

Dalma Lukács

Ph.D. candidate, University of Public Service

lukacs.dalma.93@gmail.com

**CRIMINAL GEOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH OF THE STOLEN
CULTURAL PROPERTIES FROM HUNGARY - BASED ON THE
PSYCHE PROJECT****Abstract**

During my research I have studied several databases, like ENYÜBS² or Leonardo, but I have always encountered the same problem, latency. This phenomenon has to be taken into account in research and analysis. With this in mind I started to investigate the theft of cultural properties in Hungary. My goal was to identify domestic "trends" in illicit trafficking from a database created within the Psyche Project. This database is the result of the collaboration between Carabinieri TPC and Interpol, which contains 944 items related to thefts in Hungary. The data showed that thefts occurred mainly along the border both in the north and south, as well in Budapest, furthermore that apartments were the number one target (85%), meanwhile the library and the museum (3-3%) to a lesser extent, they are also "victims" of art theft. The fine arts have the highest number of stolen works (746 cases). Next comes the book, goldware and religious objects. Books, just like religious objects, are easy targets. From libraries, anyone can easily steal books or rip pages such as old maps and drawings. These are usually a few pages of tiny paper booklets containing contemporary clothes, sketches and descriptions. Besides, the amount of archaeological findings from illegal excavations can still not be measure, and thus the extent of latent crime in the area under investigation cannot be estimated.

Keywords: cultural property, criminal geography, stolen artefacts, Psyche project

² Egységes nyomozó hatósági és ügyészégi bűnügyi statisztika, Uniform Crime Investigation Authority and Prosecution Statistics

1. Introduction

The source of illicit trade of cultural properties is the transfer of items from illegal excavations and stolen works of art to the black market. Although we cannot determine the exact number of illegal excavations, the number of stolen items is much more accurate. If someone has a financial loss they report it to the police. With this move, there is a possibility that the stolen artefacts become part of the national database (if the country has one) and part of the international databases, such as the Interpol database. During my research, I investigate the stolen items from Hungary by examining data from the newest Interpol database, which created within the Psyche Project (Rush and Millington, 2015, p. XIV).

2. Databases

2.1 Leonardo

To understand the topic, it is important to talk about the origin and the structure of the databases and the data that contained there. There are several types of databases with several attributes. In these days the most advanced database is the Leonardo produced by the Carabinieri TPC (Lukács, 2019). Leonardo has the image search algorithm function which facilitates the work of the Carabinieri. However, the Carabinieri is also involved in rescuing the Vatican objects, as they are dealt with the cases after they are handed over by the Vatican City Gendarmerie. The Vatican State's online catalogue is the Beni Ecclesiastici in Web ("BeWeB") (<https://beweb.chiesacattolica.it>, 5/1/2020), that collects ecclesiastical items, protecting the identity of its owners, and it also helpful for the researchers. The website allows you to read various pieces of information by searching for art objects. For geographic information, we only see the region where the object is located. The reason for this is to protect the owner of the artwork against the robbers. However, researchers have the opportunity to send a message to the unknown owner, who may decide whether or not to disclose the location of the item. BeWeB is also useful if you need to take action in the event of a theft or natural disaster because Carabinieri can immediately join the online catalogue. They have the ability to see what objects are in the church and transfer the image along with the data to the Leonardo database and then to the Interpol database (LUKÁCS, 2020 p.137).

2.2. Works of arts

Interpol's pre-2019 database is the Works of Art (Lukács, 2018 p.123), which has now been transformed by the Italian system. However, the WOA database had a word searching function only, without the Italian image search algorithm system. During my interviews with the

professionals, it was revealed that one of the biggest problems they face during dealing with the illegal trade of cultural properties is the lack of communication.

2.3 Psyche Project

Carabinieri TPC³ contributed to the development of the WOA database, creating the Protection System for the Cultural Heritage (the Psyche Project). Thus, Italian technological development can be found on the contemporary Interpol interface. The problem with the new system is that it has become too Europe-centered with Italian data. Originally designed to be up and running within 24 months, but the database was eventually changed to 33 months due to minor errors (<http://tpcweb.carabinieri.it/SitoPubblico/psyche/generic?lang=EN>, 4/1/2020). The process is divided into four phases:

- Collection of data such as location, time of the theft and associated images of the object.
- As a second step, the Leonardo and WOA databases were linked.
- As a third step, the image comparison function has been introduced.
- Finally, professionals were trained to use the new database.

