

Ernő Marosi, 'The origins of art history in Hungary'¹

translated by Matthew Rampley

The prehistory of art historical writing

The prehistory of Hungarian art history can be traced back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A lively historical interest was directed first of all towards a few objects, which, alongside their outstanding historical significance, also possessed artistic value. The first of these was the royal crown, which was a subject of artistic and historic description and analysis as early as 1613.² Later, several books on the topic appeared, to be followed in the first half of the nineteenth century by numerous articles and essays in journals.³ A similar wealth of writings was dedicated to the so-called horn of Lehel; a number of books and articles discussed this ivory hunting horn, probably from the tenth century, with rich decoration showing circus scenes.⁴

It is, however, the topographical literature of the eighteenth century, growing considerably at the beginning of the nineteenth, that can be regarded as the precursor of art historiography. Alongside their descriptions of historic monuments, churches and castles, works of this kind also contained analyses of the artistically significant interior arrangements of the mural decorations of buildings, libraries, picture galleries and pleasure gardens.⁵ Similar kinds of topographical work, which increasingly took the form of specialised literary travel accounts, with descriptions of artworks and even whole museums, continued to flourish in the journals of the first half of the nineteenth century.⁶

The establishment of the Hungarian National Museum was probably the most important event for the establishment of archaeology and art history as scholarly disciplines. In 1802 Count Ferenc Széchenyi bequeathed his extensive library and coin collection to the museum that was to be built. As early as 1803 the

¹ Many thanks are due to Ernő Marosi and Timár Árpád for giving permission to translate and publish the text, which was originally published as *Die Ungarische Kunstgeschichte und die Wiener Schule, 1846-1930*, Vienna: Collegium Hungaricum, 1983.

² Péter Révai, *De Sacra Corona Regni Hungariae*, Augsburg, Leopold Berger, 1613.

³ For a detailed critical discussion of the older literature on the Hungarian crown see Josef Deér, *Die Heilige Krone Ungarns*, Vienna, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1966.

⁴ Ferenc Molnár, *Jász-Berény várassában lévő Leel kúrtének, vagy Jász-kürtnek esmérete* [Report on the horn of Lehel, or the Jassic horn, found in the town of Jász-Berény], Vienna and Pressburg, Alois Doll and Schwaiger, 1788.

⁵ Matej Bél, *Notitia Hungariae novae Historico-geographica*, Vienna: Paul Straub, 1735-52; Johann Korabinsky, *Geographisch-historisches und Produkten Lexikon von Ungarn*, Pressburg, Weber, 1796; Idem, *Atlas regni Hungariae portatalis*, Vienna, n.p., 1804; Samuel Bredetzky, *Beyträge zur Topographie des Königreichs Ungarn*, Vienna, Camesina, 1803-5.

⁶ See, for example, J. Hormayr, *Taschenbuch für vaterländische Geschichte*, Vienna, 1820-29; Ferenc Pulszky, *Úti vázlatok 1836-ból* [Travel notes from 1836], Pest, 1839.

public was given access to the library and in 1808 the regional assembly passed the law to erect the building of the National Museum. The collections were continually expanded through bequests and purchases. When the Collection of Coins and Antiquities was opened in 1814 it already contained ancient stone monuments. The year 1832 saw the purchase of the collection of Miklós Jankovich (1772-1846), which included, amongst others, numerous works of art, and when Bishop Johann Ladislaus Pyrker (1772-1847) of Eger bequeathed his picture gallery to the museum, a new section, that of Fine Arts, was established. In 1846 the museum building was completed; constructed according to the plans of Mihály Pollack, it has continued to serve its original purpose up to the present. The collections were then transferred to the new building and made accessible to the public. The director and other co-workers of the museum comprised the first professional representatives of art history in Hungary. The first director was Jakob Ferdinand Miller (1749-1823), who, in addition to being concerned with the library, focused on the description of Roman antiquities. He was succeeded in 1823 by Antal Haliczky (1788-1837), who was initially director of the Department of Coins and Antiquities, but who then likewise worked, later, on Roman antiquities. From 1837 to 1847 the director of the museum was István Horvát, a celebrated historian at the time, while from 1846 onwards the picture gallery was directed by Gábor Mátray (1797-1875), who was responsible for the first descriptive catalogue of the collection.⁷

The first scholarly journal in Hungary, *Tudományos Gyűjtemény* (The Scholarly Collection) had been published in 1817; contributions included travel reports as well as topographic descriptions of artistic relevance. In keeping with the spirit of Neo-Classicism, there was particular interest in monuments of classical art; indeed, this was when the first studies of Roman provincial monuments found in Hungary began to be undertaken, inasmuch as inscribed stone monuments were published (i.e. translated). The journal also included the first publications on historical Hungarian artists (as well as artists originating from Hungary). Preference was given to those who had acquired a certain fame abroad. Hence, Ádám Mányoki (1673-1757), court painter, during his long life, to Prince Franz II Rákóczi and to numerous foreign rulers at the Austrian, Saxon and Prussian courts, became a focus of interest. The painter Johannes Kupeczky (1667-1740) was also the subject of numerous texts; born in Hungary and with many Hungarian patrons, he was treated as a Hungarian. In this context one should also mention the lively interest in Albrecht Dürer. Thanks to a reference in Joachim von Sandrart's *Biography of Dürer* to the idea that Dürer's family had settled in Nuremberg from Hungary, a large literature debated the question of the origin of the family name, its place of origin and, not least, whether Dürer should be regarded as a Hungarian artist. This was all closely connected to contemporary artistic and political debates, such as: who can be regarded as a Hungarian artist? Was there and is there an autonomous Hungarian art? What traits provide Hungarian art with its national character? Can its

⁷ Gábor Mátray, *Pyrker János László egri patriarchaérsek képtára* [The Picture Gallery of Archbishop Patriarch Johann Ladislaus Pyrker of Erlau], Pest, Trattner u. Karolyi, 1846. German edition published in 1853.

prehistory be traced in the past? Does Hungary have a tradition that can be continued? Is there a national Hungarian style?⁸

In the 1830s Dániel Novák (1798-1849), the first significant art critic of the time, became active. A former student of Pietro Nobile at the Academy of Arts in Vienna, and an architect of the regional architecture office of the stadtholder in Buda, Novák wrote critical reviews of exhibitions, building projects, bridges, tunnels, as well as hundreds more essays on leading historic artworks and artists, artistic techniques and genres, graphic techniques, gardens and architectural building types (later this would include hospitals, prisons and theatres). In 1835 he published the first art historical reference work in Hungarian, *The Lives of the Most Famous Painters, Sculptors and Engravers of Ancient, Medieval and Modern Times*.⁹ Its form, structure and content were modeled on the old collections of artists' lives, and followed the tradition that stretched back to Vasari. Quite apart from its second-hand biographical details and anecdotes, the book contains virtually no assertions that could be based on first-hand experience or personal impressions derived from detailed study of the artworks undertaken by the author on his travels. Nevertheless, one cannot underestimate his contribution to the establishment of basic art historical knowledge.

