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"I HEARD THE SINGING OF THE MOHAMMEDAN EZAN". OTTOMAN TURKISH MOSQUE IN THE CSÓKAKŐ CASTLE (FEJÉR COUNTY)

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The Csókakő Castle built on the side of the Vértes Hills is Fejér County's only stone castle of medieval origin built on a cliff that is still standing today (fig. 1). It was built by the Csák family in the second half of the 13th century along with several other castles in the area. It was defined by its important strategic location near the main road linking Székesfehérvár and Győr, and its military function remained until the end of the 17th century. This fortification located about 25 km from Székesfehérvár had significant estates in the Middle Ages, and its owners included – in addition to the king – important aristocratic families such as the Rozgonyis, the Kanizsais, the Nádasdys and the Bakicses. The castle fell under Ottoman Turkish control in 1543-44, which continued unbroken – with the exception of a few years during the Fifteen Years War (1593-1606) – until 1687.¹

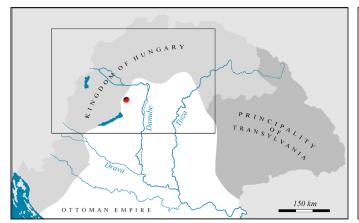




Fig. 1. Csókakő in Ottoman Hungary (Drawing by Sándor Ősi)

Considerable archaeological investigations and historic rehabilitations have been performed in the castle between 1996 and 2017.² The latter of these, performed up to 2014, brought spectacular results in relation to the inner ward developed from the 13th century castle core, the 15th century chapel and the gate tower of the outer ward also from the 15th century (*fig. 2*). A full plan for the historic rehabilitation (following the archaeological work) will be prepared after the fortification became a part of the National Castle Program in 2015. Further progress is expected in the coming years.



Fig. 2. The castle of Csókakő from the south in 2017 (Photo by Gyöngyi Kovács)

¹ For the most recent and at the same time the most detailed summary of the history of the castle, the historical sources, the archaeological research and the results up to 2008, see: Hatházi 2010. For a summary of the 2014–2015 research, see: Hatházi–Kovács 2016.

The leader of the excavations in the years 1960–1962 was Jenő Fitz. The leaders of the renewed research starting from the 1990s are Gábor Hatházi and Gyöngyi Kovács, as well as Mihály Kulcsár in the 1990s. The designers of the historic rehabilitation are Tibor Gál and Miklós Gerák.

In 2014 the excavations³ brought to the surface the remains of a special building in the castle, the foundations of the Ottoman Turkish mosque that the Turkish world traveler Evliya Çelebi mentioned in 1664 and was indicated on a 17th-century map sketch.

TWO CONTEMPORARY SOURCES ABOUT THE MOSQUE

Since according to current knowledge the sketch map kept at the General State Archives of Baden-Württemberg in Karlsruhe is the only cartographic source about the mosque (fig. 3),⁴ it is worthwhile to discuss it

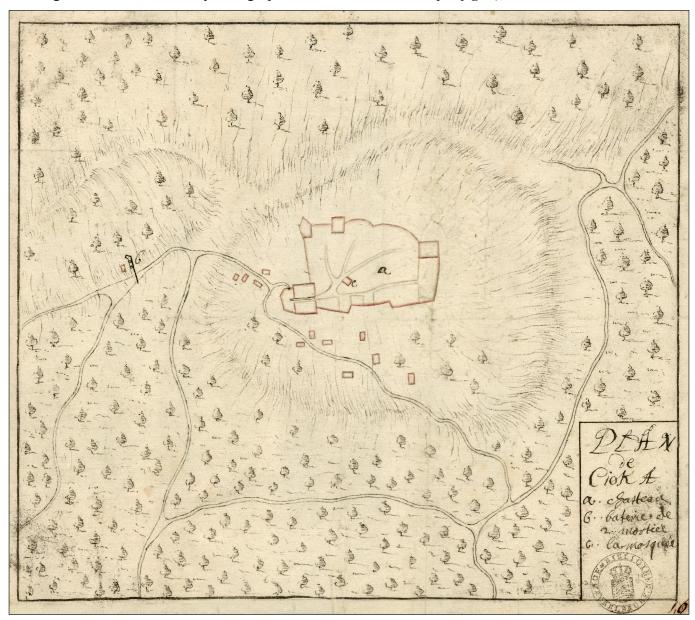


Fig. 3. Representation of the castle of Csókakő in a 17th-century map sketch (Karlsruhe, General State Archives of Baden-Württemberg)

