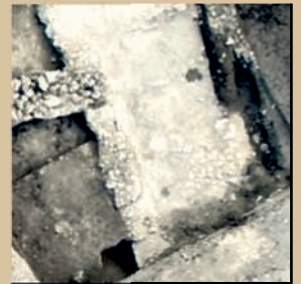
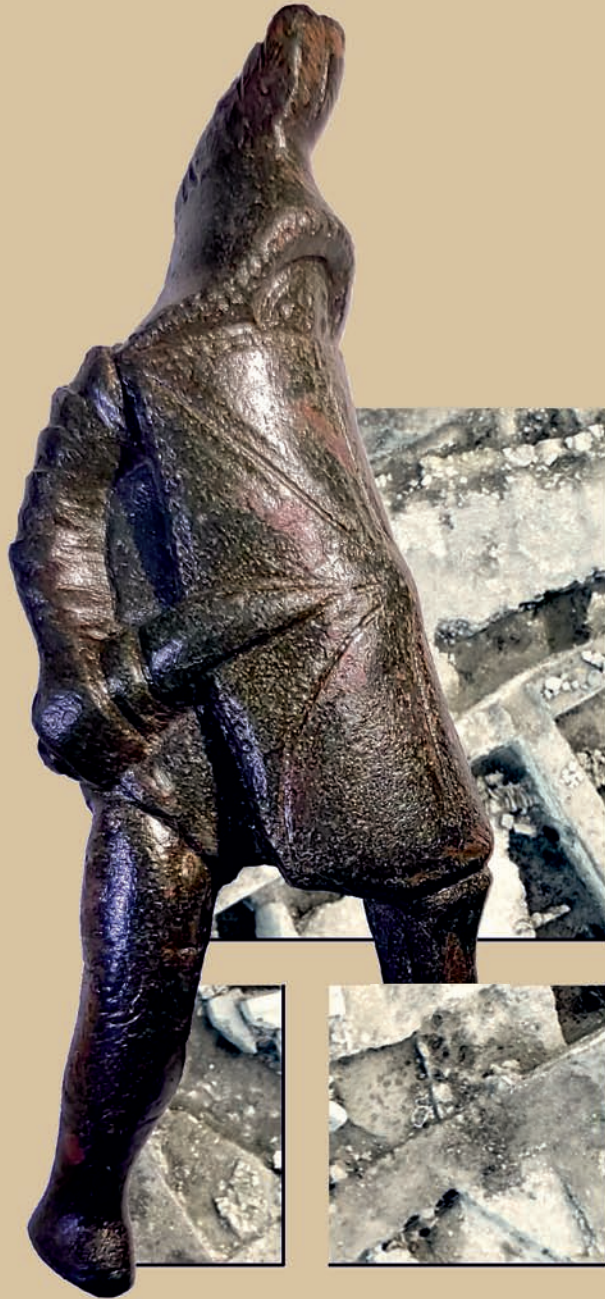


DISSERTATIONES ARCHAEOLOGICAE

ex Instituto Archaeologico Universitatis de Rolando Eötvös nominatae



Ser. 3. No. 7. | 2019

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'...circa Danubium...' from the Late Avar Age until the Early Árpáadian Age

8th–11th-Century Settlements in the Region of the Central Part of the Hungarian Little Plain and the Danube Bend

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Abstract

Abstract and further consideration of the PhD thesis¹ submitted in the winter of 2018 to the Archaeology Doctoral Programme, Doctoral School of History, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest under the supervision of Miklós Takács.

I. The aims of the dissertation and the altering research issue

The aim of the doctoral thesis changed a lot in the course of time, reflecting on the old and then on the new research questions and methodology, in this particular case: between 2009 and 2019. The original issue suggested a conservative approach, focusing on the wish to identify the 'first settlements of the Old Hungarians'.² Due to the analysis of the sites from two microregions (*Fig. 1*), a growing number of data are available, and our knowledge has increased, which naturally lead to framing more complex questions, but not to clear answers. The research process showed that the issue of the 10th-century pottery and settlements is undoubtedly inseparable from the question of the (8th–) 9th-century pottery and settlements. Since the region under study is localized in the northernmost territory of Transdanubia (Hungary), it is obvious that comparing the archaeological material with the contemporaneous sites north of the Danube River is necessary.

Thus, the results presented in the dissertation relate partly to the final days of the Avar Khaganate and the period after the fall, which drew my attention to a new issue. The topic discusses the question what role the north-eastern part of Transdanubia could have played in the 9th century, in the life of the Carolingian Pannonia Province, and how it could have functioned along the Danube, along the border between the province and the Moravian territories. As predictable, the question is generous and cannot be answered in this initial phase of research. At the same time, we should also refer to the research situation of Hungarian archaeology in connection with the region: East-Transdanubia was practically a white spot in the 9th-century archaeological research.³

1 The full version of the manuscript of the PhD dissertation is available online, in Hungarian, see: <https://edit.elte.hu/xmlui/handle/10831/43471>

2 About the topic and the changing research issues see MERVA 2018.

3 See the maps of BÓNA 1984, 26. térkép, of SZŐKE 2009, 401, 3. ábra and of SZŐKE 2014, 1. kép. Nevertheless, some exceptional relevant sites from the area of Esztergom, N-Hungary, are: site of Esztergom-8/6, Hévíz, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út 26, characteristic Carolingian spur (HORVÁTH et al. 1979, 159; 414., 40. tábla 11.), site of Esztergom-8/3, Királyi város, Mártírok útja 17, Carolingian depot (lance) (HORVÁTH et al. 1979, 127; 417, 43. tábla 1–7.), site of Esztergom-8/***, stray find, characteristic Carolingian spur and stirrup (HORVÁTH et al. 1979, 414, 40. tábla 15–16); or rather: HAJNAL 2003.

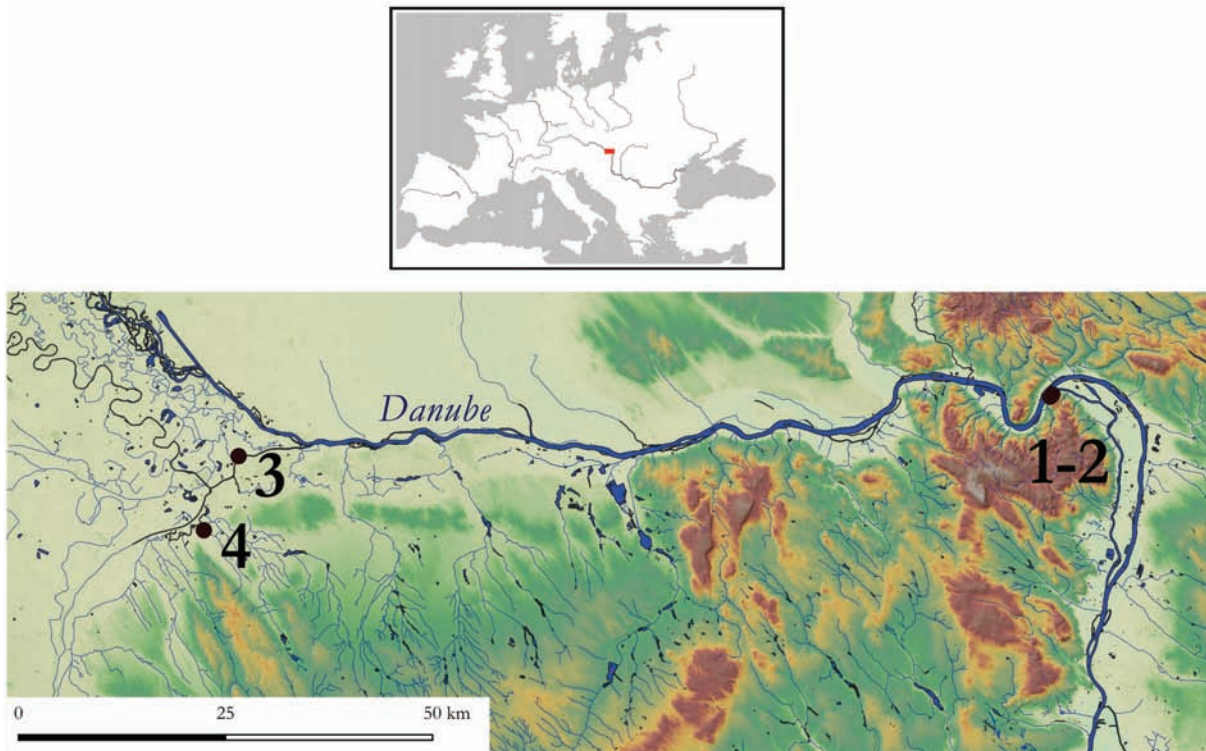


Fig. 1. The location of the sites under discussion. 1 – Visegrád-Sibrik-domb, 2 – Visegrád-Várkert-dűlő, 3 – Bácsa-Szent Vid-domb, 4 – Ménfőcsanak-Szeles-dűlő (N-Hungary).

