ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS OF THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE

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In the 14th-16th centuries, the territory of the palace belonged to the domain of Vilnius diocese, and the mansion of bishops stood there. From the year 1795, during the period of occupation by the Catholic Church, it was the residential palace of the governor-general. The palace acquired the present look after a reconstruction in 1823-1835 made according to a classicistic design by V. Tabakas. Archaeological investigations were started in autumn 1992, after restoration works were launched with a view to reconstruct the then "House of Artists" for the needs of a Presidential residence. An area of 4020 sq. m. was investigated in 1992-1995. The earliest finds from the courtyard of the palace come from the Bronze and Early Iron Ages. The people who stayed at a temporary campsite at the place which once was a dry sandy hillock left an open fire-place, first artefacts and potsherds. The cultural layer in the territory of the palace exceeds 3 m. Its earliest horizon in the excavated part of the park is dated to the turn of the 15th-16th century as well as the 16th century, though there were also individual finds dating to the 14th-15th cent. The layer at the foundation of the palace was disturbed in the result of various repairs and constructions. Later horizons of the cultural layer have not been preserved altogether, as the surface of the courtyard and the present S. Daukantas square was lowered quite a number of times during the long centuries of the existence of the palace.

Remains of a craftsmen quarter were found in the territory of the park of the president's office, which used to be a manorial area for a long time. Workshops of a potter, brewer, bone craftsman, and specialist of non-ferrous metals were localized. This quarter of workshops was in the jurisdiction of the bishop and the craftsmen who stayed there had to work to bishopric orders. It functioned in the 16th-17th centuries, until the year 1655, when the larger part of the Great Duchy of Lithuania, including Vilnius, was occupied by Russian troops. During the occupation, the Palace of Bishops was damaged, the wooden houses of craftsmen as well as their workshops burnt down. This quarter of craftsmen was not rebuilt after the year 1655. Some time later, a few brick houses were built there, the function of which has not been established yet. The dump ground has preserved remains of wooden buildings, fences of boards and wickerwork, and even curbs of six wells, as well as gabled wooden gutters. Only three of the six wells had been dug on water veins, the others were used for drainage. In the southern part of the park, a 16th-century sewage facility and a covered underground gutter made of boards were found. The gutter was separated from the structure-enclosure, constructed from curbs, by a draw-valve. More sewage facilities were also found in the territory of the palace. Archaeological excavations showed that in the 17th-18th century an intricate drainage-sewage system was installed in the palace which was built on a dump site. Remains of as many as six structures-collectors constructed of curbs have been found. There were wooden tubs leading to and out of them. Remains of such tubs have been also found in the excavated part of S. Daukantas square. A further find includes a covered wooden gutter made of boards which is dated to the 18th century. Also noteworthy is a preserved underground brick collector, built in the 19th century and still functioning. Excavations of the territory have yielded stone-mixes of 180 different variants of decorative patterns (some have analogues from the territory of the Lower Vilnius castle, Veličkai; especially beautiful is the collection of gallic tiles), interior tiles, ceramic roof tiles, fragments of kitchenware, household utensils, lead market bullets, flasks of stone cannonballs, silver and copper coins from the 16th-17th century, trade seals of lead, etc. A rare find was a wooden shutter with metal bindings, which provides information on the size of windows of 16th-century wooden buildings.

The finds make it possible to reconstruct the roofing of the Palace of Bishops in the course of different periods of time. The Gothic palace was covered with green and unglazed concave as well as flat tiles with massive bent crests and curved protruberances of clay, which formed a very imposing composition of "spikes" on the roof and at the same time met the reinforcement function. Glazed tiles could be combined with unglazed ones to produce an impression of playfulness. During the Renaissance period the Palace of Bishops could have been covered with a colourful tile roofing, isolated fragments of flat tiles of as many as three colours have been found - green, yellow and sky-blue.

Evidence of archaeological excavations have been supplemented by findings of various special analyses. Analyses of animal bones and bone artefacts have been carried out, as well as pollen and spore dating. Timber samples of wooden buildings have been taken for dendrochronological analysis, and construction dates of some buildings have been revealed already.

ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE MUSEUMS OF LITHUANIA

Egle Kuncovicienė

Secretary of the Association of Lithuanian Museums

The association of Lithuanian Museums is a public professional organization called the Association of Museums of Lithuania which incorporates the majority of Lithuanian museums (with Director of the Lithuanian Art Museum Romualdas Dradytis acting as Chairman). One of the numerous fields of activities of the Association of Lithuanian Museums includes accumulation of data on the Lithuanian fund of museums and preparation of an aggregated register of Lithuanian museum funds. Today, it is the only one institution in Lithuania which accumulates data on specialized collections of Lithuanian museums. This work was undertaken by one of the sections of the Association of Lithuanian Museums, i.e. the section on scientific investigation of collections, headed by Brūte Šalkaitė, head of the archaeological division of Šiauliai "Aukštaitija" Museum. Pursuant to the data of January 1, 1998, exhibits kept at Lithuanian state museums totalled 4136617, of which 275300 were archaeological finds (about 6.7%). Finds are usually brought to museums from archaeological sites where excavations are carried out, according to the information of the section and their activities as well as epigraphy are changing. Creation of a new legal system on the regulation of museum activities, based on the Law on Museums of the Republic of Lithuania, enforced in 1995, is being finalized. In 1995 Lithuanian museums founded a public professional organization called the Association of Museums of Lithuania which incorporates the majority of Lithuanian museums (with Director of the Lithuanian Art Museum Romualdas Dradytis acting as Chairman). One of the numerous fields of activities of the Association of Lithuanian Museums includes accumulation of data on the Lithuanian fund of museums and preparation of an aggregated register of Lithuanian museum funds. Today, it is the only one institution in Lithuania which accumulates data on specialized collections of Lithuanian museums. This work was undertaken by one of the sections of the Association of Lithuanian Museums, i.e. the section on scientific investigation of collections, headed by Brūte Šalkaitė, head of the archaeological division of Šiauliai "Aukštaitija" Museum. Pursuant to the data of January 1, 1998, exhibits kept at Lithuanian state museums totalled 4136617, of which 275300 were archaeological finds (about 6.7%). Finds are usually brought to museums from archaeological sites where excavations are carried out, according to the information of the section and their activities as well as epigraphy are changing. Creation of a new legal system on the regulation of museum activities, based on the Law on Museums of the Republic of Lithuania, enforced in 1995, is being finalized.