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POPULATIONS OF EAST EUROPEAN STEPPE ORIGIN IN THE CEMETERIES OF SZEKSZÁRD-BOGYISZLÓI STREET AND KÖLKED-FEKETEKAPU B (7TH CENTURY AD)

Bence GULYÁS* 

In the Early Avar period, groups from the Eastern European steppe appeared in the Carpathian Basin mainly in the Transisza region. Recent research has revealed the coeval presence of similar communities in south-east Transdanubia. This paper presents an evaluation of burials of steppe origin from two cemeteries, Szekszárd-Bogyiszlói Street and Kölked-Feketekapu Cemetery B, with particular emphasis on the analogies to the burial customs in the Transisza region.

Kelet-európai sztyeppe-i csoportok a kora avar korban elsősorban a Tiszántúlon jelentek meg. Az újabb kutatások nyomán hasonló közösségek a Délkelet-Dunántúlon is kimutathatók. Cikkemben két lelőhely, Szekszárd-Bogyiszlói út és Kölked-Feketekapu B temető sztyeppe-i eredetű temetkezéseit vizsgálom, különös tekintettel a temetkezési szokások tiszántúli párhuzamaira.

Keywords: Szekszárd-Bogyiszlói Street, Kölked-Feketekapu Cemetery B, Early Avar period, burial rite

Kulcsszavak: Szekszárd-Bogyiszlói út, Kölked-Feketekapu B temető, kora avar kor, temetkezési szokások

Introduction

The heterogeneous ethnical composition of the Early Avar Khaganate has been described thoroughly in written sources, which mention, apart from the Avars of Asian origin, Merovingian groups and Byzantine populations deported from the Balkans.¹ Peoples who joined the Avars in Eastern Europe, such as the Kutrigurs, the Zabenders, and the Kotzagers, can be added to this list (Némethi, Klima 1992, 173). The archaeological identification of these peoples is one of the greatest challenges the research of this era has to face. In the past few decades, a most promising progress has been made in identifying a population settled in the area east of the Tisza River. As the material culture became more homogeneous throughout Eastern Central Europe during the 6th–7th centuries AD, this group could only be separated based on burial customs. Single graves and a great number of cemeteries with only a few graves with E-W, NE-SW and, more rarely, N-S orientation, the special separation of the deceased and the ani-

mal offering, and the large number of graves with a sidewall niche are the most important characteristics of this group. The graves in the region east of the Tisza are characterised by the high number of sacrificed animals, usually not put in the grave as a whole but only their hides with the skull and the lower legs still in place. This form of animal offering is referred to as ‘partial animal burial’ in Hungarian literature. With regard to species, horses, cattle, sheep, and goats were usually found next to the deceased. Certain parts of the sheep – most frequently the sacrum and the scapula – were offered as food. Compared to other regions, the graves east of the Tisza contained more hand-formed pottery, which were usually placed in the grave next to the skull of the deceased (Lőrinczy 2016, 156–162). As these elements of the funerary rite appear in identical combinations in contemporaneous burials in the East European steppe (Sivashovka-type burials), the group that settled east of the Tisza River has been thought to have come from that area (Gulyás 2015 with further literature).

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According to Gábor Lőrinczy, this population moved to the Carpathian Basin in a single block. The greatest number of graves related to them was found south of the Körös (Criş in Romanian) River, on the left side of the Tisza, and in the area between the Maros (Mureş) and Aranka (Aranca) rivers (Lőrinczy 2016, 163). The sites dated to the earliest phase (Szentés-Lapistó, Szentés-Borbásföld, etc.) can also be found there (Lőrinczy 2017, 159–161). Much fewer Early Avar period sites are known from north of the Körös, and these are not consistent with regard to burial customs; the almost single feature all share is that they can only be dated to the AD 620–630s (Lőrinczy 2016, 164). If we observe the burial customs of the people of steppe origin in more detail, it can be seen that they were also sparsely scattered over Transdanubia. Can it mean communities similar to those east of the Tisza River also settled there? In the following, we try to answer this question. Due to the limited scope of the present work, the study is restricted to the evaluation of the cemeteries at Szekszárd-Bogyiszlói Street and at Kölked-Feketekapu Cemetery B (Fig. 1, 1).

The Szekszárd-Bogyiszlói Street cemetery

Description of the site

Gyula Rosner excavated a cemetery with 788 graves and a settlement at Szekszárd-Bogyiszlói Street (Tolna County) between 1974 and 1987. The burial ground was in use throughout the whole Avar period (Rosner 1999, 7–8). The vast majority of the graves were disturbed, making any evaluation problematic. The main orientation of the burials was W-E, while in a spatially distinct group the graves, evenly distributed along the northern edge of the cemetery (Rosner 1977, 100–102) (Fig. 2), had N-S orientation. In addition, the finds show that the local population was under strong Merovingian and late antique influences (Vida 2017, 125).

Steppe burials in the cemetery – research history

In his article on the horse burials in the cemetery, Gyula Rosner analysed the relative position of animal remains within the graves. He noticed that these graves differ from the other burials on the site in other respects, too, and raised the possibility that they represent a different ethnic group. In defining their ethnicity, he based his argument mainly on the partial animal burials. Since this custom was unknown in Central and Inner Asia in the period in question,

Rosner thought these graves belonged to a nomadic people from East Europe who joined the Avars (Rosner 1977, 108). He dated their graves to the first half of the 7th century AD and later (Rosner 1977, 106). Rosner did not modify his opinion in his publication of the cemetery but only repeated his 20-year-old theory in a more concise version (Rosner 1999, 153–154). Csilla Balogh drew attention to the coincidence of the N-S orientation and partial animal burials, which helped to identify this group of Eastern origin more precisely (Balogh 2002, 482). In his monograph on finds of East European steppe origin in Bulgaria, Rasha Rashev mentioned the possibility that the partial horse burials in the Carpathian Basin may have been of Pontic, probably Bulgarian origin. He drew attention to the fact that in present-day Hungary, this custom occurred in several cases together with a particular grave type, the graves with a sidewall niche, which were quite frequent in 6th–7th-century AD nomadic context (Rashev 2005, 164). The issue of ethnicity with relation to the Szekszárd cemetery was last addressed by Tivadar Vida. According to his model, the cemetery, which was founded in the last quarter of the 6th century AD, was established by two families with strong connections to Merovingian culture and three families of steppe origin. The latter community could be characterised by N-S orientation, partial animal burials, and spatial separation. The small number of these graves led him to the conclusion that after a short while, this population of mixed origin moved on or their descendants buried their deceased in the row cemetery (Vida 2017, 125).

