

A Brief Biography
of Prominent Hungarians
in East Africa

Tibor Gaál
(1938-2019)

Tibor Gaál emigrated to Wien in 1956, where he finished his high school studies. He graduated as an architect in 1965. After a short detour to South Africa, he moved to Mombasa, where he joined the Bamburi cement company's design team to design low-maintenance concrete buildings.

Tibor Gaál met with Sbish Trzebinski, a Polish architect, in the design studio of Imre Rózsa, with whom he had already had a fruitful working relationship for about forty years. Their architectural activity contributed significantly to a boom in tourism, accounting for much of Kenya's and Tanzania's revenues.

One of their first significant accomplishments is the building known today as Serena Mountain Lodge Hotel in Mount Kenya National Park, which they designed together with Rózsa. From the elevated structure, guests can view the animals that come for the water. They built an underground tunnel to give tourists access to the pond from their accommodation, and from this location they could safely photograph the animals up close. This design was the first of its kind. They designed and built many hotels for their clients on the shores of the Indian Ocean with their "trademark" swimming pools that lead from the reception desks through the garden to the sandy beaches.

Serena Mountain Lodge



The Tamarind Restaurant and Village Complex (Tamarind Village) in Mombasa and the Flamingo Beach Hotel feature all typical stylistic characteristics. They even built an astonishing water amphitheatre.

Their Kenyan assignments include the Severin Sea Lodge, Traveller's Beach, Two Fishes, Jadini, Saki Beach Hotel, Kaskazi, the Swahili Beach Resort, and the Blue Bay Resort in Zanzibar.

The two architects often used local materials such as the traditional Swahili *makut* roofing. In this roofing method, they use palm leaves to cover the roof. They creatively combine this traditional coastal architecture with modern motifs.

The Kunduchi Beach Hotel in Tanzania incorporates a Swahili style combining African and Arab architectural and cultural traditions. This building was selected as one of the top 300 hotels in the world.

Gaál was the honorary consul of Austria in Kenya for a long time.



Kálmán Kittenberger

(1881-1958)

Born in 1881 to a poor working-class family, Kálmán Kittenberger's childhood dream came true when in 1903 he travelled to Mombasa, the former capital of Kenya, as a taxidermist for a private expedition led by Africanist Arzén Damaszkín. The "African madness" (*Furor Africanus*) immediately captivated the young scientist, who turned to East Africa with scientific curiosity unlike hunters who just wanted trophies to decorate their homes.

Kittenberger, though he was a devoted hunter, considered his scientific work to be his greatest passion. Instead of collecting trophies, he often walked for days tracking rare animals, hoping that he would be able to showcase them to Hungarians in the future. Although his achievements speak for themselves, it took time for his peers to recognize his work: during his time in Africa, he barely received any salary and he lost donors early on. To sustain himself, he often had to sell pieces of his collection on site even though he wanted to showcase his work in Hungary. His poor financial status almost cost him his life once: he could only buy low-quality supplies and ammunition. On one of his hunts, his firearm malfunctioned and put him in grave danger. Kittenberger often found himself in adrenaline-fueled situations. Once a lion attacked him, and he lost one of his fingers in close combat with the animal. His biographer, István Fekete, recalled this story in a quote from Kittenberger: "A lion struck me down at daybreak on June 11th. This would not have happened if my rifle had not jammed before my second attempt to shoot the lion. The wounded animal was running towards me, and I had to let it come close because I couldn't see it in the tall grass. It was a dire situation, and not a soul was in sight to assist me. Eventually, I grabbed its tongue with my left hand and pulled it hard. This puzzled the beast, so I had a moment to pull out the jammed ammunition, reload, and shoot my opponent in the eye."

The scientist was called "Mr. Kitty" by the locals, and he spent ten and a half years in Africa during the six times he visited. He contributed to the collection of the Hungarian National Museum with almost 60,000 items. He discovered nearly three hundred new species of animals, and approximately forty were named after him. "He could break through elephant grass, bamboo jungles, the snow-capped mountaintops of Kilimanjaro, and the white spots on the black continent, where no white man had gone before", his biographer Fekete wrote about him. He worked in Tanzania and Ethiopia, as well as in the Danakil Depression located on the present-day borders of Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti, which was uncharted territory for Europeans back then.

