History of Hungarian Buddhism and the influences of Buddhism in Hungary until the 1920`s

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Summary

As the first of a series, this paper aims to introduce the story of Buddhism and its influences in Hungary until the 1920s with some references to later decades. The introduction of Buddhism into Hungary should not be interpreted only from the point of view of the history of religion, but also as a history of ideas, because individuals, artists, diplomats, representatives of then-nascent Hungarian Oriental Studies, Tibetology and Buddhology all played significant roles in this process. As a result, the study focuses on, inter alia, the person of Sándor Kőrösi Csoma, (known outside Hungary as Alexander Csoma de Kőrös,) the father of Tibetology, the commemoration and celebration of whose achievements bring together from time to time both adherents and researchers of Buddhism in Hungary.

Keywords: Hungarian Buddhism, Eastern religions in Hungary, Sándor Kőrösi Csoma, Hungarian painters, Simon Hollóssy, religious life in Hungary in the interwar period, yoga

Introduction

The first of this multiple-part series of papers deals with the aims to introduce the history of Buddhism in Hungary until the 1920's. One such aim is to try to understand the reasons for the rapid growth of Buddhism in Hungary in the past 25 years since the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. To do so, we need to concern ourselves with the development of Buddhism in Hungary before and after World War II, especially during the post-war socialist period. The end of the eighties meant also the end of the socialist period; significant changes took place in Hungarian society and in religious life, and these had a considerable influence on emerging Buddhist groups.

It is important to mention here that the research literature on Hungarian Buddhism and other Asian religions in Hungary is undeniably poor compared to Western European and North American academic literature on Buddhism in the West.

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The history of Buddhism in Hungary has been examined in detail so far only by an earlier Buddhist theological dissertation¹, two major studies² after 1990, a commemorative book edited by the Dharma Gate Buddhist College and another unpublished study³. In other countries only shorter studies and reviews have appeared on the subject⁴. Although there exists already a rich body of literature on Buddhism in the West, including Western Europe, historical surveys of European Buddhism make little more than passing reference to Buddhism in Hungary⁵. This, of course, originates in the differences that exist between Western and Eastern European Buddhism, their historical developments, financial backgrounds, structure of their groups, publicity etc. There are obviously also numerous historical reasons for these differences.

Nevetheless, it is also true that many Hungarian Buddhist groups are eager to describe or position themselves conspicuously in a different way than Buddhist groups in other Western or Eastern European countries: many Hungarians cherish their alleged Eastern historical roots

Bulletin of Tibetology 10, no. 1 (1973): 57-59. Russell Webb, "Buddhism in Hungary," British Mahabodhi Soc. "Buddhist Quarterly" Autumn, n.d.

¹ Rev. Géza Rács, "Magyarország és a Buddhizmus" (Hungary and the Buddhism), (Buddhist) Doctoral thesis. Budapest: Buddhista Misszió, az Árja Maitreya Mandala Rend magyarországi ága, 1960).
²Attila Márton Farkas, Buddhizmus Magyarországon Avagy Az Alternatív Vallásoság Egy Típusának Anatómiája (Buddhism in Hungary or the anatomy of a type of alternative religiousness). MTA PTI Etnoregionális Kutatóközpont Munkafüzetek 50 (Budapest: MTA Politikai Tudományok Intézete, Etnoregionális Kutatóközpont, 1998). Ágnes Kárpáty, Buddhizmus Magyarországon avagy egy posztmodern szubkultúra múltja és jelene, (Buddhism in Hungary or the present and the past of a postmodern subculture) MTA PTI Etnoregionális Kutatóközpont Munkafüzetek, 2001).

³ Csaba Kalmár, *Lángra Lobbant a Szikra - Emlékkönyv a Buddhizmus Magyarországi Meghonosítóiról* (The spark became a flame - Commemorative book about those who introduced Buddhism to Hungary) (Budapest: A Tan Kapuja Buddhista Egyház, 2004). The Gate of Dharma Buddhist College website also published short articles on the important figures of Hungarian Buddhism, which uses as source the above-mentioned memorial book. Buddhist groups' homepages also publish short summaries of Hungarian Buddhism. The above-mentioned unpublished work is about the post-war, socialist era history of Buddhist Mission) (Budapest: Gate of Dharma Buddhist College, after 2010). This work also contains references to the pre-war times. The journalist Károly Nagy also wrote a short informative book about Buddhism with a brief summary of the history of Hungarian buddhism. Károly Nagy, *Buddhizmus, Misztika, Tibet.*, (Buddhism, mysticism, Tibet) Változó Világ Többnyelvű Könyvtár 40 (Budapest: Változó világ, n.d.)

⁵ See for example Martin Baumann, "Global Buddhism: Developmental periods, regional histories, and a new analytical perspective." Journal of Global Buddhism, no. 2 (2001) (2001): 1-43.

and thus, Hungarian Buddhists tend to describe themselves as more sensitive to Eastern spiritual ideas than other Europeans.

Meanwhile, since the year 2000 research on Eastern religions in Hungary became somewhat more energetic; the number of studies on Buddhist and other religious groups with Eastern origins have increased remarkably⁶. Japanese researchers have also dealt with Hungarian Buddhism⁷. However, as some time has elapsed since the publication of many of these works and more than a quarter of a century has gone by since the fall of Eastern European communist regimes, a new summary of Buddhism-related research in Hungary would seem to be justified.

