

Rome, Constantinople and Newly-Converted Europe

Archaeological and Historical Evidence



Volume II

U ŹRÓDEŁ EUROPY ŚRODKOWO-WSCHODNIEJ / FRÜHZEIT OSTMITTELEUROPAS

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edited by
Maciej Salamon, Marcin Wołoszyn, Alexander Musin, Perica Špehar

in cooperation with
Matthias Hardt, Mirosław P. Kruk, Aleksandra Sulikowska-Gaska

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Byzantinische Staurothek (10. / 11. Jh.) aus Ostrów Lednicki,
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ÁDÁM BOLLÓK

BYZANTINE MISSIONS AMONG THE MAGYARS DURING THE LATER 10TH CENTURY?

Abstract. *Byzantine missions among the Magyars during the later 10th century?* For many 10th century Christian observers, as they frequently noted, the arrival of the conquering Hungarians at the end of the 9th century meant the beginning of the Apocalypse. Therefore it is hardly surprising, that in the eyes of Christian authors the newly arrived People of Gog and Magog appeared as the *par excellence* pagans of their age. This view is clearly attested by all extant historical writings of the time, whether Byzantine Greek, Western European Latin or Eastern European Slavic. On the other hand, archaeological excavations conducted over the last one and a half century in the Carpathian Basin, produced a number of cross finds, datable to 10th and 11th centuries that continue to provoke a lively debate among historians and archaeologists, most of whom have been speculating how these crosses are to be interpreted. Some leading experts of early Hungarian history were in favour of and others were against the presence and spread of Christianity in the Carpathian Basin before the time of the state-enforced conversion under Saint Stephen. The present paper aims to revisit the main arguments established by the debating parties and introduce new ones in order to better understand the background against which Saint Stephen's efforts in Christianizing his kingdom are to be contextualized. My object is to question the usefulness of applying strict theological/canonical criteria when hints of an early evangelizing activity in the burials of the given period are searched for. On the other hand, by reviewing the known ecclesiastical regulations I argue that in the first century of official Christianization of the Árpáadian Age, the Church left the question of burial up to the family of the deceased; a fact which, in my judgement, helps to explain why it is nearly impossible to find a criterion or a set of criteria for determining the burial of a Christian or a partly Christianized individual before the use of churchyard cemeteries.

For many 10th-century Christian observers, as they frequently noted, the arrival of the conquering Hungarians at the end of the 9th century meant the beginning of the Apocalypse. Therefore it is hardly surprising, that in the eyes of Christian authors the newly arrived People of Gog and Magog appeared as the *par excellence* pagans of their age. This view is clearly attested by all extant historical writings of the time, whether Byzantine Greek, Western European Latin or Eastern European Slavic documents are concerned. Moreover, the earliest testimony in this sense has been noted down by an Arabic geographer about the last decades of the 9th century (presumably around the 880's). Even if the original work containing the report in question, i.e. al-Ġayhānī's *Kitāb al-masālik wa-l-mamālik* (*Book of the roads and kingdoms*) has been lost, a later geographer, Ibn Rusta, who extensively excerpted Ġayhānī's writings, has transmitted and preserved it (*cf.* Ibn Rusta I; Ibn Rusta II). His judgement is as follows: "The Magyars are fire-worshippers".

Although some scholars attempted to interpret this laconic note as evidence for the presence of Zoroastrianism among the ancient Hungarians, they obviously disregarded the simple fact that the phrase “*abda al-nīrān*” used by Ibn Rusta means literally “worshippers of fire”, while in contemporary Arabic literature the term “*mağūs*” designated the Zoroastrians. Therefore the real meaning of the quoted passage is simply: the Magyars are pagans (cf. Fodor 2003a, 341).

It would be tempting to assign to this notable agreement of all available written sources that the first learned explainers of early Hungarian history from the 17th to the 19th century raised hardly any doubt with regard to the pagan nature of the early Hungarians’ belief system before the age of Saint Stephen (r. 997-1038). Nevertheless, mention must be made of some remarkable exceptions. In 1740 Godolfred Schwarz published a brief study in which he quoted a group of Byzantine historians (John Skylitzes, Kedrenos, Kuropalates and Zonaras), whose works contain clear statements about the first attempts to Christianize the ancient Hungarians in the second half of the 10th century (for these sources, see Moravcsik 1984). Taking their testimony at face value, Schwarz argued for the priority of Byzantine missionary activity amongst the peoples of the Carpathian Basin (Schwarz 1740). Subsequently, most leading researchers of the early Hungarian history were involved in the debate opened by Schwarz, either supporting or refuting his views (for an overview of the 19th century opinions, see Thallóczy 1896). However, it is hardly surprising, that the question could not have been unequivocally resolved. Even if later some previously unknown sources also were discovered, these mostly short accounts did not shed much new light on the old problem. This phenomenon is manifestly illustrated if one takes in hand the collected essays presented by the leading historians and archaeologists of the first half of the 20th century, published on the occasion of the 900th anniversary of Saint Stephen’s death in 1938. In this monumental synthesis (Serédy [ed.] 1938) both the historian P. Váczy and the Byzantinist Gy. Moravcsik were invited to give an overview on the state and spread of Christianity among the ancient Hungarians before and after their conquest of the Carpathian Basin, respectively. Partly due to the prevailing *Zeitgeist* of their own age, and partly – and as far as I see mainly – as a consequence of the painful absence of relevant historical data, both eminent scholars turned to such written accounts, which only indirectly could have helped them to formulate some new insights.

