DISSERTATIONES ARCHAEOLOGICAE

ex Instituto Archaeologico Universitatis de Rolando Eötvös nominatae



















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New results of the excavations at the Saint James' Pauline friary and at the Castle Čabraď

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Abstract

In 2015 the Department of Hungarian Medieval and Early Modern Archaeology of Eötvös Loránd University participated in excavations at five different sites, including Pauline friary at Bakonyszentjakab, castles at Filakovo (Fülek), Zvolen (Zólyom) and Čabraď (Csábrág) in Slovakia, Franciscan friary in Szécsény and a post medieval château at Sângeorgiu de Mureş (Marosszentgyörgy) in Romania. This report presents the two major from the aforementioned projects.

Sáska-Bakonyszentjakab

Bakonyszentjakab is an abandoned site within the cadastral boundaries of the present-day Sáska village, north of Lake Balaton. According to the written sources the Pauline friary already existed in 1263 thus being among the earliest such ecclesiastical institution. After several centuries of history with ups and downs both from the spiritual and financial points of view, the friary became depopulated in the second third of the 16th century. During the following centuries the building complex burnt down and then was systematically looted, which included quite extensive treasure hunting activities continued up until the last decade of the 20th century.

Apart from a sole description made by Flóris Rómer in 1876 and several 20th-century attempts of creating virtual reconstructions of the former building complex neither archaeological nor architectural research was carried out on the site until 2014 when the Eötvös Loránd University has launched the systematic excavation of the site.¹ The works – corresponding with the demands of Bakonyerdő Forestry and Wood Industry Corporation – first of all targeted the church building. In 2014 our department has excavated the presbytery and southern part of the sacristy. The main goal of the 2015 season was to finish the uncovering of the western part of the church.²

During the excavations altogether six trenches were opened. The unearthed nave was ca. 11 m long and approximately 6 m wide with 1 m thick walls (*Fig. 1*). The structure of the walls was very similar to those of the presbytery. It was built of rough basalt stones using very bad

1 For the preliminary results see: Mordovin 2014, 488-489.

² In 2015 the participants were Dóra Hegyi (assistant) and Árpád Balogh, Orsolya Gálvölgyi, Fruzsina Hege, Bence Tamás Jőrös, Réka Anna Juhász, Anna Kulcsár, Tamás Lados, Eszter Magyar, Anna Mikesy, Ágnes Szabados, Bernadette Szabó, Ágoston Takács (students of archaeology).

quality lime mortar mixed with too large amount of gravel. The nave was completed in two stages but seemingly within the same building phase. On the both side walls, approximately 1.5 from the western façade there is a clearly visible vertical joint (*Fig. 2*). At the same time there is no sign of a possible western wall at this point. The nave had two entrances: one from the west and another from the north. The first one must have been the main entrance of the church with relatively simply carved door frame. The frame datable to the 14th–15th century was made of very poor quality sandstone. The northern door led to the yet unexplored cloister. No traces of any stone frames have been found here. Excavating the northern wall of the church we have partially uncovered the southernmost section of the cloister, more exactly the 1–1.5 m wide zone along the northern side of the church. This have enabled to reach the southwestern separate entrance of the cloister, which was located just beside the north-western corner of the church close to its main doorway.

The interior of the nave was almost completely dug up after the destruction of the friary. The latest, 16th-century surface survived only beside the southern wall of the church. It was made of very simple square $(19 \times 19 \text{ cm})$ floor tiles (Fig. 3). The deserted complex was used as a quarry for several centuries by the inhabitants of neighbouring villages, which process led to loss of most of the fine architectural details. Fortunately enough, in those places where the walls collapsed soon enough before being pulled down intentionally, the stone rubble had buried some carved fragments (Fig. 4). These finds give essential help in reconstruction of the building history of the church. It seems that the main outline formed as late as in the 13th century were left with no significant changes until the very end of its existence. The above mentioned joints infer to that the construction process was interrupted at least once with no known or visible reasons. At the same time the available carved stones indicate two later refurbishment of the complex. The earlier reconstruction might have happened during the first half of the 15th century (Fig. 5) while the second, larger alteration was carried out already in the early 16th century, but not earlier than ca. 1500. It seems that during the latter most of the carved details were changed to "modern" late gothic frames. Such stone frames were excavated in situ collapsed next to the southern façade of the chancel and inside the nave. These relatively large fragments can be regarded quite unusual representing not a common lancet-arched form of windows but rather a twinned type united by three-centred hood mould arch with very simple geometrical tracery (Fig. 6). This solution can be described both as a very decayed form of gothic or as relatively early appearance of renaissance style.

