

2023

Vol. 3

No. 2

Historical Studies on Central Europe

HSCE | Historical Studies
on Central Europe

Eötvös Loránd University
Faculty of Humanities

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Ecclesiastical Remedies for the Uncertainties of Everyday Life

Introduction

Dániel Báráth 

Special editor of the block

The MTA-ELTE Lendület (“Momentum”) Historical Folkloristics Research Group organized a separate panel at the 16th Congress of SIEF (Société Internationale d’Ethnologie et de Folklore), the world’s largest ethnological and folklore organization, which took place in Brno, Czech Republic, in June 2023.

The panel *Ecclesiastical Remedies for the Uncertainties of Everyday Life – Religious Services Offered by the Lower Clergy in Past and Present* looked at the clerical services available for the uncertainties of everyday life from the modern era to the present. The intention of the two panel organizers (Dániel Báráth, ELTE and Judit Kis-Halas, University of Ljubljana) was partly to present the work of the research team and discuss the results with the international academic community. (About the main goals of the research project cp. Báráth, Dániel. “The Lower Clergy and Popular Culture. Introductory Remarks to a Current Research Project.” *Historical Studies on Central Europe* 1, no. 1 [2021]: 177–212.) In addition, the event provided an opportunity to explore future avenues for research and, in this context, possibilities for cooperation with European experts.

Religious services offered by priests and the clergy within the frames of official Christian religious practice amidst the circumstances of the challenges and insecurities of human life in periods of crisis have occupied a special place among religious responses to such situations. This panel focused on the activity of priests and pastors living in the local communities of various denominations over a time scale stretching from the early modern era to the present day. It explored practices and rituals that pastors employed in their attempts to remedy their believers’ bodily and mental sufferings and tackle the individual or collective crises that emerged in the wake of epidemics, climate change or war. Special emphasis was placed on the broad range of local needs and demands on the variety of attitudes of clerical service providers concerning diseases and healing. Religious and lay forms of healing were present as

parallel offers, particularly since the eighteenth century, leading to a constant choice dilemma or even the option of benefitting from both. Besides the clerical services of a medical nature, the former may include several further areas of human (this-worldly) welfare to which priests and pastors have contributed by mediating religious (other-worldly) power (grace), by sanctifying religious objects or by applying blessings and conducting exorcisms.

Below are two excellent presentations from the panel, written by three Czech historians. The first article examines the regional source material of the lower clergy living and working in local communities in a sensitive and problem-oriented way. The question that guides the study is clear: how can we identify in these special reports the 'communication of norms', and what kind of roles did the lower clergy play in that process in the second half of the eighteenth century? The '*cura animarum*' was a very complex form of clerical activity, and religious services were a most important part of that. The article examines those services from the point of view of the supervisors: it focuses on the patrons of the church. The other article examines the complex phenomena of religious healing and religious services in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Czech Lands. The authors use complex source material (archival-primary and printed-secondary sources as well) for an excellent analysis of three fields: the veneration of miraculous images, apparitions from Purgatory, and vampire incidences. The authors argue that these fields were closely connected in that period. Behind all these phenomena, we can clarify the roles of local needs, the functioning of folklore or popular culture, and the responses and attitudes of the clergy toward them.

Vampires, Revenant Souls, and Objects of Healing

Religious Remedies in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Czech Lands

Tomáš Malý 

Department of History, Masaryk University, Arna Nováka 1, 602 00 Brno, Czech Republic;
malytomas@phil.muni.cz

Monika Enenklová 

Department of History, Masaryk University, Arna Nováka 1, 602 00 Brno, Czech Republic;
enenklova@phil.muni.cz

Received 3 September 2023 | Accepted 10 November 2023 | Published online 18 December 2023

Abstract. This study searches for the characteristic features of religious healing in three phenomena of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: veneration of miraculous images, apparitions from Purgatory, and vampire incidences. All the examples originate from the Czech lands, and all were in some way related to the Catholic renewal or strengthening the Catholic faith in this region. Individual cases have been analyzed with regard to the social relevance of religious remedies, their connection to social problems, and the interaction between the actors involved. The authors draw attention to the link between physical and mental healing and show the key role of local spiritual authorities, especially members of religious orders and parish priests, in spreading practices of spiritual healing. The study reveals that, however theologically sensitive they might have been, the practices analyzed were apparently encouraged by the clergy and the social elites in the local communities, therefore they can hardly be associated only with the so-called popular piety of the rural folk.

Keywords: religious healing, miraculous images, apparitions, purgatory, vampires, Czech lands, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

In the following study,¹ we look at healing by religious means within Catholic societies in Central Europe during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. We understand the term ‘healing’ to mean any help which aims to alleviate the physical as well as mental suffering of both the living and, in some cases, also the deceased

1 The study was prepared within the project Rites of Reverence: Roman Coronations of Miraculous Images as a Means of Cultural Translation in East Central Europe (Czech Science Foundation, project no. GA22-04023S).

members of a society. This is based on two premises: firstly, religious healing was highly relevant during this period partly because medical science was not yet capable of challenging religious doctrines in this field, at least not on a society-wide level. Another reason was the feeling of being threatened, which people expressed in various forms and testimonies, and which historians have explained as being due to the crises of the era: wars and the establishment of absolutist monarchies; the fundamental reform of (religious) education, which led to a change in piety and eventually to a relativization of the official theology; heightened anxieties linked to eschatological expectations apparent in astronomical phenomena (comets, solar and lunar eclipses); the repression of Jews, witches and other groups (even though this repression was less severe in Western Europe at the end of the seventeenth century, in East Central Europe it was reaching its height); and finally the mobilization of consolatory, ethical-educational means to overcome different forms of fear.² The phenomena we have analyzed are also linked to fear caused by social insecurity and climatic events, the awareness of the universality of death, the eschatological perspective, and fear of God and the Last Judgment. The belief in and relationship to God represented the basic framework for therapy.³ In the seventeenth century, more precise ideas about how the body functioned, which highly influenced the concept of pain, did not fundamentally undermine the belief in the inseparability of the human physical body and the soul. Descartes and his followers argued that physical pain was felt in the soul rather than in the body. According to Descartes, the external senses, which played a key role in his theory, allowed humans to become aware of what was either beneficial or harmful rather than the true nature of pain itself.⁴

Secondly, the healing rituals exemplify how the cultures of the authorities and of the lay communities merged. David Gentilcore came to the conclusion that local ecclesiastical authorities were often tolerant of unofficial practices, and the majority of the elements of religion were characterized by a process of communication and interaction between different social strata: between the clergy and laity, the educated and the uneducated, and the center and the periphery.⁵ Throughout the seventeenth century, the elites adapted to popular beliefs, i.e., they often appropriated unofficial ideas and cults. This resulted in a diffusion of ideas and cultural models, while from the perspective of how religious principles were received, we observe the “internal dynamic of a shared religious culture and occasionally conflicting priorities, needs, and solutions in different regions and social groups.”⁶

2 Lehmann, *Das Zeitalter des Absolutismus*, 114–44; Maravall, *La cultura*, 55–128.

3 Different types of seventeenth-century discourses of fear were analyzed by Bähr, *Furcht und Furchtlosigkeit*.

4 Rey, *The History of Pain*, 71–88; Toellner, “Die Umbewertung des Schmerzes,” 36–44.

5 Gentilcore, *From Bishop to Witch*.

6 Johnson, “„Everyone Should Be Like the People,” 206–24, note 218.

In the following text, we analyze three examples from the Catholic Czech lands which we believe to demonstrate the same phenomenon, despite being different in terms of type and time: apparitions from Purgatory before the middle of the seventeenth century, a vampire incidence from the second half of the seventeenth century, and the issue of miraculous images covering the second half of the seventeenth and the first third of the eighteenth century. All these examples are in some way related to the Catholic renewal, i.e., to the enforcement of the doctrine. They also reflect the social situation on a regional or local scale: in accordance with Stuart Clark, who referred to revenants, we can state that these cases refer to moral and social rules, as well as to the needs of local communities.⁷ They belong to an era which preceded the transformation in the attitudes of intellectuals and state authorities towards these phenomena. Prior to the mid-eighteenth century, a part of society registered their distrust of such phenomena and called for superstitions to be resisted. Gradually, in the works of philosophers, moralists, and even in state decrees we find increasingly frequent mention of the madness surrounding magic and sorcery, the inclination of the idiotic crowd towards superstition, and the folly and ignorance of the people who are incapable of distinguishing between reality and illusion. Marian visions and the appearance of spirits were declared superstitions, fairy tales, or hallucinations, for which scientific explanations could be found, such as a hyperactive imagination caused by madness, an injury to the brain, too much fasting, or too little sleep.⁸

The Czech lands or the lands of the Czech crown were a strongly re-Catholicized region in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This applies especially to Bohemia and Moravia, where Catholicism was the only permitted denomination after 1627–1628 (and definitely, after 1648) where means of forced conversion and systematic recordings of believers were put into practice, especially in towns. In Silesia, the third country covered by this study, bi-confessionality persisted, but only with a limited scope for non-Catholic worship. However, the Catholic revival was rather slow and not entirely successful in the Czech lands due not only to the insufficient parish organization, but, as Marie-Élizabeth Ducreux showed, also to the specific manner of re-Catholicization, in which, for example, the activities of Catholic missionaries played a role.⁹ Still, the majority of society proved a Catholic identity by the end of the seventeenth century, and groups of secret non-Catholics were concentrated in the peripheral, eastern and north-eastern regions of Bohemia and Moravia. Between the 1640s and 1760s, various forms of Catholic piety flourished in these countries. They were partially initiated, backed, and supported by the

7 Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, 205–6.

8 Klaniczay, “Decline of Witches,” 165–80; Keyworth, “The Aetiology of Vampires,” 158–73; Johnson, “„That in Her the Seed“,” 259–70.

9 Ducreux, “La mission,” 31–46; Ducreux, “La reconquête catholique,” 685–702.

ruling Habsburg family, bishops, and aristocracy, but their diffusion and development were impossible without the activities of other social groups, especially members of the religious orders, burghers, and manorial officials. The interaction and reactions of these groups significantly shaped the nature of religiosity as expressed in the veneration of the saints, the Virgin Mary, and the Eucharist, in the development of pilgrimages, in the promotion of religious processions, or in the building of a Catholic sacral landscape. One of the typical elements of religious and social life was pious confraternities whose expansion—with the peak between 1660 and 1730—contributed substantially to the promotion and spread of the Catholic religious practice, such as Corpus Christi processions, receiving the sacraments, recital of the catechism, requiem services, the Loreto litany, penitent meditations, rosary prayers, and the use of the scapular. Both the veneration of the Virgin Mary and the cult of souls played a significant role in the religious change. New forms of religious practice were bound to them, affecting broad areas of social behavior, and providing an important impetus for the finances of ecclesiastical institutions. They also created the space for the spread of unofficial, doctrinally questionable practices and beliefs, which did not fully match the ideas of the Cardinals at the Council of Trent.¹⁰

Miraculous images

Countess Anna Dorota of Thurn, who as Controller of the Royal Household (*Hofmeisterin*), accompanied the Austrian archduchess and future Queen of Portugal Mary Anne, reported in a 1708 letter to her husband—when she was spending time on a ship in Portsmouth in England—chronic spleen pains that were immediately alleviated when a picture of an icon from Brno's Church of the Augustinians, which she apparently always had with her, was placed on the sore area.¹¹ As we are informed by a local book of miracles from 1662–1751, the statuette of the Madonna in Svatá Hora (Holy Mountain) near Příbram was able to convert sinners to the true faith, with cases including a Calvinist soldier after demonstrating “great zeal, contrition, and entreaty”; a Lutheran following a nightmare and making a general confession for his entire life; the wife of a dying man who was subsequently saved; a soldier suffering from melancholy who wanted to commit suicide; non-Catholics who doubted

10 Winkelbauer, *Österreichische Geschichte*, Vol. 2, 63–70 and 112–239; Čornejová et al., *Velké dějiny země*, Vol. 8, 288–327; Zuber, *Osudy moravské církve*, Vol. 1, 181–248; Zuber, *Osudy moravské církve*, Vol. 2, 175–335 and 378–477; Louthan, *Converting Bohemia*, 16–82 and 179–210; Keller et al., eds, *Adel und Religion*; Ducreux, “Emperors, Kingdoms, Territories”; Mikulec, *Náboženský život*, 154–212; Mikulec, *Barokní náboženská bratrstva*.

11 MZA, E 4, sign. 5:30, Miracles caused by St Thomas icon (seventeenth to eighteenth century), fol. 211r.

the veneration of images; and an adulteress to whom a terrible dragon appeared in her dreams and warned her that if she did not confess at Svátá Hora, it would devour her.¹² The Jesuits in Svátá Hora kept statistics of miraculous conversions and healings according to specific types of illnesses—Markéta Holubová counted seventy-six types of illnesses listed in their books.¹³

Examples and evidence of miraculous help and healing were typical phenomena of early modern Marian piety. They developed significantly throughout the seventeenth century when they were utilized in the building of chapels, churches, and places of pilgrimage, in the popularization of the Catholic doctrine, and in polemics with Protestants. During this period, the theme of miracles and healing also became an important link between the representations of the images that were crowned in East Central Europe in the eighteenth century, in particular in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the Habsburg monarchy. These were miracles connected to the discovery of the image, the protection of places of pilgrimage, towns, or countries, and to the aid of individuals—mostly lay people.¹⁴ Tomasz Dywan provides the following typology of miracles related to the miraculous images of the southeastern Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth: healing including bringing someone back to life (in particular children who died at or shortly after birth), conversions (Protestants and Jews), the prevention of injustices (courts), help in times of misfortune, the protection of livestock, and protection from natural disasters.¹⁵

The theme of miracles also played a fundamental role in the coronation of three Bohemian–Moravian Madonnas, which took place in 1732–1736. The Jesuits at Svátá Hora near Příbram kept meticulous records of Marian miracles, which were then used by the historians of this pilgrimage site. Bohuslas Balbinus, relying heavily on the Svátá Hora archive, devoted a large part of his well-known work to the local miracles, and if he was not the actual founder, he was at least the codifier of the tradition of highlighting the significance of Svátá Hora.¹⁶ The author of the largest history of this holy site and its image, the Jesuit Ignatius Popp, took the same approach when

12 NA, ŘR, inv. no. 118, sign. P–152, History of Svátá Hora near Příbram, Book III (1751).

13 Holubová, *Panna Marie Svatohorská*, 99–120. Extensive data on the miracles of Marian images in Moravia and Silesia have been collected by Eichler, *Poutní místa*.

14 For the Virgin of Pochaiv, see: Łoś, “Księga cudów,” 111–30. For the so-called Our Lady of Sapiehas in Vilnius: Janonienė, “Sapiegų Švč. Mergelė Marija,” 116–33; Berazo-Komarynska, “Słynący cudami wileński obraz,” 97–112. For Czestochowa, briefly: Szafraniec, “Jasna Góra,” 32–7.

15 Dywan, *Kształtowanie kultury prowincjonalnej*, 128–77. P. M. Kruk interpreted the miracles associated with images as topoi testifying to the “occidentalization of the cult of icons”, i.e., the penetration of the “sensualist concept of miraculous images” into Eastern Europe: Kruk, *Ikony-obrazy*, 162–92.

16 Balbinus, *Diva Montis Sancti*, 153–472.

he dedicated most of his book to the miracles.¹⁷ The original book of miracles was probably the inspiration for the iconographic decoration of the cloister, which began in 1732 on the occasion of the coronation of the image.¹⁸ The same themes were highlighted on a triumphal arch placed at the main entrance to the pilgrimage site during the coronation. It presented Marian signs for the blind (Mary's power to illuminate them with rays), the good fortune of air (the ability to deflect lightning from towns), earth (the power over lightning, the heavens and earth), fire (the ability to pacify Vulcan and, conversely, to ignite the flame of love for one's country), and water (serving as a harbor for castaways). The upper sections featured shields with motifs referring to the miracles of the Madonna: healing the blind, the mute, the insane, grout sufferers, the infertile, the fatally wounded, expectant mothers, and sinners.¹⁹

From the seventeenth century, these motifs were also among some of the elements most used to describe the history of the pilgrimage site of Svatý Kopeček (Holy Hill) near Olomouc.²⁰ At the coronation of the image in 1732, the triumphal arches commemorated miraculous healing and the intercession of the Virgin Mary in times of hardship or at the moment of death. The arch at the entrance to the church depicted twenty specific miracles, while the second, which was situated at the foot of Svatý Kopeček, showed a further eighty. They depicted people with various afflictions, looking up towards Mary with pious gestures and tears in their eyes, and subsequently being relieved from their suffering: the blind, mute and deaf, the lame and wounded, those drowning or suffering from fever, infertile women, people in danger or in confinement, those falling from heights, those lacking spiritual strength or suffering from different forms of despondency, people experiencing Marian apparitions in their dreams, women freed from magic or incantations, repentant sinners and people converting to Catholicism.²¹ The miracles of the Madonna of Svatý Kopeček were also mentioned in the coronation sermons, and some of them even offered statistics. In relation to this, one of the preachers urged worshippers to tour the cloister and look at the images depicting miracles of Madonna.²² In the Moravian capital of Brno, where an icon from the Augustinian Church of St Thomas was crowned in 1736, the theme of miracles during the celebrations was of more peripheral interest. However, this does not mean that it did not have a significant role as an argument when applying for permission for the coronation. This can be seen in a collection

17 Popp, *Historia Divæ Virginis*, 221–374.

18 Holubová, “Zázračná uzdravení,” 219.

19 *Regina Cæli*, A2^a–F1^a.

20 [Siebeneicher], *Mons Præmonstratus*, 131–348; [Wancke], *Mons Præmonstratus*, 96–210; [Kayser], *Sanctum Sæculare Marianum*, I^b–X^a.

21 Described by [Kayser], *Enthronisticum Parthenium*, g2^a–tt1^b.

22 [Kayser], *Enthronisticum Parthenium*, a2^b.

of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century documents which served as the basis for proving the miraculous nature of the image. It has been preserved under the title *Ad acta coronationis* and contains 271 records of different miracles—usually healings—which took place between 1626 and 1679.²³

The miraculous images were threatened by heretics—they were protected or hidden from them, they caused miracles and even meted out punishment to those who would destroy them (mainly Swedes and Ottomans in the lands of the Habsburg monarchy). The images referred to a glorious past though they could also be a useful new instrument in the suppression of paganism or a means of Christianization. A historical perspective, i.e., a description of the image's history, evidently supported this line of imagination. During its coronation in 1736, the St Thomas Icon (Brno) was presented as the source of all sources (*fons fontium*), i.e., the source of the wine which brings and symbolizes conversions. This was because wine was the bearer of God's mercy and, thus, of conversion, and was also a bearer of the Virgin Mary's grace and, therefore of refreshment. Conversion was offered to someone in the sense of turning towards God on the path of repentance (*via peccatorum*), a return to the arms of the Virgin Mary and setting out on the path to salvation (*via salutis*).²⁴ The history of the Marian statuette at Svatá Hora near Příbram, written down by the Jesuit Jiří Konstanc, contains numerous stories about people moved to repent by the image.²⁵ The Svatá Hora book of miracles also notes a number of cases of conversion, as has already been shown. These examples share similar features for the stages in repentance: from despair (the recognition of sin), through the intervention of the image (the miracle) to bravery (the confession) and hope. As was precisely laid out by the Ignatian (Loyola) model, all the sinners finally recognized the horror of their wrongdoings and felt the appropriate contrition. The confession, presented as an examination (*examen*) and the searching of one's conscience (*Erforschung des Gewissens*), was to be simplified by the appearance or even the mere thought of the Virgin Mary as a refuge. Therefore, the image was attributed with the power of protection against falling into hopelessness, "into the depths of sorrow and despair".²⁶ During the coronation, one of the preachers at Svatá Hora spoke of two sinners who, out of shame, had concealed their guilt for fifteen and twenty years respectively, and only repented when the Virgin Mary "enlightened them through sickness."²⁷

The miraculous Madonnas in the Bohemian–Moravian coronations were triumphant queens, but primarily they were intercessors, protectors, and helpers in

23 MZA, E 4, sign. 5:30, Miracles caused by St Thomas icon (seventeenth to eighteenth century).

24 *Conchylum Marianum*, i1^{a-b}.

25 Konstanc, *Svccvrre Miseris*.

26 [Kayser], *Enthronisticum Parthenium*, 'f2^{a-b}.

27 [Kayser], *Enthronisticum Parthenium*, "o2^a.

times of need. The people—residents of towns and their surrounding areas, or even from the whole country—were presented as being under permanent threat from adversaries, enemies of the faith, natural disasters, epidemics, illnesses, the devil, and sin. From a sociological perspective, this approach was somewhat justified, as in the first third of the eighteenth century there were indeed several demographic crises in Bohemia and Moravia caused by the 1713–1715 plague and other epidemics in the years 1719–1721 and 1736–1738. On the other hand, the coronations of the images concerned happened in a period which was still benefiting from the demographic growth of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, whereas a serious population crisis occurred due to the wars in the 1730s and 1740s.²⁸ From a socio-psychological perspective, other phenomena must also have played a role, for example—if we consider the crucial importance of the motif of Christianization and conversion—the pressure of re-Catholicization during the reign of Charles VI, which was quickly transferred from the legislative level to a social practice in the towns and countryside (investigating the presence of secret non-Catholics and the possession of non-Catholic literature); or on a wider scale, the new challenges for missionary activity in the form of contact with non-Christianized populations and the efforts to confirm the superiority of European Christian culture (see the reports from Jesuit missionaries) or the need to defend against the Ottoman danger threatening East Central Europe. Although these issues were not always explicitly referred to in the coronations—instead medieval Christianization was mentioned—they could have resonated in the minds of eighteenth-century people and become fertile ground for defensive responses. Historicization and revived (or indeed constructed) memory belonged to the basic legitimizing elements of the coronations. Therefore, one of the aims of the ritual was to increase the protective effects of the miraculous images.

There was never any doubt about the miraculous power of the images. Even though theological treatises by prominent Catholic writers at the turn of the seventeenth century emphasized in their polemics with Protestants the fact that reverence was not linked to the material substance of the sacred images but rather to the figures who were represented there, in reality the boundary between the symbolic and material concept of the image was not so sharply defined. This can be clearly seen in the Marian treatises that do not doubt the true miraculous powers of the images themselves. It was thought they could alter the observer's consciousness, rectify it, and bring about conversion.²⁹ The Austrian Capuchin Prokop of Templin, author of one of the largest works on the Virgin Mary, trod a thin line between orthodoxy and a magical-cult concept of the reverence of images. He believed that God had given Mary the power to affect people not only personally but also through images, i.e.,

28 Dokoupil et al., *Přirozená měna*, 71–3, 92–5.

29 See Haydt, *Mariale Augustinianum*, 1–96.

through what a person could see or touch.³⁰ The Moravian parish priest Valentin Bernard Jestřábský wrote that to the pious viewer it seemed as if Christ or the Virgin Mary were really present in the images, that through prayers to the depicted Mary miracles happened, and that the image (Mary) provided protection to its holder. He recommended carrying along Marian images.³¹ Therefore, when preachers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries talked about Mary as a crowned queen in the image painted by St Lucas and mentioned the pilgrimage sites “where Mary is venerated in her holy images as though she were present in person,” or when the image—albeit “dead on the wood”—is attributed with the power to communicate and grant graces and mercies, then it becomes difficult to see the line between orthodoxy and idolatry. Accounts concerning the remarkable changes to the faces of the Madonnas constitute important evidence which reveals the way the images were perceived. Depending on the specific situation, the image speaks by changing the colors of Mary’s face, shedding tears, sweating, turning her face away, announcing calamities, expressing sadness, or darkening before sinners. Clerics and visitors to pilgrimage sites observed the images and watched for any change in facial expression or color, expecting miracles. The *Svatá Hora* books of miracles contain a number of testimonies. These accounts, which were written down, sealed, and eventually published,³² reveal the fascination with the ‘living image’ which communicates directly with people—i.e., through physical, sensory means. In various sources, we therefore see the materialization of a reverence of miraculous images, often on or beyond the border of orthodoxy as was defined by the documents of the Council of Trent and the Catechisms.

Apparitions from Purgatory: a case in Southern Bohemia³³

At the end of 1648 and the start of 1649, the baker Gregor Exelius in Jindřichův Hradec (Neuhaus) in Southern Bohemia was visited by the apparitions of several souls who asked that he and his acquaintances should perform good deeds so that they might be delivered from the fires of Purgatory. The souls always appeared towards evening or at night and their arrival was often shrouded in smoke so that no-one other than Exelius saw them. In addition, the spirits spoke in a deep voice

30 Von Templin, *Mariale*, vol. I, 214–20.

31 Jestřábský, *Stellarium novum*, 27–40.

32 NA, ŘR, inv. no. 118, sign. P-152, History of the Holy Mountain near Příbram, Book III (1751); Konstanc, *Svccvrre Miseris*; Balbinus, *Diva Montis Sancti*, 153–358; Popp, *Historia Divae Virginis*, 221–374.

33 In the following we develop considerations presented in Malý and Suchánek, *Images of Purgatory*, 170–92.

and the people around could only distinguish some kind of mumbling or ‘babbling,’ as one of the witnesses said. Exelius described the souls as having black bodies wrapped in white robes, while after deliverance they had beautiful, shining faces. They won over the disbelieving witnesses by offering different evidence of their sufferings, and in the end their demands were met with at least two souls finding redemption.³⁴

This incidence is significant because it contains vital aspects of the Catholic representation of Purgatory. The documents preserved refer to many details of great significance for the construction and popularization of the doctrine on Purgatory after the Council of Trent. Here, however, we are more interested in those involved in the case and their role in providing or receiving spiritual medicine. All the documents were collected by the governor of the castle in Jindřichův Hradec, Georg Miller of Rothenburg.³⁵ His motivation became clear when it transpired that one of the returning souls was his deceased wife Sibyla. Miller’s role, therefore, was to organize a mass, distribute alms to the poor, purchase candles for the mass, and go on a pilgrimage to the important Styrian pilgrimage centre of Mariazell. In order to convince him, the souls told him through Exelius that by that moment the enemy could have killed him three times if the saints had not intervened on his behalf. Miller had three charters drawn up by representatives from the towns of Žirovnice and Počátky, and by Jan Uničovský, whose daughter’s godmother had been Sibyla. The documents confirmed that as an ardent Catholic the deceased Sibyla had led a pious and praiseworthy life, attended mass practically every day, went to confession frequently, and helped the poor; she was a faithful wife and prepared for death in the Christian Catholic manner: she confessed her sins to the parish priest, received the sacrament of the altar and last rites, all in the presence of her husband and others.

Miller appears to have been the main organizer of the examination of the witnesses, although the local nobility, the Slavata family seems to have had some role as well. Together with the Martinitz family, the Slavatas were the most important promoters of souls (Purgatory) worship in Bohemia: they financed the establishment of soul chapels, supported the activities of religious brotherhoods, and used various channels to promote and help in the publication of the histories of the revenant souls.³⁶ The owner of the Jindřichův Hradec estate, the High Chancellor of the Bohemian Kingdom Wilhelm Slavata of Chlum and Košumberk, who as the

34 The basic outlines of the case have been described by Wolf, “Očistec a revenanti,” 71–8. Petr Mat’a put the case into the wider context of the Jesuit strategies of written self-representation: Mat’a, “Die Konstruktion der Wunderereignisse,” 75–81.

35 The statements of witnesses and in particular a detailed relation of governor Miller, written on 25 January 1649, are archived at the NA, APA, box 2629, inv. no. 4006, sign. D 136/1, unpag.

36 Mat’a, “Familie und Fegefeuer,” 124–27.

vice-regent in 1618 was thrown from a window of the Old Town Hall by representatives of the Bohemian Protestants, had already had experience with spirits from 1646–1647, when he ‘ordered’ the Jesuit exorcist Hieronymus Gladich in Bratislava (Pressburg) to deliver ten souls of his relatives from Purgatory.³⁷ Slavata had a weakness for Gladich and the apparitions of souls. In 1648, when he heard from two Hungarian Jesuits how Gladich had delivered souls in Styria, he had these stories written down and dedicated them to his own memory.³⁸ In addition, during their lifetime the two Jindřichův Hradec souls which had been identified were in the service of Slavata’s deceased wife, Lucie Otýlie of Hradec. One of them, the governor’s wife Sibyla—who had been happily delivered from Purgatory thanks to Exelius—allegedly failed to fulfil her oath to go on a pilgrimage to Mariazell in her youth. She later decided to substitute her original intention with a pilgrimage to the nearby Bavarian town of Altötting, but she repeatedly failed to do so.³⁹ In light of the fact that Lucie Otýlie was buried in Altötting, an important Marian pilgrimage site, her story may have served as a model that inspired the events at Jindřichův Hradec castle and which reflected the experiences of the nobility.

The baker Exelius was a medium in this case and, as such, was evidently a very pious man well-versed in religious habits: he often went to confession and received the sacrament of the altar; on St Stephen’s Day, he sang Latin and German Christmas carols in front of the governor’s family. Exelius’s colleagues at the castle (a painter, tailor, and glazier) also knew the main prayers—*Our Father*, *Ave Maria*, the *Litany*, and the *Officium Defunctorum*—which they recited together after each apparition. One evening he met the governor, his wife, and elder daughter and, one after another, they read selected chapters from the Ecclesiastes. This is important for the entire case because these aphorisms focus on the impermanence of life, obedience, humility, and the vanity of human possessions, while the end also deals with merciful acts, the fear of God, and the following of God’s commandments. The revelations brought terror and suffering to Exelius. The castle residents normally found him terrified, shaking, or lying helpless on the floor. The revenant souls beat on his window, door, or furniture, tore his pillow from him, slapped him, and frightened him with burnt furniture. If he slept in another house, they appeared to him and ordered him to return to the bakery—evidently because the revelation of each soul was linked to a specific place. When he refused to continue to help one of the spirits and sent it to bother someone else with its demands (best of all a governor or Jesuit rector who

37 Mat’a, “Die Renaissance des Fegefeuers,” 151.

38 SOA Třeboň, o. Jindřichův Hradec, FA Slavata, cart. 15, inv. no. 111, sign. III A 2b, Wilhelm Slavata to Jaroslav Bořita of Martinice about the Jesuit Gladich, Vienna, 22 April 1648.

39 Lederer, “Living with the Dead,” 47, also refers to the apparition of a soul from Purgatory who had been punished for thirty years for not making the promised pilgrimage to Altötting.

could offer a better chance of deliverance), the spirit was not deterred and tormented the baker until he fainted. As soon as he wanted to escape from his room, the apparitions forced him back and made him listen to their demands. Naturally, these and other things—such as Exelius's coat burned by the soul which embraced him—also terrified the people working at the castle, who listened to Exelius's instructions in fear and obediently knelt down together to pray for the savior of the souls. The question arises why the purgatorial apparitions were represented by such wicked and powerful spirits, addressing what was basically a legitimate claim. In the later revenant literature, the souls are somewhat 'kinder'. In any case, the baker had to make some kind of a sacrifice in order to atone for the sins of the apparitions. And this sacrifice was not limited to the usual suffrage of alms, prayers, and masses, but also involved physical and psychological strain on the part of the benefactor.

The revenant souls mainly described to the living the reasons why they were in Purgatory: the maid Dorotka had made superstitious concoctions and had been ashamed to mention them at confession (she did not think it a sin), and so had remained in Purgatory for twenty-six years; the governor's first wife Sibyla had already spent six years in the flames because during her lifetime she had been in debt for goods which she had bought purely for her own benefit. The souls warned against sin, they told their benefactors to faithfully observe the Ten Commandments, and even provided the baker with some secret information about misdeeds being committed in the castle. They also had to convince those who did not believe them, which they were able to do by presenting 'touched' objects with their hands still burned onto them: Exelius's fur coat, a crucifix, a consecrated stole, a Candlemass candle, and a box of relics. And, not least, there was also a stool on which one of the souls sat in order to prove to governor Miller that it was real, who then asked the souls for permission to keep the object.

