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## ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES LINKED TO THE “FIRST GENERATION” OF THE AVAR CONQUERORS LIVING EAST OF THE TISA DURING THE 6<sup>TH</sup>-7<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES. THE GRAVE CLUSTER IN NÄDLAC – SITE 1M

### ABSTRACT

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Four graves were excavated on site 1M at Nădlac. They could be dated to the the second part of the 6<sup>th</sup> century and the first part of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. Based on the <sup>14</sup>C analysis, grave 86 can most probably be dated between 532 and 609 AD. This result indicates that the woman inhumed in the grave, aged 40-55 years, was very probably an immigrant who came from the East. The funerary rituals documented on site 1M in Nădlac can fit within the repertory of the regional environment characteristic of the area east of the Tisa in the the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. Certain aspects of the ritual, however, like the burial of an entire calf in grave 86, draw attention to the danger of generalizations.

In addition, we have attempted to perform a brief analysis of various aspects of the development of the different concepts related to the nomadic lifestyle of the analyzed populations.

Keywords: graves, funerary ritual, <sup>14</sup>C analysis, Early Avar Period, Lower Mureş

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The rescue excavations performed along the route of the Nădlac–Nădlac–Pecica highway sector, Plot 1 km, and along the connection road with the city of Nădlac (Figs 1 and 2) have led to the discovery of several sites (86 archaeological features on 1.5 ha) dated to different historical periods – among them, a burial ground with four graves from the Early Avar Age (Fig. 3). Site 1M was delimited on the basis of surface surveys between km 0+000 – 0+300, near the Romanian-Hungarian border.

## 2. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF THE DISCOVERIES

Site 1M is located 7 km north of the present-day course of the river Mureş and 5 km north-east of the city of Nădlac. This area belongs to the geographic unit called the High Western Plain, or the Banat-Crişana Plain (Posea 1997, 11-12) – the eastern part of the Great Plain. The area of Nădlac belongs to the group of terminal piedmont-type plains, or tabular plains, with loess hills that look like piedmonts. It has remained higher than the surrounding low plain. It is, in fact, the remainder of a large dejection cone of the Mureş (Posea 1997, 34). The group of graves was located on a slight rampart (Fig. 3).

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The surface of the site, severely affected by previous excavations, was uncovered with the aid of excavators with grading blades. After the removal of the topsoil, which measured about 0.2 m on average, the team coordinated the removal of a series of layers, each measuring up to 0.1/0.2 m deep. After these deposition levels were removed, the team delimited the features that became apparent in the cultural layer.

In the case of the graves discovered on site 1M in Nădlac, the pits were delimited inside wider features attributed to other historical periods. Thus, the precise identification of the grave pits has not always been possible (see the case of Ftr. 77).

When the two infrastructure projects were connected, another archaeological site was discovered less than 400 m away, on the Hungarian side of the border. Colleagues from Szeged have attributed that site to the Early Medieval Period. There, they have researched not only graves with niches (from the second part of the Avar Age), but also part of a settlement, and all the features have been dated to the later period of the Avar Khaganate (Pópity 2015, 93-114). It is thus very likely that the four graves under discussion here are connected to some of the discoveries made in Hungary.

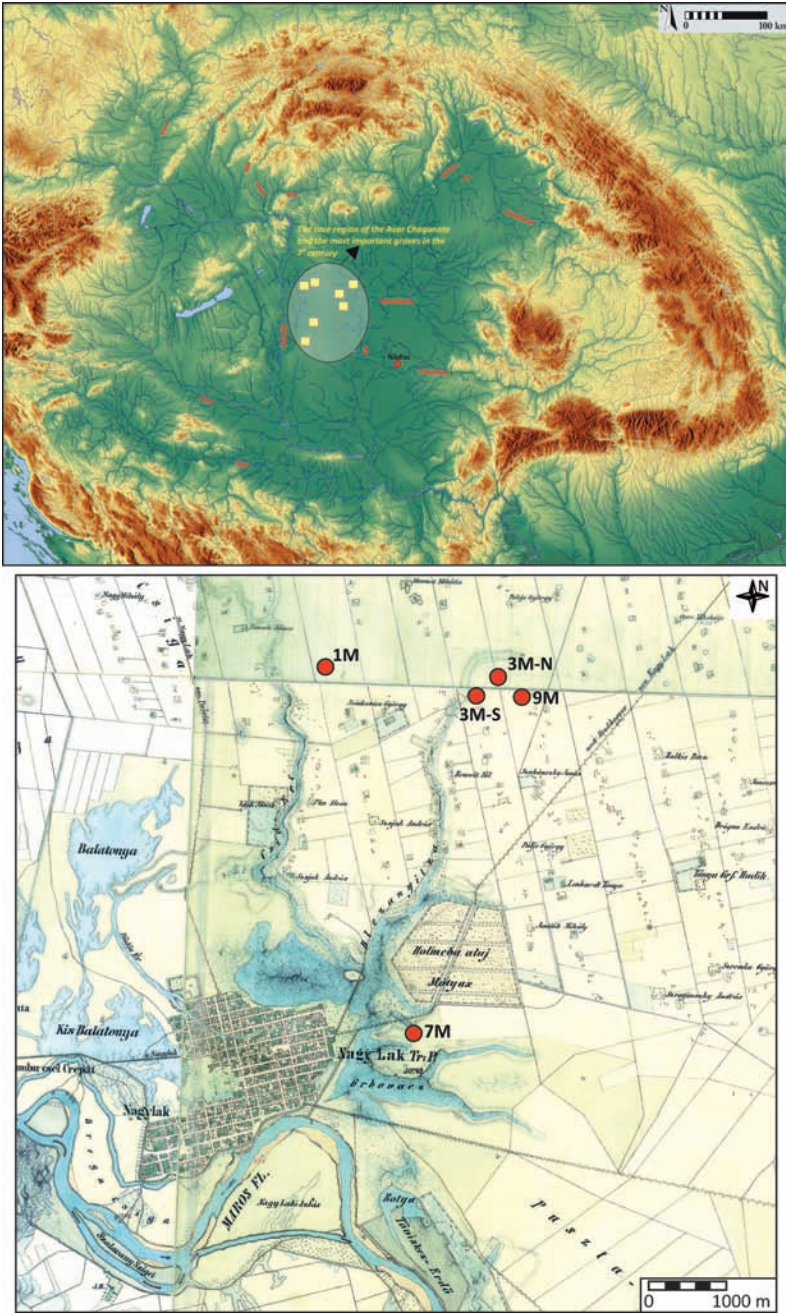


Fig. 1. A – The location of Nádlač and the position of the richest graves of the 7th century in the Carpathian Basin. B – Nádlač: Avar Age funerary sites 1M, 3M-N, 3M-S, 9M projected onto the map of the 2nd Military Survey (illustrated by Erwin Gáll and Florin Mărginean)

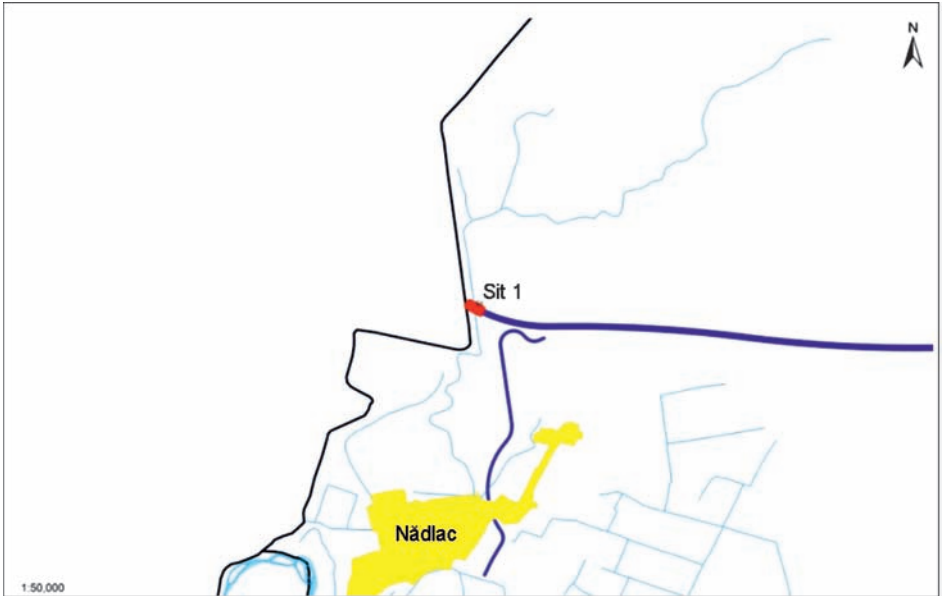


Fig. 2. Nădlac – Arad motorway. Map with the location of site 1M (illustrated by Florin Mărginean)

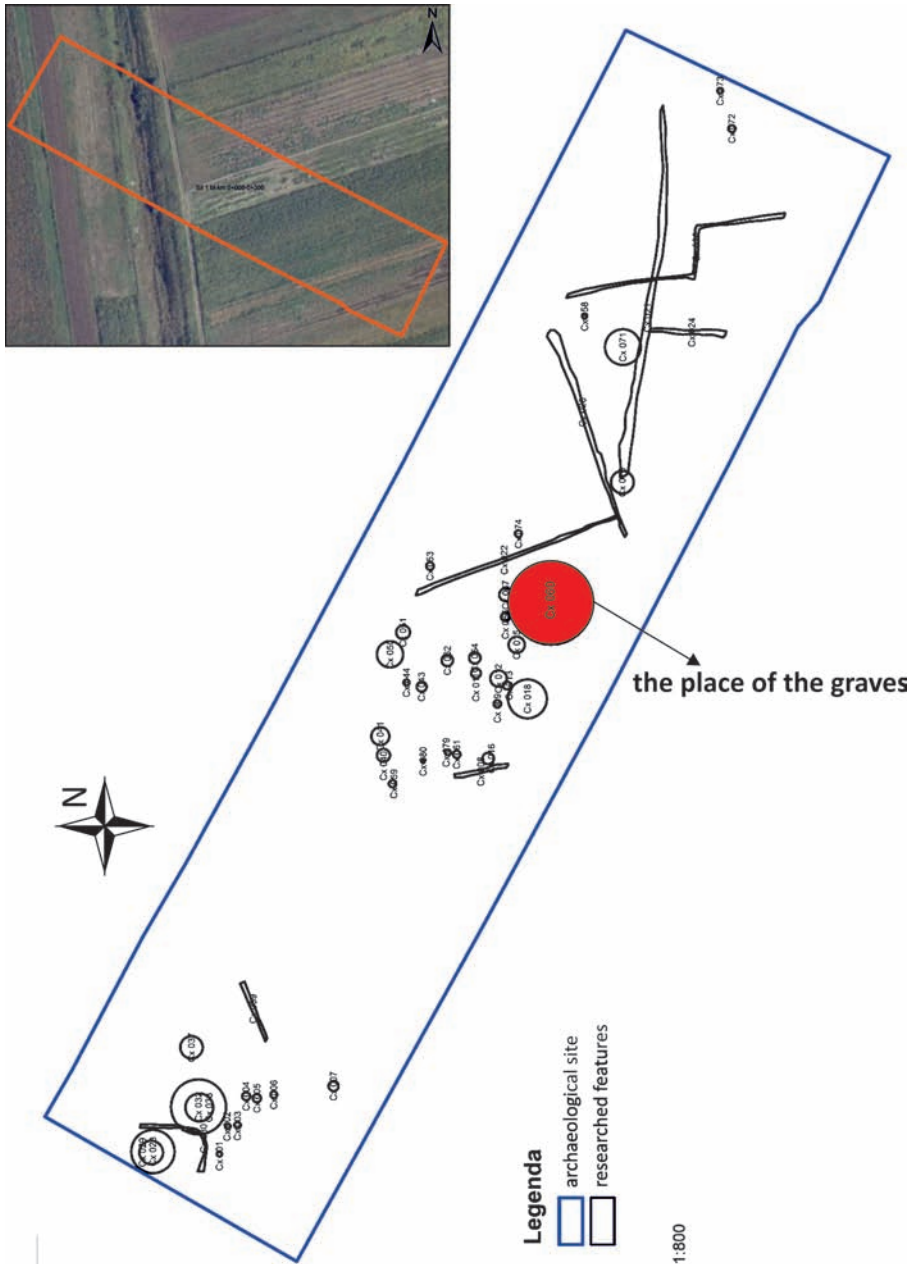


Fig. 3. Nădlac-1M. General map of the archaeological excavations and the precise locations of the graves (illustrated by Adrian Ursuțiu)

