
MILITARY ARCHAEOLOGY AND OPTIONS FOR MILITARY AND CIVIL HIGHER EDUCATION

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THE MEANING AND HISTORY OF BATTLEFIELD ARCHAEOLOGY

The first officially organised Hungarian “battlefield archaeology” was made by the archaeologist, László Papp on the historical battlefield of Mohács (1526). The archaeologists’ group had been working hard for many years, making a reconstruction of the structure of former settlements (16th century) and discovering the first two common graves. Their first aim—to locate the inner battlefield—failed, but these projects proved that a territory covering several tens of thousands of square metres is too great to use traditional methods. That is why we had to find new methods, to make the best reconstruction of the battlefield and military events.

The aim of the military archaeology is to reconstruct a sequence of military events on the battlefield and to be able to provide more information for the science of history. The books and archive documents are the basis for locating the scene and obtain the necessary information about the military events. With these together we are able to start mapping the findings which turn up during the discovery. The course of proceedings resemble the methods of procedure in the law-court. There are three main respects: the evidence or sources, the scene and the discovered trails on the territory. After the procedure we need to have enough information to get answers about the events or in the case of problematical events to verify or refute previous knowledge.

To date, the most documented discovery was that of the battlefield of Little Bighorn (United States of America) between the years 1983 and 1985. Nowadays this is considered to be a typical example of military archaeology, and the methods used there have been the basis for Hungarian projects too. Other interesting projects from foreign countries include Monroe’s Crossroads (United States of America), Teutoburg (Germany), the Western Front of the first world war (France, Nederland) and the Eastern Front of the second world war (Russia).

The official institutes in Hungary which are permitted to be engaged with military archaeology are the Hungarian Association of Military Science’s the Section

of Military Archaeology and the Ministry of Defence, Institute and Museum of Military History. The leaders in both institutes are Lieutenant General Dr. József Ferenc Holló and Lieutenant Colonel Lajos Négyesi Ph.D.

ABOUT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

In the event of any project, it is essential that international co-operation is taken into consideration in order to maximise the chances of a successful outcome to the research.

This study discusses a research method of military history and the exploitation of the results in military and civil higher education. I would also like to share with the reader my experiences and ideas regarding the facilitation of cooperation among countries in the region. We are given a better chance to know more about our common general and military history if universities and local associations co-operate with one another.

One excellent example of international co-operation was when the Hungarian Zrínyi Miklós National Defence University, the Bulgarian Vassil Levski Military Academy and the G. S. Rakovsky Military Academy executed a military archaeology project together near the village of Kisbajom in the county of Somogy, to explore the Bulgarian Army's battles in Hungary. Here the outcome of the archaeological work could be used in higher education both in Bulgaria and Hungary. The result of this cooperation helped in making a better reconstruction of the military events (the movement of the platoons, the point of break-through, the process of the Soviet-Bulgarian counter-attack, the weapons and ammunition used), and this new information were sometimes in marked contrast with Hungarian and Bulgarian bibliographical data. In this way military archaeology represents an important role in history teaching alongside the archive documents which are the basis of teaching and writing history.

The research was the collective success of the Hungarian and Bulgarian multinational group and the relationship between the participants (men and institutions) is still very good. The documentation of the research was built into the syllabus of both universities. We want to continue the research with the Bulgarian delegation near the River Dráva in the future.

In the Danube region our common history is as important as the common desire to know more about it and for this reason there are important Hungarian projects carried

out in foreign countries by Hungarian researchers under international cooperation in Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania and elsewhere. An example of international cooperation and of the use of military archaeology in tourism, culture and education is in Kobarid-Caporetto (Slovenia), where a local group has established a museum from the relics of the first world war with the assistance of collaborators from the Hungarian Ministry of Defence Institution and the Museum of Military History.

Such methods in history teaching in national, international and the Danube region's higher education are less widespread. With the use of military/battlefield archaeology, we are able to reconstruct the events on the historical battlefield and the students acquire practical experience of military history, the techniques used and tactics as well as becoming acquainted with the material culture of war.

ABOUT THE CONNECTION BETWEEN MILITARY ARCHAEOLOGY AND EDUCATION

The results of battlefield archaeology were first used in Hungarian military higher education at the Zrínyi Miklós National Defence University by the scholar Lieutenant Colonel Lajos Négyesi and in civil higher education at the University of Pécs by the author.

