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ABSTRACT OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

**HISTORY OF THE RESTORATION OF THE CORVINS' CASTLE
FROM HUNEDOARA, FROM THE BEGINNING UP TO 1970**

PhD Supervisor:

C.S. I Marius Rotar, PhD

PhD Student Ioan Bodochi

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the work is to make an x-ray of the restoration works carried out at the Corvins' Castle in Hunedoara between 1868 and 1970, leading to a thorough and clear knowledge of the transformations produced as a result of the liberation, reunification and reconstruction works, which have totally or partially changed the appearance of the castle and its architecture.

In the first chapter, in which we dealt with the history of research, we came to the conclusion that it can be divided into three stages. The first is that of pioneering, when both auxiliary sciences of history and those in the field of preservation of historical monuments are in the phase of searching for identity and when the foundations of specialized institutions are laid. This stage chronologically covers the second half of the 19th century. The second stage, which begins with the publication of Möller's articles, is to clarify and present firm conclusions about the history of the castle's construction. This stage lasts until the end of the 20th century. It is characterized by accepting the hypotheses and conclusions published by István Möller following his research at the castle. Going into the new millennium meant a change of approach to the subject, manifested by the critical resumption of Möller's hypotheses. The results of this paradigm shift led primarily to a quantitative and qualitative augmentation of information related to the history of the castle.

The second chapter addresses the situation of the castle in the context of the formation of institutions and organizations that assumed the protection of monuments, of the fire of 1854, of the events that occurred before the opening of the site, and of the restoration works until its takeover by the Romanian authorities.

In Hungary and Transylvania (until 1872) the fight to save historical monuments was assumed by non-governmental organizations and personalities of public life concerned with this subject.

Although, as he personally admits, he was not the first, Lajos Arányi became the most important supporter of the cause of saving the castle, turning the Hungarian Society of Physicians and Naturalists into the main platform for launching his messages. With the support of other public figures, the castle's situation became a topic of public interest. The persuasion actions paved the way for Friedrich von Schmidt to elaborate the first

restoration project in the winter of 1867-68 and appoint Ferenc Schulcz (October 26, 1868) to lead the works. Unexpectedly, von Schmidt's proposed restoration plan, worth 250,000 forints, was challenged on the grounds that the country was too poor to invest so much money in useless things.

A decisive contribution to the opening of the site was the proposal to include the castle in a national restoration program, which happened as a result of its nomination among the possible residences that Franz Joseph was to own in Hungary. The gesture, with a strong symbolic charge, aimed mainly at two objectives: the desire of the Hungarians to show their good faith towards the new sovereign and marking the continuity between the heyday of King Matthias and the newly born era.

The restoration project, elaborated by von Schmidt in the spirit of the neo-Gothic principles promoted by Pugin's school, did not provide for interior design and did not have as theme the creation of a royal castle, recommending moderate interventions and reconstructions. Because von Schmidt refused to take over the works and in the meantime the idea of building a royal hunting castle in Hunedoara was launched, F. Schulcz and Imre Steindl, both former students of von Schmidt, created new restoration projects that fit into this theme, but depart from their mentor's vision, approaching that of Viollet le-Duc's school.

The one who had the honour to open the restoration site in Hunedoara was Ferenc Schulcz. Unfortunately, his untimely death (on the 21st of October 1870, at only 32 years old) did not allow him to complete even the works at the Knights Hall, where he only managed to re-settle the pillars on the walls of the castrum and to rebuild the vaults and windows. He also had to restore: the bay windows of the New Gate Tower, the rectangular bay window (the one facing the Bears' Pit) and the windows on the ground floor of the Matthias Loggia, the wooden ceilings of the Golden Room and built temporary or permanent roofs for almost all the castle's elements.

The death of F. Schulcz was also deplored in the main specialized publications. In *Századok*, for example, there was talk of "the death of one of the youngest champions, who was already part of the standard-bearers of the archaeology of the homeland", and Béla Ney, in his obituary, stated that the deity "with one hand handed us a valuable richness, but with the other he immediately took it from us".

Among those regarded as Schulcz's descendants were two of his colleagues, also former students of von Schmidt, Imre Steindl and Frigyes Schulek. Of the two, Steindl

received the leadership of the restoration works in Hunedoara and Schulcz's position in the University of Art, and Schulek the construction of the new town hall in Buda-Pest.

