

Doctoral Dissertation

**Deviant Burial Practices in Medieval South-Eastern Europe**

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I'm coming up only to hold you under  
And coming up only to show you're wrong  
And to know you is hard, we wonder  
To know you all wrong, we were [...]

*The Funeral*, Band of Horses

[...] Just as every cop is a criminal  
And all the sinners - saints  
As heads is tails  
Just call me Lucifer  
'Cause I'm in need of some restraint  
So, if you meet me  
Have some courtesy  
Have some sympathy, and some taste  
Use all your well-learned politeness  
Or I'll lay your soul to waste [...]

*Sympathy for the Devil*, The Rolling Stones

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## Introduction

Archaeologists are sometimes compared to detectives solving the mysteries of history. Rarely such analogy is more appropriate than in the study of deviant burials. The nearly forensic strive to collect the most detailed observations possible and to restore the stories embodied in the human remains motivates the investigation of these unusual and marginalized discoveries. The growing awareness that those special cases where the deceased received noticeable differential treatment deserve dedicated and systematic approach turned a tide in funerary archaeology. Furthermore, we must admit deviant burials attracted significant interest from the wider public and, like it or not, are now part of the pop-culture perception of the discipline.

What is deviant burial and why it occurs are questions that have been part of archaeological thinking longer than we may assume. Nevertheless, a fragmented point of view focused on material culture and biological objectification of human skeletal remains drove most of the focus away from symbolic interactions and bodily manipulations in the formation of the archaeological record. While much of its appeal originates in the exceptionalism of the phenomenon, the most fascinating aspects of research on the topic is the exposure to diverse and complementing perspectives conventionally disregarded in historic narratives. In many respects the unlikely group on focus here manages to expose significant deficiencies in our notions on the social, political, religious circumstances of medieval life or likewise incomplete understanding of past landscape or corporal inculturations etc.

The chronological and geographical framework of the dissertation is constructed around different layers of analysis and the capacity to further explore the topic in cross-cultural perspective. Thus, this is but a tiny facet of the general problem

of mortuary deviance in human funerary behaviour. The region of study is focused on South-Eastern Europe and the range in time is from the seventh to the fifteenth century.

The expanding sphere of knowledge based on deviant burials shaped the main themes considered in the dissertation. The first of these broad goals is to clarify the place of deviant burials in the mortuary behaviour, especially how they relate to regular funerary rites and what will be redefined here as extra-normative funerary activity. From the onset of this study it was clear that deviant burials are just a fraction of the funerary record. The diverse nature of our evidence also means that very often prospective deviant burials can be easily recognized against other mortuary contexts in the field but their definition and description remain precarious. The difficulties for post-excavation identification reduces the sample even further, yet a stricter sampling strategy based on current archaeothanatological principles is followed.

The second major concern is to what extend the impact of secular and sacred factors on past populations can be assessed through deviant burials. Perhaps all too easily the variety of funerary performances has been relegated to incomprehensible rituals with peculiar appearance and simplistic explanatory formulas on the spirituality of pre-modern times. The historical gap between contemporary and medieval perceptions has been lazily exploited to draw superficial narratives about the social conditions and meanings facilitating the creation of these specific archaeological contexts. Arguably, deviant burials demonstrate the multiple facets of biopolitics or rather necropolitics entangled in the (mal)treatment of the deceased.

Directly streaming from this line of thought is the third main research theme of the dissertation trying to understand how deviant burials can inform us on the



development of judicial culture and complex society in medieval South-Eastern Europe. Indeed, legal aspects in the interpretations of the archaeological record have been virtually absent in the academic tradition of Eastern Europe until the continental reappraisal of the topic in the last decade or so. It will be demonstrated that in many cases such a reading of the archaeological record proves better suited to the empirical basis and allows refined reconstructions. Hence, the long-term view on the available physical evidence for coercion and violence over particular individuals in this cultural background will comparatively analyze and deliberately test many ideas emerging from the ongoing debate.

Adressing these general thematic issues will be elaborated through a narrower set of specific research questions. They include, but are not limited, to matters like: the spatial configurations of deviant burials in the landscape; the continuity or change of deviant burial practices during Christianization; the possible correlation between deviant burials and particular elements in the funerary rites; evidence for state-authorized violence; or, the existence of execution cemeteries in the region.

The principle research task to approach these themes is the collection and analysis of the deviant burials in systematic and theoretically-informed manner. A stricter sampling strategy based on current archaeothanatological principles is followed. For this reason, a working definition of deviant burials was accepted. According to it, deviant burials are a distinct, extra-normative variation in the continuum of mortuary practices. They are characterized by the specific body treatment signalling devaluation of the individual and thus, the negative connotations attached to it in the past or the present. As it is evident, this is a composite term with intertwined descriptive and interpretative elements. The four forms of interment most often recognized as deviant are the prone (face-down) position, fixation (weighting

down) in the grave, decapitation, and bodily mutilation. Despite the wide chronological and geographical framework, the difficulties for identification reduces the sample substantially. The main database consists of 250 entries with additional data from mass graves or similar extra-normative burials included in case studies and the discussion as a whole.

The dissertation unfolds in a traditional structure including an introduction, three thematic chapters, conclusion, and the catalogue containing the descriptions of all burials from the main database.

The first, prelude part, includes the present introduction, an overview of previous literature, and a methodological chapter. The section devoted to the history of research does not defer to disengaged listing of authors and their publications but prefers to grasp the predominant research trends by commenting on a selection, although not exhaustive selection of representative and somewhat influential studies. It also tries to place the current state of research within the grand developments in archaeological thinking and the specific political and social context of archaeology in the Balkans. Hence, a brief discussion on the terminological history and alternatives to the term deviant burials is also present here. In the methodological chapter are explained the series of choices and the rationale behind them in the approach to the source material, mostly archaeological, anthropological, and historical in nature.

Some clarification on the chronological and regional framework of the dissertation are also placed in this section. Specific explanation is given for the different sampling methods and analytical levels applied in the large-scale view on the topic.

The following analytical part consists of two mirroring chapters complementing each other. In chapter one self-evidently named *Chronology*,

*distribution, and quantification of individual deviant burials* are summarized the results from the quantitative analysis of the four forms of deviant burials. The chapter discusses the prone position, decapitation, fixation, and mutilation burials separately according to a set of standardized characteristics such as dating, geographical distribution, the layout and orientation of the grave, the presence of grave goods, and the biological sex and age of the deceased. Naturally, particular aspects of the deviant practices are also discussed, such as targetting of particular body part, types of constraint or disarticulation, and notably the level of correlation with the rest of the deviant practices. The recorded temporal and regional variations are summarized with special attention given to the the formation of regional clusters and their periodization.

Chapter two *Outsiders in death: contextual site surveys* takes a rather different stance. The phenomenon is discussed in greater detail against the site-specific context and on a limited number of referential sites with significant concentrations of deviant burials. The selection of these case studies intends to cover more or less the cultural zones and conditions around the Balkan peninsula, as well as different periods. Hence, Bečej (Serbia) reflects decapitations in late Avar Pannonia and could be compared to the situation in the slightly later pagan Bulgar cemeteries in Devnya (Bulgaria). The Adriatic littoral around the Croat conversion to Christianity is represented by the cemeteries Ždrijac near the city of Nin and Maklinovo brdo (Croatia) in the hinterland. Also, the positioning of deviant burials in urban mortuary landscape is illustrated in the early Bulgar power centre Pliska (Bulgaria), although the recorded examples cover the later period in its existence. Finally, the late medieval rural cemeteries are represented by the site Trnjane (Serbia).

Furthermore, case studies do not reflect only single-site surveys but were designed after certain emerging or expected patterns from the analysis in the previous chapter. These include the examination of evidence for violent death in the Podunavlje-Iron Gates region or the liminal placement of deviant burials in the early medieval biritual cemeteries on the Lower Danube. Other sections focus on the excavated mass graves known or the interments outside designated burial grounds and within settlements across medieval South-Eastern Europe.

The third chapter accommodates the interpretative part of the dissertation. Its five interconnected subchapters will discuss extensively the research outcomes to answer the main thematic goals of the dissertation. The first of them will delve into the blurred lines in archaeological denominations of funerary practices. In this grey area for our understanding deviant burials are not a rigid norm, but an ensemble of meaningful arrangements in the symbolic interactions among social agents. They can be contemplated as the coping mechanism for disturbances in the personal or communal handling of extraordinary social situations. In the following subchapter is reflected the body-centric perspective on funerary customs. Examining a mixture of medieval and postmodern conceptualizations of the human body, the patterns visible in graves with deviant traits will be contextualized in behavioural and physical terms.

The focus then shifts to the religious aspects of funerary practices built around the mindset described before that. The argument will assess the traditional narratives on deviant burials as expressions of resilient pre-Christian belief systems and subsequently, deeply rooted rites dealing with the fear from the dead. It will be proposed that religion provided the framework for performing deviant rites but does not give a sole satisfying explanation for the social tensions behind them. To expand on this, evidence from the judicial realms of medieval life is integrated in the

discussion. The principal view that misconduct or misfortune in life was transmitted in death will be applied to seek the remains of social outsiders and felons in the mortuary record.

Finally, the account given by these silenced witnesses will be brought in the larger cultural context of the socio-political development of the very same communities negotiating their funerary mistreatment. The possibilities of deviant burials to inform us on the long-term processes of complexity and political struggle will be tested in the dynamic and often misrepresented environment of a region still very much haunted by its past.

### **1. *Glocal trends in the history of research***

When defining the history of archaeology Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn<sup>1</sup> described it as foremost the history of the ideas and the theories about the human past. Then comes the development of the methods engaging these ideas and questions until finally the individual discoveries could be integrated in this narrative. To a large extent, their consideration provides the blueprint for discussing how archaeological thinking approached deviant burials. The following survey aims not merely to provide exhaustive list of literature, but to create a sense of the ongoing academic endeavors. Only in the last two decades the subject of deviant burials could be regarded as truly active and deliberate line of scientific inquiry steaming from the general field of mortuary archaeology. As such, some long-held notions in the various national academic traditions influenced the marginalization of deviant burials in earlier archaeological research. With the increased occurrence of deviant burials, the

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<sup>1</sup> Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn, *Archaeology: Theories, Methods, and Practice* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 17.

discourse achieved a *glocal* character in a sense of "find locally, think globally" if we twist the popular business expression. However, the local findings tend to be placed in two opposing interpretative considerations with emphasis on the fear of the dead or the judicial factor in the archaeological record. Another common feature of the historiography is the uneasiness surrounding the terminological preference of researchers from differing linguistic and theoretical backgrounds.

### 1.1. The tyranny of culture history

The social sciences, archaeology included, do not exist in a vacuum and contemporary political, social, and economic circumstances are reflected in reconstructions of past societies.<sup>2</sup> It has also been noted that the profound impact made by historical changes, ideological influences, and political movements is more obvious in Central and Eastern Europe than in Western European context.<sup>3</sup> This situation is hardly surprising for the region on focus here, as the historical regions in the Balkans have been synonymous to political turmoil and instability as recently as the beginning of the century. Unquestionably, archaeology and national histories played their part in the struggles of national states and communist regimes between the Adriatic and the Black Sea.

Predrag Novaković made a detailed effort to overcome the traditional model of the general progress of archaeology in the case of the states of former Yugoslavia

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley, *Social Theory and Archaeology* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> József Laszlovsky and Csilla Siklódi, "Archaeological Theory in Hungary since 1960: Theories without Theoretical Archaeology," in *Archaeological Theory in Europe: The Last Three Decades*, ed. Ian Hodder (London: Routledge, 1991), 272.

and by extension, the Balkans.<sup>4</sup> Particular point of contention is the application of derogative colonizing stereotypes on the development of local archaeologies there exemplified in a generalizing gaze on a single Balkan image. While he offers a detailed overview on the institutionalization process to demonstrate the heterogeneous and fragmented nature of the discipline in the region, the general point that national archaeologies are largely dependent on political and historical circumstances remains valid.

Despite Novaković' objections, this entanglement is not an isolated sign for the epistemological domination of the culture-historical paradigm in the archaeologies of South-Eastern Europe. Most, if not all principal features of culture history like the normativity of culture, ethno-centric concern for identification and mapping of cultural groups, the emphasis on migrations, and the fundamentally descriptive style could be found in fieldwork and post-excavation work alike. This is especially valid in the field of medieval archaeology. According to Florin Curta this appeal is ultimately tied to the persistent reverence to textual evidence and historiography as superior evidence for the human past.<sup>5</sup> Anyway, much like in Hungary for example, the compulsory Soviet Marxist ideology failed to overcome the culture-historical tradition and actually strengthens it as most studies avoided theorizing and limited themselves to descriptions of the excavations and cataloguing the finds.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Predrag Novaković, "Archaeology in the New Countries of Southeastern Europe: A Historical Perspective," in: *Comparative Archaeologies: A Sociological View of the Science of the Past*, ed. L.R. Lozny (New York: Springer, 2011), 343.

<sup>5</sup> Florin Curta, "Medieval Archaeology in Southeastern Europe," in: *Reflections. 50 Years of Medieval Archaeology 1957-2007*, eds. Roberta Gilchrist and Andrew Reynolds (London: Routledge, 2009), 195-196. Cf. David Austin, "The proper study of medieval archaeology," in: *From the Baltic to the Black Sea: Studies in Medieval Archaeology*, eds. David Austin and Leslie Alcock (London: Routledge, 1997), 11-19; Timothy Champion, "Medieval archaeology and the tyranny of the historical record," in: *From the Baltic to the Black Sea: Studies in Medieval Archaeology*, eds. David Austin and Leslie Alcock (London: Routledge, 1997), 88-93.

<sup>6</sup> József Laszlovsky and Csilla Siklódi, "Archaeological Theory", 275; Florin Curta, "Medieval Archaeology", 212.

For funerary archaeology, this variation of culture history, as well as the limited number of its practitioners<sup>7</sup>, resulted in the establishment of certain views that obscured and directly affected the research on deviant burials. Probably the most widespread and influential cliché describes funerals in universal unilinear evolution as the most conservative cultural tradition linking people from different historical ages.<sup>8</sup> Thus, very often when irregularities are detected in the archaeological record, they are automatically characterized as archaic rituals. In Christian milieu they are often considered pagan reminiscences, encoded in the mentality of the people. The Bulgarian archaeologist Yordanka Changova puts it quite vividly. In her own words these are “throwback from the pagan period, an echo of outgrown funeral tradition.”<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, the alleged conservatism of the death rites was occasionally used to track the ethnogenesis of various groups in the area like Bulgars, Croats, later Serbs etc., especially for the pre-Christian period. The pagan-Christian continuity of these groups is usually negotiated through observations on grave goods deposition, but occasionally the deviant burials are also cited in this respect. For instance, Gordana Marjanović-Vujović sees early Slavic pagan continuity in the eleventh-twelfth century cemeteries from Serbia in a number of practices.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, she establishes a link between the predetermined place of pagan customs irrespective of the official religion to Serbian ethnic identity of the population of early medieval Belgrade.<sup>11</sup> On the contrary, non-normative, i.e. non-Christian, elements of the burial rite are cited by Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova as yet another sign for Pecheneg ethnocultural

<sup>7</sup> Predrag Novaković, “Archaeology in the New”, 449-450.

<sup>8</sup> Originally found in [Sergey Tokarev] Сергей Токарев, *Ранние формы религии и их развитие* [Early forms of religion and their development], (Moscow, 1964), 20.

<sup>9</sup> [Yordanka Changova] Йорданка Чангова, *Перник* [Pernik], vol. 2 (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1983), 181.

<sup>10</sup> Gordana Marjanović-Vujović. “Burial rite of the necropolises from 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century in the territory of Serbia,” *Balkanoslavica* 9 (1980): 68.

<sup>11</sup> [Gordana Marjanović-Vujović] Гордана Марјановић-Вујовић. “Раносредњовековна некропола на Доњем граду Београдске тврђаве” [Early medieval cemetery in the Lower town of the Belgrade fortress], *Годишњак града Београда* 36 (1989): 21.



identification of the community using the contemporary cemeteries in Odartsi, today Northeastern Bulgaria.<sup>12</sup>

Another example comes from the Soviet archaeologist Valeriy Flerov who builds on the so-called anti-transfiguration ritual interpretation and implies that it can be seen as ethnic marker for the Bulgars during and after their migration.<sup>13</sup> He constructed a tenth- eleventh-century archaeological horizon Sarkel-Devnya 2 stretching from the Danube to Volga and stressed the importance of proving the intentionality of the rite. If we follow his logic though, this Bulgar horizon could easily be stretched far to the west on purely formal characteristics. The shortcomings of this approach demonstrate the necessity of contextually studying the phenomenon on a regional scale beyond the trivial ethnocultural agenda.

While all these views see deviant and non-normative funerary practice as decisively non-Christian, analogous findings are mobilized to testify for either long-established primal superstition of ethnically stable communities or the migration of foreign nomad cultures. Essentially, the effect of the stubborn preoccupation with ethnic identification results in vaguely defined and misplaced discussion on any minor rites either on a single site level or in broader context.

The focus on summarizing an established funerary norm that could hold the key to the riddle of ethnic identity for the culture-historical tradition has another effect on the study of deviant burials. While they remained outside of the focus, their counterpart, the normal and the standard were summarized by archaeologists. This usually takes the form of a quantifiable set of characteristics listed in more or less unified fashion, occasionally incorporating internal variabilities, against which the

<sup>12</sup> [Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova] Людмила Дончева-Петкова, *Одърци: Некрополи от XI век*. [Odartsi: Cemeteries from the 11<sup>th</sup> century] (Sofia: Marin Drinov, 2005), 161.

<sup>13</sup> [Valeriy Flerov] Валерий Флеров, Обряд обезвреживания погребенных у праболгар (предварительное сообщение) [Anti-transfiguration rite among the Protobulgarians (preliminary observations)], *Проблеми на прабългарската история и култура* 1 (1989): 185.

unusual should be observed. These *re-constructions* hold merit to the study of deviant burials both as the methodological benchmark for their identification and interpretative framework which should be acknowledged. Nearly all available works are done in such manner with added interest in greater chronological precision, but particularly influential and useful overviews are written, for instance, by J. Belošević<sup>14</sup>, Dušan Jelovina<sup>15</sup>, Maja Petrinc<sup>16</sup> and Vladimir Sokol<sup>17</sup> for the Old Croatian mortuary practices, Branko Marušić for Istria<sup>18</sup>, Gordana Marjanović-Vujović<sup>19</sup> and Perica Špehar<sup>20</sup> for Serbia and the Central Balkans in general, Nebojša Stanojev for Vojvodina<sup>21</sup>, Dejan Radičević for the Serbian Podunavlje<sup>22</sup>, Silviu Oța<sup>23</sup> for Banat, Cristian Luca and Dragoș Mandescu for the Wallachian Plain<sup>24</sup>, Zhivka Vazharova for Bulgaria<sup>25</sup>, and Uwe Fiedler for the early medieval Lower Danube<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Janko Belošević, *Materijalna kultura Hrvata od VII do IX stoljeća* [Material culture of the Croats from 7th to 9th century] (Zagreb: Sveučilišna naklada liber, 1980)

<sup>15</sup> Dušan Jelovina, *Starohrvatske nekropole na području između rijeka Zrmanje i Cetine* [Old Croat necropolises in the area between Zrmanja and Cetina rivers] (Split: Čakavski sabor 1976); Dušan Jelovina, *Starohrvatsko kulturno blago* [Old Croat cultural heritage] (Zagreb: Mladost, 1986)

<sup>16</sup> Maja Petrinc, *Groblja od 8. do 11. stoljeća na području ranosrednjovjekovne hrvatske države* [Cemeteries from 8th to 11th centuries on the territory of the early medieval Croatian state] (Split: Muzej hrvatskih arheoloških spomenika, 2009).

<sup>17</sup> Vladimir Sokol, *Medieval jewelry and burial assemblages in Croatia: a study of graves and grave goods, ca. 800 to ca. 1450*. (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

<sup>18</sup> Branko Marušić, *Istria i Sjevernojadranski prostor u ranom srednjem veku (materijalna kultura od 7-11. stoljeća)* [Istria and the North Adriatic region in the early Middle Ages (material culture from 7th-11th centuries)] Monografije i katalozi 4 (Pula: Arheološki muzej Istre, 1995).

<sup>19</sup> Gordana Marjanović-Vujović. “Burial rite of the necropolises”.

<sup>20</sup> Perica Špehar [Перица Шпехар]. *Централни Балкан от 7. До 11. Века. Археолошка сведочанства* [The Central Balkans from 7th to 11th c. Archaeological testimonies] (Belgrade: IP Booka, 2017), 101-130.

<sup>21</sup> Nebojša Stanojev, *Nekropole X-XV veka u Vojvodini* [Necropolises from 10-15th centuries in Vojvodina] (Novi Sad: Arheološko društvo Vojvodine, 1989).

<sup>22</sup> Dejan Radičević, “Periodizacija nekropola IX-XI veka u donjem crpskom Podunavlju” [Periodization of the cemeteries from 9th-11th centuries in the Lower Serbian Podunavlje], *Starinar* LVII (2007); Dejan Radičević, “Necropole medievale din secolele al IX-lea –al XI-lea în bazinul inferior al Dunării (porțiunea sârbească)” [Medieval cemeteries from 9th -11th centuries on the Serbian side of the lower Danubian basin], *ISTROS* 19 (2013); Dejan Radičević [Дејан Радичевић], “Периодизација позносредњовековних некропола у доњем српском Подунављу,” *Starinar* LVIII (2008).

<sup>23</sup> Silviu Oța. *The Mortuary Archaeology of the Medieval Banat (10th – 14th centuries)* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> Cristian Luca and Dragoș Măndescu. *Rituri și ritualuri funerare în spațiul extracarpatic în secolele VIII-X* [Rites and funerary customs in the extra Carpathian space between the 8th and 10th centuries] (Braila: Editura Istros, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> [Zhivka Vazharova] Живка Въжарова, *Славяни и прабългари: по данни на некрополите от VI-XI в. на територията на България* [Slavs and protobulgarians based on data from the

The Avar archaeology is mostly based on mortuary remains; thus, the abundance of literature is even greater.<sup>27</sup> Naturally, these are supplemented by an increasing number of site-specific publications. However, as cemeteries yield a significant amount of archaeological information, the emphasis is strongly placed on the material culture and the interest in the human remains themselves is only supplementary.

## 1.2. What are you saying? Terminological issues in the historiography

*Nomen est omen*, the Latin saying claims. Naming a thing is in a way its creation, profoundly appreciating that it is separate entity from everything else. In the case of *deviant* burials, this formalized beginning happened in the midst of the theoretical developments of archaeology in Anglophone countries. With the emergence of processual and postprocessual schools of thought, deviancy, like many other concepts or methods, was borrowed in archaeology as part of the growing importance of statistical and scientific methods in social sciences.<sup>28</sup> The terminology

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necropoleis from seventh to eleventh century on the territory of Bulgaria] (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1976)

<sup>26</sup> Uwe Fiedler, *Studien zu Gräberfeldern des 6. Bis 9. Jahrhunderts an der unteren Donau* (Bonn: Dr. Rudolph Habelt GmbH, 1992).

<sup>27</sup> Falko Daim, "Avars and Avar Archaeology. An Introduction," in: *Regna and Gentes. The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the transformation of the Roman World* eds. Hans-Werner Goets, J. Jarnut, and W. Pohl (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 463-570; József Szentpéteri (ed.) *Archäologische Denkmäler der Awarenzeit in Mitteleuropa, VAH 13*, vol. 1–2 (Budapest: Archäologisches Institut der UAW, 2002); József Szentpéteri, "Was die Verbreitungskarten erzählen ... (Beiträge zum Problemkreis der Datierung der Awarenzeit)," *Antaeus* 29–30 (2008), 325–346.

<sup>28</sup> Matthew Johnson, *Archaeological Theory: an introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999); David Clarke, "Archaeology: the loss of innocence," *Antiquity* 47 (1973), 6-18; Lewis R. Binford, *In pursuit of the past: Decoding the Archaeological Record* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1983); Colin Renfrew, *Approaches to Social Archaeology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984); Ian Hodder, "Postprocessual archaeology," *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory* 8 (1985), 1-26; Kent Flannery and Joyce Marcus, "Cognitive Archaeology," in *Contemporary Archaeology In Theory: a reader* eds. W. P. Preucel and Ian Hodder (Oxford: Blackwell 1996), 350-363; Michael Shanks, "Post-processual archaeology and after," In: *Handbook of Archaeological Theories*, eds. R. Alexander Bentley, Herbert D. G. Maschner, Christopher Chippindale (Plymouth: AltaMira Press, 2008), 133-146.

applied to the phenomenon proved to be a contested point and some crucial takes on the matter should be acknowledged.<sup>29</sup>

The prominence of the term for the so-called New Archaeology is ultimately tied to the Saxe-Binford approach, which lies on the premise that social roles and organization are detectable in the funerary effort and treatment of the deceased.<sup>30</sup> Arthur Saxe and his research on the social dimension of mortuary practices had major role in this methodological shift.<sup>31</sup> Among his eight cross-cultural hypotheses based on anthropological observations over the West African Ashanti, the Kapauku from New Guinea and the Bontoc Igorot of the Phillipines, Hypothesis No.7 has significant impact on the argument of this thesis. According to Saxe, the simpler a society is, the less variation exists in deviant funerary practices. Several aspects of this hypothesis are relevant here. First, the term is used to designate unusual burials in numerical terms. Second, it is associated with individuals considered as outsiders in one way or another. Third, the complexity of this phenomenon and the society as a system are directly interdependent.

In the reactions to the processualist perspective, deviant burials maintained conceptual relevance as they were seen to reflect religious beliefs and individual agency, all topics favoured in post-processual thinking.<sup>32</sup> The substantial critique on the epistemological and theoretical background of the term is introduced by

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<sup>29</sup> The same applies for social theory in general: Pip Jones, *Introducing Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), 102-115; Alex Thio, Thomas Calhoun, and Addraine Conyers, "Introduction," In: *Deviancy Today*, eds. Addraine Conyers and Thomas Calhoun (London: Routledge, 2020), 1-5.

<sup>30</sup> Lewis R. Binford, "Mortuary practices: their study and their potential," *Memoirs of the Society for American Archaeology* 25 (1971), 6-29; James Brown, "On mortuary analysis—with special reference to the Saxe-Binford research program," In: *Regional approaches to mortuary analysis*, ed. Lane Beck (Boston: Springer, 1995), 3-26.

<sup>31</sup> Arthur Saxe, *Social Dimensions of Mortuary Practices* (PhD Thesis: University of Michigan, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms Inc., 1970)

<sup>32</sup> E.g., Ian Hodder, *Postprocessual archaeology*; Edeltraud Aspöck, "What Actually is a Deviant Burial? Comparing German-Language and Anglophone Research on "Deviant Burials", In: *Deviant Burial in the Archaeological Record*, ed. Eileen Murphy (Oxford: Oxbow Press, 1998), 23.

international comparison and more specifically with the German research vocabulary. E. Aspöck regards the term deviant burial as English equivalent of the German *Sonderbestattung* and points to the fact that the word deviant is charged with sexual and negative connotations. She argues for the use of a neutral term closer to the archaeological evidence and its classificatory character.<sup>33</sup>

The logic is especially sound for fieldwork records and translated variants of the denomination are widely used around East-central Europe. The linguistic chaos is one of the objective reasons behind the terminological uneasiness surrounding the topic. For instance, the most adequate translation for *Sonderbestattung* to English would be special burial, but more in line with Aspöck's remarks is atypical grave (*pochowek atypowy*) as used in Poland.<sup>34</sup> In fact, atypical burial has been promoted as a supposedly neutral alternative to deviance in attempts to diminish any preconceived negative associations and avoid binary oppositions.<sup>35</sup>

Going further in this direction, the possible translation of deviant to German was *abweichenden*, but *irregulären* probably feels less speculative.<sup>36</sup> In the linguistic environment of the Balkans, the rare references to the phenomenon use similar vocabulary e.g., *neobičajeni ritus* (unusual rite) in Croatian or irregular grave (*нередовен гроб*) in Bulgarian.<sup>37</sup> However, resorting to *atypical* burials has exactly

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<sup>33</sup> Edeltraud Aspöck, "What Actually is a Deviant Burial," 29.

<sup>34</sup> Leszek Gardela. *Bad Death in the Early Middle Ages. Atypical Burials from Poland in a Comparative Perspective*. (Rzeszów: Instytut Archeologii UR, 2017), 22.

<sup>35</sup> Amy Scott, Tracy Betsinger, Anastasia Tsaliki, "Deconstructing 'deviant.' An introduction to the history of atypical burials and the importance of context in the bioarchaeological record," In: *The Odd, the Unusual, and the Strange. Bioarchaeological Explorations of Atypical Burials*, eds. Amy Scott, Tracy Betsinger, Anastasia Tsaliki (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2020), 6.

<sup>36</sup> Alexander Gramsch, "Wer will schon normal sein? Kommentare zur Interpretation 'irregulärer' Bestattungen," In: *'Irreguläre' Bestattungen in der Urgeschichte: Norm, Ritual, Strafe ...?*, ed. Nils Müller-Scheeßel (Bonn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, 2013), 509.

<sup>37</sup> Siniša Krznar and Željka Bedić, "Neobičajeni ritus pokopavanja u srednjem i novom vijeku na prostoru sjeverne Hrvatske," *Zbornik Instituta za Arheologiju* 4 (Zagreb: Institute of Archaeology, 2016).

the opposite effect since its very conception is based even more explicitly on the same linguistic dichotomy and maintains the simplification of mortuary variation.

Ironically, precisely the shortcomings of the term *deviant* can turn into advantage. Truly, non-normative burials cover a wide spectrum of contextual variations and a rare grave type should not be simply declared deviant.<sup>38</sup> In French context the possible meanings surrounding the *atypiques mortuaires* present in English research are 'distilled' in the concept for liminal ritual, *rite liminaire*.<sup>39</sup> For their part, deviant burials should be understood as sub-category of non-normative or rather extra-normative burials associated with a certain negative image upheld by society.<sup>40</sup> In fact, such restrained meaning was already proposed by Aspöck. She acknowledged that certain physical aberrations are consistent in attempts to mark individuals in negative way, thus suggesting that the term deviant burial should only be used at the interpretational stage.<sup>41</sup>

Then again, radically reducing the overlap between descriptive and interpretative terminology to fixed absolutes in the way Boulestin argues will lead only to the disintegration of any holistic understanding of the phenomena and the accumulation of redundant descriptive data for its own sake.<sup>42</sup> The latter is rather vainly advocated by proclaiming an independent school of 'field anthropological' thought based on 'characteristically French' rigour for the increasing understanding of

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<sup>38</sup> Boulestin, Bruno, "Norme funéraire: illusions et vérités," In: *Qu'est-ce qu'une sépulture? Humanités et systèmes funéraires de la Préhistoire à nos jours*, eds. Michel Lauwers and Aurélie Zémour (Antibes: Editione ABDCA, 2015), 373-5.

<sup>39</sup> Ian Gonzalez Alaña, "Deviant burials, nécrophobie, rite liminaire: pour une normalisation sémantique et une approche systémique des gestes funéraires et mortuaires "atypiques", In: *Antropologia e archeologia a confronto: Archeologia e antropologia della morte 1. La regola dell'eccezione* ed. Valentino Nizzo (Rome: Fondazione Dià Cultura, 2018), 125-130.

<sup>40</sup> See below, 3.1.

<sup>41</sup> Edeltraud Aspöck, *The relativity of normality: an archaeological and anthropological study of deviant burials and different treatment at death* (PhD Dissertation: University of Reading, 2009), 56-7.

<sup>42</sup> Boulestin, Bruno, "A tale of two worlds: terminologies in archaeoethanatology," In: *The Routledge Handbook of archaeoethanatology. Bioarchaeology of mortuary behaviour*, eds. Christopher Knüsel and Eline Schotsmans (London: Routledge, 2022), 42-48.

the mortuary process.<sup>43</sup> Ironically, the application of hard line archaeothanatology resembles a quest for bioarchaeological middle-range theory.

By repeating the ultimately futile search of the New Archaeology and self-isolating terminological puritanism, this separation offers merely a diminished view of the human experience of death. It is worth considering that conceptual schemes exist in practice and are structured by the physical condition. The archaeological vocabulary should maintain this entanglement and link multiple possible readings of the objectified mortuary find.

The existing terminology is more sensibly criticized in relativistic terms pointing out that contemporary prejudices are not necessarily adequate in different temporal or cultural milieu.<sup>44</sup> While this is a valid consideration for the interpretations of wide mortuary variability, the concerns are misdirected since the deviant term does not equate extra-normativity here rather than representing a restricted hypothesis about social denial. Moreover, this concern compromises the integrity and possibility for any abstraction based on strict and clearly stated criteria by falling into the nuance traps so predictably present in social science discourse.<sup>45</sup>

Instead of avoiding the problem by replacing one problematic term with clumsy and insufficient wording, perhaps it will be more productive to define the limitations of the term, soberly address the semantic issues, and focus on the substance. Nevertheless, this historiographic issue will inform the subsequent interpretation of data about deviant burials in the Balkans.

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<sup>43</sup> Personal statements by Fanny Bocquentin (2018) and Bruno Boulestin (2019), cited in Christopher Knüsel and Eline Schotsman, “Archaeothanatology, funerary archaeology and bioarchaeology: perspectives on the long view of death and the dead,” In: *The Routledge Handbook of archaeothanatology. Bioarchaeology of mortuary behaviour*, eds. Christopher Knüsel and Eline Schotsmans (London: Routledge, 2022), 4.

<sup>44</sup> Belinda Crerar, *Contextualizing Deviancy. A Regional Approach to Decapitated Inhumation in Late Roman Britain*. PhD Dissertation: University of Cambridge (2014), 25.

<sup>45</sup> Kieran Healy, “Fuck Nuance,” *Sociological Theory* 35 (2017).



### 1.3. Narratives of deviance: folklore, archaeology, and vampirism

Fear of the dead and vampirism are the key concepts in the first major and somewhat dominant academic narrative about deviant burials. This explanatory scheme is fundamentally tied to the notion of stable religious essence embodied in the conservative archaic emanations of the funerary ritual. This conceptual premise defines the most characteristic trait, namely the ethnographic emphasis in argumentation and explanation.

The discourse based on anti-vampire rituals is quite substantial in East-Central Europe with Polish archaeologists seeming especially involved. In the Balkans, the academic tradition is widely accepting the anti-vampirism as equivalent to deviant burials with the Bulgarian research appearing the most consistent in this trend. Poland and the Balkan countries share many cultural, political, and historical trends, especially in the post-war period. The similarity of responses to deviant burials is therefore not surprising.

Following the influential work by Helena Zoll-Adamikova on tenth-thirteenth century graves from Poland, the protective anti-vampire ritual (*pochówek antywampiryczny*) commentary received unchallenged association with deviant burials.<sup>46</sup> It seems she understood the word vampire rather as a heterogenous term describing all forms of revenants. Unusual early medieval Polish graves have been collected and categorized by Przemysław Żydok, and Andrzej Janowski and Monika Garas.<sup>47</sup> The reading of deviant burials in anti-vampirism terms is still preferred by

<sup>46</sup> Helena Zoll-Adamikowa, *Wczesnośredniowieczne cmentarzyska szkieletowe Małopolski. Część 2. Analiza*. [Late medieval burials from Małopolski. Part two. Analysis.] (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk/Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich, 1971), 47-54.

<sup>47</sup> Przemysław Żydok, "Wczesnośredniowieczne pochówki antywampiryczne" [Late medieval anti-vampire rites], In *Hereditatem Cognoscere: Studia i szkice dedykowane Profesor Marii Miśkiewicz*, ed. Z. Kobyliński (Warszawa: Wydział Nauk Historycznych i Społecznych Uniwersytetu



some researchers dealing with the phenomenon in modern day Czechia and Slovakia as well.<sup>48</sup> Such readings of the archaeological record rely on ethnographic accounts for unusual funerary practices as late as the twentieth century or early written stories about rising dead such as the eighteen-century treatise by the Benedictine Dom Augustin Calmet dealing with the vampires of Hungary, Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia.<sup>49</sup>

Ethnographic argumentation enters the discussion of deviant burial rites in the Christian context of field cemeteries. Peyo Gatev establishes this framework on the basis of his twelve-century finds in Kovachevo.<sup>50</sup> He directly correlates the archaeological data to ethnographic records. He interprets deviant burials as manifestations of an anti-vampire tradition trying to prevent ill-tempered people from becoming undead. Furthermore, following L. Niederle and similar finds from elsewhere in Eastern Europe, he presents anti-vampirism as characteristically Slavic. In Greece, the belief in vampires is commonly recorded throughout the Ottoman age but is connected to Slavic influence in the Byzantine period.<sup>51</sup> In fact, a major disbalance in the frequency of early ethnographic records and archaeological reports on anti-vampirism burials has been observed.<sup>52</sup> This view is echoed in the acceptance of preventive measures against vampires by Gordana Marjanović-Vujović in her

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Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego/Państwowe. Muzeum Archeologiczne/Instytut Archeologii Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2004), 38–66; Andrzej Janowski and Monika Garas, “Pochówki atypowe na cmentarzyskach zachodniopomorskich w dobie chrystianizacji,” *Acta Archaeologica Lodziensia* 56 (2010), 51–64.

<sup>48</sup> Vladimir Kaznakov, *Treatment of the "special" dead in the early Middle Ages: Anglo-Saxon and Slavic perspectives* (University of Glasgow: PhD thesis, 2013).

<sup>49</sup> Augustin Calmet, *Treatise on the Apparitions of Spirits and on Vampires or Revenants: of Hungary, Moravia, et al. The Complete Volumes I & II*. Translation by Rev Henry Christmas and Brett R Warren (Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015).

<sup>50</sup> [Peyo Gatev] Пейо Гатев, *Средновековно селище и некропол от 12 век при с. Ковачево, Пазарджишки окръг* [Medieval village and cemetery from 12th century near Kovachevo, district Pazardzhik] (Sofia: National Archaeological Museum, 1985).

<sup>51</sup> Sandra Garvie-Lok and Anastasia Tsaliki, “The ‘vampires’ of Lesbos. Detecting and interpreting anti-revenant ritual in Greece,” In: *The Odd, the Unusual, and the Strange. Bioarchaeological Explorations of Atypical Burials*, eds. Amy Scott, Tracy Betsinger, Anastasia Tsaliki (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2020), 297.

<sup>52</sup> Sandra Garvie-Lok and Anastasia Tsaliki, “The ‘vampires’ of Lesbos,” 306–307.

analysis of the rural cemeteries Trnjane<sup>53</sup> and Vajuga-Pesak,<sup>54</sup> also, on the grounds of modern ethnographic records. She will extrapolate this point in her general overview of the funerary rites in medieval Serbia. These interpretations revolve around the general importance of ethnography in the academic life in the Eastern European countries connected to the survival of traditional lifestyle, late industrial revolution, and the political and ideological mobilization of “ancient” (often perceived as national) traditions.<sup>55</sup>

Typically, archaeologists would use analogical reasoning when they assume that, based on observed similarities between a source (ethnographic) and a subject (archaeological) context, other elements of these two contexts might also be similar or dissimilar.<sup>56</sup> What appears to become the recurring problem in the study of deviant burials is that later ethnographic records are uncritically appropriated into the medieval archaeological record on the grounds of weak formal analogy.

The perceived relevance of such analogies is constructed around the trope of funerary conservatism and a Kossinian assumption for the uniformity of present and medieval ethnicities in the region.<sup>57</sup> A typical example is the equation made by the nineteenth and twentieth century practice to stab the fresh cadaver with a knife or iron nail against future vampirism with the diverse set of extra-normative practices and the

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<sup>53</sup> Gordana Marjanović-Vujović, *Trnjane: srpska nekropola (kraj XI-početak XIII veka)* [Trnjane: Serbian cemetery (end of the 11th – beginning of 13th centuries)] (Belgrade: Narodni muzej, 1984), 66-7.

<sup>54</sup> Gordana Marjanović-Vujović, „Vajuga-Pesak,” *Derdapske sveske* 3 (1986), 184.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Laszlovszky and Siklódi, “Archaeological Theory,” 276, 289-290.

<sup>56</sup> Alison Wylie, “The reaction against analogy,” *Advances in archaeological method and theory* 8 (1985), 63–111.

<sup>57</sup> Typical example in: [Zhivka Vazharova] Живка Въжарова, “Погребалният обред като исторически източник за етническата същност на българската народност” [The funerary rite as historical source for the ethnic essence of the Bulgarian nation], *Археология* 2 (1977). On Kossina's ethnic paradigm see: Gustaf Kossina, *Die Herkunft der Germanen: zur methode der Siedlungsarchäologie* (Würzburg: C. Kabitzsch, 1911); Heinrich Härke, „All quiet on the Western Front? Paradigms, methods and approaches in West German archaeology,” In: *Archaeological Theory in Europe* ed. Ian Hodder (London: Routledge, 1991), 187–222; Siân Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and the Present* (London: Routledge, 1995), 2-13, 15-26.

presence of ferrous objects in some early medieval non-Christian graves.<sup>58</sup> Even with a sophisticated assessment of their relevance, they remain framed by the assumptions made by the individual preferences of researchers and their theoretical background.<sup>59</sup> The issue here is not in the use of ethnographic analogy, but the disregard for its limitations recreating a distant past in the image of the recent past. To be fair, some recent studies show a growing awareness in this regard.<sup>60</sup>

Boni Petrunova's article dedicated to the evidence for anti-transfiguration rite from cemeteries is seminal for the study of this phenomenon in the later medieval period.<sup>61</sup> Petrunova reviews findings from multiple sites in a long-term perspective, but eventually provides few examples with little contextualization and no discussion of larger processes and patterns. Petrunova also relies heavily on ethnographic records and accepts the continuity between medieval and early modern belief systems uncritically. She broadens the range of archaeological indicators for anti-transfiguration practices by pointing out the deposition of amulets or charcoal in graves. In this respect, she acknowledges the variety of practices and downplays its use for ethnic characterization by contrasting it with universal magical symbolism from the "most ancient mythological layers of the human mind". Finally, Petrunova briefly points out that a practical fear from the deceased lies behind the complex ritual system.

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<sup>58</sup> [Rasho Rashev] Рашо Рашев, *Българската езическа култура VII-IX век*. [Bulgar pagan culture 7th – 9th century] (Sofia: Класика и стил, 2008), 197, 200[Zhivka Vazharova], "Погребалният обред," 47; For similar traditions in Croatia, Luka Šešo, *Živjeti s nadnaravnim bićima. Vukodlaci, vila i vještice hrvatskih tradicijskih vjerovanja* [Living with supernatural evils. Vukodlaks, vilas and witches in Croatian traditional beliefs] (Zagreb: Naklada Jesenski i Turk, 2016), 54.

<sup>59</sup> Jeremy J. Cunningham and Kevin M. McGeough, "The perils of ethnographic analogy. Parallel logics in ethnoarchaeology and Victorian Bible customs books," *Archaeological Dialogues* 25:2 (2018), 172.

<sup>60</sup> Siniša Krznar, "The reflection of folk beliefs in burial customs in the Early Modern period in northern Croatia," *Beiträge zur Mittelalterarchäologie in Österreich* 35 (2019).

<sup>61</sup> [Boni Petrunova] Бони Петрунова, "Некрополите от XIII-XVII в. като източник за практикуването на обредите против превъплъщаване" [Cemeteries from 13th-17th century as a source on practicing rituals against transfiguration after death], *Конфесия и фолклор* (1998): 67-76.

#### 1.4. Narratives of deviance: legislation, archaeology, and outlaws

The major alternative interpretative trend gaining traction in the academic understanding of deviant burials is focusing on their judicial context. The first truly comprehensive studies on the materiality of human legal activity are in fact a breakthrough of medieval and early modern documentary archaeology. The *Rechtsarchäologie* focuses above all else on symbolic and legal significance of places, objects, and images for the positivist reconstruction of the legal traditions in the past.<sup>62</sup> Thus, the continental research initially succumbs to the artificial hierarchy between textual and ‘auxiliary’ evidence. However, many of its themes and subjects correspond to contemporary thinking and demonstrate remarkable potential for the reintegration of knowledge.

A very influential and detailed analysis made by Andrew Reynolds for the Anglo-Saxon period in Britain opened the door for the funerary record towards this approach.<sup>63</sup> He integrates his observations on large sample deviant burials and long-term perspective of traditionally big themes like the political processes in post-Roman and Anglo-Saxon England.

Another feature of his work is the discussion of the possible motivations behind the choice of deviant burials for certain individuals (e.g., suicide), as well as the potential archaeological indicators for each one of them. Reynolds puts strong emphasis on spatial contextualization of the individual cases and considers isolation

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<sup>62</sup> Claudius von Schwerin and Karl von Amira, *Rechtsarchäologie: Gegenstände, Formen und Symbole Germanischen Rechts* (Berlin: Ahnenerbe-Stiftung Verlag, 1943); Witold Meisel, *Rechtsarchäologie Europas* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1992); Heiner Lück, “Was ist und was kann Rechtsarchäologie?”, *Denkströme. Journal der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 8 (2012): 35-55.

<sup>63</sup> Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

as another sign of deviant burial. The number of execution cemeteries excavated in England enabled him to link deviant rites to criminals and judicial activities. With the help of charters and analysis of geographical distribution he provides another point of view on the construction of power in the landscape and the archaeological trace of governance. This approach is further developed into a model of developing social complexity through legal culture.<sup>64</sup> Deviant burials are included among other elements (court, confinement, and ordeal facilities) in the archaeological characteristics for the development of legal culture. However, the main contribution of Reynolds' work from an Eastern-European perspective is the introduction of landscape-awareness and alternative interpretations relying less on religious rituals.

Legal interpretations are proposed by Leszek Gardela and Kamil Kajkowski.<sup>65</sup> They summarize evidence for prone, stoned and decapitated burials and argue for alternatives like capital punishment for decapitations or weighting down individuals accused of performing magic. However, they note that a universally accepted explanation is unlikely. The debate is fuelled by discoveries from late medieval and early modern periods, which indicate cremation was a measure against revenants and stress judicial significance for atypical inhumations.<sup>66</sup>

Gardela advances this argument in his monograph on medieval atypical burials from Poland with direct rebuttal of the vampire-centred narrative surrounding them.<sup>67</sup> In this book he duplicates Reynolds methodology by systematically addressing the

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<sup>64</sup> Andrew Reynolds, "Judicial culture and social complexity: a general model from Anglo-Saxon England," *World Archaeology* 45:5(2013): 699-713.

<sup>65</sup> Gardela Leszek and Kamil Kajkowski, "Vampires, criminals or slaves? Reinterpreting 'deviant burials' in early medieval Poland," *World Archaeology* 45:5 (2013).

<sup>66</sup> Daniel Wojtucki, *Publiczne miejsca straceń na Dolnym Śląsku od XV do połowy XIX wieku* [Public execution places on Dolny Śląsk from fifteenth to late nineteenth century] (Katowice: Fundacja Zamek Chudów., 2009), 211-3; Paweł Duma, *Grób alienata: pochówki dzieci nieochrzczonych, samobójców i skazańców w późnym średniowieczu i dobie wczesnonowożytnej* [Alienated graves: burials of neonates, suicides and convicts from the late medieval and early modern age] (Kraków: Avalon, 2010)

<sup>67</sup> Leszek Gardela. *Bad Death*.

current archaeological record from the tenth to the thirteenth century. One curious aspect is the brief demonstration of the tense, even competing relationship between academic and media representations on archaeological themes. As his example of Gliwice clearly shows, although recent public attention focuses on the vampire narrative, archaeologists have uncritically embraced such labels much earlier. The author urges to carefully consider possible taphonomic factors with examples of grave disturbances and possible stone executions demonstrating the necessity for applying archaeothanatological and anthropological methods already in the field. Overall, law enforcement and legal context are the clearly preferred explanation based on this detailed analysis.

One possible weakness for this school of thought could be its reactionist lure locking the debate in a stark opposition against archaeological study of vampirism. This resentment is especially evident outside strictly academic publications like the contribution by David Barrowclough.<sup>68</sup> Although Barrowclough does not state it explicitly, many of his examples are from Bulgarian sites and his sources come from journalist reports rather than peer-reviewed research. A point that he raises in comparison to the Anglo-Saxon burial from Southwell or Irish burials from Knockvicar criticizes precisely the methodological discrepancy in seeking direct correlation of early modern folklore tradition and much earlier archaeological records.

However, his criticism is premature for several reasons. He does not take into account the late dating of his Polish cases which can be matched to contemporary descriptions of anti-vampire rituals. Moreover, he neither seems acquainted with the research tradition on deviant burials nor does he acknowledge the diversity of data. As a result, his argument remains within the same simplistic framework as those he

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<sup>68</sup> David Barrowclough, *Time to Slay Vampire Burials? The Archaeological and Historical Evidence for Vampires in Europe*, Cambridge: Red Dagger Press (2014).

criticizes. Barrowclough risks accusations of academic hubris and entertaining a colonial attitude towards continental archaeology.

Nevertheless, a crucial step forward in the refinement of the legal interpretative framework was offered in the proceedings of an international symposium held in Bordeaux summarizing diverse European experience on the matter.<sup>69</sup> In the long run the premeditated outcome from such collaborations is rallying around common methodological standards and research agenda. The latter goal was set in a number of works where deviant burials are included in a much wider network of legal sites, objects, and remains, thus enabling thick sociocultural conceptualization of the phenomenon. To this end, judicial-minded thinking is aptly interested and relies on the bioarchaeological and forensic means provided by physical anthropology.

Such studies usually take a closer examination of the evidence for interpersonal violence and attempt a detailed reconstructions on the mode of killing. For instance, Abadie says that the patterns of the cut marks on the human remains from two ninth-century pits in Villiers-le-Bel were explained by judicial torture and execution.<sup>70</sup> The author based her observations on osteological characterization of cut marks distribution and makes a comparison to animal butchery. This approach provides insight into the cultural context of deviant burials, but also can serve as instructive methodological lesson.

The same attitude is reproduced for instance in the anthropological examination of the eleventh century prone burial from Piazza Armerina in Sicily. The male individual suffered a peculiar pattern of injuries on the sternum which inspired

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<sup>69</sup> Matthieu Vivas (ed.) *(Re) lecture archéologique de la justice en Europe médiévale et moderne*. (Bordeaux: Ausonius, 2017)

<sup>70</sup> Isabelle Abadie, “Deux dépôts humains atypiques dans un silo du IX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Acte de violence ou châtement judiciaire?” In: *(Re) lecture archéologique de la justice en Europe médiévale et moderne*. ed. Matthieu Vivas (Bordeaux: Ausonius, 2017), 259-275.

the research team to use 3D technologies to make a truly forensic assessment of the mode of killing. Their digital reconstruction establishes the violent end of the man which also inclines them to seek explanation related to criminal activity.<sup>71</sup>

### 1.5. Summary

The selection of research focused on deviant studies does not pretend to be overly meticulous or instantly suitable to all deviant burials. Instead, this review highlighted the origin and current steps towards a consensus in the designation of this phenomenon as a reflection of the prevailing theoretical environment in archaeology at different moments. The selected trends are relevant for the interpretation of the Balkan region, either based on similar archaeological features or because of parallel socio-historical processes. Figuratively speaking, deviant burials can be regarded as a themed crucible for experimentation with ideas and methods. The outcome of this intellectual enterprise usually follows into the lines of two diverging interpretative lines, judicial and necrophobia. The latter has somewhat longer and more established tradition in Slavic-speaking national archaeologies, while the former ascended as a prominent alternative in the last two decades of unprecedented information exchange. Finally, the various notions on deviant burial practices reviewed so far are still very well grounded and will impact the analysis and interpretation of the phenomenon in the medieval Balkans.

## 2. Methodology

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<sup>71</sup> Roberto Micciché, Giuseppe Carotenuto, and Luca Sineo, “An execution in medieval Sicily: Computerised tomography scan analysis and 3D reconstruction of an ancient forensic context,” *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 29 (2019), 352-354.



At the heart of the pursuit to explore deviant burials lies a methodology based on diachronic regional perspective. When we delve into the historiography, it is obvious that the examined phenomenon is not simply the actual state of deviant burials *wie es eigentlich gewesen is* but is partially shaped by the methodological decisions of the various researchers too. The present study is no exception. Early on the systematic critical approach was embraced as the bare scientific necessity for studying this multi-faceted phenomenon. Another major methodological point to be considered is the re-evaluation of old archaeological evidence preserved through differing documentation practices and its integration in the emerging Digital Humanities. The following lines deal with the project design behind it.

## **2.1. Archival archaeology: Materials and Sources**

The foremost concern of the current approach is creating a compendium of medieval deviant burials depending on integrated methodological criteria and composite terminological definition. Probably the most distinctive requirement put forward during the data selection stage is the weight put on observations regarding the immediate archaeological context and the osteological state of the skeleton.

This view aligns to the archaeoethanatology's objective to place the deceased at the centre of interest in the funerary context through focusing on the human skeleton and the acts related to treatment of the corpse.<sup>72</sup> To properly address how the data collection protocol applied here was inspired from this view is necessary to briefly introduce some of its more defining characteristics.

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<sup>72</sup> Mihai Gligor, "Archaeoethanatology: An Interdisciplinary Approach on Death from Prehistory to the Middle Ages," *Annales Universitatis Apulensis Seria Historica* 18:2 (2014), 6.

At its very core, archaeoethanatology aims to fill the gap between archaeology and physical anthropology through more integrated specialist involvement during excavations.<sup>73</sup> The common ground between the two disciplines is naturally found in the dead human body. Here comes the third, crucial element, namely considering the formation process of the funerary context. Simply put, this is done by tracking the so-called taphonomic anomalies i.e., any deviations from the expected overall state of the cadaver at a given stage in the decomposition.<sup>74</sup> The digital recording techniques available today and the experimental studies of post mortem bodily processes enable much more precise modelling of these conditions. Whenever applied they offer a potent method to distinguish between intentional interventions and naturally occurring post-depositional processes inside the grave.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, their prowess should not be absolutized. As with any archaeological reconstruction, the loss of information is inevitable and simply some burials are more informative than others.<sup>76</sup>

Fortunately, avoiding bio-environmental determinism while yet determining the applicability of taphonomic explanations requires above all else some common sense. For instance, experimental observations on the post mortem movements of unrestricted decomposing cadaver demonstrate how significantly the position of the limbs can change on its own.<sup>77</sup> Still, multiple factors from the varying rigidity of the

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<sup>73</sup> Christopher Knüsel and Eline Schotsman, “Archaeoethanatology, funerary archaeology and bioarchaeology”, 2)

<sup>74</sup> Frédérique Blaizot, “Methodological guidelines for archaeoethanological practice,” In: *The Routledge Handbook of archaeoethanatology. Bioarchaeology of mortuary behaviour*, eds. Christopher Knüsel and Eline Schotsmans (London: Routledge, 2022), 24.

<sup>75</sup> Hayley Mickleburgh, Daniel Wescott, Sarah Gluschitz, Victor Klinkenberg, “Exploring the use of actualistic forensic taphonomy in the study of (forensic) archaeological human burials. An actualistic experimental research programme at the Forensic Anthropology Center at Texas State University (FACTS), San Marcos, Texas,” In: *The Routledge Handbook of archaeoethanatology. Bioarchaeology of mortuary behaviour*, eds. Christopher Knüsel and Eline Schotsmans (London: Routledge, 2022), 545-547.

<sup>76</sup> Frédérique Blaizot, “Methodological guidelines,” 39.

<sup>77</sup> Eline Schotsmans, Patrice Georges-Zimmerman, Maiken Ueland, Boyd Dent, “From flesh to bone. Building bridges between taphonomy, archaeoethanatology and forensic science for a better understanding of mortuary practice,” In: *The Routledge Handbook of archaeoethanatology*.

corpse to the dimensions of the burial container affect how pronounced is the movement. Arguably, such observations may indicate the initial existence of funerary void and account for some disarticulations of the skeleton.<sup>78</sup> Considering this, an overly complicated classification of the position of the hands was deemed irrelevant for the broad research questions addressed here. Evidently, a mortuary deposit in the ground like the burials discussed here will have very different conditioning than open-air or postponed disposal. Thus, without supporting indications for the nature of the grave fill, disturbances caused by burrowing animals or signs of a possible burial container, some dubious cases simply cannot be disregarded during the data collection.

To complicate matters further, the realities of preparing and conducting a fully equipped investigation in the field are often very different from the ideal scientific standard. This holds even greater significance for underfunded projects and old fieldwork practices. A simple formal analogy to existing archaeothanatological references is insufficient without comparable record about the prospective deviant burial.

In the data collection was critical to balance between the available record (written, visual etc.) for a given grave and its falsifiable interpretation in terms of intentional practice. At the same time, it will be imprudent to disregard completely quite substantial body of evidence which is relevant to the study of deviant burial practices. The underlying idea is that the archaeothanatological analysis is not really possible if not implemented already in the field. Its principal logic though could be accommodated to the archival record with differing levels of authenticity.

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*Bioarchaeology of mortuary behaviour*, eds. Christopher Knüsel and Eline Schotsmans (London: Routledge, 2022), 506-508.

<sup>78</sup> Frédérique Blaizot, "Methodological guidelines," 33-39.

To solve this problem, the collected graves had to be sorted according to their data quality. For this purpose, a grading rubric rating the type of content and formats of the source material was established. The data quality level for each catalogue entry was determined after the overall score was individually calculated.<sup>79</sup>

Clearly, the formation of mortuary deposits is often the result of complex and unrelated events, which can take place at any moment between the death of an individual and the recovery of the human remains by the archaeologist (Fig.1).<sup>80</sup> The conceptual shift aims to overcome the still prevailing fieldwork separation of specializations where archaeologists place emphasis on the grave architecture or deposited objects. What naturally follows is a failure to adequately comprehend the material record of past mortuary activity.

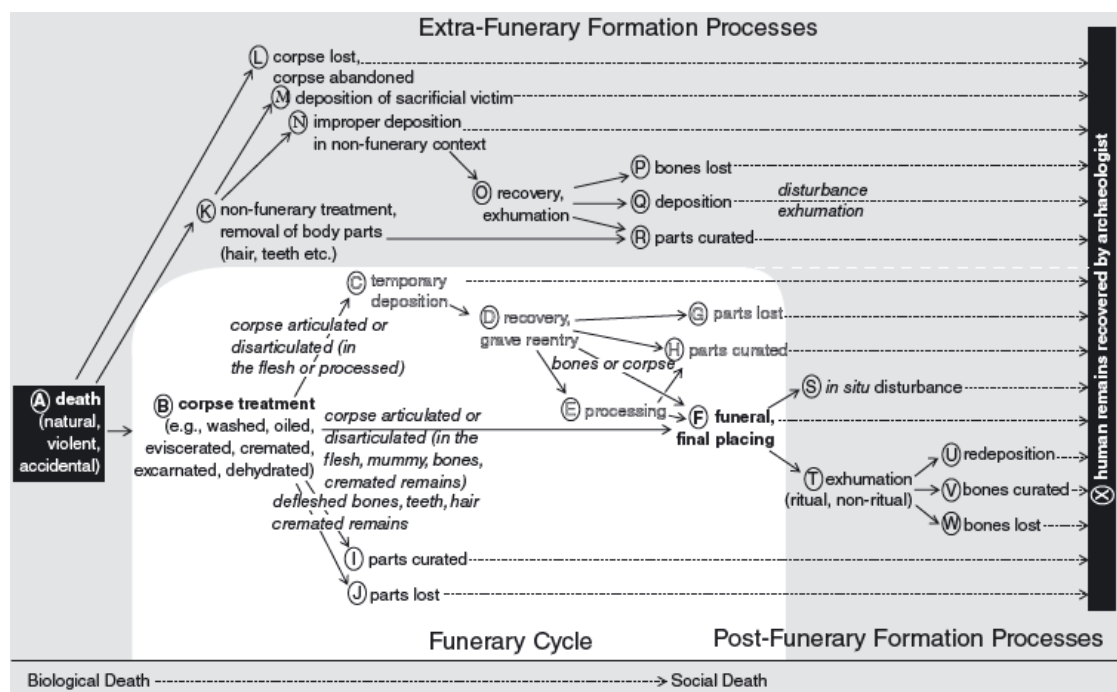


Figure 1 Formation processes for mortuary deposits with highlighted funerary cycle. After Estella Weiss – Krejci, "The Formation of Mortuary Deposits," 69, fig. 4.1.

<sup>79</sup> The detailed rubric and grade levels are attached to the catalogue.

<sup>80</sup> Estella Weiss – Krejci, *The Formation of Mortuary Deposits: Implications for Understanding Mortuary Behavior of Past Populations*, In: *Social Bioarchaeology* eds. Sabrina Agarwal and Bonnie Glencross (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 69.

Here, to be classified deviant, the manipulation of the body must be directly observable on the skeletal remains. Although this would mean that not all burials considered as such in the past would be positively identified, the discriminative criteria allow greater certainty in interpretation.

The deviant burial practices tend to leave highly individualized archaeological signature which is classically recognized against set benchmarks of recurrent and normalized elements in the disposal of cadavers. The critical literature review and methodological considerations point out that mass graves, prone position, decapitations, fixation of the body within the grave, and mutilations of the postcranial skeleton are rather universally accepted as fitting the notion of deviant burial practices under extreme social conditions. Specifically, the mass grave from Devnya-3 turned out to be a crucial site in the pilot study where all these distinctive categories unified and confirmed their general appropriateness within the wider concept of deviant burial customs.

The next important decision was to discriminate variables according to which the data would be recorded and later analysed. The obvious one was a description of the deviant practice manifested on the skeleton. Other standardized variables for each entry include the provenance of the find, its date, grave structure, position and orientation, sex and age, and the presence of grave goods and animal remains.

Current trends in funerary archaeology within the general field of death studies recognize the necessity for expandability and flexibility in creating a mortuary dataset. The aim is to produce a database that, while not comprehensive, is robust and representative and that will help to identify specific periods, regions or issues that

should be priorities for further research.<sup>81</sup> Thus, the usability of data beyond the project-specific limitations needs to be addressed in several ways.

One basic solution was the choice of data structure based on traditional descriptive variables and simplified values for them. Another was the arrangement of an online open-source database where the individual entries will be available. More importantly, the database needs to be expandable both in qualitative terms like adding new descriptive categories (e.g., prospective isotopic or anthropological measurements) or entries recorded around medieval Europe. Some precedents in this respect are already available around the world and for mortuary data in particular. The idea for an open-source database began its implementation in 2022 on the platform of the *Thanados* project coordinated and hosted by the Natural History Museum in Vienna.<sup>82</sup> When completed, this digital summary of the existing information will be the foundation for further sophistication of our approach with the anticipated discovery of new deviant burials.

The principal source for obtaining legacy data are the archaeological publications and primary reports on excavated sites. Certain amount of unpublished data was obtained with the permission of the relevant authorities. However, not all source material was of equal standing because the plethora of formats in the excavation strategies and recording formats evolved unequally over time. Moreover, the records were often made in different languages or inconsistent in their vocabulary

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<sup>81</sup> Jennie Bradbury, Douglas Davies, Mandy Jay, Graham Philip, Charlotte Roberts and Chris Scarre, "Making the Dead Visible: Problems and Solutions for "Big" Picture Approaches to the Past, and Dealing with Large "Mortuary" Datasets," *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 23:2 (2016), 585.

<sup>82</sup> THANADOS. The Anthropological and Archaeological Database of Sepultures accessed 23.05.2022, <https://thanados.net/>

and descriptive detail, a condition which is also addressed to an extent by unified archaeothanatological approach.<sup>83</sup>

While meta-data is rarely a concern in the early days of the discipline, the theoretical underpinning and acknowledgment for the traditional skillset and biases prove crucial methodological standpoint as well. Such idiosyncrasies and the necessary responds are a common experience in the digitization and integration of excavation data.<sup>84</sup>

As anticipated, clear formalized descriptions or anthropological analysis in old records and site diaries were limited at best. Indeed, the acquisition of osteological assessment is the sphere where much improvement is needed. Rarely were human remains available for observation due to access restrictions or commonly, their unclear statues due to reburial or secondary disposals. Particular preference was given to cases where graphic or photo documentation from the excavations was present, even if it could not be reproduced in the database. These factors underline the determination of data quality as the main factor behind inclusion in the database.

The mostly archival research in multiple institutions around the modern states within the geographical range described above collected more than three hundred examples of unusual funerary behaviour. Final revision of the collected data reduced the database to 250 entries which form the basis of any discussion. The conscious omissions were made either on the grounds of insufficient data quality or lack of archaeothanatological indicators of deviant practice. However, further revisions may disprove or add new examples for deviant burials in this list depending on newly

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<sup>83</sup> Christopher J. Knüsel, “Crouching in fear: Terms of engagement for funerary remains,” *Journal of Social Archaeology* 14:1 (2014), 29-30.

<sup>84</sup> Edeltraud Aspöck, “Old Excavation Data – What Can We Do? An Introduction,” In: *Old Excavation Data. What Can We Do? Proceedings of the Workshop held at 10th ICAANE in Vienna, April 2016* Eds. Edeltraud Aspöck, Seta Stuhec, Karin Kopetzky, and Matthias Kucera (Vienna: VÖAW, 2020), 16-19.

obtained information and concepts. Unless otherwise specified, the database reflects the secure archaeological record up to 2019 for feasibility reasons.

The research design relies on rather traditional approach for data systematization. The point is to intelligibly integrate the deviant burials within the already available wider body of evidence. Furthermore, the results obtained through standard archaeological procedures accentuate on the scholarly neglect towards marginalized and underappreciated finds. This, however, should not be read as an attempt to point fingers at previous researchers operating under very different theoretical, political, and economic background. The critical perspective taken here is proposing an alternative approach by expanding the frame from which analogies and ideas are drawn. To an extent, this is clear from the choice of chronological and geographical study area explained below. Even clearer though is the way in which forensic archaeology inspired and underlined my own approach for this study.

The necessary set of methods for dealing with buried remains, a grave site and its immediate surrounding are long established professional competence in archaeology. With this in mind, the application of archaeological techniques in forensic investigations is a relatively new and unequally explored terrain for the discipline. The archaeological excavations of mass graves from recent conflicts has been an enormous step in this direction, but the search for clandestine individual burial sites also contributed for their recognition around the world.<sup>85</sup>

In South-Eastern European countries the situation is truly disparate. The horror of the Yugoslav wars has incised a rise in the deployment of forensic

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<sup>85</sup> John Hunter, "A background to forensic archaeology," In *Studies in Crime: An Introduction to Forensic Archaeology*. Edited by John Hunter, Charlotte A. Roberts, Anthony Martin (London: Routledge, 1996), 10-16; William Haglund, Melissa Connor, and Douglas Scott, "The archaeology of contemporary mass graves," *Historical archaeology* 35: 1 (2001); Uroš Košir, "When Violins Fell Silent: Archaeological Traces of Mass Executions of Romani People in Slovenia," *European Journal of Archaeology* 23:2 (2020).



archaeology from international and national authorities. In Bosnia and Herzegovina for instance the civilian casualties are recovered from mass graves in several landmark cases.<sup>86</sup> In Serbia archaeological techniques are increasingly used in crime scenes investigations and reconstruction.<sup>87</sup> Elsewhere, the task is placed upon criminal pathologists to exhume the victims of crimes or to examine various human rights violations in Communist and World War II concentration camps.<sup>88</sup> In Bulgaria, being an example for the former situation, the archaeological contribution to forensic science is minimal.<sup>89</sup>

Nevertheless, this line of work is operating at the forefront of multidisciplinary practice and excels in the deployment of scientific techniques in the field, and in turn reimages the social and intellectual boundaries of archaeologically constructed knowledge. The methodical inclusion of search techniques involving geophysics, strict excavation protocol, and collating evidence not simply from macroscopic observations on the grave content but from additional osteological and geochemical analysis or after flotation of the soil can reveal the invisible part of the burial.<sup>90</sup>

Of course, this resourceful approach functions under very different demands than the usually underfunded academic fieldwork. The methodological condition is

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<sup>86</sup> Ian Hanson, Adnan Rizvić and Thomas J. Parsons, “Bosnia and Herzegovina: forensic archaeology in support of national and international organisations undertaking criminal investigations and identifying the missing from 1996 to 2013,” In *Forensic Archaeology: A Global Perspective*. Edited by Mike Groen, Nicholas Márquez-Grant, Robert Janaway (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015).

<sup>87</sup> Marija Djurić and Andrej Starović. Forensic archaeology in Serbia: from exhumation to excavation. In *Forensic Archaeology: A Global Perspective*. Edited by Mike Groen, Nicholas Márquez-Grant, Robert Janaway (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015).

<sup>88</sup> Mario Šlaus and Anja Petaros, “Croatia (Hrvatska): from WWII and the 1991 war to contemporary forensic cases,” In *Forensic Archaeology: A Global Perspective*. Edited by Mike Groen, Nicholas Márquez-Grant, Robert Janaway (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 41-42; Annamaria Diana, “Forensic archaeology in Romania: present and future of a new discipline.” In *Forensic Archaeology: A Global Perspective*. Edited by Mike Groen, Nicholas Márquez-Grant, Robert Janaway (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 131-136.

<sup>89</sup> Ilian Boyanov. “Forensic archaeology in Bulgaria – problems and perspectives.” In *Forensic Archaeology: A Global Perspective*. Edited by Mike Groen, Nicholas Márquez-Grant, Robert Janaway, pp. 33-38 (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015).

<sup>90</sup> John Hunter and Margaret Cox, *Forensic Archaeology: Advances in Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2005).

famously exemplified in Hawkes' ladder of inference distinguishing the levels of scientific security of archaeological conclusions obtained only from silent or rather silenced material remains.<sup>91</sup> In comparison, the forensic interpretation is scrutinized in a medico-legal context with different evidential goals, e.g., to prove the fact of death and reconstructed disposal sequences.<sup>92</sup> Forensic evidence is simply not gathered to uncover the broad patterns of human behaviour, but rather to reconstruct the specifics of a single event.<sup>93</sup>

Arguably, such aims are elemental for many other problem-oriented research avenues as historical or battlefield archaeology come to mind. Archaeological evidence like pre-modern mass graves are a powerful tangible link between those disciplines. After all, even purely scientific inquiries on larger processes rely on an evolving collection of bigger and better data to support their claims. The forensic-inspired archaeothanatological reading must be used to outline what is currently missing in the funerary record, as well as the necessary changes and future research prospects. Historical archaeologies, such as the study of medieval period, thankfully offer formidable tools to expand our inherently retrospective and limited view.

Among them the most traditional and relevant would be the abundance of written sources. The sheer number of medieval accounts required further selection of appropriate texts for consultation. Written documents with legal character form the most prominent group of them and picking specific codified documents followed the distribution patterns observed from the archaeological data. The feasibility problem in

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<sup>91</sup> Charles Hawkes, "Archaeology as science: purpose and pitfalls," *Archaeological News Letter* 6 (1957), 93–100; Christopher Evans, "Historicism, chronology and straw men: situating Hawkes' 'Ladder of Inference'," *Antiquity* 72, no. 276 (1998): 398–404.

<sup>92</sup> Zoë Crossland, "Evidential regimes of forensic archaeology," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43 (2013): 124–127.

<sup>93</sup> Melissa Connor and Douglas Scott, "Paradigms and perpetrators," *Historical Archaeology* 35, no. 1 (2001): 3.

the survey of narrative histories and canonical literature is even more evident. Nevertheless, whenever detected the relevant textual data was consulted critically.

The final sort of evidence commented on in the study of deviant burial customs are the accounts from cultural anthropology. These later recordings of oral and living cultures pose similar problems to textual data when taken simply as metatext to be imposed on the physical evidence. However, their potential to illuminate possible social situations and support theoretically driven templates for social development are highly valued in our approach.

## **2.2. Context, context, context: Principles in data analysis**

The guiding principle of the analysis could be summarized in one word: contextualization. Its successful implementation is a direct consequence of the data collection procedure and activities. The contextual analysis is performed in two comparative frameworks. The first one provides a diachronic regional view on deviant burials as a discrete form of mortuary activity. In a way, this could be seen as the internal contextualization of the database, where the individual cases are grouped in detailed typology and the characteristics of each group are outlined after quantitative analysis. This correspondence analysis will account for any emerging patterns in spatial or temporal distribution but will also seek any correlation between the different deviant practices.

Clearly the strict analogies at this analytical level create an idiosyncratic dialogue between similar yet dispersed individual cases in a *longue durée* perspective. To an extent, this collection is a result of the methodological choices in the project design as well. Thus, the big picture needs to be supported by another level of

contextualization, which can demonstrate the immediate context for these exceptional cases and scrutinize their manifestation against the local normative background. These thick descriptions are achieved through contextual site surveys selected to reflect changing chronological and geographical circumstances or types of sites like mass graves and communal burial grounds (rural, urban etc.). A distinct manifestation of this principle is the analysis of the topographies and spatial organizations in these mortuary landscapes.

Actually, geospatial analysis is another important method in the contextualization of deviant burial practices. Mapping the positions of known deviant burials should reveal any attempts for segregation or clustering of maltreated individuals on site-specific level. The larger processes at hand are also sorted in maps illustrating the patterning in chronology and treatment.

Clearly the comparative interdisciplinary approach is foundational in this project. Profound research aim is to discuss and foster the interpretation of archaeological finds. In a way, this could be understood as another level of contextualization. Even so, the critical comparison to alternative source materials and different archaeological assemblages remains the path forward.

### **2.3. Chronological and geographical scope**

Determining the geographical and chronological scope seeks a balance between the ambitious aim for a genuine insight into the deviant burial phenomenon and the practical project-driven concerns of feasibility and sampling strategies. Clearly, the current state of archaeological research and the methodological stance described above require some level of flexibility in delineating the temporal and

geographical frame of the topic. It is important to remember that such clearly drawn distinctions of confined territories are always unrealistic, a situation even more evident in a diachronic view. The study area outlined here is thus an artificial construct formulated under the practical considerations on the feasibility of the research tasks.

The region of the study is South-Eastern Europe, interchangeably referred to as the Balkans throughout the dissertation. This synonymity may sound unfair under various geographical and cultural definitions of the two. The Balkans are a region too often defined by its past and especially the conflicted twentieth century. However, the geographical limits reflect a purposeful sampling from a much wider world.

South-Eastern Europe has always found itself in-between. The region can be loosely attached to the Mediterranean, the Eastern European steppe, the Pontic area or even Central Europe. The accumulation of marginal positions compared to other regions easily associated with certain civilizational and quite often imperial unit makes it the centre of their interactions, the contact zone *par excellence*.

At the same time, the South-Eastern Europe studied in detail here is not a coherent region and encompasses only generally the actual study region of the dissertation. Truly, the in-depth study region explicitly consists of those sites where deviant burials were recorded. This is important, as the local voice has often been neglected in generalizing research. Here the cross-cultural goal for an expandable account on individual deviant burials comes into play.

The so-called study region must be expandable too. The permeable borders are especially noticeable in the contextualization of the finds. Arguably, this approach also can overcome any static views on human activities and medieval landscapes,

even if the information deficits in comparison to other regions are significant.<sup>94</sup> Thus, the study region is also the area that mostly makes sense given the historical circumstances and also the contemporary administrative, cultural, and even linguistic situation in the region.

In purely geographical terms, what is meant by Balkans or South-Eastern Europe here is the land mass between the Adriatic Sea and the Black Sea along the rivers Sava and Danube. Further natural borders are the Carpathian Mountains to the north and the Rhodope Mountains to the south. The drainage basin of the river Danube covers much of the territory.

Considering the present political map of Europe, the traditional regions within the core of the dissertation are the following. In Croatia these are Istria with the Kvarner, Dalmatia (excluding Dubrovnik), and Slavonia. Serbia was studied in its entirety but especially important were Vojvodina and the Podunavlje (also known as Đerdap). North of the Danube were studied Romanian Banat, Oltenia (Lesser Wallachia), Muntenia (Greater Wallachia), and Dobrudza. Bulgaria was also entirely studied but eventually her southern part defined by the Rhodopes and the Struma River valley with the surrounding mountain ranges were excluded. Occasionally, these toponyms are applied to intelligibly designate the concerned regions even if some historic alternatives may suit better the period.

The other major factor setting the stage for this research is the chronological frame. The long seventh century is the starting point. The main reason is the series of historical transformations occurring in these territories. The reign of emperor Heraclius (610-641) is most characteristic when, in addition to the internal changes for Byzantium, the permanent settlement of Slavic groups on the Balkans and the

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<sup>94</sup> Grenville Astill, "Understanding the Identities and Workings of Local Societies in Early Medieval England, ad 800–1100," In: *Polity and Neighbourhood in Early Medieval Europe* eds. Julio Escalona, Orri Vésteinsson, and Stuart Brookes (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019).

secession of the Bulgars from Avar dominion under the leadership of Kubrat occur. The arbitrary final point is set at the end of the fifteenth century which oversaw the complete establishment of the Ottoman rule over the region with the conquest of Constantinople (1453) and the expansion westwards.

In a peculiar way, this timeframe pays homage to Henry Pirenne who claimed that without Muhammad Charlemagne would be unconceivable.<sup>95</sup> The emergence of Islam in the first half of the seventh century and its ultimate political supremacy in South-Eastern Europe by the end of the fifteenth match the chronological scope of the study. In a way, the shift of Islam's position in the political life on the Balkans from external to direct, dominant factor can be seen as another subtler historical process that can motivate the chronological choice here.

These chronological and geographical limitations of the work emphasize again the characteristic large-scale approach defended here. For certain periods, a larger area is considered, and the level of analysis is different. Many comparisons are drawn to somewhat related, yet detached periods or regions only as summary studies.

Another related concern is the formulation of a sampling strategy following the geographical and temporal framework set for the research. The artificial construction of designated study region around cultural and geographic abstractions like the Balkans or South-Eastern Europe also had an impact on the choices during data collection.

Perhaps the best example to clarify this approach will be the Avar khaganate on the Middle Danube. Modern-day Vojvodina and Slavonia for instance were apparently part of this polity until its collapse in the early ninth century. The two regions, now in Serbia and Croatia respectively, were sampled intensively for deviant

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<sup>95</sup> Henri Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne* (London: Routledge, 2013).

burials during the data collection and recovered significant number of archaeological records. The rest of the geographically defined Pannonian plain could not be studied at the same level for feasibility reasons. After all, the mortuary record from the Avar period in Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania counts in the range of tens of thousands. Thus, in a perspective focused on the Avar khaganate the cluster sampling was further stratified and incomplete.

Nonetheless, the collected data confirms the specific position of the area surrounding Sirmium in the organization of the late Avar state. The summary of patterns in southern Pannonia is also very valuable for the comparison with the ongoing developments in the remaining parts of the in-depth study region, especially in Dalmatia and along the Danube.

Similar imperfect, but well-intended inclusion was necessary for the Hungarian kingdom or Byzantium, among others. The situation can also be seen in a reversed manner. Modern Romania was not sampled exhaustively, but the territory of the early Bulgar khanate is completely covered in its borders until the mid-ninth century.

On this note, the methodological concerns of the dissertation make way for the analytical engagement with the collected source material.

## **CHAPTER 1. CHRONOLOGY, DISTRIBUTION, AND QUANTIFICATION OF INDIVIDUAL DEVIANT BURIALS**

Series of quantitative and comparative analyses of sampled individual graves were made to formulate a qualitative characterization of the deviant burial rites. The results will be presented in this chapter. The four groups (prone, decapitation,



fixation, and mutilation) are discussed separately with detailed accounts on their chronology, distribution, grave structures, grave goods, and other characteristics. Further categorization is proposed for each group. Some burials featuring more than one element of the deviant burial rites appear in more than one group. Indication of the correlation with other deviant rites is provided for each type of body treatment. Unless convincing evidence suggest otherwise, the dating suggested by the primary investigator of each site is favored during seriation. Very often the date of a single burial is extrapolated from the general dating of the burial site. Absolute dating techniques, like radiocarbon dating, are extremely rarely applied, even though they could enable more elaborate analysis for deviant and isolated burials. The anthropological analysis of the human remains is far from satisfactory, but an effort has been made to represent age and sex profiles on the most reliable data.

### **1.1. *Prone burials***

Prone, or face-down, burial is universally acknowledged irregularity in the treatment of the deceased. The deliberate placement of the body turns what is considered appropriate positioning of the body and all the following assumptions upside down. The nuances observable in different cases can be plausibly explained with inconsistent level of care during the disposal and only in very few situations with post-depositional factors. Prone burials draw most attention as the absolute reversal of the supine position, by far the most familiar and comfortable mode of inhumations worldwide. Thus, this form of deviant rite captures perhaps best the importance encoded in the cultural choices surrounding death.



*Figure 2 Prone burial from Gradishte, Shumen district in Bulgaria, excavated in 2021. Photo by the author*

Prone position burial rites are indeed very rare. Up to now, thirty-eight prone burials from thirty sites could be securely dated to the medieval period. Recorded prone burials usually contribute around 0.5% and 1.5% on individual sites: 0.52% (n=1) in Balchik, 0.63% (n=1) in Vrbas, 0.76% (n=1) in Kovachevo, Aradac (n=1) – 1.02%, Batin (n=1) and Kyulevcha (n=1) with 1.08%, and Odzaci (n=1) and Čik (n=2) with less than 1.6% each. The value from Topola, less than 0.002% (n=1), testifies to the rarity of the practice. However, some interesting discrepancies can appear in the biritual cemeteries. For example, the prone burials in Capuil Viilor (n=1) and Izvoru (n=2) are 0.4% and 0.46% from all recorded burials on site. However, when only inhumation burials are counted the numbers in Izvoru remain stable with raise up to 0.6%, while in Capuil Viilor the share surges to nearly 2%. The highest percentage is recorded for the small cemetery on site No.2 near Shumen (8.33%, n=1). Another concentration deserving attention is in the cemetery by the southern fortification wall in Pliska where the 3 prone cases count for 7.14% from the overall graves.

### 1.1.1. Types, chronology, and distribution

The prone burials are known in two types, depending on variations in skeletal position:

- I. Ventral prone burials. Individual variations can occur in the position of the limbs or the head, but the cadaver is generally disposed prone. This type consists of twenty-five burials presented in relative chronological sequence in the table below:

Grave	600-650	650-700	700-750	750-800	800-850	850-900	900-950	950-1000	1000-1050	1050-1100	1100-1150	1150-1200	1200-1250	1250-1300	1300-1350	1350-1400	1400-1450	1450-1500
Ar.40	*	*																
Cik.104	*	*																
Vrb.139		*	*	*														
Blc.162			*															
Bog.1			*	*														
CpV.48			*	*	*	*												
Izv.234			*	*	*	*												
Izv.327			*	*	*	*												
Dbc.a			*	*	*	*												
Nzh.a			*	*	*	*												
Kyu.81			*	*	*	*												
Dv3.72			*	*	*	*												
Dv3.93			*	*	*	*												
Hit.32			*	*	*	*	*											
Odz.24				*	*													
Bat.20					*	*	*	*										
PIC.29								*	*									
PIC.30								*	*									
PIC.33								*	*									
GTrmr									*	*	*	*						
Lob.879												*	*					
Kom.59													*	*	*	*		
Npr.49													*	*	*	*		
Trg.358																		

Table 1 Relative chronological sequence for Type I prone burials.

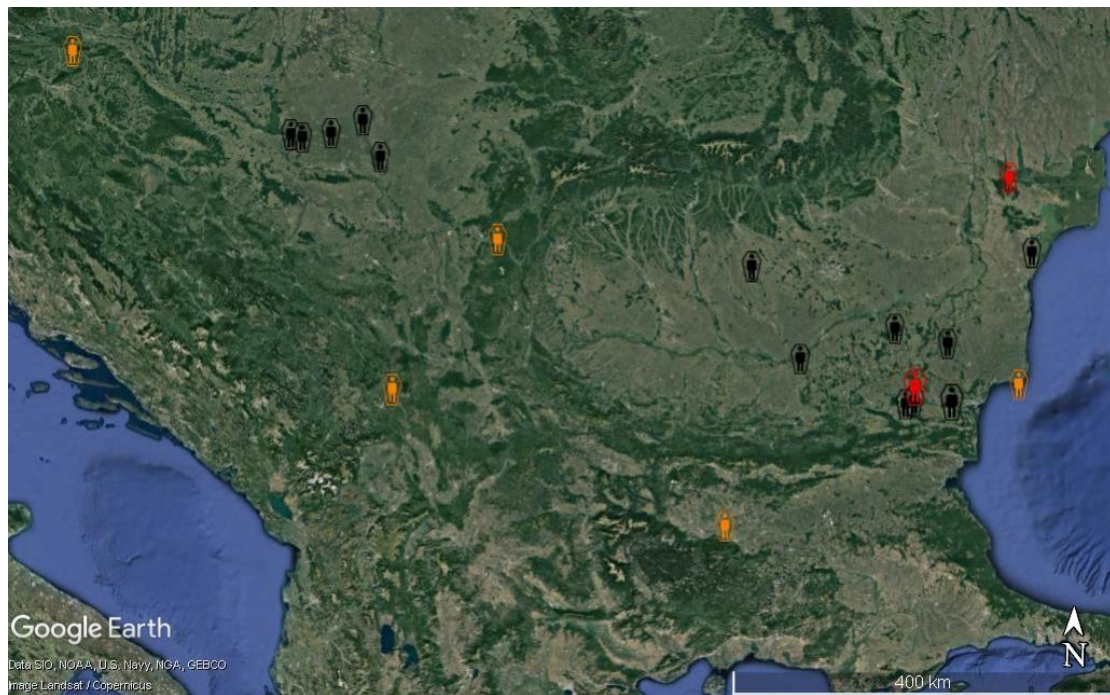


Figure 3 Distribution of Type I prone burials. Legend: Early period (black), middle transitional period (red), late period (yellow).

II. Face-down prone position. This type has two subtypes, namely:

A. The rest of the body in supine position.

The accurate assessment of the original burial position is very important in this case. The practice can be an indication for peri mortem decapitation or post humous intervention. However, a pseudo prone position can occur during decomposition, especially if the head was placed on a headrest or in particular position.<sup>96</sup> There are eleven known cases.

B. The rest of the body is in a flexed position.

It is documented in only two cases from North-eastern Bulgaria (HHW.1 and Top.83). The prone burials from Type II are listed according to relative chronological sequence in the table below:

<sup>96</sup> Miodrag Tomović, „Равна (Campsa) у средњем веку[Ravna (Campsa) in the Middle Ages],“ *Зборник Народног Музеја* 17:1 (2001): Fig. 8 and Fig. 9.



Grave	600 - 650	650 - 700	700 - 750	750 - 800	800 - 850	850 - 900	900 - 950	950- 1000	1000 - 1050	1050 - 1100	1100 - 1150	1150 - 1200	1200 - 1250	1250 - 1300	1300 - 1350	1350 - 1400	1400 - 1450	1450 - 1500
Cik.39	*	*																
<b>HHW.1</b>			*	*														
<b>Top.83</b>			*	*	*	*												
Mnd.4			*	*	*													
SJR.12					*	*	*	*										
PGB.13						*	*	*										
Kov.78											*	*						
Psk2.32												*	*					
AnK.7													*	*	*	*		
AnK.49													*	*	*	*		
KOm.16 3													*	*	*	*		
GPzr.1													*	*	*	*		
TVL.192														*	*	*		

Table 2 Relative chronological sequence for Type II prone burials

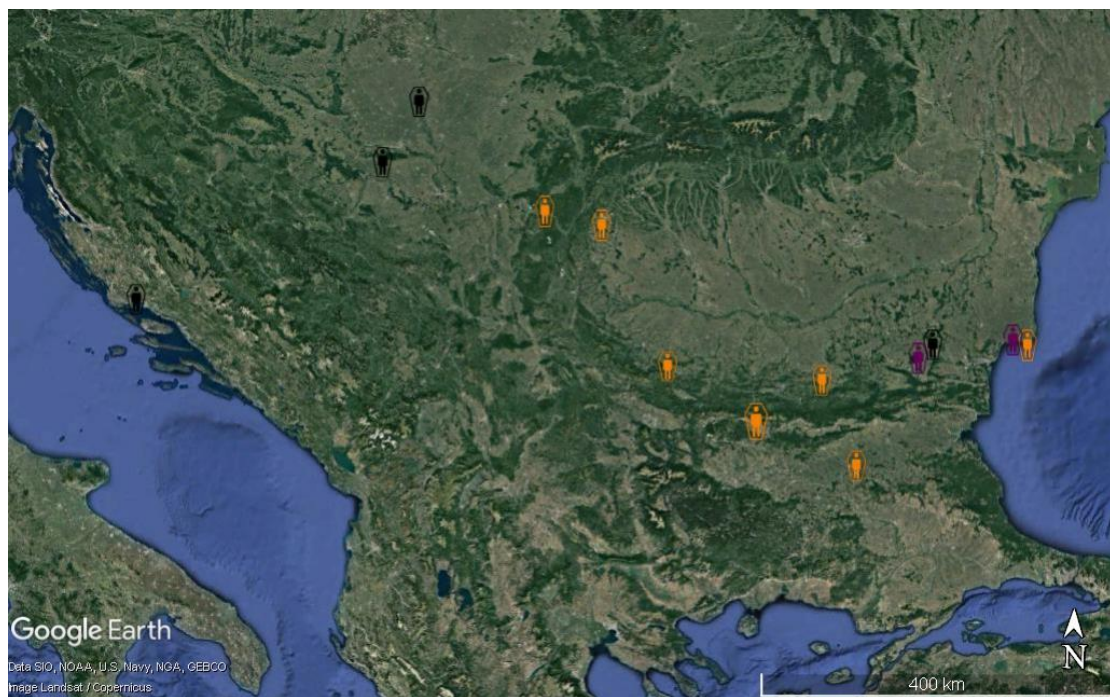


Figure 4 Distribution of Type II prone burials: Early period (Type IIA – black; Type IIB – purple), Late period (yellow)

The chronological sequences reveal several trends in the development of the prone burial practice. Above all, two distinctive phases take shape. The first phase, up to the eleventh century is clearly dominated by the ventral prone burials from Type I. Also, the type II.B appears exclusively in the early stage of this phase around the eighth century, corresponding temporally and geographically to the pagan Bulgar

Khanate on the Lower Danube (See below). The eleventh century marks a decline in the numbers of prone Type I and disappearance of prone Type II. Then, the frequency of the two forms (I and II.A) of prone position in the burial record equalizes.

The change of patterns demonstrated by chronology is also evident in the geographical distribution. The place and role of deviant burials in the landscape will be discussed in more detail later.

Prone burials Type I appear initially in Vojvodina, on the Middle Danube. Their initial appearance is probably related to the attested practice for prone burials around the Pannonian Plain ever since the early Avar period. Yet, the prone burials continue well within the Late Avar period and is contemporary to the other significant concentration between the Lower Danube and the Balkan Mountain, i.e., the Bulgar core territories. The late tenth- early eleventh century Pliska, the former centre of the Bulgars, could provide a possible link to the later manifestations of prone Type I burials, which are dispersed across the peninsula. Communal burial grounds of open settlements and rural landscape, as the best studied type of sites, unsurprisingly dominate the distribution before the Christianization. Interestingly, their appearance will slowly increase in the west later, in the early modern period as evident from several cases in northern Croatia.

The situation with the burials from Type II follows a different trajectory. As noted above, the two early cases of flexed prone burials come from Northeastern Bulgaria, coinciding and perhaps even slightly pre-dating the Type I concentration. Two occasional finds belonging to Type II.A supplement the distribution of ventral prone burials in Vojvodina.

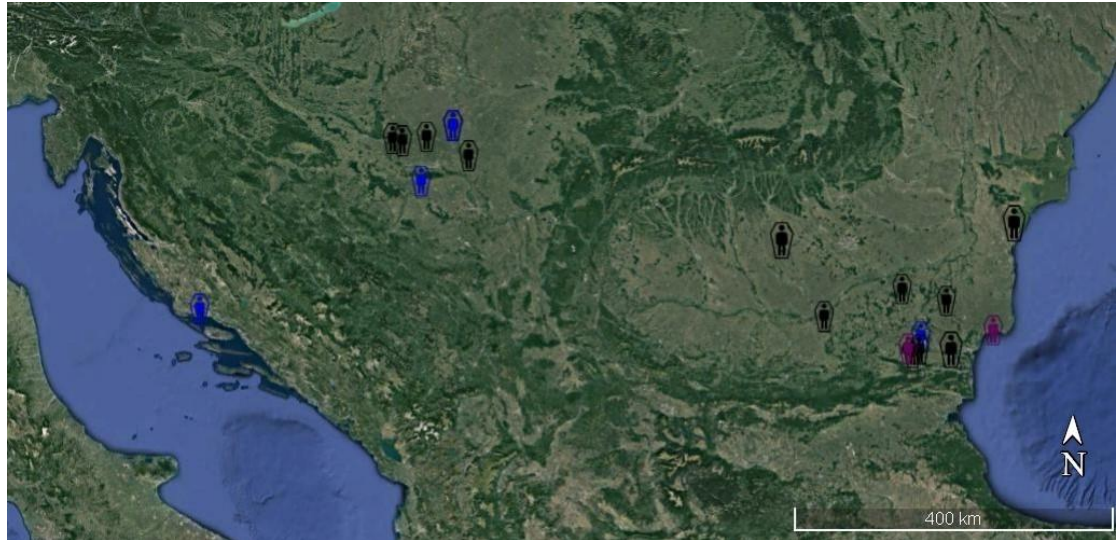


Figure 5 Comparative distribution of prone burials in the early period. Type I (black), Type IIA (blue), Type IIB (purple)

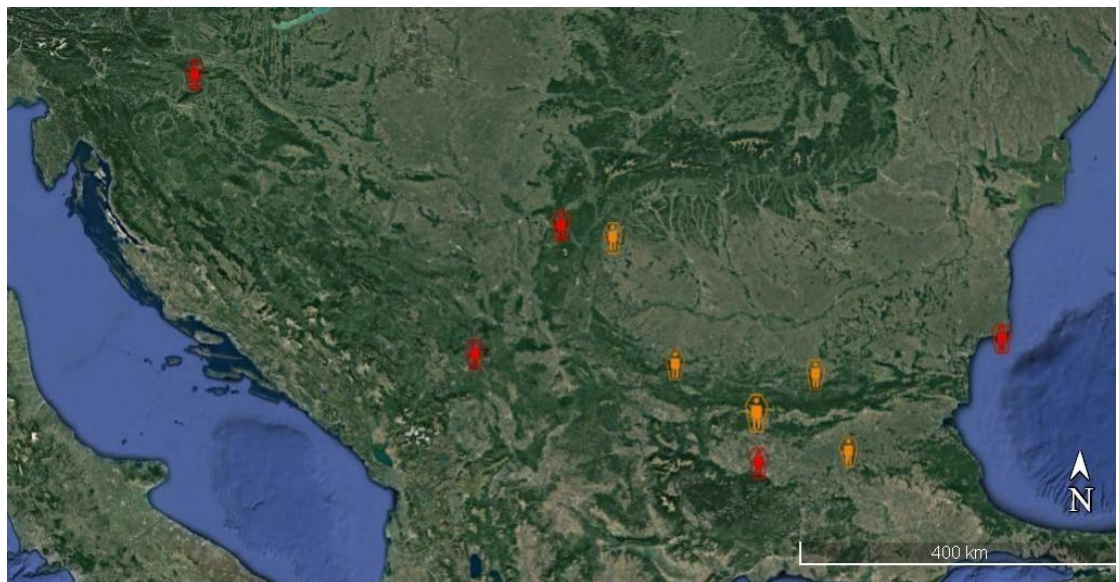


Figure 6 Comparative distribution of prone burials in the late period. Type I (red), Type II (yellow)

The types of sites where prone burials are found merits attention. After the re-appearance of the type in open field burial grounds from the twelfth and possibly early thirteen centuries like Kovachevo and Pesak 2, the type concentrates in major urban centres like Tarnovo and Kaliakra. The majority of the cases are found in churchyards and monastic burial grounds open to lay people. This association was



also evident in the first phase with two analogous cases from cemeteries of the Great Basilica in Pliska and the St. Juraj from Radun church in Kaštel-Stari.

### 1.1.2. Grave structure and orientation

The preferred grave structure is for prone burials is indicated in Fig. 6 below.

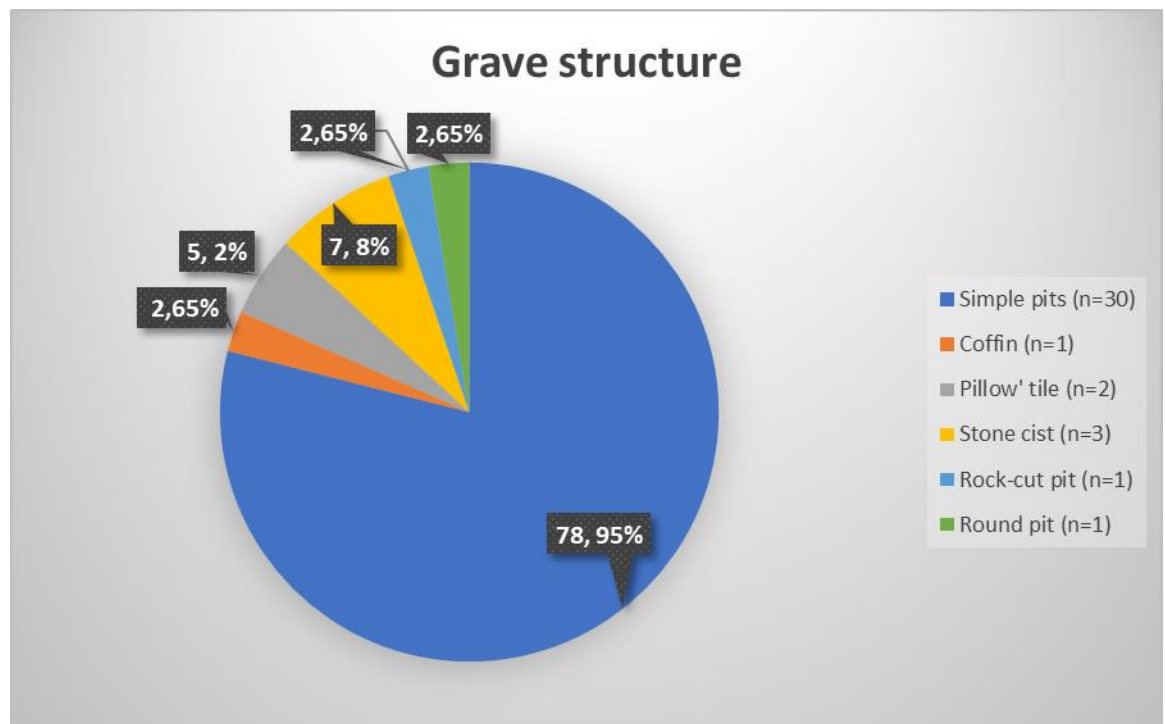


Figure 7 Types of grave structure for prone burials

The grave orientation is presented according to the cardinal directions and in head-feet position in Fig. 7 below. The orientation differs significantly from the norm characteristic for their respective site in eight cases, which constitute a quarter of the sample. Interesting is the body from Dv3.93 is placed in line with the traditional north-south orientation, but the skull is placed on the back in the opposite direction. Notably, deviation from standard orientation is combined with the rite in the graves belonging to the first phase and is characteristic for the pagan and early Christian period.



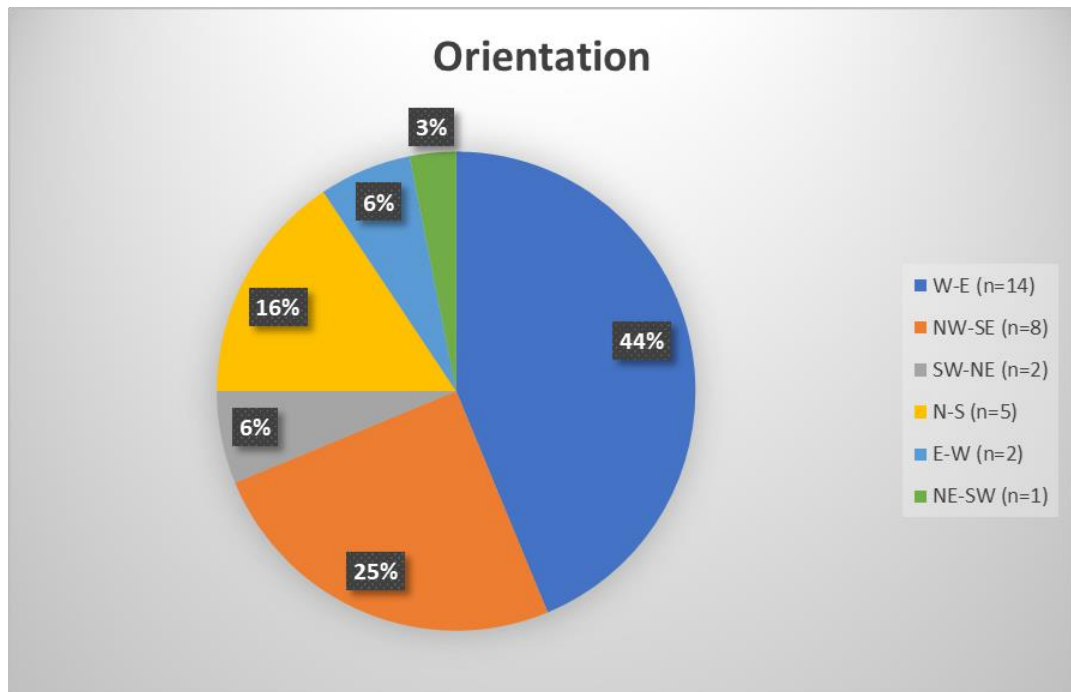


Figure 8 Prevalent orientation of prone burials

### 1.1.3. Demography: age and sex, diseases

Presently, the age and sex of only half of the individuals is determined and available. The current data (Fig.8) presents a ratio of 2:1, thus markedly more males are buried in prone position than females.

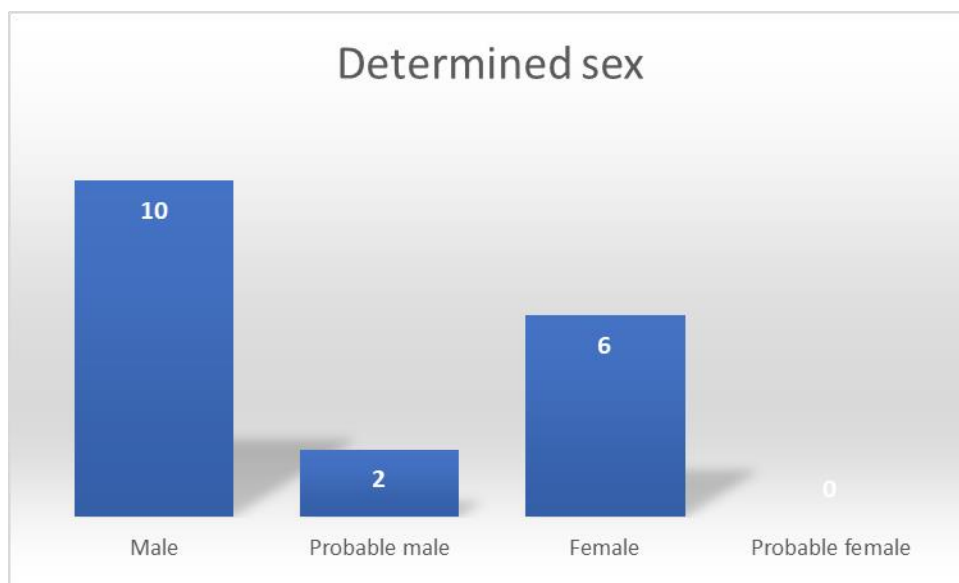


Figure 9 Determined sex of prone buried individuals

The various age categories are shown in the following chart:

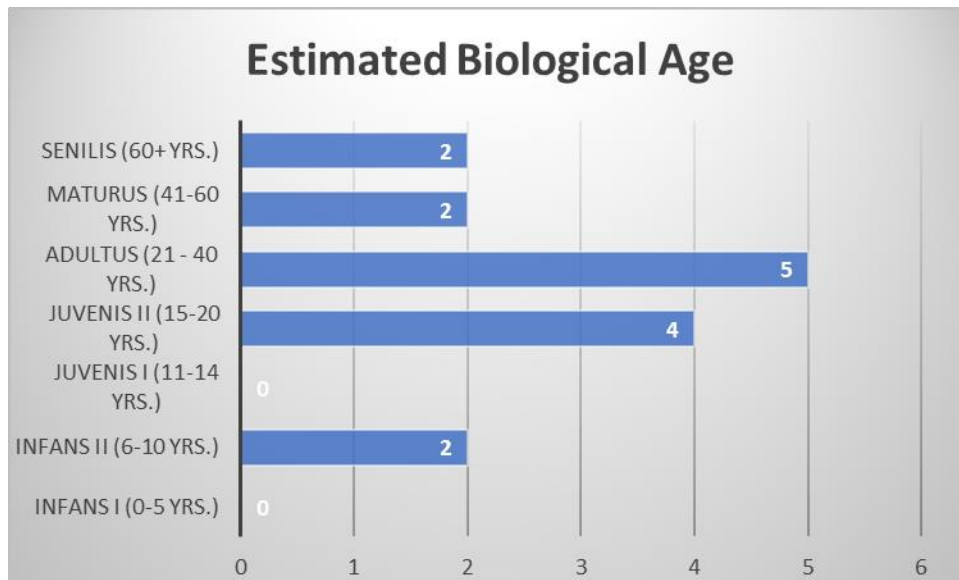


Figure 10 Age distribution of prone burials

When it comes to palaeodisease, there are two more interesting cases. One of them is from Lobor, where aDNA analysis on burial Lob.979 confirmed leprosy. The other one, Odz.24 is a case of advanced megalodontia on his canine teeth, which had an impact on the facial appearance of the deceased.

#### 1.1.4. Grave goods and animal remains

In terms of inventory, prone burials are generally poor although artefacts were discovered in 38% of the graves (fourteen contexts). In the early period up to the eleventh century prone burials from Type I are in line with this general pattern with 37,5% (n=6) containing grave goods. Curiously, the early manifestations of Type II differ in this respect. Type II.A prone graves almost always contain grave goods (75%, n=3), while type II.B lack any. This, of course, may be due to the low known cases of the kind. During the transitional eleventh century when prone burials are generally in decline, no grave goods are registered. Afterwards, the probability for grave goods increases but only slightly for Type I (40%, n=2) and Type 2 (43%, n=3)

Pottery was found by the skull in CpV.48 and the leg in Vrb.139 and Mnd.4, jars were placed in the graves from Čik. Also, there a red ceramic spindle was discovered on the bottom of Cik.104. Potsherds were found in one grave (Bog.1).

Iron knives were discovered in Cik.39, Cik.104, Vrb.139 (between the left humerus and the ribs), and Mnd.4 (by the right hand). Two iron buttons were found on the pelvis of the male from Npr.49. Other iron objects from burial contexts include the iron wedges used for the fixation of the individual in Psk2.32.

Earrings are present in four burials: single copper alloy earrings come from AnK.7 and SJR.12, while two were by the skull in Ar.40. The latter is a well-furnished grave with gilded bronze object and bronze hoop by the occipital bone, bronze button between the ribs, and iron buckle under the pelvis. Another distinct burial (AnK.49) had two gilded earrings discovered in situ. Her grave also contained brocaded textile and a copper spherical button were unearthed. Other possible adornments include the pearls from Cik.104 and the two rings placed on the left hand of the elderly male from Stari Ras (Trg.358)

Charcoal was present in the fill in only one grave (PGB.13). Animal remains in these graves pose interesting questions. They are generally missing from the graves with prone burials (with the exception of Cik.39, Vrb.139, and Hit.32), but in one case (Hit.32) the animal skeleton is present in articulated form. The sheep skeleton (animal bone group) is covered with a stone, a direct resemblance to the fixation rite used in human deviant graves.