In one of his contributions, Moravcsik (1938) tried to draw a brief outline of the various attempts at Christianization among the nomadic peoples living in the Eastern European steppes in the Early Middle Ages (from the 6th to the 9th centuries). In his view, as a consequence of the repeated missionary efforts, some elements of Christianity must have been disseminated not only among the Turkic peoples of the South Russian steppes, but also among the ancient Hungarians who were assumed to have lived during most of their pre-Conquest history under the name of those Turkic tribes or tribal confederations about whom the Byzantine historiographers have noted that they were visited by Christian missionaries to evangelize them. On the other hand, Váczy (1938) focused on the 9th century process of evangelization among the peoples living in the Transdanubian area of the former Avar Khaganate. Since after the collapse of the Avar rule the Carolingian administration organized the missionary activity of the Roman Church on the Empire’s newly occupied territories and since the contemporary Carolingian sources celebrated the far-reaching effects and great successes of it, it seemed likely to assume, that the supposed profound results achieved by this century-long evangelization could not have been lost completely without any detectable traces. Therefore, as Váczy tended to speculate, if these Christian elements were present also during the 10th century – or at least during its first half – in the Western part of the Hungarian domain, it follows that they must have left their imprint on the emerging Hungarian Christianity – even if he was unable to reveal any detectable influence which should have to be connected with these surviving Christian communities.

No matter how reasonable these suppositions seemed to be, neither withstood the test of time. On the one hand, as the prevailing concepts of the 1930’s have been changed and, consequently, the current hypothesis concerning the chronological and geographical framework of the early Hungarian history shifted considerably, most of the supposedly more or less evangelized steppe peoples became uninteresting from the Hungarian perspective. On the other, the systematic excavations in and around Mosaburg/Zalavár (i.e., the political/cultural centre of the Carolingian Pannonia) shed much new light on the post-Carolingian history of the site and the fate of its inhabitants after the Hungarians’ arrival, thereby making Váczy’s hypothesis untenable (cf. Szőke 2005 and his contribution in this volume [Szőke 2012]). However, if archaeology is mentioned, it needs to be stressed, that some archaeological data had also been used in Moravcsik’s

above mentioned contribution. In search for previously unidentified source material, Moravcsik turned to the Tiszabездé sabretache plate (Fig. 1), what turned out to be a ground-breaking attempt. Although this unique object was discovered and published already in 1896 (Jósa 1896), its incredible career started only in the 1930's, when the young archaeologist Nándor Fettich discovered it again for himself and began to make use of it. In his view, even if the Tiszabездé plate had surfaced in the Carpathian Basin, it must have been manufactured before the Hungarian conquest, when the ancient Hungarians were still living somewhere in the Dnieper region (in their ancient homeland referred to as *Levedia* by Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos in his famous *De administrando imperio*; cf. DAI 38, p. 171). Therefore, it has been argued, if the Tiszabездé plate was a product of a pre-conquest goldsmith working in *Levedia*, the Byzantine cross displayed in the middle field of this item must be an undeniable trace of the spread of Byzantine Christianity among the Hungarians before their conquest (Fettich 1931, 388; 1935, 13). Moravcsik, being an outstanding philologist and historian but no archaeologist, accepted Fettich's argumentation and inserted this object into the framework of his historical narrative.

However, as time goes by, archaeological narratives change. Whereas for the post-WW-II generations of Hungarian archaeologists the Tiszabездé plate remained a standard reference point, its place of manufacture and the interpretation of its decoration altered considerably. Although these scholars did not reject entirely the possibility that the Tiszabездé plate could be a surviving object from the pre-conquest



Fig. 1. Tiszabездé, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg megye, Hungary. Sabretache plate; after I. Fodor (1996, 183, Fig. 3).

period, nevertheless, they tended to argue for the likelihood of its local production. As far as the plate's iconography is concerned, they turned toward a new reading which, in their view, helped to explain all the peculiarities of this find. In this new interpretative framework the cross again played a crucial role, being a Christian element of a *par excellence* syncretistic composition, in which the typical "Hungarian" palmettes and the Iranian *senmurw* depictions represented the shamanistic pagan and the Zoroastrian traits, respectively. Moreover, this syncretistic nature fitted well into the model delineated by ethnographers investigating the first encounters between the great world religions and shamanistic belief systems (for recent views, see Fodor 1996, 181-184; 2003a, 334; 2005, 26).

Post WW-II archaeology, however, happened to extend its scope in another way, too. M. Bárány-Oberschall (1953), following Moravcsik's research agenda but moving on her own way, collected a corpus of cross finds came to light from the cemeteries of the early Árpadian age or published as stray finds, kept in Hungarian museum collections. In a short review, Bárány-Oberschall argued for an explicitly Christian interpretation of these finds. In her opinion the Byzantine or Byzantine style crosses from the Carpathian Basin are clear marks of a Byzantine missionary activity among the Hungarians. However, even if later re-evaluations of the continuously growing corpus of data challenged her views (Lovag 1971; 1980; Langó, Türk 2004; Langó 2010), none of these studies managed to integrate all the available information into a fairly convincing and coherent explanation. As a consequence, around the beginning of the third millennium some leading experts of early Hungarian history (archaeologists as well as historians) argued again for, while others were against the presence and spread of Christianity in the Carpathian Basin before the time of the state-enforced conversion under Saint Stephen. Thus, the positions seem to return to that point from which Moravcsik's generation had attempted to remove them (for an overview of the arguments, see Langó, Türk 2004).