The friary emptied before the expansion Ottoman Empire in this region in 1560s was probably robbed and definitely set on fire not to be used as a fortifiable place for the enemy. The traces of the fire could have been observed in all areas not affected by treasure hunting. These events explain why there are almost no small metal finds from the site. However, some notable objects lost during the lifetime of the friary have been collected.³ Apart from the predominantly 16th-century coins some late medieval rings, buckles and book bindings are worth to be mentioned (*Fig. 7*).

³ For the metal-detecting and collecting all the "invisible" finds our team is very grateful to Lajos Sándor.

Castle Čabraď (Csábrág)

In 2015 the excavations at Castle Čabraď (*Fig. 8*) continued at the same place as in the previous two seasons⁴ concentrating on the so-called second gate tower.⁵ Main target of the two weeks of archaeological research was primarily to collect new data concerning the building history of the tower itself. At the same time the removing of the debris from the interior required some new logistic solutions since the only way to transport the debris led through the northern building of the Great Courtyard. To protect the still surviving but very decayed walls of the structure a small cut was made on the tourist path. After the conservation of the unearthed foundations a special earth rampart was created to protect the reburied architectural features.

Altogether five new trenches have been set including the one outside the tower (Fig. 9). With four of them situated within the walls of the 16th-century gate tower our team had two goals. On the one hand to clarify the building history of the site and in particular to examine the character of the foundations of the northern partition wall inside the tower; on the other to partially remove the debris of the collapsed upper vaultings of the building and thus to decrease the pressure on the surviving lowest vaults. Four significant layer groups could have been identified in these trenches. The uppermost one consisted of soil accumulated during the last several decades containing traces of tourism and most of all modern rubbish. This layer directly covered the destruction debris of the building. This second stratum composed most of all of larger stones, mortar and plaster debris, and contained almost no finds. Very interesting situation could have been observed in the southwestern part of the tower. Partially mixed with the wall rubble and at the same time under it an earth filling was found, which contained a relatively large amount of finds. These were predominantly 15th-16th-century ceramic objects (pottery and stove tiles), iron nails and fittings and fragments of lead window frames. The dating of the layer can be done according to some 16th-century coins and fragments of early 17th-century glazed pottery. Correspondingly, the layer, which obviously was used to fill the uppermost vaults of the tower can be used to date a later building phase of the gate tower. The third layer observed during the excavations was a thick terrazzo-floor, most likely of the second storey of the tower. The whole floor slipped down as the lower vaults collapsed. However, some architectural features survived relatively well. One of such is a baroque pilaster foundation in the southwestern corner, beside the western wall (Fig. 10). It is quite clear that this pilaster was added later to the already existing interior. There are no traces of any joints between this architectural detail and the floor nor the walls. Some carved stone fragments found in the rubble support the above mentioned dating and thus the identification of a new building phase. Previously it was supposed that the tower was vaulted yet by the end of the 16th century.

The terrazzo floor – seemingly being part of a later (baroque) reconstruction of the building – was laid on another group of layers loaded onto the lower vaultings of the ground floor (*Fig. 11*). This vaulting was constructed also secondarily according to the well visible putlog holes in western and eastern walls of the tower. At the same time the traces of the putlogs refer to the character of the earlier ceiling. The filling layers of the lower vaults can also help in dating

⁴ Mordovin 2013, 156–158; Mordovin 2014, 485–486.

