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**Hungarian Adriatic Association in the Age of State-Building Nationalism.
Opportunities for a Hungarian ‘marine researcher’***

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Abstract

The Hungarian Adriatic Association (HAA) is evidence of the relationship between cultural nationalism and science in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. By examining the cultural and scientific activities of the middle class, which provided the association both with members and with audience, this article shows that at the time of the development of oceanography, cultural nationalism in Hungary had an impact on the development of numerous disciplines, e.g. history, geography. Through the connection between cultural nationalism and oceanography and by means of the seaport of dualistic Hungary (Fiume/Rijeka), the idea of the Hungarian empire is also manifested as a kind of condensation of the imperial attitude of the Monarchy. The emergence of the HAA followed Austrian and Italian models, and the professional career and relations of the founder and president of the association, Béla Gonda, help to understand the Hungarian oceanographic aspirations and to explore the results of the foundation and operation of the association.

Keywords: Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, cultural nationalism, Hungarian imperial thought, association, development of scientific disciplines, oceanography, geography, Hungarian Adriatic Association

If an individual at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries was concerned with the geography and history of Hungary, then this person most likely participated in the activities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, secondary and higher education and was also a member of one of the related associations. (S)he would have had publications in the official gazette or been a publisher of the association and participated in international conferences representing her/his community. (S)he would have endeavoured to establish as many professional contacts as possible in the related institutions. After all, the era, particularly the age of Dualism, was beneficial for the rise of civic society and also for the formation of associations and the development of sciences. All of these were influenced by the dominant ideology of the era which was called nationalism.

With the establishment of the Hungarian Adriatic Association (HAA) on February 26, 1910, a small number of Hungarian marine researchers and oceanographers had similar opportunities. HAA was tasked with establishing by relying on the proverb¹ of the

¹ Go to the sea Hungarians! Go to the sea! In 1846, volume 8 of the weekly called *Hetilap* included one of his influential editorials (170–172) which later became a proverb: “*Go to the sea Hungarians!*”

prominent Reformist politician, Lajos Kossuth; however, the association wanted to combine this with the modernity of its own time and to lay the foundations of a new science² called oceanography at the service of the Hungarian state. Therefore, the primary question of this study is to what extent can oceanography be considered a nation- and state-building science and does it follow the example of history or geography in the Hungarian context? Although Hungarian efforts in the field of oceanography were influenced by Austrian and Italian research, mainly due to the Adriatic involvement, this international outlook and comparative analyses are not included in this study.

The second section of this study will focus on the career of Béla Gonda (1851–1933), the first head of HAA, who combined modern engineering and scientific knowledge with Hungarian state-building nationalism. It will examine his inauguration speech, as well as the annual progress reports presented by Nándor Koch at the 15th and 25th anniversary of the association with the aim of ascertaining the success of the association's activities and the efficiency of Béla Gonda's leadership. In terms of the functioning of cultural nationalism, the work of Gonda and the oceanographic activity of HAA will also be analysed. Our primary source is the association's own journal called "*A tenger*" [The Sea]. In addition, Béla Gonda's letters are also useful sources as he wrote about the organisation of the association and the editing of the above mentioned journal. The analysis of Béla Gonda's professional writings and HAA members are not included in this study: these will be the subject of a later research.

Nationalism in science

A significant number of scholars and writings dealt with the relationship between the nation and science: from these, historical science and geography play the most important role in nation-building. Therefore, based on his qualifications, his membership in the association and internal division, these are the most relevant for the examination of HAA and Gonda. Closely related to geography, oceanography is a discipline dealing with the description and research of the natural environment and the human dominated landscape. This was however supplemented by a strong historical approach during the operation of the association. Other departments and areas such as ethnography or administration could be examined as well but this study does not include these aspects.

²Observations of the sea date back to the ancient times but its scientific investigation began with the development in shipping in the Western world with the formation of committees, the establishment of institutes, and the organization of expeditions. For the history of modern oceanography see Eric Mills, *Biological Oceanography: An Early History 1870–1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012). 9–10., 13–17.

The Hungarian Historical Society, established in 1867, or the Hungarian Geographical Society, established in 1872, served as a point of reference for the HAA. With their foundation, these associations emphasized the autonomy of the discipline and carried out activities in which they organised a museum, published a yearbook, a journal and so on. They were of national importance but were often supplemented by smaller associations organized in a given county seat. The Transylvanian Museum Society was another point of reference for the HAA. With several internal departments, it had a diverse cultural profile and operated as a smaller academy of science.³ This idea was in line with the concept of cultural and scientific nationalism which claimed that the elaboration of modern European national consciousness was the task of historians and philologists. A national identity is created by the definition of national characteristics: by relying on myths and symbols, a common remembrance essentially equates to a cultural community. Nationalism is not just an ideology or a political doctrine. It creates a national community which is also an identity construct with a cultural entity: this includes religion and beliefs. It is a permanent system of ideas that is suitable for state-building and community organization. Complemented by historicism, it thus became a social treasure beyond the narrow elite of the era.⁴ During the construction of a nation, nationalism was also often associated with the need to create a national culture. Thus, in nation construction, we distinguish between political and cultural nationalism. The former serves to create a sovereign nation-state while the latter fights for community cohesion. The actors of cultural nationalism are primarily artists and scholars who endeavour to synthesize national feeling and thought by filling political nationalism with moral content (e.g. equality of its citizens or language unification). The national philosophy of cultural nationalism is organic and is built by the intellectuals.⁵ It aims to construct and strengthen a spiritual community and to renew the system of collective identity. In the 19th century, there was an increased demand for a professional, rational cognition. The role of sciences had increased and the national aspect as a topic and approach had also started to appear in all disciplines. The nation as a constant factor was to be constantly present in thought, institutions and in political will. As a result of cultural nationalism, historical

