

# DISSERTATIONES ARCHAEOLOGICAE

ex Instituto Archaeologico Universitatis de Rolando Eötvös nominatae



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Budapest 2018

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# Transformations of the human communities in the eastern part of the Carpathian Basin between the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century

## Row-grave cemeteries in Transylvania, Partium and Banat

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### **Abstract**

*Abstract of PhD thesis submitted in 2018 to the Archaeology Doctoral Programme, Doctoral School of History, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest under the supervision of Tivadar Vida.*

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## **Introduction**

After several decades of scientific research the Migration Period and the Early Middle Ages can still be considered one of the less researched fields of the Romanian archaeology. Except for the scientific activity of Kurt Horedt, important studies have started to be published more regularly only in the last three decades. Unfortunately the so-called row-grave cemeteries (*Reihen-gräberfelder*) dated roughly between the second half/end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century and the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD represent no exception. Thus, the main goal of the PhD-thesis was to systematize and reinterpret the archaeological material coming from the mentioned cemeteries.

The geographical frame is offered by three main regions: the Transylvanian Basin, the eastern part of the Partium region (north-western part of Romania) and the eastern Banat/*Bánság* region. Though in contemporary historiography one can frequently encounter the (rather incorrect) usage of the term 'Transylvania' for the totality of the territories annexed to Romania after World War I, including the western part of the country (the above mentioned Partium and Banat [*Bánság*] regions), it is important to underline that within this territory, the Transylvanian Basin constitutes a separate region both from a geographical and a historical point of view. Thus, taking into account the geographical separation of the Transylvanian Basin – from a geographical viewpoint the Partium region and the Banat being organic parts of the Great Hungarian Plain –, in the dissertation the term 'Transylvania' denotes only the area surrounded by the Carpathians, delimited to the west by the Apuseni Mountains (*Erdélyi-középhegység*).

From a chronological point of view the limits are determined by the period of use of the row-grave cemeteries. But as the moment of their emergence is still quite unclear, the dissertation also discusses the previous period, while the discoveries belonging to the Apahida–Someşeni (*Apahida–Szamosfalva*) group are only tangentially considered, since these have already been analysed in detail several times. On the other hand, the graves dated in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century which might be parts of larger cemeteries were included in the analysis. The upper

chronological limit was established based on the latest burials belonging to the late group of the row-grave cemeteries. Their dating varies from site to site; roughly the middle/second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century can be proposed. The only exception is represented by the cemetery at Noşlac/*Marosnagylak*, where the latest burials belong to the Late Avar Period.

## Methods

The PhD-thesis analyses the Gepidic and Early Avar Age cemeteries from an archaeological point of view, and for this reason less emphasis is put on the historical issues of the period. Therefore, the historical context is not sketched; instead, a more detailed overview is offered for historical issues that strongly influenced the interpretation of the archaeological material. Among these the most significant are the process of the settlement of the Gepids in the different regions of the Carpathian Basin and the identification of the Gepids in the Avar Age. The former played an important role in the discussion regarding the early row-grave cemeteries, while the latter in the interpretation of the late graveyards.

The thesis is mainly based on published material. The only exception is the cemetery at Noşlac/*Marosnagylak* that is known in the literature only from archaeological reports.<sup>1</sup> The presentation of this site is based on the original documentation left by the leader of the excavation, Mircea Rusu, which includes grave plans, grave descriptions, a few drawings of grave-goods, and an incomplete plan of the necropolis. Unfortunately, the objects discovered in the cemetery could be only partially identified in the different museums from Romania.

The most important working instrument of the research is represented by the catalogue based on the published material. The cemeteries included here are analysed both from the perspective of the burial customs and of the grave-goods. The analysis of the latter is completed by the stray-finds. This detailed analysis offers the base for the conclusions referring to the chronological and social issues and the settlement patterns.

It is noticeable in the archaeological literature that the row-grave cemeteries, especially the late group, are treated as one phenomenon. Beside the common traits, in the dissertation I tried to focus also on the individual cemeteries in order to detect the existing regional differences.

After a short review of the theoretical literature one can observe that there is no consensus in the research regarding either the social or the ethnical interpretation. From the point of view of the social aspects, research pointed out in the last few decades that the burials cannot be considered at all the direct and passive reflections of the living society. However, several patterns can be detected, among which the most significant seems to be the deposition of the grave goods depending on gender and age.<sup>2</sup> This observation underlines once again the crucial importance of the anthropological analysis which, unfortunately, is lacking in the majority of the cemeteries discussed in the dissertation. Therefore the available data is not sufficient in order to draw further conclusions regarding this matter.

In my opinion a direct connection between the material culture and the ethnicity of the deceased cannot be established either, taking into account the situational aspect of the ethnic identity. Furthermore, it is questionable in what extent ethnic identity was expressed

1 RUSU 1962; RUSU 1964.

2 See e.g. BARBIERA 2005; BRATHER 2005; STOODLEY 1999.

through the burials. Of course, this does not mean that in certain cases the ethnic identity could not have been expressed during the funeral, but these situations are difficult to identify archaeologically.<sup>3</sup> For this reason the ethnic markers (e.g. Gepidic, Avar etc.) are used in the PhD-thesis as *termini technici*, being associated with the representative material culture of a certain period and region and not with the ethnic identity of the buried individuals. On the other hand it has to be emphasized that if one does not examine the objects separately but their combination inside the individual graves, certain assemblages can be identified that reflect different traditions and, therefore are relevant from the viewpoint of the cultural relations of the given communities.<sup>4</sup> In order to simplify the terminology in the dissertation, these were named 'Merovingian' and 'Avar' traditions, however, without assigning an ethnical meaning to them. The former model is strongly connected to the Merovingian Age cemeteries from Western- and Central-Europe, while the latter appeared in the Early Avar Age in the Carpathian Basin.

## Results

### *Dress and weapon combinations*

On the grounds of the typological analysis of the individual artefact types and the position of the objects inside the graves it became possible to draw conclusions regarding the female and male dress as well as the weapon combinations. It seems that in the case of the female graves, similar to the Tisza-region, the *peplos*-type garment held by two brooches on the shoulders<sup>5</sup> remained in use for a longer time than on the territories situated west of the Danube. A change similar to the one observed in Western and Central Europe took place only later and in a different manner: the brooches were placed in pair or singly in the area of the chest or single on the pelvis. Due to the lack of an exact chronology referring to the brooches it is difficult to establish the date when this change occurred. It seems likely that it can be placed roughly in the period when the small bow-brooches were in use, i.e. the last third of the 5<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> It appears that simultaneously the girdle hangers decorated with hinged plates appeared, which are attested only twice in Transylvania.

In the late group of the row-grave cemeteries the number of the brooches decreased significantly. Among these a disc-brooch discovered in Grave 114 at Noşlac/*Marosnagylak* can be mentioned, which was situated under the chin, on the left side. This situation, like the type of the brooch itself,<sup>7</sup> is a typical characteristic of the late Merovingian Age. Most of the brooches that can be dated in this period were discovered in Cemetery 3 at Bratei/*Baráthely*. All of them belong to the group of the so-called 'Slavic' bow-brooches. Beside the decrease of the importance of the brooches another significant change in this period is the growing popularity of the girdle-hangers, the typical variant being represented by the one decorated with metal sheet mounts and strap-end (*Fig. 1.3–6*). Similarly, the sets equipped with buckle and strap-end belonging to the footwear became popular in this period.

