

Medieval stone cellars in the suburb of Buda (today Watertown)

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The suburbs and other minor settlements surrounding the centre of medieval Buda, the Castle District (i.e. the medieval 'castrum'), are almost blank pages of archaeological research. Despite the fact that some major objects, churches and buildings have already been excavated, researchers are far from being able to trace back a complete set of streets, the arrangement of buildings or building types. In the past decades the increasing building construction at different sites has facilitated extended archeological research, in the course of which numerous remains of burgher houses have been discovered. The paper would like to introduce some mediaeval cellars found at the recent excavations near to the former Parish Church of St Peter the Martyr in the northern part of the suburb, in the recent 26 Gyorskocsi Street and 13 Medve Street. (Fig. 1.)

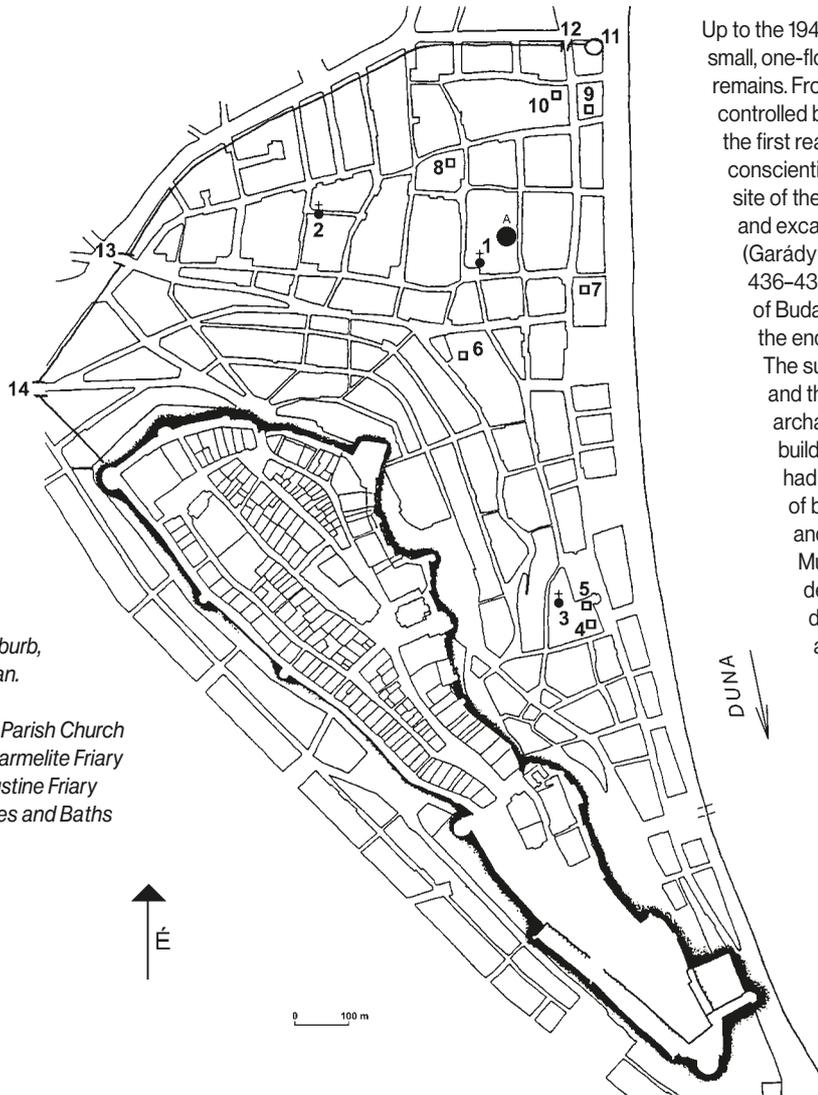


Fig. 1.
Buda – castle and suburb,
the modern street plan.
A. Gyorskocsi u. 26.
1. St Peter the Martyr Parish Church
2. Mother of Mercy Carmelite Friary
3. St. Stephen's Augustine Friary
4.-10. Turkish Mosques and Baths
11. Rundell
12.-14. Gates

