

THE CULT OF ST URSULA  
AND THE 11,000 VIRGINS

*Er cof am fy ngŵr*

In memory of my husband  
John Haydn Thomas Hughes 1967–2014

# THE CULT OF ST URSULA AND THE 11,000 VIRGINS

*Edited by Jane Cartwright*



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## CHAPTER 9



# The Cult of St Ursula in Hungary: Legend, Altars and Reliquaries

*Anna Tüskés*

Due to the assumption that Huns and Hungarians are related, the legend of St Ursula was thought to have specific relevance for Hungarians, and this is reiterated by all of the Hungarian codices. For a long time the Church in Hungary celebrated 21 October (the martyrdom of St Ursula and her companions) with great reverence and formality and this perhaps helped reinforce the notion that the cult of St Ursula had specific connections with Hungary.

Researchers interested in the legend of St Ursula still consider the 1866 study of Jenő Szentkláray,<sup>1</sup> as well as the article of Miklós Szmercsányi published in 1900,<sup>2</sup> as their baseline. Cyrill Horváth has reviewed the process of how the legend changed over time and drawn attention to one of the versions that had Hungarian relevance.<sup>3</sup> Dénes Radocsay listed the representations of St Ursula on frescoes and Gothic altars.<sup>4</sup> In his publication *Festive Calendar* Sándor Bálint surveyed the different versions of the legend including the traditions preserved in the chronicles and painted depictions.<sup>5</sup> These are complemented by several case studies, most of which focus on a particular object or genre. Katalin Dávid has written about two objects from Hungarian ecclesiastical collections that both contain representations of St Ursula, among others.<sup>6</sup> Zoltán Szilárdfy published a selection of eighteenth-century devotional images from his own private collection.<sup>7</sup> András Mező has collected the names and titles of churches in medieval Hungary, as well as the details of their consecration.<sup>8</sup> Emese Sarkadi Nagy deals with some fifteenth-century panels depicting St Ursula in her book on late medieval altars in Transylvania.<sup>9</sup> However, there has been no sufficient attempt to cast light on the relationship between these different artefacts (their similarities and sources) and a detailed analysis of the individual artefacts

has not yet been undertaken. This chapter is divided into two parts: in the first I discuss the idiosyncrasies and variations that can be found in the Hungarian versions of the legend, as well as the role of St Ursula in the Hungarian Chronicles. In the second part I deal with the visual sources of St Ursula's cult in Hungary from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries through various genres of art (altars, statues, vestments, monstres) to show the spatial and temporal spread of her veneration.

## Written sources

### *Variations within the legend*

The portrayal of the Huns, and Attila in particular, is especially interesting in a Hungarian context. The popularity in Hungary of Jacobus de Voragine's series of legends, the *Legenda aurea* is only proven by a handful of extant copies and fragments of translations.<sup>10</sup> The earliest remaining codex in Hungary can be dated to the first half of the fourteenth century; the manuscript (Vienna, ONB Cod. 14600 Han) that was damaged at the front and back contains 61 complete and two incomplete legends. These are mostly from the *Legenda aurea*. The compiler of the codex may have been a Dominican friar in Hungary. As well as the Lives of the founders of his order, Saint Dominic, and of Peter of Verona, he also inserted the legends of three Hungarian saints, King László (27 June), King Stephen (20 August) and Prince Imre (5 November) in their appropriate places within the calendar.

Besides the handful of codices and ancient prints, the popularity of the *Legenda aurea* in Hungary is also marked by its effect on the evolution of sermons. The observant Franciscan, Pelbárt Temesvári, dedicated one speech to St Ursula in his book *Sermones Pomerii de sanctis*, containing sermon cycles about saints, published in Hagenau in 1499. The piece was called *De undecim milibus virginibus, de sancta Ursula*.<sup>11</sup> Pelbárt Temesvári used the *Legenda aurea* as his source without any reservation. Of course, in his version, the legend is altered and abbreviated. Pelbárt found followers in the later tradition of writing in Hungary. The most characteristic codex in this respect is the Érdy codex, the work of an anonymous Carthusian. Osvát Laskai, who was also an observant Franciscan, composed a Latin sermon about St Ursula and the 11,000 virgin martyrs entitled *De undecim milibus virginum. De virginitate et eius nobilitate*. This was also published in Hagenau in the 1499 *Sermones Pomerii de sanctis*.