The characteristics and the periods of Hungarian Buddhism

Just like in other European countries, one of the distinctive features of "Hungarian Buddhism" is that those, who introduced it to Hungary were not only individuals who claimed themselves Buddhist practitioners, but also groups of Hungarian intellectuals - typically orientalists, artists, musicians, art historians, art collectors, diplomats – who came into contact by different motives and sometimes with a strong adventurous spirit with Buddhism during their lives and professional careers, and then pioneered in introducing the Buddhist teachings and heritage into Hungary. The scientific educational work carried out by scientists and researchers was particularly important during the decades of socialism (1947-1989), when those interested in the East, had to rely almost exclusively on these types of works for information about Buddhism on a wider range⁸.

⁶ It is worth to mention here, that although Hungary has a long tradition in "traditional" folklore studies which received strong official support even during the socialist era, serious academic research in the fields of cultural and religious anthropology – which might help to understand the different aspects of the changing religious life in a changing society – began only after 1989 with the establishment of anthropological departments in some Hungarian universities.

⁷ These will be introduced in detail later in this series of paper. I would mention here only that recently a significant monograph was published on the Hungarian adherents of the Society of Krishna consciousness.

⁸ Above criteria are in accordance with the editorial principles of the commemorative book published by Tan Kapuja Buddhista Egyház (in English: Gate of Dharma Buddhist College) which was established at the beginning of the nineties. Kalmár, *Lángra Lobbant a Szikra - Emlékkönyv a Buddhizmus Magyarországi Meghonosítóiról*.

Thus, the story of the introduction of Buddhist ideas into Hungary should not be interpreted only from the aspects of the history of religion, but also as an adventureous tour de force of ideas, since in addition to religious practices and beliefs, intellectual interest and curiosity in East Asia and the spirit of adventure also played a substantial role in it.

In certain cases, one can not draw a sharp dividing line between a researcher and a practitioner - in this regard, the "Hungarian Buddhism" shows a similar character as its Western European or North American⁹ counterpart.

The author of the paper divides into three periods the history of Hungarian Buddhism and the history of the influences of Buddhism in Hungary. These papers will discuss these periods in a roughly chronological manner with some thematically organized subsections, and with some that concern themselves with later periods.

1. The first phase lasts from the mid-19th century to the end of the Second World War. This paper covers mostly the first part of this period until the 1920's. The second paper will deal mostly with the 30's and 40's.

2. Buddhism under the socialist regime. The second period begins after the Second World War, from approximately 1947 and lasts until 1989.

3. The third period begins from about 1989 and has so far laster more than a quarter century.

A few things should be noted here. First of all, the presentation of the history of Buddhism and its influences in Hungary should not be seen as confined to the territory of present-day Hungary, since before 1920 the teachings of Buddha appeared in a country with a much bigger territory than the present Hungarian state. Hungary's territory was reduced after World War I, but in a certain sense the Treaty of Trianon had a greater impact on the practice of Eastern religions after World War II. This is because with the establishment of the Eastern bloc under Soviet control, the practice of all religions became more difficult than had been under the more liberal prewar regimes of East/Central Europe.

During the years of the socialist regime, it was impossible even to think about free networking with Buddhist practitioners in neighbouring countries. This situation began to change in the 80's, and changed significantly only after 1989.

On the other hand, as a result of the integration of East/Central Europe into the system of the "socialist" world order created by the USSR, Buddhism and Buddhism-influenced

⁹ In this context see for example Journal of Global Buddhism 9 (2008) Special Issue Buddhist and Scholars of Buddhism: Blurred Distinctions in Contemporary Buddhist Studies.

activities in Hungary and other East Bloc countries, including the attempts to engage in research by Buddhist groups, were held back when compared to the American and Western European Buddhism and Buddhology. During the eighties, when the socialist world was loosening, this inclusion-like development resulted in the birth of a unique world of Hungarian Buddhism, the effects of which are still being felt.

This situation changed radically only after the 1990s, when more and more Buddhist groups, denominations and churches were founded. In addition to the Western (European and American) and Hungarian Buddhist communities, there appeared also Japanese, Korean and Tibetan groups, and we may expect in the near future further developments with regard to Theravada communities and initiations. In addition to the capital, Buddhist communities emerged in other major cities and there are also more and more communities operating Buddhist meditational centers, retreats, and even monasteries in the countryside. As one may expect we can find naturally a lot of examples of the peaceful co-existence of Buddhism with other Oriental religions and/or semi-, or pseudo-religious "intellectual trends" and there is no shortage of syncretic tendencies.

Characteristics of the first period of development until the end of the Second World War

Let me summarize in brief the characteristics of the first period until the end of WWII with some additional comment on the postwar socialist era and the situation after the 1990's.

- The early period of Buddhism in Hungary was a period when Hungarians were getting to know the "East", and the Eastern religions. As Martin Baumann stressed in his work about "global Buddhism", at the time when the West met Buddhism in the 19th century, Buddhism appeared to Westerners as "text only", in other words text without context. This may be even more affirmatively said about Hungary¹⁰.

- This is the classical period of traveler's and explorer's books, reports and romantic accounts about the East. The descriptions are in accordance with the fashion of the period; we can find a lot of examples of descriptions of "the national character" of East Asian peoples.

¹⁰ Martin Baumann. Global Buddhism: Developmental Periods, Regional Histories, and a New Analytical Perspective. In: Journal of Global Buddhism 2 (2001): 1-43.

