

## I. The topic

John Hunyadi was not only one of the main personalities of the Hungarian history, but he established a period even in the history of the Hungarian architecture. This is a period that fits between two main royal patrons. His patronage can not be compared with that of King Sigismund of Luxembourg or King Matthias, but he put in shade sovereigns like Vladislas I or Ladislas I.

The range of the buildings attributed to Hunyadi was constantly increasing, especially starting with the monograph of István Möller, who was the first who tried to identify Hunyadi's constructions. Though the link between these building and Hunyadi are questionable, it is truth that the castle of Vajdahunyad constituted the central core of his constructions. However the castle did not play important role in the everyday life of the family, the paid lot attention to it. The Hunyadis constantly enlarged the castle, and at the end King Matthias established for his illegitimate son, John Corvinus, the title of the count of Hunyad. The castle, that once was a value for the family, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century became an architectural shrine for the Hungarian nation. This is the reason why it played central role in a building complex erected for the celebration of the Hungarian millennium that had to illustrate the most important monuments of Hungary.

The castle of Vajdahunyad nowadays represents a great value in many respects. First of all its owners, the Hunyadi family, embody a period of glory in the history of Hungary. The castle reflects in all its details, and as a whole as well, that it was owned by the Hunyadis. The relation between the castle and the family in the conscious of the Hungarians is very deep. On the other side, the castle, in contrast with the general condition of the medieval castles of Hungary, is not a modest ruin, but it is quite well preserved. Beside these, the castle was an outstanding building even in the 15<sup>th</sup> century when it was built. Even the moment when it was erected is placed in a period less known from architectural point of view, so the castle could help us to understand the patronage of the aristocracy in that period.

The castle was well represented in the scholarly research too. The book published by Arányi is one of the best monographs on this subject. However, the study of István Möller is better known, who at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century involved very modern architectural, art historical and archeological methods to establish the construction phases of the castle. After the First World War, the castle became part of Romania. After a short break, the interest in it increased from the 1940s. During the last decades, the scholarly research stressed out that it is necessary to reconsider some of the building phases defined by Möller, and the castle has been placed in a new context of the Hungarian medieval architecture. Beside this, there are many questions, which have to be answered, raised by the modern research of castleology. All in all, it seems that the castle deserve to be brought to the centre of our attention, and the results of the scholarly research in the past few decades already put the bases for a new approach.

The architectural history of the castle rises lot of questions, which can be answered only involving historical, art historical and archeological methods. In some cases, even the auxiliary sciences of history are welcome. This far-reaching research resulted in a dissertation with a very complicate structure. This is not the first case in the research history of the castle, since the monograph of Arányi, has a complicate structure as well. He basically describes the castle three times, partially repeating, and partially offering new information about different parts of it. In this way, in order to have a complete understanding of one of the wings for example, one has to get throw the whole book. In contrast with Arányi, the article of Möller is much more fluid, but he never wanted to give complete description of the castle, he just enlisted data that sustained his ideas about the building phases of the castle.

From structural point of view the dissertation is much more closer to Arányi's work, but in this case the fact of repeating some information is sustained by other reasons. This

situation occur in the chapters that refers to scholarly research – the history of restoration, the history of restoration – the description of the castle, and the description of the castle – architectural history of the castle. This means that the reader has to survey the whole dissertation in order to have a proper idea about a building. To help the reader I tried to systematize the text following a detailed structure.

During the 19-20<sup>th</sup> century the castles was heavily restored, and even rebuild. These works drastically changed in some cases certain wings of the castle. This is the reason why, one who is interested in the architectural history of the castle has to start to clarify the restorations. These interventions resulted different kind of transformations. Alongside the original parts, there are good quality copies of the original structures and neo gothic additions as well. It means that even the 19<sup>th</sup> century copies can be regarded as a source, if other sources demonstrate that they are authentic. In the dissertation, on the one hand I try to follow the reconstruction work carried out at the castle as a process, and a cultural phenomenon. On the other, in a separate chapter I give a detailed description of the component parts of the castle indicating too, the way in which it was restored. Basically, these chapters constitutes the main body of the dissertation. Beside this, gave an analysis of what was written about the castle from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, because many mistakes are still present in different writings about the castle.

