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BENEFITS OF THE LONG-TERM RESEARCH INTO THE PUSTÝ HRAD CASTLE (DESERTED CASTLE) IN ZVOLEN AND ITS PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

NOÉMI BELJAK PAŽINOVÁ – JÁN BELJAK

Abstract: *The National Cultural Monument of the Pustý hrad castle in Zvolen towers majestically on a hill at the south edge of the town of Zvolen, in the heart of Slovakia. The interest in research into this site goes back to the 18th century. Modern archaeological research conducted annually since 1992 has confirmed the importance of the castle as the seat of the Zvolen County Committee and a favourite leisure and hunting location of Hungarian kings in the High Middle Ages. The article introduces the individual stages of research into this significant site and presents its results, as well as their contribution not only to the history of the castle but also to the enhancement of the specialist and lay public's awareness of the potential and results of archaeological research. The paper also sums up all known published outcomes regarding Pustý hrad in Zvolen.*

Key words: Slovakia – Pustý hrad (Deserted Castle) in Zvolen – High Middle Ages – archaeological research – publicity.

Prínos dlhodobého výskumu lokality Pustý hrad vo Zvolene pre bádanie a jeho perspektíva do budúcnosti

Abstrakt: *Národná kultúrna pamiatka Pustý hrad vo Zvolene sa hrdo týči na rovnomennom kopci na južnom okraji mesta Zvolena v srdci Slovenska. Záujem o výskum tejto lokality je evidentný od 18. storočia. Moderný archeologický výskum, realizovaný každoročne od roku 1992, osvetlil jeho význam ako sídla Zvolenského komitátu a obľúbeného miesta odpočinku a polovačiek panovníkov Uhorska vo vrcholnom stredoveku. Cieľom príspevku je predstaviť jednotlivé etapy a výsledky bádania na tejto významnej lokalite a ich prínos nielen pre dejiny hradu, ale aj pre zvýšenie povedomia odbornej i laickej verejnosti o možnostiach a výsledkoch archeologického bádania. Dôležitým prínosom príspevku je aj zhrnutie všetkých známych publikačných výstupov týkajúcich sa Pustého hradu vo Zvolene.*

Kľúčové slová: Slovensko – Pustý hrad vo Zvolene – vrcholný stredovek – archeologický výskum – propagácia.

The National Cultural Monument of Pustý hrad in Zvolen (Fig. 1) spreads across two peaks of the hill of the same name rising at the southwestern edge of the town of Zvolen, in the Javorie mountain range and above the confluence of the Hron and Slatina rivers. Medieval builders used the natural properties of the site and built Horný hrad (Upper Castle) with an area of 3.5 ha on the hilltop plain (571 m a. s. l.) and below (476 m a. s. l.) they located Dolný hrad (Lower Castle) of 0.7 ha. Together with the so-called connecting part, they cover an area of 4.7 ha. The castle was declared a National Cultural Monument in 1963.

The current name of Pustý hrad has been used since the first third of the 18th century, when it replaced the name of Starý hrad (Old Castle), previously associated with the castle area (Beljak-Beljak Pažinová–Šimkovic 2018, 9). The first official form of the name (a schematically drawn ruin with a caption saying “Pusty Hrad”) is introduced on a map sheet from the First Military Survey (Theresian-Josephinian) created in 1783. The Second Military Survey (Franciscan survey) carried out in Slovakia in 1819–1858 distinguishes the locations of the Lower and Upper castles, although both locations are called Pusti hrad. The same applies to the Third Military Survey (1875–1884) based on quality geodetic fundamentals.

The hill of Pustý hrad was a popular place for settlement since prehistory (Beljak Pažinová 2018; Hanuliak 2002). Its strategic location above the confluence of the Hron and Slatina rivers with a good view of the Zvolenská kotlina basin and its wider vicinity was an important factor for the choice of location (Beljak Pažinová 2014; 2018a). The site became a good guard post controlling the crossroads of trade routes crossing the Zvolenská kotlina basin. Rare finds of sherds from the Aeneolithic phase of the Lengyel culture (Ludanice group) can be identified at



Fig. 1. Deserted Castle in Zvolen. Aerial view of Upper Castle in the background with Lower Castle towering above the town of Zvolen, 2018. Photo by Ján Beljak.

Obr. 1. Pustý hrad vo Zvolene. Letecký pohľad na Horný hrad v pozadí s Dolným hradom, týčiacimi sa nad mestom Zvolen, 2018. Foto Ján Beljak.

Lower as well as Upper Castle. Settlement from the Middle Aeneolithic (final stage of the Baden culture) concentrated mainly in the area of Lower Castle (Beljak Pažinová–Niklová–Beljak 2015) is well documented. Both hilltops were intensely settled in the Late Bronze Age, the Urnfield culture period (Beljak–Beljak Pažinová–Putško, in print). The sporadic finds of wheel-made pottery of Celtic provenance discovered on the castle hill are classified with the Púchov culture, and we should also mention the discovered Middle LaTène bronze fibulae (Beljak–Beljak Pažinová–Šimkovic 2018, 18) and the unique find of a subaerate antoninianus (a coin of Emperor Gallienus) roughly dated between 260 and 276 AD (Beljak 2018, 36–39, Fig. 2).

