

## THE AVAR INVASION OF CORINTH<sup>1</sup>

The great restless movement of peoples from the slopes of the Caucasus westward to the banks of the Danube and beyond, which made Europe in the early Middle Ages a land of warring nomads, affected also the countries to the south—the Balkans and Italy. A great number of different tribes participated in this movement: Avars, Slavs, and other peoples whose names and origins are alike mysterious. Archaeological evidence of their inroads into northern Greece has been reported previously;<sup>2</sup> actual remains of similar invasions of the Peloponnese were until recently utterly lacking. A chance discovery has now cast upon the obscurity of these centuries a light which, though faint, yet gives to the literary tradition tangible, and therefore important corroboration.

Before discussing this evidence it may be well to observe with what recorded historical facts we have to deal. Most of the sources are vague, brief, and otherwise unsatisfactory.<sup>3</sup> The most explicit information concerning the Avar inroads into the Peloponnese, and specifically into Corinth, is given in the narrative of an anonymous writer, a chronicle entitled: *Concerning the Establishment of Monemvasia*.<sup>4</sup> For the sake of convenience a translation of those parts of the chronicle which relate to the subject under discussion follows (MS. I was chosen for translation):

"In the 6064th year since the creation of the world (556 A.D.), which is the 32nd year of the reign of Justinian the Great (559 A.D.),<sup>5</sup> there came to Constantinople ambassadors of a strange people, called Avars, and the whole city ran to see the marvel, for they had never beheld such a people. They wore their hair very long, bound with fillets and braided, while their accoutrement in other respects was like that of the rest of the Huns. These people, as Evagrius says in the fifth part of his ecclesiastical history, are a tribe of wagon-dwellers living beneath the Caucasus, and pasturing there in the plains. Since they suffered ill at the hands of their neighbors, the Turks, they fled from them. Leaving their own country and traversing the shores of the Euxine, they came to the Bosphorus. Proceeding from there they passed through the territory of many tribes. Those whom they met on their way they engaged in battle until they reached the banks

<sup>1</sup> I am most grateful to Dr. Tibor Horváth of the Hungarian Historical Museum, who has written the "Supplementary Note" and given much useful advice; to Professor Clarence A. Manning of Columbia University, who was extremely generous with his help; to Dr. Bertha Segall for information about the jewelry; and to Dr. Paul A. Clement for several of the photographs.

<sup>2</sup> G. A. Soteriou, *Ανασκαφαί Νέας Αγγράλου*, in *Πρακτικά*, 1935, p. 63, fig. 12.

<sup>3</sup> See J. H. Finley, Jr., "Corinth in the Middle Ages," in *Speculum*, VII, 1932, pp. 478–479; *Cambridge Mediaeval History*, II, pp. 432–438 for an account of the Avaro-Slavic State, and for bibliography.

<sup>4</sup> Edited by Nikos A. Bees in *Byzantis*, I, 1909, pp. 57–105. I owe this reference to the kindness of Dr. Gabriel Welter.

<sup>5</sup> This discrepancy in date is paralleled by others in the two other preserved manuscripts of the chronicle.

of the Ister (Danube), and sent an embassy to Justinian asking to be received. The king welcomed them kindly, and bestowed upon them the right to dwell in the region of Mysia, in the city of Dorostolos, now called Dristra. Though at first without resources, they became wealthy and grew numerous. Unmindful of and ungrateful for past favors, they set out to subdue the Romans, capturing the Thracians and Macedonians, laying waste their kingdom, and freely plundering the lands round about. They also captured Sirmion, a famous city of Europe, which is in Bulgaria, and is now called Strimons. It was formerly held by the Gepaides, and handed over by them to King Justin. On account of this, ignominious agreements were made with them by the Romans, who promised to pay them a yearly tax of 80,000 gold pieces. And with these the Avars announced that they would cease from further attacks.

In the year 6090 (582 A.D.), when Maurice was in power, the Avars sent an embassy to him demanding that another 20,000 gold pieces be added to the 80,000 which they were already receiving from the Romans. The king, desiring peace, acceded to this demand. But the agreement lasted no longer than two years, for the khan, making inordinate demands on the grounds that he had been disregarded in some respect, as a pretext for starting war, broke the truce and suddenly captured Singidon, a town of Thrace. (Here follows a list of Avar invasions and conquests, which include Macedonia, part of Asia Minor, Thessaly, Epirus, Attica and Euboea.) They blockaded the Peloponnese, driving out the good Greek peoples; and destroying them, they themselves settled in the land. Those who were able to escape their murderous hands dispersed to various places. The city of Patras was established in the country of Rhegium of the Calabrians; the Argives settled in the island named Orobe. And the Corinthians migrated to the island called Aegina...

Thus the Avars held the Peloponnese and dwelled in it for 218 years, subject neither to the Roman king nor to anyone else, continuously from the 6096th year of the creation of the world, which is the sixth year of the reign of Maurice (588 A.D.), until the year 6313, which is the fourth year of the reign of the elder Nicephorus (805 A.D.)... Only the eastern part of the Peloponnese from Corinth to Cape Malea, belonging to the Slavonic people, was free, because of its ruggedness and inaccessibility, and a general of the Peloponnese was sent by the king of the Romans to this section..."