3 For the research history of the topic with further bibliography see HAKENBECK 2011, 11–26.

4 For the Carpathian Basin see VIDA 2008, 18–29 (with further bibliography).

5 See MARTIN 1994, 544.

6 According to Max Martin the way of wearing the brooches changed around 500 A.D. or slightly later: MARTIN 1994, 546; MARTIN 2002, 212.

7 For the typological analysis see VIDA 2005.



Fig. 1. Noşlac/Marosnagylak Grave 18: grave plan and selected finds.

In the case of the male graves the components of the belt can be mentioned in the first place. While in the Gepidic period simple oval copper alloy or iron buckles were characteristic, in the early Avar period composite belt sets also occurred. The components of the belts discovered in the Transylvanian cemeteries belong to the so-called three-part variant of the Merovingian type belt sets, the only significant difference being that the ‘classical’ combination (buckle-counterplate-rectangular mount) is sometimes completed with a strap-end (Fig. 2.3–6;

Fig. 3.10–12).<sup>8</sup> Regarding the geographical distribution of the three-part belt sets important regional differences can be observed, as they are the most frequent in the cemeteries situated in the Mureş (*Maros*) Valley (especially at Noşlac/*Marosnagylak*), but are completely missing in Cemetery 3 at Bratei/*Baráthely*.

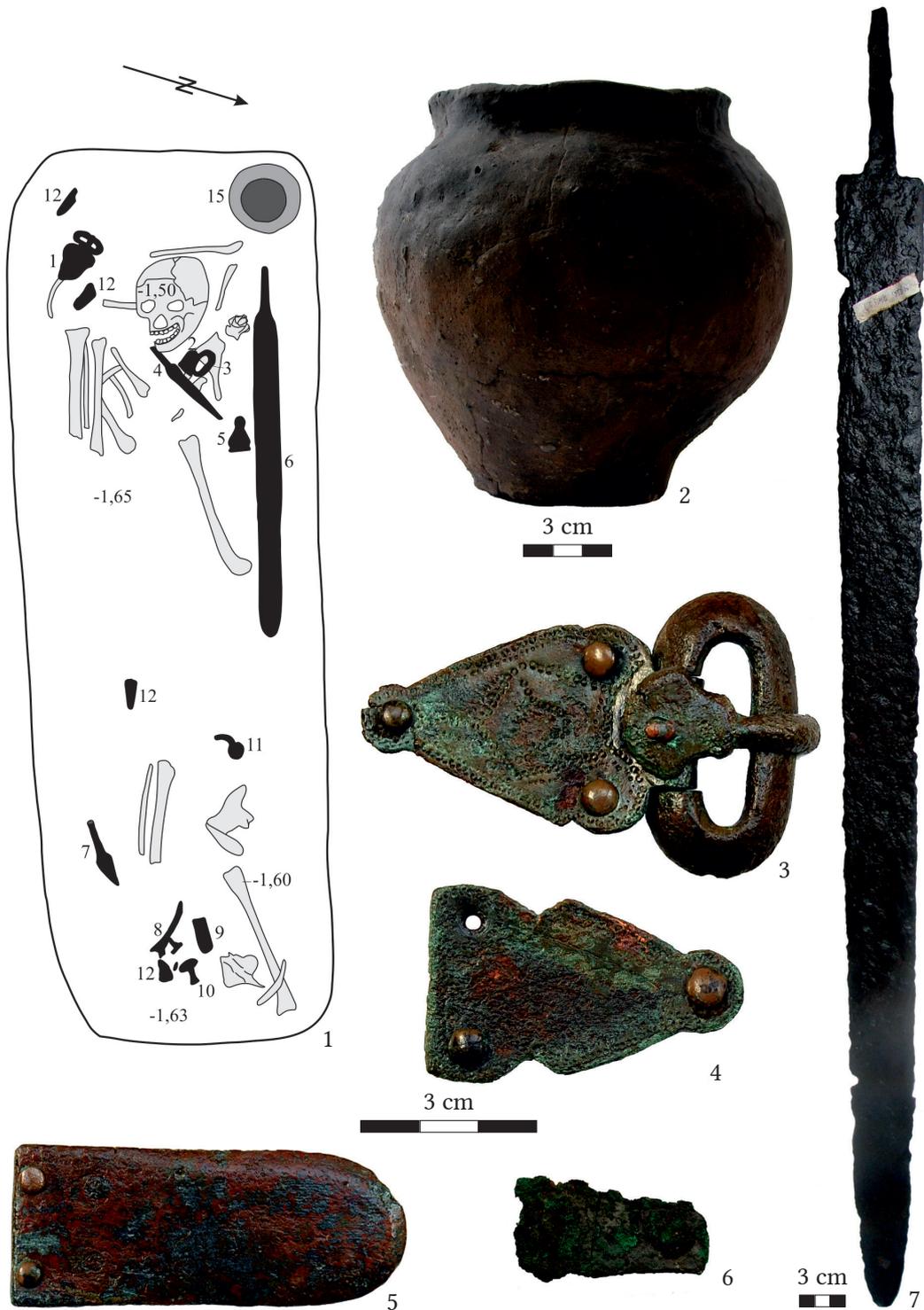


Fig. 2. Noşlac/*Marosnagylak* Grave 17: grave plan and selected finds.

8 MARTIN 1996, 65–68. Recently, this variant started to be also known as four-part belt set: HEINRICH-TAMÁSKA 2005, 47.

Concerning weapon combinations, again, the cemeteries belonging to the late group are more suitable for revealing some general tendencies. Unfortunately their study is seriously hindered by the extremely high degree of disturbed burials. Similarly to the belt sets, some regional differences can be detected.<sup>9</sup> The ratio of the weapon assemblages characteristic for the 'Merovingian' tradition is higher in the cemeteries situated in the Mureş Valley, whereas the weapon combinations connected to the 'Avar' tradition occur more frequently in the Cemetery 3 at Bratei/*Baráthely*. In the same time, the latter are completely missing in the cemeteries from the north-eastern part of the Transylvanian Basin like Bistriţa/*Beszterce*, Galaţii Bistriţei/*Galacfalva* and Fântânele/*Szászújös*.

