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Count Sámuel Teleki in Africa.
The Inherited Expedition Documents
SUMMARY

Scientific Guide

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Cluj-Napoca, Romania

2018

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Key-Words: Count Sámuel Teleki, Ludwig von Höhnel, East Africa, Kenya, expedition, journal, Transylvanian aristocracy, Lajos Erdélyi, photography, cultural heir, Transylvania's heritage

Summary

The famous explorer of East Africa, Count Sámuel Teleki from Transylvania, cannot be considered a well-known representative of any scientific discipline, however he is still one of the well-known researchers in the field of natural sciences, due to his expedition from the end of the 19th century, which started from the small lake Baringo (Kenya today) and continued to the territory called back then as *terra incognita*. This expedition resulted in findings important for geography, anthropology and natural sciences - all these related to Africa. Investigating Count Sámuel Teleki's journeys to East Africa is important, as he was the person to fill in the last 'blank edges' on the map of Africa and he is the discoverer of the lakes Rudolf and Stephanie (today Turkana and Chew Bahir); and of the volcano bearing his name today (Teleki's Volcano); and he also tried to climb the most famous mountains in Africa: Meru, Kilimanjaro and Kenya – just to mention only the most important achievements. Within his expedition the name of Ludwig von Höhnel (Austria) is also important, since Ludwig von Höhnel escorted the Transylvanian count in all his expeditions, being responsible for the scientific aspects of the expedition (Cartography, research, etc.). Furthermore, the only reference book concerning the expedition of Count Teleki Sámuel in East Africa was written and published by Ludwig von Höhnel, shortly after their return to Europe.

Count Teleki's contribution to the exploration of Africa is very appreciated by the Western World, his name being mentioned along other famous names, such as David Livingstone, Samuel Baker and Henry M. Stanley. However, Count Sámuel Teleki is little known in his country of origin, this situation being caused by the former communist historiography, hiding his merits. Currently it is very important to initiate the procedure for the purpose of recovering the memories and the heritage of his expedition; this is important for the communities living in Transylvania and also for the general historiography.

Over the years many books and papers were written about Sámuel Teleki, the purpose to highlight the importance of his activities for natural sciences; however nobody made a deeper research in order to find out the various aspects concerning the life of Sámuel Teleki in the timeframe preceding and following the expeditions.

The Hypothesis

The purpose of the research project hereto is to exploit and use various methods, specific for many academic curricula: this implies a specific approach to history (Consulting archive records) to sociology (Rebuilding the given eras social and political context, to everyday life aspects the life of aristocratic families living at the end of the 19th century) and to photojournalism (Investigating the photographic materials gathered during the journeys).

This thesis is basically a trip back to time, in the past century, to the expedition lead by Sámuel Teleki in Africa, and to the importance of his expedition on international level and also to the private, family and social life of the Count. Therefore, the paper hereto is rather an interdisciplinary monography, thereby focusing on the written documents – mainly on the press articles written in those days –, on the documents published and on the photos and documents drafted by the Count in East Africa, and stored in various archives. Furthermore, the thesis hereto focuses also on the inventory and highlighting to the academic community of all the photos and written documents building the anthropological heritage of Sámuel Teleki.

We started from the assumption that all the papers and publications dedicated to the Count are lacking important information concerning the heritage of the Teleki family, accessible today at the Romanian National Archives. When writing their works, the authors of the papers mentioned used, without exceptions, only one resource, the book written by Ludwig von Höhnel, published in German, English and Hungarian.

The library in the Teleki castle containing the photos related to the expedition in East Africa lead by Teleki Sámuel suffered a sad fate: a large part of got lost being endangered by complete vanishing by the end of World War II, when the Count's castle in Dumbrăvioara (Mureș County, Romania) was completely robbed. Following the Romanian nationalization policy a large part of the library's content was recorded in the Romanian National Archives in Cluj-Napoca, being subsequently rediscovered in 1970 by the photojournalist Lajos Erdélyi. Due to this event, a part of the photos taken during the trip to East Africa became known to the public, after being published in the aforementioned author's book. Lajos Erdélyi brought the expedition back to the public's attention, moreover the published photos 'came to life' and ever the since the copies he made can be found all over the world. Lajos Erdélyi did not process the entire family heritage recorded in the Romanian National Archives in Cluj-Napoca, he rather focused on processing the photographic

heritage. According to our information, during the 40 years that have passed since then, no further researches have been made in the archives, and therefore no further documents were discovered relating to the Count's expedition or his private life. Many of the Count's documents stored in the Teleki Castle in Dumbrăvioara, Romania, had been destroyed, and some had been taken to the United States of America and sold to the university library located in East Lansing, Michigan. One of the project purposes was to bring to Romania the copies of these valuable documents and to study these copies.

