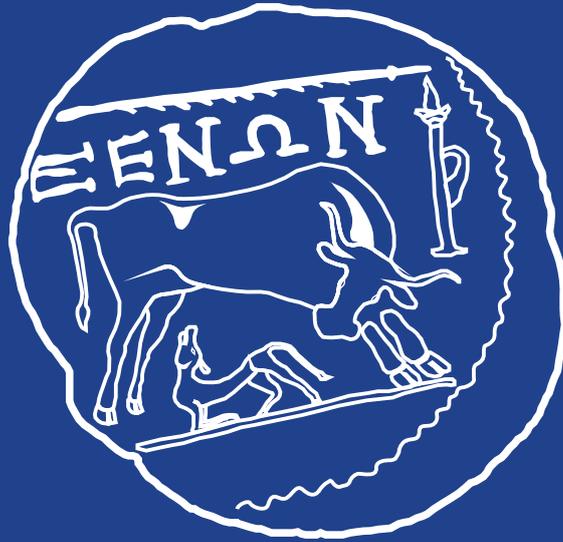


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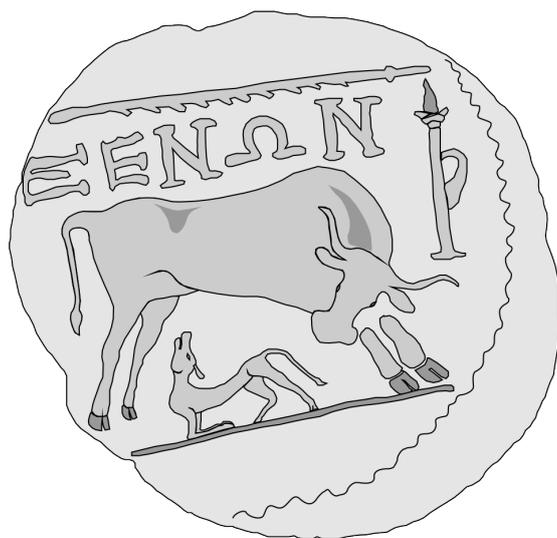
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**Editura MEGA**  
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*This volume is dedicated to Florin Draşovean at 70 years*

*Acest volum este dedicat lui Florin Draşovean cu ocazia împlinirii a 70 de ani*





# Contents / Cuprins

<b>Laudatio</b> .....	9
-----------------------	---

## **Research papers / Studii**

### **Cristian Eduard Ștefan**

Vidra Type Axes Revisited: The State of Research Nearly Two Decades Later .....	17
---	----

### **Andrei Mărincean**

Inside Daub: A Preliminary Study of Burnt Wattle-and-Daub from the Late Bronze Age Site of Sântana-Cetatea Veche .....	25
---	----

### **Feraru Remus Mihai**

Theos Megas Derzelas, an Enigmatic Deity of Odessos: Cult and Iconographic Representations. A Numismatic and Epigraphic Study .....	51
--	----

### **Florin Mărginean, Erwin Gáll**

Revised Information on the Early Avar Period Grave from Sânpetru German-Magazin .....	67
---	----

### **Călin Cosma**

Social and Gender Symbolism of Earrings in the 7th–8th Century Avar Communities of Transylvania .....	77
---	----

### **Dan Băcueț-Crișan**

Less Discussed Aspects in the Research of Early Medieval Wares from Romania: Purpose, Use, Re-use, and Recycling. Theoretical Interpretations and Archaeological Realities .....	115
---	-----

### **Imre Szatmári**

The Round Church of Battonya .....	129
------------------------------------	-----

### **Augustin Mureșan, Adriana Gașpar**

The Fortress of Pomezueu (Bihor): History, Heritage and Conservation .....	153
--	-----

### **Timea Major-Keresztes**

Adornment, Status and Mobility: A Hairpin from Zalău-Valea Miții (Sălaj county) and Its Place in Early Modern Material Culture .....	179
---	-----

## Field reports / Rapoarte asupra cercetărilor de teren

### **Vlad Murgu, Victor Sava, Ioan Cristian Cireap, Andrei Mărincean**

Tehnici de teledetecție și cercetări de suprafață. Contribuții noi la cunoașterea așezărilor din zona Olari, județul Arad ..... 187

### **Sofia Berteza, Victor Bunoiu, Iulian Leonti, Vyara Stancheva, Andrei Geor-gescu, Răzvan-Ioan Pinca, Bogdan Calotă, Patrik Ostaș, Dragoș Diaconescu, Robin DiPasquale, Ionuț Marteniuc**

The Archaeological Excavations at Susani – Grămurada de la Jupani:  
Report on the 2025 Field Campaign ..... 233

### **Victor Sava, Florin Gogâltan, Marian Adrian Lie**

Excavations at the Late Bronze Age Mega-Fort at Sântana – *Cetatea Veche*.  
The 2018 Field Campaign ..... 243

### **Ioan Cristian Cireap**

Illyrian Drachmas and Late La Tène Iron Items Discovered at Monoroștia – *Dâmbu lui Hârtici*  
(Arad County) ..... 385

### **Cătălin Discă, Iulian Leonti**

The Roman Roads South of Berzovia: Some Observations and the Results of New Research ..... 291

### **György Kerekes, Zoltán Rózsa**

Árokos. The Success Story of Identifying an Archaeological Site in Mezöhegyes – Revisited ..... 317

## Reviews / Recenzii

Alpár Dobos, Sándor Berecki (Eds.), *The Migration Period Cemetery from Ernei*. Bibliotheca Musei Marisiensis Series Archaeologica XIX. Mega Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2023, ISBN 978-606-020-636-1, 192 pages.  
(**Erwin Gáll**) ..... 333

# The Round Church of Battonya

**Imre Szatmári**

**Abstract:** It is possible that more than two hundred medieval churches existed on the current territory of Békés county, with over 90% of these village churches. Nevertheless, only thirty-five were the object of archaeological excavations, which revealed complete church layouts or made possible at least their partial reconstruction. The plans of thirty-three of the thirty-five parish churches are known, with only two that had remained unpublished.

One of these is a round church discovered by the Battonya town outskirts in 1979. The building is oriented from south-west to north-east, the sanctuary deviating by approximately 25 degrees northwards from the east. The external diameter of the nave is of 5.6 meters, the internal diameter is 3.5 meters, while the foundation wall width is 90-100 cm. The nave foundation is missing by the sanctuary entrance, the beginning of northern and southern walls of the sanctuary surviving, but the eastern wall of the sanctuary was entirely destroyed by the road construction.

All that remained from the circular church foundations is a brick row set by the base of the foundation trench and a 10-12 cm thick yellow compacted clay layer on top. The remainder of the foundations were destroyed, the graves in the cemetery surrounding the church being also seriously damaged by the mechanical embankment works.

The round church lay on the north-eastern bank of the Százazér, in the four neighbouring archaeological sites being identified 11th – 13th century pottery fragments. Based on the density of identified surface remains, two of the sites located on the stream bank might have been the settlement's centre. One included the church and adjacent cemetery, while the other might have been the place where village houses lay. During the metal detecting research carried out between 2015 and 2024, sixty-three Hungarian, Byzantine and Friesach coins, dated to the 11th – 13th century, were discovered in the settlement area. Their distribution and age confirm presumed views on the settlement's location and date. The village name is unknown, however, it was most definitely abandoned during the 13th century.

Several settlements termed Kerekegyháza (Roundchurch) are recorded by medieval documents, yet there are only a few examples of round churches were archaeologically excavated in the region. In the Békés county there are only two of such churches: one is the Csolt monastery of Vésztő and the other the rotunda in the medieval village Fövényes, located by the periphery of Gyula city. The Battonya round church was likely built in the 11th century, similarly to the above. Although the eastern wall of its sanctuary was destroyed – whose shape might have been either angular or curved – its importance is underlined by the fact it is the third rotunda discovered from a wider region.

**Key words:** round church; graves; archaeological excavations; Battonya; Békés county.

According to the most recent register of the current Békés county territory, the number of Middle Age churches could exceed two hundred, while more than 90% had most definitely been parish churches. Only thirty-five of the latter have been archaeologically investigated, the excavations revealing entire or at least, partially visible church layouts. Among the thirty-five village parish churches, the layouts of thirty-three are known, while two have remained unpublished to date<sup>1</sup>.

One of these is the round church discovered by the outskirts of Battonya town in 1979, surfaced in September of the same year, when bulldozers began to remove earth from the embankment nearby the Hármashatár mound for the construction of an underground canal. Human bones and bricks were discovered during the civil works. The artefacts were recovered by György Goldman between the 21st and 25th of September 1979<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Szatmári 2005, 83-84, 87, 89.

<sup>2</sup> Site name: *Battonya, Hármashatárhalom*. RégFüz 33 (1980) 5; MNM RégAd IX./121/1981; MMM RégAd 1690/1982 (missing here the entire documentation). The existing excavation documentation in MNM consists of a page long summary report, typed, two typed pages regarding the excavation report, the sketch of the round church and six photos. I wish to thank here Mrs. Tünde F. Komori for her cooperation in relation to the documentation and to Levente Szentesi for digitising the sketch.

Two disturbed graves, without any grave goods were discovered within the exposed area during the first day of research. Nevertheless, there was little evidence of a possible cemetery or additional graves, the already identified two graves being disturbed to such an extent that no bones could be observed in their original location.

On the second day, the investigations carried out within the area covered by mortar and brick remains revealed a large foundation, approximately round – of yellow, compacted earth, in the open-area excavated west of the road. According to the excavation diary, “*the level of the former floor was clearly visible in the profile in the form of a thin, white lens, only one or two centimetres wide*”, likely lime mortar preserved where the floor bricks had been removed. In order to more completely excavate the building, the area was extended the following day northwards and southwards up to the national road, while an approximately rectangular area was left midway.

During the third day, in the extended open-area was identified the “*yellow, very well compacted*” foundation of the entire building, a few bricks being found in one “*small part*” of it. For examination, the yellow foundation was broken in a few places, thus it could be noted it was “*10-12 cm thick, while beneath there was another brick layer*”. It became obvious that the building had been round, namely, the foundations of a rotunda had been identified, and that the foundation was discontinued on the eastern side of the building, where two short parallel walls joined the round foundation that had become visible to that point.

On the fourth day, focus was directed to the examination of the sanctuary. Its foundation was not visible throughout, since “*unfortunately, most part of its eastern wall had been destroyed during the road construction*”. Respective side was so close to the road that even the tree roots along the road could be found. Part of a skull was identified in secondary location on the northern foundation of the sanctuary. According to the excavator, “*the eastern end of the sanctuary may be reconstructed with precision based on the southern wall corner*”. During the same day, the compacted yellow clay layer was removed, exposing another brick layer throughout beneath, which represented the foundation base. According to the excavation diary, the areas nearby the foundation showed there were no other foundations below the brick layer.

