

BOBDA

Transience as a fact of life

The Romanian village of Bobda (Hungarian: Papd) is located 8 km from Zillasch and belongs to the municipality of Tschene / Cenei. At the end of the 19th century, about one third of the 1200 inhabitants were German-speaking; today Bobda has about 850 mostly Romanian inhabitants.

The history of Bobda is remarkable!

The association ArheoVest and the UVT West University of Timisoara have gained in 2016 further knowledge with their research on the basis of satellite images, that west of the Old Bega creek possibly already in the Bronze Age was a large complex of fortified settlements, basically on the territory of today's villages Bobda, Nemet, Gertianosch, Ketscha with Tschene as a central fortification. This is concluded by the scientists on the one hand from earth piles and ditches but also from findings of pottery shards as well as traces of grindings and ashes, all of which indicate settlements [1].

Bobda is mentioned for the first time in the 13th century as Pophth and the papal archives mention in the middle of the 14th century the parish priests Stefan from Popd and Pavel from Pokd [2].

The map from 1773 by the Austrian Cameral engineer Johan Carl v. Wittinghof [3] shows a disorderly settlement with houses and names of land and garden owners, a fenced church, streets and wells, representations of streams swamps, fields, meadows and pastures. The small gray circular dots are probably those elevations attributed to fortified settlements from the Bronze Age mentioned in the above named archeological study. To the south, Bobda borders on the Predium Silasch, a barren land; the Josephinian Land Survey (1769-1772) also identifies the Predium Sylhasch there.

Over the centuries the village passed through the hands of several landowners. This also led to the fact that within a few decades the settlement of 1773 was developed and transformed into an orderly village with a structure that still characterizes Bobda today. The actual map still shows what was already documented in the Franziszeische Land Survey of 1819-1869: detailed streets and house shapes as well as the place in the center of the village where the 'Castle' and Manor houses with the generously laid out garden used to be. Outside the village, on one of the aforementioned historical elevations, was a 'Pleasure House' of the noble family; today, only a rectangular piece of woodland can be seen there on the map to the left of the road leading northwest.

The last noble of Bobda was Baron Csávossy Gyula, one of the richest landowners of the area. He started building a mausoleum for his family in 1860, modeled on the Basilica of Esztergom, Hungary. Across the street was his lavishly furnished 'castle' with 42 rooms. In 1904 Csávossy was ennobled.

From 1909 the mausoleum served as a church for the Catholic community. The baron died in 1911 and the descendants emigrated after the expropriation as a result of the land reform of 1921.

The communists later desecrated the church and the crypt, and local vandalism destroyed or stole the valuable furnishings. The few Catholics as well as the diocese of Timisoara can hardly raise the funds to stop the decay. Moreover, the heavy storm of September 17, 2017 did not make things better.

I first heard about this church in the neighboring village of Bobda as a teenager in the 70s. Despite the short distance of 8 km from Zillasch, I only saw this architectural gem in 2010. There are hardly any traces left of the count's country estate and it is only a matter of time before the mausoleum collapses if nothing is done. Nevertheless:

"In 2021, the Banat Monument Rescue Service carried out the first safety work here. This was followed by a 3D scan, the first step in a complex project. This was possible after the then newly elected mayor Sirgean Tanasin negotiated the takeover of the mausoleum from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Timisoara, the owner until then. Three years later, the National Heritage Institute put the contract out to tender for "design services and technical support for the consolidation, restoration and upgrading of the Roman Catholic Church (Csavossy Mausoleum)"."

(Source: https://stiridetimisoara.ro/mausoleul-csavossy-din-bobda-cauta-proiectant-pentru-restaurare-institutul-national-al-patrimoniului-da-banii-foto_63086.html)

The 1880 census recorded 1274 inhabitants: 759 Romanians, 403 Germans, 109 Hungarians, 4 others. 855 inhabitants were counted in 2002: 824 Romanians, 11 Hungarians, 9 Germans, 11 others [4].