

BURIALS IN THE UPPER TISA BASIN ATTRIBUTED TO THE EARLY SLAVS (CA. SECOND HALF OF THE 6TH CENTURY – FIRST HALF OF THE 7TH CENTURY)

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Abstract

There are few flat cremation graves in the geographic area of the upper basin of the Tisa River which can be dated between the second half of the 6th century and the first half of the 7th century, and none of them are recent findings. The current article re-examines these graves and makes new observations in relation to their location, the internal topography of the graveyards (or smaller clusters of graves), the appearance of the graves and the scarce inventories, and, last but not least, their chronological placement.

Keywords: Flat cremation graves; Upper Tisza area; data now known; dating; Early Slaves.

Preliminary clarifications

A simple examination of the map reveals the positioning of the upper Tisa region as a geographic entity located on the north-eastern periphery of the Carpathian (Carpathian – Danubian) Basin, now a separated area between the frontiers of four modern states. Aside from the possibility of having a very precise geographic delimitation, this territory was centred on the upper segment of the Tisa River and its tributaries, being bordered by the north-eastern bent of the Carpathians. Nevertheless, the local landscape characteristics and the diversity of the natural conditions in general allow the identification of a series of micro-regions, but in essence this is a unitary territory whose surface is relatively evenly covered by mountains, hills, plains and, in the past, several marshes in lowland areas (Fig. 1). Regarding the delimitation of the territory which would correspond to the Upper Tisa basin, most archaeologists have taken into consideration, although rarely in an explicit manner, south-eastern Slovakia (centred on the upper basins of the Bodrog and Hernád rivers), Zakarpattia region in Ukraine,

Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, and the north-eastern part of the Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplen County in north-eastern Hungary, and north-western Romania, the latter a geographical area anchored by the middle-lower basin of the Someş River, but crossed to the north by the segment with which the Tisza River follows its place of origin. Irrespective of the historical period, numerous common elements can be noted in the evolution of the habitat, a situation which was determined by the role of this territory in connection with the regions from the northern and north-eastern vicinity of the Carpathians through the Veretsky, Laborec or Dukla passes, to mention only the most important ones².

A radical change of the archaeological environment, which included the spread of cremation as a funerary rite, occurred in the entire area of the Upper Tisa, and also – at different times – in most of the regions in which the Slavs were attested. It has been already noted that the definition of “ethnicity” itself is problematic, being a recent construct that was meant to sustain cultural identities. The superposition of the term “archaeological culture” (as a manifestation that was archaeologically identified) over an entity having a decisive “ethnic” content remains a thoroughly questionable attempt³.

The term “Early Slavic period/age” remains equivocal in what concerns its chronological limits, as well as its precise contents. In principle the “Early Slavs” should represent an intermediary link be-

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² This area was sometimes considered a real *via gentium* during the Roman imperial period. See Dumitraşcu 1997, 351–52.

³ A comprehensive analysis and synthetic image of the entire problem, with the solution of the so-called “emblemic style” of the material culture (according to Polly Wiessner) to allow the identification of ethnic boundaries: Curta 2001a, 6–35. At the same author a remarkable examination of such complex issues concerning the Early Slavs: Curta 2021). Only as examples of the variety of opinions concerning even the ethno-genesis of the Slavs, with references to the bibliography of this problem: Pleterski 1996; Parczewski 2000; Barford 2001, 30–34; Curta 2002; Mamzler 2004; Tabaczyński 2005. See also Platonova 2016.



A



B

Fig. 1. The Upper Tisza Basin indicated in the wider area of the Carpatho-Danubian basin. Draws attention to its position in relation to the north-eastern Carpathians and the passers-by that cross this segment of the mountains (A). The same geographical area of the Upper Tisza today intersected by the borders of several states; more important cities are also indicated (B—processing of an image taken from Google Earth).

tween the “proto-Slavs” and those of the Early Medieval period when their evolution in distinct territories and even in state entities is already known⁴. The term “Early Slavic period” is mainly justified for the regions in which the Early Slavs developed their own medieval economic and social-political structures⁵. Chronologically, and according to the specific local situations, the specialists usually take into consideration the interval between the middle of the

⁴ From the perspective of this issue, linguistic data and literary information that can be brought into discussion, along with archeology, are critically examined in Curta 2021, 21–68.

⁵ Bialeková 1980.

5th century (when the late Roman imperial cultures disappear) and the middle/end of the 7th century⁶ or the 6th – 7th centuries⁷. Although the changes that occurred in the material culture (mainly in pottery) offer a relative chronological reference point for the final limit, regarding the starting point it is necessary to note that some variables existed in different areas affected by Slavic colonization, which determined different chronological sequences, one good example being the territory of Romania. The first Slavs could not have arrived at the same date across the entire large area in which their presence was

However, the term “Early Slavs” should be correctly defined using a set of variables, more precisely from the historical (written sources), archaeological, ethnographic, and not least, linguistic perspective. Since some of these criteria cannot be applied to this early period (the 5th – 7th centuries), one must recognize that the used term is artificial and academic⁸. Non-Slavic communities also existed in at least some of the regions in which the Slavs settled, so in any given situation this concept can only be used with due caution.

Regarding the geographical area now studied a horizon is considered whose point of gravity should correspond to the 6th century (maybe starting with its middle third) and the first half of the 7th century. The dating can be called into question in light of research in the settlements, although those known so far are not very numerous, and were investigated to varying degree (Fig. 2). Attempts to establish more precise chronological framings have been fundamentally supported by the examination of pottery (mostly made without the potter’s wheel), which is why the solutions proposed so far remain questionable, and mostly only aid in building a real database for future reviews (of course, the results of alternative dating methods would be important)⁹. The following period gradually

⁶ For instance, Godłowski 1980 and Parczewski 1993, 131–140.

⁷ For instance, Szykuliński 1991 and Fusek 1994. For the identification of the final dating of the Prague culture, archaeologically and according to the regional specifics, see Gavritukhin 2009, 8–10.

⁸ Barford 2001, 27–28. Regarding the Early Slavs, this author delimitate the end of this period in the 9th century. At the same time, in German literature the upper limit of the period is placed towards the end of the same century (for instance Dulinicz 2006, 15).

⁹ In terms of relative chronology, four stages were previously proposed for the territory of Slovakia, and in absolute chronology delimited between the first half of the 6th century (but reaching the final part of the 5th centu-