The Jindřichův Hradec Jesuits were involved in the events from the very start of the case. The rector of the local college was the baker's confessor; when he found out about the apparitions, he gave Exelius instructions on how to distinguish between a good and bad spirit as well as how to behave in such incidences. With the prefect of the seminary, a Czech Jesuit preacher and guardian of the Franciscan Monastery, Exelius quickly examined all the evidence and ensured the necessary suffrage in the form of masses and prayers. The Jesuits also wrote ten questions to ascertain whether it was indeed the apparition of a soul from Purgatory or an evil spirit. Exelius took these questions to one of the meetings and after sprinkling the revenant with holy water—on the Jesuits' advice—he asked it to answer the questions. The Jesuit preacher Widmon undertook to say mass twelve times a day, with the local Franciscans following suit. On the final day, attended by Jesuit students as well as many clerical and lay individuals, the rector of the college celebrated a funeral mass in the parish church's

chapel of the dead. A joyful, delivered soul appeared to Exelius at the moment of the elevation of the host on the epistle side of the altar. When the mass ended, the baker approached this place, knelt down, and kissed it reverently several times. At the end, he was taken to the sacristy, where he described his vision and swore on the Gospel that it was true in front of the rector, several other clergymen, and the governor.

The aspects described above featured in other well-known cases as well. For example, a revenant soul appeared in 1641–1642 to the burgher and convert, Hans Clement, from Pressburg. This story gave rise to the creation of a wooden carving called Piety around which an extensive souls cult developed supported by the Bratislava (Pressburg) Jesuits, chapter, and archbishop.⁴⁰ There was also the soul of the Prague archbishop, Johann Fridrich of Waldstein, which appeared to the Premonstratensian nun Maxmiliana Zásnecká of Zásnecky in Doxany in 1694.⁴¹ Another case is that of Katharina Taschnerin's soul, which was freed by a pious girl Mariana in a village near Brno in 1762. However, this incidence occurred at a time when both the secular and ecclesiastical elites professed skepticism towards the revenant stories.⁴² Petr Maťa described the fascinating story of Hieronymus Gladich, a Jesuit from the Pressburg College who managed to convince members of the imperial court that he was able to communicate with the souls of the dead and deliver them from Purgatory. When the Imperial Diet was sitting in Pressburg in 1646–1647, the Jesuit acquired clients from among the ministers and diplomats and contacted fifty souls at their request and helped them by celebrating between three and seven masses. However, this was only a fraction of his extensive intercession: over a period of only three years, Gladich was responsible for the deliverance of a thousand souls.⁴³ Maťa highlighted the fact that Gladich's activity and that of other similar 'charismatics'—the Carmelites Cyrillus a Matre Dei (1590–1675), Paula Maria de Jesus (1586–1646), the Jesuit Martin Stredovius (1587–1648), and the Premonstratensian Maxmiliana Zásnecká (1655–1718)—were part of the re-Catholicization strategy of the post-Tridentine monasteries. However, influential laymen played an important role as supporters of these initiatives, whilst the ecclesiastical elites were occasionally more suspicious of them—in fact, Gladich was finally thrown out of the Order.⁴⁴

The apparitions that we have looked at represent a mere fraction of early modern ideas concerning the appearance of spirits from the other world. These were nothing new in the seventeenth century. They were widely documented in the

40 Mat'a, "Familie und Fegefeuer," 124–27.

41 Wolf, "Sny v literárních rukopisech," 274–75; Mat'a, "Die Renaissance des Fegefeuers," 139–60; Havlík, *Jan Fridrich z Valdštejna*, 232–43; Hrbek, *Proměny valdštejské reprezentace*, 230–37.

42 Malý and Suchánek, *Images of Purgatory*, 188–91.

43 Mat'a, "Arme-Seelen-Rettung," 75–97.

44 Mat'a, "Zwischen Heiligkeit und Betrügerei."

Middle Ages, then even in the Protestant world, and by the reformers themselves, who adopted stories with a moral message usually related to the bad life and death of the revenant soul.⁴⁵ Since the Protestants rejected the teachings on Purgatory, they interpreted (theologically) any contact of the souls of the dead with the earthly world as evidence of the victory of Christ's power over death, and (philosophically) as the appearance of Paracelsian human spirit.⁴⁶ In the Catholic theology and philosophy, particularly in the seventeenth century, various aspects of the faith were more precisely defined and spirits were also categorized in more detail. Prominent demonological writings, such as Del Rio's *Disquisitionum Magicarum libri sex* (1600), drew on Paracelsus' distinction of the celestial, infernal, and human spirits.⁴⁷ However, due to uncertainties about the physical body, the astral body, and the shade of the soul, as distinguished by Paracelsus, the concept of spirits remained visually ambiguous, vague, even 'paradoxical'. There were no clear criteria for distinguishing the 'real' from the imagined nature of an apparition, nor was the difference between the visible (perceptible) and invisible clearly defined.⁴⁸ The uncertainty as to whether the spirit was an angel, the devil, or the soul of the dead made the apparitions from Purgatory a tricky subject. This was also reflected in individual cases, as we have seen in Jindřichův Hradec, where the Jesuits had to investigate the apparition to see if it was indeed a soul from Purgatory.

The events in Jindřichův Hradec were linked to the suffering in Purgatory. These revenant souls required spiritual healing in the form of pious acts in order to be delivered from the flames. The living then required spiritual encouragement for greater piety—Exelius was the medium for just such encouragement. It was evidently no coincidence that most of the revelations took place in the bakery or, more precisely, in the room where the loaves were stored.⁴⁹ The documents make regular mention of bread and there may be a symbolic parallel to the Eucharist as the 'food of the soul' (*geistliche Seelennahrung*), as the popular metaphor in Baroque literature stated.⁵⁰ One critical aspect was the promotion of the doctrine of Purgatory and good deeds. We should remember that in the Czech lands it was only from the end of the sixteenth century that the topic was more frequent in religious literature.

45 Gordon, "Malevolent Ghosts," 87–109.

46 Ittzés, "The Knowledge," 193–213.

47 Neuber, "Die Theologie der Geister," especially 29–30.

48 Göttler and Neuber, eds, *Spirits Unseen*; Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, 209–27; Lederer, "Living with the Dead," 25–53.

49 The relevance of information about the place and time of the apparitions for understanding the meaning of these events was pointed out by Greenblatt, with reference to Geertz's 'thick description'. Greenblatt, "The Touch of the Real," 22–8.

50 For the Corpus Christi Confraternity in Brno, a print was published in 1690 under the title *Kräftege Geistliche Seelen-Nahrung*.

Non-Catholic polemic against Purgatory included several works by Czech Utraquist priests and a Czech translation of the tract by Wittenberg professor Joachim von Beust entitled *Enchiridion de arte bene beateque moriendi* (1599, in Czech 1610). A stronger Catholic defense of the doctrine had also rarely occurred before the end of the sixteenth century and was strengthened in the 1620s and 1630s, when Czech, German, and Latin editions of the treatises of prominent Jesuit authors, such as Antoine Sucquet, Martín de Roa and Hieronymus Drexelius, were issued.⁵¹ Still, not much literature on apparitions was available in 1648, because only in the second half of the seventeenth century did larger collections of revenant histories appear in Central Europe, in connection with the expansion of lay religious brotherhoods and their promotion of the cult of remembrance.

The events described above with the revenants belong to a wide set of post-Tridentine tactics by which the principles of the faith were communicated and reflected upon. They included the promotion of soul altars and chapels, the production of Purgatory paintings and sculptures, the publication of the meditational literature, and books on the last things of man. The case of Exelius the baker contains all the important facets of post-Tridentine teachings on Purgatory: the phenomenon of fear and the ways in which it was aroused; the role of images and meditation; the characteristics of sins and penance; the role of prayer, Mass and *memento mori*; and the significance of elevation at the funeral Mass. This image of Purgatory was built by the local elites, particularly the Jesuits who—together with the Carmelites and Capuchins—were the most important promoters of the doctrine on Purgatory, especially its popularization. In the written sources, there was a particular group of influential promoters of this reverence linked to archbishops and the Jesuits—the Jesuits supplied the stories about revenant souls, while specific individuals (e.g., in Bohemia Wilhelm Slavata of Chlum and Jaroslav Bořita of Martinice) showed considerable interest in them and financed their publication.

Vampires in Friedlandt

In 1674, there was a case on the Sovinec estate of the Order of the Teutonic Knights that was to unite the lower clergy, the village administration, the manorial authorities, and the bishop consistory in Olomouc in the fight against magic for the next eighty years. At the end of March, an elderly widow named Marina Fischerin died in the village of Friedlandt (today: Břidličná municipality). Shortly afterwards, the town's inhabitants started to be plagued by night-time disturbances, which they were quick to attribute to the deceased woman, accusing her of posthumous magic.

51 Malý and Suchánek, *Images of Purgatory*, 29–33.

This was a prevalent belief in northern Moravia and Silesia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. People believed that some individuals were able to return to the living after they died, inflicting numerous torments on them. Terrified witnesses of the night-time disturbances testified *en masse* to the nocturnal attacks that spared neither people nor livestock. The posthumous witch or wizard was said to lay on their victim in the night, pressing down their body so hard that they could hardly breathe. The unfortunate individuals hastened to relate their woes to the reeve and the parish priest, since it was up to them as the main authorities of the village to try to remedy the situation.

The first references to the restless dead appear as early as the Middle Ages. The chronicler Neplach recorded the case of the shepherd Myslata in the village of Blov near Kadan in 1336. The man allegedly rose from his grave and called his neighbors by name, who subsequently died within eight days. Although his body was pierced with a stake, he continued to appear to people. Only after his remains had been burned did his actions cease. There was a similar case in 1344 in the village of Levín, where a dead woman caused several people's death. Peace was only restored when her body was burned.⁵² However, the Moravian-Silesian borderlands were the real scene of the trials of the returning dead almost three hundred years later. Although civil registers recorded the first cases of the restless dead who ended up on the pyre as early as the beginning of the seventeenth century, the real hysteria started more than half a century later. In this context, Branislav Martinek noted that during the period when 'classical' witch trials were on the decline, cases proliferated related to the complex of superstitions about so-called vampirism and afterlife magic. The growing number of cases prompted the Secret Councilor of the Bishop of Olomouc, Karl Ferdinand Schertz, to write a treatise entitled *Magia posthuma* and published in 1706.⁵³ Daniel Wojtucki also pointed out that executions of the dead broke out on a mass scale in the early eighteenth century, when it was no longer possible to prosecute living people and accuse them of witchcraft and magic in the area studied.⁵⁴ He sees the 1674 Friedlandt case as one of the other cases, but the first to be so thoroughly documented.⁵⁵ We can therefore say that it started a wave of cases with a specific scheme of procedure, which periodically waxed and waned in the Moravian-Silesian border region until the mid-eighteenth century.

Unfortunately, the sources dealing with the case have only been preserved in a book of copies and charters. This means that the earliest source available to us dates back to June 1674. Its wording suggests that the matter had begun much earlier,

52 *Neplacha, opata opatovského*, 480–81.

53 Martinek, "K otázce," 37.

54 Wojtucki, "Wampiryczne dzieci," 217.

55 Wojtucki, "Martwe czarownice," 171.

since the parties involved had already responded to the nocturnal aberrations and their repercussions. To see how the case started, it is necessary to go back three months to 28 March, when Marina, the widow of Hans Fischer, died in the village at the age of ninety-four.⁵⁶ The woman was buried in the local cemetery without any objections. Further information can then be found in a decree from the commander (*Komtur*) of the Order of the Teutonic Knights, Friedrich von der Asseburg, addressing the representatives of Friedlandt in a letter of 13 June 1674. Although the interment of Marina Fischerin in the hallowed ground of the cemetery was not a source of controversy in March, it quickly turned into a serious problem the commandry was starkly confronted with. The commander initially took exception to a situation where the people of Friedlandt refused to bury their dead in the Friedlandt cemetery and sought to have them interred at the cemetery in nearby Albrechtice u Rýmařova (Albrechtice). The commander denounced this as impudence, which in his own words stemmed from nothing but fear and an overactive imagination.⁵⁷

At the same time, he was careful to emphasize that the Friedlandt cemetery had been consecrated in 1655 by the bishop of Olomouc himself and therefore offered the same spiritual provision as the cemetery in Albrechtice. He also pointed out to the representatives of the village that the manorial authorities had not given consent for the bodies to be moved. The commander regarded the fear of the ghost, described in the letter as a *Polter Geist*, as mere gossip, prescribing a fine of ten gulden for anyone who continued to spread it. The economic factor was of paramount importance to the commander since, as he said, the general panic affected the economic well-being of the community, because the prevailing atmosphere of fear deterred travelers and foreigners from spending the night in the village, which had a negative impact on the trades of the local inhabitants.⁵⁸ The fear of burying the dead in the cemetery where the alleged afterlife witch lay stemmed from a belief in the possible transmission of infection. People believed that not only relatives of the afterlife witches were susceptible to the same fate. The transformation was also thought to be caused

56 ZAO, Sbírka matrik Severomoravského kraje, Roman-Catholic Parish Břidličná, N, Z, O 1657–1720/1848, sign. R V 2, inv. no. 7442, fol. 166, The death register entry, March 28, 1674.

57 ZAO, ÚS ŘNR, inv. no. 118, fol. 63, Komtur Fridrich von der Asseburg to the representatives of Friedlandt (copy of a letter), 13 June 1674. In this context, Karen Lambrecht pointed out the sceptical attitude that the Order had towards the trials of afterlife magic. On 8 January 1675, the Komtur of the Order, Johann Caspar von Ampringen, asked Statthalter Zocha for detailed information and the involvement of experienced lay and clerical persons. He did not consider the established procedure legally acceptable and wanted to have the phenomenon investigated within the Order and the university. Whether this action took place and what the outcome was is not known. Lambrecht, *Hexenverfolgung*, 392.

58 ZAO, ÚS ŘNR, inv. no. 118, fol. 63, Komtur Fridrich von der Asseburg to the representatives of Friedlandt (copy of a letter), 13 June 1674.

by being deposited in the same soil. This belief reflected general attitudes towards unclean bodies, of which they were wary. People feared not only the bodies of criminals, but also those who died through no fault of their own, such as those who were murdered, and such bodies were buried outside the cemetery.⁵⁹ On the issue of burying suicides, Daniela Tinková points out that burials on church grounds could lead even to cemetery riots in early modern and modern Europe.⁶⁰

From the surviving records we know that a further development occurred on 16 August, when the bailiff and the compurgators met to examine the remains of the deceased Fischerin. The copy of the original memorandum does not state who the text was intended for, but it is likely that it was meant for the *vogt* (governor) of Sovinec, Melchior Ferdinand Riedl. Friedlandt's secular authorities referred to a meeting between the parish priest Valentin Heinrich and the *vogt*, which resulted in an agreement to subject the suspect body to an examination consisting of a search for unnatural post-mortem anomalies, such as the presence of red marks on the body, flexibility of the limbs, or fresh blood in the tissues. The sources indicate that the local parish priest and his colleagues from the neighboring villages first attempted to intervene using spiritual means. They repeatedly blessed houses in the village and celebrated masses for the dead. However, this approach apparently failed to produce the desired respite, which is why a more drastic solution was adopted. The men in attendance confirmed that during the examination of the suspect body they saw fresh bloody tissue with their own eyes after scratching the skin with a shingle nail. Their testimony was corroborated by other witnesses, the foreman of the hammer works, and a certain Georg Maÿer.⁶¹

The investigation gave new momentum to the case. Upon receiving the results of the 'test', Melchior Riedel promptly contacted the *Landkomtur* (*Statthalter* or governor) of the Teutonic Order Johann Wilhelm von Zocha, informing him of the state of affairs and confirming that the body was indeed in an unusual condition. He appealed to Zocha, drawing his attention to the fact that people had been afflicted for a long time and even the current, more moderate protective measures did not restore peace. He recommended that the *Landkomtur* refer the entire matter to the bishop consistory in Olomouc for resolution.⁶² Shortly afterwards, the representatives of Friedlandt headed by the bailiff and the compurgators contacted Zocha to plea for

59 Navrátilová, *Narození a smrt*, 305.

60 Tinková, "Hřbitovní vzpoury," 169.

61 ZAO, ÚS ŘNR, inv. no. 118, fol. 64, The representatives of Friedlandt to the Sovinec Vogt Melchior Riedel (copy of a letter), 16 August 1674.

62 ZAO, ÚS ŘNR, inv. no. 118, fol. 62, Melchior Riedel to the Statthalter of the Teutonic Knights Joh. Wilhelm von Zocha (copy of a letter), 17 August 1674.

remedial action and an end to the aberrations.⁶³ Zocha yielded to the pressure and sent a letter to the Olomouc consistory informing them in detail about the case.

In spite of the initial attempt to resolve the case on ‘home turf’ in a more moderate way, Zocha reassessed his original position. He notified the consistory that, despite the use of spiritual means, the situation had not improved, and people were still being plagued by a restless spirit or spectre (*unruhige Geist oder Gespenst*) which was said to roam through the village, causing all kinds of trouble for the Friedlandt community. He also informed the consistory of the residents’ opposition to burials taking place in the local cemetery. Zocha supported his intention to leave the matter for the Olomouc office to decide with the approval of the dean of Bruntál, Eberhard Cronberger and the parish priest of Albrechtice, and administrator of Friedlandt, Valentin Heinrich.⁶⁴

What made Zocha change his mind and perform a significant about-face? One of Zocha’s main goals as *Landkomtur* of the Order was to ensure the economic recovery of the ravaged estate. In a letter from June addressed to the representatives of Friedlandt, he explicitly warned against spreading panic which, in his words, led to economic instability for the village. In spite of his efforts to deal with the case on his own without outside intervention, he had to yield to the agitated people. The episcopal consistory in Olomouc responded quickly and sent the dean Cronberger instructions on how to proceed. In the letter, signed by the Bishop of Olomouc, Karl of Liechtenstein-Castelcorno, and a member of the consistory, Joannes Petrus, the prelates justified the outlined course of action, being careful to repeat the established fact that the spiritual means used had proved ineffective.⁶⁵ Once again they stressed the fact that more moderate methods had failed to stop the spree of witchcraft, which justified a further examination. Although the dignitaries in Olomouc advised proceeding with caution, they gave permission for the body to be exhumed and submitted to an inspection. The men present were to search the body for “signs of evil or a pact with the devil” (*signa maleficj vel pactj sathanici*).⁶⁶ This remark helps to shed light on the relationship between witchcraft practised by living persons and the posthumous magic people were accused of after death. The church officials understood posthumous magic, which entered the consciousness of educated circles

63 ZAO, ÚS ŘNR, inv. no. 118, fol. 65, The representatives of Friedlandt to Joh. Wilhelm von Zocha (copy of a letter), 18 August 1674.

64 ZAO, ÚS ŘNR, inv. no. 118, fol. 65, Joh. Wilhelm von Zocha to the Bishop Consistory in Olomouc (copy of a letter), 20 August 1674.

65 ZAO, ÚS ŘNR, inv. no. 118, fol. 66, The Bishop Consistory in Olomouc to the dean in Bruntál, Cronberger (copy of a letter), 27 August 1674.

66 ZAO, ÚS ŘNR, inv. no. 118, fol. 66, The Bishop Consistory in Olomouc to Cronberger (copy of a letter), 27 August 1674.

in the eighteenth century as ‘vampirism’,⁶⁷ as a type of magical practice which was no less problematic than the sorcery practiced by the living. As was the case with witch trials, posthumous witches also ended up being burned at the stake.

Based on the instructions of the consistory, the manorial authorities progressed to the final stage of the case. The individual steps taken during this phase were recorded in a comprehensive report dated 6 September 1674. In the introduction to the memorandum, the author described the matter, identifying the main actor as Marina Fischerin, who died on 28 March. The desperate plight of the Friedlandt community compelled the authorities of the Order of the Teutonic Knights to cooperate with the Olomouc consistory.⁶⁸ To a large extent, the author’s account of the case casts the individual actors in specific roles. The village of Friedlandt appears in the role of a victim whose fate lies entirely in the hands of the manorial authorities. The latter, together with the bishopric, will then take action to remedy the situation. Acting as intermediaries between these actors are the representatives of the village and the local clergy, who on the one hand are familiar with their community, and on the other hand present their requirements to the manorial authorities. On both sides we can see the positive character of the secular and ecclesiastical representatives, who are able to secure the necessary peace and restore the prosperity of the village by working together. The author thus depicts an idealized power scheme, which essentially corresponded to the re-Catholicization policy in the Czech lands.

Although we do not know the author’s name, we may assume that he was an eyewitness to the events. In his memorandum, he recorded the important individuals who took part in the proceedings: the dean of Bruntál, Eberhard Cronenberger, and the dean of Opava, Maximilian Linder, both of whom were priests in the Order of the Teutonic Knights; the parish priest of Albrechtice, Valentin Heinrich, acting as the local ordinary; the *vogt* of Sovinec, Melchior Riedel; the foreman of the Friedlandt hammer works, Baltzer Schindler, and the scribe of the hammer works, Michel Herolt; the bailiff and the compurgators of Friedlandt.⁶⁹ The men listed apparently witnessed the exhumation of the body and its subsequent examination.

67 The word ‘vampire’ was publicly used to describe this type of case in a reprint of an official report that appeared in the Vienna newspaper *Wienerisches Diarium* on 21 July 1725, referring to a case in the village of Kisljevo in the Habsburg part of Serbia. See: “Copia eines Schreibens.” Daniel Wojtucki argues that this term is not entirely correct for a precise definition of the phenomenon under study. It should be associated with witches and wizards rather than the phenomenon of a being rising from the grave and feeding on blood. According to Wojtucki, it was possible to practise magic not only in life but also after death, hence the later term *magia post-huma*, which can be found in the works of eighteenth-century authors. Wojtucki, “Der Glaube,” 190–91.

68 ZAO, ÚS ŘNR, inv. no. 118, fol. 67–8, Record of Marina Fischerin’s execution.

69 ZAO, ÚS ŘNR, inv. no. 118, fol. 67, Record of Marina Fischerin’s execution.

The body of Marina Fischerin was removed from the grave for a visual inspection, whose outcome had probably been anticipated by those present. Although Marina Fischerin had been dead for over five months and her remains exhibited the natural signs of decay, it only took a few changes in the body for the men present to decide on the outcome of the case. Although, according to the record, the front of the body was blackened and decomposed, after turning it and cutting through the tough skin, those present saw bright red tissue supplied with blood. Together with the testimonies about the night-time disturbances, it was decided, in accordance with the decree of the Olomouc consistory, that the remains would be handed over to the secular authorities represented by the *vogt* of Sovinec, whose competence the subsequent disposal of the body was. Throughout this time, the body was handled by a gravedigger who was given the job of digging up the remains and handing them over to the secular authorities across the cemetery wall. After that, the body was left under the supervision of a special guard while preparations were made for it to be executed the next day, a task which fell to an executioner called in from the village of Rýžoviště. He loaded the body onto a cart along with the tools that had been used to handle the body. The execution site was the boundary of the neighboring villages of Friedlandt, Moravský Kočov, and Valšov. On his way there the executioner was accompanied by a procession of onlookers. Once there, the body was dismembered and burned. The ashes were placed in a hole prepared in advance and the soil excavated from the grave was thrown into the water. The grave was then filled in so that no-one else could be laid to rest in the incriminated location. With that, the case was closed.⁷⁰ The participation of the actors listed above in the execution of Marina Fischerin was vital. Posthumous magic stood on thin legal ground. Although it was a case of magic, posthumous sorcery was not covered by any penal code at the time. Moreover, the accused could not take their place in the dock as they were already dead. The main form of evidence was the accused's confession, which could not be obtained in this case and was therefore replaced by eyewitness accounts of the nighttime disturbances.⁷¹ The presence of representatives of the secular authorities, the clergy, and the inhabitants of the village provided the much needed legitimacy to the verdict and expressed approval of the conduct of the trial and the punishment.

However, it was still necessary to settle the financial liabilities—significant costs had been incurred by the trial. Four accounting entries are recorded in the book of copies, with the most interesting one dated 8 May 1674. This date is significant in terms of the spiritual means the parties repeatedly mention in their correspondence. On that day, the parish priests of the villages of Rýžoviště, Dolní Moravice, Velkruby, and Albrechtice apparently officiated at masses for the dead, for which they were

70 ZAO, ÚS ŘNR, inv. no. 118, fol. 67–8, Record of Marina Fischerin's execution.

71 Wojtucki, *Magia posthuma*, 208.

entitled to refreshments to the value of 3 gulden and 6 kreuzer.⁷² Although neither the type nor the content of the masses is specified, it is most likely that this was one of the spiritual means referred to in the letters. We know that the masses were celebrated for the dead and were supposed to ensure their protection. As noted above, in connection with posthumous magic, people believed that the 'unclean' body was capable of infecting other deceased persons buried in the cemetery. This may have been one of the main reasons why the people of Friedlandt refused to bury their dead in Friedlandt and sought to have the bodies transferred to Albrechtice.

What role did the church, especially the lower clergy, play in posthumous witch trials? The case of Marina Fischerin clearly shows that it was very important, if not essential. After the deprivation and hopelessness that accompanied the Thirty Years' War, the Catholic Church offered spiritual comfort and a helping hand. However, the belief ordinary folk in the countryside had in supernatural beings cannot be ignored. Early modern man and his life cycle were inextricably linked to the land and agricultural production, which provided for his material needs throughout the year and ensured the family's survival in the barren winter months. It took very little—bad weather, a wet summer, or a disease among livestock—for all his work to come to naught.⁷³ A critical milestone in the life of the rural population was the Little Ice Age. The interval between 1619 and 1679 was a very cold period⁷⁴ whose impact was intensified by the beginning of the Thirty Years' War and ending with the incursion by the Ottoman Turks. If we look at Marina Fischerin's case through the optics of the climate, we discover that it did indeed coincide with a climatically adverse period. The woman died at the end of March 1674, with the subsequent proceedings lasting almost half a year. According to weather records of the time, we know that it was a severe winter with abundant snow, and in late March, when Marina passed away, people were still having to contend with ice and snow. This is a significant fact, since the unseasonably cold weather may have preserved the body, initially deposited in the ground, to a considerable extent, thus contributing to its 'unnatural' appearance during the examination. Even the spring did not bring about a dramatic temperature rise. According to contemporary records, it was cool and wet, as was the summer, when temperatures were average but there was a great deal of rain.⁷⁵

Harsh weather was not the only problem early modern villagers had to contend with. The limited availability of medical care in the countryside was a reason why people

72 ZAO, ÚS ŘNR, inv. no. 118, fol. 68, List of costs for spiritual care, 8 May 1674.

73 Vondra, *České země*, 302; Brázdil, Dobrovolný, Štekl, Kotyza, Valášek and Jež, *History of Weather*. Adverse weather and natural disasters affecting economic activity were often blamed on witches. Bever, *Popular Witch Beliefs*, 54; Behringer, *Witches and Witch-Hunts*, 159.

74 Svoboda, Vašků and Čílek, *Velká kniha*, 323.

75 Svoboda et al., *Velká kniha*, 352.

turned to herbalists, who often augmented their knowledge with supernatural elements in times of illness and affliction. If disease struck livestock and domestic animals, that represented a major problem for the household, which is why it was necessary to prevent such situations. People often resorted to protective magic that was supposed to ensure a good harvest, as well as preventing livestock from falling ill or being bewitched. Popular means of protection included liturgical or consecrated objects. Scapulars, rosaries, holy water, oil, candles, medals, crosses, pictures, and relics held a special attraction for the early modern believer. They combined elements of the sacred and the magical, categories that many people found difficult to distinguish. These so-called 'sacramentals' enjoyed enormous popularity in Catholic regions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and despite contradicting official church doctrine, worshippers used them as mediators of grace and an effective means of help with the trials and tribulations of everyday life. The magical function did not only relate to the well-known images of saints and the Virgin Mary, which were attributed a protective and curative power or the ability to ward off bad weather, but also to the aforementioned rosaries, scapulars, and other devotional artifacts of an amuletic nature. These objects were essentially treated as talismans, protective objects. This view was supported not only by the practices of lay religious brotherhoods but also by the catechetical handbooks of the time that made reference to the power of the artifacts that drive away storms, help put out fires, provide relief during childbirth, prevent a person from drowning, or offer protection against spells.⁷⁶ In his publication *Zrcadlo Náboženství* (The Mirror of Religion, 1642), the Catholic priest Jindřich Ondřej Hoffmann defended individuals who brought various herbs into church to have them blessed. According to Hoffmann, their motives for doing so were pious rather than superstitious, and people used the consecrated plants as protection against sorcery, storms, or disease.⁷⁷

The belief in the power of consecrated objects was, therefore, not limited to rural populations but was shared by some of the clergy. A specific example is found in the last case of posthumous magic, which took place in the Moravian-Silesian border region in 1754–1755. In Svobodné Heřmanice, which then belonged to the estate of the Cistercian monastery in Velehrad, a healer called Marianna Saligerin died and was accused of posthumous magic. At the very outset of the investigation, the parish priest of Velké Heraltice, Johann Metzner, who was personally involved in the case, informed the Olomouc consistory about the use of protective amulets among the terrified people.⁷⁸ The Latin term *amuletis*, which Metzner used in the

76 Greyerz and Conrad, eds, *Handbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, 86–9; Scribner, *Popular culture*, 38; Zuber, *Osudy moravské církve*, 240–45; Mikulec, *Náboženský život*, 118–31.

77 Hoffman, *Zrcadlo Náboženství*, 185.

78 ZAO-OL, ACO, sign. C13, inv. no. 2279, fol. 273, The parish priest Johann Metzner to the Bishop Consistory in Olomouc, 23 September 1754.

letter, undoubtedly referred to consecrated objects commonly used by church officials, even though it could suggest the use of amulets employed within magical practices, which were forbidden by the church.⁷⁹

In the case of Marina Fischerin, during the night-time disturbances, the first phase involved spiritual means, such as the reading of masses and exorcism (*mit-maßleßen alß and[eren]n gewöhnlichen Exorcismis*), which were supposed to help calm the situation.⁸⁰ But what was the meaning of the term ‘exorcism’ within the context of posthumous magic? The third book of a manual from twenty years later, *Agenda seu rituale Olmucense*, gives instructions on the correct procedure for performing an exorcism.⁸¹ The text records a dialogue between a clergyman/exorcist and a possessed individual. In the case of a posthumous witch or wizard, this was an individual who had died, although it was believed that they visited their neighbors, either in their own form or even more frequently in animal or other form, and tormented them in various ways, especially at night. If the unknown author of the Friedlandt record did mean the enactment of the procedure described, this may have been an attempt to use spiritual means, such as holy water or a crucifix, to make the restless spirit leave the dwelling under attack. Despite the fact that a reference to spiritual healing appears several times in the course of the Moravian–Silesian posthumous witch trials, it never succeeded in putting a stop to the case, and it was always necessary to proceed with an invasive solution.

Cases of posthumous magic occurred mainly on three estates: Bruntál and Sovinec (Order of the Teutonic Knights), Libavá (bishopric of Olomouc), and Velké Heraltice (Cistercian monastery of Velehrad). Their manorial authorities represented an important Catholic entity committed to actively implementing the policy of re-Catholicization. The approach of the Komtur of the Order shows that, despite distancing themselves from superstition, the authorities did not take people’s concerns lightly. The involvement of the lower clergy, who interpreted the episcopal directives to the village folk during sermons, contributed significantly to spreading Catholic supremacy in remote mountain regions. After the Thirty Years’ War, people in these areas faced a number of crises to deal with. One way of doing so was to identify and present a culprit responsible for the problems. Most often, the spotlight fell on an inconvenient individual who behaved differently from the others and disturbed the established order in the village. Although young women, men, and children

79 The efforts of the church to combat superstitious behaviour were reflected, for example, in the resolution of the Prague Synod of 1605, which targeted problematic practices, namely idolatry, witchcraft, sorcery, or the use of amulets. *Synodus Archidioecesisana Pragensis*, 20; Sedlák, “Některá zvláštní ustanovení,” 606–7.