In the absence of earlier research results, a better understanding of the late Avar – early Carolingian settlement hierarchy and material culture of the region has made it necessary to compare it with the well-known, characterized regions (that is: Western Slovakia and South Moravia). The study may also be important from the point of view of the research on the 10th century, treating the continuity of the 9th-century population as a working hypothesis, and assuming that the social structure, settlement hierarchy and economic relations of the newly arriving population in the Carpathian Basin did not happen in the way of a ‘*tabula rasa*’.

II. Methodology and research sources

As mentioned above, the sites involved in the research are localized in two Northern Transdanubian microregions. On the one hand, the early medieval settlements of Bácsa-Szent Vid-domb⁴ and Ménfőcsanak-Szeles-dűlő⁵ are found in the center of the Little Hungarian Plain, east of the Rába River, in the catchment area of the central place at Győr-Káptalándomb⁶. On the other hand, the site of Visegrád-Sibrik-domb,⁷ as an early medieval centre and its suburbium at Visegrád-Várkert-dűlő,⁸ in the Danube Bend, were also processed. In the case of the four sites, the number of early medieval ceramic and metal artefacts examined was about 6600, and a total of 76 buildings and other related features were analyzed.

4 TOMKA – MERVA 2016.

5 Previously: TAKÁCS 1993; TAKÁCS 2006.

6 TOMKA 2006.

7 SZÓKE 1971, 43–44; SOPRONI – SZÓKE 1972, 43–44; SOPRONI – SZÓKE 1975, 69–70, 106; SOPRONI – SZÓKE 1976, 49; 1977, 28; SOPRONI 1986, 49; SZÓKE 2000; TOLNAI 2013. Latest results: BUZÁS et al. 2014; BUZÁS et al. 2017; BORUZS et al. 2018.

8 KOVALOVSZKI 1986; KOVALOVSZKI 1994; KOVALOVSZKI 1995.

The basis of the research was the analysis and interpretation of these multilayered sites, which was primarily based on the analysis of pottery, seeing the quantitative distribution of the types of artefacts. As a first step, the pottery analysis aimed to clarify the periodization, which was proper to create the relative chronology, and which – besides the exceptional cases - was just complemented with the data of the small amount of metal artefacts, the classification of the settlement features, and the observed stratigraphy. Ceramic analysis was based on the definition of ceramic groups that can be determined by technology, the formal classification played only a secondary role. The validity of the created groups was verified by a multivariate statistical method (Principal Component Analysis). The information recorded during the survey was linked to spatial data, so that the mapping of the data of the sites from different perspectives were realized in GIS, which also helped the analysis. The determination of the absolute chronology of the ceramic groups was done by the independent radiocarbon dating method.⁹ The starting point of the processing of the settlements was to establish the individual horizons, which allowed the multi-level interpretation of the settlements in terms of their size, various activities, house building and lifestyle. Further archaeometric analyses of the finds made it possible to define the pottery technological tradition more precisely, and their changes were observable,¹⁰ but in some cases (in connection with the graphite import ware) it was possible to conclude to commercial relations and a probable provenance.¹¹ The archaeozoological results of each site contributed greatly to the interpretation.¹²

One of the results of the ceramic analysis was the definition of the 8th–9th-century, as well as the 10th–11th-century formal spectrum, which provided the basis for comparing the finds of the sites on the right bank of the Danube River with the ceramic assemblages of the sites in Southwestern Slovakia (*Figs 2–3*). Using the parameters necessary for the shape analysis, also with a statistical method, I compared the data on scatterplot matrices.¹³ The comparison with the ceramic material of the sites in Moravia could only be done in a comprehensive way, given the irrelevance of possible formal identities.

III. Results and evaluation

III. 1. Chronology and characterisation of the sites involved in the research

Obviously we should consider more models in terms of temporal, population, toponym and location-continuity / -discontinuity of settlements of the 8th–9th century, the 9th century and of the 10th century. I assume the survival of the 8th–9th-century population, together with a theoretical ‘*contact period*’. The idea refers to a supposed interaction of surviving people and the newly arriving population in the Carpathian Basin at the turn of the 9th/10th century. The two populations could have interacted culturally, concerning their lifestyle, material culture, economic relationships, and during the 10th century presumably – with the decline of some components and the dominance of other elements – the fusion of these elements, the accul-

9 The radiocarbon research was done by Mihály Molnár and István Major (Institute of Nuclear Research, Hertelendi Laboratory of Environmental Studies). Both the archaeological and the interdisciplinary research was financed mainly by the project funded by the Hungarian Science Fund (OTKA) no. NK 104533, titled ‘*Centuries of transformation – settlement structures and settlement strategies in the central parts of the Carpathian Basin in the 8th–11th century*’ (Principal investigator: Dr. Miklós Takács).

10 MERVÁ – SZAKMÁNY 2016; MERVÁ et al. 2016; SZILÁGYI 2015.

11 MERVÁ et al. 2016.

12 VÖRÖS 1990; VÖRÖS 2009; DARÓCZI-SZABÓ 2009; DARÓCZI-SZABÓ 2016; BARTOSIEWICZ 2015.

13 The methodology was based on FUSEK 1995.

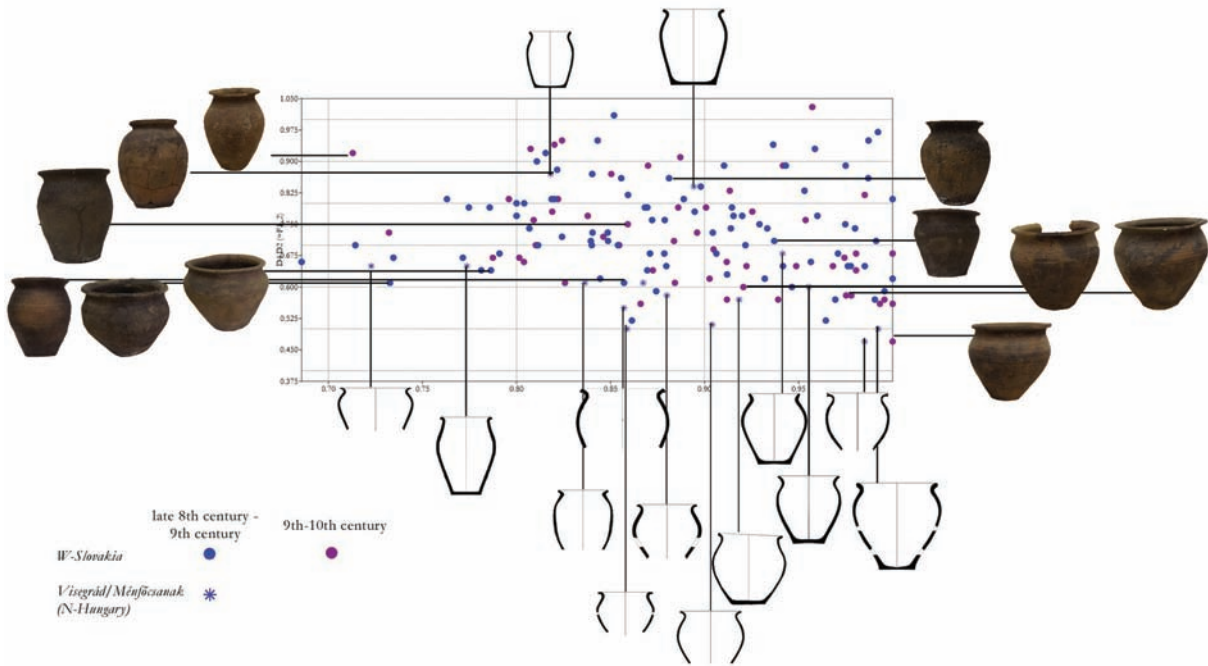


Fig. 2. Scatterplot matrix on metrical data of completed ceramic vessels from the region of N-Hungary and SW-Slovakia (late 8th–9th century and 9th–10th century horizon).