As established by the editor, the chronicle was written between the year 1340 (the date of the latest event mentioned therein) and the end of the sixteenth century (the date of the MSS.). This document is not to be regarded as an original or entirely veracious source. Undoubtedly it owes many of the facts and events related in it to Evagrius and other earlier writers; nevertheless its value can hardly be overestimated. It presents a consistent, plausible narrative of the conquest of Greece by the Avars, mentions specific dates for this invasion, and states exactly how long the Avars were in power and over what portions of the country they held sway. As far as the city of Corinth is concerned, some obscure points in her history are clarified, and we have only to investigate whether the archaeological evidence confirms the facts as presented in this narrative.

Several years ago the western wall of the city was traced from where it runs through the Potters' Quarter nearly to the upper end where it must have joined the walls of Acrocorinth.<sup>1</sup> In the course of excavating the ruins of the wall and its towers a number of graves of various periods were discovered, so many that one may assume

<sup>1</sup> Carpenter and Bon, *Corinth*, III, Part II, pp. 65-80.

with some degree of plausibility that the slopes to the west of Acrocorinth were used, when necessity arose, as a military cemetery. It would have been only natural for invaders and besieged to bury their dead upon the field of battle. They utilized convenient holes and crannies provided by the fortifications, especially the towers, which had been partially demolished by the Roman conquerors. Excavations conducted in the region about the walls might unearth still more graves in places where the soil is sufficiently deep to cover a body.

The first interments in the west wall seem to have been made during the early Imperial period.<sup>1</sup> The graves of later times have offered, in most cases, so little in the way of finds that one can only assert that they contained Christians (from the orientation), and even this may be open to doubt, since the shape and orientation of the space afforded by the construction of the wall must have restricted the position in which a body could be laid. For lack of evidence one may call these burials tentatively "Byzantine," with the exception of two discovered in a square tower not far below the fortified west entrance of Acrocorinth (Fig. 1).

This tower "is built entirely of poros blocks . . . laid as stretchers, but interrupted by occasional courses of headers to make an external casing for the tower rather more than four feet thick. Trans-

verse ribs divided the interior into compartments and prevented the fill from shifting."<sup>2</sup> In the roughly rectangular spaces left by these transverse ribs were interred a considerable number of bodies, some of them accompanied by weapons and ornamental objects. It is these objects which have enabled us to discover the origin of their owners.

Two graves were made in the east half of the tower, Grave III utilizing the blocks of the tower for its four sides, Grave II having a row of smaller stones added to form its north side. Grave I, just south of the tower, in the adjoining wall, contained only skeletons. Grave IV, discovered in the spring of 1936 in the course of a brief supplementary excavation, lies directly south of the southeast corner of the tower, and does

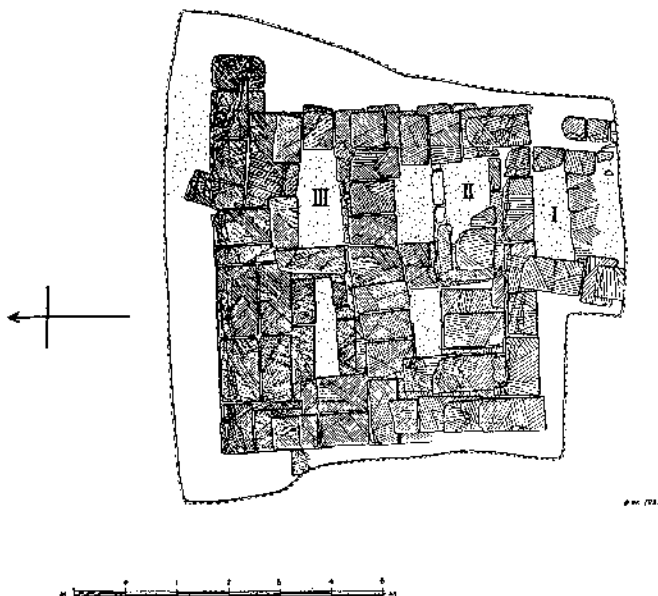


Fig. 1. Foundation of Square Tower in West City-wall of Corinth, showing graves. (From Carpenter and Bon, *Corinth*, III, Part II, fig. 49)

<sup>1</sup> Carpenter and Bon, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> Carpenter and Bon, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

not appear in figure 1. This grave, merely scooped out of the earth, was oriented more accurately east to west than the others. It contained seven poorly preserved skulls, including one of a child, and one nearly intact laid some distance above the others. The bones were confused, evidently as the result of a second burial, and nothing was found among them except a plain bronze ring, probably used as a finger-ring. (Other short trenches excavated near the tower in a search for graves—one to the south of Grave I, and another along the north side of the tower—produced no results whatsoever.)

Graves II and III alone are of interest to us. In Grave II lay six bodies, the skulls in poor condition, so that none could be preserved complete.<sup>1</sup> The teeth of all were

<sup>1</sup> Three of these skulls, the only ones sufficiently intact, were examined by Professor I. Koumares of the University of Athens. He has very kindly prepared the following report:

**Skull no. 1:**

Upper jaw (left side) preserved. The skull is that of a man, at the prime of life, but delicate. Viewed in *norma lateralis* it appears hemispherical (smooth), with projection of theinion. In *norma verticalis* it is oval. The forehead is high and slanting, without superciliary arcs. The metopic suture has fused.