Burial rites

Characteristics of the grave group. The N-S-oriented graves were scattered in the northern part of the cemetery (Rosner 1977, 100–102), forming three groups according to Tivadar Vida (Vida 2017, 125). In connection with the Early Avar period cemetery unearthed in Börcs-Nagydomb, Péter Tomka has described this type of burial ground, with graves arranged disorderly and relatively far from one another (Tomka 2005, 160–161). Since then, such sites have also been identified east of the Tisza River, e.g., in Tiszavasvári-Kashalom-dűlő (Lőrinczy, Rác 2014, 166–171) and Apátfalva-Nagyút-dűlő (Cseh, Varga 2017, 406–407).

Orientation. Three different orientations could be distinguished in the cemetery at Szekszárd-Bogyiszlói Street.² Most graves were oriented to W-E or

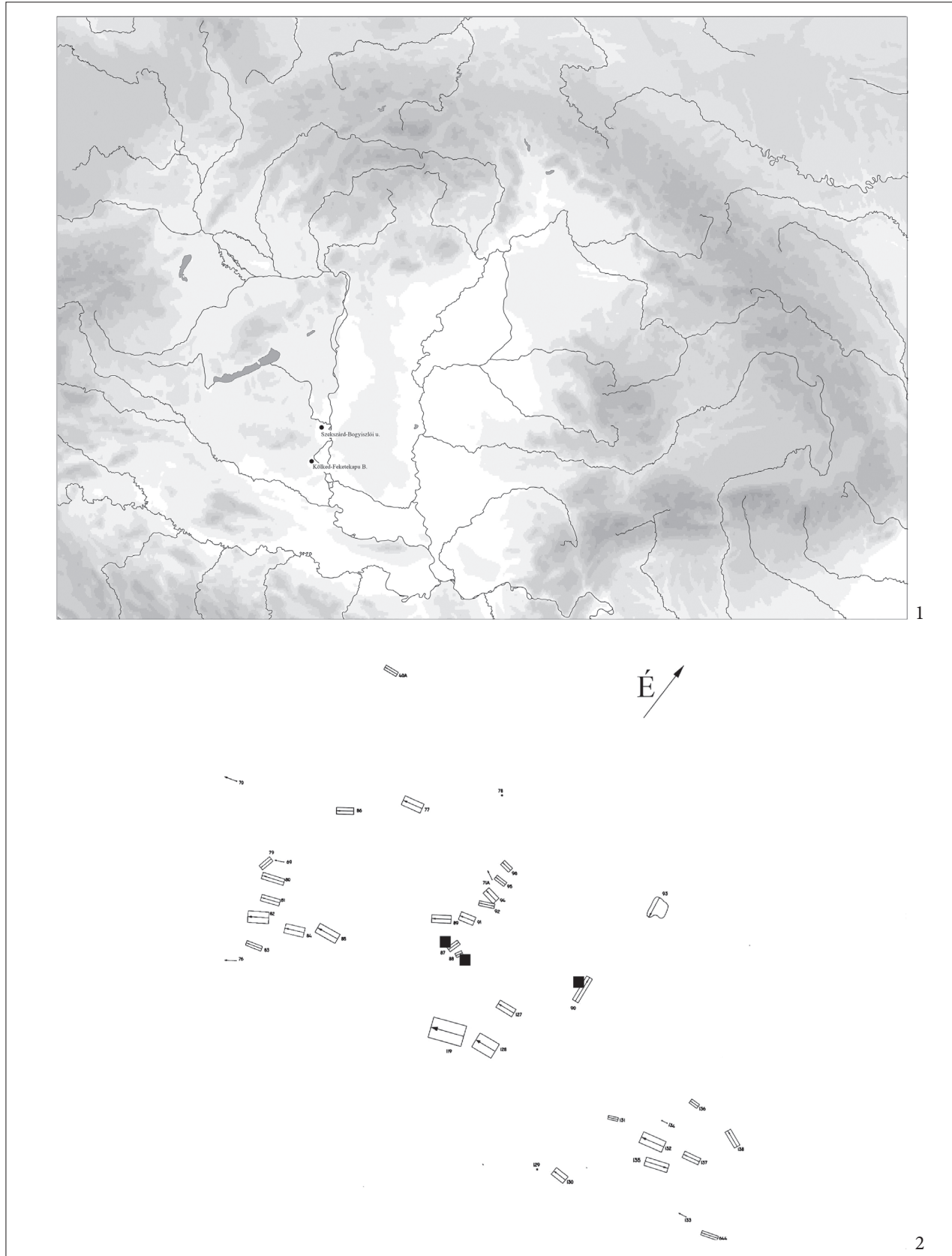


Fig. 1 1: Location of the sites in the article; 2: Grave Group IX in Cemetery B at Kölked-Feketekapu.

Legend: ■ – graves of eastern origin

1. kép 1: A cikkben vizsgált lelőhelyek elhelyezkedése; 2: A IX. sírcsoport Kölked-Feketekapu B temetőben.

Jelmagyarázat: ■ – keleti eredetű sírok

NW-SE, which was common in Transdanubia during the period in question (Lőrinczy 1992a, 164). However, four burials (724, 731, 732, and 735) were oriented E-W. That and the NE-SW orientation were common in the Transtisza region in the Early Avar period (Lőrinczy 2017, 139). The graves in the cemetery in Szekszárd were scarce in findings, but a yellow bottle from Grave 732 suggested this grave group to be dated to the second half of the Avar period; therefore, their orientation could be interpreted as 'reversed'.

