The purpose of our series object. story. etc. launched in 2018, is to lay out alternative routes for visitors at the permanent exhibitions of the Hungarian National Museum, to organize scientific, informative and museum education programmes related to these routes, and to record and disseminate their results in order to offer our visitors the opportunity to think together.

After letters: objectified memories of leaving traces, we continue the series in 2019 with looking for bonds from the New Stone Age to the 18th century. Our route opening now invites visitors to join us reflecting on how individuals were organized into communities throughout the millennia. What were the similarities binding the members of smaller-larger communities? What were the differences separating them? What do objects tell us about the diversity of human relationships, and in how many ways can they be connected from a current point of view?
Together Apart
#family #burial

The large cemeteries of late Chalcolithic Baden Culture (3500–3000 B.C.)—often containing several hundred tombs—are characterized by homogeneous burial rituals, with only a few sporadic examples for different customs. Some of the extraordinary examples are the human-figure vessels first unearthed during road constructions in 1958 and in 1963 in Ózd-Center, Northern Hungary, from the cemetery of a community practicing cremation rituals. The dead excavated at this site would be burnt, and their ashes were either scattered on the bottom of the grave or held in simple, ordinarily decorated vessels. A different routine was followed in two examples, though. Cremated remains were stored in quite exquisite urns bearing traits of gender and having faces as well as arms held up. We can only guess for the reasons of these rarely occurring rituals—was it done for a dissimilar social status, a certain religious aspect or possibly origins from another community? Similar burials using human-figure urns are rare, and only a few of them have been revealed at the archaeological sites of Ráckeve, Mhé, Szentsimon, and Sajógömör from all over the vast region of the Baden Culture, which covers areas well beyond the borders. It is a question for future research how individuals buried that way were related to other members of the community or in what sense they were different from them.

Besides, one of the two burial sites at Center is unique, as it, rather unusually, includes three diversely shaped urns with faces. Based on the anthropological examination of the calcined bones, it has been revealed that the biggest urn contains the ashes of a middle-aged woman, whereas the two smaller urns hold the remains of two younger children. Presumably, the grave was a place of final rest for variously aged members of the same family. These bonds within the family were also emphasized by the designer of the urns, for the vessels were created differently, so that each would match the age of the deceased. The mother’s urn is bigger, those of the children are smaller, and gender traits are also exposed by indicating the women’s breasts.

Hungarian National Museum, 2019
Mixed Forms #taste #interaction

At the dawn of the Iron Age, an equestrian people originating from the Eastern steppe arrived at the region of the River Tisza. This exhibition displays three sets of golden finds related to the pre-Scythian period. The finds from the territories currently called Besenyőszög and Pusztáegres were brought to the National Museum in the 1870s, whereas the treasure from Angyalföld arrived in 1925. Unfortunately, the set is incomplete as one golden cup was sold to the British Museum. Certain pieces (for example the diadem and the ornamented discs from Fokoru, the vertically ribbed cups from Angyalföld, or the winged pearls from Pusztáegres) show traces of an oriental style originating from the regions north of the Caucasus. It is worth looking for further similar objects in the neighbouring showcases containing pre-Scythian and Scythian items. Another group of golden objects reflect the taste of the late Bronze age of the local population in the region of the Tisza. Jewellery similar to the bracelets with double spiral endings from Fokoru can be found in showcase Nr. 14. in Room 4. In the same room, knot ornamentation reminiscent of the cups from Angyalföld can also be seen in the showcase Nr. 19. A third influence originating from the North Balkans is reflected in the style of the fibulae from Fokoru.