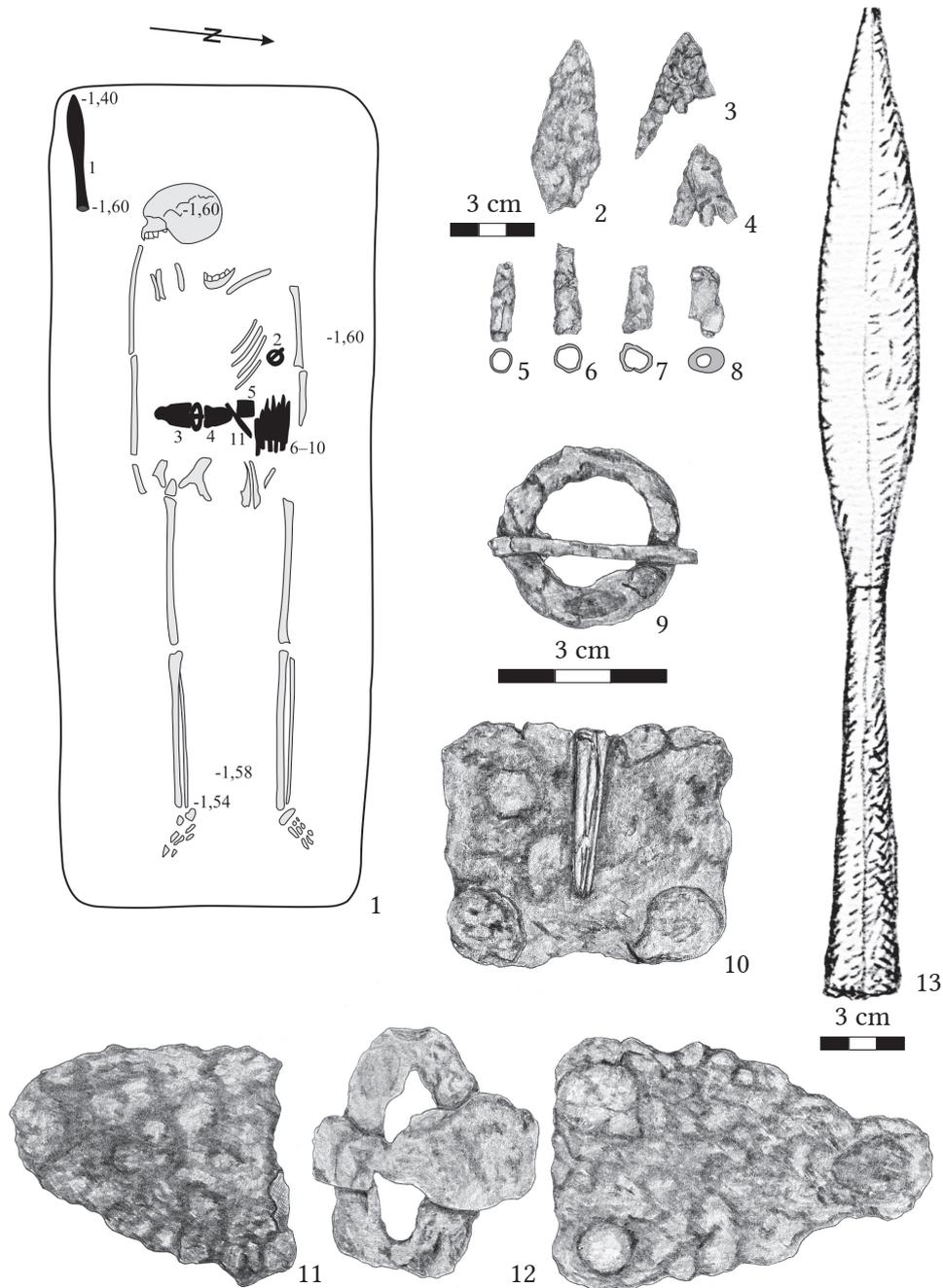


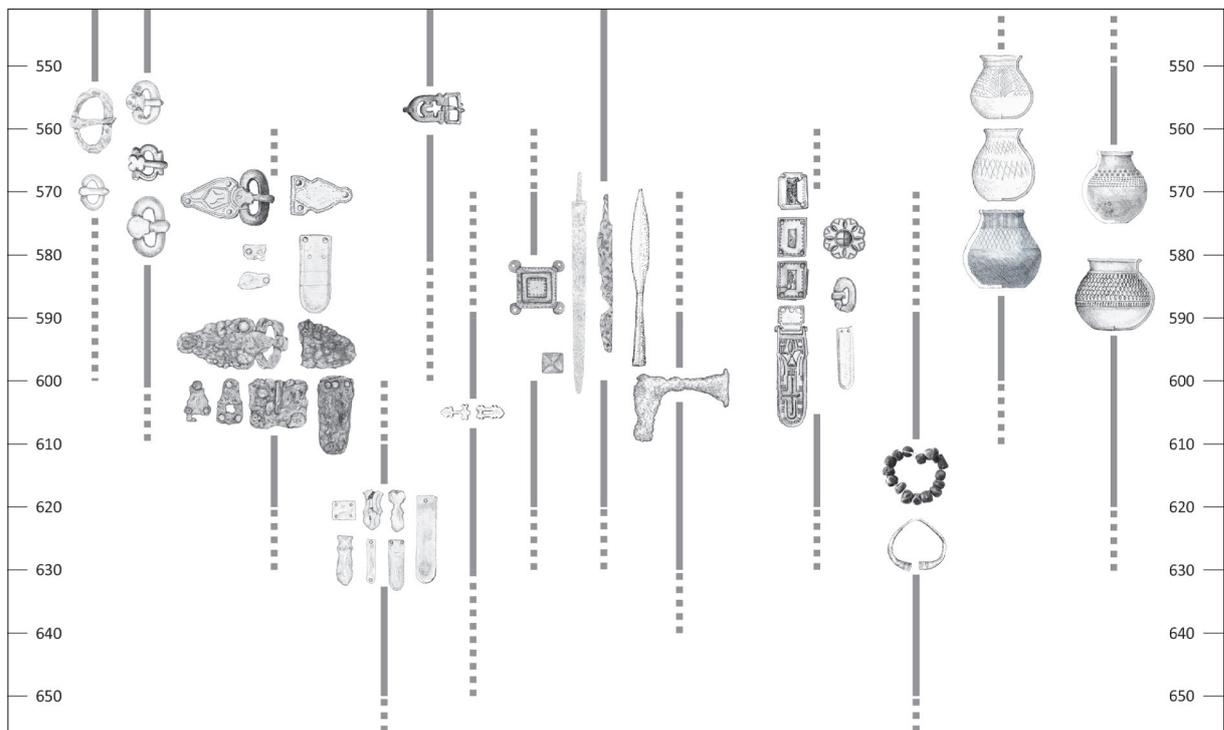
Fig. 3. Noşlac/*Marosnagylak* Grave 16: grave plan and selected finds.

9 For a more detailed discussion see DOBOS 2015.

### Chronology

Unfortunately, due to the high degree of the grave reopening and the small number of well-datable grave-goods, the archaeological material coming from the analysed cemeteries is not suitable for elaborating a precise chronological system.

Regarding the inner chronology of the individual cemeteries it can be observed that only the situation documented at Noşlac/*Marosnagylak* allows more exact conclusions (*Fig. 4*). Within this necropolis several chronological groups can be isolated; however, without being able to trace sharp chronological borders between them.



*Fig. 4.* Chronological table of the most significant grave-goods from Noşlac/*Marosnagylak*.

In the earliest group the graves containing buckles with shield-shaped tongue and without buckle-plate can be included.<sup>10</sup> Another artefact that can probably be connected to the earliest horizon is represented by the wheel-thrown pottery with burnished decoration (*Fig. 5*).<sup>11</sup> The burnished decoration can be clearly derived from the Gepidic Period and it seems that, unlike in other regions of the Carpathian Basin,<sup>12</sup> in Transylvania it remained quite popular in the Early Avar Age as well. Thus, it seems plausible that the vessels with burnished decoration belong to the earliest phase of the late group of row-grave cemeteries. This presumption is also supported by the fact that at Noşlac/*Marosnagylak* none of them was combined with objects that belong to the next chronological sequence (e.g. three-part belt sets, girdle hangers with rectangular mounts etc.). The most important associated finds are objects that

10 Graves 24, 86 and 115. All of them belong to late variants of the buckles with shield-shaped tongue.

11 Graves 25, 26, 30, 46 and 64.

12 Only a few vessels are known from Transdanubia, most of them (8 pieces) from Kölked–Feketekapu ‘A’ (Kiss 1996, 42). Other examples can be mentioned from Budakalász and Káloz (Vida 1999, 42). While in Transylvania the burnished motives are generally the only decoration, on many of the Transdanubian vessels these have a secondary role, being combined with other ornaments like stamped decoration or incised wavy lines.

