

ŠTUDENTSKE PRACE

Práce študentov postgraduálneho štúdia

Presentation and interpretation of architectural parts of structures found by archaeological field-work

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Any contact with history brings exciting experiences to scientists as well as to visitors. Witness of previous centuries represent inseparable part of the present environment. Their existence in an aggressive environment of present towns or in attractive touristic sites in the country is sometimes very problematic, especially if we consider ruinal architecture found by archaeological field-work. „Ruinal“ because it is quite improbable to find any architecture in better condition in this field of work. They exist prevailingly under the ground-level until somebody discovers them. How can we preserve and present them now? In which way do they touch modern man? What do those „ruins“ mean to modern man? I would like to be looking for answers to these questions in my thesis topic „Presentation and interpretation of architectural parts of structures found by archaeological field-work“.

The subject of my thesis topic is influenced by many professions and aspects. It has something to do with architecture, archaeology, history, preservation, sociology, economics, politics, philosophy, ideology... I chose it because supervisor of my thesis topic is associate professor Anna Schwarczová who was interested in the theme during a term when she worked as chief of Municipal Administration for Care about Historical Sights and Nature Protection (MACHSNP) in Bratislava. The author of the idea (of presentation and interpretation of archaeological finds) dr. Kostka was her supervisor in the theme of preservation of monuments. He pointed out the need to work on that idea in 70s. Later, in 1981, she asked workers of MACHSNP in Bratislava, Ladislav Snopko and Ladislav Férus to go to work on the theme ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONUMENTS AND ECOLOGY. I would like to continue in their work and add the architectural view to the theme. My thesis topic will be something between creation and science. Presentation is about WHAT to show, and interpretation is about HOW to show. The subject of presentation and interpretation are cultural and historical values of still existing or no more existing objects and their parts found by archaeological or other kinds of researches. Knowledge from many professions is very important for understanding of the theme in a field of past representation.

My thesis topic should include, at least, 4 parts:

1. Introduction to the theme;
2. Appreciation of existing presentations and interpretations of ruinal architecture;
3. Discussion with specialists in the field of presentation and interpretation of ruinal architecture (P&I);
4. Application to deduce general conclusions in the field of P&I.

The aim of my work is an acquisition of a more complex view to the theme and summarisation of possible methods and ways of P&I.

The first part of my thesis topic will concern specification and preface of the theme. It includes an explanation of the relationship between archaeology and architecture by the defining of key-words, determination of their particular spheres of interests and specification of continuity and overlapping of their spheres. Processes of the research and evaluation of archaeological finds will take a part which will help me to prepare a theoretical basis for the appreciation of existing examples of presentation and interpretation of architecture found by archaeology.

In the part of an appreciation of existing examples I would like to focus on Slovakia and the Mid-Danubian region including Austria and Hungary. Because of the fact that those countries have very closely connected cultural and historical development, they are comparable by the same scale of appreciation. It means that I will have a possibility to compare the development and trends in the field of preservation and presentation of architectural parts of structures found by archaeology in those countries.

Discussion with archaeologists, architects, historians of art and other professions specialised in the area of care about historical sights and monuments should help me to gain further points of views to the theme. Synthesis and comparison of their opinions and experiences can help me to articulate its main problems. Where is the locality of a possible presentation of an archaeological find situated? In the middle of a town? In a countryside? In a cellar of a house? What is the environment around? To whom is the presentation addressed? What is the condition of the ruin? What is the climate in the locality? There are so many aspects for an appreciation of examples...

In order to obtain a wider view to the theme, I was looking for literature containing some aspects about it. I found a book written by Kevin Walsh, Research Scholar in Archaeology at the University of Leicester in Great Britain, titled „The Representation of the Past - museums and heritage in the post-modern world“, published in 1992 by Routledge, London. The author writes

about the field of past representation in a relationship with influences and demands of a present human society. He is mainly interested in a connection among heritage industry, tourism, the stock-market, politics and sociology. Those aspects are unquestionably important for understanding the phenomena of past representation in terms of present time.

Through a characterisation of human society in a post-modern world he comes to the explanation of development in the field of heritage industry in Great Britain. The expression „heritage industry“ includes movements in the field of preservation of national cultural heritage, legislation, organisations... He compares development and understanding of monuments theme in Great Britain and Europe. He points the phenomena of Britishness, relationship between nationhood and europhobia. „...British nationhood is the idea of a continued unbroken line of history...British are an island race, that results in them being a 'favoured' people...“ (Norman Tebbit, *Fanfare on Being British*, magazine *The Field*, May 1990). It is one extreme, but we should see it in a context of homogenisation trends of the (post-) modern world, in a process of European reunion. We can try to understand a fear of English conservatives which present „traditional values of the Britishness“ and they are afraid of the fact to be a member of European Union because it could be the end of „...continuous national history...“. It is just one example of the theme of the past P&I in a context of the present world and its development.

In a chapter entitled „*Simulating Past*“ he points to influences and demands of consumptional society and stock-market, facilities of multimedia technologies. „...Representation of the past is more exciting if the past is to make money...“ (Kevin Walsh about all trends which characterise the placing of 'the past' in the market, *The Representation of the Past*,...,p.94). That way we can understand a 'law': „The more any representation of the past makes money, the more it is successful“. Making money from a representation of the past assumes popularity among visitors (real or potential). The author points out that it is not so difficult to make something attractive for visitors if you make a good marketing strategy and you bend or disguise some de-emphasizing details, facts or elements. He says: „Popularity is not an acceptable criterion alone for judging such a representation...Popularity is hardly any guarantee of its own (the representation's) quality...“ What do we do for an economic success? Where is the border of what we are able to do for it? Sometimes in an attempt to inform visitors about some facts we try to show them everything possible. Sometimes we are not sure about some details or whole facts but „in the