Nine graves in the cemetery had N-S orientation with slight deviation (Graves 7, 55, 268, 269, 314, 335, 350, 351, and 742). Ilona Kovrig and József Korek discussed this orientation in connection with the Čoka cemetery (in the territory of present-day Northern Serbia). They concluded that the N-S orientation was frequent east of the Tisza River (Kovrig, Korek 1960, 273). The latest compilation included twenty graves with such orientation, 14 from the Transtisza region, three from the Danube–Tisza Interfluve, and three more from Transdanubia (Lőrinczy 1992a, 164). The distribution of this orientation is not even in the Transtisza region either: most graves were found north of the Berettyó River, their appearance having been explained by the arrival of a new people (Lőrinczy 1998, 352). Earlier, Dezső Csallány argued otherwise, explaining the various orientations in the Transtisza region by chronological differences. In his opinion, initially, the E-W orientation was characteristic in the area, which was replaced by N-S and then W-E orientation (Csallány 1968, 62–63). This latter explanation seems more plausible in the light of the data gained so far, as this orientation is also dominant in some cemeteries that can be dated to the last third of the 7th century (e.g., Csárdaszállás-Szakácsföld, Hódmezővásárhely-Gorzsa, Örménykút: Bende 2017, 252).

Graves with a sidewall niche. Six of the nine N-S-oriented graves must have had a sidewall niche. Such a feature was only detected by Rosner in one case, while in the rest of the cases, it could only be supposed. Sidewall niches were identified in four more graves by Gábor Lőrinczy and Péter Straub (Graves 268, 269, 314 and 335) (*Fig. 3, 1; Fig. 4, 1*). The animal bones in the sidewall in these graves niche were tilted towards the deceased, and, in some cases, the grave wall next to the human skeleton was slightly inclined rather than perpendicular (Lőrinczy, Straub 2006, 291, 295, note 47). According to the descrip-

tions, Graves 351 and 742 (*Fig. 3, 9*) can also be assigned to this group.

Niche graves appeared throughout the whole Avar period, although in different regions at different times. While burials dating back to the Early Avar period were mainly found in the Transtisza region, they only appeared, sporadically, in the Danube–Tisza Interfluve at the end of the 7th and the beginning of the 8th century AD, while in western Transdanubia only at the end of the Late Avar period (Lőrinczy, Straub 2006, 282).³ The graves with a sidewall niche in the region east of the Tisza and the Danube–Tisza Interfluve differ in that they contain an animal offering and also the position of the sidewall niche. East of the Tisza, the sidewall niche was dug into the left side of the grave pit, while west of it, in the right, which indicates that analogies to the pits' shape of the graves at Szekszárd–Bogyiszlói Street must be looked for in the Transtisza region (Balogh 2016, 43–44).

This grave pit type remained in use longer in the Szekszárd cemetery. According to G. Lőrinczy and P. Straub, Graves 537 and 785 must have had sidewall niches. The former grave was dated to the second half of the Avar period based on some rectangular mounts with hinged rings, while the latter based on a pentagonal mount with interlace decoration, braid clamps, and a stirrup with curved tread. Only the shape of these graves resembled the older burials (as they were W-E oriented).

Graves with an end wall shaft. One of the most characteristic burial customs of the Transtisza Region in the Early Avar period is the use of graves with an end wall shaft (also referred to in literature as 'tunnel-shaft graves' (Lőrinczy 1994; Lőrinczy 2017, 146–153). We only have information about this grave form from the Early Avar-period Transdanubia from Bölske, but the more than a century-old excavation documentation is unclear (Lőrinczy 1994, 320, note 16). Reviewing the documentation of the cemetery of Szekszárd, Gábor Lőrinczy and Péter Straub noticed that Grave 463 actually had an end wall shaft (Lőrinczy, Straub 2006, 293, note 26). According to Rosner's description, a small soil stain revealed the grave after removing the topsoil. They found nothing while unearthing this stain, but a new discoloured patch appeared, indicating the actual grave pit. The skeleton's leg and pelvic bones were found slanted, while its upper part was destroyed (Rosner 1999, 63). These characteristics clearly indicated a



Fig. 2 Survey map of the cemetery of Szekszárd-Bogyiszlói Street. Legend: ● – Graves of eastern origin, ▲ – Early Avar period graves with eastern influence, ■ – Late Avar period graves with eastern influence

2. kép A Szekszárd-Bogyiszlói úti temető térképe. Jelmagyarázat: ● – keleti eredetű sírok, ▲ – keleti hatásokat mutató kora avar kori sírok, ■ – keleti hatásokat mutató késő avar kori sírok



Fig 3 Graves from the Szekszárd-Bogyislói Street cemetery. 1–8: Grave 314; 9–17: Grave 742
 3. kép Sírok a Szekszárd-Bogyislói úti temetőből. 1–8: 314. sír; 9–17: 742. sír

grave with a shaft dug from one of the short ends of the grave pit, as was noted by Rosner.⁴ The finds from Grave 463 – a rectangular iron buckle and an iron knife – were of no use for dating. Its W-E orientation and relative position within the cemetery have led us to suppose that it can be dated to the second half of the Avar period. Gábor Lőrinczy and Péter Straub came up with the idea that the ‘empty’ graves in the cemetery could have actually been the empty main shafts of graves with an end wall shaft (Lőrinczy, Straub 2006, 293, note 26).

Cenotaphs. No human remains were found in Graves 261 and 268 but only partial horses. Grave 261 can be considered a local variant of the horse burials characteristic of Transdanubia (Némethi, Klima 1992, 177). As opposed to that, the sidewall niche in Grave 268 seems to indicate that it must have been a cenotaph. Empty grave pits are amongst the most important features in the cemetery of Szekszárd; there are dozens of graves where no human remains were found (Rosner 1999, 103). Previously, the presence of symbolic burials was also supposed in Szegvár-Oromdűlő, but since then, the dating of the related features to the Avar period has been disputed (Lőrinczy 2016, 158–159).