Up to the 1940's this area had been characterised by mainly small, one-floor houses which did not contain medieval remains. From that time on a total reorganization was started, controlled by Sándor Garády, the person carrying out the first real excavations in medieval Buda. Due to his conscientious work he was able to establish the proper site of the medieval Parish Church of St Peter the Martyr and excavate several cess pits and middens rich in finds (Garády 1943a, 206–233; Garády 1943b, 417–418, 436–438). Unfortunately Sándor Garády fell in the siege of Budapest in 1944/45 and his death also marks the end of a period in the research of the suburbs.

The suburb was badly damaged during the war and the reconstruction was not followed by systematic archaeological observation. The demolition of old buildings was finished by the 70's, but construction had not been completed by then. A new wave of building activity began at the end of the 80's, and on the local council's initiative Budapest History Museum was involved in the project. In the past decades the increasing building construction at different sites has facilitated extended archeological research, in the course of which numerous remains of burgher houses have been discovered. On the basis of the results the Museum initiated the legal protection of the entire archaeological area, which was carried out in 1994. In the following I would like to introduce some mediaeval cellars found at the recent excavations near to the former Parish Church of St Peter the Martyr in the northern part of the suburb (Végh 2000, 67–74).

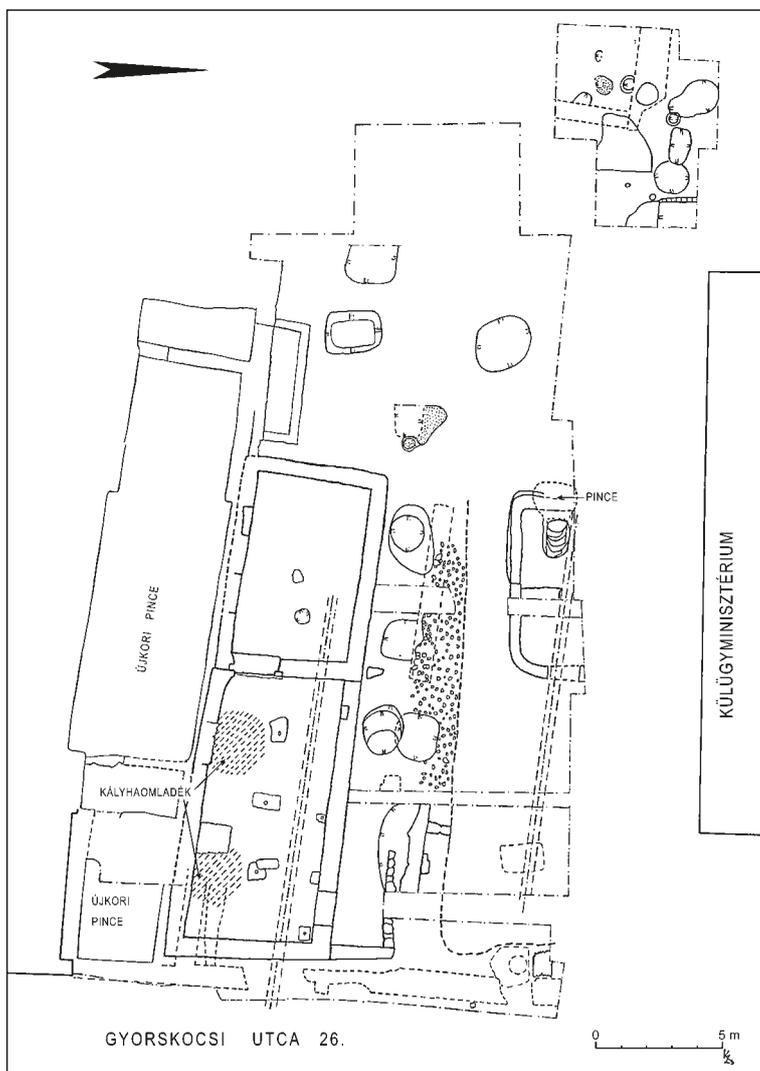
26 Gyorskocsi Street

Preceding the construction work a medieval house and its surroundings were excavated in 1991–92 and 2002 on the site of the planned enlargement of the building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Sabján – Végh 2002, 269–288). (Fig. 2.) This plot is situated in the neighbourhood of the medieval Parish Church. The excavations found cellars of three different periods (medieval, Turkish and modern) built at right angles to the street. The medieval cellar was situated in the interior of the plot under the modern yard. (Fig. 3.) The plan of this medieval building was rectangular, the walls were built of random coursed limestone. The entrance opened in the eastern wall, facing the street with original stonework. (Fig. 4.) The doorstep was 60 cms below the medieval occupation level and the floor of the cellar lay 80 cms below this. There used to be stone stairs leading down to the cellar but the original form of the entrance was destroyed by the other cellar from the Turkish period. A window and another badly damaged opening – perhaps a former door or window – were found in the southern wall of the room. No remains of the ceiling were found. (Fig. 5–6.) As there were no hints of vaulting, a wooden roof can be assumed. A flat stone found in the middle of the room could have been placed under the post supporting the lengthwise beam of the ceiling.