Imre Henszlmann

The creation of what was, for the time, a mature art historical discourse in Hungary is bound up with the achievements of one outstanding representative of the next generation, Imre Henszlmann (1813-1888). He was born in Košice, the son of a well-to-do family of merchants. After attending school in his home town he continued his studies in Prešov, where he met the famous art collector Gábor Fejérváry, whose European education and rich art collection made a distinct impression on the young man. It was through Fejérváry that Henszlmann became familiar with many creations of world literature as well as works from the classical era of German aesthetics from Winckelmann to the Schlegel brothers. Henszlmann commenced his university studies in 1832 at the University of Pest where, at the wishes of his family, enrolled to study medicine. However, he was already more interested in the humanities, philosophy, literature and art history. During his stay in Pest he lodged with Antal Haliczky, the curator of the Collection of Coins and Antiquities of the Hungarian National Museum, and this gave Henszlmann a renewed opportunity to increase his archaeological and art historical knowledge.

When he moved to Vienna in 1835 in order to continue his medical studies, he came into contact with Joseph Daniel Boehm (1794-1866), the celebrated medalist, originally from Hungary. The group of young people who gathered around Boehm played a large role in the development of the Vienna School of art history as well as Hungarian art history. Boehm had been born in Wallendorf in Spiš, and had originally been a commercial apprentice, but his artistic talents gained the attention

⁸ See Árpád Timár, 'Dürer-Literatur in Ungarn', in *Acta Historiae Artium*, 24, 1978, 391-96.

⁹ Dániel Novák, *Hajdan-, közép- 's újabbkori híresebb képírók, szobrászok, 's rézmetszők életrajza*, Buda, Magyar Királyi Egyetem, 1835.

of others, and thanks to the support of aristocratic patrons he was allowed to study from 1813 onwards at the Vienna Academy. He studied sculpture and travelled to Rome, where he continued his education in the studio of Thorwaldsen. In 1831 he was appointed medalist to the imperial court and in 1836 he became director of the Academy of Medal and Coin Engraving. Two of the young men from his group, Henszlmann and Rudolf Eitelberger von Edelberg (1817-1885), became distinguished art historians; both wrote about Boehm after his death and acknowledged how much they owed to their erstwhile master.¹⁰

Both reports were in full agreement that although he never put down his theoretical views in writing, Boehm often outlined them to his students, mostly in the form of concrete analyses of artworks. Consequently his students had the sense of a clearly thought through, well-grounded, theoretical position. Boehm's theoretical views drew above all on empirical experience, his teaching at the Academy and what he encountered on his travels. He had fundamental technical and practical specialist knowledge; when a student at the Academy he had learned engraving, carving and metalwork, as well as sculpting in wood and stone. This precise knowledge of the capacities and limits of techniques and raw materials was a basic starting point for his theoretical ideas. The other corner stone of his judgements was a sense of history that was both deeper and more modern than that of the eighteenth century. In contrast to the majority of early art historians and theorists he drew a fundamental distinction between Greek originals and Hellenistic and Roman copies. He studied and drew Egyptian sculptures as well as the Elgin marbles at first hand and, as Eitelberger stressed, he was one of the first to recognize that art works such as the Apollo Belvedere and the Venus de Milo, which were still being celebrated in the previous century as the classic ideal, were by no means to be seen as the high point of classical art, indeed were not even originals, but were rather copies from imperial times. This hierarchical ordering based on direct experience, by means of which he distinguished between archaic, classical and imperial, was a decisive step forward towards the establishment of a scientifically grounded art history. Due to his connections with the Overbeck circle in Rome Boehm was also drawn to painting of the period before Raphael, and even to the sculpture of artists such as Niccolò Pisano or Jacopo della Quercia. He strongly rejected the ambition and acquisitiveness that marked the *mores* of his own times. This negative attitude together with his lively interest in the Middle Ages led to him to identify the realization of his ideal in Gothic. As a collector he went further, and his initial appreciation of Dürer and Holbein progressed on to recognition of the significance of the art of Rembrandt. He organized his art collection around educational principles, and he always explained artistic problems to his students in front of the works themselves. It was out of this intellectual circle and its basic principles that the Vienna School of art history writing emerged as well as that of Hungary.

¹⁰ Imre Henszlman, 'Joseph Daniel Böhm', *Österreichische Revue*, 4:1, 1866, 110-27; Eitelberger, 'Josef Daniel Böhm.' Eitelberger, *Gesammelte kunsthistorische Schriften I: Kunst und Künstler Wiens der neuen Zeit*. Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1879, 180-227.

Although he was awarded his medical diploma in 1837, Henszlmann never practiced as a doctor. In keeping with his literary ambitions he even published a tragedy (*Brutus and the Tarquins*) and he soon became exclusively concerned with issues in art history and aesthetics. From the beginning of the 1840s onwards his essays appeared in succession in newspapers in Vienna and Pest. In 1841 he published his collected views on art history, theory and criticism in the book *Parallels between Contemporary Views of Art and Education, with Special Reference to Artistic Developments in Hungary*.¹¹ The primary objective of this work, in which Henszlmann frequently supported his principles with reference to the views of Boehm and his circle, was to address the issue of the obstacles to be cleared in order to enable a blossoming of national Hungarian art. The nine chapters of this book articulate the most important theoretical and practical problems, defining the task of the fine arts and providing an overview of relevant writings. They also discuss the relation between art and the public, public education, new artistic techniques, questions to do with the organization of exhibitions and museums, artistic education and the use of study trips, as well as the role of artistic associations. It is of considerable theoretical interest that he rejects the category of the beautiful, which he regards as subjects, historically relative and indefinable, and suggests it should be replaced by the category of the 'artistic.' He wanted to use this complex concept in order to combine criteria such as lively, characterful, purposeful and appropriate to the medium. In individual chapters of *Parallels* he even attempts to sketch out a general concept of art history. Henszlmann conceived of the history of art as an organic totality, in which one epoch developed out of the previous one, and could be explained on this basis, even if they were not of equal value. He drew a distinction between periods such as the Gothic, the Renaissance and Mannerism, on the one hand, and Baroque and Rococo on the other, in that he saw the high point of art history (gauged in terms of aesthetic value and national character) in classical Greece, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and Dutch and Flemish painting of the seventeenth century. At the same time he condemned any form of imitation, such as Romanists, Mannerism, the Academicians of the seventeenth century, as well as 'eclectics' like Anton Mengs, or extreme 'materialists' such as Balthasar Denner and Christian Seybold. The views collected together in his book would be used in numerous exhibition reviews and polemical pamphlets of the 1840s.