Partial horse burials. Skulls and lower leg bones of altogether ten horses were discovered in eight graves of the cemetery (Graves 7, 55, 211, 261, 268, 335, 350, and 351); the partial remains of two animals were found in Graves 335 (Fig. 4, 1) and 350. All graves were N-S oriented except for Graves 211⁵ and 261 (W-E). Rosner classified the partial horse burials from the site into three distinct types based on the relative positions of the deceased and the horse:

1. Flayed horse above the deceased: Graves 7, 211;
2. Flayed horse in the sidewall niche next to the deceased⁶: Graves 261, 268, 335, 351;
3. Horse laid across the legs of the deceased: Graves 55, 350.

According to Mária Némethi and László Klima, who conducted the most extensive research on Early Avar period partial horse burials, this custom was characteristic of the Transtisza region in the Early Avar period, although rarely also occurring in Transdanubia (Zalakomár, Mór-Akasztódomb and Szekszárd-Bogyiszlói Street) (Némethi, Klima 1992, 277). The latest compilation, by Gábor Lőrinczy, mentions 148 such burials (Lőrinczy 1996, 180). More than 20 years have passed since that publication,

and the number of such graves has increased considerably; however, the exact number is unknown. It is a characteristic of partial horse – and, in general, animal – burials that the animals had been placed in the grave pit separate from the deceased: in the case of simple shaft graves, the animal was laid on top of some planks supported by a pair of shoulders that run along the side walls of the grave pit or fitted into niches carved into the grave wall, closing off the deceased and their furnishing beneath (see Rosner’s Group 1) while, in the case of graves with an end wall shaft, the animal remains were put in the main shaft (Rosner’s Group 2) (Lőrinczy 2017, 153). I do not know of any analogy to Rosner’s Group 3. Besides, the offered animals east of the Tisza were bone-cut flayed, i.e., the leg bones were not cut at the joints but truncated at the distal end of the radius and the tibia (Lőrinczy 2016, 157). Rosner also described this method in connection with the partial animal burials unearthed in Szekszárd (Rosner 1977, 105).

The position of the riding equipment in the graves. Harness parts were found in only three N-S-oriented horse graves: a horse-bit in Grave 7, a loop-eyed stirrup in Grave 55, and a complete harness with a bit, a loop-eyed stirrup, and a strap buckle in Grave 335. Whereas most burials with complete horses (Graves 126, 193, 598, 698) contained a pair of stirrups, only one piece was found in Graves 55 and 335. While in the former case, the grave having been disturbed may explain the absence of the second stirrup that does not apply to the latter where the area of the harness was intact. Albeit in meagre numbers, assemblages containing only a single stirrup – indicating asymmetrical use – are also known from the area east of the Tisza (e.g., Tiszabercel-Vékás-dűlő, Grave 3) (Csallány 1960, 35).

A new interpretation of horse burials has gained ground recently in connection with the Transtisza region, involving a categorisation based on the presence and relative position of riding equipment. The related phenomena were classified into six groups (Lőrinczy, Straub 2005, 141):

1. Funerary offering containing equestrian equipment
2. Horse offering without any harness preserved or only with a bridle
3. Horse offering only with horse-bits
4. Complete horse or parts of it equipped with a harness

5. A complete horse without a harness, the harness is next to the animal
6. Burial with horse harness

The related graves in Szekszárd belong to several of these categories. Most can be classified into Group 2 (Graves 211, 261, 268, 350, and 351). Only one horse had a bit in its mouth (Grave 335), while the other was buried without a harness. Several cases are known when a harnessed and several unharnessed horses were placed in the grave, including Ártánd-Határkő [Border Stone] No. F142 (Mesterházy 1987, 219) and Mokrin Grave 49 (Balogh 2004, 268). According to the available data, Grave 55 falls in Group 5: the stirrup – and most likely also the saddle – were placed right next to the deceased, and the stirrup slid between the skeleton and the grave pit wall. Grave 335 can be described as a combination of Groups 3 and 5: the undecorated bridle with the bit was put on the animal, and the saddle was placed at the head end of the coffin.

Partial cattle and ruminant burials. Graves 314 and 742 contained the skull and lower leg bones of cattle, while Grave 269 the same bones of a goat (Fig. 3, 1, 9). The animal remains in each case were placed in the graves the same way as the horse remains: the orientation of the remains and the deceased matched in all three cases, the cattle bones were found in the main shaft of the niche grave, while the goat remains lay above the human skeleton. These animals were bone-cut flayed like horses. That partial cattle and goat remains were only found in the graves of women and girls, while horses were only added to the burials of males, indicates gender-based distinction (Rosner 1977, 106).

Though sparsely, partial cattle and sheep burials appeared in Transdanubia from the Early Avar period. Their number east of the Tisza was greater: the custom is known to have been practised on 110 sites altogether (Lőrinczy 2017, 154). In Szegvár-Oromdűlő, animal remains were found in 375 graves; about 400 cattle, 600 sheep and goats, and more than a hundred horses were discovered on the site (Lőrinczy 2017, 153). Looking at the whole Transtisza region, a territorial distribution between horse burials and burials containing other animals becomes conspicuous. While horse burials seem scattered evenly throughout the region, cattle and sheep are mainly found in the core area (observation by Gábor Lőrinczy). The only exception is Tiszavasvári (Lőrinczy 1992b, 113–117).

Pottery in the graves. Three of the 11 burials examined or about 25% (Graves 269, 314, and 351) contained pots. All three were hand-formed vessels, despite the area was a centre producing early medieval grey pottery (Rosner 1990, 127) (Fig. 3, 7), as clearly reflected by the pottery record of the cemetery (Rosner 1999, 136–140). The pots were always placed next to the skull.

Unlike in other territories, pots are common grave goods in Early Avar burials in the Transtisza region. One of four burials contained a vessel in the cemetery of Szegvár-Oromdűlő, one of five in Mokrin, and every second in Tiszavasvári-Koldusdomb. Vessels seem to have had a fixed place in the grave, usually next to the skull, with only a few exceptions (Lőrinczy 2017, 154–155). Most grave vessels from the region are coarse, hand-formed specimens, with only occasionally other wares, such as grey pottery, among them (Lőrinczy 2015, 166–167).

