



# Religion Culture Society 4



MTA-SZTE  
RESEARCH GROUP FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIOUS CULTURE

# RELIGION, CULTURE, SOCIETY

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Yearbook of the MTA-SZTE Research Group  
for the Study of Religious Culture  
Szeged, Hungary

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Edited by  
Gábor BARNÁ and Orsolya GYÖNGYÖSSY



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## CONTENTS

Foreword. BARNÁ, Gábor . . . . .	7
GLÄSSER, Norbert: “This Crown Came Down to us from Heaven, God Sent it to you Through us” Neolog Jewish Discourse Traditions on the Coronation of Charles IV . . . . .	9
BÁNYAI, Viktória: „The Emperor’s Deliverance” – János Libényi’s Assassination Attempt on Franz Joseph’s Life Commemorated in Contemporary Hebrew Poems . . . . .	30
ARAD, Lily: “For King of Jerusalem is your name”: Offerings to Franz Joseph from the <i>Old Yishuv</i> . . . . .	44
BARNÁ, Gábor: Reconciling National and Imperial Identity. Royal masses and commemorative masses in Kunszentmárton . . . .	57
FRAUHAMMER, Krisztina: Prayer in the Trenches. Prayer Books for Soldiers on the Hungarian Fronts in the First World War. . . . .	88
GYÖNGYÖSSY, Orsolya: Bell Chimes and the Role of Bells in the Life of a Community and the Requisition of Bells for Military Purposes (1917–1918) . . . .	105
POVEDÁK, István: The Sacred Sled Hill. Analysis of a Neonationalist Vernacular Memorial Place. . . . .	126
POVEDÁK, Kinga African and Afro-American Influences on Contemporary Christian Music. . . . .	151

BELHAJ, Abdessamad – SPEIDL, Bianka	
The Good, the Junk and the Profitable: The New-halal Food in Budapest and London. ....	167
TERENDI, Viktória	
20 <sup>th</sup> Century Landmark Ceremonies of a Hungarian Calvinist Community Reflected in Family Photos .....	186
GLÄSSERNÉ NAGYILLÉS, Anikó	
“Taking on a visit to the Lord Jesus...” Eucharistic Education of Children in the Heart Brigade .....	201
NAGY, Réka Anna	
The Role of the Ecclesial Family in Religious Practice Today as Seen in Two Religious Communities in Hungary .....	210

## FOREWORD

Once again the contents of our yearbook offer a selection of the results achieved in the past year by associates of the MTA-SZTE Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture. The three world religions: Christianity, Judaism and Islam continue to provide the frame. Within this the case studies interpret different phenomena and reflect different processes. Various approaches are taken: they are in part historical, in part anthropological, analytical or descriptive in nature.

Four studies deal with monarchic rites in the last decades and years of the Hungarian monarchy, analysing representations of the ruler's anniversaries. The coronation (1916) held in a time of war and according to Roman Catholic rites is presented on the basis of religious tradition and community memory in the Neolog Jewish interpretation, in which modern civil self-definition and the notion of religious equality are reflected. We can form a picture of the attitude of Jews in the Holy Land to the religious, Christian ruler and the different ways in which the Western and Eastern (Galician) Jews interpreted loyalty to the ruler and national identity. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century rites surrounding the ruler's anniversaries appeared within a denominational and religious frame, supplementing or, in cases, substituting the secular rites of commemoration. God himself defends the continuity of the rule of the Habsburg house. These studies involved new sources in their analyses. They show the connection between different world views, the ancient past and the eschatological vision of the future.

The studies of prayer books for soldiers and the bells requisitioned for military purposes offer an interpretation of wartime events within a religious frame.

The description of a neo-pagan sacred place throws light on the colourful religious scene in Hungary today. The analysis of the Afro-American influence on Christian Popular Music opens a wider perspective. We learn about the role played by *halal* in religion, food economy and Muslim identity, through the contemporary food practice of Muslims living in European cities and the rules applied.

Our yearbook also includes studies by three doctoral students. It is instructive to see through private photos what religious events a Calvinist community or private individuals and families considered important to record in images and how they were represented. Another study shows the religious education given within the Heart Brigade, an association established for children in the 19<sup>th</sup> century within the frame of veneration of the Sacred Heart. This thorough religious education made effective use of symbols and aimed at the emotions in preparing children for a life as believing adults. The "spiritual family" representing a new religious movement occupies a special place among the charismatic movements operating within the frame of the Roman Catholic Church. The study presents two such forms: the *Community of the Beatitudes* and the *Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity and Missionary*

*Family.* Their members, clergy and lay persons, men and women, married or single, strive to live their religion within strong community ties.

The case studies in this volume clearly reflect the multifarious attitudes and methodological approaches brought to religious phenomena in the Szeged workshop.

Szeged, Christmas 2017.

Gábor BARNA  
editor

NORBERT GLÄSSER\*

“THIS CROWN CAME DOWN TO US  
FROM HEAVEN, GOD SENT IT TO YOU  
THROUGH US”

NEOLOG JEWISH DISCOURSE TRADITIONS  
ON THE CORONATION OF CHARLES IV

*“we Hungarian Jews feel with undying gratitude and proud self-assurance that this blessed land and the glorious ancient throne of our new king have brought for us the fruits of the harvest of the prophet Samuel: our rights and justice with our inclusion in the fraternal alliance of the great nation”*

Kiss, Arnold: “Színarany koronát tettél a fejére...” [You placed a crown of pure gold on his head...] *Egyenlőség* 6 January 1917. 4.

**Abstract:** The last coronation in the Kingdom of Hungary took place in the social reality of the Great War. The event was documented with modern means, it was interpreted by numerous opinion-setting groups through the press and also recorded in works of art and easily reproduced popular souvenir objects. The life-worlds of the Monarchy experienced on a denominational basis fundamentally determined the experiences, possibilities for action, interpretations, discourse tradition and perspectives of their members. The study examines how the Jewish confession in Hungary adapted and interpreted a rite symbolizing statehood that was performed within the frames of the Roman Catholic confession, as part of the coronation mass. Although veneration of the crowned ruler had been present in Judaism, the succession to the throne in 1916 created a new situation for the Jews who had been raised to the rank of recognised denomination under the previous ruler and who had become equal subjects of the Kingdom of Hungary. The Neolog rabbis presented the events of their time through religious tradition and

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community memory. Charles IV – like the deceased Francis Joseph – acquired the image of biblical kings, that conveyed the hopes the denomination placed in him as subjects, as well as the role that had been played by Francis Joseph. The figure of Charles IV represented a span of historical development in which the Jews acquired civil rights and became part of the nation.

**Keywords:** Habsburg, Jew, civil religion, state patriotisms, veneration of the king

The last coronation in the Kingdom of Hungary took place in the social reality of the Great War. The event was documented with modern means, it was interpreted by numerous opinion-setting groups through the press and also recorded in works of art and easily reproduced popular souvenir objects. Parallel with the anniversaries of great national figures we find in the shaping of national feast culture in Hungary celebration of the coronation, the birthday and anniversaries of the ruler, and the commemoration of major events linked to members of the ruling house. They were held within denominational frames, in religious services.<sup>1</sup> The collective rites of symbolic politics were carried out along the lines of the division of contemporary society into denominations and associations. In religious texts of the Jewish and other denominations the ruler represented the prevailing order of society and the structure of society at the given time unfolded around him. The Habsburg Monarchy, that in comparison to other empires was often mentioned as a “Catholic great power”,<sup>2</sup> had become by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, besides a dynastic community, a manifold system of economic, social and cultural ties. The Neolog Jewish weekly paper *Egyenlőség* published in Budapest also attributed the peace among the peoples and denominations of the Monarchy to the dynasty, presenting it as an institution above nations and religions that alone bore responsibility for preserving the unity of the Empire.<sup>3</sup> The role of patron extended to the dynasty was also reflected in Orthodox news items.<sup>4</sup> Pre-figurations of this topos can be sought in publications marking anniversaries of the ruler and under the patronage of members of the ruling family, as well as the texts of prayers said for the well-being of the ruler and the state, and in religious explications regarding loyalty to the authorities.<sup>5</sup>

The life-worlds of the Monarchy experienced on a denominational basis fundamentally determined the experiences, possibilities for action, interpretations, discourse tradition and perspectives of their members.<sup>6</sup> In the case of a coronation being held in the hinterland of a war – where the self-image of feudal Hungary

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1 BARNÁ 2016.

2 KLIEBER 2010. 218–219.

3 GLÄSSER 2016.

4 *Zsidó Híradó*, 27 October 1898 / 9. Hírek – Albrecht főherceg és a szentesi rabbi [News – Archduke Albrecht and the rabbi of Szentes]; *Zsidó Híradó*, 3 February 1889 / 9. Hírek – Felekezeti béke [News – Denominational peace].

5 UNOWSKY 2006; DAMOHORSKÁ 2010.

6 KLIEBER 2010.

and the demand of modern society for representation appeared together<sup>7</sup> – it can be said that the distinctive life-world of the Jewish denominational interpretations could also be identified. Veneration of the crowned ruler had its roots in the religious traditions of Judaism, while the interpretations of the coronation also indicated that the new Jewish institutional system was being created at the same time as the frames of the modern civil state. Writing in the Neolog Jewish weekly *Egyenlőség*, Arnold Kiss, a Jewish poet and Neolog rabbi in Buda, following the Jewish concept of time that sought fundamental similarities of events, drew a parallel between the figure of Charles IV and the coronation itself, and Biblical times. This was also generally true for the coronation homilies of Neolog rabbis and publicistic writings in the Jewish press.

The study examines how the Jewish confession in Hungary adapted and interpreted a rite symbolizing statehood that was performed within the frames of the Roman Catholic confession, as part of the coronation mass. What was the response within the synagogues to loyalty and homage manifested within confessional frames? And what place did this have within the historical order of the Neolog community? How did they represent the topos of progress and the betterment of society with regard to their own situation? How did the coronation become a celebration of equal rights and belonging to the nation?

## **The search of Jewry for its place in the process of succession to the throne**

Mourning for Francis Joseph and the coronation of the new emperor as king of Hungary were intertwined both at the level of the hinterland of the country at war and in the interpretations of the Jewish denomination. Ferenc Maczó points out that at the time of the death of Francis Joseph in the eyes of his subjects the emperor-king became one with the state, one with the faith placed in permanence. Under his reign generation followed generation without experiencing change. He became the symbol of continuity from the past and an era of prosperity.<sup>8</sup> The image formed of Francis Joseph in the different strata of society was largely shaped by people's experience of history, the life-world in which the members of different denominations lived.<sup>9</sup> Although veneration of the crowned ruler had been present in Judaism, the succession to the throne in 1916 created a new situation for the Jews who had been raised to the rank of recognised denomination under the previous ruler and who had become equal subjects of the Kingdom of Hungary. At the same time Jewish denominational news items on the coronation also attempted to present the expected impact the coronation of the new ruler

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7 KERTÉSZ 1917.

8 MACZÓ 2016b. 5.

9 LANDGRAF 2016; GERŐ 2016.

would have on the future of the Jews. If we regard the wider social frame of the news items, we find that they were written in the capital city in mourning. As Ferenc Maczó also notes, news of the emperor's death spread quickly, already at 11 p.m. on 21<sup>st</sup> November music and entertainments were halted in coffee-houses and other amusement places in Budapest.

However some people learnt the news only the following morning. Mourning banners were put out in the streets, images of the ruler appeared in black mourning frames and the crowds wore black mourning bands.<sup>10</sup> Four days later the Neolog Jewish weekly *Egyenlőség* announced in a mourning frame the death of the ruler and gave a historical overview of his long reign, judging it to have been a blessing for the Jews of Hungary.<sup>11</sup> Because of the social changes that had occurred in the lives of Jews, Francis Joseph was compared even in his lifetime to Moses, and this became a recurrent topos in the speeches of rabbis in connection with the death and succession, showing parallels to the liberation from Egyptian bonds.<sup>12</sup>

“We stand there at the bier of Francis Joseph I. We were an oppressed and persecuted people when he ascended to the throne; today we mourn him as the free citizens of a free nation. Our freedom was born during his reign. His blessed hand ordered our rights. The hand of the king that opened the doors of our centuries of oppression, that took us out into freedom, was like the hand of a father leading his tired child. There is mourning for the dead, laments for a father in every house of Israel in Hungary. He was like the majestic figures of our Bible. He was Moses in his wisdom, love and sobriety. He was Moses in his death too. The great old man died on the last mountain, on the threshold of the future. Grant Oh Lord, God of all kings, that his Joshua may lead us to the promised land of peace and development. We place our trust in you, Joshua of millions, our new ruler! You were able to spend your youth at the side of the Master. He placed his hand on you, anointed you. There is deep mourning without end among us. We, abandoned children, are crying on the wilderness. Come, Joshua and lead us with your triumphant youth!”<sup>13</sup>

The editor-in-chief of *Egyenlőség*, Lajos Szabolcsi, who followed his father in that post, used comparisons to Moses and Joshua in writing on the connection between Francis Joseph and the heir to the throne Karl Franz Joseph. Just as Moses could not enter Canaan after the years of wandering in the wilderness, so

<sup>10</sup> Maczó 2016b. 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Egyenlőség* 25 November 1916. 5–7. I. Ferenc József tettei és nyilatkozatai a zsidóság ügyeiben. [Actions and declarations of Francis Joseph I on Jewish causes.]; See: LOHRMANN 2000. 212–213, 216.

<sup>12</sup> The background for this comparison was that in the 1867/68 legislative period following the Compromise, together with other major issues, the question of Jewish legal status was also regulated (in Act 17 of 1867).

<sup>13</sup> *Egyenlőség*, 1 November 1916, 1. Szabolcsi, Lajos: Meghalt a király [The king is dead].

Francis Joseph could not see the new world. After their long journey full of trials but with the promise of victory, his people(s) were being led on the road to peace by Charles, the heir to the throne who had grown up beside him and represented the new generation, like Joshua.

The image formed of Francis Joseph in the Judaized loyal state-patriotic discourse followed the time concept of Jewish liturgy and homilies and sought parallels in which the foundational memory in the Assmannian sense could be referred to the present, so that in the writings of contemporaries and in commemorative speeches Francis Joseph assumed the figure of the biblical king.

The crowned ruler was a pale reflection in this world of the glory of the Creator. He was also the guarantee of social order and the safety of the Jews. This was a more general phenomenon of which the Jewish denominational publicistic was only one manifestation. A readily understandable picture of the role of the ruler placed in the context of the world-view of the Jewish diaspora of Judaism can be found in *Kötelességtan* [Duties] a handbook of religious morals adapted to the bourgeois world, published in Hungarian in 1907 by the Orthodox chief rabbi of Rimaszombat, Leo S. Singer.<sup>14</sup> In the section of the book devoted to the powers that be, chief rabbi Singer drew a picture of the ruler legitimated by God.<sup>15</sup>

## Coronation and the wartime life-worlds

The Neolog Jewish life-world of the coronation was determined by the Great War and the thought of the struggle undertaken together with the nation, as an equal part of it. In Jewish collective memory the equality won with emancipation became a recurring point of reference in judging and interpreting the challenges faced by the community. Emancipation and the ideal of equality shaped Jewish public discourse and became the frame of interpretation for the community response to many challenges.

Incorporating the experience of emancipation into the collective memory and self-definition gave rise to the idea of the joint Hungarian-Jewish conquest among Jews approaching denominational recognition as the country prepared for the Millennium of the conquest. All this displayed the features of Rankean German historicism.<sup>16</sup> The Jewish self-definitions of the Great War were built on the discourses that arose among the political, social and symbolical realities of the previous two or three generations. The wartime publicists writing in *Egyenlőség* spoke of Hungary as the Holy Land, of the Hungarian Jews as brothers of the other Christian members of the Hungarian nation, and of the Jews setting out to war as free, included and fighters for their new homeland. The Jewish middle-aged

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14 SINGER 1907. 210–211, for an analysis, see GLÄSSER 2016.

15 HAHNER 2006.

16 See: ZIMA 2008.

generation of the Great War took for granted their equality of civil rights because as the new generation that grew up after recognition they were born into that status and during the war, as members of one of the recognised denominations they were able to demonstrate their loyalty to the nation, the empire and the ruler.<sup>17</sup> Neolog propaganda during the First World War stressed unity with the nation as well as the dynastic grievances and loyalty to the king. Even before the 1916 Jewish census in Germany the Jews had often been accused of being incapable of heroic, self-sacrificing deeds. In Central Europe too the Jews were often accused of evading military service.<sup>18</sup> Refutation of this was part of the Jewish adaptation of war propaganda and also of the later Hungarian-Jewish hero cult.<sup>19</sup>

Parallel with the reception, as part of the church policy struggles, the Catholic People's Party paper, *Alkotmány*, launched by the group led by the conservative aristocrats Nándor Zichy and Miklós Móric Eszterházy, constantly attacked the modern social trends and liberal political aspirations. According to Tibor Klestenitz one of the most important characteristics of the struggle over church policy was the increasingly coarse tone of public life. The Catholic People's Party stood on the basis of the Compromise of 1867, but at the same time the fracture lines in national politics divided the Catholic movement, and on the whole it did not represent either the clergy or the politically active Catholics.<sup>20</sup> The paper's pieces attacking the Jews, liberalism and modernity with its western intellectual roots often led to series of articles in *Egyenlőség* protecting interests and presenting counter arguments. The coronation, that no longer took place as the state religion, merely as a constitutional ceremony conducted by the Catholic church as one of the denominations, became an occasion for attacks in the struggles over church policy. A political debate arose over the appointment to the position of Palatine – which had also been a problem at the time of the coronation of Francis Joseph – due to the fact that the prime minister, Count István Tisza belonged to the Calvinist denomination. The opposition strove to implant in public opinion the idea that the coronation was a strictly Catholic ceremony that would be desecrated by the participation of Tisza as a Protestant.<sup>21</sup> It is in this context that the Neolog Jewish press apologetics on the denominational role of the Jews is to be understood. It was sparked by László Márkus, a publicist for the Catholic People's Party organ, *Alkotmány*, who wrote about the approaching constitutional event as the Jews' coronation.

“Who are crowning? Today it is still they who are the ones crowning. They: that is, the Jews. These are the words of László Márkus writing on Sunday in *Alkotmány*; a person we are glad to recognise as the best

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17 *Egyenlőség*, 31 October 1915, 1. Szabolcsi Lajos: “A recepció huszadik évfordulója,” [The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the recognition]

18 PENSLAR 2011. 427–428.

19 GLÄSSER – ZIMA 2015.

20 KLESTENITZ 2013. 40, 45–46.

21 MACZÓ 2016b. 51–52.

director of László Beöthy's theatres. It is only natural that as an excellent director he is not happy with the way the coronation is staged. The Jews have reserved all the places. The new rich and Adolfs is the way Márkus refers to the Jews, of course, they are the ones who are crowning today. They reserved the tribunes, they are watching from the windows, they are sitting on the tower of Matthias Church. Fortunately, there are also a few knights involved, otherwise the coronation would be nothing more than a Jewish long-day procession."<sup>22</sup>

– was the ironical riposte from *Egyenlőség*.

In the articles of *Egyenlőség*, the coronation became a demonstration of belonging to the nation. According to the editorial board:

“Even if the Jews pay out many thousands of crowns, that does not make them guilty or open to attack. All the Jews want is to participate in the national celebration.”<sup>23</sup>

Participation and homage also appeared at the individual level. For example, the gifts sent to Vienna to the royal couple by an Orthodox rabbinical student in Pozsony and other Jewish admirers have survived.<sup>24</sup>

The symbolic assertion of equal rights also appeared in news on the preparations for the coronation, questioning why there were no Jews in the list of those to be made Knights of the Golden Spur in Matthias Church.<sup>25</sup>

“If the Golden Spur heroes were not selected but taken to Matthias Church straight from the trenches, a good number of our heroes too would be kneeling before the crowned king. Because the prospective knights have been kneeling for a year and a half now in musty trenches. Jews as well as non-Jews. But precisely because a selection was made, they were left out. No matter, we will keep on fighting.”<sup>26</sup>

– wrote *Egyenlőség*.

The unresolved issue of representation in the Upper House – that was a recurring motivation of Neolog efforts for unification<sup>27</sup> – also caused a dent in representation of the equality won and was keenly felt by the Neolog Jewish weekly. At the same time press discourses on the symbolic representation of equal rights also touched on another problem but did not examine it in detail. That problem

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22 *Egyenlőség*, 23 December 1916 /2. Glosszák a hétről; Glosses of the week: The “long-day” procession is an ironic reference to the Day of Atonement that does not include a rite similar to the Christian processions

23 *Egyenlőség*, 23 December 1916 /2. Glosszák a hétről. [Glosses of the week].

24 *MACZÓ* 2016a. 379.

25 *MACZÓ* 2016b. 104–105.

26 *Egyenlőség*, 30 December 1916 /7. Glosszák a hétről. [Glosses of the week].

27 See: FROJIMOVICS 2008. 86–90, 264–269.

was secularisation in the sociology of religion sense, that is, discrepancies could be observed between religious norms and the norms and expectations of other institutions of the society. It is an indication of the modern separation of religion from other social forms in the bourgeois life-world of Budapest Neolog Jews that it was only in the case of rabbis that the publicists pointed out the problem that they would not be able to be present at the coronation because of their synagogue service. The question did not even arise that participation in a Catholic mass could perhaps be of concern from the viewpoint of religious laws.

“There are no priests in the delegations of Hungarian Jews participating in the coronation celebration. It would have been better and more in keeping with the spirit of our denomination if the Hungarian rabbis were to be represented at this historical act, but this is prevented in part by the fact that we have no national priestly dignitary or priestly member of the Upper House who could play a role on this occasion *ex officio*, and in part because the coronation is to be held on a Saturday and on this day the rabbis are needed by our people waiting for devotions and edification, our priests cannot leave their temples on that day. For these reasons the noble vestments of the Hungarian Jewish priest will be absent from the company of the splendid garb of the Catholic clergy and the Protestant leaders.”<sup>28</sup>

The parallel drawn between the role of the rabbi and the priests of other recognised denominations was also intended to express linguistically their belonging among the recognised denominations. The term “Hungarian Jewish priest” was used for the spiritual leader of the Jewish denomination in the process of Hungarianisation. Already in the course of the preparations for the coronation *Egyenlőség* had attempted to place the question of Jewish presence at the coronation ceremony in the service of ending the separation within the denomination, that is, for unification.

“When in a few days’ time King Charles IV takes an oath to uphold the Hungarian constitution and laws, he is also vowing to uphold two basic laws for the life of Hungarian Jews, he guarantees the eternal principles of emancipation, the recognition and commits himself to defending our particular freedoms within Hungarian freedom. And the Hungarian Jewish denomination, to which those two glorious laws gave life and rights in this country, will soon have the opportunity to express its great loyalty before the throne. [...] May King Charles IV not get to know the divided Hungarian Israel. May the new Hungarian king see the Hungarian Jews united after the errors of the past. Let the brothers join hands before the throne. Let us

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28 *Egyenlőség*, 30 December 1916 /15. Hírek – Pap nélkül. [News – Without a priest].

take the great occasion to heart. Let us look to the future and forget the past. Many old dividing walls have fallen during the war. And now, reunited, let us begin a new era in the history of Hungarian Jewry. Let us go before the king together!"<sup>29</sup>

However, the symbolic Neolog involvement of royal prestige into the issue brought no substantive change. The main argument behind the rejection of unification by Orthodoxy was that the respect of religious norms in all areas of life no longer counted as the principal condition for belonging to the Neolog community. The Orthodoxy attributed this to the ideals of the Jewish Enlightenment that imbued Neology. According to *Egyenlőség*, the official Jewish representation at the Christian legal ceremony held on the Sabbath was realised at the societal level through national institutions of the denominations/trends, by individuals representing the institutions, with social standing and through their civic successes, not by rabbis.<sup>30</sup>

## Discourse traditions in the press readings of the coronation

The religious interpretations of the crowned ruler arose from the Diaspora interpretation of Judaism and Judaization of veneration of the ruler in Antiquity. These fitted well into the state patriotic veneration of the king in the time of the Dual Monarchy. Europe's modernising society added nuances to the phenomenon. On occasion feudal traditions intertwined or clashed with the modern ideals of nation. The prayer said for the ruler was an important expression of the relationship between Jewry and the authorities. Variants of the prayer beginning *Hanoten teshuah* [= He who gives salvation] that appeared in Central Europe from the 17<sup>th</sup> century showed the relationship between the community and the wider socio-cultural system.<sup>31</sup> The name taken from the first line designates a prayer type that, in Hungarian translation and also in its occurrences in Hebrew, could have numerous variants. The First World War propaganda postcards also carried *Hanoten teshuah* prayer variants, such as the Art Nouveau prayer and greetings card published by the Henrik Spatz Printing House in Budapest for the Jewish New Year that is also known to have existed in a coloured version.<sup>32</sup> Other publications were prayer texts said for Francis Joseph and/or Kaiser Wilhelm, with their portraits.<sup>33</sup> These postcards showed the identification of the Jewish middle

29 *Egyenlőség*, 9 December 1916 /1. Együtt a király elé! [Together before the king!].

30 *Egyenlőség*, 30 December 1916 /15. Hírek – A magyar zsidó felekezet képviselője a koronázáson. [News – Representation of the Jewish denomination at the coronation].

31 DAMOHORSKÁ 2010. 7, 12–13, 17–20; for the period examined, see: GLÄSSER 2016. 79–81.

32 *Hanoten teshuah* prayer for the ruler, First World War propaganda postcard for the Jewish New Year. Hungarian Jewish Archive, inventory no.: Hu HJA K709

33 See items nos: MILEV Hu HJA K361; Hu HJA K393; Hu HJA K262; Hu HJA K709.

strata with the Central European war aims. The Jewish New Year card published in Vác by Lipót Katzburg – with a visual allusion to veneration of the crowned ruler – placed the war propaganda in a transcendent context with quotations from psalms and a bilingual prayer text, a common phenomenon among Christian denominations too.<sup>34</sup>

Within these frames the mourning homilies on Francis Joseph and news of his death in the press combined the traditions of Judaism with the mourning pomp of the aristocracy and First World War propaganda. The obituaries column of *Egyenlőség* is noteworthy as a forum for the countrywide Jewish commitment to patriotism, the Monarchy and Hungary. From after the issue of the paper announcing the ruler's death to before Pesach a special column was devoted to mourning services held for the salvation of Francis Joseph in communities in Budapest and elsewhere in the country. The editors launched the column as a chronicle of the historical mourning of Hungarian Jews, to show the love that the Jews felt for the king. Mourning for the great ruler who "liberated" the Jewish denomination and attention paid to the symbolic gestures of the new ruler were present in parallel in the press. The articles attempted to trace the attitude of the new ruler towards the Jews, from the process of preparation for the coronation right up to his first constitutional actions affecting the Jews. The prototype was the wartime perception of Francis Joseph, and his memory. He became the model and expectation regarding the new ruler. Charles IV was compared to him in emphasising continuity. The declarations made by the emperor on ascending the throne were presented as condemnation of the accusations questioning the participation of Jews in the war.

"Even before the way opened to his historical vocation King Charles IV, together with his exalted way of thinking, showed justice and understanding towards those of Jewish faith; this is proved by the fact that he recognised and appreciated their patriotic sentiments and actions in the difficult times and qualified them as a merit promising a better future."<sup>35</sup>

In addition to their own institutionalisation, Neology and Orthodoxy also attributed to the merit of the ruler the social integration of the Jews, their acquisition of equal civil rights and status as a recognised denomination. In this way Francis Joseph became a deeply religious Catholic ruler who defended the Jews. According to the Joshua comparison made in *Egyenlőség*, the role of ruler inherited by Charles IV predestined him to be the defender of equal rights for the Jews. For this reason its interpretations of the coronation were intertwined with references to the creation of the new Jewish institutional system simultaneously with the creation of the frames of the modern civil state. In his article published following

<sup>34</sup> See: BUSCH 1997. 94–104.

<sup>35</sup> *Egyenlőség*, 2 December 1916 /13. Hírek – IV. Károly király és a zsidók. [News – King Charles IV and the Jews].

the coronation Arnold Kiss, Jewish poet and Neolog chief rabbi of Buda, drew a parallel between the figure of Charles IV and the ceremony itself and biblical times, following the Jewish view of time that sought an essential identity between the events.

“To the sound of cannon, the ringing expressions of popular joy, and the brilliance of waving banners the ancient Hungarian crown descended on the anointed head of the young ruler. Bells rang and the voice of millions intoned the words of the psalm of the harpist king [David]: ‘the king rejoices in your strength, you have placed a crown of pure gold on his head.’ This day is one of the most important days in the life of our nation, when the Hungarian king vows to uphold the thousand-year-old constitution and the ancient crown in placed on his head.”<sup>36</sup>

The interpretation of the coronation and homage in the Neolog *Egyenlőség* reflected not only religious traditions but also the social reality of the age and were addressed to the ruler acting in a social space, endowed with a personality and known from his declarations as heir to the throne.

“Hungarian Israel stands before the throne of Charles IV with sentiments of homage. It is no longer with the obsequious and fearful gaze of serfs filling their eyes with a veil of past tears, but as self-assured citizens confident of their rights and justice that they vow their loyalty. The brightest of all the pearls on the crown: justice shines in our eyes too. His first word to us was the encouraging word of justice: *‘the Jewish population always demonstrated its loyalty and devotion to my Homeland and their home. And in the present great time they have contributed to the successes won through the grace of God with their readiness to sacrifice blood and treasure. I assure their co-religionists that in my lands they will enjoy the rights due to all citizens without restriction ... for the Jewish soldiers all behaved very bravely.’*”<sup>37</sup>

In its articles on the coronation and its later interpretations, the figure of Charles IV was associated with his role of ensuring full equality and preserving denominational peace that, according to the paper, arose from the king’s world-view and his personal conviction.

“Hail to the king of Hungary, whose first promise was that he will safeguard equal rights. Hail to the king of Hungary, who on the first

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36 *Egyenlőség*, 6 January 1917 /4. Kiss, Arnold: Színarany koronát tettél a fejére... [You placed a crown of pure gold on his head...].

37 *Egyenlőség*, 6 January 1917 /4. Kiss, Arnold: Színarany koronát tettél a fejére... [You placed a crown of pure gold on his head...].

day of his reign remembered with gratitude his Jewish soldiers and the self-sacrifice of the Jews. Hungarian Jewry has no greater wish than these two: that they have rights and freedom and recognition for what they have done for the country. May they be given only an opportunity for development and prosperity.”<sup>38</sup>

Even earlier writings on historical themes in *Egyenlőség* had been marked by the romantic view of history of the Hungarian nobility influenced by the German historicism of Ranke. The historian and rabbi Sámuel Kohn adapted to Hungarian Jewish relations the dynastic, tribal evocation of the past that had its roots in Central Europe and Germany. The Hungarian-Jewish collective founding memory was formulated in the spirit of the millenary anniversary of the Magyar settlement in Hungary and strongly reflected the contemporary reality of emancipation and reception. In the process of becoming Hungarian the social demand for the presentation of the shared establishment of the country, shared origin, the arrival together in the new homeland and a thousand years of shared Hungarian-Jewish collective fate also appeared in the loyal Neolog Jewish interpretations of the coronation.

“Just as today when the struggle is to retain what is ours, Jewish warriors fought among the heroes of the Conquest. For a thousand years we have been among those celebrating the great days of Hungarian kings. Our proud band was an ornament in the procession to the coronation of Matthias Corvinus. Later during dark centuries we were silent witnesses of the joy. But it is the free Hungarian Jews with equal rights who are participating in the coronation of Charles IV. And we interpreted the freedom to mean that we can now sacrifice even more than before for our nation. Now, bent under the weight of the war, but with burning Hungarian enthusiasm, we greet the king and queen with Jewish loyalty. We expect many great things from them. Peace. Peace out there, on the borders and in our homes.”<sup>39</sup>

The publicists writing in *Egyenlőség* made a clear distinction between the veneration and homage that was to be given on the basis of religious tradition – that they illustrated by citing the coronation ceremonies of King Matthias and Francis Joseph – and participation in the coronation on the basis of equal civil and denominational rights. They experienced the coronation held at the end of 1916 as part of the nation, and the Neolog rabbis who shaped denominational publicistics regarded it as important. Neolog rabbi Béla Bernstein, a historian belonging to the new generation in the age of reception, who shaped Hungarian Jewish memory of independence, expressed this thought from the angle of the history of the denomination.

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38 *Egyenlőség*, 30 December 1916 /1. A koronázás ünnepére. [For the celebration of the coronation].

39 *Egyenlőség*, 30 December 1916 /1. A koronázás ünnepére. [For the celebration of the coronation].

“December 30, 1916 is a double joyful celebration in the history of Hungarian Jewry for in the work of this great day they are taking part for the first time in the traditional coronation pomp of a Hungarian king. True, there have been many coronations in Hungary in which the Jews also took part, but only from a distance, by manifesting their homage as loyal subjects; but the fact of the coronation did not concern them, they were regarded as foreigners because the Jews were not dear sons of the country, not citizens equal to the others in whose name the Hungarian king was crowned, however small and insignificant part of the nation they may have been. [...] This is not the case now on 30 December 1916! Now the Hungarian Jew with equal rights, son of the Jewish religion that has been given equal rights, follows the brilliant coronation of the new Hungarian king with proud joy, because the deputy palatine elected by the representatives of the Hungarian nation will place the crown of Saint Stephen on the head of the young king in the name of all the people of Hungary and we know and see that there are no longer any serfs, no longer any outcasts deprived of their rights and outside the law in this country; all individuals of whatever estate and rank, whatever language and denomination are equal members with full rights of the state of the Hungarian holy crown.”<sup>40</sup>

As Buda chief rabbi Arnold Kiss saw it, that crown: “the crown of loyalty and love”, that according to the tradition interpreting the scripture of Judaism the pharaoh did not wish to receive from the delegation of Moses and Aaron, will be an ornament on the head of Charles IV before the Everlasting.

“Our Lord! our king! – they reply [to the pharaoh – G.N.] – we did not bring an ordinary crown for you – eye cannot see its brightness, its weight does not press down on your head, this crown came down to us from heaven, God sent it to you through us, and this crown descended from heaven has the magical property that whoever comes into possession of it does not wear it on his head, the crown carries its possessor, it protects him from attacks, shelters him in trouble, saves him in time of trial. Our name is: Moses and Aaron, we are the teachers of freedom and justice, and the crown that we have brought for you is the crown of love and loyalty’.”<sup>41</sup>

In the interpretation of the chief rabbi of Buda, the crown that was of divine origin according to oral Teaching appears again as a sign of the unbroken loyalty of the Hungarian Jews to the king.

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40 *Egyenlőség*, 30 December 1916 /4–5. Bernstein, Béla: A mi koronázásunk. [Our coronation].

41 *Egyenlőség*, 6 January 1917 /4. Kiss, Arnold: Színarany koronát tettél a fejére... [You placed a crown of pure gold on his head...].

“We can never for a moment become unfaithful to the crown that we are taking to our king, our shining devotion to our king and country has never wavered even in dark times – the flames of its fire still leap high, in the brilliant sunshine of justice and equal rights, because the admonition of our wise king has become an article of faith<sup>42</sup>: ‘fear the Lord and the king, and do not join with the rebellious’.”<sup>43</sup>

The Neolog chief rabbi of Buda applied the text of Psalm 21 to the crowned ruler.

“We are singing the ancient prayer of the psalm, the hymn of nations, in our temples: O Lord! the king rejoices in your strength, how great is his joy in your help! You have granted him the desire of his heart and have not withheld the request of his lips. You have welcomed him with rich blessings and placed a crown of pure gold on his head.”<sup>44</sup>

In connection with the coronation, practitioners of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*<sup>45</sup> representing biblical criticism and historicism placed in the service of moderate religious reform of the community also published writings on the Jewish religious bases of the coronation. The remarks made by Neolog rabbis in country towns drew links between the present coronation and parallels of founding memory. Chief rabbi of Kaposvár, Manó Herczog, analysed the coronation chalice in a psalm of King David, folklorist Bernát Heller drew a connection between the coronation mound and Talmudic legends.<sup>46</sup> In this way they placed the Catholic feudal ceremony within the religious frames of Jewish citizens of the modernising state. They sought the ancient Jewish roots of the Catholic elements, and ordered the historical, folkloristic and historical knowledge of the time into rational historical knowledge. Supporting the aspirations of the community, the *Meturgeman* column that published applied science and took its title from the readily understandable interpretation of scriptures, showed the “Jewish origin”<sup>47</sup> of various elements of the coronation ceremony. In further arguments written in response to the reactions to these, the editor-in-chief Lajos Szabolcsi made a clear link to individual statements coming from outside that represented the historicism of the nobility but questioned the need for a Jewish denominational role in the coronation ceremony. In this way for example the waving of a lulav at Sukhot

<sup>42</sup> *Proverbs* 24:21

<sup>43</sup> *Egyenlőség*, 6 January 1917 /4. Kiss, Arnold: Színarany koronát tettél a fejére... [You placed a crown of pure gold on his head...].

<sup>44</sup> *Egyenlőség*, 6 January 1917 /4. Kiss, Arnold: Színarany koronát tettél a fejére... [You placed a crown of pure gold on his head...].

<sup>45</sup> See: GLÄSSER – ZIMA 2014. 155–156, 159.

<sup>46</sup> *Egyenlőség*, 30 December 1916 / 4–5 Weisz, Miksa: Koronázás a régi Izraelben [Coronation in ancient Israel]; Bernát Heller also wrote in *Ethnographia* in 1909 on the coronation mound. HELLER 1909. 133.

<sup>47</sup> *Egyenlőség*, 9 December 1916 /20–21. A királyi kézmosás. [The royal hand washing].

was regarded as a parallel to the waving of a sword on the coronation mound.<sup>48</sup> And right from the beginning of preparations a whole series of occasional historical articles evoked Jewish participation in earlier Hungarian royal coronations.<sup>49</sup>

The adaptation of the coronation ceremony at religious community level was achieved by including coronation services before the Sabbath morning prayers. Mihály Guttman, a teacher at the Rabbinic Training Institute – continuing the tradition of a prayer said for the ruler – wrote a coronation prayer that the paper published on a full page.<sup>50</sup> *Egyenlőség* covered the national and local Jewish aspects of the coronation, from Hanukkah news items until after Pesach, as well as the new king's symbolic gestures that affected the Jews. These reports included extracts from the rabbis' speeches, and also mentioned the participation of persons of other denominations in official state positions and other socially prestigious posts in synagogue services following coronation day. The Neolog press interpreted the coronation service speeches made in Hungarian in different Orthodox centres as a sign of Hungarianisation, as confirmation of Neolog homiletics and the adoption of the national language, as support for the Neolog strategy and a sign of progress confirmed by the "new times". This trend had already appeared in *Egyenlőség* in connection with the funeral services held for Francis Joseph.<sup>51</sup> The services after the coronation were held with the intention<sup>52</sup> of providing an opportunity to attend for dignitaries of other denominations who had not been able to attend earlier because of their participation in the coronation ceremony.<sup>53</sup> The symbol of "Hungarian Maccabees" participating with the nation in the common struggle and the reports about the coronation service speeches were used as an allegory in the press in declaring the loyalty of the Jewish denomination to the king.

48 *Egyenlőség*, 6 January 1917 /11–12. Szabolcsi, Lajos: A kardvágás. [The sword waving].

49 *Egyenlőség*, 9 December 1916 /5. Magyar zsidók az 1790-ik évi koronázáson [Hungarian Jews at the coronation in 1790]; *Egyenlőség* 16 December 1916 / 2–3. A magyar zsidók szerepe a koronázások alkalmából [The role of Hungarian Jews on the occasion of coronations]; *Egyenlőség* 23 December 1916 / 19–20. Adalékok a magyar zsidókról és a koronázásról [On Hungarian Jews and the coronation]; *Egyenlőség* 30 December 1916 /2–3. Büchler, Sándor: Koronázás napján. [On the day of the coronation].

50 *Egyenlőség*, 30 December 1916 /6. Guttman, Mihály: Héber ima a koronázásra. [Hebrew prayer for the coronation].

51 *Egyenlőség*, 16 December 1916 /11. Hírek – Magyar szó az orthodox templomban. [News – Hungarian language in the Orthodox temple].

52 *Egyenlőség*, 16 December 1916 /10. Hírek – A magyar zsidóság a koronázáson. [News – Hungarian Jewry at the coronation].

53 *Egyenlőség*, 30 December 1916 /15. Hírek – Koronázási istentiszteletek. [News – Religious services for the coronation].

## Conclusions

Parallel discourse traditions intertwined at various points can be distinguished in interpretations of the coronation. The quotation in the title of this study is a striking example of these mergers. The state patriotic veneration of the king that formed part of the symbolic politics of the Dual Monarchy met with religious traditions of Judaism regarding the crowned ruler. In this way the deceased Francis Joseph became an active participant who understood the attainment of equal rights for the Jews, and the 1916 coronation became a celebration of Hungarian-Jewish equality. The Hungarian elite nobility viewed the events amidst the trappings of historicism. At the Compromise that paved the way for the coronation of 1867 too, they did not think in terms of either state or state sovereignty, but of country and king, and of their historic rights on a dynastic basis.<sup>54</sup> The debates on denominational politics that arose over interpretations of the coronation were of news value for the weekly *Egyenlőség* as violations of equal rights. The presentation of the coronation narrative was not unequivocal even within the Neolog Jewish life-world. Differing traditions and frames of interpretation can be found in the formulation of the texts. The Neolog rabbis presented the events of their time through religious tradition and community memory. Charles IV – like the deceased Francis Joseph – acquired the image of biblical kings, that conveyed the hopes the denomination placed in him as subjects, as well as the role that had been played by Francis Joseph. The professional lawyers or writers who wrote the publicistic interpreted the constitutional and symbolic events of the coronation through the liberal political thinking of the Dual Monarchy, modern constitutional theory, and the enlightened universalist and egalitarian ideals of the Haskalah.

Nevertheless the Jewish confessionalization of the coronation, based on religious traditions reinterpreted within the frame of equality of civil rights in the modern state and internalised through rational historical enquiry, was realised through the participation in church and state ceremonies by the central offices representing the network of Neolog and Orthodox religious communities and in the form of coronation services held within community frames. In this way, through constant reference to his symbolic statements made in the direction of the Jews and to earlier coronations, the figure of Charles IV represented a span of historical development in which the Jews acquired civil rights and became part of the nation. In the 1848–1849 homilies of Lipót Löw this historical arc had already become an “eschatology” linked to the figure of the Everlasting intervening in the fate of the Jews manifested again in history, in the symbolic political space of the Dual Monarchy.

<sup>54</sup> For more detail, see GLÄSSER – ZIMA 2013. 38–39.

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Poster for the Budapest Orthodox Jewish coronation service  
(Hungarian Orthodox Jewish Archive and Library)



Reproduction on a postcard of the royal portrait by Jewish artist Árpád Basch, published by the Office for Military Aid

“THE EMPEROR’S DELIVERANCE” –

JÁNOS LIBÉNYI’S ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT AGAINST  
FRANZ JOSEPH COMMEMORATED IN CONTEMPORARY  
HEBREW POEMS

**Abstract:** The paper presents three Hebrew poems inspired by the joy over how Franz Joseph luckily survived an assassination attempt and his recovery in 1853. They were published in Vienna, in the periodical *Kochvei Yitzhak*. The focus of the analysis is that the three seemingly identical poems, in fact, reflect three different voices and attitudes. There is an inverse correlation in terms of traditionality of their content and form. In its content Simon Bacher’s poem is the most traditional, related to the prayer for the welfare of the emperor, while its form is the most fashionable of the three. The traditional form (Psalm) of Rabener’s poem is coupled with a theologically unusual content. Löwy’s piece is between the two. He begins by expressing his patriotic feelings: while the long-awaited legal emancipation of the Jewish community tilts the scales in favour of Franz Joseph, in the closing lines we find a very personal testimony of the poet’s loyalty to the emperor.

**Keywords:** Haskalah literature, Hebrew poems, loyalty, patriotism

On 18 February 1853, at around 1 pm Franz Joseph was taking his usual walk accompanied by one of his military aides, Maximilian Karl Lamoral O’Donnell (1812–1895), in Vienna, near the Carinthian Gates. When he walked up to the parapet of the then still existent bastion to survey the troops exercising below, János Libényi (1831–1853), a 21-year-old tailor’s apprentice born in Csákvár and working in Vienna at the time, threw himself on the Emperor and using a weapon made from a kitchen knife, stabbed him in the neck.<sup>1</sup> The wound itself was relatively slight and the Emperor could again appear in public in less than a month. The two people who intervened, O’Donnell and a civilian passer-by, Josef Ettenreich, were awarded the golden cross of the Salvador Order of Merit. János Libényi, who was shouting ‘Long live Lajos Kossuth!’ even as he was being led away

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<sup>1</sup> DOBAI 2000. 81–88.

after the attack, proved to be a solitary fanatic.<sup>2</sup> As he confessed after the event, he had been preparing for the attack since 1850, with the aim of freeing Hungary from the Austrian military and police oppression that followed the uprising and revolution of 1848–49. It was with this specific goal in mind that he had moved to Vienna in early 1851. Even though he was executed for high treason only 8 days after the assassination attempt, so there was no hope for a line-up, extensive investigations were carried out for months after the event, to find any potential instigators, accomplices, a mastermind behind the attack, or even those who supported it afterwards. Apart from potential links within Hungary and with the emigrant community, extensive after the fall of the revolution, a possible Italian connection was also considered, as the Milan uprising had been crushed by the Austrian troops only 12 days before the assassination attempt, on 6 February.

While the already existing bans and restrictions were tightened even further after the attack, and the ‘state of emergency made stricter’,<sup>3</sup> a series of events were organised throughout the empire to express subjects’ sympathy and loyalty. These included masses and candle lighting ceremonies in towns and cities as well as a host of deputations and letters directed to Vienna to convey to the Emperor his people’s fervent wishes for a speedy recovery.<sup>4</sup> Of course the actual support behind these actions varied in the different regions within the empire. A barber from the town of Veszprém, for instance, records the day of 22 February in his diary as follows:

‘Today every Catholic church in the country held a thanksgiving *Te Deum laudamus* mass, while all the other denominations prayed for the Emperor. Our big church was not quite full, though, and the pews were mostly filled with soldiers and students [...]. After 7 o’clock in the evening in the marketplace, in the fortress and in every street throughout the town all the windows were lit with pairs of candles. Above the gates of the Gentlemen’s Casino and in Szabadi Street in front of the gates of the Jewish Courtyard a portrait of Franz Joseph was put on display with candles lit in front of it. Apart from these, however, no respect is paid in the town and quite a large crowd is in the streets going about their daily business, freely ignoring the celebrations.’<sup>5</sup>

Among other symbolic acts of solidarity, a fundraising campaign was started to commemorate the fortunate outcome of the assassination attempt. As for the money that was gathered, one of the suggestions was to spend it on financial assistance for the Austrian soldiers wounded at the Milan uprising, as Franz Joseph was said to have noted after the attack that it was his privilege to share the

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2 SOMOGYI 1989. 65.

3 DOBAI 2000. 81 cited in Adolf Frankenburg: FRANKENBURG 1880. 18.

4 DOBAI 2000. 87.

5 FRANCSICS 1973. 312.

fate of his soldiers wounded while defending the country.<sup>6</sup> A Hungarian landowner, whose name is not mentioned in the historical sources, suggested that the money be spent on setting up a teacher training institute ‘so that by improving school education we can prevent young people’s spirit from becoming as barbaric as seen in Libényi’s case’.<sup>7</sup> Eventually it was Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian’s suggestion that gained the greatest support, his initiative involved the building of a new church. While the resulting Votive Church constructed by 1879 has been one of the sights of Vienna ever since, the many poems inspired by the joy over the fortunate survival and full recovery of the Emperor have mostly sunk into oblivion.

In the D 46 Section of the Hungarian National Archives (*Archives of the Age of Absolutism – K. K. Militär- und Civil-Gouvernement für Ungarn – Civil Section*) there is a minor collection of richly ornamented slim velvet-bound volumes, each sent by a school, under the name ‘Deferential Vows of Loyalty to Franz Joseph after His Survival of the Assassination Attempt by János Libényi’.<sup>8</sup> For example, the title of the booklet compiled from the poems by the students of the Calvinist College of Debrecen goes, ‘To Commemorate Our Utmost Joy at the Deliverance of His Apostolic Highness, His Royal and Imperial Majesty, His Grace Franz Joseph from the Assassin’s Hands by Divine Providence and Then His Full Recovery, Poems Written by the Students of the Calvinist College of Debreczen to Express Their Reverence and Eternal Devotion’ (Debrecen, 1853).

In my paper I wish to place alongside the already known Hungarian, German and Latin poems a set of Hebrew poems from the same context, whose authors and content might both be of considerable interest.

## The Hebrew periodical *Kochvei Yitzhak*

The poems to be presented here were first published in the periodical *Kochvei Yitzhak*.<sup>9</sup> This was a late product of the *haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment) movement in the Habsburg Empire, published in Vienna between 1845 and 1873.<sup>10</sup> (The movement itself continued to push eastward and by the 1850s it had spread

6 DOBAI 2000. 88.

7 FRANKENBURG 1880. 21.

8 TUZA 2013.

9 Apart from the poems presented here we know of numerous further Hebrew poems, among others, there are some published also by *Kochvei Yitzhak*: the poem by Markus Boss, a schoolteacher from Leipnik (*Kochvei Yitzhak* 19 (1854). 13–15) and those by Lelio Della Torre, professor of the rabbis’ school of Padova (*Kochvei Yitzhak* 24 (1859). 54–55). The poem of rabbi Lazar Horowitz, from Vienna was published in the Hebrew appendix of *Wiener Vierteljahrsschrift* (*Abne nezzer* 2 (1854). 11–12). In 1853 Joseph Kohn-Zedek of Lemberg published *Jesuot malki* [My King’s Deliverance] as a separate booklet, which included the German version as well.

10 See also PELLI 2016.

beyond Central Europe into the territories then belonging to Russia.) The 37 booklets of the *Kochvei Yitzhak* (meaning ‘The Stars of Isaac’) were all edited by Mendel Stern a.k.a. Max Emanuel Stern (b. 1811, Bratislava, d. 1873). Stern’s death in 1873 marked the end of a set of periodicals published in Hebrew in Vienna, which had included, before *Kochvei Yitzhak*, the 12 annals of *Bikkurei ha-ittim* (‘First fruits of the times’, published between 1821 and 1832) and the 9 annals of *Kerem hemed* (‘Vineyard of delight’, 1833–56).

Similarly to its predecessors, *Kochvei Yitzhak* also aimed at advancing the cause of Hebrew language, literature and academic fields (literary history, linguistics and exegetics). The original works and Hebrew translations/adaptations of Schiller, Herder, Goethe, Byron, Shakespeare, Young, Horace, etc. all conveyed European culture and aesthetics to its Hebrew-speaking audience. Its etymological papers, biographies, notes on literary history, etc., introduced the modern approach to scholarship. The verbose Hebrew subtitle states that *Kochvei Yitzhak* ‘Contains the Fruits of Research and Poetic Language from the Wisest of this Generation, As Well As a Collection of the Most Pleasant Poems of Our Age, for the Use of the Sons of Judah, to Teach Them the Writer’s Tools, to Lead Them Along the Path of Reason, to Understand the Words, Parables and Riddles of Wise Men, to Awaken Their Desire for the Sacred Language so that their Hands Wield the Pen of Bronze<sup>11</sup>, for Justice, Faith and the Restoration of Past Glory’.

The set of authors was explored and processed in the form of a repertory with additional biographic data by Bernhard Wachstein: it includes over 60 authors linked in some way or another to Hungary.<sup>12</sup> Some of them appeared as the author of one single piece, while others published a series of writings, poems, translations and speeches or short articles. For some of them – who were schoolteachers from the country, the rabbis of small communities or educated merchants – these publications were the only forum for literary utterances, while others among the authors are also known for their volumes of poetry, school textbooks, books for young readers or scientific writings.