had already been in use in the Gepidic Period, but cannot be dated very precisely (simple oval buckles in Graves 30 and 46; seaxes in Graves 25 and 46; pear-shaped vessel in Grave 64). The first chronological phase can roughly be dated in the second third – second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

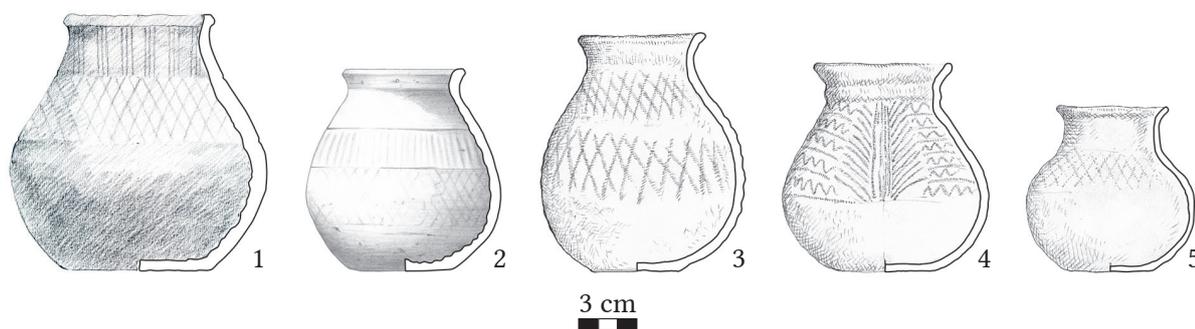


Fig. 5. Wheel-thrown pottery with burnished decoration from Noşlac/Marosnagylak: 1 – Grave 26; 2 – Grave 64, 3 – Grave 30, 4 – Grave 46, 5 – Grave 25.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> group is defined mainly by the three-part belt sets and its related variants discovered in male graves.<sup>13</sup> Concerning the weapons, the double-edged swords (two of them with pyramidal strap-retainer<sup>14</sup>), the short seaxes and the spears with leaf-shaped blade are characteristic, all of them being already present in the first group (Figs 2–3). Among the latest graves of the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase Graves 87 and 101 can be mentioned, both containing an L-shaped axe.<sup>15</sup> The representative grave-goods of the female graves belonging to the second group are the girdle hangers decorated with rectangular mounts and a strap-end from Grave 18 (Fig. 1), as well as the footwear equipped with buckles and strap-ends and the disc-brooch discovered in Grave 114. Based on the mentioned grave-goods, the second group can be dated mainly in the period between the last third of the 6<sup>th</sup> century and the first third of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Within this group a few burials can be isolated which probably belong to the late part of the mentioned period, but tracing a sharp borderline between the two phases is not possible.

Only two graves can be included in the third chronological group: Grave 102 belonging to a boy with a composite belt set and Grave 27 of a woman buried with a girdle hanger and a bracelet with widened ends. These can be dated to the beginning – first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

The grave-goods of the burials included in the next group consist of objects that cannot be dated to a shorter period, but they certainly should not be placed before the Middle Avar Age. Representative in this respect are the objects discovered in the male Grave 11 (one-edged sword with straight blade, spearhead with rhombic section, and rectangular buckles) and in the horse burial no. 12 lying next to it (bit with cheek pieces, stirrups with straight footplate, axe, rectangular buckle) (Fig. 6). The female burials of this chronological unit are characterized, among others, by earrings with star-shaped pendant and widened ring (Graves 13 and 73), respectively with a grapelike pendant (Grave 61). The fourth group can be dated in a longer chronological interval, roughly between the last third of the 7<sup>th</sup> century and the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

13 Graves 16, 17, 22, 33 (double burial with two belt-sets), 44, 63, 87, 89, 95 and 96.

14 Graves 6 and 89. The pyramidal strap-retainers can be considered typical finds of the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase.

15 The earliest variants of the Avar Age L-shaped axes in the Carpathian Basin were dated in the first third of the 7<sup>th</sup> century: Szűcs 2014, 130.

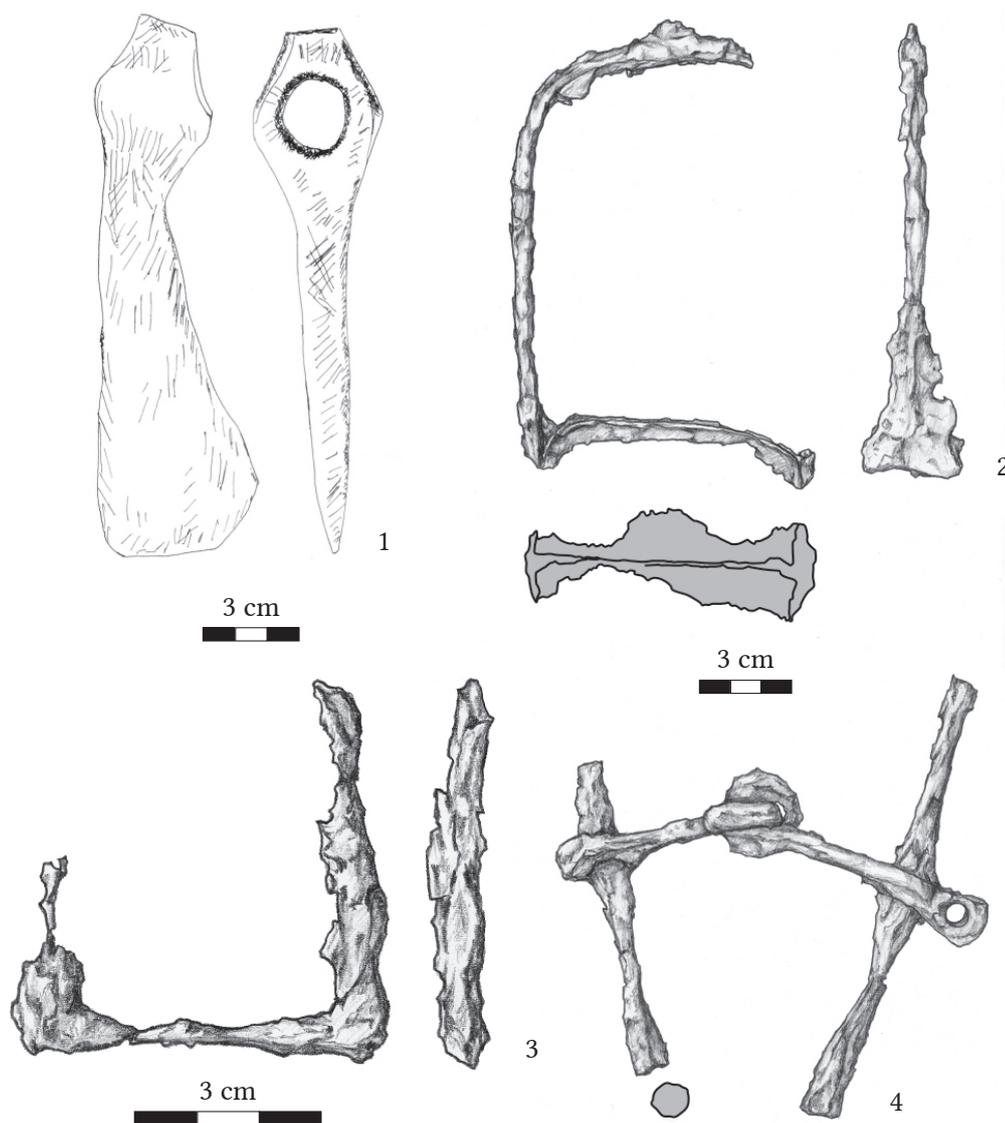


Fig. 6. Noşlac/Marosnagylak, Grave 12: selected finds.

