

# LIFE AND DEATH IN MEDIAEVAL AND EARLY MODERN TIMES

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## FOREWORD

On 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> June 2018, the Institute of Archaeology organized the 5<sup>th</sup> International Scientific Conference of Mediaeval Archaeology entitled *Life and death in mediaeval and early modern times*. The co-organizer of the conference was the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, where the meeting took place. The intention of the conference was to acquaint scientists and the general public with new research and interpretations, and to encourage quality scientific discussion on everyday life and attitudes towards the death of mediaeval and early modern populations. As this is a topic that cannot be fully covered by archaeological methods alone, our goal was to bring together scientists of different profiles (archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, molecular biologists) in a multidisciplinary attempt to interpret the life and death of our ancestors.

During the two days of the conference 34 podium presentations were held and six posters were presented. A total of 86 scientists participated: 26 from Croatia and 60 from abroad (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Italy, Poland, Romania, United States, Slovakia, Slovenia, Serbia, Spain, United Kingdom).

This edition brings 20 conference presentations, which were adapted into papers by their authors. By publishing the proceedings in English, we have tried to provide to the authors the widest visibility in the international scientific community.

I would like to thank once again all the conference participants for excellent cooperation, reviewers of proceedings as well as colleagues for their help in the organization of the conference and publishing of this proceedings. I am also grateful to the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb for their support in the organization of the conference.

The publication of the proceedings would not be possible without the financial support of the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia.

Siniša Krznar



## MAGIC OR PRACTICALITY? “ANTIQUITIES” IN AVAR PERIOD GRAVES IN EASTERN CROATIA

*This paper examines the question of a group of artefacts found in Late Avar period graves in Eastern Croatia. The artefacts in question are of an earlier origin, dating from prehistory to Byzantine period, therefore they can be referred as antiquities. The assumption was that the antiquities had primarily magical purpose, but many of them were found as if they were used practically, in their original purpose. That brought to the light new questions which we will try to answer in this paper. In the Avar period society, who were the consumers of such practice? Can we relate these objects to funeral practices or were they used during the lifespan and then just deposited in graves? Nevertheless, antiquities can be seen as healing charms, protective amulets, object with occult power and demonic magic.*

*Key words: Avar period graves, antiquities, prehistory, Roman period*

### INTRODUCTION

Archaeologists dealing with a certain period, consciously or unconsciously, often tend to neglect finds that somehow deviate from usual assemblage. The most common explanation given is “cult objects” – a phrase that covers every find which stands out and cannot be explained satisfactorily. When dealing with early medieval period archaeologists are unwillingly to explain how people buried in graves expressed their faith and belief, especially in pre-Christian phase. This question is above usual interpretation of finds, and the lack of material evidence makes it harder to imagine how people actually lived their everyday life.

Nevertheless, there are some papers written on the topic of antiquities in Avar period graves. One of the pioneer works on the topic was written by Ľ. Kraskovská in 1971. She described La Tène and Roman finds found in Avar period graves on the territory of Slovakia, and concludes that some objects were still used functional (pendants, buckles, fibulas) and some had no practical significance (glass fragments, coins). The latter could have been used as toys, peculiarities or amulets (Kraskovská 1971). E. Garam has collected the data about Roman fibulas in Avar period graves (Garam 2003), and E. Krekovič wrote about Roman pottery in Avar graves (Krekovič 2012: 90). The territory of Moravia was covered in the work of Š. Ungerman; following the classification of A. Mehling he divides antiquities into several categories: recycled items (original purpose, reused for other purposes, material resource), esthetic value, knowing the age, magical objects – amulets (Ungerman 2009). Recently an overview on the topic was done by A. Rustoiu, for the territory of Carpathian Basin. He also divides antiquities into two categories: objects that retained their original purpose (jewellery, clothing accessories) were transmitted from one generation to other as a family treasure and objects that had magical purpose, due to the fact that they have lost their original meaning (Rustoiu 2015).

### SPATIAL POSITION

The very east of Croatia administratively belongs to Vukovar-Srijem County, covering an area of about 2.450 km<sup>2</sup>. It lies between river Danube at the north, river Sava at the south, river Vuka at the west and partly streamlet Jošava and state



border toward Serbia at the east. Geographically this area is a part of Pannonian plain which is called East Croatian plain (Bognar 1996). Latter consists of inflected loess sediments and alluvial valleys (Njegač 2002: 255). Loess drifts are up to 20 m thick and form higher, arable surfaces of great importance (Roglić 1975: 18). Morphometric analysis shows that altitude in this area is mainly less than 200 m; highest peak is 294 m, and lowest 78 m (Pokos, Turk 2012: 20).

Because of its position on junction between East and Middle Europe, and due to geomorphologic reasons (loess/clay ridge surrounded by oak forest and marshes) this area has been continuously settled since Neolithic (Durman 2013).

The area in Vukovar-Syrmium County in Eastern Croatia (Fig. 1) yielded quite a few Late Avar period sites. Although list of Avar period sites published in ADAM mentions altogether 10 sites, more new finds came to light in last years, giving much more complex picture of inhabitation level of the area.

