

MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN ARCHAEOLOGY CONFERENCE ON THE OCCASION OF THE HUNGARIAN SCIENCE DAY

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A few decades after the emergence of medieval archaeology as an independent field of research, the need arose for its researchers to summarise the current state of research and outline the most important directions for future research from time to time (previously every ten years or so).

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A conference initiated by István Éri in Nagyvázsony in 1971 was the first attempt to take stock of the state of medieval archaeology and its results; the papers presented there were published two years later (ÉRI 1973). After these precedents, the first comprehensive volume (edited by István Fodor and László Selmeczi) was published in 1985; it contained the papers presented at a conference held exactly forty years ago from today, which, in the spirit of the above, summarised the results of medieval archaeology in Hungary and outlined the next research tasks. This was followed, about a decade later, by the next review, organised by the Department of Medieval and Early Modern Archaeology in Hungary of the Eötvös Loránd University (Budapest), but the papers presented at this conference have not been published in written form. The last conference on the results and research directions of medieval and early modern archaeology, organised by the Archaeological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, was held at the Mátyás Király Museum in Visegrád in 2006. The papers presented there, together with some contributions not presented at the conference but considered important for the overall picture, were published in 2010 in a volume edited by Elek Benkő and Gyöngyi Kovács (BENKŐ & KOVÁCS 2010).

The last decade and a half have seen many changes both in the organisational framework and the technical possibilities of research. Among the latter, the spread of various non-destructive methods and the increasing use of thermo-scientific methods are noteworthy, as is the development of spatial data analysis of large databases and the emergence of community archaeology. In addition, old projects, such as traditional topographic research, have been given a new impetus in response to changing circumstances.

On November 2 and 3, 2023, as part of the official series of events of the Hungarian Science Day 2023, a conference presenting the achievements and tasks of medieval and early modern archaeology over the past two decades was held under the auspices of the Hungarian Society of Archaeology and Art History. The event was co-organised by the Institute of Archaeological Sciences of the Eötvös Loránd University, the Institute of Archaeology of the Pázmány Péter Catholic University, the Department of Archaeology of the University of Szeged, and the Institute of Archaeology of HUN-REN.

The event entitled – with reference to the two previous volumes – Tradition – Heritage – Renewal. Medieval and Early Modern Archaeology in Hungary 3: Achievements, Issues, Tasks in the 21st Century, hosted by the Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church and the Eötvös Loránd University, featured around seventy papers, short presentations, and posters in ten sessions. Many interested colleagues, including representatives of the youngest generation and members of the Society, attended both days of the conference.

The event was designed to present the results of the last almost two decades of research structured around relevant topics. The twenty-five-minute keynote lectures on current research questions in individual

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Fig. 1. Posters and presentations at ELTE



Fig. 2. Generations of researchers in the audience

areas of medieval archaeology were followed by shorter case studies presenting new excavation results and delving into sub-topics with a view to future challenges. Besides, case studies often reflected on more general topics. Reviews of research history, questions, and presentations of new results and methods – each accompanied by an evaluation – provided a clear picture of the current state of research. Senior and mid-career researchers formed the backbone of conference speakers, while the younger generation was also strongly represented in the poster session, which is very positive for future research.

The conference adverted to the most current hot topics of medieval archaeology, also showing that research has become way too diverse for some topics to be fully covered in only two days. New fields have been opened for research, and new methods have become integrated into our work since the last synthesis. The round table discussion at the end of the event also shed light on how the current educational system, institutional background, and technical possibilities have contributed to the expansion of the research spectrum.

Unfortunately, the tight programme and relatively short time left little time for discussions and comments. There was no opportunity to clash divergent views on specific research questions either; thus, these topics will be discussed in detail in the conference papers, which will include a synthesis of the results of medieval archaeology, indicating the main areas of current research, excavation reports, and an evaluation of future research possibilities.

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