The Pustý hrad castle was built at the end of the High Middle Ages and especially Hungarian kings of the Árpád dynasty used it intensely (Beljak et al. 2014, 36–43). The castle ranks among the most important seats of Hungarian kings and the largest medieval castles in the territory of Slovakia. The origin and beginnings of the stone castle can be associated with the establishment of the Zvolen County, a large unit of territorial administration, administered by an official – *župan* – appointed by the king and seated in Zvolen. The Zvolen County was probably established as early as the beginning of the 12th century. The oldest report mentioning the administrator of Zvolen (comes, rarely also procurator) dates from 1222. A source from 1229 also mentions the name of the Zvolen comes – Detrik (Beljak et al. 2014, 38). The castle of Zvolen (Fig. 2) was used as the administrative centre of the large Zvolen County. The most noticeable construction activities at the castle took place in the 13th century (Beljak–Beljak Pažinová–Šimkovic 2018, 23–28). These extensive construction activities created a unique complex of two castles united into one whole.

After the Árpád dynasty had died out, the administrators of the Zvolen County took over the administration of the castle and turbulent times began. As late as the reform of the kingdom by



Fig. 2. Deserted Castle in Zvolen, Upper Castle. Aerial view of the highest point on the top of the hill with the residential tower of the county seat, 2018. Photo by Ján Beljak.

Obr. 2. Pustý hrad vo Zvolene, Horný hrad. Letecký pohľad na najvyššie položené miesto na vrchole kopca s vežou komitátneho hradu, 2018. Foto Ján Beljak.

Charles Robert, the administrator of Zvolen called Donč participated in the modernization of territorial administration and the situation at the castle was stabilized. The role of the Zvolen castle changed as well – instead of the whole county, it only ruled the territory of a smaller territorial unit, the Zvolen comitatus (Beljak et al. 2014, 44). In the 14th century, Louis (1342–1382), the son of Charles Robert, stayed in Zvolen. However, the castle did not meet his requirements anymore, thus, he had a royal hunting lodge or a modern Gothic castle – Zvolen castle (chateau) – built on the hill above the town (Beljak–Beljak Pažinová–Šimkovic 2018, 21, obr. 26; Maliniak 2019). At the times of his successor Sigismund of Luxembourg, both castles in Zvolen probably continued to function as an administration as well as residential centre. Nevertheless, in the 14th century the old Pustý hrad castle gradually lost its importance and fortification function and by the end of the Middle Ages, the old seat of Zvolen administrators was given the name of Starý hrad (Old Castle) (Beljak–Beljak Pažinová–Šimkovic 2018, 22).

In the mid-15th century, a Czech military leader Jan Jiskra of Brandýs seized several castles and towns in Upper Hungary and the castle of Zvolen and possibly also Old Castle became his main strategic points (Hanuliak 2006). Archaeological evidence from that period, however, is absent in the area of the Pustý hrad castle. The location of the wooden watchtower has not been identified either (Menclová 1954, 13). The tower was supposed to provide protection to the region from invasions of Ottoman armies in the second half of the 16th century. Among the places planned to be built, the source from the meeting of mining towns' representatives in Banská Štiavnica on 15 May 1564 mentions a tower at Old Castle near Zvolen (Beljak–Beljak Pažinová–Šimkovic 2018, 23). However, archaeological research has not yet confirmed such structure.

Research and renovation of the castle

Probably the first mention of vast ruins of a castle on the steep hill adjoining the town of Zvolen, which is called Stary Hrad by Slovaks and Óvár by Hungarians, can be found in Matthias Bel's *Noticia* (Zvolen County edition) first published in 1736 (Bel–Nagy–Turóci 2017, 412–413).

The first excavations at the castle are documented in the 19th century and they are associated with treasure hunters (Beljak–Maliniak–Pažinová 2011, 266). The sixth issue of the Budapest newspaper *Vasárnapi ujság* from 1858, for instance, says that in August 1856 superstitious treasure hunters were digging at Pustý hrad (Beljak–Beljak Pažinová–Šimkovic 2018, 50–51, Fig. 63). Then, sherds and animal bones saved by a certain burgher of Zvolen were discovered among the ruins of a cistern. According to the memoirs of the Zvolen notary Juraj Bánik, the cistern was uncovered at Upper Castle during a treasure hunt in 1857. There, several animal bones, pottery and glass artefacts were discovered. J. Bánik is the first to describe the rectangular ground plan of the cistern, plastered brick walls and a stone gutter above the cistern, and he also mentions the standing part of (probably) a wall of the residential tower at Lower Castle and the ruins of an entrance gate at Upper Castle (Bánik 1866, 184–186; 1891, 77; Beljak–Maliniak–Pažinová 2011, 267). It is the book by J. Bánik on the history of Zvolen that we can consider the first comprehensive work on the Pustý hrad castle.

The castle was introduced in the contemporary archaeological literature by Ferenc Kubínyi and Imre Henszlmann and we know that they had both visited the castle – Henszlmann was probably there in September 1865, Kubínyi might have been there even earlier (Beljak–Maliniak–Pažinová 2011, 267). F. Kubínyi (1859, 36) described the entrance gate, cistern and remains of defensive walls at Upper Castle. He also mentions the connecting wall between the Lower and Upper castles and does not forget the tall standing wall (remnant of the residential tower) at Lower Castle. I. Henszlmann (1866, 126–127) divided the castle into three parts: the upper area surrounded by a stone wall is described as Fellegvár, i. e. castle in the clouds (Upper Castle); he calls Lower Castle *előerőd* or *Vorwerk*, i. e. bailey and in the central part he included the connecting wall which ended in the lower part.