The fifth phase is represented by female graves containing late type jewellery, first of all earrings and beads, which can be dated to the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps to the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century (Figs 7–8).

Taking a look at the general plan of the cemetery from Noşlac/Marosnagylak (Fig. 9) it is obvious that two areas can be separated. The graves situated in the south-eastern part are the earlier ones (1<sup>st</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> chronological groups). In this area the edge of the cemetery was not identified during the archaeological excavations; therefore, it can be presumed that the necropolis continues in all directions. Except for one grave, the late burials (4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> chronological phases) are placed in the north-western edge of the cemetery. It is worth mentioning that horse burials were discovered only in this area. Just a few graves were unearthed in this part of the necropolis; thus, it can be presumed that more burials can be found in the south-eastern direction.

Based on the aforementioned, the question can be raised: was there only one necropolis at Noşlac/Marosnagylak that was continuously in use beginning with the middle/second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> (beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup>?) century or can two different

cemeteries be presumed that were opened in two different moments close to one another? Unfortunately, without new archaeological excavations it is not possible to give a certain answer to this question.

Regarding the other cemeteries, one can draw less conclusions. It is conspicuous that at Band/Mezőbánd the chronological interval corresponding to the second phase of the chronology established for Noşlac/Marosnagylak is the most visible. However, this phase can be defined here mainly based on the female burials (girdle hangers decorated with rectangular mounts

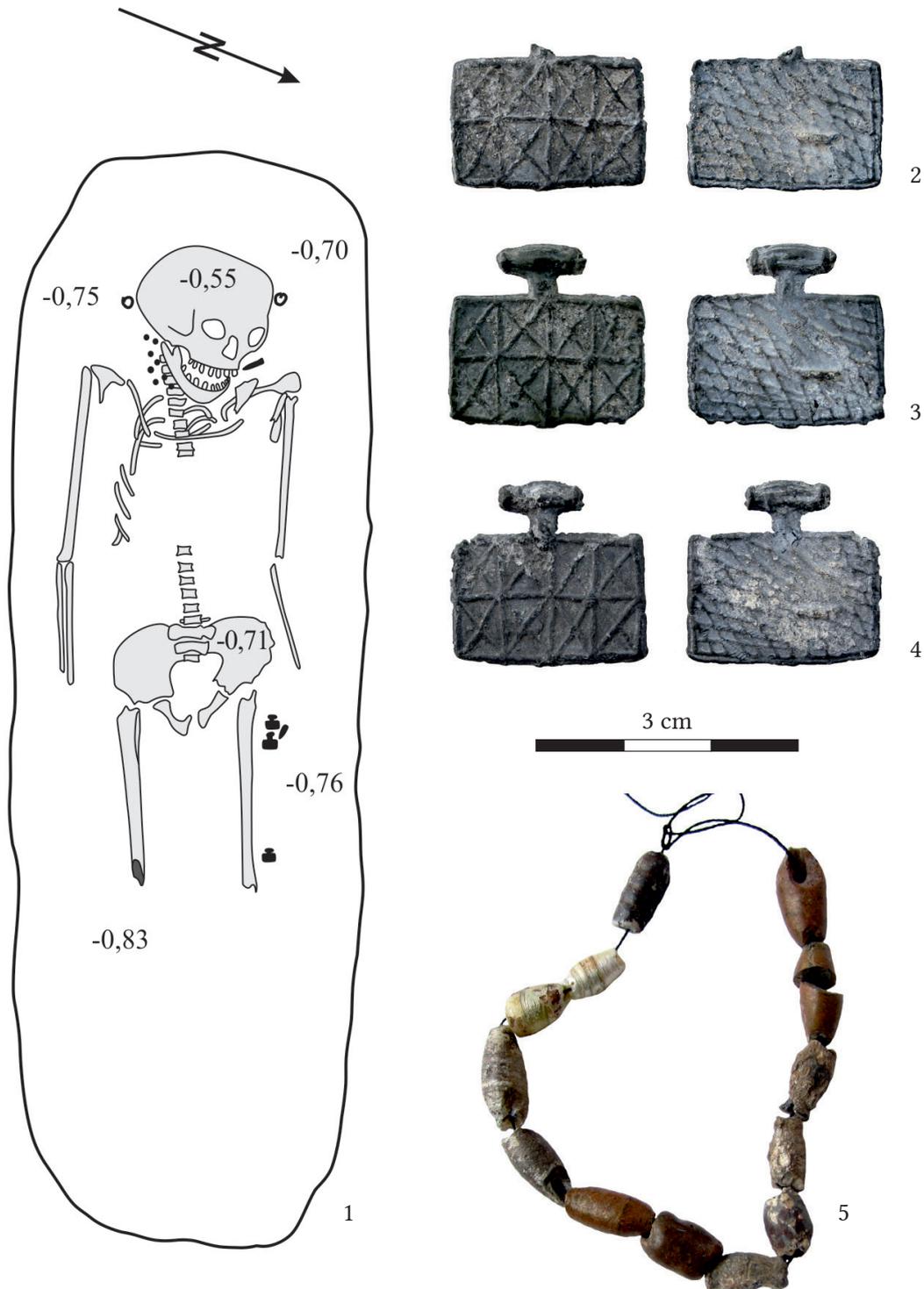


Fig. 7. Noşlac/Marosnagylak, Grave 60: grave plan and selected finds.

and a strap-end, footwear sets composed of buckles and strap-ends, amulet boxes etc.). In the same time, at Band none of the graves can be dated with certainty after the first third/half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The horse burials situated on the edges of the cemetery, considered in the archaeological literature to represent the latest phase,<sup>16</sup> cannot be dated more precisely; therefore the topographical argument remains the only one which might indicate that they belong to the end phase of the necropolis. The only exception is represented by Grave 44 containing a whip-handle and rosette-shaped mounts belonging to the harness, which roughly indicate a dating in the 7<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 8. Noşlac/Marosnagylak, Grave 85: selected finds.

It is difficult to establish an inner chronology for Cemetery 3 at Bratei/*Baráthely*, taking into consideration that the grave-goods discovered here are less suitable for a precise dating than the ones coming from the abovementioned burial grounds. The Byzantine buckles, the so-called 'Slavic' bow-brooches, the beads belonging to the category of the so-called '*Augenperlen*', the different types of spearheads etc. can only be dated to a longer period of time, broadly between the last third of the 6<sup>th</sup> century and the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. For the moment it seems that none of the graves can be dated with certainty before the middle/second third of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The latest graves belong to the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century or slightly later.

