

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MARKET TOWN AND ITS MARKET PLACES IN THE HUNGARIAN GREAT PLAIN. KECSKEMÉT, A CASE STUDY

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Abstract. This paper interprets and discusses specific aspects of urban development, as urban function, role and hierarchy of the changing network of settlements in relation to Kecskemét, a typical market town in the Great Plain Region in Hungary. The discussion is aimed to provide a broad perspective through the centuries to understand the key elements in the town's development. Beside the general aspects of urbanization, the development of the market places will be reviewed, in the context of the transforming townscape in the late medieval-early modern period.¹

Keywords: Kecskemét, medieval, urbanization, market town, townscape, market.

INTRODUCTION

Whatever aspect of urbanization is studied, naturally, written documents constitute the most obvious source type to investigate the development and the characteristics of this settlement form. The composition of written evidences allows inferring the main tendencies of the economic as well as legal development, and through this, it is possible to draw conclusions on the hierarchy and the basic urban functions of settlements. However, there are various features, which, due to the special composition and inadequate nature of written evidences cannot be answered purely based on those sources, especially the physical character of the market towns, the townscape. The landscape of towns is part of their social and cultural identity, thus an important palimpsest, whose various layers can be represented.² Among the various source-types, historic maps are one of the most important records, which can be used for studying the development of settlements.

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² William George Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1955).

One essential method to reveal the emergence and development of urban settlements in historic research is to study and analyze town plans, which offer various morphologic evidences in this context. The town plan may transmit crucial information particularly in periods when documentary record is sparse, thus town plan analysis may offer possibilities to demonstrate distinct growth phases.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN HUNGARY

Concerning the general features of the urban development in Hungary, it has to be stressed that the heritage of the Roman Empire, which deeply influenced urbanization in other parts of Europe, only partially affected the medieval settlement network of the Carpathian Basin. Although the classic urban settlements were present in the Roman *provinciae Pannonia* and *Dacia*, as regards to the closer context of the present study, the Great Plain of Hungary and the Danube-Tisza Interfluvium Region, first, it has to be emphasized, that this part of the Carpathian Basin has never been occupied by the Roman empire, thus no Roman settlement tradition, can be found here. This means that not only at the very site of Kecskemét, but in the whole region no urban tradition existed before the late medieval period, consequently, there were no pre-medieval urban features or elements that influenced the setting and the morphology of the later settlements.

It may seem to be unimportant, but the geographical-geological circumstances had significant affects on urbanization and market town development. The natural character of pre-modern Interfluvium Region was significantly different from what we see today in two main aspects: on the one hand the territory was provided with abundant water resources, and on the other hand numerous gallery forests diversified the landscape. Apparently, the local natural endowments offered relatively limited range of building materials, which basically influenced architectural methods and traditions. Practically this means that less durable materials as daubed clay and brick were the fundamental parts of the built environment, while stone and wood-built structures were rarely used, in most cases only for church building even in the nineteenth century. Consequently, most of the architectural legacy of the market towns disappeared during the centuries, and nowadays few pre-modern features are present in the townscape.

The first wave of urban settlements appear in the documentary sources from the late twelfth- thirteenth century in Hungary, much later than in many other parts of Europe. Even by this period only a handful of settlements could be called a 'civitas' in the Western sense of the world; though almost all had certain privileges and various forms of autonomy, in fact only some of them achieved full urban liberties.

The changing socio-economic structures of the thirteenth century, the development of the inner trade and the market network of the country brought a major rearrangement of the countryside, which process was fundamentally

influenced and accelerated by the dramatic effects the Mongol Invasion in 1241–1242. Concerning urbanization, there is a well definable conscious policy of strengthening urban communities by granting privileges during the reign of Béla IV and Stephen V. By the fifteenth century, around thirty to forty major chartered towns can be counted in the territory of the Kingdom, among them the most prestigious ‘free royal towns’ (*liberae civitates regiae*)³, under the jurisdiction of the *magister tavernicorum*, and the ‘free mining towns’, governed by the royal chamber.⁴

Additional major feature of the thirteenth-fourteenth century complex transformation was the emergence of a new urban settlement form beside the *civitates*, called ‘*oppidum*’ (‘market town’, ‘*mezőváros*’) by the sources.⁵ These settlements represent a rather diverse group of sites. The common feature about them is that they were under seigniorial jurisdiction, and all enjoyed limited autonomy, and privileges. The most valuable rights were the freedom to appoint the town magistrates as well as the parish priest, the freedom to hold weekly market as well as annual fairs and right of custom free trading. The number of settlements referred to as *oppidum* most dynamically increased between 1390 and 1490, especially in the second half of the fifteenth century (Table 1).

Table 1

Increase of the *oppida*’ number as reflected by the first documentary references⁶

| Date | Number of new <i>oppida</i> references | Total number of <i>oppida</i> |
|-------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Before 1390 | 50 | 50 |
| 1390–1441 | 249 | 299 |
| 1441–1490 | 331 | 630 |
| 1490–1526 | 79 | 709 |

³ Such as Buda (Ofen), Bratislava (Pozsony/Pressburg), Trnava (Nagyszombat/Tyrnau), Sopron (Ödenburg), Košice (Kassa/Kaschau), Bardejov (Bártfa/Bartfeld), Prešov (Eperjes/Preschau), and Pest.

⁴ The most important mining towns were: Zlatna (Zalatna/Goldenmarkt), Baia Sprie (Felsőbánya/Mittelstadt), Kremnica (Körmöcbánya/Kremnitz), Banská Štiavnica (Selmechánya/Schemnitz), Banská Bystrica (Besztercebánya/Neusohl), Pukanec (Bakabánya/Pukantz), L’ubietová (Libetbánya/Libethen), Nová Baňa (Újbánya/Königsberg), Banská Belá (Bélabánya/Düllen), Gelnics (Gölnicbánya/Gölnitz), Smolnicka Huta (Szomolnokbánya/Schmölnitze Hütte), Rudabánya, Jasov (Jászó/Jassau), Telkibánya, Rožňava (Rozsnyóbánya/Rosenau) and Spišská Nová Ves (Igló/Zipser Neudorf).

⁵ This settlement type is also known from other European countries. See Vera Bácskai, ‘Small Towns in Eastern Central Europe’, in Peter Clark (ed.), *Small Towns in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 77-89.

⁶ Based on the data by István Petrovics. See István Petrovics, ‘A középkori mezővárosi gazdálkodás’ [Economic Production of Medieval Market Towns], in József Laszlovszky and Péter Szabó (eds), *Gazdaság és gazdálkodás a középkori Magyarországon* [Economy and Economic Production in Medieval Hungary] (Budapest: Martin Opitz Kiadó, 2008), 450.

The data imply that the general countrywide pattern of market towns was balanced. Still, the distribution of *oppida* in contrast with the chartered towns shows a remarkably different picture. In fact, no chartered towns can be found south of the line of Zagreb (Zágráb) – Székesfehérvár (Alba Regia / Stuhlweissenburg) – Buda (Ofen) – Pest – Košice (Kassa / Kaschau) – Baia Mare (Nagybánya / Neustadt) – Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár / Clausenburg) – Sibiu (Nagyszeben / Hermannstadt), in the Great Plain region, except for Szeged, which settlement got its royal privileges relatively late, in 1498.