During the fifth and last day, the removal of the yellow clay layer was completed, the excavated area was cleaned, the round church was photographed and drawn, while in the afternoon of the same day, it was also covered.

The excavation diary and report found in the archives were dated by the excavator in charge with the archaeological investigations to the 30th of March 1980, respectively six months after the proper excavations. This could be the reason why it is impossible to ascertain all details of the documentation, not even based on drawings and photos. The accurate location of the excavations is also uncertain, as no site plan and no basic plan of the excavations had been drafted. There are no drawings to show the location and limits of the excavated area and its extensions mentioned in the excavation diary. There are no cross-section drawings, not even of the midway baulk. The location of the two graves is unknown and there are no grave drawings. Two of the photos are of the round church, one of the human bones discovered within the site’s surface, one shows the church’s location and two indicate earthwork traces performed on the site. The two photos of the rotunda are almost identical in terms of composition, one is unclear, while the accompanying descriptions are partially illegible and therefore, disputable. Of the six photos, only three could be of use: one is of the earthworks carried out on the site, the other shows the excavation site and the third is of the round church excavated to the lowest brick level. In the latter, a two-meter length measuring equipment, barely visible, likely not entirely stretched and set horizontally central to the round church, indicates building sizes (Figs. 1-3).

The plan, drawn on a 1:20 scale, shows most of the church, however the photo clearly evidences that the bricks depicted in the plan are not real bricks, but only served to fill the voids. The plan does not indicate either any information on depths (Fig. 4).

Seven years after the completion of the 1979-excavations, respectively between the 7th and 19th of October 1986, additional excavations were conducted on the site, with the declared goal of furthering previous rescue excavations, the “*possible presentation of the church foundations discovered at that time*” as a historical monument and partially, subsequent to a planned relocation of the road along its route<sup>3</sup>. According to the excavation documentation, a very long trench, 50 x 2 meters, suitable

<sup>3</sup> György Goldman was the excavation leader this time as well; however, the site was no longer recorded as Battonya-



Fig. 1. The archaeological site, possibly from south-east, according to the car parked on the location of the former church. Image from the excavations, 1979.



Fig. 2. Location of the church find from south-east. Image from the excavations, 1979.

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*Hármashatárhalom*, as in previous cases, but as *Battonya-Kerektemplom*. (RégFüz 40, 1987, 7; MNM RégAd 36.II./1987.)  
– The excavation documentation is not preserved in the Archaeological Archives of the MMM; in fact, it was never deposited there/handed in.



Fig. 3. Base wall of the rotunda from north-west. Image from the excavations, 1979.

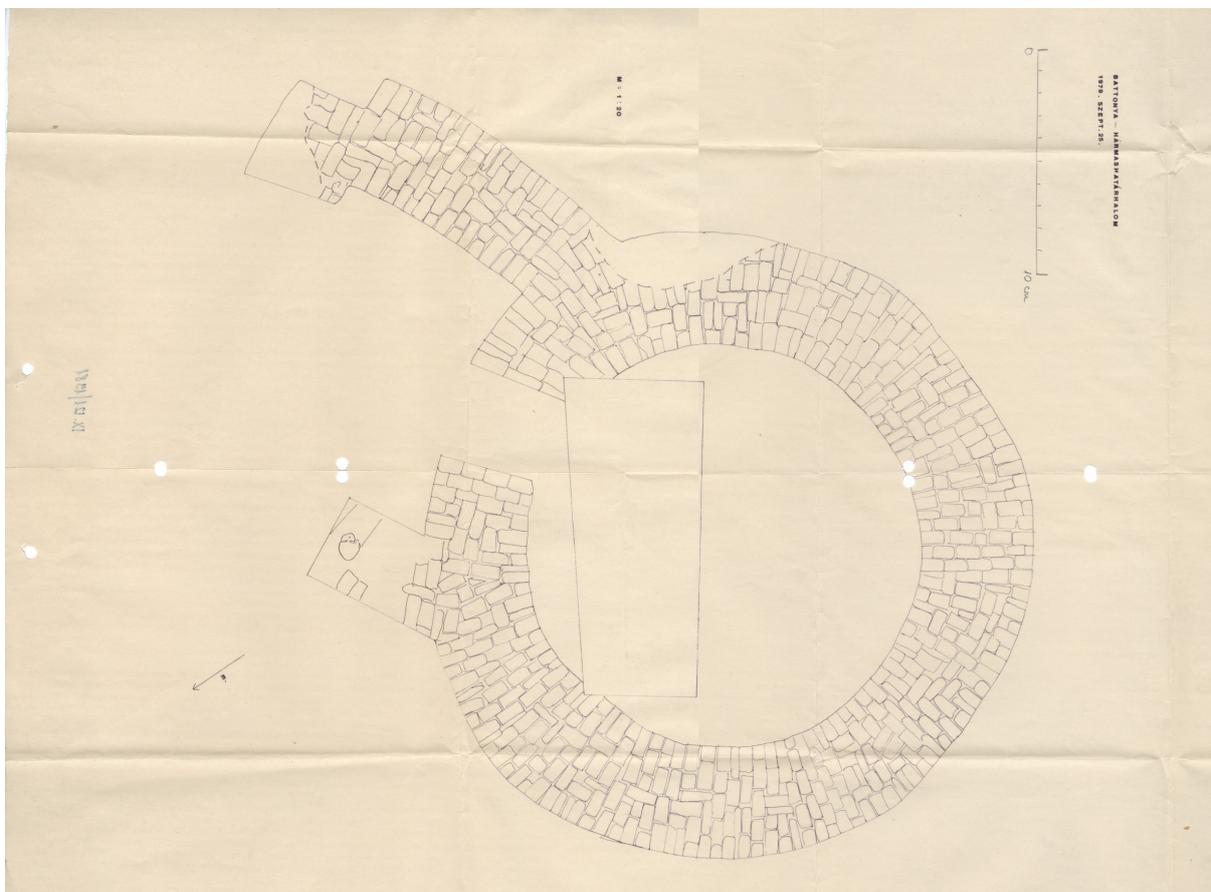


Fig. 4. Sketch of the rotunda according to the excavations, 1979<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> The scale on the drawing was inserted later during the photo digitising.

for research trenches, was excavated parallel to the road. Nevertheless, for the lack of research data and site plans, the accurate location of this excavation cannot be identified. It is only known that the north-south stretch<sup>5</sup> of the excavation had been marked directly in the road vicinity, on its eastern side, so that the location of the rotunda excavated “at approximately 30 meters” on the western side of the road be as close as possible to the centre of the newly dug. (Fig. 5.) Accordingly, it might have been possible that the “cemetery wall, if ever existing” might have been identified in the more recently excavated area. However, neither such traces nor medieval graves could be found. Three middle Bronze Age graves, a borrow pit of the Late Bronze Age, two Sarmatian pits and two ditches dated to the Árpádian period were discovered<sup>6</sup>.

The documentation of the 1979-excavations does not mention other finds than the above, while the 1986-documentation only specifies that “there were relatively many finds in the third spit, including prehistory and medieval pottery and medieval brick fragments”. This statement is completed by a description of the prehistory pottery. The three prehistory skeletons were discovered in the southern part, respectively southern half and central part of the excavated area. Also, centrally to the excavated area, at 27 meters from the northern end, there lay a shallow trench, V-shaped, oriented precisely north-south, which contained only Árpádian date finds. The second and third trench, still of the Árpádian period, emerged along a diagonal line in the excavation, perpendicular one to another, located in the northern half of the excavated area. Both were similar in nature (filling, size, shape) with the first ditch. Ditch 3 yielded only Árpádian date finds as well. Pit 1 was located nearby the southern wall of the trench, the second pit lay in the middle trench and the third pit lay at the northern end of the trench. The second pit was dated to the Bronze Age, while the third pit to the Sarmatian period, according to pottery finds. (Indirect evidence suggest that pit 1 might have dated to the Sarmatian period as well.)

In the Munkácsy Mihály Museum there is no record of the finds yielded by the 1979-archaeological excavations, so that it is possible that nothing was added to the collection at that time. Nevertheless, the 1986-archaeological excavation finds are found in the museum’s un-catalogued material. Out of the



Fig. 5. Trench excavated on the eastern side of the road from north-west. Image from the excavations, 1986.

<sup>5</sup> The excavation diary mentions a north-south-oriented trench; however, the north arrows indicated on the grave and feature drawings consistently contradict this. Based on the latter, the ditch was more likely oriented northwest-southeast, although its exact alignment remains uncertain.

<sup>6</sup> In the report published in *Régészeti Füzetek* are mentioned “three Bronze date graves (Maros culture), two Iron Age pits and two Sarmatian date pits, respectively two Árpádian date pits, which however cannot be investigated in detail”. *RégFüz* 40, 1987, 7.

eight boxes of different sizes, three contain pottery and animal bones and five human bones. According to their labelling, the finds were packed spit by spit. Based on pottery, it may be clearly established that the medieval term used in the excavation documentation may refer to only the Árpáadian period, given that the finds include only Árpáadian date pottery fragments, except for Prehistoric and Sarmatian objects and that late medieval finds are entirely missing<sup>7</sup>.

Based on the results of the synthesised two excavation documentations – assuming that the 1979-plan accurately records the location and size of the foundation walls – data on the round church may be reconstructed as follows.

The building is oriented south-west and north-east, the sanctuary deviating approximately by 25° northwards from east. The external diameter of the nave is of 5.3-5.6 meters, the internal diameter is of 3.4-3.5 meters, while the foundation wall width generally varies between 90 and 100 cm, reaching 110 cm in only one or two places. By the access into the sanctuary, the nave foundation is discontinued on a 74-88 cm span and is missing. The limits are slightly at an angle and apparently are not parallel to the church axis.

Brick fragments were set in a row by the base of the circular church foundation, followed by a 10-12 cm thick layer of compacted yellow clay, on top of which survived a few bricks in a “*small area*”. The rest of the foundation was destroyed. According to this information, it is possible that the foundation contained alternating brick rows and clay layers. Based on similar buildings, the church entrance lay likely on the south or west side.

According to the excavation plan, the bricks’ arrangement into the foundation clearly indicates that the nave and sanctuary were built concurrently, however the bricks shown on the plan do not correspond to the position of the bricks visible in the excavation photo. Nevertheless, the consistent layer of yellow clay noted on top of the bricks and systematically removed during the excavations likely confirm that the nave and sanctuary had been built at the same time. The sanctuary foundation wall is identical with that of the nave, the lower layer being also composed of brick fragments and has no level differences.

