Hungarian Artists in Mexico at the Beginning of the 20th Century – The Activities of Antal Illés, Pál Horti and Gyula Schmidt

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The Porfiriato and Europe

"Mother of foreigners and mother-in-law of Mexicans" is a saying that is used to refer to the period of the Porfiriato (1876–1910) in Mexican history. During this era, Mexicans undoubtedly admired foreign (European and U.S.) culture, technology, science and civilization in general. Many also wished to attract capital and knowledge from abroad to foment the development of the country: a process that various Mexican intellectual and political leaders thought would be impossible without outside help.

Yet the relationship of the Porfiriato with Europe was not devoid of ambiguities. Let us start with Porfirio Díaz himself: his career was very much shaped by the victory against the French intervention at Puebla on 5 May 1862, in which he played a significant role as a 32-year-old brigadier general fighting under the orders of General Ignacio Zaragoza. Although the French succeeded in taking the city a year later – only to be reconquered by Díaz in 1867 – the Battle of Puebla is considered a crucial moment in Mexican history, as it "symbolizes Mexico's determination to thwart foreign aggression".[1] This military success paved the way for Díaz's further ascent in the ranks and legitimised his active participation in political life. Thus, the Porfiriato had to have a certain degree of anti-foreign sentiment – or to put it in another way, a dose of nationalism – as part of Díaz's proper charisma.

On the other hand, the history of independent Mexico is characterised by repeated foreign interventions. "At the time it won its independence, Mexico was the largest of the Spanish American countries. [yet] its geopolitical problems were enormous: international isolation; border difficulties; regional separatism and the deterioration of its roads" coupled with economic devastation during the struggle for independence, disruption of commercial relations, bankruptcy, etc. all of which contributed to political weakness and a rather chaotic situation.[2] During the first forty years of its existence, Mexico had more than fifty governments.[3] The weak state was liable to foreign ambitions,

[1] Britannica s. a.
[2] Cosío Villegas et al. 1985, 98.
[3] Foster 1999, 103.

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including a Spanish intervention landing in Tampico (1829), the first French intervention, also known as the Pastry War (1838–1839), the U.S.–Mexican War (1846–1848), resulting in the loss of approximately 2 million km^2 of national territory, an allied French, Spanish and British intervention blocking the harbour of Veracruz (1862) and the second French intervention (1862–1867) installing the reign of Maximilian of Habsburg as Emperor of Mexico (1864–1867), which came to an end via a military defeat and the execution of the emperor.

These armed conflicts interfered with the development of Mexican–European relations, leading to a complete break in the 1860s. Diplomatic ties were first restored with Spain (1871), and later, already in the years of the Porfiriato, with other countries such as Belgium and Portugal (1879), France (1880) and Great Britain (c.1884).[4] A notable absence was that of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy. In the latter case, the re-establishment of diplomatic relations took place thirty-four years after the execution of Maximilian in Querétaro (1867), at the very beginning of the 20th century.

By that time, Mexico's mineral resources and land had become increasingly attractive for the Dual Monarchy. The Mexican leadership, which adored European culture, wanted to normalise the country's relations with the state in the heart of Europe, which spanned more than 600,000 km^2. The Monarchy was not only the biggest country in the region, but was also an important player in maintaining Europe's status quo. Diplomatic ties were thus restored in 1901. The Monarchy opened a legation in Mexico City, while Mexico established one in Vienna. Besides diplomatic relations, consular ties were also formed with the principal aim of fomenting bilateral commerce. Consulates were typically instituted in industrial centres and harbours. In order to save on costs, they were run on an honorary basis. The Monarchy had honorary consulates in the ports of Tampico, Veracruz and (Mérida)-Progreso, as well as in Monterrey and Mexico City. The honorary consulates of Mexico functioned in Brno, Pressburg, Budapest and in the harbours of Trieste and Fiume (today Rijeka, Croatia). The diplomatic staff and the honorary consuls could play a role not only in promoting commercial relations but also cultural ties.