Since 2014 the excavations have continued with the financial support of the Hungarian National Property Management Company, and organized by the Szent István Király Musuem in Székesfehérvár. Our archaeology colleagues are Ágnes Kolláth, Csilla Szőllősy and Tamás Belegrai, our GIS experts are Balázs Holl and Krisztián Pokrovenszki. The photogrammetry experts are Ilona Győrfi and József Vajda.

Generallandsarchiv (GLA), Karlsruhe, Karten, H., Hfk. XIV. Nr. 76 GI. 263. The ground plan was most recently published in: KISARI BALLA 2000, 516: fig. 257. For a summary of the earlier literature related to the ground plan, see: HATHÁZI 2010, 264, footnote 67. See also: Sudár 2014, 235.

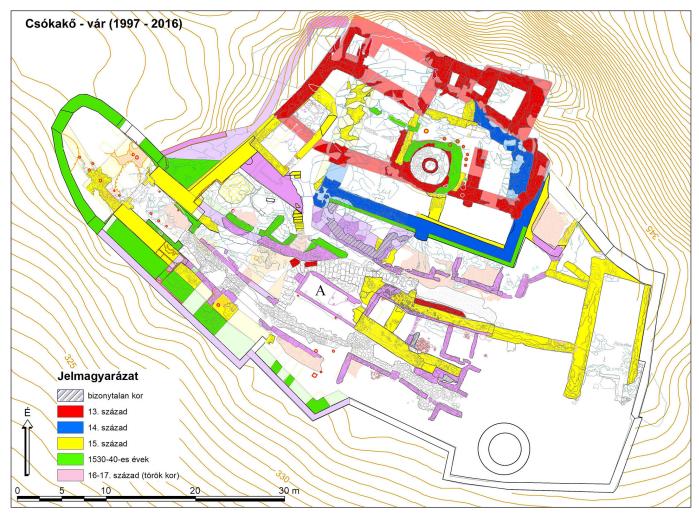


Fig. 4. The plan of the castle, the location of the mosque is marked by letter A (Drawing by Balázs Holl, survey by Balázs Holl, Krisztián Pokrovenszki, Tamás Belegrai)

in more detail. On the basis of the results of the excavation from 2015, it seems that the plan was not made around 1690 (as was hypothesized up until now), but instead in a much earlier decade of the 17th century, so prior to its recapture by the Christians and before the final Turkish fortification work. The plan of the castle depicts two buildings along the southern main wall of the outer ward – with the small road leading to the castle wall between them – which we were able to successfully excavate and determine that they were from the Turkish period. According to our excavation observations, the buildings were merged – through the demolition of the eastern outer wall of the western building – in the first half/middle third of the 17th century, and the small road leading to the castle wall ceased to exist (fig. 4). It can be clearly seen that the newly constructed section of wall that closed off the small road contains the remains of the end of the demolished wall. Thus the sketch map without doubt records conditions prior to the middle third of the 17th century.

The new dating of the sketch map may provide an explanation for why it preserves the earlier conditions of the southern interior buildings of the castle, why it indicates service paths on the interior of the castle that according to archaeological data no longer existed in this form or had been altered by the end of the 17th century and last but not least why the location and the function of the mosque is indicated so precisely. Following its recapture in 1687, the Christian descriptions from the end of the 17th century and the 18th century do not mention a mosque, 5 despite the fact that Turkish captives were imprisoned in the

According to a German/Latin language description of the castle from 1690, in the castle "the buildings are constructed in the Hungarian, or rather Turkish manner from stone". So, the person writing the description noticed that there were buildings "constructed in the Turkish manner" in the castle, but did not know the function of the mosque, unlike the person who made the map. Cf. *Urbaria et Conscriptiones* 1967, 100–101; as well as Jeney 1971, 9.

