

THE AVAR-AGE CEMETERY AT SÜKÖSD

by

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North of Baja, connected with the present-day settlement of the village Sükösd situated 14 km far, we can find a loess-ridge named Ságod rising 20 m above the surrounding. In this area, between 1967 and 1969, we performed rescue excavations lasting for shorter or longer periods, on four occasions. 170 graves were opened altogether. The material of graves is medium rich, despoiling and upsetting of graves didn't occur but in a low percentage, and graves without furniture were scarcely found. The 170 graves opened form the South-Western part of the cemetery and may mean only 20 percent of it. Our aim is first of all to elaborate the material anthropologically, therefore we give only a short archaeological evaluation.

On the basis of the cemetery map, one of the curiosities of the excavated area is that the graves of females are generally placed circularly, in the middle with the children's graves while the graves of males are found somewhat farther. Advancing from North-West towards South-East, we may find by and large three groups like these. These are anyway forming a comprehensive whole, without empty areas among them. There occur both sheet and cast girdle sets, although in the first group we found only two graves with a furniture of two sheet sets, in the second one two graves with cast girdle sets apart from four ones with sheet sets, while in the third group there occurred two graves with a furniture of sheet sets and three ones with cast girdle sets. From this phenomenon we can infer some chronological deferment.

The fittings made of stamped sheets are mostly without decoration; we have found some chequered decorations consisting of two parallel lines only on sets made of silver. From the cast girdle sets we have so far found exclusively those of sarmatense decoration. The finds characteristic of the Avar-age relics in Hungary till the end of the 630-es, being as uniform as the long-eared stirrup, reed-leaf shaped pike, harness fittings with fringed trimming¹, have not been found at Sükösd, so far. We have, therefore, to put the beginning of cemetery to the age between 640—660. There are missing also the things typically characteristic of the last phase of the late Avar-age, the belt-ends decorated with lilies the buttons of stamped background with engraved palmettedecoration². In the middle of the 8th century, therefore, in this area burials ceased to get on with. The cemetery may have been used for about three generations and with respect to its general aspect, it can be arranged into type II of our Avar-age cemeteries³.

The collection of the Anthropological Institute of the Attila József University has got the material of 165 graves for elaboration. From that, the number of sub-

¹ Kovrig, I., (1955): Contribution au problème de l'occupation de la Hongrie par les Avars. — Acta Arch. Hung. 6, 163—184.

² Bóna, I., (1957): Az úrböpusztai avar temető. — Arch. Ért. 84, 155—174.

³ Kovrig, I., (1963): Das awarenzeitliche Gräberfeld von Alattyán. — Budapest.

adults and children is 56, that of adults 109. Breakdown by sex: the number of males is 41 while that of females: 68. The series is in a good enough state of preservation, resp. a little below the average, as the skeletons in good condition are representing 32 percent, the crumbling ones and those of subadults and children 68 percent of the material. The breakdown by age of life and sex of the material in good or crumbling condition is contained in Table 1. Owing to the low number of well-preserved crania there were not reckoned any parameters. Keeping in view Martin's prescriptions⁴, we have analysed the metric and morphological characteristics of the series and took into consideration the ten anatomic variations established by Brothwell⁵, as well.

Table 1. Anthropological material of the cemetery at Sükösd—Ságod

Characterisation of the material		Inf. I.	Inf. II.	Juv.	Ad.	Mat.	Total No. p.c.
Fragmentary crania (unmeasured)	Males	—	—	—	9	9	18
	Females	—	—	—	22	16	38
	Undeterminable.....	23	14	5	—	—	42
	Total:	23	14	5	31	25	98 59,4
Well preserved crania (measured)	Males	—	—	—	8	15	23
	Females	—	—	—	19	11	30
	Undeterminable.....	1	5	8	—	—	14
	Total:	1	5	8	27	26	67 40,6
Sum-total: p.c.		24 14,5	19 11,5	13 7,9	58 35,2	51 30,9	165

