

ZWISCHEN BYZANZ UND DER STEPPE

ARCHÄOLOGISCHE UND HISTORISCHE STUDIEN
FESTSCHRIFT FÜR CSANÁD BÁLINT ZUM 70. GEBURTSTAG

BETWEEN BYZANTIUM AND THE STEPPE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL STUDIES IN HONOUR OF
CSANÁD BÁLINT ON THE OCCASION OF HIS 70TH BIRTHDAY



INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY
RESEARCH CENTRE FOR THE HUMANITIES
HUNGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

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Csanád Bálint in Istanbul, in front of the finds brought to light during the excavations preceding the underground construction (2013)

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Cover photo: Detail of an Early Byzantine mosaic floor, Kissufim, Israel
(© Photo: Vladimir Naichin, Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority)

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THE CIRCULATION OF ARTEFACTS, FASHIONS AND STYLES IN LANGOBARD LOMBARDY AND THEIR INTERACTIONS WITH THE CONTEMPORARY BYZANTINE CULTURE

Paolo de Vingo – Paola Marina De Marchi

The Langobard sites excavated in both the central-northern and central-southern regions of Italy reveal how the process of sociocultural assimilation had already commenced around 600, by which time the monarchy had overcome its problems of political instability. During this phase, official requirements of state, probably related to the needs of 'international' politics to which the Langobard monarchy aspired, prompted the ruling class to adopt objects and symbols that would make it recognizable to outsiders. On the basis of the existing finds, only rarely did these artefacts display the high technical and stylistic quality of contemporary jewellery made in Constantinople. This article proposes to examine which artefacts were used as 'symbols of power' in Langobard Lombardy to determine whether they were merely a 'provincial production', concentrated in certain urban settlements and in the castra, or whether it is possible to document the circulation of widespread models and goods, which travelled along privileged channels from the Byzantine workshops in central-southern Italy towards Pavia and Milan in the heart of the Regnum Langobardorum Maior.

Keywords: Symbols of power, artefacts, trade, workshops, gold crosses, rings, buckles, sea dragons, eagles

INTRODUCTION

Studies of the artefacts imitating traditional Byzantine pieces to which this article refers – prevalently gold-leaf crosses and parade shields, along with a few composite gold belts, discovered among the grave goods in Langobard cemeteries in rural Lombardy – have so far focused primarily on identifying the social status of their wearers, rather than understanding their particular production characteristics and their meaning as an indication of cultural assimilation. Further clarifications will be available following the publication of the excavations of the cemeteries currently being studied and in a wider research context.¹

The comparison of sumptuary goods found in the northern and central-southern Langobard areas, close to the Byzantine borders (Fig. 1), shows marked differences in the representational symbols denoting appurtenance to a specific ethnic tradition and/or status in the 6th and 7th centuries.

With a few exceptions, Langobard stamped pottery is almost completely absent in the southern areas of Italy, but very widespread in the north, which shows interesting combinations of Late Roman decorative patterns, parade shields with naturalistic decoration and decorated gold crosses.²

¹ DE MARCHI 2012, 704.

² VON HESSEN 1968; DE MARCHI 2007a, 285–286.



Fig. 1. The Italian peninsula in the 7th century with the borders of the *Regnum Langobardorum Maior* and of the two southern Langobard duchies (Spoleto and Benevento) (© Rossana Managlia)

On the other hand, a fair number of Roman-Byzantine artefacts that are absent or very rare in northern Italy, have been found in burials belonging to the aristocratic, military and landowning classes in Lucca, Chiusi, Castel Trosino and Nocera Umbra: scale armour, saddle pommels, gold trimmings from composite belts, gold and silver bridles, rings, wedding bands, ivory pyxes and disc brooches.³ In some cases parallels with these objects can be seen in prototypes found in the

³ VON HESSEN 1974; BIERBRAUER 2008, 126–134; RUPP 2008, 171–178; PAOLUCCI 2009, 12–21.

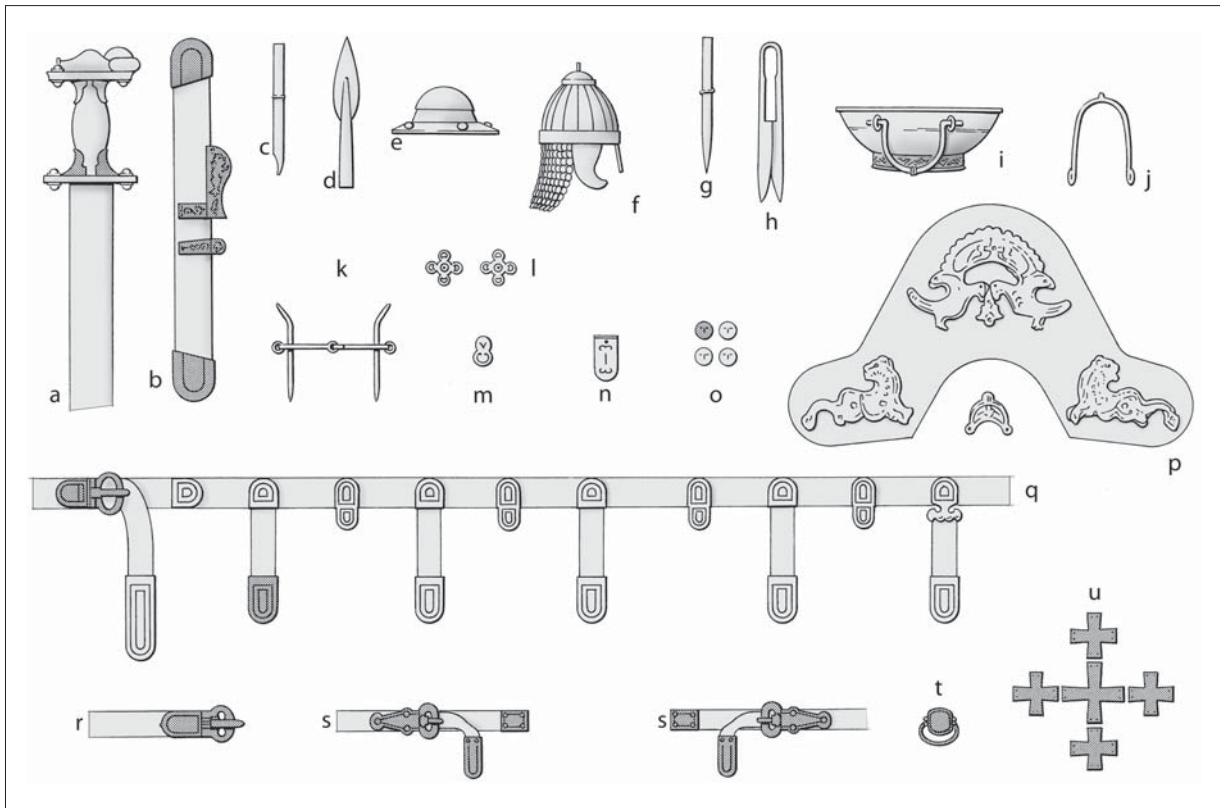


Fig. 2. Reconstruction of the assemblage from the Langobard warrior grave at Castel Trosino–Località Pedata (late 6th–early 7th century). The pieces in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Unites States of America) (a, b, o, q, r, s, t, u) are shaded, while the others (c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, p) are in the Musée des Antiquités Nationales (France) (after PAROLI 2000b, 141, modified)

Crypta Balbi workshop, active in Rome in the 7th century, in the production of luxury goods that were less elaborate or more ‘provincial’ than Middle Eastern products.⁴

So far only the Castel Trosino horseman’s grave in Pedata has yielded gold trimmings from a composite belt probably made in Constantinople (Fig. 2).⁵

There is a distributional problem regarding bronze basins and pitchers, which were the fruit of gifts, diplomatic exchanges, purchases and, sometimes, loot. They are little documented in Lombardy, where they have been found in just two areas: Brescia, a ducal city with close ties to the monarchy, and Trezzo on the River Adda, a very important waterway during the Langobard period, which initially acted as a sort of channel connecting the Byzantine territories (Cremona and the River Po) with Lake Como and Isola Comacina, which was not conquered by the Langobards until 590, and subsequently as a sort of permeable hiatus between the territories subject to royal influence and those prevalently under ducal control (Fig. 1).⁶

The status symbols of the central-southern duchies were adopted by the neighbouring Byzantine territories and by workshops in Rome or other cities, while the central-northern regions distinguished themselves for the circulation of decorated gold crosses and parade shields with ‘non-Germanic decoration’ derived from Roman-Byzantine iconographic models, whose distribution was concentrated particularly in the Transalpine areas.⁷

⁴ PAROLI 1994, 11–18; RICCI 1997, 268–270; PAROLI 2001, 296–297; RICCI 2001b, 331–334.

⁵ PAROLI 2000a, 88–92; PAROLI 2001, 271.

⁶ DE MARCHI 1995, 63–70.

⁷ VON HESSEN 1974; DE MARCHI 2000, 284–291; DE MARCHI 2006, 37–82.; GIOSTRA 2007a, 329.

In both cases, this led to interaction between three distinct cultures – Germanic, local and Roman-Byzantine – but in the northern part, whose epicentre was in Lombardy, it is possible to identify an innovative autonomous production that was the earliest expression of Langobard craftsmanship in Italy. It paralleled the emergence of the new ruling class of the kingdom between the last decades of the 6th century and the early years of the following one. These objects conveyed a visual message that granted their wearer the mandate to deal with ambassadors and notables from Rome, Byzantium, the Italian and eastern Byzantine regions, and the Transalpine Germanic kingdoms.⁸

Damascened sword blades and damascened iron belt trimmings with zoomorphic motifs, widespread in all the Langobard territories, constitute the heart of the Germanic metalworking tradition, which stands out for its design and complex craftsmanship. The basket earrings widespread throughout Italy between the 6th and 7th centuries pertain to the original Byzantine culture and long remained part of women's costume. These popular and easily assimilated items were also fairly widespread in the areas under Langobard political control.⁹

LOMBARDY BETWEEN THE 6TH AND 7TH CENTURIES

The process of stabilization of the kingdom, which followed the migration phase (568/569), commenced with the crisis of the monarchy and the decade of ducal anarchy, which was accompanied by the descent of Frankish army divisions to the Po Valley, the betrayal of the dukes, and fragmented and unstable frontiers. The recovery started with the election of Authari (584) and continued with his successor Agilulf (589/590–616). In the space of just over a decade the uprisings of the Dukes of Bergamo, Orta and Verona, allied with the Franks and the Byzantines, were followed by the descent from the Ticino valleys of the Frankish Auduald, Olo, and Cedinus. The period ended with the conquest of Isola Comacina, the last Byzantine stronghold in northern Italy (590). The successive phase led to the definition of the frontiers in the Emilian areas, where Cremona, Brescello and Mantua were annexed (602–603).

The different cultures underwent a process of integration during these decades.¹⁰ Between the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 7th centuries, the dialogue between the authorities of the kingdom and the papacy, represented by Queen Theodelinda and Gregory the Great, became intense.¹¹ It is attested by the exchange of letters and the refined gifts, of Roman and Byzantine production, sent from Rome to Monza, accompanied by ambassadors and churchmen.¹² The Monza burial sites and hanging crowns that Agilulf donated to the Basilica of San Giovanni, founded by his wife on a Roman architectural model and furnished with gold and silver artefacts, are of very high quality.¹³ No object of Byzantine tradition found in rural burials is of such high quality as the precious artefacts in Monza.¹⁴

In the period between 590 and 643, Pavia, Milan and Monza were capital cities and residences of the royal family. In Milan, Agilulf reclaimed the imperial palace, with its wealth of antique figurative decoration, was elected king, appointed Adaloald his heir, and restored the early Christian basilica of San Simpliciano and other buildings.¹⁵ In Monza, the queen organized the construction of the royal palace and its frescos, while two decades later in Pavia, with its wealth of churches and

⁸ PAROLI 2001, 296; RICCI 2001a, 84–85.

⁹ POSSENTI 1994, 39–41; VON HESSEN 2000, 166–168; PAROLI 2001, 268–270.

¹⁰ DE MARCHI 1995, 35–52.

¹¹ Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, Liber IV.8–9.

¹² Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, Liber III.13, III.22, III.31, Liber IV.25.

¹³ Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, Liber IV.21.

¹⁴ CHRISTIE 2010, 113–122.

¹⁵ Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, Liber III.35, Liber IV.35.