⁵ In 2015 the participants were: Alena Bobáková, Renáta Daróczi, Ágnes Font, Mónika Gácsi, Orsolya Gálvölgyi, Olivér Gillich, Andrea Kocsis, Tünde Komori, Borbála Maros, Máté Mészáros, Fruzsina Németh, Veronika Németh, Maja Oszolik, Rita Rakonczay, Kitty Soltész, Ágnes Szabados, Gergely Szoboszlay, Mária Vargha.

of their construction. According to the preliminary evaluation of the finds, both floors had been vaulted in the same period. However, the filling of the lower one contained significantly different assemblage than that of the upper. This assemblage consisted most of all of stove tiles datable to the early 16th century. It seems that these stoves had been pulled down during a larger reconstruction of the castle around 1600 and their tiles were thrown into the fillings of the newly built vaults. The well fired, large clay objects were perfect to keep the filling and the surrounding masonry dry.

Three groups of finds discovered in 2015 are worth to be mentioned particularly. The first is the huge collection of the high quality renaissance stove tiles. This assemblage can be divided in at least three groups: tiles with floral, ecclesiastical and secular motives (*Fig. 12*). According to the glazes there are simple green glazed (monochrome) and polychrome finds, while some types appear both in mono- and polychrome version. All the three groups represent a very widespread type of renaissance stove tiles, which was very popular in Northern Hungary. Similar finds have been found so far in Szécsény,⁶ Salgó,⁷ Šintava,⁸ Rimavské Jánovce,⁹ Beckov, Širkovce,¹⁰ Banská Štiavnica¹¹ and Banská Bystrica.¹² The last is the main find location of this type and actually the whole group was named after it. It is very likely now that Banská Bystrica is the "birthplace" of the whole type but at least the largest number of similar tiles has been collected in this city. However, the finds from Čabraď have closest analogies in Banská Štiavnica – Kammerhof. Even the smallest details of the stove files from these sites are identical. Thus it is very likely that the renaissance stove tiles found in the late 16th-century layers at Čabraď were produced in Banská Štiavnica.

Among other finds datable to the 16th century two cloth seals should be mentioned (*Fig. 13*). The first one survived only fragmentarily was discovered yet in 2014. It depicts a quite specific coat of arms and thus its provenance can be identified with Opava (Troppau), a relatively significant city in Silesia (today Czech Republic). The second one is very well preserved and can be really regarded as unique since no other similar such seal is known so far from the available publications.¹³ The obverse of the seal shows an unambiguously identifiable Tudor rose, while the reverse depicts English coat of arms. According to the shape of the object and the details of the arms, the cloth seal can be dated to the first half of the 16th century, most probably to the reign of King Henry VIII. While the seal from Opava refers to cloth of medium or even low quality, the English one surely belonged to fine woollen cloth, which was extremely popular but relatively expensive in contemporary Europe.¹⁴

There are some other interesting objects found in the late 16th – early 17th century layers. The most notable among them is a barrel tap with privy marks on the handle survived in remarkable condition (*Fig. 14*).

- 6 Bodnár 1988, Fig. 9–11.
- 7 Feld Balogh-László Tóth 2013.
- 8 For further references see: Кviеток Мácelová 2013.
- 9 Hrašková Kürthy Ragač Šimkovic 2001, 282, obr. 2:2.
- 10 Вотоš 2015, 108-111.
- 11 LABUDA 2005, 181, obr. 11.
- 12 Mácelová 2009, 407–412, obr. 13:1–2.
- 13 Hereby I would like to thank the metal-detecting contribution of Richard Balga who has found this seal among many other similarly interesting finds.
- 14 The evaluation of the cloth seals was made with the support of the OTKA PD-115912 Grant.