After this short survey of the previous literature and divergent opinions, it seems tempting to ask whether this problem can be resolved at all. Although I am fully aware of the imperfect nature of the available source material and the methodological difficulties associated with the problems of conversion, two phenomena which form inevitable barriers in search for a definitive answer (for recent overviews of methodological issues, see Müller-Wille [ed.] 1997-1998; Stäcker 1999; Armstrong, Wood [eds.] 2000), I tend to think that it is not impossible to take another step forward.

As a starting point it would seem appropriate to begin with the first find on which Christian traits have been identified, i.e. with the sabretache plate from Tiszabezdéd. However, its re-interpretation requires a separate study (for an attempt, see Bollók 2010). Therefore, within the frames of the present survey only the cross finds known from the 10th century Carpathian Basin will be examined in detail. The first main problem – as in so many instances in archaeology – is associated with their dating. Although in many cases we seem to be able to date grave assemblages with relative certainty, the archaeological context or even the absence of it in case of the remaining examples do not enable us to assign them either to a 10th or an 11th century environment. This point must be stressed, since archaeological interpretations largely depend on the chronological and geographical distribution of finds. It is true, that the larger part of the datable crosses indicated on the distribution maps (Fig. 2-3) originates from the 11th century. However, if it is impossible to establish the precise chronological dissemination of the crosses, this means that it is also impossible to establish the exact dynamics of their spreading. Nevertheless, there are some lucky examples which can be dated with certainty to the second half of the 10th century, either by coin finds or with help of other grave goods. What is apparently evident from these burials is that in most cases such type of objects are also present in these assemblages which should not have been placed in the grave if Christian prescriptions were observed during burial (*cf.*, however, the important points made by S. Brather in the present volume; *cf.* Brather 2012). To quote only some of the most striking examples, let me refer to Grave No. 197a in the Ibrány cemetery, Grave No. 1 at Dunaalmás and Grave No. 60 at the Szob-Kiserdő cemetery. At Ibrány, in the grave of a young girl among various jewellery items a simple pendant cross and an animal tooth amulet were found around the neck of the deceased (Istvánovits 2003, 97-99, Pl. 93-96). Similarly, in the graves at Dunaalmás (Kralovánszky 1988, 244-245, Fig. 5) and at Szob (Bakay 1978, 29-33, Pl. XVI; *cf.* Fig. 4) the crosses also lay among jewellery items. Conversely, mention must also be made on some less salient instances which illustrate that does not exist always such a huge gap between the find assemblages of the 10th and the 11th centuries. For example, Grave No. 199 in the Sárretudvari-Hízóföld cemetery, with its reliquary pendant cross (M. Nepper 2002, 339; *cf.* Fig. 5), does not diverge significantly from Grave 73 in the Szentes-Szentlászló cemetery (Széll 1941, 238, Pl. 6) despite the fact that the former belongs to the 10th while the latter to the 11th century.