Starting from Schulcz's project, the new endeavour meant the continuation of the idea of a royal hunting castle, in fact if we look at the situation plan presented by him, it is identical to the one proposed by Schulcz in 1868. However, according to Steindl, the project presented two major problems: The amounts provided for restoration works were considered "ridiculously small" compared to those allocated by other countries for the restoration of monuments, which is why Schulcz's project could not meet the demands and standards of a royal hunting castle, so he modified it twice. In both variants, the proposed changes are beneficial. Although Steindl presented more realistic restoration options, the cost of the work had almost tripled.

Steindl's projects were not without controversy. If Schulcz was accused of constructing a false history, Steindl also faced his share of criticism. He was reproached for the practice of replacing the original components with replicas, the attempt to extract the fresco decorating the Matthias Loggia and the fact that through his additions, which are the cause of the high costs of the projects, practically cover the constructions of Bethlen's period. The costs that some Members of Parliament considered exaggerated, among them Carol P. de Szathmáry, made the works in Hunedoara considered luxury and unwelcome in a country that has 4,000 localities without schools.

But the harshest accusations came from J. Schulcz and G. Ángyán, who accused Steindl and his successor of corruption and incompetence.

Although his designs were better, the execution and, above all, the replacement of the original components with copies are arguments that allow us to say that the works of Schulcz's time are qualitatively superior to those of Steindl's period. However, the reproaches and accusations affected Steindl's pride at most, as he was also involved after his resignation from the management of the Hunedoara construction site in matters related to the continuation and smooth running of the works at the castle. However, the works executed during Steindl's time are important because, except for certain parts, they influence until now the external appearance of the castle.

Following Steindl's resignation, the management of the works was taken over by Gyula Piacsek, through whose appointment a "tradition" was established, that the assistants of the castle restorers should be the ones who continue their activity¹. A former draftsman

¹ Steindl was succeeded by Piacsek, Khuen by Möller and Wagner, who continued to be involved in restoration work at the castle until his death in 1948. Here we do not include the period when Schulek

for Schulcz, Steindl's head of works and close to people in the leadership of the Temporary Monuments Commission, he fell far short of what he expected. His period, characterized by poor quality of works, reuse of original components as building material and filler, indiscriminate plastering of façades, was the one that caused most destruction to the castle. In fact, regarding the entire period of implementation of the royal castle project, Gyula Forster stated that: "the works did not reach their goal, produced losses and instead of being useful to the most famous monument of the country, led to its destruction".

During 1869-76, the total amount spent on the restoration works at the Corvins' Castle was 364,671 forints.

After the interruption of the works, the castle is somewhat out of public attention. The click of overcoming this moment is generated by L. Arányi's proposal suggesting, once again, the involvement of the civil society in the restoration of the monument. Although rejected, the proposal had the opportunity of bringing up the issue of the castle at an institutional level. The issue of continuing the works is also discussed by the Hungarian Association of Engineers and Architects, which, in its meeting on the 27th of October 1879, decides to set up a commission to assess the situation in Hunedoara and proposes the elaboration of a new project to be presented to the government. Steindl was elected to head the commission by acclamation.

The commission's report noted the deplorable situation of the castle and the fact that at that time no restoration work that had begun was ever completed. The members of the commission finding that the amounts allocated under the initial restoration plan could not be ensured in the future, propose the elaboration of a new restoration project that would pursue a different purpose than the one implemented until then (royal castle) and use the castle only as a history museum. We can say that this is the moment when any serious initiative to support the royal castle project had ceased.

Antal Khuen and István Möller, his assistant, started their work in Hunedoara in the context of important changes. At the institutional level, in 1881, the MOB is established, and at the administrative level the castle passes from the property of the Ministry of Finance to that of the Ministry of Cults and Education. Unfortunately, although attention was drawn to this, the transfer of the castle into the property of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, due to lack of money, did not produce the expected revitalization. We note, however, that Khuen, who does not renounce the historicist vision, frames his works to the

Frigyés was in charge of the works, when practically no work was done in the castle, but only on the Hussars Yard.

new theme, that of using the castle as the headquarters of a museum institution. Despite the lack of funds, he managed, together with Möller, to complete the Knights Hall and to carry out works on the Mace Tower and the northern wing.

Illness and subsequent untimely death on the 1st of February 1890, prevented Khuen from realizing his plans, especially those related to the restoration of the Chapel.

After Antal Khuen's death, the project's leadership was taken over by István Möller who, in August 1890, was also appointed vice-architect within the MOB. There followed a period of more than a decade in which few restoration works were carried out at the castle (for financial reasons the works were focused on the Hussars Yard).