According to one version of the legend of Ursula, which has

specific Hungarian relevance, Ursula is the daughter of the Hungarian king and queen.<sup>12</sup> In this version also, the virgins go on a pilgrimage to Rome first and continue their journey across the barren and deserted kingdom of the king of Slavonia to Jerusalem, accompanied by the pope and several cardinals. This king, who is a relative and friend of the Sultan of Babylon, sends a vast army against the pilgrims. When he discovers that they are Christians he wants to force them to renounce their faith. In the end, as he does not succeed, he has the unbending pilgrims killed.

There are four known Hungarian translations of the *Legenda-aurea* version of the Life of St Ursula: these are in the Nádor, Kazinczy, Érsekújvári and Érdy codices.<sup>13</sup> The Nádor codex, with its miscellaneous content, presumably copied by one of the Franciscan nuns in the Poor Clare's convent in Óbuda in 1508 and intended for communal reading, aimed for similar precision.<sup>14</sup> It presents the Lives of eight saints, including the Life of St Ursula, situated between the stories of St Eufrozina and St Apollonia. The first lines of the latter are missing, however.

The first significant person who wrote in Hungarian, the anonymous Carthusian, followed the text of Pelbárt Temesvári in the Érdy codex, written around 1526 in Lövöld.<sup>15</sup> The section including the saints' Lives is the only collection of legends entirely in Hungarian and its main source, besides Pelbárt Temesvári, is the *Legenda aurea*. Epistole 130 is the legend of St Ursula. The work of the anonymous Carthusian surpassed that of a translator: he assembled a monumental piece of writing using a variety of sources.

The Érsekújvári codex, which was written between 1529 and 1531 on the Island of Rabbits (today Margaret Island in central Budapest), also contains a legend of Ursula.<sup>16</sup> The text belonged to a community of Dominican nuns and was presumably read aloud on the feast of the virgins. Its wording follows the narrative numbered 153 in the *Legenda aurea* and it is a fairly close translation of that text. The Kazinczy codex, which was probably prepared for the Poor Clare's community in Óbuda between 1526 and 1541, is rich in engaging and educational pieces. It contains a range of sermons, legends and parables. Among these, in the second half of the section on the chastity of saints, the story of St Ursula is found on pages 156–66.<sup>17</sup> The main source of the sermons is Pelbárt Temesvári's version, and the legends are mostly based on the *Legenda aurea*. Further codices that contain the legend of St Ursula are the Gömörý<sup>18</sup> and Czech codices.<sup>19</sup>

### *Chronicles*

In section three of the third chapter, entitled *About the Victorious Conquest of Attila* in his Chronicle *Gesta Hunnorum et Hungarorum*, Simon Kézai mentions St Ursula briefly:

And after Attila ravaged France and Flanders in this way, he crossed the Rhine near Cologne, where the Huns ruthlessly killed Saint Ursula, the daughter of the king of the Britons along with eleven thousand virgins.<sup>20</sup>

Kézai's source, in this case, is undoubtedly *Chronicon sive Chronographia*, the work of Sigebertus Gemblacensis (c.1035–112).<sup>21</sup> Following Kézai, according to chapter 11 of the *Illustrated Chronicle* (*Képes Krónika*) Ursula and her 11,000 companions die a martyr's death at the command of Attila:

He ravaged all of France and Flanders in this way, reached Cologne where the Huns ruthlessly killed Saint Ursula, the daughter of the king of the Britons along with eleven thousand virgins.<sup>22</sup>

