

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE SZALONNA CALVINIST CHURCH

Village Szalonna (c. Borsod) lies on the Bódva, at the southern extension of the Szárhegy, north of Szendrő. In technical literature it is known of its church, standing on a small hill in the centre of the village. Its most important part is the shrine, once a round church. The romanesque and gothic wall paintings, uncovered at the beginning of our century add to the significance of the church.

Szalonna used to be the quarters of the Örsúr kin at the time of the Magyar Conquest. The village is first mentioned in documents in the 13th c. The name comes from ancient Slavic language.

The document from 1249 tells that the members of the Örsúr kin sell Zsíros and Martonyi of the Szalonna estate to Tecus, bailiff in Sáros, and to his brothers. The Tecus family owned the Szalonna land even in the 14th c.

The first data about the church have been preserved in the Papal tithe-list, where it is mentioned as a small church consecrated to St Margaret.

Loránd Szalonnai and his younger brother, István made a contract with their nephew from Torna on the family estate before the chapter of Jászó in 1340. According to the contract the Torna branch has got the fortification of Torna with 17 villages, while the Szalonna branch owned Szalonna and 14 other villages.

The most noteworthy member of the family at the end of the 14th c. was István Szalonnai, who, according to a document from 1399, ruled over 18 villages. The document mentions the masonry house of the family with a fencing wall, the church and a water mill in the village. After István Szalonnai's death (1402) the significance of the family decreased, the estates disintegrated.

In 1554 the Turks arrived to the Sajó and Bódva valley. Antal Veranics, Bishop of Eger wrote in his letter in 1562, that Zangzacchus, bey of Fülek had burnt Szalonna. In 1582 the settlement paid 50 forints poll-tax to the Turks.

The village is mentioned several times in the 16517th centuries as an accessory to the Szendrő fortification.

The protestant ecclesy, according to historical data, was formed in Szalonna in 1589. The tax of the pries reached 25 forints.

The historical significance of the village grew gradually smaller and smaller, its estates belonged to middle and small landowners, while the church remained in the hands of the calvinist ministry.

The church was first depicted at the beginning of our century by Viktor Miskovszky and Gergely Pörge.

The authentic research of the church began in 1972 with the investigation of the outer walls. The execution of the reconstructive works began in 1973 followed a year later by archaeological excavations.

The round church, built of bricks diverges from the orientation of the nave of stones. The round church stands on stone basement, the brick walls

were made of $30 \times 14.5 \times 5$ cms large bricks. For some of the architectural elements (frieze, first row of the footing, entrance) ashlar was used.

In front of the shrine of the round church the 12–13th c. pavement, trimmed with $28 \times 14 \times 5$ cms large bricks was found 35 cms deep, under a layer of brick rubble and mortar. The vaulted arch built during the enlargement was made of bricks preserving mortar remains. The level of the round church was lifted during the extensions in the second half of the 13th c. with the rubble of the ruined western wall. The coloured pieces of plaster collected from the rubble fit into the wall paintings on the eastern wall of the nave of the round church, showing the Margaret legend. In some cases even the pieces of the frame could be identified. It shows that the painting ran over on the ruined western wall as well.

At the beginning of the excavations a hole could be noticed at the meeting point of the shrine and the nave of the round church. Later the hole proved to have been a priestly sit in a niche. After the clearing off the filling of the round church, the basement of the building came to light.

The western wall of the round church was found 800 cms far from the eastern wall of the shrine. The southern end of the wall remained somewhat higher. The stone basement was followed by a well elaborated ashler row, then by the brick footing. It is best demonstrated in the eastern wall of the nave. The outer ground floor of the round church has been found in the south-eastern corner of the later enlargement of the nave.

A square-formed stone pillar (110×110 cm) was found in the axis of the nave 444 cms from the western entrance of the church. Later a round pillar was attached to its eastern side. The square formed pillar comes from the Middle Ages, while the rounded one seems to have been the base of a wooden pillar supporting the wooden ceiling of the 17th c. Similar phenomenon can be noticed in the Rudabánya Calvinist Church also together with a wooden ceiling from the 17th c.

The nave from the 13th c. had 160 cm high basement, the ground floor was found 30 cms deep.

The western entrance, originally the entrance of the round church, is on a secondary place now. During the baroque building period inner alterations were made.

During the 15th c. a square formed ossary was added to the southern side of the round church. Its western wall could not be found. No trace of entrance could be detected on the badly preserved walls. The ventry of the 15th c. can be reconstructed from the walls standing on the northern side of the shrine. Its entrance was found bricked in the wall of the nave of the round church. According to the documents the ventry was pulled down in 1808. The stones may have been used for the building of the baroque fencing wall.

The furniture of the church comes from the 18–19th cc. The belfry standing in the yard is from 1786.

Summing up we can tell, that the descendants of the Örsúr kin built their church in Szalonna, in the centre of their Szalonna estate, and used it also as a burial place, as it can be deduced from the skeletal finds, at the turn of

the 12th, 13th century. No other sacral building is known in the settlement, thus it must have functioned also as a Parish church.

The ground plan of the church with the semicircle formed nave and the shrine is a representative of the round church form spread in Central Europe. The outer architectural elaboration is characterised by wall piers proportioning the plane of the wall, the semicircle and dentally engraved elements of the architrave are closed with a stone frieze. The windows are of stepped orders of arches. The original entrance is not known, though its frame stones can be found in the western entrance. Beside the well elaborated outer façade, inner decoration was important, too, as it is shown by the remains of the wall painting depicting the legend of Margaret of Antiochy, the titular saint of the church.

After the Tartar invasion the church proved to be too small. One third of the nave of the round church was demolished, and the church was enlarged with an ill orientated stone nave towards west. Its quality is far behind that of the round church. The funnel shaped romanesque windows and the western entrance witness about an enlargement no later than in the second half of the 13th c.

Under the rule of István Szalonnai and his sons, i.e. at the end of the 14th and during the 15th century, the church was enriched with gothic elements. The church was decorated with coloured wall paintings, some of them made by András Szepesi in 1426.

The coloured wooden ceiling, that survived till the beginning of our century, was made during the calvinist era in the 17th c. Probably this was the time, when the wall paintings were whitewashed.

The research of several years proved that during the 11–13th centuries the round church was an accepted form of village architecture beside the ones with long naves. The reconstructed church in Szalonna adds to the early examples of architecture of the Árpád-era, and also provides further data to scientists dealing with round churches.

Éva M. Kozák