Editor Mendel Stern had been the Hebrew proofreader of Anton Schmidt’s printing house in Vienna, the author of several schoolbooks, and also a teacher at Jewish schools. He became editor of *Kochvei Yitzhak* in 1845, which twice received financial support from the Vienna Imperial Academy. The editor, as he himself never failed to mention on the cover of the publication, was elected an honorary member of the *Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft* (Leipzig), and was awarded the *Pro litteris et artibus* golden medal by the emperor. Stern became a well-known figure of Vienna society and knew how to spread his network throughout the monarchy. The authors whose work he published, in turn, inundated him with the signs of their loyalty in the shape of odes and other poems addressed to him. Stern did not hesitate to include these in his publications: the 37 volumes contain a total of 32 writings praising Stern himself.<sup>13</sup>

11 Ps 18:3.

12 WACHSTEIN 1930.

13 FÜRST 1930. 208.

However, it was not just praising himself that Stern was so keen on. When on 13 August 1852 Franz Joseph completed his first (rather ambivalent) visit to Hungary by visiting Bratislava, Stern wrote a 21-stanza Hebrew poem in the name of the Jewish community of Bratislava to applaud the visit, which he published together with its German translation as the starting piece of the next edition of *Kochvei Yitzhak*.<sup>14</sup> Considering all this, it is hardly surprising that in the 1853 edition he dedicated an entire section made up of three pieces to the poems celebrating the failure of the assassination attempt and the recovery of the emperor: obviously he was fishing for some extra merit points with the court.<sup>15</sup> The actual authors, on the other hand, might be a bit more of a surprise. Not that they were not established authors of *Kochvei Yitzhak*: Rabener, Bacher and Löwy had published 10, 15 and 20 writings in it respectively.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, especially taking into account these pre-existing links, we may assume that some of these pieces had been written at the explicit incentive provided by Stern. The one feature, however, that I wish to use as the focus of my analysis is that the three seemingly identical and completely commonplace poems, in fact, reflect three radically different voices and attitudes.

### *The Emperor's Deliverance* by Simon Bacher

The author who is perhaps best known today is Simon Bacher (1823–1891). He was born in Liptovsky Mikulás and went on to study in *yeshivas* in Nikolsburg (Mikulov), Eisenstadt and Bonyhád. Apart from Talmudic erudition, he acquired the literary German and French languages as well. In his youth he earned a living as a merchant, a lease-holder and then a teacher, while constantly publishing his writings in Hebrew publications. In 1853, at the time of writing the poem examined here, he was living in Szucsány (Turóc County), as the overseer of the salt tax collection and headmaster of the local Jewish school. In 1867 he moved to Pest, where he worked as the treasurer and notary of the Jewish Congregation of Pest until his death in 1891.

He had published 15 of his writings in *Kochvei Yitzhak* before 1853 – hardly an edition had come out without his contribution.<sup>17</sup> Among these, there were poems written for special occasions, such as the opening of the new synagogue in Liptovsky Mikulás or that of the new wing of the local Jewish school. He also wrote many poems later commemorating historic events in Hebrew, such as the coronation of Franz Joseph (1867), the opening of the Jewish Congress (1868), the death of Baron József Eötvös (1871) and the opening of the Rabbinical Seminary

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14 *Kochvei Yitzhak* 17 (1852). 3–13.

15 *Kochvei Yitzhak* 18 (1853). 8–13.

16 WACHSTEIN 1930. 122–123 and 170.

17 WACHSTEIN 1930. 4–6.

in Budapest (1877). His best known writings, however, are his translations into Hebrew, among others of dramas translated from German and patriotic Hungarian poems by Petöfi, Vörösmarty, Arany and Kölcsey published under the title *Zemiroth ha-arec* (The Songs of the Land, 1868).<sup>18</sup>

*The Emperor’s Deliverance (excerpt)*<sup>19</sup>

Gratitude to Thee, God, Gratitude!  
 For Thou have sent Thine emissary to deliver  
 From Peril our father Franz Joseph  
 We sing with pure hearts and tongues and rejoice:  
 The knife was on the neck of our King  
 And Thou said unto the Angel of Destruction, ‘Enough!’

When the Men of Murderous Intent attacked our King,  
 Having lain in ambush like a fierce lion,  
 Thou ordered Thine Angels to guard him eternally,  
 Like speedy clouds they flew, faster than eagles,  
 They preserved Joseph’s life, our life-giving breath,  
 Not a hair did our King lose.

הַצֵּלַת הַקַּיִסָּר .

Am 18. Febr 1853. Von S. Bacher. Ward in der Synagoge  
 nebst Psalmen und Gebeten in feierlichem Gottesdienste vorgetragen.

הוֹדִינוּ לָךְ אֱלֹהִים הוֹדִינוּ!  
 כִּי מִלֵּאדָּךְ פָּגַחְתָּ שְׁלַחְתָּ לְהוֹשִׁיעַ,  
 קְדוֹת מִצַּר פָּרַאנִיזְ אֶזְעַף אֲבִינוּ,  
 בְּקֶלֶל לִבָּב וְלִשׁוֹן לָךְ נָשִׂיר גְּרִיעַ: –  
 עַל צְוֹאֲרֵי מַלְבָּנוּ הִיטָח הַחֶרֶב,  
 וַתֹּאמֶר לַמִּלֵּאדָּךְ הַמְשַׁחִית: הֲרֵף!  
 בָּקוּם עַל מַלְבָּנוּ אֲנָשֵׁי נְצַח  
 אֲזַרְבִּים לְנַפְשׁוֹ קְאָרִי בַמִּסְתָּרִים;  
 לְמַלְאכֶיךָ צִוִּיתָ: שְׁמַרְוֵהוּ נְצַח –  
 וּבְקֶעֶב קַל דָּאוּ קְלוּ מְנַשְׁרִים;  
 שְׁמַרוּ חַי יוֹסֵף רוּחַ אֲפָנוּ  
 לֹא נִפַּל מִשְׁעַרְתּוֹ רֹאשׁ מַלְבָּנוּ. –

Simon Bacher, The Emperor’s Deliverance (Excerpt). *Kochvei Yitzhak* 18 (1853) 12.

18 Simon Bacher’s works were collected and published by his son, Vilmos Bacher, and the first volume also contains a short biography in Hebrew: BACHER 1894. IX– XIV.

19 Rough translations from the Hebrew original by the author, English translation by Júlia Károlyi.

The poem, according to its German caption was read alongside psalms and prayers at a celebratory service in a synagogue. The circumstances of its conception are, then, quite clear: it was written for the thanksgiving service ordered to be held in every church of every denomination at the time. As the headmaster of the local Jewish school and a poet regularly publishing in Hebrew, Bacher must have been the obvious choice to write an occasional piece like this. The situational context of the utterance is defined by the synagogue setting – this is why it is full of biblical and liturgical vocabulary. The poem is closely related to the traditional prayer said for the emperor, one of the standard components of which is Psalm 144:10: “the One who gives victory to kings, who delivers his servant David from the deadly sword”.<sup>20</sup> The synagogue as a setting naturally evokes the gestures of pleading, thanksgiving and veneration, which is what the congregation finds natural. Reverting to the first person plural verb forms and possessives (‘our king’, ‘our father’, ‘we sing’, etc.) also reflects the act of speaking for the entire community. It is probably for the same reason that the poet uses the particular Hebrew word for the rank of the sovereign. While in the title he uses the word ‘emperor’, whose Hebrew equivalent ‘*kesar*’ is a Roman loanword from Talmudic times, the years of Roman rule, within the text his choice is the Biblical and liturgical term for ‘king’, ‘*melekh*’ – even though technically Franz Joseph was not king of Hungary at the time. As opposed to the archaic-liturgical language, the form of the poem is modern, with five stanzas of ABABCC rhyming scheme and two closing lines. The lines are of equal length, most of them made up of 11 syllables.

The poem makes no reference to the fact that the poet is a compatriot of the would-be assassin or that the assassination attempt might have had any regional political motive – these sensitive questions seem to be resolved under the recurrent reference to ‘the peoples of Austria’, who, according to the poem, are all united in rejoicing and giving thanks for the deliverance of the sovereign. However, the opening line of the last stanza, ‘us, the scattered herd, the Jews in exile’, narrows the scope of the group represented by the speaker, who goes on to say how many favours the emperor had extended to the Jews, which he likens to ‘freeing them from prison’. With this Bacher most probably refers to the equal rights provided to all subjects regardless of their denomination, in the Constitution of Olmütz (Olomouc) and later regulations.<sup>21</sup> The end of the stanza connects the two by saying that ‘our Heavenly Shepherd has saved our earthly shepherd from the sword of rebels and the plot of plotters’.

<sup>20</sup> On the prayer for the welfare of the country and the emperor, and its cultural history in the Habsburg era see: DAMOHORSKÁ 2010.

<sup>21</sup> KOMORÓCZY 2012. 28–30.

*Der 18 Feber 1853* by Josef Löwy

Another of the authors was also from Hungary: József Löwy (1802–1882). He was born in Frauenkirchen and then lived in Nagykanizsa as a merchant, who could only dedicate his free time to the pursuit of Hebrew poetry and Jewish academic lore. He too had published some of his writing in *Kochvei Yitzhak* before 1853. One of these was a poem applauding the fact that the use of the organ in the synagogue was introduced in Nagykanizsa, a prose piece mocking Hungarian Orthodox Jews, and a longer paper published in instalments where he called for the introduction of Jewish numismatics, based on his own coin collection. As these three examples illustrate, he was a typical representative of the erudite Hungarian Jew who works in commerce and supports moderate Reform Judaism and modern education – it was this bourgeois social stratum that lent impetus to the Neolog movement then taking shape. This social group also supported Magyarization, or at least shared the aims of the Hungarian political class. Löwy articulated this very clearly in a sonnet about Ferenc Deák he had also published in *Kochvei Yitzhak* in 1846.<sup>22</sup> Here he likened Deák to Cicero and Orpheus, but portrayed his oratorical skills as even better and his personal aura as even stronger.

This, in turn, raises the question of how the poem celebrating the saving of the emperor in 1853 sits with Löwy’s earlier views. How a dedicated follower of Lipót Löw could celebrate the sovereign who put Rabbi Löw in prison after the revolution of 1848–49.<sup>23</sup>

Löwy had chosen a less fashionable, simple poetic form with rhyming couplets, short lines of varying length and relatively accessible vocabulary. Of course it also contains biblical phrases, the very first line being a paraphrase of “that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle (1Sam 3:11)”. The poem describes the circumstances of the assassination attempt in great detail, including the assassin and those who saved the Emperor. The text contains the date, the time of day, the location, mentions Csákvár and Székesfehérvár (‘Albargalis’), the name of Libényi and his profession, age and weapon, O’Donnell and Ettenreich, the medical treatment of the emperor, the prayers said for his recovery, which, in turn, were heard by God. It is this detailed, and even overly detailed description which seems to be a compromise between the compulsory show of loyalty and the poet’s patriotic feelings. The logical conclusion is that the poem, then, was specifically commissioned by Stern. It also seems to be an expression of the expected loyalty in that rather than presenting the usual set of varied adjectives and metaphors seen in other poems, here there is but one formula to go with the name of Franz Joseph, and that is repeated four times: ‘the King, Franz Joseph I, loved by his entire people like the apple of their eyes’.<sup>24</sup> Note the possessive: ‘his people’ rather than ‘our people’!

22 *Kochvei Yitzhak* 6 (1846). 25. The rough translation of the first lines: “Who is the man who conquers every heart?/ Truth on his lips and peace in his words.”

23 KOMORÓCZY 2012. 19–21.

24 When it comes up later, it runs ‘all his peoples’.

## „Der 18. Feber 1853.“ Von Josef Löwy.

מי ישמע כזאת ולא תצלנה אזנים  
 אחת זו שמענו, אחת היא ולא ישנים.  
 איש אחד, נוצרי, מתושבי ארצנו  
 מילדי הגר – הם! נישפכה בכישתנו!  
 לו אולד באי ציה ושממה,  
 ותועבה כזאת לא נעשתה ישמה;  
 אז מי יתן ונאלמתי ולא אדבר במופי  
 ממת בארץ מולדתי שמען דופי.  
 הנה אחד מילדי הגר,  
 חיט, ערירי, הקורא דגר,  
 מספר טשאקנאר בגליל אלבארענאלים יושבת  
 – ארוחה האדמה בעבורו, ארץ נוישבת! –  
 בחור, ליבעני שמו, בן אחד ועשרים שנה,  
 חשף משחור רוחו ומפגרי אלמנה,  
 פאריה במסותרים יארוכ מיום ימים;  
 ויהי כחצות היום לעת הצהרונים  
 והפלך פראנץ יאזעף הראישון  
 האהוב מפל עמו כאישון

Josef Löwy, Der 18 Feber 1853. (Excerpt) *Kochvei Yitzhak 18* (1853) 8.

At two distinct points of the poem, however, the poet casts aside the role of chronicler and speaks in the first person singular. In lines 5-8 he speaks passionately of the shame brought upon his homeland by one of his compatriots – although, significantly, a Christian rather than Jewish compatriot – who carried out the assassination attempt. ‘I wish I had been born on a barren and lifeless island, such an abominable thing would not have happened there.’ It leaves no doubt in the reader that the poet considers the attempt on the emperor’s life abominable and the death penalty a proportionate punishment for it (lines 31-32), while he is sure that the assassin went to Sheol for his deed.<sup>25</sup> In the last sixth of the poem (lines 55-66), the poet again switches into a more personal style: the life-saving assistance of O’Donnel and Ettenreich are praised in biblical phrases:

It is with highest joy that I remember Captain O’Donnel,<sup>26</sup>  
 It is to Mr Ettenreich that I raise the cup of my blessing.

<sup>25</sup> Sheol in the Hebrew Bible is the place where all the dead go without moral considerations, but after Late Antiquity, in the rabbinic interpretation, it came to mean the place of the wicked in the afterlife.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Ps 137:6 – in the much-quoted original context it is Jerusalem that he considers his greatest joy.

They are our liberators in times of distress,<sup>27</sup>  
Had they been but one minute late in their act of helping –  
They are worthy of not just gratitude but benediction.  
Is there but one among us who would have acted differently?

In his answer to the question, made up of biblical phrases and closed by the recurring formula, which is also the closure of the entire poem, Löwy states that he himself would have leapt into action as well, to save the emperor, even sacrificing his life in the process.

My witness is in heaven, my advocate is on high,<sup>28</sup>  
I fall under his strength,<sup>29</sup> whether it means life or death.<sup>30</sup>  
Though he slay me,<sup>31</sup> and I go down to the grave,<sup>32</sup>  
yet it will comfort me, to be a great deliverance<sup>33</sup>  
to King Franz Joseph I,  
loved by all his peoples like the apple of their eyes.

This gesture goes beyond the expected show of loyalty. The pain felt at the shaming of his homeland indicates at the onset of the poem that he is undeniably a patriot, while the long-awaited legal emancipation of the Jewish community tilts the scales in favour of Franz Joseph, patriotic feelings aside.

### ***Psalm* by Matitjahu Simha Rabener**

The third author on our list is Matitjahu Simha Rabener (1826-?) from Lemberg (Lviv). He was a member of the *maskil* circle, that is, the enlightened Jewish intelligentsia, in Galicia and later (from 1860) in Chernovitz.<sup>34</sup> He studied philosophy, oriental languages and music at the university of Lemberg. He had been in touch with Stern ever since Kochvei Yitzhak was first published and continued regularly publishing his writings in it. For example, for Franz Joseph’s visit to Lemberg in 1851 Rabener composed a poem with a remarkable feat: it contained both an acrostic and a *telestich*, that is, the first and last letters of the lines (the latter backwards) both read ‘Franz Josef’.<sup>35</sup> The poem urged the inhabitants of

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27 Jer 14:8.

28 Cf. Job 16:19.

29 Ps 10:10.

30 2Sam 15:21.

31 Job 13:15.

32 Cf. Gen 37:35.

33 Cf. Gen 45:7.

34 GOLD 1958, 58.

35 *Kochvei Yitzhak* 16 (1851). 2.

Galicia and specifically Lemberg (*Lwow* in the Hebrew text) to rejoice and extol 'the Habsburg lion', 'the anointed one of the Lord' and to bring their heartfelt exaltation before him as a sacrifice, shouting two or even three times, 'Long Live Franz Joseph! Franz Joseph is our king!'

**Von M. S. Rabener aus Lemberg.**

פ עזי נא ליציא רעה . יושבית סמא ק  
 ר ממי הדבר סד'ה . ברוימן חונג ירוג ע  
 א ריאל הא'קם ב'ר'ג הנח בא משיס יי עזו ז  
 נ ניד סקשל או'ם ס'ר נא , מושיע נרב את א  
 י' הלי נלמי יושבת ל'ב'ב פי טלפ'ה בתוכב י  
 י ו'ס'ף פן סו'רר , בסוד נפנרי חיל נעב י  
 א תיו לאוסיב לקראתו נסד יקסת ישרו נ  
 ז כחו זכמי ל'נב'גם , ודו'בילי שי ל'פ'ר א  
 ע ל'יו נ'ה'נתו ה'ריעי , שני ק'ש'לשי ס'ה'ר ר  
 ה' ראנ'ץ יאו'ע'ף , וחי טלפ'ני ס'ר'א נ'ץ יאו'ע ס

Matitjahu Simha Rabener, Franz Joseph. *Kochvei Yitzhak* 16 (1851) 2.

In 1853, however, rather than choosing a format fashionable at the time, Rabener opted for the most traditional form – that of the biblical psalms. The opening sentence of the poem, like that of actual psalms, is an instruction to the conductor:

**Psalm.**

Zur Feier der glücklichen Lebensrettung und Wiedererhebung unseres allgeliebten jugendlichen Monarchen Sr. Majestät des glorreichen Kaisers Franz Josef des Ersten, am 18. Febr. 1853. **Von M. S. Rabener.**

למנצח לקור יהודה סומור לתורה ביום הציל יי את טל'בני ס'ב'פ ס'ענול  
 (וחימן מיד ל'פ'נ'ס) : נאור אתה אלי סאד י'ש'בו ס'ל'אכ'תיך :  
 ותקח עי'ראניש לחזות עזמו ס'לה : אביטה הליכ'תיך ס'ק'רש ול'ב'ני ת'ס  
 י'הל'ך : אף רוחי יתהל'ך ש'ל'ל ס'מ'עט נ'סיו י'ש'ע'פי ס'ק'רבי : ס'מ'ל'אמו נ'סי'י  
 לס'פי ו'ש'טורות ל'שוני נ'אל'סו : ס'ת'ח'נ'א ד'ל'ש'פ'תי ו'ת'ר'ג'ה ת'ח'לו'תיך : ות'ק'ס  
 ת'הו ל'תו'ש'יה ס'ס'ק'ר'ה ה'א'ס'ס ל'פ'ני י'ש'נות עו'ל'מי'ם : ה'ס'ירו'ת א'ס'ל ו'צ'ל'מו'ן  
 ס'ה'לו ו'ח'ה' עלי ת'הו'ס'נ'כה : ות'ס'רו'ש ס'נ'ס'ירו'ת ס'ק'ע'ת ס'פ'ל'שי ס'מ'י'ק'ר'ס :  
 הו'ס'בי ס'צו'לה י'נ'ש'ת ס'ונ'ן א'ר'ץ ות'ע'מוד על ז'רועות ס'ל'י'טה : ס'ע'לי א'כ'רה  
 י'יו י'ש'די ו'ד'ג'ת ה'ס' ס'ל'ה'ס א'ת'ה נ'ח'ס ס'ר'ח'ס ה'רת עו'ל'ם : ות'ס'ק'וד ס'ב'ין ר'ב'בות  
 י'צו'רים ס'ן'א'ר'ם נ'יש'א צ'ל'ק'ה : א'צ'ל'ת לו נ'ח'לת י'ש'די נ'גו'חות ז'ה'ר'ה ע'ל'יו

Matitjahu Simha Rabener, Psalm (Excerpt). *Kochvei Yitzhak* 18 (1853) 10.

‘To the conductor, a son of Judah: thanksgiving psalm commemorating the day when the Lord saved our king from the hands of the wrongdoer, from the hands of Labén [Libényi]’.

The long text is cut into sections by the *sela* formula also known from psalms, while parallelism, a basic tool of biblical psalms, is hardly ever used. All the more emphatic are the archaic vocabulary and grammar. It is in this elevated tone and archaic style that the poet tells the story of how God saved the life of the emperor – relying heavily on biblical quotes, while almost completely ignoring the actual details of the event. Towards the middle of the psalm, the Lord says to ‘Joseph’ (i.e. Franz Joseph):

You are my son, today I have become your father,<sup>36</sup> I am your shield,<sup>37</sup> I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.<sup>38</sup> I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you<sup>39</sup> (...) As Aaron’s staff had budded, the sceptre of your kingdom sprouted a month ago.

The use of biblical fragments and phrases – as already seen in Löwy’s poem – is a literary device employed widely in *haskalah* literature. In many cases the original context of the quotes, or allusions to the original texts (the intertextuality) are consciously used by the poets. In other cases they use the quotes just because they sound pleasing and elevated, at least for today’s readers.<sup>40</sup> The specific biblical allusions and quotes used by Rabener were all well known to the contemporary reader, who was also fully aware of the shift from the promise to Israel in the Bible to the way the author applied it to the Habsburg dynasty. This, however, is especially significant bearing in mind the next passage, which contains the real theological surprise:

Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness, and I will not lie to<sup>41</sup> Rudolf, the sceptre will not depart from<sup>42</sup> Habsburgs and the crown will be on the heads of their offspring.

By providing an actualization of the original psalm, the poet swaps David for Rudolf,<sup>43</sup> that is, the poet ascribes all the promise and eternal covenant in the

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36 Ps 2:7.

37 Gen 15:1.

38 Jes 41:10.

39 Jes 54:8.

40 On the reconstruction of the perception and interpretation of the contemporary reader see Cohen 1994.

41 Ps 89:36.

42 Gen 49:10.

43 Rudolf, the first ruler of the Habsburg dynasty: 1273–1291.

original psalm to the Habsburg dynasty, the house of Rudolf.<sup>44</sup> In the second half of the same sentence the text recycles a section of the biblical text (Gen 49:10), which is a cornerstone in the Jewish-Christian theological debate as well. This, in turn, not only guarantees eternal rule on earth to the Habsburgs, but extends it into the Messianic era as well. Thus Rabener places the saving of the emperor in a historical-theological context, where the interpretation is that the Chosen One can not be ousted by any human agent, God himself protects the continuity of the Habsburg dynasty. Thus what happened is not a one-off exceptional act of grace and divine intervention, but the continuation of an age-old alliance. The framework the poet had chosen is indeed suitable for this grave statement: the biblical phrasing and allusions attempt to validate and justify the content, which very much goes against the Scripture.

If we look at the three poems side by side, as they lend themselves to it due to editor Stern's decision, we can see a strange inverse correlation in terms of traditionality of their content and form. In its content it is doubtless Simon Bacher's poem which is the most traditional, while its form is the most fashionable of the three. Rabener's poem is the other extreme; its very traditional form is coupled with a highly unusual, and, for any religious Jew, outrageous content. Löwy's piece is in between: its form is simple, its content is objective up to the very last lines, where biblical expressions are used, but still, we find a very personal testimony of the poet's loyalty to the emperor.

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LILY ARAD

## “FOR KING OF JERUSALEM IS YOUR NAME”

### OFFERINGS TO FRANZ JOSEPH FROM THE *OLD YISHUV*

**Abstract:** Choosing or creating a gift requires givers to engage in an imaginative process to empathize with recipients and their preferences, while also conveying their own particular identity. Tributes to Franz Joseph were perceived by the court not only as signs of appreciation and gratitude for benefits that he granted: most importantly, these were acknowledgments of his authority at a time when ethno-national loyalties competed with loyalty to the dynastic state and he was struggling to keep his empire from disintegrating. The homages were expected to awaken national pride, solidarity and devotion, and became a means to construct an ideal image of national identity and loyalty to the monarch. For this reason the imperial court developed special ceremonies for their presentation and display as a means to exalt the monarch and to spread national myths constructed around his image.<sup>1</sup> Given the long lists of tribute appointments, audiences lasted only a few minutes; therefore artists strove to attract attention and express the donors' identity and messages. How did offerings presented by the *Old Yishuv* to Franz Joseph I function in their historical, socio-political and religious contexts? What were the incentives for and rationale behind the design, production and presentation of these objects? How did material, form and content tell a relevant story in the Austrian imperial and the Jerusalemite Jewish contexts? We propose that these objects were expected to play upon the Emperor's piousness and self-perception as holder of the Crown of Jerusalem and thereby ensure a sympathetic attitude toward the *Old Yishuv's* plight, while enhancing the community's own self-image as well as its status in the eyes of the monarch and of Jewish benefactors on whose generosity it depended. A further contribution of this study will be an improved understanding of the ways in which social groups constructed and used narratives and images of a space, in this case the unique space of Jerusalem. **Keywords:** Jewish identity, cultural memory, holy sites.

A local tradition tells that on the last day of his visit to Jerusalem, in November 1869, Emperor Franz Joseph I received a delegation from the *Old Yishuv* led by Rabbi Nissan Beck, who asked to present him a memento: a precious bowl carved some years earlier by the prestigious artist Mordechai Schnitzer in the

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1 PRASCHL-BICHLER 2007. 207–208.

local Moses or Bethlehem stone. Deeply moved, Franz Joseph said that he would never forget the Jerusalemite community and the many attentions they showed him, and expressed a wish: “May my Jewish subjects always remember me.”<sup>2</sup> Another tradition tells of an imperial gift to Jerusalemite Jews. When touring the Jewish Quarter guided by Rabbi Beck, Franz Joseph passed by the Tiferet Israel Synagogue and asked why it was standing without a roof. The witty Rabbi quipped, “Why, the synagogue took off its hat in honour of Your Majesty!” The Emperor smiled and donated money for its completion. The story became widespread not only in local Hasidic circles, and the dome became popularly referred to as “Franz Joseph’s cap”.<sup>3</sup> Events were embellished and stories invented. The image of Franz Joseph became a myth.

Sophisticatedly coordinating textual and visual imagery, Franz Joseph’s subjects and protégés in Jerusalem acclaimed, thanked and expressed loyalty to him in epistles and offerings;<sup>4</sup> although unsaid, they also expected recompense: protection and support in the future as well. Images of Jerusalem stood out in the decoration: the aura of holiness that Jerusalem could confer on a monarch by the Grace of God held tremendous value, since the concept of divine support was a basic tool in the construction of his legitimacy, invulnerability and absolute power.<sup>5</sup> These images also best conveyed the *Old Yishuv*’s self-perception as keeper of religious precepts, as a community that studied the Bible and Jewish ethics not just for its own sake but also for the sake of Jews in the Diaspora. Hence it regarded their support as a just return for its endeavours, since “where there is no Torah there is no bread” (Avot 3:17).<sup>6</sup> Thus images of venerated sites, decorated books and cultic objects were sold or offered in the Diaspora with the aim of touching the heart and increasing the material support.<sup>7</sup>

Holy places and their images are perceived, constructed and reconstructed based on narratives of the sacred and the profane, ancient past and eschatological future, myths and a variety of modes of perception of reality. The *Old Yishuv* represented biblical sites in a concise and schematic visual language, existing in perfection and quietude as if no time had passed. No unseemly element mars the spiritual beauty of the site nor disrupts the emotional stillness of the moment; holiness is immanent and the absence of figures suggests the presence of God. The timeless images link between the biblical past, the present and the long-awaited ideal future. In contrast, Orientalist painters depicted small towns with crowded houses, domes, minarets and bell towers, sparse vegetation, unpaved roads and scattered ancient ruins as evidence of a magnificent but long-lost past; small figures in pseudo-Oriental colourful garments, camels and palm trees all of

2 YELLIN 1916. 13.

3 HAYARDENI 2013. 47–49.

4 Important collections are kept in the Kaiserliche Schatzkammer and Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Wien (KOHLEBAUER 2007, 116–139 on offerings by Jews)

5 ARAD 2012. 109–124, 147–166.

6 Liberal Judaism at the time interpreted this saying in an opposite sense: a person should work to sustain himself and study Torah, a still dividing controversy.

7 GENACHOWSKI 2002. 35–36.

them bathed in bright light, completed the scenery.<sup>8</sup> These elements confirmed the authenticity of the biblical stories in a romantic spirit. As a pious believer, Franz Joseph saw Jerusalem with the eyes of his soul; he focused on what he expected to see rather than on the real city: the imagined became real.<sup>9</sup>

Most blessings are organized in a gate of honor, an element that since ancient times celebrates a triumphant king and symbolizes the Gate of Heaven, bridging between the secular and the sacred, and between earth and heaven. The symbolic meaning and consequent mental and emotional impact are a function of the general layout of word and image, their place, size and colour, and the relations between them no less than the verbal praises and blessings. In effect, the writing is carefully planned as well: key words, including the name and title of the monarch, appear in larger characters usually embellished in gold, silver or purple, and placed on compositional axes. Traditional Hebrew calligraphy endows the text with authority when compared with Western styles, among them the Secession fashionable in Vienna at the time. The whereabouts of many of the objects are unknown and so are the names of most artists and writers.<sup>10</sup> Some chose well-known schemes to coordinate word and image, others aimed to attract attention with less-known ones; most sought a middle path.<sup>11</sup>

## Two Poles

The blessings in the Austro-Galician Esther Scroll (ÖNB Reg. J./55) (fig. 1.) and the Austro-Hungarian, Bohemian and Moravian epistle (ÖNB Reg. J./95) (fig. 2.) offered on the occasion of Franz Joseph's Golden Jubilee are paradigmatic opposites. The Austro-Hungarians chose micrography, a traditional Jewish art form that reflects the priority of the word in Judaism and highlights a Torah crown, whereas the Austro-Galicians preferred an eclectic Neo-Baroque style prevalent in European courts and only the Hebrew characters and the seal of the kolel reveal their identity. Obviously, only Hebrew readers would appreciate the special attention given to texts and their visual arrangements, for example, the double acrostic spelling of monarch's name in the latter blessing.

8 BEN-ARIEH 1996.

9 ARAD 2015. 264–272.

10 A Moses-stone vase and plate by Mordechai Schnitzer sent to the Emperor in 1853 in celebration of his escape from an attempt on his life is at the Natural History Museum, and a coffee set at the Weltmuseum, both in Vienna. For other presents: GRAYEVSKI 1930. 4, 7, 22; ELIAV 1985. 166–167.

11 For detailed analysis see ARAD 2016. 133–166.



1. Austro-Galician koler, 1898. Blessing in Esther Scroll.



2. Austro-Hungarian, Bohemian and Moravian koler, 1898. Epistle.

Two questions arise: Could one of the opposite styles more effectively draw the attention and touch the heart of the Emperor? And, how could the donors convey their singular identity as pious Jews who dedicated their lives to prayer, study and good deeds in Jerusalem? In fact, no matter which style was chosen, images of the Jewish holy places were considered essential: they decorate the carved olivewood Esther Scroll of the Austro-Galician *koler* (fig. 1.1.) the wood and mother-of-pearl box of the Austro-Hungarian, Bohemian and Moravian *koler epistles*<sup>12</sup> (fig. 2.1.) and other objects (figs. 3.1., 4.1., 5.1.). The venerated sites most often represented are the Western Wall, usually flanked by the Dome of the Rock representing the site of the Temple and the Al-Aqsa Mosque as Solomon’s School; the Site of the Temple in the image of the Dome of the Rock popularly and wrongly called Mosque of Omar; Zion, the citadel with its iconic minaret; David’s Tomb as domes and a minaret rising behind a wall; Rachel’s Tomb as a small domed cubic-room and the anteroom added in the early 1840s by Sir Moses Montefiore; and the Kidron Valley tombs from the Second Temple period known as the tombs of Zechariah, Absalom and Bnei-Hezir.<sup>13</sup> The schemes vary slightly, even in works by an artist who signed his works, Abraham Keller: the 1898 Jerusalemite Rothschild Hospital offering-case (fig. 5.1.) and the 1908 Austro-Galician scroll case (fig. 3.1.) and in our opinion also the 1898 Austro-Galician scroll case (fig. 1.1.) based on style similarities. Interestingly, in the 1898 Austro-Galician box the Bnei-Hezir Tomb is labelled Beth Ha’Hofshit (House of the Free), following

12 In the Austro-Hungarian *koler* box the Hungarian seal is exceptionally flanked by a figure holding a scroll and another holding a sword instead of the usual angels in what could be a local invention.

13 GENACHOWSKI 2002. 35–36; EINHORN 1979. 17–70.



3.1 Scroll-case. ÖNB Reg.J.II/40



1.1 Scroll-case. ÖNB Reg.J./55



2.1 Gift box. ÖNB Reg.J./95



4.1 Gift box. ÖNB Reg.Jub.II/6



5.1 Gift case ÖNB Reg.J./96

an ancient local tradition that the leper King Uziah/Azariah, free of the burden of reigning, lived in this tomb, actually built about 600 years later, similarly to nineteenth- and twentieth-century lepers; ancient traditions were collected and spread as means to confirm the authenticity of the Bible.<sup>14</sup> Whereas the Austro-Galician *kolel* identifies the sites in Hebrew, the Austro-Hungarian *kolel* chose German. Naturally, the Austro-Hungarian *kolel* addressed Franz Joseph by means of heraldic symbols of the Dual Monarchy.

<sup>14</sup> VILNAY 1973. 254–256, 335.

## Between Local Jewish and Western Visual Language



3. Austro-Galician *kolel*, 1908 offering. Blessing in Esther Scroll.

The Esther Scroll offered to Franz Joseph by the Austro-Galician *kolel* on the occasion of his Diamond Jubilee is paradigmatic of such combination (ÖNB Reg.J.II./40) (fig. 3.). The blessing preceding the biblical story and Abraham Keller's olivewood scroll case present traditional Jewish-Jerusalemite, Neo-Baroque and Orientalist imagery certainly apt to catch the eye of the Western audience (fig. 3.1.). As in the 1898 offering by the same *kolel*, text and images are organized in a Neo-Baroque gate of honour lacking any architectural logic. However,

the 1908 work includes four icons of Jerusalem and symbolic imagery carefully coordinated with the text, which add to its impact. Thus, Franz Joseph's coat-of-arms; his motto as Austrian emperor, *Viribus unitis*, that gained new currency as nations struggled for various measures of autonomy<sup>15</sup>, and oak and laurel branches signifying victory and glory are highlighted on the painted tympanum. Moreover, below it an eagle with spread wings, holding in its beak the parchment with the text, binds the heavenly and the earthly layers of meaning: based on biblical passages, it is a metaphor for God and the Emperor who protect their people under the shadow of their wings (e.g. Ps. 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7). Images and text reinforce the prayer to God to bless the righteous monarch and his realms, and express the Jews' heartfelt gratitude. Franz Joseph's name appears in large golden letters with a witty interpretation of his title below: "[a blessing from] the city after which you are named, for King of Jerusalem is your name," playing to his self-image as a monarch by the Grace of God and holder of the Crown of Jerusalem.<sup>16</sup> Wishing the monarch the prosperity and glory of Solomon's kingdom, the writer adds a messianic layer of meaning: "In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace as long as the moon endureth" (Ps. 72:7). This meaning is reinforced by the four iconic images of Jerusalem: the Western Wall with cypresses behind it in the seal of the Austro-Galician *kolel*; the paradisiacal view of this wall with rich vines (Isa. 5:1-7; 1 Kings 4:25; Mic. 4:4) painted below; and two images on the gate's columns, Mount Zion and the Temple Mount, illustrating Psalm 128:5: "the Lord shall bless thee out of Zion and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life." Remarkably, Keller added to his striking scroll-case an unmissable

<sup>15</sup> e.g. BELLER 1996; chs. 4, 5. GERO 2001.

<sup>16</sup> ARAD 2012, esp. 49–62 for the evocation of this title in the contemporaneous mosaic at the Austrian Hungarian's Houses in Jerusalem.

Orientalist element unusual in an Orthodox context: three kneeling camels support a huge column, the scroll-case proper; yet he kept to traditional schemes for the holy sites carved on it.

The offering of the Austro-Hungarian *kolel* at the same event, an Esther Scroll in a silver filigree scroll case with the Hungarian shield in gold set in a wooden box (ÖNB Reg. Jub.II/6) (fig. 4.), also reveals two attitudes: the carver kept to traditional icons of the holy places, whereas the painter of the prayer preceding the story innovated by staging the monuments as in painted postcards and in more realistic settings, probably influenced by the high popularity of that medium and photography, for example, believers praying at the Western Wall. The postcards also present new Jewish neighbourhoods and institutions in Jerusalem that the senders were proud of, for example, Batei Ungarin, the first neighbourhood built by a *kolel*,<sup>17</sup> along with agricultural settlements and towns

established on the principle of self-sufficiency – an ideology close to that of the *New Yishuv* – and other towns with a small Jewish population. In fact, the whole design and iconography of this blessing reflect significant changes in the *Old Yishuv*. Instead of a gate of honour, a delicate frame in the Secession-influenced Bezalel School of Arts' style, bordered on its sides and bottom by the postcards, encloses the painted parchment and text. The verse highlighted in royal crimson at the head of the parchment, "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty" (Isa. 33:17), adds a messianic meaning to the prayer, namely, that the just Franz Joseph will see the Glory of God; its juxtaposition with the postcards brings to mind its second part, "They shall behold the land that is very far off," that is, the promised Land of Israel, lyrically binding imagery and text. The text is written as a prayer rich in praises to God and the Emperor; it adapts references to the ideal biblical kings, such as "Thou wilt prolong the king's life: and his years as many generations" (Ps. 61:6) – a plea to God that establishes a parallel between Franz Joseph and King David, while also characterizing the Diamond Jubilee as "a great event in the History of the World." In addition, at the centre of the Habsburg eagle to which golden rays of light add a heavenly touch, appears the portrait of Franz



4. Austro-Hungarian, Bohemian and Moravian *kolel*, 1908 offering. Epistle.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> The Hungarian *kolel* was the best-organized and most pious – its official name – Guardians of the Walls, in a religious sense.

<sup>18</sup> FRIEDMAN 2001.

Joseph on a clipeus as a victorious Augustus, a well-known laudatory scheme of portraits of European monarchs. The rays lead our eyes to two small medallions enclosing a Star of David flanking the frame on top, and above them the blessing, in crimson too, “Long live the King” to the right and “The Lord our King” to the left, an expression usual in prayers and poems to God, that could be interpreted as “the King, our lord,” namely, Franz Joseph. As in this *kolel*'s 1898 offering, the prayer is written in Hebrew but the sites are titled in German, thus greatly increasing the immediate impact of the whole image.

## Jewish Philanthropists' Offerings

A comparison between offerings presented by Jerusalemite Jewish and Christian entities shows that each community naturally chose its own holy places and religious texts, and the *kolelim* usually used simpler materials. Fancier materials also distinguish offerings from Jewish entities in Austria-Hungary from those of the *kolelim* and, significantly, they depict institutions they founded there. These institutions expressed their pride in their integration into Austrian society and gratitude to the monarch for making it legally possible, and were presented as signs of loyalty and contribution to the kingdom's prosperity and glory. Moreover, they were built in the eclectic classicist style popular in Vienna at the time; thus “Jewish architecture” became part of the Austrian narrative. In 1898 Franz Joseph thanked social benefactors, proclaiming that no homage gives him more joy than acts of charity.<sup>19</sup>

Wealthy assimilated Jewish families also founded hospitals, vocational schools, hospices and orphanages in Jerusalem, instead of directly supporting the *Old Yishuv*'s reliance on alms, with the aim of helping it change its way of living and not only providing temporary relief.<sup>20</sup> These virtuous deeds would earn the benefactors merits and blessings in the heavenly and also in the earthly realm; their names would be displayed or institutions would even be named after them. Nevertheless, these acts must be seen as stemming from the interests of liberal Jewish circles in Europe in gaining legitimization as loyal citizens and demonstrating their patriotism by promoting the interests of their specific monarch in Palestine.<sup>21</sup> Because any such project required the permission of the monarch, expressions of praise and gratitude were essential.

The Mayer Rothschild Hospital, originally founded in the Old City in 1854 by James Mayer de Rothschild, one of five brothers bestowed with the title of Baron by Franz I of Austria in 1822, is paradigmatic. Although named after the father of the family, it constituted a homage to Franz Joseph who granted it his

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19 Brix 2007. 48–75.

20 BEN-GHEDALIA 2009.

21 BEN-GHEDALIA 2008. 112.

auspices and saw in it a statement of his presence and influence in Jerusalem. In 1888 it moved to a new complex in the new city, designed in the style dominant in Vienna at the time: a higher central section with a gabled roof, elaborate balconies and balustrades, flanked by symmetric receding wings.<sup>22</sup>

Like Jewish foundations in Austria-Hungary, the Rothschild Hospital, sent a tribute to Franz Joseph on the occasion of his Golden Jubilee (fig. 5.) Similarly to those offerings, the hospital's laudatory epistle is decorated with an image of the institution and two more appear on the carved olivewood case housing it, together with images of holy sites; both also include Austro-Hungarian heraldry. Most interesting is the decoration of the epistle, which, though it does not present images of venerated sites, suggests the holiness of Jerusalem as well as its Oriental flavor while addressing both the donors and the monarch. As in many epistles, a gate of honor organizes the imagery and text: the hospital appears in the right spandrel, identified by its seal and the Mayer de Rothschild shield on



5. Rothschild Hospital 1898 offering. Epistle.

the background of an Orientalist cityscape with the essential domes, minarets and palm trees; the coats-of-arms of Austria and Hungary crown the opening of the gateway, and the years of Franz Joseph's reign until then, 1848 to 1898, appear in the left spandrel. Unlike gates in other *Old Yishuv* epistles, this one is skilfully drawn in a typical local Muslim style and the right column fades away to make more space for the text, as often in postcards at the time. Another interesting feature in our context is the Oriental cityscape above the gateway that would be perceived as Jerusalem. This iconographic scheme was common not in the nineteenth century but in medieval Jewish and Christian art. In the well-known Worms Mahzor dated to 1278, with additions around 1280 (Jerusalem, NLI, MS Heb. 4" 781. C, II, f. 73a), this would be the New Jerusalem, a time of never-ending peace and prosperity. Like most medieval German *mahzorim*, the miniature shows a gateway, an architectural element that became a symbol of the Gates of Heaven through which prayers reach God. The prayer for Atonement Day enclosed in it blesses God who "opens the Gates of Mercy" on that Holy Day;<sup>23</sup> similarly, the

<sup>22</sup> This was a political strategy current in Jerusalem in the nineteenth century: the European powers built in a style clearly identified with them, to better state their presence and influence in the Holy City, and often added a local touch to suggest their deep and strong roots here. ARAD 2012. 31–33.

<sup>23</sup> COHEN-MUSHLIN 1985. 90.

Rothschild Hospital epistle begins: “on this Holy Day,” yet meaning the Golden Jubilee. Did the artist of the Rothschild Hospital epistle conceive this iconography or perhaps know the medieval and Early Modern Jewish and Christian tradition? Both possibilities should be considered. The originality and high quality of this object are consonant with the prestige of Dr. D’Arbela, the hospital director, in Jerusalem and European courts, and the growing artistic activity in Jerusalem.

## The Holy Places: A Cornerstone of the *Old Yishuv* Essentiality

Offerings from the *Old Yishuv* to Franz Joseph functioned as a tool in the construction of the self-image of the monarch and the Jewish communities alike. Donors and addressee wished to proclaim and demonstrate their deep devotion and commitment to Jerusalem, and saw themselves as fulfilling religious precepts and deserving of heavenly blessings. Therefore images of venerated sites became an essential element in the decoration of these objects, created to thank the monarch for his benevolent attitude, to praise and bless him in the hope of ensuring his support in the future as well. *Old Yishuv* artists ignored the sad present and represented the holy places as if time had left no marks on them: their aim was to construct a timeless image that would reinforce the belief in God and the soon-to-come redemption that their pious way of life was making possible. The iconography of holy sites underwent only minor changes. Winds of change affected other imagery and style. The works reveal a dynamic discourse between the *kolelim* and their brethren in the Dual Monarchy – a continuous transfer of ideas and images that underwent the necessary adaptations according to the specific context. Likewise, they disclose many nuances; for example, the Austro-Hungarian, Bohemian and Moravian, and the Austro-Galician 1908 homages show that at the beginning of the century, when hard-line Orthodox circles parted ways with progressive Jewish movements, the conceptual and practical borders were still flexible: Eretz-Israel could be presented as a national space in an Orthodox offering and Orientalist trends could be adopted to add to its appeal. The offerings also show that the visual images that accompany the text do not necessarily illustrate it. Rather, they explain, interpret and complement the narrative and contribute to a better understanding of the messages encoded in it. Moreover, artists and writers often consciously created subtle and multivalent literary and visual metaphors adopting, quoting and transforming sources, manipulatively omitting or emphasizing selected elements, thus strengthening impressions and memories and inspiring new narratives. The images are ideologically driven and show the way in which people want to represent themselves, their world, their ideals and aspirations.

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GÁBOR BARNA\*

## RECONCILING NATIONAL AND IMPERIAL IDENTITY

### ROYAL MASSES AND COMMEMORATIVE MASSES IN KUNSZENTMÁRTON

**Abstract:** A celebration brings the past into the present. And the attitude towards the past shapes the identity awareness of the commemorating group. Collective identity is often expressed by celebratory, ceremonial communication. The celebration can mean acceptance of the existing world order. Through the analysis of a previously unknown and unexplored source group, the article examines from this point of view the commemorative church ceremonies held between 1867 and 1914 in a single settlement, including the invitations to so-called royal masses.

A church ceremony held within denominational frames was the accepted form of celebration in that period. Through its analysis of these ceremonies the study shows how the judgement of Habsburg ruler Francis Joseph (King of Hungary) who had crushed the 1848/49 Hungarian war of independence, and of the historical events changed over the decades. In the course of this process, Habsburg family events and commemorative days of the war of independence became part of a festive order expressing a dynastic and imperial sense of identity.

**Keywords:** Francis Joseph I King of Hungary, Habsburg family, royal masses, national days, church ceremonies, identity

### The celebration

Celebrations bring a sense of order and stability into our everyday lives and the world.<sup>1</sup> The most important social and cultural role of the celebration is that it orders time and ensures order.<sup>2</sup> The celebration is an expression of harmony with

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1 BÁLINT 1943.

2 LEACH 200. 101.

the world: everything is good and it is good as it is.<sup>3</sup> People celebrate on special occasions. They remember something, or they hope for something.<sup>4</sup> The celebration transforms the past into present. The attitude towards the past shapes the sense of identity of the commemorating group. Remembering their own history, remembering their own religion and bringing it into the present shapes the identity of the person remembering or celebrating. Some of our festive occasions are related to the organisation of everyday life, they affect the individual and the community (birthday, wedding, the beginning of work, the end of the work cycle, etc.). Others, however, are organised by the church and state authorities (Corpus Christi, the anniversary of the Reformation, national feasts, etc.). We often express our collective identity not with everyday communication but with festive, ceremonial communication.<sup>5</sup> This communication is directed and kept in hand by the higher echelons of church and state that try to extend it to the widest possible strata of society, preferably to the whole of society. It is at this point that the means available to the church and state for influencing society become of special interest: the channels through which the holding of state celebrations becomes part of the community's every day life, and how they shape the opinion of society, opinion-making and the creation of memory.<sup>6</sup>

### Source used for the analysis

Following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise<sup>7</sup>, it became characteristic of festive culture in the period between 1867 and 1918 that besides the denominational religious feasts and the celebrations of the traditional order of peasant work, state days in the civic sense appeared. Citizens of the Kingdom of Hungary included among their festive occasions days for the remembrance of the revolution and war of independence defeated in 1849: the day on which the ruler endorsed the laws adopted in April (11 April),<sup>8</sup> the day on which the martyr generals of the Hungarian army were executed (6 October)<sup>9</sup>. Francis Joseph I who crushed the

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3 PIEPER 1999, NYÍRI 1975. 139.

4 NYÍRI 1975. 140–141.

5 BARNA 2006. 259.

6 ASSMANN 1999.

7 Vienna continued absolute rule over Hungary for two decades after crushing the struggle for independence. In 1867 the Habsburg empire was transformed into a dualist monarchy with the establishment of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Within this frame Hungary enjoyed full independence in matters of domestic policy. This was followed in 1868 by the Hungarian-Croatian Compromise.

8 The last Hungarian feudal diet met in Pozsony (now Bratislava) in 1847–1848. On 11 April 1848 the ruler signed laws that set in motion and regulated bourgeois transformation: e.g. popular representation, general and proportionate taxation, liberation of the serfs, etc.

9 The Austrians were able to crush the armed Hungarian struggle for freedom with the help of the Russian imperial army. Subsequently 13 generals of the Hungarian independence army were condemned to death in the town of Arad (now part of Romania) and executed on 6 October 1849.

war of independence but was crowned following the Compromise and took an oath to uphold the country's constitution, became the legitimate king of the country and nation<sup>10</sup>. With his accession to the throne, the events of the ruling family (anniversary of the coronation, birthday, name day, etc.) were raised to the rank of Hungarian national feasts. Two contradictory sets of celebrations.

On all these occasions commemorations were also held within the frame of church ceremonies. In this way the festive occasions were sacralised. My analysis is based on a group of documents preserved in the archive of the Roman Catholic parish of Kunszentmárton,<sup>11</sup> that throw light on the practice of celebration in the settlement around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century. They are invitations sent out by messenger by the parish priest four to six days prior to the event to the town's magistrates, state institutions (post office, railways, gendarmerie, court, etc.), to representatives of religious (Catholic) and social organisations and associations, who acknowledged receipt of the invitation and returned it to the parish priest. The surviving invitations clearly show that in the period examined the church was the principal organiser and repository of public life, including community celebrations. For this reason the church's celebratory practice reached the settlement's entire Catholic society, and all state employees regardless of denomination.

The invitations document mainly the so-called *royal masses* held on the birthday and name day of the ruler, Francis Joseph. There were also invitations for other occasions associated with the ruler and his family. Another group of invitations were for church and national celebrations.

This group of sources had previously escaped the attention of researchers dealing with the period. My study is therefore also an attempt to analyse and present a new source group. The documents reveal the central will and prescriptions, ideals and thoughts that shaped celebrations at the time of the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century, and how it resulted in the festive structure of a market town on the Hungarian Great Plain.

This festive structure is three-layered:

1. occasions of the major Catholic church feasts, anniversaries of prominent church figures (pope, bishop, priest's jubilee) formed the *ecclesiastical line*,
2. commemorative days and celebrations related to the royal house and events in the life of the royal family (birthday, name day, coronation anniversary, death and anniversaries of death), that is, a *feudal, dynastic line*,

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10 An important part of the coronation of the Hungarian king was the oath taken to uphold the constitution of the country that obliged the ruler to respect Hungarian laws. Francis Joseph I (1830–1916) Austrian Emperor, King of Hungary and King of Bohemia, was the first ruler of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

11 Saint Martin Parish archive, without reference number. From 1720 to 1993 Kunszentmárton belonged to the Eger diocese; since then it has been part of the Szeged-Csanád diocese. I take this opportunity to thank parish priest Zsolt Kövesdy for his support.

3. commemorations linked to anniversaries of the events of 1848/1849, or to outstanding Hungarian figures (e.g. István Széchenyi<sup>12</sup>, Ferenc Rákóczi<sup>13</sup>), and to the millennium of Hungarian settlement in Hungary, the turn of the century, that is, a *Hungarian civic national line*.

The three lines coexisted peacefully. On some occasions they were even intertwined, for example, the turn of the century that was celebrated as the “1900-year history of Christianity”. For decades the parish priests invited the same authorities, officials and civic organisations to the requiem mass held for the “repose of the souls of the national martyrs” on 6 October, as they did for celebrations of the birth or name day, and anniversary of the coronation of the ruler who was responsible for their martyrdom.

But let us examine the three layers on the basis of the sources.

