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Problems of colonization in the territory between Danube and Tisza Rivers in the Avar Age

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In the Carpathian Basin about 70,000 Avar graves was explored, but regional studies based on the entire collection of the archeological material have been performed. In the dissertation after the analysis of the burial customs and archeological finds of the territory between Danube and Tisza Rivers was looking questions of colonization problems in the Avar Age.

The main question of the thesis: when and how happened occupation of the territory, when and where were immigrations and migration processes.

The indicators of the change of the settlement area and of the migration could be detected only in part. For a complete exploration complex social analysis and in the other areas of the Avar Khaganate similar detailed analysis is needed.

In the paper was examined the environmental conditions of lasting colonization, the carrying capacity of the area and before the Avar period Germanic archeological finds.

Especially graves and stray finds were analyzed because in this area were not systematic topographical researches and settlements are not processed.

In the archeological material of this territory six chronological horizons was determined, and based on these was made a model of the colonization.

Near the burial customs and the find-typology was studied communication of different levels of the society consisting of communities and the development and survival of the early kagan center in the upper third area of the territory between the Danube and Tisza rivers. Due to the lack of cemetry maps and documentation Complex social analysis could not be made.

In the first book of the two-volume dissertation you can find an analytical material, 46 typological figs, 10 diagrams and 51 distribution maps. In the appendix at the end of the book is a result of the \(^{14}\text{C}\)-measurements and 33 tables.

In the second volume is located Catalog of the archeological sites and description of 1,083 graves from 25 cemetery. The grave goods are edited to 518 figs.

**Spatial and temporal context of the research**

The territory between Danube and Tisza rivers is approx. 25000 km\(^2\) area, three sides by the river is bordered. But the northern boundary of the territory is uncertain. In the dissertation was analyzed material of the area up to the line of Szolnok–Jászberény–Gőd. In the territory is located eastern Pest country, western Csongrád and Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok countries, Bács-Kiskun country and Vojvodina (Srb).

A temporal context of the research is a 7\(^{th}\) century. In this territory 6\(^{th}\) century archeological material was not possible to show. The colonization process was ended at the beginning of the 8\(^{th}\) century. In this time some little community moved to area Šajkaška (Srb).

**The database**

At the end of the material-collection (end of 2012) in the territory between Danube and Tisza rivers were 743 Avar Age sites: 217 settlements (majority topographical data), 366 graves, cemeteries and cemetery details and 160 known-site stray finds (*Table 2*).

In the database has been recorded data of 8039 graves from 462 archeological sites (*Table 1*). It has all been unearthed in 90% of the material. They made an analysis of the dissertation.
Natural environment of the area in the Avar Age

So far the results of scientific researches gathering tried to draw a picture of the natural conditions of colonization and land-carrying capacity.

During the reporting period quarters of the territory between Danube and Tisza rivers was temporarily or permanently covered by water. In the Carpathian Basin among the Sub-Atlantic phase (3-4th Century AC) and the beginning of the medieval climate optimum at the end of the 8th century was a wetter period.

Based on the results of scientific researches so far, geographical factors, conditions of farming in this area were more favorable than today. In this area the first Avar communities appeared later than the eastern Transdanubia and the Southern Great Plains. This cannot be explained by the natural environment.

Not inhabited by people territory between Danube and Tisza rivers before Avar Period

In the Hungarian researches so very long time was that after the Hun Age and before the Avar colonization this area was uninhabited. But now known on the base of research of István Bóna, Attila Kiss, János Cseh and Serbian researches in the last decades in the eastern part of the territory between Danube and Tisza rivers can be reported Gepid presence.

I collected all Gepid sites in this area, 54 Gepid archeological sites known (Table 3). These was located in a narrow band near the rivers and neighborhood of the temporarily covered by water territory (Map 12). In the territory between Danube and Tisza the Gepid presence was greater than was previously supposed.

