

RAKIČAN MANOR AS A MONUMENT OF PROMINENCE IN TIME AND SPACE

DVORAC RAKIČAN KAO ISTAKNUTI SPOMENIK U VREMENU I PROSTORU

Andreja BENKO

Ulica Mikloša Kuzmiča 21,
9000 Murska Sobota
Slovenija

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Tajda BENKO

Ulica Mikloša Kuzmiča 21,
9000 Murska Sobota

SUMMARY

The article covers the Rakičan Manor in space and time. Rakičan is located 1 km east of the town and municipality of the same name, Murska Sobota, the capital of Prekmurje. A region that is still associated with agriculture and fertility. Prekmurje was under the dominion of the Hungarians for more than 800 years. The conquered territory of Prekmurje was integrated into the Kingdom of Hungary around 1100 and formally remained part of the country until 1919 when the Treaty of Trianon was signed. Rakičan Manor is located on the outskirts of an 11-hectare English park. The park underwent its initial landscaping in the 17th century, and by the 18th century, its layout had conformed to the prevailing stylistic preferences of Hungarian feudal lords during that era. The park featured the cultivation of numerous fruit trees native to Hungary, alongside non-indigenous species of fruit and ornamental trees, predominantly sourced from Italy. The present-day shape of the surroundings of the manor has been preserved since at least the 1880s. Due to the lack of historical sources, the remoteness, and the rural character of the building, much of the history of Rakičan is unknown. However, it exhibits some Baroque elements, especially on the façade, typical of rural manor structures that can be compared with similar buildings in neighboring countries. Once a strategic fortress of defence against the Turkish invasions, the manor underwent a transformation in the 17th century under Counts Ádám I and Ádám II Batthyány to become a summer country residence with a Baroque touch. This change was mainly influenced by the progressive extension of Baroque forms from Vienna and Graz to the territory of Hungary and Prekmurje by the Hungarian counts. With its new Baroque appearance, the manor house, as the seat of the then recently autonomous Rakičan estate, became a commodious summer residence comparable to the more impressive estates in Hungary. The subject is approached and analyzed from a historically critical point of view, and therefore a multi-method approach is implemented.

Key words: architecture, Rakičan, manor, Baroque, Batthyány, Prekmurje

Ključne riječi: arhitektura, Rakičan, vlastelinstvo, barok, Batthyány, Prekomurje

INTRODUCTION

Rakičan is located 1 km east of the town and municipality of the same name as Murska Sobota, the capital of Prekmurje - a region still associated with agriculture and fertility. Rakičan was already inhab-

ited in the Middle Ages and was described as a place with favorable agricultural land. It is well known that the noblemen who owned the Rakičan estate for many years were exceptionally satisfied with the farmland and the produce, and were also intensively involved in livestock breeding.

The region of Prekmurje was under Hungarian dominion for more than 800 years. The conquered territory of Prekmurje was incorporated into the Kingdom of Hungary circa 1100 and formally remained part of the Hungarian territory until 1919 when the Treaty of Trianon was signed.

The first known historical reference to the settlement of Rakičan, first recorded in medieval records in 1322 under the name of Rekythe (also Rekeyte), falls within the period of Hungarian rule. At the time, the territory of western and northeastern Prekmurje, which was partitioned into the so-called Upper and Lower Prekmurje, was part of Iron County (Hungarian: Vas megye), formed in 1000 and centralized in the town of Sombathely in Hungary. Today, a suburb of Murska Sobota, Rakičan used to be an important commercial and strategic spot, as the Via Regna, the main transport route, passed through the village in the Middle Ages. This route led through Rakičan to Murska Sobota (its route is represented by today's Tišinska Street) to Gornja Radgona and further on to Austria. In the Middle Ages, the village was a part of the territory of Murska Sobota, or Muraszombath, which held the rights of a free town as the most important settlement from the 15th century onwards. The district was called Belmura or Belmura District, and its seat was the town castle. In addition to the town of Murska Sobota, the entire territory of Belmura, including Rakičan, was made up of fifteen other localities. From 1366 until the 17th century, the owners of this territory were the Széchy family.

Until the end of the 17th century, the settlement Rakičan was part of Murska Sobota municipal territory, and its inhabitants also considered it to be part of the town's domain. This prevailing view is confirmed by a document dated April 6th, 1633, in which Blaž Temlin, the steward of the Rakičan manor, refers to the Rakičan estate and its manor as the Lower Sobotai Castle (inferiori castello Muraj Szombat, aliter Rakicsân). At the time, the entire Prekmurje faced the imminent threat of Turkish invasions, and it was the settlement of Rakičan and its manor that played a key role in safeguarding the territorial integrity of the region.

The description of the settlements in the Iron County (Železna županija) from the end of the 19th century indicates that Rakičan belonged to the 5th District known as Muraszombat (Murska Sobota). This district comprised 76 houses and had a population of 632 people. In the 20th century, the number of inhabitants increased due to the expansion of Murska Sobota.

The main focus of this article is Rakičan Manor, currently located a short distance from the Murska Sobota-Beltinci national road, and surrounded by an English-style park.

METHODS

The topic is approached and analysed from a historically critical perspective, necessitating a multi-method approach. The historical, analytical, and descriptive methods are all applicable and suitable for the subject, as they are interrelated and complement each other.

The historical method is employed at the beginning of the article to outline the status and conditions that have given rise to the present-day problems in the field. The analytical method is then utilized to analyse the situation thoroughly. Based on the analysis and synthesis, guidelines for solving the existing problems are provided. The descriptive method complements the above methods by characterizing the situation and offering solutions.

RESEARCH

Before analysing the object in greater detail, it is necessary to define a uniform terminology to be used for the object. Throughout the historical sources, the building is classified both as a manor house and as a mansion.