The foundation of the southern wall of the sanctuary survived better. Its width is practically the same with that of the nave foundation. At the junction with the nave, the width is of 90 cm, however there the nave foundation is slightly wider than the average, being 110 cm. The southern wall of the sanctuary slightly curved outward and inward on the eastern direction, enlarging with up to 100 cm by its preserved end. However, its eastern end is unknown, since this part of the building was entirely destroyed prior to the road construction. Only a 185 cm stretch survived of the inner part and a 260 cm stretch of the external part of the southern wall of the sanctuary. To the eastern end of this surviving wall stretch, according to the available excavation plan and a long-distance view photo, partially unclear, there is a rectangular hollowing on both the internal part as well as on the external part of the foundation, whose explanation is unknown. According to the excavator, this suggests that the closure of the sanctuary can be edited, however because we are dealing with only a brick-size stretch on each side, this is insufficient to drawn large scale structural conclusions. In both cases, one must consider the possibility these might have been caused by previous damages or damages occurring during the excavation. The sanctuary’s original form, the line of its eastern enclosure and shape are, therefore, uncertain.

The southern and northern foundation walls of the sanctuary start at a distance of 76-76 cm from the external corners of the entrance into the sanctuary. By the junction with the northern wall, the nave wall width is of 90-95 cm, smaller than that of the southern wall. Only a few bricks had survived from the foundation of the northern wall of the sanctuary, its foundation width being there of only 80 cm, with a noticeable length of 75 cm on the internal side and of only 130 cm on the external side. The skull fragment discovered on or in the foundation might have reached there subsequent to a previous disturbance or destruction.

Data could be obtained from the original surface and stratigraphy of the baulk in the north-eastern half of the circular nave of the church, which is 2.8 meters long and 1 meter wide to the north-western end and 1.2 meters wide to the south-east end. Still, no cross-section drawings or close-up photos of this wall are available, while foundation depth from surface is not mentioned on the plan drawing. The single usable photo of the circular church shows two-meter-long measuring equipment placed in the middle, likely bent at 180 cm, yet partitions are impossible to determine.

<sup>7</sup> We thank this way Máté Fülöp, for having investigated and described the museum objects.

The destruction level of church foundations measured from the surface is unknown, however, on the basis of the support wall visible in the photo, it was approximately 80 cm from topsoil, gradually descending eastwards. In the photo, the farmed upper layer and a thicker layer beneath may be clearly distinguished by the junction of the north-western end of the support wall. By the corner of the support wall foundation, there is likely a less mixed excavation, coarse, possibly the ditch of the foundation pit. The lower layer, on the other hand, seems homogenous inside the round church. The excavation documentation does not contain data on artefacts discovered in the archaeologically important approximately 30 cm thick layer, which lay between the two-three approximately 20 cm surviving levels of the foundation (brick-clay-brick), and the 30 cm deep farming layer. The accuracy of the statement on the possibly surviving floor level is disputable for two reasons. On one hand, according to details that may be inferred from depth data, a level difference of only approximately 60 cm between the lower part of the foundation and the floor level is unlikely to have existed. On the other hand, the “*thin, white lens, only one or two centimetres wide*” mentioned in the excavation diary as floor level had emerged by the base of the farming layer, so that not only its origin, but also extension are uncertain. The thin mortar layer might have been resulted from the foundation phase, when the mortar-set bricks began to be placed on top of the first one-two brick layers and clay.

Nevertheless, the photo clearly shows that during construction, the larger and more intact brick pieces were selected and placed on the sides along the internal limit of the foundation trench, set longitudinally along the arch. There are no intact bricks in-between these. According to the photo, the same method was not utilized on the external edge of the foundation, since intact bricks might have been entirely used. Midway the wall, there are only smaller brick pieces, set randomly, yet always horizontally. There are no data on brick sizes and these cannot be deduced from the 1:20 scale plan.

Almost nothing is known about the cemetery around the church; two looted graves were discovered, however their location is not included in the excavations’ documentation, nor there are drawings or photos.

For the lack of a site plan, the location of the excavation may be partially determined from the mention in the documentation regarding the Hármashatár mound and the road crossing it, as well as from one of Gyula Gazdapusztai’s reports and János József Szabó’s fieldwalk by the outskirts of Battonya.

The mound is termed “*Harom Hátár Halom*” in the Second Josephinian Survey and “*Hármas határ hal*” in the Third Josephinian Survey, yet it was most likely already marked in the First Josephinian Survey (Figs. 6–8).

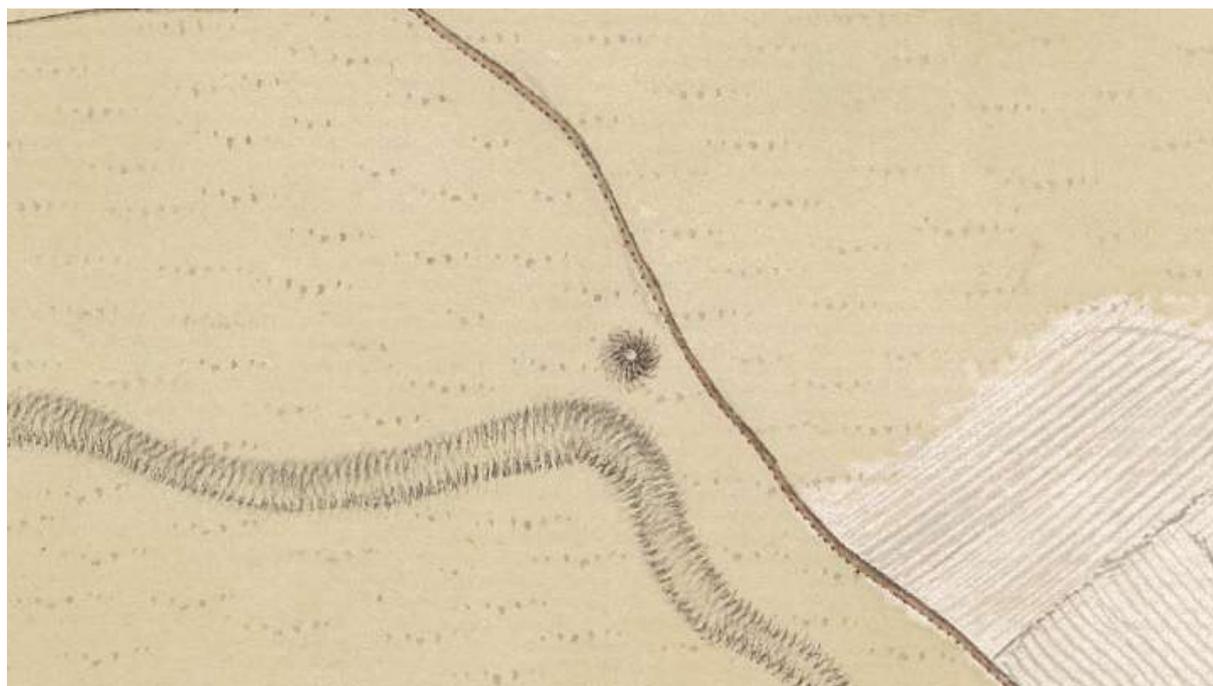


Fig. 6. Marking Hármashatár-halom on the First Josephinian Survey, 1782–1785  
(source: <https://maps.arcanum.com/hu/map/firstsurvey-hungary>).



Fig. 7. Marking Hármashatár-halom on the Second Josephinian Survey, 1819–1869  
(source: <https://maps.arcanum.com/hu/map/secondsurvey-hungary>).



Fig. 8. Marking Hármashatár-halom on the Third Josephinian Survey, 1869–1887  
(source: <https://maps.arcanum.com/hu/map/thirdsurvey25000>).

The site was visited for the first time by an archaeologist in 1964, when Gyula Gazdapusztai began excavations nearby and on the 23rd of May, conducted a survey by kilometre 10 of the road between Battonya and Mezókovácsháza, at the “mound covered by trees and brush”. It is worth quoting word by word the relevant part of his notes: “South of the mound, there is a smaller natural hummock, cut in two by the road. The highest point of this knoll lies precisely near the road, at approximately 30 metre’s distance. In this spot there are bricks from the foundation of a medieval church and human bones unearthed by the farming works performed all around. There lay an Árpáadian cemetery or a later village church.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> MNM RégAd VI.106/1965. The first part of the excavation diary, page 6 (23.05.1964.).

On the 5th of April 1977, during his fieldwalks by the periphery of Battonya, János József Szabó termed the site number 27 “Hármashatárhalom/Hármas határhalom” (the triple border mound). Part of its description reads: “At the point where road Kovácsházi leaves the border of Battonya, stream Száraz nears the road at a few meters’ distance. On the same stretch, a winding depression from the east-north-east flows into stream Száraz. In the north-eastern corner of the interflow, on the south-western part of the road, there is a high mound of 3–3.5 m, with a base diameter of approximately 50 m; the potshards suggest that the site extends in the north-eastern part of the road too.” No artefacts were discovered in the area covered by brush and grass, while in the vicinity of the mound there were identified potshards of late Bronze and Iron Age date, as well as a few potshards of Árpáadian date and a human mandible. He mentioned that Gyula Gazdapusztai had already visited the same location in 1964 and that “by the southern foothills of the mound, in the road vicinity” were discovered in 1979 the foundation remains of an Árpáadian church and that the finds yielded by previous field investigations from the south-eastern part of the mound were transferred to the Munkácsy Mihály Museum<sup>9</sup> (Fig. 9.)

The Munkácsy Mihály Museum repertory includes twenty-nine items marked with the location “Battonya, Határ-halomtól (Mezőkovácsházi út) DK-re” (Battonya, of Határhalom – Mezőkovácsházi út – south-eastwards), mainly dating to the Bronze Age, the late Bronze Age, the Iron Age and the Migrations Period, as well as three potshards of the Árpáadian period. All originate from clay pots, two are rim fragments and one is a side fragment. The inventory does not mention the collector’s name, yet mentions the date when these were collected from the field: the 9th of October 1974. Therefore, the finds were brought to the museum, most likely, subsequent to the fieldwalks conducted by János József Szabó<sup>10</sup>.

Nearby the site, in sites 28, 30, 31 and 222, also documented by János József Szabó, Árpáadian date remains were discovered together with prehistoric and Migrations Period remains. According to available data, their majority were found in sites 28 and 30<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, Árpáadian date sites series may be completed by mound Hármashatár in the north-west, with another site, this time located on the Mezőkovácsháza side, along the northern bank of the Száraz stream, extending approximately 500 metres in length and at least 200 metres in width. Finds from this area include not only prehistoric, Migration Period, and Árpáadian material, but also artefacts from the period of the Hungarian Conquest (Fig. 10)<sup>12</sup>. The presence of the latter and proven existence of Árpáadian artefacts in the vicinity confirm that the Hungarians’ presence and settlement there may be traced up to the conquest of the Carpathian Basin, while the round church suggests that the local population counted among the first to have converted to Christianity.

The site, known as Battonya-Hármashatárhalom, was listed in the 1990 national registry of monuments, together with the necessary registration numbers. Accordingly, there are located the foundations of a round Romanesque church, built in bricks during the 11th century, whose sanctuary was “destroyed” by the Mezőkovácsháza road ditch and road<sup>13</sup>.

