

**AVARI I SLAVENI
DVIJE STRANE
POJASNOG JEZIČCA —
AVARI NA SJEVERU I
JUGU KAGANATA**

**AVARS AND SLAVS
TWO SIDES OF A BELT
STRAP END —
AVARS ON THE NORTH
AND THE SOUTH
OF THE KHAGANATE**

**ZBORNIK RADOVA S MEĐUNARODNOG
ZNANSTVENOG SKUPA ODRŽANOG
U VINKOVCI 2020. GODINE**

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL
SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE HELD
IN VINKOVCI 2020**

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Avari na sjeveru i jugu kaganata

Avars and Slavs

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Avars on the North and South
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FOREWORD

The international scientific conference „Dvije strane pojasnog jezičca – Avari na sjeveru i jugu kaganata“ / “Two Sides of a Belt Strap End – Avars on the North and South of the Khaganate” was unique in many ways. It was planned as a closing event of the “Avars and Slavs” project, a project that included two exhibitions, several public lectures and workshops, led by the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb in partnership with the Municipal Museum of Vinkovci. The project was prepared for more than two years and included the Slovak exhibition “Avars and Slavs North of the Danube” and the Croatian exhibition “Avars and Slavs South of the Drava River” with a comprehensive bilingual (Croatian-English) catalogue. The international exhibition project “Avars and Slavs” received the annual award of the Croatian Museum Association in 2020 in the category for inter-museum cooperation.

But, just as the Avars came and changed the picture of Europe after their arrival, a few weeks after the conference that was held in Vinkovci, the global pandemic of Covid-19 changed our lives as well. So, this conference was among the last, if not perhaps even the very last big conference held in person and not online or in the now very popular – hybrid form. Additionally, a few weeks after that, a devastating earthquake shook Zagreb and its surroundings, and critically damaged, among others, the building of the Archaeological Museum. All of the above reasons have slowed us down during the preparation and completion of these Proceedings that we are now proudly presenting.

This volume rounds up the contributions from the international conference that took place in Vinkovci, Croatia from February 6th to 7th 2020. The main theme of the conference was divided into six sessions, presenting new finds, cultural interaction, funerary rites, belt sets, Slavs, and the post-Avar period. Themes were discussed by some forty colleagues from ten European countries, who answered the call for papers, submitted an abstract published in the book of abstracts, and presented their results at the conference. The conference, as noted in the title, showed us that the huge area occupied by the Avars had many similarities, but also specific, local versions, just like one of the most recognisable items from the period, the two sides of a belt strap end.

We are extremely pleased to present twenty submitted papers from this conference. Due to various reasons, some colleagues were not able to provide their papers, as some had to publish them elsewhere. The book follows the conference structure, so we start with a theoretical introduction, followed by case studies from different parts of the Khaganate or areas influenced by the Avars.

The last day of the conference (the 8th of February), the participants took a field trip to Zagreb, where we participated in a programme of the exhibition closure that was a start of a new project that never had the opportunity to be fully realized – *The EU Archaeology Festival* – an event meant to present the European archaeological heritage in the year when Croatia was presiding over the EU.

We would like to thank our colleagues from our home institutions who helped us in the organisation of the project, as well as our directors, who showed full understanding every step of the way. A special *thank you* goes to the members of the scientific and organisation committee of the conference, and the reviewers, but foremost we would like to thank our colleagues, who have patiently waited for their works to be published.

This volume is financed by the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, the Municipal Museum of Vinkovci, and the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia, for which we are deeply grateful.

Anita Rapan Papeša and Anita Dugonjić

Vinkovci – Zagreb, summer 2022

AVARI I SLAVENI AVARS AND SLAVS

Međunarodni znanstveni skup

DVIJE STRANE POJASNOG JEZIČCA:
AVARI NA SJEVERU I JUGU KAGANATA

International scientific conference

TWO SIDES OF A BELT STRAP END:
AVARS ON THE NORTH
AND THE SOUTH OF THE KHAGANATE



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6 – 8 FEBRUARY 2020

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VINKOVCI 2020

"THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE KHAGANS" AN OVERVIEW OF THE AVAR AGE BURIAL SITES NEAR PECICA

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The rescue archaeological excavations carried out in recent years due to infrastructure works or spatial arrangements for business and services in the administrative territory of Pecica (Arad county), have simultaneously uncovered parts of settlements, as well as burials pertaining to funerary sites, which fill in the information gap with new data in regard to the habitat and funerary rituals of the second half of the first millennium in this microregion of the Carpathian Basin. Our presentation will reveal a series of recent discoveries, such as those surrounding the city of Pecica (Pecica Site 15, Pecica Rovine/Căpravanul Mic, Pecica Est/Smart Diesel, or Pecica Duvenbeck), which complete a limited and perhaps exaggerated repertoire published in the literature of the past decades. Partially published or currently being processed, the already accumulated data complete the repertoire of discoveries from the Avar period and allow us to suggest new working hypotheses for the area east of the Tisza river.

¹ The article has been written in the frame of the project no. TKP2021-NKTA-24 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 funding scheme.

Key words:

Rescue archaeological excavations, burial sites, graves, Avar Age, lower Mureş basin

The rescue archaeological excavations of the past decade, carried out either due to investments in road infrastructure or as a result of construction work, have led to the discovery of new vestiges of the early Medieval period in the Lower Mureş basin. The new topography that resulted after these excavations, with sites attributed with certainty to the Avar Age, in the space west and especially east of the town of Pecica, is very complex. This is due to the fact that the discoveries are connected equally to aspects related to habitat as well as funerary practices, which appear to cover the entire Avar Age.

In the present study, we will discuss the funerary sites near Pecica, which resulted from the archaeological rescue campaigns that took place after 2010.

The area where the funerary discoveries attributed to the Avar Age were made is located east and west of the town of Pecica (*Hungarian: Románpécska, Pécska, Ópécska*), close to the eastern bypass on the Nădlac – Arad highway, on a terrace on the right bank of the Mureş River (Fig. 1).

A. The history of the research and the topographical realities of the burial sites

The analyzed area was known in professional literature since the '80s as being rather interesting, with sites that were located and investigated archaeologically, such as the one at Pecica-Forgaci.² Nothing then would indicate the extent of the traces of early medieval dwellings that were revealed during the archaeological rescue excavations started on the occasion of the construction of the pan-European highway corridor IV, but also as a result of the subsequent construction investments that followed.

In this way, the discoveries from Site 15 on the Pecica – Arad highway, or more recently the Pecica-Rovine/Căprăvanul Mic and Pecica-Duvenbeck sites, are very important and worth mentioning in the context of our study, because through the correlation of the information thus obtained, we can offer consistent explanations as to the habitat and funerary customs of the Avar Age in our case.

In the geographical context of the area at hand, the most important modifications over time were those to the Mureş River, which changed its course permanently, due as much to natural causes as human interventions, a fact demonstrated by the secondary backwaters still visible in the terrain. Practically, on the Habsburg mili-

tary maps, as well as on the modern satellite images, it is apparent that the sites were located on a terrace isolated from inundations in the proximity of a meander that emerges from a secondary arm, which has kept its name until today – Valea Forgacelor (*Forgács* in Hungarian). In turn, the latter emerges towards the south from another secondary arm named Mureşul Mort (*Holt Maros* in Hungarian), still active, which re-enters the river mouth near Pecica (Fig. 1).³

B. In general on the funerary sites: the “picture of the afterlife”

In addition to birth, death is the second most unequivocal liminal situation in life. Funerary acts reflect how a community thinks about death and the afterlife,⁴ and how the community maintains its continuity after losing one of its members. Thus, the funeral is about caring for the body and soul of the deceased,⁵ allowing the soul to travel to the afterlife and safely separate itself from the world of the living. The grave is the focal point of the whole ritual and as such, it offers a cross-section about the practices before and after the liminal act of the burial itself.⁶ Apart from the image of the afterlife, the quantity and quality of the “inventory package” placed in the grave was strongly linked to the social status, the material possibilities of the deceased/their family and, of course, the manner and measure (the funeral) of the funeral representation in a given society and period.

