GUIDE TO

PROVINCIAL ROMAN AND BARBARIAN METALWORK AND JEWELRY

IN THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

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COVER Fig. 5. Plaque with two rings

Guide to Provincial Roman and Barbarian Metalwork and Jewelry in The Metropolitan Museum of Art

KATHARINE REYNOLDS BROWN

To the ancient Greeks, a barbarian, or foreigner, was a person who could not speak Greek, someone outside Hellenistic culture and therefore uncivilized. For the Romans, however, the term carried fewer pejorative connotations; it simply denoted one who spoke neither Greek nor Latin. The barbarians were often welcomed and respected within the Roman Empire, where some lived by peaceful agreement, many guarding the borders as *foederates,* or auxiliary troops. Others invaded and devastated parts of the western half of the Roman Empire. The barbarians consisted of various Germanic tribes who gradually settled in western Europe between the fourth and seventh centuries A.D., and, because their movements characterized this period, it is usually referred to as the migration period. The portable art of these migrating Germanic tribes, together with the enamel and metalworking techniques already being practiced in the late Roman Empire, laid the foundation for the splendid metalwork of the medieval period. Barbarian art is dedicated to the ornamentation of those weapons and articles that a warrior and his wife could carry on their persons. Jewelry and weapons revealed the status of the barbarian warrior in a military society and were buried with him in his tomb, along with other portable objects, some of which were imbued with protective or apotropaic virtues. Like most Greeks and Romans, the Germans at first cremated their dead, but from the fourth century they shifted to inhumation under influences from the Near East. This custom was transmitted to the tribes of Central Europe by the Ostrogoths and Visigoths, after their sojourn on the northern shore of the Black Sea.

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THERE IS EVIDENCE that enamel was produced continuously in Gaul from pre-Roman Celtic times, but wherever in the West enameling originated, the largest surviving body of champlevé enameling from the first to the mid-third century has been found in Celtic lands of western Europe conquered by Rome.

Roman Gaul and the Rhineland were renowned throughout the Empire as producers of enamel, *terra sigillata* (pottery, usually red, with figures in relief), metalwork, and glass. Remains of enamel and metalworking workshops have been uncovered at the Villa Anthée near Namur, Belgium. This provincial Roman villa may have supplied a great part of the enamels for the region. The Villa Anthée was probably overrun by Frankish raids in the mid-third century. This terminal date also seems to apply to the Rhineland since no enamels that can be dated later than mid-third century have been found there.

One of the best-known examples of this enameling, dated to the mid-third century, is the bronze vase found at La Guierche, west of Limoges, in the first half of the nineteenth century (Fig. 1). The find included silver bracelets, silver and gold rings, silver and bronze spoons, an earthenware vase with handles and fifteen coins with dates suggesting burial during the unsettled time toward the end of the third century. The enameled vase consists of two sections; four points of attachment on opposite sides of the neck indicate that it originally had handles. Its

1. Vase

Champlevé enamel on bronze
Mid-3rd century (before 275 A.D.)
H. 4¾ in.; diam. 4½ in. (12.1, 11.4 cm.)
Provenance: La Guierche, Charente, France
Purchase, 1947, Fletcher Fund
Ex coll.: John Abraham Bolle, Angoulême
47.100.5

2. Torque

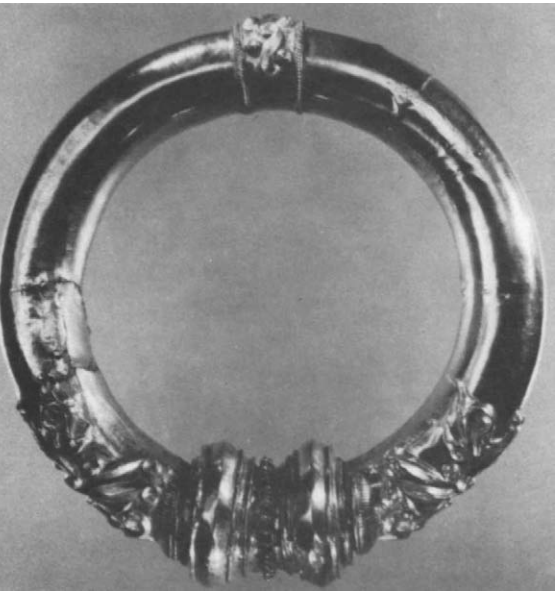
Iron, beeswax and resin, gold
First century B.C.
Diam. 7¾ in. (19.7 cm.)
Provenance: Frasnes-les-Buissenal
Lent by The Guennol Collection
L. 53.43.1

3.

Detail of Fig. 2 showing decoration near buffer

surface is decorated with a series of vertical bands that increase in width toward the middle, and diminish again toward the top and bottom. The bands are of two alternating designs in contrasting colors. One design shows pairs of confronted trumpets in dark blue enamel against the blackened bronze background. In the other design, the pair of trumpets are joined together to form a *pelta,* or heart-shaped pattern, in red alternating with olive green enamel against a background of turquoise enamel. The pattern of the upper section is the mirror image of the lower. The alternation of colors makes it difficult to distinguish between pattern and background: on the dark bands the pattern of enamel on metal stands out; on the light bands, the pattern of metal on enamel. This alternation between pattern and background is one aspect of the optical illusionism that is a characteristic of late Roman art. The earlier Celtic tradition probably supplied the trumpet motif used in provincial Roman art, but unlike the Celts the Romans used it in balanced patterns. The *pelta* is another motif that was popular throughout the late Roman world. Both paired trumpets and *peltas* used in symmetrical, vertical rows, one *pelta* on top of another, probably derive from the vertical lyre compositions of early Celtic art.