After the ‘70s, the church location was re-identified in 1992 near the western edge of the road running from Mezőkovácsháza to Battonya, by milestone 7, where the dirt road of Kunágota meets

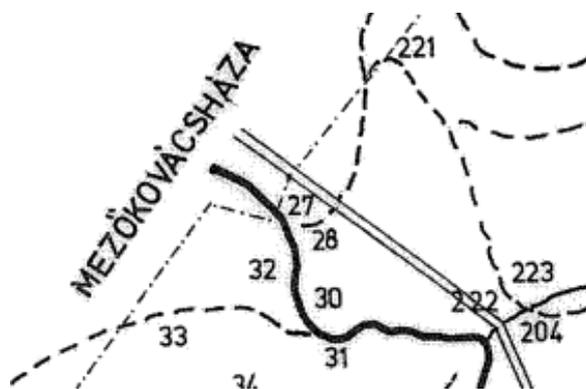


Fig. 9. Existing archaeological sites around the site. Szabó é. n., map appendix.

<sup>9</sup> Szabó é. n. 74–75. – see also: protocols of land surveys. MMM RégAd 1818/1986. – According to later memories, the visits by the border of the place might have occurred between 1975–1979, while the manuscript for the Battonya Monograph, whose drafting was only intended, could be accomplished only in 1980. (János József Szabó’s e-mail 24.02.2025.)

<sup>10</sup> MMM Itsz. 74.360.1–29.

<sup>11</sup> Szabó é. n. 75–76, 78–79, 158.

<sup>12</sup> Site name: Mezőkovácsháza, Déli határszél, Tóth-tanya. Gyucha et al. 2001. Site 20; Gyucha et al. 2003. Site 1; Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum Régészeti Adatbázis, <https://archeodatabase.hnm.hu/hu/node/72608>, 15 February 2025.

<sup>13</sup> MMJ 1990, 9–10.

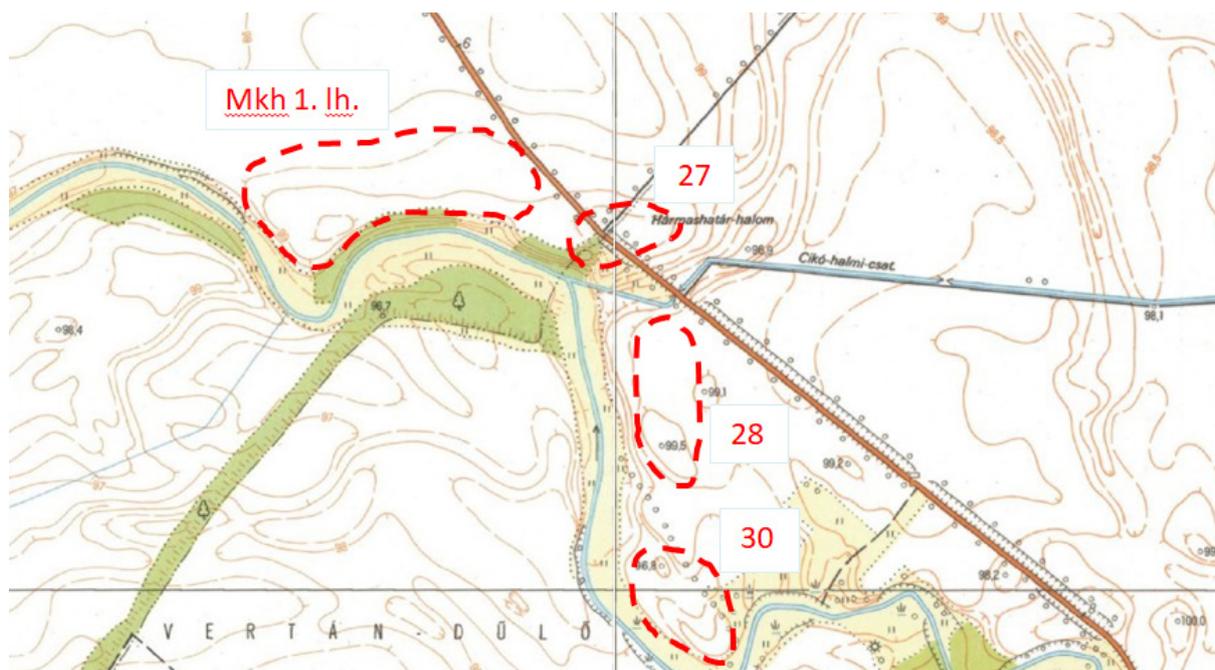


Fig. 10. Árpáadian date sites in the rotunda vicinity.

the asphalt road. At a few meters south-west the dirt road junction with the main road, on its western side, there was a wide and shallow ditch, whose grass covered bottom and edges were scattered with human bones and chaff-tempered medieval bricks covered with mortar. The earth excavated from the ditch had been piled up by the western edge of the ditch and was already overgrown. In the ditch soil and on its western side, among the here and there alfalfa, there were also many brick and human bone fragments. The church location could be located on the external north-eastern and eastern banks of the more marked north-eastern bend of Száraz stream<sup>14</sup>.

In 2000, during the field surveys related to the rehabilitation works of Száraz stream, another opportunity to carry out field observations in this area of the site emerged, however this never occurred in this stretch of the river bank.<sup>15</sup>

Currently, there is no record of the two archaeological excavations performed in 1979 and 1986 in the national electronic archaeological registry, yet it includes the inspections carried out by Ádám Bede in 2007 and 2008 and Edit Huszár's documentation presenting the "kunhalmok", the mounds discovered in the Körös–Maros National Park<sup>16</sup>.

Based on all the above, the church is located at nine kilometres from the centre of Battonya and at seven kilometres from the centre of Mezőkovácsháza, in the southern corner of the junction between the delimiting line separating the two villages and the connection road in-between these, at approximately 60 meters from mound Hármashatár and approximately 30-35 meters from the delimiting line, precisely on the western road edge, where a slight deviation from the current route is noticeable. The original road, still straight on this stretch, is visible in the records of the 1979-excavations and the previous survey map<sup>17</sup>. The latter even shows the cut on the road edge. Nevertheless, it is clear from the current road route that it was formed at a later date, subsequent to the road construction. Instead – at approximately 30 meters from the church, on the eastern side of the original road – in 1986, a 50 x 2-meter trench was noted. The name Hármashatár-halom (Triple Border Mound) is the result of the convergence there, until January the 1st, 1973<sup>18</sup> of the Mezőkovácsháza, Battonya and Mezőhegyes

<sup>14</sup> Szatmári Imre: Jelentés Battonya, Mezőkovácsháza, Végegyháza, Tótkomlós és Orosháza határában végzett helyszíni szemlékről, 29 July 1992. MMM RégAd 2110/1993, 3040/2013.

<sup>15</sup> Gyucha *et al.* 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum Régészeti Adatbázis, <https://archeodatabase.hnm.hu/hu/node/12934>, 15th February 2025.

<sup>17</sup> Map numbers: 709–444.

<sup>18</sup> Resolution No. 34/1972 (XII.13.) of the Békés County Council. Bulletin of the Békés County Council, 1 December 1972, no. 5. – Cf./see/compare with: Békés Megyei Népujság (Békés County People's Newspaper), vol. 27, no. 288, 7 December 1972, p. 3. – I am grateful to György Kerekes for providing the precise reference.

village limits. Today though, the Mezőhegyes village limit no longer reaches this point. According to our current data, the site surrounding the church may stretch on approximately 150 x 50 meters on

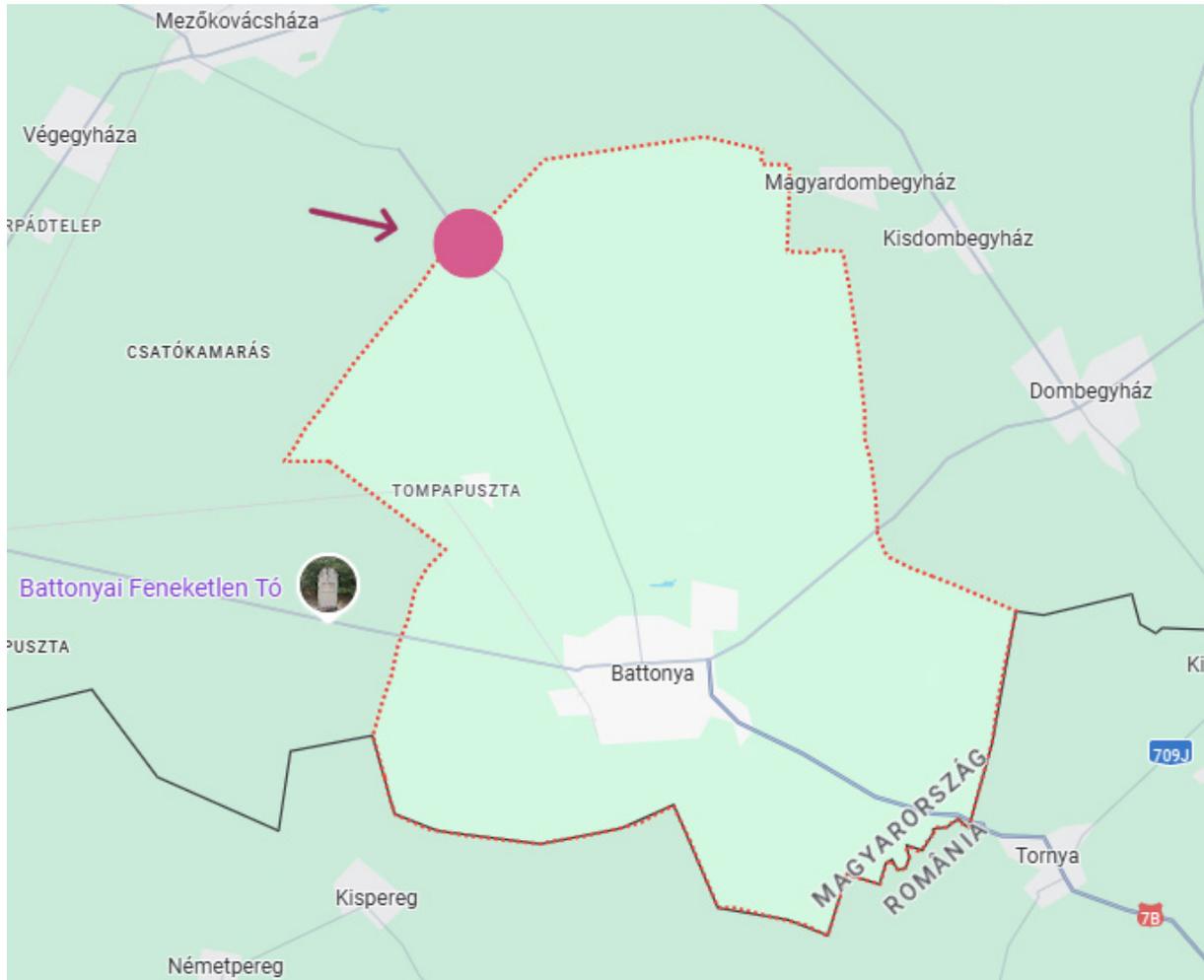


Fig. 11. Site position (source: Google maps, 11.02.2025).