Despite holding on to his scientific curiosity amidst all sorts of difficulties, he had to wait a long time for well-deserved personal and professional peace. After World War I, he was deported to India by the British as a citizen from a hostile country. Nonetheless, after returning from five years of captivity, the "impoverished Hungarian scientist" continued his work with renewed energy. He became editor-in-chief of the hunting magazine *Nimród*, which he managed for 30 years and transformed into a popular publication for the hunting community. His work laid the foundations for the Africa collection exhibited in the Hungarian National Museum. However, in the wake of the guerrilla fighting during the 1956 revolution in Budapest, a fire broke out in the building, destroying most of the items preserved there along with Kittenberger's trophy collection.





Imre Löffler

(1929–2007)

Imre Löffler is one of those Hungarians who is better known abroad than in Hungary. One of the main reasons for this (besides selective historical memory) is that despite having led an adventurous life with significant professional achievements and ground-breaking initiatives, the bibliographic information available for him is relatively scarce. Löffler was born in Budapest in 1929. Although he grew up in a religious family and began his studies at a church school, he but later became more attracted to the prospect of a military career. He left high school and continued his studies in the Hungarian army, which we know from his friend, Yusuf Kodwawala (the former president of the Pan-African Surgeons Association). The Germans occupied his military school during Budapest's occupation in 1944 and sent Löffler to the Polish front, where he escaped by cutting ties with war-torn Hungary. He fled to Germany and American soldiers captured him. Thanks to his Austrian and Bavarian ancestry, he spoke excellent German, so he was soon offered a military hospital job as an assistant and handyman. He excelled in his work with his talent and diligence. He returned to Budapest for a short time, but due to his "anti-class" background, he did not get a job and he did not have the opportunity to study. He fled to Austria, and then again to Germany. In 1948 he was admitted to the Medical University of Regensburg with a German state scholarship to study philosophy and medicine. Later, he married another doctor and they had three children. To cover his studies and family expenses, he worked nightshifts as a taxi driver and caretaker in

a nursing home. He completed his graduate studies in the United States with the assistance of American scholarships and aid. They settled in Cincinnati, Ohio and began working at the Samaritans Hospital. He soon became interested in remote, exotic lands and decided to embark on missionary medical work in Uganda.

The couple divorced in 1969, and he moved to Zambia to begin teaching medicine at Lusaka University Teaching Hospital. His interest then turned to wildlife, animals and natural habitats. He married again and started farming and fighting poachers with his wife. He was expelled from Zambia after the one-party dictatorship rose to power in the early 1970s.

Löffler was compelled to move to Kenya in 1975. He worked at the Nairobi Hospital from 1986 to 1992 as a medical advisory board member and then in the hospital's management. Although he was a general surgeon, he specialized in specific gynaecological interventions (such as a hysterectomy), skin grafting, and cleft lip and palate repair. In addition to his medical work, he was involved in scientific and theoretical problems such as research into drugs against multi-resistant bacteria. His focus was on fighting fatal pathogens with drugs like penicillin and chloroquine. His rule of thumb was to administer adequate doses of antibiotics to avoid both overdosing and underdosing, and he frequently shared this conviction with his colleagues. This was pioneering work in East Africa at the time. He published his results in professional journals, and he founded a library and a journal (titled *The Proceedings of Nairobi Hospital*) at the hospital.

In 1983, he remarried and dedicated his life with his new wife to nature and animal conservation. In 1998, he became president of the East African Wildlife Society, a position he held until 2005. During his presidency, Kenyan wildlife protection programs were reorganized and improved, and with his leadership respect for human and animal coexistence reached new heights. Löffler regularly reflected on public issues in his philosophical and provocative writings, which frequently appeared in the *East African Standard* magazine.

As a result of his conservation efforts and a vocal campaign against governmental plans to clear natural areas, Löffler helped save Nairobi's Ngong forest from many construction and development projects in the growing city. After a long struggle, he achieved his goal and the forest was declared a nature reserve. The education centre named after him still stands today.

Löffler died in 2007 of a terminal illness in Nairobi.



Kálmán Mészáros

(1894–1971)

He was born on 8 May 1894 in Gyula, a peaceful small town full of green parks in the Great Hungarian Plain. He obtained his medical degree with honours in Budapest. In the meantime, he married Erzsébet Bertalan Vilma and they had a daughter together. However, in the crisis following the Treaty of Trianon, he could not find a job and so they decided to emigrate.