In the Turkish period the building was changed significantly. The floor of the medieval cellar was raised by 60 cms in the middle of the 16th century, later on the building must have burnt down as can be concluded from the burnt layer on the floor. The new cellar at the front of the plot could have been built then. The door of the old cellar was walled up and the cellar was filled in.

Fig. 2.
Budapest II. Gyorskocsi u. 26.
Plan of the excavation.

1) Budapest II. Medve u. 13.



The medieval cellar was situated in the interior of the plot. It must have belonged to a building on the surface level, extending to the street. These supposed parts had been completely destroyed by the Turkish cellar. Our supposition was confirmed by another excavation in the same building block on the opposite site. **1)** Part of a very similar cellar was excavated in this plot, which was also demolished in the Turkish period. (**Fig. 8.**) This cellar was also situated in the interior of the plot, its entrance opened towards the street and its size was almost the same as the previous cellar. The largely demolished remains of a building structure possibly made of timber were detected on the surface between the cellar and the street. (**Fig. 7.**) Lines of stones put under the sills, postholes and the burned floor levels showed the plan of the house. The first room at the street heated by an oven was followed by another room and the stone cellar.

These cellars must have been used for the safe storage of wine. It is a well-known fact, that wine production played a very important role in the economic life of the citizens of Buda and that wine was preserved in the cellars built under the houses of the town. Though no signs of barrels or wood could be detected on the floor of the cellars, the traces of abrasion on the stone frame of the door do suggest it.

(**Fig. 4, 8.**) The full barrels were let into the cellars with the help of ropes. The traces could have been left by the ropes on the jambs. Similar traces were observed in many cases on the doors of the cellars in the Castle District too.

What makes the cellars of the suburb interesting is the fact that in the Castle District, as the centre of the city cellars of a different type were common. Under the medieval houses of the Castle District most of the cellars were built immediately behind the street front, and in many cases there were several within the plot. It is also known from archaeological



Fig. 3.
Budapest II. Gyorskocsi u. 26.
Medieval cellar under excavation.



Fig. 4.
Budapest II. Gyorskocsi u. 26.
Original door of the medieval cellar.

Fig. 5.
Budapest II. Gyorskocsi u. 26.
Remains of a window
in the medieval cellar.



excavations that cellars were also frequently built in the back part of the plots along the city wall. Similar constructions to those unearthed in the suburb are also known from the Castle District, but they were built in the early period of the city after the foundation (middle of the 13th c.) and they were only used until the beginning of the 14th century. No similar examples are known in this quarter of the town from a later period (Vég 2003, 167–190).