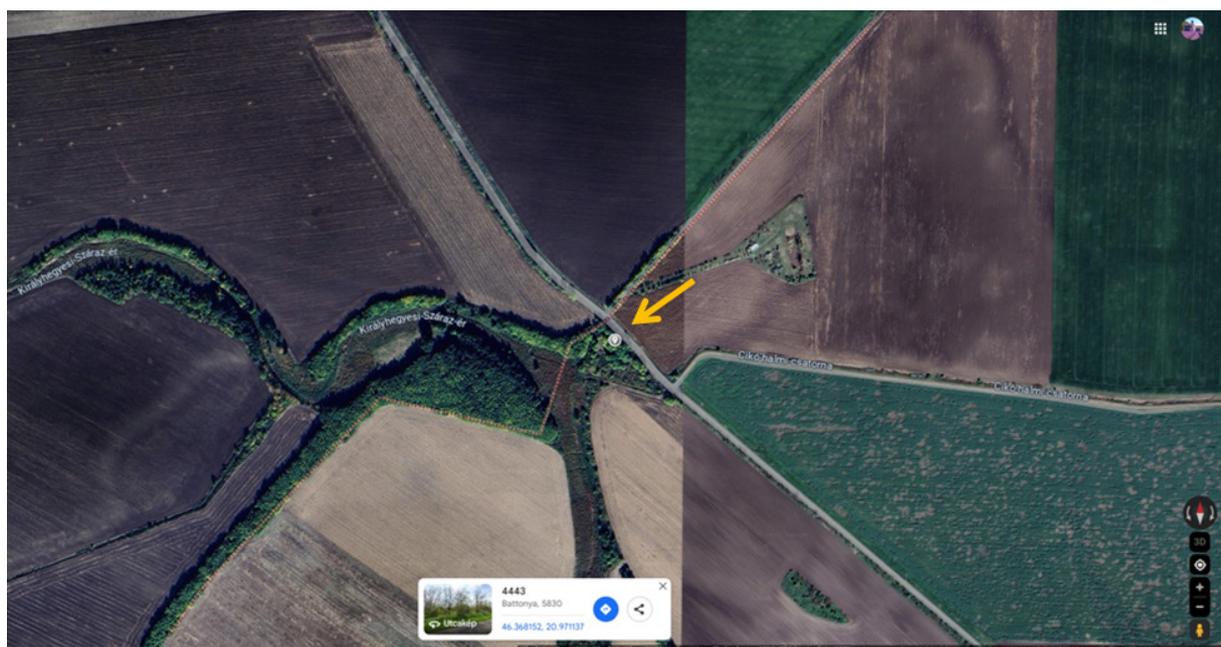


Fig. 12. Church location with the surrounding riverbeds (source: Google maps, 11.02.2025).

an east-west direction, extending on the northern bank of the Száraz stream interflow with another stream that flows in it from north-east. The church lies on the western end of the site, more precisely in the northern corner, where the two streams meet. (Figs. 11–17.)

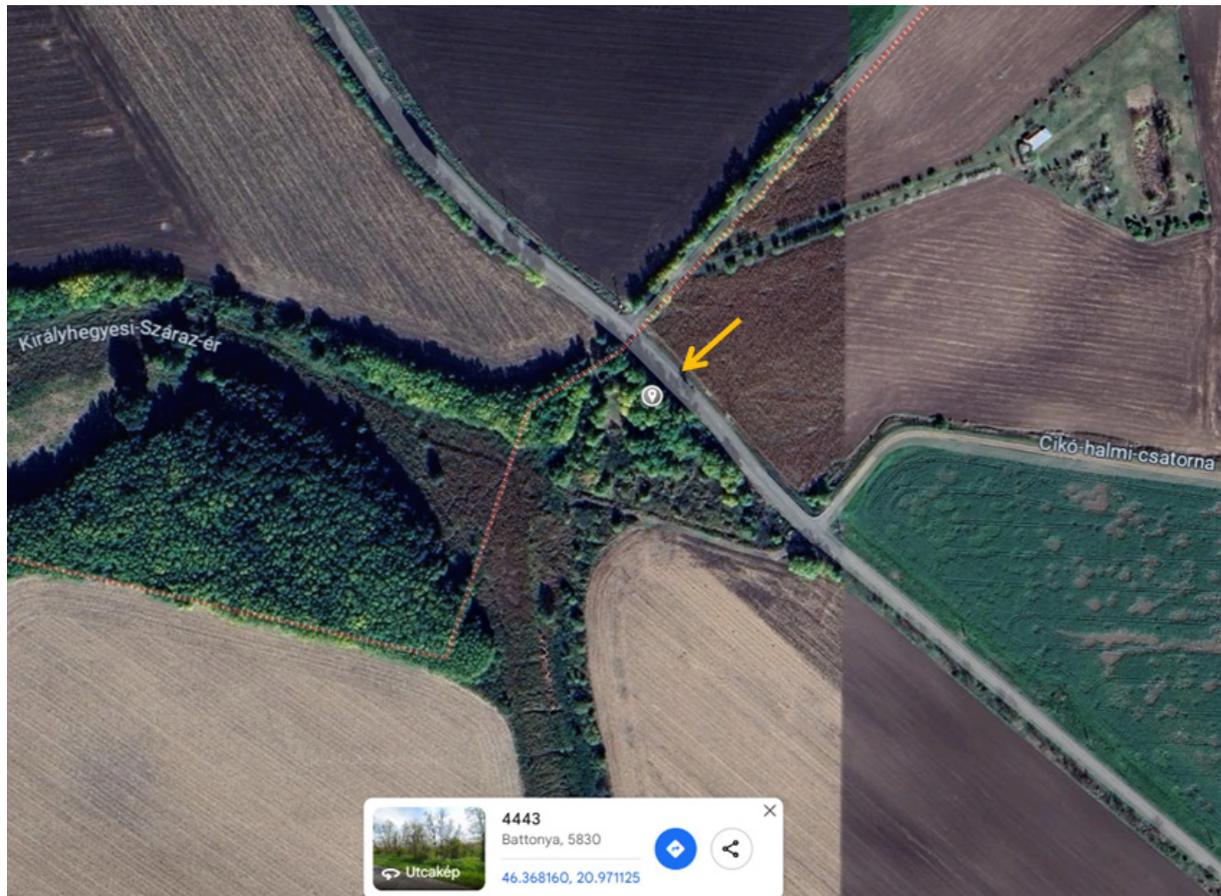


Fig. 13. Church location in relation to the current road route running nearby (source: Google maps, 11.02.2025).

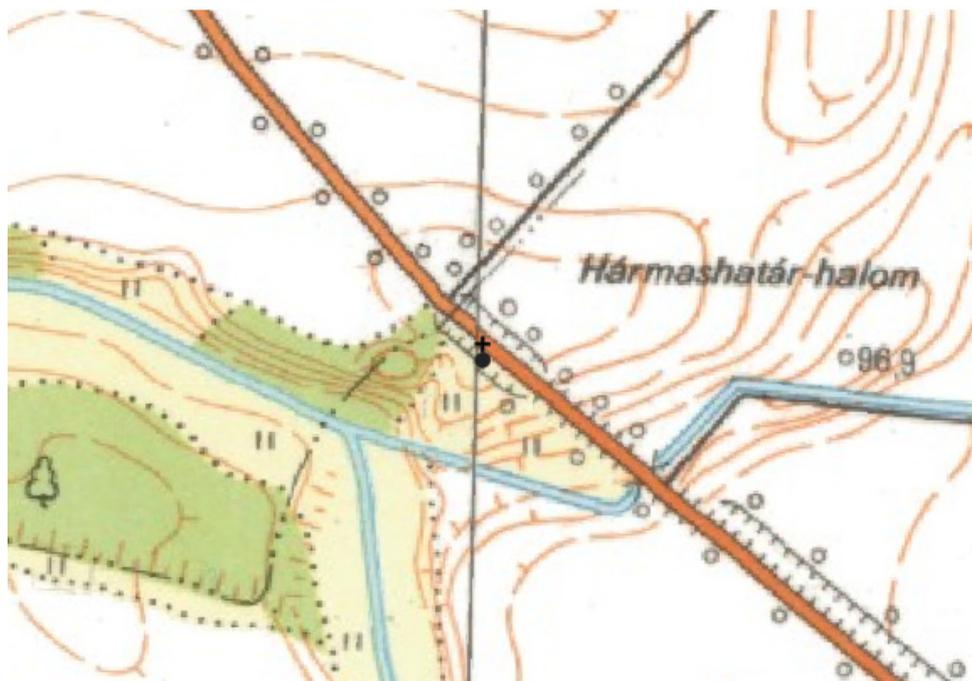


Fig. 14. Church location on the former road between Battonya and Mezőkovácsháza (drafted: György Kerekes, 2025).



Fig. 15. Church location along the former and current routes of the road between Battonya and Mezőkovácsháza (drafted: György Kerekes, 2025).



Fig. 16. Location and surroundings of the site, aerial view from south-east (source: Google maps, 11.02.2025).



Fig. 17. The site today from the east (source: Google maps, 11.02.2025).

There were no Late Middle Ages date artefacts identified in the site area or the neighbouring sites, so that it is certain that the settlement was abandoned prior to the 14th century<sup>19</sup>. Its name did not survive and it cannot be identified with either of the settlements recorded by documents. Its surface might have been extended to several neighbouring archaeological sites, including sites 27, 28 and 30 discovered by János József Szabó, as well as on the Mezőkovácsháza side. (Fig. 10.)

From the point of view of the settlement's history, the quantity, type, age and distribution of the coins discovered between 2015 and 2024 subsequent to metal detecting activities carried out on the site and its vicinity, are rather remarkable. Amongst, count sixty-three coins from the Árpadian dynasty, two Byzantine coins and four Friesach coins. The Árpadian coins date to a period of one hundred years between the rules of Kálmán and Béla III, namely 1095 and 1196, the Byzantine coins date to the reign of emperor Manuel I (between 1143 and 1180), while the Friesach coins are from the period between 1220 and 1256<sup>20</sup>. This clearly shows that nearby the church site there are no 11th century coins or more specifically, from the period prior to king Kálmán's reign, while the 12th century was characterised by extensive coinage circulation, only to cease in the 13th century. All of this does not only confirm the settlement's dating based on other aspects, but also mirrors the intense and less intense periods in its existence. Accordingly, the village could have come into existence during the 11th century, flourished in the 12th century and gradually started to decay in the 13th century, being ultimately abandoned (Table 1). Obviously, it is impossible to draw conclusions regarding a settlement's existence or destruction based exclusively on coinage use, because there are many factors that impact the specificities of currency circulation, however, in this case, it may be deduced that the emergence of currency and the settlement's existence had been mutually bolstering factors.