Henszlmann's name is also bound up with the first scholarly study of Albrecht Dürer, published in 1843 in the journal *Tudománytár* (Archive of Sciences).¹² The book-length study demonstrates a deep familiarity with the specialist German literature of the period. Rumohr, Hirt and Bartsch are cited, occasionally with polemical comments. When doing so Henszlmann frequently draws on his personal experience, for he had ample opportunity to study Dürer's works when he was staying in Vienna. This was provided not only by paintings and graphic works on paper, but also by the rich collection of Dürer drawings that Archduke Karl had in his possession at the time. These preliminary studies enabled him to put Dürer's

¹¹ Henszlmann, *Parhuzam azó és újkor művészeti nézetek és nevelések közt, különös tekintettel a művészeti fejlődésre Magyarországon*, Pest: Landerer and Heckenast, 1841.

¹² An abridged German version appeared as Emmerich Henszlmann, 'Dürer als Zeichner', *Österreichische Blätter für Literatur und Kunst*, 113-115, 1845, 881-85, 889-92 and 897-902.

works into historical sequence, taking into account his German and Netherlandish predecessors, as well as those from Italy. He sketched out Dürer's internal artistic development and outlined his artistic background in terms of genre and technique and, in addition, made valuable comments about the intellectual and cultural background to Dürer's art. He indicated that intellectual transformations that he counted as the early signs of the Reformation.

The next episode in Henszlmann's activity was marked by his work in documenting and interpreting Hungary's artistic monuments. In 1846 he undertook his first important excavation, namely, the remains of the medieval Pauline monastery near Buda. Interest in the artistic monuments of his home town was evident in essays devoted to the cathedral of Košice, as well as his first architectural monograph, *The Churches of the City of Košice built in the Old German Style*.¹³ In the same year, 1846, the touring assembly of the Society of Hungarian Doctors and Natural Scientists stopped in Košice and Eperjes, where Henszlmann presented his initial ideas concerning the protection of Hungary's artistic monuments. His initiative was warmly welcomed, and his proposals were presented to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. In 1847 they were addressed by the Academy and published as instructions to the whole country. However the political events of the years 1848 and 1849 prevented further development of the movement for monument protection. Henszlmann continued his excavations, but he soon had to devote himself exclusively to his political work for the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the independent Hungarian government. In the autumn of 1848 he was arrested in Vienna on account of his political activities, and he was not released until the end of 1849, following the collapse of the Hungarian struggle for freedom and the surrender at Világos. It was not until the 1850s that he could recommence his art historical work, while he was an émigré in France.

The beginnings of monument protection and the activity of the k.u.k. Zentralkommission in Hungary

The call for a national art historiography and for institutionalized protection of artistic monuments coincided with the Vormärz of the 1840s in Hungary; it was one of its demands and found its earliest expression in Henszlmann. On the 22nd of February 1847 Ferenc Toldy, Secretary of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences published his call for the protection of artistic monuments. This manifesto bears the hallmarks of its time in two ways. On the one hand one of its key ideas is to draw on the example of the civilized nations of Europe, a much-favoured idea of the reform movements in Hungary. On the other, it turns 'ancient glory' into a dynamic force for national renewal:

Whereas other nations carefully maintain, preserve and renovate all the relics of their past that attest to the glories of the culture of the past, and make them accessible to the educated public by means of faithful, high quality drawings; and whereas their connoisseurs and scholars select them as instructive objects

¹³ *Kassa városának a nemet stílii templomai*, Pest: Landerer & Heckenast, 1846.

of study, and their poets bring them back to life in the magical light poetry, we remain cool towards our ancient glory and its monuments. Even those that survived the tumult of previous centuries we view with unfeeling disregard, leaving them to the destructive ravages of time, in that we at best do nothing for them, or even destroy them.¹⁴

This call, published again in 1858 at the time of the founding of the Archaeological Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences had, by means of its goals and approach, a definite impact on Hungarian art historical scholarship and monument protection for decades. Moreover its chronological specification of the kind of monument that deserved protection remained valid for years afterwards.¹⁵

The establishment of the independent Hungarian Ministry in 1848 was not followed by any legislation regulating the protection of monuments in Hungary. Henszlmann did propose setting up an archaeological commission, and the government saw through a number of measures that indicated that it was increasingly mindful of caring for national antiquities (the only significant excavation of 1848, the opening up of the royal graves in Székesfehérvár, was conducted under the auspices of the National Museum but had to be interrupted prematurely due to the events of the war), but no laws were passed, and there was no attempt at co-ordinated monument protection.

With the introduction of absolutist rule in 1849, the Royal and Imperial Central Commission for Research and Preservation of Architectural Monuments (*k. u. k. Central-Commission für Erforschung und Erhaltung der Bau-Denkmäler*) that was brought into existence by a decree of the Emperor Franz Joseph I in 1850 became responsible for Hungary, Transylvania, Croatia and the territories on the southern border. The Central Commission started its work in 1853 and continued to be the responsible body until October 1861, when Franz Joseph I dissolved absolutist government. Its achievements were still acknowledged a decade later when a proposal was being prepared for a law covering monument protection in Hungary. As Imre Henszlmann wrote in 1870 when, already a deputy to the parliament, he proposed the draft law: '... considerably fewer artistic monuments and antiquities were lost during the five years from 1856 to 1861 than in the same period either before or after. It was truly only then that it came to be known precisely what there is, what has survived, and how one can investigate what is still unknown.'¹⁶ The address by the Hungarian Engineers' Association reveals the same idea:

Things are worse than ever, especially since public affairs have been administered by the national government. Previously, our country stood under the auspices of the Viennese Central Commission for the Preservation of Architectural Monuments. However, since the abolition of this one saving grace of dependency, anyone can knock down architectural monuments at

¹⁴ *Archaeologiai közlemények*, 1, 1859, v.