Excavations carried out by Gyula Thomka (an attorney in Zvolen) and Lajos Leustách (the chief processus clerk in Zvolenská Slatina) in 1889–1890 can be considered the first archaeological research at the Pustý hrad castle hill with a scientific focus (Beljak–Maliniak–Pažinová 2011, 269–273). Their excavation brought the oldest known measuring of the castle (Upper and Lower) carried out by the town's forest inspector János Boroskay in 1889. We learn from their correspondence (research documents have not been preserved) that the defensive walls of Upper Castle altogether are 1847 m long and the size of the area is 20 morgens (= 5.8 ha; royal morgen = 0.28945 m²). The first feature which they uncovered at the castle in the spring of 1889 was the entrance gate. They financed the autumn research season in 1889 with income from an archaeological exhibition organized in the town hall in Zvolen from 27 July to 12 August. In September 1889, they uncovered the tower of the county castle which they wrongly considered to be a chapel, and part of the cistern in the northern area of Upper Castle. They probably also studied the residential tower at Lower Castle. A well-known researcher and the author of a book about Hungarian castles (Könyöky–Nagy 1905, 227) József Könyöky visited the castle during their research. He dated the castle to the mid-12th century at the earliest. His assumption proved correct as late as the modern archaeological investigation which confirmed the origin of the county castle around the end of the 12th century. J. Könyöky thought that the entrance gate of Upper Castle was a Romanesque structure, he evaluated the cistern as an interesting brick structure and his attention was also attracted by the large tower-like structure at Lower Castle. Moreover, he was convinced that there was no larger castle in Hungary.

There is another interesting information on a model of the Pustý hrad castle from the end of the 19th century. For a millennium exhibition in 1896, the royal forest clerk Eduard Vaitzik created a model of the castle at the scale of 1 : 720, according to instructions by Gy. Thomka (Szendrei

1896, 96). The total size of the model was 2.03 m (length) and 1.5 m (width). Unfortunately, its design – like the model itself – has not been preserved in drawings or photographs.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the site of the Pustý hrad castle was classified among the Monuments of the Zvolen County and its description includes two standing walls – a front one and a rear one. The front wall (authors' note: it is probably the standing wall of the residential tower at Lower Castle) is approx. 10 m high and 2 m thick. The description also mentions vaulted cellars and foundation walls of rooms, a well and other structures (Fajnor 1904, 3–4).

In 1944, when guerrilla fighters were digging their trenches on the slope of the castle hill, part of a bronze hoard was discovered (Balaša 1946, 90; Furmánek–Kuka 1973, 603; Novotná–Ratimorská 1981, 200). Its second part was unearthed more than 50 years later (Hanuliak 2001). It was this hoard that raised a new wave of interest in the investigation of the castle.

In the second half of the previous century, new knowledge and mainly the incorporation of the castle in a wider framework of development of castle architecture was brought by a publication by D. Menclová (1954, 8–13) entitled *Hrad Zvolen* (Zvolen Castle) and dedicated primarily to the Zvolen castle. However, it also contained information on the defunct Pustý hrad castle, including a drawing of its ground plan. The best described structure of Upper Castle is the entrance gate, which is also the best-preserved part, dated by Dobroslava Menclová to the first third of the 13th century based on the preserved architecture. She briefly described the cistern as well and formulated a presumption on the existence of a tower in the north-eastern corner of Upper Castle. She dedicated a smaller part of the text to Lower Castle and dated it to the 13th or the 14th century. As for the numerous terrain depressions visible in the area, Menclová assumed that they were cellars of residential features.

The need for modern archaeological research and monument renovation at the Pustý hrad castle was aroused by the critical condition of the main entrance gate of Upper Castle in the early 1990s (Hanuliak 1993; 1993a). The four-storey remains of the main gate had severe structural faults and were in danger of a total collapse. The town of Zvolen became the main initiator and investor of the research, which was carried out by the regional centre of the Slovak Monuments Board in Banská Bystrica. The first three seasons of the investigation were organized in cooperation with an organization called *Strom života* (Tree of Life). In other seasons, mainly students from Zvolen and its vicinity participated, as well as students from Slovak departments of archaeology.

The archaeologist Václav Hanuliak became the central figure of modern research at the Pustý hrad castle. He excavated the Upper Castle area for 17 seasons and uncovered all key structures: the entrance gate/gatehouse (Hanuliak 1993; 1993a), the residential tower of the county castle (Hanuliak 1994; 1995; 1996; 1996a), smaller residential tower II (Hanuliak–Šimkovic 1997), the prism-shaped tower/bastion added to the eastern defensive wall (Hanuliak 1999, 353–354), and the so-called Donč's Castle (Hanuliak–Šimkovic 1997a). The line of fortification protecting the northern and eastern parts of Upper Castle was completely excavated and preserved (Hanuliak 1995; 1996a; Hanuliak–Šimkovic 1997a), the levelled terraces on the western slope between the so-called Donč's Castle and the transverse wall were also studied (Hanuliak 2001, 190; Hanuliak–Cengel–Holly 2003). Simultaneously, almost 8 m of cultural layers from the castle cistern were excavated during the seasons 2003 to 2008 (Hanuliak 2001; 2008). In total, an area of more than 5,000 m² was excavated at Upper Castle during V. Hanuliak's research. His name is also closely associated with the popularization of the research outcomes (Hanuliak 1998; 1998a; 2001; 2003; 2008), which resulted in more interest from the specialist as well as general public.