A fine example of the debt that Roman Gaul owed its Celtic predecessors is the magnificent large gold torque (Fig. 2), on loan from The Guennol Collection. This piece is one of the highlights of the Museum's



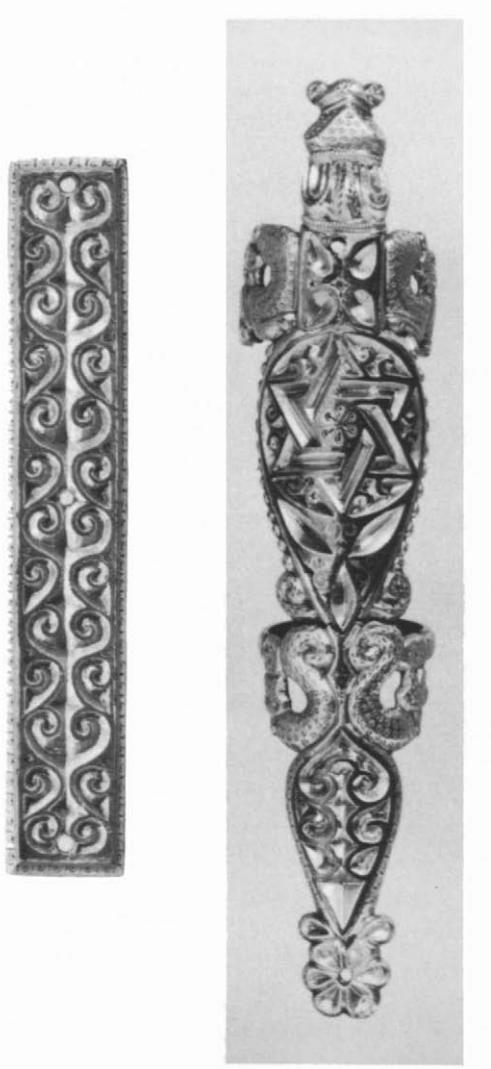
early medieval galleries; not only the most splendid item of the Frasnes-les-Buissenal (Hainaut, Belgium) hoard with which it was found, but one of the most magnificent large gold torques in existence. The Frasnes hoard is thought to date to the first century B.C. and to have been buried at the time of the Roman invasion under Julius Caesar in 57 B.C.

Celtic art synthesized Eastern and Western influences in all its phases to a greater or lesser degree. Some aspects of this synthesis can be seen on the torque from The Guennol Collection. Two lyre motifs, sharing one pair of scrolls framing an animal's head embedded in ribbons and flanked by spirals, are represented in high relief near the buffers (Fig. 3). A band of running spirals marks the center back of the torque. The classical heritage of the lyres on the buffers is evident, but the most outstanding feature of the torque is the beveled technique by which the decorative motifs are rendered. These slanting planes and sharp lines ultimately derive from Scythian art. The additional spiral motifs, ribbons, and scrolls, which may represent the animal's horns, and the highly stylized treatment of the animal's head are united to achieve a high degree of ambiguity in the overall design. This predilection for designs that can be read in more than one way was also inherited from Celtic art by Roman artists.

The Roman penchant for ambiguous design is well illustrated by a plaque from a lance associated with a military tomb of the second half of the fourth century at Vermand in northern France (Fig. 4). As noted by William H. Forsyth ("The Vermand Treasure," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin,* May 1951, p. 239; "Provincial Roman Enamels recently acquired by The Metropolitan Museum of Art," *Art Bulletin* 32, 1950, p. 306), when placed horizontally the ornament on the plaque may be interpreted as two scrolling vines, whereas when placed vertically the plaque appears to have the same vertical arrangement of *peltas* and trumpet patterns as on the La Guierche vase, although the trumpets here are addorsed. The plaque is one of several silver-gilt and niello mounts that had evidently decorated a lance. Too large to have been put inside the slab-lined tomb, the lance was put outside the right wall of the tomb. The mounts and point of the lance were found, but the wooden shaft had disintegrated. The lance's mounts are of such high quality that it must have belonged to an officer of high rank, who may have been a Roman or a barbarian in the service of the Romans, since the mounts display a mixture of Roman and barbarian motifs. The mount from the lower end of the lance shaft (Fig. 5) also displays the *pelta* and addorsed trumpet

design, but adds two pairs of fantastic animals of barbarian taste and at the top a cicada probably derived from the cicada pins found in Sarmatian graves in Hungary and South Russia.

The technique by which these mounts are decorated is called "chip carving" because of its resemblance to wood carving. While some scholars think the technique was a single type of decoration developed along the Danube and the Rhine Rivers, others contend that different types of chip carving originated in many locations and later came to be practiced in these frontier regions of the Roman Empire. The type displayed on the Vermand plaque (Fig. 4), where curvilinear designs are executed by smooth slanting planes and sharp lines, probably derives ultimately from



4. Plaque

Silver gilt, niello
Second half 4th century
L. 3¾ in. (9.5 cm.)
Provenance: Vermand, Aisne, northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
Ex colls.: Jumel, Amiens; Boulanger; Jumel, Amiens; Stanislas Baron, Paris
17.192.144

5. Plaque with two rings

Silver gilt, niello
Second half 4th century
L. 4⅞ in. (12.4 cm.)
Provenance: Vermand, Aisne, northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
Ex colls.: Jumel, Amiens; Boulanger; Jumel, Amiens; Stanislas Baron, Paris
17.192.145

Scythian metalwork and, as we have seen, more directly from Celtic metalwork. All types of chip carving were extremely popular among the barbarian tribes. A type similar to that on the Vermand plaque can be seen on the head of a magnificent late sixth-century Alemannic fibula (a pin that works in the same way as a modern safety pin) (Fig. 6). On the lanterns around the head and on the sides of the foot, the chip carving resembles notching, probably indicating a different, western origin. Fibulae like this one are usually illustrated so that the semicircular plate called the "head" is at the top. To judge by contemporary illustrations, however, as well as by their positions at the time of excavation, bow fibulae were worn with the head down, as illustrated here.

Perhaps the most important migration of the Germanic tribes for the history of art was that of the Goths, who pushed southward from southern Scandinavia and reached the north shore of the Black Sea about A.D. 235. A highly developed and refined goldsmith's art making use of stone inlay had long flourished in Greek colony cities, such as present-day Kerch and

Olbia on the north shore of the Black Sea. Jewelry from the Pontine area around the Black Sea shows the influence of these Greek colony cities mingled with that of earlier Scytho-Sarmatian cultures. Gold filigree work and granulation was typical of Hellenistic jewelry, while the tradition of decoration with colored stones may have been derived from the Sarmatians, who reached the Black Sea area in the third century B.C. Representing the Pontic tradition is a pair of gold and sardonyx earrings from Olbia dated to the third century A.D. (Fig. 7). The earrings display not only filigree and granulation, but also loop-in-loop chains, which have a long history in Greek and Roman jewelry, and the dogtooth settings popular in Hellenistic jewelry.