### 1.1.5. Correlation with other deviant burial rites

There are various combinations of prone burials with other attributes of deviant burial rites. Besides the type IIA, decapitation is part of the disintegration of the individual in Kyulevcha (Kyu.81). Another combination of decapitation and prone position is evident in Devnya (Dv3.93). This burial presents a reversal of type IIA by placing the skeleton in prone extended position and the skull supine on the back with opposite orientation. Possible Mnd.4 right clavicle Mutilation of the body is possible for Mnd.4 and Bat.1. There are several cases of likely tied limbs indicating coercion (CpV.38, Izv.234, Kyu.81, Bat.1, PIC.29, PIC.30, and Trg.358), all ventral prone burials. The fixation of the body is combined with prone in two later examples. In the first one, the feet of the body from Tarnovo (TVL.192) were weighed down with stones. The second one is from Vajuga-Pesak 2 (Psk2.32). The foramen magnum of the face-down skull was stabbed by an iron wedge and another one was found under the red scapula. Generally, prone burials tend to be combined with other types of deviant burial, but rarely with more than one additional element.

In comparison to the prone positioned skeletons from the mass grave in Devnya-3, the individual instances of this deviant rite present significant similarities. The most indicative is the level of correlation with other categories of unusual treatment, notably tied limbs. Without doubt the closest parallel is the individual from Kyulevcha (Kyu.81), where the position is complemented by bodily disintegration, the shape and location of the grave, and chronological proximity. Differences compared to prone burials from the mass grave include the lack of artificial skull deformation, as well as different age and sex pattern. However, all these are unique

characteristics found in the mass grave in Devnya-3 and are most probably the result of specific historical circumstances.

#### 1.1.6. Prone burials in European perspective

Prone burials have always been considered different in comparison to the usual way of internment, yet they have been present in many cultures from different ages. Caroline Arcini counted about 600 cases from 215 sites around the world, a number that has only grown.<sup>97</sup> Despite acknowledging that face-down placement is far from unprecedented throughout history, they never receive widespread popularity among the funerary customs. Perhaps the only exception is the pre-Mesolithic community which left the cemetery Al Khiday 2 in Sudan where the norm was a prone extended inhumation.<sup>98</sup>

Arcini's cross cultural approach resulted in the summary of several trends, which might be compared to the patterning in the northern Balkans. She observed that there were no exclusive gender restrictions on the practice that was found in mostly single graves. Prone burials also tend to use simple shallow pits and lack grave goods. Another important trend is that they are often isolated or in marginal parts of the burial ground, even though sometimes concentrations occur. Finally, in her exceptionally *longue duree* view, the frequency of the phenomenon seems to be highest in the Roman period up until the end of the Viking age in Nordic chronology (mid-eleventh century).

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<sup>97</sup> Caroline Arcini, "Losing face: the worldwide phenomenon of ancient prone burial." In: *Döda Personers Sällskap: Gravmaterialens Identiteter och Kulturella Uttryck* ed. I.M. Back Danielsson. (Stockholm: Stockholm university, 2009).

<sup>98</sup>Donatella Usai et al., "Excavating a unique pre-Mesolithic cemetery in central Sudan," *Antiquity* 84:323 (2010).

Around medieval Europe, burials have been studied on the grounds of similar systematic data collection in several cultural contexts. For pagan Anglo-Saxon England David Wilson and then Andrew Reynolds provided such an approach based on more than 115 examples from 60 cemeteries. The large sample showed some preference towards females and grave furnishing in more than half of the recorded cases. Importantly, ‘the range of grave furnishing with prone burials varies considerably, and in many senses reflects the degree of variance found in Early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries among ‘normal’ burials.’<sup>99</sup> Other comparative points include conformity to the cardinal directions in burial orientation and uncommon combination with other deviant attributes. For instance, only twice the prone position was combined with decapitations, a clear difference with the situation in the northern Balkans.

In the late Anglo-Saxon period after the conversion, prone burials give at least fifty-one examples from seventeen sites classified as execution cemeteries. Despite the continuation of the pre-Christian practice, some notable changes are observed by Reynolds. The gender preference of face-down position is now towards males and the coincidence with other special practices like decapitation, mutilations, or simply tying of the limbs is higher.<sup>100</sup>

In Viking Age Scandinavia c. 100 prone burials are found on sites around the region, but especially on Gotland.<sup>101</sup> This is due to the extensively excavated tenth-eleventh century site of Kopparsvik near Visby. From 450 graves on the site, prone burials are recorded in 50 graves mostly in the northern periphery alongside the former shoreline. The distinctive picture offered by this concentration shows a

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<sup>99</sup> Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant*, 72.

<sup>100</sup> Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant*, 160-1.

<sup>101</sup> Matthias Toplak, “Deconstructing the deviant Burials- Kopparsvik and the Rite of Prone Burials in Viking Age Scandinavia,” *META Historiskarkeologisk tidskrift* (2018), 81.

preference for adult males. In Kopparsvik they were buried with a standard variety of dress accessories and without any signs for violence or maltreatment.<sup>102</sup> Elsewhere in Scandinavia, prone burial and decapitation are sometimes appearing together as in the double grave from Lejre.<sup>103</sup>

Central Europe is another area where the study of medieval prone burials has been on the rise in the last decade. Most recently the phenomenon was thoroughly examined in the German-speaking areal. The collected evidence amounts to 95 burials from 60 sites from the tenth to the nineteen centuries. The general chronological trend is for their number to increase in the late Middle Ages and remain somewhat stable in the following centuries. The majority of them were included in the churchyards or were buried outside but not far from their limits. Interestingly, between the thirteen and sixteen century there is a significant appearance of adult males being buried in prone position at 'favoured locations' (church or chapel interior). In general, the adults are the far predominant age group subjected to face down burial with some preference towards male individuals. The grave goods are practically absent from the sample, while a deviation in the orientation is another characteristic for the later examples.<sup>104</sup>

To compare, thirty Polish examples corresponding to the high medieval period in the German study were compiled by L. Gardela.<sup>105</sup> This is a relatively higher occurrence given the smaller geographical scope of the sample. Most of them were found in communal burial grounds and also exhibit an inclination towards adult and

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<sup>102</sup> Matthias Toplak, "Prone Burials and Modified Teeth at the Viking Age Cemetery of Kopparsvik. The Changing of Social Identities at the Threshold of the Christian Middle Ages," *Analecta Archaeologica Ressorviensia* 10 (2015), 79.

<sup>103</sup> Steen W Andersen, "Lejre – skibsætninger, vikingegrave, Grydehøj," *Aarbøger for nordisk oldkyndighed og historie* 1993 (1995), 24.

<sup>104</sup> Amelie Alterauge, Thomas Meier, Bettina Jungklaus, Marco Milella, Sandra Lösch, "Between belief and fear -Reinterpreting prone burials during the Middle Ages and early modern period in German speaking Europe," *PLoS ONE* 15:8 (2020), 5-17.

<sup>105</sup> Leszek Gardela, "Face Down: The Phenomenon of Prone Burial in Early Medieval Poland," *Analecta Archaeologica Ressorviensia* 10 (2015), 103-7.

mature individuals and men over women. Grave goods are also rarely discovered, and the exceptions are jewelry or small iron objects. Important observations concern their location on the margins of the cemeteries and the rare combination with other deviant practices. Several inconclusive associations with beheadings and tying of limbs, however, exist.

In present-day Czech Republic and Slovakia prone burials are found in cemeteries and in dug-in features within settlements. The latter category is characterized by its great variety of carelessly deposited human remains and the likely violent treatment of those individuals dating to the ninth-eleventh century.<sup>106</sup> Prone burials appear relatively often under such circumstances in single (e.g., Blatne, Sala Veca) and multiple (e.g., Komjatice A) burials alike. Interestingly, prone and flexed positions are occasionally mixed like in grave 160 from Nitra-1.<sup>107</sup> Further sixteen prone burials were recorded from nine cemeteries without any recorded additional characteristics.<sup>108</sup>

Despite that, this kind of internment is known from the Avar age in Central Europe, its comprehensive study is still somewhat lacking. Some examples can be found in the high-status grave in Ozora or in the larger cemeteries in Pilismarót-Basaharc<sup>109</sup> or Mödling.<sup>110</sup> Allegedly, face-down position and decapitation show some correspondence.

The picture gets clearer in the Arpad period. On the grounds of the key site Sarud and the parallels around the Carpathian basin, the prone position burials were

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<sup>106</sup> Milan Hanuliak, “Zur Problematik der Gräber in Siedlungsarealen aus dem 9.-10. Jahrhundert auf dem Gebiet der Slowakei,” *Archaeologia Adriatica* 4 (2010), 109.

<sup>107</sup> Milan Hanuliak, *Veľkomoravske pohrebiská: Pochovávanie v 9.-10.storočí na území Slovenska* [Great Moravian cemeteries: The funeral in 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century in the Slavic lands] (Nitra: Slovakian Academy of Sciences, 2004), 48-9, 59-66.

<sup>108</sup> Vladimir Kaznakov, *Treatment*, 136-7.

<sup>109</sup> Fettich Nandor. *Das awarenzeitliche Gräberfeld von Pilismarót-Basaharc* (Budapest: MTK, 1965), 134.

<sup>110</sup> Karin Wiltshcke-Schrotta and Peter Stadler, “Beheading in Avar times (630–800 A.D.),” *Acta Medica Lituanica* 12:1 (2005), 61.



characterized by the lack of grave goods, concentrations in the periphery and prevalence of females.<sup>111</sup> In the densely occupied Kána cemetery from the same period, prone burials are an element in the multiple graves on the edges of the churchyard.<sup>112</sup>

To summarize, the overview shows the similarities and differences in the prone burial phenomenon in the northern Balkans and the rest of medieval Europe. Its overall appearance is not drastically different. However, the frequency of prone burials is rather in the low spectrum on the Balkans. This is further highlighted by the decrease in the eleventh century, a stark distinction from the picture in most of Europe during the High Middle Ages. The high correlation with decapitation and coercion is another aspect with cross-cultural parallels, but especially pronounced in the Balkan sample.

## 1.2. *Decapitations*

Decapitation is another deviant rite based on deliberate action: the removal of the head from the rest of the body. Intentional post mortem interventions and violent attempts targeting the cranium are included in this count. The principal anthropological indications for decapitations are concerned with the status of the skull and cervical vertebrae. Pathological indicators like cut-marks and evidence for violent blows on them are definite markers for decapitations but are rarely reported. Thus, very often the identification is dependent on observations of disposition or absence of

<sup>111</sup> János Győző Szabó, “Árpád-kori telep és temetője Sarud határában III. A temető leírása és rendellenes temetkezéseink párhuzamai” [Árpadian settlement and cemetery on the border of Sarud III. The description of the cemetery and the parallels between our abnormal burials], *Az Egri Múzeum Évkönyve* 14 (1976), 37-40, 82.

<sup>112</sup> Maria Vargha, “Deviant burials in rural environment in the High Middle Ages – ritual, the lack of ritual, or just another kind of it?”, *Ruralia* 11 (2017), 275-7.

the skull. One major condition that must be considered is the possibility for taphonomic causes for secondary disturbance or decay before determining a decapitation.



*Figure 11 The decapitation burial Bčj.20 - detail (After Mikić Antonić, Nekropola iz perioda avarske dominacije, fig.76)*

There are one hundred and ten confirmed cases of decapitations distributed across fifty-six sites. The ratio of decapitations is 5.67% of the overall number of graves per site. This number must be taken with a pinch of salt though, as the individual sites exhibit quite different situations when it comes to this practice. For instance, in smaller or only partially studied cemeteries their percentage is naturally higher. Such is the situation in Ravna (11.1%, n=3), Dervent (10.34%, n=3), Krasen (12.5%, n=2), Brodski Drenovac (9.38%, n=3), Bečej (8.7%, n=2), Čonoplja (6.25%, n=1), Preslav-1 (5.88%, n=1). Yet, some mid-sized and large burial grounds are somewhat close to the mean value, for instance in Vajuga-Pesak 2 (6.9%, n=8), Šopotu Vechi (6.38%, n=3), Anevsko kale (5.36%, n=3), Batajnica-Velika Humka (4.35%, n=5), Braila-1 (3.85%, n=2), Udbina – St. Jakob (c.3%, n=2) and Devnya-1 (3.09%, n=3). Vojka and Čik maintain an equal value for decapitations (3.2%, n=4). Elsewhere, the percentage falls under 1% like in Trnjane and Čelarevo (both 0.54%, n=2), Vukovar-Lijeva Bara (0.45%, n=), Ždrijac-Nin (0.59%, n=3), Durankulak

(0,81%, n=2), Sakardzha (0.8%), and Kaliakra (0,85%, n=3). The statistical difference in context of biritual funerary customs is particularly evident with decapitations. A site like Sultana where inhumations are more common than cremations can shift values from 1.65% to 2.2% (n=3). On the contrary, on sites where cremations prevail significantly like Sihleanu the decapitation burial stands for 1.3% of all the graves and 20% of the inhumations. The most intriguing example is the cremation cemetery Constanta-Castelu. There, one unburnt skull is the single exception from the rite and its differentiation is only more obvious with only 0.56% from all the graves.

### 1.2.1. Types, chronology, and distribution

Decapitations discovered in medieval sites in the northern Balkans can be grouped into four types determined by the recorded skull setting:

- I. Only skull deposit. Sometimes the cervical vertebrae removed with the rest of the head are also preserved. The recorded thirty-four cases are presented in their relative chronological sequence in the table below. Two more cases possibly belong in this group: Kyu.28 and Tcl.26.

Grave	600-650	650-700	700-750	750-800	800-850	850-900	900-950	950-1000	1000-1050	1050-1100	1100-1150	1150-1200	1200-1250	1250-1300	1300-1350	1350-1400	1400-1450	1450-1500
Cik.65	*	*																
Vjk.b		*																
Vjk.c		*																
Vjk.d		*																
Shl.20		*	*	*	*													
Slit.17		*	*	*	*	*												
Cns.110			*	*	*	*												
Plt.344			*	*	*	*												
Vrn.3			*	*	*	*												
Dv3.30			*	*	*	*												
BrDr.2					*													
BrDr.12					*													

Grave	600-650	650-700	700-750	750-800	800-850	850-900	900-950	950-1000	1000-1050	1050-1100	1100-1150	1150-1200	1200-1250	1250-1300	1300-1350	1350-1400	1400-1450	1450-1500
PsBc					*	*	*	*										
Prs.15						*	*	*										
Krs.a						*	*	*										
Bat.59							*	*										
BVH.3								*	*	*								
BVH.4								*	*	*								
BVH.5								*	*	*								
BVH.27								*	*	*								
BVH.28								*	*	*								
IIDo.2									*	*	*	*						
Isc.60									*	*	*	*						
Isc.157									*	*	*	*						
Brl1.16									*	*	*	*	*	*				
Brl1.49									*	*	*	*	*	*				
SpV.1											*	*	*					
SpV.35											*	*	*					
Psk2.16												*	*					
Psk2.17												*	*					
Psk2.18												*	*					
Psk2.92												*	*					
Drs.69													*					
Drs.70													*					

Table 3 Relative chronological sequence for Type I decapitation burials

II. Missing skull. The postcranial skeleton is present. The recorded twenty-three cases are presented in relative chronological sequence in the table below:

Grave	600-650	650-700	700-750	750-800	800-850	850-900	900-950	950-1000	1000-1050	1050-1100	1100-1150	1150-1200	1200-1250	1250-1300	1300-1350	1350-1400	1400-1450	1450-1500
Cik.6	*	*																
Cik.100	*	*																
ZdrN.60			*	*	*													
Dv1.18			*	*	*	*												
Dv1.24			*	*	*	*												
Dur.49					*	*	*	*										
VLB.185							*	*	*	*								
Drvt.5							*	*	*	*								
Drvt.6							*	*	*	*								
Drvt.19							*	*	*	*								
PIC.10								*	*	*								
Od2.218									*	*								
Od2.493									*	*								
Kvc.88										*	*							
Kvc.165										*	*							
SpV.9										*	*	*						

Grave	600 - 650	650 - 700	700 - 750	750 - 800	800 - 850	850 - 900	900 - 950	950- 1000	1000 - 1050	1050 - 1100	1100 - 1150	1150 - 1200	1200 - 1250	1250 - 1300	1300 - 1350	1350 - 1400	1400 - 1450	1450 - 1500
Hot.2											*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
GTcv.23											*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Blt.3													*	*	*	*		
AnK.33													*	*	*	*		
KOm.15 4													*	*	*	*		
Srm85.2 0													*	*	*	*	*	*
Udb.10																		*

Table 4 Relative chronological sequence for Type II decapitation burials

III. Displaced skull. The most common type of decapitation was with fifty registered cases. They are presented according to their relative chronological sequence in the table below:

Grave	600 - 650	650 - 700	700 - 750	750 - 800	800 - 850	850 - 900	900 - 950	950- 1000	1000 - 1050	1050 - 1100	1100 - 1150	1150 - 1200	1200 - 1250	1250 - 1300	1300 - 1350	1350 - 1400	1400 - 1450	1450 - 1500
Cik.39	*	*																
Vjk.a		*																
Clg.1		*																
Snj.10		*																
Con.8a		*	*	*														
Bcj.20		*	*	*														
Bcj.32		*	*	*														
Slt.92		*	*	*	*	*												
Bog.3			*	*														
Bog.13			*	*														
BcT.13			*	*														
BcT.101			*	*														
Clr.166			*	*	*													
Clr.244			*	*	*													
Mnd.4			*	*	*													
Kyu.81			*	*	*	*												
Var.11			*	*	*	*												
Dv3.93			*	*	*	*												
Dv3.106			*	*	*	*												
Dv1.14			*	*	*	*												
VIMI.89				*														
BrDr.32					*													
RnC.3					*	*	*	*										
RnC.10					*	*	*	*										
RnC.11					*	*	*	*										
SJR.12					*	*	*	*										
Dur.29					*	*	*	*										
Zmn.207						*	*											
PGB.13						*	*	*										

Grave	600-650	650-700	700-750	750-800	800-850	850-900	900-950	950-1000	1000-1050	1050-1100	1100-1150	1150-1200	1200-1250	1250-1300	1300-1350	1350-1400	1400-1450	1450-1500
Krs.11						*	*	*										
Srm34							*	*										
H2.2							*	*	*									
VLB.83							*	*	*	*								
Psk.19									*	*								
Trn.52										*	*	*	*					
Trn.232										*	*	*	*					
Skr.1											*	*	*	*				
Kvc.78											*	*						
Psk2.30												*	*					
Psk2.32												*	*					
Ps2.39												*	*					
Ps2.82												*	*					
GPzr.1													*	*	*	*		
Srm85.61													*	*	*	*	*	*
Tar.192													*	*	*	*		
AnK.7													*	*	*	*		
AnK.49													*	*	*	*		
KOm.66													*	*	*	*		
KOm.163													*	*	*	*		
Udb.15																		*

Table 5 Relative chronological sequence for Type III decapitation burials

IV. The skull was removed from the grave, but present in its vicinity. Only one case:

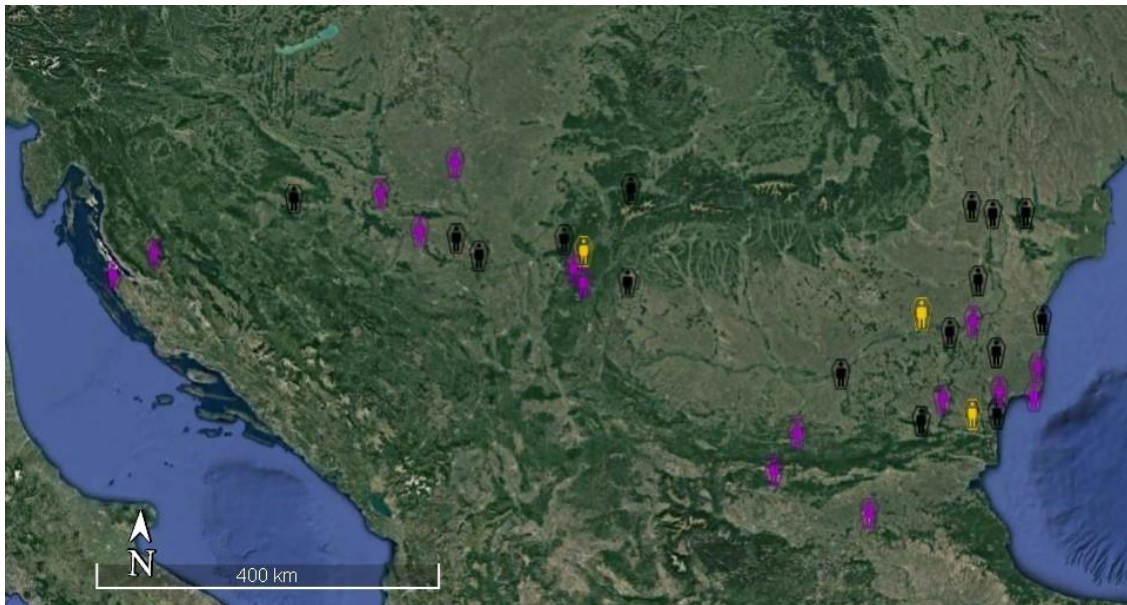
Grave	600-650	650-700	700-750	750-800	800-850	850-900	900-950	950-1000	1000-1050	1050-1100	1100-1150	1150-1200	1200-1250	1250-1300	1300-1350	1350-1400	1400-1450	1450-1500
Od2.416									*	*								

Table 6 Relative chronology for Type IV decapitation burials

The decapitations seem to have uninterrupted presence around the Balkans in the medieval period. The period between seventh and ninth centuries could be seen as one of early peak. Yet, the following centuries show only slight decrease and maintain steady number in overall recorded cases. The comparison of the chronological sequencing with the distribution patterns will reveal the genuinely interesting aspects in the development of the practice.



Types I and II represent two contrasting modes of treatment. In one of them



*Figure 12 Comparative distribution of decapitations Type I (black) and II (purple) and their coincidence on sites (yellow)*

the skull is absent, in the other – everything but the skull is missing. This mirroring practices undoubtedly reflect certain cultural choices and corporal conditions. Still, the existence of grave like Od2.416 from Type IV, which allows plausibly to suggest the cranium nearby the cist and the skeleton in it are from the same individual, raises the question on their interconnectedness. Naturally, and as much in the case of Od2.416, obtaining aDNA data of sufficient quality could drastically improve such identifications. From the point of view of the current large-scale characterisation, observations on the simultaneous occurrence of Types I and II within the same site could be sufficient.

The map (Fig.12) demonstrates that normally Type I or II are not represented simultaneously in the sites on the record. They coincide in the biritual cemeteries in Sultana and Devnya (the last being a wide mortuary landscape) and later in Șopotu Vechi. Thus, Type I and II must be regarded as parallel and mostly independent forms of decapitation funerary practices. Also, this means that the severed skull and the

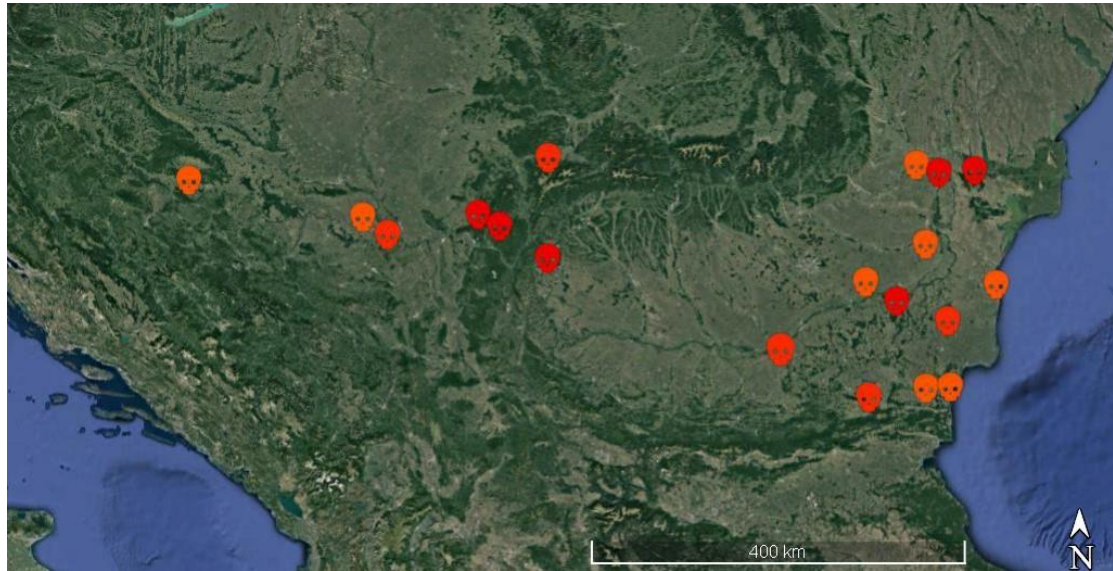


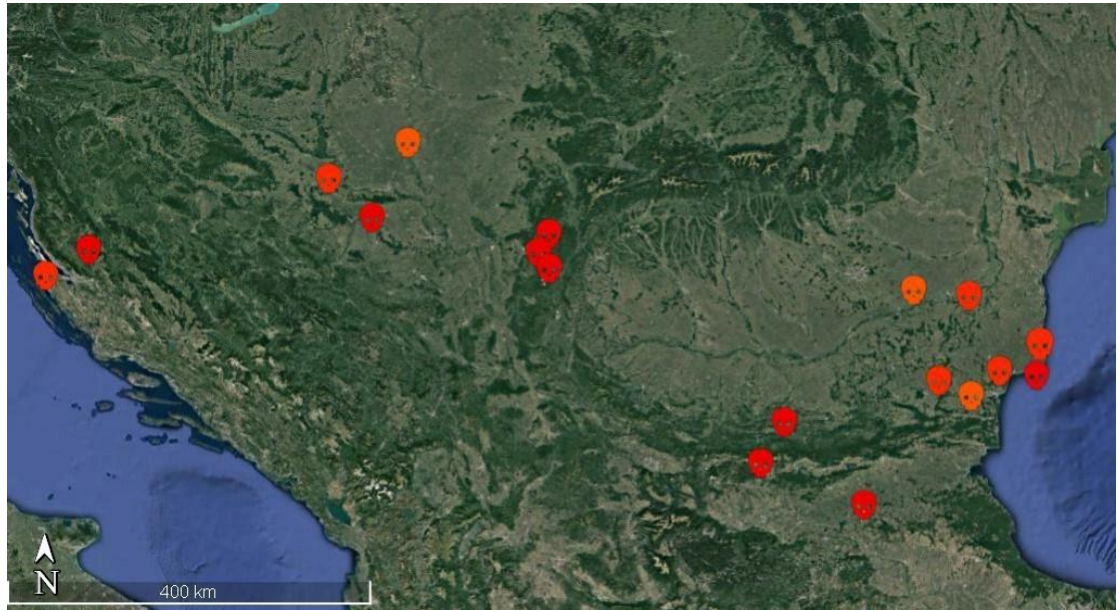
Figure 13 Distribution of Type I decapitation burials. Early period (phase 1 light orange, phase 2 dark orange), Late period (red).

beheaded body are receiving separate treatment at least as often as they were kept together (Type III).

The distribution of Type I shows its early manifestation in Vojvodina, but on limited number of mid-late Avar sites. Shortly after the type is already evident in pagan biritual cemeteries on the Bulgar-controlled Lower Danube, first north of the river and later in the coastal zones. In the early ninth century Brodski Drenovac stands out as the westernmost cemetery with Type I decapitations. In the ninth-tenth century only skulls are found in isolation (Puszta Bucova), as well as in rural (Krasen) or urban cemeteries (Preslav). River Danube connects the two concentrations of Type I burials in the period eleventh-thirteen century. The western one is in the Iron Gates zone and includes mostly rustic cemeteries on both banks. The eastern concentration



follows the river as it runs along Dobrogea, the former Byzantine province Paristrion and is found in the burial grounds of fortified towns.



*Figure 13 Distribution of Type II decapitation burials. Early period (phase 1-light orange, phase 2-dark orange), Late period (red)*

Despite being recorded on the middle Avar site of Čik, the burials from Type II do not form enduring presence in southern Pannonia. In the eight-nine century they appear seldomly on the Adriatic coast in the urban row cemetery Nin and in the Bulgar biritual cemeteries Sultana and Devnya-1. Until the end of eleventh century, the type continues in the plain southeast from the Danube without apparent pattern. For instance, some are from the big cemetery in the trade settlement near Odartsi, while another one reuses abandoned fortification tower in Pliska. From the twelfth century decapitations Type II contribute to the formidable concentration of deviant burials in the Iron Gates area. In the thirteen-fourteen century they are also introduced to the funerary landscape of urban centres like Sirmium, Hotalich, Anevsko kale, and Kaliakra. From this late period the burials from Anevsko kale, Sirmium and Udbina come from proven churchyard burial grounds.

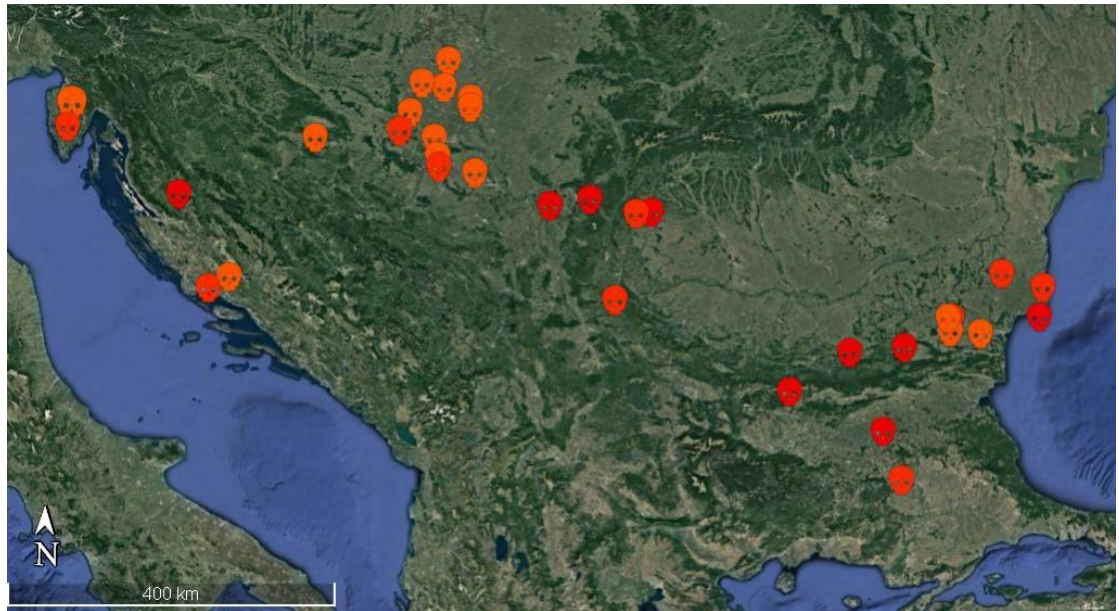


Figure 14 Distribution of Type III decapitation burials. Early period (phase 1- light orange, phase 2 – dark orange), late period (red)

The first observation when we look at the geography of Type III decapitations (Fig.14) is their prevalent spread in the early medieval period. This applies both to the number of individual graves and the sites where they were found. They are particularly strongly represented in eight-ninth century Vojvodina. Another area of interest is north of the Balkan Mountains around the core of the Bulgar polity. Less dense concentrations are found on the Adriatic coast in Dalmatia and Istria. Twelfth century examples of Type III are mostly found in rural environments. In a very similar fashion to Type II, these decapitations accumulate in the Iron Gates and disperse around urban centres like Tarnovo and Sirmium, mostly within churchyards.

After the chronological and geographical dimensions of the main decapitation forms are summarized, it becomes apparent that two distinctive phases could be outlined here as well. They correspond to broadly defined early and late medieval periods. Similar developments are observed in the other deviant burial practices. Perhaps the picture is clearest with the prone burials, some of which (like Type II.B) also correspond to a portion of the Type III decapitations. According to the data



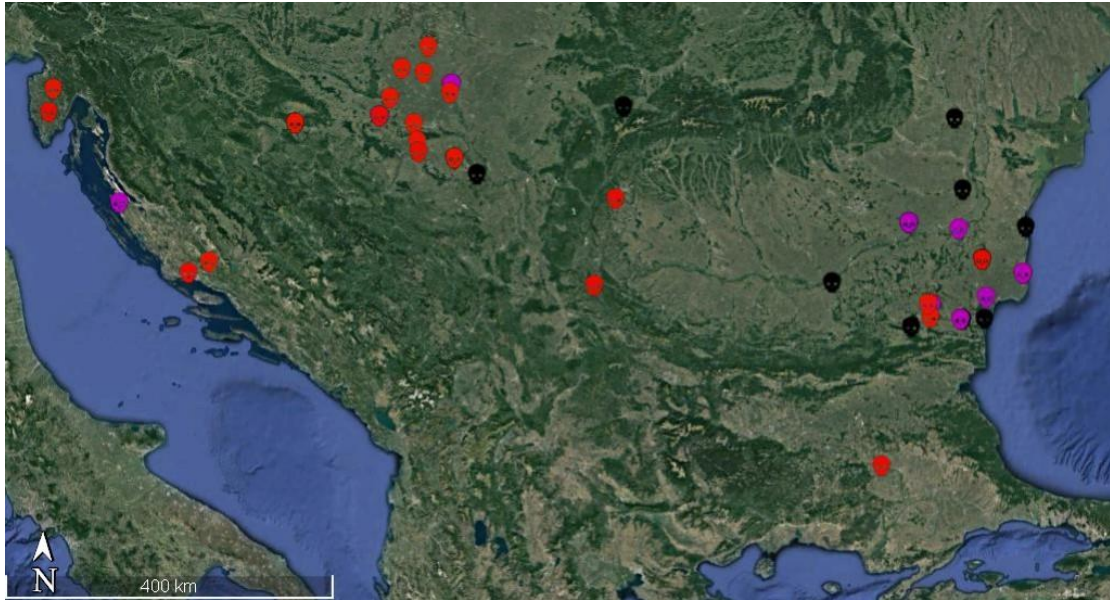


Figure 15 Comparative distribution of decapitation burials in the early period. Type I (black), Type II (purple), Type III (red)

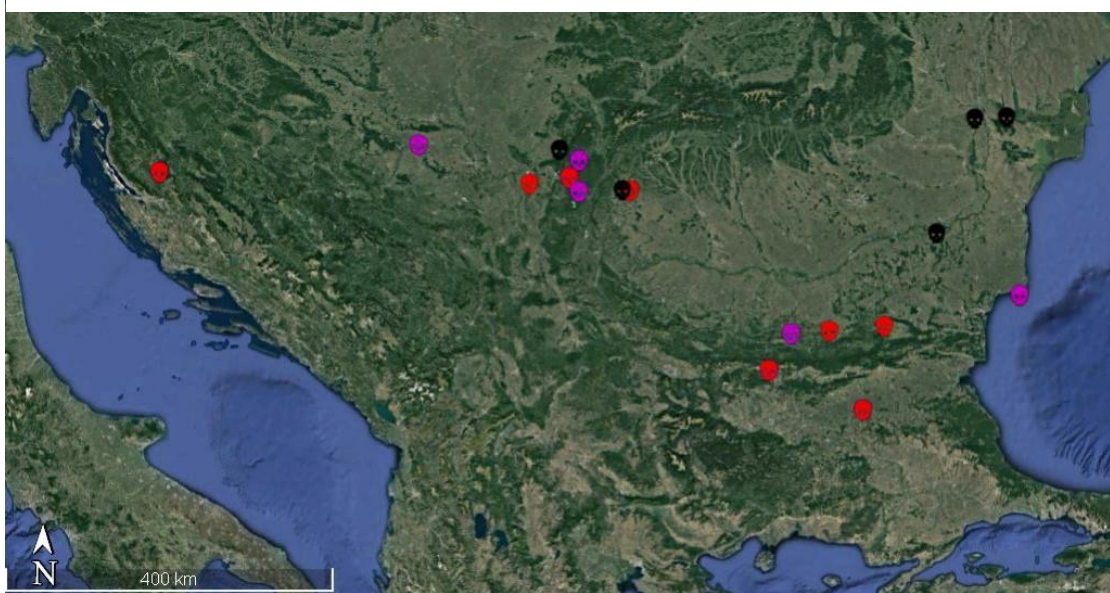


Figure 16 Comparative distribution of Type I (black), Type II (purple), and Type III (red) decapitation burials in the late period

gathered so far, the eleventh century is a transitory period between the two phases. The distribution of decapitation burials per each phase is summarized in the following maps.

In the first period (Fig.15) decapitations in the northern Balkans are found *en masse* in two major clusters. The first is the southern Pannonian Plain along the Middle Danube, i.e., present-day Vojvodina. All types of decapitation are presented

here but Type III seems to be the most dominant. The second major cluster is on the Lower Danube and the western Black Sea coast. This cluster is characterised by the variability of decapitations with discernible lack of Type III burials north of the Danube. The Adriatic littoral forms a third cluster of lesser density with clear geographical distinction between Type II in the centre and Type III to the north and south.

In the late period the distribution is very different (Fig.15). The most conspicuous differences are the decreased frequency and the shift of decapitation burials on the Middle Danube to the east. In the area of the Iron Gates, they form the central and most prominent cluster where all forms are recorded. Further east, the concentration of decapitations seems quite dispersed with Type I strongly represented in urban contexts on the Lower Danube. Types II and III are to be found further south, also in dominantly urbanized and ecclesiastically managed environments with the vivid exception of the earliest site, Kovachevo in Thrace. In the west the Adriatic cluster looks all but gone according to the current data. Confirmed decapitations are recorded only in Udbina at the very end of this phase.

### **1.2.2. Grave structure and orientation**

The orientation of decapitation burials is presented according to the cardinal directions and the position of the head. Certain differences are evident here as well (Fig.17). The most common orientation even before the Christianization is the W-E. The orientations NW-SE and SW-NE are very likely related to it. The N-S orientation is generally preferred in pagan burial sites south of the Danube, is recorded twelve times of which five (Cik.100, Od2.218, Dur.29, Hot.2, Krs.a) are atypical for the

specific site. Other variations include S-N (three times), NE-SW, SE-NW, and E-W. The last one is arguably closest to orientation chosen to highlight the deviant features of the burial rite. Some examples include the skull from Constanta-Castelu or the decapitation from Vajuga-Pesak (Psk.19). Sometimes this orientation reflects the placement of the skull in opposition to the rest of the body like in Čelarevo (Clr.166) or Devnya (Dv3.93).

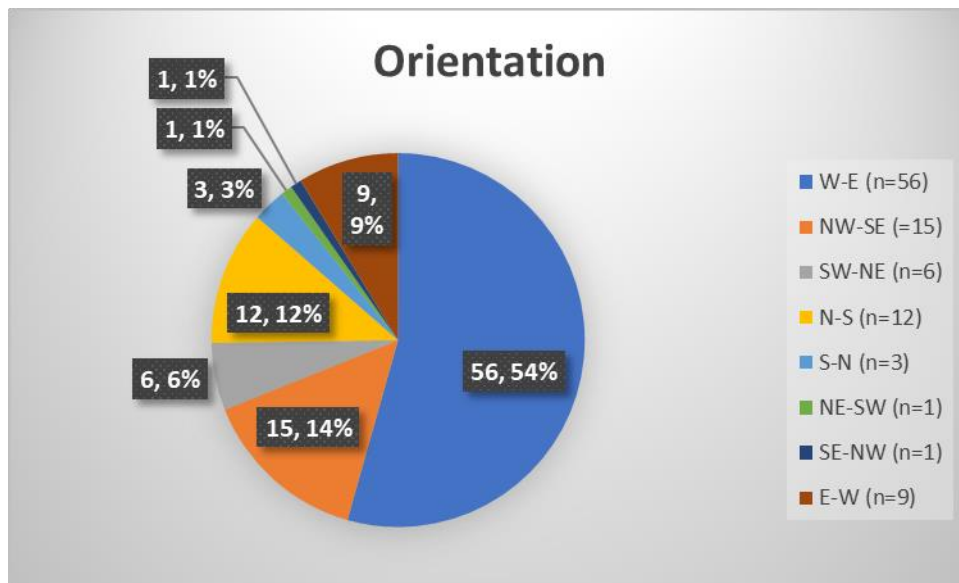


Figure 15 Predominant orientation of the decapitation burials

The most common position is by far the supine. Supine extended is recorded forty-eight times and supine with different variations, notably Type I decapitations, is observed on forty occasions. When the deceased is face-down, this is apparent by the position of the skull (eleven times). Rarely (e.g., Dvn3.93) the body is prone, while the skull is placed supine. Three individuals are neglectfully disposed like they were thrown, three more are on the side, and only one burial is flexed.

The grave structures used for decapitation burials are presented in Fig.18 below:

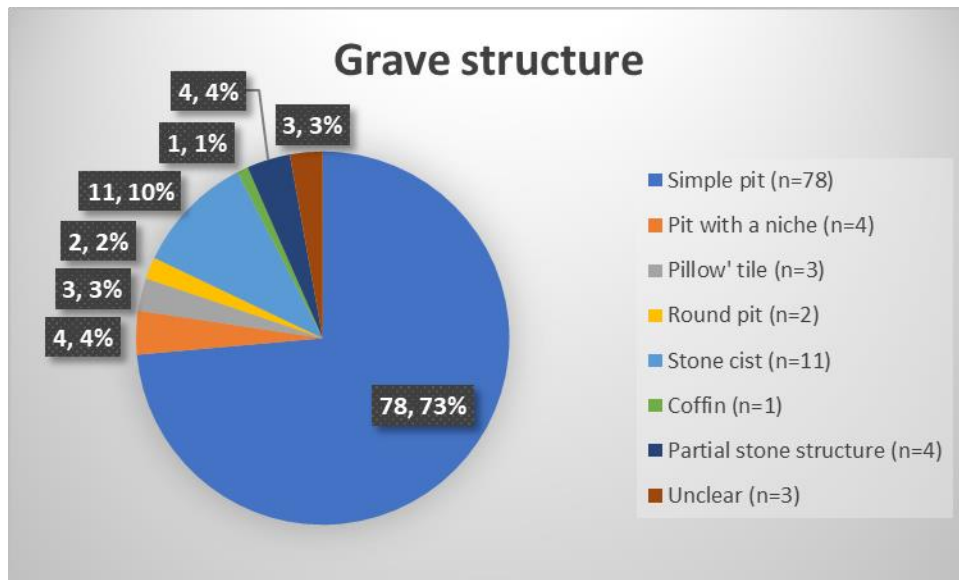


Figure 16 Grave structures for decapitation burials

### 1.2.3. Demography: age and sex

Anthropological analysis of age and sex is available for only a third of the described burials. The sex of seventy-five individuals is still unidentified. May be surprisingly, the sex ratio among the anthropologically analyzed decapitations is relatively equal with 56% men and 44% women. This is partially due to the dominance of anthropologically recognized female remains in the twelfth-thirteenth centuries on sites like Vajuga-Pesak 2, Anevsko kale, and Drstar.

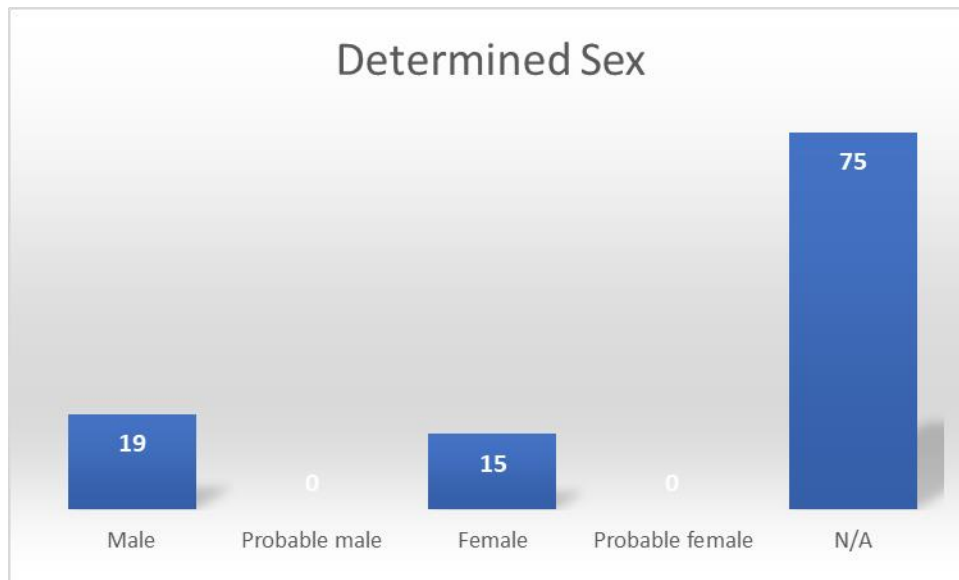


Figure 17 Known sex for individuals from decapitation burials

The age at the time of death is unknown for twenty individuals. The determination of the biological age for the remaining decapitated individuals and the age structure within the sample are represented in the following graphics:

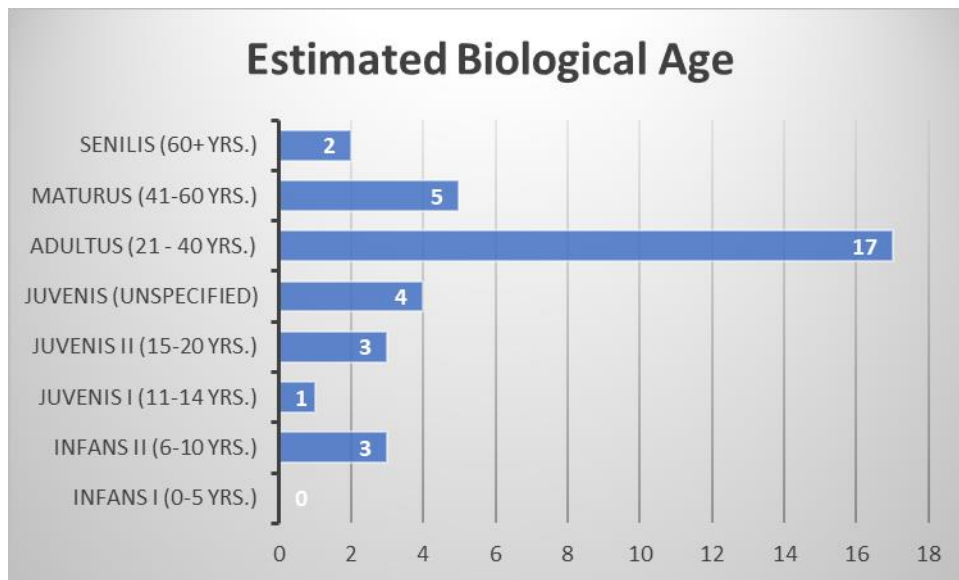


Figure 18 Age distribution of individuals from decapitation burials



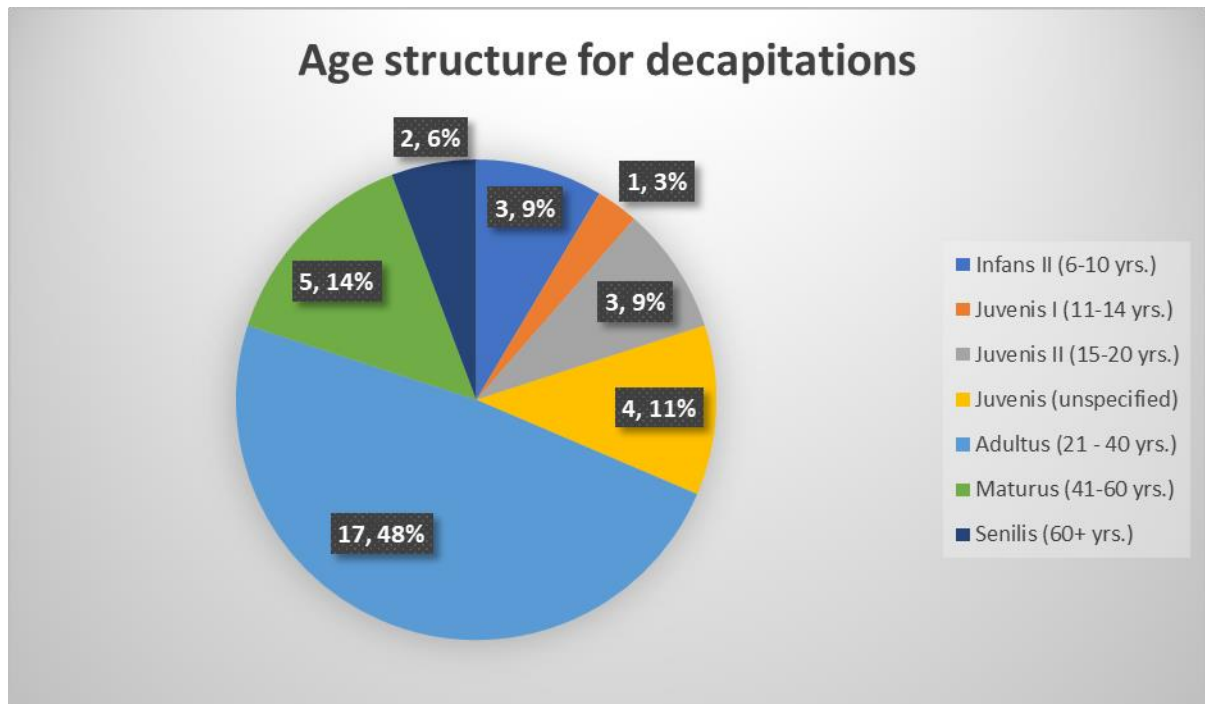


Figure 19 Age structure for decapitation burials

#### 1.2.4. Grave goods and animal remains

Most of the decapitation burials are without grave goods and finds are recorded in almost a third of the cases (n=30). Grave goods tend to be more often found in female graves and prominently those from the early medieval phase on the Middle Danube. In fact, objects were discovered in just four confirmed male graves from the tenth-twelfth century. From chronological perspective, the decapitations from the early period were more likely to contain grave goods (33%, n=22) than those from the second, later period (c.22%, n=8). Pottery and ferrous objects are decisively more common in decapitations before the eleventh century, while jewellery, although rare, is more equally distributed chronologically.

Pottery was found in fourteen graves and is sometimes in fairly fragmented state (Vrn.3, PGB.13, AnK.49, Dv1.18, Cns.110). Well preserved vessels are known from nine graves (Cik.39, Cik.100, Bcj.20, Bcj.32, Clr.244, Mnd.4, Prs.15, PsBc,



BrDr.12). Additionally, one ceramic bead was found among the ribs in one of the graves (Var.11).

Iron knives are relatively noticeable in the early medieval graves with seven recorded instances (Cik.39, Cik.100, Con.8a, Bog.13, Bcj.20, Bcj.32, Mnd.4). Other iron objects include belt elements and buckles (GTcv.23) or arrowheads (Bog.13). Elements from belts are found also in Becej. One arrowhead probably caused the death of the individual from KOm.154.

Other noteworthy finds are the adornments. These consist of eleven earrings (gold and silver from Sl.17, two gilded from AnK.49 and copper from AnK.7, bronze Bcj.20, Bcj.32, Bog.13, SJR.12, glass from Cik.100), two glass bracelets (Kvc.165), two copper bracelets from the same grave (Kvc.165) and the spherical copper button from AnK.49. Textile remains were also found in the same grave around the head. One woman from Brodski Drenovac (BrDr.32) had a necklace from 29 glass beads (white, blue, green), silver medallion on the chest, and silver ring on the right hand. Another necklace was discovered in Sultana (Sl.17). Bronze rings were found in Zminj.207 and Isc.157 (possibly accidental inclusions in the grave fill). Bracelet was found on the right hand of the skeleton from Psk2.82. Also, a silver coin of Charles Robert (1308-1342) was discovered here *in situ*, suggesting significantly later date for this grave than the rest of the cemetery.

The finds of multiple flints (AnK.88), cattle and horse/arse bones (Odartsi), eggshells (Kyu.28), animal knucklebones (Vrn.3, Dv1.24) also should be listed here.

The inventory of the decapitation and cremation grave from Preslav (Prs.15) is particularly interesting. In addition to the cremation urn, a clay jar was found filled with chicken bones and one bone awl. The deposition with urn associates this find with another Type I decapitation, namely the contemporary isolated burial from

Puszta Bucova, where the unburnt skull was deposited in a jar. Another case, which resembles the situation in Preslav is the grave from Constanta (Cns.110). Despite the lack of cremated remains within its grave pit, this is the only skull inhumation in a cremation cemetery. Furthermore, pottery fragments are also reported for Cns.110, suggesting the use of some vessel for the burial.

The most peculiar find, however, remains the small pectoral cross. It is listed under number 422 by Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova in her study of pectoral crosses from Bulgaria.<sup>113</sup> It belongs to a widespread type of pectoral crosses made of copper alloy used as a reliquary as well. The iconography represents the Crucifixion of Christ and Virgin Mary. A small cross is notched/engraved above the head of Christ and another small Maltese-like cross is added above the figure of the Virgin. The date for this object is early tenth century and the most likely provenance is the metal production centre in Novosel near Veliki Preslav. There are plenty of well-known analogies for the find, including more than sixty items from Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia and the tenth-eleventh-century findings from Szentes-Szentlászló and Vésztő in Hungary.

### 1.2.5. Correlation with other deviant burial rites

Decapitations seem to correlate with other deviant burial rites. The largest number of combinations is the already mentioned correlation between twelve instances of displaced skull and prone burials from Type IIA and its reversed Type I manifestation (Dv3.93). In addition, decapitation occurs with other forms of mutilation in eleven burials (GTcv.23, BcT.13, Psk2.30, Psk2.32, Trn.52, ZdrN.77,

<sup>113</sup> Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova [Людмила Дончева-Петкова], *Средновековни кръстове-енколпиони от България (IX- XIV в.)* [Medieval pectoral crosses from Bulgaria (9<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century)] (Sofia: Marin Drinov, 2011).

Kyu.81, Dv3.106, Var.11, Krs.11, Kov.88). Five times (Drv.5, Psk2.69, Kov.165, TVL.192, AnK.33) fixation was performed on the decapitated skeleton. Curious substitution occurs within Type II decapitations, when stones are placed instead of the missing skull (Drv.5). Such a situation is observed in the treatment of other body parts as well.

In one case (Prs.15) the decapitation dated well into the Christian period is associated with cremation burial. It is hard to confirm if the two rites belong to a single event or to a single individual. Nevertheless, the skull and the cremation urn are in direct physical relationship suggesting an awareness of the disposal and perhaps chronological proximity. One peculiar case of incomplete drilling into the skull was described as ritual trepanation (Br11.16). All forms of decapitations known from the mass grave in Devnya 3 are recorded among individual graves as well, just like the preference for combination with other forms of skeletal mutilation.

Decapitations where the skull of another individual is present are a special variation. The practice was recorded in three cases: Dv3.106, Zmn.207, Clr.244. This group does not form a unified chronological or geographical pattern and consists of highly individualized cases. It is also the most ambiguous among decapitation burials, because of the possibility for reburial and reuse of the grave. Reusing earlier grave was disregarded in these cases, because the long bones are usually also present among the remains of the earlier burial, often collected in one of the corners. Another argument is the direct physical contact between the skeleton and the additional skull.

### 1.2.6. Other characteristics

The skull placement for graves from Type III summarizes the correlation with other body parts.

Graves	Corporal association
Cik.39, SJR.12, PGB.13, TVL.192, AnK.7, AnK.49, KOm.163, GPzr.1	Original anatomical position - prone
BcT.101, Slt.92, Dv1.14, BrDr.32, Psk2.39, Srm85.61	Original anatomical position- reversed
Clr.166, RnC.3, Trn.52, Psk2.30, Psk2.32, Kvc.78	Shoulders and upper arms
Bcj.32, VLB.83, IIDO.2	Arms and hands
Clg.1, Con.8a, Kyu.81, Dv3.93, Zmn.207, Psk.19, Trn.232, Psk2.82,	Torso (excluding arms)
Bog.3, VIMl.89, RnC.10, RnC.11,	Pelvis
Vjk.a, Snj.10, Bcj.20, Bog.13, BcT.13, Clr.244, Dv3.106, Dur.29, Krs.11, KOm.66	Legs

*Table 7 Corporal associations for the displaced skulls*

Generally, the skull was placed on or in close proximity to the postcranial skeleton. Sometimes, like with Mnd.4 or Hz.2 the skull is displaced further away from the body. In such instances the skull could be on a niche and at different level in the pit as Var.11 illustrates. Regarding the vertical relationship between skull and postcranial skeleton the skull was beneath the rest of the body on four occasions (Kyu.81, Bog.3, VIMl.89, and Dv3.106). Otherwise, the skull is usually on top of the skeleton. Another emerging pattern is evident in the slight preference for placement around the left-hand side like in Vajuga - Pesak 2 (Psk2.30 and Psk2.32) or Becej (Bcj.20 and Bcj.32). Yet, placement to the right is also recorded (Kvc.78, right shoulder). An interesting situation occurred in Sinj (Snj.10), where the skull was displaced on top of the already displaced tibia.

### 1.2.7. Decapitations in European perspective

The decapitation is repeatedly confirmed as the most widespread from the deviant burial practices. The numerous examples of beheadings in medieval Europe known from archaeological reports and written sources demonstrate its significance as a cross-cultural phenomenon. However, the abundance of evidence has the downside that makes a long-term analysis based on comprehensive and systematic databases particularly challenging. The situation is improved by multiple in-depth contextual studies, but several overviews similar to the approach favoured here exist.

Any discussion on decapitations must account for the impressive anthropological and archaeological inquiry into the phenomenon in Britain made by Katie Tucker.<sup>114</sup> Her overview places the Romano-British evidence in the *longue durée* picture by contextualizing it with data from the prehistoric, medieval, and post-medieval periods in Britain.

In addition to some continuity in the mode of decapitation as in the standard *peri mortem* chopping aimed at the cervical vertebrae (Tucker's Types 3 and 4), she points to a demographic continuity as well. Nevertheless, some fine differentiation exists as adult males are statistically far more common profile for beheaded individuals in medieval execution cemeteries and isolated burials than in Romano-British context.<sup>115</sup> Also, the late Roman period shows a pronounced presence of adult females in decapitation burials from rural and small-town cemeteries than in other periods. They even slightly outnumber the adult males, thus mirroring the general

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<sup>114</sup> Katie Tucker, "*Whence this Severance of the Head?*": *The Osteology and Archaeology of Human Decapitation in Britain* (PhD Dissertation: University of Winchester, 2012).

<sup>115</sup> Katie Tucker, *Whence this Severance*, 207, 373-5.

demographic picture and presenting very unbiased treatment according to sex and age categories.<sup>116</sup>

Other curious observations confirm that decapitated individuals are less likely to receive grave goods of any kind in the Roman and medieval period and close even if sparse link to prone position from the deviant practices. The ratio of skull displacement within the grave in comparison to the alternatives is similar to the situation in the Balkans during the early medieval period in Britain (47,9%-55,6% from the decapitation sample), but less than in Late Antiquity. Further, the distribution of all kinds of decapitation burials is uneven with regional and site-specific concentrations during the Roman period and Christian Anglo-Saxon periods.<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, in the early medieval period the distribution of decapitations is rather evenly dispersed geographically and exhibits conformity to the dominant orientation in the cemeteries of interest.<sup>118</sup>

Importantly, the presence of isolated skulls is up to 12% from the sample in medieval execution cemeteries and less than 4% from the sample in other Roman and medieval necropoleis.<sup>119</sup> The situation is very different from the northern Balkans where the presence of skull only is about a third from all confirmed decapitation burials.

Central Europe offers another exciting setting to compare the trends outlined for the recorded decapitation burials. The various national schools all dealt with the matter of human beheading, including in funerary context. So far, the efforts to analyze the phenomenon are easiest to grasp in Polish milieu.

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<sup>116</sup> Robert Phillpott, "Burial Practices in Roman Britain. A Survey of Grave Treatment and Furnishing A.D. 43–410," *BAR British Series* 219 (1991), Tab.14.

<sup>117</sup> Belinda Crerar, *Contextualizing Deviancy*; Reynolds, Andrew. *Anglo-Saxon*, 168.

<sup>118</sup> Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon*, 81.

<sup>119</sup> Katie Tucker, *Whence this Severance*, 210.

Between the tenth and thirteen centuries at least twenty-six decapitation burials from Types II and III are recorded with the highest concentration on the site of Cedynia in western Pomerania (n=9).<sup>120</sup> Moreover, at least ten decapitations matching Type I in the Balkans are also recorded in Poland.<sup>121</sup> The majority of them belong to rural burial grounds without church or chapel on site. Boundary location is manifested but does not constitute a recurring trait for this type. Decapitation burials are rather rarely furnished with exceptions made for personal adornment (e.g., the inscribed ring from grave 60 at Cedynia) or ceramic vessels (e.g., Chroscina).<sup>122</sup> In the late medieval and early modern period, decapitation burials continue to appear and get confined to the emerging execution sites.<sup>123</sup>

The combination of decapitation with other forms of deviant practices is interesting. In addition to the already-attested face-down decapitations, some links to fixation through stone seem to have existed. This is most noticeable again on the site of Cedynia despite some concerns over possible disturbances.<sup>124</sup> An unusual practice seems to be the deposition of several skulls only within the same grave pit as recorded in graves 12/59 (n=7) and 13/59 (n=4) in Giecz.<sup>125</sup> However, the available information is unclear if these were not simply ossuary deposits or represent multiple decapitations.

Most of the Avar cemeteries fall outside of the geographical scope of this study focusing on the Balkans. Still, it is archaeologically visible practice in the Avar

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<sup>120</sup> Leszek Gardela, *Bad Death*, 119.

<sup>121</sup> Magdalena Felis, “Pochówki (?) czaszek” [Burials (?) of skulls], *Funeralia Lednickie – spotkanie* 9 (2007), 99-105.

<sup>122</sup> Leszek Gardela, *Bad Death*, 133-4.

<sup>123</sup> Paweł Duma and Daniel Wojtucki, “Znaczenie głowy w sądownictwie późnego średniowiecza i czasów wczesnonowożytnych” [The importance of the head in the judiciary of the late Middle Ages and early modern times], In: () *The Head Motif in Past Societies in Comparative Perspective*. eds. L.Gardela and K.Kajkowski (Bytów: Muzeum Zachodniokaszubskie w Bytowie, 2013), 289-293.

<sup>124</sup> Leszek Gardela, *Bad Death*, 134-5.

<sup>125</sup> Magdalena Felis, *Pochówki*, 101, 103.

funerary context, as well on later Moravian-period sites. Some of the cases are securely defined as *peri mortem* decapitation through cut marks as in the seventh-ninth century Mödling Goldene Stiege or the ninth-tenth century site of Gars-Thunau.<sup>126</sup> A good number of decapitations are also recorded in Kisköre, Zhitovska Ton, and Győr.<sup>127</sup> Decapitations are appearing in the Arpad age, like in Kána, but it seems there is a real peak around the time of the Mongol invasion from 1241/2 attested archaeologically and in written sources.<sup>128</sup>

Beheadings are among the primary forms of maltreatment recorded in the execution cemetery Čelákovice in present-day Czechia.<sup>129</sup> The site was initially dated to the tenth-eleventh century, but C14 revealed the thirteen century is the earliest possible dating, thus belonging to a number of late medieval-early modern execution sites in the region.<sup>130</sup> Generally, this chronological pattern and the increased spatial separation for decapitations like other deviant burials seem steady development in Central Europe.

### 1.3. Fixations

The fixation of the corpse is also referred to as stoning or weighing down in the archaeological literature. It is the practice of placing a heavy or sometimes symbolically significant object on top of the body. The manner of direct contact

<sup>126</sup> Karin Wiltshcke-Schrotta and Peter Stadler, “Beheading in Avar times”.

<sup>127</sup> Éva Garam, *Das awarenzeitliche Gräberfeld von Kisköre* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1979), 45; Jovan Kovačević, *Avarski kaganat* [The Avar Khaganate] (Sremska Mitrovica: Blago Sirmiuma, 2014[1977]), 205.

<sup>128</sup> , Maria Vargha, “Deviant burials,” 275-7; József Laszlovszky, Personal communication (03.03.2021).

<sup>129</sup> Jaroslav Špaček, “Slovanské pohřebiště s projevy vampyrizmu v Čelákovících” [Slavic cemetery with vampirism in Celakovice], *Časopis Národního Muzea* XL, 1 (1971).

<sup>130</sup> Pavlina Mackova, “Dovetok o Celokovickem “pohrebisti s projevy vampyrizmu” [Postscript about Celokovice Cemetery with Sign of Vampirism], *Stredocensky Sbornik Historický* 36 (2010), 130-131.



between the skeletal remains and the fixation object is crucial for the recognition of this deviant burial rite. The presence of stones around the body and in the grave fill is not necessarily part of the funerary rites and most likely is a result from the geology of the area or the structure of the grave. Sometimes building materials were used to secure the position of certain body parts. Essentially, the fixation applies the same principle, but symbolically ensures the proper place of the corpse inside the grave. A relevant archaeological issue is to what extent the stones were directly placed on the body (fixation) or on the burial (with separating layer of soil between the body and the stones). This is an issue, as reports about these graves are not always clear about this. Also, in the case of fixation with metal objects the clearly stated information on the position of the object is even more important. A sickle or a plough in the grave can also be “ordinary” grave good, not simply tool of fixation. The two can only be separated if we have got detailed documentation on the position of the object and the body. Thus, evidence of fixation relies on more or less subjective judgment. This means that some cases should be taken with pinch of salt, but also that many other instances of such deviant rite have remained unrecorded.

Fixation of the corpse is registered in sixty-four cases across thirty-three sites. They make up 2.67 % of all graves on the sites where this deviant burial rite is detected. Excluding sites with high concentration of deviant rites and limited number of excavated burials like Tsarkvishte, Hauza and Sovinjsko brdo, the highest occurrence of the fixation rite is in the sites Maklinovo Brdo (5.45%, n=3), Beograd (3.64%, n=2), Derwent (3.44%, n=1), Pesak 2 (2.59%, n=3) and Devnya 1-3. 4.12% (n=4) of the graves in Devnya 1 display evident fixation, 3.96% (n=4) in Devnya 2, and 2.55% (n=4) of the individual graves in Devnya 3, making altogether twelve cases in the current sample. The cemeteries in Odartsi have a high number of fixation

burials: one for Odartsi-1 and eight for Odartsi 2, which are persistent 1.5% from the overall number of graves. Again, the distinction between cremation and inhumation graves in the biritual cemeteries could affect the numbers with the example of Capuil Viilor (n=1) shifting between 0.5% and 1.8% for fixation burials.

In Pliska (n=2), Varna 1 (n=1), Sakardza (n=2), Anevsko kale (n=1) and Sevtopolis (n=1) the percentage varies between 1.3% and 1.8%. In Ždrijac-Nin (n=3), Gorica (n=1), Mejica-Buzet (n=1), Vojka (n=1), Bdintsi (n=1), Durankulak (n=2), Pernik (n=1), and Plovdiv (n=1) fixation burials constitute less than 1% of all graves.

### 1.3.1. Types and chronology

Burials with fixation of the corpse can be grouped according to the material used to perform the rite:

I. Fixation with stone. This is by far the most common type with fifty-four cases presented in their relative chronological sequence in the table below:

Grave	600-650	650-700	700-750	750-800	800-850	850-900	900-950	950-1000	1000-1050	1050-1100	1100-1150	1150-1200	1200-1250	1250-1300	1300-1350	1350-1400	1400-1450	1450-1500
McB.195		*																
SvBr.5		*																
SvBr.13		*																
CpV.182		*	*	*	*	*												
ZdrN.13			*	*	*													
ZdrN.237			*	*	*													
ZdrN.278			*	*	*													
Vrn.19			*	*	*	*												
Bdn.54			*	*	*	*												
Dv3.39			*	*	*	*												
Dv3.71			*	*	*	*												
Dv3.72			*	*	*	*												
Dv3.111			*	*	*	*												
Dv1.18			*	*	*	*												
Dv1.24			*	*	*	*												
Dv1.48			*	*	*	*												

Grave	600-650	650-700	700-750	750-800	800-850	850-900	900-950	950-1000	1000-1050	1050-1100	1100-1150	1150-1200	1200-1250	1250-1300	1300-1350	1350-1400	1400-1450	1450-1500
Dv1.77			*	*	*	*												
MkBr.10				*	*													
MkBr.44				*	*													
MkBr.45				*	*													
Beo.8					*	*	*	*										
Beo.35					*	*	*	*										
Dur.94					*	*	*	*										
Dur.106					*	*	*	*										
Trbl.a					*	*	*	*	*	*								
Grc.169					*	*	*	*	*	*								
McM.191							*	*										
Dv2.56							*	*										
Dv2.57							*	*										
Dv2.59							*	*										
Dv2.97							*	*										
Hz.3							*	*	*									
Drvt.5							*	*	*	*								
POE.51								*	*	*								
POE.77								*	*	*								
Od1.41									*	*								
Od2.42									*	*								
Od2.45									*	*								
Od2.60									*	*								
Od2.271									*	*								
Od2.354									*	*								
Od2.357									*	*								
Od2.485									*	*								
Skr.65									*	*	*	*						
Skr.89									*	*	*	*						
Kvc.165											*	*						
Vrt.10											*	*	*	*	*	*		
Vrt.27											*	*	*	*	*	*		
Psk2.30												*	*					
Psk2.69												*	*					
Tar.192													*	*	*	*		
AnK.33													*	*	*	*		
Grad.1													*	*	*	*		
Srm85.53													*	*	*	*	*	*

Table 8 Relative chronological sequence of Type I fixation burials

## II. Fixation with tile/brick:

Grave	600-650	650-700	700-750	750-800	800-850	850-900	900-950	950-1000	1000-1050	1050-1100	1100-1150	1150-1200	1200-1250	1250-1300	1300-1350	1350-1400	1400-1450	1450-1500
Psk.1									*	*								

Grave	600-650	650-700	700-750	750-800	800-850	850-900	900-950	950-1000	1000-1050	1050-1100	1100-1150	1150-1200	1200-1250	1250-1300	1300-1350	1350-1400	1400-1450	1450-1500
Prk.80													*	*	*	*		
Pdv.507																*	*	*

Table 9 Relative chronological sequence of Type II fixation burials

III. Fixation with ferrous tools. The three cases are represented in their chronological sequence below:

Grave	600-650	650-700	700-750	750-800	800-850	850-900	900-950	950-1000	1000-1050	1050-1100	1100-1150	1150-1200	1200-1250	1250-1300	1300-1350	1350-1400	1400-1450	1450-1500
Svt.27											*	*						
Szp.a											*	*						
Psk2.32												*	*					

Table 10 Relative chronological sequence of Type III fixation burials

#### III.A. Fixation with agricultural tools: Svt.27, Soz.a

There are further examples of graves containing agricultural tools, notably sickles in direct contact with the body. However, they require special commentary and were not included in the main database.

#### III.B. Fixation with iron spikes/nails: Psk2.32

IV. Combined. It has been recorded in four cases so far and has two subgroups represented in relative chronological sequence below:

Grave	600-650	650-700	700-750	750-800	800-850	850-900	900-950	950-1000	1000-1050	1050-1100	1100-1150	1150-1200	1200-1250	1250-1300	1300-1350	1350-1400	1400-1450	1450-1500
Vjk.24		*																
Od2.496									*	*								
Tsr.15											*	*	*	*	*	*		
Tsr.17											*	*	*	*	*	*		

Table 11 Relative chronological sequence of Type IV fixation burials

#### IV.A. Fixation with stone and iron nails: Vjk.24

#### IV.B. Fixation with stone and clay materials (tile/pythos): Od2.496,

Tsr.15, Tsr.17

Type I and the fixation rite in general appear in the late seventh century and continue until the fifteenth century without interruption. In the tenth-eleventh centuries there seems to be a peak of finds with relatively narrow chronological limit, but it must be acknowledged that this reflects the extensive concentration in the cemeteries in Odartsi. Type IV.A also emerges early on in the late seventh century, but the diversification of fixation materials happens only in the eleventh century and peaks around the thirteen century. In contrast to its increased internal variations, the frequency of the custom generally declines after the twelfth century.

### **1.3.2. Distribution**

The geographical distribution of fixation burials demonstrates the development of patterns related to the chronological and classificatory observations made so far. Fixation burials, especially Type I, are quite widespread around the Balkans with three early regional concentrations. The early examples from late 7<sup>th</sup> century Istria stand out in the west, while the contemporary Type IV.A burial from Vojka appears in the Middle Danube region. In the following centuries the fixation rite occurs in the coastal areas of Dalmatia and the Pontic region. The distribution zones correspond to the Duchy of Croatia and parts of the core territory of the Bulgar Khanate. For the former, their appearance in row cemeteries around its political centre Nin and in the cemeteries around Devnya for the latter deserve a special note due to the high occurrence of Type I burials. Towards the tenth century the practice spread inland as well.

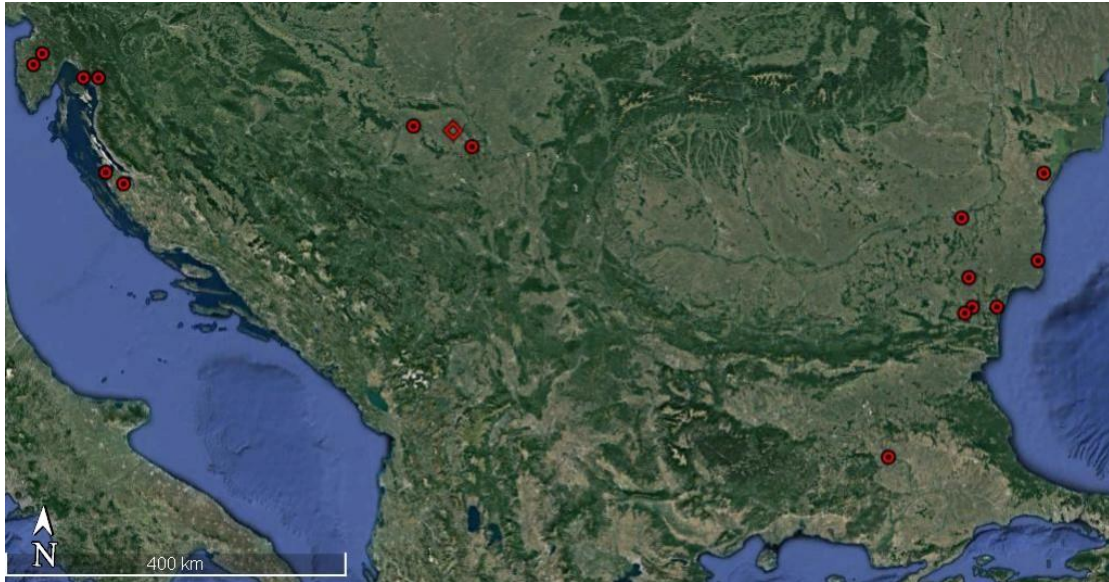


Figure 20 Distribution of fixation burials in the Early period: Type I (dot), Type IV (diamond)

The large numbers of fixation burials that could be attributed to the eleventh and possibly the early twelfth century do not equal vast territorial distribution. In fact, such burials accumulate in the cemeteries in Odartsi. Clay materials are introduced as an alternative to stone through one large pythos fragment in Odartsi 2 and bricks in Pesak 1. The nearest site with multiple fixation burials, both chronologically and geographically, is in Pliska where fixations are applied to a specific group of likely reopened graves of subadults.

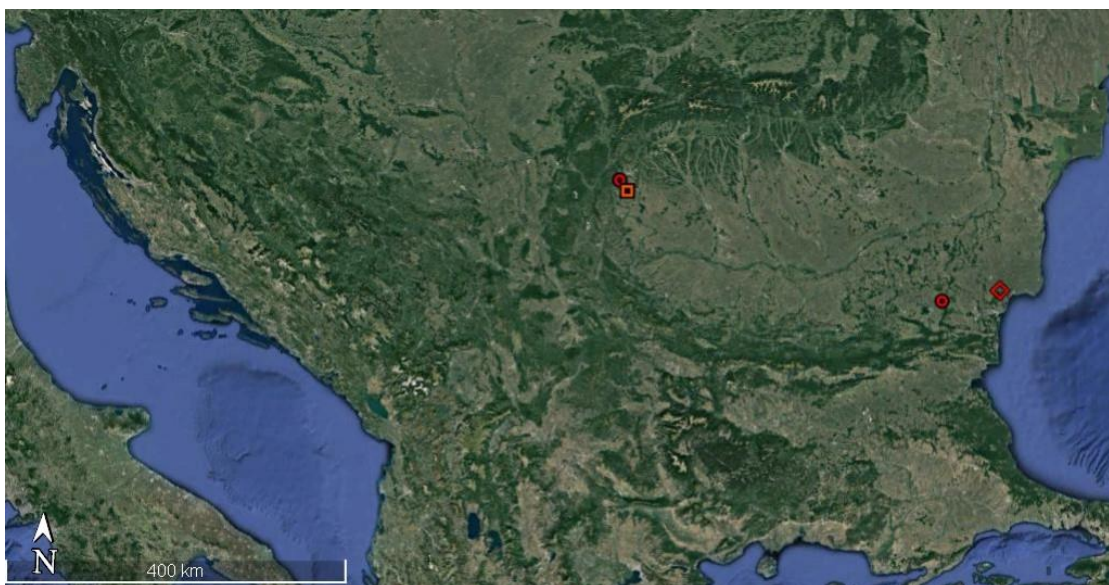


Figure 21 Distribution of fixation burials in the transitionary period: Type I (dot), Type II (square), Type IV (diamond)



In the early twelfth century another cluster emerges in the eastern part of the peninsula, together with the diversification in the choice of weighing-down objects applied to the cadaver. Type III.A is characteristic for what is today South-Eastern Bulgaria. Another important observation is that the type is found in urban cemeteries (Sozopol) and open settlement's cemetery (medieval Sevtopolis). Graves belonging to type I are found in rural cemeteries (Vajuga-Pesak I, Sakardzha and Kovachevo).

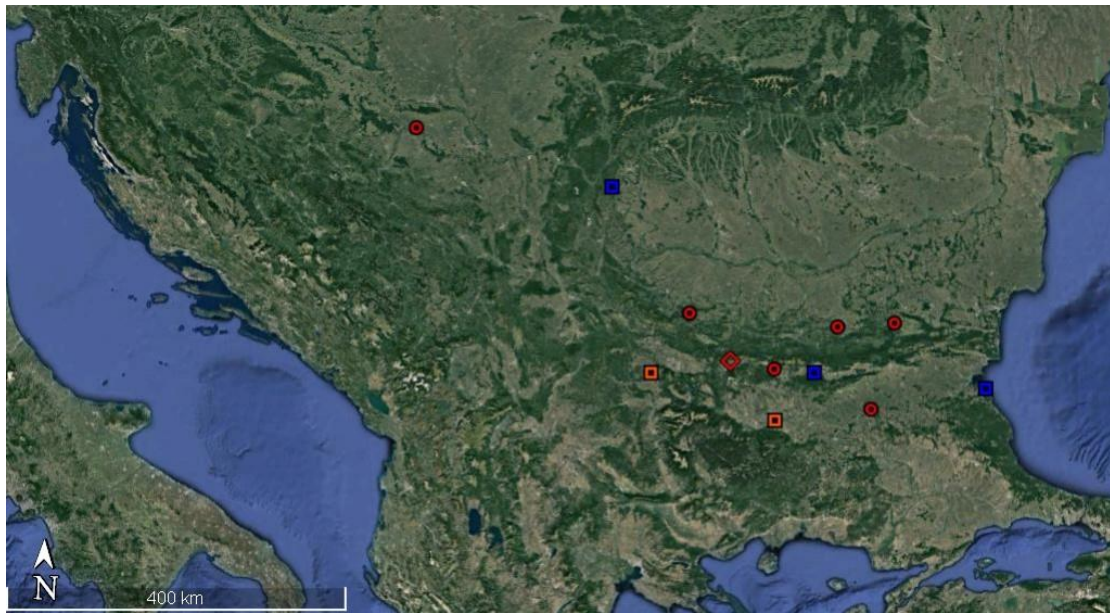


Figure 22 Distribution of fixation burials in the late period: Type I (red dot), Type II (orange square), Type III (blue square), Type IV (red diamond)

Finally, in the later period between the late twelfth and fourteen centuries the fixation burials from Types I and II are concentrated rather in urban sites in the central Balkans (e.g., Tarnovo and Plovdiv). Yet, the practice is not absent from some rural cemeteries in the Iron Gates area (Type III.B) and Thrace (Type IV.B).

### 1.3.3. Grave structure, position, and orientation

The types of grave structures recorded for fixation burials are represented below. Some semantic connection between fixations from Type I and the layout of the

grave possibly exists since no other deviant practice has stronger association with stone structures.

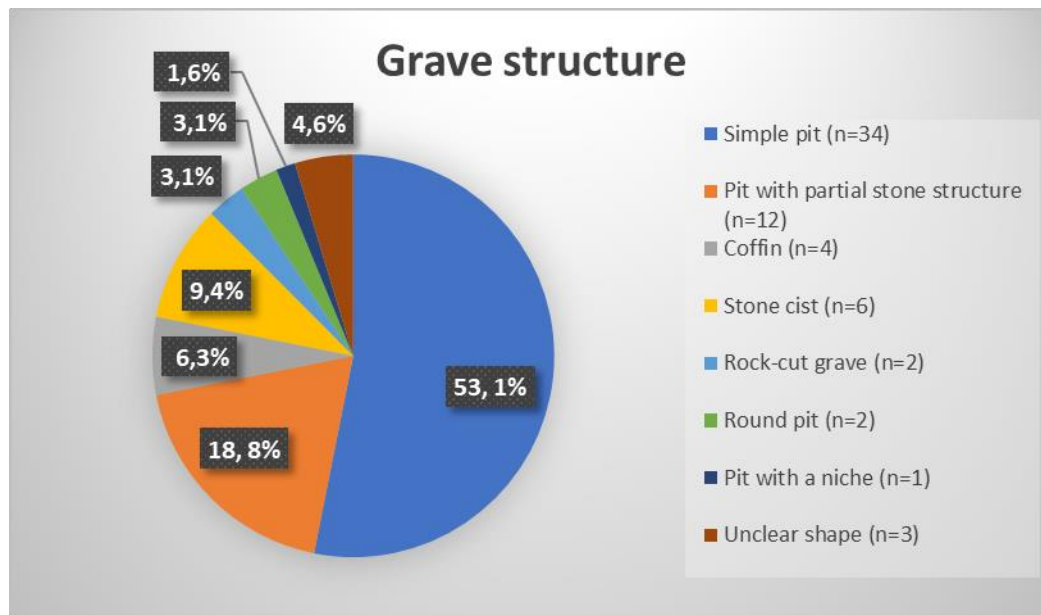


Figure 23 Preferred grave structure for fixation burials

The position of the deceased in the grave is mostly supine (forty-six cases) with supine extended accounting for thirty-eight of those cases. The body was placed on the side or prone on six occasions altogether. Another three cases were flexed, while the body appears to be neglectfully thrown twice. The knees were bent in five of the burials.

The orientation is presented according to the cardinal directions and follows the head-feet arrangement. Fixation burials tends to follow the norm for the particular period and site. The pattern is visible in the graph (Fig.25) below:



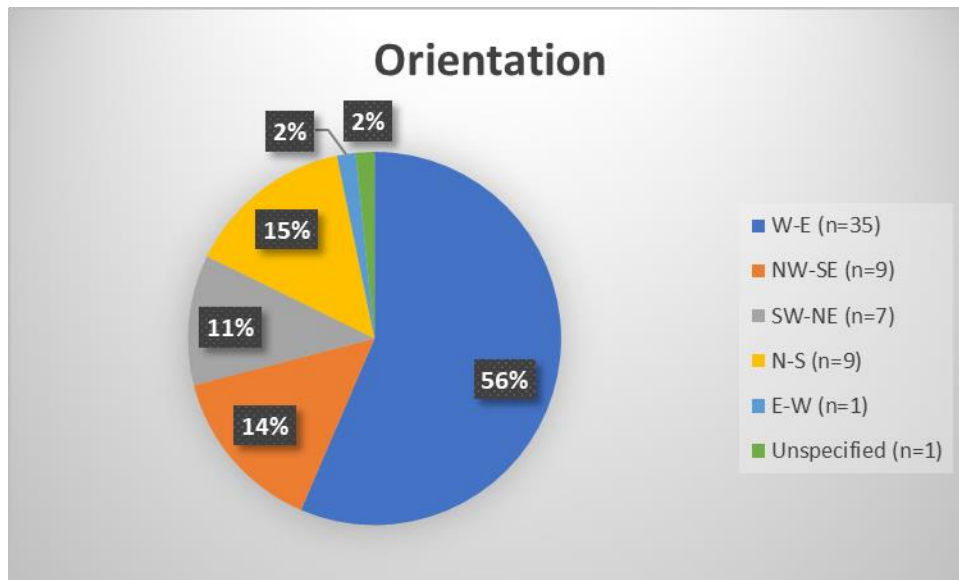


Figure 24 Dominant orientation in fixation burials

#### 1.3.4. Demography: age and sex

As always, the anthropologically analyzed burial assemblages are not sufficient to provide a comprehensive picture. The sex and age of the deceased was determined for about half of the individuals included in the sample (Fig.26). To illustrate the sex ratio, almost 65% of fixation burials were male and nearly 35% female.

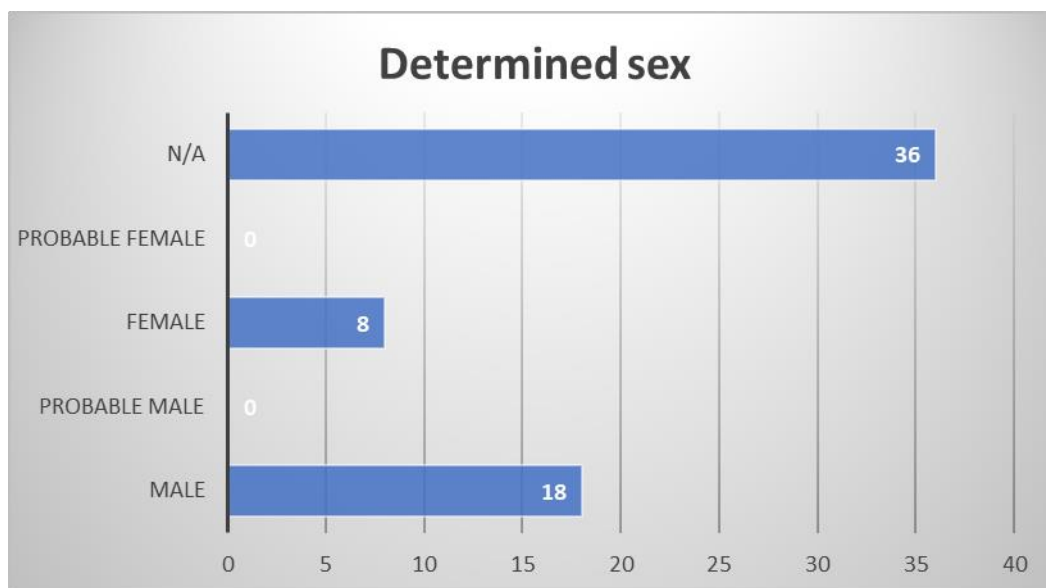


Figure 25 Known sex of individuals from fixation burials

The age composition of the individuals in fixation burials is represented in Fig 27. The age of thirty individuals was not determined.

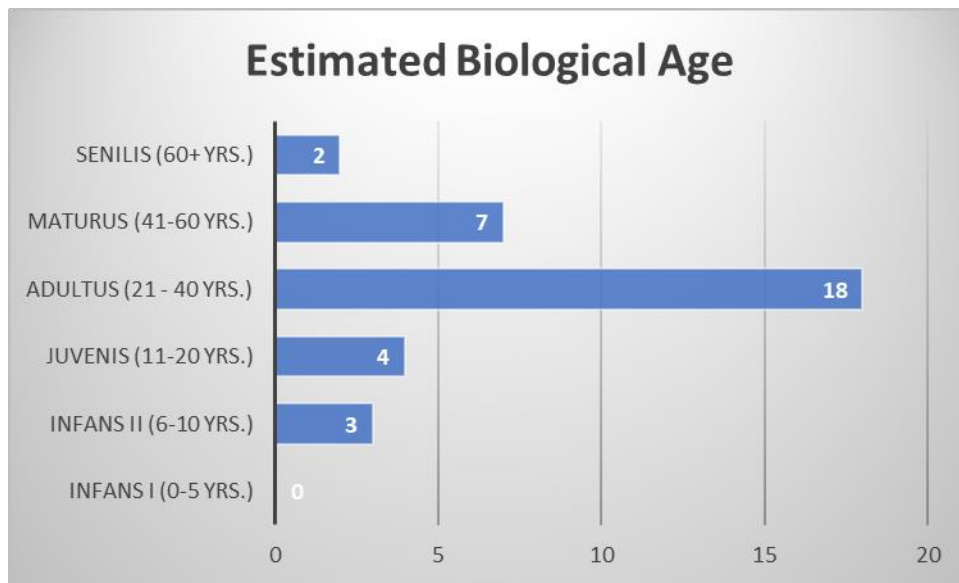


Figure 26 Age distribution of individuals from fixation burials

The relative proportions are compared in the chart (Fig.28) below.

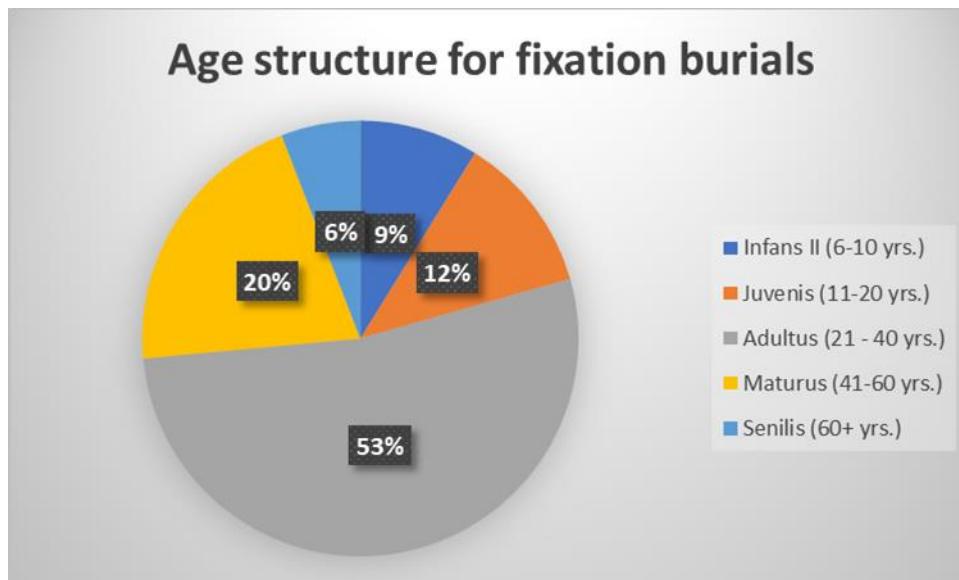


Figure 27 Age structure for fixation burials

### 1.3.5. Grave goods

The objects found in graves where fixation rite was registered are limited. The ferrous tools used for fixation in Type III burials are not included in this category.

Grave goods were found in fourteen graves (three male, three female, one mixed dual and one collective). According to the chronological and spatial patterning outlined above, the fixations graves from the early period are more likely to contain grave goods with 25% probability (n=9). During the transition period the values are similar (26%, n=4) but the concentration in Odartsi may be distorting the quantification. In the late phase of the phenomenon the chance for depositing grave goods aside from the fixation tools is merely 7,7% (n=1).

A reddish jar was placed by the skull in one grave (Vrn.19) and pottery fragments were found in another one (Dv1.18). Pottery was also discovered in Maklinovo brdo (MkBr.10 and MkBr.44). In the dual grave MkBr.10 one reddish-brown vessel with incised decoration was on the feet of the male and a brown one by the head of the female. The other item in this grave was an iron knife.

Two better furnished graves are also from the Adriatic littoral. In Mejica-Buzet the body was buried with an iron knife, four iron arrows, bronze belt buckle, ornamented strap fittings, flint, and iron bonds (chains) from the belt. The woman buried in grave 237 from Ždrijac – Nin had one bronze ring on her right hand, a necklace ornamented with eleven dark blue pearls and two silver earrings.

Adornments were deposited in Odartsi as well. For instance, the male from Od2.354 had bronze earring and ring on his left hand and another bronze earring was found right from the skull of the individual in Od2.42. Moreover, two rings, one silver and one bronze, were on the right hand of the male from Od2.357.

Elsewhere, another female (Kvc.165) was buried with three bracelets – two copper alloy bracelets on the right hand and one made of black glass on the left. Another grave with personal adornments is registered in Vratsa (Vrt.27). The woman had six bracelets: two bronze, one ferrous and three polychromous glass bracelets.

Further, she was wearing a necklace decorated with cowry shells and a reused ancient coin (2<sup>nd</sup> – 1<sup>st</sup> c. BC) with suspension loop. A particularly interesting find is the iron spearhead placed on the right shoulder of the child from Devnya (Dv2.59).

There are several animal bones in these graves. One is placed on the pelvis of an individual from Histria (CpV.182), sheep mandible to the left of the chest in Belgrade (Beo.8), and one knucklebone found at the legs of the woman from the triple grave in Devnya (Dv1.24).

### **1.3.6. Correlation with other deviant burial rites**

The number of fixation burials correlating with other deviant burial rites is relatively high. The most common combination is with decapitations which is known from seven burials (Drv1.5, Psk2.30, Psk2.32, Dv1.18, Dv1.24, TVL.192, AnK.33). Next in line are the six mutilations of the postcranial skeleton (Psk2.69, Dv1.24, POE.51, POE.77, Skr.89, Svt.27). Fixation was applied in collective graves in Devnya and Maklinovo Brdo. Prone position is recorded in two graves (Dv3.72 and TVL.192). Fixation of certain individuals is also present among the victims in the mass grave from Devnya 3.

### **1.3.7. Other characteristics**

It has been noted that the direct contact between the fixating object and the skeleton is an indication of a fixation rite in a grave. Furthermore, the correlation between the object and specific body parts is also relevant. The following tables summarize the exact placement of the fixating object on the skeleton. Sometimes the object is in fact replacing the missing or displaced target body part.

Graves [number]	Target body part	Represented types
Dv3.71, Dv1.77, SvBr.13, McM.191, Dv2.97, Drvt.5, Od2.60, Od2.357, Psk2.30, AnK.33, Prk.80 [11]	Head	I, II
McB.195, Dv3.39, Dv3.111, Dv1.18, MkBr.45, Trbl.a, Grc.169, Od1.41, Skr.65, Szp.a, Grad.1 [11]	Torso (incl.arms)	I, II, III.A
Beo.8, Dur.94, Hz.3, Od2.45, Svt.27, Srm85.53 [6]	Pelvis	I, III.A
ZdrN.278, Dv3.72, POE.77, Od2.271, Vrt.10, Vrt.27, Psk2.69 [7]	Legs	I
Dv2.56, Dv2.57, Dv2.59, Od2.485, Kvc.165, Tar.192 [6]	Feet	I
Vjk.24, SvBr.5, CpV.182, ZdrN.13, ZdrN.237, Dv1.24, Dv1.48, MkBr.10, MkBr.44, Beo.35, Dur.106, POE.51, Od2.354, Od2.496, Psk.1, Skr.89, Tsr.15, Tsr.17, Psk2.32, Pdv.507 [20]	More than one	I, II, III.B, IV

*Table 12 Targeting body parts in fixation burials*

Grave(s)	Target body parts	Represented types
Vjk.24, Psk2.32, SvBr.5, Dv1.24b	Head and torso	I, III.B, IV.A
Dv1.48	Head and legs	I
Beo.35, Dur.106, Psk.1, Skr.89	Head and feet	I, II
Od2.496	Head, torso and feet	IV.B
ZdrN.13, ZdrN.237	Torso and pelvis	I
Tsr.15, Tsr.17	Torso, pelvis and legs	IV.B
CpV.182, MkBr.44, Dv1.24a, POE.51, Od2.354	Torso and legs	I
MkBr.10	Torso, legs and feet	I

*Table 13 Correlation between body parts in fixation burials with multiple targets*

Among the burial context where single body part is the subject of special treatment the torso is slightly more common target than the head or the legs. Yet, the combination of body parts is the most popular approach in fixation burials. Sometimes the different body parts were covered with objects from different materials, thus contributing to the distribution of Type IV. In the cases where feet were involved, usually both of them were fixated, with the exception of one case where the right foot, and one where the left foot was weighed down only. The fixation burial from Plovdiv (Pdv.507) is peculiar, because in addition to the tile cover of the head, an additional brick piece was placed in the mouth of the deceased. Another highly unusual situation is recorded in Vajuga-Pesak II (Psk2.32), where an iron spike was stabbed into the *foramen magnum*, the cranial opening for the spinal cord.

### 1.3.8. Fixations in European perspective

Medieval fixation burials have rarely been examined on comparable scale in archaeological literature. The most comprehensive surveys are done for Anglo-Saxon England and Poland. Additional review including fixations was done for early medieval Ireland, but it was not available at the moment.<sup>131</sup>

For the pagan period in early medieval England is observed that covering the body with one or more stones is the second most widespread deviant burial practice. Yet fixations are quite rare with only sixty-five examples from twenty sites identified by Reynolds. The range of finds and orientation again reflects the assemblage known from normative burials.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>131</sup> Maura Farrell, "Prone, stoned, and losing the head," *Trowel* 13: 1-2 (2012), 56-72.

<sup>132</sup> Andrew Reynolds. *Anglo-Saxon*, 81-83.

One commonality with the practice in South-Eastern Europe is the clearly attested placing of stones over specific body parts. Some compelling examples in this direction are found in Broughton Lodge where fixations are particularly common (c. 20% of all graves). So, the people from graves 36 and 35 had multiple stones on their heads, the male from grave 101 had five stones targeting the feet, and four stones were placed on the pelvis of the individual from grave 42.<sup>133</sup> There is no statistically significant coincidence with other deviant practices.

In the execution cemeteries from the Christian period fixations by objects are found to somewhat lesser degree. Nevertheless, they are still present on eight sites in altogether twelve cases. In nine of them the fixation objects were stones, while interestingly flints were placed on the severed heads of two beheadings from Roche Court Down.<sup>134</sup>

In Poland between the tenth and thirteen centuries are recorded twenty cases of fixation by stones. Apparently, there is quite an internal variance within this group.<sup>135</sup> Much like in the Balkans, substitute fixation to missing body parts was an element in the funerary practice as demonstrated by a few examples in Cedynia (e.g., graves 60, 146, 196, 215, 530, 552, 888). Curiously, on this site substitute fixation is more frequently recorded than the usual form where the object is placed straight on the cadaver and is dominantly applied to male individuals.

The targeting of specific body parts is attested in medieval Polish sites, although no clear preference can be distinguished. Another important note is that fixation burials appear well included within the cemetery sites to which they belong.<sup>136</sup> Grave goods, however, are not particularly common finds.

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<sup>133</sup> Andrew Reynolds. *Anglo-Saxon*, 84.

<sup>134</sup> Andrew Reynolds. *Anglo-Saxon*, 172.

<sup>135</sup> Leszek Gardela. *Bad Death*, 161.

<sup>136</sup> Leszek Gardela. *Bad Death*, 167.



The correlation between fixation and other deviant practices is much like in the English background rather an exemption with local manifestations. Some coincidence with decapitations is observed in Cedynia and one individual from Radom (grave 47) was buried face-down in addition to stoning.<sup>137</sup>

The overall picture in comparison to the data from South-Eastern Europe would provide mixed results. Some apparent similarities exist on criteria like relation to normative burials, selection of body parts, and notably in the Polish case the existence of substitute fixations. However, the practice in the Balkans is statistically less likely occurrence and exhibits slightly greater correlation with other forms of deviant treatment.

#### **1.4. Mutilations of the postcranial skeleton**

The mutilation of the dead body, sometimes referred to as amputation, is the most commonly misidentified deviant burial rite and apparently the most ambiguous one. Deliberate manipulation of the corpse, often focusing on the postcranial skeleton, can be identified by detailed observations of the archaeological context and the anthropological condition of the human remains. The possibility of natural factors or disturbance of the grave makes this practice very hard to prove, especially when accessible records are insufficient. Likewise, this type of deviant rite is most often cited in relation to the anti-transfiguration rituals discussed in historiography. Another decisive point for the recognition and the interpretation of such burials is how the mutilation relates to the time of death. The character of any secondary activities in the grave is very hard to be determined even with careful excavation and recording.

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<sup>137</sup> Leszek Gardela. *Bad Death*, 171.

The current analysis is based on seventy recorded cases of mutilation of the skeleton distributed across forty-three sites. Two small sites have a significant share of skeletal mutilation among the excavated graves, namely Krusheto (25%, n=1) and Krasen (6.25%, n=1). If we disregard them, mutilations constitute 2% of the burials on the sites of record. Otherwise, the highest concentration is in Perlek (5%, n=1), Pliska – Inner City (4.76%, n=2), Grabovica and Braila-1 (both 3.84%, respectively n=1 and n=2). Trnjane provides the biggest count of mutilation burials in general (n=13), but they account for only 3.48% on the site. Burials with mutilation are above 2% of all excavated graves in Velim-Velištak (3%, n=1), Bogojevo (2.33%, n=1), Pliska – Outer City (2.27%, n=3), and Kovachevo (2.27%, n=3). On the sites Devnya-2 (n=1), Anevsko kale (1.78%, n=1), Sakardzha (1.58%, n=2), Pesak-2 (1.33%, n=1) falls below the 2% mark. Burials with mutilated corpses comprise less than one percent in Vojka (0.83%, n=1), Čonoplja and Bačka Topola (each 0.6%, n=1), Izvoru (n=3, 0.69% overall or 0.9% among inhumations), Sultana (0.55/0.79%, n=1), Vukovar-Lijeva Bara (0.45%, n=2), Ždrijac-Nin (0.3%, n=1), Pernik (0.59%, n=1), and Nikolovo (0.49%, n=1).

#### **1.4.1. Types, chronology, and distribution**

The mutilation of the skeleton is a quite varied practice. On the basis of the skeletal condition four types of maltreatment can be distinguished:

- I. Displaced bones and body parts. Cases where the anatomical order of the skeleton is clearly disturbed, but the relevant bones were found within the grave. There are forty-one known examples grouped according to the body part where the displaced bones belonged.

Displaced mandible	POE.30, Dv2.74
Displaced chest bones	Cik.4, Izv.24, VIV.22, Var.11
Displaced arm	Con.9a, VLB.376, Trn.52, Trn.170, GCds.31, Kov.97, Kru.7
Displaced hand	Trn.113, Trn.212, Kov.88
Displaced leg	Snj.10, VLB.363, PIC.10, POE.77, Hdn.14, BVH.71, Trn.46, Trn.56, Trn.112, Trn.230, Trn.374, Prs.a, Prk.155
Displaced feet	Izv.64, Dv3.119, Beo.1, Od2.38, Od2.342, Trn.133, Trn.156, Skr.89, Svt.27

Table 14 Selection patterns for displaced body parts from Type I mutilation burials

The relative chronological sequence of Type I mutilations is presented in the table below:

Grave	600-650	650-700	700-750	750-800	800-850	850-900	900-950	950-1000	1000-1050	1050-1100	1100-1150	1150-1200	1200-1250	1250-1300	1300-1350	1350-1400
Cik.4	+	+														
Snj.10		+														
Izv.24		+	+	+	+	+										
Izv.64		+	+	+	+	+										
Slr.47		+	+	+	+	+										
VIV.22		+	+	+	+											
Con.9a		+	+	+												
Vrn.10			+	+	+	+										
Var.11			+	+	+	+										
Dv3.119			+	+	+	+										
Beo.1					+	+	+	+								
Dv2.74					+	+	+	+								
Grb.15							+									
VLB.363							+	+	+	+						
VLB.376							+	+	+	+						
PIC.10								+	+	+						
POE.77								+	+	+						
Hdn.14								+	+	+						
BVH.71								+	+	+						
Od2.38									+	+						
Od2.342									+	+						
Skr.89									+	+	+	+				
POE.30										+						
Trn.46										+	+	+	+			
Trn.52										+	+	+	+			
Trn.56										+	+	+	+			
Trn.112										+	+	+	+			
Trn.113										+	+	+	+			
Trn.133										+	+	+	+			
Trn.156										+	+	+	+			
Trn.170										+	+	+	+			
Trn.196										+	+	+	+			
Trn.212										+	+	+	+			
Trn.230										+	+	+	+			
Trn.374										+	+	+	+			
GCds.31											+	+	+	+		
Kvc.88											+	+				

Grave	600-650	650-700	700-750	750-800	800-850	850-900	900-950	950-1000	1000-1050	1050-1100	1100-1150	1150-1200	1200-1250	1250-1300	1300-1350	1350-1400
Kvc.97											+	+				
Prs.a													+	+		
Prk.155													+	+		
Kru.7																+

Figure 28 Relative chronological sequence for Type I mutilation burials

II. Missing bones and body parts. The term amputation is most relevant in this group of burials with mutilation. Accepting that the absence of the bones from the grave is not caused by different factors, suggests the loss of extremities ante mortem. Alternatively, the missing part may have been selected for separate treatment.

Missing arm	Izv.47, Br1.44, GCds.49, GTcv.23
Missing leg	Dv1.24, PIC.20, POE.51, Od2.101, AnK.23
Missing feet	Dv1.13, Vrn.10, Trn.22, Krs.11
More than one/Unspecified	Br1.9

Table 15 Selection patterns for missing body parts from Type II mutilation burials

The relative chronological sequence of Type II mutilations is presented in the table below:

Grave	600-650	650-700	700-750	750-800	800-850	850-900	900-950	950-1000	1000-1050	1050-1100	1100-1150	1150-1200	1200-1250	1250-1300	1300-1350	1350-1400	1400-1450	1450-1500
Izv.47		*	*	*	*	*												
Dv1.13			*	*	*	*												
Dv1.24			*	*	*	*												
PIC.20						*	*	*										
Krs.11						*	*	*										
POE.51								*	*	*								
Od2.101									*	*								
Br1.9									*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Br1.44									*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Trn.22										*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
GCds.49											*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
GTcv.23											*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
AnK.23												*	*	*	*	*	*	*

Figure 29 Relative chronological sequence for Type II mutilation burials

III. Disintegration, or severe destruction or mutilation of the body as a single entity, is recorded six times. Within this group are included three cases of

partial burning of the body, which should not be mistaken with cremation of human remains (Cik.93, ZdrN.77, VIML.21)

The relative chronological sequence of Type III mutilations is presented in the table below:

Grave	600-650	650-700	700-750	750-800	800-850	850-900	900-950	950-1000	1000-1050	1050-1100	1100-1150	1150-1200	1200-1250	1250-1300	1300-1350	1350-1400	1400-1450	1450-1500
Cik.93	*	*																
Vjk.e		*																
BcT.13			*	*														
Bog.6			*	*														
Prl.13			*	*	*													
ZdrN.77			*	*	*													
Kyu.81			*	*	*	*												
VIML.21				*														
Stan.4-9									*	*	*	*						

Figure 30 Relative chronological sequence for Type III mutilation burials

IV. Combined forms of mutilation. The type can be found in nine examples:

Missing and displaced leg bones	Pvd.2, Dv3.106, Skr.65, Kvc.104, AsK.a
Missing limbs and bones from another individual	Nik.185
Displaced torso and right hand	Skr.118
Missing and displaced arm bones	Drvt.24
Missing pelvis and displaced arm bones	Psk2.69

Table 16 Combination patterns in Type IV mutilation burials

Generally, securely identified mutilations tend to target the limbs and especially the legs. Rarely does the practice affects multiple parts of the postcranial skeleton. When this happens, in Type IV mutilation burials, the preference for the legs must be noted. Interestingly, the pelvis is not the subject of mutilation and the only confirmed case of its absence is in Vajuga – Pesak 2 (Psk2.69). There the arm bones were displaced to substitute the missing pelvis, thus stressing even more the bodily manipulation.