A manor house is usually constructed as a representative aristocratic building, usually in a lowland setting, intended for residential use. As such, it represents the centre of a feudal lordship. Manors were generally not constructed with massive fortifications, as were castles, but many were nevertheless for-

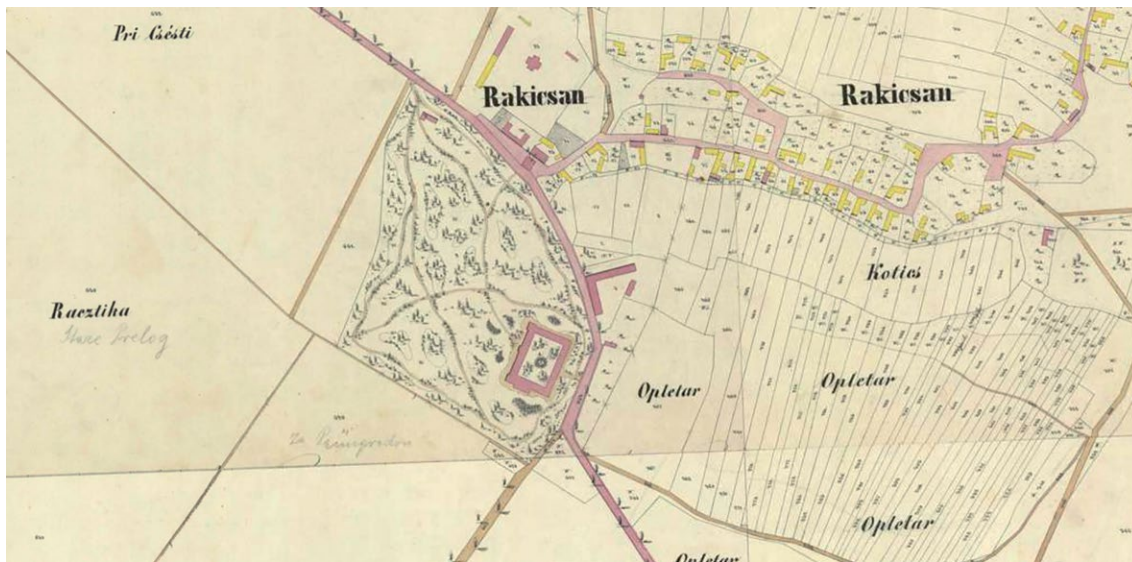


Fig. 1 The first military map of Maria Theresa from the period 1856-1860 shows the Rakičan manor and the manor chapel in the park. The later map also shows the English layout of the park around the manor (source: <https://maps.arcanum.com/de/map/cadastral/?bbox=1802257.781527498%2C5884038.312027127%2C1803189.3578097236%2C5885373.571364984&map-list=1&layers=3%2C4>).

tified if they were given royal approval to do so. They were surrounded by defensive walls and/or a moat, and sometimes their tenure also consisted of agricultural and horticultural facilities.

A *mansion* is a building constructed by the order of the ruler or other members of the nobility; the term applies regardless of the size or artistic design of the façade.

Manor houses and mansions differ both in the number of occupants and in their functional use. The distinction between a manor house and a mansion is rooted in their functional spheres. A small estate owned by a non-noble landowner typically features only a manor house. In contrast, a noble landowner's manor house can serve as both a residence and a manor. It's important to note that a noble manor, designed solely for representative purposes without agricultural property, is never referred to as a manor.

In the case of Rakičan, a comparative analysis leads to the conclusion that the building falls within the category of manor houses rather than mansions.

Rakičan manor is located on the outskirts of an 11-hectare English park. The park was initially landscaped in the 17th century, and by the 18th century, its layout followed the trends of Hungarian feudal lords.¹ Thousands of fruit trees from Hungary, along with non-indigenous fruit and ornamental tree species, primarily from Italy, were cultivated in the park. Numerous footpaths marked the park, guiding visitors around the estate and into the surrounding forests.

On the northern side of the manor park, a carriage path led from the main entrance in the direction of the family chapel. The family chapel, an oval-shaped building, was built at least as early as the second half of the 18th century, as it is already registered and depicted in the Josephine topography of 1784 and served as a funerary chapel.² It was reconstructed in the neo-Gothic style in the 1880s.³

The small oval building is vaulted and features narrow windows with pointed arches. Inside, a tomb housed the remains of some members of the Batthyány family. At the end of the Second World War in 1945, the chapel was raided and almost entirely demolished as part of systematic destruction carried out by the new local authorities. Until recently, it was in a rather fragile state, but now, due to increased awareness, it is undergoing revitalization once again through appropriate conservation interventions.

¹ HUBER 2010, p. 126.

² Ibid.

³ KEPÉNE BIHAR – LENDVAI KEPE 2020, p. 46.



Fig. 2 The burial chapel has withstood despite poor maintenance over time and was restored in 2021 as part of the Living Heritage project (LAS programme) with the financial support of the Municipality of Murska Sobota (photography by Tajda Benko).

According to the earliest known records, dating from 1730, the manor house was surrounded by moats and fortifications.⁴ Sources indicate that the defensive moat was filled with water from the Ledava river, which flows northeast of the manor. Such a water supply required a particular infrastructure with canals and sluice gates, which no longer exist today.

The present-day appearance of the surroundings of the manor house has been preserved since at least the 1880s, as is evident from a sketch by József Könyöki (German: Ellenbogen) (1829-1900). The sketch was made after the foundation of the “Temporary Monument Heritage Commission of Hungary” on 11th April 1872—the first such committee for the recognition and protection of cultural heritage in the territory of the then Hungary. The Commission set as its mission the recording and cataloguing of the historic monuments. To enrich the records, painters, drawing teachers, and architects were selected to work as associate researchers. They were also given the task of measuring individual monuments, for which a prize award was granted on a case-by-case basis. The most important of the delegated external members were Viktor Myskovszky, Ferenc Storno, and Josef Könyöki.

The latter was the most relevant for the territory of the present-day Prekmurje region, as he contributed the majority of the sketches and evaluated some of the architectural monuments that are still in the register of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia today. Könyöki was an academically educated painter who, in addition to Bratislava, also studied in Padua and Venice (he was a pupil of Giovanni Battista Gori). Throughout his lifetime, he held various esteemed positions, serving as a corresponding member of the National Monument Committee, a conservator of the Central Committee for Monuments in Vienna, a member of the board of directors of the Hungarian National Museum of Art, an elected corresponding member of the International Congress of Prehistory and Anthropology held in Lisbon in 1880, among other notable roles. In December 1884, he drew the floor plan of the building, as instructed for the purpose of cataloguing the buildings.⁵

A note about the building reads:

“Just half an hour's walk south of Murszombat (Murska Sobota), on the southwest side of a village of the same name, is the castle. The less densely shaded part of the drawing has two storeys, while the more densely shaded part is entirely on the ground floor. Historically, this castle was surrounded by a wide moat, which has now been entirely filled in and converted into a park. At the time, the moat was supplied with water by the Ledava stream. The current building has a 17th-century feel in all respects and is not something of special significance. The main road between Csáktornya (Čakovec) and

⁴ KOPPÁNY 2014, p. 225

⁵ Ibid.