The dating of the graves

Only a few clues are available to help with dating. Graves 55 and 268 contained no grave finds. The object types – including cheek bits, loop-eyed and long-eyed stirrups, a pear-shaped bone whip handle, knives, and pottery – found in graves of males (Graves 7, 55, 335, 350 and 351⁷) and in Grave 269, of a woman, cannot be dated more precisely within the Early Avar period (Fig. 4, 2–11). The strap end with a stylised face recovered from Grave 314 was already evaluated by several authors. Although cast items, dated usually to the late 6th and early 7th centuries AD, are considered the earliest examples of this object type, the one found in Szekszárd was dated to the Middle Avar period by Péter Somogyi and Csilla Balogh because the strap end was not in the area of the waist but at the clavícula in a secondary position (Fig. 3, 2) and, therefore, it was interpreted as an archaic piece (*Altstück*) worn around the neck (Somogyi 1987, 134; Balogh 2004, 264). In some burials east of the Tisza (Szentés-Derekegyházi oldal, Gyoma-Ugari tanyák-dűlő), belt mounts were found in the chest area, perhaps because the belt was put on top of the body during the funeral (Lőrinczy 1998, 351). In my opinion, this is also the case in Szekszárd. The objects with the highest chronological value in graves of women and girls are the necklaces strung of diverse beads. Adrienn Pásztor dated the string of beads from Grave 314 to the first and another from Grave 742 to the second half of the 7th century AD (Pásztor 2001, 143) (Fig. 3, 14). Small

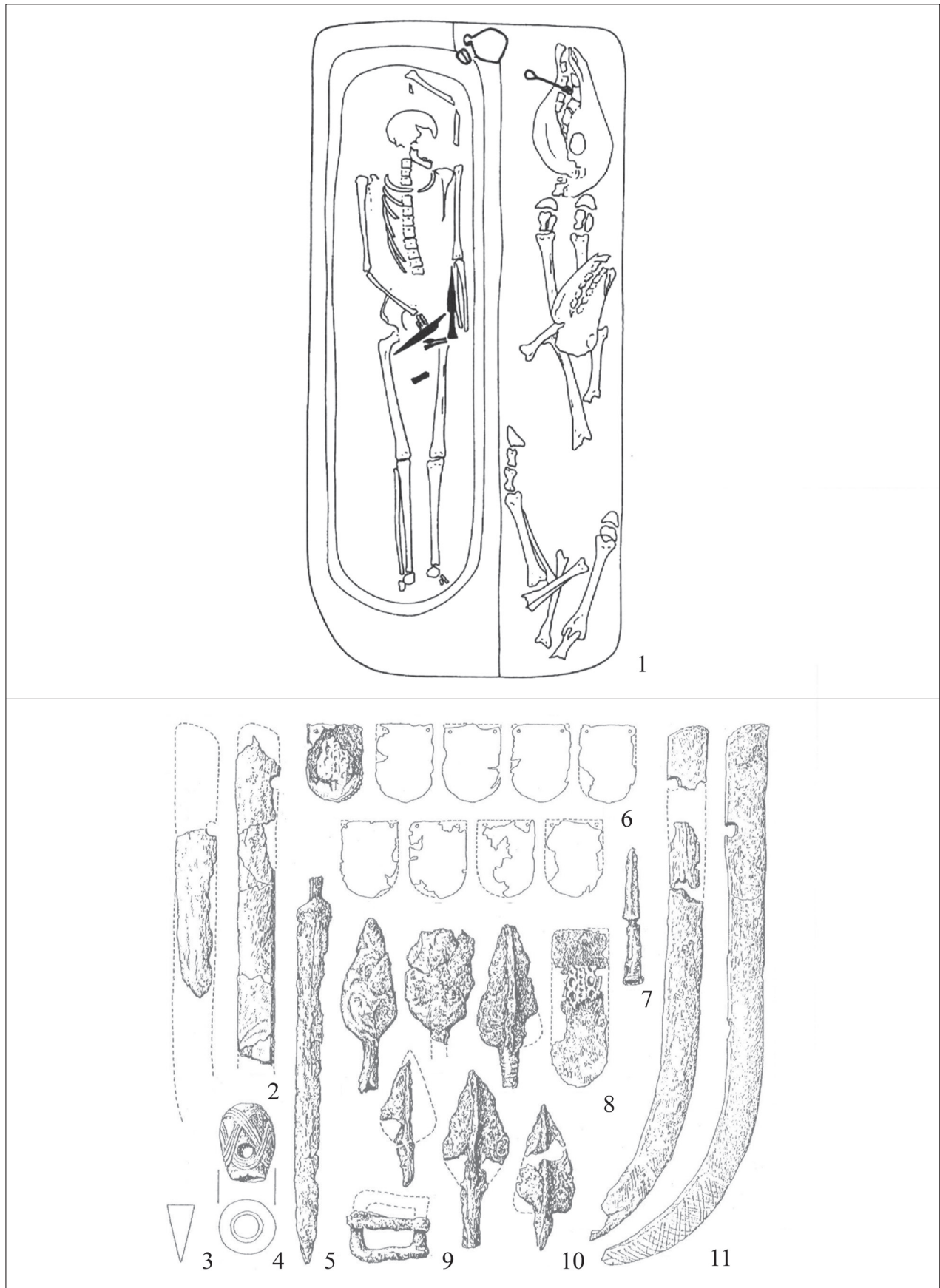


Fig 4 Graves from the Szekszárd-Bogyiszlói Street cemetery. 1: Grave 335; 2-11: Grave 350
 4. kép Sírok a Szekszárd-Bogyiszlói úti temetőből. 1: 335. sír; 2-11: 350. sír

spherical pendant earrings appeared at the beginning of the 7th century and had become widespread by the mid-century (Balogh 2016, 153). In summary, based on available information, the grave cluster can be dated to the first or second third of the 7th century AD, which, to some degree, corresponds with Rosner's dating.

