

Review: Horváth C. (2019). *Régészeti tanulmányok a Bodrogek 10–11. századi településtörténetéhez* [Archaeological Studies on the Settlement History of the Bodrogek in the 10th–11th Centuries]. (Magyarságkutató Intézet Kiadványai 1).
Magyarságkutató Intézet.

Judit Szigeti

PPKE BTK Doctoral School of History, PhD student

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In 2019, Ciprián Horváth's book on the settlement history of the Bodrogek region during the 10th–11th centuries was published. The book is visually appealing, featuring colourful plates and a hardcover design, making it a pleasure for readers to handle. The images are of high quality, printed on premium paper, and effectively complement the text with a clear and well-organized layout.

The analysis of the selected archaeological sites in the volume was also carried out by Horváth in *Borsod, Abaúj és Zemplén megyék honfoglalás és kora Árpád-kori temetői és sírleletei* (*The Conquest-Period and Early Árpád-Era Cemeteries and Burial Finds of Borsod, Abaúj and Zemplén Counties*) (Horváth, 2020). The present publication contains part of this more extensive work. The selected microregion's natural geographical description is presented in the summary chapter of the book.

The Bodrogek region, up until the late 19th century, could be regarded as a relatively closed unit. Its most pristine area was the Bodrog floodplain and the Bodrogek, historically referred to as “the island” (Horváth, 2019, 149–150).

The “Borsod Corpus” (Horváth, 2020) and the discussed book about the Bodrogek (Horváth, 2019), hereinafter referred to as “Bodrog Corpus”, both focus on regions where some experts suggest the existence of a 10th-century princely centre. This theory is supported by the exceptionally rich cemeteries in the area and the interpretation of certain grave goods as symbols of rank or authority. The most renowned cemeteries were unearthed near Karos (Révész, 1996; Révész, 2020, 434–436).

In his analysis of the Bodrogek, Horváth incorporates material from the Karos cemeteries, illustrating burial practices observed there with references and diagrams (Horváth, 2019, 159–169, figs. 1a–1b).

In 2022, Károly Mesterházy published an extensive review of Horváth's “Bodrog Corpus” volume as well as the entire series. He offered significant criticism regarding the analysis of the Kenézlő cemeteries, particularly highlighting the inaccuracies in the drawings and issues with the interpretation of the cemeteries (Mesterházy, 2022). According to Mesterházy, the drawings were likely made based on photographs, which is not the most fortunate method for representing objects (Mesterházy, 2022, 232).

The book is divided into six chapters (I–VI). The first five chapters present individual archaeological sites while the sixth chapter provides a settlement history summary. The selected five sites (Bodrogszerdahely-Bálványdomb; Bodrogvécs-Lecse, opposite the tavern; Kenézlő-Fazekaszug, site II; Sárazsadány-Akasztószér and Sárospatak-Baksahomok) are discussed within the framework of subchapters titled “Bevezetés” (“Introduction”), “Sírleírások” (“Grave Descriptions”) and “A temető értékelése” (“Evaluation of the Cemetery”). This structure is consistently applied throughout the book.

The sixth evaluative chapter is further divided into five subchapters, which are, in order: “A Bodrogeköz természetföldrajzi környezete” (“The Natural and Geographical Environment of the Bodrogeköz”), “A Bodrogeköz 10–11. századi településtörténeti kutatásainak legújabb eredményei” (“Recent Results of 10th–11th-Century Settlement History Research in the Bodrogeköz”), “9–10. századi sírok, temetők a Bodrogeközben” (“9th–10th-Century Graves and Cemeteries in the Bodrogeköz”), “10–11. századi sírok, temetők a Bodrogeközben” (“10th–11th-Century Graves and Cemeteries in the Bodrogeköz”) and, finally, “11. századi sírok, temetők a Bodrogeközben” (“11th-Century Graves and Cemeteries in the Bodrogeköz”). The book concludes with the “Irodalomjegyzék” (“Bibliography”), “Táblák jegyzéke” (“List of Tables”) and a résumé in English.

In the “Introduction”, the author addresses the apparent contradiction between the content and the title of the book as well as the initial sense of missing information that arises when one considers how the settlement history of a region can be outlined, based solely on the burial finds from five sites. The author views this book as a preliminary study for a more comprehensive volume, which will present the 10th–11th century burial finds from all 42 known sites in the Bodrogeköz, written with great thoroughness and dedicated research (Horváth, 2020). Through the five carefully selected sites, with their varied finds and different chronologies, the author aims to present the analytical work already completed, which includes all the sites (and was already in the process of being published at the time the book was issued).

However, unresolved dissatisfaction remains as the author did not include material from settlements of the period in either this book or the forthcoming one covering the entire Bodrogeköz. The author justifies this omission by citing the uncertain dating of settlement materials and believes that burial finds provide more precise chronological possibilities than the often century-long dating intervals of settlements.

The author begins the presentation of each site with an “Introduction” subchapter, which discusses the geographical location of the sites and provides a historical overview of the research. This is followed by the “Grave Descriptions”, along with a list of appendices. Given the book’s promotional nature, this section stretches the format, and upon seeing the long list of appendices, the reader is naturally inclined to flip ahead. In my opinion, this section should have been presented in a catalogue at the end of the book.

Szigeti Judit: Review:

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The subchapters evaluating the cemeteries are the great strength of the book, in which — based on the listed appendices and burial practices — the author attempts to date the cemeteries and outline the typology of the artefacts. Each of these subchapters is followed by plates of high-quality photographs of the objects, which, thankfully, were not placed in bulk at the end of the book. This arrangement makes the book clearer and easier to interpret. I should note that although the drawings of the objects are missing, the absence does not create a sense of dissatisfaction for the reader, as the high-quality photographs fully convey the material, texture and — thanks to their scale — also the size of the objects.

In the final chapter (VI) of the book, the author analyses the settlement history of the Bodrogköz region in the 10th–11th centuries, including the cemeteries of 42 sites already collected and in the process of being published at the time of the reviewed book's publication. The author breaks down the analysed period into smaller chronological units and rightly also integrates the 9th-century “antecedents”, which he considers to be naturally fitting into this era. In the mid-2010s, several studies suggesting that a group settled in the area from the 860-s onward, continuously occupying the territory, were published. Although the author found no archaeological evidence of this early settlement, he does not dismiss the possibility. Additionally, the author addresses the presence of Slavs in the 9th century and their archaeologically verified traces.

Based on the grave finds, the author differentiates between “Magyars” and Slavs in the area, with the former referring to the group of people who settled in the region by the end of the 9th century. The author analyses the archaeological traces of the “Hungarians” in the Bodrogköz, yet the field and researchers of this era have hardly reached a consensus on who we refer to as “Hungarians” and what their material culture was. Avoiding ethnic definitions, the author identifies settlement blocks, based on the density and absence of certain artefact groups, burial practices, site locations and artefact types. These blocks may potentially indicate different ethnic groups. A more in-depth examination of this will be a future task, for which the presented book provides excellent supplementary material.

Based on its appearance and content, the book is excellently suited to provide new data for the professional community. It also appeals to and is easy to read for those laymen who are not necessarily engaged in archaeology but interested in history, especially the early history of Hungarians.

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