

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE DANUBE REGION IN THE MID-2ND MILLENNIUM BC International Conference in Budapest on the Latest Research Results Concerning the Transition between the Middle and Late Bronze Age

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*Between 22–24 April 2026, the international archaeological conference entitled, *A World in Motion. Between Tradition and Transformation in the Tumulus Culture along the Danube*, was held in Budapest. The original idea emerged within the Tumulus Research Group, formed since 2024 and bringing together young researchers. Due to the considerable international interest, the event was ultimately realised as a three-day international conference instead of the originally planned one-day workshop. The main goal was to provide a much-needed regional overview of the mid-2nd millennium BC through the latest finds, methods, and developments, to summarise earlier research results, review current approaches, and outline future research directions.*

Keywords: Bronze Age, Tumulus culture, international conference, Budapest

CENTRAL TOPIC OF THE CONFERENCE

The three-day international conference *A World in Motion. Between Tradition and Transformation in the Tumulus Culture along the Danube* focused on the wide-ranging transformations occurred in the Carpathian Basin and the surrounding Danubian regions during the mid-2nd millennium BC (Fig. 1). The nearly 300-year-long period of the Tumulus culture (c. 1600/1500–1300/1200 BC) reflects a changing world, as suggested by the conference title itself, with transformations affecting nearly every aspect of former communities' lives. Climatic conditions influencing daily life changed, the relationship between humans and landscape was transformed, the position and function of settlements shifted, attitudes towards life and death were redefined, and local and regional networks expressed through material culture were also reshaped. In this complex process, much like today, tradition and innovation, rejection and adaptation, locality and mobility were simultaneously present and continuously interacting.

Although research has clarified numerous issues concerning this period over recent decades, the rapidly increasing amount of finds, the latest methods, and targeted investigations conducted within multidisciplinary



Fig. 1. Printed *abstract volume* of the conference (logo by Luca Morovián, cover design by Nóra Szabó)

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research projects have raised many new questions. The conference therefore brought into the centre of archaeological discourse a historically significant period that is usually discussed only indirectly, in relation to the preceding Middle Bronze Age *tell* cultures or the subsequent Late Bronze Age Urnfield period.

In line with these considerations, the thematic scope of the conference was not restricted beyond temporal and geographical frameworks. Accordingly, the conference's five sessions were organised around five broad thematic areas:

1. **Chronology** – Still or shifting? The dynamics of chronology
2. **Raw materials** – How far is near enough?
3. **Settlements** – What makes a place worth living?
4. **Tradition and innovation** – What connects and what divides us?
5. **Burials** – How deep are biographies buried?

Each session opened with an introductory lecture delivered by an invited researcher, who not only presented their own work but also offered a problem-oriented synthesis of the topic, and concluded with a lively 30-minute discussion moderated by invited session chairs. Over the course of the three days, the conference provided a broad and much-needed synthesis of the period from both geographical and methodological perspectives. The comprehensive character of the presentations is clearly illustrated by the simultaneous presentation of reassessments of early, 19th-century research and findings alongside the results of the latest excavations. In addition to the systematic analysis of individual sites, participants also became acquainted with ongoing micro-regional research projects. We heard reconstructed life histories of individuals, communities, and artefacts, while also gaining insight into the latest theoretical and methodological directions.

RESEARCHERS MEETING IN BUDAPEST

In order to provide a comprehensive regional research and historical overview of the period, a total of 32 researchers and research groups from 11 countries (Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia) were invited to the conference (*Figs. 2–3*).



Fig. 2. Participants of the conference (photo by László György)



Fig. 3. Lively discussion following Session 1 (photo by László György)

In addition, eight poster applications were accepted through an open call. Their authors were also given the opportunity to present their results in flash talks at the end of the first day's programme. The posters remained on display throughout the conference in the upper gallery area where coffee and lunch breaks were held, thereby creating direct interaction between authors and interested participants.

The professional relevance and success of the conference were clearly demonstrated by the broader-than-expected domestic and international interest. To our great pleasure, the number of participants reached 80, including a significant number of university students.

An important consideration during the organisation process was ensuring strong representation of the Hungarian research community alongside international participants. Particular attention was also devoted to providing opportunities for young doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers, in addition to experienced specialists, to present their research directions, latest results, and methods, especially since the conference itself was initiated by young Hungarian researchers. We hope that the opportunity for personal encounters and the accompanying professional discussions will pave the way for the integration of different research perspectives and methodological approaches, including professional collaborations extending across generations.

The success and scientific importance of the conference were further demonstrated by the closing quiz game, during which participants unanimously supported both the future continuation of the conference and the publication of a comprehensive edited volume (*Fig. 4*). Thus, this Hungarian initiative is far from ending with the end of the conference.



Fig. 4. Unanimous 'YES' in support of the future continuation of the conference (photo by László György)

ORGANISERS AND SUPPORTERS

The members of the Tumulus Research Group and organisers of the conference were Kristóf Fülöp,⁴ Polett Kósa,⁵ Péter Mali,⁶ Ákos Mengyán,⁷ Gábor Sánta,⁴ Nóra Szabó,⁴ Anna Szigeti,⁸ as well as Viktória Kiss⁴ and Gabriella Kulcsár⁴ (Fig. 5).

The conference was organised by the [ELTE RCH Institute of Archaeology](#) and the [MTA–ELTE HTK Lendület “Momentum” BASES Research Group](#), with the support of the [National Cultural Fund of Hungary](#) (NKA 503108/01463). Cooperating partners included [HUN-REN ATOMKI](#), [Isotoptech Zrt.](#), the [Archaeological Department, University of Szeged](#), the [HNM PCC, Hungarian National Museum, National Institute of Archaeology](#) (from 1 April 2026: Department of Archaeology and Archaeometry Laboratory), and the [Institute of Exploration Geosciences, University of Miskolc](#).

The full conference programme, the printed [abstract volume](#) published by Archaeolingua, the posters, and photographs from the event are available on the conference’s [website](#).



Fig. 5. The team that envisioned and organised the conference: the “Tumulus Research Group” (photo by László György)



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