The differences observed between the cellars of the suburb and the Castle District also suggest the differences of the buildings built on the surface. They should belong to rather different house types. As for the cellars of the suburb, they are the remnants of a generally spread building type in Central Europe characteristic of the early cities and later on of village houses too. There are a lot of examples, so I would like to present some examples from Hungary. The medieval cellars of Vác, a small town north of Buda along the Danube were systematically surveyed (Miklós 1996; 2000, 183–190). In the Middle Ages Vác was divided into separate German and Hungarian settlements owned by the local bishop. The cellars situated in the interior of the plot form a significant group among the buildings of the town. Unfortunately the systematic examination of the cellars was not followed by archeological excavation of the surface and the standing buildings, so we hardly know anything about the houses belonging to the cellars in Vác.

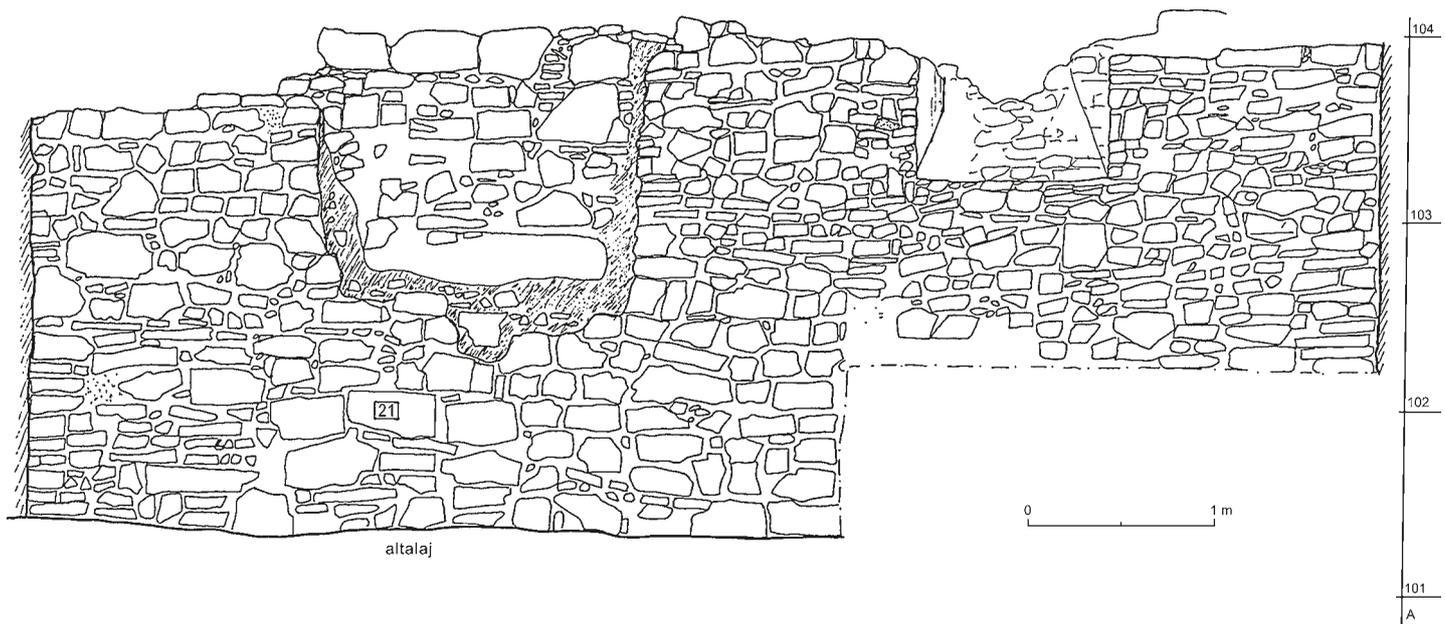


Fig. 6.
Budapest II. Gyorskocsi u. 26.
Southern wall of the medieval
cellar.

A systematic cellar survey – similar to Vác – investigated numerous cellars of the same type in the former free royal town Nagyszombat (Trnava, Slovakia), which were also demonstrated here in the presentation of the Slovak colleges (Stanik - Žuffová 1995, 285–298). From the rural environment the excavation of a deserted village of lesser nobles, called Sarvaly in Transdanubia showed some examples of the same building type from the 14th century (Holl 1982).