This early period is mainly "paper-based". In this sense it differs significantly from the post-war period, when radio and television, and from the after 90s onward, when in addition to the traditional media the Internet began to play a significant role.

- This first period which lasts until the Second World War is just like elsewhere in the West, also the period of emergence of a Hungary-based Oriental Studies and Asian-related museology. Hungarians played a notable role in several major scientific discoveries related to Buddhism, and at the birth of the discipline of Buddhology and Tibetology (Alexander Csoma de Kőrös – Sándor Kőrösi Csoma, Sir Aurel Stein – Stein Aurél)¹¹.

- However we must wait until the end of WWII for the institutionalization of Buddhism in Hungary and the birth of the first officially recognized Buddhist group (Buddhista Misszió - the Buddhist Mission). Consequently, there were no Buddhist religious schools, Eastern "masters" or "teachers" living in the country during the previous period. Of course, there was no direct master-student relationship (which is a legitimizing element within a Buddhist lineage). Naturally, we cannot speak about interbuddhist relations, although there were personal connections with the already existing Western Buddhist organizations (Pali Text Society, Maha Bodhi Society). Thus the above mentioned relative delay compared to Western Buddhism can be perceived in these terms too. The task of Buddhist teaching is limited to the delivery of some spiritual counselling and "spiritual life skills".

- Obviously, transplantation and adaption of ritual practices (meditation, prostration, ceremonies etc.) was also delayed. Such practices would only start seriously after the war, when the Buddhist Mission (Buddhista Misszió) began to operate, but in reality this process is still underway at present. Rituals and ceremonies involve the construction of spaces full of symbolic meaning – neither authoritarian regimes, nor the constrained budgets of small religious groups made it easy to bring them to life.

- During this period Buddhism did not influence the whole of society, but only some small groups. This is actually still true today. The construction of Buddhist structures or Buddhism-related buildings that are clearly visible from the outside took place starting only in the eighties, and that of Buddhist temples only since the nineties.

- Because of the lack of institutionalization, we cannot speak of the establishment of any religious hierarchy. Interestingly, the lack of institutionalization or a relaxed, only partially implemented institutionalization can be observed even today in many modern groups. (There are financial, legal and political reasons behind this phenomenon.)

¹¹ I will come back to Sir Aurel Stein in the second part of this series of papers.

Until the nineties there were many Hungarians interested in Buddhism, but monks or Buddhist masters had yet tot arrive to the country. Initially Hungarians were mainly interested in the Southern, Theravada Buddhism, and this remained so until the nineties. In the first instance, the interest in Buddhism was intellectual and artistic, and not devotional. Let me emphasize here, that the resulting spiritual openness towards the various schools of Buddhism remains until today an important characteristic of Buddhism in Hungary. People were not "fanatic" about Buddhist teachings, there has been no "religious fanaticism", and this may be said even today. The subcultural, in some measure elitist, but also self-organizing nature of Hungarian Buddhism lasts to this day, though, after the millennium, devotional Buddhism grew stronger¹². In the first part of the twentieth century, to a certain degree because of urbanization there were already signs of the disintegration of religious traditions in Hungarian society, and thus it was already predictable that Buddhism would reach out in particular to the urban and more educated segment of the population. Similarly, it was also predictable that Buddhism in Hungary would be adopted by many predominantly as a spiritual lifestyle, that would allow the individual to develop and maintain multiple religious adherences, as Buddhism makes possible without any particular problem for the practitioner of Buddhism to observe Christian customs and celebrate its holidays. In other words, tendencies towards "secular Buddhism" – which is an important topic for present day Western Buddhist research - can be traced back to this first period¹³.

- Buddhism to the general public actually did not appear alone and independently in Hungary, but together with other Eastern religions. This partnership with other East Asian spiritual traditions is still characteristic of the way Hungarians approach Eastern religions. It is also worth to mention here that Europe's first yoga school started to operate in Hungary during the thirties.

- One of the pivotal and substantial element of the attraction of Hungarians to Eastern religions was the idea that the Hungarian nation originates in the East, and consequently Hungarians appreciate and comprehend better and more "deeply" and "instinctively"

¹² Shopping for religion as an option and the New Age began to appear already during the sixties and seventies in the West, but the trend showed up only in the late eighties, early nineties in Hungary. "Self-yourself religions"

emerged also only at these later years.

¹³ See for example Winton Higgins, "The Coming of Secular Buddhism: A Synoptic View", *Journal of Global Buddhism*, no. 13 (2012) (2012): 109–26.

Buddhism than other European nations. Consequently, Buddhism is interpreted as a religion of our Eastern "cousins", and thus has strong links to the heart and soul of Hungarians. This idea runs through the history of Buddhism in Hungary, and until nowadays provides a solid ideological support for the adherents. There can be found more than enough examples of this kind of thinking in the publications and on the websites of Buddhist communities.

- Theosophy should be also mentioned here, as it appeared very early in Hungary and Buddhism was interpreted as a part of it. Thus, here is another example that Buddhism existed in a syncretic form and intertwined with the occult.

