



# QUADERNI FRIULANI DI ARCHEOLOGIA



ANNO XXXIV - N. 1 - DICEMBRE 2024

## QUADERNI FRIULANI DI ARCHEOLOGIA

Pubblicazione annuale della Società Friulana di Archeologia - numero XXXIV - anno 2024  
Autorizzazione Tribunale di Udine: Lic. Trib. 30-90 del 09-11-1990

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ISSN 1122-7133

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## FIBULAE FROM THE ROMAN FORTRESS OF CHARAX IN SOUTHERN CRIMEA

Vyacheslav *MASYAKIN*, Natalya *TUROVA*

### Abstract

Charax is a Roman fortress located on Cape Ai–Todor on the southern coast of Crimea. Fibulae are one of the most important categories of finds to clarify the chronology of the monument, the peculiarities of the garrison soldiers' costume, and their contacts with the local barbarian population. 44 samples originating from the excavations of Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich Romanov in 1896-1911 have been preserved in the collection of the Yalta Historical and Literary Museum. Fibulae are represented by both Roman and local types.

**Keywords:** Roman Empire; southern coast of Crimea; Charax fortress; Roman-barbarian contacts; fibulae.

### Riassunto

#### Fibule dalla fortezza romana di Charax nella Crimea meridionale

Charax è una fortezza posta sul capo Ai-Todor sulla costa meridionale della Crimea. Le fibule sono una delle più importanti classi di rinvenimenti per chiarire la cronologia del complesso monumentale, le peculiarità del costume dei soldati della guarnigione e i loro contatti con la popolazione barbarica locale. 44 esemplari provenienti dagli scavi del granduca Alexander Mikhailovich Romanov del 1896-1911 sono conservati nel museo storico e letterario di Yalta. Sono presenti sia tipi romani che locali.

**Parole chiave:** impero romano; costa meridionale della Crimea; fortezza di Charax; contatti romano-barbarici; fibule.

Charax is the most eastern Roman fortress in Europe, located on Cape Ai-Todor on the southern coast of Crimea, 7 km west of Yalta (fig. 1). The name “Charax” is interpreted as a fortified place, castell, is mentioned in written sources only once by Claudius Ptolemy (Ptol. Geog. III, 6, 2).

For the first time, the remains of the fortress at Cape Ai-Todor were recorded in 1837. Systematic archaeological excavations were started by Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich Romanov in 1896 and were conducted for about 15 years.

M. I. Rostovtsev took an active part in the interpretation and publication of materials from these excavations. He published a plan of the fortress, epigraphic monuments and reliefs, and gave a brief history of the Roman military presence in this point of Crimea.

In a later period, the fortress was explored by V. D. Blavatsky, K. K. Orlov, V. I. Novichenkov and N. G. Novichenkova.



Fig. 1. Map of Crimea with the location of the Roman fortress Charax.

According to the epigraphic data, the garrison drawn from the troops of the Legio I Italica and Legio XI Claudia, and equestrians of Cohors I Thracum Syriaca Equitata and Ala II Hispanorum et Arvacorum. The vexillation of Charax was part of the Moesian army and was led by a centurion.

To the present time there have been published, Latin inscriptions, altars, reliefs with images of Artemis, Dionysus, Mithras, the Thracian horseman and tiles with stamps, found on the monument.

Meanwhile with some exceptions, the category of finds designated by the term “small finds”, which includes metal parts of military equipment, costumes, and small household items, remained practically unknown. In this regard the important discovery is the finding in the Yalta Historical and Literary Museum of a collection of bronze objects originating from the excavations of Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich Romanov in 1896-1911, which was considered lost during the World War II. The collection includes details of military equipment, jewelry, mirrors, tools, medical instruments, details of bronze vessels, caskets, and objects related to writing, including seal capsules, bone tesserae and others.

Fibulae are one of the most important categories of finds to clarify the chronology of the monument, the peculiarities of the garrison soldiers' costume, and their contacts with the local barbarian population. The findings of bronze fibulae of various Roman types from the excavations of the Grand Duke are reported by M. I. Rostovtsev. E. R. Schtern, who visited the Ai-Todor estate in 1904 and got acquainted with the findings from the excavations of the fortress, including fibulae, described in sufficient detail the bow ties with the upper bowstring and figured by winding the shackle.

For now 44 items are preserved in the collection, the type of which has been determined. In addition there are separate fragments of fibulae the type of which cannot be determined.

Fibulae are represented by both Roman (16 exemplars) and local (28 exemplars) types.

#### FIBULAE OF ROMAN TYPES.

##### 1. *Arch-shaped hinged fibulae*

1. A fibula with a high plate receiver, a button at the end of the leg, semicircular cutouts in the upper part of the arm and transverse

relief ribs in the lower (fig. 2, no. 1; fig. 6, no. 1). It belongs to type 11/B according to S. Petkovich, type 15b according to E. Gencheva, type 14d 1b2 according to S. Cociş.