Prior to the intended but once again postponed reconstruction of the southern façade of the tower some levelling was required on the site of the former trenches 1–2/2013–2014 (*Fig. 15–16*). During the removing of the balk within the shaft of the drawing bridge a huge amount of 18th-century finds have been collected, including coins, jewellery, architectural fragments and 17th–18th-century stove tiles. One medallion is of particular interest since it might be interpreted as a freemason pendant. Another extraordinary find is a ring seal with P.E. monograms depicting a hand holding a feather. This one most likely was owned by a notary (*Fig. 14*).

The excavations inside the tower have not been finished. Removing the debris in some places to 1-1.5 m depth we could not find the foundations of the northern partition wall (*Fig. 17*). Its lack in this depth can only mean that it was already missing when the vaults collapsed. In this case some explanation should be found for this situation but some further research is needed before.

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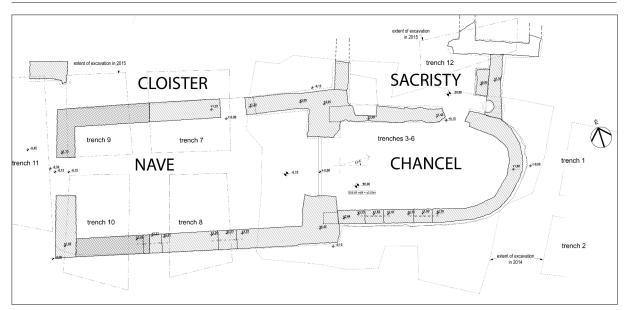


Fig. 1. Ground plan of the Saint James' church at Sáska – Bakonyszentjakab with outlines of the excavation trenches (after László Vidosa's survey).

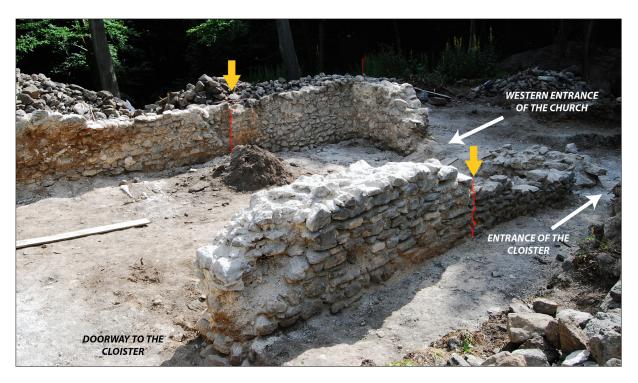


Fig. 2. Western part of the church showing the main entrances and the joints in the walls (Bakonyszentjakab).



Fig. 3. The only *in situ* survived fragment of the floor inside the nave (Bakonyszentjakab).



Fig. 4. Collapsed window frame left *in situ* south of the chancel (Bakonyszentjakab).



Fig. 5. Excavated fragments of a door frame from sacristy of the earlier gothic phase (Bakonyszentjakab).