castle between 1692 and 1695.⁶ The realistic possibility arose that the French language map may have been created during one of the sieges of the Fifteen Years War in 1601-1602 (the Christian armies were led by the Lotharingian prince Philip Emanuel Mercoeur at that time). On the basis of the historical events, the details of which are well known,⁷ the sketch may even be from around the 10th of September 1601. If this is true, then an early version of the mosque may really have stood here prior to the 10th-11th of September 1601. It is worth noting that the precise details of the map are fundamentally limited to the outer ward, as if the person who drafted it did not make it into the interior of the castle, only the outer ward.

Csókakő Castle fell into Turkish hands in 1543 or 1544, during the campaign of the sultan Suleiman the Magnificent aimed at developing the Ottoman Turkish defensive system around Hungary's medieval capital of Buda following its capture. This hill fort functioned as an outer fortification for Székesfehérvár, and its task was to control the Mór Valley and thereby ensure access to the Little Hungarian Plain, which was desperately needed by the Turks for the collection of taxes from the area. However, the castle is relatively far from the main road and stood at a point that was not very satisfactory for the military demands of the day. It is no accident that Evliya Çelebi only saw it, but did not enter it. The series of similar hill forts from the Middle Ages lost their significance during the period of Turkish occupation, and new stockades were built to replace them in more suitable locations (e.g. Drégely Castle and Drégelypalánk Stockade, Szekszárd Castle and Jenipalánka Stockade and Bokcsa Castle and Boksánbánya Stockade). Perhaps there was no opportunity for this at Csókakő, so in any case the castle was simply counted as a fortified "base", which was the reason for the small size of its garrison – 30-50 men. Around 1563 Csókakő became a *nahiyah* center in the *sanjak* of Székesfehérvár, but this only had slight significance from the perspective of the castle and the life within it.

The Turkish traveler Evliya Çelebi wrote about the castle and its environs in 1664,¹⁰ "Description of Csóka Castle. In Hungarian it means (---).¹¹ In the language of the Rúm it just means Jackdaw Castle.¹² Indeed, since there are many walnut trees in the hills, there are also many jackdaws. And in Rúm¹³ there is a proverb in the language of the people – it stares like a jackdaw at a walnut. In accordance with this, since there are many jackdaws, they call it Jackdaw (Csóka) Castle. It is the seat of a soubashi under Székesfehérvár and a deputy judge district. It has a commander of the castle and two hundred castle guards. Its castle was built on a high hill between Palota and the Bakony Hills. It is a small but sturdily built castle, but I did not enter it.

