

**ÁKOS ZSEMBERY :**

**Protection of medieval architectural monuments**

*(methodological recommendation for the critical analysis of the display of 'dead'  
monuments)*

Theses of the Ph.D essay

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## **I. The aim and topicality of the survey**

The presentation of 'dead' medieval architectural monuments is a special field of monument protection as being essentially determined by the relation between theory and practice. The possibility of an 'academic crisis' of Hungarian monument protection was mentioned repeatedly among professionals on the grounds of the rather controversial ruin displays of the last twenty years. Apropos of this, the following matters should be defined clearly, in a theoretically interpretable way:

- The state of critical analysis of monument displays in Hungary;
- The place of Hungarian monument protection practice within contemporary European pragmatics;
- Academic bases and practical considerations guiding our work today;
- Critical analysis of the display of 'dead' monuments in Hungary.

Resulting from the last thirty years' deficiency in professional literature, the critical analysis and study of restorations has not been and could not be supported by continuous theoretical background. However, the necessity and roots of the monuments' critical analysis are traceable from the beginning of the eighties (especially in the publications of Miklós Horler, Gyula Hajnóczy and János Sedlmayr). Accordingly, the tendencies of Hungarian monument restoration practice can hardly be compared to international pragmatics supported by continuous theoretic bases. Hungarian theoretic assumptions are always connected to an actual restoration or display, publications are restricted to the architects' reports and usually no substantive critic is formulated in relation with the restoration works. Among the examples, there are debates on that ones which cannot be adapted by the former unified approach. Here we can mention the clearly negative response to the three big representative works prepared for the millennium, resulting in more personal arguments than substantive critical discussion. The detailed interpretation of the restorations, the analysis of tendencies and the discussion of theoretical bases are usually failed to be done.

The methodology of the protection of 'dead' monuments cannot be considered as definitive; it is under development all the time, showing up contemporary tendencies. In relation of their display, monument protection activity supposes a continuous intervention; however, the regularly repeated process of interventions prevails more than a continuous

maintenance of the monuments in use. The regular and intense conditioning of ruins may entail the chance for a possible revision of the presentation as well.

Present essay aims to compare the categories of Hungarian and international theoretical bases, and after setting up a unified definition apparatus, to create an analysis system that gives a methodological recommendation for the critical analysis of restorations.

## **II. The resources and method of the survey**

To this day, the detailed critical history of Hungarian monument protection has not been written, any attempts on this task had been made prior to the political changes. No comprehensive and up-to-date book has been written on the theory and practice of Hungarian monument protection yet. Only studies, publications and manuscripts of PhD essays provide a guideline in this issue. We are not even able to present some brief up-to-date reviews in other languages for foreign experts. In Hungary, the number of professional periodicals on monument protection is low; the larger essay volumes containing appendices in foreign language are published haltingly. Foreign responses on Hungarian restoration practice are not known for a long time because on one hand Hungarian publications and their reflection can hardly be found in foreign professional periodicals and on the other hand the previously intense professional relationships are actually died away by this time. There are just few experts who would present their visit to Hungary in the professional media of their country. Our personal presence in international organisations has been practically given up. Experts visiting abroad are dealing with their trip as a diplomatic task and barely present the ongoing works in Hungary. This gap cannot be eliminated with some issues in foreign language published by the Hungarian National Committee of ICOMOS. We are aware of only fragments of the European tendencies of the last years' restoration practice. The continuity of the theoretic bases is in short supply; the review of contemporary European professional literature can help in completing it – with no claim for completeness. In the analysis of the display of 'dead' monuments, archaeological topographies, monographies, volumes and periodicals are essential. The detailed excavation and wall exploration documentation of the earlier finished restoration works are important resources but in many cases they are not published. This deficiency is emphasized also by Hungarian archaeologists.

Present assay works with the method of critical study and analysis based on unified definitions. The setup of a viewpoint system gives the theoretical basis of this method, making the objective appreciation of the restorations' quality possible. For this, I take the *credibility* of the display, the adapted *value-hierarchy*, the *relation between old and new parts* and the *connection between the presented monument and its surroundings* as bases. The display is based on a theoretical reconstruction prepared with scientific methods, and this should not merely mean the construction of a mass-reconstruction dreamt by the graphic artist. The theoretical reconstruction can do its job and assist the judgement of the authenticity of the reconstruction attempt only if it not only applied the forms on the mass but also created their structurally deliberate and up-to-date reproduction.

