

The History

The History of Zalaszentgrót

Celtic traces have been found

According to archeologists, who found La Tene graves, swords and other everyday objects during the excavation in the sandmines of Szentgrót, there was a Celtic settlement before. Due to the findings this Celtic settlement functioned only as temporary accommodation since they have not found any traces that would refer to permanent living standards.

Roman presence

Roman presence can be continuously seen in the place of Zalaszentgrót from the end of the 1st and the beginning of the 2nd century to the 5th after the Celtic antecedents. The place used to be perfectly suitable to cross the river. Sources have been found on both sides of the Rive Zala. As a result of the romanisation, stone and brick buildings, import ceramics, glass and graves findings that are concerned to be significant in the region, it has been heavily proved that Zalaszentgrót used to be Maestriana situated 30 miles from Savaria and 25 miles from Mogetiana.

The Hungarian conquerors appeared

According to some assumptions the tribes of Bulcsú settled down here when the first Magyars appeared. One of the branches of this tribe must have been the Türje clan. The clan that conquered the area used to have a nomad way of life at the beginning and they decided to settle down only at the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries. It is supposed that at that time it was quite an important question of power for the Magyars to overtake the routes that were essential from both commercial and military points of view as soon as they could, and to have the inhabitants under control, so that they would live among them. The swamp area from Lake Balaton used to extend to somewhere nearby Zalaszentgrót.

The origin of the eponym

One of the most important data of the town is 1083 or 1084, which years are supposed to be the years of the naming, however, no written evidence can prove it. According to the experts who deal with the history of the settlement it got its name after St. Gellért bishop. The bishop who died as a martyr was declared a saint in 1083 or 1084, therefore the settlement could get its name after him only after his

death. There are some written evidence in connection with the naming from 1491, which is a certificate of Ulaszlo II.. In this document he gave Szent Gót to the Hagymasy family as a present. According to the Pray codex the certificate included the following: Nikolai Hagymas e St. Giróth, however, it was mentioned as Zend Geród as well. Giróth is supposed to be the same as Gellért, and Geród is the same as Gerard, which can be abbreviated as Grót. Szent Grót is most probably the abbreviated form for St. Gerard that could possibly originate from the name of St. Gellért. The first written evidence for the existence of the settlement is from 1247. In order to understand this document you should go back to the Türje clan, the owner of Szentgrót. The first well-known person of the clan is mentioned namely as Gecse or Géza who had the name Szentgiroliti then Szentgrót. His son was Dénes, the ban and later palatine of Hungary who founded the Premonstratensian abbey. He is mentioned in the certificate as Dénes master ban from Szent Gerard who was given the abbey that was established by himself in addition with four holdings, a two-wheeled mill by the bank of the River Zala, and half of the amount of the taxes as well. The donation was approved by Béla IV. and he ordered the chapter of Veszprém to inaugurate the Premonstratensians of Türje. It happened on 22th September 1247.

The Hagymásys, the captains of the castle

According to the Pray codex Szent-Grót is one of the oldest market towns of Hungary. The castle of the town was already mentioned in 1299: at this time the clans of Türje, Pósa, Tamás and Dénes came to an agreement that included the following: the castle of Szentgrót with Szentgrót, Zyad, Barka and Udvarnok villages belonged to the clan of Tamás. The town was mentioned as a market town in 1397 in the documents. In 1433 the widow of Szentgróty László got married to Hagymásy László, so since then Szentgrót belonged both to the Hagymásys and Szentgrótyys. After the death of King Albert in 1444 Bánffy Pál robbed the castle due to the treason of the captains of the castle. Afterwards, he agreed with Szentgróty János and the sons of Hagymásy László on giving the fortress back in return for 560 gold forints. But this was not the end of the case. Two years later the Hagymásys and the Szentgrótyys sued Bánffy Pál in order to compensate the damage that had been caused while occupying the castle. In 1480 another interesting case came up when Lady Ágota, the daughter of Szentgrótyi László and wife of Hinfy Benedek, and her son, Hinfy Imre, made a complaint to King Mathias that after the death of King Albert Hagymásy Miklós and Szentgróty János took over their fields in Szentgrót. After the death of King Mathias during the period of the civil war Hagymásy Miklós and Szentgrótyi János robbed and burnt down the holdings of Bánffy Miklós and Jakab, who were the descendants of their old enemy s. Hagymásy Miklós, who was the deputy overseer of Zala County according to the Pray codex, submitted to Miksa Tsar, therefore, Ulászló II took away the castle from the disloyal, the Szentgrótyys and the Hagymásys and donated it to the Bánffys from Alsolendva. However, the Bánffys did not have such a powerful army by which they could enforce the will of the King. As a result of this, the castle remained in the hand of the Hagymásys. Hagymásy Kristóf, who became the captain of the castle, killed Ujlaki Lajos, the bishop of Veszprém and carried out huge destruction in Vas, Zala and Somogy counties, according to some sources. The nearby Premonstratensian monestry in Türje was attacked and robbed several times by the Hagymásys. Even the stones of the monestry were taken away to fix the walls of the castle of Szentgrót. It was the only solution since the nearest stone mine was in Sümeg, 20 km far. In 1556 Ferdinand I

