

NEW CHALLENGES IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSERVATION IN A COUNTRY LIKE HUNGARY

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We live at the time of the growing globalization, which tends to cover and unify traditional values, culture of different nations. One of the main questions is, whether the mankind may let the perishing of these cultures. It was not always a question earlier. The people of the 20th century can be proud that he was the first in the history who have paid special attention to it. Speaking about archaeological heritage it must be mentioned that often human activity has increased their number instead of letting them to exist in their original form. Regrettable enough that again the people of the 20th century went into such crimes which have awoken the responsibility.

A welcome development of today's politics is the growing attention paid to the valuable heritage of our predecessors, and the remnants of their cultural traditions. It is not only for the sake of the material culture, but to preserve it as human resources for the present and for the future. The cultural heritage is not only a mere decoration for tourists but an organic part of our life. It is used through many ways, so the movable and non movable heritage together with its spiritual essence is integrated into our culture. The cultural, scientific and social knowledge of earlier generations were always built into the structure of the newer generations at first through oral tradition, later through written media, all that having been merged into the new possibilities of information technology.

The culture and heritage of a small nation can be as valuable as that of a big nation. Hungarian experience proves that through preservation of the values of the past not only the archaeological heritage will be rescued but also the present population gains a lot. The well preserved and maintained heritage will be an instrument for the cultural diversity and an engine of cultural and human development.

Nature

The Carpathian Basin lies on the edge of the Alps, north of the Balkan Peninsula. Its main characteristics are the partly continental, partly oceanic climate, in its south region mixed with some Mediterranean influences. Though the climate is generally mild, the continental influence can cause on this latitude very severe, frosty winters. Its unique position enabled people in the previous millennia an agriculture production according to different methods like the irrigation system of Anatolia and Mesopotamia, the nomadism of the steppe and the peasant life of Central Europe. The big rivers

coming from the Carpathian mountains meet themselves in the big lowland, their water is gathered by the Danube and taken into the Black Sea (Fig. 1). Huge areas in the lowland lay under water during and after inundations, providing an extreme high fertility (Fig. 2). The main entrance and exit of the Carpathian Basin was always the place where the Danube entered and left its territory.

The Past

Peoples settled in and went through the Carpathian Basin

Most peoples and armies coming from south or west used this way through the past millennia, but there was a third direction from east as well, used by nomadic or half nomadic peoples of the steppe. All these tribes could find their traditional way of life in this region, and for almost all of them became the Carpathian Basin the last station. This phenomenon was caused less by other groups of people, than rather through the natural circumstances of ecology, hydrology and climate of the region. The unique feature of the Carpathian Basin lies in its extreme rich and diverse cultural heritage which testifies at the same time the inundation culture of the south with the nomadic life of the steppe people and the settled peasants of inner Europe. These different cultures influenced each other and new composite cultures were created.

Survive and destruction of cultural heritage

The road of peoples and armies along the Danube did not only create new monuments but also destroyed the land, and so not only running time, water and hard frost, but also human activity threatened the cultural heritage in every era. The level of destruction was – at least in the lowland – increased by the fact that in the stone age region almost every building was made of mud and wood, or deepened into the earth. The stone material of the Roman towns and fortresses of the loess region were robbed out later and as only stone in the territory used by later settlers. However, not only Roman stone buildings (Fig. 3), but a great number of middle ages castles and forts perished in the wars, and if not then, in the peace time of the 18th century, not to provide asylum for so called rebels (Fig. 4).

The World Wars and Communism

The World Wars, especially the second one, destroyed towns in Hungary, too, but the following period of the Soviet era

did the same, devastating and letting people to devastate estates and buildings of the former aristocracy and sometime those of the churches. Many historical monuments became archaeological monuments, like the still standing ruins of the monastery church at Pusztaszer from the 12th century which was used – successfully – as an artillery target on a training in the beginning of the fifties (Fig. 5). But every negative thing has some positive effects as well. The archaeology was born in Hungary in the 19th century and it was a well established practice and science in the 20th. One can complain about the huge devastation on the one side, but it made possible archaeological investigation on the other side as well. So in the almost total destroyed Buda castle could be excavated its long covered oldest parts (Fig. 6).