2. Fibula morphologically similar to the one discussed above. It differs from the latter by a narrow high receiver (fig. 2, no. 2; fig. 6, no. 2). It belongs to type 14d4a according to S. Cociş, type 11/C by S. Petković. The considered pieces are late derivatives of “Aucissa” type fibulae and have a number of signs of strongly profiled fibulae. Such fasteners are typical for Moesia Inferior and Moesia Superior, Dacia, and isolated finds are known in Pannonia. They date from the second half of the II century – beginning of the III centuries AD. Finds of such fibulae come mainly from military contexts. Presumably, they were the products of military workshops.
3. A fibula with a diamond-shaped plate in the plan, decorated with a stamped longitudinal ornament, with a button at the end of the leg (fig. 2, no. 3; fig. 6, no. 3). Belongs to group 13, form 28 according to V. V. Kropotov, type VB.2b according to K. Hellström. All known pieces originate from the Southwestern and Central Crimea. Such fibulae were found in the Chernorechensk burial ground, the necropolises of Belbek IV (2 pieces), Ust-Alma, Levadki, Bitak (2 copies), at the settlement of Balanovo. The only close but not analogous fibula comes from Dacia, but the exact location of the find is unknown. The burials in which fibulae of such type were found date back to the II century AD. The features of the hinge design of the fasteners certainly indicate their Roman origin. The discovery of such a fibula in Charax probably indicates the production of this type in Roman garrison workshops.
4. A fibula with a lamellar, sub-triangular bow, a complexly profiled leg and a perforated receiver. The bow is decorated with a punch ornament (fig. 2, no. 4; fig. 6, no. 4). In general, it can be attributed to type 19, group C2 according to S. Rieckhoff, type 5.12 according to E. Riha, type 23c2 according to M. Feugère. The products of this group also originate from the “Aucissa” type fibulae and differ in a wide variety of shapes. Such fibulae date from the first half of the II century AD. Their main distribution area is in the Gallic provinces, in the Rhine region and in England. The closest sample is kept in the collection of the Metz Museum in northeastern France .

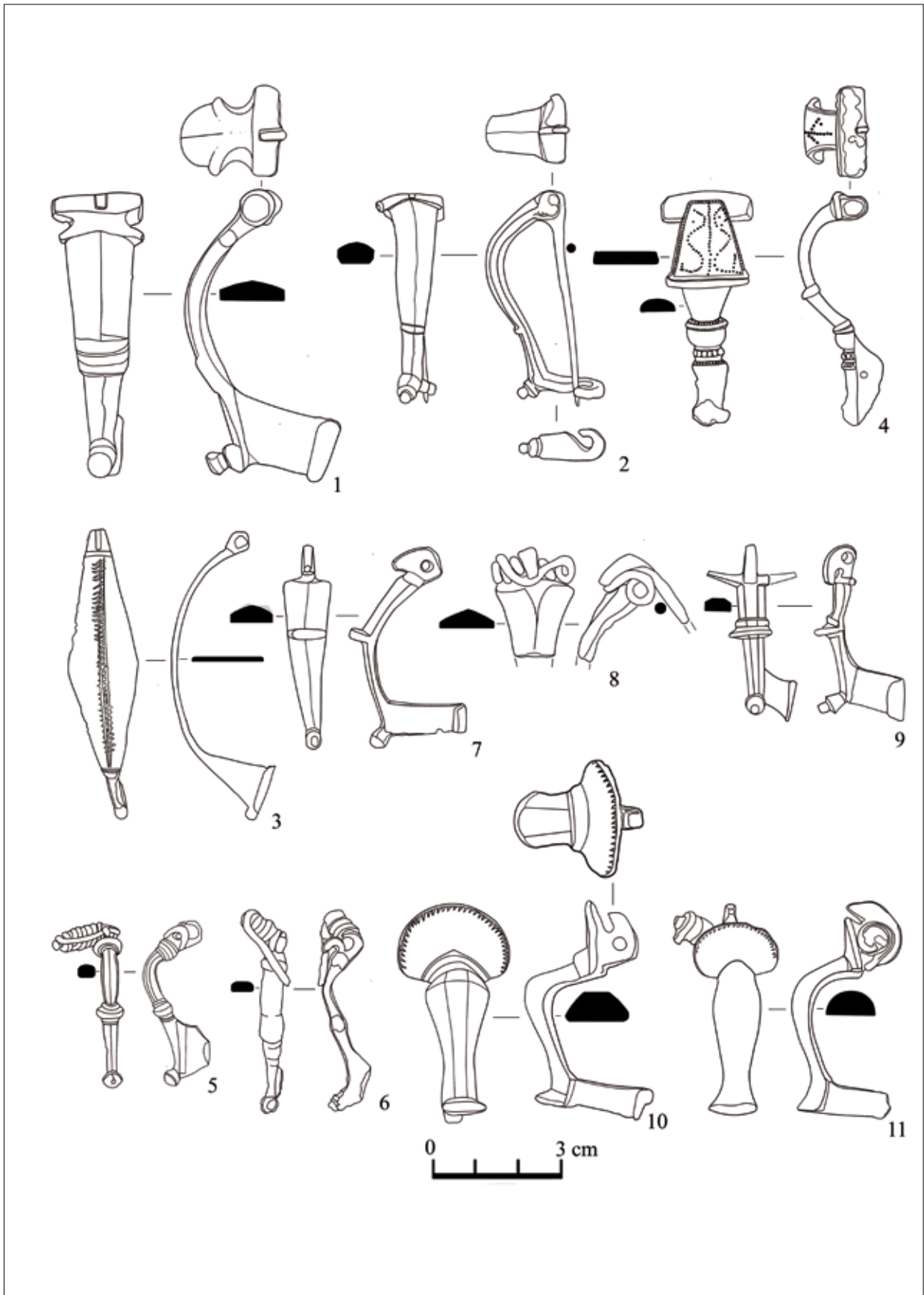


Fig. 2. Roman fibulae from Charax.