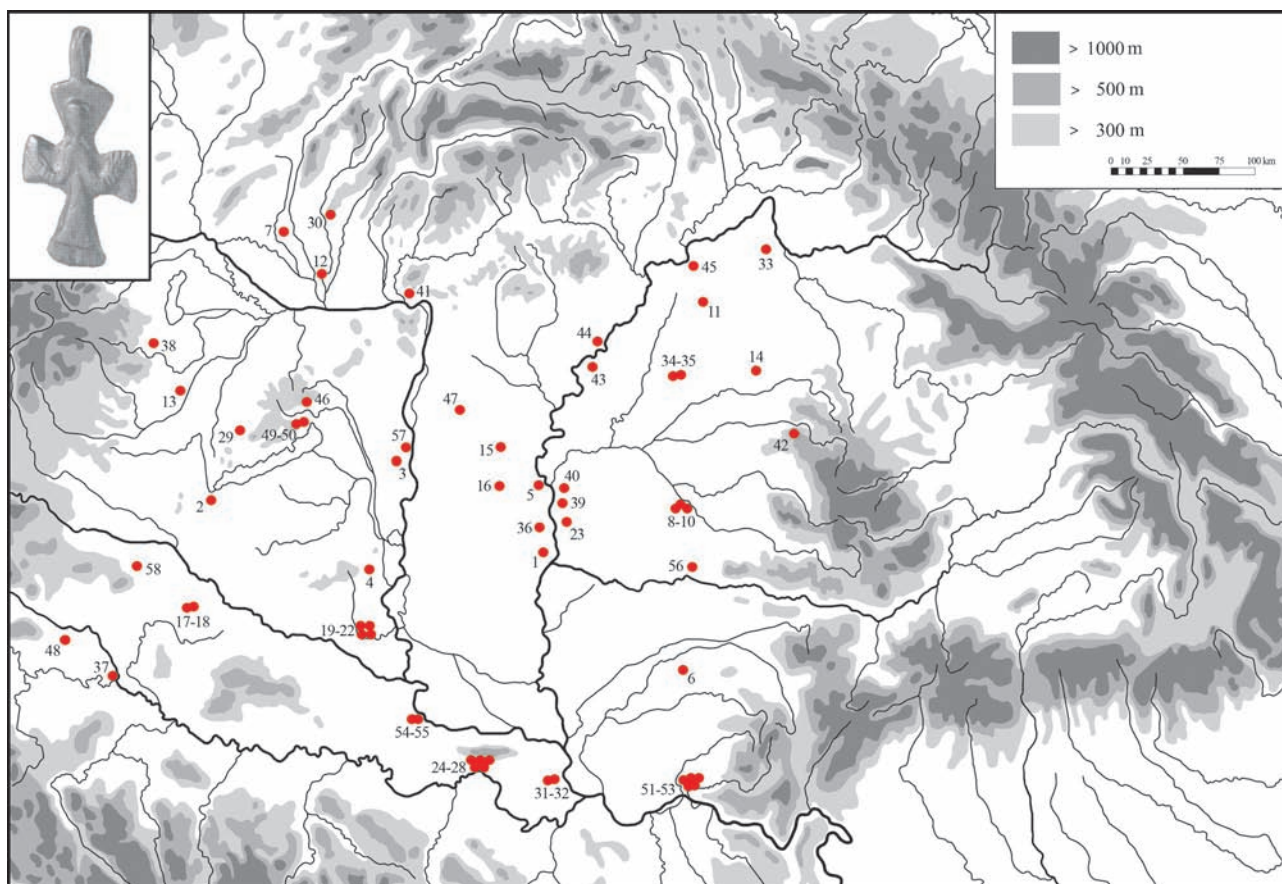


Fig. 2. Carpathian Basin. Distribution of the simple hanging crosses (10th-11th century); after P. Langó (2010, Fig. 8).

1. Algyó, Csongrád megye, Hungary, Grave No. 105;
2. Balatonmagyaród-Felső-Koloni-dűlő, Zala megye, Hungary, Grave No. 213;
3. Cece-Menyődpuszt, Fejér megye, Hungary; 4. Cikó, Tolna megye, Hungary;
5. Csongrád-Felgyő-Csizmadia tanya, Csongrád megye, Hungary, Grave No. 45; 6. Deta, județul Timiș, Romania;
7. Galanta-Kertalja, okres Galanta, Slovakia; 8-10. Gyula-Téglagyár, Békés megye, Hungary;
11. Hajdúdorog-Gyűlás, Hajdú-Bihar megye, Grave No. 19; 12. Hurbanovo, okres Komarno, Slovakia, Grave No. 22;
13. Ikervár-Virág utca, Vas megye, Hungary, Grave No. 112; 14. Jankafalva, Hajdú-Bihar megye, Hungary;
15. Kecskemét-Városföld-Szarvas-tanya, Bács-Kiskun megye, Hungary;
16. Kiskunfélegyháza-Kántordomb, Bács-Kiskun megye, Hungary; 17. Kloštar, Županija Požesko-Slavonska, Croatia;
18. Kloštar Pdarvski-Pijeski, Županija Požesko-Slavonska, Croatia;
- 19-22. Majs-Udvari-rétek, Baranya megye, Hungary, Graves No. 234, 275, 770, 1031;
23. Mindszent-Koszorús-dűlő, Csongrád megye, Hungary, Grave No. 2; 24. Sremska Mitrovica, Okrug Sremski, Serbia;
- 25-28. Mačvanska Mitrovica, Okrug Sremski, Serbia; 29. Nemeshany, Zala megye, Hungary; 30. Nitra, okres Nitra, Slovakia;
- 31-32. Novi Banovci, Okrug Sremski, Serbia; 33. Nyírkársz-Vecse-kút-lapos, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg megye, Hungary;
- 34-35. Püspökladány-Eperjesvölgy, Hajdú-Bihar megye, Hungary, Graves No. 95, 107;
36. Sándorfalva-Eperjes, Csongrád megye, Hungary, Grave No. 14;
37. Sisak, grad Zagreb, Croatia; 38. Szakony-tsz major, Győr-Moson-Sopron megye, Hungary, Grave No. 9;
39. Szegvár-Szőlők alja, Csongrád megye, Hungary, Grave No. 32;
40. Szentcs-Szentlászló, Csongrád megye, Hungary, Grave No. 26; 41. Szob-Kiserdő, Pest megye, Hungary, Grave No. 60;
42. Tileagd, județul Bihor, Romania; 43. Tiszafüred-Nagykenderföldek, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok megye, Hungary;
44. Tiszakeszi-Szódadomb, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén megye, Hungary;
45. Tiszalök-Rázompuszt, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg megye, Hungary, Grave No. I/103;
46. Várpalota-Semmelweis utca, Veszprém megye, Hungary, Grave No. 12; 47. Vát, Pest megye, Hungary;
48. Velika Horvatska, grad Zagreb, Croatia; 49. Veszprém-Nándortelep, Veszprém megye, Hungary;
50. Veszprém-Temetőhegy, Veszprém megye, Hungary; 51-53. Vršac, Okrug Južnobanatski, Serbia;
- 54-55. Vukovar-Lijeva bara, Županija Vukovarsko-Srijemska, Croatia, Graves No. 378, 388;
56. Zimandu Nou-Földvári-puszt, județul Arad, Romania; 57. Baracs, Fejér megye, Hungary;
58. Popove-Bregi, Županija Koprivničko-Križevačka, Croatia; 58-59. unknown provenance (Hungary);
- 60-62. unknown provenance (Gyula Mészáros' collection, Hungary).