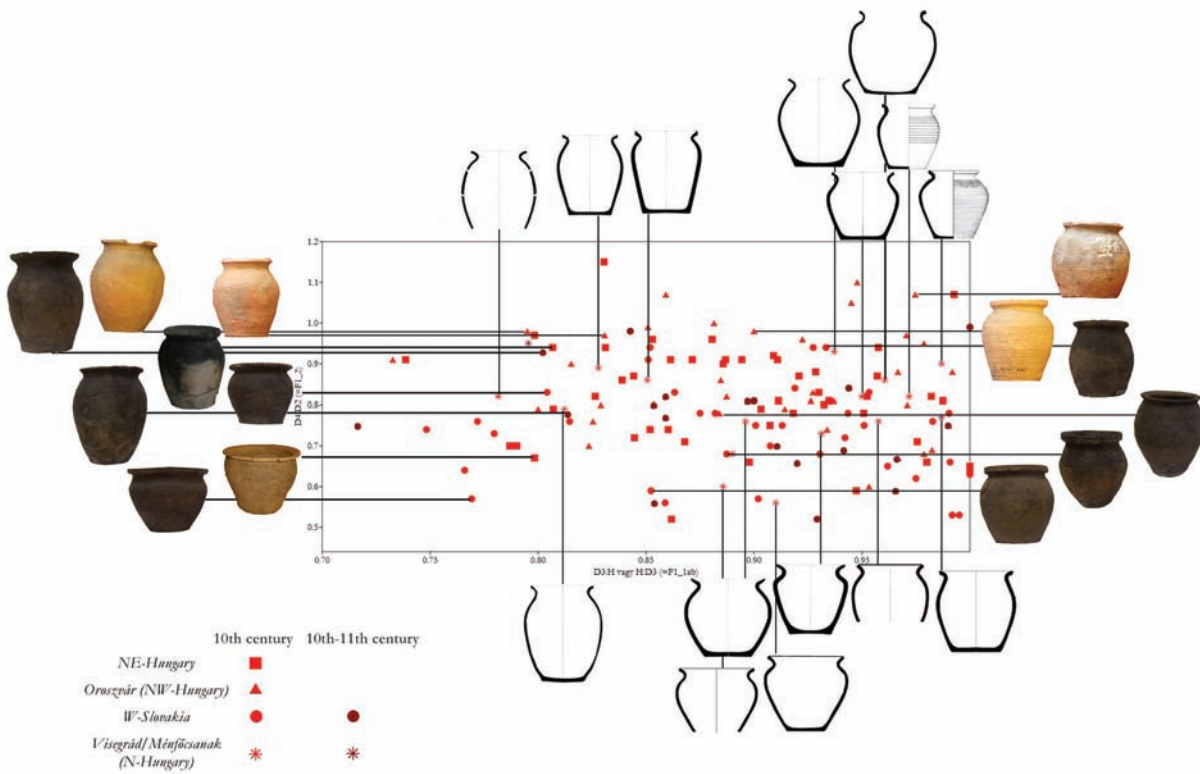


Fig. 3. Scatterplot matrix on metrical data of completed ceramic vessels from the region of N-Hungary and SW-Slovakia (10th–11th century and 11th century horizon).

turation of the surviving population can be assumed. In this form, we can only sketch the process in a schematic way, and in the case of given settlements, considering at least two possible models. 1. At the time of the conquest, the newly arrived people settled down at the area of the abandoned villages of the 9th-century communities. 2. The surviving people continued their life locally at the same settlement, and maybe with marriage, by way of economic interest, or with the artificially formed communities (as servants in suburbs, for instance), partly mixed with the Hungarians. The general idea of discontinuity is as hypothetical as the models listed above. Naturally, to think *ab ovo* in the principle of continuity is the most obvious in Transdanubia, seeing especially such a vivid socio-economic medium in the previous century, as I interpret it, in the case of microregions selected at the northern edge of the territory.

In general, we see that the supposed hierarchy of society in the settlements of a population in the 10th century, presumably a diverse ethnic composition, is not or rarely reflected. One of the reasons for this is the low number of power centres in the 10th century: apart from the centres and their agglomerates, we know mostly rural settlements.¹⁴ The sites presented in this research are diverse in this respect and can be presented in the following way. (The list provided here already includes the probable relative and absolute chronology, and continues to consider the possibility of both continuity and discontinuity as the two main models.):

A1: At the time of the fall of the Avar Khaganate – in the 9th century (not to be specified more precisely):

- Central place at Visegrád-Sibrik-domb (Fig. 4).
- And its associated settlement producing agricultural crops, a suburbium at the site of Visegrád-Várkert-dűlő (Fig. 5). The latter can be considered dense as the scattering of the houses in the small excavated area shows. A total of 11 buildings can be connected to the settlement.

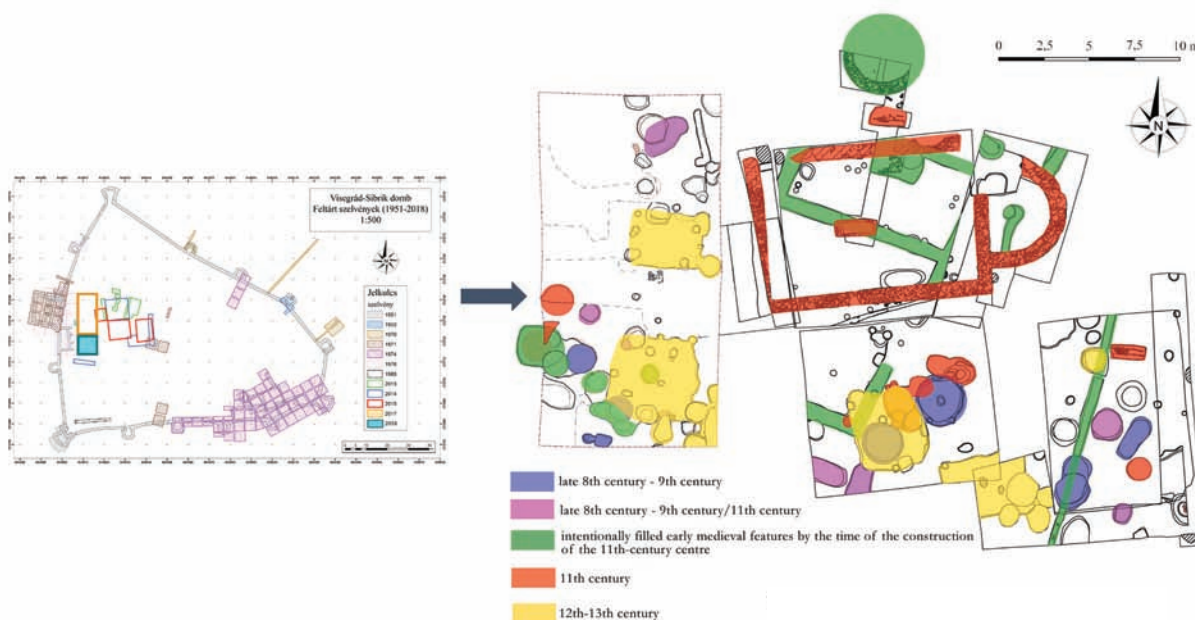


Fig. 4. Visegrád-Sibrik-domb. Left: The excavated sections at the site (Prepared by: Katalin Tolnai). Right: Early medieval settlement horizons (trenches excavated in 2013–2015, 2017).