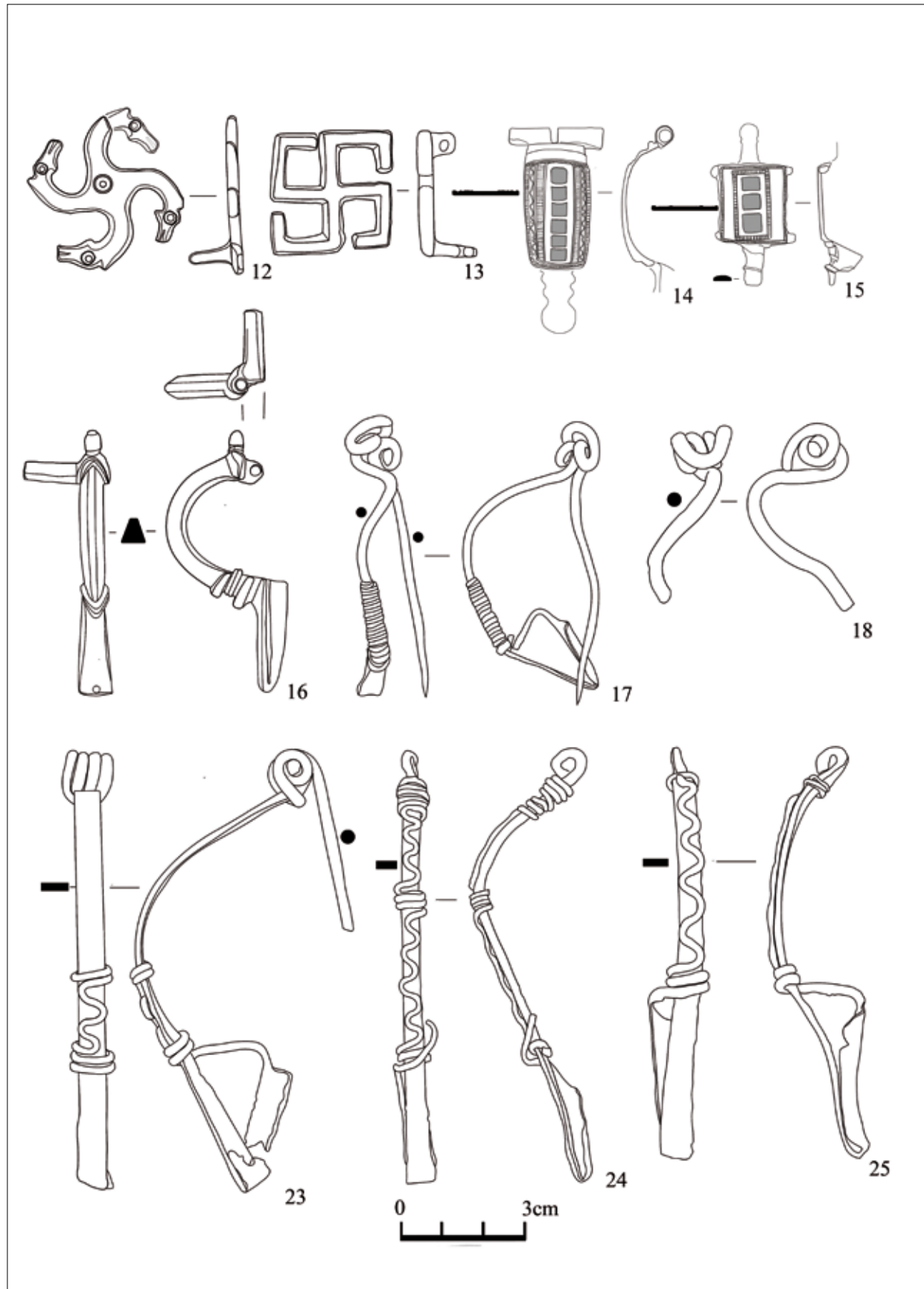


Fig. 3. Roman (nn. 12-16) and local (nn. 17-25) fibulae from Charax.

