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ACTA NUMISMATICA HUNGARICA

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Late medieval finds from Kisnémedi Church Hill

Enikő Kovács

Small metal finds and coins were discovered on the Church Hill near Kisnémedi.¹ Besides seven Prague groschen from the early 14th century the find included a Friesacher Pfennig, two rings and four bronze buckles.

The archaeological site

The hill lies between Bugyi and Kisnémedi, in the corner of Ráday street, that connects Bugyi and the 5th main road. The site had previously been examined by archaeologists through field survey. Besides substantial earlier finds the traces of a church, a cemetery and a town from the 13–15th century could be identified then.²

The church on the hill once dedicated to St. George used to belong to Vány. The town was first mentioned in 1277.³ By 1359 it was desolated, and charts term it *ecclesia desertam* (deserted church).⁴ According to the database of Edit Tari the town later became populated again and perished for good around the beginning of the era of the Ottoman conquest.⁵

Prague groschen

The seven Prague groschen create a separate group among the finds. They were found near to each other, on a small c. 10x10 m area. Three of them were minted in Kutteneberg (today Kutna Hora, Bohemia) during the reign of King Wenceslaus II. (1278–1305) (*Fig 1.1–1.3*). The other four are from the same mint, from the reign of King John of Bohemia (1310–1346) (*Fig 1.4–1.7*).

Wenceslaus II. (1278–1305)

(Frynas B 25.16.)

1. 3.53 g, 2.6 mm

2. 3.49 g, 2.7 mm

3. 3.48 g, 2.8 mm

John of Bohemia (1310–1346)

(Frynas B 27.2.)

4. 2.94 g, 2.8 mm

5. 3.49 g, 2.7 mm

6. 3.30 g, 2.8 mm

7. 3.01 g, 2.6 mm

The Prague groschen were in general use during the first decades of the 14th century in Hungary. They occur in several contemporary written sources as the main medium of exchange. Only by the minting of Hungarian groshen was their role slowly diminished from the 1330's on. Their spread in the kingdom can be traced by Prague groschen in the 14th century finds. The groschen of King Wenceslaus II., Wenceslaus III (1305–1306) and John of Bohemia occur often in coin hoards in varying quantity. Most of these hoards are from the northern part of the medieval

1 TARI 2000, 13–14.

2 TETTAMANTI 1977.

3 BÁRTFAI SZABÓ 1938, 89.

4 BÁRTFAI SZABÓ 1938, 356, 357.

5 TARI 2000, 14.

Kingdom of Hungary, today Slovakia.⁶ The frequency of the finds indicates that this area played a central role in the circulation of Prague groschen in Hungary.⁷ These hoards contain either only Prague groschen, or also Hungarian coins beside them. They are mostly accompanied by the silver coins of King Charles I. (1308–1342), and in some cases of King Louis I. (1342–1382).⁸