1. A central government decree introduced in 1855 regulated the festive day opening hours of businesses, shops and inns, and the rules for holding events with music and balls. In all settlements, including Kunszentmárton, this was adapted to the local conditions.<sup>14</sup> We know from this what celebrations the state expected its citizens to observe in the 1850s, for which it imposed restrictions on both work in the fields and the opening hours of shops. In addition to Sundays, the so-called “norm days” here were: Christmas, Easter, Whitsun, Corpus Christi, Feast of the Immaculate Conception (8 December), Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (8 September), and the feast day of King Saint Stephen (20 August). Periods when entertainments with music were restricted were Advent, Lent, the Ember Days<sup>15</sup> and the vigils for major feasts. We know from records made in the 1880s that Christmas celebrations were held in the school with a Christmas tree and the collection of donations and gifts for needy children.<sup>16</sup>

With its moral prestige and the support of the town’s authorities, the Catholic church strove to assert its Christian principles in the celebration. Given that the local school was maintained by the church and the director was always the parish priest, he was able to prescribe the forms of festive behaviour required of teachers and students. Around Easter 1891, for example, the parish priest issued instructions regarding attendance at mass during Easter week, prescribing the time of confession and communion for students, calling on teachers to set an example by attending the masses, and forbidding “walking up and down the streets in groups, playing noisy games especially in the vicinity of the church, entering the

12 István Széchenyi (1791–1860) landowner, politician, writer on economics, leading politician of the Reform Age in the first half of the 19th century, named the “greatest Hungarian” by his peers in recognition of his merits.

13 Ferenc Rákóczi II (1676 – 1735) Hungarian aristocrat, leader of the Rákóczi freedom struggle, the last prince of Transylvania.

14 Parish archive, no number, 23 March 1891.

15 These are the quarterly fasts, *quattuor ieiunium*.

16 Obviously this must have been the channel of transmission for the bourgeois form of Christmas celebration in the settlement! The pine tree as a symbol of Christmas in festive practice appeared through the school celebrations and families of the local intelligentsia. See also: BARNA 2011. 295.

tower and all kinds of disorder” during the three holy days (Easter Thursday, Friday and Saturday).<sup>17</sup>

Those instructions reflect a festive order wholly Catholic in spirit. This was the frame and foundation on which the entire festive order was built, and that preserved its ecclesiastical character throughout the period. For the most part celebrations took the form of church commemorations. There are only a few data suggesting the nature of other, secular forms that may have supplemented the church commemorations. In addition to the major Catholic feasts there were also celebrations for anniversaries of heads of the diocese and the universal church, jubilees of the archbishop of Eger (József Samassa<sup>18</sup>) and the Pope (Leo XIII<sup>19</sup>) (ordination of priest, ordination of bishop, papal election, anniversaries of death). The church and secular community celebrated these together.

2. The series of royal masses began after the Compromise of 1867. These masses were held each year, even if the documents for each year have not been preserved in the parish archive. In this way 18 August, the birthday of King Francis Joseph, and 4 October, the king’s name day, became festive days. In addition there were a few other festive occasions associated with the figure of the king, such as the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1892 of his coronation as king of Hungary, or the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1898 of his accession to the throne (of Austria). These events were interpreted as occasions when the king and the nation came together.

A solemn mass was held in May to mark the marriage of Archduke Rudolf and the Belgian royal princess Stéphanie, then a few years later, to mark the tragic death of Rudolf in 1889. On the latter occasion, in departure from the usual practice the Archbishop of Eger advised his priests not to hold a church ceremony, but to have mourning flags placed in the institutions under their direction. This could have been because of Rudolf’s suicide. However the Jewish community in Kunszentmárton held a requiem ceremony, the invitation to which has survived in the archive of the Catholic parish.<sup>20</sup>

The tragic death in 1898 of Elisabeth<sup>21</sup> “the queen of glorious memory” and its anniversaries were occasions for memorial masses. Special mention must be made of the fifth anniversary, on 9 September 1903.

17 Parish archive, no number, 1891.

18 József Samassa (1828–1912) cardinal bishop. From 1873 archbishop of Eger, he was granted the cardinal’s hat in 1906. He was a major patron of the diocese of Eger. Honorary citizen of the town of Eger. KATLEX XI. 2006. 832–833.

19 In 1878 Leo XIII (1810–1903) ascended to the papal throne as successor to Pius IX. KATLEX VII. 2002. 802–804.

20 In that period the only religious denomination in Kunszentmárton other than the Roman Catholic was the Jewish community.

21 Elisabeth Wittelsbach (Sisi) (1837–1898) Empress of Austria, Queen of Hungary and Bohemia, wife of Francis Joseph I. She was assassinated in Switzerland.

A mass was held on the occasion of the death of Archduke Joseph<sup>22</sup> in July 1905 to which not only the community and state institutions were invited but also the associations, circles and religious confraternities.

3. The series of commemorations and masses of a national character began in 1861 with the commemorative mass held for István Széchenyi. In 1861 the municipal council decided to have a foundation memorial mass said every year in honour of the greatest Hungarian on 6 April, the anniversary of his death. The background to this was probably the *détente* in high politics in 1861.

The data in the Kunszentmárton parish archive concerning commemorations of a national character are all from the period after the Compromise (1867) when there was no longer any political obstacle to holding them. However, we can deduce from one reference that a mass had already been held every year in November for the fallen soldiers of the 1848/49 liberation army, but in 1868 this was shifted to 30 March. The commemoration in November was probably linked to All Souls Day to remove any political connotations. We do not know the reason for the change of date.

The day on which the laws of 1848 were endorsed, 11 April was for a long while the official national celebration.<sup>23</sup> The first invitation to attend the national celebration that has survived was only for 1899, but it can be supposed that it was held each year following the Compromise. The celebration took the form of a thanksgiving mass with the *Te Deum*.<sup>24</sup> In 1906 the 11<sup>th</sup> of April fell on Easter week and the archbishop of Eger ordered that it be held on Easter Monday.

The notes made by parish priest József Dósa<sup>25</sup> on a few of the surviving invitations are very instructive: for the mass in 1899 “Attended by the heads of the municipality, court, post office and railways [and we can add: the customs and excise guard and the gendarmerie]. The school children with millenary banners for each class made a good impression on the viewers. Mass began with the *Te Deum* and was celebrated by three priests.” In other years the invitations were also signed by representatives of the gentlemen’s casino,<sup>26</sup> the civic reading circle,<sup>27</sup> the community circle, the 1848 independence circle, the Catholic circle,<sup>28</sup> the tradesmen’s corporation, the fire brigade, the municipal teachers’ board, the choir and cultural society, the Kun casino and the devotional confraternities<sup>29</sup>. In short, the participants at the national celebration in the church represented the whole of local society.

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22 Habsburg Archduke Joseph (1833–1905) was commander-in-chief of the Hungarian royal army.

23 March 15 did not become the national day until 1927.

24 *Te Deum laudamus* – Catholic hymn of thanksgiving and praise.

25 József Dósa (1845–1913) priest born in Kunszentmárton. He was parish priest of his native town from 1888. See: Józsa 2016. 67–74. The documents analysed in the study were produced during his term. He achieved exemplary documentation discipline.

26 Grouped the town’s leading intelligentsia and landowners.

27 The town’s middle class, primary and secondary school teachers belonged to this circle.

28 Composed mainly of tradesmen.

29 The other societies had members from practically all social strata.

Besides these regular annual commemorations there were also events for jubilees or extraordinary occasions. For example, on 6 October 1899 a solemn requiem mass was held “on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the sorrowful day made unforgettable by the death of the Arad martyrs, for the repose of their souls”. The return to Hungary of the ashes of Ferenc Rákóczi II and his companions and their burial in Kassa took place with great ceremony on 29 October 1906. “On this great national day all Hungarians and faithful souls express their gratitude with great patriotic enthusiasm,” wrote parish priest József Dósa on the invitation to the commemorative mass, “that out of the infinite mercy of the God of the Hungarians, with the welcome approval of the Apostolic king and our nation, the glorious heroes of freedom, martyrs of patriotism, finally await in Hungarian soil the great awakening of the resurrection, the dawn of true freedom. – Our Holy Mother Church, always sharing the sentiments of the nation, now too expresses its respect, participating in the glory of the great funeral. For this same reason at 10 a. m. on 29 October we are holding a solemn requiem in Saint Martin’s church for the repose of the souls returned to their homeland, to which I hereby invite the undersigned.” Commenting on the events on the returned and signed invitation, the parish priest noted that: “Flags were flying in the town already on 27/X, there was tower music in the evening with a brass band, on Sunday 28/X there was again a cannon salute and tower music. On 29 a splendid mass. At 6 p.m. a Rákóczi celebration and public supper was held in the Catholic Circle. It was a great success.” The invitation for the occasion and the parish priest’s interpretation of the events clearly show that loyalty to the king could be combined with national sentiments.

A printed invitation to a celebration for the millennium of the settlement of the Magyars in Hungary has survived in the parish archive. “The municipal council in its resolution No. 61/2268 1896 has decided to hold a solemn meeting of the municipal assembly on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May [1896] to celebrate the Hungarian millennium following the thanksgiving mass. The mayor has requested the members of the council to gather in the town hall meeting room at 8.30 a.m. on Sunday 10 May 1896 so that we can attend the thanksgiving mass in the church as a body”. Following the mass, at 10 a. m. they held a special assembly meeting in the town hall meeting room where the official speech was made “paying tribute to the main figures and outstanding moments of Hungary” – in the words of the programme, and they set up a foundation of 1000 florins “to provide clothing each year for entirely penniless orphan boys attending school and destitute parents, in memory of the Hungarian millennium”.<sup>30</sup>

30 According to the position of Hungarian historiography, the Magyar tribal federation moved into the Carpathian Basin around 895–896. The one thousandth anniversary of the settlement was celebrated with major investments and great pomp and ceremony. The solemn masses held in all settlements were part of these celebrations. – The Csépa “united Protestant church” belonging to the Lutheran mother church in Szentes held a school and church celebration on 9 and 10 May 1896 on the occasion of the one thousandth anniversary of the existence of Hungary – the Millennium. The minister-teacher made a commemorative speech, the children sang. The celebration ended with a special prayer. CsÁK 2017. 134.

The “Commemoration of nine centuries of Christianity in Hungary” was held with similar solemnity. At the order of the archbishop of Eger festive thanksgiving masses were held on the Feast of the Assumption and the feast day of King Saint Stephen. Also included in the series of events was 18 August, the “70<sup>th</sup> birthday of His Majesty Apostolic King Francis Joseph I”. Officials and office-bearers, the various corporate bodies and associations appeared under their banners at the anniversary celebrations, “giving expression in this way to their patriotic and Christian sentiments”. The parish priest ordered that “all the bells be rung to mark the great occasion” at 8 p.m. on 14 August, the vigil of the Feast of the Assumption.

## Conclusions

In Kunszentmárton between 1867 and 1918 the annual order of feasts thus comprised the major church feasts as well as occasions commemorating the ruler and the nation.

Date	Occasion
30 March	Solemn mass for soldiers of the 1848/49 army of independence
	Easter
11 April	National day
	Whitsun
	Corpus Christi
8 August	Birthday of Francis Joseph
15 August	Feast of the Assumption
20 August	King Saint Stephen
8 September	Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary
4 October	Name day of Francis Joseph
6 October	Day commemorating the martyrs of Arad
11 November	Saint Martin’s Day – the church feast
8 December	Immaculate Conception

Up to the years around the turn of the century the parish priest invited only the authorities. In order these were first the municipal/community magistracy, followed by the royal district court, the royal post and telegraph office, the customs and excise guard, the head of the railways, the gendarmerie. Their participation is understandable: this was a state celebration with commemorations related to the ruler. The participation of the municipal/community magistracy can also be explained by the fact that, on the basis of the Jazygian-Cumanian privileges,

Kunszentmárton held the advowson and maintained its church, that is, the secular and ecclesiastical communities were closely intertwined. The secular community maintained the church community and as a consequence it had the right to a say in certain church affairs.

The involvement of the schools, teachers and children could be justified by the fact that for a long while the primary school in Kunszentmárton was a Roman Catholic school, its director was always the parish priest. This is why he could require the teachers and, through them the students, to attend the commemorative masses.

The associations and circles represented a wide spectrum and different strata of society. By the turn of the century several types operated in Kunszentmárton. The tradesmen's corporation formed after 1872 on the basis of the old guilds can be regarded as an old organisation; it represented the trades society. The religious societies and confraternities had similarly old roots, as did the fire brigade, while more recent organisations were of a cultural and political nature and were a sign of civil society. One of these various circles was the gentlemen's casino that grouped the town's intelligentsia. Only the 1848 independence circle can be qualified as a political organisation. We have no information on the social basis and composition of the Kun (Cumanian) Federation and the Community circle.

The number of officials and institutions invited depended on how many operated at the given time in Kunszentmárton, but it is perhaps possible to measure the local importance and emphasis given to the celebrations by the more limited or wider scope of civic associations invited. Good examples of this could be the requiem mass held on the second anniversary of the death of Queen Elisabeth (on 10 September 1900), or the celebrations of the millennium, the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hungarian Christian state, or the return of the ashes of Rákóczi, where all institutions were represented, giving a good cross-section of the town's authorities and corporate bodies at the time.

The commemorative masses were generally celebrated by the parish priest himself, further emphasising the importance of the event; in only a few cases was he replaced by one of the chaplains.

The surviving documents indicate that the mass was the main part of the celebration; at the rare jubilee celebrations the forms and rites of the period and the symbols used appeared at the long evening celebration. Among the forms and rites we find bell-ringing, the appearance at the masses of the corporate bodies with their badges and banners. At times there was also tower music, while a cannon salute was one of the oldest forms of celebration. The invitations rarely mentioned a banquet or the decoration of buildings with flags as commemoration rites.

It can be said that in the years before the First World War celebration was and remained largely within the church, all elements of feudal and civil/national celebration were incorporated into this frame. It was the organisation and liturgy of the church that bound these areas together. The holding of royal masses and commemorative masses was obviously not a phenomenon restricted to

Kunszentmárton. The small prints collection of the National Széchényi Library contains many printed invitations that show similar commemorations were held by the different denominations. Their study and analysis is a task awaiting a future researcher.<sup>31</sup>

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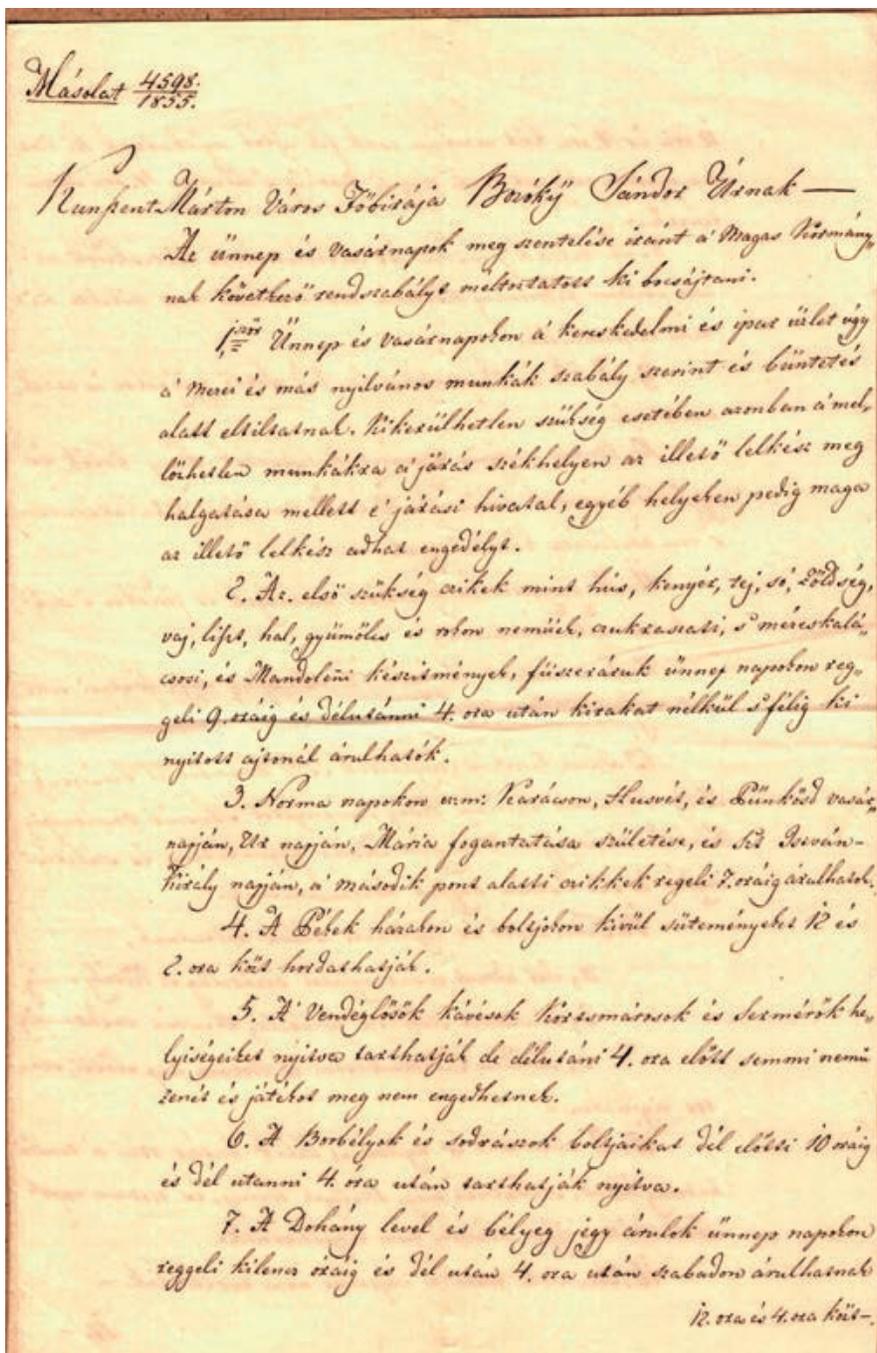
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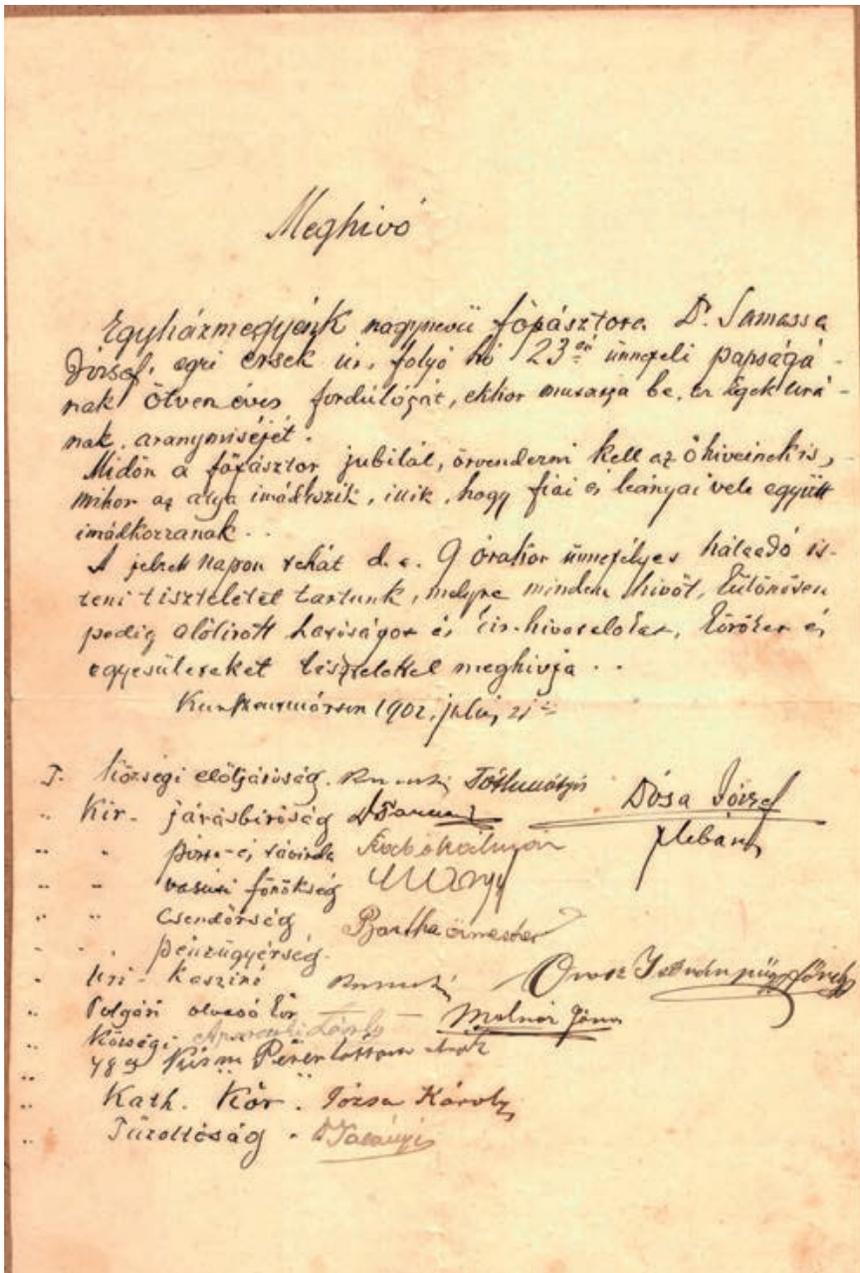
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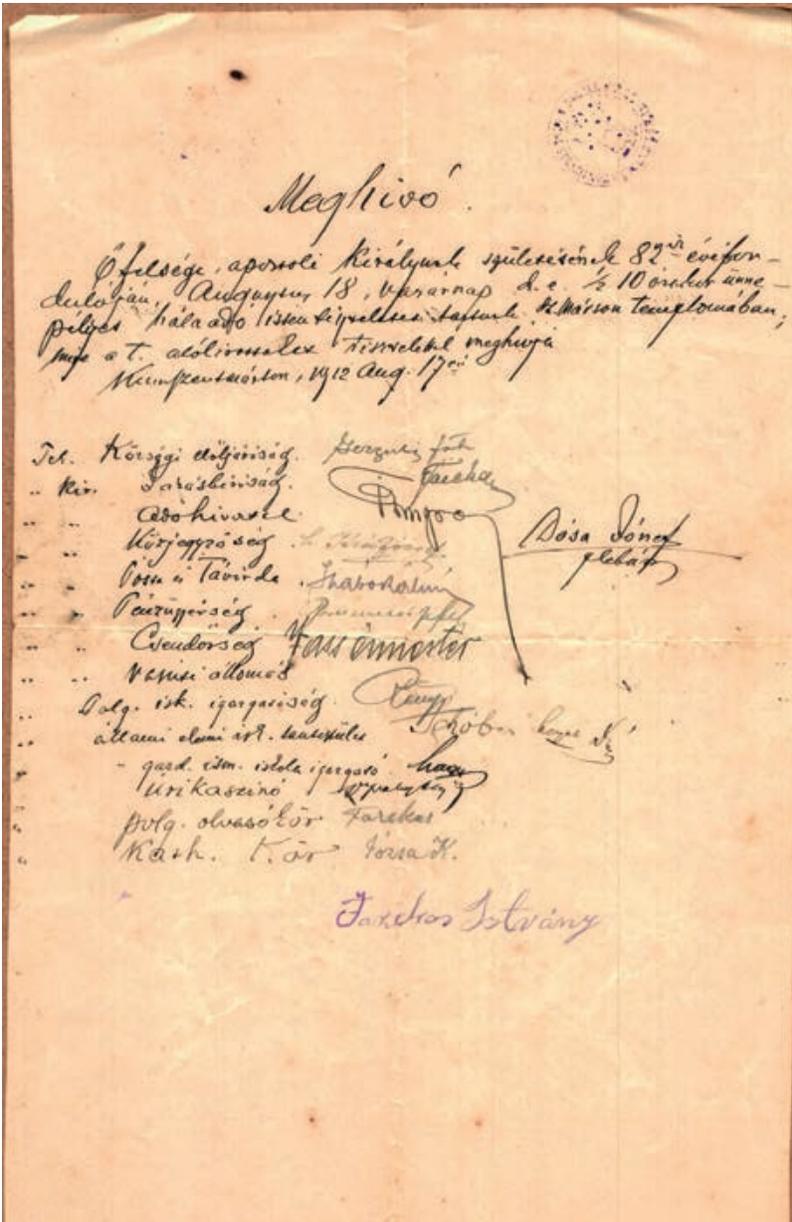






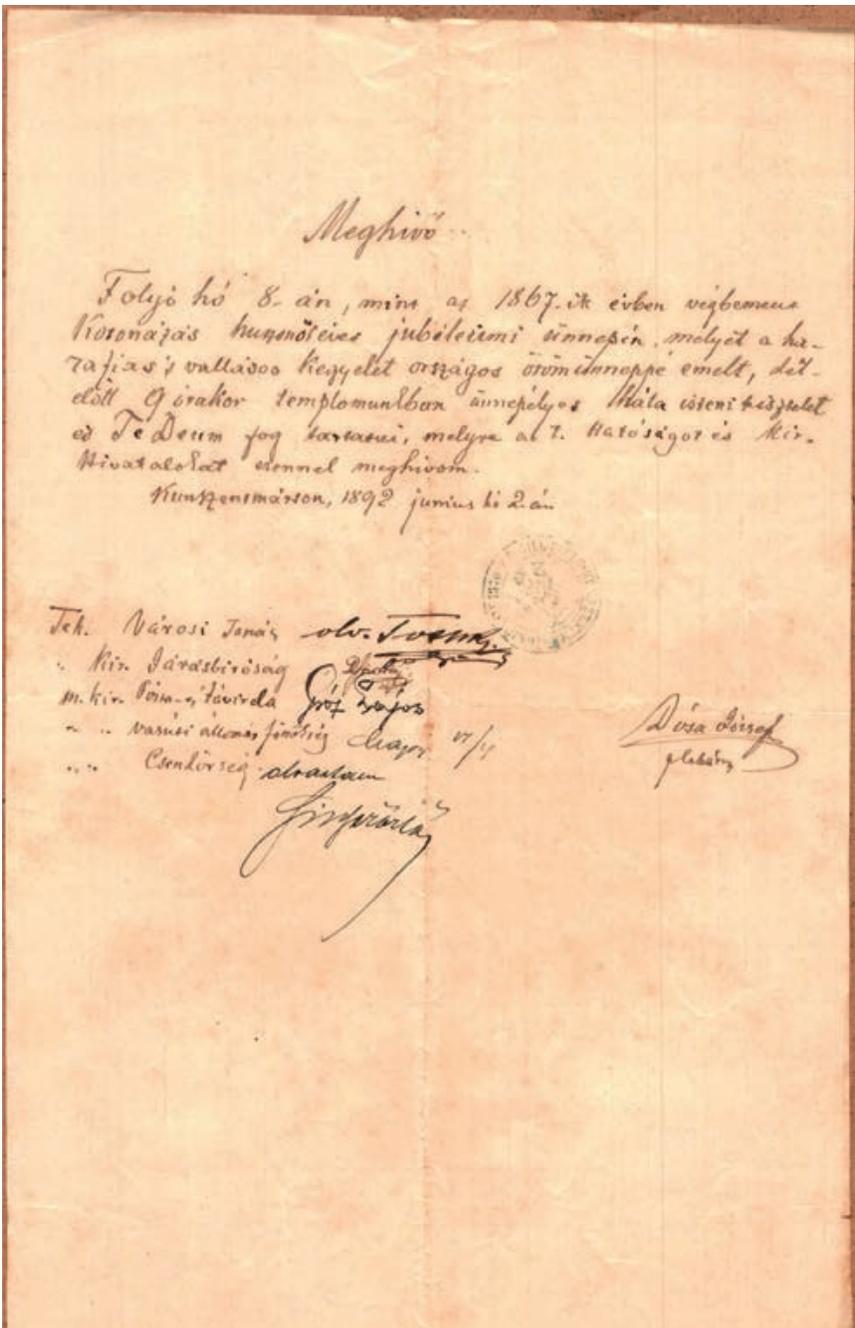
Invitation to the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> jubilee mass of the Archbishop of Eger József Samassa; invitees: community magistracy, royal district court, post and telegraph office, railways, gendarmerie, customs and excise guard, Gentlemen's Casino, Civic Reading Circle, community reading circle, 1848 reading circle, Catholic circle, fire brigade, 1902





Invitation to the mass for the 82<sup>nd</sup> birthday of Francis Joseph I; invitees: community magistracy, royal district court, taxation office, public notary's office, post and telegraph office, customs and excise guard, gendarmerie, railway station, board of the secondary school, Gentlemen's Casino, Civic Reading Circle, community reading circle, 1848 reading circle, Catholic circle, community teaching staff, the 5 funeral societies, devotional confraternities, trades corporation, fire brigade, 191





Invitation to the mass for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the coronation of Francis Joseph I; invitees: municipal magistracy, royal district court, post and telegraph office, railway station, gendarmerie, 1892

480  
1889

Felhívom Annedek, mint kegyelme, hogy  
 Rudolf trónörökös ö fenségge megrendelő  
 hatalmaerte fölötti gyász jeléül az iskolá-  
 épületekre gyászlobogó tűzessenék ki, a ke-  
 metes napján pedig a tanítás szünetel-  
 jen.  
 Egerben, 1889. évi január hó 31-én.

Arany  
 Elek

Instruction from the Archbishop of Eger to put out mourning banners on the death of Archduke Rudolf, 1889





Meghívó.

Erzsébet királynő nagyszentjánosi gyászának tizedik évfordulóján, Szeptember hó 10-én v. 9 órákor innepélyes Requiemet tartunk melyre a 2. karcsóvárosi, és hivatalos és egyházasok azon részvételére megjegyzésük kivonul meg, hogy a díszes emeleti

1. Királynő emléktábláinak emelendő - örökmemóriájára tisztelettel alapítva ez általommal perselyt fognak tartani, melyek helyeinként örömmel fogadják a legbiztosabb adományt a leírás szerinti.

Munkácsmester 1900. évt. 5.

1. Községi karcsóvárosi farsang  
 2. Kir. Szentjánosi karcsóvárosi farsang  
 3. Posta és távíró karcsóvárosi farsang  
 4. Állami fenntartás karcsóvárosi farsang  
 5. Szendősi karcsóvárosi farsang  
 6. Szendősi karcsóvárosi farsang  
 7. Törökországi karcsóvárosi farsang  
 8. Törökországi karcsóvárosi farsang  
 9. Törökországi karcsóvárosi farsang  
 10. Törökországi karcsóvárosi farsang  
 11. Törökországi karcsóvárosi farsang  
 12. Törökországi karcsóvárosi farsang  
 13. Törökországi karcsóvárosi farsang  
 14. Törökországi karcsóvárosi farsang  
 15. Törökországi karcsóvárosi farsang  
 16. Törökországi karcsóvárosi farsang  
 17. Törökországi karcsóvárosi farsang  
 18. Törökországi karcsóvárosi farsang  
 19. Törökországi karcsóvárosi farsang  
 20. Törökországi karcsóvárosi farsang

Invitation to the mass held on the second anniversary of the death of Queen Elisabeth; invitees: community magistracy, royal district court, post and telegraph office, stationmaster's office, gendarmierie, customs and excise guard, fire brigade, Gentlemen's Casino, Civic Reading Circle, community reading circle, 1848 circle, Catholic circle, trades corporation, funeral societies, Lower Town cemetery society, Upper Town cemetery society, sacred reading society, everlasting rosary confraternity, Sacred Heart society, Saint Anthony of Padua Society, Franciscan Third Order Society, savings share company, economic savings fund, 1900

Meghívó

István királyunk örmény fohászának emlékére j. h. 18<sup>o</sup> Redden d. o. J. örökös királyi Legationa vastud. mire azért az esküszóval st. sig. tel. tel. meghívó

Kunpaueruorm 1905 július 17.

J. Körs. Előjáróság ~~kommisszár~~

J. Kir. Szászberényi látványok

J. Csudórság ~~látványok~~

J. városi alkalmi fűzőségi ~~szolgálat~~

J. J. pörvényszerű

J. Tűrtörvény ~~szolgálat~~

T. köv. laudat. látványok

T. pörvén. társaság ~~szolgálat~~

T. kirkasági ~~szolgálat~~

T. Polgári önkéntes. látványok ~~szolgálat~~

T. 48<sup>o</sup> Köv. gár. ~~szolgálat~~

T. Körségi kör

T. Kisk. Köv. Józsa Károly ajtószolgálat.

Dósa János  
pály.

Shabi

Invitation to the requiem mass held at the death of Archduke Joseph; invitees: community magistracy, royal district court, gendarmerie, stationmaster's office, customs and excise guard, fire brigade, community teaching staff, post and telegraph office, Gentlemen's Casino, Civic Reading Circle, 1848 circle, community circle, Catholic circle, devotional societies, 1905



Hívatat.

Kunffeharászán Város Tanácsa közli: Könyviből az  
1868. évi Március 30-án

120. szám. Flauvidékérsi ünne-  
pélgetésnek kik az 1848/49.  
évi béni szabadság harcában  
haltak. Német: Jók Sándor  
Plebános úrnak bejegyzése  
jólján ezután ezen községben  
November hóban hanem min.  
Den év Március 30-án leendő  
megszárazás tiszteletére indítvány-  
ban, —

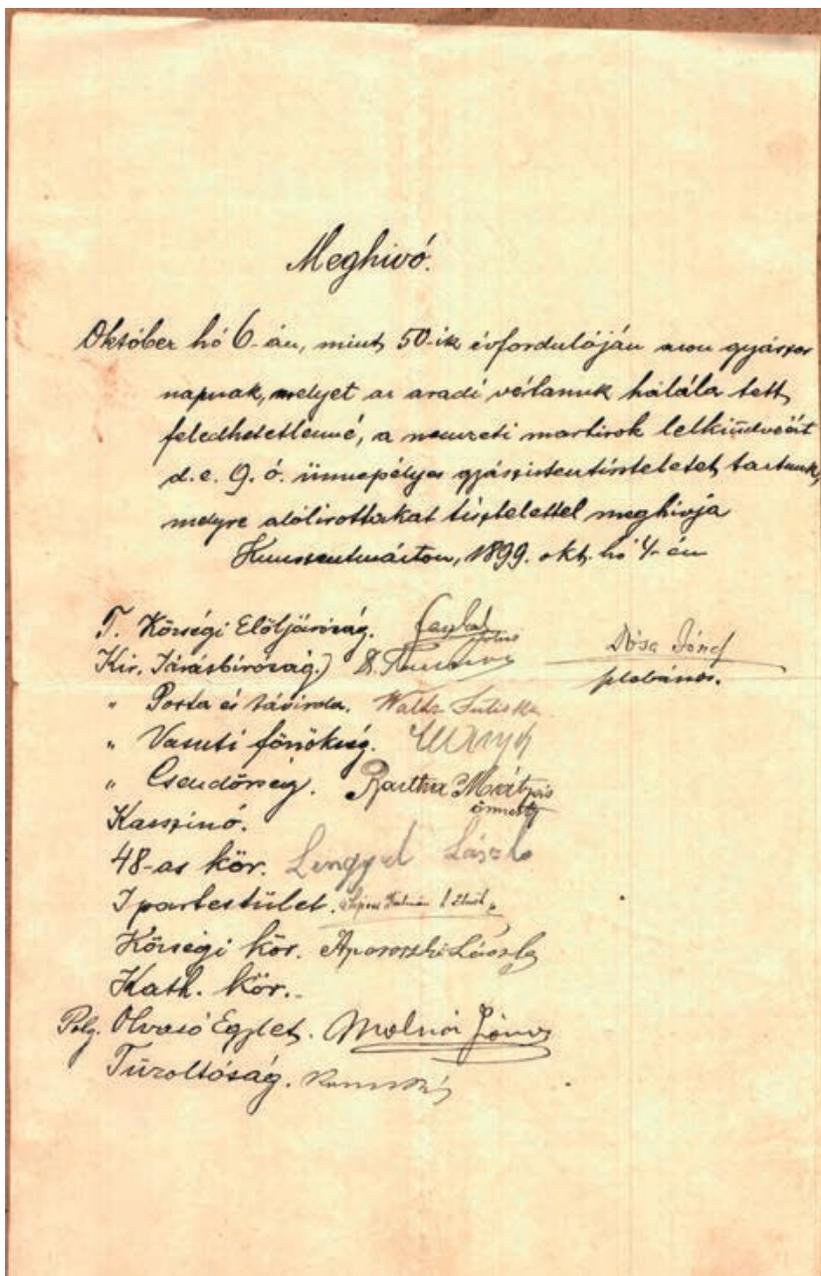
Tekintettel erre ezen köz-  
leves megemlékezést, az 1848/49.  
évi béni szabadság harcában  
halt Flauvidékérsi ünne-  
pélgetés tartandó ünneppélgetésnek  
pélgetésnek minden évi Mar-  
tius hó 30-án leendő megszá-  
zára is az alapítványi misé-  
prébe leendő bejegyzésére Né-  
met Jók Sándor Plebános úr - e tanács  
esi képviselő által kifizeti a  
szereplő felkérte, egy személy  
ezen feladat miséket megjel-  
pírré a tanács öpzetes tagjai meg-  
hívatik. —

Köszönettel  
Köszönettel  
Köszönettel



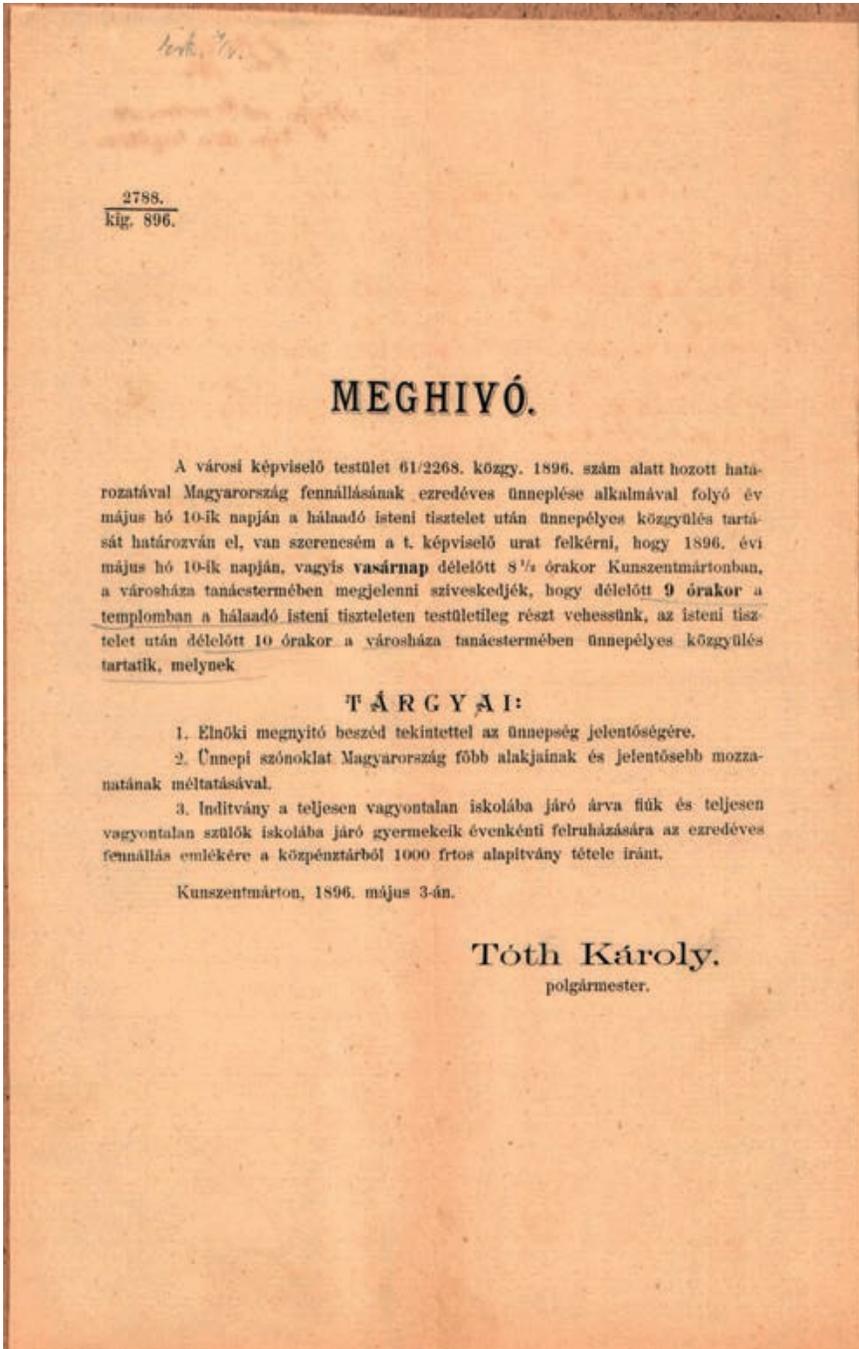
Resolution of the municipal council on a memorial mass for fallen soldiers of the war of independence, 1868





Invitation to the mass held on the 50th anniversary of the death of the "national martyrs"; invitees: community magistracy, royal district court, post and telegraph office, stationmaster's office, gendarmerie, Casino, 1848 circle, trades corporation, community circle, Catholic circle, civic reading circle, fire brigade, 1899





2788.  
kig. 896.

## MEGHIVÓ.

A városi képviselő testület 61/2268. közgy. 1896. szám alatt hozott határozatával Magyarország fennállásának ezredéves ünneplése alkalmával folyó év május hó 10-ik napján a hálaadó isteni tisztelet után ünnepélyes közgyűlés tartását határozván el, van szerencsém a t. képviselő urat felkérni, hogy 1896. évi május hó 10-ik napján, vagyis **vasárnap** délelőtt 8 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> órákor Kunszentmártonban, a városháza tanácstermében megjelenni szíveskedjék, hogy délelőtt **9 órákor** a templomban a hálaadó isteni tiszteleten testületileg részt vehessünk, az isteni tisztelet után délelőtt 10 órákor a városháza tanácstermében ünnepélyes közgyűlés tartatik, melynek

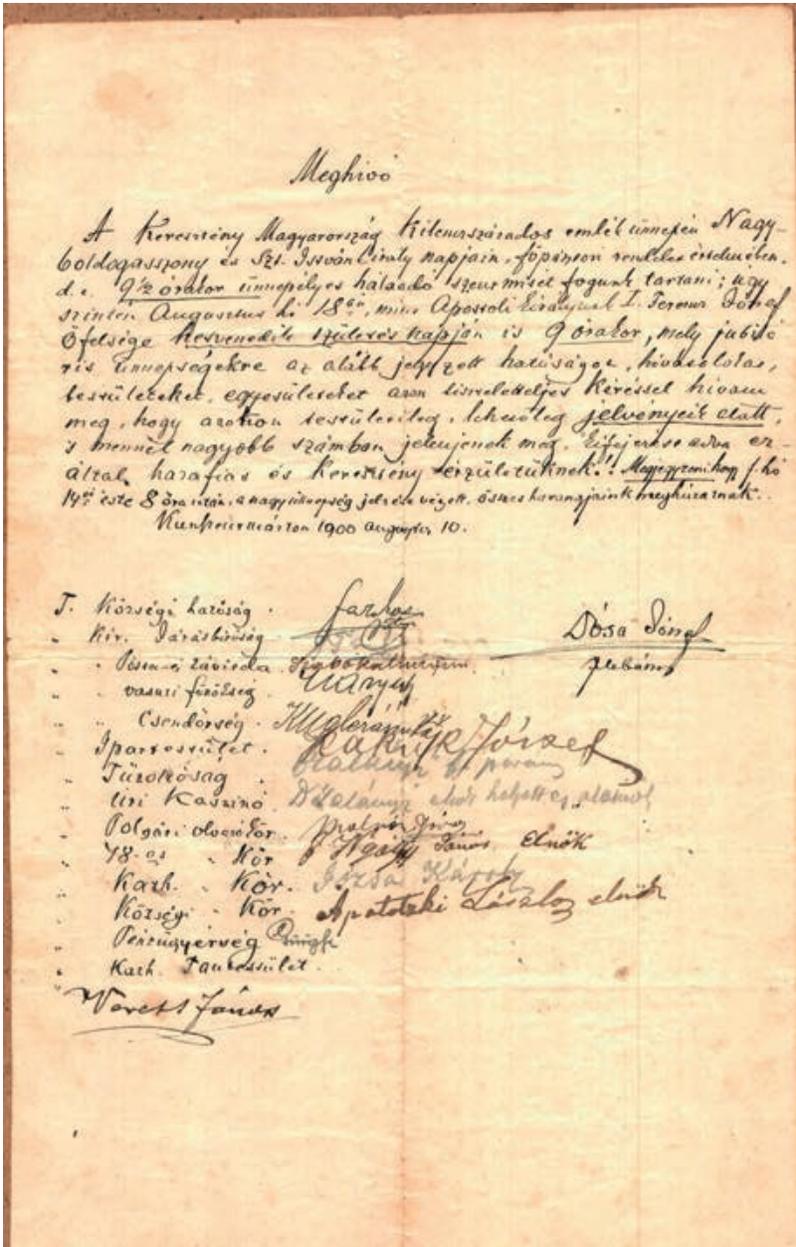
### T Á R G Y A I:

1. Elnöki megnyitó beszéd tekintettel az ünnepség jelentőségére.
2. Ünnepi szónoklat Magyarország főbb alakjainak és jelentősebb mozzanatainak méltatásával.
3. Indítvány a teljesen vagyontalan iskolába járó árva fiúk és teljesen vagyontalan szülők iskolába járó gyermekeik évenkénti felruházására az ezredéves fennállás emlékére a közpénztárból 1000 frtos alapítvány tétele iránt.

Kunszentmárton, 1896. május 3-án.

Tóth Károly.  
polgármester.

The millennium of Hungary was celebrated with a mass and solemn council meeting, 1896



Invitation to the mass held on the occasion of the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hungarian state and the 75<sup>th</sup> birthday of King Francis Joseph I; invitees: community magistracy, royal district court, post and telegraph office, stationmaster's office, gendarmierie, trades corporation, fire brigade, Gentlemen's Casino, civic reading circle, 1848 circle, Catholic circle, community circle, customs and excise guard, Catholic teaching staff, 1900

KRISZTINA FRAUHAMMER\*

## PRAYER IN THE TRENCHES

### PRAYER BOOKS FOR SOLDIERS ON THE HUNGARIAN FRONTS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

**Abstract:** The study analyses prayer books for Catholic soldiers published in Hungary during the First World War. We know of close to twenty such books that appeared in numerous editions. Prayer sheets and hand-copied prayer texts with magical functions (prayers against bullets) have also been found. Drawing on these and contemporary press materials it reconstructs religious life on the fronts and in particular the practice and function of prayer. The study also examines veneration of the Sacred Heart that played a big part in wartime pastoral activity, seeking an answer to the question of how that cult was able to become a source of spiritual strength for soldiers. In addition it looks at the opinion of the church on war and the Christian soldier as reflected in the books and prayers.

**Keywords:** First World War, Catholic Church, prayer book, Christian soldier, veneration of the Sacred Heart, prayers against bullets

In the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the church had to provide guidance not only on the transformation of society but also in the global military events of the period. Amidst the difficulties of the First World War both soldiers serving at the fronts and those who stayed at home looked for consolation. The thematic prayer books, booklets and leaflets published at that time clearly confirm that the churches responded immediately to these challenges. The spread of the Sacred Heart cult that was undergoing a revival among Catholics also proved to be a good tool in wartime pastoral activity as all families had husbands, fathers, sons, relatives, loved ones in the army to worry about and the women waited for their return. Prayer was a common language that could be used to overcome the anxieties caused by the war. It could fill everyone with hope, whether they were Protestant, Catholic or Jewish. This was why in this difficult situation the representatives of all denominations strove to provide help and spiritual support with prayer texts for both those on the battlefields and those left at home. In this article

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I present a few characteristics of Hungarian Catholic prayer books published during the First World War.<sup>1</sup>

## The war and the church

Although almost no one in Hungary doubted the justness of the First World War,<sup>2</sup> the Hungarian Catholic Church nevertheless received it with anxiety. When Prince Primate János Csernoch at the head of the church learnt about the declaration of war he immediately offered his help to rescue the country from its difficulties.

“The heads of the other churches were no less enthusiastic in their patriotism and readiness to make sacrifices. Like everywhere else in Europe at war, the servants of God, priests, ministers, rabbis blessed the weapons that brought death, urged the soldiers to struggle heroically, and those who remained at home to resign themselves to sacrifices.”<sup>3</sup>

The clergy, who at that time still expected that the war would end swiftly, hoped that the heroic struggles would bring an end to immorality leading to anarchy and selfishness arising from disbelief.<sup>4</sup> Ottokár Prohászka<sup>5</sup>, the greatest Hungarian church figure of the period also argued in a pastoral letter that the war would have the effect of ennobling morality, seeing in it a form of penance:

“[...] let us humble ourselves deeply under the hand of God and face these difficult times with great faith and without grumbling. After all He is the Lord; He sends the good and the bad, but he always sends

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1 Using material I collected myself, library catalogues and the offers of second-hand book dealers I was able to identify 20 Hungarian-language prayer books published for Catholic soldiers. I was able to actually examine and analyse close to half of these.

2 In face of the circle of church leaders supporting the declaration of war, the only open supporter in Hungary of a position against the war was Canon Sándor Gieswein (1856–1923), well known as a linguist, philosopher, anthropologist and religious historian. As a member of the Christian Socialist Party he boldly condemned the bloodshed and struggled for peace throughout the war. In 1915 he joined the Permanent International Peace Bureau, a pacifist organisation based in Bern. For further details, see: László, T. László 2005. 65 and Magyar Katolikus Lexikon [Hungarian Catholic Lexicon] (Kat. Lex.) IV. 1998. 99–101.

3 LÁSZLÓ, T. László 2005. 64.

4 SCHNAITER 2007. 184.

5 Ottokár Prohászka (1858–1927) was the greatest Hungarian Catholic church writer and orator of the period. He was an apostle of social care, a reformer at the turn of the century, and also a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The inscription on his grave reads: “Hungary’s apostle and teacher.” KAT. LEX. XI. 2006. 289–293.

it to benefit us; He places us in the trials of war too, and he places us there to make us better, more faithful, more noble and more ready to make sacrifices. He sends the sufferings so that we will love Him and each other more; He sends them so that we will draw closer to Him and join together in one; He sends it to purify our souls and so that we can make sacrifices for Him and for our fellow men."<sup>6</sup>

This heroic pathos attributed eschatological meaning to the ideal of war, in which the trials brought down by Providence served for the salvation of the individual's own soul and the spiritual renewal of the entire nation.<sup>7</sup>

In their declarations in 1915 the churches still addressed their followers with hope-filled encouragement, painting a vision of the approaching country of God:

"He may have guided us on difficult, unmarked paths that lead to battles, trenches and unmarked graves, but those paths only lead that way, they do not end there, because they are actually leading to Him."<sup>8</sup>

However, as the war dragged on, the situation in the hinterland deteriorated, and the horrors became widely known, opinions increasingly turned towards a stronger expression of the desire for peace.

### **Prayer books for the use of soldiers**

"Faith, as well as religious piety and the practical Christian life arising from it, played a big part in easing the sufferings and strengthening souls."<sup>9</sup>

To increase faith, the church held rousing sermons, sent out pastoral letters and organised extraordinary devotions. Frequent communion and temporary battle-field chapels served to intensify religious sentiments.<sup>10</sup> All these devotional practices were led by the army chaplains who provided spiritual care for the soldiers. Their task was to hold religious services as often as possible and strengthen the soldiers with their sermons. Before battles they gave absolution (the formula for forgiveness of sins) to the soldiers lined up in battle order. During battles they

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6 He wrote the pastoral letter on 3 August 1914. The full text of the letter can be read in Vol. 22 of his collected works: PROHÁSZKA 1929. 117–120.