Measurements:

Maximum cranial length,	17.8
Maximum cranial breadth,	12.5
Basio-bregmatic height,	11.4
Minimum frontal breadth,	9.3
Circumference,	48.5

Indices:

Cephalic index,	70.22
Length-height index,	64.04
Breadth-height index,	91.20
Fronto-parietal index,	71.10

General characteristics: dolichocephalic, hypsicephalic (or acrocephalic), and with broad forehead.

**Skull no. 2:**

Tholos alone preserved. The skull is probably that of a man at the prime of life. The forehead is straight and small. Viewed in *norma verticalis* it appears elliptical. The superciliary ridge is slightly developed.

Measurements:

From glabella to lambda,	17.5
Maximum cranial breadth,	13.0
Minimum frontal breadth,	9.4

Indices:

Cephalic index,	74.29(?)
Fronto-parietal index,	72.31

General characteristics: broad forehead and apparently dolichocephalic.

**Skull no. 3:**

Back portion alone preserved. The skull is large, of a man, with characteristic flat occiput.

Measurements:

Maximum cranial breadth,	13.8
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**Observations:**

The similarity of the first two skulls is to be remarked, as to measurements and especially as to appearance. The most important characteristics recall the general Mediterranean type. As to the question of relationship with the Avars, it is difficult to answer. To be identified with them the skulls should be brachycephalic, whereas these are dolichocephalic.

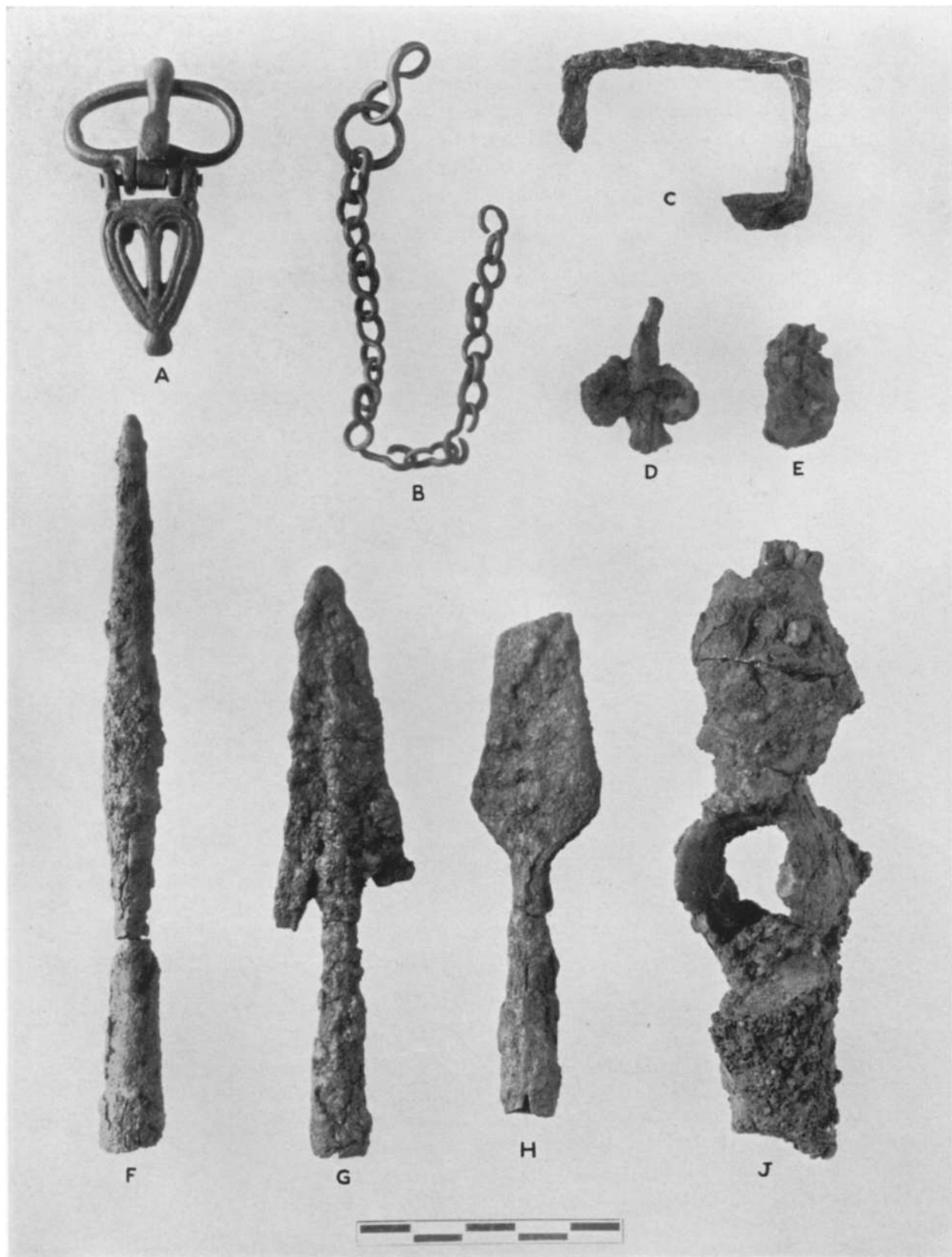


Fig. 2. Objects from Grave II in Tower at Corinth

mature and in excellent condition. Beneath the bones, at the bottom of the grave, were a few Greek sherds, and finally gravel. No definite floor had been made. The objects found in this grave are the following:

**Bronze buckle** (Fig. 2, A). Length, 0.059 m. It is composed of two parts: the buckle proper and a decorative plate attached to it by a hinge. The plate is heart-shaped, its outlines emphasized by deep engraving, with a petal-shaped portion cut out on either side of the central rib. A small spherical knob finishes off the end. Three small protruding loops on the reverse of the plate are for attachment to the belt.

**Bronze chain** (Fig. 2, B). Length, ca. 0.14 m. It consists of one simple ring, with a large figure-eight link and thirteen similar but smaller links attached to it.

**Iron buckle** (?) (Fig. 2, C). Length, 0.055 m. It is square in section, but badly corroded, and the tongue is missing.

**Iron ornament** (Fig. 2, D). Length, 0.03 m. Roughly in the shape of a cross, one end is pointed, while the others are rounded, thicker, and slightly foliate in appearance. Possibly it was once attached to the chain.

**Iron object** (Fig. 2, E). Length, 0.024 m. It is a small fragment, approximately cylindrical, perhaps part of a handle.

**Iron spear-point** (Fig. 2, F). Length, 0.14 m. The long solid blade, circular in section, ends in a hollow cylindrical haft.

**Iron spear-point** (Fig. 2, G). Length, 0.113 m. The double-edged blade ends in two barbs (one broken off), and has a slightly defined midrib. The cylindrical haft is hollow.

**Iron spear-point** (Fig. 2, H). Length (end broken off), 0.097 m. It has a flat, leaf-shaped blade, without barbs, and a hollow, rounded haft.

**Iron axe-head** (?) (Fig. 2, J). Length, 0.119 m. The fabric has become so badly corroded that only the general outlines of the object can be distinguished. It consists of a piece of metal, now broken at both ends, which was pierced by a circular hole through the centre for the insertion of a handle.



Fig. 3. Buckle from Grave III in Tower at Corinth

In Grave III were found two skeletons, the skulls fragmentary, and the following objects:

**Bronze buckle** (Fig. 3). Length, 0.061 m. A decorative plate is attached to the buckle proper. The plate is approximately triangular, with a flat, circular knob at the lower end, and three holes, two round and one heart-shaped, as decoration. Three loops for attachment project from the reverse (one of these had been broken off and another, slightly too large, fastened on with a rivet). The buckle itself is formed from a broad flat strip of metal bent into a loop, and the tongue is made of a similar strip. This part is probably also a repair.

Three fragments of a small **bronze ring**, with a loop at one end like that of an earring.

Hardly any of these objects are of the sort customarily called Byzantine. It is true that two of the spear-heads (Fig. 2, F and H) are of types almost universal, and numerous analogies can be found for them at almost any period, but the barbed spear-head and the axe (if such it be) are distinctly uncommon. In a search for parallels one soon finds that in all Greece there are few such objects, and it is to the north that one must look for their origin. Central Europe, Hungary in particular, where excavations have been frequent and extensive, has produced hundreds of graves containing objects startlingly similar to these. Those found at Keszthely, on Lake Balaton, provide particularly sharp

and clear parallels. The graves there which contain objects similar to ours date from the early seventh century, shortly after the time mentioned by the chronicler as the period of the desertion of Corinth, a period when her native industry failed to produce anything, when commerce was dead, when, in other words, foreigners had captured the region. It is clear that these graves are not those of Corinthians who merely happened to be in possession of foreign dress and weapons. A spot so far from the lower town would be unlikely for the burial of natives, and no settlement existed on Acrocorinth so early as this period. The only conclusion to be drawn is that the actual intruders were buried here, exactly the sort of people who died and were buried during the same centuries on the shores of Lake Balaton, in Hungary. Here we cannot enter upon a discussion of the origin of these tribes nor of their wanderings in central and southern Europe. It is sufficient for our purpose to know that they have been traced as far back as southern Russia, whence they spread over central Europe and into the Balkan peninsula, conquering as they went, and that certain of them have been, rightly or wrongly, called Avars. The name is immaterial. They are known also to have subdued Hungary and to have remained in possession of it until the Magyar conquest in the ninth century. The earlier tribes which penetrated the Peloponnese, in the reign of Justinian, were probably purely Slavic, for by that time the Avars had not yet reached the plains of Hungary; while the traces of South Russian influence in the accoutrement of the invaders buried near Acrocorinth show that even though the Slavic element may still have been present, the dominant cultural influence was Avar.<sup>1</sup>