Summing up the conclusions that can be traced by analyzing the restoration of the castle, the study of the castle on the spot, and the new results of the scholarly research regarding the castle, I tried to establish the architectural history of the castle. Beside the architectural history, the parallels and the stylistic connections are very problematic. First of all we have to consider that the castle was an outstanding building even in the period when it was built. On the other side it is very problematic to find those special architectural features that can be analyzed stylistically. This is a method when subjectivism can gravely influence the final conclusions. Having these deficiencies in mind, I tried however to call the attention to some specific features, and later research probably will justify, or not, my decisions.

My conclusions concerning the construction of the castle, and its place in the wider context of architectural history, raise questions that cannot be exhaustively answered in a single dissertation. First, because castles like this, raise almost all of the questions that can be put regarding medieval castle architecture. Secondly, the exhaustive analysis of the different features may result in a series of monographs, which exceed the limits of the dissertation. However, in each of the cases I tried to call the attention to features that I considered relevant, and to offer solutions concerning the building phases of the castle, and its connection with other workshops.

## **II. Sources**

There are plenty of sources concerning the history of the castle. Engravings, photos, drawings, descriptions, pictures etc., all document a stage in the restoration of the castle, and their value is high.

Before the sources of the present era, the inventories written at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, or at the beginning of the next one are very important in order to understand how the castle originally looked like. Among them, the inventory written by Bajoni in 1681 is the most detailed and punctual. It is still a reference concerning the description of the castle. It is worth of mentioning those written sources from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which document the ownership of George, count of Brandenburg. They were published by József Pataki in a separate volume.

The condition of the castle, prior to the restoration started in 1868 is quite well documented. First of all three photos call our attention. One of them is of special value, because was taken before 1854, when the castle was completely burned down. The others were taken after the fire, and document the ruinous situation of the castle in the period short after 1854. All of them were published by Möller.

The monograph of Lajos Arányi, published in 1867, can be regarded completely as a source. He put in writing the stage of the castle that allows us to understand the inventories of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He published for the first time the inventory of Bajoni, adding even more detailed comments to it. He attached some drawings to his book. Among them it is very important the plans of the castle for each floor, the cross-section of the great hall and the chapel, and the color drawings of the outer painting of the castle.

The drawings of the Wiener Bauhütte are another important group of sources created before the restorations. These are more accurate than those made by Arányi, but they are in a way a strange mix of documentation and reconstruction. If they are confirmed by other sources, they constitute the main source for the castle. Even the architects, who restored the castle, until the beginning of the 20th century, used the drawings of the Wiener Bauhütte. Möller was the first one who made a new series of drawing about the castle.

Arányi made several models of the castle too. Only one of them is preserved (now in the exhibition of the castle). In those cases when the monograph of Arányi is not understandable, the model may help us. Beside this, the model preserves lot of very interesting architectural features, which now are lost. There is another model at the castle. It reflects the situation after the restoration of Imre Stendl. This means that it was made in the 1870s, or 1880s.

The restoration started in 1868, and ceased in 1920, produced lots of technical drawings. The architects left their drawings at the castle, and only in some special cases brought them to Budapest. The letter group was gathered together from different legacies and collections, and now they can be found in the archive of the Office of the Hungarian Cultural Heritage. However, the major parts of the drawings remained at Vajdahunyad, and were used for example by the architect who led the restoration starting from 1956. After that, the drawings got lost, and only two years before they were found again. Some of the drawings were included in the dissertation, but they suppose an exhaustive study, that should be another work.

Möller not only made some new technical drawings about the castle, but he asked for a new photo documentation. Hollenzer and Okos did it in 1902. Beside very important fragments of carved stone, the photos record the outlook of the castle after the restoration of Steindl, and during the works led by Möller. The photos document the frescoes of the so-called Matthias-loggia, and demonstrate that the aquarelles of Ferenc Storno from around 1870 are not very accurate.

Between the two world wars the students of the Architectural Academy of Bucharest as summer-practice made a new series of drawings about the castle. These drawings are not copy. Beside the fact that they have done a good job, the drawings reflect the situation after Möller's work, which was eradicated by the restorations of 1960s.

The lost main restoration of the castle started in 1956. It was a long-term project that essentially changed the shape of the castle. The whole documentation of these works can be found in the archive of the Directorate of Historical Monuments in Bucharest.