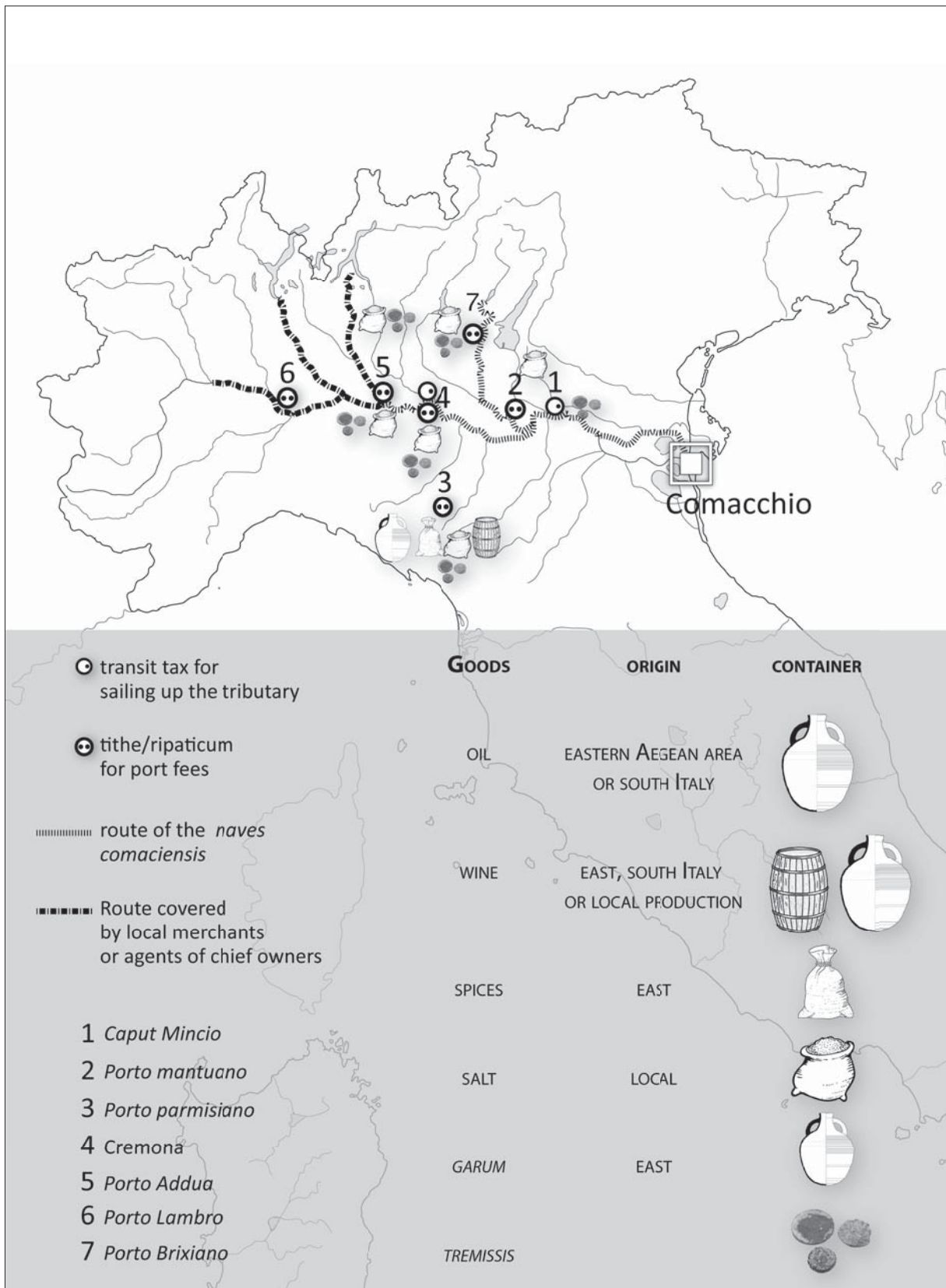


Fig. 3. 1. Navigation along the Po River with river berthing points according to the capitulary of Liutprand. 2. Types of goods, traded products and transport vessels used in the Po River areas (© Rossana Managlia)

palaces, Rothari issued the edict named after him (643), another symbol of the ambivalent policy of the Langobard kings, which placed the people on one side and the crown on the other.¹⁶

The role of Lombardy differs from that of the Tuscan duchies (Chiusi and Lucca) and the central-southern ones (Benevento and Spoleto) because most of the region's contact was with Transalpine countries, due to their vicinity, as attested by the presence of gold crosses with stamped decoration and parade shields in the territories of the Alemanni and Baiovarii,¹⁷ and bronze trimmings from 'five-piece' composite belts in the Danubian and Transdanubian regions.¹⁸ Between the 6th and 7th centuries, trade relations with the Upper Adriatic northern sector, Venice and Constantinople seem to have been limited to fabrics and liturgical objects sold by Syrian and Jewish merchants, and by pilgrims heading to the Transalpine cities, monasteries and bishoprics – particularly Frankish ones – via the still-efficient Roman roads or the waterways constituted by the Po and its tributaries (Fig. 3).¹⁹

The monarchy was defining itself politically and culturally oscillating between the eastern authorities, the papacy and the Roman-Germanic kingdoms in both its domestic and foreign policies, developing a dual diplomatic profile: on the one hand seeking the cohesion of the Langobard people (traditions, weapons, people's assembly) and on the other developing an 'international' one constituted by treaties, marriages and trade. Military expeditions partly combined military objectives and partly satisfied the need to expand the kingdom. This dual role can explain the conservative nature of some of the artefacts, such as the stamped pottery, and at the same time the innovative nature of others, with the production of objects of Roman-Mediterranean tradition, influenced by mosaics and liturgical furnishings in the old imperial palaces – now the seat of royal power – the surviving Roman *domus*, and the bishoprics.

The reorganization of the kingdom, in the first half of the 7th century, forced some manufacturing and the production of cereals to become centralized, and the landowning nobility was flanked by a new class of court officials: a ruling class sensitive to the local culture, which did not appear able to purchase artefacts imported from Byzantium, possibly not only for economic reasons.²⁰ In Lombardy very few objects display the high quality of contemporary Byzantine gold and silver production,²¹ but there are possible parallels with jewellery made in Rome, a 'provincial' workshop that would seem – along with others not yet identified – to have commercialized its production prevalently via the economic circuit of the Italian peninsula.²²

MEDITERRANEAN-BYZANTINE ARTEFACTS AND ICONOGRAPHY

The iconographic subjects of this 'provincial' production derive from mosaics, gold and silverware, glass, fabrics and ivories. The chosen decorative motifs reproduce mainly details from mouldings or inscriptions: flowers and plant/floral volutes, animals, hunting scenes, architectural motifs, monograms and rarely human figures (warriors, Victory). The crafting stage was often very basic and the production techniques, with the exception of the parade shields, fairly simple: small casts in moulds, stamping, punching, pressure-beating and engraving.²³

¹⁶ BROGIOLO 2000, 144–147.

¹⁷ WERNER 1951–1952, 45–58; VON HESSEN 1974, 199–226, DE MARCHI 2000, 2002.

¹⁸ LUSUARDI SIENA–GIOSTRA–DE MARCHI 2002, 227–228; VIDA 2008, 78–80; DE MARCHI–SIMONE ZOPFI 2014, 128–131.

¹⁹ RUGGINI 1961, 222–231; VERCAUTEREN 1964, 393–411; PAROLI 2001, 265; MALAGUTI–RIAVEZ–ASOLATI–BRESSAN–MARCANTE–MASSA 2007, 82–83; NEGRELLI 2007, 469–471.

²⁰ MONNERET DE VILLARD 1919, 1–83; PAROLI 2001, 297; BROGIOLO 2005, 321–395.

²¹ BALDINI LIPPOLIS 2010, 250–251; YEROULANOU 2010, 337–345.

²² RICCI 2001a, 79–86.

²³ MOOSBRUGGER LEU 1967, 144–152, fig. 28.

Plant and flower motifs

The Leno-San Giovanni silver cross (Fig. 4.1), with an original context, is a Byzantine piece, which may have been imported or made by skilled artisans.²⁴ The motif is very elegant: a vine shoot that forms wreaths around an alternating succession of birds and bunches of grapes. It is achieved by embossing, and has parallels with Late Roman gold jewellery – the bar of the gold ring from a rich Gothic-Roman site in Torriano (PV) – and with a fabric in the British Museum (Fig. 4.2).²⁵ The terracotta moulding from the oldest church of Saint-Similien in Nantes (France) dates from the 6th century (Fig. 4.3).²⁶

A vine shoot forms the motif, known as ‘trefoils and palmettes’, that adorns the gilded copper and bronze plates of the flanges of the parade shield bosses from Fornovo San Giovanni (Fig. 5.1) and Trezzo (grave 5: Fig. 5.2), a 7th-century horseman burial.²⁷

Vine shoots also embellish the cross from Loreto (BG),²⁸ while the cross from Stabio, in Canton Ticino in Switzerland, is characterized by garlands of leaves that form tondi containing lions and dragons. The latter is a skilled piece of craftsmanship, possibly Roman due to close parallels with the dagger with perforated gold sheath (grave F) from Castel Trosino, where the grave goods contained many Byzantine artefacts (approximately 600) – and the bronze die from *Crypta Balbi* in Rome.²⁹ The Castel Trosino sheath has parallels with other similar examples from Kerim-loo (Korea), confirming the movement of models and men from Eastern Asia to Western Europe.³⁰

A rather interesting gold cross with arms adorned with naturalistic vine shoots and bunches of grapes (identical stamp) was found in Peltuinum (Abruzzo). A tondo in its centre, surrounded by several frames, recalls the settings of Byzantine-Roman-style rings. The decorative scheme is not particularly sophisticated and the cross can thus be considered an imitation of a Byzantine product, characterized by ‘strong local influences’, which may however be attributable to the technical skill of the individual craftsman or that of the workshop where it was produced.³¹

The trilobate leaf, stamped on two arms of the cross of the Trezzo shield boss (grave 5: Fig. 6.1), recalls the leaf of the silver cup from Notre-Dame-d’Allençon (3rd century: Fig. 6.2).³² The flowers engraved on the back of the strap end found in Trezzo (grave 5) are the same as those on the belt trimmings discovered in Mersin (Cilicia) (first half of the 5th century) and recall the Leno-San Giovanni cross (grave 10: Fig. 6.3).³³ This cross, perhaps in white gold leaf, is decorated with the same ‘rosette’ stamp as an example from Brescia-Villa Glori, but in this case the motif is repeated to form a pattern that recalls those of fabrics.³⁴ The Leno-San Giovanni crosses are of higher qualities than all the others documented in Lombardy, so it is possible that they may have been made by Byzantine workshops, or skilled Roman craftsmen, perhaps active in Brixium itself.³⁵

The cast-iron Syracuse-type buckles, widespread in both the western and eastern areas of Europe are distinguished by garlands of plants around the edge with a lily in the centre.³⁶ In Lombardy they are concentrated in Fornovo San Giovanni (BG) (Fig. 7.1), with parallels in 7th-century burials at Zanica and Romano di Lombardia (BG); in the burial dating from the first half of the 7th century

²⁴ DE MARCHI 2006, 37–82, pl. 1c; DE MARCHI 2007b, 241.

²⁵ PERONI 1967, 117, no. 75; RUTSCHOWSCAYA 1990, 7.

²⁶ SIMON HIERNARD 2004, 106.

²⁷ VON HESSEN 1986, 165; ROFFIA–SESINO 1986, 83–100, pl. 40.1, 144; DE MARCHI 2002, pl. II.8, 10.

²⁸ DE MARCHI 1988b, pl. III.

²⁹ PAROLI 2000b, 142–143, figs. 13.4–13.7, 143; PAROLI 2001, 273; RICCI–LUCCERINI 2001, 378–379; PAROLI–RICCI 2005, pl. 4.2a–c.

³⁰ ANAZAWA–MANOME 2000, 71–77, fig. 5.3.

³¹ ROTILI 1992–1993; REDI–SIENA–MELONI–DI PIETRO 2012, 595–600, figs. 4.1–2.

³² BARATTE 1989, 102–103.

³³ ROFFIA–SESINO 1986, pl. 4.1, 108; SCHULZE–DÖRRLLAMM 2009, 276–277, fig. 105, 277; TOBIAS 2011.

³⁴ DE MARCHI 2006, 37–82, pl. 1a.

³⁵ DE MARCHI 2007b, 240.

³⁶ SCHULZE–DÖRRLLAMM 2009, 171–177, figs. 142–153, 342–344.