As part of the cultural exchange between Mexico and the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy, the first ten years of the 20th century saw one of the most intensive periods of Hungarian–Mexican cultural relations. These ties were solidified by Hungarian participation in the construction of one of the most emblematic buildings of Mexico City, the National Theatre, which was intended to commemorate the centenary of independence in 1910.[5] It is now the Palace of Fine Arts: a must-see destination in the Mexican capital. Some of its most attractive details are connected to Hungarian artists, and in particular, to Géza Maróti (1875–1941).[6] They include a group of sculptures featuring the female allegoric figures of Music, Song, Tragedy and Dance on the outside of the principle dome of the building, together with an eagle devouring a serpent: a reminder of the Aztec myth of origin found on the Mexican court of arms and flag. Inside the building, Hungarian artists designed the stained-glass ceiling of the auditorium with the theme of Apollo and

[4] RIGUZZI 1992, 374.

[5] For related articles published in the Hungarian press at that time see Pécsi Napló 1907a, 6; Pécsi Napló 1907b, 4; Magyar Iparművészet 1908a, 44, 49; Magyar Iparművészet 1908b, 70; Pécsi Napló 1908, 5–6; Pécsi Napló 1910, 3.

[6] Other Hungarian artists involved were Miksa Róth, Aladár Körösfői and Ede Telcs.

the nine Muses, the 55 m^2 art nouveau mosaic over the proscenium arch that runs around the stage-curtain, and the first design of the glass stage-curtain, displaying a Mexican landscape with plants and volcanoes.[7] The details of the Hungarian artists' contribution were forgotten for decades. This started to change from the 1980s,[8] both owing to Mexican efforts to shed light upon the construction of the building for its 50th anniversary (1984), and to the opening of Hungary towards the world after the change of regime (1990). The Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest organised a major Maróti oeuvre in 2002,[9] and recently there was an exposition in the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City on the occasion of the 140th anniversary of Géza Maróti's birth.[10]

Whereas the Hungarian works of art related to the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City have been thoroughly investigated, and a slowly but steadily increasing number of Hungarians and Mexicans have knowledge of their existence, the activities other Hungarian artists carried out in Mexico at the beginning of the 20th century are much less known. Therefore, this paper will focus on the painter Antal Illés, the architect Gyula Schmidt and the applied artist Pál Horti.

Antal Illés

Antal Illés was born in Szolnok in 1871. He studied arts in the capital, Budapest, and later continued his studies in München and Paris with the support of a scholarship from his hometown. He was a disciple of the Hungarian Ferenc Újházy (b. Szolnok, 1827–1921), as well as the French artists Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848–1884) and Jean Paul Laurens (1838–1921). Illés travelled to the United States in 1908 and prepared several works of art including oil paintings and watercolours. On the initiative of the Hungarian Association in New York, he met President Taft and painted a portrait of him.[11] Illés wrote to Elek K. Lippich from Texas for a letter of recommendation in November 1909, explaining his plans to visit Mexico and organise an exhibition of his overseas works upon returning home.[12] These ideas were not new. Illés already had the intention to travel to Mexico, and before setting out for his American journey, asked for a letter of recommendation from the consul

[7] For more see Szente-Varga 2010a, 139–152; 2010b, 147–157; 2002a, 113–123; 2002b, 112–113.

[8] The pioneering research of Sára Iványi-Balogh preceded that, but unfortunately did not receive due attention. See Ivánffyné Balogh 1964, 24–27; Iványi-Balogh–Jakabffy 1976, 127–149.

[9] Ács 2002.

[10] Reforma 2015, 22; Boletín de prensa 2015. The exposition was open from December 2015 until April 2016.

[11] It was placed into the office of the association.

[12] Letter of Antal Illés to Elek K. Lippich, councillor of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education, 28 November 1909. El Paso, Texas. Collection of the Széchényi National Library (OSZK).

general of Mexico in Hungary, Jenő Bánó.[13] "Thanks to the excellent recommendation of Bánó, I could paint the portrait of the president of the Mexican Republic, Porfirio Díaz"[14] – he wrote enthusiastically.

