

03 REMARKS ON HEINRICH NEBBIEN'S WORK AT DOLNÁ KRUPÁ AND IN THE BANAT REGION

József S i s a

Institute of Art History, Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences,
Budapest, HU

The following article intends to shed light on some aspects of Heinrich Nebbien's art and activities, partly at Dolná Krupá and partly in the Banat region. It is based on research on the country house and park at Dolná Krupá and also some country houses in the Banat, without claiming to be complete in any way. 217 letters by Heinrich Nebbien written between 1812 and 1818, kept at the Slovak National Archives in Bratislava and in microfilms at the Hungarian National Archives in Budapest, form the backbone of the present writing, as well as the results of repeated field trips to the aforementioned places.

It was probably in 1812 that Nebbien entered into the service of Count Joseph Brunswick. His patron was an active member of the Hungarian political elite, held high offices, rising to the rank of országbíró, or Lord Chief of Justice. Brunswick was in effect the second man in the national hierarchy of the Kingdom Hungary after the Palatine.

The first document relating to Nebbien's activities in his new position dates from 1812; it was in this year that he asked for permission to publish the design for the planned landscaping of Dolná Krupá park in a publication called *Dendrona*. The incident implies that the project for the improvement of the park was still at an initial stage. Very soon a rival, the French-born architect and garden designer of Prince Esterházy, Charles Moreau, came on the scene. Moreau arrived at Dolná Krupá on 17th August 1813 for a short visit to survey the grounds. The visit lasted from 11 in the morning till 3 in the afternoon, i.e. only four hours, but that could have sufficed Moreau to form a basic idea of what to do with the park. The event immediately prompted Nebbien to action: within a few days he presented an illustrated programme for the upgrading of Dolná Krupá park. There was no word of Moreau any more, at least as far as the park was concerned; Nebbien himself would take charge of the job. (Moreau will be later responsible for the design of the house)

Nebbien's work at Dolná Krupá was rather complex. It concerned the park, the main building (the country house) as well as the adjacent buildings; briefly, he had to modernize the complex. It is no accident that he possessed the title of an Ökonomierat, or economic councillor (and not specifically a garden designer). Besides a general responsibility for the whole estate he also had to fulfil miscellaneous, smaller commissions.

One of his main tasks was to harmonize the outbuildings on both sides of the country house, such as stables, a coach house and service buildings. He called them rustic ("bauerisch") in one of his letters. He tackled the problem in several ways. One of them was ennobling them by adding

elegant, Neo-Classical features. Another was connecting the main building with the service buildings by means of an underground passage (“unterirdischer Weg”) so that there would be no unwanted structure above ground to spoil the visual effect. A third one included concealing the outbuildings behind trees and clumps of bushes as part of the general design for the park; this was meant to bring out the aspect of the main building better. (The theatre, a fairly impressive Neo-Classical structure, was built later, and the house itself received its present Neo-Classical façade in 1820-22 from designs by Charles Moreau)

Nebbien turned his attention to the practical matters of the main building as well. In 1814 he paid a visit to the manufacturer of flushing toilets (“englische Retiraden”), which he quite liked and recommended for the house. He also intended to buy pieces of furniture for the house and the “pavilions”. Being chiefly responsible for its landscaping, Nebbien’s improvements for the park were more far-reaching. The main feature of the park was the lake outside the rear façade of the main house. Nebbien also embellished the gate of the park by placing there two large vases on high pedestals. In his letters he referred to various ornamental structures, such as the garden lodge, the hermit’s hut, the Florentine Hall (“Florenz Hall”), the obelisk and the grotto. Especially the latter, a complicated and unusual structure, kept him pre-occupied, and he considered it a feat of art and joy of nature. Other, more practical structures, such as a guest house, an ice-pit, pavilions adorned with balustrades, etc. were also build by him.

