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The National Direction of Applied Arts? Ideas on the "Nationalization" of Applied Arts in Hungary in the Last Quarter of the Nineteenth Century[*]

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Drawing on contemporary Hungarian and Central European writings, exhibition texts and institutional debates, this article reconstructs how the "national direction" of applied arts was conceptualized in Hungary between roughly 1870 and 1900. It shows that discussions of national style were shaped by a recurring set of dilemmas: whether "national" applied art was possible at all, what its legitimate models should be (European historical styles, "Eastern" traditions, vernacular ornament or reconstructed "ancient Magyar" motifs) and whether national character should be sought in style and ornamentation, or rather in taste, usefulness and modern functionality. Case studies centred on key actors (Arnold Ipolyi, Károly Pulszky, József Hampel, Károly Tagányi and József Huszka) and exhibitions (such as the Goldsmith Exhibition at the Museum of Applied Arts) and the vocational-school network in Austria-Hungary reveal a shift from historically grounded, comparative arguments toward increasingly ahistorical, essentializing readings of folk ornament. By the turn of the century, the concept of "national style" had largely receded from scholarly discourse even as it was gaining popular appeal. Although attempts were made to fit certain groups of objects and forms into separate national narratives, a comparative, large-scale regional perspective shows that the shared motif repertoire of multi-ethnic Central Europe continued to connect rather than separate its cultures.

Keywords: applied arts; national style; Hungary; Museum of Applied Arts; ornamentation; historicism; vocational schools; folk art; Habsburg monarchy; Central Europe; 1870–1900.

An essential part of creating national identity was emphasizing differences from "the other". In the nineteenth century, when the creation of a national style and national art played a legitimizing role not only in Hungary but in most of the nation states of Central Europe, cottage industry, handicrafts and folk art became important elements in the shaping of identity.

In this article we will attempt to explore what people thought about the national direction of applied arts in the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, with the help of writings from that period. As we will see below, during the period of historicism, the programme for the creation of modern applied arts was shaped by the following questions. Is national applied art possible? What could be the models for a Hungarian applied art to be created: the great European

[*] The following article is a revised and expanded version of the study entitled Az iparművészet nemzeti iránya? Elképzelések az iparművészet „nemzetiesítéséről" Magyarországon a 19. század utolsó negyedében (Ars Hungarica 2025/3). The topic addressed in this study will be discussed in greater detail in my forthcoming monograph on the history of national architectural endeavours in nineteenth-century Central Europe.

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historical styles; the entirety of Western and Eastern artistic traditions; a unique collection of motifs created through specific internal development; folk ornamentation untouched by the great styles; or a collection of imagined ancient Hungarian motifs? Or can applied art characteristic of the nation be created with practicality and usefulness in mind?

My aim is to use a few examples to show how thinking about applied arts and, in connection with this, the idea of a national style took shape in Hungary between 1870 and 1900. At the same time, it is worth briefly referring to the broader Central European context in which questions about the national character of industrial art were discussed in Hungary. In Central Europe, especially in the territory of the present-day Czech Republic and Poland, efforts to create a national identity were closely linked to the formation of the German national self-image. In many cases, German ideas about national style were the initiators and catalysts of processes taking place in the Central European nation states. For example, an important part of Polish, Hungarian and Czech ideas about national style was the expression that their national characteristics differed from artistic forms associated with Germanness.

On the other hand, ideas about German style and their performative manifestations also served as inspiration for the Central European nation states. For example, writings and exhibitions on the creation of German national style and German national applied arts led to questions about national applied arts in Hungary and the present-day Czech Republic.

In 1876, the Erste Deutsche Kunst und Kunstindustrie Ausstellung (First German Art and Art Industry Exhibition) was held at the Glaspalast in Munich, presenting the German Renaissance style as the national style.[1] At the exhibition, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century objects were not displayed individually, by type, period or region, but were arranged in joint groups and presented in uniformly furnished cabinets. The aim of the concept was to create a sense of experience, to convey a kind of national spirit. This sense of experience not only offered the German nation a shared past, but also, through this, the possibility of a shared national (or rather imperial) future. It was from this perspective that Julius Lessing, director of the Berlin Museum of Applied Arts, referred to the great figures of sixteenth-century German painting in 1877.