16 KOVÁCS 1913, 368; BÓNA 1979, 43.

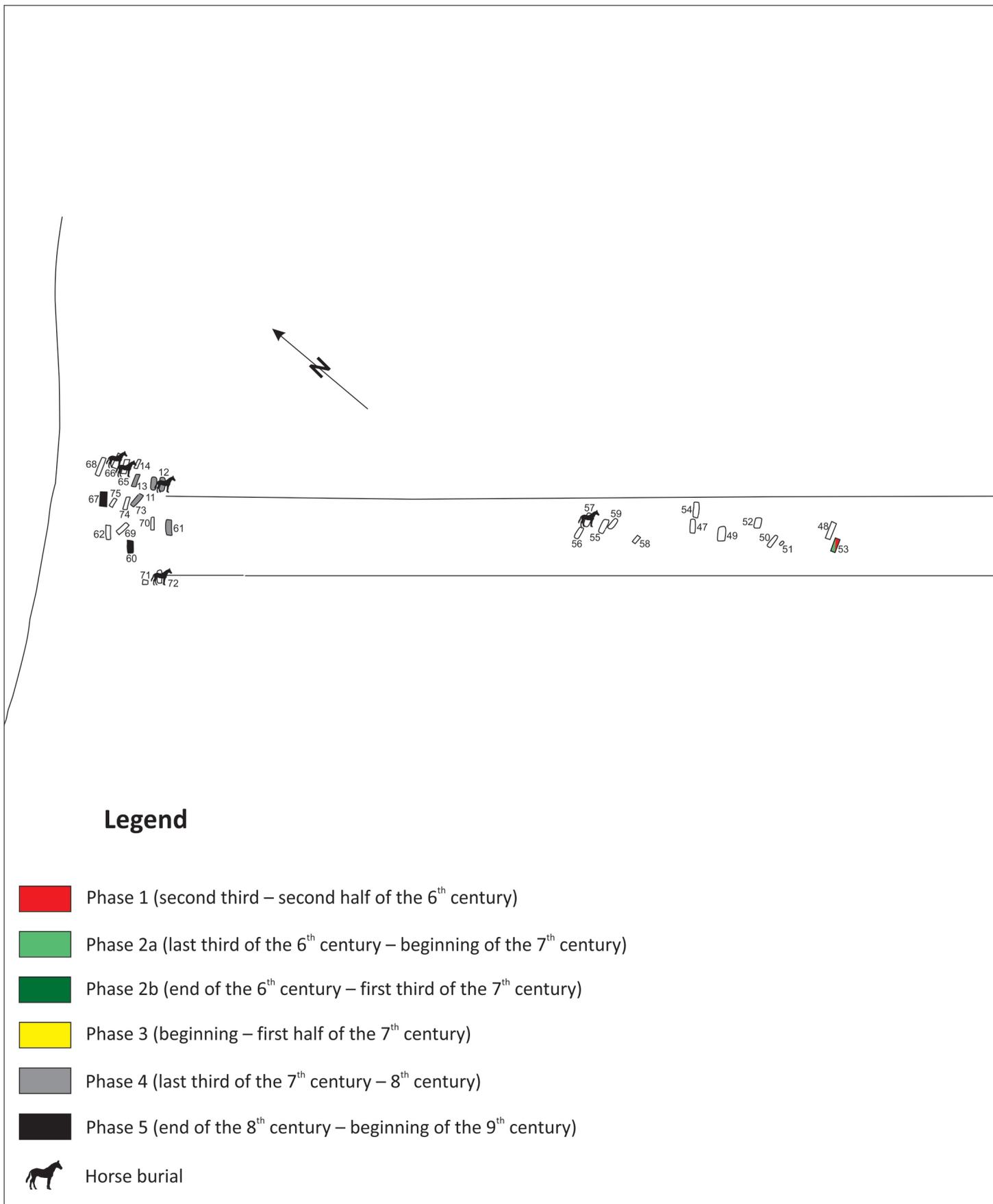
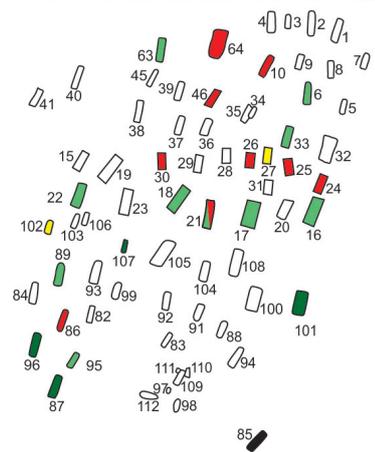


Fig. 9. Chronological phases in the cemetery at Noşlac/Marosnagylak (ground plan redrawn after the original documentation of Mircea Rusu).



street



20 m



Until now the only chronological system of the Transylvanian row-grave cemeteries was elaborated by Kurt Horedt.<sup>17</sup> Three of the four chronological groups established by Horedt are representative of the analysed period, which were named after emblematic archaeological sites: Group II = Group Apahida/*Apahida*, Group III = Group Moreşti/*Malomfalva*, Group IV = Group Band–Vereşmort/*Mezőbánd–Marosveresmart*. Regarding the relative chronology it can be stated that the groups defined by Horedt are still valid and, therefore, his system can be used further with some adjustments. Accordingly, I tried to integrate my chronological observations into Horedt's system.

The most representative finds of the cemeteries belonging to Horedt's Group II are the small bow-brooches decorated with chip-carving, frequently combined with earrings with polyedric button. Due to the reduced number of the discoveries, the dating of this group is quite difficult, roughly the second half/last third of the 5<sup>th</sup> century can be proposed.

Among the main characteristics of group III the larger dimensions of the cemeteries as well as the occurrence of new artefact types can be mentioned. Unfortunately, the cemetery from Moreşti/*Malomfalva* is the only published larger cemetery from this chronological phase. It can be dated mainly in the first and second third of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, but it cannot be excluded that the earliest phase had already begun at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Because of the present state of research no further inner phases can be isolated within this chronological group.

Due to the high number of unearthed graves, most conclusions can be drawn regarding Group IV. Its earliest phase can be dated roughly in the second third of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Within the group an inner chronological division can be established that was identified in different degree at Noşlac/*Marosnagylak*, Band/*Mezőbánd* and Unirea-Vereşmort/*Felvinc–Marosveresmart*). The upper chronological border of the group differs from cemetery to cemetery; generally speaking, it can be placed around the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. At Noşlac/*Marosnagylak* the use of the cemetery continued in the Late Avar Age as well.

#### *Settlement pattern and cultural connections*<sup>18</sup>

Examining the distribution pattern of the row-grave cemeteries in Transylvania dated to the Gepidic period (*Fig. 10*), one can observe that these are situated mainly in the valleys of the important rivers and their tributaries. One of the future tasks of the research should be the investigation of the settlement area not only as a whole, but also on a micro-regional level. A higher concentration can be observed in the valley of the Someşul Mic (*Kis-Szamos*), in the area of the middle course of the Mureş (*Maros*), as well as in the valley of the Târnava Mare (*Nagy-Küküllő*) River. At the same time, lesser finds are known from the north-eastern part of Transylvania, from the area of the Someşul Mare (*Nagy-Szamos*) River. On the other hand, the south-western and south-eastern regions of Transylvania are blank, a situation that can scarcely be explained with the lack of research. It has not yet been fully explained why the horizon of the row-grave cemeteries did not extend to these areas.

Comparing the distribution pattern of the late group of the row-grave cemeteries (*Fig. 11*) with the previous period, one can observe that on the one hand the distribution area became

17 HORED T 1977; see also HORED T 1958, 97–103; HORED T 1986, 14–36. Later, Horedt's system was adapted and modified by R. Harhoiu: HARHOIU 2003, 127–133.

18 For a more detailed discussion see DOBOS IN PRESS.

smaller in the Early Avar Period, and on the other hand the main concentration of the cemeteries is situated in the valley of the Mureş (*Maros*) River. At the moment only one necropolis is known in the Târnava Mare (*Nagy-Küküllő*) Valley (Bratei/*Baráthely* 3); instead, it seems that the north-eastern area of the Transylvanian Basin played a more important role now than in the Gepidic period. Furthermore, it is conspicuous that no cemetery has been identified so far in the valley of the Someşul Mic (*Kis-Szamos*) River. For the time being the causes of this sharp cultural change in this region are still unclear. Likewise, the question to what extent this may be explained by the leaving of earlier communities remains open.