Muraszombat (Murska Sobota) runs in front of the castle, so the castle probably played an important role in the protection of the road at a certain time. The castle is currently the property of Count Arthur Batthyányi.”

Signature, date on page 1: Könyöki, Bratislava, end of December 1884, inscription on the first page: Rakicsány.

In one of the sketches, Könyöki marked the course of the Murska Sobota - Čakovec regional/county road (Megyei út) and specified that the defensive moat had already been completely sealed and turned into a park. In another sketch, he depicts the entrance to Rakičan Manor. Both sketches are hand-drawn in black ink.

A SHORT OWNERSHIP SURVEY OF THE BUILDING

The story of the Batthyány family and the Rakičan manor dates to the 14th century, when the Széchy family, a prominent noble family from Hungary, received the Rakičan estate as a donation from King Sigismund of Hungary.⁶ When István Széchy got divorced in the 1530s, his daughter inherited the estate. With the marriages of Széchy's daughters, the Erdődy⁷, Thurzó⁸, Choron, Zekel⁹ and Poppel¹⁰ families also became keen to acquire the property.

In 1565, the Czech nobleman Lázsló Poppel Lobkowitz married the Hungarian noblewoman Magdolna Salm, who had inherited prominent estates in the southern part of the Iron County from her mother Margit Széchy: the Dobra, Rakičan, Györvár, and Szentgotthárd (Monošter) manors.¹¹ In 1582 Lázsló Poppel Lobkowitz obtained almost all of his wife's estates, including Rakičan, and after a lengthy negotiation, he and Tamás Széchy decided to also share Murska Sobota.¹² His daughter, Éva Poppel (1585-1640), married Ferenc II Batthyány (German: Franz von Batthyány) (1577-1625) in 1607 and endowed the Batthyány family with the estate as a dowry. Thus, they eventually became the most prominent landowners of the 18th century in the Iron County. With the dowry of their daughter Eva Poppel, they obtained half of the manor of Murska Sobota, Rakičan, the manor of Dobrá, and part of the estate of Upper Lendava, which was later incorporated into the estates of Murska Sobota and Rakičan.¹³

This also marks the beginning of the Batthyánys' ownership of Rakičan, which lasted for more than three centuries. After the death of Ferenc II. Batthyány in 1625, his widow resided in Rakičan manor until her death in 1642.¹⁴ The period we have termed “the period of the two Ádams” - Ádám I (1610-1659) and his nephew Ádám II (1662-1703) - was the most significant in terms of the development of

⁶ ZIMÁNY 1962, p. 12.

⁷ Hungarian-Croatian noble family descending from the Bakócz family of Transylvania. Between the 15th and 20th centuries, they were among the largest landowners in the Austro-Hungarian Empire (NAGY 1858, pp. 59-61).

⁸ A Hungarian noble family that originated in Poland, which was active between the 15th and 17th centuries. They were closely connected with the growth of the city of Kraków, where they acted as entrepreneurs, patrons, and supporters of the arts (NAGY 1858, pp. 199- 200).

⁹ Hungarian-Austrian noble family (Hungarian Székely). The name is derived from the ethnic Hungarians of the historical region of Transylvania.

¹⁰ A Czech noble family whose roots go back to the 14th century. The family still lives today and is among the oldest noble families in Czechia. Their position of power and influence increased substantially at the time of the Prague Defenestration when the Catholic family welcomed the King's ministers under its protection. To this day, they remain renowned supporters of the arts and have one of the most extensive art collections in the Czech Republic.

¹¹ These estates, including Murska Sobota, fell together until the 17th century and had joint censuses. Later, Murska Sobota was part of the Zgornja Lendava domain (Grad Castle), to which the Batthyánys retained their claims. At the end of 1787, Murska Sobota is already mentioned as the center of its own - the Murska Sobota estate, whose owners were no longer the Batthyánys, but the Hungarian Szapáry family of counts.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ KUZMIČ 2006, p. 74.

¹⁴ KOPPÁNY 2014, p. 224.

the manor itself, as it was during their time that the manor underwent its most noticeable changes, additions and renovations.

After the Scharfensteiner¹⁵ branch of the Batthyány family became extinct in 1841, the manor became the property of Count Arthur Batthyány (1813-1893). He is best known in connection with the Gothic reliquary, which was once part of the interior of Rakičan Manor and itself has a long and curious history. After his passing, he was buried in the already mentioned chapel-rotunda in Rakičan Park, which also functioned as the Batthyány family tomb.

As Arthur's son, also called Arthur (1854-1874), died, the manor was passed on to Arthur I's daughter, Countess Georgina Batthyány (1856-1929), at the end of the 19th century. Countess Georgina was also the final owner of the manor belonging to the Batthyány family. Count Arthur had another daughter, Countess Helena, who was married to Count Nepomuk Spaur u. Flavon, but died at the age of thirty in 1880 and was buried next to her father in the Rakičan burial chapel.

The new owner, Countess Georgina, married Count Johann Clemens Saint-Julien-Wallsee (1845 -1908) in 1888, and the manor, therefore, fell into the hands of a German noble family from Bregenz. The Count and Countess lived in Austria, at Wartenburg Castle (near Krems in Lower Austria).¹⁶ They had two children, Count Albert, and Countess Helena. Their heirs hardly ever visited the Rakičan estate, and therefore the estate was administered by a steward for several years. The manor house was frequently flooded and suffered from severe dampness during these years, causing severe damage to the property.¹⁷ It was also at this time that Rakičan received its new official name: Batthyánfalva (falva in Hungarian meaning village).¹⁸ Thus, its name literally became 'the village of the Batthyánys'. In Hungary, the name is still widely used today, although after 1919 it was formally renamed to Rakičan (Rakicsan in Hungarian).