80 ZAO, ÚS ŘNR, inv. no. 118, fol. 67, Record of Marina Fischerin’s execution.

81 *Agenda seu rituale Olmucense*, 76–7.

also faced accusations of witchcraft, it was the image of the witch as an old woman, often on the fringes of society, that dominated among the common people. Marina Fischerin was regarded as an unpleasant person; she was old, widowed and, therefore, potentially dangerous. Although she died in the bosom of the church and was given a formal burial, it did not take long for her to become the prime suspect. For the most part, the rural clergy did not suppress this fear but, instead, responded to the common need to 'purge' the community. It provided spiritual comfort in several phases. The initial purification involved the repeated blessing of houses and the celebration of masses and, in all likelihood, the provision of religious objects too, as we find in other cases. The next level consisted of removing the 'infected' body from the cemetery and taking the remains away from the village. Once again, this purified the safe space of the village. The burning of the remains was also purificatory in nature—not only for the community, but also for the deceased person. From the clergy's point of view, the process represented a legitimate protective act by which the community was once again purified and unified. Posthumous magic was not just a manifestation of the belief of simple, frightened people. It also encompassed a number of aspects that clearly reflect a 'crisis of the Early Modern Age'. Above all, it became a social phenomenon that gave the moods, feelings, and concerns of the time a material form in the posthumous witch as a punishment and a purifying instrument for society in the second half of the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century.

It is possible that the official invitation to intervene against posthumous magic in remote regions of northern Moravia and Silesia proved useful for the episcopal consistory in Olomouc. Perhaps this affair could even be regarded as part of the church's response to the danger of the emergence of non-Catholicism in a region strongly affected by the Lutheran Reformation. The Bishop of Olomouc, Karl of Liechtenstein-Castelcorneo, who was involved in the cases of posthumous magic between 1674 and 1679, also played a role in the infamous witch trials in Velké Losiny, where the fear of non-Catholicism appears to have been a factor in the individual cases.⁸²

The problem of non-Catholics, especially the hidden ones, was still a topical issue at this time. The origins can be traced back to the Thirty Years' War, when the non-Catholic nobility and burghers of the royal towns had two options: convert to Catholicism or go into exile. The inhabitants of the other towns and people in the countryside did not have the right to emigrate and were theoretically obliged to convert to the Catholic faith. However, there was another option, i.e., illegal migration to another estate or abroad, where the religious conditions were more acceptable to them. The last option was to outwardly convert and conform, but secretly retain the original faith.⁸³ It is therefore not surprising that the clergy were concerned about the religious life of their subjects, who often adhered to their doctrinally different

82 Parma, "Biskup Karel z Lichtensteinu-Castelcorneo," 88–9.

83 Mikulec, *České země*, 61–3.

ideas, mixed with superstition. Wojtucki's research helps illustrate this problem. The records of the Court of Appeals in Wrocław, which dealt with cases of the restless dead in 1632, 1641 and 1644, show that these people were good Christians, as confirmed by witnesses. It was all the more difficult to understand why they were causing harm in the community after death. People explained this fact by witchcraft, which the accused were said to have practiced during their lifetime.⁸⁴ The inadequate personal situation of the parish organization, especially in the northern and eastern regions of Moravia, was perhaps the reason why even in the first half of the eighteenth century the bishop consistory in Olomouc did not leave the fear of secret heretics. In an attempt to maintain its spiritual dominance in the area, it used various means, including trials of posthumous witches and sorcerers.

Trials against witches and vampires continued throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, even though a part of the church had already expressed considerable skepticism about such matters. The last major case of posthumous magic took place in Svobodné Heřmanice in 1755. The trial, which entailed the execution of nineteen bodies, did not escape the attention of the sovereign, Maria Theresa, who had the matter investigated by her personal physician Gerhard van Swieten. In her correspondence with the Bishop of Olomouc, Ferdinand Julius Troyer, she strongly condemned the practices adopted. The priesthood did not escape her criticism; according to the Empress, they should have maintained a distance from superstitions of this kind, rather than reinforcing the ignorant population's belief in them. A definitive end to the persecution was brought about by the decree of 1 March 1755 forbidding the desecration of bodies.⁸⁵

The reform period brought about a change in the treatment of the dead. A court decree, printed in Prague on 2 August 1784, discussed the new way of dealing with bodies and a simplified form of burial. It included a prescription for the abolition of cemeteries in the villages and their transfer to the outskirts. Hygienic standards also focused on the appropriate location. The new cemeteries were to be located away from watercourses and were not to be on land whose properties would prevent decomposition.⁸⁶ Emperor Joseph II supplemented the previous instruction with a decree to shorten the time of funeral ceremonies. The bodies of the deceased were to be taken to the church for prayers and then buried in the ground outside the village, placed only in linen sacks and covered with quicklime.⁸⁷

84 Wojtucki, "Der Glaube", 192.

85 MZA, B1, book no. 213, fol. 748–51. A decree of 1 March 1755.

86 *Dritte Sammlung*, 66.

87 *Dritte Sammlung*, 66–7.

Facit

We have seen in three examples that there were two dimensions to the spiritual medicine of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: it concerned both physical healing (common diseases, protection against the risk of death, and disposal of an unclean body) and spiritual healing (sinful behavior and conversion), two phenomena that were inextricably linked. Furthermore, it became apparent that local spiritual authorities, especially members of religious orders and parish priests, played a key role in spreading this type of thinking. As preachers, confessors, and investigators of suspicious matters, they provided orientation to the faithful, gave instruction, issued authorization for contentious cases, constructed a historical tradition of cult locations, and communicated with other authorities. In his fascinating analysis of the ‘anatomy of Catholic learning’, Robert Evans observed the separation of intellectual and popular culture, that apparently occurred in the seventeenth century due to the fact that intellectual discourse was given scope for self-expression, while popular culture was subject to increasing regimentation. What Evans had in mind was primarily specific phenomena, such as ghostly apparitions, exorcisms, miracles, prophecies, and witchcraft, to which he linked the attacks on folk magic.⁸⁸ Traditionally, ‘popular piety’ also encompasses the topic of miraculous images and pilgrimage sites, which are associated with a ‘popular’ unofficial approach to faith. These assumptions are largely justified, especially from the perspective of comparing medieval and early modern piety. Nevertheless, they obscure the fact that in the seventeenth century, in both the Czech lands and Bavaria, those who upheld these practices—however theologically controversial and sensitive they may have been—were also representatives of the social elite. Therefore, these were not practices associated exclusively with the rural folk, as it was claimed by intellectuals and state authorities around the mid-eighteenth century, and for a long time also by post-Enlightenment historiography.

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Religious Services or the Care of Souls in Reports on Clerics at the Moravian and Silesian Estates Belonging to the Prince of Liechtenstein from the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century

Pavel Pumpr 

Department of History, Faculty of Arts, University of Ostrava, Reální 5, 701 03 Ostrava, Czech Republic; pavel.pumpr@osu.cz

Received 31 August 2023 | Accepted 6 November 2023 | Published online 18 December 2023

Abstract. The reform of the Catholic clergy initiated by the Council of Trent emphasized the importance of the practical exercise of the care of souls (*cura animarum*). The ideal priest should, following the example of Christ—the Good Shepherd, take responsible care of his ‘sheep’—the parishioners. The paper focuses on how the parish clergy performed pastoral care, based on the analysis of reports written on clerics working in the 1760s in ten Moravian and Silesian estates of the Prince of Liechtenstein. These reports prepared by the Prince’s officials mostly contain an evaluation of the performance of the pastoral care by the given cleric. They thus provide an interesting insight into the religious services offered by the lower clergy from the perspective of the owner of the estate, who was also the patron of the local parishes. They show that the Prince of Liechtenstein as the patron, together with his officials, supervised how the clerics provided for the spiritual needs of his subjects and furthermore through the exercise of the right of patronage he helped to provide his subjects with proper pastoral care.

Keywords: care of souls, lower clergy, the right of patronage, estates of the Prince of Liechtenstein, Moravia, Silesia, eighteenth century

The first century of the early modern period brought new impulses that influenced the perception of the religious services offered by the clergy. In the Catholic Church, the Council of Trent emphasized the importance of the practical exercise of the care of souls (*cura animarum*) by the clergy when it stated:

“[...] it is by divine precept enjoined on all, to whom the cure of souls is committed, to know their own sheep; to offer sacrifice for them; and, by the preaching of the divine word, by the administration of the sacraments, and by the example of all good works, to feed them; to have a fatherly care

of the poor and of other distressed persons, and to apply themselves to all other pastoral duties [...].”¹

The ideal image of a priest’s activity as a spiritual administrator was developed in more detail in the ecclesiastical norms issued in the individual dioceses. In the diocese of Olomouc, such an instruction for the parish clergy was issued in 1666 by Bishop Charles of Liechtenstein-Kastelkorn.² According to this instruction, the main task of the parish priest was the zealously exercised care of souls, which represented a ‘heavy and formidable burden’ (*grave ac formidabile onus*), since it was connected with the responsibility for the salvation of the souls entrusted to him. The parish priest was the exclusive mediator of contact with God for the inhabitants of the parish. Therefore, he was to permanently reside in his parish and watch over the parishioners entrusted to him and conscientiously provide them with spiritual services. He was to administer the sacraments to his parishioners willingly and as needed in any situation, so that no one would be deprived of eternal salvation due to his negligence. Other duties of the priest included the frequent and proper celebration of Mass and the proclamation of the Word of God through regular preaching and catechesis. Overall, the instruction defines a desirable model of responsible spiritual care for the parishioners, whom the priest was to accompany with his religious services both in everyday life and on the way to eternal salvation, following the example of Christ—the Good Shepherd who cares for his sheep.³

The question of how priests actually exercised pastoral care for their parishioners was of interest not only to church authorities, but also to holders of the patronage

1 “[...] praecepto divino mandatum sit omnibus, quibus animarum cura commissa est, oves suas agnoscere, pro his sacrificium offerre, verbique divini praedicatione, sacramentorum administratione, ac bonorum omnium operum exemplo pascere, pauperum aliarumque miserabilium personarum curam paternam gerere, et in cetera munia pastoralia incumbere [...]” *Canones et decreta sacrosancti oecumenici concilii Tridentini*, 123–24 (sessio XXIII, decretum de reformatione, cap. I). The English translation is taken from: *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, 175. On the ideal of the priest according to the Council of Trent, see e.g.: Jedin, “Das Leitbild des Priesters,” 102–24; Holzem, *Christentum in Deutschland I*, 339–42. From other literature on the early modern development of the clergy, see e.g.: Bergin, “Between Estate and Profession,” 66–85; Schorn-Schütte, “Die Geistlichen vor der Revolution,” 216–44; Schorn-Schütte, “Evangelische Geistlichkeit und katholischer Seelsorgeklerus,” 39–81; Schorn-Schütte, “Priest, Preacher, Pastor,” 1–39; Dürr, “Images of the Priesthood,” 87–107; Pfister, “Pastors and Priests,” 41–65; Julia, “Der Priester,” 282–320; Janse and Pitkin, eds., *The Formation of Clerical and Confessional Identities*.

2 *Monitorium sive instructio brevis*.

3 On the concept of the Good Shepherd, see: Dürr, “...die Macht und Gewalt der Priestern,” 80–86, 91; Dürr, “Images of the Priesthood,” 92–99, 106.

rights of parishes.⁴ It is the evaluation of the work done by clerics by their patrons that can provide a new perspective on this topic.⁵ This is evidenced, for example, in documents written from the extensive estates of the Princes of Liechtenstein. Members of this noble family, while exercising the right of patronage, also monitored the activities of the clerics on their estates.⁶ This monitoring is documented in a comprehensive list of clerics from the Liechtenstein estates, which was compiled in the 1760s.⁷

This list is based on the reports of various people—the officials of individual Liechtenstein estates. Their reports were always sent in a given year to the central administration of the princely domain, and here they were transcribed into the manuscript analyzed. This gave the entire set of reports a unified external form, but retained a certain diversity of content. This diversity reflected the individual approach of their original authors—local princely officials. Nevertheless, the reports are similar in their main features.⁸ Most of them contain a brief general assessment of the performance of pastoral care, some of them also provide information on specific clerical duties.⁹ Another common feature of the reports is that their writers praised

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- 4 From the perspective of church authorities (through the written documents they produced), summarized the activities of clerics within parishes Zuber, *Osudy moravské církve I*, 205–48.
 - 5 For more information on the exercise of patronage rights in the Czech Lands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see: Schlenz, *Das Kirchenpatronat in Böhmen*; Stuchlá, *Prachatický vikariát*, 103–123; Stuchlá, “Curés et seigneurie,” 97–115; Pumpr, *Beneficia, záduší a patronát*.
 - 6 On this topic based on normative sources from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Winkelbauer, ed., *Gundaker von Liechtenstein*, 60–88; Hipfinger, ed., *Das Beispiel der Obrigkeit*, 256, 351, 416–17, 428.
 - 7 MZA, G 10, book no. 1140. The manuscript contains reports written in 1764–1768 on the clerics working at twenty-four estates belonging to the Prince of Liechtenstein. Some reports from this manuscript have been analyzed with regard to the issue of clerics’ careers, their professional structure, and professional competences. See: Pumpr, “Původ, profesní struktura a kariéry patronátního kléru,” 283–314; Pumpr, “Úloha patrona v procesu profesionalizace nižšího kléru,” 461–98.
 - 8 Due to the considerable size of the entire manuscript, only reports from some of the estates have been analyzed for the purposes of this paper. Specifically, reports from ten Liechtenstein estates have been selected for this investigation: Úsov (Mährisch Aussee), Bučovice (Butschowitz), Ruda nad Moravou (Eisenberg), Lednice (Eisgrub), Kolštejn (Goldenstein) (today Branná), Zábřeh (Hohenstadt), Krnov (Jägerndorf), Uherský Ostroh (Ungarisch Ostra) (in the source: Ostrau), Šternberk (Sternberg) (and its part Karlovec [Karlsberg]), and Moravská Třebová (Mährisch Trübau). All these estates were located in Moravia and Silesia, all belonging to the Olomouc diocese. For more information on the part of the Liechtenstein domain that was located in the Bohemian Crown Lands, see: Merki and Löffler, *Das Haus Liechtenstein in den böhmischen Ländern*.
 - 9 Characteristics of the performance of pastoral care are available in the vast majority of the reports on clerics. For the ten estates under investigation a total of 313 reports on 177 clerics have been preserved in the manuscript analyzed, of which the characteristics of the performance of clerical duties by a priest are available in 243 records on 145 clerics.

the work activities of the vast majority of clerics. Most often they stated that the cleric is 'zealous' (*eifrig*), 'diligent' (*embsig, fleissig*), or 'tireless' (*unermiedet, unverdrossen*) in the performance of his clerical duties.¹⁰ These attributes show that the spiritual administrator was valued mainly for his efficiency and zeal for work.¹¹ If the patron's officials praised the clerics for performing their duties properly and 'accurately',¹² they appreciated it even more when a cleric worked above and beyond the call of duty.¹³ Overall, it is clear that the patron and his officials, as well as the Church, based their evaluations of the clerics on the ideal of an efficient spiritual administrator.

Liechtenstein officials also shared the Church's demand that clerics administer the sacraments to parishioners according to their needs. That is why they praised clerics who were willing or helpful (*willig*) in providing spiritual services. The willing provision of spiritual services was naturally appreciated by the parishioners themselves.¹⁴ Liechtenstein officials sometimes explicitly stated whether parishioners were satisfied with their clerics. These testimonies suggest that the popularity of the cleric may have been reflected in the greater interest of parishioners in the spiritual services he provided. For example, the parish priest in Brankovice, František Jiříček, was said to be so popular with his parishioners that more people came to him for confession in one year than to the previous parish priest in four years. Also, if parishioners

10 E.g., the report on the local chaplain in Strání Ondřej Nevijel (1764): "[...] ein besonders auferbaulicher frommer Geistlicher, der in der Seel-Sorge sich alle nur erdencklich Mühe giebt [...]" MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, p. 215.

11 The adjectives good (*gut*), exemplary (*exemplarisch*), praiseworthy (*rühmlich, löblich, lobenswertig / lobwürdig*), or the formulation "*führet sich wohl auf*" repeatedly appear in other general characteristics that positively evaluate the activities of a given cleric.

12 "Verrichtet seine Officia accurat, daß er auch hirowegen allerdings zu beloben" (local cooperator in Mladoňov [Bladensdorf] František Dvořák, 1765); "in seinen geistlichen Obliegenheiten giebet sich selbter alle mögliche Mühe solche der Schuldigkeit nach zu vertreten" (parish priest in Podleší [Krumperk, Grumberg] Johann Hertzog, 1764). MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, pp. 32, 70.

13 For example, the chateau chaplain Ignác Pauer often preached in Nové Zámky (Neu Schloss), where he was not explicitly obliged to do so (1764). Similarly, Josef Lang, the later parish priest in Úsov (Aussee), was praised in his previous position in Plumlov (where he was chateau chaplain) as a cleric who was "tireless in pastoral care beyond his duties, zealous, vigilant and diligent in the performance of all clerical functions" (1764) and who zealously and tirelessly provided spiritual administration in the town of Plumlov and five distant villages, all by himself and without remuneration (1765). MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, pp. 25, 231, 241.

14 See the report on the cooperator in Úsov (Aussee), Antonín Pschor (1764): "Hat sich durch seinen schönen und denen Tugenden anhängigen Lebens-Wandl, grossen Eyfer in denen geistlichen Verrichtungen, durch seine durch das ganze Jahr alle Sonn- und Feyertag haltende Predigen und ansonsten Iedermann erzeugende geistliche Dienstfertigkeit bey denen Kirch-Künder dermassen Lieb und Werth gemacht, daß alles in dessen Persohn ein besonderes Zutrauen sezet." MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, p. 20–21.

needed to provide the dying with the sacraments, they turned more often to parish priest Jiříček than to his local chaplain. The parish priest responded willingly to these requests regardless of harsh weather (rain or snow) and, in addition, treated parishioners with compassion and mercy when collecting the stole fees.¹⁵

These stole fees (*Stolgebühren*), which were collected at some church ceremonies (baptisms, weddings, funerals, etc.), had traditionally been a source of problems. The cause of the problems was the fact that in collecting them there was a connection between the exercise of spiritual administration and the raising of funds for the parish priest's livelihood.¹⁶ The Church instructed clerics to be moderate and modest in collecting these fees, not to make spiritual services conditional on payment, and to provide the poor with free sacraments and a church burial.¹⁷ Nevertheless, there were other cases similar to the one concerning the actions of the dean in Bučovice, Jiří Schüller. According to the parishioners' complaints, this priest was ruthless and harsh, refusing to perform the burial regardless of their poverty until they paid the required fee.¹⁸ It should be added that parishioners generally accepted the connection of spiritual services provided by the priest with the provision of his material needs, i.e., a system based on the provision of spiritual services in return for material services. Problems arose when the parishioners felt that the rules of this 'mutual trade' were broken, i.e., that the cleric did not care about their salvation and gave priority to his own economic interests.¹⁹

15 See the 1764 report on parish priest František Jiříček: "[...] hat das Lob von seinen Pfarr Kindern genommen, daß er mehr in diesem einen Jahr Beicht Kinder gehabt, als dessen Vorfahrer in 4 Jahren, dessen wegen wird er auch zu denen Sterbenden mehr alß dessen Local Caplan berufen und findet sich es mag regen oder schneiben gantz willig ein, nebst diesem ist auch derselbe mit dessen Pfarrkindern in Abnehmung der gebührenden Stolla mitleydig und barmhertzig [...]" MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, p. 42.

16 See: Pumpr, *Beneficia, záduší a patronát*, 220–31; Stuchlá, *Prachatický vikariát*, 69–76; Zuber, *Osudy moravské církve I*, 199–200; Petke, "Oblationen, Stolgebühren und Pfarreinkünfte," 26–58.

17 *Monitorium sive instructio brevis*, 60–61 (article 33).

18 "[...] sehr unbarmhertzig und hart, besonders gegen denen armen Pfarr Kündern unmitleydig, indeme er gar keine Begräbnus umsonsten, gleichwie seine Vorfahrere gethan, verrichten lasset, sondern zur gänzlichen Tillgung der Begräbnus Schuldigkeit die wenig hinterlassene Kleydungen verkauffet werden müssen, ingleichen auch in der grösten Theuerung denen armen und gepresten Pfarr Kindern einiges Körndl in leydentlichen Preyß nicht zulassen, viel weniger vorleihen wollen, in übrigen ist diese Beschwernuß wieder demselben von seinen unterhabenden Pfarr Kindern hervorgekommen, das selbter durch dieß gantze Jahr, so er bereits allda Dechand ist, weder eine Kinder Lehr, vielweniger eine Predig gemacht [...]" MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, pp. 39–40 (1764).

19 See: Beck, "Der Pfarrer und das Dorf," 107–43, 283–87. Beck's observation that there was a direct relationship between the religious acts of the priest, which were supposed to ensure the salvation of the individual and the community, and the material obligations of the parishioners

Liechtenstein officials thus recorded in their reports not only the positive evaluations of the cleric's activities by the parishioners²⁰ but also (albeit isolated) cases of their dissatisfaction.²¹ These records show that Liechtenstein officials took into account the parishioners' references when assessing the clerics' professional activities. Parishioners were thus involved in controlling the activities of the priests to whose supervision and spiritual administration they were to be subject.²² They were therefore not just passive objects of the priest's pastoral care. They could communicate their potential dissatisfaction with the cleric's pastoral care to the officials of the patron. And it was the patron who, through the right of presentation to the parish benefices, decided on the career of the clerics.²³ Negative references from parishioners could ultimately affect a cleric's career prospects. In extreme situations, parishioners could write a complaint against their parish priest and thus initiate a process that in some cases led to the priest's departure from the parish.²⁴

Critical reports also indicate what was perceived as the opposite to the ideal image of a spiritual administrator. For example, the chamber burgrave of Krnov (Jägerndorf) described the parish priest in Równe (Rovné, Roben), Antonín Červenka, as a "very weak" priest and also "a lukewarm spiritual administrator whose pastime is the economy and wine houses", adding that this parish priest left

to the parish priest, was used in the Czech environment by Pavel Himl when he examined relations between rural subjects and their spiritual administrators on the South Bohemian estate of Český Krumlov (Krumau). See: Himl, *Die 'armben Leüte' und die Macht*, 297–333.

- 20 E.g., "Embsig in seinen Verrichtungen, daß dessen Pfarr Kinder mit ihm wohl zufrieden" (parish priest in Dubicko Jeremias Franck, 1765); "Die Kirch Kinder geben demselben in der Seelsorge sehr gutes Lob" (local chaplain in Domašov [Domstadt] Augustin Němec, 1764). MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, pp. 138, 329.
- 21 It was not only the aforementioned dean in Bučovice who provoked complaints from his parishioners. The parishioners were also dissatisfied with the parish priest in Široká Niva (Breithenau) Christian Brückner, whom the report from 1765 evaluates as follows: "ein mather und stichlender Prediger, mit welchen die Kirch-Kündern nicht wohl zufrieden seynd". MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, pp. 151, 158.
- 22 This situation was not specific to the Liechtenstein estates. A similar practice is documented for the South Bohemian estates of the Prince of Schwarzenberg. According to a report from 1696, officials on the Schwarzenberg estate of Hluboká (Frauenberg) asked the village mayors (*Dorfrichter*) whether parish priests were celebrating Mass properly, holding sermons and catechesis, and whether they were charging excessive stole fees. Podlaha, *Dějiny arcidiecése pražské*, 452.
- 23 It was the decision-making on the career advancement of clerics that gave rise to the list analyzed here. It collected data on the professional qualities and activities of clerics so that the patron could decide based on this information who would be appointed to hold parish benefices.
- 24 See: Pumpr, *Beneficia, záduší a patronát*, 272–78.

the pastoral duties to his cooperator.²⁵ This characteristic is the opposite of the ideal model of a priest's activity, who was to be as active as possible in the care of souls. The repeatedly used adjective 'weak' points to the absence of professional skills that were necessary for the effective exercise of spiritual administration and that could not be replaced by anything else. This fact is recounted by a critical remark about the parish priest in Široká Niva (Breithenau), Christian Brückner: "Although he wants to perform his clerical functions with great benefit for souls, especially in matters of faith, he is too weak and also does not know how to capture the minds [of the faithful]." Nor did the priest impress his listeners with mocking sermons.²⁶ This brings us to the question of assessing the specific clerical duties that made up the care of souls.

The spectrum of tasks for the spiritual administrator were characterized by Liechtenstein officials as a trinity of activities: preaching, catechesis, and administering the sacraments. Through the first two activities the cleric was to fulfill one of his basic duties, namely the proclamation of the Word of God. In the context of preaching and catechizing, the zeal, diligence, and tirelessness of clerics are again often praised. The quality of the performance of these activities is rated mostly positively (most often using the general term 'good'). Liechtenstein officials evaluated a minority of preachers with superlatives²⁷ and only rarely spoke about the average to below-average preaching performance of specific clerics.²⁸

Another fact evaluated was the frequency of preaching and catechesis. According to the regulations of the Church, priests were to perform these activities regularly on Sundays and feast days.²⁹ The commendatory reports of Liechtenstein officials usually

25 "[...] derselbe ein sehr schwaches Subjectum und lauer Seelsorger, sein Zeith Vertreib ist die Würtschafft und Wein Häuser, die geistliche Schuldigkeiten überlasset er seinem Cooperatori alleine zur Sorge." MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, p. 159 (1765).

26 "Will zwar seine geistliche Functiones mit großen Seelen Nutzen, sonderlich in Glaubens Sachen, verrichten, ist aber zu schwach und hat auch keinen Modum die Gemüther einzunehmen" (1764); "ein mather und stichlender Prediger, mit welchen die Kirch-Kündern nicht wohl zufrieden seynd" (1765). MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, pp. 151, 158.

27 Such preachers are called "excellent", "berühmt", "renomirt", "stattlich", "vortreflich", "vornehm", or "besonders gut". See e.g.: the report on the cooperator in Bučovice Joseph Blumenwitz (1764): "sowohl in der deutsch- alß auch böhmischen Zunge vortrefflicher Prediger, wessen seinen Predigen das Volckh ohnerhörth gerne beywohnet, wird auch hin und wieder zu predigen invitiret". MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, p. 41.

28 "In predigen kein besonderes Subjectum"; "ein mather und stichlender Prediger, mit welchen die Kirch-Kündern nicht wohl zufrieden seynd"; "der schlechteste Prediger und Seelsorger ob denen fürstl. cammer Güttern." MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, pp. 158, 336.

29 *Monitorium sive instructio brevis*, 47–48, 50 (articles 15, 18); Zuber, *Osudy moravské církve I*, 207–16; Stuchlá, "Křesťanská cvičení v některých farnostech prachaticko-netolického vikariátu," 251–66; Stuchlá, *Prachatický vikariát*, 185–94.

only state in general terms that the cleric does these activities ‘frequently’.³⁰ In the case of the parish priest in Brankovice, František Jiříček, the local official also praised his helpfulness: the priest often held catecheses in the homes of parishioners so that they could understand the truths of the faith as easily as possible.³¹ For some clerics, the report writers commented that they could preach more often.³² Only rarely is the cleric’s complete inaction in the above areas criticized. The parish priest in Rovné (Roben), Antonín Červenka, according to a Liechtenstein official, had not preached or held catechesis in the eight and a half years he had been in his parish. The reason may have been his limited language skills: although the parish was German, the priest knew the Czech language better.³³ The opposite problem was encountered in the case of Joannes Klötzer, the cooperator in Hluk, who spoke more German than Czech, which was the language of inhabitants in the local parish. The consequence was that people slept more than they listened during his preaching. Therefore, the official recommended that another cleric, who could speak Czech better, be appointed in his place.³⁴

However, similar cases in which the language skills of a cleric limited his work in the care of souls were exceptional. The Prince of Liechtenstein and his officials, as well as church authorities, realized that knowledge of the parishioners’ language

30 In the case of the cooperator in Úsov (Aussee), Antonín Pschor, did the official specifically point out that he preaches all year round every Sunday and feast day. MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, p. 20 (1764).

31 “Catechisiret auch öfters in denen Häußern, um daß das Volckh es desto leichter begreifen möge.” MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, p. 42 (1764).

32 See: the report on the dean in Krnov (Jägerndorf) Joseph Saliger (1765): “berühmter Prediger und wäre zu wünschen, daß sich derselbe auch ausser der Fasten Zeit hören lassete”. The report on the parish priest in Hluk František Antonín Podstatský of Prusinovice (1764): “in seiner geistlichen Function fleissig, doch predigt er einmahl und scheint hierwegen die öftere Unpäßlichkeit zum Vorwand zu haben”. The report on the parish priest in Kunovice Jan Merten (1764): “in der Seel-Sorg eyfrig, doch wurde guth geschehen, wann er zum Trost seiner Kirchen Kündern dann und wann auch selbst predigen möchte”. (In this case there was a correction, as the report of 1765 indicates: “ein guter Seel Sorger, der nun mehro an Predigs statt alle Sonn und Feyertage fleißig catechisiret”). MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, pp. 155, 208, 210, 218–19.

33 MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, pp. 153–54 (1764). The report about the dean in Bučovice from 1764 has a similar sound (“in übrigen ist diese Beschwernuß wieder demselben von seinen unterhabenden Pfarr Kindern hervorgekommen, das selbter durch dieß gantze Jahr, so er bereits allda Dechand ist, weder eine Kinder Lehr, vielweniger eine Predig gemacht”). In this case, however, the reason was not ignorance of the language of the parishioners (the priest knew both Czech and German). Moreover, according to the report of the following year, the priest corrected his inaction (“derselbe nun sich öfters in dieser verwichener Jahrs Zeith mit deßßen gutt gemachten Predigen hat hören laßßen”). MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, pp. 39–40, 44.

34 MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, p. 210 (1764). However, already a year later, the official reminded that the cooperator was trying to improve his Czech: “giebet sich Mühe die böhmische Sprach beßßer zu erlernen”. MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, p. 220 (1765).

was a prerequisite for effective pastoral care. Therefore, when deciding who would be granted a parish benefice, the patron with his officials made sure that the cleric knew the language of the parishioners.³⁵ As a result, the language skills of the clerics on the Liechtenstein estates almost always corresponded to the language of the parish inhabitants.³⁶ Exceptional cases of language incompatibility between a cleric and his parish were solved e.g., through the joint exercise of spiritual administration by several clerics whose language skills complemented each other. In other cases, the clerics concerned were relocated to areas more in line with their mother tongue, and some individuals sought to improve their language skills.³⁷

Relatively rarely did Liechtenstein officials record the question of how clerics administer the sacraments. Again, they appreciated the diligence and zeal, i.e., the work commitment of the cleric. Of the particular sacraments, they noticed only two: the Eucharist (i.e., the celebration of Mass) and the Extreme Unction (most often referred to as the “provision of the sick”—“Versorgung/Versehung deren Krancken”).

The celebration of Mass was perceived by the patron's officials as the most elementary and simplest activity, which even the least capable cleric should master.³⁸ Thus, in the aforementioned report criticizing the inactivity of parish priest

35 In 1765, the chamber burgrave of Krnov (Jägerndorf) pointed out to the Prince that the local cooperator in Lichnov (Lichten), Franz Opitz, should be rewarded for his merits with ‘some German benefice’ (Opitz spoke only German). MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, p. 157. The fact that the Prince of Liechtenstein and his officials paid adequate attention to the language issue in the context of ecclesiastical administration is also evidenced by other information recorded in the source analyzed. Reports on individual clerics contained therein record their language skills, and the manuscript also records the language situation in the parishes under the Prince's right of patronage. See: MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, pp. 1–7.