Among them the most important aspect of the funerary acts are the burials with horses, which were the central element in the mortuary ritual of the early medieval populations in the Carpathian Basin, lifting the dead above the average ritual *energy investment*.⁷ Burials with horses (or in its more widespread, albeit misleading wording: horse burials) are among the most important funeral cultural markers of the Avar Age. The several forms and types of burials with horses were classified by Attila Kiss more than 50 years ago.⁸

If animals buried whole are generally assessed as a *sacrifice* (excepting horses), partially deposited animals in the graves reflect a more complicated issue. In light of the hypothesized purpose of placing an animal (body part) in the grave, the practice may be symbolic if only an attribute of the animal is placed there. We can interpret situations as a *food offering*,⁹ where the animal bone most likely had meat on it, or, as in the case of a sheep's tail, a large

2 Luca 1993, 49–84, Plan 1.

3 Posea 1997; Rusu 2007, 41.

4 In cultural anthropology and ethnology, the idea of the *ritual* has been considered an intellectual construction.

5 “Caring for Body and Soul” (Effros 2003).

6 For this widespread term in cultural anthropology, see the works of Arnold van Gennep (Van Gennep 1981).

7 About the social function of funerals in early medieval times, see Effros 2003; Halsall 2003.

8 Kiss 1963.

9 According to Zoltán Tóth, the bones close to the deceased probably played the role of food offerings, however, in cases where e.g. we can register the *tail vertebrae* of a given animal next to the body, we have to reckon with its symbolic role (Tóth 2012, 535–536).

amount of fat.¹⁰ Depending on cultural *habitus*,¹¹ the distinction between animal parts in a grave as a sacrifice or a food offering is problematic.¹² Thus, although, except for horses, the animal parts placed in Avar Age graves are almost exclusively interpreted as *food offerings* or *symbolic*, except for situations when the skull and the limbs of the animals can be documented in the graves, in that case they can be interpreted as *sacrifices*.

Accordingly, the interpretation of a cemetery and a grave as a complex phenomenon is a task that requires the consideration of several factors.

On the base of these statements, we will present below the aforementioned funerary sites near Pecica.

C. Funerary sites near Pecica

1. Pecica-Est/Smart Diesel (Fig. 2–3)

The archaeological site initially named *Pecica-Est/Smart Diesel* fuel station (Pecica-Est) was identified and delimited in the framework of diagnostic archaeological excavations. In the course of two archaeological campaigns (2015, 2017) 360 archaeological complexes were unearthed, among these, 9 funerary complexes could be attributed to the Early Avar Age. The funerary area from *Pecica-Est/Smart Diesel* is undoubtedly noticeable through the simplicity of the funerary ritual. Of the nine graves, only the child grave recorded as Ftr. 8a and the male grave recorded as Ftr. 455 stand out.

The nine graves excavated at *Pecica-Est/Smart Diesel* stand out due to the fact that the analyzed skeletons have proven to be, apart from one case, either males or *infants*. Of the nine graves, 4 were definitely disturbed and robbed in the past (Ftr. 412, 430, 437, 455). It is very strange that there is no trace of the skull in grave Ftr. 455, so in this case we could not exclude a ritual nature of the looting.¹³

We did not observe any special care taken in terms of the shape of the burial pits, which were mostly rectangular in shape (Ftr. 8a, 412, 431, 437), sometimes widened at the legs (Ftr. 431, 448) or in the upper part of the body (Ftr. 455).

The apparent lack of attention given to the arrangement of the burial pit could be interpreted from a sociological perspective as reflecting an inferior status of the individuals buried in this funerary area. The orientations display great heterogeneity (WSW – ENE, E – W, ENE – WSW, ESE – WNW), which shows us that in the case of this funerary area, the orientations cannot be considered a well-determined custom, suggesting different (micro) communities that carried out these burials. We could also document a grave with a lateral niche in the case of the Ftr. 437 grave, a custom that,

according to some opinions, would be characteristic of the region east of the Tisza.¹⁴ The defining characteristic of the burial ritual in this microregion of the Carpathian Basin – located at the Pecica site as well, is undoubtedly the deposition of *sacrificed animals* and food offerings, such as those documented in graves Ftr. 8a, 408, 412, 431, 437, 448, 455.

Regarding the material culture, although out of the 9 funerary units, 5 were disturbed and robbed, generally the material culture of the individuals buried at *Pecica-Est/Smart Diesel* can be considered very modest, like the burial ground from Nădlac-1M.¹⁵

It must be mentioned that all the pots were handmade, from a clay in which medium grained sand was used as temper, and all fired reductively. The different types of beads offer dating that is not much more precise: bipartite (made of two parts) beads, prismatic, cylindrical, and those decorated with embossed strips on the surface cannot be dated more precisely.¹⁶

Regarding the chronology of this funerary area, if the nine graves belong to a single micro-community, the analysis of the ¹⁴C samples indicates an early period of use, very likely dated to the 7th century (600), but one cannot entirely exclude its dating to the second half of the 6th century. Nevertheless, taking into account the fact that these graves were dug in a dispersed manner on a large territory (ca. 1.5 ha), at a distance of dozens of meters from one another, without any organized character of the funerary place in contrast with other cemeteries, and with a heterogeneity of orientations, we must suppose that these individuals were not related biologically, they did not form a community, but they were instead buried by different mobile communities at different times. For a very similar situation, we have data from a 10th century funerary area, in the case of the graves at the site of “Homokbánya” (Sand-pit) no. 5 in Szeged-*Öthalom*. There, similarly to the site of Pecica-Smart Diesel, the graves were situated at a distance of dozens of meters from one another, and archaeogenetic analysis could confirm that these individuals were not related biologically.

Much more importantly, while the archaeogenetic analysis could confirm that these individuals were not related biologically, the ¹⁴C and the typochronological analyses respectively have revealed very clearly that the digging of graves 36, 124, 132, and 237 occurred with gaps of several decades. The funerary space from Szeged was most likely used by several different communities and – what is more important – in different periods: in the case of graves 36 and 124 an early dating may be plausible, maybe even to the 9th century, while graves 150 and 287 (sheet metal bangle with twirled endings) could be dated only to the middle of the 10th century.¹⁷

10 However, food offerings that did not leave a trace, such as boneless meat, could also be placed in the grave.

11 Bourdieu 2002, 27–34.

12 Vörös 1999, 43–58.

13 Related to the ritual acts of the dislocation of the skull, see: Kovrig 1963, 71–72; Tomka 1979, 50.

14 Lőrinczy 2017, 137–165, with a further bibliography.

15 Gáll, Mărginean 2020, 373–407.

16 Pásztor 2008, Tab. 2.

17 In the case of graves 36 and 124, an early dating could be feasible, maybe even in the 9th century, at the same time graves 150 and 287 (sheet metal bangle with twirled endings) could be dated only to the middle of the 10th century (Türk, Lőrinczy, Marcsik 2015, 44–45).

2. Pecica-Duvenbeck (Fig. 4–6)

The rescue excavations performed in Pecica-Duvenbeck in 2018 have led to the discovery of 582 features from different periods, among them two groups of graves that can be dated to the eighth-ninth centuries, which were called funerary areas "A" and "B" (Fig. 4).

The phenomenon probably can be explained through the abandonment of the funerary area, or the region itself by these two groups of populations, implicitly a (micro- or macro-) migration phenomenon. The graves in the burial space called by us funerary area "A" formed 3 groups, however in their case some order of burial can be observed. The 47 human skeletons (in 46 graves)¹⁸ excavated at Pecica-Duvenbeck have proved to be in 19 cases male burials, in 15 cases female graves, while in 12 cases minors (*infans* I-II) were buried.¹⁹ In one case (Ftr. 525), a separate horse burial was registered, while in two cases the grave pits did not contain human bones or other elements.

