SEVENTH–EIGHTH-CENTURY SWORDS, SABRES, AND BACKSWORDS DISCOVERED IN TRANSYLVANIA, MARAMUREȘ, AND THE ROMANIAN BANAT

CĂLIN COSMA

The chronological framework of the current subject is provided by the three main historical phases of the Avar Khaganate established in the Carpathian Basin. Geographically, the subject is limited to Transylvania, Maramureș, Crișana and the Romanian Banat. The catalogue of hitting/thrusting/cutting weapons discovered in western Romania lists 14 objects. The 14 artefacts were recovered from 12 cemeteries: 13 objects; and one settlement/house: one object. Based on the shape and characteristics of the blade, three main types of hitting, thrusting or cutting weapons have been distinguished: I – the Sabre; II – the Sword; III – the Backsword. The backswords have been further classified according to the characteristics of the hilt and cross-guard. Type III.1a – backsword with the hilt ornamented with decorative thin precious metal foils covering the wood: Unirea/Vereșmort. Type III.1b – backsword with an undecorated hilt, without a cross-guard: Dindești, Săntuș Gheorghe, Tieuș, Sânpetru German. Type III.2 – backsword with a hilt and a narrow rod-shaped cross-guard fixed perpendicularly on the blade, with a rhombic part whose sharp ends point towards the blade and the hilt: Aiudul de Sus. Type III.3.a – backsword with a ring-shaped cross-guard and a semi-circular pommel: Valea lui Mihai. III.3b – backsword with a ring-shaped cross-guard and a simple, straight hilt: Timișoara. All deceased of the 7th–8th c. from western Romania that have been buried together with a sword, sabre or backsword, but also with other weapons or dress accessories, were men (adults). No woman’s or child’s grave contained, at least according to the current state of the research, swords, backswords or sabres. In 7th–8th c. western Romania the sword, the backsword and the sabre were the weapons used by the high-ranking Avar warriors within the military hierarchy of the Avar Khaganate.

Keywords: Romania, sword, sabre, backsword, Avars, Early Middle Ages.

BRIEF INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The swords, sabres and backswords were amongst the most representative weapons to be used throughout history. Each of them were adopted at different times and then constantly developed throughout history. Regarding the Middle Ages, the study of the three above-mentioned weapons was and still is a constant focus for archaeologists. The research on the various aspects concerning the swords, sabres and backswords, such as the occurrence, the origin of each type, the shape and evolution of these weapons throughout time and last, but by no means least, the archaeological contexts they were found in, provide opportunities for the study of several historical subjects. The swords, sabres and backswords share the fact that they are all personal weapons intended for a one-to-one combat (See for example Bálint 1978, 173–186; 1992, 338–343; Csiky 2009, 35–39, 106–188; Garam 1991, 157; Kazanski 1999, 197, 198, 204, 205; Kirpichnikov 1966; Kokowski 1993, 336; Kolias 1988, 133–161; Korzuhina 1950, 63–94; Masi 2000, 185–226; Menghin 1983; Pinter 2007, 18, 19, 41–46, 53, 54; Rattkay 1976, 245–293; Simon 1991, 263–346; 1993, 171, 172; Stachowski 2004, 133–138; Szőke 1992, 92–96; Yotov 2004, 37–76, 205). Nevertheless, each has a particular shape that entails distinct roles in the fight between the combatants, difference which will be explored in the following pages.

A series of studies have been elaborated in the European professional papers concerning the swords and sabres discovered at European sites that date to the 5th–10th c. On the one hand, the swords, sabres and backswords are introduced and discussed in distinct subchapters in the monographs of the sites where they were discovered. On the other hand, this type of weapons was the subject of separate analyses described in special studies. Both types of papers are extremely numerous (Aside from the papers listed in note no. 1, I include only a few contributions which refer to swords, sabres or backswords: Čilinská 1973, 23, 24; Garam 1979, 78, 79; 1995, 342–345; Kaminsky 1996, 95–98; Kazanski 2000, 199–212; 2012, 193–199, 290; László 1955, 228–230, 232–238, 261; Legoux 2005, 77–82; Sös/Salamon 1995, 66, 67; Urlacher/Passard/ Manfredi-Gizard 1998). Several typologies have been put forward, as well as multiple theories about the role that these objects could have played in the communities where they were found. Briefly, what is understood from these studies is that during the Early Middle Ages there are different phases of use in the history of these swords,
sabres and backswords in the European areal. The sword is a weapon that was used by the Germanic and Slavic tribes. The Avars, although they also fought with the sword during the first half of the 7th c., abandoned it in favour of the backswords (in the Hungarian language they are referred to as ‘swords with a single blade’, term that will be further discussed in the paper) and the sabres. The ancient Hungarians brought the sabres with them in the Carpathian Basin and only later adopted the swords as combat weapons. The presence or absence, as well as the primordial or less important role that each of the above-mentioned weapons had in the war-like communities, result from the fighting technique specific to each people that moved through Europe during the early Middle Ages. However, generally, the heavy cavalry fought with the sword, whereas the sabre and the backsword were used by the light cavalry.

If the swords, sabres and backswords discovered in Eastern, Central and Western Europe in contexts dated to the 5th–11th c. enjoyed a close interest from the specialists, the artefacts from 7th–8th c. archaeological sites of western Romania did not. There is no study dedicated to the aforementioned weapons. Reason enough for the current scientific effort, which aims to describe in detail all 7th–8th c. swords, sabres and backswords published in the Romanian professional papers, along with those unpublished, discovered in Transylvania, Maramureş and the Romanian Banat. If correctly described and typologically classified, as well as analysed in close relation with their archaeological context of discovery, the swords, sabres and backswords provide new opportunities for the decoding of some military, social, political, economic and other situations that manifested within the western Romanian territory during the 7th–8th c.

### Tab. 1. Sites where swords, sabres and backswords have been discovered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cemeteries</th>
<th>Settlements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transylvania</td>
<td>1. Aiudul de Sus (A.a.1)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Cicâu (A.a.2)</td>
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<td>3. Noşlac (A.a.3)</td>
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<td>4. Şpâlnaca (A.a.4)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Teiuş (A.a.5)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Unirea/Veresmort (A.a.6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>North-Western Romania</td>
<td>1. Dindeşti (B.a.1)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Săcueni (B.a.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Valea lui Mihai (B.a.3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Romanian Banat</td>
<td>1. Dudeşti Vechi (D.a.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Sânpetru German (D.a.2)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Timişoara (D.a.3)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Remarks on the chronological and geographic context

From a chronological point of view, the studied time span is contemporary with the three main phases of the Avar Khaganate in the Carpathian Basin. Geographically, the area of interest is limited to Transylvania, Maramureş, Crişana and the Romanian Banat.