3. Hungarian data in the Psyche Project

For my research, I used the Psyche Project database, from which I collected data of stolen objects in Hungary. Access to the database can be initiated online from Interpol's Paris headquarters, after which you can browse the database for one year. I chose the Psyche Project for my research because it combines international data with the Italian model. In addition to this, it is possible to inspect not only cities but also localities for stolen items (eg how many items have been stolen from a museum, how many apartments have been robbed, etc.), allowing for a comprehensive examination of the data. My goal is to make recommendations to the Hungarian law enforcement agencies in order to protect the cultural property more effectively. At the beginning of my research, I made questions about whether there is a tendency and connection between thefts? Is the size of the objects important to the perpetrators? My goal during this study is to answer such and similar questions. The data were recorded one by one into an Excel spreadsheet, then I analyzed them and prepared statistics and maps. I worked with a total of 944 subjects. It is important to note that a description of a cultural property can belong to multiple objects, for example in the case of Terény- Kiskérpuszta where seven silver bowls are registered as one item.

³ Comando Carabinieri per la Tutela del Patrimonio Culturale

4. Hungarian settlements in the Psyche Project

There are 23 settlements registered in Hungary in connection with art theft. Most art thefts were committed in Budapest (790 cases), accounting for 83% of the crimes (See Mátyás 2018). Then Terény, Kiskérpuszta comes with 42 thefts (4%) and then Szentendre with 20 cases (2%). From the Figure 1, we can now see only cities with 13 or fewer offenses. Although the majority of thefts occurred in the capital, there were also thefts in the North and Northwest part of the country near to the state border and sporadically in the South. However, it is also noticeable that these settlements are not only close to the border but also function as a traffic hub. Thefts occurred in the border areas close to Slovakia, Austria, Romania, Serbia and Croatia.

Distribution of stolen cultural property by cities

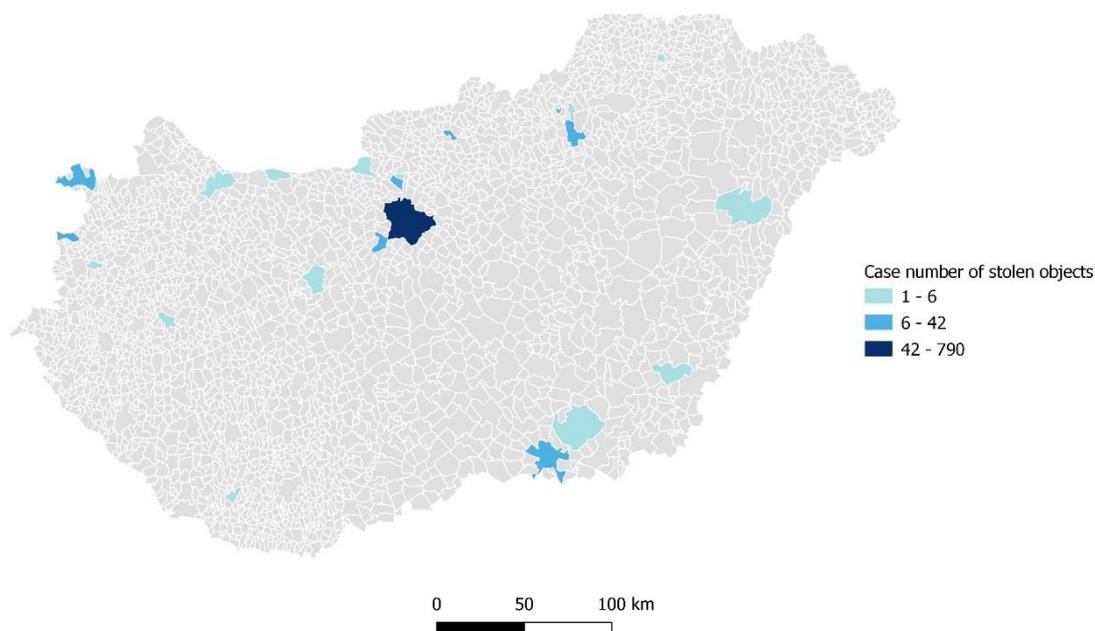


Figure 1: Distribution of stolen cultural property by cities

Database: Based on data from the Interpol's WOA database (own editing)