#### 4. DESCRIPTION OF THE GRAVES

(a broader anthropological and archaeozoological analysis can be found in: Andreica Szilagyi and Peter 2020; Dumitraşcu 2020)

The funerary features investigated on Site 1M (Fig. 4), four in number, have been labeled Ftr. 77 (Fig. 5), Ftr. 78 (Fig. 6), Ftr. 81 (Fig. 7) and Ftr. 86 (Figs. 8 and 9). All four graves overlapped other features, attributed either to Prehistory or to the Sarmatian Period, according to their contents.

Of the features under discussion here, three (Ftr. 78, Ftr. 81, and Ftr. 86) are oriented E-W, and one, Ftr. 77, is oriented N-S. Almost all lacked an inventory – it was only in Ftr. 77 that the team identified a fragmentary iron item, probably part of a buckle, near the knee. The dating and attribution to the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century of feature Ftr. 77, oriented N-S, remains debatable; we also remain cautious on the matter considering the absence of radiocarbon analyses (<sup>14</sup>C). The interred bodies lay in a supine position with the arms on the thorax (Ftr. 77), on the abdomen (Ftr. 78) or extended along the body (Ftr. 86).

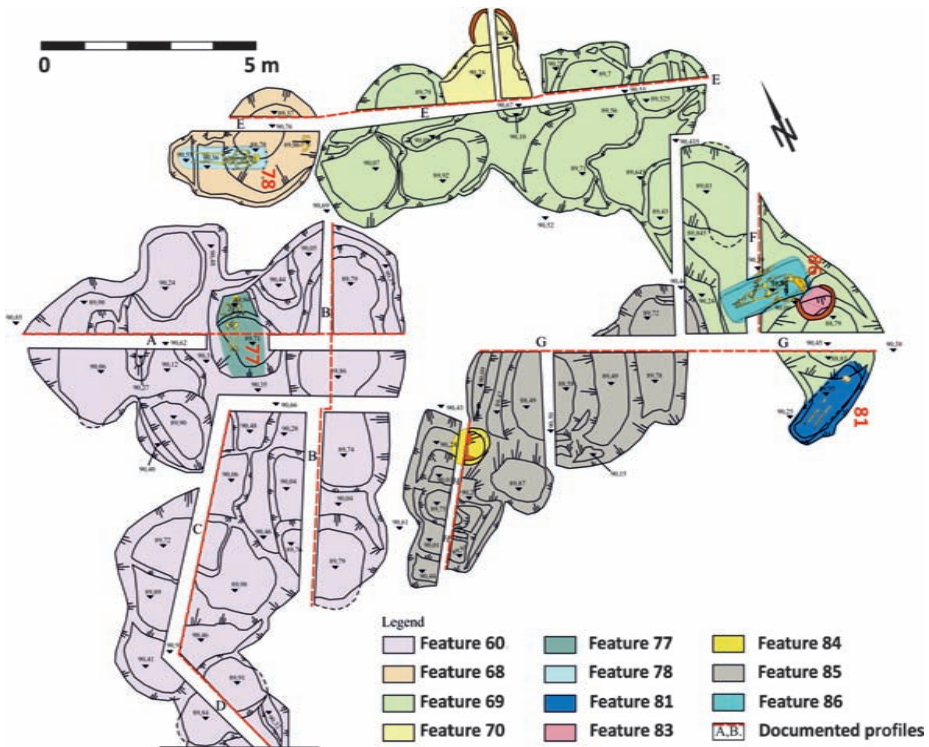


Fig. 4. Nădlac-1M: plan with the locations of the graves: Feature 77, Feature 78, Feature 81, and Feature 86 (illustrated by Adrian Ursuțiu)

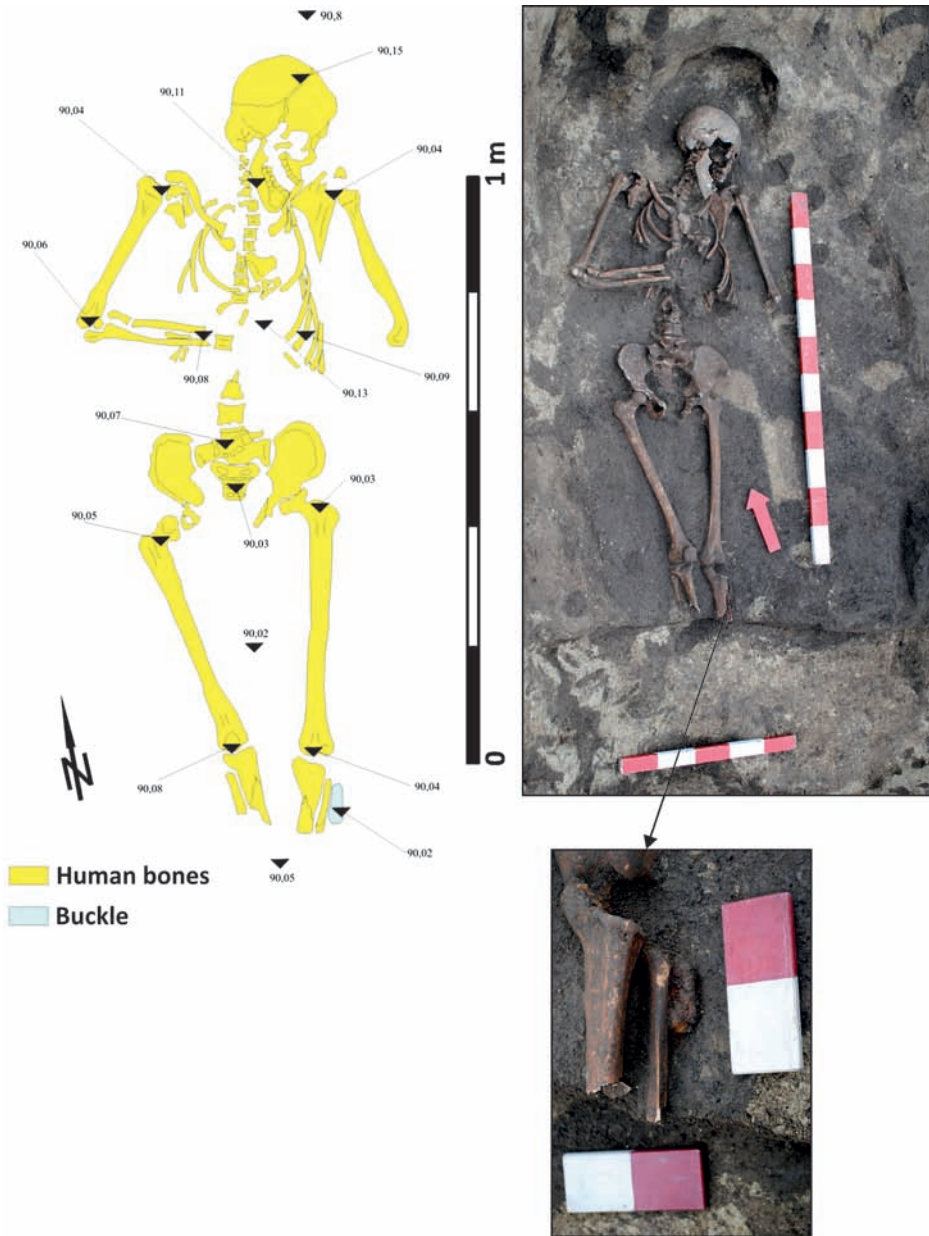


Fig. 5. Nădlac-1M: Feature 77  
(illustrated by Malvinak Urák; photo by Adrian Ursuțiu)

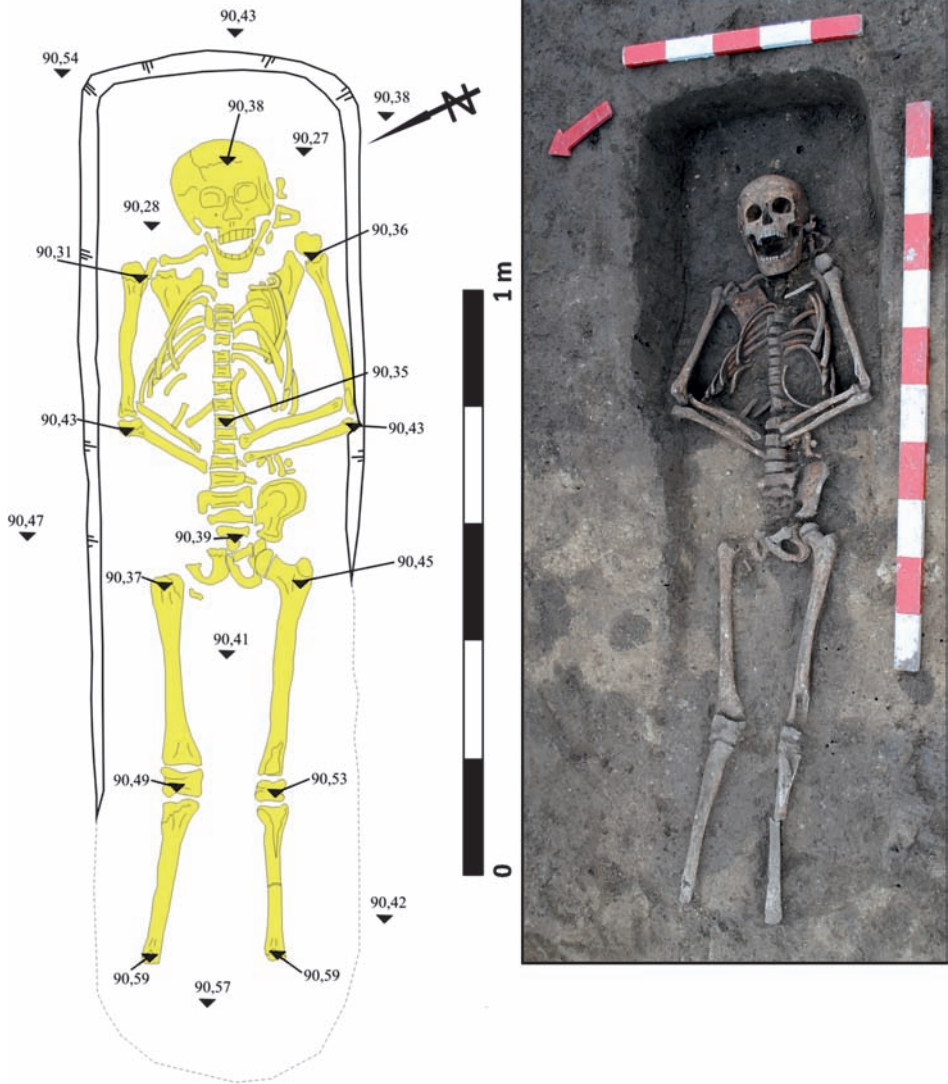


Fig. 6. Nădlac-1M: Feature 78  
(illustrated by Malvinak Urák; photo by Adrian Ursuțiu)