Since publications of Hungarian excavations are not universally available, we reproduce in figure 4 drawings of objects from Hampel's *Alterthümer*<sup>2</sup> which most closely resemble the Corinth finds. For the first buckle (Fig. 2, A) no identical parallel appears,<sup>3</sup> but for that from Grave III (Fig. 3) figure 4, A<sup>4</sup> offers the closest likeness that can be hoped for. The only respect in which ours differs from the Hungarian specimen is the buckle and tongue, and those, as stated above, are probably the result of a makeshift repair. A similar one has been found in the Agora of Athens,<sup>5</sup> and another in the excavations at

<sup>1</sup> Not without interest is the fact that the invasions of the Avars into Greek lands are paralleled by incursions of similar and contemporary peoples into the Italian peninsula. Excavations in Picenum have disclosed an entire "Barbarian" cemetery at Castel Trosino, near Ascoli Piceno. The weapons found there are much like those from Corinth, but the ornamental objects exhibit variations sufficient to show that the invaders were not of identical tribes, though undoubtedly they were closely related. (See *Mon. Ant.*, XII, 1902, p. 292, fig. 184.)

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Hampel, *Alterthümer des frühen Mittelalters in Ungarn*. Braunschweig, 1905. Although not the most modern source available, Hampel offers the most extensive and nearly complete array of Hungarian antiquities. Thanks are due to the Director of the Hungarian Historical Museum for permission to reproduce from Hampel the drawings of objects shown in figures 4, 7, and 8.

<sup>3</sup> A very similar one, with heart-shaped motive arranged in a slightly different manner, has been found in a grave in Salonica (Archaeological Museum, no. 588). This information was kindly furnished by the curator, Mr. Makaronas.

<sup>4</sup> Hampel, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, fig. 731 (from Keszthely).

<sup>5</sup> Inv. no. B 282. This buckle was called to my attention by Mrs. H. A. Thompson, and is mentioned here by permission of Professor T. Leslie Shear.