János Thuróczy, chief notary (*protonotary*) and chronicler (c.1435–89) tells the legend of St Ursula and her companions briefly at the beginning of chapter 19 entitled *The Suffering of the Eleven Thousand Virgins and the Murder of Buda by his brother Attila* in his book *Chronica Hungarorum* (*Chronicle of the Hungarians*) which was published in Brno in 1488:

Meanwhile king Attila sent the commander of his army called Julius or Gyula along with the majority of the army to the siege of the city of Cologne, which was called Agrippina before. While he was besieging the city, the famous group of the eleven thousand virgins arrived there on their ships sailing on the deep River Rhine. They were led by St Ursula, the daughter of the king of the Britons, her fiancé the excellent prince Ether, son of the king of the English, Pope Cyriacus and many other worldly nobles and leaders of the church. After that the above-mentioned commander, leader of the hostile army, following the advice of a handful of Roman commanders who were deluded by popular pagan fallacies, attacked the holy company of the virgins with the Huns partaking in the siege of the city. They attacked with enormous noise and ruthless ferocity, killing all of them. A number of chronicle accounts describe the suffering of these virgin saints and although their opinions differ regarding the time of the martyrs'

death, we can assume that it occurred at the time of King Attila, since according to the chronicles no other Hun army took the city of Cologne under siege but that of Attila.<sup>23</sup>

In 1538 in Vienna Hans Hauge zum Freistein published certain sections of János Thuróczy's *Chronica Hungarorum* that he had translated into German and abbreviated.<sup>24</sup> The book contains ten woodcuts. The fifth image, on the verso of folio 8, depicts the Huns murdering St Ursula and the 11,000 virgins. The illustrations that were used as patterns for the woodcuts were drawn by Peter Flötner.

Antonio Bonfini discusses the legend of St Ursula in considerable detail in *A magyar történelem tizedei* (volume 5).<sup>25</sup> Péter Kulcsár has established that Bonfini took the legend from *Speculum Historiale* by Vincentius Bellovacensis.<sup>26</sup> In his version certain sections were condensed whereas others were expanded. The main facts and details narrated remain the same. The majority of the two texts is identical in form also. Bonfini uses three further sources, however, in his text: those of Thuróczy, Aenas Sylvius and Blondus, but he also expands these significantly.<sup>27</sup> He often inserts one or two superfluous lines that either expand on the obvious or repeat concrete facts. He also reorders some of the expressions of the source. Nevertheless, Ursula's inspiring speech is Bonfini's own composition:

No one can win a worthy reward, innocent sisters, who had not fought bravely before, and no one can find life in heaven, who had not renounced it and sacrificed it for God. It is impossible to become the Savior's fellow in the kingdom of heaven, if we had not rejected our lives. [. . .] Is it possible to win more than over ourselves? Whose triumph is brighter than that, who heads the body of a prisoner, who is self-defeating, and who has triumphed the wishes of the flesh? [. . .]

### ***Relics and feast days***

The church of St Ursula in Cologne, where the relics of the virgins are kept, was regularly visited by Hungarians on pilgrimage to Aachen. Queen Elisabeth passed through Marburg and Cologne during her pilgrimage to Aachen in 1357. We cannot exclude the possibility that Elisabeth acquired relics as a result of her activities as patroness: some are mentioned in the comprehensive list of the treasures of a Budaszentlőrinc nunnery.<sup>28</sup> Built in the fourteenth century<sup>29</sup> this religious house belonged to the Order of St Paul and kept a relic of

St Ursula, namely 'the head of St Ursula with gold-plated silver to her waist' – probably a herm.<sup>30</sup>

King Louis the Great donated a number of relics to the Hungarian chapel that he founded (built between 1342 and 1366) in the Cathedral of Aachen. These included the bone relics of SS Stephen and Emeric and the relics of St Ursula and her companions. These relics are noted in an inventory in 1656 and they are kept in the treasury to this day.<sup>31</sup>