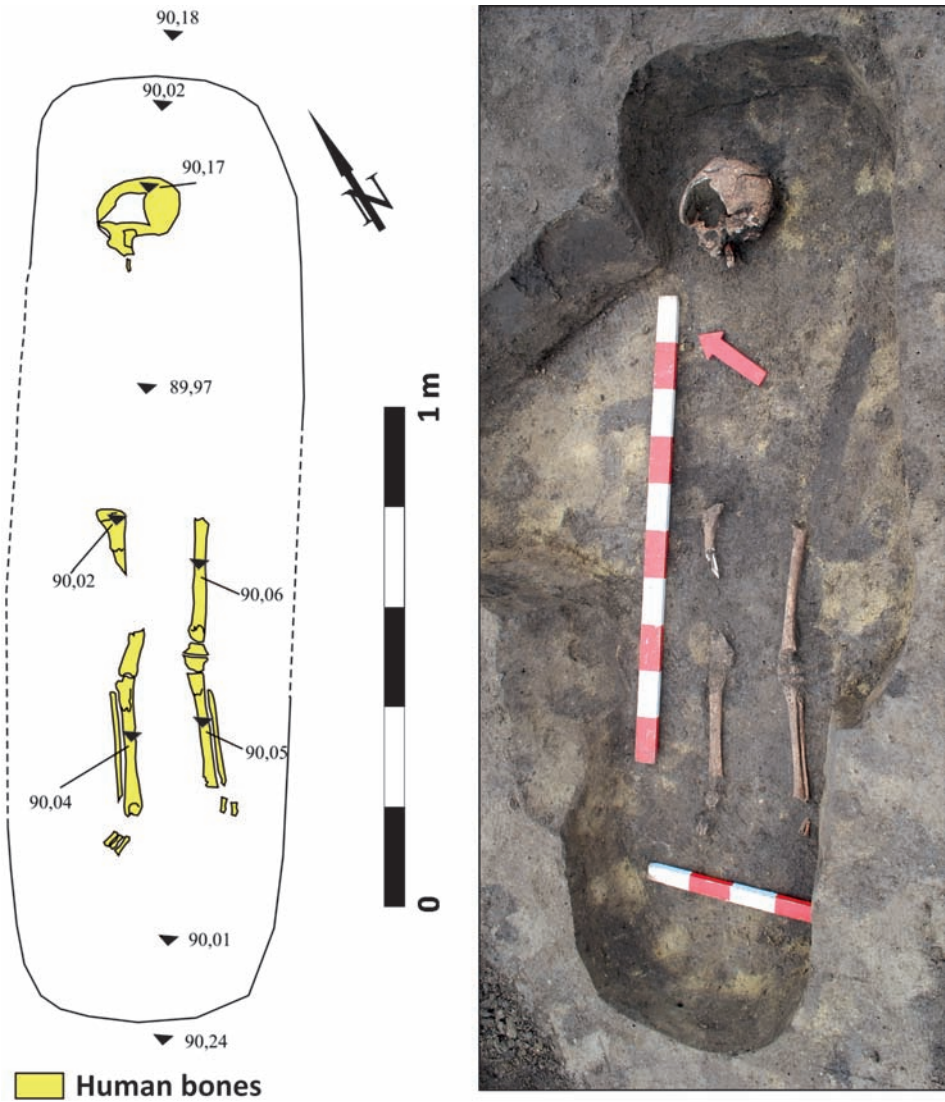


Fig. 7. Nădlac-1M: Feature 81  
(illustrated by Malvinak Urák; photo by Adrian Ursuțiu)

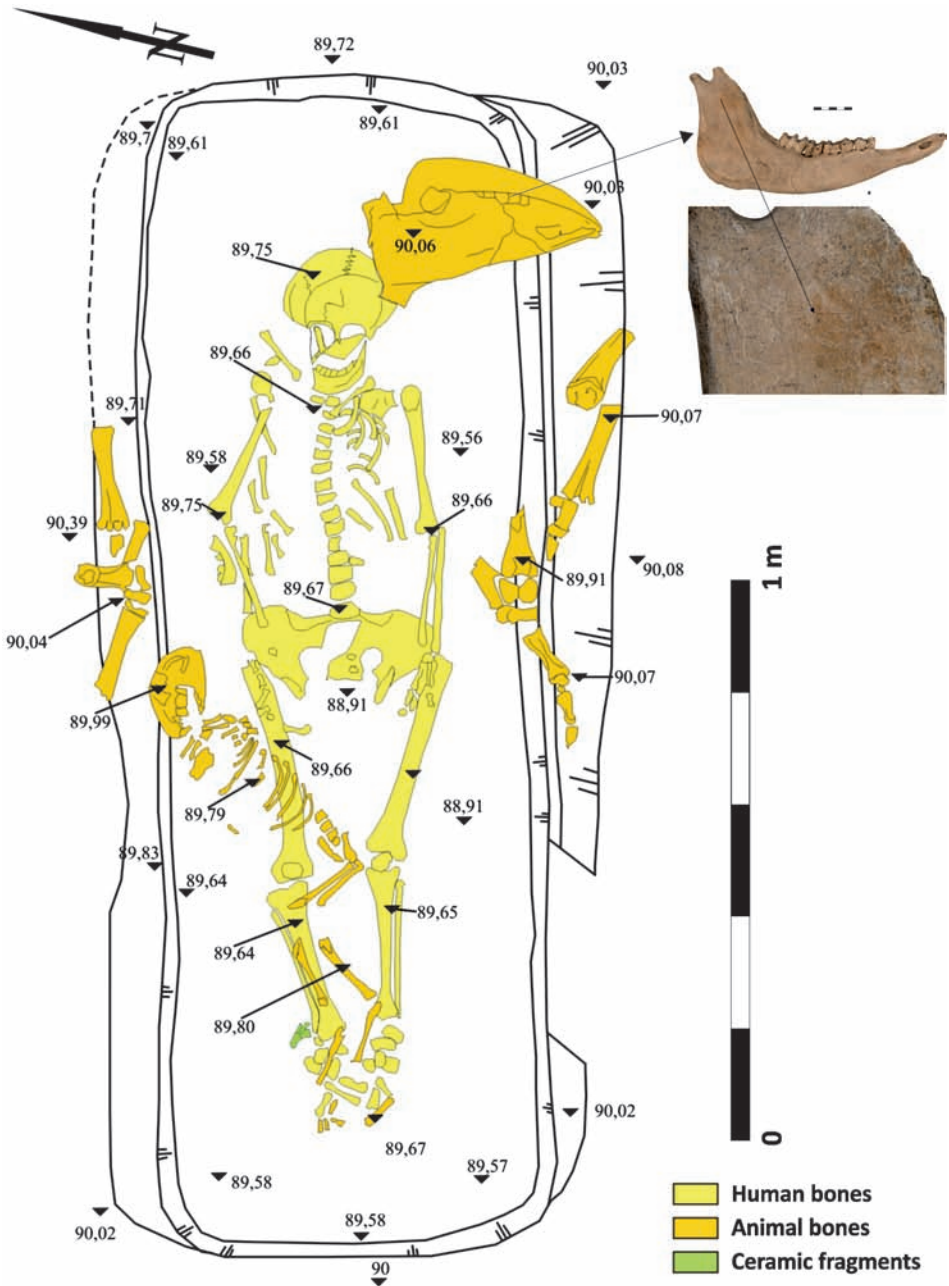


Fig. 8. Nădlac-1M: Feature 86 (with right mandible with cut marks)  
(illustrated by Malvinak Urák; photo by Valentin Dumitraşcu)



Fig. 9. Nădlac-1M: Feature 86  
(photo by Adrian Ursuțiu)

**Ftr./Grave 77** (Fig. 5)

Inhumation. Orientation: N-S. Grave pit shape: at the level of identification it seems to have been rectangular with rounded corners. The grave cuts through an older, large pit. Thus, the identification of the shape and depth of the grave is relative. Grave pit size:  $\pm 1.7$  m. Depth: approx. 0.7 m.

The deceased lay in a supine position, with the head turned left (eastwards). The arms had been bent and placed upon the thorax. The lower limbs were stretched, brought closer together towards the heels. Skeleton length: 164.7 cm.

Gender: very probably male. Age: *adultus*, 18-23 years.

Funerary inventory: an iron buckle was preserved near the left knee; the item was very corroded, apparently rectangular in shape with rounded corners.

**Ftr./Grave 78** (Fig. 6)

Inhumation. Orientation: NE-SW. Grave pit shape: rectangular with rounded corners and slightly oblique walls. The bottom of the pit was slightly tilted, higher by the lower limbs and lower towards the skull. The grave overlapped an older pit. Grave pit size: 1.96 m. Depth: 0.4 m.

The deceased lay in a supine position, with the arms bent and placed upon the abdomen. The lower limbs were stretched straight.

Skeleton length: 151 cm.

Gender: indeterminate. Age: *infant II*, 12-13 years.

No other elements of funerary ritual had been deposited in the grave.

**Ftr./Grave 81** (Fig. 7)

Inhumation. Orientation: NE-SW. Grave pit shape: a rectangular shape became apparent at identification, more visible in the western part. The pit walls were slightly oblique and the bottom was straight. Taking into consideration the fact that the median part of the skeleton was missing, the grave was very likely disturbed by a subsequent pit that partially overlapped it. Grave pit size: 1.9 m. Depth: 1 m.

According to the position of the bones that were preserved *in situ*, the deceased lay in a supine position, with the head to the right (north-west) and the lower limbs extended.

Skeleton length: 135 cm.

Gender: indeterminate. Age: *infant I-II*, 7.5-8 years.

No other elements of funerary ritual had been deposited in the grave.

**Ftr./Grave 86** (Figs 8 and 9)

Inhumation. Orientation: ENE-WSW. Grave pit shape: the grave was identified inside an older and larger feature; the grave pit was rectangular, with rounded corners. The pit walls were slightly oblique, and towards the bottom they formed a small step. The bottom of the pit was flat. Pit size: at identification, the pit measured 2.05 m in length and approximately 0.67 m in width.