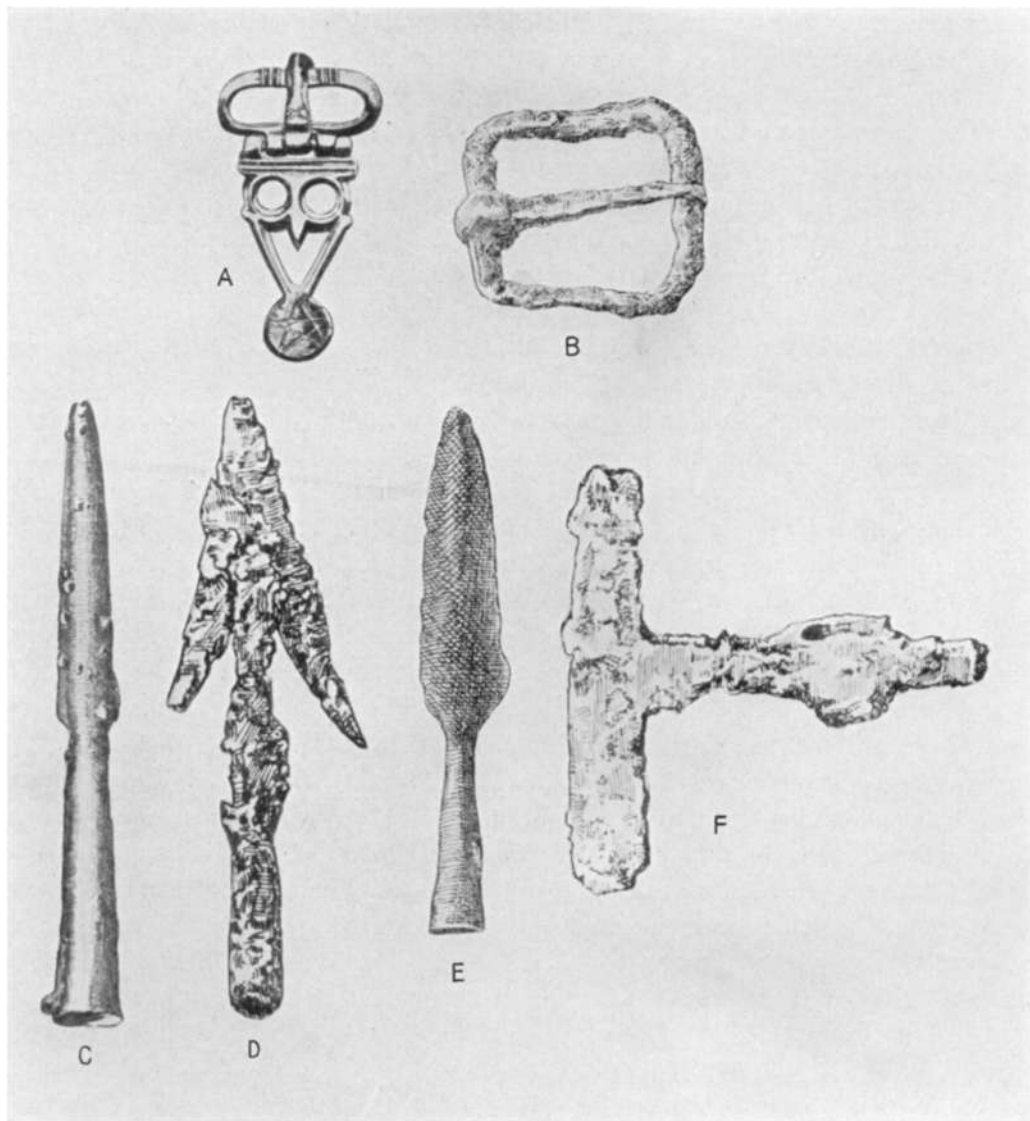


Fig. 4. Objects from Graves in Hungary

Aphiona on Corfu,<sup>1</sup> as well as several elsewhere in Corinth (Fig. 5). Figure 4, B<sup>2</sup> shows an iron buckle whose form suggests that our figure 2, B may be a fragment of a similar one. A spear-head very like figure 2, F, from Kotaj, is reproduced in figure 4, C.<sup>3</sup> A

<sup>1</sup> *Ath. Mitt.* 59, 1934, p. 282. See also *ibid.*, p. 226, fig. 27, a photograph of a similar buckle, found in Athens, which bears a Christian monogram.

<sup>2</sup> Hampel, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, fig. 671 (from Czikó).

<sup>3</sup> Hampel, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, fig. 444.



similar but larger weapon from the cemetery of Reichenhall<sup>1</sup> is one of many from that site which bear a close relationship to the Hungarian, and hence the Corinthian finds. In the ornaments, however, use is made of niello work, which is characteristic only of the western branch of these nomad peoples. Many double-barbed spear-heads, similar to figure 2, G, have been found at Reichenhall<sup>2</sup> as well as in Hungary (Fig. 4, D).<sup>3</sup> To figure 2, H we may compare figure 4, E<sup>4</sup> from Czikó, in Hungary, as well as its German counterpart from Reichenhall.<sup>5</sup> The axe-head (Fig. 2, J) will perhaps appear to be plausibly identified as such if compared with figure 4, F.<sup>6</sup>

Various parts of Corinth have yielded buckles and other ornaments as well as weapons which are obviously of the same origin as those found in the graves just described, but which may either have been introduced by the Avars or brought to Corinth in some indirect way. The buckles are the most characteristic.

Figure 6, A (found on Acrocorinth) is particularly interesting because of its decorative motive. The opposed horses' heads, though reduced to the simplest possible form, yet recall the splendid animal designs created by the Scythians for their metal work. Their inevitable decline reached its lowest point in such forms as this buckle, a decline for which was responsible not only the passage of centuries but also the diffusion of their art. The side view of this buckle (Fig. 6, B) shows the provisions for attachment which are customary on all the buckles here represented. Some have only two projections, but in other respects they are similar. Any number of buckles from Keszthely (Fig. 7)<sup>7</sup>

show a certain resemblance to figure 6, A, but none is identical. The buckle represented in figure 6, C (found west of the Lechaëum Road) is still more conventionalized than that of figure 6, A; yet it shows traces of a naturalistic origin. A very similar pattern may be seen in figure 8, A,<sup>8</sup> a buckle from Kassa. The knob at the end of the plate seems to be characteristic of all Avar buckles, no matter what variations the design may exhibit. Figure 6, D exhibits the herring-bone and zigzag pattern, which is extremely



Fig. 5. Two Buckles from Corinth

<sup>1</sup> Max von Chlingensperg-Berg, *Das Gräberfeld von Reichenhall in Oberbayern*, Grave 309, pl. XXXV.

<sup>2</sup> von Chlingensperg-Berg, *op. cit.*, Grave 306, pl. XXXIV, *et alia passim*.

<sup>3</sup> Hampel, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pl. 147, 5 (from Keszthely).

<sup>4</sup> Hampel, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, fig. 427.

<sup>5</sup> von Chlingensperg-Berg, *op. cit.*, Grave 250, pl. XXIX.

<sup>6</sup> Hampel, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, fig. 104.

<sup>7</sup> Hampel, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pl. 160.

<sup>8</sup> Hampel, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pl. 27, 16 a and b. See also *Archaeologiai Értesítő*, XL, 1923-26, pl. IV, no. 7.

characteristic of this art. Occasionally it is combined with the cut-out pattern, as in figure 8, B,<sup>1</sup> from Szeged. Another type of buckle is exemplified by those represented in figure 6, E and F, both without a regular plate, the former having a rectangular loop at the end for the insertion of the end of the belt. Exactly alike is figure 8, C,<sup>2</sup> from Szeghegy. The last and simplest type of buckle, figure 6, G, is paralleled by that in figure 8, D<sup>3</sup> and by another from Kenézlő.<sup>4</sup>



Fig. 6. Buckles and Arrowhead from Corinth

The only weapon, besides those found in the tower, which can be definitely attributed to the Avar invasion is an iron arrowhead with three concave sides (Fig. 6, H). While unknown in Greek or Roman times, it is identical with many from Hungary, of which

<sup>1</sup> Hampel, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pl. 93, 15. A buckle identical with our figure 6, D, from Igar, may be found in *Archaeologiai Értésítő*, XLIII, 1929, pl. IX, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Hampel, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pl. 497, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Hampel, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, fig. 770.