Bringing their own Germanic forms of jewelry, the Pontine Goths seem to have favored the combination of garnets with gold, exemplified by this splendid bow fibula of the fourth to fifth centuries (Fig. 8), which was probably one of a pair once connected by a chain and attached to the borders of a mantle to hold it in place. The fibula is said to be part of

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6. One of a pair of bow fibulae

Silver gilt
Late 6th century
L. (of each) 3⅞ in. (9.9 cm.)
Gift of Alastair Bradley Martin, 1948
48.154.3

7. Pair of earrings

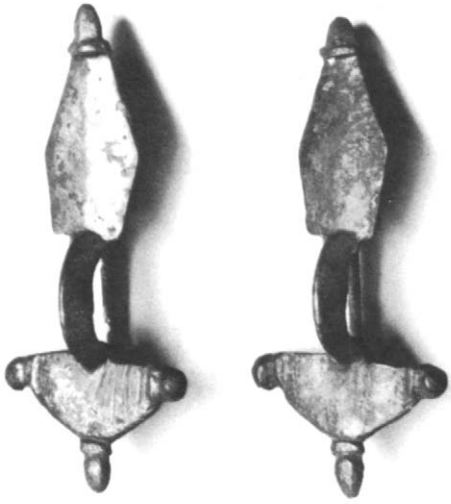
Gold, sardonyxes
3rd century A.D.
Provenance: Olbia, South Russia
Purchase, Rogers Fund, 1922
Ex coll.: Joseph Chmielowski
22.50.5,6

8. Bow fibula

Gold, silver, almandines, mother-of-pearl
Ca. 400 A.D.
L. 6¾ in. (17.1 cm.)
Provenance: possibly Transylvania (Szilagy-Somlyo?)
Purchase, Fletcher Fund, 1947
Ex coll.: R. Martins Reay
47.100.19

the Second Szilagy-Somlyo Treasure, which may have been owned by the Visigothic king Athanaric. None of the few comparable pieces is in the United States. The fibula is made of heavy gold leaf placed over a silver core. The back is uncovered and soldered to it are the fragments of the pin. Garnets of various shapes, placed in a symmetrically balanced pattern, and several now empty cloisons that probably contained some enamellike substance, together with gold filigree wire and granules, decorate the fibula. Garnets were usually imported from Burma and India, although Pliny mentions other sources. To enhance the brilliancy of the garnets, small pieces of thin gold foil, either plain or hatched, were often put under the translucent stones, such as the rectangular stone at the base of the foot of this fibula. This technique appears later in Frankish jewelry.

The earliest Gothic bow fibulae were small, simple in character, and made of bronze. They have been found in Gothic graves of the late second and early third centuries in the South Russian-Danubian regions. A pair in silver (Fig. 9) from Kerch shows the basic characteristics: the head is semicircular with three digits; the footplate is rhomboid with a slight median ridge; and the two are connected by an arched bow. In the course of the fourth century, the Gothic bow fibula became larger and more elongated, while the original semicircular shape of the head was occa-



9. Pair of bow fibulae

Silver
Ca. 400 A.D.
L. (of each) 2⅞ in. (7.3 cm.)
Provenance: Kerch, South Russia
Purchase, 1898
98.11.107,108

10. Pair of bow fibulae

Bronze
6th century
L. (of each) 6 in. (15.2 cm.)
Provenance: Castiltierra, Segovia, Spain
Purchase, 1947, Fletcher Fund
47.100.20,21

sionally modified. The development of the Ponto-Gothic fibula reached its climax about A.D. 400, when it became a sumptuous piece of jewelry, as exemplified by Figure 8.

The plain, small, sheet-silver fibula of the Black Sea area was carried westward by the Goths. Derived from that type is this splendid sixth-century Visigothic pair (Fig. 10), probably from the Visigothic cemetery of Castiltierra in Segovia, Spain. The semicircular head now has five projections, and there is a lozenge-shaped footplate with four small lateral projections. Both head and foot are decorated with chip carving. This form of fibula is characteristic of Visigothic cemeteries of Spain and South Gaul.

By peaceful agreement with the Romans the Visigoths, or "western Goths," had taken over the province of Transdanubian Dacia (between the Carpathian Mountains and the Danube River) about 275 A.D. The Ostrogoths were to their east, north of the Black Sea, when in 374 the Huns, probably coming from the steppes of Central Asia, invaded the southern plains of modern Russia. When the Huns reached the Danube in 376, the Visigoths fled into the Roman Empire, where they lived as *foederates,* auxiliary troops, until 395. At that time their king Alaric had a dispute with the Roman emperor. As a consequence, the Visigoths

ravaged Athens in 396 and Rome in 410, before settling in southern France and Spain in 418. Some of the Ostrogoths remained under Hunnish domination in South Russia, while some of them fled westward and at the end of the fifth century invaded Italy, where their king Theodoric made Ravenna his capital.

In 406 the Vandals, Langobards (known to the Romans as Suevians), and the Alans crossed the Rhine into Gaul. After three years of plundering, they crossed the Pyrenees into Spain, where they settled for twenty years. In 429, the Vandals migrated into North Africa, where they established an independent Germanic state with Carthage as its capital.

In about 435, the exiled Honoria, granddaughter of Emperor Theodosius, sent her ring as a proposal of marriage to Attila the Hun, who, taking full advantage of the situation, demanded half the Empire as her dowry. While the negotiations were in progress he advanced southward to the walls of Constantinople, where the Romans, by paying him 2,100 pounds of gold, purchased peace. By about 450 his empire stretched from the Caucasus to the Rhine, from the Danube to the North and Baltic Seas. In 451, he crossed the Rhine into Gaul, but was stopped by the allied forces of Romans and Goths. In 452 after an unsuccessful campaign in Italy he retreated north of the Danube into the plains of Hungary. Following his death in 453 and the unsuccessful attempts of his sons to hold it together, the vast empire of Attila the Hun collapsed and fell to various Germanic tribes in 455. What was left of his great force sought admittance to the Roman Empire as *foederates*.

