

THE PREFEUDAL CEMETERY OF NOȘLAC (VIth — VIIth CENTURIES)

The archaeological researches which went on in different localities ranging along the Mureș valley, repeatedly demonstrated that during the far past the terraces of this valley were intensely and uninterruptedly inhabited. This fact is confirmed by archaeological researches carried out in the course of the years 1960 and 1961, at various points within the area of the Noșlac village (Aiud district, Cluj region). The village is situated on the left bank of the Mureș river, at about 6 km eastwards of Ocna Mureșului, where, on such occasions, several old settlements and graveyards were uncovered.

There is a particular interest in the prefeudal settlements and cemeteries, which on such a limited territory as this, show an astonishing continuity of life between the IVth and the XIIth centuries. It is also worth remembering that mentions of the Noșlac village are met in medieval documents as soon as the XIIIth century. The intensity of the life which went on during the Antiquity on the terraces within the area of the Noșlac village can be explained on the one hand by the neighbourhood of the Ocna Mureșului salt-pits, and on the other, by the geographical and strategic position of these terraces, all the more so as the confluence of the Mureș and the Arieș rivers is found within the same area. These circumstances, to which the possibility of land-tilling or stock breeding must be added, played an important part in the development and extension of the human settlements, during certain periods: it is then easy to understand why on such a limited territory great and lasting settlements or cemeteries are found.

The object of the present study is however only the pre-medieval cemetery, from the VIth—VIIth centuries. Although the uncovering of the graveyard is only at its beginnings, we feel it is both necessary and useful to show in a preliminary study the main results obtained up to now, since the rich materials discovered, and the observations concerning the funeral ritual, etc., already generate some historical problems of a peculiar importance, worth stressing and discussing by the historians who are interested in that period.

The prefeudal cemetery of the VIth—VIIth centuries is seated on the first terrace of the Mureș river, in the western part of Noșlac. Researches up to now show that the cemetery covers a surface whose length exceeds 300 m. The 80 graves uncovered up to now are placed in almost parallel files, from one end of the graveyard to the other. For the time being, only ten files of graves

were recorded. Owing to the unusually — for that epoch — great surface occupied by the cemetery, the pits of the graves cut the culture levels of some earlier settlements (the Petrești culture, the Hallstatt A₁, Latène II and the level of the IVth century), originally lying on the same terrace. In its turn, this cemetery of the VIth—VIIth centuries is superimposed by two settlements, one of the IXth—Xth centuries, and the other of the XIth—XIIth centuries, both extending along the northern border of the terrace (the Mureș flowed then just past it, while nowadays its bed is at about 1 km more to the north).

The funeral rite. The 80 graves examined as yet are exclusively inhumed interments. As a whole, they present a series of peculiar features, common to the lot, but some exceptions were also signalled. A trait common to all graves is their setting in nearly regular files, at constant intervals of 2 m, while the distance between the graves varies from 1 to 3 m (fig. 1/1,3). Another general characteristic: the dead were lain down on their back and directed westwards — eastwards. The little deviations registered in their orientation were caused by the different seasons at which the burials took place. The only grave (G. 34) where the dead was reclining on one side, in a contracted position, is of a later date as resulting from the recorded observations it superposing the pit of a grave of the VIth century (fig. 3/4). As for the graves' direction, the graves of the horses are an exception, because, though inserted among the human graves' files (fig. 1/4), they are always directed eastwards — westwards¹. A third characteristic trait, which can be considered a general one, because it was noticed with most graves, is the great depth, 1.30—2 m, at which the dead were buried. Only the children's and horses' corpses were buried at smaller depths (0.60—1 m). All the pits of the graves are rectangular, with slightly rounded corners; those which were deeper were formed by two steps. The first step of the grave had a larger opening as the culture layer, of a black or dark grey earth, 0.60—1 m thick, was easily dug; the second step is narrower (0.50—0.70 m), because the pit goes deeper in the yellow clay, much more compact and therefore more difficult to dig. For the grown-ups, the graves are 2 to 2.20 m long. The yellow soil, mixed with the black earth, allows the registering of the pits at different depths (0.40—0.80 m). Naturally, the children's graves and the double graves are of a different size. As yet, three double interments of grown-ups were recorded (G. 32, G. 33, G. 64), and three instances of superposed burials (G. 34 over G. 35, G. 42 over G. 43 and G. 73 over G. 74). Coming back to the position of the dead in their graves, it must be remarked that generally the arms are stretched along the body; the palms are placed on, but chiefly under the basin (fig. 1/1—3, 3/2—3). There are however instances when either the left arm, or the right one, is slightly bent from the elbow, and the palm (very seldom both palms) is placed on the abdomen (fig. 3/1).

The funeral goods. Most graves have only poor funeral goods; only about 10% are better provided. The objects most frequently met, and which are seen

¹ The horse skeleton in G. 57 is that of a four years stallion. Judging by the conformation and size of its head, it is of a Mongol type (*Equus Przewalski*), measuring about 135—175 cm. The horse osteologic material from this cemetery is being

studied by Petru Mecea and Ștefan Pap, lecturers at the «Dr. Petru Groza» Agronomical Institute at Cluj, whom we are glad to thank again for the help and information they kindly gave us.

on nearly each skeleton, be it that of a man, a woman or a child, are the belt buckles (fig. 2/34–40; fig. 4/2, 3, 6, 14) and the iron knives, which sometimes

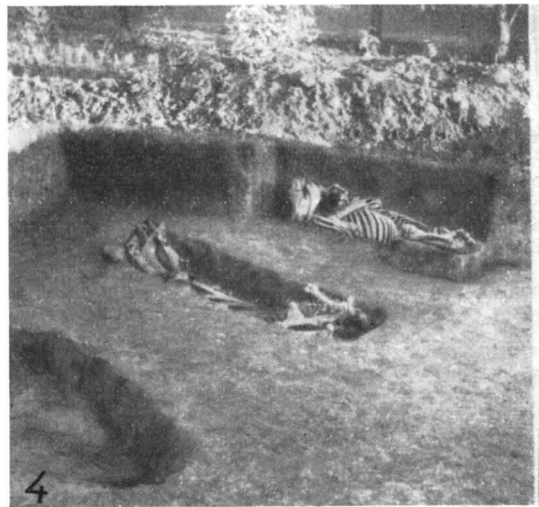


Fig. 1. — The prefeudal cemetery of Noșlac. 1, G. 1–4; 2, G. 13; 3, G. 30 and 29; 4, G. 66 and 65.

have their wooden sheath set in iron plates too (fig. 4/7). In a great many of graves, near the dead's head, on the right or on the left side, clay vessels were placed as offerings (fig. 1/1–3; fig. 3/3–4). The only exceptions are grave 29, where the

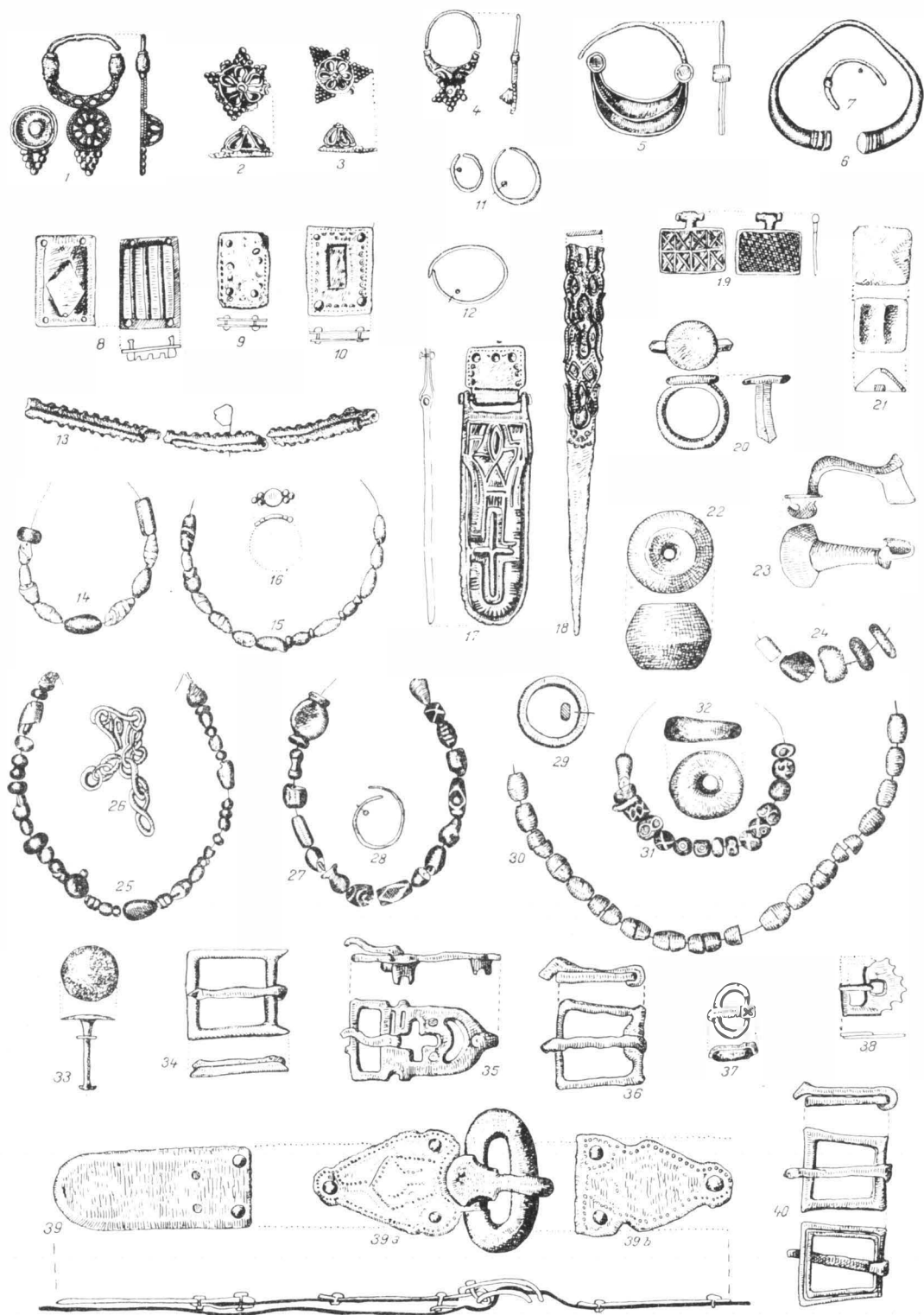


Fig. 2. — Bronze, silver and lead objects; beads of paste, glass and amber found in the Noșlac cemetery: 1, 30, G. 13; 2, 3, 5, G. 67; 4, 12, 14, G. 73; 6, 9, 31, 32, G. 27; 7, 15, 16, 19, G. 60; 8, 37, G. 49; 10, 17, 18, G. 18; 11, G. 45; 20, 22, 26, G. 7; 21, 23, G. 6; 29, 35, G. 10; 25, 27, 28, G. 62; 13, 24, G. 39; 33, 39 a-b, G. 17; 34, G. 69; 36, 40, G. 12; 38, G. 48.

