
IN FONDO AND IN SITU ARCHAEOLOGY PRESENTATION IN SLOVAKIA

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Abstract

Being dead fragments of ancient living culture, archaeological sources are special in the highly demanding way they have to be presented. In quest of breaking through the antiquated view of artefacts from the past and composing a mosaic of life in the primeval times of minute pieces (what is in accordance with academic archaeological research eventually), this endeavour have to be in balance with technical aspects of its presentation and of communication with clients as well. The problem of *in fondo* and *in situ* presentation of Archaeology via special museum expositions and exhibitions is telling. Its quality and standard depends on its creators. The common aim is to protect our cultural heritage and its legacy for future generations.

Keywords: archaeology, museology, presentation, museum, open-air

1. Introduction

In museum practice, presentation of archaeological finds – assembled artefacts as well as archaeological sites have surpassed several evolution phases, character and particularities of which were contingent on the level of archaeological research, development of methods used in Museology and growing importance of the cultural heritage protection in social life.

The topic of archaeological sources presentation is rather extensive and spacious, in our article we have concentrated on pursuing three highly specified aims:

- historical aim comprising looking to the past and mapping of these activities evolution since their detectable beginning;
- museological aim comprising analysis of presentation methods and steps convenient for making the archaeological sources accessible;
- educational aim comprising developing methodology for archaeologists in the field of special Museology.

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2. History of archaeological finds presentation

Presentation of archaeological finds in Slovak museums is closely connected with the process of evolution of Archaeology as a historical discipline and with the history of Slovak museums as well. Beginning of archaeological heritage protection in Old Hungary that included also territory of present-day Slovakia probably goes back to the 16th century, more remarkably to the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, given credit to collectors from among intellectuals, nobility and antique enthusiasts [1]. Mostly they were collections gathered to augment the prestige of these persons and manifest their sincere interest in the antique sphere.

Parallel to the interest in archaeological artefacts and their collecting was also the interest in particular archaeological sites and their protection.

These patriotic activities that were aimed at raise of national awareness acquired a new dimension by establishing of the national Slovak cultural institution of Matica Slovenská. The centre of Slovak intellectual quest for recognition of the Slovak nation sovereignty was Turčiansky Svätý Martin, where a first Slovak nationwide museum was founded in 1869. When in 1918, after the founding of the first Czechoslovak Republic, Bratislava had become the administrative centre of Slovakia, museum institutions situated here had the ambition to become nationwide as well. This situation was solved in 1961 when the Slovak Museum in Bratislava (1924) and the Slovak National Museum in Martin were amalgamated into the central Slovak National Museum in Bratislava. Apart from the nationwide institutions, several regional museums were founded since the middle of the 19th century. Assemblages of archaeological finds that were already acquired by research activities of museum employees became an important part of museum collections of both the central and regional institutions. Numerous museums were founded in *zhupas* (i.e. contemporary Old Hungarian counties) and towns: Mestské múzeum in Bratislava (1868), Múzeum Oravského komposesorátu in Oravský Podzámok (1868), Hornouhorské múzeum in Košice (1872), Karpatské múzeum in Poprad (1876), Mestské múzeum in Trenčín (1877), Tatranské múzeum in Veľká (1881), Gemerské župné múzeum in Rimavská Sobota (1882), Spišské múzeum in Levoča (1884), Spolkové múzeum Historického a archeologického spolku župy komárňanskej a mesta Komárna in Komárno (1886), Mestské múzeum in Banská Bystrica (1899) and Župné múzeum in Nitra (1900). All the museums were based as associations, and archaeological finds were a relevant part of their collections in the days of their foundation as well as they are in present.

3. Forms of in fondo and in situ presentation of archaeological finds

Archaeological sources as representing facts of the outside past world can be seen from two points of view: (1) they are sources of knowledge about the past (in this sense they are used by academic Archaeology); (2) they are part of present-day world as historical monuments [2]. In common museum practice the

second position of archaeological finds as historical monuments is widely serviceable. Management of museum exhibitions and expositions can offer several presentation forms for archaeological finds that can be realized inside or outside the museums.

4. In fondo presentation – inside presentation of archaeological finds

Standard forms of inside presentation of archaeological finds are expositions and exhibitions. Exposition is a long-term museum programme based on its basic collection fund. It is focused to reflect the museum profiling and field of activity. Regarding the exhibition presentation and attendance, it is a static element [3]. Exhibition is a short-term programme and its theme is focused on more specified problem or section of a certain topic. It is a dynamic element that motivates visitors to visit the museum again. Regarding way of its presentation, it gives more space for interpretation and experiment [3].

Particular character of archaeological finds, i.e. the fact that they are dead fragments of ancient living culture, puts higher demands on the way they are presented to visitors.