State of conservation

According to the running inventarisation there are more than 100.000 archaeological sites in Hungary, and their number increases through fieldwork and complex investigation. The partly published catalogue supports every work and provides basically the archaeological data for the evaluation of investments with significant impact on to the archaeological heritage. The responsibility lies in the hands of the museums, but also other scientific institutions take part in this work. In the last decades Hungarian archaeology has focused on to the prevention. Excavations have been made primarily in connection with investments of roads and other huge building projects. On the other side there is a need to excavate some archaeological sites fully, but also in these cases must be left some parts to testify the original site for the future.

The Present and the Future

Archaeological conservation and protection of archaeological heritage

At the present time the main task is to preserve the archaeological heritage in its original form and quality and to make the inevitable excavations due to the growing building activity. To be successful in doing so there is a need to involve the society and to increase the public awareness for archaeology. It is a very long process. It begins in the schools and keeps on in the exhibitions and auditoriums of the museums, but one of the most important place the archaeological site itself with its visible remains – conserved or restored – and with its atmosphere. The visitors can and must feel themselves in the well structured archaeological parks as in a place of the past, having the facility for joining to historical and archaeological programs. The education in the schools, the public work in the museums have achieved a significant change in the society of Hungary. Some decades ago archaeology meant for most people a curiosity, often an obstacle in fulfilling new projects, but for now cultural heritage and archaeology have become an important and respected pillar of the society. What could cause these changes?

New efforts on national level

First of all the new and fresh approach in the heritage management. The systematic work in the archaeological sites and in the museums has brought its fruits. Hungary is very rich in valuable archaeological sites, and the society could see and estimate the efforts made for their protection. The growing number of archaeological parks and interactive programs create a centre of attention and people join to them. The life in a bronze age village, the life in a Roman town (Fig. 7-8) or a fort (Fig. 9), the knights of a middle ages castle (Fig. 10-11) or the heroes of the Hungarian conquest, all in archaeological sites with conserved and partly reconstructed remains and exhibitions and publications form a well known network in Hungary.

This attitude is now supported by the new, euro-conform law on cultural heritage. It integrates the different elements of the heritage and prescribes the way of their investigation, conservation and maintenance. It is very important for the archaeology that the costs of the archaeological investigations are to be covered by the initiator who intends to disturb old structures or fields.

New methods are used as well. Different types of archaeological and natural scientific examinations are carried out, first of all aerial photography and archaeomagnetic survey. Both are very important elements of the undamaging investigation. In the last ten years these methods could be developed with international help in Hungary, and the first achievements are could be published (Fig. 12). The cooperation with scholars of archaeobotany, palaeontology, soil science and other sciences enable complex research and evaluation of the archaeological finds. In its sessions the Commission for Archaeological Sites of the ICOMOS – Hungarian National Committee focuses on to the complex presentation and evaluation of a single archaeological site with the aim of the complexity, regarding to the different scientific results, to the maintenance and presentation and usage of the site, to the public demand against it as a cultural heritage sites like the royal basilica in Székesfehérvár (Fig. 13), the Iseum in Savaria, Szombathely, and soon a prehistoric tumulus, middle ages castle). Also the publication of a series of an archaeological Itinerarium was started.

New efforts on international level

There is no obstacle now for scientific cooperation on international level. Common projects like in Babarc: Roman villa, in Dijon: Celtic oppidum, or in Züllich: Roman bath (Fig. 14) and various programs like aerial archaeology establish a new European level in archaeological investigation for Hungary.

The cooperation could be started also in conservation (Fig. 15). The planning of conservation and presentation belonged to these works, too, which contributed a lot to get acquainted with the newest expectations in other countries

Archaeology and World Heritage

World heritage has brought a new quality in the cultural heritage. The main question is, in which extent the World Heritage program is to be connected with the heritage programs of the single countries, with those of Hungary. At the present it covers only the most valuable monuments both on natural and cultural level. However, regarding its broad international acceptance, its integration effect is rather strong. Though there are many unquestionable sites worth to be World Heritage sites, they can not be qualified without exception. Through their increasing number their quality will show a decrease within some years or decades. On the other side the nominated World Heritage sites are the most valuable sites of the countries, standing on the top of their list. In some aspects the categories and the evaluation methods of the World Heritage sites will influence and integrate the national legislation.

