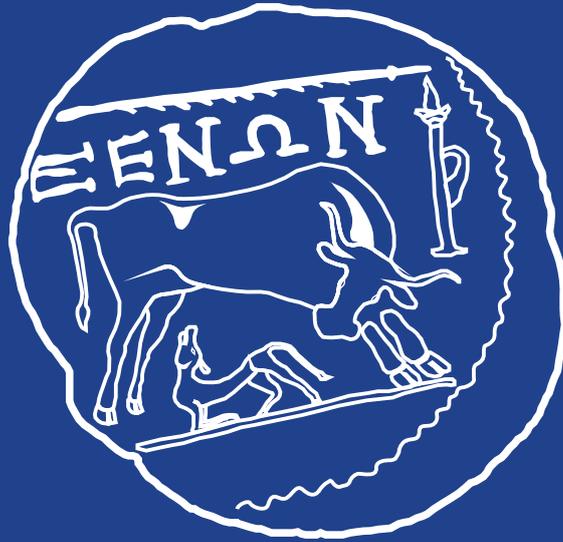


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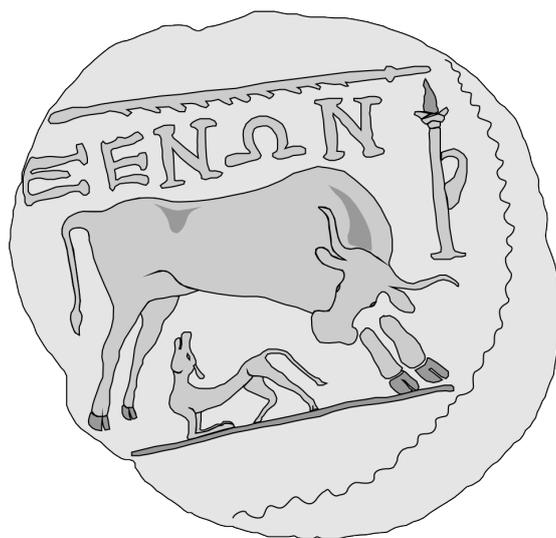
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Cluj-Napoca
2025

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ZIRIDAVA STUDIA ARCHAEOLOGICA

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The content of the papers totally involve the responsibility of the authors.

Layout: Francisc Baja, Florin Mărginean, Victor Sava

DTP: Petru Ureche

ISSN 2392-8786



EDITURA MEGA | www.edituramega.ro

e-mail: mega@edituramega.ro

This volume is dedicated to Florin Draşovean at 70 years

Acest volum este dedicat lui Florin Draşovean cu ocazia împlinirii a 70 de ani



Contents / Cuprins

Laudatio	9
-----------------------	---

Research papers / Studii

Cristian Eduard Ștefan

Vidra Type Axes Revisited: The State of Research Nearly Two Decades Later	17
---	----

Andrei Mărincean

Inside Daub: A Preliminary Study of Burnt Wattle-and-Daub from the Late Bronze Age Site of Sântana-Cetatea Veche	25
---	----

Feraru Remus Mihai

Theos Megas Derzelas, an Enigmatic Deity of Odessos: Cult and Iconographic Representations. A Numismatic and Epigraphic Study	51
--	----

Florin Mărginean, Erwin Gáll

Revised Information on the Early Avar Period Grave from Sânpetru German-Magazin	67
---	----

Călin Cosma

Social and Gender Symbolism of Earrings in the 7th–8th Century Avar Communities of Transylvania	77
---	----

Dan Băcueț-Crișan

Less Discussed Aspects in the Research of Early Medieval Wares from Romania: Purpose, Use, Re-use, and Recycling. Theoretical Interpretations and Archaeological Realities	115
---	-----

Imre Szatmári

The Round Church of Battonya	129
------------------------------------	-----

Augustin Mureșan, Adriana Gașpar

The Fortress of Pomezau (Bihar): History, Heritage and Conservation	153
---	-----

Timea Major-Keresztes

Adornment, Status and Mobility: A Hairpin from Zalău-Valea Miții (Sălaj county) and Its Place in Early Modern Material Culture	179
---	-----

Field reports / Rapoarte asupra cercetărilor de teren

Vlad Murgu, Victor Sava, Ioan Cristian Cireap, Andrei Mărincean

Tehnici de teledetecție și cercetări de suprafață. Contribuții noi la cunoașterea așezărilor din zona Olari, județul Arad 187

Sofia Berteza, Victor Bunoiu, Iulian Leonti, Vyara Stancheva, Andrei Geor-gescu, Răzvan-Ioan Pinca, Bogdan Calotă, Patrik Ostaș, Dragoș Diaconescu, Robin DiPasquale, Ionuț Marteniuc

The Archaeological Excavations at Susani – Grămurada de la Jupani:
Report on the 2025 Field Campaign 233

Victor Sava, Florin Gogâltan, Marian Adrian Lie

Excavations at the Late Bronze Age Mega-Fort at Sântana – *Cetatea Veche*.
The 2018 Field Campaign 243