No particular preference between right or left side of the body with relative parity in terms of targeting and positioning can be detected. The practice of keeping the selected bone in anatomical order, but turning it 180 degrees, thus disturbing its

natural position in the skeleton, is particularly interesting (e.g., POE.30). This is highly unlikely to occur by bioturbation, neither is it possible before an advanced stage of dry decomposition and skeletonization.

The relative chronological sequence of Type IV mutilations is presented in the table below:

Grave	600-650	650-700	700-750	750-800	800-850	850-900	900-950	950-1000	1000-1050	1050-1100	1100-1150	1150-1200	1200-1250	1250-1300	1300-1350	1350-1400	1400-1450	1450-1500
Dv3.106			*	*	*	*												
Pvd.2					*													
Nik.185						*	*	*										
Skr.118							*	*										
Drvt.24							*	*	*	*								
Kvc.104											*	*						
Skr.65									*	*	*	*						
Psk2.69												*	*					
AsK.a													*	*	*	*		

Figure 31 Relative chronological sequence for Type IV mutilation burials

The great variability in the forms of mutilation itself makes it difficult to highlight definite chronological developments. The only exception is Type III, which is strongly represented in the early period between the seventh - ninth century. All the partial burnings are from this period and the only later example is the eleventh-twelfth century case from Stan (Stn.4-9).

Type I also emerges early on in the seventh century and established consistent presence until the tenth century, when its frequency increases with accent on the legs. Overall confirmed mutilation cases decrease with time and in the twelfth-fourteen century they are visibly less numerous and concentrate into limited number of sites.

The geographical patterning following the typological and chronological characteristics of the mutilation burials is summarized below.

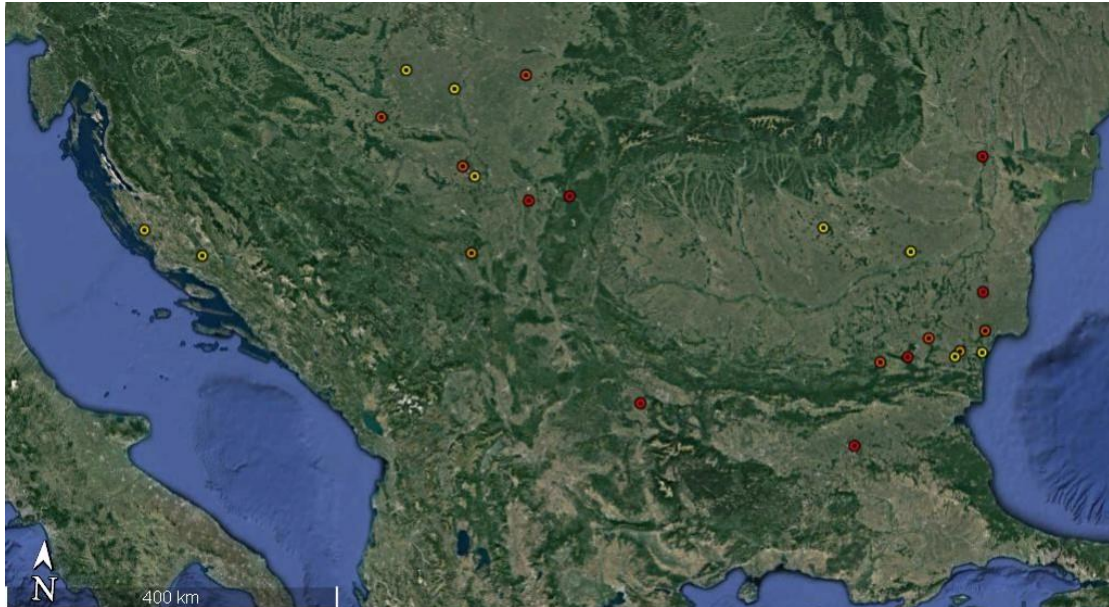


Figure 32 Distribution of Type I mutilation burials: Early period (phase 1-yellow, phase 2 – dark yellow), transitional period (orange), and late period (red)

The earliest examples of Type I are from southern Pannonia on the Middle Danube and from the Adriatic hinterland. The distribution of Vojvodina from the late Avar period moves and southwards in the tenth century but still looks somewhat dispersed in comparison to the situation in the eastern Balkans. The other traditional cluster for early medieval deviant burials in the Bulgar core has mutilations concentrated in the coastal zone north from the Balkan Mountains and in on the left bank of the Danube. In the late tenth-eleventh century the type appears along the line Sakardzha-Pliska-Odartsı in the southern part of Paristrion. The eleventh century is the terminus post quem for the vaguely dated burials from Braila to the north of the Byzantine province. In the twelfth and thirteen centuries type I is recorded in the Iron Gates zone, mainly in the most representative site Trnjane. To the southeast, the type is also attested in various contexts: rural graveyard (Kovachevo), urban cemetery (Pernik) and in a trash-pit (Preslav).



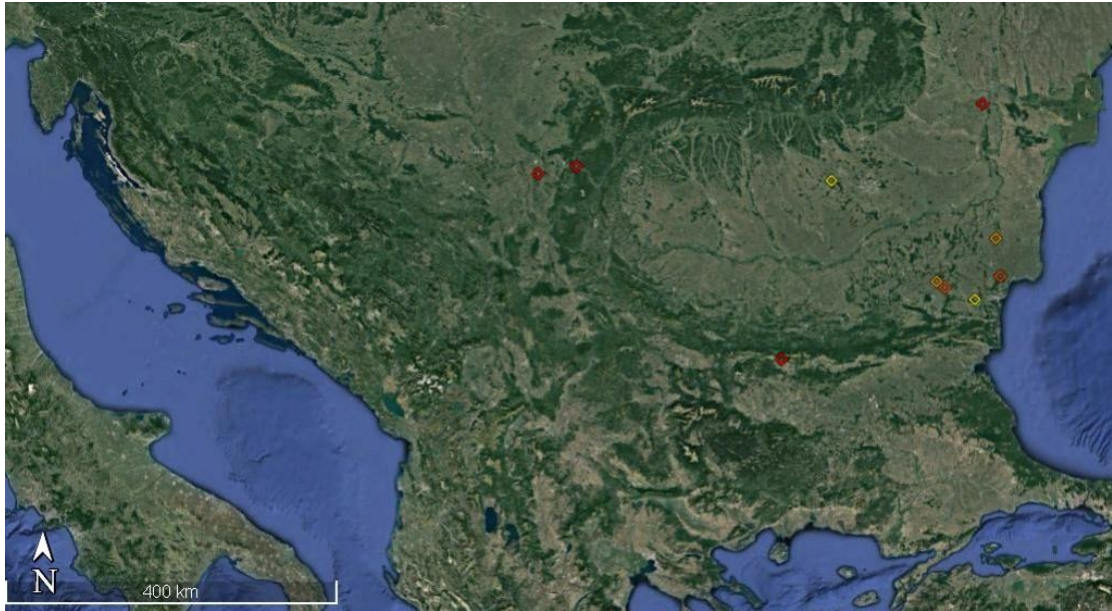


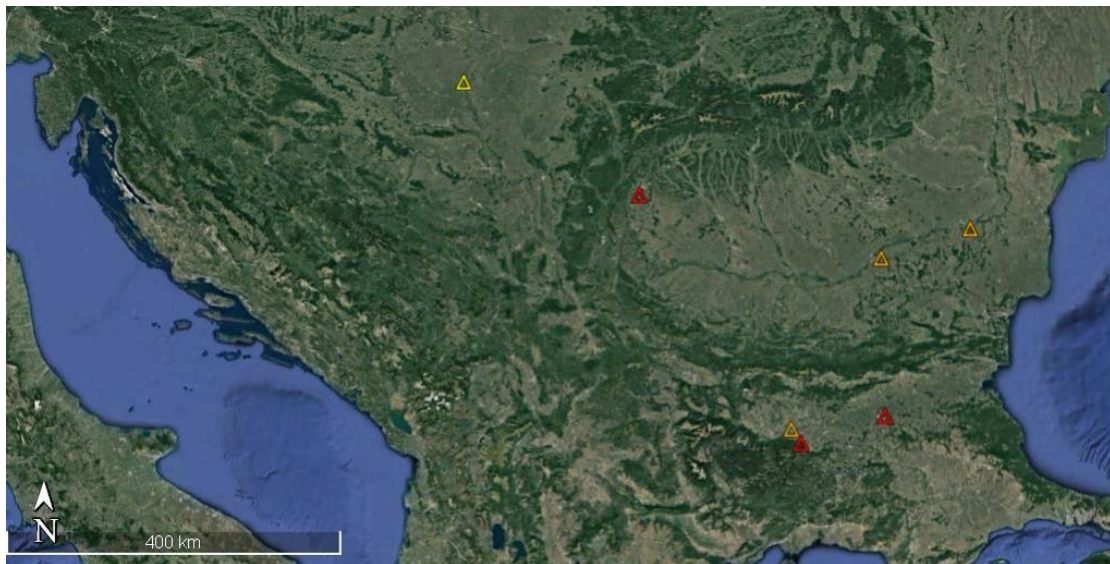
Figure 33 Distribution of Type II mutilation burials: Early period (phase 1- yellow, phase 2 – dark yellow), transitional period (orange), and late period (red)

The geographical spread of Type II is far simpler. In the early period it appears mostly in the pagan biritual cemeteries in the core of the Bulgar Khanate until during the eleventh century rearranges along the Pliska-Odartsa line. In the twelfth-early thirteen century it supplements Type I along the Danube, especially in the Iron Gates cluster. Only one case (AnK.23) testifies for its appearance south from the Balkan Mountains.



Figure 34 Distribution of Type III mutilation burials: Early period (yellow) and transitional period (orange)

As already mentioned, Type III is very rare and follows very clear chronological pattern, which manifests itself in the geographical distribution as well. So far, the disintegration through partial burning seems to belong to the late seventh-eight century period. It appears on the Middle Danube (Cik.93) and on the Adriatic littoral in Dalmatia (ZdrN.77) and Istria (VIMl.21). Further Type III cases are found north from the interflux of Tisza and the Danube. The type is represented in the eastern Balkans by two examples. They are geographically close in the field of Pliska, but temporarily quite distinct. The earlier one is from the pagan biritual cemetery of Kyulevcha dated to the eight-ninth century and the later one is in a small burial ground from the eleventh-twelfth century.



*Figure 35 Distribution of Type IV mutilation burials: early period (yellow), late period (red)*

Finally, the Type IV mutilations must be commented upon. Despite their low numbers and individualized contexts, they have two clear distribution zones. The first one is on the Danube with earlier cases in the east and later in the west. The second one is in Thrace and consists entirely of combined dislocation and absense of bones the lower limbs. The early case is from Plovdiv and the twelfth-thirteen century are from an isolated burial (AsK.a) and rural graveyard (Kvc. 104)



The temporal and geographical spread of mutilation burials is summarized in the maps below:

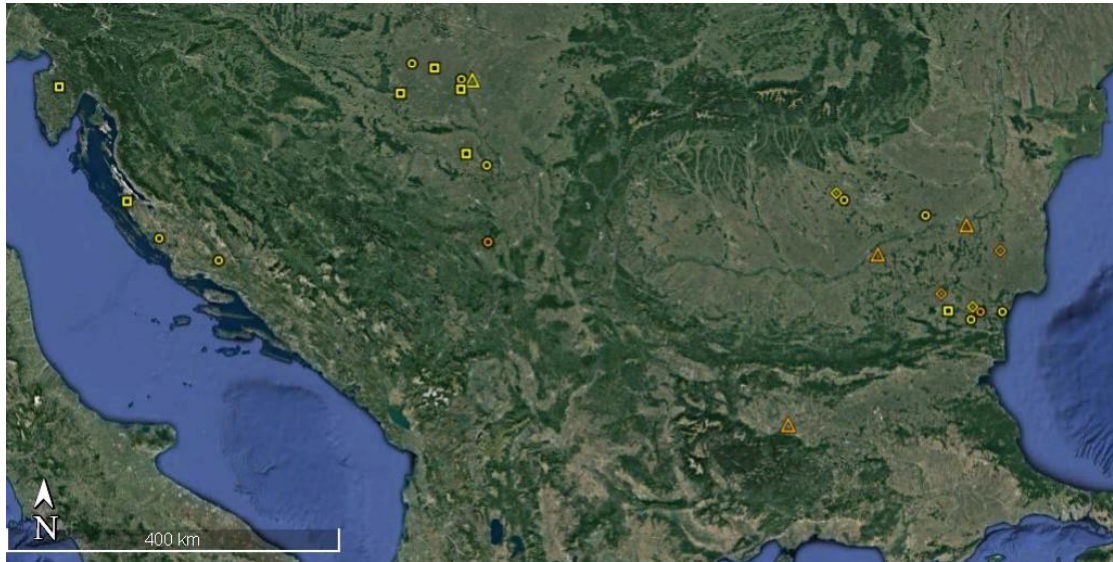


Figure 36 Comparative distribution of mutilation burials in the early period. Phase I (yellow): Type I (dot), Type II (triangle), Type III (square), Type IV (diamond) and Phase I (dark yellow): Type I (dot), Type II (triangle), Type III (square), Type IV (diamond)



Figure 37 Comparative distribution of mutilation burials in the transitionary period: Type I (dot), Type II (triangle), Type III (square), Type IV (diamond)

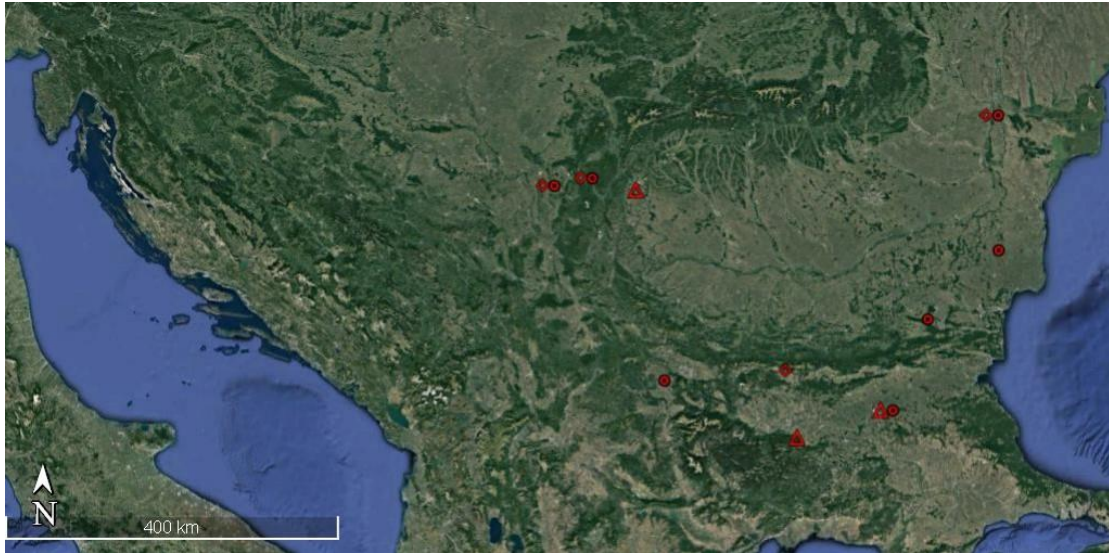


Figure 38 Comparative distribution of mutilation burials in the late period: Type I (dot), Type II (triangle), Type III (square), Type IV (diamond)

#### 1.4.2. Grave structure and orientation

The grave structures used for mutilation burials are presented in Fig 41.

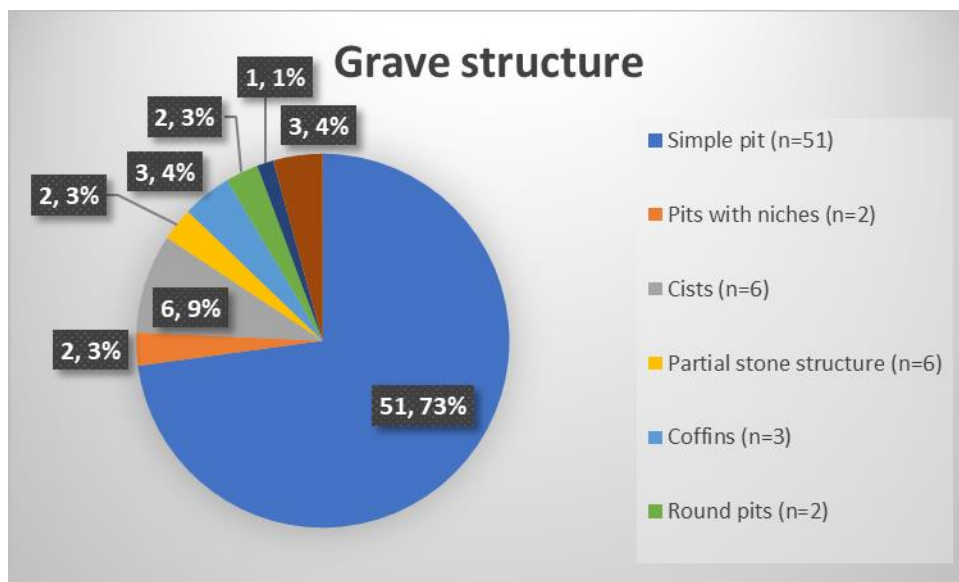


Figure 39 Preferred grave structures for mutilation burials

The orientation of mutilation burials is presented below (Fig.42) according to the cardinal directions and follows the head-feet arrangement. The standard N-S orientation is found in eight graves but for three cases (Nik.185, possibly Slt.47, Slt.60) it could be argued this was irregular for the site. In two other cases the displaced legs were oriented N-S, obsolete to the rest of the skeleton (Trn.112 and

Prs.a). Using orientation as secondary marker to emphasize the deviant character of the burials is relatively rare and is characteristic for the period before or not long after the conversion to Christianity.

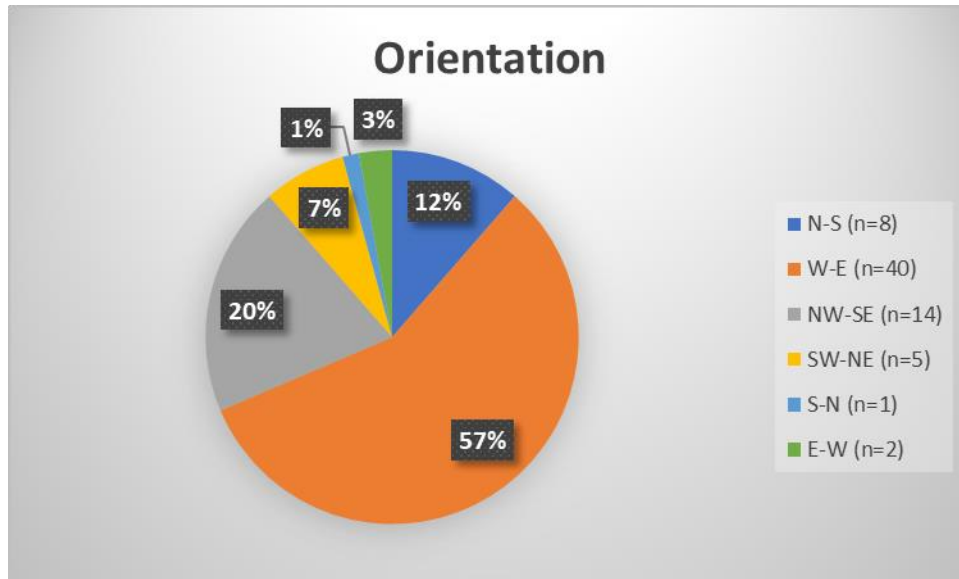


Figure 40 Dominant orientation in mutilation burials

### 1.4.3. Demography: age and sex

Anthropological study is waiting for almost half of the sampled burials with mutilations. Forty-five percent of the sample lack certifiable information about age and sex. Identified cases show a ratio of 56% men versus 44% women based on the data summarized in Fig 43.

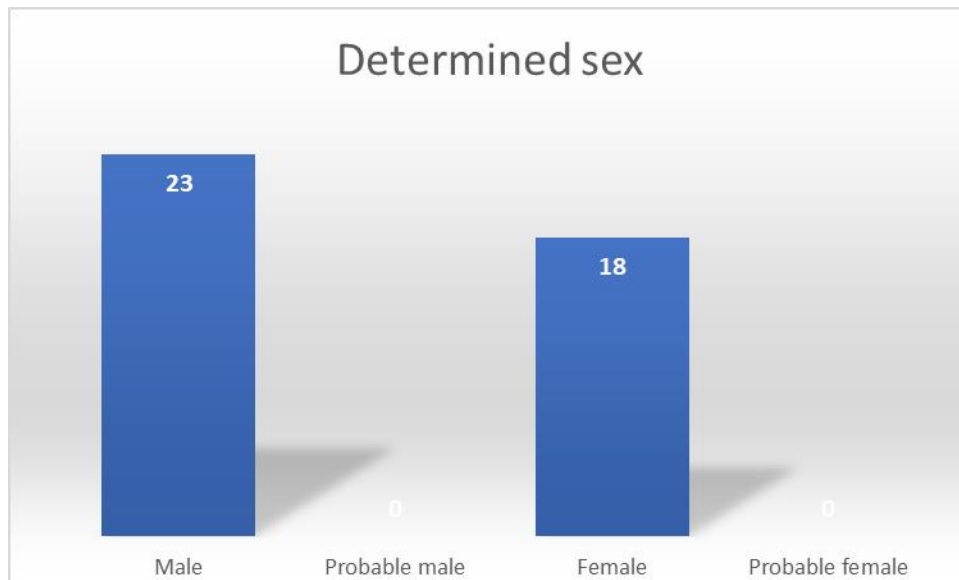


Figure 41 Known sex of individuals from mutilation burials

The patterning according to biological age is illustrated below.

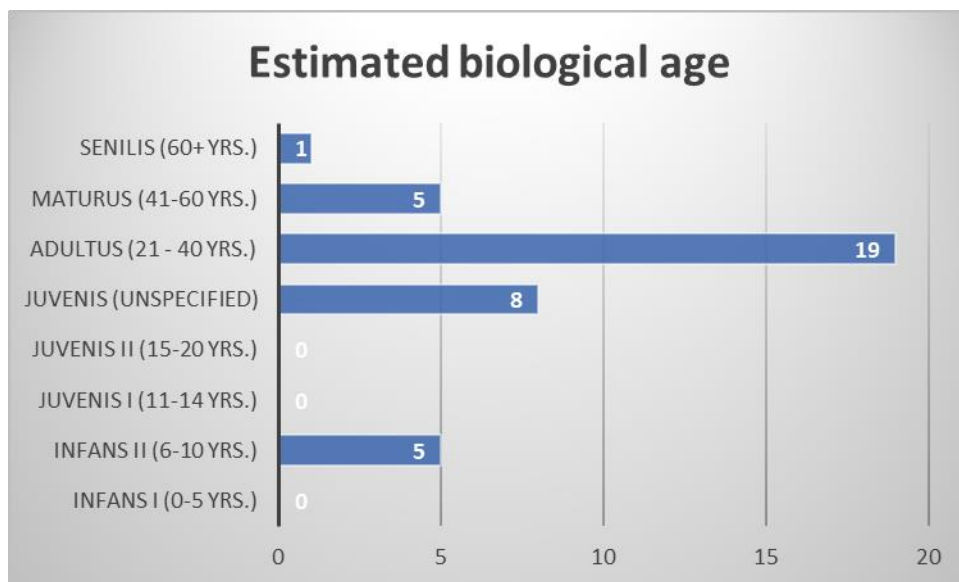


Figure 42 Age distribution of mutilation burials

#### 1.4.4. Grave goods and animal remains

Most of the burials with mutilation lack grave goods with twenty-seven contexts containing objects or animal remains. The allocation of grave goods within mutilation graves before the end of the tenth century is high (46%, n=16). The Christianization only slightly lowers this pattern, as a third of these cases are post-



conversion. Towards the eleventh century this practice is recorded in 23% (n=3) of the mutilations. After the twelfth century the tendency remains strong with deposited objects recorded in nearly a third in the known mutilation burials (32%, n=8).

Pottery is rarely represented as it is found only in three graves (Izv.24, Cik.4, Nik.185) with complete vessels recovered from two of them. Also rare are the coins, all three (POE.30, GCds.49, Kru.7) dating after the early eleventh century. The latest and most valuable one is the silver coin by Ivan Shishman in circulation after 1380.

Personal adornments and jewellery are the most numerous finds from mutilation graves. The earrings hold the primacy in this category with one copper example (Trn112), seven bronze (2x in Hdn.14 and Pdv.2; single in Grb.15, Bog.6, and Od2.38), and five silver earrings (2x Izv.24 and Skr.118; single from POE.30). The four rings are mainly made of bronze (Cik.93, Trn.112, Trn.212) and in one case from iron (Izv.24). Glass beads and pearls are found in Cik.93, Con.9a, Grb.15, Var.11, and in the rather lavished burial of elder woman from Hodoni (Hdn.14). Further, two bronze necklaces were found in Trn.230 and Hdn.14.

Iron buckles and belt buttons are recorded in GCtv.23, Cik.93, Bog.6, Beo.1, Dv1.13. In two graves were discovered plenty of ferrous items, namely Bog.6 and the isolated burial PIC.20. The latter contained two iron buckles, two iron stirrups, four ring hoops, a bridle, one whetstone and two other ferrous fragments. The former held, in addition to the buckle, an arrowhead by the neck, ornamented bone plate, an iron knife, and twenty-one bronze fragments. Iron knives were also discovered in Izv.47 and Con.9a. Other metal objects include one iron fibula from Nikolovo (Nik.185) one stirrup in Preslav (Prs.a), and a niddle still inside its decorated needle-holder from Izvoru (Izv.24). Multiple flints were deposited in Kvc.88.



Animal remains are present in six burial contexts (Cik.4, Cik.93, Bog.6, Prl.13, Dv1.24, Nik.185). The only partially articulated ABGs originate from Prl.13 (dog) and Nik.185 (sheep). Especially interesting is the situation in Perlek where the back half of a dog skeleton was used for recombination with the disintegrated human remains.

#### **1.4.5. Correlation with other deviant burial rites**

The mutilation of the corpse is seldom found in combination with all other deviant burial practices across the sample. One collective burial from Devnya (Dv1.24) shows a high level of contextual combinations involving mutilations. Decapitations and mutilations were recorded together on eleven occasions (GTcv.23, BcT.13, Trn.52, Trn.56, Snj.10, ZdrN.77, Var.11, Dv1.24, Kyu.81, Krs.11, Kvc.88). Perhaps this is natural since both forms of maltreatment include physical injury or intervention to the body of the selected individual. Unsurprisingly, they also coincide in Type III cases like ZdrN.77 or Kyu.81. Even further, the only established co-occurrence of mutilation with the prone position is also combined with decapitation as part of bodily disintegration. The overlap with fixations is far more independent with six known cases (Dv1.24, POE.51, POE.77, Psk2.69, Skr.89). In half of them dated around the eleventh century (POE.51, POE.77, and Psk2.69) substitute fixation is performed. In them the fixating object is placed instead of the missing body part, thus symbolically replacing it in its proper anatomical position. In another case from Sakardzha (Skr.89) the stones used for fixation are placed on the displaced feet. Finally, the mutilation of the body and particularly the disintegration from individual graves are markedly similar to the treatment of the victims in the mass grave in Devnya 3.

#### 1.4.6. Mutilations in European perspective

Mutilation burials are a category rarely studied through big data approach, mostly due to the scarcity of proven cases and the focus on in-depth studies. Again, Reynolds' compendium of Anglo-Saxon deviant burials establishes the ground on which comparison over large scale collections can build upon.

In this cultural context mutilations of the postcranial skeleton have been equated to amputations, especially the removal of limbs. Likewise, an important factor is the difficulties in confidently recognizing the deliberate removal of body parts. Thus, it is not surprising that amputation is considered the 'rarest of the indicators for deviant burials.'<sup>138</sup> Only fourteen examples from twelve sites dated in the pagan period were listed by Reynolds. In fact, this is not too drastically lower than the numbers from South-Eastern Europe originating from pre-Christian times. In the early English context though the amputation was significantly more likely for males than females. Typically, only one of the extremities was removed. The trait was recognized mostly in poorly furnished or unfurnished graves with high preference for the standard orientation.<sup>139</sup>

The range of mutilations derived from execution cemeteries gets closer to the miscellaneous picture in the Balkans. However, the vast majority from the limited series with known sex are still males. Limb removal is still among the main characteristics with the arms chopped off a bit more often than the legs. A very important pattern is the appearance of corpses separated at the waist presumably left

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<sup>138</sup> Andrew Reynolds. *Anglo-Saxon*, 85.

<sup>139</sup> Andrew Reynolds. *Anglo-Saxon*, 86-7.

unburied and disintegrated during advanced decomposition.<sup>140</sup> The practice is notably localized on the site Bran Ditch (seven cases) and to a smaller level in Roche Court Down (three cases).

Alternative trend in the commentary of mutilation burials is their connection to grave reopening in the past. Grave reopening as a phenomenon is traditionally commented on in relation to grave robbery or secondary interments.<sup>141</sup> There is a sensible growth in the appreciation that past disturbances of mortuary context were also a trait of cultural activity with specific meaning.<sup>142</sup> In fact, more and more instances of grave reopening become archaeologically recognizable and in some regions of Europe the frequency of the phenomenon is arguably 15% or more.<sup>143</sup> In fact, mortuary activities in seventh century Merovingian cultural milieu, contemporary to the Anglo-Saxon sample, was described as epidemic of grave disturbances.<sup>144</sup> Of course, mutilation graves would represent only a fraction of this vast phenomenon.

In the summarizing study of Gardela grave reopening in Poland was classified according to its purpose, thus, to add bodies in pre-existing graves, to remove particular body parts, and to destroy the dead. The last two categories are closely

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<sup>140</sup> Andrew Reynolds. *Anglo-Saxon*, 173.

<sup>141</sup> [Sergey Yatsenko and Marina Kilunovskaya] Сергей Яценко и Марина Килуновская, “Нарушенные погребения: Проблемы изучения” [Grave disturbances: Research issues], in *Древние некрополи и поселения: Постпогребальные ритуалы, символические захоронения и ограбления* [Ancient cemeteries and settlements: Post funerary rituals, symbolic interments, and robbery] ed. E. Nosov (St. Peterburg: Russian Academy of Sciences, 2016).

<sup>142</sup> Edeltraud Aspöck, “Past ‘disturbances’ of graves as a source: taphonomy and interpretation of reopened early medieval inhumation graves at Brunn am Gebirge (Austria) and Winnall II (England),” *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 30: 3 (2011).

<sup>143</sup> Edeltraud Aspöck, “Frühmittelalterliche Graböffnungen: von ungeliebter Störung zur archäologischen Quelle,” in *Lebenswelten zwischen Archäologie und Geschichte Festschrift für Falko Daim zu seinem 65. Geburtstag* eds. J. Drauschke, et al. (Mainz: RGZM Verlag, 2018), 7-11.

<sup>144</sup> Alison Klevnäs, “Give and take: grave goods and grave robbery in the early middle ages,” *Stockholm Studies in Archaeology* 62 (2015), 157

connected and can give appropriate comparison for the mutilations from South-Eastern Europe.<sup>145</sup>

Unfortunately, there are not too many instances when intentional mutilations of the body can be distinguished from the record for medieval Poland. Another observation for grave reopening is that it was indiscriminate about burial location or the demographic profile of the deceased, thus any grave could be subjected to this apparently infrequent practice.<sup>146</sup> Still, some of the most elaborate examples of such practices are reconstructed to a significant degree. For instance, on the site Debczyno were found three cases of intensive manipulation of skeletonized cadavers. In one case (grave 10) the body except the lower limbs was removed and burned on the spot, while the grave pit was also subject to ritualized behaviour – filled with liquid (probably milk), sand, and stones. In another grave, the feet of an adult male individual were removed sometime after the funeral. Cedynia also provides evidence for combination of mutilations with other deviant rites. In grave 789 from Cedynia-2 the cranium of an adult woman was removed from its original anatomical position and displaced to the lower leg area. There the cranium was piled together with the long bones.<sup>147</sup>

Perhaps mutilation burials offer the greatest potential to search for missed analogies in the broader context of European deviant practices. Improved sorting of such interventions according to the time of death and exclusion of taphonomic factors are crucial in this respect. Thus far, Balkan mutilation shows basic similarities to other continental examples but wholesome comparison in their patterning remains unattainable.

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<sup>145</sup> Leszek Gardela. *Bad Death*, 208.

<sup>146</sup> Leszek Gardela. *Bad Death*, 207.

<sup>147</sup> Leszek Gardela. *Bad Death*, 218-221.

### 1.5. Conclusion

Summarizing the data acquired from individual graves reveals wholesale patterns about all deviant practices. Most numerous are the decapitation burials, followed by mutilations on the postcranial skeleton and fixation being close third. Prone burials are the least frequent group. The four principle deviant practices exhibit seemingly greater correlation within the same funerary context in South-Eastern Europe than in the rest of the continent.

Looking at the chronological sequence for each type, three major periods appear to be taking shape. These are rather traditionally classified as early medieval (seventh-tenth century), middle or transformative period occurring in a long eleventh century, and late medieval period starting usually in the twelfth century. The major differentiation between them is in the distribution patterns and occasionally in the outlook of the preferred deviant rite. Examples for the latter include the changing dominant form in prone burials, various targeting of body parts or the diversification in fixation modes in the late period. In the early medieval period, there are three major clusters in the Lower Danube area, in Vojvodina, and in the Adriatic littoral zone. Over time the significant concentration of deviant burial practices in the western Balkans disappear. In the late period when dispersed local clusters set the trends, the Podunavlje-Iron Gates area stands out in the overall picture.

Excluding the tell signs of deviant practices used to formulate the basic classification, the graves discussed here share some traits with the dominant burial custom. This is evident in the growing share of the west-east orientation or the occasional introduction of grave structures different than the simple rectangular pit. When present, the deposition of grave goods does not provide really unified picture. Truly, the finding of a luxurious object is exceptional, and most artifacts are rather

poor. For instance, the grave goods ratio in late types of decapitations, prone burials, and fixations are markedly lower than those in mutilations or pre-Christian prone and decapitation graves.

The demographic profile is incomplete due to the unsatisfactory integration of osteological data in the archaeological analysis. However, the overall picture suggests that infants are seldom the definite subject of deviant practice. Adult and juvenile individuals are the two age groups most often represented in the sample. Only for fixations the *maturus* age group is slightly more recorded than subadults. Ubiquitously males are more than females, although the gap in beheadings is not so drastic as one might expect.

Quantitative analysis of chronology, distribution, and other archaeological characteristic allowed the reconstruction of the general development patterns and, ironically, an idealized standard for deviant burials of all kinds. However, for these results to contribute best towards the research questions set out in the beginning, they must account for the concrete circumstances naturally occurring over the extensive territorial and timeframe. The need for more focused view will be tackled in the following chapter where selected locales and aspects of the phenomenon will be discussed in detail.

## CHAPTER 2. OUTSIDERS IN DEATH: CONTEXTUAL SITE SURVEYS

In the previous chapter the chronology of deviant burial practices was mapped out alongside a general description of their archaeological characteristics over the entire study region. This enabled the identification of nuclei where their material expression can be commented in depth against the immediate context on a single site or in landscape-based case study. Another opportunity opened by site-specific overviews emphasises the deeper investigation on alternative aspects of the phenomenon, notably those more problematic to employ in the analysis of individual graves. Furthermore, the selection of surveys tries to appreciate the differing temporal and cultural conditions affecting the funerary behaviour. Open field raw cemeteries or urban graveyards, pagan or Christian, mass graves and isolated burials are all testifying to the generic nature of mortuary deviancy. Additional factor can be the high esteem for certain sites held in the intellectual tradition of medieval archaeology in South-Eastern Europe.

### **2.1. Bečej**

Bečej is a town on the river Tisza in the South Bačka District in Vojvodina, Serbia. Archaeological work on the cemetery has taken place under the form of a series of rescue excavations making test trenches under and around the Pionirska street in the southwestern part of the town. The very first excavations were done by Nebojša Stanojev in the 1970s. Nearly a decade later the work is continued by



Branislava Mikić-Antonić. She also led the archaeological campaign in 2003 after which a comprehensive publication of the site was prepared.<sup>148</sup>

The excavations unearthed parts of Avar-age cemetery with fifty studied graves. The cemetery has two phases: the poorly preserved early Avar cemetery is to the west and its apparent continuation from the mid-late Avar period to the east containing twenty-three graves. The two deviant burials from Bečej are part precisely

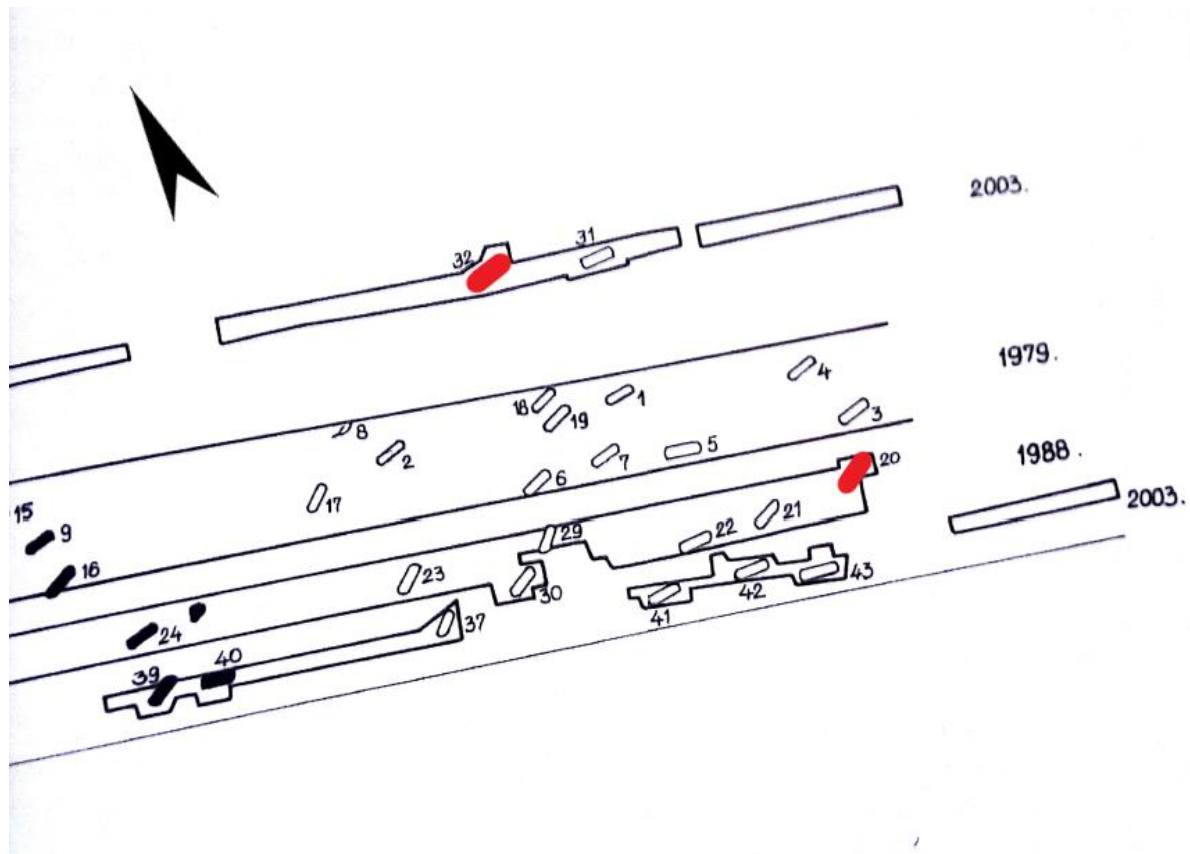


Figure 43 Plan of the site Pionirska street in Bečej with the deviant burials marked in red

of the late Avar phase of the burial ground. The usual layout of the graves is in a simple pit, oriented W-E and the deceased disposed in a supine extended position.

<sup>148</sup> Branislava Mikić-Antonić, *Nekropola iz perioda avarske dominacije: lokalitet Pionirska ulica u Bečeju* [Cemetery from the period of Avar domination: the site Pionirska street in Bečej], (Bečej: Gradski muzej Bečej, 2012)

The plan shows the late Avar eastern section of the cemetery on Pionirska street in Bečej. As it is suggested by the low density of graves and empty trenches in the easternmost parts, the two graves are more or less in the periphery of the burial ground. They are not necessarily isolated but are not a part of central cluster either.

The first burial (Bcj.20) is a female individual placed in a simple pit with hypothetical cover from perishable material like timber or animal skin. The orientation follows the W-E norm in the cemetery. The deviant burial practice is an example for decapitation type III. The skull and some vertebrae are placed on the left femur. The presence of cervical vertebrae together with the skull indicates the displacement happened *peri mortem* and it is plausible the beheading is the cause of death. The position of the earrings also testifies for this timing. One of them is next to the mandible and has a glass bead. The other one was found between the cranium and the bones of the left hand. Their exact location, similar to the lower jaw and the vertebrae, was undoubtedly affected by taphonomic processes like decay and soil pressure.

The two bronze earrings were not the only objects discovered in the grave. A black jar was placed in the corner of the pit by the left foot. Animal bones were also found in the area of the feet. One iron knife was placed by the right femur. The most characteristic find are the remains from mounted belt in the pelvis area. It contained decorated ferrous buckle, four bronze fittings, ferrous buttons and loops, decorated bronze belt mounts in different shapes. Another, larger belt fitting was found under the displaced skull. Ivan Bugarski notes that the belt fittings should be dated between 750-780 and the belt buckle is consistent with finds from the later eight century.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> [Ivan Bugarski] Иван Бугарски, *Археологија Авара у Србији* [Avar Archaeology in Serbia] (PhD Thesis: University of Belgrade, 2014), 175.

This places Bcj.20 in the very end of LAII and likely into the LAIII phase in Stadler's revised Avar chronology.<sup>150</sup>

The second burial (Bcj.32) is of another female placed in a rectangular pit with four round holes (post-holes?) in each corner. Like in Bcj.20, the orientation is standard W-E. This decapitation burial too belongs to type III. The cranium is displaced on top of the left forearm. The mandible is more or less in its expected anatomical position. In this case we have an example for *post mortem* decapitation through skull removal and displacement. The anthropological examination of the skeleton did not find any cut marks or interventions on the cranial bones, thus confirming this must have happened after the decomposition of soft tissues. Another critical observation was made already in the time of the excavations. Two secondary disturbances from yellow soil were cutting through the grave fill of dark, almost black soil in the areas of the head and the abdomen. The targeting of the two interventions and the combined archaeological and anthropological assesment of the context prove targeted grave reopening for *post mortem* decapitation.

To further stress this conclusion and to complete the characterisitics of this deviant burial, the undisturbed grave goods should be described. By the left foot a completely preserved dark grey pot with incised linear and wave decoration was found. Just like in Bcj.20, an iron knife was placed by the right arm. A bronze earring was discovered by the cervical vertebrae and a bronze loop was found by the left arm. The belt contained bronze buckle, bronze plate, small iron nails, and probably small studs from which only corroded imprints were recorded. According to Ivan Bugarski,

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<sup>150</sup> Peter Stadler, „Avar chronology revisited, and the question of ethnicity in the Avar gaganate,“ In: *The Other Europe in the Middle Ages* ed. Florin Curta (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 59

the buckle could be dated to the second half and possibly the last quarter of the eighth century.<sup>151</sup> Animal bones (most likely cattle) were also present in the grave.

The deviant burials from Bečej overlap in two distinctive aspects. The first is their gender profile (both females) and second, the fact they are among the best furnished graves in the cemetery. This is particularly well reflected in the belt remains. Only one normative burial contains belt elements, noticeably without a belt buckle. In fact, Bcj.20 has the most lavished belt attested in the cemetery, a fact stretching the traditional association between such findings and male warrior burials.<sup>152</sup> Some far-reaching analogy could be sought in the rich grave goods, including belts in female graves from Newolino.<sup>153</sup> Earrings (ten graves) and knives (eight graves) are more common find types in Bečej. From those two artefact categories, knives are discovered exclusively in adult burials and mostly with male individuals.

Finally, the two deviant burials Bcj.20 and Bcj.32 must be compared to each other. The two funerary deposits represent ideally the two modes of decapitation as maltreatment practice on the human body. Obviously, Bcj.20 exemplifies beheadings as the lethal and immediate act of violence. Despite being performed sometime after the death and burial of the person, Bcj.32 also represents an intentional physical maltreatment of the human remains. Furthermore, the two examples may have occurred at different biological and social stage and yet they exhibit very similar choices. The deliberate decision to remove the head and its dislocation in Bcj.32 are particularly conspicuous because they resemble the physicality of *peri mortem* decapitations as displayed in Bcj.20. Their simultaneous coexistence on the same site

<sup>151</sup> Ivan Bugarski, *Археологија Авара*, 175.

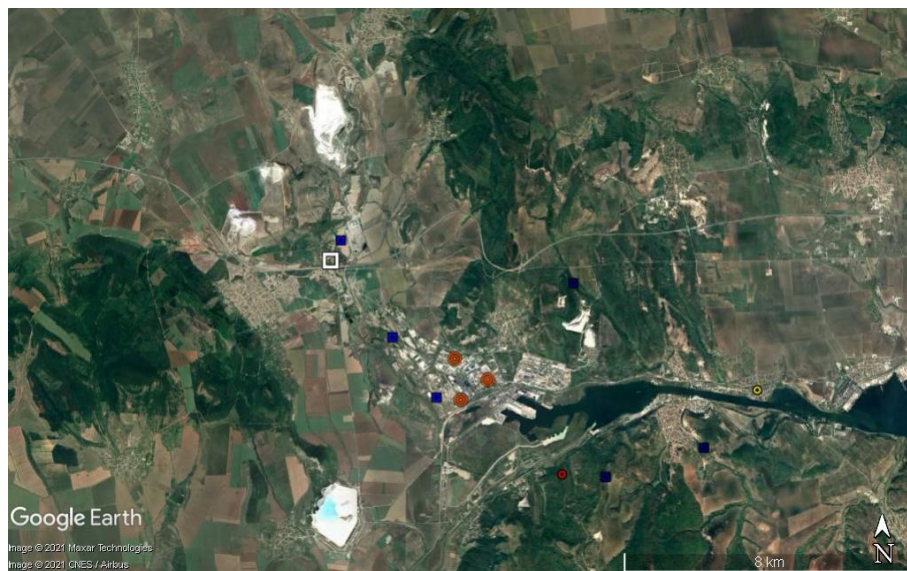
<sup>152</sup> Walter Pohl, *The Avars* (Cornell University Press, 2019), 346, 369.

<sup>153</sup> István Erdélyi, Eszter Ojtozi, and W. Gening, *Das Gräberfeld von Newolino* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1969).

emphasizes the interchangeable underlying rationale embedded in decapitation practices.

## 2.2. *Devnya*

The territory around the lakes Beloslav and Varna is dotted by archaeological traces for dense habitation in the early medieval period. The amphitheatre of the late



*Figure 44 The early medieval landscape by the Beloslav lake: White square – the fortress reusing the amphitheatre of Marcianopolis, blue squares – settlements, dots – cemeteries (yellow – biritual, red – cremation, orange – cemeteries with deviant burials Devnya 1-3)*

Roman Marcianopolis was appropriated as a fortified centre on the west and Odessos (today Varna) defined the settlement system on the coastal eastern part of the region. The natural setting was heavily appropriated by modern human activity, especially during the Communist period in Bulgaria. The two lakes were connected by a channel, effectively including them in the major maritime port in Varna. Additionally, the railway network was expanded to serve the new harbour and the construction of a substantial industrial zone covering the western and northern shores of the lakes.

The intensive developments also meant a rise in the preventive archaeological activities coordinated by the museum in Varna. The industrialization revealed the existence of at least two open settlements and a large mortuary landscape around the shores of the lake Beloslav in the early medieval period.<sup>154</sup> The area had the characteristic pagan bi-ritual cemeteries alongside large cremation cemeteries

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<sup>154</sup> Valentin Pletnyov [Валентин Плетньов], *Варна през Средновековието. Част I* [Varna in the Middle Ages. Part I] (Varna: Zograf, 2008).

(Razdelna). Funerary activity continued in the area after the Christianization too. The key sites with deviant burials Devnya 1, 2, and 3 are all located within this landscape. They are partially explored through salvage excavations between 1968 and 1971 by Dimitar Dimitrov.<sup>155</sup> The three sites combined provide the highest concentration of deviant burials in the database, altogether 24 individual graves.

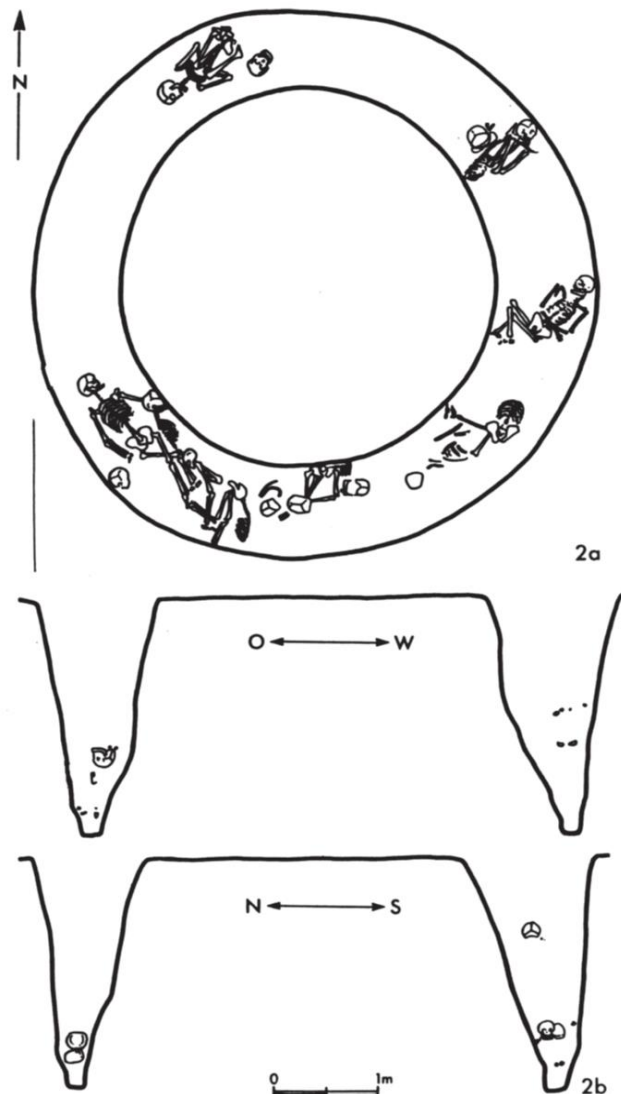


Figure 45 The ring-shaped mass grave from Devnya-3. Section and plan of the top layer. Following Uwe Fiedler, *Studien*, Taf. 112/2

<sup>155</sup> [Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров, “Старобългарски некропол № 2 при Девня” [Old Bulgarian necropolis no 2 near Devnya], *Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 6 (1970); [Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров, “Новооткрит раннобългарски некропол при Девня” [Newly discovered early Bulgarian necropolis near Devnya], *Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 7 (1971); [Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров, “Раннобългарски некропол № 3 при Девня” [Early Bulgar Necropolis No. 3 near Devnya], *Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 8, no. 23 (1972).



However, the situation is made even more essential for the study, because in the periphery of the Devnya-3 necropolis was found a ring-shaped mass grave containing the remains of up to 76 individuals. Its suggested date is the early-mid 9th c., but absolute dating would depend on prospective C14 dating on samples from preserved skeletal remains.

When the mass grave was initially excavated in the late 1960s, Dimitrov emphasized its unusual shape and quickly declared it a pagan sacrifice.<sup>156</sup> The horrid find allowed him to include a physical anthropologist in the study and fortunately a full anthropological report is also available.<sup>157</sup> Matching the primary publication, excavation diary, and the anthropological report allowed to rectify some inconsistencies between them and to re-examine the find primary as evidence for deviant practices and then offer an interpretation.<sup>158</sup> Since the results of this analysis are published elsewhere, only some critical points will be summarized here.

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<sup>156</sup> [Dimitar Dimitrov and Georgi Marinov] Димитър Димитров; Георги Маринов, “Раннобългарски масов гроб при град Девня” [Bulgar mass grave near the town of Devnya], *Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 10, no. 25 (1974), 109 – 43.

<sup>157</sup> [Yordan Yordanov] Йордан Йорданов, “Антропологическо Изследване на костения материал от раннобългарски масов гроб при град Девня” [Anthropological Study of the Osteological Material from the Bulgar Mass Grave near the town of Devnya], *Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 12, 25 (1976), 171 – 273

<sup>158</sup> Petar Parvanov, “The mass grave from Devnya and judicial culture in medieval Bulgaria,” in *(Re)lecture archéologique de la justice en Europe médiévale et modern* ed. Matthieu Vivas (Bordeaux: Ausonius, 2019).

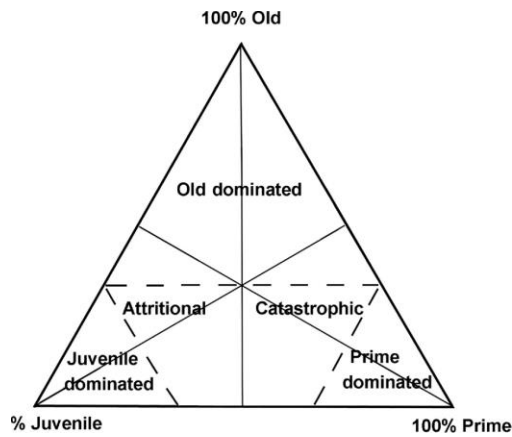


Figure 46 Mortality regimes, after Andrew Chamberlain, *Demography*, fig. 18.

The bodies in the mass grave are dominantly females (94%) and the age composition at the time of death represent mostly infants, juveniles, and young adults (79%). In stark contrast, the few male individuals are either very young, very old, or disabled. The individuals' age at the time of death in the mass grave fits the expected proportions of age categories for attritional and catastrophic mortality regimes. The mortality rate in Devnya also corresponds to the demographic composition of civilian casualties during armed conflicts as recorded for prehistoric and modern warfare mass grave sites.<sup>159</sup> A plausible confirmation for a medieval reality matching the demographic models can be derived from some written sources like the correspondence between the Bulgar ruler Boris I and Pope Nicholas I.

Another important characteristic is the ratio of artificial skull deformation among the deceased. The frequency of 76% in the mass grave is remarkably high. In comparison, artificial skull deformation was recorded in 40% of the cases in Topola and 14% in Novi Pazar. This practice is usually seen as one of the markers of Bulgar populations with analogies among other nomad and semi-nomad cultures like the Huns or the Mongols.<sup>160</sup> The social significance of artificial skull deformation is yet

<sup>159</sup> Andrew Chamberlain, *Demography in Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 77-78.

<sup>160</sup> Uwe Fiedler, *Studien zu Gräberfeldern des 6. bis 9. Jahrhunderts an der unteren Donau* (Bonn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, 1992), 331-32.

to be understood, but arguably this somatic modification signifies particular social status and identity.

The form of disposal proved a very informative aspect of the archaeological record. Most skeletal remains exhibit pathologies suggesting extremely violent death without single unified mode of operation being identifiable. Although the level of violence suffered varies among the individuals, they were killed more or less simultaneously and perhaps at a single location not far away from the place of disposal. A closer examination on the bodies inside the mass grave creates the impression for random clearance of a murder site with several perpetrators involved, while the sign of constraint suggests the victims were treated like felons or captives. The site can be plausibly linked to state induced violence over a community losing its social status and treated as extra-legal and unwanted subjects.

Furthermore, a stratigraphic analysis was made to establish a micro-chronological sequence thanks to the direct positional relationship between the skeletons.<sup>161</sup> It seems that after the initial placement of several bodies at the bottom, a preference for bunching the victims together in heaps is identifiable. This practice left some space unused and resulted in the greater density of skeletal remains in the western half of the ring pit than in the eastern half. It is contrary to the logic of most mass graves to save time and effort by maximizing the use of limited space.

Then, the series of maltreatments could be isolated in groups, occasionally detectable in combination on single skeleton.<sup>162</sup> The types identified on the remains from the mass grave in Devnya-3 are tied limbs, dismemberment, decapitation, prone position, contracted and flexed positions, position lying on the side, and fixations (weighting down) by stones. The individuals placed on the bottom of the pit are

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<sup>161</sup> Petar Parvanov, "The mass grave," 286, fig.8.

<sup>162</sup> Petar Parvanov, "The mass grave," 285-289.

essential for our analysis. On one side, the very fact of their literally lowest position has to be accounted for. On the other, these are the only skeletons found complete, hence giving the clearest account of the variety in treatment. The eight individuals there represent around half the instances when prone, fixation by stone or lateral burial is recorded. Finally, decapitations seem to form a group of their own displaying internal variations in the mode of deposition. Intriguingly, these isolated types correspond directly to the forms of deviant practices recorded in individual graves from the associated burial grounds suggesting similar violent and excluding behaviour to be a factor in funerary practices.

### **2.2.1. Devnya-1**

The biritual cemetery Devnya-1 consists of ninety-seven graves: fifty-one inhumations, thirty-six cremations, and ten empty grave structures described as cenotaphs. The grave structures are varied – simple rectangular pits, pits with partial stone structure or stone covering, and rarely stone cists. The dominant orientation is varying around the N-S axis. Six deviant burials, including one collective grave with three individuals are recorded from Devnya-1 or 11.8% from the inhumations. In fact, Dimitrov is reporting much higher occurrence of deviant practices, but the majority of these were excluded from the present sample due to insufficient information at the moment. For instance, two graves contained only skulls placed in the northern halves of full-size rectangular pits, but this might be due to decomposition processes. Further, according to Dimitrov, the amputation count consists of twelve cases and two other skeletons were completely destroyed due to anti-revenant practices. Graves are generally poor with little or no grave goods, mostly pottery. Artificial skull deformation was established in 22,5% of the examined craniums. The biritual cemetery is dated between mid-eight to the first half of the ninth century.

The excavated area is cut by the modern road through the middle, as evident in the plan reproduced below. However, this makes the peripheral positioning of the confirmed deviant burial even more apparent. Half of them are concentrated in two spatially separate outer zones to the south and northwest. The other half are spread

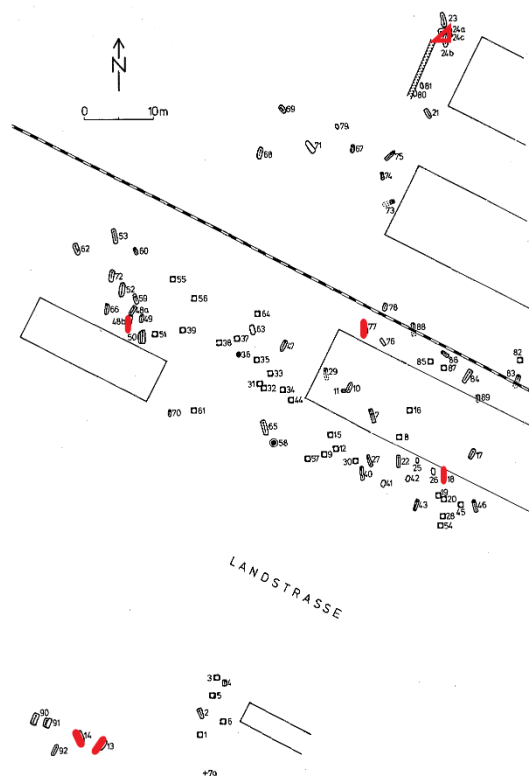


Figure 47 Plan of the biritual cemetery Devnya-1 with deviant burials marked in red

around a central zone with mixed inhumations and cremations. Cremations, however, appear to dominate to the east, where we find Dv1.18.

The overview of the deviant graves begins with Dv1.13. The pit is oriented NE-SW with rectangular layout and is deeper in the leg area. It was covered by large unworked stones. They were not in direct contact with the body, apparently piled in the last stage of filling back the pit with homogenous soil. The male individuals belongs to the *maturus* age category and was placed on his right side with knees bent. On his pelvis was found a ferrous belt buckle. Iron objects are generally rarely found

in the cemetery, but another plain buckle is also detected. The body was mutilated with the right foot missing after being cut off. Additionally, the right foot is on visibly higher level, possibly placed intentionally on a shallow niche during the deposition.

The neighbouring Dv1.14 is another rectangular pit with even deeper niche for the legs and covering from unworked stone. In this case the stones were also placed on the very top of the grave homogenous fill indicating the extent of the pit. Its floor is rather uneven and accommodates the leg arrangement where the knees are at a elevated position than the rest of the body, while the lower legs sink down the niche. In depth, the feet are prominently getting closer with the right one placed behind the left foot. Only one medium sized stone is included in the fill above the legs. The rest of the body was placed supine with the hands on the pelvis. No grave goods were discovered. The postcranial skeleton is oriented roughly N-S, but the skull is reversed facing westwards, thus illustrating the decapitation from type III.

Next is Dv1.18, which is a short pit with partial stone structure to the north. The two large stones are on the very edge of the pit and above ground, thus probably a grave marker. Two pot fragments were found in the fill. The adult male is placed on his back with the legs in eastward flexed position. The left leg is crossed over the right one with the knee leaning on the side pit wall. Two deviant practices are observed here. The skull is absent, which is emphasized by the grave cut in the solid ground leaving no space for a head in normal anatomic position. Additionally, a mid-sized stone was placed on the chest towards the left hand.

The collective burial Dv1.24 is occupying a triangle trench-like pit. The individuals are in flexed and supine position, with the limb positions in the latter indicating the bodies were neglectfully disposed in the pit. There are minimal displacements suggesting bone movement in the free space between the bodies and

stones thrown inside the pit. The three individuals also have different orientations. The flexed male adult (a) is oriented SW-NE, the female with biological age *maturus* (b) is thrown almost on top of him with N-S orientation, and the elderly male (c) is oriented NE-SW. An animal knucklebone was discovered around the feet of the woman. The deviant practice within the triple grave is likewise complex. Individuals **a** and **b** have missing, presumably amputated feet bones (mutilation type II), the same is valid for the skull of individual **c** (decapitation type II), and finally stones were placed over individual **a** and on the skull and chest of individual **b** (fixation type I).

Yet another fixation burial Dv1.48 is in what is described as rounded pit with N-S orientation. The adult (31-40 years old) male is placed in flexed position without any grave goods. However, stones were utilized to weighted down the body with one big stone on the skull and three similarly large stones placed over the legs.

The last deviant burial from Devnya-1 is Dv1.77. The grave is plain, oriented N-S and without any grave goods. The deceased was an adult male. A large stone was placed on his skull in another manifestation of fixation from type I.

In overall the deviant burials from Devnya-1 show forms of the decapitation, mutilation and fixation practices. Fixations tend to be most common without having a clear connection to the use of stone in the grave structure. They are clearly correlated in the treatment of the individuals from the collective grave Dv1.24. Excluding the single female from this context, all individuals selected for such special treatment were males and mostly adults. Also, the examples from Devnya-1 conform to the low-status pattern with a single ferrous object from clothing found in the sample.

### **2.2.2. Devnya-3**

Devnya-3 is another biritual cemetery studied and preliminary published by Dimitar Dimitrov. In its periphery was found the often-mentioned ring-shaped mass



grave. The site Devnya-3 is located around 1,5km to the southeast from Devnya-1. A prehistoric burial ground was detected through three excavated graves, the rest of the explored terrain was used by medieval funerals, which Dimitrov calculates to have exceeded one thousand. Excluding the mass grave and the prehistoric graves, the overall count of excavated burial contexts is hundred fifty-seven: fifty-three cremations, hundred and three inhumations, and five empty features considered cenotaphs. The inhumation burials show two consistent orientation patterns with the head placed towards the north (fifty-six) and west (twenty-nine). The tendency for the W-E orientation to appear on the northern periphery of the cemetery inclines Dimitrov

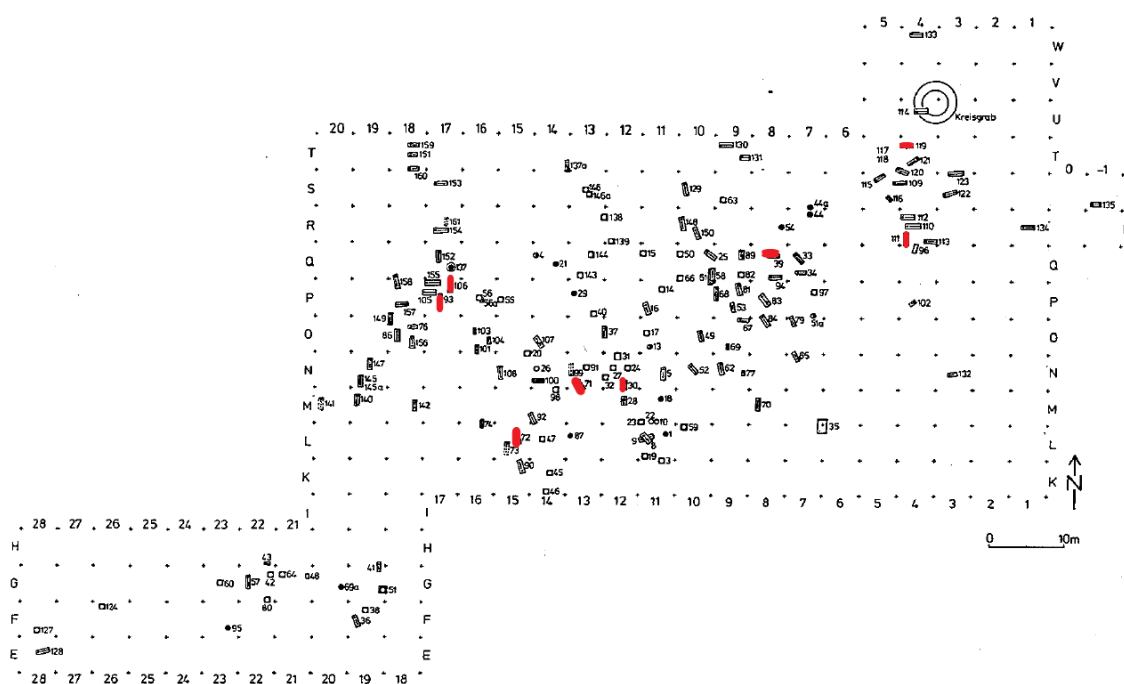


Figure 48 Plan of the biritual cemetery Devnya-3 with individual deviant burials marked in red. The mass grave is in the NE section.

to seek chronological and religious explanation. He proposes that this group signifies the extension of the cemetery after the conversion to Christianity around 864/5. Generally, distinguishing between Christian and non-Christian burials on the grounds of orientation alone is a tricky endeavour, but Devnya-3 falls in line with a number of mortuary sites when similar change in orientation is observed.

On the general plan of the cemetery the location of the mass grave is distinguishable and markedly isolated until grave No.114 was not inserted in superposition to it. This stratigraphic situation actually supports Dimitrov's claim for the later expansion of the cemetery driven by graves adapting Christian norms. If we accept the relative inner border outlined by the change of the dominant orientation, deviant burials exhibit decisively peripheral positioning, which was later overran by the main expansions in northwest and northeast directions. The southern group of deviant burials could be regarded better included in the cemetery, despite still being peripheral to the central concentration of mixed graves.

Like elsewhere around Devnya, the grave structures include simple pits and more elaborate partial stone structures or coverings from stone or reused ancient tiles. The site was in use during the (late?) eight and the ninth century. The confirmed cases of deviant burials are eight or 7.8% from all inhumations, but again there is insufficient information for recurring irregularities in the sample. These include four more graves containing only skull and six amputations of the feet.

The first example from this site is Dv3.30. The stone cist contained only one complete skull in its northern part. The skull was placed supine in an imitation of the regular funerary custom.

Next in line is Dv3.39. This burial is in a simple pit with orientation W-E. However, Dv3.39 is surrounded by inhumations with 'pagan' N-S orientation and cremation, which makes its orientation irregular in the immediate context. The body is placed supine with the legs contracted upwards. No grave goods were found. The deceased was weighted down by very large stone covering its torso.

Another fixation grave is Dv3.71. The pit is very narrow, oriented NW-SE and barely fitting the body. There are no grave goods. The body is laid on its left side with

the legs bent at the knees. A large unworked stone is placed immediately on top of the skull. Probably its weight contributed to the breakage of the skull bones and their bad preservation.

Dv3.72 is a good example for applying deviant practices within the same context. The grave is quite typical: narrow pit neatly containing the body, orientation N-S, and no inventory. The body, however, is placed face-down with the legs and left arm extended. The skull is turned to the right and the right hand is beneath the body. Large unworked stone with roughly rectangular shape is placed directly on the thighs.

Particularly interesting is Dv3.93. Once again, the pit is simply dug in the ground to hold a body with orientation N-S and without any grave goods. Despite not being mentioned in the original publication, the postcranial skeleton is placed in prone extended position (type I). This is proven by the posterior view of the skeleton in the retained photos from the excavations, best visible on the right femur and the pelvis. The grave must have been relatively short and shallow judging from the curve of the body. The skull was found in absolutely unnatural supine position on top of the back and opposite orientation S-N suggesting a correlation with decapitation practice (type III). The displacement of the skull might have happened after the decomposition of the soft tissue in the neck, but the cranium and the mandible remain associated. The extended upper limbs make cadaveric spasm very unlikely. This position is probably chosen during the disposal of the body. Even if the displacement of the skull is due to taphonomic processes, they have been caused by the intentional placement of the body in ventral prone position inside a pit too short to fit it comfortably.

The next case is Dv3.106 containing remains from two individuals. It is possible the rectangular pit for the main body in supine position and oriented N-S to have reused a tile from earlier decapitation type I burial. The bones from the right leg

of this individual are displaced or missing (mutilation type IV). Beneath the left knee joint and in direct physical contact with the bones, there was a skull placed on its side. The skull is consistent with the decapitation type I burials, but its peculiar position and association with another body are the reason to be classified as type III decapitation. The two deviant practices are not applied to the same individual but are related by the single context.

Dv3.111 is a grave with extensive stone covering from two layers, one of which has collapsed. The grave is oriented N-S in contrast to the surrounding graves following the Christian preference for W-E. No grave goods were discovered. The body is lying on its left side and is pushed to the side of the pit. Dv3.111 is a fixation type I burial with one stone slab placed over the chest. Another stone, perhaps from the destroyed grave structure, was found in the western part of the pit.

The final grave on our list from this site is Dv3.119. It is a simple pit with W-E orientation and no grave goods. The deceased is placed supine with legs extended, right arm alongside the body and the left on the abdomen. The feet bones in anatomical order are displaced between the tibiae (*peri mortem* mutilation type I).

To summarize the results from the analysis, Devnya-3 shows all main deviant practices. Furthermore, all forms of maltreatment isolated on individual skeletons from the mass grave were also present among individual deviant burials. Noteworthy patterns can be observed in the position of the bodies. Relatively often the deceased from deviant burials were placed on their side. Also, there is some correlation between prone position on one hand, and decapitation or fixation on the other. In fact, prone burials appear only in combination with other deviant practices on this site. Another peculiarity is the parallel appearance of mutilation and decapitation in the ‘dual’ grave Dv3.106.

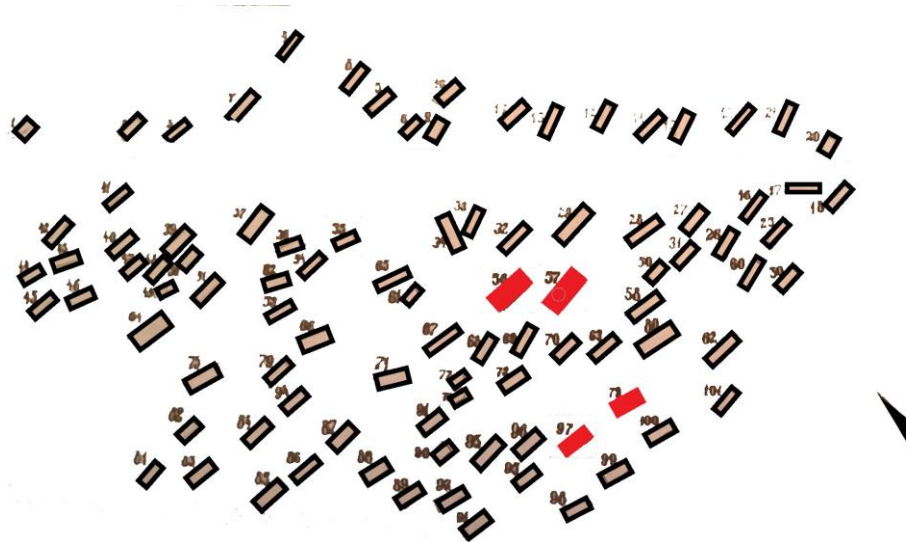
Fixation by stone has been detected in half of the deviant burials from Devnya-3. Two of them cases are very indicative that the use of stone for weighting down is ultimately different part from its application as construction material in grave architecture. First, this is Dv3.39, where the stone is placed on the chest. In addition to the direct contact with the skeleton, the large stone is clearly following the orientation of the body and is still on lower level than the knee joints bent upwards. Thus, it is not possible for this to have been part of any stone cover. Further illustration for this dichotomy is visible in Dv3.111. The stone coverings has collapsed inside the grave at some point in close proximity to the skeleton. However, it is clear from the picture that a flat stone different from the ones used in the grave structure is placed directly on the chest of the individual.

### **2.2.3. Devnya-2**

The third and latest cemetery from this funerary landscape is the so-called Devnya-2. It is positioned to the northwest from the previously discussed sites. The graveyard was established after the conversion to Christianity in 864/5 and strictly applies the inhumation rite and the W-E orientation. The cemetery was probably used until the middle of the tenth century. This cemetery is also partially explored, although Dimitrov believes the excavated hundred and one graves represent around two thirds from the overall number. Coffins are used in addition to the rectangular pits and partial stone structures. The anthropological data is scarce, but it has been noted that the level of subadult mortality must have been very high (almost 22%). The confirmed cases of deviant burials are only five, yet once again several less likely irregularities are being referenced in the preliminary report. Three feet amputations

are suggested (No. 35, 36, 47), as well as partial destruction of the skeletons in at least nine cases.

The cemetery, which is organized in rows accordingly to the cardinal direction, shows some concentration of deviant burials in its southern part. The deviant graves are close to each other, grouped in couples and generally observe the organizational norm. The southern pair could have been peripheral at some point during the growth of the cemetery. Some disorder and distancing can be attributed to the central zone where two more deviant burials are located in close proximity to each other. Finally, the clearest example for spatial segregation is the complete exclusion of Dv2.59 from the graveyard plot. Given the young age of the deceased from Dv2.59, this could indicate the subadult individual was not baptized before his/her



*Figure 49 Plan of the cemetery Devnya-2 with deviant burials marked in red*

death.

The first deviant grave in this list is Dv2.56. There are remains from the wooden coffin in the simple rectangular pit. Evidence for coffin use were recorded in twenty-two graves on the site. The body was placed in supine extended position with

standard W-E orientation. There were no grave goods. On the feet of the deceased were placed two flat stones.

The nearby Dv2.57 is very similar. The supine extended position, the W-E orientation and the lack of grave goods characterize the burial. The grave was a simple rectangular pit without any indications for funerary container. Another commonality is the form of the fixation – through a large stone on top of the left foot.

The above mentioned isolated Dv2.59 also observes the modest burial custom. The skeleton of an infant with undetermined sex was found in a simple pit with orientation W-E. Another outstanding feature of this grave is its inventory. On the right clavicle was placed an iron spearhead. Grave goods are rare in the entire cemetery, but weaponry is never attested on the sites in Devnya, especially in infant's grave. The only other ferrous objects from Devnya-2 are knives (five cases), usually placed around the pelvis. The deviant practice is familiar: a flat stone is placed on the feet.

The next two graves form the southern pair of deviant graves. Dv2.74 used a rectangular pit with long side stone on its southern wall. The individual is laid on his/her back with extended limbs with the head to the west. No grave goods were found. The mutilation type I is detected through the displaced mandible, which was found between the femur bones.

The second is Dev2.97, which had quite standard layout: simple pit, W-E orientation, without grave goods. This is another fixation case, but here the skull of the individual was weighed down by two stones.

The chronologically latest cemetery around Devnya illustrates the transformative effects on the change of religion to the funerary rites observed in this mortuary landscape. By far the majority of deviant burials here are examples for



fixation Type I with only one recorded exception. Moreover, there is a strong preference for targeting the feet in the central pair and the isolated graves. The tendency for spatial separation is also continuing, even if on a lesser scale. Finally, the dislocation of the mandible in the knee area without any serious disturbance of the rest of the skeleton and crucially, the cranium, suggests *peri mortem* intervention and grave reopening after the decomposition of soft tissues.

When all three cemeteries close to Devnya are considered, a dynamic picture of deviant burial practices emerges. Despite the recording of all isolated forms of maltreatment from the mass grave in individual graves, there is a consistent domination of fixations in single graves throughout the period of use. This is diverging from the pattern in the mass grave where fixations were the rarest type. Naturally, one should acknowledge the big difference in the availability and quality of anthropological examination between the sites. Still, age and gender characteristics show prevailing mistreatment of adult males unlike in the mass grave. The principal manifestations of deviant burial practices are rather commonly supplemented by secondary indicators like tied hands, neglectful disposal or spatial separation. However, the diversity in mortuary behaviour and frequency of minority rites decreases in the late ninth-tenth century.

## **2.3. Ždrijac-Nin and Maklinovo Brdo**

### **2.3.1. Ždrijac-Nin**

Nin is located on a lagoon on the Adriatic sea to the north from Zadar, the centre of the Byzantine *theme* Dalmatia. Multiple periods of habitation are registered

Figure 50 Plan of the cemetery Ždrijac-Nin (west) with deviant burials marked in red

horizons, but still within this general timeframe.<sup>164</sup> There is also a small section further west in Ždrijac, which should be dated to the tenth-eleventh century. However, none of the altogether five deviant burials were located there.

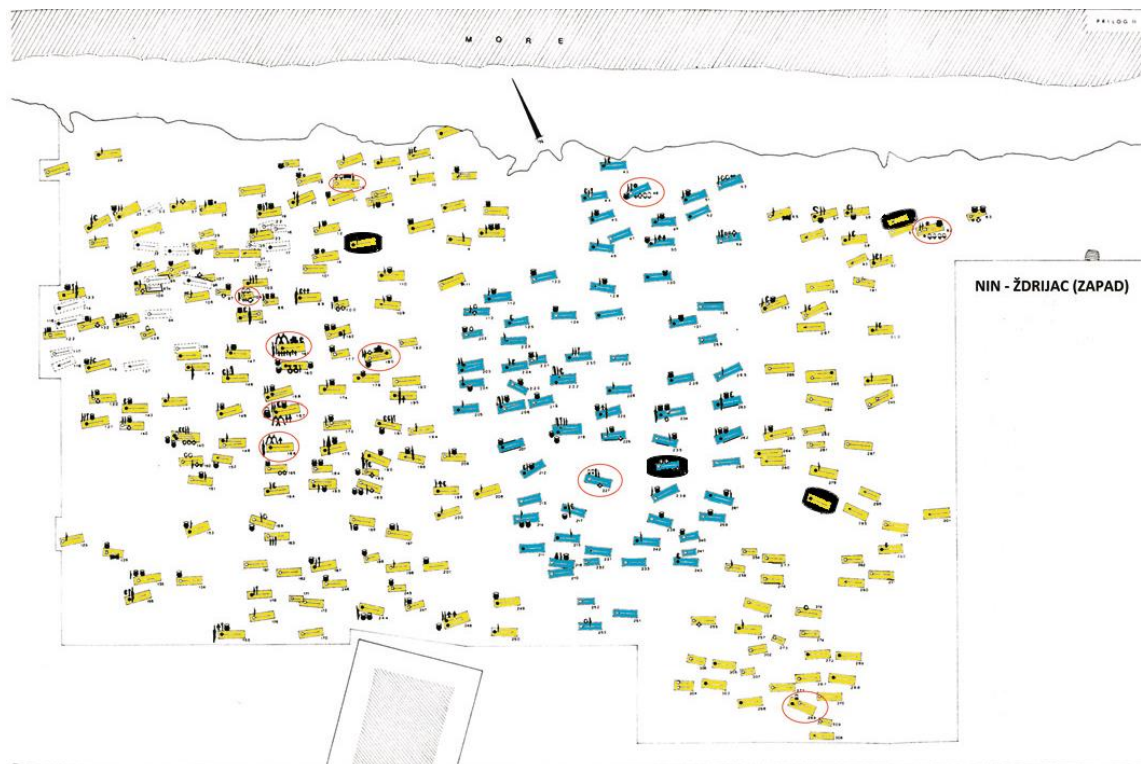


Figure 51 Plan of the cemetery Ždrijac-Nin (west) with deviant burials marked in black

The two plans above show the placement of deviant burials in the general plan of the cemetery Ždrijac – west (Fig.) and within Alajberg’s topographic model (Fig.). The first important observation is the missing ZdrN.77, which is not on the plan, because of its formal inclusion and peripheral position in Ždrijac – east if we can judge from the photo. Only ZdrN.237 falls within the early sepulchral horizon. Interestingly, this is the only deviant burial from the site containing grave goods.

<sup>164</sup> Ante Alajberg, „O topografskoj kronologiji ranosrednjovjekovnih grobalja s poganskim osobinama pokapanja u sjevernoj Dalmaciji“ [On the topographical chronology of early mediaeval cemeteries with pagan burial characteristics in northern Dalmatia], *Archaeologia Adriatica* 8 (2014), 149-152.

ZdrN.60 and ZdrN.278 flank the north-eastern cluster of later graves. The position of ZdrN.60 is clearly peripheral, while ZdrN.278 is isolated from the south. In the western extension ZdrN.13 is in the cluster with highest density and its position still appears to be in-between rows.

The first deviant burial from here is ZdrN.13. The deceased is male between 41 and 50 years old. He was placed in supine extended position following the standard orientation W-E in a rectangular pit. Some mid-sized stones supporting the body by the right arm and the skull might be seen as remains of basic grave arrangement. More importantly, two stones were placed on the chest and the pelvis of the individual. No grave goods were found.

Another deviant burial is ZdrN.60. It is male individual in supine extended position and oriented W-E. The rectangular pit exhibits partial stone structure with stones around the legs and on the northern side. No grave goods were discovered. The skull is absent in accordance with Type II decapitation burials.

The next entry in the database is ZdrN.77 located outside of the main burial ground. It is an example of a burial with combined deviant features. The pit has elongated oval shape. The body was placed in supine position with W-E orientation. The skeleton exhibits traces of both decapitation (Type II) and mutilation (Type III). The disintegration is particularly interesting since this is the best recorded and most advanced form of partial burning of the body. The incineration happened after the body was deposited in the grave. The entire lower skeleton was destroyed with particularly high concentration of charcoal in the expected area of the pelvis.

Burial ZdrN.237 is another simple pit with elongated oval shape, oriented W-E. The deceased is a female with biological age *maturus* I (41-50 years). She was placed in supine extended position and had two silver circlets by the skull, bronze ring

on the right hand, and a necklace with eleven dark blue glass beads. Rings of similar shape without decoration are found in three other graves (No.65, 104, and 106) in Ždrijac and two more analogies were found elsewhere in Nin, one in Materiza (No.15) and one in Sv. Križ (No.168). Necklaces with colourful glass beads are found in twenty-three other graves in Nin, which is nearly half of the known examples from Dalmatia.<sup>165</sup> However, the number of beads is rarely more than ten, usually only two-three pieces were used. In this respect, the example from ZdrN.237 is matching only six (No. 54, 326, 184, 227, 48, and 104) other necklaces on the site. The body was weighed down by a large stone placed on the abdomen and covering the pelvis as well.

The last recorded deviant burial on the site is ZdrN.278. The pit exhibits partial stone structure on the narrow sides by the head and the legs. The orientation is typical, W-E. The deceased is elderly male (above 60 years old) placed in supine position with his legs bent at the knees. No grave goods were found, but a large stone was placed on the lower legs pressuring the tibia and fibulae.

On the burial ground Ždrijac are represented fixations, decapitations, and one severe mutilation. The three practices show little correlation between each other on this site with one vivid exception, namely ZdrN.77. Males are clearly more often the subject of deviant practices than women. Interestingly, there is also a clear preference for individual over the age of forty.

One general concern regarding fixation burials could be if the stones placed on the body are not simply part of the cover. Throughout this dissertation a strict methodological principle for direct physical contact between the osteological remains and the fixation object is followed. To add to it, in Ždrijac we have one secure

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<sup>165</sup> Maja Petrinec, *Groblja*, 137

(ZdrN.237) and one possible (ZdrN.13) example for fixation from Type I in graves without any stone structure. Some links in funerary appropriation of stones must be recognized. However, on the site of Ždrijac and in the Adriatic littoral as a whole some form of cist graves is a widespread funerary preference. For the site in question, two thirds of all graves had at least partial stone structure. Thus, the coincidence of fixation Type I and stone grave structures is to be expected and in fact certain in only one fixation burial from Ždrijac (ZdrN.278). The fixation burials target several different body parts, but the pelvis is part of the combined weighting down in both Zdr.13 and Zdr.237.

### 2.3.2. Maklinovo Brdo

Following the example set by Janko Belošević, the funerary archaeology of the early medieval period in Croatia contextualizes the Ždrijac cemetery by drawing parallels with the site of Maklinovo brdo near Donji Kašić.<sup>166</sup> Since this cemetery also provides evidence for deviant burials, the current work will follow in kind. Donji Kašić is some 30km to the southeast from Nin and the number of cemeteries known from the area like Razbojine (37 graves) or Glavčurak stand for a densely populated landscape in the hinterland of Dalmatia.

Maklinovo Brdo in particular was first excavated by Mate Suić in the 1950s before Janko Belošević continued the systematic work in the area in 1967, around the same time when he first localized Ždrijac. The cemetery has longitudinal plan, and its 55 inhumation graves are organized in rows with varying orientation. Individual

<sup>166</sup> Janko Belošević *Materijalna kultura*, 67-84. Most comprehensively discussed in: Janko Belošević, *Starohrvatsko groblje na Maklinovu brdu u selu Kašiću kod Zadra* [Old Croat cemetery in Maklinovo Brdo by the village Kašić near Zadar] (Split: Muzej hrvatskih arheoloških spomenika, 2010).

graves mostly follow the direction NW-SE. Furthermore, Belošević discovered a group of cremation graves around 50m southeast from the main site. The two are usually considered as separate burial grounds with the cremation cemetery dated in the seventh century and the inhumation cemetery to the eight- mid ninth century. Vladimir Sokol includes this cemetery, together with Ždrijac, to an even narrower (late eight – mid ninth century) early pagan horizon of cemeteries with earring finds.<sup>167</sup> Ante Alajberg deals with the chronology of Maklinovo brdo too and establishes two sepulchral horizons in the course of eight century.<sup>168</sup>

In the current database of deviant burials are included three graves with altogether four individuals from Maklinovo Brdo (Fig.52): MkBr.10, MkBr.44, and MkBr.45. All of them are fixations from Type I. Almost all the individuals are females. Still, in the dual grave MkBr.10 only the male individual was weighed down.

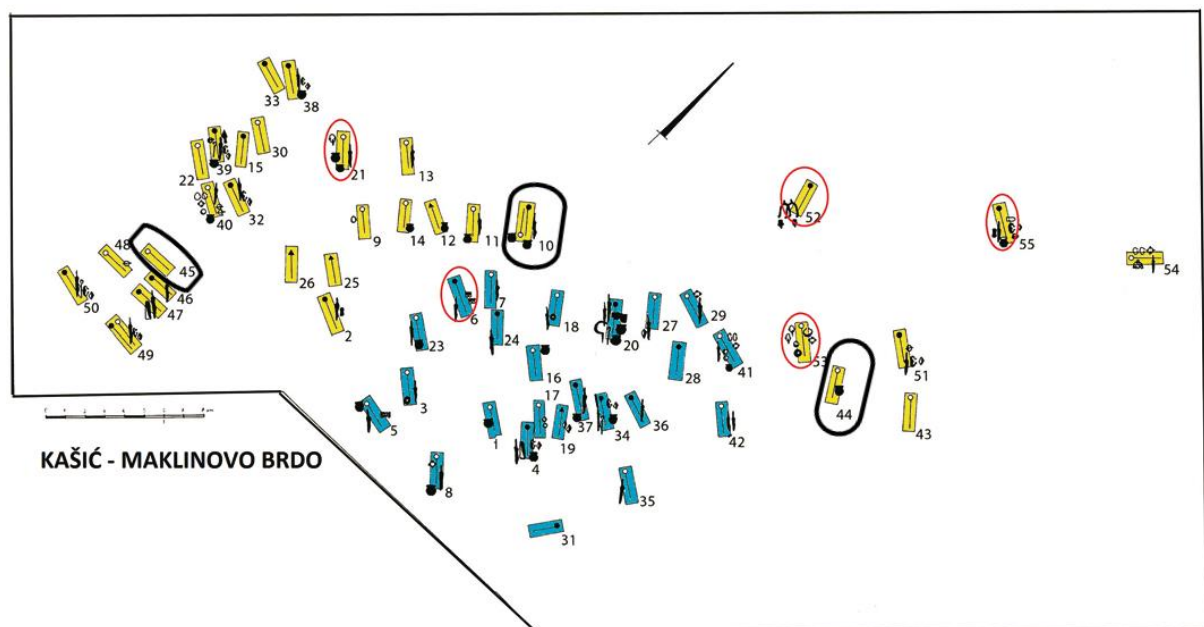


Figure 52 Plan of the cemetery Maklinovo brdo with deviant burials marked in black

There is no data for their age at the time of death.

<sup>167</sup> Vladimir Sokol, *Medieval Jewelry*, 89-93.

<sup>168</sup> Ante Alajberg, "O topografskoj," 144-148.



The three deviant burials are placed in the periphery of the central group identified by Alajberg as the early phase of the cemetery and mark the different directions of its expansion. The north-eastern burial MkBr.44 is part of rather dispersed section. The dual MkBr.10 is peripheral to both the early central group and the western cluster to which is attached. Further, to the north MkBr.10 is completely isolated. Finally, grave MkBr.45 is attached in the periphery of a small separate cluster and characterised with different preferred orientation. MkBr.45 observes the W-E orientation of the cluster but is isolated from the north and fails to follow in line with either of the two rows.

The dual grave MkBr.10 is a rectangular pit with partial stone structure in the north-western end of the pit. Two individuals are placed next to each other in supine extended position with opposite orientation: the male NW-SE and the female SE-NW. The grave goods consist of two pots and an iron knife. The knife is by the right humerus of the male individual and the two vessels are in the southern part of the pit. One grey vessel was placed by the skull of the female and the other jar of reddish colour and incised wave decoration was placed over the legs of the male. Knives are among the most common items discovered in burial contexts in Dalmatia and in Maklinovo brdo alone there are found in twenty more graves besides in MkBr.10.<sup>169</sup> The fixation is performed only on the male individual by placing one slabs on the abdomen and two on the lower legs (including the feet). The ceramic vessel is between the two stones on the legs.

The grave MkBr.44 is another pit with stone structure framing the skeleton. The female was placed in supine extended position in NW-SE direction. Dark brown pot was placed between the stones to the left of the skeleton. Two large stones were again targeting the area of the abdomen and the legs.

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<sup>169</sup> Maja Petrinec, *Groblja*, 177.

These two graves resemble each other in two important characteristics. First is the combined weighing down on abdomen and legs. Second is the deposition of ceramic vessel. However, this is not an uncommon find with pottery discovered in sixteen other graves from the site of Maklinovo brdo.

The last deviant burial from this site is MkBr.45. The grave pit has partial stone structure, including a 'stone-pillow' under the head. The body is oriented W-E and placed in supine extended position. There are no grave goods. One stone is placed on the chest of the female individual.

There is far less variety of deviant practices in Maklinovo Brdo than in Ždrijac. Fixation is present on both sites with different gender patterning. In the latter the fixation burials are mostly males (2:1) and in the former the situation is reversed. In temporal terms ZdrN.237 is supposedly synchronous to the cases from the hinterland. However, the kind of objects deposited in the graves are completely different. In the characteristics of the practice itself, some similarity can be traced in the choices of targeted body parts.

#### **2.4.      *Pliska***

Despite being studied for nearly 120 years, the vast cultural heritage landscape of Pliska is still far from explored. The urban agglomeration consists of Inner and Outer city enclosed by earthen rampart and stone fortification wall respectively. Within its limits are registered around 70 settlements and multiple other prospective sites of archaeological interest. The unquestionable focus of attention has been the monumental constructions dictating the urban character of the Bulgar power centre

such as the palatial ‘citadel’, the Throne palace, aristocratic mansions, and pagan temples.

In terms of mortuary landscape, Pliska offers an intriguing challenge since absolutely no graves from the pagan period are discovered in the enclosed area. One highly unlikely exception is the collective grave reusing mound XXXII around 250 m north from the Inner City. The human remains were in poor condition, but likely included two grown individuals and two subadults. One bronze earring with open shape and fragments from grey incised pottery were the only finds.<sup>170</sup> The construction of the barrow is indeed dated to the pagan period and the opinion that it was linked to the defense system of the elite Inner City seems to prevail at the moment.<sup>171</sup> The open field surrounding Pliska, however, is dotted by settlements and the typical biritual cemeteries with some of the closest being near the village Varbyane and Novi Pazar. This contrast inclines Uwe Fiedler to propose the existence of religiously-sanctioned ban on burials within the limits of the enclosure<sup>172</sup>, while Joachim Henning<sup>173</sup> and Pavel Georgiev<sup>174</sup> seem to see it as the mathematical equation of low number permanent residents.

The conversion to Christianity in 864/5 changed the situation in Pliska drastically. Together with the construction of churches replacing old temples, the funerary activity was quickly adapted to the new religion. Inhumation burials were

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<sup>170</sup> [Sonya Georgieva] Соня Георгиева, “Разкопки на могили XXXIII и XXXII в Плиска” [Excavations on mounds 33 and 32 in Pliska], *Известия на Археологическия Институт* 20 (1955), 30-31.

<sup>171</sup> [Andrey Aladzhov] Андрей Аладжов, “Външният град на Плиска – проучвания и проблеми,” In: *Археологическа карта на Плиска* [Archaeological map of Pliska] ed. Andrey Aladzhov (Sofia: National Archaeological Institute with Museum, 2013), 184-185.

<sup>172</sup> Uwe Fiedler, “Eine Hauptstadt ohne Gräber.” In: *Post-Roman Towns, Trade and Settlement in Europe and Byzantium* ed. Joachim Henning (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1999).

<sup>173</sup> Joachim Henning, “Pliska—Machtzentrum zwischen Byzanz und Abendland. Neue Wege der Archäologie,” *Forschung Frankfurt. Wissenschaftsmagazin der Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main* 18:2 (2000), 11.

<sup>174</sup> [Pavel Georgiev] Павел Георгиев, “Плиска – езическото средище на България през IX век” [Pliska- the pagan centre of Bulgaria], *Плиска-Преслав* 13 (2018), 57-59

introduced to the urban space and deviant practices appeared with them. So far, more than four hundred burials from the Inner City and five hundred from the Outer City area are unearthed from the Christian period. Seven graveyards are recorded around the territory of the Outer City, excluding its north-western section. More often than not, there is an ecclesiastical building in their vicinity.<sup>175</sup> Pliska might have lost its political primacy to Preslav in the tenth century<sup>176</sup>, but life (and death) consolidated around the Inner City and continued well into the eleventh century. Cemeteries formed alongside the fortification walls, particularly in the southern, south-west and northern section or in the palatial churchyard. Limited remains from eleventh century funerary activity are also recorded in more central places, for instance to the east from the former palatial complex or north from the complex with oval stone pavement.

Deviant burials have been found on three cemeteries within the enclosed area of Pliska: two in the Outer city and one in the Inner city. Additional fixation burial is supposedly found in the cemetery by the western fortification wall, but sufficient information about it could not be obtained at the moment.<sup>177</sup> The location of the sites with deviant burials is marked on the general plan of Pliska below (Fig. 53).

<sup>175</sup> [Andrey Aladzhov], “Външият град,” 182-184.

<sup>176</sup> Daniel Ziemann, “Pliska and Preslav. Bulgarian Capitals between Relocation and Invention,” In: *Българско средновековие: общество, власт, история* [The Bulgarian Middle Ages: society, power, history] ed. Georgi Nikolov (Sofia: University of Sofia, 2012), 185-187.

<sup>177</sup> [Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova] Людмила Дончева-Петкова, “Некропол при южния сектор на западната крепостна стена на Плиска” [Cemetery by the southern part of the western fortification wall of Pliska], *Сборник в памет на проф. Станчо Ваклинов* [A collection of essays in memoriam Prof. Stancho Vaklinov] ed. Vasil Gzuyev (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1984).



*Figure 53 Map of the Outer (red) and Inner (yellow) city of Pliska. The cemeteries with recorded deviant burials are by the Great Basilica (green), the Eastern gate (blue) and the south fortification wall (dark red)*

#### **2.4.1. Cemetery by the Great Basilica**

The first and earliest of the sites with deviant burials (marked in green) is linked to probably the most imposing monument in Pliska, the Great Basilica. The basilica and the adjunct monastery embodied the ideological and religious change in Bulgaria under Boris. The complex was built over an earlier settlement in the second half of the ninth century. The graveyard occupied the area around the apse and is partially excavated and published by Zhivka Vazharova. Altogether forty-four graves were discovered with the consistent W-E orientation and standard supine position. The graveyard is dated in the late ninth – tenth century, which is accepted for the deviant burial.

Grave PGB.13 is placed in a simple pit with W-E orientation. In the grave fill were found traces of charcoal and potsherds. Anyway, they should be regarded as

probable seldom inclusions remaining from the earlier settlement layer. The skeleton was lying in supine position, excluding the face-down skull. This description matches the Type II.A prone burials. The only contemporary example from the type is SJR.12, also originating from churchyard cemetery.

#### **2.4.2. Cemetery by the Southern Fortification Wall of the Inner City**

The second important burial ground (marked in red) occupies the strip on the inner side of the southern stone fortification wall. The cemetery was excavated in the 1970s as part of the research project exploring the fortifications of the Inner City in its entirety. The publication by Ivan Zahariev describes forty-two graves. On the grounds of their isolation, overall differential treatment and some grave goods, two of the deviant graves (PIC.10 and PIC.20) are declared ‘pagan’ by the author. Different religious identity is one of the possible reasons for exclusion from communal burial grounds. If the non-Christian character of the burials is accepted, it should be clarified their dating is later than the grave-free pagan period of Pliska. The cemetery as a whole was in use in the tenth-eleventh century.

PIC.10 has the most peculiar location. The grave is in the north-western corner of the pentagonal tower No.2 by its juncture with the main wall. The towers of the southern and western gates of the stone fortification were also reused after the Byzantine interferences dated by coins of John I Tzimiskes (969-976) and Basil II (976-1026). However, these gates were transformed into dwellings and PIC.10 is the only example for funerary appropriation of fortification towers in Pliska. The possible adult male was placed in supine position and oriented N-S without any grave goods. The body was missing the skull (decapitation Type II) and the bones of the lower leg

were crossed. According to the written description by Zahariev, the displaced tibiae and fibulae were 0,55m away from the skeleton suggesting mutilation Type I, although the very unclear photography may show the legs being only tied.

The other burial labelled pagan is PIC.20. Another adult male is in simple isolated pit, supine extended position and orientation SE-NW. The grave goods, found on the either side of the legs include horse harness with bridle, round stirrups, buckles, and other ferrous objects and a whetstone. Such items are fairly common among nomad and semi-nomad societies, including in burial contexts and are likely dated to eleventh century. The cadaver was subject to peri mortem mutilation Type II cutting of the lower legs. Very interesting moment is the juxtaposition of equestrian artefacts for the human legs and their targeted removal from the actual body.

These two burials are very similar in their uniqueness. Naturally, the main commonality is the physical damage to the body. Moreover, this corporal action is amplified through spatial forms of exclusion like separate placement in the topography and differing orientation from one another and the grave rows in the main cemetery.

The following deviant burials from the cemetery by the southern fortification wall form a group of their own, spatially (especially PIC.29 and PIC.30) and typologically.

PIC.29 is in a roughly shaped simple pit oriented W-E and without inventory. The skeleton is in prone position, the arms are possibly tied beneath the body and the legs are extended. The skull was facing north.

The proximate W-E oriented grave PIC.30 is in a rectangular pit with several stones on the sides. The juvenile male is in prone extended position with the arms under the body and possibly tied. No grave goods were discovered.



The last from the group is PIC.33. This is another burial in a simple grave pit with orientation W-E and without grave goods. The body was placed in prone position with the right shoulder slightly turned upwards. The left leg was bent at the knee and placed over the right one. The legs were beneath the abdomen/pelvis area, possibly tied.

All three burials are poor and fairly similar in treatment belonging to Type I of the prone positioned sample. The slight differences in the position of the heads could be attributed to negligence during disposal. There are indications for tied limbs in all of them further adding to their low-standings nature. Anthropological data for sex and age is available in just one instance and despite falling in line with the general trend for prone burials is not entirely representative.

### 2.4.3. Cemetery by the Eastern Gate of the Inner City

The third burial ground where deviant burial practices were recorded was excavated much later. It was identified by Yanko Dimitrov following the development of agricultural drainage in the area and led him to five consecutive research campaigns summarized in his publication. The cemetery (marked in light blue) is

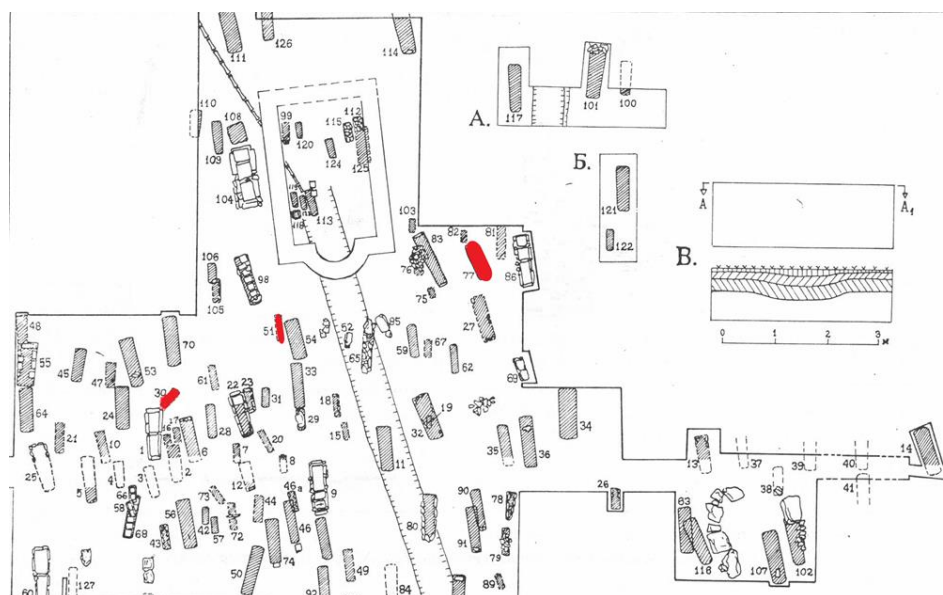


Figure 54 Plan of the cemetery by the eastern gate of the Inner City in Pliska with deviant burials marked in red

located in proximity to the so-called building No.32 and just outside the main eastern gate of the Inner City. During the excavations some hundred thirty-two graves were uncovered. The cemetery had its own chapel within which ten of the graves were unearthed. Dimitrov extrapolates that in its entirety the site covers up to 4.5 decares and more than a thousand graves of people from all demographic groups. The cemetery was active from the late tenth century throughout the eleventh century.

The three deviant burials are found close to the small church on its eastern side. None of them could be considered excluded. As it will be demonstrated below, in all three cases the graves were probably reopened, thus the spatial integration in the graveyard should not be surprising. Another peculiarity that may have significance here is the distinctive age profile of the individuals, all from the category *infans* II.

The southernmost grave is POE.30. It is a simple pit deviating significantly to the north from the traditional W-E orientation. The body was in supine extended position. Silver earring was discovered to the right from the skull. Anonymous Byzantine coin *folis* class B with circulation dates between 1030 and 1042 was found on the chest. The skull exhibits traces of decapitation with the mandible turned to the opposite side and the poorly preserved cranium on top of it. The dislocation occurred in the normal anatomical position of the head.

To the southeast from the apse is located grave POE.51. The child is buried in a simple pit with standard W-E orientation and no grave goods. The deviant rite in place here is a combination of two forms. The left femur and right tibia are missing (mutilation type II) and two stone slabs are placed on the body (fixation type I). One of the stones is on the chest and the other is substitute fixation for the missing femur.

Last but not least, grave POE.77 is the just north from the chapel, almost in line with its apse. Another subadult burial in a simple pit, oriented W-E and without

inventory. Here is again mutilation and fixation are combined. The left femur is placed on the chest close to the skull, which is also displaced according to Dimitrov. The right tibia and fibula are also displaced to the south, but this is not necessarily intentional. Then, a large stone slab is placed in the expected anatomical position of the displaced left femur in yet another substitute fixation.

To summarize, these three burials are relatively close to each other and belong to individuals from the same age group. Also, they demonstrate relatively high correlation between different deviant burial practices. In this respect particularly close are POE.51 and POE.77, which combine substitute fixation and mutilation on the exact same body part. Even if we consider the slabs being placed under the legs during the funerals, this is still very unusual choice predicting the dislocation or removal of this particular body parts. The displacement over rather intact skeleton in POE.77 and the presence of the remaining long bones in POE.51 indicate this mutilation must have happened in stages of advanced skeletonization, thus the graves were likely reopened sometime after the funerals. If this is the case, it is not impossible for the burials to have been selected during deliberate and parallel reopening for *post mortem* interventions.

In general, all forms of deviant burial practices are represented around Pliska.

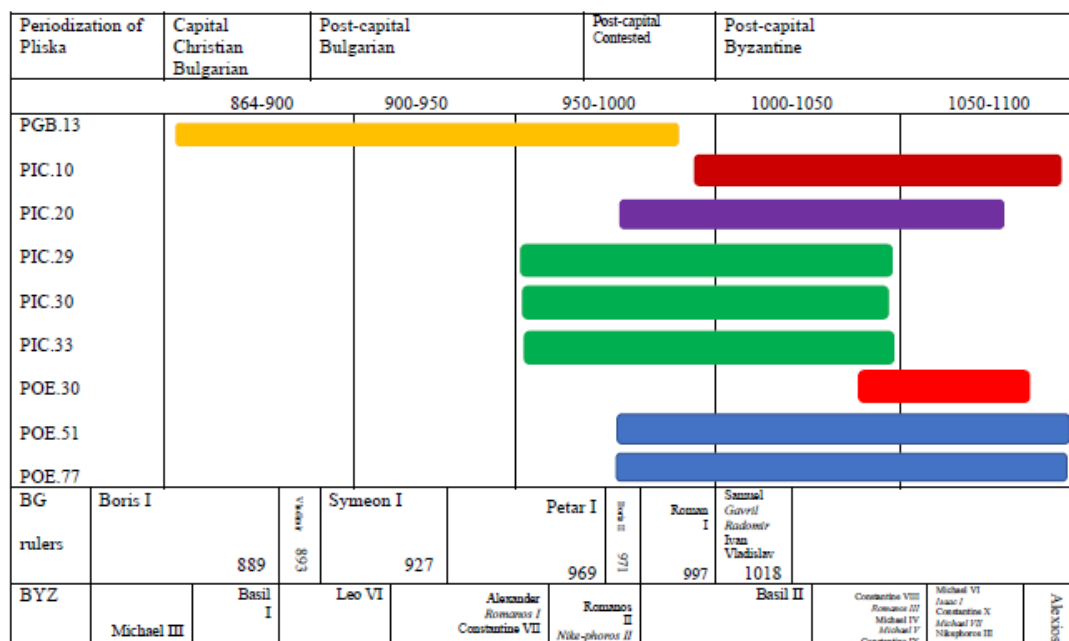


Figure 55 Relative chronological sequence of the deviant burials from the mortuary landscape of Pliska

They appear in combinations on the level of the single grave or the overall burial ground. Their earliest and most dominant manifestation are the prone burials transitioning from Type II.A (combined with decapitation) to Type I. Anyway, consistency of the preferred custom or their combination develops in each separate cemetery. This pattern crystallizes if we consider graves PIC.10 and PIC.20 as outsiders to their closest cemetery. The differences between sites are also evident when the limited data regarding age and sex is considered. As shown on the chronological table below, the end of the tenth - first half of the eleventh century could be seen as the peak period for deviant burials in Pliska. Since the temporal framework could not be reconstructed with greater precision, this pattern may reflect customary choice among communities and kinship groups co-existing in the urban space.