- ⁶ Fitz 1958, 6–7. See also: Hatházi 2010, 137, and the further literature in footnote 349.
- ⁷ For the historical events in detail, see: HATHÁZI 2010, 127–132, and further literature.
- ⁸ Hegyl 2007, II., 1014–1022. Only infantry soldiers (*mustahfis*) are listed on the pay ledger in the 16th century. Starting in 1591-1592 artillerymen show up, and in the 17th century religious staff also appears. A significant proportion of the garrison was from the Balkans.
- ⁹ Vass 1989, 69–71, and in particular 86, 88–89.
- "Evsâf-ı kal'a-i Çavka. Lisân-ı Macarda (---) (---) demekdir. Ervâm lisânında Karka kal'ası demekdir. Hakkâ ki [16b] dağlarında ceviz ağaçları çok olmağile karkası çokdur. Hattâ Rûm'da elsine-i nâsda darb-ı meseldir kim karka koza bakar gibi bakar dedikleri üzre karkaları çok olduğundan Çavka kal'ası derler. Ustolni-Belgrad hükmünde subaşılıkdır ve niyâbetdir. Dizdârı ve iki yüz mikdârı merdüm-hisârı vardır. Kal'ası Polata ve Bakvan dağları mâbeyninde bir püşte-i âlîye yapışmış bir küçük şeddâdî binâ bir kal'acıkdır, ammâ içine girmedim. -- Derûn-ı hisârda Murâd Hân-ı Sâlis câmi'inde ezân-ı Muhammedî tilâvet olunduğun istimâ' edüp su'âl etdim. -- Sene 1002 mâh-ı Muharreminde fâtih-i Yemen Sinan Paşa fethidir. Kulu azdır, ammâ kerrât ile bunun gâzîleri kâfirin Tata ve Papa ve Senmartin ve Yanık altlarına varup şikâr alup yine şâhîn yuvasına gelir gibi kal'alarına gelüp girirler. Kerrât ile kâfire amân dedirmişlerdir. -- Kıbleye nâzır bir kapusu olup cebehânesi ve her mühimmât-ı zahîreleri müstevfâdır. Lâkin bundan ileri bir kal'amız yokdur kim intihâ-i serhaddir. Her cânibinde kâfir kal'alarının horosları âvâzı işidilir. Tâ bu mertebe bî-amân kal'adır, ammâ bunun dahi bâğ u bâğçeleri çokdur. Bundan dahi yigirmi nefer kulağız alup yine dağlar ve sık ormanlıklar içre gidüp kâmil yedi sâ'at yürüyüp sehel atlara istirâhat etdirüp 9 sâ'atde." Evliyâ 2003, 28.
- A blank space left by Evliya in the text, which just means that he did not know the Hungarian meaning of the word.
- In the language of the people living in Rúm Slavic there is the word *chavka* 'csóka' meaning crow, Evliya is correct in this. The Turkish translation, *karga*, is also appropriate, indicating species belonging to the *corvus* genus of the *corvidae* family, which also includes the jackdaw.
- ¹³ In Rumelia, or rather the Balkans.

When I heard the singing of the Mohammedan ezan in the castle mosque of Khan Murad III, ¹⁴ I inquired about the [castle]. In the month of Muharram in the year 1002, ¹⁵ the victor of Yemen, Sinan Pasha conquered it. ¹⁶ Its soldiers are few, but if the opportunity arises its fighters go below the infidels' [castles of] Tata, Pápa, Szent-Márton and Győr, plunder and then return like a falcon to its nest. At times the infidels say, "mercy!" It has a single gate looking towards the qibla, ¹⁷ and its armory and supplies are sufficient. We have no castles in advance of this, as this is the edge of the frontier. Here the voices of the roosters are heard from everywhere, from the castles of the infidels." (translated from the Hungarian translation of Balázs Sudár.) ¹⁸ Numerous actual elements can be found – despite the inaccuracies ¹⁹ – in Evliya's descriptions, and this is the case for Csókakő as well. At the same time, it is interesting that the traveler does not know about the first period of occupation of the castle (1543-1593), and does not even mention that it changed hands many times during the Fifteen Years War (1598, 1601–1602). The history he relates recalls just one conquest, in the year 1593, and names the conqueror of the castle, the Grand Vizier Sinan Pasha. It is a fact that the individual mentioned was active in the area at the time indicated, and took Veszprém and Palota, but we do not know about the battles for Csókakő. It is conceivable that the story of its conquest in this form is just an invention or logical conclusion of Evliya Çelebi. ²⁰

RESULTS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH OF THE CASTLE AND THE MOSQUE

The ca. 600 m² area of the early, 13th-14th century section of Csókakő Castle occupies the highest point of the cliff top that is the site of the castle. In the 15th century, large scale new construction was performed,

and as a result of this the early castle became the inner ward. Around this, a ca. 1,400 m² outer ward was constructed at levels 7-17 m below it, which connected to the earlier central castle in an L shape from the south and east (fig. 4). The slope of the steep hillside was bridged through the formation of several stepped stone terraces. In the Turkish period (particularly in the 17th century), considerable construction projects were also performed in the outer ward; the medieval buildings were demolished or remodeled and new structures were sometimes erected. One example of the latter is the mosque, whose surviving foundations are a special relic of Ottoman Turkish architecture in Hungary, at least in terms of mosques that are still standing or the actual known details from excavations.21

The remains of the mosque (fig. 5) are set on the northern wall of the 15th century space between the walls leading to the interior of the outer ward (fig. 5) (The direction of this section of the men-



Fig. 5. Remains of the mosque in the outer ward from the west, 2014 (Photo by Gyöngyi Kovács)

¹⁴ Sultan Murad III (1574–1595).

