

The Characteristics of Mountain Architecture in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy¹

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Mountains principally serve as an ideal location for the construction of monuments, lookout towers, spas and health resorts. In this study, however, I am not going to expand on all these architectures, but limit my scope to the characteristics of mountain architecture typical in case of private buildings that functioned as resort houses or summer resorts. These buildings were usually related to towns in many respects. The geological formations surrounding towns cannot always be classified as mountains regarding their height, however, in their names sometimes settlements refer to mountains. The important factor lies not in the height of the mountains, but in the function of such buildings as temporary residences and in their closeness to nature, thus these architectures share features regarding the applied materials and designs different from residential buildings.

The most proper form of architecture to create a more intimate built environment was of the villa to meet all the requirements of recreation and the spreading custom to go on summer holidays. Since the Antiquity the basic concept of the building type to satisfy the demand for maximum convenience via its ever innovative forms providing a vast playground to turn both the client's and the architect's fantasies into reality has not changed and, in fact, was reborn in the 18th-century West Europe.² As prerequisites, on the one hand, their growing social and economical strength made the burgers possible to have a smaller scale summer residence built over their home in the town. On the other hand, the romantic attitude to life appeared with the demand of bringing back the magic of nature by leaving the city for the open air and green. The longing to leave the bustling of the city for solitude and to private sphere became a basic life experience.³ Despite summer holidays coming into vogue, work bound the entrepreneur burger to the city and taking a ride to his villa near the centre in the evenings to see his family was a great alternative. Thus, the first villas appeared in the neighbouring mountains close to cities.

¹ The study is the written publication of the lecture presented at the conference held in Krakow on the 21–22. October in 2005, titled: The Mounts. Mountains in History and Civilisation of the Middle Europe.

² J. S. ACKERMAN, *The Villa. Form and Ideology of Country Houses*, London 1990.

³ I. SARMANY-PARSONS, *Villa és családi ház. Polgári lakáskultúra a századfordulón*. Összeállította és bevezető: P. HANAK, Budapest 1992, p. 179.

Wienerwald developed in Vienna, while in Buda, Sváb-hegy and Zugliget meant such resorts.

To understand the characteristics of villa structures in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, some of the antecedents should be mentioned. The first villas of Buda hills were built in Classicist style in the 1830s and 40s. The small, one-storied architectures were mostly constructed on larger building plots of several acres. Lacking prototypes, the forms of such villas derived from classicist castle designs only realised on smaller scale with common features that had become typical: the ground plan of usually not more than 3 premises arranged along a single axis, or the porticus⁴ that was carried by columns supporting a tympanum appearing symmetrically in the middle of the façade section. Regarding classicist summer resorts in Buda, the villa called Csendilla has kept its original design the most. Led up by a wide fly of stairs, the porticus of the building has the function to connect the living room and the garden.⁵

This type of architecture has a more rustic example in the city of Pécs, on the slopes of Mecsek, the resort called Parva Domus built according to the plans of József Piatsek in the 1830s. 8+4 window panes and a double-winged front door fill up the space between the semi-columns of the porticus that is small in depth, while the proper inscription on the entrance beam reads: “*Small house, big calm.*”⁶ Following villa constructions in Classicist style, the real boom took place during the epoch of historical styles. The popular type of the period was the Swiss villa with timber gable and veranda. It had developed from the late 18th century picturesque ideal of the English landscaped parks nesting Swiss cottages among different buildings, pavilions, artificial ruins and caverns. The idea of placing Swiss cottages into parks for the purpose of recreation and fun remained popular also in the 19th century, however, the style got independent of its former arrangement, and became typical with villas and summer resorts in the neighbourhood of cities. The autochthonous character of the cottages, also as the symbol of Swiss freedom, and the environment of the romantic Alps evoked by the structure all contributed to the

⁴ E. BARTHOLY, *A villaépítkezés történelmi stílusai a kiegyezéstől az első világháborúig*. Thesis, ELTE BTK Művészettörténet Tanszék, Budapest, 1979. Manuscript.

⁵ J. SISA, *A magyar klasszicizmus. (Stílusok – korszakok)* Corvina, Budapest 2006, pp. 81–82.