Celestial Stable #commerce #domestication #horse #burial

This horse skull was found in one of the graves of the Scythian cemetery in Szentes-Vekerzug, where the skeletons of two horses lay along with the metal components of a four-wheeled cart. In the showcase, the harnessed skull of the horse on the right can be viewed; it has been on display in situ ever since the excavation lead by Mihály Párducz in 1950. All in all, archaeologists have found 14 horse graves, located apart from human graves in the former Scythian cemetery. Some believe that the horses buried in harness used to be mounted by warriors lying separately. The examination of the bones proves that the horses were of Asian origin, characterized by small heads with wide foreheads, short backs, and small, slender limb bones. Later, during the Iron Age, larger horses appeared too, which could have been imported from North East Italy. The horse, the skull of which is exhibited, must have been a mare with low withers and medium slender bones, approximately 6-8 years old at the time of her death. Horses were domesticized relatively late, in the Bronze Age, and they became widespread by the Iron Age. The ritual of horse burials appeared along with the Scythians, and it survived with the Celts arriving later as well. Similarly, bits with riveted side components and mouthpieces jointed in the middle, which helped riders to direct the horses, were also first put to use by the Scythians and spread westwards later. Breeding horses was important for the Scythians’ lifestyle, as their living was based on ironworks and horse breeding. They traded objects made of iron, and horses, too, while the latter also allowed them to travel great distances.
In 312 A.D., Emperor Constantine, the Great had a dream on the night before his battle near Rome against Maxentius, the usurper of the throne. In his dream, Constantine received a heavenly command to mark the shields of his soldiers with the sign of God, which would bring him victory. The new sign consisted of a combination of the Greek letters Chi (X) and Rho (P). It was recognized as the initials of Christ’s name (ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ) by the Emperor’s Christian soldiers, whereas the pagans perceived it as a new symbol for victory. After winning the battle, the Christian emperor ordered his army to use the new sign also on military standards called labarum from then on.

In 1991, a treasure of many-folded silver sheets was unearthed during the excavation of a tower in the Late Roman inner fortress of Alsóhetény. These pieces originally belonged to the gilded silver covering of a cavalry helmet and were stripped off the helmet’s iron components. One of the sheets covered the panel protecting the nose, and it bears the embossed initials of Christ at the nasal bone. It might have expressed the Christian views of the soldier just as well as his belonging and loyalty to the army and its general, the emperor, indicated by this symbol of victory.

The new states established on the territory of the former Roman Empire and the neighboring regions relied on various traditions in course of their legitimation process; besides employing their own (Hun or German) customs, they also claimed to be acknowledged by the surrounding empires. An excellent example for that can be observed in the composition of the treasure found in Szilágysomlyó. In 1797, young shepherds found the treasure including medals made of Roman memorial coins and a large gold necklace, which were taken to the imperial treasury and are on display at the Kunsthistorische Museum in Vienna. Not far from the site of the first treasure, a second set of gold items was found in 1889, while planting potatoes. These finds consisted of 21 fibulae, 3 bowls and an allegiance ring. Some of the objects explicitly marked ranks and privileges: next to the allegiance ring employed at German religious rituals there is also a large fibula with an onyx gemstone indicating that the local leader was legally acknowledged, since such jewelry could be worn exclusively by members of the imperial family governing the Roman Empire. This jewel used for fastening a male overgarment, presumably complete with an entire set of ceremonial dress fashioned to the Roman taste, was sent to the Barbarians as a present enforcing the alliance between the German Kingdom and Rome. Today there are only 4 fibulae of that type left; and this one surpasses all the others in both beauty and craftsmanship. Although the large onyx gem is only half as thick as the fibula itself, the jewel still weighs almost 0.5 kilograms. Like many other fibulae in the treasure, it was no longer in a state to be worn by the time it was hidden. The pairs of clasps for female dresses produced in the beginning and middle of the 5th century must also have been cached and preserved for their value.

Among the symbols for power and hierarchical position, the influence of the Huns, the new rulers of the region can also be noticed: there are examples for the new custom of artificial cranial deformation. It appears not only in communities of Eastern origin, who already followed this practice in East- and Middle-Asia, primarily on men born to the most distinguished families. It became widespread among the Germans as well, although they tended to deform only the heads of girls. High foreheads thus achieved were topped by ornamented, pointed caps decorated either by golden mountings or, like in the case of the noble lady buried in Csorna, by a diadem.
Pagan? Christian? #religion #interaction #burial

The cross cast in bronze and decorated with a Christ figure is from Földvárpuszta, in the vicinity of Zimándújfalu close to the towns of Arad and Muszka. The 11th century cemetery was discovered while mining grit and the finds were donated to the Hungarian National Museum.

Conversion to Christianity and church organization brought an immense change to the society of Hungarian people. They were commanded to give up their ancestral faith centering around the belief in double souls, mythical animals and the tree of life, for a religion that acknowledged only one god and communicated in Latin, its foreign-sounding, official language. People who used to sacrifice horses had to start building temples and replacing the fangs on their necklaces with crosses. Many archaeological data, however, testify that wearing a cross does not necessarily prove in itself that its owner followed exclusively the Christian faith. For instance, another 10-11th century necklace—found at another site—decorated with a perforated tooth, an iron pendant, a cowry shell and a cross, indicates a much stronger connection or bond to pagan believes than to Christianity.