The unity of theory and practice has to be in view at the methodological considerations of critical analysis. For this purpose, I have had recourse to the relation between contemporary ruin display theory and practice of the following three countries, with some restrictions.

- **Italy:** *the critical course and contemporary tendencies, and their influence on the treatment of ruin monuments;*

- **Germany:** *current matters of reconstruction, study of its theoretical bases and analysis of its practice;*

- **England:** *practice of ruin conservation and maintenance of ruin areas, analysis of the different methods.*

Beside the brief study of the tendencies in contemporary European monument protection, I have also analysed their influence on Hungarian practice in the period of 1934-2009, from the medieval ruin monuments' point of view. The year 1934 is taken as starting date because MOB (Hungarian Committee of Monuments) was reorganised, modern monument protection in Hungary appeared and the reconstructions of Esztergom started at that time.

The theoretical proposal-package will be analysed in relation with the reconstruction-types completed at the different medieval architectural monuments: display of partly demolished architectural reminiscences and archaeologically excavated ruins within and out of urban texture. For the study of the presentation of Hungarian medieval monuments, I have chosen that architectural reminiscences which have several matters at service by reason at their relevance.

### III. New scientific achievements of the dissertation

**1. Comparing the European and Hungarian definition-apparatus, we can state: the terminology system of the European countries cannot be transformed into a unified international standard that would be able to provide determinations detailed enough for a standardized critical analysis of restorations.**

The differences are not only linguistic and cultural ones, but they can be explained by the methodological and professional historic background as well. The differences can only be resolved to a certain extent with an interpretation following the cognition of the theoretical background of the different countries and the examination of their practice. The monument protection practice of any of the countries can only be analysed together with their own historic and theoretic background; at best the main international tendencies can be traced. Due to the heterogeneity of Hungarian terminology, the interpretation of critical remarks or even their understanding present many difficulties. For this reason, in my opinion it is a very important role to suggest Hungarian practice the adaptation and use of a standardized terminology in consideration of international tendencies too.

**2. The standardized definition system of monument restoration methods I have prepared and which is needed for the critical analysis is based on the examination of Hungarian and international definition-apparatus. I have proved that this system could make a good ground for the discussion of monument protection with critical attitude.**

The methods of restoration and their systematization have no common standards in Europe. Nevertheless, on the basis of their local characteristics and after analysing their critical approach it can be stated that the three countries in my focus use their system uniformly. I propose the following as a definition-system of Hungarian methods.

#### ***RESTORATION - PRESENTATION:***

- 1.) CONSERVATION
- 2.) RESTORATION
  - *COMPLETION*
    - DIDACTIC (ANASTYLOSIS also belongs here)
    - AESTHETIC
  - *REINFORCEMENT*
    - FOR STRUCTURAL REASON (again with the chance for didactics)

- *RUIN COVERAGE*
  - PROTECTION ROOF
    - evoking the original form („par excellence“)
    - creating a form completely independent from the original one
  - PROTECTION BUILDING
    - *FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE MONUMENT*
      - evoking the original form („par excellence“)
      - creating a form completely independent from the original one
    - *WITH NEW FUNCTION, INTEGRATING THE MONUMENT*
- 3.) REVITALIZATION
- 4.) RECONSTRUCTION:
  - *THEORETICAL RECONSTRUCTION*  
(not a direct intervention, but presenting the building in all different construction periods it makes part of the restoration documentation and becomes the theoretic basis of the display)
  - *ACTUAL RECONSTRUCTION*
    - PARTIAL REKONSTRUCTION (this is close to completion)
    - COMPLETE RECONSTRUCTION
    - REDEVELOPMENT

Restoration interventions have always come together with a continuous maintenance. Even abroad such definitions are used for monument protection action that are much closer to these meanings: *demolition, restoration, rehabilitation, renovation, etc.* According to international observations parallel to using these terms the maintenance of old buildings and remains is done without any scientific bases; and they are usually put in focus only in case of investments and tenders, where the main goal is the mere utilization of monumental values. The basic aim is the permanent maintenance but only with continuous analysis and just up to the actually needed extent.