He arrived in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, in 1924. He became court physician to Ras Hailu, the ruler of Godjam. The Ras, lord of life and death, did not abide by the terms of their contract and was in no hurry to pay his salary either. Therefore, in the fall of 1925, he escaped from Godjam without a passport and permit and returned to Addis Ababa to open a clinic. He was a humane and generous person, which could be seen by the way he treated ordinary people. Nonetheless, much of his time was devoted to the medical treatment of the royal family. The imperial relatives invited Mészáros to visit distant provinces. He healed the emperor's son, the lord of Wollo Province and his godfather, and the prince of Gamo. Mészáros also helped with the birth of Haile Selassie's daughter in Sidamo. During his travels, he treated inhabitants in countryside villages while exploring the area as a passionate hunter. He shot four lions in one minute at the Shebelle River in 1931.

Kálmán Mészáros witnessed one of the most turbulent times in Ethiopian history. Often visiting the imperial court, he experienced the stormy struggle for power between Tafari Makonnen and Emperor Haile Selassie I, followed by Selassie's reform attempts and the Italo-Ethiopian wars. Mészáros became very popular in the imperial court and was appointed chief medic of the Ethiopian army in 1930.



Kálmán Mészáros with his friends in Addis Ababa

Mészáros was awarded membership to the Order of the Star of Ethiopia for his role in the battle of Anchem. On 3 October 1935, the Italians launched an attack on Ethiopia. Mészáros followed the imperial formations with his Red Cross caravan and tended to the wounded. He returned to Addis Ababa by the end of April 1936 to work at the English Red Cross Hospital, treating victims of street fights or other patients requiring medical care. The Italians, the new lords of the capital, were not friendly with the Hungarians at all, and they soon began intervening with his clinic. Finally, in December 1936, he left Ethiopia in frustration and impoverishment and moved to Tanganyika. He lived in Chunya for a short time, organized hunting expeditions, and joined safaris as a doctor. He fell seriously ill with black fever at Lake Rukwa. Troubling news from Europe prompted him to return home in March 1938. During the troubling years of World War II, he slowly recovered from his illness in several locations, and from November 1944 he served at the hospital in Sopron, Hungary. He remarried in Mezőcsát in September 1948 but could only enjoy the peace that his home and wife Zsuzsanna Nagy provided for a short time. One of his patients accused him of anti-Semitism, and although there was no evidence to support this claim, he was sentenced to five years in prison. After his release, he got a job as a district GP in Kiskunfélegyháza, and then in Ároktő in 1954. He retired from in 1965 and moved to Mezőcsát. He wrote a memoir of his African adventures titled *Abesszínia a vadászok paradicsomá* (Abyssinia: A Hunters' Paradise). He devoted all his time to his patients, not caring about his illness. He died on 25 September 1971 at the Miskolc Hospital. He was laid to rest in the cemetery of Mezőcsát.

Kálmán Mészáros was a very talented, resilient doctor. He was an incredibly successful surgeon, and he also received praise for his dermatological treatment. His writings are good reads for those who love travelling, hunting and adventures. His notes on Ethiopians' health are a valuable source on medical history. His personal experiences of Ethiopian society, power struggles, and Italian colonization may be relevant to historians. His love for people, selflessness, and willingness to sacrifice undoubtedly make him an outstanding figure of the Hungarian medical community.



Károly Polónyi

(1928-2002)

Károly Polónyi graduated from the Faculty of Architecture at Budapest University of Technology in 1950, and he then became an assistant lecturer at the Department of Public Building Design. After his experience at the Urban Planning Office (VÁTERV) and the Industrial Building Design Company (IPARTERV), he worked as the chief engineer of the Lake Balaton Management Committee. A zoning plan he developed at that time brought him several professional awards, including the Ybl architecture award in 1961.

The Hungarian architect attended the last congress of the CIAM (Congres Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) and became a member of the prestigious Team 10 modernist architecture group, which also offered him a valuable network of international contacts. Later, he used his vast network of contacts built over the decades to develop the English language courses at the Budapest University of Technology.

As an internationally renowned expert in urban architecture, he worked on large-scale plans from 1963 for about twenty years as a building and urban designer in Ghana, Nigeria, Algeria and Ethiopia.

His career in Africa began in Ghana. He expanded the Faculty of Architecture at Kumasi City Technical University and became an organizer of the first postgraduate architect program in West Africa. He also took part in designing low-cost and efficient model farms and housing estates. He worked on the Volta River's regional development project with a multinational team involving Hungarian professionals and local students. He and his students received the

Perret Award from the International Association of Architects for their work on the "Tongo Development Project".

