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A Grave from Nezabylice, Chomutov District. On the Phenomenon of Inhumation in Stage B1 of the Early Roman Period in Bohemia

Abstract

Půlpánová-Reszczyńska A., Kuljavceva Hlavová J., Ondráčková L., Černochová R., Křivánek R., Radoň M., Půlpán M. 2023. A Grave from Nezabylice, Chomutov District. On the Phenomenon of Inhumation in Stage B1 of the Early Roman Period in Bohemia. *Analecta Archaeologica Ressoiviensia* 18, 131–158

The article describes the discovery of a skeletal grave in 2015 in Nezabylice (NW Bohemia, Chomutov district) at a cremation burial ground, which was dated to stage B1 of the early Roman period according to characteristic metal objects. Today, only four dozen similarly dated skeletal graves are registered in Bohemia, which, together with the early date of acquisition, makes them one of the rarest and most difficult to recognize archaeological monuments in this area. In the given situation, every recently researched skeleton grave from the early Roman period brings a wealth of new and important information about this distinctive phenomenon of burial rite among the Elbe-Germanic tribes.

Keywords: Bohemia, early Roman period, inhumation grave, arrangement and equipment of graves

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1. Introduction

A peculiar phenomenon of the funeral rite is the distinctly rare occurrence of the skeletal method of burying the deceased in the early Roman period in Bohemia. A substantial part of the finds of skeletal graves were already made in the 19th century, and the

lack of any documentation fundamentally reduces their informative value (cf. Břeň 1953; Lichardus 1984; Droberjar 2011). The unsatisfactory situation of the source base is significantly improved by the presented skeletal grave from the early Roman period, explored in 2015 at the contemporary cremation cemetery in Nezabylice in northwestern Bohemia. The find brings

new knowledge not only with regard to the geographical or spatial distribution of the Elbe-Germanic burial grounds, but also with regard to the construction arrangement and artefact equipment of the skeletal graves of the given period.

2. Location and natural environment of the site

The necropolis from the Roman period is located less than 2 km southeast of the village of Nezabylice (Chomutov district, NW Bohemia) at an altitude of 320 m above sea level on the hill of a long and slightly elevated terrace of the Chomutovka River, flowing approximately 1.2 km north of the site, with settlements from the early Roman period concentrated along its course and the right-bank tributary Hačka (cf. Blažek *et al.* 2014, 800–801; Půlpánová-Reszczyńska *et al.* 2018, fig. 8). The exposed landscape position provides good visual control of the surrounding area. The Ore and Doupov Mountains, Džbán Uplands and the vol-

canic hills of the Central Bohemian Highlands are in viewing distance of the locality (Fig. 1).

Locality lies in the area of Žatecká pánev and in the Blažimská plošina district. It is a rugged upland formed by erosion-accumulation processes of the Eger River and its left tributaries (Lorber 1998, 18–28; Demek and Mackovčín (eds.) 2006, 72; Bína and Demek (eds.) 2012, 121–123). The predominant local rocks form quaternary eolic loess and ochre clay loam, to a lesser extent also clays, sands and sandy clays (http://mapy.geology.cz/geocr_50/). According to field observations, the subsoil at the site of the site consists of compact dense orange-ochre clay with black veins. The topsoil has a thickness of about 30 cm. With regard to pedological conditions, the local soils are among the heavy soil types, from brown to black ground. The area falls between the beech-oak and oak-beech vegetation stages with the occurrence of thermophilus plant species. With regard to the climatic conditions, it is a warm area with low summer precipitation (Lorber 1998, 26, 29; Demek and Mackovčín (eds.) 2006, 17–18, 72).

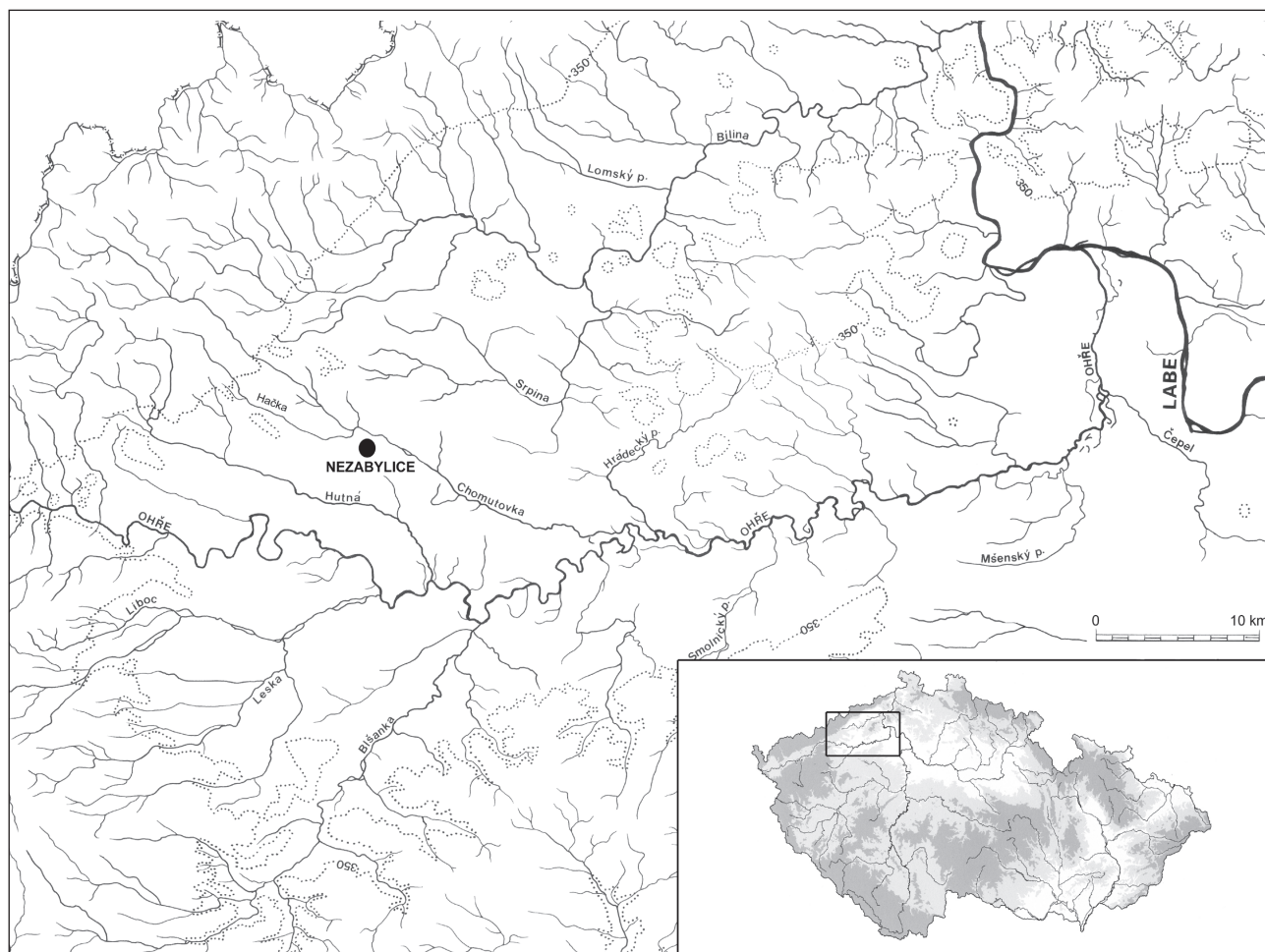


Fig. 1. Location of Nezabylice, Chomutov district, north-west Bohemia (map modified by M. Sýkora).

3. Circumstances of the finding

The cemetery of the Roman period at Nezabylice was discovered by two amateurs in October 2010, during an illegal survey with metal detectors (Blažek *et al.* 2014, 801). Subsequently, an extensive geophysical survey was carried out, which documented the presence of many dozens of well-defined anomalies, i.e. graves and metal artefacts (Křivánek 2012, 17; 2016, 11; 2017, 14). Since 2012, a systematic field excavation of the burial site has taken place every year, as part of an international Czech-Polish project (Blažek *et al.* 2014; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018). The total area measured by magnetometers is 3.3 ha. The archaeologically explored area is 28.2 ares, which represents roughly 8.5% of the assumed area of the necropolis (Půlpánová-Reszczyńska *et al.* 2017a, 112–114; Půlpán *et al.* 2018, 646).

Nezabylice represents the first modern and systematically investigated burial site from the early Roman period discovered in northwestern Bohemia in the last 50 years (cf. Kruta 1967). By 2023, over 260 archaeological objects have been explored here, roughly half of which date back to the early Roman period. More than 100 cremation urn graves, pit cremation

graves and several other objects are dated to this period. Graves with warrior armor and equipment play a prominent role among them (cf. Blažek *et al.* 2014; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; Půlpánová-Reszczyńska *et al.* 2017a, 115–123; 2017b; Ondráčková *et al.* 2018; Půlpán *et al.* 2018, 646–650; Dobeš *et al.* 2020, 4–5). The skeletal grave presented below, published only tentatively so far (Půlpánová-Reszczyńska 2018, 89–96), represents a rare find at the cremation ground.

4. Finding situations

A skeleton grave from the early Roman period (feature 69) was manifested during geophysical measurement as a distinct, extensive and irregular anomaly with varied values of measured magnetic field intensity gradient (Fig. 2). An additional survey using geo-electrical resistivity measurements confirmed the presence of several other objects in its vicinity. However, non-destructive surveys and field research have not yet confirmed the presence of another skeletal grave from the Roman period (Fig. 3).

Feature 69 was uncovered in 2015 as part of probe IX with an area of 0.6 acre. The analyzed feature was

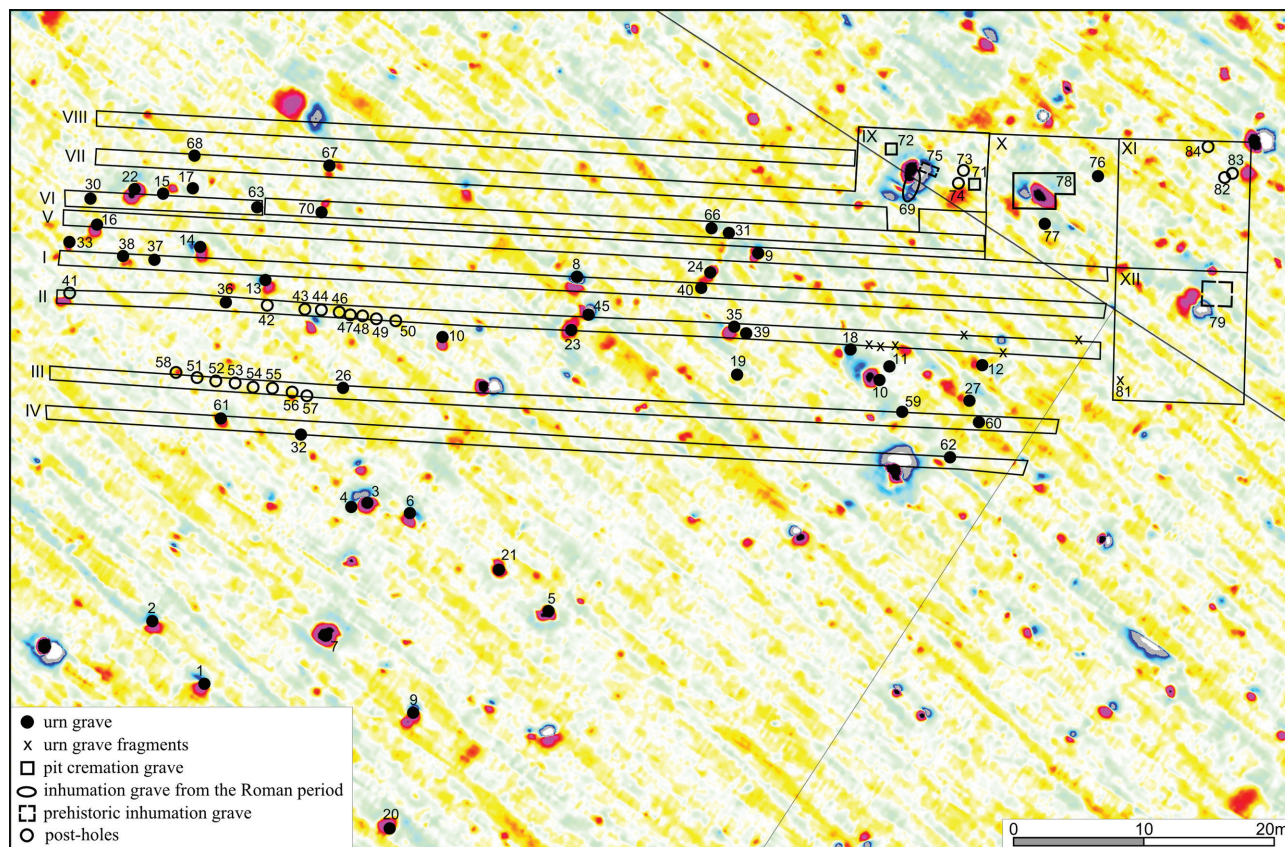


Fig. 2. Nezabylice, Chomutov district. Geophysical measurements and soundings from 2011–2016 on the area of the burial ground (prepared by J. Šály).

