

## TOPIC AND OBJECTIVES OF THE DISSERTATION

The primary objective of the doctoral dissertation entitled *Settlement History of the Southern Pest Plain in the 9th–12th Centuries and a Microregional Analysis of the Csepel River Crossing during the Hungarian Conquest Period* was to compile and analyse, as comprehensively as possible, the archaeological evidence relating to the Hungarian Conquest Period and the Early Árpáadian Age within the study area.

The spatial framework of the research was defined by three major communication corridors crossing the microregion and the associated Danube crossing points. These included the routes corresponding to the present-day Highways 4, 5, and 51, as well as the areas surrounding the Csepel, Soroksár, Kén Street, and Pest ferries. During the collection of archaeological data, the present administrative boundaries and the collection areas of the relevant museums also had to be taken into consideration. Consequently, the majority of the analysed finds derive from the collections of the Budapest History Museum, while the finds from several archaeological sites were inventoried and are currently curated in the Archaeological Department of the Hungarian National Museum.

A fundamental objective of the research was to provide the most comprehensive possible chronological framework for the finds, burials, and cemeteries of the Hungarian Conquest Period and the Early Árpáadian Age within the study area, based on the available archaeological evidence. Data collection also extended to information relating to contemporary settlements. In the investigation of settlement patterns and habitation between the 9th and 12th centuries, both cemeteries and settlements constitute essential categories of archaeological evidence.

Accordingly, the archaeological material from contemporary settlements was also reviewed. In the case of published sites, the chronological assessments established by previous research were adopted, while for unpublished settlements attempts were made to establish their dating on the basis of available documentation and direct examination of the finds. The incorporation of settlement data aimed to facilitate the most comprehensive possible reconstruction of the settlement history of the region.

A detailed analysis of the settlements and their full integration into the dissertation would have considerably exceeded both the thematic scope and the intended length of the study. Consequently, settlements were incorporated into the analysis primarily through the relevant archaeological literature and published excavation reports.

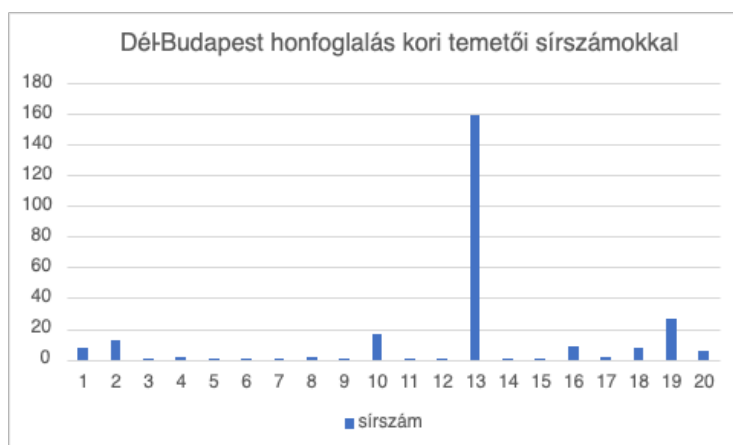


Figure 1. Conquest Period cemeteries in South Budapest and their recorded numbers of burials.:  
 1: Budapest, 5. kerület, Károlyi kert (Képtár kertje), 2: Budapest, 5. kerület, Eskü tér / Március 15. tér, 3: Budapest, 18. kerület, Üllői út (Vöröshadsereg útja) Benczúr utcával szemben, 4: Budapest 18. ker. Kispest-Pestszentlőrinc, Szivattyútelep, gépház., 5: Budapest 18. ker. Pestszentlőrinc-Gloriette/Gilice tér, Varjú Sándor földje. 6: Budapest 18. ker. Pestszentlőrinc–Gyártelep, 7: Budapest, 20. kerület, Knézich és Desseffy utca sarok, 8: Budapest, 20. kerület, Attila u. 36, 40–42., 9: Budapest 20. ker. Pesterzsébet Szt. László utca 121. / Török Flóris utca 121., 10: Budapest 21. ker. Csepel-Királyerdő / Király-major, 11: Budapest 21. ker. Csepel Komáromi út, 12: Budapest 21. ker. Csepel, Szigetcsúcs, 13: Budapest 21. ker. Csepel, Szabadkikötő, 14: Budapest 23. ker. Soroksár, Vörös Október MGTSZ, 15: Budapest 23. ker. Soroksár Marx Károly úti homokbánya-Juta domb, 16: Budapest 23. ker. Mol Ásatás – Soroksár 11. lelőhely, 17: Budapest 23. kerület, Péteri-major, Csonthalom, 18: Budapest 23. ker. M0 autópálya 9. lelőhely, 19: Üllő Ilona út (Pest vármegye), 20: Üllő Kund Gyűjtemény (Pest vármegye).