It was András Kubinyi, who, influenced by the central-place theory of Walter Christaller and the works of Jenő Major⁷, György Székely⁸, Vera Bácskai⁹ and Erik Fügedi¹⁰ convincingly proved that the overwhelming majority of the market towns appeared and developed in regions, where privileged royal cities were not present, consequently, market towns were essentially not competitors of these, but in fact their network played real urban functions in areas where those privileged settlements were not present. Based on this theory, he formulated a new, functional definition of urban settlements, and argued that there is a hierarchic spatial order in the late medieval-early modern settlement network of the Hungarian Kingdom. Moreover, stressing that the growth of the *oppida* is a primary result of the expansion in the market production, he questioned the passivity of export in the late fifteenth – early sixteenth century, and reasoned that market towns not only completed the overall network of settlements of pre-modern Hungary, but contributed greatly to the foreign trade, which was not at all passive, but balanced due to the large scale export of agricultural products (mainly living animals such as oxen) originating from the market towns themselves.¹¹

⁷ Jenő Major, 'A magyar városhálózatról' [About the Pattern of Towns in Hungary], *Településtudományi Közlemények*, 16 (1964): 32-65.

⁸ György Székely, 'Vidéki termelőágak és az árukereskedelem a XV–XVI. században' [Rural Farming and the Commerce of Goods], *Agrártörténeti Szemle*, 3 (1961): 309-322.

⁹ Vera Bácskai, *Magyar mezővárosok a XV. században* [Hungarian Market Towns in the Fifteenth Century] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1965).

¹⁰ Erik Fügedi, 'Die Ausbreitung des städtischen Lebensform-Ungarns oppida im 14. Jahrhundert', in Wilhelm Rausch (ed.), *Stadt und Stadtherr im 14. Jahrhundert* /Beiträge zur Geschichte der Städte Mitteleuropas II./ (Linz/Dunau: Österr. Arbeitskreis für Stadtgeschichtsforschung, 1972), 168-172.

¹¹ He built up a whole set of criteria to select and define those market towns, which had real central-urban functions in the larger group of settlements mentioned as *oppida*. He investigated ten standard characteristics, namely: 1. the presence of seigniorial residence – the nature of its feudal residence; 2. the presence/role of judicial center or *loca credibilia*; 3. the presence/role of financial administration center; 4. the presence/role of ecclesiastical administration; 5. the presence of religious orders, especially mendicant houses; 6. the number of students attending foreign universities between 1440–1514; 7. the number or references of guilds; 8. the presence of a route-foci -how many other central places can be reached from the settlement without reaching other central sites; 9. market rights, the markets and fairs held; 10. the legal character of the settlement.

He tested this method on the south-western part of the country (Somogy, Vas, Zala and Veszprém counties), then he turned towards the north-western corner of the country (Sopron, Moson and Győr counties), then Abaúj, Borsod, Heves and Torna counties, which was followed by the investigation of the Great Plain region, including twenty counties). His system was applied by further investigations, such as Borsod county (see: Péter Tóth, 'Szempontok a borsodi mezővárosok

According to his results, there were around five hundred settlements with urban functions in the territory of the Hungarian Kingdom around the turn of the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries, which can be grouped into seven major hierarchic categories, from the most developed urban centers to small local market sites. Among these settlements around two hundred sites can be defined as urban site, in which approximately 8-10% of overall population of the kingdom lived. Among them, thirty chartered royal *civitatiss*, thirty royal *oppida* and one hundred and forty additional market towns can be counted.¹²



Fig. 1. Urban settlements in the Great Plain Region in the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries (after Bácskai, Magyar mezővárosok).

középkori és korajúrkori történetének a vizsgálatához' [Aspects for Studying the Markets Towns of Borsod in the Medieval – Early Modern Period], *Studia Miskolcinsia*, 1(1994): 113-124, and Gömör, Kishont counties by Örs Kollmann. See: Örs László Kollmann, *Gömör és Kishont vármegyék központi helyei a középkorban* [The Central Places of Gömör and Kishont Counties in the Medieval Period]. PhD Dissertation, Manuscript (Debrecen, 2004), (http://phd.okm.gov.hu/disszertaciok/ertekezések/2004/de_2139.pdf), accessed on 29 November, 2005). His main contributions on the topic: András Kubinyi, 'A középkori magyarországi városhálózat hierarchikus térbeli rendjének kérdéséhez' [About the Hierarchical Structure of the Hungarian Towns in the Middle Ages], *Településtudományi Közlemények*, 23 (1971): 58-78; András Kubinyi, 'A magyarországi városhálózat XIV–XV. századi fejlődésének néhány kérdése' [Remarks on the Medieval Urbanization Trends in Hungary], *Tanulmányok Budapest Múltjából* 19 (1972): 39-56; András Kubinyi, *Városfejlődés és vásárhálózat a középkori Alföldön és az Alföld szélén* [Urbanization and the Network of Markets in the Great Plain Region in the Medieval Period] /Dél-alföldi Évszázadok 14./ (Szeged: Csongrád Megyei Levéltár, 2000).

¹² Without the territory of Slavonia and Transylvania. Kubinyi, *Városfejlődés*; Petrovics, *A középkori mezővárosi gazdálkodás*, 450.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE GREAT PLAIN REGION. THE PLACE OF KECSKEMÉT IN THE REGIONAL SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY

Focusing more closely on the context of study area, according to Professor Kubinyi's system, there were three major, primary urban centres in the Great Plain Region, namely Pest, Szeged, and Oradea (Várad) around the turn of the fifteenth-sixteenth century. The second group in hierarchy is composed of the Episcopal site of Eger, and another significant administrative centre, Timișoara (Temesvár / Temeswar). Further on, the third hierarchical category includes additional important ecclesiastical and administrative cores as Bács, Kalocsa and Csanád, and beside them Debrecen, Gyöngyös and Gyula, which are described as smaller towns and significant market towns with remarkable urban functions. Kecskemét, accompanied by Cegléd, Hatvan, Heves, Pásztó, Túr and (Nyír) Bátor can be grouped to the following, fourth hierarchical subgroup, defined by medium urban functions. The fifth cluster of settlements, with limited urban functions are Szolnok, Halas, Ráckeve, Szentés, Bátmonostor, Jászberény, while Csongrád, Kőrös, Szer, Pótharasz, Vacs were categorized into the sixth subgroup, identified as average market towns/villages resembling market towns. At last, the lowest, seventh stratum consists of unimportant *oppida* and villages with central functions, such as Jakabszállás, or Fajsz.¹³ Concerning the place of Kecskemét, the town might be ranged among the thirty-five most dominant settlements of the Great Plain Region in the late medieval period.

As regards to closer context of the present study, the Danube-Tisza Interfluvium Region, the two main urban cores were undoubtedly the *civitas* of Pest and Szeged (royal privilege from 1498) throughout the medieval and early modern period, and additional significant line of market towns emerged typically at the borderline of the North Middle Mountains and the Great Plain, such as Gyöngyös, Hatvan or Pásztó.¹⁴ In case of these sites, the geographical endowments apparently played a major role as the stimulator of development, as these settlements are located in the contact zones of the hilly-mountainous and the plain regions.

The central part of the Great Plain Region has basically different geographical characteristics. This large, flat area offered basically similar natural endowments in the pre-modern period, namely varying deposits of sand and loess, densely intermitted by smaller lakes, rivulets and broad marshy areas. Here the location of sites was defined by nature for a long time, especially the extension of

¹³ Kubinyi, *Városfejlődés*, 59-101.

¹⁴ However, these towns represented a well definable group concerning urban development as all settlements lied at the crossing points of west-east oriented trading roads leading from Vienna through Buda in the direction of Transylvania and north-south oriented routes from the Felvidék Region towards the western territories.

water covered areas; the hydrological endowments were determinant factors.¹⁵ Thus, here presumably those settlements had better chances for the development which emerged along the permanently (all year) manageable route ways, or junctions of roads. Parallel, minor changes in the ground water level (i.e. changing climate!) probably caused instant changes in the accessible territories, thus alterations in the structure or hierarchy of settlements.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF KECSKEMÉT

Having a closer look at the study area in the Interfluve Region, halfway between the two dominant urban cores of Szeged and Buda, two noteworthy market towns developed with similar, according to Kubinyi's categories upper level urban functions, namely Kecskemét and Cegléd. Their closest neighbours were Kőrös, Szolnok, Csongrád, Félegyháza, and Halas defined by minor scale urban functions.¹⁶

The urban development of the area was strongly influenced by the presence of major trading routes and crossroads, such as the east-west and north-south oriented route leading from the main ferry points of the Middle-Tisza Region at Szolnok, Varsány and Csongrád, or towards the customs as well as ferry stations at Vác, Pest, Keve. The major northeast-southwest roads oriented from the direction of Hatvan, Gyöngyös, (Jász) Berény towards the major crossing points at Földvár and Tolna on the Danube, and also in the direction of Halas, Kalocsa or Szeged.

