The Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation

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The Cemeteries and Grave Finds of Győr and Moson Counties from the Time of the Hungarian Conquest and the Early Árpádian Age

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My dissertation examines the period burials of the territory of two counties, Győr and Moson in the west of the Hungarian Principality in the age of the Hungarian Conquest, and the Hungarian Kingdom in the early Árpádian age. Their analysis will be the ground for sketching the picture of the territory in the 10-11th centuries. First we shall show the period sites, then the assessment of the individual phenomena and object types will follow, providing the ground for the examinations of the history of settlements, which will partly lead through the examination of the borderland character of the territory. The territory of the former two counties will form the geographical frames. The temporal frames will be formed by, on the one hand, the occupation of Transdanubia in - according to our present knowledge - 900 and on the other hand, the end of the 11th century and the beginning of the 12th century.

I. Natural geographical environment

The two counties found in the Kisalföld major region of the Danube Basin are bordered from the north on the Danube, which is touched by all the three middle regions of the major region, the Győr Basin, the Komárom-Esztergom Plain and the Marcal Basin. Regarding their soil conditions, the different alluvial soils are typical, their climat conditions reveal a picture similar to those of our day. The most important among the natural geographical conditions were the hydrographical conditions. Before the river controls this country was rich in marshes and swamps, often exposed to flood danger, having territories covered with contiguous water, lying in the windiest part of Transdanubia.

II. The history of research of cemeteries and burial sites in the age of the Hungarian Conquest and the late Árpádian age of Győr and Moson counties

We have had information concerning the provenience of the first period graves of the territory since the middle of the 19th century, but at that time we can only reckon with the conservation of some parts of findings coming from graves uncovered by chance. The first site known also by us is the Győr-Újszállások graveyard, from which finds could have turned up even at the end of 1850’s and at the beginning of the 60’s. Nevertheless the first burials, whose finds could have got to public collections, even with record and publication in 1865 in Pannonhalma, were found the same year in Koroncó. It had a great importance for the research of the period that on Flóris Rómer’s initiative in the Benedictine Grammar School in Győr the Archeological Laboratory was formed in 1859, giving a significant momentum to interest toward archeology, and beside The Archeological News then The Archeological Bulletin, the publication of the finds found place in the bulletin of the laboratory, the annual reports informing about the growth of the laboratory as well. In 1890 Ágost Sőtér began the excavation of the graveyard with the highest grave number in Moson county on Wiesenakker field, in Rusovce/Oroszvár, which was continued in 1903 by him, in 1938 by Nándor Fettich, while in 1942/43 by Árpád Bottyán and János Nemeskéri. In particular at the beginning of the 20th century many graves or graveyards were turned up, the rescue and the publication of the majority of them is connected with Arnold Börzsönyi. The leader of the collection of the Benedictine Grammar School searched on Győr-Téglatető field, in Mosonszentmiklós, Gyömöre, Nyúl-Öreghegy as well. Béla Cigány, school- and headmaster in Koroncó then in Győr, rescued finds on Koroncó-Rácz hill in 1934, then in 1936 in Csíkvánd. The works of Elemér Lovas is of great importance too, who -beside his excavations - drew up the archaeological cadaster of Győr county, published the history of archaeological collection of Győr and presented the historical geography of Koroncó. At the end of 1946 Béla Szőke went to Győr and became the curator of the Museum of Győr. His synthetical works are of the greatest importance among his works, in which he regarded and analysed the entire territory
of Kisalföld as a whole. He devoted a separate study to the period history of Győr, and dealt with the history of Kisalföld in the 9-10th century in a separate study too. In his work, of determinative importance till now, published in 1962 and entitled The Archaeological Relics of the Hungarians in the Age of the Hungarian Conquest and the Early Árpádian Age, he rested on more finds of Kisalföld during the analyses.