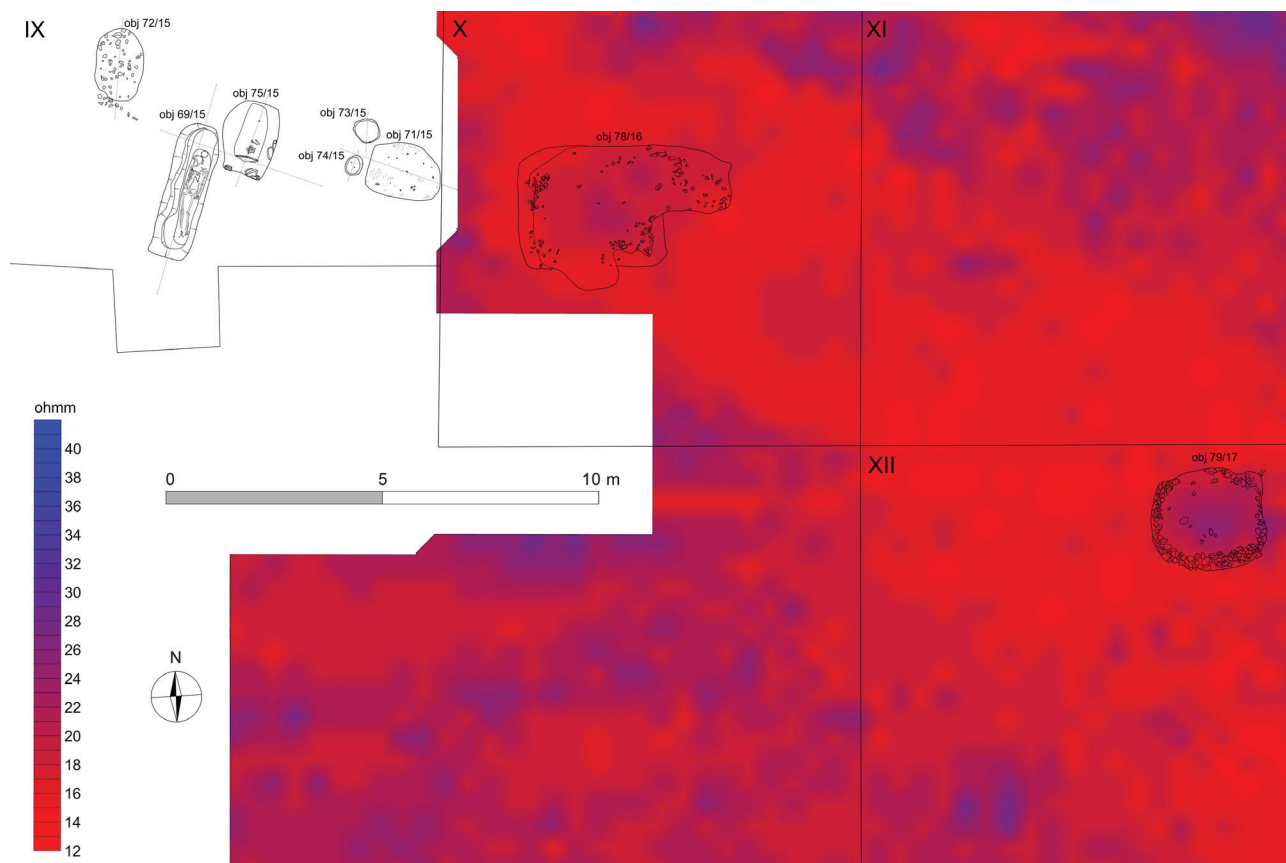


Fig. 3. Nezabylice, Chomutov district. Geo-electrical resistance measurement and spatial distribution of funerary objects in the vicinity of feature 69 (measured by R. Křivánek; prepared by J. Šály).

in close contact with a skeleton grave from the Middle Bronze Age stored in a stone box (feat. 75), respecting its course at a distance of about 20 cm. Several pit graves from the Roman period were also concentrated in its vicinity – features 71 to 74 (Fig. 3).

Grave-pit: Feature 69 consisted of a regular oblong grave-pit with dimensions of 320 × 95/105 cm, which was oriented in the N-S direction with a slight deviation to the NE-SW. The walls of the structure sloped sharply towards the bottom to the final dimensions of the grave-pit 285 × 50/60 cm. From the existing surface of the field, the depth of the feature reached 107–110 cm (Fig. 4).

Stratigraphy: The overlay consisted of a 37 cm thick layer of topsoil. The contours of items 69 and 75 were lined on the surface by a clayey dense and very compact black-brown layer. The filling of the feature was a clayey brownish-rusty, heavily mixed, in places rather speckled layer. A deep brown clay layer was at the bottom. The feature was buried in the underlying dense, compact, orange-rusty clay. The longitudinal profile was tub-shaped, the transverse profiles were bowl-shaped and showed the massive stone lining of the grave (Fig. 4).

Modification of the grave-pit: The interior of the feature was carefully lined with several (at least eight) continuous layers of stones from the surface to the level of the skeleton. The stones were mostly spread over the entire surface of the grave, with the largest concentrations mainly in the northern half and central part of the grave (Fig. 5, 6).

Human skeleton: The human skeleton was laid at the bottom of the burial pit (at a depth of 106 cm) in an extended position on its back, with the head pointing to the north, the feet to the south, the face to the west. The whole body was slightly turned on its axis towards the right side, i.e. towards the western wall of the grave. The upper limbs were placed alongside the body: the left limb, however, considerably higher than the right, which rested partly under the body (wrist and knuckles under the right pelvis). Left radius turned towards the body. The lower limbs, slightly bent outside the body axis, were placed parallel to the SE (Fig. 7).

Anthropological analysis: The examined individual is very poorly preserved and the bones are fragmentary. Based on the dental abrasion, the age was estimated at 30–40 years (adultus II), the sex was not determined

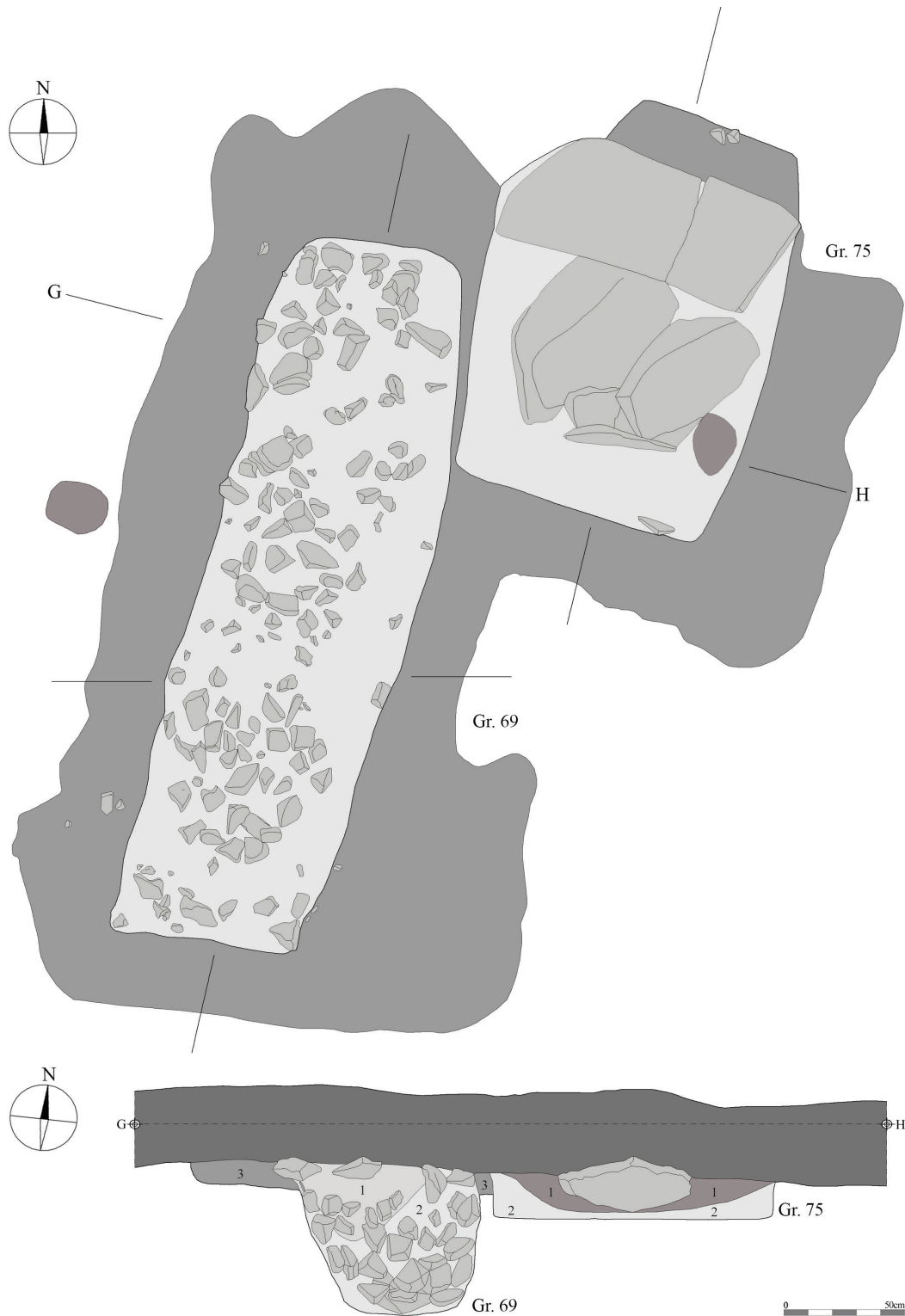


Fig. 4. Nezabylice, Chomutov district. Ground plan and profile of a grave from the early Roman period (feature 69) and ground plan of a grave from the Bronze Age – feature 75 (drawn by Š. Cmunt Martinková).



Fig. 5. Nezabylice, Chomutov district, feature 69. Ground plans of inhumation grave in levels 37–70 cm (drawn by Š. Cmunt Martinková).



Fig. 6. Nezabylice, Chomutov district, feature 69. Ground plans of inhumation grave in levels 80–104 cm (drawn by Š. Cmunt Martinková).

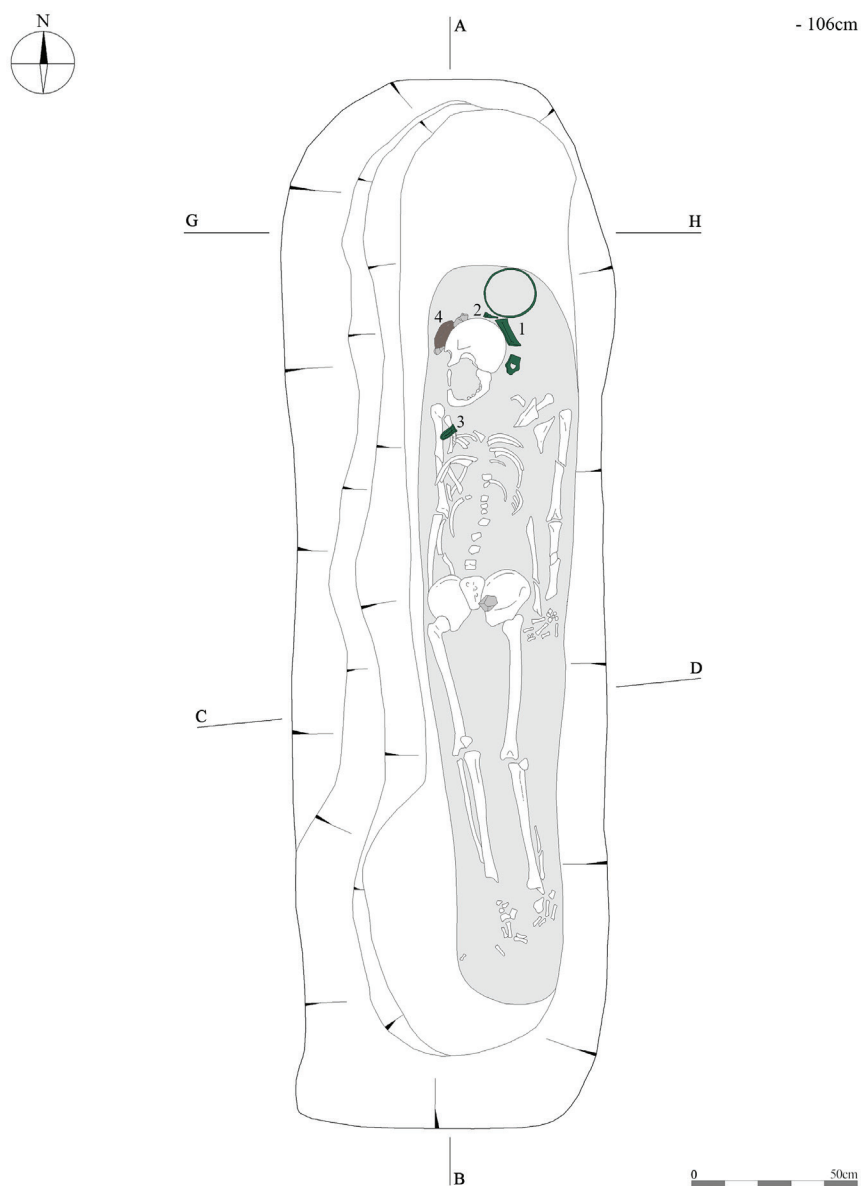


Fig. 7. Nezabylice, Chomutov district, feature 69. Grave-pit with a skeleton and finds. 1 – pan; 2 – brooch; 3 – buckle; 4 – vessel (the numbering of the finds also corresponds to the other images; drawn by Š. Cmunt Martinková).