Simultaneously with the research into Upper Castle, heritage restoration of all uncovered walls was carried out (Bejčák 2018a, 199–200). The walls were extended upwards and ended with atop course covered with grass. The aim was to build a forest park following the principle of harmony between nature and the remains of historical architecture. In 1992–2008, the masonry at Upper Castle was conserved by cement mortar. However, it was discovered that the use of cement for jointing had an adverse effect on the humidity regime of the masonry as it – after such treatment – considerably damaged the original masonry. Application of cement mortar in

the conservation of historical masonry, thus, appears to be inappropriate, causing damage to the authenticity of the monument. In the last decade, lime mortar with metakaolin has been applied in the reconstruction of the defensive walls in accordance with the rules of structural engineering. The mortar corresponds to the historical mortar with its colour, texture and in detail. At the same time, it is durable and firm.

Since 2009, the archaeological research at the castle has been managed by the Institute of Archaeology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Nitra and is led by Ján Beljak. Before 2014, an excavation for scientific and documentation purposes was carried out in the area of Lower Castle (Fig. 3; Beljak et al. 2014; Beljak–Šimkovic 2012). The reason was the critical condition of the only remains of the wall of the stand-alone residential tower as well as the unanswered questions regarding the origin and function of the castle. A comprehensive investigation was facilitated in 2009 by forest roads built under the supervision of the Forest Enterprise (Lesný podnik Mesta Zvolen) of the Zvolen town company. The research at Lower Castle gradually uncovered a massive residential tower, the main entrance gate, the gate in the so-called connecting wall, a small gate in the northern line of fortification, multiple parts of the castle's fortifications and the so-called connecting wall and parts of the courtyard (Beljak et al. 2016; Beljak–Pažinová 2012; 2013; Beljak–Beljak Pažinová 2017; 2018; 2019; Beljak–Beljak Pažinová–Kvietok 2015). In total (in 2009–2019), an area of more than 5500 m² was uncovered, which represents more than a third of the Lower Castle area. The largest volume of the research was carried out in the area of the residential tower of Lower Castle, where the studied layer of debris and the cultural layer were 3–6 m thick. Identically, during the renovation of Lower Castle, most attention was paid (Fig. 4) to the residential tower (renovation completed in 2015) and the entrance gate (renovation completed in 2016). Selected parts of the northern (including a small gate for pedestrians), western and eastern lines of the castle area fortifications and the connecting defensive wall, together with the first entrance gate (renovated



Fig. 3. Deserted Castle in Zvolen, Lower Castle. Aerial view of the fortified castle area with the dominant residential tower in the south part of the courtyard, 2018. Photo by Ján Beljak.

Obr. 3. Pustý hrad vo Zvolene, Dolný hrad. Letecký pohľad na opevnený areál hradu s dominantnou mohutnou obytnou vežou v južnej časti nádvorja, 2018. Foto Ján Beljak.



Fig. 4. Deserted Castle in Zvolen, Lower Castle. View from the courtyard at the reconstructed entrance gate, western line of the fortification and the residential tower (in the background on the left), 2019. Photo by Ján Beljak.

Obr. 4. Pustý hrad vo Zvolene, Dolný hrad. Pohľad z nádvorja na rekonštruovanú vstupnú bránu, západnú líniu opevnenia a obytnú vežu (v pozadí vľavo), 2019. Foto Ján Beljak.

in 2016–2019), were not neglected either. The priority when re-masonry the fortification walls is the preservation of the original skyline of the castle, as well as keeping the design and structure of the masonry from the 13th century as authentic as possible (Beljak 2018, 201). The archaeological research at Lower Castle of Pustý hrad has been completed for now (last season in 2019) and no further excavations in this area have been planned. The priorities include maintenance, protection and such form of the presentation of Lower Castle that would lead to visitors' satisfaction.

Together with the excavation of Lower Castle, the research team also dealt with the background of the castle monument. On the castle hill and in its nearest vicinity, several anthropogenic terrain relics, such as old hollow tracks, historical roads, milestones, etc.) are observable. They could have been used in the Old Zvolen (Pustý hrad) castle's prime. So far, a system of rampart lines Na Drahach southeast of the castle has been identified (Beljak–Pažinová 2012), as well as almost 50 km of historical – mainly transport – roads leading from the south, from the Pliešovská kotlina basin, to Zvolen and covering an area of more than 16 ha (Beljak Pažinová a kol. 2013; Slamová et al. 2014; 2016; Chudý et al. 2014).

Since 2015, trial trench research has been resumed at Upper Castle of the Pustý hrad castle. Its priority was to complete the study of cultural layers in the large medieval cistern for rainwater (7 × 7 m, depth 10 m). The cistern was part of residential buildings, including the nearby representative palace (Fig. 5). The water tank sunken under the courtyard surface was excavated in the andesite bedrock. Its walls are made of masonry from quality-fired bricks. In 2015, more than a 2 m thick layer had to be removed to reach its bottom. The fill which was removed from it during the research represented the volume of 103 m³ of sedimentary deposits. Just above the bottom of the cistern with a smoothed layer of mortar slightly slanting towards the centre, timber – mainly fir – was situated. These finds bear witness of the artisan skills of medieval master



Fig. 5. Deserted Castle in Zvolen, Upper Castle. Research into the cistern, 2015. Photo by Ján Beljak.