In his cadaster of finds, published the same year as the second volume of the Archaeological Studies, referring to collections till 1959 and entitled The Grave Finds in the Age of the Hungarian Conquest and the Early Árpádian Age in the Middle-Danube Basin, 28 period sites can be found from Győr-Moson county. The research of the period owes much to Rezső Pusztá’s activity too, who between 1965 and 1970, with smaller interrupts made rescue excavations on Pusztasomorja-Timár hill. In 1968 and 1974, he rescued graves on the main square of Levél village. In 1960 on the inner territory of Öttövény, András Uzsoki excavated a horse grave, in 1968, he worked together with Károly Kozák in the graveyard of Győr Cathedral from the time of the early Árpádian age. They excavated period graves with the leadership of Eszter Szőnyi and Péter Tomka. The Lébény-Kaszás graveyard containing 98 observed graves, excavated in 1991-92 is attached to Tomka’s name as well. Recently a graveyard with small grave number were excavated in Győrszentiván-Károlyháza with the leadership of Szilvia Biro. The finds and documentation of these graves and graveyards can be found in the collections and archives of BGLM, HM, MNM and XJM. Further we used the relevant data of the heritage of Géza Fehér, Nándor Fettich, János Nemeskéri, Aladár Radnóti and Béla Szőke.

III. The grave finds in the age of the Hungarian Conquest and the early Árpádian age of Győr and Moson counties

The basis of the dissertation is the analysis of the presented graves and cemeteries. We shall present 18 sites, which were known till now only from preliminary articles or excavation reports, 8 sites were not presented in the technical literature, and 23 sites were critically published again. Thus the analysis will be based on at least 520 graves from 50 sites. Unfortunately the sites are poorly opened up. Altogether the excavation of 2 cemeteries and 3 so called solitary graves can be regarded as authentic and complete. The material known only partly from the reports of the individual graves, has further declined to our day, the material of at least 25 sites are damaged, unfortunetaly several times, the whole find material has disappeared or perished.

The presentation of the sites happened as follows: first a report was made of the circumstances of the finding, then followed the grave and find description, the assessment, and finally the relevant archival indexes and those of the technical literature. The EOV maps can also be found here, as well as the eventual cemeterie maps and other figures relating to the topography of the sites.

IV. The assessment of the finds of Győr and Moson counties

Unfortunately the burials not excavated by specialists, or the partial destruction of the sites, have made it to a greater extent difficult to draw consequence regarding the structure and chronology of the cemeteries. The number of the anthropological data is also low.

As far as the geographical conditions of the region are concerned, the cemeteries and graves are generally situated on smaller moulds, which practice was common in the Carpathian Basin in the 10-11th centuries. In known cases the sites can be found on moulds 0.5-5 m higher than their environment, or on smaller terraced hillsides. In case of hills, they found their places on their ridge, or on the northern slope, and if they were near to water, their distance from it could expand from 60-70 m to as much as half a km. Rarelier they can turn
up on plain territories, some sites however can be found near the Danube, on teraced high banks or on smaller cones made from stream deposit.

The sites can be divided into three groups: the solitary graves, the so called raw cemeteries, and the graveyards around churches. 3 graves can be ranked among the first group, while 4 sites turned up from around a church. Unfortunetaly among the so called raw cemeteries - which is the biggest group -only Győrszentiván-Károlyháza and Lébény-Kaszás can be considered as fully and authentically excavated, while the the biggest known cemetery of Moson county, in Rusovce/Oroszvár is known only in parts. A ditch bordering a cemetery can be observed in only one case.

In most case, the defuncts were buried in a simple, rectangular-shaped grave, with rounded corner, the orientation of the skeleton is adjusted to the main west-east direction. Neither graves with niche nor with sidewall niche was found, meanwhile graves with berm can be observed in 5 cases. No clue refers to grave monument and the stone- or tailed roof graves are missing as well. The classification of the graves with stones got into, is uncertain. In the Lébény-Kaszás and Mosonszentmiklós-Lednice hill cemeteries the defuncts were laid on an embanked layer in some graves. The wooden remains found during the excavation or the discolorations caused by them could refer to a coffin, but unfortunetaly not that way in any case that they could make its reconstruction possible. Nevertheless it can be stated that metal nails, clamp-irons were only rarerly used to it.