Whereas the incursions of Frankish tribes across the Rhine from the mid-third century onward were far less dramatic than the westward movements of the other tribes, the Franks alone succeeded in establishing a political power that survived the disintegration of the Roman Empire, and formed the foundations of the Carolingian empire. The Franks were the product of a political amalgamation of many small tribes in the first and second centuries A.D., in the lands between the Weser and the Rhine Rivers. The names of such Teutonic tribes as the Franks, Alemanni, and Thuringians thus indicate large groups of peoples who superseded the many smaller groups that populated the forests east of the Rhine at the height of Roman imperial power. Probably as early as the second century, some Franks settled just within the frontier as farmer-soldiers. Larger groups of Franks with similar military obligations to Rome began to establish themselves on the frontier by the mid-third century; during the

following century, such units grew in size and importance, spreading into western areas of Roman Gaul. The growing Frankish power in Gaul was thus the result of infiltrations rather than direct conquests. By the early fifth century, Gaul and the Rhineland were covered with barbarian settlements: Franks in the north, Goths in the southwest, Burgundians in Savoy, Alemanni in the Upper Rhine, Bretons in the northwest, and Alans in the south.

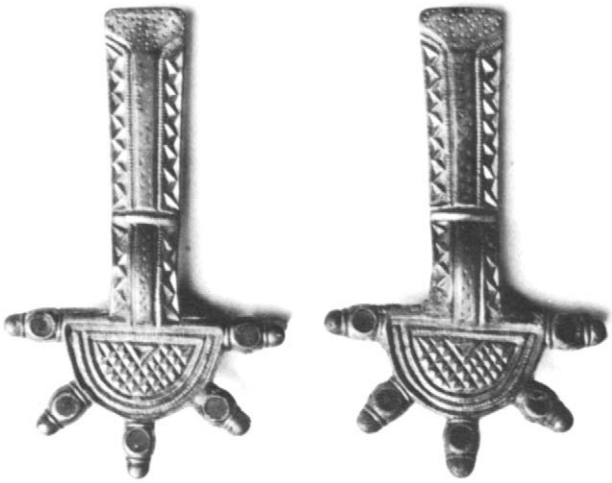
The most powerful king of the Merovingian, or first Frankish, dynasty was Clovis I (reigned 481–511), grandson of the possibly legendary Merovech, for whom the dynasty was named. In 486 Clovis defeated Syagrius, the Roman patrician who ruled central Gaul. In 493 he married the Burgundian princess Clotilda, who converted him from Arianism (a belief in only one divinity, God, and a denial of the consubstantiality of Christ) to Orthodox Christianity. This conversion to orthodoxy, or the belief in the divine Trinity, was extremely important to the subsequent history of the Franks, because, by adopting their beliefs, Clovis obtained the goodwill of the orthodox majority of the Gallo-Roman population and their support against his powerful neighbors—the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, and Burgundians, all of whom belonged to the Arian sect. This support was furthered when he was granted an honorary consulship by the Eastern emperor Anastasius in 508, thus creating a firm base for Frankish rule in Gaul.

The Franks had close contacts with the Langobards, who by 568 had moved westward from Pannonia (the Roman province mostly in modern Hungary and Yugoslavia) into Italy, supplanting the Ostrogoths and establishing Pavia in northern Italy as their capital—so close, in fact, that in 774 Charlemagne assumed the title King of the Franks and Langobards.

Because the Franks laid the foundations of the Carolingian Empire and, consequently, of medieval Europe, their art is most important; it is fortunate that most of the Museum's collection of migration art is Frankish. Many aspects of Frankish jewelry betray an origin in South Russia; the motif of birds' heads, the form of the bow fibula, the propensity for inlaid almandines (a variety of garnet) or red glass, and even the technique of using gold foil under the glass came to the Franks from South Russia. The Frankish court may have employed Gothic goldsmiths from South Russia, or the Goths may have carried the influences westward from South Russia. Probably both occurred.

An examination of the actual pieces will demonstrate the connection.

A typical type of Frankish bow fibula of the sixth century has a semicircular head with five digital projections, each ornamented with a circular piece of almandine and a surface decorated with chip carving (Fig. 11). On this pair, the head is decorated with cross-hatching, the borders of the bow with zigzags, and the center of the bow with punched dots, all characteristic motifs of the type. Examples have been found throughout the Frankish region and are typical of the Rhine area and northern France in the sixth century. On a second characteristic type (Fig. 12), the foot terminates in an animal's head and the digits of the semicircular head represent birds' heads inlaid with almandine, a motif repeated on either side of the foot. The surfaces of both head and foot are decorated with



11. Pair of bow fibulae

Bronze gilt, almandines
6th century
L. (of each) 3⅜ in. (8.5 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
17.191.186,187

12. Pair of bow fibulae

Bronze gilt, almandines
6th century
L. (of each) 3¾ in. (9.5 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
17.191.172,173

13. Pair of bird fibulae

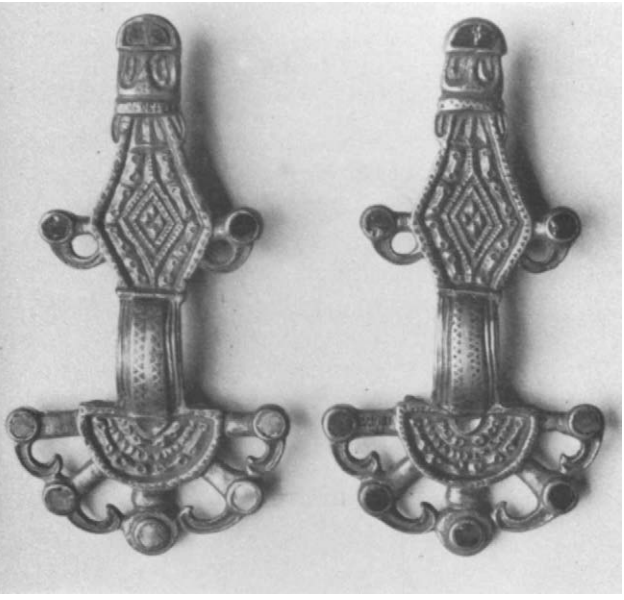
Bronze gilt, red glass paste, mica, pearls
Ca. 550
H. (of each) 1½ in. (3.8 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan
17.191.164,165