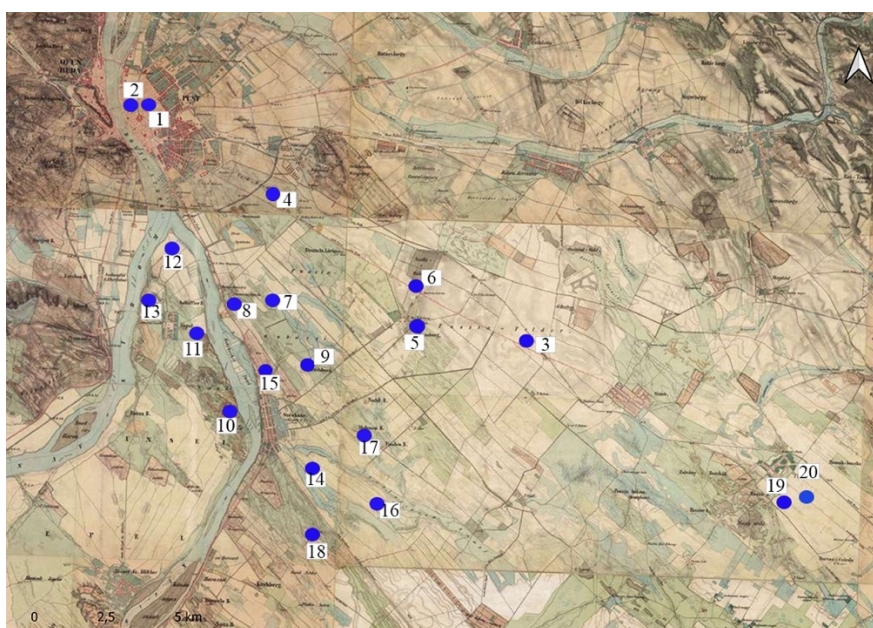


Figure 2. Location of the Conquest Period and Early Árpadian Age cemeteries analysed in the dissertation, shown on the map of the Second Military Survey.

Within the framework of the dissertation, detailed analysis was undertaken primarily on the cemeteries and their grave assemblages. The results are presented in the form of catalogues, plates, tables, and synthetic overviews.

Of the twenty cemeteries included in the study, only one site, Budapest–Soroksár, M0 Site 9, comprising eight burials, can be regarded as fully excavated. Nevertheless, the archaeological material recovered from the 262+ burials examined in this dissertation represents a significant body of evidence, despite the often fragmentary nature of the available data. The analysis encompasses 543 artefacts, together with their typological and chronological parallels, presented in the accompanying plates.

The dissertation aims to provide a comprehensive presentation of the cemetery assemblages, to analyse burial customs observable within the graves, and to establish the most precise chronological framework possible for the individual burial grounds. During the course of the research, all available archival records, excavation documentation, and unpublished sources were systematically collected and reviewed. Photographic and graphic documentation was prepared for the artefacts, while genetic analyses of the anthropological material have also been initiated.

Unfortunately, the urban expansion of Budapest during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries largely preceded the development of modern archaeological heritage management. As a consequence, Conquest Period graves and finds survived only under exceptional circumstances. The extensive extraction of clay for brick production, together with large-scale sand quarrying, had a particularly severe impact on the study area. Since the cemeteries of the tenth and eleventh centuries were frequently situated on elevated sand ridges along the Danube, many of them were likely destroyed before archaeological investigation could take place.