Tradition and Assimilation #interaction #ethnicity #burial

Objects preserved from the multinational Roman Empire represent well that duality reflects, on the one hand, how indigenous people insisted on their traditions, and, on the other hand, how they were assimilated and Romanised. Some of the most prominent examples for that process are tombstones erected by local inhabitants in memory of the deceased, following the Roman model. The Celtic Eravisci men, who appear more and more frequently on stone memorials from the second half of the 1st century A.D., and who obviously belonged to the local elite, wore togas according to the Roman fashion, proudly demonstrating that they were already Roman citizens. Their women, however, who did not participate in public life, tend to appear in representations wearing regional dresses: turban veils and winged fibulae. (For example, on the tombstones made for Vindo and Ammuta or for Demiunus and Angelata.)

The tombstones were excavated in the territory of the former Civitas Eraviscorum, a public administration unit organized by the Romans, which preserved the name of the indigenous community for more than two centuries.
Rome and Byzantium #religion #power #interaction #motifs

Byzantine gold cloisonné set consisting of seven semi-circular and two circular plates with Greek inscriptions, and a socket for a gem, all of which presumably belonged to a crown. On the plates, Byzantine Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos, his wife, Zoë, his sister-in-law, Theodora, female dancers and allegorical figures of virtues (Justice and Humility) are represented, whereas the two medals feature half-length portraits of the Apostles Peter and Andrew.

The set expresses one of the dominant political programs of the Christian Roman (Byzantine) Empire: the ideals of the always victorious emperor and, those of the Pax Romana, respectively, adapted to the situation in the mid-11th century. Female dancers have been primarily part of the iconographic cycle of the imperial ceremonies of victory since the Antiquity, but contemporaneous sources often quoted analogies form the Old Testament as well: the dance of Israel’s daughters after crossing the Red Sea (Exo 15:20) or succeeding David’s victory over Goliath (1Sam 18:6).

The portraits of the two Apostolic brothers, which might have been taken from another, larger set and added to the plates, could also convey a political message at that time. The two characters refer to the two ecclesiastical centres: Peter’s Rome as well as to the new Rome, i.e. Constantinople, since the first episcopacy was at that time considered to have been established by Andrew the Apostle in Byzantion, the predecessor of the city. It was principally the Roman (Byzantine) emperor, who felt himself responsible for maintaining the balance between the two ecclesiastical centres; especially Constantine IX, who could not prevent the schism in 1054.

Preparing the crown and delivering it to Hungary was probably a process in several steps, so it can be assumed that the crown had originally been created for a ceremonial victory march or for a princess, and it was sent abroad afterwards. Based on the political circumstances of the age, it is also conceivable that the crown had been at the court of the Kievan Rus (which offered asylum for King Andrew I before his coronation ceremony), or at the court of the German Emperor Henry, before it was transported to Hungary. The crown must have been cached in Nyitraivánka during one of the fratricidal wars within the Árpád dynasty in the 11th century, in course of a battle around the castle in Nyitra. The finds were revealed only centuries later, in 1860, in Nyitraivánka (today: Slovakia).

In the Greek inscription of the crown there are several spelling mistakes and examples for the idiosyncratic use of accents due to the local pronunciation, which implies that its preparation was not duly monitored, and it might have been produced with the cooperation of foreign goldsmiths possibly from the Caucasus.

Dynastic Marriages #family #interaction

The queens of Hungary would always come from far-away lands like Aragon, France, Bavaria, Poland, South Italy or the Kiev Rus. Usually, marriages were decided upon in early childhood, and the future wife would grow up at the court of her betrothed until the wedding.

