GENIUS LOCI LASZLOVSZKY 60

edited by
Dóra Mérai
and
Ágnes Drosztmér, Kyra Lyublyanovics,
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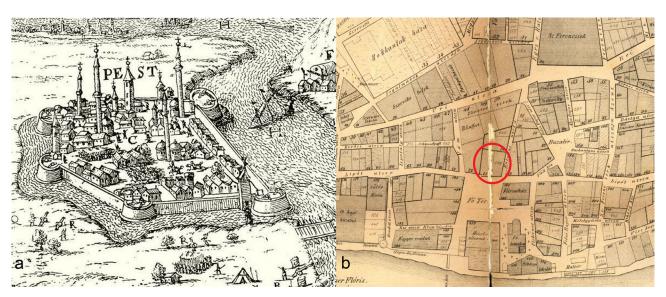
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Places of Memory / Az emlékezet helyei

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Ottomans in Pest in the Light of "Luxury" Ceramics: Four Cups from Kígyó Street

TÜNDE KOMORI*



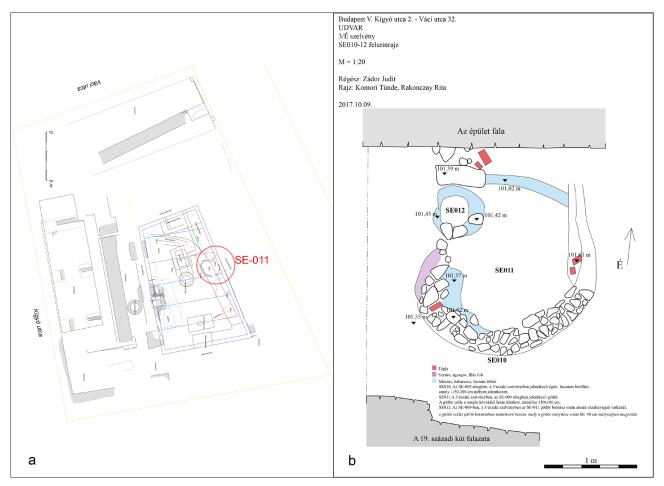
Pest was occupied by the Ottomans together with Buda between 1541 and 1686. The two towns had been closely connected from the Middle Ages onwards and this connection remained during the occupation. The status of the two towns however was quite different in this period: Buda was a vilayet center with a pasha residing next to the medieval royal palace - a complex which was occupied by the garrison, while Pest itself became a garrison town, inhabited mostly by soldiers and their families. This difference is reflected in the Ottoman-period ceramic finds, mainly through the presence of Oriental import or "luxury" ceramics.1 Excavations have yielded a rich assemblage of such objects from Ottoman layers in Buda; in Pest, however, the number of imported Oriental ceramic sherds is significantly lower in ratio compared to Buda, even though typical Ottoman tableware is present. This study discusses this difference as seen in four ceramic cup fragments, three out of which can be identified as Oriental imports.

▶ Fig. 1. (a) The view of Pest – part of an Italian engraving, published by Francesco Collignon in the seventeenth century (source: http://keptar.oszk.hu/html/kepoldal/index.phtml?id=3975; Magyar Történelmi Képcsarnok T.145).
(b) Location of the site on Flóris Rómer's map of Pest, after Rómer, A régi Pest, 110.

The site is located near the medieval main square of the town, which probably remained a frequented location during the Ottoman period as well (Fig. 1/a). The excavation took place in the inner courtyard of the present-day building at the corner of 2 Kígyó street and 32 Váci street. The earliest preserved ground plan of the plot is from 1862.² According to Flóris Rómer (called the "father of Hungarian archaeology"), Heinrich Siegfried Herold, pharmacist and town councilor, had owned the house that stood on this plot earlier in 1696 (Fig. 1/b, no. 73), and the house on the corner was separated from this plot and building in 1733 (Fig. 1/b, no. 589).³

The history of the plot is important for the archaeological context of the finds discussed here.⁴ As a result of the several construction episodes on the plot between the end of the seventeenth century and 1872, as well as modifications made to the inner courtyard after the Sec-

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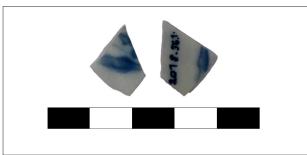
► Fig. 2. (a) Ground plan of the excavation, by Zsolt Viemann, Budapest History Museum. (b) Surface of SE-011, by Rita Rakonczay and Tünde Komori, Budapest History Museum, Archaeological Documentation Database, inv. no. BTM RA ltsz. 6159-2018.

ond World War, the archaeological features mostly consisted of leveling layers and modern period sewage constructions, including a well (Fig. 2/a).⁵ One of the two well-defined features is the pit (Fig. 2/b. SE-011) that yielded three of the four cups discussed here.

The cups

Chinese porcelain

One sherd of Chinese porcelain was discovered during the excavations (Fig. 3). It has a foliated rim and vertically ribbed walls, which are decorated with nature scenes on both sides, with a bird sitting on a rock in the well. This type can be dated to the Wanli period (1573-1620) and has been identified as the product of the Guanyinge kiln in Jingdezhen.⁶



▶ Fig. 3. Blue and white Chinese porcelain sherd, Wanli period (1573-1620). Budapest History Museum, inv. no. 2018.56.1. (photo by T. Komori).