The identification and interpretation of archaeological sites in the study area are often complicated by inconsistencies in the scholarly literature, the use of multiple databases, and varying site designations and numbering systems. Consequently, one of the primary objectives of the research was to establish the most accurate and comprehensive catalogue possible of the cemeteries attributed to the Hungarian Conquest Period and the Early Árpáadian Age.

The dissertation is centred on a Conquest Period and Early Árpáadian Age cemetery excavated in 2015 in the vicinity of the Csepel ferry crossing, near the location of the former village of Csepel. The cemetery, comprising 143 burials, was in use from the late tenth century until the twelfth century. The site had been known since the 1950s, when the construction of the Csepel Free Port and the large-scale transformation of the natural landscape began. These developments resulted in the destruction of a substantial part of the cemetery.

Several harbour basins were excavated along the Danube bank, while crane tracks and railway lines were constructed across the area. These activities led not only to the partial destruction of the cemetery under study but also to the loss of numerous archaeological sites dating from prehistory through the medieval period. It is possible that the royal manor established by King Saint Stephen I (1000–1038) was likewise destroyed during these large-scale construction works.

Although the 143 excavated burials represent only a fraction of the original cemetery, the site nevertheless provides a substantial body of evidence concerning the population living in the vicinity of the Csepel ferry crossing during the period of state formation in Hungary.

Research into the Hungarian Conquest Period on the Pest Plain has a history spanning nearly a century. In 2008, archaeological investigations preceding the construction of the M0 motorway led to the discovery of an eight-burial Conquest Period cemetery on the outskirts of Soroksár. Owing to its exceptionally rich grave assemblages, the site renewed scholarly interest in the Conquest Period archaeology of the region and highlighted the need for a comprehensive collection and analysis of archaeological data relating to the surrounding cemeteries and isolated burials, as well as for a microregional synthesis of the available evidence.

The planned microregional study was originally conceived as part of a larger archaeological corpus devoted to the Budapest region. Preparatory work began in accordance with the methodological framework of the *Corpus of Hungarian Conquest Period and Early Árpadian Age Grave Finds*. Several preliminary studies were published, and the results of the ongoing research were presented at professional conferences.

The archaeological material recovered from the cemeteries also formed the basis of a temporary museum exhibition. The author actively participated in both the research and exhibition projects, working in close collaboration with colleagues from the Budapest History Museum.

The idea for the doctoral dissertation emerged during an excavation directed by the author in 2020 at Csepel Free Port, where an Avar-period cemetery dating to the seventh century was investigated under the auspices of the Várkapitányság. Archaeological evidence indicates continuous or recurrent settlement activity in the vicinity of the Csepel ferry crossing from prehistory onwards and, more specifically, from the seventh to the twelfth century.

During successive archaeological investigations conducted at Csepel Free Port, it became increasingly apparent that the wider area surrounding the ferry crossing warranted a more comprehensive study. By 2020, the author had already gained extensive experience in the excavation and analysis of Conquest Period cemeteries, including participation in the investigation of one of the largest known Conquest Period burial grounds in Budapest and the study of the richest cemetery assemblage discovered on the Budapest section of the Pest Plain. In addition, the author had been involved in several excavations of contemporary settlements and had published research based on their archaeological material.

The choice of research area was also influenced by a long-standing personal connection to the region, as the author was born and continues to reside in the area and has family roots in Soroksár.