Kölked-Feketekapu B

Description of the excavation

The cemetery at the site Kölked-Feketekapu B (Baryana County) was excavated by Attila Kiss in 1973–1999. Besides 564 Avar Period burials, several prehistoric graves were discovered. Kiss separated 17 grave clusters (marked by him as Groups I–XVII) and a similar number of single graves within the cemetery that was used throughout the whole Avar period. However, only Group XII contained both early (XII/A) and late (XII/B) graves (Kiss 2001, 15–19). Albeit the cemeteries in Kölked are well-known for the wide range of grave finds, including Merovingian items, some eastern artefact types and funerary customs also occurred there. Nevertheless, unlike in the cemetery at Szekszárd-Bogyiszlói Street, no attempt has been made so far to identify East European steppe people in the mortuary community of the cemetery.

Burial rites

Characteristics of the grave group. Just like in Szekszárd-Bogyiszlói Street, burials of a steppe character are scattered (rather than forming clusters) in Kölked. However, they concentrate in two major clusters: 60% lay in Groups IX (Graves 87, 88, 90) (Fig. 1, 2) and XIII (Graves 351, 355, 365), while the rest in the area between them. It must be noted that both clusters contained burials with different funerary rites, some also with Merovingian connections. As those could be dated to the Early Avar period, the relationship between the groups of different origins is not clear at present. It is unfortunate as the two richest graves in the cemetery (Graves 85 and 119) can be found in Group IX.

Orientation. The dominant orientations in the cemetery were NW-SE and W-E. Nine graves (87, 88, 90, 329, 351, 355, 365, and 471) were oriented N-S with some deviation. The orientation of two graves (79 and 241) could not be determined due to disturbance; only a rough N-S-oriented main axis was

recorded. In summary, the overall picture is similar to the grave cluster unearthed in Szekszárd. Grave 352 was E-W oriented, which may be interpreted as a reversed main orientation in the cemetery.

Grave pit types. We managed to collect data on the grave pit of ten of the N-S oriented graves, most of them simple shaft graves with rectangular grave pits, a width:length ratio around 2.5 and 3.33,⁸ respectively, which approximately matches the average proportions of such features in the Transtisza region (Lőrinczy, Rácz 2014, 172; Gulyás 2015, 503).

Besides simple shaft graves, burials with niches on both sides appeared in Kölked, as observed by Attila Kiss in connection with Grave 355. Partial animal remains were found above the deceased in Grave 87 (Fig. 5, 1). Their arrangement was akin to the general practice in the Transtisza region: laid on top of the planks or beams that closed off the grave bottom, they were separated spatially from the deceased. The construction was supported by two shoulders or grooves in the two side walls of the grave pits (Lőrinczy 2016, 158), which were not observed or recorded in every case in sites in the Transtisza Region and maybe in Kölked either.

Special attention must be paid to Grave 88, which contained a partial sheep placed left of the skeleton of a child (Fig. 5, 4). Indirect evidence suggests that this feature is a grave with sidewall niches: the clues include the uncommonly low 1.45 length: width ratio of the grave pit, the fact that the animal remains were slightly above the human remains, and that the sidewall of the grave on the side of the child was slightly sloping.

A common feature of these burials is that – while such elements are characteristic of the cemeteries of the local population – they did not comprise post structures or had grave bottoms with deeper ends.

Partial animal offerings. Two of the early graves (87 and 88) contained remains of sacrificed animals: Grave 87 a horse and two small ruminants, and Grave 88 a small ruminant. The animal remains in Grave 87 were positioned above the deceased, whereas in Grave 88, they were found on the left side of the young (*Inf I*) child. Many examples are known from the Transtisza region where several animals were placed over the deceased person in the grave. In Grave 1 in Szegvár-Oromdűlő, the partial remains of a horse, a cattle, and a sheep were placed over a woman's body (Lőrinczy 1991, 127); analogies to this particular custom are known from