- Needless to say, at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries there was no ethnic Buddhism (Thai, Tibetan, Chinese, Japanese etc.) in Hungary. We have to wait until the 1990's for them to appear. On the opposite side of the globe, Buddhist groups of ethnic Chinese and Japanese origin appeared already in the United States by the middle of the 19th century. At this time in Eastern Europe and in the Balkans, we can find only Kalmyk and Buryat Buddhism in Russia, and a Kalmyk Buddhist group that functioned in Belgrade, in Serbia.

- There existed no translations of Buddhist texts from original languages in the earliest periods. The exception is, of course, Sándor Kőrösi Csoma, or as he wrote his name in English Alexander Csoma de Kőrös, the founder of Tibetology. At this time typically German, French and English books were used for the source of translations.

- Because of that, I should emphasize once again the delay Hungary was subject to. Just like in other East/Central European countries, "Hungarian Buddhism" was actually developing at the periphery of western Buddhism. However, the above-mentioned belief in the links of the Hungarian people to the East, and the nature of this peripheral situation gave opportunities to the formation of specific, local forms of Buddhism. This came to have significance after the 1980`s.

The beginnings

The first Hungarian sources associated with Buddhism can be traced back long before the 19th century. Galeotto Marzio, the Italian humanist residing in the court of King Matthias pondered for the first time mistakenly on the possibility that the name of the castle of Buda might be traced back to the Buddha's name¹⁴.

The first Hungarian written source linked indirectly to Buddhism is the story of Barlaam and Josaphat (in Hungarian: Barlám, Jozafát) in the codex Kazinczy (1521-1541). The codex Kazinczy was most likely a Hungarian sermon-, legenda- and sample-collection¹⁵. The story of Barlaam and Josaphat is the Christian version of Buddha's life. Its original source was a Mahayana text written between the second and fourth century A.D.¹⁶

Sándor Csoma Kőrösi (Alexander Csoma de Kőrös)

Strictly speaking, Alexander Csoma de Kőrös (1784-1842) was the founder of the science of Tibetology and thus one of the initiators of domestic Hungarian Oriental Studies, but he was also indirectly – without his will - one of the persons who layed down the foundations of

Galeotto Marzio writes about Buda and the Buddha (p46): "Buda castle lies upon a hill, and its shores are washed by the Danube. It is not quite certain from where its name was taken: maybe from the antique Budaliah, or maybe from the holy man named Buddha. It does not mean, that the city had been founded by him, it was just named after his famous name. According to the testimony of St. Jerome, Buddha was the author of the doctrine of the Indian philosophers named gymnobrachmans, and according to the tradition he was born from the side of a virgin. Is the story of this birth real or written, I do not bother myself too much to find it out. But it is certain that the Buddha is the name of a very wise man who founded the religion of the Indians (Indus) (sic)."

¹⁴ Galeotto Marzio, *Mátyás Királynak Kiváló, Bölcs, Tréfás Mondásairól És Tetteiről Szóló Könyv* (Budapest: Magyar Helikon, 1979). The English title is: "Book about the great, wise, humorous sayings and deeds of King Mátyás". The online edition may be found in the Hungarian Electronic Library (Magyar Elektronikus Könyvtár). - Galeotto Marzio, *Mátyás királynak kiváló, bölcs, tréfás mondásairól és tetteiről szóló könyv*, Bibliotheca historica ([Budapest]: M. Helikon, 1977), http://mek.oszk.hu/06500/06598. Galeotto Marzio, (Budapest: Hungarian Helicon, 1979). The original Latin title of the work is *De egregie, sapienter et iocose dictis ac factis Mathiae regis*.

¹⁵ Sándor V. Kovács, ed., A magyar nyelvű középkori irodalom (The Hungarian medieval literature) (Budapest: Neumann Kht., 2000), http://mek.oszk.hu/06100/06196. Zsuzsa Kovács, Kazinczy-Kódex 1526– 1541 (Codex Kazinczy), Régi Magyar Kódexek 28 (Budapest: Magyar Nyelvtudományi Társaság, 2003). The text is also listed on the webpage Sermones Compilati of the Institute of Old Hungarian Literature of Eötvös Loránd University. "Barlám És Jozafát legendája[1]," Sermones.elte.hu - Szöveggyűjtemény, accessed February 1, 2016,

http://sermones.elte.hu/szovegkiadasok/magyarul/madasszgy/index.php?file=374_386_Barlam_Jozafat. ¹⁶ The story of Barlaam and Josaphat entered the Christian World with Manichean help.

domestic Buddhism¹⁷. On the international level Csoma was one of the generators of scholarly and public interest in Buddhism and Tibet, and he was the editor of the first Tibetan-English dictionary and the writer of a Tibetan grammar book in English.

Csoma's importance goes far beyond his oeuvre. He was one of the founders of a new science, Tibetology, but since his quest was originally launched to explore the past of the Hungarian nation, his life's work served and serves as an example for later generations of Hungarians.

Körösi`s legendary figure is still hugely revered both in Hungary and in his homeland, the Székelyföld, or Szeklerland of Transylvania which is now part of Romania. Various scientific¹⁸ and educational institutions bear his name. Statues of Csoma can be found in many towns and villages of Transylvania and Hungary¹⁹. Schools are named after him²⁰ and poetic works commemorate his achievements. Hungarian Buddhists feel a strong attachement to his person, Buddhist groups named stupas and parks after him²¹.