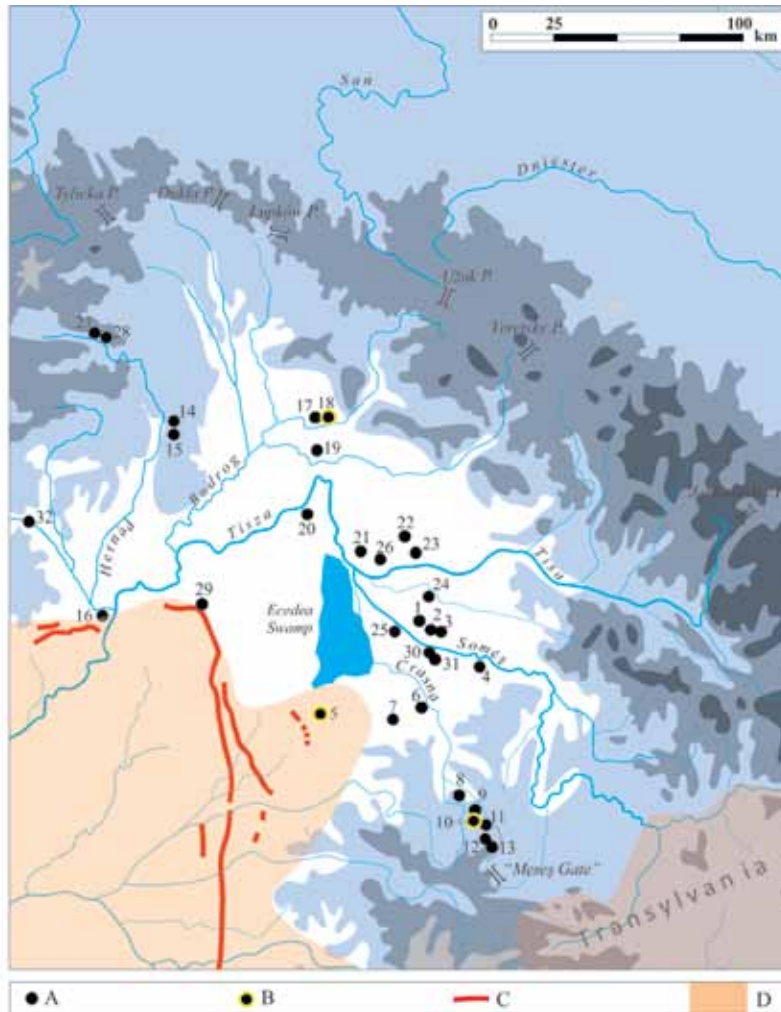


Fig. 2. Sites that can relate to the presence of Early Slavs in the area of the Upper Tisza (about the middle third of the 6th century – the first half of the 7th century). A—Settlements. B—Cremation graves. C—The so-called ‘Sarmatian walls’. D—The territory included in the Gepid Kingdom, and in the next period in the Avar Khaganate. 1—Peleşu Mare—Liget/Grădina lui Ilarion (RO, jud. Satu Mare ; Stanciu 2011, 358–59 no. 28). 2—Lazuri—Lubi-tag (RO, jud. Satu Mare; Stanciu 2011, 331–57 no. 26). 3—Lazuri—Râtul lui Béla/Nagy Béla rét (RO, jud. Satu Mare; Stanciu 2011, 357–58 no. 27). 4—Culciu Mare—Zöldmező (RO, jud. Satu Mare; Stanciu 2011, 330 no. 18). 5—Pişcolt—Homokos domb/Nisipărie (RO, jud. Satu Mare; Némethi 1983, 139–40 no. 4, Fig. 8/5–6.9–12, Fig. 10/3–4.6.6–7; Stanciu 2011, 359–60 no. 29). 6—Acăş—Râtul lui Vereş (RO, jud. Satu Mare; unpublished excavation, year 2000, János Némethi, mention in Stanciu 2011, 320 no. 1). 7—Tăşnad—Sere (RO, jud. Satu Mare; Stanciu and Virag 2013). 8—Badon—Doaşte (RO, jud. Sălaj; Stanciu 2011, 320–22 no. 3; Stanciu and Băcuceţ-Crişan 2018). 9—Zalău—Dromet SA 1/ ISICIP 1 (RO, jud. Sălaj; Stanciu 2011, 388–89 no. 49). 10—Zalău—Dromet SA 2/ISICIP 2 (RO, jud. Sălaj; Stanciu 2011, 389–93 no. 50). 11—Zalău—Bulevardul Mihai Viteazul 104-106 (RO, jud. Sălaj; Stanciu 2011, 370–88 no. 47). 12—Zalău—Farkas-domb/Dealul lupului (RO, jud. Sălaj; Stanciu 2011, 393–95 no. 51). 13—Zalău—Valea Mâţii/Tăneiu lui Winkler (RO, jud. Sălaj; Stanciu 2011, 387–88 no. 48). 14—Nižná Myšľa—Alamenev (SK, okr. Košice-okolie; Fusek, Olexa, and Zábajník 2010). 15—Ždaňa—Vyšné pole (okr. Košice-okolie; Fusek, Olexa, and Zábajník 2010, 338 Fig. 1, 350–51, 352 Fig. 16, 355). 16—Oszlár (HU, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén megye; Fusek, Olexa, and Zábajník 2010, 352 Fig. 16 and note 15). 17, 18—Uzhhorod—Halaho (UA, Zakarpatska oblast; Penyak 1980, 31 no. 6, 33; Penyak S.I. and Penyak P.S. 2013, 204–05 no. 3). 19—Galoch (UA, Zakarpatska oblast; Penyak 1988, 174–78). 20—Kisvárda—TV-Torony (HU, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg megye; Istvánovits 2001; Samu 2017, 158 Fig. 2, 167 Pl. 3/1–3, 170 Pl. 6). 21—Dedovo III (UA, Zakarpatska oblast; Cherkun 1994–95). 22—Ivanivka/Yanoshi—Odehashov (UA, Zakarpatska oblast; Kotighoroshko 1987, 350; Kotighoroshko 2008, 328 Fig. 70/5; Fusek, Olexa, and Zábajník 2010, 352 Fig. 16, 353). 23—Berehovo (UA, Zakarpatska oblast; Penyak 1980, 178–81). 24—Garbolc (HU, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg megye; Fusek, Olexa, and Zábajník 2010, 352 Fig. 16 and note 15). 25—Csenger—Sanykertből (HU, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg megye; Fábian and Pintye 2008, 3; Stanciu 2011, 467, Appendix 13/2, no. 57). 26—Beregdaróc—Zsid (HU, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg megye; Pintye 2010; Stanciu 2011, 395 Fig. 175/4). 27—Spišský Štvrtok—Pod Šibeničnou horou (SK, okr. Levoča; Kučerová, Soják, Kušnierová, and Fecko 2012, 19–22). 28—Iliašovce—Za hostincom (Kučerová, Soják, Kušnierová, and Fecko 2012, 22–23). 29—Hajdúnánás—Verestenger-járás (HU, Hajdu-Bihar megye; Fodor 2012). 30—Satu Mare—Bypass road/Site 5 (RO, jud. Satu Mare; preventive archaeological research 2018, results to be processed). 31—Satu Mare—Bypass road/Site 7 (RO, jud. Satu Mare; preventive archaeological research 2018, results to be processed). 32—Sájoszentpeter—Vasúti őrház (HU, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén megye; Samu 2017, 165–66 Pl. 1–2, 167 Pl. 3/4–6, 169 Pl. 5, 171 Pl. 7).

became more homogeneous from the archaeological point of view and the difference between the area inhabited by the Avars and the remaining territory was primarily defined by the characteristics of the funerary contexts (Fig. 15)¹⁰.

The available information from Transcarpathian Ukraine, south-eastern Slovakia, north-eastern Hungary, and the north-western part of Romania is limited, although it has been presumed that an even earlier Slavic horizon should have existed on the other side of the Carpathians, in comparison with the Central European territories, structured here after the cessation of Germanic habitation¹¹. According to Gabriel Fusek, the chronological interval corresponding to the second half of the 7th century does not truly belong to the Early Slavic period but is more likely marking the cessation phase of this culture¹². In connection with the funeral customs, it is necessary to specify that during the next period in the entire Upper Tisa basin barrow cemeteries also appeared, the practice of incineration being continued (Fig. 15)¹³.

Flat cremation graves from the period we are interested in are few. The older discoveries from Uzhhorod in Ukrainian Zakarpattia (two graves)

ry), and ca. year 700 (Fusek 1994, 91–115). Three stages have been indicated for the similar horizon known in the north-western part of Romania, distributed between ca. the middle of the 6th century and the first third or half of the 7th century (Stanciu 2011, 282–301, 580–88). The chronological sequencing of the early slavic discoveries is in most cases problematic. Better dated components of the inventories exist only for the 5th century (if this ethnic identification is accepted) and the 7th century. Two studies focusing on chronological problems: Gavrituhkin 1997 and Gavrituhkin 2005. The contexts belonging to the 6th century were usually dated based on pottery or of some stratigraphic sequences.

¹⁰ For instance, Zoll-Adamikowa 1990.

¹¹ Godlowski 1979, 230–31.

¹² Fusek 1996, 37–38. In relation to the whole area of the Upper Tisa, a more certain definition of the second half of the 7th century is still unclear, with the transformations that took place at that time, presumably the progress of economic structures, as suggested by the advance of the slow-wheel pottery.

¹³ Penyak 1980, 78–92; Stanciu 1999; Hanuliak 2001; Penyak S.I. and Penyak P.S. 2013, 213–17. The tumulus cremation cemetery (?) from Zemplénagárd, in the north-eastern part of the Bodrog Plain, which seems to begin in the 7th century (?), is an interesting discovery (Révész and Wolf 1993; Wolf 1996). Still, the situation there remains unclear in what concerns both the so early dating and the type of this site, as it can be in fact a settlement. For comments see Stanciu 2011, 98 n. 685.

were not presented in sufficiently clear terms, but their dating in the 6th–7th centuries can be considered (Fig. 3)¹⁴. The earliest graves of this kind from eastern Slovakia can be dated to the turn of the 8th century¹⁵. In northeastern Hungary the situation now known is similar; a cemetery consisting of flat cremation burials with urns dated to the 7th – 8th centuries was identified in Karos¹⁶. Regardless of the explanations, the situation in the south-eastern part of the Upper Tisa area, based on the lower basin of the Someş River (the main tributary of the Tisa River in this segment), is better known. As the field research progressed, the number of settlements included in a local horizon called „Lazuri-Pișcolt” increased, and along with the cremation graves previously published from Pișcolt, there are now reports from Zalău–Dromet S.A. 2/I.S.C.I.P. 2 (Fig. 2)¹⁷.

It appears that very few funerary contexts of this kind are known so far in the geographical area of interest, but it should be noted that simple, shallow cremations are difficult to identify today. Natural soil erosion or other artificial changes in the landscape, especially repeated agricultural works overtime, are factors that make them difficult to identify on the ground.

¹⁴ Penyak 1980, 31–32 no. 6, 34 Fig. 10/1–2, 77–78 no. 35, Fig. 32–33; Penyak S.I. and Penyak P.S. 2013, 204 no. 3, 212–13. Sometimes ago the higher density of habitation was noted in the south-western corner of Transcarpathian Ukraine, although not a single artefact surely dated to the 6th or 6th–7th centuries was registered (Kotigoroshko 1974). Slightly later, a horizon probably belonging to the 6th or 6th–7th centuries was identified in the settlements from Holmok, Cherveneve and Chepa, but in the majority of cases the handmade pottery is associated with the one produced on the slow wheel, a situation that is more likely suggesting the 7th century (Kotigoroshko 1977; Penyak 1980, 33, 35–45, 46 Fig. 16, 22–24 no. 2, 24–30 no. 3, 152–53; Kotighoroshko 2008, 317 Fig. 67). See also Penyak S.I. and Penyak P.S. 2013. The settlement from Haloch was identified in 1986, and that of Berehove in 1988, both being dated to the 6th century (Penyak 1986 and Penyak 1988), similarly to the settlement from Didovo III (Cherkun 1994–95). Another possible early settlement exists in the surroundings of Ivanivci (Fusek, Ol-exa, and Zábojník 2010, 352 Fig. 16, 353).

¹⁵ Béreš 1996, 135. An earlier clarification also indicates the lack of early slavic necropolises in the mountainous area of Slovakia, the Košice basin and the plain in eastern Slovakia (Fusek 1994, 138–43, 310).

¹⁶ Wolf 1996, 59 (but it has been very briefly reported).

¹⁷ Regarding the northwestern part of Romania, the existence of another cemetery at Tiream–Dealul cănepii/ Kenderes halom (Satu Mare County), cannot be proved. Under question, proposal in Stanciu 2011, 364–65 no. 41.