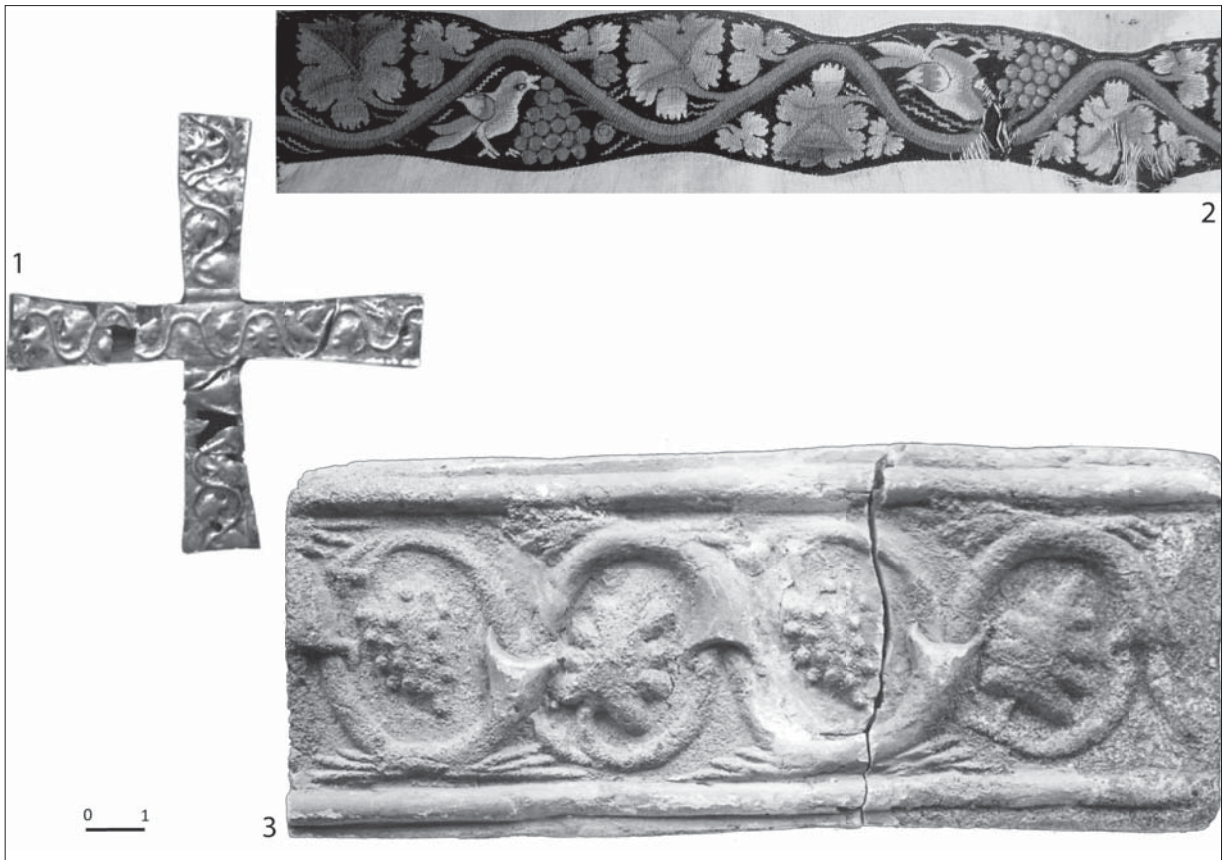


Fig. 4. 1. Funerary cross, grave 10, Leno-San Giovanni cemetery (after DE MARCHI 2007b, sheet 4.23a, 240–241); 2. piece of fabric at the British Museum (after RUTSCHOWSCAYA 1990, 7); 3. terracotta moulding from the religious complex of Saint-Similien (after SIMON HIERNARD 2004, 106, modified)

at Calvisano-Santi di Sopra (grave 61: Fig. 7.2) (BS); at Corte Sant'Elena in Verona in forms identical to those discovered (Fig. 7.3–4); and at Rutigliano and Matinata in Byzantine Apulia.³⁷

A buckle with mobile silvered bronze plate (Fig. 8.1), imitating costlier products, was found in a burial (grave 1) at Offanengo (CR), dated to the first half of the 7th century, together with a silver strap end with Latin box monogram *Johannes*, made in provincial workshops that produced traditional items.³⁸ *Johannes* is, perhaps, the name encrypted in the monogram stamped in the central medallion of the Trezzo cross (grave 2: Fig. 8.2), from the burial of a horseman dating from around the mid-7th century. The cross, with geometric motifs adorning the edge of the two arms, is a unique example inspired by Late Antique pieces. The metal sheet has been cut with beaten stamps, sacrificing part of the borders of the stamped crosses.³⁹

The skilfully crafted bronze buckle from Brescia-San Giovanni (Fig. 9.1), with pierced fixed plate, central cross and settings with almandines, has parallels in the eastern Byzantine areas.⁴⁰ The spiral decoration that forms a lily – present on a damascened iron strap end (grave 13) from Arsago Seprio

³⁷ DE MARCHI 1988b, pl. 2, fig. 16; LA ROCCA 1989a, fig. 31, 161; DE MARCHI 1997, fig. 10.13; BALDINI LIPPOLIS 1999, 226; BALDINI LIPPOLIS 2010, 241–243.

³⁸ VON HESSEN 1965, pl. 7.1; TOBIAS 2011, fig. 2.5.

³⁹ VON HESSEN 1986, 166; ROFFIA-SESINO 1986, 37–38, fig. 16, 37, pl. 13, 117; GIOSTRA 2007a, 326–327.

⁴⁰ SCHULZE-DÖRRLAMM 2009, 116.

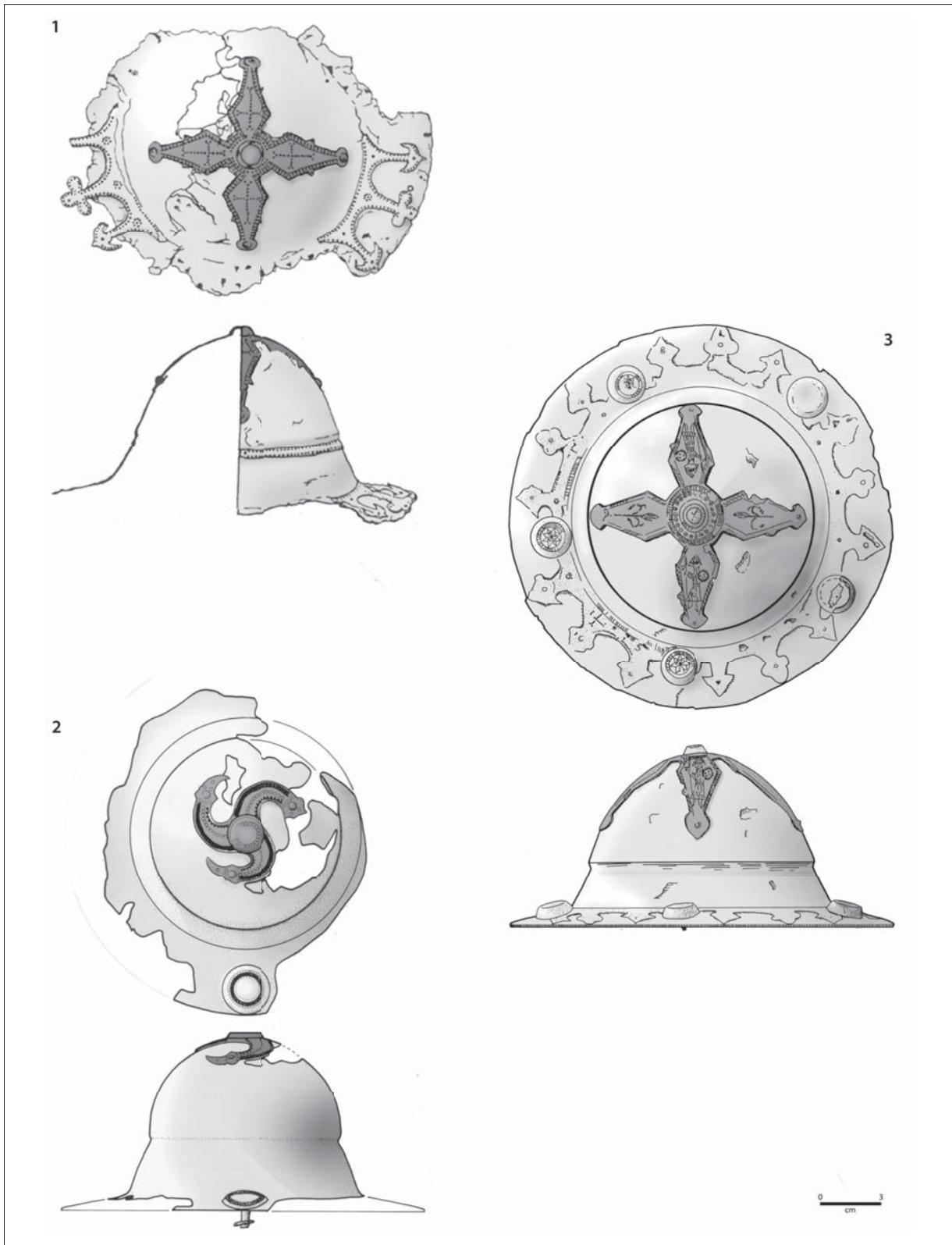


Fig. 5. Parade shield bosses with 'cross' gilded bronze-sheet plates:
1. from Fornovo San Giovanni (after DE MARCHI 1992, fig. 63, 208, modified);
2. from grave 5 in Trezzo (after ROFFIA-SESINO 1986, pl. 40.1a, 144, modified)

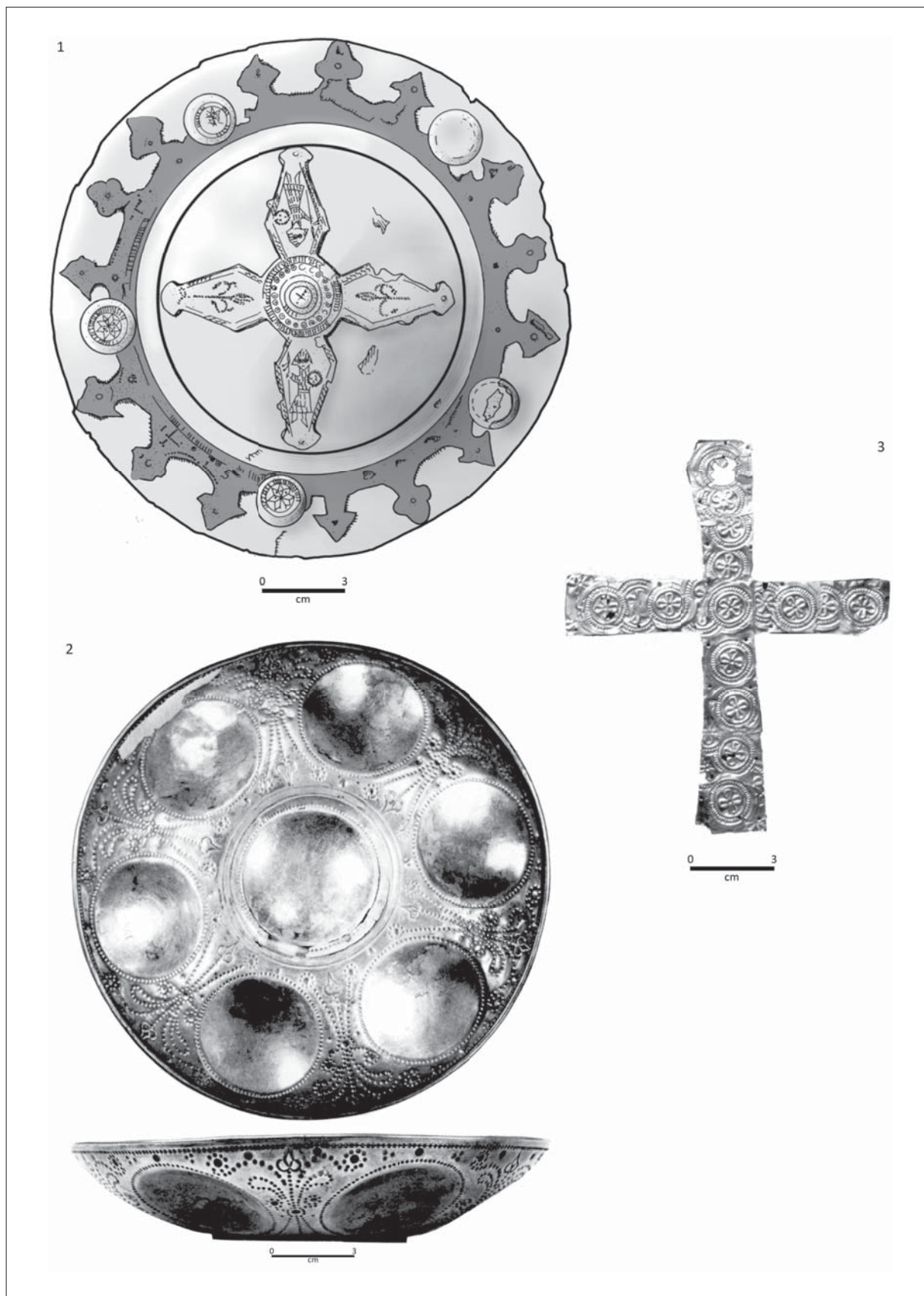


Fig. 6. 1. Gilded bronze-sheet bordure with plant motifs from shield in grave 5, Trezzo (after ROFFIA-SESINO 1986, pl. 40.1a, 144); 2. cup from Notre-Dame-d'Alencon (after BARATTE 1989, fig. 33, 103); 3. funerary cross, grave 10, Leno-San Giovanni cemetery (after DE MARCHI 2007b, sheet 4.23b, 241)