¹⁵ 26 September 1593-25 October 1593.

¹⁶ After the capture of Veszprém and Palota, there were indeed military operations in the area in October of 1593, which were in fact led by the Grand Vizier Sinan Pasha. However, there is no evidence about the siege of Csókakő.

This is a strange phrasing of the Muslim perception of space, which can be approximately rendered in English as "from where we look towards the *qibla* (towards the Kaaba in Mecca)". Thus, for a building this is the northwestern wall.

¹⁸ EVLIYÂ 2003, 28. For Imre Karácson's slightly imprecise translation, see: EVLIA 1908, 51.

¹⁹ Cf. for example, Sudár 2012a, 40–48.

²⁰ On Evliya's constructed (compiled from actual data, but still incorrect) histories, see: Sudár 2012b.

²¹ See: Sudár 2014.



Fig. 6. The southern façade of the foundation of the mosque (Photo by Gyöngyi Kovács)

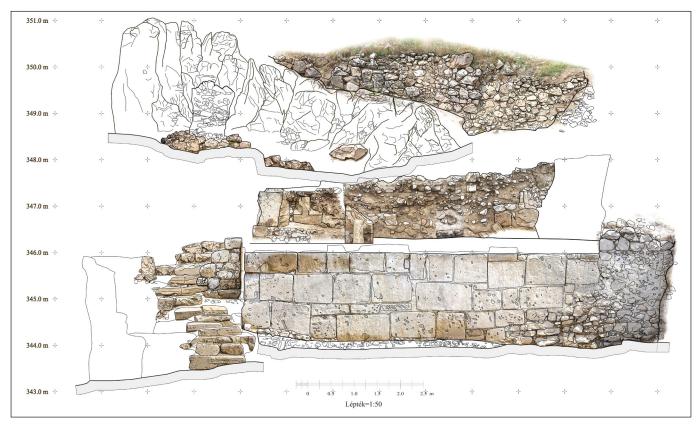


Fig. 7. The southern façade of the foundation of the mosque (photogrammetry by Ilona Győrfi and József Vajda)



Fig. 8. The northern wall of the mosque, with a medieval stone section (Photo by Gyöngyi Kovács)



Fig. 9. Remains of the mosque with the stairs (Photo by Gyöngyi Kovács)



Fig. 10. "Space economizing", modern, wooden place of worship in Bursa http://www.yeserenahsap.com/UserFiles/Fotograflar/2882.jpg (4 October 2017)

tioned wall is suitable for the demands of the Islamic religion – the direction of Mecca from Hungary is to the southeast). The structure is bordered to the south by a street that widens into a small square in the area between the walls, and to the west and north by a staircase leading to the upper stone terrace of the outer ward.

The ground area of the sub-structure (stone foundations), which has been discovered relatively intact, is 7.7×3 m, and its height is 2 m. During its construction, the northern wall of the medieval space between the walls was significantly demolished and widened to the north. The southern and western surfaces of the medieval wall were given a new façade treatment, receiving dressed ashlar cladding (*figs.* 6–7). The top of the demolished medieval wall and the Turkish-period expansion were brought to the same level through a compensating infill of rubble stone, gravel and mortar, which was covered by a floor level base of mortar and clay.

The majority of the superstructure has been lost, with only the lower section of the wall on the northern side still standing (to a height of about 1.5 m), which also contains re-used medieval stone sections amongst its materials (fig. 8). We observed cladding also made of large medieval ashlar stone on the interior side, below which the space for a 20 cm diameter east-west beam appeared sunk into the floor level base of the building interior. Traces of beams were also found elsewhere in the floor level base of the building interior, and from their traces in the east-west and north-south directions, we can conclude that there was a grid structure that served as the base of the superstructure and to strengthen it. On the southern edge of the sub-structure a bordering row of stones and carved "stone tenon"-type remains are present, which were for the securing of the beams.

The eastern exterior wall was constructed atop the wall of the neighboring 15th century building that was demolished to the level of the top of the foundation of the mosque.²² The entrance was on the western (or more precisely, the northwestern) side, and its location is indicated by a well-preserved staircase made up of 3-4 rectangular prism-shaped stones (*fig. 9*).