Thesis Structure

The thesis hereto is structured in seven chapters, the first and last chapters presenting the Introduction and the Conclusions.

The second chapter focuses on the expedition's national and international impact, it presents the various papers building the specialized literature, based on the book of Ludwig von Höhnel. The expeditions undertaken in the last century and following the footsteps of Sámuel Teleki are also described. Furthermore, the audio-visual materials dedicated to the Count's works are also mentioned.

The third chapter presents the Count's biography. After overcoming the difficulties posed by such an undertaking – there are no witnesses, therefore the biography can be rebuilt only based on a small number of documents and data recorded in the archives – we continue our thesis with the detailed description of Sámuel Teleki's personality, as existing today only in the society's collective memory. Based on the biographic model provided by David G. Mandelbaum we managed to rebuild and to organize Count Teleki's private life in several subchapters, for example: The context of the Teleki family in Dumbrăvioara, Romania, in which the Count was born, his military and political career, this friendship with the archduke Rudolf, heir of the Austro-Hungarian crown, his trip to East Africa and the importance of this expedition, the last years of Sámuel Teleki and his cultural heritage.

Due to the lack of memorialist literature the information and data mentioned are based on press articles written in the past. The Hungarian ethnographer, Balázs Borsos, did analyze the articles written in the press of those times, however he limited his work only to 1886-1889, the timeframe within which the Count undertook his expedition and to the reports related to the mentioned

expedition. The thesis hereto follows this path further, by extending the research to the Count's entire life. Beside the major publications issued in Budapest at that time, we have also researched the articles of the main Transylvanian newspapers existing back then, especially the newspaper articles published in Cluj-Napoca (Romania) and in Tîrgu-Mureş (Romania). Another important resource of information for data gathering were the interviews conducted in Vienna with Ágnes, daughter of the heir to Sámuel Teleki and with Lajos Erdélyi, the author contributing to the awakening of the Count's works and who had the opportunity to meet personally the members of the Teleki family back in 1970.

By means of the fourth chapter we aim at identifying Count Sámuel Teleki's motivation to organize the expedition to East Africa. For almost a century press articles, personal documents, specialized papers, rumors and family legends had been used for the purpose of finding the answer to the aspect mentioned above. However, this attempt failed because the numerous conclusions identified were too different from each other. The Count's biography clearly indicates that following the hunting occasions organized together with the archduke Rudolf in Transylvania and in Hungary, the next step for the Count would be a greater challenge, since he was very interested in natural sciences. Taking the decision was probably stimulated also by the opportunity to discover 'the last blank edges of the Dark Continent'.

The fifth chapter is dedicated to the written documents concerning Sámuel Teleki's greatest achievement, i.e. his expedition to East Africa. One of the most valuable documents concerning the expedition, is the Count's diary written in that given timeframe, this document being currently stored in the Michigan State University Library, the United States of America, whereas this institution purchased the aforementioned document from the Count's heirs. During the past decades there were several attempts to gain access to this document, however until now there is only one copy available in the Hungarian Geographical Museum, this copy being of poor quality and incomplete.