In my opinion the similar early development potentials of the settlements in the study region is reflected in the fact that the main trading road between Pest and Szeged was not 'fixed' for a long time. In fact there were (at least) two parallel alternatives, one leading on the right shore of the Tisza River reaching Szer, Csongrád, Alpár, Kőrös, and Cegléd, and another one through the Homokhát Region, reaching Sáregyháza, Félegyháza and Kecskemét, which became more dominant from the fifteenth century.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ferenc Kovács, 'Analysis of the 200-year Environmental Changes of a Strictly Protected Area in the Kiskunság National Park, Hungary', in Leoš Jeleček et al (eds.), *Dealing with Diversity, Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on European Society for Environmental History* (Prague: Charles University of Prague), 263-268.

¹⁶ The distance between Kecskemét and Cegléd is around 33 km, which makes 2 rastas, while Kőrös is approximately halfway between them, which is exactly the average distance of local markets in the late medieval period. Kubinyi, *Városfejlődés*, 35-36.

¹⁷ In my opinion the natural endowments (i.e. changes in the groundwater level) had probably serious influence on this 'parallel' route-structure. This aspect will be further analyzed in the chapter about the road system of the area. About the road structure in general: András Pálóczi-Horváth, 'A kun betelepülés Kiskunfélegyháza környékén és a város korai története' [The Cuman Settlement and the Early History of Kiskunfélegyháza], in Ilona Kőrösi (ed.), *Múzeumi Kutatások Bács-Kiskun Megyében 1995–1996* [Researches in Museums in Bács-Kiskun County 1995–1996] (Kecskemét: Bács-Kiskun Megyei Önkormányzat Múzeumi Szervezete, 1997), 25-26.

Beside the geographical location, the ownership of the sites had a remarkable consequence on the later urban development. According to the documentary sources, from the early Árpáadian Period massive royal estate body existed in the study area. After the Tartar Invasion this system considerably changed: sizeable part of the deserted village lands were donated or let to Cuman kindreds. Besides, it is likely that another significant part of deserted or not viable royal properties were reorganized and attached to surviving and/or developing local market centres such as the later Kecskemét, Debrecen or Cegléd. Accordingly, typically a whole cluster of minor deserted early villages are usually detected around and on the site of the later urban cores. Regrettably, lacking detailed written evidences and systematic archaeological data, it cannot be decided whether all these settlements were destroyed by the tartars in 1241–1242 and these lands were attached to other settlements as physically destroyed and depopulated territories, or these sites (or at least some of them) survived the Tartar Invasion, and their disappearance can be connected to other economic reorganization and social processes of the late thirteenth- fourteenth centuries, and mainly to the attraction of developing local urban centres.

Although there are no written data mentioning Kecskemét before the mid-fourteenth century, it can be inferred from the contemporary documents that the core territories of the later town were most probably part of the royal estate system in the Árpáadian Period. The first reference to Kecskemét comes from 1353, when *possessio Ketskemeth* is mentioned as belonging to the royal estates¹⁸, while 1415 the town is possessed by the queen¹⁹, who possessed it until the 1430s.²⁰ The quick urban development is well represented by the documentary sources the settlement is mentioned as *oppidum* in 1368.²¹ In 1415 and in 1424, the settlement is exceptionally referred to as *civitas*²², while from 1423 onwards steadily referred to as an *oppidum*.

It seems that until the mid-fourteenth century Kecskemét and the appearing pre-urban cores in the area such as Cegléd or Halas had presumably the same potentials to emerge into an important local center – most probably it was the ownership of the royal family that encouraged their development. The situation somewhat changed from the late fourteenth century, as Cegléd was donated to the Clarisse nuns of Óbuda (1368)²³, and Halas was pawned to various private

¹⁸ János Hornyik, *Kecskemét város története oklevéltárral* [The History of Kecskemét, with a Repertory of Documentary Sources] (4 vols, Kecskemét: privately printed, 1860–1866), vol. 1, 197.

¹⁹ Hornyik, *Kecskemét város története*, vol. 1, 199–200.

²⁰ István Kenyeres, *Uradalmak és végvárak. A kamarai birtokok és a törökellenes határvédelem a 16. századi Magyar Királyságban* [Estates and Fortifications: The Royal Estates and the Anti-Turkish Border Land- defence] (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2008), 62.

²¹ Budapest, Magyar Országos Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives], Dl. 6973.

²² “*oppidi seu civitatis Kechkemeth cum tributo in eadem habito, ac unacum Comanis Reginalibus, prope eandem Kechkemeth.*” See István Gyárfás, *A jász-kunok története* [History of the Jazyg-Cumans] (4 vols, Kecskemét–Szolnok–Budapest: privately printed, 1870–1885), vol. 3, 580.

²³ Nándor Ikvai (ed.), *Cegléd története* [The History of Cegléd] /Studia Comitatus 11./ (Szentendre: Pest Megyei Múzeumok Igazgatósága, 1982).

landowners.²⁴ Also Kőrös was possessed by various private owners from at latest the mid-thirteenth century onwards.²⁵ These processes likely opened new short-term prospects for Kecskemét, which still remained part of the royal properties for some decades. The town was first pawned to the Káthai family in 1439²⁶, later donated to various noble families, and remained private property for the next four centuries. The owners might have changed relatively quickly in the fifteenth century; in 1445 Mihály Csekekátai, in 1452 János Péró is mentioned as possessors. In 1456 Erzsébet Szilágyi, László Hunyadi and Mátyás Hunyadi are cited as possessors, and in 1458 Mátyás, already as king donated the settlement to the members of the Lábathlan family. In 1458 the widow and son of János Péró regain the possession of the town. Later, between 1508 and 1558 the Patochy family is the owner of the settlement's larger part, beside them the Vízkelety family, then János Liszti and Pál Zarkándi are noted among the landowners. Through the descendants of Zarkándi, the Wesselényi family possessed the half of the town until the 1660s. In 1668, Széchy Mária, the widow of palatinus Ferenc Wesselényi pawned her part to István Koháry.

Concerning the sixteenth-seventeenth century, also Ottoman landowners has to be mentioned. Ottoman landlords are registered from the earliest defter rolls. According to these lists, in 1546 Mehmed Pasha, Beylerbey of Buda, in 1559 and in 1562 Rustem Pasha, Beylerbey of Buda is the beneficiary of Kecskemét, and the settlement is listed among the private has-properties of the Sultan himself, from 1580 till the 1680s.

Interestingly, despite all difficulties of the Ottoman occupation period, the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries cannot be interpreted as a total decline of the settlement, but rather as fragile adaptation to the varying historical situation. The development and economic growth of the settlement was based on trade, and especially cattle trade and the town became one of the prominent centres of export-oriented large-scale cattle breeding of the Great Hungarian Plain by the late sixteenth century, and emerged to the highest level in the hierarchy both from economic and social point of view.

From the eighteenth century Kecskemét became one of the most populous settlements in Hungary, despite, the settlement gained full urban liberties only in the second half of the nineteenth century. The economic basis of the town remained agriculture also in the modern period, but instead of cattle breeding the main focus of production became intensive farming; especially fruit and vegetable production became important.