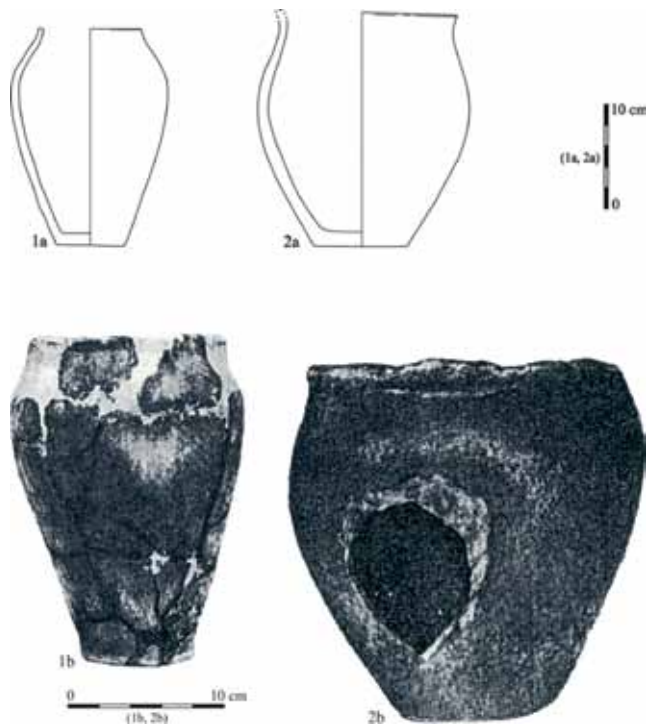


Fig. 3. Urns in the two tombs at Uzhhorod–Halaho (Penyak 1980, 34 Fig. 10/1–2 and Fig. 32–33).

Location of cemeteries and (possible) observations regarding their internal topography, the appearance of graves

Of course, it is natural for these burial places to be in the vicinity of settlements, although the latter are not always known. The horizontal extension of these sites remains unknown, as none of them have been fully researched, and often some of the graves – especially the shallow ones – have been destroyed over time, the information being unrecoverable¹⁸.

The two graves in Uzhhorod–Halaho (Ukraine, Zakarpattia Region) were formerly found on a terrace of the Uzh River, also from there being signaled a settlement inhabited in the 6th or 7th century (Fig. 3)¹⁹. Three cremation graves found at Tiszadob–Sziget, already published, but that were – possibly wrongly – dated to the Roman period, draw attention from the north-eastern part of Hungary (Fig. 4–5)²⁰. Chronological framing of these graves

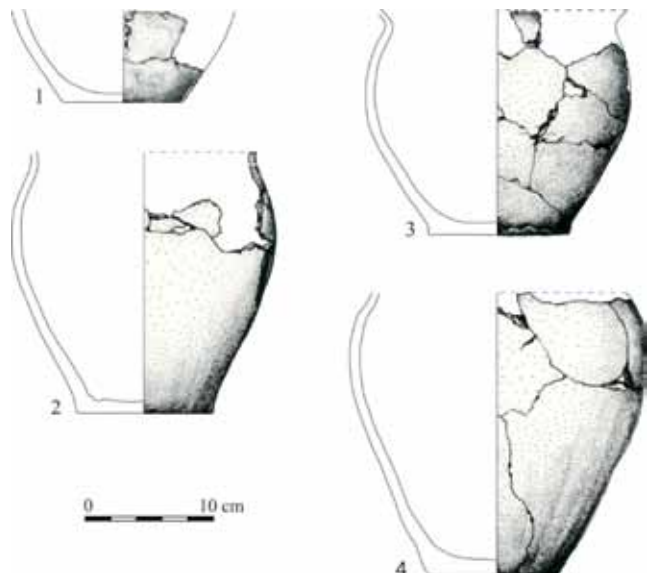


Fig. 4. Cremation graves in Tiszadob–Sziget, with proposed dating for the Roman period, but in uncertain terms (Istvánovits 1993, 115 Fig. 18). Graves 16/a (1), 32 (2–3), and 37 (4). All urns are handmade.

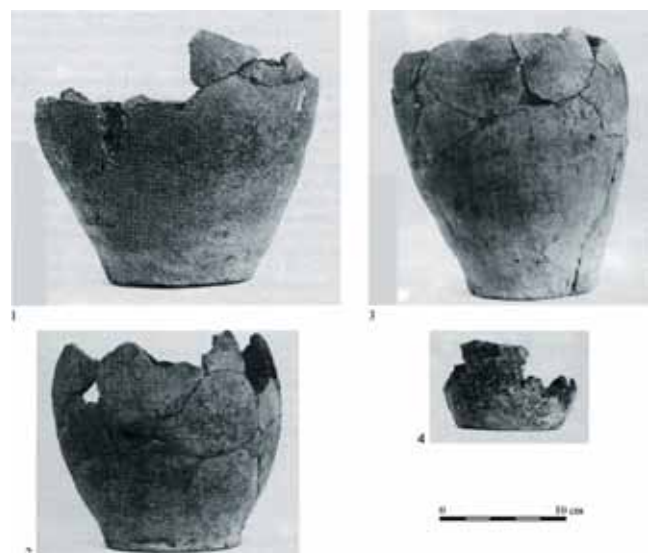


Fig. 5. Cremation graves in Tiszadob–Sziget, with proposed dating for the Roman period, but in uncertain terms (Istvánovits 1993, 119–120 Figs. 20–23). Graves 32 (1–2), 37 (3), and 16/a (4). All urns are handmade.

¹⁸ In the site from Zaláu–Dromet 2, an area of only 776.50 m² was investigated.

¹⁹ Penyak 1980, 31 no. 6, 34 Fig. 10.1–2, 77–78, Figs. 32–33. Two handmade urns, formally compared to Prague–Korchak pottery (Fig. 3). In Penyak 1980, the vessel of Fig. 10/1 (respectively Fig. 3/1a–b now presented) is indicated as being found in the settlement, but at Fig. 32 appears as a funerary find.

²⁰ This refers to three handmade urns and the lower part of a fourth vessel (graves 16/a, 32, 37), and only burnt bones were found in them. They were presented together

with several inhumations, the latter belonging to the early stage of the Migration period (end of the 4th century and first half of the 5th century). The reference to the Roman period in the case of the three cremations is not supported in definitive terms, especially since no artifacts were found indicating a specific environment and a specific period (Istvánovits 1992, 90 and Istvánovits 1993, 107, 114, 134 n. 206). There is also a settlement from the Roman period, and the presence of graves in the same place would not be a very common situation. The poverty of the cremation grave's inventories attributed to the early Slavs is well known. However, a stray find has been reported from the Tiszadob site, namely a fire steel (Istvánovits

remains uncertain, so they were not included in this examination.

The cemetery from Pişcolt (Piskolt)–Homokos domb/Nisipărie (Romania, Satu Mare County) was identified and published long time ago²¹. Seven burials were investigated, on a sand dune located near a former riverbed, of which only one has an urn, whereas in the remaining contexts the cinerary remains were placed directly into the pit. Although supplementary details cannot be provided, one may presume that the burials were more numerous, some of them being destroyed during the extraction of sand or repeated agricultural works. The settlement corresponding to the cemetery remained unknown. It should be noted that the graves are located on the site of a large La Tène (Celtic) and from the Bronze Age cemetery (Figs. 6)²².

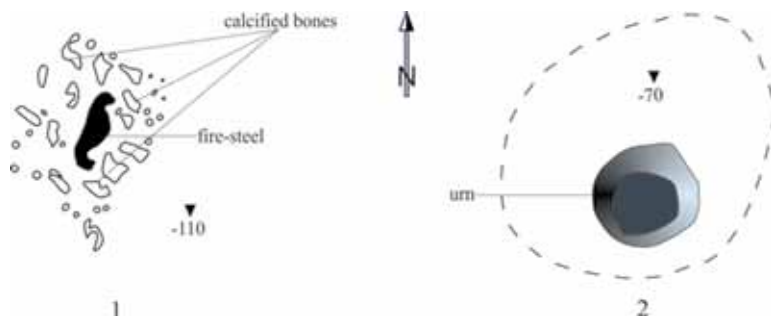


Fig. 6. Pişcolt/Piskolt–Homokos domb/Nisipărie (Satu Mare County, north-western Romania), graves 18 (1) and 21 (2). Depths are specified in centimeters from the current surface; horizontally, no precise dimensions. It is a reconstitution based on available information (takeover from Stanciu 2011, 727 Pl. 117/1–2).

1993, Fig. 17/9), like the two specimens found in connection with the graves at Pişcolt (dug in a Celtic cemetery), and which can point in the direction of the 6th–7th centuries (Stanciu 2011, 278). From the morphological point of view, but also from the other aspects, the urns from Tiszadob have the best parallels in the pottery of the settlements connected with the Early Slavic horizon, starting with the known material from the Upper Tisza area (Fusek 1994; Stanciu 2011, 171–245). Tiszadob village (in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County) is located on the Tisza River, not far from the border with Slovakia, Ukraine, and Romania. During the Avar period, the micro-region was in the immediate vicinity of the territory directly controlled by the Avars or in an interference area.

²¹ Némethi 1983, 139–40 no. 4, Fig. 8/5–6.9–12, Fig. 10/3–4.6–7; Némethi 1988, 39, 49, 51 Fig. 1, 139; Stanciu 2011, 359–60 no. 29.

²² The site is located on an oval dune measuring 254 × 122 m, the long axis being oriented in the NW–SE direction. The author of the research states that the graves were found in the north-western extremity of the dune, but that they were not recorded on the plan of the large Celtic cemetery situated here. Because the graves were recorded in the order of discovery, then the distribution of Celtic funerary features with appropriate numbers (that was the rule), we can presume though a different horizontal spread of the Early Slavic graves. Those numbered 18 and 21 were located at the northern end of the dune, four graves were found in its south-western side (81, 83, 84, 87) and one in the central-northern part (197), this one probably related to graves 18 and 21. If this was the actual situation, then a distance of around 150 cm was found between the graves from the northern corner of the dune and those from the south-western corner, an interval within which no other Early Slavic funerary features were uncovered, except the one numbered 197, closer to the northern group. It is possible that other graves from the northern end and

The cemetery from Zalău–Dromet S.A. 2/I. S.C.I.P. 2 (Romania, Sălaj County) was more recently investigated (in 2000); on the same place there were dwellings from the Neolithic and Bronze Age, also from the Roman period²³. Is located on the south-eastern part of a plateau (having an altitude of 250 m) created by the hills bordering the valley of the Zalău River to the south-west. The corresponding settlement (Zalău–Dromet S.A. 1/I.S.C.I.P. 124) is located at only 300 m to the north-west. Not far away, at about 800 m to the south-east, is the settlement from Zalău–Bul. Mihai Viteazul (Figs. 2), so, we do not have to ignore the possibility that the cemetery has been used by both communities. Only a part of the cemetery was investigated (including eight burials), so any presumption regarding the surface size, internal evolution or estimated total number of burials is risky. The graves no. 1, 6 and 7, which are closely located, seem to form a group, whereas the remaining funerary contexts are scattered, with distances of 8.5 to 12.3 m between

its north-western edge of the dune were destroyed by the exploitation of the sand. Potentially, the existence of two groups of graves (one northern and the other southern) can be presumed, otherwise we could be dealing with a cemetery that included a much larger number of features than are known, also situated in the space between the two already mentioned groups. In such a situation, it is possible that the graves had not been identified, more so as they contained only few calcified bones and the contour of the pits was not visible, or that they had been destroyed (precisely the central part of the dune was flattened following repeated agricultural work).