36 See: Pumpr, “Úloha patrona v procesu profesionalizace nižšího kléru,” 486 (for seven North Moravian and Silesian estates of the Prince of Liechtenstein). An analogous situation prevailed in the entire Olomouc diocese. Pumpr, *Nižší klérus na Moravě v 18. století*, 102–5, 174–76. On the language question in the context of ecclesiastical administration, see further: Zuber, *Osudy moravské církve II*, 113–18; Stuchlá, *Prachatický vikariát*, 39–43; Ryantová, “Jazyková otázka v církevní správě,” 135–54; Martínková, “Profesní migrace duchovenstva,” 90–94.

37 More on this with references to specific cases, Pumpr, “Úloha patrona v procesu profesionalizace nižšího kléru,” 488.

38 If a cleric was unable to celebrate Mass, it was evidence of his poor health and consequent inability to perform his clerical duties. See the report on the parish priest in Moravský Beroun (Bärn) Franz Traum (1767): “[...] hat dermahlen einen Administratorem, ist dergestalten schon miserabl, das er weder die heil. Meßß zuleßen imstand seye und ist stetts bethliegerig.” MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, p. 336. The parish priest in Nivnice, Ferdinand Egide, was also unable to fulfill his clerical duties to the extent that even celebrating Mass was a problem for him. In this case, the cause was the parish priest's poor health, apparently caused by excessive alcohol consumption. See: the 1764 report: “[...] hat er vielleicht durch das angewohnte unmässige Trüncken sich dermassen hingerichtet, daß er schon durch etwelche Jahre nicht das mindeste mehr zu verrichten imstande ist. Von dem

Červenka, the writer stated that this priest had shown ‘poor diligence and usefulness’ in the spiritual administration that was his responsibility and would have been better suited for the role of a cleric who would only celebrate Mass (i.e., not for the function of a parish priest).³⁹ From the patron’s point of view, it was not enough that the parish priest was able to regularly celebrate Mass for his parishioners; he had to have the practical professional competencies that were necessary to exercise quality pastoral care for his patron’s subjects. He was to direct their religious life by means of preaching and catechesis, and to provide them, as necessary, with all the spiritual services which were to ensure their earthly success and ultimately their post-mortem salvation. By these services, the priest accompanied the parishioners in their everyday concerns as well as in critical life situations. These critical situations are recalled in the positive appreciation of those clerics who have shown a compassionate and merciful attitude towards their parishioners, especially those in need, i.e., the poor and the sick.⁴⁰ It was grave illness or the end of earthly life that represented the most extreme situation in which the priest was to be available to each of his parishioners in order to help the sick or dying person to step into eternity through the sacraments. Therefore, the clerics who were appreciated were those who willingly responded when called to the sick and, in accordance with the orders of the Church, tried to ensure that their parishioners did not die without the sacraments.⁴¹

übermässigen Trincken lasset zwar gedachter Pfarrer in etwas ab, doch hat es das Ansehen nicht als ob er hierdurch restituiret, gefolgsam von dem miserablen Zustand des Zittern an denen Händen, weswegen er weder zu communiciren fähig ist, befreyet zu werden sich Hoffnung machen könnte, immassen es mit ihme von Tag zu Tag immer ärger wird, daß er genung mit harter Mühe das Heyl. Meeß-Opfer zu verrichten sich vermögend befünde und gleich wie dann hiraus natürlicher Weiß erfolgen muß, daß dem allda Zahl Reichen Kirchen-Kindern das schuldigste genügen schwehrlich oder gar nicht geleistet werden.” MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, p. 212.

39 “[...] hat selbter auf unverdiente Recommendation des verstorbenen Herrn v. Glomner vor 8 ½ Jahren das daige [!] Roobner pur deutsche und mit dem Lutheranern vermischte Beneficium erhalten, alwo er bies anhero noch keine Christliche Lehr gehalten, viel weniger selbst geprediget hat, mithin einen schlechten Fleiß und Nutzen in seiner obliegenden Seelsorg erwiesen, taugete besser für einen Meeß-Pater.” MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, pp. 153–54.

40 See the report on the second chaplain in Krnov (Jägerndorf) Christoph Niessner (1765): “[...] ein guter Prediger und sehr eyfriger Seelsorger, besucht öfters die Krancken, tröstet die Betriebten und hiefft nach Möglichkeit denen Nothleydenden und bestrebet sich nach Cräften die Laster auszurotten, das Gute zu unterstützen und folgsam die Ehre Gottes zu vermehren [...].” MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, p. 155.

41 E.g.: “eyffrig- und embsiger Versorger dern Krancken” (cooperator in Bučovice Joseph Blumenwitz, 1764); “in Beruffung zu die Krancken willig und unverdroßßen” (cooperator in Zábřeh (Hohenstadt) Josef Křížan, 1764); “in Versehung dern Krancken mühesam und unverdroßßen” (cooperator in Postřelmov, Ignác Christ, 1764); “ohnermiedet in Besuch und Tröstung dern Krancken” (second chaplain in Krnov (Jägerndorf) Christoph Niessner, 1764). MZA, G 10, book no. 1140, pp. 41, 129, 130, 146.

Again, the ideal of the active spiritual administrator who conscientiously cares for the salvation of the souls entrusted to him, an ideal defined by the post-Trent Church, appears here. The reports analyzed show that this ideal was shared by the Prince of Liechtenstein and his officials, as well as by the parishioners themselves – the princely subjects. The Prince, as the holder of the right of patronage over the parishes on his estates, exerted effective pressure on clerics to exercise the care of souls in accordance with this ideal: through his officials, he gathered data on the life and work of clerics and then used this information when deciding who would be granted a vacant parish benefice. The cleric seeking career advancement (i.e., seeking to obtain a benefice) was thus dependent on how the patron (his officials) evaluated his previous professional activity. In this way, the Prince of Liechtenstein, through the exercise of the right of patronage, together with his officials helped to provide his subjects with proper pastoral care and, in addition, contributed to the implementation of the post-Trent reform of the clergy, i.e., to the gradual transformation of the clerical estate into the clerical profession.⁴²

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42 See: Pumpr, “Úloha patrona v procesu profesionalizace nižšího kléru,” 461–98; Pumpr, *Nižší klérus na Moravě v 18. století*. As far as the concept of the ‘professionalization of the clergy’ is concerned, it should be emphasized that in the period under investigation the formation of a modern clerical profession was not yet a completed process, rather it was ‘an early modern »path toward a profession«’ (Luise Schorn-Schütte). On this concept (and its critical reflection), see: Schorn-Schütte, “Die Geistlichen vor der Revolution,” 216–44; Schorn-Schütte, “Evangelische Geistlichkeit und katholischer Seelsorgeklerus,” 66, 80; Schorn-Schütte, “Priest, Preacher, Pastor,” 36; Bergin, “Between Estate and Profession,” 66–85; Pfister, “Pastors and Priests,” 41–65; Comerford, “The Care of Souls is a Very Grave Burden for [the Pastor],” 349–68; De Boer, “Professionalization and Clerical Identity,” 369–77.

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Competing Frameworks of Interpreting Modernity in East Central Europe

An Introduction

Gergely Romsics 

Research Center for the Humanities, HUN-REN Hungarian Research Network; 4 Tóth Kálmán Street, 1097 Budapest, Hungary; Department for Modern and Contemporary International History, ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, 6–8 Múzeum körút, 1088 Budapest, Hungary; romsics.gergely@btk.elte.hu

Interwar East Central Europe remains somewhat of an enigma for historians and historical sociologists of ideologies, political practices and modernity in general. Seven decades of research have produced numerous competing interpretations and characterizations, creating a situation in which we might feel more at ease discussing the historiography of the subject matter than the subject matter itself. This is partly because of the natural barriers the region presents to researchers. Numerous and diverse local languages, frequent ruptures of political evolution, intersecting outside influences operating on multiple levels from the directly political to the cultural: interwar histories of East Central Europe have not proven a simple task to tackle. Nothing demonstrates this better than the fact that the referent object of “East Central Europe” still bears re-definition both in terms of geography and historical trajectory. In the present case, this regional appellation refers, geographically, to the Eastern ‘arc’ of Europe’s semi-periphery, running from the Baltics to Greece. Conceptually the central question which the present and subsequent thematic units in *Historical Studies on Central Europe* are looking to investigate aims at a better understanding of regional responses to challenges of modernity and modernization.

In interpreting the relationship between East Central Europe and modernity, no other term has had such a persistent influence on shaping the discourse as the notion of backwardness. A powerful metaphor, it evoked a paradigmatic or at least ‘normal’ variant of modernity from which the region had somehow deviated.¹ Backwardness, however, also implied belatedness, the elusive promise of catching up—in sum, it preserved the idea of modernity in the singular, with deviation

1 Janos, “The Politics of Backwardness.”

becoming a malfunction to be corrected.² Even in discussions of backwardness which remained pessimistic about the chances of overcoming historical underdevelopment, the perspective of a single modernity-cum-deviations proved sustainable, contributing to the resilience of the term.³

The alternative to positing a single, core meaning of modernity has surfaced in multiple research projects rooted in various disciplines—but no other formulation has proven more successful than the framework proposed by S. N. Eisenstadt in 2000, allowing for the conceptualization of ‘multiple modernities.’ In his famous essay, Eisenstadt reduced the shared meaning of all ‘modernities’ to belief in “a conception of the future characterized by a number of possibilities realizable through autonomous human agency.”⁴ This opened a window to conceiving of various political, economic and cultural patterns of development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as representing distinct, and even more importantly, divergent alternatives of navigating modernity.

With regard to its applicability to East Central Europe, especially during the interwar period, the problems inherent in the multiple modernities thesis are quickly brought to light. Eisenstadt distinguished between a liberal, a socialist/communist, a fascist and a national socialist paradigm of (re)constructing modernity, while in the past two decades his concepts tended to be used increasingly in contexts where identifying alternatives to a Eurocentric perspective represented an important goal for authors.⁵ Neither of these directions appears particularly productive for the research dilemmas associated with the topic of this collection of papers. Even if one were to disregard the criticism from authors who consider technological and other ‘unifying’ factors of modernity more determinative than those supporting the distinction among the multiple varieties of modernity, the problem of trying to make sense of hybrid regimes, rapid changes in political systems and representations would remain.⁶ Eisenstadt’s ideological variants simply fail to capture the mixed and often transitional character of rebuilding society, developing the economy and transforming the ways politics was conducted during the interwar period in the region. Additionally, Eurocentrism is not a research flaw from which analyses of East Central Europe would need to distance themselves: the goal, for most, would after all include situating the semiperiphery in histories of Europe and doing so without being relegated to the role of representing locally (mis)adapted variants of innovations and transfers from the ‘core countries.’⁷

2 For a concise, yet sophisticated narrative in this mode, see: Berend, “What is Central and Eastern Europe,” esp. 401–4.

3 Chirot, “Causes and Consequences,” 1–11; Brenner, “Economic Backwardness.”

4 Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities,” 3, 7.

5 Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities,” 10–1; Schmidt, “Multiple Modernities?” 2887–9.

6 Fitzpatrick, “Introduction.”

7 Stokes, “The Social Origins,” 210–1.

It is therefore perhaps better to survey characteristics—challenges and outcomes—of modernity across the region during the interwar years, choosing to ‘shop around’ for more meso-level theories and situate those in their historical contexts. In this respect, the metaphor of the ‘gardening state’ as proposed by Zygmunt Bauman (and used in numerous broader contexts since) offers a productive vista towards making sense of the increased interest in the well-being of populations—linking physiological and mental dimensions of this concern.⁸ Practices in totalitarian and democratic states could be meaningfully compared in this respect, and the various hybrid regimes of interwar East Central Europe fit very well into this framework.⁹ Mandatory prenuptial medical examinations within a broader framework of all-encompassing pronatalism, physical education with or without an overt militaristic dimension, measuring access to nutrients, and so on—all of these concerns represent typical instances of interwar biopolitics in the region, beyond some of the better researched and more extreme aspects such as eugenic initiatives.¹⁰ In the present introductory collection of papers, Lucija Balikić’s essay offers at least two important caveats to this discussion.¹¹ It highlights how preoccupation with physical fitness and training could be part of a modernizing project rooted in liberal nationalism, with the Sokol movement, however, gradually becoming hybridized itself and reflecting the political transformations around it (as Yugoslav parliamentarism was replaced by the king’s autocratic rule in 1929). In the end, the Yugoslav Sokol movement chose to support the royal dictatorship out of modernizing—not to say: modernist considerations, yielding an ideological construct that resists easy categorizing: emulation of more advanced, Western nations was to be achieved by transcending the badly copied political system and replacing it with a royal regime that would be better able to guide the backward society toward enlightened modernity.

Discounting Czechoslovakia, proponents of the liberal project of modernity/modernization represented, however, the minority across the region for the better part of the era. A uniquely successful alternative vision was that of corporatism, with some of its success perhaps due to the vagueness of the term. This lack of specific meaning was due to the multiple ideological lineages that contributed to interwar corporatism: molding (first and foremost) politicized reform or Neo-Catholic thinking, as well as German *Ordoliberalism*, fascist ideas and multiple local traditions of interest representation, a corporate reconstitution of state and society could be made to fit a wide variety of programs united by the quest for re-establishing a social

8 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, 91–2; Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, 20–1.

9 Weiner, ed., *Landscaping the Human Garden*.

10 Griffin, “Tunnel Visions,” esp. 435–6, and 446–8; for a more broadly empirical account on the modernism-eugenic linkage see: Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics*.

11 Balikić, “Depoliticizing the Modern Nation.”

order without the scars caused by liberal ‘individualism’ and ‘greed’, and by Marxist class politics. Corporatism could be fused with one or more national ideological legacies, yielding various incarnations often with considerable differences between them.¹² In a single country, multiple varieties of corporatist reform could be vying for eminence especially during the 1930s with proponents cooperating or opposing each other depending on the specific context. In Romania, noted economist and politician Mihail Manoilescu, representing a strongly nationalist and partly agrarian variation of corporatism could balance between belonging to the establishment and support for the fascist Iron Guard during the 1930s.¹³ Both the authoritarian ‘mainstream’ Right and Codreanu’s radical movement was receptive to and was in fact developing corporatist ideologies that seemed to bridge the gap separating societal self-organization and societal control, and offering, according to various proponents, a successful third way between weak liberal democracy and dictatorship. Similarly, Hungarian domestic politics in the 1930s remained enthralled by various corporatist ideas: from former ‘white officer’ turned Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös’s quasi-fascist vision of societal reorganization in the early 1930s to Neo-Catholic projects culminating in the 1940 draft constitution by PM Pál Teleki, corporatism never ceased to function as a buzzword, of which only its anti-parliamentary and anti-liberal dimensions remained fairly clear and constant.¹⁴

Aleksandar Stojanović’s present paper tackles a special case within the broader current of corporatist political design: briefly surveying interwar predecessors, his contribution focuses on a 1942 attempt during World War II to propose a corporatist constitution for occupied Serbia, one that would demonstrate ideological proximity to the occupiers while also being exclusively rooted—in its formulation—in Serbian political and social tradition.¹⁵ Building on the idea of the *zadruga*, the extended family-based cooperative from the Serbian agrarian tradition, the constitutional proposal eliminated any measure of real societal control over politics and especially over the executive—much like it had happened in corporatist Austria and as it had been proposed by one of Teleki’s collaborators in designing a Hungarian corporatist constitution in 1939–1940. Even an ‘outlier’ case, such as that of wartime Serbia, offers multiple points of meaningful comparison in the broader region, attesting to the importance of including the study of corporatist thought high on the list of research priorities for interpreting developments roughly summarized under

12 For an early synthesis see: Luebbert, “Social Foundations.” For recent, well-known investigations—focusing, less, however, on the non-authoritarian linkages, Pinto, “Fascism, Corporatism.”

13 Rizescu, “Corporatism in Interwar Romania,” 117–8.

14 Romsics, “Reform a keresztény nacionalizmus.”

15 Stojanović, “The Concept of the Serbian Peasant Cooperative State.”

the notion of the rise of ‘illiberal subjectivities’ during the first half of the twentieth century. Incidentally, as with Balikić’s paper, the subject matter permits comparison with other European mesoregions and countries: both physical culture/education and corporatism represented pan-continental phenomena which call for a careful stock-taking of shared and case-specific characteristics.

The third paper in the present collection further highlights the importance of historical intersections, of transnational history for interpreting developments in the region. Dávid Turbucz’s contribution surveys two, related dimensions of the leader cult around the person of Miklós Horthy, Regent of Hungary during the interwar period.¹⁶ He analyzes both the appropriation of religious symbolism for a secular religion around the Regent and the participation of churches in his cult as a leader and savior of Hungary. The two represent—from the point of view of the history of ideologies—opposing trends. As Emilio Gentile has highlighted, totalitarian regimes draw on religious imaginaries to appropriate structures from societally embedded universes of meaning and partially construct their leader cults in quasi-religious terms.¹⁷ At the same time, the full co-optation of churches and the delegation to these spiritual elites of the task of disseminating the cult of the leader characterizes a more traditional paradigm of politics. As Turbucz demonstrates, the two dimensions co-existed in Hungary and in the cult around Horthy specifically. Neither Gentile’s fascism-based interpretation nor Juan Linz’s distinction of authoritarian regimes (more pluralistic and traditional, less focused on ideology and mobilization than fascist ones) seems to capture his subject matter in itself.¹⁸ East Central Europe is revealed, in this instance, as a region of hybridized forms, where transnational influences and local practices coalesce around successful techniques of political representation, reinforcing their societal impact.

The present collection of studies suggests, in the last end, that phenomena we associate with ‘modernity’ in East Central Europe do not represent a separate category that could stand in as an instance of multiple modernities. This does not infirm or confirm Eisenstadt’s proposition, nor those of his critics: the region does not appear anywhere in this literature on its own right. Furthermore, the earlier approach of viewing the ‘lands in between’ through the lens of backwardness appears misleading, as well. Some idea of backwardness was very much acknowledged, across the political spectrum, in most countries of the region, yet overcoming backwardness ceased to be tied in with adopting ‘Western’ or ‘European’ blueprints. A case not treated in the present volume is that of Bulgaria—but existing research largely confirms the comparability of many ideological developments there with

16 Turbucz, “Nation Building and Religion.”

17 Gentile, “The Sacralization of Politics.”

18 Linz, “The Religious Use of Politics.”

those unfolding in other countries of the region. The shift towards the vilification of 'external interference' reflects the disillusionment with liberal patterns of reform and, as Maya Kosseva and her co-authors have argued, political imaginaries of the interwar period tended to resolve the tension between backwardness and the desired return to tradition by 'inventing' a tradition which at the same time seemed to offer superior responses to the acknowledged pressures and challenges of modernity as well.¹⁹ More generally, similar logics have been explored in various works (co-)written by Balázs Trencsényi, who has defined the underlying turn to the irrational and to communitarian political imaginaries as crucial for understanding the ideological fermentation of East Central European modernities.²⁰

Taken together, the above should allow for an assessment of the difficulties implicit in (re)considering the region's interwar history in the light of modernity and strategies for modernization. The homogenizing approaches which reduced core regional trends to representing the gradual spread of fascism, and in which Western 'bourgeois' and Eastern 'socialist' scholarship mirrored each other in the 1950s and 1960s, have been thoroughly revised by several generations of newer research.²¹ Perhaps no single concept has contributed more to the revisionist drive in histories of East Central Europe than Linz's notion of authoritarian regimes.²² More recent research, often about the subject matters discussed in these papers, has, however, problematized the Linzian paradigm, as well. Too many phenomena suggest the adoption of novel political technologies, social visions and biopolitical agendas in the region to simply fit these regimes into the category of authoritarianism which, for Linz, stands as the traditionalist, non-totalitarian counter-concept to fascism.²³

The unease regarding the authoritarian-totalitarian dichotomy mirrors concerns from other regions, arguably also on the European semi-periphery—or at least not counted among 'core' countries. Stanley Payne points out that an important lesson for Francisco Franco was the fall of the dictator of the pre-republican period, Miguel Primo de Rivera, who refused to consider the exigencies of modern mass politics. The failure of Primo, who revived nineteenth-century political practices and, despite his military background, built a bureaucratic-authoritarian system,

19 Kosseva et al. "European Dilemmas," 89.

20 Trencsényi, *The Politics of 'National Character'*, 12–4, and *passim.*, in the subsequent case studies contained in the volume.

21 See: Mosse, "The Genesis of Fascism," and a late instance demonstrating the longevity of the approach: Barany, "The Dragon's Teeth." For an early revisionist work, see: Weber, "Fascism and some Harbingers," esp. 746–7.

22 For a systematic restatement, see: Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*.

23 Miley, "Franquism as Authoritarianism."

pushed Franco towards becoming more aware of the role of societal structures and ideology in stabilising modern political systems. Simultaneously, he integrated the fascist movement of the *Falange*, was to some extent fascistised as public figure himself,²⁴ and in the end formed a bridge between Christian conservatives, monarchist groups and fascists. Similar trends can be brought forth with regard to the royal dictatorships (Yugoslavia and Romania) in the East Central European region, and also in the case of Miklós Horthy. While the latter was perhaps less conscious as a politician, the cult builders around him created the image of a traditionalist authoritarian leader (not reliant on a mass movement or paramilitary organization), yet who at once retained charismatic leadership elements akin to the political imaginaries of the conservative revolutionaries and fascists.²⁵

It will remain an important task for histories of East Central Europe to identify strong traditional currents that had the power to modulate ideational transfers—during the interwar period and beyond. In Poland, to be explored in the future on these pages, Catholicism could have served as a natural basis for an authoritarian order, as it did Portugal, except it could not be wielded against the chief opponents of Marshall Józef Piłsudski's *Sanacja* [Healing] regime. Despite this lack, Piłsudskian politics served a similar function to Horthy's: it occupied symbolic and social 'ground' from other, more radical communitarian movements of domestic or international origin. This is why Stanisław Andreski called the *Sanacja* government a 'pseudo-fascist' regime created in Poland between the two world wars in the face of 'semi-fascism'.²⁶ Other examples of modernizing, but in many ways traditionalist political regimes 'occupying' and 'filling' political space can easily be found in the wider region. Both the attempted royal dictatorship in Romania and even the authoritarian shifts in the Baltic countries, especially in Lithuania, such as the regime of Antanas Smetona, have sought to contain their own far-right opposition by introducing various integrative, syncretic political representations and practices.²⁷

With modernity and the pressures of modernization widely acknowledged, and receiving numerous impulses and wholesale ideological transfers from laboratories of sociopolitical innovation in 'core countries', politicians and intellectuals, especially those hailing from the establishment of their respective countries, were aware of the need to adapt. With foreign imports often masked as the rediscovery of domestic tradition and thus bridging the backwardness vs. autochthonous development divide, painstaking research is required into histories of social movements

24 The exact extent of this is debatable, but the existence of a general trend is itself sufficient to support the parallels presented here. Payne, "Franco, the Spanish Falange."

25 Turbucz, *A Horthy-kultusz*, 140–5.

26 Andreski, *Wars, Revolutions, Dictatorships*, 69–72.

27 Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution*, 66–7.

and ideologies with the goal of overcoming the ‘fascist or authoritarian’ dichotomy.²⁸ Understanding and putting to use the ideas of the theories of fascistization and parafascism are likely to prove productive in this regard,²⁹ but so will a renewed focus on transformations of liberal/parliamentary legacies, as well, which seem to have received less attention of late. In this latter respect, the diverse studies collected in a recent volume edited by Sabrina Ramet prove a much-needed addition to our perspective.³⁰ The current, initial selection of studies also includes one contribution investigating the hybridized afterlife of liberal legacies under the conditions of inter-war modernity, which is very much in keeping with the ambitions of these papers published here and in forthcoming issues: to continue building nuanced representations of a complex regional past. This will serve to inform historians of all specializations about dynamics of transfer and adaptation, transnational learning and the genesis of regional, often hybridized patterns.

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28 Kallis, “The Fascist Effect,” 13–4.

29 Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 130–1; Kallis, “The Fascist Effect,” 36–7; Kallis, “Fascism, Parafascism and Fascistization”; Eatwell, “Introduction.”

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Nation Building and Religion

The Horthy Cult in Hungary between 1919 and 1944

Dávid Turbucz 

Research Center for the Humanities, HUN-REN Hungarian Research Network, 4 Tóth Kálmán Street, 1097 Budapest, Hungary; turbucz.david@abtk.hu

Received 6 October 2023 | Accepted 4 December 2023 | Published online 18 December 2023

Abstract. The leader cult built up around Miklós Horthy, the Regent of Hungary between 1920 and 1944, was one of the leader cults that appeared after World War I as a response to the critical social and political conditions. According to the main message of Horthy's selectively constructed image, he was the only one who could achieve the national goals and restore the lost national glory. In my paper, I analyze religion, primarily Christianity, as a domain from which the cult-makers selected, (mis)used, and manipulated symbols, elements, and concepts, such as 'resurrection', 'rebirth', 'salvation', 'the Passion of the Christ', 'selectness', 'the promised land', and references to the will of divine providence for justifying the leadership of Horthy. Religious symbols also shaped and strengthened the national identity. It is shown that the traditional churches, because of the cooperation between them and the state, made a significant contribution to strengthening the leader's legitimacy in this way. This is the reason why the term 'politicized religion', introduced by Juan J. Linz, seems appropriate in this context. Naturally, this was a wider phenomenon in Hungary, but the Horthy cult is its striking example.

Keywords: nation building, religion, leader cult, Miklós Horthy, Trianon, Horthy cult, irredentism

After World War I, leader cults appeared in conjunction with the critical social and political conditions in several European countries.¹ Notable instances of the phenomenon include the cults around Adolf Hitler, who was the chancellor of Germany (1933–1945), as well as Benito Mussolini, the Prime Minister of Italy (1922–1943), and Józef Piłsudski, the Marshal of Poland (1918–1935). In Hungary as well, a cult was built up around Regent Miklós Horthy between 1920 and 1944, incorporating political technologies that emulated and integrated religious practices of the era.

1 About the interwar leader cults, see e.g.: Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth*; von der Goltz, *Hindenburg*; Petrakis, *Metaxas Myth*; Paine, *The Franco Regime*; Hein, *Der Piłsudski-Kult*; Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*; Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*; Dreidemy, *Der Dollfuss-Mythos*; Iordachi, *Charisma, Politics and Violence*.

Every leader cult of the interwar period had religious elements, but the extent to which they determined the nature of this phenomenon varied, depending mainly, but not exclusively, on the character of the political regime. In this respect, the Horthy cult was one of the conservative and authoritarian types of interwar leader cults, with a greater prevalence of quasi-religious representations integrated into its symbolism.

A leader cult is a system of rituals of excessive admiration for a political and/or military leader depicted as the only one capable of solving a critical situation, of restoring the lost national glory and greatness.² The selectively constructed, simplified, and fictitious image of the leader, which nevertheless comprises multiple conjoined elements, is meant to explain his extraordinary qualities, personality, and so-called 'charisma'.³ Charisma, often analyzed in the relevant literature as a social construct, is a central notion for leaders seeking mass legitimation.⁴ In order to construct such charisma and justify the leaders' entitlement to their elevated positions, cult-makers often use religious symbols, motifs, and notions. As a result, such leaders are, at least partially, sacralized.⁵ Propagandists frequently depict them as national saviors, as well as the embodiment of the nation, who stand unwaveringly above party politics. One of the most frequent elements in the numerous glorifications is the notion of the unbreakable unity of leaders and their nation. This feature contributes to fulfilling the integratory function of leader cults, creating a feeling of community and belonging.⁶ With its help, propaganda has (re-)created imagined national communities around the imagined figure of the leader.⁷ As a result, leader cults have been important means of strengthening and reshaping national identity.

This paper analyzes Christianity as a domain and a pool of resources from which Miklós Horthy's cult-makers appropriated, used, and manipulated symbols, elements, and concepts.⁸ In doing so, the propagandists had two main goals: to

2 Cassirer, *Myth of the State*, 280; Rees, "Leader Cults," 3–26; Kallis, "Fascism," 25–43; Apor, "Communist Leader Cults," 37–62.

3 Turbucz, *A Horthy-kultusz*, 25–32; Turbucz, "Miklós Horthy in Poland," 291.

4 Plamper, "Modern Personality Cults," 35; Kallis, "Fascism"; Apor, "Communist Leader Cults," 37–8; Eatwell, "The Concept and Theory," 141–56.

5 About the sacralization of politics, see: Gentile, *Politics as Religion*; Maier, "Political Religions," 267–81; Maier, "Political Religion."

6 Goltz, *Hindenburg*, 6.

7 Hein, *Der Pilsudski-Kult*, 3. In this respect, although Benedict Anderson does not deal with these cults, his term 'imagined communities' is appropriate for analyzing the phenomenon of leader cults. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

8 Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics and Power*, 42–6. As Kertzer argues, "[m]any of the most powerful symbols of legitimacy are of religious origin. It should come as no surprise, then, that new political forces eagerly rummage through the pre-existing body of religious rituals and symbols to find those that will enrich their own ritual forms." (p. 45).

justify Horthy's right to hold his position and the associated power and, indirectly, to strengthen the national identity and cohesion during a critical period in Hungarian history, i.e., after World War I and the collapse of the pre-war multiethnic state.⁹

The evolution of the cult of Miklós Horthy

The cult around Miklós Horthy was in many ways the consequence of the collapse of historic Hungary after World War I.¹⁰ Horthy, an ex-naval officer and successful commander in the Austro–Hungarian Navy,¹¹ was the symbolic and cultic leader of the Hungarian counter-revolution against the Communist dictatorship in 1919. Accordingly, the beginnings of the Horthy cult reach back to the autumn of 1919, the period before his election as Regent (on 1 March 1920). During that period, his cult resembled a 'dictator-cult' because his radical right (*fajvédő*) followers, who were the driving force behind the mythmaking around him and were trying to convert the Hungarian political system into a military dictatorship, fashioned him as an autocratic leader in most aspects.¹²

The 1921 appointment of the great conservative politician István Bethlen as prime minister and Hungary's stabilization made an important impact on Horthy's cult.¹³ During the first years of the 1920s, Horthy gradually, and slightly reluctantly, distanced himself from his former radical comrades, who had a large, if not exclusive, role in making him 'the leader of the nation'. Because of the demands of the ongoing political consolidation, some elements of his earlier image faded by the mid-twenties. This included several points of emphasis on militarism, autocracy, and the principle of undivided individual leadership. Nevertheless, the main message did not change: Horthy was positioned as the one person capable of leading the nation towards a 'brighter future', guiding Hungarians on the road to 'resurrection', meaning the revision of the Trianon Peace Treaty and the restoration of national greatness.

From 1925 onwards, the entire state apparatus in association with traditional churches, local authorities, and non-governmental organizations loyal to the regime, were joining forces in the construction of the Regent's cult. Horthy was extolled as the 'savior of the nation' who liberated the country in 1919 from both the Bolshevik

9 The author has explored aspects of the following arguments in previous publications, including Turbucz, "Átpolitizált vallásosság"; Turbucz, "A vezér két teste"; Turbucz, *A Horthy-kultusz*; Turbucz, "Miklós Horthy in Poland."

10 On this period, see: Romsics, *Hungary*, 79–125.

11 On his naval career, see: Halpern, *The Battle of the Otranto Straits*; Turbucz, *Horthy Miklós, a haditengerésztiszt*.

12 Turbucz, *A Horthy-kultusz*, Chapter 3.

13 On the topic of political consolidation, see: Romsics, *István Bethlen*.

dictatorship and the Romanian occupation. After the stabilization, he thus received the 'rebuilder of Hungary' epithet. In these efforts, special attention was given to the anniversaries related to Horthy himself, such as his birthday (18 June) and name day (6 December), celebrated each year. Beyond these, the tenth, fifteenth, and twentieth jubilees of his entry into Budapest (16 November) and his election as Regent (1 March) were also regularly commemorated. Over time, his cult developed into an important source of the legitimacy of the entire political system.