The defuncts were laid in the graves on their back, in stretched out position, which was general at that period. Naturally more different were observable regarding the limbs. One prone burial and two in contracted position are known. One of the latter turned up from Grave 44 in Lébény, which was one of the burials providing the richest metal finds, quering thus the hypothesis that the persons buried in contracted position could have been of servile state. Trepanation can be documented only in two graves in Lébény.

Clue referring to period plunder is not known, superposition was only observable in Graves 171 and 172 in Rusovce/Oroszvár, the latest was supposingly an after burial. Adult women and children lied in five graves, but for lack of genetic examinations, we can only render it probable that these graves hid mothers and their children.

The defunts were laided generally in the middle axle of the grave. Only one empty tomb is known which has to be further explained by the research. But on our territory it can be excluded that they were cenotaphs of armed men fallen abroad.

The individual object types - in known cases - were generally found in the place according to wearing custom, there are only two graves where accessories thrown into the grave turned up.

Food or drink supplements come from 76 graves of 6 cemeteries, in majority referred to by clay pots holding them. This custom is known in great number from the Rusovce/Oroszvár cemetery, where 35% of graves included pottery, which is without parallel till now in the cemeteries of the Hungarian territory.

The number of coins coming from 6 sites, 5 graves and as stray finds in 2 cases, furthermore 3 items from unknown sites, is 14. Unfortunetaly the type of only 10 of them can be determined. We should separate among them the coins coming from the time of the Hungarian incursions and of the early Árpádian age, which did not turn up from any grave - or even any cemetery - from the area of these counties.

Among the finds, the different types of lockrings are the most frequent. The separation of their simple, penannular version is often rendered more difficult by the fact that in case of pieces found without knowing their position in grave, their use as ring can also be supposed, further the use of jewelleries as lockring and earring cannot be separated in every case. The simple, penannular wirerings and the S-terminalled rings were most frequently worn, but
sometimes the coiled, one and a half fold, S-terminalled, broadening downward lockrings with spiral pendant can also be observed.

Earrings are known from 7 graves, in greatest number the earrings with cast-beadrow pendent type is known, among them the earrings from Grave 47 of Győr-Téglavető field were connected by chain. The crescent-shaped earring with chain pendent decorated with filigrane and granulation having turned up from Grave 68 in Rusovce/Oroszvár is unique.

Among the characteristic jewellery type of the so called commonalty cemetery, the collars 22 are known, in determinable cases from female or child graves. Beside 1 piece made of a single wire and 1 cast example imitating twist, each one is twisted of bronze wire, and 4 of them is supplemented by filigrane.

The types of pearls show a great variety, nevertheless pearl made of metal is not known. Cowries, smaller snails occur, while lunulas and animal teeth are known only in smaller number.

Only one braid ornament made of sheet is known, whose parallels have been till now reported from sites found east of Danube.

The find material includes the variety of bracelet types, band, wire and animal headed pieces can be found as well. The bronze wire bracelets of round or oval cross-section are present in the greatest number, from 12 graves and sporadically 23 pieces of bracelets turned up. They were mainly worn by women, from six graves of this type turned up wire bracelet of round cross-section, while the number of child graves are three, and there is only one male burial. 7 examples of wire bracelets of square cross-section are known. Among the twisted bracelets, pieces spirally filled on both ends and loop-in-loop and hooked terminalled can equally be found. Band bracelets turned up from five graves and in two cases sporadically, altogether in 7 samples, in bronze and silver version, in each case from female grave. Among the 6 pieces of animal headed bracelets only one, the jewellry of the Grave 17 in Bácsa comes from authentic excavation.

Among the rings almost every type characteristic of the age can be found, two ball-headed and one equipped with bronze ring and silver framework, ornamented with filigrane and granulation from Grave 200 of Rusovce/Oroszvár rise above the other.

Unfortunately the belt mounts of all the three sites can be considered stray, among the dress fittings some smaller pieces having one and two parts, furthermore one piece of secondary use with bigger pendant and two pieces of square-shaped mounts are known. The use of metal button was less characteristic, since bronze or silver buttons turned up from only 7 graves. Two so called Moravian ornamental buttons are documented, they turned up from the Grave 68 of Rusovce/Oroszvár containing the earlier mentioned crescent-shaped earrings with chain pendants. The number of weapons is low, beside the only - though unique till today - single-edged sword, the elements of archer equipments can be mentioned. We should note that boned bow has not been known till now.