¹⁷ An extensive body of research literature on Csoma already exists. Here I will mention only two researchers and their relevant works. The Hungarian Géza Bethlenfalvy and the French-Breton Bernard le Calloch are among the most important Kőrösi-researchers. Géza Bethlenfalvy, "A Buddhizmus és tanulmányozásának kezdetei (Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Munkásságának Tükrében.)", (Buddhism and the beginning of its research in light of the works of Kőrösi Csoma) *Távol-Keleti Tanulmányok*, January 2009, 55–70. Bernard Le Calloc'h, "Alexandre Csoma de Körös, Le Bodhisattva Hongrois.," *Revue de L'histoire Des Religions* tome 204, no. 4. (1987): 353–88.

¹⁸Félix Vályi, "Kőrösi Csoma Sándor szentté avatása Japánban" (The canonisation of Sándor Csoma Kőrösi in Japan) *Pesti Napló*, April 2, 1933.

Kőrösi Csoma Társaság. (http://www.kcst.hu/)

¹⁹ There are for example Csoma statutes in Transylvania, in his native Csomakőrös, in Marosvásárhely (Targu Mures), and also in the garden of the Rath Museum of Budapest.

²⁰ For example the Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Általános Iskola és Gimnázium (Sándor Csoma Kőrösi Elementary and Secondary School) in Budapest, Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Kéttannyelvű Általános Iskola (Sándor Csoma Kőrösi Bilingual Elementary School) in Budapest, Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Általános Iskola (Sándor Csoma Kőrösi Elementary school) in Dunakeszi and Tóalmás.

²¹ The Sándor Csoma Kőrösi stupa was inaugurated on September 25, 1982 in Budapest, and later in 1987, the Hungarian Buddhist inaugurated another Kőrösi Csoma stupa at the legendary Uszó ranch. At Tar village, situated near the Mátra mountains, there is a Buddhist Park, called the Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Memorial Park. Here can be found the Sándor Csoma Kőrösi Peace stupa, which was built on the 150th anniversary of his death in 1992. The Dalai Lama was also present at the inauguration ceremony and he consecrated the stupa.

I will come back to the figure of Kőrösi in my next paper, when I will examine the beginnings of Hungarian Orientalist Studies and the Hungarian Buddhist groups of the thirties, but let me mention here some important things.

Körösi`s figure played some moderate role in the Hungarian-Japanese relations²², as his person was a certain kind of catalyst during the 1930`s when for well-known political reasons Hungary and Japan reestablished and strengthened their diplomatic and cultural relations.

By the initiative of Felix Vályi, the Hungarian Society for East Asia donated in 1933 a Csoma statue sitting in meditational pose to Japan honoring the country's achievement as a research center of Asian studies. The statue was the work of the famous sculptor, Géza Csorba. The donation ceremony, and the Csoma memorial service took place at Taishō University in Tokyo on February 22, 1933. Later, the statue was transferred to the Museum of the Japanese Imperial House²³. The statue was later copied, and the new statue was placed at the entrance of the library of Taishō University. This ceremony was interpreted by Vályi as the canonization of Kőrösi to "Buddhist sainthood", and thus it is commemorated with great respect by the Hungarian Buddhist communities and the picture of the statue can be seen in many Hungarian Buddhist publications²⁴.

Csorba produced later some other statues of the Székely-Hungarian scientist. For example, another Csorba statue "The eternal wanderer" depicting Csoma in traveling dress with walking stick had been placed in the garden of the Rath Museum (formerly the Museum of China) which belongs to the Ferenc Hopp East Asian Museum²⁵.

²⁴ The author is planning to write a separate paper about the ceremony and the events at the University of Taishō. This event contributed significantly to the shaping of a semi-mythical figure of Csoma in Hungary. The demystification of the personality and works of Csoma was recently the goal of a major Csomaresearcher, Péter Marczell, who examined also the political motivations behind the mythisation of Csoma's figure. P. J. Marc Zell, "Csomakőrös: Himalayan Hermit or Nationalistic Activist?" Himalayan and Central Asian Studies 5, no. 2 (April-June 2001): 23-53. P. J Marc Zell, but Kőrösi Csoma's Planet (Alexander Csoma de Koros I. Vol.), Asiatic Society Monograph Series 1 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 2007).

²² In Japanese ケーレシ・チョマ・シャーンドル. Csoma's name is frequently written in Japanese texts in this way: チョーマ.

²³ Vályi wrote a report about the event for the *Pesti Napló* (Diary of Pest). Vályi interpreted the event as Csoma's canonization to "Buddhist sainthood". Félix Vályi, "Kőrösi Csoma Sándor szentté avatása Japánban" (The canonization of Kőrösi Csoma Sándor in Japan) *Pesti Napló*, April 2, 1933.

²⁵ Béla Kelényi, "A Nyugati Bódhiszattvától Az Örök Vándorig: Csorba Géza Csoma-Szobrai," (From the Western Bodhisattva to the Eternal Wayfarer: Csoma de Kőrös statues by Géza Csorba) *Keletkutatás* 2012.

The earliest of Csoma's biographers was the renowned Theodore Duka (1825-1908), whose Kőrösi-biography was written and published originally in English. It is also available in Japanese²⁶. There are several Japanese scholarly works dealing with Csoma's life and achievements²⁷.

The Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences contains the famous Csoma Archive, which arrived in Hungary courtesy of Theodore Duka at the end of the 19th century. One part of this covers the base of the Tibetan manuscript and woodprint collection of the Oriental Collection of the Academy. I have to mention here briefly the so-called Alexander-books, written about Tibetan Buddhism and other subjects at the request of Csoma by his Tibetan masters and teachers²⁸. These naturally did not affect directly the course of Buddhism in Hungary, as these were not read by those sympathizing with Buddhism. The Csoma Archive was included into the Memory of the World Register of UNESCO in 2009²⁹.

As I have mentioned on previous pages, in Hungary, just like in the US and Western

²⁶ The original English edition: Tivadar Duka, *Life and Works of Alexander Csoma de Koros*, Trübner's Oriental Series (London: Trübner, 1885). The Japanese edition: Tivadar Duka, Choma do Keresu no Shogo: Yoroppa saisho no Chibetto gakusha, trans. Maeda, Takashi (Tokyo: Sankibo busshorin, 1998). ²⁷ Due of the lack of space, I would mention here only some major Csoma-studies, including a very early work written by Naojiro Kitamura, and those which have links to Taisho University. Naojiro Kitamura, "Arekusanderu Choma Kurushi no keireki oyobi jigyo", Shigakkai 4, no. 2 (1902): 24-31. Masao Ichishima, "Chomazo to Taishodaigaku" Tendai 8 (1984): 62-67. Masao Ichishima, "Alexander Csoma", Taisho Daigaku Sogo Bukkyo Kenkyujo Nenpo 3 (1981): 47-58. "Zatsuho: Arekusanda Choma dozo hoteishiki to kinentenrankai", Taisho Gakuho Daigaku 15 (June 1933): 166 Masao Ichishima, "Kindai seizogaku no senkusha Choma ni tsuite", Tendai Gakuho 22 (1980): 104-110. Masao Ichishima, "Chibettogaku no senkusha Choma ni tsuite", Taisho Daigaku Kenkyu Kinenho - Bukkyo Gakubu Bungakubu 76 (1991): 338-318. Masao Ichishima, "Shirarezaru Hangari no eiyu Choma", in Kokusaikajidai aidentiti tamaru tokuzen hóka hen (Tokyo: Shunshusha, 1998). Isabella C. Kovacs, "Choma Arekusanda but Kyoroshu - Yoroppa ni shite okeru Ajiakennkyu no senkusha kindai Chibettogaku soshisha", Gengobunkaronshu 46 (January 1998) pp.81-100. Akira Yuyama, "Choma no Chibettogakusha Goettingen ryugaku", Toyobunkoshoho 8 (1976): pp.87-91.

ősz (2012): 5–24. .

²⁸ His legacy is introduced on the website of the MTA (Hungarian Academy of Science): "Kőrösi Csoma Sándor (1784-1842)," accessed April 1, 2016, http://csoma.mtak.hu/.

²⁹ UNESCO, the Hungarian National Commission for UNESCO | The Memory of the World list Hungarian elements, (September 8, 2014) http://www.unesco.hu/kommunikacio-informacio/vilagemlekezet-program/vilagemlekezet-lista-140908.

Europe, there exists a certain kind of free corridor between the representatives of academia and active Buddhism and because of his legacy, Kőrösi's person represents in many senses a link between Hungarian Orientalist researchers, Tibetologists and various domestic Buddhist groups³⁰.

It is worth mentioning here that Hungarian Orientalists have also always held in high esteem another world-renowned researcher, Sir Aurel Stein (in Hungarian Stein Aurél), and the legacies and memories of these two have been nurtured by generations of scholars³¹.

Csoma's name became a recurring element in the Hungarian history of Buddhism. As for the religious institutions during the post-war socialist period, it was the Kőrösi Csoma Institute of Buddhology founded by the Arya Maitreya Mandala (AMM) and the Hungarian Buddhist Mission, which bore his name. We can also frequently encounter his name on the webpages and in the publications of the Buddhist groups founded after the nineties.

Let me mention here another example of how Csoma's legacy is interpreted and cherished by contemporary Buddhist society. On May 27, 1991 following the then-valid law, various Hungarian Buddhist groups created as an umbrella organization the Gate of Dharma Buddhist Church (Tan Kapuja Buddhista Egyház, TKBE). Between the various teachers, educators and mentors at the (Tan Kapuja Buddhista Főiskola, TKBF) launched by TKBE we can find not only representatives of the Buddhist organizations, but also researchers and scientists representing universities and research institutions. Other than these, domestic advocates of Buddhism also make use of works on Buddhism written by scholars. Moreover, the Gate of Dharma Buddhist College (TKBF) also taught Eastern languages, including Sanskrit, classical

³⁰ A few years ago, a group of young professionals started to work on the maintenance of the sites in Zanskar where Csoma worked during the 19th century. The project's name is Csoma's Room. "Csoma's Room," accessed February 10, 2016, http://csomasroom.kibu.hu/hu/.

³¹ I will discuss in detail his works in the next paper of this series, when I will describe the beginnings of Hungarian Oriental Studies. Let me mention here only, that his most important works were quickly translated - sometimes abrdiged versions - into Hungarian. Stein, Aurél. *Homokba temetett városok*.
Edited by Gyula Halász. Budapest: Lampel R. Könyvkereskedése R.T. könyvkiadóvállalata, 1908. Stein, Aurél. *Indiából Kínába. Harmadik utam Belső-Ázsiába 1913-1916*. Translated by Gyula Halász. Budapest: Atheneum RT., 1913. Stein, Aurél. *Ösi ösvényeken Ázsiában*. Budapest, 1935. Stein, Aurél. *Romvárosok Ázsia sivatagjaiban*. Translated by Gyula Halász. Budapest: K.M. Természettudományi Társulat, 1913. Other Hungarian geographical expeditions, and Béla Széchenyi's and Lajos Lóczy's work will be also discussed later.