On the basis of the anthropological analysis, in the case of both the males and females the majority were tall and tall-medium (Tab. 1).

At this moment we cannot answer the question of whether individuals from the burial site had biological links and whether any degree of kinship existed between them.

Few observations can be made regarding the shape of the burial pits. We did not document the so-called *niche graves*, while in one case a little niche for the deposition of a pot was documented. Most of the burial pits were rectangular shaped, but in one case a large, square pit was registered. Except for burials with horses, the plan of the pits was rectangular with rounded corners, which is common in the Late Avar context.

A significant portion of the graves were apparently disturbed by robbers, like graves Ftr. 11, 13, 20A, 60, 191, 522, 527, 534, 536, 613, 626A, 626B (funerary area "A"), and 150, 152, 155A, 168, 170, 176 (funerary area "B"), which constitute 39.13% of the human graves.

Usually, the orientation of the skeletons was attributed to their concept of the world, or rather their image of the afterlife.²⁰ Without taking a position in this regard, we can note that the orientations from this aspect present a homogenous attitude of the micro community from Duvenbeck: every pit was dug in a NW – SE orientation, both in the "A" and "B" funerary areas.

In the case of the burial site of Duvenbeck, we can separate 2 types of burial with horses based of Attila Kiss' classification:²¹

Type I: Horse skeleton on the right side of the human skeleton, in an opposite orientation. This group includes grave Ftr. 536.

Type VII: Individual horse grave (Ftr. 525), which has been excavated next to the double burials (Ftr. 524A–B) westwards.

The partial animal skeletons identified in the graves of the burial site belong to cattle and sheep, and in the case of one grave (Ftr. 64), probably to a dog (?). Both the female and male burials, as well as the infant graves, feature such remains. The pottery in graves Ftr. 9, 20A, and 22A are categorized as holding food and/or drink offerings.

A very interesting case was documented in grave Ftr. 534: the human skeleton was buried in the same pit with a cow, which was placed above it, and next to that, in an upper layer, a disturbed, partial horse skeleton was found. According to the archaeological observations during excavation, the horse burial clearly belonged to grave Ftr. 534, being buried as part of the same funerary ritual.

In some cases we documented traces of coffins (Ftr. 524 A–B, 626A), without nails.

Among the 47 human burials and the horse grave Ftr. 525, dated to the Avar era in the funerary areas "A" and "B", there were 17 graves with some kind of furnishing with objects characteristic of the late Avar era. The inventory of these graves was very poor: the most important elements are the belts (graves Ftr. 8, 171, 334, 534, 641) with buckles and decorated with fittings (graves Ftr. 334, 534), earrings (grave Ftr. 155A), knives (graves Ftr. 8, 61A, 67, 191), and pots (graves Ftr.9, 20A, 22A).

In a grave, Ftr. no. 20A, with a female skeleton (*adultus/maturus*, over 30 years), partially disturbed at the time of its robbery, a pot has been identified with an incised cross sign under the neck. As we have emphasized, it is almost impossible that the cross-shaped sign on the pot would have had the same meaning as the symbol of the universal religion, it was rather an *apotropaion*, the shape of a symbol that was adopted and transformed according to the pagan mentalities of the 8th century.²²

The pot, based on Vida's typology, can be classified as type IIIA_{2/a}, with a long lifespan from the beginning of the 7th century to the first decades of the 8th century.²³ However, the ¹⁴C analysis of the grave has indicated a timespan of 576 – 662,²⁴ which, taking into account the funerary context seems to be a very early date.

An interesting case could be documented in grave Ftr. 168: behind the skull of a male (*maturus/senilis*, 50–71 years old) a corroded, almost pentagonal piece of iron was registered; so far its function could not be determined.

18 There is only one known case of double burial (Ftr. 524A–B).

19 In the case of the graves Ftr. 536 and 626A, the skeletons were disturbed to such a degree that anthropological analyses were impossible.

20 Kovács 1944, 418.

21 Kiss 1963, 153–154, Fig. 1–2.

22 With more details: Gáll, Mărginean, Peter 2019.

23 Vida 1998, 119.

24 We could not rule out the impact of a freshwater diet (Olsen et al. 2010, 640–642; Philippsen 2013, 1).

3. Pecica-Site 15 (Fig. 7–8)

In the context of the archaeological rescue excavations related to the building of the Nădlac-Pecica section of the A1 Highway, the archaeological team of the Satu Mare County Museum investigated, among others, an area of roughly 101 m², ca. 2 km E – NE of the city of Pecica, subsequently known as *Site 15*.

The investigations resulted in the identification of a total number of 469 archaeological features, from 8 different chronological periods, ranging from the Eneolithic to the late medieval era, but most notably, from our point of view, 71 features that were initially attributed at the site to the Avar Period, these being situated in the southern half of the investigated area.

The spatial distribution of the graves presents us with some interesting problems. As can be seen on the general plan of the burial place (Fig. 1), the majority of the graves are situated in a single, central cluster, which in itself seems to be separated into 3 smaller groups, the northwestern and northeastern groups having a blank spot between them, which starts at the northernmost edge of the researched area, and spreads towards the south in a funnel shape. Both of these groups seem to be separated by an even wider gap from the southern part of the central cluster. The reason for this separation is not yet clear to us, as there are no major topographical boundaries between them, moreover, those characteristics of the burial ritual that are, at this point, known to us (more on those later), are present in all of the aforementioned groups. Perhaps future examinations (biological or anthropological, etc.) will shed some light on the matter.

Similarly, the reason for which the other two clusters stand separated at a relative large distance from the aforementioned cluster requires further research. Namely, features 273 and 276/1 stand ca. 30 meters to the NW from the central location of the burial place.

Another distinct burial cluster can be observed at the southeastern fringes of the site, consisting of 4 burials, ca. 50 meters from the central groups, consisting of three female graves, close to each other, with a very interesting inventory (Ftr. 223–224, 239), and a fourth one, ca. 5 meters west of these (Ftr. 28). Based on the different funeral rites, we can most certainly state that the three female graves, and the fourth grave (Ftr. 28), have no relation whatsoever, besides a relative proximity. As to the cause of the segregation of these graves from the main cluster, we can only speculate at this point, however the three female graves, as we shall see below, offer unique chronological clues regarding the burial place as a whole.

Regarding the burial rites, the most striking difference is observable regarding the orientation of the graves, which allows us, even at this early stage of the research, to identify at least two distinct groups within the burial place.

Among the human burials, beside the aforementioned two, which are oriented along a N – S axis, a smaller number (14) of graves present an orientation of NE-SW or its variations, including 3 female burials situated at the southern fringes of the site, as well as Ftr. 276/1, at the northern limits (for future reference: Group A).

The majority of the graves (49) are oriented NW – SE, or its variations (for future reference: Group B). These are situated mainly in the central cluster, with the exception of the aforementioned Ftr. 28 at the southern fringes of the site.

The use of coffins was only documented without any doubt in the case of Group B, the majority of these being simple wooden coffins, but in some instances small, rectangular holes in one, or both ends – at the corners – of the grave pit were also documented, which may point to coffins standing on legs (Fig. 2).²⁵

For animal bones in graves, or animal burials (Fig. 3), we could identify 19 cases where animal bones occur in human graves, and also we could observe some particular differences in the customs between groups A and B.

Group A can be characterized by the deposition of multiple parts, if not full equine or bovine bodies (for example at Ftr. 223).