7 LÁSZLÓ, T. László 2005. 67.

8 PROHÁSZKA 1915a 98.

9 SZÁNTÓ 1988. 572.

10 SZÁNTÓ 1988. 572.

were at the dressing stations and comforted the wounded. It was their duty to give the last rites to the dying on the battlefield and in case of death to accompany the soldier on his last journey. They also served in the military hospitals beside the trenches.<sup>11</sup> In addition to their tasks on the battlefield and in hospitals they played a key role in the distribution at the front of prayer books, booklets and leaflets published especially for soldiers.<sup>12</sup> These prayer books and other spiritual books also played a big part not only in keeping religious faith alive but also in humanising in the special circumstances of war.

Publication of the books began practically as soon as the outbreak of war.<sup>13</sup> The first book they began to distribute was the 11<sup>th</sup> edition (1909) of “Imák és intelmek a magyar katolikus hadfiak számára” [Prayers and Admonitions for Hungarian Catholic Soldiers] a work written in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the Capuchin army chaplain Bertalan Molnár Vid (1813–1898).<sup>14</sup> It had been in print since 1861, the 1909 edition had been revised by the Lazarist<sup>15</sup> Aladár Reviczky. He was also asked to prepare a new, more easily handled version of the 1909 edition. This appeared in 1915. Reviczky produced a number of other prayer books, not only and not exclusively for those serving on the battlefield, but also for the wounded and for those remaining at home. Having in mind also the needs of the ethnic minorities, the books were published in several languages.

Besides the Molnár Vid prayer book, three others deserve special attention. The first is “Háborús zsolnárok” [“Prayer book of psalms for time of war”] (Budapest 1915) by the Franciscan László Péri Bonaventura (1887–1934). We learn from the subtitle that it is a collection of prayers compiled from Scripture, from the 1793 work translated from Latin by Terencián Buberlée. It is in reality a collection of quotations. The prayers have been compiled from lines in the biblical psalms with war themes, linked to sentences in the Lord’s Prayer.<sup>16</sup> This book was not the only translation among the Hungarian wartime prayer books. We know from contemporary data that Bernat Dühr’s prayer book: “Mit Gott für König und Vaterland” (1914, Regensburg/München) also appeared in Hungarian translation. The third

11 SCHROTT 1915. 561–581, DR. VARGA 2010. 66–70.

12 DR. VARGA 2010. 81.

13 The biggest Hungarian church publisher of the time, the Szent István Társulat (Saint Stephen Society) reports on this in the minutes of its meeting held on 18 March 1915. MACZÁK 2010, available at: [http://www.mediakutato.hu/cikk/2010\\_01\\_tavas/09\\_elso\\_vilaghaboru\\_imakonyvek/](http://www.mediakutato.hu/cikk/2010_01_tavas/09_elso_vilaghaboru_imakonyvek/) retrieved on: 21. 08. 2017.

14 Data of the earlier editions: 1st edition, Mantova, 1861; 5th, 7th edition, Pest, 1864; 8th edition Eger, Budapest 1882; 11th edition, Budapest, 1909; 12th edition, Budapest, 1915. (reissued 3 times, then in 1916 a further four reprints were produced); 13th edition, 1917. Source: SZINNYEI 1891–1914. available online at: <http://mek.oszk.hu/03600/03630/html/m/m16616.htm> Accessed on 21. 08. 2017.

15 The Lazarists were members of the Congregation of the Mission, an order devoted to spiritual care and missionary work both at home and abroad. It was founded by Saint Vincent de Paul (1589–1660).

16 MACZÁK 2010. [http://www.mediakutato.hu/cikk/2010\\_01\\_tavas/09\\_elso\\_vilaghaboru\\_imakonyvek/](http://www.mediakutato.hu/cikk/2010_01_tavas/09_elso_vilaghaboru_imakonyvek/) Accessed on 21. 08. 2017.

prayer book is Péter Pázmány:<sup>17</sup> “Háborús idők imakönyve” [“Book of prayers for time of war”] (1915, Budapest). This is actually a new edition with minor revisions of the archbishop’s prayer book published in 1606. It was published in two formats, one that could be taken to the battlefield and a version for the use of those who remained at home.

It can be seen that prayer books published during the First World War were not necessarily new works. Often old works were adapted to the historical situation and reissued, or foreign works (especially in German) were translated into Hungarian.

“It may surprise the minister of religion, the historian and the literary historian that the different church institutions responded almost immediately with the mass publication of targeted and varied prayer books, however the majority definitely did not consider it absolutely necessary to update the contents.”<sup>18</sup>

In part this was obviously due to lack of time, on the other hand it was perhaps because they were guided by the hope that the war would soon be over.

The books were published by the Saint Stephen Society, the official publisher of the Hungarian Catholic church. The Society distributed many free of charge to soldiers in the barracks, hospitals and on the battlefields.

<b>1914</b>	670,000
<b>1915</b>	625,000
<b>1916</b>	345,000
<b>1917</b>	183,000

Number of prayer books published by the Saint Stephen Society during the war years.<sup>19</sup>

In my research to date I have succeeded in collecting a total of 17 different Catholic prayer books for soldiers. They include one that reached 13 editions and numerous reprints. Single-sheet prayer leaflets were also very widespread. It can be said that the Catholic church devoted considerable material means to meet the spiritual needs of soldiers fighting on the fronts and those who remained at home in the hinterland.

17 Péter Pázmány (1570–1637) a Jesuit, was a key figure in the Hungarian Counter-reformation following the Council of Trent. With his conversions, polemical essays, the schools, seminaries and university he founded he played a leading role in 16th-17th century church life and culture. *KAT. LEX. X.* 2005. 712–718

18 MACZÁK 2010. [http://www.mediakutato.hu/cikk/2010\\_01\\_tavas/09\\_elso\\_vilaghaboru\\_imakonyvek/](http://www.mediakutato.hu/cikk/2010_01_tavas/09_elso_vilaghaboru_imakonyvek/) Accessed on: 21. 08. 2017.

19 MÉSZÁROS 1998. 137.

They counted mainly on the army chaplains, priests and the faithful for distribution of the books.<sup>20</sup> However at times even the women who remained behind took part in this missionary work. In its June 1916 issue the Hungarian-language Jewish weekly “Egyenlőség” [“Equality”] carried a report about two big-hearted and exemplary women. One, Mrs Miklós Zay, was the wife of a Catholic magnate, the other an anonymous Jewish lady. Recognising the need for spiritual consolation and strength of soldiers wounded in the war who had suffered physical and spiritual trials, the two women worked to send prayer books and prayer leaflets to their compatriots in the trenches.

“I made it my duty to give a small prayer book or booklet to every one of our brave fighting men (together with other small souvenirs) at the last farewell and so far I have distributed thousands of these here,”<sup>21</sup>

wrote Mrs Miklós Zay to the National Jewish Office and, with her Jewish compatriots in mind, she requested copies of the “Pajzs és Vért” [“Shield and Armour”] prayer book for the soldiers. Her Jewish compatriot thought similarly: among others she distributed Aladár Reviczky’s Catholic prayer book for soldiers.<sup>22</sup> As we can read in the columns of *Egyenlőség*, the two women, “shining examples of freedom from any prejudice”, show that the tragedies of war had strengthened bonds between the denominations.

### **A few characteristics of the spirituality of the prayer books for soldiers**

“May the Prayer Book for Soldiers be a precious treasure of the fighting man from which he draws strength, new enthusiasm and consolation,” wrote imperial and royal army bishop Imre Bjelik on 25 March 1917 in his foreword to Molnár Vid’s *Prayer Book for Soldiers*. The principal aim of the battlefield prayers was to

<sup>20</sup> A circular letter from the Győr Bishopric, for example, reported on this: “The Saint Stephen Society has published a number of very useful occasional booklets for time of war that I warmly recommend to the attention of priests and for distribution among their parishioners. The booklets are the following: Uram irgalmazz nekünk [God have mercy on us] (10f), Imádkozzunk a hadbavonultakért [Let us pray for the men who have been mobilised] (20 f), Imák és intelmek katonák számára [Prayers and admonitions for soldiers] (20f), Bízál fiam, sebesült katonák részére [Trust my son, for wounded soldiers]. The latter booklet is sent by the Saint Stephen Society everywhere there are wounded soldiers. The author of the booklets is our esteemed church writer Aladár Reviczky. Győr, 9 October 1914.” Circular Letters of the Győr Bishopric, 1914. book recommendation No. 6115, available online at: [http://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/GyoriPuspoksegKorlevelei\\_1914/?pg=179&layout=s](http://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/GyoriPuspoksegKorlevelei_1914/?pg=179&layout=s) , Accessed on : 21. 04. 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Mrs Miklós Zay’s letter is cited in: *Egyenlőség* 24 June 1916, 10.

<sup>22</sup> For the report on the Jewish lady, see: *Egyenlőség* 17 June 1916, 3.

give courage, consolation and enthusiasm: "Great enthusiasm is required for war, without it defeat is certain. Only the thought of the nation and religion can arouse such enthusiasm."<sup>23</sup> References to the nation, the wounds suffered by the nation, the defence of its rights and justice appear as a frequent element in the texts, in what could be considered justification of the just war. "The war that threatens the homeland has wounded the hearts of us all,"<sup>24</sup> or "This nation is struggling for its rights and justice."<sup>25</sup> According to Christian tradition the aim of this just war is not to exclude the possibility of war but to condemn its evil, limit its harmful effects and make the methods of warfare more humane. It can only be initiated for morally acceptable reasons (unjust attack, failure to respect rights).<sup>26</sup>

Leafing through the books it can be seen that the majority followed one and the same subject matter: morning and evening prayers, prayers in time of war (for homeland, king, leaders), battlefield prayers, prayers for the wounded, prayers of those at home (all kinds of family members) for family members struggling on the battlefield, for a friend, etc. and finally in most books we find short compilations of biblical passages (one or two sentences) giving hope. The selection is thus understandably far more limited than in the customary general prayer books. These books do not contain the various devotional exercises and prayers linked to the feasts of the church year and to Mary. The individual texts are also brief and simple as these could be best used on the battlefield, as army bishop Imre Bjelik noted:

"If anyone has need of prayer it is above all the soldier; it gives him courage in danger, drips patience and cheer into his heart in the various difficulties of life, it brings him strength to perform his duty. Even if it is short, the soldier's prayer should be often and sincere!"<sup>27</sup>

The most emphasised among the short prayer texts are prayers of blessing and confession. The characteristics of modern warfare also play a role in this. It was a new feature in the First World War that the time of clashes could not be known in advance. It was therefore not possible to prepare the soldiers in the morning of battles. Soldiers could confess and ask for absolution, and in case of a greater emergency general absolution was also possible, for the soldiers were in fact continuously exposed to danger. This situation was further aggravated by the appearance of aeroplanes, meaning that soldiers on the battlefield had to be prepared for death as any time. The short prayers could be of help in these minutes filled with fear.<sup>28</sup>

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23 MOLNÁR VID (revised by Reviczky), 1915. 4.

24 WÉBER 1915. 231.

25 REVICZKY 1914. 14.

26 SOMFAI 1991. 131–133, 186–189.

27 Imre Bjelik sermon cited in: PRÁGA 2015. 8.

28 WITTENBERG 2009. 231.

Religious zeal arising from faith and practical Christian life became more intense among the soldiers and the faithful who remained at home. Amidst the trials of the war years many people found their way back to God, in many places the numbers receiving communion and especially those observing the First Friday increased ten- and even twenty-fold compared to the figures for the beginning of the century and growing numbers took communion daily.<sup>29</sup> According to the Catholic paper *Religio* "this war is the dawn of a religious renaissance."<sup>30</sup> A few issues later we read that

"Who knows whether the dawn is now breaking when the apostles who have fished all night and caught nothing hear the word of the Saviour 'Cast your net again'."<sup>31</sup>

These hope-filled ideas reflect the longing of all mankind and especially of the Hungarians for their moral cleansing and a return to religion. However disenchantment soon followed and the idea of penance for sins gave way to a longing for peace.

"Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world ... take from us our sin, the hatred and its curse, the war and give us what You alone can give, give us what You wept for and won for us – give us Your peace – give us international, Christian love; then the fighting and the war will end and we will place beside the laurel the olive branch, without which the laurel withers!"<sup>32</sup>

The prayer texts allow us to form a picture of the criteria for a good Christian soldier too.

"In the war do not be a tiger thirsting for blood. Avoid hardness of heart towards the poor, unfortunate inhabitants who live on the battlefield. Do not harm your unarmed fellow men. Spare their cattle. Show your nobility of heart. You too would appreciate it if your enemy treated you that way. Do not steal, do not rob, do not cause fire or harm. ... Be humane and helpful to the wounded, merciful to prisoners and God will show mercy to you too. Be obedient. If anywhere, this is the place for unconditional obedience. ... Fight with death-defying bravery. Be conscientiously obedient. Be merciful and wherever possible – and there will be a hundred chances for it – do

29 SALACZ 1974. 207.

30 MIHÁLYFI 1915. 13.

31 TÓTH 1915. 130.

32 Ottokár Prohászka's prayer below the nihil obstat permission number and date in Damján Vargha's prayer book. VARGHA 1917.

good to your fellow men. Comrades, into the battle! If you lose your earthly lives, you will win eternal life."<sup>33</sup>

In the properties listed in the prayer we find a new element of the views on war held in Christian moral tradition. The aim of war is not to destroy the enemy, or revenge, but the means of ensuring a just peace as soon as possible: "I humbly beg You to ease the horrors of war and the sufferings of the fighters, prevent all cruelty, console the wounded [...]."<sup>34</sup> Another quality of the Christian, believing soldier is that he accepts his struggles, suffering and death as penance out of love for the Lord of Hosts because – as Ottokár Prohászka wrote in an article on the correct behaviour in war – with this he is serving a higher order of good, the salvation of others. To ensure that this service is indeed just and sincere, the prayer books placed great emphasis on confession, communion, blessing, receiving the last rites and naturally also on frequent prayer, even if only in the form of one or two short sentences:

"Trust in man and force does not console and does not encourage; we must find our way to the Lord and remain steadfast. We must look to Him, although with anxiety in our heart, but with the confidence of hope. The days of war, the long days of suffering are of no account when we do penance."<sup>35</sup>

This appears in the texts as the reflection in human life of the sufferings of Christ.

"As the heavenly Father glorified the wounds of our Lord Jesus, so your wounds too bring only glory to our Hungarian homeland. Suffer and be consoled in this knowledge."<sup>36</sup>

"In the dark hours of danger I remember Your bitter sufferings Lord Jesus that I had forgotten in the carefree days of my life. Your sufferings and blood are the proof of Your love for us. I look on Your bleeding wounds and cry for mercy."<sup>37</sup>

To bear the sufferings of the battlefield the church focused on veneration of the Sacred Heart, in the hope that it would become a source of strength for the soldiers.

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33 REVICZKY 1916. 4–6.

34 MOLNÁR VID (revised by Reviczky), 1915. 18.

35 WÉBER 1915. 231.

36 From the foreword by Cardinal Prince-Primate János Csernoch to the prayer book "Trust, my son!". REVICZKY 1914. 2.

37 TOMA 1914. 1.

## Sacred Heart, the source of hope and penitence

It was not by chance that it was veneration of the Sacred Heart that became the cult offering the most hope during the war years. The Sacred Heart is the symbol of Christ's saving love in which the church saw the source of the obedience, patience, self-denial and meekness expected of the soldiers. It imagined that just as Jesus sacrificed his life for the sins of mankind, so all participants in the war must do penance and be reborn in the faith. Christ's suffering, sacrifice and death was a suitable symbol for a kind of *imitatio Christi* to be realised through it. There was a special need for this because in the opinion of the church: the war was a divine punishment for which penance had to be done.

"It was those human sins that we all committed that brought down the horrors of war on mankind. Let us wipe these sins from our hearts so that the colour of the earth can be renewed in justice and peace."<sup>38</sup>

It was hoped that penance for sins and a return to faith would bring victory for the soldiers fighting for the just cause.<sup>39</sup> Thus, when at the beginning of the First World War the population realised the horrors of war and their consequences Francis Joseph, king of Hungary dedicated his crown, throne and peoples to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.<sup>40</sup> Later the Hungarian bishops also joined the king's dedication: they drew up a special prayer for 1 January 1915 that was read in the churches, in this way too recognising and reinforcing the king's intention. With this Hungary not only became the country of Mary, but also the country of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.<sup>41</sup> A separate prayer book, "Jézus Szíve imakönyv katonák számára" ["Sacred Heart Prayer Book for Soldiers"] was also published in 1917 with a his foreword by army chaplain Imre Bjelik titled:

"Pray frequently and invoke the most sacred Heart of Jesus! Let the most sacred Heart of Jesus be your hope and the blessed virgin

38 TOMA 1914. 22.

39 BUSCH 1997. 96–104.

40 The dedication was made on 8 December 1914. MÜLLER 1944. 371–372.

41 It is known that a similar dedication was made by Germany and France, as well as by the Tyrolean bishops, so this is not an exclusively Hungarian characteristic. SCHLAGER 2005. 181; SCHNAITER 2007. 745. However the 20th century renaissance of the cult cannot be attributed solely to the influence of the war. Already in 1891 the famous "Rerum Novarum" encyclical of Pope Leo XIII drew attention to the tensions appearing and to be expected in the wake of industrialisation and capitalism. He wrote: "For, the happy results we all long for must be chiefly brought about by the plenteous outpouring of charity; of that true Christian charity which is the fulfilling of the whole Gospel law, which is always ready to sacrifice itself for others' sake, and is man's surest antidote against worldly pride and immoderate love of self." This guideline was fully in harmony with the basic ideal of the veneration of the Sacred Heart. In 1899 Pope Leo XIII dedicated the whole world to the Sacred Heart, it was then that he approved the Sacred Heart litany for the world. Since the Sacred Heart was regarded as the symbol of the saving love of God, this image proved well suited to counterbalance for the faithful the horrors of the wartime events. MÜLLER 1944. 371–372.

Mother be your saving star! Recommending you to their protection I  
 bless you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost.  
 Amen. BI army chaplain, 1916, on the day of the Blessed Lady of  
 Hungary."<sup>42</sup>

But it was not only the emergency of the war that led to an upswing in the cult. The clergy saw it as a means through which "there is hope for the society and the Church to escape from the present catastrophic problems [...]." <sup>43</sup> It is not so much the difficulties of the war that the author was referring to here, much rather to the symptoms of crisis in the years following the turn of the century, to the anomalies of bourgeois development, the political and economic tensions, the masses turning away from the church and religion. Penance had to be done for these sins too in the war.<sup>44</sup>

### Prayers against bullets

The collective fears and anxieties caused by the war also evoked prayer texts that activated ancient tradition and reached the soldiers in need not through the official church channels. These texts were used as amulets having special power. They included holy letters, prayers giving protection against bullets, and in cases even the prayer books themselves could function as amulets. There thus existed a kind of notion of war/soldiers in which beliefs related to religion and prayer occupied an important place.<sup>45</sup> This was not a new custom: prayers against bullets also appeared in mediaeval manuscripts and later also in prayer books, and from time to time were used in situations of armed conflict.<sup>46</sup> One such text that was frequently found was the *Prayer against enemy bullets*, a holy or heavenly

42 From the foreword by Imre Bjelik to the prayer book *Jézus Szíve imakönyve katonák számára* [*Sacred Heart Prayer Book for Soldiers*]. 1917.

43 BÍRÓ 1933. 4.

44 SZIGETI 2014. 53.

45 We know this, among others, from the material collected by Ákos Szendrey (1902–1965) a renowned Hungarian ethnological researcher of the time who in 1916 published in several parts a study on his field work concerning superstitions in the trenches. The inspiration came from an appeal issued by the Kisfaludy Society in 1915 for collection of war-related folklore. Szendrey 1916. 294. Similar research was also conducted in other countries. We know of the appeals for collecting made Adolf Spamer ethnological researcher in Germany, that inspired an article written by Karl Pümer in 1916. According to his report, the use of amulets, hearts, crosses, relics and holy letters was very popular also among German and Russian soldiers. BEIL – WINKLE 2005. 149-178.

46 The relevant entries in HdA give detailed information on the different types of heavenly letters protecting against bullets over the course of history: HdA IV. 1931/32, Himmelsbrief [Heavenly letters] 21–27, HdA VIII. 1936–37, Sonntagsbrief [Sunday letters] 99–104, III. 1930/31, Grafenamulett [Blessing text of Count Philip, blessing of weapons] 1111–1112, VII. 1935/36, Schutzbrief [Protecting letters] 1384–1385, VI. 1931–32, Ölbergspruch [Blessing of weapons] 1246–1247. The study by Emese Szojka drew my attention to the various entries. SZOJKA 1990. 178-191. See also: JUNG 1994. 4–17, 18-34.

letter, comparable in form to an ordinary letter. According to the instructions it contained it was “to be carried at all times”, so that it could stop bleeding, heal wounds, give protection against armed attacks:

“every Catholic in possession of this letter can boldly face any danger, is protected from all enemies, cannot be touched by anything, need have no fear of bullet or bayonet, of murderer or thief, in short it wards off all trouble and sickness. He must have no fear of death or fire or water, any pistol or bullet aimed at him misses its target at God’s command. I know that my words have been doubted, but believe! The immortal soul of Lord Jesus is found only in my words. In short every Catholic should test this on an animal: copy the letters and tie them around the neck of a dog and shoot at it from any distance. You will see that the bullet misses its target and every person who carries this letter will be protected in the same way.”<sup>47</sup>

Almost certainly many soldiers grasped at the beliefs promised in the letter, the reason why many of them carried the letter or a copy of the combination of letters it contained folded up tightly in a pocket above the heart or around the neck.<sup>48</sup>

## Conclusion

“The war with its irrational violence and senseless destruction of life and values”<sup>49</sup> did not bring the expected purification with which the prayer texts encouraged those fighting on the battlefield. As Prohászka wrote in his article

“friend and foe are praying; the same cry rises to heaven from the opposing sides and those praying in the trenches want to destroy the enemy who are praying. They are all praying and all striving to ensure that the prayer of the other side is not answered. If the Lord hears one, he will allow the other side to be destroyed; if I can kill, then the same prayer that filled my soul with the longing for liberation and trust is frozen on the lips of the other. This request for protection by religiosity in wartime thus contains impossible things.”<sup>50</sup>

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47 The letter can be found in the Data Archive of the Department of Anthropology of Szeged University (SZENTA), it entered the collection a few years ago as a gift.

48 These letters did not disappear after the First World War either. They reappeared during the years of the Second World War, and even again in the 1990s when considerable numbers were found during the Serb wars. SZOJKA 1996. 178–191, JUNG 1994. 4–17, 18–34.

49 PROHÁSZKA 1915. 882.

50 PROHÁSZKA 1915. 882.

It is perhaps precisely these impossibilities that in the final years of the war led “masses of believers and people who have lost their faith to want something new.”<sup>51</sup> They were no longer enthused by the realisation of God’s plan for the world; everyone was disillusioned by the death of millions and the misery that came in its wake. Only the longing for peace remained on the lips of those praying in the trenches: “Will You have mercy on us Lord of Heaven? Will the beautiful dawn break over the Hungarians, Will the star of Peace shine again over us?”<sup>52</sup>

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BELL CHIMES AND THE ROLE OF BELLS  
IN THE LIFE OF A COMMUNITY  
AND THE REQUISITION OF BELLS  
FOR MILITARY PURPOSES (1917–1918)

**Abstract:** The article examines the question of bells requisitioned and melted down for military purposes during the First World War through the example of Csongrád, a small Hungarian Catholic town. It examines the role played by the parish priest and the strategies used to save the bells. To assess the extent of the loss to the community it describes the bells in Csongrád before 1917, the way in which they were rung and the local characteristics of the bells.<sup>1</sup> The research reveals the local characteristics of a changing set of customs under the influence of a historical event. The efforts made to save the bells illustrate the expanding moral and ethical role of the priesthood.

**Keywords:** parish history, bell-ringing customs, First World War, requisition

### Csongrád bells before 1917

In the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century Csongrád had a small church named after Hungarian King Saint Stephen, built of reed, timber and stone without a tower.<sup>2</sup> According to a protocol drawn up in 1716 the fittings of the church included two small and a larger bell.<sup>3</sup> The first inventory drawn up in 1726 in the Church of Our Lady (now Saint Roch) built after the small church was destroyed by fire, also mentions these bells.<sup>4</sup> The larger bell was dedicated to the Assumption of

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1 Data on the “enlisted” Csongrád bells have survived in the second volume of the *Historia Domus* thanks to the care of the parish priest. Although the notes made by the parish priest Dr. Thury have been published earlier by Dudás – Kóhegyi, I have noted the physical parameters and inscriptions of the bells in the footnotes to facilitate identification. DUDÁS – KÓHEGYI 2000.

2 It stood in the yard of the house at what is now Szent Rókus tér 4.

3 VPL LVis. Liber 3. 92–94.

4 VPL LVis. Liber 3. 400–401. 1726. For more details, see: BARA 2016.

Mary, one of the smaller bells to King Saint Stephen. The name of the third is unknown.<sup>5</sup>

The only information preserved in the records on the bell of the chapel of Saints Roch, Rosalia and Sebastian, built in 1738 (behind the present Church of Our Lady) is that it was later used in the cemetery and until it broke.<sup>6</sup> By 1761 the number of bells had increased to five;<sup>7</sup> In 1778 seven bells hung in the temporary belfry built beside the church.<sup>8</sup> We have precise data on only two of the bells from that period. A small, damaged bell cast in 1758, that must have escaped attention during the requisition in 1917 (or the parish priest may have remained tactfully silent about it) can still be found in the storeroom of the parish church of Our Lady.<sup>9</sup> The other, the Assumption of Mary bell cast in 1760 was very likely made by melting down the Assumpta bell listed in the very first inventory – perhaps at the time the new parish church was built. Like the previous one, this bell mentioned as the “old second” bell, was made in the Buda workshop of Antal Zechenter; it had a relief on its body of Jesus on the cross.<sup>10</sup>

Parish priest András Kanyó had the “old big bell” in today’s Church of Our Lady made in the year the tower was built (1784). The first entry in Hungarian in the Csongrád *Historia Domus* is one of the parish priest’s sermons in which he encouraged the faithful to donate more generously. We know from the sermon that, thanks to the parish priest, two other priests, the chaplains and the parish servants, they had already collected 142 forints 9 krajcárs for the bell.<sup>11</sup> The Csongrád parishioners must have heeded the parish priest’s words: in the same year they ordered from the Buda workshop of János Brunner the large bell<sup>12</sup> that glorified the protecting Trinity. To mark a death the people of Csongrád paid 50 krajcárs for each set of chimes. The bell-ringer rang the smaller bells in the parish church free of charge.<sup>13</sup>

A year later they fished out of the Körös river a “phantom bell” that according to its inscription had been made in Eperjes (today Prešov in Slovakia).<sup>14</sup> Accord-

5 VPL APar. Cs. 1735.

6 DUDÁS – KÓHEGYI 2000. 389.

7 VPL LVis. Liber 6. 26–29 June 1761.

8 VPL LVis. Liber 7. 1778.

9 The passing bell was made in 1758 in the Buda workshop of Antal Zechenter. Its inscription: GOSCH MICH ANTONI ZECHENTER IN OFEN ANNO 1758. NPI *Historia Domus* Vol. II, 25.

10 Weight of the bell 354 kg, diameter 86 cm, height 78 cm. Inscription: HAEC CAMPANA FUSA EST IN HONOREM B. MARIA VIRGINIS IN COELOS ASSUMPTAE PRO ECCLA CSONGRADIENSI ANNO 1760. GOSS MICH ANTON ZECHENTER IN OFEN 1760. NPI *Historia Domus* Vol. II, 25.

11 NPI *Historia Domus* Vol. I, 37–40.

12 Weight 843 kg, diameter 113 cm, height 100 cm. Inscription: IN HONOREM SS. TRINITATIS SUM BUDAE ANNO 1785. PRO CSONGRÁD. JOHANN BRUNNER GOSS MICH IN OFEN. NPI *Historia Domus* Vol. II, 26.

13 VPL APar. Cs. 4 July 1891. Letter from Antal Hegyi to the Vác Episcopal See.

14 Referring to László Tari, local historian Lajos Dudás also stated that it was pulled out of the Körös river on 4 March 1785. Tari 1977. 13. The original inscription on the bell: MAR IHS GOSSE MICH ANNO MDCXXXII GEORG WIERD IN EPPERIES. It weighed one hundredweight 15 pounds. NPI *Historia Domus* Vol. II, 26–27.

ing to the legend the tiny Saint Stephen's church, the predecessor of the present Saint Roch church did not have a bell so an old hand bell was used to signal that mass was about to begin. When the hand bell was rung, the people of Csongrád heard the muffled sound of a bell coming up from the Tisza river. For a long while fishermen superstitiously avoided the spot from where the mysterious sounds were heard. Until one of them caught in his net the bell that for two centuries served as the passing bell of the Saint Roch Church. At the time the bell was raised from the river an old beggar said that the people of Csongrád would only have the bell for as long as they rang it for the salvation of souls drowned in the river.<sup>15</sup> The small bell also known as the "little second" cracked in 1912 and the authorities had it recast in the workshop of Antal Novotny in Temesvár (now Timișoara, Romania).<sup>16</sup>

The present Saint Roch Church's only bell, the Roch bell that can still be seen today was ordered by the town, as the holder of the advowson, in 1793 from the bell founder József Brunner of Buda.<sup>17</sup> The date the bell was made figures mistakenly in several church inventories and also in the relevant literature.<sup>18</sup> The bells that served the filial church right up to 1818, when the tower was built, hung in a wooden belfry near the church.

The old bell from the Felgyó estate (that according to the literature "survived" the requisitioning) was made in 1813 in the Pest workshop of Henrik Eberhard.<sup>19</sup> In 1825 parishioners of the Saint Roch Church had a 286-kilogram bell made, with the figures of Saint Anne, Saint Sebastian, Saint Florian and Saint Nicholas in relief on the body.<sup>20</sup> Half a century later a new bell was placed in the tower of Saint Roch Church – beside the two already there.<sup>21</sup> This small bell was ordered by the town as holder of the advowson; it was sent to Vác to be consecrated as a *passing bell*.<sup>22</sup> In 1891 (for reasons unknown) the sources mention only two bells in the Saint Roch Church. The town has these two bells adjusted at its own expense – presumably the suspension system was changed.<sup>23</sup>

15 GÁT 2006. 162; GyÖNGYÖSSY 2016. 101.

16 *Csongrádi Újság*, 29 December 1912. Vol. X, no. 52, p. 3. Weight of the new passing bell 53 kg, diameter 47 cm, height only 40 cm. New inscription: D.O.M. KÉSZÜLT EPERJESÉN 1632 BEN. UJRAÖNTÖTTE: NOVOTNY ANTAL TEMEVÁROTT 1913 BAN. [D.O.M. MADE IN EPERJES IN 1632. RECAST BY ANTAL NOVOTNY IN TEMESVÁR IN 1913.] Dudás (manuscript) 1997. 5.

17 Inscription: GOSS MICH IOSEPH BRUNNER IN OFEN / IN HONOREM ST ROCHI COMUNITAS CSONGRADIENSIS CURAVIT 1793.

18 The bell is mentioned in an 1842 church visitation protocol and in the 1885 church inventory. Both places state that the bell was made in 1723. Cf. VPL LVIs. Liber 17. 154. 1842; NPI Inventory of the Saint Roch church, 1885; Dudás – KőHEGYI 2000. 394.

19 Dudás – KőHEGYI 2000. 395.

20 The "old bell" was of middling size and weight: 286 kg, diameter 84 cm, height 74.5 cm. Inscription: AUDIT HENRIENS EBERHARDT, PESTINI 1825. NPI Historia Domus Vol. II, 26.

21 The small bell weighed 24 kg, diameter 35 cm, height 30 cm. Inscription: CSONGRÁD VÁROS KÖZÖNSÉGE NEVÉBEN CSONGRÁD VÁROS RENDEZETT TANÁCSÚ HATÓSÁGA 1874. [ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF CSONGRÁD BY THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF CSONGRÁD 1874.] NPI Historia Domus Vol. II, 27.

22 VPL APar. Cs. 23 March 1875. Letter from József Szvoboda to the Diocesan Office.

23 NPI 14 July 1891. Letter from the Csongrád assembly to the Bishop of Vác.

The Csongrád parish priest who had the most bells made was Antal Hegyi (1886–1902). The two quintal Agnus Dei (“little second”) bell of the Church of Our Lady was recast in a larger size in 1891 because of a crack; it was raised up into the tower on 24 April, attracting much interest.<sup>24</sup> We do not know when the first bell was originally made.<sup>25</sup>

Parish priest Antal Hegyi devoted special attention to fostering the veneration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.<sup>26</sup> He had new statues made (1888), he increased the membership of the Csongrád Sacred Heart Society to several thousand, he taught the faithful the songs of the Sacred Heart cult – from his own publication that he had produced for the Society.<sup>27</sup> In 1889, when the spring flood threatened Csongrád with disaster, Antal Hegyi commended the suffering settlement to the protection of the Sacred Heart. When the flood subsided the parish priest officially proposed to the diocesan bishop that the feast of the Sacred Heart be a special votive day in Csongrád. Konstantin Schuszter approved the request with the proviso that there should continue to be no ban on work on the Friday following the second Sunday after Whitsun. Antal Hegyi wished to crown the successfully expanded Sacred Heart cult with a bell bigger than any of the previous bells. In 1891 he had stonemasons measure the load-bearing capacity of the tower. He accepted with disappointment that the tower could not take the strain of a three ton bell.<sup>28</sup> A bell of the largest size specified by the masons (1.8 tons) was ordered from the Buda workshop of Ferenc Walser for the price of 4800 forints, with a 15-year guarantee.

People attending the Feast of Assumption witnessed the arrival of the Sacred Heart bell at the parish church. According to tradition it was cast from the same giant Belgian cannon as the bell of Matthias Church in Budapest.<sup>29</sup> At the official raising of the bell the parish priest scattered coins from the tower among

24 *Csongrádi Lap*, 26 April 1891. Vol. I, no. 12, p. 3. The bell originally weighed 85 kg. After recasting its weight became 204 kg, diameter 67 cm, height 60 cm. Inscription: AGNUS DEI QUI TOLLIS PECCATA MUNDI MISERERE NOBIS / IN HONOREM FILII DEI PRO ECCLIA PAROCHIALI CSONGRADIENSI HAEC CAMPANA REFUSA ET AMPLIFICATA EST ANNO 1891. Walser F. Budapest. NPI Historia Domus Vol. II, 26.

25 This is probably the bell that according to one record was made in 1742. DUDÁS – KŐHEGYI 2000. 389.

26 Cult based on the vision of Margaret Mary Alacoque (1674) that spread with the support of the Jesuits and became popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

27 *Jézus és Mária Szent Szíveinek dicsérete. Imakönyv a csongrádi Jézus Szent Szíve Társulat tagjainak használatára.* [In Praise of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Prayerbook for the use of members of the Csongrád Sacred Heart Society.] A FT. Egyházmegyei hatóság engedelmével kiadja: A Társulat Elöljárósága. Szilber János nyomdája Csongrádon. 1903. CsKK TLM NA 94-2008.1

28 VPL APar. Cs. 22 June 1891. Letter from Antal Hegyi to the Vác Episcopal See.

29 *Csongrádi Újság*, 13 June 1909. Vol. VII, no. 24, p. 2. According to data given by Lajos Dudás the bell was somewhat lighter, 1431 kg. Dudás (manuscript) 1997. 6. Inscription: IN HONORUM SS. CORDIS D.N. JESU CHRISTI REGNANTE SS. MO PONTIFICE LEONE XIII. ANTISTITE VACIENSI SCHUSZTER REGE APOSTOLICO FRANCISCO JOZEFÓ I. PATRONO ALEXANDRO KÁROLYI COMITE J. V. K. HAEC CAMPANA MAJOR CURIS ET STUDIIS ANTONII HEGYI PAROCHI PRO ECCLESIA CSONGRADIENSI FUSA EST ANNO 1891. Cast by Ferenc Walser in Budapest. NPI Historia Domus Vol. II, 29.

the onlookers.<sup>30</sup> For the occasion Antal Hegyi had the parish church's other bells adjusted.<sup>31</sup>

The Sacred Heart bell was rung at three o'clock every Friday afternoon with the exception of Good Friday – in remembrance of Christ's death on the cross; on major church feasts this bell was also rung at dawn, noon and evening. There was a separate fund for the bell: mourning families paid 2 forints 30 crowns for each set of chimes. It must have been a substantial source of income given that family members of wealthier deceased in Csongrád had the bell rung for the repose of their souls every hour up to the day of the funeral.<sup>32</sup>

The weight and vibrations of the bells in the tower of the Church of Our Lady began to cause cracks in the vault of the church around the turn of the century. The author of an article in *Csongrádi Lap* noted ominously that ever since the Sacred Heart bell had been placed in the tower there was a danger that the vault would collapse on the heads of the congregation.<sup>33</sup> A year later a piece of masonry weighing around a hundredweight did in fact fall from the exterior of the tower.<sup>34</sup> In the summer of 1910 the bells were withdrawn from use for an extended period while the axis was replaced. In 1913 the old big bell had to be silenced for a few days for the repair of faults resulting from regular use.<sup>35</sup>

The earliest Csongrád cemetery bell was probably the one transported by boat from Pest in 1851, personally accompanied to Csongrád by the parish priest Lajos Virter.<sup>36</sup> The second cemetery bell glorified the risen Christ; it was made in 1891, during the time of parish priest Antal Hegyi.<sup>37</sup> The big cemetery bell weighing ten hundredweight and tuned to E flat was paid for by a bequest in the will of János Kuruczleki who died without descendants. The bell worth two thousand forints was consecrated in the name of the donor's patron saint, Saint John the Apostle in 1896. The bell arrived by train from the workshop of Antal Novotny in Temesvár. Following the will of the donor it was rung for half an hour every year at the time of his death (at one in the afternoon of 16 October) for the repose of his soul and

30 *Csongrádi Lap*, 30 August 1891. Vol. I, no. 30, p. 3.

31 "Among the old bells, the modification of the big bell and the passing bell was very successful, but that of the so-called big second did not succeed because its clapper became so heavy that it was hardly able to strike the bell. The bell founder says the cause of the problem is that the old bell loop was not placed in the centre of the bell and so the bell is not properly balanced when it swings. [According to Antal Hegyi the problem was that the bell was too close to the old big bell below it and so there was not enough space for a sufficiently long mechanism for the clapper. As a result it struck only one side of the bell, that opposite the rope.] Another fault was that the axle bed of the small second bell snapped when the bell was fitted and so has to be replaced." VPL APar. Cs. 18 September 1891. Letter from Antal Hegyi to the Vác Diocesan Authority.

32 VPI APar. Cs. 4 July 1891. Letter from Antal Hegyi to the Vác Diocesan Authority.

33 *Csongrádi Lap*, 5 June 1904. Vol. XIV, no. 23, p. 3.

34 "All those bells and bell-ringing are damaging the tower." *Csongrádi Újság*, 1 May 1904. Vol. II, no. 18, p. 3.

35 *Csongrádi Újság*, 20 July 1913. Vol. XI, no. 29, p. 2.

36 Cited by: DUDÁS (manuscript) 1997. 6.

37 Weight 120 kg, diameter 57 cm, height 49 cm. Inscription: IN HONOREM RESURECTIONIS DN. JESU CR. FUSA 1891. ÖNTÖTTE [CAST BY] WALSER F. BUDAPEST. NPI Historia Domus Vol. II, 28.

that of his deceased wife.<sup>38</sup> It was rung by the cemetery caretaker three times a day and for burials. In the following decades the cemetery belfry was often chosen as the place for suicides.<sup>39</sup>

Because the people of Csongrád too were of the opinion that *an honest person does not settle in a place where the bells cannot be heard*, parallel with the process of creating growing numbers of scattered farms more and more belfries were erected in outlying areas. One of the earliest known of these bells stood in an area called the Old Vineyards; we know that by 1853 it had a paid bell-ringer.<sup>40</sup> This bell cracked in 1868; the authorities had it repaired with the costs covered by public contributions.<sup>41</sup> Most of the belfries erected in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century were located next to farm schools, where priests from the town also held religious services. Pupils of the schools or a temporary “bell-ringer” living in the vicinity rang these bells three times a day.<sup>42</sup> In 1916 there were 13 belfries in the extensive outlying areas of Csongrád.

The dedication of the Csongrád bells allows us to draw conclusions regarding the living cults and the most popular saints. On the basis of the known reliefs and inscriptions,<sup>43</sup> the dedications of the Csongrád bells before 1917 were the following: the bell of the *Blessed Lady taken up to Heaven* with a relief of *Christ crucified*;<sup>44</sup> *Saint Stephen*,<sup>45</sup> *Holy Trinity*;<sup>46</sup> relief of *Saint Anne*, *Saint Nicholas*, *Saint Sebastian*

38 A special fee was charged for ringing the big cemetery bell: one forint 30 krajcárs for each set of chimes, of which 30 krajcárs went to the cemetery caretaker. *Csongrádi Közlöny*, 5 January 1895. Vol. 1, p. 3. The bell weighed: 1049 kg, diameter: 126 cm, height: 108 cm. Inscription: A VILÁG ELMŰLIK EZ AZ ÓKÍVÁNSÁGA. AKI PEDIG ISTEN AKARATÁT MEGTESZI MINDÖRÖKKÉ MEGMARAD. JÁN 2.17 EZEN HARANGOT SZENT JÁNOS EVANGÉLISTA TISZTELETÉRE ISTENBEN BOLDOGULT KURUCZLEKI JÁNOS ÉS SZIVÁK JULIANNA HITESPÁR VÉGRENDELETI HAGYOMÁNYÁBÓL A CSONGRÁDI RÓM. KAT. TEMETŐNEK ÖNTETTE HEGYI ANTAL PLÉBÁNOS AZ ÚRNAK 1896. ÉVÉBEN. AZ ÉLŐKET HÍVOM, A HOLTAKAT SIRATOM, A VILLÁMOKAT ELHÁRÍTOM. NOVOTNY ANTAL TEMESVÁROTT, [THE WORLD AND ITS DESIRES PASS AWAY BUT HE WHO DOES THE WILL OF GOD LIVES FOREVER. JOHN 2.17. ORDERED BY PARISH PRIEST ANTAL HEGYI IN 1896 FOR THE CSONGRÁD RC CEMETERY IN HONOUR OF SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST FROM THE LEGACY OF THE DEVOUT JÁNOS KURUCZLEKI AND HIS WIFE JULIANNA SZIVÁK. I CALL THE LIVING, MOURN THE DEAD, WARD OFF LIGHTNING. ANTAL NOVOTNY TEMESVÁR] *NPI Historia Domus* Vol. II, 27.

39 *Csongrádi Újság*, 20 July 1913. Vol. XI, no. 29, p. 2; *Csongrádi Lap*, 10 May 1914. Vol. XXIV, no. 19, p. 2.

40 In 1853 István Lantos vineyard bell-ringer complained to the municipal authority that although he was entitled to a payment of 2 garas from the larger vineyard owners and 1 garas from the smaller owners, very few of them paid him. He requests that his income be paid from the municipal funds – as it was earlier because of the same difficulties. The representatives voted in favour of payment of an annual sum of 3 pengőforints. *Forgó – Forgó* 1987. 62.

41 MNL CsML CsL Community documents, 29 February 1868. Minutes no. 145.

42 “Among the vineyards there stands a cross [...] with a small belfry beside it, that is rung at dawn, noon and evening.” *VPL APriv.* János Mátyus, 10 May 1823. Letter from the Csongrád judges to the Vác diocesan bishop.

43 We do not know the dedication of all bells.

44 This is presumably the Blessed Lady bell mentioned in 1735, recast. Church of Our Lady 1760.

45 Former parish church (now Saint Roch Church), mentioned: 1735.

46 Church of Our Lady 1785.

and Saint Florian;<sup>47</sup> Sacred Heart bell with reliefs of an angel and a pelican;<sup>48</sup> Sacred Heart bell with the relief of a heart surrounded by a crown of thorns;<sup>49</sup> Immaculate Heart of the Virgin Mary;<sup>50</sup> Agnus Dei (Lamb of God) bell with a cross;<sup>51</sup> Christ resurrected;<sup>52</sup> Saint John the Evangelist;<sup>53</sup> and Saint Roch<sup>54</sup>.

The early Saint Stephen bell had the same dedication as the old church that burnt down: for the people of Csongrád this saint and Hungarian king was their protector against the Turks and the challenges of the Reformation. Although one of the first bells of the church was dedicated to the Assumption of Mary, the living cult of Mary in Csongrád is not reflected in the dedications of the bells; typically they were dedicated to the adoration of Christ crucified and resurrected, and glorified him as the Lamb of God.

It would appear that veneration of the Holy Trinity in Csongrád had remained popular since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century (see the tympanum of the altars in today's Saint Roch Church – 1723–24; Holy Trinity bell – 1785; Holy Trinity sculptural group – 1869). The reason for the cult could be the protection it offered against plagues and other dangers – that is, it closely resembled the veneration of Saint Roch.

As a memory of the revived cult of Sebastian during the epidemic of the plague, the people of Csongrád called the “old big bell” in today's Saint Roch Church decorated with reliefs of Saint Anne, Saint Nicholas, Saint Sebastian and Saint Florian, the Sebastian bell. The portrayals of Bishop Saint Nicholas and Saint Florian are the only ones in the town, we do not know of any other cult symbol attached to them. The appearance of Saint Florian on the bell could have represented the wish to ward off fires, while the fishermen and navvies of Csongrád-Belsőváros who had the bell made could have looked for help from the Bishop of Myra who supported the poor.

We know that under the influence of the Franciscans the veneration of the grandmother of Jesus, patron of family peace and childbirth was already popular in the settlement in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Both churches in Csongrád had a Saint Anne altar, her feast was celebrated with special pomp. Later a booklet in praise of Saint Anne was compiled by parish priest Antal Hegyi.<sup>55</sup>

The two Sacred Heart and Heart of Mary bells were the result of the systematic pastoral work of parish priest Antal Hegyi. The imposing Sacred Heart bell proclaimed the cult of the town's “new protector”, while the bells of the

47 Saint Roch Church 1825.

48 Church of Our Lady 1891.

49 Homoki Chapel, Bokros, 1900.

50 Homoki Chapel, Bokros, 1906.

51 Church of Our Lady 1891.

52 Cemetery bell, 1891.

53 Cemetery bell, 1891.

54 Saint Roch Church 1723.

55 NPI *Szent Anna asszony tisztelete*. A Ft. Egyházmegyei Hatóság engedélyével kiadott a csongrádi keresztény hívek használatára. [*Veneration of Saint Anne*. Published with the permission of the Diocesan Authority for the use of the Christian faithful of Csongrád.] Csongrádi Közlöny nyomdája, 1896.

Bokros-pusztá (Homoki) chapel erected at the initiative of the parish priest created the sacral centre (“heart”) of a cluster of farms that was gradually becoming a settlement.<sup>56</sup>

The Saint John bell in the cemetery pays tribute to the memory of the fiery apostle Saint John who raised the dead and occupied a place beside Jesus. The quotation from the First Epistle of John reminds the faithful of the mortality of all things.

Regarding the place where the bells were made, before the railway was built between Csongrád and Kiskunfélegyháza they were always ordered from bell founders in Buda (Zechenter, Eberhard, Brunner, Walser), as the safest way of transporting them was by boat down the Danube and up the Tisza. In the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century bells for Csongrád were also cast in Arad and Temesvár (Hőnig, Novotny), and transported by rail to the settlement. Seeing the many orders arriving from Csongrád from the increasingly prosperous farming and vine-growing population, for years Novotny and Walser – the main rival bell founders – advertised in the local papers.



In the 1910s the Csongrád parish possessed and supervised a total of 25 bells: three in the cemetery, three in the Saint Roch Church in Belsőváros, four in the Church of Our Lady, two in the Bokros (Homoki) Chapel, and 13 in the outlying areas.

Advertisement by the legal successor of the Walser factory in *Csongrádi Lap*, 20 February 1898, Vol. VIII, no. 9, p. 4.

56 The big bell in the Homoki Chapel weighed 96 kg, diameter 64 cm, height 55 cm. Inscription: JÉZUS SZENTSÉGES SZÍVE TISZTELETÉRE ÖNTETTÉK A CSONGRÁD-HOMOKI HÍVEK 1900 BAN. OH JÉZUSOM ÉDES SZÍVE, ADD HOGY TÉGED MINDIG JOBBAN SZERESSELEK. HŐNIG F. ÖNTÖDÉJE ARADON. [CAST AT THE ORDER OF THE FAITHFUL OF CSONGRÁD-HOMOKI IN 1900 IN HONOUR OF THE SACRED HEART. OH SWEET HEART OF MY JESUS, MAY I ALWAYS LOVE YOU MORE. CAST BY F. HŐNIG IN ARAD.] NPI Historia Domus Vol. II, 27; The smaller bell in the Homoki Chapel weighed 61 kg. Inscription: SZŰZ MÁRIA SZEPLŐTELEN SZÍVÉNEK TISZTELETÉRE ÖNTETTE HEGYI ANTAL PLÉBÁNOS 1906. SZŰZ MÁRIA ÉDES SZÍVE LÉGY AZ ÉN MENEDÉKEM. ÖNTÖTTE: HŐNIG F. ARAD. [CAST AT THE ORDER OF PARISH PRIEST ANTAL HEGYI IN HONOUR OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY 1906. SWEET HEART OF VIRGIN MARY BE MY REFUGE. CAST BY F. HŐNIG, ARAD.]

## Use of the bells

The descriptions of the Csongrád bells include information on the way they were used. We know from these, as well as from other sources, that the winter and summer bell-ringing practice differed: From Saint Michael's day to Saint George's day, that is, in the winter period the *Angelus* bell rang on weekdays at 5 a.m. and again at 7 p.m. For many people the morning bell meant the time of awakening and morning prayers, and in the evening – after prayers – the animals were driven in, girls walking in the town returned home and the gates were closed. During the summer period the bells rang an hour later; the time of the noon bell remained unchanged.<sup>57</sup> The bells were rung as a reminder one hour or half an hour before the start of mass, as well as at the beginning and end of mass.<sup>58</sup>

The bell-ringer noticed from afar the approach of pilgrims arriving with banners for the church feast and welcomed them with continuous bell-ringing.<sup>59</sup> The bells were rung for an hour on All Souls Day in remembrance of the dead. There was also long ringing to mark the birthday of the king and the pope, and when the diocesan bishop visited the town.

Besides their everyday use, the bells in Csongrád were rung mainly as a mark of respect for the dead. When parish priest András Kanyó explained to parishioners the need for a big bell he spoke mainly of the role it would play in the cult of the dead:

"This will be the bell that will encourage you, my dear faithful, in the service of God. It will be the bell that reminds you every hour it chimes that you must be ready at any time for your last moment. In a word: This will be the bell that tolls its mournful sound when you take your last farewell from this sinful world, accompanying you on your journey to the cemetery."<sup>60</sup>

In 1843 the bell-ringer provided one set of chimes for everyone to ease the passing of the seriously ill. A payment of six krajcárs had to be made for each further set of chimes.<sup>61</sup> The order of chimes of the passing bell indicated the gender of the dead mainly by the inclusion or exclusion of a pause.<sup>62</sup> Even the poorest families made an effort in addition to the expense of a wake, to pay to have the

57 From Saint Michael's day to Saint George's day weekday masses were held at 6 and 8 a.m. *Csongrádi Közlöny*, 27 September 1896. Vol. III, no. 39, p. 3.

58 DUDÁS – KÓHEGYI 2000. 387.

59 *Csongrádi Közlöny*, 18 August 1895. Vol. II, no. 33, p. 3.