Among the horse graves we should highlight the harness mounts with rosette, whose gathering in the Koroncó area is overmuch remarkable. Horse bits and bridle bits of a foul, furthermore the different types of stirrups can equally be found, one of them is decorated with trapezoid metal inlay.

V. Territorial examinations
This chapter includes examinations relating to the history of settlements.

V. 1. Chronological examinations
I have rated the graves, cemeteries into three chronological sections. The first one is the 10th century, with all the horse graves, these sites are solitary, or have only few graves, often including horse grave or graves, mainly situated between Rába and Concó brook and
along the Moson-Danube. The grave number of the cemeteries from the 10-11th centuries is seven, but because of the cemeteries with higher grave number, the majority of graves belongs here. The so called commonalty graveyards are found along the Danube and its Moson arm. The 11th century is represented by eleven sites, but most of them are unfortunetaly sporadic.

V. 2. The ethnical examination of graves and cemeteries

Nowadays the possibility of ethnical determination is one of the disputed questions of Archaeology. It reckons with the possibility of the presence of more ethnics as well on our examined territory. On the basis of written sources and toponymic data the research reckons with the settlement of Petchenegs in four separated territorial blocks. No such archaeological source turned up on these territories - and even on the whole territory of the two counties either - on the basis of which their presence would be supposable. The examination of the graves from the 10-11th centuries found in Győr-Téglavető field from the cemetery in the Avar age, brought negative results as well, they cannot be regarded as a proof of surviving Avar population. Regarding the Rusovce/Oroszvár cemetery, the written sources and the toponymic data raise the question of the presence of a Russian population, while a part of the archaeological finds seem to refer to a surviving population from the 9th century. We could not detect eastern Slavic population with Archaeological methods in the cemetery, and there are only some vague trace as well referring to a population dwelling here in the century preceeding the Hungarian Conquest, without helping to solve the question unambiguously.

V. 3. Microregional examinations

These examinations separated two minor regions, in Győr and in Koroncó area, and as far as our definition is correct, they cannot be in every case identified with the natural geographic borders. On the basis of a larger examination it can be seen that the majority of sites can be found on the territory of Moson county, but in spite of that it is quite evident that we can reckon with a similar settlement structure till Leitha like on the Hungarian territories and the later territories of the Hungarian Kingdom.

VI. Archaeological data to the history of Győr and Moson counties of the age of Conquest and the early Árpádian age

In this chapter we try to provide data with the help of presented source basis to the period history of the two counties and that of the western part of Transdanubia.

VI. 1. The question of borderland

Regarding the 10-11th centuries the first and most important question is the methodological problematic of the border. Its examination will be followed by the analysis of natural geographic and toponymic data, then I examined the topographical situation of the sites of the western region with their character and finds, representing their situation in a map as well. We ranked them among three chronological units too, like in the case of Győr and Moson counties. On its basis it can be seen that the Moson county group of 10th century sites is connected with those of Sopron county from south-west. Regarding their topographic situation, the great majority of the sites from the 10th century is situated in Rábaköz, south of Hanság, their westernmost occurance is Szakony and Röjtőkmuzsaj. Cemeteries providing richer finds are characteristic of Rábaköz too, and within it, rather of its western part. In Vas county two blocks of them seem to stand out, one is the territory between Burg/Pinkaóvár and Vasasszonyfa, the other is east of Rába river, in the Celemdömölk area.

In the case of graves and cemeteries from the 10-11th century compared with the block of those in Rábaköz from the 10th century, a swing to the west can be observed, and a
site is known even from the north-west part of lake Fertő. In the 11th century cemeteries turn up farther in the west, up till the Pöttsching/Pecsnyéd - Mittelpullendorf/Középpulya line, approximately in territorial equipartition. On the territory of Vas county, this significant swing to the west of the 10-11th century cemeteries cannot be observed compared with those from the 10th century. In Zala county the sites dated from the period beginning with the middle of 10th century can be found in the north-east part of the county, near Zala valley, or near Kis-Balaton.

