

PHD THESIS

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POTTERIES FROM VAS COUNTY BETWEEN THE 9TH AND  
12TH CENTURY

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My PhD thesis presented a statistical examination of pottery fragments taken from Vas County, originating between the Late Migration Period and the Árpád Period. My aim was to publish settlements from Vas County discovered in recent decades. My discussion and conclusions are based upon data from well-known and published archaeological sites in Vas County, in particular graveyards which have received more attention than local settlements.

## 1. Spatial and Time Frames

The majority of excavated sites analysed were found in recent decades under huge archaeological investment works in the eastern and middle part of Vas County. They are estimated to originate prior to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century as determined by archaeological finds. Previously unknown larger settlements from the Late Migration Period were discovered in the vicinity; however a mass of graveyards were already known containing rich burial gifts (e.g. Vasasszonyfa, Lukácsháza, Celldömölk-Izsákfa). From the centuries prior to Hungarian settlement, only the graveyard from Sárvár-Végh Malom is known. Close to this area we already know of two settlements founded in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, one of which was still alive in the 10<sup>th</sup> century (typical of settlements from the Karoling Period) while the settlement in Sárvár-Faképi dűlő was densely populated even up to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The examined settlements from the Hungarian Conquest period and the Árpád Period terminated sometime near the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century or early 12<sup>th</sup> century when inhabitants gave up their old residency and moved closer to newly built churches and buried their dead in its vicinity.

## 2. Examination Process

Most excavated finds were pottery fragments; in my work I emphasise comparative statistical analyses and detailed descriptions of their nature. I aim to find characteristic differences between pottery from the 9-10<sup>th</sup> and the 11-12<sup>th</sup> centuries to improve dating of these finds. I am interested in the transition between the two periods and the dating of pottery from the 10<sup>th</sup> Century. Besides typo-chronological categorisation of the potteries, tools and other metal finds were noted and are put under scientific examinations. I separated pottery into different types under the inventory. From the pots of the Karoling Period I first described baking bowls, baking bells, bowls and finally cooking pots. All are described from the top to the bottom part (rim, side and bottom fragments). Under examination of the pots from the Árpád Period I separated all finds into the following order: cauldron-type pots, bottles and cooking pots. I further subcategorised the finds through further examination, e.g. examination

oftempering materials (under macroscopic view) like sand, small stones, grinded pottery granules, chalk grains, graphite and organic materials; technical elements of the pottery making; colour; burning types; decoration and measurements of the pots. In the case of the rims and bottom fragments I described the form, shape, starting point, lay-out and diameter of the rim and the stamps; the diameter and the slightly protruding rounded special stamps (so called “*delle*”) of the bottom pieces. By applying these technical elements I derived the most observations from analyses of bottom fragments. I documented traces of use-wear and signs of secondary burn in every pot shard (smut traces and grime subsidence).

In the work I described 4052 pottery fragments from the 9-10<sup>th</sup> century and 2456 pieces from the Early Árpád Period. In total 6508 pieces have been documented.

Cooking pots were dominant throughout the examined period with a rate of 98,4% by the end of the Migration Period and 98,62 % in the Árpád Period. Bowls and baking bowls account for less than 1% in the Karoling Period and cooking bells reach only 1,5% throughout the entire interval. The rate of bowls and bottles is less than 1% in the Árpád Period. The most prevalent pot type after cooking pots are cauldron-type pots with a rate of 1.1% in the collection.

I applied comparative statistical analysis to examine different pottery fragments. In every case the most relevant data groups were combined: for example in monitoring the diameters of rim shards I combined the results with the whole length of the separate examined pots, or while examining decoration rates I compared results with the frequency of decoration elements (up to 100 %) and in the case of multi decoration elements I counted every element as a single piece.

