

GERGELY HAJDU NAGY

RUSTIC BUILDINGS IN THE HUNGARIAN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

RUINS, GROTTOS, HERMITAGES

PHD DISSERTATION BOOKLET



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ANTECEDENTS AND AIMS OF RESEARCH

There is no handbook available in the Hungarian specialized literature market which would deal with garden buildings influencing the historic gardens' artistic and spiritual aspects in the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary. Despite of their value as historic gardens and their increased liability to sustain damages only a general attention is admitted by the cultural heritage officials who consider them as a uniform work of art. However if a garden as a work of art would loose its buildings as the most characteristic mediators of its concept its cultural heritage value will suffer an almost irrecoverable loss. It is of special importance in our time, when these built-up elements – for our urbanized and civilized culture – are capable more expressly and effectively to convey thoughts and spiritual contents than the living elements of the gardens, the plants or the spatial arrangement of the whole garden.

As the primary target for my research work I have chosen the parallel historical research of artificial ruins with rustical facade and „building-like” parts and elements, grottoes and hermitages and I have focussed on the their role in the garden space. Due to the fact that these types are often concised into a single building – in most cases – appearing as a multifunctional rustic building it was necessary to create an independent typological scheme.

The „on-spot” survey, classification, documentation of their actual technical conditions and to make the general public aware the history of these objects have all had special importance for me. It seemed the most appropriate to elaborate and present the independent studies with some new findings connected to the various scenes in an alphabetical land register. To ease the comparative analysis of the buildings I worked out a comprehensive chart drawn in a unified method.

SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

In addition to the analysis of the primary written and image sources, archival fonds and the fact finding research of the garden architecture in the reference bibliography the „on-the-spot” investigation, survey and documentation of each single object earned special focus. The theoretical works, early sketches and papers, scientific reviews in foreign languages (English, German and French) related to the theme of the research beyond the general history on style also give representative information on the variety and similarities of forms of the objects as well. All these sources have given an essential help for the relevant classification of the rustic buildings.

A detailed introduction and analysis of the Hungarian literature and image sources is offered in this paper. The majority of these sources are itineraries, memoirs, technical descriptions, letters, professional articles, literary works, paintings, postcards, plans or maps. The reasons of the erection and the use of artificial ruins, grottoes and hermitages in the Western-European and Hungarian historical gardens were able to learn from the foreign and domestic publications, and various researches published in professional magazines. However all these knowledges were not enough to duly stress the significance of the use of these buildings in the gardens. The summative evaluation of the results of the survey table attached to this paper and the experiences gained on the spots have resulted in new knowledges and have made possible to find new perceptions.

During the field work – besides making the documentation and taking photographs – the role of the individual objects in the space-structure still existing or already lost were investigated. If it was possible I liased with the local population, tried to find a person knowledgeable about local history and made notes. I studed the results of the recent restoration works of several rustic garden buildings.

RESULTS

As one of the most important results of my research that I managed to proved that the rustic buildings form an independent group within the garden architecture which used to have (and still have) an essential role in the interpretation of the historic gardens. I have proved by a series of examples that the destruction of these buildings went (and still goes) along with the annihilation of the space structure of the garden itself. I hope that even during the preparation of this paper I managed to draw attention of the national monuments authorities for the necessity of both independent protection of this field, the justification of the enlargement the cultural heritage inventory and the regular supervision of the shown objects.

While processing a fair amount of sources and special bibliographies – forgotten or lesser known authors who were dealing with the rustic garden buildings and castles as view elements of the historical gardens theme. Thanks to the archival and museum-research several written and image sources have become known for the public.

To the the already known history of the emergence of the rustic garden buildings – as it can be followed in the Hungarian specialized literature - new data, comparative analyses, conclusions and new statistical figures are presented. The land register on the territory of the Hungarian Kingdom (state of 1896) shows in detail 113 rustic buildings at 60 places.¹ A *summary chart* on these sits attached.

As a result it was possible to put together such a comprehensive work, which presents the artificial ruins, grottoes, hermitages and other similar rustic garden building in a single „landscape architecture history inventory” along with one another offering a starting point for further studies.