Regarding Group B, in a small number of cases we could observe a custom specific only to this group, namely the deposition of certain parts (mainly the skull, but sometimes other parts as well) of an ovi-caprid in a small pit, dug into the floor of the grave, the deceased being laid above it (Ftr. 114, 145, 253, 298).

To this group (B) belongs the special case of Ftr. 180, where the deceased was placed on carefully arranged parts of a cow. The only individual horse burial also belongs to group B (Ftr. 179).²⁶

The phenomenon of grave robbing (observed in 36 cases from the total number of graves) is also present among the graves of the burial site.

A special inventory package was present at burial Ftr. 224 with a straining spoon, spatula, brush holder, and 17 quite unique head-dress fittings,²⁷ made by the pressing of two sheets of different metals, the outer sheet being gilded,²⁸ with highly similar – although not identical – features to the pressing molds found in the

25 For a more detailed analysis of this phenomenon, see Tomka 1979, 72.

26 Group VII: Kiss 1963, 154.

27 Unpublished graves and inventories. Some information has been presented at Balogh, Lőrinczy 2019, 128–130, based on the verbal disclosure and unpublished MA paper offered by one of the co-authors of this paper, with his agreement.

28 In contrast to that stated in Balogh, Lőrinczy 2019, p. 219, based on our verbal disclosure, we have to emphasize here that we don't yet have any archeometric data regarding the material and composition of the fittings.

metalsmith graves from Békéssámsón,²⁹ and, with a lower degree of similarity, to the butterfly-shaped pressing mold of Felnac.³⁰

On the basis of the NE – SW orientation of the graves and the typochronological characteristics of the finds (raceme-pendant earring-pair [type VII], large spherical bead-pendant earring [Type Szentes, subtype Páhipusztá])³¹ this burial group, at least partially, can be dated more or less to the second third or the middle of the 7th century.

On the other hand, group B, characterized by a NW – SE orientation, can roughly be dated, based on the cast belt-buckle, and small strap-end decorated with a griffin-like predator in Ftr. 298, as well as the small strap-end with floral palmettes³² motive in grave Ftr. 270, to the Late Avar Period.

4. Pecica-Rovine/Căpravanul Mic

One example of habitation from the early Avar ages in Rovine/Căpravanul Mic, was situated near Pecica, on the road to Nădlac, between the channel under the grapevines and the European Road Arad-Nădlac.

The rescue excavation that took place in 2014 due to the construction of a truck parking area led to the delimitation of a multistratigraphic site. On the delimited parking area, 49 contexts were documented, dating to five chronological horizons as follows: prehistory, Sarmatian period, Early Avar Age, Early Arpadian Age, and Late Medieval period (Ottoman).³³ The complexity of the site was determined by the discovery of contexts that could be attributed to funerary settings, dwelling or workshop areas, dispersed across a relatively large area on what appears to only be the margins of the site.

Among the contexts researched in 2014, there were two graves that can be attributed to the Early Avar Age, one of which was a triple burial (Ftr. 46/A–C, 47), along with a dwelling (Ftr. 09; Fig. 9). Following primary anthropological analyses, it was determined that in Ftr. 46 an adult male (30 – 40 years of age) and two *infans* (Ftr. 46/B–C, aged 2 – 3 and 6 – 7 years respectively), were inhumated, while in Ftr. 47, an adult female was buried. The analysis of the funerary inventories as well as the household waste that was recovered from the dwelling (pottery fragments that were exclusively hand-made), combined with ¹⁴C analyses, dated these burials to the Early Avar chronological horizon (end of 6th c. – beginning of 7th c.). Probably the most interesting piece inventory is that of Ftr. 47, consisting of an earring and two amber beads. Very good analogies for the earring are from Transdanubia.³⁴

In 2018, a new project extending the initial investment led to an archaeological diagnosis on the remaining area to the east of the terrace, which led to the delimitation of various contexts, including some graves. Based on their orientation, some graves appear to belong to the Sarmatian period, and some others to the Avar

Age. This allows for the careful estimation that up until now the archaeological excavations had exposed only the western limit of the site used both as a dwelling area and as a funerary area during the Early Avar Age.

5. Pecica-Forgaci/Forgács

In a brief archaeological excavation report, Sabin Adrian Luca has stated that among other material at a multistrata prehistoric site, a grave has been discovered belonging to the 7th – 8th centuries.³⁵ If we accept these data, it is a sign of another burial site in the region of Pecica from this period.

D. Some observations regarding to the funerary sites near Pecica

1. According to earlier military maps, the funerary sites from the Avar Period near Pecica were situated next to the delta-like estuary of the Mureş, crisscrossed by small streams (*Cseh-ér* and *Forgács-ér*). The graves from Pecica-Rovine/Căpravanul Mic located near the stream Cseh-ér are the only known funerary sites discovered until now nearby this stream from the Avar Age.

In contrast, east of Pecica, near the stream of *Forgács*, four or five large or small funerary sites (clusters of graves) were discovered from the Early Avar Period: Site 15 grave Clusters 1 and 2, Smart Diesel, Duvenbeck, and perhaps *Forgaci/Forgács* (see Fig. 1).

2. The Avar Period burial sites near Pecica present multifarious characteristics that most probably can be related to the lifestyle of the populations in the 6/7th – 9th centuries. In this respect, the burial sites in the Early Avar Age with a low number of burials are signs of a mobile, pastoralist way of life of the communities in this period (funerary sites from Smart Diesel, Site 15), while the burial sites with a larger number of graves, which have been dated from the last decades of the 7th century onwards, would belong to the settled, “peasant” communities.

3. The early dated of the graves from Pecica-Rovine (the end of the 6th century – first half of the 7th century) based on ¹⁴C analyses could represent signs of the existence in this area of pre-Avar Period populations?

4. The NW – SE and the W – E orientations of the early graves from Pecica-Duvenbeck and Pecica-Rovine/Căpravanul Mic draw attention to the fact that not all graves in the region of Transtisza were oriented an E – W direction. From this perspective, the “cultural unity” of the Transtisza region in the 6 – 7th, and 8 – 9th centuries, respectively, appears to be much less plausible.

29 Unpublished grave. Some information has been given on the grave and its inventories by Balogh, Lőrinczy 2019, 128.

30 Tănase 2010, 76–78; Rácz 2014, 153–158, Pl. 15: 5.

31 Čilinská 1975, 75–76; Ormándy 1995, 157–158, 161–163; Balogh 2016, 153, 159.