³ Kósa László, *Magyar művelődéstörténet [Hungarian Cultural History]* (Budapest: Osiris, 2006), 364.

⁴ Gyáni Gábor, "Kulturális nacionalizmus és a tudományok: a történetírás példája," [Cultural Nationalism and Science: An Example of Historiography] in *Nemzet és tudomány Magyarországon a 19. században* ed. Bollók Ádám and Szilágyi Adrienn (Budapest: Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont, 2017), 11-12.

⁵ Political and cultural nationalism are not necessarily separate but their sources are different. In the case of political nationalism, the voluntarist conception of the nation is a characteristic feature, which can be traced back to the Age of Enlightenment. Cultural nationalism is characterized by romanticism and the organic conception. John Hutchinson, "Kulturális nacionalizmus," [Cultural Nationalism] in *Tudomány és művészet a magyar nemzetépítés szolgálatában* ed. Cieger András and Varga Bálint (Budapest: Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont, 2017), 21.

science examines the national spirit and the national self-consciousness. It also conveys them to the present as a result of which it ensures the survival of cultural nationalism.⁶ Based on these, it can be stated that cultural nationalism was also manifested in the objectives of HAA: the association wished to research the Adriatic Sea as scientifically as possible, as well as to introduce it to the whole society. It can therefore be assumed that Béla Gonda met the expectations of the era when formulating these goals at the HAA.

The Adriatic Sea as a Location and a Tool

An important part of national identity is the location where the nation lives. Geography, a science institutionalized in the 19th century, has always been characterized from a historical point of view: on the other hand, however, it has also served to describe this location mentioned above. Geography later made a distinction between natural geography and social geography: this way, it sought connections between locations created by nature and human beings. Since the territorial dimension is part of national identity it also indicates the individual's attachment to his or her environment. Geography sought to describe this space, creating a tangible, perceptible landscape. On its drawn maps, geography legitimized the nation's state territory and its own place in the field of sciences.⁷

According to the HAA, the Adriatic Sea is the space to which the nation must be attached: this could occur via the only seaport of the country (as a separate entity without an actual land connection), called Rijeka. In the age of Dualism, the nationalization of the natural landscape was characteristic but the creation of the internal cohesion of the nation had the opposite effect on ethnic underdevelopment. (See the stereotype of modernizing Hungarians and underdeveloped Croats.)⁸ On the Hungarian side, it was a motivating factor that the 1868 Croatian-Hungarian settlement did not solve the legal situation of Rijeka and its surroundings: as a result, the Hungarian elite attempted to seize the territory and nationalize it. During the Compromise of 1867, it proved its worth on the initiative of

⁶ Gyáni “Kulturális nacionalizmus és a tudományok: a történetírás példája,” [Cultural Nationalism and sciences: an example of history writing], 17–19.

⁷ Szilágyi Adrienn, “A tudományos nacionalizmus szolgálatában – A 19. századi földrajztudomány a nemzetépítő diszciplínák között,” [At the service of scientific nationalism - 19th century geography among nation-building disciplines] in *Nemzet és tudomány Magyarországon a 19. században*, ed. Bollók Ádám and Szilágyi Adrienn (Budapest: Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont, 2017), 58–59.

⁸ Eszik Veronika, “A magyar horvát tenger mellék, mint nemzetiesített táj. Adalék az intézményesülő földrajztudomány és a nemzetépítés kapcsolatához,” [The Hungarian Croatian coast as a nationalized landscape. An account of the relationship between institutionalized geography and nation building] *Korall* 16, no. 62 (2015): 75–96.

Ferenc Deák but the territory was provisionally placed under the direct rule of Hungary by a royal decree. However, this situation was unacceptable to the Croats throughout the age of Dualism. This had a double effect as, on the one hand, the legal situation of Rijeka was the subject of constant controversy and, on the other hand, the Hungarians initially sought to start a moderate nationalisation procedure and they rather set their goals in the North Adriatic region according to economic and trade aspects. With the help of modernisation, the Hungarians endeavoured to expand and consolidate their sovereignty by gaining and retaining the support of Rijeka residents paying special attention to the Italian⁹ elite who ruled the city. That's why they did not concentrate on great nationalist demonstrations or such direct manifestations of Hungarianization as the national coat of arms and flag or parades. However, in political pamphlets, literary works and in the press a concept of the "Hungarian sea" was promoted. They wanted to introduce it scientifically and educationally both in the Hungarian environment and in the international scene as well. Nevertheless, in the light of the events following the First World War, it can be said that the standard of living and economic progress could not conceal or resolve the growing nationalist Slavic or irredent Italian voices following the Hungarian millennium in 1896 which sought to overthrow Hungarian rule. Despite the fact that it was not the "Hungarian repression" that caused the greatest tension among the locals, Slavic, (mainly Croatian) nationalism and Italian irredenta aspirations could not be neutralized by the Hungarian state's investments and developments. The social problems of the rapidly developing city and the combined effect of the parallel growing nationalisms stretched this diverse environment.¹⁰