14 Connected the latest summary in the concerning topic, analyzing the Pest Plain see RÁCZ 2019, specially: 145–149.

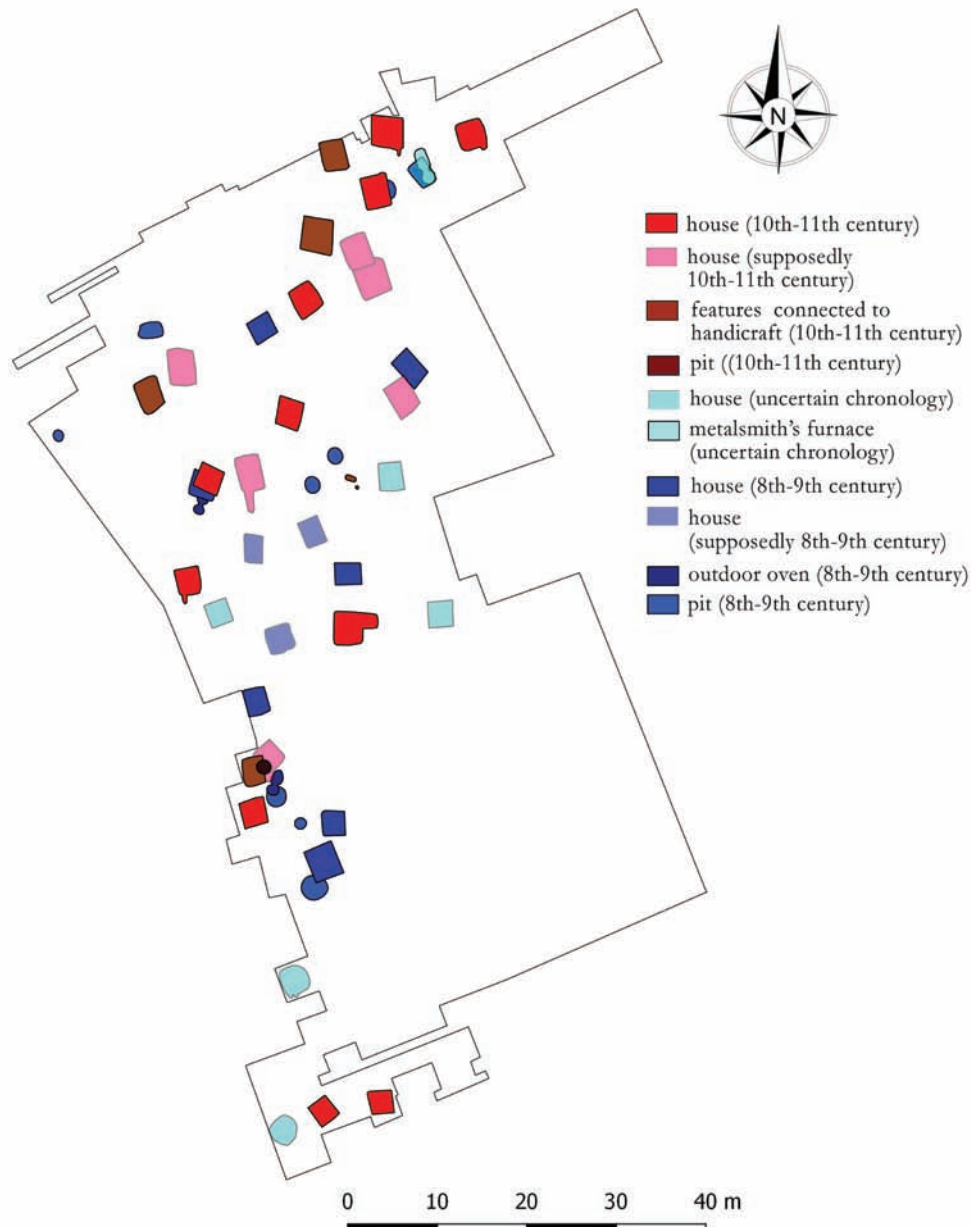


Fig. 5. Visegrád-Várkert-dűlő. Early medieval settlement horizons (trenches excavated in 1955, 1960, 1962–1963, 1980–1994).

A2: The second half of the 9th century – early 10th century:

- In the vicinity of the uncertainly dated centre of Győr: a part of a site excavated on a small area at Bácsa-Szent Vid-domb, where the archaeological traces of the barter with the western Slavic areas was documented. Based on the observations of one building and other settlement features.
- The settlement excavated at Ménfőcsanak-Szeles-dűlő (Fig. 6), presumably the living space of a community that deals with agriculture, mainly animal husbandry. At the same time, it is astonishing that some of the unique ceramic fragments of the Blučina group, characteristic of the South Moravian core area, appear here, suggesting long-distance connections (Fig. 7). About 6–10 buildings can be connected to this horizon of the site.

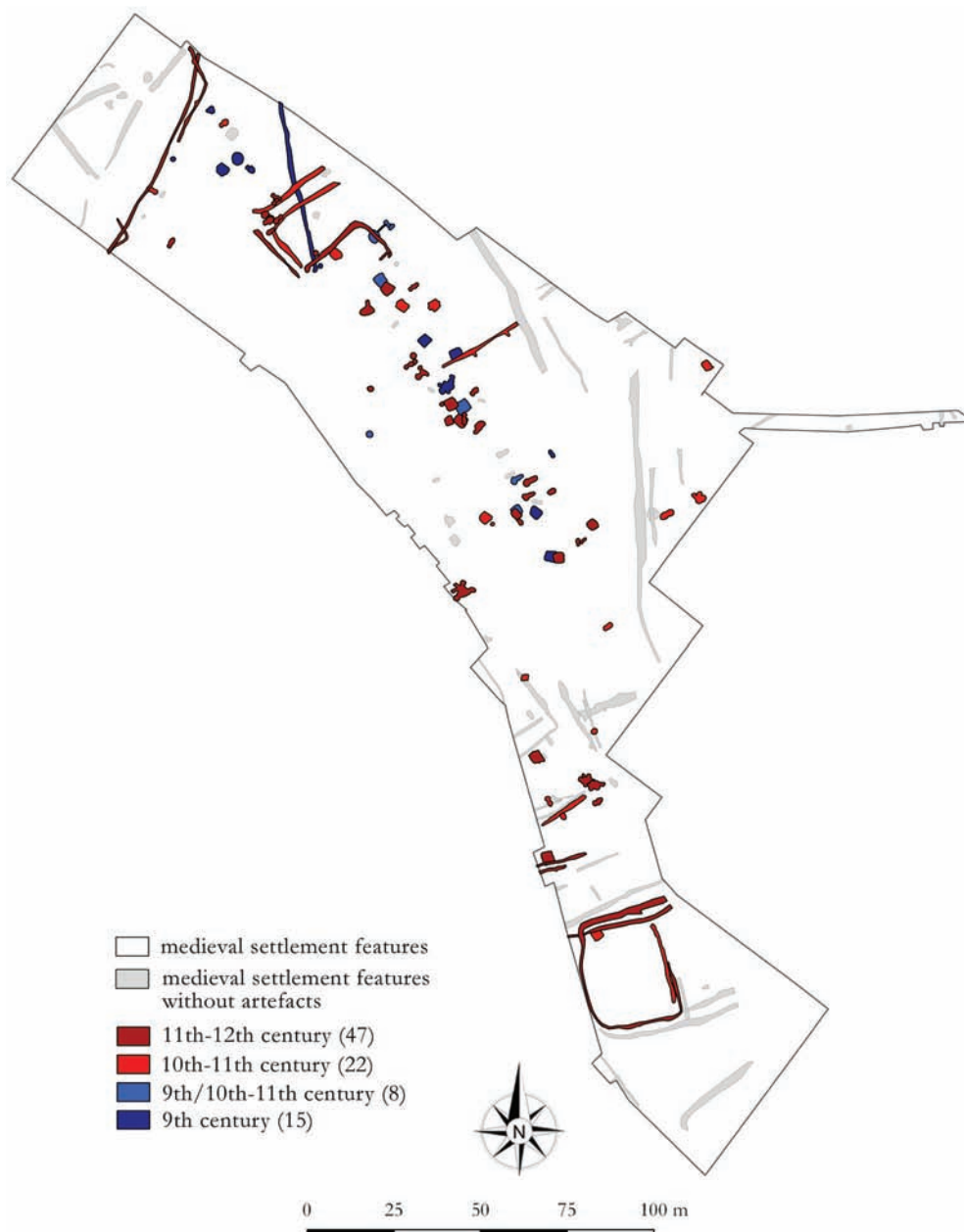


Fig. 6. Ménéfőcsanak-Szeles-dűlő. Early medieval settlement horizons (trenches excavated in 1990–1991).