vase is placed at the dead's feet, and grave 46, in which the vase was found near the left elbow (fig. 3/2). 28 entire vases were found until now, either handmade or with the aid of the potter's wheel (fig. 5–7); in these graves, near the dead's head, little wooden pails were placed, with iron or bronze hoops (fig. 1/2). In

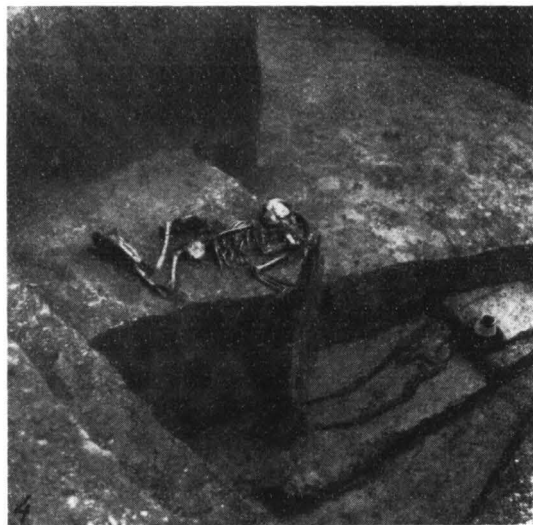
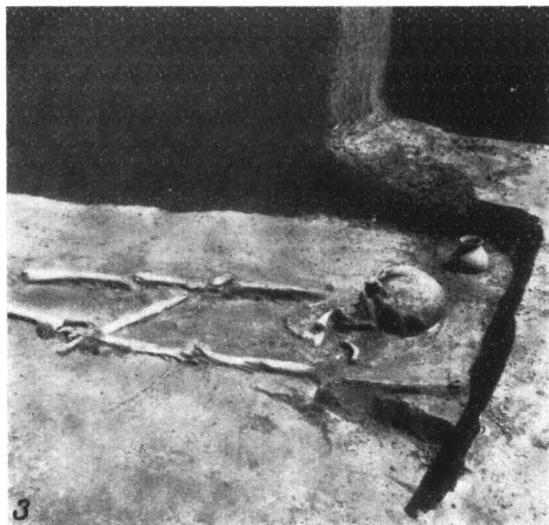
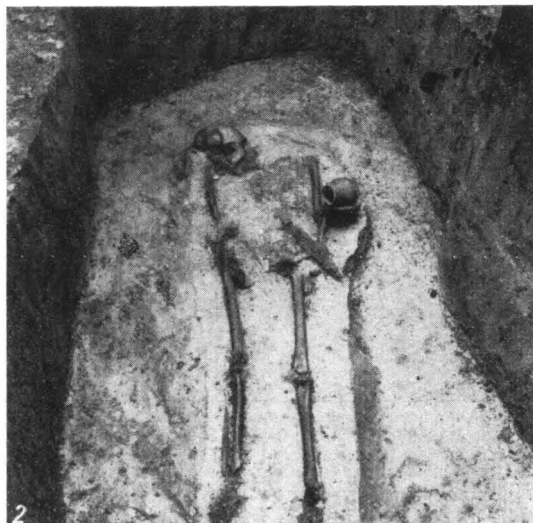
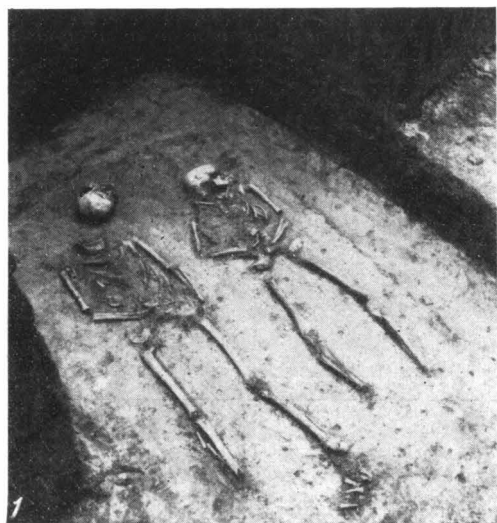


Fig. 3. — The prefeudal cemetery of Noșlac: 1, G. 32 a – b; 2, G. 46; 3, G. 25; 4, G. 34 and 35.

twelve man graves traces of a large girdle, made out of a broad strap, on which 2–4 belt clasps were riveted, either simple or accompanied by variously-shaped iron, bronze or silver plates. In some graves iron, bronze or gilt silver belt tags were found (fig. 2/17, 39); the strap portion between the buckle and the tag was sometimes enhanced by silver or gilt silver ornamental plates of different shapes (fig. 2/8–10). Arms are rather numerous: five swords (fig. 4/17); one sabre,

nine daggers (fig. 4/16), one battle axe (fig. 4/8), three spear-points (fig. 4/11 – 12), and, in six graves, arrow-heads of various forms. No bone blades or other remains of bows or arrow-bags were uncovered as yet. Similarly, no iron shield-spike was found.

Tools are scarce: two scissors (fig. 4/4), one rasp for the skins' tanning (fig 4/5). Among the grave goods there were too: a sandstone whetstone, some pincers (fig. 4/15), iron clamps from the coffins (fig. 4/1) and eight pieces of iron for striking fire of different forms, which usually are accompanied by flint blades. In three human graves, at the feet of the dead, an iron bit (fig. 4/13) was deposited; and a horse skeleton (G. 11) had a bit with lateral bars, one axe, two stirrups and two great buckles from the saddle girth (fig. 4/9–10). The adornment objects are both numerous and various. The most frequent are the head necklaces and the ear-rings. The beads are made either of thin barrel-shaped silver plates (fig. 2/30), or of glass, amber or coloured or enamelled paste (fig. 2/14, 15, 24, 25, 27, 31). The beads' form, size and colour are different from one grave to another, but most are of Byzantine fabric. Large leaden (fig. 2/32) or burnt clay beads (fig. 2/22) were found too. The ear-rings, varying in form and size, are made of bronze or of silver. The plainest are cut out of a bronze wire, sometimes with knots in bold relief (fig. 2/7, 11, 12, 28); the most refined have intricate shapes, enhanced by various filigree patterns (fig. 2/1–5). A hair ring was uncovered too, with funnel-like thickening ends, as well as a gilt-bronze pin, richly and elegantly ornamented (fig. 2/18). The men wore bilateral bone combs of unusual dimensions (18–22 cm), while the women's combs were smaller in size (10–12 cm). The rings, plain, are either of bronze, with a circular bezel, flanked on each side by three granules (fig. 2/16), or of lead, with unornamented bezel (fig. 2/20). Beside the rectangular plates adorning the straps, other plates were found, cut out of thin silver sheets with trefoiled borders; while the scabbard of a sword was enhanced by two pyramid-shaped plates (fig. 2/21). Certain long leaden tube-like objects, with notched borders, seem to have been applied on the clothes. In some graves little bronze chains were found (fig. 2/26), on which hung various leaden pendants (fig. 2/19); elsewhere, bronze rivets or nails of undefined use (fig. 2/33) were uncovered. In other graves the wooden sheath of a knife was fitted with variously-shaped bronze plates. Contemporary fibulae and bracelets are entirely lacking. The two bronze fibulae found up to now (fig. 2/23) are of Roman fabric and reached the graves only by accident, just as the Heliogabal coin (218–222) found in G. 44.

TYPOLOGICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING

A good many of the grave goods brought to light in the Noşlac prefeudal cemetery have analogies neither on the territory of Transylvania, nor in the more or less neighbouring regions. This could be accounted for by the peculiar features of some finds, but chiefly by the small number of contemporary cemeteries searched up to now. On the contrary, for some objects, especially for those which were imported, perfect and well dated analogies can be found. The arms, being rather numerous, show that the population which used them was an independent

one. In four graves (G. 6, G. 17, G. 21, G. 43), entire iron swords were discovered, placed either on the left or right side of the body. G. 49 being ransacked by the construction of a hut in the IXth–Xth centuries, only traces of a sword's scabbard were left there. An edged sabre with the point slightly arched to the outside was found in G. 12. Typologically, the four entire swords of Noșlac are derived from the late Roman or Sarmatian swords, whose evolution can be surveyed during the whole early prefeudal period². The nearest contemporary analogies for these objects we know of, come from the Merovingean cemeteries³; it must however be noted that among the Noșlac swords no one shows the mid-rib for the blood thrickling. The hilt's plates were exclusively wooden, without guard and metallic pommel. The scabbard and the sword's butt were made of wood and once only (G. 6) the scabbard was adorned with pyramidal plates of bronze. The absence of the mid-rib, of the guard and of the metal pommel of the hilt, as well as the whole fabric of the Noșlac swords prompt us to suppose they were manufactured in some local workshops, but following foreign models. The sword in G. 12 represents an eastern type, brought in the Carpathians – Danubian region by the Avars, in whose graves it chiefly is found⁴.

The spear-points discovered until now belong to three different types: the first type has a flat blade, larger at its basis and oval in section. The cylindrical shafting tube is proportional in its length to the blade. The nearest parallels to it are the items found in the graves of the early Hun or Avar period⁵.

The second type has a leaf-shaped blade, oval in section, with a long cylindrical shafting tube. The third type has a massive blade, (rhombic in section), which is growing thicker towards the shafting tube, equally cylindrical, but shorter⁶, so that this arm could rather be taken for a spear.

The daggers are for the most part single-edged, with a straight and thick back⁷. The handles' plates and the sheath are of wood; in two cases the sheath

² P. Reinecke, in «Germania», 14, 1930, p. 3 sqq.; J. Werner, *Beiträge zur Archaeologie des Attila-Reiches*, München, 1956, p. 38 sqq.; Idem, in «Germania», 34, 1956, p. 156 sqq.; I. Bóna, in *AE*, 1961, p. 198 sqq.; Idem, in «Alba Regia», I, 1960, p. 167 sqq.; Idem, in *ActaArch*, VII, 1956, p. 203 sqq.; M. Párducz, in *AE*, VII–IX, 1946–1948, p. 301 sqq.; Idem, in *ActaArch*, XI, 1959, p. 368 sqq.