¹⁵ 'With regard to smaller objects the term 'historical' refers to the period up to the beginning of the eighteenth century, namely, the Treaty of Szatmár, and it is useful to take note of this as an upper time limit for buildings.' *Archaeologiai közlemények* 1, 1859, vii

¹⁶ Imre Henszlmann, 'Indokolás a műemléki törvényjavaslathoz', *Archaeologiai Értesítő*, 2, 1870, 13.

whim. They are not guarded, and failed restoration projects have caused untold irreversible harm to our most precious monuments.¹⁷

As in the other Crown Lands, the Viennese Central Commission organized its works by means of nominated curators with regional responsibilities. Their appointment was well known to have been vetted beforehand by the Secret Police; only persons who had shown themselves to be completely loyal to the absolutist government were appointed. Of the seven conservators appointed in 1856, none of them had earned a place in the Hungarian scientific community as a result of their work on the care and protection of monuments. Like Henszlmann, the majority of those individuals were émigrés or were overlooked. A typical case was that of János Waldstein, friend of Count István Széchenyi. Due, probably, to the high esteem in which he was held and his involvement in research into medieval castle, but also, obviously, because he was President of the Vienna Arts Society (Wiener Kunstverein), he was proposed as a conservator to Karl Czoernig, President of the Central Commission. His appointment was rejected, however, by Archduke Albrecht, Regent of the Kingdom of Hungary. Thus the conservators were mostly drawn from their upper ranks of the clergy or from the aristocracy. Only one representative of the intelligentsia was appointed on the basis of his specialist knowledge: Arnold Ipolyi-Stummer, at the time a priest in Zohor. Another was the collective body of conservators in Transylvania. The curators also included representatives of the Saxon intelligentsia such as Ludwig Reissenberger, Martin Samuel Mökesch, Friedrich Müller and László Kővári, the sole historian from Cluj, who had all been active as significant historians and art historians. Their work, above all, their monographs, has led them to be seen as the founders of art historical research in the region. The relatively small number of Hungarian correspondents in the Central Commission can also be understood on the same grounds.

The procedure of the Central Commission was that the conservators or correspondents would first of all draw attention to monuments in Hungary that would then be examined *in situ* by the Commission's specialists. The latter sought to secure the financial means from governmental circles for monument protection. Following the reports by Joseph Haas, conservator for Buda, the Commission was constantly involved in the Roman remains in Óbuda, especially after the discovery of ruins on the harbour island. As early as 1853 Count János Keglevich reported to the Central Commission on the former Benedictine Abbey of Ják. This building, which the Central Commission sought to restore, was the starting point for one of its most significant undertakings. When it sent out two of its members, Rudolf von Eitelberger and Joseph Hieser, to prepare a 'precise description and documentation' of the Abbey, '[Eitelberger] declared that he was prepared to write an extensive essay for the *Yearbook* that would cover not only the church of Ják but also other outstanding art historical monuments in Hungary.¹⁸ When Vajdahunyad castle in Transylvania fell victim to fire in 1854, the Central Commission was likewise involved in drawing up measures for protecting it, even though it had very few

¹⁷ *Archaeologiai Értesítő*, 3, 1870, 303.

¹⁸ *Jahrbuch der Central-Commission zur Erhaltung und Erforschung der Baudenkmale*, 1, 1856, 60.

financial resources. From then on the building of the castle of the Hunyadis took on pre-eminent importance for the sense of Hungarian national identity in the nineteenth century, and stood at the centre of public attention for half a century. Unfortunately during the course of the restoration works, which were heavily delayed, the fate of the monument took an unfortunate turn.

The Central Commission was able to provide more significant help to the task of researching the artistic monuments of Transylvania, since the modern measurements it undertook contributed to the survey published by Friedrich Müller.¹⁹ Together with Eitelberger's earlier publications, this work for a long time played a highly important role in opening up the Romanesque monuments of medieval Hungary.

The significance of the early work of the Central Commission should not be gauged by its individual interventions in the protection of monuments, but rather by its exploratory expeditions that led to the discovery and publication of monuments. The introduction to Eitelberger's essay, provided a programmatic formulation for this opening up of Hungary, which had, until then, been regarded as *terra incognita*. His expeditions to Hungary in 1854 and 1855 led to the discovery of whole series of unknown or overlooked monuments that were of great importance for the history of art in Central Europe. As Eitelberger asserted:

... educated Europeans are better informed about some countries in distant parts of the world than about territories virtually in the centre of Europe, on one of the tributaries and close to those lands that have been almost exclusively bound up with the history of Christian civilization for centuries.²⁰

Without doubt Eitelberger was one of the first to attempt to set the historiography of Hungarian art on the right path, in other words, to assess it in the context of central Europe:

The recognition, stemming from insight into the artistic nature of its medieval architectural monuments, that Hungary enjoyed intimate cultural connections with central Europe in the Middle Ages, that the architectural forms and approach to art that governed the lower Danube were the same as those on the upper Danube and the Rhine, was a decisive gain.²¹

These positive assertions gained a particular salience due to the fact that they were of particular relevance for an absolutist government that had suspended the independent statehood of Hungary after suppressing the Hungarian struggle for freedom. It was this government that funded the research and expeditions of the Central Commission; the question remains as to whether the enterprises of Eitelberger and the Central Commission were the cultural face of a colonizing

¹⁹ Translator's note: Friedrich Müller (1828-1915) was a prominent German Lutheran cleric based in Cluj, and wrote a number of works on the history and culture of Transylvania.

²⁰ Eitelberger, 'Bericht über einen archäologischen Ausflug nach Ungarn in den Jahren 1854 und 1855', *Jahrbuch der Central-Commission zur Erhaltung und Erforschung der Baudenkmale*, 1, 1856, 92.

²¹ Eitelberger, *ibid*, 95.

power. Conscious of the political circumstances, Eitelberger, at least, was concerned to support his search for objective and convincing evidence by reference to the fact that he regarded Hungarian nationalism as having been overcome and consigned to the past:

The migration of art from west to east, which artistic monuments attest to beyond doubt, the lively recognition that Hungary is one of those nations that took an active role in the development of medieval and Christian thinking, can only be a cause of satisfaction for Hungarians, and it can be all the more satisfying now with the lifting of all those political restrictions and barriers that have so often and for so long prevented Hungary from making full use of the advances of modern culture in science, art and social life. The connections between Hungary and central Europe have not always been given their due. It was mostly political passions that prevented them from being seen in the appropriate light.²²

Viewed objectively, Eitelberger, the liberal-minded and positivistic Viennese professor of art history, was undoubtedly right when he criticized the distortions of Hungarian art historiography, which included all-too frequent references to the era of St. Stephen, which incorrectly ascribed a major role to eastern and Byzantine tradition, in other words, one independent of the West. Yet at the same time he basically misrecognised the role of national consciousness, just as he misrecognized the potential and the roots of the continued appeal of romanticism. Subsequent events, as well as the history of Hungarian art historiography and monument protection in the nineteenth century, fundamentally disproved his view, according to which the political and historical grounds for the phenomena he was criticizing had been permanently overcome.

In contrast to Eitelberger's tactful, liberal conception, there was another significant undertaking by the Central Commission that was shaped by direct political intentions that were an initiative from the highest circles. Franz Bock, a chaplain from Cologne, was tasked with studying the most important symbol of Hungarian sovereignty and estates, the sacred crown and the coronation insignia. The results of his studies of the crown, which were hidden in 1849 by the revolutionary government when it was in flight and rediscovered in 1853, were published quickly.²³ In contrast to the legend of the unity of crown of St. Stephen, Bock supported the view, which had already circulated in the older historical literature in Hungary, that it consisted a Byzantine lower part and a '*corona latina*' consisting of the bands on the top. In other words, it consisted of two parts that could be clearly distinguished from each other. Bock considered this upper part to be a work of Roman goldsmiths from the eleventh century, which he identified as the crown that Pope Sylvester II had sent to St. Stephen. In 1856-57 Bock completed

²² Ibid, 95.