<sup>19</sup> Although the excavation leader was unable to provide a more precise date for the round church, he considered it "*most likely to date from the 14th century.*" (MNM RégAd IX./121/1981: excavation report.) – This dating, however, is contradicted by the finds themselves, as only artefacts from the Árpadian period were discovered at the site and in its surroundings, with not a single later item present.

<sup>20</sup> Metal detecting collection compiled by András Bene, György Kerekes, Róbert Kvak, Gábor Tóth. Coin determining: György Kerekes. Archaeological finds: NGyTM Itsz. 2016.3720.1, 2016.3723.1., NGyTM gysz. 2020/16.1–7., 2021/16.1–3., 2021/29.1–2., 2024/112–116., 2024/118., 2025/63. We thank here György Kerekes for data obtained from the metal detecting research, respectively Mrs. Imre Mihályné for the numbers related to museum records. The collector's personal data are found in the Orosháza Museum registers.

Table 1. Classification of coins discovered around the church location.

<b>Coins dated to the Árpadian dynasty</b>					
	<b>Coin type</b>	<b>Minting authority</b>	<b>Minting year</b>	<b>Catalogue</b>	<b>Discovered by</b>
1	Denar	Kálmán	1095-1116	ÉH. 31	Gábor Tóth
2	Denar	Kálmán	1095-1116	ÉH. 32	György Kerekes
3	Denar	II. István	1116-1131	ÉH. 35	Gábor Tóth
4	Denar	II. István	1116-1131	ÉH. 35	György Kerekes
5	Denar	II. István	1116-1131	ÉH. 39	Gábor Tóth
6	Denar	II. István	1116-1131	ÉH. 39	György Kerekes
7	Denar	II. István	1116-1131	ÉH. 39	Gábor Tóth
8	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 48	Gábor Tóth
9	Denar	II. Béla	1141-1162	ÉH. 51	Gábor Tóth
10	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Róbert Kvak
11	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
12	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
13	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
14	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
15	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
16	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
17	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
18	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
19	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
20	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
21	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
22	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
23	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
24	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	András Bene
25	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
26	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
27	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	György Kerekes
28	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	György Kerekes
29	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	György Kerekes
30	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
31	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
32	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
33	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
34	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
35	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
36	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	György Kerekes
37	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	György Kerekes
38	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth

39	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 52	Gábor Tóth
40	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 53	Róbert Kvak
41	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 53	Gábor Tóth
42	Denar	II. Béla	1131-1141	ÉH. 53	Gábor Tóth
43	Copper coin	III. Béla	1172-1196	ÉH. 114	Gábor Tóth
44	Copper coin	III. Béla	1172-1196	ÉH. 114	Gábor Tóth
45	Copper coin	III. Béla	1172-1196	ÉH. 114	Gábor Tóth
46	Copper coin	III. Béla	1172-1196	ÉH. 114	Gábor Tóth
47	Copper coin	III. Béla	1172-1196	ÉH. 114	Gábor Tóth
48	Copper coin	III. Béla	1172-1196	ÉH. 114	Gábor Tóth
49	Copper coin	III. Béla	1172-1196	ÉH. 114	György Kerekes
50	Copper coin	III. Béla	1172-1196	ÉH. 114	György Kerekes
51	Copper coin	III. Béla	1172-1196	ÉH. 114	Gábor Tóth
52	Copper coin	III. Béla	1172-1196	ÉH. 114	Gábor Tóth
53	Copper coin	III. Béla	1172-1196	ÉH. 114	Gábor Tóth
54	Copper coin	III. Béla	1172-1196	ÉH. 114	Gábor Tóth
55	Copper coin	III. Béla	1172-1196	ÉH. 115	Gábor Tóth
56	Copper coin	III. Béla	1172-1196	ÉH. 115	Gábor Tóth
57	Copper coin	III. Béla	1172-1196	ÉH. 115	Gábor Tóth
58	Copper coin	III. Béla	1172-1196	ÉH. 115	Gábor Tóth
59	Copper coin	III. Béla	1172-1196	ÉH. 115	Gábor Tóth
60	Copper coin	III. Béla	1172-1196	ÉH. 115	György Kerekes
61	Copper coin	III. Béla	1172-1196	ÉH. 115	György Kerekes
62	Copper coin	III. Béla	1172-1196	ÉH. 115	Gábor Tóth
63	Copper coin	III. Béla	1172-1196	ÉH. 115	Gábor Tóth

**Byzantine coins**

	<b>Coin type</b>	<b>Minting authority</b>	<b>Minting year</b>	<b>Catalogue</b>	<b>Discovered by</b>
1	Aspron trachy (cup-shaped coin)	I. Manuel	1143.04.08- 1180.09.24.	Sear 1962	Gábor Tóth
2	Aspron trachy (cup-shaped coin)	I. Manuel	1143.04.08- 1180.09.24.	Sear 1966	Gábor Tóth

**Friesachi type coins**

	<b>Coin type</b>	<b>Minting authority</b>	<b>Minting year</b>	<b>Minting location</b>	<b>Catalogue</b>	<b>Discovered by</b>
1	Friesacher pfennig	Archbishop II. Eberhard of Salzburg	1220/1230	Pettau	CNA I. Cg 2	Gábor Tóth
2	Friesacher pfennig, Forgery	Archbishop ERIACENSIS, of Salzburg		Friesach	CNA I. Ca 9	Gábor Tóth
3	Friesacher pfennig, Forgery	Bernard, prince of Carinthia	1202-1256	ST. Veit	CNA I. Cb 17	Gábor Tóth
4	Friesacher pfennig	Barbarian imitation			CNA I. Cn4 reverse/Cg1	Gábor Tóth

From the settlement's history view, the distribution of the discovered coins provides valuable data as well. Most of all, these confirm that the settlement's area covered the four archaeological sites mentioned above. Nevertheless, the village nucleus was represented by the immediate vicinity of the church and the site opposite this, on the south side of another riverbed coming from the east, flowing into the Szárazér (sites 27 and 28). The coins presence further evidences that the church located in the north-eastern corner of the two streambed and the cemetery around the church might have been a separate place, not only from a sacral point of view, but also from a territorial, village structure and village organization point of view<sup>21</sup>. According to the coins distribution, the settlement's daily life activities occurred in the area on the opposite bank to the church, in the south-eastern corner of the area where the streambeds were found. There lay the majority of houses and there the population carried their day-by-day activities. The coins density also shows that site 28 might have extended up to the current route of today's public roads from the east and even slightly expand beyond. In line with their distribution, the settlement's density in site's 30 area and that of the site on Mezókovácsháza were far from reaching the density of central site 28. The coin found on the western bank of the Szárazér River can be considered a scattered find, in the absence of ceramic finds from the Árpád period. (Fig. 18.)

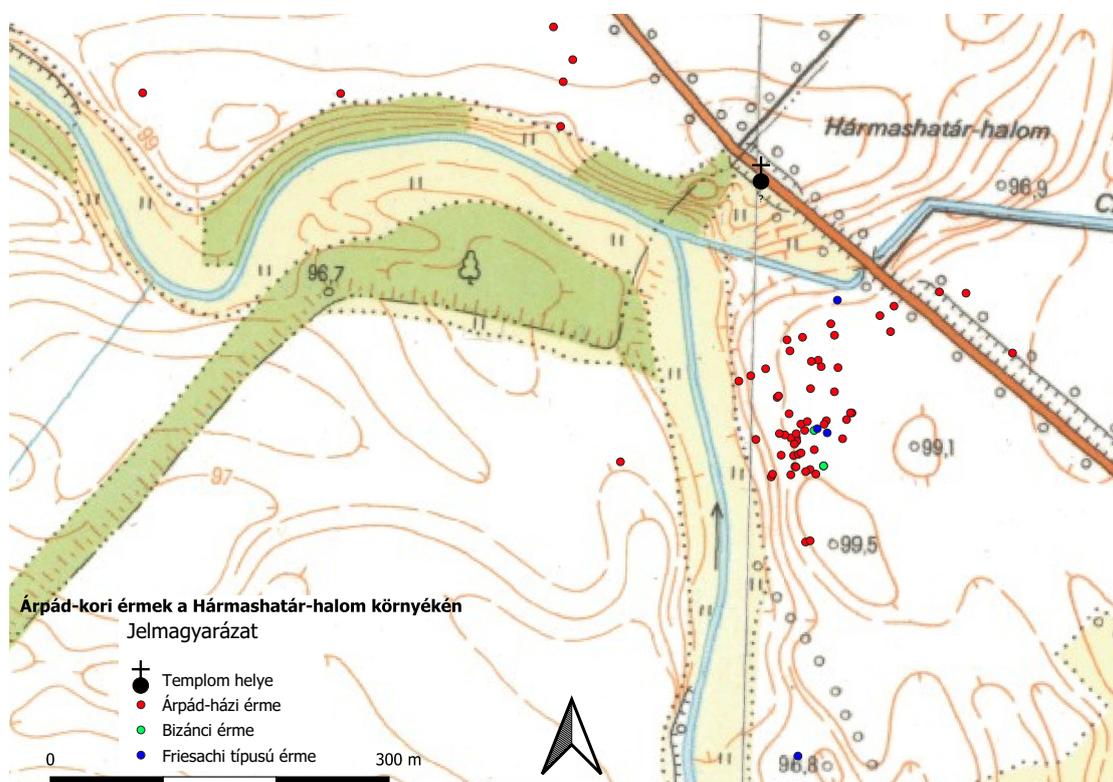


Fig. 18. Distribution of coins discovered around the church location (drafted: György Kerekes, 2025).

There is little information about the round churches from the wider region. Based on historical documents references, it may be concluded there existed only two medieval villages termed *Kerekegyház* (Round church) in what today is Békés county<sup>22</sup>. One could be identified by the outskirts of current Újkígyós, the other by the periphery of Örménykút, however no archaeological excavations had been conducted yet there<sup>23</sup>. Even so, a round church was excavated at Mágor, near Vésztő, in the Csolt

<sup>21</sup> On the prominent stretch of site 27, in the church and cemetery vicinity no coins could be found, either in the ploughed area, north-east from the today's existing road (information György Kerekes via email, 2025).

<sup>22</sup> This characteristic toponym, however, is also present in other parts of the Carpathian Basin, especially in the Great Hungarian Plain. Gervers-Molnár 1972, fig. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Szatmári 2005, 130.

monastery area and another between Békéscsaba and Gyula, on the location of the destroyed village of Fövényes. The first was identified in the courtyard of a later monastery, so that its original function is uncertain. Moreover, its plan is rather unique and uncommon in many aspects, raising a lot of questions in the light of circular churches discovered insofar. According to Irén Juhász's observations, "only the compacted clay foundation survived and one to three brick layers, covered with grey lime mortar". The external diameter of the circular part is of 6.6 meters, the internal diameter is of 3.8 meters, "together with the vestibule, its length being 10.7 meters, while the thickness of the walls was of 1.6 meters", its orientation being precisely west-east. The archaeologist dated the church to the 11th century<sup>24</sup>. (Figs. 19–20.)