The chronological phases of the archeological material and model of colonization of the territory between Danube and Tisza rivers

In the archeological material to the 6th century dated find-horizon could not be detected. In the material from the beginning of the 7th century to the 9th century at the middle of the 7th century sharp boundary was determined: some cemetery was closed (Bačko Petrovo Selo, Čik (Srb), Bečej-ul. Pionir (Srb), Szeged-Fehértó A., Felgyő-Úrmös tanya, etc.), some cemetery was opened (Jánoshida-Tótérpuszta, Városföld, Hajós-Cifrahegy, etc.), in these new burial customs and finds have emerged. The changes are mainly in the jewelry.

The result of the slow transformation and immigration of Onogurs was that the end of the 7th century early Avar traditions resolved. A homogeneous material culture emerged. In this time from Transdanubia and other side of Tisza river smaller communities moved here.

At the middle of the 8th century opened new cemeteries (Tatárszentgyörgy, Horgoš-Budzak (Srb), Čelarevo (Srb), etc.), repeated appearance some already ceased Early Avar burial custom (niche graves, grave pits with post-holes, ledge graves, graves with horse) an era of internal border drawn up.

This three period corresponds to the classical trichotomy of the Avar Age (Early, Middle and Late Avar period), but border between the Middle and Late Avar period is not sharp. Because the two-period allocation is appropriate (first and second half of the Avar period).

In the first half of the Avar period was two find-horizons, in the second half of the Avar period we can store around four object-horizon.

The colonization of the territory between Danube and Tisza Rivers on the basis of the six chronological phases of the archaeological material occurred in four phases.
Phase 1: ?–600–620/625. In this phase along the Danube, in a narrow band near the river was a military presence driven by strategic considerations.

At the main strategic points (fords, crossing) and around the area were found some burial of the lower-ranking military leader and smaller armed cemeteries (Fajsz-Garadomb, Kunpeszér). At the northern edge of the controlling area, in the Zsámok and Hatvan region a regional chief of accommodation was emerged.

The belt mounts of the military elite was decorated with pressed round, stone or glass insert fittings, and Martynovka-type fittings. His weapon was the silver or gold P-shaped ear hanger sword. They liked the gold earrings with a large spherical pendant. These grave goods are similar to the material of the cemeteries in the Eastern Transdanubia.

The tombs of common people (Lovcenać (SrB), Subotica-ciglana Mácskovics (SrB)) and family cemeteries (Subotica-Sand (SrB), Baja-Allaga szőlő, Páhi-Kenyérhalom) was located in the southern half of the area. In this period was opened a larger cemetery in Pačko Petrovo Selo (SrB).

The cemetery at Vajska (SrB) represented an independent cultural island in the territory between Danube and Tisza rivers; this is a burial place of the late antique community (Map 50/1).

Typical burial customs: NNW–SSE orientation, shaft graves, sacrificial animal and pottery is not in the graves.

In the archeological material of this phase have a lot of subject of Asian origin: earrings with large spherical pendant, quiver-belt with rosette, two belt wormald, some bead, narrow lance, bone buckle, the earliest bone plates decorated quivers, straight-edged, narrow bows (Type I/1).

From the woman’s graves were deposited a late antique–early Byzantine bronze chains and earring with pyramidal pendant.

In this time arriving of Byzantine coins was very intense: from the southern part of the territory 11 Byzantine coins was found (Map 43, Table 32).

Most of the find-types in the other parts of the Avar Khaganate not detected, these not be dated before 600 years. Therefore, I assume the first decades of the 7th century some smaller communities from outside of the Carpathian Basin to this area moved.

Phase 2: 620/625–650/660. The area consisted of lime increased to the north along Tisza River was significantly, but the middle part of the territory between Danube and Tisza Rivers remained uninhabited (Map 50/2).

In this phase more new cemetery started to use (Bečej-ul. Pionir (SrB), Szeged-Fehértó A., Gátér, Felgyő-Úrmös tanya, Tiszavárkony-Hugyinpart, Bugyi-Úrbópuszta, Mélykút-Sánc dűlő, etc.). These and those typical new finds further introductions around 620/630 suggests.