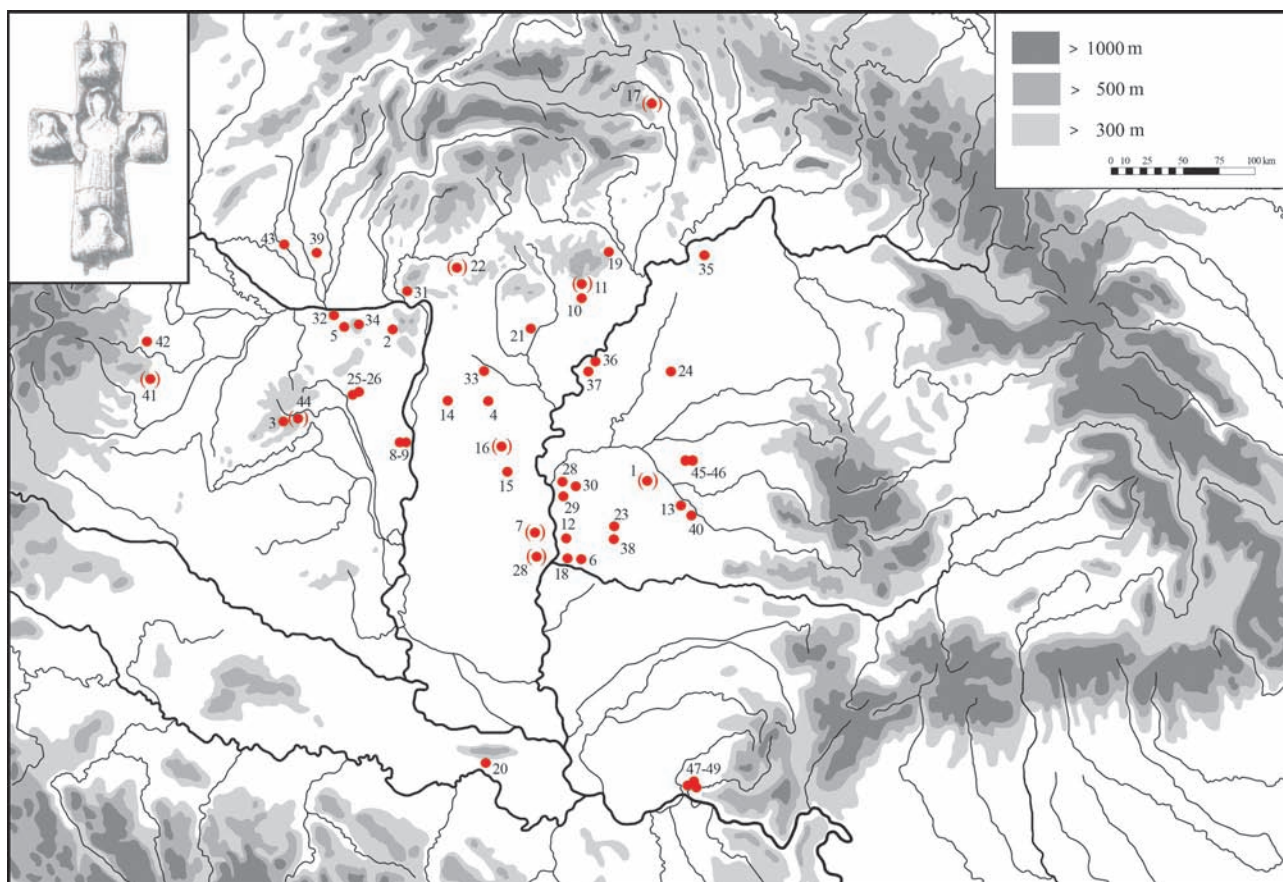


Fig. 3. Carpathian Basin. Distribution of the pectoral hanging crosses (10th-12th century; () – approximate localisation); after P. Langó (2010, Fig. 7).