The Hungarian examples shown here are results of archaeological excavations being either objects preserved under the surface or observable remains on the former surface. Further questions should be asked: How many floors did the building have above the cellar and which kind of building? How was the stone cellar attached to the building in front of it? What kind of building was attached to the cellar? Those parts of the buildings above the floor level have not been found in any cases, so analogies play a very important role in the reconstruction of the former buildings.

There is a widespread trend among Hungarian experts to compare the one-room cellars found in the interior of the plots to the very similar buildings excavated in Northern German territories. Thus it is supposed that the building above the cellar was also made of stone, it might have had several floors, and as for its function it could have been used for the safe storage of trading goods. (This is the 'Steinwerk', or 'Speicher' well-known for example in Lübeck or Münster.) The wooden-frame building in front of the cellar was the house used for living in. The parallel chosen for the interpretation here has been taken from an area pretty far from Hungary, and some other ones coming from different areas of Germany might lead to different possible conclusions. There are also some interpretations completely different to ours one saying that they may have been multi-storied houses used both for storage and for living in and that above the cellar there may have been rooms that could have been heated. (This is the so called 'Kemenate', for example in Braunschweig)

Fig. 7.
Budapest II. Medve u. 13.
Remains of a medieval
wooden building and its cellar.

It seems that the method of taking analogies from other areas hasn't helped us to solve the problem, therefore let me conclude my lecture by summing up the conclusions of our archaeological excavation. Thus, the examples shown from Buda present us one characteristic house-type of the suburb. The building was placed at right angles to the street on one side of the plot. The front part on the street was built of timber and it was divided into several rooms on the groundfloor. Some of the rooms could have been heated by an oven. At the back part of the building a stone cellar was to be found, which was mainly used for storing wine. The cellar consisted of a single rectangular room. In the presented examples they had a wooden ceiling but in some other cases, for example in Vác, there was stone vaulting. Ventillation was supplied by narrow windows and the entrance opened through a stone framed door from the wooden part of the building. No observation could be made concerning the building above the cellar. There are hints that it may have been built of stone too, but its character, function and the relationship to the other parts of the building have remained unresolved and require further research.



Fig. 8.
Budapest II. Medve u. 13.
Detail of the medieval cellar.



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Středověké kamenné sklepy na předměstí Budy (dnes Vodní město)

Předměstí a jiné menší osady obklopující centrum středověké Budy, Hradní čtvrť (t. j. středověké „castrum“), jsou téměř bílými místy na mapě archeologického bádání. Navzdory tomu, že některé větší objekty, kostely a budovy, už byly prozkoumány, odborníci zatím nejsou schopni zrekonstruovat obraz původní uliční sítě, uspořádání budov a jejich typy. V minulých desetiletích zvýšená stavební činnost na různých místech umožnila rozsáhlý archeologický výzkum, díky kterému byly odkryty četné pozůstatky měšťanských domů. V článku jsou prezentovány některé středověké sklepy objevené nedávnými výzkumy v blízkosti někdejšího farního kostela sv. Petra Mučedníka v severní části předměstí, v dnešních ulicích Gyorskocsi č. 26 a Medve č. 13.

Popisy obrázků

Obr. 1
Buda – Hrad a předměstí, moderní síť ulic.
A. Gyorskocsi č. 26.
1. Farní kostel sv. Petra Mučedníka
2. Karmelitánský klášter Matky
Milosrdenství
3. Klášter sv. Štěpána
4–10. Turecké mešity a lázně
11. Rondel
12–14. Brány

Obr. 2
Budapešť II. Gyorskocsi č. 26.
Plán archeologických výzkumů.

Obr. 3
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Obr. 4
Budapešť II. Gyorskocsi č. 26.
Původní portál středověkého sklepa.

Obr. 5
Budapešť II. Gyorskocsi č. 26.
Pozůstatky okna středověkého sklepa.

Obr. 6
Budapešť II. Gyorskocsi č. 26.
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Obr. 7
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Pozůstatky středověké dřevohliněné stavby se sklepem.

Obr. 8
Budapešť II. Medve č. 13.
Detaily středověkého sklepa.