(according to metric methods, it is more likely a man). Pathological changes were not registered.

Distribution of finds: The grave equipment consisted of four artefacts concentrated in a small area in the northern part of the grave, or around the head and on the chest of the human skeleton (Fig. 8). Between the skull and the northern wall of the grave, a metal pan (1) was placed at the bottom of the grave. The handle was broken into two parts that were located close to the skull. In the gap between the broken off handle and the body of the vessel rested a brooch turned with the winding upwards (2). A belt buckle (3) lay wide open at the right shoulder joint of the skeleton. Frag-

ments of a small ceramic vessel (4) adjoined the skull in the western direction.

Finds: 1. Bronze pan of Eggers 131 type, preserved almost intact, before reconstruction the edge of the vessel was slightly broken, the body corroded and broken into several smaller and larger pieces, the handle was broken off from the body of the vessel and broken into two pieces, bottom pierced. The handle is decorated around the perimeter with a double engraved line and ends with two feathered bird (duck) heads, between which there is an oval-shaped opening, which is decorated at the bottom with six engraved semi-arches. The obverse of the handle is decorated with a stylized thyrus, topped with pine cones



Fig. 8. Nezabylice, Chomutov district, feature 69. Distribution of grave goods near the skull and on the upper half of the skeleton. 1 – pan; 2 – brooch; 3 – buckle; 4 – vessel (photo by M. Půlpán; modified by Š. Cmunt Martinková).

at both ends. On both sides of the thyrsus, tendrils in the motif of ribbons made with the dotting technique (min. 3×2). A pair of stamped rings (2×2) symmetrically distributed between the tendrils. The reverse of the handle is undecorated, without a stamp (cf. Sakař 1965; 1970).

Tinning: a) irregular on the outside of the vessel, a strip 1.7–2.2 cm wide below the edge; b) all-over on the inner side (Černochová 2016, 6, tab. 1). Engraved and pitted decoration: in the upper part of the vessel, from the outside (on the tin strip) and from the inside, several thin and irregularly engraved single and double lines; on the bottom of the vessel, from the inside and outside, a central dimple and turned concentric circles formed by single and double lines. Total height 10.3 cm; outer diameter of rim 16.5 cm; inner diameter of rim 15.5 cm; bottom diameter 11.3 cm; handle length 15 cm; total length of container with handle 31.3 cm; thickness of the tin plate 1 mm; no. 17/15 (Fig. 9: 1; 10).

2. Brooch A 45a, preserved almost completely, catch slightly broken, its part missing, with a broken but preserved needle, winding 3×2 , open eyelets, decoration: belt engraved on the trigger, brooch very corroded. Length 46 mm; weight 14 g; no. 19/15 (Fig. 9: 2).

3. Eight-shaped bronze belt buckle similar to the Madyda-Legutko type AA4, practically intact, only slightly damaged, originally broken into two pieces, with a square clamping plate and a rhombic projection ending in a circular rivet hole, plate undecorated. Dimensions: frame length 74 mm, frame width 27 mm, frame cross-section 3 mm, plate length 60 mm; weight 19 g; no. 18/15 (Fig. 9: 3).

4. Ceramic miniature vessel – most likely a terrine, approx. 1/4 of the upper part preserved, the greater part of the vessel preserved only in individual and very small non-reconstructable fragments, with a reinforced and sharply edged rim, a higher cylindrical neck, which is offset from the body by a sharply edged strip highlighted with an engraved groove, the surface is smooth black matte to shiny, the material is coarse sandy with a greater admixture of mica. Preserved height 3.5 cm; rim diameter approx. 7.5 cm; no. 16/15 (Fig. 9: 4).

5. Evaluation of finds

A set of three metal objects and a fragment of a ceramic object were preserved in skeleton grave 69 from Nezabylice. Significant finds from the early Roman period include mainly metal artefacts made of copper alloy, i.e. a pan, a brooch and a belt buckle. Approximate dating of the analyzed grave is also confirmed by the torso of a miniature ceramic vessel.

The most prestigious find from the grave is undoubtedly the Eggers 131 type metal pan (Fig. 9: 1; 10). Its handle is finished with feathered bird's heads. It is decorated with a thyrsus/thyrsos with pine cones and ribbons, there are a total of four rings on both sides. This motif represents the most lavish way of decorating this type of vessel (Droberjar 2014, 415, fig. 14). In addition to the way the handle is decorated, its sophisticated surface treatment also testifies to the technological sophistication and care with which the vessel was made. The outer and inner surfaces of the vessel were for the most part meticulously tinned (cf. Droberjar and Frána 2004).

Pans of type E 131 (in German: *Kasserollen mit Schwanenkopfbügel* after Motyková-Šneidrová 1963, 45; “bronze dipper with duck's head” after Sakař 1970, 33) belong to the most widespread types of bronze vessels in Bohemia from the 1st half of the 1st century

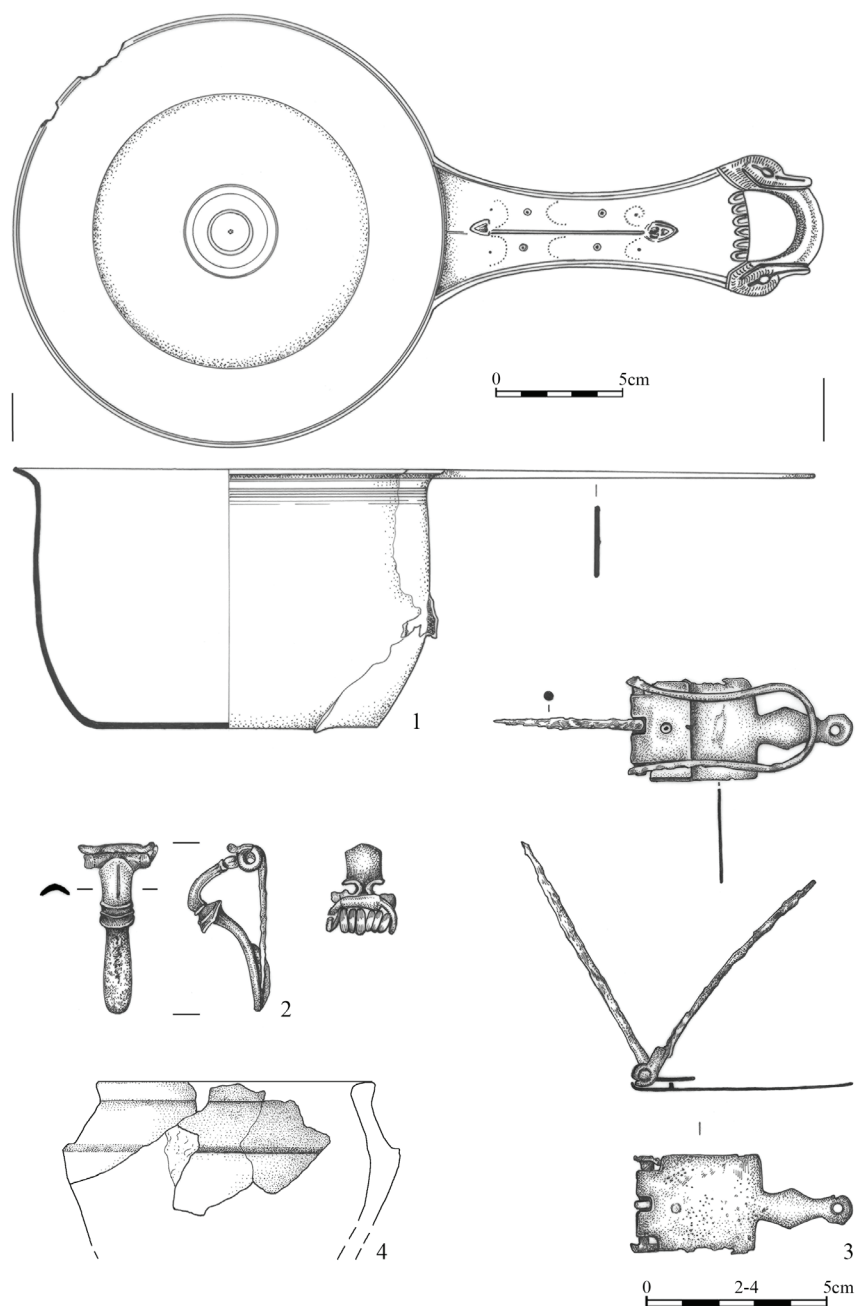


Fig. 9. Nezabylice, Chomutov district, findings from feature 69.

1 – pan; 2 – brooch; 3 – buckle; 4 – vessel. 1–3: bronze; 4: ceramics (1–3: drawn by A. Waldhauserová; 4: drawn by H. Jonášová; modified by Š. Cmunt Martinková).

AD (Eggers 1965, 31, 34–35, fig. 5; Sakař 1965; 1970; Karasová 1998, 29–32, map XII; Droberjar 2014, 415). Recently, a total of 32 vessels of this type at 13 locations were known from Bohemia (Droberjar 2007, 45, 62–63, tab. 4, 5; 2014, 415). Within the Central European Barbaricum, pans of type E 131 are also relatively common, and their greatest occurrence is concentrated mainly in the regions of the Czech basin (Eggers 1951; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963a, 404, 406; Eggers 1965, 31, 34–35, fig. 5; Tejral 1967, 122; 1970, fig. 24;

Karasová 1998, 29–32, map XII; Jílek 2012, 70–72; Droberjar 2014, 415; Schuster 2016, 129–133, fig. 9). In addition to Bohemia, the course of the Elbe and the lower course of the Odra, individual specimens are found in SW Slovakia or, quite rarely, in Polish Mazovia (cf. Schuster 2016, 130, 133, fig. 9).

Pans of type E 131 found in Central European Barbaricum are mainly from stage B1 of the early Roman period (e.g. Karasová 1998, 29–32; Jílek 2012, 70–72; Schuster 2016, 129). Pans of this type from cre-

mation graves 34 and 69 in Sládkovičovo (Galanta district) together with brooches with eyelets of type A 45 were considered by T. Kolník to be accompanying finds defining the earliest stage B1a in southwestern Slovakia (Kolník 1971, 511, 513, fig. 12, 14; 1980; also Kraskovská 1976, 431, fig. 2: 12). According to J. Tejral (1967), the E 131 type pans were dated to the 1st half of the 1st century AD and were included in the first phase of imports flowing into Czech territory (Tejral 1967, 93–94, 121–122, fig. 6: 1–3). The pans became an important find, which made it possible to compare Moravian finds with Czech ones, i.e. with phase II of stage B1 according to K. Motyková-Šneidrová (according to Tejral 1970, 138, 146; cf. Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b; Kolník 1971, 513). Most often, authors date them more precisely to the Augustan-Tiberian period (cf. Sakař 1994, 24; Karasová 1998, 31; Jílek 2012, 71; Schuster 2016, 129). On the other hand, it must be mentioned that some specimens of E 131 pans may have had – like other Roman imports – relatively long periods of circulation in the regional areas of Barbaricum (Schuster 2010, 215–223; 2016, 129–130).