The above-mentioned four Romanian provinces are defined in the physical geography of Romania as distinct territorial units (Fig. 1; Pop 2003, 11–27). All have been affected during the 7th–8th c. by the migration of the Slavs and the expansion policy of the Avar Khaganate based in the Pannonian Plain. The Transylvanian Depression, encircled by the Carpathian Mountains, stands out from the other territories of western Romania (Pop 2003, 17–20). Maramureş includes the geographical and ethnographic areas of Săttmar, Oaş and the Historical Maramureş (Staniciu 2011, 17–21). The entire area

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![Fig. 1. Historical provinces of Romania.](image-url)
is generically (or conventionally) referred to as North-Western Romania (Cosma 2002, 16–19; Stanciu 2011, 16–21). Within the North-Western Romanian territory are incorporated also the western parts of today county Sălaj (Cosma 2002, 16–19; Stanciu 2011, 16–21). The geographic area Maramureș is bordered to the east by the Western Hills of Romania, to the north-east by the crests of the Maramureș Mountains, and to the south by the upper basin of the Eriu River (Cosma 2002, 16–19; Pop 2003, 12–22; Stanciu 2011, 16–21). The North-Western Romanian territory is from a geographical point of view part of the Northern Carpathians’ area and of the upper basin of the Tisa river (Stanciu 2011, 16–21). Crișana is bordered to the north by the upper basin of Eriu river, to the south by the Mureș valley, to the east by the Occidental Carpathians and to the west by the Tisa River (Cosma 2002, 16–19; Pop 2003, 11, 17–20). The Romanian Banat is limited to the east by the crests of the Occidental Carpathians, to the north by the Mureș River and to the south by the Danube (Mare 2004, 9–11; Pop 2003, 11, 15–21). North-western Romania, Crișana and Banat are structurally interdependent with the Tisa basin (Stanciu 2002, 203; 2011, 16–21). Southern Banat is incorporated in the lower basin of the Danube (Mare 2004, 9–11). The Transylvanian Depression was and still is connected with the areas across the Occidental Carpathians by the communication paths set along the main water streams that flow westwards, as well as by the passes of the Western Carpathians (Pop 2003, 19).

**TYPOLOGY, ANALOGIES, CHRONOLOGY**

In the western area of Romania the catalogue of finds lists 14 weapons for hitting, thrusting or cutting. The 14 artefacts are from 12 cemeteries (13 finds) and one single settlement/house: one find (Fig. 2; Tab. 1).

Based on the shape and characteristics of the blade there are three types of weapons for hitting, thrusting or cutting: I – the Sword, II – the Sabre, III – the Backsword. All three types are well defined in the Romanian archaeological professional papers (Pinter 2007, 18–20), applicable including for the Early Middle Ages in the Carpathian Basin (Bálint...

Type I – the sword

The sword is a weapon with a straight blade and two cutting-edges. It has a hilt ended in most cases with a pommel of different shapes, meant to prevent the warrior’s hand from slipping. The sword also has a cross-guard, although not always preserved. As a weapon, it was used for hitting and thrusting (Csiky 2009, 35–39; Menghin 1983; Pinter 2007, 18; Simon 1991, 263–346). On the same subject, depending on the point of the blade, the swords have been split in two categories: those with a rounded point are considered hitting weapons; whereas those with a sharp point were evidently linked to both hitting and thrusting (Pinter 2007, 59–66).

Only one sword was found in western Romania. It was recovered from an Avar inhumation grave from Dudeștii Vechi, in the Romanian Banat (D.a.1.1; Fig. 2). The blade of the sword is straight, with two cutting-edges. It probably had a fuller. The blade is wider next to the cross-guard, and then narrows gradually towards the point, detail which suggests the efficacy of the weapon both for the hitting and thrusting of the enemy. The hilt didn’t have a guard or it wasn’t preserved. The hilt is wider next to the blade, but then narrows towards the end, where it had a rivet. Traces of the wooden grip were preserved on the hilt.

The swords, which originated in a Roman setting and are detected later in the Germanic milieu, were detected by the Avar warriors particularly during the Early Avar period (Csiky 2009, 107–109, 114; Menghin 1983; Pinter 2007, 18; Simon 1991, 263–346; 1993, 175). G. Csiky counts only few swords with two cutting-edges for the Late Avar period (Csiky 2009, 114). According to Csiky, these have a different shape from the swords of the Early Avar period and he sees no direct connection between the two types (Csiky 2009, 114). Considering the discovery of the sword from Dudeștii Vechi in an Avar grave, the analogies for its shape have been searched mainly in the Avar cultural milieu of the Carpathian Basin. The scarce technical details preserved identify the sword from Dudeștii Vechi with the V.I.A/1 type of the classification elaborated by G. Csiky for the swords indexed in the Avar Khaganate established in the Carpathian Basin (Csiky 2009, 108–111). The swords without a cross-guard are considered older (used during an earlier time of the Early Avar period) weapons than those with a cross-guard, occurring during the 7th c. in the Carpathian Basin (Csiky 2009, 114). Certainly, the sword from Dudeștii Vechi was used by an Avar warrior who fought during the first half of the 7th c. in the Romanian Banat. The chronological framework is confirmed both by the analogies and the other artefacts found in the grave (Kisléghi Nagy 2015).

Type II – the sabre

The sabre is a hitting and cutting weapon intended for a one-to-one combat. The main characteristic of the sabre is the curvature of the blade inward, while its point curves towards the outside. The curvature of the blade and of the point is the main technical aspect which clearly separates the sabre from the sword (for example Csiky 2009, 35, 125–130; Garam 1991, 142; Korzuhina 1950, 63–94; Pinter 2007, 19; Simon 1993, 171, 172, 176; Stachowski 2004, 133–138; Yotov 2004, 59–76, 205). Most of the Early Middle Ages sabres in Europe have a more or less pronounced cross-guard and a hilt that curves in the direction opposite to the curvature of the blade (Csiky 2009, 35, 125–130; Garam 1991, 142; Korzuhina 1950, 63–94; Pinter 2007, 19; Simon 1993, 171, 172, 176; Stachowski 2004, 133–138; Yotov 2004, 59–76, 205).

Sabres of the above-described type were found within Transylvania in the Avar cemeteries at Cicău and Teiuș. The sabre from Cicău is relatively well preserved. In the middle, the blade, with only one cutting-edge, curves slightly towards the inside, while the point curves towards the outside. The cross-guard has the shape of a rectangular rod. The hilt is inclined in the direction opposite to the point. The hilt ends in an angle. At the end of the hilt the rivet meant to attach the wooden plates of the grip was preserved. The sabre from Cicău is 84.9 cm long and its blade is 3.2–3.4 cm wide (A.a.2.1; Fig. 2; 3: 4). The sabre from Teiuș has a curved blade (with only one cutting-edge) and point (A.a.5.2; Fig. 2; 4: 3).

Regarding their chronology, both the sabre from Cicău and Teiuș have clear discovery contexts. They were recovered from cemeteries, each from an Avar warrior’s grave. Both cemeteries and implicitly both graves date to the Middle Avar period (650/670–710/720; Cicău – Winkler et al. 1977, 269–283; Teiuș – Cosma 2013, 23–29). Based on the ethnic configuration of the two cemeteries where the sabres were found, analogies have been searched in the Avar milieu of the Carpathian Basin, in order to confirm also by typological correspondences both
Fig. 3. 1. Backswords (1–3) and sabre (4) from Transylvania. 1 – Noșlac; 2 – Aiudul de Sus; 3 – Șpălnaca; 4 – Cicău 
the dating and the ethnic-cultural identity suggested for the two cemeteries at Cicău and Teiuș. The two sabres from Transylvania do not possess unique typological traits which could justify a typological or chronological reassessment of the sabres discovered in the Avar cemeteries within the Carpathian basin. The sabres from Cicău and Teiuș fit in the group of sabres used by the Avar warriors in the Carpathian basin (Csiky 2009, 35, 125–130; Čilinská 1973, 23, 24; Garam 1979, 78, 79; 1991, 142; 1995, 342–345; Simon 1993, 171, 172; Sós/Salamon 1995, 66, 67). In fact, they can be included into the Csky’s V.III.A ‘sabres with a slightly curved blade’ type. The type appears at the end of the Early Avar period, it reaches peak popularity during the Middle Avar period and is still used afterwards during the Late Avar period (Csiky 2009, 131).