The Horthy cult culminated between 1938 and 1943. During this period, Horthy became the 'enlarger of Hungary', as between 1938 and 1941 with the support of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, the country was regaining lost territories. The partial reversal of the Treaty of Trianon was in fact the main reason for his cult reaching its peak. Governmental propagandists also relied on the symbolic potential of the cult to counterbalance tendencies in society, which World War II had brought to the fore. Thereby, they intended to stabilize the political regime, threatened by the extreme right and its parties.¹⁴ In order to justify his larger-than-life image, the propaganda attributed the regime's every success and triumph to Horthy, regardless of his actual involvement.¹⁵ This was an almost inevitable outcome: if indeed the leader is expected to lead the nation to 'a brighter future', every step taken towards 'paradise' and the restoration of national glory had to be presented as his exclusive triumph.¹⁶

National 'salvation' and 'resurrection'

Miklós Horthy marched into Budapest at the head of the National Army on 16 November 1919. Even though his entry did not take place in the wake of a victorious war, it was an important stage in the construction of his cult. The Romanian Army, which had occupied much of the country, started to evacuate Hungary in October because of pressure from the victorious great powers. This meant that Horthy's National Army did not fight against either the invaders or the communist regime. Nevertheless, Horthy was made out to be the 'victorious' leader due to his triumphant entry into the capital.

According to the numerous commemorative speeches, Horthy's 'triumphal' entry into Budapest was a turning point in Hungarian history. Cécile Tormay, a novelist, journal editor, and one of the leading representatives of the so-called 'National-Christian idea', delivered a speech on 16 November. Already in this early phase of nascent cult-building, she emphasized the break with the past by using religious terms.

14 Romsics, *Hungary*, 91–126.

15 On the role of Horthy as Regent of Hungary, see: Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral*.

16 Rees, "Leader Cults," 14; Turbucz, "Miklós Horthy in Poland," 299–300.

“Today is the new dawn! You [the soldiers and the leader of the National Army—D. T.] have brought it with you, and we, the women, as it happened at the foot of the Golgotha 2000 years ago, have come here to welcome the resurrection. Your arrival is a Hungarian dawn and Christian resurrection after a bloody, unholy Passion, because the Hungarian Judas, Mihály Károlyi, and his demonic panders betrayed, tortured, and humiliated the Hungarian nation. It was the darkest hour of our history, but this morning is hopeful because you are here. Horthy became the name hope is called by [...] in Hungary”.¹⁷

Tormay appropriated the Passion of the Christ and the Christian tradition of resurrection to describe and interpret the events that had led to the collapse.¹⁸ She argued that Miklós Horthy was in fact the ‘savior’ and the ‘hope’ of the nation because he defeated the ‘demonic’ power and ‘death’, personified by Károlyi and his ‘demonic panders’. Hers was a manichean interpretation, structured around the struggle between the ‘good’ and ‘evil’ powers. Therefore, Horthy’s entry into Budapest may be interpreted as a turning point (‘morning’, ‘dawn’) in Hungarian history, marking both the promise of a brighter future and the beginning of an era of putative rejuvenation, which has since become known in Hungarian literature as the so-called Christian-national era, when the nation was victoriously ‘resurrected’.¹⁹ The event “symbolized a break with the liberal past and with everything that led to the revolutionary catastrophes. It also symbolized a nation reborn from an apocalyptic death.”²⁰ The parallels with Christianity are obvious in the ceremony, since the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the Christian tradition also marked the coming of something new and better, the promise of salvation and eternal life. However, as Tormay made it clear, national resurrection was not complete, because the lost territories had not been regained.²¹ Some reports about the ceremony commented that rectifying this wrong was Horthy’s mission. Apparently, his cult and irredentism had amalgamated by as early as 1919.²²

17 Her speech is cited by Pilch, *Horthy Miklós*, 279.

18 For the analysis of Tormay’s speech, see: Szabó, *Politikai idegen*, 18–21, 71–4, 85–8; Gerő, *Imagined History*, 260–63.

19 What is more, this speech was delivered in front of the Hungarian Parliament, where the people’s republic had been declared a year before (16 November 1918). In this context, Parliament Square became the ‘Hungarian Golgotha’ itself. See: Vörös, “Károlyi Mihály tér,” 144–72.

20 Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary*, 135.

21 Pilch, *Horthy Miklós*, 280.

22 The irredentism, the cult of historical Hungary, was also a reaction to the collapse of Hungary. For instance, Hungary was frequently symbolized as a crucified body. Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision*.

Those busy constructing the new cult continued to stress that the new leader of the Hungarian nation had brought along the promise of national resurrection and the restoration of national glory. The 1918–1919 period was blamed for the military defeat and the collapse of Hungary.²³ According to this interpretation, Horthy had indeed saved the nation from ‘destruction’. Thereafter, he supposedly was resolute and consistent in guiding the nation en route to a ‘brighter future’ while overcoming all obstacles. He was described as a ‘fixed and stable point’ on which the nation’s future rested. In the resulting mythic chronology, the recent past became identified with ‘death’, ‘passion’, ‘misery’, ‘the darkest hour’, ‘treason’, and ‘humiliation’. In comparison, the present and the future stood for ‘recovery’, ‘hope’, ‘healing’, and the promise of national ‘resurrection’.²⁴ On his sixtieth birthday, in 1928, one of the celebratory articles went as far as to state that “national rebirth and regeneration [had] started with him at the nadir of the national tragedy”.²⁵ On the twentieth anniversary of his entry into Budapest, in 1939, a journalist emphasized again that Horthy “had dragged the nation from a catastrophic abyss to the level of prosperous life”, as “he carefully and infallibly steered the ship of the state amongst dangerous whirlpools towards the harbor.”²⁶ Political consolidation and the territorial revision of the peace treaty were linked causally to Horthy’s entry into Budapest. This interpretation, emphasizing the break with the recent past, the notion of the symbolic beginning of a new era, and the struggle between ‘good’ and ‘evil’ were central components of the Regent’s cultic persona. Moreover, such references were increasing in frequency while, simultaneously, religious symbols beyond the idea of a symbolic new beginning were proliferating.²⁷

As Figure 1 clearly shows, the annual frequency of this element of his image was increasingly coming to the fore. The trend was similar for Horthy’s birthdays.²⁸ Naturally,

23 It is important to note that the scapegoating was not concrete. Thus, Károlyi or Kun were rarely mentioned in the articles published on the anniversaries concerning Horthy. The collapse of Hungary was usually expressed through images, such as crucifixion, slavery, humiliation, etc. Turbucz, “Anti-Bolschewismus,” 218–21.

24 Turbucz, *A Horthy-kultusz*, 70–6, 146–54, 221–48.

25 *Nemzeti Újság*, 17 June 1928, 1.

26 *Esti Kurir*, 16 November 1939, 5.

27 Horthy was sometimes portrayed as a ‘national’, ‘political’ Messiah, but this was not an integral element of his image. It was especially frequent right after the collapse and less prominent following the period of consolidation during the 1920s. *Halasi Újság*, 3 March 1920, 1; *Szózat*, 2 March 1920, 4; *Új Nemzedék*, 18 November 1919, 2–3.

28 I analyzed the content of articles published on Horthy’s birthdays and namedays to identify the constituent elements of his image. I tried to select a representative sample of the dailies according to their political affiliations. For a full list of the publications studied, see the Sources at the end of the present article. As a result, right-wing extremist, national, conservative, liberal and socialdemocrat political dailies were analyzed. The number of articles gradually increased. On his birthdays, fifteen–twenty articles were published each year before 1934. The number rose

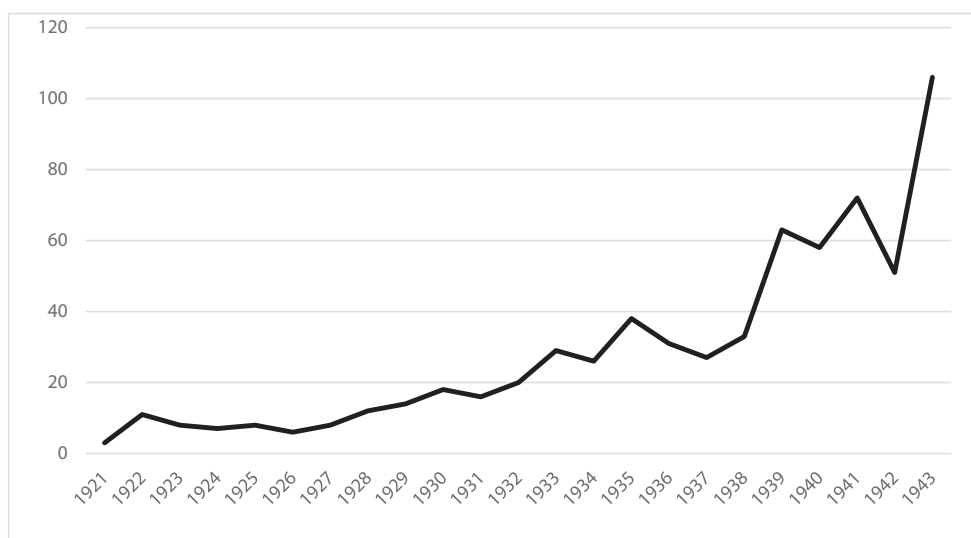


Figure 1 The number of mentions per annum of a new era's symbolic beginning in articles published on the occasion of Horthy's name-days

newsreels, propaganda films, radio programs, history textbooks, biographies, flyers, and other publications also disseminated the concept of 'national resurrection' and 'national salvation'.²⁹ The explanation for this tendency is the fact that the Horthy cult peaked during World War II, gaining dominance especially towards the last years of the regime named after his person. This trend was reflected in every aspect of how the cult was constructed: the number of biographies, paintings, portraits, and other representations was also increasing significantly.³⁰

The chosen leader

In order to bolster his leadership, Horthy was frequently depicted as a chosen leader, selected by God, blessed, and sent to lead the Hungarian nation towards 'a better future'. In these contexts, his 'deeds' appeared as the fulfilment of the will of divine providence, as is due to an envoy of God.³¹

from twenty-nine in 1935 to ninety in 1942. In 1943, when Miklós Horthy was seventy-five years old, onehundred and fifty-nine articles were published. The numbers showed a similarly increasing tendency on his namedays. Turbucz, *A Horthy-kultusz*, 324–25, 347, 366; Turbucz, "Miklós Horthy in Poland," 294.

29 For a few examples, see: Turbucz, "Miklós Horthy in Poland", 295–96.

30 Turbucz, *A Horthy-kultusz*, 215–61, 271–84, 341, 356–65.

31 On this phenomenon, see: Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, 40–94.

Providing an example for the above notion, a journalist in a pro-government daily stated in 1939 that “[e]very Hungarian person, the whole nation is grateful to the Almighty, because he gave us a providential Leader during the most critical years. The legendary Leader leads his nation riding his white horse, to justice, to resurrection.”³² This language recurs in publications, reaching new heights as in the following quote from 1943: “The Lord of the Creation [...] was generous with him, when the Lord entrusted him with a mission that merits a great, strong, extraordinary character. Horthy was selected as the new founder of the homeland. He rebuilt a destroyed country and created a home for Hungarians. And Providence was most generous in giving him to us in such a way as to fulfil this mission.”³³ Additionally, God was often depicted as a ‘national God’, ‘the God of the Hungarians’. The propaganda tended to emphasize, modelled on the relevant chapters of the Old Testament, that there was a particular relationship between the Hungarian nation and the God of the Hungarians.³⁴ This interpretation highlighted the chosen character of both the leader and the nation. In this light, the Hungarian nation was never definitively forsaken in the course of its history because ‘our’ God always took care of ‘us’. In this series of historical events, Horthy was chosen and sent to the Hungarians in 1919, in a moment of crisis, to save them and lead them towards a better future. Ferenc Szombathelyi, the chief of staff of the Hungarian Army, on 6 December 1943 in a solemn speech on the Regent’s name day went so far as to argue that “[h]is life is a message from God: do not fear! He is here, whom I sent to you in hard times. He is here, who has already led you from the desert. He will lead you through dangers a second time [a reference to World War II—D. T.]. You only have to hold on strongly to his blessed hand.”³⁵ The image of the providential leader remained connected with the concept of national ‘rebirth’ and ‘resurrection’. It strengthened the references to the ‘promised land’, which symbolized in mythical thought the ‘paradise’, the place without misery and disorder and was equated with a prosperous, national-Christian and enlarged—if not fully restituted—future Hungary.³⁶

References to Horthy as an envoy of God appeared only ten times between 1925 and 1936 in the articles in our sample published on his birthdays. After 1937, however, such references were more frequent. For instance, the sample contains thirty-eight instances in 1938 alone, and forty-seven in 1941. The tendency was fairly similar on the occasion of his name days.³⁷

32 *Esti Magyarország*, 5 December 1939, 1.

33 *8 Órai Újság*, 17 June 1943, 1.

34 Gerő, *Imagined History*, 260–63.

35 *Vitézek Lapja*, 11 December 1943, 1.

36 Szabó, *Politikai idegen*, 190–91; Turbucz, “Miklós Horthy in Poland,” 297.

37 Turbucz, *A Horthy-kultusz*, 331–2, 335–6., 352–3, 355, 367–8.

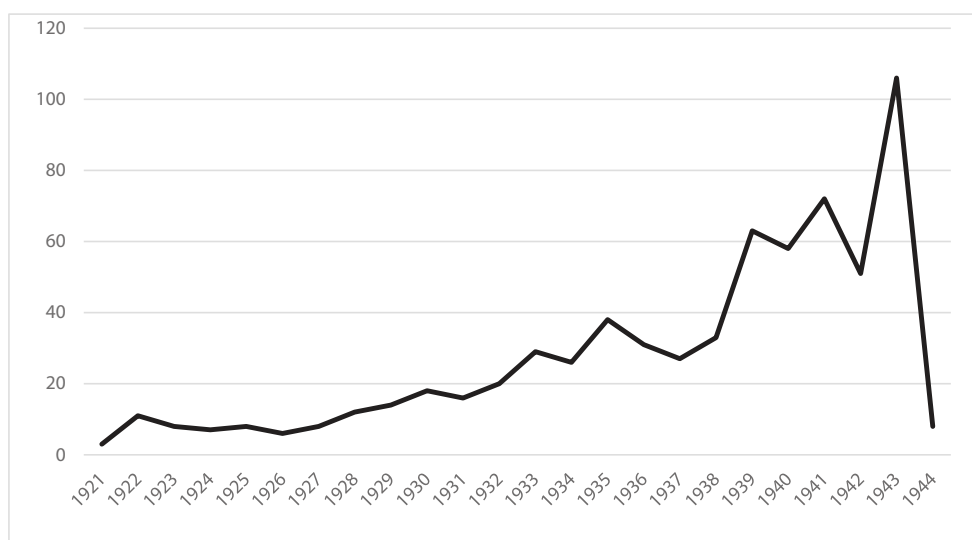


Figure 2 The frequency of the notion that Horthy is the envoy of God in articles published on his birthdays

The leader's two bodies

Ernst H. Kantorowicz's study about the medieval ruler's two bodies has been invoked also in the context of modern-day leader cults.³⁸ This helps fathom their mystical and religious character, less apparent in secular eras.³⁹ The mediaeval theory rooted in the Christian tradition proposed that rulers possessed not only their physical bodies but also a second one in the form of the realm as a whole, with their health directly connected to each other.⁴⁰

Similarly, modern political leaders were often depicted as personifications of their nations.⁴¹ In the case of Horthy's cult, there is evidence to suggest that the aforementioned Christian tradition did not disappear with secularization, but survived in a significantly changed context and with its content altered. The analysis of the relevant texts emphasizes that Horthy was seen as embodying eternal Hungarian virtues, such as valor, gallantry, patriotism, and Christianity. Thus, he constituted what could only be called a 'perfect' national leader, as the propagandists stressed.⁴²

38 Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, xvii–xviii, 241.

39 Apor, "Communist Leader Cults," 60–1.

40 Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*.

41 Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, xvii–xviii.

42 Turbucz, *A Horthy-kultusz*, 31–2, 153–4.

In a festive album, edited by Ferenc Herczeg, a conservative author of the era, the key sentence concerning the leader's mystical body was that "[t]he people, if they see Miklós Horthy, see themselves in a golden mirror. They see their own national qualities in his face and they are proud of their nation."⁴³ The leader was thus equated with the nation, and the nation *was* in fact the leader, in whom "the community of the nation is visibly embodied".⁴⁴ The daily *Magyarország* exalted Horthy as the personification of the true national unity, the historical will, and the power of national life.⁴⁵ Similarly, Prime Minister Miklós Kállay (1942–1944) stated in a solemn speech delivered five years later, on 18 June 1943 that "the power and the soul of the eternal nation are embodied by Miklós Horthy, thus when we celebrate him we celebrate ourselves, when we greet him, we make a confession to the nation."⁴⁶ In this vein, the celebration of the nation and the leader were fused together through social practices.⁴⁷

The constituent element of his image, according to which Horthy was the personification of the nation, gradually gained salience between 1937 and 1944. Earlier, the sample of speeches and articles contained such hyperboles no more than ten times in any given year, but they were becoming increasingly more frequent in the final years of the regency. The trope appeared no less than thirty-five times in 1938, thirty-seven times in 1941 and an astounding eighty-three times in 1943. The trend was similar for pieces commemorating the Regent's name day.⁴⁸

The mystical second body attributed to Horthy represented the 'eternal' Hungarian nation, its timeless virtues, qualities, and its unbreakable historical continuity. This placed Horthy on a special pedestal due to the character of Hungarian nationalism: representing the unity of a fragmented nation. In the wake of the Trianon Peace Treaty, Hungarians were living disjointedly in several countries. Horthy's cultic figure carried the central message that the lost territories and thus the nation could be reunited. If Horthy had embodied only the state, in the mold of the kings and emperors of the Middle Ages, Hungarians who suddenly found themselves living outside the new borders would have been expelled from the nation. Horthy, however, did not personify the post-Trianon, rump territory of Hungary: his cult was structured around the vision of a 'brighter future', of national 'resurrection', rather than the grief and humiliation associated with the peace treaty. This was true notwithstanding the numerous references to the 'crucified' country, Hungary's

43 Herczeg, ed., *Horthy Miklós*, 10.

44 *Vitézek Lapja*, 1 December 1938, 1.

45 *Magyarország*, 18 June 1938, 2.

46 *Pesti Hírlap*, 19 June 1943, 1.

47 Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics and Power*, 16.

48 Turbucz, *A Horthy-kultusz*, 331–2, 335–6, 352–3, 355, 367–8.

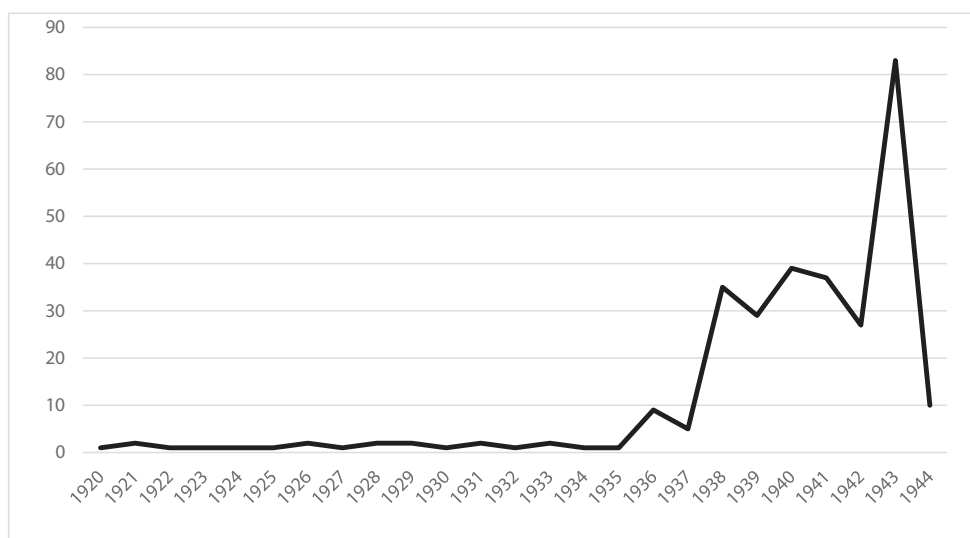


Figure 3 The frequency of the message that Horthy embodied the nation in the articles published on his birthdays

agony, and humiliation. These instances, however, were complemented by mentions of Horthy leading the nation from darkness to ‘salvation’. To emphasize this mythical dynamic, Horthy was always portrayed visually with the image of historical Hungary. There was no exception to this rule.⁴⁹ Associated with and representing national greatness, through Horthy every Hungarian became a member of this mystical body, as long as they confirmed their membership in the national body politic.⁵⁰ The mystical second body of Miklós Horthy thus represented an increasingly prominent aspect of his cult as a leader: strengthening its mystical, irrational, and religious character.⁵¹

The role of the churches in the construction of the leadership cult

The previous chapters analyzed Horthy’s cult from the perspective of the secular agents of mythmaking. Their group included political and military leaders, journalist, authors and others. At the same time, the spiritual elites of the established churches have not been discussed so far, though they were direct participants of numerous rituals around the person and the image of the Regent.

⁴⁹ Turbucz, *A Horthy-kultusz*, vii, xix.

⁵⁰ Apor, “Communist Leader Cults,” 60.

⁵¹ Turbucz, *A Horthy-kultusz*, 31–2, 279–83.

The representatives of the churches regularly attended celebrations of anniversaries. The schools that the churches maintained also marked these days. From the mid-twenties onwards, camp services were held every year on the same occasions. On these days, the churches would send delegations to declare their loyalty to Horthy. The archbishops and bishops would even issue detailed instructions on how to celebrate. In their preaching, the priests used carefully selected symbols and motifs from core tenets of Christianity, such as the prophecies, the Passion of the Christ, etc., deploying them so as to strengthen the leader's legitimacy.⁵²

Representatives of the established churches also frequently emphasized the close relationship between God and Horthy. According to László Ravasz, a Calvinist bishop, Horthy was governing Hungary with the help of the Holy Spirit, referencing a biblical locus ("Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit", Zechariah 4:6). Ravasz stressed that God had sent the Holy Spirit, which is greater and stronger than empires, to the Regent to guide his decisions. Thereby, the Regent had become a 'blessed instrument' of the Holy Spirit.⁵³

The linkages with the Holy Spirit also highlighted the chosen character of the leader, but the "original" core concept according to which Horthy was chosen, blessed, and sent by God to save the nation, retained its prominence in the sacral imagery. As an envoy of God, the leader was seen as fulfilling the will of divine Providence. This implied a special relationship between the two parties. During the anniversaries, many priests, such as Lajos Baliko, Sándor Kiss, János Folba, István Hász, and Elemér Soltész, sanctified Horthy's leadership with reference to the divine will. As in other contexts, his mission was defined as leading the nation to the 'promised land'.⁵⁴ In 1932, for instance, Baliko argued that the Regent had been chosen with reference to verses 20–21 of Psalm 68.⁵⁵ The propaganda emphasized that Hungarians had a caring God, who attended to his chosen people. In 1930, Elemér Soltész, a Calvinist pastor, justified Horthy's supreme position by referring to verse 4 of Psalm 42. He added that his audience also had to recognize "in Horthy's mission the caring and blessing hands of God." God is on "our" side, so "if God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).⁵⁶ Naturally, Roman Catholics disseminated the same message. István Hász announced on 6 December

52 Turbucz, "Átpolitizált vallásosság."

53 *Dunamelléki Egyházkerületi Közlöny*, 1 March 1930, 9–10.

54 For instances of this, see: *8 Órai Újság*, 19 June 1936, 7; *Budapesti Hírlap*, 19 June 1934, 1, and 19 June 1935, 7; MNL OL, K 612, a) 1929–1944, 18 June 1930, 5; 19 June 1933, 10–13; 18 June 1934, 12–13; 18 June 1938, 4–7; 6 December 1939, 5–6; 19 June 1940, 5; 6 December 1940, 2–3; 18 June 1941, 2–3; 6 December 1941, 8–9, 18 June 1942, 5–7.

55 *8 Órai Újság*, 18 June 1932, 5.

56 MNL OL, K 612, a) 1929–1944, 6 December 1930, 2.

1936 that “God gave him, God sent him to you during the darkness of your life so that you have a guiding star.”⁵⁷

During World War II, the notion of the Regent as divinely chosen was intimately connected to the war propaganda.⁵⁸ In 1941, István Hász justified Hungary’s entry into the war in this way: “We have to turn to divine Providence with deep gratitude, which, after saving Hungary from communism in 1919 through our Regent, after regaining lost territories, [now] crowns our Regent with the triumph of the crusade.”⁵⁹ The following year, Hász asked God to bless ‘our crusade’ to protect Hungary, his homeland, Europe and Christianity.⁶⁰ On the tenth anniversary of Horthy’s ‘reign’, István Hász already lauded Horthy as a leader who would know the way to the ‘promised land’, implying, of course, the promise of regaining lost territories.

Horthy’s leadership cult had come full circle. On 22 February 1920, the radical Awakening Hungarians’ Association (*Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete* – ÉME) held a rally in Veszprém. Sándor Tihanyi Kiss, a Calvinist pastor, the local leader stated there, perhaps for the first time in a line that would grow ever longer, that Hungarians “are looking for a leader” who “will lead us to the promised land of glorious Hungary through wandering in the desert.”⁶¹ The idea that Miklós Horthy was chosen by God to save and lead the nation to the ‘promised future’ gained increasing prominence during the 1920s and 1930s and, eventually, became a central tenet of the cult.⁶²

A further frequently employed notion was that of the symbolic new beginning, the ‘resurrection’ or ‘rebirth’ of the nation. However, due to their sensitive connotations, religious personalities seldom used the words ‘resurrection’ and ‘rebirth’. Instead, they would refer to the ‘night’, followed by a new ‘dawn’ or ‘morning’. This preserved, but also rendered somewhat indirect the parallel between the Messiah and Horthy. In this vein, Henrik Geduly, a Lutheran bishop, declared in 1930 that in the wake of World War I ‘a great light’ had appeared—drawing a parallel with a biblical locus (Isaiah 9:12).⁶³ By referencing one of the prophecies about the coming of the Messiah, he emphasized that a new historical period had begun in Hungary in 1919. Retrospectively, the weeklies close to the Reformed Church also depicted 1919 as a symbolic beginning.⁶⁴ Horthy’s persona and his mission were thereby inserted into the mythotopoi about the struggle between ‘good’ and ‘evil’ or ‘life’ and

57 MNL OL, K 612, a) 1929–1944, 7 December 1936, 4.

58 Turbucz, “Anti-Bolschewismus,” 227–9.

59 *Nemzeti Újság*, 7 December 1941, 3.

60 *8 Órai Újság*, 18 June 1942, 6.

61 *Veszprémi Hírlap*, 24 February 1920, 1–2.

62 *Budapesti Hírlap*, 19 June 1935, 7.

63 *Pesti Hírlap*, 2 March 1930, 2; MNL OL, K 612, a) 1929–1944, 1 March 1930, 15–17.

64 For an example, see: *Reformátusok Lapja*, 2 March 1930, 49–50.

‘death’. Late in the period of the Regency, in 1940, Sándor Raffay, himself a Lutheran bishop, employed the most important elements of the official Horthy image in a concentrated and, therefore, representative passage. He positioned himself among the faithful, stating the following:

“We are praying for a man who stands above us, we are praying for a man whom God gave us in a moment of crisis. We are expressing our gratitude to him who reigns rightfully with the fear of God above the people. In the Hungarian night, his appearance was a morning light [...]. When Horthy entered our community, the forsaken nation awoke from both desolation and humiliation [...]. As the silence of the cloudless morning, so has trustful hope spread through the life and soul of the nation.”⁶⁵

There are no instances of the Regent being depicted as the ‘Messiah’ in the sermons reviewed for this paper. However, he was transformed into a political and national ‘savior’, who healed and saved the nation, achieving the sought-after ‘national resurrection’.

It is also important to highlight the role of Jewish Hungarian spiritual leaders. They did not refrain from contributing to the construction of the cult. On the tenth anniversary of Horthy’s ‘reign’, for instance, the Hungarian Jews expressed their “gratitude” for his “extraordinary deeds in saving and recovering our humiliated beloved homeland.”⁶⁶ In 1938, in sharp contrast to the first anti-Jewish Law, Rabbi Simon Hevesi underlined that the person of Miklós Horthy “was given to the Hungarian nation by God.” He depicted the Regent as the “supreme protector of the constitution” and the “liberator of the nation”, who had “created a new Hungary after the lost war.”⁶⁷ One of the Jewish weeklies, *Egyenlőség* [Equality] observed the promulgation of the first anti-Jewish Law, but portrayed the Regent as “the supreme patron of the nation”, whom the Jews ask to provide protection against anti-Semitism.⁶⁸ This demonstrates that the image of the Regent, who had an important role in legislation, was nevertheless separated from the anti-Semitic discourse.⁶⁹ Disenfranchised Jews celebrated Horthy during World War II. Sándor Büchler, a rabbi in Keszthely, praised him in 1942 as “the third founder of Hungary”, who “as an envoy of God is

65 8 *Órai Újság*, 1 March 1940, 2.

66 *Egyenlőség*, 1 March 1930, 8.

67 *Egyenlőség*, 23 June 1938, 1–2.

68 *Egyenlőség*, 15 June 1938, 3.

69 As Regent, Horthy had no absolute right of veto. Between 1920 and 1937, he had the authority to return a bill for consideration once only. Law XIX of 1937 expanded his prerogative. From then on, the Regent could return a bill to Parliament twice for reconsideration, and was allowed to delay its entry into effect by a period of up to twelve months. Romsics, *Hungary*, 186–7.

standing guard over a brighter Hungarian future.”⁷⁰ The main new Jewish religious weekly launched in the wake of anti-Semitic legislation still asserted that the Regent will would “take care of every member of the family of Hungarians.”⁷¹ On 1 March 1940, Rabbi Hevesi also continued to stress “the loyal devotion of Hungarian Jews to the Regent.”⁷²

What might be the explanation for these declarations of loyalty? One of the most important functions of a leader cult is to integrate society, which can be achieved only through an oversimplified image of the leader. By reducing complex processes to simple issues and by creating dichotomies, the entrepreneurs of the cult create a sense of community and belonging to promote the co-optation and integration of society.⁷³ In order to preserve this integrative potential in the context of the Hungarian nation, Horthy’s figure was not linked to the anti-Jewish laws. Thus, anti-Semitism did not become an integral element of his image. Nevertheless, Horthy considered himself an anti-Semite. He agreed that the ‘solution’ to the so-called ‘Jewish Question’ was extending the scope of discrimination (by passing anti-Jewish laws). However, he did not give voice to his anti-Semitic views in public speeches, which may have been another reason why his persona did not come to incorporate anti-Semitic components.⁷⁴

Conclusion

The Horthy cult was a symbolic response to the critical political conditions after World War I. According to its main message, the Regent had proven himself to be the only one capable of restoring national glory.

As the above analysis has demonstrated, the concept of the Hungarian nation in the context of the new cult was centered on the leader, positioned as the ‘father of the nation’. His imagined figure was the pillar of the imagined national community, a ‘great family’, whose members were subordinated to him. The chosen character of the caring leader emphasized that there was a close relationship between God and the leader, the envoy, whose mission was to fulfil the will of divine providence. In this setting, Hungarians (re-)emerged as a chosen people and historical Hungary, ever to be reconstituted, functioned as a kind of ‘promised land’. Religion thus contributed to the reinforcement of the national identity by depicting the nation as a

70 *Magyar Zsidók Lapja*, 25 June 1942, 2.

71 *Magyar Zsidók Lapja*, 17 June 1943, 1.

72 *Múlt és Jövő*, March 1940, 47.

73 Goltz, *Hindenburg*, 6; Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics and Power*, 11, 69.

74 Sakmyster, *Hungary’s Admiral*, 209–10, 228–9, 250–1.

privileged community of the 'chosen people'.⁷⁵ Its history metamorphosed into a struggle between 'good' and 'evil' with the roles being predetermined by the eschatological outlook of the cult around the leader and the 'synoptic' nationalism with which it was fused. This fusion was all the easier as both Horthy's cult and irredentist nationalism sought to re-establish national pride and strengthen national identity.