²⁴ Gábor Hatházi, 'Halas, a kun nemzetségi központ' [Halas, the Cuman Seat], in József Ö. Kovács – Aurél Vajkai (eds.), *Kiskunhalas története* [The History of Kiskunhalas], (<http://www.halas.hu/kiskunhalas/tort1/index.html>), accessed on 31 July, 2006.

²⁵ György Györfly, *Az Árpád kori Magyarország történeti földrajza* [The Historical Geography of Hungary in the Age of the Árpáds] (4 vols, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1963–1998), vol. 4, 529.

²⁶ Hornyik, *Kecskemét város története*, vol. 1, 207-208.

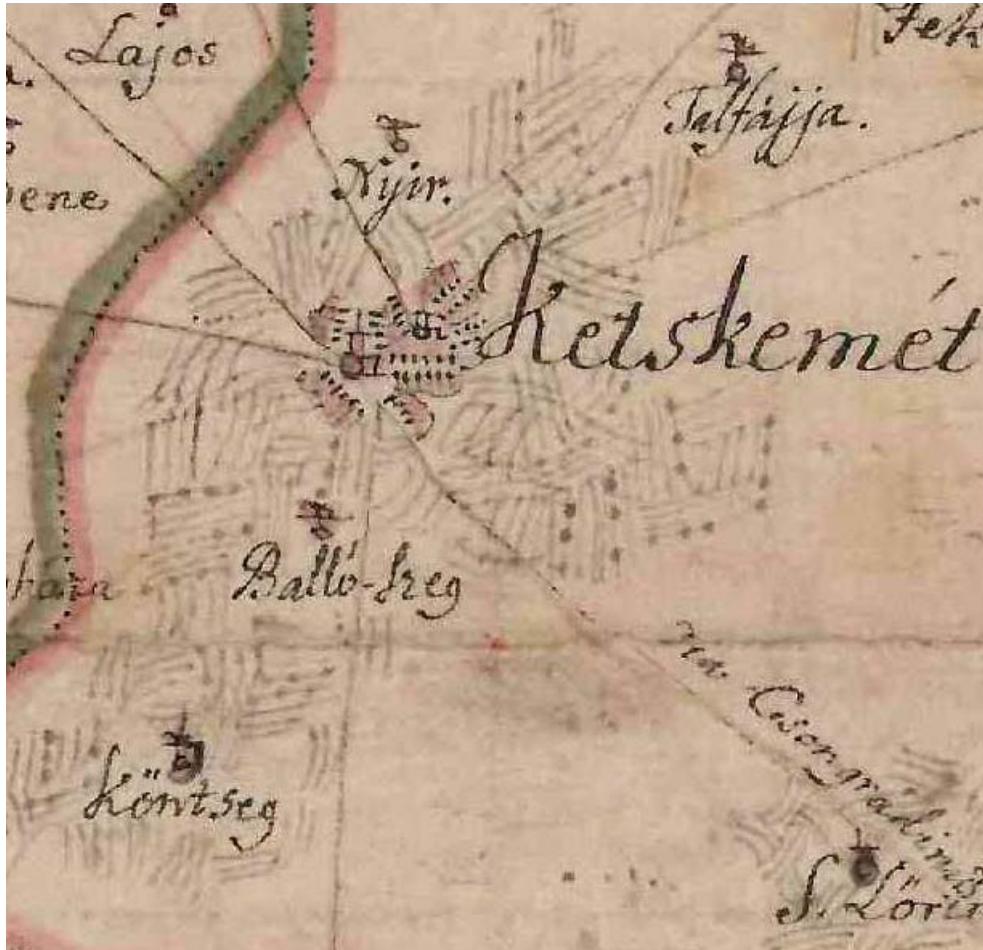


Fig. 2. Kecskemét in 1740. Detail from the *Mappa Uitorum Comitatum Pestiensis Pilisiensis et Solthensis Non Minus Districtum Cumanorum Minorum*. DVD-ROM (Budapest, Arcanum e-térképtár, 2007).

THE TOWNSCAPE

Turning to the townscape of Kecskemét, the survived cartographic as well as documentary source material can be regarded as average concerning both the number and the composition of representations. The earliest detailed drawings originate from the mid-eighteenth century. The maps can be separated by large into two major groups: beside the more general series of the Ordnance Surveys and various county-scale representations, numerous more detailed town plans are available.

The earliest depiction of the town comes from 1528, from the *Tabula Hungariae* compiled by Lazarus²⁷, also depicted on the county map of Lazius from 1556²⁸, and on the map by John Speed from 1626²⁹, or on another county map from the *Atlas Maior* by Blaeu from 1664.³⁰

The earliest detailed map of Pest County was drawn by Antonius Balla around 1740³¹, and there are additional county maps from 1793³², and 1834³³ all with more or less schematic representation of the settlement. The depiction of the First Ordnance Survey from 1783 is a special transition between general symbols of the county maps and the detailed surveys, outlining the main structural elements such as the town ditch, the main streets as well as the churches.³⁴ There are additional series of town plans from the nineteenth and early twentieth century, including the detailed representations of the Second and the Third Ordnance Survey from the 1830s³⁵ and the 1880s³⁶, providing further links to understand the morphological development of the modern settlement.

Lacking systematic archaeological investigations, there is almost no information about the medieval topography of Kecskemét, while owing to the appearance of documentary sources more data is available from the sixteenth-seventeenth century onwards. In the territory of the today city, the earliest village probably goes back to the tenth-eleventh century. The site of this early community was likely defined by geographical and hydrological characteristics, more closely the Dellő Lake and the Pecsó Rivulet, and the natural hill located south-south-west of the water. Sadly, little is known about the inner structure of the pre-fifteenth century settlement. It surely had two parishes, one church was consecrated to the Holy Virgin (also known as the Sandy chapel); and the Saint Nicholas church, sited

²⁷ *Tabula Hungariae ab quatuor latera per Lazarum quondam Thomae Strigoniensis Cardinalii...* Budapest, Országos Széchényi Könyvtár [National Hungarian Library], Apponyi Collection M 136.

²⁸ Árpád Pap-Váry and Pál Henkó, *Magyarország régi térképeken* [Hungary on Historic Maps] (Budapest: Gondolat-Officina Nova, 1990), 58.

²⁹ *The Mape of Hungari newly augmented by John Speed*, Budapest, Országos Széchényi Könyvtár [National Hungarian Library], TM 53 65.

³⁰ *Regni Hungariae nova et exactissima Delineatio*, Budapest, Magyar Országos Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives], S 16.361.

³¹ *Mappa Unitorum Comitatum Pestiensis Pilisiensis et Solthensis Non Minus Districtum Cumanorum Minorum. DVD-ROM* (Budapest, Arcanum e-térképtár, 2007).

³² Antonius Balla, *Regni Hungariae Comitatum Pest Pilis et Solth. Mappa specialissima regionibus coeli juxta recentissimas observ. astronomicas accomodata. DVD-ROM* (Budapest, Arcanum e-térképtár, 2007).

³³ József Örkényi Ferenczy, *Pest-Pilis és Solt törv. egyesült vármegyék és a Kis Kúnság Föld képe, DVD-ROM* (Budapest, Arcanum e-térképtár, 2007).

³⁴ *Az első katonai felmérés* [The First Ordnance Survey], *DVD-ROM* (Budapest, Arcanum e-térképtár, 2004).

³⁵ *A II. katonai felmérés* [The Second Ordnance Survey of Hungary], (http://archivportal.arcanum.hu/maps/html/katfelm2b_google.html), accessed on 17 June, 2010.

