

A SURVEY OF 200 YEARS OF THE HUNGARIAN ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY WRITING¹

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We begin this survey with the first essay in *Architectural History* which was published in 1760 in Nagyszombat under the title 'MOLNÁR Jánosnak Jézus társaság szerzetes papjának a régi Jeles Épületekről Kilentz Könyvei' (Nine Books on some old outstanding buildings by János MOLNÁR, the regular clergyman of the Society of Jesus) and conclude the 200 years in 1960 with the third volume of Máté MAJOR's *Architectural History*. The span of 200 years bears witness to the struggle of art history and architectural history to separate and distinguish themselves as independent disciplines.

Intellectual basis of Molnár's work is perhaps Johann FISCHER VON ERLACH's 'Entwurf einer historischen Architektur' — which included buildings in Hungary as well. In spite of the kinship, the two authors represent two different intellectual approaches: one is primarily literary, the other architectural.

— ... Molnár János's work is one of the masterpieces of the 18th century's literature in Hungary ... Its focuses on the architecture primarily in literary aspect, his colourful descriptions transplant history of old biblical, Greco-Roman and Chinese architectural monuments in Hungarian language...'; FISCHER VON ERLACH is an architect '... The recording of the monuments of architecture is important not only from the point of view of science, but from the standpoint of art history as well, and I am a historian who strives to contribute to the usual and general process of arts — he writes. According to Fischer von Erlach, the conceptual and idealistic reconstruction of the remains of architectural history is a task for the architect: '... often we find buildings in such a state, having been reconstructed so often, that they have entirely lost their original character —

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and only from descriptions, documents, and ancient coins and medallions we are able to gather some idea of their original state . . . Many of these monuments owe their formal and substantive state, their very being, to our illustrious ancestors, Palladio, Serlio, and Donato Bramante's science, as well as on the basis of the earliest grave inscriptions from beneath dust and ashes of recent archaeological excavations it is now possible to bring to light and understand the elements and remains of our architectural heritage . . . '.

The clearing away 'dust and ashes', the excavations at Pompei and Herculaneum, the activity of Winckelmann and Lessing had inspired a growing archaeological trend in Hungary at the end of the 18th century — and yielded the first architectural historical results.

The Roman remains at Óbuda are already mentioned by the 14th century's chronicler Simon Kézai, and from this time on they are listed among our national architectural monuments; this was a sort of turning-point for Hungarian architectural and archaeological sciences. A new and novel approach toward historic documentation or architectural monuments takes root: Bonfini's account, for example, is regarded as a documentation, and description of Hungarian architectural history and the earliest example of architectural history. The description of the patterns of the Hungarian settlement is given in the study, dated 1798, by István SCHÖNWIESNER (1778–1838) which contains a scientific comparison of actual buildings with some grave inscriptions found around Florian Square — an ancient settlement, which, however, is now primarily known as a Roman site and archaeological excavation. It was Schönwiesner who first dug out the Roman Baths at Florian Square, and reported on the remains and ruins of ancient Savaria as well. This early architectural activity in Hungary did not, however, lead to the immediate knowledge of our country's architectural heritage.

According to the information available to us today, the first serious studies and chronological systematizations of architectural remains took place in the early decades of the 19th century, under the direction of János Packh, the architect of the Cathedral of Esztergom.

János PACKH paved the way in uncovering the built heritage of the Hungarian people, and following him, Dániel NOVÁK's writings, newly discovered and appreciated now, also demonstrate the awakening of a new consciousness toward the subject of architectural history in Hungary.

Unluckily, only fragments of the writings of Dániel NOVÁK are known; however, a mere listing of the titles of his works demonstrates that his aim was to systematically process the built heritage of Hungary according to architectural characteristics. He chronologically ordered the country's architectural monuments and history, according to styles, as well as compiled the biographies of the outstanding architects of the country — those who most

frequently worked and had commissions in Hungary beginning with the early 18th century. His comprehensive work 'Az architektúra történetéről művészek, technikusok, s dilettánsok hasznára az izlésterjesztésére' (Concerning the history of architecture, for the use of and interest of Artists, Engineers and Dilettantes) is lost; we know of this work only from the rejecting judgement of the Academy.

Novák defines 'proper taste' as synonymous with Classicism: 'We are afraid that this proper taste . . . making our noble monuments and buildings similar to those constructed in Athens and Rome, will be strangled and obscured by the rude Gothic taste. . .'