5. The locations

Beyond the cities, it is also worth investigating where these thefts occurred. Most of the artefacts were seized from the accommodations (802 cases), which is 85% of all burglaries. Then a much lower number, the unknown sites (4%), churches (4%) and libraries (3%) also appeared, followed by a negligible number at the end of the line for the embassy, air space and shop. The residents (blue dots), the museums (dark green dots) and library (light green dots)

appear on North, meanwhile museums (purple dots) both in North and NorthWest. The church as a burglary site is interesting in many ways. While there are locations where there are more or fewer protrusions, it is still the religious location that is on the list in almost every city. The red dots indicate the churches on the map. The most interesting part is that the red dots appear in South and North Hungary. The church is also an “easy target” for perpetrators because it is open to everyone. Although it is becoming more common that many places still do not have a camera installed to help to identify the perpetrators or an alarm device to indicate if a burglary has occurred. In addition, the work of law enforcement agencies in Hungary is cumbersome, as the largest number of art thieves took place in both homes and churches. However, in most cases, they don’t have any good quality image or documentation about the cultural property, which also makes it difficult to find the objects. In the Italian system, the BeWeB online catalogue is designed to remedy this problem. In our country, however, there is no database of stolen objects in the hands of the police.

Location-based identification of stolen cultural properties

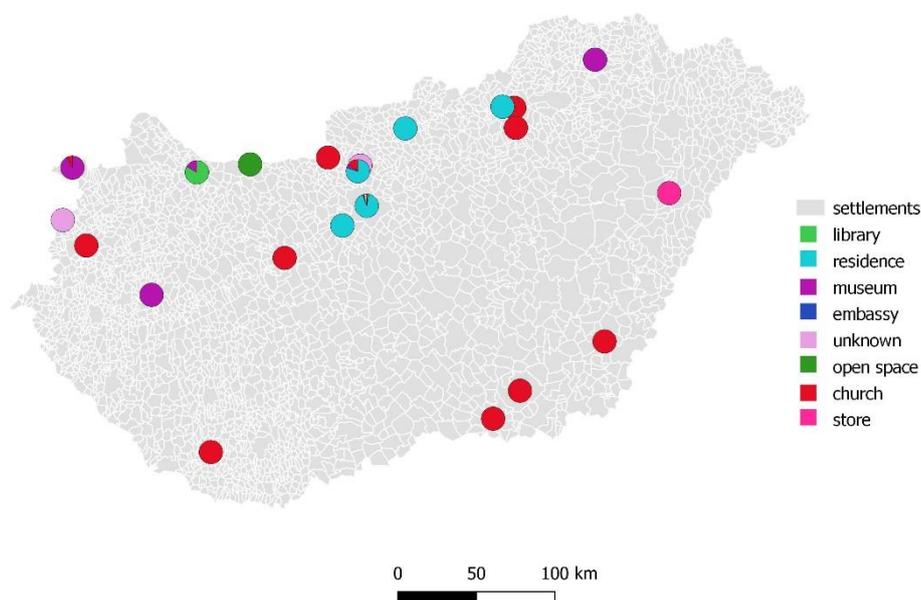


Figure 2: Location-based identification of stolen cultural properties

Database: Based on data from the Interpol’s WOA database (own editing)

6. Periodic distribution of stolen cultural properties

The exact year or century was indicated in the database, and objects were also marked separately where the date is unknown. I find it important to mention, for both the era and the subject type section, that items from illegal excavation are not included in the Hungarian part of the database (and neither in other databases), although they are found in large numbers worldwide. There is no documentation, inventory or picture of the underground archeological finds, so we do not know its exact look, place or date of origin. Thus, I present the results without archaeological finds from illegal excavations. The objects are grouped by centuries for easier analysis. It is interesting that after the Roman period (8th century BC to 5th century AD), the 14th century was completely omitted from the 11th to 20th century, meaning that there is no item stolen from Hungary in the Psyche database, which is evidently from this century.

Unfortunately, we are not able to date most artefacts (505 pieces) based on the data from WOA. However, the most popular period is clearly the 20th century with 165 items, and as we go back, we will see fewer and fewer items according to the list.

The earliest items come from the North side of Hungary, meanwhile in South the most common cultural properties are from the 19th and 20th century. In Budapest, we don't know most of the item's period, but from almost every century there is an item.(12th-20th century).