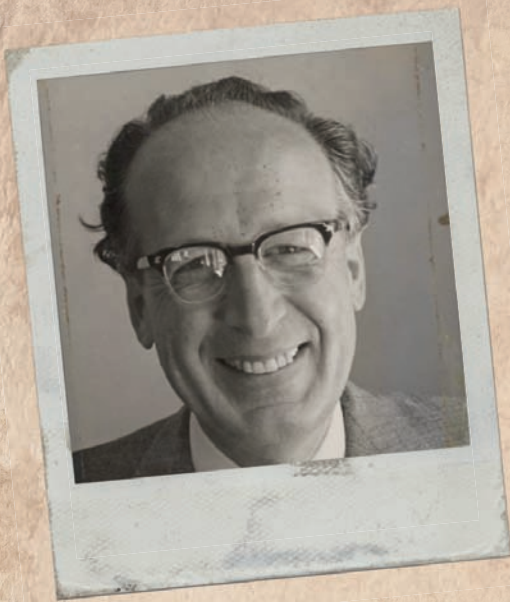
From 1969 he was the deputy chief architect of the Budapest Metropolitan Council. At the same time he worked in Africa as the chief of the Public Building Design Company's (KÖZTI) design team. He prepared the development plans for Calabar in Nigeria and three Algerian cities.

Károly Polónyi began his work in Ethiopia in 1977 as a consultant to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, which would last for three years. Polónyi's first assignment was to create a development strategy for Addis Ababa. Polónyi and his colleagues envisioned a decentralized solution for the crowded area: they planned to develop six or seven regional centres at least 200 kilometers away from the capital. Formulating a plan for the development of the Addis Ababa city centre also presented a creative challenge.

He was also assigned a significant construction project – the expansion of the Revolution (Abiyot) Square (today Meskel Square). This square is located next to the city stadium, the Imperial Palace, the Ghion Hotel and the Filwoha Healing Spring. It was a starting point for urban planning and had long been the site of church holidays. According to the plans of the communist regime, nearly half a million people in the square could have, in the ironic words of Károly Polónyi, "exercised their right and duty to express their solidarity with the government through disciplined marches."

The construction of the square had already begun based on the plans of a Finnish architect. The architects intended to connect the square to the city's infrastructure to allow continuous and diverse utilization of the square throughout the year. They were hoping that in addition to political rallies, they could develop the oval-shaped square into the capital's heart, which would host church ceremonies, cultural festivals, sports events, fairs and exhibitions. Polónyi's vision of the square operating regardless of the ruling political parties and ideologies came true. The square got back its old name in 1992 after the fall of the communist regime, and now it hosts huge community events, including the spectacular Christian Meskel festival.

Polónyi had a unique carrier, unlike any of his colleagues living in Hungary or abroad. Perhaps he was the only one who was aware of the latest international and Hungarian trends, while also combining his European perspectives with his African experiences in his works.



Imre Rózsa
(1911-1991)

Imre Rózsa was born in Nagyvárad in 1911. He studied architecture but took a job in Baghdad due to the anti-Jewish laws in Hungary. His fiancé moved with him, and they eventually married in 1939. The couple left Iraq in 1942 and moved to Palestine, followed by Mombasa, Kenya and Entebbe, Uganda for a while. Imre Rózsa joined the British Army and settled in Nairobi, where he founded an architectural firm. His three children were born in Kenya. The family played an active role in the Jewish Community. Imre Rózsa designed a new synagogue in Nairobi, which still stands to this day, and later he became the head of the congregation.

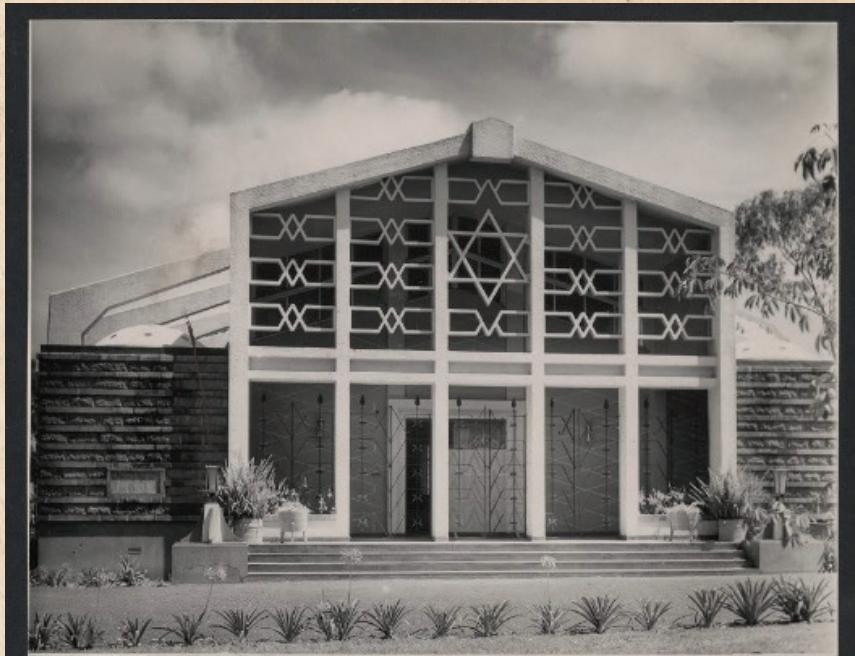
The first synagogue in Nairobi was built in 1913. After World War II, a new and larger building was needed due to growth in the Jewish community. The old synagogue was demolished and replaced in 1955 with a building designed by the Hungarian architect.