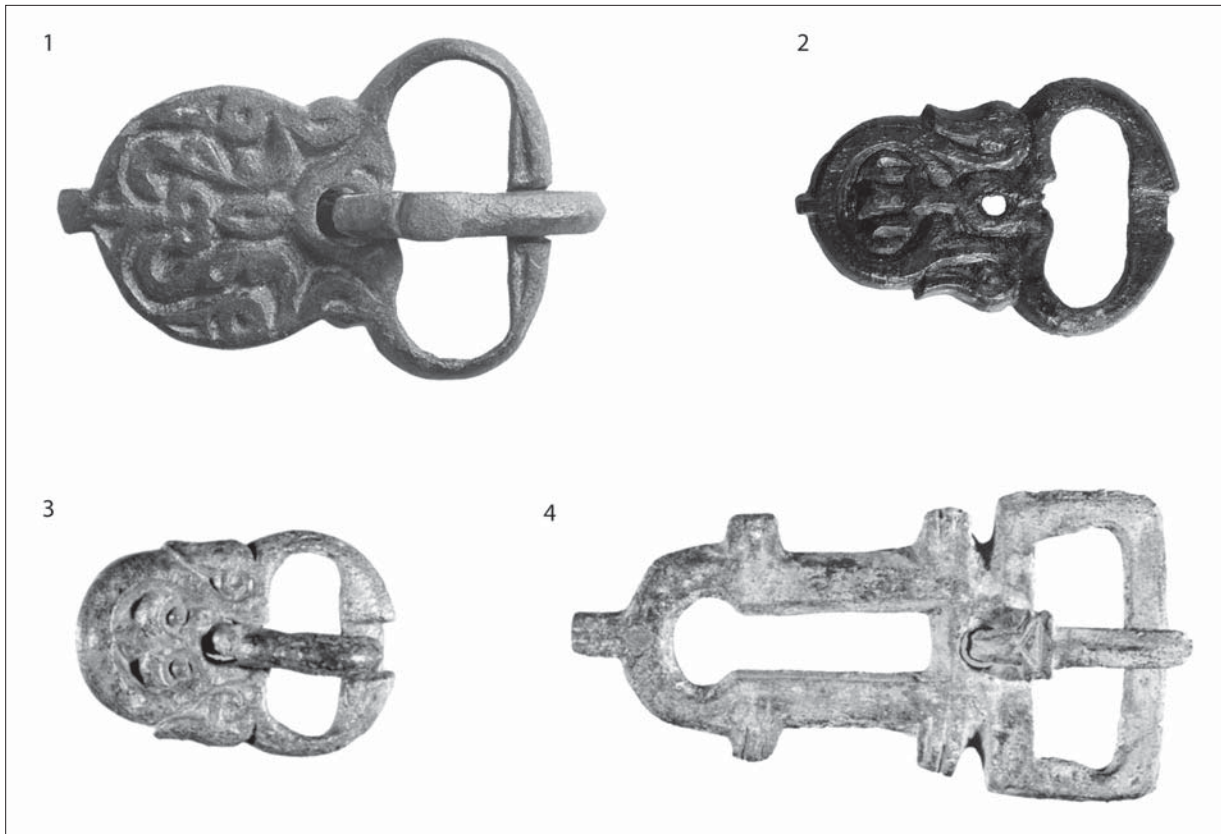


Fig. 7. Byzantine bronze buckles documented in Lombardy: 1. Fornovo San Giovanni; 2. Calvisano–Santi di Sopra (after DE MARCHI 2012, pl. 3b–3c, 706); 3–4. Verona–Corte Sant’Elena (after LA ROCCA 1989a, fig. 31, 161)

(VA)⁴¹ – reproduces the lily motif of Byzantine-style buckles with pierced plate, such as that found in Castel Trosino (grave 90: Fig. 9.2).⁴²

The damascened strap end comes from the same burial that also yielded the silver strap end with monograms, indicating the assimilation – in a settlement well served by major communication routes – of traditional Mediterranean-Byzantine decorative motifs and objects. This factor directs us to workshops that produced items for a cultured clientele integrated in the formal stylistic designs of the time, such as *Crypta Balbi* in Rome.⁴³

Sea dragons

The sheath of the *seax* (grave 128) from Goito (MN), found among military grave goods dating from the 6th or 7th century, was adorned with plates shaped like sea dragons (Fig. 10.1).⁴⁴ The dragon with coiled tail, sharp talons and punched anatomical details, recalls the hippocamps of the gilded bronze-copper plates of the parade shield bosses from Trezzo (grave 3: Fig. 10.2), belonging to weapons buried with a youth approximately 11–12 years old, dating from between the 6th and 7th centuries, and from Boffalora d’Adda (Fig. 10.3).⁴⁵ Sea dragons, dolphins, hippocamps and sea-

⁴¹ DE MARCHI–MARIOTTI–MIAZZO 2004, pl. 7b, 147.

⁴² PAROLI 1995a, 225, figs 175; PAROLI 2001, 273; PAROLI–RICCI 2005, 66–70.

⁴³ PAROLI 2001, 278; RICCI 2001a, 82–83.

⁴⁴ DE MARCHI 1994, 49–53, pl. X, figs. 1–3.

⁴⁵ MALLEGNI 1986, 275; ROFFIA–SESINO 1986, 165, pl. 16.1a, 120; CERESA MORI 1987, 195–197.

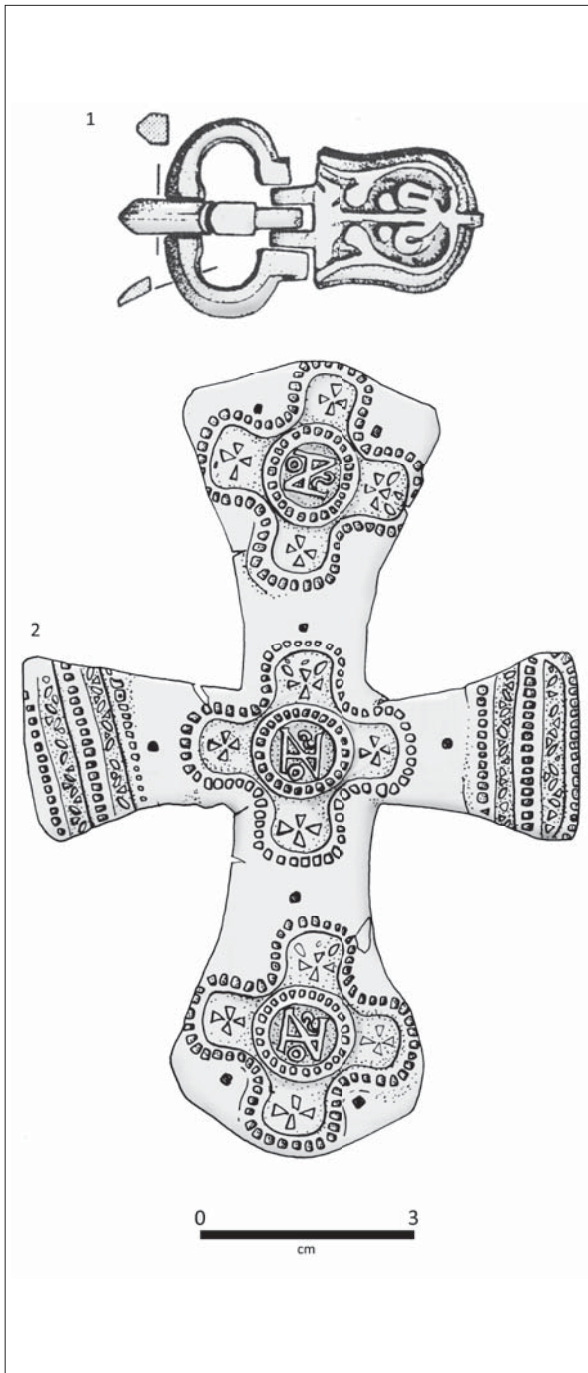


Fig. 8. 1. Buckle with mobile silvered bronze plate, grave 1, Offanengo (1), (after DE MARCHI 1988b, pl. 2, fig. 16, modified); 2. central monogram of gold cross, grave 2, Trezzo (after ROFFIA–SESINO 1986, pl. 13.8, 117, modified).

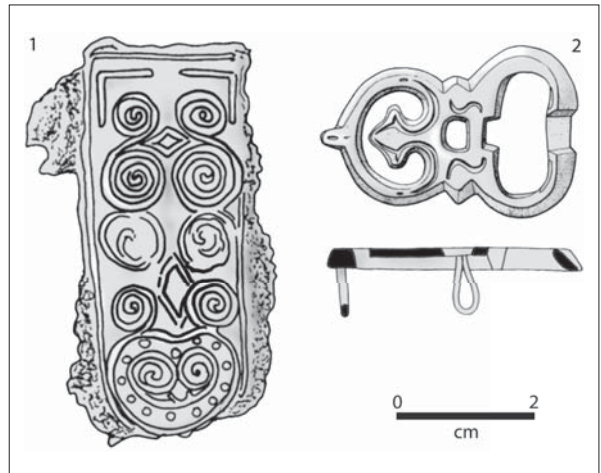


Fig. 9. 1. Damascened iron strap end, grave 13, Arsago Seprio (after DE MARCHI–MARIOTTI–MIAZZO 2004, pl. 7b, 147, modified); 2. silver buckle with lily motif in perforated plate, grave 90, Castel Trosino (after PAROLI 1995, fig. 175, 225, modified)

lions, common in Late Roman mosaics, inspire the Late Antique *militaria* and the Merovingian brooches from the 6th and 7th centuries.⁴⁶ The ‘migration of symbols’ that characterizes these transitional centuries is well illustrated by the border of a bronze buckle from Yverdon (Fig. 10.4), decorated with sea dragons, a Christian kantharos and the Germanic name of the owner *Willimer*, dated to the second half of the 6th century.⁴⁷

Eagle and hunting scenes

The plate (gilded copper) from the Boffalora d’Adda shield is shaped like an eagle with open wings (Fig. 11.1).⁴⁸ An engraved eagle, surmounted by a Greek monogram (Constantine) adorns the setting of a gold signet ring (Fig. 11.2) found in a double grave at Verona-Corte Sant’Elena dated to the 6th–7th century – the same burial also yielded two Byzantine bronze buckles⁴⁹ – identical to the one with the monogram (*COSMA*), made in Byzantine

⁴⁶ MARTIN 2000, 237–239; PÉRIN 2000, 255–257; PÉRIN 2008, 513–515.

⁴⁷ MOOSBRUGGER LEU 1967, fig. 31.

⁴⁸ DE MARCHI 2007b, 238.

⁴⁹ LA ROCCA 1989a, 54–55, fig. 31, 161.