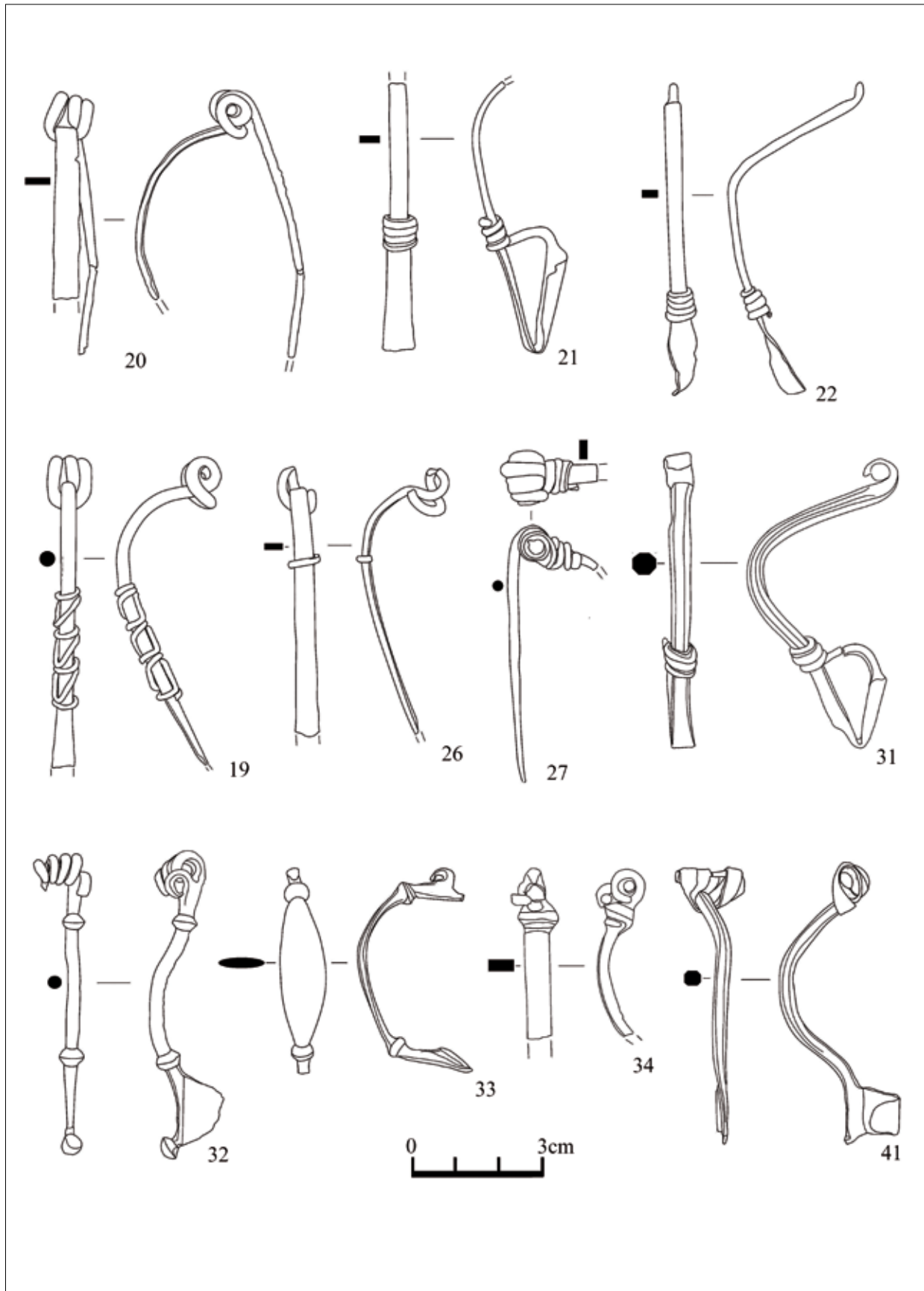


Fig. 4. Local fibulae from Charax.