Obr. 5. Pustý hrad vo Zvolene, Horný hrad. Výskum interiéru cisterny, 2015. Foto Ján Beljak.

builders (Beljak–Beljak Pažinová 2016; Beljak Pažinová–Beljak 2016). It was a collapsed wooden vault of the cistern and parts of a block and pulley system – a windlass – for drawing water. Wooden buckets, a fragment of a rope, a waterskin, wooden swords, a single-edged iron sword (a hunting sword) with a bone handle, coin discs and two silver denarii were lifted from the cistern as well. Thanks to these discoveries and results of dendrochronological dating of parts of the cistern's wooden construction, its building was dated more exactly to the end of the 13th century, i. e. the reign of Andrew III (Beljak–Beljak Pažinová–Šimkovic 2018, 56–57). For the collection of finds from the medieval cistern, the team of archaeologists from the Pustý hrad castle received the annual award in the Discovery – Find of the Year category in 2015 from the Monuments and Museums review of the Slovak Heritage Board.

The roofing of the castle cistern was carried out in 2016 to prepare the cistern for conservation. The roofing protects the original plaster from water freezing in winter months and from filling with rainwater all year round.

Currently, the priority of the Upper Castle research is to verify and detect the oldest construction phases of the medieval residential towers and finding information about the function and use of the large and previously unstudied terraces of Upper Castle. Excavations were also resumed at the trenches previously studied by the archaeologist Václav Hanuliak.

The richest cultural layers currently (excavations in 2016, 2017 and 2019) occurred near the prism-shaped tower added to the eastern defensive wall line. The tower was studied by V. Hanuliak in the late 1990s. Numerous coin plates – blanks for coin production – come from its surroundings (Beljak–Beljak Pažinová 2016a; 2017a). They are evidence of a functioning counterfeiters' workshop at Upper Castle which was also localized in the past in the basement part of smaller residential tower II (Hanuliak–Hunka 2000).

The research seasons 2016–2018 brought important information leading to the reevaluation of the castle's dating (Beljak–Beljak Pažinová 2016; 2018a). The previously assumed period of the

construction of the large castle fortification after the Tatar invasion (1241–1242) can be – thanks to new findings – shifted at least 30–50 years earlier. In the context of the Upper Castle's architecture uncovered so far, we can date the construction of the fortification before the Tatar invasion. The construction of the defensive wall is associated with the construction of the county castle and it was positively finished in the first decades of the 13th century. The construction of the fortification at Lower Castle was confirmed around the mid-13th century. The speculations about the beginnings of the medieval castle during the 12th century are also supported by unique finds of vessel fragments decorated with wavy lines, which can be dated to the 10th–11th century. They were discovered near the interior face of the eastern fortification line (opposite the prism-shaped tower).

The overall shape and extension of the oldest castle has not been verified so far. The residential tower (county castle) built on the highest plateau of the castle hill (571 m a. s. l.) is considered its central building (Figs. 2; 6). The complete structure's external size was 10.3 × 10.8 m and its almost 3 m thick walls protected the inner space of approx. 28 m². Our excavations in its surroundings suggest that it originally stood isolated, without the masonry fortification. It was also discovered in the last research season of 2019 that the massive additional walling extending the county castle outwards by 2 m was built on surprisingly shallow foundations which had been carelessly dug in the rock. This is confirmed by the fact that the additional walling, which was probably built to stabilize the tower (in the bottom part, the walls were more than 5 m thick afterwards), is considerably younger than the original structure of the county castle. The masonry of the additional walling was also of low quality (without the footing bottom and using stones of various sizes and irregular shapes).

As part of renovation of the Upper Castle features, conservation of the western annexe of the castle palace was finished in 2018 and the plaster in the north part of the palace's interior was restored. The project of the preservation of other architecture at Upper Castle (the county castle's tower, the prism-shaped tower in the eastern fortification line, the palace) is prepared and it should start in 2020.

Presentation of the castle to the expert as well as the general public

The first guidebook of Zvolen and its vicinity mentioning also the Pustý hrad castle was published in 1925 and its author was Jozef Kubát, a teacher from Zvolen. When describing the site, he specifies that the so-called front wall makes up the north part of the castle and the rear wall is situated on the south side. He mentions in the description of the cistern that broken stone troughs lead to it. The guidebook also contained a photograph of the entrance gate of Upper Castle and a description of the route to the Pustý hrad castle drawn in red (Kubát 1925, 39–42). A few years later (1940), the Catholic Youth Association in Zvolen published their own brochure entitled *Zvolen* with a description of the then known features at the Pustý hrad castle. They mention the main gate at Upper Castle, the cistern as well as Lower Castle (Feranec–Kunik–Hajling 1940, 7). Summarizing information on the Pustý hrad castle is also brought by the work of a team of authors, *Zvolen v prítomnosti a v minulosti* (Zvolen Present and Past) published in 1959. Another summarizing work called *Pustý hrad* was prepared for the public by Pavol Kuka (Kuka 1966), a museologist and archaeologist.