Political interests mattered more than anything else, including feelings. We do not know about sentiments and bonds between spouses, since we have no sources regarding the emotional life of the Árpád period. It was conspicuous, however, if either partner—for example Ladislaus IV (the Cuman)—committed adultery. Wives brought their households along, the members of which assimilated in course of the decades. The queen’s most important task was to maintain the continuity of the dynasty. Boys counted as heirs to the crown, whereas girls—as future brides—provided the basis for networking in foreign policy. In case of numerous heirs, the rivalry among them was fierce, and family bonds did not weigh much when it came to seizing the power. The male line of the Árpád dynasty ended on 14 January 1301 with the death of Andrew III, the last golden branch of the family tree. The last member of female line was his daughter, Elizabeth, who died in a monastery of the Dominican Order in 1336 or 1338.
Together Apart #religion #profession

The forerunners of monastic orders are communities strictly following the teaching and the orders of Jesus Christ. In the last centuries of the Roman Empire, educated and charismatic leaders (e. g. Johannes Cassianus) put themselves at the head of groups answering the call of God and seeking fulfillment in the experience of faith outside the social system. At the decline of the Empire’s western part, the monastic way of life started to spread. The regulation written by St. Benedict for the communities organized by him (Regula Monasteriorum) sums up the principles of balance between spiritual improvement and physical work as prescribed by him as well as by his predecessors.

In the new homeland of Hungarians, the first missionary monks might have appeared as soon as the years right after the conquest of the Carpathian Basin. Grand Prince Taksony requested missionaries from Rome, but others may have arrived from Byzantium as well. Both Greek and Latin monasteries were established during the first century of the Hungarian Kingdom. Following the Benedictine monks, further newly organized medieval orders started to appear in Hungary, too. The most important ones were the Cistercians, the Premonstratensians, the Augustinians, the Order of Friars Minor and the Dominican Order, but some Orders of Knighthood were also present. The Order of Saint Paul the First Hermit was established in Hungary in the 13th century, and it flourished through the Ottoman period up till the age of the Reformation. In the showcase, objects related to monastery life can be seen, including archaeological finds, a glass church window, fittings from ceremonial books and a pair of candle snuffers, reminiscent of evening prayers.

Passion Led on Halter #mythicalcreatures #privilege #thefew #horse

Late medieval royal courts wallowed in colourful chivalry ceremonies, pervaded by the mysterious and magic world of fiction about heroic and romantic themes complete with supernatural creatures, sometimes recalled by the participants of the royal balls themselves. On the bone cover of parade saddles, such creatures like the savage and the unicorn are also represented in the company of St. George, the Dragon-slayer and several other human and animal figures. On one of these, the so-called Jankovich-saddle, a dragon can be seen, which is the emblem of the Dragon Order established in 1408 by King Sigismund (1387-1437), later emperor (1432-37). Presumably, he had the saddle made as a present, possibly for the infamous Dracula, whose name derives from the same Order, since the saddle was allegedly stored at the beginning of the 19th century in Bucharest. The style of the saddle is called international gothic, due to the numerous centres and consequently the international character of courtly culture. One of the important centres was Sigismund’s court, which travelled all over Europe. The connections to Central-Europe are reflected in the frequent inscriptions on the saddles written in Latin or in the South-German dialects. (On the Jankovich-saddle: da Pacem domine / give peace, Lord; on the Rhédey-saddle: Lach lieb lach / laugh, beloved, do love.) The use of the highly decorated bone saddles is still much debated. Conceivably, they could be best appreciated on the backs of horses led on halter in parades, like wedding marches. The character of the representations may also suggest this: besides the magical creatures, many examples for various good and bad romantic and marital relationships appear, suggesting moral purposes.
As a result of the conquests of the Ottoman Empire, the medieval world and its social hierarchy disintegrated, and the new rule reinforced new networks and bonds. The shift is also indicated by the change in official language: Latin was replaced by the Ottoman Turkish writing, which used Arabic letters, and was heavily influenced by Arab and Persian cultures. Social strata were reorganized; besides the presence of Turkish state and army officers, merchants, craftsmen from the Balkans also settled down, especially in cities. The presence and the memories of Muslim communities have been preserved in the masterpieces of applied arts. This 17th century leather document case is decorated with a Turkish inscription embroidered in silver and ornate motifs of rosettes / flowers; it could be fastened with a string. The Ottoman Turks had originally learnt the skills of preparing and processing hides from Arab and Persian craftsmen, and later they spread the know-how over Central and South-East Europe in the succeeding centuries. City quarters called Tabán up to this day bear witness to the introduction of the hide processing skills. The items produced by applied arts were highly popular among the Hungarians of the Ottoman period as well. Especially members of the aristocracy were fond of objects—harnesses, saddles, richly decorated gowns—of Turkish origin or designed in the Turkish style, thus these pieces of applied art also represent relationships between local and newly settled inhabitants.