Several other relics of Ursula found their way to Hungary. For example, the medieval chapel of St Ladislaus, which once stood in the centre of Bratislava, obtained three of the heads of the 11,000 virgins in 1486. Similarly the Cathedral of Eger had two similar relics: 'The skulls of two of the 11,000 virgin martyrs. The choir is lead by priests in red. Mass: *Gaudeamus*.' Furthermore, the Poor Clare's community had relics in Nagyszombat.<sup>32</sup>

The feast day of St Ursula and the 11,000 virgins occurs regularly in medieval Hungarian mass calendars, and it was clearly a festival that was observed from the High Middle Ages onwards. It is obvious that the German immigration during the Árpád era (1000–1301) encouraged the establishment of the cult in Hungary, but we must not forget the specific Hungarian relevance of the legend too.

The Church in medieval Hungary considered the feast day of Ursula and her companions to be a significant festival worthy of glorious celebration. In the Hungarian-Latin rule book of the White Canon Sisters (Norbertines), in the Lányi codex, presumably written for the cloister of Somlóvásárhely in 1520, we find the following reference: 'With eleven thousand virgins. The day of these saintly virgins is worth double [the usual feast days]; we celebrate with an eight-day feast (octave).'<sup>33</sup>

An example of the relic cult from the modern era is the seventeenth-century relic holder board kept in the Hungarian National Museum.<sup>34</sup> The object is rectangular and has silk embellishments of stylised flowers and leaves covering its entire surface, embroidered in silver and gilded thread. In the top row, the coats of arms of Matthew II, the Hungarian and Czech king, is framed by parchment indicating that these are the relics of SS Katherine and St Ursula. In the lower rows the names of the twelve apostles can be read. In the middle there is the bone relic of St George. The rest of the relics cannot be seen: if there are any, they are contained in the protruding decoration. The embroidered board, made in the royal court, may have been prepared in the period between the crowning of Matthew II (16 November, 1608) and the death of his brother, Emperor Rudolph II (20 January, 1612). Matthew II was known



for his passion for collecting relics. The relic holder board shows traits of a later, presumably eighteenth-century, alteration.

### ***Church dedications to St Ursula and her association with guilds***<sup>35</sup>

The churches of Viborna, Tapolysárpatak (now Mokroluh in Slovakia, 1772),<sup>36</sup> Wellbach (Ágostonháza / Bystrany)<sup>37</sup> and Ipolynyitra (now Nitra nad Iplom, 1823) chose St Ursula as their patroness. The Roman Catholic church of Irsa in Pest county was dedicated to St Ursula according to the 1777 *canonica visitatio*.<sup>38</sup> Today it is dedicated to the Transfiguration of our Lord. The medieval guild of the tailors of Brassó (modern-day Brasov in Romania) had the 11,000 virgins as their patron saints.<sup>39</sup> The flag of the weavers of Lövö was decorated with the images of its two patronesses: SS Ursula and Katherine.<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately, this is no longer extant as it was partially destroyed by fire. In the region of Somló harvest officially starts on the feast day of St Ursula.<sup>41</sup>

## **Fine and Applied Arts in the Fourteenth–Sixteenth Centuries**

### ***Frescoes***

A large number of Gothic frescoes and altars signal the popularity and widespread reverence for St Ursula. The fact that so many works of art from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century are extant suggests that her legend was widely known in Hungary during this period. Considering the number and nature of the surviving artefacts, it soon becomes obvious that the heyday of the portrayal of St Ursula and her female companions must have been in the second half of the fifteenth century. This rich period, obviously hallmarked by local workshops, could certainly not have evolved without the preceding events of the fourteenth century, although the number of extant objects from the fourteenth century is quite scarce.