One more aspect of Nebbien’s stay at Dolná Krupá deserves attention: it was here that he prepared the designs for the City Park (Városliget) of Pest. He already mentioned them in 1812, when he wanted to publish them in his *Dendrona* calling it a “Folks-Park”. He kept working on it at least until in 1815, when it was nearly complete. He called the design the fruit of his stay at Dolná Krupá; in some way the extensive park here could be a good testing-ground for the other, more important project. He asked Count Joseph Brunswick to pass on the design to Palatine Joseph. As referred to above, his patron held a very high position, which enabled him to communicate with Palatine Joseph and thus be a mediator in the affair. Nebbien pointed out that he had prepared not only plans but also images (“Darstellungen”), which the young arch-duchess may appreciate even more. As it is well known, Palatine Joseph played a major role in the realization of the City Park. It is generally believed that Nebbien acquired the commission to create the City Park in a competition. It seems to be equally possible that this happened through personal channels, i.e. through Count Brunswick’s patronage and mediation. As a result, Nebbien’s design formed the basis of the development of the present-day City Park of Budapest.

There was another direction of Nebbien’s activities that derived from Dolná Krupá: the south-eastern part of the Kingdom of Hungary, more specifically the Banat region (now part of Serbia and Romania). It is geographically far, and it must have been quite cumbersome to get there

in those days, when travelling was a difficult and slow business. The story began in 1805 when Count Joseph Brunswick's daughter Júlia married Baron András Forray. The young couple built a country house in Soborsin (today Săvârșin, Romania) on the North bank of the Maros River. In 1812, when Nebbien wanted to publish his *Dendrona*, in it he planned to publish also his design for Soborsin park – he called it „der kleine romantische Park zu Soborsin”. Sporadic data confirm that he was indeed active in the creation of the landscape park round the Neo-Classical mansion.

South of the Maros River lay the region called the Banat, where Nebbien laid out several parks in the subsequent years. It was a flat but very fertile area, in fact excellent farmland. In the 16th and 17th centuries it had languished under Turkish rule. Taken back by the Habsburg army from Turks at the end of the 17th century, it was re-populated in the 18th century with the help of the central government. For several decades it was under Habsburg military administration, then under the administration of the Treasury. It was only in 1779 that the court incorporated it into the administrative system of the Kingdom of Hungary. As a consequence, the estates were auctioned off and new landlords appeared. In the subsequent decades the newly-established nobility of the region erected country houses, laid out parks and in general improved their estates. In this process Heinrich Nebbien played a role, apparently an important one: he designed parks and he was probably involved in the modernization and improvement of several estates across the region. In all probability this happened through the mediation of Baron Forray residing in near-by Soborsin, and thus ultimately through the Brunswick family. Being basically an Ökonomierat, or economic counsellor, Nebbien's expertise was surely needed and appreciated in the remote and backward region. He visited the Banat personally at least once, in June 1817; one letter that he wrote from Temesvár (today Timișoara, Romania), the capital of the region, and another sent from the village of Elemér (today Elemir, Serbia) attest to this.

In the Banat he was responsible for at least three parks, and in all likelihood, he also had a hand in the management of the surrounding estates. These three places were Elemér, where one of his letters was written from, Bégaszentgyörgy (today Žitište, Serbia) and Écska (today Ečka, Serbia). The creation of these parks occurred between 1817 and 1821.

Elemér park was not much more than a big garden and, typically of the region, entirely integrated into the structure of the village. Like virtually all villages in the Banat, Elemér was a planned settlement with a regular grid pattern as a result of the great campaign of re-population after the Turkish wars. The park at Bégaszentgyörgy, similar in size to Elemér, was situated on the edge of the village, still constituting part of it. The considerably more complex park at Écska consisted of three sections. The main section was, along with the house of the family, wedged between rows of plots and peasant houses. An additional, ornamental section complemented it on the other side of the road. And finally, the owner also had a game park beyond the stream. The

proprietor, Ágoston Lázár, a colonel in the army, wanted to establish a model estate at Écska and that is why he needed Nebbien's services. We know from Nebbien's letters that he sent Lázár saplings and seeds from Vienna, and it is safe to assume that he also had a hand in the design of the park.

Today most parks in the region are overgrown, built up or totally modernized. Écska still survives, altered nearly beyond recognition but it is still there. The L-shaped original building complete with small porticoed entrances can also be identified. In the main section stands the Neo-Classical sepulchral monument of the Lázár family dated 1835. The ornamental section of the park boasts a peculiar structure, a large folly with an octagonal plan and a crenellated tower attached to one side. Heinrich Nebbien, however, had probably nothing to do with these structures.

