

Aspects of late medieval and early modern archaeology of Timișoara (Timiș County, Romania) in the context of the Ottoman conquest

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Summary

After the Battle of Mohács in 1526, some regions of the Hungarian Kingdom gradually came under Ottoman rule and became administrative units (*eyalets*) of the Ottoman Empire. The region of the northern Temes Plain (parts of the counties of Arad, Cenad, Temes, Torontal) was conquered in 1552 after a one-month siege of the castle of Timișoara (Timișoara).

The period of Ottoman rule, which lasted for 164 years, represents a very long chronological interval, during which the influences of a foreign culture were strongly felt. The conquest of the area also brought about a massive demographic change: a large part of the population fled to neighbouring territories that had not yet been annexed, and was replaced by various Balkan peoples, notably Serbs and Bosnians, who were much easier to integrate into the new order.

1. Introduction

Although the region between the Danube, Tisza and Mureș rivers was effectively taken over by the Ottoman administration after the conquest of Timișoara/Temesvár/Timișvar in 1552, in fact it had come under formal Ottoman control after the fall of Buda in 1541. Sultan Suleiman considered it a *sanjak* and placed it under the administration of Péter Petrovics, the count of Temes, who was a member of the party of King János Zápolya (1526–1540).¹ As part of the gradual conquest of the Balkans by the Ottoman Empire, significant Serbian populations moved to the Timiș Plain at the end of the 15th century. After the siege of Timișoara the area was largely abandoned by its former inhabitants, especially the Hungarians, who fled to Transylvania and to other parts of the formal Hungarian kingdom, and a massive colonisation of Balkan populations took place, a phenomenon that can be seen in the local

From an archaeological point of view, the Ottoman rule is clearly visible, precisely because of the massive import of artifacts that were previously foreign to the region, making it very easy to distinguish the archaeological layers and contexts of this period. With Ottoman society being conservative and characterised by strict rules in many aspects of life and customs, it left behind a real mosaic of goods from important Turkish, Persian and Chinese craft centers such as İznik, Kütahya and Jingdezhen.

This paper focusses on the archaeological traceability of a new culture, issues related to the dating of artifacts, cultural diversity and possible ethnic markers.

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toponymy and personal names.² The extent of the ethnic changes is well illustrated by the fact that the Temesköz region appears on foreign maps under the name of “Rascia”, referring to its increased Serbian population.³ The historian Géza PÁLFFY concludes that by the end of the 17th century the Hungarian population “had become a minority in their own country”,⁴ a statement that is very true for the center of the region we are focusing on, Timișoara.⁵

While archaeological research of the so-called Ottoman rule period has a relatively long tradition in Hungary,⁶ with Hungarian archaeologists having thus taken a “leading role” in the excavation of Ottoman sites,⁷ in Romania it

² ENGEL 1996, 5–6; HEGYI 2005.

³ PÁLFFY 2001, 121–122.

⁴ PÁLFFY 2001, 123–124.

⁵ See GRISELINI 1984, 156–157, who doesn’t even mention the Hungarians.

⁶ The first excavations of Ottoman buildings and of rural settlements and publications of the material culture related to them date back to the 1930s–1940s, with an expansion after the World War II, becoming an independent subfield within archaeology. GERŐ 2003; LASZLOVSKY/RASSON 2003.

⁷ ROGERS 2003, 41.

¹ FODOR 1996, 195.

Aspekte der Archäologie des Spätmittelalters und der Frühneuzeit in Temeswar (Bezirk Timiș, Rumänien) im Kontext der Osmanischen Eroberung

Nach der Schlacht von Mohács 1526, kamen einige Regionen des Königreichs Ungarn nach und nach unter Osmanische Herrschaft und wurden zu Verwaltungseinheiten (*eyalets*) des Osmanischen Reiches. Die Region der nördlichen Banater Heide (Temes-Ebene; Teile der Komitate Arad, Cenad, Temes und Torontal) wurde 1552 nach einer einmonatigen Belagerung der Burg von Temeswar erobert.

Diese Periode der Osmanischen Herrschaft, die 164 Jahre andauerte, stellt einen sehr langen Zeitraum dar, in dem die Einflüsse einer fremden Kultur stark spürbar wurden. Die Eroberung des Gebiets führte auch zu einem massiven demografischen Wandel: Ein großer Teil der Bevölkerung floh in benachbarte Gebiete, die noch nicht annektiert worden waren, und wurde durch verschiedene Bevölkerungsgruppen vom Balkan ersetzt: Serben und Bosnier, die sich leichter in die neue Ordnung integrieren ließen.

Aus archäologischer Sicht ist die Osmanische Herrschaft deutlich erkennbar, gerade wegen des umfangreichen Imports von Objekten, die zuvor an diesem Ort nicht vorhanden waren, wodurch es sehr einfach ist, die archäologischen Schichten und Kontexte dieser Periode zu erkennen. Als konservative Gesellschaft mit strengen Regeln in vielen Lebensbereichen und unterschiedlichen Bräuchen hat sie ein wahres Potpourri an Waren aus wichtigen türkischen, persischen oder chinesischen Handwerkszentren wie Iznik, Kütahya oder Jingdezhen hinterlassen.

Diese Arbeit konzentriert sich auf die archäologische Nachweisbarkeit einer neuen Kultur, auf Fragen im Zusammenhang mit der Datierung von Artefakten, kultureller Vielfalt und möglichen ethnischen Merkmalen.

Schlagworte: Osmanische Eroberung, Timișoara/Temesvár/Temeswar, Osmanische Archäologie, 16.–17. Jahrhundert.

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