The first part of Möller's activity in Hunedoara ended in December 1895, when he was replaced by Frigyes Schulek, who wanted very much to add the prestige of the Corvins' Castle to his CV. In the same meeting, architect Ottó Sztehlo was appointed to lead the works at the Hussars Yard, where the site's activity was concentrated during this period.

Because things dragged on Schulek, tired of waiting, presented in 1899 the conditions under which he was willing to continue, namely the allocation of at least 30,000 forints per year.

In order to break the deadlock, due to the fact that the Ministry did not take any decision, Forster proposed in 1901 that István Möller return to Hunedoara to complete only the works started under Antal Khuen's leadership, without discussing the question of Schulek's position. As for the restoration of the other parts of the castle and the complete finalization of the works, this was to be done on Schulek's offer, when the necessary money would be available, which never happened.

Although he did not contribute directly to the restoration works at the castle, Schulek, through his capacity as architect of MOB, was closely involved in the works. From this perspective, the most important contribution is his presence in Hunedoara in 1907 where, together with Möller, the two decided to give up the historicist vision and continue the works based on the documents prior to the fire.

After 1900, the activity of I. Möller, whose restoration decisions were based on scientific principles, focused on completing the works started and removing the fanciful neo-Gothic elements, proposed by Schulcz and Steindl, with more realistic ones, a direction that also coincided with the MOB vision regarding the restoration of the castle in Hunedoara.

Until 1907, due to lack of funds, his main concern was to assure the safety of the buildings in the Hussars Yard, which were rented. At the castle only small works and archaeological research were being carried out, the most significant work consisting in extracting the fresco decorating the parament of the northern wall of the Matthias Loggia.

In 1907, Forster Gyula was elected head of MOB, who managed to get a restoration plan worth a total of 490,000 krona voted in Parliament. The plan, laid out on a 7 years period, was to be implemented by Möller.

During this period, the most important works were carried out in the northern area of the castle, where the façade of the Matthias Loggia was restored, degraded components were replaced, parament, masonry, floor restorations and roof repairs were carried out. But work was done, with a few exceptions, in all areas of the castle. A surprising thing is that, although he spent most of his time at the castle, Möller failed to leave his mark on its appearance, like Steindl, his most imposing work, the façade of the Matthias Loggia, being radically modified during the restorations of 1965-1968. However, the decisions of 1907 were to be applied vigorously in the restoration project proposed by Möller in 1914. The project envisaged significant demolitions aimed at returning to the situation before Bethlen's works in many areas of the castle, which betrays another mentality tributary to the theory of stylistic unity. In fact, according to the project, no later constructions were preserved than in areas where they did not cover fifteenth-century constructions. The outbreak of World War I did not allow the implementation of this project, the works being interrupted in 1917.

Unfortunately, almost forty years after the beginning of the works, only the Knights Hall, the northern wing, the first floor of the New Gate Tower and the spaces on the ground floor of the Bethlen Wing were functional or completed.

What happened at the castle until the establishment of the communist regime is treated in the third chapter of the work. The procedure for taking over the castle was started by the Prefecture of Hunedoara County in February 1919 and ended on the 5th of March 1919. The stated objective of the Commission was to maintain the castle in an optimal state of conservation, until decisions were taken on restoration works. Unfortunately, the lack of funds has meant that even this objective has only been partially achieved.

From the end of the First World War until the establishment of the communist dictatorship, the destiny of the castle was closely linked to the name of architect Rudolf

Wagner who, in 1923, became architect² of the Commission and Castellan of the monument in Hunedoara. Due to the fact that he was an adept of stylistic restoration and because of his ethnic origin, he withstood numerous attacks, which we analysed in the subchapter dedicated to the struggles for the post of castellan. To illustrate this situation, we present below some statements made about Wagner. About him, the president of the Commission, Nicolae Iorga, stated that: he is "late and faithful partisan of stylistic unity and sometimes visibly unsympathetic to the values and specificity of national architecture", while Judge Ghica Scarlat, complained that he had to live daily the humiliation of being defied from his sumptuous home by "this Wagner who does not know at least one Romanian word ..." and wondered how he could "... represent in this post the symbol of our national unity?"

With the support of the Commission, Wagner remained in this position until his death in November 1948, fulfilling the purpose he was hired to do, namely to maintain the castle in a satisfactory state of preservation until restoration work actually began. He was, in fact, the person who had the honour of working the longest period at the castle, for more than forty years.

After the death of the Castellan, Architect Stefan Baș, together with Architect Horia Teodoru were commissioned to supervise and finish the works. They wanted things not to get out of control, especially since the direct interference of politics could no longer be tempered. Now, in the context of the abandonment of the old value system in favour of the Soviet one, the conceptual and technical issues have been added to the Proletcultism ones.