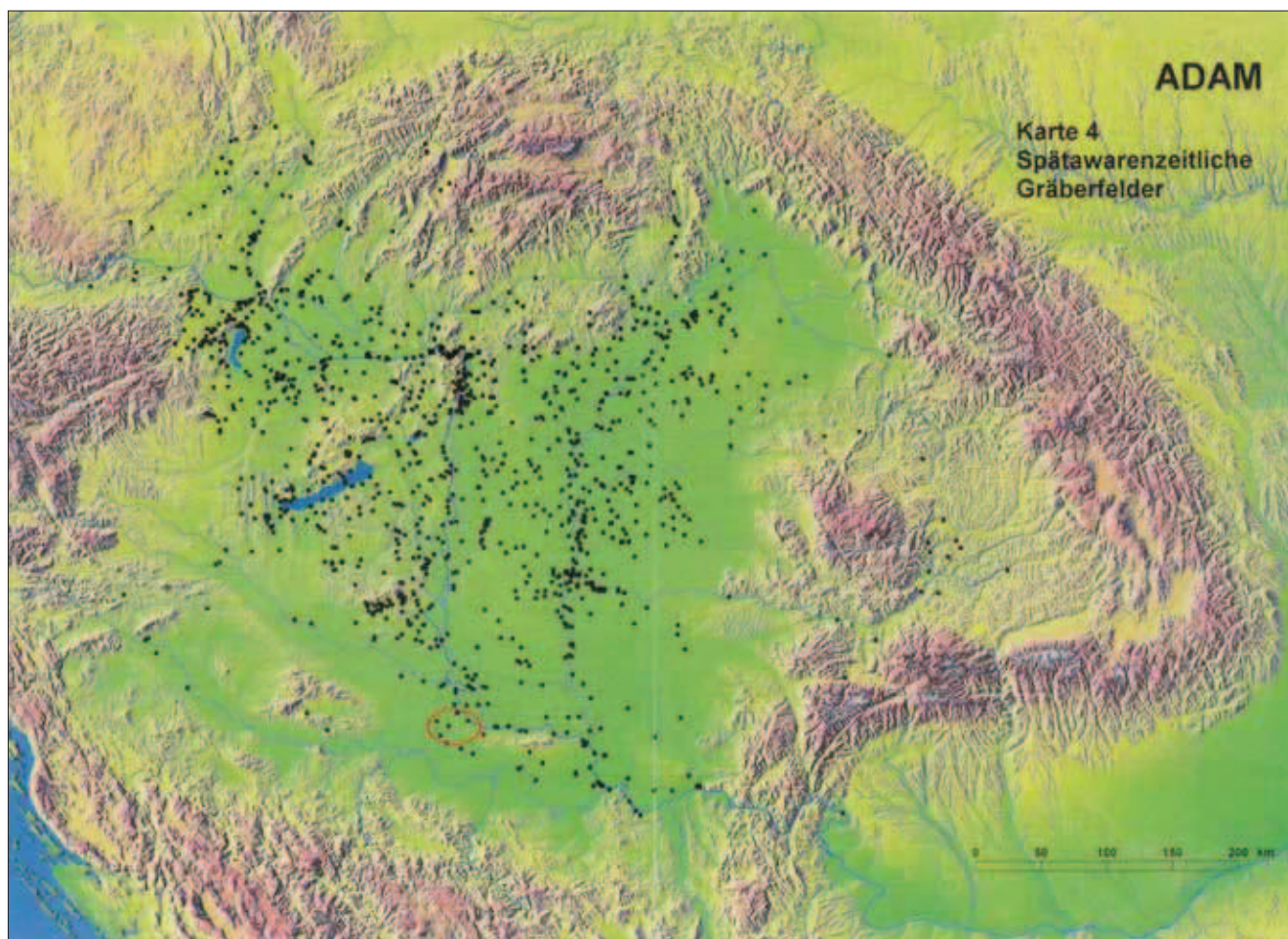


Fig. 1 The map of the Late Avar Period cemeteries with position of sites mentioned in the text (ADAM, Karte 4)

Five cemeteries from the County have been partly investigated: in Otok (ADAM 2002: 275), Privlaka (ADAM 2002: 295-296), Stari Jankovci (ADAM 2002: 329), Nuštar (Rapan Papeša 2012a; 2012b) and Šarengrad (Dizdar et al. 2017; Rapan Papeša et al. 2018). Objects that can be treated as antiquities have been found in Privlaka, Nuštar and Šarengrad.

### PRIVLAKA-GOLE NJIVE

The site is situated north of village Privlaka (municipality Stari Jankovci, Vukovar-Srijem county), along the left bank of river Bosut. Nearby prehistorical hillfort settlement was excavated in 1970's, and just underneath it spreads a Late Avar period cemetery. It was found during earthworks by accident, some grave goods were saved and initial for archaeological excavations. The site was excavated in 1973, 1976, 1979, 1980 and with 230 excavated graves remains the biggest explored Avar period cemetery in Croatia. According to finds cemetery is dated to period between middle 8<sup>th</sup> and beginning of 9<sup>th</sup> century, and most interesting find from this site are iron phalerae with golden intarsia (Šmalcelj 1973: 117-119; 1976: 127-128;



1981:143-144; 1992:44-45). Unfortunately, a complete publication of the site has never been done. In several graves, listed underneath, antiquities have been found.

In grave 15 (F, 40-45) two bronze earrings and a necklace of beads were found. The necklace consists of 3 beads, one melon seed like, blue prismatic one and a big cylindrical one.

In grave 30 (F, 40-45) a pair of bronze earrings and a necklace of beads were found. The necklace consists of 46 beads, mostly melon seed like and also a big round blue one with eyes.

In grave 46 (C, 9,5-10,5) two pearls, a piece of roman glass and a part of fibulae mechanism were found.

In grave 53 (M, 17,5-18,5), which is a double burial, among bronze belt set of the male also a German mount was found.

In grave 55 a necklace with a shell was found.

In grave 66 (M, 55-60) among the bronze belt set two roman coins were found.

In grave 74 (M, 30-35) an iron knife, a pair of bronze earrings and necklace of beads were found. The necklace consists of 13 beads, melon seed like are predominant, but a round big blue one among them as well.

In grave 92 (F, 20-25) a pair of simple bronze earrings and a necklace of beads were found. The necklace consists of 13 beads, mostly oval with yellow ornaments, but also two round big blue beads with eyes.

In grave 98 (M, 35-40) an iron knife, a bronze earring and necklace of beads were found. The necklace consists of 14 beads, some millet seed and some melon seed like, and among them two round big blue ones.

In grave 100 (F, 25-30) a flint stone, a bronze earring and a necklace of beads were found. The necklace consists of 19 beads, mostly melon seed shaped, but also two small irregular and one round.

In grave 163 (M, 35-40) an iron knife, an iron buckle, a flint stone and a stone axe were found.

In grave 165 (F, 35-40) an iron knife, an iron buckle and a necklace of beads were found. The necklace consists of 18 beads; except for one round small blue others are millet seed like.

In grave 186 (F, 25-30) a pair of bronze earrings, a necklace of beads and a piece of roman glass were found.

In grave 200 (C, 14,5-15,5) a pair of bronze earrings, a bronze finger ring and two more earrings, as well as a necklace of beads were found. The necklace consists of 46 beads, mostly millet seed like and oval with yellow plastic ornaments, but also a damaged round big blue one.

## NUŠTAR DVORAC

The site is situated on the western outskirts of village Nuštar (municipality Nuštar, Vukovar-Srijem county), along the state road (D56) from Županja towards Vukovar. The site was found and excavated in 2011. About 2400 m<sup>2</sup> were explored with 196 graves organized into ten rows (Rapan Papeša 2012a; 2012b). According to finds cemetery is dated to period from early 8<sup>th</sup> until beginning of 9<sup>th</sup> century. In several graves antiquities have been found.

In grave 47 (F, 35-50) a pot, an iron knife, round needle case, a pair of bronze earrings with globular pendants and a necklace of beads with bronze buckle were found. The necklace consists of 15 beads, some of them segmented but two beads are of prehistoric origin.

In grave 68B (M, 35-50) a pot, an iron knife and a bronze belt-set were found; the belt set consists of 13 elements: main strap end, main strap mounts, bronze buckle and side strap end, but a roman penannular fibula as well (Fig. 2). It was found along with mounts on the waist area.



Fig. 2 Detail of grave 68B, Nuštar (photo by: B. Kratofil)

In grave 161 (F, 20-35) a pot, a pair of bronze bracelets, an iron knife, a lead spindle-whorl, a bronze earring with a chain, necklace of beads, roman strong profiled fibula (Fig. 3) and finger ring. The fibula was found between the lower legs, and the finger ring came from gravefill.