Modern popularization activities are associated with the archaeologist Václav Hanuliak, who presented the Pustý hrad castle to the general as well as the expert public in domestic and foreign specialist literature from the very beginning of the research. Information about the castle appeared in the magazines *Krásy Slovenska* (Hanuliak 1993b), *Müemlékvédelem* (Hanuliak 2001), *Pamiatky a múzeá* (Hanuliak 1998) and even in the work *Gotika* dedicated to the visual art of Slovakia (Hanuliak 2003, 579). Evaluation of heraldic motifs on a sample of finds discovered in the years 1992–1999 at Upper Castle was presented by Radoslav Ragač (2001).

The very first promotional leaflet which briefly presents the modern archaeological research at the Pustý hrad castle was published by Václav Hanuliak in 1994. He also contributed to the publishing of the first multimedia CD *Pustý hrad and Zvolen* in 2001, and in 2007 he continued

with the publishing of the multimedia presentation *Zvolen and Pustý hrad* subtitled *In the Tracks of the Distant Past* (both CDs only in Slovak). He was also presented with the award of Monuments and Museums of the Slovak Heritage Board for the multimedia presentation of the castle in 2007 (Hanuliak 2008). In 2008, the Slovak guidebook *The Pustý hrad of Zvolen and Its Vicinity – A Little Homeland-Tourist Guide* (Sliacky 2008) was published. A modern guidebook of the Pustý hrad castle of Zvolen in Slovak and English published in 2011 was more scientific (Šimkovic–Beljak–Maliniak 2011; 2011a).

A discovery trail to Pustý hrad in Slovak and English, which was originally 6.4 km long and was built in 1996, was completely restored for the castle visitors in 2012. It provides the visitors with information about the flora and fauna of the castle hill as well as the results of historical, architectural-historical and archaeological research. Currently, a new modern version of the discovery trail and new tables with updated information are being prepared and are planned for 2020.

The first scientific monograph on the Pustý hrad castle describing the excavations at Lower Castle was published in 2014 (Beljak et al. 2014; Beljak Pažinová 2015). Another comprehensive specialized publication for the general public was published in 2015 with the title *Pustý hrad in Zvolen and Fortification in Its Vicinity* (Beljak–Beljak Pažinová–Šimkovic 2015). The latest comprehensive scientific study comes from 2018 and presents the current results of excavations not only at the Pustý hrad castle in Zvolen but also at the nearby castle of Peťuša (Beljak–Beljak Pažinová–Šimkovic 2018).

Besides the above-mentioned publications, information about the investigation results from Pustý hrad was published in the last decade in journals in Germany (Beljak–Pažinová 2012a), Slovenia (Beljak–Maliniak–Beljak Pažinová–Šimkovic 2014), Hungary (Beljak–Pažinová 2012; 2017a; Beljak Pažinová–Beljak 2016; Beljak–Mordovin 2017), Slovakia (Beljak–Beljak Pažinová–Šimkovic 2014; 2016; Beljak–Beljak Pažinová 2014; 2016) and most recently also in an almanac dedicated to the hillforts in the territory of Slovakia (Beljak Pažinová–Beljak 2019).

Conclusion and the future prospects

The Pustý hrad castle belongs with the most visited monuments in the region of Central Slovakia and the number of visitors increases every year. From the perspective of tourism strategy, it plays a key role in the region. Its administration and maintenance are carried out by the Forest Enterprise of the Zvolen Town company, which also built a log-house information centre in the car park below Lower Castle in 2018.

The town of Zvolen as the owner of the National Monument of the Pustý hrad castle has been supporting and providing heritage renovation and presentation of the area for a long time, mainly from its own budget and – in the last decade – with considerable help of other funds from grant schemes and private donations. Thanks to this long-term support, the uncovered architecture of the Pustý hrad castle is being gradually conserved and presented to the public. For the town of Zvolen, Pustý hrad has become an important historical landmark and a symbol of national pride, where numerous activities associated with the castle and its promotion are organized. An individual chapter on the Pustý hrad castle can be also found in the *Town of Zvolen Monograph* published on the occasion of the 755th (Hanuliak 1998a) and 770th anniversaries (Beljak–Šimkovic 2013) of receiving town privileges.

As regards the popularization of the excavations at the castle and archaeology in general, we must point out that several hundred students have participated in the research at the Pustý hrad castle in Zvolen during summer months. Since 2009, the International Summer School of Archaeology has been organized by the Department of Archaeology of Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra and every year, students and lecturers primarily (but not exclusively) from the V4 countries take part.

An exhibition of the significant archaeological finds discovered at the Pustý hrad castle was installed in the building of the Old Town Hall in Námestie SNP square in Zvolen in 2012 and it is

still open to the public for free. A separate exhibition room for the finds from the Pustý hrad castle in the Zvolen town castle is being considered.

Almost thirty seasons of the systematic research into the castle area and its background has elevated the study of medieval castles in Slovakia to a higher level. The archaeological research into the Pustý hrad castle in Zvolen is set to continue mainly at Upper Castle. Especially the areas previously untouched by the archaeological excavations near the internal face of the fortification line in the south and west parts of the castle will be excavated by means of test pits and the research is supposed to continue on the terraces in the central part of the area, where the economic facilities of the castle are assumed to have been. Reconstruction and conservation works should continue in the castle palace and the county castle.