³ M. Roska, in «Germania», 18, 1934, p. 123 sqq., fig. 4; I. Bóna, in *ActaArch*, VII, 1956, p. 203 sqq., fig. 16, pl. XXX, XXXIX; J. Werner, *Münzdatierte austrasische Grabfunde*, Leipzig, 1935, p. 58 sqq., pl. XXV/31, pl. XXVI/1, pl. XXVII/A, pl. XXXI/4 a; G. Behrens, *Die Bad-Nauheim Gegend in Urzeit und Frühgeschichte*, Bad-Nauheim, 1939, p. 16 sqq., figs. 62, 74, 80; W. Šmid, «Jahrb. f. Alt.», I, 1907, p. 58 sqq., fig. 9.

⁴ J. Hampel, *Altertümer des frühen Mittelalters in Ungarn*, I, p. 197, II, pp. 367, 481, III, pl. 276/18, 278/11; J. Eisner, *Devinska Nova Ves*, Bratislava, 1952, p., 182, 399, pl. 89/1; K. Horedt,

Contribuții la istoria Transilvaniei, sec III–XI, Bucharest, 1958, p. 72, fig. 17/3. For the Avar sword, cf. D. Csallány in *FoliaArch* I–II, 1939, p. 134 sqq.; Gy. Lázsló, in *ArchHung*, XXXIV, 1955, p. 232 sqq.

⁵ J. Werner, *Beiträge...* p. 56, pl. 40/4; M. Párducz, in *ActaArch*, XI, 1959, p. 370 sqq., fig. 6/88 and pl. XVII/2. D. Csallány, in *AE*, 80, 1953, p. 134 and 137, pl. XXI/6; I. Kovrig, in *ActaArch*, VI, 1955, p. 164, pl. IV/3–5; Z. Vinski, «*Opuscula Archaeologica*», III, 1958, p. 13, pl. V.

⁶ I. Bóna, in *ActaArch*, VII, 1956, p. 205, fig. 16/1; K. Horedt, *Untersuchungen zur Frühgeschichte Siebenbürgens*, Bukarest, 1958, p. 90, fig. 8/12; Idem, *Contribuții...*, p. 72; I. Kovrig, *op. cit.*, pl. III/4,5.

⁷ J. Hampel, *op. cit.*, I, p. 94 sqq., figs. 127, 129; Gy. Lázsló in *DolgSzeded*, XVI, 1940, p. 145 sqq., pl. XXIII; Idem, in *AE*, 1941, p. 194 sqq.; I. Korek, in *DolgSzeded*, XIX, 1943, p. 112; J. Eisner, *op. cit.*, p. 399 sqq.

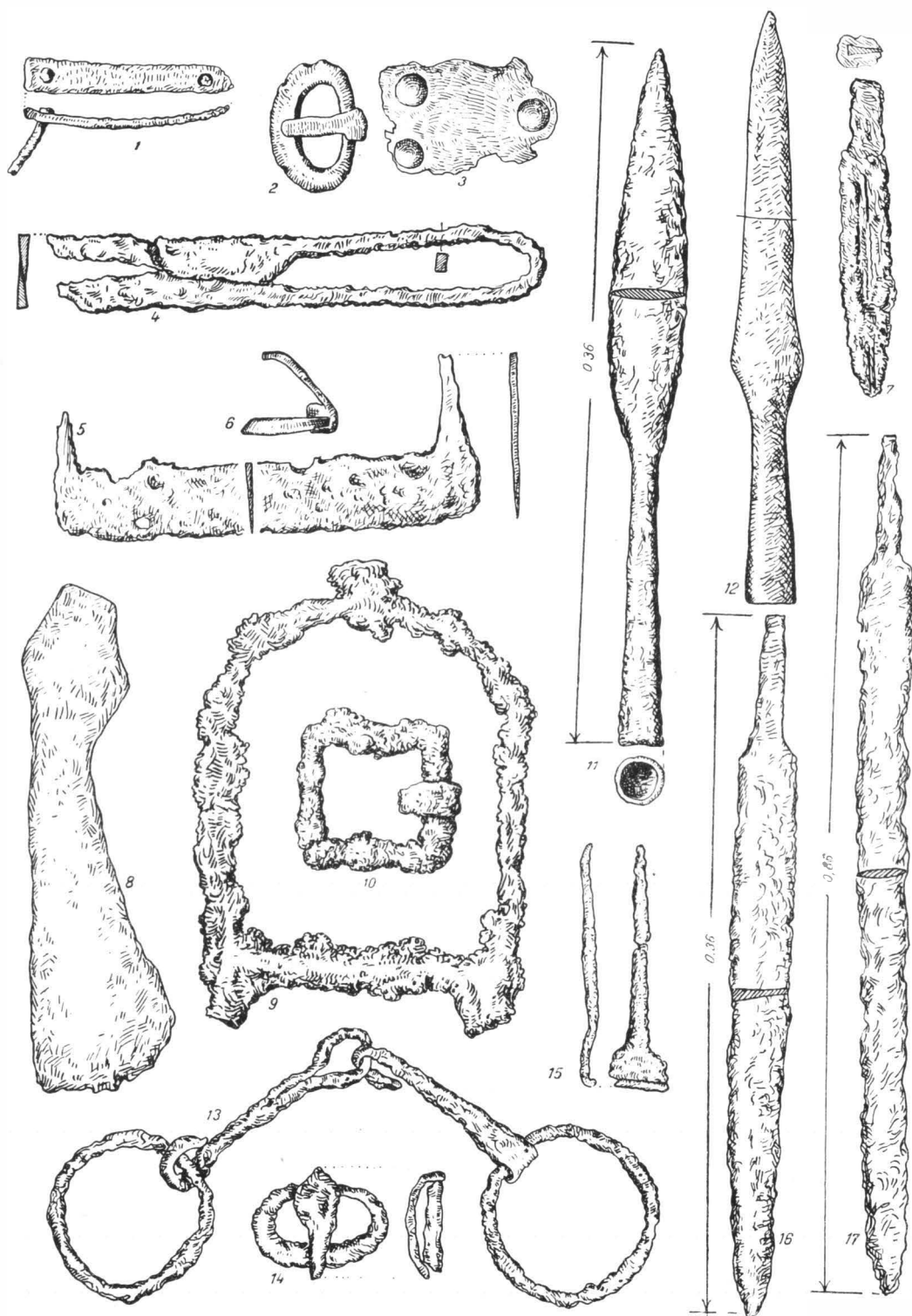


Fig. 4. — Iron objects from the Noșlac graves: 1, G. 17; 2, 3, 12, G. 6; 4, 15, G. 33 d; 6, G. 2; 5, G. 39; 7, G. 67; 8, 9, 10, G. 11; 11, G. 16; 16, G. 25; 13, 17, G. 21; 14, G. 27.

was lined with iron plates. A double-edged dagger was found too, whose handle ended in a metal link, like the Sarmatian swords ⁸.

The arrow-points belong to three types: the first type has a flat, leaf-shaped blade, with cylindrical shafting-tube. For the second type the point is ended by two little wings joining at an angle; the shafting-tube is equally cylindrical. The third type has a three-edged blade, whose massive, final part is sharpened so as to be stuck into the wooden rod of the arrow proper. Usually, all these three types are found together, as funeral goods of the same grave. It must be mentioned, this being a less usual case, that an arrow-head was equally found in a youth's grave (G. 15). From the chronological point of view, all the recorded types were used during a long period, which extended over several centuries, without being however characteristic of one population alone ⁹.

The battle axe, with blunted back, found on the right shoulder blade of the horse in G. 11, has its nearest analogies in the similar axes from the Avar and Slav cemeteries ¹⁰.

The harness pieces are few, but characteristic: the bits, for instance, belong to two different types. The first type has the bit proper made out of two iron rods with a joint in the middle; their ends are provided with rings to which the bridle was tied. The three bits of this type were placed at the dead's feet, in the human graves (G. 21, G. 27, G. 41). The second type shows on the external side of the bit two holes through which passed, on the one side the lateral cylindrical bar («cheekpiece»), with a hole or a little ear in the middle, and on the other the external ring to which the rein was tied. Both types, but especially the second, which is obviously of an eastern origin, were widely spread and for a long time in use ¹¹.

The stirrups are oblong with an arched upper part; the horizontal stirrup-iron on which the foot reposed is curved towards the interior, and bent upwards, so as to form at its basis two prominences with downward points. The loop through which the stirrup-leather passed is square-shaped. Such type of stirrups, and the large, rectangular buckles of the saddle's girth are frequent in the Avar cemeteries ¹².

⁸ J. Hampel, *op. cit.*, II, p. 631; M. Párducz, in *ActaArch*, VII, 1956, p. 158, pl. XX/2–5; I. T. Dragomir in «*Materiale*», V, 1959, p. 480, fig. 6/1–2.

⁹ J. Hampel, *op. cit.*, I, p. 169 sqq., figs. 355, 357, 426–427; J. Werner, *Beiträge...*, p. 49; Heinrich Sevin, *Die Gebiden*, München, 1955, p. 123, fig. 85; I. Bóna, in *ActaArch*, VII, 1956, p. 206 sqq.; K. Horedt, *Untersuchungen...*, p. 83, fig. 28/6–11; M. Párducz, in *ActaArch*, XI/1959, p. 370.

¹⁰ J. Hampel *op. cit.*, I, 85, fig. 97–98; J. Eisner, «*Slavia Antiqua*», I, 1948, p. 389, figs 8/13, 9/1; Idem, *Devinska Nova Ves*, p. 401, pl. 60/7, 64/2. D. Csallány, in *AÉ*, 80, 1953, p. 138, pl. XXXI/5. K. Horedt, *Contribuții...*, p. 72, figs 11/6, 17/7–8.

¹¹ J. Hampel, *op. cit.*, I, p. 243, figs 574–578; A. E. Alihova, in *KS*, XXIX, 1949, p. 76 sqq., fig. 14/14; V. F. Gening, in *KS*, LII, 1953, p. 95 sqq., fig. 35/9; I. A. Lunegov, in *KS*, 57, 1955, p. 128,

fig. 48/6. K. Horedt, *Contribuții...*, p. 76, figs 9/6, 10/4,5, 14/8, 19/1; V. A. Kuznetsov, V. K. Pudovin, in *SA*, 1961, p. 87, fig. 2; I. Bóna, in *AÉ*, 1961, p. 198 (with the corresponding references). The bridle bit, with two holes at the ends is derived from the Cymmerians; and up to the prefeudal age it did not undergo substantial changes, except in the form of the lateral rods («cheekpieces»). Cf. A. A. Iessen, in *SA*, XVIII, 1953, p. 52 sqq., fig. 2/1 (type I), J. Hampel, *op. cit.*, I, p. 245 sqq., fig. 582–602; B. A. Rybakov, in *KS*, XXXV, 1950, p. 11 sqq., fig. 3; N. I. Merpert, in *KS*, XXXVI, 1951, p. 14 sqq., figs 2/74, 110; P. F. Jherikov, in *KS*, XLVII, 1952, p. 79, fig. 29/3; J. Eisner, *op. cit.*, p. 402; D. Csallány, in *AÉ*, 1953, p. 138, pl. XXXI/7–11; I. Kovrig, *op. cit.*, p. 178 sqq., pl. III/3–8; K. Horedt, *Contribuții...*, p. 76, fig. 11/1 and 17/6; M. F. Zhiganov, in *SA*, 1961, 4, p. 170, fig. 8/2–3.