There is one more place in the Banat, the village of Lovrin (today Lovrin, Romania), which may have a connection with Nebbien. Baron Frigyes Liphay owned the estate here, who planted long lines of trees, and in 1819 laid out a "magnificent English garden". In fact there were two gardens (parks) in Lovrin, integrated into the settlement as usual in the region: a small one behind the house, and a big one at the end of the village. The latter featured windings paths and a small pond with a tiny island. It may be no accident that Lovrin was called the most beautiful park in Torontál county. The author of the park could have easily been Heinrich Nebbien. We know that in 1822 Anton Pius Rigel visited Lovrin, most likely on business, building the owner's house. Rigel served as the architect ("Baudirector") of the Brunswick family, working both at Dolná Krupá and Soborsin. Thus he was Nebbien's colleague – a link that may allow us to assume that Nebbien was involved in designing the park. The bigger section of Lovrin park was in fact nearly a paraphrase in miniature of the Budapest City Park.

Parks in the Banat region were invariably small, typically they formed part of, or were integrated into, the settlement. The reason for their restricted size was simple: the soil was so fertile and valuable that the owners did not want to waste it for parks.

By comparison, Nebbiens other parks in Hungary proper were quite different. Here no such restrictions existed and the owners apparently gave him a free hand. This is how he designed the extensive parks at Tóalmás for the Prónay family, and at Martonvásár for Count Ferenc Brunswick, Joseph Brunswick's nephew. Of course also the large and beautiful park at Dolná Krupá fell into this latter category.



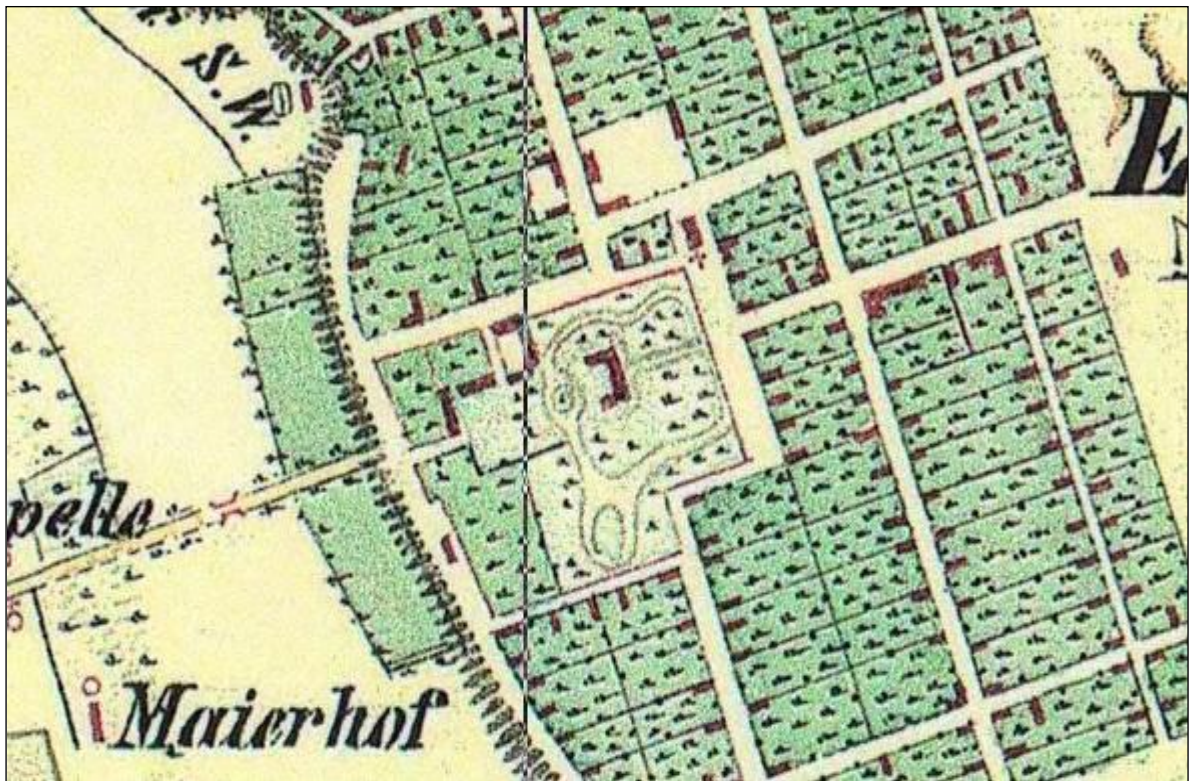
Dolná Krupá, view of country the house and the park. 1835 – 1845