Another priority is the comprehensive processing of the obtained information and finds in form of scientific articles and monographs. The results of the excavations at the Pustý hrad castle which have been previously published represent only a fragment of the rich material culture accumulated over centuries which still remains hidden. Despite this, the obtained information continuously enriches our knowledge and confirm that the National Monument of the Pustý hrad castle in Zvolen is one of the important archaeological sites in the territory of Slovakia and deserves our lasting attention and interest. Thus, it is our priority to continue the excavations of the castle area and to keep the interest in this monument alive in the future.

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Translation: Viera Tejbusová

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Zhrnutie

Prínos dlhodobého výskumu lokality Pustý hrad vo Zvolene pre bádanie a jeho perspektíva do budúcnosti

Národná kultúrna pamiatka Pustý hrad vo Zvolene sa rozkladá na dvoch vrcholoch rovnomenného kopca, ktorý sa vypína na juhozápadnom okraji mesta Zvolena v pohorí Javorie nad sútokom Hrona a Slatiny na strednom Slovensku. Stredovekí stavitelia využili prírodné danosti polohy a na vrcholovej plošine (571 m n. m.) postavili Horný hrad s rozlohou 3,5 ha a nižšie (476 m n. m.) umiestnili Dolný hrad s rozlohou 0,7 ha. Spolu s tzv. spojovacou časťou tvoria areál s rozlohou 4,7 ha. Pustohradný vrch bol vďaka strategickej polohe už od praveku (Beljak Pažinová 2018a) vyhľadávaným miestom na osídlenie (Beljak Pažinová 2014; 2018b). Známy je však predovšetkým pre vrcholnostredoveké opevnenie (Beljak et al. 2014, 36–43). Vznik a počiatky kamenného hradu môžeme spájať s utvorením Zvolenského komitátu (Beljak et al. 2014, 38). Najvýraznejšie stavebné aktivity sa na hrade realizovali v 13. storočí za vlády posledných kráľov z rodu Arpádovcov (Beljak–Beljak Pažinová–Šimkovic 2018, 23–28). Po nepokojných časoch začiatkom 14. storočia sa až v rámci reformy kráľovstva Karolom Róbertom stabilizovali pomery a došlo aj k zmene úloh hradu. Namiesto komitátu mu už podliehalo iba územie Zvolenskej šľachtickej stolice, t.j. menšej územnej jednotky (Beljak et al. 2014, 44). Po tom ako bol nový moderný gotický kastel postavený priamo v meste Zvolene Ľudovítom I. Veľkým z Anjou v druhej polovici 14. storočia, Pustý hrad postupne strácal na význame a staré sídlo zvolenských županov a kráľov získalo označenie Starý hrad (Beljak–Beljak Pažinová–Šimkovic 2018, 22).

Prvá zmienka o rozľahlých ruinách hradu sa nachádza v Noticiách Mateja Bela o Zvolenskej stolici, vydaných v roku 1736 (Bel–Nagy–Turóci 2017, 412–413). Prvé výkopy na hrade sú evidované v 19. storočí a spojené sú s hľadaním drahocenností (Beljak–Maliniák–Pažinová 2011,

266). Dielo zvolenského notára J. Bánika o dejinách Zvolena môžeme považovať za prvú komplexnejšiu prácu aj o Pustom hrade, ktorého skutkový stav opisuje (Bánik 1866, 184–186; 1891, 77; Beljak–Maliniak–Pažinová 2011, 267).

Prvý archeologický výskum s vedeckým cieľom realizovali na Pustom hrade Július Thomka (advokát vo Zvolene) a Ľudovít Leustách (hlavný slúžny vo Zvolenskej Slatine) v rokoch 1889–1890 (Beljak–Maliniak–Pažinová 2011, 269–273). Pustý hrad počas ich výskumu navštívil známy bádateľ a autor diela o uhorských hradoch J. Kőnyöki (Kőnyöki–Nagy 1905, 227). Začiatkom 20. storočia bola lokalita Pustý hrad zaradená medzi „Pamätnosti Zvolenskej stolice“ (Fajnor 1904, 3–4). Po polovici minulého storočia zaradenie Pustého hradu do širšieho rámca vývoja hradnej architektúry priniesla publikácia D. Menclovej (1954, 8–13).

Potrebu realizácie moderného archeologického výskumu a pamiatkovú obnovu na Pustom hrade vyvolal havarijný stav hlavnej vstupnej brány Horného hradu začiatkom 90-tych rokov 20. storočia (Hanuliak 1993a; 1993b). Archeológ V. Hanuliak skúmal Horný hrad počas 17 sezón (preskúmaná plocha vyše 5000 m²) a postupne odkryl všetky kľúčové stavby: vstupnú bránu (Hanuliak 1993a; 1993b), vežu komitátneho hradu (Hanuliak 1994; 1995; 1996), vežu II. (Hanuliak–Šimkovic 1997avans), obrannú baštu hradbového opevnenia (Hanuliak 1999, 353–354), tzv. Dončov hrad (Hanuliak–Šimkovic 1997b), líniu opevnenia chrániacu severnú a východnú časť Horného hradu (Hanuliak 1995; 1996; Hanuliak–Šimkovic 1997a), terasy na západnom svahu medzi tzv. Dončovým hradom a priečnou hradbou (Hanuliak 2001, 190; Hanuliak–Cengel–Holly 2003), takmer 8 m vrstiev z hradnej cisterny (Hanuliak 2001; 2007). Súbežne s výskumom Horného hradu sa uskutočnila aj pamiatková obnova (Beljak 2018b, 199–200).