32 Szente 2013, 310, Fig. 3.

33 Mărginean 2016, 109–111.

34 For a broader analysis, see: Gáll - Mărginean 2021, 203–223.

35 Luca 1993, 49–84, Plan 1.

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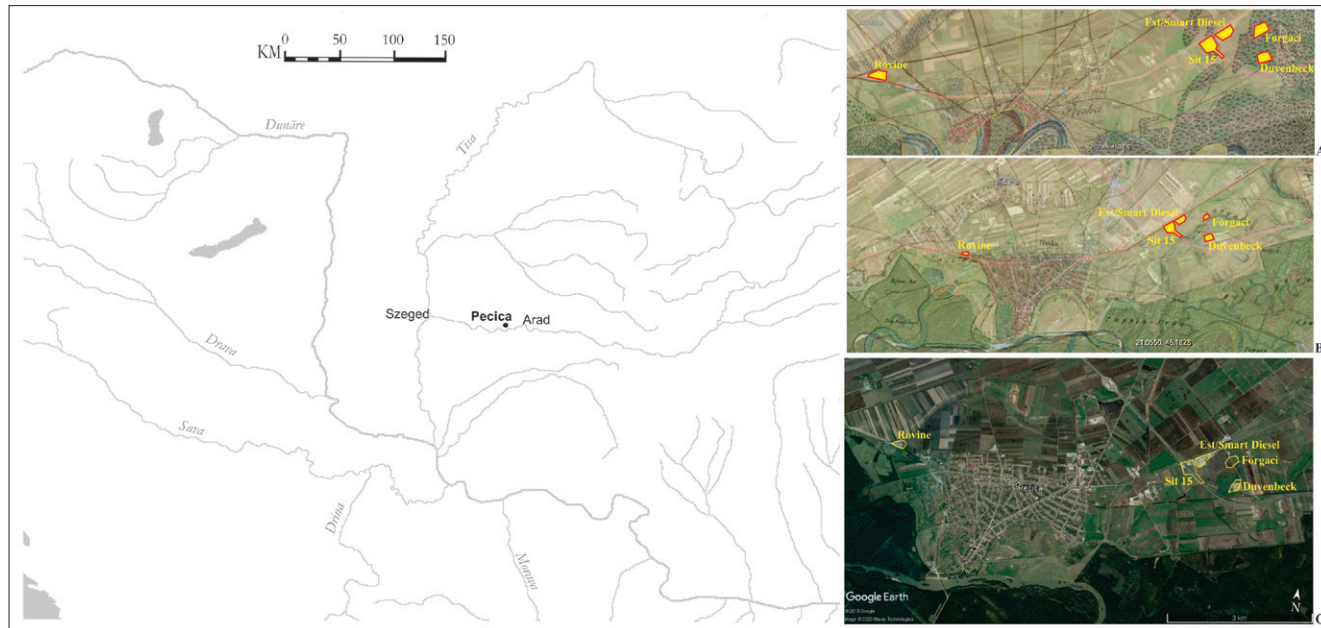
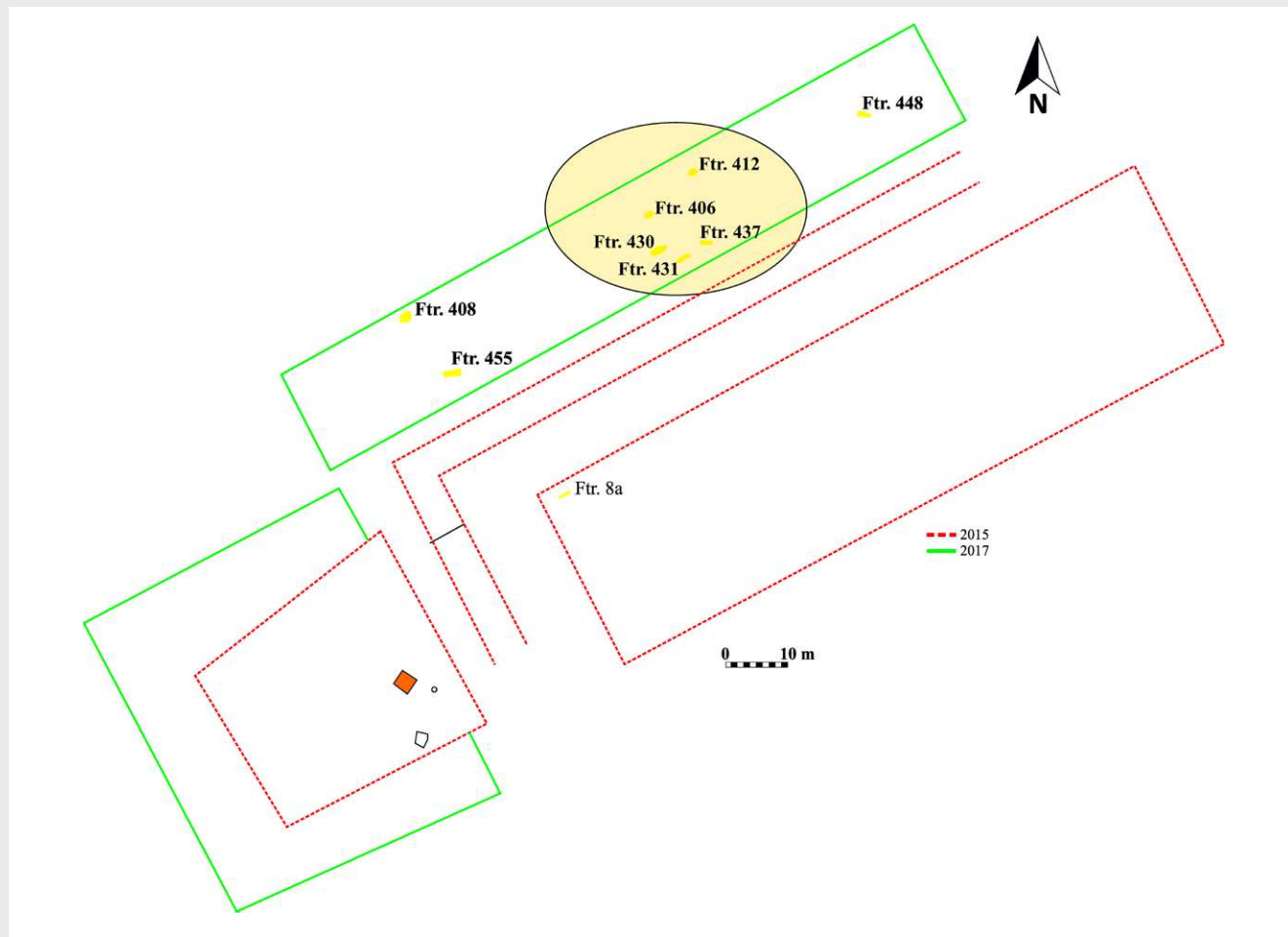


FIGURE 1. Geographic location of Pecica region in the Carpathian Basin. (A–C) The topographic distribution of the sites with funerary discoveries from the Avar Age in the Pecica area (made by F. Mărginean).

FIGURE 2. The microtopography of the graves from Pecica “Est/Smart Diesel” (made by F. Mărginean, E. Gáll).