After obtaining the Teleki family's consent in 2017 I had the opportunity to continue my investigations in the East Lansing University Library and read the two diaries written by Count Sámuel Teleki. The first diary dates back to 1887-1888, the year of the great expedition to East Africa; the second diary refers also to the expedition on the 'Dark Continent', however this one took place subsequently, in 1895. The first diary consists of two volumes: The first volume

contains 193 pages, the second one contains 100 pages; the diary dating back to 1895 contains only 17 pages. These documents are stored as Special Collections, together with other rare documents referring to the colonization of Africa. Other documents related to the expeditions are recorded in the Österreichisches Staatsarchiv Wien (The Austrian National Archives in Vienna) - these documents being the Count's personal letters to Prince Rudolf, the Archduke of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Beside the efforts of Lajos Erdélyi concerning the documents, the Hungarian Geographical Museum organized after 100 years from the original expedition (1987-1988), another expedition meant to follow the Count's footsteps during the original expedition. At this expedition participated various specialists in the fields of natural sciences: Geologists, biologists, geographers, anthropologists, etc. Back then it was assumed that the only research aspect to be considered was the publication of the Count's diaries, since there were no information about the letters sent by the Count during the expedition to the family. Following to our researches we discovered these letters in the Archives located in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, and we are certain that these letters have not been studied by anyone before.

Beside Sámuel Teleki's biography we drafted the story of his expedition, based on the information mentioned in his personal documents. Hence we managed to draft the chronicle of expedition as mentioned by the Count himself. As compared to Höhnel's book, drafted and edited carefully in the two years following the expedition, in our case we have the possibility to read about the Count's daily reactions and thoughts concerning the events occurred during the expedition. Therefore, the Count's personal documents offer by means of the thesis hereto a new approach towards a deeper and more intimate knowledge concerning Sámuel Teleki's personality.

One of the subchapters presents the Count's thoughts, his perception on the African reality and on the various ethnic groups and tribes, met during the expedition. Hence, the modern researcher may gain access not only to the special details about the psychology of Sámuel Teleki, but also to the way the Europe of those times reacted to the 'shockwaves' generated by the cultural differences after meeting the cultural differences existing on the 'Dark Continent'.

Another subchapter focuses on the second diary referring to the journey organized a year later, i.e. in 1895, when the continent was already totally discovered. A great part of the specialized literature considered that the second trip was meant to continue the first expedition. However, this idea is argued by the entries in the diary. The second time the Count went on a safari in Africa, in a region

he had visited during the first expedition. The diary describes the events occurring within the timeframe of two months, thereby offering a description of the colonization taking place on the East Coast of the Continent.

Beside the geographical and ethnographical achievements the expedition included also a valuable heritage - less known and partially genuine - consisting a series of photos taken during the adventure; this collection may be studied in the Archives located in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. The sixth chapter of the thesis highlights the photographic heritage and presents it in an organized manner. The results of Lajos Erdélyi's researches indicates that the collection, recorded in the Romanian National Archives, consists of unique copies, since all photos were the property of Ludwig von Höhnel -many of them having been destroyed during World War II. Therefore, the photo collection concerning Count Sámuel Teleki's expedition is very valuable since it is part of the international photo heritage and consists of the single copies taken during the expedition and available even today. The 64 copies published in the book is not only a part of the collection organized in the 7 folders, but it is also part of the 712 photos, illustrations and drawings. Some of the copies can be found in various papers and folders. Identifying all the photos mentioned would be a tedious and long task since a large part of it was archived directly from the castle's yard during the war; some of these photos being dirty and damaged. The drawings and illustrations present in the book of Ludwig von Höhnel were made based on these photos, which consequently, became a point of reference during the identification for Erdélyi's thesis and for the thesis hereto.

Another subchapter is actually an inventory of the habits and activities related to photography in those days. Furthermore, the 193 photos relating directly to the expedition and to Teleki's personality are analyzed in detail as to what concerns the author of the photos and the way these photos were used in Höhnel's book.

Further subchapters are dedicated to organizing the photos taken during the trip, whereas such photos are organized based on their topics; since they illustrate portraits and frames with persons and landscapes for ethnographic purposes. These series of photos is followed by various drawings copied in the book of the Austrian author.

The photo heritage recorded in the Archive in Cluj-Napoca, Romania is stored under the title *Fond Familial Teleki de Dumbrăvioara (Family Fund of the Teleki Family from Dumbrăveni) 1574 – 1943, no. 252, folder no. 991 – 997*. The detailed inventory of the photos mentioned is included in

the appendix of the thesis hereto, whereas all copies created during the expedition are specified and the photos published by Erdélyi are also identified. the photos copied as drawing in Höhnel's book and the photos not identified even today were made in other periods of time. The appendix to the thesis hereto contains also the photos analyzed in chapter six and attached to the illustrations and lithographies created based on the photos analyzed mentioned.