Returning to the Hungarian aspects, the Hungarian state attempted to initiate state-building on its "separate entity" by strengthening the Hungarian cult of the area in the given multicultural environment and using its integrative effect both in Rijeka and in Hungary. This effort had the greatest impact on the mobile urban middle class who were then encouraged by the Hungarians to protect their individualized home.¹¹ An example of state-building in Rijeka is the series of developments that started with the construction of the port initiated by Minister Gábor Baross. By following the tendency of ship names, the growing influence of cultural nationalism could be clearly seen. With the help of state

⁹ 1881 Census: 214 and 1910 Census: 458-459. According to the 1880 census, the population of Rijeka was 20,981, of which 8,999 were Italian, 7,669 were Croatian-Serbian and 367 were Hungarian. The 1910 census involved 49,806 people of whom 24,212 were Italians, 12,926 Croats (and a further 425 Serbs), and 6,493 Hungarians.

¹⁰ For more about Hungarians at the turn of the century and Croatian-Hungarian/Italian-Hungarian relations see : Juhász Imre, *Fiume. Egyközép-európai város és kikötő a hatalmi érdekek metszéspontjában [Rijeka. A Central European city and port at the intersection of power interests]* (Budapest: Heraldika, 2020), 236-267.

¹¹ Hutchinson, "Kulturális nacionalizmus," [Cultural Nationalism] 27-28.

subsidies, the Hungarian Adriatic joint stock company started to develop steam navigation and the first ships were named after its board members like Jókai, Szapáry, Tisza or Baross.¹² However, when Baross was appointed as a minister in 1889, all ships were named after great figures of Hungarian history (e.g. Árpád or King Matthias): this clearly demonstrated that the given ship was financed by the Hungarian state and there to serve Hungarian interests. In order to increase Hungarian power in the city, they purchased several plots and land though they did not intervene in the main structure of the city. It is true however, that the place of the filling of the sea was built up. These were such emblematic buildings as the railway station, the market, the governor's palace and the Adriatic palace (its counterpart was later constructed in Budapest). Mór Jókai, the founder of the Adriatic cult in modern Hungarian literature¹³ also stated in his speech in the House of Representatives that the Hungarianisation of the coast can only be the result of very conscious work.¹⁴ The Hungarian coast appeared in children's literature thanks to Viktor Garády (director of the Institute of Biology in Rijeka, founded with state support in 1905¹⁵, strictly for scientific and professional purposes)¹⁵ and in travel descriptions by Géza Kenedi, writer and Member of Parliament. As for associations, the Hungarian Tourist Association had a department in Rijeka and later became part of the Carpathian Association. In addition, the Hungarian Geographical Society was another key factor thanks to one of its vice-presidents, Rezső Havass who considered Rijeka as a key to Hungary's expansion in the Balkans.¹⁶ Havass was also a member of HAA having a good relationship with Gonda. It is important to note that according to researchers, the activities of the Hungarian state in Rijeka should not be

¹² Eszik Veronika, "Közelebb hozni a tengert az ország szívéhez.' A magyar tenger megalkotása (1868-1914)," [Bringing the sea closer to the heart of the country.' The creation of the Hungarian sea] in *Előadások a Magyar Tudomány Napján az Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület I. szakosztályában*, ed. Egyed Emese and Pakó László and Sófalvi Emese (Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum Egyesület, 2019), 241.

¹³ Jókai's three novels based on Adriatic: *A Player Who Wins* (1882); *The Three Marble Heads* (1887); *The Place Where Money Is Not A God* (1904).

¹⁴ Speech by Mór Jókai at the session beginning on September 24, 1881. Eszik, "Közelebb hozni a tengert az ország szívéhez.' A magyar tenger megalkotása (1868-1914)," [Bringing the sea closer to the heart of the country.' The creation of the Hungarian sea], 236.

¹⁵ "A fumei biológiai intézet," [The Institute of Biology in Rijeka] *Gazdasági Mérnök* 29, no. 16 (1905): 124–125.

