

JENŐ MAJOR, PhD
1922 – 1988



He was born February 15, 1922 in Felsőszakony (Transdanubia, Hungary), where his father was a teacher. After the father's death in 1929, the family moved to Sopron (Hungary), where Jenő Major completed secondary school at the famous Lutheran gymnasium. In 1944 he graduated from the Pázmány Péter University in Budapest as professor of history and geography, member of outstanding aptitude of the Eötvös College.

Since the very beginning of university education in 1945, he acted as assistant at the Institute of Geography of the Pázmány Péter University, then in 1946/47, he was commissioned lecturer in geography and senior of students at the Eötvös College. In 1947 he was granted PhD degrees in history for his study on the Georgicon High School of Agriculture in Keszthely (Hungary) and in geography for his PhD Thesis on the settlement geography of Sopron.

He got engaged in the chart room of the National Széchényi Library, then in the East-European Scientific Institute at the University. After its dissolution in 1949, he worked at the Institute of Country Planning belonging to the Central Planning Office of the Hungarian Government. From 1951 to 1958 he worked at the Department of Town Planning of the Technical University of Budapest, then changed for the Department of General Economical Geog-

raphy at the Eötvös Loránd University and did there research work in settlement geography. But the economic geography approach without historical background and perspective, overwhelming by the late fifties at that University, did not allow Jenő Major to continue his fundamental research scopes: settlement history and settlement morphology, therefore in 1960 he returned to the Technical University of Budapest where he firmly continued his research work first at the Department of Town Planning then at the Institute for History and Theory of Architecture, even after his retirement in 1986.

By his scientific research works, he contributed to the substantiation of urban development plans (Békéscsaba, 1952; Karcag, 1972; Balassagyarmat, 1972).

His early theoretical, historical conception in several essential professional problems were perfectly supported decades later by ulterior town historical disclosures. This was the case for Sopron, town of his youth, of that he participated in the settlement history research beginning with his PhD Thesis — until his decease.

A survey of the long list of over 200 items of his publications testifies comprehensive, deepgoing cultivation of his subject.

He discussed aims and methods of research underlying settlement planning, various settlement forms in Hungary, origins and transformations of villages, beginnings of urban history.

His studies in settlement history and geography rely on historical precise research based on original sources. He was deeply concerned — among others — with the settlement histories of Székesfehérvár, Óbuda, Esztergom, Pápa, Abony, Heves, Baja, Kőszeg, Gyöngyös, but he always fitted details to territorial relations of Pannonia, mediaeval Hungary or Central Europe.

He was absorbed in the geohistorical development and changes of the Danube and other rivers and their effects on settlements.

His lectures have been concerned with the development of Hungarian regions. He has delivered "Historical Geography of Hungary" at postgraduate courses of the Eötvös Loránd University and of the Technical University of Budapest.

He has co-authored chapters of settlement history, settlement ethnography of the Technical Lexicon and the Ethnographical Lexicon.

He shared the work of scientific societies and of editorial boards of periodicals. He was member of the Committee for Urbanology and of Committee of History of Town Planning at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, of the Hungarian Society for Ethnography, of the Hungarian Urbanistic Society, and of the Hungarian Association of Historians.

He was always willing by shared his achievements both with his fellow scientists and with his pupils. He represented his achievements and ideas not only by words but also by his outstanding drawings.

His helpfulness, the uniquely humble and steadfast service of his selected scope made all he said authentic before his co-workers and pupils, although his activity was not rewarded by "official" distinctions of that age. Things developed in 1987 when the Technical University of Budapest officially conceded Jenő Major's merit but his death in 1988 kept him back to take over his appointment to university reader. His discrete warnings of the importance to be acquainted with the real historical processes were suppressed by his noisier surroundings, and it is a belated redressing to recognise by and by admitted frustrations in settlement planning two years after his death.

His untimely, unexpected decrease prevented him from finishing his projected work, comprehensive mediaeval historical geography of Hungary, to ease the problem of subsequent generations of researchers. Nevertheless, a survey of his innumerable studies, papers and lectures may offer a complete view of his œuvre, belonging among the most significant Hungarian spiritual achievements of the 20th century. This work expects his pupils who — to make a real step forward — can not renounce of the achievements of Jenő Major's œuvre.

Horváth Alice

List of selected papers:

- Young Transsylvania,* *Nyugati Őrszem*, 1939/2.
- Outlined History of the Young Hungarian Society,* 1890—1940, Supplement of *Nyugati Őrszem*, 1940.*
- Background of the Origin of the Name Oedenburg,* *Soproni Szemle*, 1955.
- Selected Questions of the Topography of Sopron at the Late 14th Century, *Soproni Szemle*, 1956.
- Old and New Colleges,* *Valóság*, 1946/10.
- The Settlement Network of Hungary in Respect of Settlements of Agricultural Character,* In: *Agriculture and Town Planning*, (Eds.: I. Perényi, K. Faragó and J. Major), *Műszaki Könyvkiadó*, 1962.
- The Zone of Provision of the Hungarian Towns,* *Településtud. Közl.* 1952/2.
- On the Basic Problems of Regional Planning,* *Településtud. Közl.* 1953/5.
- Tasks of Settlement Research in Village Construction,* *Településtud. Közl.* 1954/6.
- Comprehensive Aims of Village Research,* *Településtud. Közl.* 1954/6.
- On the Problems of the Mediaeval Hungarian Town Concept,* *Településtud. Közl.* 1955/7.
- Methods of Planning of the Environs of a Town, *Településtud. Közl.** 1956/8.
- Settlement Studies of a Village along the Danube,* *Településtud. Közl.* 1956/8.
- On Some Respects of the Methods of the Research of the Traditional Village Construction,* *Településtud. Közl.* 1959/11.
- The Commencements of the Development of Some Estate-Types in Hungary,* *Településtud. Közl.* 1960/12.
- On the Hungarian Town Network,* *Településtud. Közl.* 1964/16.
- Outlines of the Morphological Characters of the Hungarian Villages,* *Településtud. Közl.* 1965/17.
- The Ground Plan as Source of Early Hungarian Town History* (Development of the Inner Town of Sopron), *Ép. és Közl. tud. Közl.* 1965.

* In Hungarian

- On the Commencements of Development of the Hungarian Towns and of Town Network,* Településtud. Közl. 1966/18.
- Natural Geography, In: Information Hungary, Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1968.
- Natural Geography, In: Hungary — Our Fatherland* (= Hazánk Magyarország), Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1970.
- Characteristic Features and Development of the Structure of Hungarian Towns,* Településtud. Közl. 1971/23.
- Settlement History and Development of Town Concept of Karcag, Studies on the Town History of Karcag,* Ép. és Közl. tud. Közl. 1974.
- Data to the Background of Settlement and Possession History of Rise of the Church of Feldebrő,* Ép. és Közl. tud. Közl. 1976.
- A Survey of Settlement History of Heves,* Heves Megyei Tanács, 1981.
- Natural Geography of Vecsés and its Environs,* In: The History of Vecsés (= Vecsés története). Egyetemi Nyomda, Budapest, 1986.
- Natural Geography of Abony and its Environs,* In: The History of Abony (= Abony története), in Press.