There are two groups of frescoes which were made in the second half of the fourteenth century depicting St Ursula among other female saints: one of them is in the Calvinist church of Szék (modern-day Sâg in Romania) dated between 1360 and 1370,<sup>42</sup> and the other in the Lutheran church of Almakerék (now Malamcrav in Romania).<sup>43</sup> Both of the churches are located in Transylvania. In the side sanctuary of the church of Szék, on the lower area of the southern wall, there are two scenes from the legend of St Ursula. The walls of the church of Almakerék were once covered by late fourteenth-century frescoes both inside and outside. In Hungary the exterior south wall of the church was

often painted in the High Middle Ages, but these frescoes rarely survive as they were inevitable exposed to rain. The vault of the sanctuary is decorated with scenes of the birth and passion of Christ; and female saints are depicted in the arches of the sanctuary – including a seated figure of St Ursula.

In the church of Our Lady's Assumption at Torna (Turňa nad Bodvou, before Turnianske Podhradie) in Slovakia, wall paintings dating from the fourteenth century were discovered: images of these have not been previously been published yet (See Figure 5).<sup>44</sup> Large images of female saints painted to three-quarters the height of life-size images, standing in niches can be found on the three sections of the arched ceiling of the sanctuary. They were painted in the lowest register. Due to their poor preservation, only SS Dorothy, Margaret and perhaps Christina can be recognised apart from St Ursula. A group of frescoes in Visk (Вишков) in Ukraine, discovered in 2014, can be mentioned as related artefacts. These were once finely portrayed female martyr saints and some scenes of the passion of Christ were found in the sanctuary. The image at Visk may be dated to the end of the fourteenth century.

Between approximately 1450 and 1460 a fresco depicting seven virgin martyrs standing around the Madonna was painted on the southern wall of the southern transept in St Michael's Church, Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca).<sup>45</sup> The wall paintings are badly damaged and missing some fragments; therefore the figure on the far left cannot be identified for lack of any attributes, and only six of the saints can be recognised: SS Margaret, Barbara, the Madonna, SS Katherine, Agnes (?), Dorothy (?), and Ursula.

### ***Winged Altars***

#### *Lost Objects*

St Ursula had an altar in the church of Our Lady, near the moat of the Sopron fortress; we also know that the altar dedicated to St Ursula was commissioned by István Herb, since there a written document dated 1477 mentions his donation.<sup>46</sup> St Ursula also had altars in Csanád<sup>47</sup> and Nagyváradi.<sup>48</sup> There was a statue of St Ursula at the church of St Elisabeth, Győrvar in 1698,<sup>49</sup> and another in the church of Irsa (today part of Albertirsa) according to the *Canonica visitatio* dated the same year.<sup>50</sup>

#### *An Altar Dedicated to St Ursula*

The only remaining altar of St Ursula is from the parish church of Homoródbene (Beia) dating from 1513. In 2005 the altar was moved to

the fortress church of Segesvár.<sup>51</sup> On the feast-day side, four scenes of the Life of St Ursula are represented on the wing panels: 1. St Ursula's journey along the Rhine, 2. her arrival in Rome, 3. Pope Cyriacus baptises Ursula and her companions, and 4. her martyrdom. The first three scenes are relatively rare in St Ursula's iconography: the same scenes are depicted on an altar made in 1456 in Cologne, which is attributed to one of the followers of Stefan Lochner.<sup>52</sup> Another example is an image on Hans Memling's Shrine of St Ursula in Brugge.<sup>53</sup> In the last scene, St Ursula is standing in front of the altar praying while a Hun is about to behead one of the saint's companions, holding her down by her hair, leaning over the bow of the boat. This scene also appears on another altar in Hungary, and it was widespread in Europe, e.g. on a panel painting dating from 1448 at the Landesmuseum Gemäldesammlung in Innsbruck<sup>54</sup> and the panel painting in the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum of Cologne.<sup>55</sup> Masters presumably worked following the same exemplar, probably an engraving.