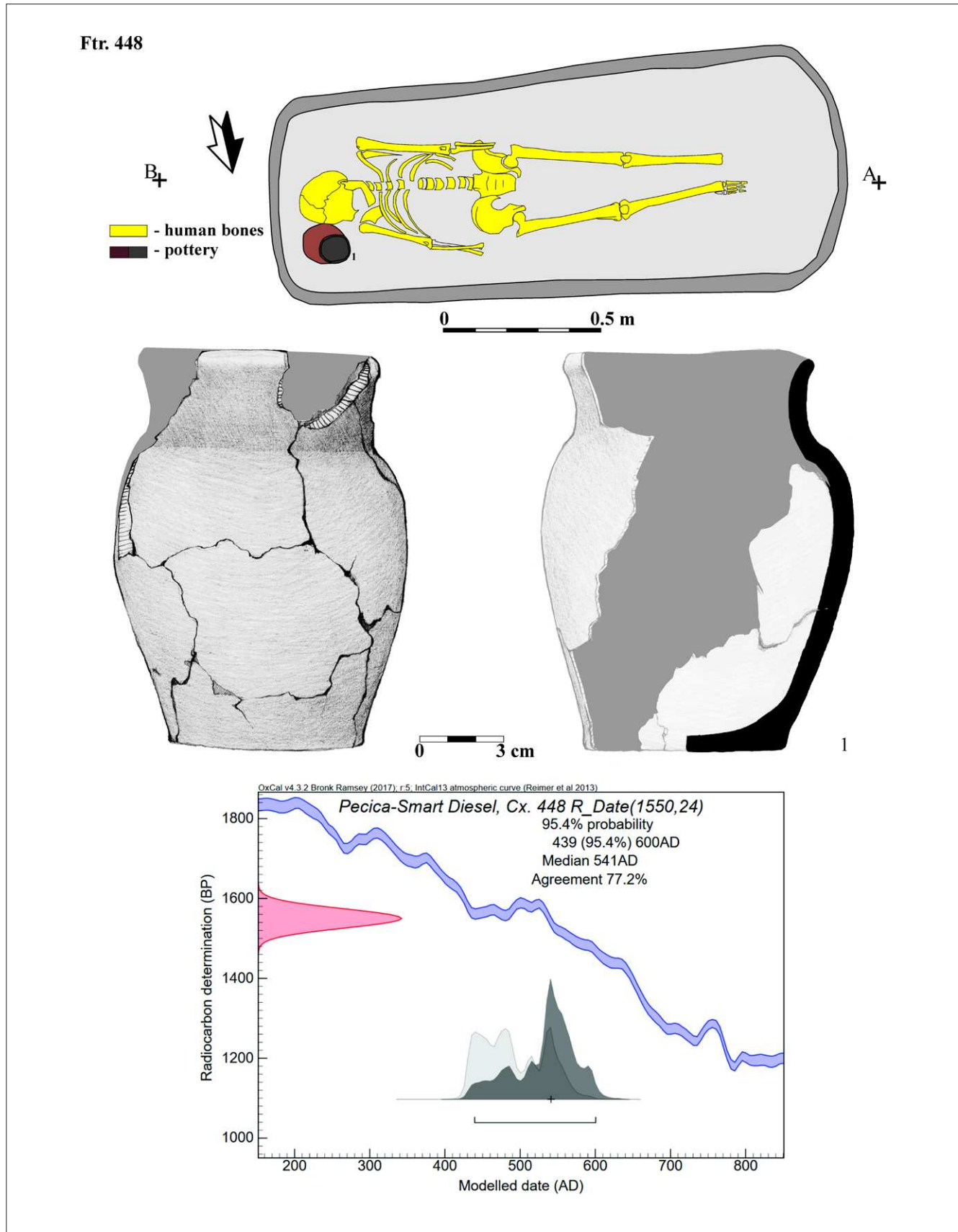
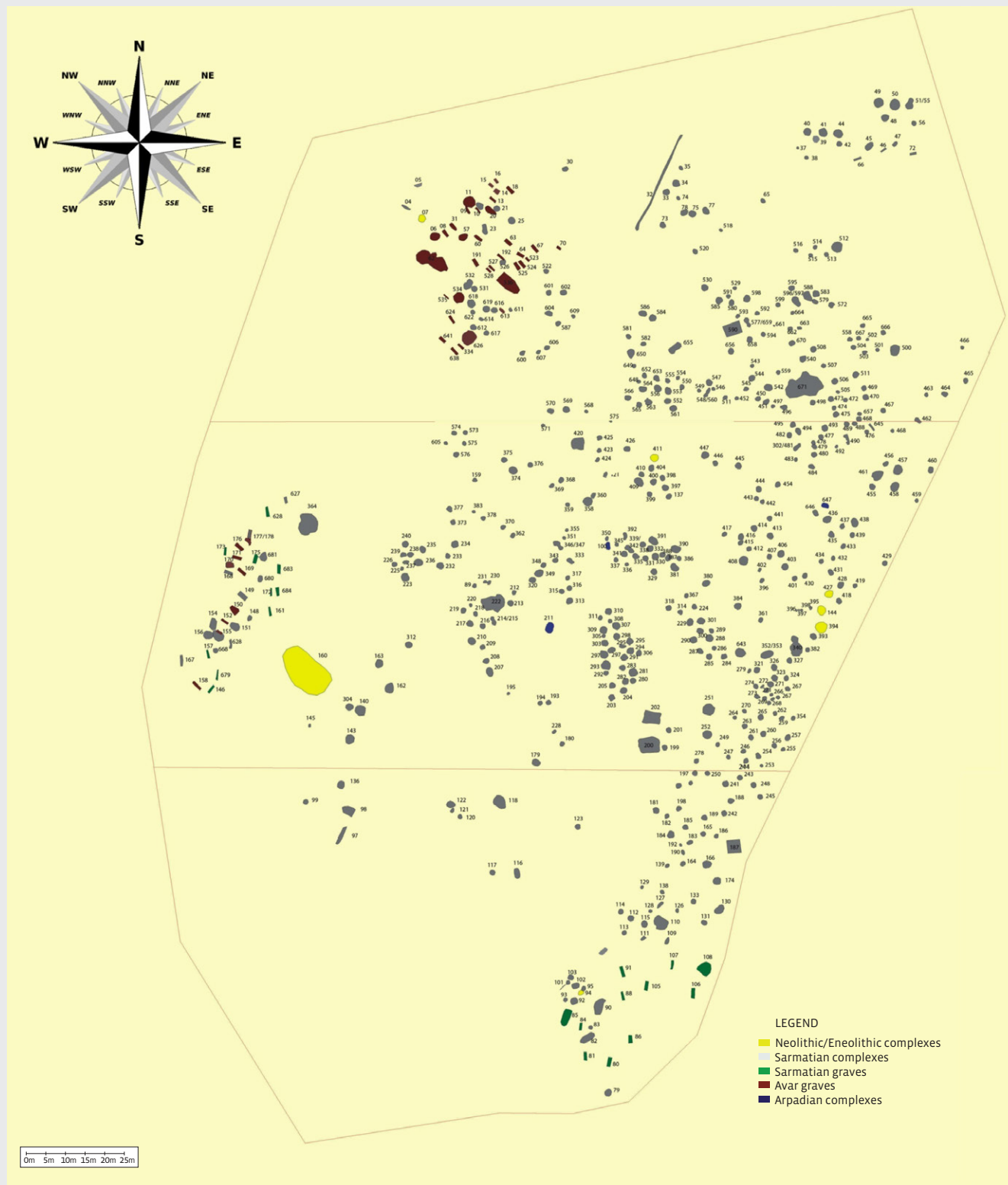


FIGURE 3.
 The grave Ftr. 448 (made by M. Urák, D. Preda).



MALE				
	Grave no.	Femur average	Stature by Sjøvold	Martin's classification
1	8	416.50	158.73	S
2	18	446.50	166.86	M
3	31	423.00	160.49	Sm
4	61-A	455.00	169.17	Tm
5	62-B	448.00	167.27	Tm
6	67	470.00	173.23	T
7	150	430.00	162.39	Sm
8	158	473.50	174.18	T
9	171	453.50	168.76	Tm
10	334	494.00	179.73	T
11	524-A	455.00	169.17	Tm
12	638	494.50	179.87	T
13	—	—	—	—

MALE		
N	12	12
Vmax	494.50	179.87
Vmin	416.50	158.73
M	454.96	169.15
S.D.	25.05	6.79
S.D./M	5.51	4.01