The implicit explanation about the dissolution of historical Hungary, however, was not correct, since it refused to consider the deeper causes, and as a result "it could provide no cure, only a form of therapy."⁷⁶ The insufficient diagnosis led to an instance of magical thinking: an imagined figure, a public construct was expected to 'heal' the nation, restore national glory, and 'reconquer' lost territories. As a result, a gap opened up between the genuine role and personality of Horthy as Regent and his highly manufactured image. As Miklós Zeidler observes, "this attitude considered the situation created by the Treaty of Trianon to be unacceptable and that it would change because it had to change. The 'good people' would support Hungary in this providential manifestation of 'justice' while the 'bad people' would be enemies. Such simple and effective pronouncements of irredentism [and the religious motifs and symbols used in Horthy's image—D. T.] were suitable to influence public opinion but were unable to create a well-informed and thoughtful public."⁷⁷

Beyond establishing its role and function in Hungarian politics, Horthy's cult can be productively compared to other interwar instances of charismatic leadership. To what extent were these secular cults quasi-religious? How did religion, especially Christianity, influence these cults? Every leader cult appropriated religious elements in order to create the image of a charismatic leader, but the extent was not the same. It varied from cult to cult or, more precisely, from political system to political system. The nature of leader cults depends on a series of factors that contributors to the field mostly seem to agree on. They include the degree of political pluralism, the extent of media pluralism, the degree of political control over the media, (if it exists) the role of political ideology, and how much the ideology defines the leader's image, the scale of mass mobilization and the relative prevalence of the leader principle, the so-called *Führerprinzip*.⁷⁸ Democratic, authoritarian, and totalitarian regimes, not to mention hybrid political systems, offered different frameworks for leader cults. For instance, the cult of Masaryk in Czechoslovakia, a fairly democratic state, the cult of Hindenburg in the Weimar Republic, and Hitler's cult in Nazi Germany cannot be equated. An analysis of the images of these interwar leaders reveals, however, that despite real differences, the agents constructing the cults all

75 For an analysis of this phenomenon, see: Smith, *Chosen Peoples*.

76 Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision*, 254.

77 Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision*, 254.

78 Turbucz, *A Horthy-kultusz*, 24–52, 308–15.

appropriated religious elements from Christianity. Notions such as ‘national salvation’, ‘national resurrection’, ‘national savior’, evocations of the chosen leader and the chosen nation, the struggle between ‘good’ and ‘evil’ were frequently incorporated into the representations of charismatic leaders.⁷⁹

Given these shared characteristics, how are we to understand the claim that the leader cults of interwar Europe cannot be equated? The listed religious elements of the leaders’ images existed in different political frameworks and appeared to different degrees. For instance, the term ‘political religion’ introduced by Emilio Gentile,⁸⁰ is especially productive in the analysis of totalitarian regimes, first and foremost, in the case of Nazi Germany and the national socialist ideology.⁸¹ ‘Political religion’, a secular system of symbols, myths, and rituals, assumed the functions of traditional religions in this instance. Hitler’s cult was an integrative element of this system. The central figure of Nazism was certainly Adolf Hitler, who as a chosen leader would ‘heal’ the German nation, lead them from ‘darkness’ to ‘paradise’, with all of these mystical allusions implying the restoration of ‘national glory’.⁸² Another type of ‘political religion’ was represented by Italian fascism, in which Mussolini took the place of the leader chosen by providence itself.⁸³ Such instances of ‘political religion’ represent an extreme form of relations between politics and religion (Christianity), because they are exclusive and hostile to traditional religion. Other types of the religion-politics linkage exhibit different, less exclusive characteristics.⁸⁴

In an important essay, Juan J. Linz described an alternative to the above, totalitarian variant as ‘politicized religion’.⁸⁵ He argued that the politicization of religion may, under certain circumstances, occur in authoritarian regimes. He observed that “[o]n the one side, there are some authoritarian regimes that reject individualism and the values of liberal society and, on the other, there are certain manifestations of cultural nationalism in the process of nation-building or the assertion of national identity.”⁸⁶ The traditional churches cooperate with the representatives of the politi-

79 As discussed in the introduction, see esp.: footnotes 1 and 5.

80 Gentile, “Politics as Religion,” xiv; Gentile, “Political Religion,” 30.

81 See, for instance: Gentile, “The Sacralisation of Politics,” 18–55; Gentile, “Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion,” 326–75; Gentile, “Political Religion,” 19–32; Babík, “Nazism as a Secular Religion,” 375–96; Steigmann-Gall, “Nazism and the Revival of Political Religion Theory”; Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*; Cattaruzza, “Introduction,” 1–18.

82 Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth*.

83 Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*; Melograni, “The Cult of the Duce.”

84 Turbucz, *A Horthy-kultusz*, 29–31; Balogh, “Totalitarizmus és politikai vallások,” 75–85; Voegelin, “A politikai vallások,” 64–71.

85 Linz, “The Religious Use,” 104–13.

86 Linz, “The Religious Use,” 107.

cal power, and vice-versa. This makes it possible and even implies that the religious (Christian) symbols and motifs are used for political aims, for example, in the construction of a leader cult. In this case, the leader cult becomes based on 'politicized religion'. Francoist Spain and Poland during the regime of Piłsudski are characteristic instances of 'politicized religion'.⁸⁷ Linz's model seems to capture several important aspects of the Horthy era. Needless to say, cooperation between the state and the traditional churches was a more complex phenomenon in Hungary, of which only one layer, the leader cult around the person of Horthy is analyzed in this paper.⁸⁸ Yet, the religious symbolism surveyed here undoubtedly contributed to the justification of Horthy's leadership and played an important role in the construction of his cult. Between 1919 and 1944, there existed an 'intimate' relationship between politics and religion. The state sought to cooperate with the churches to gain legitimacy by relying on religion. Religious symbols and rites were appropriated for political aims. As a result, these symbols came to occupy a prominent place in public discourse, becoming dominant in several aspects.⁸⁹ For the churches, cooperating with the state appeared to hold advantages, because the state was granting them a privileged status in society. The memory of the atheistic and internationalist Bolshevik dictatorship of 1919 and the shock of Trianon, against the background of the collapse of historical Hungary, only facilitated this cooperation.⁹⁰

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Depoliticizing the Modern Nation

Discourses of Organic Nationhood and Political Socialization in the Interwar Yugoslav Sokol

Lucija Balikić 

History Department, Central European University, Quellenstraße 51, 1100 Vienna, Austria;
balikic_lucija@phd.ceu.edu

Received 30 October 2023 | Accepted 2 December 2023 | Published online 18 December 2023

Abstract. Taking the case of the interwar Yugoslav Sokol (*Sokol Kraljevine Jugoslavije*), this article examines the complex relationship between the discourses of organic nationhood and political socialization in what was the largest voluntary association in the country. While Sokol typically projected a vision of itself as an apolitical entity—as it claimed to represent the organic national body—this article will explore the dynamics, as well as contradictions, between such discourses and the socio-political reality they aimed to describe and eventually alter in their pursuit of improving the ‘national body.’

In conversation with scholarship on the conceptual history of modern East Central European nationalisms, including the social history of ideas and movements and political socialization more specifically, this article provides insight into the contextual, conceptual history of nationhood by focusing on selected thinkers engaged in Sokol, against the backdrop of particular mass practices and modes of political socialization in the organization. The tension between the involvement of the masses in the allegedly apolitical formations and the reality of subjecting them to political socialization *en masse* provides the central axis around which the argument is organized. The article concludes that their concept of nationhood was intimately intertwined with that of democracy and simultaneously posited against (party) politics and statism. Moreover, it demonstrates that Sokol was rooted in notions of civilizational hierarchies and directly linked to producing modern political subjects for the new Yugoslav state by means of the gymnastic and educational practices they promoted and conducted.

Keywords: interwar Yugoslavia, political socialization, conceptual history, East Central Europe, nationalism studies, Sokol

Introduction

Taking the case of the interwar Yugoslav Sokol (*Sokol Kraljevine Jugoslavije*),¹ this article examines the complex relationship between the positivist discourses of organic nationhood and political socialization in what was the largest voluntary association² in the country. In other words, it explores the usage of what they saw as positive knowledge for scientifically justifying both the existence of the Yugoslav nation as such³ and supporting their claims concerning its organic—meaning natural, horizontal, classless—character.⁴

Under the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, from roughly the turn of the century, South Slavic Sokol associations had a broadly neo-Slavic, often anti-dualist and, in certain cases, anti-state character, but still comprised mostly urban elites and middle classes, who aimed to spread their liberal national ideas to the broader population and were mostly engaged in urban symbolic politics. In contrast to Czech, Polish, Ukrainian, and other Slavic Sokol associations in the Dual Monarchy, the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the subsequent Balkan Wars, played a significant role in radicalizing their discourses and activities.

In the interwar period, however, once their main prewar goal of the political unification of South Slavs was achieved, even if in a different form than most of them had envisioned, other issues came to the fore—the most prominent one being the tension between the synthetic understanding of the given national community (espoused by the integral Yugoslavist ideology) and the one based on titular nationalities (those being Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs) cohabiting a common country. During the volatile 1920s, there arose the particular issue of the status of the Croatian Sokol and its refusal to join the Yugoslav Sokol association, which largely

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- 1 *Sokol/Sokil* (the latter being Ukrainian but in all Slavic languages meaning ‘falcon’) was a massive Slavic voluntary gymnastics association which was founded in Bohemia in the early 1860s in a liberal national key. It later spread to most Slavic-populated provinces of Austria-Hungary, as well as the kingdoms of Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, the Russian Empire, and the USA. In the interwar period, it proliferated in most of their successor states but was banned in the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, and, after World War II, in most Slavic countries, despite many of them (particularly Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia) adopting significant portions of their respective political cultures and symbolic representations from Sokol’s repertoire. Mostly known for its collective callisthenic performances (slets), Sokol also had a militaristic, as well as a strong medical (eugenic) component. See: Nolte, *The Sokol in the Czech lands*; Roubal, *Spartakiad*.
 - 2 Troch, “Interwar Yugoslav state-building,” 60; Zec, “The Sokol Movement,” 48; Giomi and Petrunaro, “Voluntary associations, state and gender,” 1–18.
 - 3 For more on positivist traditions and the debates around them, particularly in the Habsburg context, see: Feichtinger, Fillafer and Surman, *The Worlds of Positivism*.
 - 4 For a more detailed overview of East Central European organicist traditions, see: Trencsényi et al., eds, *A History of Modern Political Thought*.

echoed the other political debates of the day, namely that of the legal subjecthood of Croats in the newly founded state. Besides, before the introduction of the Royal Dictatorship in 1929, Sokol was technically just one of many voluntary associations, albeit one with a very strong and distinguishable tradition.

It was only after 1929 that it was essentially co-opted by the state, as all Sokol associations were merged into a single one, put under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Physical Education, and prescribed a more plastic ideological canon that was to serve the function of state-legitimation and representation in cultural diplomacy more broadly. After the assassination of King Aleksandar Karađorđević in 1934, these organizations gradually lost their privileged position and, even if mostly informally, fell out of state favor, thus becoming targets for the rising ethnonationalist forces prior to the breakout of World War II.

While Sokol typically projected a vision of itself as an apolitical entity—as it claimed to represent the organic national body—this article focuses on the dynamics, as well as contradictions, between such discourses and the socio-political reality it aimed to describe and eventually alter, in the pursuit of improving the ‘national body.’ In other words, I aim to provide an insight into the contextual, conceptual history of nationhood by focusing on selected political thinkers engaged in Sokol within the context of particular mass practices and modes of political socialization in the organization, focusing on those that promoted the adoption of certain modes of political thinking.

As opposed to the well-established historiography on ‘national mobilization’ and ‘nation-building,’⁵ both of which indicate a developmental phase of modern nationalisms in conjunction with the rise of mass politics, the concept of ‘political socialization’ is broader and potentially more productive. It shifts the focus away from the agents and subjects of disseminating national ideas to the complex social processes of negotiating political ideas. Similarly to approaches such as the study of intellectual milieus⁶ or the social history of ideas,⁷ and—influenced by Cold War dynamics and contexts within sociology—even Soviet-style ‘political technology,’⁸ the notion of ‘political socialization’⁹ pays particular attention to social fabrics and contexts which shape historical actors’ understanding of political ideas and guides their political behavior.

5 For the most recent monograph on the region in this perspective, see: Conelly, *From Peoples into Nations*.

6 Coen, *Vienna in the Age of Uncertainty*.

7 Darnton, “In Search of the Enlightenment,” 113–32.

8 Völgyes, “Political Socialization in Eastern Europe,” 261–77.

9 Hyman, *Political Socialization*.

In conversation with scholarship on the conceptual history of modern East Central European nationalisms¹⁰ and the social history of ideas and movements,¹¹ this article provides an analytic synthesis of the conceptual transformations ongoing in the social setting of interwar *Sokols*. The tension between the involvement of the masses in the allegedly apolitical formations and the reality of the *en masse* political socialization taking place therein, as originally noted by Karl Mannheim,¹² provides the central axis around which the main argument of this paper is organized. The article, thus, aims to demonstrate that the Sokol concept of nationhood was intimately intertwined with that of democracy and simultaneously posited against (party) politics and statism. Moreover, it demonstrates that this understanding of nationhood was rooted in notions of civilizational hierarchies and directly linked to producing modern political subjects for the new Yugoslav state by means of the gymnastic and educational practices they promoted and conducted therein.

In terms of historical scholarship on political socialization in East Central Europe, the massive gymnastic associations, such as Sokol, represent one of the more neglected cases. At the same time, these associations emerged as crucial 'sites' of political socialization not only due to their immense size (they often represented the largest voluntary associations in ECE countries) but also because their membership was engaged in activities that were designed to promote the symbolic performance of their idea of nationhood, as well as provide political socialization in accordance with a specific world view. These associations¹³ were often led and even designed by local intellectuals who projected their visions of political modernity and, consequently, nationhood onto their often socially diverse membership. Thus, studying such massive associations through the lens of 'political socialization' and in combination with Koselleckian conceptual history provides a nuanced and productive analytic framework for studying how the intellectual informed the social and vice versa in the dynamic post-imperial contexts which emerged in the wake of World War I.

Positivism and the organic understanding of nationhood

In many of these cases, the conceptualization of nationhood as advanced by engaged intellectuals rested on positivist claims, not least because these Sokol activists had

10 Trencsényi et al., eds, *A History of Modern Political Thought*.

11 Reichardt, "Fascist Communities of Action and Violence," 51–73.

12 Mannheim, *Man and Society*.

13 Such as *Deutsches Turnverein* in German-speaking lands and places with sizable German populations, *Ballila* for the Italian youth in Fascist Italy, the *Levente* movement in Hungary, etc.

backgrounds in disciplines concerned with typologizing human nature and culture, e.g., biology, anthropology, medicine, ethnography, the nascent discipline of physical education, etc.¹⁴ In other words, these typically urban, middle-class male intellectuals educated in the former imperial capitals used the language of scientific authority and their personal credibility to support or refute particular national claims and ideas—which became particularly pertinent after the break-up of European continental empires following World War I. The newly established states sought political legitimacy both internally and in the international arena, and the existence of this demand also influenced the proliferation of patriotic associations and the claims intellectuals belonging to them tended to espouse.

In addition to the prevalence of support for certain national ideas with recourse to positivist logic or theory, an additional characteristic of the post-war milieus impacted the organizations' outlook. Many of the new titular nations of the victorious states incorporated extensive lower social strata in comparison to the composition of the former imperial 'oppressors' (e.g., Germans, Hungarians, and Russians, perceived as made up of the higher social classes and particularly the nobility), as a result of which the concept of class gradually became ethnicized as early as the late nineteenth century. Importantly, this catalyzed the discourse about uniting all members of a previously 'oppressed' national culture (e.g., Czech, Polish, Yugoslav) within a given national state. Such an arrangement was seen as a much more democratic and horizontal model than an imperial structure where members of one national culture dominate the elite while another community could be dominant amongst the masses.¹⁵

The imperial experience explains why having an ethnically and culturally homogenous national state was, particularly in this region, conceptually closely linked to democracy. In this context, the notion of the 'oppressed nation' dominated the narratives of the (post-)imperial experience. Many of these national identities were, therefore, constructed not only in opposition to the imperial state apparatus that was suppressing them but also against the dominant national culture within that apparatus. Sokol members had a particular stake in this since they posited themselves as key actors in the anti-imperialist struggle within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as well as being the heirs to the anti-Ottoman uprisings in Serbia and Montenegro. Altogether, these experiences permitted the creation of a narrative about the anti-imperialist and freedom-loving national character of the Yugoslav people.¹⁶

14 Pojar, "Resisting Nazi Racism in Post-Habsburg Spaces," 97–120.

15 Hroch, "National Romanticism," 19.

16 For one of the clearest examples of such narratives in which the two empires are equated, see: Žakula, *Sokolska buna na bečke dahije*.

Since these ‘new nations’—and this pertains particularly to the Czechoslovak, Yugoslav, and Polish cases—saw themselves as inherently more democratic, class differences were seen or expected to be overwritten by promoting a homogenous national culture within a mostly homogenous nation-state. Combining this framing of nationhood as a simultaneously modern, democratic, and superseding class with the aforementioned positivist epistemological frameworks resulted in these intellectuals espousing an organic view of the nation and imbuing associational activities and discourses with it. Put another way; they tasked themselves with providing scientific authority to support the aforementioned romanticist national goals.

For instance, Sokol thinkers such as the Novi Sad-based physician and publicist Nikola Mrvoš¹⁷ or the prolific Belgrade-based polymath Milorad Dragić¹⁸ were particularly inspired by the Sokol founder, philosopher Miroslav Tyrš, the Yugoslav geographer Jovan Cvijić, but also by the sociological work of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, which they often used to support their theses on the scientific provability of Yugoslav nationality, primarily relying on linguistic, ethnological and anthropological arguments. It was particularly the Masarykian notion of ‘small work’ that was seen as the crux of Sokol’s evolutionary approach to (its role in) societal development, as opposed to the ‘revolutionary’ forces of both the political Left and the Right. These and similar claims made their way into the conceptual delineation of nationhood in the associational periodicals relatively early on, as can be seen from the following statement undersigned by ‘P+G,’ which most probably refers to the frequent contributors to the Ljubljana Sokol journal, Slovenian intellectual and businessman Pavel Pestotnik and Slovenian pedagogue and Sokol leader Engelbert Gangl:

“Nationality and nation stand as wider social forms above the concept of political party and social class (*stalež*). Claims by political parties and social classes must never stand opposed to the generally recognized ethical principles of humanity and to the healthy, self-preserving principles of real nationality. Let us never forget that we are in a defensive mode. We, Slovenes do not attack, and our holy and natural duty is to defend our land, language, and property, to fight for the conditions in which we are able to economically and culturally progress. Only a powerful and independent nation possesses economically independent social classes. For Slovenian workers, with bad education and contingent German influence, are prone to neglecting the principle of national feeling...”¹⁹

17 Mrvoš, “Tyrš – filozof,” 5–8.

18 Dragić, “Jugoslovenska ideja kod Dra Jovana Cvijića,” 7–11.

19 P+G, “Sokolstvo in delavska telovadna društva,” 6.

Additionally, 'nationhood' appears as a central notion uniting core social values while buttressed by scientific rationality:

"...we see that today leading socialists and the most renowned global experts, such as Masaryk and Gumpłowicz, recognize nationality as a culturally and socially creative force, and that the solving of the national question is of paramount importance for solving social problems, as well. Since Sokolism is an institution which doesn't recognize differences in name and class, it has the power and strength to gather all the members of our nation to whom liberty, progress, and independence are not just empty phrases, but who use them to build their own existence. [...] Labor, free-thinking in its inclinations, and yearning for independence, is a member of Sokolism for precisely these reasons, as is any other class whose members do not renounce brotherhood and equality. Those who deny this do harm to the workers and do not understand the core of the Sokol idea."

Due to the prevalent positivist stance of these thinkers who understood nation as a natural category ranked above most others (primarily class, but also religion and gender), the debate around nationhood could be framed as not being political in its essence. After all, if the existence and characteristics of a given nation could be determined scientifically, such as those of the Yugoslav nation (in contrast to 'tribal' and 'artificially superimposed' collectivities, such as the 'Serbian', 'Croatian' or 'Slovenian' nation), there would remain no need for 'politicizing' the debate, which these interlocutors sought to position as scholarly or based on expertise. Additionally, the fact that Yugoslavs had been given (or had won) their own state also meant that they had joined the international community of the 'cultured,' meaning civilized, nations. The latter notion and its connection to democratic statehood was explored by the Skopje-based 'elder' (*starješina*) of the Kragujevac Sokol 'parish' (*župa*) Milivoj Pavlović. In a contribution to a Sokol periodical dedicated to scientific and pedagogical topics, Pavlović argued that:

"...[o]nly free nations can make genuine contributions and [enjoy] the ripe fruits of their development. The civic equality before the law and, more broadly, in social life, enables this connection and ensures its success. [...] [T]he equality guaranteed by the foundational laws of the state today represents a great basis for further cultural development; thus, our Sokol should not lead the struggle in the direction in which it did in the states which consisted of privileged classes, aristocratic and others [LB: this is a reference to Sokol's work in the Austro-Hungarian Empire]; Sokol will lead towards equality by mending the social differences [...] The same needs, the same interests, the same way of life, the same customs—all this

binds the members of a nation into one large whole, enables the independence of a given national state and justifies its national-cultural individuality. The tasks of a nation, understood in this way, enable the process of the competition (*utakmice*) in the life of humanity. Sokolism is also a Slavic movement—not because it thinks that it should separate Slavs from the general drive towards the cultural progress of humanity, but because Slavs make up a narrower unit racially, linguistically, ethnographically, historically and with regard to their contemporary interests. Our age excludes small and fragmented nations; a large process of material culture inevitably contributes to creating larger complexes of national masses through various alliances; and nations should not hastily reproach one another if this is attempted directly and without first bringing closer those who manifest kinship through their race and interests.”²⁰

While the nation-state model was indeed reflective of this understanding of political modernity, Sokol thinkers also sought unmediated access to the ‘national body’ through the organization. They often voiced the feeling that the nation still required some ‘gardening’ and culturing, which was to be done mainly through physical education.

Civilizational hierarchies and modernity: creating citizens for the ‘New Age’

The associational practices Sokol thinkers designed, organized, and perfected throughout the first half of the twentieth century typically aimed at improving not only physically but, by extension, also intellectually the ‘national body.’ Their discourses were deeply embedded in claims about civilizational hierarchies—namely, differentiating between ‘primitive’ and ‘cultured’ nations and/or peoples. In this context, they presented as imperative that the associations, working in concert, raise the cultural level of the Yugoslav nation through their activities and programs. As their discourses on nationhood were becoming increasingly biologized and psychologized, particularly in the 1920s and early 1930s, this endeavor was also seen, particularly by physicians engaged in Sokol, as supporting ‘guided evolution’ through eugenic initiatives in Sokol that could then be transferred to the level of the state.²¹ Underpinning these ambitions was a monistic body-mind approach to physical education, which assumed such activity to have hereditary consequences. This positioned Sokol as a kind of ‘gardener’ of the modern Yugoslav nation, a metaphor that became a commonplace in associational

20 Pavlović, “Sokolstvo kao živa sila u narodu,” 368.

21 Balikić and Pojar, “»Politics of Plastic Nationhood«,” 155–79.

periodicals. In these outlets, it became commonplace to find statements claiming that “[i]t is a fact [...] that the physical education of the modern world/people (*modernog sveta*) has a unique educational goal: to create a person fit for life, a person aware of their duties towards their family, nation and state.”²²

The purported civilizatory role of Sokol with regard to its own membership was exceptionally clearly articulated by Lazar Car (1860–1942), a notable Zagreb-based zoologist, science popularizer, and Sokol activist, who was also one of the founders of the Institute for Comparative Anatomy, in 1926:

“The realization of one’s own backwardness and the acknowledgment of authority, those are the foremost conditions for any sort of progress. It is precisely this which is increasingly missing nowadays, to a horrifying extent. The state is also in the wrong here, in its overly scholarly regard for the national education. The virtues of our nation are being over-accentuated, instead of familiarizing our nation with the fact that it is far behind others in terms of culture and civilization. We [LB: Sokols] aren’t against the democratic principle. It is being realized and it wouldn’t be possible to resist it anymore. It is justified and surely represents some more advanced degree of humanity’s development. But, since every kind of progress also comes with certain disadvantages, we need, if we want to stabilize and perfect it, correct the existing shortcomings [...] This particular task, instead of the formerly privileged class, [has fallen] on us, the free, cultural (better to say civilizing) societies.”²³

This excerpt also reveals an interesting tension between the model of the nationally homogenous, and thus democratic, national state and the perceived level of backwardness of Yugoslavia’s population. The role of Sokol is here explicitly defined as that of a civilizer of the nation, which will raise the community to a level of progress adequate for properly managing the institutional framework of political modernity.

Political socialization within Sokol was seen as conducive to this goal, as members were expected to learn to discipline themselves and embrace political modernity, learn about the scientific basis of nationality, and undergo physical education which was to influence and improve their psychological characteristics as well. In turn, all of the above would ensure the viability of the national state, founded on the conceptual framework of political modernity, in the face of a potentially corruptible public and political life.²⁴

22 Polić, “Temeljna načela telesnog uzgoja,” 374.

23 Car, “Još jedna zadaća Sokolstva,” 48–9.

24 One of the most elaborate examples of this theory can be seen in Murnik, *Kultura in telovadba*, passim.

(Party) politics as crisis

Yugoslavia's post-war political regime (particularly the first constitution and the choice of monarchy instead of a republic), as well as the outcomes of several early electoral cycles, failed to fulfill the expectations of most Yugoslavist intellectuals and resulted instead in a bitter competition between parties whose programs represented radically opposing grievances concerning the constitutional structure of the state.

Compounded by hardly reconcilable and immensely diverse heritages of political and legal cultures sustained by numerous local and regional elites, this struggle eventually culminated in a number of political assassinations, the most important of which was that of Stjepan Radić in June 1928. This incident resulted in the aforementioned introduction of the Royal Dictatorship in January 1929, which effectively abolished all party politics.²⁵ Parties did not reappear as major drivers of politics until after the King's assassination in 1934. The volatile environment and the turbulent political developments stood in stark contrast with Sokol's vision and practices that were meant to strengthen and improve the organic Yugoslav nation. For this reason, in addition to their intense dislike of late Habsburg nationality politics, most Sokol thinkers also became wary of party politics as such, and, incrementally, went on to adopt a radically critical stance towards politics at large. Although articulated before Radić's assassination and the consequent culmination of the crisis of party politics, Ivan Majstrović, a prominent Split-based lawyer, argued in front of the Adriatic Sokols in 1926 that:

"The indiscipline of the wide national masses, which is reflected in the large number of political streams and directions; disavowal of any authority except that which appeals to the lower instincts of the national crowd by using primitive demagogical methods; the fragmentation of national energies in minute party struggles; prioritizing personal gain and ambition over state interests and goals—those are all the greatest vices that Slavic nations suffer from and on which the non-Slavic world pronounced judgment on a long time ago, showing that they [Slavs] do not have a developed state-centric consciousness nor clear regard for the conditions of state organization..."²⁶

Beyond thematizing the mismatch between the modern nation-state model and the 'primitive' character of party politics in Yugoslavia, some Sokols deployed a more profound and holistic argument for why politics, more broadly, in fact, constituted a crisis for the development and the state of the 'national body':

25 Djokic, *Elus ive compromise*.

26 Majstrović, "Prigodom VII Sokolskog župskog sleta u Splitu," 51–2.

“We can see from experience [...] how political organizations enthusiastically grab the impressionable young souls [...] in order to mold them according to their own interests, neglecting the fact that they deprive the developing beings of the rare and beautiful characteristics of personal liberty: to independently create and build up their own worldviews, free of all types of lived experience, particularly the superimposed and scholastic ones. [...] That is why physical education must encompass everyone, first and foremost the physically weak ones; this can be seen from the modern goal of physical education, the eugenic goal, the hygienic-educational, ethical, aesthetic, practical, national-economic and national-defense one.”²⁷

Beyond criticizing domestic conditions with regard to the development of political modernity, Yugoslav Sokol thinkers were outspoken in their reflections on the rise of authoritarian and dictatorial regimes in neighboring countries, particularly in fascist Italy. Italian developments involved high stakes for these intellectuals, partly because of the Yugoslav–Italian border disputes and partly because of the continuous contacts they maintained with the former Sokol societies in the Eastern Adriatic and which found themselves on the other side of the border. In most of their interwar associational periodicals, Sokol thinkers analyzed news pieces about physical education initiatives in such contexts, comparing foreign examples to their own methods, goals, and achievements, with special regard for the links between political socialization and biological, psychological, and social outcomes of the typically state-run, authoritarian organizations they were surveying. In his attempt to define Sokol’s stance towards and ideological differences from fascism, national socialism, and communism, Aleksandar Tabaković, a Novi Sad-based lawyer and publicist, argued that in Italy:

“All the efforts are concentrated with an aim to mold the children’s souls in the fascist manner. The party program represents a holy dogma which no one is allowed to question, the party leadership is infallible and all critique is banned. On top of all that there is also a system of mutual secret surveillance which additionally morally wrecks them. This is a way to destroy all mental and personal independence. [...] The result of that fascist education, solely by the nature of things, can only be obedient praetorians, ruthless stivers (*štreberi*), political mandarins or blinded fanatics. Mussolini and his current associates the consequent culmination of the crisis come to power in this way [...] it is not [the] least likely that they would have achieved all this had they been raised by the artificial system that they are now imposing onto their successors.”²⁸

27 Weigner, “Odnos Sokolstva prema vaspitanju dece,” 29.

28 Tabaković, “Sokolstvo i duhovna strujanja sadašnjice,” 202.

While most Sokol thinkers agreed on the need for ‘harmonious development’ and the inextricable connection between intense physical education, national character, and, consequently, political modernity (or lack thereof)—many came to gradually adopt diverging stances on the political subjectivity of the members of the ‘national body’ in question, with new voices of the late 1930s contesting citizens’ agency in the realization of this development. During the early 1920s, the ‘natural method’ of Georges Hébert,²⁹ Rudolf Bode’s early expressive gymnastics, and Lamarckian eugenics represented the dominant tendencies and theoretical models, which were incorporated into Sokol practices to shape the ‘national body’ with an emphasis on participation. From the mid-1930s onwards, Sokol thinkers such as the notable Slovenian anthropologist Božo Škerlj and the Belgrade-based young gymnastics expert Branko Polić turned their attention towards studying and managing human instincts, urges, and physical metrics—hence aiming to engineer a homogeneous population and react to the increasingly more critical political situation at home and abroad.³⁰ This is well exemplified by the case of the Serbian eugenicist pedagogue Vićentije Rakić, whose work on the developmental psychology and neurology of exercise was often praised at length in Sokol periodicals. The latter drew a clear connection between the physiological effects of physical exercise and the enlargement of human intellectual capacities, the ability to perform labor, and the level of cultural development. Beyond praise, his arguments were used to demonstrate that physical education alone had the ability to ‘mold the national body’ into a desired shape, without the educational initiatives organized thus far, which would have given agency to the membership as well.³¹

Conclusion

Claims and observations made by Sokol-affiliated intellectuals concerning organic nationhood and their reflections on political socialization in interwar Yugoslavia permit a number of important considerations, revealed by the analysis of these texts and utterances.

29 The ‘natural method’ (*la méthode naturelle*), as articulated by the French ‘physical culturist’ Georges Hébert, relied on a holistic understanding of physical education and gymnastics in particular, where it was also seen as conducive to character- and morale-building. Moreover, it stressed graduality, moderateness of exercise (in contrast to extreme exercise), adaptation to the individual’s physical abilities, and the use of natural resources instead of man-made environments and equipment. For more, see: Delaplace, *George Hébert*; Grelley, “Contrepoint – Georges Hébert et la méthode naturelle,” 361–69.