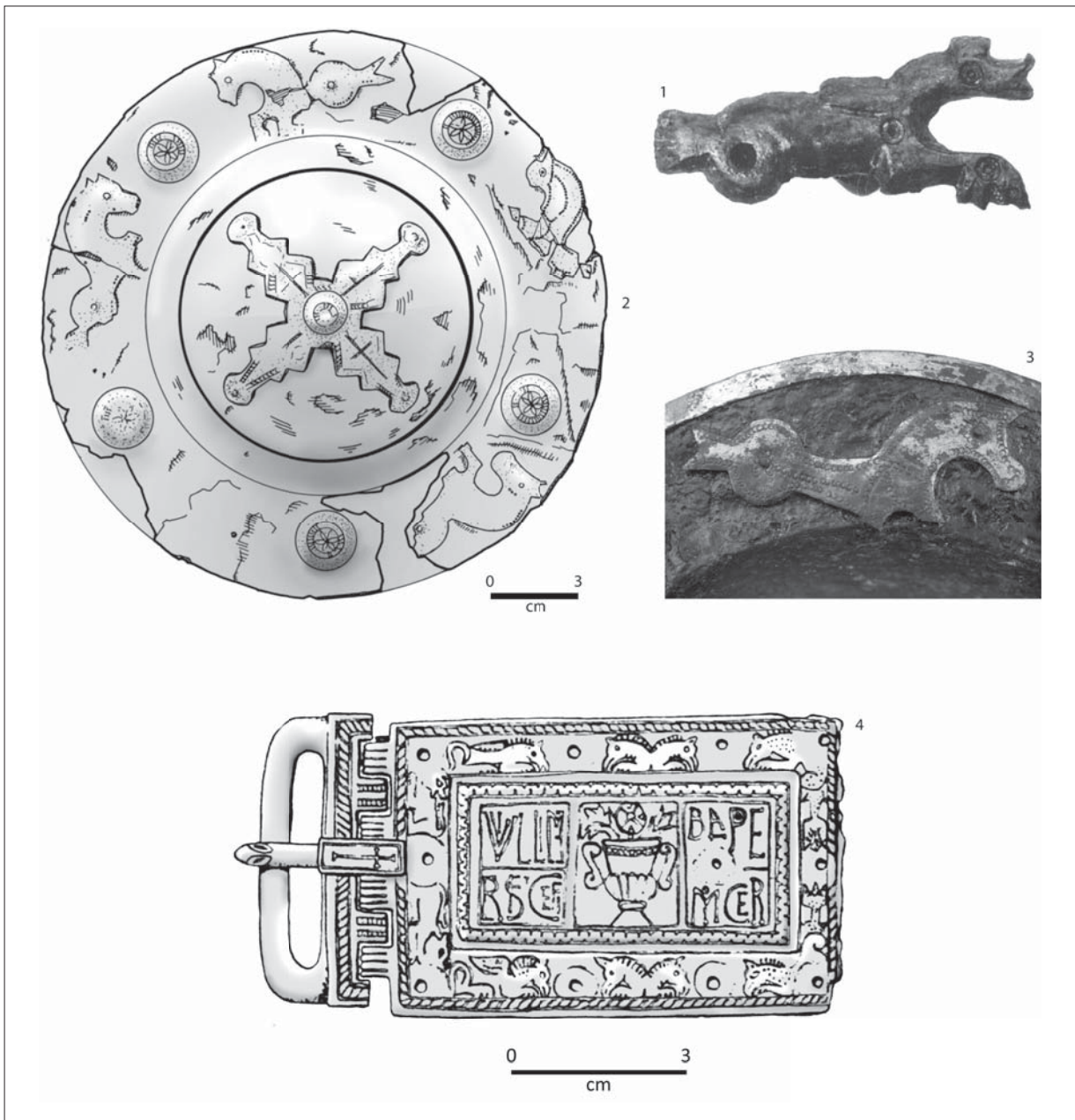


Fig. 10. 1. Small decorative plate, grave 128, Goito (after DE MARCHI 1994, pl. X, fig. 1, 67, modified); 2–3. gilded bronze-sheet bordures with decorative animal motifs: 2. grave 3, Trezzo (after ROFFIA–SESINO 1986, pl. 16.1a, 120, modified), 3. Boffalora d’Adda (after DE MARCHI 2007b, sheet 4.20a, 238, modified); 4. decorated bronze buckle (after MOOSBRUGGER LEU 1967, fig. 31, modified)

workshops between the 6th and 7th centuries, and now part of the Dumbarton Oaks Collection in Washington DC.⁵⁰

Eagles with lowered wings adorn the medallions of the gold strap ends (stamped) of the composite trimmings from Trezzo (grave 1: Fig. 11.3),⁵¹ from a rich burial of armed warriors with

⁵⁰ CUTTLER–NESBIT 1986, 47–48.

⁵¹ WERNER 1974, 121–132; ROFFIA–SESINO 1986, 17–19, fig. 2, 19.



Fig. 11. 1. Ornamental plate from shield, Boffalora d'Adda (after DE MARCHI 2007b, sheet 4.20b, 238, modified); 2. gold ring with engraved eagle with spread wings surmounted by monogram from Verona–Corte Sant'Elena (after LA ROCCA 1989a, 161, modified); 3. gold belt trimming, grave 1, Trezzo (after ROFFIA–SESINO 1986, pl. 4.4a, 108, modified); 4. decorated silver-sheet strap end, grave 8, Arsago Seprio, 4a. front and 4b. back (after DE MARCHI 1989, pl. LX, modified)

signet ring, dating from the last decades of the 6th century to the early years of the 7th, and from the contemporary burial in Nocera Umbra (grave 1); the two objects are identical and of 'provincial' production.⁵² Similar eagles are stamped on the crosses from Civezzano (TN) – a 'princely' grave dated around 600 – and Fornovo San Giovanni (BG) – a cemetery used from the time of the conquest of the Italian peninsula to the late 7th century, with horsemen buried alongside their horses.⁵³

⁵² VON HESSEN 1986, 165; RUPP 1997, 3–5, pl. 1–4.

⁵³ DE MARCHI 1988a, 93–98.

The silver-foil strap end (grave 8) from Arsago Seprio (VA) is a unique piece (Fig. 11.4). A hunting scene is engraved and punched on the back, depicting a dog, wearing a collar, chasing a hare (Fig. 11.4b).⁵⁴ The monogram, which interrupts the chase, unravels into a Latin name (*BUITALIANUS*).⁵⁵ The theme of the hunt, very widespread in the Roman and Mediterranean world, has a parallel in the mosaics of the church of Saint Christopher in Qabr Ibrāhīm (Nubia), built in the second half of the 6th century.⁵⁶ An embossed 'winged Victory' supporting a Greek monogram appears on the opposite side of the Arsago Seprio strap end (Fig. 11.4a). The Arsago burial – pillaged in ancient times and identifiable as belonging to a nobleman – dates from the first half of the 7th century.⁵⁷

Architecture

The comb with fretworked handle reproducing a colonnade with arches is Byzantine Christian (5th–6th century) and was the sole grave good in a burial in Montichiari (grave 164: Fig. 12.1).⁵⁸ It is composed of several slats, secured by pins or slotted in, and was made using a technique that required several stages and tools suitable for making tiny decorations (bow-drill, lathes, perforators, punches, files). The artefact has parallels with a comb from the cemetery of Castel Trosino (grave 49: Fig. 12.2) – despite rougher workmanship compared to the one examined – with an engraved side handle with two blind arches on one side supported by the same number of columns at one end and four blind arches rotated 45 degrees with respect to the previous ones supported by four columns.⁵⁹

The decorative module on the handle of the comb from Montichiari is quite interesting and can be compared to simple architectural structures, like a building with a front portico reproduced in a Carthaginian mosaic (Fig. 12.3), but also to a pierced tablet, depicting eight arches supported by 6 columns resting on a platform, on display at the British Museum of London.⁶⁰ The ornamental motif on the upper part of the grip shows parallels with the central mounting strip of a specimen with differentiated double rows of teeth from Mombello (AL),⁶¹ the facing of what was probably a reliquary box (Fig. 12.4) found when the church in Centallo (CN) was excavated,⁶² but with much more even workmanship and a double concentric semicircle on the sides of the die dots; the flat handle of a singled-sided comb from the Piazza Medaglie d'Oro cemetery (grave 2) in Nocera Umbra.⁶³ The long slats of the combs with a case/grip in Treviso–Via dei Mille (grave 6), which has two differentiated sets of teeth in sequence and not opposite each other;⁶⁴ the Piedmont finding of Benevagienna (CN), similar to it in type and decoration; and the comb with a grip in Acqui Terme (grave 2).⁶⁵

All of these artefacts can be dated to the 7th century, since they are the same type.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that this type of decoration – along with the double-ended skein, of which our undulated ribbon is a part – is well documented in areas north of the Alps on various types of combs dated between the late 4th – early 5th century and the end of the 8th century.⁶⁷ The

⁵⁴ DE MARCHI 1989, 119–136, pl. LX; SCHULZE-DÖRRLAMM 2009, 307–308, fig. 122, 307.

⁵⁵ TOBIAS 2011, 151–188, fig. 2.9.

⁵⁶ DONCEEL-VOUTE 1988, figs. 405–407.

⁵⁷ DE MARCHI 2012, 707.

⁵⁸ DE MARCHI 2007c, 67–69; DE MARCHI 2009, 468–469; DE VINGO 2009, 103.

⁵⁹ PAROLI-RICCI 2005, pl. 54.59; DE VINGO 2009, 103.

⁶⁰ DE MARCHI 2012, 707.

⁶¹ GIOSTRA 2007b, 68.

⁶² PEJRANI BARICCO 2007, 102; DE VINGO 2009, 104.

⁶³ PROFUMO 1995, 334–335; BONOMI PONZI-VON HESSEN-PROFUMO 1997, 189.

⁶⁴ POSSENTI 1999, 86.

⁶⁵ MICHELETTO 2001, 70–71, pl. 4b.

⁶⁶ CROSETTO 1987, 196–197, pls. LXIX.1–LXXI.a.

⁶⁷ SCHULZE-DÖRRLAMM 2002, 302–309.

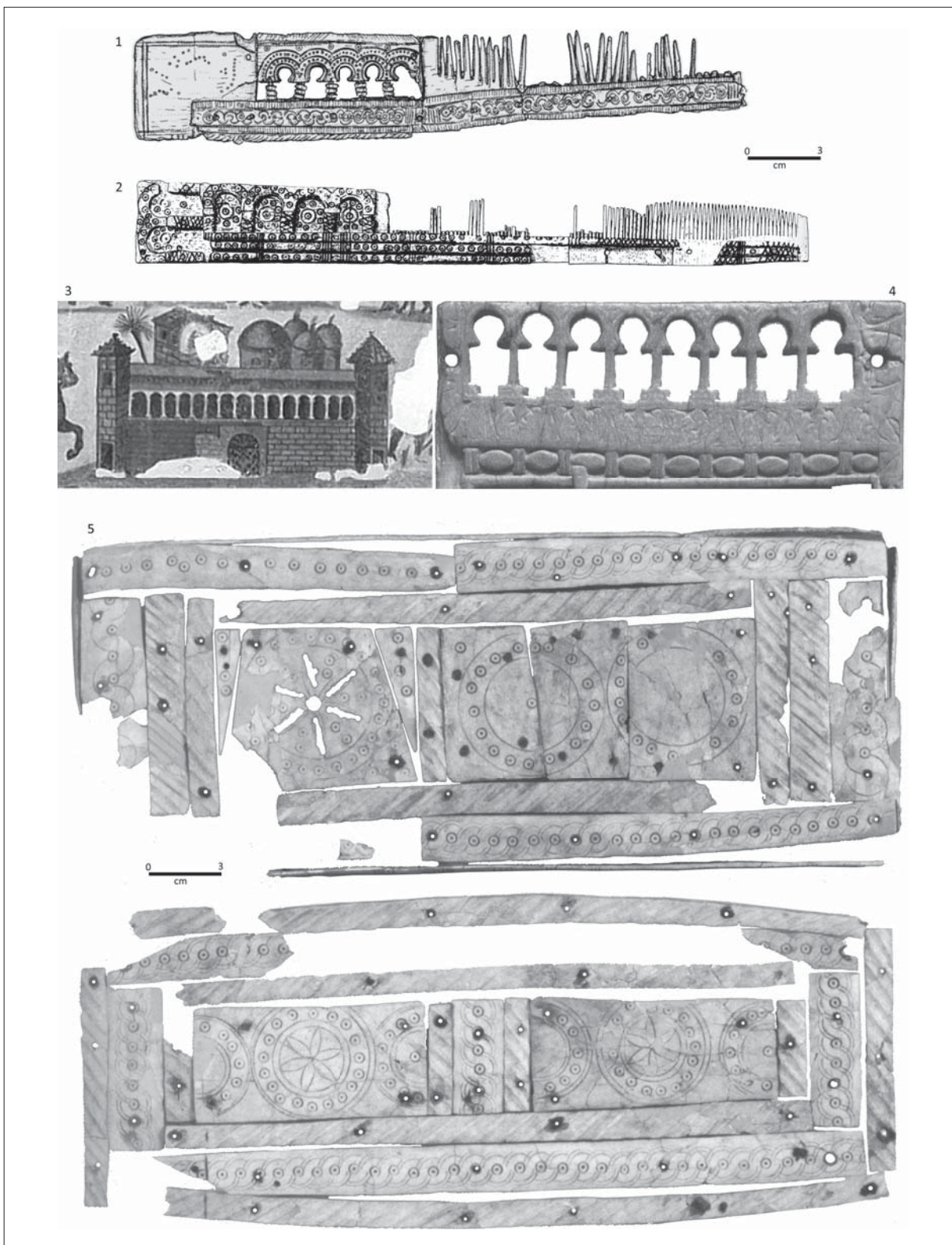


Fig. 12. 1–2. Decorated bone combs: 1. grave 164, Montichiari (after DE MARCHI 2007c, 69, modified), 2. grave 49, Castel Trosino (after PAROLI-RICCI 2005, pl. 54.2, modified); 3–4. details of Carthaginian mosaic and a perforated ivory tablet (after DE MARCHI 2012, pl. 5b–5c, 706, modified); 5. hartshorn-faced plates, Centallo (after PEJRANI BARICCO 2007, 102, modified)

sophisticated decorative work on a type that was usually unadorned may reflect the Langobards' predilection for decorated combs.⁶⁸

