

**University of Szeged  
Faculty of Arts**

**Theses**

**to PhD dissertation entitled**

**Hungary and Ethiopia  
Formal and informal relations  
from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to WWII**

**by**

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## **I. The aims, sources and methodology of the study**

The dissertation's main objective is to reveal the relations between Hungary and Ethiopia from its beginnings to the WWII. These relations can be formal (commerce, politics) and informal (travel writing, press, fiction) The topic is reasonable because in the era of imperialism Ethiopia resisted to colonization thus she was the only one independent country in the Sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore in Hungary there was a relatively significant interest in Ethiopia.

This study is based on both primary and secondary sources. In Hungary the National Archives, the Archives of the Geographical Museum (Érd), the records of the Munkácsy Museum (Békéscsaba) have been used, and the Public Record Office (London), Drzavni Arhiv (Fiume) and the Archives of Wales abroad. The majority of these documents are used here for the first time. There are also published documents among the sources and both Hungarian and foreign language basic works of the subject are discussed. The dissertation is chronologically set up with a wide spectrum of the events. There are prolific quotations in the text; the study would be poor without their content, arguments, contemporary idioms and language.

## **II. The structure of the dissertation**

There are four chapters in this dissertation that include sub-chapters. The four chapters' content is the following.

Chapter I includes the era unfolding the early Hungarian–Ethiopian relations to the WWI. Since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there had been a growing interest in Ethiopia according to the contemporary Hungarian press. In this era the first Hungarian travellers got to Ethiopia. One of them, Franz Hassen (probably of Saxon origin) lived there for decades and married an Ethiopian wife. Count Sámuel Teleki and Vilmos Zichy were aristocratic adventurers and hunters. The latter fought against Ethiopia as an officer in the Egyptian army and died in the war of 1875.

There is a sub-chapter to show the relations of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and Italy following with special attention to the Italian imperialism. Italy's fiascos in Africa (1887, 1896) were great motivations to her to maintain the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria–Hungary although there were serious tensions between the members. The Austro–

Hungarian Monarchy disfavoured Italy's African attempts because these weakened the Triple Alliance's potentials in Europe.

In the same chapter the evolution of the commercial relations is also presented from the career of the first successful businessmen (and even a businesswoman) through the commercial treaty (Höhnel's mission in 1905) to the establishment of the consulate of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in Addis Ababa (1912). The Ethiopian delegations are also mentioned which visited Austria and Hungary in 1907 and 1914.

There are new historical data about the adventurous life of Károly Inger (Suleyman ibn Inger Abdullah). The dissertation points out that Inger really travelled in Africa, but great majority of his statements are falsehood. In the same time, it becomes clear that the contemporary Hungarian government supported Inger's colonizing aims in Somalia. Count Lajos Königsseg's three novels are also analyzed with special attention to the possibility that these fictions are based on true stories.

The Chapter II is discussing the era between the two World Wars. The lack of the diplomatic connections between Hungary and Ethiopia is significant in this era. Even so there are dozens of Hungarian emigrants to Ethiopia. Thanks to the detailed biographical data, the motivations of the émigrés could be analyzed. Besides wanderlust and personal misfortune, Trianon Peace Treaty's social consequences cannot be neglected regarding the fact that the majority of the émigrés are intellectuals (physicians, ex-military officers, economists), who impoverished in Hungary. There are detailed data about two Hungarian medical doctors' African career (Kálmán Mészáros and László Sáska) from their settlement in Ethiopia to their struggles during and after the Italo-Ethiopian war in 1935-1936. There are also parts about the two most successful Hungarians in Ethiopia, Mátyás Gajdács (who lived there the longest time as a Hungarian between 1911 and 1965) and Sándor Dörflinger. Only that two were successful financially in Ethiopia in this era. Gajdács, who was a taxidermist, became a worldwide known ornithologist and the first description of Ethiopia's bird fauna is due to him.