**3. For the service of the critical analysis of the display of 'dead' monuments, I have set up an analysis system based on European theory and practice. The certain analyses prepared for the study have proved that this kind of system could be apt to an objective examination.**

With the following viewpoints, I find the analysis appropriate for the critical examination of the 'dead' monuments' display and for their objective judgement:

- **authenticity of the display**
  - *use of materials and forms;*
  - *spatial structure and spiritual content;*

- **hierarchy of values at restoration**
- **relationship between new and old**
  - *the architectural approach of restoration*
  - *sub- and co-ordination*
  - *supportability of new parts*
  - *illegibility, interpretability*
  - *reversibility*
- **relationship between the environment and the monument, influence on townscape**

The viewpoints of critical analysis were chosen on the basis of former Hungarian considerations, the details were elaborated on the ground of the edifications of European – mainly Italian – critical approaches. The examination of the restoration methods in Hungary and Europe gave the analytic viewpoints, which - after systematization - could serve as basis for an objective analysis.

For judging the authenticity of a restoration, the basis should be the credibility of the theoretical reconstruction based on scientific survey; the authenticity of the presentable status can be stated in reflection of that. It is essential to compare the authenticity of the monument and its treatment according to its material (materials and form) and immaterial (space, structure, spiritual content) factors. In order to make the analysis of the display possible from the space's authenticity's point of view, the present or planned function should be compared to the theoretical reconstruction after clarifying the architectural periods, preparing a theoretical space reconstruction and examining its function. During restoration, the values of the excavated and interpreted remains have to be determined, first on the basis of the scientific survey, then with the theoretical reconstruction too. Comparing these two aspects, the primer values can be defined which were relevant in the given period of the building to be presented; thus which are very important from the display's point of view. In respect of the analysis to list these values in a hierarchy is closely connected to authenticity. The analysis of the relation between new and old parts helps to find the right emphasis in the relation of details: the didactic stresses with focusing on interpretability and architectural stresses with verifiability. In the presentation, the role and function of the memory have to be examined within its closer and wider surroundings - on the basis of its original environmental relations that are clarified in the theoretical reconstruction.

**4. Specific assays have proved that the scale of the elaboration of the theoretical reconstruction, having great influence on the authenticity of the display, cannot be restricted to the right presentation of mass and form. It is also important in the preparation of the theoretical reconstruction to take into consideration the construction and structure technologies and rules of the period.**

The theoretical reconstruction can have a regular 'mistake', namely - by using graphics and modern computer techniques - that basic architectural and structural fault can be found behind the spectacular mass reconstructions. It should be noticed that the preparation of a theoretical reconstruction means the reconstruction of the design process as well. It is a process in which the original architectural idea is being re-composed. During reconstruction, the monument has to be reconsidered on the basis of available archaeological and survey data, at least in scale 1:100 for the whole building or even in detail plans.

**5. Critically analysing the restoration methods it can be clarified that to what extent scientific and social demands of the restoration are represented in the different methods. By this we can define which monument protection methods can be considered as critically based.**

In case of conservation with only minimal intervention, the scientific feature of the intervention is stronger than its social factors. We can talk about the critical approach of conservation in case of smaller completions. Restoration and partial reconstruction approach the complex task of message transmission in a scientific and critical way. Their methods refer to social demands scientifically, especially with their didactic considerations. So restoration is an architectural action with scientific aspects; its right social judgement is rather dependent on the right interpretation of the viewpoints which determined the restoration. Thus restoration is a critical action too. Protection roofs and buildings - as special examples of restoration - can also be constructed with critical aim. However, this critical need can be traced in case of protection roofs and buildings par excellence, which may refer to the original forms of the monument with their mass. From the critical analysis's point of view, protection roofs serving merely conservation do not differ from conservation without completion. Neither a new building, which only integrates the ruin monument or its part and functions as protection building, can be analysed with monument-critical methods. Usually in case of complete reconstruction, social or social-political need is much stronger than the

scientific one, thus complete reconstruction or renovation cannot be interpreted as critical restoration at all.