Architectural structures are often featured in Christian scenes, such as the ivory pyx found in Nocera Umbra (grave 23: Fig. 13.1), depicting *Daniel in the Lion's Den* against a background of arches (Fig. 13.2), from a site dating from between the end of the 6th century and the beginning of the 7th, which may have been made in the *Crypta Balbi* workshops where these kind of artefacts were produced.⁶⁹ The Montichiari comb may have been purchased and/or commissioned from an eastern workshop, but Brescia and its territory have a high concentration of good-quality objects, such as the Leno–San Giovanni crosses.⁷⁰ Brescia (the Roman Brixium), a crossroads between the central Po Valley and the Alpine valleys and a longstanding bishopric with well-established relations with Aquileia and the regions of the Upper Adriatic, may have been both a centre of production and a market for sumptuary goods.⁷¹

The human figure

Human figures appear on a cross from Leno (Fig. 14.1), a shield from Trezzo (Fig. 14.2), and strap ends from Arsago Seprio (Fig. 14.3) and Fara Olivana (Fig. 14.4). The Trezzo shield has frontal views of standing warriors, dressed in armour and helmet, and armed with shield and spear, engraved on the two arms of the cross (grave 5), which underscore the military component in particular.⁷²

On the Leno–Località Cimitero cross (stamped thin metal foil), the 'churchman' wearing a tunic and stole, depicted standing (his feet shown in profile), framed by an arch supported by columns with cruciform capitals (Fig. 14.1), is inspired by the Byzantine iconographic tradition, the figures of bishops in the mosaics of San Vitale in Ravenna, or the praying figures and saints of Coptic stele and Byzantine chalices, to give just a few examples. However, the clean-shaven faces, with short hair standing on end, and exaggerated features, are very similar to those of the locally produced crosses found in Cernago, Calvisano and Rodano.⁷³

The 'winged Victory' of the Arsago Seprio strap end (Fig. 14.3) recalls the stamp pattern from Antalya (Antiochia), but simplified like the figure of the 'churchman' on the Leno cross.⁷⁴ The subject, elegance and softness of the stamped decoration of the Fara Olivana cross, featuring dancing nude figures holding a cloth, beaten on a piece of metal cut out of what was originally a larger sheet, suggests that it may have been made in Syria or Constantinople.⁷⁵ Lastly, the Trezzo signet rings (grave 2: Fig. 15.1–3), whose purpose and meaning have been the subject of much debate,⁷⁶ may have an evocative parallel, in a different context, with Byzantine rings with a setting surmounted by a *Chrismon* and surrounded by an inscription – probably name and office covered with gold, silver or silvered lead – like the one in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection in Washington DC (Fig. 15.4).⁷⁷

⁶⁸ GIOSTRA 2007b, 68.

⁶⁹ RICCI 2001b, 333–334; RUPP 2005, 35–38, pls 41.11–11a, 223; RUPP 2008, 189–190, fig. 13, 192.

⁷⁰ DE MARCHI 2006, 60–81; GIOSTRA 2010, 129–130.

⁷¹ DE MARCHI 2012, 707.

⁷² ROFFIA–SESINO 1986, pl. 40.1a, 144.

⁷³ PERONI 1967, 131–132, pl. XXIV; DE MARCHI 1988a, pl. XLII/4.1; DE MARCHI 2000, pl. II.8, 10; DE MARCHI 2007b, 241; GIOSTRA 2010, 134.

⁷⁴ DE MARCHI 1989, pl. LXI; SCHULZE-DÖRLAMM 2009, 307, fig. 122.

⁷⁵ FORTUNATI 2014, 152–159.

⁷⁶ LUSUARDI SIENA 2004, 122–129; LUSUARDI SIENA 2006a; SANNAZARO 2006.

⁷⁷ CUTLER NESBIT 1986, 47.

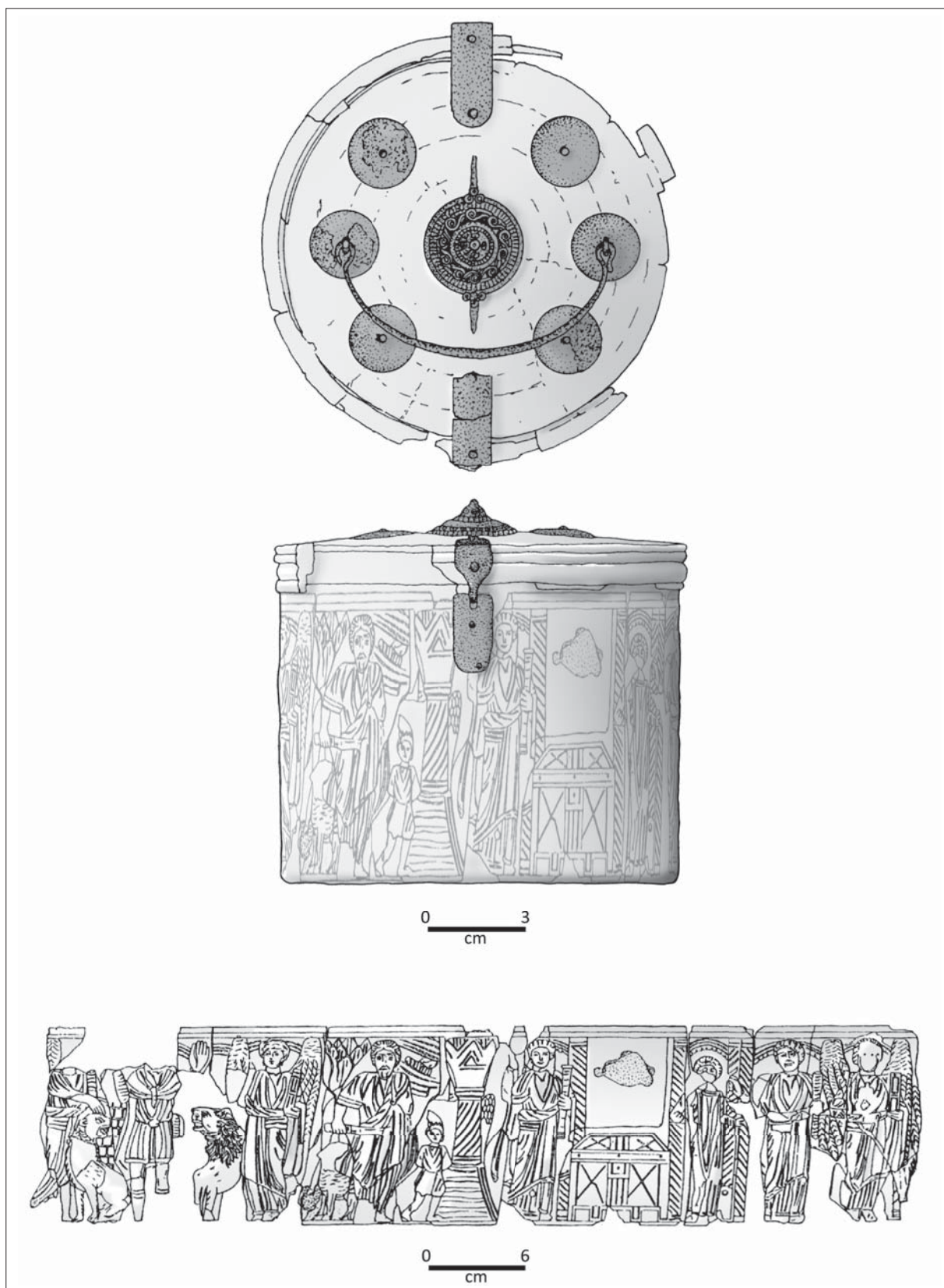


Fig. 13. 1. Elephant ivory pyxis, grave 23, Nocera Umbra; 2. graphic reproduction of the decorative part (after Rupp 2008, fig. 41, 223, modified)



Fig. 14. 1. Detail of upper arm of gold cross, Leno–Località Cimitero (after VON HESSEN 1974, modified);
 2. detail of the two arms, shaped and opposing, of the shield gilded copper ‘cross’ plate, grave 5, Trezzo
 (after ROFFIA–SESINO 1986, pl. 40.1a, 144, modified);
 3. front of strap end, grave 8, Arsago Seprio (after DE MARCHI 1989, pl. LXI, modified);
 4. stamp pattern (after SCHULZE–DÖRLAMM 2009, pl. 122, 307, modified)

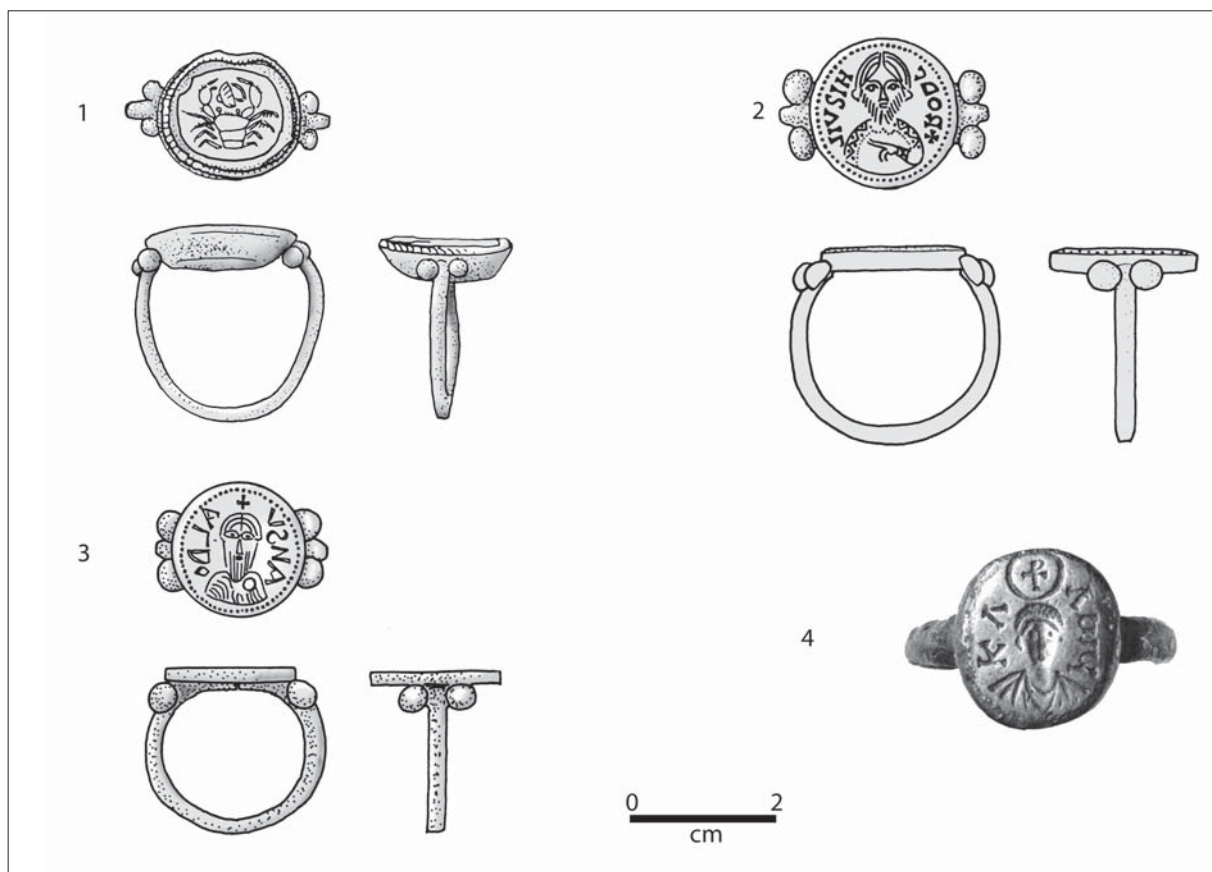


Fig. 15. 1–3. Gold signet rings, graves 1, 2, and 4, Trezzo (after ROFFIA–SESINO 1986, pl. 5.7, 109, 13.9, 117, 31.12, 135, modified); 4. gold Byzantine ring, Dumbarton Oaks Collection (after CUTLER–NESBIT 1986, 47, modified)