<sup>4</sup> *Archaeologiai Értésítő*, XLV, 1931, p. 85.

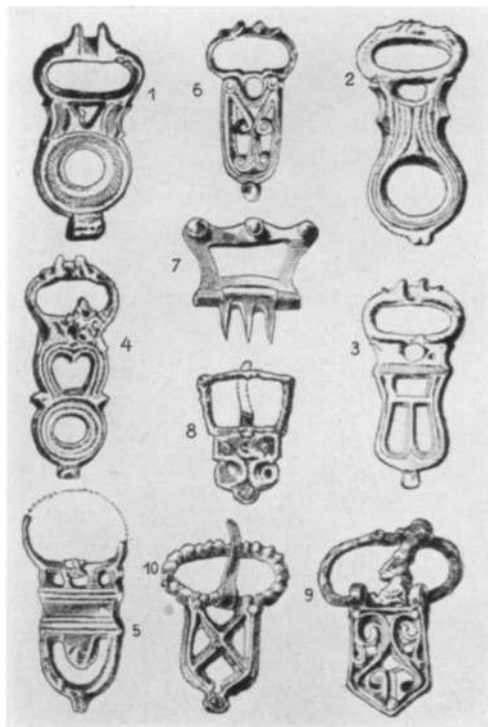


Fig. 7. Buckles from Keszthely, Hungary

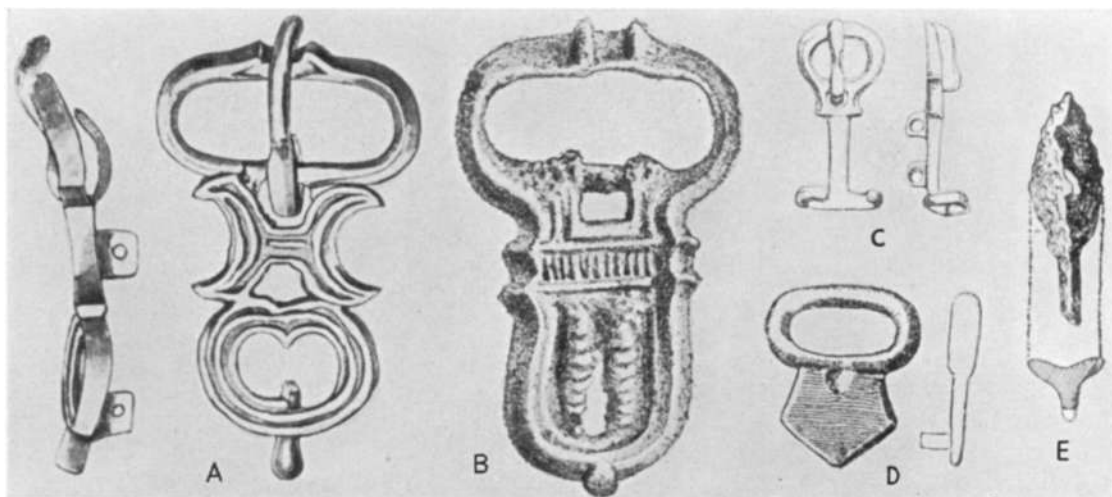


Fig. 8. Buckles and Arrowhead from Hungary

one, from Kassa, is reproduced in figure 8, E.<sup>1</sup> Other weapons discovered in the excavations at Corinth may very likely have belonged to the invaders, but are not sufficiently characteristic to be absolutely identified as such.

In addition to buckles and weapons, there is a considerable amount of jewelry from the excavations, whose motives if not provenience are distinctly "northern." Bracelets and earrings (Fig. 9) made of wire with filigree balls attached to them have been found by the thousands in southern Russia as well as in the lands directly to the north of Greece.<sup>2</sup> The presence of such jewelry at Corinth may best be explained by the evidently lengthy stay of the invading peoples at the site. The women of the tribe would doubtless soon have followed the successful army. To repeat the words of the chronicle: "The Avars held the Peloponnese and dwelled in it for 218 years . . . Only the eastern part of the Peloponnese from Corinth to Cape Malea, belonging to the Slavonic people, was

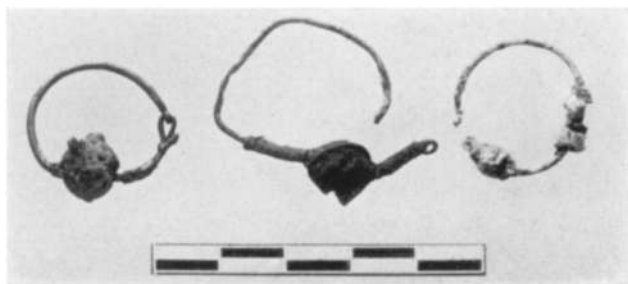


Fig. 9. Bronze Earrings from Corinth

free, because of its ruggedness and inaccessibility." Since Corinth itself and the Argolid present no rugged or inaccessible features, it is likely that the writer referred strictly to the eastern coast of the Peloponnese, beginning at Cenchreae, the port of Corinth, and including the peninsula of Acte, as well as the Laconian coast. On the other hand, if this section did in truth belong to "the Slavonic people," the jewelry could as well

have been theirs as the Avars'. The type was widespread among the northern peoples.