On the basis of Tables 2 and 3, the crania of both males and the females are characterized of by being mesocranic, the brain cranium of males generally with orthocranic and chamaecranic, that of females with definitely chamaecranic, resp. in case of both sexes with tapeinocranic ovoid skull circumference. The protuberantia occipitalis externa was at males mostly of degree 3, at females of degree 1. On the basis of the attribute transversal-frontoparietal, stenometopia is dominant at both sexes but at females also metrimetopic crania are represented in a great number. The glabella is mostly of degree 4 at males and of degree 1 at females. The face index gives a varied picture at males; of females, however, leptoprosopia is characteristic. On the basis of the upper face index, both sexes are mostly mesene, the fossa cania being medium deep, resp. deep, and there can't be demonstrated, generally, any alveolar prognathism. The eyehole is mesokonch, the nose is mesorrhine at both sexes. The males are generally 165,5 cm, the females 150,5 cm tall. From the anatomical variations we could establish as the most frequent ones: lambdoidal suture or Worm's bones in 9; metopic suture, an anatomically localized phenomenon of the metopic syndrome in 7; torus palatinus as a bony protrusion engendered by

⁴ Martin, R., (1928): Lehrbuch der Anthropologie. II. Aufl. — Jéna.

⁵ Brothwell, D. R., (1959): The use of non-metrical characters of the skull in differentiating populations. — Homo (Supplement), 103—109.

Table 2. Sükösd—Ságod: Distribution of the principal metrical characters

Characters		Males	Females	Total
8:1 Cranial index	Hyperdolichocranic 65,0—69,9	—	2	2
	Dolichocranic 70,0—74,9	3	5	8
	Mesocranic 75,0—79,9	14	15	29
	Brachyranic 80,0—84,9	4	10	14
	Hyperbrachyranic 85,0—89,9	1	1	2
Total:		22	33	55
17:1 Length- height index	Chamaecranic x—69,9	6	12	18
	Orthocranic 70,0—74,9	7	9	16
	Hypsicranic 75,0—x	3	5	8
Total:		16	26	42
17:8 Breadth- height index	Tapeinocranic x—91,9	10	16	26
	Metriocranic 92,0—97,9	3	5	8
	Acrocranic 98,0—x	2	5	7
Total:		15	26	31
9:8 Fronto- parietal index	Stenometopic x—65,9	9	10	19
	Metriometopic 66,0—68,9	7	10	17
	Eurymetopic 69,0—x	6	9	15
Total:		22	29	51
47:45 Facial index	Europrosopic 80,0—84,9	4	3	7
	Mesoprosopic 85,0—89,9	4	6	10
	Leptoprosopic 90,0—94,9	4	9	13
	Hyperleptoprosopic 95,0—x	1	—	1
Total:		13	18	31
48:45 Upper facial index	Hypereuryene x—44,9	1	—	1
	Euryene 45,0—49,9	4	3	7
	Mesene 50,0—54,9	10	11	21
	Leptene 55,0—59,9	1	10	11
	Hyperleptene 60,0—x	1	1	2
Total:		17	25	42
52:51 Orbital index	Chamaeconch x—75,9	5	2	7
	Mesoconch 76,0—84,9	15	12	27
	Hypsiconch 85,0—x	3	15	18
Total:		23	29	52
54:55 Nasal index	Leptorrhine x—46,9	6	10	16
	Mesorrhine 47,0—50,9	10	10	20
	Chamaerrhine 51,0—57,9	4	9	13
	Hyperchamaerrhine 58,0—x	2	—	2
Total:		22	29	51

a postnasal hyperostosis in 3; from the variations of the pterion region the epiptericum bone in 6; the os apicis and os bregmaticum in 1—1 cases. In grave 134, the orbital osteoporosis, i.e., the rarefaction of bone of the eyehole is remarkable. It is an extremely rare phenomenon and its aetiology is unknown. After analysing in details the single characteristics, we have performed also an analysis of the complexes of them, that is to say, a taxonomic analysis according to Pál Lipták^{6, 7, 8}. We would like expressing here our thanks to Pál Lipták for being kindly helpful to us in the taxonomic analysis. (The results of the taxonomic analysis are summarized in Table 4.)