SIGNIFICANT MILESTONES OF THE RAKIČAN MANOR

Historical records and cadastral records show that a fortified structure existed on the grounds of the present-day manor house as early as the Middle Ages. The fortification or 'castle' is first recorded in 1350 as Reketye in Castriferieri, while an unknown document from 1431 mentions a fortified feudal outpost in Rakičan *castellanis et jabagionibus ad quasdam duas possessiones vtrasque rekethye vocatas* ("with castles/fortresses and jurisdictions to certain two possessions, both called Rekethye" – authors

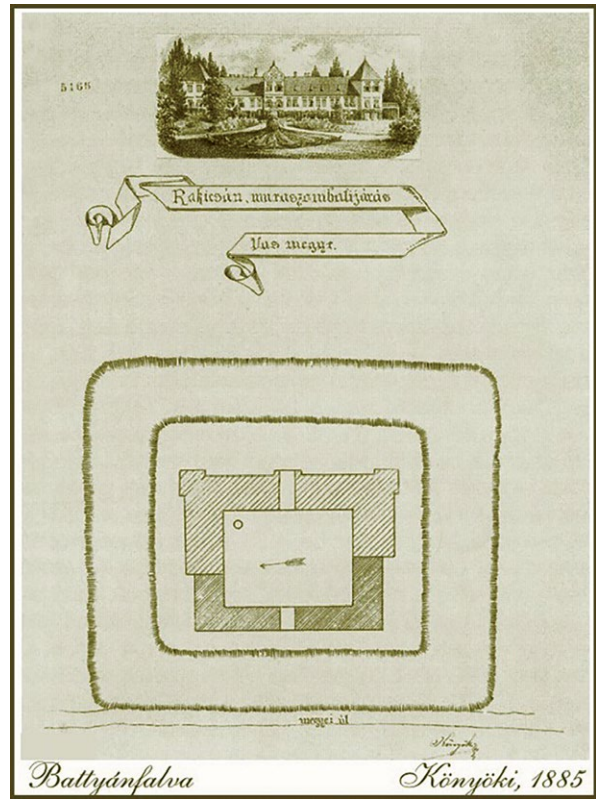


Fig. 3 A sketch by Jozef Könyöki from 1885 (source: *Az örökség hagyományozása/Tradition of Heritage*, ed.) The book on the heritage tradition and the pioneers of the heritage census of the territory of Hungary at the time also includes some of Slovenia's cultural heritage monuments, especially from the region of Prekmurje, and thus constitutes an important record/witness of the past.

¹⁵ The Scharfensteiners are the count branch of the Batthyány family, while the former princely branch was known as the Pinkafelder branch after the town of Pinkafeld in Austria.

¹⁶ Typescript Veleposestvo Rakičan, p. 1.

¹⁷ KEPÉNE BIHAR – LENDVAI KEPE 2020, p. 45.

¹⁸ SCHOBBER 2005, p. 105.



Fig. 4 Aerial photograph of the Rakičan Manor in a setting showing the enclosed design of the manor in the four tracts referred to throughout the article (photography by Borut Juvanec).

note).¹⁹ Up until the invasion of the Turks, the manor was a feudal property in the hands of the Hungarian Jobagions.²⁰ Today, we no longer possess any knowledge of its medieval appearance, but we can only imagine that, as a fortress or outpost, it had a far less impressive appearance than the one we see today.

The historical episodes involving the Ottoman Turk invasions in the Prekmurje area are integral to understanding the formative stages in the development of the building. The region, as part of the Kingdom of Hungary, was in permanent danger for several years. While much of present-day Slovenia was finally free from the Turkish threat, the Ottoman invasions in Prekmurje had only just begun.

The Turks first broke into Prekmurje in 1526 - to Lendava. The Battle of Mohacs resulted in the death of several Hungarian noblemen and thus indirectly posed a threat to the count families, who controlled the entire territory of Prekmurje. The first actual battle to take place entirely in Prekmurje was fought in 1578, when the area of Rakičan and its surroundings was not yet fully secured, as more extensive defenses against the Turks gradually began in the latter half of the 16th century.²¹ The fortress at Velika Kaniža²² which was crucial for the defence of Prekmurje, was overthrown on 21 October 1600, and the territorial boundaries have thereby changed. From Kaniža, letters were demanding their submission, were sent to the citizens by the Pasha and the Begi²³. All the villages and towns sent their mayors to Kaniža, where they would negotiate the charges that the villagers had to pay to be released and/or remain free. Up until the middle of the 17th century, there was no well-defined border to indicate which villages belonged to the Turkish and which to the Habsburg party.

The territory of Prekmurje was the very place where both parties, each in its individual way, wanted to establish their power. Unlike Carniola and other regions, where defensive camps were built in times of Turkish danger, Prekmurje was not secured by them. The landlords were almost entirely dependent on themselves for the defense of their lands.

¹⁹ STOPAR 1991, p. 113.

²⁰ In the Hungarian medieval frontier defense system, the guards were in the service of the landlords, and their main duty was to provide military service. The jobagioni represented a particular social stratum, a specific link of all the Prekmurje administrative manors or estates. In exchange for their service, the jobagioni received land from the landlord as a hereditary possession, meaning that not even the ruler was able to take it away from them. Some of them also gained the title of count in the course of their service (ZELKO 1996, p. 37).

²¹ KEREK 2001, p. 29.

²² It is administratively part of the Nagykanizsai sub-province in Hungary. Its importance increased in the Middle Ages, and the name Kaniža is first recorded in 1245, when Kaniža became one of the most valuable fortified towns in Hungary and had an important commercial role in the following centuries. During the Turkish invasions, it was one of the crucial defense points of Western Europe against invasions from the Ottoman Empire.

²³ Head of small Turkish tribes.



Fig. 5 The portal in the context of the entire eastern wing (formerly utility wing) before and after the restoration of the façade and portal (photographs by Tajda Benko and Andreja Benko).

At the time, the commander of the Hungarian army was Ferenc II Batthyány, who by marriage also became the first owner of Rakičan in the Batthyány line.

