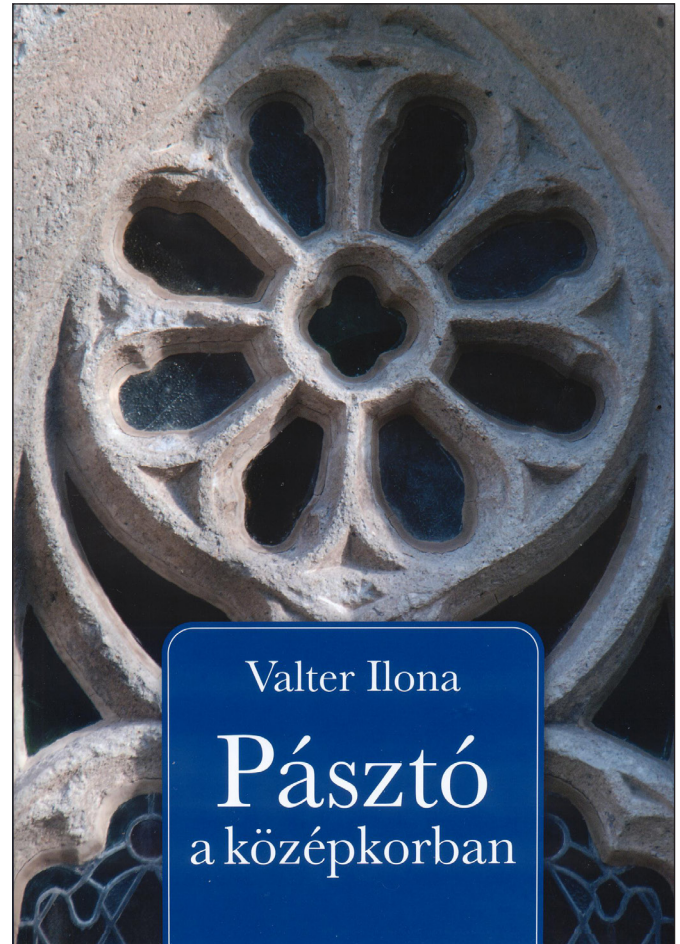


PÁSZTÓ A KÖZÉPKORBAN [PÁSZTÓ IN THE MIDDLE AGES]

JÓZSEF LASZLOVSZKY

There were two key factors that had a major influence on the advancement of medieval archaeology in Hungary after WWII. One of these was the excavation of medieval royal centers, especially in Buda, Visegrád, and Esztergom. The other factor was the use of complex methods in building archaeology, which produced groundbreaking results in the study of various monuments (castles, monasteries, village churches), both in terms of the given building's history and the history of medieval architecture in general. The arrival of these new methodologies also marked a new era in monument protection. The office responsible for granting construction permits and authorized to exercise public powers in monument protection was, at the same time, almost a research center. It operated as a think tank for professionals, where architects, art historians, and archaeologists cooperated; and by their joined efforts, the methodology of monument protection and building archaeology took a qualitative leap. Although there were preludes to this advancement even before WWII, it was the 1960s that brought a most dynamic progress, the fruits of which have a huge impact on our knowledge of medieval architectural heritage today. Ilona Valter was among the most outstanding members of this think tank. She started working in monument protection right after graduating from university. Unfortunately, this above-mentioned professional think tank no longer exists; in the past few years, the repeated and ill-considered reorganization of institutions in archaeology and heritage protection has led to the absence of proper conditions and has hampered quality work. Luckily, some members of the generation who participated in monument protection in the 1960s and 1970s are still active and bring out summaries of their experience and results. This volume encapsulates five decades of research, the outcome of Ilona Valter's work, whose 80th birthday the book commemorates.



*Ilona Valter,
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Pásztó was a moderately significant settlement in medieval Hungary. Efforts were made to help its development into a city, but it remained a regional center, a market town in the late medieval Hungarian settlement network. Therefore, buildings in this town are not to be compared with buildings in royal centers; they represent several types and periods of architectural construction, and thus provide a cross section of the medieval heritage of this settlement type. This complex picture is a result of Ilona Valter's studies.

The medieval history of the town has been explored through three monuments: the still standing medieval parish church; the schoolmaster's house, a building identified by research as medieval; and the Cistercian monastery, known to scholarship from written sources but not researched earlier by archaeological means.