In consideration of the whole area, the individuals investigated are belonging in the highest percentage to the Mediterranean and Nordoid groups. To be sure, the *nordic* (more correctly nordoid) complex of characteristics is not completely identical with the narrow-faced-dolichomorphic, tall-statured characteristics of the population of the late Avar-age⁹ and that of Arpadian-age in the southern part of the Great Hungarian Plain^{10, 11}; in the material at Sükösd—Ságod is namely the

Table 3. Sükösd—Ságod: Distribution of morphological characters

Characteristics		Males N	Females N	Together N
Norma verticalis	Ovoid	14	21	35
	Pentagonoid	7	12	19
	Ellipsoid	1	1	2
	Total:	22	34	56
Glabella	Broca 1	—	20	20
	Broca 2	—	16	16
	Broca 3	14	3	17
	Broca 4	7	—	7
	Broca 5	2	—	2
	Total:	23	39	62
Fossa canina	1. Absent	1	3	4
	2. Slight	9	11	20
	3. Medium	14	16	30
	4. Deep	1	4	5
	Total:	25	34	59
Alveolar prognathism	1. Absent	11	12	23
	2. Moderate	9	11	20
	3. Pronounced.	4	3	7
	Total:	24	26	50

⁶ Lipták, P., (1962): Homo sapiens — species collectiva. — Anth. Közl. 6, 17—27.

⁷ Lipták, P., (1963): Einige Fragen der Anthropotaxonomie. — Anthropos. 15, 149—154.

⁸ Lipták, P., (1965): On the taxonomic method in paleoanthropology. — Acta Univ. Szeg., Acta Biologica, 11, 169—183.

⁹ Lipták, P.—Vámos, K., (1969): A „Fehértó-A” megnevezésű avar kori temető csontváznak emberantani vizsgálata. — Anthropol. Közl. 13, 2—30.

¹⁰ Lipták, P.—Farkas, Gy., (1962): Anthropological analysis of the Arpadian age population of Orosháza-Rákóczi telep. — Acta Biol. Szeged, N. S. 8, 221—236.

¹¹ Lipták, P.—Farkas, Gy., (1967): Anthropological examination of the Arpadian age population of Szatymaz (10th to 12th centuries). — Acta Biol. Szeged, N. S. 13, 71—120.

Table 4. Sükösd—Ságod: Taxonomical analysis

Types (races)		Males N p.c.	Females N p.c.	Total N p.c.
Nordoid group (n)		—	10 (38,5)	10 (21,3)
Cromagnoid group	Cromagnoid-A (cr-A)	5	1	6
	Cromagnoid-C (cr-C)	2	1	3
	Total:	7 (33,3)	2 (7,7)	9 (19,1)
Mediterranean group	Gracile-Mediterranean (m)	3	3	6
	Iranian (i)	3	1	4
	Total:	6 (28,6)	4 (15,4)	10 (21,3)
Brachycranial group	Lappid (l)	—	1	1
	Dinaric (d)	1	—	1
	Armenoid (ar)	1	1	2
	Pamirian (p)	1	3	4
	Total:	3 (14,3)	5 (19,2)	8 (17,0)
Chamaecranial-Europid group (ch. e.)		4 (19,1)	5 (19,2)	9 (19,1)
Mongoloids: Sinid (s)		1 (4,7)	—	1 (2,1)
Sum-total:		21	26	47

cranial index somewhat higher and the stature shorter. This statement is supporting Pál Lipták's earlier supposition that the nordoid element of the Arpadian age can't originate from the nordoid race component of the Avar-age in the 7th—8th centuries¹². The nordoid characteristic complex that appears in the cemetery of Sükösd is characteristic first of all of females, notably those with richer furniture; we may suppose therefore, that these women are not of autochthonous origin. These graves are generally to be found in the North-Western part of the cemetery excavated, in the third group denominated so by us.

From the *Mediterraneans*, there occur only the gracile or classical Mediterranean taxon diagnosed easily as well as the Iranian taxon characterized by low brain cranium and a strongly protruding hook-nose. The gracile Mediterranean race is frequent in the poorer graves.

The *Cromagnoid* group forms somewhat lower percentage than the previous two groups but its importance is not subordinate. We can distinctly recognize the Cromagnoid-A (in one case its gracile variation), apart from the brachycephalized Cromagnoid-C. The Cromagnoid component is also connected with the richer graves, mainly the Cromagnoid-C, occurring mostly in the graves with the sheet girdle furniture.

From the *Brachycranial* group, of heterogeneous origin in itself, the Pamirian, Armenoid, Dinaric and Lappid races are represented with a decreasing rate of enumeration. These components occur both in poorer and richer graves equally, their origin is therefore uncertain.

¹² Lipták, P., (1957): A Homokmégy-halomi avarkori népeesség. — Biol. Közlem, Pars Anthropologica, 4, 25—42.