The territory of Rakičan, belonging to the Murska Sobota estate, remained relatively unscathed by Ottomans threats until mid-17th century. In 1641, when Ádám I Batthyány, the son of Ferenc, had recently become the new owner of the Rakičan estate, news arrived. A group of prisoners returning from captivity in Nagykanizsa reported that the Turks were planning to attack Murska Sobota, Rakičan, and Martjanci.²⁴ This was confirmed by Blaž Temlin, the then steward of Murska Sobota and Rakičan manors, who advised his master Batthyány to further secure his properties and dispatch 200 foot/pedestrian soldiers to Rakičan and the village of Martjanci slightly further away. Besides Blaž Temlin, the guarding of the complex was also undertaken by a jailer, an armed attendant, a castellan, a castle commander, and a drabant—all contributing to the security of the estate.²⁵

As is evident from the records, the manor was continuously fortified during the Turkish invasions. As early as 1633, the so-called County Commission convened in Rakičan, where it was accepted that the two families owning the Murska Sobota territory - the Széchys and the Poppels (the family of Ferenc Batthyány's wife) - should build special fortifications and bastions. A preserved record from 6th April 1633 confirms that the so-called Lower Sobota Castle (referred to in the record as the inferior Castello Muraj Szombat), along with defensive trenches and moats, had inner and outer rampart walls and a long bridge that extended over the defensive moat.²⁶ Before 1640, the manor had two fortifications or bastions: a lower fortress and a small fortress, after which, in 1640, a third fortress made of wood and soil was added. It is listed in the inventory records *egyik uy fa Bastia, az töltet Bastia, az töltet fa Bastia in*

²⁴ KEREK 2001, p. 30.

²⁵ Often also known as a trabant – was the escort of the aristocrats, especially in the Middle Ages. His role was primarily to protect the aristocrat or carry out his bidding.

²⁶ ZELKO 1972, p. 414.

az tölt Bastia (“the new fortress, that replaced old timber fortress is additionally fortified with wood filling”).²⁷ Just two years later, the fortifications were further strengthened and a fourth, the so-called 'Great New Fortress' (*Eörög wy Bastia*), was added next to the tower.²⁸ In the time of Adam I, defensive walls called *palánk* were also constructed throughout the whole area of Murska Sobota and Rakičan. These consisted of two parallel rows of thick stakes, around which strong wicker was weaved, with earth piled and stamped in the middle.²⁹ Rakičan manor was a major anti-Turkish fortress and served as a permanent fortification point on the Habsburg side.

In August 1645, a small Turkish cavalry unexpectedly invaded the village of Rakičan, which was entirely enclosed by a wooden fence.³⁰ The castle officer ordered the use of a mortar, which, presumably because of the inflammation of the gunpowder, accidentally ignited the wooden fence. The fire rapidly spread throughout the village and engulfed the manor house, the whole upper floor of which was completely burnt down.³¹ Reconstruction and renovation of the manor house began about two years later and lasted until 1654. In 1647, new wooden beams and rafters were carved. The roof was completed in August of the same year, and by September it had already been covered with roof tiles. The construction was handled by Austrian master builders and craftsmen, who made new frames for the doors and windows, stairs, railings, and a decorative fountain, which was in the centre of the courtyard. Unnamed craftsmen from Radgona are also listed as having provided the glazing for the windows.³² Based on an inventory conducted in the year the renovations were completed, the manor house was now surrounded by a new park and a fenced garden. There are also references to the manor gate, which was equipped with a drawbridge over a moat, the new summer lodge in the garden, and a new gardener's house, composed of an atrium, a room, and a chamber.³³ Unfortunately, the manor house did not remain in this form for very long, as it was once again burnt down in 1664 by the Turkish army, then marching towards Szentgotthárd (Monošter).³⁴

Turkish invasions and pillaging in Prekmurje gradually stopped at the turn of the 17th century, more specifically after 1690, when Velika Kaniža (Nagykanizsa) was freed. Correspondingly, the manor has not been in permanent danger since then, nor has it suffered any further attacks or arson. This also marked the beginning of the transformation of the building into a representative Baroque manor after the death of Ádám I.

Early Baroque art in Hungary, and consequently in the Prekmurje region, initially manifested itself through the interior alterations of existing structures, including plasterwork and ceiling paintings. This occurred while the late Renaissance Mannerist movement was still very much alive in the second half of the century. Almost without exception, these are the typical characteristics of Ádám I's architectural projects.

For the most part, he did not construct his properties anew but rather upgraded or reconstructed older Medieval or Renaissance properties in line with the new Baroque principles. For the three decades (1630-1660) during which he undertook his construction works, the architectural execution of the Counter-Reformation programme shows characteristic features of the early Baroque era.

The now mostly forgotten architects of Ádám I constructed the first monuments of Hungarian Baroque and set their work in an area that had long been in direct contact with Graz and Vienna, the two cradles of Central European Baroque art. Ádám's initial architectural projects were largely dedicated to completing his mother's construction works. He did not undertake any major constructions until after 1635. From then on, he built constantly and uninterrupted until his death.³⁵

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ KOPPÁNY 2014, p. 224.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ KOPPÁNY 2014, p. 225.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ KOPPÁNY 1984, p. 540.

In accordance with the new way of life, he expanded and transformed his manors and castles into prominent estates with numerous personnel. In Graz, he purchased paintings, whereas in Vienna he acquired Dutch tapestries and Turkish carpets for the furnishings of his renovated estates.³⁶ He frequently visited his estates, which were situated all along the trail between Ottoman Empire and Bratislava.

He had nearly completed the organization of the mansion's construction. In addition to the workmen, many craftsmen, who are mentioned by name in historiographical literature, were also employed. Almost all of them came from or worked in Hartberg in Styria. The following masters are listed by name in the references: Abbondio Bolla, Giovanni della Torre, Antonio Butz, Anton Goys, Hans Moser, Ruprecht Rosenberger, and Tobias, who is merely mentioned by first name.³⁷ Some of them are still known to this day, while others have been forgotten because little has been written or is known about them.

The best-documented sculptor in the historiographical sources is Abbondio Bolla, often referred to as Abundio. He came from a family of plasterers and sculptors originating in Italy. The first known member of the family was Bernardo Bolla, noted as being involved in the construction of the fortress at Hartberg in 1597. Abbondio Bolla was likely to be a relative of Giovanni Bolla, who led a sculpture workshop in Vienna in the latter half of the 17th century. He worked in Burgenland and Styria, where, among other things, he was involved in furnishing the pilgrimage church in Mariazell (financed, among others, by *Ádám I*) and in the construction of the Pillar of Mary or Turkish Column in Graz. In addition to the individual sculptural elements at Rakičan Manor, he also produced carved frames for the City Palace in Güssing, the framework and staircase for Rechnitz Castle, and selected sculptural decorations for Szalónak Castle—all owned by the Batthyány family.³⁸