²³ Franz Bock, 'Die ungarischen Reichsinsignien', *Mittheilungen der Zentralkommission für Erforschung und Erhaltung der historischen Baudenkmale*, 2:6, 1857, 146-151; 2:7, 1857, 171-174 and 2:8, 1857, 201-211;

a further piece of significant work, namely, research and publication of work by goldsmiths in the cathedral treasury of the Archbishop of Esztergom.²⁴

Few restoration projects were undertaken during the relatively short period that the Viennese Central Commission was responsible for Hungary. One of the few, and probably the most typical, was that of the cathedral of Košice (the medieval parish church of St. Elizabeth). The builder was Bishop Ignaz Fábry, conservator of the Central Commission for the Košice region. A St. Elisabeth's Church Building Society was set up between 1857 and 1860 to support the restoration project. The restoration, which proved shortly afterwards to have been completely superficial and deficient, consisted mostly in the removal of damage to the building. The most striking were the new roofs, which were decorated with colourful glazed roof tiles after designs by Henszlmann. The work was executed by Károly Gerster, a master builder from Pest, who had previously been part of the circle around Henszlmann. There is every indication that the proposal for a polychrome interior in the church was also influenced by the vision of Henszlmann; the vaults were painted blue and decorated with gilded stars, the architectural elements painted in geometric forms in bright colours. These features, such as the frequent use of gilding (even on the architectural sculptures), betrayed the impact of the study of polychromic Gothic building (such as the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris). The missing statues on the sides of the portal were executed by the sculptor János Marsalkó from Pest. The missing statues on the walls of the choir and the niches of the tabernacle were replaced by terracotta figures.

Arnold Ipolyi (Stummer)

After Ipolyi studied at the gymnasiums of Krupina and Banská Štiavnica, he completed his studies in theology at the seminaries in Bratislava and Trnava and then at the Pázmáneum in Vienna. A parish priest in Zohor (in Bratislava county) from 1850 onwards, he became conservator of the Central Commission in 1856. His earliest literary outputs were devoted to the topic of Hungarian folk traditions and early Hungarian religion. In 1854 he published *Hungarian Mythology*.²⁵ It was probably due to the unfavourable response to his first work that his output of the subsequent decade and a half tended rather to archaeology and art history. In 1857 he was given the assignment by the Commission of travelling to Žitný ostrov [translator's note: Great Rye Island in the Danube], and he quickly published a description of its monuments in the *Mittheilungen* of the Commission, and even published it in Hungarian.²⁶ In 1859 he was elected to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. During the years after he devoted the most significant part of his work to giving academic lectures in which he went considerably beyond the topographical

²⁴ Bock, 'Der Schatz der Metropolitankirche zu Gran', *Jahrbuch der Zentralkommission für Erforschung und Erhaltung der historischen Baudenkmale*, 3, 1859, 105-46.

²⁵ Arnold Ipolyi, *Magyar Mythológia*, Pest, G. Heckenast, 1854.

²⁶ Arnold Ipolyi-Stummer, *Beschreibung der Baudenkmale der Insel Schütt Csallóköz in Ungarn*, Vienna, Kaiser.-Königl. Hof- und Staatsdruck, 1859.

collecting of material from individual regions, and boldly attempted to sketch out broader historical contexts.²⁷

These essays attest to Ipolyi astonishingly wide-ranging knowledge, in which his attempts at a general overview considered practically all monuments that were accessible in the second half of the nineteenth century. In his interpretations and historical judgments he was the first to make use of perspectives that are still recognized by Hungarian art historical writing today. Given his rationalistic outlook, parallels can be drawn between his method, which consisted of historical morphological and formal analyses of artworks, and that of Semper or Viollet-le-Duc. His method of interpretation was primarily cultural history, for his conceived of artistic monuments as historical documents:

Not only the pages of history are the signs of the greatness and gifts of nations, but also, in particular, those monumental works, those monumental artistic creations, which although mute, are nevertheless living reminders, and serve as sources for history ... Every time one of these national artistic monuments is lost, a page has been visibly torn out of the book of our history.²⁸

For Ipolyi the historian and art historian, it was the nation and religion that he was most passionately concerned to trace in history. As is clear from his later writings, Ipolyi attributed a certain political relevance to the 'history of monuments' or 'study of national heritage' that he pursued:

... One can only develop a stronger and more dynamic future out of the past if one seeks to influence the natural development of the life and learning of the nation. For when faced with the great advances of the modern era, regardless of whether they have seized whole nations or individuals, it is always problematic and questionable, indeed it can even be dubious and harmful, if one allows oneself to be governed by them unwittingly or out of timidity, and thus submits to new ideas unthinkingly or without reservations, rather than shaping them, using knowledge of one's national history and consciousness as the guiding concept. These two views were developed into systems which we are accustomed to characterize, using archaic names and concepts, as the revolutionary French way of constructing the state and society, or the historical, developmental method of the English.²⁹

²⁷ See Ipolyi, *Magyarország középkori emlékszerű építészete* [The Medieval monumental architecture of Hungary], Emich Gusztáv, 1861; *Középkori Magyar ötvösművek* [Medieval Hungarian goldsmithing] (Pest, 1861); *A középkori szobrászati emlékei magyarország* [Monuments of medieval Hungarian sculpture] (Pest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1863); *A középkori magyar festészet emlékeiből* [From the monuments of medieval painting in Hungary], Buda: Eggenberger Ferdinánd and Magyar Tudományos Akadémia könyvtárusnál, 1864.

²⁸ Ipolyi, 'Magyarország középkori emlékszerű építészete' [The medieval architecture of Hungary] in *Magyar műtörténelmi tanulmányai* [Studies in the history of Hungarian art], Budapest, Rath, 1889, 3.

²⁹ Ipolyi, 'A Magyar műtörténelmi emlékek tanulmánya' [The study of Hungarian art historical monuments] in *Kisebb Munkái* [Shorter Writings], Budapest: Ráth Mór, 1878, IV, 11.