> Our era, with its powerful national resurgence, feels spiritually drawn to the great era of the Reformation [...]; if we want to reflect on the splendour of Germany's past, if we seek symbols of beauty and dignity in old German life, if we want to give our mountains and houses a reflection of a magnificent past, we do not look back to the Gothic Middle Ages, we call upon the manifestations of the Reformation – the era of Luther, Albrecht Dürer and Hans Holbein.[2]

1 *Katalog der Kunst- und Kunstindustrie-Ausstellung.*

2 "Unsere Zeit mit ihrem kräftigen nationalen Aufschwunge fühlt sich geistig hingezogen zu der grossen Zeit der Reformation [...]; wenn wir uns spiegeln wollen im Glanze deutscher Vergangenheit, wenn wir Sinnbilder suchen für Schönheit und Würde altdeutschen Lebens, wenn wir unsern Bergen und Wohnhäusern einen Abglanz prächtiger Vorzeit verleihen wollen, so greifen wir nicht zurück in das gothische Mittelalter, wir rufen die Erscheinungsweise nach der Reformation, die Zeit eines Luther, eines Albrecht Dürer und eines Hans Holbein." See: LESSING, *Die Renaissance*, 4.

The direction and parallels of the national style aspirations of the Central European nation states are well illustrated by the educational materials of the industrial schools established in various regions of the Austrian Empire after the 1870s. The aim of industrial schools and technical colleges was to train a suitable class of craftsmen who could design and manufacture architectural ornaments, decorative works and everyday objects. Consequently, one of the main tasks of these schools was to create a uniform, contemporary industrial art throughout the monarchy, based on a pattern book of national decorative art motifs. The number of these schools grew rapidly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. While there were two dozen such schools in 1876, by 1900 there were around two hundred operating throughout the empire.[3] While Vienna regarded these schools as the custodians of a common "imperial style" encompassing the nations of the empire, these institutions also became catalysts for local national (regional) styles as developers of local crafts. While teachers who graduated from the Vienna School of Applied Arts (Kunstgewerbeschule) "spread" a uniform artistic idea as teachers at the empire's industrial schools, the Vienna Museum of Applied Arts (Museum für Kunst und Industrie) often purchased works from local industrial schools that displayed local artistic characteristics for its own collection.[4] The extent to which the concept of a unified art education could be controversial in a multi-ethnic empire at the end of the nineteenth century was pointed out as early as 1871 by art historian Rudolf Eitelberger, director of the Museum für Kunst und Industrie in Vienna:[5]

> Anyone visiting exhibitions in Vienna to learn about Austrian art will find the information they receive there very inadequate. Drawing and colour seem to have become a means of dividing people rather than uniting them. Unfortunately, there is no doubt that language has become a divisive element. Any intensification of linguistic conflict widens the divide between people. Until now, however, it was believed that art was the very element that united people. After all, a drawing or painting speaks to everyone equally; it is equally understandable and accessible to everyone.[6]

In Hungary, the first writings on the importance of vocational schools appeared in the 1870s. Arnold Ipolyi,[7] an art historian, for example, assigned a prominent role to vocational museums and especially vocational schools in the creation of national applied arts based on medieval forms, saying the following:

3 REYNOLDS-CORDILEONE, *Die österreichische Synthese*, 205.

4 GOTTSMANN, *The Arts Policy*, 18.

5 To Eitelberger see: KERNBAUER et al., *Rudolf Eitelberger*.

6 "Wer die Ausstellungen Wiens besucht, um sich über die Kunst in Österrreich zu orientiren, der wird durch dieselben eine sehr ungenügende Antwort erhalten. Fast scheint es, als ob Zeichnung und Farbe auch bei uns ein Mittel würde, die Völker zu trennen und nicht zu verbinden. Daß die Sprache ein völkerscheidendes Element geworden ist, das ist leider wohl kein Zweifel mehr. Jede Stärkung des sprachlichen Conflictes erhöht die Scheidewand zwischen den Völkern. Aber bisher war man der Ansicht, daß eben die Kunst dasjenige Element sei, welches die Völker vereinige. Denn eine Zeichnung, eine Gemälde, spricht zu jedem gleich, ist jedem gleichmäßig verständlich und zugänglich." See: EITELBERGER, *Die Kunstbestrebungen Österreichs*.