Sources also mention Antonio Butz, an Italian sculptor working in Hartberg, first mentioned between 1643-53. He was associated with a masonry guild in Graz, and most of his work focused on the construction and renovation of castles for the Batthyány family in Burgenland. In addition to unspecified elements at Rakičan manor, he also crafted portals, windows, ornamental fountains, and doors at Güssing, Szalónak, Borostyánkò, and Rechnitz castles.³⁹ His connection with the Rakičan estate dates back to 1642, when, after the death of his mother, *Ádám Batthyány I* and his sister Magdolna, together with sisters Elisabeth and Borbála, divided the Dobra, Rakičan, and Gereben estates along with other properties.⁴⁰

By mutual agreement, the Rakičan manor passed to Count *Ádám I*. He inherited it from his mother in a good condition and well-furnished, as evidenced by the inventory made just after his mother *Éva's* passing. The inventory lists twenty rooms in the partially cellared mansion with complete furnishings. Although there is no immediate information on the actual interior furnishings, it does mention a grand front door, a turret above the door (emphasizing the entrance at that time), parlors, porches, the steward's and the officer's houses, a fountain, a garden house, two mills, and utilitarian outbuildings next to the garden. Between 1642 and 1654, eight more inventories were made, providing us with almost identical information.⁴¹ Although no exact record of the mansion's appearance at the time has been preserved, according to Tibór Koppány, it maintained the exterior appearance of a late Renaissance building and overall impression during the period of *Ádám I*, while the interior supposedly included new Baroque artwork and furnishings.⁴²

The landlord employed his own craftsmen and skilled tradesmen in and around the grounds of the manor house. The inventory notes include a furrier, a gardener, a baker, a miller, etc. The landowner was also a keen farmer and had a large amount of cultivated land and fields on his estate, as well as producing wine. In his day, the Rakičan estate was known primarily for its wine and produce.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ KOPPÁNY 1984, p. 551.

³⁸ KOHLBACH 1961, p. 312.

³⁹ SAUR 1997, p. 392.

⁴⁰ KOPPÁNY 2014, p. 224.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² KOPPÁNY 1984, p. 553.

At the end of the 17th century, the estate manor, then owned by Adam II (1662-1703), was rebuilt on its original rectangular foundations. The exterior of the building took on the appearance of a rural Baroque country manor house, comparable to those in Hungary (e.g., the Erdődy manor in Vép - medieval base with Renaissance elements) and Austria (e.g., the late Renaissance Deutschkreutz manor).

In 1696, *Ádám II*, who had acquired the whole estate from his relatives, instructed his officer to send an as-yet-unknown sculptor and stonemason to Vienna with a design plan. It can only be assumed that the renovation of the manor was carried out by Viennese craftsmen, as there is no precise documentation of the renovation. During the Baroque reconstruction, when the period of tranquility had begun, the manor became the commercial center of a new, independent lordship. The manor was used for mercantile purposes and for the production and trading of crops and wine.

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

The late 17th- and early 18th-century appearance of the manor house has been maintained in its exterior form to the current day. The entire complex has since then consisted of four building tracts.

The tracts form a structure enclosed on each side around an inner rectangular courtyard centered by a decorative element (a round flower bed). The eastern, northern, and southern sections were used for utility rooms, stables, and staff quarters, while the western section was more representative and architecturally elaborate, designed to house the count and his family. The manor house is covered with a gabled roof made of beech roofing tiles.

The east wing is a single storey with eighteen window axes. These are simple rectangular window frames. It served as utility and staff quarters. One of the passageways led through it into the inner courtyard (Fig. 9). On opposite sides of the passage lived the manor gardener and the coach driver.⁴³

Viewed from today's regional road (Murska Sobota-Lendava) - Lendavska Street, one can see a distinct portal, slightly set to the right, which deserves some mention.

The portal, crafted by an unknown stonemason, stands as one of the remaining late Renaissance elements of the former mansion, having been carved in 1631 and thus surviving the fire that devastated the entire mansion in the late 1740s. Despite being part of a rather modest country mansion, it boasts a vast rectangular design, measuring more than two and a half meters wide and just over three meters high, fully covered with carved ornamentation. The base of the portal consists of two stone blocks on either side, designed to allow carriages to pass through with ease. The outer rusticated framework is adorned with alternating rectangular and elliptical relief fields, protruding from the stone base of the portal (fig. 6).

Above the very center of the portal, a more elaborate, decorative carved element stands out among a series of relief ellipses and squares. The rectangular recessed part, featuring a semicircular entrance cor-



Fig. 6 Photograph of a single decorative field of the main portal of the Rakičan mansion prior to restoration, showing the stone structure and the base of the portal with an older grey coloured coating (photography by Tajda Benko).

⁴³ HUBER 2010, p. 126.



Fig. 7 A photograph of the entrance to Cmurek Castle in Trate (source: <https://www.seviqc-brezice.si/trate-grad-cmurek.html>). Given the way the stone portal and the system of lifting doors are designed, a parallel can be drawn with the portal at Rakičan Manor, where a similar gateway marks the entrance to the manor. It can be affirmed that the knowledge was transmitted and that, in all probability, the builders of the portal were from the same school or workshop, in spite of the fact that Cmurek Castle belonged to the Austrian part of the monarchy and Rakičan Castle to the Hungarian part.

ridor, is not rusticated. Above the outer frame rises a horizontal lintel consisting of several sections, with a thin fluted band below the top of the lintel itself. The axially symmetrical side openings are still in place, suggesting that this was once the site of a lifting door, allowing the raising and lowering of lift gates. This confirms that the gates were located above a defensive moat, which is no longer there.

The stone entrance portal has been significantly affected by usage, time, and climatic conditions. Today, visible cracks mar the stone, and in some areas, the stone has completely disintegrated. The portal has likely been dismantled and reassembled during renovations and reconstructions. Prolonged exposure to weather conditions has rendered the stone brittle and breakable, resulting in fractured decorative relief fields and the stone crumbling when touched. Additionally, the decorative protective paint layer has practically fallen off due to material incompatibility (sandstone and plater and paint). Similar to the burial chapel of the manor, the portal has undergone restoration.

The stone portal of the Rakičan manor can be compared with the portal of the Cmurek castle in Trate (Fig. 7), even though it belonged to a different family (among others to the Counts of Celje and later to the Counts of Stubenberg), this castle was likewise heavily reconstructed in the 16th century. The picture shows that a parallel can be drawn with the stone portal and the way it was constructed.