Chinese, Japanese, and "Csoma's" Tibetan language. Along with other holidays, Csoma's birthday is also an official holiday of The Gate of Dharma Buddhist Church and the Gate of Dharma Buddhist College³².

However, as the researchers of Csoma's life and Kárpáty and Farkas stress in their papers, the original purpose of Csoma's eastern odyssey was to search, find and explore the Hungarian homeland and the decendants of those Hungarians who had remained in Asia, when our forefathers moved to Central Europe, and thus his adventurous life and his scientific results not only lifted him to the position of a cult figure of Buddhism in Hungary, but he became also a strengthening element of the national myth of the nation's eastern roots³³. A specific, state-patronized cult of Csoma emerged in socialist Hungary after the war, and even though Csoma remained a Protestant Christian until the end of his life, borrowing Kárpáty's words, Csoma became a "legitimizing symbol of Buddhism" during the socialist period of Hungary (1947-1989)³⁴.

The pseudo-mythical interpretations of the origin of the Hungarian nation rooted in the "East" has a long tradition in Hungary, and it happened also many times that even various pseudo-religious elements were stitched to these concepts. Csoma's figure appears from time to time to back these pseudo-mythical concepts.

As I have mentioned already before, the emphasis on the eastern origins of the Hungarian nation, and therefore the affinity of the Hungarian people to the reception of Buddhism appears repeatedly in many older and contemporary Hungarian Buddhist sources³⁵.

Early Hungarian Buddhists

As Attila Marton Farkas suggests Hungarian Buddhism has its roots in the intellectual

³² The holidays of TKBE are Lunar New Year (February), Csoma's Birthday (April 4), Buddha's enlightenment and parinirvana (May), opening ceremony of the school year. Other detailed informations about the ceremonies could be find in the Ceremony Book of the Church: *A Tan Kapuja Buddhista Egyház – Szertartáskönyv*, 3.7 ((Budapest): A Tan Kapuja Buddhista Egyház, 2013).

³³ Kárpáty, Buddhizmus Magyarországon avagy egy posztmodern szubkultúra múltja és jelene. Farkas, Buddhizmus Magyarországon avagy az alternatív vallásoság egy típusának anatómiája.

³⁴ Kárpáty, Buddhizmus Magyarországon avagy egy posztmodern szubkultúra múltja és jelene, 4.

³⁵ The emergence of national cults and neo-paganism after the collapse of the socialist regime and their relations with Buddhism will be discussed later in this series of studies.

quests of Hungarian bourgeois intellectuals. The western interpretations of eastern religions, along with mysticism, occultism, psychoanalysis and Schopenhauer's thoughts about Buddhism reached the expanding middle class bourgeoisie of Hungary almost the same time at the end of the 19th century³⁶.

Thus, Buddhism came to Hungary fundamentally from the West and not from the East. During the subsequent decades, the Buddhist literature was translated into the three major Western languages, namely German, French and English. The formation of Western Buddhism in these three major language areas was of major significance for Buddhism in Hungary.

During the first decades of Buddhism in Hungary, there is a noticeable orientation towards India, South Asia and Tibet. Behind this orientation, there is the well-known fact that almost everywhere in the West, early researchers and practitioners of Buddhism tried to find and explore "the purest, most authentic" forms of Buddhism, and Hungarians were no exceptions to this rule³⁷.

The first representative of Hungarian Buddhism is József Hollósy (1860-1898), who went from Máramarossziget, in present-day Romania, through Budapest to Munich to study painting, where he deepened his knowledge of Indian philosophy and upon his return to his homeland compiled and published from English sources his Buddhista Káté (Buddhist Catechism) in 1893³⁸, and then using German translations, rendered Buddhist sutras into Hungarian and published some parts of the Dhammapada³⁹. Hollóssy`s Buddhist circle

³⁸ The book received wide and positive recognition; great Hungarian writers of this epoch, including Mór Jókai and Gyula Krúdy also knew about it and made references to it. After the 1990s, when the Hungarian publishing industry was liberalized and the publishing of Buddhist books was revitalized, this book was also republished in a slightly modernized form. Bhikshu Szunhádra, *Szunhádra. Buddhista Káté* –

³⁶ Farkas, Buddhizmus Magyarországon avagy az alternatív vallásoság egy típusának anatómiája, 4–10.

³⁷ It is relevant to mention here the work of the Pali Text Society.

Bevezetésül Buddha Tanához. (Buddhist Catechism - Introduction to the teachings of Buddha), trans. by József Hollóssy (Budapest: Trajan Könyvesműhely, 2006). Rev. Geza Racs, who was a member of the Hungarian branch of Arya Mandala Maireya and the Buddhist Mission during the socialist period, also wrote about the early Hungarian Buddhist works in his work on page pp. 101-106.

³⁹ About the two painters, József Hollóssy and László Mednyánszky see Bincsik Mónika. *A magyar festészet és a buddhizmus 1880-1914 között: Hollósy József és Mednyánszky László* (The Hungarian Painting and Buddhism between 1880-1914: József Hollóssy and László Mednyánszky), 1998.

released the first Buddhist-themed books⁴⁰.