However, it was a fact during these years that writers and intellectuals throughout Europe began to turn back to the Middle Ages. This can be seen in the restoration and reconstruction of many medieval monuments, 'completion' of the Cathedral of Cologne, which demonstrated the epitome of the architectural and historical interests and activity at the turn of the 19th century.

The huge comprehensive art historical writing of SCHNAASE, Viollet-le-Duc's writings, Mertens' typology point toward the efforts of architects and historians to establish a systematic ordering and definition of a national character in architectural heritage in the 19th century.

' . . . the desire for a national art had to awake, what the foreign art historic explorations could affect . . . Imre HENSZLMANN, Flóris RÓMER, Arnold IPOLYI . . . aspired to point out the way of national survival in the national culture . . . ' Following Johann Nepomuk Schauff's attempts for establishing The Hungarian Order of Columns at the turn of the century, Imre HENSZLMANN was the first to systematize and study, and publish the architectural heritage of the nation; he sought to establish the recognition and the differentiation of our national architectural and built heritage, and to have these recognized within the larger European norms, conforming to the norms of European art historical practice of that time.

HENSZLMANN's most important seminal work in architectural history and in art history is the 1846 publication on the 'Cathedral of Kassa' (today Košice in Slovakia) which is the first study based on actual archival sources — and in which Henszlmann at the same time proposes an 'ideal' architectural reconstruction.

Arnold IPOLYI, the Monsignor of Eger, caused great sensation on December 22, 1861, at the National Academy of Sciences with his paper entitled 'Remains of Medieval Architecture and its ruins in Hungary.' Although seeming to be outwardly timid, yet firmly great scholar of the study of artistic development in Hungary, he was the first to approach the study of art and of architecture in Hungary as part of the artistic development of Europe in integrated framework; he completed his paper with the following

statement: '... let us therefore preserve for posterity and gather the remnants of our scattered heritage which otherwise will be lost forever, — thus, emptying the past even more, making poorer the present, and providing only a tenuous promise for the future! ...' Ipolyi's call initiated a sort of inventorying approach to our national monuments which persisted in this century, too.

Among the first enthusiastic historians are churchmen, art historians, archaeologists, such as Flóris RÓMER as well as architects such as, for example, Vilmos FRÖHDE, whose studies appear in publications one after the other, 'in topographic and historic delvings.'

The Archaeological Reports (*Archaeológiai Értesítő*) was published in 1869; this contains a series of studies of local sites and monuments; — there are monographs by HENSZLMANN: the sites and fragments published in '*Monumenta Hungariae Archaeologica*' which contains information on excavations in Pécs, Nagyszeben, and church of Székesfehérvár. The result of this early work is Péter GERECZE's huge undertaking, the Artistic Monuments of Hungary (*Magyarország Művészeti Emlékei*) which contains the first truly scientific listing of monuments, completed by relative textual data.

GERECZE gathered an unbelievably rich scientific or architectural historic material — together with graphic illustrations of the monuments, which, is still unpublished. This material is of little use in its present form for architectural historians. Imre STEINDL and his students did further work following GERECZE; 50 years later, Ernő FOERK's, then Jenő RADOS' studies were published in a comprehensive form.

The Department of Art History at the University came into being in the 1860s starting its work at the same time as the József Polytechnicum, later Technical University of Budapest; these were the bases for teaching and research of art history, and of architectural history.

A great advantage and a uniquely colorful aspect of this development was the fact and policy that those who taught art history and the history of architecture at the University were also practicing architects, whose aims were to make known and to teach the accepted norms and the historic styles of architecture, by using the process of actual practice. They were studios of true 'practicum' in architectural history. My aim in this brief paper is to show the extent of their work, and the breath of the ideas about their heritage which they left behind here at the University ...

The Department of Medieval Architectural History was founded in 1870, its professors, Ferenc SCHULZ, Imre STEINDL, and Frigyes SCHULEK were all students of Friedrich Schmidt from Vienna. All three were experts in medieval architecture and leading represents of Schmidt's school Hungary.

It is no wonder that in the issues of the Magyar Mérnök és Építési Egylet Közlönye (Hungarian Engineer's and Architect's Bulletin), started in 1867, some hundred essays were published on monuments by the leading architectural experts, even outside the Association. These experts also published in other professional periodicals, 'Építő-Ipar-építő-művészet' and the 'Magyar Építőművészet' ('Building Trade and Architecture' and 'Hungarian Architectural Works').