We have made a separate group of the *Chamaecranic* crania present in our material, under the name: chamaecranic Euroid. These crania are extremely low, having a peculiar protomorphous aspect. In their development some ancient Euroid race may have played a role (Plate 1).

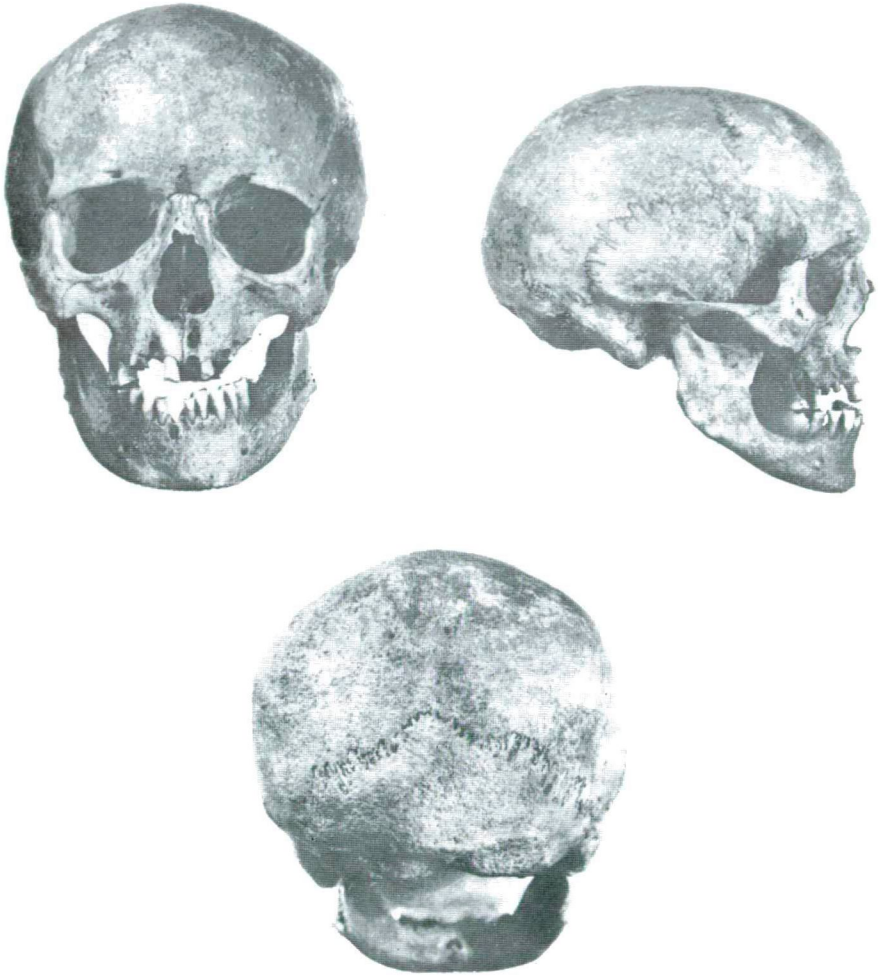


Plate 1. Sükösd-Ságod, grave 163 (6752) from the Avar-age, ch.-e., female

In the material of the cemetery excavated, the *Mongoloid* group plays a fully subordinate role. The cranium of grave 35 shows the characteristics of the Sinid race (Plate 2), and also the crania of graves 95 and 135 are definitely Mongoloid but undeterminable more nearly. In addition, the Mongoloid features can be recognized also on two female crania, as well. The Mongoloid element, appearing in the cemetery at Sükösd is on the basis of the archaeological furniture (in two case

with certainly) from the 7th century, confirming the supposition that period is characterized also by the presence of a Mongoloid component. With that is connected the Asiatic origin of the Sinic type present in our material because on the mandible a mandibular torus can be observed (Plate 3). The mandibular torus is a bony protuberance, occurring bilaterally on the lingual surface of the mandible in the molar