> "Illés was animated and recommended by Jenő Bánó, and thus arrived in the Mexican capital. The Austro–Hungarian envoy, count Hadik,[15] presented him to Porfirio Díaz, and Illés painted a portrait of the president. He ventured to one of the most picturesque regions in Mexico: Tehuantepec. One of the attractions of his works done there is the fact that until that moment no European artist had painted the locals of the Isthmus"[16] wrote Károly Lyka, art historian and critic in 1911.

Although Lyka does not mention any fellow travellers, Illés did not travel alone. He was accompanied by a close relative, the widow of the painter Sándor Bihari (1855–1906), herself an artist. She wrote three letters home on their experience which were first published in the daily paper *Pesti Hírlap,* and later in 1912 as a 44-page travelogue.[17]

> "It is difficult to take photos because people immediately realize what is going on and they leave. They believe in the superstition that those who were photographed would die. It was even more difficult to paint them because they are lazy to model and when you convince someone with money to do it, hundreds gather around to watch. Yet if it were their turn, they would leave, saying "mucho trabajo".[18]

Via the text, we can get an insight into such details of the trip as the visiting and painting of the Mexican president. Porfirio Díaz is presented as a very kind and gracious person, and is quoted as stating, "I am very thankful for the attention on behalf of the Hungarians.

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[13] Jenő Bánó (1855–1929). Jenő Bánó studied at the Naval Academy in Fiume. He worked for the navy and later the railways. This experience could have contributed to his desire to travel, but the reason he gives for setting out on a trip around the world, was the death of his wife, Kamilla Münnich. Bánó got to the American continent, visiting first the United States, then Mexico. He decided to stay in the latter place, founding his own plantation and marrying Juanita Yanez from the state of Oaxaca. The contacts of Bánó reached the highest levels, getting even to the Mexican President. Porfirio Díaz named him honorary consul general of Mexico in Budapest and the returning Bánó opened his office in 1903 under Andrássy Street number 83. He was a great promoter of intensifying economic and cultural contacts between Mexico and Hungary. He published three books and various articles on Mexico to share his experience and shatter the negative image the country had in Hungary. With respect to artists, besides Antal Illés, he also helped Géza Maróti and actually travelled to Mexico to be personally available and translate during the negotiations related to the works in the National Theatre.

[14] *Újság.* Szolnok, 04 January 1911.

[15] Count Max Hadik de Futak was the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy in Mexico in the years 1910 and 1911. He was preceded by Baron Karl Giskra and followed by Baron Ferenc Riedl in this position. Hadik was an experienced diplomat. Before getting to Mexico, he had worked in Berlin, Dresden, London, Brussels, Paris, Athens, the Holy See and München, in different ranks. Magyarország tiszti cím és névtára 1901–1918. Also see Godsey 1999.

[16] Lyka 1911, 351–357.

[17] Bihary 1912.

[18] Bihary 1910, 38.

Besides an enthusiastic feeling of sympathy, I am also very grateful towards Hungarians, because I was freed from my captivity by a Hungarian prince[19] (sic).”[20]

The French intervention of the 1860s and the empire of Maximilian in Mexico reappear once more in the travelogue when József Brájer [Breyer] is mentioned. “József Brájer is the [honorary] consul general of Sweden. It seems difficult to believe what I say: he came to Mexico 47 years ago with Emperor Maximilian. From a simple soldier, he made it to an important person.[21] He still speaks Hungarian very well and remained Hungarian in his heart. Even the Spanish [sic] call him “verdadero húngaro” / a real Hungarian.”[22]

Apart from Mexico City, Illés visited the village of Hueuetoca (and stayed at the residence of Guillermo Landa y Escandón[23]) and the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. The latter was possibly the place that inspired them most. Sándorné Bihari recalls it this way:

> “[Tehuantepec] is a garden of palm trees surrounded by mountains, converted into a peninsula by the River Tehuantepec. The suffocating tropical air is freshened by the breeze coming from the sea. Every coco-palm a gigantic pinwheel.
>
> There are so many colours, fruits and flowers, so much beauty, sunshine, singing of birds, and each of them lures you; the pleasure calls to dream in the arms of star-gazing, but the strong desire to work kept us away and our dwindling force was renewed upon seeing so much harmony and beauty.”[24]