The sherd was recovered in the upper layer which covered the whole surface of the court-yard and consisted mostly of modern debris. This suggests that it was either buried on this plot or nearby and ended up in an upper mixed layer as a result of several episodes of constructions that moved significant amounts of dirt. Regardless of the unfortunate archaeological context, this one piece of Chinese porcelain is outstanding in the context of Pest because it is the only one known so far.



▶ Fig. 4. Persian faience cup sherd imitating Chinese porcelain, (sixteenth-)seventeenth century. Budapest History Museum, inv. no. 2018.16.226 (photo by T. Komori).

Persian faience, A

Persian faience is a lesser known part of the material culture of Ottoman Hungary. The first comprehensive study of the type was published by Imre Holl, where he also discusses the fact that Persian faience in general imitates the motifs of Chinese porcelain. The piece recovered at Kígyó street (Fig. 4) was buried in the pit marked SE-011 in the documentation (see Fig. 2/b). This pit contained mainly Ottoman-period finds, including the two faience (Figs. 4 and 5) cups and the locally produced vessel (Fig. 6) discussed below. The pit, which was connected to the cellar wall of the building standing today, was marked by stones placed in a half circle with no binder between the stones.

The cup depicted on Fig. 4 has no direct parallel among the published Persian faience finds from Hungary; but it can be placed among the most typical types of Persian blue and white ware of the period. The vessel is unusually well-preserved, the glaze is intact and shiny; its paste is high-quality faience, which resembles to porcelain to a deceiving extent. Its deceptiveness does not stop with the glaze, the cobalt blue-painted ornamental motif might also be mistaken for lower quality or "folk-painted" (private kiln-produced) Chinese porcelain.8 What gives it away is the potter's mark on the bottom, which is not a



▶ Fig. 5. Persian faience cup sherd, (sixteenth-)seventeenth century. Budapest History Museum, inv. no. 2018.16.227 (photo by T. Komori).

Chinese character but rather an imitation of one. Interestingly, this exact mark is without analogy among the published Persian pieces discovered in Hungary. As small cups are rather underrepresented in the international scholarship, finding a parallel for precise identification requires further research. Possible directions include certain Persian types which material testing proved to have been produced in Iznik. The style and quality of this particular cup suggests Safavid production, mostly because of its close resemblance to Chinese porcelain – a trademark of Safavid blue and white ceramics.

Persian faience, B

This type is easier to place in the context of Ottoman Hungary, because it occurs quite commonly in Ottoman contexts. The motif is an imitation of a common Chinese porcelain type of the Wanli period (1573-1620), decorated with a peach in the well and clouds and floral motifs on the outer wall. The Persian variation of this motif is a stylized imitation of the entire decoration. This cup, also discovered at Kígyó street in the context of pit SE-011, is an outstanding piece of the type. The body is thin-walled and the decoration is well-articulated, although the glaze is corroded. Even though the motif is well-recognizable, its articulation leaves the

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► Fig. 6. Locally produced cup, sixteenth-seventeenth century. Budapest History Museum, inv. no. 2018.16.225.

vessel with no direct analogy in the faience assemblages of Ottoman Hungary.

Local cup

The most intact find of SE-011 was the ceramic cup depicted on Fig. 6. This cup was most likely locally produced as it corresponds to the typical Ottoman-type tableware which scholarship does not identify as import. The cup is shaped similarly to footed bowls, made with oxidation firing, covered in brownish-yellow glaze with underglaze white engobe. The size of the cup corresponds to its Oriental imported counterparts, thus it was probably used for drinking coffee, tea or soup.

Conclusions

The absence of Oriental imported ceramics in Ottoman Pest is definitely not a result of the lack of archaeological research. Several Ottomanperiod sites with ceramic assemblages typically associated with Ottomans have already been identified in Pest. These assemblages, however, rarely contain imported Oriental ceramics. This might be because most of Pest's inhabitants were the families of the soldiers stationed in the town garrison, probably not among the wealthiest of society. Several sites, however, such as the Ottoman cellar excavated in the courtyard of the

Károlyi Palace (presently Petőfi Museum of Literature), indicate that some inhabitants had a higher financial status. A Venetian glass bowl recovered from this cellar shows a taste for prestige goods, still the site did not yield Oriental "luxury" ceramics, which one would expect.¹²

This absence of Oriental ceramics raises questions regarding the material culture of the inhabitants of Pest during the Ottoman period and the social composition of the town. A possible hypothesis about the users of Oriental ceramics associates these objects with high-ranking officials and military leaders educated and cultured in the center of the Ottoman Empire, who might have arrived at their posts in Hungary with a taste for and a habit of using such objects. Based on this hypothesis, there were probably few such persons stationed in Pest, the garrison town of Buda. Another possible approach focuses on the role of Pest in the trading network of the Ottoman Empire. The difference in the number of Oriental ceramics unearthed in Buda and Pest paints a fundamentally different picture regarding the commercial activity of the two towns. For reconstructing these activities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, more complex research is needed that focuses on the movement of objects and a network of connections between the producers, traders, and consumers of the period.¹³