The numerous studies on the origin, typology and dating of the sabres from Early Middle Ages Central Europe note that their origin should be searched in Asia, from where they were introduced in Europe along with the population movements from Asia into Europe, and date their use within the Avar Khaganate in the Carpathian Basin starting somewhere during the Middle Avar period (when most finds date to), after which it continued during the Late Avar period (Bálint 1978, 184–186; 1992, 338–343; Csiky 2009, 125–136; Garam 1991, 142–160; Simon 1993, 171–174). The adoption of the sabre has been directly linked with the stirrup, which eased the control of the horse by the light cavalry warriors and implicitly the handling of the sabre in a one-to-one encounter (Garam 1991, 160).

**Type III – the backsword**

The backsword is a hybrid weapon which combines the characteristics of the sword with those of the sabre. The backsword is a hitting/cutting and thrusting weapon. It has a straight blade, but one cutting-edge. In some cases, the point only can

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**Fig. 4. Backswords (1, 2, 4) and sabre (3) from Transylvania.** 1 – Sfântu Gheorghe; 2, 3 – Teiuș; 4 – Unirea II/Vereșmort (1 – according Cosma 2013; 2, 3 – according Cosma 2017; 4 – according Cosma et al. 2013b; Rustoiu/Ciută 2015).
be slightly curved towards the outside. The hilt is straight or slightly inclined (Pinter 2007, 19; Simon 1993, 171). From an etymological point of view, in the Romanian language the term *paloș* (backsword) originates from the Slavic languages, where it appears as *paloš* (Csíky 2009, 35; Pinter 2007, 19; Zábojník 2004, 136). The Slavs used this word to make the distinction between the sword (weapon with a straight blade, with two cutting-edges) and the weapon with a straight blade, but only one cutting-edge (Csíky 2009, 35; Pinter 2007, 19; Zábojník 2004, 136). Accordingly, the backsword is a weapon of a particular body/blade shape, distinct from the sword or sabre. The backswords identified in western Romania were found in Transylvania at Aiudul de Sus (A.a.1.1; Fig. 2; 3: 2), Noșlac (A.a.3.1; Fig. 2; 3: 1), Șpălnaca (A.a.4.1; Fig. 2; 3: 3), Teiuș (A.a.5.1; Fig. 2; 4: 2), Unirea/Veresmort (A.a.6.1; Fig. 2; 4: 4) and Sfântu Gheorghie (A.c.1.1; Fig. 2; 4: 1), in North-Western Romania at Dindești (B.a.1.1; Fig. 2; 5: 1), Săcuenei (B.a.2.1; Fig. 2) and Valea lui Mihai (B.a.3.1; Fig. 2; 5: 2) and in the Romanian Banat at Sânpetru German (D.a.2.1; Fig. 5: 3) and Timișoara (D.a.3.1; Fig. 2; 5: 4). From a typological point of view, all the weapons are identical. They have a straight blade with one cutting-edge and a point sharpened only at the cutting-edge. Most of the finds are fragmentary; therefore, it is difficult to evaluate the exact length of the blades. The preserved length of the blades varies between 0.60–1.05 m. Their width is between 2.5–4 cm. The weapons are with or without a cross-guard.

Except for the backsword found in a settlement/house from Sfântu Gheorghie, all the other backswords were recovered from funerary areas which belonged to the Avar milieu of the Middle and Late Avar periods. Consequently, the analogies for the finds from western Romania have been searched first of all in the Avar cultural milieu of the Carpathian Basin.

However, before introducing the analogies for the backswords from western Romania, several remarks should be made about the terminology used in the historiography of the countries neighbouring Romania to describe the weapon of the Avar Khaganate with a straight blade, with one cutting-edge and a hilt which has or hasn’t a cross-guard. Most of the Hungarian archaeologists define the aforementioned weapon as ‘the sword with one cutting-edge’ (for example Bálint 1978, 173–184; Csíky 2009, 35, 119–124; Garam 1991, 142–160; Simon 1993, 171–177). G. Csíky distinguishes the *paloș*, as a weapon with a straight blade and one cutting-edge, from the sword with two cutting-edges (Csíky 2009, 35). Still, he prefers to refer to the weapons for thrusting, cutting and hitting with a straight blade and one cutting-edge, from the area of the Avar Khaganate, as ‘swords with a straight blade and one cutting-edge’ (Csíky 2009, 35, 39, 119–124). I have met in the Hungarian professional papers also the term *paloș* for the weapons with a straight blade and one cutting-edge (Szóke 1992, 93; 2002, 77, no. 9b., 80, no. 13, 14). In the Slovak archaeological papers, the weapons for hitting/cutting and thrusting with a straight blade and one cutting-edge are described in most cases as ‘swords with a straight blade and one cutting-edge’ (Čilinská 1973, 23, 24). J. Zábojník’s separation between the sword and the weapon with a straight blade and one cutting-edge, named *paloș*, is notable. He adds that the latter term didn’t prevail in the professional papers (Zábojník 2004, 136).

Personally, I consider that the term ‘sword with a straight blade and one cutting-edge’ is here improper, because it can cause confusion in the description and typological classification of the weapons for hitting and cutting. Both the sword and the sabre have well defined technical characteristics, which I have already highlighted. If the term ‘sword with a straight blade and one cutting-edge’ is accepted, then the essence of the definition of the sword, whose essential characteristic is the straight blade with two cutting-edges and a sharp or rounded point, disappears.

### THE TYPOLOGY OF THE BACKSWORDS FROM WESTERN ROMANIA BASED ON THE HILT AND CROSS-GUARD

From the backswords discovered at Noșlac (Fig. 3: 1) and Șpălnaca (Fig. 3: 3) only the blades, which are straight with one cutting-edge, have been preserved. As a result, it is impossible to classify them based on the cross-guard and the hilt, elements which are used by the Hungarian archaeologists to typologically define the ‘swords with a straight blade and one cutting-edge’ of the Avar Khaganate (Csíky 2009, 119–124; Garam 1991, 142–160). Despite the absence of these elements, the two backswords from Noșlac and Șpălnaca can still be dated to the Middle Avar period, just as the archaeological finds associated with the swords confirm.