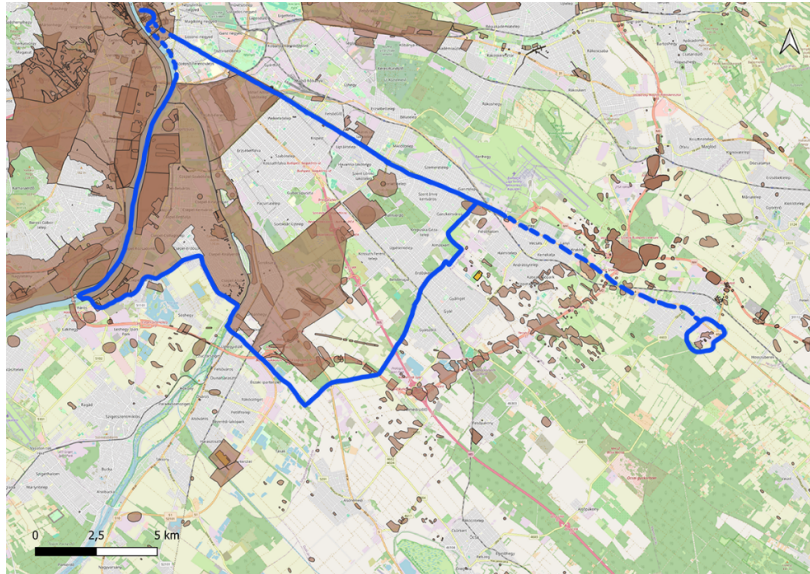


Figure 3. Archaeological sites recorded within the study area.

## STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION AND METHODS OF ANALYSIS

The dissertation consists of four chapters and is supplemented by a bibliography, three appendices (grave descriptions, descriptions of grave goods, 26 tables, and a catalogue of the tubular fittings used for pouch stiffeners), as well as a plate volume comprising 192 plates.

In the first chapter, I present the historical geography, archaeological context, and research history of the area examined in this dissertation. The discussion begins with a description of Csepel Island, followed by the region situated east of the Ráckeve (Soroksár) branch of the Danube. The archaeological context and research history are reviewed through an examination of archaeological sites located along the Danube crossing points (ferry stations) and the roads leading to them. This chapter also includes a presentation of the area surrounding the Csepel ferry crossing and a summary of the archaeological investigations conducted there. The focus is not limited to cemeteries; the chapter also discusses Árpáadian Age settlements in the region, attempts to identify the location of the royal manor house, and provides references to and an overview of previous archaeological research.

In the second chapter, I provide a description and analysis of the Conquest Period and Early Árpáadian Age cemeteries that form the basis of this dissertation. Owing to space limitations, the detailed grave descriptions associated with these cemeteries are presented in Appendix 1. The research history of the cemeteries and the analysis of the various categories of grave goods, however, are discussed within this chapter. The archaeological sites are presented according to the administrative districts of Budapest, proceeding southward from the Pest ferry crossing to Soroksár. This arrangement also follows the routes leading to the Danube crossing points.

In the third chapter, the twenty cemeteries are analysed collectively as a micro-regional unit. The analytical framework follows the conventional methodology applied to cemeteries of this period: a discussion of burial customs is followed by an examination of the grave goods. The analysis of the finds proceeds from horse equipment to jewellery, costume elements, utilitarian objects, and finally weapons. Separate subchapters are devoted to distinctive costume elements

characteristic of the region, such as coins used as dress accessories, cowrie shells incorporated into attire with rings, two-part pendant mount series, and related finds. These artefacts are examined within a broader comparative framework, including the discussion of relevant parallels from other sites.

In the fourth chapter, I summarize the distinctive burial customs observed in the cemeteries and establish the chronological framework derived from the analysis of the grave goods. Based on these results, I outline the chronological sequence of the cemeteries and graves within the region, as well as their relationship to the presumed historical road network and the Danube crossing points (ferry stations). This chapter also discusses the Avar-period and ninth-century archaeological sites of the region, examining their spatial distribution and settlement patterns in relation to the Conquest Period cemeteries.

The earliest graves can be dated, on the basis of their grave goods, to the middle of the tenth century. However, their number is too small to provide convincing evidence for settlement in the region before that time. A more substantial population presence, as reflected by the cemeteries, becomes apparent only in the final decades of the tenth century. From around the turn of the millennium, it can be stated that small communities were living in the vicinity of Soroksár, although their distribution remained scattered. Early villages, seasonal settlements, or dispersed habitation sites can be securely documented from the eleventh century onward, based on both written sources and archaeological features. Prior to this period, no settlements are known; only a limited number of archaeological features can be assigned to the tenth century. The cemeteries were, at least in part, used contemporaneously within the region, but a more substantial and continuous population presence can only be associated with the period around the turn of the millennium and the era of the foundation of the Hungarian state.