¹² J. Hampel, *op. cit.*, I, p. 228 sqq., fig. 254–257; J. Korek, in *DolgSzeged*, X^{IX}, 1943, p. 96 sqq.,

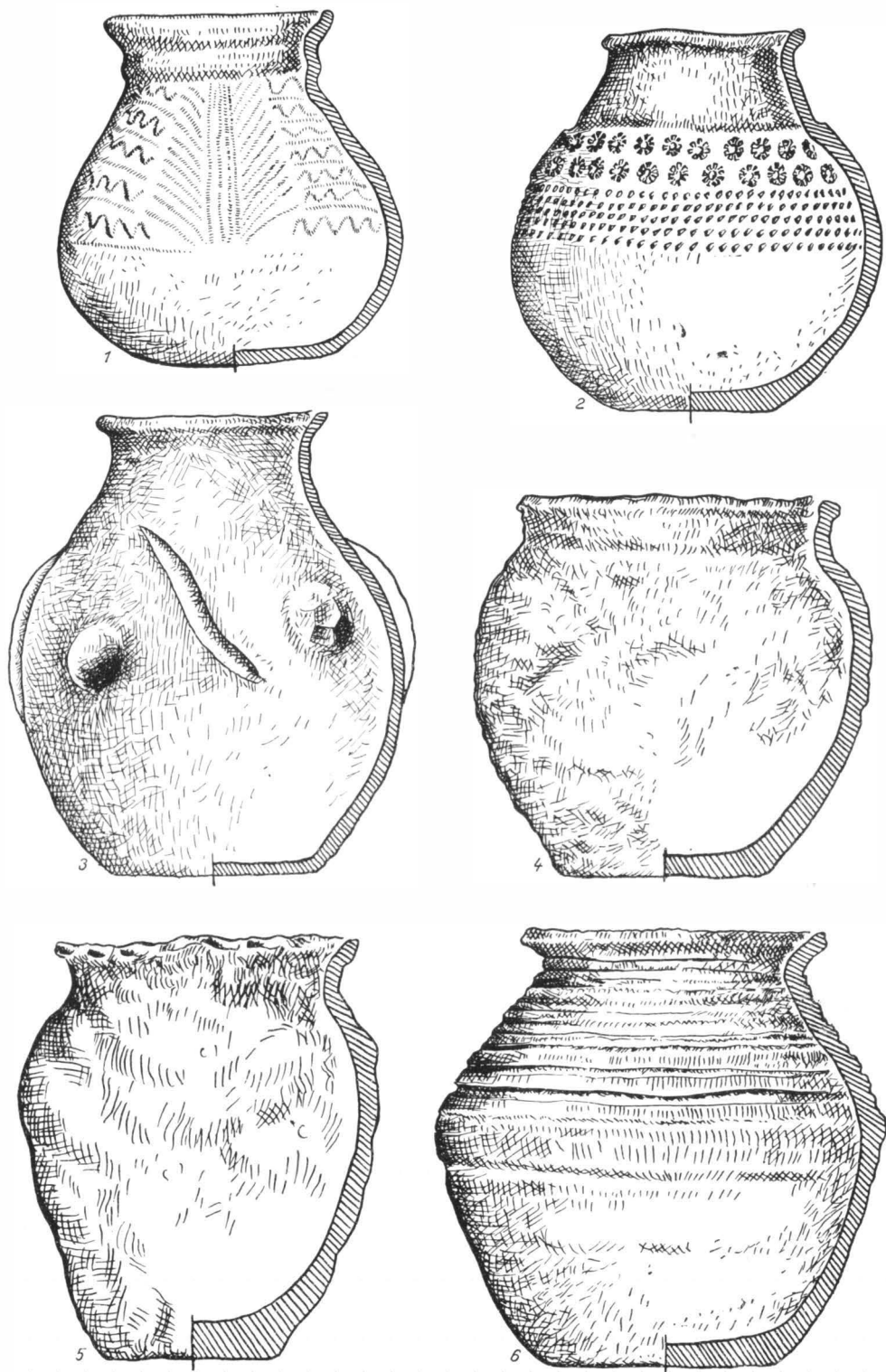


Fig. 5. — Clay vases from the prefeudal cemetery of Noșlac: 1, G. 46; 2, G. 18; 3, G. 28; 4, G. 19; 5, G. 40; 6, G. 58.

The production tools are few and cannot give a clear idea of the principal occupation of the people buried at Noșlac. The scissors, for instance, could have a manifold use; the iron pieces and flint too, besides their usual purpose, could help to the lighting of the torches in the salt-rocks, and so on. The eight iron pieces are differently shaped¹³, but they were always accompanied by flint blades. The rasp for the skins' tanning is attested in the contemporary cemeteries of Transylvania and in other cemeteries more or less remote, as well¹⁴. The knives, as stated before, are present in nearly all graves, they being, as it seems, an attribute of the free people¹⁵. Notwithstanding their great number, typological differences among them cannot be established, all being single-edged, with straight back. The handle's plates are without exception wooden. Occasionally, the wooden sheath of the knife was lined with thin iron plates.

Naturally, the usual grave furniture consists in adornment objects, which are equally seen on nearly all men, women or children. The most frequent are the belt buckles which, made of iron, bronze or silver, show various shapes and types, out of which we shall mention only the most characteristic ones. The most numerous are the plain belt-buckles of a semi-oval form, with the tag thicker at its basis, or shield-shaped, and with a point curving like a parrot's beak (fig. 4/6, 14). Certain buckles are accompanied on either side by variously shaped iron or bronze plates, sometimes beautifully decorated (fig. 2/39 a–b; fig. 4/2–3); these were fixed to the belt by three or four joints, generally with bulging or semi-spherical heads. This type of buckle is found only in graves of the seventh century of our era¹⁶. Other buckles are rectangular¹⁷ (fig. 2/34, 36, 40), or with a half-circular plate with cogged edge (fig. 2/38). Occasionally the plate or plates of the clasps are two-fold and bear each from two to six joints which fixed them to the belt. Finally, worth mentioning too is the buckle of Byzantine type, whose bulky, cast plate is adorned with a crescent and an open-worked cross, or with incised circles (fig. 2/35); according to J. Werner¹⁸ it must be dated of preference in the second half of the VIth century.

pl. VI, pl. XV/71–72, pl. XXII/17–18; K. Horedt, *Contribuții...*, p. 72 sqq., fig. 11/2–3, figs 18/1–3, 6–7.

¹³ J. Hampel, *op. cit.*, I, p. 111, figs 192–194, 196; Gy. Török, in *Dolgszeged*, XII, 1936, p. 105, pl. XLVI/404, LIX/177 and 367, LV/220; I. Korek, *op. cit.*, p. 112; J. Eisner, *op. cit.*, p. 401; K. Horedt, *Contribuții...*, p. 70, figs 16/3, 9, 10.

¹⁴ St. Kovács, in *DolgCluj*, IV, 1913, p. 298, fig. 21/1, p. 302, fig. 23 a, p. 304, fig. 26; J. Werner, *Münzdatierte Grabfunde*, p. 86, pl. 8/11; G. Behrens, *op. cit.*, p. 16, fig. 68.

¹⁵ V. Hrubý, *Staré Mešto*, Prague, 1955, p. 362; I. Borkowsky, «*Slavia Antiqua*», V, 1954–1956, p. 367.

¹⁶ J. Hampel, *op. cit.*, I, p. 291, fig. 719; St. Kovács, *op. cit.*, p. 284 sqq., fig. 15/2–7, p. 315, fig. 35/4, p. 329, fig. 51/1,3; M. Roska, in «*Germania*», XVIII, 1934, p. 123 sqq., fig. 3/C 1, fig. 4/A 4; N. Åberg, *Die Goten und Langobarden in*

Italien, Upsala, 1923, p. 103 sqq.; L. de Campi, in *JÖAI*, XII, 1909, Beiblatt, p. 125 sqq., fig. 94; J. Werner, *Münzdatierte Grabfunde*, p. 41 and 55, pl. 6/C and 31/8; G. Behrens, *op. cit.*, fig. 75 and 80/10; J. Eisner, *op. cit.*, p. 398, pl. 20/2.

¹⁷ J. Hampel, *op. cit.*, I, p. 287 sqq., figs 679–681, 706; III, pl. 175/16–19. Such belt-buckles are frequent chiefly in the Avar cemeteries of the VIIth century; towards the end of the same century and in the next one a plain bronze plate is added to them, or a cast plate, decorated with various vegetal patterns; cf. J. Hampel, *op. cit.*; I, figs 699, 702, 733, 1558, 1681, 1685, 1687.

¹⁸ I. Werner, in «*Kölner Jahrb.*», 1955, p. 39 ss., p. 45 ss., fig. 6 and pl. 8/6–11; D. Csallány, in «*ActaAnt*», X, 1962, p. 55 sqq. For other belt-buckles belonging to this type and discovered on the Rumanian territory, let us mention those of Histria and Dinogetia: cf. Em. Condurachi and co-workers, in «*Materiale*», VII, p. 260, fig. 25 b.



Fig. 6. — Clay vases from the prefeudal cemetery of Noșlac: 1, G. 64 a; 2, G. 53; 3, G. 26; 4, G. 23; 5, G. 29; 6, G. 52.