¹ Of the 113 objects studied in detail 103 were actually built while 10 of them remained in design only.

THESES

I. Rustic garden buildings constitute a scientifically describable, independent group of garden buildings

The garden buildings having a rustical appearance are related closest to the group of the staffage buildings but *their role exceeds the picturesque construction of the scenery*. Their primary role is to offer an experience effectively that is in compliance with the architect's original intention to show the desired mood and to express and amplify it in the garden and in the scenery. However due to their structural design and situation in the garden's space these buildings may predestined for more, and this „excess” is proven also in the land register, in the presentation of the individual gardens and objects. Thanks to the ingenious engineering solutions the rustic building in several cases have also vertical space-orientation: appearing at the same time both as punctiform eye-catcher constructions in the garden however a part of their structure protrude in the ground generating an extra dimension, underground space connections.

While the majority of the artificial ruins appear as an element for the scenery, for the grottoes and hermitages this is valid partly only especially in the case of landscape gardens (e.g. underground passages, cyptocorpicus, hermitages built in rocks, tombs). On the other hand it can be considered of all three types that they form an independent space in their closer environs and have psychic influence on the intellect, generate emotions, evoke associations of ideas, catch simultaneously the analytical and cognitive way of thinking, constitute the object of contemplative meditation. These objects are not only passive participants or compulsory „constituents” of the gardens presented but give inspiration to other arts and sciences (e.g. the grotto in the Bethlen manor at Bonyha or the artificial ruin-grotto in the garden of the Szemere-Darvas-Pallavicini manor at Szemere).

The rustic buildings have played an important role in certain innovative engineering works during the history as a testfields (iron-casting structures, ferro-concrete structures, technologies for window-glasses, carpenter's work, new materials for buildings. Within the types of buildings shown the artificial-ruin is of outstanding importance the building process of which could occasionally cause a serious statics challenge, bringing to life a real architectural masterpiece.

II. The rustic garden buildings were classified according to their functions and appearance

Depending on their architectural formation, structural proportions and the rich variety of their functions differentiation can be made between *simple* (artificial-ruin, grotto, hermitage) and *complex rustic buildings*. (Form is defined by function.)

The artificial ruins take after buildings in decayed condition while their task is on the contrary - to remain in stable condition for a long period of time. It means that they will mislead the spectator (giving the impression that the building is older than it looks like) and effectively arouse their imagination so that they could reconstruct the building. (The artificial ruins were erected mainly as parts of castles or churches.) The grottoes are artificial caves and their primary task is to form a garden scenery and give shelter to the people (rest place or cryptoporticus). The *hermitages* consist of a small hut (a simple garden house usually built of wood) and a small vegetable garden. Beyond a staffage function their task is of an excessively spiritual and at times ethical nature. The complex rustic buildings are characteristically combinations of sham ruins and grottoes, e.g. the watch tower in the garden of the Batthyány-Strattmann manor at Köpcsény or the lookout-terrace in the garden of the Schmahl-villa at Buda.

In the character of the rustic garden's building the use of the material has an important role. The structural units of sham ruins were generally made from bricks and covered with carved stones and often roman and medieval sculptural

part sin their walls or some of their parts were decorated with stones having some inscriptions. The rustic surfaces of mock ruins and grottoes were made of spring-water limestone, calc tuff, at times volcanic stones. The hermitages were built of less lasting materials like wood, bark and rye-straw and the like. This was one of the factors of their relatively fast decay.