¹⁶ Havass Rezső, *Dalmácia Magyarországhoz való vonatkozásaiban különös tekintettel Fiumére* [Relationship of Dalmatia and Hungary with special regard to Rijeka] (Budapest: Fritz Ármin, 1898). Havass 1898. Summarised by: Romsics Ignác, „A magyar birodalmi gondolat,” [The Hungarian imperial idea] in *Műltről a manak: tanulmányokéesség a magyartörténelemről*, ed. Romsics Ignác (Budapest: Osiris, 2004), Romsics 2004: 121–159.; Demeter Gábor, „A modernizációtól a kolonizációs törekvésekig. Magyar utazók, politikusok és gazdasági szakírók a balkáni feladatokról. (a 19. századi annexiós krízisig),” [From modernization to colonization efforts. Hungarian travelers, politicians and economic experts on tasks in the Balkans. (until the 19th century annexation crisis)] *Századok* 152, no. 2 (2018): 284–316. Demeter 2018: 284–316.

considered as expansionist or imperialist.¹⁷ At the same time, the Hungarian, south-east oriented imperial idea of thought dates back to the 19th century: just think of the activities of István Széchenyi, the “Greatest Hungarian”, on the development of steam navigation on the Danube and the Black Sea, or even the ideas of the former Minister of Finance of the Monarchy, Governor of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Béni Kállay, on Bosnia in connection with the annexation. According to Kállay, in line with the era, the titles of the Hungarian great power were based on history, civilization and security policy.¹⁸ From an imperial point of view, Kállay found Bosnia and Herzegovina favourable for the construction of a political nation since Bosnia and Herzegovina was part of Hungary in the sense of public law, however, instead of a political unity, it had a cultural unity. He also connected all this with the Roman Empire claiming that the annexation was a direction of the Hungarian imperial policy along the routes built by the Romans: by this, the country could take its strength and civilization to the south.¹⁹ The main point of the Balkan expansion was to separate people living there from the Russian and Pan-Slavic influence: in this way, the Monarchy and Hungary could have a green light to go on a free path. The Hungarian great power fully played its role in the Habsburg Empire as they had the opportunity to manage common affairs. During his ministry of finance between 1882 and 1903, Kállay was in charge of these affairs.²⁰

Oceanography and State Building: Why are we on the Adriatic?

Oceanography was also a nation- and state-building science in the interpretation of the HAA – at least this is indicated by the speeches of Béla Gonda. At the inaugural meeting of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Gonda said that the association has a dual purpose: scientific-social and cultural. His speech was certainly self- and programme-defining for HAA. He spoke not only about the structure of the association but also about the reasons for creating HAA. Their aim was to explore and disseminate Hungarian memories and to achieve Hungarian results in marine research. In addition, they wished to provide an expert report to support sea-related government work in ministries. Gonda repeatedly referred to

¹⁷ Eszik, “Közelebb hozni a tengert az ország szívéhez”. A magyar tenger megalkotása (1868-1914)”, [Bringing the sea closer to the heart of the country. The creation of the Hungarian sea] 243.

¹⁸ Romsics Ignác, “A magyar birodalmi gondolat,” [The Hungarian imperial idea] 121–159.

¹⁹ Dán Károly, “Kállay Béni és a magyar imperializmus. Egy bátortalan kísérelt maradványai,” [Béni Kállay and the Hungarian imperialism. Remains of a timid experiment.] *Aetas* 15, no. 1 (2002): 220–221.

²⁰ Ifj. Bertényi Iván, “A magyar birodalmi gondolatról – az I. világháború előtt,” [About the „Hungarian imperial idea” - before World War I.] *Kommentár* 2, no 4. (2007): 53–54.

Croatia and the negative tendency of the Croatian-Hungarian relationship however, he did not name them explicitly. According to Gonda, the association did not promote Hungarian occupation but only drew attention to the Hungarian aspects of Rijeka and the Adriatic. The task of the association was to find out what scientific research could do to strengthen those aspects in the field of state developments.²¹

In parallel, it is important to mention Gonda's contemporary, Sándor Márki (1853–1925), who graduated in history and geography and was a professor at the University of Cluj-Napoca where he taught universal history. In addition to university textbooks, he published works on local history and wrote a monograph on Francis II Rákóczi and György Dózsa who was the leading figure of the 16th century peasant war. Based on his professional and political views, Márki had a complex personality as he simultaneously supported the kuruc-based independence idea and the left-wing, plebeian-democratic views as well. Encouraged by Kálmán Thaly, a writer, poet and politician, Márki's trilogy on Rákóczi was national and romantic but in his local history writings he had an understanding of national aspirations. However, he was always dismissive of Vienna.²² Compared to Márki, Gonda was not dismissive of Vienna, as the organisation of the MAE was based on the Austrian model where Gonda envisioned it within the imperial framework of the dualistic Monarchy. However, his relationship with Croatia highlighted a contrasting picture as, on the one hand he had an understanding of their aspirations (like Márki) and he believed in a peaceful coexistence but on the other hand, he rivalled the Croatian oceanographic initiatives for the interests of the association. This was linked to the rivalry between Trieste and Rijeka and the strong West Slavic presence in Trieste. Due to Habsburg's imperial aspirations, the Czechs had a significant amount of capital in the North Adriatic.²³ This made the Hungarian strategy even more complicated in the multicultural area and Gonda surely recognised this. It is known that Gonda and Márki were friends and Gonda tried to involve him in the activities of the association. From 1914, he wrote that *“Let me recommend the significant operation of our cultural and patriotic association and let me kindly ask you to contribute to the realisation of the goals of our association with your diligent activities.”*²⁴ On the one hand, he relied on his historic works and asked him to submit such writings as Rákóczi's Adriatic

²¹ “Magyar Adria Egyesület,” [Hungarian Adriatic Association] *Budapesti Hírlap* February 27, 1910: 1.