14. Pair of bird fibulae

Silver gilt, almandines over gold foil
Early 6th century
H. (of each) 1⅜ in. (3.5 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
17.191.168,169

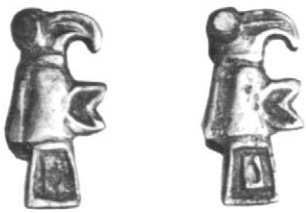
geometric designs in chip carving. These fibulae were cast in bronze and gilded.

Fibulae cast in the shape of birds and set with cloisonné garnets or red glass were developed in South Russia about 400, and after 450 appeared in the Danube region. The central area of their distribution was northeast France and the middle Rhine, where they were popular until the second half of the sixth century. This beautiful pair (Fig. 13), with pearls for the birds' eyes and collars of mica can probably be dated about 550. There were many variants of the bird type; in contrast to the pair in Figure 13, an early sixth-century pair (Fig. 14) has neither wings nor claws indicated by projecting portions, and the silver-gilt body is set with four pieces of



almandine. A north French form that was current in the first half of the sixth century displays a trapezoidal tail and prominent claws (Fig. 15); this third pair is bronze gilt, each with a blue paste eye. Another derivative popular at this time, in the central Rhine region as well as in northern France, is inlaid with four pieces of red paste and has a rectangular tail (Fig. 16). Two later variants are datable to the second half of the sixth century: one with a bronze-gilt body decorated with chip carving, and an eye and tail inlaid with almandine (Fig. 17); the other, larger example of bronze gilt with traces of silver, on which beak, claws, wings, and tail are accentuated and decorated with incised lines (Fig. 18). Only a few examples of this type have been found outside France.

One of the most frequently encountered types of fibulae and the most



15. Pair of bird fibulae

Bronze gilt, blue paste
First half 6th century
H. (of each) 1 1/16 in. (2.7 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
Ex coll.: Stanislas Baron, Paris
17.192.174,177

16. Pair of bird fibulae

Bronze gilt, red paste
First half 6th century
H. (of each) 1 1/4 in. (3.2 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
Ex coll.: Stanislas Baron, Paris
17.191.166,167

17. Bird fibula

Bronze gilt, almandines
Second half 6th century
H. 1 1/4 in. (3.2 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
17.191.19

widely represented in the Metropolitan Museum collection is the inlaid disk fibula, also developed in South Russia. Although it became popular in the Frankish territories in the second half of the fifth century, most extant examples date to the sixth century. One example is made of silver inlaid with six pieces of almandine around a central red paste cabochon (Fig. 19). Bronze was used as often as silver, and eight sections of almandine were as current as six, while bone or meerschaum (a fine white claylike mineral) often served as the central piece. One beautiful piece in the Museum, from the late sixth century or the beginning of the seventh, represents a development from the common type of small and simple inlaid disk (Fig. 20). This silver fibula, inlaid with almandine in three zones, originally consisted of forty-two pieces. A sixth-century var-

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18. Bird fibula

Bronze, gilt and silvered
Second half 6th century
H. 1⅜ in. (3.5 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
17.191.127

19. Inlaid disk fibula

Silver, almandines, red paste
6th century
Diam. ⅞ in. (2.2 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
17.191.146

20. Inlaid disk fibula

Silver, almandines
Late 6th–early 7th century
Diam. 1½ in. (3.8 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
17.191.38

iant of the inlaid disk fibula is the inlaid star-shaped brooch (Fig. 21); from a central square composed of four pieces of almandine radiate eleven petal-shaped pieces. Yet another variant of the cloisonné inlaid disk fibula is the rosette fibula (Fig. 22). This form is thought to have been developed in France at the end of the fifth century and was especially popular in the Rhine region during the second half of the sixth century.

From about this time into the early seventh century the inlaid quatrefoil fibula also became popular in France and the Alemannic and Frankish areas of what is now West Germany. The example in Figure 23 is inlaid with almandine and blue paste on bronze with a small gold plaque in the center. This type of fibula was the prototype of the later gold quatrefoil fibula, a variation of the gold disk fibula, which consists of a bronze groundplate and a gold, silver, or bronze cover plate, usually with a

21. Star-shaped inlaid fibula

Silver, almandines
6th century
Diam. ⅞ in. (2.2 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
17.191.154

22. Rosette-shaped inlaid fibula

Silver, almandines, blue paste
Second half 6th century
Diam. 13/16 in. (2.1 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
17.192.34

23. Quatrefoil inlaid fibula

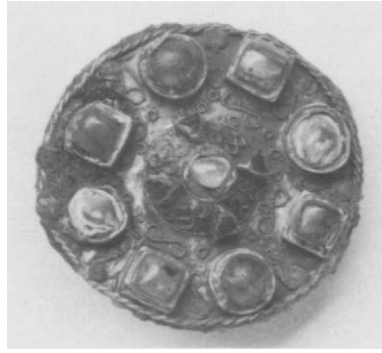
Bronze, almandines, blue paste, gold
Second half 6th–early 7th century
Diam. 1⅜ in. (3.5 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
Ex coll.: Stanislas Baron, Paris
17.192.29

filling of clay, sand, or lime between the two plates. Although disk fibulae are usually round, quatrefoil examples are frequent, and rosette and octagonal shapes also occur. On all forms, the gold plate is very thin and is decorated with filigree, glass paste, or precious stones. This example of a gold rosette disk fibula, studded with nine pieces of brown or greenish paste and decorated with filigree (Fig. 24), is not a common type, but comparable examples datable to the seventh century have been found in northern France, the middle Rhine region, and northern Italy.