### 3. Presented Settlements

We must continue the search for settlements from the Karoling Period by applying the results of field surveys and sporadic finds, testing along strategic spots such as still used roman roads in the vicinity of shallow wadingriver points or hilltops. Settlements along wading neighbourhoods of the river Répce (Répcelak-Várdomb), the river Rába in Sárvár (Sárvár-Végh malom, Sárvár-Sitkei wood and the so called ERTI, Sárvár-Faképi dűlő) and in Körmend were found to be highly significant, similarly in a suburb of the old roman town Savaria and on the hilltops of Velem-Szentvid. From these places we have little information from excavations. From Velem we can expect a normal settlement, according to the archaeological finds inventoried in 1954 in the Savaria Museum, but the circumstances of discovery are unknown. The first scientifically investigated settlements were excavated in

1970 in the vicinity of Sárvár, in so-called Sitkei wood and ERTI by Mária Károlyi and Terézia Buocz. After this a handful of new settlements were discovered from the Late Migration Period in the years of 2000: in Sárvár-Faképi dűlő by Péter Kiss and Csilla Farkas, in Vát-Telekes by Péter Skriba and in Kemenespálfa-Zsombékos by Csilla Farkas. Most recently in 2012 and in 2013 in Pósfá-Almás, Réka Mladoniczki and Péter Hornok excavated a larger settlement from the same period. From these listed settlements only the finds from Vát-Telekes was published by Péter Skriba in 2010 (Skriba 2010); all other settlements have been processed in this dissertation. The examination of the settlement of Pósfá-Almás will be my new work in the close future, although the peculiarity of the finds can already be drawn into my thesis – principally the pottery examinations from the Karoling Period.

The settlements from the 9-10<sup>th</sup> century, presented in my recent paper, have continuity after the occupation by the Hungarians. The inhabitants from Kemenespálfa (on the high terraces above the river Marcal) and from Sárvár-Sitke (on a natural peninsula in the river Rába) lived through agriculture and fishing, according to the excavated archaeological finds (sickles, iron coulter, grappling iron, fishing net weights) and the phytolith examinations made on grinding stones from Kemenespálfa by Gergő Persaits. The settlement in Sárvár was protected from the east with a trench, and on the western side the river Rába had a strategic notability. Most probably the inhabitants had an important object to protect the wading place on the river. This hypothesis can be enhanced with archaeological find from a pit containing a hauberk fragment.

The transition into the Árpád Period is derived from sites in Sárvár-Faképi dűlő which contains finds from both periods. The so called impressed rouletting decoration on the cooking pots from this continuous settlement – which was still alive in the 12<sup>th</sup> century – proves that these decorations were already in use by the 10<sup>th</sup> century. These decoration elements were thought to originate from the 11<sup>th</sup> century based on unusual finds from graveyards in West Hungary, however, this style is completely missing from graveyards in Vas and Zala County. Thus the early appearance of this pot style gives us fresh information to better understand the situation in these settlements. This decoration style appears on cooking pots in Vas County with high variation already in the Early Árpád Period, recognisable from multi-decorations and from the inner side of the rim. Radiocarbon data similarly corroborates this conclusion. Analysis of 668 objects from the excavation site Sárvár-Faképi dűlő reveal that in the region of West Hungary, the early presence of this decoration is plausible.

In Celldömölk, on the foothill of the Ság hill, we have excavated along more than 2 acres a huge settlement from the Árpád Period, until now the largest in the region. From the

excavated 105 objects three are living houses while another three are either houses or workshops. Most of the objects describe ongoing economic activity in the settlement: two workshops, ten outdoor ovens, one concentrated group of ovens, several pits and a storage pit.

Up to now only a flowerpot-shaped bowl was discovered in the outer structure of a well in the settlement, next to a structure made of rammed soil and wood. From the ovens of the workshops and houses we have excavated a great deal of slag, deposited directly onto the burned out floor of the structures. Archaeometric examination of the slag, performed by geologist Ferenc Molnár, showed a large variation of iron content and, from the type of excavated objects, we can assume that in this settlement the inhabitants produced wrought products for the hillfort on Ság hill. This fort was most likely ruined because of the modern basalt quarry. The same situation can be observed with secondary phytolith examinations, carried out by Gergő Persaits, on the grinding stones deposited in the mouth of the ovens which showed only a small amount of grain remains confirming the idea that inhabitants were involved in iron melting processes rather than anything agriculturally orientated.