However, the ornament on the handle of the vessel from Nezabylice belongs to one of the most impressive ways of decorating this type of vessel in Bohemia (Fig. 11: 9; cf. Droberjar 2014, 415–417, fig. 14). Pans with the motif of Dionysus's stick – i.e. thyrsus – are classified as type E 131b, which is documented in Bohemia only in the case of 11 vessels (list of locali-

ties by Droberjar 2014, 417). On the other hand, the identical motif finished with pine cones, ribbons and rings is documented only in two Czech specimens. The first comes from urn grave 63 from Tišice, district Mělník (Fig. 11: 5; cf. Motyková-Šneidrová 1963a, fig. 19: 8; Droberjar 2014, 416, fig. 14: 5); the other from skeleton grave III/1948 from Prague-Bubeneč (Fig. 11: 1; cf. Droberjar 2014, fig. 14: 1). The last-mentioned specimen is most similar to the vessel from Nezabylice, which is similarly tinned inside and out and also decorated with concentric circles on the bottom (Droberjar 2014, 415, fig. 7). The aforementioned find from Prague-Bubeneč 1948 was included by the author of the last study (Droberjar 2014) in the elite group of graves of the Lubieszewo/Lübsow type and dated to phase B1b of the early Roman period (Droberjar 2014, 425–426, 428–431).

The deceased individual buried in the Nezabylice grave had two parts of their costume made of bronze, namely a brooch near the head and a belt buckle lying on their right shoulder. The brooch has been preserved intact. It has two open eyelets on the head and a wide hook for attaching the string. The brooch bow is banded without accentuated edges in the upper part, decorated with a notched band in the middle. A knot (ring) is placed on top of the bow and the end is slightly rounded (Fig. 9: 2).

This type of brooch belongs to the group of brooches with eyelets identified in the literature by



Fig. 10. Nezabylice, Chomutov district. Bronze tinned pan type E 131 after restoration and conservation and detail of the handle (photo by R. Černochová).

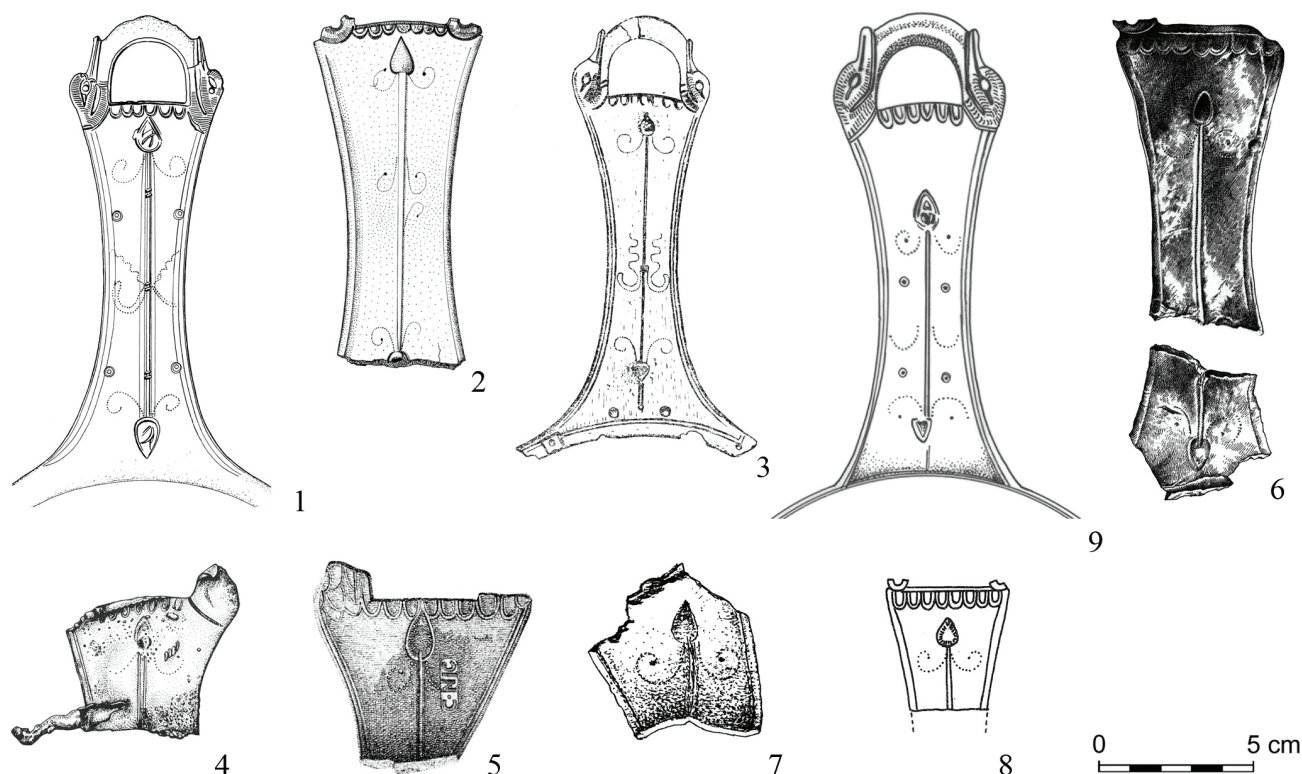


Fig. 11. Thyrus motif on vessels of type E 131.

1. Prague-Bubeneč, gr. 1948; 2. Holubice; 3. Sládkovičovo, gr. 34; 4. Dobřichov-Pičhora, gr. V; 5. Tišice, gr. 63; 6. Třebusice, gr. 560; 7. Třebusice, gr. 587; 8. Hořín; 9. Nezabylice, gr. 69 (amended and modified by Š. Cmunt Martinková according to Droberjar 2014, fig. 14).

the symbol A 45a. It was distinguished by P. Glüsing from Almgren's type A 45 (Glüsing 1968, 59). In later literature it also appears under the name *böhmische Augenfibeln* (Cosack 1979, 59-63) or *klassische Augenfibeln* (Kunow 1980, 160). These brooches are an earlier variant of the A 45 type and are characterized by a less massive and less rounded bow than the younger A 45b buckles. In earlier specimens, the decoration is found less frequently and is at the same time less ornate than in the case of the A 45b brooches (Kunow 1998, 100; Droberjar 1999, 73). For the specimen from the Nezabylice grave, we find many analogies not only in Bohemia, but also in the whole of Barbaricum. In the Bohemian basin there is a significant concentration of brooches of type A 45 and especially variant A 45b, which is why most researchers believe that the production center of these brooches could have functioned on Bohemian territory (Kunow 1998, 101). Their production probably began in phase B1a of the early Roman period, but we can see their greatest expansion in the following phase B1b (Droberjar 1999, 75). From graves in northwestern Bohemia, we know type A 45 from the localities of Louny, Prosmyky, Radovesice, Tvršice

and Litoměřice (Kunow 1998, 114, fig. 6). In addition to Bohemia, the given type is recorded in almost the entire territory of Barbaricum from southern Sweden and the islands of Gotland and Öland, through the Rhineland in the west, the Danube in the south to the Przeworsk culture in the east. Individual specimens are also found in northern Italy (Cosack 1979, map 13; Kunow 1998, fig. 6; Mączyńska 2004, 216, map 1; Droberjar 2014, 420-421). Specimens of type A 45a, which were singled out by E. Droberjar (1999, 74), are represented both in Bohemia and in the whole Barbaricum. As an example, the author of the study cites specimens from graves 126 and 147 from Dobřichov-Pičhora (Droberjar 1999, 74, tab. 71: 126/2, 80: 147/5; 2006, 617, fig. 12: 10).

Analyzes of the co-occurrence of A 45 brooches along with other grave equipment elements showed that this type of find cannot be included either among objects providing the function of a gender marker, or among attributes of social status (Kunow 1998, 111; Łuczkiwicz 2010, 348-349; Černý 2013, 44-45). They occur in both female and male burials, as well as in urn and skeleton graves (Łuczkiwicz 2010, 348-350, 354-356; Černý 2013, 44-45).

Another part of the outfit found in the analyzed grave is a bronze belt buckle with an eight-shaped frame. The buckle was preserved intact, but has an unusually curved frame in relation to the clamping plate, which may indirectly indicate an unusual placement of the belt in the shoulder area. The square-shaped clamping plate is connected to the frame by a single rivet, from which a profiled tab with a rivet hole at the end protrudes (Fig. 9: 3).

The mentioned buckle can be classified in group A according to the R. Madyda-Legutko classification (1986), which is characterized by an eight-shaped frame. It is closest to type 4, which consists of bronze buckles with an elongated, eight-shaped and two-part frame with rhombic cross-section, which is connected to the leather part of the belt with a profiled clamping plate (Madyda-Legutko 1986, 5, fig. 1). The length of the frame varies between 80 and 105 mm, the width 30 mm and the length of the plate reaches 70–80 mm. They can have two or four rivets. R. Madyda-Legutko (1986, 5) included two buckles from Zliv in Bohemia, supplemented by brooches of type A 67, A 26 and bronze vessels E 24, E 30, E 124, E 131 and E 154 (Schulz 1885, tab. III: 1–12; IV: 13–15, 20, 21). Another specimen of this type was discovered in the burial ground at Putensen in grave 150, where it was found together with brooches A 24, A 37 and A 67, and with a late La Tène pointed shield boss (Wegewitz 1972, 84, fig. 35: 188; Madyda-Legutko 1986, 5). The author of the typology places them in phase II of stage B1 (Madyda-Legutko 1986, 5). Belt buckles with eight-shaped frame are known from Bohemia mainly from richly equipped urn and skeleton graves (cf. Droberjar 2006, 626, fig. 20: 8–9, 12, 14; 2014, fig. 11: 1, 16).

The last item from the grave is a fragmented part of a miniature ceramic vessel (Fig. 9: 4). Its more precise typological determination is rather problematic due to the poor state of preservation – it could have been either a small terrine, or a cup (cf. e.g. Droberjar 2006, 610–617, fig. 4–6, 10, 11). Although miniature vessels are certainly not among the common finds of the Roman period, they are confirmed in Central Europe throughout this period, by partial finds in settlements and burial grounds (Krekovič 1979, 414; Droberjar 1999, 48). In Bohemia, they are mainly found in early Roman settlements (Krekovič 1979, 414), cremation burial grounds (Droberjar 1999, 48), but also as part of the equipment of skeleton graves. We have reports of these findings from skeletal graves from Prague-Bubeneč 1929, where a miniature vessel – just like in the case of Nezabylice – rested next to the skull of a skeleton (Horáková-Jansová 1931,

80–82) and recently also in the case of the burial of a most likely adult woman from Prague-Modřany (Zemanová 2016, 914). A general analogy to the vessel from Nezabylice can be found at the Dobřichov-Piřhora site in urn grave 52, where a rare miniature terrine (Droberjar type 20) was dated to stage B1, or to phase B1a (Droberjar 1999, 48, fig. 47: 52/2). The purpose of such small vessels is not exactly known. It is considered that they could have been children's toys/products, drinking vessels, symbolic grave goods, or in women's graves they could have been used to store cosmetic products (Krekovič 1979, 416–417; Droberjar 1999, 48).

6. Construction of the grave

Feature 69 from Nezabylice provides interesting insights into the construction of skeleton graves in the early Roman period. The external surface and above-ground form of the grave can be indicated by the black-brown clay layer that lined the outline of feature 69 along the perimeter (Fig. 4). In addition to the possibility that it was a natural terrain depression, it could be either the remains of a flooded and partly plowed mound embankment or a smaller above-ground grave cover created by piling up excess soil. Unfortunately, due to the close proximity of a grave from the Bronze Age (feature 75), the perimeter of which was lined with the same layer, it cannot be ruled out that this eventual surface treatment belonged rather to a grave from an earlier period (Fig. 4).

Somewhat more clues were found regarding the internal arrangement of the grave-pit. The most striking element in this context is the massive and compact stone lining, recorded practically over the entire surface of the grave in at least eight successive height levels. According to the finding situation in the grave, we believe that the stones were not found in random groupings (formed, for example, when a wooden ceiling and a possible mound embankment collapsed into the inner parts of the grave) but, on the contrary, they clearly show an intentional method of storage. The stones were selected according to their size and shape and regularly laid out in such a way that they fit together as tightly as possible, apparently making their easy removal impossible. This observation concerns mainly the northern half and the central part of the grave (cf. Figs. 5 and 6). The total volume of the stones in the grave was approximately 0.75 m³. According to the geological assessment, these were mainly whitish, yellowish or reddish quartz boulders (pebbles) with a size of 10–15 cm. The source of the boulders was

most likely local fluvial sediments of young Tertiary to Quaternary age. The relic of this early Tertiary terrace lines the entire length of the northern slope of the elevation with the burial ground (Radoň 2015).