In the second half of the seventh century, a new type of gold disk fibula developed, characterized by a raised central boss called an umbo and sometimes two or three different levels on the surface of the brooch. On an example from Niederbreisig (Fig. 25), the umbo is studded with an opal surrounded by four triangular pieces of red glass forming a Greek

24. Rosette-shaped gold disk fibula

Bronze; gold; brown and greenish paste
7th century
Diam. 1⅜ in. (3.5 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
Ex coll.: Stanislas Baron, Paris
17.192.92



25. Gold disk fibula

Bronze, gold, glass, paste, opal, iron (pin)
Second half 7th century
Diam. 1 13/16 in. (4.6 cm.)
Provenance: Niederbreisig, Germany
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
17.193.70

cross. Around the rim are eight larger bosses, alternately round and square, with the interstices decorated with gold wire in circles and reverse spirals. Also current in the second half of the seventh century were the large gold quatrefoil fibulae characterized by a cross with equal arms and an equal number of square, round, and triangular pastes (Fig. 26). The order and symmetry of the designs are striking. They were created by Burgundian and Frankish goldsmiths and found their way to the Rhine region from Burgundian workshops. Because the majority of extant examples have been found around Niederbreisig, they are referred to as the Niederbreisig type. The Metropolitan Museum collection has several examples, but this is the finest.

Among the most frequently encountered items in Frankish, Alemannic, Burgundian, and Gothic graves are belt buckles inlaid with red glass paste (Fig. 27). Their exact area of origin cannot be determined, but they

26. Quatrefoil gold disk fibula

Bronze, gold, paste, glass, pearls
Second half 7th century
Diam.: 2⅜ in. (6.1 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France (Férebrianges or Petit Troussy?)
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
Ex coll.: Stanislas Baron, Paris
17.191.134

27. Buckle

Bronze, paste, gold
Ca. 500
1½ × ⅞ in. (3.8 × 2.2 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
17.192.114

28. Buckle

Iron, silver, niello, brass
7th century
L. 8¾ in. (22.3 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
17.191.325

are usually found in rich warrior graves of about A.D. 500 and reflect the close ties between the Germanic tribes of the Danube area and those of the Frankish-Alemannic region.

Iron buckles inlaid with precious metals, usually silver and brass, became fashionable in the seventh century. Some of the variants originated in the Burgundian region, the central area of production at the time. One example (Fig. 28) is decorated with an interlace design executed in brass against a background of silver-foil plating. These large buckles were made for wide and heavy leather belts, which were worn by both women and men. Their decoration of inlaid metal on metal is sometimes referred to as "damascening," because the technique was used and made famous in medieval Damascus, Syria, although it had been practiced for centuries in the ancient Far East and Near East. The technique requires cutting a deep groove with a sharp instrument in the base metal, fitting wire of

another metal into the groove, and hammering it down. The silver plate that usually forms the background for the inlaid pattern was attached by roughening and scoring the surface of the iron and then hammering the silver foil onto it. The design on Figure 28 is an abstraction of interlaced dragons, found in many pieces displaying the animal style; on many of these buckles the dragons' heads are visible.

Because flat openwork disk-shaped plaques have been found lying near the knee- and shinbones in women's graves in the Rhineland and northeastern France from 500–600, they are thought to have been worn hanging from the belt for the suspension of implements and other possessions. This particular example (Fig. 29) has three short bars connecting the outer circle to a triskelion representing the whirling symbol of the sun. The ends of the triskelion have dragonlike heads with open mouths.

Rock crystal balls, mounted in bronze, silver, or gold bands and also suspended from the belt by means of a long chain, have been found in Germany, Austria, Bohemia, England, France, and even occasionally in Langobardic graves. They are always found in burials of the wealthy, and

29. Openwork plaque

Bronze, silvered
6th century
Diam. 2⅞ in. (7.3 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
17.191.254

the majority of them date from about 550–600. The Museum's example is set in a nineteenth-century gold mount (Fig. 30). Thought to bring power and good luck as well as to guard against fever, rock crystal was worn for its magical qualities. Although the sphere was a talisman for peoples of the Far East, the custom of wearing spheres of semiprecious stones in association with the sword can be traced in the West from the first century B.C. through 700 A.D. Rock crystal was most popular among the Huns and later the Alemanni, Franks, and Anglo-Saxons.

Several S-shaped fibulae or brooches in the Museum collection illustrate again the ties between Franks and Langobards. A distinctive feature of these fibulae is the birds' heads forming the terminals of the S. The origin of this form is not quite clear, but some scholars believe it was developed under Gothic influence. The type is chiefly Langobardic, although Frankish and Alemannic imitations are prevalent. The Museum houses one example from the Pannonian phase of Langobardic history (Fig. 31) on which the surface ornamentation consists of a deeply incised spiral design, while the eyes of the birds' heads are indicated by a boss with a dot in

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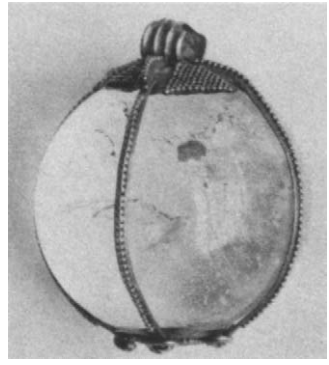
30. Spherical amulet

Rock crystal, gold mount
Amulet, probably second half 6th century; mount 19th century (probably made by Carlo Guiliano, 1831–95)
H. 1¾ in. (4.5 cm.)
Provenance unknown
Purchase, 1922, Rogers Fund
22.139.51



31. S-shaped fibula

Bronze gilt
Mid-6th century
H. 1 1/16 in. (2.6 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
17.192.39

the center rather than by the usual stone. A second example, in gilt bronze, is typical of S-fibulae from Langobardic Italy (Fig. 32); its closest parallels having been excavated in Langobardic cemeteries like that at Cividale. On this type the eyes of the birds' heads are indicated by round pieces of almandine and the S is inlaid with rectangular pieces of the same stone. Two other examples are Frankish imitations of Langobardic prototypes, decorated with incised parallel lines arranged in groups and the eyes inlaid with circular pieces of almandine (Figs. 33, 34). Both types were also made in the region of present-day Germany and Switzerland.