## **2.5.      *Trnjane***

Trnjane is a village near Požarevac in north central Serbia. Its origin is relatively recent with the first references to the village are from eighteenth century Ottoman registries. In its territory, however, a large medieval cemetery was excavated between 1975 and 1978 by a team from the National Museum in Belgrade led by Gordana Marjanović-Vujović.<sup>178</sup> The settlement (or perhaps settlements) associated with the burial ground was not localized, but the rustic character of the inhabited landscape is well established. This rural cemetery is more than 30km to the southwest from the important medieval town Braničevo on the Danube and demarcates the extent of the Iron Gates concentration with deviant burials.

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<sup>178</sup> Gordana Marjanović-Vujović, *Trnjane*.

The cemetery is not completely explored, even though 373 graves were excavated. Marjanović-Vujović expects a total number of up to 800 burials. Objects, mostly jewellery, were found in 136 of these contexts. The traditional W-E orientation with its seasonal variations to north and south is observed, and the vast majority of the graves is placed in supine extended position. The simple grave pits were dug in relatively regular rows with two clusters with higher density and in the northern and southern section. The burial ground has been in use for approximately hundred and fifty years and is dated between the end of the eleventh and early thirteen centuries.

The site has one of the largest concentrations of deviant burials in the entire database. The fourteen examples and yet they equal only 3.75% from the sample here. The distribution of the deviant burials is mainly in the central part of the excavated area. Notably, they are surrounding from three sides the big unstudied section in the west. Deviant burials are noticeable in the narrow central zone, which is characterized by rather low density and seems to fill the space between the two main clusters. In a



Figure 56 Plan of the Trnjane cemetery with deviant burials marked in red

kind of dispersion from there, several deviant burials are encircling the southern knot

from its north-western and eastern margins. The westernmost extent of the archaeological site is also defined by several deviant graves in line.

The first burial of interest (Trn.22) is specifically highlighted by Marjanović-Vujović (1984, 68) as an example for intentional intervention and belief in vampirism. The adult female is placed in simple pit along the W-E axis. The body is supine with legs extended and the arms on the chest. No grave goods were found. The right foot was cut above the ankle joint and missing (mutilation Type II).

Another mutilation burial but from Type I is Trn.46. The simple grave is oriented W-E. No grave goods were present. The body of a male from the *adultus* age category was placed supine extended with arms on the abdomen. The tibia and fibula from his lower left leg are displaced by the femur and the pelvis.

Trn.52 is another burial in simple pit with normative orientation without grave goods. The individual was an adult male. The skeleton is supine extended, but it exhibits evidence for subsequent disturbance. The skull was placed on its side with face to the north by the left shoulder (decapitation Type III). The long bones from the left arm are displaced and crossed just next to the skeleton (mutilation type I).

In grave Trn.56 is buried a female individual from the age group *juvenilis*. No objects were discovered in the standard grave pit. The body is also placed in the regular supine position with the head to the west, but the long bones of the left leg have been dislocated. The tibia and fibula were placed by the pelvis and the left femur in a familiar form of mutilation type I.

Next is Trn.112. The deceased is placed supine in a simple pit with orientation SW-NE. The arms are on the chest. The body is of an adult male. On the left hand was found a cast bronze ring with decorated hexagonal bezel. Rings are found on forty-six graves in Trnjane and similar solid rings made from bronze were discovered

in nearly half of them. On the right side of the skull was found a copper earring with openwork drop. Three more such earrings were discovered in Trnjane. The remaining two have been found in female graves No.58 and 309, but earrings were found in six other graves of adult males and always on the right side of the skulls. The lower legs are displaced with the articulated bones are placed obsolete with orientation N-S by the right femur (mutilation type I).

Another mutilation type I is Trn.113. The grave is again rather poor – simple pit, W-E orientation, no grave goods. The body of an adult male is placed in supine extended position. The dislocated body part is the right hand, which in its articulated anatomical order is placed in opposition to the rest of the arm with orientation E-W.

The next example for the same kind of mutilations is found in Trn.133. In this funerary context, an elderly (over 60 years old) woman laid supine, with legs extended and arms on the shoulders. The grave was again a simple rectangular pit, but the orientation was NW-SE. No grave goods were discovered. The articulated bones from the left foot were dislocated by the right knee.

A bit similar is the situation in Trn.156. The simple pit followed the standard orientation W-E and contained the remains of younger (juvenilis) female in supine position without any grave goods. The left foot bones were displaced and found articulated by the left knee.

In Trn.170 the deceased was an adult male. His remains were placed in supine position, legs extended and arms to the shoulder (left) and the abdomen (right). This is another poor grave. The taphonomic anomaly is observed in the dislocation of the proximal humerus over the chest. One possibility for this rearrangement could be the rapid pressure in this direction caused by the collapse of the pit wall or a piece from burial container. However, there are no recorded indications for this in the cross



section or the fill of the grave. Also, the preserved articulation of the rib cage and the clavicle evident in the photo may suggest that the displacement was indeed a single targeted event.

Trn.196 has identical grave characteristics in terms of shape, orientation, and lack of grave goods. The adult female was buried supine, and her articulated left hand was placed to the other side of the body, to the right from the pelvis. Also, the left radius and ulna were absent from the grave. The combination of displaced and missing arm bones are rare and are categorized here as mutilation burials type IV.

The human remains from Trn.212 belong to an adolescent woman placed on her back with extended legs and arms crossed on the chest. The layout of the grave is quite standard: simple pit with W-E orientation. The burial is another example for mutilation type I. The right-hand bones were displaced over the left knee. Among them was found a cast bronze ring with open ends and oval bezel. The ornamental motif is linear animal image. The animal is a quadruped with pronounced head, neck and tale. Marjanović-Vujović identifies it as a lion. In Trnjane three more rings with similar casting and ornamentation were unearthed. Rings of similar production technique and different animal imagery (eagle) are known from two more graves in Trnjane.

Next is Trn.230. The grave represents a simple pit and W-E orientation. The deceased was an adult woman placed supine with her arms in the abdomen area. There was a bronze bracelet on the left hand. These bracelets are relatively common with more than twenty objects from the same type discovered across the Trnjane cemetery. The position of her legs is peculiar. The lower left leg is displaced almost diagonally beneath the left femur. The right leg is bent at the knee over the left leg, thus covering the femur and almost touching the upper extremity of the dislocated

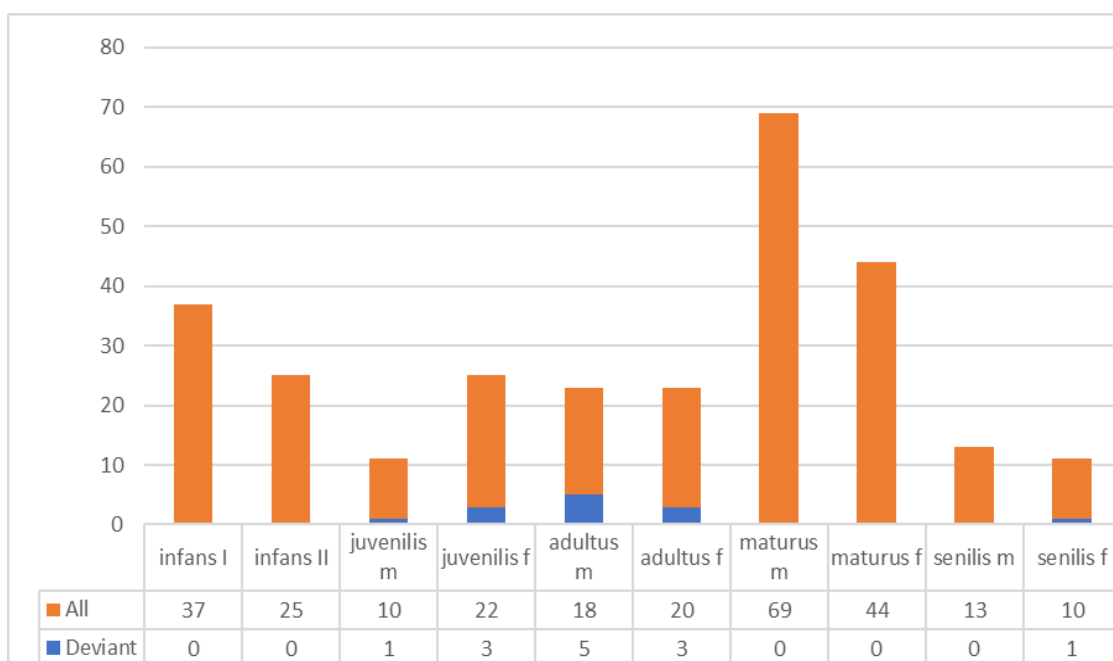
tibia. There is a fair chance that the dislocation might not be caused by human intervention, but since there are no supporting evidence this burial was provisionally included in the database.

The possible mutilation could have inspired the imitation of flexed position for the lower legs thus covering the amputated left leg. Such position with only one bent leg is in three more graves, two female (No. 155 and 193) and one male (No.326). Flexed position was also recorded in three more female burials (No. 33, 152, and 344).

Grave Trn.232 is a simple pit with the body of adolescent male in supine extended position with arms on the chest. There were no grave goods. The postcranial skeleton is oriented W-E and the severed skull is placed on its side and facing east on the chest.

Finally, grave Trn.374 is another simple pit with W-E orientation and no grave goods. The male individual of unspecified age is laid supine extended. The articulated right feet bones are displaced under the humerus of the same leg (mutilation type I).

Keeping in mind that the sample is inevitably incomplete, the age and sex characteristics of the deviant burials compared to the overall picture in Trnjane are the following. Males and females are equally selected for differential treatment with



seven individuals from each sex. This is nearly the same ratio as for the general stats of 53% males and 47% females on the site. The situation gets more nuanced when the age variation (summarized in the chart below) is considered.

There is apparent mismatch between the general mortality pattern and the group of deviant graves. Moreover, the deviant burials appear almost entirely among adolescent and adult individuals with the notable exception of one female in very advanced age. Adult males are the group most likely to receive deviant treatment, while the otherwise equivalent value among females is spread between juvenile and adult women. Grave goods are found only in three deviant graves from Trnjane, but they are all equally distributed among these same demographic subgroups.

The observed deviant customs in Trnjane are only mutilation and decapitation. They are coupled within the same grave only once (Trn.52). By far the most dominant form is the mutilation and particularly type I characterized by the displacement of various body parts. The level of articulation and the occasional find *in situ* in this mutilation indicate that most likely these interventions were done *peri mortem* and possibly around the funerary event. Perhaps the only instance of intentional displacement of bones after decomposition is again the case of Trn.52.

There are several repeating elements that should be outlined. First, is the amputation of one foot (usually the left) and its displacement in the area of the knees. Similar pattern is observed in the hand amputations, which are displaced either by the knee or in reversed position at their expected anatomical area. Second, is the particular treatment of long leg bones. Their displacement is usually a rearrangement of the extended position recorded in most normative and several deviant graves. Some imitation of the flexed position as counterpoint to the rest of the supine body could be seen in Trn.112 and especially Trn.230. In other cases, like in Trn.46 and Trn.56, the

amputated lower leg is moved by the body up to the pelvis. Finally, the two type III decapitations Trn.52 and Trn.232. In the former case it is possible that the skull removal occurred at the same time as the mutilation during the grave reopening. For the latter, the *peri mortem* decapitation is far more likely. Nonetheless, both skulls were found placed on their side, one in the area of the left shoulder and the other on the chest possibly held by the hands.

## 2.6. Other case studies

### 2.6.1. Peripheral position in the biritual cemeteries on the Lower Danube

As it has been noted previously, spatial isolation and exclusion from communal burial grounds is one of the ways in which deviant burials are segregated. When dealing with long-term processes on a wide geographical scale is easy to forget about some regional specifics and overlook important details. As several case studies were analyzed in greater detail to offer thick descriptions on single site manifestations of the phenomenon, it is appropriate to pay special attention to this spatial aspect too.

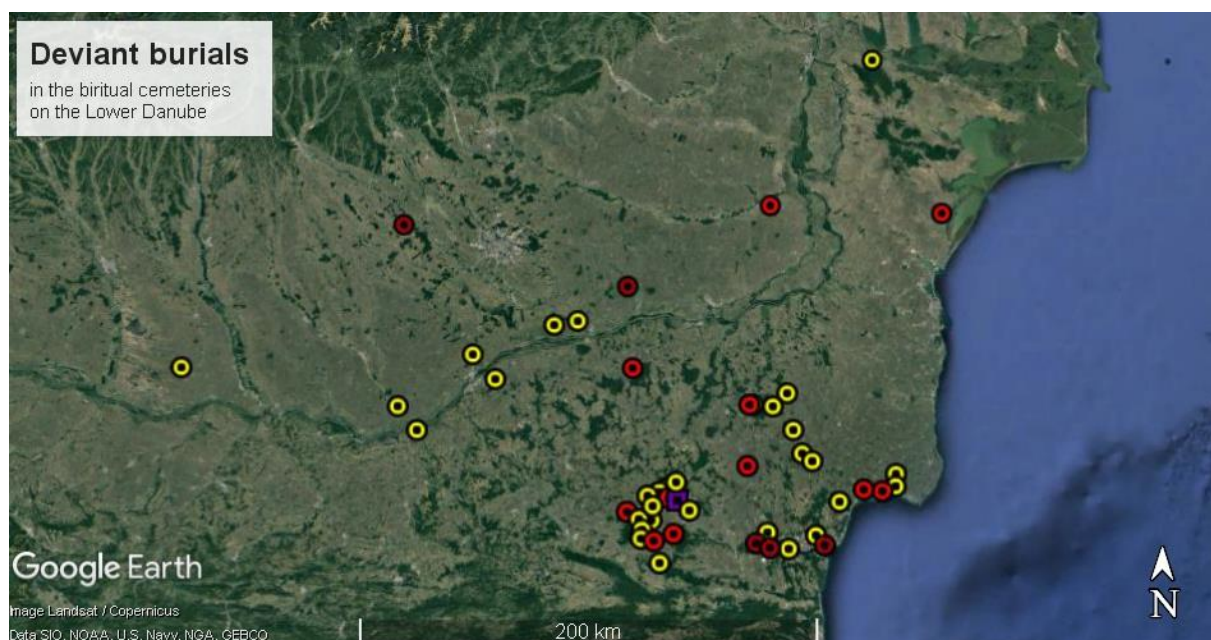


Figure 58 Map of known biritual cemeteries on the Lower Danube: Pliska (purple), biritual cemeteries with deviant burials (red), biritual cemeteries without deviant burials (yellow)

While the geographical distribution of all distinctive types of deviant burials is crucial in the analysis of diachronic general patterns, this section will focus on the region of the Lower Danube between the seventh and mid-ninth century. The discrete set of mortuary sites left by the pagan population of the Bulgar Khanate offers an ideal ground for observation on spatial patterns in the geography and internal topography (or in the term coined by Reynolds, microgeography) of early medieval sites with deviant burials.

The biritual cemeteries are one of the most characteristic archaeological footprints from pagan mortuary behaviour. The ratio between cremations and inhumations varies from site to site. Another important difference with cemeteries from other parts of the Balkan peninsula is the consistent N-S orientation for the majority of the inhumations, especially valid south from the Danube. Surrounding the biritual cemeteries are multiple cremation cemeteries. The principal concentration of such biritual cemeteries is in the Lower Danube, although several sites from the early ninth century are identified in Transylvania. Anyway, since no deviant burials are known from this group so far, they will be excluded from the present survey.

Generally, the early medieval cemeteries are less archaeologically studied in Romania than in Bulgaria, a discrepancy explainable by insufficient archaeological recognition and some nationalistic bias. It is very telling that Topola and Platonesti, the two largest biritual cemeteries in both countries, are still awaiting the completion of archaeological research and proper publication on them. With this precondition in mind, a brief look on the map will show three main clusters. To the north biritual cemeteries are found on both banks of the Danube. Another concentration is formed in the coastal zone of the western Black Sea with extensions into the hinterland.

Perhaps the most critical one is spread around Pliska, the political centre of the Bulgar polity.

Deviant burials appear in all three zones of biritual cemeteries. While most of the sites are rather dispersed, the cases where larger number (more than three) was identified are somewhat concentrated. This is above all the coastal Black Sea cluster with the key sites Devnya 1 and Devnya 3, as well as Varna 1. The other two significant findspots are north from the Danube, Izvoru and Sultana.

What is the situation on a closer look into the layout of the various communal burial grounds?

Sultana is a perfect example for the peripheral position of deviant graves. All recorded instances are in the outer section of the cemetery, especially close to the northern

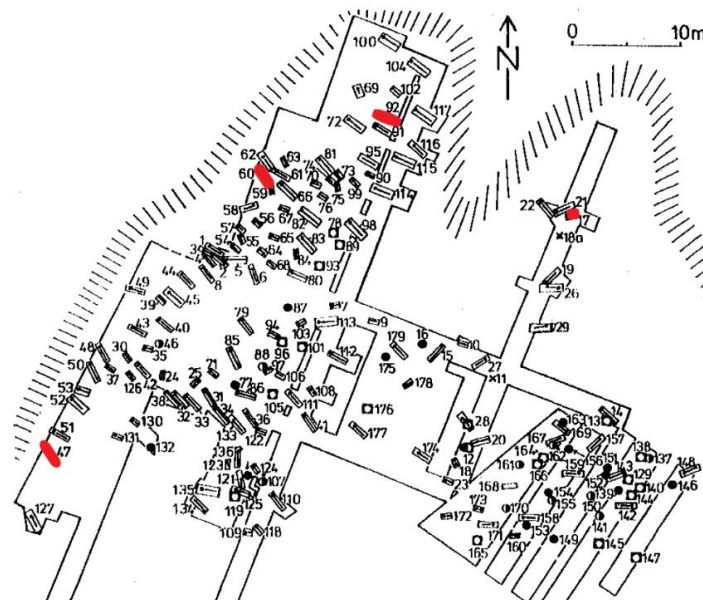


Figure 59 Plan of the biritual cemetery Sultana with deviant burials marked in red

downslope of the terrain. Even when a deviant burial could be considered part of densely occupied zone like Slt.60, it is still effectively marking its limit.



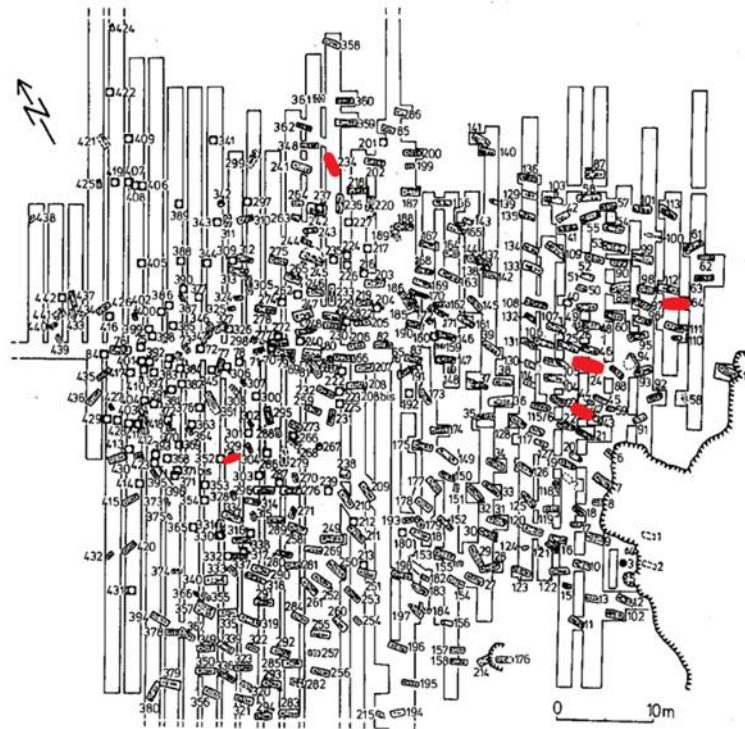


Figure 60 Plan of the biritual cemetery Izvorul with deviant burials marked in red

The situation in Izvorul is similar. There is a higher frequency of deviant burials in the South-Eastern periphery of the cemetery. Yet, they are not as isolated as their counterparts in Sultana. Interesting is the situation with the prone burial Izv.234. The grave is in the north-western section of the cemetery and surrounded by graves with different orientation. Furthermore, they are still spatially distanced, especially when the overall density of the cemetery and its central cluster is considered. On the other side of this densely occupied lot is another prone burial, Izv.327. Despite the initial impression for its higher inclusion, the situation is still different. The first visible difference is again in the orientation of Iz.327 and the nearest inhumation rows. Second, the grave still falls in the empty space between two clusters oriented to the northwest (dominated by cremations) and southwest (dominated by inhumations in rows). Finally, the recorded stratigraphic sequence of Izv.327 clearly reveals the



superposition of a later cremation context. In this case the vertical and horizontal stratigraphy complement each other and is only logical to consider if deviant burials with higher inclusion within communal burial grounds were not simply absorbed during the natural expansion of the cemetery over time.

Before elaborating on this possibility, few more cases illustrating the tendency for peripheral positioning of deviant burials will be included. Indeed, in some of them this pattern is rather subtle. For instance, in Capuil Viilor – Histria the two examples are clearly peripheral to individual clusters but the lack of archaeologically confirmed

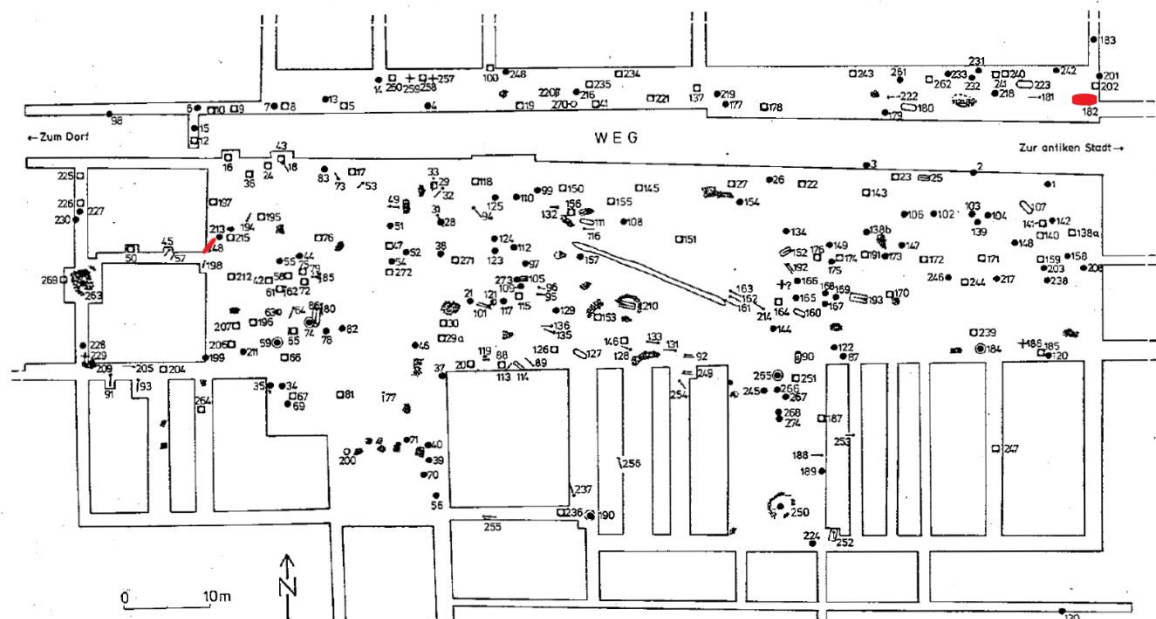


Figure 61 Plan of the biritual cemetery Capuil Viilor-Histria with deviant burials marked in red

border of the funerary site makes it impossible to determine their place in the general layout.

In the case of another biritual cemetery from the Black Sea coast, Varna 1, the peripheral position of the three deviant burials is recognizable against the concentration of the dominant cremation rite and the decreasing density to the north-west of the site.

The biritual cemeteries from the Bulgarian lands conform to the tendency for expulsion of unwanted death to the peripheries of the cemetery. The circumstantial

evidence for later inclusion of peripheral deviant burials into an expanding burial ground are arguably present in the key sites Devnya-1 and Devnya-3. Still, the spatial arrangement is nothing short of obvious in Kyulevcha.

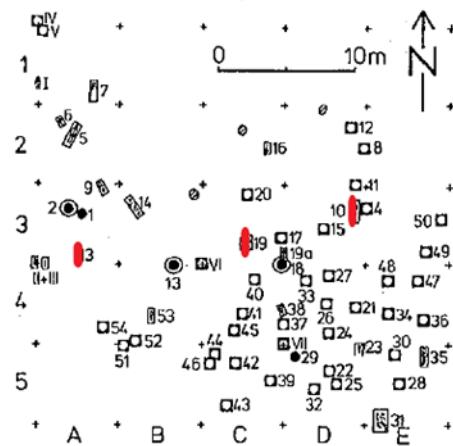


Figure 62 Map of the biritual cemetery Varna-1 with deviant burials indicated in red.

The western border of the cemetery is detected through the empty space between the final row of graves and the elongated mass grave No.80. The mass grave is outlining a special section, which includes the disintegration Kyu.81, two poor male graves with non-normative orientation for the cemetery, and the dual (man and a woman) grave No.84. Grave No.28 is another deviant, a decapitation type I. The unburnt skull is within the main funerary domain, but it lies isolated in the space between the inhumation row and the cremation cluster.

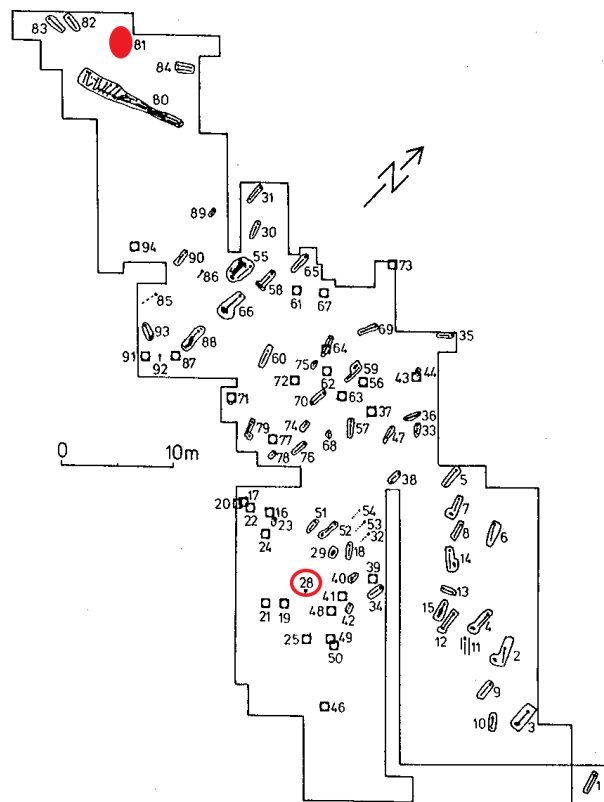


Figure 63 Map of the biritual cemetery in Kyulevcha with indicated deviant burials

The dichotomy between cremations and inhumations from Varna and Kyulevcha in fact introduces the spatial dimensions of another aspect of this matter. The presence of single decapitation burials from Type I within the cremation cemeteries is so far observed only north of the Danube, but it should be expected elsewhere too. The few instances of decapitated unburnt skulls on sites like Constanta-Castelu, Sihleanu or Tichilesti is already a very strong indication for differential treatment. However, in all these three sites the outsider label attached to the individual graves is quite literally expressed in their spatial positions in the cemeteries, as shown below.

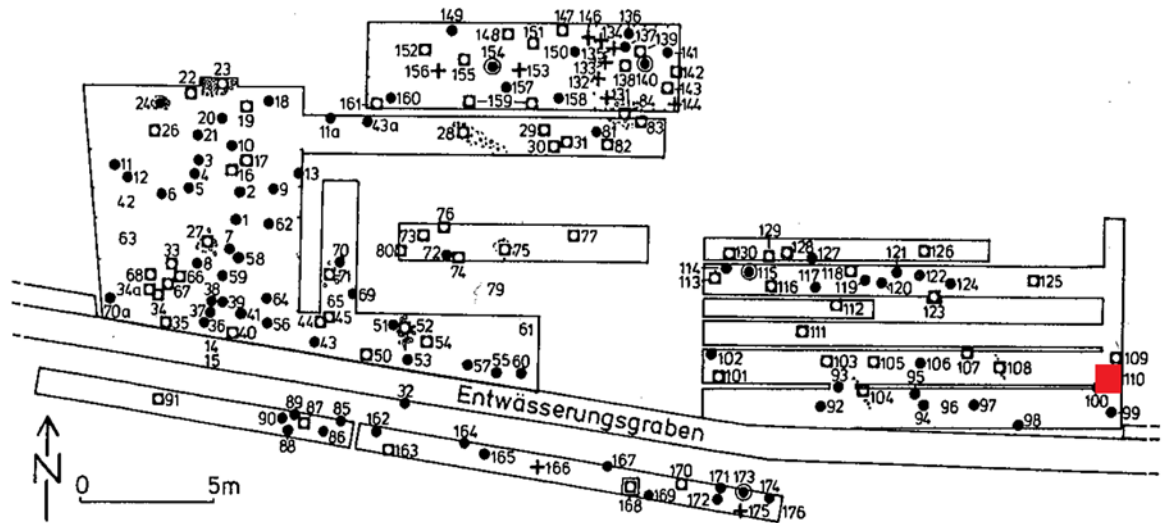


Figure 64 The cremation cemetery Constanta-Castelu with the deviant burial marked in red

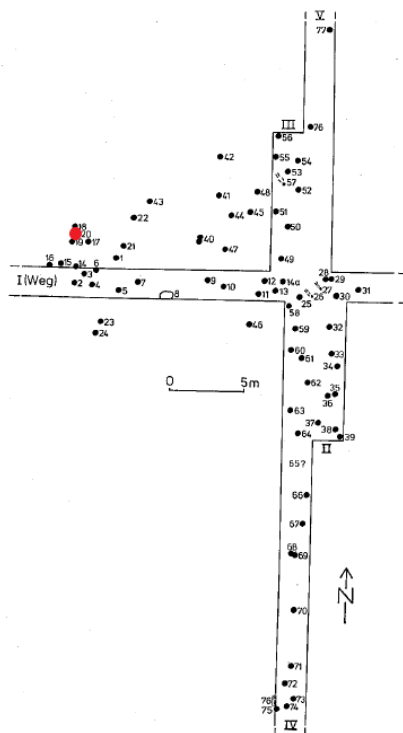


Figure 65 The cremation cemetery Sihleanu with the deviant burial marked in red

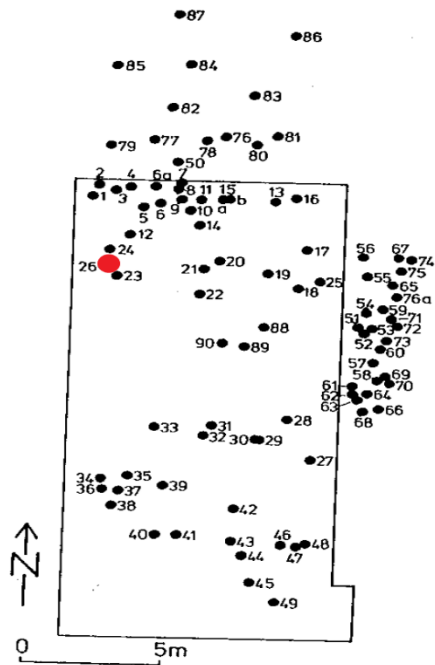


Figure 66 The cremation cemetery Tichilesti with the deviant burial marked in red

Perhaps similar attitude could be seen in the unburnt skull placed in a ninth century jar and buried isolated in a prehistoric mound from Puszta Bucova in Banat, north from the Danube. Unfortunately, the cemetery from Preslav where a skull was similarly placed over an urn with cremated remains is minimally explored and any

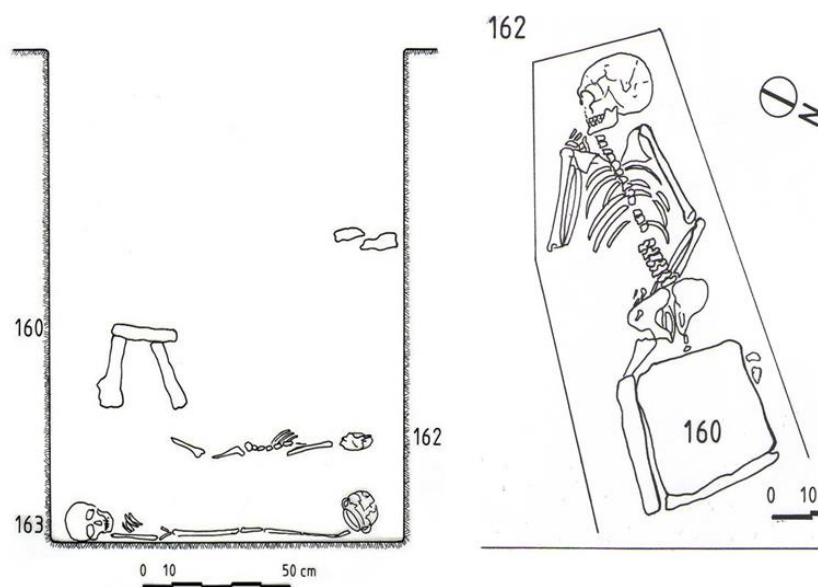


Figure 67 Superposition of graves 160, 162, and 163(deviant burial) in the biritual cemetery Balchik.

conclusions about its placement are too speculative.

One final point is again related to superposition in packed cemeteries. This case is from Balchik on the Black Sea coast. The prone burial Blc.162 is in the middle of a very clear stratigraphic relationship, which was used for the periodization of the cemetery. The three burials are in part of the cemetery with medium density. The early grave No.163 belongs to the early phase from the seventh century and must have been relatively isolated. The female from the deviant Blc.162 was buried during the second phase in the first half of the eight century. Finally, the cremation grave No.160 was constructed over the area of her flexed legs towards the end of the second or during the third final phase of the cemetery. This situation illustrates the shifting positional relations within funerary landscapes. Nonetheless, the consistent pattern for exclusion through peripheral placement of deviant burials demonstrates on one side the clear situational representation of social denial and on the other could be used as a marker for the horizontal expansion of cemeteries over time.

### **2.6.2. A post-battle mass grave: Kyulevcha**

All over the world more and more mass graves from varying historical periods are archaeologically examined. This trend experienced particular increase in the last decade and bears particular ethical and moral dimensions, especially sensitive for times not so detached from our own, sometimes even within our living memory.

Mass graves can be truly considered among the most striking divergence from regular funerary customs, especially in cultural attitude favoring individual burials. Indeed, the number of interments is blatantly obvious characteristic of the phenomenon. Thus, the aggregation of dead bodies should be the definitive first step

for recognition and understanding of the mass grave. It is important to distinguish mass graves from collective burials. Current forensic concepts define criminal mass grave as a burial site containing three or more victims, but this cannot be transmitted to archaeological practice.<sup>179</sup> Strict agreement in archaeology on the matter is lacking, according to my knowledge. In my approach here, collective burials and mass graves are rather arbitrarily separated by accepting the latter as the deposition of six or more individual simultaneously in a single feature, while the former was applied to graves containing up to five individuals without strict criteria on the timing of interment.

Besides the previously discussed ring-shaped mass grave from Devnya, five more medieval mass graves are known so far. Only one of them near Kyulevcha was sufficiently published and is selected as representative case study for burial plausibly linked to military activity. The remaining examples originate from settlements excavated on the territory of present-day Bulgaria and Romania. Apparently, the mass graves do not reveal a particularly uniform pattern. Hopefully, the advancement in the post-excavation analysis of the unpublished cases and any future discoveries will refine the picture. Unfortunately, the practicalities of dealing with exceptional mass death have not changed even today. Satellite imagery has revealed arrangements for multiple disposals in elongated trenches dug nearby existing burial grounds, for example by the Behesht Masoumeh in the Iranian city of Qom during the outbreak of the global coronavirus pandemic or in the village of Manhush during the battle of Mariupol in the recent Russian invasion in Ukraine.<sup>180</sup>

<sup>179</sup> Élisabeth Anstett and Jean-Marc Dreyfus, *Human remains and identification: Mass violence, genocide and the 'forensic turn'* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 169-171.

<sup>180</sup> Julian Borger, Satellite images show Iran has built mass graves amid coronavirus outbreak, *The Guardian*, 12.03.2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/12/coronavirus-iran-mass-graves-qom>; Mariupol: Satellite images suggest mass graves dug near besieged city, *BBC*, 21.04.2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61183056>



The eight-ninth century biritual cemetery in Kyulevcha was excavated in 1971-1974 by Zhivka Vazharova who also published the results.<sup>181</sup> The mass grave is in the western periphery belonging to a group of graves separated from the rest of the necropolis. No intercutting between graves was detected in the cluster and on the site in general.

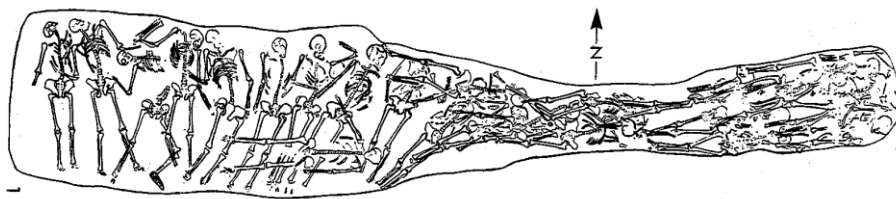


Figure 68 Plan of the mass grave No.80 from the biritual cemetery in Kyulevcha

The grave has irregular rectangular shape. The length of the pit is 10, 2m with depth around 0, 6m. The pit is oriented W-E and has initial width 1, 7m, but suddenly narrows down around the centre and is only 0, 65m wide in its eastern end. The

<sup>181</sup> The following description and interpretation are based on rectified data from her primary publication [Zhivka Vazharova] Живка Въжарова, *Славяни и прабългари*, 126-133, supplemented by [Georgi Ikononov] Георги Икономов, “Палеопатологични изследвания на колективно погребение на 26 българи от края на VIII век” [Paleopathological studies on the collective burial of 26 Bulgars from the end of 8<sup>th</sup> century], in: *История, изкуство и култура на ранносредновековна България* [History, Art and Culture of Early Medieval Bulgaria] ed. Vasil Gyuzelev [Васил Гюзелев] (Sofia: Narodna Prosveta, 1981), 244-251

recorded plan of the pit, particularly the angle of the narrowing to the north, gives some ground to believe that the rectangular western section was initially dug out. The eastern enlargement was necessary when it was realized that the space available will not be enough to contain all victims. This change indicates that the intended structure was dug in great haste and even had to be finished faster than anticipated.

In the mass grave were disposed the bodies of 25 individuals. The demographic profile of the group is very consistent. All the bodies in the mass grave represent males in their twenties, or in other words belonging to age categories *adultus* I or *juvenis* II.

Observations on the pathology of the skeletal remains reveal evidence on another common thing between the individuals. All skeletons have cut marks and traces from *peri mortem* injuries suggesting the violent combat circumstances of their death. Two men had suffered particularly severe deaths. The first of them, individual No.3, was hit by an arrow at least once with the arrowhead remaining inside the body in the pelvis area. The arrowhead was the only piece of attacking weaponry found inside the mass grave and it is bent from the impact. However, this injury was not the immediate cause of death, although probably decreased the fighting capabilities of the individual. The body was cut into two pieces by a sword or other cutting blade at the waist. Another man, individual No. 9, was decapitated and his skull was found elsewhere in the grave.

The treatment of the deceased is also varied, probably due to the rush in the burial activities. The position of the bodies can be described as supine, but almost all skeletons have variant positions of the limbs. Two skeletons (individuals No. 16 and 17) are placed on the side to maximize the use of space in the narrow half of the pitch.

Similarly, the orientation of the disposed bodies was adjusted to fit the grave structure. The individuals from the western end are placed according to the pagan norm following N-S orientation. The remaining victims are buried oriented E-W. Most of them are disposed in the narrow eastern half of the ditch, but one individual was placed on top of the skeletons in the western part. Particularly interesting is the position of skeleton No. 3 from the western group. The accepted orientation of the body is N-S in line with the rest. However, because of the characteristic pathology, the upper part of the body is placed by the lower skeleton and with diverging W-E orientation.

After examining the available plan and photos, an analysis of the stratigraphic relationship between the bodies confirms the observation that the disposal of the bodies started from the west to the east. The skeletons can be categorized into two groups. The western group is closer to the normative rites and there is less superposition between the skeletons, while the eastern had to be adjusted to the narrow side of the pit. The compression of the bodies in the eastern section and the findings from the western group described below can indicate difference in the importance of individuals from the two groups. This can serve to illustrate once again the incompleteness of the grave structure and the funeral custom itself.

The finds from the grave are of relatively high number and are associated with warrior culture in archaeology, thus demonstrating consistency with expected demographic and pathological profile of the deceased. The forty-one finds are not distributed equally and yet more than half of the skeletons were found with artifacts. Weaponry is not found in the mass grave, and this is not a surprise as the valuable metal items were almost always collected before burial. Exception is the single arrowhead discussed above. Five knives found around the bodies have primary tool

function, although they could be utilized as weapons. Several iron rings from mail armor, three iron S-shaped fire strikers, and stirrup elements are also found. The single piece of adornment is a simple bronze earring found by the skull of individual No.8.

The importance of belt decoration in the cultural context of various semi-nomad societies and early states like the Danubian Khanate has often been discussed. These finds are the main chronological indicator and are important signs of warrior identity, arguably used as military insignia. Hence, the discovered buckles and fittings made from copper alloy or iron are receiving most attention. The most outstanding specimen is the belt associated with individual No.3 due to its Avar-style bronze lyre-shaped buckle and bronze pendants and fittings.<sup>182</sup>

The discussion of the date and the historical interpretation of the mass grave in Kyulevcha are inevitably entangled. The typo-chronological analysis of the belt garnish from the mass grave dictates the debate. The proposed dating for the object varies between the late 8<sup>th</sup> century and the late 9<sup>th</sup> century<sup>183</sup>. However, the contextualization of the site makes it more likely to accept the earlier date for *terminus post quem* of the mass grave<sup>184</sup>. Usually, the mass grave is related to the campaign of Nicephore I Genik towards Pliska in 811. The main cemetery is contemporaneous to this historical episode, and the site itself was a visible landmark in use at the time of the burial. The deliberate decision to bury the fallen warriors near

<sup>182</sup> [Stanislav Stanilov] Станислав Станилов, “Памятники аварского типа в староболгарской культуре” [Avar-type artifacts in Bulgar culture], *Проблеми на прабългарската история и култура* 3 (1997): 195

<sup>183</sup> Ibidem, contra, Uwe Fiedler, *Studien*, 318

<sup>184</sup> [Kamen Stanev] Камен Станев, “Масов гроб 80 от Кюлевча-опит за историческа интерпретация” [Mass Grave No. 80 from Kyulevcha – an attempt for historical interpretation], *История* 5-6 (2008): 58-59. However, some of the arguments of the author like that the Byzantines were leaving their dead unburied after battle are presumptuous and exercises in logic based on written evidence.

communal burial ground is important. It is uncertain if the site selection is identity-related or simply this was the nearest necropolis to the battlefield. However, the treatment of the deceased suggests that they warriors were buried by their own side, but in great haste. This could confirm the information for fast advancement of the Byzantine army and the initial military struggle of the Bulgars against the invasion.

In terms of deviant burial customs this mass grave is very different from the one in Devnya-3. The variety and severity of applied deviant practices is lesser in Kyulevcha. The social status and identities are strikingly different, and the sex of the individuals is illustrating the point perfectly.

### **2.6.3. Burials in settlements**

Finding the dead in settlement features outside of consecrated burial grounds is a phenomenon ultimately linked to the concept of deviant burial practices. These special cases are simultaneously excluded from their community represented in the cemetery and present amid the inhabited space and the living. The ambiguity of their position could rarely be matched to strictly anthropological criteria for maltreatment as the ones proposed here. Arguably this is above all an issue of preservation and archaeological visibility, and sometimes is simply yet another example for insufficient research cooperation. Still, these non-normative funerary events offer another tangible connection to examine the continuum of mortuary behaviour. The case studies shall briefly outline the practice as a reminder that deviant burials are not a rigid norm, but an ensemble of meaningful arrangements in the symbolic interactions among social agents.

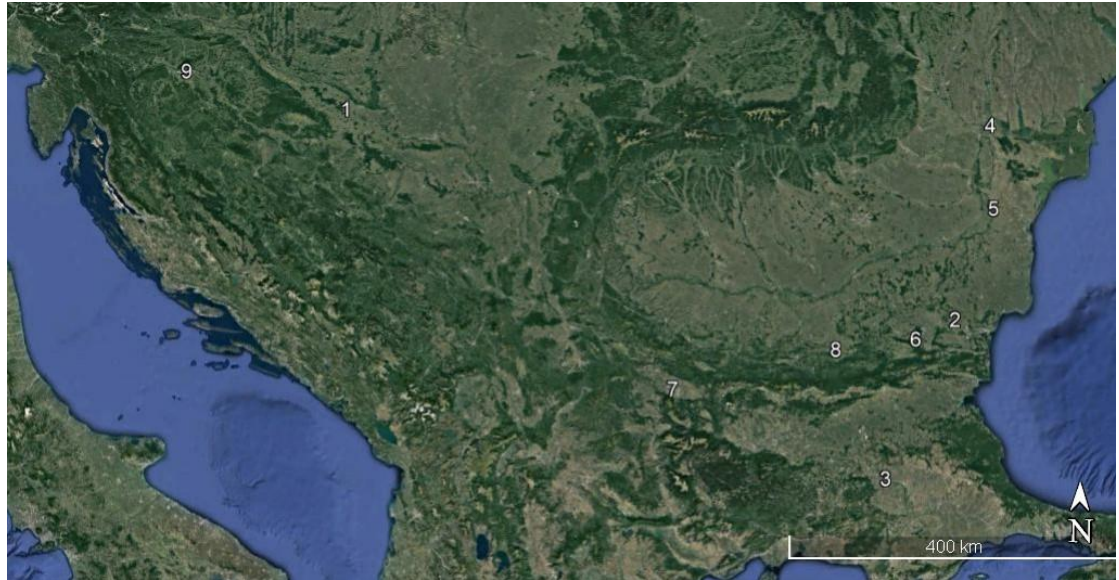


Figure 69 Map of the sites discussed in this section: 1. Čepinski Martinci, 2. Belogradets, 3. Hauza, 4. Dinogetia, 5. Capidava, 6. Preslav, 7. Sredets-Sofia, 8. Trapezitsa, Veliko Tarnovo, 9. Zagreb.



Figure 70 SU 6283 with human remains from Čepinski Martinci – Dubrava (after Siniša Krznar and Tatjana Tkalčec, *The identity*, 256)

The first example for human burial within the settlement is from the site Čepinski Martinci – Dubrava located in the historic region of Slavonia, modern-day Croatia.<sup>185</sup> During rescue excavation preceding the construction of the highway 5C, the remains from an early medieval open (rural?) settlement were found.<sup>186</sup> Among the excavated features were dwellings, pits, wells, etc.). The feature of interest is an

<sup>185</sup> Siniša Krznar and Tatjana Tkalčec, “The identity of the community and the identity of the individual. The burial of the deceased within the settlement in the Middle Ages in Northern Croatia,” *Ruralia* 11 (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2017): 256.

<sup>186</sup> Hrvoje Kalafatić, “Zaštitna istraživanja lokaliteta Čepinski Martinci-Dubrava na trasi autoceste Beli Manastir-Osijek-Svilaj 2007. i 2008. g.” (Rescue Excavations of the Čepinski Martinci-Dubrava site on the Beli Manastir-Osijek-Svilaj Motorway Route in 2007 and 2008), *Annales Instituti Archaeologici* 5 (2009): 22, fig. 1.

elongated pit of irregular shape (perhaps a trench?). Judging from the photo, this context is disturbing another roundish cut feature. The human remains were found in the narrow eastern section of the feature. The deceased was in supine position with flexed legs. The overall orientation of the body was east (head) – west (feet) with the bended knees pointing southwards.

The skeleton was identified as male individual with age of death between 35 and 50 years old, i.e., biological age on the borderline between *adultus* II or *maturus* I. Further anthropological examinations have shown that the man was approximately 171cm tall and had signs for advancing osteoarthritis on the hips, the right knee, and some vertebrae.<sup>187</sup> A charcoal sample found nearby was radiocarbon dated to Cal AD 660-810. There were no physical signs for deviant practices except the atypical orientation, but the position is known in Slavonia from one early medieval grave No.35 from Zvonimirovo-Veliko polje and is sometimes recorded among later unusual burials like VLB.83 and Trn.230.<sup>188</sup>

The next case was found during rescue archaeological excavations near Belogradets in north-eastern Bulgaria in 2020. Naturally, much of the post-excavation analysis is still ongoing, but some preliminary information is available.<sup>189</sup> The site was a large settlement enclosed by a ditch and timber wall. Due to the nature of the excavations, the site was studied only within a narrow strip of land, but it is clear that the settlement was occupied in the eight-ninth century and then in the tenth century expanded further to the north where a monumental stone building was erected.

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<sup>187</sup> Vlasta Vyroubal and Željka Bedić, *Rezultati antropološke analize ljudskog osteološkog materijala s nalazišta Donji Miholjac – Đanovci i Čepinski Martinci* [Results of the anthropological analysis of human osteological materials from the sites Donji Miholjac – Đanovci and Čepinski Martinci] (Unpublished report: Antropološki centar Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti Zagreb, 2015), 6-10.

<sup>188</sup> Siniša Krznar and Željka Bedić, „Neobičajeni ritus,“ 208.

<sup>189</sup> Personal observations and information provided by the PI of the site Yanko Dimitrov (National Archaeological Institute with Museum, Shumen branch).



The ditch was used for the disposal of multiple human and animal corpses, concentrated in the South-Eastern section of the excavated area, almost like in a mass grave. The majority of the human remains are found disarticulated, probably due to their exposure to open environment. Indicative deviant traits are recorded for several individuals. They include male pelvis and femurs placed supine and found together with earrings dated to the eight-ninth century. The preserved bones exhibited cut marks, thus the disintegration of the body in this case was intentional. Nearby, about 1m to the west, were found two bodies on different levels. The incomplete skeleton of a male individual was placed on higher level with orientation NE-SW after the body of a woman was thrown in the trench with her torso turned sideways in an unnatural manner. Her legs are possibly tied at the knees, but further anthropological examination is required. Two skulls consisting with Type I decapitations are also recorded, one of them placed on its base and the other on its right side.

The maltreatments and deviant characteristics of the bodies from Belogradets is intriguing to say the least and in many ways similar to the individual types of maltreatment known from the mass grave in Devnya. The fact that these two sites are only about 30km apart incites further comparisons. As already mentioned, this is a very recent find and its complete analysis will undeniably bring a fresh impetus in the study of deviant burial practices.

Somewhat related example is found in Thrace, not far from Adrianople. Again, during preventive archaeological work close to the modern Bulgarian-Turkish border in the Hauza locality was uncovered a multi-period site with human activity from the Neolithic until the medieval period. Part of the Roman Via Diagonalis, which remained a major road in the Middle Ages too, was also unearthed during the excavation. The point of interest for us is the portion from tenth, possibly early

eleventh, century rural settlement consisting of three sunken houses with rectangular layout and three deep (around 1.5m) round-shaped pits with fragmented pottery and querns.<sup>190</sup>

All three explored pits contained human remains. Unfortunately, the results of the excavation and the anthropological analysis (if done) are not sufficiently disseminated. Nevertheless, Pit 1 offers a particularly intriguing contrast to the burial from Čepinski Martinci – Dubrava. Two individuals were neglectfully disposed in the pit with the overall appearance of the skeletal contexts creating the impression for them being thrown away. The lower, central individual is supine with both arms outstretched and the flexed legs bent to the north. The second, northern individual is in superposition to the legs and left arm of the former. The torso is turned on its left



*Figure 71 The medieval Pit 1 with human remains from Hauza-Kapitan Andreevo*

side alongside the cut, the arms are kept together and possibly tied, while the legs are extended. The remaining two pits present more discernible evidence for deviant burial practices.

<sup>190</sup> [Vasil Nikolov, Viktoria Petrova, Tanya Hristova, Petar Leshtakov] Васил Николов, Виктория Петрова, Таня Христова, Петър Лешаков, “Пра- и протоисторически обреден комплекс при местността Хауза, Капитан Андреево, Свиленградско” [Pre- and protohistoric ritual complex near the Hauza locality, Kapitan Andreevo], *AOP* 2013 (2014), 70.

In pit 2 were located the remains of a subadult individual. The postcranial skeleton was lying supine on the bottom of the pit, while the skull was found some 0.6m above it in the fill. In addition to this decapitation, fixations are also represented in Hauza. The body of a grown individual was unearthed from pit 3. The deceased was lying on his back, but the legs were split in opposing direction, possibly another indication that the corpse was simply thrown away. The pelvis was covered by multiple stones of different size.

Despite the chronological difference and clearly closer association of the cases from Hauza with habitual maltreatment attested in the northern Balkans, some structural similarities (e.g., deposition context, body position, lack of grave goods) indeed can be found.

The examples covered so far are derived from allegedly rural settlement contexts. Towns in the Balkans are no stranger to Christian mortuary display, especially concentrated within the designated churchyards. However, the existence of placed funerary deposits in reference to the urban fabric and domestic space is seldom detected. Some archaeological contexts from the Lower Danube stand out in this respect and hint at the prospect for future discoveries.

The relevant burial deposits from Capidava and Dinogetia are recorded in rather vague manner. According to Petre Diaconu should be united in a Dobrogea-wide destruction horizon from the first half of the eleventh century and linked to Skylitzes-Cedren's information about Pecheneg massacres of the local population.<sup>191</sup> In the case of Capidava these discoveries belong to the final occupation layers of the site. Again, in Diaconu's opinion, the situation was repeated in Dervent, also

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<sup>191</sup> Petre Diaconu, "Despre pecenegi la Dunărea de Jos în prima jumătate a secolului al Xllea" [On Pechenegs in the Lower Danube region during the first half of the 11th c.], *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche* 18: 3 (1967): 470.

abandoned in the eleventh century. In this respect he mentions two decapitations burials in the debris of the fortress but without further details.

Indeed, the brief archaeological information hints at mass graves and collective burials resulting from the clearance of murder sites. In Capidava were identified the osteological remains of at least nine individuals and additional pelvic bones of unclear number of humans. From the nine distinguished individuals eight were adults and one was a subadult. They were thrown in three levels without distinguishable pattern in round (2,4x2,3m) pit. The various positions include prone and lateral disposal, as well as evidence for dismemberment. Noteworthy is the observation that the skull of the child together with several vertebrae were dislocated from the body, thus indicating a *peri mortem* decapitation.<sup>192</sup>

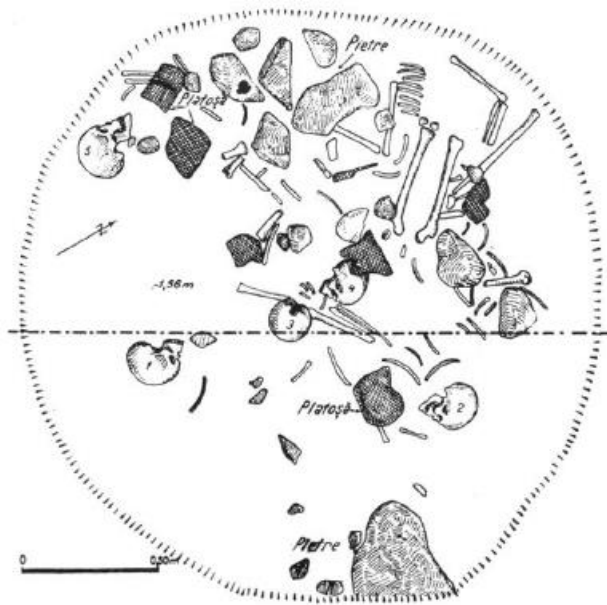


Figure 72 Drawing of the mass grave from Capidava – level 1 (after Grigore Florescu, Radu Florescu, Gloria Ceacalopol, “Săpăturile,” fig.1)

<sup>192</sup> Grigore Florescu, Radu Florescu, Gloria Ceacalopol, “Săpăturile arheologice de la Capidava / Les fouilles archéologiques de Capidava,” *Materiale și cercetări arheologice*, 8 (1962), 701.

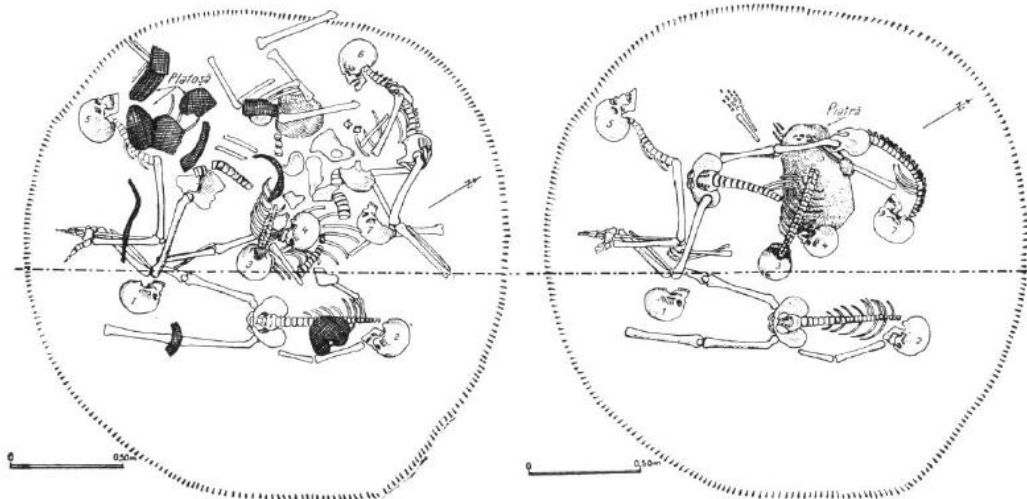
Fig. 2. — Planul sectorului A<sub>1</sub> — al doilea nivel.Fig. 3. — Planul sectorului A<sub>1</sub> — al treilea nivel.

Figure 73 Drawings of the mass grave from Capidava – levels 2 and 3 (after Grigore Florescu, Radu Florescu, Gloria Ceacalopol, “Săpăturile,” fig.2 and 3)

Around and between the bodies were found multiple stones resembling the fixation practices known from individual graves or Devnya-3. Overall, the treatment is consistent with the negligent disposal known from other deviant burials. The only finds were few pieces from ferrous chain mail dated by the researchers to the ninth-tenth century, thus suggesting slightly yet significantly earlier date than Diaconu's proposal.<sup>193</sup>

<sup>193</sup> Grigore Florescu, Radu Florescu, Gloria Ceacalopol, “Săpăturile,” 703.

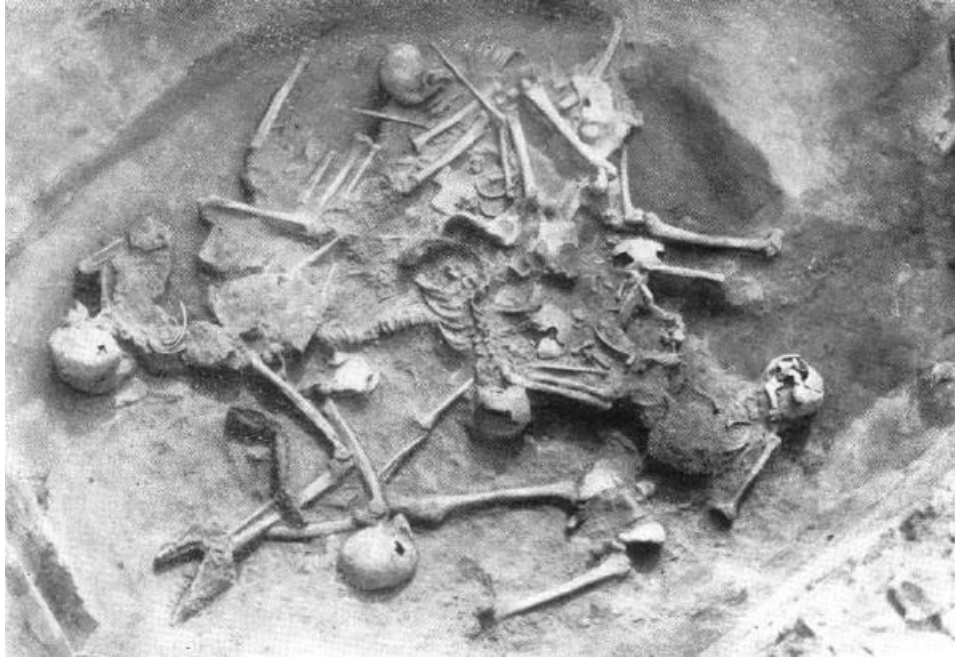


Figure 74 The mass grave from Capidava (after Grigore Florescu, Radu Florescu, Gloria Ceacalopol, “Săpăturile,” fig.14)

Two features with collective mortuary deposits are known from medieval Dinogetia, each containing three individuals.<sup>194</sup> The first one was a simple pit outside the urban fortifications. The second one was a burned dwelling with the remains of three individuals with traces of incineration (probably compatible to Grade I for human cremains).<sup>195</sup> The latter case is analogous to the frequent discoveries of unburied bodies of people hiding in their dwellings from the time of the Mongol invasion in Hungary from 1242.<sup>196</sup>

<sup>194</sup> Petre Diaconu, “Despre pecenegi,” 470.

<sup>195</sup> Joachim Wahl, “Leichenbranduntersuchungen: Ein Überblick über die Beartbeitungs- und Aussagemöglichkeiten von Brandgräbern,” *Prähistorische Zeitschrift* 57, 1 (1982): Table 1.

<sup>196</sup> József Laszlovszky, “Material remains of the Mongolian Invasion in Hungary and Development-Led Archaeology,” *Hungarian Archaeology* 1 (2012): 2-3; Gyöngyi Gulyás, “Egy elpusztult falu Cegléd határában (Pest m.)” [A destroyed village on the outskirts of Cegléd, County Pest], in: *A tatárjárás* [The Tatar invasion] eds. Ágnes Ritoók and Éva Garam (Budapest: Hungarian National Museum, 2007), 52–53.





*Figure 75 The medieval mass grave reusing late Roman tomb in Sofia (photo by I. Borisova-Katsarova)*

South of the river Danube mass graves in settlements are likewise seldom discoveries with still unexplored potential. To be fair, two of these cases are also quite new additions to the archaeological record. In one of them at least hundred supposedly male skeletons were placed in reused tomb from the late Roman eastern necropolis of Serdica (today Sofia). It seems the bodies do not follow any systematic arrangement and their dating to the tenth-eleventh century is based on multiple coins from this period found with them.<sup>197</sup> Since the bones were not grouped and the spatial arrangement of the human remains likely resulted from the natural decomposition of neatly inserted bodies, the identification as mass grave rather than ossuary was preferred. The other may be the result of an earthquake or another catastrophic event

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<sup>197</sup> Information by one of the PIs on the rescue excavation Iliana Borisova-Katsarova from the University of Sofia.



as the bodies of at least fifty individuals were found beneath the debris of the fourteenth century St. John of Rila monastery in Veliko Tarnovo.<sup>198</sup>



Figure 76 The human remains from the St. John of Rila monastery on the Trapezitsa Hill in Veliko Tarnovo (after Yordan Alexiev, Велико Търново, 606)

Medieval Preslav is best known as the capital of the Bulgarian Tsardom during the reign of Symeon I (893-927) and Petar I (927-969/70). The city developed from earlier *aul*, a fortified residential space with political and administrative function in the Bulgar khanate. The palatial complex of the Bulgarian tsars hosted the *strategion*, the administrative centre of Byzantine authority in Paradounavion/Paristrion during the eleventh century. The town maintained its urban character and some importance after the ascension of the Assenids in the late twelfth century, as the eldest brother Theodore-Petar took over it as appanage. From the twelfth century onwards the splendour of the royal palace is replaced by structures of regular urban life. The space is appropriated for dwellings and production sites with their associated midden. Additionally, three close cemeteries with more than hundred and forty interments developed around the former palatial complex. The occupation of the area remains stable at least until the fifteenth century.

<sup>198</sup> [Yordan Alexiev] Йордан Алексиев, “Велико Търново. Крепостта Трапезица. Манастир „Св. Йоан Рилски” [Veliko Tarnovo. Trapezitsa fortress. St. John of Rila Monastery], *AOP* (2009): 605-607.

One of the cemeteries from this period occupied the previously open square south from the palace. It is one of the largest burial grounds in the interior of Preslav. During the 1989 excavations to the southwest from this cemetery in peripheral and somewhat isolated section of the site was found the mass grave 129.<sup>199</sup> The bodies were on the bottom of a waste pit with round layout not unlike similar features around

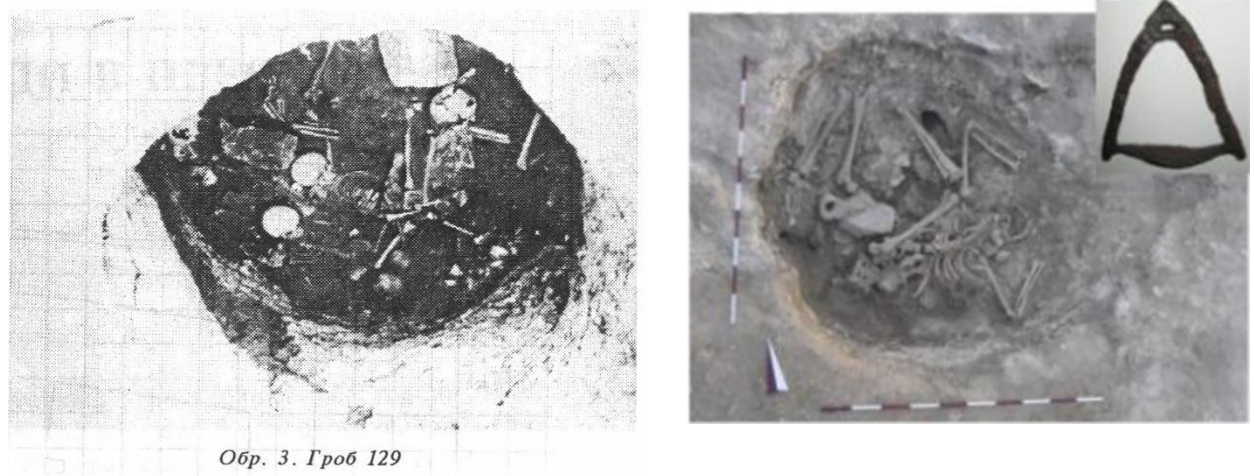


Figure 77 The medieval mass grave No.129 (left) and deviant burial Prs.a from Preslav (right)

Preslav or the three pits from Hauza. The upper layers were sealed with multiple stones and included scattered materials from the thirteen-fourteen century. The burial deposit represents seven bodies thrown without particular care and placed in direct superposition with each other at the bottom of the pit. Unfortunately, the skeletal remains are not thoroughly examined, but two object were found. One arrowhead was found between the ribs of one individual suggesting the likely cause of death, while between the bones of two other individuals a Byzantine coin from the late twelfth-early thirteen century.

More or less at the same time on the other side of the former palace the northern open area was filled with various truncated features, rarely graves or the

<sup>199</sup> [Emilia Evtimova] Емилия Евтимова, “Некрополи южно от Дворцовите сгради във Велики Преслав” [Cemeteries south from the palatial compound in Veliki Preslav], *Плиска-Преслав* 6 (1993): 182-183.

occasional dwelling. In one of these oval pits, among the thirteen century waste, a human skeleton was found (Prs.a). The body was oriented E-W and lying on its back as if thrown, with the knee almost contracted and the arms spread out. The lower legs with orientation N-S are significantly displaced and separate from the rest of the skeleton, partly reflecting the overall flexed position. The deceased was male around 22-24 years old (*adultus* I) without direct signs from injuries. However, there are traces from brain cyst, which sometimes can cause headache, vertigo, hearing and visual problems affecting behaviour and could be the outcome from trauma to the head. Around the skeleton in the pit were discovered a bone fragment from arrow and triangle ferrous stirrup dated to the thirteen century.

Additionally, some references list another waste pit from the thirteen century cutting into the interior of the earlier palace or a triple grave with evidence for lethal arrow injuries to the east from the complex.<sup>200</sup> Eventhough they confirm some repetition of the phenomenon, they offer limited analytical opportunities.

The last example is again derived from the territory of modern Croatia, namely its capital Zagreb. It illustrates mortuary activity in urban context with decidedly Central-European character. The twin-city had uninterrupted habitation of



Figure 78 The infant burial from Zagreb, after Siniša Krznar and Tatjana Tkalcic, "The identity".

<sup>200</sup> [Margarita Vaklinova and Snezhana Goryanova] Маргарита Ваклинова и Снежана Горянова, "НИАР Велики Преслав. Дворцов център-север" [NHAR Veliki Preslav. Palatial compound-north], *AOP* 2017 (2018): 459.

the hills even before Ladislaus I established the Zagreb diocese on the Kaptol hill in 1094 and the Gradec received its royal charter from Bela IV in 1242.

The burial is found during excavations on the site of the Zagreb City Museum, thus the establishment of the convent of Poor Clares on the same spot in the first half of the seventeenth century is the unquestionable *terminus ante quem*. Eventhough the upper chronological marker of the burial is well beyond the temporal scope of the current dissertation, its *terminus post quem* is marked by the early fifteenth century collapse of an older building. The plot is in the northern periphery of the town. During this period, the foundations of the crumbled building were used for the drainage of the surrounding area and the cellar was filled with mud and silt. The body of a new-born child was placed in ceramic vessel and deposited in the drainage pit.

Boris Mašić has suggested that this unusual circumstances reflect the clandestine nature of the deposit and convincingly links it to attempted cover-up for infanticide to avoid the capital punishment prescribed in Slavonian laws.<sup>201</sup> This isolated disposal holds a special place among the finds from settlement contexts not only in the Balkans, but probably in Europe too. Nevertheless, the choice of place for dumping the body resembles the tendency for marginal and low status locations documented in other inhabited areas and strictly deviant burials alike.

The internment within medieval settlement features has been commented elsewhere in Europe in relation to social outcomes from the Christianization or mnemonic appropriation of abandoned buildings.<sup>202</sup> The evolution of this relationship

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<sup>201</sup> Boris Mašić, “Interpretacija skeletnog nalaza s lokaliteta Muzej Grada Zagreba – samostan klarisa” [Interpretation of the skeletal find on the site of the site Museum of Zagreb – monastery], *Histria Antiqua* 8 (2002): 95-101; Maria Karbić, „Što znamo o nezakonitoj djeci u gradskim naseljima u međurječju Save i Drave tijekom srednjeg vijeka“ [What do we know about illegitimate children in the towns between Sava and Drava in the late Middle Ages], *Scrinia Slavonica* 2 (2002): 174-176.

<sup>202</sup> Frans Theuws, “Changing settlement patterns, burial grounds and the symbolic construction of ancestors and communities in the late Merovingian southern Netherlands,” in: *Settlement and Landscape: Proceedings of a Conference in Århus, Denmark, May 4-7, 1998*. eds C. Fabeck and J. Ringtved (Moesgård: Jutland Archaeological Society, 1999); Eva Thäte. *Monuments and*

between living space and burial grounds once again points to a common rationale of opportunistic burials in existing features like ditches, pits or ruined structures.<sup>203</sup> From the available synthesis on the matter, the clearest analogies for its emerging northern Balkan manifestations come from Central European *milieu*.<sup>204</sup> Some examples from Moravia like grave 4 from Blatné or grave 5/62 from Biňa are deviant burials placed in regular simple pit. Remarkably, most Central European finds dated between the ninth and the eleventh century like Velky Cetin 2, Velky Kyr, Nitranska Streda, Sala Veca and Senec Martin show uncanny similarities in terms of treatment (e.g., body

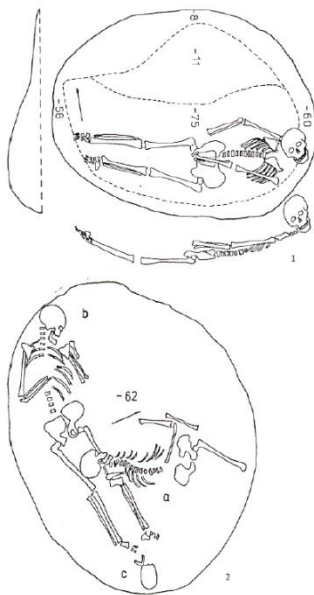


Figure 79 Central European burials from settlements: grave 4 from Blatné (left) and grave 5/62 from Biňa, after Milan Hanuliak, *Zur Problematik*, Abb.7.

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*minds: monument re-use in Scandinavia in the second half of the first millennium AD* (Lund: Wallin and Dalholm, 2007).

<sup>203</sup> Clifford M. Sofield, "Living with the Dead: Human Burials in Anglo-Saxon Settlement Contexts," *Archaeological Journal* 172:2 (2015): 376.

<sup>204</sup> Milan Hanuliak, *Velkomoravské pohrebiská*; Milan Hanuliak, *Zur Problematik*; contra Vladimir Kaznakov, *Treatment*, 125-135.

position and circular pits) to the Balkan specimens, especially from Bulgaria.

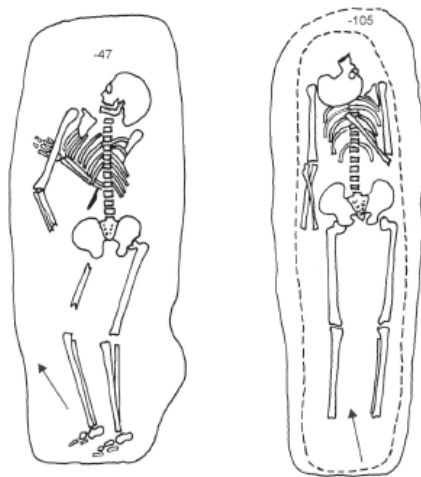
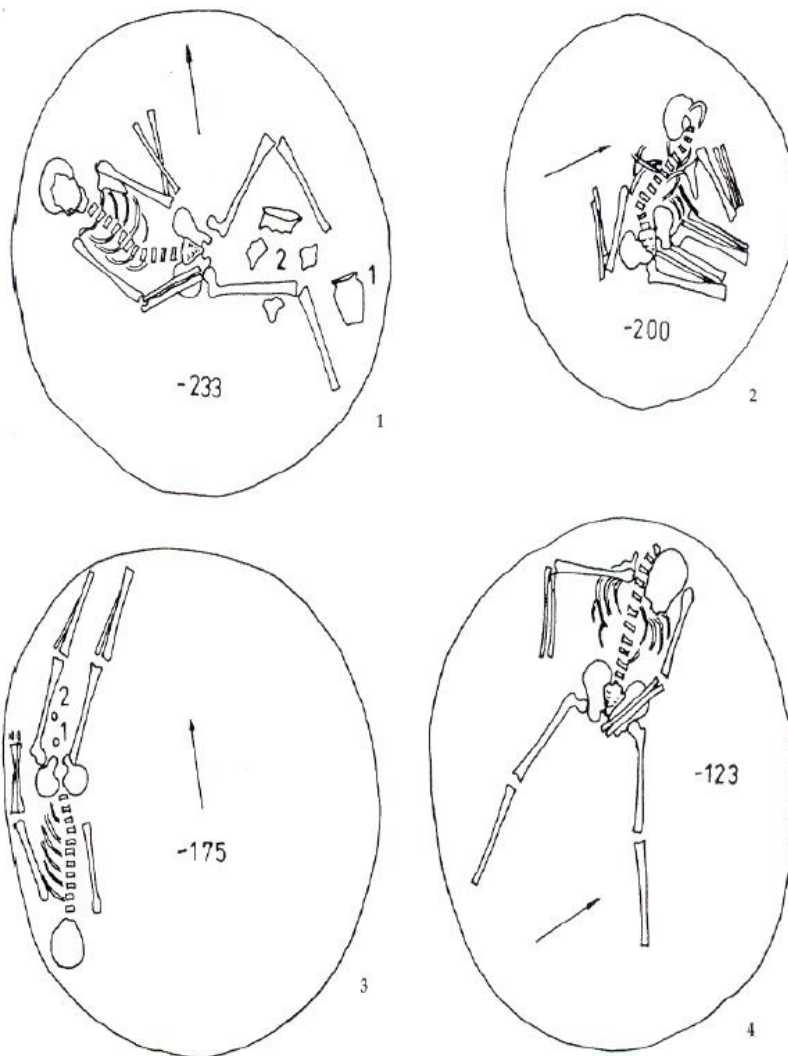


Figure 80 Central European burials from settlements: grave 4 from Blatné (left) and grave 5/62 from Břina, after Milan Hanuliak, *Zur Problematik*, Abb.7.

Central European burials from settlements: 1. Nitrianska Streda-1, 2. Sala Veca-18, 3. Sala Veca-15, 4. Senec Martin 5/77, after Milan Hanuliak, *Veľ'komoravske pohrebiská*.





#### 2.6.4. Violence in the Podunavlje-Iron Gates

The penultimate collection of case studies explores those known extra normative burials from the Podunavlje – Iron Gates area who exhibit signs for violent death and maltreatment but could not be included in the strictly defined ‘deviant’ category. Broadly speaking, they discern the meanings attached to deviant burials

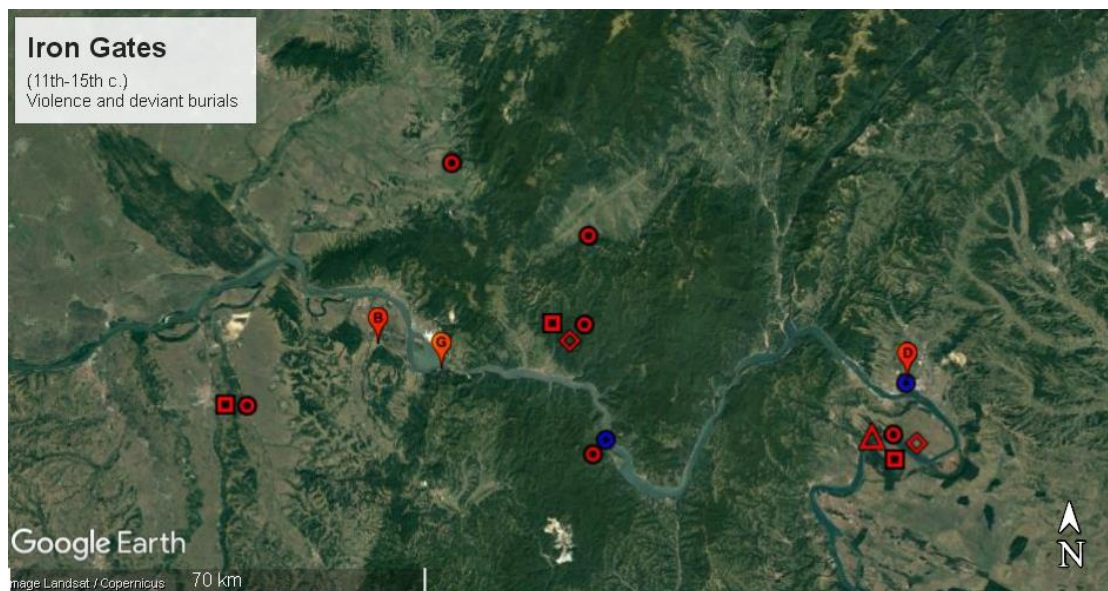


Figure 81 The Podunavlje-Iron Gates cluster with deviant burial practices: Braničevo (B), Golubac (G), Drobeta-Turnu Severin (D); prone (diamond), decapitation (red dot), fixation (triangle), and mutilation (square) burials; other burials with evidence for violence (blue dot)

without fitting the neat methodological criteria set at the beginning of the research and consequently illustrate even better many of the themes raised by them.

Mirijevo is a burial ground located southeast from Belgrade not far from the river Danube. The cemetery contains altogether 160 graves dominantly following the W-E orientation. The site is generally dated between the tenth and fifteenth century with two stratigraphic layers present in some sections, thus establishing internal chronological development. The long period of use prompt grave reuse with several



recorded cases where later interments disturbed earlier skeletal remains.<sup>205</sup> Some instances bare resemblance to decapitation burial as the skull is displaced in different sections of the grave like in graves No.81, 139 or 144. However, some caution for possibly unrecognized beheadings must be advised in certain cases like individual graves 36 and 160.

The grave of interest No.115 is placed in the southern loose occupied zone of the cemetery. The male individual is thrown with the legs and the torso bent to the right while the chest and the right hand curved in the opposite direction. The body is beheaded, and the skull is missing (Type II decapitation). Moreover, the hand and feet bones are also missing, although there is no sufficient evidence to exclude the possibility for decomposition. Another differential mark is the orientation N-S.

In the same line, to the south there was a complete horse skeleton. From the cemetery there are three other ABGs from horses grouped close to each other among the graves by the slope in the South-Eastern part of the site. Apparently, horse No.4 was coupled with the male from grave No.115.

The two skeletons, the human and the horse, were placed in superposition of a context from mixed human bones. From the description by Bajalović-Bartašević it seems the pile was not in a comprehensible anatomical order and contained the remains from several individuals. Unfortunately more details are lacking.

The author explains the grave as the remains of a soldier buried there with his warhorse immediately after a battle.<sup>206</sup> She is inclined to link it to the Austro-Ottoman wars, but there is no hard evidence for such assumption.<sup>207</sup> Her principle argument is that the latest coin from the site, an Ottoman silver coin, is found nearby. However,

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<sup>205</sup> Marija Bajalović-Bartašević, *Srednjevekovna nekropola u Mirijevo* [Medieval necropolis in Mirijevo] (Belgrade: Muzej Grada Beograda, 1960), 7-11.

<sup>206</sup> Marija Bajalović-Bartašević, *Srednjevekovna nekropola*, 8.

<sup>207</sup> Marija Bajalović-Bartašević, *Srednjevekovna nekropola*, 37.

there is no direct stratigraphic connection to grave 115 and the remaining materials from this zone are from the eleventh-fifteenth century. In fact, the nearest graves with datable materials in the sector are from the eleventh-thirteen century (Nos. 123, 126, 141, 144). Another argument for later dating of the grave was the shallow pit, but this is a common characteristic of deviant graves in the Balkans and Europe as a whole.

Obviously the chronological conundrum surrounding grave No. 115 cannot be solved without absolute dating techniques like C14. The chances for this are very slim since the consequent destiny of the osteological material from there is unclear. For this reason alone the case from Mirijevo is excluded from the main database for this research.

Yet, the line of argumentation is very informative on previous archaeological considerations surrounding extra normative burials. The decapitation burial from Mirijevo does not fit the normative funerary picture summarized for a site attributed to medieval Slavic population. Thus, it was offloaded to the conflicts between the empires subjugating them during the nation-formative period. In a typical pitfall for mid-twentieth century archaeological thought the social significance of the find was immediately rationalized as chronological differential susceptible to political mobilization.

Despite being a borderline case in many ways, grave 115 from Mirijevo can be considered highly probable medieval decapitation burials with multiple physical traits for maltreatment: missing skull, isolated position, negligent disposal, and may be mutilations of the extremities.

The next archaeological record for violence in the region comes from a very different context. The focus shifts to the Danubian castel and port Drobeta-Severin, present day Turnu Severin. The fortress was a strategic point for control over the

Danube and key stronghold in multiple campaigns after the eleventh century. The fortress was especially valuable in the military and political plans of Bulgaria and Hungary in the region. King Andrew II (1205-1235) established the Banate of Severin centered around it and Bela IV granted it to the Hospitaller Knights in 1247.

The fortress has a poligonal plan with multiple fortification towers. To the northwest from the round tower V was discovered a very deep rectangular pit, probably part of a foundation cut. Inside it were found various materials, including two massive stone blocks with Roman inscriptions as those reused in the tower structure.



Figure 82 Weaponry found with the three male bodies from Drobeta-Turnu Severin, after Misu Davidescu. *Monumente*, 21.

Beneath them were discovered three male skeletons with different estimated biological ages: one juvenis (14-17 years old), one adultus (c.35 years old), and one maturus (50-55 years old). The three were disposed without apparent care and around them were discovered multiple objects, mostly connected with warfare. The weapons included two iron battle axes, iron spearhead, corroded ferrous knife, iron spur, a triangle iron arrowhead, and curiously, a curved ferrous weapon, probably a war scythe.<sup>208</sup> Coins also appeared in the assemblage. Near the bodies was discovered a coin issued by the Bulgarian tsar John Assen II (1218-1241), while at the very top of the pit was found a coin by the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282-1328).<sup>209</sup>

No details from the anthropological report are available, but it is very likely the three men suffered a violent death during an unsuccessful assault on the fortress sometime in the second half of the thirteen- early fourteen century and were hastily buried there during the post-battle clearance.

<sup>208</sup> Contra, A. Ioniță following M. Davidescu see it as the head of a siege hook. Adrian Ioniță, *Spațiul dintre Carpații Meridionali și Dunărea inferioară în secolele XI-XIII* [The space between the Middle Carpathians and Danube between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Romane, 2005), 129.

<sup>209</sup> Misu Davidescu. *Monumente Medievale din Turnu Severin* [Medieval monuments in Turnu Severin] (Bucharest: Editura Meridiane, 1969), 18-22.

The final example is also discovered outside a designated burial ground. The site Lepenski vir is well-known for the prehistoric culture flourishing there, but much less is known about its role in the landscape after the Neolithic. The site is downstream from the important late medieval Golubac fortress and in the middle of the strategic Iron Gates gorge on the Danube.

Four medieval burials of adult males dated vaguely in the field journal to a Slavic period were excavated on the site. Two of the skeletons were eventually tested for C14 dates and the results shifted their dating to the late medieval period: grave LV30 can be placed in the 1400-1465 interval and grave LV62 between 1390 and 1620. Three of them are grouped together in the northwestern corner of the site and a single individual was discovered to the south by the slope. No grave goods were found and all individual were placed in supine extended position following the W-E orientation, thus conforming to the projected funerary treatment in the period.<sup>210</sup>

In fact, the only suspicious circumstances are their isolation in the landscape and the trauma registered on the skeleton designated LV 62. This individual belongs to the three man group buried close to each other and has a clear sharp-force cranial trauma. The careful osteological analysis showed that the penetrating injury was direct and probably made by an axe not much different from those found in Drobeta-Severin.<sup>211</sup> Also, the cranium shows some signs of healing and infection indicating the man survived few months in great pain and mental distress before eventually dying.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Mirjana Roksandic, Carolan Wood, Dejana Vlak Nikitović. Death in the Line of Duty: Late Medieval Burials at the Site of Lepenski Vir, Serbia. *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 17 (2007): 635-6.

<sup>211</sup> Mirjana Roksandic et al., *Death in the Line*, 637-9.

<sup>212</sup> Mirjana Roksandic et al., *Death in the Line*, 639.



Figure 83 Lepenski Vir 62 with evidence of sharp-force trauma on the left parietal (from Mirjana Roksandic, et al., *Death in the Line*, fig.2)

The situation in Lepenski vir may reveal an attempt towards the fulfillment of standard burial practices during the period visible in the position and orientation of the deceased. However, the isolation from communal cemetery and the violent experience documented for one of the individuals very likely reflects the unnatural mode of dying for all males on this site. Similar exclusion from consecrated graveyards is valid for the male skeletons from Drobeta-Severin, although there was probably a difference in the group performing the burial. The examples from these sites stress on the importance of segregation in deviant burial practices without necessarily displaying the skeletal criteria for maltreatment.

Another salient connection is the formation of the Podunavlje-Iron Gates cluster with deviant burials after the eleventh century i.e., during the transitional and late periods in the development of the phenomenon. Excluding Mirijevo, Drobeta-Severin, and Lepenski Vir, additional thirty-five individual deviant graves are found on seven distinctive sites, which measures for 14% of the entire sample.

Site	1000-1050	1050-1100	1100-1150	1150-1200	1200-1250	1250-1300	1300-1350	1350-1400	1400-1450
Mirijevo	*	*	*	*	*	*			
Vajuga Pesak 1	*	*							
Ilidia	*	*	*	*					
Trnjane		*	*	*	*				
Sopotu Vechi			*	*	*				
Gornea Cds			*	*	*	*			
Gornea Trm			*	*	*	*			
Boljetin			*	*	*	*			
Gornea Trcv			*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Vajuga Pesak 2				*	*				
Drobeta					*	*			
Gornea Pzr					*	*	*	*	
Psk2.82*							*		
Lepenski Vir								*	*

All four principal forms are attested in the cluster. Even excluding Trnjane, decapitations are particularly common occurrence (71,4%, n=15). In comparison, prone position, fixations, and mutilations are recorded equally (19%, n=4 each) with nearly a fifth of the graves showing correlation between the different deviant practices. The majority of the site represent communal rural cemeteries (e.g., Vajuga-Pesak). Still, the trend for separation of the deviant burials continues and is especially clear in Gornea. This contextual data adds to the relevance of the burials from Mirijevo, Drobeta-Severin, and Lepenski vir for our study.

### **2.6.5. Reconstructing the primary burial condition**

The last survey will take a retrospective look on the way deviant practices are introduced and recognized in the original burial context. The



retrospective aspect is in the examination of the factors involved in the long formation process of the funerary find. The basis of these reconstruction are graves of higher data quality according to the criteria laid out in the collection methodology. In turn, the reliability of such modelling is discussed with analogous examples.

The first grave was discovered in 2012 during rescue excavations ahead of motorway construction works near the town of Shumen, Bulgaria.<sup>213</sup> The grave (HHW.1) is part of a dispersed burial ground from the eight century containing at least twelve inhumation burials. The cemetery was nearby a rectangular timber building of the same age and occupied the periphery of late Roman settlement judging from the pottery kilns around the site. Additionally, the nearby area of HHW.1 is dotted by pits and two graves with poorly preserved human remains. Notably, one of the pits contained four articulated canine skeletons.

Apparently, the grave pit was very hard to detect during fieldwork and judging from the photos was rather amorphous and shallow. The body of a female individuals in the biological age juvenis was placed face-down with her limbs tightly contracted beneath her torso. There were no associate artifacts, but immediately to the south of her body was found a small stone. There is no immediate physical relationship between the skeleton and the stone which makes the possibility for fixation unlikely. However, the stone might have been used to fasten the opening of a shroud or some other form of light perishable cover. The slight turn to the right observed on her limbs, especially visible on legs might support such an idea. By all means the body was neatly placed in a very small space and any major cadaver movements should be excluded. Also, the level of preservation of the osteological remains is good, especially in comparison to other burials on the site. These factors demonstrate that

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<sup>213</sup> The archaeological and anthropological documentation were provided to me by the principal investigator of the site Stanimir Stoychev from the Regional Historical Museum-Shumen.

the entire bodily arrangement and its prone position are the result of intentional burial activity.

This grave was difficult to classify in a formal typology of the deviant burial practices and prone burials specifically. Both the skull and the torso were positioned towards the ground suggesting a complete form of prone burial. However, the contraction of the lower limbs in this case is too significant to be neglected. Following this note, HHW.1 has several possible analogies with matching geographical and chronological characteristics.

The nearest possible comparison is, in fact, from the same burial site. This is grave 7 where another female individual of similar age (18-20 years old according to suture closure) was buried on her right side with flexed limbs. However, the lateral position and the degree of flexion of the limbs are simply not the same as in HHW.1.

Another somewhat similar arrangement is from Balchik (Blc.162) dated to the early-mid eight century. The body was placed in ventral prone position with the skull lying on its right side. However, this does not mean immediately that the head was not positioned face-down at the time of the burial. It has been observed multiple times that unsupported skulls in supine burials can turn on either side as a consequence of the decomposition of the soft tissue in the neck area. There is no known reason why the same taphonomic condition would not apply for face down burials. This is only a minor concern since the rest of the torso is unquestionably placed prone. The orientation SW-NE also separates this grave from the usual rite practiced in the Balchik cemetery, a situation ideally demonstrated by the normative orientation of the stratigraphically earlier grave 163.

Examining the limb positions shows that the arms are bent and placed respectively beneath the left shoulder and the pelvis. The legs are also bent at the

kneels and turned to the left. Again, the degree of flexion is much less pronounced than in HHW.1. Perhaps the most conspicuous similarity is gender-based as this is yet another female burial. The individual from Balchik probably had artificial skull deformation and died at an adult age.

The third and so far, final parallel is from Topola (Top.83) where the upper body is also placed prone with the arms and the legs pressed towards the chest and oriented left towards the west. Despite the lack of in-depth anthropological report on the skeleton, the available evidence does not suggest major disruption on the body. Thus, some cadaver movement could have contributed to the position of the skeleton, but this does not conclusively defy the face down position of the skull and the chest.

Importantly, a pattern surrounding the flexed prone burial HHW.1 is beginning to emerge. The few examples exhibiting similarity in the funerary arrangement of the body and the preferred demographic profile demonstrate well the difficulties caused by asymmetrical information availability. Still, the opportunity for reconstructing fairly certainly the initial state of the cadaver in this case suggests such repetitive practice is a plausible reading of the incomplete data.

Albeit less frequent than other deviant practices, the prone position often sets the tone in the overall discussion. Particularly imbricate is the correlation between the decapitation burials and the face down burials from Type II, the same group where the previously discussed HHW.1 was eventually seriated. Due to the concentration of two deviant practices not simply on a single body but on a single body part, it is critical to re-establish the original funerary context whenever possible.

This retrospective method following the tenets of archaeoethanatology was already applied in the data collection to sieve the authentic deviant burials. For instance, the complex deviant burial Psk2.32 from twelfth-thirteenth century Vajuga-

Pesak was singled out when discussing grave reopening documented in post mortem skeletal perturbations.<sup>214</sup> The well-preserved cranium was placed face down on the left shoulder and the mandible is dislocated in the upper chest area. Left with this description alone, the deviant practice could be questioned over possible animal disturbances etc. However, two iron spikes were found inside the grave: one under the left scapula and another one inside the foramen magnum. Especially the latter one could have been inserted in this opening of the cranium only after its separation from the spinal cord, probably in very advanced skeletonization. The evidence for fixation of the body clearly corroborate the posthumous intervention to a previously generic internment resulting in prone decapitation.

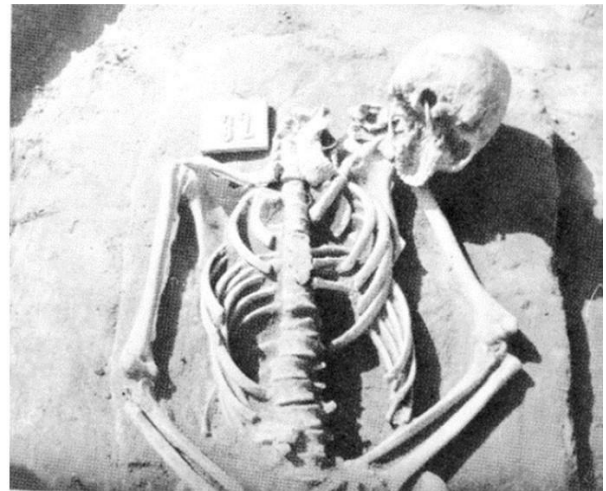


Figure 84 Grave No.4 from Ravna (left, after Miodrag Tomović, “Равна (Camps),” fig. 8) and Psk2.32 (right)

The opposite scenario is no less instructive. Grave 4 in Ravna, a tenth century site with confirmed decapitation burials, appeared to be a possible face down decapitation. The skull lying on the right shoulder strongly resembled this arrangement, but actually taphonomic factors better explain the skeletal disorder. From the photo is evident that the head was lying over a flat stone or tile in elevated

<sup>214</sup> Gordana Marjanović-Vujović, “Vajuga-Pesak,” 184-185.

position relative to the rest of the body. Upon the decomposition of the soft tissue the head must have fallen to the side creating the impression of a prone placement. Judging from the position of the mandible and the fractures on the lower arm bones, the subsequent soil pressure must have amplified this outcome. This may suggest there was some sort of perishable lid over the body, but that no deviant practice can be recorded in this case.

Decapitations have been fairly easy to confirm in situations where the osteological conditions of the skull and the cervical vertebrae are observed and analysed. Several such cases have already been pointed out. The following examples will rather continue to elaborate how the correlation of deviant practices and their timing in the funerary cycle can be estimated.

The early ninth century cemetery of Brodski Drenovac is one of the sites with multiple decapitation burials. Two of the three decapitation burials (BrDr.2 and BrDr.12) contained just the skull of the beheaded individual. Grave BrDr.32 had traces of bodily mutilation and decapitation.<sup>215</sup> The skull of the female individual was placed in the anatomically correct place, but it was lying on its base facing west i.e., in exactly the opposite direction from the rest of the body. The anatomical anomalies were most notable on the torso with two long hand bones crossed. The necklace and silver medallion of the woman were present, but they appear dragged to the right side of the chest area. Another dislocation is observed on the lower legs where the right proximal tibia and fibula are pushed to the left. By the knee there is a stone.

Indeed, there are some strong indications that BrDr.32 is another example for coinciding deviant practices. Even so, the overall burial condition must be considered. The position of the skull and the arm bones appear too conspicuously arranged to

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<sup>215</sup> Ksenija Vinski-Gasparini and Slavenka Ercegović, "Ranosrednjovekovno groblje u Brodskom Drenovcu," *Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu* 1:1 (1958): 159.

have occurred from non-human activity. The decapitation has a wide window of opportunity from the funeral event to grave reopening. In the case of the long bone manipulation this requires the removal of any connecting tissue and implies secondary intervention.

When it comes to the other displacements of the rib cage, the situation is even more difficult to ascertain. There could have been some animal disturbance in that area which could have affected the primary position of the skull and the grave goods. The leg disarticulation could have been caused by a number of taphonomic factors and should not be marked as mutilation on its own right. However, these observations remains very hypothetical, and any or all disturbances might be an element of complicated long-term funerary behaviour.

The form of decapitation burial recorded in Brodski Drenovac has analogies around southeastern Europe. An example with similar date and skull dislocation from Devnya (Dv1.14) was in earlier contextual survey. Another one can be derived from Vajuga-Pesak. In the latter case the skeleton of an adult male is preserved in excellent condition and there are no additional anatomical anomalies. The skull is again placed on its base with E-W orientation so that will contradict the natural axis of the supine extended body. No information about the condition of the cervical vertebrae or possible cut marks is available. Nonetheless, this apparently primary burial could offer supporting evidence for analogues *peri mortem* decapitation in the more complicated burial context of BrDr.32.

The matter of possible grave reopening when deviant practice could be implemented on the exposed cadaver is relevant to multiple early medieval decapitation burials. In this respect, the entry from Varbyane (Var.11) provides

another chance to try and go further back in the funerary cycle.<sup>216</sup> The body of an adult individual lays in supine extended position inside the rectangular pit. A large portion of the right-side chest bones together with four glass beads are displaced to the northwest where the head is supposed to be. The skull was found by the north profile of the pit on a slightly higher level than the pelvis and the left extremities. The cranium lies on its anterior with the mandible being just south of it on what appears to be an inner niche in the grave.

The lack of more detailed anthropological report is truly unfortunate, because the position of the skull and the displaced bones require a more refined insight into their state. Following the similar procedure as before, several possibilities can be put forward. If the skull was placed on this position during the primary funerary event, it should have been accompanied by some cervical vertebrae. This cannot be entirely excluded as a possibility, but the description does not mention nothing of the sort. Thus, it is more likely that the head was removed post deposition and put to the side on the level reached during grave reopening. The disarticulation of the chest bones could be collateral to this activity or attributed to later movement of burrowing animal.

If this sequence is correct, the grave Var.11 should be counted among the examples for post mortem decapitations. The comparison with the more or less contemporary post mortem decapitation from Bečej (Bcj.32) reveals a very interesting parallel. In both cases, the cranium was displaced to a similar area of the grave. The cross section and the observations on the grave fill in Varbyane do not present any further evidence to elaborate on the significance of this detail.

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<sup>216</sup> [Rasho Rashev and Hristina Stooyanova] Рашо Рашев, Христина Стоянова, “Ранносредновековен некропол при с. Върбяне, Шуменска област“ [Early medieval biritual cemetery near Varbyane, Shumen district], *Известия на Регионален Исторически Музей – Шумен* 17 (2017): 37.



In conclusion, this survey tried to experiment with the opportunity to reconstruct the initial burial context of several graves with suspected deviant practices. The limits of this exercise were set from the very beginning in the research design and are typical for the archaeological appropriation of legacy data. Despite the conditional nature of the conclusions, the differentiation between taphonomic and anthropogenic changes in the funerary deposit and the identification of separate stages in the process must be increasingly integrated in the study of deviant burials. By no means the contextualization of examples with stronger empirical basis through possible analogies with lesser evidential weight is a one-way street. The recurrent patterns testify how both categories supplement and improve each other in the analysis.

## **2.7. Conclusion**

The contextual site surveys and other case studies offered a thorough view on the immediate archaeological settings of the deviant burials. They reckon more focused dimension in the analysis supplementing the general overview. Digging into specific sites of interest also became somewhat representative for each main group in the categorization. For instance, Avar-age Bečej exemplify the meticulous study of alternative modes of beheading in pre-Christian milieu as much as Ždrijac-Nin and Maklinovo Brdo do for fixations prior and around the mass conversion to Christianity. The immense variety within the mortuary landscapes of Devnya and Pliska illustrate

evolving patterns in co-existing burial grounds, whereas Trnjane gives a glimpse into the role of mutilations and decapitations for the supposedly rural communities sharing the extensive open field cemetery.

Interesting observations on the integration of deviant burials can be made by examining their peripheral positioning on early medieval sites from the Lower Danube or the internments with unclear status inside settlements. The latter group also provides quite significant evidence for mass atrocities due to conflict or disasters, a matter relevant to the discoveries of mass graves around the eastern part of the Balkan peninsula. However, similarly copious is the archaeological record for interpersonal violence. Here this is elaborated in the depiction of the cluster Podunavlje-Iron Gates where all sorts of maltreatment and violence intensify after the eleventh century. The accumulation of thick descriptions narrowed down to a single site or area enriches the summarized large-scale patterns and opens the road to properly contextualizing the deviant burial practices.

## CHAPTER 3. MORTUARY PROXIES: DEVIANT BURIAL PRACTICES IN CONTEXT

### ***3.1. False sense of normality: normative and non-normative funerary behaviour***

*Normal is the average of deviance.*

*Rita Mae Brown*

How deviant burials relate to other forms of body disposal is a key issue in mortuary variability. Clearly the very idea for funerary deviations challenges the essentialism of a checklist-like grave normativity. Nevertheless, the two remain intrinsically connected. Even more intriguing issue is concerned with the segregation of deviant burials from the other unusual, ‘non-normative’ funerary practices.

As it was discussed, much of the critique to the term was based precisely on the attempts to introduce greater objectivity to the archaeological description and the potentially misleading contradiction between regularity and exceptionalism within the funerary record. Indeed, it has become apparent that in the past far greater regional variety of burial practices existed than archaeological summaries could acknowledge properly. Thus, in a sense the answer to the questions raised by our abstraction attempts has to address the overlap between deviant burials as defined here and at least some of the available choices for the treatment of the cadaver.

Perhaps Aspöck's way of conceptualizing the matter is the most concise account available so far. According to her, there are different mortuary practices at the disposal of a given population 'each being the appropriate and right funerary treatment in certain circumstances or for a certain type of dead individual'.<sup>217</sup> The weakness of this view is that it does not account for extraordinary situations when ad hoc solutions are necessary. In this sense, deviant burials are the coping mechanism for disturbances in the personal and corporate handling of death events. Deviant burials were never meant to be simply the exception of the rule as much as a recognizable extension of the customs sustaining the funerary behaviour. The realization for deviant burials being a variant of the norm has been candidly demonstrated, for instance, through prone burials in Scandinavia<sup>218</sup> and Germany.<sup>219</sup>

In the Balkans and especially during the early medieval period preceding the conversion to Christianity cremation was a widespread mode of burial. On the Lower Danube it is at least as common as inhumation, while the evidence for consistent use of cremations in the Adriatic is increasing. At least eight sites of this kind are confirmed so far.<sup>220</sup> Usually when talking about the continuum of funerary practices including deviant burials, its archaeologically visible manifestation is restricted to inhumations. Yet again, the material evidence indicates that was not the case in reality.

Three eighth-ninth century cemeteries on the Lower Danube exhibit straightforward dichotomy between the vastly dominant rite and solitary decapitation burials (Type I). The unburnt human skulls from Constanta-Castelu, Sihleanu, and Tichilesti each represent a lone exception to the cremation registered in every other

<sup>217</sup> Edeltraud Aspöck, *The relativity of normality*, 107.

<sup>218</sup> Matthias Toplak, *Das Wikingerzeitliche Gräberfeld von Kopparsvik auf Gotland. Studien zu neuen Konzepten sozialer Identitäten am Übergang zum christlichen Mittelalter* (PhD Dissertation: Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, 2016), 212-213

<sup>219</sup> Amelie Alterauge et al. "Between belief and fear", 20

<sup>220</sup> Kašić – Vinograd S. Drče, Dubravice kod Skradina, Sv. Lovre – šibensko Donje polje, Velim -Velištak, Glavice– Gluvine kuće II, Belišće, Vinkovci, Novi Slankamen. See Maja Petrinec, *Grobja*, 271; Vladimir Sokol, *Medieval jewelry*, 129-130.

grave on these sites, an observation further stressed by their peripheral placement. Despite the stark contrast between these decapitations and their immediate background, the fact is that the treatment of the respective postcranial skeletons remains unclear. One very real possibility is that the rest of the corpses were incinerated, as the prevailing practice would have required.

This dichotomy is also present in two cases from cemeteries where inhumation was the preferred form of disposal. In a contemporary grave from Ždrijac-Nin (ZdrN.77), the beheading is combined with the nearly complete burning of the lower body. In the post-conversion grave 10 from Preslav the connection between the cremated remains from the urn and the unburnt skull found on top of it remains more ambiguous.

The example from Ždrijac-Nin illustrates to an unprecedented degree how incineration was adjunct and adapted for bodily mutilation in the early period. Three further skeletons from the cemetery Materiza near Nin are sometimes mentioned to have signs of burning but apparently this is rather due to the presence of charcoal in the grave fill.<sup>221</sup> Around the same time in Veli Mlun the body from grave 21 was partially burned. The earliest known case is Čik.93 where the right hand of a young female was burnt. Somewhat similar situation could be registered in the vague note by Zhivka Vazharova that intact human feet bones were discovered on top of the burnt remains in several graves in the biritual cemetery from Bdintsi in Bulgaria.<sup>222</sup>

The two principal modes of burial in the early Middle Ages could not be more different in the attitude and symbolism embodied in their treatment of the cadaver. Undeniably, deviant burials from communal burial grounds with inhumations are the

<sup>221</sup> Danijel Dzino, *Becoming Slav, Becoming Croat. Identity Transformations in Post-Roman and Early Medieval Dalmatia* (Leiden: BRILL, 2010), 134; Cf. Hew Evans, "The Early Medieval Archaeology of Croatia. A.D.600-900," *British Archaeological Reports International Series* 539 (1989), 301.