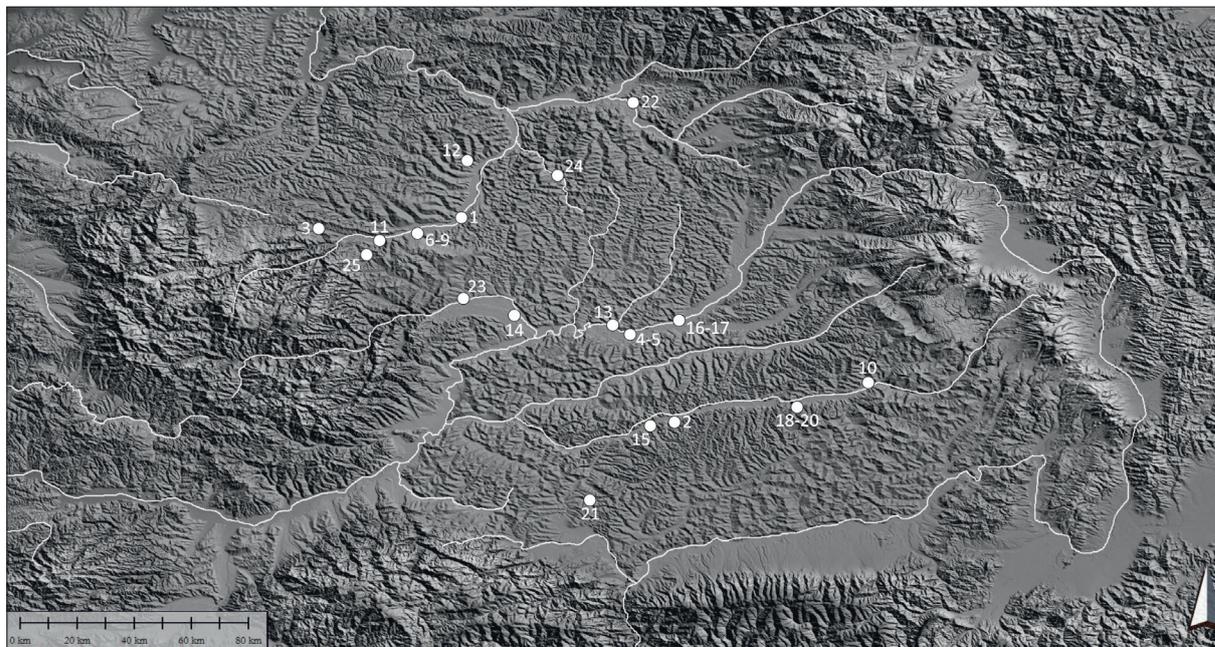
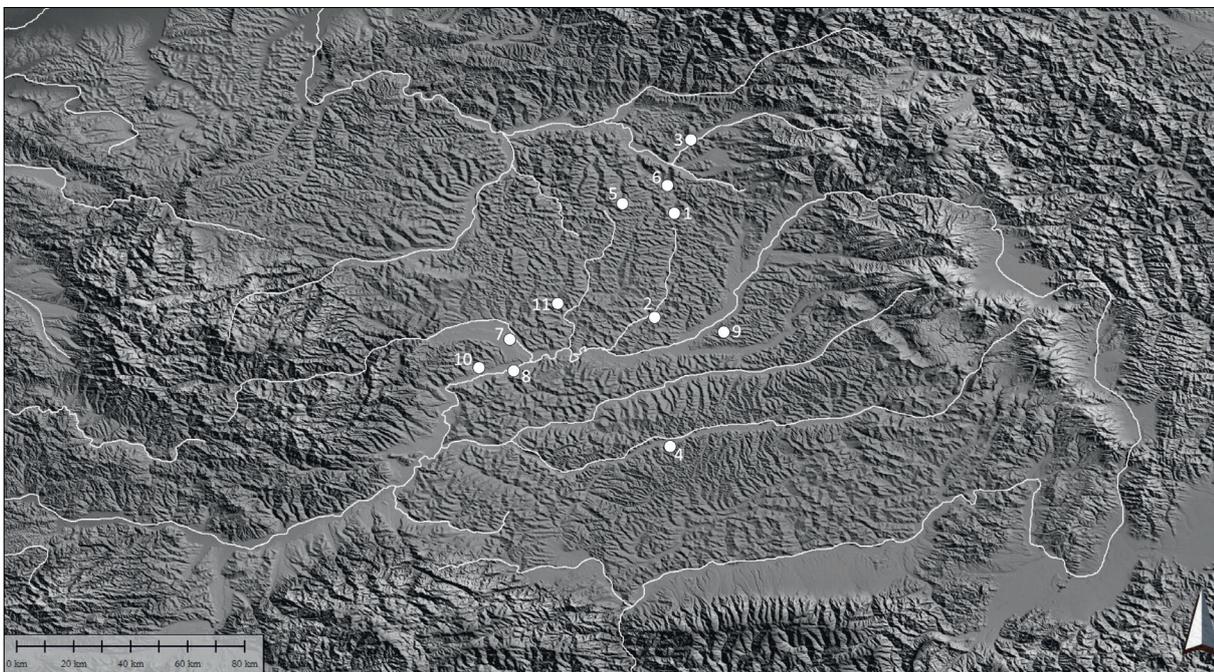


Fig. 10. Gepidic Age cemeteries and burials in Transylvania: 1 – Apahida/*Apahida*, 2 – Bratei/*Baráthely*, 3 – Căpuşu Mare/*Nagykapus*, 4 – Cipău/*Maroscsapó-Gârle*, 5 – Cipău/*Maroscsapó-Îngrășătoria de porci*, 6 – Cluj-Napoca/*Kolozsvár-Corneliu Coposu street*, 7 – Cluj-Napoca/*Kolozsvár-Memorandumului street*, 8 – Cluj-Cordoş/*Kolozsvár-Kardosfalva*, 9 – Cluj-Someşeni/*Kolozsvár-Szamosfalva*, 10 – Cristuru Secuiesc/*Székelykeresztúr*, 11 – Floreşti/*Szászfenes-Polus Center*, 12 – Iclod/*Nagyiklód*, 13 – Lechinţa de Mureş/*Maroslekence*, 14 – Luna/*Aranyoslóna*, 15 – Mediaş/*Medgyes*, 16 – Moreşti/*Malomfalva-Po-dei*, 17 – Moreşti/*Malomfalva-Hulă*, 18 – Sighişoara/*Segesvár-Bajendorf*, 19 – Sighişoara/*Segesvár-Dealul Viilor*, 20 – Sighişoara/*Segesvár-Herteş*, 21 – Slimnic/*Szelindek*, 22 – Şintereag/*Somkerék*, 23 – Turda-Râtul Sânmihăienilor/*Torda-Szentmihály*, 24 – Țaga/*Cege*, 25 – Vlaha/*Magyarfenes-Pad* (map made by Oana Toda).