³⁶ *A Monarchia III. katonai felmérése* [The Third Military Mapping Survey of Austria-Hungary], (<http://lazarus.elte.hu/hun/digkonyv/topo/3felmeres.htm>), accessed on 14 September, 2008.

south from the Holy Virgin church at the later main market square, and still being used as a parish of the local community. The approximate extension of the earliest settlement can be roughly defined by the stray finds that were collected in the today city centre.³⁷

Consequently, the chronological relations between the two medieval parishes are unknown, and it cannot be confirmed, but surmised that the settlement was structured along streets at latest by the second half of the fifteenth century. Most probably one of the earliest streets formed along the line of the later *Gyümölcs/Kápolna* ('Fruit'/'Chapel') Street between the two churches. Except for the parishes, there is one more medieval built feature known from excavation data from the territory of the settlement, namely a brick built at least two-storey high tower in the close neighbourhood of the Saint Nicholas church, which was built into the building of the Franciscan Friary in the seventeenth century. This structure, according to archaeological investigations, was built no later than the early fifteenth century. The owner or the function of this building is not known, likely it was built/used/owned by one of the private landowners, or maybe the custom officers of the queen mentioned in the early fifteenth century.

More information is available about the sixteenth-seventeenth century town, partly from the Ottoman sources, especially tax rolls, and from the emerging Town protocols. The documents name twelve streets around that time, thus it seems that the mid-sixteenth century had a composite, multi-street plan.

The town was surely defended by the late sixteenth century; however the exact dating of the defense system is unknown. This system consisted of a water ditch surrounding the settlement, and a wooden palisade with gates, which regulated the traffic at latest from the second half of the sixteenth century; however, there are detailed documentary references to the structure and operation of this system from the later period of its existence, from the seventeenth-eighteenth century.³⁸ The town defenses are also mentioned in the narrative work of Mathias Bel from 1737, who writes that the whole town is encircled by a shallow ditch, but hardly any water can be found in it. Further on, Bel names all in all five major gates or entrances of the town, namely the *Budai-*, the *Kőrösi-*, the *Csongrádi-*, the *Halasi-* and the *Homoki* gates.³⁹

³⁷ Árpadian Age finds were documented from the Mária street, and the site of the former Korona café (today: Malom Center), and additional find were recorded at the building of the Town Hall in 1893. See: Hornyik, *Kecskemét város története*, vol. 1, 98-99; György V. Székely, 'Kecskemét Árpád-kori régészeti emlékei' [Árpadian Age Archaeological Finds from Kecskemét], in Tibor Iványosi-Szabó (ed.), *Kecskemét története* [The History of Kecskemét] (Kecskemét: Kecskemét Megyei Jogú Város Önkormányzata, 2002), vol. 1, 69-70.

³⁸ Unfortunately, no archaeological research had aimed at locating or studying this structure.

³⁹ Matthias Bel, *Compendium Hungariae geographicum ad exemplar notitiae novae historico-geographicae* (4 vols., Posenii, 1753).

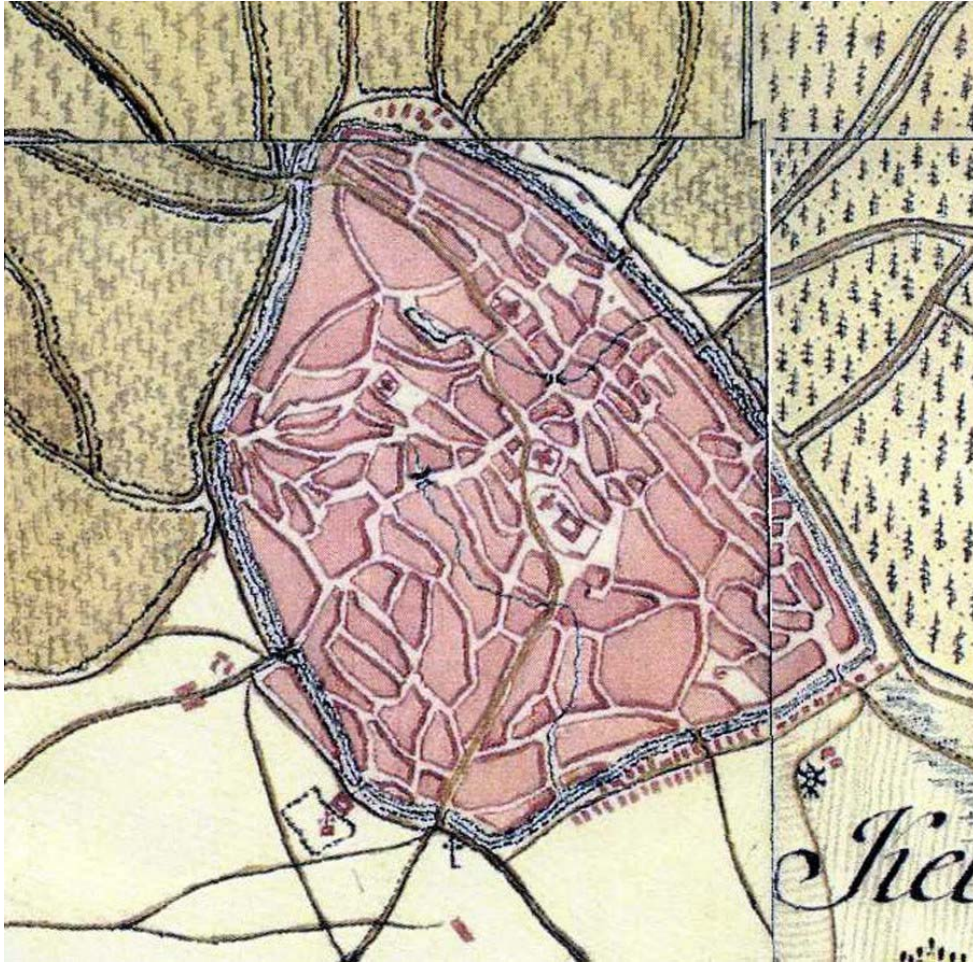


Fig. 3. Kecskemét on the First Ordnance Survey, 1783 *DVD-ROM*
(Budapest, Arcanum e-térképtár, 2004).

In this period, the settlement's ground plan represents a special radial arrangement. All the main streets start from the central market place of the town. The names of the four main streets, documented as early as the 1590s in the earliest protocols of the town⁴⁰, clearly indicates the main commercial connections of the town and the system of regional traffic routes: the *Kőrösi* street (leading towards Kőrös (Nagykőrös) and Cegléd), the *Szentlőrinci* (later *Csongrádi*) street (leading in the direction of Szentlőrinc village and Csongrád) and the *Pálkai* (later *Halasi*)

⁴⁰ Tibor Iványosi-Szabó (ed.), *A kecskeméti magisztrátus jegyzőkönyveinek töredékei 1591–1711* [The Fragments of the Kecskemét Town Protocols, 1591–1711] (2 vols., Kecskemét: Bács-Kiskun Megyei Levéltár, 1996).

street (leading towards southern direction through Pálka village and Halas). There is, in fact one exception from that rule, the (*Vásári*) *Nagy* street ('Main Street' or 'Main Market Street'), which street connected the main market place around the Saint Nicholas parish and the site of the annual fairs south of the inner city territories, and was most probably also among the most important economic-axis of the town. Additional list of street names were documented in the Ottoman defter rolls in 1559, namely the *Nagy* street, *Szenmária* street, *Új* street, *Varga* street, *Szentlőrinc* street, *Oskola* street, Gyümölcs street.⁴¹

Beside the two medieval parishes, the Protestant (Calvinist) church is a new feature in the townscape from the late-sixteenth century.

There are two further main routes of traffic, which might be quoted here, namely the *Budai street* (leading towards Buda, the medieval capital and Pest) and the *Szolnoki* street (leading towards Szolnok-Hatvan), but these are first depicted on the First Ordnance Survey and there are referred to only quite late, from the nineteenth century onwards.