²² There was no relationship or functional connection between the mosque and the Turkish-era period of the 15th century building.





Fig. 11a.b. A wooden place of worship built on a bench, with a wooden foundation, Afyonkarahisar http://www.kulturportali.gov.tr/turkiye/afyonkarahisar/kulturenvanteri/bel-mescd-gokce-cam (4 October 2017)

The characteristically Turkish architectural solutions alien to the castle's medieval period (reinforcing/strengthening beam structure and large ashlar walls), the elements aimed at making it more imposing (the precisely carved and laid large ashlar facing of the sub-structure, the entrance stairs made of rectangular prism-shaped stones and the quoins reinforcing the ashlar construction at the northwestern corner) and the abundant and uniform Turkish finds discovered in the building's rubble infill indicate that we are dealing with a Turkish structure with a prominent function, which on the basis of the sketch map from Karlshuhe must be interpreted as the remains of Csókakő's Muslim place of worship. The map does indicate the castle mosque quite precisely at this location.

The ground area of the structure's stone foundations is without doubt small. This size was determined by the castle's small available space, the extent it was filled with construction and the terrain conditions. The small size of the Turkish garrison may also have influenced this. However, the superstructure that in all likelihood was primarily wood-framed may have had a larger floor space, extending from the plane of the foundation on the southern façade. According to our conception, the Turkish building in its exterior form may have resembled old residential houses characteristic of Ottoman Turkish architecture with a wood-framed superstructure extending out on brackets or columns (Ottoman architects did in fact utilize these solutions when space was lacking, see *figs. 10–11*). This solution is indicated not only by the grid of wooden beams sunk into the floor level base, but also the spots observed along the southern façade that preserve wooden remains and may have been the holes for holding posts that could be connected to the support of the mosque's superstructure.

The staircase mentioned earlier that bounds the mosque to the west and north dates from several periods. Its lowest section was built utilizing a significant amount of re-purposed medieval (in cases 13th century) carved stone pieces and is a hastily built Turkish period construction. The stone pieces in all probability are from the nearby (about 10 km away as the crow flies) Vértesszentkereszt Benedictine monastery that was abandoned in the 16th century.

The age of the Csókakő mosque is dated to the 17th century by several coins of Matthias II (1608-1619) and Ferdinand II (1619-1637) that were found in the foundations of the floor.²³ On the basis of the coins, it seems that its construction may have taken place in the first decades of the 17th century. According to

The coins of these Habsburg rulers were also in use in Ottoman Hungary, and they might be connected even to Hungarian serfs forced to labor for their lords (see note 27.).

the archaeological observations, a renovation (remodeling) may have taken place, perhaps in the 1630s or 1640s. The archaeological data are in accordance with information from the soldier's pay list. Religious staff appears in the 17th century; in 1608 there is the *muezzin* Memi Bosna (who on the basis of his name may have been Bosnian) and he appears again in 1619 along with the *imam* Ibrahim. In 1631-1632 the muezzin was Mehmed Hasan.²⁴

In contrast to the excavation results, Evliya Çelebi states that the building can be linked to the sultan Murad III (1574–1595). This, as well as the staff paid amongst the mercenaries, clearly indicates that the ruler supported the place of worship, so in no way could it have been a private foundation. In the case of small castles like this, royal mosques were usually founded at the time of capture, and we can rightfully count on something like this at the time of the first conquest, in 1543 or 1544, but there are no traces of the existence of a place of worship in the first Ottoman period. The repeated loss and recapture of the castle during the Fifteen Years War may have provided a good reason for the foundation of a royal place of worship again, and Evliya Çelebi points this out as well. However, the foundation connected to Murad III may be incorrect or a result of misunderstanding, as this could also have occurred at a later date (let us not forget that Evliya himself did not enter the castle, so he could hardly have ascertained the founder of the mosque at the site).