7 To Arnold Ipolyi see: VÉGH, *Arnold Ipolyi*.

> For example, imitating natural flowers in carvings, ornamentation and jewellery suddenly became fashionable. A successful artistic creation, drawing, or design is transferred to the arts and crafts industry through skilful design. It is immediately picked up and imitated ad infinitum. Everything takes on the shape of a flower. Not only are carvings, ornamentation, and jewellery full of roses, violets, and flowing flower petals, but so are glasses and dishes, as well as inkwells, powder compacts and cigar holders. [...] Similarly, geometric or arabesque patterns on fabric are replaced by natural or decorative rose shapes, for example on suits and furniture. But on the carpet, in order to match the larger dimensions of the ornament, the rose often has to be as big as a cabbage head. Slowly it becomes tasteless, ridiculous, and then we say that it has gone out of fashion. [...] [A] vocational school is needed, where drawing, pattern making and technique are taught, and also, according to the various crafts, in separate specialized vocational schools. This is the modernity of industrial museums, where the most outstanding examples are collected for study and exhibited to raise better taste.[8]

The 1870s in Hungary was the period during which the independent applied arts collection, the Museum of Applied Arts, was founded.[9] As part of this movement, special lectures were held on the style of objects of handicraft and applied arts, and on how artistic taste, which can influence object culture, can be shaped and formed. Many, including Arnold Ipolyi, believed that collections of applied arts and their historical material should play a prominent role in the development of artistic taste in his own era. His argument was based on a historical perspective. In connection with raising artistic taste to a higher level, he argued for the need for a unique artistic form based on historical forms. As an expert on medieval monuments in Hungary, he believed that medieval forms provided the appropriate starting point for national applied arts. Here he makes a clear distinction between the idealized (and "confused") image of the Middle Ages presented by Romanticism and that of his own age, based on scientific findings. In his theoretical construct, he assigned a prominent role to industrial museums and, in particular, vocational schools in the creation of national applied arts based on Romanesque and Gothic forms.

> The poor imitation and mimicry of classical antiquity [...] gives way to medieval romanticism. At first, this too began to dominate as a vague, confused concept, but [...] embraced by a newly awakened religious sentiment and nationalist tendencies, it became the subject of profound study in literature, science and art. The great ecclesiastical styles of the Middle Ages, Romanesque and Gothic, return and bring with them new elements for art and industry. [...] As basilicas and cathedrals are stylistically restored and similarly repaired or newly built, following the example of the old ones, their furniture and equipment artists, restoration architects, designers and modellers are once again taking over the production of these industrial and handicraft objects, or simply

8 IPOLYI, *A műipar fejlődése*, 229, 231.

9 See: ÁCS, *A budapesti Iparművészeti Múzeum*.

> designing, modelling and shaping their artistic forms. And this is what gives new impetus to ecclesiastical art and, with it, to industrial art.[10]

During the 1882 presentation at the Museum of Applied Arts of the history of applied arts, and within that, ceramics (known at the time as the clay industry), questions inevitably arose as to the extent to which any national characteristics or features could be identified in the objects. Even before the exhibition, historian Béla Majláth attempted to prove the national character of medieval ceramic art in a longer study. In contrast, art historian Károly Pulszky wrote his study based on his observations while curating the exhibition with József Hampel, in which he wrote about the formative role of European historical styles in late medieval ceramic objects.

Majláth's argument was as follows: "While abroad, in the field of ceramics, French and Italian majolica artists presented masterpieces of art, reworking antique ideas (!) but without a national direction; Hungarian ornamental art, on the other hand, not only asserted its national character in clothing, textiles, embroidery, carved and painted chests, cabinets, and even ecclesiastical decorations, but also transferred the same motifs to pottery, and we find them on the vessels, tiles, stove drawers and bowls; of course, without artistic conception, creation or execution, but with a clearly expressed national character."[11] However, Pulszky believed that "[r]esearch to date has not proven that Hungarian ornamental art at the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth century was national in character, but rather that in our country, as in the northern and eastern parts of Europe in general, Gothic taste was struggling with the spreading Renaissance taste".[12]

Ultimately, the question arose as to what extent the primitive nature (provincialism) of handicrafts could be seen as a national stylistic feature, or whether it was more a mechanism characteristic of this region for the spread of European styles.