60 NPI *Historia Domus* Vol. I, 39.

61 VPL APar. Cs. 17 September 1843. Letter from András Keviczky bell-ringer to the Bishop of Vác.

62 For the death of an adult man the bell-ringer rang the big bell three times, then after a short pause rang the passing bell (--- : +++). If the deceased was a woman there was no pause (--- +++). For a male child two chimes were rung with the big bell bell, then after a pause the passing bell (--- : +++), for a girl there was no pause between the two (--- +++). EGYHÁZI – MÉSZÁROS (manuscript) 1976.

big bell rung.<sup>63</sup> Parish priest János Mátyus criticised this custom in the following words:

“You have the big bell rung so much that it almost deafens me in my room and it threatens to crack the bell; you take your leave of the dead but you never want to have a requiem mass said for them!”<sup>64</sup>

We know of only one case, during the cholera epidemic in 1855, when bell-ringing for the repose of the dead was restricted at the request of the chief administrative officer:

[because] “the constant bell-ringing in the present period causes considerable alarm, I consider it would be expedient to limit the bell-ringing to no more than a specified one or at the most two hours a day.”<sup>65</sup>

In 1867 the municipal authorities terminated free bell-ringing also in the Saint Roch Church they maintained: they charged ten krajcárs for each set of chimes rung for the repose of the dead. They also introduced the measure that the bells of the parish church would be rung for deceased persons from Belsőváros only for a separate fee.<sup>66</sup>

The sound of the bells was illustrated with a different, usually humorous verse, in each settlement: the Csongrád variant has survived thanks to collecting done by participants in a Know Your Country Students Camp held in 1976:

“Gingalló, szent ajtó,  
főzz kását, nincsen só!  
Ha nincs só, kérj mástól,  
ha nem ád, vágd pofon!”

[Ding dong, sacred door,  
make porridge, without salt.  
Ask for salt from someone else,  
if they have none, slap them hard.]<sup>67</sup>

Even in recent decades the people of Csongrád rang the bells to ward off hail, mainly in the outlying areas. In 1901, when the Csongrád parish priest refused

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63 DUDÁS (manuscript) 1997. 2. A fee of four crowns per set of chimes was charged for the 15-quintal big Sacred Heart bell. *Set*: A ‘unit’ of uninterrupted chimes.

64 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 10 May 1823. Letter from the Csongrád magistrates to the Bishop of Vác.

65 MNL CsML CsL Papers of Lajos Dudás, 21. d. 8 August 1855. Letter from the chief magistrate to parish priest Lajos Virter.

66 MNL CsML CsL Community documents, V. B. 42. 16 March 1867. Minutes no. 119

67 EGYHÁZI – MÉSZÁROS (manuscript) 1976.

permission to ring the bells against the clouds, he was blamed for the damages that followed.<sup>68</sup>

The fire wardens on duty in the Csongrád tower were employed by the settlement. Every quarter hour they walked around the external balcony, greeting people with a loud *Praised be our Lord* to signal that they were awake and vigilant. For fire protection purposes the town was divided into a number of districts: in the case of trouble the tower wardens used the big bell to signal the location of the fire they had observed.<sup>69</sup> They also placed a flag in the corner of the tower facing the direction of the fire.<sup>70</sup> The volunteer fire brigade was formed in 1890 but anyone who noticed the danger was required to help in fighting the fire. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the local press called Csongrád the “tower guards Eldorado”, saying that the fire wardens who were often asleep were generally not called to account by their supervisors.<sup>71</sup> In 1871 parish priest Ferenc Alvinczy said that it was because of the lack of space for movement that the tower guards fell asleep so quickly and they were generally not the ones to warn of danger but were woken by people in the town.<sup>72</sup>

Because of the roof of wood shingles and the firewood stored up in the tower for the use of the guards, the risk of fire in the church tower was very high. Parish priest Antal Hegyi more than once wrote a firmly worded letter to the authorities demanding that the firewood be removed from the tower:

“The authorities of the community of Csongrád have had a dangerous fire risk shoddily built of boards in the church tower, immediately below the bells, for the tower guards and arranged for the most primitive form of heating, without seeking the permission either of the Church Authority or of the holder of the advowson. Since this cubby-hole mistakenly called an alcove greatly endangers the safety of the church and its furnishings, especially considering that a large quantity of firewood is stored in the tower, and taking considerations

68 “The grape harvest promised to be very rich this year. However for many growers this crop was lost. Last Saturday there was such a heavy hailstorm that the whole crop of around 850 hectares was completely destroyed. Many people believe that this hailstorm was caused because the parish did not allow the bells to be rung against the clouds.” *Csongrádi Lap*, 28 July 1901. Vol. XI, no. 30, p. 3.

69 This bell-ringing practice was introduced somewhere around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century, before that the bells conveyed only the existence of the danger but not its general location. *Csongrádi Közlöny*, 2 August 1896. Vol. III, no. 31, p. 3.

70 EGYHÁZI – MÉSZÁROS (manuscript) 1976.

71 “In recent weeks there was a fire in Félégyháza and the tower guard, as is the custom in our town too, was sound asleep. [...] The mayor dismissed the tower guard. We feel great pity for the sad fate of the Félégyháza tower guard and sincerely recommend that he come to Csongrád, the Eldorado of tower guards. When even the wire that connects the tower to the town hall serves to wake the tower guard in case of fire and ask him the favour of ringing one of the bells.” *Csongrádi Újság*, 17 May 1908. Vol. VI, no. 20, p. 3.

72 NPI *Historia Domus*, Vol. I, 11.

of economy into account, I was obliged last year to terminate the fire insurance for the church."<sup>73</sup>

Although it belonged to the church, this part of the highest building in the town was also used for purposes of public security, but there were occasionally disputes over what the community authority could do with the tower and what it could not. In 1886 the minister for religious affairs and public education had to declare that the church tower that was raised and rebuilt in 1886 (on the basis of a clear account of construction costs) constituted the sole property of the Roman Catholic church.<sup>74</sup>

In earlier centuries too the need had arisen to regulate the right to use the bells and dispose of the income from bell-ringing. In 1806 the community authority wanted to restrict begging that had reached excessive proportions by building a hospice for the poor. Since they did not have sufficient funds to begin the construction, they wished to increase the revenue from having the church bells rung and use it for the hospice. This would have meant that the bell-ringer could only ring the bells if the person announcing the death presented evidence of the sum paid to the town hall.<sup>75</sup> The idea was presented in forceful terms to the parish priest who firmly refused to cooperate. The authority argued in vain that the cost of casting the bell had been covered by donations from Csongrád parishioners, and so the revenue from it should be used for public purposes and to meet the Christian duty of caring for the poor;<sup>76</sup> parish priest János Mátyus rejected the idea:

"Since such a decision was made without my knowledge and is entirely illegal, it would be harmful both to the dignity of church order and to church law, as well as to the poverty of our church building that is crumbling and leaking in many places."<sup>77</sup>

When parish priest János Edelényi died in 1886, but the new priest had not yet entered into service, the community authority had an alcove created in the tower for the fire wardens. To make space for the alcove, they had one bell placed above the other. As a consequence of the unworkmanlike alteration, five years later it became impossible to use the bell that had been moved up. Parish priest Antal Hegyi also involved his church superiors in the dispute that arose in particular over who should pay for the damage.<sup>78</sup>

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73 VPL APar. Cs. 12 November 1891. Letter from Antal Hegyi to the Vác Episcopal See.

74 VPL APar. Cs. 29 January 1892. Letter from the Bishop of Vác to minister Albin Csáky.

75 VPL APar. Cs. 25 January 1806. Extractus Protocolli, letter from the chief magistrate of Csongrád, protocol.

76 "As our town daily expands there are many of our fellow men now without succour, having reached extreme poverty and second childhood, bearing public burdens together with us, it is therefore our principal duty to provide for them as our fellow men." VPL APar. Cs. 5 March 1806. Report of the Csongrád magistrate to the Bishop of Vác.

77 VPL APar. Cs. Letter of reply from János Mátyus to the town, 25 January 1806.

78 VPL APar. Cs. 29 January 1892. Letter from the Bishop of Vác to minister Albin Csáky.

There are examples everywhere of the extraordinary use of bells, mistakes, scandals or accidents involving bells. In 1894, on the day of the funeral of Lajos Kossuth the community leaders asked the parish priest to have the bells rung in honour of the occasion.<sup>79</sup> Because Kossuth was a Lutheran, parish priest Antal Hegyi (after seeking the opinion of the county bishop) did not allow the big Sacred Heart bell to be rung. But – as a good member of the opposition and supporter of the spirit of 1848 – he had a banner in the national colours placed above the church door, saying: “the bells are consecrated vessels of the church, but the banners are not consecrated”.<sup>80</sup> However, not everyone accepted his decision: on the day of the funeral a “few lads” used a skeleton key to enter the church tower unnoticed and rang all the bells.<sup>81</sup> On the third of March 1899 the parish priest received a telegram informing him of the death of His Holiness the Pope. On that day all the bells in Csongrád were rung. Later it was found that the pope had merely fallen ill, the information in the telegram was erroneous.<sup>82</sup> On 18 April 1901 the chains of the clock in the tower of the Church of Our Lady became entangled with the clapper of the big bell causing the bell to emit sounds similar to those of danger warning. This continued until the clapper of the bell broke off. The fire wardens shouted out from the tower to the alarmed residents that there was no emergency, the trouble was caused by the clock.<sup>83</sup> A similar case occurred in 1891 when:

“the evening Ave Maria bell chimes almost caused a fatal accident when the clapper broke in two and the bottom half nearly killed the bell-ringer.”<sup>84</sup>

On the whole it can be said that in Csongrád, an almost entirely Roman Catholic settlement, there was always a demand for bell-ringing. The new parish church was originally intended to have two towers that would be able to accommodate as many as 6–8 bells, but this plan was not carried out due to lack of funds. It was always easy to find donors to have new bells cast: the towers of the two churches were filled and belfries of various size were erected in the outlying areas. “Raising” the bell was always a special event as men with hat in hand and women in tears watched the result of their sacrifices, the new bell in the tower, and waited with excitement to hear its first chimes. Bells articulated the everyday lives of the people of Csongrád, watched over them and accompanied them on the major events in their lives.

79 Minutes of the Csongrád Municipal Assembly V. B. 71. 26 March 1894. minutes no. 78.

80 *Csongrádi Közlöny*, 25 November 1894, Vol. I, no. 37, p. 3.

81 *Csongrádi Közlöny*, 8 April 1894, Vol. I. no. 4, p. 4.

82 *Csongrádi Lap*, 5 March 1899, Vol. IX, no. 10, p. 2.

83 *Csongrádi Lap*, 21 April 1901, Vol. XI, no. 16, p. 2.

84 VPL APar. Cs. 2 June 1891. Letter from Antal Hegyi to the Vác Episcopal See.

## The requisitioning of bells in Csongrád

There were already examples of the requisitioning of bells, that is, their use by the authorities for military purposes, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, for example in the Barcaság region during the time of the election of two kings, and in the months of the 1848-49 revolution and war of independence, largely on a voluntary basis. However, during the First World War the initial, tactful tone of request by 1918 changed to an impatient order, as the shortage of raw materials became a serious problem.

In 1915 the state requested the churches to voluntarily hand in any bells that were dispensable, in return for a payment of four crowns per kilogram. The Ministry of Defence covered the cost of removal and transport, as well as compensation for any damage caused to the tower.<sup>85</sup> In the same year an itemised list had to be drawn up of all church and convent bells. The parish priests were asked to indicate those that were of artistic value or essential for liturgical service. Barely a year later they began to remove bells on the basis of this list.

At that time Dr. Károly Thury was the Csongrád parish priest. Before his arrival in Csongrád as parish priest he had earned a doctorate in church law at the Budapest University and then became director of the Count Károlyi Catholic institutions and religious instruction teacher at the Újpest College. He showed great interest in the Kolping societies and travelled to Frankfurt to attend the world congress of the association. He visited almost all countries of Europe, everywhere studying the operation of Catholic youth associations. Count László Károlyi appointed him to Csongrád in 1912 as a kind of reward for his successful development of the Catholic Young Men's Society in Újpest.<sup>86</sup>

The young scholar-priest took over leadership of the Csongrád parish with great enthusiasm. The local historian Lajos Dudás has written about his work in Csongrád for the youth societies and for the renewal of the church.<sup>87</sup> The entries left by Dr. Károly Thury in the *Historia Domus* reveal that he not only had an educated but also a sensitive soul; he was filled with sincere concern at the horrors afflicting parishioners. In his correspondence with the enlisted men and prisoners of war he offered help to anyone in need and also joined in the work of the Red Cross.

Like all priests, Dr. Károly Thury knew from the circular letter of the diocesan bishop about the obligation to remove the bells. The arrival of members of the military bell removal committee could be expected at any time. He also knew that they would leave only four bells in Csongrád: the biggest and the smallest in the Church of Our Lady, the Roch bell in the Saint Roch Church and one cemetery bell. The lines parish priest Károly Thury wrote at that time reflected the impotence he felt:

85 VKM (Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education) 18 August 1915: no. 7903, and circular letter no. 413/1916 of 21 March 1916 addressed to the church authorities.

86 DUDÁS 2000. 84.

87 DUDÁS 2000.

“In February this year great sorrow fell on the Csongrád parishioners. The Moloch of war has already taken their sons, their goods, everything, now it is the turn of the bells [...]. The faithful felt deep sorrow, there was deep sorrow in my heart too, but in spite of that, following the instructions of the bishop the parish priest had to console his parishioners and keep alive in them the hope of victory. What a difficult task it was!”<sup>88</sup>

The committee arrived in Csongrád on 24 February 1917. They removed and took away nine bells in all from the Church of Our Lady, Saint Roch Church, the Homoki Chapel and the cemetery. On that day they also requisitioned a number of 18<sup>th</sup> century bells. The Eperjes phantom bell was not spared either, it had been recast in 1913 and so did not meet the strict conditions for classification as a historic relic.

Two photographs survive from the day of the removal. In the first we see a crowd of local people in fur hats and head shawls against the February cold and in their midst parish priest Dr. Károly Thury, a teacher, and cantor Illés Kalmár stand in the square in front of the Church of Our Lady, their hands on the disc of the old big bell. Around them await a further six bells in a carefully arranged row, with the administrative marks painted on them by the removal committee. In its



Farewell to the bells in front of the Church of Our Lady, 24 February 1917. Photo: MNL CsML CsL XIV. 3. Papers of Lajos Dudás, 22. d.

<sup>88</sup> NPI Historia Domus Vol. II, 25.

structure the photo evoked contemporary images of funeral biers. While the cantor and teacher take their leave of the bells departing to war, standing erect with expressions of solemn pride, Dr. Károly Thury bends slightly forward, his body turning towards the old big bell; he is the only one who looks not at the photographer but at the departing servant of the church. The faces of the men, women and children around them express silent mourning and suppressed defiance. Many of them still remember the collections made for the “younger bells”, the celebration when they were raised into the tower, and their first chimes. They observed with-out resignation their latest, common loss caused by the war.

On the second photo we see the three bells that have been removed and local children in front of the Saint Roch Church in Belsőváros. The figures standing in the background are probably the bell-ringer-sacristan and the teacher. The crowd of children stands impatiently, some of them whispering together, around the forlorn bells in the centre. The beams used for the removal can still be seen propped up against the church wall.

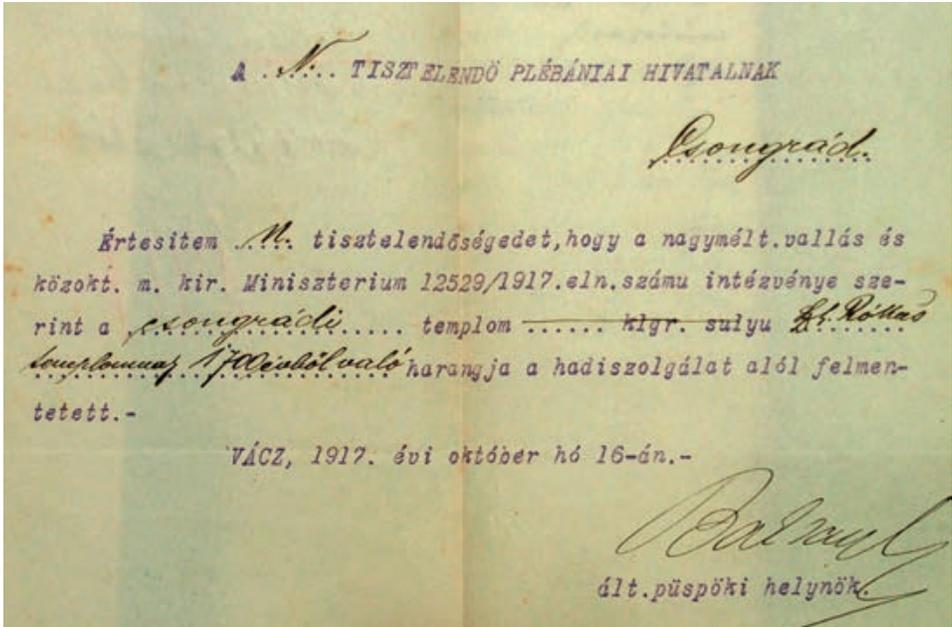


Farewell to the bells in front of Saint Roch Church, 24 February 1917. Photo: MNL CsML CsL XIV. 3. Papers of Lajos Dudás, 22. d.

The transfer of the bells to the railway station resembled a funeral procession. A crowd of thousands, tears in their eyes, the men with hats in their hands, followed the carts carrying the bells. Their only consolation was that the popular Sacred Heart bell was left untouched and the belfries in the outlying areas remained hidden to the authorities.

The remaining church bells were given a written exemption. The wording of the certification still bears the memory of their treatment in a manner almost befitting persons:

“I inform the reverend N. that under provision no. 12529/1917 of the Ministry for Religious Affairs and Education, the bell dating from the year 1700 in the Csongrád Saint Roch Church is exempted from military service.”<sup>89</sup>



The Saint Roch bell “exempted from military service.” NPI 16 October 1917.

If it is not a simple error, we can rightly assume that in his first listing of the bells parish priest Dr. Károly Thury gave the wrong date for the casting of the bell. If the parish priest was aware of the real date (1793), he put it back close to a hundred years so that it would qualify under the regulation as a historic relic and so have a chance of escaping. He must also have been aware that under the regulations in force (apart from a few exceptions) only one bell could be left in each church. Károly Thury did everything in his power to ensure that that one bell in the Saint Roch filial church was as large as possible.

In 1918 the demands of war overrode all other considerations. The authorities began with great firmness to remove the “questionable” bells that had been left earlier. Only one bell, the smallest, could be left in each church and none at

<sup>89</sup> NPI 16 October 1917. Letter from the episcopal vicar of Vác to parish priest Károly Thury.

all in the cemetery and outlying areas. Without previous notification a group of soldiers appeared in Csongrád on 7 January 1918, carrying an open order. In desperation, the parish priest turned to the chief notary Gyula Sóhlya: however the telegram sent to the Ministry of Defence begging their intervention was not even answered. The parish priest himself sent a telegram to the Ministry of Defence in Vienna requesting that the Sacred Heart bell be left in the interest of the town's fire protection. His effort was in vain:

"The Czech sergeant of the military committee laughed sarcastically and said: I won't even wait until you send the telegram, I am beginning the removal at once, I have the order in my hand and I will carry it out immediately, and he began to have the Sacred Heart bell broken up because they could only get it down from the tower in pieces."<sup>90</sup>

The people of Csongrád were deeply shaken by the fall of the Sacred Heart bell. The former parish priest Hegyi Antal, who at that time was serving as magistrate, was also witness to the day when the bell that he brought to life with such heavy sacrifices was broken into pieces, thrown onto a cart and taken to the railway station.<sup>91</sup> On this occasion the soldiers left no opportunity for the parishioners to see the bells or for a farewell photograph to be taken.

This time the commander of the military unit learnt about the existence of bells in the outlying areas. He asked the municipality for two policemen who, accompanied by two soldiers, removed all the bells in the area. The military commander threatened the parish priest with treason and court martial because of his silence. In his defence Dr. Károly Thury pointed out that the bells in the outlying areas were not the property of the parish: they had been erected by individual families for private devotions, and it was therefore not his task to mention them to the authorities. In the end, in respect for his status as a priest, Dr. Károly Thury was not subjected to reprisals.

On that day the big Sacred Heart bell, the smaller Immaculate Heart of Mary bell in the Homoki Chapel, and 13 bells in outlying areas weighing less than 100 kg were taken away from Csongrád.

The silencing of the countryside was only one "episode" in the war losses suffered by the people of Csongrád. Dr. Károly Thury used every means at his disposal in an effort to influence this series of events within his own limited competence. He entered false data in official documents; he asked for outside help from the municipality and the ministries concerned; he failed to disclose the location of the bells in outlying areas – and when he was called to account he put forward well considered arguments, citing protection against fire and the limits of

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90 NPI Historia Domus Vol. II, 26.

91 Károly Thury made the following remarks about his predecessor, Antal Hegyi: "Throughout my term as parish priest he always showed paternal good will towards me and I was attached to him with the love of a child." NPI Historia Domus Vol. II, 35.

his competence. He went far beyond his office as a priest, defending the interests of his parishioners with determination. In 1918 the diocesan bishop of Vác transferred him from Csongrád to Fót but appointed István Szedlacsek as his worthy successor. One of the major programs in the activity of parish priest Szedlacsek was the rehabilitation of the bells. As a result of his persistence, six years after the end of the war Csongrád had as many bells as it had in 1916.

The fathers, husbands and sons lying in unmarked graves could be brought back, but the life instinct of the surviving community put forth new shoots above the ruins. The stubborn struggle and exemplary combined efforts to acquire bells produced the moral and symbolical victory that the war had not brought. The new bells cast after the First World War became symbols of the instinct and will to live – but their history is another story.<sup>92</sup>

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VPL – Vác Episcopal and Chapter Archive

APar. Cs. – Acta Parochialis, Csongrád

APriv. – Acta Privatorum

LVis – Libri Visitationum

ISTVÁN POVEDÁK\*

## THE SACRED SLED HILL

### ANALYSIS OF A NEONATIONALIST VERNACULAR MEMORIAL PLACE

*“I saw lots of children here today cheerfully asking their parents about Transylvania... cheerfully taking photos, laughing... everyone enjoyed themselves.”<sup>1</sup>*

*“I believe – that the created world was conceived in love – everything that can be found in it is for us and when we begin to speak the language of love – it also becomes perfectly understandable.”<sup>2</sup>*

**Abstract:** The study analyses the circumstances that brought about the syncretic memorial place in an area of concrete-panel apartment buildings in Szeged, a city in the south of the Hungarian Great Plain, its symbolism, the characteristics of the mythology used in the course of its construction and its reception in the local culture. The investigation of the “vernacular memorial place” created by a bottom-up, grassroots movement throws light on the operation of the religious dimension of neonationalism, the origin of the new myths, as well as the characteristic complexity of ethnic paganism – at once neonationalist, pseudo-historical, seemingly Christian and neopagan – and its reception in the local culture.

**Keywords:** ethnic paganism, contemporary paganism, neonationalism, religious syncretism, pseudo-history, vernacular memorial culture

In 2008, residents in the extensive area of concrete-panel apartment buildings were surprised to see that a “tree of life” several metres tall had been erected on the previously neglected Szeged “sled hill” surrounded by ten-storey buildings and mainly used for sledding in winter and sunbathing in summer. Over

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1 Comment on the site: [http://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged\\_hirek/mi\\_koze\\_a\\_vertonak\\_a\\_szekelyekhez/2171965/](http://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged_hirek/mi_koze_a_vertonak_a_szekelyekhez/2171965/) [What does Vértó have in common with the Szeklers?]. Accessed on 11 August 2016.

2 APRÓ JUHÁSZ 2013. 4.

the years, with permits from the building authority of the Municipality of Szeged, the number of statues erected on Vértó Hill<sup>3</sup> rose steadily with eight Szekler gates<sup>4</sup>, wooden grave markers, and a monument representing the Szekler Hymn, turning it into a *vernacular memorial place* that some people call a “Szekler open air museum”,<sup>5</sup> or in the words of its creator, a “temple of souls erected on the sacral kurgan”<sup>6</sup>. A common feature of the monuments erected in the Vértó district of Szeged is that they are basically representations in a public space of the historical and religious ideas of János Apró Juhász a far-right local politician<sup>7</sup>. Given that the project reflects the reading experiences of Apró Juhász<sup>8</sup> in Hungarian alternative history, the mythology it embodies does not coincide with the views of “academic” history, and the statues erected did not have the approval of the official historical consultation committee. Consequently, Szeged Vértó is a vernacular memorial place based on “individual or vernacular” knowledge differing from “official knowledge”, an individual interpretation of the increasingly popular new Hungarian mythology<sup>9</sup>, an analysis of which can give an insight on one hand into how the mythical dimension of neonationalism, the new Hungarian mythologies are present in the local space and community thinking. The following study is an attempt to describe the “kurgan” sacralised by the person who created the vernacular memorial place and his community to interpret the ideology behind it through the rites held there and the information given on the mythology represented, and to present the reactions of local society manifested in local public space.

3 Vértó means „Blood pond” in Hungarian. The name refers to the slaughterhouse that stood there until the early 20th century.

4 Szekler gate is wooden gate, carved by hand in a tradition passed down through generations among Szekler people (Hungarian ethnic group in Eastern Transylvania, today Romania).

5 GONDA, Zsuzsanna: Székely vicc. [Szekler joke]. *Délmagyarország*, Accessed on 5 August 2010. [http://www.delmagyar.hu/jegyzet/szekely\\_vicc/2171982/](http://www.delmagyar.hu/jegyzet/szekely_vicc/2171982/)

6 This name was first used in the booklet for the “Arise Hungarians!” Autumn Equinox Gathering held on 18–20 September 2015.

7 János Apró Juhász became a member of the Szeged self-government council in 2002-2006 on the basis of the radical, far-right MIÉP [Hungarian Justice and Life Party] compensation list, then after his exclusion from the MIÉP he became a member of the local government in 2006-2010 on the basis of the list of his own Independent City Federation – Hungarian Association. His name became known nationally for the Timișoara scandal, when as a member of the Szeged delegation and the municipal cultural committee on an official visit to the twin city he became drunk and made an irredentist speech on the reoccupation of Transylvania then (according to the press report) vomited under the table. For more detail on this, see: <http://index.hu/belfold/miep0108/> Accessed on 5 August 2010.

8 As he calls himself: “Apó”, Szöged–Csanád-(Ajtony)-Torontál Őrzője [“Father”, Guardian of Szöged–Csanád-(Ajtony)–Torontál.] The name is a fake archaism (I.P.) that only sounds traditional but there was no position in Hungarian history like that.

9 For more detail on the new Hungarian mythology, see: HUBBES – POVEDÁK 2015

## From rubbish dump to sacred kurgan. The origin of the Szeged Vértó vernacular memorial place

The radical transformation of the hill began with the *Stars above Vértó* event held on 16–17 August 2008. This was when the *Tree of Life* statue that still represents the most spectacular and complex ideology of the place was unveiled.<sup>10</sup> The symbolism of the Tree of Life practically encapsulated the entire invented and real Hungarian history. On its base are the *Lions of Ister-Gam* that the alternative historian Ferenc Badiny Jós believes to be of Sumerian origin<sup>11</sup>; on these stand the guardians (“Nimrod and his sons Hunor and Magor, our king Atilla and his son Prince Csaba, our Chieftain Árpád, our king Saint Ladislás”<sup>12</sup>). Above them the branches of the tree preserve the memory of the apostles (Peter, Simon, Andrew, Phillip, James, John, Thomas, Bartholomew), heroes of 1848 and 1956 wars of independence, János and Matthias Hunyadi, and Saint Stephen.<sup>13</sup> At the top are the “Holy Trinity” “the Father, the Mother, the Son”<sup>14</sup>, the Hungarian coat-of-arms with the Holy Crown pointing in the four cardinal directions, and at the very top “our holy bird – the Saker Falcon (Turul-Torontál)”<sup>15</sup>.



Tree of Life on the Szeged kurgan  
(Photo: Povedák, 2014)

10 Created by Zoltán Varga on the basis of designs by János Apró Juhász.

11 BADINY JÓS 1998 (The book has been published in several editions.) Ferenc Badiny Jós (1909-2007) was a chief ideologist of Hungarian alternative, pseudo-history who stated for instance the genetic connection of Sumerians and Hungarians or that Jesus himself was of Hungarian origin.

12 From the 2008 poster on the inauguration of the Tree of Life. According to historical legends from the middle ages Huns and Hungarians were relatives who originated from the mythic Nimrod and his sons Hunor and Magor (the forefathers of Hun and Magyar [Hungarian] people). Chieftain Árpád (c. 845-907) was the leader of the nomadic Hungarians during the conquest of the Carpathian Basin. King Saint Ladislás (c. 1040-1095) has been a popular saint in Hungary and neighboring nations, where many churches are dedicated to him.

13 Matthias Hunyadi (1458-1490) was the most glorious king of Hungarian history. Saint Stephen (1000-1038) is considered to be the founder of the Hungarian state and one of the most-renowned figures in Hungarian history who converted Hungarians to Christianity.

14 *ibid.*

15 *ibid.*

The *Szekler Hymn monument* was erected on 1 August 2009 at an event called Kurultáj's<sup>16</sup> "clarion call at Szeged". János Apró Juhász who dreamt up the monument described it as follows: Its motifs are two grave markers, vertical and horizontal. The former lists the constituent elements of the Szekler universe: earth, water, fire, Szekler cross. The horizontal marker shows Sun-Moon, light-dark, the 12 stars of the Blessed Lady, with the evening star in the centre which is the star of the Blessed Lady of Hungarians. Its base is a cross-section of a globe, symbolising the Earth. The front shows heavenly life, the back earthly life. On the heavenly side the Blessed Lady orders the heavenly bodies, her gaze rests on the lower world. At the back are portrait statues of Kálmán Mihalik and György Csanády – the composers of the Szekler Hymn – in Szekler costume. Creative devotion is clearly visible on their faces. The statue was carved by János Losonczi on the basis of János Apró Juhász's dream and designs by András Barta.



Szekler Hymn monument (Photo: Povedák, 2014)

In 2010 eight *Szekler gates* were erected in a row running up the hill. From the bottom up they are gates of Udvarhelyszék, Csíkszék, Gyergyószék, Sepsiszék, Kézdiszék, Orbaiszék, Bardócz [sic!]-Miklósvarszék and Marosszék, each donated by the given *szék* (Szekler administrative area).

On top of the *Hungarian Altar – Altar of Light* are lines from the Hungarian prayer ("Kőbe vésve néped által Marosszék-től Sopronig, Neved szálljon mint a

16 The Kurultáj Hungarian tribal gathering is a neonationalist festival organised every second year by the Hungarian Turanian Foundation. In that year the event was held in Bösztörpuszta and attracted several hundred thousand visitors. For more details on Kurultáj see: Csörsz 2015.

sirály – Ébredjél fel Nimród király, Adj erőt az öreg tölgynek, Ismét éljen minden ág, Ős hitét a nemzetednek, negyvennyolcnak otthonát” [Engraved in stone by your people from Marosszék to Sopron, Your name flies like the seagull – Awake king Nimrod, Give strength to the old oak, New life to every branch, Ancient faith to your nation, a home to forty-eight]) and on the octagonal side are verses of the Hungarian National Anthem. Beside it stands a three-metre-high carved wooden *Turul statue*<sup>17</sup> received as a donation from Upper Hungary (now part of Slovakia).



Szekler gates (Photo: Povedák, 2014)

The *Light – monument to Hungarian resurrection* sculptural group unveiled in 2012 in practice represents figures from the time of Attila linked to Szeged and appearing in the Arvisura.<sup>18</sup> Looking towards the town, with their backs towards the others, stand the chief shaman Nekese and beside him the chieftain Szöged, behind them rising above the others is “Anahita the ancient Hungarian Mother Goddess”, with the two Parthian panthers beside her, in front of her is Deédes the

17 Turul (Saker Falcon) is the mythological bird of Hungarians.

18 Arvisura is perhaps the most influential alternative concept of Hungarian history written by Zoltán Paál that represents the paleoastronautic origin of Hungarians from the Sirius star system. See PAÁL 1972/1993.

golden woman, further to the front is the chieftain Koppány with drawn sword, and the blinded Vazul.<sup>19</sup> No further statues were added up to the end of 2016.



The sculptural group *Light – monument to Hungarian resurrection*  
(Photo: Povedák, 2014)

### **Whip cracking and Blessed Lady gathering. Rites on the Vértó kurgan**

The Vértó Hill in Szeged has been the scene of various events several times a year since 2008. Each new sculpture inauguration has been accompanied by a major two-day event; other events held on the site have been a Szekler-Hungarian World Gathering in 2010, Chain of Light for Hungary ceremonies in 2011, Szöged gathering in 2012, October Gathering on 23 October 2013, Szeged National Gathering and Blessed Lady Gathering in 2014, Autumn Equinox Gathering and Hungarians Arise Days in 2015, and watch-fires were lit in support of Szekler autonomy on 30 October 2016.

<sup>19</sup> In the chapter on historical remythologisation I discuss in greater detail the figures represented.

Some of the events are religious, so-called neopagan rites (the various anniversary gatherings), that include and mingle elements and symbols associated with Christianity, shamanism, esotericism, alternative history and neonationalism. The rites that are not (only) of a religious character (e.g. Szekler-Hungarian world gathering, inauguration of different monuments) are basically vessel rituals<sup>20</sup>, that serve simultaneously purposes of religion, entertainment, traditionalising, dissemination of information and the cultivation of national awareness, and accordingly all of these elements can be found in the programme offer (e.g. crystal meditation, lectures, neopagan religious ceremonies to restore female energies and prepare for the rebirth of the MAG nation, sacral viewing of sunrise at Fehér lake, crafts market, crafts activities, whip-cracking show, archery show, popular music programmes, etc.). The most demonstrative example of this is the initiation rite for the Szekler Hymn monument. The event began with a wreath-laying ceremony at the grave of Kálmán Mihalik – composer of the Szekler hymn – in the Inner Town cemetery, followed by a procession up the hill in Vértó as Miklós Patrubány, President of the World Federation of Hungarians, János Apró Juhász and Sándor Fuksz, President of the Upper Hungary Council of the World Federation of Hungarians, unveiled the trees of 8 heroes (from the bottom up: Lajos Kossuth, Ferenc Rákóczi II, István Dobó, Miklós Zrínyi, János Hunyadi, István Bocskai, Great Khagan Baján and Ilona Zrínyi<sup>21</sup>). A marker was erected for each one and beside them oaks were planted with soil and water from their native lands, then the *táltos* [shaman] Zoltán Sólyomfi blessed each of them with a shaman drum and singing. At the top of the hill – described by the organisers as the “Hungarian Golgotha towards the light” – they sang the Szekler hymn led by folksinger Tünde Ivánovics, then the shamanic drum circle performed a song titled “Come, come, take this soul into your mouths”. In his speech Miklós Patrubány outlined the economic/cultural idyll of the interwar far-right Christian-conservative Horthy era (1920-1944), when “honest persons could advance”, and reassured those present that the World Federation of Hungarians would take steps in international forums for the revision of the Trianon peace treaty that mutilated the country after the World War I in 1920. Gyula Mózes, President of the Szekler National Council added a new line to the Szekler hymn composed

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20 Post 1998.

21 Lajos Kossuth (1802-1894) was governor and the emblematic leader of the 1848-1849 anti-Habsburg war of independence. Ferenc Rákóczi II (1676-1735) was Prince of Transylvania, who headed a nearly successful national rising of all Hungary against the Habsburg empire. István Dobó (c. 1502-1572) captain of the fortress of Eger, where in 1552 he scored a historic victory over the besieging Ottoman army. Miklós Zrínyi (1620-1664) was a statesman, military leader, and author of the first epic poem in Hungarian literature. He spent his entire life fighting the Ottoman conquerors, becoming the outstanding Hungarian military leader of his century. János Hunyadi (c. 1406-1456) was the governor of Hungary who successfully fought against the rising Ottoman Empire. István Bocskai (1557-1606) was Prince of Transylvania and Hungary who led an anti-Habsburg uprising in 1605-1606. Ilona Zrínyi (1643-1703) is celebrated in Hungary as one of the greatest national heroines who opposed, although unsuccessfully, the autocracy and absolutism aspirations of the Habsburgs. Khagan Baján (Bayan) was the first khagan of the Avar Khaganate, between 562 and 602. He had no connection with Hungarian history at all.

by Kálmán Mihalik and György Csanády. In the course of the ceremony for the inauguration of the Szekler Hymn monument that lasted a good hour, he was the first to mention the name of the creators. The inauguration ceremony was led by shaman Zoltán Sólyomfi, then at the high point of the event they made a phone call to the “chief shaman of Hungary”, Tokmak Karaul of the Koppány tribe, who was already seriously ill at the time thus blessed and inaugurated the monument via mobile phone. The event ended with singing the Szekler Hymn, shouts of Huj-huj hajrá!, shooting arrows, and in the evening a bonfire. A crafts market was held around the hill, and participants could hear lectures reflecting an alternative view of Hungarian history.

### **Legends of the sacred kurgan. Historical remythologisation**

We have become accustomed to find that in the case of neonationalist and ethnic pagan spaces drawing on the new Hungarian mythology the sacralisation of the given place is based on the remythologised reinterpretation of events presumed to be or in fact linked to the place. This can be observed, among others, in the case of the Atilla hill at Tápiószentmárton where local legends suggest that the tomb of the Hun leader lies under the “hill”; of Dobogókő where alternative history writings postulate that the mythical Ancient Buda and the burial place of the Árpadians<sup>22</sup> lie under the presumed remains of the (presumed) former castle and where – according to esoteric beliefs – the “heart chakra of the Earth” is supposed to be found;<sup>23</sup> and the same historical reinterpretation can be found behind the attribution of a Sumerian origin to the cult of Babba-Mary in Csíksomlyó.<sup>24</sup> However, there are no other examples in Hungary of a complex meaning comparable to the historical myths of Vértó in Szeged. In this case the remythologisation applies to a.) reinterpretation of the place, b.) the historical figures (presumed to have once existed) and their (presumed) ties to the place, c.) the past (presumed) events associated with them, and in addition to all this, d.) the (presumed) ancient religion of the Hungarian people.

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22 Chief Árpád and his descendants.

23 POVEDÁK 2014a.

24 Csíksomlyó is the most popular Roman Catholic pilgrimage destination among Hungarians. Csíksomlyó is situated in Transylvania, today Romania, and by today the pilgrimage became a “vessel ritual” that attracts nationalists, ethnic pagans, neopagans, new age believers and Christians as well. See more: POVEDÁK 2014b.

### *a) Remythologisation of Vértó*

Although the origin of the Szeged Vértó Hill is well documented<sup>25</sup> and lacks any mystical or transcendental element, according to the mythology of the creators of the memorial place it is a sacral space, a kurgan that “was not only an ancient Hun burial place but also a sacral initiation site and watch-mound, and our ancient Hun forebears also marked the boundary of an area with it.”<sup>26</sup> János Apró Juhász maintains his mythology even despite such minor anomalies as that, by his own admission, the artificial lake was formed on the basis of the personal plans and voluntary work of himself and his companions.<sup>27</sup> In this way his compulsive self-justification overlooks the logical discrepancies and insists that

“SZÖGED-CSONGRÁD-CSEÉPA is in reality a sacral axis. One of the remaining proofs of this is the KURGAN beside Csongrádi road and the Fehér lake at Sándorfalva”.<sup>28</sup>

### *b) Neomythology of the heroes of Vértó – Attila, chieftain Szöged, chief shaman Nekese, Koppány*

It is obvious from the neomythology of Vértó that its creator made use of the two most important foundation writings of the new Hungarian mythology, the Arvisura linked to the name of Zoltán Paál and the writings of Ferenc Badiny Jós, in particular his classic on Jesus the Parthian prince. Apró Juhász himself says that he wrote the myth according to “THE WRITING, the TRUE WORDS, THE ARVISURA and the KNOWLEDGE left to me”<sup>29</sup>. As a consequence the “historical sacral description of Szöged Vértó”<sup>30</sup> in practice reflects the legends of the region in the Arvisura, although with minor departures, “corruptions”. For example, while throughout the Arvisura we read of Atilla, great king of the Huns, in the Vértó myth we find Attila. Moreover in the Szeged myth Attila’s death was caused intentionally by his Germanic wife, Ildikó in 489, in the Arvisura that happened in

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25 The pond known as Vértó [Blood pond] or Vöröskereszt [Red cross pond] was formed in the 1970s as a rainwater retention pond when the surrounding housing estate was built. At the same time the artificial sled hill was also formed beside it.

26 APRÓ JUHÁSZ 2013. 6.

27 “I and the engineer Zoltán Fírbás, and my wife Zsuzsanna redrew the original plans to ensure that they met the required technical specifications. (Stormwater retention pond!) In this way, as a result of our changes to the plans it was possible to meet the technical requirement of the Vértó hill and the Vértó pond, as a retention pond for stormwater” APRÓ JUHÁSZ 2015.

28 *ibid.*

29 <http://www.fvszme.hu/magyar-napok-szogedi-szer-2012-a-feny-a-magyar-foltamadas-emlekjele/> [Hungarian Days Szöged gathering 2012. The light is the sign of Hungarian resurrection]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

30 APRÓ JUHÁSZ 2015.

453 and the wife who poisoned him – who was sent to him in conciliation by the Goth tribes who rebelled against him – is called Krimhilda, Krimhilda-Ildikó.<sup>31</sup>

In the sacral account of Vértó, Attila and among those associated with him Deédes the golden woman, Nekese the chief shaman, prince Csaba, chieftain Szöged, as well as Koppány and Saint Stephen appear as central figures.

In connection with “great king Attila”, it is understandable that his burial/burials figure here, in view of the proximity of the Tisza-Maros rivers. According to the local myth based on the Arvisura teachings, Attila was buried<sup>32</sup> in one of the tributaries of the Maros river. The “grave” was guarded by chieftain Szöged, son of the shaman Maros, with his horsemen, and he founded Szöged for his mounted patrol guards.

“[...] every day for close to twenty years at TÁPÉ (THE YELLOW) they swam their horses across the Tisza to »SCYTHIAN ISLAND« the Tisza-Maros junction and rode up to the first resting place of OUR GREAT KING ATTILA in the Maros-Szárazéri-Nagyéri tributary to check that the grave had not been disturbed [...] after 20 years DEÉDES THE GOLDEN WOMAN<sup>33</sup> decided with simple female wisdom (entirely rational and practical) to have ATTILA’S TRIPLE SARCOPHAGUS brought to the new main HUN camp (beside the Fehér Lake at Szöged) so that the patrols would not have to ride out there every day. Here, close to the ANCIENT PUSZTASZER sacral place he was reburied in a fitting place on the sacral axis. THE SECOND BURIAL WAS HERE. [...] As to the question of whether the triple sarcophagus of OUR GREAT KING ATTILA was later taken away from beside the banks of SZÖGED FEHÉR LAKE to the PILIS MOUNTAINS, our other sacral centre thousands of years old, I CANNOT and DO NOT WISH to give an answer!”<sup>34</sup>

In all cases the new Hungarian mythologies – including that associated with Vértó – treat Saint Stephen and his opponent Koppány (c. 962-997) as a pair and portray them in binary opposites. Stephen regularly figures as a negative, harmful traitor and the main sin attributed to him<sup>35</sup> is the imposition by force of the Christian religion foreign to ancient Hungarian traditions, interpreted as ideological colonisation. They contrast the “original”, “true”, “Hungarian/Scythian” Christianity, represented by Koppány, with the “falsified” “Judeo-Christianity” operating under the direction of the Roman Pope that infiltrated the country

31 PAÁL 1972/1993. 414, 479.

32 PAÁL 1972/1993. 489–493.

33 According to the Arvisura it was Ildikó who had the patrols stopped in 505. PAÁL 1972/1993. 494.

34 <http://www.fvszme.hu/magyar-napok-szogedi-szer-2012-a-feny-a-magyar-foltamadas-emlekjele/> [Hungarian Days Szöged gathering 2012. The light is the sign of Hungarian resurrection]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

35 For a detailed discussion of the remythologisation of Saint Stephen and Koppány, see Povedák 2015.

under the leadership of Stephen with the intention of oppressing the Hungarian people.

“VAJK (the future SAINT STEPHEN) abandoned our ANCIENT faith – CHRISTIANITY OF THE SUN – then before his death converted and offered up our country to the Virgin Mary »OUR BLESSED LADY«. When he formed the alliance with the Roman Catholic Church, HE IMPOSED THE NEW RELIGION ON HIS NATION with brutal force. He had tens of thousands of our táltos priests put to death, had the hands cut off the lute players, their tongues torn out, and had the rune writing sticks collected and burnt.

KOPPÁNY most firmly represented the ANCIENT MATRIARCHAL LAW, THE HUNGARIANS TRUE TO THE ANCIENT ONE GOD FAITH – CHRISTIANITY OF THE SUN. He resisted the imposition by blood and murder of the new Judeo-Christianity.

THERE WAS ONLY ONE SINGLE HUNGARIAN WHO stood up in defence of the faith of OUR ANCIENT, OLD ONE GOD FATHER, the MAG-GAR, PEOPLE OF KNOWLEDGE, SONS OF LIGHT, THE ANCIENT MATRIARCHAL LAW, OUR ONE MOTHER GOD, OUR ANAHITA AND THE BLESSED LADY CLOTHED IN THE SUN, BABBA MARIA, THE MOTHER who gave birth to JESUS, OUR NAZIR – KOPPÁNY who defended the HUNGARIANS OF THE CHRISTIANITY OF THE SUN WHO FOLLOWED THE ANCIENT ONE GOD FAITH, THE LEGAL INHERITOR OF LEADERSHIP AFTER THE DEATH OF GÉZA!”<sup>36</sup>

### *c) Reinterpretation of historical turning points*

In addition to the death and burial of Attila already mentioned, local myth also presumes an integral connection between Pusztaszer and Szeged Vértó, presumably because of the geographical proximity. For this reason, the Vértó legend naturally speaks about the Magyar Conquest as an outstanding event, defining it as a reoccupation in view of the belief in the Hun-Magyar kinship.

“In 896 the Hungarians returned not to »CONQUER«, but to RECONQUER; according to the decision of the tribal alliance, what had been the centre of the empire of our great king ATTILA, the ANCIENT HUN-GARY. It was not an easy matter then either as they

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36 <http://www.fvszme.hu/magyar-napok-szogedi-szer-2012-a-feny-a-magyar-foltamadas-emlekjele/> [Hungarian Days Szöged gathering 2012. The light is the sign of Hungarian resurrection]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

had to break through the combined efforts and resistance of the western powers (just like today).”<sup>37</sup>

There are also occasional mentions from the reign of Saint Stephen (conversion by force, the blinding of Vazul). Both events are landmarks that opened a new chapter in the course of Hungarian history, and because of their transitional nature their mythologisation can be regarded as inevitable.<sup>38</sup>

### *d. Religious reading: Christianity of the Sun*

If we approach the site from the viewpoint of religious studies, it can be said that its primary marker is contemporary paganism, but one that is a phenomenon showing a strongly syncretic, almost bricolage religious construction. There are basically two main trends in contemporary paganism. One – less in evidence in the present case – aims to revive the Hungarian shamanic belief while the basic tenet of the more significant segment of the other (also in the case of Szeged Vértó) is that before Saint Stephen the Hungarians were not pagans but Christians. The creator of Szeged Vértó in practice follows those teachings, when he writes (in the Szeged dialect) that “The Huns and the Hungarians were never pagans! They always believed in one God, the original Christianity (they practised Christianity of the Sun, the Manichean religion).”<sup>39</sup> Further:

“Our king ATTILA was of the Jesus faith, he spoke four languages [...and followed] the true religion of LIFE-GIVING LOVE – of JESUS-NAZIR.”<sup>40</sup>

This so-called *Scythian-Hungarian Christian* subculture dissociated itself from the Christian churches that it called *Judeo-Christian*,<sup>41</sup> speaking of itself as the true follower of the legacy of Jesus. On the basis of the book published by Ferenc Zajti in 1936 *Was Christ a Jew?*, and the Parthian Jesus theory based on, Zajti by Ferenc

37 <http://www.fvszme.hu/szoged-vertó---magyar-tortenelmi-nemzeti-emlekhely-es-a-vertó-ujjaszulesenek-hiteles-leirata-5/> [True account of Szögged Vértó – Hungarian historical memorial place and the rebirth of the Vértó]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

38 For more detail on the circumstances contributing to remythologisation, see KAPITÁNY - KAPITÁNY 2015: 39-60.

39 <http://www.fvszme.hu/szoged-vertó---magyar-tortenelmi-nemzeti-emlekhely-es-a-vertó-ujjaszulesenek-hiteles-leirata-5/> [True account of Szögged Vértó – Hungarian historical memorial place and the rebirth of the Vértó]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

40 <http://www.fvszme.hu/szoged-vertó---magyar-tortenelmi-nemzeti-emlekhely-es-a-vertó-ujjaszulesenek-hiteles-leirata-5/> [True account of Szögged Vértó – Hungarian historical memorial place and the rebirth of the Vértó]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

41 Use of the term Judeo-Christian to describe Christianity in itself implies an anti-Semitic attitude.

Badinyi Jós who became far better known<sup>42</sup> – the basic tenet of Hungarian, Chaldean or Scythian Christianity is that neither Jesus nor his disciples were Jews. According to the belief of Apró Juhász:

“JESUS-NAZIR our PARTHIAN-MAG-GAR-BROTHER, never was and could not have been of Jewish descent; he was PARTHIAN, and his mother, as a simple, real earthly mother, the FIRST GOLDEN WOMAN of that time, the embodiment of FEMALE MATRIARCHAL LAW did not and could not have given birth to him as a virgin, BECAUSE THAT IS PHYSIOLOGICALLY IMPOSSIBLE. She, who addressed her firstborn in JERUSALEM, in JARU-SALEM, the CITY OF THE SAKER FALCON, not as »little lamb«, but as little falcon!”<sup>43</sup>

Drawing on Zajti’s writings, the Scythian-Hungarian Christians – including Apró Juhász – also proclaim the teaching of *the Hungarians as God’s chosen people and their Calvary*,<sup>44</sup> *the ancient Hungarian religion of love*; and under the influence of racial theory the *view of religious history that thinks in terms of Jewish-Hungarian (sinful-uncorrupted) opposites*.<sup>45</sup> It claims that the last, still living memory of this ancient religion that even the conversion by Saint Stephen was unable to wipe out, is the Babba Mary cult of the Szeklers and the Csángós and the Whitsun feast at Csíksomlyó.<sup>46</sup>

“Our ancient sacral place, Csíksomlyó, the SACRED PLACE where our people waited for the »REBIRTH OF THE SUN – LIGHT« on the sacred sun feast day of our first lady clothed in the sun, BABBA MARIA was transformed into a site of the »neo-Christianity« imposed with force and blood. BUT EVEN THERE people did not stop

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42 ZAJTI 1936. The work of Badinyi Jós has become an unquestionable, canonised ideological basis among those who believe in the alternative descent of the Hungarian people and their prophetic consciousness.

43 <http://www.fvszme.hu/magyar-napok-szogedi-szer-2012-a-feny-a-magyar-foltamadas-emlekleje/> [Hungarian Days Szöged gathering 2012. The light is the sign of Hungarian resurrection]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

44 It was not Zajti who created the topos referring to the sufferings of the Hungarian people and it was not a product of the period. Zajti used it as early as 1918, but it could be found much earlier in the period of Hungarian Romanticism (it is sufficient to think of the National Hymn!), and its roots can be traced right back to the 16th century. On this subject, see ŐZE 1995, IMRE 1995.

45 These are all treated as basic truths by practically all authors putting forward alternative views of the past, including Bobula, Badinyi Jós, Szántai, and Gábor Pap.