²² More about Sándor Márki's life, political attitude, and historian's evaluation in Hungarian history see: Romsics Ignác, *Clio bűvöletében. Magyar történetírás a 19–20. században – nemzetközi kitekintéssel* [Under the spell of Clio. Hungarian historiography in the 19th and 20th centuries - with an international perspective] (Budapest: Osiris, 2011), 150–152.

²³ Klabjan Borut “‘Scramble for Adria’: Discourses of Appropriation of the Adriatic Space Before and After World War I,” *Austrian History Yearbook* 42, (April 2011) 22–23.

²⁴ Béla Gonda to Sándor Márki. 1914. június 2. MTA KIK KtMs 5161/1025-1062

Plans, published in 1915, or Hungarian rule on the Adriatic: a historical sketch, published by HAA's own publisher, the Hungarian Adriatic Library. On the other hand, Gonda tried to involve Márki in such initiatives as the Hungarian Fleet Calendar²⁵ or teaching sea studies in public education. Márki kindly accepted these offers. They remained friends after WWII: he wrote that *"Our old connection to the Adriatic - hopefully not forever - was cut off by the Yugoslavs. But we must not give up the Adriatic. We will maintain our scientific work on the Adriatic and we will also keep historical traditions"*.²⁶ Gonda's friendship with Márki is important because, on the one hand, it indicates Gonda's network of contacts he used to promote the goals of the association and, on the other hand, he may have been influenced by Márki's historical work. Gonda's letters to Márki have a patriotic tone and are clearly about the nationalization of the Adriatic.

Self-evaluation and praise

At a ceremonial general meeting held on the 15th anniversary of the association on 25th March 1925, Nándor Koch gave a review of its activities in the Múzeum körút building where he evaluated HAA's performance in terms of its goals. According to his questionable statement, the association was organized entirely on its own without any government support. It should be noted here that after the formation of the association in 1910, before the First World War, the Hungarian government could not give a clear answer to the questions in connection with HAA. Gonda's request for supporting HAA's activities implementing its objectives was reviewed by the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Commerce and the Joint Ministry of Foreign Affairs: it raised a number of questions of public law and diplomacy. Recognizing the cultural significance of the association, governmental bodies did not reject material support however, HAA was harshly criticised by the Ministry of Commerce for questioning the feasibility of its goals and the strength of the social cohesion behind the association.²⁷ Due to his previous work and personal connections, Gonda was able to learn about this.

During the above mentioned anniversary, Koch stated claimed that HAA was a *"new cultural organization leading to the expansion of Hungarian science and became more widespread."*²⁸ Koch

²⁵ The release of this was not possible due to the war. MTI Daily News 1922. április 4.52.

²⁶ Béla Gonda to Sándor Márki, June 30, 1916. MTA KIK KtMs 5161/1025-1062. Márki Sándor, "A tenger történetének tanítása," *A Tenger* 5, no. 6 (1916): 209–221 It was published entitled 'Teaching the History of the Sea: 'A Tenger'

²⁷ Documents no. MNL OL K 26 1914-XLI-5225. A 6211-910, 6655-910, 778-911, 5061-911, 7128-911, 6652-912..

²⁸ Koch Nándor, "Tizenöt év a Magyar Adria Egyesület történetéből," [15 years of the Hungarian Adriatic Association] *A Tenger* 15, no. 4–6 (1925): 39.

stated that, with its development, HAA set itself a national task and in its second year, it had a firm social base (in 1911 it had 600 members!).²⁹ To be able to do this, HAA needed to launch *The Sea* journal which could help the association overcome the “indifference of Turan”. The significance of the association was defined culturally by *The Sea*, as the journal was the only Hungarian paper that contained knowledge and information about the sea. The journal provided an opportunity for Hungarian professionals to publish their writings and, by building its foreign relations, the association achieved its goal of operating a unique library in Budapest where Hungarian scientists who were concerned with the sea and its wildlife could share their knowledge internationally. Actually, Koch based HAA’s solid legitimacy on the two marine research expeditions,³⁰ which he said were the most important accomplishments of the organization and its leader, Béla Gonda. They managed to finance it through donations. They could not purchase their own ship due to the outbreak of the war. In addition to scientific management, Koch also emphasised HAA’s educational activities which were conducted through public lectures before the war: by this, the association reached rural audiences as well. HAA tried to establish further contacts with the actors and special writers of the navy, and they participated in such significant events as the launch of the battleship *St. Stephen*. Koch drew special attention to the fact that not only the representative of the Hungarian imperial ideal, the influential newspaper owner, Jenő Rákosi donated a silk flag to the battleship but HAA also made a plaque handed over by Béla Gonda at the ceremony. According to Koch, the importance of HAA has been enhanced by the rank of its patrons as Charles IV accepted the patronage of the association as the king of the country³¹ and Admiral Haus Antal (1851–1917), the head of the naval department of the Ministry of Defense of the Austro-Hungarian army

²⁹The only association census of Dualism was in 1878 but the usability and relevant information was questionable from the point of view of the Hungarian Adriatic Association. However, it can still show that the reason for Nándor Koch’s pride in connection with membership was justified as, according to the 1878 census, an association had an average lifespan of 10 years and a membership of 169 people. This was far surpassed by MAE. More about the census of associations see Kósa, *Magyar Művelődéstörténet* [Hungarian Cultural History], 362–363.