During her research, Ilona Valter identified a cluster of monuments, the medieval cellars, that had been literally invisible for earlier scholarship. By mapping them, a system of medieval cellars was explored under the early modern buildings of the town, and their location helped the reconstruction of Pásztó's medieval street network. This was, however, made possible only by Ilona Valter's perseverance: she had grasped all opportunities to survey Pásztó, and systematically collected and organized all available pieces of information gained in various monument protection projects. This strategy is by no means unprecedented in Hungarian medieval archaeology: István Horváth also dedicated decades of research to Esztergom so that the topography of this medieval royal and ecclesiastical center could be established. While in the case of Esztergom it was the town museum that provided the background for Horváth's studies, in Pásztó, the base for archaeological research was offered by the above-mentioned monument protection think tank. In addition to Pásztó, Ilona Valter conducted research on a number of medieval monuments of pivotal importance, such as monasteries with considerable, still standing remains (Zsámbék, Ják, Cikádor, Szentgotthárd), or village churches. Therefore, her results could easily be integrated into the scholarship of the Cistercian order, as well as into the history of ecclesiastical institutions and architecture.

The first half of the present volume provides an overview of the early history (10th-11th c.) of the settlement's environs, primarily based on archaeological data. This seems like a foreign territory for a researcher who spent her life studying buildings. However, Ilona Valter has gained great familiarity with settlement archaeology and the research of cemeteries, as her first important paper focused on the settlement history of the Bodrogek area based on written sources and archaeological topography; this piece still serves as a model for such studies. In the first part of the present volume she goes into details about the early settlements of the Zagyva valley, including a summary on the Pata castle and the Pata archdeaconry.

The next part consists of several chapters and discusses the Pásztó abbey. The information available on this abbey was very limited before 1965, when the excavations started; even the dimensions of the potential remains were unknown. Today, scholarship has a more-or-less clear view on the complex history of the site, even before the Cistercian period. The early building is, according to the architectural analysis, associated with the Benedictines. The chapter on the Cistercian period provides detailed information on almost all aspects, including the architecture of religious orders, the economy of the monastery, and the complete history of the building complex from its establishment until its destruction. An outstanding result was achieved through the excavation of a glass producing workshop, one of the earliest monuments of this kind of craftsmanship. Natural scientific analysis of the site made it clear that the workshop used a special technology of glass production. Another addition to the history of glass production in the area is the presentation of an 18th-century glasshouse that belonged to the re-established, modern abbey.

The third part of the volume focuses on the development of Pásztó as a settlement, from the 12th century to the end of the Middle Ages. The author presents the history of the town's owners and discusses Pásztó in the context of their other landed properties, centers and buildings (also castles and castellums), thus providing a summary of micro-regional history. The most important historical monument of the period is the parish church dedicated to St Lawrence, which has been under scholarly scrutiny and is discussed in detail in this volume as well. Valter interprets Pásztó's architectural history from the basis of monument heritage studies and provides an overview of the parish church's history in the context of late medieval market town development. Changes in the parish church's architecture reflect Pásztó's advancement in the 14th-15th centuries. Various factors of this complex development are considered in the book. The market town's letter of exemption serves as a starting point to discuss the important factors of urbanization, such as markets, trade, craftsmanship, and the presence of vineyards. Medieval cellars, in addition to their importance for medieval settlement structure, are significant in terms of economic development, similarly to mills. Town baths are also interesting elements of the town's urban character. The author dedicates a whole chapter to the cultural life of the market town and provides an exemplary analysis of the schoolmaster's house. This

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example demonstrates how a seemingly worthless building, in a very bad condition and determined to be demolished, may be researched through archaeological and monument protection methods, and yield groundbreaking results. Excavations brought to light a medieval dwelling house, and its restoration made this special monument of Hungarian cultural history accessible to a wide public. Presenting the interior was part of this project, and the limitations inherent in the methodology of reconstructing medieval material culture were properly observed. To this end, questions like the role of schools in medieval market towns, their curriculum, or the identification of teaching schoolmasters, were addressed.

The volume presents a medieval, urbanized settlement, summarizes the documentation of excavations, provides analyses on the major finds, and discusses the various aspects in a wider historical context. The nearly 300 page-long monograph is supplemented with ca 200 images, maps, diagrams, and computer reconstructions, presenting the primary sources and possible interpretations of the building and settlement historical research. Norbert C. Tóth's study on the connections between Pásztó and King Sigismund, as well as the now published letter of exemption that played an important role in the settlement's history, are also added to volume.

This book has a special place in Ilona Valter's oeuvre, and at the same time it summarizes the methodological tradition of Hungarian archaeology in the second half of the 20th century. Its publication brings an enormous benefit to archaeologists, urban historians, and art historians alike, and demonstrates how long decades of systematic research on a medieval settlement of moderate importance may contribute to a deeper understanding of medieval everyday life in the Hungarian countryside, through the five centuries of the Middle Ages.