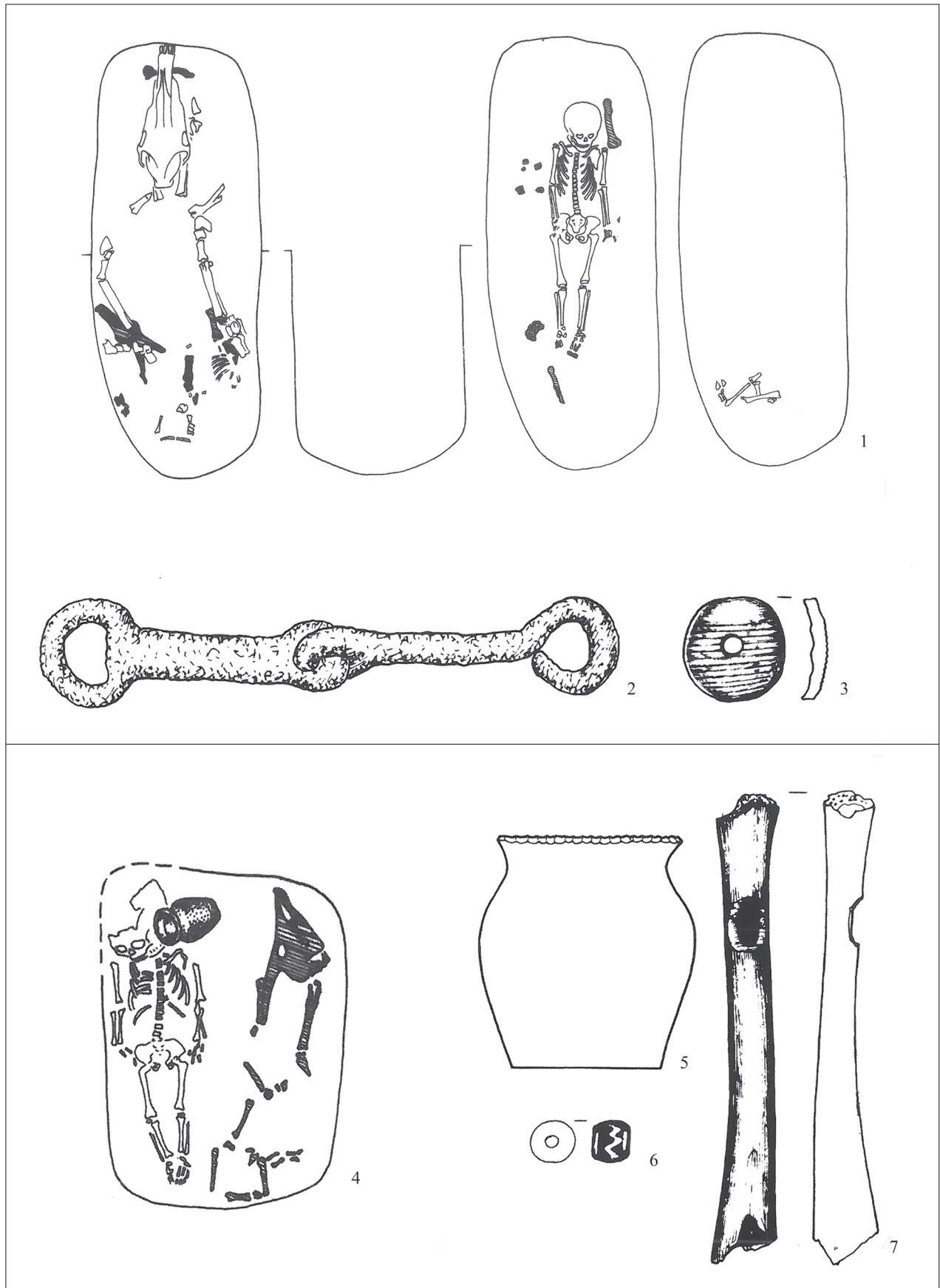


Fig. 5 Graves from Cemetery B at Kölked-Feketeapu. 1-3: Grave 87; 4-7: Grave 88
 5. kép Sírok Kölked-Feketeapu B temetőből. 1-3: 87. sír; 4-7: 88. sír

Tiszavasvári-Koldusdomb (Gulyás, Lőrinczy 2018, 540–541). The animals in Graves 87 and 88 were bone-cut flayed.

The horse in Grave 87 was not harnessed completely; only the cheek-bit, arranged in a wearing position, was buried with the animal (Group 3 by G. Lőrinczy and P. Straub). A similar burial is known from Grave 335 in Szekszárd.

Among the Late Avar grave clusters, graves in Groups VI, XII/A and XIII contained partial sheep and, sometimes, cattle remains. These were not bone-cut flayed – as customary in the Transtisza region at that time – but the knuckles were cut at the joints (Lőrinczy 2016, 166).

Pottery in the graves. Poor-quality hand-formed pottery vessels were placed into four of the 13 graves, always near the skull. Finger imprints decorated the rim of the pot found in Grave 88, while the others bore no decoration (Fig. 5, 5). It must be noted that, like in Szekszárd, the steppe-type graves in the cemetery did not contain stamped or grey pottery, albeit these two types were also present in Kölked (see Kiss 2001, Taf. 154–159).

Dating of the grave cluster

The graves not assigned to any grave groups by Attila Kiss (Graves 79, 241, 329, and 471) cannot be dated as they did not contain grave finds with a particular chronological value. The furnishings in Graves 88 and 89 in Grave Group IX (eye bead and beads with wavy line decoration, a spindle whorl, and cheek bits) cannot be dated more precisely within the Early Avar period (see Fig. 5). As for relative chronology, Grave 90 may provide a clue as it was dug into House 75, but the finds from the house and, therefore, its dating are unknown.

The ring-shaped bead from Grave 354 in Grave Group XIII was dated to the first half of the 7th century AD (Kiss 2001, 376). The exact type of the large spherical pendant earring cannot be identified due to its highly fragmentary state. Such earrings were in fashion for a long time, from the 6th century AD, and their late versions were worn until the last third of the 7th century (Balogh 2016, 151–152). Due to its W-E orientation, the grave can better be dated to the second half of the Avar period, conclusively also dating Grave Group IX to the Early Avar period. However, Group XIII was used even in the second half of the 7th century.

Summary

In the cemeteries at Szekszárd-Bogyiszlói Street and Kölked-Feketekapu Cemetery B, a specific group of burials could be distinguished with traits culturally different from the majority of the mortuary community of the cemetery. Their distinct funerary rite – characterised by N-S orientation, grave pits with sidewall niches and those with shoulders on both sides, bone-cut-flayed partial animal offerings, pottery vessels by the head – connects them with the Early Avar period population of East European steppe origin settled in the Transtisza region. As for Graves 7, 55, 269, 314, 335, 350, 351 and 742 in Szekszárd, and Graves 87 and 88 in Kölked, it is not only single elements of the funerary practice that connect them with the communities east of the Tisza but almost all parts are identical to the ones observed there. Therefore, it can be assumed that the presence of these phenomena in Szekszárd and Kölked does not represent merely a cultural influence from the Transtisza Region, but some groups actually moved there from that part of the Avar Khaganate. The conclusions in the case of the other burials discussed above are less clear.

This group of steppe origin appeared in the early 7th century AD in the area of Szekszárd. The graves connected with them are separated spatially from the rest, concentrating at the northern edge of the cemetery. As opposed to this, steppe-type burials in Kölked were scattered all over the cemetery and could be found in grave groups XIII and IX, together with graves featuring Germanic traits in the latter. While the graves with eastern connections could not be dated more precisely within the Early Avar period, the rich burials comprising Merovingian-type jewellery (85 and 119) were established at the end of the 6th or the first quarter of the 7th century AD (Hajnal 2012, 627). It seems that the people of steppe origin appearing there arranged their burials with consideration to an already existing cemetery structure, based on which their graves must be younger than those of the earlier group with Merovingian cultural traditions.