Beside the two medieval parishes, the Protestant (Calvinist) church is a new feature in the townscape from the late-sixteenth century. There are uncertain data about the dating and the site of the earliest town hall, the first textual reference for building a new town hall is from the 1650s opposite the Saint Nicholas church. Further on, there are many topographical features, such as shops, workshops, mills or wells, which are referred to in documentary sources, but their sites cannot be identified. The inner market place around the Saint Nicholas church and the outer market place (*Vásártér*; literally Fair-field) were probably the two dominant factors which fundamentally influenced the development of the town's structural layout.

The first detailed topographic map of the settlement is the representation of the First Ordnance Survey from 1783. According to this representation the expansion of the town is basically defined by a circular water ditch. There are all in all ten gates and bridges depicted leading through the ditch towards the inner area. There is a well definable central market place around the Saint Nicholas church, from which area five major streets/routes run radially.

The map also reveals that the morphologic character of the settlement probably developed from more compound clusters. Two well definable agglomerations might be identified around the medieval parish churches, which are typified by dense, small clusters of houses and irregular, devious street pattern, while there is a third cluster of parallel, more regular, rectilinear streets in the north-eastern part of the town. Interestingly, there are larger accumulations of plots in the northern and southern parts of the town; moreover, there are a small group of houses in the north-eastern corner and southern part outside the water ditch, which shows the development potentials of the late eighteenth century settlement.

⁴¹ Gyula Káldy-Nagy, *A budai szandzsák 1559. évi összeírása* [The Census of the Buda Sanjak from 1559] (Budapest: Pest Megyei Levéltár, 1977), 173-178.

Unfortunately, there is no direct information on the stages or phases of settlement expansion, thus only a hypothetical chronology can be outlined: most probably those areas around the medieval parishes were populated in the first settlement phase, thus, the more dense, irregular clusters are probably represent an earlier texture in the town plan. Accordingly, the more regular grid street pattern in the north-eastern part of the town should be the remain of a planned expansion along the *Budai* and the *Kőrösi* street, and the larger, undivided blocks of plots were perhaps also populated in a later, possibly in the latest phase. This theory can be further compared or contrasted to references to street-names: interestingly, it seems that two main streets, namely the *Budai* Main Street and the *Szolnoki* Street in this area are not referred to earlier than the late-eighteenth century⁴², while all identifiable pre-seventeenth century streets are located in the neighbourhood of the two medieval parishes.

Connected to this, another crucial morphological aspect of the late medieval-early modern town is the real extension of the late medieval settlement, which was surely smaller than it is shown on the late eighteenth century depiction. In this respect, lacking written, cartographic or archaeological data, there are no evidences to demonstrate or prove how the settlement grew in reality. However, it is striking that there are small ‘squares’, or rather convergences of four-five streets along all major streets, such as the *Vásári* Main street, the *Pálkai* street, *Kőrösi* street or the *Szentlőrinci* street, which might refer back to earlier stages of town development, namely to former town boundary, or sites of earlier town gates.

MARKETS AND FAIRS

The weekly market at Kecskemét is mentioned as early as in 1393 and the annual fair is first quoted in 1463.⁴³ The earliest references on the annual fairs come from the town protocols from the 1590s, when the fairs are regularly referred to. Although there are no survived medieval privilege charter about the market rights of the settlements, the royal edicts from 1622 and 1696 which strengthen the rights of Kecskemét to hold three yearly annual fairs (on 12th March, 10th August, 25th November) clearly refer to the pre-Ottoman antecedents of these fairs.⁴⁴ Consequently, at latest around the turn of the fifteenth-sixteenth at least three annual fairs can be deduced. Additional fairs were granted in 1746 (for the 10th of

⁴² However, this does not automatically mean that they did not exist in the preceding period, maybe these routes were known under other names.

⁴³ Iványosi-Szabó (ed.), *Kecskemét története*, vol. 1, 107.

⁴⁴ “... *ad idem Oppidum Nundias liberas, seu fora annualia libera, et in festis S. Laurentii Martyris, S. Gregorii Episcopi et Confessoris, ac Catharinae Virginis et martyris, alias quoque ante depopulationem, ac dicti Oppidi devastationem per Turcicam impietatem, celebrari solitas...*” Hornyik, *Kecskemét város története*, vol. 1, 249-250.

May) and in 1798 (26th September), when the two weekly markets were allowed (on Tuesday and Friday) too.⁴⁵ Beside the daily markets, weekly fairs were also present from the seventeenth century, as the town magistrates regulated them in 1702.⁴⁶ The earliest reference to daily markets on Tuesdays and Fridays comes from 1813, and this pattern appears also in the general regulations of the town approved in 1821.⁴⁷

MARKET CONNECTIONS

Kecskemét had a custom station from the medieval period; in 1415 the queen's customs-officers had their office in Kecskemét, and the custom station is mentioned in 1424 as well as in 1439.⁴⁸ The custom was most probably among the most important incomes of the town as this profit was listed among the ordinary incomes in the donation charters issued by Queen Elizabeth in 1439⁴⁹ and by King Matthias in 1458.⁵⁰

According to the Ottoman defter rolls, between the line of Pest – Keve – Vác and Szeged, there were not many settlements, from which any tolls were expected, beside Kecskemét only Cegléd⁵¹ can be quoted, but no such incomes were registered from the two neighbouring competent settlements of either Kőrös or Halas.⁵²

From the early sixteenth century at latest, till the mid-seventeenth century Kecskemét not only strengthened its role in the regional market network of the Great Plain, but largely extended its market connections. The town's name was mainly connected with the export of living animals (mainly oxen the 'Hungarian Grey') and oxhide. The Ottoman administration allocated toll incomes after both marketing and vintage.⁵³

⁴⁵ Tibor Iványosi-Szabó, *Kecskemét gazdasági fejlődése (1700–1850)* [The Economic Development of Kecskemét, 1700–1850] (Kecskemét: Bács-Kiskun Megyei Önkormányzat Levéltára, 1994), 235; Iona Székelyné Kőrös, *Kecskeméti évszázadok; Fejezetek a város múltjából* [Centuries at Kecskemét; Chapters from the History of the Town] (Kecskemét: Kecskeméti Lapok Kft. & Kecskeméti Monográfia Szerkesztősége, 1993), 32-33.

⁴⁶ Iványosi-Szabó, *Kecskemét gazdasági fejlődése*, 245.

⁴⁷ Iványosi-Szabó, *Kecskemét gazdasági fejlődése*, 246.

⁴⁸ Hornyik, *Kecskemét város története*, vol. 1, pp. 199–200; Iványosi-Szabó, *Kecskemét gazdasági fejlődése*, 207.

⁴⁹ Hornyik, *Kecskemét város története*, 207-208.

⁵⁰ Hornyik, *Kecskemét város története*, 209-210.

⁵¹ Gyula Káldy-Nagy, *A budai szandzsák 1546–1559. évi összeírásai* [The Census of the Buda Sanjak from the Period 1546–1559] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1985), 165.

⁵² See Káldy-Nagy, *A budai szandzsák 1546–1559*, 389; Ferenc Szakály, 'Kiskunhalas a török uralom alatt' [Kiskunhalas in the Ottoman Period], in József Ö. Kovács and Aurél Vajkai (eds.), *Kiskunhalas története* [The History of Kiskunhalas] (<http://www.halas.hu/kiskunhalas/tort1/index.html>), accessed on 31 July, 2006.