Nevertheless, it is certain that the mosque was founded within a state context sometime, and this may have taken place in 1599 or 1602, as there was not really an opportunity for this at any other time. Due to all of this as well as the historical events cited above, the mosque in all likelihood may have been built at the end of the 16th century. This building may have been remodeled in the 17th century, certainly after 1619 on the basis of the coins. We do not know whether the 17th century construction projects also included the reconstruction of the foundations or were only aimed at the renovation of the superstructure.

The key individuals at the castle in the first half of the 17th century were Şaban Agha (*dizdar*) and *kethuda* Osman, who may have been the individuals who remodeled the place of worship, and thus the financial supporters of it. They first appear in the list of soldier's pay in 1608, and they are still leaders at the castle in 1631-1632.²⁶ The Hungarian serfs from the area were ordered to perform corvée labor for the building projects in the castle, perhaps including the construction of the mosque, and the sources report on the brutal way they were treated.²⁷

ARCHITECTURAL PARALLELS OF THE MOSQUE

As we have written, the Csókakő mosque was situated on one of the interior walls of the castle's 15th century system of defensive walls. Amongst the mosques from the Turkish occupation period still standing in Hungary, the western façade of the mosque in the Víziváros district of Esztergom²⁸ was built upon the former town wall, or more precisely the Víziváros (medieval) Gate (so in this sense it is an analogy to a great extent), but in terms of its floor area and superstructure it was much larger and more imposing than the Csókakő mosque. While the Esztergom mosque was a typical Muslim place of worship with a *mihrab* and a minaret, the mosque at Csókakő may have only been a residential-style building, even if it was constructed as a place of worship. The great majority of the several hundred Muslim places of worship from the Turkish occupation belonged to this simple type of structure that lacked or had very few classical Ottoman

 $^{^{24}}$ Hegyi 2007, II., 1014–1022; Sudár 2014, 235.

²⁵ Although the coins indicated construction in the 17th century, the other archaeological finds do not exclude construction at the end of the 16th century. These finds cannot be dated more precisely within 8-10 year period under discussion.

²⁶ Hegyi 2007, II., 1019–1022.

²⁷ Fitz 1958, 6: e.g. in 1618 the serfs from the community of Nagy Nyul were ordered to perform repair work on the castle's fortifications; in 1643 Ibrahim Agha (the son-in-law of Şaban and the *dizdar* following him at Csókakő) had a well (according to the 2017 excavations, a cistern) dug out in the outer ward by the "*giaours*" (infidels).

²⁸ Horváth–Zsembery 2008.

features.²⁹ Unfortunately, research of the history of architecture has not paid extensive attention to these structures, although this building type was dominant within the whole of the Ottoman Empire. Once in a while, wooden structures were also common -Evliya Çelebi gives reference to such a building in the Hungarian borderlands as well – and although their number has considerably decreased by today, numerous examples can be visited both in Anatolia and in the Balkans. On the basis of the few remains, the mosque of Csókakő can be clearly classified in terms of its ground plan; it had a rectangular ground plan with the entrance opening on the shorter, northwestern side, opposite the qibla, or the direction of Mecca. Naturally, this type of mosque did not have a dome, even when constructed of stone, but instead was covered in a simple gable roof. The presence of a minaret is not mandatory, even is there was one at Csókakő, it must have been made of wood (fig. 12).30 Today we do not know of any wood-framed places of worship similar to the Csókakő mosque amongst the historic buildings of Hungary, so for the time being it is in its own manner a unique monument to Ottoman Turkish religious architecture in Hungary.



Fig. 12. Mosque with a wooden minaret in Sarajevo (Photo by Hajnalka Kovács)

GLOSSARY

dizdar – fortress commander

ezan – call to prayer

giaour - "infidel", person not of the Islam faith

imam – leader of a Muslim community

kethuda – deputy (here the deputy fortress commander)

qibla – the direction of prayer (Mecca), in Hungary this is to the southeast

mihrab – alcove in the wall that is in the direction of prayer

minaret – tower constructed next to mosques from which the call to prayer is heard

muezzin – (mu'adhin) person appointed at a mosque to call the Muslims to prayer five times a day

²⁹ Sudár 2014, 112–113.

³⁰ Ibid., 80, figs. 6a-b.

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