Stray finds

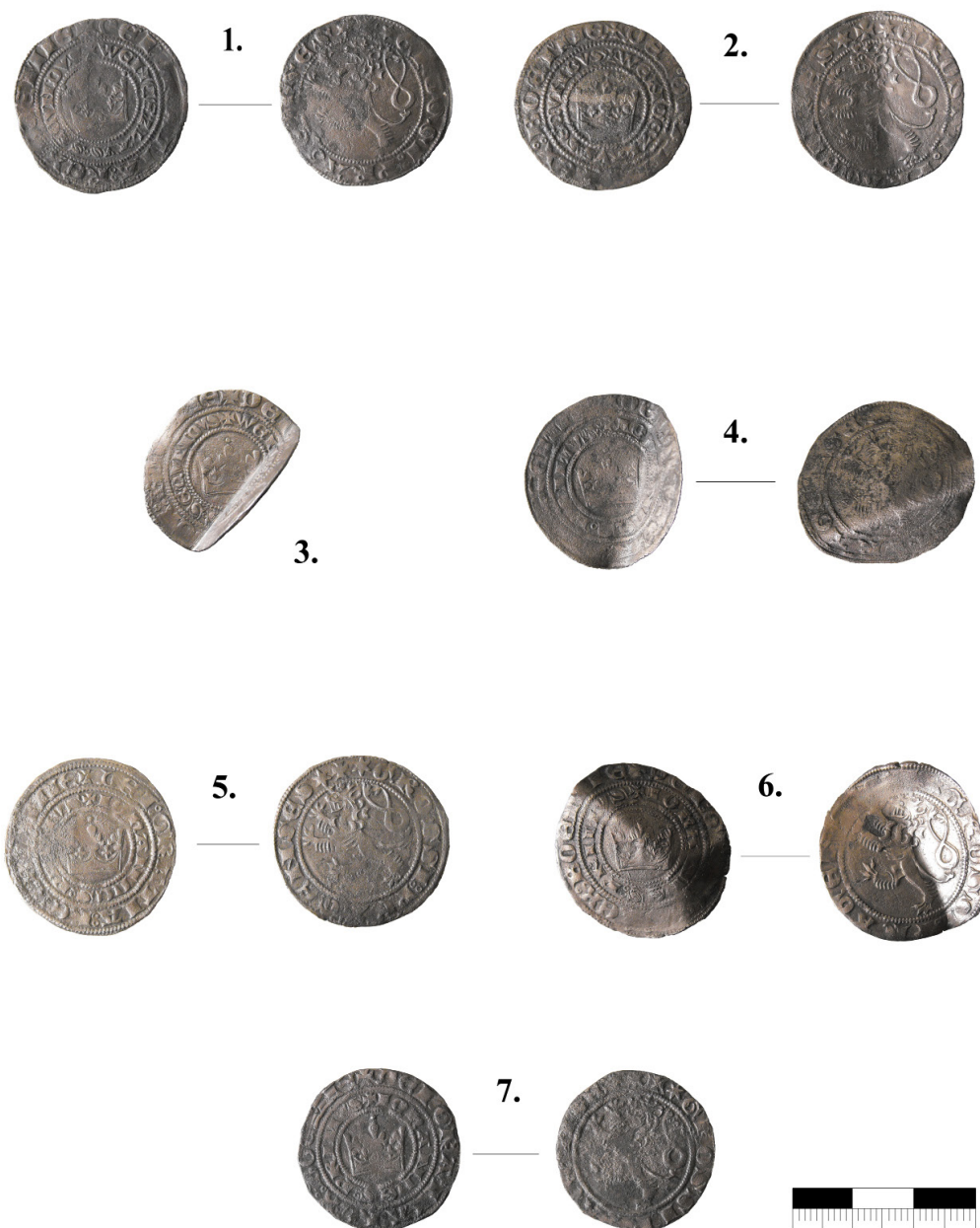


Fig. 1. (Photo: Cs. Gedai)

6 HUSZÁR 1976, 56. note 6.; BUDAJ 2014, 63. tab. 1.

7 HUSZÁR 1976, 56.

8 For the collection of hoards containig also Hungarian coins see TÓTH 2002, appendix V/1, 176–200.

The rest of the finds were discovered also on the hillside, but separate from each other and the groschen.

Coins

One of the stray finds is a silver Friesacher pfennig struck in the mint of Rann (today Brežice, Slovenia) by the Archbishop of Salzburg Eberhardt II. (1200–1246) along with the Duke of Austria, Leopold VI. (1198–1230) (*Fig 2*).



Fig. 2. (Photo: Cs. Gedai)

Friesacher pfennigs are quite usual in the finds and hoards from the 12th–13th century in Hungary. These fine silver coins played a major role in the Hungarian economy at that time. Both written and archaeological sources show that they were frequently used in external and interior trade. Their golden age in Hungary was the first half of the 13th century. From the middle of the century the strike of the Friesacher pfennigs began its fading, and they were gradually crowded out from the circulation of the kingdom.⁹

Based on oral sources, more coins are known to be from the same hill: a rare denar of King Otto (1305–1307),¹⁰ a Slavonian denar (banalis), and a modern age coin.

Rings

The two rings among the finds are both hammered, bearing engraved ornaments on the bezel. The more delicate piece of the two is made of silver, and has the traces of gilt remaining in its decorations. (*Fig. 3*) On the bezel one can see a cross combined with lily and floral decorations.¹¹ The design is definitely of high quality. The lines of the engravings are clear and deep, the design of the figure is fairly symmetric. The figure does not fill the whole bezel, but around the ornament there is an inner circle, and another beaded circle just by the edge of the bezel. On the two sides of the hoop, where it connects to the bezel, one can see geometric ornaments. These frame decorations were engraved in a much lighter way than the main design. Despite the fine execution of the central figure the framing shows prominent flaws. The inner circle was meant to be made of two semicircles, but the two didn't connect to each other as they ought to have. Considering the void space between the inner and the exterior frame circles, the artificer may have planned to make a legend, but for some reason – maybe because of the malformation of the inner circle or the small space – it did not come to fruition. Despite its flaws, the ring must



Fig. 3. (Photo: Cs. Gedai)

⁹ HÓMAN 1916, 289–314., SZÉKELY 2001–2002, 126–127.