Fig. 3 Detail of grave 161, Nuštar (photo by: I. Sokola)

In grave 163 (C, 5-10) a pot, an iron knife and a roman mount were found. The mount came from gravefill.

In grave 168 (M, 20-35) a bronze belt-set, an iron knife, saltier were found. The belts set consists of 30 elements: main strap end, side strap end, main strap mounts, propeller mount, ring and bronze byzantine buckle. The buckle was found on the left hip.

In grave 179 (F, adult) a pot, a pair of bronze bracelets, two pairs of bronze earrings, a bronze finger ring, a necklace of beads, an iron knife and an iron buckle. The necklace consists of 57 beads, mostly small millet-like, but also one blue square shaped.

In grave 196 (M, 50+) a pot, an iron knife, a bronze belt set were found. The belt set consists of 32 elements: main strap end, belt buckle, main strap mounts, a propeller mount, side strap ends, side strap mounts, belt holder, roman coin and pendant. The coin and the pendant were found together with the belt, on the waist area, perhaps in the purse.

An iron chain with roman omega fibula and roman key on it is a surface find.

## ŠARENGRAD KLOPARE

The site is situated on eastern outskirts of village Šarengrad (Ilok, Vukovar-Srijem county), along the state road (D2) from Vukovar towards Ilok. The site was first recorded in 2006, when some earthworks were done and two vessels from destroyed graves landed into Ilok town museum. Archaeological excavations were carried out in 2016 and 2017. About 680 m<sup>2</sup> were explored with 49 graves organized in eight rows (Dizdar et al. 2017; Rapan Papeša et al. 2018). According to finds cemetery is dated to period between middle 8<sup>th</sup> and beginning of 9<sup>th</sup> century, and most interesting find from this site make graves of horsemen and horses. In one grave antiquity has been found, listed underneath.

In grave 26 (M, 40-50, with horse) iron buckle, iron knife, eggs and bronze belt buckle were found. The buckle lied on the sacrum bone, facing upwards, toward right.

## SOURCES OF FINDS

Obviously, sites from earlier period must have been the source for antiquities found in Avar period graves. Remains of previous inhabitants of the area are still visible even today, and in the past they must have been even more recognisable. Targeted walks conducted by archaeologists – filed surveys – often result in finding sites from all periods, and such surveys are often results of tips made by local population. Municipal Museum Vinkovci has recorded over 600 sites on the area of 1022 km<sup>2</sup>, so we know that the density of archaeological sites is very high. In the vicinity of Privlaka-Gole njive site there are several sites very close, such as prehistoric settlement hillfort with layers from La Tène Period, Bronze age and Neolithic (Majnarić-Pandžić 1981) or Roman *vicus* and *villa rustica* (Dimitrijević 1979: 186, 253-254). Similar, in Nuštar there is a multilayered site Cerić-Plandište (Dimitrijević 1979: 186-187, 254) not far away, as well as Roman *villa rustica* at Žankovac site (Iskra-Janošić 1984). In the vicinity of Šarengrad also several archaeological sites are known from all periods, including Roman town Cuccium in today's Ilok.

Remains of Roman infrastructure must have been visible in the Early Medieval period, and Roman sites are often found in the vicinity of Avar period sites. But, as we do surveys today we can assume that Avars did it too. Of course, not intentionally, but if they looked after the cattle or gathered herbs they could have found some archaeological material. There is also the question of intentional gathering of metal finds. Unfortunately, we do not have analysis for metal composition neither of Avar nor Roman period finds, but Avars could have reused Roman bronze for their purposes. Trips to Roman sites were frequent, probably even had a goal of collecting roman metal objects as a source for raw materials which could be melted for Avar purposes (belt sets and jewelry), as suggested – and generally accepted – as an *idée gratuite* (Bálint 2010: 150), but it was also proven by analysis (Kasztovszky et al. 2000).

In roman town of Cibalae (today Vinkovci), during rescue excavations in protected archaeological zone, we often find plundered roman graves. As we know from ancient sources, even Romans themselves plundered, and we know from written sources that plundering continued well into 19<sup>th</sup> century. So we can state that some graves must have been robbed during Avar period. In all cases, especially in brick built tombs, there is visible gap at one side of the tomb, and bones and finds – if any remained – pulled to the side where the opening was made. (Fig. 4)



Fig. 4 Plundered Roman period brick grave in Cibalae (Archive of GMVk)

## DESCRIPTION OF FINDS

### PREHISTORY

Artefacts that belong to prehistory<sup>1</sup> are as follows: Neolithic stone axe, Neolithic? seashell, Iron Age beads, Iron Age pendant.

In Privlaka grave 163 a damaged stone axe (Pl. 1: 1) was found. The axe is made of light stone, probably tuff, light brown in colour; it seems that only half of the axe is preserved, and on one side it was additionally used for cutting out a smaller tool, 47 x 45 mm.

In Privlaka grave 55 a shell (Pl. 1: 2) was found. The shell was worn as a pendant on a necklace, it has a round perforation

1 Artefacts that could have prehistoric origin, but most likely were made in Avar period, e. g. flint stones will not be a part of this paper.



on the top, and it is slightly damaged on the bottom; dimensions: 24 x 24 mm. The shell is a marine shell, probably cockle from family *Cardiidae*. Although it could have been contemporary, meaning that it was collected at the sea during the Avar period and then brought to Privlaka, it is more likely that it is a Neolithic period reused specimen.

In Privlaka grave 30 a blue bead with white dots (Pl. 1: 4) was found. Round bead made of translucent blue glass, with three white dots made of paste with blue dot in the middle, Ø 13 mm, h. 12 mm.

In Privlaka grave 74 a blue bead (Pl. 1: 5) was found. Bead is round, made of opaque blue glass, undecorated, Ø 13 mm, h. 8 mm.

In Privlaka grave 92 two blue beads with white dots have been found. Beads are round, made of translucent blue glass, one with three white dots made of paste with blue dot in the middle (Pl. 1: 7), the other with four white dots made of paste with blue dot in the middle and wavy line made of white paste in the middle (Pl. 1: 6), Ø 13 mm, h. 11 mm, Ø 13 mm, h. 12 mm.

In Privlaka grave 98 two beads have been found. The first one (Pl. 1: 8) is round, made of translucent blue glass, decorated with a wavy line made of white paste, Ø 13 mm, h. 8 mm. The second (Pl. 1: 9) is also round, made of blue translucent glass, undecorated, Ø 11 mm, h. 7 mm.

In Privlaka grave 100 three beads (Pl. 1: 10) have been found. Two of them are made of blue-green translucent glass in the shape of a flower, Ø 6 mm, h. 3 mm. The third is made of blue semi-translucent glass, round in shape, Ø 6 mm, h. 2 mm.

In Privlaka grave 165 a blue bead (Pl. 1: 13) has been found. Bead is round, slightly irregular, made of translucent blue glass, with round perforation in the middle, Ø 8 mm, h. 4 mm.

