

Rethinking Preservation and Use in Religious Heritage Sites: Insights from the Balaton Region

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Context and Approach

- Hungary’s Balaton region links tourism, landscape and religious heritage.
 - Scope: from the 1950s–60s regional programme to contemporary Tihany.
 - Values-based conservation and living heritage: fabric, use, meaning and care.
- Question: how do use and institutional responsibilities shape conservation and ongoing care? Method: archival records and contemporary sources trace decisions, funding and responsibility.

Evidence Across Time

Building a Regional Heritage System

From 1957, the National Monument Protection Inspectorate (OMF) coordinated research, protection and conservation within broader regional planning. **Surveys:** nearly 40 lakeside settlements and 38 villages north of the lake. **1958–1960 proposal:** OMF funding and works for ruins; state and congregational contributions with locally organised works for active churches. **1965–1974 plan:** joint conservation programme for ruins and active churches.

Medieval Ruins: Conservation at Scale

Site-specific proposals: wall stabilisation, protective roofs, partial reconstruction. Urgent stabilisation could precede excavation; design reviews weighed historic fabric, safety and legibility, proposing distinguishable additions. **Visitor interpretation and grounds care** accompanied conservation aims.

Tihany in the Regional Heritage System

After 1950, parish worship continued; the monastery housed a care institution, then a museum. Monks returned in 1990. Tourism and protection: accommodation development challenged landscape restrictions; reuse proposals linked conservation with local jobs and upkeep. The 1975 plan addressed carrying capacity and competing land uses. Heritage, tourism and church bodies coordinated visitor-route changes for fabric protection and access.

Tihany Today

Living monastic centre: worship, education, culture and economic activities. **Regional ties:** pastoral care in 7 settlements and an abbey-run school. **Mission and income:** cultural programmes, tourism, hospitality and local products combine outreach with revenue. **Funding:** tourism reportedly covered upkeep and repairs; EU and domestic funds supported larger projects. For the state-funded 2019–2025 restoration, designers stayed with the monks to understand daily routines and **user needs**.

Conclusions

Use shaped responsibilities: Balaton’s state-socialist programme assigned different funding and tasks to ruins and active churches. **Regional coordination, site-specific decisions.** Recurring tensions: Tihany faced tourism–conservation conflicts under changing institutions. **Diversity ≠ self-financing:** multiple uses do not ensure financial independence. Religious and educational value is not measured by income. **Beyond restoration:** completed works do not prove lasting care.

References

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