1. Region of Békéscsaba, Békés megye, Hungary; 2. Bicske-Nagyegyháza, Fejér megye, Hungary;
3. Borsad-pusztá, Veszprém megye, Hungary; 4. Cegléd-Nyúlfelehalom, Pest megye, Hungary;
5. Csákányospusztá, Komárom-Esztergom megye, Hungary; 6. Csanádpalota, Csongrád megye, Hungary;
7. Csongrád megye, Hungary; 8. Dunapentele, Fejér megye, Hungary;
9. Dunaujváros-Öreghegyi szőlők, Fejér megye, Hungary; 10. Eger, Heves megye, Hungary;
11. Region of Eger, Heves megye, Hungary; 12. Region of Hódmezővásárhely, Csongrád megye, Hungary;
13. Gyula-Téglagyár, Békés megye, Hungary; 14. Inárc-Szent György-templom, alapozási árok, Pest megye, Hungary;
15. Kiskunfélegyháza, Bács-Kiskun megye, Hungary; 16. Region of Kecskemét, Bács-Kiskun megye, Hungary;
17. Košice, okres Košice, Slovakia; 18. Makó, Csongrád megye, Hungary;
19. Miskolc-Repülőtér, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén megye, Hungary, Grave No. 8;
20. Mačvanska Mitrovica, Okrug Sremski, Serbia;
21. Négyszállás, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok megye, Hungary, Grave No. I/236; 22. Nógrád megye, Hungary;
23. Orosháza, Békés megye, Hungary; 24. Sárrétudvari-Hízóföld, Hajdú-Bihar megye, Hungary, Grave No. 199;
25. Székesfehérvár, Fejér megye, Hungary; 26. Székesfehérvár, Fejér megye, Hungary, Grave E;
27. Region of Szeged, Csongrád megye, Hungary;
28. Szentés-Nagytőke-Jámborhalom, Csongrád megye, Hungary, Grave No. 6;
29. Szentés-Szentilona, Csongrád megye, Hungary; 30. Szentés-Szentlászló, Csongrád megye, Hungary, Grave No. 73;
31. Szob-Vendelin, Pest megye, Hungary, Grave No. 18; 32. Szöny, Komárom megye, Hungary;
33. Tápióbicske-Szőlőskert, Pest megye, Hungary; 34. Tata-Bencés apátság, Komárom-Esztergom megye, Hungary;
35. Tiszaeszlár-Sinkahegy, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg megye, Hungary;
36. Tiszafüred-Nagykenderföld, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok megye, Hungary;
37. Tiszaörvény-Templomdomb, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok megye, Hungary, Grave No. 440;
38. Tótkomlós-Teleki-pusztá, Békés megye, Hungary; 39. Trnovec nad Vahom, okres Galanta, Slovakia, Grave No. 382;
40. Vársand, juduțul Arad, Romania; 41. Vas megye, Hungary; 42. Velem-Szentvid, Vas megye, Hungary;
43. Velká Mača, okres Galanta, Slovakia; 44. Region of Veszprém, Veszprém megye, Hungary;
- 45-46. Vésztő-Mágori-halom, Békés megye, Hungary;
- 47-49. Vršac, Okrug Južnobanatski, Serbia; 50-58. unknown provenance (Hungary).



Fig. 4. Szob-Kiserdő, Pest megye, Hungary. Reconstruction of the necklace from Grave No. 60 (no scale); after K. Bakay (1978, Pl. XVI).



Fig. 5. Sárrétudvari-Hízóföld, Hajdú-Bihar megye, Hungary, Grave No. 199. Reliquary hanging cross (no scale); after I. Nepper (1996, Fig. 37).

However, there is an unmistakable difference between the pre- and post-millennial situation. As of now no 10th century ecclesiastical building has been revealed among the many excavated sites in the Carpathian Basin as opposed to the well-documented series of churches and monasteries harking back to the 11th century (Fig. 6). Also the ecclesiastical hierarchy seems to be missing before the age of the state-enforced conversions of Saint Stephen's time. These facts need to be kept in mind when the first steps of Christianisation are touched upon.

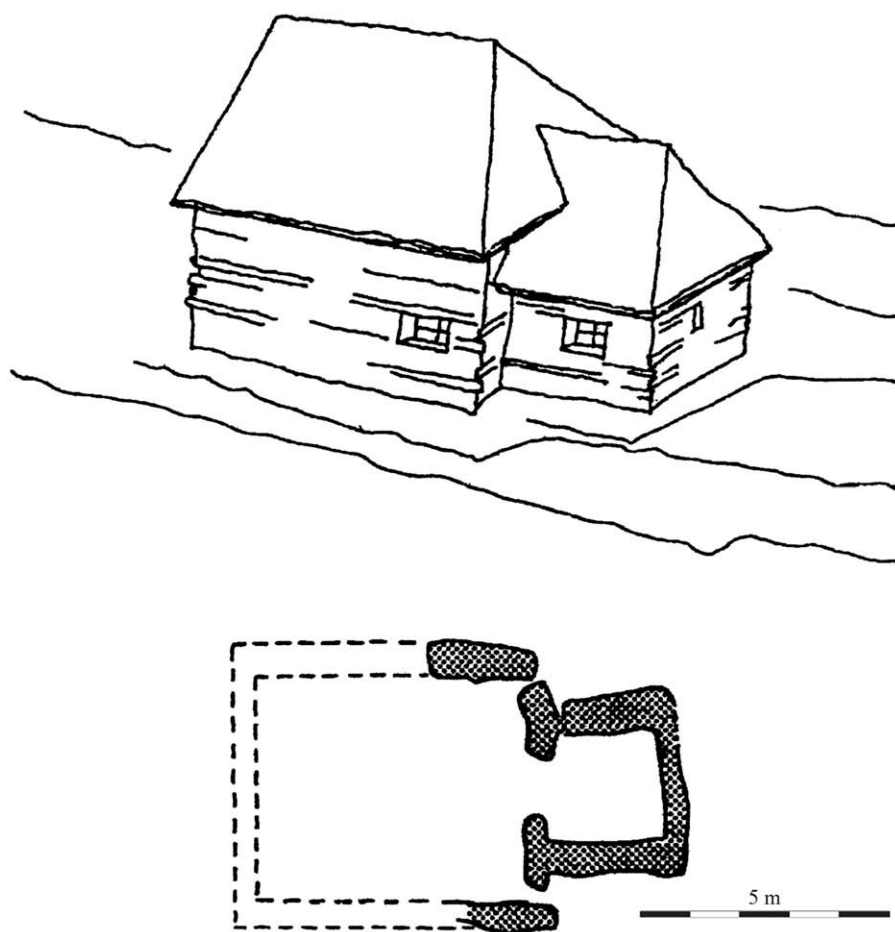


Fig. 6. Tápiógyörgye, Pest megye, Hungary. Excavated ground plan and hypothetical reconstruction of a wood church from the 11th century; after E. Tari (1999, Fig. 1).