Regarding the settlement territory in 11th century, a swing to the west can be observed in Sopron county, which is however not characteristic of Vas county. Meanwhile in the case of Zala county, sites can be found in the west, as far as Válicka valley.

As far as the types of cemetery structures are concerned, the so called commonality cemeteries with greater grave number can be found on the whole examined territory, even if not in the same proportion.

The graveyards providing ampler finds with smaller grave number - at most 30-40 graves - are known till now only from Sopron county. Whereas the solitary ones often containing bridle ornament with rosette as well, are rather typical of the Győr area.

Regarding the finds, it is widely known that the Transdanubia is deficient in those object types, which can be ranked among the so called dominant type of the age of Conquest. The bridle ornaments with rosette are the only exception. The metal brade ornaments are rare, the metal dress fittings are scanty and only some sites of belts decorated with mounts are known. More conspicuous is the almost entire lack of the double-edged swords and the trapezoid stirrups, though the lack of the object types spreading from the middle of the 10th century can be caused by the diverse representation as well. Nevertheless the sables used already from the first half of 10th century are scarce, which - even if the early spread of diverse representation is taken into concideration, at least in the beginning of the century - could have got into graves at that time.

On the basis of the above mentioned arguments it is probable that the Hungarians of the 10th century could have appeared earlier in the areas south of the Danube than in the central and southern part of Transdanubia. The reason could be that, beside the possibilities provided by the natural geographic conditions, surely geopolitic as well, the Hungarians, perhaps like the Avars, regarded the Danube valley as the most vulnerable part of their whole territory, which needed to be covered.

VI. 2. The so called connection zone. Data to the the question of east-Alpin type finds in the Carpathian basin.

The so called connection zone in geographical sens means the territory, where the neighbouring political powers can be in contact with each other. It is in present case the Ostmark, on the south, the Caranthane Principate and the Hungarian Principate then the Hungarian Kingdom. During the examination, both the archaeological sources of the Carpathian Basin showing western European influence and its opposit, the Eastern Alpin occurence of the Hungarian-like finds or/and ritual elements should be scrutinized. Through the analysis of these two will be outlined the phenomena caused by the cultural relations.

Above the objects which can be regarded as uncertain or transitional types, and the exception of those not needing any particular archetype because of their very simple solution; the button terminalled rings, the fibulas and the earrings with engraved pattern or with enamel enlay can be ranked here. In greatest number the button terminalled rings are known. 38 pieces have turned up from 29 graves and as stray finds, they can be ranked among four categories. They were used as head jewellery, bracelet or ring. The crescent-shaped earrings are known from 14 sites, which can be ranked among two main groups on the basis of their ornaments: the pieces with enamel inlay and with engraved pattern; the previous can be
ranked among two further subcategories. Fibulas turned up from 11 sites and because of their various forming, almost each one belongs to a separate group. The earliest occurrence had the button terminalled rings, among them especially the ones with longer diameter, which could have appeared already in the middle of the 10th century in the graves, while the ones with shorter diameter could have got into the graves from the last quarter of the century. The earrings could also have appeared in graves from the 970/80’s, while the fibulas can be dated from the turn of the millenium. Regarding the occurrence of these objects, the rate is 70% female, 22% infant and 8% male grave in the known cases. We can notice a certain site concentration on the northern shore of Balaton, on the territory of Győr, Moson, Sopron, Vas, Baranya, Heves counties, but it can also be caused by the different research processes. As far as both the way of wearing and the combination of the certain object types are concerned, eastern Alpin parallels can be detected. The Hungarian-like object types and ritual elements are known from 6 sites, they are mainly the smaller monomial mounts or mounts with pendant, collars, bracelets, lunulas, earrings and food and drink furnitures. Fashion, commerce and ethnical identity also arose in the technical literature. In generally we can say that in spite of observable bilateral connections, we cannot speak of the formation of a contiguous zone - or at least with archaeological methods it cannot be justified - where on the encounter of the two cultures a third one would have come into existence with a special and unique profile as it was observale in the case of Pannonia of the 9th century.