#### III.1 Backsword with a hilt without cross-guard

In Transylvania, Maramureș and the Romanian Banat were found also backswords whose upper part was preserved. Consequently, their typological classification based on the hilt and cross-guard is possible. Such finds were discovered at Dindești (Fig. 5: 1), Sfântu Gheorghie (Fig. 4: 1), Teiuș (Fig. 4: 2),...
Fig. 5. Backwords from Maramureș (1, 2) and Romanian Banat (3, 4). 1 – Dindești; 2 – Valea lui Mihai; 3 – Sânpetru German; 4 – Timișoara (1, 2 – according Cosma 2016; 3 – according Dörner 1960; 4 – according Cosma et al. 2013b).
Sângeorgiu de Pădure (Fig. 5: 3) and Unirea/Vereşmort (Fig. 4: 4). Depending on the ornamentation of the hilt, two types of backswords are described:

- III.1.a Backsword with a hilt ornamented with decorative thin precious metal foils covering the wood;
- III.1.b Backsword with an undecorated hilt.

**III.1.a**

At Unirea/Vereşmort the iron hilt of the backsword was covered by wooden plates fixed with iron rivets. The hilt was then plated with a thin silver foil. The silver part of the hilt, which has the shape of a reversed truncated cone with a circular-oval section, is formed by two unequal parts, fixed together transversally by narrow bronze bands decorated with parallel longitudinal ridges. At the hilt's end is a circular iron ring, partially immersed in the silver covering. The scabbard of the backsword was also preserved, along with the bronze fittings that fixed it to the belt. Two sets of finds were placed along the length of the scabbard. One set was formed by two similar bronze plates, attached parallel to one another by five copper rivets. Starting at each end of the small plates, two parallel bronze bands decorated with ridges ran, in an oval pattern, transversally around the scabbard. On some of these bands the leather parts of the scabbard were still conserved. The other set was similar to the previous, but only one of the two small plates was preserved (Fig. 4: 4; 6). The backsword from Unirea/Vereşmort, based on both the hilt and the scabbard (the system of fixing to the belt), can be included in the Garam second type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type III.1</th>
<th>Type III.2</th>
<th>Type III.3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type III.1.a</td>
<td>Type III.1.b</td>
<td>Type III.3.a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unirea/Vereşmort</td>
<td>Sângeorgiu de Pădure</td>
<td>Aiudul de Sus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type III.1.a</td>
<td>Type III.1.b</td>
<td>Type III.3.b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valea lui Mihai</td>
<td>Timișoara</td>
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Fig. 6. Types of backswords based on the hilt and cross-guard.
dated mainly to the second third of the 7th c. (Garam 1991, 145–148, fig. 11). In the typology of G. Csiky, the weapon from Unirea/Vereșmort is listed under the VII.A/1b Csiky type (Straight swords with one cutting-edge, without a cross-guard, with a hilt ornamented with precious metal foils: Csiky 2009, 121). G. Csiky mentions some Early Avar finds, but dates most of the 'straight swords with one cutting-edge, without a cross-guard, with a hilt ornamented with precious metal foils' to the Middle and Late Avar periods (Csiky 2009, 121). This type of weapon is considered special, intended for the Avar elite (Balint 1978, 173–184; 1992, 338–343; Csiky 2009, 121; Garam 1991, 145). The backsword from Unirea/Vereșmort is chronologically included, according to the finds it was associated with inside the warrior grave, in the Middle Avar period. The backsword is unique in Transylvania, but similar weapons were found in Alfold and more particularly in the area across the Danube (Csiky 2009, 120, 121).

### III.1.b

The backswords from Dindești (Fig. 5: 1), Sfântu Gheorghe, (Fig. 4: 1), Teiuș (Fig. 4: 2; 6) and Sânpetru German (Fig. 5: 3), without a cross-guard, are of the Garam second type (Garam 1991, 145–152, fig. 11), or the Csiky VII/A/1a type, named 'swords with a straight blade, with one cutting-edge, without a cross-guard' (Csiky 2009, 120, 121). G. Csiky underlines the frequency of this type in the Avar milieu, already used during the Early Avar period, and then frequently occurring during the Middle and Late Avar periods (Csiky 2009, 120, 121). A similar chronology was set also for a series of weapons found in Avar cemeteries across Slovakia (Čilinská 1973, 23, 24). According to the archaeological finds that the backswords are associated with in the contexts of their discovery, the backswords from Teiuș and Sfântu Gheorghe date to the Middle Avar period, whereas the weapon from Dindești is from the Late Avar period (Teiuș – Cosma 2013, 23–29; Sfântu Gheorghe – Cosma et al. 2013a, 100 wrongly identified as a sabre; Cosma 2016, 218).

### III.2 Backsword with a narrow rod-shaped hilt and cross-guard, fixed perpendicularly on the blade, with a rhombic part whose sharp ends point towards the blade and the hilt

The backsword from Aiudul de Sus (Fig. 4: 4; 6) has a rod-shaped cross-guard perpendicular on the blade. The cross-guard has a rhombic central part with the sharp ends oriented towards the blade and the hilt. The rod of the hilt is broken above the cross-guard. Analogies for the cross-guard of the backsword from Aiudul de Sus are known in the Avar cemeteries from Slovakia (Čilinská 1973, 23, 24) and Hungary (for example Garam 1979, 78, 79; 1995, 342–345). Within the two aforementioned areas, cross-guards such as the one from Aiudul de Sus are mentioned on sabres, as well as on 'swords with one cutting-edge'. Both types of weapons were recovered mainly from Middle Avar contexts. Fewer (almost none) contexts date to the Late Avar period (Csiky 2009, 169; Garam 1991, 148–153, fig. 13). Based on the objects associated with it, the backsword from Aiudul de Sus was buried sometime at the end of the Middle Avar period (Horedt 1958, 93, fig. 17: 1–4).

### III.3 Backsword with ring-shaped cross-guard and hilt

#### III.3.a Backsword with a ring-shaped cross-guard and a semi-circular pommel

The weapon was found at Valea lui Mihai (Fig. 5: 2; 6). The cross-guard of the backsword is ring-shaped. The hilt ends in an iron semicircle with prolonged ends that were fixed on the hilt rod. At its discovery, the imprints of the wooden scabbard were still visible. I personally have yet to identify an analogy for the semicircle at the end of the hilt. The artefacts found together with the backsword in the grave from Valea lui Mihai date to the Middle Avar period (Cosma 2016, 211–213, 220, pl. 6). G. Csiky describes them as 'popular (intended for ordinary
people) weapons’ and considers them characteristic for the Early Avar period (Csiky 2009, 122).

### III.3.b Backword with a ring-shaped cross-guard and a simple, straight hilt

A backword of this type was found at Timişoara (Fig. 5: 4; 6). The backword was recovered from a grave which contained artefacts from the Late Avar period. Weapons such as the backword from Timişoara are very frequent during the Avar age. They appear during the Early Avar period, but their occurrence on a large scale is detected during the following Middle and Late Avar periods (Csiky 2009, 120, 121).

The conclusion of the above is that the chronology of the sword, sabres and backswords from western Romania corresponds to the chronological framework outlined for the hitting/thrusting/cutting weapons of the Avar Khaganate that have been discovered in the Carpathian Basin.

### THE GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF THE SWORDS, SABRES AND BACKWORDS

Swords, sabres and backswords have been discovered in Transylvania, the Romanian Banat and in North-Western Romania. They are missing from the archaeological sites of the 7th–8th c. in Crişana (Cosma 2015a, 266–268; for Nădlac – Cociş et al. 2016, 1–75).