The role played by war history and military archeology is unambiguous in military higher education. The encyclopaedical knowledge, the experiences of the former military operations of war (or military) history has set examples and morale for students in the future during a war situation.

We cannot teach something adequately to students if we do not have a reliable and suitable amount of information about it. One of the aims of teaching is to give more experience to students and during the process of learning they have to hear, see and feel the theme of the lecture, so that they get a full picture about periods in history; all three perceptions are employed in those methods, with which we have made trials of at the University of Pécs. In the case of military history the micro and macro events can be understood, too. I would like to present to the reader some Hungarian examples of military archeology projects from the age of modern history and the results of projects, which may be attached to the concept of practical education and which have been used at the University of Pécs.

VÁGOTPUSZTA, 1956

The conflicts during the Hungarian revolution in 1956 are the most recent events in Hungarian war history. Fifty years after the events numerous eyewitnesses are still alive, aiding the work of the historians. We might believe that there are only any unsettled questions, but the whirl of the fight, the danger of life and the effect of spiritual pressure make eyewitnesses' accounts contradictory.

In this situation military archaeology carries out research to clarify questionable points in testimonies and the course of proceedings are like the methods of the procedure in the law-court. Academic and special research methods and the examined and mapped traces make the territory an objective source.

In November 1956, when the Hungarian Revolution was defeated by superior forces, a large group of freedom fighters from the town of Pécs, about 340 people, decided to continue the fight in the Mecsek Hills. One of the most significant centres of resistance was established in Vágotpuszta, situated on a hilltop by Road 66 from Pécs to Kaposvár, and this hilltop was hardly approachable by any means of transport. The freedom fighters based themselves there on 7th November, and carried out their enterprise with more or less success until the location was detected. At about 9-10 o'clock a.m. on 12th November, after a fifteen-minute mortar barrage, an unknown number of Soviet troops and Hungarian police entered the village from the East and put the insurgents to flight. The leaders of the group managed to gather the remainder in the forest and lead them to Kisújbánya, but the group disbanded in a few days after a failed mission against the police station at Pécsvárad.

In the spring of 2006, the Pécs Branch of Military Archeology decided to explore the scene of the struggles that took place in a hilly, forested terrain, far from inhabited areas, which was most untypical of the 1956 fight for freedom. As a result of our research, which was carried out using various instruments (metal detector, GPS, theodolite), the traces of a fairly large group of the "Invisible Resistance Fighters of the Mecsek Hills", which fled in a south-westerly direction during the attack of 12th November, were found. The findings included many Nagant and Tokarev cartridges, a stick grenade and a DP-28 medium machine gun, which was a rare automatic weapon for the resistance group. The given terrain, the properties of military objects and the locales where they were found form the basis of our conclusions at to the series of events. The location of the items found along the route of the fleeing insurgents was documented on a map. These methods of battlefield research contribute to the

knowledge of the events of the 1956 Revolution in Pécs and the Mecsek Region, as well as the history of the “Invisible Resistance Fighters of the Mecsek Hills”.

The result of the research was a study published in the Quarterly of Military History for the jubilee of the revolution, in addition to which several conference lectures were held in the University of Pécs and Budapest during the years of 2006-2007. In the University of Pécs we have organised with the students an exhibition and a tour to reconstruct the events in the city and on the Mecsek Hills too: the movement of the fighters, the fights with the Soviet mechanised infantry and tanks, the targets of the mortar barrage fire.

The other result was the small-scale but nationally unique exhibition organized and opened in the regional historical museum of Pécs. During the one-month exhibition we projected documentary movies, photographs and maps with narrations of the events of the freedom fighting and about our research. We have exhibited pieces of material culture from the '50s, such as propaganda brochures, the uniforms of the Hungarian military forces (“Néphadsereg” = People’s Army), the Hungarian political police forces (“Államvédelmi Hatóság” or abbreviated to “ÁVH” = State Defence Authority) as well as other uniforms made for revolutionaries during the weeks of the revolution; the types of weapons and equipment used and the flags which were the symbols of the age. We were the first to exhibit personal objects associated with the local revolution, such as uniforms, personal belongings, a handwritten curriculum vitae of the military commander of the revolution in the region and the weapons found during the research. Our group hopes to continue its research related to the struggles of the revolution and to open more exhibitions in cities and towns of the region like Pécs and Kaposvár.