The tombstones in Muslim cemeteries are the memories of a religious community acutely distinct from Christianity. The Turkish cemetery culture shows certain constant traits of the burial rituals defined by Islam as well as grave markers changing with time. In the Ottoman period, the typical tombstone surmounted by a carved turban developed presumably from anthropomorphic grave markers without a significant change of form. Its early examples appeared in period of the ruling Timurid dynasty (1370-1501), and its shape is reminiscent of the dervishes in Mevlevi. According to the somewhat disputed opinions of certain Turkish scholars, turban-shaped grave markers were first produced under Indian influence. Benedek Kuripesics, the Styrian-born ambassador to Istanbul wrote on the subject in 1530: “Turkish people parading at the court ceremony wear different turbans matching their ranks and positions.” The head covers also indicated the origin of military people and of civilians: a scribe, a goldsmith, or a member of another guild would each twist his turban around his serpus (high pointed cap) in a different way. The tombstones (from Buda?) exhibited duly represent such social connections. Here the fragments from grave markers of people of lower social statuses can be seen.

At the end of the 16th century, a new trend appeared in Hungary: the so-called noble embroidery, which is intensely bound up both with Western decorative arts and with oriental culture. In the courts of the Hungarian aristocracy, elegant, tender curves of the Italian Renaissance and the symmetrical arrangements of patterns were mixed with oriental motifs imported by the Turks, merged to a delightful unity as the result of the arduous work of industrious girls, women, and professional embroiderers. Young ladies from high-ranking families were often raised under the surveillance of prestigious ladies of the nobility, who also taught the art of embroidery to these “courtly girls”. Their work was frequently assisted by Turkish embroidering women or ladies of the Turkish aristocracy. They sewed oriental flowers, carnations, and roses on pieces of fine linen or silk with colourful silk or shining metal threads. In these workshops, the girls produced not just their own entire trousseaus, but also clothing items for themselves and for their relatives, moreover, other items for use in church or at home. According to Hungarian tradition, the most beautiful piece of noble embroidery belonged to the wardrobe of Catherine of Brandenburg. Its expensive material and high-quality embroidery truly make it suitable for a grand princess, however, the ownership is not proven. The set consisting of a shirt and a skirt was originally purchased by the Museum of Applied Arts and later transferred to the Hungarian National Museum. Looking around in the room, one can see several further examples for noble embroidery: chasubles, mitres, chalice covers, tablecloths and saddles.
Anabaptists, also called Hutterites, one of the radical Protestant groups rejecting the idea of baptizing infants still unable to confess their faith, started to arrive at the territory of the Hungarian Kingdom from the mid-16th century. Their movement began in Zürich and spread fast in the Southern German regions, Austria, North-Italy, the Netherlands, and from the 1520s also in Moravia. Their first communities of goods were established there. Hutterite brethren lived in courts enclosed by stone walls (Hausoben), living and working together, being skilled in about 40 crafts. They had to be the masters of agriculture, house building, education, and medical therapies for sustaining their own settlements, too. Aristocrats—both Protestant and Catholic ones—preferred to employ them or buy the luxury products of these industrious, puritan craftsmen. Their pewter-glazed ceramics, stoves and knives with mother-of-pearl ornaments were famous all over the country. Their religious life was based on reading the Bible in German. They raised their children together, teaching them reading and writing in school, and then training them in various trades. Children were baptized at the age of 12 or 13. The highly developed written culture of the Hutterites is testified by their codices. They started to settle down in large numbers after the Battle of White Mountain in 1621. Most of them found new homes in the North-western parts of the Hungarian Kingdom, where they had already had some courts. Gábor Bethlen also invited them to Alvinc, a town in the Principality of Transylvania. In 1646, another Anabaptist settlement was established in Sárospatak, at the order of George Rákóczi I. Contemporary Hungarian sources usually called these people and the goods their sold new Christian. Their future Hungarian name, habán—first used for mocking—appeared at the end of the 17th century.