30 This was also applied, in an exemplary manner, to the young heir apparent, King Petar II Karađorđević, whose physical and mental development was duly recorded and analyzed in Sokol periodicals, see: Dragić, “Kralj Petar kao Soko,” 71–6.

31 Gačić, “Telesno vaspitanje,” 423–30.

1. The positivist understanding of nationhood endorsed by these authors was rooted in notions of civilizational hierarchies and directly linked to producing modern political subjects for the new Yugoslav state.
2. The gymnastic and educational practices they promoted and conducted within Sokol were expected to incrementally raise the cultural/civilizational level of the national collective and produce a shared Yugoslav consciousness.
3. Their concept of nationhood was intertwined with a notion of democracy and, while simultaneously being directed against (party) politics and statism, a deep-seated dislike rooted in the experience of late Habsburg nationality politics and the rise of authoritarian regimes in their immediate neighborhood in the interwar era.

Taken together, these points demonstrate that the insistence on the part of Sokol intellectuals and leaders concerning the objective quality of nationhood, as well as the activities conducted in the association serving to 'mold' the 'national body' physically and intellectually, were conceived as existing outside the realm of politics. Political modernity and integral Yugoslavism as its corollary correspondingly tended to be positioned as grounded in expertise and part of a civilizing project. This is why these concepts and the field they marked out were seen as providing a fertile ground for political socialization towards modern nationhood. This was placed into sharp relief by juxtaposing it with the 'primitive' political culture of the local elites and identified the political cohesion of a given country as only being achievable as a result of the long-term acculturation of the widest masses. Throughout the interwar period, Sokol thinkers attempted to depoliticize nationhood as a category by providing it with epistemic authority, both through their scientific research and publications, but also through the practices conducted in Sokol that were to demonstrate their validity and 'raise' (*uzgojiti*) Yugoslavs worthy of the political modernity which they had been awarded by the Great Powers during the making of the Versailles order.

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The Concept of the Serbian Peasant Cooperative State

An Unrealized Attempt to Introduce a Corporatist System in Serbia during World War II

Aleksandar Stojanović 

Institute for Recent History of Serbia, 11 Trg Nikole Pašića, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia;
acas109@gmail.com

Received 21 November 2023 | Accepted 10 December 2023 | Published online 18 December 2023

Abstract. The paper introduces and interprets the corporatist plan of organizing and establishing the ‘Serbian Peasant Cooperative State,’ which was developed by the collaborationist authorities in Serbia during World War II. Born out of deep disillusionment with interwar parliamentarism and under the influence of the German occupation system in Serbia, this unrealized concept of state organization was an ultra-conservative response to the political conditions in occupied Serbia, as well as one of the aspects of its planned integration into Hitler’s new imperial order founded on the premise of Nazi hegemony and known as ‘New Europe.’ The present analysis is based on the limited number of surviving primary historical sources that testify to the genesis and character of the draft proposal. To provide context for interpreting the plan and the thinking behind it, the paper extends the chronological framework to the entire interwar period.

Keywords: Peasant cooperative state, corporatism, government of Milan Nedić, Serbia, World War II

Introduction: Political life in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes/Yugoslavia and the development of the idea of corporatist social organization

The first common state of South Slavic peoples, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (the Kingdom of Yugoslavia after 1929), was founded in December 1918 in Belgrade. During almost its entire existence, it remained ridden by continuous political crises of different causes and intensities.¹ In the same state, several kin nations lived who, however, had belonged to different cultural zones for centuries and, therefore, possessed very different experiences of politics and state-building.

1 Petranović, *History of Yugoslavia*; Pirjavec, *Yugoslavia (1918–1992)*; Sundhaussen, *Geschichte Jugoslaviens*; Sundhaussen, *Experiment Jugoslavien*; Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*; Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*; Calic, *A History of Yugoslavia*.

Influential political actors from Serbia and centers of power, including the ruling dynasty, advocated a unitary arrangement for the new realm that corresponded to the Serbian state-building experience. Parties and national leaders from the rest of the Yugoslav territory were mostly supporters of national emancipation and autonomy, which they thought achievable through a federalist arrangement. Between them and the political leaders of the Serbs, disagreements persisted regarding the extent of power that should belong to the monarch, as well as the powers and the method of selecting the executive power and local self-government.

The so-called Vidovdan constitution adopted in June 1921 defined the Kingdom of SHS as a hereditary parliamentary monarchy. The constitution provided for the inviolability of the king's personality and left the monarch with broad executive powers and considerable sway over the legislative process. Political instability in the country frequently resulted in cabinets falling and government changes: no single cabinet of the period fulfilled its full mandate stipulated by the constitution.² Two constitutional drafts submitted during the debate in 1920–1921, proposed by radical political leader Stojan Protić and the Union of Farmers, respectively, stand out for already containing elements of corporatist ideology, but at the time, neither idea received significant support.³

Frequent changes of government led to the creation of numerous opportunistic coalitions, while parliamentary culture suffered and failed to evolve, and the plenary sessions themselves were occasionally the scene of severe verbal conflicts. Political instability also prevented the implementation of numerous essential reforms and negatively impacted the functionality of the state and the efficiency of the bureaucracy and other government bodies. The leading politicians of the era, or at least their considerable majority, were mired in corruption and nepotism.⁴ With the passage of time, it seemed less and less imaginable that the existing political parties and their leaders would be able to solve accumulated political and social problems. With the turbulent times, a notion increasingly gained ground that parliamentary democracy was not the appropriate political framework for resolving the accumulated crises and ushering in a period of stability and development. This corresponded to the experience of other European societies at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, reflecting in part the consequences of the Great Depression, as analyzed incisively and in detail by Philip Longworth and Eric Hobsbawm, *inter alia*.⁵

2 Čulinović, *Jugoslavija između dva rata*; Gligorijević, *Parlament i političke stranke*; Radojević, *Srpski narod*.

3 Stojanović, *Ideje Milana Nedića*, 309–10.

4 Kulundžić, *Politika i korupcija*.

5 Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, 109–41; Longworth, *Making of Eastern Europe*.

The apex of tensions associated with parliamentary politics came about in June 1928. After several verbal challenges by opposition Croatian MPs, Puniša Račić, a Radical Party MP and Serbian chauvinist, pulled out a revolver and killed two Croatian MPs. Stjepan Radić, the leader of the Croatian Peasant Party and the most prominent Croatian politician of the day, was also wounded and succumbed to his wounds two months later. King Alexander, who had repeatedly intervened in the functioning of Parliament before, this time brought about the end of parliamentarism in the country by dissolving the National Assembly. He then rapidly introduced a personal dictatorship and effected a series of radical political changes in the country, including a name change (to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia), the creation of a new system of territorial administration, and the widespread use of repressive measures.⁶ Among other restrictions, the functioning of all political parties and organizations with a 'tribal' (national) aspect was prohibited.

In the years that followed, King Alexander ruled Yugoslavia as a dictator, relying on governments that he chose and appointed himself. The members of the governments were mostly civil politicians with close ties to the court, conservative in outlook, committed anti-communists, and Yugoslav nationalists,⁷ with several ministers also being members of the *White Hand*, a group of officers who supported the king. Many of them did not hide that they considered the king's personal regime to be an arrangement superior to a democratic constitution, and they blamed the problems of the Yugoslav state and society on divisive 'partisanship' and the political schemes of the former parliamentary parties.

When the dictatorship was established and stabilized through a series of legal acts, the question of a new constitution arose once more. The Minister of Justice at the time, Dimitrije Ljotić, was entrusted with drafting the new constitution. The document itself has not been preserved, but it is known that Ljotić proposed to the king a corporatist parliament based on estates (*stales* in the original, *ordos* or *ordines* in the language of interwar corporatism), which, instead of the representatives of political parties chosen in parliamentary elections based on universal suffrage, would have been made up of deputies representing professional associations and the broader estates.⁸ These estates represented in the conservative and New Right thinking of the time a corrective to the decadence of liberal parliamentarism and a way of organically reconstructing society, based on professional groups, supposedly avoiding the pitfalls of party politics and the danger of ideologies creating fault lines in society. Given the fact that the draft has not been preserved nor showcased in detail in any existing narrative, it is difficult to estimate if Ljotić was under the

6 Dobrivojević, *Državna represija u doba diktature*.

7 Bakić, ed., *The Serbian Right-wing Parties*, 13–80, 277–322, 351–76.

8 Ljotić, *Iz mog života*, 101–2; Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića*, 20–21.

influence of foreign ideologies and constitutional concepts, and if so, just how much. Worth noting is the fact that Mussolini's Italy, the most obvious possible influence for corporative constitutional ideas, was a bitter enemy of Yugoslavia at the time and that fascism was perceived, even among the Yugoslav right-wing, as a hostile imperialistic ideology. A number of authors wrote extensively on Ljotić's early ideological influences, claimed to range from religious philosophers of Christianity, such as Blaise Pascal, via the 'organic political thought' of nineteenth century France and Fyodor Dostoyevsky to Charles Maurras, but none of them identified Italian fascism as an influence.

At the time when Ljotić's draft was made, the corporatist outlook was gaining in popularity across the continent, but no European country possessed such a constitutional regime, and King Alexander rejected the proposed draft. In its place, in September 1931, the Octroic [Imposed] Constitution was promulgated, which made the Yugoslav Parliament bicameral, and the powers as well as the electoral representativeness of the Parliament were curtailed compared to the Vidovdan Constitution.

Parliamentarism in Yugoslavia was restored in the wake of the assassination of King Alexander in Marseilles. Despite the great changes that had taken place during the years of the royal dictatorship, both in the international system and in the internal affairs of the state, Yugoslav parliamentarism retained most of its weaknesses from the 1920s: corruption, nepotism, opportunism, and even dynastic meddling on the part of the Prince-Regent Paul. The rise of fascism and Nazism, as well as the political and economic crises affecting democratic countries, represented global processes impacting an increasing number of Yugoslavs who felt that parliamentarism suffered from major faults and weaknesses. It was during this period that Dimitrije Ljotić rose to lead the right-wing Yugoslav National Movement 'Zbor' (being an abbreviation for *Združena borbena organizacija rada* – United Militant Labour Organization).⁹ Although Zbor participated in the elections and abstained from fomenting revolution or engaging in a coup, it advocated the abolition of democratic institutions and political parties. Instead of parliamentarism, Ljotić and his comrades sought an absolute monarchy and the political organization of the people on an 'organic' basis, i.e., the principle of estates or professions, which reflected features of corporatist thinking. At around the same time, corporatist state reforms were introduced in Austria and Portugal,¹⁰ but overall, the Yugoslav public remained largely unaffected by these changes, and nor was the possibility of adopting such a model of societal organization seriously considered by significant political actors. Corporatist ideas only attracted the attention of certain Roman-Catholic

9 Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića*; Dragosavljević, *Druga Evropa i Kraljevina Jugoslavija*; Lompar, *Dimitrije Ljotić*.

10 Ščetinec, *Korporativno uređenje države*; Coyne, "Oliveira Salazar," 81–94.

clerical circles and a number of younger rightists who were researching Italian and German state organizations and political systems.¹¹ In the parliamentary elections in Yugoslavia, held in 1935 and 1938, Zbor won only about 1 percent of the votes, which attested to the fact that such radical changes to the political system did not resonate with larger sections of the Yugoslav public at the time.

The occupation of Serbia during World War II and the question of state reform

At the time of Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland in September 1939, Yugoslavia was going through another political crisis, this time triggered by the establishment of the Banovina of Croatia and the reactions to the change in the administrative division of the country. By this time, Yugoslavia had grown largely dependent on export arrangements to Germany and Italy.¹² Although the sentiment of a significant part of the population, composed mostly of Serbs, was on the side of the anti-fascist coalition, the Yugoslav government had to balance and harmonize its foreign policy with the realities in Southeastern Europe. The progress of the war, especially following the capitulation of France in the summer of 1940 and Italy's attack on Greece, rendered the neutrality of the countries of Southeastern Europe unsustainable. After several months of diplomatic pressure from Berlin, and following the same action by Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria, the government and Prince Paul signed, on 25 March 1941, the treaty on Yugoslavia's accession to the Tripartite Pact, originally a treaty of the Axis powers guaranteeing mutual assistance in the case that a non-belligerent power were to attack any of the signatories. On 27 March, in the early hours of the morning, a coup was carried out in Belgrade, significantly assisted by the British intelligence service. Adolf Hitler's response to this act was the German attack on Yugoslavia, which followed on 6 April 1941, bringing about the rapid collapse of the Yugoslav army, which capitulated after eleven days of war. At the same time, King Peter II and the government left the country, settling in London after a long journey via the Middle East.

The territory of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was divided between Hungary, Italy, Albania, Bulgaria, and Germany, and the Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska* – NDH) was formed in the central part.¹³ On the territory of Serbia,

11 Šćetinec, *Nacionalni socijalizam*; Šćetinec, *Korporativizam i demokracija*; Šćetinec, *Korporativni sistem fašizma*; Gregorić, "Ekonomska i socijalna politika nacionalnoga."

12 Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in Crisis*; Mitrović, "Ergänzungswirtschaft," 5–42; Ristović, *Nemački novi poredak*; Hadzi-Jovancic, *The Third Reich and Yugoslavia*.

13 Čulinović, *Okupatorska podjela Jugoslavije*; Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia*, 47–174; Pavlowitch, *Hitler's New Disorder*, 21–90.

approximately within the borders existing in 1912, a German occupation military administration was introduced, while the question of future statehood, borders, and organization was left for the period after the war. Germany's official position was that Yugoslavia no longer existed and would not be restored. The occupation regime was comprehensive, strict, and repressive. The entirety of life on the territory of Serbia was subordinated to the main German priorities: the security of the occupying power and unhindered economic exploitation of the country. Under these conditions, the needs of society hardly impacted considerations. Inflation was high, and shortages of food, medicine, firewood, and other necessary goods were very frequent. The German administration promulgated anti-Semitic and anti-Roma decrees, setting the stage for a full-scale Holocaust that would take place throughout the following year. By May 1942, over 80 percent of Serbian Jews had been murdered in this process.

In the summer of 1941, a popular uprising against the occupiers broke out in Serbia, spurred by Germany's attack on the USSR. Soon, two resistance movements took shape: one royalist (legitimist) and one revolutionary, headed by communists. The Germans had not expected an uprising in Serbia and at first, had great difficulty containing the attacks of the insurgents. Domestic administration, the so-called Council of Commissioners, which did not have an army at its disposal and relied only on a policing force (the gendarmerie), was not able to suppress the uprising. At the end of August, a decision was made to replace this administration with a government with broader powers, modeled after the government in occupied Greece. Former General and Minister of the Army Milan Nedić was appointed as the head of the government, while the government itself took on the propagandistic name of the 'Government of National Salvation.'

Nedić's government was composed of a heterogeneous group of different right-wingers, among whom there were more moderate conservatives and true fascists, Germanophiles, as well as anti-communists.¹⁴ Nedić adopted the German position concerning the dissolution of Yugoslavia and started 'reconstruction,' i.e., building a 'New Serbia,' based on the principles of nationalism and anti-communism. Positioning it as the counterpoint to the crises of the interwar period, collaborationist propaganda blamed pre-war political parties and democracy, economic and social liberalism, Jewish influence, and cosmopolitanism for all the difficulties of the Serbian people.

At the end of 1941 and the beginning of 1942, the majority of the insurgent forces were driven out of the territory of Serbia. The two resistance movements

14 Stojanović, "Ekstremna srpska međuratna desnica," 111–34; Janjetović, *Collaboration and Fascism*, 109–90.

ceased cooperation in the late autumn of 1941 and began a bloody civil war. The collaborationist government, although secretly cooperating with parts of the royalist resistance movement, sought to destroy both. The further development of the war situation, and above all, the failure of the German offensive in the USSR, catalyzed the evolving political programs of all parties that participated in the chaotic conflict on the territory of the occupied Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The communists tried to carry out a revolution and seize power in order to radically change the state and the prevailing social order. The Royalists (also known as Chetniks and formally called the Yugoslav Army in Homeland – *Jugoslovenska vojska u otadžbini/JVuO*), who were formally the armed forces of the émigré government, advocated the reconstruction of Yugoslavia, but in a way that would entail the creation of a large Serbian federal unit and the punishment of Croats and Bosnian Muslims for crimes in the NDH. Nedić's government, although constrained by the rigid German attitude, also formulated its political vision for the future, which was based on the creation of a 'New Serbia' over the widest possible area and its integration into Hitler's 'New Europe.' It is indicative that none of the perpetrators of the Yugoslav war drama wanted a 'return to the old ways,' which testifies to the ubiquitous dissatisfaction with the interwar order and parliamentarism.

Development of the 'Serbian Peasant Cooperative State' concept

The concept of corporatist societal organization was seriously considered, both theoretically and practically, during the occupation of Serbia in World War II, appearing in the form of a peasant cooperative state.¹⁵ It is not completely clear which personalities participated in the development of the project and the planning of legal acts related to the proposed constitutional transformation, but the great influence of Prime Minister Milan Nedić himself, as well as a number of right-wing intellectuals close to him, is noticeable. Former diplomat and prominent collaborationist Dr. Miroslav Spalajković was very likely tasked directly by Nedić to draw up the initial draft of the 'Cooperative and Social Organization of the Serbian People.'¹⁶ In addition to the aforementioned draft, Spalajković was, under strict secrecy, tasked with preparing research for the Nedić government on the Serbian national question,

15 The project of the Serbian Peasant Cooperative State has been only partially explored in Yugoslav and Serbian historiography. Of the existing body of research, the following especially merit mention: Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji*, Vol. 2, 33–44; Petranović, *Srbija u Drugom svetskom ratu*, 455–70; Jovanović, "Srpska seljačka," 118–28; Kerkez, *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike*, 137–45; Stojanović, "Planning a Social Transformation," 135–52; Aleksić, *Privreda Srbije*; Janjetović, *Collaboration and Fascism*, 441–84.

16 Bajin, "Miroslav Spalajković," 526.

the issues of minorities in Serbia, and the territorial expansion of Serbia as part of strengthening the anti-communist front in the Balkans. His political views reflected nationalist and ultraconservative convictions, coupled with committed anti-Semitism and overt hatred for everything communist.

The final elaboration of the concept of the peasant cooperative state and the accompanying legal acts was given over to Dr. Ilija A. Pržić, professor of international law and high-ranking official in the government, as well as Cvetan Ceka Đorđević, state secretary in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. During the occupation, Pržić was a legal advisor to the Ministry of Education and the Presidency of the Government. In addition to drafting legal acts (government decrees and by-laws), he, like Spalajković, was in charge of preparing reports on a number of high-priority issues, as well as providing expert opinions. The draft 'National Cooperative Organization of Serbia,' as well as a series of decrees on the establishment of the State Assembly, with handwritten comments by Ilija Pržić, were found among his papers after his execution following the liberation of Belgrade. Today, they are preserved in the Archives of Yugoslavia and represent the most direct evidence of intensive work on the development and planned introduction of a cooperative-corporatist organization in occupied Serbia. These historical sources, as well as inscriptions published in the Belgrade press during the occupation, demonstrate that the project of the cooperative state was also backed by the president of the collaborationist government and that the creation of detailed studies and plans related to the introduction of this arrangement was the result of systematic, organized engagement with these ideas.

Seen in the context of everyday realities in occupied Serbia, which included a strict occupation regime, repression, shortages of supplies, civil war, and the deep division of Serbian society, the idea of introducing a cooperative state, or in general, any radical change of the social and political system in the country could easily appear to be the reflection of the fantasies of a group of political actors, or part of a propaganda strategy aimed at gaining the support of wider sections of the population. That the idea of a cooperative state was much more than propaganda or a mere theoretical consideration is most convincingly evidenced by the memoranda sent by Milan Nedić to the German Military Commander in Serbia, General Paul Bader, the official¹⁷ who represented the highest authority in the country. In these documents, at the beginning of 1943, Nedić sought approval for the establishment of a corporatist representative body and the strengthening of the authority of the Serbian collaborationist government, emphasizing the anti-communist (and, in

17 VA, NAV, T. 501, roll 256. Milan Nedić's letter to General Bader, 1 January 1943, with two memoranda attached. The memoranda are titled: "Justification of the necessity of organizing the Serbian people on the basis of national community" and "Building Serbia on the basis of national community."

general, anti-internationalist) attitude of the conservative Serbian countryside. The idea of a cooperative state is interpreted in these in a context- and history-specific manner, so for a full understanding of its genesis and essence, it is necessary to trace its pre-war roots, as well as the pragmatic function assigned to it by the nature of occupation and total war. It is important to keep in mind that the entire project had three basic components:

1. propaganda, whose main goal was to mobilize the peasantry in the fight against the communist resistance movement;
2. political, the purpose of which was to strengthen the authority of Milan Nedić, enable more direct contact between the government and the population, and thereby mitigate its standing as an authoritarian and insulated quisling regime, and
3. ideological, which was reflected by the character of the proposed state structure, as well as the insistence of the 'Government of National Salvation' on nourishing the cooperative spirit in society and submission to the 'interests of the national community,' which was carried out both in theory and in practice during the occupation.

The *zadruga* (usually translated into English using the word 'cooperative') references in the Serbian context an extended, multi-generation agrarian household where everyone works together and shares the benefits and products of their labor. It was a byproduct of Serbian history, especially during the centuries-long Ottoman Turk rule. Economy-wise, it was (originally) a large, or, more precisely, a crowded agrarian household, the multi-generational members of which shared land, animals, tools, and profit. Already in the second half of the nineteenth century, the decline of the institution was underway, as it had become economically obsolete and conflicted with the emancipation and social progress of the era. However, both on the political Left and the Right, the *zadruga*/cooperative was also frequently perceived as an autochthonous and somewhat unique feature of Serbian society, a basic cell of social, popular, and political organization.¹⁸ Not once, and not from just one side of the political spectrum, was it declared that the entire Serbian state or nation is (or should become) 'one large cooperative.' Such thinking was based on the following premises: all members of the cooperative were closely related to each other; they had the same goals and faced the same challenges; they shared everything and had only common, rather than individual interests and aims; and finally, the success and wellbeing of the cooperative was dependent on harmony and joint effort. Although the number of cooperatives had decreased steeply by the 1930s, Zbor and several right-wing intellectuals (Zbor renegades and others) persistently advocated cooperatives as an instrument for dealing with the economic, social, and political crisis in Yugoslavia.

18 Stojanović, "Imagining the Zadruga," 333–53.

The key document for understanding the origin and essence of the concept of the Serbian peasant cooperative state is the elaboration 'National-Cooperative Organization of Serbia,' although a large number of synoptic articles were also published in the collaborationist press about this form of state organization.¹⁹ The main goal of the cooperative constitution was specified as 'ensuring and improving the material and spiritual life of the Serbian people,' and was especially supposed to strengthen and affirm the most numerous stratum, the peasant class, which, it was pointed out, "proved to be the most resistant to the destructive influence of various internationalists." As in the case of other political projects associated with the government of Milan Nedić,²⁰ it implied breaking with the constitutional, social, and political traditions of interwar Yugoslavia and building a new Serbian society based exclusively on Serbian national tradition and patriarchal spirit. This implied the disappearance of parliamentary representation and all its achievements, which was to be replaced by a new order organized according to the principle of submission and personal responsibility, in many aspects similar to the Nazi *Führerprinzip*. In the explanation of the concept of cooperative organization, the historical experiences and the political circumstances of the day shine through in passages that attest to the direct impact they had on the text:

"Given the complete bankruptcy of all earlier liberal-parliamentary institutions, founded on the postulates of false democracy (such as political parties, elections, general suffrage, etc.), the connection and cooperation between the government and state administration on the one hand and the people on the other in the future cooperative-social organization of Serbia will be based on the principle of personal responsibility and leadership, expressed through patriarchal obedience to the head of the cooperative."²¹

The abolition of political parties and parliamentarism was, both in the years before and during World War II, part of the program and ideology of the 'Zbor'

19 "О задружној држави" [On the cooperative state], Српски народ, 23 January 1943; "Ка новој сељачкој задружној држави" [Toward a new, peasant cooperative state]; "Генерал Недић о улози српског задругарства" [General Nedic on the role of Serbian cooperative organization], Српски народ, 8 May 1943; "Ударен је камен-темељац Српске сељачке задружне државе" [A cornerstone of Serbian peasant cooperative state was laid], Српски народ, May 1943; Милан Недић, "У новом уређењу Србије задругарство има да постане темељ нове сељачке задружне државе" [Cooperative organization is to become a cornerstone of the new peasant cooperative state], Ново време, 4 May 1943; "Народно задругарство биће кичма и ослонац будућег поретка у Србији" [Popular cooperative organization is to become a central pillar of the new social order in Serbia], Ново време, 25 May 1943; "Ново доба српског задругарства" [Serbian cooperative organization's new era], Обнова, 5 September 1944.

20 Stojanović, "Planning a Social Transformation," 135–52.

21 AJ, 389/1, "People's cooperative organization of Serbia."

movement, which actively collaborated with the German occupation authority and was part of Nedić's government as well. Ljotić and his political comrades advocated the unification of all political actors around the concept of the nation and national interest, propounded again and again in their newspaper *Naša borba* [Our Fight], which was published in occupied Serbia from September 1941 to September 1942.²²

The system of individual responsibility, that is, the principle of leadership as known from the ideology of totalitarianism, permeates all spheres of social and political life in such regimes. In practice, it was realized to the greatest extent precisely in the case of Nazi Germany, where even children's associations and school departments had to have their responsible 'leaders.' This principle, which represented an authoritarian alternative to democracy and responsibility towards the electorate, had its sympathizers among the members of the Zbor movement, who praised it with some reservations. The intellectuals around Zbor had insisted, especially prior to 1941, on the uniqueness of each nation's historical experience and political system and sought original solutions for the Yugoslav case rather than replicating foreign models. At the same time, in the case of the *Führerprinzip*, voices around the movement pointed out to the public of occupied Serbia that this exact principle of governance (based on leadership and responsibility) stood in accordance with Serbian tradition and historical development.²³ In the explanation of the national cooperative organization of Serbia, the principle occupied a central place:

"[...] the social hierarchy in the organization of the family, village, municipality, district (*srez*), county (*okrug*) and state will rest on the cooperative organic principle according to which at the head of each community there is an elder who, after agreement and consultation with his collaborators (community members), makes decisions by himself, bearing all the responsibility for his decisions."²⁴

In the vision of the Serbian collaborators, the basic unit of the Serbian people and its national 'essence' was the (extended) rural family, i.e., the cooperative. In the memorandum that he sent to General Bader, Nedić defined the cooperative as "an extended family in terms of time and space, that is to say, a family community that

22 Др Ст. З. Иванић, "Не партија већ уједињена нација" [Not a political party, but a nation united], *Наша борба*, 25 January 1942, 4; Милосав Васиљевић, "Окупљање Срба" [A gathering of Serbs], *Наша борба*, 15 February 1942, 3.

23 Димитрије Најдановић, "Принцип вођства" [The leadership principle], *Наша борба*, 30 November 1941, 3; Бора Карапанџић, "Задруга као темељ државног уређења" [Cooperative as a state organization cornerstone], *Наша борба*, 22 February 1942, 10; Рад. Св. Павловић, „Ауторитативност је српско начело" [Authoritarianism is a Serbian principle], *Наша борба*, 28 June 1942, 9.

24 AJ, 389/1, "People's cooperative organization of Serbia."

includes a number of generations and all the fruits of their efforts” enigmatically emphasizing that it “embodies the central real purpose of tradition.”²⁵ The rural family unit was credited with the preservation and development of national traditions, language, customs, and religion, as well as exceptional resistance to harmful cultural and political influences coming from abroad. This perception of the (agricultural) family cooperative represented an idealized and, by extension, distorted image of the past, rendering invisible other, less amenable aspects of this traditional form of societal organization.

In contrast to the ideas of harmony, shared wealth, and the fair distribution of acquired goods, such cooperatives rested on anti-enlightenment and retrograde practices, patriarchy often on the verge of dictatorship by the head of the cooperative, the extremely unequal position of women and children, the absence of individual decision-making and the impossibility of emancipation. And from an economic point of view, most cooperative households would not have appeared prosperous: the family members would often sleep on the bare floor or in improvised beds in a central room where, around the stove or hearth, most activities occurred in a closed space: cooking, eating, sleeping and also communicating with each other would take place here. Life in a cooperative, especially by the middle of the twentieth century, was mostly a consequence of necessity: both economically and socially, the cooperative was already largely falling apart and had been superseded by other structures, and it could no longer be considered an optimal framework for the development of the individual, the family, and or even agricultural production. Nedić’s fascination with the cooperative, however, was part of his family background. Coming from a family that lived in Grocka, a fertile region of Serbia known for fruit growing and relatively wealthy peasants, Nedić mainly had the opportunity to experience the brighter side of cooperative organization. The fact that his father, Đorđe, was the head of a district and, therefore, a representative of the central authorities in his region also impacted the impressions he gained in his youth.

Considering the cooperative’s patriarchal internal arrangement as an ideal organizational unit, Milan Nedić and his advisers wanted to organize the entire Serbian people into one large cooperative. Municipal, district, and country councils were planned, as well as a state assembly, but these institutions were intended to have an exclusively advisory role—all power and responsibility was to belong at every level to the head of the community. The real function of these political bodies was to give greater legitimacy to the collaborationist government and to simplify the management of the country, in which, after the establishment of the cooperative regime, numerous and until then, passive strata of the Serbian population should

25 AJ, 389/1, “Justification of the need for national cooperative organization of the Serbian people”; VA, NAV, T. 501, roll 256, record nos 907–14; 915–23.

have been included. When explaining this state concept to the occupying authorities, Milan Nedić emphasized the shared war goals of the anti-communist struggle and also the pragmatic role that cooperative arrangements could play in that struggle. Pointing out that “there is no organic cooperation between the Government and the people, through which the broad layers of the people would take on their share of responsibility,” he asked for the occupier’s approval and help in the reform that would “restore national tranquility to the Serbian people” and provide the opportunity to occupy “a place that corresponds to its constructive spirit and the abilities that will contribute to the broader community of European nations.”²⁶

The constitutional forms envisaged by the Peasant Cooperative State proposals

The project of the peasant cooperative state implied the establishment of the state assembly as a general representative institution and the formation of municipal, district, and county representative bodies. The principle of elders was to be consistently applied at all levels of organization, from family cooperatives and villages through municipalities, counties, and districts all the way to the national level. The village elder was to be elected once a year at the “household meetings of family and cooperative elders,” “by agreement, not by individual vote,” and in the presence of the district head. If the municipality consisted of one village, the village elder would have automatically become the municipal elder; if the municipality consisted of several villages, its head would be the head of the village where the municipal building was located. In rural municipalities, the council was to be formed from the elders of all villages and “the necessary number of the best village householders” appointed by the elder himself, taking into account the suggestions of the leader of the district. In urban municipalities, with the exception of Belgrade, the municipal head and the council were to be appointed by the county chief, “taking care that people who distinguished themselves with their work on the reconstruction of Serbia, as well as representatives of certain classes, are prioritized with regard to being included in the committees.” The elders of the city municipalities could then appoint their deputies and had the possibility to divide the municipal council into more committees and sections to facilitate more efficient administration. Belgrade was to be made exempt from this rule as the largest city municipality in the country, whose mayor and council were appointed by the Minister of the Interior.

Municipal local authorities would have, according to the national-cooperative organization project of Serbia, all the powers that municipalities had “exercised

26 VA, NAV, T. 501, roll 256, record nos 907–14.

before, according to existing customs and legal provisions,” which mainly related to communal and security issues, as well as an insufficiently defined jurisdiction over issues pertaining to the “economic, cultural and social progress” of the municipal community. The scope of the work of the municipal administration was expanded with several new duties listed in detail, which included essentially the following points of emphasis:

1. construction and maintenance of road and public infrastructure (for which the use of public work for the reconstruction of Serbia was also approved);
2. implementation of agricultural production quotas and coordination with cooperative means to effectuate such production goals;
3. organizing public lectures in order to improve production;
4. selection and recruitment of “the best and most capable village youths” for sending abroad, “especially to Germany for further education in agricultural knowledge and work” and
5. constant supervision of the unity of the cooperative and preventing divisions within it.