Fig. 7. Pot fragment identified as the S-Moravian Blučina-type pottery from the site of Ménéfőcsanak-Szeles, Feature 327 (inv. nr. 2010.52.9. Xantus János Museum, Győr).

B: In the second half of the 10th century – early 11th century:

- (In the 10th century continuous?) centre at Visegrád-Sibrik-domb (as the *ispán*'s castle), renovation of the Roman Age walls and building new ones, that started in the decades before the turn of the millennium
- And its related settlement of craftsmen in the suburbium at Visegrád-Várkert-dűlő (Fig. 8). It can be considered dense regarding the scattering of houses in the small excavated area. By its very nature, the servants are considered to be a co-ordinated community, which leads to the conclusion that necessarily they were not in population continuity with the previous inhabitants in the totally 0.4 ha large excavated area. There are 21 dwelling houses and 5 workshops (approx. 110–150 people).
- We know little about the 10th–11th-century history of Bácsa-Szent Vid-domb. Some graves of an 11th-century cemetery cut the 9th-century features.
- The site of Ménfőcsanak-Szeles-dűlő is the most uncertainly identifiable rural settlement, as the number of houses (wide interval: 1–13) also shows this. Presumably, only a few houses can be connected here.

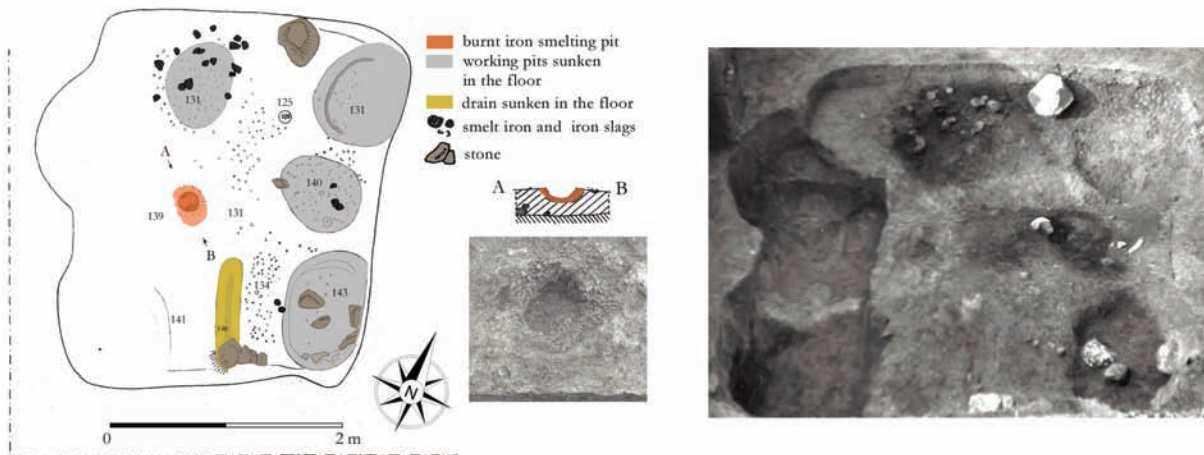


Fig. 8. 11th-century smithy excavated at the site of Visegrád-Várkert-dűlő (Drawing and photo documentation of István Méri, 1963).

C: In the second half of the 11th century – early 12th century:

In the area of the Árpadian Age centres and their vicinity (see the later history of Győr and Visegrád, with which the thesis did not deal in detail):

- The site of Ménfőcsanak-Szeles-dűlő, as an element of the agricultural hinterland, was relatively large and could have been a settlement of a livestock farmer community. We have data on 9–22 houses, and the most likely chronological model assumes that it was the most populated in this period.

The analysis of the partly contemporaneous settlements revealed a rather mosaic image, although the site found at Visegrád-Várkert-dűlő foreshadowed an exceptional site from the beginning. While the radiocarbon studies have roughly clarified the absolute chronology, the statistical methods refer to the differences of ceramic groups, partly due to regional or chron-

ological reasons and partly to different precedents. Most of my results are separated from the last phase of the settlement in Ménfőcsanak, which, in terms of its settlement structure, archaeozoological data and pottery, evokes the settlements of the late-Árpáadian era. Not by chance: its earliest horizon is the middle of the 11th century, probably even the middle of the 12th century. The observations on these sites do not allow us general conclusions, however, it should be noted that the appearance of the clay cauldron from the surveyed sites alone may refer to their chronological situation, and on the other hand, perhaps this is a more pronounced aspect: to the lifestyle, gastronomy and cultural traditions.

III. 2. The early medieval Visegrád

Summarizing my results about the early medieval Visegrád, with particular regard to the period before the foundation of the Hungarian Kingdom, the following aspects and considerations can be taken. The new chronology, based on the above detailed methodology, proves the late Avar – (early) Carolingian (late 8th century – 9th century) horizon of the sites. Seeing its geographical position, the anatomy of the site (considering the munitio-palatium-emporium functions), it can be assumed that the site could have already become central place in the end of the Avar Age, that is to say, the early Carolingian period. It is not known how the rearrangement of the provincial administration in 828 AD had affected the life of the local centre. In any case, the toponym can be originated from this age (it was already mentioned in 1009 AD). In addition, the archaeological evidence suggests that the fact is worth considering that it is included in the donation charter issued by the Bishopric of Veszprém, which mentioned early centres of the Hungarian Kingdom (“...*quatuor civitates, nominibus Wesperen, ata Albam civitates, Colon et Vyssegrad civitates Sancti Mychaelis Wesprimiensi subicimus ecclesie cum omnibus ecclesiis...*”).¹⁵ Two of the four centres are mentioned in one context: among them Colon and Vyssegrad, the late 8th-century – 9th-century antecedents of which have been proven. Further research is needed to answer the question whether the centre of Veszprém and Székesfehérvár are relevant in this respect. Likewise in this context, the centre of Győr, which is similarly early, may also be important.

In view of the new chronology, it is also worth considering the geographical location of the region. In addition to the natural geography (especially the Danube as a waterway), the cultural precedents should be emphasized, too: the site complex is located on the limes of the Roman province of Pannonia, partly on the territory of a Roman castrum and along the Roman Limes Road. After the fall of the Avar Khaganate, the region was located on the border of the Carolingian Pannonia province, or east of the Transdanubian region, where the impact of Carolingian material culture was more pronounced. It was directly adjacent to the territories on the left bank of the Danube, with today’s Southwestern Slovakia, in the centre of Nitra and its catchment area in the Moravian period. Interestingly, contrary to most of the centres of the Central and Eastern European region in the 9th century, it continued its life in the later period of the Middle Ages, or even flourished in the heart of the medieval Hungarian Kingdom. The early medieval settlement territory (Sibrik-domb and Várkert-dűlő) were only abandoned in the 13th century by the construction of the Visegrád citadel.