⁵³ Káldy-Nagy, *A budai szandzsák 1546–1559*, 349. Nota bene, it was not a simple vintage-tax, but a toll, thus this sum might have been collected from merchants not from local wine-producers. Although it is probable that there were vineyards around Kecskemét at latest from the early sixteenth

Actually, it is not easy to define the circle of those, who regularly attended the fairs at Kecskemét. The earliest reference to the place of origin of sellers visiting Kecskemét comes from the 1590s, when people from Mizse⁵⁴, Pataj⁵⁵, Szenttamás⁵⁶, Szabadszállás⁵⁷, Cegléd⁵⁸, are mentioned. This circle obviously circumscribe those local – nearest settlements that can be completed with other settlements such as Kőrös, Szentkirály, Szentlőrinc, Halas, whose inhabitants were regularly invited as *convocati* in jurisdictional process, most of whom were presumably not professional merchants, but primary producers of agricultural goods (among them animals) or craftsmen, who constituted the most solid basis of markets and fairs beside the Kecskemét inhabitants. At the same time, those *convocati* (invited judges) from Ráckeve, Kunszentmiklós, Rimavska Sobota (Rimaszombat/Gros-Steffelsdorf), Tolna or Túr mentioned from the mid-seventeenth century, who were involved in the jurisdictional process of the town, most probably arrived deliberately for the fairs- and it can be supposed that these people were in fact traders or merchants. A wider circle of trade connections can be outline on the basis of a roll from 1698, when the town magistrates regulated the order of sellers' tents in the marketing area; then merchants from Pest, Buda, Győr, Komárom, Beszterce, Debrecen and the Greeks merchants from Pest as well as Eger are listed⁵⁹. Besides, there are random data that Turkish goods⁶⁰ and Turkish merchants⁶¹ were also present in Kecskemét.

THE MARKET PLACE

Concerning the site of the local weekly and annual markets and fairs, these were most probably connected to the Saint Nicholas parish church and the place around it. The fourteenth and the fifteenth century gothic enlargement of the

century, but the scale of production as well as the quality of local wines is dubious. Thus, it can be supposed or raised that this tax was levied after the wine produced in the Szerémség (Srijem/Srem) region, and transported from there towards Buda through Kecskemét.

⁵⁴ 1592: Iványosi-Szabó, *A kecskeméti magisztrátus*, vol.1, 29.

⁵⁵ 1593: Iványosi-Szabó, *A kecskeméti magisztrátus*, vol.1, 30.

⁵⁶ Actually he was selling melons, but his prices were above the limitation, thus was fined. Iványosi-Szabó, *A kecskeméti magisztrátus*, vol.1, 45.

⁵⁷ In 1597 they were selling oxen and horses. Iványosi-Szabó, *A kecskeméti magisztrátus*, vol.1, 46.

⁵⁸ 1599: Iványosi-Szabó, *A kecskeméti magisztrátus*, vol.1, 51.

⁵⁹ Iványosi-Szabó, *A kecskeméti magisztrátus*, vol.1, 176.

⁶⁰ 1594: *Hosztanak Süwegh Istan wramtol Én hozszam Tozh Matyashoz valami terorók partekavath...* [They were bringing to me from István Süveg for Mátyás Tozh some Turkish merchandise...] Iványosi-Szabó, *A kecskeméti magisztrátus*, vol. 1, 37.

⁶¹ For example in 1596 some Turkish merchants were attacked somewhere around Kecskemét, and their goods were taken to the town. Turkish merchants are also mentioned in 1678. Iványosi-Szabó, *A kecskeméti magisztrátus*, vol.1, 121.

church let us suppose that this building and the surrounding area had played a central role in the life of the settlement from at latest that period. From morphological point of view, it is also striking that all important street start from here and leads radially into various directions.



Fig. 4. The market place in 1860. Detail from the map entitled *Kecskemét kövezeti vázlat* [The delineation of pavements in Kecskemét], Kecskemét: Bács-Kiskun Megyei Levéltár [Archives of Bács-Kiskun County], XV 1/a 1. 437.

The general structure of the town did not change significantly in the forthcoming centuries; the centre of the town remained the market place and the St Nicholas parish church. In the 1580s a protestant church was built next to the catholic parish at the Market place. The Franciscans founded their house in the 1640s at Kecskemét, next to the St Nicholas parish, and later the new Catholic minster in the late eighteenth century, the Lutheran church, the orthodox church, and at last the synagogue in the nineteenth century were built at the edges of this central market place.

Alike, the administrative body of the town had been closely related to the this location, as in the first half of the seventeenth century the new town hall was built next to the St Nicholas Parish. This building was renovated and extended in the eighteenth century, when the town clock was erected also, but was continuously

used until the late nineteenth century, when the new, still-standing Town Hall was built at the very same site. We here about permanent sell stalls, pubs inns and rest houses at and around the market place from the 1670s. Also a new brick built well was built by the town's magistrates in 1786.

According to the eighteenth century sources, the markets stretched into the surrounding streets around the market place. In 1800, the Town Magistrates regulated the order of the weekly markets, when the selling of various goods, such as bread, meat, living animals, fish, fruits, wheat, were separated into defined areas.⁶²

A significant rearrangement of the place happened around the turn of the twentieth century, when several blocks of houses were demolished and the central public place was opened up. Nevertheless, the weekly markets were held here until the WWII, the market was reorganized and put to a new site from the 1950s. Still, today this central place is the real focus of everyday life, where occasional markets are still held.

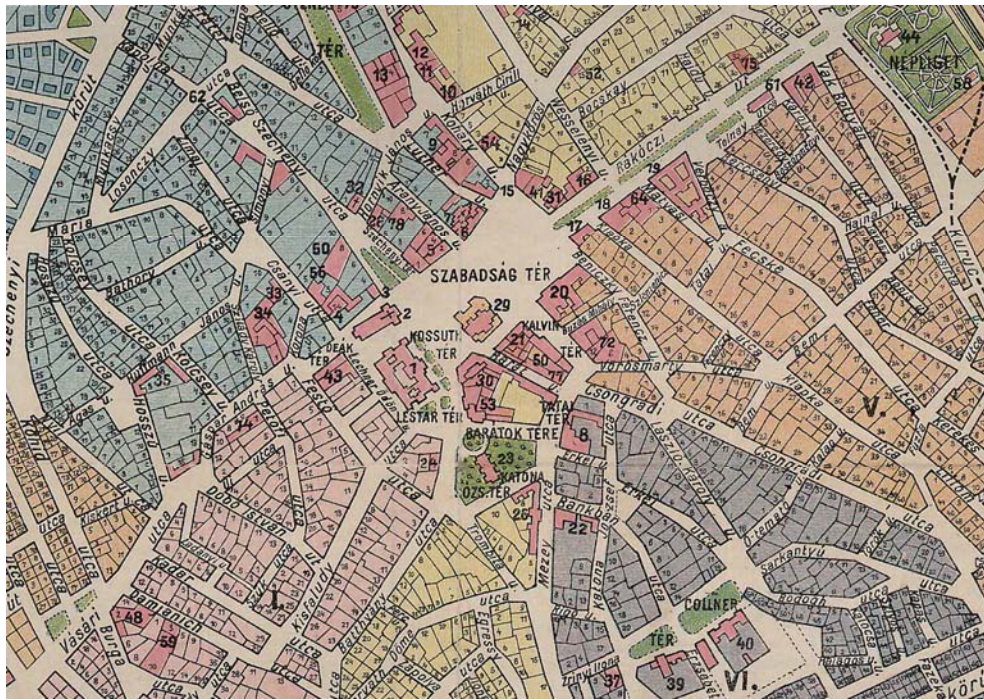


Fig. 5. The market place in 1929. Detail from the map entitled *Kecskemét törvényhatósági jogú város térképe* [The map of Kecskemét], Kecskemét: Bács-Kiskun Megyei Levéltár [Archives of Bács-Kiskun County], s.n.

⁶² Iványosi-Szabó, *Kecskemét gazdasági fejlődése*, 254.

THE VÁSÁRTÉR ('FAIR-FIELD')

It has to be emphasized that the most significant annual fairs and especially the specialized yearly cattle markets were probably held outside the inner settlement area from at latest the turn of the fifteenths-sixteenth centuries, at the end of the *Vásári* Street, outside the *Vásári* Gate, at the place called *Vásártér* (literally 'Fair-field').