46 On this point the influence of the work of the Franciscan Árpád Daczó OFM can be clearly seen. It was Daczó who expounded in his popular alternative historical monographs on the Sumerian origin of the Csíksomlyó Babba Mary cult. Daczó 2001, 2010.

waiting at dawn to greet the rebirth of the SUN and LIGHT, they were NEVER able to take this away from us!"<sup>47</sup>

Just as there are no clear borderlines in the contemporary pagan trend, the mythology of Vértó is also more complex. Although it reflects Scythian Christianity it also speaks of shamans (chief shaman Nekese led the burial rites for Attila, Zoltán Sólyomfi and Tokmak Karaul "consecrated" the place), and through the appearance of Anyahita it is also integrally connected to the spirit of the Arvisura.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to all this, there is also emphasis on the anti-Semitic thinking that already appeared in Zajti's work. This is present in the dissociation from Judeo-Christianity as the power that plotted against the ancient Scythian-Hungarian Christianity,<sup>49</sup> and appears far more emphatically in community opinions on judgement of the place.<sup>50</sup>

## The bipolar world view of the neomythology

It can be clearly seen from the historical remythologisation that the world view underlying it is a basically folk tale-like simplified model built on binary opposites, in which parties with exclusively good and exclusively bad qualities oppose each other. In this view the Hungarian historical events presented are also practically reinterpreted, where the Hungarians/Huns are on the positive side and those who are always plotting against them (Western culture, Jews, communists) are considered to be the negative side. In this way a continuous anti-Hungarian

47 <http://www.fvszme.hu/magyar-napok-szogedi-szer-2012-a-feny-a-magyar-foltamadas-emlekjele/> [Hungarian Days Szöged gathering 2012. The light is the sign of Hungarian resurrection]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

48 [http://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged\\_hirek/van\\_remeny\\_megkoronaztak\\_a\\_vertoi\\_dombot/2296750/](http://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged_hirek/van_remeny_megkoronaztak_a_vertoi_dombot/2296750/) [There is hope – the Vértó hill crowned] Paleoastronautic mythology an ad hoc occurrence (the presence of intelligent extraterrestrial beings in terrestrial civilisation). In the course of the 2012 inauguration rite: "Magdolna Szelei asked for a blessing on the assembled company. – Blessed be all those who undertook the journey to Earth today, from whatever planet they have come – in the words of the teacher awakening the Hungarian soul, who also reminded us that we arrived on Earth through the Milky Way." [http://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged\\_hirek/van\\_remeny\\_megkoronaztak\\_a\\_vertoi\\_dombot/2296750/](http://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged_hirek/van_remeny_megkoronaztak_a_vertoi_dombot/2296750/) Accessed on 12 August 2016.

49 "In the three centuries following the crucifixion, killing of JESUS-NAZIR the Christians of the Sun were wiped out to the last man, and the »new masters« – who became extremely wealthy – occupied the Vatican! What has happened to the resolution of the synod of that time that exists in the Vatican archives, which declared that every 10<sup>th</sup> Pope had to be PARTHIAN, HUNGARIAN?! That is why ATTILA, the master of the world, stopped with his armies before the Vatican and did not raze it to the ground, because he, as a CHRISTIAN OF THE SUN respected the ancient law, the resolution of the Vatican synod that was then still CHRISTIAN OF THE SUN!" <http://www.fvszme.hu/szoged-vertomagyar-tortenelmi-nemzeti-emlekhely-es-a-vertoujjaszuletésenek-hiteles-leirata-5/> [True account of Szöged Vértó – Hungarian historical memorial place and the rebirth of the Vértó]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

50 More on this later!

conspiracy becomes one of the driving forces of Hungarian history. In the present case the opposing parties are the great king Attila and the Germanic Ildikó who poisons him, the Christianity of the Sun Koppány and Vazul (Vászoly) against the Judeo-Christian Stephen and Gizella, who as the principal evil one also had her own child, Imre, murdered.

“The Germans-Bavarians, feigning peace and friendship, with carefully considered intent sent a woman – Ildikó – to the main camp in Nagyszentmiklós, where one night she furtively poisoned OUR GREAT KING ATTILA.<sup>51</sup>

Then 30,000 German mercenaries invited into the country by Gizella attacked Koppány’s group and killed them all. These are the dry historical facts.<sup>52</sup>

The wild boar [that killed Saint Emerich] was in fact the assassins hired by Gizella.<sup>53</sup>

He had VÁSZOLY, the rightful successor to the house of Árpád, imprisoned for years and when as he approached death he realised what he had committed against his nation, he called Vászoly to him. When his wife Gizella the German woman learnt of this intention, she acted first: she had Vászoly blinded and hot lead poured into his ears to make the blood of the House of Árpád unfit to act as king.”<sup>54</sup>

During the years of socialism, it was the oppressive regime that opposed them, the creators who intended to rescue the Hungarian people, and today it is persons linked to left-wing political forces and the West who embody the opposition who cowardly hide behind anonymity and wish to do harm.

“We were never able to bring in and erect the HUNGARIAN TREE OF LIFE made at that time because on the night before it was to be brought in those in power had it sawn up into one-metre-long pieces [...]”<sup>55</sup>

[...] was the first Szekler gate burnt? Chief Koppány’s arm and sword were broken three times, they smeared shit on the Hungarian altar and the foreign-owned press used every means of defamation

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51 APRÓ JUHÁSZ 2013. 7.

52 <http://www.fvszme.hu/szoged-vertó---magyar-tortenelmi-nemzeti-emlekhely-es-a-vertó-ujjaszuletésének-hiteles-leírata-5/> [True account of Szöged Vértó – Hungarian historical memorial place and the rebirth of the Vértó]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

53 *ibid.*

54 *ibid.*

55 APRÓ JUHÁSZ 2013. 10.

to discredit people, their determined national cooperation and will, but they did not succeed!”<sup>56</sup>

In this one-sided struggle János Apró Juhász owed his persistence to widely respected individuals – mainly on the political Right – who support the preservation of Hungarian identity, such as Imre Makovecz<sup>57</sup>; mention of their names and personal ties to them quite clearly becomes a basis for self-legitimation.

“I had that »HUNGARIAN TREE OF LIFE« carved 30 years ago in ÁSOTTHALOM, in the Forestry School’s wood-carving camp, at the encouragement of my BROTHER, teacher, comrade-in-arms, eternal example, the Hungarian architect IMRE MAKOVECZ, for the inauguration of Vértó and the »lady of Szöged«, so that we could put the crown on our work together.<sup>58</sup>

I was encouraged and helped in this by József Gregor who lived at the time in the same building as me in Szeged, Ipoly sor 7/B, my true Szöged brother, shining star of our nation who said: »Jani, do it!«<sup>59</sup>

The positive, true Hungarians have always opposed the representatives of all negative, harmful powers. Their chief qualities are heroism, the readiness to make sacrifices, to help each other, representing love in face of the materialistic world. This is why Apró Juhász stresses that the vernacular memorial place was created without any state support, through full Hungarian combined efforts, or through the cooperation of the people of Vértó.

“[...] we are carrying out this work worth several hundred million forints without a single forint of support from the state and guided by the will of the supreme ONE ANCIENT GOD ...<sup>60</sup>

Then this entire area (that for more than 30 years served as a rubbish dump and place to dispose of dead animals) was planted with trees and sown with grass free of charge, with the voluntary work of the PEOPLE OF VÉRTÓ SZÖGED, and a cultured city district was created WITH FULL NATIONAL COOPERATION, with one faith and will!”<sup>61</sup>

56 <http://www.fvszme.hu/szoked-vertó-%E2%80%93-magyar-tortenelmi-nemzeti-emlekhely-es-a-vertó-ujjaszuletésenek-hiteles-leirata-5/> [True account of Szöged Vértó – Hungarian historical memorial place and the rebirth of the Vértó]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

57 Imre Makovecz (1935-2011) was one of the most prominent proponents of organic architecture.

58 APRÓ JUHÁSZ 2013. 10.

59 <http://www.fvszme.hu/magyar-napok-szokedi-szer-2012-a-feny-a-magyar-foltamadas-emlekjele/> [Hungarian Days Szöged gathering 2012. The light is the sign of Hungarian resurrection]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

60 <http://www.fvszme.hu/szoked-vertó-%E2%80%93-magyar-tortenelmi-nemzeti-emlekhely-es-a-vertó-ujjaszuletésenek-hiteles-leirata-5/> [True account of Szöged Vértó – Hungarian historical memorial place and the rebirth of the Vértó]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

61 <http://www.fvszme.hu/category/archivum/vertó/> Accessed on 12 August 2016.

“[...] it was created through the combined efforts of the whole of the Hungarian people of Vértó Szeged, Rókus Makkosház, Dorozsma, Szőreg, and Hungarians beyond the border!! WITH VOLUNTARY WORK!! I never asked for, expected or received thanks.”<sup>62</sup>

However, the representatives of the positive side, in keeping with the principles of the religion of love often mentioned in myths of a religious nature do not hate despite all harmful intentions, do not exclude, but love. However harmful a figure he portrayed Saint Stephen to be, he nevertheless gave him a place on the Tree of Life.

“IN THE SPIRIT OF FORGIVING LOVE I put him too on the »HUNGARIAN TREE OF LIFE« erected on OUR KURGAN in Szöged Vértó, one of the branches is devoted to him, to Vajk »SAINT STEPHEN« – in the spirit of the FORGIVENESS of the true faith, the RELIGION OF LOVE proclaimed by our blood brother JESUS-NAZIR the Parthian prince, our great teacher of CHRISTIANITY OF THE SUN!<sup>63</sup>

It would appear from all this that the often emphasised cooperation and national will are self-justifying factors providing an escape from the fact of the far more ambivalent and divisive reality, and parallel with this the constant creation of enemies provides the basis for identity construction.<sup>64</sup>

The extent to which this folk-tale, bipolar world view is an ideological construct or the actual reality can be clearly seen in the community reactions concerning the reception of the Vértó vernacular memorial place.

### **Collective reception – from neonationalist idyll to “soc.lib” Mordor**

How the neonationalist, bricolage creation shifts from the ideological level to the local, lived reality can best be seen in the discourse on it. To obtain such a view it is worth examining the relevant articles in the Csongrád county daily *Délmagyarország* and the many comments they attract. The additions to the “memorial place” made over a number of years and the events held there on each occasion evoked very strong reactions from readers. If we are to obtain an objective and

<sup>62</sup> [http://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged\\_hirek/apro\\_juhasz\\_janos\\_olvasoi\\_levele/2172749/](http://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged_hirek/apro_juhasz_janos_olvasoi_levele/2172749/) [Reader's letter from János Apró Juhász] Accessed on 12 August 2016.

<sup>63</sup> APRÓ JUHÁSZ 2013. 9–10.

<sup>64</sup> GLÓZER 2013. 123.

interpretable result from all this we need to make a (hopefully) prejudice-free analysis of the whole discourse.

It soon becomes obvious when reading the comments that these are verbal struggles between two opposing sides practically incapable of compromise. On the one side is the idyll of the neonationalist memorial place where the many children living in the Vértó area “already have a chosen Szekler gate that they guard voluntarily”, and who, in the words of Apró Juhász, when he arrives “rush down from their homes to their homeland, and always receive him with embraces”.<sup>65</sup> According to the opinions that can be classified on this side, the gates and statues erected at Vértó are beautiful and sacral. “They are quality creations in the interest and memory of a good cause”.<sup>66</sup> On the other side are those who entirely reject all this. In the words of Gonda who wrote an article in a sarcastic tone “the Szekler skanzen is just as out of place among the panel apartment houses of Makosháza as Father Christmas would be in the midst of a Nigerian massacre.”<sup>67</sup>

In the course of the mutual construction of enemies, the neonationalist supporters accuse the commenters on the opposite side they generally assign to the political category of “soc.libs” [socialist-liberals] of dividing the population of the country on a level that becomes part of national characterology. In their unanimous opinion, the other side are “anti-national”, do not recognise “either God or country”, and are not capable of recognising the good intention and selfless action of others and their beautiful creations.

“Now too, here too, as always and everywhere the Hungarians’ terrible lack of togetherness is in full evidence. The past 50-60 years have made such individualists of us that we are incapable (1) of tolerating others (especially the soc.libs) [...] It is only louts who always denigrate, criticise, belittle – but at the same time are incapable of positive, creative, value-creating manifestations or actions. The lout is in his element in opposition to EVERYTHING and ALWAYS. Unfortunately there are now too many louts in our little country.”<sup>68</sup>

“The local MSZP [Hungarian Socialist Party] people have once again shown what is in the bottom of their hearts! They have neither God, nor nation, nor homeland... Look, you can see that the communist brainwashing has been successful in many people. It is only people

65 <http://www.fvszme.hu/magyar-napok-szogedi-szer-2012-a-feny-a-magyar-foltamadas-emlekleje/> [Hungarian Days Szöged gathering 2012. The light is the sign of Hungarian resurrection]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

66 Comment by JUNGHEINRICH 05.08.2010. [http://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged\\_hirek/mi\\_koze\\_a\\_vertonak\\_a\\_szekelyekhez/2171965/](http://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged_hirek/mi_koze_a_vertonak_a_szekelyekhez/2171965/) [What does Vértó have in common with the Szeklers?] Accessed on 12 August 2016.

67 *ibid.*

68 *ibid.* Comment by CYT 05.08.2010.

deprived of the possibility of thinking, fit for a real consumer society, a grey, dumbed down mass, who can say such things...<sup>69</sup>

“Personal attacks, all personal attacks. I went out to see. Beautiful. You don’t have to be a local resident to see, hear, gather information. I am deeply ashamed, because this is not what those craftsmen worked for, not what they carved the gates for. It is typical that a gift, good words are received in this way. Sounding an alarm: MORTAL DANGER!”<sup>70</sup>

Basically the other side are regarded as traitors, servers of foreigners (Jews, Western economic powers), who are not prepared to cultivate togetherness with Hungarians living beyond the border, nor to recognise the glory of Hungarian history serving as the basis of the new Hungarian mythologies – that has for the most part undergone remythologisation and is represented in the works created.

“Yes, the country needs to be shaken up, there is no need of grey people, everyone must know and learn about the past, live in the present and look to the future, all this can only be done in harmony and equilibrium. [...] We must proudly recognise brothers, relatives, the family, this is true for the small family and it must be true for the family of the big nation!”<sup>71</sup>

“I welcome questions like the one the editor kindly put at the head of the article: »What does Vértó have in common with the Szeklers?« Dear Mária Germán Szabó! Dear Gábor R. Tóth! Would he have asked the question if János Apró Juhász, or someone else organised a »gathering« in Vértó of the »American«, »Danish«, »Catalan« or some other nation? (I don’t dare to mention the people of David, because I could end up being driven out of my own country...) Say, if the question was put: »What do the Jews have in common with Vértó?« I will answer for you: Nothing. Because he wouldn’t have dared to say a word... He should be ashamed of himself!”<sup>72</sup>

If we analyse the discourse of those on the other side representing a position rejecting the creations of the vernacular memorial place, we find a more complex argumentation. On the one hand emphasis is placed on the practical consideration, because the memorial place was built on Szeged’s only “hill”, a popular place for sledding, many people feared that the Szekler gates would endanger children’s physical safety. On the other, the firm rejection of neonationalism and

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69 *ibid.* Comment by SZGD-I 05.08.2010.

70 *ibid.* Comment by HORIZONT 07.08.2010.

71 *ibid.* Comment by SZGD-I 05.08.2010.

72 *ibid.* Comment by TENGRI77 05.08.2010.

the conception of history behind the sculptural group appeared as a basic argument.<sup>73</sup> Beside these views, there were far fewer counterarguments based on aesthetic principles and fewer people complaining about the noisiness of the rites held here.

“Why did the local authority give its approval for the erection of a confused historical and ideological symbol in such a prominent place, for the ideological expropriation of the Vértó hill? Do the people in city hall perhaps believe in the Sumerian origin? Or did they just behave as a building authority, without considering that the memorial tree suggests knowledge contrary to what the local children learn at school? And do those who do not think this way have to look at this collection of »values« from Nimrod to 1956, reflecting confused values?”<sup>74</sup>

“Now then. There’s everything here. Nimrod’s sons, and kurgan, and Szekler gate, wooden grave marker, Szekler hymn, sacral place with Attila, king of the Huns. I haven’t even listed all the idiocies. So we are waiting for the sons of Nimrod to appear, through the eight Szekler gates, and on the Vértó kurgan there will be bacon frying at a campfire, and whip cracking, the Szekler hymn that will give Attila great pleasure in his grave beneath the Vértó, because he is the great king of the Huns. And the children will whiz down between the grave markers on their sleds, and the residents of the ten-storey panel buildings will come to gaze in admiration, and many of them will shed tears of delight. It looks as though someone has left the door of the loony house unlocked.”<sup>75</sup>

“It’s terribly tacky, kitschy. They’re putting carved gates all over the hill – will there be Szekler garden gnomes?”<sup>76</sup>

“The Szekler gates have been built right on the sledding slope that the children won’t be able to use, although lots of them come to slide down here. Why did they have to put the monument here? What have the Szeklers got to do with Vértó? Why will the festival be here? We’ll hear nothing but whip cracking all day, like last year!”<sup>77</sup>

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73 It is true that in some cases the rejection of neonationalism itself also led to an excluding way of thinking: “get out of here to Romania if you’re so keen to see Szekler gates” comment by POTZOK 05.08.2010. *ibid.*

74 *ibid.* Comment by TOROK52 05.08.2010.

75 *ibid.* Comment by YOSSARIAN 05.08.2010.

76 *ibid.* Comment by LOGARITMUS 05.08.2010.

77 *ibid.*

It is a good indication of the (initial) strong opposition that arose in connection with the vernacular memorial place that even before it was erected, in early August 2010, someone set fire to the Csíkszék gate, then in 2012 the statue of Koppány was knocked over and its arms broken off. In the opinion of Apró Juhász, who had the place built, the nature of the two opposing sides can be seen in the fact that even he was unable to free himself from the view based on dual opposites. Though both sides regard themselves as tolerant, there has not been the slightest sign of reconciliation and compromise.

“I believe that it has given strength after so much denigration and humiliation (the first Szekler gate was burnt, Koppány’s arm and sword were broken off three times, shit was smeared on the Hungarian altar and the foreign-owned press used every means of defamation to discredit me, the determined national cooperation and will, but it did not succeed)! I have been guided above all by the intention of contributing during my short life on this earth to the survival of my community and to making known the true history I have learned.”<sup>78</sup>

## Conclusion

Whenever international researchers visit Szeged, we always visit the “kurgan” at Szeged Vértó and their reaction there is always great (scholarly) wonder at the mythology of the vernacular memorial place. The object of their wonder on the one hand is the ideological wealth present there, the amazing degree of syncretism, and on the other the fact that it is found not in some place remote from built civilisation, in nature – as is generally the case for neopagan sacral places – but in the middle of an extensive housing estate that stands as a memento of socialism. However, anyone who comes to the place as a researcher with the goal of the desired objectivity, needs to move quickly beyond that wonder in order to determine what they are seeing here. Is it a neopagan sacral space, a historical memorial place based on pseudo-scientific facts, or a radical Right-wing demonstrative ritual space, or perhaps a memorial place making use of traditional motifs, arising from the individual level and reflecting “popular” national consciousness? Is all this an integral part of our folklore and religious heritage, or rather merely an attractive creation?

If we wish to describe it with the category of religious studies, the phenomenon itself can be defined with the concept of contemporary paganism, as

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78 <http://www.fvszme.hu/szeged-vertó---magyar-tortenelmi-nemzeti-emlekhely-es-a-vertó-ujjaszületesenek-hiteles-leirata-5/> [True account of Szeged Vértó – Hungarian historical memorial place and the rebirth of the Vértó].

shamans, spiritual beings, ancestral spirits and alternative healers all appear in connection with the rites. At the same time the figures of Jesus and the Virgin Mary, also prominent in the mythology of the place, certainly cannot be classified in the category of paganism, moreover the creator of the site and the participants in the various rites also generally define themselves as Christians, not as pagans. Even if we are aware that the contemporary pagan trends widespread in Eastern Europe are basically ethno-centric<sup>79</sup>, we cannot place in this category the alternative historians who have reinterpreted the past of the Hungarian people in a manner contrary to mainstream historical studies and whose teachings have been incorporated into the local mythology, as they wrote not about religious but (seemingly) historical phenomena and events.

But alternative historiography does not explain why two real figures, the composers of the Szekler Hymn appeared without any distortion on top of this "hill" in the south of the Great Plain.

The answer to the question of "what is this phenomenon" does not lie in the rejection of these categories, the place simultaneously combines neopagan and Christian symbolism, creates seemingly traditional invented traditions, that appear to be much more than only folklore but in reality are not that, and it tries to appear (history)scholarship, while it builds from the world view of tales and myths. But it is also easy to state that basically it is popular among the followers of radical Right-wing politics and radically rejects the opinion, arguments and actors of the political other side that it calls "soc.lib". The neopaganism, alternative history, radical Right-wing popular culture, the invented traditions are not "the" phenomenon itself, only parts of it. Neonationalism is a fluid syncretic mass of trends that do not dissociate themselves from each other, are simultaneously religious but often anti-church and anti-institution; resting on bases that are historical but tale-like and not scholarly; traditional but invented traditions. In the words of Feischmidt in her excellent analysis of the subject, neonationalism "[e]vokes the causes and manner of togetherness, the past imagined as shared and the present presumed to be shared. Its meaning in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century [...] comes mainly from the desire for community and respect that places in the centre of discourse on Hungarianness the loss of territory and the minority communities, and imaginings concerning them, as well as symbolic forms of restitution."<sup>80</sup> The vernacular memorial place created on the Szeged Vértó "kurgan" is the realisation of all this in local, everyday culture.

79 On the subject of contemporary paganism in Eastern Central Europe, see AITAMURTO – SIMPSON 2013, STRMISKA 2005.

80 FEISCHMIDT 2014. 7.

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## AFRICAN AND AFRO-AMERICAN INFLUENCES ON CHRISTIAN POPULAR MUSIC

**Abstract:** The article deals with the development of Christian popular music (CPM). It reveals that the appearance of CPM was strongly influenced by African and Afro-American music from several directions. Musically CPM can be traced back to the Afro-American spiritual, from which gospel music grew, then blues and finally rock and roll, all of which can still be found among the subgenres of CPM. The article also shows how the direct influence of the African American background can also be found behind the folk masses of the 1960s that appeared in numerous parts of the Christian world parallel with the development of CPM. **Keywords:** Christian popular music, Afro-American religious music, African Christian music, Missa Luba

### Three encounters

As a university student I often listened to recordings by *Kimnowak*, an alternative Hungarian rock group popular in the 1990s. The first track on their album *Fekete zaj* [Black Noise] begins with snatches of striking “Sanctus, sanctus” choral music, but I was unable to find out anything about it at the time. My next encounter with the melody was in Lindsay Anderson’s emblematic film *If...* made in 1968. If anything, the melody was even more powerful and catchy in the English New Wave film, a real earworm. Thanks to the spread of the internet in the meantime, I soon found out that the music was part of the Sanctus in the Missa Luba of Congolese origin composed in 1958, a “modern mass” based on traditional Congolese melodies. Out of curiosity I read through the comments on a popular file-sharing portal to find out what others thought of it and was surprised to see experiences very like my own, such as “Took me 10 years to find it.”, “i watched the film if in the early 70s and it has took me till now to find the name of the music

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missa luba amazing sound, I discovered this when I was 16 years old (more than 45 years ago!). I re-discovered this one day ago. It's an emotion for me."<sup>1</sup>

Since, at the time I watched the film I was working on a study analysing Christian popular music from the angle of changes in the field of religious music in Hungary, I felt that it was worth devoting a separate study to tracing the African thread.

## The Afro-American roots of Christian popular music

When we begin to unravel the background of Christian contemporary music<sup>2</sup> (CPM) we come across four facts that may appear strange. Firstly, it may be surprising to some that the beginnings reach back not to the 1950s and the emergence of rock and roll, they go more than two centuries back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Secondly, CPM hardly builds at all on the earlier church music practice,<sup>3</sup> it stands on entirely new music foundations. Thirdly, the musical roots of CPM do not lie in European Christian culture, but in the musical culture of the Afro-American slaves. Fourthly, it is not only within religious culture that we can find the beginnings of CPM.

### The spiritual

The most distant historical roots of Christian popular music reach back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century in the United States.<sup>4</sup> By the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century hundreds of thousands of African slaves were already living and working on the American continent. Conversion to the Christian faith soon began among them. The result was a distinctive syncretic popular religion in which African music tradition continued to be a firm presence in the Christian context. It is well known that the black slaves were not allowed to practice openly their religion of African origin, but

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1 From the comments to the video: Missa Luba 1965: Sanctus. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jlXEPYkXkU8> Accessed on 30. 08. 2017.

2 Christian popular music is used as an umbrella category for a sonically diverse repertoire of late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century evangelical Protestant commercial popular music. As defined by Nekola, Mall and Ingalls, it encompasses several distinct subcategories based on musical genre, industrial context, or function including, but not limited to, Jesus Music, Contemporary Christian Music (CCM), Praise & Worship music, and Christian rock. INGALLS – MALL – NEKOLA 2013.

3 Although there are folk song arrangements, or Taizé songs based on the sound world of Gregorian chant, on the fringes of Christian popular music, they form only a tiny proportion of the now vast wealth of CPM songs.

4 For more details, see WILSON–DICKSON 1998. 210–232.

their conversion to Christianity was not unequivocal either because many 18<sup>th</sup> century Christian theologians were of the opinion that Africans were creatures of a lower order and so the Scriptures were not suitable for them. Others argued that if they were converted to Christianity their slavery could not be justified and it would damage the very institution of slavery.<sup>5</sup> In the end conversions nevertheless began, but not with the same impetus for the various denominations.<sup>6</sup> The emotionalism and preaching of the Methodists and Baptists had a greater influence on the slaves than any other denomination.<sup>7</sup> A factor contributing to the success of the Baptists was that they allowed the Afro-Americans to take part in conducting the services and they began quite early to “appoint” black ministers and deacons. In addition, in most West African religions the river spirits were held to be among the most powerful gods and so they found baptism by full immersion especially attractive.<sup>8</sup>

Besides showing characteristics of the folk religion of newly converted slaves, the content and texts of the first Afro-American Christian songs reflected their social situation and their longing for advancement and liberation. Consequently their imagery is full of references to the sufferings and hope of the oppressed Jews of the Bible and identification with them: *Go Down Moses, I'm Marching to Zion, Walk Into Jerusalem Just Like John*.<sup>9</sup>

This kind of Afro-Christian music is a good illustration of how syncretism works. The new teachings spread behind the old musical forms, adapted to the original African melodies, rhythms and forms of movement (shuffling dance). Later the Afro-American music became so predominant that it also influenced the forms of representation of the denominations converting the greatest numbers of Afro-Americans. In this way the host organisation also changed with syncretism. Bornemann stressed that

“the Methodist revival movement began to address itself directly to the slaves, but ended up not by converting the Africans to a Christian ritual, but by converting itself to an African ritual.”<sup>10</sup>

From the 1770s the slaves were allowed to form their own congregations. Their first prayer houses and churches became the centres of their social life where they were free from the everyday oppression of slavery and where they could give free

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5 JONES 2007. 62.

6 The Second Great Awakening that began in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century was basically shaped by two different movements but one trend spread in the urban environment beginning mainly from what was then the North-east, while the other began with “camp meetings” along what was then the southern border region (Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, West Virginia). For more details on the musical aspect of American religious trends, see NEKOLA 2009.

7 JONES 2007. 64.

8 JONES 2007. 64–65.

9 JONES 2007. 68. The political message behind Christian music is not unique. A similar political content could be observed during the communist dictatorship in Hungary. See the following chapter of the article.

10 BORNEMANN 1959. 21.

rein to their emotions and express themselves. In these processes music was not only a means of expression but also a catalyst, as also indicated by the African saying *The spirit will not descend without a song*.<sup>11</sup> At such ceremonies they sang

“[...] the body of the song and clapping their hands together or on the knees. Song and dance alike are extremely energetic and often, when the shout lasts into the middle of the night, monotonous thud, thud of the feet prevents sleep within half a mile of the praise house.”<sup>12</sup>

Their first hymn book appeared in 1801 and has gone through countless revised editions over the past two centuries. These clearly show that the initial songs of a folk character were soon transformed into the later continuously used spirituals. Their music spread not only among the black population: whites also joined in at the giant open-air *camp meetings*.<sup>13</sup> Nekola notes that the collective congregational songs formed the central part of the camp meetings; they strengthened the emotional side and played a major role in giving expression to the religious experience and, beyond that they also conveyed a message to those who had not yet converted.<sup>14</sup> Their songs were short, easy to learn, with little information and a clear message. By their nature they appealed basically to the emotions and were less suited to didactic purposes. “White” spirituals soon appeared beside the “black” spirituals.



“Religious camp meeting”. They gathered in the woods to praise God and to sing gospel hymns.

Shaded by a cloth canopy, the pastor with open book, preaches to men, women, children and babies among the trees. Harper’s Weekly, August 10, 1872. Source: <http://www.littleafrica.com/incredibleart/57.htm>

11 JONES 2007. 69–70.

12 KREHBIEL 1914. 33.

13 The camp meetings were events lasting several days, where thousands of people camped together, spent whole nights in prayer, and there were immediate mass conversions and healings. Historians researching the subject date the first camp meeting to 1801, in Cane Ridge (Kentucky). See NEKOLA 2009. 91–95.

14 NEKOLA 2009. 92.

Drawing on African music traditions the singing of spirituals took the form of question and answer, with a simple melody that was easy to learn and improvisative solo singing, while the texts were drawn almost exclusively from parts of the Bible that spoke of liberation or in cases from well known English hymns. The camp meetings and the songs sung there appealed mainly to the popular masses with a lower level of education and schooling. Their direct influence can be felt largely in the further development of ecstatic praise imbued with the influence of popular or folk music. Debates that began in the 1830s in the universities of what was then Northeast America attempted to find a way of incorporating the practice into the religious teachings of the different denominations.<sup>15</sup> As Nekola has pointed out,

“While the frontier camp meeting may have established a long-standing practice of ecstatic worship, marked by the inclusion of popular music that was used to achieve religious transcendence, the theological and ideological discussions happening in colleges and churches in the Northeast in the 1830s and 1840s wrestled with how these new practices fit into systems of belief.”<sup>16</sup>

## Gospel

From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – following the emancipation of the slaves – the number of former slaves greatly increased in the towns too, as industrial development created a big demand for labour. They took their spirituals with them to the cities where they were transformed together with the new political and social environment. But the mass gatherings remained – in football stadiums, giant tents, meeting halls, railway storehouses – and were attended by both blacks and whites. The liturgical/evangelising/praise song that grew out of the spirituals in the new environment was first called gospel in 1873. This was when Dwight L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey formed the first preacher-musician evangelism group, who – as their name shows – preached and sang the gospel (godspell – gospel). Of the two it was Moody who led the evangelism with his powers of persuasion, but he also needed the songs of Sankey to draw in the masses. At their gatherings the gospel songs conveyed the simplest Christian messages to the masses, making use of the emotional impact of music. The rites began with Sankey’s songs, then Moody preached, and the meeting came to an end with another Sankey song.<sup>17</sup> As a contemporary journalist noted

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15 NEKOLA 2009. 95.

16 NEKOLA 2009. 96.

17 CUSIC 2012. 106.

“although they were written to religious texts, various secular tricks were used to make them more attractive [...] Circus march, negro sentimental ballad, choral piece for students and hymn were all combined in them.”<sup>18</sup>



Dwight L. Moody (1837–1899) and Ira D. Sankey (1840–1908) Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Moody\\_and\\_Sankey.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Moody_and_Sankey.jpg)

It was really Sankey who made the gospel hymns popular songs by adopting the verse-refrain-verse form giving the songs emotional charge and making them easy to remember. As Cusic notes, Sankey used the attraction of the popular songs and in practice made them a tool that could be used to persuade and convert people. While the hymns of the camp meetings still had characteristics of true folklore, that is, they were anonymous, learnt by ear, and in addition spoke mainly to rural Afro-Americans, in contrast the gospel songs were written for the urban masses and their composers were known and remembered.<sup>19</sup> The songs' typically American characteristics (optimistic or requesting nature, melodious, easily memorised) made them easy to receive for the masses. Gospel songs became just as important and essential a part of religious services as the sermons themselves.<sup>20</sup>

Then in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the stylistic features of new, fashionable popular music trends – first ragtime, then jazz – also appeared in gospel. It is important to stress that after spirituals and gospel, ragtime and jazz were also musical inventions of

<sup>18</sup> WILSON–Dickson 1998. 219.

<sup>19</sup> CUSIC 2012. 107.

<sup>20</sup> “A march-like movement was typical and the device of letting the lower parts echo rhythmically a line announced by the sopranos in a fuguing form became a mannerism. Sankey preferred a small reed organ to accompany his singing. He did not like a professional quartet, or putting the singers behind a screen in back of a minister, preferring a choir of the best singers placed in front of the congregation, near the minister. Part of this desire stemmed from his own view that the singing was as important as the preaching and that he was as important as the evangelist, a view supported by the popularity of the hymns he sang.” CUSIC 2012. 108.

the Afro-American population and emerged at practically the same time as blues, the third type of black secular music. However it was generally not possible to separate gospel and blues musicians from each other. The first blues were real folk songs that the Afro-American workers performed on the basis of traditions but they no longer used the traditional African instruments, or not only those. The early performers most often accompanied their songs on a mouth organ, banjo or guitar. In its last, late revival in the 1940s-1960s Black gospel already carried the seeds of the 1960s-1970s. The two decades regarded in the literature as the *Golden age for Black Gospel* are associated mainly with the name of Mahalia Jackson who achieved outstanding fame and success in the United States from the 1940s. Mahalia at first sang the songs of Thomas Dorsey (*Father of Black Gospel*) in a distinctive style: she changed their melodies and tempo, lengthened the song, making it appear simultaneously inspired and attractive.<sup>21</sup> In 1950 Mahalia gave her first concert in Carnegie Hall, in 1952 she won the French Academy's Grand Prix du Disque for her song *I can put my trust in Jesus*, then toured Europe. In America from 1954 she had her own radio and TV show. Her recordings were issued by Columbia Records with giant nation-wide campaigns, winning her a large fan following not only among Afro-Americans but also in the White population. She increased her popularity when, from 1956 she became one of the emblematic figures of the civil rights movement, at the same time also spreading the world of Black gospel.<sup>22</sup> Two other factors also contributed to the popularity of Black gospel. One is that after the World War II. a large number of radio and television stations were set up in the United States and the other the internal migration processes involving vast masses of Afro-Americans, as a result of which millions of people moved from rural areas to big cities.<sup>23</sup> Hard gospel performers popular in the Pentecostal churches in the 1950s, like Dorothy Love Coates, Shirley Caesar or the most popular Soul Stirrers, Pilgrim Travelers and Dixie Hummingbirds were regarded as important not only in religious culture, they also had a big influence on the singers of rhythm&blues that was becoming secular music.



Thomas Dorsey accompanies Mahalia Jackson.  
Photo courtesy George Nierenberg. Source:  
<http://georgiamusic.org/dr-thomas-a-dorsey/>

21 CUSIC 2012. 205.

22 CUSIC 2012. 215.

23 CUSIC 2012. 207.

## Jazz, blues, rock and roll

The same intertwining can be found from the early 1910s in jazz music, from the 1930s in rhythm&blues, and then from the 1950s also in the case of rock and roll: even at the beginning of rock and roll in the early 1950s it is difficult to determine which groups and performers had ties to Christian contemporary music and which were regarded as secular. It is well known that Chuck Berry (the son of a Baptist minister) and Buddy Holly were practising Baptists.<sup>24</sup> Ray Charles, Sam Cooke and Aretha Franklin began their careers in church choirs or as gospel singers. The song *I got a woman* that Ray Charles recorded in 1948 at the age of 18 and made a hit in 1953 was still played as traditional gospel music. In 1954 Roy Hamilton earned big success with the gospel song *You'll never walk alone*. The music of James Brown and Little Richard was also strongly influenced by the gospel style. Among the biggest rock and roll stars, Sam Cooke was famous for a long while "only" as a gospel singer. Cooke's<sup>25</sup> father served as a minister in the Chicago *Church of Christ Holiness*, where Sam, with his two sisters and elder brother was a member of the *The Singing Children* group. Later he sang in the *Soul Stirrers* then at their peak and took the first steps towards his later self. One of his first successes was *Jesus gave me water* in 1951. At their concerts the charismatic Sam Cooke who had the looks of a film star became a sex symbol among young people. For a long while he planned to pursue his career in both musical scenes, but he was unable to achieve this and gospel was forced into the background of his life.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, his success in black gospel is significant because it practically opened the way for Afro-American musicians and singers who became stars later.

It is well known that Elvis Presley who marked the beginning of rock and roll, inherited a Pentecostal family background from his mother. The deeply religious Elvis naturally began to be drawn to gospel music. He was a member of at least one gospel group, although according to urban legend he was the leader of *The Songfellows* quartet, Jim Hamill did not include Elvis in his group because of his weak vocal skills.<sup>27</sup> Presley's first gospel album was the 1956 *His hand in mine*, which contained basically traditional gospel songs arranged in a more rhythmic style. Throughout his career he always looked on gospel as his personal heritage – a childhood memory with ties to his mother – that was too deeply integrated into his personality for him to ignore and he also drew spiritual strength from it.<sup>28</sup>

All these processes, of course, occurred in a cultural environment where and when the separation of religious and profane popular culture, secularisation in the broader sense was not as strong as it was in the socialist countries at that time.

24 Of course, the personal religious faith of performers does not mean that their songs can be automatically classified as religious music. On the definition of Christian popular music, see INGALLS – MALL – NEKOLA 2013 or POVEDÁK 2016b. 7–21.

25 He was born in 1931 as Sam Cook.

26 CUSIC 2012. 212–213, 215.

27 CUSIC 2012. 225.

28 CUSIC 2012. 223–226.

In the western plural democracies religiosity did not represent any kind of disadvantage in the individual life career, indeed the public acknowledgement of a personal religious life was an accepted, everyday phenomenon. This was one of the factors contributing to the fluidity and constant interchange between the profane and sacral arts, as was also the case in earlier centuries in the course of world history. Richard Stanislaw even states that rock was first Christian music and was only later taken over by popular culture. However, this is not entirely true because while in a certain sense rock and roll shifted away from Christianity, it must be pointed out that the hippy movement of the 1960s-1970s did not become entirely secular as right from the outset the main motivational factor was not only the renewal of music. Musicality was the most striking form of manifestation of the cultural revolution that emerged in the 1960s; it was capable of expressing the feelings of that generation and opposition to the conformist values of their parents based on status and hierarchy. In the words of Sebók:

“because of its prominent role rock was never just music for the young generations, it was always also a way of expressing a lifestyle, a feeling, rebellion, a distancing or separation: a confession of faith, behaviour form, lifestyle, world view.”<sup>29</sup>

However rebellion and opposition did not result in atheism, but in a spiritual awakening, an awakening openness in the spirit of liberalism towards previously unknown and therefore attractive exotic Eastern philosophies and religions. Rousseau’s “back to nature” concept was embraced by the hippy movement as a quasi-religious new ideology, communes based on a utopian equality sprang up and there was a general rejection of consumer civilisation. Eastern religions and cults appeared, in many cases popularised by the musicians themselves. Nevertheless, a content linked to Christianity can also be found in the songs of many performers; it certainly cannot be said that the period unequivocally turned away from Christianity.

## **Direct African influences in the birth of Christian popular music**

Christian popular music arose from this musical background in the 1960s and in its style bore the characteristics described above as well as features of the popular music trends fashionable from that time.<sup>30</sup> However, a return to traditional local

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<sup>29</sup> SEBÓK 2002. 372.

<sup>30</sup> It is quite obvious that in its musicality the religious music revolution of the 1960s built on the fashionable music styles of the period, at first hallmarked by the name of Bob Dylan, the trend inspired by American folk music that also carried a political message, and then from the 1970s the other trends of rock and roll.

roots and authentic folk culture was characteristic not only of American Christian music culture in that period. Among others renewal from popular culture was a widespread phenomenon in practically all parts of the world in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century history of modern Christian music. The incorporation of style features of local musical tradition was present in Christian music long before the spread of world music. Gospel was one such trend, others were the inclusion of elements of folk music such as the folk mass movement based on pol-beat,<sup>31</sup> that was highly popular for a short while in the United States in the 1960s, the masses drawing on folk hymns in Hungary, and also the French chanson-type songs of Aimé Duval from the 1950s.<sup>32</sup> We must also include here the Missa Luba based on authentic Congolese melodies that has become popular and inspiring around the world.<sup>33</sup>

### **Missa Luba: the renewing power of local traditions**

The appearance of African traditional music within the frames of Christian (primarily Roman Catholic) liturgy cannot be seen as a one-way process, in which African melodies have a fertile influence on Christian culture; this was a two-way influence. Accordingly, liturgical music of African origin is basically a sign of African culture adapting to “European” Christian culture. Without conversion to Christianity there would have been little chance of anyone producing mass compositions based on Congolese melodies. As O. E. Axelsson notes

“There is no doubt that, ‘The influence of the Christian church in Africa has produced some of the most accomplished examples of modern African music. In recent years composers of African church music have increasingly used traditional elements in their music, and some of the most exciting experiments in neo-traditional music have been carried out in the church.’”<sup>34</sup>

Although the appearance of African music in the world of Christian song coincided with the movement of radical cultural and religious revival in western culture from the 1950s-1960s, in reality there is no connection between the two. The appearance of African music was much more closely related to the political transformation, the desire for self-determination that began on the continent after

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31 For more detail on the folk mass movement, see: POVEDÁK 2016a.

32 For more detail on Duval and his influence, see POVEDÁK 2016b. 68–71.

33 They are the most prominent trends/figures encouraging the phenomenon. Naturally, figures not mentioned in this article may have appeared in Europe and other parts of the world. The reason they are not included here is that there is practically almost no literature on the subject in other regions.

34 AXELSSON 1974. 90. Citing A. Euba, “Music adapts to a changed world”, *Africa Research*, 1970, C 251.

the World War II. This was manifested in religious culture as the demand to supplement the hymnody of exclusively European origin with melodies from local culture. According to Axelsson two different approaches seem to have prevailed.

“On the one hand there is the recommendation of a complete break with the old tradition of Western hymnody and liturgical music, and a creation of new music within those fields, written and composed by Africans. Although such an idea was presented rather early in the debate, there were no practical results of it until the 1960s, at least in the area of Southern Africa. On the other hand there was a more cautious approach with recommendations of (a) adaptation of African indigenous tunes of a secular kind and with no connection with African religion and worship; (b) construction of ‘African chants’, based on the model of Gregorian chants and fairly often recommended to be in parts instead of in unison (either in parallel two-part harmony or according to proper Western four-part functionality principles), and using what was termed ‘African free rhythm’. Of these recommendations, the adaptation method and the construction of ‘African chants’ are the ones that have been most followed.”<sup>35</sup>

The use of African tribal melodies for religious purposes in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century can be associated mainly with the name of Joseph Kiwele (1912–1961), politician, composer and university educator in what was then the Belgian Congo. He was considered one of the greatest African composers of his time. Kiwele’s most famous work was certainly the “Missa Katanga” (1949), the first African Mass in history. Another of Kiwele’s pieces, “Te Deum bantou” was an arrangement of Handel’s Hallelujah Chorus for choir, organ, and African musical instruments.<sup>36</sup>

Missa Luba too was composed years before the liturgical changes in 1958, although it displays the openness of the II Vatican Council to local culture. Consequently, it throws an interesting light on the appearance in a religious guise of demands for African renewal: it was still written in Latin, but drew on traditional local musical elements. The idea of Missa Luba first came to the Belgian Franciscan father Guido Haazen when on a missionary trip in the Belgian Congo.<sup>37</sup> Through the close co-operation between a gifted African musician, Joachim Ngoi and Fr Guido Haazen, the whole Mass, built according to adaptation principles, became a blend of Western influence and African indigenous musical elements. All sections of the Mass are derived from traditional Congolese folk-music but elaborated by Ngoi and Haazen, and this has resulted in a rather ingenious

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35 AXELSSON 1974. 93.

36 Dictionary of African Christian Bibliography <https://dacb.org/stories/democratic-republic-of-congo/kiwele-joseph/> Accessed on: 5 January, 2018.

37 The Belgian Congo won independence in 1960, from 1971 it was known as Zaire, today it is the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

rhythmic, harmonic and polyphonic texture.<sup>38</sup> Haazen and Ngoi composed the songs through improvisation with students from the Baluba tribe in Katanga province, following the pattern of traditional songs. As Haazen wrote in his introduction to the issue of the LP in 1964:

“the music of the Missa Luba is mainly the product of a collective improvisation. What is recorded (and published) is simply and solely a reproduction of the concrete improvisation that took place during the recording.”<sup>39</sup>

In a musicological study of Missa Luba written in 1973 Doris Anna McDaniel notes that both the pure African style and Western influence appear in the work.<sup>40</sup>



Guido Haazen O.F.M. Franciscan Friar from Belgium. He settled in the Belgian Congo in 1953. In 1954 he founded Les Troubadours Du Roi Baudouin. Source: <https://www.discogs.com/artist/1252927-P%C3%A8re-Guido-Haazen>

The Kyrie is in the style of a kasala, a Luba song of mourning. The Gloria is improvised in the Kiluba style characteristic of Katanga. The Credo, the longest section of the Mass, is based on five different folk songs linked by improvisations. The text of the Credo refers to the crucifixion of Christ and the vocal part in the Missa Luba is preceded by the customary announcement of death, first on the kyondo (log drum), then on the kikumvi (tom-tom). There follows a kilio (elegy) without percussion accompaniment, sung by the solo voice. The Sanctus and the Benedictus were inspired by a Bantu farewell song. The Hosannah is a rhythmic dance of Kasai, and the Agnus Dei is a typical Bena Luluwa song, such as might be heard around Kananga.<sup>41</sup> The first performance was given with a choir called

38 AXELSSON 1974. 94.

39 STRIMPLE 2002. 194.

40 McDANIEL 1973.

41 FOSTER 2013.

*Les Troubadours du Roi Baudouin* in 1958. They then gave concerts in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. Missa Luba was not notated until 1964, by which time there was such a demand for it from various choirs around the world that Haazel was forced to do so.<sup>42</sup> It is an indication of its rapid spread and popularity that already in the mid-1960s journals in Hungary behind the Iron Curtain were also writing about Missa Luba.

“... a tape of the Ba-luba tribe’s ‘Missa Luba’ with a jazz beat reached Hungary too. Together with many others I listened to the liturgical ceremony of the Negro tribe [...] This music was deeply moving even at first hearing, it touched the heart and remained fixed in the memory: we would like to hear it again and again.”<sup>43</sup>



The original LP cover of Missa Luba. Source: <https://twicemodern.wordpress.com/2013/11/13/studsterkel-and-african-music/>

Missa Luba was the most successful of many world music Masses created in the 1950s and 1960s. It eclipsed the earlier *Messe des Savanes* (1956) arranged by Abbé Robert Wedraogho in Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) and gave rise to several imitations, including the *Misa Criolla* (1964)<sup>44</sup> arranged by Ariel Ramírez and the *Misa Flamenca* (1966) arranged by Ricardo Fernández de Latorre and José Torregrosa. Finally in this series we can mention Robert Ray’s Gospel Mass. The genre – as its name indicates – wished to combine Afro-American gospel music with Catholicism. It was first promoted by Clarence Rivers, the first African-American to be ordained in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, who was also himself a musician. The piece was first performed in 1979 at the University of Illinois-Urbana by a

<sup>42</sup> McDANIEL 1973.

<sup>43</sup> POSSONYI 1965, 633–634.

<sup>44</sup> MITCHELL 2008.

choir of Ray's students. It subsequently became known and popular around the world.<sup>45</sup>

It also shows the importance of Missa Luba that

“owing to the indigenous musical activities which took place here and there within the Roman Catholic Church, and which as a whole gave significant and positive results, Pope Pius XII sanctioned them more clearly by the Papal Instruction ‘Musicae Sacrae Disciplina’ of 1955, which was the first of its kind; in dealing with the Catholic mission areas, the Instruction made clear that there was no longer merely a wish for adaptation of secular African tunes, but a desire for a new music similar to the indigenous music. In other words, Africans should be encouraged to compose new music containing an African idiom, and this certainly leaves room for an accultural process. This trend was confirmed and accepted in the II Vatican Council.”<sup>46</sup>

### Summing up

It can be clearly seen that melodies of African origin have had a multiple influence on the shaping of Christian contemporary music. On one hand, musical genres arising from Afro-American folk culture contributed directly to the renewal of secular and religious music that was still intertwined at that time. On the other hand, throughout the world the African masses encouraged a return to the store of local folk melodies. In the light of all this it can be stated with confidence that Afro-American and African musical influences were the most significant in the emergence of CPM. Of course, we must not forget that the appearance of CPM can be attributed not only to musical factors, social, political and cultural processes also played a part. Thus an analysis of early CPM and its immediate forerunners allows us to throw light also on mental and emotional processes taking place in popular culture.

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45 <http://www.chron.com/life/houston-belief/article/Gospel-Mass-grew-its-audience-over-time-1750099.php> (Accessed on 14 December 2015.)

46 AXELSSON 1974. 95.

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## THE GOOD, THE JUNK AND THE PROFITABLE: THE NEW-*HALAL* FOOD IN BUDAPEST AND LONDON

**Abstract:** This research examines the emerging role of new-*halal* in two different European contexts: the Hungarian context in which the *halal* economy is embryonic, and the British context in which *halal* industry has reached its present peak of expansion in Europe. Drawing on interviews (with Hungarian Muslim actors of *halal*) and observant participation in the London Muslim Lifestyle Show 2017, this study attempts to show that *halal* promoters think of it, beyond its religious dimension, as an economic product, and especially as an ethical-ecological one, designed for non-Muslims as well.

**Keywords:** *halal*, Islam in Hungary, Islam in the UK, Islamic moral economy

### Introduction

From time immemorial, religions have advocated special food practices and restrained from others, providing at the same time a rationale for prescribed food behaviour, and rules of good diet. While the category of sacred and profane could be useful in terms of framing a comprehensive understanding of religious perspectives on food, it does not do justice to the many and complex aspects of the relationship between religion and food, particularly to its economic aspect. That is to say, religions restrict certain foods and promote others also because, or as a consequence of major economic interests that religious cultures, laws or norms generate. Pamela V. Michaels captures well the link between religion and economy through the example of the sacred brew:

“After the Roman Empire fell in the fifth century AD, brewing technologies were preserved in the west in Christian monasteries. Monks had originally started making their own sacramental wine and

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brewed beer as a nutritional alternative to meals. This was important during their many fasts because drinking liquid was not considered to break the fast. The excess was sold to raise money for the monastery. Some religious houses, in fact, made brewing a big business: eleven out of twelve monastic houses in medieval Yorkshire, for example, had brew houses on their premises. It is not only likely that monks discovered the advantages of adding hops to beer, but medieval monasteries such as those in St. Gall in Switzerland also added secret proprietary mixtures of herbs to their brews to widen their public appeal.”<sup>1</sup>

In the footsteps of Judaism and Christianity, Islam has also developed an economic ethics of food. For example, dates, which constituted the first product of Arabia (and after energy, are still the major product of the region) are highly praised in Muslim scripture. It is recommended by the Prophet Muhammad, according to Muslim traditions, to break fasting during Ramadan by eating dates, to use them to recover from certain illnesses in the so-called Prophetic medicine, to protect oneself from Satan and to make healthier children. Finally, dates are offered in marriage feasts, and to guests, as blessing foods.

The perspective of Islamic law on food is developed around the notions of *halal*, lawful and *haram*, forbidden. This seems to be close to Judaism (although a Quranic verse takes a Christian stance, namely 16:116 which says

“And do not say, as to what your tongues falsely describe, ‘This is lawful; and this is forbidden’, so that you may forge against God falsehood; surely those who forge against God falsehood shall not prosper”.<sup>2</sup>

The *haram* category is defined by Islamic law through the Quran and hadith as being blood, carrion, pork and alcohol, meat offered to another divinity than Allah, and ferocious animals. In addition, any food that is dirty or harms the body or the mind, is forbidden by extension, in the Islamic schools of law. *Halal* on the other hand is either what was slaughtered in the Islamic way (or “authentic” Jewish and Christian ways), or non-meat food, which does not contain any of the forbidden substances. The word *halal* defines what is lawful by virtue of Islamic law, that is, what is allowed by God or the Prophet (and imams for the Shiites). The word *halal* is used in European languages to mean Islamically authorized meat, but in Arabic its use is much wider: *ibn halal* is a lawful son (*ibn al-halal* being a good husband), *bint al-halal*, a good wife, and *mal halal* legitimately acquired money.