TRADITIONAL PANNONIAN POTTERY: DECORATIVE PATTERNS AND THE LATE ROMAN AND MIDDLE EASTERN TRADITION

In terms of shape and ‘stamped’ and ‘stralucido’ decoration – bundles of reticulate or intersecting lines forming motifs that recall woven wicker in some cases – the ceramic tableware found in many Langobard burials in northern Italy is inspired by the wheel-thrown pottery made in the Danubian area between the 4th and 5th centuries, and the ornamental tradition that developed particularly during the early part of the successive one in Bohemia, Moravia and southern Austria, which features decorative schemes with intersecting lines, lattices and triangles.⁷⁸

The decorative motifs with ‘branches’ and other plant motifs may derive from the decorations featured on Roman pottery, e.g. the 2nd-century loom weights decorated with stylized plant motifs combined with geometric patterns, and on other terracotta artefacts found in the Gothic village of Monte Barro, one of which was adorned with what may have been palm fronds arranged in a cross, and another with geometric stamps similar to those of Langobard pottery.⁷⁹

Comparison with the symbolic decorations of Syrian-Palestinian oil-lamps appears to show a possible Mediterranean and Middle Eastern influence, made probable by the fact that Langobard

⁷⁸ WERNER 1962, 55–59; FRIESINGER–KERCHLER 1981, 193–266; VITALI 1999, 203–204; DE MARCHI 2007a, 286–287; DROBERJAR 2008, 238–243; TEJRAL 2008a, 268–270; TEJRAL 2008b, 60–66.

⁷⁹ LA ROCCA 1989b, 139; DE MARCHI 1991, 123–124, pl. LXV.6; UBOLDI 2001, 199–201, pl. LVI.20–21.

warriors fought alongside the Byzantines in the eastern and Italian regions during the Gothic War in the first half of the 6th century.⁸⁰ The 'sprig', 'interwoven' and 'leaf' motifs may confirm the transformation into decoration of the imprint of fabric weaves or the straw used in hand modelling to smooth and polish the surfaces.⁸¹ The 'stamped' decoration, on the other hand, may derive from the Roman and Late Roman pottery tradition, with possible connections with prehistoric and proto-historic artefacts, with which many parallels exist.⁸²

A shared cultural bond unites pottery and Late Roman metal and bone artefacts, which are often decorated with abstract naturalistic motifs. The movements of troops and migrations of people during Late Antiquity allowed the extremely wide circulation of brooches, buckles, rings, *armillae*, combs and, more in general, components of military dress, throughout the entire empire and the regions nearest its borders.⁸³ These areas became the meeting point of different traditions due to both trade and the presence of soldiers of diverse ethnic and cultural origin. The process intensified with the controlled posting of Germanic groups in the areas under imperial political control, repeating the same strategy adopted in 406, when bands of Alemanni crossed the border formed by the Rhine and the Danube.⁸⁴

The decorative motifs of Langobard pottery offer a wide array of geometric patterns, but also plant and floral subjects. In the first case, the most popular are rectangles, rhombuses and various geometric shapes, in the second melon seeds, leaves and ovals – filled with two or more series of checked or lattice-filled boxes, arranged in more or less regular, closely spaced lines. Variations on these basic shapes include crosses, circles filled with reticulate or lattice patterns, flower-like circles, swirls, zigzags, intersecting broken lines, pincers, and fragmentary fringe pendants (Fig. 16).⁸⁵

Only one example, found at Brescia–Santa Giulia, represents a stylized human figure, with parallels in the human mask depicted on the gilded bronze horse harness from Veszékény (Hungary) dating from the first half of the 6th century.⁸⁶ The fragment from Vicenza–San Biagio with stamped decoration, featuring a series of frontal busts wearing very elaborate garments and with identical bearded faces, is the most explicit human depiction on traditional Langobard pottery.⁸⁷ These portraits are representative of the Langobard tradition whereby all freemen wore their hair, beard and moustache long, like the Frankish *reges crinitos*, as a mark of nobility and appurtenance to a Germanic group.⁸⁸ Stamps in 'star', 'multi-petal flower', quadrangular and rectangular shapes are also attested on traditional single-handled Rhaetian goblets, found principally in the central Alpine area and dating from the Iron Age to the 4th century.⁸⁹

The single-handled goblet – of unknown origin, housed in the Archaeological Museum in Bergamo – decorated with a band of reticulated rectangles, flanked by two others with abstract motifs may constitute an intermediate stage between prehistoric, proto-historic and Late Ancient pottery.⁹⁰ Decorative motifs present in pre-Roman culture re-emerged during Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, as has been ascertained also on other categories of artefacts, particularly in peripheral areas or those with a strong indigenous substrate.⁹¹

⁸⁰ MODRZEWSKA 1988, pls. XXXIII, XXXIC, XXXVII.6, XXIX.6, fig. 2c; BERTOLOTTI–MURIALDO–PARODI 2001, 457–461.

⁸¹ VON HESSEN 1968, pl. 21.75; LAVAZZA–VITALI 1994, 24; VITALI 1999, 203–206, pls LXXXV–LXXXVI, 601–602.

⁸² TASSINARI–VITALI 1998, 253–256; ONGARO 1999, 47–49, pls. XV–XVII, 531–533; VITALI 1999, 203–204.

⁸³ HASELOFF 1989, 12–14, figs. 1–3; BUORA 2002, 183–186.

⁸⁴ BROGIOLO–POSSENTI 2001, 269; DE VINGO 2010a, 17–20.

⁸⁵ DE MARCHI 2007a, 285.

⁸⁶ BÓNA 1990, 62–63, I.55d, 63.

⁸⁷ VITALI 1999, 205–206; SANNAZARO 2003, 40–45; LUSUARDI SIENA 2004, 120–121; DE MARCHI 2006, 34; POSSENTI 2007, 75.

⁸⁸ GIOSTRA 2007a, 322; DE MARCHI 2007a, 285.

⁸⁹ POGGIANI KELLER 1992, 96–97, fig. 28; DELLA PORTA–SPREDDA–TASSINARI 1998, 208, pls. CXXXIX.4–5, XLVIII.1, 5–7, XLIX.1, 6–8, fig. 3b.

⁹⁰ VON HESSEN 1968, pl. XV.3.

⁹¹ DE MARCHI 1997, 406, fig. 9, 11–12.



Fig. 16. Traditional Pannonian pottery from Langobard areas: 1. S. Martino Siccomario, 2. Carpianello, 3. Lagozza di Besnate, 4. unknown origin (after DE MARCHI 2007a, 296, modified)

During the Langobard period, all kinds of materials were adorned with geometric decorations, often small and made using the most diverse techniques. A revealing parallel, also in terms of the chronological continuity of the motifs, can be drawn between the ‘honeycomb’ decoration of the damascened iron belt trimmings from Povegliano, dating from the late 7th century, and the stamped designs on the jugs from Testona, Como, Borgo Vercelli and Magenta, or the leaf motif on the reinforcement of the bronze scabbard from Goito (grave 128) and the arms of the cross of the jug found in the Gothic village of Monte Barro.⁹²

The transition from the second half of the 5th century to the first half of the 6th century has not been completely defined and it is still considered a prolonged intermediate stage during which ancient relationships, types, functions and technology changed at varying speed and from area to area.⁹³ A singular mixture of decorative motifs is documented in the case of Danubian Gepidan-Langobard pottery, which often combines them with geometric elements of naturalistic derivation borrowed from the Late Roman manufacturing tradition.⁹⁴

GOLD EARRINGS: A VERY WIDESPREAD FORM OF JEWELLERY

In the burials examined (rural cemeteries, mausoleums, individual graves or worship complexes) two distinct types of jewellery were identified: ‘mobile pendant’ earrings and ‘basket’ earrings. A pair of the first type was found in one of the graves (grave 11: Fig. 17.1) of the church of San Zeno in Campione.⁹⁵ The hanging ring style, which has parallels with the earrings from Senise and other sites in Lucania, suggests they date from the second half of the 7th century.⁹⁶ The opulence of the pendant and the decidedly Byzantine style of the entire composition point to a cultural milieu sensitive to the ‘aristocratic fashions’ of Mediterranean jewellery, according to what it has been possible to deduce from the production techniques used.⁹⁷

On the basis of this observation, it is very interesting to compare the gold earrings adorned with pseudo-baskets and gold foil and pearl pendants found in the lavish women’s burial in Civezzano (TN), from a site dating from the early decades of the 7th century. Such a comparison confirms the persistence of the Byzantine cultural tradition even in Alpine and Subalpine areas, with formal variations and developments and trade relations between the eastern and northern areas of Italy and the central-southern ones, which were particularly well developed in the regions near the borders and those situated along important communication routes.⁹⁸

Few examples of ‘basket’ earrings (Fig. 17.2–5) are documented in Lombardy, where we find only those belonging to group 2, type 2b with ‘perforated hemispherical baskets’ and gold and silver settings – all the examples are from the central-western sector of the region (Pavia–Vecchio Ospedale, Varese–Ligurno, Varese–Sesto Calende, Como, Como–Laino d’Intelvi, Milano–Varedo) – and appear to have been produced over a rather long time span, from 575 to 650.⁹⁹

Due to their exceptionally wide distribution, the diversity of the type and the coexistence of series of different value, depending on whether they were made from gold or silver, ‘basket’ earrings are particularly suitable for studying the circulation and marketing of the artefacts produced by the

⁹² VON HESSEN 1968, pls. 7.69, 9.11, 24.32–33, 25.72; LA ROCCA 1989a, pl. XXVIII.2, 4–5; MENOTTI 1994, fig. 8b; DE MARCHI 2001, pl. LVI.19.

⁹³ BROGIOLO–GELICHI 1996, 139–145.

⁹⁴ DE MARCHI 2007a, 281.

⁹⁵ BLOCKLEY–CAIMI–CAPORUSSO–CATTANEO–DE MARCHI–MIAZZO 2004, 91–92; BLOCKLEY–CAIMI–CAPORUSSO–CATTANEO–DE MARCHI–MIAZZO–PORTA–RAVEDONI 2005, 51.

⁹⁶ CORRADO 2001, 236–242.

⁹⁷ BLOCKLEY–CAIMI–CAPORUSSO–CATTANEO–DE MARCHI–MIAZZO–PORTA–RAVEDONI 2005, 70–73.

⁹⁸ LUSUARDI SIENA–GIOSTRA–DE MARCHI 2002, 227–228; CIURLETTI 2004, 761; BLOCKLEY–CAIMI–CAPORUSSO–CATTANEO–DE MARCHI–MIAZZO–PORTA–RAVEDONI 2005, 52; TERZER 2005, 298–299.

⁹⁹ POSSENTI 1994, 39–41; VON HESSEN 2000, 166–168.