The deceased lay in a supine position, with the head turned to the left. The right arm was slightly bent and placed upon the pelvis, while the left arm was extended along the body. The lower limbs were also extended and placed closer together towards the heels.

Skeleton length: 144.8 cm.

Gender: female. Age: *maturus II-senilis*, 40-55 years.

Depositions of animal offerings:

1. A cow's skull (*adultus*) had been deposited on the left side of the deceased's head and limb elements of (probably) the same animal had been placed on both sides of the pit.
2. An entire calf (*juvenis*) had been deposited over the lower right limb of the deceased.

Traces of a coffin could not be observed due to the conditions of the discovery, but it is certain that the body had been spatially separated through something from the butchered parts of the animals deposited in the grave.

A pottery fragment, probably disturbed, was recovered from the area of the phalanges of the lower right limb. The fragment is irrelevant to the grave in question.

## 5. FUNERARY RITUALS AND REGIONAL ANALOGIES

The funerary rituals documented on site 1M in Nădlac can be included in the repertory of the regional environment characteristic of the area east of the Tisa in the second part of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. Gábor Lőrinczy has performed a synthetic analysis, taking into consideration only the funerary sites in Hungary, without a catalogue of discovered graves (Lőrinczy 1998, 343-372; Lőrinczy 2016, 155-165). The four graves – though almost devoid of inventory items – can be dated, based on the specific funerary rituals, between the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. They display general characteristics similar to those of graves discovered east of the Tisa. Such characteristics (typical to the rituals practiced in, but not exclusive to the area east of the Tisa and shared by the funerary discoveries on site 1M), include the following:

1. The E-W orientation (or NE-SW or SE-NW);
2. N-S orientations are rarer (and thus we cannot state with certainty that the grave labeled Ftr. 77 belongs to the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries);
3. The so-called composite graves, inside which the deceased had been spatially separated from the offerings (1. *graves with catacomb-type niche*; 2. *stepped graves*; 3. *graves with side niche*). In the case of Site 1M in Nădlac, in Ftr. 86 we were able to document a grave pit that included side steps, characteristic to this period;
4. The defining characteristic of the funerary ritual in this region undoubtedly refers to the deposition of offerings consisting of sacrificed animals, as is the case inside feature Ftr. 86.

Until now, in the area east of the Tisa, besides a small number of animals deposited in their entirety (only horses and, in a few cases, sheep; Gulyás 2015, 499) there were many more numerous situations when only parts cut off such animals had been deposited in the



Fig. 10. Kövegy–Nagyföldek, grave 12 (after Benedek and Marcsik 2017, Pl. 24)

graves. Among these types of depositions, a significant number of remains consisted of horse, cattle, sheep, and goat bones. We have to emphasize, that no regional statistic is available, only analyses of certain sites such as Kövegy and Nădlac-3M-N (Benedek and Marcsik 2017, table 2; Gáll 2017, figs 12 and 53). In the cases where certain animal parts were selected as food offerings (such as those of birds), they were especially deposited near the head of the deceased (just like pottery containers).

4.1. In the case of grave Ftr. 86, the skull, distal bones, and the first vertebra of an adult domestic cow (*Bos taurus*) were located on both grave steps, spatially separated from the human body, ca. 20-25 cm from it; the bone remains display traces of the tool used to butcher the animal. One should also note that animal parts that did not contain meat were deposited. The manner of deposition and the placement of the deceased in Ftr. 86 (with the steps created on the left side of the pit) were almost identical to grave 12 in Kövegy-Nagy-földek, belonging to a woman aged 23-25 years (Fig. 10; Benedek and Marcsik 2017, 371-372, tables 7 and 24), as well as to the discovery in Makó-Mikocsa halom (Gulyás *et al.* 2018, fig. 1); these two funerary sites are located ca. 5 km and 19 km from Site 1M in Nădlac. One should also note that remains of an adult female cow had been discovered in the woman's grave.

This type of deposition, consisting only of parts from sacrificed adult cattle, is characteristic to the regions east of the Tisa (such is the case of Ftr. 86), but similar cases are also known in several other places, such as Szekszárd-Bogyiszló út (*Transdanubia*). However, we also wish to mention the fact that not all funerary discoveries made or even published have been analyzed (not by far!), so such statements should be regarded with maximum care (Gulyás 2015, 504).

4.2. The complete skeleton of a newborn calf was discovered in grave 12 from Kövegy-Nagy-földek (not far from Nădlac-1M), in the area of the buried woman's pelvis and right femur (Fig. 10). The deposition consisted only of the butchered bones of the calf, (Benedek and Marcsik 2017, 371-372, table 7).

Though the presumed complete absence (?) of entire animal depositions in the same space as the deceased is often mentioned in scientific discussions regarding the graves of the funerary spots known east of the Tisa (Lőrinczy 2016, 157), the situation on Site 1M in Nădlac draws attention to the danger of generalizations. We can interpret this as a perpetual need of specialists – derived from nationalist methodology – to construct black-and-white pictures; an aspect that might be connected to the concept of cultural uniformity. This situation might lead to a great number of hypotheses, but one cannot support them sufficiently with arguments. Still, we maintain our view that besides its general aspects, micro-community social psychology also recognizes a series of exceptional attitudes that cannot be explained. At the same time talking into account repertory all such natural phenomena (that we call “*exceptions*”) in order to clearly see whether this uniform picture of funerary rituals is indeed factual or rather just a scientific creation.

## 6. DATING OF THE FUNERARY SPACE

The dating of the four graves from Nădlac-1M is made difficult by the relatively poor inventory, and because of this, the chronological observations have been based on the first phase – specifically, on certain aspects of the funerary practices. However, we must mention the absence of any artefact categories with more precise dating from the graves.

As archaeology has shown in the last decades, the main characteristic of 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century burials in the *Transtisa* area is the orientation of the graves with an E-W tendency (the great majority; Lőrinczy 1987-1989, 161-171).

Because of the absence of chronologically informative grave inventories, we were forced to make use of radiocarbon analysis. We were able to collect samples from grave Ftr. 86. Based on the analyses and the calibrations, as one can see in Fig. 11, grave Ftr. 86 can most probably be dated between 532 and 609.

What can we infer from these data? First of all, we can say with confidence that it is most certainly a grave that can be dated to the final third of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, *i.e.* the first generation of conquerors of this region of the Lower Mureş. In a previous analysis, Csanád Bálint scrutinized the issue and was able to conclude that, in fact, the graves of the first

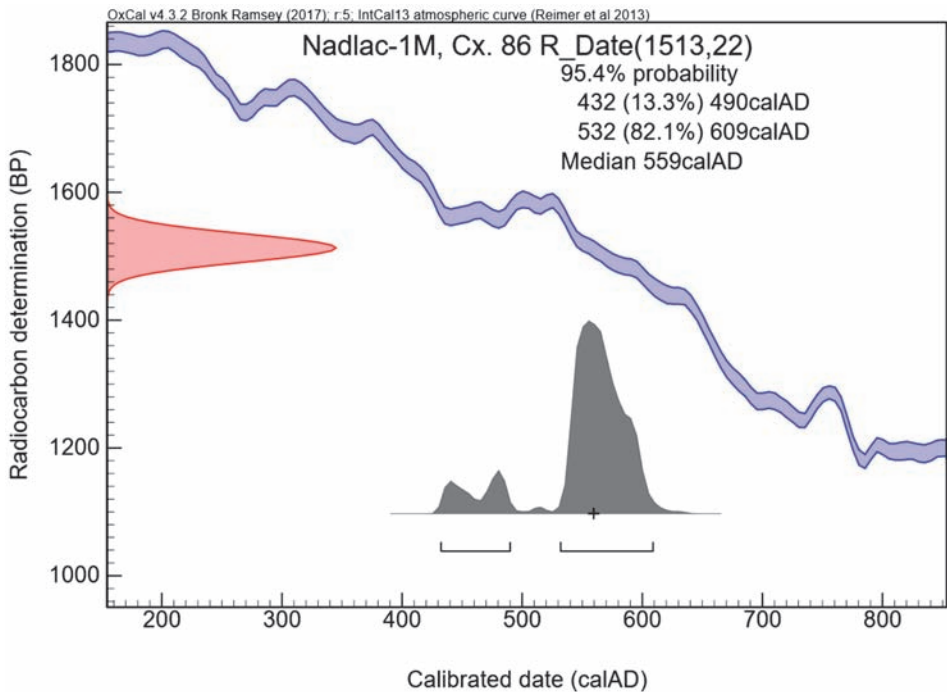


Fig. 11. <sup>14</sup>C analyses of samples from grave Ftr. 86 (prepared by Victor Sava)



generation of conquerors are entirely missing (Bálint 1995, 310-311). Against this statement, we could provide another explanation: at this moment, as shown by Fig. 11, the so called “first generation” of Avars (namely the *oriental conquerors*) in the Lower Mureş region is very clear.

## 7. STATISTICAL APPROACH TO ALL FUNERARY SITES IN THE AREA OF THE LOWER MUREŞ DURING THE FIRST PART OF THE AVAR ERA, AND THE ISSUE OF THE FIRST GENERATION OF “CONQUERING AVARS” EAST OF THE TISA

The largest concentration of funerary discoveries called, in specialized literature, “the funerary horizon east of the Tisa” is located in the Mureş – Criş – Tisa area, in the southern area of the Mureş down to Mokrin (taking into consideration the drawbacks of research in the Serbian Banat, but also in Romania, it is difficult to establish the geographic extent of these types of funerary places, see: Gáll and Romát 2016, 433-438). The area in question holds a significant concentration of such discoveries, which become more sparse to the north – especially north of River Criş, where one finds a much smaller number of researched funerary sites. No extended repository has yet been made and illustrated on a map that includes all micro-regions east of the Tisa; such finds are only encountered in partial mappings of the Mureş – Criş – Tisa area and of Banat (Lőrinczy 1998, 343-372; Gáll and Romát 2016, 457-466: Appendix 2). According to Gábor Lőrinczy’s statistical approach, the discoveries of this type made east of the Tisa consist of around 230 funerary sites with a total number of 1700 graves (Lőrinczy 2016, 156). The largest burial grounds have been researched in Szegvár – containing 370 graves (Lőrinczy 2020) and Makó – with more than 251 graves (Balogh 2016, 109-120). The other funerary places discovered in these areas are mainly noticeable through grave clusters (see Fig. 12).

Few discoveries had been made up to the year 2010 on the Romanian side. Those that had been made included discoveries in Peregu Mare (Gáll 2017, Pl. 252-254), the silver-smith grave discovered in Felnac, oriented E-W and containing horse parts as depositions (Hampel 1900, 117-123; Dömötör 1901, 62-66), or the graves in Felnac-Complexul Zootehnic, discovered in 1975 (Mărginean and Băcuceţ 2015, 216-220). To these, one can add the N-S oriented grave found in Sânpetru German, dated with a coin issued between 616 and 625 by Heraclius and Heraclius Constans (Dörner 1960, 423-433). The number of these funerary discoveries has considerably increased with the start of infrastructure and sewage system works; the best examples are those of the excavations performed in the area of Nădlac (where Avar Period funerary discoveries were made on the following sites: 1M, 3M-N, 3M-S, 7M, and 9M), and the area of the city of Pecica (where Avar Period funerary discoveries were made on the following sites: Site 15, Rovine, Est-Smart Diesel, Duvenbeck, and Forgaci [?]) – a total of around 268 graves more than the few known until then!