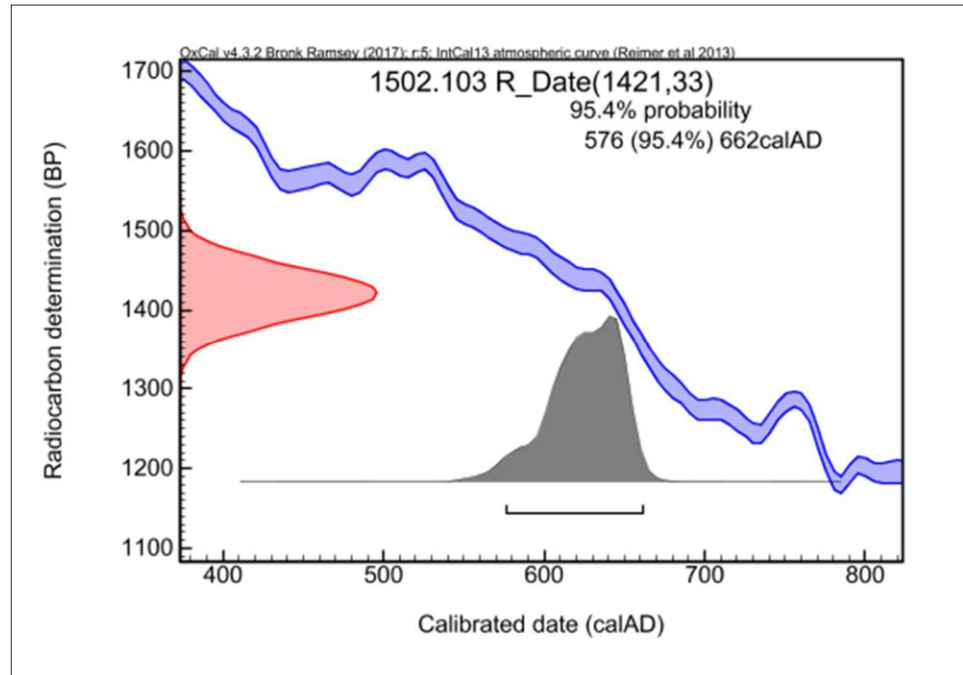
FEMALE				
	Grave no.	Femur average	Stature by Sjøvold	Martin's classification
1	6	430.00	162.39	T
2	9	380.00	148.84	S
3	10	399.00	153.99	M
4	20	428.50	161.98	T
5	22	410.00	156.97	Tm
6	57	392.50	152.23	Sm
7	60	414.00	158.05	Tm
8	63	407.50	156.29	Tm
9	155	432.00	162.93	T
10	168	412.00	157.51	Tm
11	176	407.50	156.29	Tm
12	624	394.00	152.63	Sm
13	641	391.00	151.82	Sm

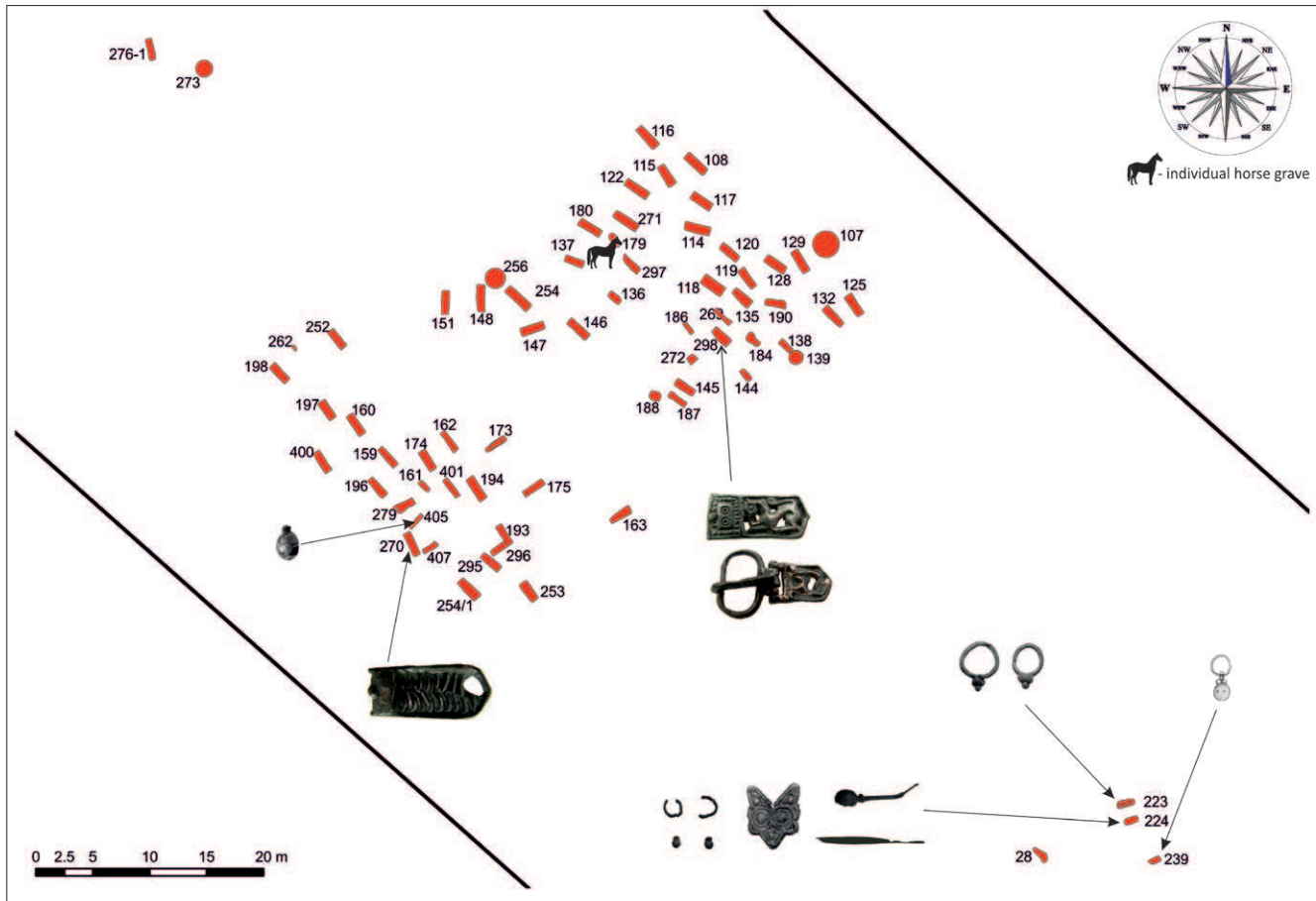
FEMALE		
N	13	13
Vmax	432.00	162.93
Vmin	380.00	148.84
M	407.54	156.30
S.D.	16.14	4.37
S.D./M	3.96	2.80

S	Small
Sm	Small medium
M	Medium
Tm	Tall medium
T	Tall

← **FIGURE 4.**
The comprehensive map of the excavations at Pecica-Duvenbeck (made by A. Ursuțiu, G. Copos).

TABLE 1.
The stature of the females and the males at the Pecica-Duvenbeck burial site (made by S. Peter).