Most of the weapons are from Transylvania. Strictly typologically, there is no sword identified in the Transylvanian Plateau. Within the same territory, the backswords are more numerous than sabres, the latter counting only two. In North-Western Romania, on the other hand, only three backswords are known. The sword appears only in the Romanian Banat – one find. Along with it, other two backswords were found here (Tab. 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cemeteries of the Band-Noşlac group (Transylvania)</th>
<th>Total number of graves/cemetery</th>
<th>Total number of Gepid graves</th>
<th>Total number of Avar graves</th>
<th>Weapon type</th>
<th>Chronology of the Avar graves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Sw. – Sword; Sa. – Sabre; Ba. – Backword.

### THE TYPOLOGICAL AND NUMERICAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE SWORDS, SABRES AND BACKWORDS ACROSS THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

In the 7th–8th c. settlements from Transylvania, only one backword was found, together with other weapons, inside a house of the settlement at Sfântu Gheorghe, jud. Mureş (Cosma et al. 2013a, 100–102).

All the other sabres or backswords from the Transylvanian Plateau were discovered in cemeteries. Within the Band-Noşlac horizon, in the nine necropolises that included also Avar graves (Cosma 2015a, 254, 255), only three Avar graves of only three cemeteries contained backswords (Tab. 3; 4). One backword was placed in an Avar warrior grave at Noşlac, which date to the second half of the 7th c. Due to the fact that the cemetery is still in preparation for publication, the number of graves which belonged to Avar warriors is unknown. Of the 39 inhumation graves from the 6th–7th c. mentioned at Șpălnaca, three of them are described as belonging to Avar warriors buried with horses, weapons, horse harness and jewellery (Protase et al. 2000, 104. Cemetery currently being prepared for publication by C. Cosma). However, only one included an iron backword. The isolated grave from Unirea/Vereșmort, dated to the Middle Avar period, contained in its funerary set a special backword linked to the Avar elite. Although unique on the site where it was found, the aforementioned grave was certainly linked with the cemetery of the Band-Noşlac group researched in 1934 by M. Roska at Unirea-Vereșmort (Roska 1934, 123–130; Rustoiu/Ciută 2015, 108, 109).

Within the 19 Avar cemeteries and/or graves identified in the Transylvanian Plateau, sabres and backswords were discovered in only three necropolises (Tab. 5; 6; for verification see Cosma 2015a, 255–262. The cemeteries from Gâmbăș/Ogoare and Sâncraii, jud. Alba, are unpublished and are currently
The cemeteries from Cicău and Teiuș provide each one sabre. The backswords occur at Aiudul de Sus and Teiuș. The backsword from Aiudul de Sus was found together with a series of horse harness and weapons, which together certainly formed the funerary set of an Avar grave. In Cicău, only one of the six graves included also a sabre. In the cemetery at Teiuș, at least 60 Avar graves were researched. Only two contained a backsword and a sabre. The cemetery at Teiuș is otherwise the only necropolis from Western Romania where two types of weapons are listed: the sabre and the backsword.

In North-Western Romania, the backsword is the only type represented. It was discovered in three of the four settlements/sites with Avar funerary vestiges of the 7th–8th C. (Cosma 2016, 205–233). One backsword was placed in one of the two researched graves from the cemetery at Săcueni. The other two were discovered in the isolated graves from Dindești and Valea lui Mihai, which included each one backsword (Tab. 7; 8).

The catalog of Avar cemeteries and graves from the Romanian Banat lists 17 archaeological sites within 11 localities (Cosma 2015a, 268–271). In only three cemeteries, a sword and two backswords were found. The sword appeared in one of the two Avar graves researched at Dudești Vechi. One backsword was placed in one of the four graves at Timișoara, whereas the other was recovered from the isolated grave at Sânpetrul German/Magazin (Tab. 9; 10).

The statistics illustrated in the charts and tables above and synthetized in the table below (Tab. 11) are based on the current research level of the 7th–8th C. in Transylvania, North-Western Romania, Crișana and the Romanian Banat. Notably, 99% of the swords, sabres and backswords were found in Avar cemeteries or graves. The 1% difference is represented by the backsword from the Early Middle Ages village at Săntuș Gheorghe. It is difficult to estimate the real number of swords, sabres or backswords for each Avar cemetery from Western Romania (Cosma 2015a, 251–275), particularly because in most cases we deal with isolated graves. Even in the cemeteries where more graves have been identified, sabres or backswords were found in only one or maximum two graves (only at Teiuș).

The Association of Swords, Sabres and Backswords with Other Artefacts

Without exception, all the types of weapons for cutting, hitting or thrusting here presented are associated in the graves they were found with other metal artefacts, such as different types of weapons.

Tab. 6. Typological distribution of the swords, sabres and backswords in the Avar cemeteries from Transylvania.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avar cemeteries and graves from Transylvania</th>
<th>Total number of graves/cemetery</th>
<th>Number of graves without swords, sabres, backswords</th>
<th>Number of graves with swords, sabres, backswords</th>
<th>Weapon</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Aiudul de Sus</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>sword</td>
<td>sabre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cicău</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>sabre</td>
<td>backsword</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teiuș</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>sword</td>
<td>sabre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
or horse harness (stirrups and/or horse bits), particularly spearheads, then axes and arrowheads. The backsword from Cicău was associated with a spear and an axe. Traces of a bow and arrowheads have been identified at Unirea/Vereșmărt. Other artefacts that are placed together with the weapons inside graves are pottery and household items (particularly knives and strike-a-lights). Additionally, the graves from Sânpetru German/Magazin and Timișoara each contained a coin (Tab. 12; 13).

The symbolic meaning of the swords, sabres and backslashes placed in the graves within Transylvania, North-Western Romania and the Romanian Banat

The interpretation of the presence of swords, backslashes and sabres inside the Early Middle Ages graves on a large geographic area was and still is the focus of numerous professional studies (I mention here only a few studies that focus on a series of aspects concerning the interpretation of the occurrence of the swords, sabres or backslashes in graves: Bálint 1978, 173–186; 1992, 338–343; Bóna 1979, 5–32; 1980, 31–95; Csíky 2009, 238–267; 2011, 9–34; Čilinská 1991, 187–212; Garam 1991, 142–160; Kazanski 1999, 197, 198, 204, 205; László 1955, 228–230, 232–238, 261; Masía 2000, 185–226; Menghin 1983; Pedersen 1997, 123–135; Pinter 2007, 21–40; Simon 1991, 263–346; 1993, 175; Žabojnik 1995, 205–344; 2015, 277–291). The swords, backswords and sabres offered/laid inside the graves certify the warrior status of the deceased, a position which is often reinforced by the association with other types of weapons. The higher the quality of the swords, sabres and backswords, particularly those with the
Tab. 10. The typological distribution of the swords, sabres and backswords in the Avar cemeteries from the Romanian Banat.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avar cemeteries and graves from the Romanian Banat</th>
<th>Total number of graves/cemetery</th>
<th>Number of graves without swords, sabres, backswords</th>
<th>Number of graves with swords, sabres, backswords</th>
<th>Weapon</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dudești Vechi</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>sword</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>–</td>
<td>sabre</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>–</td>
<td>backsword</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sânpetru German/Magazin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>sword</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>–</td>
<td>sabre</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>backsword</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Timișoara</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>sword</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>–</td>
<td>sabre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>backsword</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tab. 11. The list of archaeological sites and the number of 7th–8th c. swords, sabres and backswords from Transylvania, North-Western Romania and the Romanian Banat.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical provinces/Discovery type</th>
<th>Archaeological sites</th>
<th>Number of finds</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sword</td>
<td>Sabre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transylvania Cemeteries</td>
<td>Aiudul de Sus</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cicău</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Noșlac</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Șpălnaca</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teiș</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unirea/Vereșmort</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-Western Romania Cemeteries</td>
<td>Dindești</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Săcueni</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Valea lui Mihai</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Romanian Banat Cemeteries</td>
<td>Dudești Vechi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sânpetru German</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Timișoara</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Cemeteries</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