After the first two main aspects I made comments on the cultural approach of the artefacts and the character of the site, as a central place. At the end of the 8th century and 9th century,

15 GYÖRFFY 1992.

they may have renovated and re-used the ruined Roman fortress. Inside the originally Roman walls, a palisade wall, above-ground wooden buildings and a typical construction type in the era, a two-roomed stone building (supposly palace building) were in use during this period (Fig. 9). The presence of specialized service communities has been demonstrated in the fortress area: a small workshop and characteristic instrument types (crucibles) from the Balkans to the Czech Basin indicate traces of goldsmith activity (Fig. 10).¹⁶ The suburbium has already been established in connection with the centre during this period.

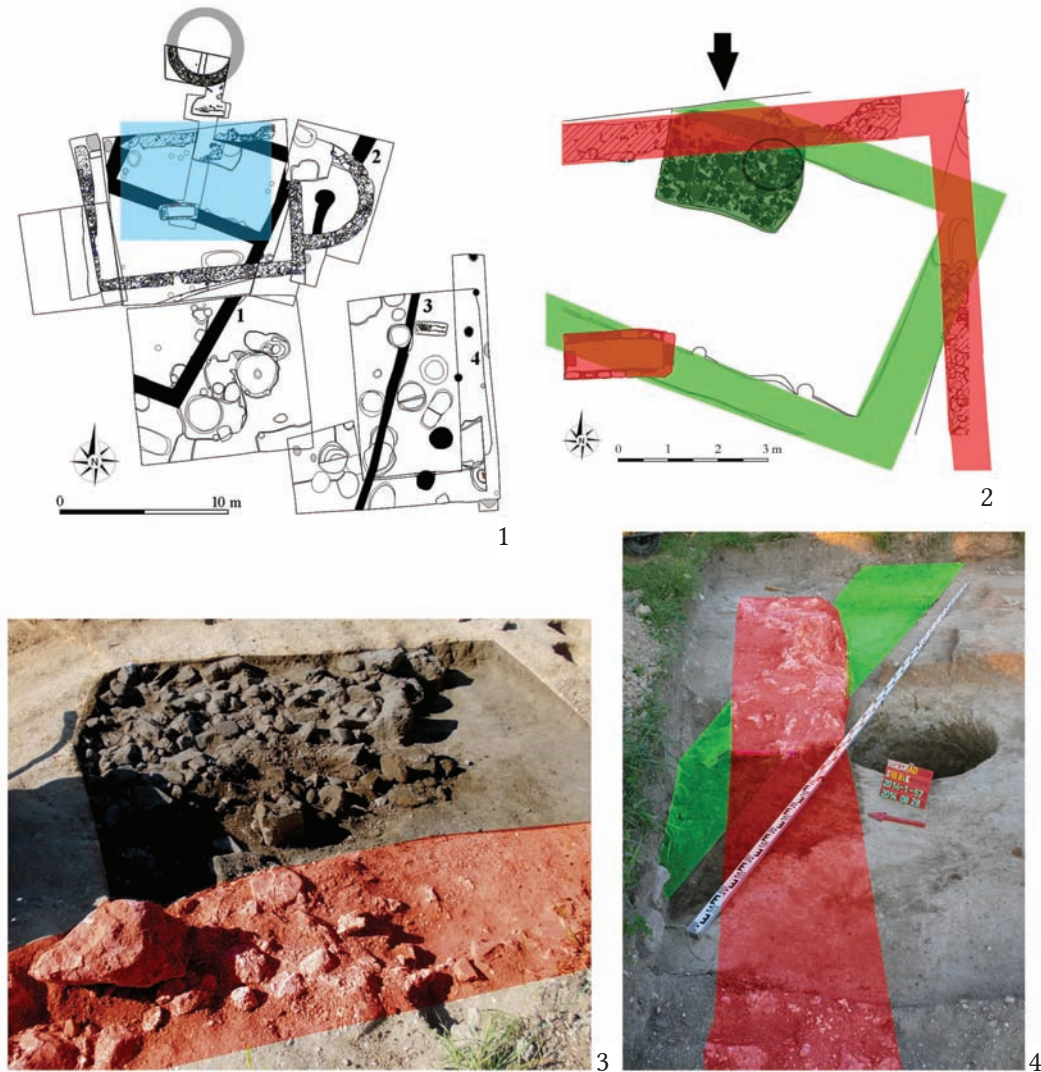


Fig. 9. Visegrád-Sibrik-domb. 1 – The structures (marked with black) identified in the excavated trenches, from west to east. 1.1 – Bedding trench of the two-roomed building preceding the establishment of the *ispán/comes*'s centre, 1.2 – Bedding trench of the 9th-century palisade, 1.3 – Detail of a (perhaps early) medieval ditch, 1.4 – Post-holes of a (perhaps early) medieval building. 2–4 – Green: intentionally filled structures by the time of constructing the 11th-century centre; Red: The line of the foundation of the church built at the time of the medieval Hungarian state's foundation, and the brick grave in the church nave (Grave 2013/1).

16 The 9th century, so-called 'bundle-shaped' ceramic crucibles (*'Beutelförmige' Keramiktiegel*) were very characteristic technological tools from various regions. For instance: Zalavár (Hungary): SzÖKE 2014, 85, 66. kép, 86; Nitra: BEDNÁR 2006, 205–215. 208, Obr. 6., 214; Novosel and Zlatar (Bulgaria): DONCHEVA 2012, 17, Fig. I. 10; Moravian sites: KLANICA 1974, Sv.6; Polish sites: RAJEWSKI 1954, 3–20.



Fig. 10. Visegrád-Sibrik-domb. 9th-century metalsmith's furnace (2017/Section 113/Feature 79). Left: 1 – The location of the feature is indicated by an arrow, 2 – The surface and cross-section drawings of the feature, 3–6 – The excavated metalsmith's furnace and associated work trench; Right: Finds from the infill of the furnace's work trench. 1–3 – Casting crucibles, 4 – Fish bones, 5–6 – Casting crucible and the fish bones found in it (scattered).

Various influences of more directions can be detected on the material culture. Among others, metal artefacts of the late Avar period (from the second half of the 8th century), but also an early Carolingian spur (end of the 8th century – beginning of the 9th century) and a Carolingian age earring (9th century). In the later period, a characteristic silver clothing ornament (10th century – mid-11th century) and a secondarily used Byzantine gold solidus (11th century) can be highlighted. Although in a small proportion, luxury tableware can be observed beside the household pottery in the 9th century and later, in the 10th–11th century. One of it is the 9th-century elite's favourite tableware, the polished yellow pottery, which is a typical artefact of the Lower Danube region, as well as the Lower Zala Valley, Austria, or South Moravian sites. In addition, graphite ware can also be found in the ceramic assemblages of the site complex, the appearance of which in the Carpathian Basin is typical exclusively in Transdanubia, and mostly along the Danube. Its spread became general west and north-northwest of the area under study (Figs 11–12).

An objective factor supported the scepticism connected with the first results of the early medieval Visegrád's research, which is the lack of 9th-century cemeteries in the area. Considering the results of the late Avar cemetery archaeology in the region, it can be seen that the same late Avar material culture appears in the centre and suburb of Visegrád. The proven 8th–9th-century horizon provides data on the character of the site complex, its cultural and economic relations, and the communication of the elite of the supposedly local centre with the territory north of the Danube. According to the chronology that has been established so far, the community settled in the area in the end of the 8th century continuously lived in the 9th century, and its material culture was re-defined as part of the new province, partly based on local precedents, and partly in accordance with the elite of the Carolingian Age peripheral regions.



Fig. 11. Visegrád-Sibrik-domb. Artefacts dating from the later 8th–first third of the 9th century. 1–6 – Trench 2015/3, from the fill of Feature 3, 7 – 2013, stray find.



Fig. 12. Visegrád-Sibrik-domb. Late 8th–9th-century finds of the Carolingian period. 1 – Spur, Trench 2013/1, from the infill of Feature 4 (bedding trench of the palisade), 2 – Pendant, Trench 2013/2, from the secondary fill of the cistern, 3–6 – Polished tableware, Trench 2015/3, stray find, 7 – Spear, stray find (excavation of M. Szóke), 8 – Graphite ware from the infill of 2017/Feature 76, 9 – secondarily used Byzantine gold solidus (II. Nikephoros Phokas, *tpq* 969), upper part of 2017/Feature 118.