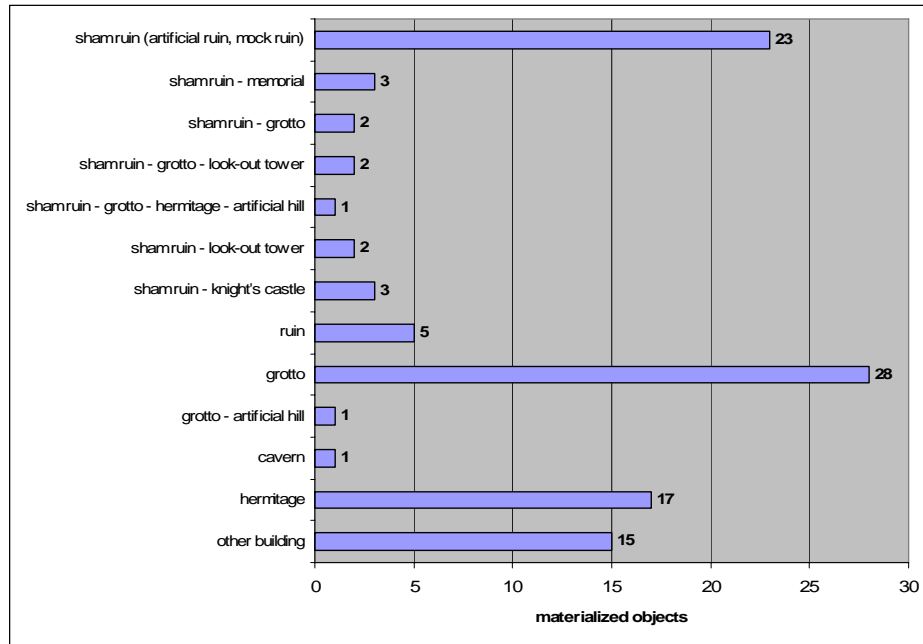


Diagram No. 1: Rustic garden building types studied in the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary

III. The significance of the proliferation of castle ruins and other rustic buildings in the gardens goes beyond the physical appearance of their objects: they may operate as symbols of decisive social, economic, political, philosophical artistic trends

While studying the relevant professional literature the hidden intentions of the architects such as motives of power and politics (political commitment, patriotism and nationalism, freemasonry etc.) were identified. In the study a detailed presentation of the so-called „*Myth of Gothic Freedom*” is offered which crucially contributed to the propagation of Gothic mock ruins in the gardens and put an end to the former dominants of artificial ruins imitating Roman buildings and parts of buildings supporting England’s aspirations to an empire extending of the world. Simultaneously with the spreading of landscape-gardens the process of „*Gothic revival*” (the preference of Gothic architectural reminiscences started) Giving expression to the old desire for freedom of Anglo-Saxon people by reproducing bizarre, imaginative Gothicizing form on the garden buildings.

The English ideas were reinterpreted on the European continent: they were primarily replaced by sentimentalism, romanticism and historicism. Mock ruins were adapted to the local cultures but eventually – in a way similar to their English counterparts – the creative intentions and philosophical and political commitments of the owners of the gardens could be perceived. Up to the 1780s *grottoes and hermitages* were undoubtedly the scenes of joy of life, easy playfulness, bucolic idill and „exotic extremities”. The philisophic problem of „*appearance and reality*” can often be grasped in the hermitages of late Baroque gardens the interior of houses built of materials of rustic appearance were provided with functions completely different from those expected; their furnishings were occasionally luxurious or practical.

Sentimentalism, that is the „cult of sensitivity” spreading throughout Central and Eastern Europe along with the proliferation of landscape gardens triggered an ethical and spiritual quest of function of garden buildings. In this process grottoes and hermitages also gained a new role in the gardens they become the scenes of experiencing of nature, loneliness, retreat from the world and quiet contemplation.

IV. The erection of rustic garden buildings in Hungary can be connected to the propagation of the idea of nation-state and patriotism to a lesser extend only: they were brought to life primarily by artistic motives and to meet various functions

The erection of rustic garden buildings cannot be connected to decisive national consciousness forming spiritual movements exemplified by Western Europe and England in the 18th and 19th centuries. In the majority of the cases there were only artistic and practical aspects behind the need to bring about such buildings. Additionally several sights show the presence of ideas of freemasonry and religious contents. The inclusion of Roman and medieval stone-cavings into artificial ruins in Hungary were justified by the sense of beauty of the architects. Furthermore the forming of the buildings were primary influenced by foreign and Hungarian professional literature, early sketches and the pleasure gardens known during the foreign travels made. The appearance of Hungarian rustic buildings were not decisively influenced by Hungarian national consciousness gaining strength in the beginning of the 19th century, it cannot be considered as a „generative factor”we can rather speak about copying Western examples or individual works.