²³ Băcucet-Crişan D., Matei, Pop, Băcucet-Crişan S., and Stanciu 2001, and especially Stanciu 2011, 389–393 no. 50.

²⁴ The name given by the villagers to this place remained unspecified. It remained signalled by the names of a construction company, respectively a former farm from the time of communism.

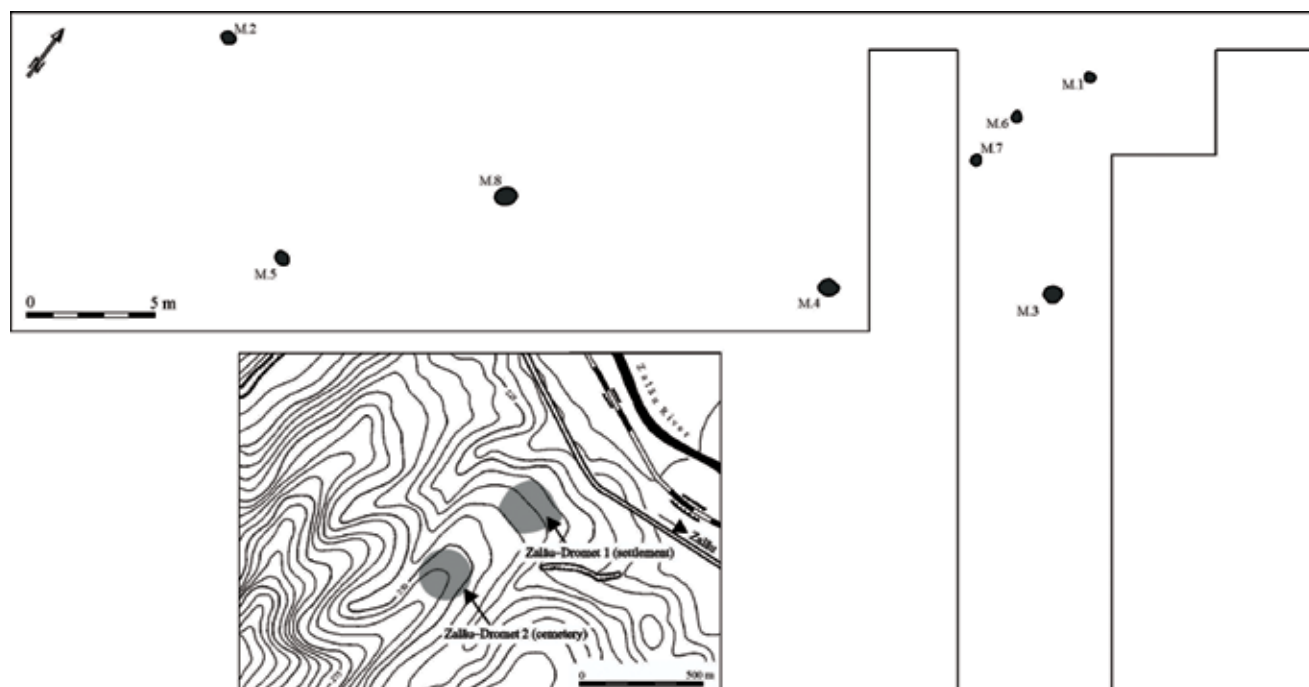


Fig. 7. Zalău–Dromet SA 2/ISCIPI 2 cemetery (Sălaj County, northwestern Romania), partially investigated (Stanciu 2011, 783 Fig. 172).

1	2		3 (cm)	4 (cm)	5	6	7
	a	b					
I/18	—	—	—	130	B	Fig. 10/4	—
I/21	—	—	—	70	A	Fig. 10/5	mature; man + woman
I/81	—	—	—	80	B	—	—
I/83	—	—	—	90	B	—	—
I/84	—	—	—	42	B	—	—
I/87	—	—	—	38	B	—	—
I/197	—	—	—	120	B	—	—
II/1	circular	concave bottom	42 × 34	32/35	A	—	adult; »man
II/2	oval	concave bottom	58 × 50	38	A	—	40-50 years; »man
II/3	circular	concave bottom	80	40	A	Fig. 11/9	child (»12 years); »girl
II/4	oval	concave bottom	72 × 62	34	A	Fig. 11/10	mature; woman
II/5	oval	flat bottom	57 × 46	45	A	—	adolescent/adult; woman
II/6	oval	concave bottom	46 × 38	35	A	—	—
II/7	oval	flat bottom	44 × 40	25	A (?)	—	—
II/8	oval	flat bottom	20/25	25	A	—	—

Table 2. Cemeteries from Pişcolt–Homokosdomb (I) and Zalău–Dromet S.A. 2 (II). Characteristics of the graves. The listed depths are related to the modern uppermost layer. 1—Grave number. 2—Shape of the pit (a: horizontally; b: vertically). 3—Horizontal dimensions. 4—Depth. 5—Urn presence or absence (A: with urn; B: without urn). 6—Inventory (illustration reference). 7—Anthropological data related to the cremated bones (according to Stanciu and Munteanu 2006–07).

them 25. Such a low density of burials across the investigated area could indicate that a peripheral part of the cemetery was uncovered, although another possibility could be a short functional lifespan of the necropolis (Fig. 7).

In the case of the cemetery from Pişcolt, the information regarding the horizontal and vertical shape of the burial pits is missing. It is only known

that the shape of the grave 21 was oval, the long axis being oriented NE–SV (Figs. 8–9). On surface, many of the pits from the cemetery at Zalău–Dromet S.A. 2 have an oval shape, sometimes nearly circular (grave 1), and their diameter oscillates between 34 and 80 cm (Tab. 2)²⁶. However, only their bottom was identified, so the shape of the upper part might

²⁵ The two burials from Uzhhorod–Halaho were 50 m away between them (Penyak 1980, 78).

²⁶ From this point of view, a similar situation was identified, for example, in the cemetery from Sărata Monteoru, the largest of this kind (Fiedler 1992, vol. 1, 74–75).

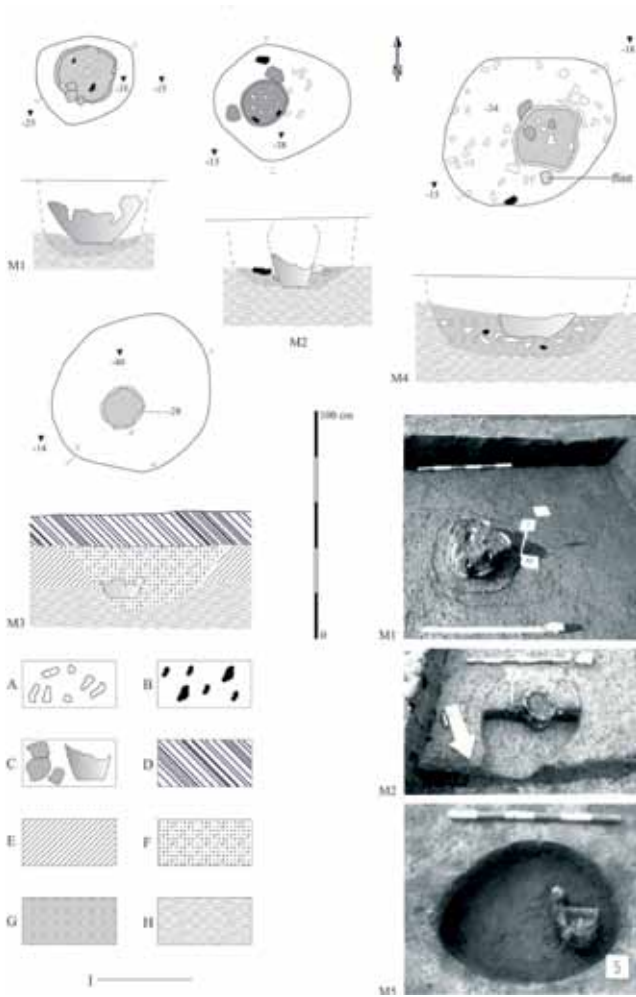


Fig. 8. Zalău–Dromet SA 2 cemetery, graves 1–4. A—Burnt bones. B—Charred wood remnants. C—Urns (handmade vessels) and remnants thereof. D—Gray-yellowish soil, disturbed, contains modern materials. E—Black sole (lighter shade), Roman deposit. F—Clay soil, brown in color, mixed with small lumps of black earth. G—Gray-yellow soil. H—Yellow clay (archeologically sterile soil). I—The horizontal line indicates the current step level, relative to which a layer of ca. 10-20 cm average thickness has been removed, almost certainly by mechanical leveling. Depths are specified in centimeters.

have been slightly different. Due to this reason, the observations regarding their orientation according to the long axis cannot be more than relative. Similarly, to the burial 21 from Pișcolt, three funerary contexts from Zalău have a NE–SV orientation; two other graves from the latter cemetery have the long axis W–E oriented. If the cross-section of the pit is taken into consideration, five of the graves from Zalău have a concave lower part and three have a flat bottom (see Tab. 2). Overall, all these observations may be relative, since it is possible that the grave pits of the tombs have been dug without observing precise rules.