#### *St Ursula on Other Altars*

The figure of St Ursula is most often depicted on altars dedicated to Our Lady, when four or eight virgin martyrs appear on winged panels. St Ursula appears in four instances on St Anne altars, usually accompanied by four other saints, but on one of the altars she appears alongside eight female saints. Her companions are mostly SS Barbara and Apollonia. The St Anne altar of the Kisszeben (Sabinov) parish church, made around 1465, is one example with its winged panels depicting St Oswald, King Stephen, Martin and Kálmán as well as female saints: Ursula and Apollonia (see Figure 6).<sup>56</sup> The altar was made in late Gothic style, following one particular variation that is the hallmark of Veit Stoss.

The figure of St Ursula also appears on other altarpieces such as those dedicated to other virgin martyrs. On the altar of St Sophia in Zólyomszászfalu (Sásová), made around 1440, in the picture of the central panel St Sophia is depicted with her three daughters.<sup>57</sup> St Sophia is surrounded by scenes depicting the martyrdom of SS Agatha, Susanna and Dorothy and the holy communion of St Ursula. On the wing panels of the high altar of Némethlipcse (Partizánská Lupča) the feast-day side shows eight scenes representing the life of Christ, and furthermore some female saints: SS Barbara and Katherine, St Cordula and Ursula, the torment of St Apollonia and finally St Sophia.<sup>58</sup> What is special about this depiction is St Ursula being represented with one of her companions, Cordula.

Of primary importance for the purposes of this study are the painted figures of the altar of the Cathedral in Szepeshely (Spišské Pohradie) dedicated to St Martin (see Figure 7).<sup>59</sup> The altar was made between 1470 and 1478 and reconstructed in the nineteenth century. There are three saints represented on the inner four pictures on the hinged shutters and three saints on the reverse side. In the two lower pictures the ubiquitous martyr saints are depicted: Apollonia, Margaret and Dorothy, as well as Katherine, Barbara and Ursula. In the two upper pictures male saints are depicted. In the picture on the left, male saints of the House of Árpád can be found: László (Ladislaus I of Hungary), Imre (Emerick) and István (Stephen). In the picture on the right a bishop appears between two saintly kings: St Oswald, king of Northumbria, St Louis of Toulouse and Louis IX. The saints of the House of Árpád and those of Anjou were meant to represent their Hungarian predecessors, the ancestors of the House of the Hunyadi. Since the Hungarian saintly kings are depicted alongside the figures mentioned above, it is worth highlighting parallels here with the altar of St Anne in the parish church of Kisszeben, mentioned above, where the figure of St Ursula follows the copper engraving of St Ursula by Master E. S. showing a crowned figure with knee-length hair holding an open book in her left hand.<sup>60</sup>

It has been suggested that the Altar depicting Mary Magdalene's Assumption in Berki (Rokycany), made between 1480 and 1490, was taken to Berki, Sáros county from Kassa.<sup>61</sup> The relief of Magdalene's Assumption into Heaven appears beneath a picture of Christ's Ascension into Heaven and another of the Passing of Mary. Below these, the scene of the martyrdom of St Ursula and the 11,000 virgins is contrasted with that of the 10,000 martyrs (see Figure 8). Juxtaposing the martyrdom of St Ursula and that of the 10,000 martyrs is not unusual: one good example is the altar of Herford Lutheran church from around 1500.<sup>62</sup>

#### *St Ursula on Altar Fragments*

The figure of St Ursula also appears on some altar fragments. There is a panel painting, dating from about 1480, which depicts the martyrdom of St Ursula.<sup>63</sup> It used to belong to the same altar as the picture of the martyrdom of St Barbara. The two altar wing panels from about 1500 in Frics (Fričovce) depicts six female saints (Barbara, Margaret, Katherine, Dorothy, Ottilia and Ursula), as well as St John the Baptist and St John the Apostle.<sup>64</sup> The wing panel of Dubravica (Dúbravica) made between 1500 and 1510 contains illustrations of SS Barbara and Ursula.<sup>65</sup> The picture of St Ursula in the lower register is damaged. The three Gothic

statues (1510–20) of the baroque altar (1634) in the Fishermen's Church (Fischerkirche) in Ruszt (Rust) depict St Florian on the left, St Katherine in the middle, St Ursula on the right.<sup>66</sup> The attribute of St Ursula is more recent than the painting itself.