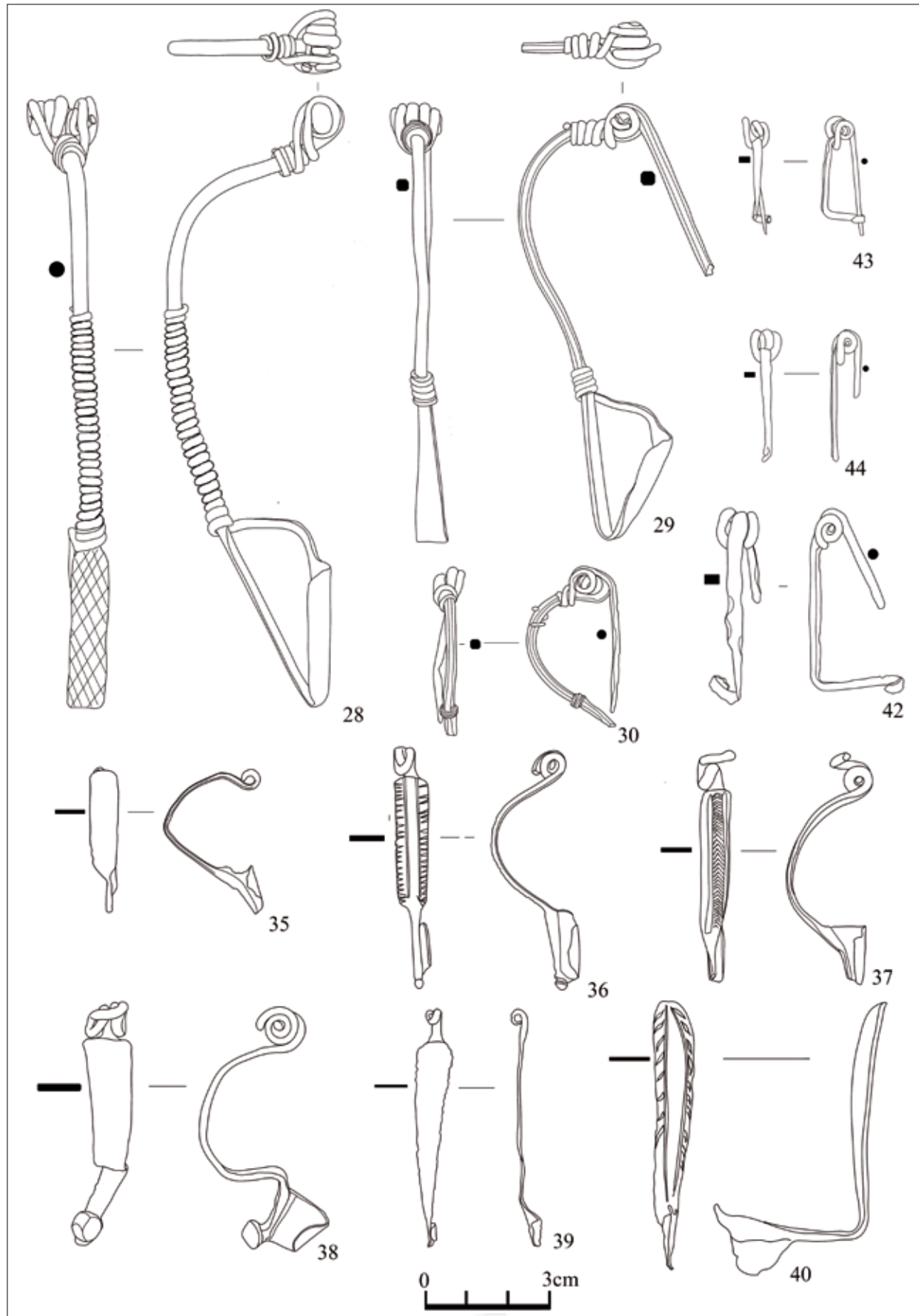


Fig. 5. Local fibulae from Charax

## 2. *Strongly profiled fibulae*

- 5-6.** Two-piece fibulae with two beads on the bow, and a hook for the upper bowstring (2 copies) (fig. 2, nos. 5, 6; fig. 6, nos. 5, 6). In one of the samples, the beads have additional ornamentation (fig. 2, no. 5; fig. 6, no. 5). They belong to group 11, series I, variant I-1 according to A. K. Ambroz, type 6b2 according to S. Cociş, type 12a according to E. Gencheva. Such fibulae are most typical for the Balkan provinces and date back to second half of the I century - II centuries AD.
- 7-8.** Two-piece spring fibulae with a transverse ridge on the shackle and a button at the end of the high receiver. On the head there is a protrusion for holding the upper bowstring and a hole for the spring axis (2 samples, one of which is fragmented) (fig. 2, nos. 7, 8; fig. 6, no. 7, 8). They belong to type 84 according to O. Almgren, type 8b2al according to S. Cociş. The highest concentration of such fibulae was discovered in the provinces of Noricum, Pannonia, and Dacia. Similar products date back to the II century AD.
- 9.** A fibula of a similar type with two transverse projections in the upper part of the arch. It belongs to a rare variety of highly profiled fibulae (fig. 2, no. 9; fig. 6, no. 9). It belongs to type 12b according to E. Gencheva. Isolated finds of such products originate from the territory of Bulgaria and date back to the end of the II century - beginning of the III century AD.

## 3. *Knee fibulae*

- 10-11.** Two-piece spring fibulae with a semicircular head in the upper part of the bow, an upper bowstring and a high receiver (2 copies) (fig. 2, no. 10, 11; fig. 6, no. 10, 11). They belong to type 13 according to V. Jobst. Such fibulae are most typical for the provinces of Noricum and Pannonia. They date from the II century - first half of the III century. They are found mainly in the layers of military camps. Note that a series of similar fibulae was found in Chersonesos and in the Roman citadel of Olbia.

## 4. *Hinged fibulae-brooches without enamel*

- 12.** A fibula in the shape of a swastika with ends decorated in the form of horse heads, deco-

rated with engraved concentric circles (fig. 3, no. 12; fig. 7, no. 12). It belongs to type 232 according to O. Almgren, type 33 according to S. Cociş. The largest number of finds of such brooches comes from the locations of the Roman troops in the Danube provinces of the Empire. It is significant that a similar fibula was found in the Roman citadel of Chersonesos. It should be noted that there is no basis for dating the brooch from the citadel of Chersonesos to the IV century AD. The fibula was found together with coins of the third quarter of the II century AD. Fibulae of this type are most often found in the contexts of the third quarter of the II century - first half of the III century AD.

- 13.** Fibula of a similar type, different in the configuration of the endings, without additional ornamentation (fig. 3, no. 13; fig. 7, no. 13). Type 32a according to classification E. Gencheva, type 33ala2 according to S. Cociş. Brooches of this type have the same distribution area as the type discussed above. One similar fibula was found in the Roman fortress of Dura Europos in Syria on the Euphrates.

## 5. *Arch-shaped hinged fibulae with enamel*

- 14.** A fibula with a lamellar rectangular bow decorated with a longitudinal stripe consisting of square enamel inserts (fig. 3, no. 14; fig. 7, no. 14). The leg is lost. It belongs to type 36 according to E. Ettinger, type 26b3 according to M. Feugère. Such products date from the end of the I century - first half of the II centuries AD, but they are also found in later contexts.
- 15.** A fibula with a lamellar rectangular bow with transverse projections, decorated with a longitudinal recess filled with enamel (fig. 3, no. 15; fig. 7, no. 15). The head with the hinge mechanism is lost. It belongs to type 36 according to E. Ettliger, type 26c2 according to M. Feugère. It is dated the same as the previous piece.

## 6. *T-shaped hinged fibula*

- 16.** A fibula with a hinged crossbar, a button in the upper part of the arm and a leg extending to the end belongs to the early group of T-shaped fasteners ("Scharnierarmfibeln") (fig. 3, no. 16; fig. 7, no. 16). It belongs to

type 281 according to A. Böhme. Just like the “Aucissa” type fibulae for an earlier period, products of this type were the main type of military fasteners of the first half of the III century AD. The beginning of the manufacture of such fibulae is attributed to the end of the II – beginning of the III centuries AD. Numerous finds in the layers of military camps formed in connection with the fall of the Upper German-Raetian Limes around 260 AD serve to determine the upper chronological boundary of the type’s existence. A series of such fibulae originates from Chersonesos.

## FIBULAE OF THE LOCAL TYPES

### 7. Bow-shaped fibulae

- 17-18.** Single-piece fibulae with an upper bowstring (2 copies) (fig. 3, no. 17, 18; fig. 7, no. 17, 18). One piece is deformed and its type is difficult to determine, the second belongs to group 15, series I, type 4 according to A. K. Ambroz, group 4, type 3 according to V.V. Kropotov, type IB.1e.1 according to K. Hellström. Fibulae of this type belong to the II century AD.
- 19.** A single-piece fibula with a lower bowstring and a curly arm winding (fig. 4, no. 19, fig. 8, no. 19). It belongs to group 15, series I, type 4 according to A.K. Ambroz, group 4, type 4 according to V.V. Kropotov, type IB.1e.1 according to K. Hellström. It is dated in the same way as the one discussed above.
- 20-22.** Fibulae with a lamellar unadorned bow and a lower bowstring (3 copies) (fig. 4, nos. 20-21, fig. 8, nos. 20-21). Formally, they are close to the fasteners of the “Inkerman” series by A.K. Ambroz. I. O. Gavritukhin distinguishes such fasteners from the Frontovoe 3 burial ground in the block of options 2 - 3 and refers to the chronological horizon of the necropolis of the second half of the II century – first half of the III centuries.
- 23-27.** Fibulae with a lamellar bow, with a wire decoration in the form of a “snake” and a lower bowstring (fig. 3, nos. 23-25; fig. 4, nos. 26-27; fig. 7, nos. 23-25; fig. 8, nos. 26-27;). They have both one-part and two-part designs (5 copies). The question of the nature and origin of the two-part structure is the subject of discussion. A. K. Ambroz