The Chapter III deals with the Italo-Ethiopian war and the related international conflict in 1935-1936. The aim is to show that the war in Ethiopia indirectly affected Hungary's foreign policy. There are detailed analyses concerning every aspect of the matter. Since that time fascist Italy was the only ally of Hungary, the latter got into serious trouble. On the one hand, because the Italian army fought in Africa thus Italy's Central-European influence in behalf of Hungary became doubtful. This confused the Hungarian government led by Gyula Gömbös because of the revision of the Trianon Peace Treaty since – as it is clear from the documents – until 1935 a peaceful revision was their conception with Italy's diplomatic

support. On the second hand, somewhat unexpectedly, the League of Nations condemned Italy as an aggressor state, thus Hungary had to vote about the notorious sanctions. In this tender and uneasy situation the Hungarian politicians decided precipitately to abstain from beans. However, due to this decision the Western Powers accused Hungary for being disloyal to the League of Nations and to the policy of the collective security.

Many Hungarian politicians stated the case. Besides the speeches in the Hungarian parliament, Ferenc Herczeg's (as president of the Revisionist League) and Count István Bethlen's writings are discussed in details. The dissertation states that the Italo–Ethiopian conflict had a great impact on the Hungarian foreign policy, and as a direct consequence Hungary begun to look at Germany as her primary ally, giving up the possibility of the peaceful revision.

There is a sub-chapter about the contemporary Hungarian press. The vast majority of this, under political pressure, published pro-Italian articles. The rare exception was the political magazine called “Századunk”. Its editor-in-chief, Imre Csécsy, entered into a debate with the great (but pro-Italian) Ignotus. Besides, another Hungarian periodical in Kolozsvár (“Korunk”) deserves special attention because it could write freely and objectively about the Italian fascism because Rumania was against Italy in the international conflict.

As the ally of Italy, it was permitted to Hungary to send a military observer to the Ethiopian front. Captain József Németh was chosen but his fair objectivity caused him trouble. He held lectures about his observations, the weak equipment and the brutality of the Italian army, and it caused a diplomatic scandal in Budapest.

There were also two Hungarian war correspondents in Ethiopia: László Faragó (Ladislav Farago) and Ödön Demeter (Edmund Demaitre). It is emphasized that their activity is important not only in the history of the journalism. A part about Béla Menczer introduces this extraordinary person who was an advisor beside the emigrant Ethiopian government in London between 1936 and 1940.

Chapter IV focuses on the “colonization” of Ethiopia, i.e. the relations between Italian East Africa and Hungary. As an ally of the fascist Italy, Hungary tried to cash in her previous stand by Italy in the League of Nations. The Hungarian–Ethiopian Commercial Ltd. established already in 1936 and even younger Miklós Horthy, the governor's son was among the founders. Hungary contracted a colonial agreement with Italy in 1937, which fixed a two million lire clearing. Hungary imported mainly tropical fruit and coffee, while she exported machines and motors to Ethiopia. The latter were manufactured in the Hungarian Machine

Works and Ganz Co., but there are documents about the business of the Pick salami factory in Szeged.

In the same time the Italian promises about Hungarian plantations remained unfulfilled in spite of the support of the Hungarian diplomacy because Italy could not pacify Ethiopia. In Hungary there was significant enquiry to emigrate and settle in Ethiopia but the Italian state refused it.

There is a sub-chapter about the Hungarian fascist journalist Tibor Ratkóczy, who travelled to Ethiopia in 1938 with the special permission of the Italian government. Although his reports are full of fascist and chauvinistic parts, his book is a primary source about Italian East Africa.

In the end the study reveals the activity of the two previously mentioned doctors during and after the Italo–Ethiopian war. Kálmán Mészáros joined the International Red Cross staff and worked until the last moment of the war. László Sáska was not working on the fronts, but he became an eye-witness of the war crimes committed by Italians (genocide, poison gas etc.). His accounts about these events were used later on international forums.

There is an appendix attached to the dissertation with a chronology, photographs, maps, and an important part of Béla Menczer's autobiography concerning his connections to the emigrant Ethiopian government in London.