Starting with 1950, the propaganda machine aimed to build a new identity of the city, which would include both "fortresses" (the castle and the steel plant). This ideological vision was also reflected in the Systematization Plans, which were designed in such a way that the symbolism of both objectives could be used imagologically as efficiently as possible. For the Propaganda, the monument symbolized the fading old world, while the new fortress of fire and steel represented the bright future provided by the new regime.

Due to the refusal of the construction trusts to carry out the works, a fact that is presented in the case studies in the subchapter dedicated to the blockages occurred on the site, the communist authorities thought of creating a pilot site, which would take over the restoration works at the castle and which would constitute the embryo of a future

² He served in this position only until 1930, when he was notified by the Commission that his services were where no longer needed.

specialized site. But the experiment failed. The construction site not only did not create a core of future specialists, but also failed to complete the works started.

The period between 1953 and 1970 can be divided into two stages. The first, until 1960, when work was carried out only on the basis of partial projects, and after 1963 when a general restoration project was executed.

The works, started with great difficulty, received an impetus in 1956, when the Romanian Academy announced its intention to organize at the castle the festivities commemorating 500 years since the death of "Ioan Hunyadi". Virgil Vătășianu and Octavian Floca, Director of the Deva Regional Museum, were in charge of organizing the event, Vătășianu together with Architect Ștefan Balș and Academician David Prodan, being part of the supervisory committee. The results were not nearly as expected, but it seems that the event could take place in satisfactory conditions, since the President of the Academy, Traian Săvulescu, thanked them for their contribution to the success of the festivities.

But the essence of the theme of the restoration projects was the result of dialogues and disputes between two historians, V. Vătășianu and Oliver Velescu, who worked together until 1957. Starting with 1959 Velescu was rehired to complete his historical studies, so from this moment onwards the restoration reflected his vision.

The most important works completed during the period of application of the partial projects method are those at the Chapel and the Council Hall. The works were stopped on the 1st of July 1960 because the CSP no longer agreed to allocate funds based on partial projects and required documentation for the complete restoration of the castle.

In these circumstances, after the design theme regarding the museum arrangement of the castle was established in 1961, and Velescu finalized the design theme for the restoration works, in 1963 the general restoration project of the castle, worth 12,676,000 lei was approved, an amount subsequently modified. It was recommended to continue the works based on the principles used in 1956, those of historical restoration, avoiding unnecessary demolitions, using the conclusions of research and studies already carried out in preparation of documentation and continuing research so that they precede design. However, stylistic restoration principles were applied both in the case of the restoration of the Chapel and of the Matthias Loggia.

After, in order to avoid blockages and inconsistencies, it was decided that the execution should be done through the DMI, the works could be resumed in August 1965. It is a period of significant works, now being carried out the last reconstructions outside the

castle. Between 1965 and 1970, the façade of the Matthias Loggia was restored in the castle, where a stylistic restoration was chosen, which provided for the construction of two loggias overlapping with balustrade consisting of spindle-shaped balusters, the roof of the Chapel was modified, the neo-Gothic gable and the wooden bell tower were dismantled, the Zólyomi Wing was restored and the drums of the Drummers' Tower and the Deserted Tower were rebuilt.

Hunedoara, a rapidly expanding town, faced the construction site with the presence of tenants in the buildings of the Hussars Yard. The matter was completely resolved only in 1968. Here were to be arranged a library with a reading room for 40 readers and a projection room for 150 people, equipped with foyer, wardrobe and toilets, several administrative spaces and a small day bar with refreshments. The value of the works here was to amount to 1,660,000 lei.

The works were accepted in two stages. The first reception took place on the 15th of January 1969, the second, after remedying the reported deficiencies and some works in the Hussars Yard, on the 24th of September 1970, at 12 o'clock at noon, an act that puts an end to this stage of restoration works.

The general restoration project was considered at that time a success, which is why, at the request of the Union of Architects, the DMI director, Richard Bordenache, proposed for the 1969 awards both the project and the team led by Architect Eugen Chefneux.

In the last chapter we presented the architectural transformations of the castle, those that led to the modification of the exterior appearance and interior refurbishment, as well as the effect that these interventions had on the minor heritage. The result of these metamorphoses, which is probably the end of the most complicated era in the history of the castle, presents us with a monument that combines in part the picturesque charm of the old castle with the new personality built in the spirit of the school of stylistic restoration during the 19th century, to which are added the reconstructions made during the interventions of the 1950-1960s.