The belt tags are simple-shaped ¹⁹ (fig. 2/39), and only one, the item discovered in G. 18, made of cast and afterwards gilt silver, is decorated with various geometrical patterns, typically Byzantine, framing a long-branched cross (fig. 2/17). In the space between the buckle and its tag, the belt is sometimes decorated with applied ornaments consisting in their silver plates, either rectangular or trefoil-edged, enhanced by incised points or crescents. On three items (fig. 2/10), in a rectangular frame thin golden leaves were inserted, coming most likely from a special type of crosses, made of thin golden plates, which were sewn on the garments ²⁰. Other decorative plates are massive, being equally of cast and gilt silver. This time their decoration consists of plain parallel grooves (fig. 2/8). Such plates were fixed on the belt by means of four points of a thin silver plate. The tubular ornaments made of a thin leaden plate with notched borders (fig. 2/13), found in G. 39, seem to have been sewn on the garments ²¹. In G. 7, on the left hand of the skeleton a little bronze chain was hanging ²² (fig. 2/26), with a leaden rectangular pendant at one end; in other graves were found, equally hanging on the left arm, a great leaden bead (fig. 2/32), or other rectangular leaden

¹⁹ J. Hampel, *op. cit.*, I, p. 282 sqq., fig. 655; St. Kovács, p. 318 fig. 38/4, p. 326, fig. 45/1; M. Roska, in «Germania», 18, 1934, p. 125 sqq., fig. 2/8 and 3/8; N. Åberg, *op. cit.*, p. 120 sqq., p. 128 sqq.; J. Werner, *Münzdatierte Grabfunde*, p. 54 sqq.; pl. 21/16–19. Concerning the controversies about the Avar strap tags, cf. D. Csallány, in *Folia Arch.*, I–II, 1939, p. 141 sqq.; I. Korek, *op. cit.*, p. 101 sqq.; N. Fettich, in *ArchHung*, XXXI, 1951, p. 115, 135 sqq., p. 173; Gy. László, in *ArchHung*, XXXIV, 1955, p. 220 sqq., p. 252 sqq.

²⁰ The idea that such thin golden foils could come from the gold-plate crosses was suggested by K. Horedt. As for their diffusion area, datation, etc., cf. Luigi de Campi, in *JÖAI*, XII, 1909, p. 122 and 134 sqq., fig. 101; N. Åberg, *op. cit.*, p. 87 sqq.; J. Werner, *Münzdatierte Grabfunde*, p. 40 sqq.; *Idem*, *Fernhandel und Naturalwirtschaft im östlichen Merowingerreich nach archaeologischen und numismatischen Zeugnissen*, in «Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo», VIII, Split, 1961, p. 577, sqq., p. 696 sqq., fig. 3; *Idem*, in *42BerRGK*, 1961 p. 319 n. 18 fig. 3; E. Schaffran, *Die Kunst der Langobarden in Italien*, Jena, 1941, p. 123 sqq., pl. 25/a–b, 53/b, 54/c. We believe, the golden foils inlaid on the Noşlac and Band plates came from the segments resulting at the manufacturing of such rolled crosses, because these were made through the rolling of a *solidus*. After the rolling, the resulting disk was cut in cross-form (without or with a circle in the middle). The four segments left could find manifold uses, among which the ornamentation of the above-mentioned plates. Occasionally, the whole surface of the disk was decorated with punches, as can be deduced

by the interrupted ornamental patterns, seen on some crosses (N. Åberg, *op. cit.*, fig. 144/1–5); but it seems that on other items the cross alone was punched (cf. N. Åberg, *op. cit.*, fig. 144/6–8; E. Schaffran, *op. cit.*, pl. 52/a, 53/b), while the segments remained from such crosses were unornamented. The large diffusion of these crosses with the Germanic populations (Langobards, Alamans), then only recently – in respect to the Romanic one – turned to christianity, seems to depend on some religious ritual purpose, which partly replaced the pagan custom of laying down a coin for Charon; this is the only explanation we can find for their use *ad hoc*, suggested by J. Werner (*Fernhandel...*, p. 577, note 18). On the other hand, it is just as likely for such crosses to have been manufactured by the Romanic population even outside the urban centres reckoned by J. Werner (*loc. cit.*), as by the Germanic population: otherwise, it would be difficult to explain the source of the golden foils used on the Noşlac and Band plates. In favour of the existence of local workshops or wandering workers plead on the one hand the tools of a silversmith found in the grave X from Band (Stefan Kovács, *op. cit.*, p. 284 sqq.), and on the other hand the moulds from Felnac, Corund and Dumbrăvioara (J. Hampel, *op. cit.* p. 392 sqq.; K. Horedt, *Contribuții...*, p. 95), which are dated just to about the VIIth century.

²¹ J. Hampel, in *AE*, XX, 1900, p. 107, fig. 34 a–d.

²² J. Hampel, *A régibb középkor emlékei Magyarhonban*, II, Budapest, 1897, p. 443, pl. CCXCIX/3; F. Nopcsa, in *WMBH*, XII, 1912, p. 194, fig. 67.

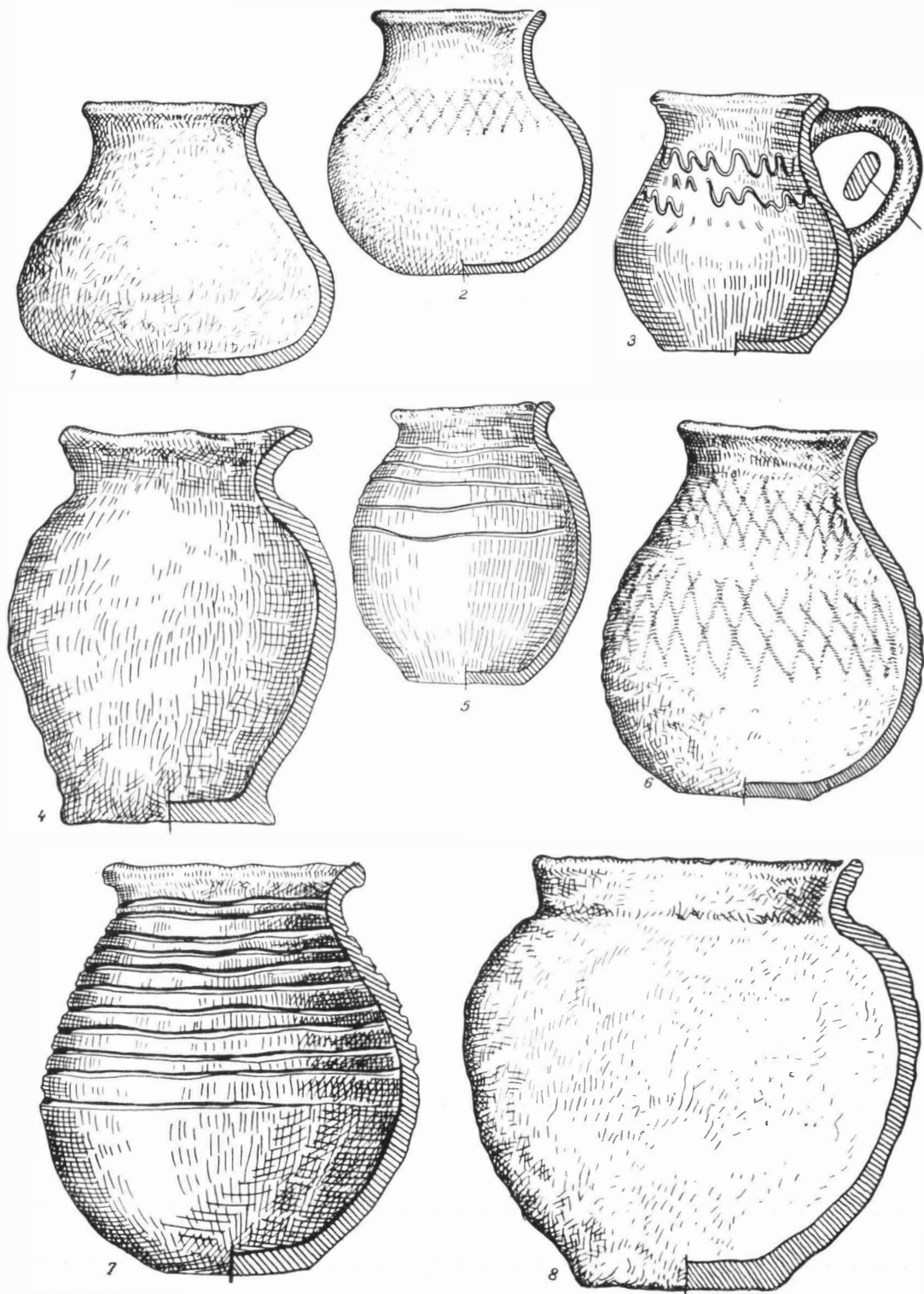


Fig. 7. — Clay vases from the prefeudal cemetery of Noșlac: 1, G. 36; 2, G. 25; 3, G. 8; 4, G. 3; 5, G. 9; 6, G. 30; 7, G. 7; 8, G. 17.

pendants, decorated on both sides with crossing lines forming a net-like ornament with rhombic loops, or two files of rectangles filled with reclining crosses (fig. 2/19).

As for the rings, only two were discovered: one of lead, with circular bezel without ornaments (fig. 2/20); the other, of cast bronze, with circular bezel too, but having on both sides a triangle²³ made of granules (fig. 2/16).

The ear-rings, cut out of a plain bronze or silver wire (fig. 2/7, 11, 12, 28) are not particularly interesting from the typological or the chronological point of view, as they are not characteristic of a given period. One type of ear-ring alone is of a peculiar interest; this is the ear-ring found in G. 32 b, which, although made out of a plain bronze wire, has one spiral-coiled end, like those at Vereșmort and Gimbaș²⁴ and represents the prototype of the hair-rings with S-like end. On the other hand, the ear-rings of a more intricate form, and chiefly the crescent-shaped and the star-shaped ones, by the analogies with the assured dates they reveal, help us to the dating of the Noșlac cemetery. These ear-rings usually consist of three distinct parts. The first part is represented by the plain bronze or silver wire, that is by the loop which passed through the ear, one of whose ends is thinned, while the other is joined to the second part. Generally, this second part is a thin bronze or silver crescent-shaped plate, with thicker, either cylindrical or barrel-shaped extremities. The third part, soldered to the crescent, is of a semi-spheric shape; on its borders three or five triangles made of granules are placed, thus rendering a star image. The crescent as well as the semi-sphere are enhanced by various decorative patterns, such as filigree rosettes, eight-shaped ornaments, etc. (fig. 2/1–3), while the triangles forming the star ornament or other motives are made of granules. The ear-rings of such technique are of Byzantine fabric and must be dated chiefly to about the first half of the VIIth century and only a few items go as far as the end of that same century²⁵. On the contrary, the ear-rings of the same form, but cast in the technique of the pseudo-granulation, begin to be in use as soon as the second half of the VIIth century and are still to be found up to the Xth century²⁶. The ear-ring discovered in G. 73 (partially superimposed to the pit of G. 74) belongs to this last group (fig. 2/4); its nearest analogies are found in the Avar cemeteries of Gimbaș, Teiuș and Cîmpia Turzii²⁷ where, as they were accompanied by human-masked fibulae, on the one hand,

²³ J. Hampel, *Régibb középkor*, I, p. 58, pl. LV/4; II, p. 366, pl. CCXL/11; A. N. Bernstein, in *KS*, XXVIII, 1949, p. 59, fig. 5; K. Horedt, *Contribuții...*, p. 81, fig. 16/13.