Archaeomagnetic dating, performed by Péter Márton, shows the settlement was already in use in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Without this dating method it would be difficult to date the settlement even though the settlement was rich in small finds (bronze and silver S-ended hair rings, beads with silver foil, iron finds such as sickles, a whole cutting objects, bucket handles, iron rings, knives, different iron fittings, hooks and the flowerpot-shaped bowl). By applying the typo-chronology of the cauldron-type pots, prepared by Miklós Takács, the settlement could otherwise only be dated in the frame between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century.

After the description of the finds from Celldömölk I would like to investigate smaller settlements from Hegyfalu, Lukácsháza, Táplánszentkereszt and Répcelak. Descriptions of these sites will increase the number of known settlements in Vas County.

In Hegyfalu during a larger excavation, a house and a pit were discovered from the Árpád Period. Owing to the small number and poor quality of finds it is hard to distinguish the period.

In Lukácsháza only two pits were excavated containing pottery from the Árpád Period. In the pot sets the number of bright – almost white – coloured objects is very high, as well as a dominance of larger pots. Such large pots are known only from this settlement.

Three finds from the cooking pots are almost completely supplemental. One from the whole pots is decorated with impressed rouletting in a spiral line with finger impressions and a wavy line on the neck. Note worthy is a typical cooking pot with hard profiled neck from the Early Árpád Period, first described by Miklós Takács in the Külsővat material find

(located close to Vas County). Similar pot types were noted in the pot sets from Sárvár-Faképi dűlő and in the finds from the Celldömölk, dated from the Early Árpád Period.

The vicinity of Répcelak, close to the wading place in the old river Répce, may have been densely populated between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century according to data from ruined graveyards in the vicinity from the Late Migration Period and Early Árpád Period. In the Galagonyás-dűlő Csilla Farkas a larger settlement was excavated containing three houses – probably workshops – from the Early Árpád Period. One of these economic buildings was a shallow, half buried, round shaped house. On its floor several cooking pots were found: a few with impressed rouletting decor and linear decorations, one (probably an import) with graphite tempering and a stab-and-drag technique line between wavy line decorations.

On the boundry of Táplánszentkereszt in 1995, Gábor Kiss discovered two houses, a large concentration of ovens, two ditches, two pits and four single ovens while excavating. The most characteristic element from the finds is a cooking pot with a deep V-shaped cut on the rim. Another special piece is a cooking pot fragment with a coarse surface made from a typical clay material with a greyish white colour. Similar pieces have been detected in the find material from Celldömölk, excavated out together with a barrel shaped bead with silver foil from the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The conclusion of these discoveries and the presence of carved line decorations on the pots, this settlement should be dated rather to the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century.

#### 4. Pottery from the Karoling Period in Vas County

In my dissertation I reviewed the characteristics of pottery from the three settlements collectively. Representative results of petrographic and archaeometric data are also available (made by Katalin Gherdán and Mária Tóth) of pottery from Vas County for examining the raw materials applied in their preparation.

After the examination of baking bowls, baking bells and bottles I presented a detailed analysis of the cooking pots. I evaluated separately the most general reddish colour pots and sporadically observed pots with orange and greyish white colour. I additionally determined different tempering materials of handmade cooking pots and pottery which spread through the region in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

After the description of the pot forms I examined the rate, modus and location of pottery decorations. The most populous decoration was the combed decoration with a rate of 84.7% followed by linear decorations with 8.3% and wavy line decorations carried a frequency of 5.4%. The remaining 1.6% was made up of other decorating motifs.

Measurements and other technical observations mostly carried out on bottom fragments, and the description of wooden pots and tools close the chapter.