did not single out such fibulae in a separate version, considering that such a design was due to the fact that the craftsman made an extension from a needle with a spring, without calculating the length of wire necessary for the manufacture of the fibula. I. N. Khrapunov and V. V. Masyakin suggested that such fibulae represent a special type of the design, which is transitional to the design of “classic” single-piece fasteners, and were produced over a short period of time. This assumption was supported by A. A. Trufanov and K. Hellström, who included similar products in group III, combining single-piece fibulae. V. V. Kropotov considers the design in question to be the result of repair. According to I. O. Gavritukhin such a design is not thought out and specially implemented by the craftsman. Nevertheless, the researcher notes that it became widespread in a relatively short time and does not consider this discussion to be over. Fibulae of this type are dated to the first half of the III century AD.

- 28-30.** Fibulae made of a round dart with a lower bowstring of a two-stage design (3 pieces) (fig. 5, nos. 28-30; fig. 9, nos. 28-30). One of the pieces has a long arm winding and a leg decorated with engraved lines crossing diagonally (fig. 5, no. 28; fig. 9, no. 28). They belong to group 15, series II (“Inkerman”), type 1 according to A. K. Ambroz, group 4, series II, type 4 according to V. V. Kropotov, variant 2-2B, G according to I. O. Gavritukhin. Probably synchronous with fibulae of the previous type.
- 31.** The only example is a two-piece fibula (fig. 4, no. 31; fig. 8, no. 31), belonging to group 15, series III by A. K. Ambroz, group 4, series III by V. V. Kropotov, variant III.1b according to K. Hellström, type 3-1-B according to I. O. Gavritukhin. Fibulae of this type appear in the second quarter of the III century, but they become most widespread in the second half of the III century.

### 8. Highly profiled fibulae

- 32-34.** Fibulae with two beads on the bow and a bowstring hook (3 copies) (fig. 4, nos. 32-34; fig. 8, nos. 32-34). In one of the pieces, the shackle has a circular cross-section, in the other two, the shackles are lamellar. They belong to group 11, series I, types I-2 and I-3 according to A. K. Ambroz, group 10, series



Fig. 6. Roman fibulae from Charax.