²⁴ M. Roska, in «*Germania*», 18, 1934, p. 126, fig. 3/1–4; P. Reinecke, in «*Germania*», p. 219; K. Horedt, *Contribuții...*, p. 83, fig. 16/21.

²⁵ A. Alföldi, in *ESA*, IX, 1934, p. 294 sqq., Márkiné Poll Katalin, in *AE*, XLVII, 1934, p. 56 sqq., fig. 61/1–4; I. Welkov, in «*Germania*», XIX, 1935, p. 153 and 157, pl. 17/2,6; I. Nestor, C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor, in «*Germania*», 22, 1938, p. 40, pl. 8; N. Fettich, in *ArchHung*, XXXI, 1951, p. 109 sqq., pl. III, and p. 115 sqq., pl. X; Z. Vinski, «*Starohrvatska prosvjeta*», III/2, 1952,

p. 53, sqq.; Idem, in «*Glasnik-Sarajevo*», 1955, p. 237 sqq.; Idem, in «*Opuscula Archaeologica*», III, 1958, p. 51.

²⁶ D. T. Berezovets, *KSIA-Kiev*, 1952, p. 109 sqq., pl. II–III; M. I. Braitchevsky, *KSIA-Kiev*, VII, 1952, p. 161 sqq., fig. 2, pl. I–II; M. I. Braitchevsky and D. T. Berezovets, in *KS*, 53, 1954, p. 23 sqq., fig. 13; Z. Vinski, «*Starohrvatska prosvjeta*», p. 29 sqq., K. Horedt, *Contribuții...*, p. 81, nota 4.

²⁷ K. Horedt, *Contribuții...*, p. 94 sqq., fig. 12/2, 3, 18, 19, fig. 15/1–4, fig. 16/16–17. To these must be added two ear-rings from Moigrad (in the Museum of Zalău, unpublished as yet).

and by early cast pieces with vegetal ornaments, on the other, they can certainly be dated in the second half of the VIIth century, or, eventually at the beginning of the VIIIth century. The crescent-shaped ear-rings of the type found in G. 67 (fig. 2/5) are rather sporadically met, and they mostly date from the second half of the VIIth century. Owing to their form and processing technique, they represent the prototype of the ear-ring discovered in the Slav cemeteries of the IXth and Xth centuries²⁸.

The hair rings with thickened, funnel-like ends (fig. 2/6) — among which some were wrongly believed to be bracelets — were widely spread, but most of them are dated to about the end of the VIth century and the beginning of the VIIth century²⁹.

Beads were found especially in the northern part of the cemetery, where nearly all women's graves contain a necklace of coloured paste beads, sometimes enamelled, or of glass or amber beads, or again of thin silver barrel-shaped plates (fig. 1/14, 15, 24, 25, 27, 30, 31). For the most part these beads are of Byzantine fabric, being, in the Noşlac cemetery as well as in other more or less distant cemeteries, imported wares³⁰.

The ceramic may be divided into two great groups, the hand-made pottery, and that one, for which the potter's wheel was used. The hand-made vessels are generally jars, with lip slightly everted to the outside and a more or less bulging body (fig. 5/4—5; fig. 7/4, 8). The only ornament which sometimes adorns them are the finger-tip made files of alveoles, on the lip's rim. The paste, with impurities, contains, as detergent, pounded potsherds, sand or tiny gravel. Being unsufficiently burnt, the vases are very brittle. By their form and fabric these vases resemble those of the Prague type; or the similar ones from the Avar cemeteries³¹, but, at the same time, they show certain peculiarities which must be explained by their being manufactured in local workshops.

The potter's wheel-made pottery may equally be classed into two distinct categories. The first category groups variously-shaped vases of a fine light-grey paste, but still very incompletely burnt (fig. 5/3, 6/1, 2, 6). It seems they were from the first meant to be offering vases, as, owing to their very porous walls, they could not be of a daily use. The majority have no ornaments at all; some of them,

²⁸ P. Traeger, in *ZfE*, 1902, p. 60, fig. 8; Fr. Nopcsa, *op. cit.*, p. 195, figs. 71—73. Concerning other grave goods found in the same cemetery, and their date, cf. P. Traeger, in *ZfE*, 1900, p. 43 sqq.; Idem, in *ZfE*, 1901 p. 44; Fr. Nopcsa, *op. cit.*, p. 190 sqq.; L. Ognenova, in *Studia in honorem acad. D. Dečev*, Sofia, 1958, p. 340 sqq. About the similar ear-rings of the IXth—Xth centuries, cf. V. Hrubý, *op. cit.*, p. 354 sqq.; A. Dankanits-St. Ferenczi, in « *Materiale* », VI, 1959, p. 607 sqq.; St. Ferenczi, *Probleme de muzeografie*, 1960, p. 246 sqq. (with the corresponding references).

²⁹ N. Åberg, *Ostpreussen in der Völkerwanderungszeit*, Upsala, 1919, p. 133, fig. 185; A. Marosi, in *MKE*, II, 1908, p. 45, fig. 6; Márkiné Poll Katalin, in *AE*, 1934, p. 56 sqq., fig. 61/9 and 62; Gy.

László, in *Dolgszeged*, XVI, 1940, p. 148, pl. XXI/11—12; N. Fettich, in *ArchHung*, XXXI, 1951, p. 166, pl. XIII/2—3, pl. XXXII/10; K. Horedt, *Contribuții...*, p. 81, fig. 13/10, 13—14.

³⁰ J. Hampel, *op. cit.*, I, p. 460 sqq., figs. 1463, 1465, 1478, 1481, 1483, 1486; III, pl. 73/24, 78/10, 91/4, 137/13—21, 179/32—47; J. Eisner, *op. cit.*, p. 397 sqq., pl. 75—76. K. Horedt, *Contribuții...*, p. 83, figs. 15/5—7; 16/7, 14, 18.

³¹ Concerning discussions about this type of ceramics found on the Rumanian territory, cf. I. Nestor, in *SCIV*, X, 1, 1959, p. 51 sqq.; M. Comşa, in *SCIV*, X, 1, 1959, p. 65 sqq.; M. Matei, in *SCIV*, X, 2, 1959, p. 428 sqq.; J. Werner, in « *Germania* », 38, 1960, p. 114 sqq. (with the corresponding references).

however, are decorated with different lusted patterns, such as wavy or parallel crossing lines, forming a rhombic-looped net-like ornament, etc. Only the vase found in grave 28 had on its body applied semi-spherical buttons inserted between bits of a relief girdle, placed aslant on the maximum diameter of the vase (fig. 5/3). Some vases in that category were better burnt, so that the light-grey, or dark-grey, or yellowish slip and the lusted patterns are better preserved (fig. 5/1, IV/1, 3); other vessels show incised wavy lines (fig. 7/3). To the same group belong the two vases adorned with different stamped patterns (fig. 5/2, fig. 6/2). All vases in this category have a flat, cut-off bottom.

In the second category there are listed the vases made of a rough paste, mingled with much sand, but very well burnt. Some of them are decorated with deeply incised lines (fig. 5/6, fig. 6/6), which, although made spiral-like during the turning of the vase on the wheel, sometimes give the impression of being parallel (fig. 6/4–5, fig. 7/5–7). The lip has a complicate and varied section; the bottom of the vase is always cut off and ringless. This group generally contains the kitchen vessels of daily use, very frequent in the settlements contemporary to the Noșlac cemetery (Morești, Iernut – Sf. Gheorghe, Noșlac, Vereșmort, etc.).

Before passing to the analogies to be found for the vases in the Noșlac cemetery, we think it necessary to give here a short analysis of the principal phases in the evolution of the prefeudal ceramics of Transylvania, during the IVth–VIIth centuries. As could be expected, the ceramics of the IVth century have deep roots in the Roman provincial pottery, regarding both the form of the vases, and their fabric or decoration technique: often, in the settlements and in the cemeteries as well, vessels are brought to light which clearly show the continuity of the traditions inherited from the precedent centuries. Gradually, however, certain forms, or some ornamental patterns, or details, were abandoned, so that at the end of the IVth and at the beginning of the Vth centuries a predilection for certain pottery forms, such as handleless vases or vases deprived of the ringed bottom makes itself felt. Between the second half of the Vth century and the last decades of the VIIth century, in the settlements as well as in the cemeteries the favourites are certain types of vases which, although represented by numerous variants, are in fact limited to only a few forms, always with cut off and flat bottom (jars, piriform vases, cups, the dishes, the bowls and the food vessels being almost entirely absent). Certain scholars ascribe these ceramics to the Gepids, – who would have inhabited and possessed the territory of Transylvania – without, however, being able to explain whence the Gepids could have brought such ceramics and what are the forms from which they were derived. As a matter of fact, the transformation and evolution of the early prefeudal pottery in the Carpathians – Danubian region is much more complex than it was generally believed, and the part of the German populations much smaller than it was asserted. Earlier researches as well as the recent ones³² prove more and more evidently that the overwhelming role in the creation and spreading of the

³² B. Mitrea, in *Istoria României*, I, Bucharest, 1960, p. 637 sqq., fig. 155–157; M. Pârducz, in *ArchHung*, XXX, 1950, pl. CXXXVIII/11, 14; CXXX/24, CXXXVI/20, CXXXIX/22, CXL/1, 14,

21; Idem, in *ActaArch*, XI, p. 333 sqq.; K. Horedt, *Untersuchungen...*, p. 103 sqq., fig. 27; Idem, in *Istoria României*, I, p. 711 sqq., fig. 177.

prefeudal pottery had been played mostly by the local Roman or late Dacian — Sarmatian population, to this must be added the influences of the new populations which dwelt in this country during a longer or shorter period of time (the Allans, Huns, Goths, Gepids, etc.). Owing to its characteristic features and to the milieu where it is brought out, the pottery of the Vth and the VIth centuries, discovered in the huts of the settlements from Morești, Cipău, Florești, Soporul de Cîmpie ³³, etc., in Transylvania, or that of Dămăroaia, Militari, Ciurel ³⁴, etc., in Wallachia, can be ascribed to no other but the Romanic autochthonous population. The dwellings of the Vth and VIth centuries and those of the VIIth century are small, poor huts (without a furnace or a hearth), characteristic of the local population. Only the huts uncovered at Iernut — Sfintu Gheorghe are a little more spacious and better furnished, they having in a corner a rudimentary furnace made of riverstone. The pottery found in these huts is obviously a continuation of the vessels of the Morești type, so that it cannot be ascribed but to the local population, the more so as over such huts a level of surface dwellings is superposed, containing ceramics of Slavo-Avar fabric, of the VIIth — VIIIth centuries. Yet, a certain Germanic influence in the pottery uncovered in the Noșlac and Band cemeteries cannot be denied: this can be detected in the more or less biconical form of the vases, or in the decoration using stamped patterns, so frequent in the Merovingean cemeteries ³⁵. However, that influence is so faint, that we rather incline to consider it a characteristic trait of that period. The same meaning may be given to the presence of the hand-made vases of the Prague type, generally ascribed to the early western Slavs, just as the presence of some piriform vases, of which the origin must be looked for in the East ³⁶.