The first Hungarian monographs on architectural history were issued at the turn of the century. Such were József KÖNYÖKI's monograph about the Medieval Castle (1905); work of László SZABÓ (Hungarian Architecture of the Age of Árpád) appeared in 1913. During these years 'The unknown architectural history', Péter GERECZE's book about Hungarian medieval architectural history was published, which so richly embraced the material that it is still valid today.

In contrast, there are two rather grim and cold surveys of art history by PASTEINER (1885) and by Zsolt BEÖTHY (1902). Simultaneously, similar works appeared about architectural history: primarily the publications launched by the Mérnök és Építész Egylet (Engineers and Architects' Association) of which only the first volume appeared edited by Gyula KABDEBO, which concerned the architecture of ancient and Eastern civilizations (1902). Another didactic practice-oriented work about architecture is Antal PALÓCZI's Vignola oszloprendjei (Vignola's Orders of Columns), and 'A görög és római építés alaktana' (Study of the forms of Ancient Greek and Roman Architecture), by Virgil NAGY and Gyula WÄLDER.

The circumstances and daily demands of teaching and instruction at the University further the publication of Ernő FOERK's overall survey of architectural forms (1924), and Iván KOTSIS' Renaissance (and with present terms baroque and classical) studies, primarily on the renaissance space mass and structural forms, as well their stylistic characteristics with a rich graphic material (1921, 1929).

Mirroring the general interest at the turn of the century for the re-discovery of the architecture of 'exotic people', outstanding figures such as Károly KÓS, and his excellent monograph on the urban architecture and compendium of Constantinople; or Róbert K. KERTÉSZ, Képek Ázsia építészetéről (Pictures from Eastern Asia) and Ceylon építésze (Architecture of Ceylon) served to a great degree popularization of the characteristics of Eastern style and decoration in our country.

The demand for defining the Hungarian 'national style', of course, appears again. The principal figure in this struggle for self-definition in style and form is Ödön LECHNER; Lechner being an outstanding figure creating

a new architectural style and ornamentation; he 'defined' and 'discovered' much about Hungarian 'national' architecture and ornamentation.

József HUSZKA's work, *Magyar ornamentika* (Magyar Ornamentation and Decoration) is the first in this series, which had earlier appeared in the *Mérvnök-Építész Közlöny* (Bulletin of Engineers and Architects). The richly illustrated volumes of Malonyai contain the photographs by the architect István MEDGYASZAY. HUSZKA's *A Székely Ház* (The Székely House) and Róbert K. KERTÉSZ' *A magyar parasztház* (The Hungarian Peasant House) and Gyula SVÁB's publications strove to document the real, palpable, virtual character of peasant and regional art and architecture in Hungary that were already then threatened. These latter personalities as well as the architects who clustered around Károly KÓS, among them Dezső ZRUMECZKY and Ede THOROCZKAY Wigand, whose *Himes Udvar*, (Fancy courtyard) was published in 1917, surpassed historicism. In their works they aimed to preserve and document the very typical, individual characteristics of the peasant and rural architecture. They also tried to popularize these by adapting them in their teaching and in actual practice of architecture.

In the next generation of architects Jenő LECHNER follows this style his publications between 1913 and 1917 on the 'pártázatos' ('crenellated') style serve development of its own style.

Beginning from the 1920s, Hungarian architectural literature tends to approach European intellectual directions; an example is Pál LIGETHI's *Új Pantheon felé* (Towards a New Pantheon), based on Spengler's views of culture; or Károly MÖLLER's book on history of urban architecture, which is obviously inspired by Brinckmann.

There is also a tendency toward specialization at the University. At the beginning of the century, the move was already on to acquaint the public and the students with the works of VITRUVIUS and ALBERTI; in 1926 Anna ZÁDOR published her seminal work on Renaissance theories of architecture.

During the 1920s the Hungarian Baroque and its masters become the topic of study mainly by János KAPOSSY, Andor FIGLER, and from the early 1930s, Elemér RÉVHELYI, Ervin YBL, Arnold SCHOEN. The study of the major Hungarian Baroque monuments, of the Baroque remains of the town of Eger became the special program of Gyula WÄLDER and of his students the Department of Contemporary Architecture.

This historizing direction can be connected with a similar tendency in architecture, popularization of the 'Neo-Baroque' architectural view.