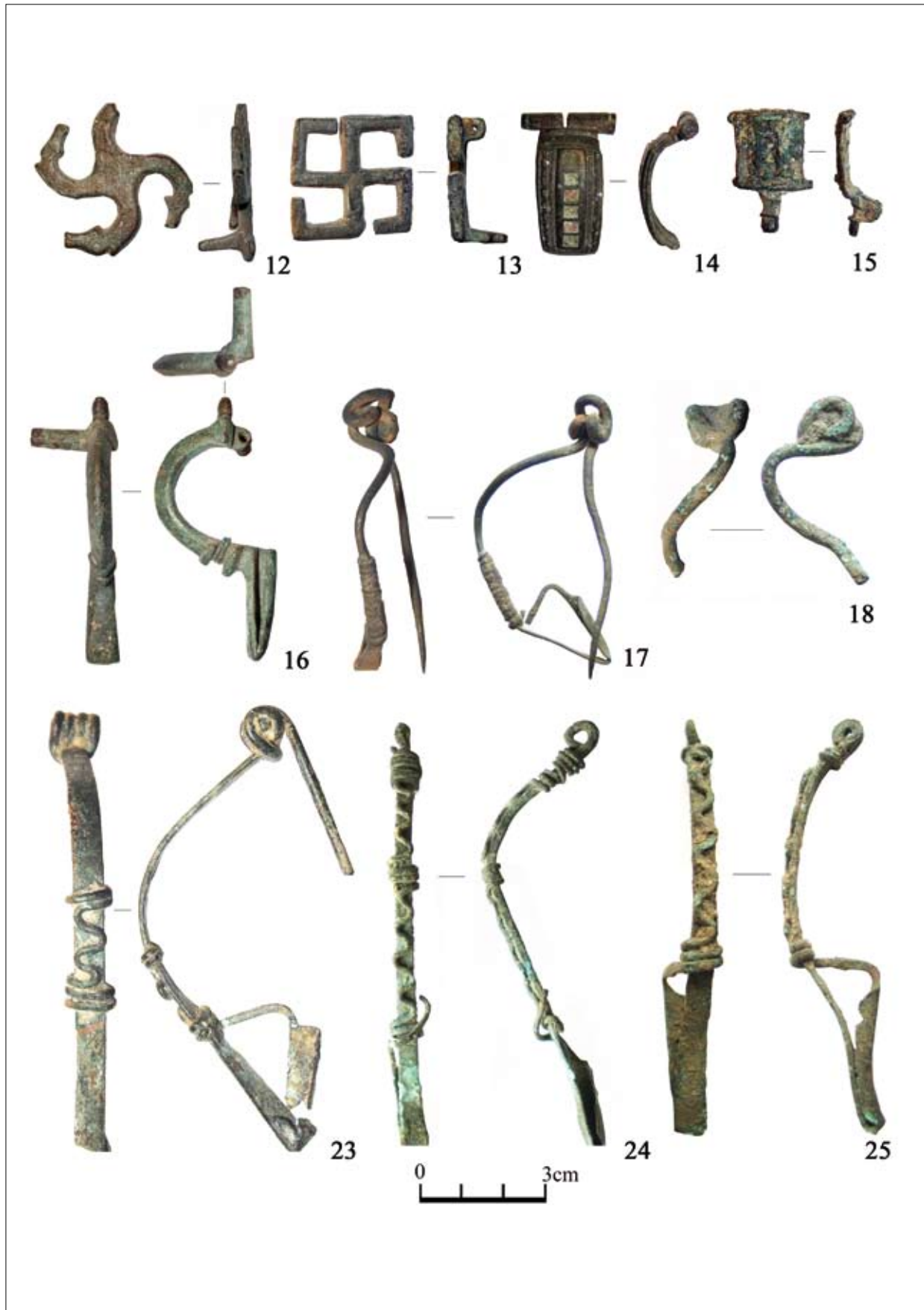


Fig. 7. Roman (nn. 12-16) and local (nn. 17-25) fibulae from Charax.

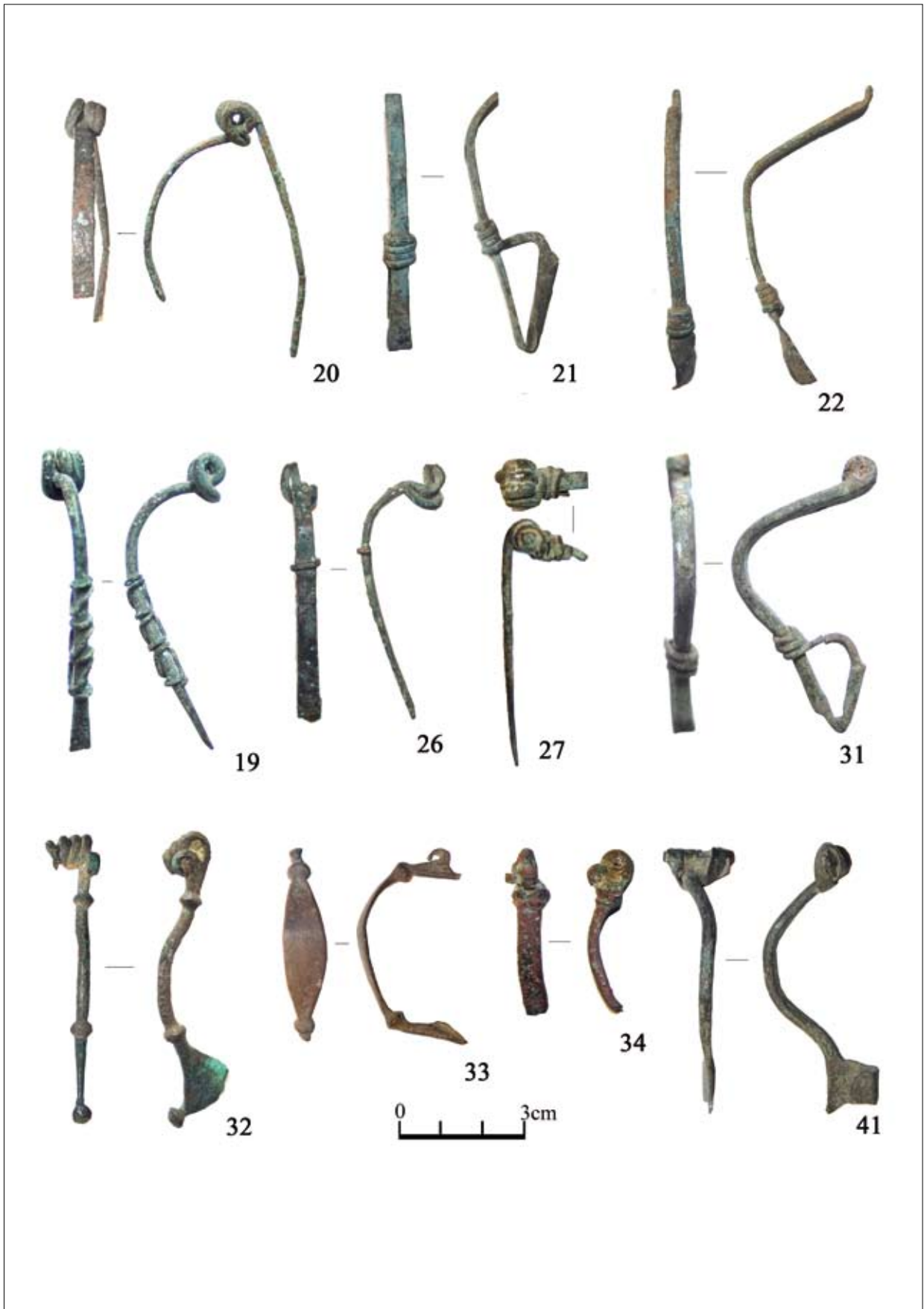


Fig. 8. Local fibulae from Charax.