The great depth of the graves from Pișcolt is curious, with a medium dimension of 80 cm mea-

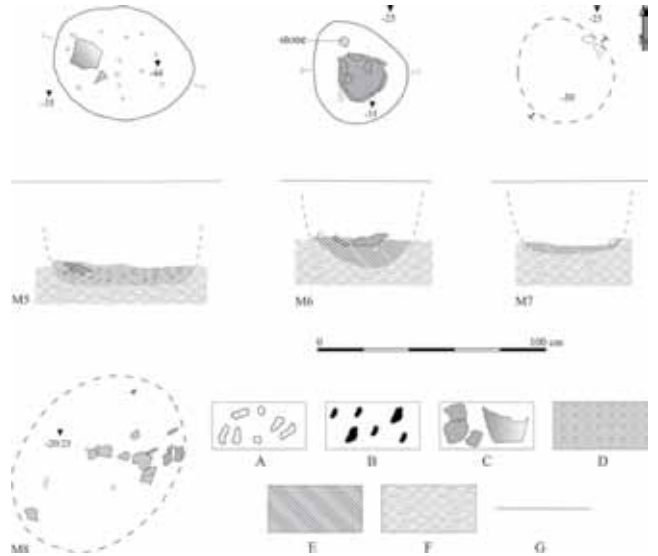


Fig. 9. Zalău–Dromet SA 2 cemetery, graves 5–8. A—Burnt bones. B—Charred wood remnants. C—Urns (handmade vessels) and remnants thereof. D—Clay-like soil, gray-yellow soil mixed with coal. E—Gray soil, mixed with small pieces of burnt bones and burnt earth scraps, pottery fragments and pebbles. F—Yellow clay (archeologically sterile soil). G—The horizontal line indicates the current step level, relative to which a layer of ca. 10-20 cm average thickness has been removed, almost certainly by mechanical leveling. Depths are specified in centimeters.

sured from the modern uppermost layer, in two cases reaching 120 cm and 130 cm respectively (Tab. 2)²⁷. On the other hand, the graves from Zalău–Dromet have a very small depth (34 cm on average), indicating that in most cases the complete urns could have touched or even exceeded the limit of the ancient uppermost layer (?). However, under the modern uppermost layer, one can note another layer having an average thickness of 15 cm and consisting of clayish soil in which some modern finds also appeared sporadically, this situation being almost surely the result of the mechanical levelling related to the establishing of an old farm on this area (Figs. 8–9).

Although the number of known graves is reduced, one difference can be noted between these two cemeteries. In the case of the cemetery from Pișcolt the cremated bones were placed into an urn in a single burial, whereas in the remaining six graves these were placed directly into the pit. There is an opposite situation in the cemetery from Zalău, in which the lower part of an urn, or even the entire reconstructed vessel in the case of the grave 2, was found in six burials, whereas a single uncertain exception (grave 7, on the bottom of which only a

²⁷ But for one of the graves in Uzhhorod, even a depth of 2 m (?) is reported (Penyak 1980, 78).

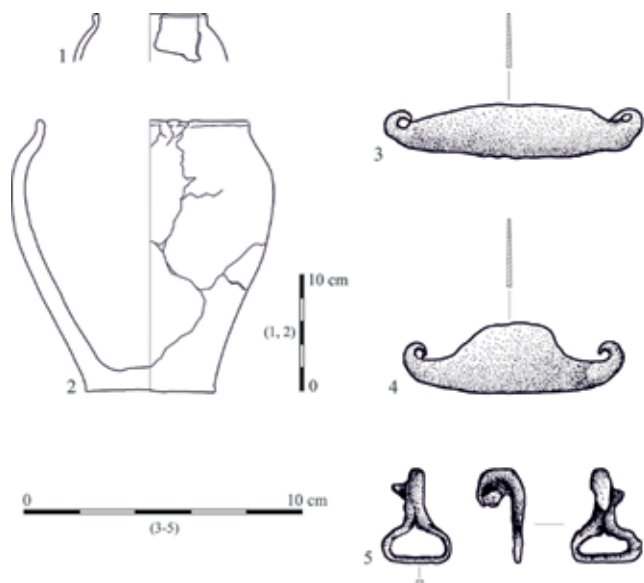


Fig. 10. Pișcolt cemetery, graves 18 (4) and 21 (1–2, 5). 3—Fire-steel found on the old stepp level in the cemetery. 1, 2—Hand-made pottery. 3–5—Iron artifacts.

few small fragments from the base of a difficult to date vessel were found) might have lacked an urn. As already shown, it is almost certain that the vessels are urns which were partially destroyed, together with the upper part of the graves, by ploughing or because of modern levelling works, so this is not an intentional placing of the cinerary remains in severed vessels or in pot bases. The latter situation may be presumed only in the case of grave 1, in which the lower part of a storage vessel was found, since the interring of a complete vessel having such large dimensions is highly unlikely. In grave 5 the cremated bones were laid on the bottom of the pit and in a small vessel, which was broken by the soil's pressure (Fig. 9/M5). When the lower parts of the urns were complete (in these cases the graves' bottom was not disturbed), it has been noted that the vessels were located at 6–8 cm above the bottom line of the pit, on a soil layer containing cremated bones and small fragments of burnt wood. This situation may indicate that a layer of cinerary remains, gathered from the funerary pyre place, was laid on the bottom of the pit before placing the urn (graves 1–4; Fig. 8).

Specific aspects of the burial ritual single out the two graves from Uzhhorod–Halaho. In one of them, the urn containing calcined human bones (covered with a larger ceramic fragment) was deposited in the central part of the pit, surrounded by flat stones. In the case of the second one (a 2 m deep pit!) the urn was placed on a pedestal made of flat stones²⁸.

²⁸ Penyak 1980, 78.

The grave goods and the issue of dating

The funerary inventory is very poor²⁹. A fire-steel was found among the cremated bones in grave 18 from Pișcolt (Fig. 10/4)³⁰, while the urn from grave 21 in the same cemetery contained a “buckle with hook” and a fragment from the upper part of another vessel (Fig. 10/1.5). A simple iron buckle was found on the bottom of the urn from grave 3 at Zalău (Fig. 11/9a–b), while a fragment of flint was found near the urn in grave 4 (unless the fragment was only accidentally associated with the burial) (Fig. 11/10).

About fire-steels as those mentioned before it can be said that similar objects are known even from other cremation graves of the 6th – 7th century or even slightly later³¹, but they were also reported from settlements with the same chronological position³². They also appear in southern Moravian inhumation graves of the second half of the 5th century³³, in the Frankish and Alamanni ones of the 6th – 7th century³⁴, and in some funerary contexts of the Early Avar environment³⁵; it was sometimes consid-

²⁹ The scarcity of the funerary inventory coming from Early Slavic burials was noted on several occasions. For instance, Godłowski 1979, 321, Pryhodnyuk 1990, 228–29, and Fiedler 1992, vol. 1, 78–86.

³⁰ A second item is a stray find, of course coming from a destroyed grave (Fig. 10/3).

³¹ Sărata Monteoru (Nestor, Alexandrescu, and Zirra 1953, 83 Fig. 15; Comșa 1960, 736 Fig. 183); Bratei (Zaharia 1977, 84 Fig. 31/4). For grave 15 from Velatice (South Moravia), where the remains were buried directly in the pit, it was also proposed to date in the second half of the 6th century (Poulík 1995, 95). The chronological framing of this burial in the late 5th century or the first half of the 6th century was also proposed (Poulík 1948, 92; Szykulska 1991, 88–89).

³² București–Câmpul Boja/Militari, two items, the association with a Roman-Byzantine brooch and a horn comb should be noted (Zirra and Cazimir 1963, 69 Fig. Fig. 17/1.2, 60, 71). Botoșana, the artifact was found along with a Syracuse type buckle (Teodor 1984, 97 Fig. 18/2, 61).

³³ An inhumation at Slížany – in which such a flint-steel was found, was initially dated to the Roman period, then to the end of the 5th century and to the first half of the 6th century (Trňáčková 1961, 445 Fig. 1/4). Also, from Velatice, an inhumation grave with another flint-steel of this kind was dated with probability in the last third of the 5th century (Poulík 1995, 79, 81 Fig. 55/5). Josef Poulík refers to the eastern origin of these artifacts (Poulík 1995, 94).

³⁴ Examples: Köln–St. Severin, dating to the last quarter of the 6th century and the first third of the 7th century (Stein 1967, 314 Fig. 54/6); Hellmitzheim (first half of the 7th century, to see Stein 1967, Pl. 11/5).

³⁵ Grave 1 of Hajdudorog, with *post quem* dating provided by a coin issued in the time of Herakleios I, after 610–613

ered that their origin should be sought in the East. Such objects have also been reported from some of the cemeteries that exemplify the Gepid environment in the Middle and Lower Tisa³⁶.

Sometimes, they were used as chronological markers of the first half of the 6th century, but this proposal does not seem to be correct³⁷. Fire-steels are also present in settlements having horizons dated to the second half of the 5th century – first half of the 7th century, or even for a certain duration onwards. Earlier analogies (from Germanic burials of the second half or the last third of the 5th century) and also later ones, like those from late Germanic or Avar graves, suggest that a narrower dating based solely on these objects is impossible. These simple fire-steels, with less evolved ends, were used over a longer period in different cultural environments, and probably most of the finds could be dated to the 6th century (?).

It can be presumed that the examples from north-western Romania are mostly dated to the second half of the 6th century or the first half of the 7th century, like those from Moravia, Slovakia, the Avar burials, or the settlements from the southern Carpathian area of Romania. Referring now to the Upper Tisa area, these fire-steels, like the hook buckle (Fig. 10/5), seem to indicate certain connections between the horizon of settlements from the lower Someş River Basin and the Early Avar qaganate, and even more so as the Pişcolt cemetery is located on the border between the two cultural environments.