Hungary has now eight World Heritage sites. Six have some archaeological elements as well, but only one, the early Christian cemetery of Sopianae, Pécs (Fig. 16) was evaluated only according to its archaeological values. The Budapest Castle and the abbey of Pannonhalma (Fig. 17) according to their cultural values, the Hortobágy National park, the region of Lake Fertő and the Tokaj wine region were accepted as cultural landscape.

The prestige of world heritage has increased in the previous years enormously. It can be foreseen that new dimensions will be opened in the judgement of cultural heritage in the light of World Heritage, which will create new challenges in

legislation, conservation, maintenance and preservation. One can assume that these challenges will be answered positively by the scientists, by the authorities and by the society of Hungary and other countries.

A welcome development of today's politics is the growing attention paid to the valuable heritage of our predecessors, and the remnants of their cultural traditions. It is not only for the sake of the material culture, but to preserve it as human resources for the present and for the future. The culture and heritage of a small nation can be as valuable as that of a big nation. Hungarian experience proves that through preservation of the values of the past not only the archaeological heritage will be rescued but also the present population gains a lot. The well preserved and maintained heritage will be an instrument for the cultural diversity and an engine of cultural and human development. The prestige of world heritage has increased in the previous years enormously. It can be foreseen that new dimensions will be opened in the judgement of cultural heritage in the light of World Heritage, which will create new challenges in legislation, conservation, maintenance and preservation.

Figure 1



Figure 2

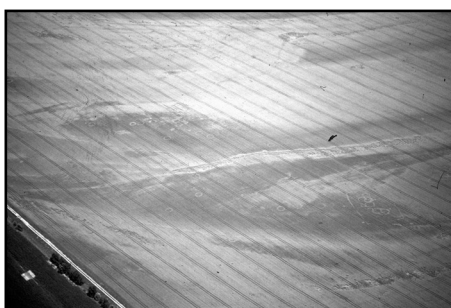


Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

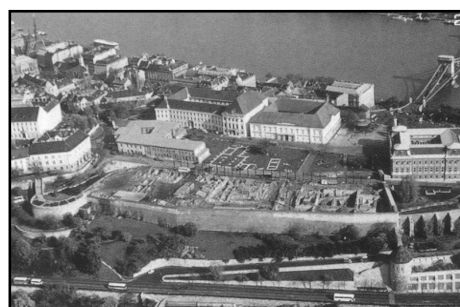


Figure 6

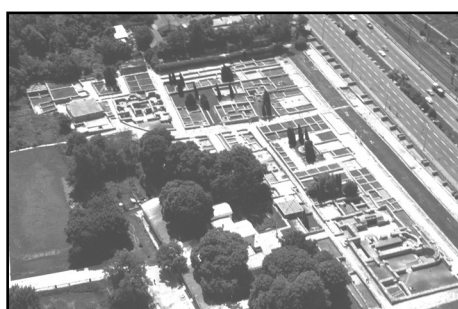


Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

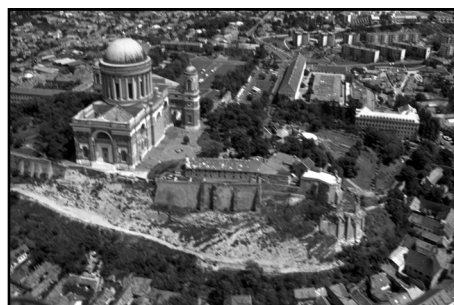


Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12

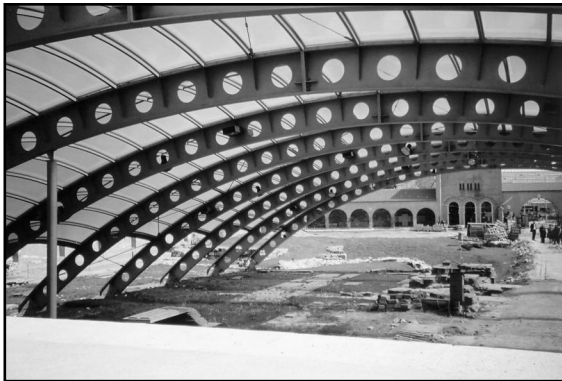


Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17