

Dead Space. Topographical changes of cemeteries – causes and indicators

Mária VARGHA and Maxim MORDOVIN

Summary

After the conquest of pagan Hungarian tribes towards the end of the ninth century, and their gradual occupation of the Carpathian Basin, in the year 1000 a major change has occurred. Stephen I, the first king of Hungary was baptized and crowned, and with his reign, the Christian state was born. The reorganization of settlement and power structures went hand in hand with the Christianisation, and so with it, the building of the local church system. Tracing this, however, is challenging, although the topic of Christianisation and so the conversion still considered as a ‘hot topic’ just as much as in archaeological, as in historical research.

In the present paper, we are approaching this issue also from a topographical point of view. Since this process went on in a relatively short period of time, the phenomenon

that otherwise resembles much to the standard process of nucleation shows some specific elements as well. The co-terminous use of field cemeteries and churchyards are interesting just as much from a topographical, as from a religious aspect. The role of the central secular power on the development of the local church system, and thus its (topographical) relation to early power centres and possibly to the early settlement system could give some alternatives on the problem on which written sources remain silent – the process of conversion and the development of the local church system, and its relation to the relocation of the cemeteries – their incorporation within the settlements.

Keywords: castles and burials, field cemeteries, church organization, Christianisation, spatial analysis

1. Introduction

Following the conquest by pagan Hungarian tribes towards the end of the 9th century and their gradual occupation of the Carpathian Basin, a major change occurred in the year 1000. Stephen I, the first king of Hungary was baptised and crowned, and with his reign the Christian state was born. Obviously, the actual process was not as quick and simple. Nevertheless, this event marks a first crucial point in the investigation of the present topic; the development of state power went hand in hand with Christianisation, and with it the building of the local church system. Although the beginnings of both the reorganisation of power structures and the first steps towards Christianity were rooted in the previous century,¹ official measures and organised development began with the foundation of the kingdom, and thus this marks the chronological starting point of the present paper. Tracing this process, however, seems to be rather challenging. Despite the fact that the 11th and 12th centuries in Hungary were of major importance for the foundation

of the state, and with it, the formation of both secular and ecclesiastic power structures, sources about this period, particularly written evidence, are rather scarce. On the other hand, archaeology can provide a large amount of data.

One of the main questions in this period is the change of burial customs; the transition from field cemeteries (German: Reihengräberfeld) to churchyards. This occurred together with changing settlement structures, and also the reorganisation of power structures, which was shown primarily in the development of the central administrative system – the county (comital) castles, and with them the first churches of the newly founded Christian state. Although the relationship between the county castles and the ecclesiastical system has long been discussed, the discussion mostly focused on archbishoprics and bishoprics, or on deaneries, and paid little attention to local churches, mostly because of the lack of relevant sources,² and of the top-down direction of Christianisation and thus also church organisation in the region. In this paper, we examine the relationship between ecclesiastical and secular power and the resulting impact on the spatial organisation of rural

¹ See an earlier example: GYÖRFFY 1976, 324–326, and the most recent, pointing on the uncertainty of the dating: MORDOVIN 2016a, 98–99.

² For an exception, see MORDOVIN 2016b, 777–794.

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Figure references

Fig. 1–2: After MORDOVIN 2016

Fig. 3 Mária VARGHA

Raum für die Toten: Topographische Veränderungen von Friedhöfen – Ursachen und Indikatoren

Nach der Eroberung und allmählichen Besetzung des Karpatenbeckens durch heidnische ungarische Stämme gegen Ende des 9. Jahrhunderts hat sich im Jahr 1000 ein bedeutender Wandel vollzogen. Stephan I., der erste König von Ungarn, wurde getauft und gekrönt und mit seiner Regierung wurde der christliche Staat geboren. Die Umgestaltung der Siedlungs- und Machtstrukturen und damit auch die Anlage des örtlichen Kirchensystems gingen mit der Christianisierung einher. Dies nachzuvollziehen ist jedoch eine Herausforderung, obwohl die Themen Christianisierung und Konversion immer noch als "heiße Themen" betrachtet werden – in der archäologischen genauso wie in der historischen Forschung.

In der vorliegenden Arbeit gehen wir diese Thematik auch aus topographischer Sicht an. Da dieser Prozess in relativ kurzer Zeit vor sich ging, weist dieses Phänomen, das an-

sonsten dem Standardprozess der Keimbildung sehr ähnlich ist, auch einige spezifische Elemente auf. Die gleichzeitige Nutzung von Reihengräberfeldern und Friedhöfen ist sowohl aus topographischer als auch aus religiöser Sicht interessant. Die Rolle der zentralen säkularen Macht bei der Entwicklung des örtlichen kirchlichen Systems und somit seine (topographische) Beziehung zu frühen Machtzentren und möglicherweise zum frühen Siedlungssystem könnten einige Anhaltspunkte zu Fragestellungen geben, zu denen die schriftlichen Quellen stumm bleiben: zum Prozess der Bekehrung und zur Entwicklung des örtlichen Kirchensystems sowie zu seiner Rolle bei der Verlegung der Friedhöfe bzw. deren Eingliederung in die Siedlungen.

Schlagworte: Burgen und Bestattungen, Reihengräberfeld, Kirchenorganisation, Christianisierung, räumliche Analyse

Mária VARGHA, MA MA
Universität Wien
Institut für Geschichte
Universitätsring 1
1010 Wien
Österreich
maria.vargha@univie.ac.at

Dr. Maxim MORDOVIN
Eötvös Loránd University
Department of Medieval Archaeology
Múzeum körút 4/B
1088 Budapest
Hungary
mordovin.maxim@btk.elte.hu