Rózsa designed many public buildings, such as offices or department stores. He even designed the building which used to house the Hungarian embassy in Dar es Salaam.

The architect and his family left Kenya in 1978 and moved to California, where two of his children were living. He died there in 1991.



Pioneer House



NEW SYNAGOGUE

The new synagogue



Flóra Sass

(?1841/45 – 1916)

Lady of Mystery

We have no certain data about her birth. She may have been born in Nagyenyed sometime between 1841 and 1845. Insurgents killed her parents and brother in January 1849. Her nanny took her as her own so that the little girl could escape. An Armenian family adopted her from Transylvania. After the fall of the Hungarian War of Independence, they moved to the Ottoman Empire. She was probably abducted - and from this point, her life became a bit more well-documented. At the end of January 1869, she was bid on at the Vidin slave market and nearly sold. Samuel White Baker, an English aristocrat in transit, rescued her. It is also possible that he bought the attractive girl (who he thought was around 20 years old) because British law did not allow the purchase of slaves, or even to free them. So, it is understandable that this had to be kept a secret. This is probably why she took up the name Florence (Flóra) Sass then. According to our knowledge, her original name was Barbara.

Baker and Sass went straight to Africa. They arrived at Cairo in March 1861. While sailing up the Nile, they learned that the Royal Geographical Society of London had failed in its latest expedition to find the "Holy Grail" of African explorers, the White Nile source. Seizing the opportunity, Baker and Sass set out on a self-funded expedition to solve one of the last African mysteries. They left Khartoum in December 1862, and they reached Gondokoro, an abandoned Austrian missionary settlement in South Sudan. On 14 March 1864, they mapped Lake Albert (Albert Nyanza), and three weeks later they mapped Murchison Falls and a large section of the upper White Nile. Along the way, they went through many ordeals. Baker fell

Flóra Sass and her husband



ill, and during this time Flora Sass had to stand her ground alone, gaining the recognition of all the male members of the expedition. This along with her blonde hair is how she got the name Morning Star (Myadue) from the locals. They finished their expedition, believing that they had solved the mystery of the White Nile. Although this only happened decades later, their discovery was a huge scientific achievement. They were celebrated as heroes in England. They were married with special permission, and Baker was given the rank of knight. However, Queen Victoria was unwilling to meet Lady Baker because of her uncertain origins. On the other hand, his son, the Prince of Wales, befriended the couple, and they set out on another trip to Africa together. The Viceroy of Egypt made Baker Governor General of the Equatorial Nile, with his wife accompanying him. They spent three years there, but the circumstances did not allow for further explorations. They returned to England in 1874 and settled in Devon County. Flóra Sass, known as Lady Baker, outlived her husband by more than two decades, passing away on 11 March 1916. Following her will, her documents were burned after her death. Only her diary written on their second journey was found in 1965, which is why we know so little about the Lady of Mystery.



László Sáska

(1890-1978)

László Sáska was born on 26 September 1890 in Nagyenyed, a city with a rich history in Transylvania. He was raised in a protestant family. He studied in the Bethlen College, where he developed an interest in zoology. He graduated in medicine at the University of Budapest in 1920. In 1933, he and his brave and adventurous wife, Mária Mojzsis, seriously considered emigrating to Africa. The tragic health problems of East Africa, the possibility of medical research, and his love of hunting and nature all helped him make up his mind.

They decided to travel to Somalia and then to the capital of Ethiopia, where Sáska opened a clinic. After experiencing many difficulties during the first months, the lord of the southern province Sidamo offered him a lucrative job in his court. Twice the size of Hungary, Sidamo had a population of four million at the time. Sáska began as the only doctor in the province to set up health care and organize the South Ethiopian army's medical service.