Following the national book exhibition organized by the Museum of Applied Arts in 1882, entitled Book Exhibition Memorial, another major exhibition (exhibited 3,787 items in five sections) stood out in terms of both size and professional foundation: the Historical Goldsmithing Exhibition, which opened at the National Museum on 17 February 1884.[13] The exhibition, organized by a scientific committee,[14] presented the development of goldsmithing in a historical narrative.[15] In line with the contemporary European conception of the history of applied arts, the exhibition presented the collected material in the context of the system of pattern adoption and dissemination, and the narrative of centres and surrounding areas. This approach necessarily resulted in the national narrative being pushed into the background. More precisely, it was shifted to the field of ornamentation. Not surprisingly, this was the direction from which the exhibition organizers received the most criticism.

10 IPOLYI, *A műipar fejlődése*, 231.

11 MAJLÁTH, *Agyagiparunk*, 46.

12 PULSZKY, *A magyar agyagművesség*, 264.

13 See: *Kunstchronik: Wochenschrift für Kunst und Kunstgewerbe* 19 (1884), 35 (12 Juni), Sp. 573–579.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 4 (1884), 47 (február 17.), 1.; *Pesti Napló* 35 (1884), 43 (február 13.), 2–3.; *Rozsnyói Hiradó* 7 (1884), 15 (április 13.), 2.

14 The members of this committee were: Arnold Ipolyi, Ferenc Pulszky, István Keglevich, György Ráth and Károly Pulszky. The curators of the exhibition were: Károly Pulszky, Jenő Radisics, Lajos Thallóczy and János Szendrei.

15 *Könyvkiállítási emlék; A magyar történeti ötvösmű-kiállítás.*

József Hampel, archaeologist at the Hungarian National Museum, wrote an introductory essay on the goldsmithery exhibition, which gave him the opportunity to discuss the nature of national art in relation to the exhibited material, alongside an overview of Hungarian goldsmithing.[16] In his stylistic analysis, he rejected the idea of an independent national art, considering Hungarian artworks to be part of the common European artistic heritage. He wrote that the formal characteristics of the objects made in Hungary and presented at the exhibition were not so much related to the national affiliation of the clients, but rather could be considered local variations and manifestations of European stylistic trends. For Hampel, the distinctive local character was represented by decorative motifs interpreted as local variations of forms originating in the East, in Byzantium. Ornamentation thus becomes the bearer of national character in this writing and will represent the source of a Hungarian style to be created in later decades, not only for Hampel, but also for his contemporaries, such as Jenő Radisics, director of the Museum of Applied Arts. In his writing, Hampel emphasized that "the geographical location of our country and the close contact of our people with the West and the East are the main reasons why every artistic movement, whether it originated in the West, the South or the East, also reached our country".[17] In his view, despite the openness of art and the mixture of styles that appeared here, no national style developed, but the characteristic ornamentation of the region continued to live on. According to Hampel, Hungarian historical metalwork took its structure from Western art, but its motifs, decorations and colours from Eastern art. He included in the Eastern influence the Arabs, Byzantium, Eastern Christianity, the influence of the Ottoman world, and sixteenth-century Western pattern books inspired by Eastern motifs. The positivist attitude with which Hampel concluded his essay is striking. He believed that the exhibition had made it possible to clarify the most pressing issue of the age, the problem of national artistic style and its context: "There is no more important problem in our art history than the question of national style. This and many other difficult questions have now been resolved by our current exhibition."[18]

Historian Károly Tagányi responded critically to this approach. In his study, he outlined his ideas about national styles that emerged from local conditions, based on material from the goldsmithery exhibition and articles published about it.[19] His view polemicized against the trend represented by József Hampel, who believed in styles independent of national characteristics and in the adoption of models from other areas of art geography. In this article, Tagányi strongly criticized what he considered to be an outdated view of creating style from patterns and motifs, and spoke of national styles that had developed through internal, immanent development, embodying the specific characteristics and ideas of nations. "Every nation developed from its own unique complex, that is, its own style, which could not be imported from anywhere else, because it sprang from its own soil and its own world. This is how the English, French, German etc. Renaissance arose in England, France, Germany etc., on their own soil, on their own, without any Italian Renaissance."[20]