In the same time took place some archeological research, but only a small part of the finds was published. Nowadays the main stress is put on this type of research, and hopefully we will get information about the beginnings of the castle, and its relationship with another earlier castle, built near it, on the Saint Peter Mountain.

### III. Conclusions

During the past five hundred years, the castle of Vajdahunyad has played a great variety of roles. For John Hunyadi the castle was a tool, which reflected his wealth and social status. During King Matthias the castle became the younger brother of the royal constructions, but he elevated it to the center of a perpetual county, created for his son, John Corvin, in order to demonstrate that he regarded the duke as his legitimate heir. During the Principality of Transylvania, ill-fated families owned the castle. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was the victim of officials who altered some parts of it. The devastating fire from 1854 was necessary in order to get into the centre of the public opinion. The first amateurs of art history, and architects conceived the idea to transform the castle into a hunting one for the Hapsburgs, and only the lack of money stopped them, to not transform the castle into a neo gothic building. Anyway, the restoration of the castle had a tragic final, and neither Möller, nor the architects of the 1960s could recover the losses.

The architectural history of the castle starts with a phase that even nowadays is not clarified. It is evident, that it was built before the ownership of John Hunyadi, but there is no possibility to set up a more precise chronological frame. There is little information even about the structure of the first castle. The written sources did not mention it too. This is the reason why Pál Engel denied the existence of a castle before John Hunyadi. The first castle in that region was built on the Saint Peter Mountain. It was the first centre of the county, and was still used in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Its decline started in the same century and later was abandoned. Its central function was taken over by the castles of Hátszeg (Hațeg, Romania), and Déva (Deva, Romania). Therefore, there is no historical context for a new castle at Vajdahunyad in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

When the Hunyadi family obtained the property of Vajdahunyad in 1409, there is still no mention of a castle. At the beginning, it was a small property, but later on, it was gradually enlarged, and became an estate. The family settled down population in order to increase the population of his property.

John Hunyadi basically was a *homo novus*, who always was keen on to demonstrate that he is worth of his new position in the Hungarian society. He even tried to surpass the aristocracy for example with his newly built castle. His outstanding career was coupled with an outstanding castle.

As a first step he transformed and enlarged the earlier castle in order to reflect authority and power: high walls, towers, gate towers, crenellation on a castle that could have been hardly defended. All these were enforced by a special refugee corridor and tower, called Nebojsa. However, the defensive aspect was not underestimated, because the castle fitted the new requirement for firearms. It was one of the earliest examples of this types placed between two main periods of castle architecture. The traditional part of the castle, and the style of the carved stones demonstrates the work of a local master builder, but the crenellation resembles on the castles of Italy. It is well known that he had an almost two-year stay at the court of the Viscontis in Milan. Therefore, the Italian influence could originate in this way, or through a given master.

Beside the curtain walls and towers, we know little about the domestic buildings. There is a single mention of a chapel in the castle, and thanks to the heraldic wall of the Matthias-loggia, I demonstrated that the northern wing, together with this loggia-like construction was built during the reign of King Vladislas I. The heraldic wall raises the most important questions. It was really built in that period? If yes, what was the reason of placing this heraldic program on the wall of his castle, which in general was part of the royal patronage? It would have been easy to answer to these questions if the heraldic wall would have been created when Hunyadi was elected governor of Hungary. It looks very bizarre in a

private castle of a nobleman the coat of arms of the members of the royal court. Anyway, the whole northern wing can now be dated in the 1440s, and not in the age of King Matthias as it was considered before.

Möller traced an interesting parallel between the career of Hunyadi, and the construction of the castle. He assumed, that the first major rebuilding of the castle was carried out when he was voivode of Transylvania, and after 1446, when he was elected governor of Hungary, he changed his plans for a new design. The new design supposed much more stress on the representative function of the castle. As his coats of arms demonstrate the next phase of construction took place after 1446, when he used the heraldic symbol of his Hungarian governorship, and after 1453, when he used the extended coat of arm of the family.

The second constructions of Hunyadi supposed the destruction of the defensive line of the previous castle, in order to accommodate the new chapel and the palace. These new buildings reflect the influence of the royal architectural workshop of King Louis and Sigismund on the aristocracy, when the castles were provided with this specific chapels, great halls, balconies, heraldry and so on. At the court of King Sigismund great number of the Hungarian aristocracy had even the opportunity to travel through Europe, and to see the new tendencies in residence architecture.