### *Works of Art in Applied Arts*

Besides frescoes and altars, there are extant works of applied arts which prove that St Ursula was revered in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The first example is a Hungarian piece made around 1500, a gold-plated silver monstrance (99 cm high), which was transferred to the Cathedral Treasury of Győr from Némethárfalva (Jahrendorf).<sup>67</sup> This fine piece of goldsmithery was presumably made in a workshop in Buda for the Cloister of the Poor Clares in Buda. Its main character is Christ, standing under an upper architectonic baldachin. In front of him there is a kneeling angel holding a chalice in order to gather the holy blood. At the top of the monstrance the Virgin Mary and Child are depicted, while on the two sides images of St Clare and St Ursula. There is an inscription on the rim of the base. The second surviving object is a vestment from the end of the fifteenth century, of unknown origin, which became part of the textiles collection of the Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest after 1880.<sup>68</sup> Its fabric is made of Italian velvet, its embroidery is perhaps German. On the reverse side of the casula the Madonna is standing on the meniscus in the centre of the cross. Next to the Madonna figure, there are the figures of four female martyr saints: Katharine, Barbara, Dorothy and Margaret. St Ursula also appears on other vestments,<sup>69</sup> but with a different iconography: she is holding arrows and protecting her female companions under her mantle, e.g. on the two casulas of the Schnütgen Museum in Cologne.<sup>70</sup> Although the vestment is no longer extant, a letter written in the 1470s refers to the fact that Lady Margaret of Putnok requested that an image of St Ursula and her companions be painted on a cincture:

I, Lady Margaret, Lord George of Putnok's wife, bequeath to the church of the Blessed Mary in Putnok, all of the silks that I have, so that my husband may have a humeral made; and that he also have painted a cincture of the same church (that which is worth twelve florins), and that it be painted with the representation of Saint Ursula with her companions on the outside.<sup>71</sup>

As we have seen, St Ursula usually appears with her hair long and loose; her attribute is most often an arrow, sometimes an arrow and

a book together, rarely an arrow and a boat. There is only one altar dedicated solely to her that has survived. St Ursula often appears in the company of other female martyr saints in the fifteenth and sixteenth-century winged paintings in Hungary and Europe, e.g. on the altarpiece of the Emmerthal Lutheran Church, where SS Barbara, Katherine, Dorothy and Ursula appear on the work-day side.<sup>72</sup>

The iconographic representation of St Ursula holding an arrow in two hands is widespread. This can be seen on a home altar in Trencsény, as well as in Sztankahermány and Héthárs. Several parallels to this scene are known, e.g. a wooden statue of Ravensburg from the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>73</sup> Another widespread representation is when St Ursula is clutching an arrow in one hand, her mantle in the other. These can be seen on the altars of Magyarfenes and Késmárk, on the altar dedicated to St Anne in Leibic and on the monstrance in Győr. Parallels of these can be seen on the wooden statue of St Ursula in the parish church of Sterzing<sup>74</sup> and on a tiny home altarpiece of the Zweigmuseum in Bebehausen.<sup>75</sup>