Tiled stoves played an important role in the 17th century castles, in the inner spaces of princes’ and aristocrats’ palaces, and in mansions as well, as they both heated and decorated the living space. Hutterites manufactured various types of tiles for stoves: without glaze, with monochrome lead glaze, with multicoloured pewter glaze, with three-dimensional, relief-like motifs, and with their combination. The tiled stove from Liptóndásd, now retained in the Hungarian National Museum, used to stand in the Baán family’s castle in Liptóndásd (Trstené, today: Slovakia) until 1917. It was bought by the museum in Budapest for 4200 pengős from Árpád Baán, a former judge of the county court. The stove could be stoked from the outside, from another room. The tiles are decorated with oriental floral motifs, which were popular in the late Renaissance applied arts, in noble embroideries as well. The edges of the motifs mounting from the blue base are highlighted by white painting. The legs and the tiles of the rim only have painted decoration. The upper section is closed by a frieze. Above the hanging clusters of grapes, mermaids can be seen with double tails. Why? The answer is to be found in contemporaneous books: song collections and other printed documents.

In the Calendar of Kolozsvár (1592), January, the month of the Blessed Virgin Mary is illustrated with a double-tailed mermaid pouring water: “It is good to build a house, to move into a house and to get married in the month of Aquarius.” Besides, the initial letter “J” of the Cantio Matrimonial, that is the Wedding Song in a 17th century song collection is shaped like a one-tailed mermaid: “Joyful future, I’ve been thinking of you...” Conceivably, the ornate tiled stove was prepared for a young couple, possibly on the occasion of their wedding or their moving into their new home.
Work in the Depth: Miners

Even in medieval Europe, mining was one of those trades that required appropriately trained professionals and specific equipment. Yet these dangerous plants brought essential raw materials to the surface. Among them, non-ferrous and precious metals had an exceptional significance since the existence of empires literally relied on them, due to the currency system based on precious metals.

The rich non-ferrous mines of the Hungarian Kingdom could be utilized efficiently since the beginning of the 14th century. Mining sites were located along the River Garam and in the Eastern parts of the Carpathian Mountains, in Transylvania. “Engineers” and miners skilled in mining, processing, refining, and alloying metals, and in minting coins were mostly German-speaking bourgeois citizens, either born locally or coming from other parts of Europe. In the mining regions of the Czech and German Ore Mountains and of the Carpathian Mountains, many objects of art represent the life of miners: its beauties and difficulties as well. Some of these are ornaments of mining societies—specific corporations of medieval origin, religious or secular brotherhoods—, or types of artefacts unique to this region. The former group includes the ornaments (silver hammer and mining wedge) carried around during meetings, processions and ceremonies, accessories of ceremonial mining activities, and the Úrvölgy (Herrngrund, Špania Dol, Slovakia), using rocks with metal or mineral content.

Closed Up Together: Fortress Soldiers

For a century and half, Hungary was one of the most important buffer zones between the two greatest powers of the Christian and the Islam cultures. On the Christian side of the fortress system in progress, Hungarian soldiers served along with their German trained fellows as well as with representatives of other nationalities. “Oh, soldiers what can be on this Earth more awesome than the fortresses?,” asked the Hungarian poet Bálint Balassi in his enthusiastic and idealistic poem about serving at a fortress on the border. Archaeology gives a less distorted picture about the material culture of diverse community of and various roots, which consumed not only regional products but purchased the artefacts of more distant lands, too. Predecessors of future ethnographic regions can be traced in the pottery ornaments. The communication between soldiers both in wartime and in peace resulted in the import of certain objects from the neighboring cultures. Thus weapons, pipes, clothing items and certain components of harness started to resemble the matching elements of the enemy, especially among Hungarian soldiers. In contrast, other items of clothing like head covers or the vessels belonging to different cuisines seem sharply distinct, referring to separate identities. Among the German soldiers, ethnic differences can be traced in certain clothing items and in the larger number of objects from the West (bowls, glasses, pipes).
Constructing the Past #family #power #collecting #privilege

Each human society knows well the various means of representations as one of the ways to express the group identity of individuals or of smaller-larger communities. These can be literary works relying on written or oral tradition testifying the real or presumed fact of belonging together, or documents, objects, and relics articulating the merits and the past of the person or of the group as well. Since the late Middle Ages, a new demand for creating and collecting artefacts can also be observed in the European culture. The claim to record events, to produce real or presumed portraits of mythical ancestors, and to collect objects of predecessors and heroes gradually led to the approach that conceived and appreciated the time preserved in the artefacts and the aesthetic values of the objects themselves. At the end of the 16th century, sophisticated forms of patronage and collections were present all over Europe: in the circles of erudite humanists, wealthy, widely travelled citizens, aristocrats, princes, rulers, emperors, and highs priests as well. Some of the most significant manifestations among these collections were the treasury in the castle of Fraknó and the library and painting gallery in Kismarton, both possessed by Pál Esterházy (1635−1713), the Palatine of Hungary. Practically these constitute the only aristocratic treasury that has survived the troubled centuries of Hungarian history more or less unharmed. Its objects of art prove how important and modern ways of patronage and status symbols existed within the aristocracy of Hungary split into three parts.