Another type of fibula that developed from the S-shaped brooch is the

32. S-shaped fibula

Bronze gilt, almandines
Early 7th century
H. 1½ in. (3.8 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
17.191.199

33. S-shaped fibula

Bronze gilt, almandines
Early 7th century
H. 1⅜ in. (3.5 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
Ex coll.: Stanislas Baron, Paris
17.192.5

34. S-shaped fibula

Bronze gilt, red paste, iron (pin)
First half 7th century
H. 1½ in. (3.8 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
17.191.80

oval fibula; this pair (Fig. 35) again is a Frankish imitation of a Langobardic prototype: an openwork design decorated with incised parallel lines on bronze gilt, studded with four circular pieces of almandine. It can be dated to the second half of the sixth century.

In contrast to the Frankish jewelry, for which bronze was predominantly used, Langobardic jewelry was often made with gold and silver. Three magnificent fibulae in the Museum's collection were produced by the Langobards when they occupied Italy from 568 to 774. The first is a large gold disk fibula (Fig. 36) that was probably originally attached to a silver backplate, now missing. It is decorated with a central boss and eight

35. Pair of oval fibulae

Bronze gilt, almandines
Second half 6th century
H. (of each) 1⅜ in. (3.5 cm.)
Provenance: Northern France
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
Ex coll.: Stanislas Baron, Paris
17.192.36,37

36. Disk fibula

Gold
7th century
Diam. 3 in. (7.6 cm.)
Provenance unknown
Purchase, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1952
Ex coll.: Sieck, Munich
52.30

surrounding repoussé bosses ornamented in filigree with squares containing a circle and intersticial motifs of addorsed filigree spirals. The central boss and the bosses around the rim are separated by a roped ridge; twisted and braided wires form the outer border of the disk. The type was current in the seventh century. Some Langobardic brooches of this type have colored stones in raised settings, as on an example (Fig. 37) where the central boss is an ancient onyx cameo representing a female figure, probably Nox or Proserpine, in a three-horse chariot waving a torch or scourge. As on the previous piece, there is a central accent and the rest of the ornament is based on a symmetrical pattern.

On a large bow fibula of silver gilt and niello (Fig. 38), the radiate head is surrounded by small, highly abstract heads of animals, some of which are missing. The design on the body is composed of chip-carved zoomorphic forms. Two birds' heads project from each side of the body.

37. Disk fibula

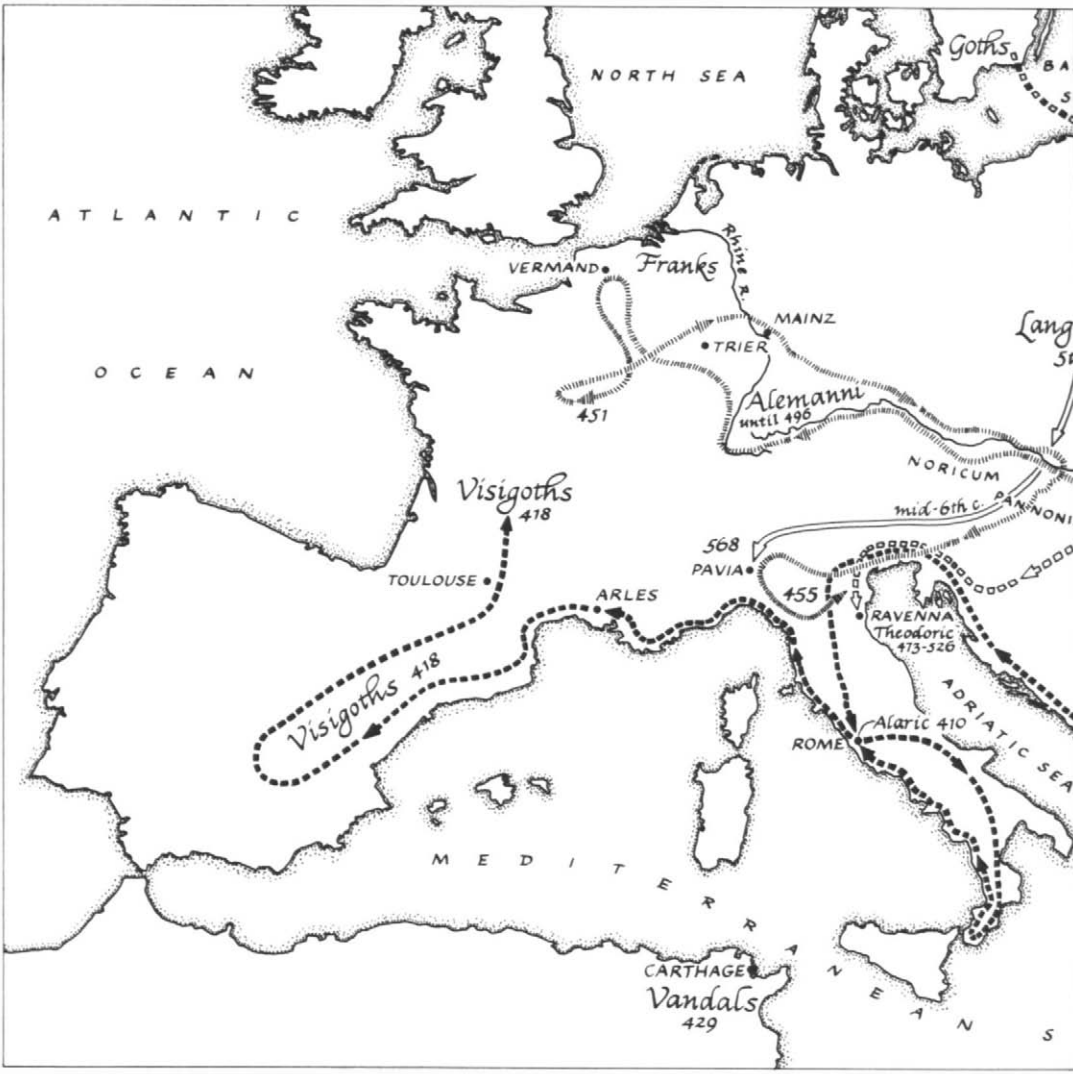
Gold, onyx cameo, paste
7th century
Diam. 2 7/16 in. (6.2 cm.)
Provenance: Northern Italy
Purchased by subscription, 1895
95.15.101