³⁰The Hungarian marine research expedition, organised by the Hungarian Adriatic Association, took place twice with the *Najade* ship in the autumn of 1913 and in the spring of 1914. The research work focused on water quality, seabed and the fauna and flora with comprehensive measurements and the collection of samples. These were processed and published by the association. Biologist Gyula Leidenfrost took part in both expeditions and he wrote his experiences in the books called *Keserű Tenger* [Bitter Sea] (1936. Budapest) and *Kék Adria* [Blue Adriatic] (1937. Budapest). In addition, other MAE members have also published. List of studies and books published up to 1940: Kolosváry Gábor, “A két ‘Najade’-expedíció irodalma,” [Literature of the two *Najade* expeditions] *A Tenger* 30, no. 10-12 (1940): 87–88

³¹Charles IV also sent his own lines and a portrait of him in a uniform: the association could have used this letter for the Calendar of the Hungarian Fleet.. MNL OL MTI 1922. április/11922-04-04.52. [MTI Daily News April 4, 1922 .52.]

was another patron of the association (this contradicts the lack of government support). Later, Governor Miklós Horthy also accepted the patronage request and, in his letter he encouraged all patriots to join the association. During World War I, the association was dedicated to conducting war reports about the sea and after Trianon it remained committed to rebuilding the country by all means of culture.³²

In his speech at the 25th anniversary assembly, Koch also evaluated the operation of the association. As a prelude to the MAE, Koch mentioned the booklet called *Hungarian Adriatic* published in 1909 by László Tápay-Szabó (1874–1941), a cultural historian and journalist, the Secretary General of HAA. The booklet was about the establishment of the association's predecessor, the Hungarian Adriatic Committee. The committee would have operated primarily as a scientific body but Koch admitted that in line with the established mission of the cultural association of the era, an association targeting a wider section of society would also have been added to the committee. The main reason for this was to obtain the resources needed for the operation of the committee, a significant part of which was brought by the association from membership fees and donations.

Béla Gonda, Minister Councillor and Aspiring Cultural Engineer

Szólóské is a village located in the immediate vicinity of Borsi, the birthplace of Francis II Rákóczi. Today, it is in the county of Kosice, Slovakia. Béla Gonda, engineer and minister councillor, was born there on 28th December, 1851. According to contemporary descriptions, the Bodrog-side village had 375 inhabitants at that time, 280 of whom were members of the Reformed.³³ Gonda, the father of Béla Gonda, served as the pastor of the community: thanks to his efforts, new church was built by 1838/39.³⁴ The Gonda family was an old noble family from Zemplén County. On 18th November, 1631, Balázs Gonda was awarded a Hungarian noble title by Ferdinand II.³⁵ Béla Gonda completed his secondary school studies in Sárospatak in 1869 and went on to study water engineering at

³² Koch, "Tizenöt év a Magyar Adria Egyesület történetéből" [15 years of the Hungarian Adriatic Association], 39–46.

³³ Fényes Elek, *Magyarország geographiai szótára, melyben minden város, falu és puszta, betűrendben körülményesen leíratik. IV.* [Geographical dictionary of Hungary in which all cities, villages and plains are described in details and in an alphabetical order] (Pest: Kozma Vazul, 1851).

³⁴ Szólóskéi Református Egyházközség. [Szólóské Reformed Church] http://www.refzem.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=94&Itemid=503

³⁵ Szinyei József, *Magyar írók élete és munkái. 3. kötet, [Life and Works of Hungarian Writers 3]* (Budapest: Hornyánszky Viktor Könyvkereskedés, 1894), 1278.

the universities of Budapest and Vienna until 1875.³⁶ As flooding was a recurring problem in his home village near the Bodrog, this fact may have played a role in his career choice.³⁷ Gonda may have also been influenced by the general popularity of the cultural engineering profession in the 19th century as the works aimed at transforming the natural environment were being carried out to the greatest extent in that century.³⁸ A stable career could have been attractive to Gonda as well. In order to understand his personality and his life path, it is worth highlighting some important events, institutions and actors.

Gonda's life was defined by associations and professional journals. As an undergraduate, he began his career in 1873 in the Torontál Flood Relief Association. Throughout his life, he collected and published his professional experience and knowledge in the form of textbooks and studies. After having finished his task in Torontál county, he published his first 32-page paper called *Tisza Locks in Torontál County* supported by the Hungarian Society of Engineers and Architects. The other association called the Tisza-valley Association, was established to regulate the Tisza: at its meetings, Gonda was in charge of the minutes and he diligently took notes on the issues of the meeting. The official gazette of the association called *Economic Engineer* was also launched by Gonda.