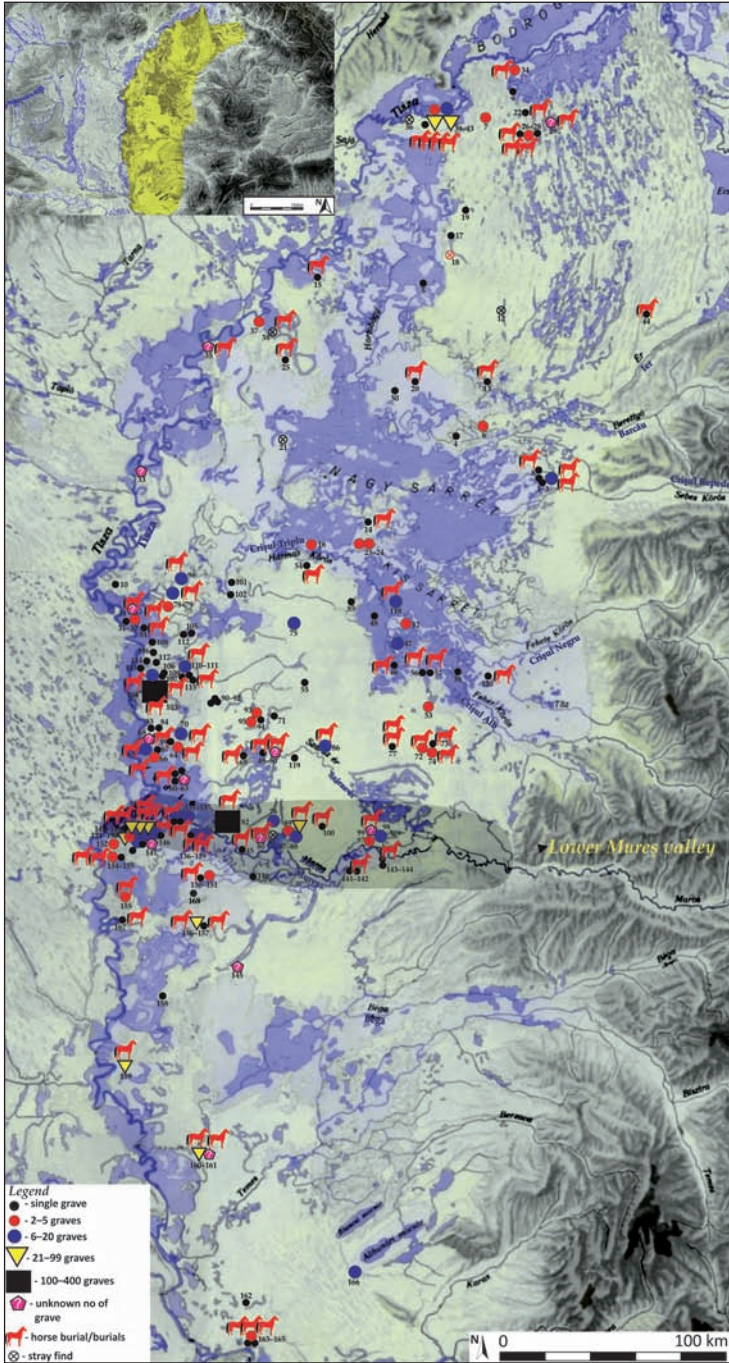


Fig. 12. The distribution of the funerary sites in the first part of the Avar Age in the regions of Transtisa

## Archaeological sites

**The regions to the north of Criş river:** 1. Ártánd-F 14211. határkő (1 grave); 2. Ártánd-Platthy Miklós birtoka (1 grave); 3. Ártánd-Kapitány-Dülöl, Róth-Tanya (10-12 graves); 4. Bakonszeg-Berettyő folyó (stray finds+1 grave); 5. Balmazújváros-Tsz tanyaközpont (1 grave); 6. Berettyóújfalú-Herpály (4 graves); 7. Bashalom-Csengőspart (3 graves); 8. Bihar-keresztes-Lencsés-hát (1 grave); 9. Buj-Hiller-gőzmalom (1 grave); 10. Cibakháza (1 grave); 11. Csépa (unknown no. of graves); 12. Debrecen-Kossuth utca (stray finds); 13. Derecske-DNy határa, M35 (1 grave); 14. Dévaványa-Köleshalom gr. 75 (1 grave); 15. Egyek (1 grave); 16. Gyoma 264. lelőhely Ugari tanyák-dülöl (3 graves); 17. Hajdúböszörmény-Vidi Puszta, Erdős Imre tanyája (1 grave); 18. Hajdúböszörmény-Zeleméri puszta (stray finds); 19. Hajdúdorog-Városkert út (1 grave); 20. Kaba-belterületi sír (1 grave); 21. Kisújszállás-Iléssy L. birtoka (stray find); 22. Kótaj (1 grave); 23. Körösladány (2 graves); 24. Körösladány-Dózsa Tsz, Fazekas-tanya 7/107 (3 graves); 25. Kunmadaras-Ujvárosi temető (1 grave); 26. Nyíregyháza-Moszkva utca 9 (1 grave); 27. Nyíregyháza-Városi kertészet, kertgazdaság (1936) (3 graves); 28. Nyíregyháza (1937) (1 grave); 29. Nyirtura-Propper S. Földje (several graves); 30. Püspökkladány-Szé u. 13 (1 grave); 31. Szelevény (1 grave); 32. Szelevény-Mennyasszonypart (4 graves); 33. Szolnok-Gépjavitó Vállalat (several graves); 34. Tiszabercel-Vékásdülöl (3 graves); 35. Tiszabura-Védőgát (several graves); 36. Tiszadada-Szomjas József tanyája (stray find); 37. Tiszaderzs-Szentimrei út (4 graves); 38. Tiszaszentimre-Református templom (stray find); 39. Tiszavasvári-Dózsa telep, Határút (4 graves); 40. Tiszavasvári-Kashalmi dülöl (6 graves); 41. Tiszavasvári-Eszényi-telek (1 grave); 42. Tiszavasvári-Koldusdomb (24 graves); 43. Tiszavasvári-Utasér-part-dülöl (26 graves); 44. Valea lui Mihai (1 grave)

**The area between the rivers Mureş-Criş-Tisza:** 45. Apátfalva (1 grave); 46. Békéscsaba-Szarvasi és Csörvasi útelágazás (1 grave); 47. Békéscsaba-Repülőtér 2/95. lelőhely (15-20 graves + other graves); 48. Békés-Hidashát (1 grave); 49. Békéssámsón-Móricz Zs. u. 12 (1 grave); 50. Békéssámsón (unknown no. of graves); 51. Csanádpalota-Országhatár-M43 Site 56 (stray find); 52. Doboz-Hajdúirtás (4 graves); 53. Elek-Kispél, Homokbánya, Ottlakai Szőlők (1 or 2 graves); 54. Endrőd-Doboskert (1 grave); 55. Gerendás (1 grave ?); 56. Gyula-Szentbenedek/Putztaszbenedek (1 grave [?]); 57. Gyula-Szövetkezeti téglagyár (1 grave [?]); 58. Gyulavári-Site 15 Paradicsomdülöl (pyre finds [deposited in a separate, sacrificial pit]); 59. Hódmezővásárhely-Dózsa Tsz. LPG (1 grave); 60. Hódmezővásárhely-Gorzsa, 744 Kovács tanya (1 grave); 61. Hódmezővásárhely-Gorzsa, Hátalom-dülöl (unknown no. of graves); 62. Hódmezővásárhely-Gorzsa, Mózes M. Földje (1 grave); 63. Hódmezővásárhely-Gorzsa, Nagy I. P. Tanya (1 grave [?]); 64. Hódmezővásárhely-IV. téglagyár (4 graves); 65. Hódmezővásárhely-Kishomok, Kovács tanya (16 graves); 66. Hódmezővásárhely-Kishomok, Mérai porta 5349 (2 graves); 67. Hódmezővásárhely-Koppánics II (1 grave); 68. Hódmezővásárhely-Solt-Palé, Katona I. halma (a few graves); 69. Hódmezővásárhely-Szárzérdülöl, Rostás-tanya (1 grave); 70. Hódmezővásárhely-Vásártér/Szabadságtér (6+?+1 graves); 71. Kardoskút-Molnár Z. övezvények földje (1 grave); 72. Kevermes-Homokbánya (2 graves); 73. Kevermes-Alkotmány utca (1 grave); 74. Kevermes-Bercsényi utca (3 graves); 75. Kondoros (6 graves); 76. Kövegy-Nagy-földek (17 graves, 2 pits); 77. Kunágota-Balázs J. telke (1 grave); 78. Kunszentmárton-Habranyi telep (10 graves); 79. Kunszentmárton-Péterszög (2 graves); 80. Magyarcsanak-Bökény (a few graves); 81. Magyartés-Zalota (1 grave [?]); 82. Makó-Mikócsa-halom (251 graves); 83. Mártély-Csanyi part, Szegefű-kocsma (1 grave); 84. Mártély-Veisz-föld (1 grave [?]); 85. Mezőberény-Régi tót temető (sometimes: Nemeskeréki) (probably 1 grave); 86. Mezőkovácsháza-Új Alkotmány Tsz. (16 graves); 87. Nádlaclac-9M (10 graves); 88. Nádlaclac-3M-N (24 graves); 89. Nádlaclac-1M (4 graves); 90. Nagymágocs-Allami gazdaság (1 grave [?]); 91. Nagymágocs-Arpádtelék (1 grave [?]); 92. Nagymágocs-Veres-halom (1 grave); 93. Orosháza-Bónium (4 graves); 94. Orosháza-Közégszépporta, Szűcs-tanya (1 grave); 95. Orosháza-Dénes téglagyár (probably 2 graves); 96. Ócsod-MRT 96a (12 graves); 97. Pecica Site 15/1 (4 graves); 98. Pecica-Smart Diesel (9 graves); 99. Pecica (a few graves); 100. Peregu Mare (1 grave [?]); 101. Szarvas-Régi piac tér (1 grave [?]); 102. Tuzsart-Vátozó dülöl (1 grave); 103. Szegegyvár-Oromdülöl (370 graves); 104. Szegegyvár-Sápadal/1-2, Józsi Bálint tanya/7 (10 graves); 105. Szentes-Belsőecser-F-9. Tábla (1 grave); 106. Szentes-Berekhat, Farkas Imre földje (1 grave); 107. Szentes-Borbásföld (1 grave); 108. Szentes-Bökény (1 grave); 109. Szentes-Derekegyházaoldali 77/a, Pataki-föld (1 grave); 110. Szentes-Dónát, Kőrögy-part, Balogh J. földje (12 + possible 7 graves); 111. Szentes-Fertő, 21 Takács F. földje (1 grave); 112. Szentes-Jaksor 7, Meleg J. tanyája (1 grave); 113. Szentes-Kökényzug, Jaksor 1, Molnár I. földje (1 grave); 114. Szentes-Kurcpart, Tóth J. u. 32 (1 grave); 115. Szentes-Lapistó 26, Lami I. és Pál F. földje (1 grave); 116. Szentes-Sárgapart, Hékedíj útelep, Kurcpart (1 grave [?]); 117. Szentes-Vásárhelyi út 13 (1 grave); 118. Tarhos-Tarhospuszta (6 graves [?]); 119. Tótkomlós-Békkéssámsóni út 48 (1 grave); 120. Várşand-Laposhalom/Movila dintre vii (1 grave [?])