III. 3. Settlements at the time of the Hungarian Conquest

Concerning the research of the 10th century, the data obtained through the analysis are significant, regarding the fact that at least the local continuity of the sites can be proved (both the centre and the suburbium as well as the settlements in the hinterland). In the case of the two

sites on the Little Hungarian Plain, the settlements in question were in use at the turn of the 9th–10th centuries, when the new population appeared in the Carpathian Basin.

Ultimately, the author could not resist the temptation of interpretation, that is, to formulate some general statements about the history of the microregions in question. The sites (the central place and their suburbia, as well as the hinterland) were inhabited with longer or shorter interruptions since the late decades of the late Avar period. The 9th-century contact of the elite in the socio-economically significant centres with the neighboring Western Slavic territories can be traced, the consequences of which – with other preferences – can be assumed in the 10th–11th centuries (see: the inherited economic relations in case of the graphite ware¹⁷).

At the end of my thoughts, I have to recognize: I cannot give an account of the ‘the first settlements of the Old Hungarians’, that is, what the initial work hypothesis suggested. Although we could think of the preliminary reports on the analyzed sites, in this respect only the 11th–12th-century site at Ménfőcsanak may be considered as a settlement of descendants of ‘Hungarians’ arriving from the East (nevertheless, only the settlement structure, and the unusually high proportion of consumed horsemeat suggest the lifestyle of livestock farming people¹⁸). Besides, the results of the dissertation are largely based on the settlements of the presumably surviving population, as well as the sites of the artificially organized settlements of craftsmen at the site of the 10th–11th-century suburbium in Visegrád. After the intentionally populated, originally free communities, blood relations could also have evolved over time, while earlier, according to the laws of the Árpád Dynasty, they were only allowed to marry each other.¹⁹

Historical research takes into account the prerequisites connecting the organization of the servants, since the developed stratification of society was essential for establishing the system. This system (from the time of the foundation of the state) could be set up with the participation of the king, the freeman who – according to the king’s needs – ensured the regular collection of services, and the servants. Another important factor was heterogeneity: the diverse production of the submerged social layer was necessary, which was realized due to the ‘*ethnic division of labor, which supported the different producer goods*’.²⁰ The most frequent servants who supplied flour or bread, were local inhabitants, who were simply obligated to produce the goods. At the same time, the settling down of craft communities, such as blacksmiths, goldsmiths, appearing in power centres, could have been organized.²¹

How to go further? The first ideas at the birth of a new topic

The history of European regions in the Early Middle Ages, following their changing cultural geographical relations, and the transfer of various institutional and cultural models during history defines modern Europe,²² with special attention to identity and social behaviour.²³

17 MERVA et al. 2016.

18 BARTOSIEWICZ 2015.

19 BOLLA 1998, 147.

20 GYÖRFFY 1972, 265.

21 GYÖRFFY 1972, 289; BOLLA 1998, 144–150.

22 KLANICZAY 2004, 100–101; SZŰCS – PARTI 1983.

23 See György Csepeli’s research: http://konfliktuskutato.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=264:postfeudalism-presentation&catid=28:posztfeudalizmus; <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/1322-73796.pdf>.

Consequently, our conceptualization about the main European regions, reflecting not only on their geographical, but on their cultural aspect also, should be reconsidered studying any particular historical locality. Therefore the given region frequently called ‘Eastern Central Europe’ can be perceived variously, depending on the historical period with more or less intensive cultural, political, institutional connections to the ‘East’ or ‘West’. Leaving the modern political considerations aside, it comes to light that the concept is ‘*only one possible historical construction of space*’,²⁴ as the case of the Carpathian Basin also presents: being located at the border of two Christian empires, laying in the zone of Byzantine influences, and being a part of Latin Christendom. In addition, the western part of the Basin (Transdanubia, Western Hungary) became under Frankish control in the early 9th century, till the line of the Danube River, the border of the province of Pannonia, and may have been a more developed region.

As presented above, my recent interdisciplinary analyses on some excavated sites near the later medieval royal centre in Visegrád (N-Hungary) resulted in a revision of ceramic chronology (Fig. 13). Furthermore, as a consequence they pointed out that in the Danube Bend a Carolingian Age centre and its suburbium, as a definite sign of the early preurban development, had been built and functioned. In spite of the fact that no central place can be understood without considering its hinterland, no research has been done regarding the settlement pattern of the region, and especially not about the changing settlement hierarchy, the changing power centres during the transitional time between the fall of the Avar Khaganate (early 9th century AD) and the foundation of the Hungarian Kingdom (late 10th century – early 11th century AD). Even though it is out of question, according to the written sources and the archaeological evidences, the region in question became the first pillar of the newly formed kingdom. However, the major factors of the preferences of the chosen localities have not been analysed so far.²⁵

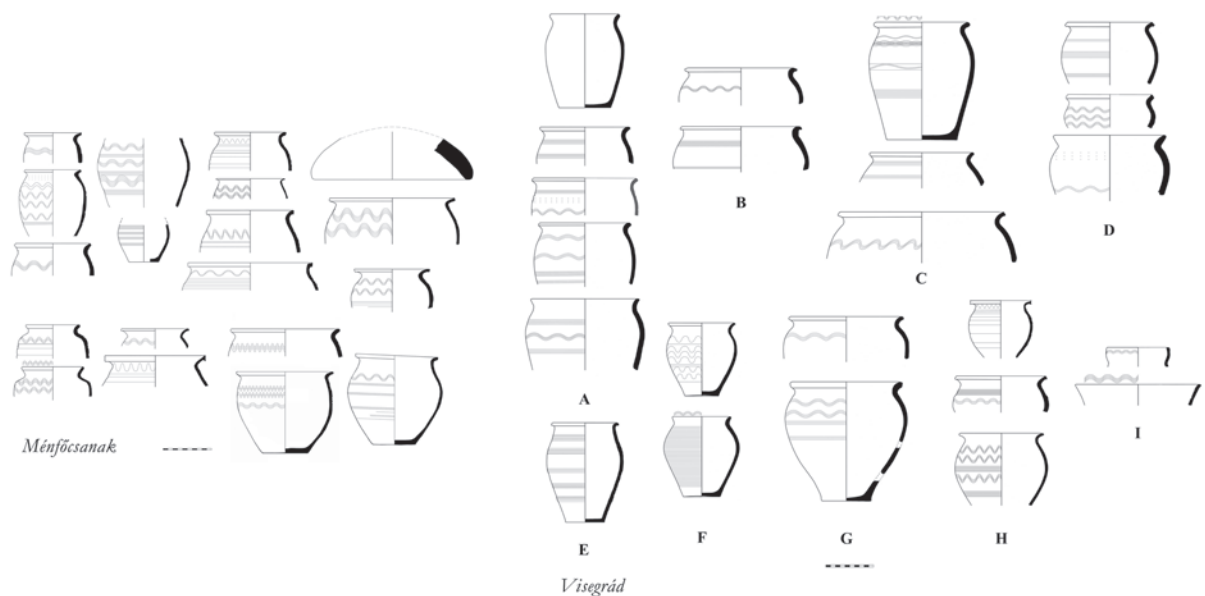


Fig. 13. Formal spectrum of the 9th-century pottery types. Left: Ménfőcsanak-Szeles-dűlő. Right: the early medieval site complex at Visegrád.

24 BEREND 2016, 11.

25 Handling the seeming lack of Carolingian Age centres in the region as a fact (apart from the research of Zalavár), the topic was absolutely ignored: NOVÁKI 1975, 45–61; MORDOVIN 2016, 11.