The vases decorated with various stamped patterns bring about certain more complex problems, which for the time being cannot be solved. Really, in older Germanic ³⁷ or Merovingean cemeteries, many stamped vases were discovered, but they essentially differ from the vases found in the Langobard and Avar cemeteries of the Hungarian People's Republic or of Transylvania, both in the shape of the vases on which such patterns were applied, and in the technique or the manner of execution. For instance, in the Frank, etc., cemeteries, the stamped vases have for the most part a biconical form, while their paste and fabric are generally clumsy enough, in the making as well as in the stamping ³⁸. On the

³³ K. Horedt, *Untersuchungen...*, p. 88 sqq.; Idem, *Contribuții*, p. 51 sqq.

³⁴ D. V. Rosetti, in «Germania», 18, 1934, p. 211 sqq., fig. 5/1—4 and fig. 6; J. Werner, *Reinecke Festschrift*, Mainz, 1950, p. 171. The pottery coming from the Militari and Ciurel settlements is unpublished as yet. It is our colleague Vl. Zirra who kindly gave us the information concerning this material.

³⁵ J. Neustupný, «Slavia Antiqua», I, 1948, p. 397 sqq., figs. 12—20, 29—34 (with the adjacent bibliography); I. Bóna, in *ArchHung*, VII, 1956, p. 200 sqq. (with the corresponding references).

³⁶ E. Beninger, *Der westgotisch-alanische Zug nach Mitteleuropa*, Leipzig, 1931, p. 124, fig. 31; V. A. Kuznetsov-V. K. Pudovín, in *SA*, 1961/2,

p. 90 sqq., fig. 6; K. F. Smirnov, in *KS*, XXXVII, 1951, p. 155 sqq., fig. 49/1; Idem, in *KS*, XLV, 1952, p. 89 sqq., fig. 34/14; M. I. Biasmitsina, *KSIA-Kiev*, VIII, 1953, p. 64 sqq., figs. 3/1, 2, 4, fig. 4/2; I. T. Kruglikova, in *MIA*, 33, 1954, p. 96 sqq., pl. II/21, 29, 42, 43, pl. III/33—35; J. Hampel, *op. cit.*, I, p. 138, fig. 229—230; II, p. 783 sqq., pl. 462—463

³⁷ F. Tischler, in 35. *BerRGK*, 1954, p. 41 sqq., p. 76 sqq., fig. 27 (with the corresponding references).

³⁸ J. Werner, *Münzdatierte Grabfunde*, p. 41 sqq., pl. IX/9, pl. 11/14, pl. 13/12, pl. 28/15, B 8; I. Neustupný, *loc. cit.*; F. Tischler, *loc. cit.*

contrary, the vases coming from the Carpathians — Danubian region are made out of a fine, well-burnt paste, and their form is an elegant one, with rounded belly and cut off or flat bottom. Likewise, the stamps are well made, they being applied at regular intervals and forming different harmonious decorative patterns³⁹. All these traits testify to the existence of local potters' workshops, with a long and rich experience in the making of vases of good quality. This fact is made even clearer by the vases decorated with various patterns of lustrated lines, so frequent in the settlements and the cemeteries of that region, from the Latène period and up to the VIIth century. The whole ornamental repertory based on lustrated lines constantly appears on the local pottery during several centuries, so that it is quite unnecessary to resort to certain foreign influences (Germanic, for instance), in order to explain its presence on the vases of the VIth — VIIth centuries.

To come back to the stamped vases, we admit that a Germanic influence could be admitted concerning to the reviving of the method of decorating the vases by stamping them (this method so widely spread during the IInd and IIIrd centuries in the ancient Danubian provinces), because this could explain the hiatus of two or three centuries, ascertained in this region in the use of this method of decoration. It is not impossible, however, that such a reviving could have come from another culture centre, namely from the Byzance, where we find the same sealed pattern applied for instance on the silver necklace of Zalesie⁴⁰.

To be sure, only a more detailed and more enlarged analysis of the ceramics coming from the Noșlac and Band cemeteries, or of the corresponding pottery from the contemporary settlements of Transylvania could reach definitive conclusions concerning their ethnical origin. Notwithstanding, based on the above stated premises (deep roots in the precedent centuries, characteristic traits, etc.), as well as on historical facts that we shall examine hereunder, we think we are justified to believe that the maker and the bearer of that pottery was the Romanic autochthonous population and not, for instance, the Gepids, as some authors asserted and even now still would have it⁴¹. On the other hand, more meaningful seems to us the absence of clay vessels, or their replacement by little wooden pails⁴², fitted with bronze or iron hoops, as stated in the graves found in the northern side of the Noșlac cemetery. The association of these small pails with the star-shaped ear-rings, the rapier having a slightly curved point, the stirrups, the bit with cylindrical lateral bars, or the presence of entire horses buried in separate graves (among which G. 57 is of Mongol type), but invested in the file of human graves, undoubtedly denote the presence of a foreign population of horsemen, which was either tolerated, or co-habited with the local population forming the basic kernel, and which buried its dead at the northern limit of the cemetery. A somewhat similar fact is ascertained at Bandul de Cîmpie too, where in certain graves horse bones and harness ornaments made of compressed bronze plates were found.

³⁹ J. Hampel, *op. cit.*, I, p. 134 sqq. figs 291, 292, 299, 300; T. Horváth, in *ArchHung*, XIX, 1935, p. 90 sqq., pl. XLVI/3; I. Bóna, in *ActaArch*, VII, p. 200 sqq., pl. XLII/4, pl. LIV/5–7.

⁴⁰ N. Fettich, in *ArchHung*, XXXI, p. 11 sqq., pl. VI/1; J. Hampel, *op. cit.*, I, fig. 292; I. Bóna, *op. cit.*, pl. LIV/5–6.

⁴¹ St. Kovács, *op. cit.*, p. 429; M. Roska, *op. cit.*, p. 130; K. Horedt, *Untersuchungen...*, p. 83 sqq., p. 103 sqq.; Idem, *Contribuții...*, p. 53.

⁴² J. Eisner, *op. cit.*, p. 401 sqq.; concerning their continued use during the next centuries, cf. M. Šolle, in *PA*, 1959/ 2, p. 468 sqq.

On the whole, taking into account the archaeological goods found in the Noşlac cemetery, and the surely dated analogies they have (the older pieces are dated to about the second half of the VIth century, and the most recent to the last decades of the VIIth century), to which must be added the considerable area of the cemetery and the great number of graves (according to our reckoning, there are at least more than 1000 still uncovered graves), we think that the cemetery had to be in use especially between the years 570 and 680. This datation we propose with the utmost circumspection, as future researches may furnish new elements which could oblige us either to give a more remote date to the beginnings of the cemetery or to protract its end.

General remarks. The limited researches allow us as yet only to set forth the principal historical, economical and ethnical problems raised by the finds in the Noşlac prefeudal cemetery of the VIth and VIIth centuries. As said before, these finds show a whole series of peculiarities, among which we shall record only the most important:

- a) The unusual great stretching of the cemetery.
- b) The different fabric and great variety of forms of the clay pottery.
- c) The presence, in nearly all graves, of iron belt buckles and knives.
- d) The presence, in twelve men graves, of a belt of large strap, which was fastened by means of two to four clasps, sometimes flanked by bronze or iron plates of different forms.
- e) The bilateral bone combs of unusual sizes (18–22 cm), worn by men.
- f) The quantitatively great number of war arms: swords, daggers, axes, spear-heads and arrow-points.
- g) The presence of many imported wares of Byzantine fabric, among which also some with a Christian character.
- h) The burial of entire horses in separate graves, but inserted in the file of human graves.
- i) The complete absence of fibulae, bracelets and necklaces contemporary to the cemetery, as well as of spikes from the shields, or of bone plates from the bows, or of remains from the arrow bags.

These peculiarities somehow isolate the Noşlac cemetery from all the other contemporary cemeteries of Transylvania, distinguishing it at the same time from the Gepid, Langobard, Avar, Slav, etc., cemeteries of the more or less distant regions.

Before analysing these peculiarities, we deem it necessary to examine the arguments which would plead for the ascribing of the Noşlac cemetery to a Germanic population. This, because certain scholars who studied the cemeteries of Bandul de Cîmpie and Vereşmort (with which the Noşlac cemetery has some traits in common), have already declared themselves in favour of a Gepid origin. This attribution could seem at first sight the most natural, as it could be admitted that an islet of Gepids might have endured there even after the destruction of that population by the Avars and the Langobards. Or, it would seem likely easy to suppose that a Langobard group, after they had conquered that territory of the Gepids, did not leave for Italy with the others, but, being interested in the salt-

pits exploitation, remained in Transylvania and finally merged in the bulk of the native population. Lastly, it could be supposed that a group of Gepids and Langobards was forced by the Avars to run the salt-mines to the benefit of the last.

Looking deeper into the *pros* and *cons*, we remark that none of these hypotheses can stand a more judicious criticism.

For the hypothesis of a Germanic population in the Band, Vereșmort and Noșlac cemeteries plead certain metal objects found there, which have their nearest analogies in the Gepid and Langobard cemeteries. Such objects are: the golden ring with zoomorphic style, the belt-plates with their golden foils, equally decorated with zoomorphic patterns, certain types of belt clasps flanked by plates of various forms, the iron helmet, all coming from Band; the swords, the spikes, some belt buckles and the iron plates inlaid with silver, from Vereșmort; finally, the swords, certain types of belt buckles, the belt plates similar to those of Band, and the ornamented hair-pin from Noșlac. To all these could be added the four clay vases decorated with stamped patterns, found at Band and Noșlac.