In Privlaka grave 200 a blue bead (Pl. 1: 14) has been found. Bead is round, made of opaque blue glass, undecorated, damaged, Ø 13 mm, h. 8 mm.

In Nuštar grave 47 two beads as a part of a necklace that consists of 14 beads, segmented and millet seed like ones. One bead (Pl. 1: 11) is yellow with white and blue dots Ø 11 mm, h. 8 mm; the other one (Pl. 1: 12) is blue with white and blue dots, Ø 9 mm, h. 10 mm.

Such beads are characteristic for Iron Age all over the Europe (so called *Augenperlen*) since Ha D – La A/B (Graf, Graf 2011: 53), but we have some in the area as well (Dizdar 1999: 40, 111). They first appear in Hallstatt period, but continue into La Tene Period; this is especially notable for translucent blue beads, undecorated and decorated with wavy lines (*Zickzackzier*).

In Nuštar grave 196 a bronze pendant in shape of an axe (Pl. 1: 3) was found at the waist, together with other parts of belt set. The pendant is made of bronze, casted. It has a round ear for hanging, and body shaped as an axe. Dimensions: h. 17 mm, w. 30 mm. Such pendants are typical for Iron Age (Warneke 1999: 146-150; Pieta 2010: 328), and Stadler names them as amulets - Amulets00010, and lists 3 examples from 2 sites (Stadler 2005). Garam refers to such finds as a German, e.g. Gepid tradition in Avar period graves (Garam 1995). It is very much likely that pendant from this grave is of Iron Age origin, especially if we take into consideration that the warrior from this grave was a collector (he also had a Roman coin), bearing in mind that other Iron Age finds (beads) were also present in graves at this and neighbouring sites.

## ROMAN PERIOD

Artefacts that belong to this period are as follows: pieces of Roman glass, Roman coins, Roman fibulae, Roman finger ring, Roman mount, Roman key. Finds of Roman origin are often found in cemeteries from the Avar period (Distelberger 2004: 13). They are usually interpreted as amulets that were worn by the deceased or as amulets given to the deceased during burial.

Pieces of roman glass were found in Privlaka graves 46 and 186. The one from Privlaka grave 46 is a piece from a bottom (Pl. 2: 1), translucent, light green in color, 25 x 16 mm. The one from Privlaka grave 186 is a piece of a handle (Pl. 2: 2), made of translucent, light green glass, 9 x 15 mm; interestingly, there is a hollow in the rim so it could have been hanging on the necklace. The fragment from Privlaka grave 46 is a part of a bottom, probably from a *balsamarium* type of a bottle, a roman glass container for perfumes. Because the fragment is too small it is not possible to determine the exact type or date. The small glass fragment from Privlaka grave 186 is a part of a handle from a *aryballos* type of a bottle, a roman glass container for scented oil, made by free-blowing, with round body, slightly flattened base, short cylindrical base and neck, the rim is collared. Because the fragment is too small it is not possible to determine the exact type or date.

Two bronze roman coins were found in Privlaka grave 66; one is so worn out that it makes it impossible to determine the ruler, but it is most probably 4<sup>th</sup> century coin. Dimensions: Ø17 mm. The other one was mint in under Valens (364-378), with head of the emperor toward right and inscription D N Valens P F AVG on the obverse, and Victory advancing left, holding wreath and palm, inscription SECVRITAS REIPVBLICAE on the reverse (RIC V 9:18b). Dimensions: Ø 17 mm.

A roman coin was also found in Nuštar grave 196: it lay among bronze belt mounts of the belt set. The coin was mint under Constantine the Great (306-337), with head of the emperor toward right and inscription CONSTAN-TINVS AVG on the obverse, the reverse is unreadable, probably VOT in wreath. Dimensions: Ø 17 mm.

Roman strong profiled fibula (Pl. 2: 3) from Nuštar grave 161; on the inner side of right knee bronze two-piece strongly profiled arch fibulae with short pin-catch, button shaped foot ending and trapezoidal head was found. The spring is made of 8 windings and the pin is fixed to trapezoidal holder. Between spring mechanism and trapezoidal head is a narrowing. In the middle of the arch is a profilation. Arch cross section before profilation is D-shaped, while the cross-section after the thickening is in the form of a triangle. The leg is long with a prominent central rib. Brown-yellow in colour. Dimensions: l. 51 mm; w. 17 mm. Dated to the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> - the first half of 2<sup>nd</sup> century. This particular grave yielded well preserved, functional Roman *Kräfteprofilerte* fibulae found by the right knee. Strong profiled fibulas have been found within the Avar period graves, both in earlier and later phases (Garam 2003: 96). The list she compiled consists of 11 examples from 8 sites: Alattyán-Tulát, grave 56; Előszállás-Bajcsihegy, grave 246; Kékesd, grave 43; Kölked A, graves 283, 384, 539; Kölked B, grave 457; Rácalmás, graves 17, 74; Szentes-Berekhát, grave 8; Tatabánya-Alsógalla, szórvány (Garam 2003: 118). This list now can be completed with find from Nuštar, and also a find from Mödling (Distelberger 2014: 42). Usual interpretation of fibulae as an amulet (Vida 2002: 180; 2008: 28) is not good enough in this case, because the fibula is still functional and it was found at a place where it could have been used as a fastener for upper garment, e.g. coat or cloak. Similar theses have been proven, for example at Alattyán (Kovrig 1963: 116).

In Privlaka grave 46 a bronze spiral mechanism of a fibula (Pl. 2: 4) was found. The spiral is made of bronze wire of round cross section, and seven windings are visible, l. 13 mm, w. 5 mm. It is not possible to determine the exact type of fibula it belonged to.

Roman penannular (Omega, Ringfibel) fibula (Pl. 2: 5) from Nuštar grave 68; round body of the fibula at one point elongates in the U-shaped addition, the ending closed with horizontal bar. Brown in colour. Dimensions: l. 51 mm, w. 39 mm. Dated to 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> century. Pennanular rings often appear in Avar period graves, predominately males, sporadically also in female graves (Stadler 2005). After Stadler it belong to type Omegaring00040, and 23 examples originate from 22 sites, the closest being Brodski Drenovac (Vinski-Gasparini, Ercegović 1958: 142). In most cases it was found around the waist, just like in Nuštar, suggesting it was reused as a part of belt set. According to typology of roman pennaular fibulas made by I. Sellye it belongs to Type 1, most outspread type of *Ringfibeln* in Roman Pannonia (Sellye 1990: 53).

Roman iron pennaular fibula (Pl. 2: 10) comes as a surface find from Nuštar; it was found as a piece in a chain that consists of four parts: one broken round iron ring, one whole iron ring, a roman iron key-ring and the fibula. An iron pennaular fibula, made of flat hammered iron, the ends open and bent. Dimensions: Ø 36 mm. After Stadler it belong to type Omegaring00060, and 9 examples originate from 8 sites (Stadler 2005).

