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HISTORIC CEMETERIES IN HUNGARY

PHD DISSERTATION BOOKLET



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ANTECEDENTS AND AIMS OF RESEARCH

My doctoral dissertation deals with the special subject of landscape architecture and national heritage; namely, the research of historic cemeteries and the questions of their protection as historic monuments. In Hungary the research of cemeteries was launched at the beginning of the 20th c., first of all thanks to ethnographers. Then, in the middle of the 20th c., conservation specialists also turned attention to cemeteries. Some cemetery elements worth protection, later the whole territory of some cemeteries, were put under protection in the second half of the 20th c. From the national rules concerning the protection of historic monuments Act LIV of 1997 dealt first with the problem of preserving cemeteries and burial sites in a separate article.

Objects found in cemeteries and the number of them under territorial protection have been growing each year; however, choosing the places worth protection is accidental, as a comprehensive and consistent aggregate of national cemeteries has not been compiled, and the analysis of them has not been carried out. The overall territorial protection of historic cemeteries would be extremely important because in this way the vegetation and the structure of the cemetery will come under protection beside its tombstones and other buildings. The purpose of my dissertation is to describe and analyse the problems comprehensively of how we can preserve cemeteries, also their

territorial protection; moreover, to put forward recommendations in respect of national preservation problems.

SOURCES AND METHODS OF RESEARCH

My dissertation is divided into two parts. In its first part I have ventured to define the historic periods of national cemetery culture and the types of historic cemeteries. The opportunity to present it was being given to me by the survey of landscape architecture, ethnographic, preservation, art history, cultural history, and local history literature. After the collection and thorough study of comprehensive scientific literature I have compiled the bibliography of national cemeteries.

In the second part of my dissertation I have dealt with the protection of historic cemeteries. I have analyzed the relevant rules and those national databases which offer different levels of protection for certain objects or territories. I have compiled statistics databases and tables based on the figures of certain current protection forms, the protected cemetery elements and cemeteries; moreover, the occurrence of certain cemetery types in protected cemeteries. I have depicted the cemeteries under current territorial protection and groups of tombs on a map. The analysis of practices associated with monuments in connection with the protection of cemeteries, also the analysis of preservation principles, have been carried out based on relevant literature

and local inspections. During local inspections I have visited 40 cemeteries on which photographic documentation and notes have been produced. When doing research on certain cemeteries, the one-time depictions, archival pictures, maps, plans, locality plans are important sources of research. It is very rare to have pictures of whole cemeteries or parts of cemeteries; the makers rather strived to record certain tombs. Engravings or other pictures were made just in case of some cemeteries of outstanding values. The plans and survey drawings of certain cemeteries can be found in different plan files, archives, and at local governments, which means that independent research should be done in case of each cemetery. As my dissertation is of summarizing character, I have not had the opportunity to go into many details.

RESULTS

After having summarized the international and national history of cemeteries, I have defined the types of national historic cemeteries. I have separated the churchyards of the middle ages, denominational cemeteries in villages and towns, public cemeteries and their subcategories. I have defined the notion of historic cemetery, and I have also drafted my heritage preservation proposals after having investigated, surveyed, and analyzed the cemeteries, which equally

refer to cemeteries either listed on the National Register of Historic Places or not, or to closed or still functioning cemeteries.

The most significant groups of historic cemeteries are under protection, either territorially or as in groups. Their number could be increased further if a national cemetery cadastre was compiled. To complete the cadastre I have compiled an assessment file with the help of which the most important data of national cemeteries could be collected. From this cemetery cadastre, based on the further nine-point integral criteria compiled by me, those examples worth further protection could be chosen.

Historic cemeteries not on the National Register of Historic Places could be locally protected. The unity of functioning cemeteries under local protection could be implemented with the help of rules and regulations (local construction regulations and cemetery regulations). The further subsisting of closed cemeteries could be most ensured by their proper utilization, which could be reached through cooperation with specialists. Maintaining and operating historic cemeteries should be based on a pre-made utilization and development plan, and occasional renovations should be carried out just after the given cemetery's detailed scientific survey.

THESES

I. In the national cemetery culture the influence of gardening styles of different eras could be depicted from the second half of 18th c., i.e. from the period of sentimental landscape gardens. This influence was first apparent just in the use of plants and tomb art in town cemeteries.

The conscious garden design of cemeteries started at the end of 19th and beginning of 20th centuries with the appearance of architectonic public cemeteries. Then, after WW2, this aspect of adjustment to garden styles in the theory of garden design remained; however, the implementation did not reflect it.

The era of sentimental gardens in Hungary could be put to the end of 18th c. By the end of 18th c. the landscape garden in Hungary became a memorial place; different monuments and statues appeared, which both in their forms and topic could be considered as ancestors to cemetery tombs. By the end of 19th c. it became a widespread custom in Hungary to put up elaborate tombs and family tomb structures. In the era of sentimental gardens several new tree species (e.g. Acacia, Canadian poplar, American hackberry, Weeping Willow) became naturalized in Hungary, which still decorate our cemeteries. The period of dendrological gardens could be put to the second half of the 19th c. Several plant species extraneous in Hungary (e.g. pines, deciduous

evergreen trees) entered Hungarian gardens, which were later also planted in cemeteries.