The method of storing the deceased and goods brings interesting findings. First of all, the skeleton gives the impression that the deceased was considerably “crammed” into the narrow interior of the grave-pit. The discovered position of the skeleton further indicates that the grave was not filled with earth at the time of the individual’s burial, but was formed by a primary hollow space. This is evidenced not only by the position of the torso slightly turned towards the right side, but also by the left arm with a rotated radius resting significantly higher than the right arm lying under the pelvis, as well as by the lower limbs turned out of the axis of the torso. Based on the situation, it can be concluded that the dislocation of the skeleton most likely occurred as a result of taphonomic processes in the original hollow space (cf. Černý 1995).

Another indication that indirectly suggests the original presence of the hollow space is the distribution of goods in the grave. In the case of the belt buckle and the brooch, their original functional storage can be seriously doubted. Similarly, a damaged bronze vessel with a broken and broken handle and sunken bottom does not clearly reflect the original archaeological situation. However, the detected position of the artefacts can probably be explained by the effect of post-depositional and transformation processes (Kruťová 2003; Droberjar and Waldhauser 2012, 899). In essence, there are only two possible explanations for how these processes took place – either it can be proof of the collapse of the cover (the wooden ceiling of the burial chamber or rather the lid of the coffin) together with the stone lining into the inner parts of the grave, or it can be proof of a secondary intervention in the grave. At the same time, we have certain knowledge for both options. The deep brown clay layer recorded at the bottom of the grave-pit suggests the presence of an internal case made of organic matter in which the deceased was buried. Eight fragments of metal-preserved wood, which were found on the handle of a bronze vessel, attest to it in an exact way. On the basis of the dendrological analysis, pine wood (*Pinus*) and several unidentifiable conifer wood fragments, probably also pine wood (after Kočárová and Kočár 2016), were identified. Unfortunately, we have no clues about the actual form of this box. In theory, it could only be simple slabs on which the deceased could be placed or a monoxylous coffin. However, due to the fact that pine is a quality soft to medium

hard wood, easy to process and usable for construction purposes, we rather assume that it was a closed coffin with a lid, which was assembled from narrow slats, or wider planks. At a certain stage, the lid of the coffin must have either decomposed due to natural processes, or cracked under the weight of the stones and fallen into the inner parts of the coffin, causing the aforementioned movement and damage to the artefacts. The slight shift of the stone lining from the upper parts of the grave downwards is also confirmed by the longitudinal profile of the grave, where we recorded a roughly 20 cm wide and arc-shaped gap between the stone layers.

However, there are also observations indicating a possible secondary intervention in the grave. In the two upper layers of the filling, indistinct traces of a possible secondary intervention were recorded in the area towards the lower limbs of the skeleton (cf. Fig. 5). The disturbance of the grave is also evidenced by the much looser arrangement of stones found in the southern part of the grave, where, compared to its central and northern part, the stones are distributed in less systematic and less dense groups (cf. Fig. 6). Furthermore, given that it is a space where bronze vessels are usually stored in other skeleton graves from the early Roman period (cf. Droberjar 2006, fig. 43; 2014, 401, fig. 4), the possibility remains that it is part of a looter’s shaft, or at least an attempt to secondarily damage or loot the grave. If we take into consideration the deposition of goods in the grave from Prague-Bubeneč 1948 (cf. Droberjar 2014, fig. 4), we find that bronze dipper/pan of E 131 type is placed behind the head of the skeleton, similarly to the case of Nezabylice. At the feet of the skeleton in the Bubeneč grave, there were another three bronze vessels (cf. Droberjar 2014, fig. 4). In the case of grave IV from Straky, a bronze strainer was placed near the head, and a pan of E 131 type together with another bronze vessel rested at the feet of the skeleton (cf. Píč 1905b, 338, fig. 9; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b, 59; Droberjar 2006, fig. 43). The abovementioned fact suggests that in the richly equipped graves with pans/dippers of E 131 type, the concentration of bronze vessels is typically higher near the lower limbs of the skeletons. Therefore, it cannot be completely ruled out that we could have been dealing with a similar situation in the case of the grave from Nezabylice, part of which could have been robbed already in prehistoric times.

The relatively common presence of stones in skeleton graves from the early Roman period is confirmed in Bohemia by relatively frequent but rather fragmentary mentions from field excavations. It turns out that

it was not a geographically limited phenomenon. On the contrary, graves lined with stones cover a substantial part of northwestern Bohemia (documented in the districts of Litoměřice, Teplice, Louny and Chomutov). Thanks to this, we know a large number of graves from the localities of Býčkovice (Michálek 1999, 33, tab. 29), Liběšovice (Franz 1935, 95), Lysec (Anonymous 1858, 140), Radovesice (Píč 1905a, 303; Preidel 1930, 246), Trnovany (Břeň 1953, 526) and Tvršice (Preidel 1930, 264; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b, 64). On the other hand, stone fillings and linings in central Bohemia occur exclusively in the Prague Basin and its vicinity. This is confirmed by excavations in the Prague districts of Bubeneč, Ďáblice (Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b, 13; Droberjar 2014, 398), Modřany (Zemanová 2016, 913–914) and Nové Butovice (Petřišćáková 2014, 272, tab. I), or in Noutonice (Felcman 1900, 17–18). Probably the best building analogy to the find from Nezabylice was provided by the grave from Prague-Nové Butovice, where a stone case was documented (Petřišćáková 2014, 272) and the grave from Prague-Bubeneč 1948, where a stone-filling was preserved (Droberjar 2014, 398).

While stones in ancient Roman graves appear to be a relatively common issue, we only have weak evidence for wooden coffins. A written mention of possible existence of a coffin or plates comes from a grave in Liběšovice (Franz 1935, 95; Břeň 1953, 525–526). According to indirect indications, the presence of a wooden chamber is considered in the grave from Prague-Bubeneč 1948, but no traces of the wooden structure were preserved (after Droberjar 2014, 398). The combination of a pine coffin covered with a lid and a stone lining intentionally placed in several continuous layers in the Nezabylice grave represents one of the most sophisticated structures ever documented in the interior of a skeleton grave of stage B1 of the early Roman period in Bohemia.

7. The phenomenon of inhumation in stage B1 of the early Roman period in Bohemia

The phenomenon of skeleton burials in the early Roman period in the region of Bohemia has been dealt with by a number of authors. Its occurrence was first pointed out at the beginning of the last century by J. L. Píč (1905a, 305). H. Preidel (1930; 1935) contributed to significant expansion of the source base of the pre-war period. The equipment of these graves was described by J. Břeň (1953) and K. Motyková-Šneidrová (1963b; 1967). Detailed analyses were presented, for

example, by R. Köhler (1975a; 1975b) and J. Lichardus (1984). In recent years, E. Droberjar (2006, 650–652, 695–697; 2011; 2014; Droberjar and Waldhauser 2012) has intensively focused on the phenomenon of skeletal burials in Bohemia, as well as, marginally, on the compendium of Bohemian prehistory (Pleiner and Rybová (eds.) 1978, 689; Salač 2008, 93–94).

The genesis of inhumation in Bohemia has not yet been sufficiently explained (cf. Pleiner and Rybová (eds.) 1978, 689–690, 737; Lichardus 1984; Margos 2000, 255, 261; Droberjar 2006, 650). Traditionally, explanations for this phenomenon have been sought in either the cultural-ethnic, socio-economic or ritual-religious spheres (Břeň 1953, 516; Krekovič 1996). The most common consideration in the case of skeletal burials is whether they may have been wealthy individuals, foreigners, envoys, traders, craftsmen, possibly scattered remnants of the native Celtic population, or whether they were an adopted post-Celtic tradition (cf. Břeň 1953, 516; Pleiner and Rybová (eds.) 1978, 689–690, 737; Lichardus 1984, 88–89; Krekovič 1996, 36; Droberjar 2002, 137; 2006, 652; 2011, 16; 2014, 428–431). However, many of these hypotheses have recently been refuted. For the time being, the question of what caused the spread of inhumation in the Central European Barbaricum in the early Roman period cannot be adequately answered (cf. Margos 2000, 261; Ibragimow 2008, 126–128; 2011, 178).

7.1. Criticism of the source base

At the outset, it should be pointed out that a deeper understanding of the issue of skeletal burial and the results of the analyzes is complicated by the a priori incomplete or uncertain context of the findings, stemming primarily from the method of research and documentation, which primarily depend on the date of acquisition of the findings (cf. Droberjar 2006, 651). Frequently, we do not even have very basic data, such as when or under what circumstances the find was obtained (e.g. Pečky: Břeň 1953, 526; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b, 42). We do not even know the approximate date of acquisition for seven graves (17.5%). As shown by the histogram of the development of the source base (Fig. 12), a substantial part of the finds (11 graves; i.e. 27.5%) were made until the end of the 19th century. The largest part of the graves (15; i.e. 37.5%) dates from the 1st half of the last century. In younger periods, we observe a significant decline in them. In the 2nd half of the last century, we record 3 graves (7.5%) and in the new millennium only another 4 graves (10%).

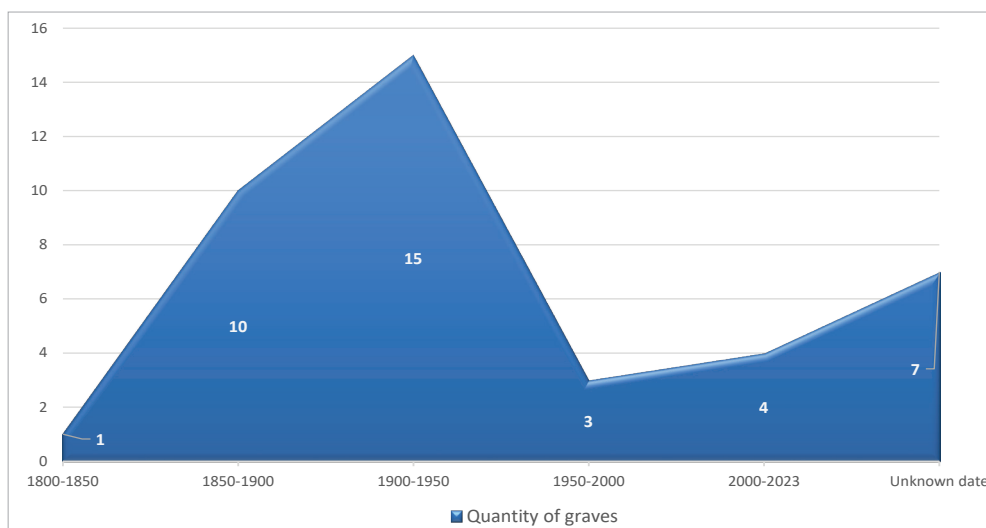


Fig. 12. Histogram of the development of the source base of skeletal graves in Bohemia (prepared by A. Půlpánová-Reszczyńska).

Unfortunately, we have to assess the research method and the method of obtaining most of the findings as unsatisfactory. The vast majority of older finds were made during various construction or mining activities, during which the graves were significantly disturbed and, moreover, largely un-expertly examined (cf. Droberjar 2006, 651). A typical example is Záluží near Čelákovice, where a larger part of the grave in the Líman's brickyard had already been destroyed by mining and the findings were handed over by quarry workers (cf. Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b, 67). However, the disturbance by the construction also applies to some later (e.g. Prague-Bubeneč, Prague-Ďáblice), as well as recently conducted research (Semčice). In recent times, the finds of graves are either related to rescue archaeological research on construction sites (Semčice, Prague-Modřany) or to systematic research of an endangered site (Nezabylice). In 2002, a pair of damaged skeleton graves were examined in Semčice and evaluated in detail (Waldhauser 2004; Droberjar 2006, 696; Droberjar and Waldhauser 2012). The year 2015 also brought an identical increase, when skeleton graves from the early Roman period were examined near Nezabylice (Blažek *et al.* 2016; Půlpánová-Reszczyńska 2018) and during rescue research in Prague-Modřany, about which basic information was provided (Zemanová 2016).