hilt and scabbard decorated with precious metal foils, the higher the social rank of the warrior must have been. In a similar manner, the combination of the weapons with other types of artefacts, such as dress accessories, jewellery, coins etc., inside graves, depending also on their quality, indicates the rank of the deceased within the military hierarchy of the Avar Khaganate in the Carpathian Basin.

All the deceased from the 7th–8th c. western Romania that have been buried with a sword, sabre or backsword, but also with other weapons or dress accessories, were men (adults). For example, the anthropological analysis of the skeletons from Șpălnaca shows that the warrior buried with the backsword was an adult (Protase et al. 2000, 104). The anthropological analysis of the warrior from Unirea/Vereșmort revealed that the deceased was an adult man (Rustoiu/Ciută 2015, 116, 117). There isn’t, at least so far, any woman or child grave that contained a sword, sabre or backsword. Bases on the artefacts that have been discovered together with the weapons in the 7th–8th c. graves from western Romania, a certain pyramid of the military hierarchy of the Avar warriors from the Transylvanian Plateau, North-Western Romania or the Romanian Banat can be drawn. The highest position is occupied by the warriors from Unirea/Vereșmort, Cicău and Teiș. The superior rank of the warrior from Unirea/Vereșmort is signaled by the ornamented hilt and scabbard of the backsword he was buried with, both decorated with precious metal foils. The piece alone is recognized as an artifact specific to the Avar military elites (Bálint 1978, 171–186; Bóna 1980, 48–52; Garam 1991, 145–152; László 1955, 228–230, 232–238, 261). At Cicău, compared to the other five graves of the necropolis, the grave which includes a sabre is the only one with a rich funerary set. The deceased was certainly the chief of the Avar com-
A warrior from Teiuș that was buried with a backsword was laid in a wooden box, along with an extremely rich funerary set (belt strap-ends, appliques etc.). He is the only person amongst the 60 deceased from Teiuș that was associated with a rich and high-quality funerary set, thus suggesting that he was the military and political chief of the community which buried its dead at the site. Amongst the other graves from the cemetery at Teiuș only two contained weapons, one a spear and the other a sabre. The deceased from the latter grave was certainly higher in rank than the one buried with a spear. A series of small silver appliques decorated by pressing which have been discovered in the grave with the sabre, together with a horse, supports this conclusion.

The warriors from Șpălnaca and Noșlac occupied a lower position in the Avar military hierarchy from Transylvania, compared to the military chiefs from Unirea/Verșmort, Cicău and Teiuș. The fighters were buried merely with weapons and several other artefacts which cannot be considered evidence of a high social status in the Avar military hierarchy. Nevertheless, the backswords from the two graves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discovery type</th>
<th>Weapon type</th>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>J</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>Chronology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avar cemeteries and graves from Transylvania</td>
<td>sabre</td>
<td>Cicău</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>650/670–710/720</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Teiuș</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>backsword</td>
<td>Aludul de Sus</td>
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<td>Noșlac</td>
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<td>Șpălnaca</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Teiuș</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unirea II/Verșmort</td>
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<tr>
<td>Settlements from Transylvania</td>
<td>backsword</td>
<td>Sf. Gheorghe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avar cemeteries and graves from North-Western Romania</td>
<td>backsword</td>
<td>Dindești</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>650/670–710/720</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Șăcueni</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Valea lui Mihai</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avar cemeteries and graves from the Romanian Banat</td>
<td>sword</td>
<td>Șudeștiile Vechi</td>
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<td></td>
<td>580–630/650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>backsword</td>
<td>Sânpetru German</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>650/670–710/720</td>
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<td>Timișoara</td>
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<td></td>
<td>710/720–810/830</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A – other types of weapons; B – horse harness; C – burial with horse; D – belt tongue; E – belt appliques; F – buckles; G – jewelry; H – harness appliques; I – pottery; J – household items; K – coin.

Tab. 12. The association of the swords, sabres and backswords with other artefacts.

Tab. 13. The association of the swords, sabres and backswords with other types of weapons.
provide enough proof for a higher position of the two fighters in the Avar army, than for example the spearmen troops which took part in the conquest of the Gepid centers from Transylvania.

It is possible that the destroyed grave from Dindești, in North-Western Romania, which contained alongside a backsword also belt strap-ends and belt buckles specific to the Avar elite, belonged to a Avar military chief. The presence of the backswords inside the Avar graves from Sâcueni and Valea lui Mihai (together with other weapons or horse harness) supports the positioning of the two warriors in the Avar military elite, on a higher rank than the one occupied by the spearmen.

A leading warrior was the deceased from Dudeștii Vechi, in the Romanian Banat. He was buried with a sword, as well as with a series of dress accessories specific to the Avar leaders of the first half of the
7th c. within the Carpathian Basin. The grave from Sânpetru German/Magazin also belongs to a warrior from the upper part of the military pyramid of the Avar Khaganate. The composition of the entire funerary set: weapons, dress accessories, gold coin, gold earring, leads to this conclusion. For example, the gold ring from the grave at Sânpetru German is an artefact occurring in the graves of the Avar military and political elites from Pannonia (Bóna 1970, 251, 260, 261; 1979, 5, 27; 1980, 39–42). A higher position in the military hierarchy of the Avar Khaganate was occupied also by the warrior buried in the grave from Timișoara. Based on the associated grave goods – a backsword and dress accessories specific to the Avar elite – he can be considered the chief of the Avar community from Timișoara/Podul Modoș.

I will approach very briefly one other subject. It refers to the evaluation of the upper or lower status of the warriors using the two weapons they were buried with – the sabre or the backsword – as a criterion. It is noted that the backsword was the weapon most frequently used by the ordinary warriors of the Avar Khaganate (Csiky 2009, 122; Garam 1991, 156). However, in Transylvania the backswords were used also by the Avar military elite (Unirea/Vereșmört, Teiuș). Possibly, also the sabre was in Transylvania an attribute of the leading soldiers of the Avar armies, especially during the Middle Avar period (Garam 1991, 156), when the sabre from Cicău was buried. The grave containing a sabre from Teiuș shouldn't be omitted. Although it includes several appliques which can be connected with an upper status, the rank of the deceased is still lower compared to the military chief buried in the same cemetery together with a backsword and many other valuable artefacts.