Turning back to the topographical development of the equally important site of the larger annual markets, the significance of the place is well reflected in the fact that three of the earliest depictions connected to the town represent the Market Place. (Fig. 3, Fig. 4, Fig. 5)

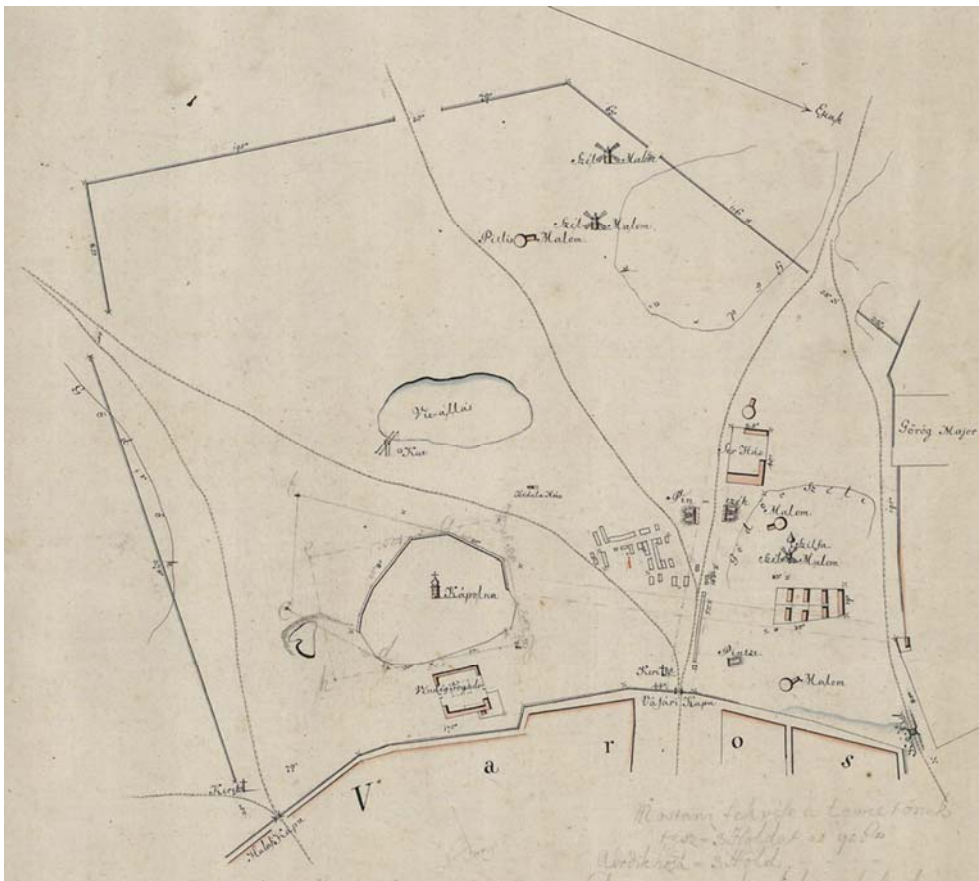


Fig. 6. The *Vásártér* around 1800. Kecskemét: Bács-Kiskun Megyei Levéltár [Archives of Bács-Kiskun County], XV. 1/a 5. téka 136/a.

According to these drawings, and contemporary sources, there was a well defined area of the trading activity. The northern border of the fair-field was the *Széktó* and the *Mária* vineyards, from the east it was neighboured by the town itself, and the town ditch with the wooden palisade and the *Vásári* gate, from eastern and southern directions extensive municipal pastures and hayfields, and from the 1720–1730s, the newly opened Holy Trinity cemetery. In 1800, the town magistrates set up crossing gates around the fair-field area during the fairs⁶³, and surrounded the territory with ditches from northern southern and western parts.

Inside the market area, the selling stalls were let to the various merchants and craftsmen. The selling and buying was also controlled by the local authorities, both sellers and buyers got a proof of payment from the market authorities, if needed. This written authentication took place in the so called *Cédulaház* ('Certificate House'). There were inns, several pubs, and also a beer brewery at the market place as well. Nevertheless, the needs of the animals driven to the fairs for selling were also considered and fulfilled as numerous wells were established, moreover the area was neighboured by extensive pastures and hayfields from the south, to supply the needs. Besides, both the survey maps and the documents suggest that from the early eighteenth century more wind mills and animal mills were located in this area.⁶⁴



Fig. 7. Vásárállás, Serház, Kecskéházi Fogadó és Kápolna felmérése [The survey of the brewery, the Kecskéházi inn, and the Chapel], 1806, Kecskemét: Bács-Kiskun Megyei Levéltár [Archives of Bács-Kiskun County], XV. 16a 53. téka 136.

⁶³ Tibor Iványosi-Szabó, *Kecskeméti Szabályrendeletek (1659–1849)* [The Town Regulations of Kecskemét (1659–1849)] (Kecskemét: Bács-Kiskun Megyei Levéltár, 1991), 135–137.

⁶⁴ Kálmán Szabó, 'Kecskeméti szélmalomok' [The Wind Mills of Kecskemét], in István Sztrinkó (ed.), *Szabó Kálmán válogatott írásai* [The Selected Writings of Kálmán Szabó] (Kecskemét: Kecskeméti Katona József Múzeum, 1986), 395–399.

This market site had lost its importance from the 1840s, when the sources report about the despondency of the fairs. Afterwards, large part of the *Vásártér* territory became a closed military area; several barracks and a horse stable were established.

At last, from the 1920s, the area was demilitarized, and the territory became slowly parcelled among dwellers and built in by the mid-twentieth century.

SUMMARY

Evaluating the main tendencies of urban development in Hungary, it must be assumed that from the fourteenth century onwards both the process of urbanization and the network of towns cannot be interpreted without taking *oppida* into account. One part of the market towns had real urban functions, which greatly contributed to the economic development of the country. The mapping of chartered towns and those *oppida* with urban functions reveal that the late medieval-early modern network of urban settlements was balanced and hierarchically structured. The real flowering of market towns can be put from the second half of the fifteenth century till the early seventeenth century.

The data on the economic status, social stratification as well as the population figures of these settlements indicate that some of these market towns, even if still missing legal approval of their urban status, should be considered as real towns at latest by the end of the seventeenth century. Kecskemét is a typical example for such development. Being intensely involved in export-oriented agricultural production, the town emerged to the highest level in the hierarchy both from economic and social point of view.

Among the various factors in the morphological character of Kecskemét, the development and continuity of the weekly markets and the annual fairs can be demonstrated. It can be stated that the site of the weekly markets, organizing around the Saint Nicholas parish church, was stable from the medieval period till the mid-twentieth century. Most of the ecclesiastical foundations, the local government offices, educational institutions were mostly located at or near the market place. Thus, not only the markets, the market place became the most important organizing element of public space, which significantly influenced the structural development of the settlement.

Another development scheme can be observed in case of the site of the annual fairs, the *Vásártér*. Until the late eighteenth – early nineteenth century, this area was directly connected to the town. along with the changing economic possibilities, there was a major change in the function of the area; the establishment of the camps and the appearance of industrial production and at last the expansion of the habitation area, the *Vásártér* as a topographical element, and even as a place

name disappeared from the texture of the town, thus it had neither effected later structural layout of the settlement nor was its memory maintained by the general public awareness.

At last, there are various aspects in the morphological character of any settlement, whose function, development or continuity can be studied. Some elements of the townscapes are visible even today, while other features are hidden and can only be interpreted through the analyzes of different source-types and interpretation of various layers in the townscape. Hopefully, this short essay on the urban development of Kecskemét, and the assessment on its markets will contribute to the better understanding and the more conscious understanding of historical townscapes.