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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY OF SZEGED AND THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLECTION OF THE MAKÓ MUSEUM

Museum organising activities of the Institute of Archaeology at the University of Szeged

So far, the role that archaeology institutes and departments in higher education institutions played in organising museums, has received little attention in research. During the two World Wars, the museum organizing activities of the Institute of Archaeology at the University of Szeged for the most part included a series of excavations conducted on the southern part of the Great Hungarian Plains, which founded the basis or expanded the archaeological collections of several museums. Furthermore, the institute strived to publish its own archaeological material as well as the finds of other museums. The archaeology institute of Szeged greatly influenced museums in organizing and structuring archaeological collections, mostly in the Southern Plains region.



The archaeological collection of Makó was in the Archaeological Institute of Szeged until 1942



The building of Makó Museum in the 1940's
(by the courtesy of Tamás Halász)

The role of institutions in organising museums

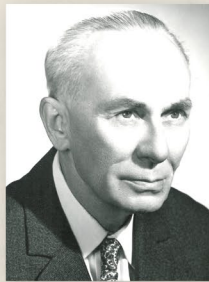
The institute of the university conducted its research in close collaboration with other interdisciplinary coordinating organizations, such as the Great Hungarian Plains Research Committee (Hungarian: Alföldkutató Bizottság) established in 1927 and the Great Hungarian Plains Scientific Institution (Hungarian: Alföldi Tudományos Intézet) formed in 1934. The influence, that the institute exerted on regional museums and collections increased greatly in 1941, when the Ministry of Religion and Public Education approved the organization of the Great Hungarian Plains Institute for Archaeological Cadastre (Hungarian: Alföldi Régészeti Kataszteri Intézet). In all three of these institutions, archaeological tasks were conducted by János Banner, the head of the archaeology institute at the university and his colleagues (e.g. Alajos Bálint and Mihály Párducz). The goal was to establish a regional centre in the framework of the Great Hungarian Plains Institution for Archaeological Cadastre, which would have included a database of every archaeological site on the Southern Plains accessible to researchers. Their activities focused on two main goals. On one hand, they attempted to restore, organize and inventory the archaeological material of several collections while organizing exhibitions in most cases. Simultaneously, they taught museum personnel the fundamentals of artifact protection and recording. On the other hand, through recording these collections, they laid the foundations for the database of the cadastre institution. The data of distinct finds was recorded on inventory cards (inventory number, dating, findspot, description, dimensions, place of custody and literature), its drawn depiction and photograph.



Archaeological excavation in the vicinity of Makó, Alajos Bálint on the left and János Banner on the right (by the courtesy of Sarolta Tettamanti)

The birth of the archaeological collection in the Museum of Makó

Throughout its existence, the Institute of Archaeology of Szeged maintained connections with multiple museums both in Hungary and abroad. The institute at Szeged played a significant role in establishing the archaeological collection in the Museum of Makó. The assemblage of the local school and a private donation laid the groundwork for this archaeology collection, complemented by material recovered from the excavations conducted by the institute. In 1934 the Society of History and Archaeology of Csanád County was reorganized and the institute became actively involved in its work, through coordinating and conducting most of the regional archaeological surveys, funded by the society. Amongst other sites, the institute conducted excavations at Kaszaper, Mezőkovácsháza, Kopáncs and Csanádapáca. Alajos Bálint, a native of Makó conducted the bulk of fieldwork until 1939, when he moved to Kassa. The archaeological material recovered during excavations was cleaned, restored, photographed, drawn and recorded in the archaeological institute in Szeged until 1942, since at that time no suitable space was available in Makó for their storage.



Alajos Bálint, the initiator of the archaeological research in Csanád County

The archaeological cadastre of Csanád county

The institute of Szeged compiled the archaeological cadastre of the county in 1939. Most of it has been the work of Alajos Bálint. The actual research operations were concluded in a brief timeframe, between April and June 1939. It was not possible to conduct systematic fieldwork in such a short time, yet this was not the goal. Alongside data accumulated by the institute of Szeged, the excavation records of Alajos Bálint and regional scientific literature, the cadastre included information and finds from archaeological sites acquired from notaries and teachers in settlements throughout the county. Furthermore, Alajos Bálint included material related to Csanád county from several museums, including the Hungarian National Museum and the Museum of Szeged, in his work. His volume published in 1941 contained material from 133 sites.

The formation of the Museum of Makó

In 1941 the county of Csanád purchased the boarding school building of the South Hungarian Association for Public Education for its public institutions. This building first housed the museum of Makó as well. Its rooms and furniture were equipped to store finds according to contemporary demands. The collection consisting of 2793 was transferred back from Szeged to this building in 1942, followed by an archaeological exhibition organized by the colleagues of the institution, János Banner and Mihály Párducz.



János Banner and Mihály Párducz, the curators of the first archaeological exhibition in Makó

Epilogue

The Institute of Archaeology at the University of Szeged played a major role in transitioning collections from all over the Southern part of the Great Hungarian Plains into a professional museum, including the organization and inventory of these collections as well as public education through exhibitions and informative public lectures. The research they conducted in Csanád county, alongside the collection of archaeological material and their role in the foundation of the museum of Makó hallmark their scientific activities. However, the artifacts kept at the museum suffered greatly during the course of WW2. The remaining finds were transferred at first to Makó, then to Szeged, where they are still kept in the archaeological collection of the Móra Ferenc Museum.

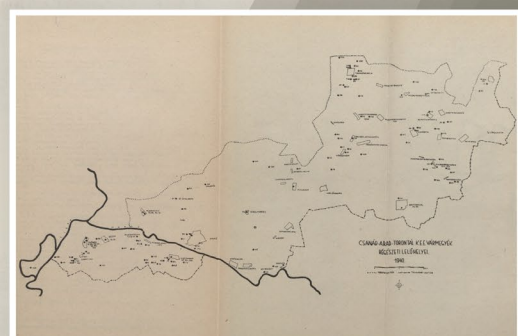
**„THEY CREATED MUSEUM HALLS, THAT WERE
THE ENVY OF EVERY PUBLIC COLLECTION IN THE GREAT
HUNGARIAN PLAINS WITH THE EXCEPTION PERHAPS
OF THE DÉRI MUSEUM.”**

(JÁNOS BANNER)



**„.... ALAJOS BÁLINT WAS THE TRUE MASTER
OF THE INSTITUTE OF ANTIQUITIES IN THE COUNTY [CSANÁD].”**

(JÓZSEF KOREK)



Archaeological sites of Csanád County collected by Alajos Bálint