Several differences can be detected in this period between certain micro-regions. The two different traditions defined in the methodological chapter (the ‘Merovingian’ and ‘Avar’ models) as well as the intensity of the objects of Byzantine-Balkan origin show significant differences. Based on the actual state of research, it can be presumed on a hypothetical level that the geographical location of the individual cemeteries had a crucial importance. On these grounds three main groups can be defined. In the central area of the Transylvanian Basin, in the valley of the Mureş (*Maros*) River and the southern part of the Câmpia Transilvaniei (*Mezőség*) region (Noşlac/*Marosnagylak*, Unirea-Vereşmort/*Marosveresmart*, Band/*Mezőbánd* and perhaps Târgu Mureş/*Marosvásárhely*) both the ‘Merovingian’ and the ‘Avar’ traditions can be detected, but without any doubt the former is dominant. At the same time, Byzantine elements appear only

sporadically. In the north-eastern part, in the valley of the Someşul Mare (*Nagy-Szamos*) River and its tributaries, as well as in the northern part of the Câmpia Transilvaniei (*Mezőség*) region (Bistriţa/*Beszterce*, Galaţii Bistriţei/*Galacfalva*, Archiud/*Mezőerked*, Fântânele/*Szászújós*) the ‘Merovingian’ tradition can be observed in a smaller degree, while the ‘Avar’ tradition and the Byzantine objects are completely missing. Perhaps this phenomenon might be explained by the relative geographical isolation of this region, which could have induced the participation to a less extent of the north-eastern communities in the communication networks of the period. In the third group only Cemetery 3 at Bratei/*Baráthely* lying in the valley of the Târnava Mare (*Nagy-Küküllő*) River can be included, where the elements connected to the ‘Merovingian’ model can be detected only in a reduced number. Instead, the ‘Avar’ tradition can be observed in a higher degree. The most conspicuous here, however, is the massive presence of the objects of Byzantine-Balkan origins (*Fig. 12*) which undoubtedly indicates the existence of strong relations towards south. In the current state of research it is difficult to determine the character of these relations (trade, migration of small groups from the Lower-Danube area? etc.).



*Fig. 11.* Early Avar Age row-grave cemeteries in Transylvania: 1 – Archiud/*Mezőerked*-Hânsuri, 2 – Band/*Mezőbánd*, 3 – Bistriţa/*Beszterce*, 4 – Bratei/*Baráthely* Cemetery 3, 5 – Fântânele/*Szászújós*-Dâmbul Popii, 6 – Galaţii Bistriţei/*Galacfalva*, 7 – Luna/*Aranyoslóna*, 8 – Noşlac/*Marosnagylak*, 9 – Târgu Mureş/*Marosvásárhely*, 10 – Unirea-Vereşmort/*Marosveresmart*, 11 – Valea Largă/*Mezőceked* (map made by Oana Toda).

It can be presumed that the communication networks of the Transylvanian communities were functioning based on the traditional trade routes used throughout history. Thus, for the communities living in the Mureş (*Maros*) Valley and in the southern part of the Câmpia Transilvaniei (*Mezőség*) region, probably the Mureş (*Maros*) Valley represented the main communication route towards west, while the ones living near Bratei/*Baráthely* might have used mainly the Olt (*Olt*) Valley for communication towards south. It seems very likely that the economic base of the external relations was the salt, even more so if one takes into consideration that some of the cemeteries are situated in the vicinity of salt resources.

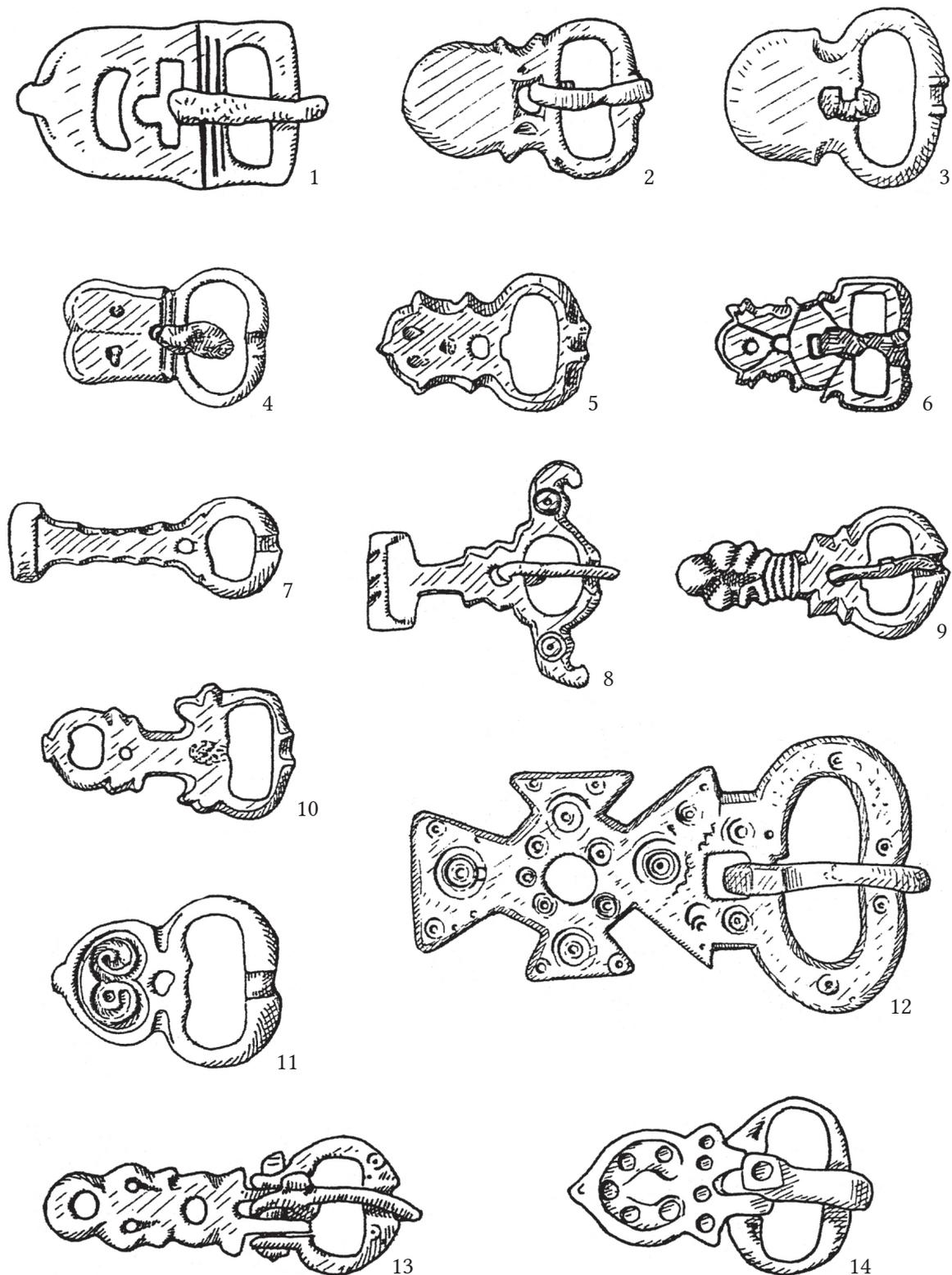


Fig. 12. Buckles of Byzantine-Balkan origin from Bratei/Barâthely Cemetery 3: 1 – Grave 113, 2–3 – Grave 15, 4 – Grave 90, 5 – Grave 124, 6 – Grave 192, 7 – Grave 236, 8 – Grave 182, 9 – Grave 98, 10 – Grave 189, 11 – Grave 236, 12 – Grave 81, 13 – Grave 116, 14 – Grave 135 (after BÂRZU 2010).

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