<sup>222</sup> [Zhivka Vazharova], *Славяни и прабългари*, 143.

most common. Yet, by selecting elements from opposing concepts the idiosyncrasy of deviant burials *per se* is constructed. Juxtaposition is further revealed as the main strategy negotiating normative and extra-normative funerary behaviour.

Indeed, in many elements of their layout these graves appear fairly regular. The most basic is the maintenance of a single inhumation burial. The vast majority of the deceased were laid down in supine extended position. Some obvious differences exist in the placement of the body, but even face-down decapitations are sometimes combined with supine position for the post-cranial skeleton. Another dominant feature narrowing the gap with regular graves is the simple rectangular pit without preserved container. When it comes to orientation, significant deviation from the communal standard is a compelling sign for differential treatment. However, divergent orientation is not always combined with the primary forms of deviant burial and with the advancement of time the west-east placement gets only more uniform.

The evolving, archaeologically visible materializations of deviancy bring forth a key insight into the social mechanism at works. All elements of the burial rite are a function of the communal action over individual bodies. However, they tend to commence from the norm and establish direct link to it. The widespread practicing of the four primary deviant practices also implies some repetitiveness and recreation in contextual deviancy. In constructivist terms, the human remains demonstrate an absolute reality created or at least highlighted by the labelling group to make the deceased different from conventional individuals. Thus, even on a purely formal level there is a causal connection to already established norms and an ingrained potential for the normalization of deviancy.

It is worth recalling that sites with well-developed preferences in grave architecture exhibit related dispositions in the fixation burials. For instance, graves in

the early medieval Adriatic area are often comprised of partial stone lining, complete built structures, or rock-cut pits.<sup>223</sup> From the available sample, Ždrijac-Nin is a typical example. Conspicuously, the early medieval Adriatic is one of the geographical clusters for stone fixations. Another fixation hotspot includes ninth-eleventh century sites in the eastern Balkans like Odartsi and Devnya. Not surprisingly, stones are regularly used both in grave constructions and as fixation tools.

Tiles are a frequently used material alongside stone in the funerary context. Hence, it was only natural for them to appear in deviant graves. For example, the severed skull in grave 3/66 from Ravna-Campsia was placed on a reused Roman tile. Moreover, after the eleventh century the application of tiles and other clay materials for weighting down intensifies (see fixations Type II and IV.B) in parallel to their use in standard graves.

The sheer materiality of the grave and the standardized use of the available materials in funerary context enabled this simple, but weighty form of maltreatment. Hristina Stoyanova's idea for deviant burials as examples of advanced attempts to separate the dead from the living comes to mind in this respect. She sides with Dimitrov who suggests that stone grave covers are an element in the separation rites.<sup>224</sup> Although this seems to be an over-interpretation of the liminal character of the funerary ritual, it is worth entertaining the idea of gradation in the treatment of certain deceased.

Another avenue of exploring the interconnectedness in mortuary variability is through grave goods. Generally deviant burials are rather poor and lack grave goods. Depending on the period and type of deviant grave considered, the recorded deposition of objects varies between a quarter and a third from the available sample.

<sup>223</sup> Maja Petrinec, *Groblja*, 107, 109-112.

<sup>224</sup> [Hristina Stoyanova], *Обредът*, 155.



Notable exceptions are the early mutilation burials and some forms of prone burials (Type II.A). Rarely the findings from such context differ from the average assemblage from each site and even more seldom numerous or luxurios objects were deposited.

However, the impression from the quantitative analysis of the grave goods is that deviant burials from cemeteries mimic the overall historical cycles of funerary elaboration and impoverishment.<sup>225</sup> The latter concept poses a number of issues in its own right as many objects classified as grave goods are not necessary stored for the afterlife rather than being simple clothing elements and accessories. Particularly typical find category before the tenth century is the pottery supplemented by small ferrous items. Although there is no explicit Christian ban in funerary context, usually such items disappear during the mass abandonment of pre-Christian religions. Personal adorning is appearing consistently, above all after the twelfth century when is apparently rehabilitated as acceptable. At least to the extent visible through deviant burials, this observation stands valid mostly for the central and east Balkans.<sup>226</sup> The presence of grave goods suggests the attempt by the families undertaking the burial and trying to conform to the regular customs and rites of their community.

Grave goods, however, are only one form of display ostentation known in mortuary behaviour, including during the Middle Ages. The construction of funerary image around the grave and its content is a matter of deliberate performance aimed at differing audiences involved in different stages of the process. The awareness for the different strategies approaching them could be another point of cohesion between normativity and deviant burials.

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<sup>225</sup> Aubrey Cannon, "The Historical Dimension in Mortuary Expressions of Status and Sentiment," *Current Anthropology*, 30:4 (1989): 446-7.

<sup>226</sup> Compare with the situation in post-eleventh century Hungary, which dominated the western part of the peninsula after the 1102, e.g., József Laszlovsky, "Social Stratification and Material Culture in 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> Century Hungary" In: *Alltag und materielle Kultur im mittelalterlichen Ungarn* eds. Andras Kubinyi and József Laszlovsky (Krems: CopyTU, 1991), 40-2.

In this regard, the imitation of correct anatomical position in decapitation cases like those from Avar-period Mödling (No.203, 334, and 485)<sup>227</sup> or the textile cover on the face-down beheading from Veliko Tarnovo (TVL.192) are likely intentional efforts to imitate normativity during the funeral. A far more important point is the location of the grave. The inclusion of deviant burials in communal burial grounds makes the normal-deviant opposition fundamentally a matter of memory. Most of the burials from this sample are eventually examples of long-term inclusion. This is due to a lack of recognition as much as to the natural expansion of cemeteries (e.g., Izvoru and Devnya) and negotiation between immediate and long-term messages. The way individual deviant burials are incorporated in the graveyard as a whole resembles the polyvalent principles regulating death-rituals. Deep down the norm is enabling deviant and other extra-normative burials instead of contradicting them entirely.

Such a notion of complimentary and interconnected funerary practices should also acknowledge the dynamics between the different rites in the spectrum. One such category are 'rich' graves distinguished by the exceptional amount of grave goods in them. Extra-normativity in disposal, much like deviant burials, can be found in the direct body treatment. Flexed and flexed burials are appropriate comparative group and even merged with deviant burials on occasions. Secondary rites such as additional interments in a grave or the removal and movement of the corpse are other activities reflecting particular stereotypes in otherwise homogenous inhumation cemeteries. In fact, any larger view on medieval death culture will only stretch the list of possibilities.

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<sup>227</sup> K. Wiltshcke-Schrotta and P. Stadler, "Beheading," 61.

So far, the general trend shows that deviant burials are poor, since they contain none or fairly simple set of grave goods. Their spatial distribution is also quite distinct from the assumption for prominence and proximity to the sacred expected from elite graves. In a hypothetical spectrum of funerary practices, precisely the lavished burials stand on the opposite end from deviant burials. What is called normativity would occupy its middle. However, in reality the two opposites are closer than they appear.

Instances of unquestionably high-status deviant burials like the face-down placements of the Frankish king Pippin the Short or one of the individuals in the Avar-period 'princely' burial site Ozora-Tótipusztá are extremely rare.<sup>228</sup> Sometimes it was the place rather than the body that was reappropriated like in the case of Sutton Hoo where execution cemeteries developed in the pre-existing funerary landscape.<sup>229</sup>

On the Balkans the closest precedents are from the late Avar cemetery Bečej. The two female decapitations were discussed in detail earlier, but it is worth reiterating that the two women received the most lavished set of grave goods there and even more so by surpassing the usual gender profiles in contemporary sites. Especially explicit is the *peri mortem* decapitation Bcj.20 where the combination of likely prestigious objects and violent death was on display during the funeral. The other case, Bcj.32, represents an illustration for the renegotiation of the furnished grave as the resting place for a decapitated woman through grave reopening and post mortem violence. The latter proves to be a consistent reinterpretation strategy of such graves as the late tenth-eleventh century post mortem mutilation (Hdn.14) from the rural cemetery near Hodon testifies.

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<sup>228</sup> Thomas Meier, *Die Archäologie des mittelalterlichen Königsgrabes im christlichen Europa* (Stuttgart: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2002), 108; Péter Prohászka, *Az Ozora-Tótipusztai avar fejedelmi sírok* [Tombs of the Avar princes of Ozora-Tótipusztá] (Budapest: Martin Opitz Kiadó, 2012).

<sup>229</sup> Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant*, 131-134.

Items from precious metals are also very rare discovery in deviant burials. The few examples that might fit this category are earrings, a silver one from Ždrijac-Nin (ZdrN.237) and a gilded pair from Anevsko kale (AnK.49), and the silver ring from Brodski Drenovac (BrDr.32). The prominence of location for deviant burials could be regarded similar to high-status graves, but this matter will be considered in depth later. Anyway, the obvious conclusion is that while rich grave inventory and deviant practices can coincide, this is far from standard arrangement. Perhaps these rare occasions are simply an amplified attempt to negotiate the contradictory messages about the deceased.

Precisely this ambivalence in the evaluation creates the tensions encapsulated by extra-normative funerary behaviour. According to Meyer-Orlac, the parallel labels attached to the life of the person and the circumstances of death are the subject of assessment in burial situation.<sup>230</sup> Her explanatory model shaped Edeltraud Aspöck's view and summarizes the motivations behind the flexible application of the customs.<sup>231</sup> This internal logic was very well understood by medieval people themselves and whenever possible they tried to explore the contradiction to their benefit.

For instance, European aristocrats engaged in distant warfare were inclined to request the return of their bones to a specified burial location, a custom known as *mos teutonicos*.<sup>232</sup> The materiality of this operation required the defleshing of the corpse and is definitely an unusual practice. Interestingly, its potential for misconduct

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<sup>230</sup> Renate Meyer-Orlac, "Zur Problematic der 'Sonderbestattungen' in Archäologie." In: *Sonderbestattungen in der Bronzezeit im östliche Mitteleuropa* ed. Karl-Friedrich Rittershofer (Espelkamp: Verlag Marie Leidorf, 1997), 10, fig.2.2.

<sup>231</sup> Edeltraud Aspöck. "What actually," 22-3.

<sup>232</sup> The earliest known example is the burial of Lothar III, see Harmutt Rotting, "Die Grablege Lothars III," In: *Kirchen, Kloster, Manufakturen. Historische Kulturgüter im Lande Braunschweig* (Braunschweig: Braunschweiger Vereinigter Kloster- und Studienfonds, 1985), 61-82.

provoked church regulation.<sup>233</sup> However, this practice known from written records illustrates an attitude that might just as well be applied to an atypical fusion of high-status and deviant traits elsewhere. It has, in fact, been proposed for fallen soldiers among the medieval nomads.<sup>234</sup> Paradoxically, even in a situation of dubious moral evaluation or extraordinary societal pressure, deviant burials can turn out to be quite elaborated in terms of the operational stages and labour investment during their preparation.

Very telling is the tendency that in the cemeteries where deviant burials occur in higher numbers, the localized mode of deviant treatment is reproduced. One example could be the prevalence of fixations in Ždrijac-Nin, Maklinovo Brdo, Odartsi, Tsarkvishte or decapitations in Brodski Drenovac, Bečej, Batajnica, and Sirmium. The local people on the site of Trnjane resorted exclusively to decapitations and mutilations. And in the mortuary landscape of Pliska there is clear specification of the preferred form of maltreatment on each separate cemetery. Still, the imitation of a familiar practice does not automatically mean its exact reproduction. The accumulation of local repetition reveal the referential and self-upgrading nature of traditions streaming from the actions of people concerned with their own lives and circumstances.

Pliska demonstrated another local pattern standing out from the overall picture of deviant burials. This is the exclusive targeting of subadult burials for reopening and post mortem manipulations in the cemetery just outside the eastern gate of the city. Generally, the remains of children are poorly preserved which makes securely

<sup>233</sup> Elizabeth Brown, "Death and the human body in the late Middle Ages: The legislation of Boniface VIII on the division of the corpse," *Viator* 12 (1981).

<sup>234</sup> [Dimitar Stanchev] Димитър Станчев, "Ранносредновековен некропол номер 2 до с. Батин, Русенско" [Early medieval cemetery No.2 near Batin in the Russe district], *Известия на Историческия музей – Русе* 5 (1998): 14; Dorottya Uhrin, Beheading Among Nomads. (Paper presented at The Mongols in Central Europe: The Profile and Impact of their Thirteenth-Century Invasions, Budapest, 26-27. November 2020).

identifying deviant practices in such cases extremely difficult. From the insufficient anthropological data can be provisionally deduced that grown individuals from various age categories are the traditional target for funerary maltreatment. However, age deviations are not excluded and probably reflect specific personal circumstances. The suggested infanticide burial from Zagreb may signal for one possible context defined by the age of the deceased.

In fact, deviant burials for elderly people are even less common than for subadults. Additionally, these individuals were not defined only by their age due to significantly longer living experience they acquired. The previously mentioned female in Hodoni is a telling example for coexisting funerary display. Her rather lavished funeral adornments were left intact but her skeleton was mutilated nonetheless. On the contrary, children are bearers of acquired status. The negative gesture is towards the social group they belong to. Instances of incomplete rites of passage, e.g. baptism in Christianity, can make them a group expected to receive differential funerary treatment.

Negative associations and deviant practices were imposed on the subadults from Pliska posthumously during grave reopening. Speculations that this might be linked to the behaviour of their surviving relatives are easy to assume but impossible to prove. In Čik the prone position is reserved for infants, one of which was beheaded. Another subadult decapitation from Pesak was also emphasized by the symbolic substitution of the displaced skull. In their cases probably a combination of age at death and mode of dying were the main incentive for the funerary choice.

The position of the body is a major indication for normative (supine) and extra-normative disposal. Since face-down burials has been accepted here as the

absolute negation of the dominant supine placement, positions such as lying on the side, flexed, flexed, and contracted represent alternative forms of extra-normativity.

The early medieval pagan period on the northern Balkans, and particularly the Lower Danube region controlled by the Bulgars, provide substantial data for studying this variability. A significant number of inhumations lying on the side with different positions of the extremities or supine with flexed knees are recorded from the biritual and early Christian cemeteries. They share many characteristics with the deviant burials in this early period, such as shallow graves with plain furnishing or peripheral concentrations (e.g., Devnya-1, Topola). Regarding the observance of the prevailing orientation on the site, these graves also exhibit inconsistency with marked deviations on the sites Bdintsi and Balchik.<sup>235</sup>

However, the most thought-provoking expression of the early overlap in the practice are two prone burials from the Type II.A. The adolescent female (HHW.1) found during rescue digs on the Haemus Highway was disposed flexed in an entirely prone position. There were no grave goods, but the site dates to the eight century and is one of the earliest known inhumation burial grounds. Its closest parallel (Top.83) is from the large biritual cemetery Topola on the Black Sea coast. There the upper body is lying on its front and the legs are flexed on the right side.

The intermediate state between face-down and flexed position remains limited. Otherwise, on the Lower Danube contemporary prone burials belong to the complete Type I and later occurrences of Type II are all combined with decapitation. From the Type I specimens only one (Izv.234) resembles this arrangement with the body strongly turned to the side with the hands tied and the legs flexed to the left. The

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<sup>235</sup> [Evgenia Komatarova-Balinova] Евгения Коматарова-Балинова, “Хокери и псевдохокери от бiritуалните некрополи в България. Възможности за интерпретация” [Hockers and pseudo-hockers from the biritual necropoleis in Bulgaria. Possibilities for interpretation]. *Салтовомаяцька археологічна культура: проблеми та дослідження* 3 (2013): 82-4



chronological sequence shows that the initial interchangeability between the rites makes way for a much more explicit disjunction between supine and prone positions. Most likely, these alternative positions are reserved for people with unclear yet special social status.<sup>236</sup> Similar view was put forward by Jovan Kovačević for whom the flexed burials (*Hockerlage*) should not be considered a funerary custom bound to ethnic identity, but rather imposed on certain social group.<sup>237</sup>

This definitely seems to be the case for later examples from the western Balkans. A very similar arrangement was recorded near the thirteen-century graveyard of the church Holy Mother of God in Lobar. In a spatially separated zone were excavated only skeletons buried laterally. The only exception in the group was an individual with his skull and torso lying on the front and the legs flexed at the knees (Lob.879), much like in Izvoru. The analysis confirmed that this plot was allocated for people with leprosy, thus confirming their differential treatment based on their physical condition. However, despite the close connections, there was some differentiation in the case of Lob.879.

When it comes to other deviant practices, there is less secure evidence for correlation. For example, in the tenth-eleventh century cemetery Vukovar-Lijeva Bara (VLB.83) the severed skull is placed in the arms of a body whose legs were bent to the right. Back to the early medieval Lower Danube, one beheaded male (Slit.92) with possible further injuries to the post-cranial skeleton was extremely tightly buried in an unnaturally flexed way.

Finally, the most significant correlation between lateral or flexed burials and deviant practices is recorded in Devnya. Within the mass grave from Devnya-3, the diversity of body position is also well attested among the unusual maltreatment of the

<sup>236</sup> [Evgenia Komatarova-Balinova]. “Хокери“, 85.

<sup>237</sup> Jovan Kovačević, *Avarski kaganat*, 192.

victims. However, it must be noted that generally the uniformity of the burial custom on this site is low and especially the lower extremities exhibit a wide range of positions.

Basically, the extra-normative funerary practices oblige to the same flexible principles evident in the creation of ‘normal’ burial events. Nevertheless, the fundamental ties between various manifestations of the funerary customs should not be exaggerated. In spite of the similarities and even overlap with many other finds with various degree of standardization, the deviant burial practices remain distinct. When we simply consider their low frequency and distinctive appearance against coveted all-encompassing cultural norms, it is clear that these were sporadic events, momentous occurrences in the usual scope of archaeological timelines.<sup>238</sup>

The correlation between prone, decapitation, mutilation, and fixation burials is more frequent than with other extra-normative elements of the rite. Mass graves in their very essence are counter-intuitive for the customary preference for individual internment, at least until full decomposition, in most Balkan cultures. Even more importantly, the main four forms of maltreatment are consistently appearing in similar contexts across medieval Europe suggesting that funerary customs accommodate an almost universal understanding of deviant mortuary praxis for exceptional circumstances.

On the matter how deviant burials fit the regular funerary rites or other extra-normative manifestations of mortuary behaviour, the answer is fundamentally tied to the tension between tradition and personal agency. It seems that not the previously acclaimed religious conservatism of the custom, but the possibility to bend and

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<sup>238</sup> Rather poetically, the same applies to their discoveries in the archaeological work itself, contributing to the presentation of archaeology as active reopening of the past, reliving it on deeply psychological level. This condition could potentially have significance for greater self-awareness in the field and its communication to wider audiences.

manipulate the funerary rite gives this phenomenon its long-lasting functionality. Increased social attention of various scale are a factor in the ongoing negotiation between habitual dispositions preferable for the maintenance of long-term cultural conventions or structures and the embodied human existence. A deviant burial is socially imposed but can linger on unique life experiences and patterns in individual behaviour.<sup>239</sup>

It is tempting to read deviant burials as a manifestation of the social structures constituting the human being, thus stressing the so-called dividual expressions of personhood.<sup>240</sup> The juxtaposition of normative and extra-normative elements in the burial rite, as well as spatial inclusion in communal burial grounds also supports the existence of dividual notion. Here the observations on labelling during symbolic communication are relevant. Sometimes, the stigmatizing physical or social attributes take predominance over other personal qualities.<sup>241</sup> After death important aspects of constructing deviancy debated in social theory such as resistance and internalization, become overwhelmingly an instrument of social networks.

Arguably, the phenomenon, with its different cultural specifics and local variations, can be diachronically extended even further back to the Graeco-Roman Antiquity or advanced to the archaeology of early modern Europe. However, the consistent appearance of the deviant practices can be attributed to their unmitigated materiality and potential to convey vivid social messages. Then, are deviant burials terrifying outburst in human creativity or merely a mechanism for social pressure

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<sup>239</sup> Lynn Meskell, "Archaeologies of life and death," *American Journal of Archaeology* 103:1 (1999): 181-199.

<sup>240</sup> Marilyn Strathern, "Persons and partible persons," In: *Schools and Styles of Anthropological Theory* ed. Matei Candea (London: Routledge, 2018); Cf. Karl Smith, "From dividual and individual selves to porous subjects," *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 23 (2012): 53-56; Julian Thomas, "Notions of Personhood," In: *Archaeology: The Key Concepts* eds. Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn (London: Routledge, 2005), 139-142

<sup>241</sup> Martin Slaterry, *Key Ideas in Sociology* (Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes, 2003), 185.

ensuring the prevalence of the system? These aspects will be elaborated in the following sections.

### **3.2. The medieval body: concepts and reality**

The inevitable material basis of the human experience and engagement with the world is the body. Naturally, the body is also the universal commonality between us and the people from the past, the primordial domain of life and death. So far, much emphasis was put on the treatment of the corpse as the definitive activity of funerary behaviour. Recurring extra-normative activities were grounded and contributed in turn to the complex of cultural attitudes informing these choices. Moreover, the corporeal condition and the promiscuous impact of health and violence on living conditions also played their part during death processing.

Socio-anthropological notions of the body acknowledge its unique position in symbolic interactions as a natural representation of the society in general.<sup>242</sup> The social construct of the body mobilizes its particular symbolic properties, effectively creating an all-encompassing metaphor: everything symbolizes the body and the body symbolizes everything.<sup>243</sup> In similar fashion, Foucault places it in the centre of his views on the historically contingent power/knowledge relations within society.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970).

<sup>243</sup> Simon Williams and Gillian Bendelow, *The Lived Bodies: Sociological Themes, Embodied Issues* (London: Routledge, 1998), 26; Gerhart Ladner, "Medieval and modern understanding of symbolism: a comparison," *Speculum* 54:2 (1979): 227-8.

<sup>244</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

Thus, the body turned into yet another contested domain for public scrutiny from physicians, priests, relatives etc.<sup>245</sup>

Apparently, the body was crucial for medieval social classification according to physical traits like sex, age, health etc., which were regulated through constructed categories like stigma and gender.<sup>246</sup> The former is particularly relevant concept for the deviant burial practices where such representational schemes are materialized. But the body itself, however, holds an inherent, mostly unconscious biological capacity to create meaning. Thus, the body being a psychosomatic entity is an active agent in the social action, even its primary material component.<sup>247</sup>

### 3.2.1. Fragile bodies

Mary Douglas discerns the body to be a system of symbols ordering the social world<sup>248</sup>, but the medieval people inherited the ancient three-partite arrangement *caput-venter-membra* as the basis for all corporeal metaphors.<sup>249</sup> For the same reason, their effectiveness for the embodiment of certain political, religious or generally social meaning remains grounded in the physical capacities of the cadaver. Anastasia Tsaliki paved the road in this respect by stressing the need to understand the entanglement of biological and social aspects in human burials. She draws a parallel between the visible outcomes of the decomposition processes and folklore attributes of vampire beliefs and argues that the latter originated in imaginative misconceptions

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<sup>245</sup> Sarah Key and Miri Rubin (eds.), *Framing Medieval Bodies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 5.

<sup>246</sup> Roberta Gilchrist, "Medieval bodies in the material world," in: Sarah Key and Miri Rubin (eds.) *Framing Medieval Bodies*, 44.

<sup>247</sup> Simon Williams and Gillian Bendelow, *The Lived Bodies*, 35.

<sup>248</sup> Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 65.

<sup>249</sup> Jacques Le Goff and Nicolas Truong, *Die Geschichte des Körpers im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2007), 171.

about putrefactive processes like swelling.<sup>250</sup> Her conclusions, of course, could hardly be universally extended over the finer points in cross-cultural beliefs in revenants. Nevertheless, while the corpse is not openly displayed for observation in an intact grave, the natural and involuntary bodily processes can provoke the social response embedded in the funerary rituals.

Even prior to the death event, an individual could be singled out and stigmatized as consequence of a medical condition. Despite being natural even if unwanted part of life, disease and sickness can present another corporeal factor in social evaluation. Considering how entangled were body and soul in the medieval Christian worldview, many biblical practices influenced the cultural response to illness. Furthermore, any physical disorder could be understood and treated in religious terms, thus creating situations where stigmatization is likely to occur.

One needs to only recall the cultural impact ascribed to high mortality rates during the plague pandemics, especially the fourteenth century Black Death.<sup>251</sup> Various aspects of spirituality, from the popularity of certain monastic orders to a rise in superstitions and macabre narratives, indicate how many different things were transformed by the near-extinction levels of death during this time.<sup>252</sup> With the limited availability of aDNA evidence to identify the victims of medieval plague, especially in South-Eastern Europe, the material trace of mass mortality is recognized in multiple internments and mass graves on separated location. Therefore, deviant

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<sup>250</sup> Anastasia Tsaliki, "Vampires Beyond Legend: a Bioarchaeological Approach", in *Teramo Proceedings of the XIII European Meeting of the Paleopathology Association, Chieti, Italy, 18-23 Sept.* eds. Marina La Verghetta and Luigi Capasso (2000 (2001)).

<sup>251</sup> Daniel Williman (ed.), *The Black Death: The Impact of the Fourteenth-Century Plague*. Papers of the Eleventh Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies. *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies* 13 (Binghamton, N.Y.: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1982); Klaus Berdolt, *Der Schwarze Tod: die Große Pest und das Ende des Mittelalters* (Munich: Beck, 1994); David Herlihy, *The Black Death and the Transformation of the West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Stuart Borsch, *The Black Death in Egypt and England: A Comparative Study* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).

<sup>252</sup> Paul Binski, *Medieval Death. Ritual and Representation* (London: British Museum Press, 1996), 126-134.

burials could be involved in discussions about the Black Death, although there is no substantial evidence yet to elaborate on the causal connection between the two in the Balkan milieu.

Perhaps the only disease with comparable cultural significance in the medieval world was the leprosy. The Hansen's disease, as it is also known, is a chronic infection caused by the *Mycobacterium leprae* bacterium. The leprosy affects mostly the skin and bones, the respiratory track, the peripheral nerves, etc. Despite its low level of mortality, leprosy has visible symptoms and can cause impairment, especially in its severe form.

Historically documented leprosy created a strong reaction with its emotionally moving symptoms, well-documented biblical precedents, and apparent chronological permanence.<sup>253</sup> Across medieval Europe the social stigma surrounding the condition was varying chronologically and regionally, likely depending on how a given society assessed the contagious character of the disease.<sup>254</sup> Generally, the negative public portrayal of the outcast leprous body imposed a liminal identity on the individual. As Gilchrist notes, this liminality can be displayed spatially through the establishment of hospitals or expulsion to the communal boundaries.<sup>255</sup>

In the present sample with deviant burials there are two cases with indications for Hansen's disease, both from the territory of present-day Croatia. The first one is an adolescent female from the tenth-eleventh century Vukovar-Lijeva Bara (VLB.60). The woman died from cutting wounds on the head and buried in lateral flexed position within the main cemetery plot. The second case is a bent prone burial

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<sup>253</sup> François-Olivier Touati, *Maladie et société au Moyen Âge. La lèpre, les lépreux et les léproseries dans la province ecclésiastique de Sens jusqu'au milieu du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Brussels: Brepols, 1998), 17-19.

<sup>254</sup> Elma Brenner, "Recent Perspectives on Leprosy in Medieval Western Europe," *History Compass* 8/5 (2010): 391-396.

<sup>255</sup> Roberta Gilchrist, *Medieval bodies*, 49.



(Lob.879) from the late twelfth-thirteenth century churchyard in Lobar found in a separate section with larger group of burials with the identified disease, all placed in lateral position.<sup>256</sup>

The position of the corpse appears to be the main common element from the funerary treatment and remains unclear if the woman was killed due to her disease. The fact that she was included in the communal burial ground shows lesser degree of ostracism, much like the situation described for ninth-tenth century Radašinovci – Vinogradine.<sup>257</sup> Possibly the level of social segregation depended on the severity of the infection and cultural attitudes set within local communities at different periods. In the north-western Balkans, the leprosy and deviant funerary customs seem seldomly matched and the well-known medieval social convention for exclusion is adopted gradually.<sup>258</sup> In fact, the dating of Lob.879 is predating by almost a century the establishment of the first leprosariums in Dubrovnik (1272), Trogir (1322), and Split (1323), thus signifying the shift in attitudes.<sup>259</sup>

Finally, it should be reminded that coping with illness is as unescapable as death itself and the human experience and the cultural responses are connected to the severity and frequency of diseases in human populations.<sup>260</sup> From the limited data on past diseases obtained from deviant burials is clear that health issues, especially those affecting the physical appearance and behaviour, contribute to the negative social

<sup>256</sup> Information shared by Željka Bedić.

<sup>257</sup> Anita Adamić and Mario Šlaus, “The social treatment of leprosy individuals in 9-10th century Croatia,” *Our heritage: The Slavs* (2016): 13.

<sup>258</sup> Željka Bedić, Mario Šlaus and Helen Donoghue, “The earliest recorded case of lepromatous leprosy in continental Croatia,” *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* 25 (2019): 53.

<sup>259</sup> Josip Bakić, “Sedam stoljeća borbe protiv unosa zaraza u Hrvatske krajeve – Osvrt na 60. Obljetnicu ustroja suvremene djelatnosti DDD u Hrvata” (Seven centuries of the prevention of spreading of the infectious diseases into Croatia - overview of the 60th anniversary of establishment of modern pest control in Croatia) *Hrvatski časopis za javno zdravstvo* 7 (2011); Damir Karbić, “Marginalne grupe u hrvatskim srednjovjekovnim društvima od druge polovine XIII. do početka XVI. Stoljeća” [Marginal groups in Croatian medieval communities from the second half of the 13th until the end of 16th century], *Historijski zbornik* 44:1 (1991).

<sup>260</sup> Charlotte Roberts and Keith Manchester, *Archaeology of disease*. (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2005), 15.

evaluation. It can be also important in the interpretation of these cases that it is our modern perception that “medical” issues are treated in a different way. Diseases and even accidents in the Middle Ages were not necessarily treated separately and happened in a very different (spiritual, religious) milieu.<sup>261</sup>

### 3.2.2. Head

By far the most popular and well-represented somatic entity is the head, unquestionably due to its unmatched cognitive potential for visual perception. In the northern Balkans, the special place of the head in the figural repertoire is evident already among the early medieval pre-Christian cultures, notably the Avars and Bulgars.

The imagery of the golden jug No.2 from the Nagyszentmiklós treasure uses the head motif quite vividly. In one of the medallions a triumphant mounted warrior is depicted. On his saddle hangs upside down the severed head of a man, probably a vanquished foe. However, the foremost portrayal of the victorious ride is centered around a demeaning gesture. With his left hand the rider is dragging an armoured captive by the hair. Another medallion contains the image of a winged composite creature with bearded human-like face.

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<sup>261</sup> Heinrich Schipperges, *Die Kranken im Mittelalter* (München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1990).



Figure 85 The decorative medallion on jug No. 2 from the Nagyszentmiklos treasure depicting a triumphant warrior with a captive and a severed head. Photo by Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna

According to the written sources, the Bulgar khan Krum after defeating Nicephore I displayed his head in public for several days and then made a drinking cup from his skull.<sup>262</sup> This story, even if accepted as malevolent foreign propaganda, establishes a historical trope among the Byzantines about their northern neighbours.<sup>263</sup> Centuries later, following the loss in the battle of Adrianople in 1205, George Akropolites would claim that Kaloyan made a goblet from the skull of Baldwin I.<sup>264</sup> Again in direct reference to Bulgarian aristocracy, a chalice from human skull is described in Czech folklore.<sup>265</sup>

Anyhow, this visual and literary symbolism is sometimes seen as a quasi-religious veneration of the living energy or *orenda* among the semi-nomad societies

<sup>262</sup> [Vesselin Beshevliev] Веселин Бешевлиев, “Чаши от черепи у прабългарите” [Skull-made chalices among the Proto-bulgarians], *Годишник на Софийския Университет: Историко-филологически факултет* 12:3 (1926): 3-6.

<sup>263</sup> Angel Nikolov, “Khan Krum in the Byzantine tradition: terrible rumours, misinformation and political propaganda,” *Bulgaria Mediaevalis* 2 (2011): 43-6.

<sup>264</sup> George Akropolites, *The History. Introduction*, Translation and commentary by Ruth Macrides (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 139-140.

<sup>265</sup> [Yordan Andreev] Йордан Андреев, *Любовните истории и сексът в Българското средновековие* [Love stories and sex in the Bulgarian Middle Ages] (Veliko Tarnovo: Abagar, 2006), 74-93.

on the Middle and Lower Danube.<sup>266</sup> The head is perceived as the vessel of this substance and through its removal and manipulation, this force could be removed or obtained.

Arguably, the hair growth was attributed to the concentration of this force and social status was negotiated through it. For instance, the contrast between shaved head and long hair preserved in a peculiar comment in the List of Bulgarian Rulers, is attributed to the restrictions on hairstyle between the male subjects of the khan.<sup>267</sup> Also relevant to this motif, the newly converted Bulgars of the ninth century felt obliged to ask if women should cover their heads when entering the church.<sup>268</sup>

More discernible allusion is made in a sun graffiti on a brick from the western gate of Pliska. The face shows the eyes and upper eyelashes, the nose with the nostrils, and the mouth with the tongue, while radial rays surround it on three sides.<sup>269</sup> By all means the head is closely associated with physical identity and is entangled in the symbolic language of power.

The Christianity, as usual, had a reliable Biblical archetype to match and appropriate this disposition. The Old Testament tells the story of Samson whose strength was derived from his uncut hair until the infamous Delilah cut it, thus making him vulnerable to his enemies, the Philistines. They captured and blinded the Israelite before eventually God granted Samson his revenge.<sup>270</sup> Notably, the beheading of St. John the Baptist is one of the most significant biblical narratives paving the way to a long list of martyrs who lost their head for the faith, including Paul the Apostle.

<sup>266</sup> [Veselin Beshevliev], *Чаши*, 21-22.

<sup>267</sup> [Anani Stoynev] Анани Стойнев, *Светогледът на прабългарите* [The worldview of the Protobulgarians] (Sofia: Marin Drinov Academic Publishing, 2006), 83-4.

<sup>268</sup> *Responsa Nicolai I. Papae ad consulta Bulgarorum (anno 866)*, edited by N. Pope and D. Dechev (Sofia: University of Sofia, 1939), chapter 58; Anani Stoynev, *Светогледът*, 100.

<sup>269</sup> Evgenia Komatarova-Balinova, "Monuments with anthropomorphic representations from the Bulgarian pagan period," In: *Pagan Bulgaria. Power and Society* eds. Metodi Daskalov. et al. (Sofia: National Archaeological Institute with Museum, 2017), 70-1.

<sup>270</sup> Judges 13-16.

The latter is instrumental in the adoption of the bodily symbolism in Christian context as he described Christ as the head of the mystical body of the church.<sup>271</sup> The church maintained this self-presentation throughout the Middle Ages and legitimized its adoption in the political sphere of life.<sup>272</sup>

The archaeological records for decapitation inform us on the long-term application of the symbolism. The semantic context for the human remains reveals that in addition to the separation of the head from the body, a decapitation burial can be read through a nuanced set of cultural references.

The patterning of Type I and Type II decapitations has shown that the two are largely separate from each other. Once the head and the rest of the body were subjected to diverging funerary practices, their separation was irreversible. In this burial situation, the symbolic properties of the head would receive even more attention. Even in the decapitation burials from Type III, there is a clear attempt to emphasize the disembodiment through the placement of the skull (or only the cranium) in an unnatural position. Of course, it must be recapitulated that integrated anthropological examination in the future could identify beheadings replicating the correct anatomical position of the skull or contribute to the understanding of the post-depositional taphonomy.

Curiously, the early peak of decapitation burials confirms the special interest in the human head by the semi-nomad communities on the Middle and Lower Danube. Similar cultural inclinations are attributed to the pagan Avars and Bulgars, but to the Magyars from the tenth century as well.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Eph 4:15.

<sup>272</sup> Jacques Le Goff and Nicolas Truong, *Die Geschichte*, 171.

<sup>273</sup> Jovan Kovačević and Danica Dimitrijević. "Srednjovekovna nekropola u Batajnici" [Medieval cemetery in Batajnica], *Arheološki pregled* 1 (1959): 151.

Perhaps the deposition of skulls in some graves testifies that the head preserves the personal identity and could enable the funeral *pars pro toto*. Following the same line of thought, its absence from the grave could signify the importance of symbolic representation of the beheaded individual in a different context.

Despite the miscellaneous placement of the head, the decapitations from Type III in this early phase are more likely to represent an opposition between the skull and the rest of the skeleton. This symbolism is entirely organized around the central axis of the human body.

Especially efficient countering was achieved by placing the face in a direction impossible with intact neck. This includes, among others, reversal of the face orientation like in Brodski Drenovac (BrDr.32) or looking towards the body like in Bačka Topola (BcT.101). Another popular arrangement was the displacement of the head by the legs as in Sinj (Snj.10), Bečej (Bc.20) or Vojka (Vjk.a). Sites like Bačka Topola and Čelarevo are interesting in this respect, because they contain examples of both practices.

Vojka offers a particularly informative and outstanding demonstration of head manipulation in late seventh-century Vojvodina. In addition to the concentration of decapitation burials of Type I and Type III, on the site was discovered the grave of a very old woman (Vjk.24). Her head was nailed down with a large iron spike and in addition several large stones and fragmented tiles pressured her chest. The mode of head fixation resembles earlier known cases from the late Roman period<sup>274</sup>, while the variety of used objects is unmatched in this early phase.

Some analogous targeting of the head and chest simultaneously is registered in a subadult grave on the late seventh-century site Sovinjsko Brdo-Mali Vrh (SvBr.5) in

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<sup>274</sup> Alessandro Quercia and Melania Cazzulo, "Fear of the Dead? 'Deviant' Burials in Roman Northern Italy," *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fifth Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference* eds. Matthew J. Mandich et al. (Oxford: Oxbow, 2016), 30-40.

the Adriatic coastal zone. Later, in Devnya near the Black Sea some similar arrangements will be applied targeting the head (Dv3.71 and Dv1.77) or the head and the torso (Dv1.24b). The figurative use of the body axis with the head and the legs being its natural oppositions is evident also in their targeting for fixation also from Devnya (Dv1.48). Unlike in Vojka, stones were the exclusive material at this point.

Other forms of decapitation arrangement are less chronologically pronounced. The symbolic associations promoted are no less meaningful and open to interpretation by medieval audiences. Most clearly this could be seen in the modification of the anatomical position of the head. The prone position is well attested before the Christianization of the northern Balkans, but the steady rise of its Type II.B against the rarity of other reversed placements indicates a preference towards the face-down placement. The position could be contextualized by ever-present iconographic and narrative imagery of humiliation and shame. Such connotations will receive a special drift in Christian milieu.

The face-down placement was the chosen treatment for another individual (Odz.24) diagnosed with the dental condition macrodontia. Simply put this is the oversized growth of one or several teeth in the mouth, which in turn leads to irregular physical appearance and the related psychological concerns like low self-esteem and confidence issues. In the case of the male from the late Avar site Odžaci V in Vojvodina, the macrodontia affected his canine teeth. Much like in Tsaliki's argument, this genetic condition fits the popular image of vampires in the modern world. However, there is no indication that such association would have been relevant in the cultural context of the early ninth century when the person lived.

Another way in which an ostensible bodily condition can create a cultural response is quite evident in the artificial cranial deformations in the mass grave from



Devnya-3. The adult female individual No.74 had plagiocephaly or the flat head syndrome. This condition is characterized by the asymmetrical distortion of the skull. In fact, the majority of the females from the mass grave experienced artificial skull deformation, but No.74 already had a skull deformation due to her genetic condition which was emphasized and advanced through the bodily manipulation. For her special place among the victims testifies her particular disposal: lying prone on the very bottom of the pit with her torso and legs tightly covered by forty-nine stones.

Not unlike leprosy, key element in macrodontia and cranial deformations is their impact on the physical appearance of the person. Fairly certainly the behaviour and social interactions of these individuals were affected and fostered the extra-normative position ascribed to them. To this point, the assessment made by Sergej Karmanski, the original investigator of the Odžaci cemeteries, is peculiar. In his words the condition ‘gave a beastly appearance of the deceased’s face [...] it is logical that, due to his ugly looks, they expected him to possess a bad temperament’.<sup>275</sup>

Skeletal remains from archaeological contexts are extremely rarely offering more information for the added significance of personal looks and facial expressions in the non-verbal communication, including within the funerary context. After all the perishable eyes, ears, nose, mouth, even skin were all included in the symbolic vocabulary of medieval people. May be the purpose of the stone slab on the head aims not only to weight it down, but to conceal it. Perhaps facing the bottom of the grave pit was necessary due to added significance of certain facial features.

The late fourteen-early fifteen century fixation from Plovdiv (Pdv.507) provides a rare archaeological insight into the importance of orifices. In addition to the tile covering the skull, a brick was put inside the mouth of the deceased. This find

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<sup>275</sup> Sergej Karmanski, *Nalazi iz perioda seobe narode na teritoriji jugozapadne Bačke* [Finds from the Migration period on the territory of south-western Bačka] (Odžaci: Amaterska Museološka sekcija Jugozapadne Baške, 1976), 12.

enters a visual dialogue with similar discoveries in Italy and German-speaking Europe.<sup>276</sup> However, the peculiar fixation reflects the widespread medieval perception that the mouth, much like the eyes, was a two-way sensory medium. Furthermore, the mouth was a key point of contact with the sacred as the kissing of icons or saint's relics in Christianity reminds us.<sup>277</sup> The belief that the soul is associated with breath and enters/leaves the body through the mouth is present in Slavic folklore.<sup>278</sup>

More common application of the anatomical disorder is manifested in the placement of the head or part of it (cranium) on the torso. The shoulders and upper arms seem to have often been appropriated this way after the tenth century. Especially dramatic is the body keeping the skull in its hands from Vukovar-Lijeva Bara (VLB.83). Particular association occurs in ninth-tenth century Ravna-Camps where the skulls of two beheaded males were found on their pelvises (RnC.10/67, RnC.11/67).

The various misplacements of the severed head have two-fold purpose in the creation of mortuary impressions. First, this is the employment of the head-motif for the purpose of the deviant burial. The second aspect is re-directing attention to the changes in the natural state expressed in the burial. Thus, the associations negotiated between the misplaced head and the target body parts set up the inquiry into the possible meanings attached to the rest of the body.

### 3.2.3. Torso

<sup>276</sup> David Barrowclough, *Time to Slay*, 7-8.

<sup>277</sup> Jack Hartnell, *Medieval Bodies: Life, Death and Art in the Middle Ages* (London: Profile Books, 2018), 81-2.

<sup>278</sup> Suzana Marjanić, „Croatian Folklore Notions of the Post-mortal and Cataleptic Soul” In: *Body, Soul, Spirits and Supernatural Communication* ed. Éva Pócs (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019), 113-114; Andriy Temchenko, “Bodily Soul” in Healing and Magical Practices of the Slavs,” *Cherkasy University Bulletin: Historical Sciences* 1 (2019): 87-88.

The trunk of the body is the central category in its axial configuration. Also, in purely physical terms, it offers the most substantial plain for manipulation with three distinctive zones of interest: the chest, the abdomen, and the pelvis. Each of them was one way or another subject to manipulation, occasionally detectable in archaeological context.

The heart was recognized as the most important part of the chest and held a special significance in medieval symbolic configurations. Its position could perhaps be compared only to the head and with the reapreciation of the Aristotelian physiological views even surpassed it.<sup>279</sup> The heart was also linked to memory and the divine word through the Biblical trope on the tablets of human heart.<sup>280</sup> Anyhow, the most enduring notion designates the emotional state and spiritual feeling of the body, i.e. the person, to the heart.<sup>281</sup>

In the hierarchical narrative about the human body, the medieval people inevitably had to deal with its lower orders too. The stomach and the anus on one side and the genitalia on the other offered awkward and provocative set of 'natural symbols' to be exploited. Indeed, the digestive and sexual properties most vividly reminded the human body is both sacred and profane.<sup>282</sup> In this privy area, the symbolic order depends on the bodily transgressive side of human corporeality.<sup>283</sup> Thus, it highlights the impossibility of the proper and pure in the material world, a central conflict for religious thinking but especially well-documented in Christianity.

In funerary context, the potential of bodily waste and decay to signify the pressures on the socially-defined and religiously-proscribed order and its boundaries

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<sup>279</sup> Takashi Shogimen, "Head or heart?" revisited: physiology and political thought in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries," *History of Political Thought* 28:2 (2007): 213-5.

<sup>280</sup> e.g., 2 Cor.3:2-3.

<sup>281</sup> Jack Hartnell, *Medieval Bodies*, 150.

<sup>282</sup> Jack Hartnell, *Medieval Bodies*, 226-8, 232-262.

<sup>283</sup> Simon Williams and Gillian Bendelow, *The Lived Bodies*, 28.

is transparent. The practicality of some liminal rites of passage like washing the cadaver clearly becomes a form of re-ordering the body transgression. In strictly archaeological terms, the decomposing of these important body parts leave little trace for ritual performance centered on them. Yet, some deliberate interest can be plausibly distinguished through the deviant burial practices detectable on the skeletal remains.

The restructuring of the body order towards the torso and the pelvis is found in seldom early medieval decapitations, predominantly in Istrian sites (Čelega, Veli Mlun, Žminj). Resembling the case in Veli Mlun (VIMl.89), the skull was placed under the pelvis in the contemporary site Bogojevo (Bog.3). The already mentioned skull-pelvis association detected in Ravna-Campsia is apparently different, because the skulls were found on top of the pelvis.

Few confirmed mutilations of the skeleton from Type I should also be included here. All of them are quite early and represent a particular interest in the post-mortem displacement of the chest. In the seventh century example from Čik (Cik.4) a part of the rib cage is found next to skull. This pattern is repeated in the two examples on the Lower Danube from Izvoru (Izv.24) and Varbyane (Var.11). The former had thoracic vertebrae and the right clavicle by the skull and the latter had nearly the entire right rib-cage where the head was supposed to be. In these pre-Christian cases we can see an echo of the head-motif typical for the period, but executed in the different direction.

In the later phase between the eleventh and fourteen century, especially in rural sites near the Iron Gates like Pesak 1 and 2, the chest becomes the preferred area for head displacement. An exception occurs in eleventh-twelfth century Ilidia to the

north of the Danube where the skull was placed on the abdomen between the hands (IIDO.2).

The latest known burial of this kind, a female decapitation (Psk2.82) with the skull on the chest, had a coin by Charles Robert (1308-1342) found by the mandible indicating the *terminus post quem*. By that time, the hearth achieved some prominence in the corporal symbolic order, at least in the Catholic world. As demonstrated by this case, the head-hearth primacy was negotiated through the medium of funerary performance and outside of the elitist literary or artistic milieu no less. It also suggests the development of certain shared symbolism in medieval Europe materialized through deviant burial practices, especially in the contact zones.

The fixation burials can also expose the medieval concepts of the human body. For instance, in the Adriatic the trunk is the principal target for the widespread fixation burials from Type I. In the north, on the seventh-century Istrian site Mejica kod Buzet the stone was placed in the abdomen area (McB.195). Later variations often appear in combination with other body parts. The torso as a whole was fixated when the abdomen was weighted down with the chest in Gorica (Grc.169) and with the pelvis in Ždrijac-Nin (ZdrN.237). Interesting framing of the torso can be seen in another fixation from there combining the pelvis with the chest (ZdrN.13).

Elsewhere in the Balkans, the pelvis attracts some attention as sole fixation target between the ninth and eleventh century. In the twelfth century the torso is singled out for the rare fixation with ferrous objects (Type III). Probably the most curious example is the use of an iron sickle to press the pelvis (Svt.27), thus doubling on the symbolic act of fixation. The diversification in the symbolic significance of the torso in this period is also evident in Tsarkvishte. There (Tsr.17) stones and tiles are applied to different parts of the shoulders, the chest, and the pelvis.

### 3.2.4. Limbs

Finally, the limbs form a unit of their own in the symbolic rendition of the body. The lower and upper extremities are by nature active, the vehicle of human deeds. Of course, there are differences. Above all else, the limbs facilitate and represent movement.

The ability of hands to direct touch, to establish this sensual proximity makes them instrumental for this fundamental measure of vitality.<sup>284</sup> Respectively, they can fulfil multiple other tasks from work to making gestures. These two semantic conditions make their position particularly expressive. In mortuary context, they are the body parts offering the greatest variety.

The legs and feet were conceptualized in somewhat similar conduit. Their critical role in the motion of the body makes them even more potent indication for life, for the animation of the corpse. Further, the legs become especially important in the ceremonial expression of power. For instance, in the Byzantine court etiquette the *proskynesis* before the emperor included kneeling before him, face-down (!) and kissing his feet. Some more important people were allowed to kiss the emperor's hand or right cheek.<sup>285</sup> This Byzantine custom express the attributed roles for each body part in complicated body politics at the highest level. Similar appreciation could be found in a cross-cultural trickle-down view on situations where clear definition of social relationships was necessary.

The long tubular bones of the limbs, much like the skull or the pelvis, are among the strongest element in the human anatomy. In addition to the clear

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<sup>284</sup> Jack Hartnell, *Medieval Bodies*, 189.

<sup>285</sup> Leslie Brubaker, "Gesture in Byzantium," *Past & Present* 203:4 (2009): 41-50, 56.

archaeological advantage of better preservation, this makes them the easiest to identify and the most widespread resource for any secondary manipulation. The mortuary access to the skeleton was by no means an isolated happening in the medieval period. It remains though an almost intimate and fundamental form of body transgression available.

Unsurprisingly, the symbolic potential of the limbs was not neglected in deviant burial practices. Fixation burials seem particularly well fit application to the corporal members so strongly associated with motion. Targeting them is recorded in the early phase around Nin and scattered on the Lower Danube. Interestingly, the phenomenon increases in frequency to the east after the conversion to Christianity (especially in Devnya-2). This shows that symbolism was shared between distinct groups. It also may signify the spread of quite literary notion for the resurrected dead raising from graves.

There is another chronological change after the late eleventh – twelfth century. Then fixations aimed at the legs or feet are rather appearing in the central part of the Balkans on mostly rural sites like Vratsa, Pesak-2, Kovachevo.

Some development is observed in the composition of the fixation burials. The examples from Maklinovo Brdo are clearly focusing on the torso and the legs in combined fixations. This is also observed on the Lower Danube (e.g., CpV.182) up until the eleventh century. However, the axial emphasis on head and legs simultaneously is evident around the east-central Balkans after the ninth century (e.g., Beo.35, Dur.106, Psk.1). Even if the materiality of the custom evolves, the diachronic patterns maintain a uniformitarian understanding of the human body.

Mutilations of the post-cranial skeleton are also particularly important in this respect. Clearly, the vast majority of these deviant burials is compiled of recorded



manipulations focused precisely on the limbs. Some examples from Types I and IV can reveal a lot on the corporal symbolism lying at the very heart of these practices.

Amputation can be another cultural action in reaction to the bodily state with importance for understanding deviant burials in the archaeological record. Indeed, the motivation behind the traumatic intervention on the human body can be caused by extrasomatic factors, such as punishment, combat triumph or other coercive purpose.<sup>286</sup> Much like some cases discussed previously, the amputation changes the physical appearance, and the related emotional and psychological reaction can directly affect the social standings of the individual. Furthermore, the limb loss can create the image of incomplete individual and impose a dependent lifestyle, which can also contribute to the stigma of a social outcast.

The biocultural study of amputations is still gaining traction in the analysis of the osteological remains from archaeological context. The disregard of this explanatory possibility in Balkan background illustrates the problems with inert acceptance of the dominant anti-vampirism narrative surrounding deviant burials. To anthropologically confirm medical limb loss and its cause the absence of bones from the skeletal assemblage is supported by observations on the patterns of lesions and the bone remodelling (Fig. 84). Unfortunately, such detailed examination is often missing, but it is worth demonstrating the plausibility for medical amputation in some mutilation cases. Particularly encouraging in this respect are the critical discussions on bilateral foot loss and peri mortem foot or forearm amputations.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Anna Mavroforou, Konstantinos Malizos, Theofilos Karachalios, Konstantinos Chatzitheofilou, Athanasios D. Giannoukas, “Punitive Limb Amputation,” *Clinical Orthopaedics and Related Research* 472:10 (2014): 3104-3105.

<sup>287</sup> Caroline Stuckert and Morrie Kricun, “A case of bilateral forefoot amputation from the Romano-British cemetery of Lankhills, Winchester, UK,” *International Journal of Paleopathology* 1(2011): 111-116.; Teresa Fernandes, Marco Liberato, Carina Marques, and Eugénia Cunha, “Three cases of feet and hand amputation from Medieval Estremoz, Portugal,” *International Journal of Paleopathology* 18 (2017): 63-68.

1 2	Location of origin	Bone Loss	Callus Osseous	Classic Pattern of Lesions	Bone remodelling
Healed necrosis	Total skeletal system	Avulsion injuries	Possible	Bone loss	Yes, in case of survival
Congenital defect	Limbs	No	No	Immobility, osteoporosis	No
Peri mortem loss	Total skeletal system	Amputated part of the body	No	Very slight remodelling	If survived, after 15 days
Post mortem loss	Total skeletal system	Amputated part of the body	No	No remodelling	No
Ante mortem loss	Total skeletal system	Amputated part of the body	Yes	Bone remodelling	Yes

Table 17 Differential diagnosis of limb loss with the indicators (1) for the pathological conditions (2). Based on Ileana Micarelli et al. Survival to amputation in pre-antibiotic era: a case study from a Longobard necropolis (6th-8th centuries AD), *Journal of Anthropological Sciences* 96 (2018): Tab.4.

Uncontrollable infections from injury or disease and frostbite can lead to amputation. Until recently, the frostbite was mainly military problem during prolonged campaigns when the refreezing cycles of soldiers harmed the body parts. The retreat of Napoleon from Moscow in 1812 is perhaps the best documented account connecting the diagnosis with warfare condition. A study on medieval populations from the territory of Russia shows the big impact of temperature stress in trauma among males precisely due to their greater involvement in military and intense outdoors labour activities.<sup>288</sup> Also, horse riding and hunting accidents can be relevant in this context.<sup>289</sup>

By all means, the extremities and especially the feet are particularly succumbed to this health hazard. Even in the fifteen century the medical compendia available to physicians were quite limited in their advice regarding feet as the well-documented amputation of the left foot of Holy Roman emperor Friedrich III

<sup>288</sup> [Alexandra Buzhilova] Александра Бужилова, *Homo Sapiens История болезни* [Homo Sapiens. History of disease] (Moscow: Языки славянской культуры, 2005), 239.

<sup>289</sup> Šimun Anđelinović, Ivana Anterić, Ela Škorić and Željana Bašić, "Skeleton Changes Induced by Horse Riding on Medieval Skeletal Remains from Croatia," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 32:5 (2015): 717-8.

shows.<sup>290</sup> Despite the access to the best available care and the successful surgical operation, the emperor still died few weeks later.<sup>291</sup> A fatal outcome would have been a very real possibility, especially with worse medical provision. Notably in this context, his amputated left leg was also buried with him in his burial monument.

From the deviant burials on the Balkans nine examples from Type I mutilations, four more from Type II, and one from Type IV are affecting the feet. From this sample, the majority are cases of single removed foot (n=10) without a set preference towards right or left side. Not necessarily a hard proof, such natural variance seems more reflective of indiscriminative medical foot loss than an established ritual practice.

Moreover, the Type I mutilation graves all contain the removed body parts, usually displaced around the remaining legs. This is another indication for the perimortem intervention. In the cases where the feet bones are missing altogether from the graves, the importance for detection of cut marks and lesions become even more important. Arguably, the Type II mutilations on one male from Devnya (Dv1.13) and a female from Trnjane (Trn.22) show no macroscopic signs for advanced healing on the cut surface, thus offering another hint at amputation around the time of death.

Forearm and specifically hand amputations are not as medically restricted as feet amputations and more biocultural explanations are possible.<sup>292</sup> Anyway, the anthropological markers for the timing of the intervention remain the same. In the sample three secure cases of displaced hands are known from Type I mutilations in rural cemeteries around the twelfth century (Trn.113, Trn.212, and Kvc.88). One earlier case from tenth century Sakardzha (Skr.118) should be excluded from here

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<sup>290</sup> Jack Hartnell, *Medieval Bodies*, 264

<sup>291</sup> Daniel Carlo Pangerl, "Item as Kaiser Friedrich's foot was amputated". The leg amputation of Kaiser Friedrich III on 8 June 1493 in Linz," *Sudhoffs Archiv* 94, 2 (2010): 195-200.

<sup>292</sup> See here, 3.4.2.

since the intervention likely occurred during grave reopening in advanced skeletonization. The possibility for hand amputation with medical motivation is more speculative for now. Future research will be wise to make use of more interdisciplinary observations on newly discovered mutilation cases to assess such proposals.

The displacement of the separated limbs very often exploits the same axial opposition described for the decapitations. For instance, this is very evident in Trnjane where the right hand of an adult male was placed against the rest of his right arm with orientation E-W (Trn.113). Another way involved reversing the positions along the longitudinal or transverse axis, as recorded in early medieval Čonoplja the right arm was beneath the left femur (Čon.9a). The twelfth century rural cemetery Kovachevo, which is contemporary to Trnjane, shows an example for both. In one of the graves (Kvc.88) the left hand was cut and placed by the right hand pointing at the elbow.

Another aspect shows that the space between the legs was deemed appropriate to receive the separated body parts. This was indiscriminately applied to instances of *peri mortem* and *post mortem* deviant practices in all periods. The body parts list includes skulls (Člr.244), mandible (Dv2.74), arms (Kvc.97), and especially feet (Izv.64, Vrn.10, Skr.89).

Grave reopening situations enabled the figural re-ordering of the body in new socially constructed and ritually proscribed manner. This practice evoked visual symbolism using the long bones set against the skeletal anatomical order.

The earlier form dates from the late tenth-eleventh century and crosses the bones to form an X-sign. In Vukovar-Lijeva Bara the left radius and ulna were crossed on the pelvis of a woman (VLB.376). In the other, possibly female burial there (VLB.363), the tibiae are crossed. Another contemporary female grave in

Hodoni (Hdn.14) exhibits similar alignment. The two femur bones were X-crossed, thus interrupting the continuity of the legs, and closing on the pelvis at the same time.

In late eleventh-early thirteenth century Trnjane the practice is modified. The left arm bones of an adult male (Trn.52) were used to make the cross-sign in proximity to the misplaced cranium. This later variant differs not only by its explicit Christian reference, but also via the probable link to the head and the demographic profile of the deceased consistent with the local trend.

Last but not least is one mutilation find in the northern Balkans from the late ninth-early tenth century cemetery Nikolovo. The adult woman buried in there (Nik.185) is missing parts of her right extremities, namely the hand and the lower leg. Despite that such combination is unrecorded so far, there are parallels in other mutilation cases. What makes this burial even more intriguing is the addition of the nearly complete arm of another individual placed diagonally on her torso. Based on the robustness of the bones, Dimitar Stantchev hints at the possibility that this is a male arm.<sup>293</sup> There are evidence for entire missing arms elsewhere, but the accumulation and position must be emphasized.

The specific circumstances and meaning behind this morbid hug cannot be convincingly reconstructed at least with our current level of knowledge. However, the funerary display relies on the referential symbolism of this gesture and the missing/added limbs. Their importance in creating the allegorical narrative focalized on the body of the dead woman could not be clearer.

Thus far, several medieval concepts about the body were explored from the perspective provided by deviant burial practices. And so, as the repeated negotiation

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<sup>293</sup> [Dimitar Stanchev] Димитър Станчев, “Прабългарски компоненти в погребалния обряд и инвентара на ранносредновековните некрополи в Русенско” [Protobulgarian features in the funerary ritual and inventory in the early medieval necropoleis in the area of Ruse], *Проблеми на прабългарската история и култура* 1 (1989): 243-244.

of corporal separation is discovered around different sites on the map and different sides of the body, the ubiquitous tension between the complete body and its parts comes to light.

Studies on deliberate fragmentation have stressed that enchainment of fragmented objects or, in fact, human bones as a corporate strategy reinstating social relations and networks.<sup>294</sup> The similarity explains the commodification of human remains, a process well documented for medieval saints' relics and plausibly affecting the deviant burials too. It also supports the notion for influential reciprocal thinking along the society-body categories, which will be recalled during the discussion on their religious and socio-political interpretation.

The observations on fragmentation in prehistoric deviant burials led Chapman to distinguish practices that could be used to transgress social order and create hybrid images.<sup>295</sup> Fragmentation as the main provision for deviant practices could be found in the majority of the burials from the sample. Anyway, the most prominent illustration for its representative power is the mass grave from Devnya-3.

Accompanying acts of substitution and re-integration are included in the medieval repertoire too. One such example comes from the Avar-age Perlek (Prl.13). The disarticulated human leg bones were coupled with a half canine skeleton. The only other confirmed case when deviant grave symbolically overcomes species boundaries is from the eight-early tenth century Hitovo-2 (Hit.32). The adult female was placed in prone position, while the articulated sheep skeleton next to her was fixated by a large stone.

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<sup>294</sup> John Chapman, "Deviant' burials in the neolithic and chalcolithic of Central and South Eastern Europe", in: *Body parts and bodies whole: changing relations and meanings* ed. Katharina Rebay-Salisbury, Marie Louise Stig Sorensen, Jessica Hughes (Oxford: Oxbow, 2010), 33-5.

<sup>295</sup> John Chapman, "Deviant' burials", 37.

Another familiar approach to substitution was the replacement of the missing or displaced body part by object(s). These were usually several stones instead of the head like in Dervent (Drvt.5) or Pesak 2 (Psk2.30) on the Danube, but in Pliska the target body part are the legs (POE.51 and POE.77).

### **3.3. The enchanted ritual: Hybridity in medieval religion and belief systems**

Religion and belief systems can have an all-pervading influence on the material culture detectable through archaeological means. Regarding deviant burials, there is a very telling conjunction with the natural temptation for archaeologists to define other contexts of strange nature without immediately recognized functionality as the remnants of religious rituals. Despite the elusive essence of religions, recognition for their entwined structural role in societal life is indispensable to our reading of the past.<sup>296</sup>

Multiple archaeological approaches to religion have been generated with varying application potential.<sup>297</sup> Among them one recent contribution advocated for holistic reshaping of the archaeological agenda exploring religious transformations in the *longue durée* between the end of classical Roman imperialism and the

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<sup>296</sup> Timothy Insoll, *Archaeology, Ritual, Religion* (London: Routledge, 2004), 154-155.

<sup>297</sup> For instance, in reference to death-rites see: Lewis Binford, *Mortuary practices*; Peter Metcalf, "Meaning and materialism: The ritual economy of death," *Man* 16:4 (1981): 563-578; Richard Bradley, "Ritual, Time and History," *World Archaeology* 23:2 (1991): 209-219; Joanna Brück, "Ritual and Rationality: Some Problems of Interpretation in European Archaeology", *European Journal of Archaeology* 2 (1999): 313-343; Mike Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), 194-195; Timothy Taylor, *The Buried Soul: How Humans Invented Death* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2002); Evangelos Kyriakidis, "Finding ritual: Calibrating the evidence," In: *The Archaeology of Ritual* ed. Evangelos Kyriakidis (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology UCLA, 2007), 9-22; Antonius Robben (ed.), *Death, Mourning, and Burial. A cross-cultural reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2017).



Reformation.<sup>298</sup> The authors suggested themes based on hybridity and tempo/trajectories of change would better conceptualize medieval religions. This framework can appropriately accommodate the insights gained from similarly large-scale view on the deviant burials in medieval South-Eastern Europe.

While the perspective on tempo challenges unilinear and accelerated narratives of conversions, hybridity tries to grasp the reconfiguration of cultural features in a perpetual creation of religion.<sup>299</sup> In this sense, hybridity is seen to be different from syncretism in its appreciation of agency and post-colonial critique of any terminological withdrawal from the socio-political context of the period.<sup>300</sup>

However, the well-intended strive for nuanced understandings can all too easily become simply an empty phrase resolving problems in classificatory schemes much like ritual, identity, etc. before it.<sup>301</sup> This problem is hardly new and is rather bluntly formulated by Steward: Calling a religion ‘syncretic,’ or a culture ‘hybrid,’ is thus not much of a revelation for scholarship; there is little triumph in affixing a label of mixed on social forms.<sup>302</sup>

The optimistic possibility to tame the problem by adjusting hybridity to its temporal attribution depends on redefining the middle ground between opposing concepts. Indeed, the deviant burial phenomenon was imprisoned in similar structuralist debacle. Henceforward, the religious aspects in its interpretation will be discussed around three fundamental interpretative oppositions which could be refined under such an updated agenda.

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<sup>298</sup> Gabor Thomas et al., “Religious Transformations in the Middle Ages: Towards a New Archaeological Agenda”, *Medieval Archaeology* 61:2 (2017).

<sup>299</sup> Gabor Thomas et al., “Religious Transformations,” 306, 312.

<sup>300</sup> Gabor Thomas et al., “Religious Transformations,” 304-5.

<sup>301</sup> Stephen Silliman, “A requiem for hybridity? The problem with Frankensteins, purees, and mules,” *Journal of Social Archaeology* 15:3 (2015): 283.

<sup>302</sup> Charles Stewart, “Creolization, hybridity, syncretism, mixture,” *Portuguese Studies* 27 (2011): 52.

### 3.3.1. Pagan vs. Christian

Deviant burials were often described as deeply inflicted pagan rudiments in the anachronistic notions of conservative religious mindset. For instance, when discussing an early medieval cemetery in Belgrade, Gordana Marjanović-Vuijović states that the population was nominally Christian, yet pagan customs were entrenched in the spiritual life of medieval people without much concern for official denominations.<sup>303</sup> Likewise Janko Belošević lists examples of deviant practices as evidence for pagan beliefs in the funerary custom of early Croats.<sup>304</sup> He counts them among the signs for pagan cults together with the deposition of grave goods and fire purifications. This is a throwback to common set of pagan indicators in funerary contexts used everywhere in the region. The division is based on the false assumption for a stark historical contrast between standardized pagan and Christian periods reflected in the mortuary record.

The conversion has two main dimensions in light of deviant burial practices. First, there is the conversion of peoples and then, the Christianization of the funerary domain. The early medieval Balkans provide some distinctive manifestations for both processes. Christianity was by no means unknown to the heathen populations gaining prominence in the Byzantine periphery at least since the time of emperor Heraclius (610-641). The Roman church was also interested in the fortunes of the de-Christianized region as the mission of Abbot Martin on the orders of Pope John IV (640-642) to salvage relics of martyrs in Dalmatia and Istria persuasively testifies.<sup>305</sup>

<sup>303</sup> [Gordana Marjanović-Vuijović], “Раносредњовековна некропола,” 21

<sup>304</sup> Janko Belošević, *Materialna kultura*, 79.

<sup>305</sup> Stanko Škunca, “Papa Ivan IV. Zadrani i misija opata Martina 641. godine [Pope John IV from Zadar and the Mission of Abbot Martin in 641,” *Radovi Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Zadru* 48 (2006).

The infidels between the Adriatic and the Pontus took somewhat alternative paths towards the cross. Historically Christianization was achieved by competing Byzantine and Catholic missionary activity. In the west, the efforts from the Patriarchate of Aquileia in this task were particularly resolute following Charlemagne's inclusion of the lands south from river Drava under its authority.<sup>306</sup> Prior to the Carolingian conquest several attempted missions to the lands under Avar rule were cancelled or largely ignored by the locals.<sup>307</sup> Moreover, the expansion of the Bulgars at the expense of the vanquished Avar khaganate and some Slavic tribes along the Danube and Drava in the first half of the ninth century surely postponed the penetration of Christianity into these territories. Generally, the Bulgar Khanate promoted decisively anti-Byzantine, pagan religious policy until Boris I finally baptized in 864 following military failures against the empire.

One seemingly important element in the Bulgar pagan ideology was open defiance to the Byzantines and their Christian faith for political gains.<sup>308</sup> Contemporary Christian narratives commemorate such episodes with praises on martyrdoms suffered from the heathen Bulgars.

The liturgical canon written by the bishop of Thessaloniki Joseph the Confessor (762-832) about the martyrs killed in Bulgaria during his time provides some relevant details. According to him, after being 'smashed by maces and severely slayed with swords' they were left unburied for many days.<sup>309</sup> The mode of killing is specifically described for three named individuals among them. Both arms of Manuel

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<sup>306</sup> Mladen Ančić, "Lombardian and Frankish influences in the formation of the Croatian Dukedom," In: *L'Adriatico dalla tarda antichità all'età carolingia* eds. Giampetro Brogiolo and Paolo Delogu (Rome: All'Insegna del Giglio, 2005), 218.

<sup>307</sup> Walter Pohl, *The Avars*, 260-261.

<sup>308</sup> Stephan Nikolov, "The Pagan Bulgars and Byzantine Christianity in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 13:3 (2000): 333-6.

<sup>309</sup> Joseph the Confessor, "Canon for the Holy Martyrs Petar, Manuel and the rest who died in Bulgaria for Christ II:39-42", in: *Покръстване и християнизация на българите. Извороведческо изследване с приложение* [Historical Sources About the Baptism and Christianization of the Bulgarians] ed. [Vassil Guzelev] Васил Гюзелев (Sofia: Tangra, 2006), 123.

were chopped before he was cut in two parts himself, while Peter was beheaded. Alongside them, a priest named Leo is mentioned to have his stomach slit.<sup>310</sup> The tenth century Synaxarion of Constantinople commemorates altogether three hundred and seventy-seven martyrs killed 'by the sword' in a series of mass executions in addition to Manuel, Peter, and Leon.<sup>311</sup> The Synaxarion accounts for the dissection and mutilation of Manuel whose remains were then thrown to the dogs, beatings prior to the beheadings, and even one case of stoning by the crowd.

The story of their violent death contextualizes forms of maltreatment visible in deviant burials like decapitations and bodily mutilations, including disintegrations. Curiously, Joseph's descriptions have certain similarities to punishments for heretics and traitors practiced in Byzantium during and after the Iconoclasm.<sup>312</sup>

The alleged persecutions were not the only obstacle for Christianity in Bulgaria which experienced significant pagan backlash in the second half of the ninth century. The violent rebel of the provincial aristocracy already in 864/5 and the change of the regime and subsequent blinding of Vladimir I Rasate (889-893) reveal the social conflicts accompanying the religious transformation.

The Christianization of funerary rites is a consequence of the mass spread of the new religion and is conceivably easier to approach archaeologically. Even though inhumations were practiced in non-Christian communities as well, everywhere the presence of cremations is considered the most reliable sign for pagan funerary rites. Before the conversion in mid-ninth century both forms of burial disposal are practiced in South-Eastern Europe. Despite the desire to neatly assign cremations and

<sup>310</sup> Joseph the Confessor II:45-50.

<sup>311</sup> Kiril Petkov, *The Voices of Medieval Bulgaria, Seventh–Fifteenth Century: The Records of a Bygone Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 13-14; Vassil Gyuzelev. *Покръстване и християнизация*, 104-105.

<sup>312</sup> See here, 3.4.2. and 3.4.3.

inhumations to Slavs and other ethnic groups, this division remains deeply problematic and distorted.<sup>313</sup>

In the Adriatic littoral zone cremation graves are scarcely found and their parallel existence with pagan inhumations is yet to be debated. The situation is very much ambiguous since all inhumations follow the W-E orientation. The differentiation between cremations and inhumations was believed to also have a chronological significance.<sup>314</sup> Sokol sketches rather coalescent early horizon/phase from around 795 to 855 having in mind mainly inhumations containing jewellery.<sup>315</sup> Petrinec is reluctant to draw conclusions about the cremations but establishes a typochronological sequence where raw cemeteries with pagan inhumations appear in the mid-eight century and exist until the mid-late ninth century.

After this time, grave goods are gradually disappearing with only jewellery and some dress accessories being found, while decisively Christian symbols were carved into grave markers and structures.<sup>316</sup> According to Petrinec, row cemeteries with combined pagan and Christian inhumations continue until the middle of the eleventh century.<sup>317</sup> Similarly, Sokol distinguishes this process as a second horizon (c. 855-1100) with two separate phases in the material culture where some burial conventions continued.<sup>318</sup> Some suggestions imply that following the councils of Split

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<sup>313</sup> Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova, "Pagan necropolises in the territory of Bulgaria from the late 7<sup>th</sup> c. to 860s," In: *Pagan Bulgaria. Power and Society* eds. Metodi Daskalov et al. (Sofia: National Archaeological Institute with Museum, 2007): 27, 38.

<sup>314</sup> Janko Belošević, "Ishodi pete završne kampanje istraživanja lokaliteta Crkvina u Galovcu kraj Zadra" [The outcome of the fifth complete excavation campaign on the site Crkvina in Galovac near Zadar], *Radovi Filozofskog Fakulteta u Zadru*, 31 [18] (1993): 131-136.

<sup>315</sup> Vladimir Sokol, *Medieval jewelry*, 88-92.

<sup>316</sup> Maja Petrinec, "By Their Fruit You Will Recognize Them: The Beginnings of Christianity Among the Croats in the Light Of Archaeological Evidence," In: *Tak więc po owocach poznacie ich* [By Their Fruit You Will Recognize Them] eds. Wojciech Dzieduszycki and Jacek Wrzesinski (Poznan: Polish Institute of Archaeological Sciences, 2010), 199.

<sup>317</sup> Maja Petrinec, *Groblja*, 278.

<sup>318</sup> Vladimir Sokol, *Medieval jewelry*, 94.

(1075) and Solin (1076) funerary activity moved exclusively around churches, thus concluding the Christianization of this social sphere surprisingly early.<sup>319</sup>

The picture in the mortuary record is somewhat similar inland where the non-Christian polities of Avars and later Bulgars and Magyars established dominance. There is rich evidence for the Avar-period burial customs in Pannonia where a number of cemeteries with deviant burials were recorded. In the late Avar period biritual cemeteries become quite common around the peripheral zones of the khaganate in Transdunabia and modern-day Slovakia and Transylvania.<sup>320</sup>

The lavished furnishing of graves is a distinguishing trait of Avar inhumations, especially for the early and mid-Avar periods.<sup>321</sup> Perhaps related and recurring element are funerary offerings. Without delving into the possible meaning for each object category and animal remains in funerary context, this resilient pattern is a stark difference to the Christian concepts.

The occasional find of crosses in graves supported by church constructions like the basilica in Keszthely-Fenékpusztá can open a debate for the presence of nucleated groups of Christians.<sup>322</sup> It seems objects with Christian symbolism were simultaneously understood like prestigious imports and probable tokens of personal belief.<sup>323</sup> Although variations exist, Avar-age pagan inhumations are

<sup>319</sup> Vladimir Sokol, *Medieval jewelry*, 95.

<sup>320</sup> Béla Miklós Szőke. "The late Avar period (turn of the 7th–8th centuries–811)," In: *Hungarian Archaeology at the Turn of the Millennium* eds. Zsolt Visy et al. (Budapest: Ministry of National Cultural Heritage, 2003), 309–310.

<sup>321</sup> Walter Pohl, *The Avars*, 345

<sup>322</sup> Tivadar Vida, "Heidnische und christliche Elemente der awarenzeitlichen Glaubenswelt, Amulette in der Awarenzeit," *Zalai Múzeum* 11 (2002): 181.

<sup>323</sup> Ádám Bollók, "Christians, Christianity and the 'Northern Barbarians' in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages," in: *Dalle steppe al Mediterraneo. Popoli, culture, integrazione (Atti del convegno internazionale di studi «Fondazione e rituali delle aristocrazie germaniche nel contesto mediterraneo (Cimitile-Santa Maria Capua Vetere, 18-19 giugno 2015)* eds. Marcello Rotili and Carlo Ebanista (Napoli: Guida, 2017), 428–436; Ivan Bugarski, "The meaning of the crosses in early Avar female graves: three case studies from Vojvodina," *Acta Archaeologica Carpathica* 44 (2009): 228–229; Cf. Giorgios Kardaras, *Byzantium and the Avars, 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century AD. Political, Diplomatic and Cultural Relations* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 127–134.

undistinguishable from Christian ones on the grounds of their orientation only as the W-E direction was also followed.<sup>324</sup>

The mortuary archaeology of the Lower Danube gives probably the most focused picture on the pagan-Christian opposition and on the changes caused by the conversion. Cremation urnfields and biritual cemeteries dominate the north-eastern part of the Balkans. Here pre-Christian inhumation graves follow both W-E and N-S (especially south from the Danube) orientations.

Sometimes the biritualism on these sites was disregarded in attempts to advance clear-cut chronologies. For instance, Emilia Corbu insists on separate cremation and inhumation phases in the early medieval cemeteries on the Lower Danube.<sup>325</sup> However, this does not reflect the actual archaeological situation. This is very clear in Capuil Viilor, among others, where stratigraphic superposition between burials from each kind reflect parallel existence of the two rites.<sup>326</sup>

To the south, Zhivka Vazharova assemble the so-called Dolni Lukovit-Galiche group where cremations and inhumation with W-E orientation are found. Based on comparison with the biritual sites in Dobrogea, she claims that the pagan rite of burning the dead was abandoned and the inhumations represent the Christian phase of those cemeteries.<sup>327</sup> Recently the existence of pagan inhumations was proposed in comparison to sites from the Avar khaganate.<sup>328</sup> Conspicuously no deviant burials have been identified in the cemeteries included in the Dolni Lukovit-Galiche group.

<sup>324</sup> [Perica Špehar], *Централни Балкан*, 104-105, 126.

<sup>325</sup> Emilia Corbu, "Rit si ritual funerar în sec. VIII-XI în spațiul Țării Românești" [Custom and funerary rite in 8th-11th century in the territory of Wallachia]. *Ialomița* III (2000): 70-71.

<sup>326</sup> Vlad Zirra, "Biritual cemetery of the early feudal age in Capuil Viilor – Histria," *Dacia* NS 7 (1963).

<sup>327</sup> [Zhivka Vazharova], *Славяни и прабългари*, 419-420, 431

<sup>328</sup> Vladimir Staykov, "Bulgars, Slavs, Avars. About the early medieval cemeteries in Northwestern Bulgaria and the people who used them," *Bulgarian e-Journal of Archaeology Supplementa* 7 (2019): 308-311.



Later migrations and movements in the region could also be viewed from the perspective of ongoing pagan-Christian transition in the funerary domain. Having said that, their footprint in the archaeological record is insufficiently studied and under the current level of knowledge rarely coincides with deviant burials.

From tenth-century Vojvodina the site of Batajnica-Velika Humka is the most relevant burial site commented in the context of the Magyar conquest. As elsewhere, the deceased practiced inhumation burial with W-E orientation. The deposition of grave goods and some offerings, as well as setting the site on a burial mound are the main pagan attestation.<sup>329</sup> The decapitations from Batajnica-Velika Humka have been classified as special kind of ritual under Avar precedence, although doubts over the preservation conditions for half of the cases excludes them from our sample.<sup>330</sup>

The funerary customs in the Hungarian realm were Christianized with great zeal. The process had a legal dimension too in likeness to the Carolingian antecedents. Burial in the churchyard received compulsory status with the legislation by Ladislav I (1077-1095) and Coloman (1095-1116).<sup>331</sup> The Roman Catholic canon law *Decretum Gratiani* (1139-1142) is the first attempt to collect the regulations on funerary behaviour. The collection shows the drive for establishing more unified burial practice, its organization in the churchyard, and importantly the circumstances when the church should deny formal burial.<sup>332</sup>

The rare discovery of the so-called equestrian graves in the Wallachian plain between the tenth and thirteen century is the most secure evidence for the presence of

<sup>329</sup> Perica Špehar and Nika Strugar Bevtš [Перица Шпехар, Ника Стругар Бевц], *Батајница Велика хумка. Раномажарска некропола* [Batajnica Velika humka. Early Magyar necropolis] (Belgrade: Muzej grada Beograda, 2016), 58-73.

<sup>330</sup> Perica Špehar and Nika Strugar Bevtš, *Батајница*, 68-70

<sup>331</sup> Lad. I: 25-26; Col. 73 in: Janos Bak, *Online Decreta Regni Mediaevalis Hungariae. The Laws of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary All Complete Monographs*. 4 (2019)

<sup>332</sup> Szabolcs Anzelm Szuromi, "La discipline d'inhumation du XIIe et XIIIe siècle," *Rivista internazionale di diritto comune* 13 (2002): 211-228.

non-Christian groups, identified as Turanic migrants like Pechenegs and Cumans.<sup>333</sup> None of these graves show signs of deviant burial treatment. Nevertheless, some of these practices are recorded in comparable graves in modern Moldova and Ukraine like the prone burials in Trapovka, Talmaza or tumulus V in Săiți-Căușeni.<sup>334</sup>

Various offerings and sacrifices were part of the commemorative repertoire in pre-Christian customs. They include fragmented pottery and entire vessels and animal remains usually associated with funerary feast.<sup>335</sup> The recurrence of such assemblages from pagan inhumations and cremations could not be coincidental.<sup>336</sup>

Testing this assumption through deviant burials should consider that so far offerings are registered slightly more often in cremations, a mode of burial usually not compatible with the archaeological recognition of deviancy.<sup>337</sup> The few early phase prone burials from Avar and Bulgar territories containing pottery and animal remains could testify for pagan commemorative feasting but the most definite case (PGB.13) comes from a clearly Christian context. Contemporary decapitations and fixations were also occasionally on the receiving end of such offerings. Mutilations, although not generally restrained from grave goods, were very unlikely to contain pottery or animal bones.

The in-depth view from the contextual site surveys also gives some insight in this respect. The female decapitations from Bečej contain objects and animal bones

<sup>333</sup> Adrian Ioniță, *Spațiul*, 60-62, 163-164.

<sup>334</sup> Adrian Ioniță, "L'horizon des tombes à dépôt de cheval ou parties de cheval dans la région comprise entre le Bas-Danube, les Carpates Méridionales et Orientales et le Dniestr (Xe-XIIIe siècles)," *Transylvanian Review* 21 Supplement 4 (2012) and the cited literature; Georghe Chebotarenko and V. Demchenko, *Pogrebenija koc srednevekovye pamjatniki Dnestrovsko-Prutskogo mezdureceja* [Burials with medieval monuments from the Dnestar-Prut interflux] (Chisineu, 1988), 95-105.

<sup>335</sup> [Perica Špehar], *Централни Балкан*, 126.

<sup>336</sup> [Metodi Daskalov and Yuri Pulchev] Методи Даскалов, Юри Пулчев, „Страва“ и „тризна“ в контекста на ранносредновековните езически некрополи (археологически данни за поменалните обреди) [‘Strava’ and ‘trizna’ in the context of early medieval pagan cemeteries (archaeological data on the commemorative rites)], *Приноси към българската археология* 8 (2018): 254.

<sup>337</sup> [Metodi Daskalov and Yuri Pulchev], „Страва“ и „тризна“, 253.

among the rich burial inventory. The deviant burials from the urban cemetery in Ždrijac-Nin have no indications for commemorative feasting, which is contrasted by the situation in Maklinovo Brdo. The mortuary landscape of Devnya where pagan and Christian cemeteries were explored shows practically no indications for commemorative activity centred around graves with deviant characteristics.

The deviant burials from South-Eastern Europe were not excluded from the pagan-Christian transformations. The Christianization of death was a long process beyond the conversion itself and common sense dictates that many customs and superstitions did not disappear overnight.<sup>338</sup> Anyway, those elements in the burial rite that specifically contradict the new religion were abandoned surprisingly fast. Indeed, from all the possible regulations concerned with the proper burial rite, the only specified by religious authorities are those directly related to the resurrection of the body.<sup>339</sup> Most notably the cremation rite and the inappropriate N-S orientation disappear. The successive usage of some biritual cemeteries in the vast Archbishopry of Ohrid was noted, but the topographic continuity on a site does not equal the continuity of the rite into the tenth century.<sup>340</sup> The orientation of deviant burials, especially those included in the communal cemeteries, also changed accordingly.

The transformative nature of the Christianization is well captured by one grave from Preslav (Prs.15). In the decapitation burial from Type I from the cemetery Preslav-1 the skull with a pectoral cross is placed on top of an urn containing cremation following the pagan custom. The cross is the Christian object *par excellence*. It is unlikely that the pectoral cross was deposited just as a precious

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<sup>338</sup> Ioan Țiplic and Maria Țiplic. "The Christianization of the Funeral Rite in the Early Middle Ages," *Transylvanian Review* 24 (2015): 274.

<sup>339</sup> Maria Vargha. "Deviant' burials," 272-3.

<sup>340</sup> Perica Špehar, "Christianity on the territory of the Archbishopric of Ohrid, 11th to the 13th century," In: *Rome, Constantinople and Newly Converted Europe. Archaeological and Historical Evidence* eds. Maciej Salamon et al. (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2012), 430-433.

object, because it is not placed in the clay vessel by the urn containing various grave goods and animal bones. It is unclear if the cremated remains and the skull belong to the same individual or if the grave was reused. However, the deliberate disposal of the skull in direct relation to the urn is certain and creates physical and symbolic association between them. It is possible that the pectoral cross was included in this composition to purify the pagan grave, thus emphasizing the Christian identity of the decapitated person. By all means, this grave summarizes the essence of the religious dichotomy in the ninth century.

In fact, all deviant burial practices carry on uninterrupted. Apart from the orientation conformity, they remain pretty much unchanged from the conversion until the eleventh century. This continuity means that the practices had no obvious religious significance going against Christian morals and eventually would be incorporated and interpreted by the new teachings. Similarly various changes in funerary customs brought by Christianization do not necessarily hold exclusively religious magnitude.<sup>341</sup> Furthermore, with the advancement of this process the church increasingly accepts some deviant practices (e.g., prone position) due to their efficacy in the funerary performance.

### 3.3.2. What They Did in the Shadows: Popular vs High religion

Theophylact, the late eleventh century archbishop of Ohrid which presided over much of the Balkan territories, complained on more than one occasion from his

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<sup>341</sup> Ante Alajbeg, “Trgovina robljem i kršćanstvo u arheološkom zapisu -primjer ranosrednjovjekovne Dalmacije” [Slave trade and Christianity in the archaeological record – the example of early mediaeval Dalmatia], *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* 47 (2020): 293.

rustic and simple flock smelling like the goatskins they were wearing.<sup>342</sup> He felt particularly deprived from the literacy and high culture of the capital (*amousia*).<sup>343</sup> Putting aside that contempt for barbarian manners was a stylistic device of middle Byzantine literature, the religion of the Middle Ages is often perceived along the same dividing lines separating elite and popular culture.<sup>344</sup> Under this notion, religious life was defined by the literate elites with direct access to the divine word.<sup>345</sup> Conversely, the beliefs of the common people are marginalized and fundamentally passive, thus turning medieval religion into a body without legs but with huge head.<sup>346</sup>

Deviant burial practices, if commented at all, were included in the domain of popular beliefs. Actually, within this cultural milieu any alleged pre-Christian rudiments are thought to survive most successfully. In other words, analysis of popular beliefs could not be completely separated from the pagan heritage. Furthermore, this is the cultural environment expected to produce and preserve the much-discussed belief in vampirism thoroughly sought by ethnographers among traditional rustic communities in early modern Eastern Europe.<sup>347</sup>

With this in mind, Kaznakov points to a shift from pagan rituals to stories about revenants and their elimination in the focus of narrative sources.<sup>348</sup> For him, around the thirteen century Christian ideology had to return to earlier beliefs to counter superstitious fears which closes the gap between clergy and common

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<sup>342</sup> Margaret Mullett, *Theophylact of Ochrid: Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), 266-274.

<sup>343</sup> Paul Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier: A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900-1204* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 152.

<sup>344</sup> Gabor Klaniczay, *The Uses of Supernatural Power: The Transformation of Popular Religion in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 6-7.

<sup>345</sup> John Moreland, *Archaeology and text* (London: Duckworth, 2001), 47.

<sup>346</sup> A metaphor I borrow from the lectures of Prof. Martial Staub on Pagans, Christians, and Heretics in Medieval Europe at the University of Sheffield.

<sup>347</sup> Adam Mezes, *Doubt and Diagnosis: Medical Experts and the Returning Dead of the Southern Habsburg Borderland (1718-1766)* (PhD Thesis: Central European University Budapest, 2019), 77-79

<sup>348</sup> Vladimir Kaznakov, *Treatment*, 187.

people.<sup>349</sup> Considering that many such accounts were written down by literate churchmen, such stories might seem pagan but were not identified as such in medieval society.<sup>350</sup>

Probably the most compelling examples are found in the eleventh-century Chronicle by Thietmar of Merseburg. His collection is the first significant grouping of its kind since Gregory the Great in the sixth century and expresses the appeal of revenant imagery in a frontier zone between the German-dominated Holy Roman Empire and Slavic communities.<sup>351</sup> The returning dead there are very much Christian and behaving as any living congregation would. Even the dead cleric is depicted leading the dead laypeople.<sup>352</sup> Unlike evil spirits, individual revenants from the stories are physically present and intelligently resemble the living.<sup>353</sup> Truly insightful is Thietmar's chain of mental associations entwining rebellion, revenants, and resurrection based on the memory of massacre in Walsleben and the general resistance to Ottonian expansion.<sup>354</sup>

The encounter with revenants is dangerous for the living and can present a fatal threat for the community as a whole. The possibility for afterlife, while giving hope for resurrection to good Christians, triggers a wide set of social anxieties. The Christian doctrine for the deeply material nature of literal bodily resurrection placed a strong emphasis on the integrity of the corpse.<sup>355</sup> The cases of violent and pre-mature

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<sup>349</sup> Vladimir Kaznakov, *Treatment*, 186.

<sup>350</sup> Carl Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 86.

<sup>351</sup> Nancy Caciola, "Revenants, Resurrection, and Burnt Sacrifice," *Preternature* 3:2 (2014).

<sup>352</sup> Nancy Caciola, *Afterlives. The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 127.

<sup>353</sup> Winston Black, "Animated corpses and bodies with power in the Scholastic age," in *Death in medieval Europe: Death Scripted and death Choreographed* ed. J. Rollo-Koster (London: Routledge, 2017), 74-75.

<sup>354</sup> Nancy Caciola, *Afterlives*, 119-119, 122.

<sup>355</sup> Roberta Gilchrist, "Transforming medieval beliefs: the significance of bodily resurrection to medieval burial rituals," In: *Ritual Changes and Changing Rituals. Function and Meaning in Ancient Funerary Practices* Eds. M. Prusac and R. Brandt (Oxford: Oxbow, 2014), 381.

death are exceptionally menacing in the medieval mindset. As long as the human body remains intact, its capacity to sustain life energy are also present and could fall prey to evil spirits.<sup>356</sup> The wasted soul itself may also develop aggression towards people and places from its incomplete life.

The folklore of South-Slavic and other Balkan nations gives an unmistakably sound image of prospective revenants. Some words designating the phenomenon are upir/vampir, striga, grobnik or voukodlak. These grave dwellers are believed to have corporal form and operate at night, often sucking blood from people and animals or causing havoc in the village. Vampirism occurs under various circumstances caused by the evil doings of the person during their lifetime, the unnatural death, or incomplete rites of passage. One typical situation is animal passing over the corpse during the funeral preparations.

Legal documents of all things give the most ostensible evidence for the existence of similar beliefs in the Middle Ages. The law given by the Hungarian king Coloman (1095-1116) contains a specific clause concerning vampires: *De strigis vero, que non sunt, ne ulla questio fiat.*<sup>357</sup> There is a two-fold reading of this text. First, the state legislation obeyed the ecclesiastical canon denying the existence of revenants following earlier precedents in Lombard and Carolingian laws. Then again, this can be perceived as rather implicit contempt towards already existing anti-vampirism among the general population.<sup>358</sup> Subtle hints for the distinctive societal roles of potential *strigae* can be deducted from the translation of the term as witch/warlock.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> Nancy Caciola, "Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture," *Past & Present* 152 (1996): 36-7.

<sup>357</sup> Col. LVII. In: Janos Bak, *Online Decreta*, 112, 126.

<sup>358</sup> James Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1972), 97.

<sup>359</sup> Janos Bak. *Online Decreta*, 126. Cf. with the legal term for sorcerers (malefici). Col. LX, Ibidem.



Quite different stance can be found in the late medieval codex issued by Stephan Dušan. Article XX clearly stipulates that the people from any village where sorcerers are taken from the graves and burnt will be collectively charged for the enmity. Curiously, the same article requires removal from position of any priest involved in the act.<sup>360</sup> Because the clause finds this practice culpable, the specifications give further insights on the existing convention. The codex specifies the absolute intolerance for corporal incineration by church and state and furthermore, clearly reveals that members of the clergy were accomplices in the not strictly canonical praxis. Also, it reaffirms religious transgressions were serious offence in the medieval period and spiritual culprits like witches, sorcerers, etc. were feared for being revenants.

Notwithstanding the condescending top-down view or the differing approach, both documents engage with these practices. The firm position of the Dušan legislation must have had some effect since no late medieval burning of corpses is registered so far. Either way, the belief in revenants does not simply provokes royal regulation but is conceived to disrupt the natural order of life and death ordained by God himself. The menace from possible revenants probably masks deeper social concerns. All too easily sinners, troublemakers, and outlaws from all kinds were asserted the most likely individuals to continue their wicked ways even after death.

Because these appearances were considered violations of the natural way, the necessary response would rely on excessive use of force projected onto the revenant body. In other words, the finality of death had to be ensured. Naturally, the appropriate treatment for spiritual transgressors would resemble the punishments reserved for the criminals and sinners under the temporal law. For what is worth, the

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<sup>360</sup> Malcolm Burr, "The Code of Stephan Dušan: Tsar and Autocrat of the Serbs and Greeks," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 28:70 (1949): 202

elimination of the labelled revenant is simply a symbolic execution applied to biologically deceased individual.

The well-documented decapitations from Bečej have shown the operational similarities in *peri mortem* and *post mortem* beheadings in pre-Christian societies. True, many archaeological cases simply do not present sufficient evidence to distinguish between these two kinds and restrict the interpretative outlook. Still, this becomes less of a problem when acknowledging that the two forms of decapitation served the same purpose on different levels.<sup>361</sup> The destruction of the physical integrity of the corpse also played to popular Christian beliefs in bodily resurrection.

Perhaps the development of vampire beliefs provided the necessary framework to re-direct punitive violence and re-establish the divinely sanctioned social order. In this sense, the deviant burial practices were another localized funerary display for *Disciplinierung* and social cohesion developed in medieval Christianity.

As the Dušan codification clearly demonstrates this was a communal manner (hence collective legal responsibility) and apparently local priests resorted to these strategies more often than not. Good example for the ongoing development and Christian interpretation of these practices can be found in some fairly certain cases of *post mortem* mutilations. Examples for intentional dislocation of skeletonized remains have overwhelmingly ritual connotations and experience some peak between the tenth and thirteen centuries. The practice is recorded on sites like Vukovar-Lijeva Bara (VLB.363, VLB.376), Hodoni (Hdn.14), Dervent (Drvt.24) and Trnjane.

The increasing Christianization of the ritual can be detected in the salient introduction of the cross symbol in the manipulation of the long bones. In the tenth-eleventh century examples from Vukovar and Hodoni, they are X-crossed, while one

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<sup>361</sup> See here, 3.4.3. and 3.4.4.

slightly later instance from Trnajane (Trn.52) clearly depicts the cross symbol made by the displaced left arm bones. Intriguingly, the latter example is combined with symbolic decapitations too because the skull is positioned on its side next to the cross.

The practice most readily associated with the belief in revenants is the fixation of the body. Usually, simple stones were applied. The modesty of the fixation tool and the transparent symbolism of weighting down the body to keep it inside the grave reveal a suspicion for becoming a revenant. What must be pointed out that the vast majority of fixations happen during the funeral, thus these are rather preventive measure. Fundamentally, the fixations are no different than the physical restraint of felons during judicial ordeals or executions.

However, related possibility is that the fixation objects have attached meanings and within the context of individual funerary events represent biographical references. In this sense, the objects become profoundly psychological symbols of sins, personal sorrows or any troubles that cause misbehaviour in life and potentially in the afterlife. Such logic can be exemplified by the colloquial sayings about the departed based on allusions for peaceful existence inside the grave.<sup>362</sup>

Nevertheless, the diversification of the fixation tools also shows considerable efforts to ensure the dead remain dead. The sole example (Vjk.24) for combined fixations with stones and iron nails from late seventh century Vojka gives unambiguous display of these intentions. The chest of the old woman was covered by stones and fragmented tiles and her skull was literally nailed down to the ground. Such rare approach would also be found several centuries later in Vajuga-Pesak II (Psk2.32).

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<sup>362</sup> E.g., contemporary variations of the classical Latin formula *sit tibi terra levis*.

Nailing skulls originates in the Roman imperial period. The recorded examples from northern Italy show the restriction with nails applied to various body parts with some frequency. Sometimes this practice is combined with mutilations and decapitations.<sup>363</sup> The Roman authorities would resolve to this violent restraint for many persecuted individuals, for instance during crucifixions.<sup>364</sup> Another medieval manifestation of the practice is discovered in the Aegean Island of Lesbos near Mytilene. The adult male was perforated by long spikes on his neck, pelvis, and ankle.<sup>365</sup>

Generally, after the twelfth century there is a significant versification in the choice of fixation tools. One of the most interesting objects brought into the funerary display is the sickle. The deposition of sickles in different historical periods has confused archaeologists for a long time.<sup>366</sup> Its apotropaic importance in dealing with vampirism became all too evident in the discoveries from the early modern period in Drawsko, Poland. Most vividly, in the case of the adult female 49/2012 the tool was placed across the neck.<sup>367</sup>

In the Balkans so far, the one confirmed example for use of sickles in deviant practices is from the medieval layers in Sevtopolis (Svt.27). Its deviant character is based on the position of the sickle pressing the pelvis and the peri mortem mutilation and displacement of the feet bones. The sickle is primary an agricultural instrument

<sup>363</sup> Alessandro Quercia and Melania Cazzulo. "Fear of the dead," 30-40.

<sup>364</sup> John Robison, "Crucifixion in the Roman World: The Use of Nails at the Time of Christ," *Studia Antiqua* 2:1 (2002): 42-52; Felicity Harley, "Crucifixion in Roman Antiquity: The State of the Field," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 27:2 (2019): 303-323.

<sup>365</sup> David Barrowclough. *Time to slay*, 3

<sup>366</sup> Przemysław Żydok, "Wczesnośredniowieczne pochówki antywampiryczne," 38-66; Arkadiusz Koperkiewicz. Święci czy przeklęci? Kilka refleksji o anomaliach w pochówkach wczesnośredniowiecznych [ Holy or Cursed? Some Reflections on Anomalies in Early Mediaeval Burials], In: Skóra, K. & Kurasinski, T (ed.) Wymiary inności: Nietypowe zjawiska w obrzędowości pogrzebowej od pradziejów po czasy nowożytne. *Acta Archaeologica Lodziensia* 56 (2010): 65-77.

<sup>367</sup> Marek Polcyn and Elzbieta Gajda, "Buried with Sickles: Early Modern Interments from Drawsko, Poland," *Antiquity* 89/348 (2015):1384-1386; Leslie Gregoricka, Tracy Betsinger, Amy Scott, Marek Polcyn, "Apotropaic Practices and the Undead: A Biogeochemical Assessment of Deviant Burials in Post-Medieval Poland," *PLoS ONE* 9:11 (2014): 4-7.

and use wear analysis of specimens found in graves can be very informative. At the same time, the sickle can be strongly associated with death. For this testify the words of patriarch Nicholas Mystikos in his poorly conceived threat to Symeon I of Bulgaria (893-927): ‘Human life is unstable [...] Many who are in their prime fall to death’s sickle.’<sup>368</sup> Arguably the instrument of death is more than appropriate to guarantee its finality.

By the way, such explanation could be cautiously proposed for another find which was excluded from the sample of deviant burials. The grave in question is from the tenth-eleventh century cemetery in the Breg locality near Matičane. In an otherwise standard funerary disposal, a sickle was placed on the right side of the abdomen and pelvis of a female individual.<sup>369</sup> However, the position of the object is ambiguous and it could be simply an element from the funerary outfit and holding different meaning.

The apotropaic function for these fixation objects relates to the category of magic as well. Furthermore, the legal references to vampirism clearly establish the sorcerers and witches have been deemed potential revenants.

In a familiar situation by now, the scholarly discourse on magic has been very disparate field. More often than not, magic has been defined according to its relation to religion.<sup>370</sup> The evaluation of magic swifts from seeing it as the practical basis for religion to being depreciatory disqualified as its negation. Interestingly, magic has succesfully asserted itself in religious conflict as a way to devaluate others or promote

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<sup>368</sup> Nicholas I Patriarch of Constantinople, *Letters* translated and edited by R. Jenkins and L. Westernik (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1973), ep.24:31-35, 168.

<sup>369</sup> Vojislav Jovanović and Ljiljana Vuksanović, „Matičane.Necropole sud-slave de Xe et XIe siècle,” *Inventaria Archaeologica* 25 (1981): tombe 54.

<sup>370</sup> Bernd-Christian Otto and Michael Stausberg, *Defining magic: A reader* (London: Routledge, 2014), 8.

distinct identities.<sup>371</sup> Probably precisely this mobilization motivated the persecution in Dušan's codification.

After all, magic is enriched and performed accordingly to the religious framework of its proponents. The written sources imply the causal link between magic and deviant burial, however, their material compatibility in the funerary context is another matter. For the purpose of this text, the placement of loosely defined amulets will be considered its paramount archaeological indicator within graves with deviant burial characteristics. These objects were valued for their possession of protective and occult natural power, antique origin, and the capacity to harness demonic magic for divination and sorcery.<sup>372</sup>

Under these specifications, magic materialized surprisingly rare in deviant burials. Now, the clarification that deviant burial practices and magic are generally two intermittent phenomena from the extra-normative funerary sphere must be made. The data, or rather the lack of data, show that even though illicit engagement with sorcery can lead to mortuary maltreatment, the two were rather independently employed. Of course, the occult qualities of human remains mean that various skeletal manipulation (e.g., Hdn.14, VLB.363, VLB.376 etc.) had markedly magical undertone.

Besides the sickle deposition, the most plausible concurrence is found in the twelfth century rural graveyard Kovachevo. One of the deviant burials there (Kvc.88) had multiple flints placed on the right side of the deceased male in addition to the decapitation and mutilation. The flint deposition and its symbolic arrangement will

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<sup>371</sup> Bernd-Christian Otto, *Magie: Rezeptions- und diskursgeschichtliche Analysen von der Antike bis zur Neuzeit* (Berlin: de Gruyter 2011), 25.

<sup>372</sup> Roberta Gilchrist, "Magic for the Dead? The Archaeology of Magic in Later Medieval Burials," *Medieval Archaeology* 52 (2008): 123.

become more widespread after the fourteenth century in the eastern Balkan peninsula, especially in coastal centres like Kaliakra and Chirakman.<sup>373</sup>

In the case of another rural cemetery from the same time in Vratsa (Vrt.27), the adornment made from cowry shells and a perforated ancient coin from the Mediterranean town Dyrrachium from the second century could have had some apotropaic meaning. Anyway, the value of the adornment must have been based on the age of the reused coin and its maritime association, hence having mostly decorative significance.

### 3.3.3. Western Catholicism vs. Eastern Orthodoxy

In many ways the existential divide in Christianity between the so-called Catholic West and Orthodox East has been too strong an obstacle for the cross-cultural study of funerary rites. Although perceptions about the afterlife begin to vary drastically after the twelfth century, when it comes to the sacrament of burial, the practical differences are really not so fundamental. Actually, many attempts to distinguish the Christian denominations through elements in the burial rite like the position of hands for instance remain inconsequential.<sup>374</sup>

On the political level tensions were much more explicit from early on. Already in the ninth century Pope John VIII (872-882) tries to persuade the dukes (knez) of the Serbs and Croats Mutimir and Zdeslav to return under the Roman church. The pope threatened with excommunicaiton the priests from the Bulgarian diocese too.<sup>375</sup> However, the discord reaches much greater levels with the Crusades. In fact, the early

<sup>373</sup> [Bonі Petrunova] Бони Петрунова, *Реликвите на Калиакра* [The relics of Kaliakra] (Dobrich: FoliArt, 2014), 26.

<sup>374</sup> Silviu Oța, *Medieval Banat*, 58-74

<sup>375</sup> Tibor Živković, "On the Baptism of the Serbs and Croats in the Time of Basil I (867–886)," *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana* 1 (2013): 41-45.



thirteen century sees Bulgaria (1204-1235) and likely Serbia recognize supreme papal authority in exchange of coronation and recognition of sovereignty. Byzantium also reached a similar arrangement with the Union of Lyon from 1274 but this was quickly overthrown. At least formally, this would blur the division between the East and the West, especially with the various short-lived crusader states in the Balkans.

Rather exceptional level of hostility between Catholicism and Orthodoxy in South-Eastern Europe culminated in the Hungarian expansionist ambitions and the beginnings of Ottoman conquest. The political necessity made the Byzantine emperor John V Palaiologos (1341-1391) to contemplate another recognition of papal authority during the failed negotiations in Buda from 1366. During this diplomatic mission, the Hungarian king Louis I (1342-1382) insisted that the Orthodox baptism was invalid.<sup>376</sup> His view on the matter was quite persistent as he tried to re-baptize the conquered territories around Bdin (Vidin). Louis organized a mission of Franciscan monks from Bosnia to the Banate of Vidin where they could promote the Hungarian Catholic hard-line policy.<sup>377</sup>

However, this ended unfortunately for them, even though they would become venerated martyrs of the church.<sup>378</sup> In 1369 the local population captured half of the Franciscans killing one in the process and publicly decapitating the rest on the bank of the river Danube.<sup>379</sup> On one side, deviant burials can be additionally contextualized by this episode of religious violence. On the other side, if Hungarian propaganda denied

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<sup>376</sup> Joseph Gill, *Byzantium and the Papacy, 1198-1400* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1979), 216.

<sup>377</sup> [Angel Nikolov] Ангел Николов *Между Рим и Константинопол. Из антикатолическата литература в България и славянския православен свят (XI–XVII в.)* [Between Rome and Constantinople. The Anti-Catholic literature in Bulgaria and the Slavic Orthodox world (eleventh-seventeenth centuries)] (Sofia: Bulgarian Historical Heritage Foundation, 2016), 161-166.

<sup>378</sup> [Angel Nikolov], *Между Рим и Константинопол*, 166-169.

<sup>379</sup> Ivan Dujčev, *Medioevo bizantino-slavo. Vol. I. Saggi di storia politica e culturale* (Rome: Edizione di Storia e Letteratura, 1965), 420-421.

so adamantly Orthodox baptism, probably this view extended to other sacraments as well.

Returning to strictly archaeological data, the religious connotations of deviant burial practices in South-Eastern Europe could be compared to their interpretation in the West. Foremost, we must remember that meanings are manifold: they are allowed to change over time and place, but also accordingly to the level of contextualization. In this light, prone burials attracted the most research attention. The belief of vampirism revolving around actively malicious revenant entities seems originally more widespread in the medieval Slavic milieu. Currently, its transition westwards is viewed within the rise of all things macabre around Catholic Europe after the plague in the late medieval period.<sup>380</sup>

The prone burials prior to the fifteen centuries have been analysed as signs of exceptional Christian piety based on the otherwise normative deposition, burial location, and sex profile.<sup>381</sup> Particularly the practice in Scandinavia is plausibly linked to the death of Christian devotees who have not yet been baptized.<sup>382</sup> This distinctively religious reading is usually based on the strive for *humilitas* performed through prostration before the altar, another form of *proskynesis*.<sup>383</sup>

Conceptualizing prone burial as a sign of personal piety has its prominent historical precedent in the West. Famously, Pepin the Short (751-768) was buried prone with his face turned eastwards beneath the entrance of the cathedral Saint-Denis in Paris.<sup>384</sup> The commentary by abbot Suger on the reopening of his tomb in 1137 claims the Frankish king aimed to make amends for the sins of his father, Charles

<sup>380</sup> Amelie Alterauge et al., “Between fear and faith,” 25.