One simple (belt?) buckle made of iron and having a nearly square shape, with the longer sides slightly curved comes from grave no. 3 at Zalău-Dromet 2 (Fig. 11/9a–b). Similar modest accesso-

(Garam 1992, 211 Pl. 39/1, 142–143); a tomb at Kecskemét, dated to the first two-thirds of the 7th century (Tóth 1980, 139 Fig. 23/2). A more likely fragment of such a utensil in the grave of Szegvár-Sápoldal, dated with a coin imitating a *solidus* from Maurikios Tiberios, issued between 583–584 (Bóna 1970, 7 Fig. 2/11). Also a grave at Tiszadersz, but with at a later stage dating (Garam, Kovrig, Szabó, and Török 1975, Fig. 4/17). A very good analogy in the Early Avar grave from the Unirea/Veresmart from Transylvania (Rustoiu and Ciută 2008, 86 Fig. 7/7).

³⁶ Examples from Kiszombor and Szöreg (Csallány 1961, Pls. CXXIX/2, CXXXII/23, CXLI/18, CLXXI/30). But very similar objects, often of somewhat larger size and made not only of iron (sometimes even luxuriously adorned) were fasteners of the bags worn at the belt (Taschenverschlüsse). A previous examination at Roes 1967.

³⁷ Szykulska 1991, 88–89.

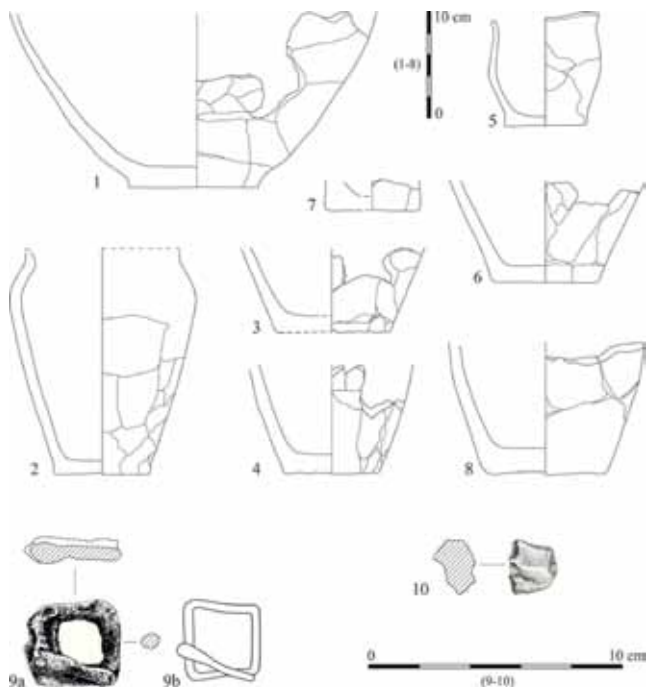


Fig. 11. Zalău-Dromet SA 2 cemetery. Graves: 1 (1); 2 (2); 3 (3, 9a–b); 4 (4, 10); 5 (5); 6 (6); 7 (7); 8 (8). Handmade pottery (1–8). Iron buckle (9a; 9b – Drawing after radiography), and a piece of flint (10).

ries were used throughout the 6th – 7th centuries, but not exclusively. They are frequently part of the horse harness³⁸. Since the metal (iron or bronze) inventory is poor and lacks variety, there are only a few examples coming from the environment ascribed to the Early Slavs³⁹, although it has been stated that these buckles are almost exclusively specific to the eastern and south-eastern Europe, appearing in cremation burials and settlements. A local production seems to be attested in the north-east, in the fortified settlement at Zymne (northwestern Ukraine)⁴⁰.

A so-called “belt hook” made of a thin iron rod having a rectangular cross-section was found in the urn of grave 21 at Pişcolt (Fig. 10/5). Similar pieces were sometimes identified as fittings of the quiver straps (*Köchergürtel*)⁴¹. Amongst the analogies can be mentioned the Early Avar graves from

³⁸ Kazanski 1999, 203, 234 Fig. 3/13–14, 18. See also Bârzu 2010, 104 n. 172 (type 16a.1c.1). A suitable example is the inventory of a newer tomb discovered at Unirea/Veresmart, in Transylvania (Rustoiu and Ciută 2008, 76 Pl. 2/5.7).

³⁹ Rusanova and Timoshchuk 1984, 21 Fig. 19/1; Rusanova 1976, 82 Pl. 30/3; Dolinescu-Ferche 1984, 144 Pl. 13/22; Fiedler 1992, vol. 1, 85 Fig. 12/13–14; Fusek 1994, 317 Pl. III/2; Teodor 1994, 251 Fig. 11/12; Vida and Völling 2000, Pl. 14/1.

⁴⁰ Aulih 1982, 57 Pl. XI/16–24.

⁴¹ Horváth 1984–85.

Szegvár-Sáppoldal⁴² and Kecskemét⁴³, in which similar artifacts were discovered in connection with a quiver, supporting this identification⁴⁴. An eastern origin was suggested for these closing systems for belts or straps, given their long-lasting presence in the mentioned region⁴⁵. Almost all the graves from the Bratei 3 cemetery (Transylvania) in which such implements – some made of bronze – appeared also contain arrowheads and in two cases the hook buckle was found next to them (graves 121 and 155)⁴⁶. Many of these graves belonged to mature men, the buckles being identified on the right thigh, the belly, or the pelvis⁴⁷, so the function seems to be also demonstrated in some of these cases. Cemeteries similar to the Bratei 3 are dated to the second half of the 6th century – first half of the 7th century. In Transylvania, one buckle that is like the one from Pişcolt comes from grave 9 at Unirea/Marosveresmart, this cemetery having the same chronology⁴⁸. Regarding the group of burials from Pişcolt, such accessories could provide a *terminus post quem* after the Avars' arrival in the Carpathian Basin, thus in the period beginning in the last third of the 6th century.

In the burials of the Early Avar qaganate, these buckles are frequently associated with fire steels like those discovered in the graves from Pişcolt. In the

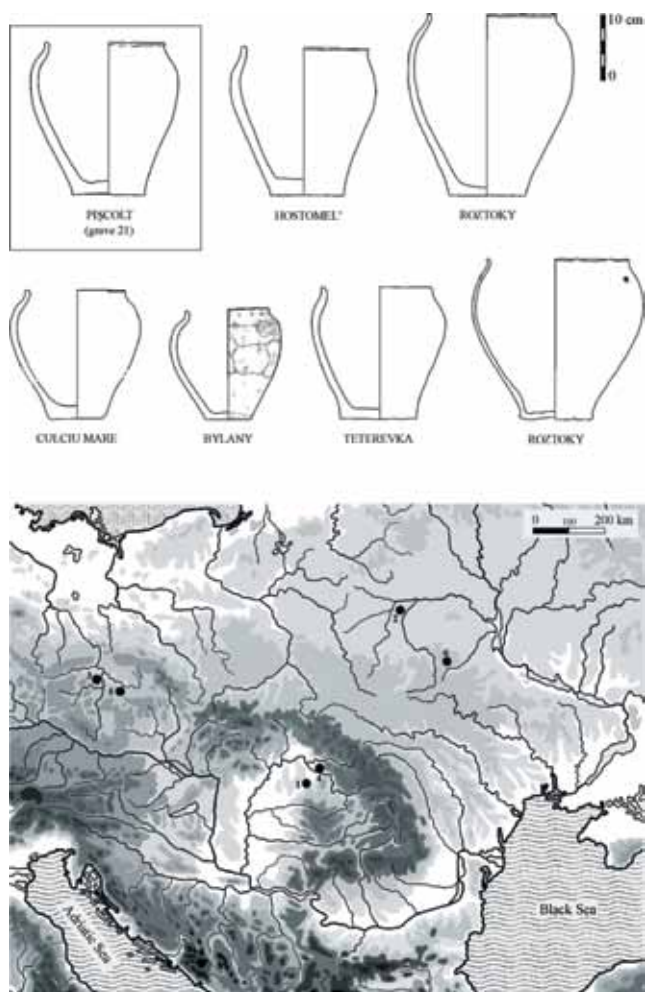


Fig. 12. Some examples for the analogies to the urn in the grave 21 from Pişcolt (variants of type 8 at Stanciu 2011), and horizontal distribution: 1—Pişcolt; 2—Hostomel (Rusanova 1976 and Rusanova 1988); 3—Roztoky (Kuna and Profantová 2005); 4—Culciu Mare (Stanciu 2011); 5—Bylany (Kuna and Profantová 2005); 6—Teterevka (Rusanova 1976).

case of the funerary contexts from north-western Romania, having in general a different and much simpler inventory, this situation could suggest a local response to the influence of the fashion and funerary practices of the Avar world. Even more interesting is the common appearance of the two categories of objects in the cremation graves from Sărata Monteoru where mostly some eastern connections could be presumed⁴⁹.

Without exception, the urns (or the shards that have been found) were all handmade, and undecorated. Only the external surface of the bottom half of the vessel found in grave 8 at Zalău–Dromet 2 shows clear traces of secondary burning, more likely to indicate that it was previously used in the kitchen (Fig. 11/8). It is therefore a simple item of pottery designed to meet everyday needs, whether

⁴² Bóna 1970, 7 Fig. 2/9, 31.

⁴³ Tóth 1980, 120 Fig. 4, 126 no. 16, 132 Fig. 17.

⁴⁴ Other parallels from Avars cemeteries, although not very numerous, it could probably still be cited. Such strap fasteners are of Eastern origin and can be traced there for a long time. References to analogies: Bóna 1970, 8 n. 11 and Horváth 1984–85. It may be useful to refer to the Mazuninsk culture environment (the region in the middle segment of the Kama River), which evolved in the 3rd and 5th centuries AD, and perhaps to some extent (Ghening 1967, 25 Pl. I/30.31; Ghening and Myrsina 1967, 115 Pl. V/6.7; Semenov 1967, 117 Fig. 1/5).

⁴⁵ Horváth 1984–85. The same explanation for this type of artifact (Köchergürtel), present during the Hunic period and after that in the graves from the Eastern steppe, as can be seen in the Avar environment, but also in the Germanic one in Western and Central Europe: Kazanski 2019, with references to bibliography.