Periodic distribution of stolen cultural properties

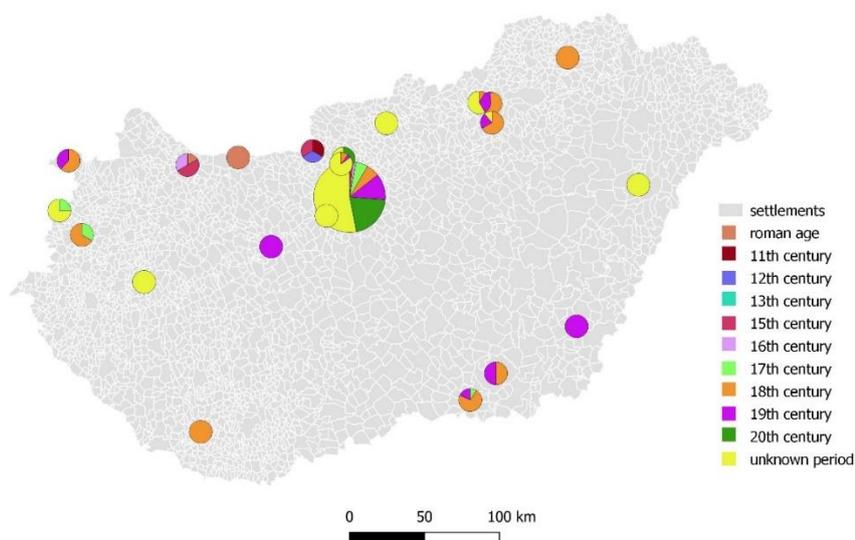


Figure 3: Periodic distribution of stolen cultural properties

Database: Based on data from the Interpol's WOA database (own editing)

7. Types of cultural properties

There are several categories of object types. Thus, I examined them individually and divided them? into subject areas. I classified in the religious category all objects that were stolen from a church, so I also included books, paintings, sculptures and liturgical instruments in this category. I classified the paintings, drawings, and scratches into the subject of fine art, while the sculptures are separate. I classified wooden objects as wood art, while pots and other objects made of silver and other precious metals were classified as goldware category. I also gave a separate category to books stolen from other places than church. In addition, I created furniture, ceramic and bone work categories.

Examined together with the period, we can get interesting information about the object types. There is a book from each century among the objects, with the exception of the Roman age. And furniture only dates from the 18th and 19th centuries, according to the Psyche database. We can see that most of fine arts item were stolen from Budapest, meanwhile, religious objects were stolen from North, West and South.

It can be stated that the most endangered category of works of art is the fine art with 746 cases, which is followed by the book, goldware art and religious objects. Among these, books and religious objects are the ones that are most at risk because they can be easily removed from the churches and libraries. The perpetrator does not have to steal the whole book, he can easily tear out a sheet which can be maps and drawings.

Stolen cultural properties from Hungary

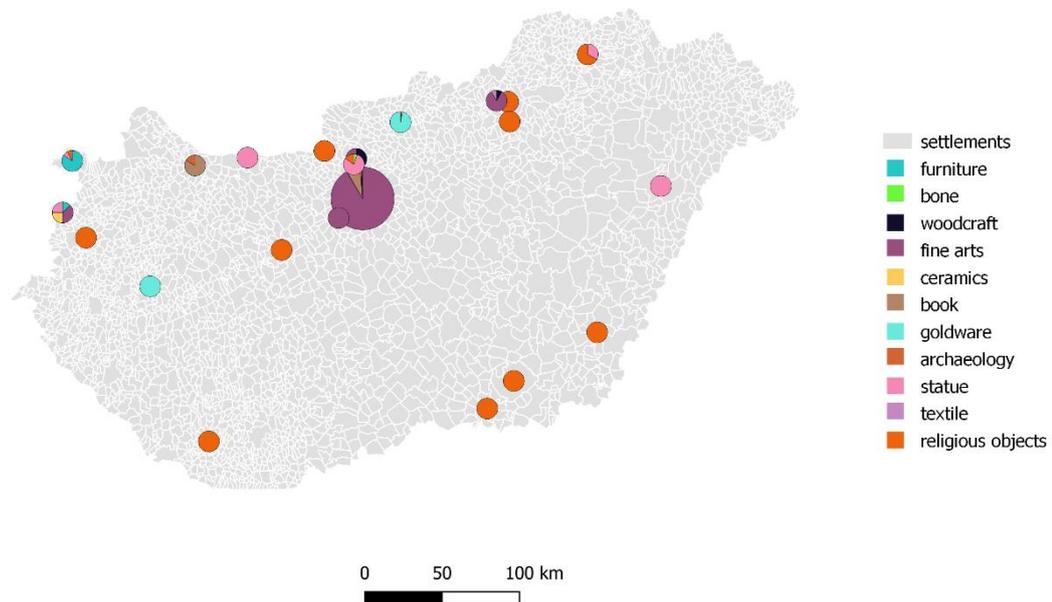


Figure 4: Stolen cultural properties from Hungary

Database: Based on data from the Interpol's WOA database (own editing)