### **III. Contribution to knowledge**

A history of the Hungarian–Ethiopian relations is a novelty itself. Furthermore, it has many aspects, not only the formal political and commercial connections are discussed, but the informal side too. It is a new approach to present and analyze the interpretation of a Sub-Saharan country in the Hungarian press and fiction. Nevertheless, there are new details in the political history too, focusing the dilemma of the Hungarian foreign policy in 1935–1936. The evolution of the commercial relations (especially concerning Italian East Africa) and the activity of the Hungarian émigrés and many travellers have been undiscovered until now.

#### **IV. Perspectives**

As past cannot be discovered in its originality, thus this dissertation is not complete. During the discussion of the several matters of the study it was pointed out that some of the sources (diaries, rare newspapers) are still missing. The prospective emergence of these sources could make this study more complete.

Beyond that, although this dissertation ends up with WWII, the study should be continued in the future. In the 1950's diplomatic connections were established again between Hungary and Ethiopia and in the following decades (until the early 1990's) there was a vivid and friendly relation between the two states. In Ethiopia dozens of Hungarian firms acted while hundreds of Ethiopian students visited Hungarian universities and high schools. The number of the Hungarian physicians working in Ethiopia during the 1970's and 1980's is also significant.

## V. Publications

- „*Oktatás és történelem Etiópiában*” [Education and History in Ethiopia]  
In: Iskolakultúra, Pécs, 1999. 6—7. sz. pp 136–150.
- „*A Tengely kovácsai: Magyarország és az olasz—etióp konfliktus, 1935–1936*”  
[Forgers of the Axis: Hungary and the Italo–Ethiopian Conflict, 1935–1936]  
In: Diákköri Dolgozatok I., Szeged, 1999., pp 64–104.
- „*A Népszövetség halála – Dokumentumok az olasz—etióp konfliktus történetéhez, 1935–1936*” [Death of the League of Nations – Documents related to the history of the Italo–Ethiopian conflict]  
In: Documenta Historica Vol. 44., Szeged, 2000. [szerk. és bevezető tanulmány]
- „*Magyarország részvétele Olasz Kelet-Afrika gyarmatosításában*” [Participation of Hungary in the colonization of Italian East Africa]  
In: Világtörténet, 2002. tavasz–nyár, pp 58–65.
- „*Idegen és mégis magyar – A magyar Fiume története*” [Foreign but Hungarian – A history of the Hungarian Fiume]  
In: Limes, 2002. 5. szám, pp. 29–46.
- „*The History of Hungarian Fiume*”  
In: Études sur la Région Méditerranéenne, 2003. Vol XII, 85–104.
- „*Fiume during the Napoleonic Wars*”  
In: Études sur la Région Méditerranéenne, 2006. Vol XV, 21–28.
- „*Fiume a napóleoni háborúk idejében*” [Fiume during the Napoleonic wars]  
In: Kövér Lajos (szerk.): Bonaparte Napóleon koronája és üzenete. Szeged, 2007. pp. 69–76.
- „*Az Etióp Ortodox Egyház rövid története*” [A history of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church]  
In: Borostyán-Kút, 2007. VI. 1. pp 2–13.
- „*Jezsuiták János pap országában*” [Jesuits in the land of Prester John]  
In: Borostyán-Kút, 2007. VI. 1. pp 17–23.
- „*Sába, Etiópia és a Beta Izrael*” [Sheba, Ethiopia and the Beta Israel]  
In: The Explorer Magazin, 2007/2. szám (február)
- „*Sziklaszilárd alapok. Etiópia ókeresztény sziklavilága*” [Solid bases. Ethiopia’s ancient Christian rock-world]  
In: A Földgömb, 2008. 4. szám, pp 54–59.
- „*Hungary and the Italo–Ethiopian Conflict, 1935–1936*”  
In: Aethiopica 11 (2008), pp 85–116.
- „*Participation of Hungary in the colonization of Italian East Africa*”  
Accepted for publication. In: Aethiopica (várhatóan 2009)