DRÁVASZABOLCS, 1945

The Pécs Branch of the Section of Military Archaeology carries out regular research on the area of the bridgehead at Drávaszabolcs to know more about the fighting and other events there. We have found and mapped out the former artillery and anti-tank positions, infantry trenches and pillboxes in the woods near the main and dirt tracks around the villages. We have sought out eyewitnesses of the events, written down their orally transmitted histories. Books and archive documents about the story of the bridgehead were our basis for locating the scenes and getting the information necessary for reconstructing military events. We summarised the detailed new and

former information in a study which was successfully outlined in the military science Section of the 28th National Academic Students' Associations Conference.

To date, we have been able to utilize the results in two educational forms at the University of Pécs. In the autumn of 2005 I organised fieldwork for the students attending the History of the second world war seminar Together with another staff member I a new, much modified seminar about the second world war was planned, but abandoned because my colleague had to move to Budapest. In 2006 and 2007 the students of the correspondence course made regular trips around the county of Baranya to explore places of historic interest, one visit being to the former bridgehead in order to become acquainted with the memories and events of the second world war and with the fortification systems of the '50s and the cold war period.

ABOUT THE FIRST FIELDWORK WITH THE STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS, IN 2005

We arrived in the morning at Harkány on 4th November, 2005. We stopped after a short walk near the town in the forest, where the students received a simplified map about the bridgehead. I sketched the global background of the battle, code-named "Operation Sylvan Devil": the strength and the tactics of the defenders (Bulgarian, Yugoslavian and Soviet forces) and aggressors (German and Cossack divisions), the morale of the men and the part played by Hungarian civilians. We inspected a trench system constructed by the Soviets, which was taken over by the Bulgarian Army in 1945. We went to Ipacsfa, but here I split the students in two groups and they had to navigate themselves to the village independently. The first team had a GPS, the second a map without a compass. While it might appear likely that the group with the GPS had more chance of arriving at their destination first, this area near the River Drava, with brooks and channels and without a bridge is problematic and while the GPS shows the shortest way, its direction and distance, that way is sometimes impassable. To be successful the offered direction has to be tested several times from a height or from a tree. On the other hand, the map ensures so many benefits that it was unnecessary to search for the right way blindly if one was able to deduce their position (surrounding hills, church tower). However, if we miscalculate the direction, we lose time. In Ipacsfa and Kovácsida the students made presentations with a notebook (which helped them with archive movies and coloured pictures) about the military vehicles and heavy weapons used and they acquainted themselves with the weapons and equipment. Drávaszerdahely was our next stop, where

a local eyewitness told us of his experiences near the village, near former trenches, dug-outs, pillboxes and near an anti-tank position on the ground.

Originally I would have finished the tour near this village, but the students wanted to go on, because they wanted to see the villages with traces of former street fighting such as damaged cemeteries, church buildings, the graves of soldiers and trenches.

The feedback of participants was very good and I think that we ended up with a fruitful day after 12 kilometers based on a new idea. The students gained knowledge of the wartime micro-history of the area, obtaining personal impressions through the traces of the war which could be seen, heard and felt. All of these have been realised with the help of the University of Pécs and military archaeology.

FUTURE & SUMMARY

With the use of military/battlefield archaeology we are able to reconstruct events on the former battlefield and the students gain practical experience from military history and the techniques and tactics used as well as acquainting themselves with the material culture of war. These methods in history teaching are more widespread for example in the United States of America and the United Kingdom, but less often employed in the higher education of the Danube region to achieve results. In the Danube region our common history is as important as the common interest to know more about it and we have a chance for co-operation. In the future we could start common research and education projects, help each others' exhibitions in Austria, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, Italy and Croatia as well as in Hungary.

Battlefield/military archaeology is one more chance for international co-operation (history is without borders) and all of the countries acquire more knowledge about their war history. The role of the method is unquestionable in military higher education. In civil higher education, war history plays only a partial role during history teaching, for example in the history of techniques, costume and lifestyles, but the use of results from military archaeology makes history more intelligible.

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CHAPTER 2

UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT – TASKS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