⁴⁶ Bărzu 2010, 204, 205 Fig. 152, 218 Fig. 182, 303 Pl. 25/G. 155.4.

⁴⁷ Bărzu 2010, 115 (“belt hooks”– type 16.f). In an undisturbed context from grave 218, one such hook buckle was found next to the sword's hilt, being very probably used to attach the scabbard to the belt (Bărzu 2010, 240 Fig. 236, 314 Pl. 36/G.218.13). A detailed examination of the contexts of discovery would most likely indicate the various functions of these objects.

⁴⁸ Roska 1934, 126 Fig. 3/B.3a–b.

⁴⁹ Nestor, Alexandrescu, and Zirra 1953, 83 Fig. 15; Comşa 1960, 736 Fig. 183; Fiedler 1992, vol. 1, 85 Fig. 12/15.

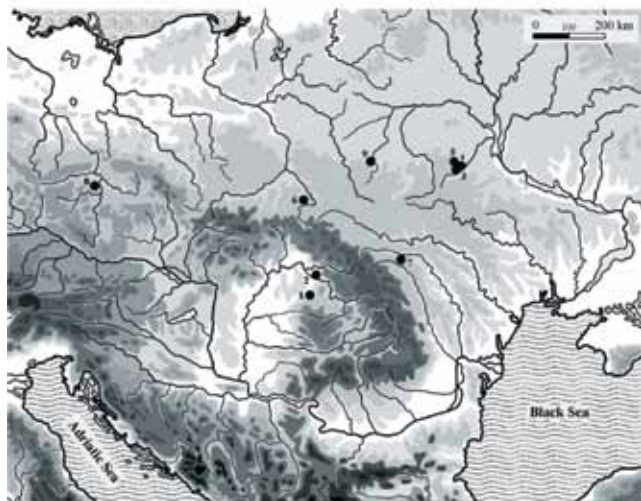
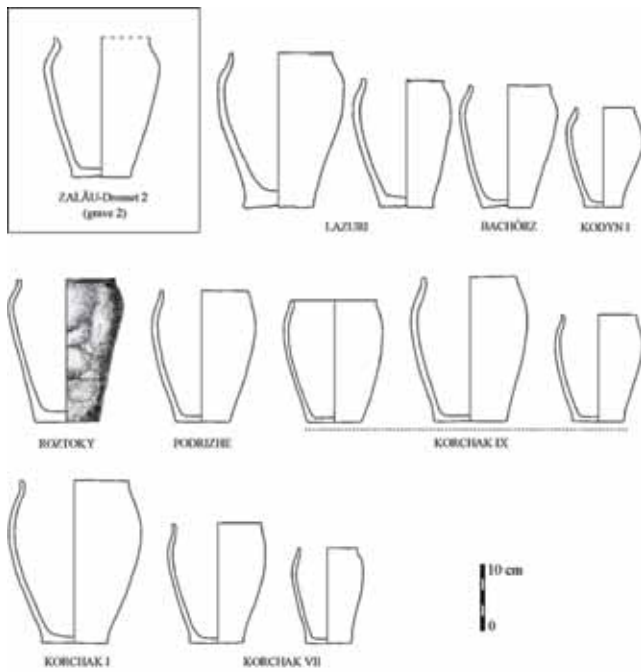


Fig. 13. Some examples for the analogies to the urn in the grave 2 from Zaläu–Dromet 2 SA cemetery (variants of type 1 at Stanciu 2011), and horizontal distribution: 1—Zaläu–Dromet 2; 2—Lazuri (Stanciu 2011); 3—Korchak I (Rusanova 1973); 4—Korchak VII (Rusanova 1973); 5—Korchak IX (Rusanova 1973); 6—Bachórz (Parczewski 1993); 7—Kodyn I (Rusanova and Timoschuk 1984); 8—Roztoky (Kuna and Profantová 2005); 9—Podrizhe (Rusanova 1973).

it was for fire contact, i.e., food preparation in this case or for its consumption (with vague indications for such use), or whether some of these containers were used to preserve food reserves. Assignment to a distinct „type” (with certain variants), i.e., Prague, Prague-Korchak, Zhitomir-Korchak or Prague-Korchak-Zhitomir, is generally thought of explained as an important marker for the presence and movements of Early Slavs⁵⁰. In terms of the method at

⁵⁰ Examples: Rusanova 1976; Rusanova 1988; Godłowski 2005; Parczewski 1993, 43, 62–65. A newer examination of this pottery in the Avar Khaganate and the area of the

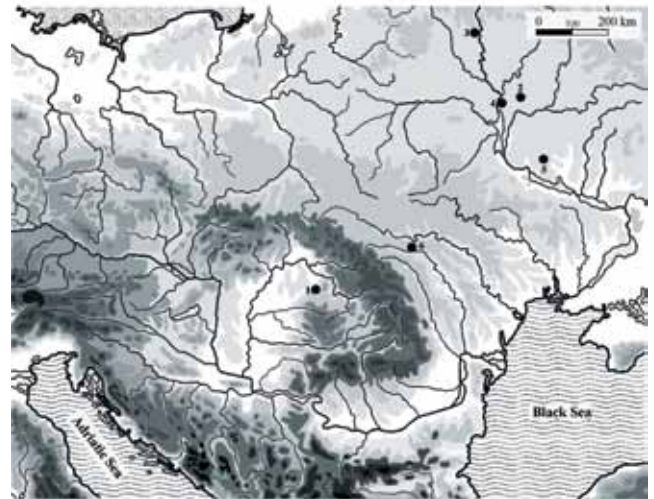
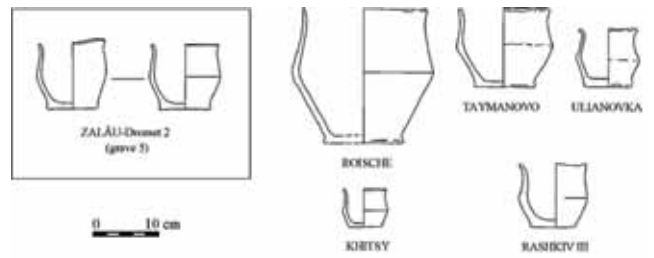


Fig. 14. Some examples for the analogies to the urn in the grave 5 from Zaläu–Dromet 2 (variants of type 17.1 at Stanciu 2011), and horizontal distribution: 1—Zaläu–Dromet 2; 2—Roische; 3—Taymanovo; 4—Ulianovka; 5—Khitsy (Late Kiev culture, the second half of the 4th century – the first half of the 5th century, takeover from Terpilovskij 2004 and Terpilovkij 2005); 6—Rashkiv 3 (6–7 centuries, takeover from Rusanova and Timoschuk 1984).

least, this theoretical approach has already been subject to criticism⁵¹. However, we cannot easily overlook the fact that such pottery (handmade, undecorated, with consistent morphology of vessels) appears from a certain date, in certain territories and is almost always associated with the same categories of relics, not least the funeral practice of cremation.

This pottery (nearly exclusively handmade, including complete and fragmentary vessels) of the „Lazuri–Pişcolt horizon” from north-western Romania, with dating proposed between about the middle of the 6th century and the first third or half of the 7th century, has already supported a detailed analysis. Is closely related to the pottery ascribed to the Early Slavs, having analogies mainly in north-western Ukraine (with the Basins of Teterev, Pryp’yat and the western Bug Rivers), southern extremity of

Upper Tisza in Samu 2017.

⁵¹ A critical examination of the “Prague Ceramic” concept, which would have been completely artificially delimited. From this point of view, Florin Curta’s position is illustrative (for instance, Curta 2001b).

Belarus, south-eastern Poland (the Upper Vistula/Wisła Basin) and the northern periphery of the Carpathian Basin. The Polish sites on the upper Vistula and San rivers, located on the direction of the passes crossing the northern Carpathians, can be seen as a link between the discoveries from north-western Romania (in general from the upper Tisza region, on the direction of the same passes, but southward the northern Carpathians) and the north-eastern area⁵². The three vessels that could be reconstructed (one from the cemetery from Pişcolt, another two from the one from Zalău–Dromet 2) point in the same direction (Figs. 12–14).

Anthropological Data

Anthropological identification of the fragmented cremated bones was more-or-less possible in the case of five graves from Zalău–Dromet S.A. 2 (Tab. 2)⁵³. These include three adults, of which two were men (grave 1 and 2; the particularities of the preserved bones from the second grave suggest that his age was between 40 and 50 years) and one probably was a woman (grave 4). The human remains from grave 3 indicate an adolescent (about 12 years old), perhaps a girl, whereas in the case of the bones coming from grave 5 only the gender – probably female – can be identified. The reduced number of graves limits the possibility to provide extensive conclusions. It can only be said that the age and gender groups are relatively balanced statistically. If this is indeed a small cemetery, then this observation can be considered appropriate.

Far more interesting is grave 21 at Pişcolt, since the anthropological analysis indicate the placing of the remains belonging to two mature individuals of opposing genders in the same urn. The specialist identification is based on the presence of some distinct morphological particularities of the typical

⁵² Stanciu 2011, 171–245.

⁵³ The analysis of the osteological material was performed by Prof. Dr. Marius Muntean („Victor Babeş” University of Medicine and Pharmacy from Timișoara). For details see Stanciu and Muntean 2006–2007 and Stanciu 2011, 390–393. I only mention here the number of calcined bone fragments recovered from the graves and their total weight: grave 1 (384 pieces/550 g); grave 2 (1450 pieces/1130 g); grave 3 (273 pieces/120 g); grave 4 (540 pieces/355 g); grave 5 (163 pieces/65 g); grave 6 (365 pieces/190 g); grave 7 (very few bones, most decomposed); grave 8 (relatively many small fragments of calcined bones found in the filling of the pit, most of them decomposed – only eight pieces were recovered).

bone fragments⁵⁴. This is important evidence, since some literary sources concerning the ancient Slavs mention the practice of sacrificing the widow upon the death of her husband⁵⁵. Although some double or even multiple burials were quite frequently attested in both flat and tumulus cemeteries, there is a degree of scepticism regarding the precise anthropological identification based on fragments of cremated bones, especially when they come from the same urn. Nonetheless, a circumspect attitude must be maintained regarding the veracity of this information, at least in connection with some of these sources⁵⁶.