Roman bronze finger ring (Pl. 2: 9) originates from gravefill of grave 161 in Nuštar. The hoop is damaged. Both shoulders are decorated with pseudo-granules. Shoulders are hammered out to form flat oval head. On the head traces of unidentifiable ornament can be observed. Dimensions: Ø 20 mm; (head) 12x10 mm. Dated to 3<sup>rd</sup> century. Although it originates from gravefill, finger bone which bears green corrosion proves that it was worn, meaning functional. Almost identical one has been found in Aquincum (Budapest, Zápor utca) and dated to 3<sup>rd</sup> century (Facsády 2009: 97). As many other this ring belongs to Facsády's Group V, rings with emphasized shoulders and separated head which are predominant in 3<sup>rd</sup> century (Facsády 2009: 39).

Roman bronze military mount (Pl. 2: 8) was found in Nuštar grave 163. Bronze propeller type mount, cut from a sheet metal, with round middle part and reversed triangular sides. The mount is decorated with three concentric circles and four small circular bosses around the middle part. Dimensions: 37 x 12 mm. Such mounts were part of Roman military belts, having beside decorative also practical function by strengthening the belt, but this particular type occurs more rarely than other types; general datation is second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> century (Radman - Livaja 2005: 97).

Roman iron key-ring (Pl. 2: 10) comes as a surface find from Nuštar; it was found as a piece in a chain that consists of four parts: one broken round iron ring, one whole iron ring, a roman iron key-ring and the fibula. The ring is round, and the bent key ends with widening with two pegs. Dimensions: l. 37 mm, w. 19 mm. This type is known within the Roman heritage; according to typology made for Serbian sites it belongs to Type Ia - ring-keys for unlocking spring-lock (Bogić 2017: 35-36), dated to 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

In Privlaka grave 15 a blue bead (Pl. 2: 7) was found. Bead is rectangular, made of opaque glass, 11x4 mm. Such beads are of Roman origin, dated to 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century, and examples of reusing it in Avar Period necklaces are known (Pásztor 2014: 293).

In Nuštar grave 179 a blue bead (Pl. 2: 6) was found. Bead is rectangular, made of opaque glass, w. 9 mm, h. 7 mm. Such beads are of Roman origin, dated to 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century, and examples of reusing it in Avar Period necklaces are known (Pásztor 2014: 293).

#### MIGRATION PERIOD

Artefact that belongs to this period is a mount (Pl. 3: 1) from Privlaka grave 53. The mount is made of bronze, rectangular body is decorated with two double braids and ornament shaped as infinity sign on one side. The other side extends into long narrow neck with bird head on the end. On the bottom there are two ears for attaching. Dimensions: l. 47 mm, w. 10 mm. It does not have obvious parallels, but its production and ornamentation point to German production within the Khaganate in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, essentially under the antique tradition. The double braid ornament can be observed on different objects from Avar period (Nagy 1998: 429-430), but this piece shows most similarities to quiver mounts from Kunbaborony, although they are shield-shaped (Heinrich-Tamaska 2006, Taf. 25). The loops on the bottom could have Byzantine origin, so this piece represents a mixture of different styles for sure.

#### BYZANTINE PERIOD

Artefacts that belong to Byzantine period are two bronze buckles; both were found as functional items, on the waist of the deceased.

In Šarengrad grave 26, which is a grave of a rider and his horse, on the pelvic bones of the rider a bronze buckle (Pl. 3: 3) and a simple iron buckle were found. The bronze buckle is casted in openwork, two-pieced (buckle and mount), connected with a hinge. The buckle consists of oval buckle and elongated, heart-shaped frame, mount. Brown – green in colour. Dimensions: l. 65 mm, w. 32 mm. This type is well known in Byzantine culture as a Mediterranean type called Korinth-Balgota, dated to 7<sup>th</sup> century (Fabijanić 2010: 152-153). According to typology of Byzantine buckles made by M. Schulze-Dörlamm it is type E.8 (*“Ovale Schnallen mit herzförmig durchbrochenem dreieckigen Scharnierbeschlag – “Typ Bologna”*); this type is more found along the Mediterranean coast (Schulze-Dörlamm 2009: 30), but it is also known within the Khaganate (Garam 2001: 100, Varsik 1992: 105). Garam gives a list of 8 examples from 7 sites, most of which can be dated to 7<sup>th</sup> century, some at the beginning of 8<sup>th</sup> century; this type is mostly found east from the Danube, in Tisza region. Because of other finds in this particular grave, especially stirrups which are of a later origin (8<sup>th</sup> century) this buckle must have been reused.

The one (Pl. 3: 2) from Nuštar grave 168 was found in the waist line, together with other parts of bronze belt set. The Byzantine buckle was connected with rectangular mount cut out of bronze sheet. The bronze buckle is casted in openwork, one-pieced. The buckle consists of oval buckle and elongated mount with circles. The thorn is shaped as animal (bird) head. On the bottom there are three loops for fastening. Brown – green in colour. Dimensions: l. 58 mm, w. 29 mm. According to Stadler this type belongs to Schnallen01580 type, with only 2 finds from 2 sites. The Byzantine origin is without doubt, but other finds from grave 168 suggest first quarter of 8<sup>th</sup> century datation.

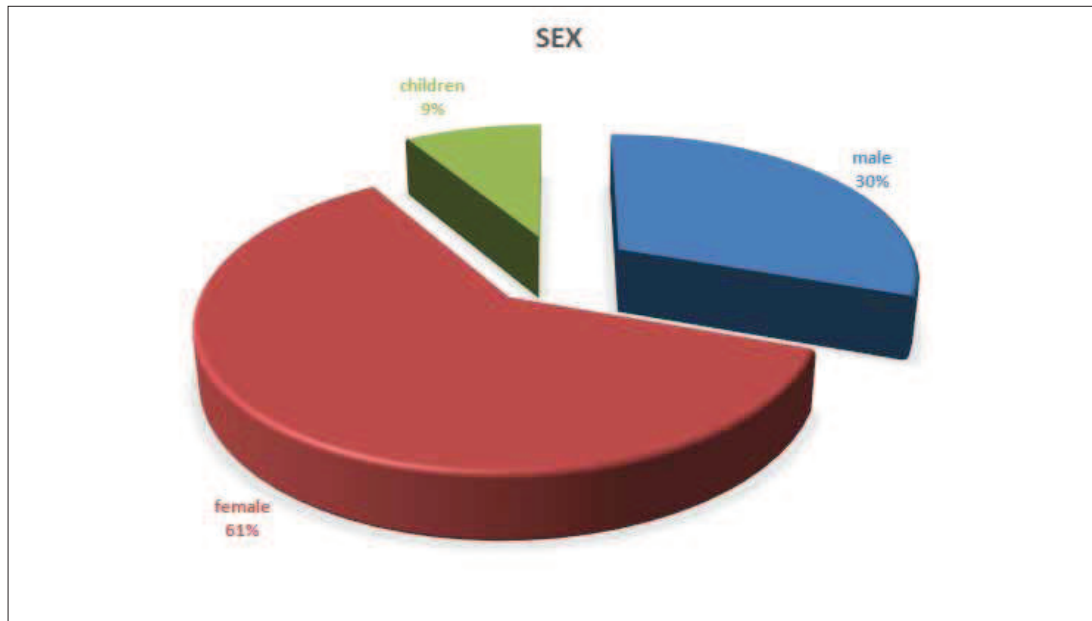
#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is interesting to compare the amount of finds from earlier period in Avar period cemeteries. For instance, there is none antiquity at Stari Jankovci-Gatina cemetery; on the other hand, there is a relatively large number of such finds in Privlaka. Could it be related to poor conditions of life at that site? Did they use it as amulets? On the other hand, the Nuštar site, which is closest to ancient town of Cibalae, and where one could expect most find has only some.