The eastern wing, now adorned with a new façade, previously revealed the brick structure of the building, a traditional type of construction in Prekmurje (Fig. 8). Today, the entrance through the east part of the building serves as the main entrance for tourists, employees, and other guests visiting the manor.



Fig. 8 Comparative photograph taken before the façade was restored, showing the bare structure of the building - the brick construction of the manor house, and later, when the façade has been completed and protects the construction of the building (photography by Tajda Benko).

The north and south wings, both on the ground floor, enclose the inner courtyard from the sides. These are simple longitudinal wings covered by a gabled roof. The north wing served a utilitarian function, housing the manor gardens, while the south wing, which remains today, accommodates the Equestrian Society.

The western wing is a single-story nobles' residence with an eighteen-axis arcade passage along the entire length of the courtyard on the ground floor. The semi-circular arcades are supported by square brickwork slopes and extend into a groin vault, merging on one side with wall capitals (Fig. 9).

The slopes are decorated at the foot of the semicircular arcade arch. The slopes alternate between two variations of monochrome painted fields with a polygonal or semicircular border. To the left of the main section, a slightly broader arcade gives the impression of a centralised and prominent main part of the wing. The upper portion of the wing now also has an open arcaded corridor, whereas in the past it was enclosed by rectangular windows.

On the ground floor, the central part opens onto the castle park, with an entrance through a wide passage closed by doors on both the inside and the outside. At the very top, it is one storey higher and accentuated by an avant-corps. The avant-corps has a Baroque gabled attic with voluted side ends, originally decorated with a subtly moulded band. At the top of the accented part, are three decorative



Fig. 9 The arcaded covered corridor with cross arches in the Rakičan manor, which provides access to various parts of the manor, including in bad weather (photography by Tajda Benko).

stone vases. The whole forms a simple unadorned monochrome façade which has undergone a recent restoration and is presently in good condition.

The view from the park side offers a somewhat different perspective. The tract has a total of twenty-two window axes on this side, with eighteen located in the central part of the wing. Larger, simple rectangular windows with horizontal lintels adorn the first floor, while the ground-floor windows, originally designed for servants' quarters, feature smaller square frames. In the emphasized section, where the main entrance for the Count's carriages was located, the motif of the volute finish with an attic at the top is echoed from the courtyard side.

The far left and right wings, facing north and south, are flanked by two-axis, two-storey emphasized towers, housing the most prestigious rooms and salons (Fig. 10). These towers were accessed by spiral staircases leading from the side wings.

While there are no surviving detailed records or physical traces of the interior furnishings from that time, historical accounts, including those by the Hungarian writer and historian Matthias Bell, indicate that the bedrooms, salons, and dining rooms were tastefully furnished. The Batthyány family inventory was also partially documented through the research efforts of Hozjan and Proctor-Tiffany.

One of the very few preserved photographs of the Rakičan mansion dates back to the late 19th century when the property was owned by Count Johann Clemens Saint-Julien-Wallsee. The photograph offers a glimpse into the state of the mansion as it appears today (Fig. 11)

DISCUSSION

World War II profoundly affected a vast portion of the human population, but the years that followed were no less challenging. A time of great triumph was also a time of great deprivation. Among the main challenges faced by survivors, beyond the loss of relatives, was the loss of property and the roof over their heads. Many survivors, particularly those in their later years, were compelled to start anew.

After World War II, the manor underwent nationalization. The post-war condition of residential houses, coupled with the negative perception of 'lordship' and their possessions, was strongly felt in Prekmurje. Following nationalization, the estates of former landlords, tended by employees and stewards, gradually fell into disrepair. These properties, often vast, challenging to manage, and economically impractical, were repurposed with minimal investment in upkeep. This was the post-war era, and many properties became temporary solutions. Initially used for military purposes, such as storage, the manor soon became a retirement home for senior citizens. In 1978, when the retirement home moved to a new location, the manor was converted into tenant apartments. While providing a temporary solution to the housing problem in the area, unprofessional interference in the construction caused more harm than good. Nevertheless, the building's utilization was positive, as it remained in service and received ade-

quate maintenance, including ventilation and painting. The absence of heritage protection laws between the two World Wars also contributed to this situation.

The preservation sector had already been advocating for the establishment of a monument protection law in the former Yugoslavia. It wasn't until 1945 that the Yugoslav Federal Law on Monument Protection was declared, forming the basis for the Institute for the Protection and Scientific Study of Cultural Monuments and Natural Sites of the People's Republic of Slovenia. Similar institutes were established for Croatia and Serbia. In comparison, Hungary had established heritage protection committees as early as 1872, as mentioned previously.

Rakičan Manor was registered as a monument of local importance in the Register of Slovenian Cultural Heritage under the serial number 6791 on 23rd of September 1991, the same year as the country became an independent republic of Slovenia. Years of neglect and a negative attitude towards the former “foreign landlords” who managed



Fig. 10 The west, representative side of the Rakičan manor house (the oldest section), where a higher quality, more decorative side of the manor house was built, which connected it to the surrounding garden and park (photography by Tajda Benko).



Fig. 11 This photograph was taken in 1898 at the west side of the manor house, from the adjacent park, showing the more representative entrance with a *avant-corpes*. The ivy covering the lower level of the mansion is also evident. According to the inscription on the photograph, *Saját felvételünk* ('personal photograph'), it was taken by Borovszky Samu (1860-1912), a Hungarian historian who became a member of the governing board of the Historical Society in 1889 and a corresponding member of the Academy since 1899 (source: <https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Borovszky-borovszky-samu-magyarorszag-varmegyei-es-varosai-1/vas-varmegye-1C4AE/vasvarmegye-kozsegei-1C5BD/battyanfalfa-saint-julien-kastely-1C629/> (4. 12. 2023)).



Fig. 12 Photograph of a gilded altar, now part of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York - The Cloisters collection 1965, registered under record number 62.96 and traceable to its previous owners (including Countess V. Batthyány and Count Arthur Batthyány) (Source: © <https://collectionapi.metmuseum.org/api/collection/v1/iiif/470310/935817/main-image> (17. 2. 2022)).

and controlled the businesses in the area have had a considerable impact on the manor and the consciousness of the people.