⁶ K. SONKOLY, *Ami a „Madas”-ból kimaradt: két klasszicista nyaraló a Mecsekoldalban*. Tanulmányok Pécs történetéből 15. A Madas József Emlékkonferencia (2002. április 16–17.) válogatott előadásai. Szerk.: M. FONT, D. VARGHA, Pécs 2003, pp. 157–172.

popularity of the style.⁷ The villa type got to Hungary from the Western regions of the Monarchy with the mediation of different architectural specimen pages and collections of prints, maybe from the south of Germany or Switzerland through Austria. Timber parts decorated with jigsaw motifs were mostly applied on buildings that were in temporary usage, thus the Swiss style became a marked feature of summer resorts. The early Swiss type resorts followed the classicist ground plan and façade solutions keeping the horizontal and symmetrical arrangement of the models with translating the gables and porticuses into timber structures.⁸

In Austria, instead of the Swiss, the Tyrol house type became wide spread merging into the reduced Rundbogenstil and German neo-renaissance. As a consequence, the preferred type since the 1880s was succeeded by the late romantic-eclectic, usually several storied, castle-like design, a transition between the Tyrolean dwelling house and a simplified smaller-scale castle with turrets, renaissance pediments, and timber veranda. The ground plan got more staggered and the ill-proportioned centrality of the main façade disappeared. The front became more exciting: the corners of the building were cut and their angles were broken in a multiplied manner, or accentuated. The windows were highlighted with the application of plaster-work sections, with eyebrows around windows instead of using jigsaw timber frames, and the wall-face was often framed or hatched. Ashlars were built into the footing of villas, brickwork was typical for the ground floor, while at the upstairs section, the plaster-work was applied with broad-stone effect. The veranda was removed from the central axis of the façade and as a main motif did not overrule the appearance of the building, but was ranked into the hierarchy of parts with its slightly protruding structure. Nevertheless, both with its function to provide a transition between living spaces and outdoors, and to decorate the front with different materials applied, the veranda brought some diversity into the appearance of the building.⁹ The recreational character also became manifest in the housing environment and the design of the exterior different from that of dwelling places and civic buildings, providing more freedom for both the client and the contractor, including the application of more wood.

Besides the villas of Buda hills, we find great examples for this type near the centre of Sopron, in Lövérék. Several buildings in the picturesque Row of Villas in Felső-Lövérék were designed by the local archi-

⁷ E. BARTHOLY, „Svájci nyaralók” a budai zöldövezetben. Magyar Építőművészet, 1983, No. 3, pp. 31–33.

⁸ I. RÉV, *Építészet és enteriőr a magyar századfordulón*, Budapest 1983, pp. 29–33.

⁹ SÁRMÁNY-PARSONS, p. 182.

tect, János Schiller, in the 1890s. The peculiarity of façades, reflecting German late renaissance forms, is the several storied veranda located in the central axis providing shade.¹⁰

There is another particular example for building up mountainous districts in Pécs, where the first villas with jigsaw decorations originated from building types functioning as centres for agricultural activity. The sunny slopes of Mecsek hills, belonging to the traditional wine regions of Hungary, had an outstanding role in the economy of the city. A citizen in Pécs without a vineyard was not regarded a real Pécs burgher, or in other words, a “tüke”. Several artisans in Pécs dealt with viticulture as well, generating a significant extra income for their households.¹¹ Thus, villas in Pécs developed from wine-presser houses.

Usually the press houses were built to store tools and barrels and the upstairs was designed with a room for the owner to enjoy his stay there. The main front, facing south, was accentuated with the jigsaw decorated timber veranda or terrace. In the 1890s, the formerly erected villas were further extended and provided with utilities to enhance convenience allowing families to spend more time in their properties. More and more upstairs rooms joined the premises of the ground floor. The ground plans reflect specification regarding the arrangement of rooms, since the expression “room with different functions”, was gradually replaced by bedroom, dining room, saloon, moreover, servant’s room and sometimes the word bathroom appeared.¹² It could be inferred, the former press houses with agricultural functions were converted into summer resorts and villas with recreational purposes. Also the owners preferred using the term “villa” and “summer resort” more instead of “press house” or “vine house” in documents. The idea that the summer resort function gained more and more strength is also supported by the fact that despite the phylloxera in 1890, almost completely devastating the vineyards in Pécs, there was no downturn in the construction of “summer cottages”, but having lost their former agricultural function, were transformed into summer resorts for recreational purposes.¹³

¹⁰ G. WINKLER, *Sopron építészete a 19. században*, Budapest 1988, p. 143.