In recent years, *halal* food has become the meeting point of religion, food business and identity claims in Europe. A much debated issue is whether religion

1 MICHAELS 2011. 682.

2 ARBERRY 1996. 120.

and economy could operate in a secular society in the same way as they do in a non-secular society. While it is common in Muslim societies to find a ministry of Islamic affairs and endowments which combines religious and economic activities, it is central to European societies to distinguish between the two activities. However, as Islamism has infiltrated the Muslim migrant communities since the 1970s in Europe, a third component, that of identity came to problematise further the relation of Islam to economy. Food-for-identity is now a reality in the Muslim communities to such an extent that 70% of Muslims in France, according to a survey by Montaigne Institute in 2016, report that they “always” buy *halal* meat, 22% buy it “sometimes” and only 6% “never” do.<sup>3</sup> Taken together, these results suggest that there is a connection between *halal* food and Muslim identity.

This research examines the emerging role of new-*halal* in two different European contexts: the Hungarian context in which the *halal* economy is embryonic, and the British context in which *halal* industry has reached its present peak of expansion in Europe. Drawing on interviews (with Hungarian Muslim actors of *halal*<sup>4</sup>) and active participation in the London Muslim Lifestyle Show 2017, this study attempts to show that *halal* promoters think of it, beyond its religious dimension, as an economic product, and especially as an ethical-ecological one, designed for non-Muslims as well. The main aim of this study is, therefore, to investigate the religious-economic redefinition of *halal*, the process of certification and marketing of *halal*, the social embodiment and the intersection of this new-*halal*<sup>5</sup> with claims of identity among Muslims in Europe, and integration of *sharia* into the European legal systems. Due to practical constraints, it is beyond the scope of this study to engage with the ethnography of *halal* food in Budapest or London.

One of our interviewees (a Hungarian Muslim woman) relativises the identity effect of food, stating that “you do not have to change your eating habits when you convert to Islam. It is enough if you are considering eating *halal* food”. In reply to the question where we can find restaurants that serve *halal* food, she stated: “There are only very few that obtain certificates but you can find many that serve no pork.” This approach showed a compromise definition of what can be labelled as *halal* with much more emphasis on the end result of the process than on the process of production itself. The theme of compatibility between European life and *halal* food recurred throughout our field work, and is the starting point of our study.

3 Un islam français est possible <http://www.institutmontaigne.org/fr/publications/un-islam-francais-est-possible> (Accessed on 19. 05. 2017)

4 In Hungary, we interviewed Balázs Mihálffy a charismatic founder of the first Muslim organization in Hungary, and a key figure of *halal* in Central Europe (moving between Hungary and Austria), who shared with us his experience and views of the new-*halal*. We are very grateful for his openness and availability.

5 We stick to this “label” rather than green *halal* as Manon Istasse calls it or green *din* as Ibrahim Abdul-Matin names it, or even bio-halal (of Tariq Ramadan) because it is less controversial than the other expressions. See: ISTASSE 2016. 127–142; ABDUL-MATIN 2012; RAMADAN 2009. 236–238.

## Redefining *halal*

As Wilson claims,

“when Halal is progressively being restricted to represent a term which is concerned with the slaughter of the animals, that this has to be undertaken by Muslims, and this practice has to be overseen and certified by religious clergy, as in Judaism... this overlooks the full spirit of spirituality and kinship intended to be encouraged amongst monotheists.”<sup>6</sup>

The approach of the al-Azhar graduate sheikh, the Hungarian Balázs Mihálffy who defines *halal* as the good, *tayyib*, seems to offer new perspectives that can link value-based production with the criteria of being progressive. He quotes the Quranic verse 2:168 which states “O men, eat of what is in the earth lawful and good; and follow not the steps of Satan; he is a manifest foe to you”.<sup>7</sup> In this verse, lawful and good translate *halalan tayyiban*, *tayyiban* being inseparable from *halal*. He emphasizes the notion of *tayyib* as beneficiary, blessed and sacred. To complete our discussion with him on this notion he provided us with his 2400-page Quran commentary in Hungarian and English in which Mihálffy puts it as follows:

“Most of the Quranic verses on food recommend *tayyib*, that is, the good food which makes it *halal*. *Tayyib* is the noun in this case and the adjective is *halal*. Therefore, from an Islamic point of view we have to meet the criteria of *tayyib*, that is, to check that a food is good for health and comes from Allah’s source. Due to the contaminated environment and accumulation, chemical substances can be introduced into plants, vegetables and fruits. Indirectly this also causes contamination in cosmetics and medicines. After that, it is ridiculous that we Muslims focus only on slaughter, while the animal we slaughter is practically a poison. According to Islam, this animal is not *tayyib*, regardless of whether it meets the legal requirements of *sharia*... It is time to treat *halal* under the control of the *tayyib* as a comprehensive system that starts from water and soil and goes to the table. First, we need to measure the region’s relationship with the production of a given product as it happens. Here, the soil and water risk factors must be tested. Then the whole process, starting with raw materials, feed, additives, should be tested. We should avoid genetically manipulated organisms which may pose a threat to man. We have to detect anything that has a swine DNA. Particular importance should

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6 WILSON 2014. 260.

7 ARBERRY 1996. 160.

be given to traceability. Warehousing and delivery must be checked until this food reaches the table...<sup>8</sup>

It is rare that a Muslim scholar who acts in the field of *halal* undertakes the task of redefining so radically the notion of *halal*. Usually, the actors of *halal* are managers or conservative jurists. Balázs Mihálffy is of course a manager and a jurist. He worked as commercial representative for different companies in the Arab world and Africa and studied Islamic religion at al-Azhar University in Cairo, where he became a follower in 1983. Sheikh Gad al-Haq Ali Gad al-Haq (d. 1996), grand imam of al-Azhar named him a sheikh in 1986, and he became the first Hungarian Muslim jurist. However, these aspects of his action are combined with other aspects that explain as well this reformist stance. First, as he puts it, he is not tied to any Muslim country, which gives him autonomy. Second, Balázs Mihálffy is by profession an agricultural engineer (he received his diploma in 1979 in Gödöllő), and earned his doctoral title on the agriculture of dry regions.

It is therefore a combination of three types of legitimacy together that justify his authority to redefine *halal*: a technical legitimacy of being an agricultural engineer who knows the tricks of junk food production, a juristic legitimacy of a Muslim scholar accredited by al-Azhar, and a manager who can supervise and provide such *halal-tayyib* products. In his perception *halal* is not only a matter of state and process (what one eats and how it was processed), but it is also about the aim of the given food product from which the consumer should benefit.

Furthermore, we asked him whether his notion of *halal tayyib* meets the notion of organic or bio food, and whether *halal* could be organic or not. He answered as follows:

“Bio is broader, it examines the soil to 5 years back, etc... In the Prophet’s time the process did not need a check, it was pure. Today it is not pure, if He lived today He would regulate the process as well. We check what is important from the point of view of *halal*. All that is bio in its content can be *halal* if the end of the procedure is *halal*. The problem with swine is antibiotics in the fodder – it is left in the meat but with the fertilizer it goes into the vegetables too.”<sup>9</sup>

This reformist redefining of *halal* is usually confronted by the traditionalist view which sticks to the Prophet’s sayings and practices in the matter. This attitude is judged by our interviewee as formalistic, failing to address the spirit of the law. As for the Prophet, Mihálffy claims that in his time

“all was natural and organic ... nothing polluted the soil and the waters. There was little chance of contamination being found in the animal feed, which only happened later, and it was not risky for human

8 MIHÁLFFY 2017. 379.

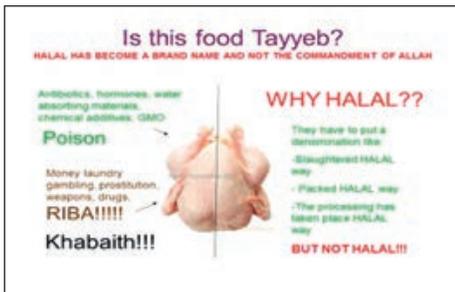
9 Interview with Balázs Mihálffy.

consumption. The *halal* standards were therefore very simple: the cutting of the animal may be done with a sharp knife in addition to mentioning the name of Allah and then make sure the animal bleeds out.”<sup>10</sup>

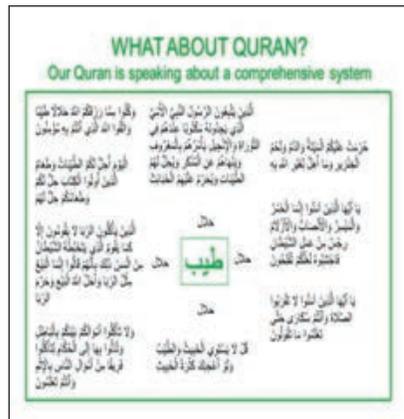
Mihálffy’s new-*halal* is in line with other reformist European Muslim thinkers; Tariq Ramadan<sup>11</sup> also challenges the authority of traditionalist jurists on *halal*, stating that

“Let us ask an interesting question: which is ethically more “Islamic,” more “halâl”? A chicken that has been mistreated when alive, that may never have seen the light of day and that has been force-fed before being slaughtered according to Islamic norms with the ritual formula, or an animal that has been kept in a healthy environment respecting its development according to “organic food” label norms, but for which no ritual formula has been declaimed? Many fuqahâ’, single-mindedly focusing on technical norm implementation, would not even understand such a question’s being asked...”<sup>12</sup>

The new-*halal* further supports the idea of a conflict of authority and interpretation between traditionalists and reformists in European Islam. However, new-*halal* should not be understood as less *halal*, but a competing *halal* label, which all things considered, still means a presence of *sharia* diet in European societies.



A document distributed by the European Fatwa Council for Halal Transactions (source: Balázs Mihálffy) about products that are *formally halal* and others which should be *tayyeb-halal*.



A document distributed by the European Fatwa Council for Halal Transactions (source: Balázs Mihálffy) on the *centrality of tayyib to halal*.

10 Interview with Balázs Mihálffy.

11 T. Ramadan is a Swiss Muslim intellectual of Egyptian background, close to the Muslim Brotherhood and a major thinker of Islamic ethics, society and politics in Europe today.

12 RAMADAN 2009, 251.

Redefinition of *halal* as organic *halal* allows new elites, converts to Islam with backgrounds in Christianity, ecology or science, as well as European-born second generation Westernized Muslims, to claim a new type of authority and to compete with dominating elites, trained in a traditionalistic way, and who represent particular interests of Muslim countries or organizations. The new-*halal* is not a mere legal or semantic matter, but a social position of local European Muslims, who aim to redefine the social organization of Islam in Europe.

In April 2017, we participated at the panel *Halal Ad: Marketing Done Right for Muslims by Muslims*, an active forum in which British Muslims, entrepreneurs and various actors of *halal* industry, engaged in a discussion on offering “advice on how to market your brand to the Muslim consumer”. One speaker suggested that *halal* business should be about “intention, not to make money, but to have a purpose, and ethical business, aiming to make the world better”.

Another speaker suggests that starters in *halal* business should create two labels: one which is a label of the personal company (to target non-Muslims selling them *halal* without labelling it), and the other should have a *halal* label (to target Muslim customers). Another speaker suggests focusing on the quality of the *halal* product in the hope that non-Muslims are attracted to it.

Another speaker advises the *halal* entrepreneurs to think about the reason a *halal* business exists in the market, that is the benefit this business could bring to the market, and that the Muslim entrepreneur should try to solve a very clear problem in the market, so that people [non-Muslims] can see and understand [that Islamic products are better]. It was clearly formulated in the panel that the new-*halal* is not only about being unique, but also about being excellent, or “an affordable luxury”.<sup>13</sup>

## Certifying *halal*

Arguably, the most crucial matter in the *halal* field is the process of certification. Certification connects religion and economy, increasing, by the same token, the authority of religious clerics beyond religious matters. A certification organism itself, before it issues a certificate for a market (producer), asks the authorization of a Muslim cleric, or a juristic collective body, which in the Muslim world, is trained in a specific juridical school, to obtain credibility. Thus, certification is a process of three actors: the religious cleric, the certifier organism and the certified label. Both the religious cleric and the certifier benefit from a share in the profit of the product which the certified label gives to the certifying organism, and which pays the religious cleric. By the nature of things, the religious clerics have every interest in encouraging *halal* consumption as this would mean more

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13 WILSON – LIU 2011. 32.

taxes on *halal*, in which they are major beneficiaries. The certifying organisms are private and religious, with no state control in Europe to date.

As in any field, competition and rivalry exist between certifiers. In order to declare a meat *halal*, some certifiers advocate slaughter without electro narcosis while others advocate it (taking the risk of legalizing dead meat). Mihálffy pointed out that sectarian and juristic differences affect the standards of certification. Mihálffy told us that some *halal* certifiers “have a lobby in Europe which pushes to do audition according to their own standards. This is all business”. According to his estimations, there are in Europe 50-70 certifying bodies – scattered all over Europe, which strive to get authorization for auditing from as many authorities as possible – to cover a bigger market. About his own organism, *European Fatwa Council for Halal Transactions*, he said that he is not

“a Shii, not a Sunni not a Sufi, I take Muhammad’s approach and attitude as a standard. For me Islam is the Prophet’s lifetime and the rest is Islamic history. I do audit according to the Iranian standards. I went there in the 1990s to catch the last wave of theocracy. When some producer comes to me and asks for audit my first question is: for which market. I can do audit for the Iranian market but this gets refused by e.g. the Saudis. There are about 50-60 auditors. My company is called *European Fatwa Council for Halal Transactions* because I merge the strictest EU regulations with the *halal* criteria. This allows me to reach out to the wider public. Science can cross divisions; I work with a food security lab called *Werklig*, it is their experts who guarantee the quality of my certificates. My approach is unique, so far there are no enterprises that merge EU and Islamic regulations.”<sup>14</sup>

The *European Fatwa Council for Halal Transactions* (its principal place of business is Vienna) established a memorandum of understanding with the Islamic Chamber Research and Information Center (ICRIC), Tehran, which states that it certifies according to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation standards, recognized by ICRIC. According to the memorandum, the latter is entitled to delegate one of its Iranian members to control the *halal* activities of *The European Fatwa Council for Halal Transactions* while ICRIC represents the former at the OCI. The two organisms cooperate in training the employees, and share the benefit of audits. The agreement also states that all persons involved in this cooperation should be Muslims.<sup>15</sup> A certifying body acts as a service company which follows an organisational structure similar to that of any other service company: monitoring, raw material control, then going to the production process, and finally storage, shipping, marking, registration issues. The rules reflect the *halal standards* established in the certification documents. The certification company assesses the viability of the label and decides whether it meets the standards or not.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Balázs Mihálffy.

<sup>15</sup> From the memorandum of understanding kindly handed to us by Balázs Mihálffy.

  
**Checking List**  
**MEAT AND MEAT PRODUCTS**  
 for EU HALAL FATWA audit

EU HALAL FATWA  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Details of the factory  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Site: \_\_\_\_\_

The first page (out of nine) of a checking list for a label that applies for a *halal certification*.

## Marketing *halal*

In our field work on *halal* actors in Budapest and London, the logic of the market did not seem to be foreign to that of *halal*. In Budapest, Mihálffy told us that “the market decides what *halal* is. The criteria vary according to the countries / regions. It is all about protecting the *market*”. Also, it takes us to the problematic of the competition among the source countries and also with the host countries about gaining control over Muslims in Europe. A possible explanation for this perception could be attributed to the importance economy has acquired over religion in *halal* food (as it has in many other areas). Also, as a relatively new actor in the field who started his enterprise in 2012, he has to realise that competition is fierce and actors of *halal* care about obtaining contracts and eliminating competitors. *Halal* in Europe is a market that has existed for 30 years, with actors from different countries and legal schools. His statement is also indicative of the harmony Muslim thinkers establish between God and the market. In particular, the Sunni interpretation considers the market as a creation of God, and prices are defined therefore by God, nothing should intervene in defining the prices. In this regard, a speaker at the panel *Modanisa: Monetizing creativity (The Muslim Lifestyle Show, April, 2017, London)* said that prayer is essential to success in *halal* business). She said that whenever she faces a difficulty, she would ask God to help her.

What makes the idea of market all the more interesting for *halal* is that the market is global, which opens immense opportunities for Islam. Mihálffy *puts is* as follows:

“Islam is the religion of globalisation, it is a globalising religion. Muhammad said to the Jews and Christians of his time that they are Muslims, but your sharia is Judaism etc... So Islam can offer ideas, solutions and even products that can reach out to non-Muslims. Through modest fashion, organic halal diet Islam can reach out to the wider public. Theology fails to create a common platform but common interest, business can do so. There is a kind of secularisation going on in Islam although it is different from the philosophical and ideological secularisation of the West. It is practical, generational and business oriented. Shia and Sunni divisions do not matter, they belong to the realms of regional power politics. People don't care about them.”<sup>16</sup>

The invisible hand of the market, now global, seems to meet the message of Islam, which Muslims claim to be universal.<sup>17</sup> As Wilson et al. point out, *offering halal* products and services “is viewed by Muslims as a legitimate form of Islamic proselytization – which will encourage a climate of Islamic acceptance.”<sup>18</sup> Mihálffy's argument is slightly different from that of reformism and traditionalism. Reformism and traditionalism considered the universality of Islam as truth-based (by virtue of the final revelation to Muhammad). Mihálffy's argument for the universality of Islam is interest-based. Interest can be given a twofold interpretation; one is the economic advantage of the exporter, producer and certifier while the other refers to the wellbeing of the consumer.

Selling a product to non-Muslims seems to put Islamic ethics of *halal* at stake. On the one hand, secularized Europeans are interested only in the biological benefits and at the same time suspicious of any religiously-embedded product to avoid financing the organisations behind them. On the other, European believers of different denominations either separate what they eat from what they believe, or defend competing religious perceptions of lawful food. The current controversy on selling *halal* as non-*halal* illustrates all the previously mentioned problems. Data about meat in the UK shows that “more than 70% of all New Zealand lamb in supermarkets is *halal*” and that “supermarkets and restaurant chains face being forced to label food containing *halal* meat as a row grew over millions of

16 Interview with Balázs Mihálffy.

17 As suggested, for example, by the title of an article by the renowned halal marketing expert Jonathan A. J. Wilson: “Konnichiwa Halal – As Japan opens its arms to Muslims”.

See: [http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/jonathan-aj-wilson/konnichiwa-halal-as-japan\\_b\\_9168942.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/jonathan-aj-wilson/konnichiwa-halal-as-japan_b_9168942.html) (Accessed on 19. 05. 2017)

18 WILSON – LIU 2011. 112.

customers being left in the dark about what they are eating".<sup>19</sup> It is also estimated that 55% of Brussels butcher shops are *halal*<sup>20</sup> (which started a similar controversy in Belgium). Likewise, in France it has been reported "that 32% of animals in France were slaughtered according to the *halal* rite"<sup>21</sup>. Labelling could be a solution to trace the origin of meat, but this could undermine the marketability of *halal*.

Being in the market requires the *European Fatwa Council for Halal Transactions* to expand its activities and controls. So far, it has standards developed for the meat industry, but it also has a standard for 10 other sectors: 1. Oils and fats 2. Pharmaceuticals 3. Drinks and waters 4. Cosmetics 5. Garden products 6. Bakery and confectionery products 7. Transportation 8. Hotel and tourism 9. Dried, Spices, soup powders, seasonings, etc. and 10. Milk products. In addition, the *European Fatwa Council for Halal Transactions* is constantly adjusting to local needs. Every two years it issues new certification lists because as Mihálffy told us "we want to adapt to the reality".

Similarly, the British Muslim speakers at the panel *Halal Ad: Marketing Done Right for Muslims by Muslims*, all sustain the idea that *halal* products should not be focused on religion, but about branding Islam through the best criteria of business and networking (a reference to Faegheh Shirazi's book *Brand Islam: The Marketing and Commodification of Piety*).<sup>22</sup> The message was that *halal* business is a new brand, and Muslim entrepreneurs should learn and adapt quickly to the market. They also maintained that Islam is good for business because it intervenes in everyday life through licit-illicit norms, *halal-haram* that need to be adapted and this adaptation stimulates the spirit of enterprise. However, the speakers faced several dilemmas and could not solve any of them: Should they stay Islamic or join the mainstream economy? What is the purpose of the brand *halal*? Should the actors of Islamic economy be capitalist apprentices in competition with big global companies with the brand *halal* or not?

Thus, although marketing *halal* seems to be the easiest step in the process of *halal* branding, it actually reveals its limits in a non-Islamic context. Many speakers expressed the dilemma that when Muslim entrepreneurs come to the market, they set making money as their goal, and then develop a strategy of appeal to Islam to sell, creating a moral dilemma. The appeal to interest could be understood by business-minded people in the West, but with secularization, many

19 Big brand shops and restaurants face being forced to label *halal* food as row grows over ritually slaughtered meat on sale in UK

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2622830/Millions-eating-halal-food-without-knowing-How-big-brand-shops-restaurants-sell-ritually-slaughtered-meat-dont-label-it.html> (Accessed on 19. 05. 2017.)

20 55% des boucheries bruxelloises sont halal.

[www.lesoir.be/.../bruxelles/2015.../55-des-boucheries-bruxelloises-sont-halal](http://www.lesoir.be/.../bruxelles/2015.../55-des-boucheries-bruxelloises-sont-halal) (last accessed: 19. 05. 2017)

21 Halal: coups tordus et idées fausses

<http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/societe/20120229.OBS2574/halal-coups-tordus-et-idees-faussees.html> (Accessed on 19. 05. 2017.)

22 SHIRAZI 2016.

people believe spirituality should be free of business, and separated from it. However, some speakers were aware of the limits of Islamification, and hope to see the *halal* business evolve into a sort of Caribbean food label, where eating it does not depend on the origin of the public. The speakers and participants at *Halal Ad* sounded, in many respects, trapped by *halal*. Several speakers said that the reason a *halal* business exists is that it appeals to Muslim identity, exploiting that “ingredient branding plays a central role in the Muslim psyche”<sup>23</sup> in order to secure a share in the market.

Being in the market brings the temptations of powerful global companies who see opportunities in *halal* food. One speaker said he had an opportunity to be paid 100,000 pounds by a company that asked him to sell its products to the Muslim community as *halal*. To take the case of Nestlé, in 2007 according to data from Forbes, it “has become the biggest food manufacturer in the *halal* sector, with more than \$3 billion in annual sales in Islamic countries and with 75 of its 481 factories worldwide producing *halal* food”.<sup>24</sup> In 2017, Bloomberg reported that “Nestlé has 151 *halal* factories, from Malaysia to Pakistan, and distributes hundreds of certified products across the world”.<sup>25</sup>

Such globalization of *halal* has at least two consequences for the Muslim young entrepreneurs in London; first, it means that bigger companies are able to pay certification fees for certifying bodies or religious clerics, thus influencing the standards and the costs of certification, which could be difficult for young entrepreneurs to keep up with. Second, bigger companies have industrial facilities and structures which allow them to squeeze out small competitors.

This anxiety was expressed at *Halal Ad* where some speakers suggested that it is not even sure that being a Muslim entrepreneur can be a sufficient reason to secure a share in the *halal* market and eliminate competitors. As one speaker said, there is a lot of Muslim negative publicity about *halal*: what one believes to be *halal*, another thinks is fake *halal*, etc. Another speaker replied that any *halal* product one puts in the market will always get a percentage of people who hate it, while another group will love it. Polarization is thus inevitable. As he said, some *halal* products were for example destined to support migrants coming to Europe, so those who wish to support them bought the products while others stopped buying the company’s products.

These findings raise intriguing questions regarding the nature and extent of *halal* industry and may help us to understand the social logic of Islamic economics, of which *halal* is only one aspect. The dilemmas faced by young Muslim entrepreneurs seem to pose threats to their social advancement. As *halal* seemed to be a label of ethnic trade able to offer a ladder to a rising social class (Muslims in the West), this capital was fragmented by the many actors in the market and by

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23 WILSON – LIU 2011. 28.

24 Meeting the Halal Test <https://www.forbes.com/forbes/2007/0416/082.html> (Accessed on 19. 05. 2017.)

25 How Halal Food Became a \$20 Billion Hit in America

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-09-14/america-loves-muslim-food-so-much-for-a-clash-of-civilizations> (Accessed on 19. 05. 2017.)

globalisation. Naturally, some young Muslim entrepreneurs would welcome the idea of the global *umma* in the hope of a larger market for their products, but it is also a field in which better equipped economic actors, the neo-liberal big companies, have better chances to dominate.

## Integrating *halal* and *sharia*

The problematic of the ethical aspect of *halal* is a recurrent one on the website of the European Council for Fatwa and Research. One request deals with the alleged alcohol content of Coca Cola. The answer first refers to a *hadith* stating that anything that makes one drunk in big quantities is *haram* in small amounts, however, the suggested interpretation is that if much of it does not make one drunk then a little of it is *halal*.<sup>26</sup> Another fatwa rules against buying meat from Christians and Jews in order to preserve religious and cultural identity, urges western countries to make slaughter possible according to Islamic Law, and Islamic countries to export meat.<sup>27</sup> But the obligations regarding *halal* food extend to issues of work, business and social life as well. This is well illustrated by the following two fatwas. In the first the question is whether it is possible to work in McDonald's since it sells food made of pork. The answer is that the Muslim person should look for another job, if he has done his best but did not succeed, then the next option is to ask a non-Muslim colleague to serve pork products, if there is no opportunity for that either then it is *halal*.<sup>28</sup> Besides the fact that religious dietary rules can affect one's employment and even seclusion in a given environment, the argumentation shows how *haram* can transform into *halal* under certain circumstances, when a condition of higher importance – in this case the necessity of making a living – justifies it. Wilson et al. label this phenomenon as "situation specific adaptation"<sup>29</sup>. They also raise the issue of the various degrees of *halal*, and in particular mark Cobra Zero beer as *halal* "but not Islamic in the classical sense".<sup>30</sup> This approach leads us back to one of the key points of the present article, namely the role of value transmission in the *halal* certification process.

The last fatwa referred to here is even more revealing on this. A restaurant owned by a Muslim is rarely frequented because they do not sell alcohol.<sup>31</sup> The question consists of three parts. First, is it possible to boost the business by selling drinks that contain alcohol? The answer is a plain "no". However, to the second

26 <https://www.e-cfr.org/fatwa/> (Accessed on 19. 05. 2017.)

27 <https://www.e-cfr.org/fatwa/> (Accessed on 19. 05. 2017.)

28 <https://www.e-cfr.org/fatwa/> (Accessed on 19. 05. 2017.)

29 WILSON – LIU 2011. 34.

30 WILSON – LIU 2011. 33.

31 بيع الخمر ولحم الخنزير في المطاعم

<https://www.e-cfr.org/fatwa/> (Accessed on 19. 05. 2017.)

question that inquires about whether they can rent it for events where alcoholic drinks are sold, the answer is yes, since as long as the owner is not present on the premises, he is not responsible for what others do there when they hire them. To the third question, whether beer that contains no alcohol can be sold, the answer is again, permissive, because it is not the name that matters but the substance. The logic applied here is very similar to the previous one. In both cases the prohibition of selling *haram* food and beverages is overstepped with religious legitimisation. This prevents economic marginalisation while maintaining social self-segregation.

*Sharia* is concomitant to *halal* food, and may be linked as well to the social advancement of young Muslims in the West, who hope through the application of *sharia*, to obtain a social advantage. Although in our questions we avoided raising the issue of *sharia*, focusing on ethics and economy, our interviewees insisted on referring to *sharia* every time and then, putting *sharia* at the centre of the prospects for a better *halal*, and a better integration of Muslim communities in Europe. Again, food seems to imply debates about identity and social cohesion. Mihálffy told us that

“Dogmas cannot be negotiated, rules can. This is the way forward. For Muslims freedom of religion means freedom to practice *sharia*. But *sharia* is rich and flexible. It is the responsibility of European (host) authorities to enforce the harmonisation of *sharia* with western legal systems. I believe it can be done, it is a matter of will and interpretation. Authority will not emerge by itself in the Muslim communities, an actor which is ready to make compromises and work out solutions must be singled out and backed by European politicians. Any law must be Islamic to get accepted by the Muslims but there is a wide pool from which decisions that allow for a *modus vivendi* can be distilled. It needs skill, creativity and commitment to modernity. Such experts do exist and in Islamic law solutions can be worked out. I want to train auditors like me in how to apply the same approach. This can be a good start. Law harmonisation is easier in tangible issues but compromises can be reached or enforced in family law as well. What matters is interpretation, reasoning and to make the Muslims interested in that of course, to set it as a condition without which their interests cannot be realised.”<sup>32</sup>

Mihálffy’s engagement with *sharia* adheres to the reformist paradigm. It is based on the assumption that Muslims only fully respect Islamic law. Such belief and argument from authenticity have been widely used since the 19<sup>th</sup> century to justify a return to Islam, and “Islamic solutions”, and to reject the West.

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32 Interview with Balázs Mihálffy.

For example, Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr's starting point in his *Our Economy* which was published in Arabic in 1960, was to declare the failure of capitalism and communism in the Muslim world, and to prove that Islamic economy is the third way, the only one that leads to salvation. Al-Sadr asserts that the most important factor in the development programme is the respect which people have for it, while Muslims have no respect either for capitalism or for communism, because they are foreign ideologies. He reminds the reader of the sensitivity resulting from the era of colonialism which cannot construct a new renaissance that offers salvation to Islam.<sup>33</sup>

The success of any development, al-Sadr argues, depends on an integrated, united movement of the *umma*. This conception of economy directs man towards heaven while the Western economies, whether capitalist or communist are world oriented. Still, Islamic economy can clothe the world in the framework of heaven. Thus, he takes the argument toward the ethical dimension. Freedom, he said, is a materialistic aberration, and Muslims have better moral motives. He admits, however, that Muslims suffer from asceticism and laziness. Al-Sadr believes that communism is worse in terms of morality because it justifies social struggle while in Islamic economy there is no struggle, just harmony in the community.<sup>34</sup>

Al-Sadr's argument is largely based on social psychology: the ability of a community to morally justify an economic activity and engage in it. However, this argument hides the fact that Muslims display different economic interests and activities. Another recurrent element in his work is the use of the *Ad hominem* argument (capitalism or communism are no good because they come from the European man) seems to weaken the probity of his ideas. It is a fact that European economies succeed in Asia and Latin America while Islamic economies failed almost with few exceptions (namely of rentier states) in the post-independence era. Finally, his argument from authenticity, that only an authentic Islamic economy is viable, is questioned by the fact that one cannot know whether Sunnism or Shiism provides the most authentic interpretation of Islamic economy. For example, what would be an authentic *zakat*? The Sunni *zakat* which is 2.5% percent of the income or the Shiite *khums zakat* which is 20% of the income.

While this argument from authenticity had some validity in the colonized Muslim countries, it seems out of place in Europe to suggest that because someone believes in a religious law, therefore we must modify law to include religious law. There are thousands of religions, and no modern society can afford conceding to religious communities, the right to modify the law according to some religious law. Mihálffy made it clear that

"Before the fall of the caliphate *ibadat* (the worship of God) and *muamalaat* (social interactions) were treated as separate. Since 1924 when the caliphate was abolished, the two got channelled into one single realm in which no secular legal system can substitute *sharia*.

33 AL-SADR 1982. Vol. I. Part I. XXII-XXV.

34 AL-SADR 1982. Vol. II. Part I. XXVIII-XXXIV.

Religious freedom in Europe means also that we can adapt *sharia*. But we can influence and change *sharia*, it can be harmonized with the EU legal system. The only place where it is harmonized is Israel. The EU should work it out with legal experts, mosques must be deprived of *shari'a* and deal only with *aqeeda* (dogma and ritual). I suggest three steps of legalizing *sharia*: 1. Divide what is for *sharia* courts and what is for secular courts. 2. The definition of sin must be the same – terrorists must be condemned by both secular and *sharia* court. 3. Arbitration is for *sharia* court about matters concerning only the community. European values should be included into *sharia*.<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, *sharia* seems to be central to both traditionalist and reformist claims in Europe. 29 percent of the respondents in a survey by Le Soir-RTBF in Belgium believe that Islamic law is above Belgian law, 11 percent are uncertain, 60 percent think that Belgian laws are above Islamic law. Likewise, 34 percent favour a political system based on the Qur'an, 26 percent are uncertain, and 40 percent oppose such a system. This is in line with other studies and surveys that show that for at least one third of Muslims in Europe Islamic law is important and decisive. In their case, there is a natural aspiration to live according to Islamic law and it is logical to give it priority if Islam is taken as a whole. A *Pew Research Center* survey found that 39 percent of Muslims who live in different countries want *sharia* to be the official legal system.<sup>36</sup> There is a very high proportion in the Muslim majority countries claiming *sharia*: 99 percent in Afghanistan, 84 percent in Pakistan, 83 percent in Morocco, 74 percent in Egypt, 56 percent in Tunisia, 86 percent in Malaysia and 42 percent in the Muslim regions in Russia. The corresponding proportion – though not comparable with the above – is surprisingly high among Muslims living in the West. According to a poll published in a British Channel 4 documentary, in Britain, 23 per cent of Muslims want to live according to *sharia* law.<sup>37</sup> A survey conducted by the WZB Berlin Social Science Center among European Muslims shows less favourable proportions: 66% of them *think that sharia* is more important than the law of the country in which they live.<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless, interpretations of *sharia* are plural (although all interpretations agree that the source of *sharia* is divine and therefore its principles are also divine). Many Muslims understand *sharia* to be a code of ethics and a set of flexible principles. Mihálffy embraces this ethical interpretation of *sharia*. He reproaches the current Muslim interpretations in Europe, including the *fiqh al-aqalliyat*, jurisprudence of minorities (the pioneer of which is the European Council for Fatwa and Research in Dublin), for being school (madhhab) -directed. Most jurists follow

35 Interview with Balázs Mihálffy.

36 <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/22/muslims-and-islam-key-findings-in-the-u-s-and-around-the-world/> (Accessed on 19. 05. 2017.)

37 <http://www.channel4.com/info/press/news/c4-survey-and-documentary-reveals-what-british-muslims-really-think> (Accessed on 19. 05. 2017.)

38 <https://www.wzb.eu/en/press-release/islamic-fundamentalism-is-widely-spread> (Accessed on 19. 05. 2017.)

specific schools, although they do not admit it. Mihálffy links the predominance of *madhhabs* in the *fatwas* and juristic work to the original backgrounds of the jurists and the financial interests at stake in keeping up with a specific juristic school. He deplors the fact that a spirit of sects rules over jurists, the lack of flexibility and compromises they display, and that “everyone believes he is right”.

This stance on the interpretation of *sharia* is consistent with his redefinition of *halal*, previously discussed. Both attempt to question the authority of dominating jurists of traditionalist tendencies. These jurists tend to promote their schools because they benefit from traditions, posing as their guardians and transmitters. A non-*madhhab*-based *sharia* could undermine their authority, and give rise to new juristic elites, such as Mihálffy. The latter, being a convert, could not make his voice heard by traditionalistic jurists.

What is surprising in this statement, however, is that he addresses, and expects his voice to be heard by the European non-Muslim law-makers. He does not seem wholeheartedly interested in convincing the Muslim jurists to work *together* for the future of Islam in Europe. He hopes European law-makers would integrate *sharia* into the legal process, allowing Muslim jurists such as himself to contribute to this process (admitting on the other hand that most Muslim jurists today either cannot be convinced about this perspective or oppose such integration). One of his proposals consists in establishing two kinds of courts: one secular and one for *sharia*, a double legal system that used to exist in Muslim countries as modernity made its way to these societies. For an external observer, this sounds like a parallel law that could threaten social cohesion. In case of opposition between *sharia* and European laws, some people would consider that they wish to be judged according to *sharia* courts (because it could give them a way out).

Likewise, in the Muslim Lifestyle Show 2017 in London, a strategy to integrate *halal* in Europe consists in adopting the Western food culture. There were eight stations: Halal Hot Dog Station, Hirata Bun Station, Pizza Station, Pulled Beef bun station, Chinese Cuisine station, Thai Cuisine station, Milkshake station and Crepes & Waffles station. Thus, the *halal* brand does not want to change the food, but to Islamize it or to “purify” it, to transform junk food into good food. To take an example, the description of Pizza Station says: “Halal Pizzas including Americano, Tropicale, Pollo Fiamma and Classic Margarita Pizza served by Levy Restaurants – Olympia London”.<sup>39</sup>

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39 <https://www.muslimlifestyleshow.com/lmls2017#whats-on> (Accessed on 19. 05. 2017.)

## Conclusion

A British Muslim entrepreneur said that the best advice he can give to Muslim businessmen, and the best strategy that made his success, is that he regularly buys flowers from a shop and goes to his mother and asks for her invocation to God in favour of the business of her son (the invocation of the mother is blessed in Islam), and her invocations so far have always proved to be powerful.

Young Muslim entrepreneurs and reformists suggest a new-*halal* label based on ethics of business and respect of organic standards, in order to obtain a share in the market. Nevertheless, the processes of certification and marketing of *halal* leave few opportunities for smaller entrepreneurs, embedded in their Muslim identity, and limited to identity claims of the *halal* label; they are being squeezed out by bigger companies and networks of major Muslim countries. Moreover, Muslim clerics who faithfully stick to standards established by juridical schools in their respective countries of origin, stand as a hurdle to rising new elites in the *halal* field, and this reopens wide the debate about Muslim authority in Europe.

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## 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY LANDMARK CEREMONIES OF A HUNGARIAN CALVINIST COMMUNITY REFLECTED IN FAMILY PHOTOS

**Abstract:** The study examines the reflection in family photographs of religious life of a Hungarian Calvinist village in Romania. Among the more than four hundred photographs included in the analysis, fifty portray events and ceremonies that can be linked to religion, giving an insight into details of the sacral actions in the church or within the family. Most of the photos record rites linked to landmarks in human life (christening, confirmation, marriage, funeral). The largest number are confirmation group photos marking the passage of an age group. There are also photos showing religious celebrations and the church itself as the village's exceptionally important and symbolical building. In the family photo groups these photos serve a similar function to the others, they mainly record the memory of a family member or acquaintance and represent the religious sentiments that accompanied them throughout their lives. Allegiance to the Calvinist denomination played a big role in the survival of the Hungarian community of Végvár in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and also in differentiating it from the Romanian Orthodox culture surrounding the community.

**Keywords:** religious life, Hungarian Calvinist community, minority status, visibility

The Christian religion played an important role in the spread of visibility and in shaping image culture. The visual contents became accessible for all members of society through paintings of sacred subjects, stained-glass windows, engravings and prints, resulting in a traditional use of images with a centuries-long practice in Europe in which the role of the image and its cult, its content and symbolical meaning became fixed and part of the methods of obtaining and interpreting information.

The Reformation brought a change that influenced the attitude of image users as its teachings rejected the cult of images surrounding veneration of the sacred.<sup>1</sup> The systems of symbols and the principles of image framing underwent change,

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<sup>1</sup> BÉRES 2006. 282.

leading to new image interpretation practices. Under the influence of the social changes profane contents took over ever greater space in visibility and the use of images increasingly entered the private sphere. However the mass spread of images of a private nature with religious or secular content required the new techniques that speeded up and simplified multiple copying. Photography was one of these techniques<sup>2</sup> that opened up new paths in the use of images: it brought the creation and possession of images within the reach of wide circles of society.

The spread of photography, the technical possibility of access for the lower strata of society is known as the democratisation of photography.<sup>3</sup> This process was helped to a considerable extent by the church ceremonies since in Hungary wedding photos were the first to bring it into the culture of less individualised communities,<sup>4</sup> they were followed by other photos related to landmark ceremonies, then by portraits and group photos. From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Kodak cameras appeared on the market, anyone could switch from being simply a viewer, recipient or subject, to being the one who could choose the content of the image.

However, the 20<sup>th</sup> century's growing production of private images differed significantly from the earlier image creation practice. Nevertheless in a certain respect motivations similar to those in the initial period of visual culture when the images with sacral content were created for the churches can be discovered behind the photography (creating a memory and setting an example, outward display, declaration)<sup>5</sup>. Different visual contents were created in the secular and religious spheres. Among the photo subjects the secular aspects of family life dominated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they served a role in connections between people and in the individual intentions. Aspects of religious life, sacral spaces and ceremonial actions were less often portrayed. In the present study I do not examine photography customs related to the use of images in connection with the cult of the sacred.

My examples are drawn from a Hungarian village in the Banat region of Romania, where I analysed the connections between private photographs and religious life. In my investigation I seek an answer to what the small number of photos related to religion found in family albums tell us about the sacral life of the local community and what role they play among their possessors.

2 BÉRES 2006. 283.

3 CHALFEN 1987. 4.

4 KUNT 1995. 12.

5 KUNT 1987.15.

## The community examined

The venue of the visual ethnographic field research was a settlement established in 1786 during the Habsburg rule under the name of Rittberg. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was forbidden for Hungarians to settle in the Banat territories, but since the Catholic Swabian settlers did not really prosper in this village designed by engineers, most of them moved on after a few years and so by the end of the century Hungarian Calvinists from various parts of the Great Plain moved here. Their church was built by 1794. In the documents in the archives by 1806 the former settlement of Rittberg is mentioned as a Hungarian settlement called Végvár; as it prospered in the following decades it was raised to the status of market town. A school and cultural centre were also built and the buildings in the main street were given an urban structure.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century brought big changes in the life of the small town: under the provisions of the Trianon treaty (1920) that ended the First World War for Hungary the Hungarian settlement was annexed to Romania. Romanianisation began in the following decades: families from the old Romanian territories were resettled here with the aim of changing the ethnic identity, language and religious characteristics as soon as possible. It was around that time that the name of the settlement became Tormac. The Second World War and the socialist dictatorship that followed made even stronger efforts to achieve uniformity in the areas of culture and the economy. During the Dej era<sup>6</sup> and also the Ceausescu regime<sup>7</sup> the Stalinist principles were applied, although Romania's relations with the Soviet leadership were ambivalent. In the 1950s the schools were nationalised and the church's freedom of action restricted. Privately-owned farming land was confiscated and the previously independent farmers were forced into collective farms.<sup>8</sup> From the point of view of religion Romania was a diverse country in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially following the expansion of its territory in 1920 when the Roman Catholic and Calvinist Hungarian settlements were annexed to the country where the majority of the population were Orthodox and a smaller proportion Greek Catholic. In the case of the Banat this ruling, that significantly changed the earlier course of life, also affected the Germans, Slovaks, Ruthenians, Bulgarians and Czechs who lived there.<sup>9</sup> There were Jews in both Hungarian and Romanian settlements in this territory (mainly in the towns).<sup>10</sup> Following the take-over of power in 1948 the situation of the non-Orthodox denominations and the conditions of their followers for the exercise of freedom of religion became uncertain because the basic tenets of communism were opposed to belief in God. The Greek Catholic Church was merged with the Orthodox Church, violent political methods

6 GAGYI 2006. 26. Georghie Georghiu-Dej was the head of the Romanian Communist Party from 1945–1965.

7 GAGYI 2006.26. Nicolae Ceausescu led the Socialist Republic of Romania from 1965–1989 as head of the Romanian Communist Party.

8 GAGYI 2006. 43.

9 GAGYI 2006. 35.

10 GAGYI 2006. 36.

were used in an attempt to restrict the freedom of the Roman Catholic Church to a minimum, while the organisational structure of the Protestant Churches representing the smallest proportion in Romania and therefore judged to represent no danger was re-regulated, their operation within narrow frames was tolerated under supervision.<sup>11</sup>

After the change of system in 1989 ownership rights were re-regulated, religion was given greater space in public life, but there was no weakening in the tendency to cultural assimilation. Today within the ethnic proportions of the population of the village the Hungarians make up around 50%, and most of them are still Calvinists. In addition to their sense of community arising from their ethnic allegiance and religion, the Hungarians are also bound together by a dense web of kinship ties that has increased in importance mainly because of the factors mentioned in the period between 1920 and 1989.

### The material studied

The basic question of my research<sup>12</sup> – the basis on which I selected the visual material of the Hungarian community in the village – was to determine the proportion of photos in family image collections that portray community occasions and whether there is an outlook from the narrow circle of the family towards the integrating society. It can be said on the basis of experience in the field that there is; I collected a total of 412 photos in Végvár meeting this criterion. These images portray outstanding events and everyday activities of groups of varying size in the village. Due to the method used for collecting, the group of images examined can be regarded as a heterogeneous sample of items produced in different periods. However, the same photos could be found in different collections, or photos taken at the same events or places, and the same persons also appeared in different photos. Their differences are thus not an obstacle to interpretation of the assemblage, all the photos are connected to Végvár and the people of Végvár, and represent mosaic pieces in the history of the local community.

The oldest photos in the set collected were taken in the 1910s, while the most recent are from the 1990s. Four are colour photos, the rest are black and white, suggesting on the one hand slower, more difficult access to technical innovations, and on the other an attitude that attaches greater value to older photos.

The image collection includes 43 photos connected in some way to religious life; these were taken between 1920 and 1990. The informants had fewer photos

<sup>11</sup> GAGYI 2006.45

<sup>12</sup> The research is carried out within the frame of a priority project of the TÁMOP 4.2.4.A/2-11-1-2012-0001 National Excellence Program – National program for the elaboration and operation of a system ensuring support for Hungarian students and researchers. The project is supported by the European Union, with co-financing from the European Social Fund.

from the beginning and end points of the time scale portrayed, while there were more photos linked to religion in the middle period, from the 1950s to the 1980s. Time is a determining factor in this topic because of the characteristics of political history briefly outlined above.

The main line for interpretation of the photos examined is set by the subjects portrayed. Among the photos we find some taken at religious feasts, at landmark ceremonies and on other community occasions as well as photos showing the religious place in itself, but due to limitations of space the analysis here is restricted to the landmark images that make up the largest number within the sample.

Almost all the images are group photos, the only difference found was in the framing of the image. Some were made following the rules of studio photography, while others were spontaneous photos where presumably it was not the intention of the person taking the snapshot that determined the image as that person was probably not able to intervene in the events taking place before the camera. The persons in the photos are Calvinist Hungarians from Végvár among whom there was a close network of connections. Members of the present over 50 age group still recognise members of the older generations on the photos and naturally they are also able to identify photos of each other taken in their youth. The family photo collections do not include solely photos of members of the given nuclear family, they also preserve photos of more distant relatives and acquaintances received as gifts. However, it could be observed that these photos are not part of the active use of images, they are produced from unarranged collections of photos kept in drawers and it was only after longer inspection that they recognised the person through whom the photo entered the collection, or in other cases the inscription on the photo helped identification. "It's my father's writing, TL, that was our neighbour, it's here because we were at the neighbours at a confirmation lunch."<sup>13</sup>

## **Photos of landmarks in the lives of individuals**

All cultures attribute great significance to events marking off the stages of human life. They are changes of position in the life of the individual that also influence the community large or small that integrates the person. Since the role that the person has played up to that point is to change, the passage from one period of life to another can also bring a crisis, depending on the extent and quality of the change. Religious rites and cultural traditions help those concerned to overcome the crisis and adapt to the new situation.<sup>14</sup> It was by recording these ceremonies that photographs were able to spread most smoothly into the broadest strata of

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<sup>13</sup> Extract from interview with KL. 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. van GENNEP 2007 (1960), TURNER 2002 (1969).

society.<sup>15</sup> From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the rules for recording these landmarks and the customs for the use of these photos constantly changed. Among the photos examined were one photo of a christening, 35 confirmation group photos, three wedding and four funeral photos.



Moment of christening an infant in white swaddling clothes, Végvár, 1980s

This the first social event in the life of the individual although he or she is not aware of it at the time, which together with the church rules also expresses reception into the community and the provision of care by the family. The photo in the collection was probably taken in the 1980s; the informants deduced this date from the time of service of the minister in the photo. The primary verbal content associated with the photograph was lost because this photo came from a collection that had been thrown out or was selected by a woman teacher in Végvár together with other family photos to be thrown out or burnt. Thus for some reason this photo had become worthless and without function for its original owners and the event portrayed on it had, as it were, fallen out of family memory. On the photo the photographer recorded the actual moment of christening in the church, with the infant dressed in white swaddling clothes in the centre – its identity entirely obscured by the clothes – and the minister wearing a festive cloak and holding the christening jug. The parents and godparents in their Sunday best stand around, obscuring each other in the photo. The image is of a spontaneous nature showing the event from the angle of the photographer who had no possibility to intervene.

<sup>15</sup> KUNT 1995. 12.

The persons in the image are paying attention to the ceremony conducted by the minister and we can conclude from their behaviour that they attributed great significance to this act.

No other christening image was found, but in the course of conversation when the question of the connections between politics, private life and the practice of religion arose, one of my informants mentioned the example of her daughter's christening.

“Well, for example, I wasn't in the church when my daughter was christened because at the time I worked at the people's council and they said that if they see me there, it's goodbye.<sup>16</sup>”



Confirmation group in Végvár, 1942

Both church and secular ceremonies provide the formal frames for the change of age group. The profane rites are closely connected to education: recognition that children are becoming adults is linked to passing examinations and completing different stages of schooling. Among the church ceremonies in the case of the Végvár Calvinists confirmation traditionally held at Easter can be regarded as such an act although it precedes the age of legal maturity by several years, being held at the age of 13-14 years. In earlier centuries in Hungary it was from this age that young people were entitled to a number of adult rights, for example the young men could begin to court girls and could freely enter the inn, while girls could receive suitors and wear the traditional headdress.<sup>17</sup> However as the

<sup>16</sup> Extract from interview with SzL 2013.

<sup>17</sup> DÖMÖTÖR – HOPPÁL 1990. 472.

culture gradually changed and the childhood stage of life grew longer, the connection between confirmation and these rights weakened.

In Végvár

“she couldn’t go to a ball because she was only 13 at the time of her confirmation. No, no, not even with her family, with her mother and father!”<sup>18</sup>

Although confirmation did not bring a significant change in the status of a child, the photos and narratives indicate that it was and still is regarded as an important event. Among the 20<sup>th</sup> century photos with a religious subject the greatest number, a total of thirty, were taken on this occasion. Each of those confirmed received a copy of the group photo, so the same photo was found in a number of family photo collections in the village.

“Confirmation of young people born in 1955. István Nagy minister and old Józsi Kele the caretaker. We will find the same people on this school leaving photo, except for this girl, she was confirmed but she wasn’t with us because she graduated from the Romanian section, CL did too, this one too, this one died (pointing to figures in the photo), but they kept their religion, the others are all still alive.”<sup>19</sup>



Young confirmation candidates in front of the congregation in the Végvár church, 1970s–1980s

<sup>18</sup> Extract from interview with Szné 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Extract from interview with KL 2013.

There is only one photo in the collection of the examination-type ceremony following the church rules; it was taken from the balcony by the village's professional photographer Antal Knöbl around 1970–1980. In the photo the candidates can be seen seated in the front pews facing the altar, the girls in front, the boys at the back and behind them the members of the presbytery. Both the candidates and the congregation can be seen in special dress: “traditional white dress, the boys received a new suit for the occasion”.<sup>20</sup> While the style of the dress differs in the photos taken in different periods, the colours are the same. Apart from this photograph only group photos were taken of the confirmation, where the minister and caretaker can be seen in the centre and the young people around them, either mixed or with boys and girls in separate rows. A third of the photos were taken indoors after 1980 and show the figures behind the altar with the pulpit in the background. In earlier periods – presumably because of the poorer technical conditions and the light levels – the confirmation group was arranged in the church garden for the photo.