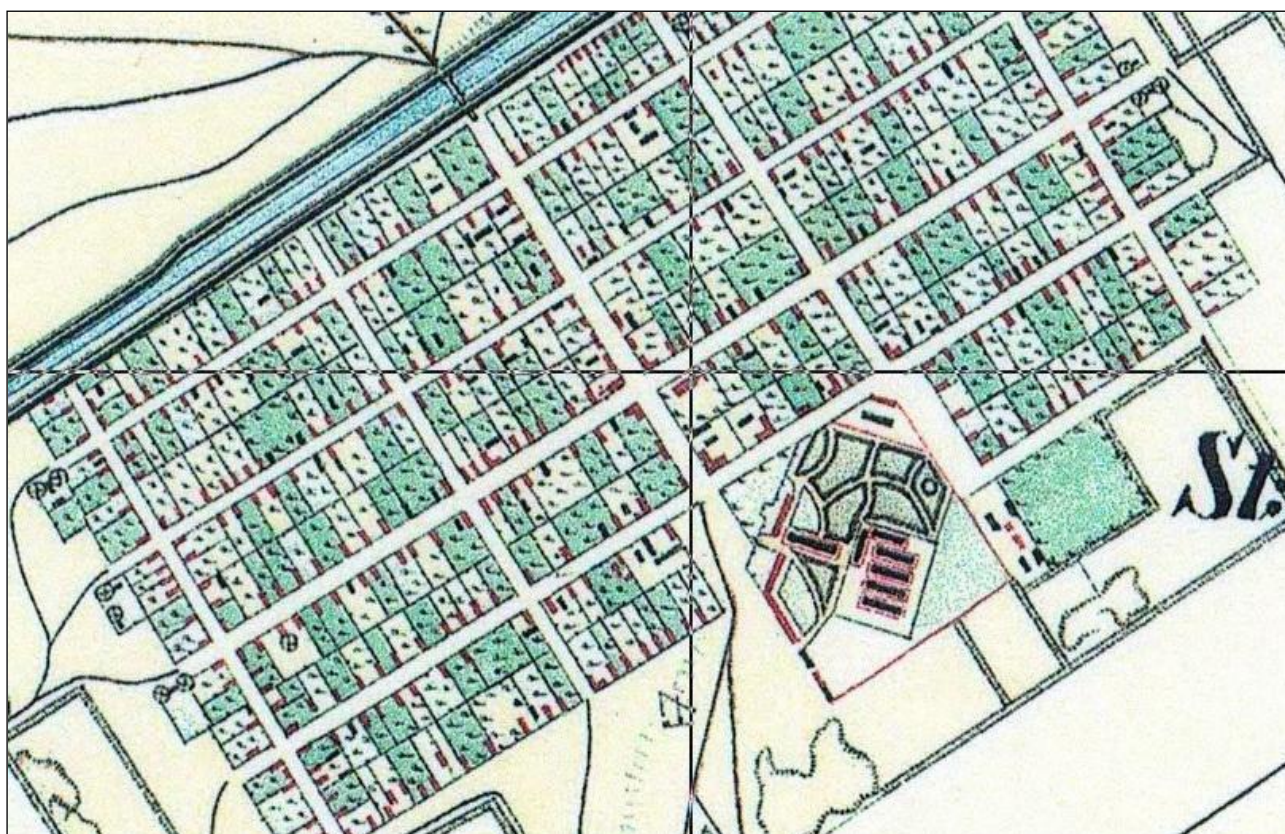
Heinrich Nebbien's design for the City Park (Városliget) of Pest. 1816