The architect Virgil BIERBAUER, began publishing in the 1920s. Studying the classical monuments of 'Classicism' in architectural history, biographies of its leading personalities made him such an extraordinary expert

of the esthetic scales that he ruled the entire scope of modern architecture of the 1930s. As editor of the journal 'Tér és Forma' (Space and Form) he inimitably recognized the progressive features worth preserving in the 'rational' works of contemporaries reflecting the influences of the Bauhaus.

In the 1930s the study of the national architecture gains a new impetus. This era sees the influences of foreign architecture, foreign relations, the reconstruction of the lives of Hungarian masters, and the production of compendiums and surveys such as Jenő RADOS's *Magyar Kastélyok* (Hungarian Castles), 1931.

This period of investigation enriches data on all phases of the Hungarian architectural history. Here are included Gyula PASTEINER (1904) and Ernő FOERK's (1929) survey of Hungarian architecture, and the surveys of art history by Antal HEKLER (1934) and András PÉTER (1930) which attempted to integrate art and architectural history and study.

In contemporary terms a 'basic research' is contained in the work by Anna ZÁDOR and Jenő RADOS, *A Klasszicizmus Építészete* (The Architecture of Classicism in Hungary, 1943) listing the major monuments, thoroughly examining and classifying them. This applies also to Jolán BALOGH's work *Az Erdélyi Reneszánsz* (The Renaissance in Transsylvania) published in 1943.

In 1930, Tibor GEREVICH published *Magyarország román kori emlékei* (The Romanesque remains of Hungary). The architectural component in this work perhaps best represents architectural archaeology, as well as the great impetus given by the growing monuments restoration in the 1930s and the 1940s. This was the period during which the medieval royal palace at Esztergom were excavated, as well as the royal palace at Visegrád, whose digging and reconstruction became the focus of new archaeological activity throughout the country.

This period brought together again the researches of human and technical aspects of the architectural history Kálmán LUX, Dezső VÁRNAI, Antal LEOPOLD, Tamás BOGYAY, and József CSEMEGI initiated top-level restorations, and created outstanding scientific works.

Following the devastation of World War II, and, in its wake, the reconstruction in 1945, pragmatic need caused the bifurcation of these two lines due to establishment of new organizational forms of monuments preservation. These two disciplines seemed to be developing into opposite directions.

The focus of architectural historic investigation in Hungary is now directed to the monuments preservation, and the Department of History of Architecture is responsible for the theory and history of architecture.

The results of newly launched research of architectural history appear in publications, excavations of the Mátyás Templom (Matthias' Church

in Buda Castle); the Bakócz Chapel (Esztergom); and the Royal Castle complex in Buda were published in monograph form, scientific periodicals and annual reports or bulletins start.

Lajos FÜLEP, in his publication of 1951, characterized by a rather peevish tone, outlines the responsibilities of the architect together with those of the art historian. He categorically attacks all work done, especially that of the past 20 years, he concludes that the 'multi-directional' art historical work in Hungary and the 'single-directional Hungarian' art historical scholarship have not yet been explored, defined, determined ... and that Hungarian art history simply does not exist.

According to FÜLEP, this situation can be remedied only in a radical way by beginning a new: '... the aim is to discover the entire Hungarian art history integrated within the context of Hungarian life and existence ...' '... the practical solution is to divide the entire country according to a concrete plan ... with topographic and monographic studies ...' '... this plan should be applied to all phases and areas affected by our scope of responsibility'. The validity of Fülep's plan is questionable. It is doubtful whether his program, begun with such a force, such a vehemence was correct. With one sentence it swept aside all the art and architectural historic work to that date, dismissing everything on Hungarian art history and architecture: '... all the work of the past must be applied to serve the new aims and ideas ...'.

FÜLEP begins to publish the works of the 1920s with a full series of monographs in the 1950s regarding the production of the 'German School', and with the uncovering of a huge body of architectural archaeological material, which newly integrates the efforts of art historians and architectural historians. By 1955, Lajos FÜLEP edited the new synthesis of Hungarian art and architecture.

An exciting, vital new group begins to take form at the Department of Architectural History at the University at this time, that is, the decade between 1951-1961, which reveals architectural historic problems enough for decades, and whose solutions are avidly attempted

In 1951 appears one of the branches of 'Debate over the state of our Architecture'. It is at this point that the conceptual and substantive policies of 'monuments preservation' are created by József CSEMEGI, followed by Frigyes POGÁNY, here we find the study of 'Hungarian Classicism: its stylistic and esthetic problems' created by György KARDOS (1951). They begin also to study the aspects of urban architecture, the urban context of monuments in order to develop a comprehensive, historical, and theoretical relation of fine arts to the study of architectural monuments (Frigyes POGÁNY).

