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MANETTO DI JACOPO AMMANATINI, THE FLORENTINE WOODCARVER-ARCHITECT AND PIPPO SCOLARI'S CASTLE IN OZORA



1. The castle of Ozora (photo: Katalin Prajda)

The theory regarding Ammanatini's participation in the construction of the castle in Ozora (Tolna County) has already been proposed by Tibor Koppány in his 1979 article, published before the beginning of the archaeological excavations at the castle.¹ [Fig. 1] However, István Feld, the lead archaeologist at the site, posited that the castle's design had local roots.² The present article's aim is to reconsider those elements which underline Koppány's hypothesis.

1 Tibor KOPPÁNY, Filippo Scolari ozorai vára, *Műemlékvédelem* XXIII/3 (1979), pp. 192-203.

2 István FELD, Az ozorai várkastély története, *Műemlékvédelem* XLVII/1 (2003), pp. 1-13.

In 1409 when, according to Antonio di Tuccio Manetti's narration, Florentine wood-carver Manetto di Jacopo Ammanatini (called *El Grasso*) arrived in the Kingdom of Hungary, the Florentine-born Pippo di Stefano Scolari had already been promoted to baronial rank in Sigismund of Luxemburg's court.³ *Lo Spano*, as he was called by his Florentine contemporaries, received the privilege via royal donation in 1416 of building a castle in the centre of his estates, along with his younger brother, Matteo (1370/71-1426) and his nephew, Leonardo di Caccia Altoviti.⁴ In 1423, when King Sigismund traveled to Ozora, the construction of the castle had probably already been completed.⁵ Three years later when two ambassadors of the Florentine Signoria arrived in Ozora on Pippo's invitation, they found there a "*castello bellissimo e più chiese fatte di nuovo*" - a very beautiful castle and several newly built churches.⁶ The ambassadors not only saw the baron's estate and properties in the baroness's company but they also met their fellow-citizen, Manetto Ammanatini, during their visit – evidence which places him in Ozora during this period. Ammanatini was not a traveler simply passing through Ozora. On the contrary, he might have spent such a long time there that Rinaldo degli Albizzi simply referred to him as "*Grasso da Osora*", which suggests that the Florentine woodcarver had actually settled on *lo Spano's* estates.⁷

As the quasi contemporary narration of Antonio Manetti reveals, the Grasso worked for the baron as architect in the Kingdom of Hungary.⁸ Besides Manetti, a letter written in 1429 also informs us that Pippo's heirs still owed Manetto a considerable sum of money for work on a castle.⁹ The castle mentioned in the document can probably be identified with Ozora, therefore it points to the fact that Manetto Ammanatini took an active part in the construction and probably also in the design of the castle for Pippo Scolari.¹⁰

3 Antonio MANETTI, Domenico DE ROBERTIS, Giuliano TANTURLI, *Vita di Filippo Brunelleschi preceduta da La Novella del Grasso*, Milano 1976, p. 3. Katalin PRAJDA, The Scolari Family at the Court of Sigismund of Luxemburg in Buda, *Journal of Early Modern History* XIV/6 (2010), pp. 513-533.

4 Katalin PRAJDA, A Scolari család várai Ozorai Pipó idején: Palagio di Tizzano és Castello di Vicchiomaggio. Kutatási beszámoló, *Castrum IV* (2006), p. 47, n. 3.

5 FELD 2003 (note 2), p. 5.

6 Rinaldo DEGLI ALBIZZI, *Commissioni di Rinaldo degli Albizzi per il comune di Firenze dal 1399 al 1433*, Firenze 1867-1873, II., p. 589.

7 DEGLI ALBIZZI 1867-1873 (note 6), p. 590.

8 MANETTI 1976 (note 3), p. 42.

9 PRAJDA 2006 (note 4), p. 50, n. 18.

10 Katalin PRAJDA, Manetto di Jacopo Ammanatini, Ozorai Pipó építész és a firenzei asztalosság, in: György DOMOKOS, Gyöngyi KOVÁCS, Maxim MORDOVIN, György TEREI (eds.), *Várak nyomában. Tanulmányok a 60 éves Feld István tiszteletére*, Castrum Bene, Budapest, pp. 201-206.



2. The escarpment of the northeastern wall (photo: Katalin Prajda)



3. Fragments of swallowtail battlements
(István FELD, *Az ozorai várkastély története, Műemlékvédelem XLVII/1* (2003), p. 4)

In my opinion, Pippo's castle in Ozora shared elements with Florentine castle and palace building of the time, such as the base escarpment (*scarpata*) of the outer walls and the swallowtail battlements, an element

which had no precedents in local architecture but had a long tradition among Florentine families with Ghibelline loyalties, such as the Scolari. [Fig. 2, 3] Furthermore, the castle's four annexes were designed around a quasi-rectangular inner courtyard, a typical feature of Florentine palaces.¹¹ It is clear from archaeological-architectonical research led by Feld that in the two-story-building, the first floor was occupied by the service rooms and a second floor was prepared for the landlord's use. The main building had no effective defense-system, only surrounding brick walls, three towers and a ditch.¹²

11 PRAJDA 2006 (note 4), pp. 47-52.

12 FELD 2003 (note 2), pp. 7-9.

The main building therefore, in terms of general concept, was probably similar to other symmetrical palace-like Florentine buildings, which underlines Koppány's hypothesis, even though the carved stone details clearly linked it to the local architecture, as Feld has suggested.

Meanwhile, the masons and the stone carvers were probably of local origin, and therefore transmitted local traditions, while Filippo Brunelleschi instead may have inspired the possible architect, his friend Manetto Ammanatini. Brunelleschi is also known to have designed castles and defense-systems and in the 1430s he designed and constructed the so-called Scolari Oratory in Florence, likely commissioned by the heirs of *Lo Spano*.¹³

13 This theory is underlined by the documents published by Saalman. Howard SAALMAN, *Filippo Brunelleschi. The Buildings*, London 1993, pp. 380-409.

Florentinski rezbar in arhitekt Manetto di Jacopo Ammanatini in grad Pippa Scolarija v Ozori

Florentinski rezbar Manetto di Jacopo Ammanatini (ok. 1384/87–ok. 1451/52) je okrog leta 1409 začel delati po naročilu Pippa Scolarija na Ogrskem. Pippo (1368/69–1426), ki je bil baron ogrske krone, je bil pokrovitelj številnih gradbenih projektov. Med njegovimi najpomembnejšimi gradnjami je grad v Ozori, ki je bil zgrajen med ok. 1416 in 1423/26. V času gradnje je Ammanatini verjetno bival v Ozori, kjer je bil zaposlen kot baronov arhitekt.