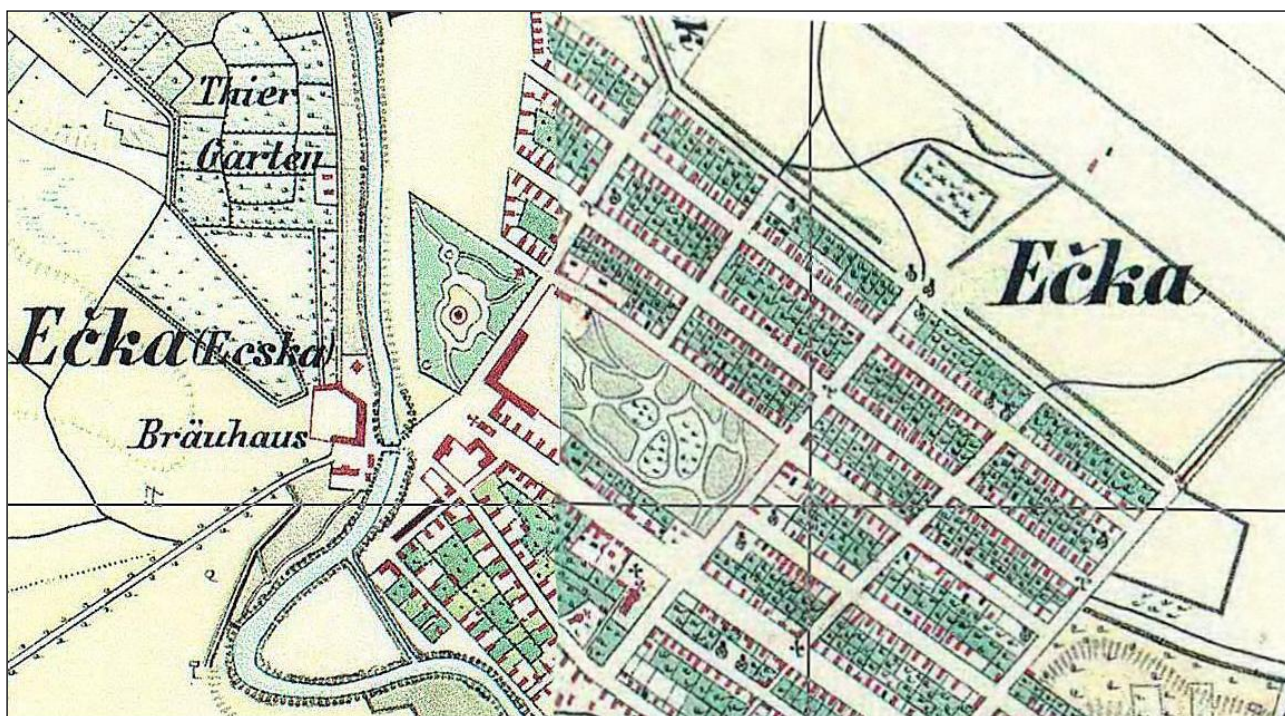
Sävârşin (Soborsin), view of the country house and the park. 1816