The main purpose of the research project hereto is, undoubtedly, to explore the genuine documentation recorded in the archive, however, this implies also the publication of Sámuel Teleki's personal documents in a volume followed by critical observations. This aim is also a duty concerning the memory of the Transylvanian Count, because this is a way to finish his biography in a certain manner. Although the document researched provide only little new information on Sámuel Teleki's expedition to Africa, they illustrate certain events from a genuine and personal perspective.

As to what concerns the images inherited, we face a question: How can they be valued in a useful manner? A photo is more significant and more important if it is exposed in a museum and not kept hidden in an attic or in a folder on any archive's shelf. It is our right and moral duty to the heirs of the Transylvanian nobleman to highlight and to treasure this visual heritage. Of course, publishing these photos today may have a sensitive impact A photo illustrating as Count Teleki shoots different animals may have a negative emotional impact on today's modern society, focused on wildlife protection and aware of its moral responsibility regarding the conquest of African territories by the European armies. The way expeditions were organized in the past may seem controversial to today's modern society, reluctant to some aspects present in the expeditions organized by Count Sámuel Teleki. For instance, 'human rights' was an unknown expression in those times. The Count's actions are not to be judged from today's perceptions. The greatest challenge is to draw the public attention on those 'natural monuments'', as recorded for future generations.

The photos taken by Count Sámuel Teleki in Africa are part of the valuable heritage on which modern photography history is based, being key elements in the era of great geographical discoveries. From the point of view of quality and importance these photos are not less significant than the photos made by the other great explorers of the world.

Conclusions

The research of these documents – mainly genuine and unknown to the academic community – shall gain in value after publication in scientific papers, after presentation to a wide audience and after building the basis required for the subsequent filming of a documentary - since the author of the thesis hereto is also an experienced director of documentaries. Capturing great personalities on audio-visual material is not something unusual. Furthermore, in this respect we can mention Gábor Xantus, a movie director living in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, member of the Hungarian Arts Academy, who directed several documentaries about famous national personalities (The expedition of the Arctic, at which participated also the famous professor from Cluj-Napoca, Prof. Emil Racoviță, the portrait of Dr. László Sáska from Aiud Romania, settled in Africa or the expedition to New Guinea lead by the zoologist, Lajos Bíró from Tășnad Romania).

During the researchers conducted in the Romanian National Archives in Cluj-Napoca, we found another diary written by Ludwig von Höhnel. The document written in German consists of 27 notebooks, of more than one thousand pages; this document is genuine and unknown to the previous researchers. These notebooks are to be processed and transcribed in the near future. Furthermore, the question whether research should be conducted in the Royal Geographical Society Archives in Great Britain still remains, since during colonization – as indicated by the Count's reports as well – the British Empire was the most influential entity, entitled to validate any trip or expedition. Should we consider the fact that the only report written by Teleki Sámuel himself about the expedition was published in the *London Times* soon after his return from Zanzibar island, the possibility that further documents may exist, cannot be excluded. It is to be mentioned that the documentation on the Teleki family, as recorded in the Romanian National Archives in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, consists of a total of 997 folders; the processing of this documentation being a plan for the near future. The archives of other family members may contain other currently undiscovered documents, providing further details concerning Count Sámuel Teleki.

For the communities living in Transylvania it is important to acknowledge that they are the successors to values and accomplishments with worldwide impact in the scientific, artistic, cultural and political fields, gathered and achieved by several famous people, such as: Emil Racoviță, Flóra Sass, Gheorghe Șincai, Sándor Kőrösi Csoma, János Bolyai, Stephan Ludwig Roth, Lajos Bíró,

Victor Babeş and, of course, Count Sámuel Teleki. Bringing the memory of Count Sámuel Teleki back into public attention by means of modern monography is a necessity not especially because of the 130th anniversary in 2018. In our days there is a growing interest for the Transylvanian historical families and more and more castles are brought back to life by means of returning. Therefore it is absolutely necessary that we become aware of the life and activities of those leaving a vast heritage behind them, for future generations. The heritage left behind for future generations can be exploited at its real value only if it is studied, evaluated and restored to its rightful place not only within the academic community but also in the memories and spirit of the people.

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