The Italian attack disrupted his work, and after the war broke out in the autumn of 1935, he and his wife fled to the capital. He continued to work in his clinic, but also treated patients at the Addis Ababa Imperial Hospital. He wrote about the events of the Italo-Ethiopian war under the pen name Dr. Ladislav Sava, exposing the atrocities committed by the conquerors. However, the Italians made it impossible for him to work in his clinic, his situation became unsustainable, and he was forced to move to the English-ruled Tanganyika.

He arrived at Dar es Salaam in July 1937, and for a short time he managed the operation of a clinic in Iringa. He settled permanently in Arusha, which had a more favourable climate, and opened a clinic on the road leading to Moshi. He treated the Arusha district residents and

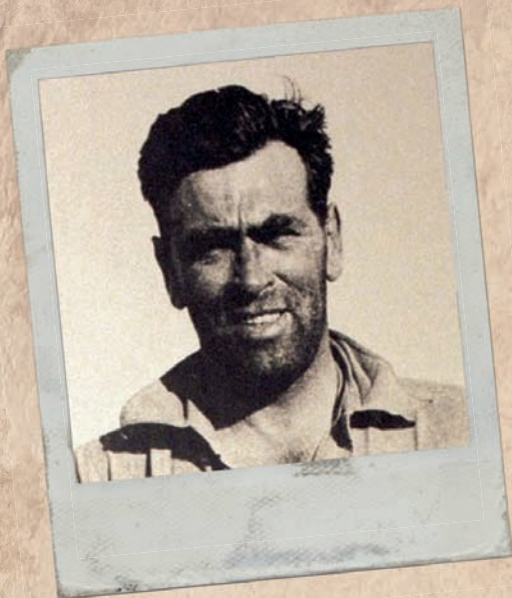
provided free care to poor indigenous people such as the Maasai and Kikuyu. His scientific reputation also boosted his medical practice. Lots of patients with malaria or cancer visited his clinic from afar. To cover his expenses, he charged Europeans for their treatment, which mostly included hunters. In exchange for his hard work in the Arusha region, he was not deported in World War II despite being a citizen from a hostile country. As a sign of recognition, he was elected to serve as a Corresponding Member of the English Cancer Research Institute. Semmelweis University awarded him a Golden Certificate of Achievement in 1970. He was also elected to be a member of the Romanian Academy of Medicine in 1972.

As a renowned physician and a caring friend, he was on good terms with many famous figures visiting or living in Africa. This included Ernest Hemingway, a famous American writer; Dr. Bernhard Grzimek, a renowned zoologist; and Albert Schweitzer, a well-known doctor, writer, and musician. Zsigmond Széchenyi, János Szunyoghy, Endre Nagy, and many Hungarian hunters and collectors could also count on Sáska's sincere support.

László Sáska was a versatile scientist with extraordinary curiosity. He made ethnographic, zoological, and botanical observations in Ethiopia, Tanganyika and the Congo Basin. He described rare and unknown orchid species. Two species of African mites and a plant were named after him. He studied the people surrounding him and their traditional medicine. His writings, documentaries and photographs of Africa are invaluable. He participated in the nature conservation festival of the Budapest Hunting Exhibition in 1971 with his film *Afrikai reggel* (African Morning). He donated most of his collections to Hungarian museums. His collection can be found in the Hungarian Geographical Museum.

He was passionate about Africa and an admirer of the continent's flora and fauna. His writings published in Hungarian magazines and his book *Életem Afrika* (My Life, Africa) are exciting reads, and his research results are treasures for medical history and botany. His reports as a witness of Ethiopia's historical events are essential sources for learning about the era.

His many years of devoted work made Sáska the most famous doctor in Tanzania. He liked the African climate, and he remained healthy and worked even in his later years. He died on 8 November 1978, at the age of 88. He rests in the Arusha Cemetery at the foot of Mount Meru.



Zsigmond Széchenyi (1898–1967)

He was born in Nagyvárad on 23 January 1899 into a family of counts. He was the great-great-grandson of Ferenc Széchenyi (founder of the National Széchenyi Library and Hungarian National Museum), and great-grandson of Széchenyi István's (considered the Greatest Hungarian) brother. He spent his childhood in Sárpentele (Fejér County). After graduating from high school, he attended universities in Munich, Stuttgart and Cambridge between 1919 and 1923. He developed his passion for hunting in his childhood, but his first real hunt took place only after graduation because his father only allowed him to shoot deer when he was young.