His political views, which corresponded to the liberalism of the ruling party after 1867, and his approach, which was conditioned by his clericalism, ensured that he had a significant role in supporting historicist artistic tendencies. He participated in the reform of ecclesiastical art and even campaigned personally an historicist ecclesiastical art.³⁰ Similar consideration guided his approach to iconographical study, in which he was concerned not only with making use of a highly significant branch of nineteenth-century international art historical research in the Hungarian context, but also with encouraging the 'creation of more appropriate images than those hitherto', namely St. Elizabeth.³¹ It was for these reasons, too, that he supported and campaigned for the Neo-Gothic plans for the Budapest Parliament in the Upper House.³²

The setting for his activities changed several times after 1860, which also influenced his choice of subject. When he became the canon of the diocese of Eger in 1864 he published essays on the monuments of the counties of Heves and Külső-Szolnok and the medieval cathedral of Eger, as well as the Cistercian Abbey of Bélapátfalva. In 1871 he became the Bishop of Baňská Bystrica; amongst the studies of monuments and sources he published there, he wrote an outline of the history of the town.³³ In 1867 he became vice-president and in 1878 president of the Hungarian Historians' Association, at which point he turned more decisively to history writing. When Bishop of Baňská Bystrica he was responsible for significant commissions of ecclesiastical art, the restoration of church monuments and was also an active art collector. In 1872 he donated 60 old master paintings (especially Italian paintings mostly from the Ramboux collection) to the regional gallery; after his death a considerable part of his personal collection was added to the Christian Museum in Esztergom. Between 1880 and 1885 he was president of the Hungarian Fine Art Society. At the end of 1886 he died as Bishop of Oradea.

The development of Henszlmann's theory of the place of Hungarian Gothic in Europe

As early as 1846, and the publication of his book on the old German architecture of Košice, Henszlmann turned to issues to do with the system of proportions of Gothic architecture. He illustrated his studies on proportion with graphic illustrations of the ground plan of the church tabernacle in Košice, which revealed not only similarities with but also an awareness of drawings from the Gothic period. At the same time he became involved in the study of the proportions of the ruins of the thirteenth-century church of Zsámbék. These studies in proportions formed the

³⁰ See Ipolyi, 'Beszéd az egyházi művészetek hazánkban emeléséről' [Address on improving ecclesiastical art in our fatherland'] in *Kisebb Munkái*, V. 'On the occasion of his induction Bishop Ipolyi passed his priestly blessing in a medieval spiritual vestment that was in keeping with his archaeological studies. He supported himself on a staff in the old style.' 'Egylveleg' [Miscellanies], in *Archaeologiai Értesítő*, 6, 1872, 237.

³¹ See Ipolyi, 'Magyar ikonographia. Magyarországi Szent Erzsébet képei' in Ipolyi, *Kisebb Munkái*, IV, 549-50.

³² Ipolyi, *Beszédei 1854-1872*. Volume 2 of Ipolyi, *Kisebb Munkái*, Budapest: Ráth Mór, 1874.

³³ Ipolyi, *Besztercebánya városa műveltség-történeti vázlatja* [Historical sketch of the culture of the city of Baňská Bystrica], Bratislava, Madách-Posonium, 2005. First published in 1874.

starting point for his general theory of proportion, a variation of the wider architectural theories of the nineteenth century. Henszlmann's theory was based on a geometrical series that relied on the proportions of the golden section. He tried to see the latter as constituting the basic law of all architectural proportion. From 1851 he lived as an émigré in London, where he presented his theories in the form of a lecture that he held at the Royal Institute of British Architects. Later, in 1856, he also found the opportunity to publicise his views in Paris. With the support of the Emperor Napoleon III he published the first part of his work, which was on the architecture of antiquity.³⁴

During his stay in Paris, which coincided with the change in terminology, in which Franz Kugler replaced 'old German' with 'Gothic', Henszlmann came to accept the theory of the French origin of Gothic architecture. In this he was particularly influenced by Franz Mertens, from whom he borrowed considerably, especially with regard to the dissemination of the style and the specification of its development stages. His stay in Paris enhanced his thinking in relation to two pivotal examples. First, he discovered that there were great similarities between the ground plan of the church of St. Elizabeth in Košice and the church of St. Yved in Braine. Second, he learnt about the sketchbook of Villard de Honnecourt and hence the trip the master of Picardy made to Hungary in the thirteenth century. He brought this knowledge together in an article he published in 1857 in the journal *Moniteur des architectes*, in which he developed his theory of the thirteenth-century origins of the ground plan of the church in Košice (the church of St. Yved in Braine, and the typology of the church of Notre-Dame in Trèves and the cathedral church of Cassovie). He first introduced this theory in letter he wrote to Ferenc Toldy in 1858, and then later in a lecture delivered to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.³⁵

Henszlmann's ideas of development and his views about the place of Hungary in European art gained wider validation. His historical hypothesis, bound up with a theory of aesthetics, was probably the most influential discovery of Hungarian art history in the nineteenth century. Henszlmann repeatedly reiterated it, as did his successors; it was his lifelong intention to provide a detailed exposition in a monograph on the cathedral of Košice. The fact that he failed to complete it may have been influenced by the fact that the later restoration threw up observations that did not accord with Henszlmann's preconceptions.

[...]

Flóris Rómer (1815-1889)

Son of a well-to-do shoemaker in Bratislava, Rómer entered the Benedictine Order in 1830 and completed his studies between 1834 and 1838 in the Order's gymnasium in Győr and the abbey of Pannonhalma. After his induction as a priest he became a teacher at the gymnasium in Győr, and from 1845 onwards he held the chair of

³⁴ Emric Henszlmann: *Theorie des proportions appliquées dans l'architecture depuis la XIIe dynastie des rois égyptiens jusqu'au XVe siècle*, Paris, Arthus Bertrand, 1860.

³⁵ Imre Henszlmann, in *Magyar Múzeum* 8, 1858, 297.

natural history at the Bratislava Academy and as well being an active botanical and geological collector developed an interest in palaeontology and painting. In 1848 he was a volunteer in the militia and became a sapper officer, which later brought him eight years' imprisonment. In 1854 he was granted an amnesty, and worked a private tutor and in 1857, after expiating his ecclesiastical punishment, became professor of natural history once more in Győr. Influenced by Ipolyi, he expanded his interests from palaeontology to archaeology, and founded a museum in Győr. In 1860 he was elected corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, becoming, in 1864, a full member. Curator of the manuscript collection of the Academy from 1861, he became the director of the Catholic Main Gymnasium in Pest. From 1860 he was a member of the archaeological committee of the Academy, and editor of the journal *Archaeologiai Értesítő* [Archaeological Report] from its founding [in 1868]. In 1868 he was appointed professor of archaeology at the University of Pest, and in 1869, curator of the antiquities collection of the National Museum. In 1874 he left the Benedictine Order and became a titular abbot in the village of Rimavska Jánovce in the diocese of Banská Bystrica. In 1877 he resigned from all his public offices and withdrew to Oradea, where he died as the canon of the cathedral.