¹¹ G. I. NAGY, *Fejezetek a pécsi szőlő- és borkultúra történetéből 1890–1914*. Tanulmányok Pécs történetéből 2–3. Az Előadások Pécs történetéből ’94 és az Előadások Pécs történetéből ’95 című konferenciák válogatott előadásai. Szerk.: J. VONYÓ, Pécs 1996, pp. 81–90.

¹² Baranya Megyei Levéltár, IV. 1406.b. Pécs város közigazgatási iratai 23309/1897., 4355/1894., 4289/1899.

¹³ G. ALPEK, *Pécsi villák a századfordulón*. Thesis. Pécsi Tudományegyetem, (Társadalomtudományi Szakkönyvtár) Pécs 1998, p. 88. Manuscript.

Besides villas built for temporary usage, also the dwelling houses intruded the area of vineyards on Mecsek hills at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. The railway tracks and the high level of subterranean water hindered inhabitants in their expansion southwards. The local newspaper likened the state in the southern suburbs to Venice with marking a slight difference: “*while in Venice the houses are in water, at us, the water is in houses*”.¹⁴ Because of the phylloxera, vineyards lost their former economic significance, thus the city expanded towards the north to the hills in the period where the steepness of streets meant further challenges for the engineering office when installing public utilities and solving the issues of transportation in the area. Following the devastation of vineyards a similar process took place in the hills of Buda. The first organised construction project regarding cluster of villas was completed on the slopes of Kis-Svábhegy in Budapest. In the quarter of Judges and Attorneys 40 villas were erected on small plots according to the plans of Aladár Árkay. The single storey, unique architectures with both their stylistic features and their efforts to create a more humane housing environment relate this initiative to the urban villa constructions of the Art Nouveau period.¹⁵

The mountain architecture at the turn of the century outgrew its previous significance and gained a style-forming role. The attempt of Art Nouveau to renew architecture, which also meant a quest to create the national style in some countries, found new modes of expression and motifs in folk architecture instead of using historical stylistic forms. In every country artists looking for the national style chose a mountainous region that was difficult to be reached and was isolated enough to conserve ancient national forms in architecture they believed to discover. Such region full of myths was Zakopane in Galicia, Slovákó in Czech-Moravia, Kalotaszeg in Hungary. While in Austria the German provincial architecture, the Heimatstil, influenced some architects of Art Nouveau, in the rest of the Monarchy the works by the English Ruskin and Morris with the aesthetic innovations related to anti-capitalism of the Arts and Crafts movement contributed to reveal the beauty-ideal in folk architecture.

In the cottages of the Tatra Mountains in Poland “*the spirit that conserved the ancient pagan character*” was already discovered at the beginning of the 19th century. Following the visitation of Stanislaw Witkiewicz, the critic and painter, Zakopane not only became a popular destination and resort, but also functioned as the spiritual centre for the national romantic movement that not only aimed to propagate the Za-

¹⁴ *Pécsi Napló*, 1902. május 29, pp. 4–5.

¹⁵ E. GÁBOR, *Budapesti villák a kiegyezéstől a második világháborúig. (A mi Budapestünk)*, Budapest 2001, pp. 24–30.

kopane-style in its programme, but also to help attain political freedom in Poland. Witkiewicz designed several villas in Zakopane sharing features as the rustic stone substructure, timber walling, high roofing, the application of the veranda, of balconies, skylights, and the motif of the rising sun depicted on the gable.

The essence of Zakopane-style lies not in the application of unique forms, but in developing a common set of motifs based upon the characteristics of different materials instead of using the pattern books of Historicism. The timber architecture of the Tatra region not only evoked the forms of the medieval Polish house type, but also suggested the myth of the noble savage that had become popular since the age of enlightenment and started to spread from Switzerland through the whole of Europe with the vogue of the earlier mentioned house type.¹⁶

The Slovakian Dušan Jurkovič also designed architectures similar to Zakopane-style and was inspired by the log walls and shingled roofs of the Carpathians. Over the local peculiarities the mode of architecture was the common source with its monuments available from the Ruthenian regions to Transylvania. During his studies in Vienna, Jurkovič got acquainted both with the characteristics of Tyrolean architecture and the conscious application of different building materials according to the theory of Camillo Sitte emphasizing the influence of the environment on the psyche. Having settled in Brno the research of the Czech and Slovakian folk architecture got Jurkovič's focus, later publishing his results in several volumes. The architect used different forms of expression developed during his research regarding folk buildings, as an aid according to the demands of the creation of a new work of art to meet the logic of the matter-construct-form triad. Considering designs of the Carpathians, he mostly adopted the picturesque roofing structures, while in the formation of ground plans he was influenced by the English country house, arranging rooms around the central hall, with the greatest example for the solution by his design in Rezek in the Czech Republic.¹⁷