16 HAMPEL, *Műtörténetünk.*

17 HAMPEL, *Műtörténetünk,* 299.

18 HAMPEL, *Műtörténetünk,* 307.

19 TAGÁNYI, *Styl és történelem;* GOSZTONYI, *Ő tisztán franczia mesterének.*

20 TAGÁNYI, *Styl és történelem,* 500.

Tagányi criticized the idea that certain styles emerged later in Hungary and passed more slowly. Contrary to the idea of belatedness, he spoke of the specific, local form of a given style. According to Hampel, Tagányi said, style is only a passing fashion, whereas (and here he referred to the philosopher Hyppolite Taine), "the same style that prevails in art at the same time appears equally in all manifestations of literature, politics and social life under different names".[21] Tagányi saw only imitation and soulless copying in nineteenth-century applied arts, rather than individuality. In contrast, Károly Pulszky, who shared Hampel's view, recognized the invention, craftsmanship and professionalism in the applied arts of his own time. He saw that the most prominent applied artists of his era did not produce imitations, but created something new, similar to their medieval predecessors.

Since his experiences at the 1873 World Exhibition in Vienna, Károly Pulszky had been concerned with the problem of creating modern applied arts in Hungary. In 1878, in his book entitled *A magyar háziipar díszítményei* (Decorations of Hungarian Cottage Industry), published in collaboration with graphic artist Friedrich Fischbach, he presented his views on the history of Hungarian cottage industry, its place in Europe and the role of modern handicrafts among the general public.[22] In his opinion, the collection compiled by Flóris Rómer and János Xantus for the Vienna World Exhibition in 1872 drew attention to the importance of cottage industry. As Pulszky pointed out, the collection showed that Hungarian cottage industry was not only national, but also capable of development. Following Pulszky's detailed introductory study, the volume presents 33 plates showing the characteristic textile designs and embroidery patterns of the various regions of Austria-Hungary at that time,[23] and seven plates featuring decorative patterns collected by Antal Reguly from his ethnographic field research in Yugor Land (Khanty-Mansia, RU). The album, featuring Fischbach's drawings, was born out of the realization that the decorative motifs preserved in the objects were almost forgotten alongside the development of industry. The aim of the album was to encourage contemporary crafts to use folk motifs. Above all, he considered the artefacts of textile art to be noteworthy, because, as he wrote, "[i]t is the textile industry that has best preserved its character; it is in table and bed linen and various items of clothing that we find the most clearly and diversely developed decorative style of our people".[24] Unlike later collections and presentations, the selection criteria here were not based on illustrating historical development, but rather on providing examples of the most beautiful decorations for contemporary applied artists. In addition, however, Károly Pulszky, who compiled the album together with the illustrator Fischbach, also raised questions related to the history of applied arts in the foreword to the volume, such as the extent to which individual decorative forms can be linked to a particular region and people. Pulszky conveys the contemporary view that the history of Western European applied arts can be divided into stylistic periods in line with the fine arts, and that its stylistic forms follow in the footsteps of sculpture and painting, but its products are merely imitations of the works of "high art". In contrast, in this article he still casts his vote in favour of the independently developed Hungarian cottage industry. At the same

21 TAGÁNYI, *Styl és történelem*, 499.

22 PULSZKY – FISCHBACH, *A magyar háziipar*.

23 Such as Bratislava, Báhoň, Budmerice, Štefanová, Hniezdne, (SK), Pamhagen, Kittsee (AT), Hărman, Rimetea, Huedin, Ghindari (RO).

24 PULSZKY – FISCHBACH, *A magyar háziipar*, 4.

time, he links the motif repertoire of Hungarian textile art to the pattern repertoire of Eastern European (Russian and South Slavic) cottage industry, referring to contemporary pattern collections.[25] At the same time, in connection with the spread and borrowing of patterns, Pulszky considers it important to note that in textile art, decorative forms are in most cases derived from weaving techniques and the materials used, and therefore have no national characteristics: "In addition to the fact that this method of decoration is closely related to the method of production and largely derives from it, there is also the fact that it is almost impossible to distinguish between local or national groups among the patterns."[26] At the same time, he detects an Eastern character in the decorative motifs of surviving (and known) sixteenth–eighteenth-century pieces of textile art in Hungary; however, he attributes this not to Slavic influences, but (based on the research of Antal Reguly) to the Uralic peoples and Ottoman influences. One can assume that Pulszky's concept was a kind of counter-reaction to Pan-Slavic national aspirations, a sentiment that is illustrated well in Lay's writing:

> Remarkably, the Magyars have incorporated a large number of Slavic words into their language, yet these artistic products have not found the slightest imitation among them. At most, their clothes are decorated with ordinary colourful ribbons, with no embroidery of their own making. [...] These works are not from the part of Asia where the Magyars finally arrived, but are more likely remnants of a unique Slavic culture passed down through tradition.[27]

In his 1886 lecture entitled Applied Arts and Style, Pulszky explored the concept of modern applied arts and examined the fundamental question of the era, namely whether a national style was even possible.[28] In his answer to this question, he offered a framework for interpretation that could be useful for other artistic discourses as well, focusing on style on the one hand and taste on the other. He separated local characteristics from universal styles that could be interpreted from a historical perspective and outside of national frameworks.

> If we look around Europe, we will find that there is no such thing as a true national style that individual nations have consciously sought and applied, but only a particular taste that characterizes the products of each nation. [...] The Romanesque style arose from the blending of ancient motifs with the artistic forms of the various new nations that invaded the Roman Empire during the Migration Period. This style was

25 LAY – FISCHBACH, *Südslavische Ornamente*; STASOV, *L'Ornement*.

26 PULSZKY – FISCHBACH, *A magyar háziipar*, 6.

27 "Merkwürdig und auffallend bleibt es und verdient hervorgehoben zu werden, dass beispielweise die Magyaren, während sie eine Menge slawischer Worte in ihrer Sprache aufgenommen haben [...] bei ihnen (sic!) diese Kunstprodukte keine, auch nicht die geringste Nachahmung gefunden haben. Ihre Kleider sind höchstens mit gewöhnlichen bunten Bändern verziert ohne irgend eine selbst verfertigte Stickerei. [...] Der Ursprung dieser Arbeiten nicht in jenem Theile Asiens, wohin die Magyaren zuletzt gekommen sind, zu suchen ist, sondern viel wahrscheinlicher die Reste einer eigenartigen slawischen Cultur sind, welche sich durch Tradition von Geschlecht zu Geschlecht fortvererbt." LAY – FISCHBACH, *Südslavische Ornamente*, 23. Quoted by PULSZKY – FISCHBACH, *A magyar háziipar*, 5.

28 PULSZKY, *Iparművészet és stíl*.

> common throughout Europe, and local differences arose only insofar as more or less elements of ancient culture remained in a given place, or insofar as it was closer to one of the two centres of the ancient world, Byzantium or Rome. [...] If we speak of style in the sense justified solely by the history of art, then there is no such thing as an Austrian, English, French or Hungarian style. [...] But what was the starting point for those who sought the Hungarian style?[29]

Pulszky continued,

> From the fact that in Hungary, primarily among the peasantry, such decorations appear on household items that are currently nowhere to be found in Western Europe; and that is precisely why they said: behold, the independent, distinctive Hungarian taste! I believe that such definitions cannot be considered serious. Simply concluding that something is separate and unique because it is different from what occurs elsewhere, without examining its origins, is a process that can only lead astray. The question is whether these particular decorations really did not occur anywhere else, and whether they have always occurred here since Hungarians settled on this land. If the answer to both of these questions, or even just one of them, is yes, then we would have to acknowledge that we are dealing with an original taste here.[30]

Following on from his 1878 writings on the Hungarian character of folk art (then referred to as folk crafts), he again pointed out that motifs associated with specific places and regions can often be found among other peoples of this region as well. He pointed out that, at that time, Slavic researchers were the first to study the folk-art objects of the Hungarian peasantry, so it is not surprising that they wanted to incorporate them into the cultural heritage of the Slavs, attempting to prove the Slavic origin of their decorative treasures (a clear reference to Felix Lay's views). At the same time, however, Pulszky emphasized that there were already examples of applied art (domestic crafts) used by the higher social classes in the sixteenth century, in addition to Hungarian folk art products. As he pointed out, Western parallels can also be found among the decorative motifs of these artifacts. Among the interior design objects of the bourgeoisie and the landed gentry that were considered typically Hungarian, for example,

> the Toroczkó embroideries, which we consider to be a specialty today, can be found in German embroidery books published in the sixteenth century, sometimes identical stitch for stitch. These are nothing more than late Gothic and Renaissance embroidery elements. In fact, we can trace some elements back to much earlier times.[31]

29 PULSZKY, *Iparművészet és stíl*, 196, 197.

30 Ibidem.

31 PULSZKY, *Iparművészet és stíl*, 197.

The above lines highlight Pulsky's fundamental view of the role and historical place of ornamentation. Like Hampel, he believed that folk ornamentation existed in the context of European style history and high culture, and not in isolation from it. For example, he did not consider floral ornamentation showing Persian and ottoman influences to be an immanent folk motif, but linked it to European artistic tradition.

