

RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES IN THE COURTYARD OF THE HUNIADE CASTLE IN TIMIȘOARA

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Abstract: Huniade Castle is the most important historical monument of the municipality of Timișoara, its centuries-old history intertwining with the evolution of the city from the Middle Ages to the modern era. The castle had several construction stages from the 13th century to the 19th century, which reflect various styles and methods of construction related to its purpose, which was a royal and noble residence, and then a casern.

In the inner courtyard of the castle, a brick donjon was discovered in 2009, which is the oldest and best-preserved archaeological vestige of medieval Timișoara, given that the city from the Middle Ages is nowadays overlapped by buildings and tissue street. The project for the restoration and conservation of the donjon, which provides for the construction of a footbridge around it, involved the carrying out of preventive archaeological research during 2021.

In this article, the results of this research are briefly presented, as a result of which built structures were discovered that complete the planimetry of the ensemble, as well as some utilitarian arrangements in the yard, a well, and a kiln, which date from the period of the 14th-15th centuries.

However, the most important result is the discovery of the first palisade and the first defensive ditch of the donjon, which had two phases of construction. According to the observations of the archaeological context and based on the ceramic discoveries, it can be estimated that these phases of wood and earth date back to the 13th-14th centuries.

Rezumat: Castelul Huniade este poate cel mai important monument istoric al municipiului Timișoara, istoria sa multiseculară împletindu-se cu evoluția orașului din Evul Mediu până în epoca modernă. Castelul a avut mai multe etape constructive din secolul XIII până în secolul XIX, care oglindesc diverse stiluri și metode de construcție legate de destinația sa, care a fost reședință regală și nobiliară, iar mai apoi cazarmă.

În curtea interioară a castelului a fost descoperit în anul 2009 un donjon construit din cărămidă, care este vestigiul arheologic cel mai vechi și mai bine păstrat al Timișoarei medievale, în condițiile în care orașul din Evul Mediu este suprapus în zilele noastre de clădiri și de trama stradală.

Proiectul de restaurare și conservare a donjonului, care prevede construirea unei pasarele de jur-împrejurul său, a implicat efectuarea unor cercetări arheologice preventive în cursul anului 2021.

În acest articol sunt prezentate succint rezultatele acestor cercetări în urma cărora au fost descoperite structuri construite care completează planimetria ansamblului, precum și a unor amenajări utilitare din curte, o fântână și un cuptor, care datează din perioada secolelor XIV-XV.

Însă, cel mai important rezultat este descoperirea primei palisade și a primului șanț de apărare al donjonului, care a avut două faze de construcție. Conform observațiilor contextului arheologic și pe baza descoperirilor ceramice se poate aprecia că aceste faze de lemn și pământ se datează în secolele XIII-XIV.

Brief history

Historical research has established for a long time that the king of Hungary, Charles I of Anjou, moved his court to Timișoara between 1315-1323.¹ This emerges from the king's itinerary, as well as from a document issued later, which mentions the king's former residence in Timișoara. From 1323 to the 16th century, the counts of Timiș resided here, the castle being part of the count's *honor*.² In 1455, King Ladislaus V pledged it to John Hunyadi (Ioan de Hunedoara), and it remained in the possession of the family until the death of Matthias Corvinus. As a result of the siege in 1552, Timișoara came under Ottoman rule until 1716. An artillery casern was built upon the ruins of the medieval castle, which was rebuilt in an eclectic style in 1856, as it can still be seen today. Starting with 1947, the building became the headquarters of the Banat Museum.

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¹ Szentkláray f.a. The first archaeological research was carried out in 1980: Rădulescu 2006.

² Institution of the Kingdom of Hungary established by Charles I of Anjou, representing the ensemble of estates and fortifications received for use along with the appointment into the function.