Od roku 2009 archeologický výskum na hrade realizuje J. Beljak z Archeologického ústavu SAV v Nitre a do roku 2014 sa výskum sústredil výlučne na Dolný hrad (Beljak et al. 2014; Beljak–Šimkovic 2012), kde boli odkryté nasledujúce objekty: obytná veža, hlavná vstupná brána, brána v tzv. spojovacom múre, bránka v severnej línii opevnenia, viacero úsekov opevnenia hradu i tzv. spojovacieho múru a časti nádvorja (Beljak et al. 2015; 2016; Beljak–Pažinová 2012; 2013; Beljak–Beljak Pažinová 2017; 2018; 2019). Archeologický výskum na Dolnom hrade (celková odkrytá plocha vyše 5 500,00 m²) je nateraz ukončený. Prioritou do budúca je údržba, ochrana a prezentácia Dolného hradu k spokojnosti návštevníkov.

Od roku 2015 bol opätovne obnovený sondážny výskum na Hornom Pustom hrade. Prvým odkrytým objektom bola hradná cisterna (vybraný objem nánosov 103 m³), na dne ktorej boli objavené konštrukčné drevá (hlavne z jedle) z klenby cisterny a časti kladkostroja. Nálezy sú svedectvom remeselnej zručnosti stredovekých majstrov (Beljak–Beljak Pažinová 2016a; Beljak Pažinová–Beljak 2016). Výsledky dendrochronologického datovania častí drevenej konštrukcie z cisterny upresnili jej výstavbu do záveru 13. storočia, teda do obdobia panovania Ondreja III. (Beljak–Beljak Pažinová–Šimkovic 2018, 56–57). V súčasnosti je už cisterna aj z dôvodu prípravy na sanáciu múrov a omietok zastrešená.

Prioritou výskumu na Hornom hrade je overenie a zistenie najstarších stavebných fáz vybudovania stredovekých obytných veží a zistenie informácií o funkcií a využívaní rozsiahlych, zatiaľ neprebádaných terás hradu (Beljak–Beljak Pažinová 2016; 2018). Najbohatšie kultúrne vrstvy sa ukazujú v okolí hranolovej veže vo východnej línii opevnenia. Z jej okolia pochádzajú početné mincové pliešky – polotovary na výrobu mincí (Beljak–Beljak Pažinová 2016b; Beljak–Beljak Pažinová 2017), ktoré sú dokladom fungujúcej falšovateľskej dielne (Hanuliak–Hunka 2000). Nové nálezy a poznatky posúvajú datovanie výstavby veľkého hradného opevnenia už pred vpád Tatárov. Úvahy o počiatkoch stredovekého hradu v priebehu 12. storočia podporujú aj ojedinelé nálezy zlomkov nádob zdobených vlnkou z 10.–11. storočia. V rámci obnovy objektov Horného hradu je už dokončená sanácia západnej prístavby hradného paláca a zreštaurované sú omietky v severnej časti interiéru paláca. Projekt na sanáciu ďalších architektúr (veža komitátneho hradu, veža vo východnej línii opevnenia, palác) je pripravený a realizácia by mala začať od roku 2020.

Dôležitou súčasťou výskumu hradu je prezentácia výsledkov laickej i odbornej verejnosti. Prvý turistický sprievodca po Zvolene a okolí, zmieňujúci aj Pustý hrad, bol vydaný už

v roku 1925 (Kubát 1925, 39–42), ďalší v roku 1940 (Feranec–Kunik–Hajling 1940, 7). Sumarizačnú prácu o Pustom hrade vydal P. Kuka (1959). Moderné popularizačné aktivity sú spojené s V. Hanuliakom (1993; 1998; 2001; 2003), ktorý sa zaslúžil aj o vydanie multimediálnych prezentácií (Hanuliak 2008). Vyhodnotenie heraldických motívov na vzorke nálezov objevených počas výskumov hradu v rokoch 1992–1999 priniesol R. Ragač (2001). Nový turistický sprievodca o hrade vyšiel v roku 2008 (Sliacky 2008) a v roku 2011 bol vydaný odbornejšie koncipovaný moderný sprievodca (Šimkovic–Beljak–Maliniak 2011; 2011a). Prvá komplexná vedecká monografia o Pustom hrade opisuje výskum na Dolnom hrade (Beljak a kol. 2014). Aktuálne výsledky výskumu hradu približujú za posledné desaťročie početné články a štúdie (Beljak–Pažinová 2012; 2017; Beljak–Beljak Pažinová–Šimkovic 2014; 2015; 2016; 2018; Beljak–Maliniak–Beljak Pažinová–Šimkovic 2014; Beljak–Mordovin 2017; Beljak Pažinová–Beljak 2014; 2016; 2019).

Archeologický výskum Pustého hradu vo Zvolene, spojený s rekonštrukčnými a konzervačnými prácami, má ambície naďalej pokračovať predovšetkým na Hornom Pustom hrade. Výsledky, ktoré sú doteraz publikované predstavujú len fragment bohatej a stáročiami nahromadenej materiálnej kultúry, ktorá je ešte skrytá. Je preto našou prioritou, aby sme pokračovali vo výskume hradného areálu a udržiavali záujem o túto pamiatku aj do budúcnosti.

Práca bola podporená Agentúrou na podporu výskumu a vývoja na základe zmluvy č. APVV-17-0063 Vita intra muros – interdisciplinárny výskum hradov stredného Slovenska.

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