Unlike his niece, Antal Illés had little time to share his overseas experience. He died untimely in an accident in Szolnok in 1911. The following year an exposition displaying 213 of his works (134 oil paintings and 79 watercolours) was organized.[25] Most of the works depicted Native Americans, especially Mescalero (Apache) people in New Mexico and Tehuantepec Indians living in South Mexico. Prices ranged between 50 and 2,000 Krones (korona).[26] It is interesting to note that the oil canvases included two portraits of the President of Mexico, Porfirio Díaz; a portrait of the consul of Mexico in Hungary, Jenő Bánó; and a portrait of the Mexican Minister of Foreign Relations, Louis Crill (sic), possibly Enrique C. Creel, who filled that position in 1910–1911. The paintings of Illés have since been scattered among private homes and collections.

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[19] The person in question was Baron János Csizmadia (born in Körmend), first lieutenant of the hussars. See Jancsó 2011a, 75; 2011b, 423.

[20] Bihary 1910, 37.

[21] József Breyer (b. 1844 in Kassa, today Kosice, Slovakia) was far from being a simple soldier. He was a veterinarian. Tardy 1990, 150. After the fall of the empire of Maximilian, Breyer stayed in Mexico, and worked as a veterinarian and a wine merchant, according to Pál Sarlay, another member of the Volunteer Corps.

[22] Bihary 1910, 37.

[23] Guillermo Landa y Escandón (1842–1927). Politician, member of the positivist circle of advisers to President Díaz, called Los Científicos, Governor of Mexico City.

[24] Bihary 1910, 38.

[25] The National Salon 1912–1915.

[26] Official currency of the Austro–Hungarian Dual Monarchy from 1892 until 1918.

Pál Horti

Pál Horti had been to Mexico a few years before Illés. Horti, originally called Hirth, was a well-known applied arts designer (furniture, carpets, etc.) in Hungary with a promising career.[27] For example, he won the Grand Prix at the first International Exhibition of Modern Decorative Art at Turin in 1902. "His designs featured at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1900 where he was awarded a gold medal for his carpets and furniture, as well as his ornamental design. Such was his reputation as an important advocate for Art Nouveau, that in 1904 he was asked (with the support of a small group of architects and designers including Géza Maróti and Ede Thoroczkai Wigand) to oversee the design and installation of the Hungarian display at the St. Louis International Exposition."[28] He stayed overseas.[29] "I am planning to stay abroad for about two years. During this time I would like to study indigenous crafts as well as Aztec art treasures and architectural ruins in America. In case of China, Japan and India, I would like to investigate bronze casting, enamelling and ceramics", wrote Horti in 1904 from St. Louis.[30] Yet he was not sure about the complete itinerary of his journey. "Mexico is the closest destination where I have to study Aztec and Toltec objects. I might need to continue my investigation in Peru and Bolivia."[31] The reason for this uncertainty was the real motivation behind this study trip and research: he was driven by the idea of eventually finding the place of origin of the Hungarians.

> "He was not only urged by a simple interest in the arts of other countries and races when widening the horizon of his interests towards North America and the East, but by the desire to find a connection between the eastern and the western cultures where the culture of our ancestors might fit. The only possible thing that interested him more than art, was the history of our origins."[32]

Horti, together with Gyula Schmidt, a Hungarian architect who joined him in the United States, travelled to Mexico and spent various months there. They visited Mexico City, Oaxaca, Mitla, Chichén Itzá, the excavations in Orizaba[33] and consulted the art collections of the National Museum and of the architect Guillermo de Heredia.[34] The Mexican trip had a profound impact on Horti. The decorative motifs reminded him of Hungarian folk art, and

[27] See Koós 1974, 173–190; 1982.

[28] Banham 1997, 584–585.

[29] On his U.S. works, see Somogyi 2008, 131–143; 2007, 105–122.

[30] Letter of Pál Horti to Elek K. Lippich, St. Louis, 08 December 1904, OSZK Collection. It is important to point out that both Illés and Horti wrote to Elek K. Lippich in order to get financial support. Lippich had a doctoral degree in liberal arts, had studied in Budapest, Leipzig and Berlin, travelled widely in Europe and visited numerous museums and collections. He started to work at the Department of Art of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education in 1886, and rising steadily in ranks and prestige, became a councillor two decades later. He is also referred to as the head of the official art politics of the country. Jurecskó 1982, 15.