It is at this point that the generation feted by this conference gathered here, Gyula HAJNÓCZY, specialist in ancient architecture; Alajos SÓDOR, specialist in the Gothic and in the 19th century; Gitta B. SZÜCS, specialist in the Renaissance; Ferenc MERÉNYI, the specialist in the eclectic movements of the 19th century and in the modern and the contemporary movements in architecture; János BONTA, who arrives to research of theory of architecture starting from teaching design.

Appearing by the turn of the decade are such works as Jenő RADOS unmatched comprehensive History of the Architecture of Hungary (1961), the biography of József HILD — (the first architect monograph in Hungary) — along with Anna ZÁDOR's monograph on POLLACK and on monograph Miklós YBL.

Elemér RÉVHELYI performs complex studies which could not be brought to publication because of the circumstances. Frigyes POGÁNY' 'Terek és utcák művészete' (The Art of Squares and Streets) appears, as well as 'Festészet és szobrászat az építészetben' (Painting and Sculpture within Architecture) by Éva BALÁZS, and Zoltán SZENTKIRÁLYI — a work unmatched today, with its novel approach to history of architecture; 1960 sees the publication of Máté MAJOR's 3-volume work that surveys architectural history.

These publications are unique models in the literature of architectural history in the 20th century. Taking the entire geographic area as an architectural whole, these scholars tried to look with a new view at the architecture from social, and the practical context of the other arts, following the development in synchronic order, they stress the importance processing data in a unified, systematic order. The ordering principle is progress extremely simplified. Progress toward a perfect architecture, e. g. toward 'modern' architecture, whose mission is to make it possible to perform daily activities of man at the highest possible level. In contrast with the historic past, in the age of 'modern architecture' there are outstanding examples of 'Building blocks' fantastic machinery, and new technology are available to completely liberate architecture from the inhibitive effects of traditional architectural form and structure; this allows the freedom of human biological-intellectual life, the recognition of man as a social being. Striving toward the better recognition of this, our actual needs, we wish to completely liberate man's life from obsolete conventions, with the new technological possibilities mankind can be best served forming an architecture worthy of the 20th century.'

I would like to call your attention to a phrase in the above quotation. 'In contrast with past history' this is characteristic of the direction of the 1960s in Hungary which is the basis of what you see around in Hungary today: our architecture of the past 40 years is stamped with this motto,

our environmental policy, our monuments preservation with its positive and negative aspects, and the 30 years of background of our architectural history.

Let me note here that my brief survey which attempts to outline the first 200 years of architectural historiography in Hungary could only demonstrate the main directions because of the limitations of time and context.

Nevertheless, it is still evident that in architecture, historic writing and scholarship it is important to keep in mind the approaches, moreover the type of method used and its aim and focus over the centuries; these colour the output; quality is too often overshadowed . . . by the personality of the writer and scholar. Here mention should be made of Róbert K. KERTÉSZ and his urbanistic approach; Jenő LECHNER, he writes of himself ' . . . the church at Rezső Square, whose cupola was meant to resurrect the style traditions from the age of József Nádor, . . . ', or Jenő RADOS, with his solution of the seemingly irresolvable problem of the reconstruction of the Ministry of Finance in the Castle of Buda with sovereign approach however using traditions.

The list of similar examples could be continued. The unity of tradition and intuition has in our day disintegrated. The integrate state cannot be regained with slogans and false methodology. We must be aware that we can best help reintegration of the unity of our national heritage by studying and publishing our national traditions.

We still face the research and study of our national traditions, the conceptual and substantive basis of our architecture, its actual documentary and archival bases, and sources, and the primary comparison to mainstream European architecture; the separation of individual characteristics of our national architectural history, and the 'phantoms of our national architectural history' still lies in the future.

This is a difficult and thankless task. Applicable to this are the words of Mihály BABITS in 1933: 'History is a depressing study . . . Therefore I find it entirely normal that the writer of history is suspicious and rigorous about revolutions and reforms, and a tiny piece of the actually uncovered virtual past means more to him than all the risky dreams of the future. And especially now, when we face our unknown future with our unexpected independence, in the midst of a volatile Europe. Of course life is full of challenges . . . thus it is an advantage for the writer of history to be conservative . . . and it is not a disadvantage for the poet to be revolutionary.'