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**“TELL ME HOW YOU BURY YOUR HORSE, I’LL TELL YOU WHO YOU ARE.”**

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Funeral practice and social identity in the Avar period.

Horse burial practice has been much extended in the early Middle Ages and especially in Avar period cemeteries. Though it didn't concern the whole society but a very limited part of it, which has been therefore considered as part of the elite. Killing a horse is actually an important economic sacrifice and not everyone could afford it. Several works has shown already the link between horse burial and men buried with a mounted belt or weapons. Nevertheless deceased buried with a horse (or part of it) aren't systematically fitted with abundant or wealthy material. On the other side, the overwhelming part of the horses in Avar period cemeteries are harnessed and fitted, but it's not always the case neither.

The purpose of this communication is to qualify the meaning of both horses' and human deceased' burials and their relationship inside the funeral practices, regarding archaeological finds. The bones assemblage, the material, and the positions of the deposits give some criteria to characterise the burials. Funeral practices are highly concerned by normalisation of ritual and differentiation inside the society. The demonstration played in this ceremony is significant for the people involved in it. We should therefore recognise “standard” or “exceptional” elements, which distinguish the individuals buried, the role(s) of the horse's deposit, as an animal and/or as reified object, it's meaning in the ritual, for the society in general and for the deceased in particular.

**Keywords**

horse burial, funerary practice, social identity, Avar period, early Middle Age, Carpathian Basin

**Note/comment**