[31] Letter of Pál Horti to Elek K. Lippich, New York, 09 April 1906. OSZK Collection.

[32] Schmidt 1907, 173.

[33] Ibid.

[34] He was a notable collector of Prehispanic Art, councillor of Mexico City, and designer of the Neoclassical Benito Juárez Hemicycle. Tablada 1992. The construction of the hemicycle began in 1906 on the centenary of Juárez's birth and was finished in 1911. Horti and Schmidt could have taken a glimpse at the monument dedicated to the Mexican statesman and the nearby National Theatre, both in the early phase of construction.

he started to assume a kinship between ancient Hungarians and the Tarascan/Purépecha cultures in Mexico, based on common Hunnic ancestors.[35] "The Huns not only rode across all Europe", he wrote, "but also roamed all America having crossed the Bering Strait."[36]

In order to prove his hypothesis, he copied (drew, painted, made plaster moulds, etc.) different motifs and folk artefacts, and also bought original objects. Fearing that some of these might be confiscated by Mexican authorities checking packs to be sent abroad, he kept several of his findings with him as personal luggage and sent the rest back home, including 150 plaster moulds and more than a dozen pots[37] from Tonolá.[38]

As Horti's personal records reveal, the study trip in Mexico was far from an easy one:

> "In no way can we talk about roads. It is impossible to travel by cart. People and luggage can only move forward on horseback and muleback. Of course, this is true for places where there is no train. Yet, it needs to be added that there are very few railway lines and that if one makes a research trip of this sort, he or she should not investigate along those lines, because Indians flee and perish from areas where trains work. It would be useless to look for folk art there. Those who contemplate Mexico from trains, can see very little."[39]

Horti basically complained about two obstacles in his letters: dwindling financial backing and the lack of Spanish knowledge. The first hindered his plans to travel more extensively and acquire more objects, the second prevented him from approaching locals and talking to them, and learning their tales and legends. Gyula Schmidt comments on Horti's intentions:

> "Connected to the migration of people and cultures, he was to trace the route that can take us back to the place of our origins on the basis of remaining reminiscences. He hoped that assiduous research and observation would bring facts and data that could prove his idea, and thus our misty history of origin would acquire a more accurate image."[40]

In order to disseminate his work, Horti planned to write a monumental book on his findings in the span of ten years, and publish it both in English and Hungarian. He even had the title: *The Language of Forms and Lines*.[41]

The premise of Horti's hypothesis, the Hunnic origin of indigenous Americans, was erroneous. Yet it is interesting to note that he was insisting on the Asian roots of American people when the dominant paradigm was still the African origin due to apparent similarities, like the construction of pyramids.

Horti stayed in Mexico longer than originally planned. He travelled from New York via Cuba and arrived in Veracruz in July 1906. Then, after almost five months, he finally returned to San Francisco in December 1906. By 1907, Horti had travelled to Asia, where he visited Yokohama, Kyoto, Manchuria, Singapore and Bombay, among other locations. He

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[35] Horváth 1991, 200–204.
[36] Letter of Pál Horti to Elek K. Lippich, New York, 09 April 1906. OSZK Collection.
[37] Letter of Pál Horti to Elek K. Lippich, Colima, Mexico, 15 October 1906. OSZK Collection.
[38] Tonolá is in the state of Jalisco and is a major handcraft centre.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Schmidt 1907, 173.
[41] Letter of Pál Horti to Kálmán Györgyi, Colima, Mexico, 23 October 1906. OSZK Collection.

died of yellow fever in Bombay on 25 May 1907. His ashes were brought back to Hungary and deposited in the National Pantheon, *Kerepesi temető.* The tombstone was designed by Géza Maróti and Ede Telcs.[42] Horti's possessions were donated to various ministries and museums:

> "Plans, images, the ancient Mexican collection as well as photos that belonged to the heritage of Pál Horti, were purchased by the Ministry of Trade and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education. The Mexican collection, together with the photos taken in Mexico, were partly acquired by the Museum of Applied Arts, the plans and the ceramics collection of modern times are to be shared among vocational schools supervised by the Ministry of Trade. Besides all these, there were some rather valuable plans and sketches in the heritage that the widow of the noteworthy artist donated to the National Hungarian Association of Applied Arts."[43]

Horti's widow partly sold and partly donated the Mexican collection of her late husband. The Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest acquired a considerable share, with 450 new objects catalogued.[44] As János Gyarmati points out, the objects were probably purchased by the Museum of Applied Arts instead of an institution with an ethnographic field of study because of Horti's friendship with Kálmán Györgyi, the President of the Association of Applied Arts. The association had financed some of the acquisitions of the Museum. Györgyi most likely tried to provide financial support for the widow of his old friend by making sure that Horti's collection was purchased at a high price. The Museum of Applied Arts paid 10,000 crowns for it in 1908.[45] The collection was exhibited right after it was purchased, at the beginning of the 20th century. It was exhibited again in 1926. Later, some pieces were moved to the Museum of Ethnography in the same city, but "the delivery of the collection did not take place in one go, and neither was it done in circumstances properly documented."[46] Nowadays the Museum of Applied Arts only preserves about 30 objects, principally watercolours made by Horti,[47] whereas some objects of Horti's original collection were identified in the Museum of Ethnography by Gyarmati.[48]

Another contribution Horti, a former teacher, made to Hungarian knowledge of the Americas was didactic material he prepared on American cultures. Horti sent some of this material to Hungarian schools that specialised in arts, while additional material was given to institutions that were training future artists, after his death. These pieces influenced the following generation of Hungarian artists, as can be seen, for example, in some of the ceramics of Hajnalka Zilzer (1893–1947).[49]

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[42] Related articles in Magyar Iparművészet 1906a, 246; 1906b, 299; 1907, 171–172; 1908c, 179; 1908d, 222; 1910, 241.

[43] Magyar Iparművészet 1908e, 298.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Gyarmati 2007, 159.

[46] Gyarmati 2007, 162.

[47] MLT 250/1-266/2.

[48] Gyarmati 2007, 155–167.

[49] Kiss 2014, 48–52.

Gyula Schmidt

Much less is known about Horti's travel companion and friend, Gyula Schmidt (1879–1915). Schmidt was born into a well-to-do bourgeois family. After completing his studies in his native city of Budapest, he moved to the United States where he worked for various architectural studios.[50] He met Horti in the U.S. and joined him on his study trip. This did not mean, however, that they always travelled together. For example, Schmidt moved on to Japan one and a half months before Horti, who stayed longer in the Americas.[51] Schmidt seems to have figured as a kind of side character in Horti's Mexican "adventure" and the overall trip as well, yet it should not be forgotten that he must have played a major role in preserving what he could of Horti's possessions left behind in Bombay. He also wrote a necrologue about his friend, published in 1907.

Schmidt, like Horti, contracted malaria, but he recovered, returned to Hungary and worked as a stone mason and architect until his death. His works include primary schools in the capital (Dembinszky Street) and in the town of Kiskunhalas, the Lutheran orphanage and hospital in Pressburg (today Bratislava, Slovakia), as well as artistically beautiful tombs[52] decorated with sculptures and mosaics in Budapest's Fiumei Road Graveyard.[53] The list is rather short because Gyula Schmidt died in 1915 at the age of 36. The complications of the malaria suffered in Mexico, as well as the hardships of World War I could have contributed to his early death.

Conclusions

"Insertion in world capitalism resulted in growing trade with Europe and also in a phenomenon that Angel Rama called "a gust of Europeism": the wines, the textiles, the furniture together with the values and the cultural norms [all came from the old continent]."[54] The high value placed on European art stimulated demand for the work of European artists, including people from the Central/Eastern part of the continent. Yet the attraction of Mexico was not necessarily strong enough to create direct links with artists from East Central Europe, as the lives of Illés, Horti and Schmidt make it clear. They all arrived in Mexico via the United States.

They stayed and worked in Mexico at the beginning of the 20th century, when there was no sizeable Hungarian or Austro–Hungarian colony in the country which could have preserved the memory of their visit.[55] They all came from an Empire – the Austro–Hungarian Dual Monarchy – that would soon disappear at the end of World War I, and

[50] Schmidt Gyula 1915.