Based on the distinctive costume elements, jewellery types, and burial customs, the archaeological material of the region—particularly the characteristics and typology of the cemeteries—can be divided into two groups. A common feature shared by all cemeteries, however, is the widespread occurrence of cranial trepanation within the micro-region. The practice appears to have been independent of the deceased's wealth or presumed social status. Evidence of trepanation is present both in the so-called “settlement cemeteries” (*szállási temetők*) and in the large-cemetery groups generally classified as “commoner” cemeteries.

The majority of the cemeteries belong to the category commonly referred to as “settlement cemeteries” (*szállási temetők*). These are small burial grounds, often consisting of only a few graves and possibly used for a relatively short period. They may represent the burial places of communities maintaining a more loosely organised, semi-nomadic way of life. At the same time, it is conceivable that the earliest grave groups within cemeteries traditionally classified as “commoner” burial grounds may themselves be regarded as independent settlement cemeteries. Such a case can be observed in the earliest grave cluster of the Csepel cemetery, where both the arrangement of the graves and the character of the associated finds differ from those of the remaining approximately 130 burials. Unfortunately, this grave group could not be excavated in its entirety. Consequently, the term “settlement cemetery” may denote not only small cemeteries with few burials but also distinct grave clusters within larger cemeteries that comprise the earliest phase of burial activity.

The fourth chapter also examines the relationship between roads and cemeteries. An attempt was made to investigate the settlement patterns of the tenth-century population by assessing the extent to which the roads and crossing points that were presumably important to them were surrounded by habitation sites and burial grounds. This analysis focused on the route of present-

day Main Road No. 4, two major crossing points—the Pest ferry on the Danube and the Tiszavárkony crossing on the Tisza—and the archaeological sites situated along the route connecting these two crossings. The research was complicated by the fact that a considerable number of Conquest Period and Early Árpáadian Age cemeteries in Pest County remain unpublished, limiting the available dataset for comparative analysis.

## THE MOST IMPORTANT RESULTS OF THE DISSERTATION

The aim of this dissertation was to collect and analyse the Conquest Period and Early Árpáadian Age cemeteries and grave finds from the southern part of Budapest. In order to provide a broader settlement-historical framework, the analysis also incorporated the topographical and chronological data of settlements and settlement features excavated within the study area.

The analysis has yielded the following principal results. In the vicinity of Soroksár, in the southern Budapest section of the Pest Plain, the cemeteries appear to be dispersed across the landscape; however, their distribution follows a distinctive pattern, with burial grounds generally situated at intervals of approximately 1–1.5 km from one another. This structure, commonly referred to as the “settlement cemetery” (*szállási temető*) type, is characterised by a small number of graves, one- or two-row grave arrangements, and a relatively short period of use. Such cemeteries may be interpreted as the burial places of communities maintaining a semi-nomadic way of life during the tenth century. The use of these cemeteries can be securely dated only from the second half of the tenth century onward. To date, neither a cemetery nor an individual grave dating to the first half of the tenth century has been identified within the region. Archaeological evidence for settlements associated with the earliest cemeteries remains extremely limited, consisting only of a small number of features such as ditches, pits, and isolated settlement remains. It can therefore be concluded that the habitation sites of the tenth-century communities buried in these cemeteries are currently unknown.

From the eleventh century onward, the region is characterised by cemeteries containing a substantially larger number of burials, as well as by the appearance of settlements that can be identified archaeologically. Written sources likewise attest to the presence of the first villages. The reconstruction of the settlement structure is complicated by the apparent asynchrony between the written and archaeological evidence. In several cases, locations documented in written sources as settled in the eleventh century have yielded archaeological finds dating no earlier than the thirteenth century. Conversely, sites where archaeological evidence clearly demonstrates occupation during the tenth and eleventh centuries are often mentioned in written records only from the twelfth or thirteenth century onward.