**Banat:** 121. Deszk-D. Kukutyin, Simonné földje (12 graves); 122. Deszk-G, Klárafalva Kukutyin, Klárafalva Faragó (58 graves); 123. Deszk-H (2 graves); 124. Deszk-L-Klárafalva-Kukutyin (13 graves); 125. Deszk-O, Czuczai III, Ferencszállás (8 graves); 126. Deszk-P, Klárafalva Kukutyin (6 graves); 127. Deszk-R (5 graves); 128. Deszk-S (1 grave); 129. Deszk-Sz (1 grave); 130. Deszk-T, Ördög (71 graves); 131. Ferencszállás-Lajtár Gy-Bárdos P. halma (8 graves); 132. Klárafalva-B (17 graves); 133. Klárafalva-C, Tóth M. udvara (1 grave); 134. Klárafalva-G, Vasút utca (6 graves); 135. Klárafalva-Hegyesi földje (1 grave); 136. Kiszombor-E. Kiss J. tanya (13 graves); 137. Kiszombor-J, Jakos M. halma (1 grave); 138. Kiszombor-O, Ronay-szántóföld (7 graves); 139. Kiszombor-B, Blaskovich Ferencné földje (8 graves); 140. Sännicolau Mare-Saravale (1 grave); 141. Sănpetru German-Goliat, ter. lui E. Borsos (sacrificial pit); 142. Sănpetru German-Magazin (1 grave); 143. Felnac-Malul Mureşului (1 grave); 144. Felnac-Complexul Zootehnic (1 grave); 145. Lunga-una din grădinile satului (without information); 146. Kübekháza-Kisbék (1 grave [?]); 147. Tiszasziget-Vedresháza (unknown no. of graves); 148. Szőreg-Homokbánya (1 grave); 149. Szőreg-Téglagyár (23 graves); 150. Dudeştii Vechi-Pusta Bucova Mov. IX (sacrificial pit); 151. Dudeştii Vechi-Pusta Bucova Mov. V (2 graves); 152. Sprski Krstur (2 graves); 153. Novi Kneževac-pr. lui B. Budzsák-Tallyán (3 + ? graves); 154. Novi Kneževac-cetatea Tallyán (1 grave); 155. Banatsko Arandelovo (3 graves); 156. Mokrin-Vodoplav (75 graves); 157. Mokrin-Humke Blizanice (1 grave); 158. Bočar-Nhumern part (1 grave); 159. Kumane (20-30 graves); 160. Aradac-Mečka site (98 graves); 161. Aradac-Jarmure a-Humke (unknown no. of graves); 162. Glogonj-Glogonskij Rit (1 grave); 163. Pančevo-Naj Najeva ciglana (2 graves); 164. Pančevo-Naselje Tesla (1 grave); 165. Pančevo-Zarka Zrenjanina street (1 grave); 166. Banatski-Karlovac-Kalvarija (5+? graves); 167. Čoka-Tüzköveshalom (1 grave); 168. Válcáni (3 graves).

Table 1. Funerary and isolated discoveries in the lower area of the Lower Mureş

Funerary site	No. of graves	Horse burials / partially horse burials	Dating	Bibliography
1. Nădlac 9M	10 graves		Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Gáll 2017, 22-25, Pl. 3-9, pl. 132-136, pl. 228-229
2. Nădlac 3M-N	24 graves	partially horse burial	Second third of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Gáll 2017, 116-143, Pl. 92-131, pl. 205-227, pl. 244-251
3. Nădlac 1M	4 graves		Fir. 86: second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c.; the other graves: Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	
4. Peregu Mare	stray finds	<i>Traces of the horse burials (stirrups, horse bits)</i>	Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Gáll 2017, Pl. 252-254
5. Apátfalva	stray finds, 1 grave	<i>Traces of the horse burial (stirrup, horse bit)</i>	First half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Kisléghi Nagy 1911, 319: kép; ADAM 2002, Vol. I.: 24; Kisléghi Nagy 2010, 86
6. Mákó-Mikocsa halom	251 graves	partially horse burials	Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Balogh 2016, 109-120
7. Magyarsanád	stray finds, a few graves	<i>Traces of the horse burial (stirrup, horse bit)</i>	Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Csallány 1961, 140-141, Taf. CCVIII; ADAM 2002, Vol. I, 230-231
8. Csanádpalota	stray finds		Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Balogh 2014, 97, 3. kép 2, 2. táb. 3
9. Kövegy	17 graves		Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Benedek and Marcsik 2017, 369-442
10. Pecica-Smart Diesel	9 graves		Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – early years of the 7 <sup>th</sup> century	Unpublished. Only the Cx8a was published: Mărginean 2017, 145-146, Pl. 3
11. Pecica-site 15/1	14 graves		First two thirds of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Unpublished
12. Pecica-site 15/2	42 graves		7 <sup>th</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup> c. (?)	Unpublished

13. Sápnetru German-Goliat	sacrificial pit		Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Dörner 1970, 456
14. Sápnetru German-Magazin	1 grave	partially horse burial	Second third of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Dörner 1960, 423-433
15. Felnac-Magaspart	1 grave	horse burial (without more precise data)	Second third of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Hampel 1900, 117-123; Dörmötör 1901, 62-66; Hampel 1905, Vol. II: 392-396, Fig. 1-26, 747-751, Vol. III: Taf. 446
16. Sännicolau Mare / Saravale – Mina Major	1 grave		Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Medeleț 1998, 307-316
17. Kiszombor-site E	13 graves	entire horse skeleton	First two thirds of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Móra 1932, 57-58; Kiss 1962, 154; ADAM 2002, Vol. I, 201-202
18. Kiszombor-site J	stray finds		Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	ADAM 2002, Vol. I, 202
19. Kiszombor-site O	7 graves		First third of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Csallány 1939, 122-126; ADAM 2002, Vol. I, 201
20. Kiszombor-site B	8 graves		First third of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Móra 1932, 56, 59; Csallány 1939, 170; ADAM 2002, Vol. I, 201
21. Ferencszállás-Lajtar Gy. halma	8 graves		First two thirds of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Csallány 1940, 122, Pl. XVI/8; Kalmár 1943, 154-155, Pl. XXV/17; ADAM 2002, Vol. I, 139
22. Klárafalva-site B	17 graves	partially horse burial	First half / first two thirds of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	ADAM 2002, Vol. I, 204-205
23. Klárafalva-site C	1 grave		Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	ADAM 2002, Vol. I, 205
24. Klárafalva-site G	6 graves		First half / first two thirds of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	ADAM 2002, Vol. I, 205
25. Klárafalva-Hegyesi földje	1 grave		Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	ADAM 2002, Vol. I, 205-206
26. Deszk-site D	12 graves	partially horse burial	Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Csallány 1943, 160-173
27. Deszk-site G	58 graves	entire horse skeleton, partially horse burial	Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Csallány 1939, 126-129, Taf. I/2, IV, VI, VIII/6-12
28. Deszk-site H	22 graves	entire horse skeleton, partially horse burial	Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	ADAM 2002, Vol. I, 110

Table 1.

Funerary site	No. of graves	Horse burials / partially horse burials	Dating	Bibliography
29. Deszk-site L	13 graves	entire horse skeleton	Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Csallány 1939, 122, 137, 140; ADAM 2002, Vol. I, 110.
30. Deszk-site O	8 graves	partially horse burial	First half / first two thirds of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	ADAM 2002, Vol. I, 110
31. Deszk-site P (Ferenészállás-Kukutyin)	6 graves	partially horse burial	Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Csallány 1940, Taf. XIII; Kalmár 1943, 152-153, Taf. XXIV/11, Taf. XXV/2; Csallány 1969-1971, 13-16, Abb. 1, Taf. I-II; ADAM 2002, Vol. I, 111
32. Deszk-site R	5 graves		Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Csallány 1940, 122; ADAM 2002, Vol. I, 111-112
33. Deszk-site S	1 grave		Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Csallány 1940, 122; ADAM 2002, Vol. I, 112
34. Deszk-site Sz	Unknown no of graves / 1 certainly from the Early Avar Age		Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Csallány 1968, 59-70; ADAM 2002, Vol. I, 112
35. Deszk-site T	71 graves	entire horse skeleton	The first two thirds of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Csallány 1968, 59-70; ADAM 2002, Vol. I, 112-113
36. Szőreg-Homokbánya	1 grave	partially horse burial	Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	ADAM 2002, Vol. I, 366.
37. Szőreg-Téglagyár	23 graves	partially horse burial	Second part of the 6 <sup>th</sup> c. – first half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> c.	Csallány 1961, 147, Abb. 18; Lőrinczy 1994, 328-330
38. Pecica-Rovine/Căprăvanul Mic	2 graves		Second half of the 6 <sup>th</sup> century	Unpublished
39. Felnac-Complexul Zootehnic	2 graves		First half of the 7 <sup>th</sup> century	Mărginean and Băcuet 2015, 215-226

The present paper does not aim to create a repository encompassing the territory between the Tisa, the Western Carpathians, and the Banat Mountains, though we publish a map here with all the funerary discoveries (see Fig. 12). In the first step, we have attempted to compile a list of discoveries dated to the first part of the Avar Period (ca. 570-670/680), focused strictly on the line of the Lower Mureş until its confluence with the Tisa – Table 1.

What conclusions can one draw?

1. The burials of entire horses are well-known but represent a small quantity of the burials with animals (Deszk-site G grave 8, Deszk-site H grave 18, Deszk-site L grave 13, Deszk-site T graves 21, 42, Kiszombor site E grave 2).

1. Deposits of animal parts (cattle, horses, goats, fowl) are attested in almost all of the 39 funerary sites. In the partial horse burials, we can document deposits of the horse tack items in only a few cases (Nădlac-3M-N 351, Sânpetru German, Makó-Mikocsa halom, Deszk-P); such artifacts were most often missing.

2. Out of the 662 registered graves, a single funerary site (Makó) contained a large cluster of graves (251); most of the others consisted of isolated graves or groups of between 1 and 20 graves that can be connected to the lifestyle of this population living east of the Tisa.