In contrast to the other two members of the 'great trio' of founders of Hungarian art historiography, Henszlmann and Ipolyi, his work consisted less in the formulation of comprehensive principles and more in concrete outputs, such as the publication and description of numerous monuments and historic sources. The most powerful mainstay of his work was a constant demand for autopsy; his publications were all based on his own discoveries. His travel notes and sketch books can be regarded as secure sources for the state of artistic monuments in Hungary after the mid-nineteenth century. Alongside the history of art, he was active in archaeology for his whole life, and it was due to his initiative that the International Congress of Palaeontology was held in Budapest in 1876. His numerous short publications of material, glosses, polemics and contributions mirror his peculiar manner. His most important larger work, the book *Historic Frescoes in Hungary* demonstrates clearly its most significant strengths: empirically based knowledge and extensive familiarity with technique and iconography, as well as sobre judgement.³⁶

[...]

Hungarian art history of the end of the nineteenth century

The overall image of art history of the 'great trio' and their contemporaries was basically deductive in character. Following the art historical literature of their time (in essence, the mid-nineteenth century), they saw the history of medieval Hungarian art as a law governed succession of styles. It was Henszlmann who was most concerned with the principles of periodization:

³⁶ Flóris Rómer, *Régi falképek Magyarországon*, Budapest, Magyar Tudományos Akadémiának Archaeologiai Bizottsága, 1874.

We can never assume that Hungary is either cradle of style or that it shows autonomous stylistic development; hence, in comparison with other countries, where one encounters a continuous progression, the determination of chronology is made much more difficult. ... In addition, historical sources are extremely sparse, not only about our buildings but also about general cultural relations, despite the vast pile of documents that are mostly to do with changes in ownership rights or changes of owner. Style alone can serve as our guide, even though, as mentioned earlier, it can easily mislead us with its variability, its derelictions, and the confusion of older and newer mannerisms.³⁷

For this reason he took the laws of Franz Mertens as his methodological foundation, in particular, the latter's law of 'propagation', that was based on the idea of the dissemination of new styles from west to east. In keeping with the rationalistic character of this idea of lawfulness, he accorded greater significance to quantifiable and demonstrable belated phenomena than to written sources or to other historical documents.

He followed the same procedure when dealing with individual practical instances, such as newly discovered monuments. He regarded the eleventh-century Collegiate Church of Székesfehérvár, which he had excavated and published, as an early Christian building, while in the case of the earliest cathedral building of Kalocsa he spoke, likewise on the basis of Mertens' classification, of a 'necessary stage'. He did not see the mature Romanesque 'monumental style' emerging until towards the end of the twelfth century, the beginnings of which he thought to be in Székesfehérvár, Pécs and Esztergom. He added an additional law to those of Mertens, drawing on an idea of Viollet-le-Duc, in that he regarded monastery building as a creative factor in the early Middle Ages. Yet he argued that in Hungary, conversely, it was the cathedrals that had a creative role; accordingly, he traced the architectural sculpture of Pécs back to Cluny and also linked the latter to the construction of the second Kalocsa church choir, with its ambulatory and radial chapels.³⁸ He identified the inception of the Gothic era with the war with the Mongols (1241-42), and divided it into three phases: transitional, strict and decline, the latter of which he judged in highly pejorative terms.

The logical rigour and internal consistency of Henszlmann's conception of architectural history ensured it exercised considerable influence that was still in evidence in the first decades of the twentieth century. The attitude of the first generation of art historians to works of art was much more problematic. Although there were hardly any attempts to formulate a coherent history of medieval Hungarian sculpture, painting was judged in highly subjective ways. The disputes over the paintings of the high altar in Košice may well be indicative; Henszlmann attributed them to the School of Michael Wolgemut, while Ipolyi attributed them to

³⁷ Henszlmann, *Magyarország ókeresztény, roman és átmenetstylű műemlékeinek rövid ismeretése* [A short history of artistic monuments in Hungary built in the Roman, early Christian and transitional styles], Budapest, Egyetemi Ny., 1876, 17.

³⁸ Henszlmann, 'A kalocsai érsek ásátásai' [The excavations of Kalocsa], *Archaeologiai Értesítő*, 6, 1872, 2

Schongauer. The names of Dürer and Cranach were also mentioned; it appears that the determination of their age and artistic character was based on draughtsmanship and compositional values; in some cases it was possible to identify the original. In this context the art historians were still acting like traditional connoisseurs.

The younger generation of historians of art and culture turned decisively against the deductive approach of the art historiography of the founders, citing the philosophy of positivism. As early as 1875 Gyula Pasteiner published his programmatic essay, 'The current state of research into the history of art of past times.'³⁹ He argued:

In keeping with the example provided by philosophy, every branch of scholarly study has seen its highest goal to be the creation of a system ... the most feverish efforts are by those branches whose objects have the least systematic qualities, indeed, completely exclude a system, and are reliant on a cursory gathering of factual information. This group is comprised of all those branches of scholarly study that form part of biology and sociology, as set out in the hierarchy of knowledge of positive philosophy.⁴⁰

And further: 'In the case of Egypt one should adopt an Egyptian point of view, and the same for Gothic and Baroque, and view them with an appropriate eye and discrimination.'⁴¹ Making explicit reference to Comte and, later, Taine, Pasteiner emphatically opposed any kind of normativity, and broke, as a matter of principal, through the barriers that had prevented art history from valuing Baroque art in a positive way.

In a review of Ipolyi the historian Tivadar Ortway wrote the following words of praise (which are in fact rather more words of criticism): 'Scholarship has benefitted from the fact that the comparative method, which was already playing a leading role in palaeontology, philology, mythology and archaeology, has now become fashionable in history, too.'⁴² Yet at the same time he was strongly against the devaluation of textual criticism: 'The author regards documents, inscriptions and historical records as merely secondary sources, indeed, all the more so, give that a far more reliable method is available for determining the age of buildings, the comparative method. However we are of the view ... that this cannot be correct, because the method he proposes appears merely to provide an additional support, for there are churches that have been dated on the basis of these documents.'⁴³

The general demand of positivism for a method that attended to the specificities of its object free of all norms was linked to the question of national characteristics by Károly Pulszky, probably the most able and significant personality of this generation. He voiced his critical views with particular reference to the

³⁹ Gyula Pasteiner, *A régi művészetek történetének mai tudományos állása*, Budapest, Egyet, 1875.

⁴⁰ Pasteiner, *ibid*, 4.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 35.

⁴² Ortway, 'Review of Ipolyi, *Besztercebánya városa műveltségtörténeti vázlata*', *Archaeologiai Értesítő*, 9, 1875, 54.