During the eleventh century, the population continued to use the “settlement cemeteries” (*szállási temetők*) established in the late tenth century, while burials also took place in the large “commoner” cemeteries that had likewise been opened in the late tenth century and remained in use until the twelfth century. These latter cemeteries were frequently situated in close proximity to one another, occupying neighbouring elevations. A notable example is provided by the two cemetery mounds located approximately 200 metres apart in the area of Csepel Freeport (*Szabadkikötő*). A similar pattern can also be observed among the cemeteries in the vicinity of Üllő. The two cemetery types existed contemporaneously, suggesting that different communities may have maintained distinct ways of life. These differences are reflected not only in burial practices but also in costume and dress traditions.

After the final abandonment of the “szállás”-type cemeteries in the Soroksár region—datable to the first third of the 11th century—settlements (“villages”) developed in the area formerly enclosed by these burial grounds (roughly in their central zone), together with the earliest church sites. Such settlements include Kerekegyház, Halomegyháza, Szent Dienes, Gubacs, Királynýire, and Csepel. Unfortunately, the churches of several early settlements may have been destroyed by construction activities in the early 20th century (Csepel, Királynýire). The cemeteries associated with the known churches remain unexcavated; therefore, there is no data on burials from the 12th century onward. Likewise, there is no evidence as to whether early Árpád-period cemeteries existed beneath or in the vicinity of the earliest churches.

The first communities are likely to have arrived on Csepel Island only at the end of the 10th century, when the manor house founded by King Stephen I (St Stephen, 1000–1038) and its surrounding settlement were established. Anthropological analyses of these cemeteries indicate colonisation and a high degree of population mixing, which may reflect the state-building intentions of the first Hungarian king. No burials can be demonstrated in the vicinity of the ferry crossing sites in the first half of the 10th century; however, evidence becomes available by the last third of the 10th century. The earliest burials can be inferred along Main Road 4 and the former routes branching off toward the ferry crossings. These consist only of isolated graves; cemeteries do not appear in the studied microregion before the last third of the 10th century. From a broader perspective, considering the entire territory of Budapest, a “occupation” of route networks is observable in the first half of the 10th century. The directions toward the ferry crossings, as well as—on the Buda side—the routes leading toward Esztergom, can be regarded as particularly important axes. The spatial distribution of cemeteries outlines these routes, which in many cases correspond to the lines of present-day roads.

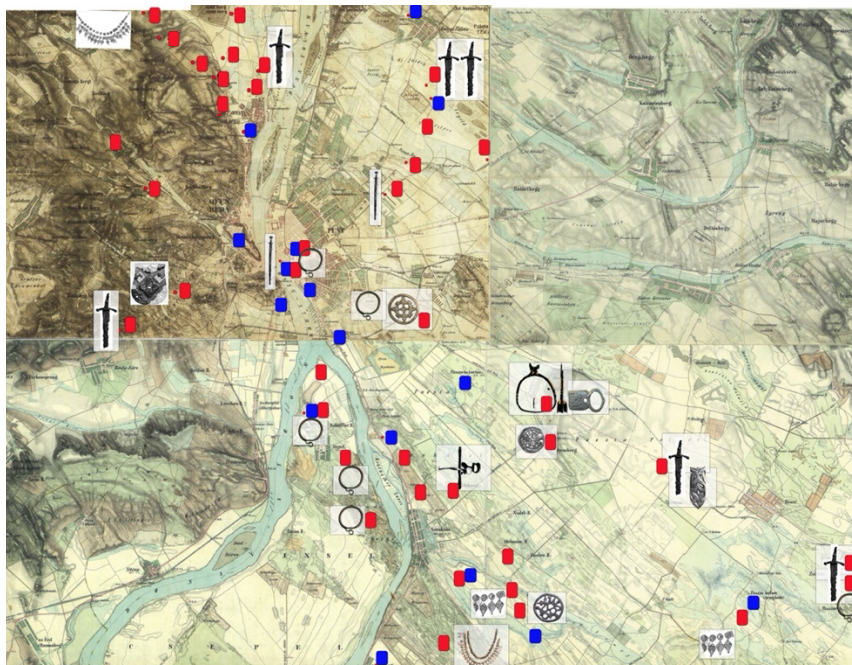


Figure 4. Burial sites from the Conquest Period (red) and Árpád-period settlements (blue) within the territory of Budapest, illustrated with the distribution of selected characteristic artefact types.