Conclusions

It is important when considering the tremendously complicated issue of ethnic interpretations of excavated vestiges (often just shards of clay pots) and contexts of provenance, that these traces of the past are dated as accurately as possible. In the case of burials currently under consideration, there are few grave goods, apart from clay pots are few, and this is not an aspect restricted only to the Upper Tisza area. It is worth remembering that these cemeteries themselves or smaller groups of graves can also be framed chronologically by comparison with the settlement or settlements known in the immediate vicinity.

Perhaps the best example is that of a microzone in this area, that is, the valley of the small river Zalău – connected to the important route marked by the Crasna river valley in north-western Romania – but located in front of the pass to the Transylvanian basin. There is a known nucleus of settlements dated to the period that interests us here⁵⁷. We further know that in the same micro-region this funeral habit existed in the coming period, right on the site of a settlement dating back to the stage of interest here⁵⁸.

Cremation in flat or tumulus graves (with the cinerary remains laid directly into the pit or in an urn, frequently without inventory or with a

⁵⁴ See Stanciu and Muntean 2006–2007, 187–188.

⁵⁵ For instance: Niederle 1926, 47–48; Zoll-Adamikowa 1979a, 162–204; Parczewski 1993, 115–18; Paddenberg 2000, 246, 295–300.

⁵⁶ Paddenberg 2000, 297–98.

⁵⁷ Stanciu 2011, 316 Fig. 184, 317 Fig. 185.

⁵⁸ Băcuc-Ţișan 2011. It is about the earlier settlement from Zalău–Dealul lupului/Farkas domb (see Stanciu 2011, 393–395 no. 51).

poor one) was specific to the Slavs during most of the Early Medieval period. This rite was also used after the official adoption of Christianity and until the beginning of the proper medieval period, although far less frequently⁵⁹. Previous opinion stating that the Slavs also practiced the inhumation as early as the beginning of the Early Medieval period is not valid⁶⁰. Mixed cemeteries (cremation and inhumation) appear northward of the middle Danube or in Transylvania precisely along the border line between the Slavic and Avar areas, the Slavs probably taking over the inhumation due to the contacts with the Avar cultural environment⁶¹ or with the one specific to the late horizon of the cemeteries with grave rows (in Transylvania). In the Slavic world inhumation spread gradually from the 8th to the 12th century, and the change in funerary rite was less likely the result of an internal evolution and more probably a consequence of the external impulse generated by Christianity and of the influence of the funerary practices of other populations, like the Avars, the proto-Bulgarians and the Scandinavians, and in Transylvania the remnant groups of late Germanic population and eventually the Romanic ones (Fig. 15)⁶².

Although the information is partial, it seems that, unlike the cemetery from Pişcolt, the burial in urns is specific to the cemetery from Zalău–Dromet S.A. 2, and according to some opinions this practice intensified during the 7th century⁶³. However, this aspect cannot contribute to the dating of this cemetery, even more so as its investigation is incomplete. According

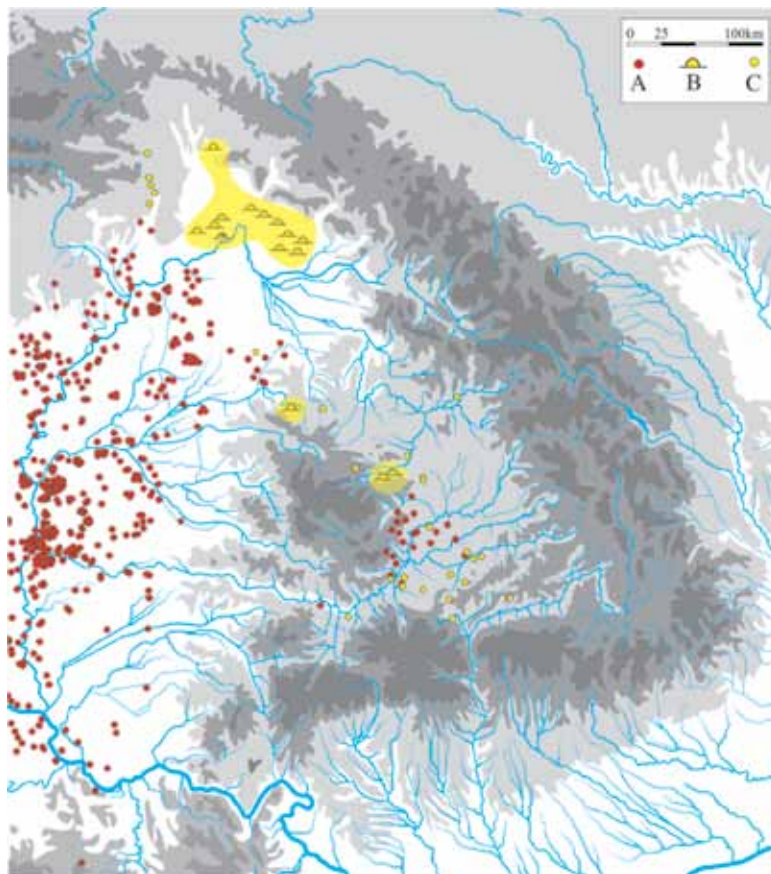


Fig. 15. The eastern part of the Carpathian Basin with funerary discoveries from the Avar Period. A—In direct connection to the environment of the Avar Khaganate (inhumation). B—Burial mounds (incineration). C—Biritual (incineration/inhumation) cemetery – flat graves – or in which only incineration was practiced. The cemeteries of the Late Reihengräber Horizon, like those in Band, Noşlac, and Brateiu 3 from Transylvania, have not been included. For the location of the sites see Stanciu 2011, 238 Fig. 201, 313–315 Appendix 8. For Avar cemeteries see Szentpéteri 2002; with additions for Transylvania see Cosma 2017. Newer discoveries from Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county (northeastern Hungary) in Istvánovits and Lőrinczy 2017. Biritual cemetery and burial mounds in Eastern Slovakia: Zábojník 1999 and Hanuliak 2001. Burial mounds in the Ukrainian region of the Upper Tisza: Penyak 1980, 77–108; Penyak S.I. and Penyak P.S. 2013, 213–217. For the eventual barrow cemetery at Zemplénagárd (northeastern Hungary): Wolf 1996.

to certain particularities of the burials, several zones were identified in the case of the early Slavic period. Burials are absent in the roughly northern part of Central Europe during this period, the preference for funerary practices that cannot be archaeologically identified being presumed (zone A). Graves with urns or with the remains laid directly into the pit are sporadically present in Moldova, western Ukraine, and the Vistula region (zone A/B). Zone B (the middle and upper Elbe region, the Morava River region) is characterised by isolated graves or small groups of burials. At the same time, the zones A/B and B are characterised by the nearly exclusive presence of flat cremation burials (the tumulus ones are later dated) and the categorical predominance of

⁵⁹ For instance, Niederle 1926, 42–59; Rusanova 1976, 42–44; Zeman 1976, 218–19; Zoll-Adamikowa 1979a; Zoll-Adamikowa 1979b; Pryhodnyuk 1990; Smylenko and Yurenko 1990; Parczewski 1993, 115–118; Fusek 1996; Paddenberg 2000.

⁶⁰ Examples for this discussion: Niederle 1926, 42–43; Či-linská 1993, 238; Pryhodnyuk 1990, 227.

⁶¹ Zoll-Adamikowa 1990.

⁶² Regarding Transylvania, a discussion around this issue in Tiplic and Crîngaci 2014 and Tiplic and Crîngaci 2015.

⁶³ Rusanova 1973, 27; Fiedler 1992, vol. 1, 306; Vida and Völling 2000, 47.

the burials in urns⁶⁴. On the other hand, in the case of the largest cemetery known so far, at Sărata Monteoru (in Muntenia, southward the Carpathians), most of the grave consists of those in which the cinerary remains were laid directly into the pit, with or without ceramic fragments⁶⁵. The presence of some small groups of graves or of the isolated ones can be related to the earliest phase of Slavic migration, when the habitation was not yet stabilised⁶⁶.

During the Roman period (2nd – 4th centuries) a significant part of north-western Romania, and the upper Tisza region in general, is characterised by flat or tumulus cremation burials, irrespective of their presumed identification as Dacian or Eastern Germanic. Inhumation graves are known in the south-western micro-zones, in which the Sarmatian habitation can be identified. Starting from the last third of the 5th century, in the same regions appear cemeteries with inhumation graves „aligned in parallel rows” (Reihengräberfelder), illustrating a funerary phenomenon specific to the entire „Merovingian world”. From the second half of the 6th century, the funerary discoveries that have to be related to the Early Avar qaganate also illustrate the same inhumation practice⁶⁷. In the remaining territory, to the north-east, one must note, as already stated, that cremation re-appeared not later than this date, although it is impossible to establish a connection with the funerary practices in use at least one and a half century before. It is more certain that, together with the characteristics of other vestiges which in general illustrate this horizon of habitation, the cremation burials of this period point directly to the appearance of a new population on this territory.

⁶⁴ Zoll-Adamikowa 1979b, 942–944.

⁶⁵ Fiedler 1992, vol. 1, 75; Bonev 1995. As another example, similar situation in the small cemetery from Lozna (Moldova), not far to the east of the Carpathian frame (Teodor 2012).

⁶⁶ Fusek 1996, 39.

⁶⁷ Until the years 567/68 the Lower Someş region (north-western Romania and the north-eastern part of Hungary) was in the immediate vicinity of the border of the Gepidic kingdom or a space of intersection with it, then the same positioning was preserved in the following period, in relation to the extension of the territories directly controlled by the Avar khaganate.

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