The information can be mediated by three ways:

- interpretation by guide – lecturer – has the advantage of opportunity to respond immediately to questions asked by visitors (in case of a qualified lecturer) and the disadvantage is to conform oneself with organized collective presentation;
- individual visit with audio guide, printed guide or catalogue;
- ‘self-service’ visit – the current trend that is very suitable for presentation of archaeological finds and it requires wide multimedia application, e.g. reconstructions, interactive consoles and communicators with touch panels, video-presentations, as well as classic text information;
- virtual visit – a distance-communication way, it requires creation of 3D space, in which a visitor can move and choose what he/she wants to see and to what extent.

Intensity of presentation of Archaeology as a field of special Museology is different throughout the Slovak museums. High degree of expertise is represented by specialized museums (with complete museum documentation in the given scientific discipline). The supreme institution with nationwide coverage is the Slovak National Museum – Archaeological Museum in Bratislava, collection funds which comprise archaeological artefacts from the Hallstatt period up to the Top Middle Ages that were obtained mainly by archaeological research realized on the territory of Slovakia. In the museum deposits there are also ancient artefacts (Egyptian, Etruscan, Greek and Roman ones) that were acquired by purchase or donation.

Some regional or city museums are of more or less specialized type. They are institutions with complex museum documentation of a given region or they are specialized closely to a certain scientific discipline or sphere that is documenting evolution of nature and society. These are established by the local

administration, i.e. town or village. In most cases they were founded on a base of a significant archaeological site. These are, e.g. Archeologické múzeum Púchovskej kultúry (The Púchov-Culture Archaeological Museum), Múzeum praveku Slovenska (Museum of Slovak Primeval Ages) in Bojnice at the Prepoštská jaskyňa cave position, Múzeum Molpír in Smolenice, Cirkevno-archeologické múzeum (The Ecclesiastical-Archaeological Museum) in Nižná Myšľa, Archeologické múzeum (Archaeological Museum) in Svodín, Obecné múzeum (The Municipal Museum) in Nitrianska Blatnica, Archeologické múzeum Veľkej Moravy (The Archaeological Museum of Great Moravia) in Bojná.

To the extent appropriate to given conditions, Archaeology is present also in the regional museums. Archaeological collections in regional museums include artefacts from the given region in its geographical extent with the aim to obtain a complete collection fund reflecting particular historical horizons.

5. In situ presentation – outside presentation of archaeological finds

The problem of presentation of archaeological finds in open air is significant. Its complexity is the consequence of the diversity of the finds presented. There are several favourable factors needed to modify a site – an area of archaeological excavation to a site – an area suitable for archaeological presentation in open air. Frequently there is a situation when there is a finding worthy a publication and presentation but the site cannot be available for visitors for some reason.

Depending on various types of archaeological immovable monuments and the possibilities resulting from them, there are more ways of their presentation *in situ*. The first one is to remind the existence of an archaeological site in the region to possible visitors. These are usually sites of great scientific importance, where archaeological excavations run for several research seasons and the finding place got firmly into the minds of local inhabitants. There are various ways how to realize this type of presentation. If the monument could not be situated at the site, another frequented and publicly available area in the vicinity is chosen to remind the finding place in a suitable way (e.g. by a piece of art that is a replica of typical structures or artefacts and with accompanying caption). This method was used to present the site in Bučany where the excavations were conducted during the highway construction and there is an informative board at the highway rest area reminding the site. In case of publicly available site, descriptive reconstruction of archaeological structures on the place is usually used. In Slovakia this type of presentation has been used at the burial ground in Kyjatice (the Archaeological monument in Kyjatice) or at a burial mound in Očkov.

A higher level of archaeological presentation in open air is represented by educative nature trails. They are usually designed for areas with high concentration of archaeological sites or at one extended finding place. The archaeological structures here are presented *in situ* (remains of fortification,

stone walls, etc.) or on panels with documentation and captions. The most frequently there is a combination of the both.

Currently in Slovakia there are more than 230 nature trails of various specialized subject field (mining, ecology, forestry, hunting, history, etc.). Educative content of particular nature trails mostly puts together History, Archaeology, Natural sciences and attractive particularities of the region. The nature trails/localities that include also archaeological sites, where presentation via informative boards is realized are e.g. those in Moravany nad Váhom, Horný Abov, Pustý hrad, Domica cave and surroundings, Katarínka, Sádok – Klátová Nová Ves – Šiance - Janova Ves, Stojslavov nature trail in Nitrianska Blatnica, nature trail in Považský Inovec mountain range. The nature trails/localities with guides presenting their story are at: e.g. Klišské Hradište – Michalov vrch – Vrchora [4] and Sádok – Cibajky – Šiance [5].

The most complex form how to present archaeological sites and finds in open nature are the open-air museums and their parallels (archaeo-parks and archaeo-folk museums). The situation in Slovakia has been currently changing remarkably and the open-air museums have become attractive mediators of the past although there are differences in quality, extent and level of the information presented. We assume the problem lies in economic and material conditions and in (un)interest of the present archaeological society and not in the small number of archaeological sites suitable for this type of presentation. Currently civic associations and archaeology enthusiasts come to the fore more and more.