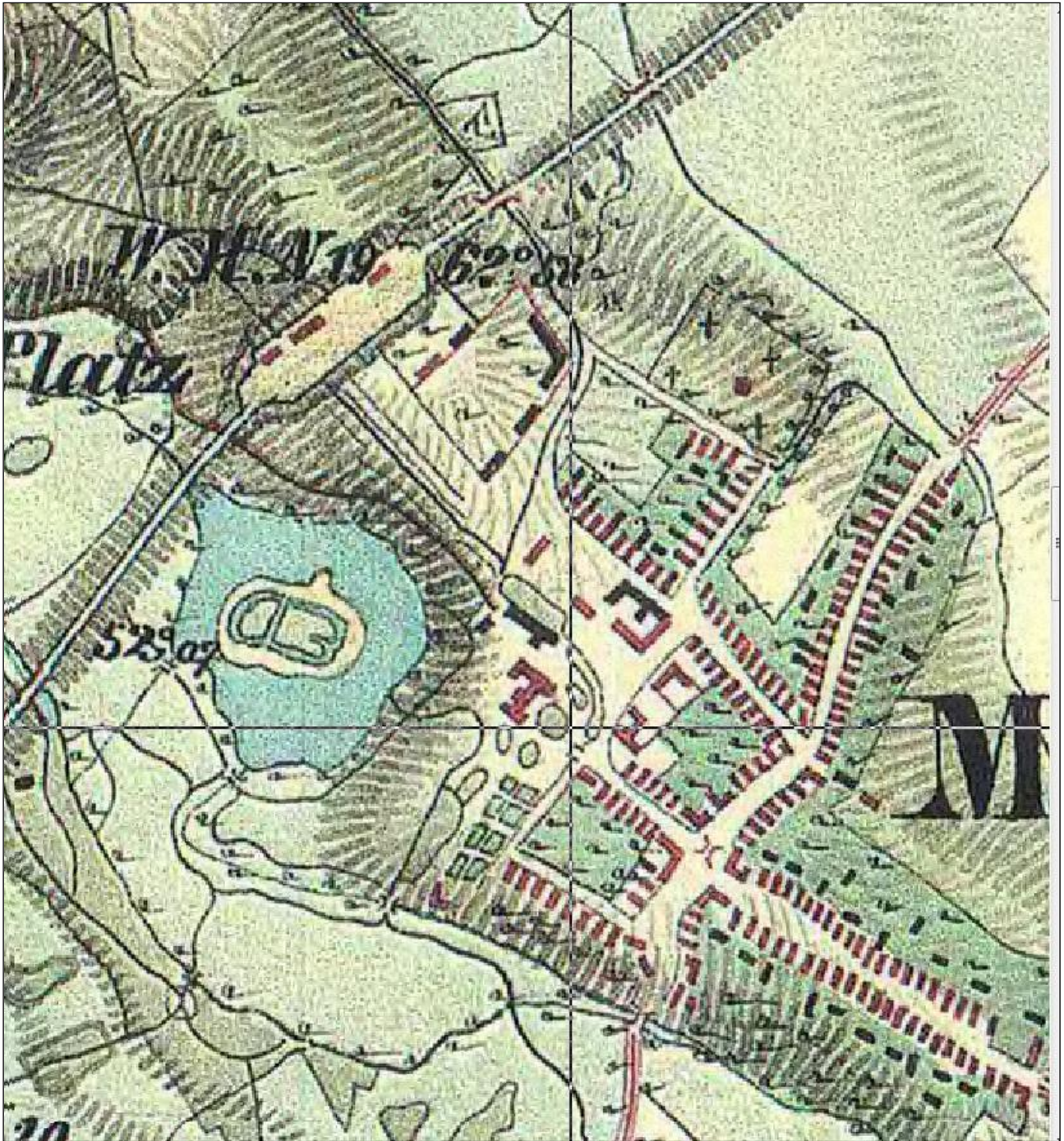
Elemir (Elemér), plan. 1864 – 1865



Žitište (Bégaszentgyörgy), plan. 1864 – 65



Ečka (Écska), plan. 1864 – 65



Martonvásár, plan. 1858

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RESUMÉ

POZNÁMKY K DIELU HEINRICHA NEBBIENA V DOLNEJ KRUPĚJ A V BANÁTE

Príspevok sa venuje niektorým aktivitám Heinricha Nebbiena v Dolnej Krupej (DK) a čiastočne i v regióne Banát; čerpá zo zachovanej Nebbienovej korešpondencie (217 listov z rokov 1812 – 18 uložených v Slovenskom národnom archíve v Bratislave a na mikrofilmoch v Maďarskom národnom archíve v Budapešti) a tak isto aj z výsledkov opakovaných pracovných ciest do horeuvedených lokalít.