On the possibility of creating a Hungarian national style, he wrote that it should be judged in terms of its usefulness and practicality. In other words, if we create pragmatically, taking into account the circumstances of the place, the work will necessarily bear the characteristics of the nation.

> In the field of applied arts, the main thing is to see clearly what the task to be solved is in each case. If we solve this task well, we will also solve it in a Hungarian way. This is when our products will acquire that special flavour that makes them popular abroad. Only under these circumstances can craftsmen and industrial artists expect society and the state to help and support them. For if they merely strive to produce specialities that foreigners at exhibitions can describe as the unique products of a unique nation, in other words, as curiosities, this is not a goal worth striving for. The study of stylistic remnants found among the peasantry is undoubtedly a useful thing that should not be neglected, but we should not believe that it is a panacea that will lead to the flourishing of Hungarian applied arts. Modern Hungary needs modern Hungarians and modern applied artists, not outdated traditions. And I am convinced that if practitioners of applied arts strive to satisfy the tastes of the Hungarian public, they will certainly become more Hungarian than if they chase the fleeting approval of foreign nations with specialities unknown to them.[32]

The question of practicality, usefulness and the authenticity of modern creations that meet the needs of the age becomes truly interesting in the context of contemporary applied art. Here, Pulszky advises the craftsmen and applied artists of his time not to follow the forms of the past, but rather the tastes of the public, who will then support them. This not only reveals the interdependence of craftsmen and customers, but also Pulszky's conviction that the fundamental task of contemporary applied arts and crafts is to satisfy the practical needs of the public for everyday objects.

As mentioned earlier, the increasing number of industrial schools and technical colleges that appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century provided the knowledge base from which Pulszky believed it was possible to create the contemporary domestic crafts and applied arts that he felt were lacking. One of the main tasks of these schools was to train a class of craftsmen who could form the basis of designers and manufacturers of reproduced building ornaments, decorative works and everyday objects. The pattern books, which were indispensable for education and reflected the additive approach of historicism (presenting the motifs of national art), became the guidelines for the domestic arts and crafts industry.[33]

The 1884 goldsmithery exhibition marked a turning point in the history of thinking about national style. The examination of the history of handicrafts not only sparked

32 PULSZKY, *Iparművészet és stíl*, 198–199.

33 See: SZÉKELY, *A magyarországi ipari szakoktatási rendszer*.

debates, but also led to a more precise definition of the scope and methodology of individual disciplines (industrial art history, art history, ethnography).

In light of the above, it is clear that in the mid-1880s, as a result of research into ornamentation in the field of decorative arts, new ideas related to the national style as a current topic did not originate in the field of architecture; the discourse revolved around applied arts. This change had several consequences. Among the writings exploring the question of national ornamentation, some appeared that did not seek the source of the national style in historical styles. For the authors of these texts, the material culture of the tenth-century Magyars (imagined mainly on the basis of written texts) was the inspiration for the national style. The folk-art research of amateur ethnographer József Huszka provided an important reference point for understanding material culture. Huszka's views differed radically from those of Károly Pulszky and József Hampel, who viewed the ornamentation preserved in folk material culture from the perspective of European style history. József Huszka and representatives of the emerging Hungarian ethnography, such as János Jankó and Ottó Herman,[34] relied on the part of Gottfried Semper's theory of ornamentation that showed that the ancient forms of ornamentation had been preserved in peasant culture, and arguing that thus the primordial state of national art(s) could be found in the peasant material culture of individual nations. Continuing this line of thought, they believed that through Hungarian folk art, it was possible to reach the roots of Hungarian national art, the culture of the conquering Magyars and ultimately the essence of the Hungarian national spirit.[35]

In the first half of the 1880s, Huszka still derived national ornamentation from the late Renaissance handicrafts of Hungary.