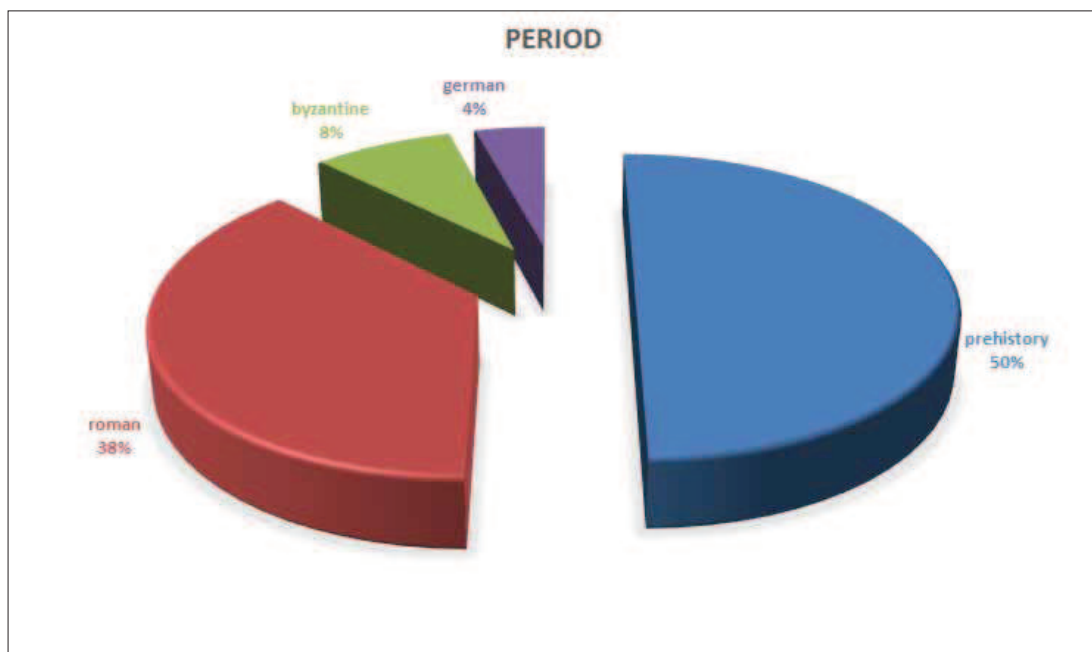
Most of the find come from female graves (61%), but like in every statistic it is due to numerous finds of beads. Surprisingly, children graves, where one could expect most amulets, are represented with only 9%. Therefore, the male graves are represented with 30%, and that makes the men more suspicious than other (Chart 1).

Another statistic shows that half of the finds belong to prehistory (50%), followed by Roman (38%), Migration (4%) and Byzantine period (8%). This statistic is reverse, in the sense that periods that are directly before the Avar period are represented with fewer finds. This can be interpreted with the fact that these are too young to be seen as magical object (Chart 2).

We have also made a statistic about presumed usage of antiquity artefacts; in 17 graves there were used practically, meaning that they kept their original purpose. Practical use was kept for prehistorical finds (10 cases), Roman period (4 cases), Migration period (1 case) and Byzantine period (2 cases). In only 7 graves the artefacts were used as magical objects.



**Chart 1** Distribution of finds according to sex (made by: A. Rapan Papeša 2018)



**Chart 2** Distribution of finds according to period (made by: A. Rapan Papeša 2018)

Magical objects come from prehistory (2 cases) and Roman period (5 cases) (Chart 3).

If we take into consideration the fact that the temporal gap between the placing the items into grave and their origin is often more than 500 years it is very hard to interpretate these finds as family treasures, in the sense that those were hereditary. All above mentioned antiquities should be regarded as charms. The only open question remains whether they represent protective charms used during the life, or are they just reflection of burial practices and an attempt to preserve the living from the dead. In my opinion we have only one proven case of the latter, and that is the stone axe found in the mouth of the deceased in grave 163 in Privlaka. The custom of putting stones, clay or coins into the mouth of the deceased is one of the signs of vampirism (Gardeła 2015: 114), and other forms of such believes (such as reopening the graves, burials in different position) have been observed on Avar period sites in the area. With this exception all other cases represent different forms of protective charms used during the life-span. Most obvious example is represented by beads that were



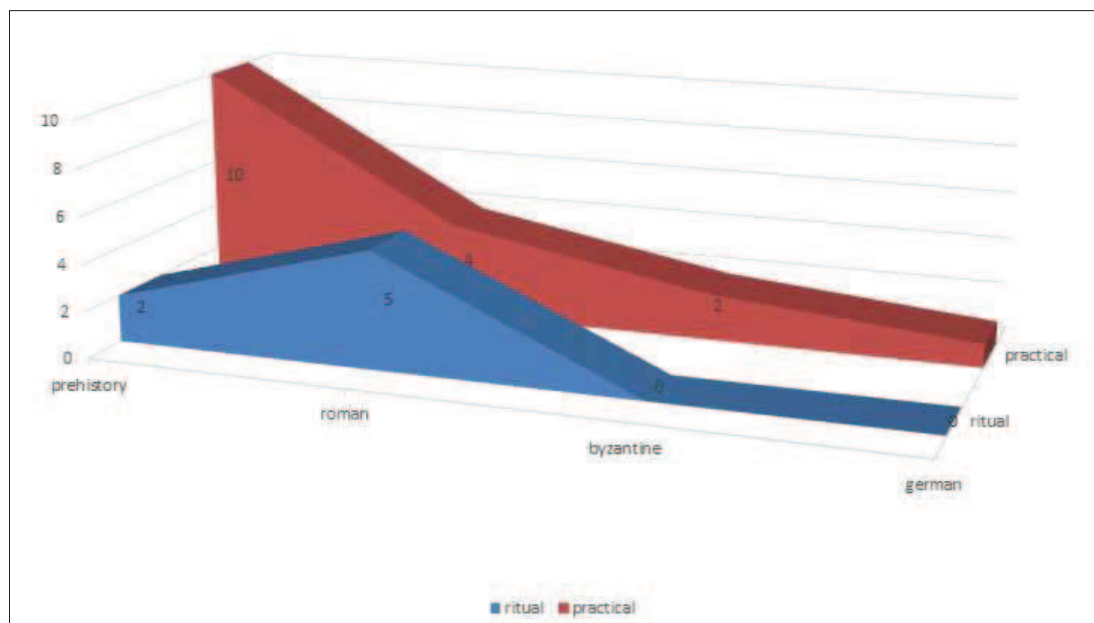


Chart 3 Distribution of finds according to usage (made by: A. Rapan Papeša 2018)