3. The dating of these sites is an ever greater problem. As one can see, in most cases they can be dated to a general interval, *i.e.* between the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century and

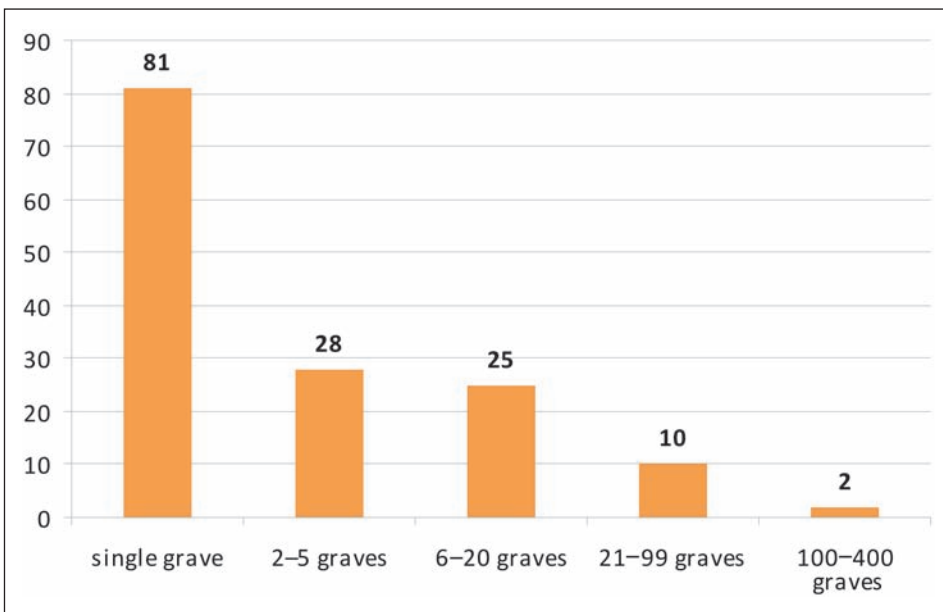


Fig. 13. The number of sites based on the quantity of graves investigated

the first half/first two thirds of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. In very few cases can these funerary sites or isolated graves be dated more precisely:

3.1. Nădlac, Ftr. 86, and Pecica-Smart Diesel graves Ftr. 8A, Ftr. 437, Ftr. 448, and Ftr. 455, on the base of <sup>14</sup>C analyses could be dated to the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century and the early years of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, respectively. It is very likely that they represented the “first generation” of the oriental (Avar) conquerors in the Carpathian Basin.

3.2. In the first third of the 7<sup>th</sup> century (?) (Kiszombor-site B).

3.3. In the first two thirds of the 7<sup>th</sup> century (Deszk-site O, T, Kiszombor-sites E and O, Ferencszállás-Lajtár Gy. halma, Klárafalva-sites B, G).

3.4. In the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century (Apátfalva, Felnac-Complexul Zootehnic, Pecica-site 15/1).

3.5. In the second third of the 7<sup>th</sup> century (Felnac-Magaspárt, Nădlac 3M-N, Sânpetru German-Magazin).

The distribution of the funerary sites in all microregions of Transtisa leads us mentioned above hypotheses, even though we must take into account the state of research. Out of the 1516 registered graves in all regions from the east to the Tisa and until the Carpathians, only two funerary sites (Makó-Mikócsa halom and Szegvár-Oromdűlő) contained a large cluster of graves; otherwise, the vast majority are isolated graves – groups containing between 1 and 5 graves (see Figs. 12 and 13).

As the result of this analysis, the number of graves from archaeological excavations can be divided into 5 large groups:

A. single grave: 81 cases;

B. 2-5 graves: 28 cases;

C. 6-20 graves: 25 cases;

D. 21-99 graves: 10 cases;

E. 100-400 graves: 2 cases.

What could this phenomenon mean in relation to the sociological realities of the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries? Based on the statistics of the number of graves, in this phase of the research, we find relevant the number of funerary sites which only contain a single grave (81) or a few graves (28), and likewise, those sites with only up to 20 graves remain important (25). Without extrapolating the available data, we must assert that the rescue excavations of the last decades – over large areas in Hungary and also in Romania – prompted by various investments in building, infrastructure, *etc.* – have shown us that the existence of funerary places with only a few graves are not a result of the state of research, but rather represent sociological realities (a medium-range nomadic lifestyle?) of the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries, detectable due to archaeology (Figs 12 and 13).



## 8. THE SITE IN NÄDLAC, THE FUNERARY DISCOVERIES EAST OF THE TISA, AND THE THEORIES REGARDING EASTERN EUROPEAN ANALOGIES

Taking into consideration the fact that the archaeology of the Migration Era and the Early Medieval Period in Eastern and Central Europe is strongly tied to national-Darwinian concepts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Frank 1987, 171-188) and to linear evolutionist concepts, respectively, researchers practicing the *linear* and/or the *retrospective* method (Langó 2005, 175-340) and mixed argumentation (in the case of the Avar Age archaeology: Bálint 1995, 63-67) have searched for and found funerary discoveries to which they connected the funerary sites in the area between rivers Tisa – Mureş – Criş. Thus, some of these discoveries in a funerary context have been related to migration, an aspect to which we can also connect the cluster of graves at Site 1M in Nădlac.

In the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Dezső Csallány, one of the most significant representatives of Hungarian archaeology at the time, discovered similar funerary situations in the eastern part of Europe, following his research in Deszk, Kiszombor and Szőreg (performed by him and by Ferenc Móra). According to the main school of thought during the period, Csallány associated these finds with a population attested to in the written sources, namely the Kutrigurs.

Csallány's 1934 theory had a profound impact on the development of research, as his observations, made during the 1930s, remained unchanged for almost 70 years, even if in some cases there were diverging opinions (such as those expressed by Béla Kürti). For the sake of clarity, we have attempted to systematize the development of this theory chronologically – Table 2.

As one can see, representatives of Hungarian archaeology have imagined and found analogies in the “*East*”, displaying a continuous preference for them since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Bálint 2007, 545-546), according to a paradigm close to evolutionism, creating in this case a *migrationist model* along the E-W direction. (Probably) under the influence of Csallány's theory, Soviet and post-Soviet archaeology, through R. S. Orlov, adopted the theory, labeling the archaeological phenomenon west of the Don the “Sivašovka horizon”, chronologically dated between the second part of the 6<sup>th</sup> century and the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, connecting it to an entity known from the written sources, the Kutrigurs (Orlov 1985, 100-105). According to another opinion, already developed during the post-Soviet period, the *Sivašovka* funerary horizon only appeared around the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century (integrated into the *Pereschepina* archaeological culture), including among its characteristics cultural elements from Central Asia, and existed until the 8<sup>th</sup> century (Komar *et al.* 2006, 245-374; Komar 2006, 242). On the basis of archaeological data combined with historical sources (a typical case of *mixed argument*), the authors of the theory reached the conclusion that this funerary horizon could be associated in the first phase with the Western Turkic population, and in the second phase with the Khazars that reached these

regions later (Komar *et al.* 2006, 360-373). Thus, one can easily observe that Csallány's theory obviously influenced the archaeologists of the Soviet Era who connected their excavations west of the Don and north of the Crimean Peninsula to the Kutrigur-Bulgar entity. Subsequently, however, they extended the envisaged area until the Volga (Artamonov 1962, 79-102).

After O. V. Komar collected the discoveries attributed to the nomads in Eastern Europe, the *Sivašovka* Horizon was included in the *Pereschepina Archaeological Culture* as its second chronological phase, defined as the *Sivašovka* Horizon (between 665 and 685). Komar has also stressed the fact that these archaeological funerary sites reflect social differences (Komar 2006, 241-242).

**Table 2.** The theories regarding the “origin” of the population living east of the Tisa during the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries

Author	Macro group mentioned in the written sources	Funerary characteristics of the group
Dezső Csallány (Csallány 1934, 212)	Kutrigurs	“Oriental” characteristics: the grave in Zinovjev
Dezső Csallány (Csallány 1939, 133-134)	Avars	Presumed analogies of the graves with niches in the funerary rituals from Siberia and Mongolia
János Harmatta (Harmatta 1954, 205)	Kutrigurs-Bulgars	Analogies with the “Bulgarian” burials along the Volga
Gyula Török (Török 1973, 130)	Kutrigur population, with Sarmatian origins	on the basis of excavations in the Lower Volga region, with analogies rather connected to the shape of the grave pits
Péter Somogyi (Somogyi 1987, 145-147)	Kutrigur population identified north of the Black Sea on the basis of the written sources	a) similar rituals in the areas of the Black Sea Basin and the Carpathian Basin: a1) similar E–W orientations in both areas; a2) stepped graves; a3) partial burials with horses
István Bóna (Bóna 1990, 115)	Kutrigurs	
Béla Kürti (Kürti 1996, 128-130)	population from Central Asia	Analogies with the Dzhetysayr archaeological culture; the graves with niches, formally connected to the catacomb-type graves, are not encountered beyond the eastern part of Kazakhstan, while stepped graves and those with depositions consisting of partial horse remains are encountered as far as Mongolia
Gábor Lőrinczy (Lőrinczy 1998, 355)	population with origins in the Eastern European steppes	a) NE–SW and E–W orientations; b) partial animal offerings, butchered parts; c) the grave was divided, separating the area of the human body and that of the animal parts sacrificed during the burial ritual (graves with catacomb-type niche; stepped graves; graves with side niche); d) the deposition of a pottery container with food or drink, usually near the head; e) sheep's leg deposited in the grave

Table 2.

Author	Macro group mentioned in the written sources	Funerary characteristics of the group
Gábor Lőrinczy (Lőrinczy 2016, 155-165)	Kutrigur population	a) NE–SW and E–W orientations; b) partial animal offerings (does not differentiate nor explain the graves that contained horse tack elements in addition to horse remains), cut marks; c) remains of skinned animals; d) the grave was divided, separating the area of the human body and that of the animal parts from animals sacrificed during the burial ritual (graves with catacomb-type niche; stepped graves; graves with side niche); e) the use of coffins; f) the deposition of a pottery container, usually near the head; g) sheep’s leg deposited in the grave
Bencze Gulyás (Gulyás 2015, 499-512)	a) “identical origins” of the population in the Eastern European steppes to those of the population in the Carpathian Basin; b) the population movements of the 4 <sup>th</sup> century triggered by the Huns changed the ethnopolitical map of Eastern Europe; c) <i>Mongoloid</i> elements became apparent among the Late Sarmatian population; d) the closest analogies for the burials in the Carpathian Basin are those in the Volga – Don area and the northern region of the Caucasus (known through the Sarmatian-Hun material); e) the Sivašovka Horizon is a “creation” and cultural mix between the newly arrived and the conquered population (“the Sarmatian substrate”); f) chronologically, the funerary sites from both regions are dated to the 6 <sup>th</sup> –7 <sup>th</sup> centuries; g) part of this population joined the Avars around the 550s	a) food offering, often with metal containers, deposited near the head; b) the artificial deformation of the skull; c) the E–W orientation is not a definitive characteristic of the horizon of funerary discoveries east of the Tisa, nor is it of the Sivašovka funerary horizon

The analogies identified by Hungarian, Austrian, and Post-Soviet archaeologists are distributed over an enormous area, from the northern part of the Black Sea until the Volga; from this perspective, the tendency of homogenizing and relating the finds to a certain type of macro-group identity is strange to say the least. Thus, as one can see, this research

approach explains the phenomenon in the Carpathian Basin in general as the result of a migration of a population from Eastern Europe. Based on observations regarding the dating of the chronological material, the hypothesis can be seriously doubted since ritual characteristics of this kind are known since the “Hun” Era. During the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries, the E-W and NE-SW orientations already appeared besides the general N-S orientation in the region of the Volga and the Don (Pokrovsk, Tuguluk), but specialists are also aware of graves with horse remains in Üllő and Sângeorgiu de Mureș, as well as the region of Odesa, in Kubej. Both the grave in Kubej and the one in Pokrovsk contain graves with a niche: Gulyás 2015, 505).