Ioan Cristian Cireap

Illyrian Drachmas and Late La Tène Iron Items Discovered at Monoroștia – *Dâmbu lui Hârtici*
(Arad County) 385

Cătălin Discă, Iulian Leonti

The Roman Roads South of Berzovia: Some Observations and the Results of New Research 291

György Kerekes, Zoltán Rózsa

Árokos. The Success Story of Identifying an Archaeological Site in Mezöhegyes – Revisited 317

Reviews / Recenzii

Alpár Dobos, Sándor Berecki (Eds.), *The Migration Period Cemetery from Ernei*. Bibliotheca Musei Marisiensis Series Archaeologica XIX. Mega Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2023, ISBN 978-606-020-636-1, 192 pages.
(**Erwin Gáll**) 333

Alpár Dobos, Sándor Berecki (Eds.), *The Migration Period Cemetery from Ernei*. Bibliotheca Musei Marisiensis Series Archaeologica XIX. Mega Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2023, ISBN 978-606-020-636-1, 192 pages

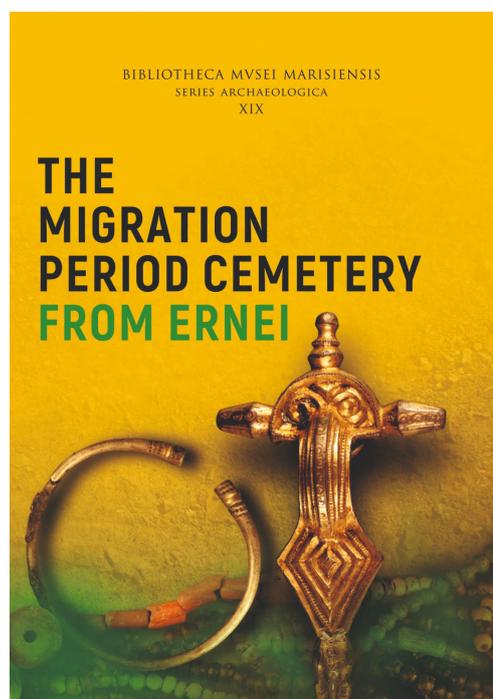
The volume, consisting of seven chapters, begins with an introduction by Ioan Stanciu, followed by the preliminary discussion of the burial site at Ernei (*Introduction*), penned by Sándor Berecki. The chapter examines the area's geomorphology, the features dated to different historical periods identified in the archaeological site excavated in 2015 and proceeds to present the general technical data of the cemetery (grave orientations and depths, accompanied by the general layout). The last part of the chapter (pg. 14–15) lists the sites of the so-called early Migration Period (*phase D*¹): *Ernei-Carieră*, *Sângeorgiu de Mureș-Kerekdomb* (Hunnic date grave, containing horse remains), - *Dealul Bunii*, their microtopography being illustrated at Fig. 5. We believe that this part of the work should have absolutely included beside the presentation of the sites located in this microarea, a discussion of the *resources in the area*, which might explain the presence of the nomads in the region, respectively the connection with northern Moldavia, where one of the most richly furnished Hunnic date grave was discovered and investigated (the *Concești* grave)². Moreover, there are a few small errors in figures, otherwise of very good quality: scale cannot be identified at figures 2, 4 and 5, which, particularly in the case of the latter, hinders very important microregional remarks, like for instance, accurate distance measurements between the previously mentioned cemeteries.

Chapter II (*Catalogue of the graves*) authored by the excavators, presents the catalogue of the seventy graves, their description being clear and logical (pg. 17–41).

In chapter III (*Anthropological analyses*), the distinguished anthropologist Szilárd Sándor Gál was able to analyse a lot of twenty-four skeletal remains yielded by seventy graves, of which 50% were infants. The remainder of the graves were impossible to examine owing to their severe looting and high disturbance (pg. 43–49).

Chapter IV (*Grave reopening*) was authored by the renowned specialist of the Gepidic period and, in particular, the most important Romanian expert on the issue of grave-reopening, Alpár Dobos. The author mentions that in Western Europe³, grave reopening, as a social phenomenon, had diffused once with the emergence of row-grave cemeteries. However, in Transylvania, Dobos notes, the phenomenon may be documented much earlier, as early as mid-fifth century, so that the practice cannot be explained by the emergence phenomenon of row-grave cemeteries. Moreover, the analysis of grave-reopening at Ernei stems from conclusive archaeological data, skilfully analysed and described by the Cluj-based archaeologist.

Chapter V (*Burial customs*) was drafted still by Alpár Dobos. Among burial customs, the author included the structure of the burial site (A), grave orientations, shapes, sizes and depths, the location of the skeletal remains (B), respectively the coffin burials (C). We believe that the cemetery structure



¹ Harhoiu 1998.

² See Harhoiu 1996–1998.