¹⁰ RUPP Cat. Nr. 320.

¹¹ This terminological frase is from the thesis of Zoltán Litauszki, group 1.2B. LITAUSZKI 2012, 20. and Tab. V. 2-7.

have been in use for a considerably long period of time, as one can see strong wear around the bezel. Considering the design, the closest analogy is a ring found in Kiskunfélegyháza-Templomhalom.¹² By the classification of Zoltán Litauszki rings of this type are to be dated to the 14–15th century. However, it has to be noted that the specimens Litauszki mentions are only similar in their design motifs. The ring found in Kisnémedi represents much higher quality, and was made with a different method and style: while the specimens cited by Litauszki are made of a separate hoop and bezel joined together, or cast. The one from Kisnémedi has the bezel and hoop hammered from a single band. While the engravings on the specimens in Litauszki's work are shallow, the pattern on the ring from Bugyi is deep enough to be used even as a seal.

The second ring is made of bronze. (Fig. 4) Similarly to the previous one, it was hammered from a single band. On the bezel there is the head of an ox engraved. Around the main figure



Fig. 4. (Photo: Cs. Gedai)

one can see a pattern imitating a legend, made of eight pairs of semicircles facing each other. The main design and the legend imitation are divided by a circle line. On the spot where the bezel meets the hoop there are two parallel lines engraved on both sides. The engravements on this ring are far more shallow than the one with lily ornaments. The hoop is broken and bent. Rings bearing ox head can be seen in archaeological finds from the second half of the 13th century up to the turn of the 14th and 15th century.¹³ The closest analogy is known from the excavations in the castle of Váralja-Várfő.¹⁴ Based on Litauszki's work, this ring can be dated to the second half of the 13th and the early 14th century.¹⁵

Buckles

The four buckles were all cast of bronze. One of them is a double-sided spectacle buckleframe. (Fig. 5) The rear face is flat, the prong is missing. Similar double-sided specimens appear in cemeteries from the 13th century on.¹⁶ The closest analogy of the Kisnémedi specimen is known from Buda castle.¹⁷ Based on the stratigraphic contexts it can be dated to the 14–15th century. A similar buckle, with hoops lengthened into an edge was found in a goldsmith's yard in Visegrád, from the early 15th century¹⁸.



Fig. 5. (Photo: Cs. Gedai)

12 LITAUSZKI 2012, Tab.V. 4., Cat. Nr. 60.

13 LITAUSZKI 2012, 30.

14 MIKLÓS 1998, 135, 153, Tab. 12. 10.

15 LITAUSZKI 2012, 29–30.

16 A similar buckle was found in Tiszafüred-Morotvpart, alongside pottery from the 12–13th century. LASZLOVSKY 1991. 317, 360, Tab II. 3.

17 HORVÁTH 2016, 96, Tab XXIV. 10.

18 VARGA 2010, 14., Tab IV. 1–2.

The rest of the buckles are oval-shaped and single-sided, with moulded front. (*Fig. 6*) Similar buckles are known from several late medieval sites. One specimen in the collection of the National Museum was dated by Zsuzsa Lovag to the early 14th century.¹⁹ A similar D-shaped buckle is known from 15–16th century layers in the castle of Buda.²⁰ This type appears also in the castle of Ozora²¹ and a graveyard in Nagytálya.²²



Fig. 6. (Photo: Cs. Gedai)

Conclusion

The dating of the small metal finds from the Church Hill fits perfectly into the preconceptions of the previous archaeological examinations. The earliest items are from the 13th, the latest from the 14–16th century. The buckle and ring types occurring among the finds are usual in the late medieval cemeteries and towns. The stray medieval coins on the other hand are not the types commonly placed in graves with the dead. As Vány was desolated during the 16th century, the supposed modern age coin is a lost item separate from the town.

The hoard of Prague groschen is clearly a part of the early 14th century horizon mentioned above. Based on their position they might have been lost together. Though the wide dating keeps the question open, whether the town was populated at that time, or it happened during its desolated period.

These finds are just part of the items from the life of Vány. The exceptional state and the quantity of the finds indicate much more information that could still be in the ground.

19 LOVAG 1999, 91., Cat. Nr. 239.

20 HORVÁTH 2016, 94–95., Tab XXIV. 1.

21 GERE 2003, 95., 208 Tab. 64. 1.

22 KOVÁCS 1972, Tab. IV. 9.

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