<sup>381</sup> Amelie Alterauge et al., “Between fear and faith,” 21; Matthias Toplak, *Das Wikingerzeitliche Gräberfeld*, 93-100.

<sup>382</sup> Matthias Toplak, “Prone burials,” 82.

<sup>383</sup> Michael Kunzler, “Prostration,” In *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche. Achter Band - Pearson bis Samuel* ed. W. Kasper (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1999), 650.

<sup>384</sup> Thomas Meier, *Archaeologie*, 108; Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant*, 69.

Martel (718-741).<sup>385</sup> The understanding of the French abbot must have held some validity at least for other prone burials from Merovingian Gaul and monastic graveyards from the high Middle Ages in the Catholic world.<sup>386</sup>

In South-Eastern Europe prone burials show some inclusion in the churchyard. Two late ninth century Type II.A prone burials (SJR.12 and PGB.13) are found in the proximity of a church, the latter being attached to the particularly high-status cathedral temple of the First Bulgarian Tsardom in Pliska. Similar situation occurs with three late medieval cases discovered in urban lay cemeteries administered on monastic grounds from Anevsko kale (AnK.7 and AnK.49) and Tarnovo (TVL.192). The jewellery found in some of the graves could also support their favourable social status in the eyes of the mourners. Nonetheless, the likely *peri mortem* decapitations of these individuals must raise concerns about the social evaluation on their deaths.

Based on the two preserved finger rings and the sex and age profile alone, the fourteen-century grave of a man from Stari Raš (Trg.358) could corroborate the narrative for demonstration of Christian piety. Anyway, this case should probably be dismissed. The argument against is based on the accumulation of additional extra-normative traits in the position of the limbs, the polar E-W orientation, and the overall isolated location of the grave.

After all, qualities like humility and piousness are prized in Christian morality but are fundamentally constructed around self-denial and shame from the sinful life on earth. Prone position remains rather extreme funerary gesture expressing regret and utter shame from any possible misconduct. True, in the choice to be placed downwards in the grave we could see a distant imitation of St. Peter's desire to be

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<sup>385</sup> Alain Dierkens, "La mort, les funérailles et la tombe du roi Pépin le Bref (768)," *Médiévales* 31 (1996): 44.

<sup>386</sup> Matthias Toplak, "Prone burials," 79.

crucified upside down since he felt unworthy to repeat the passions of Christ. Thus, the deliberate derogatory disposal is manipulated to construct ultra-Christian identity.

Ultimately the interpretation depends on where we would place the emphasis. Christian humility expressed through prone position associated with social outcasts may have been a customary obligation for long-term inclusions. At the same time, extreme demonstrations of religious reverence are not necessarily socially accepted. As the proverbial wisdom goes, one should not be more Catholic than the pope.

Another possible demonstration of the religious exchange between West and East is found in the later phase of deviant burial practices. A Type II fixation from urban cemetery in Plovdiv dated to the end of the fourteen centuries applied a tile over the head of the deceased, while still inserting a piece of brick inside the mouth. The morbid brick/stone bite is recorded around Europe in the late medieval and early modern period on sites like Lazzareto Nuovo (Italy), Kamien Pomorski (Poland), the church St. Lamberti in Lüneburg (Germany) etc.<sup>387</sup>

The practice is usually connected to the belief in particularly malign undead creature known as *Nachzehrer*, a sort of vampire from the German lore.<sup>388</sup> Such widespread distribution of analogous burials from the period shows the existence of entangled belief systems surpassing the political and ecclesiastical partition in Christian Europe.

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<sup>387</sup> Sebastian Brather, “Wiedergänger und Vampire? Bauch- und Seitenlage bei westslawischen Bestattungen des 9. bis 12. Jahrhunderts,” In: *Aedificatio terrae. Beiträge zur Umwelt- und Siedlungsarchäologie Mitteleuropas (Festschr. E. Gringmuth-Dallmer)* Eds. Gerson Jeute, Jens Schneeweiß, and Claudia Theune (Rahden: Verlag Marie Leidorf, 2007), 115; Emilio Nuzzolese and Matteo Borrini, “Forensic approach to an archaeological casework of “vampire” skeletal remains in Venice: Odontological and anthropological prospectus,” *Journal of forensic sciences* 55: 6 (2010): 1634-1637.; David Barrowclough. *Time to slay*, 7.

<sup>388</sup> Donat Wehner and Katja Grüneberg-Wehner. “Mit Stein im Mund. Ein Fall von Nachzehrerabwehr in der St. Catharinenkirche am Jellenbek, Kr. Rendsburg-Eckernförde?”, *Arkæologi i Slesvig / Archäologie in Schleswig* 15 (2014): 61-63.

### 3.4. *The disenchanted ritual: Law enforcement and power structures*

At some point archaeologists had reduced the term ritual to a vague and simplistic label attached to any discovery that is not easily explained by modern logic. For most part ritual has become nearly synonymous with religion. Despite the ill-result of such misconception, its universal application demonstrates the interpretative effectiveness offered by a well-defined ritual.

The context-driven critical study of rituals now realizes that they are multifaceted experience executed through combined physical and mental activity. Any secular dimensions of ritual behaviour are completely ignored or superficially mentioned at best. Indeed, they can be tremendously hard to distinguish from religious activity, especially in cultures perceived as deeply religious like medieval Europe. For Bell ritual is an embodied practice in which the participants draw upon and compare everyday experiences. The ritual meaning is deployed through actions which are performed with controlled precision, and a great deal of strict physical repetition.<sup>389</sup>

Much ink has been wasted on narrowing down the definitive realms of law, a futile effort since legal culture tries to encompass the different social levels in their totality. Yet, Pospisil formulates somewhat useful concept that law comprises the modes of conduct made obligatory by some sanction which is imposed and enforced for their violation by some authority.<sup>390</sup> The sanction is considered a critical attribute

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<sup>389</sup> Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory: Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford Uni Press, 1992), 92-3, 98.

<sup>390</sup> Leopold Pospisil, "The Attributes of Law," In: *Law and Warfare. Studies in the Anthropology of Conflict* ed. Paul Bohannan (New York: The Natural History Press, 1967), 25.

of legal culture.<sup>391</sup> In many ways the formalized forms of punishment and the roles portrayed in the process are ritual behaviour whose ideological underpinnings originate from power relations in the society.

Famously, Max Weber claimed that the enlightened Western civilization is disenchanted from the traditional role of religion and its institutions in the world. The natural antithesis to this state must have been its medieval predecessor fixated on the spiritual. Of course, an extreme submission to secular rationalism or religious belief was not a decision that medieval people had to make.<sup>392</sup> Although the two coalescent in the medieval mind, the detailed study of legal practices implemented on the criminal body opens up another perspective on medieval social relations.<sup>393</sup> One more interested in unfolding the mechanisms of social control and effectively giving a reality-check for the functionality and structural factors behind power and violence.

The interpretation of deviant burial practices in judicial terms as the funerary treatment for criminals or extra-legal individuals is based on two lines of argumentation. The first are the archaeological analogies found in an increasingly diverse corpus of thorough research on medieval funerary contexts and contents of the burials. The second element in this holistic approach is based on documentary evidence.<sup>394</sup> Particularly exciting opportunities by the historic and proto-historic nature of this argument are the possible application of ideas to cultures lacking written evidence and the partial reconciliation between material and textual evidence about the human past.<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> Leopold Pospisil, "The Attributes," 40-1.

<sup>392</sup> Trevor Dean, *Crime in medieval Europe 1200-1550* (Harlow: Pearson, 2001).

<sup>393</sup> Michelle Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, 1977); Cf. Paul Friedland, *Seeing Justice done: The Art of spectacular capital punishment in France* (Oxford: Oxford Uni Press, 2012), 12-17.

<sup>394</sup> Kevin Smith and Andrew Reynolds, "Introduction: the archaeology of legal culture," *World Archaeology*, 45:5 (2013): 690.

<sup>395</sup> John Moreland, *Archaeology and text*, 33-34.

### 3.4.1. Execution and burial in medieval Europe

The deviant burial customs in early medieval Britain have been established among the principle archaeological correlates for judicial activities in the region. The presence of all forms of treatment, but highlighted in the prone position, decapitation, mutilation, and fixation, is remarkably persistent. However, their concentration in the so-called execution cemeteries is perhaps the most telling example for the association with crime and punishment.

The execution cemeteries emerge in Anglo-Saxon England around the seventh century and reflect the spatial separation of social deviants from community cemeteries. Reynolds enlists twenty-seven such sites with more or less equivalent characteristics. Contemporary deviant burials are discovered in consecrated burial grounds, but such examples are very rare. The exact content of his inventory may be revised by in-depth analysis and certain deviant burials cannot present direct osteological indication for execution, however, there is enough burial sites with remarkably similar form and function to prove pretty much stable patterns of exclusion.<sup>396</sup>

The burial evidence is characterized by a lack of concern for internal cemetery organization but by clearly defined modes of execution and specific unceremonious treatment of corpses which, in certain cases, appear to reflect contemporary punishments prescribed in the law codes.<sup>397</sup> Some deviant and extra-normative burial characteristics of execution cemeteries are, variously, prone burials, multiple interments, decapitation, evidence of restraint, shallow and cramped burial, and

<sup>396</sup> Alyxandra Mattison, *The Execution and Burial of Criminals in Early Medieval England, c. 850-1150. An examination of changes in judicial punishment across the Norman Conquest* (University of Sheffield: PhD Dissertation, 2016), 65-6.

<sup>397</sup> Tania Dickinson, "Cuddesdon and Dorchester-on-Thames Oxford," *British Archaeological Reports* 1 (1974), 23; Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant*, 178.



mutilation.<sup>398</sup> Important note is, however, that west-east orientation of individual internments is still predominant.<sup>399</sup>

At some places the execution site and cemetery coincide. Sufficient evidence for wooden gallows was uncovered at Stockbridge Down, South Acre, Sutton Hoo, and Ashted. Additionally, the execution cemeteries were strongly dependent of local topography with pronounced interest in pre-existing earthwork features like mounds (e.g., South Acre, Sutton Hoo, Dunstable) and ditches (Old Dairy Cottage).<sup>400</sup> The clear spatial liminality of deviant burials is evident by their peripheral placement in communal graveyards (e.g., Lechlade), but this was generally transferred to execution cemeteries too. These sites are geographically expelled to the limits of the administrative units described in the Domesday Survey.<sup>401</sup> Similar geographical patterning is observed for isolated deviant burials (e.g., Broad Hinton or Chiswick, West London).<sup>402</sup>

The big data collected from excavated context in the south of England is confirmed by examples for similar developments in the north. In Walkington Wold one of two Bronze Age mounds was turned into an execution cemetery in use between seventh and tenth century. The pronounced prevalence of decapitation at this site is higher than at most sites from this kind.<sup>403</sup>

From the twelve individuals, only in two cases the skeleton was complete. The remaining human remains had varying levels of completeness, but the skull was always displaced. Only in four cases the cranium was found with the mandible or cervical vertebrae, while in seven cases only the cranium was present. Evidence for

<sup>398</sup> Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant*, 44-5.

<sup>399</sup> Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant*, 158.

<sup>400</sup> Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant*, 158-9.

<sup>401</sup> Andrew Reynolds, "Judicial culture," 704, 707.

<sup>402</sup> Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant*, 209.

<sup>403</sup> Jo Buckberry and Dawn Hadley, "An Anglo-Saxon execution cemetery at Walkington Wold, Yorkshire," *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 26:3 (2007): 323.

trauma was confirmed for only five of the individuals. Interestingly, nearly all individuals were confirmed male adults.<sup>404</sup> Furthermore, this is consistent with the observation made by Dawn Hadley that the majority of the deceased with unusual burials and in execution cemeteries were males and mostly young and middle adults.<sup>405</sup> However, the range of treatment applied to women from deviant burials appears to be largely the same as that applied to males.<sup>406</sup>

The credibility of the execution cemetery concept is further demonstrated by the recent discovery of such site in Weyhill Road, Andover in Hampshire. The untidy burial ground contained at least 124 individuals. Importantly, the human remains exhibit prone position, different levels of skeletal articulation, especially decapitation and displacement, as well as fixation by stone. Important to mention are the twenty-three examples for decapitation, the long bone of a different individual laid across the neck of one skeleton (Sk1193), and another having a large stone set beside the skull (Sk1211). The majority of interments are believed to be from the tenth-eleventh century, but the chronological span of the execution cemetery is wider.<sup>407</sup>

The fortunate identification of so many execution sites that could be matched to written accounts from law codes or charters in England enabled the formulation of detailed archaeological signature for penal activity. Its applicability to deviant burial practices can be demonstrated with ever growing number of examples from continental Europe.

A very instructive case study is offered by the site Čelakovice, northeast from Prague in the Czech Republic. Eleven graves containing fourteen individuals were

<sup>404</sup> Jo Buckberry and Dawn Hadley, "An Anglo-Saxon," 310-323.

<sup>405</sup> Dawn Hadley, "Burying the Socially and Physically Distinctive in Later Anglo-Saxon England," *Burial in later Anglo-Saxon England* eds. J. Buckberry and A. Cherryson (Oxford: Oxbow, 2010), 107.

<sup>406</sup> Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant*, 171.

<sup>407</sup> Cotswold Archaeology, "Aldi, Weyhill Road, Andover," *Archaeological Reports* 17171 (2021).

excavated in 1966. The human remains demonstrated remarkably uniform characteristics: exclusively males, all in the biological ages *adultus* and *maturus*, inconsistent placement diverging from the west-east orientation, and overwhelmingly differential treatment. What Špaček immediately presented as anti-vampire rituals are some instances of deviant burial practices: prone position in dual graves (e.g., graves 5A, 10B, possibly 1B) and decapitations (confirmed for graves 6, 7, 8, possibly 1, 5B, 9, and 10).<sup>408</sup> They are complemented by further evidence for restraint of the limbs and multiple skeletons in lateral position. The author initially expressed an opinion that the decapitations occurred post mortem and the dating of the site was most likely around the tenth-eleventh century.<sup>409</sup>

Alternative explanation was offered by Pavlina Mašková on several instances.<sup>410</sup> She stresses that the small finds of this kind are used well into the early modern age and the revised anthropological examination require C14 testing. More importantly she cites the clear parallels in the treatment of the cadaver registered on early modern execution sites with adjacent cemetery like Emmenbrücke and contemplates the execution character of this site as well. Another circumstantial evidence for her view is that the town of Čelakovice is granted the right to high justice (i.e., capital punishment) in the sixteenth century.

Conspicuously, two more burial grounds are discovered in the area without recorded deviant burials suggesting their seclusion into this site. Much like in early medieval England, the establishment of designated space containing the unwanted

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<sup>408</sup> Jaroslav Špaček, “Slovanské,” 211, 214.

<sup>409</sup> Jaroslav Špaček, “Slovanské,” 197.

<sup>410</sup> Pavlina Macková, “K otázce interpretace kostroveho “pohřebiště s projevy vampyrismu” v Čelakovících” [Towards the Interpretation Issue of the Skeletal Burial Place with Signs of Vampirism at Čelakovice], *Studia Mediaevalia Pragensia* 5 (2004); Pavlina Macková, “Dovetok o Čelakovickem”.

dead in the landscape leads to a significant decrease (but not disappearance!) of the phenomenon in their immediate funerary background.

Other commentators like Vladimir Kaznakov are still persuaded by the initial assessment by Špaček.<sup>411</sup> However, such views neglecting the judicial aspect of deviant burials must be reminded that precisely criminals and wrong doers were considered possible vampires and places related to execution are liminal space open to supernatural encounters in folk beliefs.<sup>412</sup> In fact, the continuous correlation between judicial activity and the esoteric or quasi-scientific beliefs surrounding the bodies of criminals and other unwanted dead in the early modern period is remarkable.<sup>413</sup>

Maškova is careful enough to designate Čelakovice only as possible execution cemetery, but her judicial interpretation gains momentum by the expanding archaeological research on execution sites around Central Europe. The penal aspect of deviant burials is quite obvious on sites like the gallows Lubomierz or Jelenia Góra where the skeletons exhibit prone position and mutilation of the hands.<sup>414</sup>

The time of formation of execution cemeteries clearly differs between Anglo-Saxon England and early modern Central Europe. Certain diachronic and culture-specific variations are expected and in fact, natural for a highly individualized body of evidence. However, the clear continuity of the basic forms recognized as deviant practices is probably their most remarkable characteristics. The execution cemeteries are simply the extracted manifestation of the correlation between deviant burials and legal culture.

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<sup>411</sup> Vladimir Kaznakov, *Treatment*, 157

<sup>412</sup> Siniša Krznar, „The reflection of folk beliefs in burial customs in the Early Modern period in northern Croatia,” *Beiträge zur Mittelalterarchäologie in Österreich* 35 (2019): 183-4; Petar Parvanov, “Mortuary Proxies: Archaeological Contextualization of Medieval Legal Practices,” In: *Law, Book and Culture in the Middle Ages*, ed. Thom Gobbitt (Leiden: BRILL, 2021), 292-293; Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death. Folklore and Reality* (New Haven and London 1988).

<sup>413</sup> Sarah Tarlow and Emma Lowman, *Harnessing the Power of the Criminal Corpse* (Springer, 2018).

<sup>414</sup> Paweł Duma, *Profane Death in Burial Practices of a Pre-Industrial Society: A study from Silesia* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2019), 41-5, 48-9.

The physical realities behind legal action embedded in judicial violence are the most important and overlooked factor in cross-cultural settings. This materiality of medieval punishment shape the shared negative symbolism, the constituting logic of social denial. Before looking into how Balkan deviant burials fare in this background, we must turn our attention to legislation for an insight on crimes and their potential punishment.

### **3.4.2. By the letter of the law: the codified corporal punishment**

An attempt to collect all written evidence about executions on the Balkans will be unfeasible and probably impossible to fulfil a task. However, the form and development of prescribed corporal punishment will be followed through an overview of several authoritative normative documents representative for the relevant government traditions. These include pre-Christian Bulgar laws, the Byzantino-Slavic legal merger from the early medieval period, the Hungarian Arpad legislation, and the late medieval codification in the region chiefly represented by the code issued by Stefan Dušan (1331-1355). The legitimized application of violence and maltreatment formulated in these texts evokes rather literally the observation by Michel de Certeau that the law constantly writes itself on bodies, thus simultaneously carrying out an intertextuation and incarnation of the social rules.<sup>415</sup>

The earliest and most enigmatic from this survey are the pre-Christian laws of the Bulgars attributed to khan Krum (800-814). They are only partially preserved in the tenth century Suidas Lexicon and the legendary character of some information in

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<sup>415</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life. Volume I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 140.

this much later source raises concerns among some scholars.<sup>416</sup> The limited information provides that fraud and perjury were punished by death, while thieves were punished by breaking their shins.<sup>417</sup>

More informative are the references in the Responses of pope Nicholas I to the Bulgars retrospectively discussing some legal issues. A Bulgar embassy approached the Roman curia with a list of questions addressing how the Catholic faith would affect Bulgar ancestral customs and socio-political arrangements. The reply recorded by the librarian Anastasius was given to the envoys on November 13, 866.<sup>418</sup> The document is valuable evidence for the Christian reinterpretation of law following the Bulgar request to receive secular laws.<sup>419</sup> Many individual chapters reveal the crimes recognized in Bulgar customary law before the Christianization.

Occasionally specific details on executions or judicial mutilations are provided. Perhaps relevant in this respect is admitting to the use of torture on suspected criminals (e.g. thievery).<sup>420</sup> However, it makes a strong impression that the pope repeatedly argues for tempering the severity of the law on grounds of compassion and mercy. Another relevant insight is offered when discussing the burial rites where the pope endorses differential funerary treatment for sinners and especially suicides, as well as burials within a church and transporting back the bodies

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<sup>416</sup> Robert Browning, *Byzantium and Bulgaria. A comparative study across the early medieval frontier* (London: Temple Smith, 1975), 124; [Ivan Bozhilov and Vassil Gyuzelev] Иван Божилов, Васил Гюзелев, *История на Средновековна България VII-XIV век. Том I* [History of medieval Bulgaria 7<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century. Vol.1] (Sofia: Anubis, 1999), 141; Kiril Petkov, “Някои бележки върху Крумовото законодателство” [Some notes on Krum’s legislation], In: *Studia Protobulgarica et mediaevalia europensia: В чест на професор Веселин Бешевлиев* eds. Vassil Gyuzelev, Kazimir Popkonstantinov (Veliko Tarnovo: St. Cyril and Methodius University Press, 1993), 47-58.

<sup>417</sup> *Suidae Lexicon*, vol. I edited by Ada Adler (Leipzig, 1928), 483-4.

<sup>418</sup> Kiril Petkov. *The Voices of Medieval Bulgaria*, 24.

<sup>419</sup> Responsa Nicolai papae ad consulta Bulgarorum. Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina 32-47, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1841-1857. Facsimile reprint, Turnhout: Brepols, 1982-1993), vol.119, col. 986. [Hereafter: Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina = PL]

<sup>420</sup> Responsa, PL119, col. 1010

of fallen soldiers.<sup>421</sup> The detailed correspondence between specific misbehaviour and its consequences are summarized in the table below.

Crime	Punishment	Chapter in the Responsa
False priesthood	Cutting ears and nose, killed (?) by beating, expelled from the country	XIV
Revolt	Killing the leaders and their kin	XVII
Fleeing the country	N/A, death	XX, XXV
Runaway slave	N/A	XXI
Deserting before battle	N/A	XXII, XXIII
Parricide/fratricide	N/A	XXIV, XXVI
Murder	N/A	XXVII
Adultery	N/A	XXVIII
Incest	N/A	XXIX
Involuntary murder	N/A	XXX
Animal thievery	N/A	XXXI
Kidnapping	N/A	XXXII
Unprepared for war/battle	Death	XL
Castration	N/A	LII
Calumny, perjury	N/A	LXIV
Poisoning	N/A	LXV
Suicide	Incomplete burial	XCVIII

*Table 18 Crimes described in the Responsa*

The document reveals a historic uncertainty concerning legal continuity during conversion. Extremely important sign for it is that 'not giving [the people] a good law' was the ideological justification for the anti-Christian revolt from 865/6.<sup>422</sup> The resolution of this tension will be realized in many codifications of traditional laws under Christian interpretation, as Slavic and Hungarian legislation proves. For now anyway, the critical points are the continuous existence of socially recognized felonies, the consequential corporal punishment, and the confirmation for funerary exclusion of wrong-doers.

<sup>421</sup> Responsa, PL 119, col. 1013

<sup>422</sup> Responsa PL 119, col.988-989.



The next survey of punishments is focused on the prescriptions in Byzantine law and their transition into the legislation of the newly-converted people in the Balkans. Its basis will be two of the most important normative documents of the period with strong influence on contemporary and later judicial practice. The first is Leo III's *Ecloga* envisioned probably in the 720s and finally promulgated in 741, a compilation meant to update the Roman legal tradition with the Christian morals and provide practical legal guidance for practitioners across the empire.<sup>423</sup> For this reason, this utilitarian anthology was issued in Greek instead of the traditional Latin language.

The second is *Законъ соудьны людемъ* or henceforth the Court Law for the People, the earliest known legal text written in Slavic language and largely based on the *Ecloga* itself.<sup>424</sup> The law code survives in multiple manuscript witnesses, which have been classified in three variants dating from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. The so-called short version, best known from thirteenth century copy known as *Novgorodskij spisok*, is usually considered to represent the earliest form of the text as it reached Russia. The creation of the code is closely related to the conversions to Christianity in the ninth century and much of the commentary has tried to place its origin either in Moravia or Bulgaria.<sup>425</sup>

Their provisions on criminal law involving corporal punishment are summarized in the following comparative table.

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<sup>423</sup>[Elena Lipshits] Елена Липшиц (ed.), *Эклога: Византийский законодательный свод VIII века* [Ecloga. Byzantine legal corpus from the 7<sup>th</sup> century] (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Nauk, 1965); Mike Humphreys, *Law, Power, and Imperial Ideology in the Iconoclast Era, C.680-850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 84.

<sup>424</sup> Horace W. Dewey and Ann M. Kleimola (eds.) *Zakon Sudnyj Ljudem (Court Law for the People)* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977), 3-29.

<sup>425</sup> [Dimitar Tokushev] Димитър Токушев, *История на средновековната българска държава и право* [History of the medieval Bulgarian state and law] (Sofia: Sibi, 2009), 60-76; Vladimír Procházka, "Le "Zakon sudnyj ljudem" et la Grand Moravie," *Byzantinoslavica* 29 (1968): 112-150; Tomas Gabris, "The Relationship of Ecloga and Zakon Sudnyj Ljudem Revisited: On Possibilities of Reconstruction of Archaic Law in Great Moravia," *Iuris Scripta Historica* 30 (2019): 91-108.

Crime	Punishment in the Ecloga (chapter XVII)		Punishment in the Court Law for the People		
High treason	Death	3	-	-	-
Breaking church asylum	Beating (12 hits)	1	Flagellation (160 scars)		16
Perjury/False witness	Cutting the tongue	2	-	-	-
Calumny	Equals the alleged crime	51	-	-	-
Hitting a priest	Flagellation and exile	4	-	-	-
Wartime stealing	Flagellation/Cutting one hand	10	Beating/Slavery	-	24
Animal thievery	1.Flagellation 2. Exile 3. Cutting hand	13	1.Beating 2. Exile 3. Slavery	-	26
Theft	Fine/Cutting one hand and exile	11	-	-	-
Grave robbery	Cutting one hand	14	Slavery	-	27
Stealing from a church	Blinding/Flagellation	15	Beating and trimming, public shaming	-	28
Unrightful appropriation of property	-	-	Beating	-	17
Kidnapping for slave trade	Cutting one hand	16	Slavery	-	29
Coin forgery	Cutting one hand	18	-	-	-
Adultery (married man)	Flagellation (12 hits)	19	-	-	-
Adultery (unmarried man)	Flagellation (6 hits)	20	-	-	-
Forcing a marriage with sex	Fine or flagellation, trimming and exile	29	-	-	-
Pre-marital intercourse	See above	29	Beating by the judge and exile	Penance (7 years)	8
Adultery	Cutting the nose	27, 32	Cutting the nose		11
Fornicating with the slave of another	Fine or flagellation	22	Fine/confiscation of property, selling the slave	Penance (6 or 7 years)	4, 5
Procuring adultery	Flagellation	28	-	-	-
Fornicating member of the clergy	Cutting the nose	23	Cutting the nose	Penance (15 years)	6
Raping a nun	Cutting the nose	24			
Marriage/fornicating	Cutting the nose	25	Cutting the nose	Penance	7

with a godparent		26		e (15 years)	
Incest	Flagellation	37	-	-	-
Rape	Cutting the nose	30	-	-	-
Rape of a girl/virgin	Cutting the nose and fine	31	Slavery and confiscation of property	Penance 8, 9	
Polygamy	Flagellation	33	Beating	Penance (7 years)	13
Abortion	Flagellation and exile	36	-	-	-
Homosexuality	Death by the sword	38	-	-	-
Sodomy (bestiality)	Castration	39	-	-	-
Arson (urban)	Death by burning	41	Death by burning	-	15
Arson (rural)	Death by sword	41	Death by sword	-	15
Poisoning	Death by the sword	42	-	-	-
Magic/communication with demons	Death by the sword	43	-	-	-
Murder	Death by the sword	45	-	-	-
Attempted murder with a weapon	Cutting hand if the victim survives/death by the sword	46	-	-	-
Manslaughter during quarrel with heavy object	Cutting the hand	47	-	-	-
Manslaughter during quarrel without heavy object	Flagellation and exile	47	-	-	-
Quarrelling	Flagellation and exile	48	-	-	-
Poisoning/killing own slave	Equals murder	49	-	-	-
Murder in ambush	Hanging	50	-	-	-
Heresy (Manichaeans)	Death by the sword	52	-	-	-
Deserting	Death by the sword	53	-	-	-

*Table 19 Comparative crimes and corporate punishments in the Byzantine Ecloga and the Slavic Court Law for the People*

In territories under direct Byzantine control like the coastal towns in Dalmatia the Ecloga would have been the definitive normative basis. In newly converted lands like Bulgaria the same document was widely translated and adopted to local conditions. As some articles indicate, the Court Law for the People was an update of

the same document to local customs and circumstances. Probably this happened after a legislative debate on its applicability as the confirmation of some punishments (e.g., for arson, some sexual misconduct) and changes in case specifications and relevant punishments (e.g., thievery) would suggest. Apparently, the existing treatment of murder, treason etc. in the *Ecloga* or other unknown documents was deemed adequate. The question if the Court Law for the People originated in Bulgaria or Great Moravia is irrelevant here, as the law received widespread recognition among Slavic-speaking population in the Balkans and beyond.

Another important law code is the so-called *Nomos Georgikos* or the Farmer's Law.<sup>426</sup> Its exact compilation is difficult to certify but it seems very likely that is also connected to the eight-century legislative efforts of the Isaurian dynasty and might have been intended as a supplement to the *Ecloga*.<sup>427</sup> Particular trait of this codex is its deliberate preoccupation with the economy of the countryside. Its utilitarian nature was appreciated in Slavic milieu as well and the Farmer's Law was translated from the Greek original probably around the late ninth or early tenth century.<sup>428</sup> Additional testimony to its widespread popularity is that the law is preserved in more than hundred manuscripts dating until the sixteenth century. Its provisions concerning corporal punishment are summarized in the table below.

Crime	Punishment	Article in the Farmer's Law
Herdsmen killing/maiming/blinding an ox and falsely denying it	Cutting the tongue Payment to the owner	27
Keeper stealing from the lot	Good beating and loss of payment	32
Misappropriation of dairy	Beating and loss of payment	33

<sup>426</sup> Walter Ashburner, "The Farmers Law," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 30 (1910): 97–108.

<sup>427</sup> Mike Humphreys, *Law, Power, and Imperial Ideology*, 208–218, 223–231.

<sup>428</sup> Kiril Petkov. *The Voices*, 30.

products by hired shepherd		
Losing livestock to wild animals, while stealing	Blinding	41
Illicit animal slaughter and meat cutting	Cutting the hands	43
Slave losing livestock to wild animals, while stealing	Hanged like a murderer	45
Slave stealing livestock repeatedly	Hanging the slave Payment for the damages by the master	46
Burning the fence of a vineyard	Beating and branding of the arm	57
Uprooting or plundering vineyards	Cutting one hand and fine	58
Pilfering during harvest	Flagellation	59
Stealing from vineyards and orchards	Flagellation	60
Arson on threshing-floor or stacks of sheaves	Burning at the stake	63
Arson on a barn or hayloft	Cutting the hands	64
Destruction of someone else's house or fence	Cutting the hands	65
Stealing from the granary	Beating hundred times with a stick and repayment. Blinding on the third time	67
Cheating with measurements	Beating as apostates	70
Killing a shepherd dog	Flagellation (100 times) and repayment to the owner.	75
Injuring someone else's dog in a dog fight	Flagellation (12 times) and repayment to the owner	76
Inciting dog fights	Flagellation (12 times) and repayment to the owner	77
Damage by livestock on the neighbour's fields	Flagellation (30 times) and repayment to the owner	78
Damage by livestock on the neighbour's vineyards	Flagellation (30 times) and repayment to the owner	79
Damage to the property of an opponent in a litigation	Cutting the hands	80

*Table 20 Crime and corporal punishment in the Farmer's law*

Some observations on the forms of corporal punishment can be made on the basis of this Byzantino-Slavic norms. Above all, there is still quite significant application of death penalties, even if judicial mutilation is softer and popular alternative. The Christian appeal to mercy and forgiveness definitely had an impact and perhaps the papal persuasion impressed the Bulgars since we see even further

reduction of permanent corporal punishment. Of course, this sort of Christian mercy had its material benefits since the wrong doers usually lost their status to become a commodity in the slave trade, a crucial resource in medieval Balkan economies.<sup>429</sup>

Few more conclusions about the physicality of punishment can be made from the written documents. First, the predominant execution tool was the sword, i.e., decapitation should be considered the principal practice on such occasions. In case of beating, the vocabulary strongly suggest that the whip was more common in Byzantium than elsewhere. Also, when judicial mutilation was prescribed the target body parts were most often the nose and the hands. The former much like other forms of punishment like lashing scarred the felon, sometimes permanently, but it has very little archaeological recognition. Finally, the ongoing adaptation of the customary corporal penalties should be emphasized.

The Hungarian laws highlighted in this selection represent a critical contribution on the matter.<sup>430</sup> They have direct relevance in the region given the expansionists agenda of the Hungarian kingdom along the Danube (especially in present-day Vojvodina) and in the Adriatic region after the union with Croatia in 1102. Apparently, Croatian customary law had significant and expected similarities with the Hungarian law. Nonetheless, the realms of Dalmatia and Slavonia enjoyed some level of autonomy expressed in the institutional organization of these lands.<sup>431</sup> Multiple communities had their own statutes, but all preserved documents are later than the Hungarian laws discussed here. Writing down local Croatian laws usually

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<sup>429</sup> Michael McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce AD 300-900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 605, 759-777; Ante Alajbeg, "Trgovina robljem," 286-287.

<sup>430</sup> János M. Bak, *Online Decreta*, 18-155.

<sup>431</sup> Damir Karbić, Marija Karbić, Martyn Rady, *The Laws and Customs of Medieval Croatia and Slavonia. A Guide to the Extant Sources* (London: UCL School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies, 2013), 3-4.

happened at signal political moments and is very often a consequence of the establishment and stabilization of Venetian rule over these communities.<sup>432</sup>

To a similar extent, the legal initiative of these Hungarian Árpád kings reflects the creation of written legislature following somewhat turbulent conversion to Christianity. The two law books attributed to Stephen are reconstructed mostly on manuscripts from the late twelfth (the so-called Codex Admont) to the sixteenth century.<sup>433</sup> Next, the Ladislav laws were probably re-edited as late as the end of the thirteen centuries but are preserved only in fifteen and sixteen century manuscripts.<sup>434</sup> Arguably, they were used without interruption at later times. Finally, the codification of king Coloman was made during an assembly aiming to review and update the original laws of St. Stephen. The codex is preserved only in later copies from the fifteen and sixteen centuries.<sup>435</sup> The Árpád legislature was also chosen to represent the Central European, Catholic influence on the Balkan legal milieu.

Crime	St. Stephen (1000-1038)	Ladislav I (1077-1095)	Coloman (1095-1116)
Missing liturgy	Beating and trimming I:9	Beating I:11	- -
Disturbing the mass (young people)	Flagellation and trimming I:20	- -	- -
Attacking/Killing with a sword	Death by the same sword I:16; II:12	Imprisonment, confiscation of property and slavery II:8	Transferred to cannon law 50
Perjury/calumny	Cutting one hand/fine I:17	- -	Branding with the cross-sign on the cheeks 83
Fornication with	Flagellation, I:28	- -	- -

<sup>432</sup> Damir Karbić, "Hungarian and Croatian Customary Law: Some Contrasts and Comparisons," *University of Cambridge Centre for European Legal Studies Occasional Paper* 6, (2003): 41-42.

<sup>433</sup> János M. Bak, *Online Decreta*, 18-19, 41.

<sup>434</sup> János M. Bak, *Online Decreta*, 51, 71, 84-5.

<sup>435</sup> János M. Bak, *Online Decreta*, 105-106.



another's <i>ancillia</i>	trimming, slavery					
Rape	-	-	Equals manslaughter	I:32	-	-
Witchcraft	1.Penance 2. Branding with the cross-sign on the bossom, forehead, and between shoulders 3. Given to the royal judge	I:33	-	-	-	-
Sorcery	Flagellation by the bishop or at the mercy of the victims	I:34	-	-	Transferred to canon law	60
Aggressive trespassing and assault on the household	Equals attack with a sword	I:35	Confiscation of property, trimming, and slavery	II:11	-	-
High treason	Death	II:2	-	-	-	-
Thievery (slave)	1.Fine or cutting the nose 2. Cutting the ears 3. Death	II:6	1.Cutting the nose 2. Hanging; 1. Fine and cutting nose 2. Hanging; Blinding (fugitive slave)	II.2, 10. II:14	-	-
Thievery (freeman)	Slavery and subject to status, i.e., death	II:7	Hanging and destruction of property	II:1	-	-
Thievery (alternate)	-	-	Bodily mutilation; Blinding one or both eyes	II:9. III:8	Blinding	53
Thievery (woman)	-	-	Cutting the nose and confiscation of property; Losing one eye and property	III:6	Equated to male thievery	56
Wartime stealing	-	-	Thoroughly destroyed with	III:10	-	-

			all his goods			
Selling stolen goods (travelling merchants)	-	-	Equals thievery	III:11	-	-
The maiming of another person's body	Equivalent injury	II:13	-	-	-	-
Intrigues	Cutting tongue	II:14	-	-	-	-
Wounding with a sword (victim survives)	Equals manslaughter (fine)	II:16	-	-	-	-
Attack with a sword (no harm)	Equals $\frac{1}{2}$ manslaughter (fine)	II:17	-	-	-	-
Stealing tythes	Equals thievery	II:20	-	-	-	-
Intrigues misusing the king's name	Death	II:21	-	-	-	-
Postponing lawsuits (judges)	-	-	Beating	III:24	-	-

*Table 21 Crimes and corporal punishments in medieval Hungarian legislation*

The general pattern is also one of entanglement of ecclesiastical authorities in the court with ordeals involving both secular judge and local bishops. In fact, bishops are the initial judges for multiple crimes like murder, adultery, theft etc. Provisions forwarding some crimes to royal, secular judge may indicate the existence of ad hoc penal practices likely involving corporal punishment. Otherwise, the attempt to reduce the physicality of justice by introducing wider and well-developed system of fines and property confiscations is evident. The developed monetary economy and the necessity to acquire institutional funds leave a mark on legal culture. Nevertheless, the physical repercussions are particularly severe towards thieves. Hanging emerges as prominent form of execution, while bodily mutilations build on a culture of shaming and social denial by creating visible marks of outlaw status through human stamping or cutting facial features. The immediate materiality of punishment is still existing, but it is

extremely unlikely to acquire direct evidence for such treatment from the archaeological record.

Last but not least are the documents of late medieval legal culture on the Balkans. There is a pronounced increase in preserved evidence for judicial activity, especially in the multiple statutes of individual communities in the Dalmatian and Slavonian realms.<sup>436</sup> The present in-depth search for prescribed corporal punishment will focus on the code by Stefan Dušan (1331-1355) issued in 1349 and later expanded in 1354.<sup>437</sup> The text is preserved in at least twenty five copies, the oldest one being the so-called Strushki manuscript dated in 1395.<sup>438</sup> The relevant provisions in his legislation are summarized in the table below.

Crime	Punishment	Article in the Code
Heresy	Branding on the cheeks and exile	10
Turning Christians to infidels	Cutting hand and tongue	21
Bribery of clergy	Death	24
Freeman cursing a lord	Fine and beating	50
Abduction of women	Cutting both hands and nose	53
Adultery with a slave	Cutting both hands and nose	54
Conspiracy	Cutting ears	69
Deliberate murder	Cutting both hands	87, 94
Murder of clergyman	Death and hanging	95
Parricide and fratricide	Death by burning	96
Injury (breaking the chin) in a fight	Cutting both hands	97
Arson	Fine and placed at the affected community's mercy	99, 100
Invasion on royal land (by horse-riders and pillagers, may be nomads)	Equals murder	101

<sup>436</sup> Damir Karbić, Marija Karbić, Martyn Rady, *The Laws and Customs*.

<sup>437</sup> Stojan Novaković, *Zakonik Stefana Dušana, cara srpskog. 1349 i 1354* [The code of Stefan Dušan, Serbian tsar. 1349 and 1354] (Belgrade: Ilija Kolarac, 1898); Malcolm Burr, *The Code of Stephan Dušan*; Paolo Angelini, "The Code of Dušan 1349–1354", *Tijdschrift voor Rechtsgeschiedenis / Revue d'histoire du droit / The Legal History Review* 80, 1-2 (2012): 77-93.

<sup>438</sup> Srđan Šarkić, *Srednjovekovno srpsko pravo* [Medieval Serbian Law] (Novi Sad: Matica Srpska, 1995), 14.

Offence against judge by villagers	Hanging and plunder (of property?)	111
Destroying a church during war	Death (possibly hanging)	130
Quarrels in the army	Beating and death	131
Plundering by fugitives from the crown	Equals high treason	144
Thieves and outlaws ( <i>lopovi</i> )	Hanging	145, 149
Robbery	Blinding	145, 149
Assisting the outlaws (local landlords)	Equals thievery	146, 147
Preventing justice and judge's assistants	Cut both hands and tongue	162
Smuggling	Equals thievery	165
Drunk quarrelling	Cut hand and taking one eye	166
Coin forgery	Branding with fire of the forger and fine/plunder for the settlement	169
Procuring adultery	Equals thievery	173

Table 22 Crimes and corporal punishment in Stefan Dušan's code

The Dušan's code confirms a preoccupation with various offences against public order and property, like thievery or smuggling, then with murder for instance. However, the immediate impression is for maintenance of bodily mutilation targeting the limbs and the head for a number of crimes, as well as the prevalent presence of hanging in death penalties. Especially in comparison to the Arpad legislation, there is a pronounced reliance of corporal punishment in the penal repertoire. Public recognition and social negation of the act and the criminal are crucial element in it.

Alternative penal law at the time could be found in the *Syntagma Canonum* by Mattheu Blastaris from 1355.<sup>439</sup> His compilation was amply valued in the entire region.<sup>440</sup> The combination of canon and secular law is based on various sources, but the criminal law borrows exceedingly from the *Ecloga*. The punishment for

<sup>439</sup> Mattheu Blastaris, *Syntagma Canonum*, *Patrologiae cursus completus*, series graeca 144-145, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1857-1886). [Hereafter: *Patrologiae cursus completus*, series graeca = PG].

<sup>440</sup> Srđan Šarkić, *Srednjovekovno srpsko pravo*, 11-12; [Dimitar Tokushev], *История на средновековната българска държава и право*, 85-89.

intentional murder was determined by the social status of the culprit. If the person were considered honourable, he would only lose property. However, if he was a peasant, he is either killed with a sword or given to wild beasts to be torn. Finally, the murderer was burnt at the stake when the victim was their relative.

To sum up, all these legal documents constitute a top-down view on criminal matters and attempt standardization and guidance of local judicial matters. Even when the forms of judicial violence are impossible to recognize on skeletal remains from archaeological contexts, the legal writings apply the same bodily symbolism discussed before. One common trait is their attempt to overcome private blood feud, yet the kin-organized retaliation remained valid social retaliation among medieval communities.<sup>441</sup> This social condition must be considered in the discussion on the legal aspect of deviant burial practices.

### 3.4.3. Bodies of criminals and criminal bodies

The deviant burials from South-Eastern Europe largely confirm the picture from the archaeological record and written sources. In many ways Devnya-3 proved to be a critical site in this respect, at least for the early medieval period. The non-combat violent death and the accumulation of evidence for coercion and ritualized killing validate the interpretation of isolated forms of deviant mortuary treatment to be the appropriate burial for extra-legal subjects.<sup>442</sup> Further, the accumulated presence of all four kinds within the archaeological context demonstrate their relevance for

<sup>441</sup> [Galabina Petrova] Гълъбина Петрова, “Кръвно отмъщение в Средновековна България” [Blood feud in medieval Bulgaria] *Векове* 6 (1979): 39; Teodor Taranovski, *Istorija srpskog prava u Nemanjićkoj držvi. II deo. Istorija krivičnog prava* [History of Serbian law during the Nemanjić dynasty. Part II History of penal law] (Beograd: Izdavačka knjižarnica Gece Kona, 1931), 178.

<sup>442</sup> See here, 2.2.

understanding early law enforcement in Balkan milieu as well. The varying entanglements materialized in the correlation between deviant burial forms inside the mass grave or with individual graves elsewhere are best explained as the physical reflection of socially sanctioned maltreatment.

Nevertheless, this rationale should not attempt becoming an all-encompassing narrative negligent of the complexities in this phenomenon or avoiding the burden of proof. Naturally some cases will fit the classificatory criteria for corporal punishment better. *Peri mortem* decapitations and mutilations are its obvious archaeological manifestation.

The anthropological identification for the latter were already discussed as the most appropriate evidential basis in this respect. In fact, the hand amputations from the rural cemeteries Trnjane (Trn.113 and Trn.212) and Kovachevo (Kvc.88) from Type I mutilations match multiple judicial prescriptions. Examples for missing limbs should also be considered in this context. Contemporary Type II mutilation graves like in Braila (especially Br11.44) or Gornea (GCds.49) can also reflect punitive limb loss. Potential offenses can involve interpersonal violence, calumny, some forms of theft (e.g., grave robbery) etc.

Plausible judicial reasoning could be found in the remarkable tenth century mutilation grave from Nikolovo (Nik.185) where the arm of another individual was found on the torso of the adult woman buried there. If we look into the relevant legal documents the amputation of a limbs is included in the possible punishments for murder, together with death. Even in such a scenario, the chances for a victim to be buried together with their killer are considered slim.<sup>443</sup> However, in the grave were found also articulated animal bones and extensive traces of charcoal suggesting some

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<sup>443</sup> Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant*, 70.

form of funerary offerings. Perhaps it is worth contemplating the severed hand of the identified offender as appropriate display for successfully served justice during the funerary event. Under these terms, the woman should be regarded the plaintiff of her own case communicated between the living and the dead. Purposefully, human remains gain the capacity of both object (the mutilated arm) and subject (the deceased) of the law in the judicially informed burial arrangement.<sup>444</sup>

Things are much more straightforward with *peri mortem* decapitations. As noticed, the execution by sword was very common form of death penalty with clear impact on the skeleton. Yet, an important lesson from execution cemeteries like Walkington Wold is that even fairly certain *peri mortem* decapitations are not always preserved in the expected set of anthropological evidence (cranium, mandible, and damaged cervical vertebrae). An unpleasant reality is that beheading requires precision and strength that were not necessarily guaranteed and can result in especially painful death and badly damaged body. For instance, this is visible in one skeleton from Udbina (Udb.15) where two separate blows are recorded on the skull and the spine.

The anthropologically confirmed cases can be found in Types I-III decapitation burials throughout the entire medieval period. Some valuable examples originate from Bečej (Bcj.20), Ravna (RnC.3/66, RnC.10/67, RnC.11/67), Sopotu Vechi (SpV.1), Ilidia (IIDO.2), Pesak 2 (Psk2.82), and Udbina (Udb.10, Udb.15). One of the graves in Udbina (Udb.10) is particularly important due to the incision cuts on the cervical vertebrae combined with the absence of the skull and the atlas, hence confirming the credibility of beheadings for similar cases. The face-down placement

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<sup>444</sup> Romedio Schmitz-Esser, *The Corpse in the Middle Ages. Embalming, Cremating, and the Cultural Construction of the Dead Body* (Nottingham: Brepols, 2020), 417-418.



of the skull while the rest of the body is supine (a.k.a. Type II.B prone burials) should also be considered a very strong indication for peri mortem decapitation.

The demographic profile of the decapitation burials does not entirely match the expectation for extensive share of adolescent and adult males in the sample. In Europe this picture is clearest in the execution cemeteries, while the deviant burials in communal cemeteries show rather mixed gender ratio subject to temporal and cultural specifics. The situation in the Balkans is pretty much the same and it further shows that gender roles in the past, either positive or negative, are not stable and socially constructed. Still, there is a tendency that males, especially adult males were more often subject to deviant burial. Many crimes punishable by death were not restricted to men, for instance heresy, witchcraft, or theft. The last example is important as there are specific regulations in multiple medieval laws that expand accomplice to family members and collective guilt transcend gender divisions. By the way, the same observation will be valid for other kinds of deviant burial and archaeologically invisible punishment.

The disintegrations of the body (Type III mutilation) could also reflect the severity of the penal action. More than just an execution, such maltreatment dehumanizes the person by entirely destroying its physical identity. The most widespread form would be burning which is reserved for heretics in the West and Byzantium alike. The same principle sanctions an action where the death by sword must be magnified. Documentary evidence imply that legal practice allowed such gradation in punishment. For instance, both the *Ecloga* and the Court Law for the People postulate that arsonists in towns must be burnt and those in villages should be cut by the sword. Even more expressive is the law of Ladislav I when dealing with

wartime stealing: the perpetrator must be thoroughly destroyed, together with his property.

While osteological evidence for burning on the stake as public execution is lacking, the disintegration of the body with a cutting weapon (sword) is attested in the archaeological record. The most distinctive example is found in early medieval Kyulevcha (Kyu.81). The body of the male was cut into three pieces: the severed head, the prone placed torso above it, and the contracted pelvis and legs thrown in the eastern part of the round pit. Probably this is the best example for correlative deviant burial practices outside the nearly contemporary mass grave from Devnya-3, because prone position and *peri mortem* decapitation and mutilation are all registered on the skeletal remains. Such disrespectful treatment is to an extent replicated in Sultana, another early medieval biritual cemetery on the Lower Danube. There the position of the beheaded mature male (Slit.92) leaves a strong impression for unrecorded injuries and disruptions of the postcranial skeleton or extreme constraint at the very least.

The eleventh-twelfth century disintegration burial from Stan (Stan.4-9) is geographically situated in the same region but it is chronologically separate by at least two hundred years. Despite considering it a single entity, the skeleton was found cut in two major pieces through the sagittal plane. To make the disembodiment even more evident, the two parts were buried on the side in two separate, though adjacent pits. Additionally, the arms were cut through the humeri and the remaining parts are missing from the graves. The condition of the skull is unclear.

The cuts on the axial skeleton and the upper limbs effectively reduce the body to four separate parts grouped in mirroring pairs. This makes the burial from Stan one of the rare archaeological demonstrations of quartering. The punishment was suggested for the tenth-eleventh century burial from Visegrád-Várkert where the

beheaded and mutilated female was disposed among six dogs. The specifically medieval mode of execution is a known consequence of blasphemy in medieval Central Europe, but likely its application was not so specific.<sup>445</sup>

There are precedents from written sources evoking parallels to the disintegration practice. One case with widespread exposition was the execution of emperor Phocas (602-610). Phocas was overthrown as a tyrant and swiftly beheaded by his replacement Heraclius (610-641), but not before his right arm and genitalia were cut off. His remains were exhibited at the Forum Bovis until finally thrown into fire.<sup>446</sup> Later account of especially gruesome public punishment of lesser public enemy is recorded in 765AD Constantinople. Christianus, a renegade from the faith and leader of Scamari (organized robbers) was captured on the Balkans and Constantine V ordered his mutilation and vivisection. His limbs were cut off and afterwards physicians were asked to open him from his pubic section to the chest. Afterwards, he was 'given to the flames'.<sup>447</sup> Dissections were performed in Byzantium mostly on criminals until very late.<sup>448</sup> Apparently the anatomical knowledge acquired during these procedures contributed to the torture and execution of outlaws.<sup>449</sup>

In fact, the account left by Theophanes could shed light on the circumstances of another disintegration from Ždrijac-Nin (ZdrN.77). As mentioned previously, the entire lower body of the unsexed individual was extensively burned inside the grave pit. Additionally, the missing skull indicates *peri mortem* decapitation and the separation from the main cemetery further stresses on the special funerary situation.

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<sup>445</sup> Norbert Ohler, *Sterben und Tod im Mittelalter* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1993), 204.

<sup>446</sup> Bogdan-Petru Maleon, "Imperial Death in Byzantium: A Preliminary View on the Negative Funerals," *Transylvanian Review* 19, Supplement 5:4 (2010): 16, 23.

<sup>447</sup> Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia* 11.16-20

<sup>448</sup> Lawrence Bliques and Alexander Kazhdan, "Four testimonia to human dissection in Byzantine times," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 58:4 (1984): 556.

<sup>449</sup> Bogdan Petru Maleon, "The Torture of Bodies in Byzantium After the Riots (Sec. IV-VIII)," In: *Killing and Being Killed: Bodies in Battle* ed. J. Rogge (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2017), 55.

The burial is broadly dated to the eight-early ninth century, approximately at the same time as the event described by Theophanes. During this period Byzantine control over coastal towns in Dalmatia is still present. Undeniably Nin was under strong Byzantine influence, even if outside direct imperial jurisdiction following the Carolingian conquests. It seems reasonable that the unnamed individual from Ždrijac-Nin experienced similar torture and execution to Phocas and Christianus before his body was finally submitted to incineration.

Multiple medieval treatises make the religiously motivated claim that it is the sin, not the person that is punished, a purification of the soul from the temporal evils.<sup>450</sup> Following the example of the penitent thief at the Crucifixion, the temporal punishment and spiritual redemption were not irreconcilable. In fact, the execution ritual was likely perceived as penitential process for the sinner and the community.<sup>451</sup>

Yet, such claims appear at the very least hypocritical when observing the treatment of felons. Indeed, the penal law constricted death penalties by introducing mutilations, enslavement, exile, and fines for many crimes. Physical punishment was reserved for the worst of the worst, but infamy and public service of justice created an overwhelming social category of outcasts appropriated to any wrong doers. Apparently, reputation had a profound importance in social interactions and repeatedly bad behaviour impacted the standings of parties at court. Narratives from

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<sup>450</sup> [Pavel Prokoshev] Павел Прокошев, *Церковное судопроизводство в период Вселенских соборов (Accisatio) и влияние на него римско-византийского процессуального права* [Church Legal Procedure in the period of the Ecumenical Councils (Accisatio) and Its Impact on the Roman-Byzantine Procedure Law] (Kazan: Imperial University Press, 1900), 196 and passim; Andrej Confalonieri, „Razbojništvo u Dušanovom zakoniku” [Crime in Dušan’s code], *Vesnik pravne istorije* 1 (2020): 114-116.

<sup>451</sup> Esther Cohen, “Symbols of Culpability and the universal language of justice: the ritual of public execution in late medieval Europe,” *History of European Ideas* 11 (1989): 407,413.

Byzantine legal practice vividly expresses the partiality of judicial proceedings based on reputation or social class.<sup>452</sup>

#### 3.4.4. Policing the afterlife: *poena post mortem*

Even when criminalized sins were punished in spiritual terms, the exclusion during the penance period is based on social denial and even dehumanization. The latter process is realized in many ways. Sometimes dehumanization is performed socially by confiscation of property and enslavement, while in other a visually recognized mark for the negated status is made through human stamping, beating or mutilation. Even if the bodily damage is not permanent, the public performance of justice was physically projected to audiences. These labels are especially easy to apply during executions or to be reaffirmed on the cadaver of a perceived law breaker. Thus, the body becomes a medium on which the transgression is remedied, and the social order is promoted at the expense of the wrong doer.<sup>453</sup> This symbolic interaction strategy is critical for another form of justice with relevance to deviant burial customs, the *poena post mortem*.

Posthumous punishments were a feature of the Roman penal law which persisted in the medieval world. This additional maltreatment was strongly associated with the dead penalty and punished the offender even after their execution, because of the seriousness of the crime. The enhanced form of social denial is derived from a belief that the lack of proper burial will transmit the social death in the afterlife as

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<sup>452</sup> Zachary Ray Chitwood, *Byzantine Legal Culture under the Macedonian Dynasty, 867-1056* (PhD Dissertation: Princeton University, 2012), 78-80.

<sup>453</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger. An analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966), 129.

well, sort of ritual overkill.<sup>454</sup> Moreover, the desecration of the corpse emphasized the abuse and disregard for those deemed outside of the law and its protection. This was a powerful statement against any potential offenders and challengers to imperial power.

The post mortem punishment become routinely implemented and its relevance to deviant burial practices like decapitation and mutilation is very well documented.<sup>455</sup> In fact, many political figures were singled out for array of their unworthy end by presenting their severed heads on prominent places, a practice continued in the medieval period. Regarding the Balkan deviant burials, the public presentation of severed heads, for instance on spikes, can plausibly explain some of the decapitation burials from Types I and II. Similar demonstration is the prolonged exposure of audiences to the bodies of hanged criminals etc.

The *poena post mortem* established several somatic tropes in punitive display that were applied to visual representations like statues.<sup>456</sup> In medieval context, the dead deemed unworthy were subjected to an increasingly formalized procedure of damnation through what Elliot calls a negative translation, a reversed counterpart of the transfer of holy relics.<sup>457</sup> Much like the veneration of saints, the deliberate repudiation of commemoration for unwanted individuals involved grave reopening and manipulation of their commodified remains.<sup>458</sup>

Perhaps the most notorious such example from the medieval period is the Cadaver Synod from 897 held against pope Formosus (891-896). Pope Stephen VI

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<sup>454</sup> Darina Kmecová. "A Few Examples of Death Penalty in Roman Law," *Comparative European Research* 1 (2016), 185.

<sup>455</sup> Eric R. Varner, "Punishment after death: Mutilation of images and corpse abuse in ancient Rome," *Mortality* 6:1(2001): 45-64.

<sup>456</sup> Eric Varner, "Violent Discourses: Visual Cannibalism and the Portraits of Rome's 'Bad' Emperors," In: *The Archaeology of Violence: Interdisciplinary Approaches* ed. Sarah Ralph (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 129-131.

<sup>457</sup> Dyan Elliot, "Violence against the Dead: The Negative Translation and damnatio memoriae in the Middle Ages," *Speculum* 92, 4 (2017): 1021-1024.

<sup>458</sup> Patrick Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 200-208.

exhumed Formosus' corpse and held trial against him on several accusations which retroactively pronounced the dead pope guilty on all charges. The maltreatment of the deceased pope involved parallel destruction of his visual representations and humiliation of his body.<sup>459</sup> The latter involved the removal of his papal attire, cutting fingers from his right hand, and reburial in a grave for wayfarers. Notably, the cadaver was further exhumed and thrown into the river Tiber with weight bound to his neck. Every single element in the ongoing abuse of the Formosa corresponds to different deviant burial practices. The political motivation and personal rivalry of this morbid episode expose how feud and personal vengeance can impact the treatment of the corpse and propel grave reopening for judicial purpose.

Grave reopening is in fact a much more common occurrence throughout the Middle Ages than previously appreciated.<sup>460</sup> On top of everything else, the occasion provided medieval people with a potent opportunity to retrospectively perform justice on dead bodies and fulfil habitual responsibilities. Probably many early examples for post mortem decapitations or mutilations could be reconsidered in this respect. This mnemonic practice might have also offered a coping mechanism for dissatisfaction with the outcome from previous legal settlement or general social tension. Concerns like these have immediate repercussions on local level between members of corporate groups.

The possibility for medieval manifestation of *poena post mortem* in the form of deviant burial practices raises the question for the multivalent legal cultures in the

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<sup>459</sup> Michael Moore, "The body of pope Formosus," *Millenium* 9, 1 (2012): 277-297; Dyan Elliot, "Violence against the Dead," 1028-1029.

<sup>460</sup> Alison Klevnäs, Edeltraud Aspöck, Astrid Noterman, Martine Van Haperen, and Stephanie Zintl, "Reopening graves in the early Middle Ages: From local practice to European phenomenon," *Antiquity*, 95: 382 (2021): 1005-1022; For Byzantium, Eric Ivison, *Mortuary Practices in Byzantium (c. 950-1453): An Archaeological Contribution* (PhD Dissertation: University of Birmingham, 1993), 163-164.



Balkans at the time. The issue is specifically tied to the plurality of normative systems and the accommodation of Roman law in medieval societies.

The legal systems of the Balkan states are very much an adaptation of the Byzantine legislation. Even more, the Byzantine jurisdiction covered much of the region in the early medieval period and at the time of the Macedonian dynasty.<sup>461</sup> From the other side, the western legal thought provided another source of inspiration in codification. Despite the traditional inclusion of the Balkan states into the Byzantine Commonwealth, this western influence should not be underestimated. For instance, Carolingian and Hungarian legal cultures had direct impact on the Adriatic and Vojvodina in different historical periods, while the Bulgars plainly requested secular laws from Rome around their conversion.

But the reception of the Roman normative spirit of the late Antiquity is not limited to acceptance of its proxy adaptations in Greek or Latin.<sup>462</sup> The deviant burial practices reveal the underlying continuity of legitimized, judicial violence exercised by the central authority. The appropriation of this violence in funerary context is characteristic already in the Graeco-Roman imperial tradition.<sup>463</sup>

However, this does not imply direct continuity of Roman deviant burials and medieval deviant practices in the Balkans. It may be beneficial if the possibility for diffusion of Roman mortuary practices into the burial customs of societies in the post-Roman periphery is considered in future research. New intellectual content from Christianity or Slavic traditional culture enriched the original symbolic significance of

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<sup>461</sup> Milan M. Macura, “Byzantine Law as a Nursery Garden for Legal Transplants with Specific Review of Dusan’s Code,” *Zbornik Radova* 54:1 (2020): 519-522; Paolo Angelini, “The reception of Byzantine law among the Slav populations: a comparative perspective,” In: *Κυρίλλος και Μεθόδιος: το Βυζάντιο και ο Κόσμος των Σλαβών* [Cyril and Methodius: Byzantium and the World of the Slavs] eds. Antony-Emil Tachiaos et al. (Thessaloniki: Thessprint, 2015), 414-422.

<sup>462</sup> Bernard Stolte, “Byzantine Law: The Law of the New Rome,” in *The Oxford Handbook of European Legal History*, eds. Heikki Pihlajamäki, Markus D. Dubber, and Mark Godfrey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 234-236.

<sup>463</sup> Alessandro Quercia and Melania Cazzulo, “Fear of the Dead,” 30-40.

the Graeco-Roman custom and probably transformed it over time. The current comparison simply places the *poena post mortem* and other forms of maltreatment in the funerary habitus of medieval societies. At its very core this is an unquestionably material phenomenon reflecting the dynamics of power structures in the society.

Judicial roles were often secondary to the general administrative responsibilities of local elites, mostly lacking the sophisticated legal education available to narrow intellectual circles in the political centres and mostly Constantinople.<sup>464</sup> In fact, a variety of narratives and performances could epitomize traditional rules, because legal discourse is not limited to the provisions of strictly formulated content.<sup>465</sup> Quite diverse set of practices were available to local elites and officials to sanction outlaws and deviant burials appear to be an obligatory and unspoken element in customary law. Their roles and social standings might have depended on providing educated justification for additional punishment demanded by the lower tiers of the community.<sup>466</sup>

The complicated coexistence between mostly orally reproduced customs and textually transmitted codices imposed by royal and ecclesiastical power is a relationship of shifting primacy. The habitual nature of deviant burials is attached to judicial actions reproduced in collective memory as much as is dependent on exceptional decisions considering the personal circumstances for each new case. Simultaneously, they can be a peculiar low-status expression of the existing power structures and governing ideologies. These relics of law enforcement and its consequences for social interactions within the communities are critical for the reconstruction of realities beyond the intended idealized norms set out in formal legal

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<sup>464</sup> Zachary Ray Chitwood, *Byzantine Legal Culture*, 210.

<sup>465</sup> Fangzhe Qiu, "Law, Law-books and Tradition in Early Medieval Ireland," In *Law, Book, Culture in the Middle Ages*, ed. Thom Gobbit (Leiden: BRILL, 2021).

<sup>466</sup> Romedio Schmitz-Esser, *The Corpse*, 610.

sources. Perhaps the study of deviant burial practices in the Balkans offers at least partial response to the plea by Alexander Kazhdan to revise the history of Byzantine law.<sup>467</sup>

### 3.4.5. Execution cemeteries in South-Eastern Europe: a hypothesis

The various analogies from written and archaeological sources endorses the place of deviant burial practices from South-Eastern Europe in the discussion of medieval legal cultures. However, one important question with important archaeological implications remains to be addressed. Simply put, the question is do execution cemeteries develop in the region during the medieval period?

At first glance the answer should be no. Nevertheless, I would propose that execution cemeteries actually existed in South-Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages. It should be acknowledged that they are principally restricted site type even for Anglo-Saxon England or medieval and early modern Central Europe. This is even more so if we place the evidentiary weight on very narrow but reliable profiles of the phenomenon.<sup>468</sup>

Execution cemeteries are frequently connected to the formation of fixed execution sites in the landscape, very often using pre-existing natural or man-made features. This correlation is central to the argument for their existence and in their eventual identification. Past environmental factors like erosion and flooding or flawed sampling strategies have made them archaeologically invisible even within extensive excavations.

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<sup>467</sup> Alexander Kazhdan, "Do We Need a New History of Byzantine Law?" 39. *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 1 (1989); Cf. Bernard Stolte, "Not New but Novel. Notes on the Historiography of Byzantine Law," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 22 (1998): 264; Bernard Stolte, *Byzantine Law*, 240.

<sup>468</sup> Alyxandra Mattison, *The Execution and Burial*, 75.

Written sources provide scarce but valuable evidence for the existence of burial grounds devoted specifically to extra-legal individuals. The descriptions of Constantinople are particularly important since the imperial capital set the tone for many cultural conventions in the region. In the eighth and ninth centuries, such dead were disposed without formal burial or ceremony in open ditches and pits (*lakkoi*, *lakkos*). Some corpses were even left to decompose in the open air, thus emphasizing their physical and spiritual pollution.<sup>469</sup> Such maltreatment is highly unlikely to provide easily discernible archaeological record.

Such site used for execution and then neglectful disposal of criminals was the Kynegion. The ruined Roman amphitheatre was on the eastern slope of the Acropolis inside the city limits and nearby a gate of the same name on the Sea walls. The site is first mentioned in this context at the time of Phillipikos Bardanes (711-713). Similar pattern of site selection was applied by Constantine V in the middle of eight century when he appropriated the ruined church H. Pelagios for the same purpose.<sup>470</sup>

The Constantinopolitan execution topography shows basic conformity to the practical requirements in spatial preferences and simultaneous funerary function. The careful selection of these sites was also informed by the political ideology and religious morals it reinforces. Permanently designed or appropriated sites have uniform topography and outline supported by diachronic cross-regional observations.<sup>471</sup> Preferred locations provide for mass gatherings and liminal environment like administrative boundaries since their symbolism emphasizes the expulsion of delinquent members of society.<sup>472</sup>

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<sup>469</sup> Eric Ivison, *Mortuary Practices*, 31.

<sup>470</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>471</sup> Jost Auler, *Richtstättenarchäologie* (Dormagen: Archaeotopos, 2008); Jost Auler (ed.) *Richtstättenarchäologie volume 3* (Dormagen: Archaeotopos, 2012).

<sup>472</sup> Joris Coolen, "Places of justice and awe: the topography of gibbets and gallows in medieval and early modern north-western and Central Europe," *World Archaeology*, 45:5 (2013): 773.

The archaeological considerations about the execution cemeteries in the Balkans are mostly circumstantial but outline the conditions and initial signs for the emerging phenomenon. The most crucial prerequisite, the attempt at spatial segregation of unwanted individuals was practiced with varying intensity around South-Eastern Europe. In fact, the peripheral location in some cases from the Lower Danube indicate advanced separation on some sites. The special western section around the mass grave in Kyulevcha proves the formation of distinct clusters with concentrations of deviant burials outside the cemetery boundaries.

The evidence from Devnya-3 strongly suggests the remains of a judicially sanctioned execution due to the felon-like treatment of the victims there. Indeed, the mass grave from Devnya-3 shares many functional characteristics with the execution cemeteries described elsewhere. The main differences can be explained by the short time span of the site-formative event.<sup>473</sup> Much like in Kyulevcha or Čelakovice, the remains of the executed people were disposed outside the main burial ground nearby.

The tendency for spatial isolation and separation from the communal cemeteries is the reason why execution sites and graves are so hard to detect. Past research strategies very often did not explore the mortuary landscapes in their entirety, because of systematic lack of sufficient resources and their focus on archaeological constructs of ethno-defining normativity. There is a very plausible chance that formalized execution cemeteries are simply not discovered yet. Reynolds connects these sites to specific geographic and socio-political patterns that could assists their search.<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>473</sup> Petar Parvanov, "The mass grave," 289.

<sup>474</sup> Andrew Reynolds, "Judicial culture," 704-707, 709; Andrew Reynolds, "Culture judiciaire et complexité sociale: le modèle general de l'Angleterre Anglo-Saxonne," In: *(Re) lecture archéologique de la justice en Europe médiévale et moderne*. ed. Matthieu Vivas (Bordeaux: Ausonius, 2017), 38-39.

The situation in early medieval Britain has shown that the existence of execution cemeteries has significantly reduced the occurrence of deviant burials in regular ones. The share of deviant graves in the sites discussed here remains more or less stable between 1% and 3%. Of course, these percentages are really relevant only for fully excavated cemeteries. Nevertheless, even in this incomplete state, they can offer some insights in mapping places with inclusive ordinance towards deviants, thus less likely to have some undiscovered and separate place for them. On the contrary though, the topography of deviant graves from Devnya should be a cautionary tale for the limits of extrapolation from this assumption.

Finally, one chance discovery during road construction could have identified prospective site of this kind in the Rhodope mountains to further the hypothesis. Skalishte is a well-organized isolated burial ground with several rock-cut cysts. There is evidence for deviant burial rites, reburials, and collective graves.<sup>475</sup> More important for the present discussion is how the site is situated in the landscape. The isolation of the place is emphasized in terms of natural and visual distinction. The burial ground is not only isolated on a rocky ridge but is separated from the inhabited valley by the river Kazlardere. Furthermore, the contemporaneous twelfth to fourteenth-century church graveyard lies on the opposite bank of the river and in direct visual contact. The isolated burial ground lies in between four cemeteries from the same period and is possible that it served as outcasts' cemetery for the community.<sup>476</sup>

The execution cemetery is perhaps the most idiosyncratic manifestations of legal culture in the archaeological record. The provocation to search for it in South-Eastern Europe means that the disenchantment of the scientific discourse surrounding

<sup>475</sup> [Milen Kamarev] Милен Камарев, Средновековен некропол, с. Скалище, общ. Кърджали [Medieval necropolis, Skalishte village, Kardzhali Municipality], *AOP 2007* (2008): 749.

<sup>476</sup> [Ivan Balkanski] Иван Балкански, *Средновековни некрополи в кърджалийски окръг* [Medieval necropoleis in the region of Kardzhali] (Kardzhali: Regional Historical Museum of Kardzhali, 1977).

deviant burials is still ongoing. No matter what, the interdisciplinary approach to either familiar or newly unearthed cases should deliberate the judicial reading of the funerary evidence.

### **3.5. Necropolitics: Models of social complexity and political development**

The emergence and development of political hierarchies resembling power structures are a major theme in studies about societies past and present. In archaeological discourse these notions are closely linked to social complexity.<sup>477</sup> Complexity took over the scholarly understanding of civilization in marking a certain level of social and cultural attainment. The notion of complex societies also inherited the criticism pointing out the emphasis on categories such as writing and urbanization. In postcolonial perspective, they still reflect the modernizing Western ethos or can project the characteristics of contemporary capitalist nation states back in time.<sup>478</sup>

It is clear that most societies are complex in some way with recent studies acknowledging the various levels of complexity outside sedentary societies as well. Outside the Euro-centric perspective cross-cultural comparisons hallmark the potential of social complexity to describe variability under explicit terms of measurements.<sup>479</sup> Thus, social complexity is seen as a multidimensional phenomenon that includes functional differentiation among societal units, both horizontally through

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<sup>477</sup> Elman R. Service, *Primitive Social Organization: An Evolutionary Perspective*. (New York: Random House, 1971); Morton Fried. *The Evolution of Political Society: An Essay in Political Anthropology* (New York: Random House, 1967).

<sup>478</sup> Michael Rowlands, "A Question of Complexity," In: *Domination and Resistance* eds. Daniel Miller, Michael Rowland, and Chris Tilley (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Randall McGuire, "Breaking Down Cultural Complexity: Inequality and Heterogeneity," *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory* 6 (1983); Randall McGuire, "Why Complexity is Too Simple" In: *Debating Complexity* eds. Daniel Meyer and Peter Dawson (Calgary: University of Calgary, 1996)

<sup>479</sup> E.g., George Murdock and Caterina Provost, "Measurement of Cultural Complexity," *Ethnology* 12:4 (1973): 379-383.

occupational specializations and vertically by rank.<sup>480</sup> Further, it denotes the degree to which social groups hold and inherit differential access to prestige, wealth or power, the extent of centralized power, and ultimately the integration of those units.<sup>481</sup>

Urbanization indeed provides the most substantial evidence for archaeological tracing of such developments. However, the trajectories of complexifications are quite varied and has been long proposed that mortuary remains can give an alternative insight into the material conditions of the process. Related and especially important in this respect could be archaeological approaches to violence in the past. Sociopolitical systems nearly always try to establish control over interpersonal maltreatment and legitimize coercion channelled into appropriate space, objects, and bodies.<sup>482</sup> Necropolitics is the struggle for authority over mortality, including the exposure to marginalized dead, thus expressing the balance of power and government in the community.<sup>483</sup> If indeed these are recurring processes throughout history, it should be possible to identify their physical signature.

### 3.5.1. Theorizing social complexity through funerary deviance

Various studies exemplify the exciting possibilities for a refined theoretical and methodological engagement with the cognitive implications of cross-cultural

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<sup>480</sup> Richard Blanton et al., *Ancient Mesoamerica. A comparison of change in three regions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 17.

<sup>481</sup> Cristopher Pool, “The formation of complex societies in Mesoamerica” In: *The Oxford Handbook of Mesoamerican Archaeology* eds. Deborah Nichols and Cristopher Pool (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 170.

<sup>482</sup> Matthieu Vivas, “Le sciences archéologiques permettent-elles d’étudier la justice médiévale et moderne?” In: Matthieu Vivas (ed.) *(Re) lecture*, 20.

<sup>483</sup> Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” *Public Culture* 15, 1 (2003): 12.



notions like complexity.<sup>484</sup> The following synthesis merely illustrates how the archaeothanatological display of deviancy reflects social complexity under the terms initially laid out by Arthur Saxe. Despite the extensive and sometimes tiresome archaeological debate, the approach here is rather formal. His generalizations can now be briefly revised with the addition of the new empirical evidence.

Unquestionably, the most relevant is his previously mentioned Hypothesis No. 7. Just to recapitulate, he stated that simpler societies would present less variation in the deviant mortuary practices. The medieval deviant practices from South-Eastern Europe comply to such assumption. For instance, the disappearance of the early Type II.B prone burials on the Lower Danube most likely sometime in the eight century testify for the eventual differentiation between flexed and face-down disposals in mortuary display. Another argument in favour of Hypothesis 7 comes from the variability in field cemeteries up to the ninth century. On the Adriatic site Ždrijac-Nin, fixation is a fairly dominant form of deviant practice, but the funerary maltreatment used by this urbanized community exhibits some diversification. The contemporary Maklinovo brdo cemetery in the rural hinterland on the other hand is using exclusively the fixation rite. Some early sites from Vojvodina like Čik and Vojka depict fairly diverse picture. Caution is required though, because in the seventh century Avar complexity was very different than in other kin-based groups around the region as it will be shown below.

The variability of parallel deviant rites is not the only marker for complexity. The combination of several deviant rites within the same context should also be regarded in this way. The accumulation of devaluation traits characterizes the deviant burials, and their combination is probably expressing the sacred and power ideologies

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<sup>484</sup> Ian Morris, "The Archaeology of Ancestors: The Saxe/Goldstein Hypothesis Revisited," *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 1:2 (1991).

embedded in the respective norms, thus stressing the gravity of the misconduct. For instance, the synchronicity between body fragmentation and symbolic restriction inside some graves can be understood in terms of simultaneous preventive acts against the corrupted body and soul.

The concentrated correlation of deviant elements over the same body is one of the more outstanding features of the phenomenon in South-Eastern Europe in comparison to the rest of Europe. The simultaneous choice of two or more deviant practices during the funerary occasion increases under complex chiefdom or state organization. Speaking chronologically, the correlation frequency is unchanged over the transitionary or late medieval phase, and even raises for the decapitations. Although mutilations are inherently the most diverse category, they also sustain this view. The combined forms of skeletal mutilations (Type IV) emerge under the same conditions.

In Hypothesis 4 Saxe claims that the most significant or public identities of a person with high social status are more likely to be represented at death than more intimate, lesser identities. In the case of deviants, the definitive identity would be the ‘social persona circumscribing that particular deviance’.<sup>485</sup> This proposition aligns well with Meyer-Orlac evaluation scheme and fairly straightforwardly describes the connection between crime and punishment in legal context. The deviant burials can also contribute for the applicability of Hypothesis 4 in regard to executions or compensatory display using grave goods and gestures of inclusiveness.

The next supposition rather intuitively suggest that simple societies are more likely to have ambiguous symbolism with unclear contrast sets for defining the symbol and its significance. While interesting, this idea is nearly impossible to test

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<sup>485</sup> Arthur Saxe. *Social dimensions*, 10.

due to the contextual nature of symbols and loss of meaning overtime. In the conceptual and methodological framework putting the body as the main symbolic canvas for the creation of meaning, deviant burials seem to logically contradict Saxe's Hypothesis 5. Nevertheless, the overlapping prone and flexed positions or even few fire-induced mutilations could stimulate further challenge of strictly defined rituals.

Finally, the most provocative and widely discussed is the proposition usually known as the Saxe-Goldstein Hypothesis. In summarized form, it argues that formal bounded disposal space for the dead is maintained by corporate groups with lineal descent legitimizing their right over certain resources.<sup>486</sup> This proposal benefits from a notion of territoriality i.e., the individual or collective attempt to control relationships, objects, and people over delimited area.<sup>487</sup> In the relationship between social and territorial organization, power can be negotiated and even institutionalized through the selective placement of violence and maltreatment.<sup>488</sup> Patterns of inclusion and exclusion of individuals under an overwhelming label imply the intentional admission into the collective memory of a group. The said groups are, of course, flexible concept which can encompass either a local kindred with acclaimed ancestry or an extended moral body like the faithful army of Christ at the end of days.

The cognitive necessity to mark out the social outcasts clearly serves power structures claiming the means and ability to impose some preferred order and ideology. Thus, the funerary formation of undesired dead and purifying punitive practices against felony could have been adopted to change and mobilize local

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<sup>486</sup> Arthur Saxe. *Social dimensions*, 119; Lynne Goldstein, "One-dimensional archaeology and multi-dimensional people; spatial organization and mortuary analysis" In: *The Archaeology of Death* eds. R. Chapman, I. Kinnes, and K. Randsborg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 61.

<sup>487</sup> Robert Sack, "Human territoriality: A theory," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 73, 1 (1983): 56-57.

<sup>488</sup> Stuart Brookes and Andrew Reynolds, "Territoriality and social stratification: The relationship between neighbourhood and polity in Anglo-Saxon England" In: *Polity and Neighbourhood in Early Medieval Europe* eds. Julio Escalona, Orri Vésteinsson, and Stuart Brookes (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019), 268.

ancestral ideologies. Various crises could trigger the disposition towards dehumanization and exclusion materialized in deviant burials. The spatial separation from the communal burial grounds can point out the existing legitimization techniques in Saxe-Goldstein's understanding and how they are challenged over time.

Furthermore, the formation of distinct execution cemeteries or at the very least adjacent sections with concentrations of deviant burials indicate a change in strategy. Their aggregation within another designated disposal area modifies the social organization mode. Allegedly, higher authorities diminish the inheritance prospects for individual corporate groups by extracting selected members into a newly created class. In other words, far-reaching hierarchical systems tolerate the continuity of limited communal colonisations in the landscape but fortify the legitimacy of their political status by exploiting negative and often violent mortuary demonstrations.

The overview of the evidence from South-Eastern Europe asserts the cultural diversity and multiple trajectories in the development of deviant burials. The specific expression of various cultural references attests that cross-cultural ideological manifestations and political processes differ and compete but on commonly recognized ground. Complex social structures evolve in an ever-shifting mosaic of different agents and new customs mixing and changing with old ones. The performative funerary behaviour gives an arena for this variety to manifest itself. This is the space of *necropolitics*.

Regarding deviant burial practices, Andrew Reynolds involves them in a three-stage model where the development of legal culture marks differing levels of social complexity.<sup>489</sup> The model is based on the data from Anglo-Saxon England but the author himself urges its cross-cultural testing. Deviant burials are only one among

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<sup>489</sup> Andrew Reynolds, "Judicial culture," 703-710.

a number of correlates for judicial activity, many of which are inequally covered by our current knowledge about the medieval Balkans. Nevertheless, their apparently intrinsic connection to the societal power structures should be contemplated against the benchmark set out in the model, at the very least because they involve observations on related phenomena.

The Anglo-Saxon case evolves gradually through the three steps of complexity between the fifth and tenth century. However, the unilinear progress following discrete stages should not be considered its essential feature. Any pre-existing structures are not necessarily evaporated in the chronological progression of social organization. Presumably higher-order articulations of power were reflected in local societies and yet, conversely, the constitution of local communities itself may have facilitated the emergence of large-scale powers.<sup>490</sup>

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the model is its territorial application of shifting centre-periphery dynamics. Other forms of social stress and conflict resolution could contribute in kind. When the archaeological contexts assigned to judicial or military violence are matched, a progressive change and partial overlap could be traced along with the physical evidence for the imposition of political power.<sup>491</sup> The organization and performance of legitimate violence adds value to the funerary manifestation of complexification.

### **3.5.2. Secondary complexity: From kin-based to supra-local power in the early medieval period**

<sup>490</sup> Stuart Brookes and Andrew Reynolds, "Territoriality and social stratification," 270.

<sup>491</sup> Andrew Reynolds, "Archaeological correlates for Anglo-Saxon military activity in comparative perspective," In: *Landscapes of Defence in Early Medieval Europe* eds. John Baker, Stuart Brookes, and Andrew Reynolds (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 18-29.

The first stage in Reynolds' model are kin-based groups occupying rather small territories. Among these bands and tribes deviant burials are the principal strategy for casting out people who failed to observe social order. Their families are included among the agents producing the deviant burial. The archaeologically visible intra-group violence appear to be exceptionally rare. The militarism of material culture suggest the emergence of stratified warrior elite with chiefs at the helm. Sedentary local communities formulate 'primary administrative networks' grounded in the traditional lands of interspersed groups with periodic social exchange and distinct identity. They can provide the initial stable base for later territorial expansion and the principles of polities.<sup>492</sup> There is lack of formalized legislation by the leader, and the tradition of religious beliefs and superstitions dominates the treatment of the wrongdoer.

The following step is the emergence of supra-local power when large-scale chiefdoms are formed and expand geographically, thus necessitating new forms of governance dictated by the center. At this stage the core-periphery dynamics is exploited to its fullest extent within the greater geographical reach of political control and resources for power display. The archaeological correlates for organized conflict become more explicit with injuries and mass graves in particular. Military activity is concentrated on the boundaries and is sometimes conducted by highly mobile groups ensuring hegemony from afar. Usually this involves the codification of the legal system and increased judicial activity, including public executions, at the limits of the state. Deviant burials would exhibit territorial differentiation with earlier rites for burying outsiders are expected to continue in the core regions. At this stage distinctive

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<sup>492</sup> Stuart Brookes and Andrew Reynolds, "Territoriality and social stratification," 291-293.

execution sites and burial grounds supplementing a dispersed institutional network form in the peripheries.

The political landscape in South-Eastern Europe during the early medieval phase of the deviant burials phenomenon fits nicely into this framework. In the post-Roman Balkan lands depopulation and secondary emergence of complexity are a common trend coinciding with the general detraction of Byzantium from its northernmost frontier. Moreover, the territorialization of cultural identities increases with the establishment of administrative units and defined borderlines.

The seventh and eighth century are mostly the time of smaller scale tribal polities without rigid or permanent social structure. The political power was centered around individuals with achieved status on grounds of skills and knowledge, very likely linked to proficiency in warfare.

The various tribal groups known as Sclavenes are taking shape south from the Danube in this period. The situation observed by Procopius that early Slavs were living in egalitarian *demokratia* and only under treat united around a military leader or allied with other groups must have continued in the seventh century.<sup>493</sup> The Avar khaganate was the dominant force in most of the military initiatives involving the early Slavs. In Dalmatia and Istria the imperial governance was focused in few coastal cities, thus forming interactive zones with the communities in the hinterland. By the way, this is not exclusively Adriatic strategy as the Empire exercised influence over the northern Pontic region also through several urban centres, like Chersonesos on the Crimea.

<sup>493</sup>Jakob Haury, ed. *Procopii Caesariensis Opera Omnia*, (Leipzig: Teubner Verlag, 1963), *Bella* 7.14.22: Σκλαβηνοί τε καὶ Ἄνται, οὐκ ἄρχονται πρὸς ἀνδρὸς ἑνὸς, ἀλλ' ἐν δημοκρατίᾳ ἐκ παλαιοῦ βιοτεύουσιν, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο αὐτοῖς τῶν πραγμάτων ἀεὶ τὰ τε ξύμφορα καὶ τὰ δύσκολα ἐς κοινὸν ἄγεται; Johannes Koder, "On the Slavic Immigration in the Byzantine Balkans," In: *Migration Histories of the Medieval Afroeurasian Transition Zone. Aspects of mobility between Africa, Asia and Europe, 300-1500 C.E.* eds. Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, Lucian Reinfandt, and Yannis Stouraitis (Leiden: BRILL, 2020), 83-84; Adam Mesiarkin, "The Elites Theory in the Ethnogenesis of the Slavs. Slovak Studies," *Revista dell' Instituto Storico Slovacco di Roma* 3:1-2 (2017): 14-17.

The funerary record shows their peripheral attachment to other polities. For instance, in Dalmatia and Istria the row cemeteries with inhumation burials show basic similarities to the traditional burial rite from the late Antiquity. This conformity is more precise on sites with connections for local history like ancient ruins or prehistoric mounds.<sup>494</sup> By far the most discussed funerary display is the introduction of Carolingian weaponry in supposed elite male graves from the end of the eight century onwards.<sup>495</sup> The prominent shift establishes archaeologically two wider phenomena. The first is the steady formation of local warrior elite. The second is the diversification of prestigious exchange and external connections for elites as Byzantium and Charlemagne were nearing collision in the western Balkans.

The Frankish presence in Dalmatia unquestionably changed the game. The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen) from 812 all but confirmed the status quo following Charlemagne's advances in the region. The Istrian peninsula and the hinterland were officially under Frankish domination. The Croat tribes were apparently reorganized into semi-independent political entities forming the fluid Carolingian frontier under differing supervision.<sup>496</sup> Some early political leaders known from the sources of this time are Ljudevit and Borna.<sup>497</sup> The latter is quite frequently mentioned figure being a *dux* under the Margrave of Friuli, probably installed by the Franks themselves.<sup>498</sup> Nevertheless, the Croatian ducatum persisted in

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<sup>494</sup> Danijel Dzino, "The rise and fall of the Dalmatian 'Big-men': Social structures in Late Antique, Post-Roman and Early Medieval Dalmatia (ca. 500-850)," *Studia Academica Šumenensia* 1 (2014): 137-139.

<sup>495</sup> Goran Bilogrivić, Carolingian Swords from Croatia – New Thoughts on an Old Topic, *Studia Universitatis Cibiniensis. Series Historica* 10 (2013); Goran Bilogrivić, Carolingian Weapons and the Problem of Croat Migration and Ethnogenesis, In: *Migration, Integration and Connectivity on the Southeastern Frontier of the Carolingian Empire* eds. Danijel Dzino, Ante Milošević, and Trpimir Vedriš (Leiden: BRILL, 2018).

<sup>496</sup> Marina Vicelja and Maja Petrinec, "Croatian ducatum and kingdom at the borders of the empires," In: *The Legacy of Charlemagne 814-2014* ed. Dirk Callebaut (Ghent: Province of East Flanders, 2014), 268.

<sup>497</sup> Danijel Dzino, *Becoming Slac, Becoming Croat*, 183-187.

<sup>498</sup> Marina Vicelja and Maja Petrinec, "Croatian ducatum," 267.



the face of the waning Carolingian influence and established itself as stable polity in the region.

In fact, the Croatian elites managed to improve their partnership with Byzantium which still exercised influence through the Dalmatian theme around Zadar. Unquestionably, the Croatian polity must have been a welcome ally in the regional Byzantine conflicts with Bulgaria under Symeon I (893-927). After Branimir (879-890) formally established his independent authority in 888, it did not take long for the Croatian ruler Tomislav (910-928) to be recognized as a king and be nominated to govern the Dalmatian theme with the rest of his state.

The core territory must have been the area between Nin and Knin – Biskupija. The majority of Carolingian finds were discovered in the area around Knin. Notable specimens come from the cemetery complex at Crkvine, which included the elite mausoleum in the basilica of St. Mary.<sup>499</sup> However, the area around Nin had the most significant concentration of cemeteries from this period. In fact, most of the registered sites are still archaeologically untouched.<sup>500</sup> The coastal town was initially the most important center of secular and ecclesiastical power. By the mid-tenth century, according to Constantine Porphyrogenites, Croatia had developed administrative organizations around fourteen districts governed usually by župans or bans with excessive political authority.<sup>501</sup> The bans traditionally controlled the mountainous Lika-Krbava region.<sup>502</sup>

The distribution of deviant burials in the Adriatic corresponds to the evolution of power structures. Indeed, securely identified deviant burials are so far rare.

<sup>499</sup> Danijel Dzino, "The rise and fall," 140.

<sup>500</sup> Danijel Dzino, *Becoming Slav, Becoming Croat*, 127.

<sup>501</sup> Danijel Dzino, *Becoming Slav, Becoming Croat*, 190-191; Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio* 29-30, 125, 145; Ivo Goldstein, *Hrvatske županije kroz stoljeća* [The Croatian župans through centuries] (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1996).

<sup>502</sup> Florin Curta, *Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages (500-1300)* vol.1 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 325.

However, they appear in the late seventh century in Dalmatia and are particularly concentrated in the core region of the Croatian dukedom until the ninth century on the sites Sinj, Ždrijac, Maklinovo Brdo, Sveti Juraj-Kaštel Stari, and Velištak-Velim. Their greater intensity around Nin indicates the continuity for deviant burials in the core until the beginning of the tenth century. However, the state of judicial or organized violence in the periphery must be further explored. An interesting situation is presented by the ninth-eleventh century fixation practice documented on the sites Gorica and Tribalj. The two sites fall within the jurisdiction ascribed to the bans. Thus, the graves may reflect the maintenance of certain customs regarding social outcasts enabled by the significant authority of the bans.

The situation in Istria also deserves a commentary. There is sensible concentration of late seventh and eighth century deviant burials there. The peninsula was under changing Byzantine and Lombard control largely focused on the urbanized ports like Pula. It seems deviant burial practices were involved in the resolution of low-level local affairs by elites without consistent overreaching authority. However, with the establishment of more permanent political hegemony by the Carolingians and later the Holy Roman empire, confirmed deviant burials decrease in the excavated cemeteries in the ninth century. The single latest example is the decapitation from early tenth century Žminj.

Different sociopolitical milieu affect the polities of Avars and Bulgars to the east. The models of social complexity, including Reynolds' discussion on judicial culture are based nearly always on traditional sedentary societies. The nomad empires of the steppe achieve considerable political complexity but otherwise exhibit very different characteristics of subsistence strategy, social structure, and settlement and burial dispersion than other complex societies. Usually theories of social evolution

among nomads recognize two paths towards complexity: the conquest of agricultural communities by nomad elite or gradual sedentarization.<sup>503</sup>

Indeed, nomad centralization seems unrelated to other evolutionary criteria. Hence, polities with considerable complexity like the Avar khaganate do not necessarily fulfil any comprehensive anthropological template for early state or chiefdom. Nonetheless, Nikolay Kradin distinguished three taxonomic levels for complexity in pastoral communities broadly equivalent to Reynolds's concepts. They are egalitarian and segmented clan and tribal communities, secondary tribes and chiefdoms, and quasi-imperial nomad polities. Eventually the latter could expand to truly nomad empires.<sup>504</sup> Particularly interesting is that nomad political complexity could be fluidly achieved without introducing changes in other social spheres like economy, population growth or indeed, the social structure. In South-Eastern Europe sedentarization is the basic acculturation mode of polities with nomad origins and ideology.<sup>505</sup>

In the seventh century there were drastic political reconfigurations in the so-called *Pax Nomadica* with repercussions in the Balkans. The Avar khaganate was the most significant formation in the Carpathian basin since the sixth century already. The fall of Sirmium around 582 was a crucial step installing Avar control in the region. Arguably, the seventh century oversaw their greatest extend and the beginning of their downfall. After reaching the walls of Constantinople in 626, historically attested internal conflicts culminating in Samo's rebellion and the secession of the Bulgars under Kubrat weakened the Avar khaganate. The southern Pannonian lands bordering

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<sup>503</sup> [Svetlana Pletneva ] Светлана Плетнева, *Кочевники Средневековья. Поиски исторических закономерностей* [The medieval nomads. Studies in historical patterns] (Moscow: Nauka, 1982), 145-148.

<sup>504</sup> Nikolay Kradin, "Nomadism, Evolution and World-Systems: Pastoral Societies in Theories of Historical Development," *Journal of World-systems Research* 8:3 (2002): 370.

<sup>505</sup> Nikolay Kradin, "Cultural complexity of pastoral nomads," *World Cultures* 15:2 (2006): 2.

the Empire also express separatist tendencies and distinct regional identities as proven by the political activity of Kuber later in the seventh century.<sup>506</sup>

Material culture is not indifferent to the social changes along the Danube. The core territory of the khaganate around what was later described by the Frankish conquerors as the Avar ring is believed to be between the Middle Danube and the Tisza river. The so-called Middle Avar period marked comprehensive changes in the material culture of a polity with remarkably tolerant internal policies unifying multiple tribal groups.<sup>507</sup> In an overly simplified explanation, the khagan held the supreme power including the redistribution of valuable and luxurious goods arriving mostly from the Mediterranean. After the mid-seventh century, however, the fundamental reliance on prestige economy and widespread pastoral nomadism was no longer viable. The reiteration of an elite displaying decisively Inner Asian cultural preferences in the seventh century coincide with territorial organization around extensive rural settlement system and permanent communication network.<sup>508</sup> Rather anticlimactic, the late Avar period is characterized by significant downgrading of funerary display. The equestrian graves from this period could reflect regional power hubs emphasizing militarized mobile elites residing over the largely agricultural population.<sup>509</sup>

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<sup>506</sup> John Fine, *The Early Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Sixth to the Late Twelfth Century*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 44-48; Florin Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 500-1250* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 106.

<sup>507</sup> Tivadar Vida, "The process of the settlement of the Carpathian Basin by the Avars and their configuration of power," In: *From the Huns to the Turks – Mounted Warriors in Europe and Central Asia* eds. Falko Daim, Harald Meller, and Walter Pohl (Halle: Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte, 2021), 172-180

<sup>508</sup> Gergely Szente, "The 'late Avar reform' and the 'long eighth century': A tale of the hesitation between structural transformation and the persistent nomadic traditions (7th to 9th century AD)," *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 70 (2019): 236.

<sup>509</sup> Tivadar Vida, "The process," 180; Gergely Szente and Erwin Gall, Nomadic peasants? Horse-and-human burials with weaponry in the early medieval Carpathian Basin, 8<sup>th</sup> century. Paper presented at the *Crossing boundaries. Mounted nomads in Central Europe, their eastern roots and connections. 14th Archaeological Conference of Central Germany* in Halle (Saale), 7-9. October 2021.

However, southern Pannonia constitute a major cluster for deviant burials in the early medieval phase. The final early Avar period and the Middle Avar period belong entirely to the seventh century. Some examples of deviant practices in cemeteries from this period include Čik, Aradac, Vojka, Bečej, Vrbas, Čonoplja, and Bogojevo. The lavished graves from Bečej are even more outstanding given the overall scarcity of well-furnished funerary deposits from the late Avar period. In the ninth century deviant practices are registered on the sites Odžaci, Čelarevo, Perlek, Mandelos, and Brodski Drenovac.

The region of Sirmium was geographically peripheral but strategically crucial zone for the Avar khaganate in the seventh and early eight century. Nevertheless, the campaigns conducted by Charlemagne in the last decade of the eighth century and Krum in the beginning of the ninth century erased the khaganate from the political map. Particularly interesting episode occurred in 820s when Bulgars and Franks engaged in an open conflict over the territories in the Middle Danube. The tribal unions of Abodriti-Praedenecenti and Timochani sought affiliations with the Frankish empire most likely on terms similar to those agreed for the Croatian ducatum. Eventually, after several futile diplomatic missions to the Frankish court, a military intervention along the Danube and Drava established the Bulgar dominance around 826.<sup>510</sup>

Precisely the Bulgars established the other major early medieval semi-nomad polity in the region. Historically, the Bulgar Khanate emerges after the internal struggles within the Avar Khaganate and the mobilization of several tribes around Kubrat in the seventh century. More permanent migration of the Bulgars to the Lower Danube occurs in the second half of the seventh century and after the war with

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<sup>510</sup> Pavel Georgiev, "The Abodriti-Praedenecenti between the Tisza and the Danube in the Ninth Century," In: *Avars, Bulgars, and Magyars on the Middle and Lower Danube* eds. Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova, Chilla Balogh, Attila Türk (Budapest: Archaeolingua, 2014), 108-113.

Byzantium around 680 a loose confederation of mixed Bulgar groups and the Sclavenes of the seven tribes and the Severes forms.<sup>511</sup> Between the seventh and early ninth century the Danubian Khanate can be regarded a chiefdom organized around tribal affiliations. In this period the power of the khan was regulated by the major aristocratic clans in sort of diarchy with the kavhan.

The best evidence for their importance is the genealogical *Nominalia* (List) of the Bulgarian Rulers.<sup>512</sup> In this historical account the individual rulers are listed according to their house and time in power claiming descent from mythological ancestors beyond the Danube, associated with Attila and Ernach.<sup>513</sup> Thus, after the first two members of the charismatic clan Dulo, the power shifted between the competing houses of Ermi, Vokil, and Ugain. The struggles between them throughout the eight century depicts the persistence of kin-based social organization. The Sclavenes were loosely governed by the khan and strategically settled in the frontier zones. Their main responsibility was the defence of the southern and western borders and perhaps included the payment of certain tribute. Apparently various Slavic leaders and Christian strategoi were involved in the Bulgar administration and army.<sup>514</sup> Generally, the local communities exercised autonomy in dealing with their internal issues and norms were regulated by the local elites.

The traditional culture-history view considered the graves from the period to reflect the ethnic diversity during the period. The basic pattern is viewed as contrast between Slavic urn-fields surrounding a cluster of Bulgar biritual cemeteries in

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<sup>511</sup> [Georgi Nikolov] Георги Николов, *Централизъм и регионализъм в ранносредновековна България* [Centralization and particularism in early medieval Bulgaria] (Sofia: Marin Drinov, 2005), 63-85.

<sup>512</sup> Antoaneta Granberg, "Transferred in translation: Making a state in early medieval Bulgarian genealogies," *Slavica Helsengiensi* 35 (2008): 50-53.

<sup>513</sup> Omelian Pritsak, *Die Bulgarische Fürstenliste und die Sprache der Protobulgaren* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1955), 35-38.

<sup>514</sup> Panos Sophoulis, "The Bulgar paradox: A horse-powered (?) elite in the Balkans," In: *From the Huns to the Turks – Mounted Warriors in Europe and Central Asia* eds. Falko Daim, Harald Meller, and Walter Pohl (eds.) (Halle: Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte, 2021), 240.

Dobrogea and on both sides of the river Danube. It is believed that there was little archaeologically attested co-existence of the two groups within the same burial group.<sup>515</sup> Any ethnic attribution aside, this can be understood in terms of weaker links between set of tribal communities.

Kin-based social structure is also sought in the settlement system of Pliska.<sup>516</sup> This key site is the most informative archaeological source about pre-Christian Bulgaria and is believed to represent structurally the entire society by virtue of being its political centre. However, the heyday of the urban agglomeration in Pliska must have come in the ninth century, hence demonstrating that kinship do not simply disappear during complexification.

Precisely the rapid historical processes of the ninth century advanced the Bulgar Khanate into the status of supra-local power. The rule of khan Krum at the beginning of the century accelerated the centralization and expansion of state power. His politics were followed by his successors and eventually lead to the conversion to Christianity in Bulgaria. The establishment of far-reaching Bulgar authority carried many elements of legal and administrative culture, increasingly based on ideology of divine-sanctioned power and codified norms.

The afore-mentioned written laws of Krum are not the only sign of bureaucratic state control exercised by the power of the written word. The stone inscriptions dispersed across the state regulate various aspects of political life like border control and allocation of military equipment. For instance, the informative inscription from Hambarli (813) reveals the territorial re-organization of the newly conquered lands south of the Balkan Mountains. In historical secondary literature is accepted to see the beginnings of territorial governance transforming the kin-based

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<sup>515</sup> Uwe Fiedler, "Bulgars in the Lower Danube Region," 158.

<sup>516</sup> [Andrey Aladzov], *Археологическа карта*, 185-189.

tribes into administrative units at that time.<sup>517</sup> Precisely the monumental architectural enterprise in Pliska shaping the city as fully formed centre of secular and religious power dictates the archaeological argument for the transformed nature of social organization.<sup>518</sup> Furthermore, the region around Pliska with high concentration of the fortified residencies *auls* (like Kabiyuk or Preslav) and biritual cemeteries is likely recognized as the Inner domain known from the written sources.<sup>519</sup>

Another point deserving more credit than usually acknowledged by historians in the narrative account about Krum's legislation is the comparison between Bulgar and Avar polities. The story is a testimony to the nearly ethnographic interest of Byzantine literature towards barbarians inherited from Herodotus. According to Suidas, Krum initiated his codification only after consulting with the vanquished Avars on the reasons behind their downfall. Supposedly, the Avars' response was a sober analysis on the corruption of the political system of the khaganate culminating in the unpunished crimes. Now, the authenticity of this meeting can be challenged for the romanticizing picture of law-making presented in the encyclopedia. Yet again, the undertaking of a historical evaluation on an important threshold in the social processes in the two polities must be emphasized.<sup>520</sup>

It would seem that the legal culture of the Avar khaganate remained within the customary arrangements of individual communities and local elites. The spread of decapitations, however, shows that some penal activity occurred without the need for further exclusion of social deviants in the funerary rite. Very likely possibility is that

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<sup>517</sup> Pavel Georgiev, "Society and State in Bulgaria (the end of the 7<sup>th</sup>- the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century)," In: *Pagan Bulgaria: Power and Society* eds. Metodi Daskalov et al. (Sofia: National Archaeological Institute with Museum, 2017), 24-25.

<sup>518</sup> [Rasho Rashev], *Българска езическа култура*, 82-98; Cf. Vasil Gjuzeev, "Hauptstädte, Residenzen und Hofkultur im mittelalterlichen Bulgarien, 7.-14. Jh. (Vom Nomadencampus bis zum Zarenhof)," *Études balkaniques* 27, no.2, (1991): 82-105.

<sup>519</sup> [Ivan Venedikov] Иван Венедиков, *Военното и административното устройство на България през IX и X век* [Military and administrative districts in Bulgaria during the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century] (Sofia: Voenno izdatelstvo, 1979), *passim*; Georgi Nikolov, *Централизъм*, 77.

<sup>520</sup> Petar Parvanov, "Mortuary proxies," 287.



mobile militarized groups associated with the khagan exercised expedient judicial authority over subjugated settled communities as well. The similarities in the political ideology of the semi-nomad polities could mean that similar practices governed the social relations in the early Bulgar khanate. Hence, the legal cultures of these chiefdoms would substantially correspond to patterns characteristic for kin-based societies in Reynold's model.

The geography of the deviant burials on the Lower Danube until the middle of the ninth century focalized in the Bulgar core territory. The territorial expansion, centralization of power, and administrative reorganization of the polity mark the swift socio-political development over the last decades of the pre-Christian period. Deviant burials with secure dating in the first half of the ninth century are less frequent in the periphery of the Danubian Khanate. This is one of the possible chronological and geographical possibilities for future discoveries of developed execution sites and cemeteries.

Some field cemeteries having segregated zones with concentrations of deviant burials like Kyulevcha and Devnya appear on the fringes of the core territory between Danube and Haemus. In the periphery the picture begins to comply to the template for supra-local chiefdoms. In the central Balkans, several decapitations from communal burial grounds could be ascribed to the period of Bulgar domination, most notably the cases from Mandelos (Mnd.4) and Brodski Drenovac. To the south, in Plovdiv the early medieval mutilation burial (Pvd.2) is found outside any communal burial ground.

The case from Plovdiv problematizes the exclusion characteristic for deviant burials in several aspects. The city, then known as Phillipopoulos, was first captured by Krum in 812 but was fully incorporated in the Bulgar state in 834 under his

grandson Malamir. The notable absence of other deviant burials from the cemeteries in the city and other early medieval sites in the frontier zone with Byzantium can plausibly complement the performance of public executions described in textual accounts. The remains from this activity should be expected outside the traditional funerary locations. Naturally, the majority of the population in the region were Christians and the exclusion of the individual in Plovdiv likely has religious meaning too.

### 3.5.3. Growing pains: large-scale power and separatism

Finally, the third stage in Reynolds' model, the large-scale power level, is more elusive. At this point the well-organized bureaucratic state extends the social distance between the governing elite and the majority of people resulting in new forms of expressing power. Although possible and often conceived in militarized chiefdoms, the fully formed and expanding state is more easily associated with the creation of regularized administrative frameworks formally replacing local kin-based territorial constructs.<sup>521</sup> The demonstrations of judicial activities and expanding legislation lead to the proliferation of execution sites and burial locations within what was the heartland. Since violence is legitimately monopolized by the state, the public attention becomes an increasing concern expressed either in the decision-making process or in the law enforcement spectacle.

In early medieval England, the territorial correlation between estate boundaries and execution sites was complete at this point. The Balkan context, however, is far less homogenous. Truly large-scale power exists in the region. The

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<sup>521</sup> Cf. Stuart Brookes and Andrew Reynolds, "Territoriality and social stratification," 295-296.

Byzantine empire is the most striking example and the information about execution topography in the capital Constantinople confirms Reynolds' observations. Despite that, other states who rose to prominence in the region generally fail to prolongue the period of large-scale domination.

Anyway, the observations related to the distribution of deviant burial practices on this level can illuminate the phenomenon through its reversal. The mosaic of medieval polities in South-Eastern Europe exemplify that there are multiple paths away from statehood and political resilience is often enclosed in creative peripheries.<sup>522</sup> Deviant burial practices are among the archaeological correlates of socio-political development. Therefore, the dissolution of large-scale power and the medieval Balkan separatism are relevant to the phenomenon. Hypothetically, the customary deviant burial practices should re-emerge in separatist or contested regions where distant hegemony struggles. In this sense, the decrease in scale can duplicate the broad scheme for small-scale chiefdoms. Such development was already demonstrated by the emergence of the Croat and Bulgar polities in comparison to the situation in the late Avar khaganate.

Afterwards, the polities in the region continue to exhibit largely fragmented power base relatively rarely overcome by enduring centralized power. The necessity for the monarchs or any quasi-imperial authority in the region to involve and co-operate with local elites and communities could often remain neglected in historical narratives. This political tradition is assisted by the geographical setting of the peninsula with hotspots of intensive territorialization of space coinciding with these episodes. Nevertheless, the consolidated bureaucratic state should maintain its codified legal culture uninterrupted.

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<sup>522</sup> Julio Escalona, Orri Vésteinsson, and Stuart Brookes, "Polities, neighbourhoods, and things in-between," In: *Polity and Neighbourhood in Early Medieval Europe* eds. Julio Escalona, Orri Vésteinsson, and Stuart Brookes (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019), 15-17.

The Bulgarian state quickly transitions to the level of large-scale power, a process especially intensified over the course of the long tenth century. Formally, this is evident in the recognition of an imperial title for Petar I (927-969) and reconfirmed through his marriage to the Byzantine princess Maria-Irine. Far less is known about the internal dealings of the First Bulgarian Tsardom during this period. Nevertheless, there are signs for tightly organized central governance influenced by the expertise of contemporary Byzantine legal and political culture. Findings of royal, administrative, and ecclesiastical seals are remnants of administrative activity exposing the frustrating lack of preserved written record on judicial proceedings or local governance.