Turning to the area of the Tisa – Mureș – Criș rivers (Fig. 12), no necropolises are known from this wide territory; only isolated graves or groups of graves have been attested (Fig. 14). Thus, only 150 graves are known from this macroregion, but they cannot be dated with great precision. It is obvious that, based exclusively on the belt appliques or the elements of horse tack with identical datings in both areas (6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century), the members of the communities documented at the funerary sites east of the Tisa cannot be identified as descendants of the population of the *Sivašovka* Horizon for a simple reason: they were contemporary!

## 9. FINAL CONSIDERATION: FROM ETHNICITY TO MIGRATIONISM AND “SCIENTIFIC NIHILISM”?

After this brief analysis, what can one say about the grave cluster from Nădlac – Site 1M, and in general about the necropolises from east of the Tisa? Based on a system of subjective criteria, archaeologists have created *ethnic* groups that they wished to connect to the most often contextual names of entities described by the written sources. We should be more cautious with (if not abandon entirely) the *national-Darwinist* tendencies in the entrenched idea of connecting funerary rituals to certain cultural/ethnic entities, especially in relation to wide or very wide geographic distances. These tendencies are also confirmed by the observations below:

1. The deposition of horse parts (head and legs on one side of the deceased) is not only known from the area north of the Black Sea (Fig. 14) or the Volga region during the 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries, but also from the funerary discoveries recorded so far in East Kazakhstan (the finds in Manyak, Lagerevo, Borovsk, Blizhniye, Elbany XIV, Chernoozerje, Zharly, Chilikry, and Egiz Kojtas prove this observation; Botalov 2015, 9) and in the area of Tuva, close to the Mongol region (Botalov 2015, 9). Thus, this is one of the significant elements on the basis of which the specificity of the *Sivašovka* Funerary Horizon has to be excluded, considering the geographic distribution of this tradition. We believe not to err much by connecting the other partial animal burials (cattle, sheep, and goats) to this tendency displayed by the populations of the Eurasian steppes. In our opinion – taking into account the state of

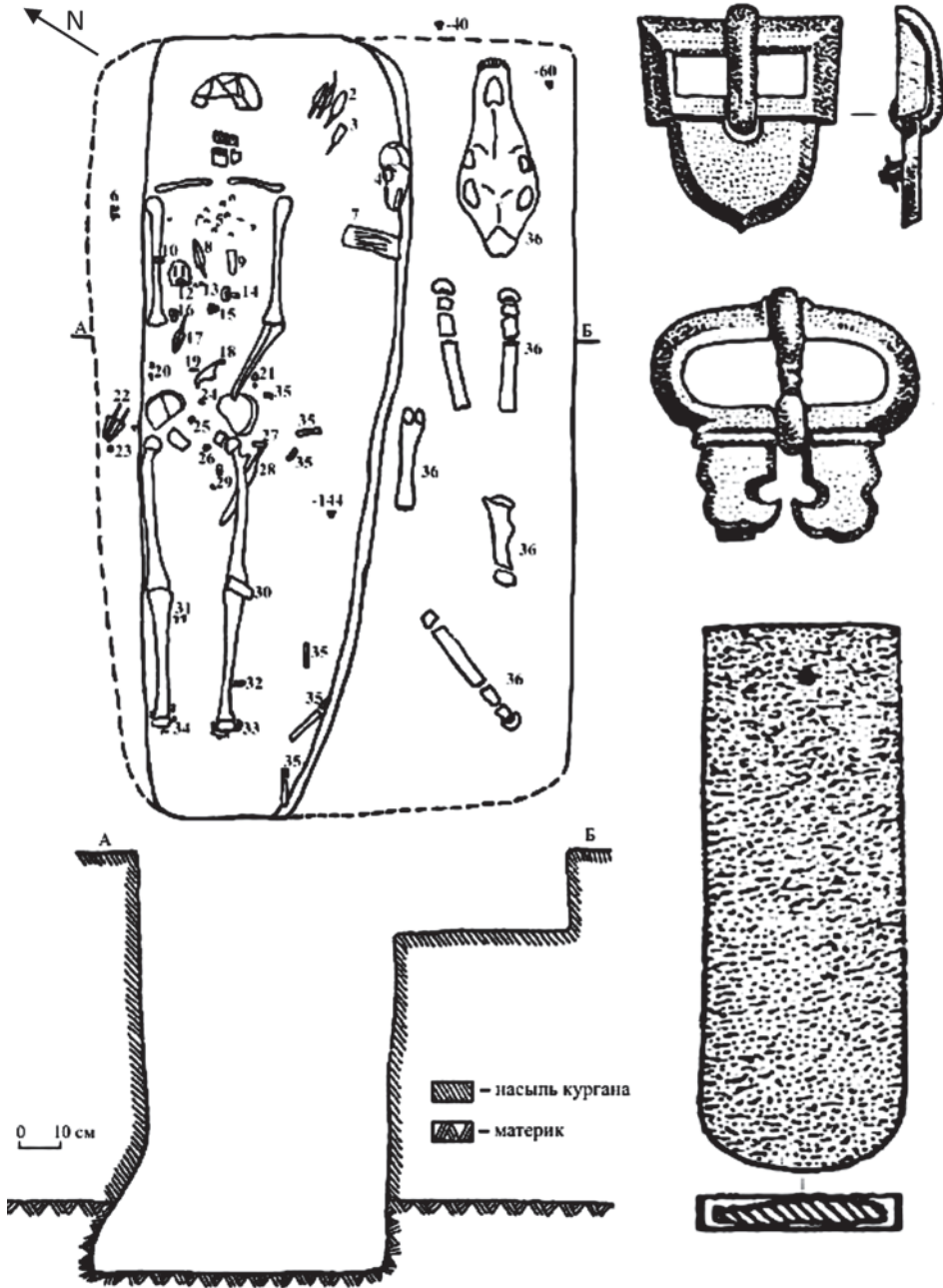


Fig. 14. Kostogryzovo, Kurgan 1, grave 7 (after Комар et al. 2006, ris. 36, 37/1, 2, 9)

research – this is a funerary tendency manifested over wide areas of the Eurasian steppes, along the “Eurasian Highway” of which the Carpathian Basin is undoubtedly the western end, as proven by the Avar and Magyar conquests.

2. We agree with Bence Gulyás’ observations that the E-W orientation of the burials east of the Tisa cannot be considered a characteristic or ethno-cultural indication (Gulyás 2015, 503). Nevertheless, we believe that this aspect should continue to be analyzed in order to clarify what is understood as “ethnicity”/“ethnic marker” (According to Siniša Malešević, ethnicity cannot be identified in the social space, as it is a “hot potato” for sociologists: Malešević 2004, 1-3) and to decide if one can speak of ethnicities east of the Tisa. Thus, we believe that – both in the case of the *Sivašovka* Horizon and of the population living east of the Tisa – one should show more caution, more restraint regarding their so-called horizontal identity, since, on the one hand, one cannot document such identities archaeologically (a more detailed debate in Gáll 2017, 149-152, where we have shown that the inventory of the graves in Nădlac 3M-N and 3M-S rather reflects the opposite situation), and on the other, we tend to create a picture closer to our own time – a transitional period from the national to the post-national era (Nițu 2014) – than to the period of the 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries. We believe that these nomad communities, living both in the area east of the Tisa and from Eastern Europe to the Great Wall of China – with a relatively similar dynamic, mobile lifestyle, but also displaying enormous differences – could have shared close funerary traditions without sharing a group identity that researchers from Dezső Csallány until today have attributed to them.

These observations, which tend towards a heterogeneous approach, are also strengthened by ethnological observations. As we know from ethnological research, the populations from the steppes did not form ethnic groups with horizontal identities (Friedmann 1999, 11-12) specific to the modern era of the masses.

Anthropological studies describe a system of “conical clans” as a dynamic model of social organization, which is already apparent during the time of the Mongols (Somfai 2017, 343-355). It would seem that this model is also relevant when describing the socio-political organization of nomadic peoples in earlier periods. Dávid Somfai-Kara discerns various clans: *i.e. the personal clan, the maternal clan, the clan of the wife, of the married daughter, of the brother-in-law*. Clan relations generally form a complex social network in which competition for power is an inherent phenomenon. This can be detected in the short-lived nature of power structures established by nomadic “big men” (Sahlins 1963, 283-303) and their entourages (or clans), the most famous being *e.g.* Temujin, the “world conqueror”. As a result of such historical-sociological processes, one clan could obtain the absolute power, under which various “brother clans” could continue to compete for power, rising higher and higher within a conical social structure. This resulted in a continuous fluctuation of elites, which also explains why one finds a range of different ethnonyms in the sources – often within a brief period of time – as such names could relate to the fighting elites of a society, which quickly reintegrated themselves during their struggle for power.

They could be recorded under different names in the narrative sources for different reasons. The clan system was a network of complex social structures, in the creation of which modern institutions (*e.g.* common language as an expression of identity) were of secondary or negligible importance. The early Avar power structure was forged in the social context of diverse, manifold and very mobile nomadic communities, who inhabited the region between the Urals and the Carpathians – it also embodied these features. All of these factors explain the aspects of the cultural heterogeneity in the Transtisa region.

3. We do not exclude a biological and cultural connection between these communities from the Carpathian Basin and the area of the Eurasian steppes. Still, archaeology is no longer enough for such observations, and such theories should be undoubtedly confirmed by DNA analyses and *strontium isotope* analyses.

4. Future researches might clarify, through *strontium isotope* analyses, including in the case of the graves from Nădlac-1M, whether one can speak of a macro-geographic migration, or whether these were the descendants of some population already formed in these areas, who submitted to Bayan and his “steppe state” structures, as Walter Pohl has labeled the nomad political powers from the Carpathian Basin (Pohl 2003, 271-272).

5. The Schmorl’s node observed on the skeleton in Ftr. 77 may suggest that the individual submitted his body to intense physical effort. Such nodes are formed through activities such as the flexion and bending of the spine, but they can also appear through trauma caused by weightlifting. This case obviously raises the issue of the occupations and lifestyle of the individuals buried in Nădlac 1M.

6. We believe we should also mention the almost identical gender and age of the human skeleton (belonging to a 40-55 year-old woman) and the cattle skeleton (belonging to an adult cow). In our opinion, the fact that the woman and the animal were close in age can be undoubtedly connected to their gender. Though, studying a larger sample, we cannot note a rule regarding this aspect (Gáll 2017, figs 53 and 54).

From this perspective, the “cultural unity” of the Transtisa region in the 6-7<sup>th</sup> centuries must be considered much more approximate speculative. These final statements stress our choices of scientific methodology – namely that each case must be analyzed in its context, without resorting to the uniformities so specific to a given methodological approach.

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