He set out on his first trip to Africa with László Almásy, "The English Patient", in the spring of 1927 to hunt in eastern Sudan, in the Fung province at the Ethiopian border. He fell in love with Africa on this trip. In November 1928, he visited the Ewaso Ng'iro River, the Maasai Mara Reserve and Kitui County with Count István Károlyi. The press reported on this expedition as follows: "The many adversities, the many deprivations, the many efforts that accompanied the six-month African hunting expedition of the two Hungarian counts were not in vain. They put down an entire army of African big games: lions, panthers, rhinos, wild buffalo. István Károlyi even managed to shoot a beautiful adult elephant." After returning home, they interviewed Széchenyi. "We are astonished by the sense of freedom one has in the wild," he said after participating in an exciting African hunting trip for the second time. The young count, who had become thoroughly acquainted with all the adversities and dangers of the African wilderness, said with a gleeful smile on his face, "I hope I will see Africa again."

Zsigmond Széchenyi
in Africa



He did see it again, not only once. He returned to Kenya in 1932, hunting mostly big boars, elephants and lions. He took part in another Kenyan safari from December 1933 to March 1934. He participated in an expedition in Sudan with László Almásy in 1935, where he shot the largest addax antelope ever and broke a world record. Out of Africa's 130 big games, he managed to collect 80 trophies. Meanwhile, his books on his hunting adventures were published, the first in 1930 being *Csui! Afrikai vadásznapló 1928. október – 1929. április* (Chui! African Hunting Log October 1928 - April 1929), and the second titled *Elefántország* (Elephant Country) in 1934. Not only did World War II make hunting in Africa impossible, but his unique collection was destroyed during the siege of Budapest. After the communists came to power, his properties were confiscated, and he was deported and imprisoned. He could only publish his new book *Afrikai tábortüzek* (African Campfires) in 1959. Once again, he was able to visit his beloved continent again in December 1963 when the National Museum sent him on a mission to acquire items for its incomplete collection. He wrote his last book about this journey, titled *Denaturált Afrika* (Denatured Africa). He died in Budapest on 24 April 1967, a few days after he submitted his book's manuscript. He was one of the few Hungarians who was not merely in love with Africa but also called it his home.

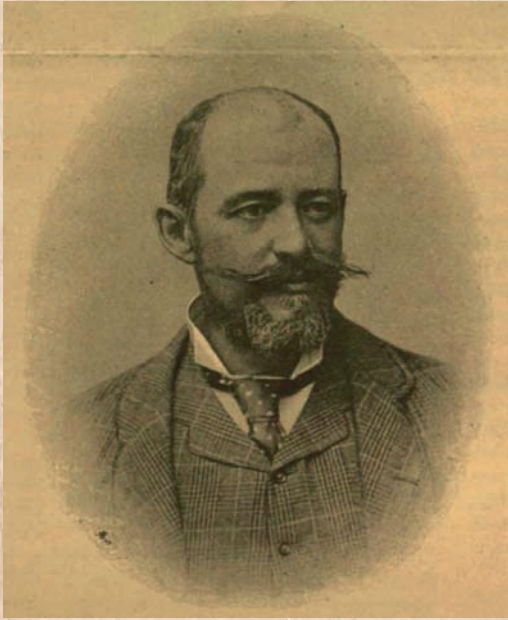


Sámuel Teleki

(1845-1916)

Born in 1845 into a Transylvanian aristocratic family, Sámuel Teleki is one of the three most significant Hungarian Africanists, next to László Magyar and Emil Torday. As usual in the era, he studied at prestigious European universities. He studied geology and astronomy in Göttingen and Berlin, but he was also interested in political and economic studies. Perhaps this is also why, after his military service, he joined the Hungarian political public life as a Member of Parliament. Here he befriended Rudolf, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne. Due to his father, Emperor Franz Joseph, Rudolf could not play a serious political role, so his attention turned to geographical discoveries, travel and natural sciences. Moreover, he became the president of the Hungarian Geographical Society. He met Teleki during this work, and together they planned exotic expeditions and Transylvanian hunts. This is how Teleki has the idea to connect his previously planned African hunting trip to explore the unmapped regions of East Africa, especially the area north of Lake Baringo in the Great Rift Valley.