## 5. Pottery from the Early Árpád Period in Vas County

This chapter, similar to the previous appraising one, demonstrates the most important characteristics of earlier existing pot styles and new styles from the Early Árpád Period; in particular cooking pots.

The reddish coloured pots still dominate in the Early Árpád Period although the rate of whitish and orange colour pots increase. However, scientific examinations show that in the whole period only local raw material was used in their construction: all three colour types were created from the same locally mined clay.

One of the main tempering materials in the Karoling Period is the chalk grain, which is present only as a contamination in the Árpád Period. The rate of graphite tempered potteries recede from 1.46 % to 0.73 % in the second half of the examined period.

The most conspicuous decoration transformation is found in the handling of decoration elements on the surface under the neck of the pot: during this period the neck and shoulder are decorated with notches, stab-and-drag techniques, finger impressions or wavy lines and the whole body part with spiral lines or occasionally with wavy lines or pressed rouletting decoration. Before these the main decoration idea was the use of the alternate striped decor. The earlier used combed decoration is replaced with linear decors in the Karoling Period and their rate increased from 8.3% to 75.2%.

Up to the Árpád Period, the forms and shapes of the cooking pots become more uniform, as opposed to earlier periods' high variability. Most pots get wider in the shoulder, mouth and bottom.

The form of the rims changes only slightly. Over the course of time, the sagging rim became more beloved and the rim itself was formed by pulling out, up or down its sides. The undercut cooking pot rim and bloated rim revealed itself during the Árpád Period as a new form.

Barely profiled cooking pot rims are the most characteristic pieces of the Árpád Period, although similar pieces with lighter profiled neck can be found in the earlier period.

The slightly protruding rounded stamp (so-called "delle") disappears completely from the bottom shards. The rate of the bottom stamps increases from 3.6% to 20.7%. The most common decorative form for the stamps is the slightly gibbous cross in a circle, the sun or the wheel.



The rectangular frame or stamp can be also found just like the single star, the cross or the double cross as a stamp without any frame.

In the settlements tools and other small finds are very rare in the Árpád Period with the only exception being Celldömölk. From the other excavation sites only two iron knives, three undefinable iron tools and five spinning wheels can be counted among the group of ordinary tools.

## 6. Change of Pottery Making Procedure from Karoling Period to Early Árpád Period

To summarise the results of my work I correlated typical changes in the pot styles under examination with pottery from different periods and different archaeological settlements. Elements sometimes vanished, in some cases lived on and in some parts appeared as new elements between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century. Concerning the examination of pottery and their dating from the Hungarian Conquest period, I collated the main criteria to describe the transition from the Karoling Period in the 10<sup>th</sup> century or conversely the archaic elements in the pot styles from the archaeological finds of the Árpád Period.

In the Karoling Period the growing rate of yellowish and orange colour pots, the lack of the chalk granule tempering, the smaller rate of the graphite tempering and the obligatory use of hand-turn wheel are primary representative signs for the transition to the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The same dating can be proposed from decorative elements of single spiral lines, incised or stroked lines and decoration of the whole pot body. Besides these, the most significant signs are the regression of parallel wavy lines and parallel line decors, the presence of the grooved decoration and the stab-and-drag techniques on the shoulder, the increasing number of the rims with triangular and rounded section, the uniformed shape of the cooking pots, the missing of the so called “*delle*”, the reduction of larger stamps and the presence of framed stamps and a smaller hunch on bottom fragments.

The archaic signs in the Árpád Period are the single used spin lines, the inner decoration of the rims, the wavy lines or normal line decoration elements on the upper third of the pot side, the alternating decor from wavy lines and normal line decorations, the multi decoration forms with parallel wavy lines or normal lines, the lower rate of the spin lines and the incised lines, the higher rate of wavy/normal lines decor combinations, the high rate of the bigger stamps on the bottom and the presence of the smaller hunch on the bottom made by the dimple of the pottery wheel.

The formulated criteria can help to better understand the dating of the potteries from Vas County and from the West Transdanubian region.