[51] Schmidt 1907, 175.

[52] Designed for Ferenc Stiastny and his wife, the Mauritz family, György Sváb and his family, the family of Nándor Wagner and the Vértessi family. See www.kozterkep.hu/a/6031/Schmidt_D_Gyula.html (Accessed: 29.01.2017.)

[53] Schmidt had a firm specialised in stone masonry, working in the 1910s.

[54] Sefchovich 1987, 27.

[55] The Hungarian colony in Mexico began to grow due to limitations on immigration introduced in the U.S. in the 1920s. It never became very numerous, though, at most it counted approximately 3,000 people. See Szente-Varga 2007.

arrived in a Mexico under the rule of Porfirio Díaz. The Porfirian system would perish, too, destroyed by the 1910 Revolution, which laid the basis for a new, modern Mexico. Cultural ties and tastes, including the Europeism of the old system, were abandoned. Mexicans increasingly embraced nationalism and tended to relegate foreign cultural contributions to the background, discarding what seemed almost obligatory before. All these underlying factors made it unlikely that the activities of the Hungarian artists in Mexico described above and their artistic work related to Mexico would attain much fame. Their short lives and careers also jeopardised their legacies.

Taking into account the normalisation of Austro–Hungarian – Mexican relations in 1901 and their growing intensity at the beginning of the 20th century, as well as the above mentioned historic reasons, it would not be surprising to discover through careful research that more Central and Eastern European artists worked in Mexico and took artistic inspiration from the Latin American country in the above mentioned period.

Because the successor states of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy embraced a variety of national languages and historical frameworks, research on subjects of the monarchy who travelled to the Americas generally focuses exclusively on members of one linguistic group. However, this is rather problematic because the Monarchy was a multinational empire, and subjects of the monarchy who travelled to the Americas were characterised by differences not only between official and personal identities, but also between their old world identities and the ones they acquired in the eyes of the locals. An example can be found in one of the emblematic buildings of Mexico City, the *Casa del Conde del Valle de Orizaba,* which is today known as the *Casa de los Azulejos,* or the House of Tiles, due to its decoration. Various sources mention that the peacock mural painting of the first floor – seen by hundreds of people every day who eat in the popular restaurant which is located there – was designed by Jean de Paleologu (Bucharest, 1855 – Miami, USA, 1942), an artist contacted by Frank Sanborns in New York in the second half of the 1910s. He is mostly referred to as Hungarian, sometimes as Romanian, and rarely as French. Most records call him Pacologue (sometimes Palcologue in Mexican sources).[56] Paleologu is principally known as a magazine illustrator and poster designer. He worked and lived in London and Paris, and in 1900 he moved overseas.

His contribution to Mexican architecture inevitably raises the issue of identity. Why is he remembered as Hungarian by various Mexican sources? Does it have to do with the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy or with Géza Maróti, who had visited Mexico a decade earlier and contributed to the interior design of the Mexican National Theatre? What did the Mexican elite think about Hungarians in the 1910s, and did they have a prevailingly positive or negative impression?

It is important to note that although Antal Illés, Pál Horti and Gyula Schmidt remained little-known after their deaths in part as a result of their short lives, their brief careers were not the primary reason why they were quickly forgotten. Paleologu was also largely forgotten in Mexico, despite the fact that he died in 1942. Paleologu's relative obscurity in Mexico confirms the hypothesis outlined in this essay that works by Central and Eastern European artists in Mexico at the beginning of the 20th century tended to sink into oblivion

[56] He is mentioned as Pacologue, for example, in *Pavorreales de Pacologue en la Casa de los Azulejos* 2013; Cronicas s. a. He also figures in the novel of RAMÍREZ 2011. Appears as Palcologue in CHÁVEZ FRANCO 2007.

primarily due to historic events and processes on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, such as the Mexican Revolution, World War I and World War II, the formation of the Soviet Bloc and the Cold War, which tempestuously destroyed old systems and created new ones while cutting links between Mexico and East Central Europe.

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