incorporated in strings formed of typical Avar Period beads (such as melon seed or millet seed shaped). Even more, at Privlaka we see typologically same beads distributed almost evenly (two exceptions) in the south of the cemetery. One could imagine a woman who found some beads and distributed those among her friends or family members. For such conclusion however further investigation and analysis should be made. Similar conclusions can be drawn for buckles; why melt a functional item when one can reuse it? The magical component of such object is also very important; if we presume that objects keep the value of the original owner it is a win-win situation. Protective charms in the narrow sense are pieces of items that have no practical value, such as coins or pieces of glass vessels. Such items are described as *objets trouvés*, unusual objects that were just picked up or as toolkits for healing or divination, meaning items with apotropaic value (Gilchrist 2008: 141).

This intention of this paper is not to resolve the question of spiritual life of Avar period population, but to bring another piece of the puzzle to this less known segment of Avar society. According to our research Avars in the region acted as in other regions of Avar state, used antiquities for different purposes and gave them magical, apotropaic value according to their own intentions.

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## Pl. 1

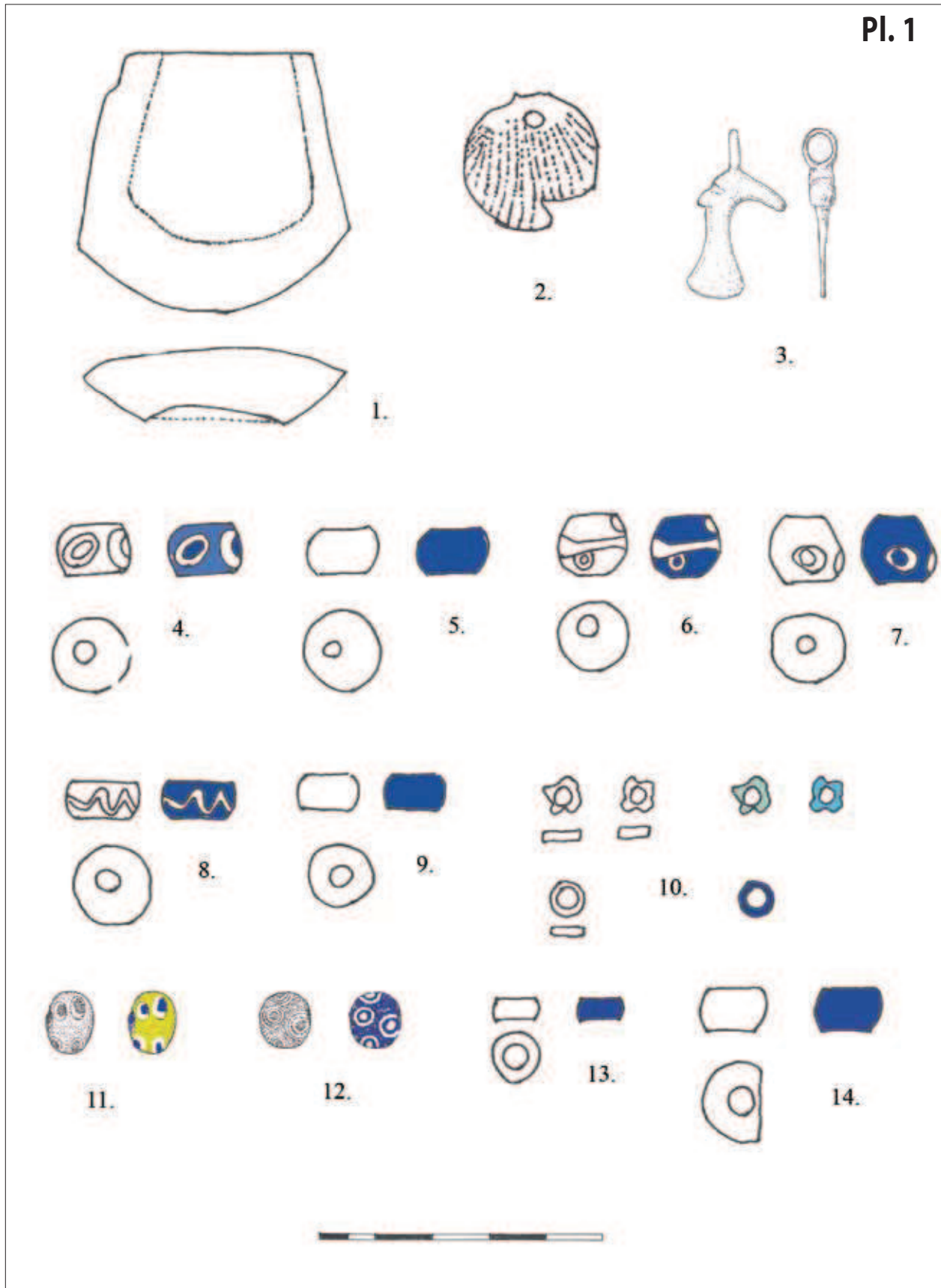
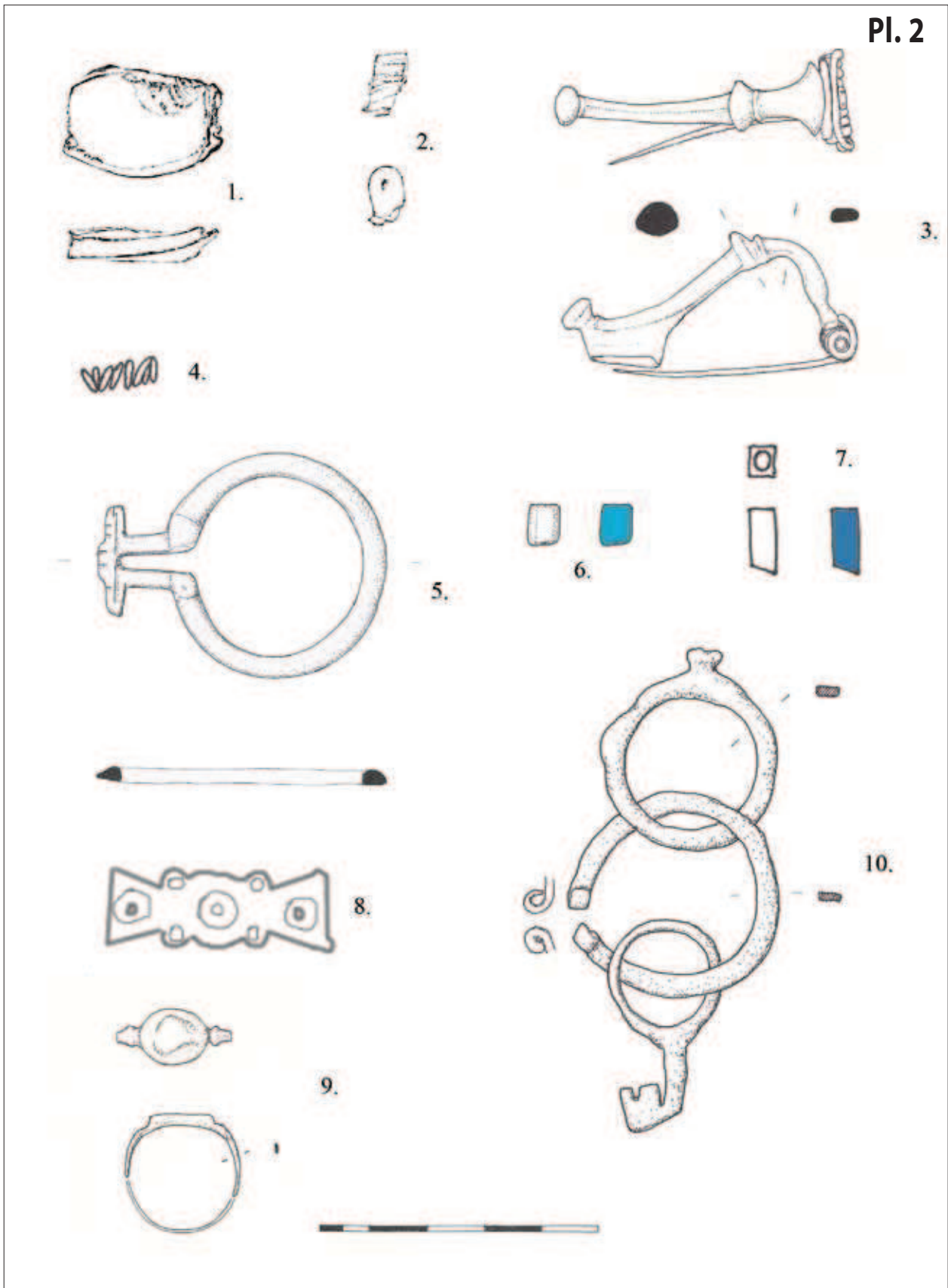