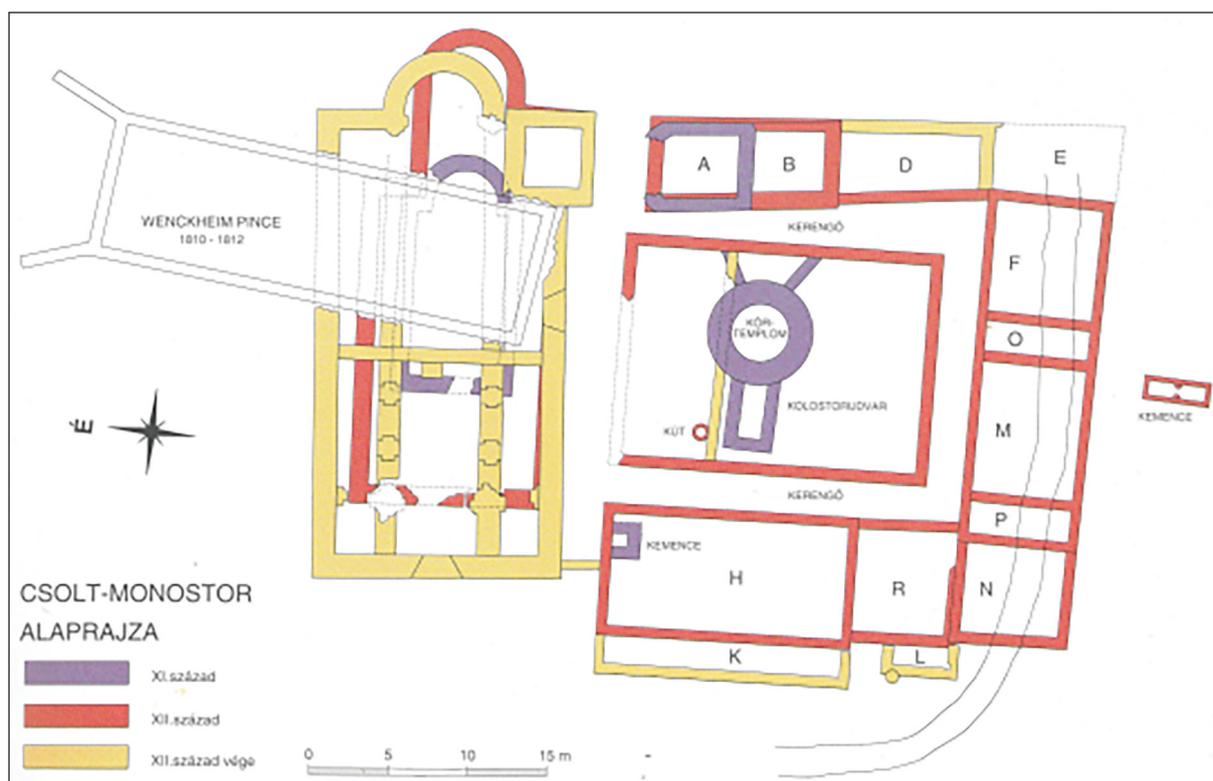


Fig. 19. Csoltmonostor monastery with a round church discovered in the monastery yard (source: Juhász 2000, 287).

The first church in the Fövényes medieval village was also a rotunda, slightly projecting on the eastern side, with an internal and external semicircular sanctuary. Its external length was of 7.5 meters, the external diameter of its circular section being of 6.9 meters, while the internal diameter was of 4.8 meters. The average thickness of the walls was of 105 cm. The building was oriented north-eastwards, with its axis deviating by approximately 20° from the east to the north of the sanctuary. Its foundation was composed entirely of compacted clay layers, while the walls were in brick. It was likely built in the 11th century<sup>25</sup>. Later, another round building was built adjacent to its northern side. (Figs. 21–22.)

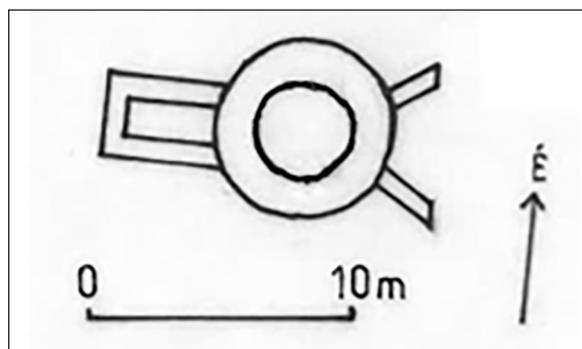


Fig. 20. Round church of Vésztő. (according to: Juhász 2000, 287<sup>26</sup>).

<sup>24</sup> Juhász 2000, 283–284, 287, photo 5; Szatmári 2005, 105.

<sup>25</sup> Szatmári 1996, 30–31, 35, 8–9. ábra.

<sup>26</sup> Szatmári 2004, 206. 10. photo b; Szatmári 2005, 185. 38. photo 1.

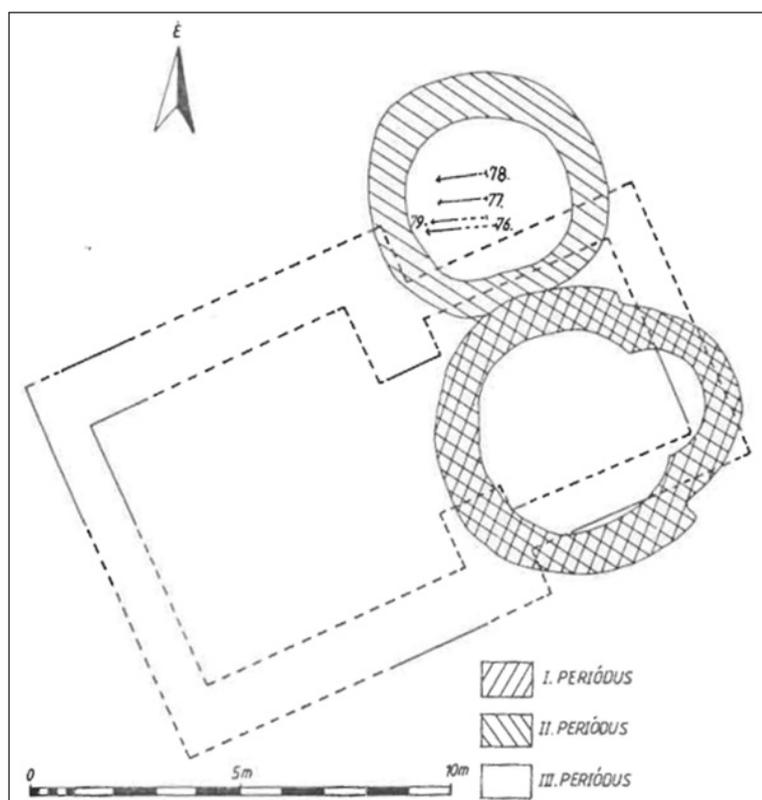


Fig. 21. Medieval church of Fövenyes  
(source: Horváth, Szatmári 1989, 380, Fig. 1).

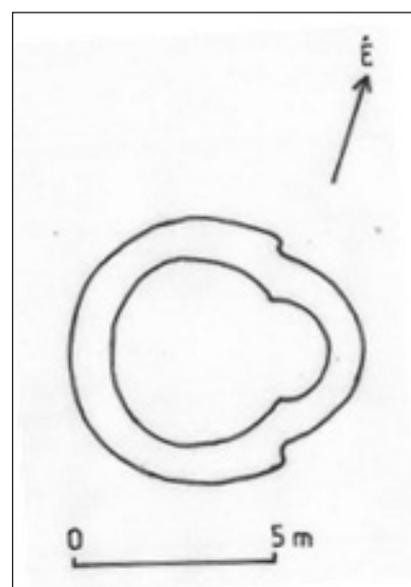


Fig. 22. Rotunda of Fövenyes  
(source: Szatmári 2004. 199. Photo 4. 11. b; conform Szatmári 2005. 176. Photo 11. 1).

The examples of Battonya and the two above show that round churches relatively close to one another in terms of age and location could be built in different manners. The rotunda of Battonya differentiated from the other two also by a few details. The size was different from the others, although only slightly, being the smallest. Nevertheless, its orientation exhibits the largest deviation from the east (Table 2). Moreover, brick pieces were laid firstly by the foundation base and only then the first clay layer started to be compacted. An example of alternating brick layers and compacted earth layers in the foundation may be found in the Szentbenedek medieval village, in a long church with a horseshoe-shaped sanctuary on the inside and a semicircular one on the outside, yet there the works began not with brick setting, but with compacted clay layering<sup>27</sup>. The use of the pure yellow clay in the foundation may be noticed in the sanctuary with straight sides excavated at Bánkút, near Medgyesegyháza<sup>28</sup>, as well as in the church discovered in site no. 14 of Örménykút, which was likely semicircular to the exterior, yet clearly in a horseshow-shape in the interior<sup>29</sup>. A row of brick fragments was set by the base of the foundations of the Bánkút church, similarly to the Battonya round church. In Bánkút, however, bricks were followed by compacted yellow clayish earth, only 5-14 cm thick, without other brick rows<sup>30</sup>.

Table 2. Main data of the rotundas discovered within Békés county territory.

Archaeological site	External diameter of the nave	Internal diameter of the nave	Nave wall thickness	Position
Vésztó-Mágor	6.6 m	3.8 m	1.60 m	West-East
Fövenyes	6.9 m	4.8 m	1.05 m	North-east 20°
Battonya	5.6 m	3.5 m	0.95 m	North-east 25°

<sup>27</sup> Szatmári 1996, 47.

<sup>28</sup> Szatmári, Vágó 1993, 18.

<sup>29</sup> Szatmári 2013, 442.

<sup>30</sup> Szatmári, Vágó 1993, 18.

Although the eastern part of the Battonya circular church sanctuary had been seriously damaged and did not survive intact, wall fragments clearly show that its shape was different than in Vésztő and Fövényes rotundas sanctuaries. The round nave was connected on the north-east side to a sanctuary with almost perpendicular walls on the nave and straight walls, which was proportionally larger and composed an almost entirely separate room. By the entrance into the sanctuary, between the northern and southern walls, the circular wall of the nave was discontinued. Concurrently, between the two sanctuary walls, the foundation of the circular nave forms a protruding part reminiscent of pillar foundations supporting triumphal arches.

The possible shape of the sanctuary is worth special attention. Only the beginning of the northern wall had survived, so its shape may be inferred only from the southern wall line. Accordingly, it is almost certain that the northern and southern longitudinal walls of the sanctuary slightly curved inwards, towards the centre. The reconstruction of the eastern closure wall shape is uncertain, given the few surviving details, yet there are possible two – or even three – forms. The two main versions depend of how we interpret the small angles visible on the excavation plan by the external and internal edges of the eastern end of the south sanctuary wall. (Fig. 23.)