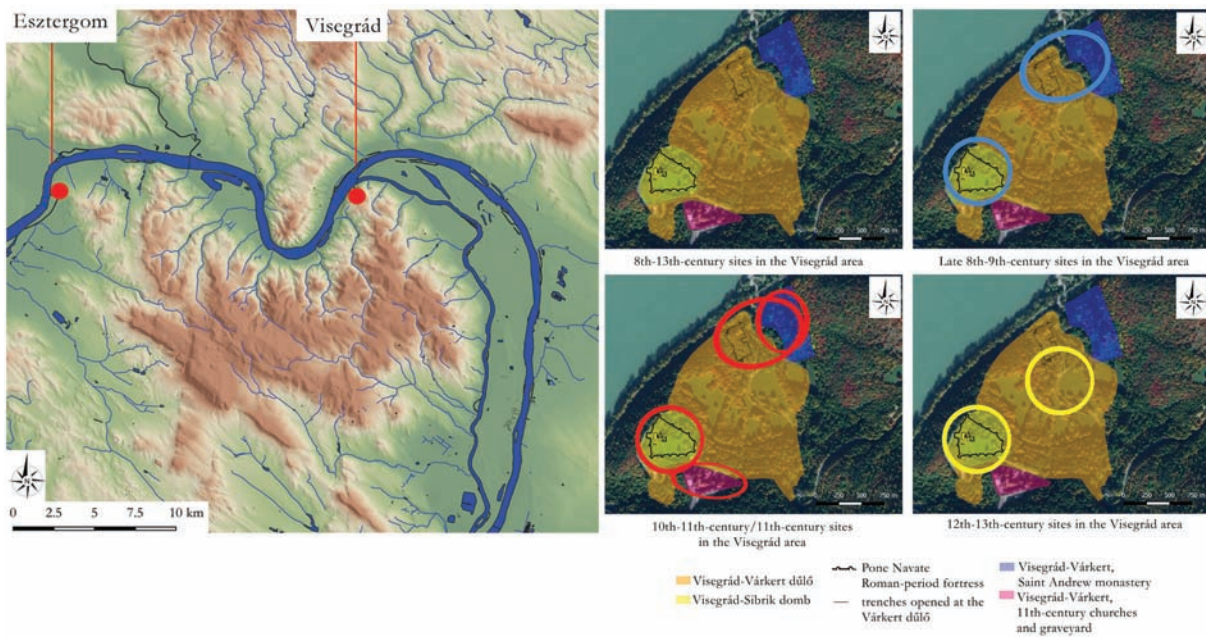


Fig. 14. Left: Geographical position of Esztergom and Visegrád, on the northern edge of the later ‘*medium regni*’. Right: Topography of the medieval (8th–13th-century) sites at the Visegrád area.

Underlining the assumption that the early medieval social structure, settlement hierarchy, and the economic relations of the newly arriving population (Old Hungarians) in the Carpathian Basin could have been influenced by the hardly known society of the locally found population, the future plan aims to study the undiscovered 9th–11th-century settlement pattern and settlement hierarchy of the Danube Bend. The region that became a significant part of the core area of the high medieval Hungarian Kingdom (mentioned in the written sources as ‘*medium regni*’)²⁶ (Fig. 14). While the supposition that its settlement network could have been supported by the survived Avar and Carolingian Age local social structure, should be proved or confuted, the 11th-century German influence is out of question. As a new Christian kingship, with the absorption of the cultural and institutional patterns of Latin (and partly Greek) Christianity, as well as the state administrative patterns, it was intensely impressed by the medieval German world. While several studies concerning the medieval diplomatic and military history discuss the Bavarian–Hungarian relations from the late 10th century (see the royal intermarriage from this time),²⁷ pointing out the importance of the creation of ‘*a virtual cohesive force*’,²⁸ the interactions between the two territories, manifested in the archaeologically researchable social structures are little known.

Connected to the well-studied 9th-century power centres in the Eastern-Central European region, at the fringe of the Carolingian Empire,²⁹ it is known that by the collapse of the previous power in the 9th century these fortresses were generally abandoned, and the new elite built up the new power centres at new localities. At the same time, at this point we should not underestimate the significance of the symbolic dimension of power, documented in some

26 ALTMANN – KUBINYI 1998; BENKŐ – OROSZ 2015.

27 KLANICZAY 2004, 100–101, 114; CSÁKÓ 2018, 543–590; BROOKE 2000, 56–62.

28 FONT 2016, 24–26.

29 Cs. SÓS 1963; BEDNÁR 2006, 205–215; FUSEK 2008, 271–290; MACHÁČEK 2010; HENNING – RUTTKAY 2011, 259–288; ITM 1994–2014; SBM 1995–2019; HEROLD 2012, 60–84; MACHÁČEK 2013, 235–248; KOUŘIL 2014; SZŐKE 2014; GERGELY 2016, 287–372; KÜHTREIBER – OBENAU 2017.

post-Carolingian written sources. The built memory, as the centres and palaces raised up there, embodied the ruler’s power. These built constructions have been the point of reference for the court in a landscape, the permanent reminder of a power centre, and the physical appearance of the political memory. If the spiritual continuity had remained, the common memory evoking the predecessors’ power would have kept it alive.³⁰

Although we have no exact concept on the given processes, according to the archaeological records, the three significant centres dating from the 9th century, Nitra (SW Slovakia), Zalavár (SW Hungary) and Visegrád (N Hungary) have rather been re- or continuously used in their same function after the appearance of the Árpád Dynasty (late 9th century) in the Carpathian Basin. What is more, the last one even flourished as a royal residence in the high Middle Ages, as one of the cornerstones of the ‘*medium regni*’, beside the Transdanubian Esztergom, Székesfehérvár and Buda. While historical, archaeological, and art historical research has been focusing on the issue of the high and late medieval royal seats and their landscape,³¹ the latest results of the early medieval settlement archaeology drew attention to a possible relevance of the earlier history in the topic. The written sources and the development of the earliest counties of the kingdom³² can also meet the raised idea. Although the early medieval settlement hierarchy on the ‘*medium regni*’ region was investigated on spots,³³ it reminds us of the possible lack of research, as well as of the most essential issues, confirming the hypothesis of a continuity of the populations during the Early Middle Ages. At this stage of the research, it still remains a question whether the organization of 9th-century and (10th-) and 11th-century centres and their service communities living in the suburbia can be interpreted as the organic steps following each other in a more or less unilinear development model. Nevertheless, in the case of the settlements of these communities living in suburbs that were built in the periods before the formation of the state, and were localized in the direct or indirect vicinity of a power centre, we can assume that they could have been the base of this layer of the settlement hierarchy, and they were consolidated by the establishment of the 11th-century kingdom.

Understanding this region’s early medieval centres does not only require topographical-archaeological research in the region itself, but a comparative study with other contemporaneous centres. By now, a lot of research has been done in Moravia, but the remarkable comparisons with German state formations are quite underrepresented. Within the framework of the comparative analysis focusing on the identification of the changing settlement hierarchy, we can get closer to the understanding of the 9th–11th-century history of the later Hungarian royal core area, with special attention to the relevant issue on the contemporaneous neighbouring regions. As in all historical periods, the Danube River could have played an important role regarding the communication, the knowledge transfer and its economic concerns, as well as it symbolized the Roman heritage, the Danubian limes in the Carolingian times.³⁴

30 See the written sources cited in: AIRLIE 2000, 1–20.

31 By the realization of the newly formed topic the results will be excellently comparable with the well researched high and late medieval Middle- and South-Pilis region, as a vulnerable cultural landscape and royal hunting area, the *silva regalis*, as well as the characteristic landscape of the monasteries. See LASZLOVSKY 1995; SZABÓ 2005; BENKŐ 2011, 115–119; PETŐ 2018.

32 ZSOLDOS 2001a, 31–73; ZSOLDOS 2001b, 43–54; ZSOLDOS 2010, 5–14; *Diplomata Hungariae Antiquissima MCMXCII*.

33 Besides Visegrád see the example of Vác: RÁCZ 2015.

34 See the relevant Austrian studies in the topic: FISCHER 2002.

The aim would be to realize a complex topographical survey on a key area of the formation of the discussed state, looking for the yet completely unmapped 9th–11th century horizon in the given region. Since the emphasis on the archaeology of the Carolingian border province has been mainly put on the area of the Lower Zala Valley (SW Hungary) so far, other Transdanubian regions have hardly been concerned before, and they have especially not been discussed in connection with the later state formation.

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