Plate 1 Prehistoric finds (1. Axe, 2. Shell, 3. Pendant, 4-14. Beads) (drawings by: M. Galić /3, 11, 12/, A. Rapan Papeša /1,2, 4-10, 13, 14/)

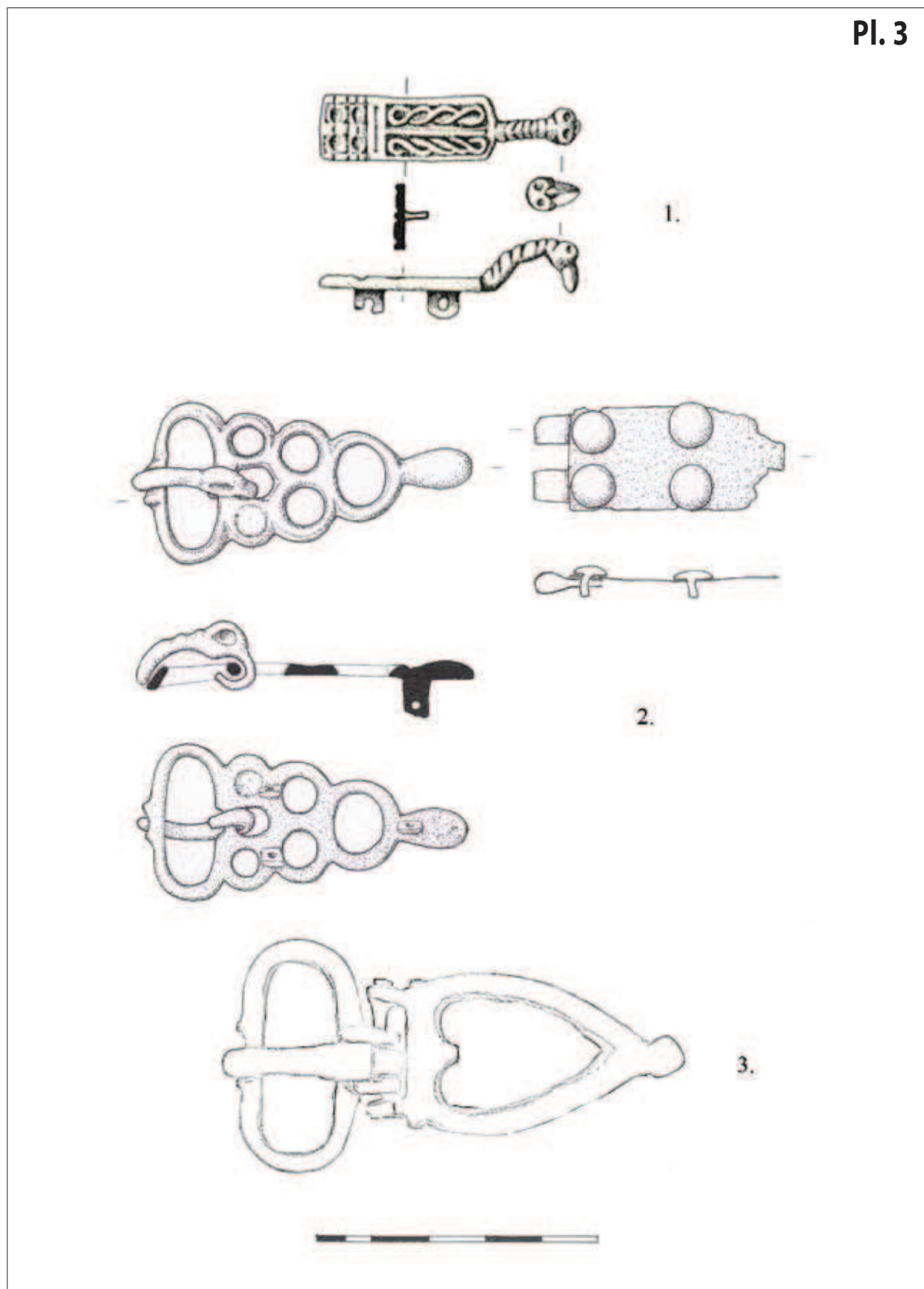
## Pl. 2



**Plate II** Roman finds (1., 2. Glass, 3. – 5. Fibulae, 6. – 7. Beads, 8. Mount, 9. Finger ring, 10. Iron chain with key-ring and omega fibula) (drawings by: M. Galić /3, 5, 6, 9, 10/, A. Rapan Papeša /1, 2, 4, 7, 8/)



## Pl. 3



**Plate III** Migration and Byzantine period finds (1. Mount, 2. – 3. Buckles) (drawings by: K. Rončević /1/, M. Galić /2/, A. Rapan Papeša /3/)