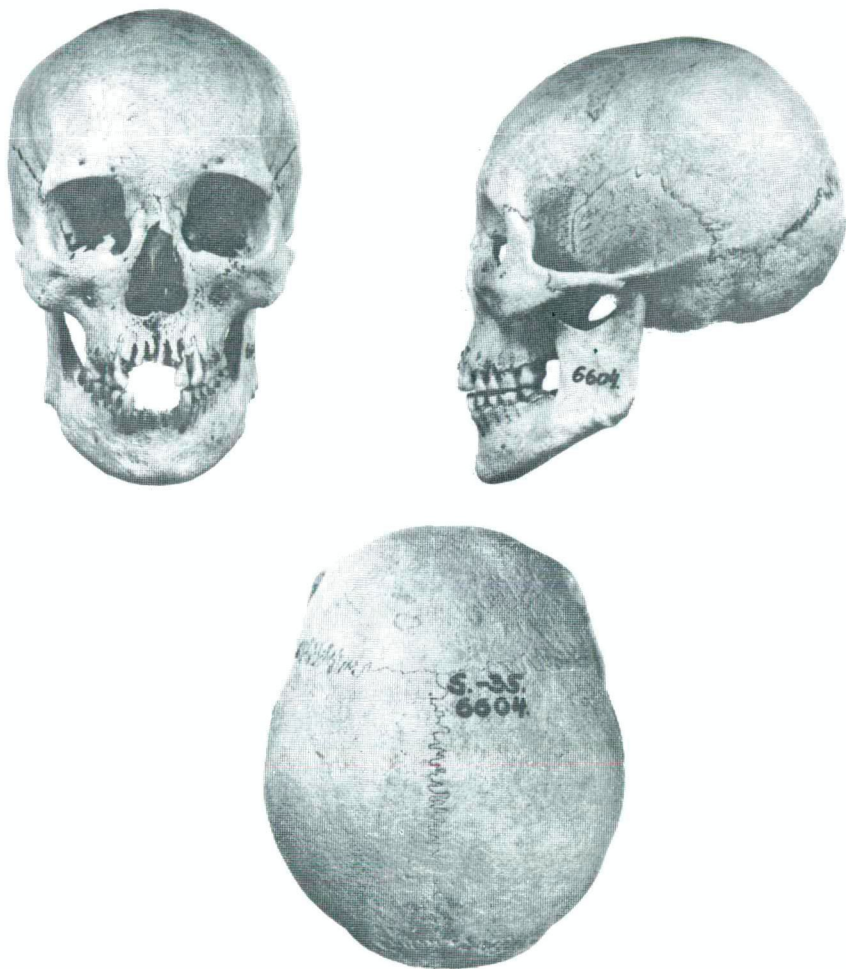


Plate 2. Sükösd-Ságod, grave 35 (6604) from the Avar-age, s, male

and praemolar regions. Its appearance is the greatest rarity, its spread being geographically mostly localized. It usually occurs at the Arctic peoples but it can also be demonstrated on crania derived from prehistoric Chinese phases as well as on recent Chinese crania^{13,14}. This variation has a genetic basis although the way of

¹³ Weninger, M., (1953—54): Ein Unterkiefer aus einem Awarengrab mit Torus mandibularis. — MAG. 83, 209—216.

¹⁴ Weninger, M., (1954): Ein Torus mandibularis am Unterkiefer eines „Awaren“ — Skelettes. — Homo, 5, 178—180.

heredity is unknown. It has enabled us, anyway, to use the study of some individual variations, as well, for determining the biological affinity of historical populations, besides the craniometric and morphological data yielded by the skeleton.

The anthropological data of the total picture of the Avar-age cemetery at Sükösd—Ságod are agreeing with the data of population from the Avar-age between



Plate 3. Sükösd-Ságod, grave 35 (6604) from the Avar-age, mandibular torus, male

the rivers Danube and Tisza, published already earlier from Homokmégy-Halom¹², Kecel¹⁵, and Áporkai-Ürböpuszta¹⁶, although in our material there is a considerable difference between males and females, by reason of a taxonomical analysis. The cemetery being open only partly the low number of the well-preserved material does not allow to draw far-reaching conclusions. We can't decide the autochthonous or non-autochthonous origin of the Europid elements present in 90 percent of the cemetery but we think so that the elaborated material is furnishing new data for recognizing the extremely vivid anthropological aspect of the population of Avar-age.

¹⁵ Lipták, P., (1954): Kecel-környéki avarok. — Biol. Közlem. Pars Anth. 2, 159—180.

¹⁶ Lipták, P., (1951): Étude anthropologique du cimetière avaré d'Áporkaiürböpuszta. — Ann. Hist. — Nat. Mus. Nat. Hung. S. N. 1, 232—259.