Symbols and Statues #religion #ethnicity #motifs #forms

In the multinational Transylvanian society, there lived a large number of German-speaking people, called Saxons in the local dialect. In Burzenland, southern Transylvania, they formed relatively closed communities, whereas in other places, for instance in Cluj Napoca, they were in majority. During the Reformation—primarily due to Johann Honter (Honterus), who attended the university of Wittenberg—they all joined the German, Lutheran trend of Protestantism. In the multi-ethnic and very receptive Transylvanian society, several other trends of Reformation also found communities open to their new ideas, moreover, ready to further refine them. While in the north, more and more radical trends spread across ethnic boundaries, the Saxons of Burzenland remained true to Lutheran Protestantism.

In the late medieval period, the regional differences in European clothing were articulated more and more visibly. Each region, and within the regions, the various social and ethnic groups, all produced their own typical attire, which distinguished them from “others” living around them. At the same time, the highest strata of society: the royal and princely courts seemed to adjust to certain international trends. In the Saxon female fashion, a very characteristic type of jewellery appears at the end of the 16th century. It is a large, disk-shaped breastpin, worn by aristocratic women either on a necklace and / or pinned to their shirt. The form derives from the fasteners on medieval clerical mantles. The items that survived from the 16-17th century were mostly made of gilded silver and decorated with turquoise and enamel.

Under the—often violent—Habsburg pressure for recatholization, these Saxon brooches also became the expression of communal identity. From the 18th century on, similar brooches can be more and more frequently observed in peasant clothing in the neighbourhoods of the Saxon towns, too. Their function as ethnic markers simultaneously decreased: Hungarian-speaking Csángos of South Transylvania as well as Romanian women in certain villages both preserved these “Saxon brooches”, up until folk costumes started to be replaced by mass products at the beginning of the 20th century.
Human-figure urns, 3500-3000 BC | Hargita Oravecz
Pre-Scythian golden finds, 8th century BC | András Jáky
Reconstruction of a horse head and riding equipment, 2002 | Annamária Bárány
Gilded silver covering of a Roman cavalry helmet, with Christ’s initials, around 314 | Zsolt Mráv
Fibula with an onyx gemstone, last third of the 4th century | Zsuzsanna Hajnal
Face reconstruction of the distorted skull of a young adult woman buried near Keszhely-Fenékpuszta in the 5th century, made by Gyula Skultéty, Hungarian Natural History Museum, Department of Anthropology, Photo by Ágnes Kustár, 2019 | Zsuzsanna Hajnal
Cross with a Christ-figure, 10th century | Rita Soós
Tombstone of Vindo and Ammuta, 21st century | Melinda Torbágyi
Monomachos crown, 11st century | Etele Kiss
Family tree of the Árpád dynasty, a tree diagram of the first Hungarian kings made for the permanent exhibition, 1996 | László Szende
Door frame from the Monastery of the Pauline Fathers in Klastrompuszta, 15th century | Zsuzsa Pető
Parade saddles, 15th century | Etele Kiss
Leather document case and Ottoman tombstone surmounted by a carved turban, 17. century | Zsuzsa Pető
Vestments with "noble embroidery", 17th century | Csilla Kollár
Objects made by the Habans, 17th century | Anna Ridovics
Tiled stove from Liptónádasd (today: Trstené), 17th century | Anna Ridovics
Objects related to the miners, 17th century | Erika Kiss
Kitchen equipment and tableware from the castle of Bajcsa, collection of the György Thúny Museum, Nagykánya, 17th century | Zsuzsa Pető
Pieces from the treasury of the Esterházy family from the castle of Fraknó (today: Forchtenstein) and the Ancestors’ Gallery, 17th century | Erika Kiss
Brooches, 17th century | Erika Kiss
MAP for the itinerary “Bonds” offering a way through the permanent exhibition at the Hungarian National Museum.