On other altarpieces St Ursula is holding an open or closed book in one hand, and an arrow in the other. St Ursula is represented with a closed book on the altarpiece of Csíkcsatószeg, but with an open book on the Szepeshely altarpiece. The depiction of her with a closed book can be traced to a wooden statue made by Hans Multscher – to be found in the Lorenzkapelle in Rottweil today;<sup>76</sup> as well as a wooden statue in the Ursulinenkloster in Erfurt.<sup>77</sup> The depiction of her with an open book can obviously be traced back to the copper etching of Master E. S, as it follows that particular example. The winged panel of the Diözesanmuseum in Rottenburg am Neckar is also an iconographical parallel.<sup>78</sup> The iconography of St Ursula protecting her female companions under her mantle cannot be found on extant Hungarian altarpieces. In representations of the martyrdom of St Ursula the virgins are seen approaching the coast with their boat, while the Huns are slaying them with arrows, swords and maces from the land.

Identifying St Ursula as the female saint holding a cross on the altarpiece of Alsóbajom is problematic. The representation of St Ursula on the altarpiece of Kisszeben is unique among the examples from Hungary, as St Ursula is also holding a sword beside an arrow. The portrayal of St Ursula and Cordula together on the altarpiece of Némétlipcse is also unusual in Hungary. St Ursula holding an arrow and a boat on the altar of two bishop saints in Leibic is also unique, not only among the Hungarian examples, but also, I presume, in the wider European context.

## Devotion to St Ursula in the Eighteenth Century

Devotion to St Ursula continued throughout the eighteenth century in Hungary. The story of the martyrdom of St Ursula and her companions is present in the Hungarian hagiographies, homilies and historical works. The Order of St Ursula was invited to settle in Hungary by Primate György Szelepcsényi. They opened their first school in 1676 in Pozsony. They also founded schools in Kassa, Varasd, Nagyszombat, Győr, Nagyszeben, Sopron, Nagyvárád, Modor, Kisvárdá Bácsa, Eger, Dombóvár, Heves, Budapest and Pincehely.

On the eighteenth-century representations, St Ursula appears with her hair pinned up, her attribute is more often a flag than an arrow and occasionally a palm branch. The visual tradition of the Middle Ages and that of the Baroque era is mixed in a nineteenth-century devotional image: St Ursula appears with her hair let down, holding a sword and a palm branch, with her female companions in the background.<sup>79</sup>

## Conclusion

In Hungary Ursula's popularity throughout the Middle Ages and the modern period may be attributed to the legend recounting how she was killed by the Huns of Attila. She was related to the Hungarians assuming a Hun-Hungarian relation, which is also emphasised by all of the Hungarian codices. Her legend first appears in written sources in the thirteenth century, while devotion to her can be traced from the fourteenth century onwards in Hungary based on surviving images. Many winged paintings were made in the second half of the fifteenth century and first quarter of the sixteenth century depicting St Ursula among her female martyr companions. One example of these stands out from the others: the altarpiece representing St Ursula in Homoródbene on which the life story of St Ursula is visually narrated in four scenes. The cult of St Ursula was also promoted by the growth of the Order of St Ursula in Hungary from the seventeenth century onwards. Although my research is ongoing and further research is required on Hungarian liturgical texts, the rich body of sources discussed in this chapter clearly demonstrate that Ursula had a significant impact on religious life, literature, fine and applied arts in Hungary.

## Notes

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70. St Cecilia casula, Cologne, Schnütgen Museum. Marburger Fotoindex 834 048.; Casula Nr. P213, Cologne, Schnütgen Museum. Marburger Fotoindex RBA 156 250.
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FIGURE 5: Fresco of St Ursula from Torna/Turna nad Bodvou (Slovakia), photographer József Lángi



FIGURE 6: Altar of St Anne from Kisszeben/Sabinov (Slovakia), c.1465, Hungarian National Gallery, photographer Anna Tüskés





FIGURE 7: St Martin High-Altar from Szepeshely/Spišské Pohradie (Slovakia), 1470–78, photographer Gyula Czimbál



FIGURE 8: St Mary Magdalene Altar from Berki (today Slovakia), 1480–90, Hungarian National Gallery, photographer Anna Tüskés