The low level of field documentation is also related to the early dates of acquisition of the finds, while we lack it for the vast majority of older finds. Exceptionally, we have a partial drawing reconstruction of the original find situation (Prague-Bubeneč 1948; Droberjar 2014, fig. 4), or a rough reconstruct-

ed sketch (Noutonice: Droberjar 2002, fig. on p. 216; 2011, fig. 3: 2). If we leave aside the presented grave from Nezabylice and the grave from Prague-Modřany (Zemanová 2016), then only three drawings of terrain situations are known from publications (Poplze: Zápotocký 1969, fig. 12; Salač 2008, fig. 59: A; Semčice: Droberjar and Waldhauser 2012, fig. 3; Prague-Nové Butovice: Petrišćáková 2014, tab. I), with photographs from two sites (Prague-Bubeneč: Svoboda 1955, fig. 1; Droberjar 2005, fig. on p. 817; 2014, fig. 2, 3; Prague-Modřany: Zemanová 2016, fig. 15). All the parameters of the graves, the position of the skeletons, including the spatial distribution of grave goods, are therefore either not known at all in older researches, or we can only deduce them on the basis of diary entries or written references.

A slightly better situation concerns the geographical data of cemeteries and graves. Most often we know the verbal description of a partial location, but sometimes the findings can only be located within the given cadastral territory. However, regarding the physical orientation of the graves and their spatial arrangement, the situation is again quite unfavorable. Plans or approximate sketches of the distribution of graves within the funerary grounds are known from older research only in the case of graves from Býčkovice (Michálek 1999, sketch on tab. 28) and two graves from Prague-Bubeneč (Droberjar 2014, fig. 1), and later on only for the recent research (Semčice, Nezabylice). A number of other problems arise from this situation. Sometimes there are uncertainties in the localities not only in the number of examined graves (Duchcov, several graves: Glott 1935, 24–25; Straky, 3–4 graves:

cf. Píč 1905a, 305; 1905b, 337–338; Preidel 1930, 258; Novotný 1955, 230; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b, 43; Droberjar 2006, 696–697, tab. 3; Salač 2008, 93), but also whether the graves without equipment belong to the early Roman period at all (Tvršice, gr. IV: cf. Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b, 64; Droberjar 2006, 697; Straky, gr. III: cf. Píč 1905a, 305; 1905b, 337–338; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b, 59; Lichardus 1984, 124; Droberjar 2006, 696–697, tab. 3), or whether they come from funerary or other find contexts (Lysec: cf. Anonym 1858, 140; Břeň 1953, 520). Sometimes it is not possible to decide whether the preserved inventories originate from one or more graves (Kutná Hora-Sedlec: cf. Čizmář and Valentová 1979, 146). At the sites where skeleton and cremation burials are recorded (Radovesice, Prague-Bubeneč, Tvršice), we lack certainty as to whether they belong to specific types of graves (Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b, 43, 45, 48, 50, 64; Prague-Michle – brooch with eyelets: Břeň 1953, 526; cf. Neustupný 1930; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b, 46).

The documentation methods are also related to the not entirely satisfactory level of visual recording of movable finds. Most of the time, individual objects are depicted only in a relatively small format on photographic tables and without a corresponding scale (cf. e.g. Preidel 1930; Horáková-Jansová 1931; Glott 1935; Franz 1935; Novotný 1949; 1955; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b), and sometimes there we lack them at all. Detailed drawings of finds on an adequate scale are thus only known from more recent works (cf. Zápotocký 1969; Michálek 1999; Droberjar and Waldhauser 2012; Droberjar 2014; Petrišćáková 2014).

The last problem with analyzes is the sometimes quite uncritical acceptance of some information. As a typical example, in this context, is the alleged skeleton grave from Prague-Bubeneč originally marked as III/1944 (Lichardus 1984, 123), in which the kettle of type E 124, cited and analyzed by many authors, should have been found (cf. Břeň 1953, 519; Novotný 1955, 230, 254–255, fig. 15; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b, 45; Sakař 1970, 30; Lichardus 1984, 123; Droberjar 2006, 696). It was only during the revision of J. A. Jíra's find fund that the origin of the vessel was found at the Austrian site of Wels (Hlava 2010, fig. 21), and therefore this alleged grave was canceled in the last analysis by E. Droberjar (2014, 397, note 1). Although the outlined state of the source base cannot be evaluated other than as unsatisfactory (cf. Droberjar 2006, 651; Droberjar and Waldhauser 2012, 899), we will try to evaluate it in the following paragraphs.

7.2. Geographical distribution of stage B1 skeletal graves in Bohemia

When looking at the Bohemian basin, two significant concentrations with the occurrence of skeletal graves from stage B1 of the early Roman period emerge. The first is located in northwestern and the second in central Bohemia (Fig. 13).

In northwestern Bohemia, we currently have 13–16 skeletal graves in 12 locations. The sites are accumulated within a radius of 25 to 35 km and are concentrated in three separate micro-regions, between which there are relatively large landscape hiatuses (cf. Lichardus 1984, 73, fig. 28). The structure of the sites is determined by the natural geomorphology of the terrain (sites avoid elevations above 300 m above sea level), the main hydrological backbone (the Eger, Bítlina and Elbe rivers), but also a dense network of lower-order streams (e.g. Blšanka, Chomutovka, Hačka, Modla etc.). Micro-regions are represented in an even, or in a practically identical way, which concerns not only the number of graves (4–6), but also the number of sites found within them (4).

The second important area with the occurrence of skeletal graves is the central regions of Bohemia, from where we currently record a total of 13 localities with 22–24 skeletal graves from stage B1 of the early Roman period. The core of the area is the Prague plateau with the largest concentration of sites (center A according to Lichardus 1984, 72, fig. 28). This includes localities from both banks of the Vltava from Prague city districts (Bubeneč, Ďáblice, Modřany and Nové Butovice) and municipalities from the northern suburbs (Líbeznice, Noutonice). In total, 10 skeletal graves were examined at these six sites. The last area is located east of Prague in the central Bohemian plateau, within which we recorded finds on the left and right banks of the Elbe (cf. center B according to Lichardus 1984, 72, fig. 28). There are 4 sites spreading along the left bank of the Elbe (Nehvizdy, Záluží, Pečky, Kutná Hora-Sedlec) with the finds of 6–7 graves. The same number of sites (Kropáčova Vrutice, Lysá nad Labem, Semčice, Straky) with the finds of 7–8 graves are located in the area between the Central Bohemian and Jizera plateau on the right bank of the Elbe.

The geographical distribution of individual skeletal graves and small inhumation cemeteries in Bohemia (Fig. 13) is broadly correlated with the situation of cremation necropolises of stage B1 (cf. Droberjar 2006, fig. 62). It is not without interest that many of the skeletal graves lie on the edges of the oikumene of contemporary cremation necropolises (e.g. Kutná Hora-Sedlec, Kropáčova Vrutice, Semčice, Trnovany,

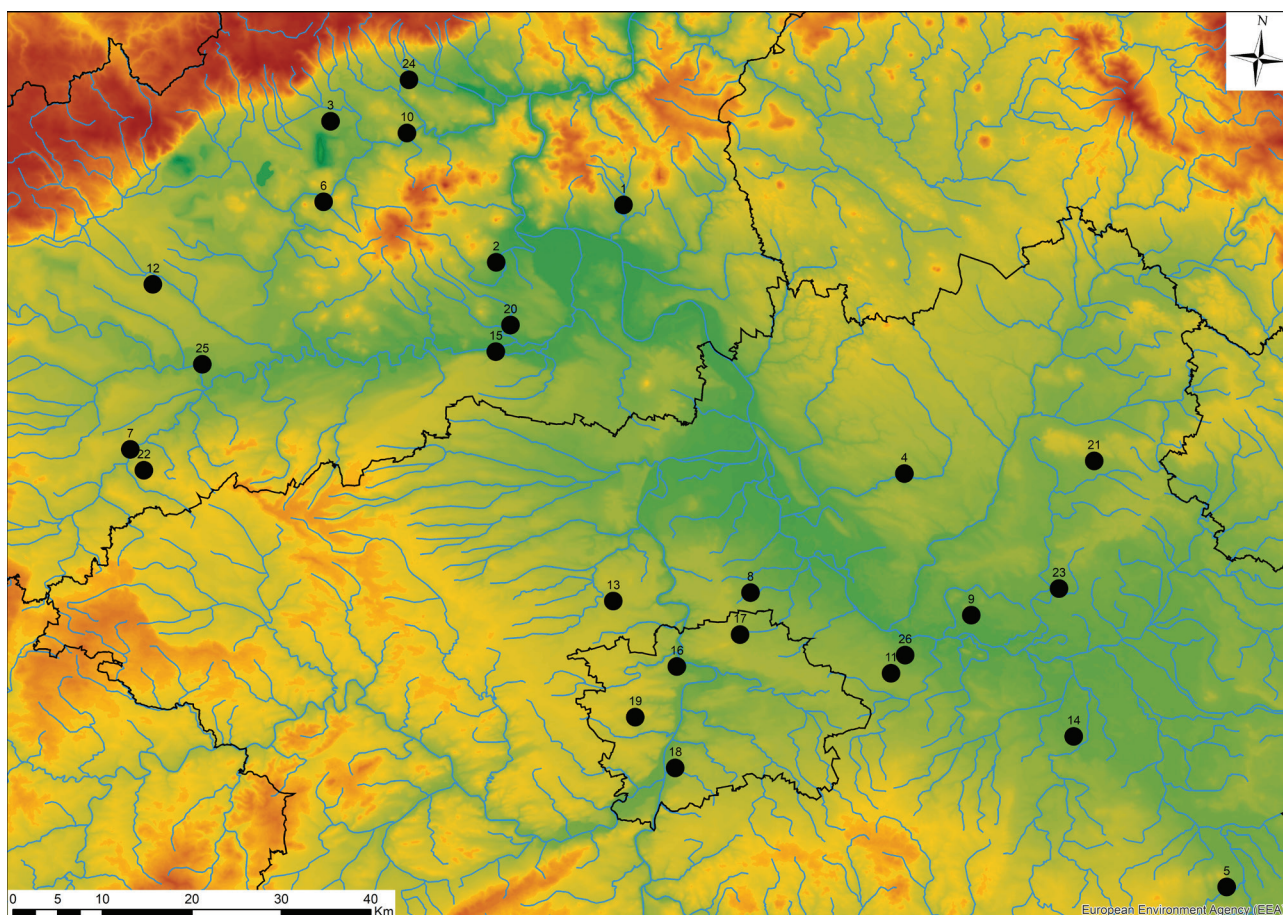


Fig. 13. Spatial distribution of skeleton graves of stage B1 of the early Roman period in Bohemia (the numbering of sites corresponds to the serial numbers in Tab. 1; background map by the European Environment Agency; prepared by J. Šály).

1. Býčkovice (Litoměřice district); 2. Čížkovice (Litoměřice district); 3. Duchcov (Teplice district); 4. Kropáčova Vrutice (Mladá Boleslav district); 5. Kutná Hora-Sedlec (Kutná Hora district); 6. Liběšice (Most district); 7. Liběšovice (Louny district); 8. Líbeznice (Prague-East district); 9. Lysá nad Labem (Nymburk district); 10. Lysec (Teplice district); 11. Nehvizdy (Prague-East district); 12. Nezabylice (Chomutov district); 13. Noutonice (Prague-West district); 14. Pečky (Kolín district); 15. Poplze (Litoměřice district); 16. Prague-Bubeneč (Prague 6 district); 17. Prague-Ďáblice (Prague 8 district); 18. Prague-Modřany (Prague 4 district); 19. Prague-Nové Butovice (Prague 13 district); 20. Radovesice (Litoměřice district); 21. Semčice (Mladá Boleslav district); 22. Sírém (Louny district); 23. Straky (Nymburk district); 24. Trnovany (Teplice district); 25. Tvršice (Louny district); 26. Záluží (Prague-East district).

Nezabylice). However, the question remains of how to interpret this phenomenon – whether to consider it as a reflection of the structure of funeral grounds or rather the current state of research.

The Nezabylice find represents the westernmost inhumation grave of the given period within the Bohemian basin (Fig. 13: 12). In the immediate vicinity of the analyzed locality there is a grave/graves in Tvršice (Fig. 13: 25; Preidel 1930, 264; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b, 64; 1965; Lichardus 1984, 124; Droberjar 2006, 697), Liběšovice (Fig. 13: 7; Franz 1935, 95, fig. VI; Břeň 1953, 525–526; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b, 29; Lichardus 1984, 123; Droberjar 2006, 696) and in Sírém (Fig. 13: 22; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b, 53; Lichardus 1984, 124; Droberjar 2006, 696). An equally important finding is that the inhumation grave from

Nezabylice – similarly to the grave/graves in Tvršice or Býčkovice – was located near cremation graves (cf. Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b, 64; 1965; Michálek 1999, tab. 29). The mentioned sites prove that stage B1 skeletal graves are also found in contemporary cremation necropolises in some cases, which has long been disputed (cf. Droberjar 2006, 650; 2014, 430–431). No less important is the fact that the graves at three nearby locations (Liběšovice, Tvršice, Nezabylice) have an analogous construction, the common feature of which is stone lining and sometimes the presence of a wooden coffin (Liběšovice: cf. Franz 1935, 95). The mentioned findings indicate that the area of the middle course of the Eger (Ohře) represents an important micro-region of the early Roman period, which may have some specific manifestations of funeral rites.