Heinrich Nebbien pravdepodobne roku 1812 vstúpil do služieb Jozefa Brunsvika, ktorý bol aktívnym členom uhorskej politickej elity, povýšený na stupeň krajinského sudcu. V skutočnosti bol druhým mužom v uhorskom kráľovstve po palatínovi. Prvý dokument týkajúci sa Nebbienových aktivít v Brunsvikových službách je z roku 1812, kedy si žiadal dovoľenie publikovať návrh plánovaných krajinných úprav v parku DK. Projekt parku bol ešte v štádiu zrodu. Roku 1813 prišiel na krátku návštevu do DK Charles Moreau (vo Francúzsku narodený architekt a záhradný architekt kniežaťa Eszterházyho) a po obhliadke pozemkov sformuloval základnú myšlienku, ako riešiť park. Udalosť podnietila Nebbiena, vzápätí prezentoval svoj návrh na zušľachtenie parku v DK a tak sám prevzal zodpovednosť za prácu. (Jeho rival Charles Moreau zodpovedal za dizajn kaštieľa.)

Nebbienova práca v DK sa netýkala iba parku, na starosti mal komplexnú modernizáciu celej nehnuteľnosti. Venoval sa aj praktickým záležitostiam (odporúčal splachovacie záchody, plánoval kúpu nábytku). Nie náhodou používal titul ekonomický poradca (a nie špecificky záhradný architekt). Predovšetkým bol však zodpovedný za krajinné úpravy.

Pozornosť si zasluhuje ďalší aspekt Nebbienovho vzťahu k DK. Prípravu návrhu mestského parku (Városliget) v Pešti považoval za ovocie svojho pobytu v Krupej. Získať túto zákazku mu potom zaiste pomohol Jozef Brunsvik osobnou intervenciou u palatína.

S Dolnou Krupou a Brunsvikovcami súvisia aj Nebbienove aktivity v juhovýchodnej časti Uhorska, v regióne Banát (dnes zahrnuje časť Srbska a Rumunska). Dcéra Jozefa Brunsvika Júlia sa vydala za baróna Andreja Forraya, s ktorým si budovali letné sídlo v Soboršine (Săvârşin) na severnom brehu rieky Mureš (Maros, Mureş). Sporadické údaje potvrdzujú, že Nebbien skutočne aktívne tvoril prírodný park tamojšieho neo-klasicistického kaštieľa ako „malý romantický park“.

Región južne od rieky Mureš sa nazýva Banát, kde Nebbien v nasledujúcom období navrhol niekoľko parkov. Rovinatý kraj s veľmi úrodnou pôdou bol v 16. – 17. storočí obsadený Turkami. Po ich porážke koncom 17. storočia oblasť spravovala habsburská vojenská administratíva, potom štátna finančná správa a roku 1779 prešla pod správu kráľovského dvora. V regióne sa objavili noví vlastníci, novoetablovaná šľachta si v Banáte stavala sídla obkolesené parkami a modernizovala majetky. V tomto procese hral Nebbien dôležitú rolu, pravdepodobne zásluhou Brunsvikovcov a baróna Forraya. V Banáte v rokoch 1817 – 1821 navrhol najmenej 3 parky: Elemir (Srbsko, maď. Elemér), Žitište (Srbsko, maď. Bégaszentgyörgy) a Ečka (Srbsko, maď. Écska). Menšie parky v Elemire a v Žitišti, väčší park, pozostávajúci z troch sekcií, v Ečke.

Možno sa domnievať, že Nebbien navrhoval aj park v Lovrine na panstve baróna Frigyesa Liphaya, ktorého roku 1822 navštívil staviteľ A. P. Rigel. Keďže Rigel spolu s Nebbieniem pracoval u Brunsvikovcov tak v DK ako aj v Soboršine (Forrayovci), tak je pravdepodobné, že Nebbien je autorom parku aj v Lovrine. Potvrdzuje to i fakt, že najväčšia sekcia parku je akoby kópia budapeštianskeho mestského parku (Városliget) v miniatúre.

Parky v Banáte boli vždy malé, tvorili časť obce alebo boli do nej integrované. Príčina ich menších rozmerov spočívala v žírnosti a úrodnosti pôdy, ktorú majiteľ nechcel premrhať iba na park. Ostatné Nebbienove parky v Uhorsku sú iné, nestiesnené a pri ich tvorbe očividne dostal Nebbien od majiteľov voľnú ruku (rozľahlý park v Tóalmási pre rodinu Prónayovcov, v Martonvásári pre Františka Brunsvika). Určite aj veľkosť a krása Dolnej Krupej patrí do tejto kategórie.