Gonda reached his full potential in the ministry. From the 1880s, he worked in the Ministry of Agriculture where he dealt with water affairs and the regulation of the Iron Gates. After some reorganisation, he continued this work in the newly formed Ministry of Commerce. It is important to mention his colleagues here: Gonda presumably took inspiration from them for his professional work. Engineers graduated from the Technical University of Buda formed the expert staff of Minister Gábor Baross³⁹ providing an appropriate professional base in river regulation or port construction which were of national importance. Therefore, Gonda's career trajectory was similar to his talented contemporaries.

In the first half of the 19th century, water works were mostly carried out at the county level administered by manorials. However, there was a lack of technical intelligence to lead these. The first generation studied at the Institut Geometrico Hydrotechnicum in Pest; an engineering institute founded by Joseph II. Among others, Pál Vásárhelyi,

³⁶ Ágoston István, *A nemzet inżynerei II. Vízmérnökök élete és munkássága XVIII–XX. sz.* [Engineers of the Nation II. The life and work of water engineers in the 18th and 20th centuries] (Szeged: Alsó-Tisza vidéki Vízügyi Igazgatóság, 2002) 115–118.

³⁷ Borovszky Samu, *Magyarország vármegyéi és városai. Zemplén vármegye és Sátoraljaújfehely* [Counties and cities of Hungary. Zemplén County and Sátoraljaújfehely] (Budapest: Apollo Irodalmi Társaság, 1905), 113.

³⁸ Kósa, *Magyar Művelődéstörténet* [Hungarian Cultural History], 318–319.

³⁹ Fejér László, “150 éve született Kvassay Jenő, a dualizmus korának kiemelkedő vízügyi vezetője,” [Jenő Kvassay, an outstanding leader of water management at the age of Dualism, was born 150 years ago] *Honismeret* 28, no. 4 (2000): 46–48

the regulator of the Lower-Danube and the Tisza, graduated here.⁴⁰ Gonda considered him as a role model and he even wrote his autobiography.⁴¹ Another important phase in Gonda's consciously constructive professional career was his business trips in the 1890s. He travelled to France and Germany and he also attended the Hague Congress as Hungary's delegate. Hungary's 19th-century water works gained recognition at the European level as the largest proportion of flood-relief areas on the continent could be found in the Carpathian Basin on the continent (ahead of The Netherlands and Italy).⁴² It also received an entry in the lexicon of József Szinnyei (1830–1913):⁴³ according to this, his university professor, Kálmán Szily (1838–1924) encouraged Gonda to commence his specialist literary activity. Some of his studies were published in the *Journal of Natural Science* and in the *Hon.* In the autumn of 1876, on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture, he traveled all across the country. Based on his observations, he wrote a number of articles on soil improvement and rice production. He founded the *Economic Engineer* (1877), edited and published the *Technical Weekly* in 1881, the *Exhibition Bulletin* (1884–1885), and the *Water Management Gazette* (1886–1887).⁴⁴ Gonda also took part in the editing and writing of Samu Borovszky's edition called *Hungary's Counties*: Gonda was responsible for the section on Rijeka and Torontál county.

The Final Task – the Hungarian Adriatic

In the last third of his illustrious career, Gonda published a series of translations of foreign books and articles; he had several scholarly articles in the many journals he edited and the many books from his field. At this time, politicians and scholars elected him president of the Hungarian Adriatic Association. According to the report of *Budapesti Hírlap*, nearly one hundred and fifty people attended the meeting, academics, university and private teachers, museum leaders and representatives and a large number of high school teachers as well. Based on the elected positions, under the chairmanship of Gonda, historian Albert

⁴⁰ Kósa, *Magyar Művelődéstörténet* [Hungarian Cultural History], 319.

⁴¹ Béla Gonda's 284-page book called *The Life and Works of Pál Vásárhelyi* was published in 1896 by the Society of Engineers and Architects. He also asked József Szinnyei for help in his work when they were writing about the life and work of Hungarian writers.. Béla Gonda to József Szinnyei. September 10, 1902. MTA KIK Kt. Ms776/344-349.

⁴² Kósa, *Magyar Művelődéstörténet* [Hungarian Cultural History], 322.

⁴³ Béla Gonda to József Szinnyei, October 23, 1894 MTA KIK Kt. Ms776/344-349.

⁴⁴ Tisza István, "Gonda Béla műveinek bibliográfiája," in „*A Közlekedési Múzeum Évkönyve VII.*” [Bibliography of the works of Béla Gonda] (1983–84) III. rész. *A Közlekedési Múzeum gyűjteményeiből*, (Budapest: Közlekedési és Dokumentációs Vállalat, 1985), 635–641.