Fig. 17. 1. Pair of gold earrings, grave 11, church of S. Zeno (after BLOCKLEY-CAIMI-CAPORUSSO-CATTANEO-DE MARCHI-MIAZZO 2004, fig. 22, 107, modified); 2-5. earrings with 'perforated hemispherical baskets', type 2b documented in Lombardy (after POSSENTI 1994, pl. XIV.1-2, XIX.1-2, XX.1-2, 5, XXI.1-2, modified)

workshops. The geographic distribution of the various types has made it possible to reconstruct the organization of the manufacturing workshops, whose distribution must have been proportionate to the quality of the materials used and the area of the region in which the workshops were located.¹⁰⁰ The type 2 gold ones in particular – accounting for all the finds in Lombardy with the sole exception of the Varese–Ligurno pair, in silver – are fairly standardized models with superregional distribution. Consequently, we can find parallels between specimens from distant sites, for which it is possible to surmise their production in workshops capable of long-distance deliveries, which covered both Byzantine and Langobard areas.¹⁰¹

BRONZE WARE

The presence of bronze vessels is little documented in Lombardy – rather unusually, considering their diffusion throughout the *Regnum Langobardorum Maior* – with the exception of Trezzo, where a container for liquids made from metal sheet was found above the right femur of the deceased in a single burial (grave 13), accompanied by an overturned bronze basin placed on the skeleton's ankles.¹⁰² The artefact (Fig. 18) belongs to *Blechkannen* group II, type 3, of which examples have been found both in Italy – Telfs in the Tyrol, Spilamberto in the province of Modena, in a burial with a body of still unknown gender, but probably female, Montepagano in Marche, Porto Torres in Sardinia – and in Germany (Täbingen and Niederstotzingen) and in the shipwreck at Yassi Ada in Turkey.¹⁰³

In terms of morphology and decorative scheme, another bronze vessel, a basin from Trezzo (Fig. 19), can be assimilated with the 'Werner B1' form and thus fits into a class of vessels that was very widespread in Italy, Europe (Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Ukraine, Hungary, Britain) and Africa.¹⁰⁴ The Trezzo basin, along with the entire 'Werner B1' series, belongs to the group of 'Coptic' vessels, for which the possibility of Egyptian production has not yet been confirmed – referring also to the flourishing local mining industry, or the identification of Italian production of Byzantine models in artisans' workshops in southern Italy.¹⁰⁵

CONCLUSIONS

A preliminary observation can be made regarding the continuity of Late Antique and Early Christian decorative motifs on 6th- and 7th-century artefacts. This iconography only started to be used by the nobility and royal officials during the period following the first stage of Langobard settlement. The burial sites, in both the northern and the central-southern regions of Italy, reveal how the process of sociocultural assimilation was already underway around 600, by which time the monarchy had consolidated its position. During this period requirements of state and status, deriving from the needs of 'international' politics (Pope, Empire and Transalpine kingdoms), led the members of the Roman-Germanic ruling class to adopt objects and symbols that made it as similar as possible to their natural direct interlocutors. On the basis of the existing finds, it seems these artefacts only rarely displayed the high technical and stylistic quality of contemporary Byzantine jewellery.¹⁰⁶

We are looking at 'provincial' production, concentrated in the cities or *castra*, which circulated throughout the Italian peninsula, as attested by parallels between the Stabio cross and the sheath

¹⁰⁰ POSSENTI 1994, 51–53.

¹⁰¹ PAROLI 2001, 270.

¹⁰² BOLLA 2012, 288; CASTOLDI 2012, 295.

¹⁰³ PAULSEN 1967, 27–29, pl. 92; MOSER 1970, 144; BOLLA 1989, 110; DE VINGO 2010b, 52; KOKKOTIDIS 2004, 737–739.

¹⁰⁴ CASTOLDI 2012, 304–307.

¹⁰⁵ VIDA 2010, 372–376; CASTOLDI 2012, 299–301.

¹⁰⁶ PAROLI 2001, 296–297.

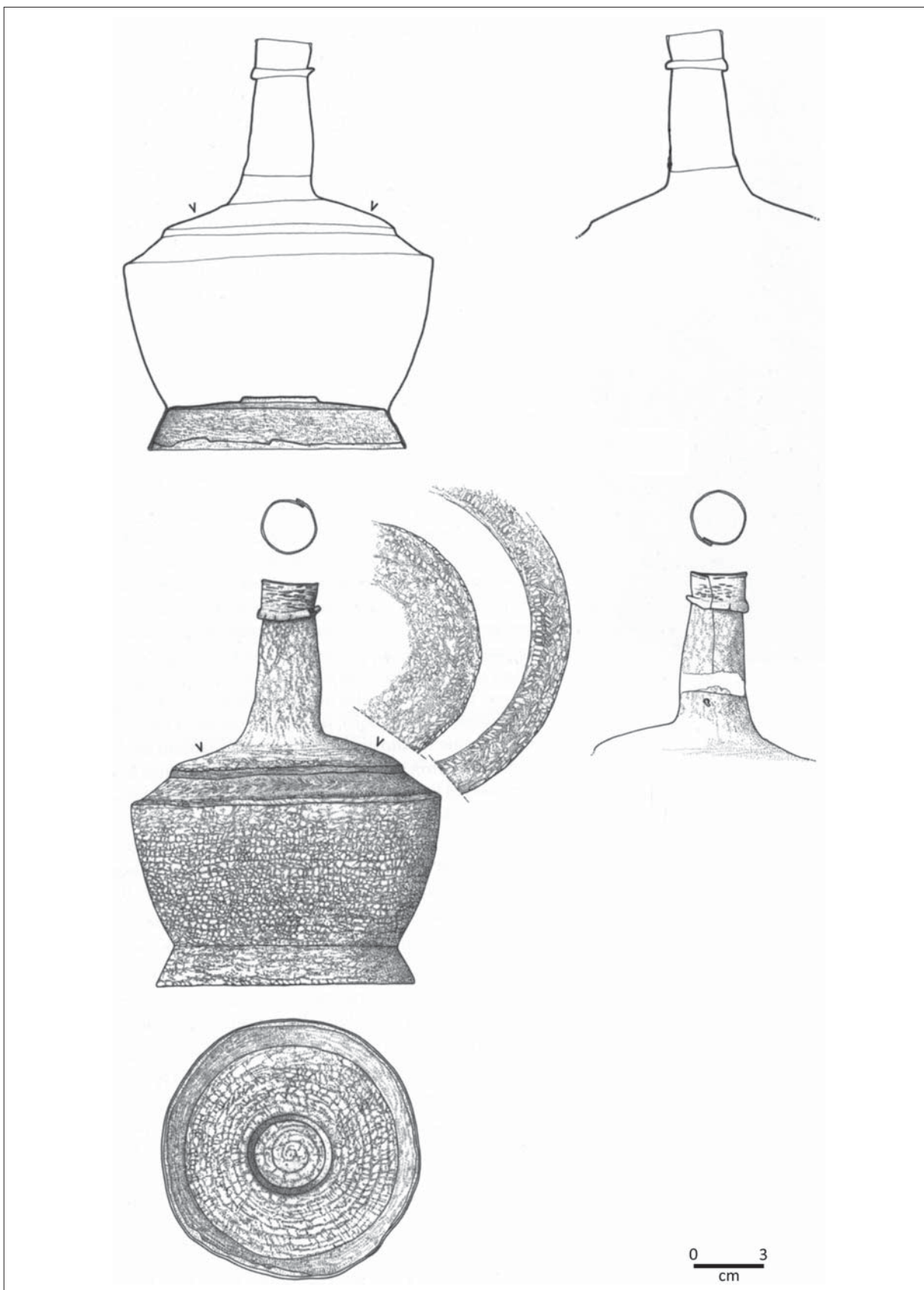


Fig. 18. Blechkanne type bronze container, grave 13, Trezzo cemetery (after BOLLA 2012, fig. 52, 289, modified)



Fig. 19. Werner B1 class bronze basin, grave 13, Trezzo cemetery, foot decorated with perforated opposing triangles (after CASTOLDI 2012, fig. 57, 297, modified)

from Castel Trosino, between the gold rings from *Crypta Balbi* in Rome and those from San Zeno, and between the Trezzo and Nocera Umbra gold trimmings (grave 1).¹⁰⁷ *Crypta Balbi* not only offers archaeological evidence of what early medieval workshops made – and the techniques they used – but also documents the circulation of models and goods between Rome and the *Regnum Langobardorum Maior*, along the roads leading to Pavia and across the Alps (Rome–Pavia route), while trade with Constantinople followed the ‘Upper Adriatic–Brescia’ route to reach Lombardy via the lagoons and the River Po.¹⁰⁸

Workshops and artisans with good technical and iconographic knowledge were probably active in Pavia, Milan, Brescia, Verona, Lucca, Cremona and the fortified villages. Off-cuts from cornelians and almandines and the casting moulds found in the fortified Gothic village of Monte Barro (LE) attest the production of small local jewellery workshops, while the perforated sheet-metal hanging crown from Monte Barro – with punched and engraved decoration – recalls the foil elements on the parade shields, testifying to the continuity of artefacts from the 5th/6th to the 7th century.¹⁰⁹ Blacksmithing/goldsmithing tools have been found, for example, in Piedmontese mountain settlements still active in the 6th–7th centuries, while smelting crucibles have been discovered in the fortified village of Sant’Antonino di Perti, in western Liguria.¹¹⁰

The most important production in Lombardy is constituted by gold-leaf crosses with stamped decoration and parade shields, which are absent in Pannonia. The crosses are mainly locally made,¹¹¹ only those from Leno–San Giovanni, Brescia–Villa Glori and Fara Olivana are of superior quality, probably of Byzantine production. The circulation of small, easily transportable objects and models with low visibility – brocade garments, fabrics for liturgical use, bronze ware, ampullae and pilgrim flasks, reliquaries with their contents and jewels – followed the roads travelled by merchants, churchmen and pilgrims in Byzantine areas, from Aquileia and Ravenna to the Alpine passes and Frankish lands, reaching the rural towns and transmitting models to the local craftsmen, particularly if involved in the development of a form of Christianization adapted to the local circumstances and controlled by Germanic-Roman settlements.¹¹² It is no coincidence that the Lombard sites where sumptuary goods have been found are situated along or near the main roads and waterways, not far from urban settlements – Milan, Brescia and Bergamo – in already densely populated areas, which had maintained their traditional Roman layout.¹¹³

Due to their distribution prevalently in northern regions and the Late Antique iconographical subjects used to form authentic decorative schemes (Trezzo, Fornovo San Giovanni, Boffalora), parade shields in particular offer the first important indicator of a local production that merged the different cultures, for a clientele of high social standing that expressed itself with new symbols of power from the end of the 6th century. The concentration of shield components in western Lombardy, with parallels in aristocratic burials in Piedmont, Trentino, Friuli, Tuscany (Lucca and Pisa) and Transalpine areas (Canton Ticino), would suggest that the workshops that made them were located in Milan and Pavia (an important marketplace) or Cremona and Mantua, where weapons were already being produced in the 4th–5th centuries.¹¹⁴ In Lucca, written sources document blacksmiths and goldsmiths active in the 8th century.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁷ BLOCKLEY–CAIMI–CAPORUSSO–CATTANEO–DE MARCHI–MIAZZO 2004, 92–93; BLOCKLEY–CAIMI–CAPORUSSO–CATTANEO–DE MARCHI–MIAZZO–PORTA–RAVEDONI 2005, 52–53.

¹⁰⁸ BROGIOLO–POSSENTI 2008, 452–454.

¹⁰⁹ DE MARCHI 1991, 105–124, pls 52–54; DE MARCHI 2001, 173–186.

¹¹⁰ MICHELETTO 1998, 51–80; BROGIOLO–POSSENTI 2001, 263; MANNONI–CUCCHIARA 2001, 587–590; DE VINGO 2012, 314–318.

¹¹¹ GIOSTRA 2012, 244.

¹¹² DE MARCHI 2007a, 287–288.

¹¹³ DE MARCHI 2012, 709.

¹¹⁴ WERNER 1951–1952, 45–58; CINI 1988, 131; LUSUARDI SIENA–GIOSTRA–DE MARCHI 2002, 230–232; GIOSTRA 2007a, 328–332; GIOSTRA 2008, 394–396.

¹¹⁵ DE MARCHI 2002, 63.

The tooled and decorated metal vessels (jug and basin) from Trezzo – while important for the assessment of the overall distribution of the two vessels and the different production environment; circumstances probably associated with contingent factors very difficult to reconstruct – indicate that both the Langobard and the Alemmanic and Anglo-Saxon elites used non-local ware, produced in distant areas and perhaps even in earlier periods than the pieces' possible use as an ablution set and their final burial in the grave. The Langobard nobility not only maintained stable relations with the Transalpine, Roman-Germanic and Scandinavian peoples, but had also long engaged in important trade for it possessed the ablution or banquet sets that it needed to adapt to a living model still based on the Hellenistic-Roman tradition and that were at the same time symbols of power and status.¹¹⁶

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¹¹⁶ DE MARCHI 2011, 291; CASTOLDI 2012, 303.

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