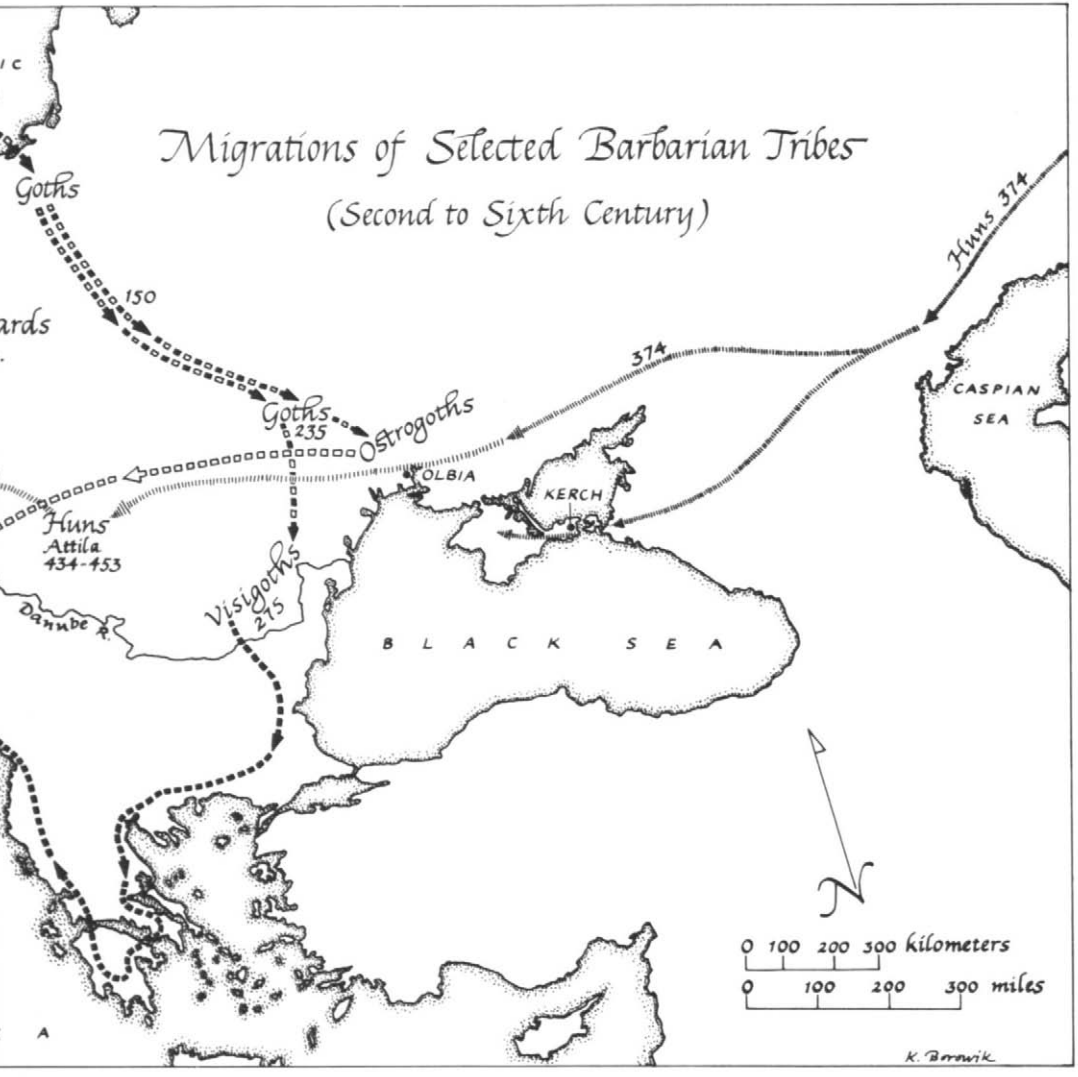
38. Bow fibula

Silver, gilt, niello
First half 7th century
6 1/4 × 3 3/4 in. (15.9 × 9.5 cm.)
Provenance unknown
Purchase, Pulitzer Bequest Fund, 1955
55.56

The footplate shows an abstract interpretation of a large boar's head with a medial axis and almond-shaped eyes. This brooch belongs among the largest examples current in the first half of the seventh century.

Although the bulk of the Museum's holdings were acquired in 1917 as a gift from J. Pierpont Morgan, some of the major migration objects in the Metropolitan Museum have been purchased by means of generous funds from donors, notably Isaac D. Fletcher; and several important pieces have been given by Alastair Bradley Martin. The Museum's collection not only represents the largest and most extensive ensemble of its kind in the United States, but it also ranks high among the most important collections in Europe. It provides a rich and broad foundation for the understanding and interpretation of the Museum's fine and extensive collection of medieval metalwork.


NORTH SEA
Goths
ATLANTIC
OCEAN
VERMAND
Franks
Rhine R.
MAINZ
TRIER
Alemanni
until 496
451
NORICUM
mid-6th c.
Visigoths
418
568
PAVIA
455
TOULOUSE
ARLES
RAVENNA
Theodoric
473-526
Visigoths 418
ADRIATIC SEA
Alaric 410
ROME
MEDITERRANEAN
CARTHAGE
Vandals
429


Migrations of Selected Barbarian Tribes
(Second to Sixth Century)
Goths
150
Goths
235
Ostrogoths
374
Huns 374
CASPIAN SEA
OLBIA
KERCH
Huns
Attila
434-453
Visigoths
275
Danube R.
B L A C K S E A
N
0 100 200 300 kilometers
0 100 200 300 miles
K. Bronwik

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