7.3. Basic parameters of the graves

Until now we have recorded approximately 40 finds of skeletal graves from stage B1 of the early Roman period, originating from 26 sites (Tab. 1). After deducting the uncertain assemblages without equipment (Straky gr. III, Tvršice gr. IV, Liběšovice second burial) we can count 37 sets (cf. Droberjar 2006, 650, 695–697). Compared to previously recorded finds, there was a slight increase in the source base. If we take into consideration that roughly 566 cremation graves from stage B1 were recorded in Bohemia (Droberjar 2006, 645–649), then in comparison to the recently recorded 6.4% (Droberjar 2006, 650), nowadays inhumation is represented by roughly 7% of the total number of all graves of the period found so far (cf. Salač 2008, 93).

Based on the preserved data, it can be concluded that grave-pits with skeletal burials take on either regular rectangular shapes with rounded corners (cf. Novotný 1955, fig. 1; Droberjar 2014, fig. 2; Petrišćáková 2014, tab. I), or slightly irregular up to slightly oval shapes (cf. Zápotocký 1969, 194, fig. 12; Zemanová 2016, fig. 15). A regular narrow and elongated pit was discovered in Nezabylice. In most cases, however, we do not have data on their shape. The documented length of grave-pits ranges from 210 cm (Býčkovice) to 320 cm (Nezabylice), most often falling within the range of 210–220 cm (3×) or 250–280 cm (3×). The width of the graves ranges from 70 cm to 92 cm (4×), then from 95 cm to 110 cm (3×) and only in one case it reaches up to 160 cm (Prague-Bubeneč 1948). If we take into consideration the total surface area of the objects, three categories emerge among them: a) smaller graves with an area of approx. 1.5 to 2.25 m² (Poplze, Býčkovice, Prague-Modřany 2015, Prague-Nové Butovice); b) medium-sized graves with an area of around 3 m² (Liběšovice, Nezabylice); c) large grave chamber, a grave with an area of more than 4 m² (Prague-Bubeneč 1948).

Depending on the depth, the following categories of graves can be distinguished: a) shallow graves deepened to a level of 30–40 cm (4×); b) the most numerous group is represented by moderately sunken graves with levels of 50–75 cm (7×); c) deep graves with a bottom at a level between 100–150 cm (4×). We do not include here the uncertain case from Záluží, where the bottom of the grave was supposed to reach up to 285 cm.

A very variable parameter is the orientation of grave-pits, which can be divided into at least three groups: a) graves oriented along the longer wall in the E-W direction (11×); b) graves with direct north-

south orientation (5×); c) graves with a north-south orientation with a deviation to NNE-NE (7×). The orientation of burials, which naturally depends on the overall orientation of the grave-pit, is even more varied: a) skeleton with head to the west (at least 7×); b) head to the east (Kutná Hora-Sedlec); c) head to the north/northeast (4×); d) head to the southwest (2×). The variability of differently oriented graves (W-E; N-S) is documented even within one burial ground (Noutonice).

De facto in all graves, a typical stretched position of the skeletons was found, resting on their backs with the upper limbs laid mostly along the body (cf. Droberjar 2014, 400). Only in probably two cases was the left upper limb bent at the elbow (Horáková-Jansová 1931, 80). The lower limbs also mostly lay stretched, only in one case they were found in crossed position (Noutonice, gr. 7: Felcman 1900, 18; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b, 6). A special way of depositing the deceased is mentioned in the case of Radovesice, where the skull was supposed to have been placed in a bronze bowl (Pič 1905a, 303) and Noutonice gr. 7, where the fingers of the lower limbs were supposed to be reaching into a ceramic container (Felcman 1900, 18).

Vast majority of graves were prepared for just one individual. Only in the case of Liběšovice it can be considered whether it was a simultaneous double burial (the second individual without goods was placed in some kind of niche?) or rather an additional burial in superposition with the older one (cf. Franz 1935, 95). The situation in Býčkovice is sometimes interpreted as a bi-ritual burial (Droberjar 2011, 14, fig. 2; 2014, 430–431), however, the direct connection of the urn together with the skeleton burial seems rather problematic (compare the original description of the finding situation of gr. 4/ 1902 from J. Szombathy's diary no. 66 of 16 October 1902: see Michálek 1999, 33).

On the question of who was buried in the skeletal graves of the early Roman period, we would primarily expect useful data from anthropological analyses. However, we must consider that there are currently only eight specialized analyzes conducted, representing only 20% of all identified skeletal burials. On this basis, it can be claimed that in the graves analyzed, mostly adult male (up to 6×) and female (up to 3×) individuals were buried, exceptionally also an infant (1×). Individuals buried in Nezabylice, Prague-Bubeneč 1948 (Kuželka 2014), Semčice gr. 16/02 (Stránská 2012), a robust individual from Prague-Nové Butovice (Petrišćáková 2014), in the Noutonice gr. 6 (Droberjar 2002; 2015), and perhaps also an individual from Kutná Hora-Sedlec (Leminger 1909, 78–79)

Table 1. Basic data on skeletal graves of stage B1 of the early Roman period in Bohemia.

No.	Location	Feat./ date	Dimension [cm]	Depth [cm]	Orientation	Position/ head	Sex/Age	Bronze wessel	Belt	Brooch	Bibliography
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	Býčkovice	4	210 × 80	?	W-E	dorsal W	?			2× A54a; A2aI	Michálek 1999; Droberjar 2006
2	Čížkovice	1898	?	?	?	?	?			eyelets	Preidel 1930; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b; Lichardus 1984; Droberjar 2006
3	Duchcov	few graves	?	?	?	?	?			A236	Glott 1935; Břeň 1953; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b; Lichardus 1984; Droberjar 2006
4	Kropáčova Vrutice	1882	?	?	W-E	W	?	E 131	buckle AA17	4× A45; A19aII; 2× stolen	Červinka 1884; Pič 1905a; Břeň 1953; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b; Lichardus 1984; Waldhauser and Košnar 1997; Droberjar 2006
5	Kutná Hora-Sedlec	1887	?	?	E-W	dorsal E	male?		5× fittings	2× A45	Pič 1905a; Leminger 1909; Břeň 1953; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b; Droberjar 2006
		1887?	?	?	?	?	?		buckle AA5		Čižmář and Valentová 1979; Droberjar 2006
6	Liběšice	?	?	?	?	?	?			2× A19a	Preidel 1930; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b; Lichardus 1984; Droberjar 2006
7	Liběšovice	1933	280 × 110	60	?	dorsal	two individuals			A2b	Franz 1935; Břeň 1953; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b; Lichardus 1984; Droberjar 2006
8	Líbeznice	?	?	?	?	?	?			A19aII; A24	Břeň 1953; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b; Lichardus 1984; Droberjar 2006
9	Lysá nad Labem	?	?	?	?	?	?			A 237c	Břeň 1953; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963; Sakař 1970; Lichardus 1984; Droberjar 2006
10	Lysec	1858	?	?	?	?	?	E131, 124			Anonymous 1858; Břeň 1953; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b; Sakař 1970; Lichardus 1984; Droberjar 2006
11	Nehvizdy	1	?	?	?	1×dorsal	?			A236b; A19aII	Preidel 1930, 203; Břeň 1953; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b; Lichardus 1984; Droberjar 2006
		2	?	?	?	2×on the side	?			A45b; A67	
		3	?	?	?		?			A236b	
12	Nezabylice	69/2015	320 × 105	110	NE-SW	dorsal N	>male 30–40	E 131	buckle AA4	A45a	Blažek <i>et al.</i> 2016; Půlpánová-Reszczyńska <i>et al.</i> 2017a; Půlpán <i>et al.</i> 2018; Půlpánová-Reszczyńska 2018
13	Noutonice	6	?	60	W-E	dorsal	male 40–50			A48; Vippachedelh.	Felcman 1900; Pič 1905a; Břeň 1953; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b; Lichardus 1984; Droberjar 2002; 2006
		7	?	40	W-E	dorsal	?			A2b	
		8	?	30	N-S	dorsal	?				

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
14	Pečky	?	?	?	?	?	?			eyelets	Břeň 1953; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b; Lichardus 1984; Droberjar 2006
15	Poplze	VI/1962	217 × 92	50/55	W-E	dorsal W	female			2× A2aII	Zápotocký 1969; Lichardus 1984; Droberjar 2006
16	Prague- Bubeneč	1929	?	60	SW-NE	dorsal SW	female?		buckle G9	3× A49	Horáková-Jansová 1931; Novotný 1955; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b; Lichardus 1984; Droberjar 2005; 2006
		1942	?	?	?	?	?	bowl	buckle AA1 end B1	A45; A19aII	Novotný 1955; Břeň 1953; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963; Lichardus 1984; Droberjar 2005; 2006; 2014
		1948	260 × 160	120	SW-NE	dorsal SW	>male 30–40	E 92, 124, 131, 154	2× belts	3× A45, A24, 2× TKF Ib1-2	Novotný 1949; 1955; Břeň 1953; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b; Lichardus 1984; Droberjar 2005; 2006
17	Prague- Ďáblice	1955	?	150	N-S	dorsal N	?			eyelets	Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b; Lichardus 1984; Droberjar 2005; 2006
18	Prague- Modřany		?	?	?	?	?		end Rad- datz JV	Kost. N-c	Břeň 1953; Motyková-Šneidrová 1967; Droberjar 2005; 2006
		24/2015	220 × 95	?	W-E	dorsal W	female?			3×	Zemanová 2016
19	Prague- N. Buto- vice	10	250 × 90	?	W-E	dorsal W	male matu- rus			A 45b	Petriščíáková 2014
20	Radovesice	1839	?	?	?	?	?	E 69	Voigt C		Píč 1905a; Preidel 1930; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b; Sakař 1970; Lichardus 1984; Sklenář 1992; Droberjar 2006
		1914	?	75	?	dorsal	?		Voigt B	4× (2× A19aII)	Preidel 1930; Břeň 1953; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b; Lichardus 1984; Blažek and Kotyza 1990; Droberjar 2006
21	Semčice	16/2002	?	35	W-E	dorsal W	male? 45–60			A 45	Waldhauser 2004; Droberjar 2006a; Droberjar and Waldhauser 2012
		18/2002	? × 85	40	W-E		juvenis 15–17				
22	Siřem	1911	?	?	NE-SW	?	?		buckle AA1?	eyelets	Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b; Lichardus 1984; Droberjar 2006
23	Straky	I 1904	?	?	N-S	?	?		buckle AA15	2× TKFIa; Kost N-c	Píč 1905a; 1905b; Preidel 1930; Břeň 1953; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b; Sakař 1970; Lichardus 1984; Droberjar 2006
		II 1904	?	?	?	?	?				
		III 1904	?	?	N-S		?			eyelets	
		IV 1905	?	75	N-S	N	?	E 69, 131, 163		A24	
24	Trnovany	?		60	SW-NE	dorsal	?			Kostrz. N-c	Břeň 1953, 526; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b; Lichardus 1984; Droberjar 2006
25	Tvršice	III?	?	?	W-E	dorsal	?			2× A45	Preidel 1930; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963a; 1963b; 1965; Lichardus 1984; Droberjar 2006
		IV/?	?	100	NE-SW	?	?				
26	Záluží		?	285	NE-SW	NE	?			2× ey- elets	Motyková-Šneidrová 1967; Lichardus 1984; Droberjar 2006

can be considered male or rather male. All recognized deceased lived to adulthood (category *adultus*) most often in the range of 30–40 years (Prague-Bubeneč, Nezabylice), 40–50 years (Noutonice), or to senile age in the range of 45–60 years (Semčice). As the youngest of the whole set, there is an undetermined adolescent aged 15–17 years old buried in the grave 18/02 from Semčice (after Stránská 2012, 902), which according to the preserved Jahn 20 type spur is rather considered to be male (Droberjar and Waldhauser 2012, 894).

In the other three anthropologically determined cases, we have confirmed female burials. The first comes from Poplze, Litoměřice district (Zápotočský 1969, 194). The gracile bones, the height of the skeleton of 160 cm and the goods suggests that a woman could have been buried in Prague-Bubeneč 1929 (according to Horáková-Jansová 1931, 80). The skeleton in Prague-Modřany was tentatively determined to be probably an adult woman (Zemanová 2016, 913–914).