Despite the spatial separation of the communities of different origins, local elements of the funerary rite and the material culture, characteristic of Transdanubian communities, occurred in the burials of people of eastern origin. Only some parts of a horse were interred in Grave 261 at Szekszárd-Bogyiszlói Street.

As the independent horse burials, a characteristic of Transdanubia, always contained a complete animal, this grave can be interpreted as the local adaptation of a custom typical to the Transtisza region. In terms of material culture, Grave 350 is outstanding: it contained a Merovingian-type belt set with interlace design and the pear-shaped whip end, also characteristic of Transdanubia (Garam 1998, 118).

We can reckon with persisting steppe people even in the second half of the Avar period in the communities behind both cemeteries. A change in grave orientation is a common characteristic of the burials related to them: by the end of the 7th century AD, NW-SE direction had become the most common. Of the elements of the steppe funerary rite, sidewall niches and end wall shafts remained in fashion; moreover, partial sheep and cattle offerings were added to burials even in the Late Avar period, indicating some kind of continuation of steppe traditions. Parallel to the Transtisza region, the method of flaying changed here, too: in the 8th century AD, the legs of the animals were cut at the knee joint. In Kölked-Feketekapu, Cemetery B, only a cattle shin bone was found in Grave 353 and a femur in Grave 354. This kind of food offering can be

considered typical in the two cemeteries, appearing sparsely in the Early Avar period but becoming widespread later (Hajnal 2012, 609).

In the Early Avar period, groups from the East European steppe zone settled down in the Transtisza region in one block. The fact that some of them could be detected in Szekszárd and Kölked shows the significance of the two sites. Szekszárd and its surroundings were one of the most important centres of grey ware production in the 7th century AD. Scientific analyses have revealed that the grey pottery found in the Maros Valley was also manufactured there (Bolla 1990, 133). The cemeteries at Kölked were situated near the Danube, one of the most important trade routes of the time.⁹ The finds of various origins unearthed in the settlement and the cemeteries bear witness to the broad-ranging connections of the communities settled there (Hajnal 2005; Hajnal 2012, 634–639; Hajnal 2013). It cannot be excluded that some communities moved to the territory of the former Pannonia province from the Transtisza region to maintain (trade) connections between Transdanubia and that area. The eastern-type grave clusters discovered in the cemeteries in Szekszárd and Kölked may testify to that.

Notes

- 1 The research has been implemented with the support provided by the Ministry of Innovation and Technology of Hungary from the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund, financed under the TKP2021-NKTA-24 funding scheme.
- 2 Several mistakes concerning the orientation of the graves appear in Rosner's monograph. Not only the points of the compass but the exact directions are also given by the author – contrary to what is written not in degrees, but using a 60-unit compass. Moreover, the two results sometimes do not agree either with each other or the map. Grave 350 can be mentioned as an example; it was described by Rosner as a burial with a N-S orientation (Rosner 1999, 48) but appeared on the map with an NW–SE orientation (see Abb 3). Csilla Balogh in her review also prompted the problems of orientation (Balogh 2002, 481). In the following, I only treat those graves as N-S oriented which Rosner had described as such.
- 3 Nevertheless, recently it has been detected that this grave type can also be found in the Transtisza region, although sparsely: Balogh 2016, 43–44.
- 4 The Hungarian term *fülkesír* (grave with an end wall shaft) was mentioned in the documentation, although the German *Nischengrab* (grave with a sidewall niche) appeared in the publication. Lőrinczy, Straub 2006, 293, note 26.
- 5 Evaluating this grave is highly problematic because it had been plundered entirely during excavation, before it was completely uncovered (Rosner 1977, 84).
- 6 These must have been burials with sidewall niches.
- 7 The beads from the grave are missing (Pásztor 2001, 115, note 11).
- 8 The length:width ratio of Grave 90 is 5:25. But it was found in House 75, and two cenotaphs (?) were observed below it (Kiss 2001, 39–40). Therefore, the grave was possibly misexcavated due to its soil stain having been unclear.
- 9 Similar distributional patterns can be observed in the second half of the 7th century as well (cf. Szenthe, Gáll 2021, 347–351).

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KELET-EURÓPAI EREDETŰ NÉPESSÉG SZEKSZÁRD-BOGYISZLÓI ÚT ÉS KÖLKED-FEKETEKAPU B TEMETŐBEN

Összefoglalás

Cikkemben Szekszárd-Bogyiszlói út és Kölked-Feketekapu B temető egy-egy sírcsoportját vizsgálom. Ezek jellegzetes temetkezési szokásaikban különböznek a szóban forgó lelőhelyek egyéb temetkezéseitől. E jellegek az É–D-i tájolás, a padmalyos és a padkás sírformák, a részleges állattemetkezések és a koponya mellé helyezett edénymellékletek, amely rítusok a kora avar kori Tiszántúlra jellemzők, ahol egy kelet-európai eredetű közösség telepedett le az avar honfoglalást követően. A szekszárdi temetőben a vizsgált temetkezések nemcsak a rítus, de az elhelyezkedésük alapján is különválnak, a lelőhely északi részén található. Hasonló jelenséget Kölked esetében nem lehetett megfigyelni. A sztyeppei közösség a szekszárdi temetőt a 7. század első és másod-

dik harmadában használta, a jellegtelen mellékletek alapján a kölkedi sírok a kora avar korban belül nem keltezhetőek. A részleges állattemetkezések, valamint a padmalyos és fülkesírok alapján ez a csoport még a késő avar korban is kimutatható, de ekkor már a rítusok alapján bizonyos keveredéssel kell számolnunk. Szekszárdon és környékén a jellegzetes szürke kerámia legnagyobb előállító műhelyei lehettek, míg Kölked környéke – a temetők és a hozzájuk tartozó település kapcsolatrendszerének alapján – regionális kereskedelmi központként funkcionálhatott. A sztyeppei eredetű közösségek valószínűleg a Tiszántúl és a Délkelet-Dunántúl közötti kereskedelmi kapcsolatok fenntartása miatt érkezettek a területre.