**6. In critical analyses it has been proved that the presentation of ruin monuments archaeologically excavated within urban structure is not able to ensure a relation of new and old parts which could avoid the overshadowing of the memory's authenticity and values. These displays cannot be examined critically, their scientific standard and value is minimal.**

The analysis of the example of Esztergom and Székesfehérvár has pointed out that even in possession of enough archaeological data, it is impossible to present in an experimental, authentic and thematic way only one layer of all interpreted layers of an urban texture, which went through relevant changes from the Middle Ages. The methods generally used in ruin presentations within the urban texture of historic towns (like mark in cladding, uprising of ground walls) cannot be interpreted with using this viewpoint-system.

#### **IV. Potentials for the practical usage of the results**

The attempt for clarifying the monument protection methods and systems on the basis of Hungarian and European terminology may help in determining a united theoretical background and in clarifying its system, in this way in composing a system for dissertations with similar subject.

An analysis system created along international experiences and contemporary monument protection tendencies can provide a proper base for the critical analysis of monument restorations. It makes easier to explore the problems to be solved by the display already in the design phase and may help in solving them as well.

A deeper analysis of European ruin monument protection tendencies and the placement of Hungarian ruin presentation on the European palette expand beyond the frame of present assay. This study gives a chance for measuring again Hungarian ruin presentation practice with European scale, provides guideline and literature for further surveys.

Depending on the condition of the ruin and its function in its environment, the relation of the ruin and its surrounding can be analysed in several levels with the help of this system, thus it can serve as a base for a study used in urban presentation of a town's medieval ruins or in urban arrangement. For that kind of work, the appendix of present dissertation sets up a model for Esztergom.

## Publications of the author in the theme of the theses

1. Az esztergomi középkori Szt. Lőrinc templom kutatása és műemléki bemutatásának lehetőségei./The research of the medieval St. Lawrence church in Esztergom and the possibilities of the presentation of the monument. In.: *Építés- Építészettudomány* XXXIII (1-2) 2005. pp. 83-109. (periodical on SCOPUS list)
2. Horváth, István – Zsembery, Ákos: Az esztergomi Özicseli Hadzsi Ibrahim dzsámi kutatása és műemléki bemutatása./The research and architectural conservation of the medieval Özicseli Hadzsi Ibrahim mosque in Esztergom. In.: *Építés- Építészettudomány* XXXV (1-2) 2008. pp. 5-41. (periodical on SCOPUS list)
3. Építészeti romemlékek kutatása és védelme Szíriában./The research and architectural preservation of the ancient ruins in Syria. In.: *Építés- Építészettudomány* XXXVI (3-4) 2008. pp. 223-250. (periodical on SCOPUS list)
4. Authenticity and didactics: theory and practice in the preservation of our medieval monuments. In.: *Periodica Politechnica Architecture*. 40/1, 2009. pp. 1-10. (periodical on ICONDA list)
5. Attualità del restauro in Ungheria e recenti ripristini dei complessi reali medievali. In.: *PALLADIO. Rivista di storia dell'architettura e restauro*. n42. lugliodidicembre, 2008. pp. 89-98. (periodical on AVERY list)
6. Elmélet és gyakorlat viszonya a mai itáliai műemlékvédelemben./Theory and practice in the contemporary Italian monument protection. In.: *Műemlékvédelem*. LIII. Évf. 4. szám, 2009. pp. 223-230.
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8. Feltárás után – tanulságok és kérdések egy rombemutató kapcsán./After excavation – lessons and questions apropos of a ruin-presentation. In.: *Műemlékvédelem* LI. vol. 5. no., 2007. pp. 331-336.
9. Roma vincit? – Richard Meier VS. Roma. In.: *Alaprajz*. 14. vol. 3. no., 2007. may-june. pp. 26-29.
10. Kortárs (és) műemlékvédelem./Contemporary (and) monument preservation. In.: *Alaprajz*. vol. évf. 2. no. 2008. március-április. 38-40.o.
11. Középkori templomaink és kolostoraink műemléki helyzete Komárom-Esztergom megyében./The status of our medieval churches and monasteries in Komárom-Esztergom country. In.: *Architectura Hungariae* VI. vol. 4. no., 2004. ([www.arch.et.bme.hu](http://www.arch.et.bme.hu))