V. The life-cycle of mock-ruins, grottoes and hermitags varies: it was found that the landscape architectural epoch creating rustic buildings between 1760 and 1830 was followed by a new wave of fashion in the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries

It can be hypothesed that the complex Mannerist building of the *mock-ruin-grotto-hermitage* in Hungary (Mount of Hermitage in the Archbishop’s garden in Posenium, 1650) appeared about a hundred years later than (Château de Gallion, the mount of hermitage in the part called Le Lydieu, 1550) the Western European example which is supposed to be the first one. It was about 60 years after the constructions of the Gothic artificial ruin (King Alfred’s Hall, 1721) considered to be the first in England that mock ruins in Hungary started to appear in greater numbers in the Hungarian irregular gardens (e.g in the garden of the Esterházy manor at Szenc) and in the early landscape gardens (e.g. in the garden of the Zichy palace, in the garden of the Batthyany-Wenckheim palace at Kisbér, in the garden of Csáky palace at Hotkovce and the garden of the Esterházy palace at Tata).

The origin of the grottoes dates back to earlier time: in the Renaissance gardens grottoes were already built in great numbers symultaneously with grotto-houses with a building like exterior and cave-like interior (the presentation of these is not dealt with in this study). With the spreading of landscape gardens instead of the Renasance and Baroque grottoes of artificial appearance the „natural” caves gained popularity (e.g. „Hell-cave at Tata”), but interestingly even in these rock constructions mythological references literary or moralising inscriptions can be found.

The Baroque hermitages offering the philosophical teaching of „*appearance and reality*” in a contrasting experience were connected to the melancholic attitude and spiritual experiences from the beginning of the 19th century. It may be the reason that while hermitages by the 1830s almost completely disappeared from the gardens, in Historism mock-ruins and grottoes again became

popular garden elements: close to one third of the objects studied in the catalogue were built in this period of time. Recent examples of building grottoes and mock ruins are still to be found.

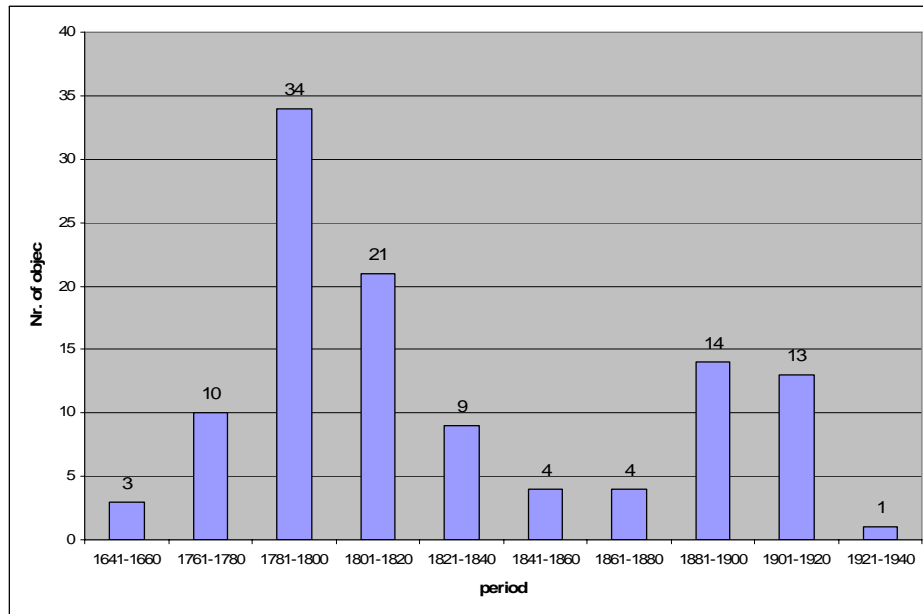


Diagram No.2: The quantitative and time distribution of the establishment of rustic garden building used in garden spatial structures

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