The creation of the national style in Hungary is related to Ödön Lechner. However, the younger generation refused the Hungarian style, since they claimed Lechner only adopted the ornaments of folk art and applied them on the façades of architectures appearing in towns. Exceeding Lechner's aspiration, Ede Wigand Toroczkai started to analyse and

¹⁶ A. MORAVÁNSZKY, *Építészet az Osztrák-Magyar Monarchiában*, Budapest 1988, pp. 139–165; A. MORAVÁNSZKY, *Versengő látomások: Esztétikai újítás és társadalmi program az Osztrák-Magyar Monarchia építészetében 1867-1918*, Budapest 1998, pp. 183–250.

¹⁷ Dušan Jurkovič (1868–1947). A pozsonyi Szlovák Nemzeti Galéria kiállításának katalógusa. Szerk.: A. HADIK, P. RITOÓK, Budapest, 1995.

systematize the creations of folk architecture at the very location by settling down in Marosvásárhely. Similarly to the aims of Voysey and Baillie Scott in England, in his plans, Toroczkai targeted to articulate a logically structured, authentic and modern national architecture finding its source for forms and materials in “spiritus loci”. Since just a few of his architectures were realised, in the promotion of his designs that could be defined as national romantic style, the books about the art of székely (Hungarian of eastern Transylvania) villages, both authored and illustrated by him, with his drawings published in journals like *Der Architekt* and *The Studio* had a major role.¹⁸

As on Toroczkai, Transylvanian folk architecture had a great influence on the art of Károly Kós as well who was the spiritual leader of the group of architects known as the Youngs. Károly Kós set out from Transylvanian architecture when designing his home building, named Varjúvár (Crow Fort) erected in 1910. According to Kós himself “the unity and locked up quality of the ground plan, the simple largeness considering its architecture, the avoidance of almost any decorations, the amplification of elements with structural necessity, and the monumentality deriving from the proportions of surfaces and windows” all characterised the building.¹⁹

In the successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy the conception of the national style became more and more conservative and revived between the world wars as the counter balance of functionalism. In Hungary, the work by István Medgyaszay, the Sports Hotel in Mátraháza with its typical form of the multiplied pagoda roofing evokes the Tatra-region style and underscores the eastern relations of architectural Turanism.²⁰

However, the attempt in styles by national romanticism at the turn of the century, mixing Finnish and English effects with forms of folk mountain architecture, was not apt enough to create a modern urban architecture; the greatest merit of the artists in the era could be the awakening for an awareness and sensitivity that brought up the demand in the succeeding generation of architects to integrate an architecture into its environment.

¹⁸ MORAVÁNSZKY, *Versengő látomások*, pp. 212–213.

¹⁹ P. BALÁZS, *Kós Károly*, Budapest 1971, p. 21.

²⁰ N. PAMER, *Magyar építészet a két világháború között*, Budapest 2001², pp. 206–209.

Abstract

Mountains principally serve as an ideal location for the construction of monuments, lookout towers, spas and health resorts. In this study, however, I am not going to expand on all these architectures, but limit my scope to the characteristics of mountain architecture typical in case of private buildings that functioned as resort houses or summer resorts. The Classicist villa type of the 1830s and 40s was succeeded by the Swiss jigsaw ornamented villas with timber gables and porticuses. The specific villa type developed from the wine press-houses in Pécs, after phylloxera had devastated viticulture on Mecsek hills. The city intruded to the territories of former vineyards of Sopron and Buda with villas bringing a healthier and more intimate housing environment. Mountain architecture had exceeded its former significance and gained style-forming role by the turn of the century. The attempt of Art Nouveau to renew architecture was related to the demand of creating the national style in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Artists representing the mentioned approach chose a mountainous region that was difficult to be reached and was isolated enough to conserve ancient national forms in architecture they believed to discover. Such regions were Zakopane in Galicia, Slovácko in Czech-Moravia and Kalotaszeg in Hungary. However, the attempt in styles by national romanticism at the turn of the century, mixing Finnish and English effects with forms of folk mountain architecture, was not apt enough to create a modern urban architecture.

Keywords

Villa Architecture, Wine Press-houses, Swiss-style Summer Resort, National Style, Zakopane Style, Folk Architecture