FINAL REMARKS

The sword occurs only in the Romanian Banat, in an archaeological context which dates to the first half of the 7th c. In North-Western Romania and Transylvania, only backswords and sabres were found (Fig. 7; Tab. 14; 15).

The absence of the swords from the Avar milieu in Transylvania and North-Western Romania could be the consequence of the transformations which the Avar warrior elite underwent after the defeat suffered in front of the gates of Constantinopol in 626 (Simon 1993, 171, 172, 176). It is estimated that a significant part of the Avar nobility, which formed the heavy cavalry of the Khaganate, whose main weapon was the sword, died under the walls of Constantinopol (Simon 1993, 171, 172, 176). After 626 the sword falls out of fashion and is replaced by the backsword and/or sabre, which gradually became the weapons used by the light cavalry of the Avar army (Garam 1991, 160; Simon 1993, 176). The absence of the swords from the Avar cemeteries, at least so far, suggests that the Avars entered Transylvania somewhere after 630, when the sword was no longer used by the Avar military elite. In the western Romanian territory, during the 7th–8th c. the swords, backswords and sabres were the weapons used by the Avar warriors occupying an upper position in the military hierarchy of the Avar Khaganate. The Avar soldiers buried with backswords at Unirea/Vereșmört, Noșlac and Şpălnaca can be considered amongst the military chiefs who led the Avar troops into Transylvania with the aim to conquer the Gepid centers. The cohorts of Avar ordinary warriors from Transylvania, North-Western Romania and the Romanian Banat used mainly the spear, less the battle axe and almost never the bow (Cosma 2015a, 251–275). For example, at Bratei/Cimitirul nr. 3 (Gepid-Avar cemetery), the Avar fighters were buried with horse harness and spears (Bârzu 2010, Grab. 66, 78, 83, 108, 274, 278).

Those buried in the Avar cemeteries from the Transylvanian Plateau with backswords or sabres were military and political chiefs of the 7th–8th c. communities in Transylvania. Conclusive examples in this regard are the two warriors from Cicău and Teiuș, who were political and military chiefs that led/coordinated the troops of Avar mounted spear-men, with the mission to control a significant part of the Transylvanian Plateau. However, it should be mentioned that these military and political chiefs were under the direct coordination of the Khaganate established in Pannonia (Cosma 2015a, 254–262, 271–273; 2015b, 228–246).
CATALOGUE

A. Transylvania
   a. Inhumation cemeteries
   1. Aiudul de Sus (jud. Alba) – locality’s boundary
      A.a.3.1. Iron backsword with straight single-edged blade (Fig. 3: 2). It has a rod-shaped cross-guard fixed perpendicularly on the blade, with a rhombic central part whose sharp ends point towards the blade and the hilt. The rod of the hilt is broken just above the cross-guard. Dimensions: $L = 61$ cm; $W_{\text{blade}} = 2.8$ cm; $L_{\text{cross-guard}} = 6$ cm. Datation: 650/670–710/720. Find circumstances: Grave 1/Warrior. Deposition: National History Museum of Transylvania Cluj-Napoca.
      A.a.4.1. Iron backsword, fragmentary (Fig. 4: 1). From it are preserved the hilt and part of the blade. The hilt is straight and pointed towards the end. Probably, it has a button at the hilt’s end. Dimensions: $L_{\text{preserved}} = 40$ cm; $W_{\text{blade}} = 3.6$ cm. Datation: 780–850. Find circumstances: House. Deposition: National History Museum Alba Iulia.
   2. Cicău (jud. Alba) – Săliște
   3. Noşlac (jud. Alba) – Grădina lui Hărăstășan
   4. Şpălnaca (jud. Alba) – Şugud
      A.a.6.1.a. Single-edged iron backsword (Fig. 4: 4a). The hilt was formed from an iron rod on to which wood was fixed with iron rivets. The hilt was covered in a thin silver foil. The silver part of the hilt, in the shape of a reverse truncated cone with a circular-oval section ($d = 2.7 \times 1.37$ cm), has two uneven parts, joined together transversally by narrow bronze bands decorated with parallel longitudinal ridges. The hilt’s end has a circular iron pommel ($d = 4.43$ cm), which is partially immersed in the silver covering. Dimensions: $L_{\text{total}} = 106$ cm, $L_{\text{blade}} = 84$ cm, $W_{\text{total}} = 3.2$ cm. Datation: 650/670–710/720. Find circumstances: Warrior grave with horse. Deposition: Regional History Museum of Transylvania Cluj-Napoca.
      A.a.6.1.b. Scabbard of the backsword, with bronze fittings that fixed the scabbard (Fig. 4: 4b). The fittings are part of two sets attached along the scabbard. One set was formed by two similar bronze plates, fixed by 5 copper rivets. Two parallel bronze bands decorated with ridges started from the upper and lower ends of the plates and then ran transversally around the scabbard creating an oval pattern. Pieces of the leather parts of the scabbard were preserved on some of these bands. The second set was similar to the first, only that just one of the two plates was recovered. Datation: 650/670–710/720. Find circumstances: Grave/Warrior. Bibliography: Protase et al. 2000, 104. Deposition: Municipal Museum Alba Iulia.
   c. Settlements
   1. Sfântu Gheorghe (jud. Mureş) – Pe Şes
      A.c.1.1. Single-edged iron backsword, fragmentary (Fig. 4: 1). From it are preserved the hilt and part of the blade. The hilt is straight and pointed towards the end. Probably, it has a button at the hilt’s end. Dimensions: $L_{\text{preserved}} = 40$ cm; $W_{\text{blade}} = 3.6$ cm. Datation: 780–850. Find circumstances: House. Bibliography: Protase et al. 2000, 104. Deposition: Institute of Archaeology and Art History Cluj-Napoca.

B. Maramureş (North – Western Romania)
   a. Inhumation cemeteries
   1. Dindeşti (jud. Satu Mare) – Latura brazilor
2. Săcueni (jud. Bihor) – Veresdomb
B.a.2.1. Iron backsword.
Datation: 725–810/830.
Find circumstances: grave/Warrior.
Deposition: History Museum Săcueni, inv. no. 546 (the object was sent to the Archaeological Museum of Bucharest, untraced).

3. Valea lui Mihai (jud. Bihor) – Rétalj
B.a.3.1. Iron backsword with a single-edged straight blade (Fig. 3: 2). Placed on the left of the human skeleton, from the shoulder down to the waist. The cross-guard is made of a transversal iron rod. The hilt ends in an iron semicircle with prolonged ends that were fixed on the hilt rod. At the time of its discovery the imprints of the wood scabbard were still visible. Dimensions: L = 93 cm; I_{hilt} = 10.2 cm.
Find circumstances: Grave/Warrior.
Bibliography: Cosma 2016, 220, pl. 6: 5; Németh 1983, 146, fig. 8: 1.
Deposition: Municipal Museum Carei, inv. ro. 2280.

