

Armament and Society in the Mirror of the Avar Archaeology The Transdanubia-Phenomenon Revisited

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Abstract

One of the most significant problems of the Avar archaeology is the question of Germanic (mainly Gepidic) continuity in Transdanubia. In my paper I would like to make some comments on the so-called Transdanubia-phenomenon of the Early Avar Carpathian Basin based on the analysis of weapon-combinations found in six cemeteries of Eastern Transdanubia. I intend to answer the following questions: 1. How far the weapon-combinations of the East-Transdanubian cemeteries of the early Avar Period (568-650) are identical or similar to the general picture of Avar armament drawn by contemporary cemeteries? 2. Are the weapon-combinations or armament of these cemeteries similar to that of the earlier Gepidic and Langobardic sites from the early 6th centuries or to the contemporary Germanic (Alemannic, Frank or Bavarian) cemeteries of the present-day Germany?

As a result, the early Avar cemeteries of Transdanubia are characterized by the relatively high number of close-combat weapons compared to other sites of the Avar Khaganate. However, comparing to Merovingian sites the burials containing only close-combat weapons are very low and in most of the cases the weapon-combinations characteristic to this culture is missing.

1. Introduction – the idea of Transdanubian Germanic continuity in the Avar Archaeology.

One of the most significant problems of the Avar archaeology is the question of Germanic (mainly Gepidic) continuity in Transdanubia. According to some theories Transdanubia (the former Pannonia province) was populated by Germanic¹ and/or

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¹ For the Gepidic continuity of Transsylvania: (Kovács 1913; Kovács 1915.); their interpretation: (Bóna 1978, pp. 123–170.; Bóna 1986, pp. 162–164.; Horedt 1985, pp. 164–168.; HARHOIU 2001, pp. 110–120.; Bârză – Harhoiu 2008, pp. 513–578.), for Transdanubia: Kiss 1979b, pp. 185–191, Kiss 1987b, pp. 203–278.; Kiss 1992, pp. 35–134.; Kiss 1999/2000, pp. 359–365, Kiss 1996, and Kiss 2001, for its critique Bálint 1995, pp. 309–310.; for the Germanic elements of pottery: Vida 1999a.), reconstructions of garment, such as belt-pendant (Vida 1996, pp. 107–112.; Vida 1999/2000, pp. 367–377.), for amulet capsulae (Vida 1995, pp. 221–295.) and for the hairpins of Merovingian origin (Vida 1999b, pp. 563–574.)