In light of the above it is hard to avoid the question: how are the 10th century cross finds to be contextualised? It seems tempting to choose the following observation as a point of departure: until now for those who argued in favour of some sort of evangelization prior to the times of Saint Stephen the *presence* of the cross finds was the main argument (Kiss 2000, 74; Vályi 2000, 375; Istvánovits 2003, 452). In contrast, those who were reluctant to accept that all the cross-wearing individuals were Christians, drew attention to the evidently un-Christian elements present in many of these burials and the obvious pagan nature of the cemeteries where the individuals provided with cross pendants were buried (Fodor 2003b, 337; Langó, Türk 2004, 398-400). This means that the latter group employed a kind of theologically- or canonically-based definition of Christian burials while the former group used a simpler criterion in search for an explanation of the same phenomenon. Therefore, in my view, the proper question should be formulated as follows: what are the necessary and sufficient attributes of a Christian individual and her/his burial? It seems to be relative easy to find an answer for the first part of the question: the belief in the resurrected Jesus Christ, the Son of God (and only in Jesus Christ if a real Christian is searched for). However, as far as the second part of the question is concerned we are on considerably more insecure grounds. The simplest answer would be adherence to the prescriptions of the canons. But the canons change. In Late Antiquity, for example, there were no obligatory prescriptions relating to the proper place of burial (Rebillard 2003). Therefore, it could have happened, that in a great number of Late Antique cemeteries both Christians and pagans buried their deceased. The first regulation which forbade the mixing of pagan and Christian burials in a common cemetery is known from the year 782 issued by Charlemagne (*Capitulatio de partibus Saxoniae*; cf. *Capitularia*..., No. 26, cap. 7 and 22, p. 69) in relation to his Saxon policy (Hassenpflug 1999, 61; Effros 1997). One of his later capitularies from 810/813 (*Capitula ecclesiastica*; cf. *Capitularia*..., No. 81, cap. 8-10, p. 178), extended the force of this law to his whole realm, however, without definitely

prescribing the use of cemeteries around the parish churches (Hassenpflug 1999, 61). Nevertheless, these edicts must have caused considerable difficulties, since the Synod of Aachen of 836 (*Concilia...*, No. 56, cap. 29, p. 712) had to compel the parish priests of the Empire to ensure burial places for their flock in the parish churchyard (Hassenpflug 1999, 62). Even so, these rules affected only the Carolingian Empire.

It can be seen clearly from the above, that even in the Carolingian Empire, where Christianity struck roots centuries earlier than Charlemagne's first edicts, it was not always easy to comply with the Church regulations. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that in the newly converted Carpathian Basin a great number of row-grave cemeteries (*Reihengräberfelder*) of the 10th century were continuously used in the 11th (and sometimes, as far as the first half of the 12th) century too. It is equally true, that during the 11th century a group of new cemeteries was set up: sometimes attached to a church while sometimes, following the practice of the previous century, not associated with any ecclesiastical building. The first known regulation ordering burials into a parish churchyard was issued only by the Synod of Szabolcs in 1092 (Cap. 25: *Decreta...*, p. 59). This decree had to be confirmed some 8 years later (around 1100) by the Synod of Tarcál ([The law of King Coloman]; Cap. 73: *Decreta...*, p. 29), which shows the commoner's strong adherence to their old traditions. Nevertheless, these efforts must have been successful, since in most large graveyards where the common people were buried the last coins originate from the time of Saint Ladislaus I (r. 1077-1095), Coloman (r. 1095-1116) or Béla II (r. 1136-1141; for an overview of coin distribution, see Kovács 1997). Therefore, based on theological/canonical criteria, the continuously used old and the newly established row-grave cemeteries of the 11th century should be interpreted as pagan graveyards. In the meantime, it needs to be kept in mind, that those individuals, or at least some of them, who were buried and/or had their dead buried in these "pagan" cemeteries must have been baptized, involved in building churches and attended masses according to the laws issued by their kings. Therefore, in my judgement, these late synodical regulations seem to indicate that before 1092, let us say, in the first officially Christian century of the Árpáadian age, "[...] the Church have left the question of burial up to the family and not have sought to interfere with its wishes in this area." (Rebillard 2003, 71).

This point should be stressed, since it can shed some light on the old problem, i.e., why is it so hard to find any established criterion or set of criteria to identify the burial of a Christian or a partly Christianized individual before the use of churchyards.

In my belief it is clearly evident from the above, that if we confine ourselves to see Christianity and the *process* of Christianization from a rigidly theological/canonical point of view, which is, after all, a justifiable approach, we may easily miss the forest for the trees. Archaeology is rarely able to illuminate personal decisions and individual historical events. However, archaeology does highlight processes and investigate the *long durée*. Therefore, from an archaeological perspective, all that can be said with some confidence is that from the middle of the 10th century onwards simple pendant crosses as well as pectoral pendant crosses appear in some burials in the Carpathian Basin. Obviously it is beyond doubt that too much weight should not be put upon this evidence. It does not allow serious scholars to argue only on these grounds for the widespread dissemination of Christianity or for an organized missionary activity before the times of Saint Stephen. However, the simple fact that these crosses were *present* starting from the second half of the 10th century in the Carpathian Basin must indicate something, since, conversely, in the first third/half of the same century they were absent – at least according to our present knowledge. From a theological point of view these finds alone, and first and foremost knowing the find circumstances, do indicate nothing. But from a historical perspective these crosses reveal two interrelated phenomena.