D. The Romanian Banat
a. Inhumation cemeteries
1. Dudești Vechi (jud. Timiș) – Movila IV
D.a.1.1. Double-edged iron sword.
The blade is straight, wider near the cross-guard, then gradually narrowing towards the point. The hilt doesn't have a cross-guard. The hilt is wide next to the blade, and then narrows gradually towards the end, where a rivet was fixed. The traces of the wooden plates that were fixed on the iron grip are preserved. Dimensions: L = 100 cm; W_{blade next to the hilt} = 5.2 cm; W_{blade at the point} = 2.5 cm; I_{hilt} = 12.4 cm; W_{hilt next to the blade} = 2.9 cm; W_{hilt's end} = 1.6 cm.
Datation: Early Avar period (?).
Find circumstances: Grave 2/Warrior buried with horse.
Bibliography: Kisligői Nándor 2015, 123, 124; Mare 2004, 116; Tănase 2015, 220, pl. 1. A; Tănase/Gál 2012, 705.
Deposition: Museum of Banat Timişoara.

2. Sânpetru German (jud. Arad) – Magazin
D.a.2.1. Iron backsword with a straight single blade (Fig. 5: 3). From it are preserved the blade (in two fragments) and a small part of the hilt. The blade narrows towards both ends. The backsword was found on the left of the waist. Dimensions: L = 90 cm; W = 3.1 cm; Wg = 0.7 cm.
Find circumstances: Grave/Warrior.
Deposition: Museum Complex Arad.

3. Timişoara (town, jud. Timiş) – Podul Mođoș
D.a.3.1. Iron backsword, with a single-edged straight blade (Fig. 5: 4). It has a ring-shaped cross-guard. Dimensions: L = 63 cm; I_{hilt} = 57 cm; W_{blade} = 4 cm.
Datation: 720–800/830.
Find circumstances: Grave 1 or 2/Warrior.
Deposition: Museum of Banat Timişoara, inv. no. 8460.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cosma 2016 – C. Cosma: Avar Warriors in North-West Romania during the 7th–8th Centuries. Notes on the
Štúdia prináša detailný prehľad všetkých mečov, šablí a jednoostrých mečov zo 7.–8. stor. objavených v Sedmohradsku, Maramureši a v rumunskom Banáte (obr. 1), ktoré boli publikované v rumunských odborných textoch, prípadne ešte publikované neboli.

V západnom Rumunsku sa dosiaľ jediný meč bol objavený v avarskom kostrovom hrobe v Dudeştii Vechi (obr. 3: 1) v rumunskom Banáte. Používal ho avarský bojovník, ktorý bol, podľa dostupných analógií a skladby nálezov objavených v hrobe, aktívny v prvej polovici 7. stor. Šable sa našli na avarských pohrebiskách Cicău (obr. 4: 4) a Teiuș (obr. 5: 2, 3) v Sedmohradsku, pričom šabľa z Cicău je relatívne dobre zachovaná. Obe šable sa našli v hroboch avarských bojovníkov. Obe pohrebiská aj konkrétne hroby sú datované do stredného stupňa doby avarského kaganátu (650/670 – 710/720).

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Typologicky sú jednoostré meče zo západného rumunska, triedené na základe rukoväte a záštity (obr. 6). Spomedzi jednoostrých mečov objavených na náleziskách noslac (obr. 4: 1) a Spiłnaca (obr. 4: 3) sa zachovali len rovné čepele s jedným ostrím. Preto je ich typologické učenie na základe rukoväte a záštity nemožné. Nálezy zo západného Rumunska sa triedia nasledovne:

III.1 Jednoostrý meč s rukoväťou bez záštity
Podľa dekorácie na rukoväti sa rozlišujú dva typy jednoostrých mečov:


III.1.b Jednoostrý meč s jednoduchou nezdobenou rukoväťou – jednoostré meče tohto typu boli objavené v Dindești (obr. 3: 1), Sfântu gheorghe (obr. 5: 1), Teiuș (obr. 5: 2, 3) a Sânpetru german (obr. 3: 3). Meče z lokalít Teiuș a Sfântu gheorghe sú datované do stredného stupňa obdobia avarského kaganátu, zatiaľ čo zbraň z Dindești sa datuje do neskorého stupňa obdobia Avarského kaganátu.

III.2 Jednoostrý meč s úzkou tyčinkovou rukoväťou a záštitou pripevnenou kolmo na čepeľ, s kosoštvorcovou strednou časťou, ktoré osťre konce smerujú k čepeli a rukoväti
Meč nájdený na lokalite Aiudul de Sus má tyčinkovú zástitu s kosoštvorcovou strednou časťou s ostrými koncami smerujúcimi k čepeli a rukoväti. Tyčinkové telo rukoväte je zlomené priamo nad zástitou (obr. 4: 2). Na základe archeologických nálezov, ktoré sú s ním spojené, sa meč datuje do stredného stupňa obdobia Avarského kaganátu.

III.3 Jednoostrý meč s kruhovou záštitou
Rozoznávame dva typy:

III.3.a Jednoostrý meč s kruhovou záštitou a polkruhovou hlavicou – meč bol objavený vo Valea lui Mihai (obr. 3: 2). Jeho záštita kruhová, rukoväť je ukončená polkruhovou železnou hlavicou s predĺženými koncami upevenenými k telu rukoväte. Na základe predmetov, ktoré hrob obsahoval, možno nález datovať do stredného stupeňa doby Avarského kaganátu.

III.3.b Jednoostrý meč s kruhovou záštitou a jednoduchou rovnou rukoväťou – meč tohto typu bol nájdený na lokalite Timișoara, v hrobe obsahujúcom artefakty datované do neskorého stupeňa doby Avarského kaganátu (obr. 3: 4).

Pokiaľ ide od geografické rozšírenie, na Sedmohrade ské vysočine meče absencujú. V porovnaní so šablami sa v tejto oblasti vyskytuje viac jednoostrých mečov. V severozápadnom Rumunsku sa našli len tri jednoostré meče. Zo spracúvaného súboru militárií sú meče zastúpené len v rumunskom Banáte, jediným nálezom, kde však boli zaznamenané aj dva jednoostré meče (tabela 2).

Typologické zastúpenie a početnosť mečov, šablí a jednoostrých mečov na archeologických lokalitách je nasledovné: z hodnotených militárií sa v sídliskovom prostredí našiel jediný jednoostrý meč, v interiéri obydlia skúmaného sídliska v Sfântu Gheorghe v Sedmohradsku. Všetky ostatné sečné zbrane zo západného Rumunska boli nájdené na pohrebiskách (tabela 3–11).

Čo sa týka výskytu mečov, šablí a jednoostrých mečov s inými predmetmi treba konštatovať že všetky typy sečných, úderných a bodných zbraní z hrobov boli nájdené spolu s inými druhi zbraní a s časťami kontšého postroja – strmižmi a zubadlami (tabela 12; 13).

Meče, šable a jednoostré meče uložené v hroboch mali svoj symbolický význam. Všetci zosnuli zo západného Rumunska zo 7.–8. stor., ktorí boli pochovaní s mečom, šablou alebo jednoostrým mečom, ale aj s ďalšími zbraňami a súčasťami odevu, sú dospelí muži. Teda dosiaľ žiadny z toho istého pohrebiska, možno majiteľov diskutovaných zbraní považovať za členov avarskéj bojovej elity. Boli to vojenský a politicke vládovia spočinečnosti, ktoré obývali západné Rumunsko v 7.–8. stor.