After 626 year the Early Avar khagan-center to the northern part of this area can be localized. The rich graves with weapons refer to this (Kunbábony, Bócsa, Maglód, Kiskunfélegyháza-Pákapuszta, Petőfiszállás, Kecskemét-Sallai utca).

In the wide neighborhood the power center’s graves of the armed elite are located (Csepel-Kpectivesbánya, Kunpeszér Gave 3, Apatin-Szikes Grave 2, Szeged-Fehértó A. Grave 26, Felgyő-Úrmös tanya Grave 83. Csanytelek Grave A, Gátér Graves 193 and 212, Óbecse Grave 38, Kishegyes-Sárgagödör Grave 70, etc.).

The new power elite in the power of symbolism appearance indicates was changed: gold shaped buckle belt mounts, sword with triple arched handle and ringed grip.

In the representation of the power elite (“imitatio imperii”) with the Germanic cultural communities of the Eastern Transdanubia multi-threaded relationship can be found.

Channel of communication between two areas was the local trade, that the products of the late antique tradition Pannon workshops conveyed to the population of thee territory
between Danube and Tisza rivers: toiletries, gray pottery with melting pots from Szekszárd beverage.

The long-distance trade goods were the amber beads, Byzantine claps, amphorae and the Byzantine jugs.

In this horizon are several types of artifacts, which is typical for the territory between Danube and Tisza rivers. One of them is linked to the archeological material of the Central Asia nomadic cemeteries. For example bone mouthpiece, bow-firestarter, bone clips, mirrors, hoes, quivers decorated with narrow bone plaques.

In the grave goods can be found some Pontic–Byzantine object (masque type mounts from Kiskőrös–Vágóhíd Grave 9, Mezőszilas type pendant, the earliest hair-clips and propeller-shaped symmetric belt-mounts, Byzantine coins replacement metal round plates as obulus).

The new object has not antecedent in the Avar archeological material of the Carpathian Basin concentrated look in the material of the territory between Danube and Tisza Rivers can be explained by immigration of the new communities.

In the burial customs the new community’s different tradition appeared: the burials yielding pottery (cam-edged, rectangular mouth vessels, hand-made bottle). Te cultural roots of the people living here and immigrants were similar.

In the archeological material of this phase on the strip along the rivers Germanic cultural influence can be meet, in the burial customs is for example the graves with horse harness, the W–E orientation, the implements (sickle) adding next to the dead, in the grave goods are the bone the combs, the brooches with fingers, the wear with two brooches, the Eastern Alpine type mounts, the degree axes, the bards, the broad leaf-shaped spears, the throwing spears, etc. On the basis of the concentration of these can be possible to think about moving of the smaller Germanic cultural communities.

After unsuccessful siege of Constantinople in 626 year the expansion of the Avar Khaganate competed in the Balkans. Instead of Bajan-dynasty a new elite was emerged and a new power center was formed in the northern territory between Danube and Tisza rivers.

The end of this phase the Early Avar cemeteries closing meant. The two putative immigrations be examined later, the eastern analogies of the burial customs and object types to be collected.

Phase 3: 650/660–670/675. This was a transitional period, the beginning of the changes now not known.

The occupied area was extended to internal part; in the Homokhátság territory were also new archeological sites (Map 50/3). New cemeteries can be found at Felgyő–Úrmös tanya, Szeged-Kundomb, Szeged-Kundomb, Szeged-Makkoserdő, Bačka Topola-Bankert, Klanica (Srb), Moravica (Srb), etc. But on the western part of the territory opened new cemeteries through 1–2 generation was used (Apostag-Célkitermelőhely B, Dunavecse-Kovacsos dülő B).