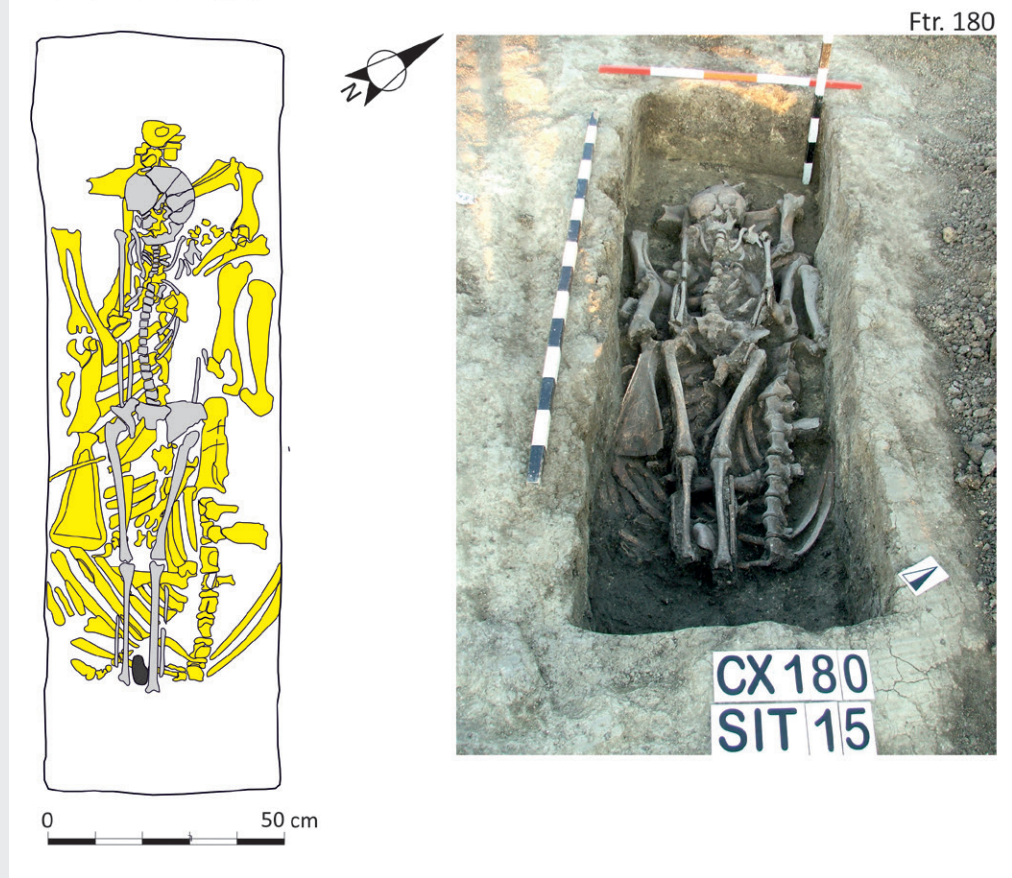
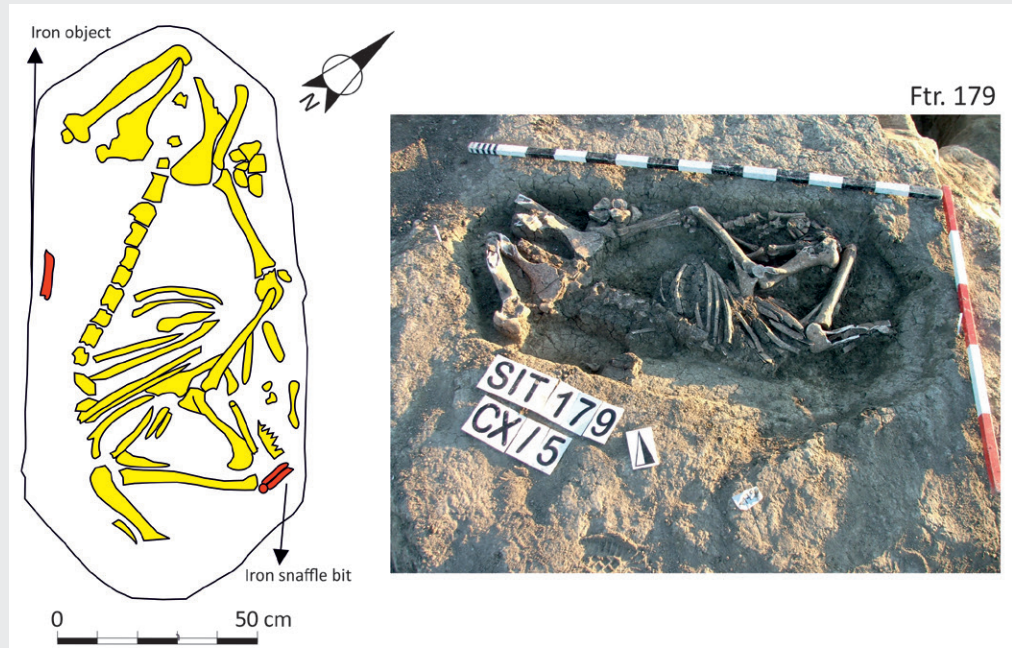




← **FIGURE 5.**
The "individual dating" of the grave Ftr. 20A made through ¹⁴C (by T. Sava, Institute of Atomic Physics, Bucharest).

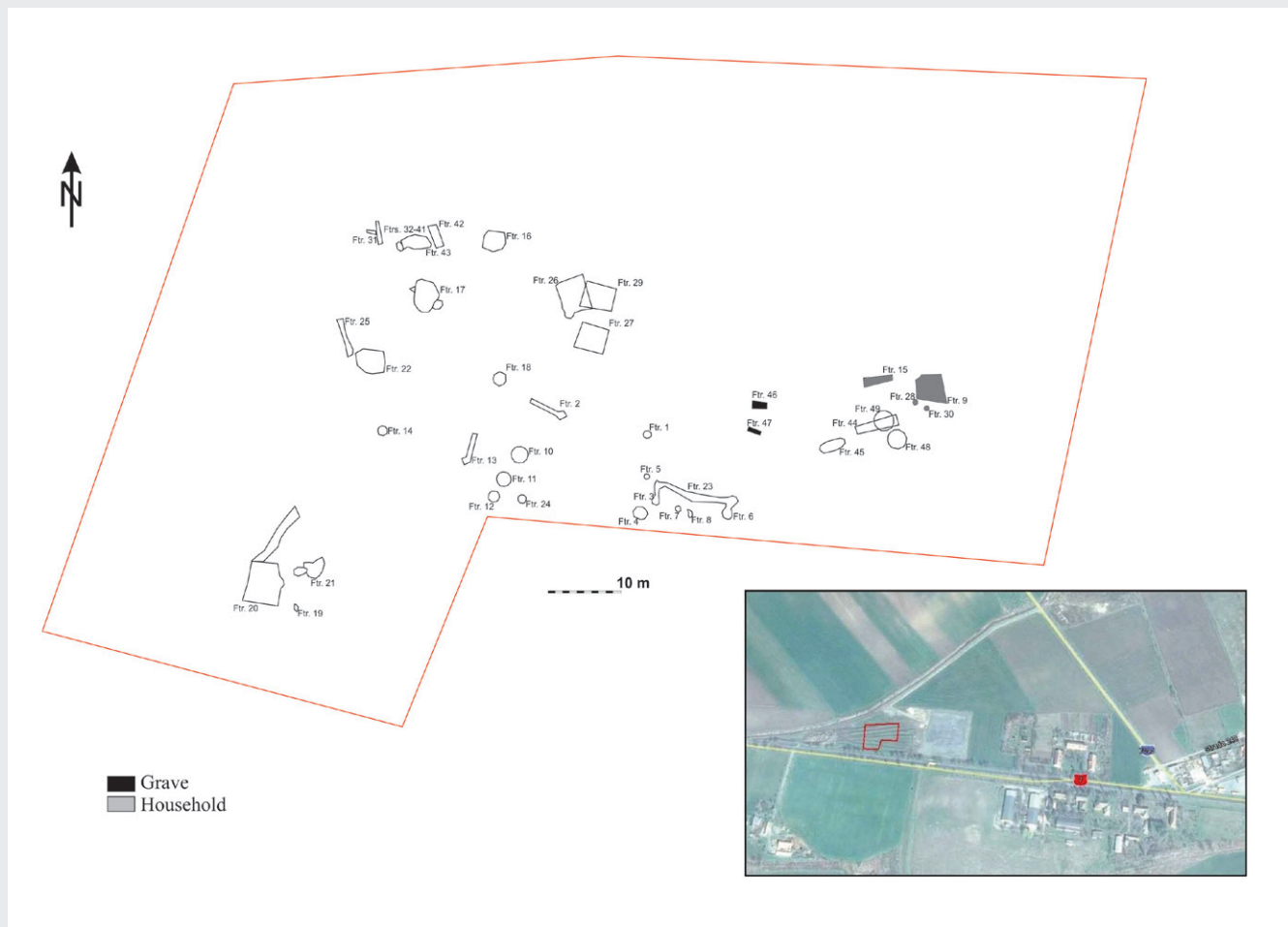
← **FIGURE 6.**
The grave Ftr. 168 and its inventory (made by F. Mărginean, E. Gáll).

FIGURE 7.
The micro-topography of the graves from Pecica "Sit 15" (made by M. H. K. Hőgyes, E. Gáll).



← **FIGURE 8.**
Animal burials in graves 178 and 180
(made by M. H. K. Hőgyes).

FIGURE 9.
Topographic survey. General ground plan of the
excavation from Pecica-Rovine/Căprăvanul Mic
with the location of the discoveries dated to
the Avar Age (made by F. Mărginean).







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