

**Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Faculty of Humanities**

**ARGUMENTS OF THE PHD THESIS**

*Beáta Szlavikovszky*

**Chapters of the Italo-Hungarian cultural relationship between 1880 and 1945**

**Supervisor:**  
**PhD László Szögi**

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### **1. Choice of subject and the objective of the thesis**

In consequence of the 1989-1990 political changes cultural policy and diplomacy have assumed greater importance in comparison with former times, and an increasing number of books on the history of the Hungarian cultural foreign policy has been issued recently.

The objective of my PhD thesis is to investigate the Italo-Hungarian relationship between 1880 and 1945. The multifold bilateral educational and cultural links date back to the 11th century. Italy was the cradle of culture for Hungary, and Italian intellectual movements made their impact on Hungary for long centuries. These cultural ties also helped Hungary join more vigorously in the European cultural and scientific life at the turn of the 19-20th century.

The reason why I have chosen the 1880's as starting point of my research is that since the end of the 19th century cultural policy has been governed by the state. The great statesmen (József Eötvös, Ágoston Trefort) of the generation of the 1867 Compromise realized that the state should take a prominent part in fostering Hungary's international cultural and scientific relations and pay more attention to study-tours abroad. Though Hungarian foreign policy became independent after 1918, its scope of action was limited. Cultural diplomacy as specific domain of foreign policy assumed even greater importance between the two world wars, and its subsidy multiplied. Despite several problems and difficulties Hungarian scientific and cultural life had its heyday in the period under investigation.

## 2. Sources and methodology

The period under examination is varied from the point of view of available sources and scientific literature. References are immense and extend to almost every domain of cultural life.

*Italo-Hungarian cultural relations* by Jenő Koltay-Kastner gives an overall picture of the bilateral co-operation. The concise and relevant work published in 1947 presents bilateral cultural history till the 1867 Compromise. Though the work does not contain bibliography and sources it serves as a starting-point for my research. *Illustrated chronicle of Italo-Hungarian relations* (2002) by György Réti gives a similar overview of the cultural links. Magda Jászay focuses on mainly political and military co-operation and her works touch upon bilateral cultural relations. *Hungarian representatives of the widening world* (1984) by Margit Waczulik takes stock of eminent scholars who studied in Padova in a period when the country was divided into three parts. Cultural life in Fiume in the 19th century is depicted by the volume of essays and studies entitled *Fiume and the Hungarian culture* edited by Csaba Gy. Kiss, while *Fiume* by Ilona Fried published in 2004 familiarizes the reader with Hungarian memorial places of the city.

Scientific literature of Hungary's cultural policy and history of diplomacy between the two world wars is quite ample. *Establishment of the Hungarian scientific policy* (edited by Zoltán Magyary) and *Hungary's public education* (by Gyula Korniss) describe the history of the Hungarian network of institutions abroad. Almost every file as regards the period in question of the Ministry of Religion and Public Education was destroyed in 1956, yet some fonds (K636 and K639) contain useful pieces of information. I myself read through the relevant committee's (Committee of the Roman Hungarian Historical Institute at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) minutes on the institute established by Vilmos Fraknói. A paper on the Hungarian historical researches in the Vatican by Péter Tusor discussed the researches in the Vatican, while Gyula Juhász made a detailed study of Hungary's foreign policy and the Italo-Hungarian political relations.

I consider the journal, called *Corvina*, published under the auspices of the Corvin Mátyás Italo-Hungarian Associate and the essays by Tamás Pelles on teaching Italian in Hungary as important sources of the bilateral cultural co-operation. Meanwhile, I used the international cultural treaties of the period, the laws regarding cultural policy and diplomacy as well as files of the Italian and Hungarian Foreign Ministries as primary sources which are accessible to the public in the volumes of *Foreign Review* (1927-1944).

One of the most significant books in relation to Hungarian students in Italy is Endre Veress' work entitled *Documents and registers of students studying at Italian universities* (1941) which took stock of the data on Hungarian students' studies at Italian universities between 1221 and 1864. Of the cultural and university history source-books Veress' work is the most comprehensive. István Bitskey explored those Hungarian students who had pursued their studies in the Collegium Germanicum-Hungaricum in Rome between 1559 and 1600. Bitskey made good use of Veress' work as well as *Geschichte des Collegium*

*Germanicum Hungaricum in Roma* (Freiburg, 1895) by the German historian, Andreas Skeinhuber. László Szögi researched into the data on Hungarian students' studies at universities between 1790 and 1850 in the Habsburg Empire. He partly made use of the work of Veress while examining the university of Padova, and looked through the documents of the university of Pavia in the state archives of Pavia. László Szögi examined the documents of the state archives in Triest as well where the records of the former Imperial and Royal Naval and Trade Academy can be found.