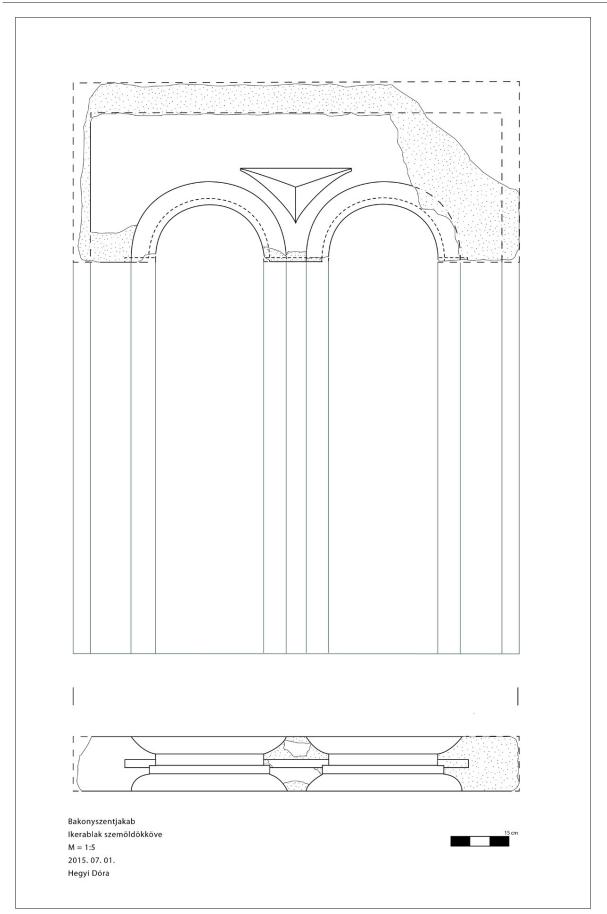


Fig. 6. Graphic reconstruction of a later gothic window from the church made by Dóra Hegyi (Bakonyszentjakab).



Fig. 7. Medieval small metal finds from the church and its surrounding (Bakonyszentjakab).



Fig. 8. View of the Castle Čabraď from east.

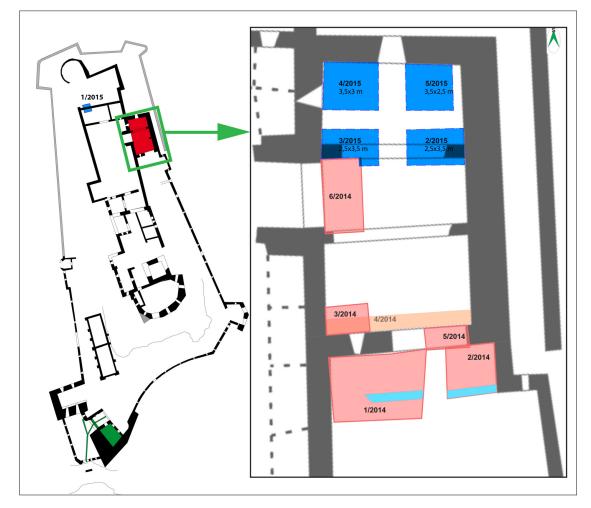


Fig. 9. Ground plan of the castle showing the investigated locations (Čabraď).



Fig. 10. Remains of the baroque pilaster (Čabraď).

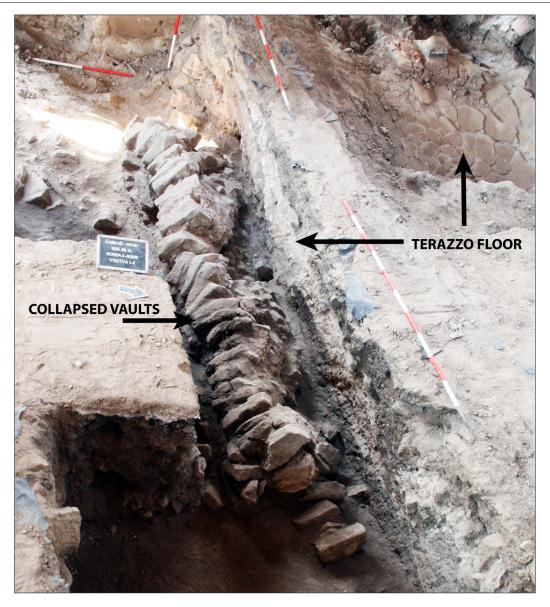


Fig. 11. Collapsed vaultings in the trenches 2–3/2015, with indication of the floor layer (Čabraď).



Fig. 12. Early 16th-century stove tiles (Čabraď)



Fig. 13. 16th-century cloth seals: Opava and England (Čabraď).



Fig. 14. 16th–18th-century metal finds from the castle: pendant, seal ring and tap (Čabraď).

New results of the excavations at the Saint James' Pauline friary and at the Castle Čabraď



Fig. 15. Excavated drawbridge shaft, view from the south (Čabraď).



Fig. 16. Excavated drawbridge shaft, view from above (Čabraď).



Fig. 17. The northern partition wall in the tower with no traces of the foundations (Čabraď).



Fig. 18. The excavation team in 2015 (Čabraď).