First archaeological open-air museums on the territory of Slovakia are: The Archaeological Open-Air Museum at Liptovská Mara-Havránok and The Museum of Ancient Gerulata – a Roman military camp.

Another successfully starting project is the archaeo-park Archaeology Alive in Hanušovce nad Topľou as a centre of experimental archaeology and educative activities that is working under the leadership of Vlastivedné múzeum in Hanušovce nad Topľou. Recently there is also a project of archaeological folk museum in the area of former military quarters in Nitra at the Martinský vrch position that is in preparation phase. The project is aimed to present the settlement from the Stone Age up to the Middle Ages together with partial reconstruction of a Roman church of Saint Martin.

Other projects of similar type are:

- Archaeo-park Mokrý kút in Vyšný Kubín that is focused on life of primeval man. The keeper is Ipea civic association.
- Archaeo-park Liptovia - a project of living primeval hamlet that is situated southward the village of Partizánska Ľupča. A complex of timber buildings has been planned at the area of 5.5 ha to document chronology of settlement from the Palaeolithic to the Slavic period. The project is realized by the Archaeo-park Liptov civic association.
- Archaeological folk museum Myssle in Nižná Myšľa. Its creators' intention is to build an archaeological folk museum at the positions of Varhegy and Koscelek that will document housing culture of our ancestors by means of

house replicas from the Stone Age through the Bronze Age up to the Middle Ages [6].

Presentation of architectural remnants on living sites where systematic archaeological research is conducted (Iža-Leányvár, Devín National Cultural Monument, Kláštorisko) is a particular category. For this category is typical its temporary character as the sites would be transformed into open-air museum after the excavations are finished. There are also several other sites with architectonic remnants with no recent presentation activities (Cífer-Pác, Stupava, Figa).

Presentation of conserved originals *in situ* is a presentation form, which is very difficult to maintain. In Slovakia its successful existence is depending on capabilities of the institution that manages the site (negative example is e.g. decaying remnants from the excavation of medieval necropolis and church in Krásno; opposite examples are a chieftain's courtyard in Ducové, the Great-Moravian basilica in Bratislava Castle, a rotunda in Michalovce or a settlement of the Roman period in Bratislava-Dúbravka).

6. Educational aim

New communication methods recently installed in museums are linked to Museum pedagogy discipline – the interdisciplinary science based on Pedagogy and Museology [7]. The discipline of Museum pedagogy is a well-established working position in majority of museums in western and northern Europe (Austria, Germany, France, Italy, Switzerland, Denmark, etc.) and on the American continent as well. The aim is to create an ideal museum as a friendly institution. Many museums use modern equipment in a greater or lesser degree to shape their exhibition aims, such as video projection, touch presentation, 3D reconstructions, creative workshops, etc. In our conditions there are first signs of this approach, too.

In the 1970s the term *public archaeology* appears and has its origin in the Anglo-Saxon environment. Loosely translated it means public archaeology in the sense of relation between Archaeology and the wide public (ethics in Archaeology, legislation, monuments protection, political aspects of Archaeology, as well as popularization, presentation and education) and their mutual communication [8]. In recent years Radomír Tichý has introduced the term *archaeodidactics* in archaeological terminology and practice. The term is connected to the problem that is not particularly museological but it implies what to choose and how to arrange it within education. It comprises archaeological presentation, popularization and education, and that is the reason why it has to be performed by archaeologists with deeper pedagogical knowledge. In archaeodidactics, archaeological finds and finding contexts, in which they were discovered, can help formulate a story. While applying museum-pedagogical aspects to education and presentation, we have to stake out educational objectives and content. Museum education generally and

archaeological education specifically have to lead to one goal – experience that can expand student's knowledge [8, p. 10–11].

7. Conclusions

Conclusions can be stated that comparing with long-lasting purposeful activity in other countries Slovakia is standing at the beginning of a long-termed and challenging way in building of archaeological presentations in open air, but there are many reasons, however, for which the *in fondo* and *in situ* presentations of archaeological monuments have to be supported. As Žbirková and Jurová claim, education in museums of various types is an act of communication and mutual influence [9]. Apart from unquestionably meritable reasons, such as education, popularization and cultural heritage protection, there is also obviously a relevant commercial aspect. Archaeological finds can be very attractive for tourists as they are in numerous countries with rich tradition in tourism. They are first of all Mediterranean and Near-East countries (Italy, Greece, Egypt, Tunisia, etc.) as well as Scandinavian ones, visits to which are traditionally closely connected with archaeological monuments. Benefits are multiple: domestic public is in attractive way acquainted with history of their own country and at the same time the presentation potential of the given state toward foreign countries can grow and bring direct economic profit in the form of profits from tourism and indirect profit in the form of workforce development and employment growth [10].

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