name of the education“ we are able to bend some facts or just „forget them for a moment“. Is it correct to show to visitors „real medieval daily life“ by showing them people (actors dressed to the typical medieval dresses) working at home or in craft-shops, speaking in the dialects which existed in early 17th century and forget to tell them all the truth or to see that facts from more than just one kind of view to that era? It is dangerous, because it is faking of the history. The author of the book gives one simple example: „The promotion of the idea that we can travel back in time implies that the „expert“, or providers of heritage, „know“ the past, and therefore, believe the fact that all our pasts are constructed in the present. Even if a time traveller could witness events in history first hand, they would not know, or understand the past - it would be merely one person's perception of that event. A member of Tsar Nicholas II's family would quite likely perceive the events in Russia in 1917 differently from a member of Lenin's family, if they were both travel back to that time and space...“ He argues that: „...there is no doubt that the development of many „heritage attractions“ owes a great deal to Disney (Disney effect = sites of fantastic spectacle, with an emphasis on titillation, rather than education). ...However, a clear chronological account of heritage is difficult...“. In part, we have to say, that such representations are a genuine attempt to recreate the „real thing“. They try to catch the visitor's interest to the subject of a presentation and maybe they would like to „educate“ him rather than just provide him fun and get his money... But why some of those „providers“ think that visitor's imagination plays no role in the process of time travel and he does not need to use it, because the aim of such representations is to show everything possible to the smallest detail and they did not leave any place for visitor's admission to THE SHOW. Somebody forgot that „space travel is an invention of our century, time travel is always possible because human beings have an imagination“ (Oxford Story narration). Visitors were just invited to see what directors of THE SHOW have prepared them. Visitors are understood like pure consumers. He ends the chapter with one quotation: „The public are not assumed to be stupid, but they are 'being invited to relinquish the right in the verifiability of public truths per se'“. (Hebdige, 1989, *'After the masses'*, *Marxism Today* 33 (1): 81).

The next part of the book has helped me to better understand present processes in heritage and tourist industries and the role of stock-market in those processes. How do people understand and see witnesses of previous centuries? Walsh quotes Ousby who said: „...During 18th and early 19th centuries ruins were admired as witnesses to the triumph of time

and nature over man's handiwork." Walsh continues: "...today they would seem to represent a celebration of humankind's ability to preserve, and fast-freeze history, and then, put it to work in a new environment which also denies the importance of historic contexts, that of the market place." The claim that the market provides what people want is not as much true as it looks, because "...the market defines the parameters of a range of commodities from which people can make choices..." (K. Walsh). So, who is guilty and for what?

To spend spare time by travelling and sightseeing around the world is very popular in our century. And it is more open to the public than it was during previous centuries. Leisure tourism increased in the last 10-20 years. People like to travel and see something new or popular (it is not every time the same). They would like to leave their daily-life problems and routines. And „being a tourist is being MODERN"! We are a consumptional society and we are invited to consume something from facilities which are prepared with an unbelievable preciseness by market experts. They use all known knowledge about people's interests, dreams and psychology. Because of those very well used strategies we can understand the big success of Disney Parks. Why do I use this example which seems to be nothing historical or just with a connection with a past? If you can imagine THE MAIN STREET in Disney Worlds (Movie World or whatever kinds of fun parks) you know, that this street looks like from 19th century (at least if not older). What Disneyland and many contemporary heritage attractions do, is to use images from the past to create a spectacle, an environment that is different, but to a certain extent remains familiar and safe. This way contributes to our historical amnesia through a quotation, or rather, misquotation, of historical styles, and a creation of artificial places. Artificiality, using historical quotation, traditional regional or folk elements and ornaments, their mixture without any context characterise a post-modernism. Artificiality, globalisation, homogenisation of the culture all around the world and loosing a sense of place and contexts, but what is more dangerous, bending and falsification of the history and past are attributes of our world. Questions such as: „What's history if you can't bend it a bit?" (quoted in Schadla-Hall 1990, NADFAS News Spring/Summer) are the biggest dangers for a human society. What will our descendants think about us? Because to deny our own history means to deny our own existence. „...How can such a society, that continually insults itself, ever hope to be taken seriously by others?!" (Ewen, S., 1990, *Marketing dreams; the political elements of style*, in A. Tomlinson -ed., *Consumption Identity and Style*, London, Routledge).

That book has helped me to see a theme of past representation from new sides. It has given me some inspirations and ideas for my thesis topic. Our role in processes connected with past presentation is in looking for the right proportion among a respect of history, context of the environment, new inspirations, present demands, new building technologies, climate, condition of the witnesses of the past, relationship between old and new architectural language and a term of to whom the presentation is going to be addressed... We cannot forget the fact that the field of conservation, preservation, reconstruction and presentation of historical complexes or their parts is having to do not just with a past and present, but (it has an important connection) with the future.

Literature:

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Gothic Sacral Architecture in Slovakia, its Matter and Space Composition and Morphological Elements in the Context of European Gothic Architecture

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The gothic era occupies the most honourable place in the development of European sacral architecture. The effort to find the content - formal expression of Christianity in the architecture of cathedrals, culminated in the gothic era.

The gothic sacral architecture can be characterized as a synthesis of construction technology, sculpture art and artistic crafts. It represents an integral constructional system.

The gothic sacral architecture, the most wide spread constructional kind of gothic architecture in Slovakia, is the main subject of investigation of my PhD thesis. My work will consist of several parts. The introduction will deal with the description of notions such as – gothic, gothic architecture and sacral architecture, from the point of view of the Middle Ages. I will focus on gothic architecture, mainly on sacral architecture, taking into account historical facts and social contexts. The description of social conditions will be the short view of the Middle Ages in Europe. Scholasticism, spiritualism and