Accompanied by his entourage, he arrived on the island of Zanzibar on 29 November 1886, where he began to organize the exploration of areas of Africa that were uncharted by Europeans. In June 1887, they reached the base of Kilimanjaro, a vast savannah region on the border of present-day Kenya and Tanzania that the Maasai call the "Infinite Land". Teleki, surpassing all previous attempts, reached the snow line at a height of 5,310 metres on the 5,895-meter mountain, which is the highest point on the African continent and the highest standalone mountain in the world. This was a significant achievement, as acclimatization and



high-altitude diseases were not yet fully understood at this time. Presumably, Teleki did not get any higher for objective and health-related reasons. After he attempted to conquer Kilimanjaro, he also climbed Mount Kenya. Although he did not reach the peak of 5,199 metres, he got to the snow line at an altitude of 4,500 metres. Reaching the peak would have required rock climbing skills and proper equipment. However, using rock samples collected on the mountain, he proved its volcanic origin and discovered significant geological findings. After climbing Mount Kenya, he reached a lake on 6 March 1888 known to the Turkana people living here as Nagira Mwaiten, which Teleki named Lake Rudolf (now called Lake Turkana) in honour of the Archduke. He continued the expedition and was the first European to reach the “top” of a volcano located there, which was unknown to Western researchers.

This mountain still holds his name. Continuing his journey, he discovered a huge saltwater lake, which he named Lake Stefania (now Lake Chew Bahir) after Rudolf’s wife. Next, they reached Mombasa’s port, their expedition’s final destination on a long and challenging journey.

Teleki’s journey was one of the most significant endeavours of the era, granting him a place among the great geographical explorers. Although his findings were published by his expedition companion, the Austrian sailor Ludwig von Höhnel, this does not detract from Teleki’s accomplishments. This work was published in Hungarian in 1892 in a book titled *Teleki Sámuel gróf felfedező útja Kelet-Afrika egyenlítői vidékén 1887–1888* (Count Sámuel Teleki’s Expedition in the Equatorial Region of East Africa, 1887–1888). After Teleki’s return home and following his expeditions to Asia and Oceania, he visited Africa several more times. His scientific observations greatly enriched our geographical knowledge. He refuted the view that volcanic activity was caused by the intrusion of seawater since the Teleki volcano is located on the mainland. He also proved that the Moon Mountains, which were assumed to be between the Great Lakes and Ethiopia at the time, did not exist. Several plant and animal species bear his name. It is also significant that Kenya’s first independent government named a shelter house on Mount Kenya (at an altitude of 4,300 metres) after this outstanding Hungarian researcher. He was also awarded and elected as a member by several geographical and academic societies in recognition of his scholarly work.



György Vámos

(1910-1999)

György Vámos was born in Budapest in 1910. He finished high school in Budapest and studied architecture in Vienna. Due to the advancement of Nazism, he joined the British government and got a job in Iraq. He later joined the British Army as he was a Hungarian citizen, but he was interned to Uganda along with many others because of his "foreign" status. When he was released from the internment camp, he rejoined the ranks of the British Army, but his time in Uganda left a deep impression on him. He was impressed by the beauty of Africa's natural environment and the coexistence of cultures. After he resigned in 1946, he did not return to Europe but settled in Nairobi, where he opened an architect firm with Heini Lustmann.

György Vámos designed several significant buildings in Kenya and the neighbouring countries. Residential and public buildings, schools, and churches were built using his designs. His work includes the Kenya Commercial Bank building and the headquarters of the country's most prestigious multi-ethnic association, the United Kenya Club, founded in 1946. Vámos held various positions at this club. He also had two significant church assignments. One was the Siri Guru Singh Sabha Sikh temple (gurdwara), built in 1963. Its 25-metre high dome features a spectacular view from above. He planned the dome to eliminate echoes and provide clear sound during ceremonies. In 1968, a cathedral in Bukoba, Tanzania was also built based on his design and plans.



The Siri Guru Singh Sabha Sikh temple

On 22 August 1978, Jomo Kenyatta, the legendary figure in the African independence movement and the first president of independent Kenya, died. György Vámos had the honour of designing the mausoleum of the world-famous and well-known late president, whose final resting place was designated to be next to the Parliament. The funeral ceremony was scheduled for August 31, leaving a hundred workers to build the 34-square-foot building in just a few days.

György Vámos was a well-known figure of Nairobi intellectuals. He spoke several languages and was active in public life. He loved to travel, which he often linked with his other passions of painting and drawing, though he was above all else an architect. At the end of his career, he received an award from the Architectural Association of Kenya for his outstanding contribution to the country's architecture.

He moved to Vancouver with his family in his senior years, where he died in 1999.