Due to the lack of historical sources and the remote, rural nature of the building, much of Rakičan Manor's history remains unknown. However, a remarkable aspect of the interior decoration can be traced and linked to both Rakičan and Arthur Batthyány. This noteworthy item is a portable altar with a reliquary function, attributed to the little-researched goldsmith Jean de Touyl. Proctor-Tiffany (2015) recognizes him as one of the leading French goldsmiths of the period, alongside Simon de Lille, Jean de Lille, Jean Pascon, Felix d'Auxerre, and Pierre de Besancon. Active in Paris between 1325-1350, de Touyl crafted the altarpiece, measuring 25.4 x 40.6 x 9.2 cm, using gilded silver and translucent enamel. This piece is a fine example of the International Gothic style (Fig. 12).

This remarkable altar stands as the largest of the four surviving architecturally designed enamelled gilded altars from the first half of the 14th century. Allegedly bought or commissioned by Queen Elizabeth of Poland, who later became Queen of Hungary (1305-1380), the altar is said to have been prayed in front of by Queen Elizabeth when she was a Poor Clare of the Order of St. Francis in the later years of her life. According to Proctor-Tiffany, the altar was once owned by Clementine of Hungary (1293-1328), the second wife of King Louis X. An inventory compiled at the time of her death, now housed at the French National Library, indicates that the altar passed on to her sister-in-law in Buda, west of Budapest.

The altarpiece is designed as a polyptych with side wings that close over the central part. In the centre of the vaulted canopy, crowned with pointed arches and finials, sits the Virgin Mary on a throne, holding the infant Jesus. Two angels on either side of her hold a small reliquary. The central part is adorned with depictions of saints in niches. After several trades and a purchase from the Rothschild family, the altar has been owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art since 1962 and is now on public display at The Cloisters as part of the museum's medieval art collection.

The current appearance of Rakičan Manor reflects an 18th-century architectural form, partially reconstructed and renovated. The original design of the Baroque façade of the Count's living quarters

has been preserved through multiple restorations. The rooms' functions were altered, and the Baroque furnishings were either sold, stolen, or destroyed when the manor became national property. In the 1980s, the south wing was transformed into an equestrian club, including a manege, stables, and a café (Fig. 13). In 1990, the roof was restored, and the arcaded corridor reconstructed, offering new hope for the general revitalization of the monument.

By the turn of the 21st century, the mansion became the headquarters of the Research and Education Centre (RIS), organizing educational workshops, seminars, and international conferences, bringing the building back to life. Today, the mansion houses several classrooms, apartments, a restaurant with a reception hall, the RIS library, and the ateliers of several local artists.



Fig. 13 Present-day view of the southern part of the building, where the stables, manege and café are located (photography by Tajda Benko).

CONCLUSION

Throughout the Middle Ages and into the 20th century, Rakičan Manor stood as a prominent landmark on the Hungarian map, a significance that persisted until 1919 when Prekmurje was also part of Hungary. The fortress played a vital defensive and protective role against continuous Turkish invasions gravitating towards Vienna.

In the 17th century, under the reigns of Counts *Ádám I* and *Ádám II. Batthyány*, the formerly strategic building underwent a significant transformation into a country residence with a touch of Baroque splendor. This change was influenced by the gradual spread of Baroque styles from Vienna and Graz into Hungary and Prekmurje, introduced by the Hungarian Counts. With its new Baroque appearance, the manor house, serving as the seat of the then newly autonomous Rakičan estate, became a grand summer residence comparable to those of more imposing estates in Hungary. Although little information about its furnishings is available today, it was undoubtedly impressive, having housed one of the four rare Gothic reliquaries for a period.

Most of the information about the manor and its history can be traced back to the correspondence between the manor's stewards or clerks and its lord. Notable figures include the aforementioned *Blaž Temlin* and the last castle steward, *Janez Schweinhammer* (1841-1940), who rests in the Rakičan cemetery.

The Manor Park also deserves mention as one of the most important landscape parks in Prekmurje, alongside those in Murska Sobota and Beltinci. The current view of the manor, undergoing steady renovation and partial reconstruction, serves as a reminder of the noble families of Hungary and their role in the cultural history of Prekmurje.

All of this underscores the need to delve into the unique history of Prekmurje, a region insufficiently studied and acknowledged in Slovenia. Due to its strategic location, Prekmurje was divided between different nationalities, and their influence is still evident today. The architectural image of Prekmurje, as unique as its landscape, has survived in sacred, profane, and vernacular architecture, shaping the distinctive character of the region.

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SAŽETAK

U članku se obrađuje dvorac Rakičan u prostoru i vremenu. Rakičan se nalazi 1 km istočno od grada i istoimene općine Murska Sobota, glavnoga grada Prekmurja, regije koja se još povezuje s poljoprivredom i plodnim tlom. Prekmurje je bilo pod vlašću Mađara više od 800 godina. Osvojeno područje Prekmurja uključeno je u Mađarsko kraljevstvo oko 1100. godine i službeno je ostalo u sastavu države do 1919. godine, kada je potpisan Trianonski mir. Dvorac Rakičan nalazi se na rubu engleskog parka površine 11 hektara. Park je prvotno oblikovan u 17. stoljeću, a već u 18. stoljeću uređenje je pratilo trendove mađarskih feudalnih gospodara toga doba. U parku su se uzgajale tisuće autohtonih voćaka iz Mađarske te neautohtone voćne i ukrasne vrste drveća, uglavnom iz Italije. Današnji izgled okoliša dvorca očuvan je najranije od 1880-ih. Zbog nedostatka povijesnih izvora, udaljenosti i ruralnog karaktera zgrade mnogo toga iz povijesti Rakičana je nepoznato. Međutim, prisutni su određeni barokni elementi, posebice na fasadi, koji su karakteristični za ruralne plemićke zgrade i mogu se uspoređivati sa sličnim plemićkim zgradama u susjednim zemljama. Nekada strateška utvrda obrane od turskih najezdi, Rakičan je dobio priliku u 17. stoljeću pod grofovima Ádámom I. i Ádámom II. Batthyány postati ladanjska rezidencija s daškom baroka. Na ovu promjenu uglavnom su utjecali mađarski grofovi progresivno šireći barokni stil iz Beča i Graza na područje Mađarske i Prekmurja. S novim baroknim izgledom dvorac, kao sjedište tada nedavno autonomnog imanja Rakičan, postao je prostrana ladanjska rezidencija usporediva s impozantnijim imanjima u Mađarskoj. Predmetu se pristupa i analizira s povišeno kritičkog stajališta, stoga se u pristupu koriste različite metode.