Zsuzsanna Orosz researched on the Hungarian students in Padova and Bologna between the two world wars. She looked through the university yearbooks which contain the register of the enrolled and graduate students between 1920 and 1942. The author took stock of the students' distribution by faculties but was unable to give account of the students' origin and religion for want of recording in the yearbooks. Péter Erdő made a study of the Hungarian students who pursued canon law studies at universities of Lateran and Gregorian. Julianna P. Szűcs examined the artists who had studied in Rome between 1828 and 1942, and looked through the series published under the editorship of the National Hungarian Scholarship Council and the artists' announcements. She has come across the names of 128 Hungarian artists who studied in Rome by means of Hungarian and Italian state or municipal scholarship.

Relatively little attention has been devoted to the exploration of the history of foreign peregrination since the beginning of the 19th century, and it is only in the 1990's that survey of this subject has become important anew. At Eötvös Lóránd University a group headed by László Szögi has embarked on exploring the history of the peregrination.

My PhD thesis is based upon already issued source material and relies upon the research I carried out in Italy and Hungary. My research is confined to the period between 1867 and 1944 and is focusing on 22 Italian universities where a larger number of Hungarian students pursued their studies. The survey takes into account every student who matriculated or acquired academic degree in Italian higher educational institution or studied at Italian universities by means of state or other type of scholarship. I scrutinize the students' place of origin, religion, occupation, pursued and preliminary studies, and describe the types of scholarships available in the inter-war years.

Having gone through the documents and records of the archives at Sapienzia university in Rome I found data on the names of matriculated foreign students, their places of origin, parents' name and the faculties they had chosen. I looked through the minutes of the university council at the archives of the most important Hungarian universities as well as the files on the Ministry of Culture at the National Archives. The series published yearly between 1925 and 1941 entitled *Foreign Hungarian Institutes* was of great help to me. This publication discloses foreign scholarships and the names of those who obtained student grants.

The register I have compiled cannot be considered as final, and more research is needed in order for the list to be complete. One should also remember that Hungarian students were likely to study at other

Italian universities which I was unable to visit. My research was hampered by the fact that the Italian university archives have mostly the modern sources of the university, while the mediaeval documents can be found in state archives and libraries. The documents of the universities of Padova and Bologna are preserved in four archives and these records are often incomplete. The elaboration of the Italian university documents is still in progress and books of reference and dissertations concerning the history of universities are being published.

### **3. Accomplishments of the PhD thesis**

The first part of the thesis describes the cultural history of the dualistic era. Italo-Hungarian cultural co-operation was multifold in this period, therefore I point out the interaction between the two cultures by taking stock of each artistic branch. After a brief political survey I focus on the artistic ties. The Italian 'verista' theatre was renowned all over Europe and it became also popular in Hungary at the turn of the century. I survey the bilateral musical relations and take stock of the famous Italian artists who performed in the Opera House. Though the Italian artistic school always made a great impact on the Hungarian fine arts, the Italian influence at the turn of the century was not so determinative in this domain as it was before.

At the end of the 19th century mutual literary attention was directed towards translation. Petőfi's works had been translated into Italian but the Italian public could read the works of Mór Jókai, Kálmán Mikszáth and Ferenc Herczegh as well. One could read in Hungarian almost every masterpiece of the Italian literature at the beginning of the 20th century. Italo-Hungarian cultural relations of the time provide an important chapter of the Hungarian cultural history. Representatives of the arts regarded the Italian models as important at the turn of the century as well.

I focus on Vilmos Fraknói's activities and the foundation of the Hungarian Historical Institute in Rome in a separate chapter. The chief pontiff and historian Vilmos Fraknói gained imperishable distinction with his scientific research into the time-honoured relations between Hungary and Italy and the Vatican. He received Hungarian scholars in his villa in Rome starting from 1895 who were engaged in research into church history. Fraknói presented his villa along with its furniture and library to the Hungarian state in 1912, so before 1918 Fraknói's institute in Rome was the one and only scientific institute in continuous use, possessed by the Hungarian state to receive Hungarian scholarship holders.