Berzeviczy (1853–1936), president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Count Pál Teleki (1879–1941), later prime minister, renowned geographer and Dezső Csánki (1857–1933), head of the National Archives, later secretary of state and director of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences became head of department.⁴⁵

Gonda may have been chosen based on his personality and expertise as his private life was not attached to the sea. In Rijeka, he only concentrated on his office work: he had no other interests there. He was not a member of the upper class so great opportunities did not come by simply mentioning his name. He had no capital that could have occasionally provided a financial base to his affairs. It may have seemed that, until then he had not been actively involved with the study of the Hungarian sea. However, this would not explain his later activity and his diligence as leader of the association. One of the early signs of his interest in the sea and Rijeka was when in a letter dated 10th September 1902, he asked József Szinnyei, the founder of the Hungarian newspaper collection, to provide him with the 8th edition of *Pesti Hírlap*. Gonda wanted to photocopy it since the edition contained Lajos Kossuth's famous call: "*Go to the sea, Hungarians!*"⁴⁶ Elected at the age of 59, Gonda was an unquestionable authority in water matters. He had gained a reputation as a specialist and had good relations in Budapest since he had lived in the capital for forty years. In addition, he had worked in public administration for several decades and had expertise in newspaper editing and publishing. He had received numerous honors in recognition of his work. Based on his translations and trips abroad, he was presumably fluent in English and German. However, the main reason for his choice may have been his personality.

An example of this is his friendship with Gyula Görzsönyi Vargha (1853–1929), a statistician, poet and translator and vice-president of the Kisfaludy Society. Based on their letters, Gonda asked Vargha to write a poem for HAA: "*I would very much like to be able to express the glory of our Adriatic rule this time in a patriotic poem in the hope of a more beautiful unfolding from our dismembered state today. I thought that perhaps among your many beautiful patriotic poems, there is an Adriatic-related one: so I ask you to send such a poem to me by March 10, if possible, with true respect and hope in your patriotic soul. This way, I can add your piece to the programme.*"⁴⁷ However, this was rejected by Vargha. Gonda acknowledged this with gratitude and understanding: "*I know very well that this requires a state of mind (since life is just a state of mind), but I also know that if there is a patriotic atmosphere in this miserable country, the very first is Gyula Vargha, whose patriotic poems ignite national souls and the fire of enthusiasm even in the souls of the most indifferent. I ask you again with confidence and look forward to the inspiring festive poem. Well... after all, we, old*

⁴⁵ Magyar Adria Egyesület. [Hungarian Adriatic Association] *Budapesti Hírlap* February 27, 1910. 10.

⁴⁶ Béla Gonda to József Szinnyei. September 10, 1902 MTA KIK Kt. Ms 776/344-349.

⁴⁷ Béla Gonda to Gyula Vargha. February 21, 1925 MTA KIK Kt. Ms 1017/84-89.

*people, have to plant a youthful heart in the disillusioned youngsters.*⁴⁸ Although the poem was not written, it proves Gonda's effort in this case.

Based on the tone of his HAA letters and his long-term presidency between 1910 and 1933, it can be stated that Gonda was a persistent organizer, with no divisive personality in the company. Gonda's religiosity may have also played a significant role since he was a Reformed believer and a member and a presbyter of the Kálvin square community in Budapest. He also founded the Bethlen Gábor Printing House which published calendars and some books. The printing house was also located in the Kálvin square church building.⁴⁹ Gonda's spirit at HAA was followed by leaders of the association after his death. This spirit was similar to the development of Hungarian geography which was established about 40 years earlier under the direction of János Hunfalvy.⁵⁰ It can be surmised that the figure and role of Hunfalvy can be related to Béla Gonda who also, due to his personal interest and professionalism, attempted to be systematic in his marine research.

Conclusion

The goal of HAA was twofold from the beginning as it was both a scientific and a cultural association. Therefore, its target audience ranged from the professional environment to educational activities in secondary schools, community centres and so on. On the one hand, they wanted to create a knowledge base about the Adriatic which they realized through publications, a magazine, a library and a museum; on the other hand, they wanted to establish these as manifestations of a proud national idea. Nationalism was thus present in the activities of the association, influencing both its scientific and cultural functioning. As the only professional forum of marine research, HAA wished to use oceanography to strengthen Hungarian national self-awareness (see the plan of integrating it into the school curricula), as had been done with geography and history at the time. According to the exemplary models of HAA, one of the most important goals of scientific research was to serve the growth of a nation, at least in accordance with the ideas of the given time. Therefore, oceanography can be considered as a nation-building science in this sense. From the very beginning, this was the aspiration of Béla Gonda, head of the association. Gonda remained true to this idea throughout his life. His letters, studies and articles clearly reveal his philosophy.

⁴⁸ Béla Gonda to Gyula Vargha. February 28, 1925 MTA KIK Kt. Ms 1017/84-89.

⁴⁹ Ibidem.

⁵⁰ Szilágyi, *A tudományos nacionalizmus szolgálatában* [At the service of scientific nationalism - 19th century geography among nation-building disciplines], 72.

With the help of HAA, the emergence of Hungarian oceanography began to develop but slowly relative primary subject soon disappeared. Scientific research was then replaced with the construction and nurturing of the cult of the Hungarian Adriatic. However, thanks to the hard work of the association, the results of Hungarian oceanography can still be found in the *Tenger* journal and in Hungarian public collections.⁵¹

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