Fig. 23. Foundation of the sanctuary's southern wall according to the excavation plan.

If these evidence false real corners, then the eastern closure wall of the sanctuary was connected to the two longitudinal walls by a small corner in the exterior and interior, and of one takes the curved line of the longitudinal walls and the nave circular wall as base, then the eastern closure wall was not perfectly straight, but slightly curved. (Figures 24–25). However, it is also possible that the sanctuary had had an entirely straight closure. (Figures 26–27). If, on the other hand, the south-eastern end corners of the sanctuary were not part of the structural project of the circular church, but only the remains of the sanctuary's destruction and damage, then the eastern arch of the sanctuary may be reconstructed as a continuation of its southern wall also based on the sanctuary's northern wall remains. It might have been precisely semicircular (Figs. 28–29) or slightly concave (Figs. 30–31)<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> We thank György Kerekes for the support in the drawing preparation.



Fig. 24–25. A possible form of the Battonya round church sanctuary is angular, with a slightly arched closure (drawing: György Kerekes, 2025).

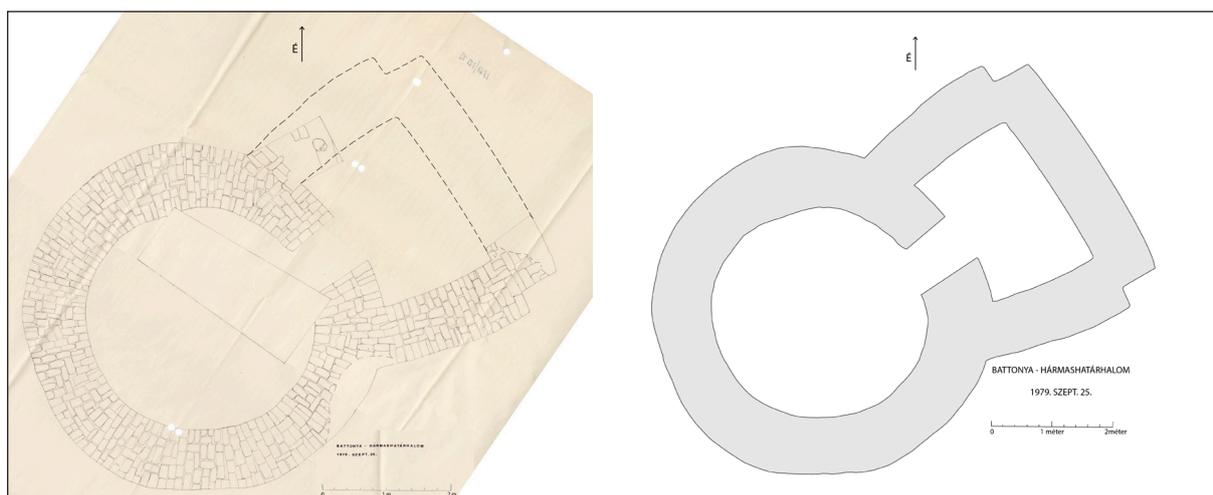


Fig. 26–27. Another possible shape of the Battonya round church sanctuary is angular, with a straight closure (drawing: György Kerekes, 2025).

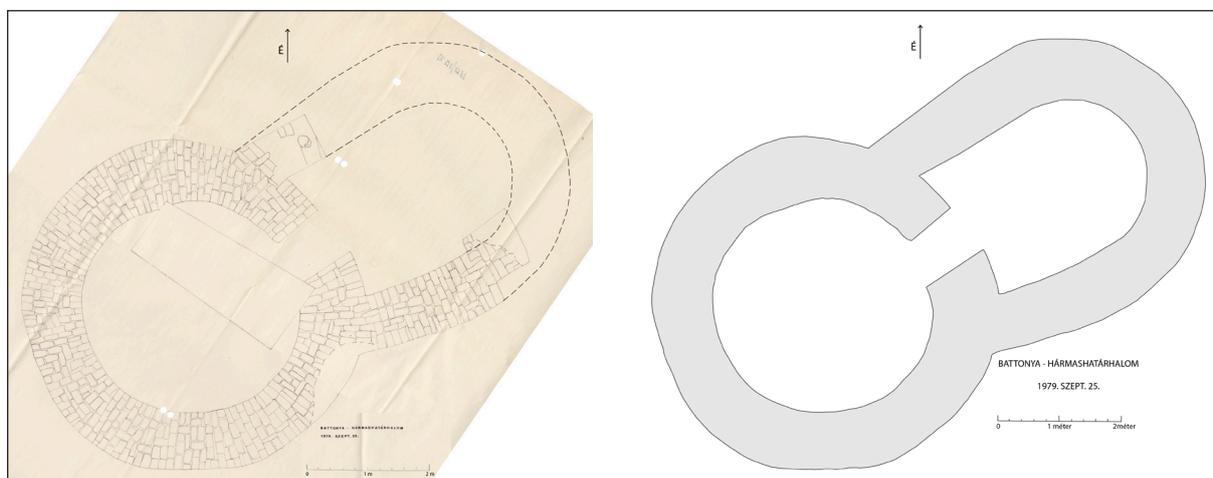


Fig. 28–29. Third possible shape of the Battonya round church sanctuary with semicircular closure (drawing: György Kerekes, 2025).

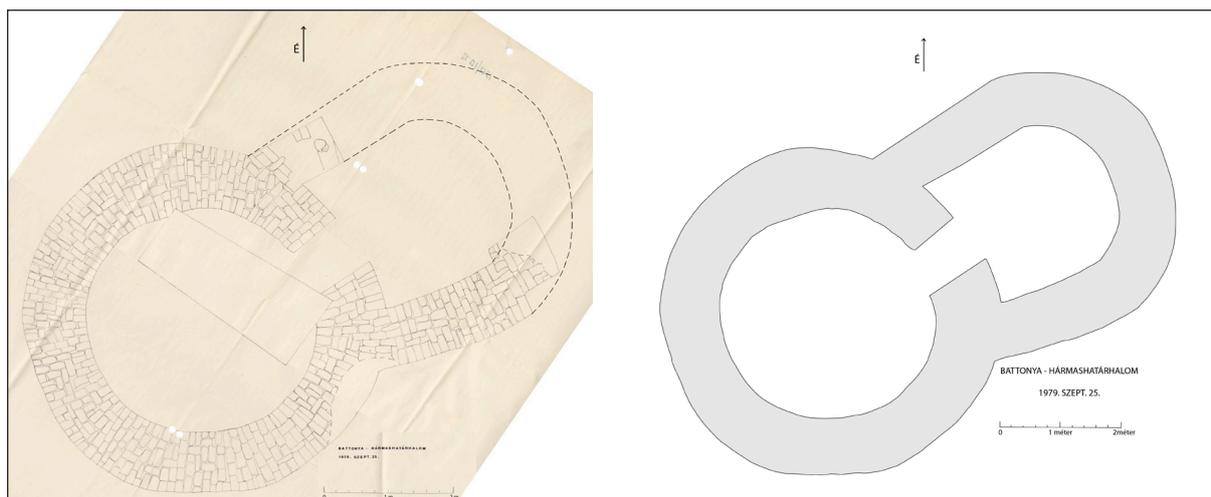


Fig. 30–31. The third possible shape of the Battonya round church sanctuary with a slightly sunken semicircular closure (drawing: György Kerekes, 2025).

There is no accurate equivalent of either structural solution, however approximately similar examples may be found in other parts of the Carpathian Basin and Central Europe for both versions. As angular sanctuary examples – even though not accurate equivalents of those in Battonya – one may include Mikulčice<sup>32</sup>, Ipolykiskeszi<sup>33</sup>, Nagykőrös<sup>34</sup>, Kisperleske<sup>35</sup>, Pelbárthida<sup>36</sup>, for a longer than the average curved sanctuary Kismána<sup>37</sup> and Znojmo<sup>38</sup> and for the arcade foundation Isaszeg<sup>39</sup>, Nagykálló<sup>40</sup>, Öskü<sup>41</sup>, Gyulakeszi<sup>42</sup>, Vitenyédshatár<sup>43</sup>, Keresztúr (Kerestur nad Váhom)<sup>44</sup> and Budeč<sup>45</sup>.

Parish churches with round nave from medieval Hungary date to the 11th – 13th century, which means they were built during the first three centuries after the establishment of the state<sup>46</sup>. At the same time, it may be noticed that the age of the churches from the Békés county villages discovered until present may be dated without exception to the 11th - 12th century<sup>47</sup>, the construction of the rotundas in Vésztő and Fövenyes being also datable to the 11th century<sup>48</sup>. There is no direct evidence regarding the building period of the Battonya round church, however it may be assumed it was built in any phase of the long Christianity conversion process which spanned throughout the 11th and 12th century. Given that the finds yielded by the church vicinity area indicate that the Hungarian population emerged in this region during a very early phase (finds dated to the Hungarian conquest period were also found in the neighbouring site) and that the settlement had already been abandoned in the Árpáadian period, the church had been likely built during the 11th century. However, only may assume that the conversion to Christianity of the local population had already been complete in the 11th century and that among the thirty-seven village churches in the Békés county known today from their plans the three centrally arranged buildings represent a small proportion (8.1%), most likely evidencing their early construction as well. This is supported by the fact that oldest buildings of

<sup>32</sup> Gervers-Molnár 1972, 3. kép 11, 4. kép 2.

<sup>33</sup> Gervers-Molnár 1972, 27. kép 1.

<sup>34</sup> Gervers-Molnár 1972, 27. kép 2.

<sup>35</sup> Gervers-Molnár 1972, 27. kép 3.

<sup>36</sup> Bunyitay 1884, 283–284. 26. kép, XV. tábla; Szilágyi 2008. 267–268.

<sup>37</sup> Gervers-Molnár 1972, 12. kép 2, 16. kép.

<sup>38</sup> Gervers-Molnár 1972, 3. kép 15.

<sup>39</sup> Czeglédly 1985, 435. 12/I. kép.

<sup>40</sup> Németh 1997, 138.

<sup>41</sup> Gervers-Molnár 1972, 12. kép 6.

<sup>42</sup> Gervers-Molnár 1972, 12. kép 12.

<sup>43</sup> Gervers-Molnár 1972, 19. kép c.

<sup>44</sup> Gervers-Molnár 1972, 12. kép 11, 18. kép.

<sup>45</sup> Gervers-Molnár 1972, 6. kép 2.

<sup>46</sup> Gervers-Molnár 1972, 60.

<sup>47</sup> Szatmári 2005, 54.

<sup>48</sup> Juhász 2000, 283–284; Szatmári 1996, 35.

churches with multiple building periods discovered on the sites of the Vésztő and Fövenyes rotundas were round churches in both cases.

Based on all of the above, the Battonya round church deserves a very important place among early Christian religious buildings in the region.

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