The new wings of the castle were built in the same time. They finished the construction of the chapel, but the palace was not finished until the last decade of the reign of King Matthias. Beside these main buildings, John Hunyadi transformed two of the earlier round towers too. Their interior became in this way a comfortable space. After 1453 was finished the spiral staircase of the great hall. Parallel with their activity at Vajdahunyad, or right after that, this workshop built a church for the Geréb family (finished in 1462). This means that there is a rare possibility to analyze the constructions of a workshop during a longer period, in more than one place.

The style of this workshop originates in France, where in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century appeared those specific architectural features, which influenced the castle of Vajdahunyad. A second component part of their style inticates a close relationship to the royal wokshop of King Sigimund that built the castle of Pozsony (Bratislava, Slovakia). In the same period and style was erected, or transformed the Saint John chapel in Pozsony, the Sigismund chapel in the parish church of Pozsony, and the vaulting of the nave of the parish church of Nagyszombat. Beside this two main feature, the style of the workshop was influenced by other local traditions, and they constantly experienced new structures and motifs. Suming up, probably it was a workshop, or just some masters of French origin who arrived in Hungary at the end of the reign of King Sigismund. After his death, the royal workshop was no more sustained, and the skilled masons were involved in the patronage activity of the nobility. In this way members of the royal architectural workshop arrived to Vajdahunyad, and worked for a long period for the Hunyadis, and Geréb family.

Beside the castle of Vajdahunyad John Hunyadi initiated the construction of some other buildings. The best preserved is the former Franciscan monastery of Tövis (Teiuş, Romania). There was another Franciscan monastery founded by Hunyadi near Vajdahunyad, at Bojtor, but that one no more exists. The church of the monastery of Tövis is in a very close relationship with the parish church of Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca, Romania). The western portal of the parish church was built in 1442, but its present-day shape is the result of a later alteration, when the western tribune of the church was built. The sarcophagi of Johannes miles, the younger brother of Hunyadi, was done probably in the same workshop of Kolozsvár, just like some carved details of the church of Botháza, property of the Kakas family. There are several other constructions supposed to be related to the patronage activity of Hunyadi, but these relations are questionable (Szentimre), or cannot be demonstrated at all (Déva). The above-mentioned situation demonstrates that the castle of Vajdahunyad in the

second phase (Hunyadi's first phase), was built by a workshop different of those working on other spots for Hunyadi.

The workshop of the third phase of Vajdahunyad was much more influential. The corbels in the Chapter House of the monastery of Tövis seems to be done by this workshop. A capital of a pillar decorated with coats of arms, originally from the castle of Diód (Stremț, Romania) follows the same type to be found in the great hall of Vajdahunyad castle. But the most important work of this workshop, beside the castle, was the church of Vingárd. It is still an open question the role played by Konrad lapicida, who even obtained from Hunyadi some minor landed properties. His role should not be exaggerated since as I traced above, there are different stylistic tendencies in what Hunyadi has built.

The fourth phase of the castle refers to the age and constructions of King Matthias. The new plan was to change the main façade of the castle. Originally this was on the eastern side where the Old gate tower was set up. Now a new gate tower was built on the opposite side, and in this period was finished the string of balconies attached to the palace from the same western side.

Probably there were some minor interventions at the castle later, when it was administered by John Corvin, and after his death, by George, count of Brandenburg. For example, a porch that linked the spiral staircase with the loggia, represents a very different type, having a crenellated upper part. That can be dated around 1500.

At the end an important question raises concerning the function of the castle. Why the family put a such a great emphasis on its reshaping, however they used it only for a few times? The question is simple: the building always had to fit the social status of its owner. King Matthias reshaped other castles as well that was given to his son, John Corvin (Árva, Solymos). But in this case the castle of Vajdahunyad was never visited by notabilities. Probably the most important role of them was to influence the public opinion. In this way got to know about the castle John Thuróczy, the chronicler of King Matthias, who never visited personally the castle: "It is said that King Sigismund was influenced by the repute of the father of our hero, he brought him from Walachia to his own country, and gave him as a perpetual property, the castle of Hunyad, where nowadays a noble and magnificent castle is standing."

#### **IV. Bibliography concerning the thesis**

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