A stronger influence of garden design could be spotted in the second half of the 19th c., when town cemeteries started to be formed as decorative gardens. On the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries there appeared the architectonic style of garden design using the formal language of which the similarly called architectonic cemetery type, which was conscientiously planned and built, came into being.

The 20th c. was characterized by the total destruction of the cemeteries' harmonic unity. Garden designers with their modern cemetery planning and design aimed at renovating cemeteries in the 1950s and 1960s; nevertheless, the appearance of cemeteries did not improve much. Economic considerations forced aesthetic endeavors into the background.

II. In the national cemetery culture the separation of village and town cemeteries started in the 18th c, first in the case of grave signs and the use of plants. Later in the 19th c., the intensive growth of cities made it necessary to put the central, usually public cemeteries into existence; while the denominational cemeteries in little settlements, which were moved between the 16th and 18th centuries, functioned further.

The Act XIV of 1876 stated that each settlement had to maintain a public cemetery; however, a jointly used denominational cemetery

could substitute for the opening of a new public cemetery. After that village and town cemeteries experienced a truthfully separate development as it seemed logical to maintain the already existing jointly used cemeteries further in villages; while in quickly sprawling cities it became timely to open new and central cemeteries. In many cases it was more and more expensive for the church to buy plots near the center, so opening a new public cemetery often became a task for the local establishment.

III. In the national cemetery culture the following basic historic cemetery types came into existence: churchyards of the middle ages, denominational cemeteries (denominational village/ jointly used village / denominational town or city/ jointly used town or city), public cemeteries (raster/ architectonic/ forest/ modern/ village).

The custom of churchyard burial commenced after the conversion to Christianity, in the 11th and 12th centuries. This practice could be taken as universal in Hungarian cemetery culture until the 16th and 18th centuries. Since the 16th c. a process over several centuries commenced, during which local cemeteries moved from the churches in the centres to the outskirts of settlements. It could be considered that this process was commenced by the Council of Trent (1545-63), and also by the Protestant Reformation. The next important stage in this process was the Act of 1777 issued by Maria Theresa, and the final

stage was the Act XIV of 1876. In the 19th c., mainly after the enactment of Law 1876, it became widespread to use the cemeteries jointly. In bigger settlements, where the cemeteries became full quickly and the city grew around them, big central cemeteries were developed which usually were maintained by the local establishment as public cemeteries.

Village cemeteries showed an almost stable picture until the 16th-20th centuries. Their design was mainly determined by local customs, while the examples of town cemeteries were under the influence of new fashions and eras of style. As a result of political and social changes after WW2, also the national countryside cemetery culture changed significantly; public village cemeteries appeared after the fashion of cities.

IV. Those cemeteries, or parts of cemeteries, could be called historic cemeteries which were open before 1945 and have preserved their original form, the original distribution of burial plots and resting places, and the tombs have survived in their original places. They could be either functioning or closed cemeteries.

The criteria that should be met to become a historic cemetery are the following: they should have been opened before 1945; the original structure, subsisted the traditional order or garden design composition; original distribution of burial plots and resting places;

original cemetery path system, subsisted buildings, vegetation; subsisting tombs in their original places, occasional new tombs in consistent formation with the old tombs; the opportunity to preserve them in their original forms, and to demonstrate them. Beyond their historic value there are often other artistic, cultural-historical, or botanical values.

V. The territorial preservation serves most the preservation of historic cemeteries.

If the whole territory has been preserved, the cemetery offers a comprehensive picture of the cemetery culture of a given period, settlement, or social group. The relationship between unique tombs or other cemetery objects, the order for burial, concept of cemetery design, vegetation design, use of materials, etc. could become known in unity.

VI. The preservation of the most significant examples of historic cemeteries is ensured by the national cultural heritage institutions, while the preservation of cemeteries significant on local level is ensured by local institutions. The suitable regulation ensures that the unity of functioning cemeteries is maintained, while in the case of closed cemeteries elaborating a suitable utilization program helps to sustain their preservation.

Historic cemeteries not under protection are in danger to a greater extent. Their legal protection could be facilitated through local protection by the local council's decree. In case of functioning cemeteries still in use in their primary function, the appearance of new graves constitutes a risk. The harmonious unity of new and old tombs could just be carried out by regulation; it could be reached by the carefully considered wording of the local construction regulations and cemetery regulations. There are numerous closed cemeteries among those of historic value. Their maintenance is just rarely ensured. The only opportunity is to utilize their territory in a way that should ensure the preservation of the values of historic cemeteries.

VII. *The national cemetery cadastre could be compiled with the assistance of an integral survey (form). The cemeteries worth protection could be chosen from this cemetery cadastre based on consistent criteria.*

The survey form includes the following details: name of the cemetery, address of the cemetery, GPS coordinates, lot number(s), owner, trustee, if it is on the Register of Historic Places or on the Conservation Register, under local protection, under veneration protection, closed/functioning state, main building, its state, history of the cemetery, historical classification of the cemetery, its present state (structure, buildings, grave signs, vegetation), references, remarks, date

of entry, name of surveyor. It is suggested to draw up the plan of the cemetery, and also make a photo-documentation of it as a supplement to the form.

Elements of the criteria emphasizing the importance of territorial protection are the following: unity, uniqueness/typicalness, historic value, artistic value, cultural-historical value, botanical value, townscape/landscape value, potential of settlement ecology, and utility potential.

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