

Master's Thesis Review

Gyöngy Molnár: *Mátyásföld: suburban villa district in the agglomeration of Budapest (1887 - 1914)*

This master thesis comprises an analytical part of 64 pages, 6 pages of well selected illustrations, 20 pages of appendixes (containing tables and documents), something more than 6 pages of bibliography and finally 2 pages for the list of illustrations. The text is completed by altogether 222 footnotes. The references are precise and the bibliography is well constructed, corresponding to the academic norms. In generally, the text is well written (with however some smaller mistakes) and comprehensible (in spite of some less precise or unclear formulations), and the use of the scientific terminology is correct. The argumentation is logical and follows a clear and well established structure. The demonstration is based on a great variety of sources (for instance the Notaries' documents of the Budapest's Archives, statistical data of different kind and origins, journals, maps and card-postales) which is one of the incontestable value of this thesis. All in all, the thesis entirely responds to the formal requirements of a master thesis of the TEMA program.

The main objective of the thesis is to analyse the circumstances of the formation of one of the villa-quarters of Budapest, *Mátyásföld*, from its foundation in 1887 up to the first world war, with respect to the social composition of its plots and/or villa-owners and also with a particular attention paid to the relations of this villa-quarter to the new Hungarian capital. The research-question is well defined and it presents real scientific relevances. The formation of the villa-quarter of *Mátyásföld* hasn't been earlier subject of a deeper social historical investigation but its main value is to present an interesting case-study which allows to shed light to the specificities of the suburban development of Budapest during the period of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

The author presents in detail the circumstances of the *Mátyásföld* villa-quarter foundation and the great lines of its development up to the first world war. The author shows the main reasons of the dynamic increase of *Mátyásföld* and the role of the railway in it. She examines in detail the creation as well as the territorial and architectural characteristics of this villa-quarter especially from her main concern which is to investigate the social status, the prestige of this particular suburban territory and its relation to the capital. This is the reason why she focuses on the social composition of the first villa/plots owners and the collective representations made of *Mátyásföld* by the local community as well as by the larger coeval public. For me the most valuable part of the thesis is the micro-analytical reconstruction of the

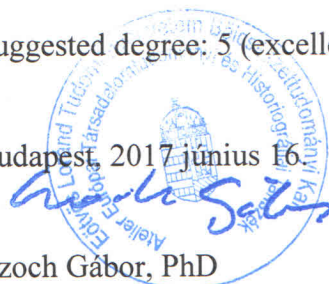
networks and interrelations of the first plot owners based on a meticulous archivist research which is really a very nice historical demonstration. On the other hand, the professional composition of the owners would have demanded further development. One could observe that the author doesn't exploit the possibilities to compare the evolution of Mátyásföld with other villa-quarters. She mentions only at the end of the thesis the case of *Rózsadomb*, which became later one of the most prestigious villa-quarter on the Buda side of the capital. But, the invocation of this case gives a nice perspective for the continuation of the research.

All in all, this is a compact and well-structured demonstration and it represents an instructive case study of a lesser known villa-quarter and it is a valuable contribution to the history of the development of the agglomeration of Budapest.

Suggested degree: 5 (excellent)

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Czoch Gábor, PhD



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