Numismatic evidence from the excavations at Corinth also bears out the supposition that the site was practically abandoned by the original inhabitants for a long period of time. The reigns of the eighteen emperors who ruled between the years 668 (the first year of Constantine IV) and 829 (the last year of Michael II) have yielded only sixteen coins. Coins of the emperors immediately preceding Constantine IV have been found in somewhat greater numbers.<sup>3</sup> Since these quantities, however, are still comparatively small, the evidence may be considered adequately to support the statement of the chronicler.

<sup>1</sup> Hampel, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, fig. 369. See also von Chlingensperg-Berg, *op. cit.*, Grave 140, pl. XXVIII.

<sup>2</sup> See Kondakov, *Русские Кладбища*, pls. IV, XII, XIII (from near Kiev); Hampel, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, fig. 980 (from Keszthely); *Arch. Anz.*, 1913, p. 43, fig. 18 (Hungarian).

<sup>3</sup> Maurice Tiberius: 26 coins, Phocas: 29, Heraclius: 14, Constant II: 54, Constantine IV: 2, Tiberius III: 1, Constantine V: 1, Leo IV: 2, Nicephorus I: 2, Michael I: 1, Leo V: 3, Michael II: 4. These figures are drawn partly from K. M. Edwards, *Corinth*, VI, p. 165, and partly from the article entitled: *Report on the Coins found in the Excavations at Corinth during the Years 1930-1935*, in this issue of *Hesperia*, which the author kindly allowed me to see in manuscript form.

The results which have been obtained from the correlation of the none too abundant evidence relating to Corinth encourage the hope that a further study of this chronicle and of other literary sources, as well as of the available archaeological material, may clarify the history of the Peloponnese and of all Greece during this obscure period.

G. R. DAVIDSON

### SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE

In the course of the extensive excavations of the remains of the period of the migration of peoples (*Völkerwanderungszeit*) which have been conducted by Hungarian scholars more than 15,000 graves have been uncovered. Not only have these excavations awakened interest in the study of the early Middle Ages, but they have fully disclosed the great importance of the Avar Kingdom. It is only by united effort that the history and culture of this kingdom can be studied as a whole. Of great importance is the historical demarcation of its boundaries. The two graves found near Acrocorinth and the stray finds in Corinth itself are important in this respect. It is quite probable that we have here the most southerly outpost of an expanding people, which they occupied for an indeterminate period. The relatively large number of weapons (spear-heads, axe) shows that these were the graves of warriors. Negative evidence for this conclusion is the complete absence of feminine adornment. We can easily date the finds, since all are contemporary. On the analogy of finds in Hungary we must place them in the first half of the seventh century. In this period a great part of the Balkan peninsula was open to the Avar hordes, who met their first opposition in Greece.

We can, indeed, determine the date of the Corinth finds even more closely. The development of the buckle forms presented here is to be found in South Russia. There we often find objects of the Krim-goths and of the Kuturgurs (later known as the Danube Bulgars) intermingled. These two peoples often lived close together, and had a demonstrably strong influence upon each other. When the Avars conquered Hungary in the year 568 they forced a great part of the Kuturgurs to go with them. This the Greek writers confirm, and they write also of the custom which the Avars had of placing the Kuturgurs in the front ranks during battle. This is told, for instance, of a Balkan campaign.<sup>1</sup> We do not know the number of Balkan campaigns conducted by the Avars, but the Corinth finds are tangible evidence of such an expedition; the graves are those of Kuturgur warriors who fell in the vanguard. It is a generally recognized fact that the Byzantine emperors later tried to defend themselves against the Avars by settling Slavs in the Balkan peninsula. It is not likely that this attempt was successful. The tactics of the Avars were the result of hundreds of years' experience.<sup>2</sup> They were splendid

<sup>1</sup> Menander, ed. Bonn, p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> Leon Sophos, *Tὰ ἐν πολέμοις τακτικά*, Chap. XVIII (after the work of Maurikios, *Στρατηγικόν*, XI, 3).

riders and were equipped with excellent weapons: bows and arrows, sabres, axes, and lances. We know that the Slavs fought on foot, for the most part poorly armed, only with knives. The southern expeditions of the Avars were frustrated by the Bulgarian occupation of the year 680, which was brought about through the initiative of Byzantine policy. Now two peoples with the same military technique opposed each other. At this time the Avar Empire lost half its possessions in the East through the successful advance of the Chazars. Then begins the second period of the Empire's history, extending from 680 to the middle of the ninth century. During this period were preponderant the massive cast bronze belt ornaments, usually decorated with vines, scenes of animal combats, or griffins. The best examples of gold have been found in Vrap (Albania), together with decorated silver vessels now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Avar art had a great influence on the art of the Croats, for example the moulds from Biskupija in Dalmatia.<sup>1</sup> These problems belong, however, to the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century, when we are no longer on such firm ground as in the case of the Acrocorinthian and Corinthian finds.

<sup>1</sup> See Karaman, *Iz kolijevke hrvatske prošlosti*, fig. 147.

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