The analysis of the archaeological assemblage confirms a duality in cemetery types. In the so-called “szállás”-type cemeteries, the material culture differs in terms of jewellery, costume elements, weapons, and funerary practices. In the “commoner” cemeteries, there is a greater variety of ring ornaments, while weapons and horse burials are absent. The deposition of vessels in graves (food offerings), the practice of placing obols, and high child mortality rates are frequently observed. In both cemetery types, the practice of cranial trepanation is present, independent of the presumed social or economic status of the communities. The assemblages show clear parallelism: the two cemetery types were in use contemporaneously, with no evidence of chronological succession. However, the “szállás”-type cemeteries were abandoned in the early 11th century, whereas the “commoner” cemeteries continued to be used even into the last third of the 11th century. The analysis of the assemblage reveals a distant network of connections extending beyond the Carpathian Basin. Certain artifact types and assemblage groups show parallels pointing toward remote regions. Among these are the tubular strap-ends (“tarsolymerevítő csövecskék”), one of which was uncovered in the Csepel cemetery. Similar tubes are known from approximately two dozen graves in the Tankaeva cemetery in the western part of Novgorod and in the territory of Volga Bulgaria.

These tubular strap-ends are also present in the Birka cemetery, indicating their distribution from northern Viking territories through the Kievan Rus’ region and into the material culture of the Volga Bulgars. An interesting additional observation is their final reappearance in 14th-century Jassic graves, where they occur as part of an already archaic toolset brought into the Carpathian Basin by this population. Within the assemblage of the Hungarian Conquest period, the occurrence of these tubes is highly sporadic: they are represented by a single site in Transdanubia and are otherwise mainly documented in northern Hungary. The three graves at Algyő stand out; the tubes appear in contexts located near Tisza river crossings and major communication routes. The twenty vessels from the Csepel cemetery are of particular significance within the assemblage, both in terms of their chronology and their contents. These vessels—interpreted as containing food offerings—were placed in graves that can be securely dated using ring ornaments. The so-called archaic wavy-line bundle decoration on the ceramics can thus be demonstrated to persist in the cemetery context until as late as the last third of the 11th century. An intriguing, specific costume practice can be observed in the northern part of Csepel Island in the first third of the 11th century. In female graves, silver denarii were found that had been pierced with two holes and were presumably used as decorative dress elements. An unique and unparalleled case is a grave in Csepel containing 13 denarii of King Stephen I (1000–1038). The coins were perforated in such a way that the holes were placed side by side, allowing them to be sewn onto garments—likely on collars or clothing—so that they hung down in a manner similar to double pendant fittings. The search for parallels to this practice of sewing coins onto clothing has shown that it persisted in the Carpathian Basin until the reign of King Béla II (1131–1141).

In connection with the female burial from Soroksár accompanied by a double-element pendant row, the search for parallels to this costume element became necessary, and the four-lobed fittings provided further insights into the known characteristics of this artefact type. Based on the parallels of the Soroksár fitting set, a late 10th-century migration can be hypothesised, the direction of which may have been the region of the Maros River confluence. The variety and typological analysis of ring ornaments appearing in the cemeteries provided a secure chronological framework for the individual graves, thereby also contributing to the dating of the cemetery as a whole. In addition to the Csepel cemetery, the dissertation placed particular

emphasis on the publication and evaluation of the previously unpublished cemetery from Ilona Street in Üllő. The drawing and photographing of the surviving assemblage, the arrangement of the graves, and the interpretation of the documentation required a considerable amount of time. The publication of this fragmented cemetery—consisting mainly of archer burials—on illustrated plates offers the scholarly community an opportunity for further analysis. The interpretation presented in the dissertation represents the first publication of the site.

Based on the preserved burials, the opening of the cemetery can be dated to the last third of the 10th century, while its closure is assignable to the 11th century. However, it must be emphasized that the cemetery is incomplete, and the excavations were not carried out by a professional archaeologist.

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