supported Queen Isabell, therefore, Hagymásy Kristóf went to Transylvania and his wealth was given to Macedonai Peter, the financial advisor of the King. The defenders of the castle could not continuously protect the castle against the stronger and stronger Turkish attacks from 1550, and in spite of the victories, the area of the castle became a tax payer one of the Turkish. We know from the sharing that there were upper and lower buildings and a chapel as well in the castle. During the Turkish regime, after the capitulation of Kanizsa in 1600, Szent-Grót became a border castle where the captains were still the Hagymásys. At this time a voluntary guard including 600 horsemen lived in the castle of Szent-Grót on their own budget. In return the town was free from the taxes and the tithe of the bishop. At this time the surroundings of the castle were boggy and swampy, therefore, completely suitable for protection. Several resolutions of the parliament (in 1601, 1602, 1655, 1659 and in 1681) ordered to fix the castle. In the 15th century Franciscan monks settled down in the market town and built a monastery and church, but they left them as soon as the Turkish appeared in town and later these buildings were used as building material by bigger constructions.

In 1634 Hagymásy István János and Péter were the owners of the castle, but they made a bell for the Lutherans. The Turkish tried to occupy the castle several times, but unsuccessfully. However, the soldiers of the border castles had to face not only the Turkish but a greater enemy, poverty as well. In 1654 the Hagymásy brothers died, so their family, and Earl Batthyány Ádám bought their inheritance. The selling was approved by Lipót I in 1663, only after the death of widow of Hagymásy László, so the Batthyánys got it at that time. According to a survey from 1681 the town had suffered great damage from the Turkish army in that year. While there were only 32 soldiers in the castle in 1682, in 1688 there were 250 hussars and 300 voivodes. In 1686 the liberating movement against the Turkish army started, during which the castle of Kanizsa was liberated in 1690, therefore, the castle of Szentgrót lost its significant role.

During the period of the Hungarian insurrection at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries the attacks around the castle did not stop. The market town became the booty of the Kurucz, the Croation and Rác armies, who took away everything that was portable. At the beginning of the year of 1707 an army of 125,000 soldiers went through the town under the command of General Rabutin de Bussy Lajos and left behind only traces of devastation. The army of the Emperor destroyed the border castles one by one: in 1710 General Schilling destroyed the castle of Szentgrót as well. The fortress became so run-down during the looting that its stone were taken away and later a new palace was built on the spot of the previous one.

The 18th century: the era of prosperity

In the 18th century trademen, craftsmen settled down here, trade was increasing, schools and societies were being organised this was the era of prosperity. The first national census was taken in 1776 in Szent-Grót, but it did not mention the population, it stated only that there were 143 houses at that time. (Later, in 1890 the national census showed that there were 273 houses and 2,243 people.) The roads of Szent-Grót were still swampy when Earl Batthyányi Ferenc arranged

the streets, built a bridge and had the swamp dried.

The leaders of the town tried to turn the settlement into the centre of the area. They wanted to reach this by improving trade. In 1830 they got the permission for organising weekly fairs, according to which the trade increased. Different societies were founded (eg. reading clubs), and the Casino was opened as well. Dr. Batthyány Károly and Deák Ferenc, who lived in Kehida at that time, helped with the foundation of the Zalaszentgrót Reginal Department of the National Association. The customs office and the great restaurant was built in 1844. The deputy office was installed as well in 1854 and in the very same year a bridge over the River Zala was constructed too. In 1855 there were quite a lot of people infected by cholera and 164 of them died of it. Beside the disease the population of the settlement had to face fires as well. In 1857 42 houses, including the Town Hall as well burnt down. There were plague of locusts several times, as well. In August 1859 the inhabitants could only get rid of the locusts that they made horrible noises according to some sources. The title of being a market town was ceased by the civil parliament in the 1870s and afterwards Szentgrót got the rank of a city.