The dentate motive which decorates the golden ring, and its style, as well as the thin golden foils with zoomorphic style from Band were repeatedly discussed, a Germanic origin being denied to them⁴³. As for the Band helmet, it was asserted it came from the Pontic workshops⁴⁴, although its ethnical origin is difficult to ascertain. Concerning the Noșlac and Vereșmort swords, it was above demonstrated, that they are derived from the Roman ones, and that their peculiarities (absence of the mid-rib, etc.) plead for being manufactured rather in the local workshops. Moreover we think that the swords of a particularly careful making, as for instance those of Krainj (Krainburg) or Nocera Umbra⁴⁵, are evidently of Byzantine fabric. The shield spikes and the silver-inlaid iron plates are really frequent, especially in the Germanic cemeteries, so that their presence at Vereșmort could suggest there the presence of a German group, but on the other hand J. Werner admits (with a certain reservation, it is true) that some silver-inlaid iron pieces, as well as the golden or silver plates, etc., could come from the permanent workshops existing in the Italian cities⁴⁶. The Vereșmort plates being of a remarkably skillful make and showing among the inlaid ornaments also some crosses, plead in favour of the hypothesis that they could likewise come from a Byzantine town-shop. The belt buckles placed between plates of different shapes are not known either in the Gepid cemeteries or in the early Langobard cemeteries of Hungary; on the contrary, they are attested in the late Langobard cemeteries of Italy, or in the Gothic cemeteries of Spain, or in the northern region of the Polish P. R.⁴⁷. This type of belt buckles does not seem to have been in use before the year 600; this would explain, on the one hand, their absence from the early Gepid and Langobard cemeteries, but on the other hand it would leave out all possibility for the Gepids and Langobards to have inhabited the Mureș valley before that date (which is also supported by the presence at Vereșmort of the

⁴³ N. Fettich, in *ArchHung*, I, 1926, p. 15 sqq.; Idem, in *ESA*, IX, 1934, p. 308 sqq.; Idem, in *ArchHung*, XXXI, p. 142 sqq.; A. Marosi–N. Fettich, in *ArchHung*, XVIII, 1936, p. 67 sqq.

⁴⁴ J. Werner, *Münzdatierte Grabfunde*, p. 66 sqq.; Paul Post, in 34. *BerRGK*, 1951–1953, p. 134 sqq.

⁴⁵ W. Šmid, *op. cit.*, fig. 9; N. Åberg, *Die Goten*, p. 100 sqq., fig. 157–158.

⁴⁶ J. Werner, *Fernhandel*, p. 697.

⁴⁷ See above the note 16 and N. Åberg, *Ostpreussen*, p. 108 sqq.

silver inlaid plates, equally dating from the VIIth century). As a matter of fact, the belt buckles of this type from Transylvania, besides being typologically different from the above-mentioned ones (Italy, Spain, etc.), show certain technical peculiarities, as for instance the bronze belt buckles joined to the iron plate, the silvered bronze plate and its clumsy decoration, etc., which prove that they were made in some local work-shops. The gilt bronze hair-pin, although it may have certain somehow approaching analogies in the Germanic cemeteries⁴⁸, represents obviously, by its execution and its ornaments characteristically Byzantine, an imported object, as well as the strap tag which was found together with it. As for the sealed vases, we do not think it impossible, as shown before, that an eventual Germanic influence had revived this kind of ornamentation.

Thus, among the «typically Germanic» objects discovered in the cemeteries of Band, Vereşmort and Noşlac, only a few are left, but even these are doubtful: the ring and the golden foils decorated with zoomorphic patterns of the second style, the spikes and eventually the silver-inlaid iron plates. These pieces could have reached the Mureş valley by trade, but it is not impossible that they testify to the existence of a restrained Germanic group (by no means Gepid or Lango-bard, but rather Frank), brought there by the Avars during the first half of the VIIth century, because the Vereşmort cemetery evinces certain Germanic traits.

All the peculiarities already enumerated plead against the assertion that the Noşlac cemetery belonged to a Germanic population.

The considerable area of the cemetery implies for at least a century the presence of a numerous population which exploited and developed the neighbouring salt-mines from Ocna Mureşului. The extraction of salt, a material of great necessity for men and animals, seems to have been the chief occupation of the population; and we can affirm with sufficient certainty that the prefeudal cemetery of Noşlac belonged to the miners who during the VIth and VIIth centuries worked in these salt-mines. The presence of the iron arms and knives is the mark of a free population, probably organized in a village community. The fact that they carried on rafts along the Mureş and Tisa rivers their surplus quantities of salt explains clearly enough the presence of the imported wares found in the cemetery, as, in exchange for their salt they could acquire any wanted objects. The particular economic importance the salt-mines of Transylvania had during the prefeudal period will be better displayed only when future researches will be carried on in the neighbourhood of the even now still working salt-mines.

The burial of the dead in files directed westwards — eastwards, and the presence of objects with a Christian character, allow us to suppose that a part of the dead buried at Noşlac were Christians, who had not, however, abandoned certain pagan rites (the imposition of offering vases near the dead's head, etc.). The large strap belts they wore, never met with any of the migratory populations, seem connected to the basic occupation of the inhabitants: the mining. The Rumanian peasants, who even nowadays still wear a strap belt, usually gird themselves when they must lift heavy loads, in order to prevent hernias. The miners of the salt-pits, who lifted the heavy salt-clods, carried them or loaded them on rafts,

⁴⁸ L. de Campi, *op. cit.*, p. 124 sqq., fig. 92;
D. Csallány, in *AÉ*, 1941, p. 133 sqq., pl. XXXIV/4;

N. Fettich, in *ArchHung*, XXXI, p. 172, pl. XXVII/4.

probably used the strap belts for the same purpose; then, by habit and tradition these remained a part of their clothing. Since for the bilateral combs of such unusual size we know of no example with any migratory population, by exclusion we ascribe them for the time being to the autochthonous population. The pottery, both the hand-and the wheel made one, is indisputably local, by its specific traits, by the style and by the variety of its forms, among which some are deeply rooted in the precedent centuries. The presence of certain hand-made vases resembling the early Slav vases of the Prague type, or of other wheel-made vases, decorated with stamped patterns, similar to the vases from the Germanic or Avar cemeteries, might be accounted for the common traits the ceramics of a certain period presented on a more or less wide area, and, on the other hand, for the co-habitation and the mutual influence of the different populations.

Owing to the peculiarities of the Noșlac cemetery, of the funeral rite or of the archaeological inventory, the population buried in that cemetery can be divided, from the ethnical point of view, into two main groups. The first, including the majority of the graves, may be assigned to the Romanic autochthonous population, which however underwent certain Germanic and Slav-Avar influences. This attribution is supported on the one hand by the above-mentioned peculiarities, and on the other by the historical situation in Transylvania at that time. It is well-known that the Gepids were crushed by the Langobards and the Avars in the year 567 and shortly later (568) the Langobards living in Pannonia left, probably forced by the Avars, or in fear of them, and settled down in northern Italy. The Avars, who were fighting for the conquest of Sirmium, and at the same time were busy on strengthening their domination in the territories newly conquered from the Gepids (the Tisa plain), or in those recently abandoned by the Langobards (the Pannonic plain), seem to have manifested no special interest for Transylvania, until later on. The native population benefited by this precarious situation and organized itself in powerful village communities of the Noșlac type, intensified the exploitation and development of the salt-pits of Ocna Mureșului, or of those in the neighbourhood.

The second group, this time much more restrained, may be perceived at the northern limit of the cemetery, where, instead of the clay vessels deposited at the dead's head, little wooden pails were discovered, and where a new element appears, that is the entire horses buried in separate graves (differing in that from the Avar graves, where the horses were buried in the same grave as their masters). The presence of a new population of horsemen, which buried its dead side by side with the autochthonous population, could be explained by the former's endeavour to seize the mentioned salt-mines, to the prejudice of the natives. The date of their arrival and the ethnical nature of such populations are for the time being difficult to determine. Certain indications could be furnished, on the one hand, by the datation and the imposition of the funeral goods found in some graves at Band, or at Noșlac and at Gimbaș, and, on the other hand, by the written sources which mention the precarious position of the Avar domination in the third decade of the VIIth century⁴⁹. This branch of the Noșlac cemetery could

⁴⁹ W. Tomaschek, *Avars*, in *RE*, II, 1896, p. 2264 sqq.; K. Zeuss, *Die Deutschen und die*

Nachbarstämme, Heidelberg, 1925, p. 716 sqq., p. 734 sqq.; E. Chirilă, *Slavii în izvoarele literare latine*

be ascribed to no Avar or Slav population, because such graves, by their specific funeral rite and grave goods (star-shaped ear-rings, small wooden pails, absence of bone bars from the bows, etc.), essentially differ from the contemporaneous Avar cemeteries proper.

For solving the historical, economic or ethnical problems raised by the prefeudal Noșlac cemetery, long and exhaustive researches about the contemporary cemeteries and settlements of Transylvania are needed. For the time being, the beginnings are promising, and the continuation of the researches on a larger and larger scale will doubtless substantially help to the knowledge of this less studied period of the history of the Rumanian People's Republic.

M. RUSU

și grecești (antice) și bizantine, *Texte culese și traduse* (in the press). For the historical interpretation of these events and of the contemporary archaeological materials, cf. *Die Gepiden*, Leipzig, 1922, p. 152 sqq.; L. Hauptmann, « Byzantion », IV, 1927–1928, p. 137 sqq.; D. Csallány, in *FoliaArch*, I–II, 1939, p. 176 sqq.; Idem, in *ActaArch*, II, 1952, p. 235 sqq.; T. Nagy, in *AÉ*, VII–IX, 1946–1948, p. 202 sqq.; Idem, in *Anthung*, 1948, p. 131 sqq.; E. Fügedi, in *AÉ*, VII–IX, p. 328 sqq.; G. Labuda, « Byzantinoslavica », 1950, p. 137 sqq.;

N. Fettich, in *ArchHung*, XXXI, p. 131 sqq., p. 161 sqq.; Z. Vinski, « *Opuscula Archaeologica* », p. 41 sqq.; H. Preidl, in *JPEK*, XVIII, 1949–1953, p. 15 sqq.; G. Feher, in *ActaArch*, V, 1954, p. 55 sqq.; B. Graffenauer, in *Riassunti delle comunicazioni del X Congresso Internazionale di scienze storiche*, VII, Firenze, 1955, p. 174 sqq.; K. Horedt, *Contribuții*, p. 64 sqq.; M. Macrea in « *Dacia* », N.S., II, 1958, p. 366 sqq.; I. Nestor, in *SCIV*, X, I, 1959, p. 53.