⁴³ Ortway, 'Review of Béla Czobor, *A középkori egyházi művészet, kézikönyve*' [Handbook of medieval church art], *Archaeologiai Értesítő*, 9, 1875, 158.

history of applied art: 'Our archaeologists have frequently confused artistic with historical value. However, whether an art object corresponds to the style of a particular period or school, or exemplifies that school and style is a completely different issue.'⁴⁴ His criticisms were directed most immediately at Franz Bock:⁴⁵

Bock, as well as all others who have described medieval artistic monuments, has proceeded on a false basis, selecting the general development of the arts in western Europe, and Germany in particular, when determining their age. We would recommend the opposite, however, namely, determining the age of as many local monuments as possible, and then comparing them with those abroad. We would then be able to see whether the great transformations in European taste from Romanesque to Gothic, from Renaissance to Baroque, and from Baroque to Rococo, might have later taken place in Hungary in one or more branch of the arts. We would also be able to see if, as in other aspects of our cultural history, influences in the arts in the neighbouring lands to the West, such as in Austria, later came to fruition in Hungary, or indeed not at all.⁴⁶

In keeping with these aspirations, he saw connections between early works of enamelling in Hungary and the later filigree enamel of the sixteenth century; in this context his work chimed with that of Henszlmann, who posited the continuous development of art in Hungary.⁴⁷

Ideas of artistic continuity in Hungary were criticized, above all by the eminent archaeologist József Hampel, who argued that Venetian or Ragusan goldsmithing had been the model for its filigree work, and brought the issue of the ornamental forms goldsmithing to bear on that of national style:

If [collecting the ornamental motifs of Hungary goldsmithing] had not passed our colleagues by, then Huszka, that most of keen researcher of national style, who searched across the country for autochthonous native examples, would not have felt to prompted to exclaim: "There was, once, a Hungarian style in pagan times, which then later fell into a deep sleep, and has only been awoken again after five centuries in Transylvania." But if one had such a collection one would have had to notice that many of the designs he put together in his interesting work represent merely an extension, a modified continuation and renewal in magnificent patterns of the tradition from previous centuries, shaped by the changing currents of the time.'⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Károly Pulszky, 'Review of Viktor Myskovszky, *Bártfa középkori műemlékei* [The medieval artistic monuments of the town of Bardejov], *Archaeologiai Értesítő*, 14, 1880, 247.

⁴⁵ Translator's note: Franz Bock (1823-1899) was a historian of medieval art who was canon of Cologne cathedral and also worked as a conservator at the Diocesan Museum of Cologne.

⁴⁶ Pulszky, 'Az esztergomi főegyház kincstára', [The treasury of the archdiocese in Esztergom], *Archaeologiai Értesítő*, 14, 1880, 273.

⁴⁷ See Henszlmann, 'Az iglói ereklye-kereszt' [The reliquary cross of Spiš], *Archaeologiai Értesítő*, 10, 1876, 210.

⁴⁸ József Hampel, 'Egy fejezet hazai ötvösségünk történetéből' [A chapter from the history of Hungarian goldsmithing], *Archaeologiai Értesítő*, 7 (new series), 1887, 117.

This comment by Hempel is evidence that he saw precisely the connection between issues in the history of goldsmithing and ornament and the demand, 100 years later, for a national style. His reference was to the book by József Huszka, which was among the most influential works of the time.⁴⁹ Huszka, an art teacher, was one of the busiest workers for the National Monuments Commission, and was particularly active in uncovering and copying murals, especially murals dealing with the legend of St. László.⁵⁰ His collection of ornamental forms was the result of his activity as a collector. For Huszka Hungarian ornament had ancient origins dating back, ultimately, to central Asia and to the Persians and the Sassanids, and this stock of motifs from the time before the seizure of the lands of Hungary was enjoying a rebirth in the recent art of the Székelys.⁵¹ He hoped that use of this ornamentation would lead to a national architectural renaissance: '... it is hoped that Hungarian architecture of the future will bypass the more recent art of the Arabs and the Persians and return to purer more ancient sources. We should start at the point where mutual relations were torn apart, namely, with Sassanian art.'⁵² Huszka's programmatic texts – all the works of a half dilettante – combine the goals of the arts and crafts movement, expressed with exemplary clarity, and the striving for a national art history, as well as research into ornament, a highly contemporary topic in historical research at the end of the century (as in Riegl's *Problems of Style*).⁵³ It is due to these currents that positivism in Hungarian took on a quite specific direction, in which the numerous motivations of romantic nationalism were formulated in seemingly modern ways. In the process there was a strong emphasis on the original intentions of positivism during the final decade of the nineteenth century. Alongside the museums, the most important workshop of this tendency was the National Monuments Commission. Péter Gerecze did not even pay heed to the authority of a figure such as Henszlmann when he wrote:

... our researchers drew their conclusions on the basis of prejudice. In particular, Henszlmann was partial to tracing many of our monuments back to France and to ascribing greater weight to French influence than there actually was. It would be a good time for our government to begin to compile and publish a scholarly directory of monuments. All the while we cannot thereby join the civilized nations, scholarship regarding the artistic life of the past in Hungary will constantly oscillate between two extremes: the one will attribute everything to foreign, in other words, German, French and, in some

⁴⁹ Translator's note: The book in question is Huszka's *Magyar díszítő stíl* [Hungarian decorative style], Budapest, Deutsch, 1885.

⁵⁰ See Huszka, 'A Szent László legenda székelyföldi felképekben' [The legend of St. László on murals in the székely land], *Archaeologiai Értesítő*, 5 (new series), 1885, 211 ff.

⁵¹ Huszka, 'Hazai ornamentikánk eredete és nemzetisége' [The origin and national character of our ornament] *Magyar Mérnök és Építész Egylet Közlönye*, 25, 1891, 154-67.

⁵² Huska, 'Nemzeti építészetünk múltja és jelene' [The past and present of our national architecture], *Magyar Mérnök és Építész Egylet Közlönye*, 26, 1892, 203.

⁵³ Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen. Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik*, Berlin, Siemens, 1893.

cases, Italian influences, while the other will regard everything as Hungarian
...⁵⁴

Gerecze was one of the first to introduce stylistic criticism as a method: 'Art history is wholly dependent on the study of style in relation to the history not only of the art of the ninth and tenth centuries but also to that of the tenth to the thirteenth centuries.'⁵⁵ It is indicative that he was the first to use photographic reproductions in opposition to the drawings that the older generation preferred to use as illustrations:

'... let the reader compare the representations of the figures and decoration on the capital of a column of Pecs cathedral that were published by Henszlmann with the photographic images included here, in order to see the worth of the conclusions he drew in regard to the decoration on the capital showing Samson toppling the pillars.'⁵⁶

His conception represented a decisive turn towards a modern Hungarian history of art.

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⁵⁴ Gerecze, 'Epületi maradványok az Árpádok korából' [Architectural remains from the period of Arpad], *Archaeologiai Értesítő*, 15 (new series), 1895, 365.

⁵⁵ Gerecze, 'A pécsi székesegyház régiségei' [The antiquities of the cathedral of Pecs], *Archaeologiai Értesítő*, 15 (new series), 1895, 37.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 27.