The clock of the town was designed and built by a clockmaker from Vienna and it was installed on 15th October 1870, however, the bell of the church that weighed 8 tonnes was only put in its right place in September 1873.

The most significant date of the following decade that was full of heavy damages was on 20th August in 1883 when the first brick of the hospital was grounded. Zala-Szent-Grót used to be the centre of the region and the seat of the electing area as well at that time. Deák Ferenc was the first elected representative of the town in 1848. (After the independent war the constitution lost its validity, therefore, there were no elections till 1861.) The settlement was the seat of the region as well as the industrial and commercial centre of the area from 1887. By the end of the 1800s more and more schools were opened, the post office was built in 1867, the telegraph office in 1883 and Perényi Antal founded the first fire brigade in 1882. The railway line was built from 1892 till Túrje and from 1895 till Balatonszentgyörgy. The town got telephone facilities in 1896. The town had a committee with 24 representatives, three doctors, a vet, a pharmacist and three qualified midwives. There were approximately 100 craftsmen and traders. Zala-Szent-Grót owned the constabulary with 5 gendarmes, and had a savings bank, as well. The settlement was significant from the commercial point of view as well: there were 8 fairs and cereal and cattle market in the town.

The population shared several religions, but only three of them created parishes: the Roman Catholics, the Agostan Lutherans and the Jewish. The parishes had their own churches and schools. In the autumn of 1896 the town could open its crèche from the donation of Okolicsányi Emília.

After the wars

The large village had a lots of victims in World War One. In 1921 Károly Imre founded a brick factory here, and the Health House were built in the same year as well. In 1922 the Hungarian Royal and State

fruit plant was introduced in the settlement. The production started in 1922 in the predecessor of the cheese factory, in the butter factory. In the very same year a generating plant and a steam mill was built as well. The population of the settlement was 2458 and the majority of the lords of the large village owned small dwarf holdings in 1935 according to some sources. During World War Two lots of Polish soldiers and civil got shelters. German and Hungarian troops surrendered the settlement in March 1945 only after serious damages in their last battles. There were 262 victims from Szentgrót

Szentgrót, the 100th town

In 1949 the population of Szentgrót was 3.683. In 1950 Kisszentgrót was attached to the settlement and since then up to 1963 Zalaszentgrót was a seat of the region with its independent council. After the war a significant improvement was started during which the co-operative movement was introduced. Beside the agriculture, the distilling, textile and wood industry, the brick factory and wine-growing and vegetables processing plants were installed. Aranyod and Tüskeszentpéter was attached to the town in 1963 and after it lost its seat role in the region in 1978 the following settlements were united with Zalaszentgrót by 31st December 1983: Csáford, Tekenye, Zalaudvarnok and Zalakoppány. Zalaszentgrót was given the title of being a town on 1st January 1984 after the attachment was ended. This was the 100th time to give the rank of being a town in the country. According to the current process that went through the country at that time, the court, the deputy office, the public prosecutor's office and the police station was closed in Zalaszentgrót.

Nowadays...

Most of the companies and co-operatives turned into Ltd-s after the change of regime in 1989. The co-operatives were disintegrated, and the most frequent economic forms were the individual managements according to the changes that occurred in the structure of the economy.

The cheese and brick factory was closed, however, edible-snail processing plants were opened though only for seasonal purposes. The product of this process, the snail is going to be appointed to the list of Hungaricum.

The main street and square of Szentgrót was being rebuilt due to the town developing plans during these years. At the very same time shops with their unique style makes one side of the Cultural Centre of the town that overlooks Batthyány Street more beautiful. The drain-pipe system was firstly installed in the town, then in different parts of the town as well as a result of regional investments. Several old buildings were refurbished, (Little Palace, Corner of the market, Kossuth block), the monument Stone Bridge was able to be saved from total destruction. In 1997 the leaders of the town decided to build a thermal spa and leisure centre in the suburbs of the town. Zalaszentgrót joined the settlements who make their living from tourism in 2001 when the construction of the spa was finished. The centre was extended with an

indoor pool in 2003 and the mineral water that comes up from the ground here has become well-known all over the country with the help of a multinational company. The population of Zalaszentgrót was 7823 in 2002.