For stolen items, I also examined how aware the perpetrators were of the value of the goods. I approached this issue by collecting from the database which objects contain captions (era, artist signature). This makes it easier to accurately identify stolen items and estimate their price, which is easier to sell on the market later. However, in 286 cases there were only inscriptions on the stolen work of art, and in 658 cases there was no sign on them, so the perpetrators could not have known the artist either. In my opinion, because of that, the artist and the era do not play a role in thefts in Hungary.

It can be stated that while in the middle of the country, in Budapest, the objects of fine art are the most endangered, in the areas close to the state border, the religious objects are the ones that are stolen. It is also interesting that in Budapest, Egercsehi and Érd the fine art objects were stolen in the largest numbers, while they appear in less numbers in Kőszeg and Leányfalu. In Békéscsaba, Bélapátfalva, Eger, Esztergom, Hódmezővásárhely, Szeged, Székesfehérvár, Szigetvár, Tápé and Vép, only religious objects were stolen. Only sculptures were stolen from Debrecen and Komárom. Unfortunately, due to the small number of items, it is not possible to

establish with certainty and make a specific definition that only a certain type of artefact is stolen from each settlement, which is later sold on the black market. Although it can be stated that private collectors who own works of fine art are in the greatest danger in Budapest.

Regarding the size of artefacts, I examined the height and width of the objects separately. I separated 8 categories. Category 0 includes objects where we do not know the size. The first category includes objects up to 1-50 cm, the second category up to 51-100 cm, the third category up to 101-150 cm, the fourth category up to 151-200 cm, and increasing the amount by 50 cm further up to 350 cm. The largest size occurred in the height category, a 302 cm high, 177 cm wide rug that was stolen from an apartment in Budapest. However, these rugs are easy to fold together so they can be shipped in smaller sizes. The same is true for paintings if they are made on canvas or possibly on paper. It is easy to fold out of the frame, put in a holder and transport it in that way. However, if the robber is unaware of the value of the items, he can transport these artefacts without a holder. The first category is containing the largest number in terms of both height and width, i.e. most stolen objects belong to the range of 1-50 cm. This is followed by the second category and then category 0 in the ranking. Thus, it can be concluded that the smaller objects are the ones that are stolen mostly, and in the case of the larger objects, only the type that can be easily folded was taken away: for example, a rug and a picture painted on canvas.

Table 1: Height divided into 7 categories

0th category	83 pieces
1th category	557 pieces
2nd category	267 pieces
3rd category	22 pieces
4th category	10 pieces
5th category	3 pieces
6th category	1 pieces
7th category	1 pieces

Based on data from the Interpol's WOA database (own editing)

Table 2: Width divided into 7 categories

0th category	120 pieces
1th category	541 pieces
2nd category	248 pieces
3rd category	25 pieces
4th category	9 pieces
5th category	1 pieces
6th category	0 pieces
7th category	0 pieces

Based on data from the Interpol's WOA database (own editing)

8. Summary

This research investigates the artifacts that have been stolen from Hungary based on the WOA database which has been renewed by the Psyche Project. The aim of this study was to show if there are any trends of the stolen cultural properties in conjunction with places, types and period.

It can be stated from the domestic data that the accommodations of private collectors in Budapest are the main targets. It doesn't matter if the painting or other cultural goods contain a signature or other inscription. In addition, smaller or easily collapsible objects are those that are stolen in larger numbers. The works of fine art are the ones that owners should pay the most attention to, as 79% of the stolen objects are paintings, drawings, and scratches. Objects appear in the database from the roman period to the 20th century. Objects made in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries were stolen in largest numbers. This is related to the number of stolen fine art objects, as the paintings date from these centuries. In addition, we are still unable to assess the amount of archaeological finds from illegal excavations, and thus not to estimate the extent of latent crime in the study area. It would be difficult to establish trafficking routes with regard to Hungary based on the WOA's data, because we are not aware where they found the objects. It would be useful to examine more databases and countries in Europe and compare the results. It is possible that even a trend or route could be detected in terms of theft of objects.

The protection of cultural property is not a priority in Hungary this may due tot he fact that most of the thefts came from private property rather than public property, so the state is not affected by such a financial disadvantage.

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