> When I began collecting material on Hungarian decorative styles years ago, I first visited the Székely Land, which is rich in originality and thus promises the most material for learning about our national decorative styles. Comparing the material from the Székely Land with that from the 1881 national women's industry exhibition in Budapest, which had opened in the meantime, and later with that from the industrial exhibition in Cluj (Kolozsvár), I became convinced that even in the last century the national decorative style still existed throughout Hungary and that its main features were the same in the whole country, although there were some local differences in the application of individual decorative elements. Transylvania's complete independence in the field of applied arts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries led to a somewhat different, uniform development from the rest of Hungary, which is why the most reliable material for learning about Hungarian decorative style in recent centuries can be found in Transylvania.[36]

Here we can also find the roots of the idea that viewed the collection of folk motifs he had gathered from a somewhat ahistorical perspective as the source of Hungarian

34 See: KRESZ, *A magyar népművészet*; PALÁDI-KOVÁCS, *Jankó Jánosról*; HOFER, *Őstörténet*.

35 See: SINKÓ, *A 19. századi ornamentika-teóriák*.

36 HUSZKA, *Magyar díszítő styl*, 5.

ornamentation, on the basis of which he later drew conclusions about the (extra-historical) ancient forms and religious beliefs of the Hungarians.

> [A] centuries-old existence, which shows no change in its main features, rightly leads us to conclude that our decorative style is rooted in the individual characteristics of the Hungarian nation and that the specific national trait, the result of racial and blood differences, which also distinguishes Hungarians from other European peoples in terms of language.[37]

By emphasizing the originality of folk art, Huszka made it attractive, interesting, and "fashionable" for a section of the bourgeoisie. Huszka and his associates contributed greatly to the revival of interest in folk art at the end of the nineteenth century. Enthusiastic amateurs popularized folk embroidery among the "aristocratic public". When Huszka wrote about the Persian, Indian and Chinese origins of folk architecture in his 1895 book *A székely ház* (The Székely House), representatives of historical science and the then-emerging field of ethnography (József Hampel, Ottó Herman) criticized him for his lack of historical perspective.[38] However, the presentation of folk art and its sources was only a starting point for Huszka. His goal was to establish a national style in Hungarian crafts through educational institutions. His vision was to create a Hungarian crafts and architecture in the national style, which was linked to Ipolyi's idea from the 1870s.

At the turn of the century, the idea of working with ornamentation and systematically creating national forms from motifs known to the people (as was thought in the 1880s) no longer seemed viable. As a result of the emergence of the ahistorical perspective outlined above, ideas about national style disappeared from academic discourse, but at the same time their popularity grew visibly.

As we have seen, the last quarter of the nineteenth century was a pivotal period in the development of national identity. In the context of increasingly professionalized academic disciplines, people sought artistic expressions of national identity in the study of ornamentation and, through this, in applied arts, domestic crafts and, later, folk art. Examining the motifs found in various sources served one purpose: to provide models for craftsmen and apprentices, who were regarded as custodians of future national art. Such efforts were not confined to the Kingdom of Hungary. The textile-art–motif collections of Lay and Stassov served a similar purpose. The late nineteenth-century exhibition of handicrafts and folk art in Prague (Národopisná výstava československá v Praze, 1895) was also created with this goal in mind,[39] as was the "rediscovery" of Zakopane and Hutsul folk art for inspiration, which formed part of the same narrative.[40]

In multi-ethnic Central Europe, as a response to the Habsburg Empire's efforts at unification, or as a manifestation of their distinctiveness from the Germanic peoples, individual nations (Czechs, Poles, Slovaks, Hungarians, Croats, Serbs, Romanians) developed their own national artistic identities. These nationally identified forms and motifs reinforced national sentiment as elements of a kind of parallel reality. In the

37 Ibidem.

38 HUSZKA, *A székely ház*; HAMPEL, *A régi hazai ornamentikáról*, 104–105.

39 See: FILIPOVÁ, *Peasants on display*.

40 See: KRUK, *Henryk Gąsiorowski*.

second half of the nineteenth century, very few art historians and historians recognized that the various motifs, forms and ornaments were part of a common Central European motif repertoire, and that this repertoire of forms did not separate but rather connected the small nations of Central Europe in their search for identity.

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