First, the presence of pendant crosses in a certain territory implies that some people had brought them, somehow, to their present place (i.e. their place of exploration) from "abroad" or that they had manufactured them locally. Both acts must be characterized as intentional. Therefore, either the transmitter or the manufacturer is concerned, the presence of some individuals or groups with some kind of Christian intentions seems to be hardly disputable – regardless their number or place of origin.

Second, seeing the sporadic appearance of these pendant crosses during the second half of the 10th century from the perspective of the following "two hundred year-long" history of the Carpathian Basin, that is, from the perspective of *long durée*, it may be argued that these crosses are the first items in a long series of similar cross finds originating mostly from large cemeteries used by the common people roughly until first half of the 12th century.

Even if these cross-wearing individuals were not Christians in a strict, theological sense of the word, they must have had some kind of experience with Christianity. Some of them may have had some sort of Christian identity as well. This, obviously, is not Christianity. But after all, is it entirely unjustifiable to take somebody's self-identity as a point of departure? In order to understand past societies archaeology does investigate the material footprints of identities, whether political, social, religious or ethnic. What is to say, for example, if someone would state, that s/he believes in Jesus Christ, but s/he also believes in her/his old gods, what a *par excellence* – and not least documented – case of syncretism is? Is s/he a Christian? The answer seems to be easy and clear: NO. However, identity, or better said, the various layers of one's identity, is rarely a question of a simple YES or NO. Obviously, the query does remain mostly theoretical, since no well-defined and sure answer could be proposed. However, there are questions that must be asked in order to illuminate some other obscure points. Let me address only one of them.

In the absence of churchyards what would be more self-evident for an at least partly Christianized people than being buried among one's ancestors and relatives? This is much more evident in case of children. And – this must be also emphasized – during the 10th and in the 11th century a vast majority of our cross-wearing individuals, as far as we are aware, are children. But can children be Christianized on their own, in part or fully, without their parents? Hardly. Conversely, could children be buried with a cross over their parents' head? Hardly, either. Consequently, these parents must be aware, at least to some extent, of the power of the cross of Jesus Christ and they were willing to assist their deceased also by this means.

In conclusion, it seems hardly disputable, as mentioned above, that these crosses alone could not prove the officially-sponsored Byzantine missions among the Hungarians in the later part of the 10th century, as suggested by some researchers – however, this possibility neither can be ruled out only on these grounds. Some kind of officially-sponsored evangelization might have taken place on the territory of the Hungarian leader, Gyula, as indicated by John Skylitzes (Skylitzes, cap. 5, p. 231), even if Hierotheos, the bishop sent from Constantinople by Patriarch Theophylaktos, focused only on Gyula's court. Nevertheless, until now no traces of this court have been revealed. Therefore this part of the question, at least temporarily, must be answered in the negative (for a historian's understanding, see Baán 1999).

On the other hand, I would suggest that some of the above considerations should not be rejected out of hand. In my view, the appearance of the simple and reliquary pendant crosses indicates the presence of some transmitters and/or manufacturers who could somehow explain and interpret the meaning of these objects, as well as of some local inhabitants who turned out to be, on one or another level, familiar with this meaning. That these early transmitters (or a part of them), whoever they actually were and wherever they actually came from, should be of foreign origin seems to be beyond doubt. The forms of these early crosses and their Southern European and Byzantine parallels suggest a southern direction. However, whether or not this is the case, their simple occurrence helps us to better understand the background against which Saint Stephen's efforts in evangelizing his kingdom are to be contextualized.

Резюме. Византийская миссия у мадьяр в конце X века? Для большинства наблюдателей X в. происшедшее в конце предшествующего столетия венгерское нашествие было началом Апокалипсиса. В этой связи нет ничего удивительного в том, что в глазах христианских авторов явление «народа Гога и Магога» было пришествием язычников *par excellence*. Это видение истории нашло отражение в многочисленных письменных памятниках этой эпохи, повествующих о событиях в Византии, латинской или славянской Европе. Археологические исследования на протяжении последних 150-ти лет в Карпатском регионе выявили здесь, тем не менее, некоторое количество находок предметов

христианского культа X-XI вв., что привело к оживленной дискуссии среди историков и археологов по поводу их возможной интерпретации. Некоторые ведущие специалисты по венгерской истории отстаивают версию распространения христианства на этой территории еще до эпохи введения новой религии при св. Стефане, тогда как ряд исследователей не согласен с этим мнением. В настоящей статье заново рассматриваются основные аргументы дискутирующих сторон и предлагаются новые подходы, позволяющие лучше понять тот исторический контекст, в котором действовал король-реформатор, утверждая новую веру. Автор ставит под сомнение полезность применения в подобных исследованиях строгих богословских и церковно-правовых критериев для выявления ранней евангелизации населения в материалах погребального обряда. Анализ памятников письменности в первое столетие после официального введения христианства при династии Арпадовичей позволяет заключить, что Церковь оставила урегулирование вопроса о нормах погребения на усмотрение семейных традиций. Этот факт помогает понять, почему выделение жестких критериев для идентификации христианских захоронений эпохи становления новой религии практически невозможно вплоть до момента начала функционирования регулярных прицерковных кладбищ.

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