Simultaneously there was substantial traditionalism in the political structure of the Bulgarian state. The nomenclature on all levels of the state apparatus maintained many titles and supposedly responsibilities inherited from the pre-Christian period. Furthermore, customary law probably continued to regulate social conduct. The double pivot between common and written law allowed juxtaposed territorial individuality to coexist within seemingly coalescent legal practice. Similar policy was adopted by Carolingian Francia where the manuscripts with regional written laws demonstrate inherited influence from the respective customary norms around the provinces. If this analogy is correct, it seems plausible that the Bulgarian state did not abandon local governing principles rather than simply replacing some components.

As much as deviant burials are concerned, the results are also mixed. As noted, no exclusively execution burial sites are known. Nevertheless, evidence for penal punishment and some demonstrations of exclusion are evident in funerary context. In the capital Preslav, the decapitation and cremation burial (Prs.15) with unclear temporal connection may be explained in this light. Other examples for corporal punishment from the core can be observed in Nikolovo (Nik.185), Batin

(Bat.59), probably Durankulak (Dur.29 and Dur.49). Curiously, all these examples are somewhat on the northern edge of the loosely defined core territory between the capital Preslav and the major cities Drastar and Varna-Odessos.

Deviant burials are present in cemeteries in the provinces as well. Spatial isolation is confirmed in two cases from Pusta Bucova (PsBc) and Srem-Sirmium (Srm34). Very likely executions are the decapitations from Ravna-Camps. Another contemporary concentration is found in the administrative and bishopric center Belgrade. In the tenth century all deviant burials decrease in Vojvodina with stand-out exceptions in Mačvanska Mitrovica (McM.191) and in Batajnica-Velika Humka, the latter being interpreted in the context of the Magyar migrations.

The second, transitional phase has important implications for the socio-political processes behind deviant burial practices. The period is broadly dated to the eleventh century and in the case of fixations ending in the early twelfth century. Around the same time many other changes occur in South-Eastern Europe, for instance in the settlement network and the political life. In this sense, the deviant burial phenomenon is an integral part of the larger transformations in the region.

In the eleventh century all forms of deviant burials decrease in frequency. The change is most visible in the rarest practice. Burials in prone position from Type II disappear entirely, while Type I persists only in Pliska. In fact, there is a restricted eleventh-century concentration in Pliska and Odartsi. Rare individual cases like the disintegration burial from Stan also gravitate around them. In a way, the exceptionalism of this cluster only emphasizes the general downsize elsewhere. Of course, the incomplete information we got must be taken into account.

Nevertheless, according to the current state of knowledge deviant burials disappear to a large extent from the consecrated cemeteries in the western Balkans.

This notable absence is especially clear over the eleventh and the twelfth century, but can be considered the general situation in these regions until the fourteen century at least. The areas of disappearance are principally under the political control of the Croatian and Hungarian kingdoms, and later Venice.

While Croatia does not expand too much before the unification with the Hungarian state in 1102, the kingdom led by the Trpimirović dynasty is a stable presence in the northern Adriatic. Regarding death culture, this is the period when funerary activities move to the churchyards. Cemeteries from the earlier period were either abandoned or possibly transformed with the construction of burial chapel. The material culture deposited in graves also changes.<sup>523</sup>

Vojvodina and Slavonia are peripheral to Hungarian power in Pannonia, but the Hungarian state evolves to a large-scale power. The mortuary culture is also dominated by the church at this point, not without the legal assistance of the monarchs.<sup>524</sup> The gap left by deviant burials in these regions during the transitional and the late medieval phase of the phenomenon could require further investigation for distinct execution sites and burial locations.

The wars waged by Svyatoslav I (945-972) against the Bulgarians and the Byzantines triggered a series of events leading to the collapse of the First Bulgarian Tsardom and the Byzantine restoration over the lands south from Danube. Thus, the largest power in the northern Balkans gradually was turned into Byzantine province. The Pliska-Odartsa cluster with deviant burials from the transitional phase concurs with this transformation in the old Bulgarian core. Under the new regime the concentration emerges within the borders of the newly established thema Paristrion, later Paradounavion. The tenth-eleventh century decapitations from Derwent (Drvt.5,

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<sup>523</sup> Vladimir Sokol, *Medieval Jewelry*, 95.

<sup>524</sup> Lad.I:25; Col. 73.

Drvt.6, Drvt.19) should probably be included here. The nearby Drastar-Dorostolon was the largest of the thirty-six Bulgarian strongholds captured by Svyatoslav and the residence of Byzantine *strategos* after 1001. The deviant burials from the outpost Dervent could plausibly be linked with penal actions conducted on behalf of their authority.<sup>525</sup> Perhaps the neglectfully buried in pits individuals from Hauza were also victims of the military conflicts from this period reaching Adrianopolis.

Despite the best efforts by imperial government based in Preslav and Drastar, the social stress on the local population would only grow. The main reason was the aggressive arrival and settlement of Pecheneg groups on the Lower Danube echoing the movement of Bulgars several centuries earlier. Initial hostilities can explain deviant burials like the pit with dismembered individuals from Capidava. Eventually, the regional balance of power was shared between Byzantine officials in the major fortified cities and the Pecheneg chieftains. Sometimes these new ‘big men’ combined the leadership in their respective fractions and position in the imperial ranks as was the case of Kegen who became the commander of the troops on the Danubian defence.

Another remarkable episode showing the inclination for cooperation on grounds of regional identity occurred during the rebellion from 1072. The local chieftain based in Drastar Tatous raised arms after the supply of prestigious goods and provincial subsidies were cut by Constantinople. Ahead of the army sent against him was appointed a native of the northern Balkans called Nestor. However, after some personal disagreements Nestor decided to better join the rebels and their combined forces even reached the capital. Subsequently, the province seceded from imperial control for almost two decades.

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<sup>525</sup> Cf. in relation to the Pecheneg invasions, Petre Diaconu, *Les petchenègues au Bas-Danube* (Bucharest: Romanian Academy of Sciences, 1970), 40-49; Gheorghe Mănucu-Adameşteanu, “Les invasions des Petchénègues au Bas Danube,” *Acta Musei Varnaensis* 2 (2004): 303–305.

Archaeology traditionally tried to supplement these historical narratives by mapping the spread of Pecheneg communities. Pliska and Odartsi in particular were the suggested centres in the demographic reconfiguration. By all accounts, ethnicity seems less important for the power structures in eleventh century Paradounavion. Deviant burials instead could reckon the reinstalment of authority in the display of maltreatment and social denial in funerary context.

In the late medieval phase of the deviant burial practices between the twelfth and fifteenth century the transformative processes create a very different balance and scale of power on the Balkans. In the north-west the Hungarian kingdom is the most consistent power, while Bulgaria and later Serbia re-emerge as major states with significant social complexity. Furthermore, territorial particularism and separatist tendencies of local lords everywhere characterize the political landscape. During this third phase deviant burials present one dense cluster in the Podunavlje-Iron Gates region and dispersed localized concentrations around the peninsula. Finally, various steppe (the Golden Horde), western (Venice and crusaders), and Mediterranean (the Nicaean state and the Ottomans) military and political impact should be acknowledged.

In fact, regarding the model proposed by Reynolds at least, the late medieval phase of deviant burials should be extended with a survey on Ottoman period deviant burials and judicial culture. Perhaps a further diachronic look over their patterning after the unification of the fragmented Balkan polities into one vast imperial formation can better test his proposals. However, the current state of funerary archaeology in Ottoman and generally Muslim studies simply does not provide sufficient data.



The Podunavlje-Iron Gates cluster is particularly pronounced in the late medieval phase, although arguably the dating of some finds could be pushed back to the eleventh century, i.e., the transitional phase. The simple seriation suggests the twelfth-thirteenth century as the most likely period of occurrence. The prolific evidence for violent death and maltreatment in the cluster is rather conclusive. However, the majority of the finds belong to communal cemeteries despite possible arguments about the level of inclusion on some sites.

The frontier region accommodates several administrative units under unstable control after the eleventh century. They are usually organized around the major urban centres Belgrade, Braničevo, Drobeta-Severin, and since the fourteenth century Golubac as well. Plausibly, the recurrent shift in allegiances caused peaks of social stress but also installed significant level of autonomy in low-level judicial proceedings on local elites. Both factors played a role for the frequency of deviant burials in the area.

In the eleventh and twelfth century Belgrade and Braničevo were part of the theme Bulgaria and the northern frontier of the empire. The Byzantine strategos resided in Skopje but the border zone proved its real political value by rebelling against the central power. Belgrade was the starting point for the revolt led by Peter Delyan (1040) and Andronikos Komnenos (1183-1185) offer to Geza II (1142-1162) to exchange the cities for his support. The following siege of Braničevo by Hungarian troops in 1154 falls in line with the same military objectives as in the wars in the war from 1127-1129 and 1182. Most likely the defensive attitude of Manuel I established the compact fortified settlements as outposts for direct imperial policing over the frontier against foreign invaders and the surrounding community alike.<sup>526</sup>

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<sup>526</sup> Paul Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan frontier*, 241-245.

His vision, however, achieved quite the opposite after the loss of the northern provinces to Assenids' Bulgaria. The principal competition over the Podunavlje-Iron Gates was thereafter between the Hungarian kingdom and the Second Bulgarian Tsardom. In the papal correspondence left by Innocent III, the fortress Keve (present-day Covin) and the river Danube are the landmarks used to distinguish the two states. The Banate of Severin was the formal Hungarian administrative unit encompassing the ethnically diverse territory north of the Danube. At the turn of the fourteen century the region was partially under the control of the powerful Ugrin Csák. The disappearance of the royal officials *ispáns* from the records for Syrmia since the 1270s could be related to his activities.<sup>527</sup> If that is correct, it would explain the direct consequences for the performance of justice and the turn to deviant burial practices for dealing with suspected wrong doers.

Also from the epistolary sources, the semi-independent political unit of Bellota *princeps* must be located in this frontier zone at least until 1203.<sup>528</sup> The separatist tendencies sway the region outside the hold of distant power centres again in 1273 when the brothers Darman and Kudelin installed their authority there. The supposed residence of the local lords was the fortress Zhdrelo somewhere along the Mlava river.<sup>529</sup> The distancing from the urban and ecclesiastical centre Braničevo is interesting. Together with the rise of deviant burials, this choice likely indicate the increased reliance on local identities and customary social order. Their eventual demise under the incursions by Stefan Dragutin (1282-1316) and Stefan Milutin

<sup>527</sup> Attila Zsoldos, *Magyarország világi archontológiája, 1000–1301* [Secular Archontology of Hungary, 1000–1301] (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 2011), 207.

<sup>528</sup> [Georgi Nikolov] Георги Николов, *Самостоятелни и полусамостоятелни владения във възобновеното Българско царство (Края на XII-средата на XIII в.)* [Independent and semi-independent lands in the reinstated Bulgarian Tsardom (late 12<sup>th</sup> – middle of 13<sup>th</sup> century)] (Sofia: Gutenberg, 2011), 189.

<sup>529</sup> [Aleksandar Uzelac] Александар Узелац, *Србија, Бугарска и татари у другој половини XIII века* [Serbia, Bulgaria, and the Tatars in the second half of the 13th century] (PhD Dissertation: University of Belgrade, 2012), 133.

(1282-1321) resulted in permanent Serbian involvement in the political gamble over the Iron Gates.

The activization of deviant burial practices in Sirmium-Sremska Mitrovica (Srm85.20, Srm85.53, and Srm85.61) and around Vratsa (Grad.1, Vrt.10, and Vrt.27) and Pernik (Prk.80 and Prk.155) can also be connected to these regional tendencies. Apparently, the former border town exercised some judicial rights between the thirteen and fifteen centuries exemplified by the decapitation burials. The late medieval phase burials from the sites in present-day western Bulgaria could measure for the social stress on border communities between the Bulgarian state and its western neighbours. Vratsa and Gradishte are particularly well-suited examples in this respect because they were on the southern margins of the autonomous Bdin territories. This poorly studied region tends to effectively escape from the power grasp from Tarnovo since the second half of the thirteen centuries. More often than not this happened with Magyar assistance. In fact, its local aristocracy managed to eventually capture the supreme power in the Second Bulgarian Tsardom with the ascension of Michael Shishman (1323-1330) to the throne. Probably the clearest admission of the dissentient situation was the secession of the Vidim Tsardom led by Ivan Stratsimir (1356-1396).

The remaining concentrations of deviant burials in South-Eastern Europe match further to separatist hubs or semi-autonomous aristocratic premises. One rather widespread set of deviant burials marks the geographical region Dobrogea located between the Danube and the Black Sea. Famously, Johann Schiltberger named it as the third Bulgaria existing at the time of his travels in the end of the fourteen centuries. The area also known as Karvuna most likely formed distinct administrative unit which managed to secede from the Bulgarian state around the middle of the same

century. The political centre of the local despots Dobrotitsa and Ivanko was Kaliakra on the maritime coast. At least temporarily, important urban and trade centres like Drastar, Ovech or in the Danubian Delta were under his control before the inescapable Ottoman conquest. The localized concentration of deviant burials from there (KOm.59, KOm.66, KOm.154, KOm.163) is from the time of the Despotate of Dobrogea or slightly predates it.

However, the dispersed territorial distribution around sites like Drastar, Preslav, and possibly Braila is more likely attributed to the thirteen century. In this respect, an unexpected insight is given by the treaty of Michael II Assen (1239-1257) with the Republic of Ragusa from 1253. The document reveals the existence of the influential sevastokrator Petar, brother-in-law of the Bulgarian tsar. His appanage was located in the northeast of the Bulgarian realm and is plausibly linked to the territories mentioned already in the Dubrovnik charter by John II Assen (1218-1241) as Preslav and Karvunska hora. Crucially, Georgi Nikolov points out that Petar had at his disposal alternative fiscal and judicial regime and was able to manage local ordeals outside the authority of the central power.<sup>530</sup> Appropriately, the peasant uprising initially against the Mongols and then the nobility led by Ivaylo from 1277 erupted in the same area. In this context, funerary display of regional power legitimation and revival of customary forms of exclusion would not have been out of place.

A question that needs to be asked is, was there some form of political continuity between the personal lands held by Theodor-Petar (1185-1197) around Preslav, those of sevastokrator Petar decades later, and the later Despotate of Dobrogea? If these territories truly developed from appanage of high-level aristocrats to independent polity and the power centre moved from Preslav towards Kaliakra,

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<sup>530</sup> [Georgi Nikolov], *Самостоятелни и полусамостоятелни*, 68.

important conclusions about the political history of the Assenid state in general and the model proposed by Reynolds in particular could be drawn. At the very least, the deviant burial correlates to wider socio-political conditions could cautiously support such a narrative.

Further focal points of the phenomenon resemble the situation around the Danube. For instance, the concentration around Anevsko kale could be connected to the lands of Smilets (1292-1298), while the Thracian lands around Plovdiv were frontier zone of immediate interest to the Ottoman groups upon their involvement in the Balkans. In a similar fashion, the findings in Udbina can be related to the conflicts culminating in the battle of Krbva field in 1493. Another deviant burial was found in the old Serbian political centre Raš. The fortified settlement evolved with the development of adjacent large trade town and very likely the local elite secured significant concessions in European model. The town was also subject to significant military interest towards the end of the fourteenth century, mostly from the advances of the Ottoman conquest.

On the contrary, deviant burials are mostly unknown in proclaimed centres of large-scale dominion so far. For instance, the traditional capital of the Second Bulgarian Tsardom Tarnovo stands out with a single, although quite complex deviant grave from the very densely used urban cemetery around the St. 40 Martyrs monastery. However, the written accounts stand for elaborate demonstration of judicial activities in the political centre. These involved public trials like the Council against the Bogomil heresy from 1211, confinement in prison and executions, including some high-profile cases like the captured Latin emperor Baldwin I (1204-1205) or prominently the Mongol usurper Chaka (1299-1300) and patriarch Joachim III (1282-1300).

Thus, the contrast between the dispersed outbursts of deviant burials in cemeteries around the eastern parts of the region and their nearly absolute absence in the western parts becomes even more striking. The most likely explanation is related to recognition and sampling strategies during excavations and used for secondary data. However, the suspicion that western legal culture promoted by the Catholic Hungarian and Venetian overlords of the Adriatic and southern Pannonia in the late medieval phase could have manifested itself in other physical form, possibly even in execution cemeteries, should be considered again when more and better data is accumulated.

The outcome from testing the model linking social complexity and deviant burials among the archaeological expressions of ideologies controlling violence demonstrate their connection to expanding power. Ostensibly, the dynamics between centres and peripheries had decisive role in the territoriality of power in South-Eastern Europe. The spatial distribution of deviant burials can contribute to the archaeological understanding of these processes. They correspond quite well to rising social complexity, especially in the early medieval phase of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, the dissolution of large-scale power and the cycles in funerary display render the direction of their distribution over the transitionary and late medieval phase.

In this sense, ranked socio-political systems should be expected to display power relationships through ad hoc funerary maltreatment when under public pressure. Beyond complexity, deviant burial practices depend on other dimension of cultural development as well. Above all else these are scale and integration, generally understood as the level of interdependence among the social, political, and economic units. The reinstalment of deviant burials in the separatist and contested regions where low-level authority regains control is very indicative pattern. Essentially, such

secessions reboot the process even if they inherit well-developed legal and political culture from the larger entity.

To conclude, deviant burial practices prove time and again their significant entanglement in the socio-political development of past cultures. Moreover, by touching on nearly every aspect related to the construction of power and social relations, the deviant burials demonstrate candidly the insufficient explanatory effort and fraud thought patterns embedded in the nationalized historical narratives. Despite the importance of notions such as exclusion and denial in the construction of medieval mortuary deviancy, this is a story of entangled and discernible social processes and the material imprint of power in the world.

## Conclusions

At some point in the eight or most likely the ninth century a man was cut in pieces and thrown in a pit nearby the cemetery of a community living in what is today Bulgaria. Not far from him twenty-five young men who died in a long-forgotten battle lay in a mass grave. They could not possibly meet the people beheaded along the river Danube centuries later on sites like Sopotu Vechi and Pesak or in the town Sirmium. They might have known that when certain people die their bodies must be covered with stones. The list could go on. But would they be surprised to hear that bodies were mutilated in their graves, sometimes even years after they were buried? Would they turn face down in their graves in fear or shame? Probably not. Probably they would expect to find reason behind this strange for our enlightened eyes interactions with the dead. And in a way this is what this dissertation tries to do as well, because the picture unravelled before the eyes of the archaeologists is as diverse, confusing, and widespread as it seems from the ever-increasing number of deviant burials known from the medieval Balkans and Europe as a whole.

From the beginning, the deviant burials were situated within three major research questions. To answer them, it was argued, it is necessary to calibrate our approach by applying stricter and consistent methodology based on the combination of archaeological and anthropological observations and to embrace theoretically informed, larger view on the problem. The research focused on medieval South-Eastern Europe for a range of reasons and practicalities but is truly concerned with the phenomenon on a much more general level. In fact, providing a coherent framework, flexible enough to expand and systematize the data on deviant burials, was an



important introduction to the funerary archaeology in the Balkans. The dissertation summarizes previous research, but a special effort is made to overcome its fragmented and atheoretical point of view. Naturally, my interpretation is situated closer to the general commentary on mortuary deviance in contemporary European scholarship.

The artificial limitations of the in-focus study area could not have fairly covered all cultural traditions or even all known sites in the region. Perhaps some cases were omitted unknowingly, or the database could have been tailored to a narrower timeframe and geographical limits. Nevertheless, the sampling strategy and the quantitative and qualitative contextualization allowed to at least sketch the general patterns and push for continuous exploration of the topic.

The first broad research question aimed to explain how deviant burial practices fare in the variety of funerary rites and burial customs. To properly do so, the characteristics for each principal deviant practice, namely prone position, decapitation, fixation, and mutilation of the body are presented. My analysis has shown that deviant graves from cemeteries exhibit several overarching trends corresponding to the overall cultural processes in the region. Their chronological development is sequenced in a traditional three-partite periodization. In the early medieval period three major clusters are taking shape: in the southern Pannonian basin, on the Lower Danube, and in the Adriatic littoral zone. The middle, transitional period occurs in the eleventh century. Then a drastic decrease in the distribution is evident with one notable exception, the Pliska-Odartsa area. During the late medieval period the picture is again transformed – then deviant burials are scattered in localized concentrations with a very significant cluster forming around the Iron Gates on the Danube.

Normative and extra-normative elements of the rite emerge in the examination of the orientation, placement, grave goods deposition etc. on individual level. This hybridity suggesting an innate potential for normalization of deviancy amidst already established customs. Many burials are standing out only on the account of the recorded deviant practice like the targeted feet mutilations in Izvoru, Kovachevo or Trnjane in otherwise fairly standard graves.

Thus, deviant burial practices must be considered to be an extra-normative addition in the treatment of the deceased selected from multiple recognizable options. They are visible in the specific practices signalling the devaluation of the cadaver and by extension, attaching negative connotations to the deceased individual. The interconnection and even overlap in the mortuary variability highlight funerary events where social evaluation required a negotiation of the commemorative labels. One may recall, for instance, the discussion on rare examples of rich and supposedly high-status decapitation burials in Bečej which nevertheless had to comply or perhaps duly compensate the bodily maltreatment.

However, deviant burials remain exceptionally rare, even on sites with larger concentrations like Odartsi, Vajuga-Pesak or Trnjane. This marginal activity signify the impact of personal agency or extreme situations on accepted conventions. Sometimes these factors could be amplified by disease, injury or simply the physical appearance of the individual. Unfortunately, truly informative evidence for their impact on public perception and deviant burial practices is so far unattainable.

The funerary deviance is rather freely following ritualized procedures but is always dependent on the physicality and symbolism of the body. I argued that this material reality conditions the deviant practices to their characteristic meaningful manipulation of targeted body parts, most often the head, the limbs, and the pelvis.

Fundamentally, decapitations and mutilations rely on the modification and disruption of the natural anatomical order, while prone and fixations burials borrow from the same symbolic schemes.

The notion of such physically embodied symbolism and cultural references leads to the second major research theme concerned with the interplay between secular and sacred factors in deviant burials. Interestingly, this matter is illuminated by their chronology. Deviant practices on their own are not particularly affected from the ninth century conversions to Christianity around the Balkans. The apparent religious lenience of the time is brilliantly captured by one baffling grave in Preslav containing a complete human skull and a silver pendant cross on top of a cremation urn. It seems plausible that the deviant burial customs were successfully appropriated in the new religious milieu because their foremost social function did not challenge the teachings of the Church. Actually various ecclesiastical authorities from local priests to the Roman popes Nicholas I and Stephen VI were complicit in their Christian re-appraisal.

Looking at the big picture, persistent changes in the distribution and the form of deviant burial practices occur in what we have called a transformative period over a long eleventh century. This is a time of overall reshuffle in the political and cultural landscape of South-Eastern.

The detailed discussion on ritual behavior in chapter three emphasizes the integration of temporal and spiritual concerns in the bodily treatment. Although the two can be at odds in particular cases, more often than not the justification and explanatory mechanisms for the violent dehumanization of selected individuals were based on a range of superstitious beliefs and ecclesiastically endorsed legal prescriptions. Generally, a complicated mixture of habitual and codified praxis

underlined the materialization of social exclusion and coercion. The deviant burial practices are essentially a strategy for the mortuary manifestation of power and control.

Reconstructing their authentic social context is difficult but narrative descriptions of the executions and torture of criminals, including against the faith, the martyrdoms of Christians and even the various judicial provisions offer glimpses into the variety of transgressions that may resort to deviant burial practices. Their connection is probably best established in the reinterpretation of some more arresting examples like the disintegrations from Kyulevcha, Ždrijac, and Stan, for instance.

Particularly instructive and appealing are the stories on revenants preserved occasionally in contemporary writings or taken from early modern folklore accounts and extended back in time. The menace from possible revenants probably masks deeper social concerns and is countered by very practical although morbid attitude of physically incapacitating and labelling the dangerous dead. Quite similar are the social mechanisms at work in posthumous punishments. The punitive display involving the desecration of corpses has two-fold purpose: the extension of the punishment to the afterlife and the cautionary demonstration of social order being restored. Apparently, legal discourse is not exclusive to the strictly formulated content of law codes and variety of narratives and performances could epitomize traditional rules.

Developing judicial culture has been integral in the formulation of power relations embodied in deviant burials. Arguably they mark social stress and can show the struggle for authority over mortality and legitimate violence as part of political coercion. In other words, they attest medieval necropolitics. On this ground, testing how deviant burial practices can contribute to the study of power structures and the

re-emerging complex societies in South-Eastern Europe was another major contribution in this dissertation.

Having analyzed the evidence for executions in archaeological context, some cases are best explained as the burials of felons and outcasts. The penal laws at the time easily verifies this conclusion for most *peri mortem* decapitations and limb mutilations like in Nikolovo by. Despite not being the only archaeologically visible feature of legal culture, execution cemeteries are the signature sites of such activity. Based on the observations made about their nature and place in the landscape of Anglo-Saxon England and early modern Europe, the role of deviant burials for the understanding of the political processes in the Balkans as well as their punitive character were demonstrated.

Following an overview of the available archaeological record from the region, the evidence for a fully formed execution cemetery remain circumstantial. For instance, the mass grave in Devnya-3 are best explained in terms of mass execution event and shares many functional characteristics of an execution cemetery. The tendency towards spatial segregation also predispose the emergence of execution cemeteries as proven by the descriptions of such sites in Constantinople. In fact, their isolated geographical position and the imperfect sampling and excavation strategies could mean that medieval execution cemeteries existed in the Balkans and can still be found in the future.

The prevalence of deviant burials in the communal burial grounds in smaller kin-based groups and the continuation of these arrangements in parallel with expansive polities and chiefdoms, especially in their core territories, are indicative for the importance of local traditions and elites. In my view the early medieval concentrations found in Dalmatia and the Lower Danube reflect the evolving Croatian

and Bulgar states. The latter case adds additional aspect in the discussion on social complexity because, much like Avar power in the Pannonian basin, the Bulgar khanate emerge from a semi-nomad traditions where highly mobile military groups and loose tribal affiliations constituted the fabric of ranked society.

Speaking of this, the significant record for mid-late Avar period deviant burials in the lands around Sirmium collected here requires further study of their distribution in other parts of the khaganate over time. For now it seems, the judicial activity there was negotiated between local communities and the agents of militarized central power. The special position of this region for the Balkan policy of the khaganate must also be appreciated.

The relative fragility of large-scale domination in medieval South-Eastern Europe leaves a lot of room for separatism and political manoeuvring by local elites exploiting regional identities. My analysis concludes that this socio-political situation is evident in the changing geography of deviant burials. Although the correlation can be observed in earlier periods too, the concentrations of deviant burials in creative peripheries and contested territories increase significantly in the twelfth century. In places like the Iron Gates-Podunavlje region they will form rather consistent cluster reflecting the peculiar in-between allegiance and frequent military activity in these lands until the Ottoman conquest. Elsewhere in the central and eastern parts of the Balkan peninsula they conspicuously converge in areas where appanages and independent polities controlled by prominent local autocrats emerge, for instance in Dobrogea.

Finally, it must be noted that deviant burial practices might appear marginal but were never excluded from the overall social processes and transformations. They provide quite distinctive and provocative point of view on human behaviour across

time and space on different levels from invisible long-term processes to individual agency and experience. Dealing with the diverse and previously neglected evidence on the mortuary treatment of devalued individuals demonstrates engagement beyond the specific burials and exposes deficits in our knowledge on topics varying from administrative landscapes to health and everyday life in the past. Simultaneously, the exceptionality of deviant burials justifies the integration of multiple research methods and tools in the excavation of new cases in the future. This makes following the unusual directions where our evidence is leading ever more important and undoubtedly worthwhile. To this end, the current overview and interpretations of the deviant burial practices in South-Eastern Europe is not truly concluded and hopefully will be just a new beginning.





## CATALOGUE

Key to Data quality grading

	Condition	Value
Registered Interest	Reference to a site/burial with non-normative traits without specifications;	0.5
Archaeological description	Written description of the grave context, including inventory of any non-human deposits (grave goods, inclusions, ABGs)	1
Archaeological description	Written description of the skeleton context – orientation, position, level of preservation	1
Archaeological description	Detailed written description on the deviant practice identified on the skeleton (target body part, specifics manipulations, certainty of recognition)	1
Visual Archaeological documentation	Indicative drawing or poor-quality photo	1
Visual Archaeological documentation	Good quality archaeological drawing	1
Visual Archaeological Documentation	Good quality black and white photography	1
Visual Archaeological Documentation	Good quality colour photography (full-scale and close shots)	2
Anthropological report	Basic – sex and age	1
Anthropological report	Detailed – observations on taphonomies or reporting osteological characteristics related to pathologies etc.	1.5
Anthropological report	Advanced – information obtained through invasive methods (C14, isotope analysis, aDNA)	1.5

Grade level	Point value	Protocol (adding up)
<b>A</b>	9-10	Used in all analysis, fairly likely archaeothanatological reconstructions
<b>A-</b>	6.5-8	Used in all analysis, plausible archaeothanatological reconstructions
<b>B</b>	4.5-6	Used for quantitative and spatial analysis, some qualitative analysis, occasional applicability for archaeothanatological reconstructions
<b>C</b>	3-4	Included in the database, used for quantitative and spatial analysis, unlikely applicability for archaeothanatological reconstructions
<b>D</b>	< 3	Excluded from the database

**AnK.7****Site:** Anevsko kale**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Pit with tile basis for the head**Position:** Supine extended, head in prone**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** female?**Grave goods:** Copper alloy earring**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position

Decapitation: The skull is in prone

**Comments:** Grade C evidence[Ivan Dzambov] Иван Джамбов, „Средновековният некропол край Сопот“ [Medieval cemetery near Sopot], *Известия на музеите в Южна България* 14 (1988): 144-158**AnK.23****Site:** Anevsko kale**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Pit of unclear shape**Position:** Supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** Adultus**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Missing the bones of the lower legs (Tibiae, fibulae, feet bones)

**Comments:** Grade C evidence[Ivan Dzambov] Иван Джамбов, „Средновековният некропол край Сопот“ [Medieval cemetery near Sopot], *Известия на музеите в Южна България* 14 (1988): 144-158**AnK.33****Site:** Anevsko kale**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** Supine extended**Orientation:** SW-NE**Age:** Juvenis I**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No

## Deviant burials from Bulgaria

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Missing skull

Fixation: Large stone placed instead of the skull

**Comments:** Isolated, Grade C evidence[Ivan Dzambov] Иван Джамбов, „Средновековният некропол край Сопот“ [Medieval cemetery near Sopot], *Известия на музеите в Южна България* 14 (1988): 144-158**AnK.49****Site:** Anevsko kale**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Pit with tile basis for the head**Position:** Supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** Juvenis II**Sex:** female**Grave goods:** Copper spherical button; Brocaded textile on the place of the head; 2 gilded earrings, pot shreds**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position

Decapitation: The skull is decapitated and placed in prone position 0,2m to the N from the postcranial skeleton

**Comments:** Grade B evidence[Ivan Dzambov] Иван Джамбов, „Средновековният некропол край Сопот“ [Medieval cemetery near Sopot], *Известия на музеите в Южна България* 14 (1988): 144-158**AsK.a****Site:** Assenova krepost**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Stone cist**Position:** Supine**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Missing the bones of the lower legs.

The patellae placed by the right clavicle

**Comments:** Perhaps shortening of the cist? Grade B evidence

[Ivan Dukov] Иван Дуков, „Няколко специфични погребални практики от средновековната епоха в Асеновград и региона в светлината на теренни археологически проучвания 2005-2013“ [Several specific funerary practices from the medieval period in Assenovgrad and the region in the light of recent excavation], In: Grigor Boykov (ed.) *Стенимахос-Станимака-Асеновград* [Stenimachos-Stanimaka-Assenovgrad] (Assenovgrad: Dikov, 2014)



#### **Blc.162**

**Site:** Balchik

**Date:** early-mid 8thc.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Prone flexed

**Orientation:** SW-NE

**Age:** adultus (30-40 yrs.)

**Sex:** female

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

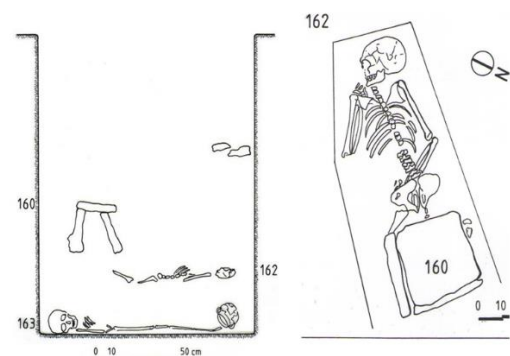
Prone position

**Comments:** possible artificial skull deformation, Grade A- evidence

[Lyudmila Doncheva Petkova, Kircho Apostolov, Viktoria Russeva] Людмила

Дончева-Петкова., Кирчо Апостолов, Виктория Русева. *Прабългарският некропол при Балчик* [The Bulgar necropolis near Balchik] (Sofia: Marin Drinov Academic Publishing, 2016)

[Evgenia Komatarova-Balinova] Евгения Коматарова-Балинова „Хокери и псевдохокери от биритуалните некрополи в Североизточна България: Възможности за интерпретация“ [Hockers and pseudohockers from the biritual cemeteries in Northeastern Bulgaria: Possibilities for interpretation] In: Свистун, Г. et al (eds) *Салтово-маяцька археологічна культура: проблеми та дослідження*. (Kharkiv: Vidavets Savchuk, 2013)



#### **Bat.20**

**Site:** Batin-1

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** prone extended

**Orientation:** N-S

**Age:** adultus

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position

**Comments:** Tied hands (beneath the body), Grade C evidence

[Dimitar Stanchev] Димитър Станчев, „Прабългарски компоненти в погребалния обряд и инвентара на ранносредновековните некрополи в Русенско“ [Protobulgarian features in the funerary ritual and inventory in the early medieval necropoleis in the area of Ruse], *Проблеми на прабългарската история и култура* 1 (1989): 243-244

#### **Bat.59**

**Site:** Batin-2

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit  
**Position:** supine  
**Orientation:** W-E  
**Age:** N/A  
**Sex:** N/A  
**Grave goods:** No  
**Description of deviant practice:**  
 Only skull  
**Comments:** Grade C evidence  
 [Dimitar Stanchev] Димитър Станчев,  
 “Ранносредновековен некропол номер 2 до  
 с. Батин, Русенско” [Early medieval  
 necropolis No.2 near Batin, Russe district].  
*Известия на Исторически музей – Русе* 5  
 (1998): 9-30.

### **Bdn.54**

**Site:** Bdintsi  
**Date:** 8th – 9<sup>th</sup> c.  
**Grave structure:** Simple pit  
**Position:** Supine extended  
**Orientation:** N-S  
**Age:** N/A  
**Sex:** N/A  
**Grave goods:** No  
**Description of deviant practice:**  
 Fixation: A stone slab on top of the  
 skeleton  
**Comments:** Grade C evidence  
 [Zhivka Vazharova] Живка Въжарова,  
*Славяни и прабългари: по данни на*  
*некрополите от VI-XI в. на територията*  
*на България* [Slavs and protobulgarians based  
 on data from the necropoleis from seventh to  
 eleventh century on the territory of Bulgaria].  
 Sofia: БАН (1976).

### **Dv3.30**

**Site:** Devnya-3  
**Date:** 8th – 9<sup>th</sup> c.  
**Grave structure:** Stone cist  
**Position:** Supine  
**Orientation:** N-S  
**Age:** N/A  
**Sex:** N/A  
**Grave goods:** No  
**Description of deviant practice:**  
 Decapitation: Only skull in the N part  
 of the grave  
**Comments:** Grade C evidence  
 [Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров,  
 “Раннобългарски некропол № 3 при Девня”  
 [Early Bulgar Necropolis No. 3 near Devnya],

*Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 8, no.  
 23 (1972): 45 – 65



### **Dv3.39**

**Site:** Devnya-3  
**Date:** 8th – 9<sup>th</sup> c.  
**Grave structure:** Simple pit  
**Position:** Supine with contracted  
 upwards legs  
**Orientation:** W-E  
**Age:** N/A  
**Sex:** N/A  
**Grave goods:** No  
**Description of deviant practice:**  
 Fixation: Large stone (d.>60cm)  
 placed on the torso  
**Comments:** Grade B evidence  
 [Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров,  
 “Раннобългарски некропол № 3 при Девня”  
 [Early Bulgar Necropolis No. 3 near Devnya],  
*Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 8, no.  
 23 (1972): 45 – 65



### **Dv3.71**

**Site:** Devnya-3  
**Date:** 8th – 9<sup>th</sup> c.  
**Grave structure:** Simple pit  
**Position:** Flexed  
**Orientation:** NW-SE  
**Age:** N/A  
**Sex:** N/A  
**Grave goods:** No



**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Large stone (d.>60cm)  
placed on the skull

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров,  
“Раннобългарски некропол № 3 при Девня”  
[Early Bulgar Necropolis No. 3 near Devnya],  
*Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 8, no.  
23 (1972): 45 – 65.

**Dv3.72**

**Site:** Devnya-3

**Date:** 8th – 9<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Prone extended

**Orientation:** N-S

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position

Fixation: Large stone placed on the  
legs

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров,  
“Раннобългарски некропол № 3 при Девня”  
[Early Bulgar Necropolis No. 3 near Devnya],  
*Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 8, no.  
23 (1972): 45 – 65

**Dv3.93**

**Site:** Devnya-3

**Date:** 8th – 9<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Prone extended

**Orientation:** N-S (skull S-N)

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

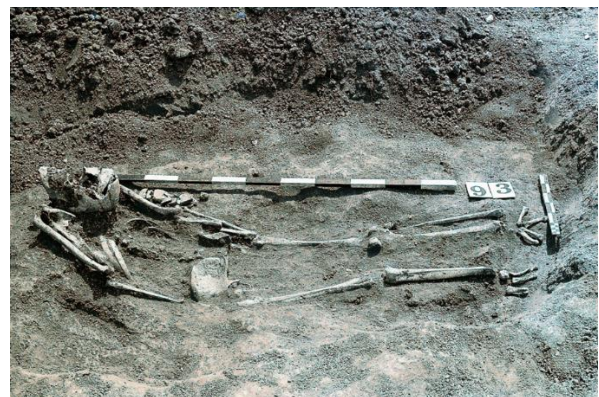
**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position: for the skeleton

Decapitation: Skull placed supine on  
the back, in opposition with the body

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров,  
“Раннобългарски некропол № 3 при Девня”  
[Early Bulgar Necropolis No. 3 near Devnya],  
*Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 8, no.  
23 (1972): 45 – 65

**Dv3.106**

**Site:** Devnya-3

**Date:** 8th – 9<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Supine extended, skull on  
the side

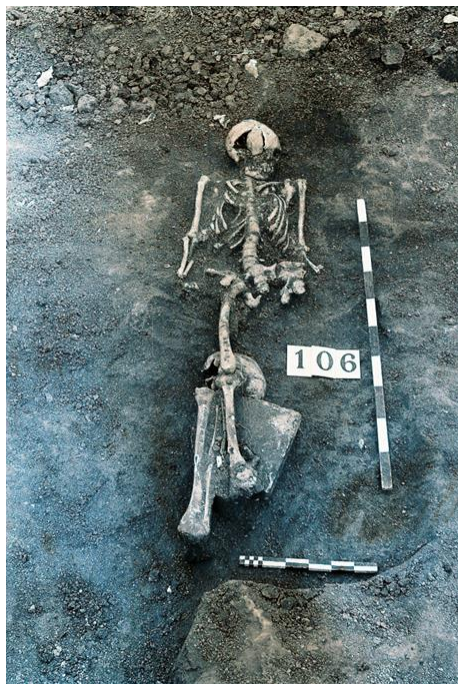
**Orientation:** N-S



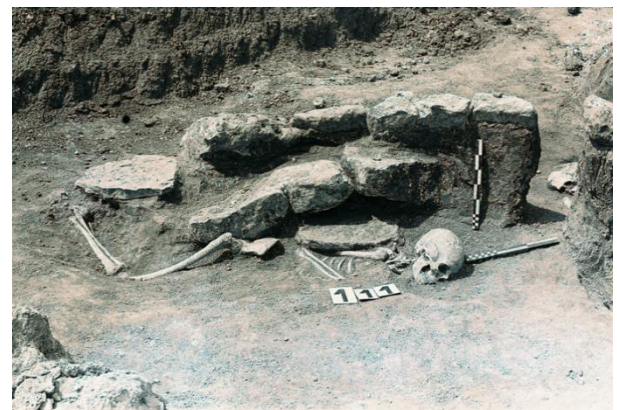
**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Missing/displaced bones of the left leg

Decapitation: Beneath the left knee joint – a skull of another individual placed by flat stone slab

**Comments:** Grade B evidence[Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров, “Раннобългарски некропол № 3 при Девня” [Early Bulgar Necropolis No. 3 near Devnya], *Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 8, no. 23 (1972): 45 – 65**Dv3.111****Site:** Devnya-3**Date:** 8th – 9th c.**Grave structure:** Irregular pit with partial stone cover**Position:** lateral, on the left side**Orientation:** N-S**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: stone slab placed on the chest

**Comments:** The body pushed to the side of the pit, Grade B evidence[Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров, “Раннобългарски некропол № 3 при Девня” [Early Bulgar Necropolis No. 3 near Devnya], *Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 8, no. 23 (1972): 45 – 65**Dv3.119****Site:** Devnya-3**Date:** 8th – 9th c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit



**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: The feet bones in anatomical order placed between the tibiae

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров, “Раннобългарски некропол № 3 при Девня” [Early Bulgar Necropolis No. 3 near Devnya], *Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 8, no. 23 (1972): 45 – 65



#### **Dv1.13**

**Site:** Devnya-1

**Date:** 8th – 9th c.

**Grave structure:** Pit with stone cover

**Position:** on the side, bent knees

**Orientation:** NE-SW

**Age:** Maturus

**Sex:** M

**Grave goods:** Tripartite Fe buckle on the pelvis

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Missing right foot, cut off

**Comments:** Grade A- evidence

[Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров, “Новооткрит раннобългарски некропол при

Девня” [Newly discovered early Bulgarian necropolis near Devnya], *Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 7 (1971): 57-75



#### **Dv1.14**

**Site:** Devnya-1

**Date:** 8th – 9th c.

**Grave structure:** Pit with stone cover, niche for the legs

**Position:** supine with legs bent downwards

**Orientation:** N-S, skull NW-SE

**Age:**

**Sex:**

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Skull oriented towards NW in unnatural position

**Comments:** Grade A- evidence

[Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров, “Новооткрит раннобългарски некропол при Девня” [Newly discovered early Bulgarian necropolis near Devnya], *Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 7 (1971): 57-75



**Dv1.18****Site:** Devnya-1**Date:** 8th – 9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Pit with partial stone structure**Position:** flexed**Orientation:** N-S**Age:** adultus I**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** 2 pot fragments**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Skull is missing

Fixation: Mid-sized stone on the chest

**Comments:** Grade A- evidence

[Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров, “Новооткрит раннобългарски некропол при Девня” [Newly discovered early Bulgarian necropolis near Devnya], *Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 7 (1971): 57-75

**Dv1.24****Site:** Devnya-1**Date:** 8th – 9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Triangle pit**Position:** a. flexed, b+c. supine (thrown)**Orientation:** a. SW-NE b. N-S, c. NE-SW**Age:** a. adultus I b. maturus c. senilis**Sex:** a. male b. female c. male**Grave goods:** animal knucklebone**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Skull is missing (c)

Fixation: Mid-sized stone on the legs/torso (a), two stones on the skull and chest (b)

Mutilation: Feet bones missing (a+b)

**Comments:** Grade A- evidence

[Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров, “Новооткрит раннобългарски некропол при Девня” [Newly discovered early Bulgarian necropolis near Devnya], *Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 7 (1971): 57-75

**Dv1.48****Site:** Devnya-1**Date:** 8th – 9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Round pit**Position:** flexed**Orientation:** N-S**Age:** adultus II**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: A big stone on the skull, 3 large stones on the legs

**Comments:** Grade B evidence[Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров, “Новооткрит раннобългарски некропол при Девня” [Newly discovered early Bulgarian necropolis near Devnya], *Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 7 (1971): 57-75**Dv1.77****Site:** Devnya-1**Date:** 8th – 9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine**Orientation:** N-S**Age:** adultus I**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: A large stone on the skull

**Comments:**[Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров, “Новооткрит раннобългарски некропол при Девня” [Newly discovered early Bulgarian necropolis near Devnya], *Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 7 (1971): 57-75**Dv2.56****Site:** Devnya-2**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit and coffin**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: 2 flat stones placed on the feet

**Comments:** Grade C evidence[Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров, “Старобългарски некропол № 2 при Девня” [Old Bulgarian necropolis no 2 near Devnya], *Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 6 (1970): 21-47**Dv2.57****Site:** Devnya-2**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Stone placed on top of the left foot

**Comments:** Grade C evidence



[Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров,  
“Старобългарски некропол № 2 при Девня”  
[Old Bulgarian necropolis no 2 near Devnya],  
*Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 6  
(1970): 21-47

### **Dv2.59**

**Site:** Devnya-2

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** Infans

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** Fe spearhead on the  
right clavicle

**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Flat stone placed on the feet

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров,  
“Старобългарски некропол № 2 при Девня”  
[Old Bulgarian necropolis no 2 near Devnya],  
*Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 6  
(1970): 21-47

### **Dv2.74**

**Site:** Devnya-2

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Pit with long side  
stone on the S

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Mandible placed between  
the femur bones at the knees

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров,  
“Старобългарски некропол № 2 при Девня”  
[Old Bulgarian necropolis no 2 near Devnya],  
*Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 6  
(1970): 21-47

### **Dv2.97**

**Site:** Devnya-2

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: 2 stones placed on the skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров,  
“Старобългарски некропол № 2 при Девня”  
[Old Bulgarian necropolis no 2 near Devnya],  
*Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 6  
(1970): 21-47

### **Dbc.a**

**Site:** Dibich

**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Prone

**Orientation:** NW-SE

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position, legs are bent  
backwards towards the pelvis

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Rasho Rashev and Stanislav Stanilov] Рашо  
Рашев и Станислав Станилов,  
“Старобългарски некропол при с. Дибич,  
общ. Шумен” [Old Bulgarian necropolis by  
Dibich, Shumen district], *AOP* (1992-3): 121.

### **Drs.69**

**Site:** Drastar - Southern Wall  
Cemetery

**Date:** early-mid 13<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Supine

**Orientation:** S-N

**Age:** maurus

**Sex:** female

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Stefka Angelova] Стефка Ангелова,  
“Средновековен некропол край Южната  
крепостна стена на Дръстър” [Medieval  
necropolis by the southern fortification of  
Drastar], *Годишник на Софийски  
Университет - Исторически Факултет* 86  
(1993)

### **Drs.70**

**Site:** Drastar - Southern Wall  
Cemetery

**Date:** early-mid 13<sup>th</sup> c.  
**Grave structure:** Simple pit  
**Position:** Supine  
**Orientation:** W-E  
**Age:** maturus  
**Sex:** female  
**Grave goods:** No  
**Description of deviant practice:**  
 Decapitation: Only skull  
**Comments:** Grade B evidence  
 [Stefka Angelova] Стефка Ангелова,  
 “Средновековен некропол край Южната  
 крепостна стена на Дръстър” [Medieval  
 necropolis by the southern fortification of  
 Drastar], *Годишник на Софийски  
 Университет - Исторически Факултет* 86  
 (1993)

#### **Dur.29**

**Site:** Durankulak  
**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> c.  
**Grave structure:** Simple pit  
**Position:** supine extended  
**Orientation:** N-S  
**Age:** N/A  
**Sex:** N/A  
**Grave goods:** No  
**Description of deviant practice:**  
 Decapitation: Skull placed to the W  
 from the pelvis  
**Comments:** Isolated, Grade B  
 evidence  
 [Katja Melamed] Катя Меламед,  
 “Средновековният некропол” [The medieval  
 necropolis], *Дуранкулак* 1 (1989)

#### **Dur.49**

**Site:** Durankulak  
**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> c.  
**Grave structure:** Stone cist  
**Position:** supine extended  
**Orientation:** W-E  
**Age:** adultus II  
**Sex:** male  
**Grave goods:** No  
**Description of deviant practice:**  
 Decapitation: Missing skull  
**Comments:** Grade C evidence  
 [Katja Melamed] Катя Меламед,  
 “Средновековният некропол” [The medieval  
 necropolis], *Дуранкулак* 1 (1989)

#### **Dur.94**

**Site:** Durankulak  
**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> c.  
**Grave structure:** Stone cist  
**Position:** supine, slight turn rightwids  
**Orientation:** W-E  
**Age:** N/A  
**Sex:** N/A  
**Grave goods:** No  
**Description of deviant practice:**  
 Fixation: Large flat stone pressing the  
 pelvis  
**Comments:** Grade C evidence  
 [Katja Melamed] Катя Меламед,  
 “Средновековният некропол” [The medieval  
 necropolis], *Дуранкулак* 1 (1989)

#### **Dur.106**

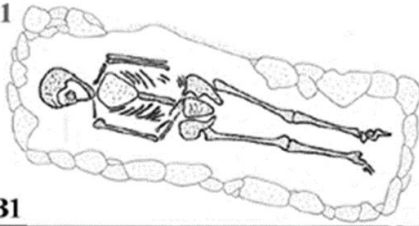
**Site:** Durankulak  
**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> c.  
**Grave structure:** Stone cist  
**Position:** supine extended  
**Orientation:** W-E  
**Age:** adultus I  
**Sex:** male  
**Grave goods:** No  
**Description of deviant practice:**  
 Fixation: 2 stone slabs placed on the  
 skull and on the feet  
**Comments:** Grade B evidence  
 [Katja Melamed] Катя Меламед,  
 “Средновековният некропол” [The medieval  
 necropolis], *Дуранкулак* 1 (1989)

#### **Grad.1**

**Site:** Gradishte  
**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> c.  
**Grave structure:** Stone cist  
**Position:** Supine extended  
**Orientation:** W-E  
**Age:** Adultus  
**Sex:** Male  
**Grave goods:** No  
**Description of deviant practice:**  
 Fixation: Large stone placed on the  
 chest  
**Comments:** Grade B evidence  
 [Narciss Torbov and Alexandra Petrova]  
 Нарцис Торбов и Александра Петрова,  
 “Археологическо проучване на  
 късноантична църква в м. Градище, западно

от гр. Враца” [Archaeological excavations on late antique church in the Gradishte locality, western from Vratsa], *AOP* (2014)

Грoб 1



Кв. AB1

### **Hз.1**

**Site:** Hauza

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> c.- early 11<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Round pit (storage?)

**Position:** supine (thrown)

**Orientation:** NW-SE

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Other: Disposed in neglectful manner with outstretched arm and intertwined legs like thrown away. The second individual is in superposition to the legs and left arm of the former. Partially on side. Tied hands and intertwined legs

**Comments:** In the settlement, Grade B evidence

[Vasil Nikolov, Viktoria Petrova, Tanya Hristova, Petar Leshtakov] Васил Николов, Виктория Петрова, Таня Христова, Петър Лешаков, “Пра- и протоисторически обреден комплекс при местността Хауза, Капитан Андреево, Свиленградско” [Pre- and protohistoric ritual complex near the Hauza locality, Kapitan Andreevo], *AOP* (2013)



### **Hз.2**

**Site:** Hauza

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup>

**Grave structure:** Round pit bell-shaped, deep 1,5m

**Position:** supine (thrown?)

**Orientation:** N/A

**Age:** Infans II

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: The decapitated skull is displaced and on higher level than the rest of the skeleton (difference of 0,6m)

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Vasil Nikolov, Viktoria Petrova, Tanya Hristova, Petar Leshtakov] Васил Николов, Виктория Петрова, Таня Христова, Петър Лешаков, “Пра- и протоисторически обреден комплекс при местността Хауза, Капитан Андреево, Свиленградско” [Pre- and protohistoric ritual complex near the Hauza locality, Kapitan Andreevo], *AOP* (2013)

### **Hз.3**

**Site:** Hauza

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> - early 11<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Round pit bell-shaped, deep 1,5m

**Position:** Supine position with legs in splits (thrown)

**Orientation:** N/A

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: The pelvis is covered with multiple stones

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Vasil Nikolov, Viktoria Petrova, Tanya Hristova, Petar Leshtakov] Васил Николов, Виктория Петрова, Таня Христова, Петър Лешаков, “Пра- и протоисторически обреден комплекс при местността Хауза, Капитан Андреево, Свиленградско” [Pre- and protohistoric ritual complex near the Hauza locality, Kapitan Andreevo], *AOP* (2013)

**HHW.1****Site:** Site 2 Hemus Highway near Shumen**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup>**Grave structure:** Unclear pit, ellipsis?**Position:** Flexed prone**Orientation:** NW-SE**Age:** juvenis II (15-18)**Sex:** female**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position

**Comments:** Grade A- evidence

Unpublished, archaeological documentation from the rescue excavation provided by the lead archaeologist Stanimir Stoychev

**Hit.32****Site:** Hitovo 2**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Pit with a niche**Position:** Prone extended**Orientation:** E-W**Age:** adultus II**Sex:** female**Grave goods:** Sheep ABG with large stone on top**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position

**Comments:** Animal fixation, Grade C evidence[Valeri Yotov] Валери Йотов, “Раннобългарски некропол при с. Хитово, Толбухински окръг” [Early Bulgarian necropolis near Hitovo], *Проблеми на прабългарската история и култура* 1, (1989): 221-230**Hot.2****Site:** Hotalich**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Unclear**Position:** Supine**Orientation:** N-S**Age:** Adultus?**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Missing skull

**Comments:** Neglectful disposal,

Grade C evidence

[Yordan Alexiev] Алексиев Йордан,

“Средновековен град Хоталич при гр.

Севлиево” [Medieval town Hotalich near Sevlievo], *AOP* (2007)**KOm.59****Site:** Kaliakra- Osmanova mogila**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** Prone**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Lyubka Bobcheva] Любка Бобчева,

“Некропол от XIII - XIV век в Калиакра”

[Cemetery from 13th-14th century in

Kaliakra], *Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 14 (1978)**KOm.66****Site:** Kaliakra- Osmanova mogila**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** Supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**



Decapitation: Skull placed between the legs

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Lyubka Bobcheva] Любка Бобчева, “Некропол от XIII - XIV век в Калиакра” [Cemetery from 13th-14th century in Kaliakra], *Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 14 (1978)

### **KOm.154**

**Site:** Kaliakra- Osmanova mogila

**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No/ Triangular arrowhead found between the ribs

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Missing skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Lyubka Bobcheva] Любка Бобчева, “Некропол от XIII - XIV век в Калиакра” [Cemetery from 13th-14th century in Kaliakra], *Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 14 (1978)

### **KOm.163**

**Site:** Kaliakra- Osmanova mogila

**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Supine extended, skull in prone

**Orientation:** SW-NE

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone

Decapitation: Skull placed in prone position

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Lyubka Bobcheva] Любка Бобчева, “Некропол от XIII - XIV век в Калиакра” [Cemetery from 13th-14th century in Kaliakra], *Известия на Народния Музей Варна* 14 (1978)

### **Kvc.78**

**Site:** Kovachevo

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Supine extended; skull prone

**Orientation:** SW-NE

**Age:** Infans II

**Sex:** Male??

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position + Decapitation: Skull placed in prone position

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Pejo Gatev] Пейо Гатев, *Средновековно селище и некропол от 12 век при с. Ковачево, Пазарджишки окръг* [Medieval village and cemetery from 12th century near Kovachevo, district Pazardzhik] (Sofia: National Archaeological Museum, 1985).



### **Kvc.88**

**Site:** Kovachevo

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Supine extended

**Orientation:** SW-NE

**Age:** Maturus

**Sex:** Male

**Grave goods:** Flint

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Bones of left hand in anatomical order cut and placed by the right radius heading towards the elbow

Decapitation: Missing skull

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Pejo Gatev] Пейо Гатев, *Средновековно селище и некропол от 12 век при с. Ковачево, Пазарджишки окръг* [Medieval village and cemetery from 12th century near



Kovachevo, district Pazardzhik] (Sofia: National Archaeological Museum, 1985).



#### **Kvc.97**

**Site:** Kovachevo

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Supine extended

**Orientation:** NW-SE

**Age:** Adultus II

**Sex:** Male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Lower right arm (radius and ulna) displaced on the medial side of the right femur

**Comments:** Charcoal around the head, the right arm, left of the pelvis and the legs, Grade B evidence

[Pejo Gatev] Пейо Гатев, *Средновековно селище и некропол от 12 век при с.*

*Ковачево, Пазарджишки окръг* [Medieval village and cemetery from 12th century near Kovachevo, district Pazardzhik] (Sofia: National Archaeological Museum, 1985).



#### **Kvc.104**

**Site:** Kovachevo

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Supine

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** Adultus

**Sex:** Male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Missing bones of the lower left leg.

The bones of the right lower leg displaced transversely (bent at the knee)

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Pejo Gatev] Пейо Гатев, *Средновековно селище и некропол от 12 век при с.*

*Ковачево, Пазарджишки окръг* [Medieval village and cemetery from 12th century near Kovachevo, district Pazardzhik] (Sofia: National Archaeological Museum, 1985).

#### **Kvc.165**

**Site:** Kovachevo

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Supine extended

**Orientation:** SW-NE

**Age:** Adultus II

**Sex:** Female

**Grave goods:** two copper alloy bracelets on the right hand, one black glass bracelet on the left hand

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Missing skull

Fixation: Right foot pressed by a stone

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Pejo Gatev] Пейо Гатев, *Средновековно селище и некропол от 12 век при с.*

*Ковачево, Пазарджишки окръг* [Medieval village and cemetery from 12th century near Kovachevo, district Pazardzhik] (Sofia: National Archaeological Museum, 1985).



**Krs.11**

**Site:** Krasen

**Date:** late 9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** NW-SE

**Age:** Juvenis II

**Sex:** Male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: The skull is placed on the left knee

Mutilation: Missing bones of the left foot

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Dimitar Stanchev] Димитър Станчев, "Прабългарски компоненти в погребалния обряд и инвентара на ранносредновековните некрополи в Русенско" [Protobulgarian features in the funerary ritual and inventory in the early

medieval necropoleis in the area of Ruse], *Проблеми на прабългарската история и култура* 1 (1989): 243-244



**Krs.a**

**Site:** Krasen

**Date:** late 9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine

**Orientation:** N-S

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Dimitar Stanchev] Димитър Станчев, "Прабългарски компоненти в погребалния обряд и инвентара на ранносредновековните некрополи в Русенско" [Protobulgarian features in the funerary ritual and inventory in the early medieval necropoleis in the area of Ruse], *Проблеми на прабългарската история и култура* 1 (1989): 243-244

**Kru.7**

**Site:** Krusheto

**Date:** late 14<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Pit with coffin  
**Position:** Supine extended  
**Orientation:** W-E  
**Age:** N/A  
**Sex:** N/A  
**Grave goods:** Silver coin of Ivan Shishman on the ribs  
**Description of deviant practice:**  
 Mutilation: Right arm bones (radius and ulna) are placed on the pelvis.  
**Comments:** Grade B evidence  
 [Atanas Pisarev] Атанас Писарев, "Средновековни гробове при Крушето, Великотърновско" [Medieval graves near Krusheto], *Музеи и Паметници на Културата* 4 (1964)



**Kyu.81**  
**Site:** Kyulevcha  
**Date:** 8th – 9th c.  
**Grave structure:** Round (ellipsis) pit  
**Position:** Prone  
**Orientation:** N-S (skull)  
**Age:** N/A  
**Sex:** male  
**Grave goods:** No  
**Description of deviant practice:**  
 Prone position  
 Decapitation

**Mutilation:** Disintegrated skeleton in 3 parts Contracted pelvis and legs in the E part, skull towards the S, the rest of the skeleton on top of the skull  
**Comments:** Cut-marks by a sword, possibly tied limbs, Grade B evidence  
 [Zhivka Vazharova] Живка Въжарова, *Славяни и прабългари: по данни на некрополите от VI-XI в. на територията на България* [Slavs and protobulgarians based on data from the necropoleis from seventh to eleventh century on the territory of Bulgaria]. Sofia: БАН (1976).

### **Kyu.28**

**Site:** Kyulevcha  
**Date:** 8th – 9th c.  
**Grave structure:** Simple pit  
**Position:** Supine?  
**Orientation:** N-S  
**Age:** N/A  
**Sex:** N/A  
**Grave goods:** Egg shells  
**Description of deviant practice:**  
 Decapitation: Only skull  
**Comments:** Dubious, Grade C evidence  
 [Zhivka Vazharova] Живка Въжарова, *Славяни и прабългари: по данни на некрополите от VI-XI в. на територията на България* [Slavs and protobulgarians based on data from the necropoleis from seventh to eleventh century on the territory of Bulgaria]. Sofia: БАН (1976).

### **Nik.185**

**Site:** Nikolovo  
**Date:** late 9th - 10th c.  
**Grave structure:** Pit with niche to the N  
**Position:** supine extended  
**Orientation:** N-S  
**Age:** adultus I  
**Sex:** female  
**Grave goods:** Iron fibula under left clavicle, grey polished pottery, sheep ABG in the niche  
**Description of deviant practice:**  
 Mutilation: Missing bones of the right hand and right lower leg  
 Arm of another individual in partial anatomical order placed diagonally on her skeleton

**Comments:** Charcoal in the SE corner, Grade B evidence

[Dimitar Stanchev] Димитър Станчев, “Прабългарски компоненти в погребалния обряд и инвентара на ранносредновековните некрополи в Русенско” [Protobulgarian features in the funerary ritual and inventory in the early medieval necropoleis in the area of Ruse], *Проблеми на прабългарската история и култура* 1 (1989): 243-244



#### **Nzh.a**

**Site:** Nozharevo

**Date:** 8th – 9th c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Prone

**Orientation:** SW-NE

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Rasho Rashev and Stanislav Stanilov] Рашо Рашев и Станислав Станилов, “Старобългарски езически некропол при Ножарево, Разградска област” [Old Bulgarian necropolis near Nozharevo, Razgrad district], AOP (1988).

#### **Od1.41**

**Site:** Odartsi-1

**Date:** 11th c.

**Grave structure:** Stone cist

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** maturus

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Half wheat stone placed on the chest

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova] Людмила Дончева-Петкова, *Одърци: Некрополи от XI век* [Odartsi: Cemeteries from the 11th century] (Sofia: Marin Drinov, 2005).



#### **Od2.38**

**Site:** Odartsi-2

**Date:** 11th c.

**Grave structure:** Stone cist

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** juvenis II/adultus I

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** Bronze earring to the left of the skull

**Description of deviant practice:**



Mutilation: Feet bones in anatomical order by the right knee joint

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova] Людмила Дончева-Петкова, *Одърци: Некрополи от XI век* [Odarts: Cemeteries from the 11<sup>th</sup> century] (Sofia: Marin Drinov, 2005).



#### **Od2.42**

**Site:** Odartsi-2

**Date:** 11th c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** juvenis

**Sex:** N/A

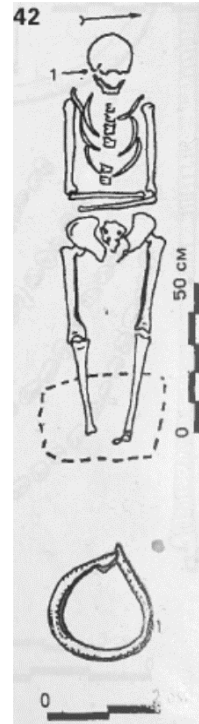
**Grave goods:** Bronze earring right on the skull

**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Stone on the feet

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova] Людмила Дончева-Петкова, *Одърци: Некрополи от XI век* [Odarts: Cemeteries from the 11<sup>th</sup> century] (Sofia: Marin Drinov, 2005).



#### **Od2.45**

**Site:** Odartsi-2

**Date:** 11th c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** infans II/juvenis

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

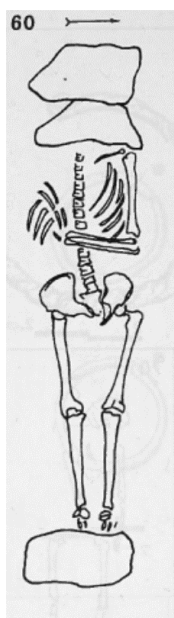
Fixation: Stone on the abdomen - pelvis area

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova [Людмила Дончева-Петкова], *Одърци: Некрополи от XI век* [Odarts: Cemeteries from the 11<sup>th</sup> century] (Sofia: Marin Drinov, 2005).

**Od2.60****Site:** Odartsi-2**Date:** 11th c.**Grave structure:** Pit with partial stone structure**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** adultus II**Sex:** female**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Large stone on the skull

**Comments:** Blunt force trauma ('ritual trepanation' LDP) on the skull, A- [Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova] Людмила Дончева-Петкова, *Одърци: Некрополи от XI век* [Odartsi: Cemeteries from the 11<sup>th</sup> century] (Sofia: Marin Drinov, 2005).**Od2.101****Site:** Odartsi-2**Date:** 11th c.**Grave structure:** Stone cist**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** adultus I**Sex:** female**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: missing bones of the left foot

**Comments:** Lower grave cover is missing – grave reopening? Charcoal in the chest area, Grade B evidence [Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova] Людмила Дончева-Петкова, *Одърци: Некрополи от XI век* [Odartsi: Cemeteries from the 11<sup>th</sup> century] (Sofia: Marin Drinov, 2005).**Od2.218****Site:** Odartsi-2**Date:** 11th c.**Grave structure:** Ellipsis pit with stones**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** N-S

**Age:** adultus

**Sex:** male?

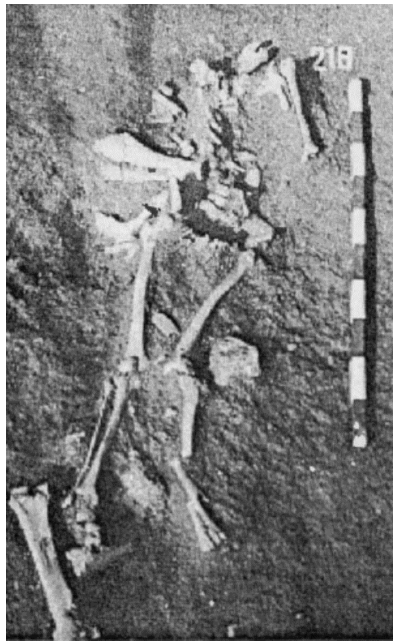
**Grave goods:** Cattle and horse bones by the chest and feet on the left side

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Missing skull

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova] Людмила Дончева-Петкова, *Одърци: Некрополи от XI век* [Odartsi: Cemeteries from the 11<sup>th</sup> century] (Sofia: Marin Drinov, 2005).



### Od2.271

**Site:** Odartsi-2

**Date:** 11th c.

**Grave structure:** Pit with partial stone structure

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** adultus II

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Large stone on the lower legs

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova] Людмила Дончева-Петкова, *Одърци: Некрополи от XI век* [Odartsi: Cemeteries from the 11<sup>th</sup> century] (Sofia: Marin Drinov, 2005).

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### Od2.342

**Site:** Odartsi-2

**Date:** 11th c.

**Grave structure:** Pit with partial stone structure

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** infans II

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Feet bones in anatomical order placed to the S from the legs

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova] Людмила Дончева-Петкова, *Одърци: Некрополи от XI век* [Odartsi: Cemeteries from the 11<sup>th</sup> century] (Sofia: Marin Drinov, 2005).

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**Od2.354****Site:** Odartsi-2**Date:** 11th c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** adultus**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** Bronze earring to the left of the skull, bronze ring on the left hand**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Stones on the chest and the tibiae

**Comments:** Grade B evidence[Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova] Людмила Дончева-Петкова, *Одърци: Некрополи от XI век* [Odartsi: Cemeteries from the 11<sup>th</sup> century] (Sofia: Marin Drinov, 2005).**Od2.357****Site:** Odartsi-2**Date:** 11th c.**Grave structure:** Pit with partial stone structure**Position:** supine**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** maturus**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** Silver and bronze rings on the right hand**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Stone on the skull

**Comments:** Grade B evidence[Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova] Людмила Дончева-Петкова, *Одърци: Некрополи от XI век* [Odartsi: Cemeteries from the 11<sup>th</sup> century] (Sofia: Marin Drinov, 2005).**Od2.416****Site:** Odartsi-2**Date:** 11th c.**Grave structure:** Stone cist**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** adultus I**Sex:** female**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Cranium removed and placed outside the cist; the mandible displaced to the chest

**Comments:** Part of the cover removed – grave reopening, Grade A- evidence [Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova] Людмила Дончева-Петкова, *Одърци: Некрополи от XI век* [Odartsi: Cemeteries from the 11<sup>th</sup> century] (Sofia: Marin Drinov, 2005).



#### **Od2.485**

**Site:** Odartsi-2

**Date:** 11th c.

**Grave structure:** Pit with stone cover

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** SW-NE

**Age:** juvenis

**Sex:** female

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Stone on the feet

**Comments:** Part of the cover removed – grave reopening, Grade A- evidence [Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova] Людмила Дончева-Петкова, *Одърци: Некрополи от XI век* [Odartsi: Cemeteries from the 11<sup>th</sup> century] (Sofia: Marin Drinov, 2005).



#### **Od2.493**

**Site:** Odartsi-2

**Date:** 11th c.

**Grave structure:** Stone cist

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** adultus

**Sex:** N/A

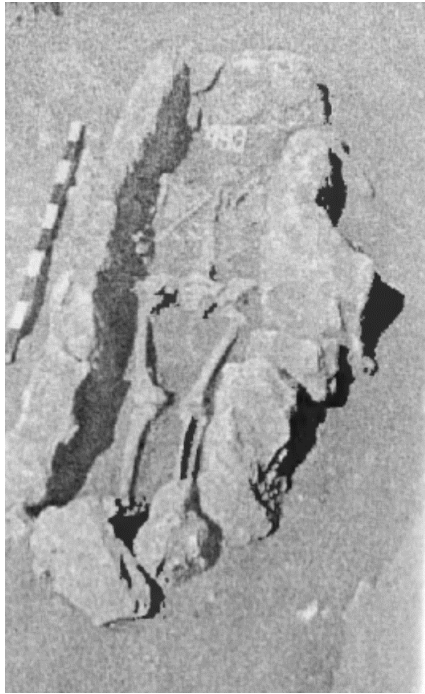
**Grave goods:** Cattle and small equine bones by the feet

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Missing head

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova] Людмила Дончева-Петкова, *Одърци: Некрополи от XI век* [Odartsi: Cemeteries from the 11<sup>th</sup> century] (Sofia: Marin Drinov, 2005).

**Od2.496****Site:** Odartsi-2**Date:** 11th c.**Grave structure:** Rock-cut deep pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** maturus**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Large piece from a pithos covers the skull and left clavicle, stones on the feet

**Comments:** Grade B evidence[Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova] Людмила Дончева-Петкова, *Одърци: Некрополи от XI век* [Odartsi: Cemeteries from the 11<sup>th</sup> century] (Sofia: Marin Drinov, 2005).**Prk.80****Site:** Pernik**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** Supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** Adultus**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: 3 tiles placed in superposition directly over the skull

**Comments:** Grade B evidence[Yordanka Changova] Йорданка Чангова, *Перник [Pernik], vol. 2* (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1983)**Prk.155****Site:** Pernik**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** Supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: The bones of the left lower leg (tibia, fibula and feet bones) in anatomical order placed on the chest

**Comments:** Grade C evidence[Yordanka Changova] Йорданка Чангова, *Перник [Pernik], vol. 2* (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1983)**PGB.13****Site:** Pliska – The Great Basilica**Date:** late 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine extended; head prone**Orientation:** E-W**Age:** N/A**Sex:** male?**Grave goods:** potsherds by the legs**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position

Decapitation: Skull in prone position

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Zhivka Vazharova] Живка Въжарова, “Некрополът до Голямата базилика” [The



necropolis by the Great Basilica], *Плиска-Преслав 1* (1979): 75.

### **PIC.10**

**Site:** Pliska – Inner City, South Wall

**Date:** late 10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** In the tower wall

**Position:** supine

**Orientation:** S-N

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

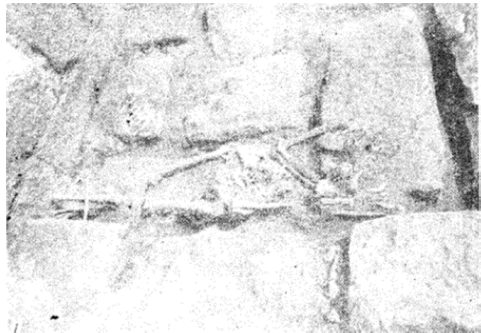
**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Missing skull – only the mandible present

Mutilation: The tibiae and fibulae of both legs found displaced and crossed 0,55m away from the femur bones

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Ivan Zahariev] Иван Захариев, “Южната крепостна стена на Плиска и некрополът до нея” [The southern fortification wall of Pliska and the adjunct necropolis], *Плиска-Преслав 1* (1979)



### **PIC.20**

**Site:** Pliska – Inner City, South Wall

**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Unclear pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** SE-NW

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** male

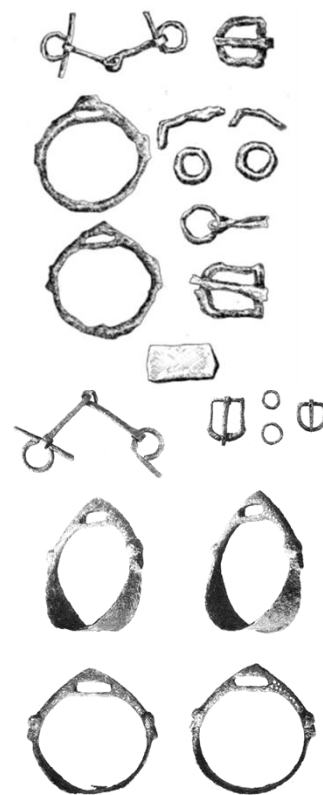
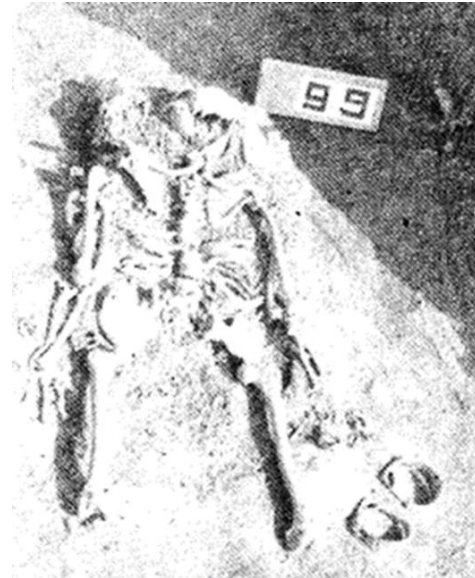
**Grave goods:** Bridle, 2 Fe stirrups, 4 Fe hoops, 2 buckles, 2 Fe fragments, 1 copper alloy whetstone

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Missing bones of the lower legs (tibiae, fibulae, feet)

**Comments:** Isolated; 99 stands for the excavation sector, Grade B evidence

[Ivan Zahariev] Иван Захариев, “Южната крепостна стена на Плиска и некрополът до нея” [The southern fortification wall of Pliska and the adjunct necropolis], *Плиска-Преслав 1* (1979)



### **PIC.29**

**Site:** Pliska – Inner City, South Wall

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** prone extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** adultus

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position

**Comments:** Arms possibly tied, Grade B evidence

[Ivan Zahariev] Иван Захариев, “Южната крепостна стена на Плиска и некрополът до нея” [The southern fortification wall of Pliska and the adjunct necropolis], *Плиска-Преслав* 1 (1979)



### **PIC.30**

**Site:** Pliska – Inner City, South Wall

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Stone cist

**Position:** prone

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** juvenis II

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Ivan Zahariev] Иван Захариев, “Южната крепостна стена на Плиска и некрополът до нея” [The southern fortification wall of Pliska and the adjunct necropolis], *Плиска-Преслав* 1 (1979)



### **PIC.33**

**Site:** Pliska – Inner City, South Wall

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Stone cist

**Position:** prone

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position

**Comments:** Possibly tied legs, Grade B evidence

[Ivan Zahariev] Иван Захариев, “Южната крепостна стена на Плиска и некрополът до нея” [The southern fortification wall of Pliska and the adjunct necropolis], *Плиска-Преслав* 1 (1979)

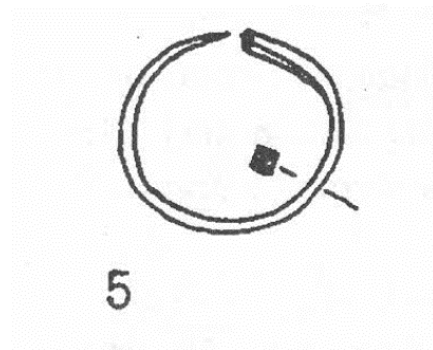


**POE.30****Site:** Pliska – Outer City East**Date:** Mid-late 11th**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** NW-SE**Age:** Infans II**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** Silver circlet earring by the skull,

Anonymous Byzantine coin class B (1030-1042)

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: The mandible is turned around on 180 degrees and the skull lies on top of it

**Comments:** Grade B evidence[Yanko Dimitrov] Янко Димитров, “Църква и некропол при Източната порта на Вътрешния град в Плиска” [Church and cemetery by the Eastern Gate] *Плиска-Преслав 7* (1995)**POE.51****Site:** Pliska – Outer City East**Date:** late 10<sup>th</sup> – early 12<sup>th</sup>**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** Infans II**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Two flat stones on the top of the chest and instead of the missing femur

Mutilation: Missing bones of right leg

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

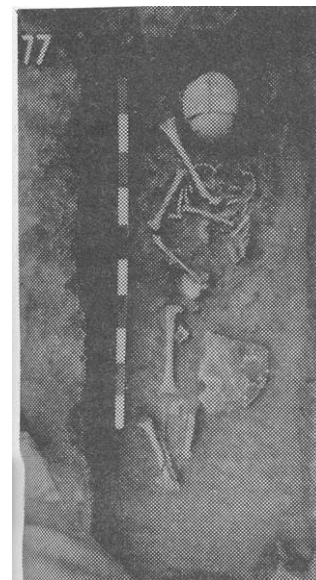
[Yanko Dimitrov] Янко Димитров, “Църква и некропол при Източната порта на

Вътрешния град в Плиска” [Church and cemetery by the Eastern Gate] *Плиска-Преслав 7* (1995)**POE.77****Site:** Pliska – Outer City East**Date:** late 10<sup>th</sup> – early 12<sup>th</sup>**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** Infans II**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Stone placed instead of the left femur

Mutilation: Sinister femur placed on the chest

Dexter tibia and fibula displaced to the S

**Comments:** Grade B evidence[Yanko Dimitrov] Янко Димитров, “Църква и некропол при Източната порта на Вътрешния град в Плиска” [Church and cemetery by the Eastern Gate] *Плиска-Преслав 7* (1995)**Pvd.2****Site:** Plovdiv**Date:** early – mid 9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** lateral**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A



**Grave goods:** Two bronze earrings around the area of the destroyed skull, only one preserved

**Description of deviant practice:**

**Mutilation:** The right lower leg is missing, the feet are cut off and placed by the knee joints

**Comments:** Dug into the destructions of Late Antique buildings, Grade B evidence

Ivo Topalilov and Kamen Stanev, "Two pagan Bulgar burials from Plovdiv" in *Avars, Bulgars and Magyars on the Lower and Middle Danube* eds. Doncheva-Petkova, L. et al. (Budapest: Archaeolingua, 2014), 83-92



**Pvd.NT**

**Site:** Plovdiv

**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup>

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Prone

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position

**Comments:** Hands tied behind the back, Grade B evidence

Unpublished. Information by Sophia Hristeva

**Pvd.507**

**Site:** Plovdiv

**Date:** late 14<sup>th</sup> c. – early 15<sup>th</sup>

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Skull covered with a tile.

Piece of brick inside the mouth.

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Elena Bozhilova and Kamen Stanev] Елена Божилова и Камен Станев, "Спасителни археологически разкопки на ул. Рилски метох 3, Пловдив" [Rescue excavations in Rilski metoh str. 3, Plovdiv], *AOP* (2014)



**Prs.15**

**Site:** Preslav-1

**Date:** late 9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Round pit with urn

**Position:** cremation/ vertical (skull)

**Orientation:** N/A

**Age:** N/A



**Sex:** N/A

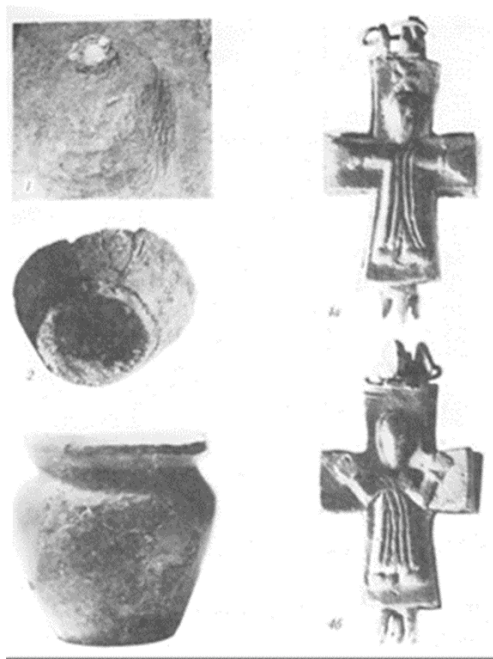
**Grave goods:** Brown urn with incised decoration Vazharova's Type IB, Conical jar with chicken bones and bone awl, Pectoral cross

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Unburned skull placed on the urn with the cremated remains

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Zhivka Vazharova] Живка Въжарова. *Славяни и прабългари: по данни на некрополите от VI-XI в. на територията на България* [Slavs and protobulgarians based on data from the necropoleis from seventh to eleventh century on the territory of Bulgaria]. Sofia: БАН (1976).



**Prs.a**

**Site:** Preslav

**Date:** 13th c.

**Grave structure:** Oval rubbish pit

**Position:** Supine flexed, thrown

**Orientation:** E-W

**Age:** adultus I (22-24yrs)

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** Iron stirrup, bone fragment from arrow?

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Lower legs separated from the body with N-S orientation

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Margarita Vaklinova and Snezhana Goryanova] Маргарита Ваклинова и

Снежана Горянова, "НИАР Велики Преслав. Дворцов център-север" [Veliki Preslav. Palatial centre-north], *AOP* 2017 (2018): 456-459



**Skr.1**

**Site:** Sakardzha

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Skull decapitated and placed 0,7m SW from the skeleton

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Kircho Apostolov] Кирчо Апостолов, "Средновековен некропол на хълма Сакарджа край Омуртаг" [Medieval necropolis on the Sakardza hill near Omurtag], in *Eurika. In honorem Ludmiliae Donchevae-Petkovae* eds. Valeri Grigorov, Metodi Daskalov, Evgenia Komatarova, 185-198 (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 2009)

**Skr.65**

**Site:** Sakardzha

**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> c..

**Grave structure:** Pit with a coffin

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: 4 stones (2 big and 2 small) placed on the chest

**Comments:** Possible mutilation: Disturbance in the position of the left femur, tibia and ribs, Grade C evidence [Kircho Apostolov] Кирчо Апостолов, “Средновековен некропол на хълма Сакарджа край Омуртаг” [Medieval necropolis on the Sakardza hill near Omurtag], in *Eurika. In honorem Ludmilae Donchevae-Petkovae* eds. Valeri Grigorov, Metodi Daskalov, Evgenia Komatarova, 185-198 (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 2009)



#### **Skr.89**

**Site:** Sakardzha

**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> c..

**Grave structure:** Pit with a coffin

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** NW-SE

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Large stone on the skull and on dislocated right foot bones

Mutilation: Left foot bones in anatomical order between the tibiae, right foot bones in anatomical order on the medial side of the right femur and covered with stone

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Kircho Apostolov] Кирчо Апостолов, “Средновековен некропол на хълма Сакарджа край Омуртаг” [Medieval necropolis on the Sakardza hill near Omurtag], in *Eurika. In honorem Ludmilae Donchevae-Petkovae* eds. Valeri Grigorov, Metodi

Daskalov, Evgenia Komatarova, 185-198 (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 2009)



#### **Skr.118**

**Site:** Sakardzha

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** female?

**Grave goods:** Two silver alloy earrings

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Right hand bones in anatomical order placed next to the right femur; Left clavicle turned on 180 degrees; Displacement of the hip and ribs

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Kircho Apostolov] Кирчо Апостолов, “Средновековен некропол на хълма Сакарджа край Омуртаг” [Medieval necropolis on the Sakardza hill near Omurtag], in *Eurika. In honorem Ludmilae Donchevae-Petkovae* eds. Valeri Grigorov, Metodi Daskalov, Evgenia Komatarova, 185-198 (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 2009)

**Svt.27****Site:** Sevtopolis**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** Supine extended**Orientation:** NW-SE**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Fe sickle with linear length 50cm and blade wide 3,2 cm pressing the pelvis.

Mutilation: The feet bones in anatomical order displaced by the left femur

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Yordanka Changova] Йорданка Чангова, *Средновековното селище над тракийския град Севтополис* [Medieval settlement above the Thracian city Sevtopolis], (Sofia: Prosveta, 1972)



Обр. 27. Сърпове:  
2 — от погребение № 27

**Szp.a****Site:** Sozopol**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Stone cist**Position:** Supine**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** Maturus**Sex:** Male**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Large iron plough head pressing on the left ribs, close to the clavicle

**Comments:** Photo as exhibited in the museum, Grade B evidence

David Barrowclough, *Time to Slay Vampire Burials? The Archaeological and Historical Evidence for Vampires in Europe*, Cambridge: Red Dagger Press (2014).

**Stan.4-9****Site:** Stan**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Two adjacent rectangular pits**Position:** Lateral**Orientation:** NW-SE**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Disintegrated skeleton, cut through the abdominal area in two and the two parts placed in the two pits separately, on the side. Arms cut through the humeri, the remaining arm bones are missing.

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[P.Petrova] П.Петрова, "Ранносредновековно селище и некропол"

при с. Стан. Шуменско” [Early medieval settlement and cemetery near Stan, Shum district] *AOP за 1992 – 1993* (1994)

### **TVL.192**

**Site:** Tarnovo – Velika Lavra Monastery

**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit with coffin

**Position:** Supine, head prone

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position

Decapitation: The skull is in prone

Fixation: The feet bones are covered with stones.

**Comments:** excavations of 1977 (grave No. 192/’77), Grade C evidence [Boni Petrunova] Бони Петрунова, “Некрополите от XIII-XVII в. като източник за практикуването на обредите против превъплъщаване” [Cemeteries from 13th-17th century as a source on practicing rituals against transfiguration after death], *Конфесия и фолклор* (1998)

### **Top.83**

**Site:** Topola

**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Flexed, head prone

**Orientation:** N-S

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

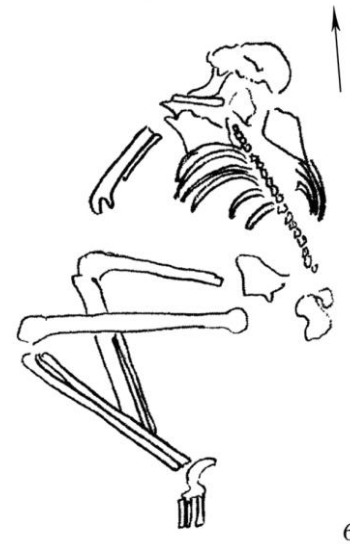
**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position: Skull (and upper body) is placed faced down

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Evgenia Komatarova-Balinova] Евгения Коматарова-Балинова, “Хокери и псевдохокери от биритуалните некрополи в Североизточна България: Възможности за интерпретация” [Hockers and pseudo-hockers in the biritual cemeteries from South-Eastern Bulgaria: Possibilities for interpretation] In: Свистун, Г. et al (eds) *Салтово-маяцка археологична култура: проблеми та дослідження*. [Saltovo-Mayatsk archaeological culture: Problems and

achievements] Kharkiv: Vidavets Savchuk (2013)



### **Tsr.15**

**Site:** Tsarkvishte

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Supine with flexed legs

**Orientation:** NW-SE

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Left clavicle covered by a tile, two tiles on the pelvis and the two femur bones.; Large stone with on the axis N-S presses the femur bones, a small stone is on the right clavicle

**Comments:** Charcoal in the grave fill, Grade B evidence

[Ivan Dzambo] Иван Джамбов, “Средновековна църква и некропол в с. Църквище, общ. Първомай” [Medieval church and graveyard in Tsarkvishte, Parvomay district], *AOP* (2009)





**Tsr.17****Site:** Tsarkvishte**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** Supine with flexed legs**Orientation:** NW-SE**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Left clavicle covered by a tile, two tiles on the pelvis and the two femur bones.; Large stone with on the axis N-S presses the femur bones, a small stone is on the right clavicle

**Comments:** Charcoal in the grave fill, Grade B evidence

[Ivan Dzambo] Иван Джамбов, “Средновековна църква и некропол в с. Църквище, общ. Първомай” [Medieval church and graveyard in Tsarkvishte, Parvomay district], *AOP* (2009)

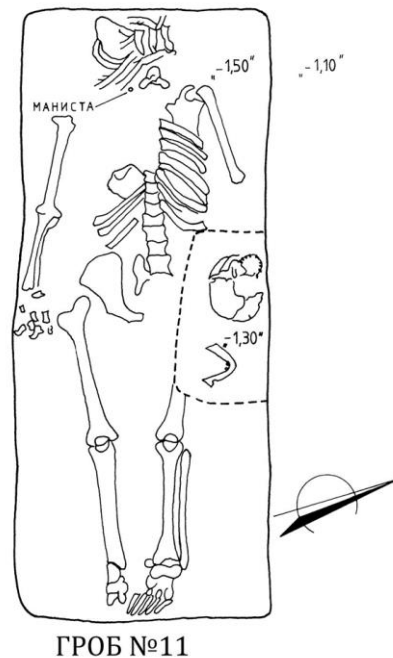
**Var.11****Site:** Varbyane**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup>**Grave structure:** Pit with niche to the N**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** NW-SE**Age:** adultus**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** four attached glass beads on the place of the skull**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Skull with the separated mandible in the niche.

**Mutilation:** Dexter scapula, clavicle, ribs and some vertebrae on the place of the skull.

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Hristina Stoyanova] Христина Стоянова, “Обредът „обезвреждане на мъртвите” в езическите некрополи (по данни от района на Плиска и Варна)” [The ritual against transfiguration of the dead in the pagan necropoleis (based on data from the area of Pliska and Varna)], in *Изследвания по българска средновековна археология. Сборник в чест на проф. Рашо Рашиев* [Studies in Bulgarian Medieval Archaeology presented to Prof. Rasho Rashev] ed. Pavel Georgiev (Sofia: Faber, 2007), 156-166

**Vrn.3****Site:** Varna-1**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** Supine**Orientation:** N-S**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** Grey potsherds, a knucklebone**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров.  
 “Двуобреден раннобългарски некропол при Варна” [Biritual early Bulgarian necropolis near Varna],  
*Преслав 2* (1976): 107-124

**Vrn.10**

**Site:** Varna-1

**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Supine extended

**Orientation:** N-S

**Age:** juvenis I

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Feet bones between the tibiae

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров,  
 “Двуобреден раннобългарски некропол при Варна” [Biritual early Bulgarian necropolis near Varna],  
*Преслав 2* (1976): 107-124

**Vrn.19**

**Site:** Varna-1

**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Pit with a niche

**Position:** Supine

**Orientation:** N-S

**Age:** Infans

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** One red jar

**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Several big stones on top of the skeleton

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Dimitar Dimitrov] Димитър Димитров,  
 “Двуобреден раннобългарски некропол при Варна” [Biritual early Bulgarian necropolis near Varna],  
*Преслав 2* (1976): 107-124

**Vrt.10**

**Site:** Vratsa – Todor Balabanov str.1

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Pit with partial stone structure

**Position:** Supine extended

**Orientation:** SW-NE

**Age:** adultus

**Sex:** female

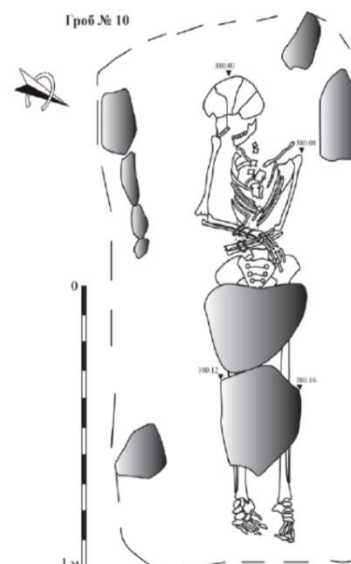
**Grave goods:** five bracelets on the hands

**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Large stones on the legs

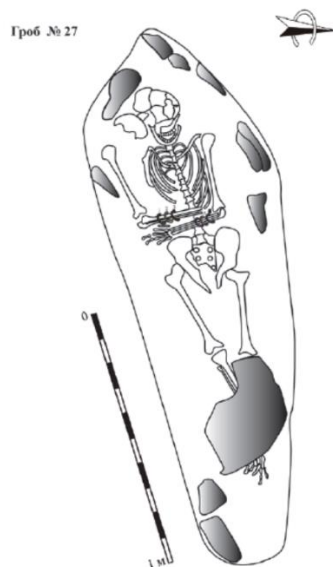
**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Alexandra Petrova and Maria Hristova]  
 Александра Петрова и Мария Христова,  
 “Средновековен некропол на ул. „Тодор Балабанов“ номер 1 в град Враца” [Medieval cemetery on Todor Balabanov str.1 in Vratsa]  
*Приноси към българската археология 8*  
 (2018): 255-264



**Vrt.27****Site:** Vratsa – Todor Balabanov str.1**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>**Grave structure:** Pit with partial stone structure**Position:** Supine extended**Orientation:** SW-NE**Age:** adultus**Sex:** female**Grave goods:** two bronze and one iron bracelet on right hand, three glass bracelets on left hand, bracelet with polychrome glass beads, cowry shells and ancient coin of Dyrachion (2<sup>nd</sup> – 1<sup>st</sup> c.BC) with suspension loot.**Description of deviant practice:**

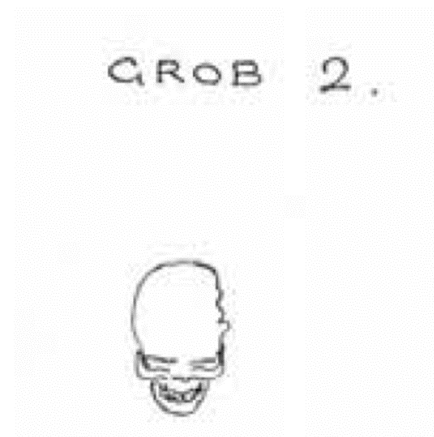
Fixation: Large stone on the legs

**Comments:** Grade B evidence[Alexandra Petrova and Maria Hristova]Александра Петрова и Мария Христова, “Средновековен некропол на ул. „Тодор Балабанов“ номер 1 в град Враца” [Medieval cemetery on Todor Balabanov str.1 in Vratsa] *Приноси към българската археология* 8 (2018): 255-264.

## Deviant burials from Croatia

**BrDr.2****Site:** Brodski Drenovac**Date:** early 9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** Supine**Orientation:** E-W**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidenceKsenija Vinski-Gasparini and Slavenka Ercegović, “Ranosrednjovekovno groblje u Brodskom Drenovcu” [Early medieval cemetery in Brodski Drenovac] *Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu* 1:1 (1958): 129-161.**BrDr.12****Site:** Brodski Drenovac**Date:** early 9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** Supine**Orientation:** E-W**Age:** N/A



**Sex:** N/A

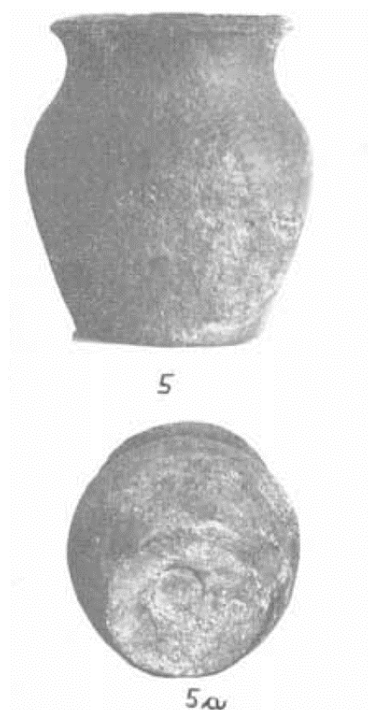
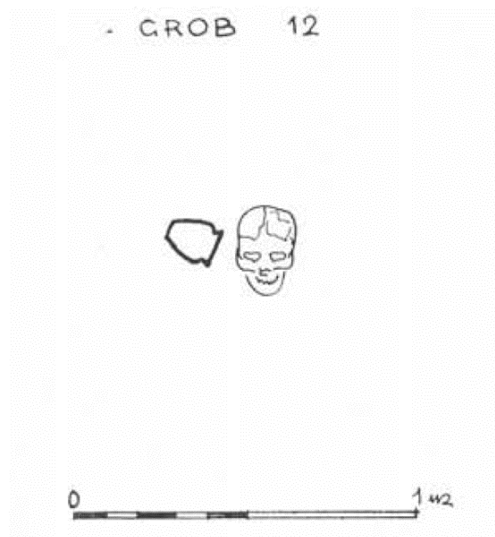
**Grave goods:** Dark grey/black jar to the right of the skull

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Ksenija Vinski-Gasparini and Slavenka Ercegović, "Ranosrednjovekovno groblje u Brodskom Drenovcu" [Early medieval cemetery in Brodski Drenovac] *Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu* 1:1 (1958): 129-161.



**BrDr.32**

**Site:** Brodski Drenovac

**Date:** early 9<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Supine

**Orientation:** W-E, skull E-W (face westwards)

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** female

**Grave goods:** Necklace from 29 glass beads (white, blue, green), silver medallion on the chest, silver ring on the right hand

**Description of deviant practice:**

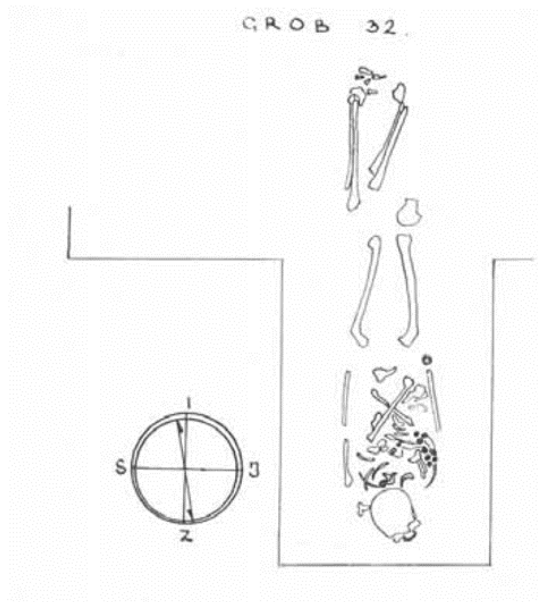
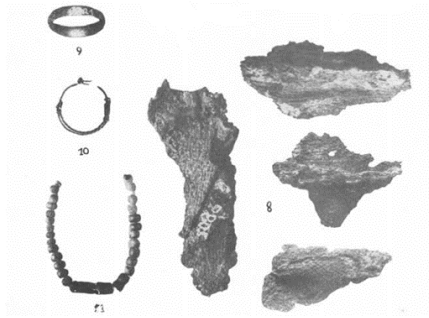
Decapitation: Displaced skull

Possible Mutilation: Displaced lower legs

**Comments:** Peri mortem, no signs of reopening, Grade A- evidence

Ksenija Vinski-Gasparini and Slavenka Ercegović, "Ranosrednjovekovno groblje u Brodskom Drenovcu" [Early medieval cemetery in Brodski Drenovac] *Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu* 1:1 (1958): 129-161.





### Člg.1

**Site:** Čelega kod Novi grada

**Date:** late 7<sup>th</sup>

**Grave structure:** Simple pit, timber cover over the skull

**Position:** Supine

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Skull on top of the torso

**Comments:** Grade C evidence, described as 'ritual decapitation'

(p.208)

Branko Marušić, „Zgodnjesrednjeveško grobišče v Čelegi pri Novem gradu v Istri“ [Early medieval cemetery in Čelega near Novi grad in Istria] *Arheološki vjesnik* 9-10: 3-4 (1959): 199-233.

Branko Marušić, „Nekropole VII. i VIII. stoljeća u Istri“ [Cemeteries from the 7<sup>th</sup> and

8<sup>th</sup> century in Istria] *Arheološki vjesnik* 18 (1967), 333-348

### Grc.169

**Site:** Gorica

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Pit with stone on the W side

**Position:** Supine extended

**Orientation:** NW-SE

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** female

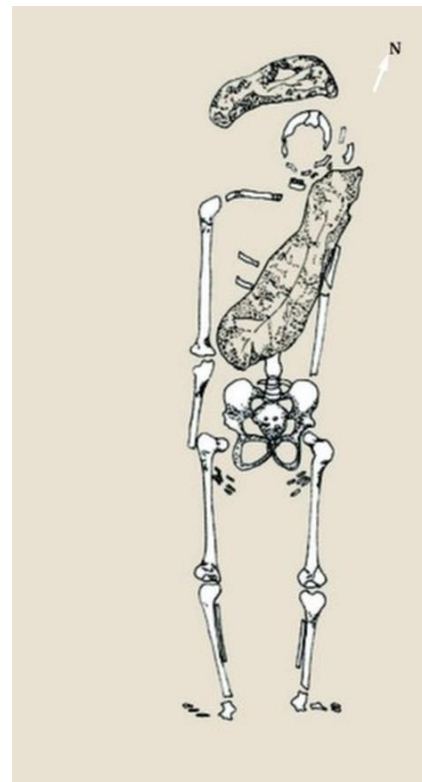
**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Very large stone placed on the chest

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

Željka Cetinić. *Stranče-Vinodol. Starohrvatske groblje na Gorici* [Stranče-Vinodol. Old Croatian cemetery in Gorica] (Rijeka: Pomorski i povjesni muzej Hrvatskog primorja, 2011)



### Ivn.204

**Site:** Ivanec- Stari grad

**Date:** late 13<sup>th</sup> – early 14<sup>th</sup>

**Grave structure:** Pit with partial stone structure

**Position:** Supine

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** maturus (45-50 yrs)

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** Elongated iron knife on the chest

**Description of deviant practice:**

Attempted decapitation: Multiple perimortem injuries on the skull (mandible and cranium), as well on the left ulna

**Comments:** Tucker's Type 6 or 7 decapitation; Probably battle-related mutilations, all blows were performed downwards, Grade A evidence

Siniša Krznar. and Željka Bedić, „Prilog poznavanju nasilja u kasnosrednjovjekovnom Ivanju (grobovi 202 i 204)“ [A contribution to the study of violence in late medieval Ivanec (graves 202 and 204)], *Prilozi Instituta za Arheologiju* 27:1 (2010): 225-240



#### **Lob.879**

**Site:** Holy Mother of God Church - Lobor

**Date:** late 12<sup>th</sup> – mid 13<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Rock-cut pit

**Position:** Prone bent

**Orientation:** NW-SE

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position: Head and torso prone, legs bent on the side

**Comments:** Associated in a section with burials on the side – all, including this one, of people with leprosy (info by Z. Bedić). Grade A- evidence (for now)

Krešimir Filipec, “Pokopi u zgrčenom i poluzgrčenom položaju na groblju uz crkve Majke Božije Gorske u Loboru” [Burials in flexed and semiflexed position in the churchyard cemetery of Holy Mother of God in Lobor] In: *Groblja i pogrebni običaji u srednjem i ranom novom vijeku na prostoru sjeverne Hrvatske* [Graves and funerary rites in the medieval and early modern period in northern Croatia] eds. Siniša Krznar et al.



(Zagreb: Institute for Archaeology, 2016), 49-56



#### **MkBr.10**

**Site:** Maklinovo Brdo

**Date:** late 8<sup>th</sup> – mid 9<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** pit with partial stone structure to NW

**Position:** Supine extended (b. is 0.3m above a.)

**Orientation:** a.NW-SE b.SE-NE

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** a.male b.female

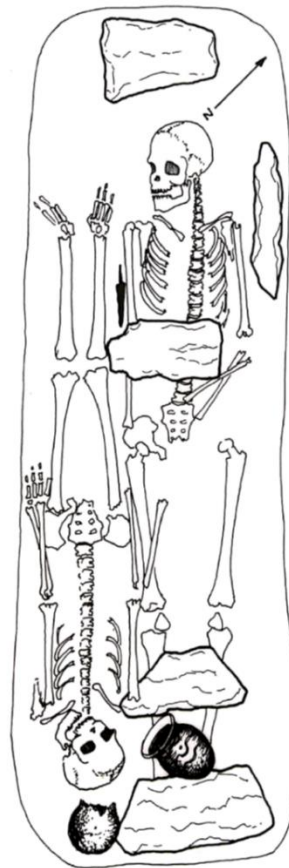
**Grave goods:** Iron knife by the right arm of the male, redish-brown pot with incised wave decoration by the feet of the male, grey pot by the head of the female

**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Large stone slabs on the abdomen, lower legs and feet of the male individual

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

Janko Belošević, *Starohrvatsko groblje na Maklinovu brdu u selu Kašiću kod Zadra* [Old Croatian cemetery in Maklinovo Brdo in the Kašić village near Zadar] (Split: Muzej hrvatskih arheoloških spomenika, 2010).



#### **MkBr.44**

**Site:** Maklinovo Brdo

**Date:** late 8<sup>th</sup> – mid 9<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** pit with partial stone structure

**Position:** Supine extended

**Orientation:** W'E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** female

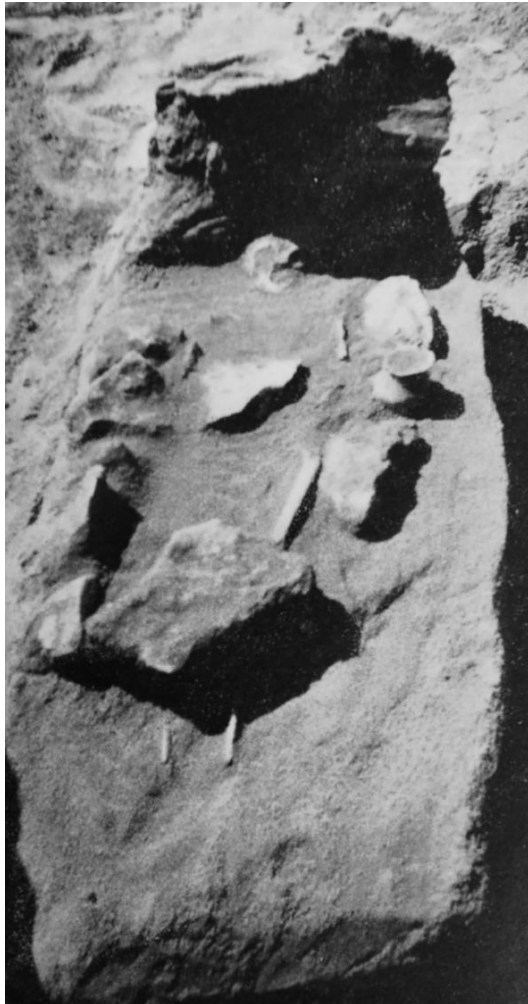
**Grave goods:** Dark brown pot to the left of the skeleton, between the stones from the grave structure

**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Two large stones on the abdomen and legs

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

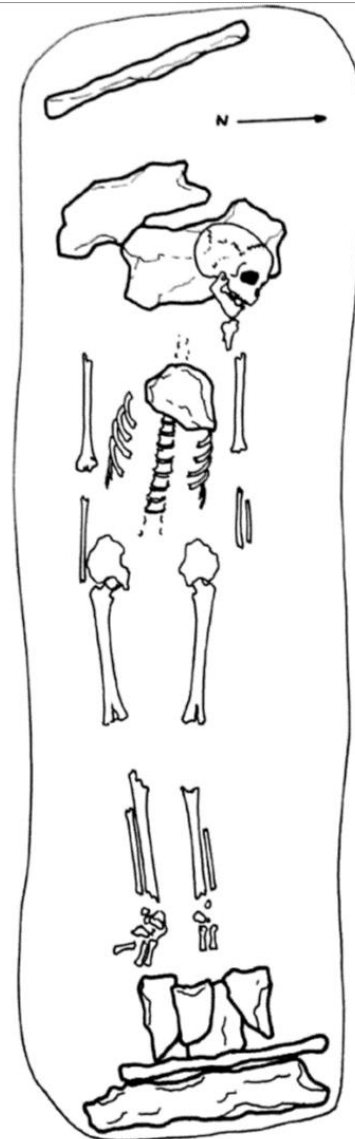
Janko Belošević, *Starohrvatsko groblje na Maklinovu brdu u selu Kašiću kod Zadra* [Old Croatian cemetery in Maklinovo Brdo in the Kašić village near Zadar] (Split: Muzej hrvatskih arheoloških spomenika, 2010).