From the overview it is clear that in the case of 80% of the finds determining the gender and age of the deceased is basically dependent solely on the analysis of preserved personal equipment or goods, which is certainly not optimal. In the given situation, it is obvious that we will probably not be able to do without DNA analyzes when resolving this issue in the future.

7.4. The equipment of skeletal graves and its storage

The range of objects represented in skeleton graves is very varied and in principle (perhaps with the exception of weapons) reflects similar functional composition as cremation graves (cf. e.g. Droberjar 2006). The predominant category is personal equipment represented by components of clothing (brooches: 65 items in 33 graves), body or clothing ornaments (pins: 14 items in 8 graves) and belt components (13 items in 12 graves). Exceptionally, shoe parts are also documented (Prague-Bubeneč 1948). Bronze vessels (13 pieces in 7 graves) slightly prevail over ceramic vessels (up to 12 pieces in 10 graves) among grave goods. Very abundantly (in 5 graves) drinking horns, or their partial fittings and ends are also recorded. The occurrence of tools and objects of daily use is also more common, among them we record iron knives (4×), iron (2×) or bronze scissors (1×) and a razor (1×). Two graves contained parts of outfit (spurs: Semčice, Prague-Bubeneč 1948) and, quite rarely, a weapon (spearhead: Býčkovice). Other metal objects include bronze and iron rings. Rare finds include a bone comb, playing stones, a lump of resin, a ceramic spindle whorl, an

amber bead and a shell. In the following part of the analysis, we focus mainly on similar finds preserved in the analyzed grave from Nezabylice – i.e. a bronze pan, a belt buckle, a brooch and a ceramic vessel.

Clothing fasteners are recorded in Czech skeleton graves in the number of 1 to 7 specimens (Tab. 1). The highest number of them was found in Kropáčova Vrutice, where there were supposed to be up to seven brooches, with only five of them remaining (Červinka 1884, 459). Six fasteners were recorded in Prague-Bubeneč in 1948 (Novotný 1949, 53; 1955, 228; Droberjar 2014, 407, 409, fig. 10), four were part of a grave in Radovesice from 1914. Three pieces of brooches were recorded in four graves (Straky I, Býčkovice, Prague-Bubeneč II/1929, Prague-Modřany 2015). The occurrence of an identical pair in graves was relatively frequent (2× type A 2aII: Poplze; 2× A 19a: Liběšice; 2× A 45: Kutná Hora-Sedlec and Tvršice III; 2× brooch with eyelets: Záluží), also two fasteners of various types. The type A 19aII occurs most often (3×) in this context together with type A 24 (Líbeznice), A 236b (Nehvizdy 1) or A 45 (Prague-Bubeneč 1942). Among other combinations, we can mention the brooch with eyelets of type A 45b appearing together with type A 67 (Nehvizdy 2) or Noutonice grave 6, where brooch A 48 was found together with type Vipachedelhausen. However, most often (15×), we find only a single fastener in the analyzed graves – as is the case in Nezabylice.

Although the brooches are mainly found in a functional position on the shoulders or chest of the skeletons (e.g. Noutonice 6, Poplze, Tvršice, Straky IV, two brooches in Prague-Bubeneč 1929), their location shows a certain variability, which can be attributed to the action of post-depositional and transformation processes (cf. Droberjar and Waldhauser 2012, 899; Droberjar 2014, 419). Probably for these reasons, in some graves the brooches rested on the head (Noutonice 7) or behind the heads of the skeletons (Nezabylice, Semčice, Prague-Bubeneč 1948), or between the lower limbs (Liběšovice). Grave III/1948 from Prague-Bubeneč shows other possibilities of their storage, where two specimens lay near the collarbones, one on the left side of the ribcage, other two next to the right shoulder and the last one behind the head of the skeleton (cf. Novotný 1949, 53; 1955, 228; Droberjar 2014, 401, 403, fig. 4). In this unusual case, it is possible that the deceased man was dressed in a ceremonial costume with more brooches than was otherwise common during the burial ceremony (after Droberjar 2014, 419). A trio of fibulae was a more common part of women's costume, as evidenced by the graves from

Prague-Bubeneč 1929 and Prague-Modřany 2015. Pair occurrence of identical brooches worn on the shoulders, which is one of the typical features of women's Elbe-Germanic costume (Gebühr 1976, 146–147, fig. 130, 131), is confirmed in the Czech context by the grave from Poplze (Zápotocký 1969, fig. 12).

Among the significant finds from stage B1 of the early Roman period are various parts of belts. Including the typical bronze belt buckles with an eight-shaped frame of the Madyda-Legutko type AA1–AA5, or Madyda-Legutko AA15–AA17 (cf. Tejral 1970, 120; Droberjar 2006, 626), which are found in Bohemia mainly in skeletons (Prague-Bubeneč 1942 and 1948; Kropáčova Vrutice; Straky gr. I; Kutná Hora-Sedlec), but even in cremation graves (Zliv: Schulz 1885). Belt buckles in skeletal graves rest most often in their original functional position at the waist of the buried individual (Prague-Bubeneč 1929). In the grave from 1948 in Prague-Bubeneč there was even a pair of belts at the waist, the first was fastened with a belt hook and the second with a buckle (Novotný 1955, 228, fig. 1; Droberjar 2014, 421, 423, 426–427, fig. 3, 11, 16). An atypical storage method was newly discovered in Nezabylice, where the belt buckle rested on the skeleton's right shoulder.

Among the most spectacular finds are primarily bronze vessels, evidenced by 13 specimens in seven skeletal graves. The most numerous ones are bronze or tinned pans of type E 131 documented in five graves (Kropáčova Vrutice, Lysec, Nezabylice, Prague-Bubeneč 1948, Straky IV). This type of vessel can be considered typical toreutics of skeletal graves of stage B1 (e.g. Sakař 1970; Karasová 1998, 29–32). Two specimens are documented as containers of type E 69 (Radovesice 1839, Straky IV) and E 124 (Lysec, Prague-Bubeneč 1948). By individual specimens are represented containers of type E 92, E 154, E 163 and a bowl with a spout (Sakař 1970; Karasová 1998).

The storage positions of bronze vessels are most often concentrated in the space either behind the skeletons' heads or at their feet. In the 1948 grave from Prague-Bubeneč, a trio of vessels were placed at the feet of the skeleton, and behind the head, as in Nezabylice, was a type E 131 pan (Droberjar 2014, fig. 2, 4). In contrast, in grave IV from Straky, a bronze strainer was placed near the head, and a pan of type E 131 together with another bronze vessel rested at the feet of the skeleton (cf. Píč 1905b, 338, fig. 9; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b, 59; Droberjar 2006, fig. 43).

Seemingly less attractive, but no less important, are ceramic vessels. Their presence can be assumed in the case of 10 graves (i.e. 25% of all skeleton graves)

and can thus be considered as one of the accompanying finds. Most often they are vase-shaped terrines or vases and, in three cases, miniature vessels (Nezabylice, Prague-Bubeneč 1929, Prague-Modřany). Ceramics are most often – as in Nezabylice – found near the head, specifically on its right side (Prague-Bubeneč 1929: Horáková-Jansová 1931, 80; Noutonice 6: Felcman 1900, 17), or to the right behind the head near the corner of the grave-pit (Prague-Bubeneč 1948: Droberjar 2014, 401, fig. 4). In two cases, the occurrence of a ceramic vessel resting at the feet of the skeleton is documented (Noutonice 7: Felcman 1900, 18; Straky IV: Píč 1905b, 338; cf. Droberjar 2006, fig. 43). A unique ceramic specimen is a spindle whorl from Prague-Modřany (Zemanová 2016, 914).

The equipment listed above shows a high degree of variability, which can be considered one of the accompanying phenomena of skeletal graves. At first glance, the vast difference in their inventory is obvious. Thus, on the one hand, we find outright poor graves, or normally equipped, and on the other hand graves very rich. The recorded graves are: a) without equipment; b) with one brooch; c) with two brooches; d) other types of sparsely equipped graves. On the other side of the spectrum are graves richly equipped – apparently elite – with, among other things, bronze vessels (Straky IV/1905: 3 vessels; Lysec: 2 vessels; Kropáčova Vrutice: 1 vessel). A group of graves with forged drinking horns also appears to be quite distinctive. The richest and most elite group is traditionally referred to as “princely graves” or “Lubieszewo/Lübsow type” graves (here Prague-Bubeneč 1948; cf. e.g. Gebühr 1974; 2009; Köhler 1975a; 1975b; Lichardus 1984). As recent precise analyzes of these elite graves in Central European Barbaricum show, this is a complex cultural-social phenomenon (Droberjar 2006, 650–652; 2014, 428–433, fig. 20; Bemmann and Voß 2007; Schuster 2010; 2013; 2014a; 2014b; 2016; Schuster and Cieśliński 2009; von Carnap Bornheim 2015; Voß 2017). Although the grave from Nezabylice has some features of a prestigious burial (imported vessel, luxurious belt, sophisticated grave construction), its inclusion among the most elite group would require a significantly deeper study in the Central European context. Ideally, we should subject the individuals from Nezabylice to natural science analyses, which would help us solve some current problems. For example, the analysis of oxygen, strontium, nitrogen, and other elements' isotopes should not only provide us with relevant answers to the questions of the origin of skeletally buried individuals, but also to their nutrition.

8. Conclusion

The article presents a skeletal grave from the early Roman period explored in 2015 at the cremation burial grounds in Nezabylice (Chomutov district, Ústí region, northwestern Bohemia). The anthropological analysis describes the buried individual as an adult, probably male, who lived to be 30–40 years old (adultus II). Their outfit included a bronze belt buckle similar to the Madyda-Legutko type AA4 and a brooch with eyelets of type A 45a. The grave goods consisted of a bronze tinned pan of type E 131 and a miniature ceramic terrine. The assemblage can be dated to the B1b phase of the early Roman period.

A significant feature of the grave was the stone lining, which consisted of several horizontally placed layers of smaller quartz boulders obtained from the local gravel-sand terrace. The benefit of the explored grave is the presence of an organic container that has been precisely documented for the first time in the Bohemian context. According to the preserved traces of a pine tree (*Pinus*), it was probably a wooden coffin, inside which the buried individual was placed. The combination of a wooden coffin and stone lining represents the most sophisticated way of modifying a grave-pit that has been documented in the territory of Bohemia.

Field research and a non-destructive survey in Nezabylice proved that the presented skeleton grave has a demonstrable spatial relation to the extensive contemporary cremation necropolis. In this regard, only burial sites from Tvršice in Louny district and Býčkovice in Litoměřice district were mentioned as exceptions (Michálek 1999, 33; cf. Droberjar 2006, 650), where, however, the detailed relation between these types of graves is not exactly known (Motyková-Šneidrová 1963b, 64; 1965; cf. Droberjar 2006, 650). The relation between the graves of both rites has not yet been documented even in the large Central Bohemian burial grounds (Třebusice: Droberjar 2002, 342–343; Dobřichov-Pičhora: Droberjar 1999; Tišice: Šneidrová 1957; Motyková-Šneidrová 1963a; Stehelčevy: Motyková 1981). Nezabylice therefore represents the first cremation necropolis of stage B1 in Bohemia, where a chronologically contemporary skeleton burial can be proven to be located. The contribution of the find is unprecedented and sheds new light on existing knowledge about the organization of Germanic necropolises.

The geographical location of Nezabylice and the adjacent sites proves that one of the important regional centers with a concentration of skeletal graves is located in the area of the middle course of the Eger (Ohře)

in north-western Bohemia. In the case of Nezabylice, it is at the same time the most western location, thanks to which the hitherto known oikumene with the occurrence of skeleton graves in Bohemia has expanded.

Today, only forty skeleton graves from stage B1 of the early Roman period are known in Bohemia. However, a significant part of these findings were inexpertly examined before the middle of the last century, and we lack comprehensive information about them, which significantly complicates their more detailed study. How can we expand our knowledge and interpretive possibilities of this phenomenon given the limited find fund? Apparently, the only way will be to include the results of natural science analyzes in our considerations. First of all, isotope analyzes (oxygen, strontium, nitrogen, etc.), which should provide us with relevant answers to questions regarding not only the origin of skeletally buried individuals, but also the composition of their diet. An ideal model for the future would be an open access Internet database created within the Central European area, where individual institutions or researchers of the Roman era could contribute the results of natural science expertise (DNA, active isotopes, bio-archaeology, etc.), similar to those for the period of earlier prehistoric times, for example the Neolithic or the Bronze Age.

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