The first major Hungarian Buddhist work, the two-volume long Dhammó (in English Dharma) was published at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was written by the Orientalist turned businessman Jenő Lénárd (1878-1924)⁴¹.

Hollósy's Buddhist orientation influenced his brother, the also renowned painter Simon Hollóssy, whose disciple, Zoltán Felvinczi Takács, became the first director of the Ferenc Hopp Museum of East Asia.

The teachings of Buddhism left also an impression on László Mednyánszky (1852-1919), who was one of the most prolific Hungarian painters at the turn of the century. Encountering Buddhism for the first time in 1889 in Paris, by 1892, when working in in Máramaros (Maramures) he had made contact with the group of József Hollóssy⁴².

Here it should be indicated that the establishment of an independent religious denomination met with great difficulties at this time. Buddhism was still basically an unknown religion. Article 43 of the 1895 law guaranteeing freedom of religion⁴³ divided religious organizations into three categories: established, recognized and unrecognized religious denominations, and consequently the initiation, establishment and operation of a religious congregation was constrained by strictly defined conditions.

A related fin-du-siecle development was the founding of the Hungarian section of the Theosophical Society by Blavatsky and Olcott. The Hungarian Theosophical Society was operating from 1906 to 1950, and its adherents communicated Buddhism and other Eastern

⁴⁰ Kalmár, Lángra Lobbant a Szikra - Emlékkönyv a Buddhizmus Magyarországi Meghonosítóiról, 24–26.

⁴¹ His two volume-work was published in 1911. The second edition of Lenard's massive, nearly seven hundred-page work was published in 1912. Jenő Lénárd, *Dhammó. Bevezetés a Buddha Tanába* (Budapest: Lampel Rt., 1912). Dhamma. (Introduction to the Teachings of Buddha). The book is about the teachings of Buddhism, but naturally the author wrote the first chapter about Kőrösi. Zoltán Takács Felvinczi wrote about the book in the prestigious journal, Nyugat (West). Zoltán Felvinczi Takács, "Dhammó. Lénárd Jenő Könyve," *Nyugat*, 1914.

⁴² About this see Katalin Keserü, "Conversio a Modern Képzőművészetben – Teozófus Művészet," in *Conversio. Az Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Bölcsészettudományi Karán 2011. szeptember 22–23-án Tartott Vallástudományi Konferencia Előadásai. Ed. Déri Balázs et Al.*, AΓΙΟΝ Könyvek 1 (Budapest: Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar Vallástudományi Központ, 2013), 49–50.
⁴³ "1895. Évi XLIII. Törvénycikk a Vallás Szabad Gyakorlásáról," (1895th XLIII. Article on the Free Exercise of Religion) *Törvények, Jogszabályok a Wolters Kluwer Kft.-Től.*, accessed September 2, 2015, http://www.1000ev.hu/index.php?a=3¶m=6605.

religions to Hungary within a syncretic framework together with spiritual-occult doctrines⁴⁴.

Another disciple of Simon Hollóssy was Ferenc Sass, husband of the famous painter, Erzsébet Sass-Brunner (1889-1950) who would later settle in India. Attracted to mysticism and inspired by the Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore's visit to Hungary (1926), Sass-Brunner moved to India accompanied by her daughter, Erzsébet Brunner (1910-2001), who also choose painting as her life-profession. They both would spend the rest of their lives in that country. As both were portrait-painters, so their talents allowed them to produce portraits of leading Indian politicians and artists. After the war, Erzsébet Brunner was granted Indian citizenship, and she strived to live according to Buddhist ideals. During her pilgrimage across India, Nepal, Burma, Thailand she stopped at Buddhist holy sites⁴⁵.

This concludes the first chapter of this series of papers. The next paper will cover the remaining period until the end of WWII, and will discuss the early Buddhist groups of the 1930's, Hungarian-Japanese prewar relations with a focus on Japanese Buddhism, the beginnings of yoga in Hungary and the beginnings of Oriental Studies, museology and the literary works related to Buddhism.

⁴⁴ During the decades of socialism, they were operating just as a circle of friends, but they made a fresh start in 1991. "| MAGYAR TEOZÓFIAI TÁRSULAT |," accessed June 2, 2016,

http://www.teozofia.hu/index.php. (http://www.teozofia.hu/index.php). There exists also within the Hungarian Theosophical Society a Siddhartha Theosophical Lodge as well. ".:: Sziddhártha Teozófiai Alosztály Honlapja ::.," accessed October 22, 2015, http://www.sziddhartha.hu/.

⁴⁵ Erzsébet Brunner visited his home country in the eighties. The artwork of Erzsébet Sass-Brunner and Erzsébet Brunner was shown to the Hungarian public at a representative exhibition in 1997 in their hometown Nagykanizsa. See Mónika Bincsik and Melinda Géger Dr., eds., *Sass Brunner Erzsébet És Brunner Erzsébet kiállítása /Nagykanizsa - Képzőművészetek Háza* (Nagykanizsa: Hevesi Sándor Művelődési Központ, 1997). After the death of Erzsébet Brunner in 2002, her legacy of more than six hundred images from India was transferred to Nagykanizsa. About the two painters see also Kalmár, Lángra Lobbant a Szikra - Emlékkönyv a Buddhizmus Magyarországi Meghonosítóiról, 42–48.

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