In this time a slow change began. Beside the Black Sea very large cultural-pulse was received. The size of the earring with large spherical pendant increased, on these the glass/bead applications was appeared. New jewellery was the earring with large bead-pendant, the ring with head and the bracelets. The biggest change was in the beads-fashion: the women liked long bead necklaces instead of some beads.

Phase 4: 670/675–700/710. At the beginning of this phase was the Onogur-immigration and at the end of the horizon can be found the cast belt mounts of the Late Avar Period.
In the eastern part of the territory between Danube and Tisza rivers rich graves with weapons (Kecskemét-Miklóstele, Ballószög, Szeged-Átokháza) and armed cemeteries were emerged (Tiszakécske-Öböd, Kunszállás, Szeged-Fehértó B.).

I think that some smaller communities from other site of the Tisza river were immigrated, because new burial customs of new cemeteries (Csongrád-Mámai csárdá-dülő, Városföld, Ballószög, Szabadszállás-Battyhányi utca, Szabadszállás B. gyakorlótér, Solt-Szőlőhegy) between Csongrád and Dunaújváros/Intercisa (once a Roman road) is similar to burial customs of the Transtisza region (ENE–WSW orientation, niche graves, catacomb like inclined shaft type grave, the most often deposited sheep offerings was a silverside (indicated by sacrum and sacral vertebrae), pottery was places beside the head, burial with sheep-skin).

The archeological material of the northern part was intensive changed by the internal and external impulses. At the same time in the southern part of the territory in the poor cemeteries was a lot of without finding graves (for example Vrbas-ciglana Polet (Srb)), other cemeteries were plundered (Bačka Topola-Bankert, Klanica (Srb)). The development of the southern area was behind northern region. The new objects (hair clips, round and rectangular belt mounts, saber, moderately wide bow, etc.) well-known.

Behind the changes in the third and fourth phases were several reasons, one of these was a climate-change at the end of the 7th century.

**Phase 5: 710/720–730/750.** The last phase of colonization of the territory between Danube and Tisza Rivers, in the southeastern corner of territory (Šajkaška, Srb) smaller communities colonized (Map 50/4).

At the beginning of the 8th century archeological material has been streamlined. The northern part of territory peacefully evolved, but the southern part was backward.

**Phase 6: 730/750–826.** Around the middle of the 8th century in the Late Avar archeological material of territory between Danube and Tisza Rivers the inner boundary was extended. At the northern west corner of territory some new richer cemeteries was opened (Budapest-Népstadion, Wekerle-telep, Tatárszent-györgy-Szabadréptuszta, Üllés-Disznójárás, Kunpeszér, Kunadacs-Turupuli tanya and Homokmégy-Halom, etc.). In this different representation was found: gold and gilt bronze earrings with a bead pendant, box-brooches, late antique type beads necklaces and the mount belts were gilding.

In other parts of territory also concentration of Byzantine objects is held: Szeged region (Szeged-Kundomb, Kiskundorozsma-Daruhalom I and II cemetery, Kiskundorozsma-Kettőshatár, etc.) and southern region (Čelarevo (Srb), Bački Maglić (Srb)).

The separated six chronological horizons in this territory can be synchronized with the phases of the Tiszafüred cemetery separated by Eva Garam. Two differences are highlighted. In the fourth phase (8th century) Éva Garam appearance of a new composed of several branches Eastern origin ethnic group assumed. This is no trace of the territory between Danube and Tisza Rivers. In his opinion in the Tiszafüred cemetery the ornamental plant mount belts was appeared in the fifth phase (at the end of 8th century/at the beginning of the 9th century). This change in material of the territory between Danube and Tisza Rivers was occurred in the middle of the 8th century.

The colonization-model of territory between Danube and Tisza Rivers is not definitive. The subsequent investigation of burial customs and archeological material, the comparison with Avar Khaganate’s other areas, and the Eastern relationship systematic exploration of the archeological finds can be changed in this picture.
Map 30. The colonization of the territory between Danube and Tisza rivers
Papers of the dissertation topic