Notes

- The term "luxury" in this paper is used for Chinese porcelain, Persian faience and Iznik ware, which are considered the luxury ceramics of the Ottoman period. Their luxurious character however is mostly hypothetical as no systematic study had been done to prove their social value so far.
- At that time, the plot and the house at that time belonged to Alajosné Gamperl, maiden name Anna Mária Pákozdy, who wished to separate the property into two; see: "Hungaricana," Budapest Főváros Levéltára [Budapest City Archive], accessed September 26, 2018, https://maps. hungaricana.hu/hu/BFLTervtar/5366/. Two major modifications are also preserved: ibid., https://maps.hungaricana.hu/hu/BFLTervtar/10316/ and https://maps.hungaricana.hu/hu/BFLTervtar/9736/.
- Floris Rómer, A régi Pest: történeti tanulmány [Old Pest: a historical study] (Budapest: Eggenberger-féle Akadémiai Könyvkereskedés, 1873), 132.
- After Herold's death in 1705 the pharmacy was in the possession of the Osterwald-Götterdorfer family until 1776. It then changed owners several times, until the present-day building was constructed in 1871–72, designed by József Diescher for Károly Várady. For the history of the pharmacy see: Mihály Pársztor, Buda és Pest a török uralom után [Buda and Pest after the Ottoman occupa-

- tion], Statisztikai Közlemények 73., ed. Lajos Illyefalvi (Budapest: Budapest Székesfőváros Statisztikai Hivatala, 1935), 18-19. For the plans, see: "Hungaricana," Budapest Főváros Levéltára [Budapest City Archive], accessed September 26, 2018, https://maps.hungaricana.hu/hu/BFLTervtar/10512/ and https://maps.hungaricana.hu/hu/BFLTervtar/13174/
- This might well be dated to the eighteenth century (although no evidence discovered so far supports this dating); but was definitely deeper later as the level of the courtyard rose. Another well was discovered in the cellars parallel with Kígyó street, next to a wall which might be dated before the eighteenth century (see Figure 2/a).
- Bai Zhang, Complete Collection of Ceramic Art Unearthed in China: Guangdong, Guangxi, Hainan, Sichuan, Chongqing, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan (Beijing: Science Press, 2008), 232. About the kiln see: Sten Sjöstrand, The Wanli Shipwreck and its Ceramic Cargo (Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Muzium, 2007), 66. and Xinyuan Liu 刘新园 et al.,"江西景德镇观音阁明代窑址发掘简报 Jiangxi Jingdezhen Guanyinge Mingdai yaozhi fajue jianbao" [Excavations at the Ming-period Guanyinge kiln, in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province], Wenwu 文物 [Cultural Relics] 12 (2009): 39–58.
- Imre Holl, "Külföldi kerámia Magyarországon III" [Foreign ceramics in Hungary, part 3], Budapest Régiségei 40. (2006): 261–263. The connection between Persian blue and white ceramics and Chinese porcelain was established as early as the 1950s by Arthur Lane, and was later assessed by several other scholars; see Arthur Lane, Later Islamic Pottery (London: Faber and Faber, 1957). Other examples: Carswell, John, "Şīn in Syria," Iran 17

- (1979): 15–24; Lisa Golombek et al., "Safavid Potters' Marks and the Question of Provenance," *Iran* 39 (2001): 207–236.
- For "folk-painted" porcelain, see: Keguan Bi, Chinese Folk Painting on Porcelain (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1991).
- Márta Balla and Katalin Éder, "Budai lelőhelyekről előkerült török kori fajanszok anyagvizsgálata" [Tests on Ottoman-era faience from sites in Buda], in Mesterségek és műhelyek a középkori és kora újkori Magyarországon. Tanulmányok Holl Imre emlékére. [Crafts and Workshops in Hungary during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period. Studies in Memory of Imre Holl], ed. Elek Benkő et al. (Budapest: MTA BTK RI, 2016), 95–112.
- For closer analogies see: Holl, "Külföldi kerámia," 280. Figs. 18/1-2.; The closest analogy was discovered in Eger Castle, see Orsolya Zay, Az egri vár oszmán-török kori porcelán- és fajansztöredékei [Ottoman-period porcelain and faience sherds from the Castle of Eger], MA thesis (Budapest: Eötvös Loránd University, 2013), 191–192, Tables 39 and 40. no. 5 (inventory no.: V2010.12.3.).
- Judit Zádor, "Régészeti adatok a török kori Pestről" [Archaeological data from the city of Pest in the Turkish period], Budapest Régiségei 38 (2004): 217–229.
- Judit Zádor, "Velencei üvegtál a Károlyi Palota udvarán feltárt török tárolóból" [Venetian glass bowl found in the Turkish storage discovered in the yard of the Károlyi Palace], Budapest Régiségei 37 (2003): 189–196.
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