At the turn of the 19-20th century Fiume was the hub of Italo-Hungarian cultural relations. Teaching Hungarian as foreign language originated in Fiume at the beginning of the 19th century. It was here that the first Hungarian language course books and Italo-Hungarian dictionaries had been published. The first Italian translators and Hungarian scholars well-versed in Italian language and literature came from Fiume, and the city became the Hungarian centre for printing of books in Italian. Several writers, translators born in Fiume worked in Hungary who made Italian literature more popular in our country. Fiume was regarded as a famous seaside resort where many Hungarian public figures spent their holiday.

In the next chapter I concentrate upon the traditions of Italian peregrination and examine the Hungarian peregrination to Italy in the dualistic era. The academic reforms carried out in the domain of educational policy in Hungary that time affected foreign peregrination as well. The network of our higher education expanded with new universities and colleges being established. The number of students who matriculated at higher educational institutions was on the increase.

The next chapter focuses on the bilateral cultural co-operation between the two world wars. In addition to offering a brief survey of bilateral diplomatic relations I explore the history of the Corvin Mátyás Italo-Hungarian Association. I consider this sub-chapter to be of great importance since no one has treated at length the activity of the association yet. The objective of the association founded in 1920 was to develop bilateral scientific and cultural relations through organizing scientific conferences, theatrical performances, concerts, exhibitions and language courses, granting scholarships and providing financial assistance to publications and translations. Its journal called *Corvina* disclosed on a regular basis works of theory of literature and history, translations, and gave account of the scientific activity of the association. The association took a prominent role in organizing Hungary's cultural life in the 1920's and undertook to make the Italian culture popular in our country.

I survey the activity of the Hungarian Historical Institution in Rome and the foundation of the Collegium Hungaricum in Rome with a special emphasis on the interaction and „co-existence” of these two institutes in a separate chapter. Since Hungary did not intend to maintain two cultural institutions in Rome at the same time, there were initiatives aimed at integrating the historical institute into the Collegium Hungaricum. Having read through the minutes of the concerned committee (Committee of the Roman Hungarian Historical Institution) at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences I have come to the conclusion that this body persisted in line with Vilmos Fraknói's intention in believing that the Hungarian Institute in Rome should continue operating independently.

I investigate the Italian-language teaching in our secondary and university education between the two world wars. Political and economic changes required high-level teaching of modern foreign languages. The Ministry of Education therefore took pains to make learning foreign languages possible at every level of our educational system. Italian language was never so popular as it was in the inter-war years. This popularity was partly due to the fact that Hungary considered Italy as her most important partner in developing cultural links.

I treat fully the cultural policy between the two world wars and survey the educational policy conception of Kunó Klebelsberg and that of Bálint Hóman, Ministers of Education of the period. The two ministers' programme differed to a great extent, mainly in the domain of cultural diplomacy. Primary aim of establishing the scholarship council and network of Collegium Hungaricum by Klebelsberg was to strengthen Hungarian educational policy. Bálint Hóman, on the other hand, gave preference to popularization of the Hungarian culture by concluding bilateral cultural treaties with a number of countries in the 1930's. Nobody has embarked on surveying the Italo-Hungarian cultural treaty concluded in 1935 in a detailed way, its impact on the bilateral relations and the Italian school as well as the Italian Cultural Institute in Budapest.

A large number of Hungarian students studied at Italian universities in the inter-war years. I explore the Hungarian students' peregrination to Italy in the period between 1918 and 1945. Political events of the period as well as scholarship policy made an impact on the Hungarian students' Italian peregrination. The Hungarian scholarship programme aided and sponsored unprecedentedly the foreign studies of gifted students. The chapters examining the peregrination, the statistics and lists based upon the database are part and parcel of the research on Hungarian and European peregrination.

The database I have compiled during the past years contains the names of those students who matriculated at Italian universities and data on their place of birth and studies.

I hope that my PhD thesis has made a contribution to the investigation of the history of the peregrination in Hungary. I trust that I have given an overall picture of Italo-Hungarian cultural relations between 1880 and 1945 as well.

#### **4. Publications**

– Magyarországi diákok itáliai egyetemeken 1526-1918 I. rész. = Magyarországi diákok itáliai egyetemjárása az újkorban. 16. kötet Bp. 2007.

– A Corvin Mátyás Magyar–Olasz Egyesület működése a két világháború között = Az Egyetemi Könyvtár Évkönyvei XIII. kötet. Bp. 2007.

– Nemzetközi kulturális szerződések az 1930-as években = Az Egyetemi Könyvtár Évkönyvei XIII. kötet Bp. 2007.