**MkBr.45****Site:** Maklinovo Brdo**Date:** late 8<sup>th</sup> – mid 9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** pit with partial stone structure**Position:** Supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** female**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: One stone on the chest

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

Janko Belošević, *Starohrvatsko groblje na Maklinovu brdu u selu Kašiću kod Zadra* [Old Croatian cemetery in Maklinovo Brdo in the Kašić village near Zadar] (Split: Muzej hrvatskih arheoloških spomenika, 2010).



G - 45

**McB.195****Site:** Mejica - Buzet**Date:** mid- late 7<sup>th</sup> c..**Grave structure:** Stone cist**Position:** Supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** Iron knife, four iron arrows, bronze belt buckle, ornamented strap fittings, flint, iron bonds (chains) from the belt

**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Stone placed on the abdomen

**Comments:** The weighting down by stone is mentioned multiple times by the author elsewhere, but here is

attested only in the photo. Grade B evidence

Branko Marušić, „Prilog poznavanje ranosrednjovekovnje nekropole na Mejicu kod Buzeta” [A contribution to the study of the early medieval cemetery in Mejica near Buzet] *Jadranski zbornik* 11 (1981): 173-196.



### **Sni.10**

**Site:** Baram Sinj

**Date:** late 7<sup>th</sup>

**Grave structure:** Stone cist

**Position:** Supine

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Displaced cranium on top of the displaced right tibia

Mutilation: The right tibia is displaced to the NE corner

**Comments:** Likely reopened, Grade C evidence



Ante Milošević, „Srednjovekovna nekropola u Barama kod Sinja” [Medieval cemetery in Baram near Sinj], *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* 3: 14 (1984): 285-304.

### **SvBr.5**

**Site:** Sovinjsko Brdo-Mali Vrh

**Date:** late 7<sup>th</sup>

**Grave structure:** Partial stone cist

**Position:** Supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** infans

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Large stone slabs on the torso

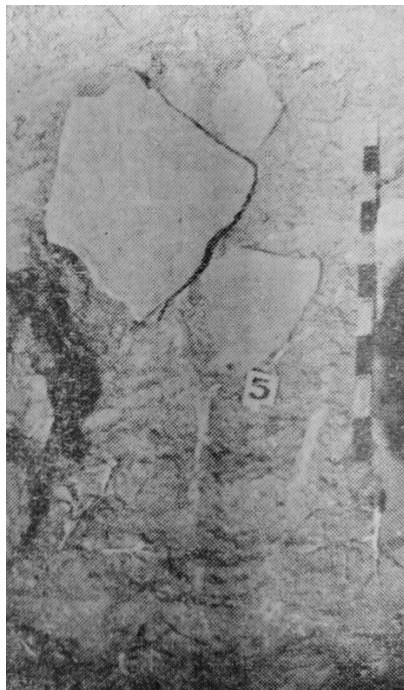
**Comments:** Possibly linked to the

stone cover, but the archaeologist

specifically points it is a fixation

(p.280). Dubious. Grade B evidence

Branko Marušić, „Tri ranosrednjovjekovna nalazišta u Istri“ [Three early medieval sites in Istria], *Jadranski zbornik* 6 (1966): 275-294.



### **SvBr.13**

**Site:** Sovinjsko Brdo-Mali Vrh

**Date:** late 7<sup>th</sup>

**Grave structure:** Rock-cut simple pit

**Position:** Supine extended

**Orientation:** SW-NE

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Large stone slab over the skull

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

Branko Marušić, „Tri ranosrednjovjekovna nalazišta u Istri“ [Three early medieval sites in Istria], *Jadranski zbornik* 6 (1966): 275-294.



### **SJR.12**

**Site:** Sv. Juraj from Radun near Kaštel-Stari

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Stone cist

**Position:** Supine extended, head prone

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** One earring

**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone and Decapitation: The skull is placed face-down

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Franko Oreb. “Srednjovekovno groblje oko crkve Sv. Jurja od Raduna kod Kaštel-Starom” [Medieval cemetery around the church St. Juraj from Radun near Kaštel-Stari], *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* 13 (1983):185-201.





12

**Trbl.a****Site:** Tribalj – Sveta Marina**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** Supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Large stone placed on the chest

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

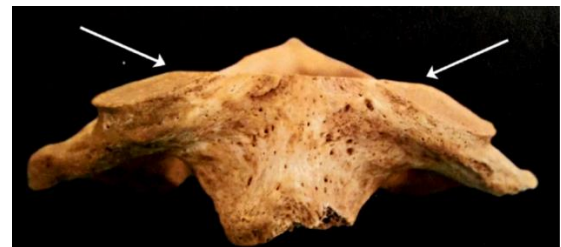
Željka Cetinić. *Stranče-Vinodol. Starohrvatske groblje na Gorici* [Stranče-Vinodol. Old Croatian cemetery in Gorica] (Rijeka: Pomorski i povjesni muzej Hrvatskog primorja, 2011)

**Udb.10****Site:** Udbina – cathedral St. Jakob**Date:** late 14<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> c. (late 15<sup>th</sup> ?)**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** Supine**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** juvenis II/adultus I (20-24 yrs)**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Missing skull and the atlas, cut marks on the cervical vertebrae

**Comments:** Associated with the battle of Krbavsko pole (1493) Grade A evidence

Mario Šlaus, *Bioarheologija. Demografija, zdravlje, trauma i prehrana starohrvatskih populacija* [Bioarchaeology. Demography, health, trauma, and diet of the old Croatian population] (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2006).

**Udb.15****Site:** Udbina – cathedral St. Jakob**Date:** late 14<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> c. (late 15<sup>th</sup> ?)**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** Supine**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** adultus (30-34)**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

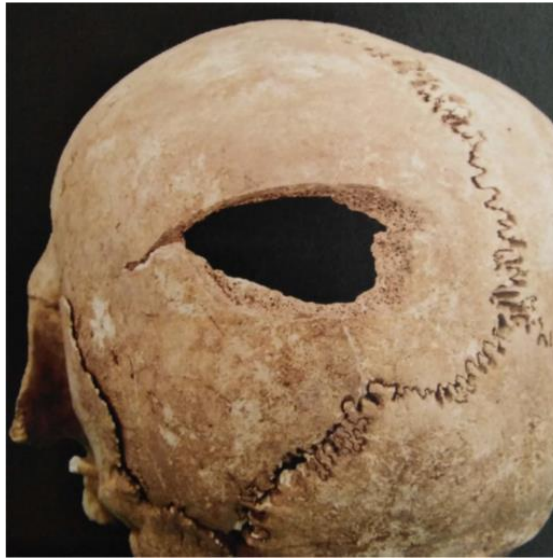
Decapitation: Peri mortem cuts on the skull and the spine, the skull was present but the position is unclear

**Comments:** Associated with the battle of Krbavsko pole (1493); Two blows were needed for the decapitation.

Grade A- evidence

Mario Šlaus, *Bioarheologija. Demografija, zdravlje, trauma i prehrana starohrvatskih populacija* [Bioarchaeology. Demography,

health, trauma, and diet of the old Croatian population] (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2006).



#### **VIMI.21**

**Site:** Veli Mlun

**Date:** late 8th

**Grave structure:** Cist

**Position:** Supine

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Partial burning of the body

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Branko Marušić. Istra i Sjevernojadranski prostor u ranom srednjem veku (materialna kultura od 7-11. stoleća). *Monografije i katalozi* 4 [Istria and the north-Adriatic region in the early Middle Ages (material culture from the 7<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries). Monographs and catalogues 4] (Pula: Arheološki muzej Istre, 1995).

Branko Marušić, "Nekropole VII. i VIII. stoljeća u Istri" [Cemeteries from the 7th and 8th centuries in Istria], *Arheološki vjesnik* 18 (1967): 333-348.

#### **VIMI.89**

**Site:** Veli Mlun

**Date:** late 8th

**Grave structure:** Cist

**Position:** Supine

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Skull under the pelvis

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Branko Marušić. Istra i Sjevernojadranski prostor u ranom srednjem veku (materialna kultura od 7-11. stoleća). *Monografije i katalozi* 4 [Istria and the north-Adriatic region in the early Middle Ages (material culture from the 7<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries). Monographs and catalogues 4] (Pula: Arheološki muzej Istre, 1995).

Branko Marušić, "Nekropole VII. i VIII. stoljeća u Istri" [Cemeteries from the 7th and 8th centuries in Istria], *Arheološki vjesnik* 18 (1967): 333-348.

#### **VIV.22**

**Site:** Velištak-Velim

**Date:** late 7<sup>th</sup> – early 9<sup>th</sup>

**Grave structure:** Stone cist

**Position:** Supine

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** adultus (30-40yrs)

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Fatal peri mortem cutting trauma through the left scapula, T2 and left rib cage

**Comments:** Growing number of such observations, little in archaeological

context too. Buried otherwise regularly. Grade B evidence  
 Radomir Jurić, „Ranosrednjovekovno groblje u Velimu kod Benkovca” [Early medieval cemetery in Velim near Benkovac], *Diadora* 22 (2007): 217-234  
 Mario Šlaus, Mario Novak, Željka Bedić, and Davor Strinović, “Bone fractures as indicators of intentional violence in the eastern adriatic from the antique to the late medieval period (2nd–16th century AD),” *American journal of physical anthropology* 149:1 (2012): 26-38.

### **VLB.60**

**Site:** Vukovar – Lijeva Bara

**Date:** 10-11<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** flexed lateral

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** juvenis II (15-18yrs)

**Sex:** female

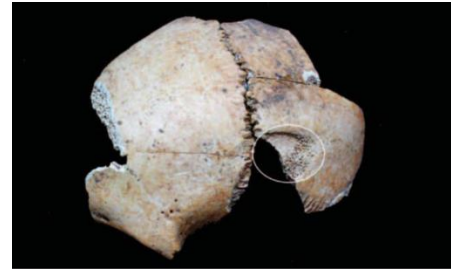
**Grave goods:** Bronze circlet under the head, two bronze rings on each hand, fragmented grey-brown pottery vessel by the legs

**Description of deviant practice:**

Other/Attempted decapitation: Buried on the side with fatal incised cuts on the skull

**Comments:** Tucker’s Type 6 or 7. Leprocy (aDNA evidence), information by Ž. Bedić. Grade A-evidence

Željko Demo, *Ranosrednjovekovno groblje Bijelobrdsko culture: Vukovar-Lijeva Bara* [Early medieval cemetery of the Bjelo Brdo culture: Vukovar-Lijeva Bara] (Zagreb: Arheološki muzej u Zagrebu, 2009).



### **VLB.83**

**Site:** Vukovar – Lijeva Bara

**Date:** 10-11<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Supine, legs contracted

**Orientation:** NW-SE

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Poorly preserved skull placed in the arms

**Comments:** Possible mutilation due to poorly preserved upper chest, Grade C evidence

Željko Demo, *Ranosrednjovekovno groblje Bijelobrdsko culture: Vukovar-Lijeva Bara* [Early medieval cemetery of the Bjelo Brdo culture: Vukovar-Lijeva Bara] (Zagreb: Arheološki muzej u Zagrebu, 2009).



### **VLB.185**

**Site:** Vukovar – Lijeva Bara

**Date:** 10-11<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** Supine extended

**Orientation:** SW-NE

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Missing skull

**Comments:** Some disarticulation in the right chest area and the feet, Grade B evidence

Željko Demo, *Ranosrednjovekovno groblje Bijelobrdsko culture: Vukovar-Lijeva Bara* [Early medieval cemetery of the Bjelo Brdo culture: Vukovar-Lijeva Bara], (Zagreb: Arheološki muzej u Zagrebu, 2009).

**VLB.363****Site:** Vukovar – Lijeva Bara**Date:** 10-11<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** Supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** female?**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: The two tibiae are crossed

**Comments:** Probably reopened, as the lower legs must have decomposed at least partially, Grade B evidence

Željko Demo, *Ranosrednjovekovno groblje Bijelobrdsko culture: Vukovar-Lijeva Bara* [Early medieval cemetery of the Bjelo Brdo culture: Vukovar-Lijeva Bara] (Zagreb: Arheološki muzej u Zagrebu, 2009).

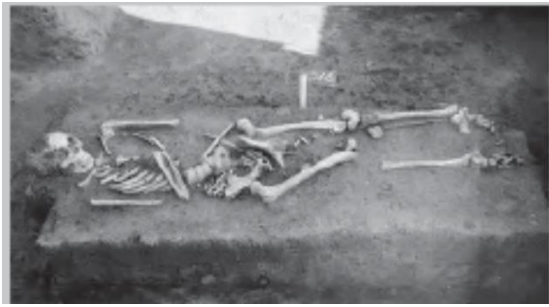
**VLB.376****Site:** Vukovar – Lijeva Bara**Date:** 10-11<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** Supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** female**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: The left radius and ulna are crossed on the pelvis

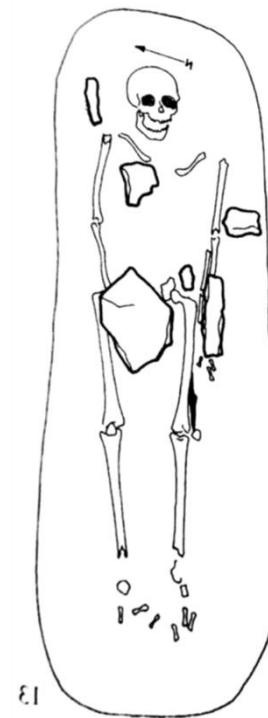
**Comments:** Probably reopened, Grade B evidence

Željko Demo, *Ranosrednjovekovno groblje Bijelobrdsko culture: Vukovar-Lijeva Bara* [Early medieval cemetery of the Bjelo Brdo culture: Vukovar-Lijeva Bara] (Zagreb: Arheološki muzej u Zagrebu, 2009).



**ZdrN.13****Site:** Ždrijac - Nin**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> – early 9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** pit with partial stone structure**Position:** Supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** maturus I**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

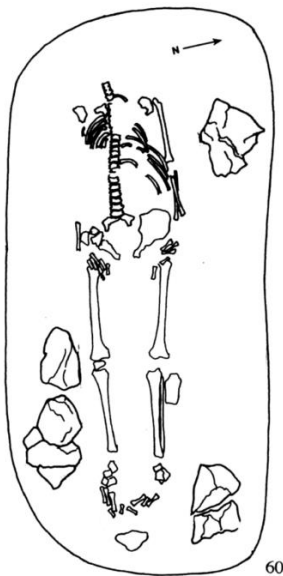
Fixation: Stones on the chest and the pelvis

**Comments:** Grade A- evidenceJanko Belošević, *Starohrvatsko groblje na Ždrijacu u Ninu* [Old Croatian cemetery in Ždrijac in Nin] (Zadar: Arheološki muzej Zadar, 2007).**ZdrN.60****Site:** Ždrijac - Nin**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> – early 9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** pit with partial stone structure**Position:** Supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Missing skull

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

Janko Belošević, *Starohrvatsko groblje na Ždrijacu u Ninu* [Old Croatian cemetery in Ždrijac in Nin] (Zadar: Arheološki muzej Zadar, 2007).



#### **ZdrN.77**

**Site:** Ždrijac - Nin

**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> – early 9<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** oval pit

**Position:** Supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

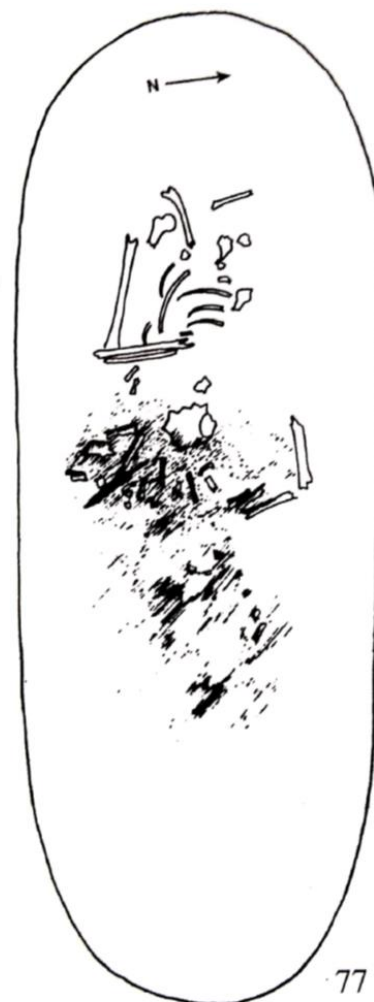
**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Missing skull

Mutilation: Burned lower body

**Comments:** Described as ‘partial cremation’ (p.280). Not part of the Ždrijac-west main cemetery. Grade B evidence

Janko Belošević, *Starohrvatsko groblje na Ždrijacu u Ninu* [Old Croatian cemetery in Ždrijac in Nin] (Zadar: Arheološki muzej Zadar, 2007).



#### **ZdrN.237**

**Site:** Ždrijac - Nin

**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> – early 9<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** oval pit

**Position:** Supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** maturus I

**Sex:** female

**Grave goods:** Bronze ring on the right hand, necklace of 11 dark blue pearls on the neck area, two silver earrings by the skull

**Description of deviant practice:**

**Fixation:** Large stone on the abdomen and pelvis

**Comments:** Grade A- evidence

Janko Belošević, *Starohrvatsko groblje na Ždrijacu u Ninu* [Old Croatian cemetery in Ždrijac in Nin] (Zadar: Arheološki muzej Zadar, 2007).



G-237



### **ZdrN.278**

**Site:** Ždrijac - Nin

**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> – early 9<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** pit with partial stone structure on the narrow sides

**Position:** Supine, knees bent

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** senilis

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

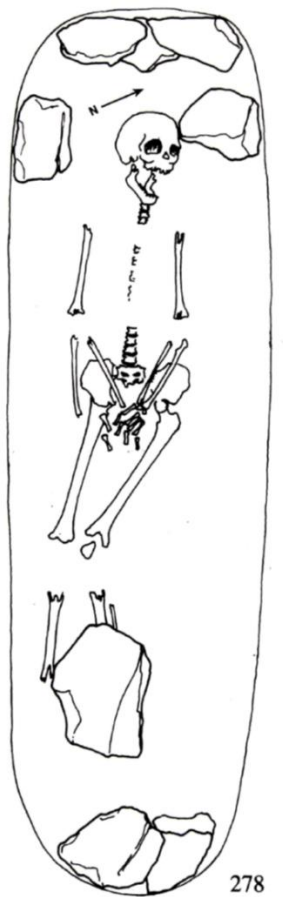
**Description of deviant practice:**

**Fixation:** Large stone on the legs

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

Janko Belošević, *Starohrvatsko groblje na Ždrijacu u Ninu* [Old Croatian cemetery in Ždrijac in Nin] (Zadar: Arheološki muzej Zadar, 2007).



**Zmn.207****Site:** Žminj**Date:** late 9<sup>th</sup> – early 10<sup>th</sup>**Grave structure:** Stone cist**Position:** Supine, double superimposed (a.below, b. top)**Orientation:** W-E (skull of a. E-W)**Age:** a. juvenis b. N/A**Sex:** a. female b. male**Grave goods:** Two silver earrings and bronze ring associated with the remains of 207a**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Complete skull of a. placed on top of the chest of b. and oriented in opposition

**Comments:** Grade C evidenceBranko Marušić, *Starohrvatska nekropola u Žminju* [Old Croatian cemetery in Žminj] (Pula: Arheološki muzej Istre, 1987).

## Deviant burials from Romania

**Brl1.9****Site:** Braila 1**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: missing complete left arm and femur

**Comments:** Grade C evidenceIonel Candea, *Braila. Origini si evolutie pana la jumatarea secolului al XVI-lea* [Braila.Origins and evolution until the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century] (Braila: Editura Istros Muzeul Braila, 1995)**Brl1.16****Site:** Braila 1**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** adultus II**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: only skull

**Comments:** Trepanation. Grade B evidenceIonel Candea, *Braila. Origini si evolutie pana la jumatarea secolului al XVI-lea* [Braila.Origins and evolution until the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century] (Braila: Editura Istros Muzeul Braila, 1995)

**Br11.44****Site:** Braila 1**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Missing right arm below the elbow

**Comments:** Grade C evidenceIonel Candea, *Braila. Origini si evolutie pana la jumatatea secolului al XVI-lea* [Braila.Origins and evolution until the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century] (Braila: Editura Istros Muzeul Braila, 1995)**Br11.49****Site:** Braila 1**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: only skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidenceIonel Candea, *Braila. Origini si evolutie pana la jumatatea secolului al XVI-lea* [Braila.Origins and evolution until the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century] (Braila: Editura Istros Muzeul Braila, 1995)**CpV.48****Site:** Capuil Viilor (Histria)**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** prone, left leg under the right**Orientation:** NE-SW**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** Pottery by the skull**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone

**Comments:** Possibly tied limbs, Grade B evidenceVlad Zirra, "Biritual cemetery of the early feudal age in Capuil Viilor – Histria," *Dacia NS* 7 (1963): 355-412Uwe Fiedler, *Studien zu Gräberfeldern des 6. Bis 9. Jahrhunderts an der unteren Donau*. (Bonn: Dr. Rudolph Habelt GmbH, 1992)**CpV.182****Site:** Capuil Viilor (Histria)**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** E-W**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** Animal bone on the pelvis**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: stones on the legs and the left arm

**Comments:** Grade B evidenceVlad Zirra, "Biritual cemetery of the early feudal age in Capuil Viilor – Histria," *Dacia NS* 7 (1963): 355-412Uwe Fiedler, *Studien zu Gräberfeldern des 6. Bis 9. Jahrhunderts an der unteren Donau*. (Bonn: Dr. Rudolph Habelt GmbH, 1992).

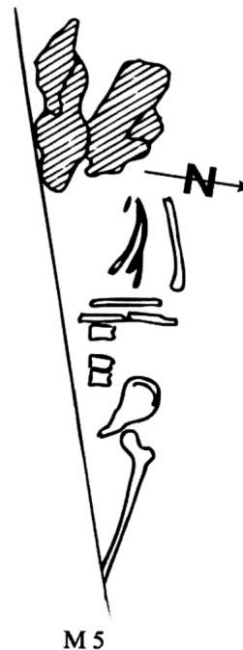
**Cns.110****Site:** Constanța Castelu**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** stone cist 60x65cm**Position:** supine**Orientation:** E-W**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** Multiple fragments from a jar with incised linear decoration**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: only skull

**Comments:** Unburned, within cremation cemetery. Grade C evidence  
Adrian Radulescu and Nicolae Harțuche. *Cimiturul feudal-timpuriu de la Castelu* [Cemetery from the feudal period in the Castel] (Constanța: Muzeul Regional de arheologie Dobrogea, 1967)**Drvt.5****Site:** Dervent**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** adultus**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: missing skull;

Fixation: 3 large slabs instead of the head

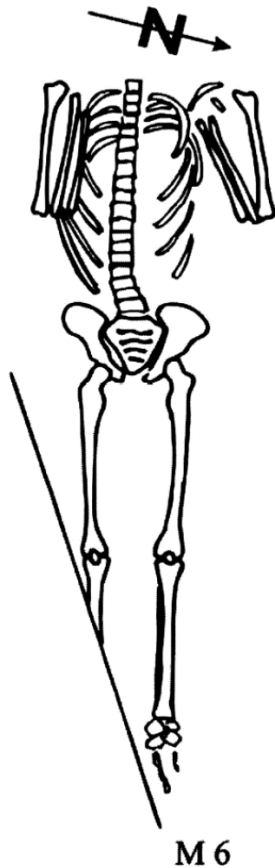
**Comments:** Grade B evidenceOana Damian and Gabriel Vasile, "Vestigii arheologice descoperite pe dealul Dervent (jud. Constanța)" [Archaeological remains discovered on the Dervent site (Constanța district)], in: *Between the steppe and the empire* eds. A Magureanu and E. Gall (Bucharest: Institute of Archaeology, 2010)**Drvt.6****Site:** Dervent**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** adultus**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: missing skull

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

Oana Damian and Gabriel Vasile, "Vestigii arheologice descoperite pe dealul Dervent (jud.

Constanța)” [Archaeological remains discovered on the Dervent site (Constanta district)], in: *Between the steppe and the empire* eds.A Magureanu and E.Gall (Bucharest: Institute of Archaeology, 2010)



#### **Drvt.19**

**Site:** Dervent

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** adultus

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: missing skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Oana Damian and Gabriel Vasile, “Vestigii arheologice descoperite pe dealul Dervent (jud. Constanța)” [Archaeological remains discovered on the Dervent site (Constanta district)], in: *Between the steppe and the empire* eds.A Magureanu and E.Gall (Bucharest: Institute of Archaeology, 2010)

#### **Drvt.24**

**Site:** Dervent

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** maturus II

**Sex:** female

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Missing and displaced arm.

Left radius placed to the right of the head.

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

Oana Damian and Gabriel Vasile, “Vestigii arheologice descoperite pe dealul Dervent (jud. Constanța)” [Archaeological remains discovered on the Dervent site (Constanta district)], in: *Between the steppe and the empire* eds.A Magureanu and E.Gall (Bucharest: Institute of Archaeology, 2010)



#### **GCds.31**

**Site:** Gornea – Caunita de sus

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> c.



**Grave structure:** simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Arm bones are displaced on the torso and pelvis

**Comments:** post mortem intervention, Grade C evidence

Dumitru Țicu and Gheorghe Lazarovici, *Gornea. Din arheologia unui sat medieval din Clisura Dunarii* [On the archaeology of a medieval village from the Danubian Gorge] (Resita: Editura Banatica, 1996)



#### **GCds.49**

**Site:** Gornea – Caunita de sus

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** NW-SE

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** Coin in the mouth

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Series of violent trauma and missing arm bones

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Dumitru Țicu and Gheorghe Lazarovici, *Gornea. Din arheologia unui sat medieval din Clisura Dunarii* [On the archaeology of a medieval village from the Danubian Gorge] (Resita: Editura Banatica, 1996)

#### **GPzr.1**

**Site:** Gornea – Pazarishte

**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** simple pit

**Position:** supine extended, head prone

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

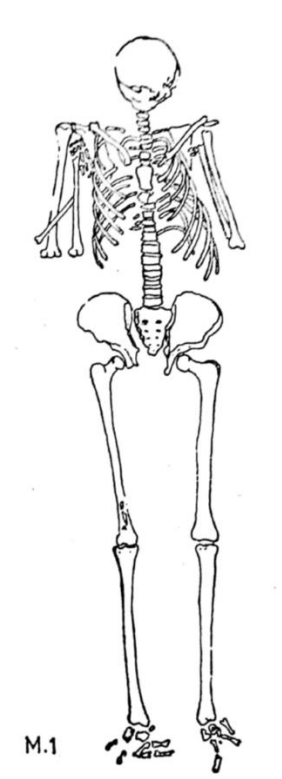
**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation + Prone: skull in prone position

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Dumitru Țicu and Gheorghe Lazarovici, *Gornea. Din arheologia unui sat medieval din Clisura Dunarii* [On the archaeology of a medieval village from the Danubian Gorge] (Resita: Editura Banatica, 1996)



**GTrmr****Site:** Gornea – Tarmuri**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit by pottery kiln**Position:** prone extended**Orientation:** N-S**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Ilie Uzum, “Locuirea feudală timpurie de la Gornea – Tarmuri (jud. Caras – Severin)” [Site from the feudal period in Gornea-Tarmuri in the Caras-Severin district], *Banatica* 4 (1977): 215-222

**GTcv.23****Site:** Gornea – Tircheviste**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** NW-SE**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** Round ferrous buckle on the pelvis**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: missing skull;

Mutilation: missing right arm

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

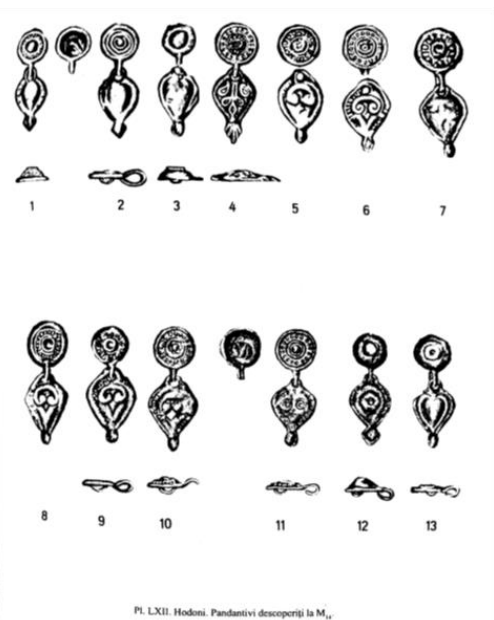
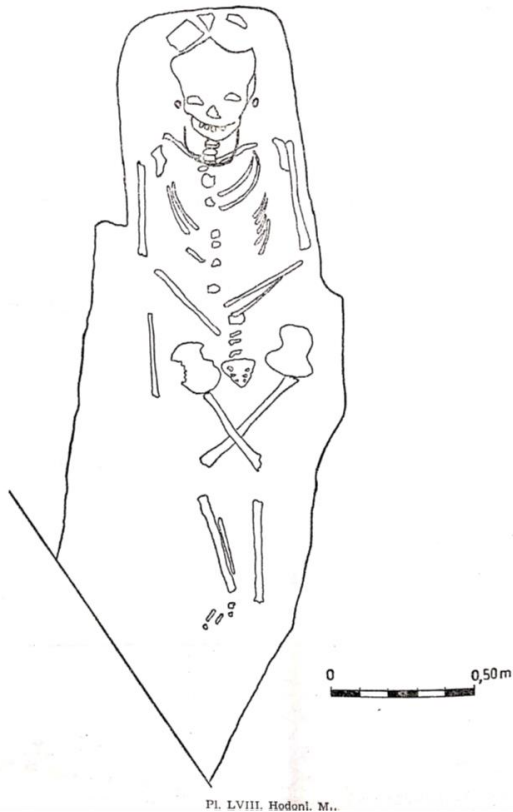
Dumitru Țeicu and Gheorghe Lazarovici, *Gornea. Din arheologia unui sat medieval din Clisura Dunării* [On the archaeology of a medieval village from the Danubian Gorge] (Resita: Editura Banatica, 1996)

**Hdn.14****Site:** Hodoni**Date:** late 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** senilis I**Sex:** female**Grave goods:** Two S-shaped earrings, glass beads facial decoration?, necklace from twisted wire with 13 double pendants**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: femurs are X-crossed and left fibula is displaced by the pelvis

**Comments:** post mortem intervention, Grade B evidence

Florin Drasovean, Dumitru Țeicu and Marius Muntean, *Hodoni. Locuirile neolitice târzie și necropola medievală timpurie* [Hodoni. A Neolithic settlement and a medieval cemetery] (Resita: Muzeul de istoria al jud. Caras-Severin, 1996)

**IIdo.2****Site:** Ilidia – Dealul Oblita**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Skull together with atlas and axis vertebrae placed between the arms on the abdomen

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Ilie Uzum and Gheorghe Lazarovici, "Așezarea feudală Ilidia în lumina izvoarelor scrise și a cercetărilor arheologice" [The feudal settlement of Ilidia in the light of written sources and archaeological research], *Banatica* 1 (1971)

**Isc.60****Site:** Isaccea**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Ioan Vasiliu, "Cimitirul feudal-timpuriu de la Isaccea" [A cemetery from the feudal period in Isaccea], *Peuce* 9 (1984): 107–141.

**Isc.157****Site:** Isaccea**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** bronze ring in the grave fill**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

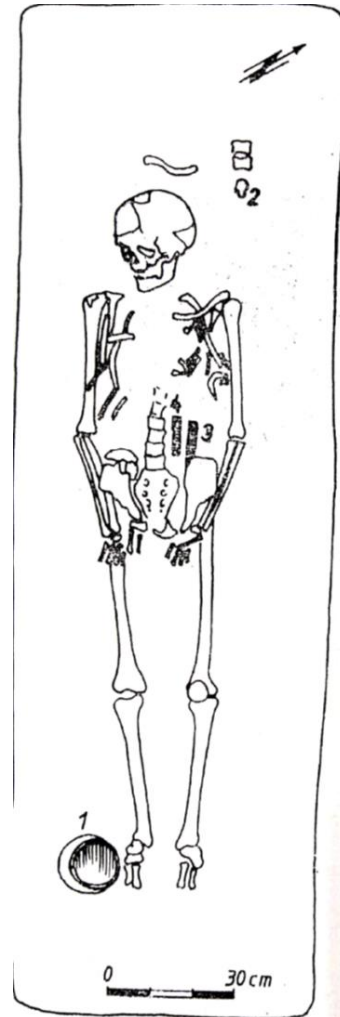
**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Ioan Vasiliu, "Cimitirul feudal-timpuriu de la Isaccea" [A cemetery from the feudal period in Isaccea], *Peuce* 9 (1984), 107–141.



**Izv.24****Site:** Izvoru**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** NW-SE**Age:** maturus (40-45 yrs)**Sex:** female**Grave goods:** jar by the right foot; two silver earrings; iron ring; decorated needle-holder with a needle**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: the right clavicle placed north of the skull, two vertebrae displaced not far from clavicle

**Comments:** Grade B+ evidence; post mortem interventionBucur Mitrea, "Necropola feudală timpurie de la Izvoru-Giurgiu, Județul Ilfov (1970)" [A cemetery from the feudal period in Izvoru-Giurgiu, Ilfov district (1970)], *Materiale și cercetări arheologice* 10 (1973): 209-219.**Izv.47****Site:** Izvoru

**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** simple pit 1,35x0,55 m

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** juvenis II (15 yrs)

**Sex:** N/A

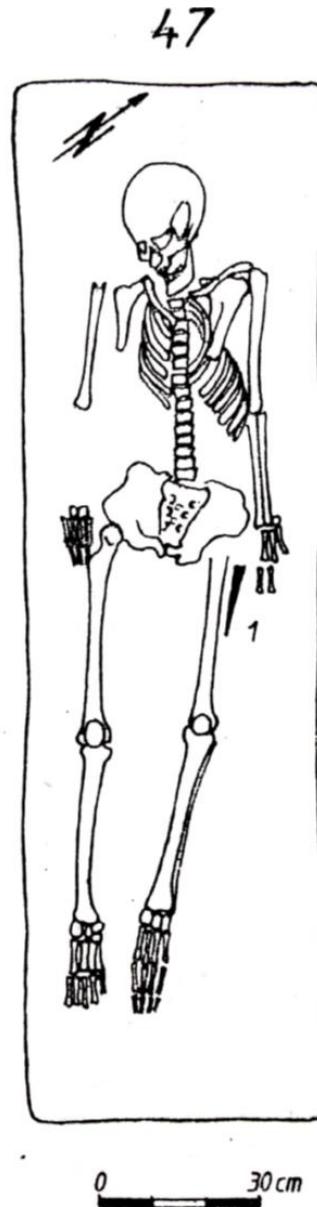
**Grave goods:** iron knife by the left femur

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: missing right radius and ulna

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

Bucur Mitrea, “Necropola feudală timpurie de la Izvoru-Giurgiu, Județul Ilfov (1970)” [A cemetery from the feudal period in Izvoru-Giurgiu, Ilfov district (1970)], *Materiale și cercetări arheologice* 10 (1973): 209-219.



#### **Izv.64**

**Site:** Izvoru

**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** senilis (60-65 yrs)

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

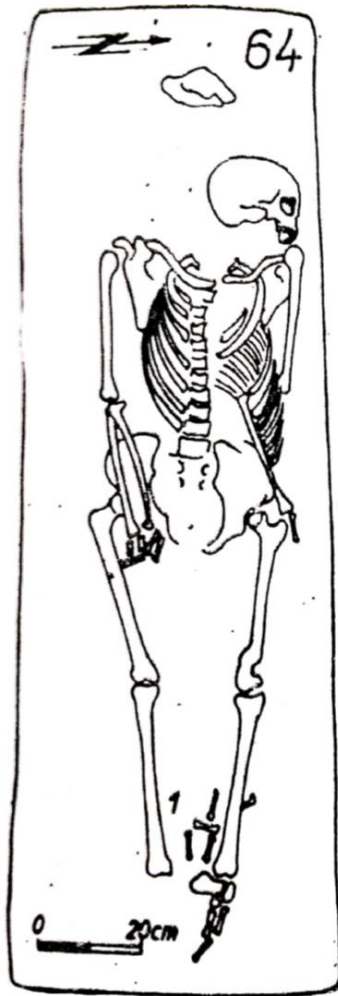
**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: the bones of the right foot are placed between the legs

**Comments:** Grade B+ evidence

Bucur Mitrea, “Necropola feudală timpurie de la Izvoru-Giurgiu, Județul Ilfov (1970)” [A cemetery from the feudal period in Izvoru-

Giurgiu, Ilfov district (1970)], *Materiale și cercetări arheologice* 10 (1973): 209-219.



#### **Izv.234**

**Site:** Izvoru

**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** simple pit

**Position:** on the side/prone, bent at knees

**Orientation:** S-N

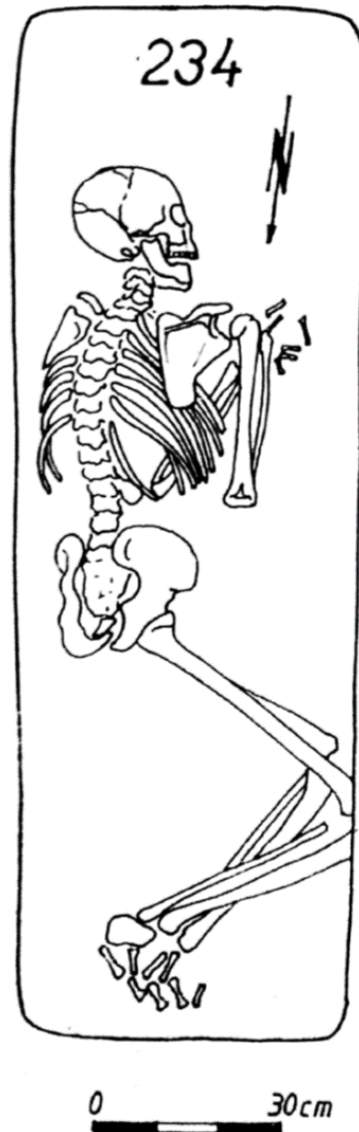
**Age:** juvenis II (16 yrs)

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:** Prone position?

**Comments:** Grade B evidence  
Possibly tied limbs, alternatively praying position. Likely lateral  
Bucur Mitrea, “Necropola feudală timpurie de la Izvoru-Giurgiu, Județul Ilfov (1970)” [A cemetery from the feudal period in Izvoru-Giurgiu, Ilfov district (1970)], *Materiale și cercetări arheologice* 10 (1973): 209-219.



#### **Izv.327**

**Site:** Izvoru

**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** simple pit

**Position:** prone extended

**Orientation:** W-E

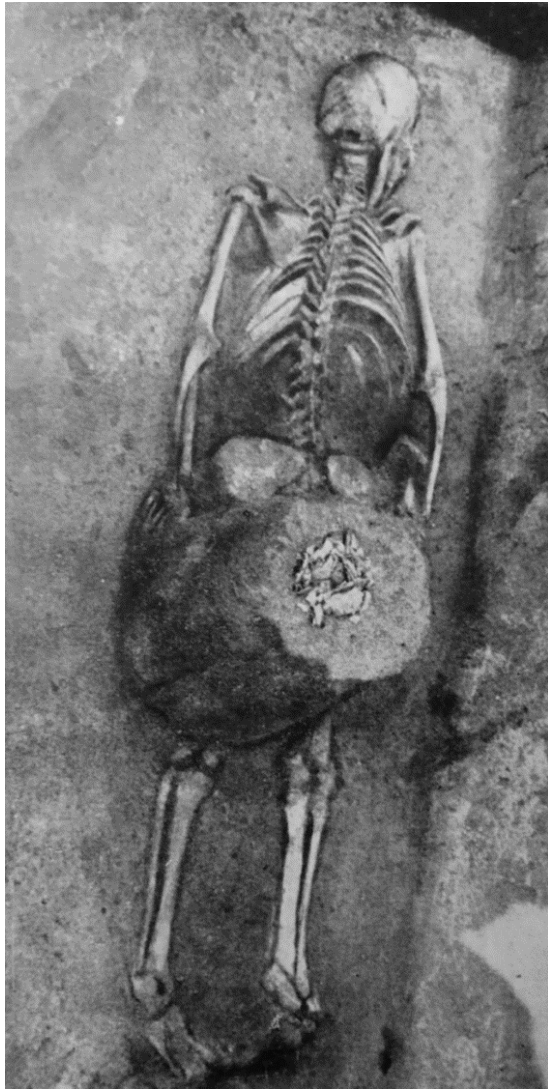
**Age:** matusus (40 yrs)

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:** Prone

**Comments:** Grade A evidence  
Bucur Mitrea, “Necropola feudală timpurie de la Izvoru-Giurgiu, Județul Ilfov (1970)” [A cemetery from the feudal period in Izvoru-Giurgiu, Ilfov district (1970)], *Materiale și cercetări arheologice* 10 (1973): 209-219.

**Plt.344****Site:** Platonesti**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine (on the back)**Orientation:** N/A**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Coman Radu and Matei Gheorghe, "Platonești, Comuna: Săveni, Județ: Ialomița," *Cronica cercetărilor arheologice Campania 1998* (1999), 86

Luca Cristian and Dragos Mandescu, *Rituri și ritualuri funerare în spațiul extracarpatic în secolele VIII-X* [Rites and funerary rituals in the extra-Carpathic region in the 8th-10th centuries] (Braila: Istros, 2001)

**PsBc****Site:** Pusta Bucova**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** ceramic vessel, unclear pit**Position:** N/A**Orientation:** N/A**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** Pot with incised linear decoration**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Inside the pot was found unburnt fragmented human skull

**Comments:** isolated find; Grade C evidence

Adrian Bejan and Mircea Mare, "Dudeștii-Vechi - Pusta Bucova. Necropola și morminte de înhumare din secolele 6-12. 1." [Dudeștii Vechi - Pusta Bucova. The inhumation graves and necropolis from the 6th-12th centuries. 1]. *Analele Banatului* SN 5 (1997): 139-158

**Shl.20****Site:** Sihleanu**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine ('vertical, on the back')**Orientation:** N/A**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull



**Comments:** Grade C evidence  
Nicolae Hartuche and Florian Anastasiu,  
“Săpăturile arheologice de la Sihleanu,  
comuna Scorțaru Nou, Județul Brăila”  
[Archaeological excavations in Sihleanu,  
village Scortaru Nou, Braila district], *Istros* 1  
(1980): 93-109

### SpV.1

**Site:** Sopotu Vechi Marvila

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** simple pit

**Position:** supine

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull + vertebrae

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

Dumitru Țicu, “Necropola de la Sopotu  
Vechi” [The cemetery of Sopotu Vechi] in  
*Studii Istorice* by Dumitru Țicu (Timisoara:  
Editura Mirton, 2003), 23-60.

### SpV.9

**Site:** Sopotu Vechi Marvila

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Missing skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Dumitru Țicu, “Necropola de la Sopotu  
Vechi” [The cemetery of Sopotu Vechi] in  
*Studii Istorice* by Dumitru Țicu (Timisoara:  
Editura Mirton, 2003), 23-60

### SpV.35

**Site:** Sopotu Vechi Marvila

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** stone cist

**Position:** on the side

**Orientation:** W-E, face to the N

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Dumitru Țicu, “Necropola de la Sopotu  
Vechi” [The cemetery of Sopotu Vechi] in  
*Studii Istorice* by Dumitru Țicu (Timisoara:  
Editura Mirton, 2003), 23-60

### Slt.17

**Site:** Sultana

**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** simple pit

**Position:** supine

**Orientation:** N/A

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

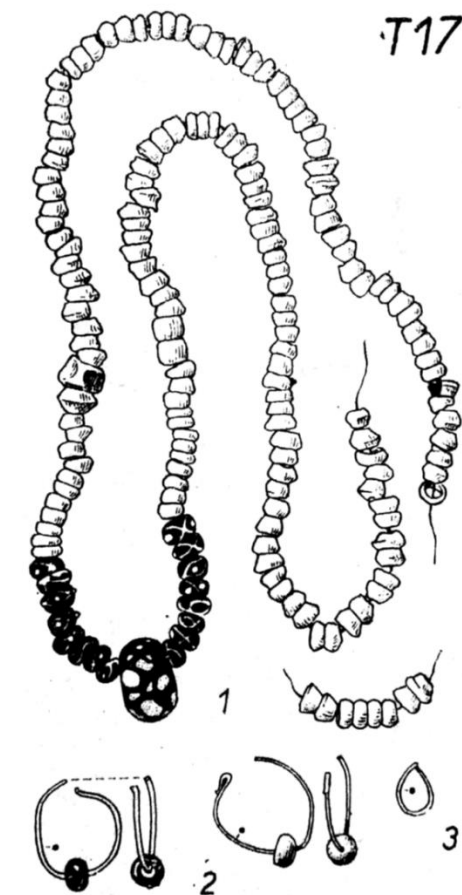
**Grave goods:** 1 gold earring, 1 silver  
earring and necklace

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

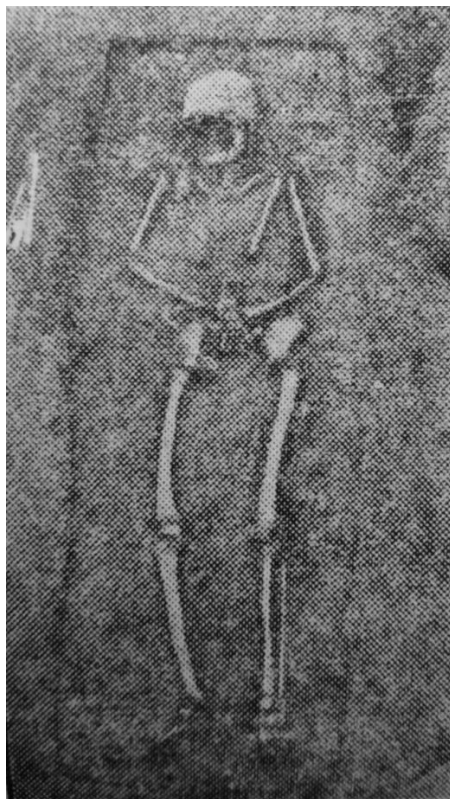
**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Bucur Mitrea, “La nécropole birituelle de  
Sultana. Résultats et problèmes,” *Dacia NS* 32  
(1988) : 91–139.



**Slt.47****Site:** Sultana**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine**Orientation:** N-S**Age:** N/A**Sex:** female**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

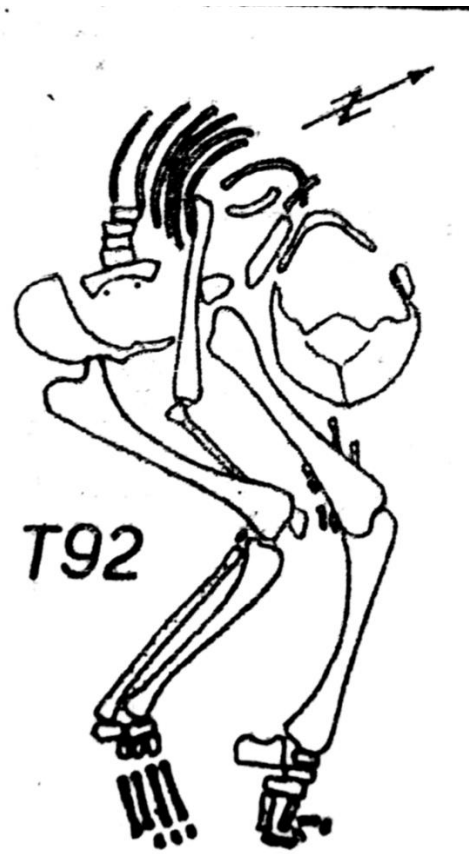
Mutilation: Long human bone placed from the humerus towards the spine

**Comments:** Grade C evidenceBucur Mitrea, “La nécropole birituelle de Sultana. Résultats et problèmes,” *Dacia NS* 32 (1988) : 91–139.**Slt.60****Site:** Sultana**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** N-S**Age:** N/A**Sex:** female**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Missing skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidenceBucur Mitrea, “La nécropole birituelle de Sultana. Résultats et problèmes,” *Dacia NS* 32 (1988) : 91–139.**Slt.92****Site:** Sultana**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** flexed**Orientation:** NW-SE**Age:** 40-45 yrs**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Unnatural angle of the skull to the W

**Comments:** Grade B evidence; We should consider the possibility for unrecorded injuries to the postcranial skeletonBucur Mitrea, “La nécropole birituelle de Sultana. Résultats et problèmes,” *Dacia NS* 32 (1988) : 91–139.**Tcl.26****Site:** Tichilesti-Tufesti

**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** simple pit

**Position:** vertical?

**Orientation:** N/A

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

**Comments:** Candea claims it is a child. Grade C evidence

Nicolae Hartuche, "Preliminarii la reporturiul arheologic al jud. Braila" [Preliminary archaeological reports from the Braila district]. *Istros* 1(1980): 281-354.

#### Deviant burials from Serbia

##### Ar.40(43)

**Site:** Aradac

**Date:** early 7<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** prone, right arm under the body

**Orientation:** NE-SW

**Age:** adultus?

**Sex:** female

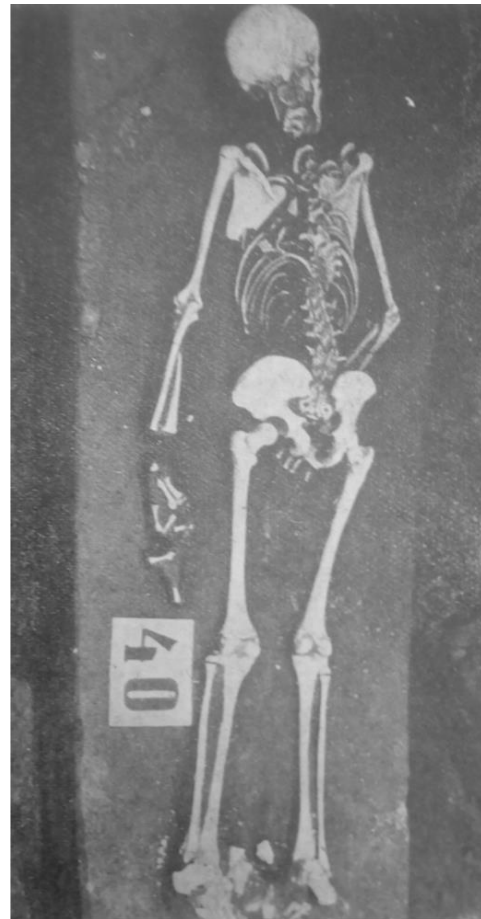
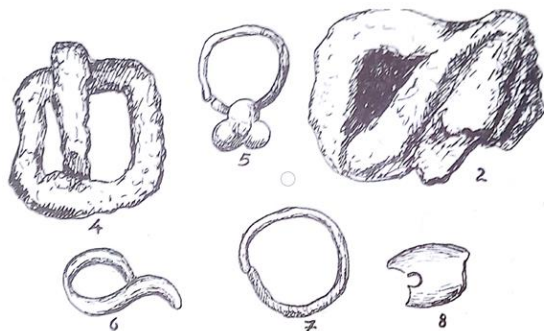
**Grave goods:** two bronze earrings by the skull, gilded bronze object and bronze hoop by the occipital bone, bronze button between the ribs, and iron buckle under the pelvis

**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position

**Comments:** Grade A- evidence

Sandor Nad, „Некропола код Арадца из раног средњег века” [The cemetery from the early Middle Ages near Aradac], *Рађ војвођанских музеја* 8 (1959): 45-102.



##### BcT.13

**Site:** Bačka Topola

**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Rectangular pit, rectangular hollow surface filled with black soil in the NW end

**Position:** supine

**Orientation:** NW-SE

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: the skull is by the left foot.

Mutilation: The upper half of the body is disarticulated

**Comments:** Possible prone position of the skull; Grade B evidence

László Szekeres, "Necropolis from the Avar period at Bačka Topola" In: *Problemi Seobe Naroda u Karpatskoj kotlini* [Issues of the Migration Period in the Carpathian Basin] eds. Danica Dimitrijević et al. (Novi Sad: Matica Srpska, 1978), 157-162



**BcT.101****Site:** Bačka Topola**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Rectangular pit with postholes in the corners**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** NW-SE, skull SE-NW**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: the skull is on its right side and oriented towards SE in opposition to the skeleton

**Comments:** Grade B evidenceLászló Szekeres, "Necropolis from the Avar period at Bačka Topola" In: *Problemi Seobe Naroda u Karpatskoj kotlini* [Issues of the Migration Period in the Carpathian Basin] eds. Danica Dimitrijević et al. (Novi Sad: Matica Srpska, 1978), 157-162**BVH.3****Site:** Batajnica-Velika Humka**Date:** mid 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Perica Špehar and Nika Strugar Bevc] Перица Шпехар, Ника Стругар Бевц, Батајница Велика хумка. Раномађарска некропола [Batajnica Velika Humka. Early Magyar cemetery] (Belgrade: Muzej grada Beograda, 2016)

**BVH.4****Site:** Batajnica-Velika Humka**Date:** mid 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine

**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Perica Špehar and Nika Strugar Bevc]

Перица Шпехар, Ника Стругар Бевц,  
*Батајница Велика хумка. Раномађарска*  
*некропола* [Batajnica Velika Humka. Early  
Magyar cemetery]. Belgrade: Muzej grada  
Beograda (2016)**BVH.5****Site:** Batajnica-Velika Humka**Date:** mid 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Perica Špehar and Nika Strugar Bevc]

Перица Шпехар, Ника Стругар Бевц,  
*Батајница Велика хумка. Раномађарска*  
*некропола* [Batajnica Velika Humka. Early  
Magyar cemetery] (Belgrade: Muzej grada  
Beograda, 2016)**BVH.27****Site:** Batajnica-Velika Humka**Date:** mid 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Perica Špehar and Nika Strugar Bevc]

Перица Шпехар, Ника Стругар Бевц,  
*Батајница Велика хумка. Раномађарска*  
*некропола* [Batajnica Velika Humka. Early  
Magyar cemetery] (Belgrade: Muzej grada  
Beograda, 2016)**BVH.28****Site:** Batajnica-Velika Humka**Date:** mid 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Perica Špehar and Nika Strugar Bevc]

Перица Шпехар, Ника Стругар Бевц,  
*Батајница Велика хумка. Раномађарска*  
*некропола* [Batajnica Velika Humka. Early  
Magyar cemetery] (Belgrade: Muzej grada  
Beograda, 2016)**BVH.71****Site:** Batajnica-Velika Humka**Date:** mid 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** adultus**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**Mutilation: left tibia by the right foot.  
The right femur turned to the north,  
outwards from the body.**Comments:** probably post deposition  
intervention; Grade B evidence

[Perica Špehar and Nika Strugar Bevc]

Перица Шпехар, Ника Стругар Бевц,  
*Батајница Велика хумка. Раномађарска*  
*некропола* [Batajnica Velika Humka. Early  
Magyar cemetery] (Belgrade: Muzej grada  
Beograda, 2016)

**Bčj.20****Site:** Bečej – Pionirska ul.**Date:** late 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit, potentially covered with timber or animal skin (?)**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** female**Grave goods:** Black pot by the left foot, bronze earring by the left hand and the skull, bronze earring by the mandible, iron knife by the right femur, belt with multiple fittings, animal bones by the feet bones**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: The skull (and some vertebrae) is placed on the left femur

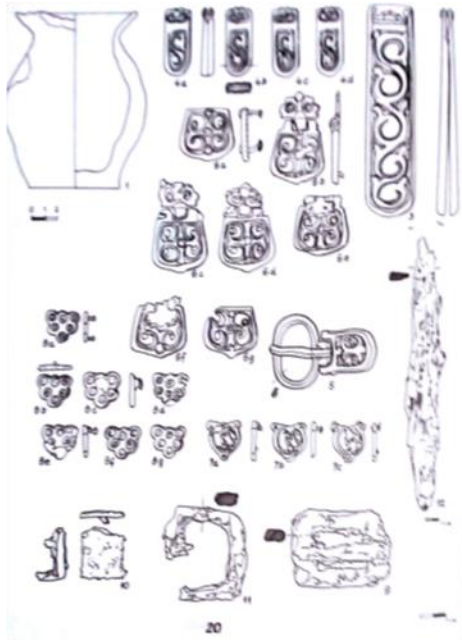
**Comments:** The head is placed there at the time of the funeral, most lavished grave in the Middle Avar cemetery; Grade A- evidenceBranislava Mikić Antonić, *Nekropola iz perioda avarske dominacije : lokalitet Pionirska ulica u Bečeju* [A cemetery from the period of the Avar domination: the Pionirska

street site in Bečej] (Bečej : Gradski muzej Bečej, 2012).

Information by Ksenia Đukić.



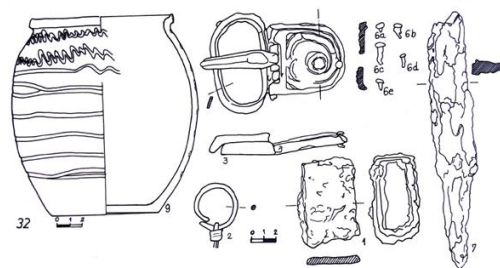


**Bčj.32****Site:** Bečej – Pionirska ul.**Date:** late 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** female**Grave goods:** Grey pot with incised linear decoration by the left leg, iron knife by the right arm, bronze belt buckle, iron nails, bronze earring and buttons**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: The cranium is placed on the left forearm

**Comments:** There were no cut marks on the skull. Additionally, later disturbances in the grave fill were recorded ONLY in the area of the head and left forearm, indicating post-humous displacement of the cranium; Grade A evidenceBranislava Mikić Antonić, *Nekropola iz perioda avarske dominacije : lokalitet Pionirska ulica u Bečeju* [A cemetery from the period of the Avar domination: the Pionirska street site in Bečej] (Bečej : Gradski muzej Bečej, 2012).

Information by Ksenia Đukić.

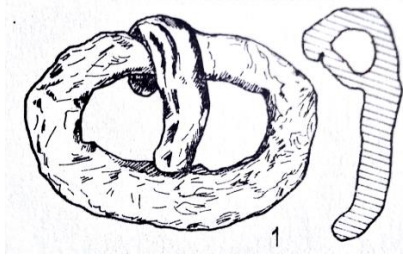
**Beo.1****Site:** Belgrade**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** SW-NE**Age:** N/A**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** Iron buckle by the left shoulder**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Right feet bones are under the right humerus

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Gordana Marjanović-Vujović] Гордана Марјановић-Вујовић, “Раносредњовековна некропола на Доњем граду Београдске тврђаве” [Early medieval cemetery in the

Lower City of the Belgrade fortress],  
Годишњак града Београда 36 (1989): 17-47



### **Beo.8**

**Site:** Belgrade

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** SW-NE

**Age:** adultus

**Sex:** N/A

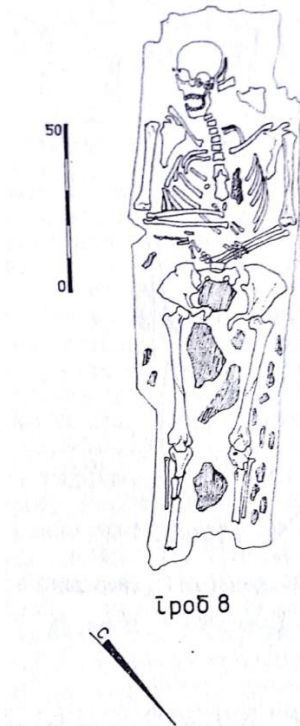
**Grave goods:** Sheep mandible to the left of the chest

**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Stones on the pelvis and between the legs

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Gordana Marjanović-Vujović] Гордана Марјановић-Вујовић, “Раносредњовековна некропола на Доњем граду Београдске тврђаве” [Early medieval cemetery in the Lower City of the Belgrade fortress],  
Годишњак града Београда 36 (1989): 17-47



### **Beo.35**

**Site:** Belgrade

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** SW-NE

**Age:** adultus

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Two stones on the skull and few smaller stones on the feet

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Gordana Marjanović-Vujović] Гордана Марјановић-Вујовић, “Раносредњовековна некропола на Доњем граду Београдске тврђаве” [Early medieval cemetery in the Lower City of the Belgrade fortress],  
Годишњак града Београда 36 (1989): 17-47

### **Bog.1**

**Site:** Bogojevo

**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Uneven pit with a niche

**Position:** prone bent

**Orientation:** Torso NW-SE, legs N-S

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** female

**Grave goods:** Fragmented black pot to the east, iron knife under the ribs by T11

**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position

**Comments:** Uneven depth of the grave pit, legs significantly deeper than the skull; Grade B evidence

[Pavle Velenrajter] Павле Веленрајтер, “Словенска некропола из VII-VIII века у Богојеву” (Претходни извештај о ископавањима у Богојеву од 28 маја до 10 јуна 1951 године) [Slavic cemetery from the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century in Bogojevo (Preliminary report on the excavations in Bogojevo from 28. May to 10. June 1951)], *Рад војвођанских музеја* 1 (1952): 135-143.

**Bog.3****Site:** Bogojevo**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** Fragmented bone tool and bronze object around the pelvis**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: The skull is under the pelvis

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Pavle Velenrajter] Павле Веленрајтер, "Словенска некропола из VII-VIII века у Богојеву (Претходни извештај о ископавањима у Богојеву од 28 маја до 10 јуна 1951 године)" [Slavic cemetery from the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century in Bogojevo (Preliminary report on the excavations in Bogojevo from 28. May to 10. June 1951), *Рад војвођанских музеја* 1 (1952): 135-143.

**Bog.6****Site:** Bogojevo**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine**Orientation:** NW-SE**Age:** N/A**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** iron buckle by the skull, iron arrowhead in the neck area, ornamented bone plate by the right humerus, iron knife by the right femur, animal bone on the knees, 21 bronze and bone fragments.

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Disarticulated upper half of the body

**Comments:** Done posthumously and intentionally, as suggested by the author; Grade C evidence

[Pavle Velenrajter] Павле Веленрајтер, "Извештај о ископавању аварске некрополе у Богојеву 1952. Године" [A report on the excavations of the Avar cemetery in Bogojevo in 1952], *Рад војвођанских музеја* 9 (1960): 176-185.

**Bog.13****Site:** Bogojevo**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine**Orientation:** NW-SE**Age:** N/A**Sex:** male

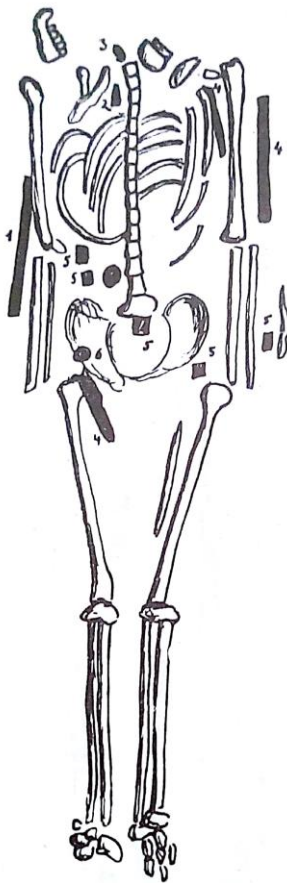
**Grave goods:** Iron arrowhead and bone object in the neck area; Iron knife by the right arm; 2 decorated bone plates by the left arm; 2 iron and 1 bronze buckles around the pelvis, bronze belt decorations. One bronze earring with the skull.

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: The skull (without mandible) is placed 0,15m above the legs, in the area between the femur bones

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

[Pavle Velenraјter] Павле Веленрајтер, “Извештај о ископавању аварске некрополе у Богојеву 1952. Године” [A report on the excavations of the Avar cemetery in Bogojevo in 1952], *Рад војвођанских музеја* 9 (1960): 176-185.



**Blt.3**

**Site:** Boljetin

**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended, arms on chest

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** juvenis

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Missing skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Slavenka Ercegović-Pavlović, *Srednjovjekovna naselja i nekropole u Boljetinu i Hajdučkoj Vodenici* [Medieval settlements and cemeteries in Boljetin and Hajdishka Vodenica] (Belgrade: Arheološki Institut, 1986).

**Člr.166**

**Site:** Čelarevo

**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> c. – early 9<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Rectangular pit, shallow niche for the feet

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E, skull E-W

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** None described, possible belt visible on the photo

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: the skull is placed in opposition to the skeleton

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Radovan Bunardić, *Čelarevo. Risultati delle ricerche nelle necropoli dell' alto medioevo* (Rome' 1980)



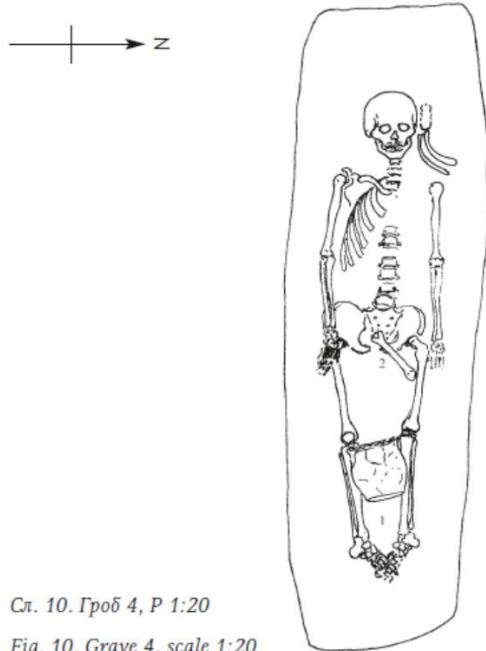
**Člr.244****Site:** Čelarevo**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> c. – early 9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Rectangular deep pit**Position:** supine extended, hands on hip bones**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** Black ceramic jug placed shallow in the pit**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: two skulls are present: one is placed between the legs and the other is displaced with the mandible turned upwards

**Comments:** recorded as Dual grave 244+244A, Grade B evidenceRadovan Bunardić, *Čelarevo. Risultati delle ricerche nelle necropoli dell'alto medioevo* (Rome' 1980)**Čik.4****Site:** Čik**Date:** late 6<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** Black pot with incised decoration on the lower legs, animal bone on the pelvis**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Bones of the left rib cage displaced north of the skull

**Comments:** Grade B evidenceIvan Bugarski, *Cemeteries from Antiquity and Early Middle Ages at Čik* (Belgrade: Archaeological Institute, 2009)



Сл. 10. Гроб 4, Р 1:20

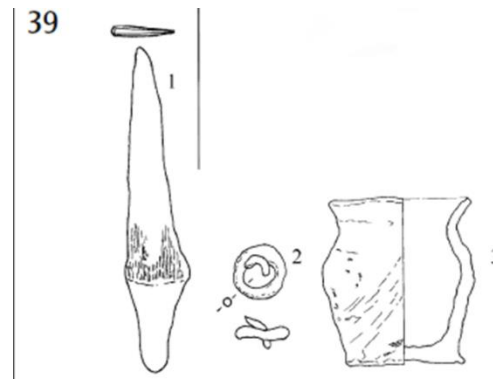
Fig. 10. Grave 4, scale 1:20

**Čik.6****Site:** Čik**Date:** late 6<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Missing skull

**Comments:** The overall preservation of the skeleton is poor; Grade C evidenceIvan Bugarski, *Cemeteries from Antiquity and Early Middle Ages at Čik* (Belgrade: Archaeological Institute, 2009)**Čik.39****Site:** Čik**Date:** late 6<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine extended+prone**Orientation:** NW-SE**Age:** infans**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** Knife by the left hand, 2 jars (on the torso and by the right foot), animal bone**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone decapitation: Skull in prone position

**Comments:** Grade C evidenceIvan Bugarski, *Cemeteries from Antiquity and Early Middle Ages at Čik* (Belgrade: Archaeological Institute, 2009)**Čik.65****Site:** Čik**Date:** late 6<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E?**Age:** juvenis**Sex:** female**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

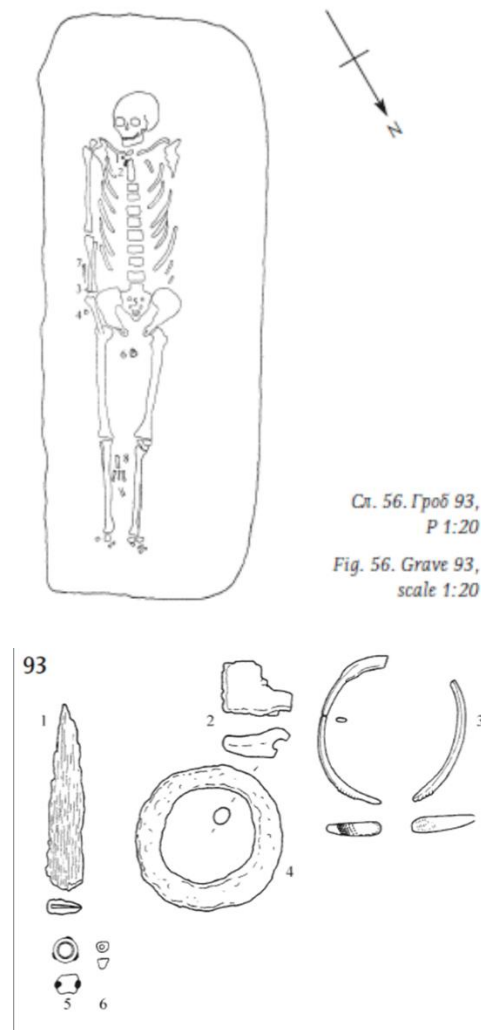
Decapitation: Missing skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidenceIvan Bugarski, *Cemeteries from Antiquity and Early Middle Ages at Čik* (Belgrade: Archaeological Institute, 2009)**Čik.93****Site:** Čik**Date:** late 6<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** SW-NE**Age:** juvenis**Sex:** female**Grave goods:** Pearls (in the neck area), metal object on the chest, bronze thimble and ring in the right hand area, iron button on the pelvis, 5 animal bones between the legs**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Missing left arm and burnt right hand

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

Ivan Bugarski, *Cemeteries from Antiquity and Early Middle Ages at Čik* (Belgrade: Archaeological Institute, 2009)



Сл. 56. Грoб 93,  
P 1:20

Fig. 56. Grave 93,  
scale 1:20

**Čik.100**

**Site:** Čik

**Date:** late 6<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** N-S

**Age:** matusus (52-56 yrs.)

**Sex:** female

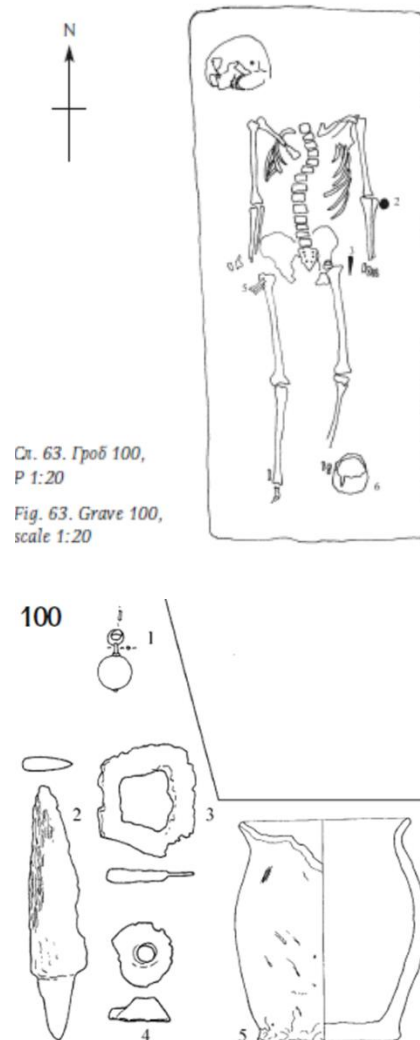
**Grave goods:** Earring from black glass and bronze, spindle bz the left arm, iron knife to the left of the pelvis, iron button on the pelvis, animal bones by the right femur, black jar by the left foot

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Significantly displaced skull

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

Ivan Bugarski, *Cemeteries from Antiquity and Early Middle Ages at Čik* (Belgrade: Archaeological Institute, 2009)



Сл. 63. Грoб 100,  
P 1:20

Fig. 63. Grave 100,  
scale 1:20

**Čik.104**

**Site:** Čik

**Date:** late 6<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** simple pit

**Position:** prone extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** infans I.

**Sex:** N/A

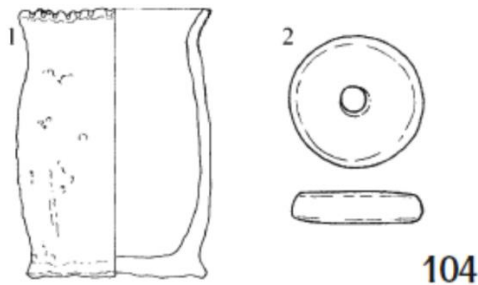
**Grave goods:** iron object by the right leg, jar in the grave pit (1), pearls in the area of the feet, red ceramic spindle on the bottom of the pit (2)

**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Ivan Bugarski, *Cemeteries from Antiquity and Early Middle Ages at Čik* (Belgrade: Archaeological Institute, 2009)

**Čon.8a**

**Site:** Čonoplja

**Date:** mid 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> c..

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** N-S

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** iron knife between the pelvis and the right arm and iron circlet on the pelvis

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: The skull is placed on the chest

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Dragan Radojević] Драган Радојевић, “Раносредњовековна некропола на циглани у Чоноплји” [Early medieval cemetery beneath the brickyard in Čonoplja], *Рад Музеја Војводине* 43-45 (2001-2003): 41-55.

**Čon.9a**

**Site:** Čonoplja

**Date:** mid 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> c..

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** N-S

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** Bronze earring by the head, iron knife by the left knee, and two blue glass beads between the head and the right shoulder

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: The articulated bones of the right arm are under the left femur

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

[Dragan Radojević] Драган Радојевић, “Раносредњовековна некропола на циглани у Чоноплји” [Early medieval cemetery beneath the brickyard in Čonoplja], *Рад Музеја Војводине* 43-45 (2001-2003): 41-55.

**Grb.15**

**Site:** Grabovica

**Date:** early-mid 10<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** adultus

**Sex:** female

**Grave goods:** One grape-shaped bronze earring. 34 pearls on the chest.

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: The right arm and the left femur are dislocated

**Comments:** Potentially after grave reopening; Grade C evidence

Slavenka Ercegović-Pavlović and Dušica Minić, „Le site d’habitation et la necropole de Pozaimiste,” *Derdapske sveske* 3 (1986), 346-361.

**MčM.191**

**Site:** Mačvanska Mitrovica

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** adultus

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

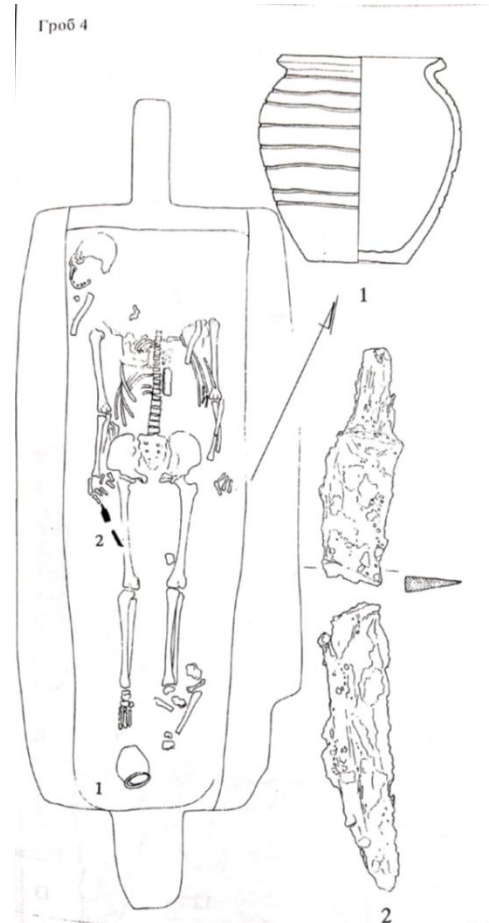
Fixation: Stone slab placed on the skull

**Comments:** Grade B evidence. Some doubts, possible disturbance and fallen grave structure. Yet no stones in the grave pits around

Slavenka Ercegović-Pavlović, “Les necropolis Romaines et Medievales de Mačvanska Mitrovica,” *SIRMIUM* 12 (Belgrade: Arheološki Institut, 1980).

**Mnd.4****Site:** Mandelos site 37**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup>-mid 9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine extended, head prone**Orientation:** NW-SE**Age:** N/A**Sex:** male?**Grave goods:** Pot with incised decoration by the feet and iron knife by the right hand**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone and Decapitation: The skull is displaced away from the body in prone position

**Comments:** Grade B evidence; Some disarticulation of the right clavicle as wellLiljana Tadin, „Rannosrednjovekovna nekropola kod Mandelosa“ [Early medieval cemetery near Mandzhelos] in: Zoran Vapa (ed.) *Arheološka istraživanja duž auto puta kroz Srem* [Archaeological excavations on the highway through Srem] (Novi Sad: Pokrajinski zavod za zaštitu spomenike culture, 1995), 257-286.**Npr.48****Site:** Naprelje**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** 47 contracted on its right side; 48 prone; 49 supine extended, arms under the chin; 50 supine on top of 49.**Orientation:** NW-SE**Age:** 47 and 48 N/A; 49 adultus; 50 infans**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** 2 iron buttons around the pelvis of 49**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position (N49).

Collective burial

**Comments:** Grade C evidenceDragica Premović-Aleksić, „Naprelje – ostaci srednjovekovne crkve i nekropole“ [Naprelje – remains from a medieval church and graveyard], *Novopazarski zbornik* 12 (1988): 23-62.



**Odž.24****Site:** Odžaci V**Date:** late 8<sup>th</sup> – early 9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** prone position**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position

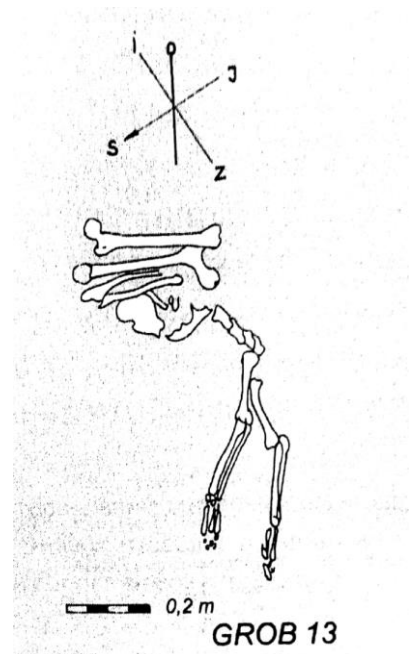
**Comments:** Megalodontia on the canine teeth; Grade B evidence  
 Sergej Karmanski, *Nalazi iz perioda seobe narode na teritoriji jugozapadne Bačke* [Finds from the Migration period on the territory of southwestern Bačka] (Odžaci: Amaterska Museološka sekcija Jugozapadne Baške, 1976), 12.

**Prl.13****Site:** Perlek**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> – early 9<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** N/A**Orientation:** SE-NW**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** Half of dog ABG**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Only the two femura, fibia and tibia present and placed in an unnatural position with the semi canine skeleton

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

Branislava Mikić Antičić, *Perlek – nekropola iz perioda avarske dominacije* [Perlek- a cemetery from the period of Avar domination]. (Belgrade: Srpsko Arheološko Društvo, 2003), 118.

**Psk.1****Site:** Pesak - Vajuga**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup>**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** NW-SE**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: One tile placed on the skull and another tile on the right leg

**Comments:** The authors believe it is part of grave structure with timber, but here the tiles are placed directly on the skeleton; Grade C evidence

Ana Premk, Petar Popović, Ljiljana Bjelajac, "Vajuga-Pesak," *Derdapske sveske* 2 (1984): 111-124

**Psk.19****Site:** Pesak - Vajuga**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup>**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended, arms by the shoulders

**Orientation:** E-W**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Skull on the left side of the chest

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Ana Premk, Petar Popović, Ljiljana Bjelajac, "Vajuga-Pesak," *Đerdapske sveske* 2 (1984): 111-124

**Psk2.16(11)**

**Site:** Pesak II - Vajuga

**Date:** mid-12<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** simple pit

**Position:** supine

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Gordana Marjanović-Vujović, „Vajuga-Pesak,” *Đerdapske sveske* 3 (1986): 184-222.

**Psk2.17(5)**

**Site:** Pesak II - Vajuga

**Date:** mid-12<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** simple pit

**Position:** supine

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Gordana Marjanović-Vujović, „Vajuga-Pesak,” *Đerdapske sveske* 3 (1986): 184-222.

**Psk2.18(4)**

**Site:** Pesak II - Vajuga

**Date:** mid-12<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** simple pit

**Position:** supine

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Gordana Marjanović-Vujović, „Vajuga-Pesak,” *Đerdapske sveske* 3 (1986): 184-222

**Psk2.30**

**Site:** Pesak II - Vajuga

**Date:** mid-12<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Pit with 3 large stones on the W side

**Position:** supine extended, arms on the pelvis

**Orientation:** NW-SE

**Age:** infans II

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

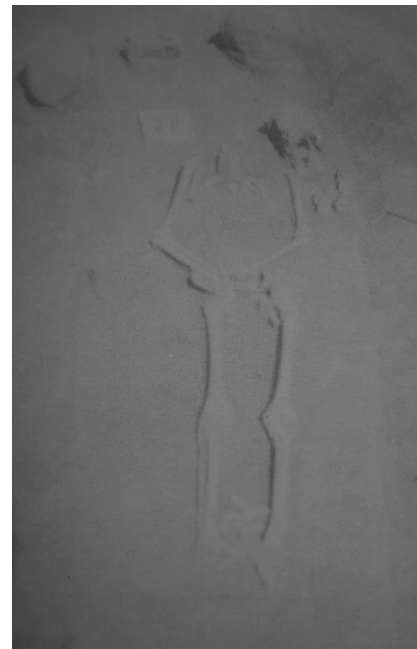
**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Skull placed above the body by the left shoulder

Fixation: 3 small stones instead of the skull on the right anatomical position

**Comments:** Grade B evidence.

Gordana Marjanović-Vujović, „Vajuga-Pesak,” *Đerdapske sveske* 3 (1986): 184-222, Fig.8

**Psk2.32**

**Site:** Pesak II - Vajuga

**Date:** mid-12<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended, prone skull

**Orientation:** NW-SE

**Age:** adultus

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No/2 iron spikes in the soil fill



**Description of deviant practice:**

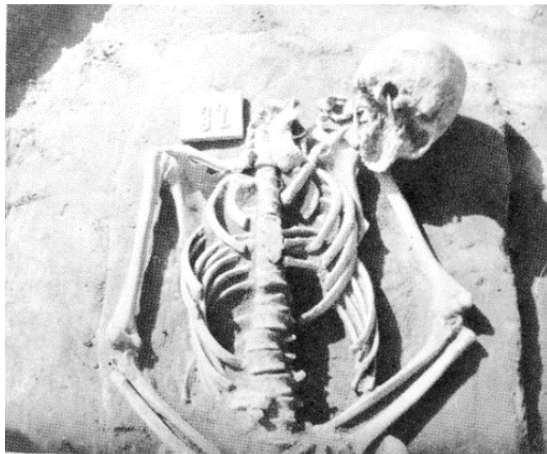
Decapitation: Skull placed on the left shoulder

Prone: skull placed in prone position

Fixation: Iron spike stabbed in the foramen magnum and a second one under the left scapula

**Comments:** Grade A- evidence

Gordana Marjanovič-Vujović, „Vajuga-Pesak,” *Đerdapske sveske* 3 (1986): 184-222  
Fig.4

**Psk2.39**

**Site:** Pesak II - Vajuga

**Date:** mid-12<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Enlarged rectangular pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** adultus

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Skull placed in opposition to the body with orientation E-W

**Comments:** Grade A- evidence

Gordana Marjanovič-Vujović, „Vajuga-Pesak,” *Đerdapske sveske* 3 (1986): 184-222  
Fig.1

**Psk2.69**

**Site:** Pesak II - Vajuga

**Date:** mid-12<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine

**Orientation:** NW-SE

**Age:** adultus

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No, trace of green patina on some bones

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Missing pelvis and displaced limbs – the tibiae and fibiae placed instead of the pelvis, while the long arm bones are on the spine.

Fixation (symbolic): 3 stones instead of the legs in the expected anatomical position

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Gordana Marjanovič-Vujović, „Vajuga-Pesak,” *Đerdapske sveske* 3 (1986): 184-222

**Psk2.82**

**Site:** Pesak II - Vajuga

**Date:** mid-late 14<sup>th</sup> c..

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** female

**Grave goods:** Silver coin of Charles Robert (1308-1342) by the mandible; bracelet on the right hand

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: the skull is on the chest

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

Gordana Marjanovič-Vujović, „Vajuga-Pesak,” *Derdapske sveske* 3 (1986): 184-222

**Psk2.92**

**Site:** Pesak II - Vajuga

**Date:** mid-12<sup>th</sup> –early 13<sup>th</sup>

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** on the side

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: only skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Gordana Marjanovič-Vujović, „Vajuga-Pesak,” *Derdapske sveske* 3 (1986): 184-222

**RnC.3/66**

**Site:** Ravna [Campsa]

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit with Roman tile

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** NW-SE

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: the skull is carefully placed separate from the skeleton on the tile next to the left shoulder

**Comments:** The investigator explicitly excludes taphonomic factors; Grade B evidence

Miodrag Tomović, „Равна (Campsa) у средњем веку” [Ravna (Campsa) in the Middle Ages], *Зборник Народног Музеја* 17:1 (2001): 309-339.

**RnC.10/67**

**Site:** Ravna [Campsa]

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: the skull is placed on the pelvis

**Comments:** The investigator explicitly excludes taphonomic factors

Miodrag Tomović, „Равна (Campsa) у средњем веку” [Ravna (Campsa) in the Middle Ages], *Зборник Народног Музеја* 17:1 (2001): 309-339.

**RnC.11/67**

**Site:** Ravna [Campsa]

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** NW-SE

**Age:** adultus

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: the skull is placed on the pelvis

**Comments:** The investigator explicitly excludes taphonomic factors; Grade B evidence

Miodrag Tomović, „Равна (Campsa) у средњем веку” [Ravna (Campsa) in the Middle Ages], *Зборник Народног Музеја* 17:1 (2001): 309-339.

**Srm34**

**Site:** Sirmium – site 34

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> c. (probably)

**Grave structure:** Isolated cist grave

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** NW-SE

**Age:** juvenis

**Sex:** female

**Grave goods:** No

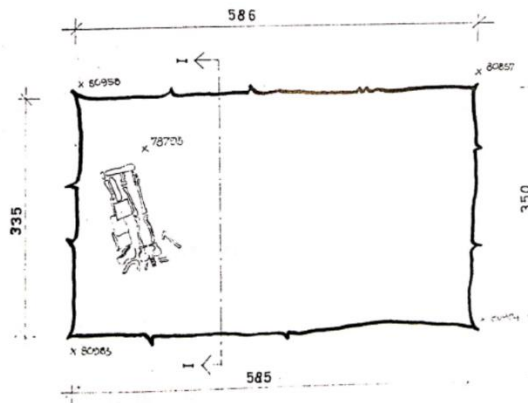
**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: The skull is displaced on the left side of the skeleton

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

Pavle Velenrajter, “Archaeological documentation 356-21,” *Sirmium site 34* (1963)

Nataša Miladinović Radmilović, *SIRMIUM Necropolis* (Belgrade: Arheološki institut, 2011)



### **Srm85.20**

**Site:** Sirmium – site 85

**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: The skull is missing

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

Nataša Miladinović Radmilović, *SIRMIUM Necropolis* (Belgrade: Arheološki institut, 2011)



### **Srm85.53**

**Site:** Sirmium – site 85

**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

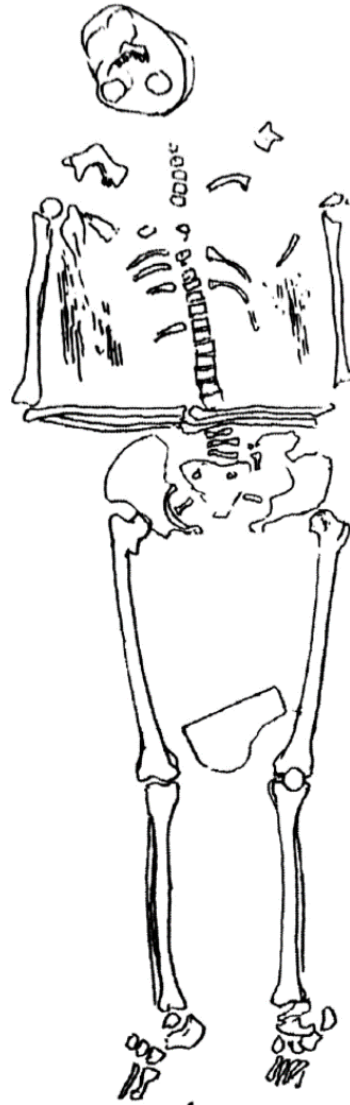
Fixation: two stone blocks on the pelvis/legs

**Comments:** Grade B- evidence

Nataša Miladinović Radmilović, *SIRMIUM Necropolis* (Belgrade: Arheološki institut, 2011)

**Srm85.61****Site:** Sirmium – site 85**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Skull (cranium only?) displaced with orientation E-W in opposition to the skeleton

**Comments:** Grade C evidence Stone between the legs (attempt at fixation?)Nataša Miladinović Radmilović, *SIRMIUM Necropolis* (Belgrade: Arheološki institut, 2011)**Trg.358****Site:** Trgovište-Stari Ras**Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** prone, arms under the body, left foot bent to the N**Orientation:** E-W**Age:** senilis I**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** 2 rings on the left hand**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position

**Comments:** Grade C evidence; isolated too, p.133Vojislav Jovanović, „Ras, Gradina srednjeevokovno utvrđenje i nekropola sa crkvom“ [Ras, the courtyard of the medieval fortress and a church graveyard], *Arheološki pregled* 24 (1985): 133-137

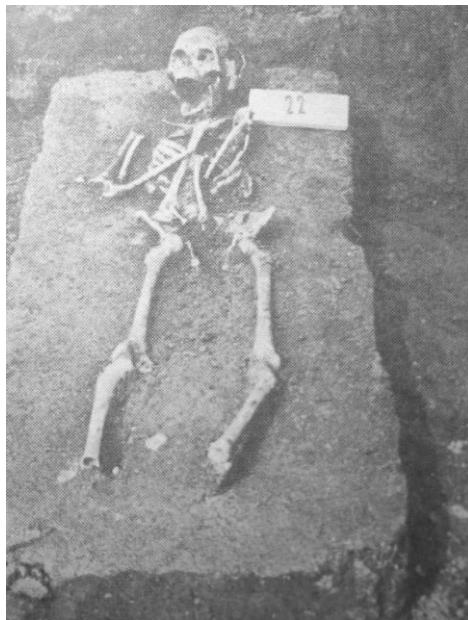


**Trn.22****Site:** Trnjane**Date:** late 11<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup>**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** adultus**Sex:** female**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Right foot cut

**Comments:** Specifically mentioned as example of intentional intervention and anti-vampirism; Grade A- evidenceGordana Marjanović-Vujović. *Trnjane: srpska nekropola (kraj XI-početak XIII veka)*

[Trnjane: a Serbian necropolis (end of 11th-early 13th century) (Belgrade: Narodni muzej, 1984), 68.

**Trn.46****Site:** Trnjane**Date:** late 11<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup>**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** adultus**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Left tibia and fibula displaced by the pelvis and left femur

**Comments:** Grade B evidenceGordana Marjanović-Vujović. *Trnjane: srpska nekropola (kraj XI-početak XIII veka)*

[Trnjane: a Serbian necropolis (end of 11th-early 13th century) (Belgrade: Narodni muzej, 1984)]

**Trn.52****Site:** Trnjane**Date:** late 11<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup>**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** adultus**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: The skull is displaced by the left shoulder, north of the skeleton

Mutilation: Left arm bones are crossed

**Comments:** On the photo N52, in the graphic and the written catalogue –

N51; Grade A- evidence

Gordana Marjanović-Vujović. *Trnjane: srpska nekropola (kraj XI-početak XIII veka)*

[Trnjane: a Serbian necropolis (end of 11th-early 13th century) (Belgrade: Narodni muzej, 1984)]

**Trn.56****Site:** Trnjane**Date:** late 11<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup>**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** juvenis**Sex:** female**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Left tibia and fibula are displaced by the pelvis and left femur

**Comments:** Specifically mentioned as example of intentional intervention and anti-vampirism; Grade B evidenceGordana Marjanović-Vujović. *Trnjane: srpska nekropola (kraj XI-početak XIII veka)*

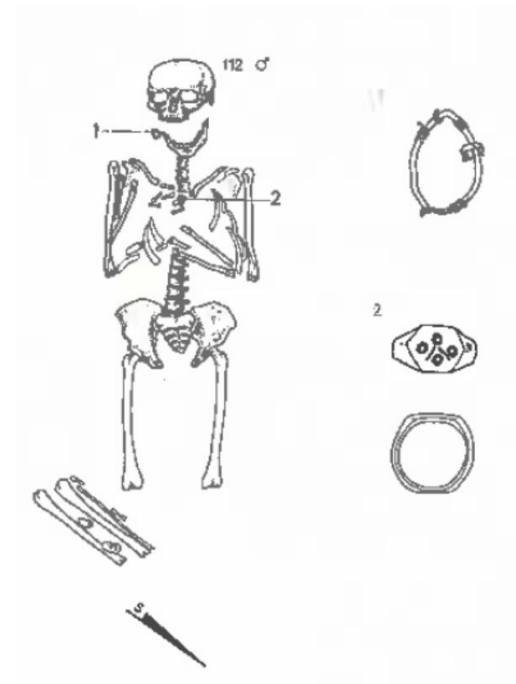
[Trnjane: a Serbian necropolis (end of 11th-early 13th century)] (Belgrade: Narodni muzej, 1984), 68.

**Trn.112****Site:** Trnjane**Date:** late 11<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup>**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine**Orientation:** SW-NE**Age:** adultus**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** Copper earring to the left of the skull and a bronze ring on the left hand**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: The lower leg bones are placed obsolete (N-S) by the right femur

**Comments:** Grade B evidenceGordana Marjanović-Vujović. *Trnjane: srpska nekropola (kraj XI-početak XIII veka)*

[Trnjane: a Serbian necropolis (end of 11th-early 13th century)] (Belgrade: Narodni muzej, 1984)

**Trn.113****Site:** Trnjane**Date:** late 11<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup>**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** adultus**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: The right hand is dislocated (in anatomical order) and placed E-W, opposing the rest of the arm

**Comments:** Grade B evidenceGordana Marjanović-Vujović. *Trnjane: srpska nekropola (kraj XI-početak XIII veka)*

[Trnjane: a Serbian necropolis (end of 11th-

early 13th century] (Belgrade: Narodni muzej, 1984)

### **Trn.133**

**Site:** Trnjane

**Date:** late 11<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup>

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended, arms on shoulders

**Orientation:** NW-SE

**Age:** senilis

**Sex:** female

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Left feet bones (articulated) displaced by the right knee

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

Gordana Marjanović-Vujović. *Trnjane: srpska nekropola (kraj XI-početak XIII veka)*

[Trnjane: a Serbian necropolis (end of 11th-early 13th century] (Belgrade: Narodni muzej, 1984)

### **Trn.156**

**Site:** Trnjane

**Date:** late 11<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup>

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** juvenis

**Sex:** female

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Left feet bones (articulated) displaced by the left knee

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

Gordana Marjanović-Vujović. *Trnjane: srpska nekropola (kraj XI-početak XIII veka)*

[Trnjane: a Serbian necropolis (end of 11th-early 13th century] (Belgrade: Narodni muzej, 1984)

### **Trn.170**

**Site:** Trnjane

**Date:** late 11<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup>

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** adultus

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Right humerus dislocated over the chest

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

Gordana Marjanović-Vujović. *Trnjane: srpska nekropola (kraj XI-početak XIII veka)*

[Trnjane: a Serbian necropolis (end of 11th-early 13th century] (Belgrade: Narodni muzej, 1984)



### **Trn.196**

**Site:** Trnjane

**Date:** late 11<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup>

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** adultus

**Sex:** female

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: The left hand bones are displaced on the right side of the pelvis. Also, the left radius and ulna are missing

**Comments:** Grade C evidence

Gordana Marjanović-Vujović. *Trnjane: srpska nekropola (kraj XI-početak XIII veka)*

[Trnjane: a Serbian necropolis (end of 11th-



early 13th century] (Belgrade: Narodni muzej, 1984)

### **Trn.212**

**Site:** Trnjane

**Date:** late 11<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup>

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** juvenis

**Sex:** female

**Grave goods:** Bronze ring with incised 'lion' image on the right hand

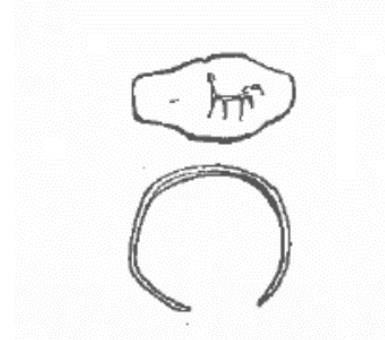
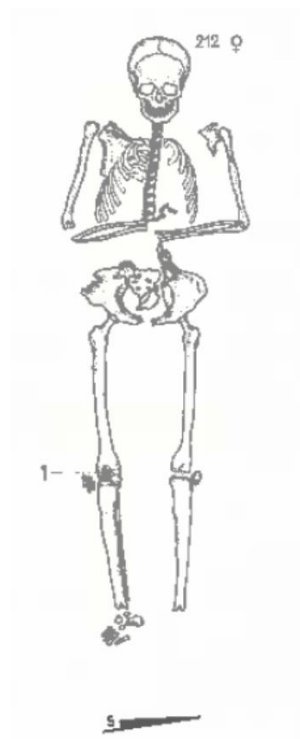
**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: The right hand bones are on the left knee

**Comments:** Grade A- evidence

Gordana Marjanović-Vujović. *Trnjane: srpska nekropola (kraj XI-početak XIII veka)*

[Trnjane: a Serbian necropolis (end of 11th-early 13th century] (Belgrade: Narodni muzej, 1984)



### **Trn.230**

**Site:** Trnjane

**Date:** late 11<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup>

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** adultus

**Sex:** female

**Grave goods:** Bronze bracelet on the left hand

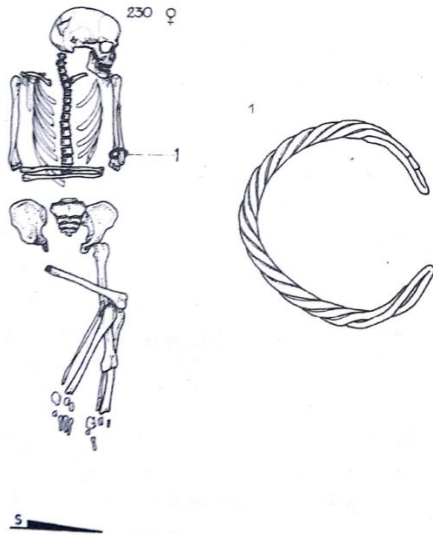
**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Lower left leg is displaced under the left femur, covered by the bent right leg

**Comments:** Grade B evidence

Gordana Marjanović-Vujović. *Trnjane: srpska nekropola (kraj XI-početak XIII veka)*

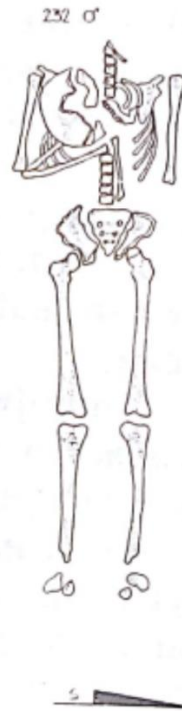
[Trnjane: a Serbian necropolis (end of 11th-early 13th century] (Belgrade: Narodni muzej, 1984)

**Trn.232****Site:** Trnjane**Date:** late 11<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup>**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine, arms on chest**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** juvenis**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: The skull is placed on the chest

**Comments:** Grade B evidenceGordana Marjanović-Vujović. *Trnjane: srpska nekropola (kraj XI-početak XIII veka)*

[Trnjane: a Serbian necropolis (end of 11th-early 13th century)] (Belgrade: Narodni muzej, 1984)

**Trn.374****Site:** Trnjane**Date:** late 11<sup>th</sup> – early 13<sup>th</sup>**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine extended**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** male**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: Right feet bones are under the right humerus

**Comments:** Grade C evidenceGordana Marjanović-Vujović. *Trnjane: srpska nekropola (kraj XI-početak XIII veka)*

[Trnjane: a Serbian necropolis (end of 11th-early 13th century)] (Belgrade: Narodni muzej, 1984)

**Vjk.24****Site:** Vojka**Date:** late 7<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine, legs split**Orientation:** N-S**Age:** senilis**Sex:** female**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Fixation: Several stones and

fragmented tiles on the chest; the skull is nailed down with large iron spike

**Comments:** Grade B evidence (for now)- Ivan Bugarski informed me he is planning to publish the complete records on the necropolis in the near future

Jovan Kovačević, *Avarski kaganat* [The Avar Khaganate] (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1977), 203; Jovan Kovačević and Danica Dimitrijević, „Brdašica, Vojka, Stara Pazova – Nekropola II Avarskog kaganata” [Brdašica, Vojka, Stara Pazova – cemeteries from the second Avar khaganate], *Arheološki pregled* 3 (1961): 118; Danica Dimitrijević, „Brdašica pres de Vojka necropole avare“ In: *Epoque prehistorique et protohistorique en Yugoslavie* eds. M.Garašanin et al. (Belgrade: Arheološko društvo, 1971), 160.

#### **Vjk.a**

**Site:** Vojka

**Date:** late 7<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine extended

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** adultus

**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Skull is placed by the legs

**Comments:** Grade B evidence. Ivan Bugarski informed me he is planning to publish the complete records on the necropolis in the near future.

According to him, the skull removal is done post mortem

Ivan Bugarski. *Avar archaeology in Serbia*. (PhD thesis. Belgrade: University of Belgrade, 2014), 635

#### **Vjk.b**

**Site:** Vojka

**Date:** late 7<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence.

Unlikely to be grave robbery. Ivan Bugarski informed me he is planning to publish the complete records on the necropolis in the near future

Jovan Kovačević, *Avarski kaganat* [The Avar Khaganate] (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1977), 203; Jovan Kovačević and Danica Dimitrijević, „Brdašica, Vojka, Stara Pazova – Nekropola II Avarskog kaganata” [Brdašica, Vojka, Stara Pazova – cemeteries from the second Avar khaganate], *Arheološki pregled* 3 (1961): 118; Danica Dimitrijević, „Brdašica pres de Vojka necropole avare“ In: *Epoque prehistorique et protohistorique en Yugoslavie* eds. M.Garašanin et al. (Belgrade: Arheološko društvo, 1971), 160; Ivan Bugarski, *Avar archaeology in Serbia* (PhD thesis: University of Belgrade, 2014), 635.

#### **Vjk.c**

**Site:** Vojka

**Date:** late 7<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine

**Orientation:** W-E

**Age:** N/A

**Sex:** N/A

**Grave goods:** No

**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence.

Unlikely to be grave robbery. Ivan Bugarski informed me he is planning to publish the complete records on the necropolis in the near future

Jovan Kovačević, *Avarski kaganat* [The Avar Khaganate] (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1977), 203; Jovan Kovačević and Danica Dimitrijević, „Brdašica, Vojka, Stara Pazova – Nekropola II Avarskog kaganata” [Brdašica, Vojka, Stara Pazova – cemeteries from the second Avar khaganate], *Arheološki pregled* 3 (1961): 118; Danica Dimitrijević, „Brdašica pres de Vojka necropole avare“ In: *Epoque prehistorique et protohistorique en Yugoslavie* eds. M.Garašanin et al. (Belgrade: Arheološko društvo, 1971), 160; Ivan Bugarski, *Avar archaeology in Serbia* (PhD thesis: University of Belgrade, 2014), 635.

#### **Vjk.d**

**Site:** Vojka

**Date:** late 7<sup>th</sup> c.

**Grave structure:** Simple pit

**Position:** supine**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Decapitation: Only skull

**Comments:** Grade C evidence.

Unlikely to be grave robbery. Ivan Bugarski informed me he is planning to publish the complete records on the necropolis in the near future

Jovan Kovačević, *Avarski kaganat* [The Avar Khaganate] (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1977), 203; Jovan Kovačević and Danica Dimitrijević, „Brdašica, Vojka, Stara Pazova – Nekropola II Avarskog kaganata” [Brdašica, Vojka, Stara Pazova – cemeteries from the second Avar khaganate], *Arheološki pregled* 3 (1961): 118; Danica Dimitrijević, „Brdašica pres de Vojka necropole avare“ In: *Epoque prehistorique et protohistorique en Yugoslavie* eds. M.Garašanin et al. (Belgrade: Arheološko društvo, 1971), 160; Ivan Bugarski, *Avar archaeology in Serbia* (PhD thesis: University of Belgrade, 2014), 635.

**Vjk.e****Site:** Vojka**Date:** late 7<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** supine**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** N/A**Sex:** N/A**Grave goods:** No**Description of deviant practice:**

Mutilation: only pelvis and legs present

**Comments:** Grade C evidence. Ivan Bugarski informed me he is planning to publish the complete records on the necropolis in the near future

Jovan Kovačević, *Avarski kaganat* [The Avar Khaganate] (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1977), 203; Jovan Kovačević and Danica Dimitrijević, „Brdašica, Vojka, Stara Pazova – Nekropola II Avarskog kaganata” [Brdašica, Vojka, Stara Pazova – cemeteries from the second Avar khaganate], *Arheološki*

*pregled* 3 (1961): 118; Ivan Bugarski, *Avar archaeology in Serbia* (PhD thesis: University of Belgrade, 2014), 635.

**Vrb.139****Site:** Vrbas**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> c.**Grave structure:** Simple pit**Position:** prone position, legs bent behind the pelvis**Orientation:** W-E**Age:** maturus (c. 50 yrs)**Sex:** male

**Grave goods:** A fragmented pot on the left humerus, an iron knife between the left humerus and the ribs, and animal (unspecified, large) bone around the femura

**Description of deviant practice:**

Prone position

**Comments:** Grade A- evidence

Sandor Nagy, “Некропола из раног средњег века у циглани Полет у Врбасу” [Cemetery from the early Middle Ages in the Polet factory in Vrbas], *Рађ војвођанских музеја* 20 (1971): 187–268.



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