First communion group in Végvár, 1937

<sup>20</sup> Extract from interview with KL 2013.

The oldest confirmation photo was taken in the 1940s and shows a group of 41 persons. Several photos have survived from the 1950s where the number of candidates range from 24 to 37; in the case of these photos it is important to take into account that by that time the socialist dictatorship based on atheistic principles was already well established in Romania. On the photos taken in the 1960s–1980s the average number of persons is 15–20, then after the 1990s the number of young Calvinists receiving confirmation drops below 20. However because the photos were not collected on the basis of a representative methodology these figures give only a general idea of a trend. But they do nevertheless throw light on demographic characteristics and identity strategies: on the one hand the declining number of children resulting from the economic situation of the village, the decline in active Calvinist religious practice as a consequence of secularisation and Romanianisation and on the other hand the village turning inward in the face of external political and cultural threats, and the retaining and distinguishing power of religion.

Among photos of the village's Catholics the collection included a picture of the 1937 first communion group showing children around the age of six to eight years holding sacred images and candles. Here too the girls are dressed in white, most of them also have a wreath and veil on their head, the boys wear a jacket over a white shirt and short cloth trousers. According to the inscription, the teacher and sister stand in the centre of the group. The names on the back of the photo reveal that most of the children were descendants of the former Swabian settlers. This photo too was rescued from destruction; the symbols recorded in the visual content helped my informants to determine the occasion on which the photo was taken, but memories associated with the image have faded and without the inscription they would not have been able to identify the persons.



Wedding in the 1980s in Végvár

Throughout the world rich traditions are associated with the choice of partner, rooted in part in religious rules and in part in popular culture. In the full collection I found only one photo of a church wedding among the photos of my informants and another photo can be interpreted as an intermediary point because it had all the features of the standard group photos but was taken not in a studio but in the church garden so that here it is rather the involvement of the sacral space that can be observed.

In the first image the connection between the framing of the photo and the visual content are similar to those of the christening photo. This photo was taken by a professional photographer, so the framing shows the event from a wider angle; it is easier for the outside observer too to interpret the photo that is richer in detail. The active participants in the ceremony (bride, groom, witnesses, bridesmaids and pages) stood in front of the altar that, in keeping with the traditions of the Great Plain was low and surrounded by a carved wooden railing.<sup>21</sup> The minister stands behind the altar. Judging from the gestures and posture recorded, he must have addressed a passionate sermon to the assembled congregation. The participants are dressed in festive clothing following the European fashion of the 1980s: the women wore long dresses made of shiny materials, the bride wears a veil and a long-sleeved white dress, the men are in dark suits. The floral decorations that were part of the wedding attire can also be clearly seen. The expressions on the faces are serious, the gazes are focused on the minister. Although it is clear from the photo that this was not posed, it reflects a kind of stiffness and order that must have been the result of the festive atmosphere of the event and the seriousness of the commitment.



Funeral in the 1950s–1960s

<sup>21</sup> DÖMÖTÖR – HOPPÁL 1990. 465.

The subject of the third image is the wedding procession; although it can also be seen in many other photos it was included in the group of photos examined because the church can be seen in the background and so the sacral space also appears on the photo. This image reflects the most relaxed atmosphere: at this stage of the rite fewer rules determined the behaviour of the participants, indeed merrymaking and joking were also important.

The rite marking the end of life and of importance mainly for the living community appeared on photos already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Around the turn of the century photos were still taken showing the mourners standing around the open coffin and recording the actual deceased person.<sup>22</sup> Funeral photos taken in Végvár in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century show a closed coffin representing death but placing the emphasis on the gathering of mourners.

Although at that time the church also had an important role in this rite, the minister does not appear on the photos – that could also be attributed to chance selection of the moment. The older photograph (around 1950–1960) portrays the most lively scene among the landmark photos. The place is the cemetery where people have gathered for the funeral of a person presumably of importance for the community. The mourners stood around the still open grave into which an elderly woman has thrown a handful of earth in farewell, a sign of letting go of the deceased. This image portrays the events as they happened, stepping beyond the limitations of imitating mourning.

In the other photo, taken at the end of the 1960s, the coffin occupies the central place. The bier heaped with wreaths dominates the image, the mourners are in the background, partly hidden, only a few faces can be seen clearly, the viewer sees mainly expressions reflecting negative emotions. In this photograph the emphasis is less on the ceremonial actions and more on the emotions.

In addition to these there are two other funeral photos taken in Győröd (Giroda), a nearby village. Taken at the same time, they show the funeral procession from a distance and close up. In one image we see the coffin being carried on shoulders along the street, and in the other is a long line of mourners dressed in black. According to the narratives, the customs in Végvár were similar. Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the coffin was set up at first in the house and later in front of the church, then the mourners followed the funeral procession on the few kilometres to the cemetery.

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22 KUNT 1995. 75.

## A few conclusions

According to visual ethnographic theses examining phenomena related to photographic use customs, documentation intentions lie behind the taking of private photos. People wish to record the moment they consider worth remembering, they project its significance into the future. This implicit form of attributing value was characteristic up to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as long as the technical conditions required photographers to strictly select how they use the 24 or 32 frames in the rolls of film in their analog cameras. Examining the thematic proportions of the images of religious subjects in Végvár from this angle we find that confirmation was the most frequently occurring image subject accounting for the largest numbers in our sample. These images illustrate religiosity in their locations, actors and inner content. Arranging the photos in order it can be seen that the successive generations entered the religious continuity of the local community. It was mainly group photos that were taken of confirmation: thus the local customs placed greater emphasis not on individual but on collective religiosity. This type of photo

“declares that there, then, these few people regarded themselves as belonging together and considered it important to record this.”<sup>23</sup>

The narratives placed special emphasis on the collective lunches or suppers<sup>24</sup> that were as lavish as the possibilities allowed, and were regarded as an essential part of the celebrations, nevertheless these meals marking the end of the ceremony were not recorded. While it was mainly only the immediate family and close acquaintances or in cases neighbours who were present at christenings and confirmations, many people from the village were invited to weddings and wakes.

After examining the whole collection of photographic material it can be said that although when portraying the landmark ceremonies great emphasis was placed on the minister and the sacral space, the members of the community are always present too in these rites accompanying – in the form of a procession – their companions on the passage.

An analysis of the layers of visual content of close to fifty photos from Végvár portraying religious subjects together with the background information revealed by the narratives shows that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century despite the restrictive political measures the Calvinist Hungarians of Végvár actively practised their religion and as the photographs show they gathered in large numbers in the church for different ceremonies. However the photographs only portray and passively transmit the sacral acts, they do not take part in them. In using the photos they remember a moment or event in the life of an individual or the group in which he or she was integrated, that is, the person comes to the fore and religion appears as a part of life, an integral part of the individual history. These photos are preserved because

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23 KINCSES 2006. 39.

24 NYÍRI 1975.152

of the now deceased person or the still living persons who appear on them. And if the memory of the person is lost, or if for some reason the descendants come into conflict with their predecessors, the photos of christenings, confirmations or Christmases lose their value, are thrown out, or burnt. The fact that there is a person who rescues these foreign photos from destruction is an indication that the members and generations have differing attitudes to the community. According to the narratives of the local people, when the justification for the very existence of the community was challenged, efforts were made to change its values by force and restrict its freedom of conscience and it was surrounded with foreigners, the community closed its ranks, clung to its traditions, religion and values and to each other, even if they were not able to do so openly. But this was the condition for their survival.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> GAGYI 2006. 120.

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## “TAKING ON A VISIT TO THE LORD JESUS...”

### Eucharistic education of children in the Heart Brigade<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century in Hungary too the growing veneration of the Sacred Heart was closely linked in Catholic religious practice to observation of the first Fridays and frequent Holy Communion. These practices were also of great importance in the Heart Brigade, veneration of the Sacred Heart organised for children in the form of a confraternity. It was considered important for children to learn at an early age the most important element of religious life because it was thought that what they learned in childhood would be carried into adult life and subsequently passed on to their own children. The intention in giving children a religious education was to better society over the long term.

**Keywords:** Sacred Heart, Apostleship of Prayer, Eucharist, childhood education

According to Norbert Busch the success of veneration of the Sacred Heart was largely determined by its cult character and the German Catholic minority's<sup>2</sup> endangered situation.<sup>3</sup> This problem was not limited to Germany. The increasing force of the social and economic changes that appeared from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century also had an influence on religiosity. The formation of nation states, embourgeoisement, the Enlightenment and secularisation changed the role of the church in society.

“The nation states that were coming into being in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century came into conflict with Catholicism practically everywhere in Europe, although with differing intensity.”<sup>4</sup>

The Catholic religion became only one of the recognised denominations, its norms were not applied in all areas of life, it became gradually restricted to

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1 The name of the association abroad is Apostleship of Prayer

2 In Germany before the Second World War, under the influence of the Reformation, around two-thirds of the population were Protestant and one third Catholic.

3 BUSCH 1997. 31.

4 KLESTENITZ 2013. 21.

private devotions and the institutionalised occasions of religious practice.<sup>5</sup> Thus secularisation

“was a two-way process: on the one hand religion in fact ceased to be a force organising society, but parallel with this forces representing the religious world view and the interests of the churches also appeared.”<sup>6</sup>

Under the influence of these changes it became even more important for the church to rely on its believers to a greater extent than previously. Pope Leo XIII himself also emphasised the need for adaptation to the modern challenges and for self-organisation that included reaching out to ever wider groups and the use of modern tools in apostolic work.<sup>7</sup> In his *Rerum novarum* encyclical<sup>8</sup> he drew attention to organisation among the workers. It was also during his reign that an awareness arose of “the possibility and need for popular Christian (Catholic) mass organisation at the highest level of the universal church”.<sup>9</sup> The church also recognised that the community of believers cannot be regarded as a homogeneous mass, as the religious communities organise themselves too with different aims. The differentiation of 19<sup>th</sup> century confraternities was achieved on the basis of these aims and needs rather than on a societal basis. Confraternities established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and earlier were often organised along the lines of the institutional structures of the modern world, which also affected their structure.<sup>10</sup>

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the aim of the Jesuits who were foremost in initiating and organising veneration of the Sacred Heart was religious revival, to promote the Catholic Church and the general recatholicisation of Europe. The Society of Jesus regarded veneration of the Sacred Heart as its mass evangelisation program and proclaimed social solidarity and reconciliation as the “remedy” for social renewal.<sup>11</sup> The Jesuits too considered it important to use modern tools and methods (press, literary products, popular missions and education of the priests/clergy), that made possible a certain degree of individualisation of religion, addressing individual believers. In addition they and the church leaders also placed great stress on early and frequent communion. The greatest opponent of this was the Jansenism movement<sup>12</sup> that

“allowed only persons who lived a very devout life and were free of even minor sins to take holy communion”<sup>13</sup>

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5 KAPITÁNY – KAPITÁNY 2007. 383–384.

6 KLESTENITZ 2013. 21.

7 Klestenitz 2013. 32.

8 SZABÓ 2006. 575–576.

9 GERGELY 1977. 8.

10 BARNA 2011. 27.

11 BUSCH 1997. 44; 48–49.

12 GÁL – SZABÓ 2000. 665–666.

13 PETRÓ 1937. 11.

in the words of József Petró papal chamberlain and teacher of theology.

In Catholic teaching Holy Communion (Eucharist) is one of the seven sacraments in which Christ appears, the communion is the mystical union of the priest and the believers with Jesus.<sup>14</sup> This is why it was considered important in religious childhood education, including in the children’s societies, for children to participate in communion as early and as often as possible. This was not only an initiative from the grassroots. Pope Pius X also supported the aspiration, striving to promote it with his measures supporting frequent (1905) and early (1910) communion.<sup>15</sup> The Fourth Council of the Lateran and the Council of Trent<sup>16</sup> linked the time of first communion to the “years of discretion”. Tihamér Tóth<sup>17</sup> argued similarly:

“The Eucharist can only be celebrated fittingly with a Eucharistic soul. One must first know the Sacrament, then live from it – and only then celebrate”.<sup>18</sup>

The time of the first communion was adapted to local customs, so the ages may differ.<sup>19</sup> The assessment of “discretion” also depended on the way children were judged by the society. A significant change in thinking about children took place from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. From then on a kind of cult of the child can be observed, a separation of the world of children from that of adults (this could be seen particularly in children’s games, moral and pedagogical literature).<sup>20</sup> From that point on it was considered acceptable for children to take communion from the age of seven. Here too the condition for this was that the child should be aware of its sins, as it was compulsory for communion to be preceded by confession, the sacrament of penance.

It can be seen that receiving frequent communion and propitiatory communion after confession on the first Friday of every month were an important element in Sacred Heart devotions. According to tradition the Saviour asked Saint Margaret Alacoque<sup>21</sup> to have people devote the Friday following the octave of Corpus Christi to veneration of his Sacred Heart.<sup>22</sup>

The children’s branch of the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Heart Brigade also regarded frequent communion, observation of the first Friday and

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14 Communion is also one of the sacraments in Protestant churches.

15 See: JORIO 1929.

16 1545–1563. Catholic reform synod.

17 Roman Catholic bishop, church writer, university teacher (1889–1939). A highly influential writer on spiritual matters, his writings addressed to youths and boys were popular in Hungary and were translated into many languages abroad.

18 TÓTH 1938. 6.

19 JORIO 1929. 8–10.

20 ARIÉS 1987. 142–143.

21 SZABÓ 1930. 35. Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647–1690) entered the Visitation convent at Paray-le-Monial in 1671. Between 1672 and 1674 she received three private revelations on the Sacred Heart of Jesus. On 24 April 1864 she was declared Blessed, and canonised on 13 May 1920.

22 SZABÓ 1930. 36. In 1856 Pope Pius IX extended the feast of the Sacred Heart to the whole church.

living together with the church as a vital task for children. Citing the Bible<sup>23</sup>, mediæval and contemporary authors,<sup>24</sup> this was made compulsory by the guidebooks and handbook of the Heart Brigade. The publications produced in preparation for the 1938 International Eucharistic Conference held in Budapest in particular emphasised that children must receive communion by the age of seven:

“Children spend the seventh year of their life in the first grade, thus they must then receive communion. This divine and church order also applies to them at the age of seven if, whether due to their own fault or for reasons beyond their control, they do not attend school or religious instruction. In countries where there is no religious instruction in the schools, they prepare for first communion in the church.”<sup>25</sup>

Similarly to the national trends, in the Heart Brigade groups in Szeged-Rókus<sup>26</sup> it was considered important to receive communion and observe the first Friday. However they were unable to achieve this in practice up to 1936 because:

“...spiritual care of the Heart Brigade members was left to the single religious instruction teacher who was incapable of performing the task because of the steadily growing number of members. Under such conditions it is not surprising that in the biggest school of the country’s second largest Catholic city the Heart Brigade did not cultivate ‘communion as often as possible’. The children could not be taken to the monthly collective communion by the brigade leaders for the simple reason that there was no one to hear their confession before communion. As a result the Heart Brigade did not participate in a collective communion for years on end.”

wrote Anna Dolch, teacher and brigade leader in her report.<sup>27</sup> The situation changed from December 1936 when the newly ordained priest Elemér Vida joined in the work as religious instructor and brigade leader. The children’s confessions could be heard with the help of the Society of Jesus.

Mass<sup>28</sup> was followed by sessions for children similar to religious instruction, that is, Guard meetings. The children reported on what they heard in ways appropriate for their age,<sup>29</sup> with the help of drawings or short texts. The drawings

23 Mk 10:13, 14, 16. and Mt 18:3–5.

24 Especially Saint Thomas Aquinas, Saint Augustine and Pope Pius X.

25 PÉTERY 1944. 3–4.

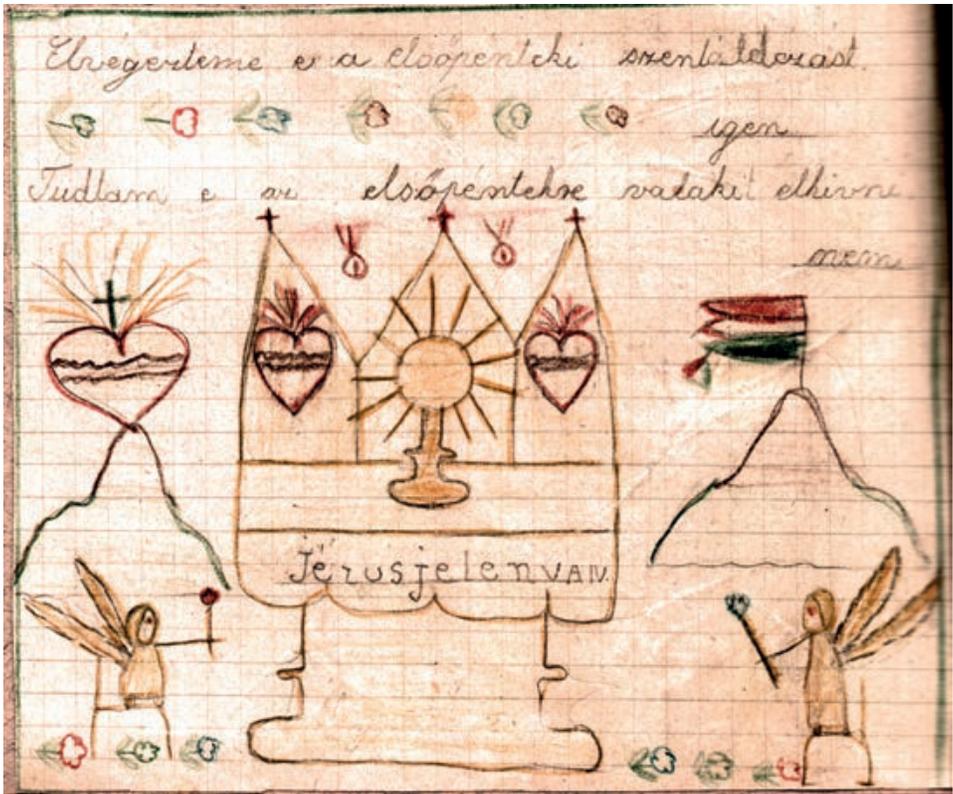
26 Szeged-Rókus, part of the city of Szeged, it was populated by the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Up to the Second World War the city’s poorest people lived here.

27 A Szeged-rókusi állami elemi iskola 6 szivgárda-csoportja krónikájának I. kötete, 1937–1938-as tanév. [Volume I of the Chronicle of the 6 Heart Brigade groups in the Szeged-Rókus state primary school, 1937–1938 school year.] Jezsuita Levéltár és Rendtörténeti Könyvtár (JTMR.) II. 4.5. 22.

28 Mainly on Sundays.

29 Children between the ages of 6 and 14 could be members of the Heart Brigade.

clearly reflected how the children interpreted what they heard at the session. The best drawings have survived as illustrations in the three-volume Chronicle (Fig. 1). Pen drawings or Art Nouveau coloured ink drawings done by Guard leaders (Fig. 2) were also included as illustrations at the top of recollections or reports when the Chronicle was compiled. The last volume was edited during the Second World War, but even despite the bombing raids it was considered important<sup>30</sup> that it should have the same external appearance as the other two volumes.



Child's drawing of the Eucharist and the Sacred Heart. Source: JTMR. II. 4.5.

Frequent communion for children was held to be of great importance also because it was thought that children are still uncorrupted in their early years and the sooner their education for a Christian life is begun the more effective it will be. It was thought that the absence of such an education had an effect on the adult soul, its attitude to the church and to Jesus.<sup>31</sup> Women were faced with two possi-

<sup>30</sup> The final volume was compiled mainly by the teacher and Guard leader Anna Dolch (Dombrádi) who preserved it after the Second World War. It then passed in 1987 to Dr. József Bálint S.J., and finally to the Jesuit Archive and Library on the History of the Order.

<sup>31</sup> RÉVAY 1944. 5–6.

ble vocations: to become a wife or to enter a convent. The options were similar for men: to become a father or to join a monastic order.<sup>32</sup> Families were considered to be “the pillars of national existence”, and so “saving families means saving the nation.”<sup>33</sup> They held that if children received a religious education they would carry what they learnt there into their own families.

The “Meeting with little Jesus” was realised first in the church when taking first communion, but the lasting arrival happens after death. This is why it was regarded as very important that children should be prepared in their souls. Accordingly, sick, dying members of the Heart Brigade were provided with the sacraments by their spiritual guides and were prepared for the journey to the “eternal home”, as their aim was to ensure a “good death”.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to the “church command”, the first Fridays and communion were considered important also because of the 34<sup>th</sup> International Eucharistic Congress held in Budapest in 1938 and the Saint Stephen Commemorative Year<sup>35</sup>. The Heart Brigade groups made big efforts to prepare for the occasion, then from 25 to 29 May, after the Congress, they travelled to Budapest as a group with 1500 children to pay tribute to the Holy Right Hand. Those who were unable to take part in the event strove to join in with novena prayers and spiritual exercises.<sup>36</sup>

Besides the celebration in Budapest, numerous local celebrations were also held. The technical achievements of the period, the press, radio and film contributed to the effectiveness of the series of celebrations. Veneration of the Sacred Heart was closely linked to observance of the first Fridays and frequent communion, and accordingly these practices were also decisive in the Heart Brigade. The “meeting with little Jesus” could be in this world or the other, individual or collective.

In this article I have shown the interpretations concerning early communion for children. The Catholic Church involved children in communion with the intention of shaping society. It was thought that if children “live together” with the church from an early age it would have an influence on their later life, and they would also pass it on to their future family. Since families were seen as “the pillars of national existence”, great emphasis was placed on pastoral work in this area. Moreover children were considered to be more receptive to religious faith than adults: “the working of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the child is much less doubtful because it hardly comes up against any obstacle. Entirely wilful and

32 A Szeged-rókusi állami elemi iskola 6 szivgárda-csoportja krónikájának II. kötete, 1938–1939-es tanév. [Volume II of the Chronicle of the 6 Heart Brigade groups in the Szeged-Rókus state primary school, 1937–1938 school year.] JTMR. II. 4.5. 114.

33 MIHALOVICS 1942. 42–43.

34 A Szeged-rókusi állami elemi iskola 6 szivgárda-csoportja krónikájának II. kötete, 1938–1939-es tanév. [Volume II of the Chronicle of the 6 Heart Brigade groups in the Szeged-Rókus state primary school, 1937–1938 school year.] JTMR. II. 4.5. 51–52.

35 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Saint Stephen, the first king of Hungary (1000–1038) that was commemorated throughout the country.

36 A Szeged-rókusi állami elemi iskola 6 szivgárda-csoportja krónikájának I. kötete, 1937–1938-as tanév. [Volume II of the Chronicle of the 6 Heart Brigade groups in the Szeged-Rókus state primary school, 1937–1938 school year.] JTMR. II. 4.5. 52–56.



Guard leader's drawing of the first Friday. Source: JTMR. II. 4.5.

customary sin has not yet cast its shadow on the light of faith, passion has not yet polluted God's living temple. God feels entirely at home in such a home,"<sup>37</sup> wrote Lajos Müller. The examples show that this aspiration was a determining factor not only at the individual level, but also in the confraternity form organised for children for veneration of the Sacred Heart, the Heart Brigade.

In face of the rational, secular explanation of social problems, the shaping of society through children drew on religious teachings as its interpretation capital and the created world in which the transcendent is an active actor is its interpretation frame. The social, political and economic crises of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were given an interpretation on a different level, that of God shaping the world and the faithful resting in his hand. This was not exclusive to the Christian religious renaissance. The Orthodox Jewish religious renaissance formulated similar discourses along the lines of the Everlasting One intervening in the life of his chosen people and the chain of generations continuously embracing and therefore maintaining the revealed teaching. The child was a key motif in this religious renaissance too.<sup>38</sup> Regardless of denomination, the next generation was the focal point of crisis management in the case of religious revival trends.

37 MÜLLER 1912. 13.

38 GLÄSSER 2008. 235, 238; GLÄSSER 2012. 90–98.

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## THE ROLE OF THE ECCLESIAL FAMILY IN RELIGIOUS PRACTICE TODAY AS SEEN IN TWO RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN HUNGARY

**Abstract:** The article deals with a new institutional form, the *spiritual* or *ecclesial family*, recently given official recognition by the Catholic Church, focusing on the forms of association arising from the particular organisational structure. Through the example of young religious communities founded in France and Spain and also established in Hungary, we can gain an insight into what it means today to live as a member of a spiritual community on both the practical and spiritual levels. The study shows the personal desires, experiences and commitments to faith that guide the lives of community members, and how their personal and community identity is shaped by the various forms of connection.

**Keywords:** Catholic Church, religious communities, new forms of consecrated life, new evangelisation

It is a widely held perception that the Church is the big family of God's children. In vernacular usage the expression is applied to all persons who have been christened, those who consciously practice their faith and those who live it less intensively, through secular believers grouped in lay movements right up to persons belonging to the clerical order of the church, in short a very diverse and large community.

However, in the terminology of the Catholic Church we also find a relatively new and less well known expression, the *spiritual* or *ecclesial family*, a new institutional form that has been given official church recognition: it assumes membership of a particular community and requires serious faith and personal commitment on the part of its members.

Under the influence of the liturgical reforms and wave of renewal introduced by the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) many new spiritual movements and religious communities arose within the Catholic Church and over the decades have won recognition from the competent church authorities as associations of Christian believers or a new form of consecrated life. On a number of occasions

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Pope Saint John Paul II called them the first fruit of the council, the wealth of the Church, a gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> In the words of Pope Benedict:

“There are always new forms of manifestation of the Holy Spirit, transforming the structure of the Church to make it alive and new.”<sup>2</sup>

The emphasis is on recognition and acceptance of novelty, the new charism.

The category of “new communities” thus comprises all the establishments that arose or received church recognition after the Second Vatican Council. It also includes communities that were formed before the council but for which the documents of the council played an important role in their recognition under canon law or the definition of their structure and government.

What characterises these new communities?

They simultaneously offer a personal and community experience in our secularising world. They constantly seek new means, authentic, living manifestation and active forms of religious practice that can lead people today to a deeper experience of God. Many people find their radicalism attractive, in cases they follow the early Christian pattern. The conscious commitment to the evangelical counsels and the effort to live a consecrated life go together with a practice of witness. For the most part these are grass roots initiatives, in which they are moved by the Spirit to embrace their vocation and serve the Church as a sign of unity in love. Their diversity enables individuals to find an expression of faith that suits their own spiritual nature and charism. They are characterised by complementarity, that is, a union and communion of different life states that is in line with today’s reality.

The expression “new community”<sup>3</sup> comprises a number of realities: private and official groupings of Christian believers, new monastic institutions, apostolic groupings, establishments that are still seeking their place and church recognition, and monastic, spiritual families. The latter is a new institutional form and at present numbers more than 50 new foundations in various places around the world.

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1 At Whitsun 1998 Pope John Paul II first invited the new communities and movements to Rome, and used the expression “new community” in connection with them.

2 The words of Joseph Ratzinger – at the time still cardinal – to those gathered at the 1998 meeting.

3 The “new communities” are a rather broad and complex concept; because it includes a great many and very different kinds of church reality, it cannot be easy or straightforward to categorise either, their canon law status is the result of a lengthy process of assessing and distinguishing. This can be explained in part by the young age of the communities, the resulting appearance of what in many cases are novel forms, the lack of centuries of experience, and the gradual transformation of the respect for traditions. They are often marked by difficulties of self-interpretation and enculturation, by a search for directions. At the same time we can speak of a religious reality with a striking presence in ever growing numbers all over the world, giving life and impetus to the Catholic Church and speaking authentically to people today. The majority were formed in the 1970s, mainly in France, Italy, Spain and Germany, the countries of Southern Europe with the desire to re-evangelise and to support the Church as it struggles with crisis.

The new form of consecrated life – that is, the communities that define themselves as *spiritual/ecclesial/monastic family* – represent a new canon law category within the Roman Catholic Church that is overseen by the Dicastery for Consecrated Life.

The given communities are generally made up of two or three branches: sisters' branch of consecrated life and a brothers' branch of consecrated life; the members of the male branch are brothers living a consecrated life and priests. In addition married or single persons also belong to them as an association or other form of connection; they represent the lay branch.

The members living a consecrated life take the familiar triple vow (obedience, chastity, poverty). The members of the lay branch commit themselves to the given charism with a promise and on the basis of spirituality. Whatever branch having its own independent government they are composed of, these communities have a common leadership. The aspiration to achieve communion is of fundamental importance. The Christian believers in different life states would like to fulfil their apostolic mission within a spiritual family, because they share in the same charism and spirituality. They support each other in living their Christianity, and in this way contribute to the sanctity of life of the individual and the community.<sup>4</sup> Their common training, common activity and missionary service help to form fraternal relations and a family spirituality among the members. In this way the Second Vatican Council opened new perspectives and the way for new initiatives in cooperation between the laity and the religious, creating more effective and at the same time more personal points of connection.

In November 2016 an international conference was held in Rome for the third time on the main topic of: new forms of the consecrated life<sup>5</sup> and new communities established after the Second Vatican Council.<sup>6</sup>

It can rightly be asked whether there is a need for the creation of new foundations or monastic institutions.<sup>7</sup> What are the particular forms best adapted to the new challenges of evangelisation, the spiritual needs and demands of our time?

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4 The Second Vatican Council stressed that in the Church everyone has a call to sanctity and sanctity has many faces.

5 CIC (Codex Iuris Canonici) canon 605: - "The approval of new forms of consecrated life is reserved only to the Apostolic See. Diocesan bishops, however, are to strive to discern new gifts of consecrated life granted to the Church by the Holy Spirit and are to assist promoters so that these can express their proposals as well as possible and protect them by appropriate statutes..."

6 On each occasion the meeting attracted great international interest: new communities come from all parts of the world. This time a speaker came from Hungary too in the person of Sister Márta Balog, who as a member of the Community of the Beatitudes and a canon lawyer, is well acquainted with the area. Her canon law licenciate titled "Développement de la signification théologico-canonique du canon 605 à l'aide des principes des canons 17 et 19 du CIC 1983" (Budapest, Szent István Társulat, 2013) gives an insight into the complex question of new forms of consecrated life. I take this opportunity to thank her for her help on the subject.

7 It was stated at the conference that the new forms of consecrated life complement the mission and vocation of the existing institutions. At present several hundred newly established foundations are waiting for official church recognition.

In Hungary to the best of my knowledge only three religious communities<sup>8</sup> operate within such frames, two of which I have been able to contact in the course of my research to date. In this brief introduction to the families I have not aimed to present the canon law, theological or historical aspect, instead I have focused more on the internal motivations and spiritual dynamics, that is, on how members experience belonging to the given family or community. This naturally requires an outline of the often seemingly complex organisational structure of the different spiritual families. Through the Hungarian examples I have sought an answer to the question of how the wealth of the Church can be seen through the closer cooperation between lay persons and religious, and communion of the different life states. How does the diversity of different forms of connection and commitment to them serve unity? What additional benefit or value does belonging to the given community give to those living in a spiritual family? How can it serve the growth of their personal and collective identity and their religious life?

### Community of the Beatitudes<sup>9</sup>

The community was founded in the early 1970s by two young married couples in the south of France, who received a call to devote their lives to the service of God. The community now has around 1200–1300 members worldwide and is present in more than 30 countries.

The founding charism of the community: life in the Holy Spirit, communion of states of life, and the apostolic radiance arising from it, that bears witness to the diversity of the vocations that make up the Church and their complementary nature. Their spirituality has its sources in the teachings of Carmel and Eastern Christianity regarding the contemplative life, the practice of silent prayer and Eucharistic adoration. The special beauty and dignified celebration of their liturgies occupies a central place in their life. Although it began with charismatic inspiration, according to its self-interpretation it does not belong among the spiritual movements and today lives its vocation more as a consecrated community.

The community was recently reorganised as an official association of Christian believers under diocesan authority with the aim of becoming a new ecclesial family of consecrated life.<sup>10</sup> On 29 June 2011 the Dicastery of Consecrated Life (Rome) approved the new rules of the Community that comprises a sisters'

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8 *Das Werk* – The Cause of Christ (1938 Belgium), *Verbum Dei Missionary Communion and Missionary Family* (1963 Spain), *Community of the Beatitudes* (1973 France)

9 For the eight beatitudes, see: Mt 5, 3-12. – The community was first called the Community of the Lion of Judah and the Slain Lamb, then it later decided that in regions with different cultures the name Beatitudes would be more readily understood and symbolise openness to the poor.

10 On the essential elements and history of the Community's spirituality, see the article by Sister Beáta Mária Versegi: *Vigilia* 1999/9. 659–665, the community's website: [www.nyolcboldogsag.hu](http://www.nyolcboldogsag.hu), and a short outline: <http://www.jelujsag.hu/a-boldogsagok-kozossege>. Accessed on 17. 07. 2017.

consecrated branch, a brothers' consecrated branch (that also has priests among its members), and a lay branch. All three branches have a common government headed by a president elected by the consecrated members<sup>11</sup> while at the same time each branch has its own superior.



Ecclesial Family of the Beatitudes (2016)

The community has been present in Hungary since 1988, its members at present live and serve in two houses<sup>12</sup>. Only a few of the founding members in Hungary still live as members of the community. They came into contact with the community in their youth, after completing their studies, under the influence of experiences in France. They have represented continuity over the past 30 years, their average age is around 50 and today they are members of the consecrated branch, one of them is also the community's only priest. Most of those wishing to join came from the vicinity of Budapest or from the south of the Great Plain (the Szeged agglomeration). Even today the community exerts an attraction mainly in towns on the Great Plain and in Western Hungary. Most enquirers were college or university humanities students. In the first years under the influence of the initial enthusiasm many people – single persons, later also married couples and others preparing for a priestly vocation – joined for longer or shorter periods in the life of the community that was taking shape together with all its difficulties, then their lives later took a different course. The years around the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century were marked by a search for directions and identity in the life of both the community and the individuals there. Many of them still belong to the circle of friends and supporters of the Community. Some of those who entered

11 When the consecrated members make their perpetual vow they receive four symbols from the superior: the brown scapular; the cross of olive wood, on which the symbol of the risen Christ can be seen; the ring which is a symbol of union with Jesus, and the choral robe that they will wear at litanies.

12 The establishment at Homokkomárom was made in 1990, in Budapest in 2006. Their first home was at Pélifyszentkereszt in the vicinity of Esztergom, in the Salesian house that was empty at the time but was returned to the order when it was relaunched in 1994. In recent years they have also been present in Kecskemét with a small community.

committed themselves in France or still live there while a number of others after several years of foreign mission recently returned to Hungary.

The members of the consecrated branch receive continuous theological and pastoral training; the experience gained in foreign houses is of value not only for the language skills but also contributes to the practice of community life. As a consequence all committed members have a high level of qualifications: they include persons with diplomas of teaching or theology, who take part in education, from religious instruction in schools up to university education. Their numbers include a canon lawyer, Christian anthropologist, supervisor, coach, clinical spiritual carer, and mental hygienist.

There are only 12 sisters, it has been years since any man entered the Community.



Eternal vow in the Community of the Beatitudes (December 2016, Homokkomárom)

Parallel with the internal, structural transformation of the community, new enquirers are also appearing. In recent years there have been mainly family vocations and they now form the lay branch of the community. Typically the families of former "shepherds"<sup>13</sup>, are returning as adult children to the community.

The members of the lay branch – who may be single, married, widowed or permanent deacons – live and work in the world and follow a kind of community way of life that is compatible with their vocation, in which community and individual prayer and efforts to achieve universal sanctity occupy a central place. They share in the mission and apostolic activity of the whole ecclesial family

<sup>13</sup> A leader elected by the community for a specified period, who may be a married man, single or a religious.

of the Community of the Beatitudes. In addition to the five Hungarian married couples<sup>14</sup> there is also a Hungarian eye specialist whose unusual life career has included twenty years of service in Africa,<sup>15</sup> who has made a commitment as a lay member with a private vow. He joined the community in the early 1990s and since then, as the only eye specialist in the Congo, he has restored the eyesight of tens of thousands.

However there are more forms of connection and association in the *Ecclesial Family* outside the branches mentioned above for families, single persons and young people living in the world. Individuals in all the forms of commitment belong to a house or particular foundation.

The oldest form of association is *Friends of the Lamb* created for laypersons. They would like to live a prayer life inspired by the community's liturgy and participate actively in the mission of the community. In their prayers they convey the permanent prayer intentions of the Community.<sup>16</sup> They may also receive an individual mission, contained in their mission letter. According to their commitment they regularly partake of the Eucharist and live an evangelical Christian life, they devote their lives to Mary. They undertake a responsible commitment to a mission or apostolic activity of the Community or their own parish. They regularly visit the Community, several times a year.

"I am present among them not as a guest but as a family member. They are like the pillars of a church for me," said a woman, a widow living in a town in Western Hungary, speaking about her connection to the community.<sup>17</sup>

When they make their commitment, all members of Friends of the Lamb are given a small metal cross with the motif of the Lamb. Their commitment is made for a year and can be renewed annually. The text of the commitment contains the essential elements of the community's spirituality:

"My Lord, my God, with the desire of belonging even more to you, and of living my Christian consecration, I beseech you, make me a true friend of Jesus, a friend of the immaculate Lamb, who loved and gave his life for me, may I become like him in his offer of love.

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14 Besides Budapest, they live in Nagykanizsa, Kecskemét and Hódmezővásárhely – from couples with young children to grandparents with numerous grandchildren.

15 Richárd Hardi speaks about his life, among others about his commitment lived in the Community, in a recently published book, see: SIMON 2017.

16 To pray for the glorious coming of Christ, for the preaching of the Gospel, for the unity of the Church, for vocations and for the fulfilment of God's plans for the people of Israel.

17 Because of the confessional nature of the personal declarations and sentiments, anonymity of informants appeared to be the ethical solution as they revealed the most intimate areas of their lives in the course of the conversations. I have tried to characterise them by their family status and location.

I wish to await your coming Kingdom with vigilance and joy, and I wish to anticipate the life of the Lord's Kingdom with constant prayer, praise and active love of my fellow men.

I commit myself to strive for constant conversion, and so allow the fire of the Holy Spirit to reshape me, and to contribute to the renewal of the Church.

I wish to follow with trust the will of the Lord, the example of the Virgin Mary and her maternal guidance.

I commit myself to live in fraternal unity with the Community of the Beatitudes and the other Friends of the Lamb in soul, in prayer, in mutual help, in the service of the Church.

I wish to follow the Lamb wherever it leads, in trust and happy hope."<sup>18</sup>

Temporary commitment, a form of association known as *Disciples of the Lamb* is intended mainly for the younger age group, persons up to the age of 35; it is for three years, with at least four weekends spent annually in a community. Following intensive spiritual and theological training and the experiences gained in community life, and the experience of finding a personal vocation and mission, they gladly help the apostolic and missionary activity of the community, and take an active part in organising the summer camps for young people and retreats. The final act of the Mount Tabor Days, now being organised for the twentieth year is the commitment of new members, made in the midst of the celebrating community. According to the organisers, the greatest benefit and fruit of the camp is that each year participants depart with a living, increasingly personal experience of God.<sup>19</sup>

In Hungary the diocesan priests – at present five in number – belonging to the *Priestly Fraternity of the Beatitudes* established in the autumn of 2015 live in country towns and in Budapest. In addition to their diocesan service, as far as possible they share in the mission and services of the community.

"The beauty of the liturgies, their fitting celebration also serve to deepen the unity among us. Those who come to us can share in this beauty. It is the divine and the beauty from the divine that touched me most deeply,"

said a priest serving in a town on the Great Plain<sup>20</sup> as a member of the Priestly Fraternity.

These forms of association, that merge with the community as a whole and in the final analysis embody the spiritual family, regularly come together. The aim

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18 Extract from a vow received from a Friend of the Lamb, its source is unknown.

19 See the report on the most recent Mount Tabor Days: Kiss 2017. 3.

20 Under his influence the presence of the community has also grown stronger in the Holy Family Parish from the autumn of 2015.

of the meetings is for the members of the community in different life states but committed in the same spirituality to pray together and to strengthen each other with their personal and spiritual experiences. Through the liturgies and fraternal togetherness in the community the participants can experience their belonging to one body.

In June 2016 the first Hungarian meeting of the Spiritual Family of the Beatitudes was held in Homokkomárom in Zala County in the community's house that has been operating there since 1990.



Prayer said for members of the Lay Branch of the Community (June 2016, Homokkomárom)

The outstanding events of the weekend were the commitments: several members of the priestly fraternity renewed their vows, and one priest made his first commitment for one year. In the lay branch established in 2011 four married couples made commitments for three years. Extract from the text of the offering made before the commitment by lay candidates:

*“My Lord, my God, I long to belong even more to you, and to live my Christian consecration more fully. Therefore I beseech you to make me a student of Jesus, and may I be ever more like Him in his sacrifice of love through my temporary commitment in the Community of the Beatitudes.*

*I wish to live according to the spirit of the apostolic counsels and the Eight Beatitudes, to be a prophetic sign in this world of the coming kingdom of God.*

*Lord, I believe that the Community of the Beatitudes is a member of your Body, the Church, that you have chosen for a special mission. I wish to give myself to the Lord, freely and of my own free will, and to do everything so that in the coming period, with the help of*

the Holy Spirit I can live my own lay vocation ever more fully in the Community of the Beatitudes.”<sup>21</sup>



Commitment of married couples in the Lay Branch (June 2016, Homokkomárom)

While the prayer for the newly committed couples was being said, a white cappa<sup>22</sup> was held above them, which as a symbol of the Holy Spirit is also a sign of their sharing in the prophecy and charism of the community.

The temporary vow gives concrete form to a promise, an undertaking set out by the couple in a personal charter, preceded by a letter of motivation: what they feel called for, what they are able/would like to undertake in the church services, individual prayer life, collective activities and contacts with the community; above all, joint participation in the liturgies, in instructions for betrothed couples, spiritual days or concrete assistance in other activities offered by the local church community. The prayer evenings held by the community – the Pure Love Prayer Evening, or paraliturgies held in memory of Blessed Sára Salkaházi and Saint Therese of Lisieux attract growing numbers and considerable help is needed for their organisation.

In the course of conversations with the families it became clear that the main motivation for entering the community was the communion of life states. “We are not members of a third order, we can be members of the community as laypersons,” they said. “It gives us enormous richness that we are able to belong to such a community where there are persons living consecrated lives,” said a young Budapest couple. We are able to form much closer and more personal contacts than in the form of the well known Third Order connection.

“The reality of the complementarity also means that it is not the person living a consecrated life or the priest who experiences the

21 Text of a ceremony received from a young Budapest couple during a personal interview, the source is unknown.

22 Cape with a hood, worn by committed members during the ceremony.

spirituality that is shared by the laypersons; they live the same spirituality as laypersons, as priest, as consecrated,"<sup>23</sup>

says a consecrated sister.

It is of fundamental importance to respect the characteristics of the different life states. The family has much greater dignity in the community, there is place for the children. The (close) coexistence and the often mutual interdependence of the different realities is a concrete help in everyday activities and services<sup>24</sup> and it also represents a personal connection with community members with different life states. In the words of a father of several children:

"I learn a lot from my children, and this also represents learning for the lay and consecrated members of the community. Learning to see things the way children do, a special way of seeing and immersion in it."

"Living as a member of a spiritual family goes beyond personal friendships and close human relations, that would not be enough in itself because the mutual relations rest not only on human pillars..."

he added.

"A conscious yes for every day, for every difficulty I face, that I do not bear alone. If I think about my days, there is much more gratitude and thanks in them, I am beginning to learn that I can count not only on myself and that is good. The community sustains and holds us together, we can experience the power and blessing of shared prayer on our lives and our connections,"

was the opinion of an older head of family living in a large country town.

According to the confession of the community, the life of the community is modelled on the Holy Family of Nazareth.

"We enter the school of Nazareth to learn to live not for ourselves but for others; to rediscover the true meaning of human relations. We strive to transform our houses into real families."<sup>25</sup>

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23 See VERSEGI 1999. 660.

24 A regular "division of labour" arose between a consecrated sister and a family with small children living nearby, in which the mother could go for the Eucharist while the sister cared for her daughter. Everyone benefited.

25 <http://docplayer.hu/993322-Nyolc-Boldogsag-Katolikus-Kozossege.html>. Accessed on: 24 September 2017.

The Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity and Missionary Family also conveys communion and the mystery of the mission. Its establishment can be a good example of the appearance of new forms of consecrated life parallel with or even before the Vatican Council. In their case everything that was later expressed by the Council members was already becoming reality.

## Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity and Missionary Family



Verbum Dei Missionary Family (2015, Budapest)

The community was founded in Spain on the island of Mallorca in 1963 by a young novice seminarian.<sup>26</sup> A few years later the community composed of members in different life states was defined as an institute of contemplative-active consecrated life and fully apostolic mission. On 15 April 2000 the Congregation for Consecrated Life recognised the community as an institute of pontifical

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26 Ft. Jaime Bonet (1926–2017) who died recently not only accompanied and assisted the life of the community right from the start: he was its life force, a tireless evangeliser, a good shepherd of the tree that he planted and that came to flower. In 1994 he participated in Rome in the Episcopal Council on “The consecrated life and mission in the church and the world”, as founder and representative of the New Forms of Consecrated Life. He led many retreats, it was very important for him that the community should have well trained missionaries.

right, as a “new form of consecrated life”. The community’s particular charism is expressed in its name: at the heart of the *Verbum Dei* Family lies the *Verbum Dei* Missionary Fraternity, comprising three branches: the male and female consecrated missionaries, and the missionary married couples. At present its members number around 400 consecrated women and 200 consecrated men (of whom 60 are priests) worldwide. They are present in more than 30 countries, in around 100 local communities. Most are in Spanish-speaking territories, in countries of South America, but they also have a substantial presence in Africa and Australia. The three branches have a common Constitution and rules, legally they constitute a community in which the charism and missionary activity is shared by all members.

The *Verbum Dei* Missionary Family belongs to the Community; here men and women in various life states from all parts of the world serve in different forms of connection. Families and single persons commit themselves as associate members, as members of the spiritual family.

In the *Verbum Dei* Family commitment can be made at various levels:

All those who are attracted to the spirituality, live the charism in everyday life and are faithful to it can be members of the Missionary Family in the wider sense. This enables them to participate actively in programmes organised by the community, in community masses and in various services. One form of formal commitment according to a concrete rule is to live as a consecrated missionary in the world: as their name shows, they retain their secular existence but live in celibacy and committed by a personal vow, and also undertake participation in training and missionary work. They form the lay branch of the community.

The male and female missionaries in the consecrated branch of the fraternity opt for even closer unity and take a perpetual vow “placing” themselves in the hand of the general superior and the president of the community. While committing themselves to a concrete branch, they become members of the entire Fraternity, officially represented by the President. This is why both leaders are present when the vows are made. In the branch of missionary couples, married couples commit themselves with a private vow where the unanimous intention of both members of the couple is required. The different branches meet several times a year in their zones or regions, sometimes meeting only with members of their own branch, at other times with all branches. At these meetings they participate in common religious exercises, further training, community building and recreational programmes, collectively planning their apostolic life. The Missionary Family groups meet regularly every week or month for common training, prayer, conversation and agapé that helps to foster a sincere, family atmosphere and community sharing.

What do they accept, what calling do they answer?<sup>27</sup>

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27 For the commitment of the different branches, see the annex.

In the spirit of the first Christian community they devote their lives entirely to prayer, to serving and spreading the Word, so that they can form apostles for Christ from people of all life states, gender, race or social situation, to spread the kingdom of God. Accordingly they carry out highly varied and many-layered apostolic activity: from university ministries through parish services to a wide range of pastoral areas.



Eternal vow in Saint Stephen's Basilica, in the Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity (2012, Budapest)

The community settled in Hungary in January 2002 in the Esztergom-Budapest Archdiocese with the permission of Cardinal Dr. László Paskai, to help the re-evangelisation of the Hungarian church with their charism. At present three missionaries who have taken perpetual vows – a German, a Hungarian and a Peruvian sister – form the Hungarian consecrated branch, with residence in Budapest.<sup>28</sup> All three entered the community at an early age, they have served among others in Germany, Spain and the American

continent, they have diplomas of theology and have also undergone training within the frames of the Ignatius Spirituality Centre in accompanying retreats and as spiritual guides.

Their service covers mainly Budapest and the agglomeration. They hold retreats, prayer and apostolic schools, lead schools of the Word regularly every week in Spanish and Hungarian to which they welcome anyone who shows interest with an open heart. With their sound theological training and experience, they take part in pastoral activity among young people. Every week they send daily meditations to those who feel the need for spiritual impulses. They offer personally accompanied retreats and spiritual programmes for all age groups. The convent of the Cistercian Sisters in Kismaros is their favoured place that often receives them for retreats. Most of the participants are members of the intelligentsia. On individual request they undertake personal pastoral care and spiritual guidance, providing a supportive presence in crises and difficult life stages. One of the pillars of their spirituality is apostolic activity and apostolic training for adults. To teach and bear witness so that they too teach others and become witnesses. Their presence in the life of local parishes is of key importance: from leading acts of adoration to community leading, through supporting family groups to preparation for confirmation. They strive to be a leaven until they have formed a

<sup>28</sup> Zsuzsanna Czupy (1973-), Iria Staat (1965-), Barbara Luz Vera Villar (1970-). I would like to take this opportunity to thank Zsuzsanna Czupy, consecrated sister, local superior for her help in connection with this study.

community.<sup>29</sup> It is very important for them to strengthen the local communities and groups and help the faithful to form a personal, living relationship with God and so live a responsible, mature, committed Christian life in the Church.

Everywhere they live as small families of a few members together with the committed community members, on the basis of conscious decisions. In their view the important thing is not addressing the masses,

“... because we deal with individuals, but this does not exclude the possibility that in some countries several hundred people take part in the Word schools. It is not the creation of an isolated community for its own sake that is the essence, but building a family around ourselves. The Fraternity is the driving force of the Missionary Family that it supports and strives to incorporate into a far wider family in which all kinds of life states are present and so everyone can find their place and vocation,”

says the Hungarian superior of the community. The family-style meetings, group sharing and quality spiritual content and teachings give them their distinctive image. They are characterised by the duality of their contemplative and apostolic spirituality. As the Hungarian superior noted:

“The spiritual family is none other than a spiritual home where one can draw nourishment, grow stronger and strengthen each other, where each family member contributes to the growth of the family with their own personality and charism. As a member of the spiritual family it is not only my own humanity and the growth of my faith that matters: I am also responsible for the others and for the growth of the Church in faith,”

said the sister of German origin.

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29 The community's current superior in Hungary writes about their vocation as follows: “When we came to Hungary we contacted the local parish and the university chaplaincy. We offered retreats, spiritual weekends, we held seminars to spread the faith, we helped in the group preparing for confirmation, the everyday spiritual practice, and we watched to see who are the people called by God to be his apostles. After two years we had to move to another apartment that was in the area of another parish. We noticed in the parish that the faithful quickly dispersed after mass, and although they had been going there for 40 years they did not know each other, there was no community life. When in 2007 the City Mission was coming up, the parish priest asked us to be coordinators of the mission in the parish. We held retreats, prayer groups, sharing after communion and mass for the faithful, where they gradually got to know each other. All the faithful in the parish shaped the programme for the City Mission. It included musical devotions, a choral evening, a play in the church on the life of its patron saint, adoration of the Eucharist, and a family day. The feedback from the faithful was that they had come to feel that they were coming home to the parish, a community had been created. This community is still alive despite the fact that we had to leave, because the Lord called us elsewhere. We gave them the tools that they still use.”

## Few lessons

I see as a common feature in the life of the spiritual families that the founders responded to the call of the Spirit and acted freely, while performing a wide variety of apostolic services to develop and live their own charism as fully as possible, for the renewal of the Church. The individual conversations showed the path taken by all committed members that led to making their personal decisions and offering to the community charism.

The path that they follow together as members of the spiritual family is both a service, a source of joy and a sustaining force. It not only strengthens their personal and community identity, their connection to God, it is also a sign in our time, a kind of radical answer to how the personal vocation can become a life-long profession.

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