³ On the notion of *Europa Occidentalis* see: Belloc 2012.

is a social feature (family groups) connected only indirectly to burial customs (for such reason, this should have been explained), similarly to grave-reopening, which otherwise should have been part of the same chapter. It is noted that graves are oriented on a W–E direction, which is specific to 5th–6th century cemeteries, termed Gepidic.

Chapter VI (*Analysis of the grave goods*), the most consistent, alike generally in each archaeological investigation, addresses the material culture, which in this volume was divided into five subchapters (pg. 63–106). In the first subchapter (VI.1. *Dress Accessories and Jewellery*), beads were discussed by Alpár Dobos, Márton Ferenczi and Mihály Huba Hőgyes. These were discovered in twenty of the seventy graves, among which five graves, with more than one hundred discovered pieces, stand out (most in grave 43, which contained 429 beads). The internal microtopography of these graves within the burial site seems similarly interesting, as they form a group in the central-western side of the cemetery.

The raw material of which these beads were made (1887 in total) (see Fig. 19) is firstly glass, with only 2% being represented by other materials. The authors widely discuss their functionality (as these were not worn not only as jewellery items, but also for protection in certain circumstances), respectively technological aspects, the raw materials. The most important contribution was undoubtedly the typological classification of the beads. The examination of amber beads draws attention, with the note that their rather well-spread wear is not limited to the period between the Roman and Gepidic eras, but is also present in the early Avar period⁴.

Márton Ferenczi – still in this subchapter – discusses the discovered two brooch forms (the so-called cicada brooch, respectively the radiate-headed brooch), the single silver pin, bracelets, finger-rings and likely, an earring. Consistent attention was given to buckles, worn, with different functions, by the Ernei community members, some of very common shapes, others being rather specific to the 4th–6th century, of which round-plate buckles stand out.

Subchapter 2 examines the weaponry (a possible arrowhead and two spearheads), representing that part of the volume where the influence of Anglo-Saxon processual and post-processual archaeological thinking is most palpably noticeable. The subchapter was authored by Norbert Kapcsos.

The above is followed by the subchapter dealing in a more traditional manner with the issue of implements (Zsolt Körösfői), discussing combs, spindle weights, knives.

In subchapter 4, authored by Norbert Kapcsos, we take again a glimpse at inquiry trends specific to Anglo-Saxon archaeology. Kapcsos's method of inquiry is praiseworthy, however, his results were curtailed because the anthropological analysis was available to him only for a few times. This is also valid for the contextual pottery analysis, which could be only rarely documented in its original location. Kapcsos's note, namely that "*the placement of the ceramic vessels in the vicinity of the head, in this case in the western part of the burial pit, reflects the characteristics of a widespread funerary rite in the Carpathian Basin from the late 4th to the early 5th century*" must be amended (pg. 98), as the trend is also traceable during the 6th–7th century, in other words we are dealing – if desired – with a certain burial rite continuity⁵.

The chapter ends with subchapter 5 drafted by Alpár Dobos, on glass recipients (or fragments of glass recipients) identified in four graves.

Our remarks are not directed to the content, but to the structure of this chapter. Thus, there is somewhat incoherence in the mapping of item classes on the burial site plan: beads (Fig. 18) and pottery (Fig. 32) were mapped, yet the remaining item classes are missing and we could not find an explanation as to why these were disregarded. Furthermore, we also believe that all objects should have been plotted on a single plan of the cemetery, in the attempt to identify those individuals of high standing, issue that was only briefly tackled by Norbert Kapcsos ("*distinguished social status*") in the subchapter on weaponry.

The conclusions (chapter VII) (*Conclusion*) were drawn by Alpár Dobos and Zsolt Körösfői, discussing the cemetery's chronology issue and that of the cultural relations of the Ernei community (pg. 107–117). We agree with the suggested chronology, namely mid-5th century until first third of the 6th century, which also means that this small community of Ernei did not relocate for reasons

⁴ See in this respect Gáll, Mărginean 2020.

⁵ Lőrinczy 2016, 161.

related to the “grand policy” of 568, but prior in time. Moreover, the *senilis* age underlines the fact that the social-biological development of the individual in grave 48 began very likely during the Hunnic period, in the Ernei microarea or elsewhere, which is in line with the archaeological material, too. This archaeological material is indicative – according to the authors – of relations with communities in the *Sântana de Mureș* archaeological culture, although it is not very clear what the authors meant when stating that “*the geographical proximity of the sites probably also played a significant role in the survival of the late Sântana de Mureș traditions observed occasionally in the cemetery from Ernei.*” What sort of tradition continuity did they reference: a populace and/or technological continuity?

Despite these small shortcomings or mistakes, the book published by Dobos and Berecki has filled another gap in the early medieval archaeological research of Transylvania. *References, abbreviations*, respectively the forty-seven colour plates of excellent graphics make the volume on the archaeological excavations at Ernei a key work for the 5th-6th century archaeology in Transylvania.

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