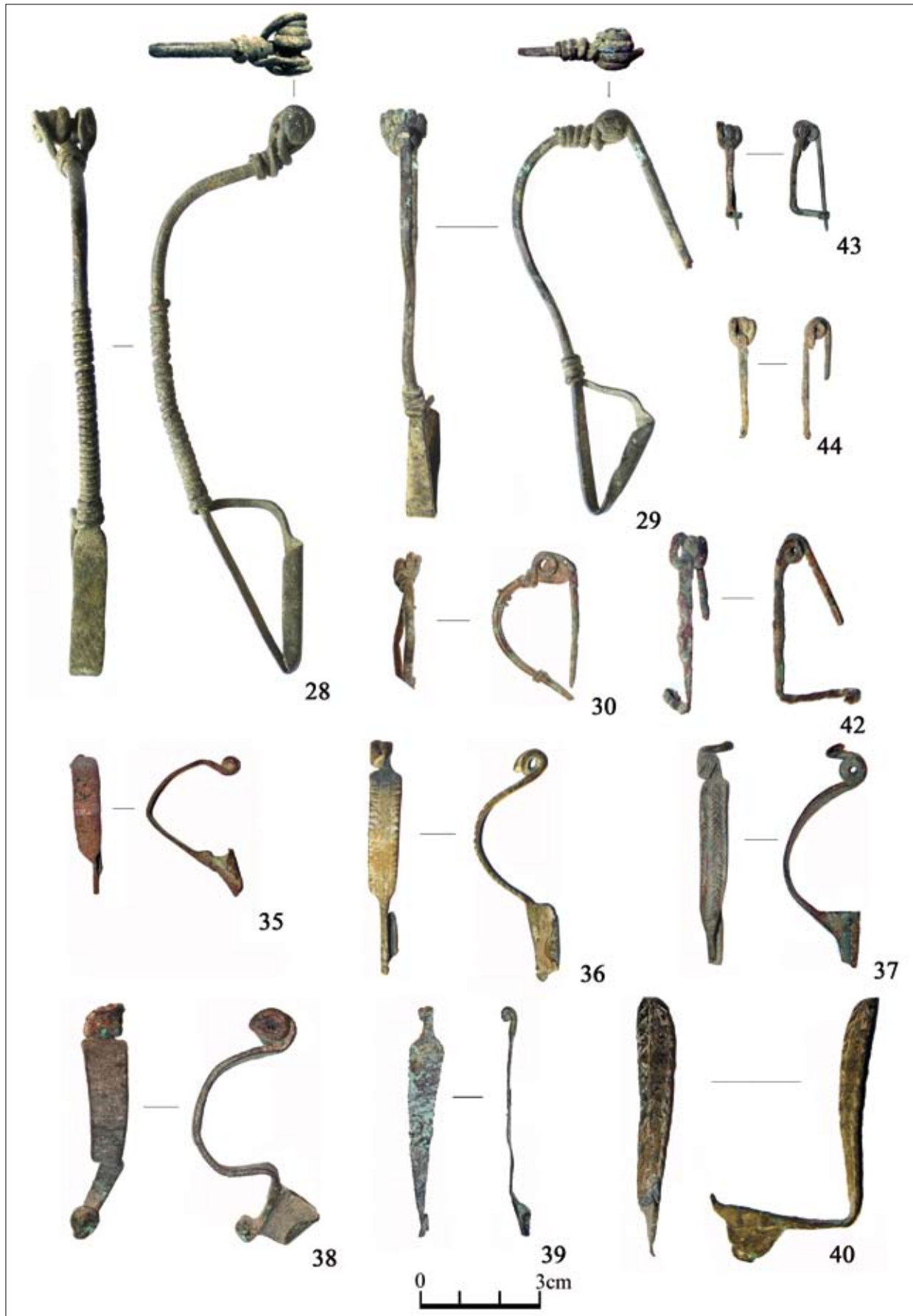


Fig. 9. Local fibulae from Charax.

II according to V. V. Kropotov, types IIA.2b.1 and IIA.2b.1 according to K. Hellström. They date back to the II – first half of the III century AD.

9. *Spring-loaded fibulae with a plate back and a button at the end of the receiver.*

**35-37.** Fibulae with similar proportions, having a smooth transition from the back to the leg (3 specimens) (fig. 5, nos. 35-37; fig. 9, nos. 35-37). In two pieces, the back is decorated with an engraved ornament (fig. 5, nos. 36-37; fig. 9, nos. 36-37). In one case, the button is small, in the other two it is lost. Probably, these fasteners can be attributed to type 1 according to V. V. Kropotov, dated within the second half of the I century - beginning of the II century AD.

10. *Spring-loaded fibulae with a lamellar back and a curl at the end of the foot*

**39-40.** The fibulae (2 pieces) have a triangular back decorated with an engraved ornament (fig. 5, nos. 39-40; fig. 9, nos. 39-40). They belong to group 8, series I (Black Sea) according to V. V. Kropotov, dating from the II century AD.

**41.** Two-piece fibula with a round back in cross section (fig. 5, no. 41; fig. 9, no. 41). The end of the curl is lost. Perhaps the two-part structure is related to the repair. Exact analogies could not be found.

11. *Bow-Shaped fibulae*

**42-44.** Single-membered spring fibulae with a lower bowstring and a high plate foot (3 copies) (fig. 5, nos. 42-44; fig. 9, nos. 42-44). They belong to group 7 according to V. V. Kropotov and date back to the II centuries – III centuries AD.

The fibulae considered represent a chronologically homogeneous group belonging to the II century - first half of the III century AD, and most of the pieces date from the second half of the II century - first half of the III century AD, which, in general, corresponds to the time of the fortress operation. Fibulae of Roman types are typical mainly for military costume. The finds of fibulae of local types probably records the contacts of Roman military personnel with the local barbarian population. Similar contacts are confirmed by stratified finds of local hand-made ceramics. It should be noted that fibulas of local types and hand-made ceramics were found in other places of deployment of Roman troops in the Crimea. This situation probably reflects the general patterns observed in the areas of Roman-Barbarian contacts. As an example, we can cite the materials of the Saalburg and Zugmantel military camps located on the Upper German-Raetian limes, where along with Roman fibulae a significant number of German ones were found.

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