The higher level of local self-government was the district administration, which was to consist of the head or chief of the district and the council, which had an advisory role. District councilors were to be appointed by the head of the district, who was supposed to have previously consulted the municipal elders of the same district. By their function, the municipal elders were members of the district council, which also included an undefined number of representatives of the ‘estates’ or professional groups. In regular circumstances, the district council would have been convened twice a year (‘before the beginning and after the end of agricultural summer work’), and the head of the district was to decide on any extraordinary sessions. Just as at the municipal level, the elder presided over the council at the regional level and had exclusive personal responsibility and decision-making rights. Unlike the municipal level, the scope of the district administration was not precisely determined. In addition to the undefined platitudes about the economic, social, cultural, and administrative duties of the district administration, some areas, including improving the nutrition of the population, implementing planned agriculture, maintaining a cooperative spirit and practice, and organizing mutual aid within the community were laid out in greater detail and reflect a particular concern with their management in these structures.

The highest level of local self-government was to be the county level. The county administration would also consist of an elder/district head and a council, whose members were to be appointed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs on the proposal of the district head. County councilors would be elected from the ranks of district councilors and those citizens who distinguished themselves in the reconstruction of Serbia and would also include representatives of class organizations.

Due to its importance in the new arrangement, a provision was introduced for the county council concerning the need for it to have a “proportionate representation of all social classes.” In regular circumstances, the county council (presided over by the county head) would meet once a year for no longer than fifteen days. The project on the corporatist ‘national cooperative’ reorganization of Serbian society did not specify the competences of the county administration more specifically. It can be assumed, however, that this level of government was intended to be the main link between the government and the state leadership on the one hand and the population on the other because this was most often the case in the state-legal development of Serbia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The National Assembly was supposed to take the place of the national representative body in the cooperative system:

“By its composition, the National Assembly represents the people as a whole in a politically, economically, and socially organized form. In the assembly, both the will of the state and the will of all actors who, through their cooperation, enter into the organic structure of the state are expressed.”²⁷

It would consist of a maximum of two hundred representatives (‘state councilors’) whose mandate would last three years. They would be delegated according to the following pattern: one representative from each district, five from Belgrade, one up to ten from the corporations, i.e., the ‘estates’ and professional organizations, depending on the respective size and importance of these organizations, as well as an additional forty persons from the category of meritorious citizens selected by the prime minister, and all government ministers according to their function. The electoral principle was thus very complex and, more importantly, completely subordinated to the will of the executive power, which can be seen both from the elaboration on the cooperative organization of Serbia and from the Regulation on the election and appointment of people’s representatives for the Serbian State Assembly, which Milan Nedić signed on 15 January 1944. In the new system, elections would be held on the same day in all constituencies: districts, county seats, Belgrade, and class organizations. The right to vote was intended for an extremely narrow circle of people: at the district level, municipal heads and ‘people’s champions’ (prominent householders appointed by the county head, in the same number as the presidents of municipalities in a given county), and at the county head of the city administration, his deputies and county councilors (and the same number of ‘people’s champions’ elected by the executive). Corporative entities including the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Crafts, Law, Medicine, Pharmacy and Engineers,

27 AJ, 398/1, “People’s cooperative organization of Serbia.”

as well as the Union of Agricultural Chambers, the Unions of Trade Associations, of Artisans, the Serbian Labor Union, the Supreme Cooperative Union and Supreme Union of Agricultural Cooperatives, would elect one representative for the State Assembly, and up to eighty of them were to be appointed by the prime minister of his own choosing from among deserving citizens. The right to be elected was given to every Serb (exclusively men) older than thirty who was literate and had not been convicted of 'dishonorable acts.' The ballot was set up to be open, effectuated by a roll call, and the representative mandate would have lasted for three years.

Like all other representative bodies in the cooperative system of Serbia, the state parliament was to acquire only an advisory role, and various stipulations would have ensured that the parliament could be completely bypassed even when adopting regulations or laws. In essence, the function of the Parliament was to consult with the government regarding regulations and legal proposals, which could be referred to the plenary session or the individual committees of the Parliament for consideration. The prime minister was to decide on the referral of the proposal and the time that the people's representatives had at their disposal until submitting their council at his own discretion. Parliament could not prevent the adoption of laws, and government decrees "as needed, especially in emergency cases," could be declared to have the full force of laws without any consideration given to them in the state assembly.

The complete dependence of the highest representative body on the executive power in the project of the national cooperative organization of Serbia was also confirmed in the provisions related to the election of the leaders of the Parliament. The president of the parliament would be appointed by the government, while four vice presidents and five secretaries would be elected by the parliament on the proposal of the president. Four committees were planned to operate within the parliament: general public affairs, economy and finance, national culture, and social issues. Convening the parliament, which was supposed to meet at least once a year, was the responsibility of the government.

At the top of the cooperative order of Serbia in the plans of the government of Milan Nedić was supposed to be the 'Supreme State Administration.' This state body would "represent [...] the political leadership of the people and the state," and at its head would stand the "state elder," "who is at the same time the leader of the people and the Prime Minister." According to the proposal on the national-cooperative organization of Serbia, the head of state was to have practically unlimited power in the country: he was the prime minister, commander-in-chief of all armed forces, and he could not be recalled or obstructed by the state assembly: "The head of state gives guidelines for general state policy as to the government as well as to the Parliament, and through this to the entire Serbian people."

Reforms envisaged in the mentioned draft were rooted in (extreme) right-wing utopian perceptions of Serbian mentality, society, and political order. If anything, modern Serbian history was clear proof that the Serbian peasant was not a passive and obedient one and that even the monarchs could lose their heads or thrones (or both) for imposing brutal and authoritarian governance on the people. It was true that the peasantry identified more directly with the national community and was ready to make sacrifices for the sake of the collectivity—at least compared to cosmopolitan and conformist urban populations, but to expect that it would willingly bend the knee to Nedić, especially with the young King Peter II being alive and part of the anti-fascist coalition was of unrealistic design at best. Comparing Serbian/Yugoslav constitutions to the draft constitution of the Peasant Cooperative State, it also becomes evident that no Serbian or Yugoslav ruler from the 1830s and the last constitution until World War II had the type of unlimited and unchecked power comparable to the unbridled authority foreseen for the ‘Supreme State Administration’ in Nedić’s political project. Such reform would have represented the construction of a radically new regime and a dramatic break with Yugoslav experience, but also a political development running against the grain of modern Serbian history.

Between planning and practice: The historical context and character of the Serbian peasant cooperative state

The plans for the reorganization of Serbian society and government, summarized above, were, to a large extent, a consequence of the historical circumstances that preceded its creation, but also the results of the specific situation in which it was conceived and laid out, ready to be translated into practice. The absolute absence of all forms of electoral democracy in the draft of the cooperative state can be partly explained by the experience of a failed parliamentarism in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia but also by pragmatic considerations: the implementation of the project depended on the occupation authorities, who had made it clear to Nedić and his collaborators that they did not intend to allow political life in the country. The project of the Serbian Peasant Cooperative State can be better understood through the analysis of the historical moment in which it was formulated, the military and political conditions in the world and occupied Yugoslavia, and above all, shed light on the real balance of power between political and social actors in the territory under the authority of the German military commander of Serbia.

Yugoslav historiography established some time ago that the idea of establishing a peasant cooperative state arose in 1942 and that the first more specific plans for changing the state system were created at the end of that year. That the socio-political project for the national-cooperative organization of Serbia was launched at that

specific point in time is a significant historical indicator in itself: A constitutional reorganization of the state could only be seriously considered after responding to direct threats. It was necessary to suppress the uprising in the country, to expel armed groups of insurgents from the territory under the control of Milan Nedić's government and also gain at least partial trust from the occupiers.

Once the uprising was extinguished and the activity of the resistance movement in Serbia was reduced to its lowest point, this necessary trust on the part of the occupying power was to be gained by deploying intensive anti-communist propaganda, sending workers and even peasants to Nazi Germany, expressing public gratitude and openly pandering to the occupation leadership and the Nazi leaders at large. Accepting the war triumph of the Axis powers as inevitable, specific Serbian collaborators, in fact, advocated active cooperation with the occupying forces and the internal transformation of the Serbian state and society in order to create the most favorable position possible for Serbs and Serbia in Hitler's 'New Europe.'²⁸ This process took place under complex geopolitical circumstances: the Axis powers suffered their first major reversals at the end of 1941, but their hold on the region was still unassailable both in the territory of occupied Yugoslavia and in the rest of the Balkans. Nevertheless, the prospect of an unexpectedly long war, which could exhaust the economy and the armed forces of the Third Reich, did create space, at least in the Nazi propaganda of the day, for 'small' nations to 'earn' the right to their existence and place in the new world order, as conclusively demonstrated by Mark Mazower.²⁹ Faced with frustration about the war defeat in April 1941, aware of the acute threat to Serbian people in neighboring countries, and driven by extreme anti-communism and nationalism, members of the 'Government of National Salvation' led by Milan Nedić decided to embark on an ambitious venture of governmental and societal transformation, whose ultimate goal was to make Serbia acceptable to the new masters of Europe. The series of major initiatives—surprisingly ambitious considering the moment in which they were advanced—involved several departments of the Nedić government, spanning disparate topics from the expansion of the territory of Serbia to changes in the state structure and the partial reactivation of the political life, and culminated in the introduction of the Serbian Civic and Cultural Plan as a comprehensive blueprint for life in the country. This reform drive was lent further impetus by the propaganda and the false promises extended by the occupation authorities toward the Serbian government. Although occupied Serbia suffered what may have been the harshest oppressive measures in any territory that had fallen under German occupation (this was certainly the case in the Balkans), representatives of the occupation authorities nevertheless made occasional appearances in front of the public. They engaged in

28 Stojanović, *Ideje, politički projekti i praksa vlade Milana Nedića*.

29 Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*; Mazower, *Dark Continent*, 141–84.

informal conversations with various Serbian officials, enticing them with the possibility of effectuating change. The situation favored the interests of the Third Reich: the collaborationist government insisted on its right to prove that it 'deserved' and could 'choose' its place in the 'New Europe,' while the German leadership persistently refused to make any substantial concessions to Nedić and his associates.

The enormous powers that the plans for the establishment of the Serbian Peasant Cooperative State would have provided for the head of the national community are, to a considerable extent, also a reflection of the political turmoil among the Serbian collaborators. In Nedić's government, there existed several groups and individuals who, using connections with representatives of the occupation administration, often acted independently and outside the control of the prime minister. During a significant part of the occupation, a kind of struggle for supremacy took place among the rival collaborationist factions, and the issue of Nedić's successor as the head of government was also raised frequently. Both Zbor and a group of Milan Stojadinović's (Yugoslav prime minister, 1935–1938) followers, including notorious war criminals and collaborators such as Dragi Jovanović, constantly competed to win favor with the German administration and amass as much power as possible. This explains why, in the draft of the cooperative arrangement, extraordinarily broad competences were foreseen for the person who would be at the head of the Serbian government, granting him nigh-absolute power in the country.

The formation of the state assembly and the system of local self-government organized on the basis of cooperatives was conceived with the aim of strengthening the political position of Milan Nedić and his government: the entire national-corporatist organization of the country was based on the premise that Nedić would be at its head. The representative institutions led by the state parliament were supposed to strengthen the legitimacy of the collaborationist administration in the eyes of the people and show how it supposedly had broad support. Convening the parliament was mentioned as one of Nedić's conditions for taking over the government during the negotiations with the German occupation authorities in August 1941.³⁰ The new cabinet, accordingly, sought to form a state assembly as early as September 1941, which is why the necessary decrees were drafted at that early date. The process of working towards this goal came to an end in 1943, when the German occupation administration stopped all work towards the setting up of a representative body.³¹

The closest point to any real autonomy that Nedić's government got was during Hermann Neubacher's initiative in 1943. This 'flying diplomat' was sent to the Balkans to conduct a special mission: to sponsor a broader political action against the

30 Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji*, Vol. 1, 102.

31 VA, Nedić Archives, 24/1-1, k. 1a "Draft Decree on the State Assembly"; Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji*, Vol. 1, 131–2.

communists and entice the collaborators to fight the communist resistance together and stop fighting among themselves.³² He was given extensive political power and initiative from his superiors in Berlin. As noted in his memoirs, Neubacher felt a lot of empathy for Nedić and his position, and the position of the Serbian nation in general, and showed himself eager to provide assistance.³³ He even managed to arrange Nedić's personal audience with Ribbentrop and Hitler in September 1943. Although the Serbian delegation was feeling quite enthusiastic and hopeful, the meetings were a fiasco, as they were met with a cold, reserved welcome and aggressive outbursts in response to any mention of Serbia's territorial enlargement or changes to existing policies. If Nedić had kept alive any illusions regarding the place of his government and Serbia in the 'New Europe' until then, he certainly had to realize the futility of such designs following the meetings.

The existence and functioning of representative bodies, despite the numerous restrictions on their authority and autonomy as foreseen in the plans of the future cooperative state, would have partially absolved the collaborators from moral and potentially criminal responsibility for cooperating with the occupier, in addition to reducing the responsibility of the leadership of the state during a complex and difficult time. This was a smokescreen, however: the function of 'head of state,' with practically unlimited powers, was more than clearly tailored to Nedić's requirements. Under the cooperative system, there would have been no possibility for any of the ministers or other officials to obstruct the will and decisions of the prime minister, which otherwise happened very often in practice. Despite the loyalty that the Serbian collaborationists formally expressed to King Peter II Karađorđević, in the documents concerning the national-cooperative reforms, the *de iure* ruling sovereign is neither mentioned and nor is the existence of a monarch foreseen at all. The new arrangement would have also strengthened the position of the national bureaucracy *vis-à-vis* the occupation. As compensation, the constitution would have placed Serbia on the side of the Axis, and in itself would have demonstrated willingness to participate in Hitler's 'New Europe' (clearly visible from the memorandum that the Prime Minister's Office sent to General Paul Bader, military commander in Serbia).

Ultimately, due to the prevailing division of power, the fate of the Serbian Peasant Cooperative State project was solely in German hands. After receiving Nedić's memorandum, Bader forwarded it to Generals August Meissner and Alexander Löhr for their opinion.³⁴ Proverbially anti-Serbian, Meissner contributed to stop-

32 Neubacher, *Specijalni zadatak Balkan*; Neubacher, *Sonderauftrag Südost*.

33 Nojbaher, *Srbi u memoarima Hermana Nojbahera*.

34 A portion of Bader's correspondence with Meissner and Southeast Command regarding Nedić's 1 January 1943 memorandum is also on microfilm at the National Archives in Washington (VA, NAV, T501, roll 256). Instead of General Löhr, Bader was answered by Counselor Bönner.

ping the initiative of the Serbian collaborationist government in this case, as well. He 'reminded' General Bader that although "Serbia has received certain borders due to political considerations and exigencies and thus represents an administrative area, its territorial existence is still so unclear that one cannot speak of it as a single state." Meissner, an officer of the k.u.k. army in World War I, shared Hitler's resentment of the Serbs and feared any strengthening of the authority of the Serbian government or the emergence of a stronger popular organization in general. Although he considered Nedić's plan to be more like a sketch about re-organizing the economy than a serious plan for state organization, he still saw any strengthening of the Serbian government to be extremely harmful to Germany's military and political interests. Meissner's letter to Bader was mostly written in a sarcastic tone, but the SS general saw quite well Nedić's intention to try and legalize his own dictatorship under the guise of introducing representative bodies and expanding the political base of the collaborationist parties. Considering Meissner's significant role in Serbia since Harald Turner's departure from the country in 1942, it is realistic to assume that it was his opinion that was decisive in terms of the Germans saying 'no' to the project on the cooperative organization of the Serbian state.³⁵

Bönner, who was an advisor to the Nazi Southeastern Command, sent a reply on behalf of General Löhr, showing a little more understanding than Meissner had done, but he was not prepared to endorse Nedić's demands either. In a letter to General Bader dated 22 January 1943, he pointed out that in the current situation, further political aspirations of the collaborationist government should not be supported. Explaining his position, Bönner pointed to the fact that the population of occupied Serbia could only be kept pacified due to the threat of coercion looming over them. He opined that the people should be treated as subjects of administrative management without their own political will and, especially, a 'state idea'. The Southeast Command was, therefore, inclined to support any ideological movement in Serbia that would contribute to the internal restoration of peace and a real political turn towards cooperation with Germany but did not share the belief that Nedić could be relied on in this sense since the memorandum was understood as a request to sanction his dictatorship.³⁶ Taking Meissner and Bönner's suggestions into account, the military commander in Serbia, General Paul Bader, wrote to Nedić on 29 January 1943, informing him that the creation of a Serbian peasant cooperative state (or anything similar) was completely unacceptable under conditions of war and the occupation. The position of the military commander in Serbia was decisive and commanded authority, leaving no room for a different interpretation. Nedić was told that he must follow the instructions of the German authorities and support

35 For an identical conclusion, cp. Kerkez, *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike*, 142.

36 VA, NAV, T. 501, roll 256, record nos 927–37.

their occupation policy as a whole. Formally, at least, the question of the future of the Serbian state, its arrangement, and its potential place in the 'New Europe' was left to be decided after the war.³⁷

Conclusion

The project of the Serbian Peasant Cooperative State, created and developed within the narrow circle of associates of Milan Nedić between 1942 and 1943, represents an unprecedented phenomenon in Serbian history. In its form and essence, it amounted to an attempt to radically break with the state-legal traditions of Serbia and Yugoslavia and to establish a system that did not exist anywhere in Europe at that time. This project was a reflection of a deep disappointment with parliamentarism and political pluralism in general, on the one hand, as well as an effort to concentrate all power in the state in the hands of one man, on the other. At the same time, it is a faithful reflection of the distance of the leading collaborators from reality, which could be interpreted as a consequence of war psychosis, propaganda, or even self-deception. It defeats reason that Nedić and his collaborators proposed to the German occupation authorities a change in the state system at a time when the Serbian people and society were under enormous pressure and were victims of numerous internal divisions and frictions, on top of the foreign occupation. The leadership of the collaborationist administration in Serbia failed to properly assess its relationship with the Germans and Germany's broader plans for Serbia and the Balkans. The cold shower of rejection that Turner, Meissner, and Bönner gave Nedić had to be expected if we take into account that the occupation administration had also refused to make even much more modest and less important concessions to Nedić. In the end, the Serbian Peasants' Cooperative State remained, in the literal sense, dead letter on paper: a series of detailed elaborations and drafts, written and signed decrees by Nedić and his ministers, which were never published or entered into force. Serbian corporatist reform, let alone the transformation of the state as a whole, was abandoned for good after these events.

37 VA, NAV, T. 501, roll 256, record nos 955–62. Letter of General Bader to Milan Nedić, 29 January 1943. The letter excludes the possibility of introducing any patriarchal-corporatist system during the occupation, but once more emphasizes the possibility that after the war Serbia will be governed according to the values that best correspond to the concept of 'New Europe' with Nazi Germany at the helm.

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The World Tree of the Conquering Hungarians in the Light of Scholarly Illusions

Reconstruction, Construction and Deconstruction

Éva Pócs 

Department of Ethnography – Cultural Anthropology, University of Pécs, 2 Rókus utca, 7624 Pécs, Hungary; pocseva7@gmail.com

Received 20 October 2023 | Accepted 6 November 2023 | Published online 18 December 2023

Abstract. In my paper I analyze the case of the supposed shamanistic ‘world tree’ of the conquering Hungarians: I show how this erroneous scientific construction came into being through the coming together of the mutually reinforcing mistakes of Hungarian folkloristics, linguistics, and archaeology; how manifestations of the spurious ideas of lay pseudo-science got mixed in with scientific discourse, and how they influenced the course of ‘professional’ scientific inquiry.

My analysis sheds light on the most flagrant methodological mistakes that lead to the mistaken construct: a) the gaining ground of ideological influences from outside ‘pure’ scientific considerations (in our case features symbolizing Hungarian identity that set it apart from Europeans: the quest for ancient Hungarian shamanism); b) an inverse research attitude of selectively looking for evidence to prove the researcher’s preconceptions; c) the effects of a deferential research attitude which considers one or another ‘great’ researcher infallible and their results irrefutable, which short circuits further research on a topic.

My paper has three parts: the first one deals with the emergence of the construct, the second with the errors of the construct created by highly respected scholars (Gyula Sebestyén, Géza Róheim, Sándor Solymossy, Vilmos Diószegi) and its Hungarian and international reception, while in the third part, I describe the processes of the construct’s deconstruction and its parallely occurring revival.

I come to the conclusion that the world tree and the related rites connected to the initiation of shamans most likely did not exist in the worldview and ritual practices of the conquering Hungarians and that in light of the most recent research results they seem to be part of an illusionary research construct which came about through the interplay of the strivings of ethnographers, archaeologists, linguists and amateurs who started out from a certain set of preconceptions.

Keywords: methodological mistakes, preconceptions, conquering Hungarians, ancient religion, shamanism, world tree, shaman tree, initiation, *táltos*

Introduction

This paper is about the flaws and follies of ethnographic research which flowed, and continue to flow to this day, partly from the internal errors following from the goals

and methods integral to scientific inquiry and partly from external factors independent of these. I would like to demonstrate through my analysis that even the internal errors and flaws are related to a large extent to factors external to scholarship. I will highlight all of this through a single example – the detailed analysis of the evolution of the notion of the ‘world tree.’¹

Misconceptions in research

One extremely wide-spread genre of ‘external’ influences causing errors is the impact of ideologies that lie outside the bounds of ‘pure’ scholarship. The example of the world tree is related to the attempts to reconstruct the ancient, “pagan” religion of the pre-Christian Hungarians. The beginnings of these were simultaneous with the early days of ethnography in Hungary. A description given by Zoltán Nagy in his book of essays about the Khanty and Russians living along the Vasyugan River in Siberia concerning the activity of a ‘native’ researcher Nad’ezhda Bronislavovna also aptly characterizes the researchers working in this era: “for »native anthropologists« ethnography is not merely an academic discipline, but a type of political and civic activity, a means in the struggle for the survival of their nation.”²

Or, to reiterate briefly something I had written in a previous paper,³ shamanism played an important role in the lives of peoples speaking Ural–Altaic languages and thus a detailed exploration of the linguistic and historical past of Hungarians has naturally led scholars to look for its traces also in the ‘pagan’ religion of Hungarians. These aspirations were tied in with the conceptual framework of European romanticism, and the spirit of the search for national identity and so this research also gained a certain symbolic ideological charge in the service of nation-building. The hope that the religion of the Hungarians possessed some kind of distinctive Oriental trait distinguishing it from the religion of Europeans was implicitly present in the background of this research. A partly nostalgic and illusory construct of the supposed ancient religion and the related notion of shamanism emerged some elements of which were imaginary—and this process of construction inevitably involved even the best of researchers.

1 This study was prepared under the aegis of a NKFI (NRDIO = National Research, Development and Innovation Office) project (No. 132535) entitled “Folk beliefs, folk religion, mentality, 16th–21st century. Digital databases, encyclopaedic overviews.” I wish to thank the members of the “East–West” Research Group as well as Lajos Gyórfi, Director of the Karacs Ferenc Museum of Püspökladány, Julianna Örsi and Gábor Vargyas for providing advice and help as well as further materials for proving my case, correcting my mistakes and the final shaping of the paper.

2 Nagy, *Egy folyó több élete*, 384.

3 Pócs, “The Hungarian Táltos,” 149–96.

This factor, however, is closely tied in with an ‘internal’ flaw of the research process—the ideological application of scholarly presuppositions, which can very easily lead to the creation of misconstrued reconstructions, since researchers will be prone to find items of proof to support their desired assumptions. (In this case, instead of surveying the totality of their research material and judging accordingly what kind of conclusions to draw from it, assuming the existence of shamanism prior to the adoption of Christianity and the presence of the notion of the world tree at the time of the Conquest.) In other words, in such cases the researcher assumes an inverse research attitude. British historian Ronald Hutton summarized the related problems as follows, and precisely in the context of analyzing the study of an assumed Hungarian shamanism,

“That tradition serves, however, to reinforce a situation in which scholars are able to construct hypotheses more or less according to their personal or ideological predispositions, whether these be to think in terms of ethnic, national or supranational identity, pan-human experience or local particularism, archaic survival or historical evolution. In this situation the terms »shaman«, »shamanism«, and »shamanic« correspond neither to agreed conceptual categories nor to precise intellectual tools so much as to materials upon an artist’s palette, with which academics create compositions of emotif and polemical power.”⁴

Mistaken theories of the lay public can easily infiltrate academic discourse due precisely to the above-mentioned ideological overtones and may even come to influence the course of ‘professional’ research. The topic of the ‘ancient religion’⁵ is particularly apt to provoke such pseudo-scientific notions. Ethnology and anthropology are in a delicate position, since some of their topics, including the ancient Hungarian religion, are particularly ‘interesting’ even for the general public. The rich source material of contemporary popular religion is likewise tempting, and those interested can take their pick as they please, without any particular scholarly method. This time, however, I shall explore all of this merely as erroneous views incorporated into genuine scholarship, i.e., as the unwitting collaboration of the two parties—I do not otherwise touch upon this subject area, one which has assumed gigantic dimensions by now, or its representatives.

At this point I need to clarify that the juxtaposition of lay, pseudo-scientific and erroneous categories with those of professional researchers, with the methods and genuine research achievements of ‘genuine’ academic scholarship is a mere hypothetical construct created in order to highlight the central claim of this paper.

4 Hutton, *Shamans. Siberian Spirituality and the Western Imagination*, 147.

5 The term used by scholars for the assumed pagan religion of Hungarians.

In fact, these boundaries are not sharp, even the ranks of the so-called ‘genuine’ scholars include laymen, pseudo-scholars and fabricators of false notions; while even laymen with scant background knowledge often attained results that made significant contributions to research (there is no room to discuss these because of space limitations). Thus, when I illustrate the ways in which errors arise through the examples of misguided research findings, I am not attacking individuals, but raising objections to particular methods. Likewise, I do not limit my criticism to the follies of ‘lay’ scholars. The very essence of my message is that, more often than not, genuine scholarship and pseudo-scholarship are intertwined and produce ideologically inspired misconstrued theories—usually unawares, following automatisms, and very rarely with the intention of conscious manipulation.

A deferential research attitude which considers one or another ‘great’ and acknowledged researcher infallible and their results irrefutable can be almost as harmful as ideological considerations. It may seem paradoxical, but, whilst criticizing false notions, I would like to promulgate the right of scholars to make mistakes and, in the same context, the obligation of critique and self-critique. There is simply no such thing as an infallible researcher. While recognizing and refuting research errors and the correction of any such mistakes as were recognized promote the cause of scholarship, scholars who stubbornly hang on to their notions as the only possible true way, will themselves fall into the trap of the illusion of infallibility. They are likely to drag their audience into the same fallacy, indeed, often the scholarly public as well, since even this latter is more likely to credit ‘great individuals’. Such deference to authority is even more likely to affect other (non-specialist) local or foreign scholars—i.e., when familiarity with the facts, necessary for the evaluation of research results, is lacking.

Reconstruction from Arnold Ipolyi to Vilmos Diószegi

It is in the spirit of the ideas expounded above that I am going to present the evolution of the notion of the world tree, roughly in the chronological order in which it took place. The framework for this exploration is provided by reconstructions of the ‘ancient religion’ of Hungarians as well as of pre-Conquest and Conquest-era shamanism and of the figure of the *táltos*—a process which began in the latter part of the eighteenth century and is still ongoing today.⁶ In my judgement, the world tree, which did not appear as part of this reconstruction until the mid-twentieth century, is the weakest link in the chain and offers examples to illustrate all of the above

6 I have given accounts of this in several of my papers, including refutations of certain arguments; most recently in Pócs, “The Hungarian *Táltos*.”

outlined scholarly misconceptions. Of the various attempts at reconstruction,⁷ Antal Csengery's work⁸ displays in its most fully fledged form the notion of a Hungarian ancient religion of a Ural–Altaic nature. By the end of the nineteenth century the idea of ancient Hungarian shamanism had become widely known in various professional circles. The figure of the *táltos* became selected for the role of the pagan Hungarian shaman who at first functioned as a sacrificing priest. The figure of the assumed sacrificier of the ancient religion came to be associated with *táltos* beliefs current at the time by Arnold Ipolyi, such as being born with teeth, the *táltos* child dying at the age of seven, the notions of *táltos* battles, of treasure-digging and the fairy-tale motif of the *táltos* horse.⁹

Even back in the mid-nineteenth century, with the exception of the idea of digging for treasure, these beliefs were already little more than legend motifs, rather than the traits of an active magical/religious specialist. Of Turkic (or possibly Finno-Ugric) origin, the word *táltos*¹⁰ existed already in the Hungarian spoken at the time of the Conquest—and we have a handful of data of the personal names of *Táltos* from the Middle Ages.¹¹ However, we know nothing from these terms about the type of specialist the Conquest-era *táltos* actually was. They do not appear in the sources as active, living magical practitioners in their community until the witchcraft trial documents of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. Judging by the data found in these, they may equally well have acted as healers, diviners, seers, weather magicians or treasure diggers. Some of them, born with a 'mark' (e.g., with a tooth or with a caul), were believed to have been chosen and were even able to keep in touch with the spirit world through their dreams and visions. They could be initiated into knowledge in the Christian or non-Christian other world.¹² This practice had practically stopped by the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Folklore collectors reported but a handful of *táltos* involved in divination and treasure hunting. However, a rich array of *táltos* legends (mostly about their battles in the shape of two opposing *táltos* bulls or horses), as well as *táltos* beliefs (about the *táltos* being born with teeth or wandering off at the age of seven), were found by researchers in many varieties, particularly in the central and southern parts of the country.

7 For an overview of related eighteenth–nineteenth century works complete with numerous quotes and illustrations from the works of Dániel Cornides, János Horváth, Ferenc Kállay, Arnold Ipolyi, Antal Csengery, Kandra Kabos and Lajos Kálmány, see: Diószegi, ed., *Az ősi magyar hitvilág*.

8 Csengery, *Az urál–altáji népek ősvallásáról*. For a description of details, see: Diószegi, *Az ősi magyar hitvilág*, 265–91.

9 Ipolyi, *Magyar mythologia*, 234–37, 447–52.

10 See: Róna-Tas and Berta, *West Old Turkic*, 845.

11 See: Pais, "A táltos meg az orvos," 73–87.

12 For more detail on this, see: Pócs, "The Hungarian shamanism;" Pócs, "Shamanism or Witchcraft," 221–89.

Rites for keeping in contact with the spirit world are characteristic of magical/religious specialists active in any part of the world, including the Christian seers known all over Europe. Nevertheless, it was on this basis that researchers in the nineteenth century began to equate the *táltos* with the Siberian shamans. In other words, the visions they experienced in a trance or dream state, their ‘other worldly’ journeys were accorded a determining role as unique *táltos* attributes in the study of the ancient Hungarian religion. As regards the motifs later associated with the *táltos*, the shaman drum came to be an important element of the reconstruction of the ancient religion in the wake of Gyula Sebestyén’s a 1900 paper on the ‘magic drum’.¹³ By the twentieth century, Hungarian ethnographers had come to see the *táltos* as the shaman of the ancient Hungarian religion supposedly active in the age of the Conquest. In their publications the above-mentioned motifs, particularly the battles of the *táltos*, had by then become parts of the reconstruction of the ancient religion.¹⁴

Géza Róheim’s book on Hungarian folk beliefs and folk customs published in 1925 presented the contemporary state of affairs regarding the reconstruction in its chapter “Táltos.”¹⁵ By comparing Hungarian data with those of the linguistic relatives of Hungarians, based on the characteristic traits of the shamanism of various peoples speaking Ural–Altaic languages he constructed the ideal-type of the Eurasian shaman,¹⁶ and it was in the light of this idealized model of shamanism that he drew the figure of the *táltos* of the ancient religion, comprising traits of the belief figure of the contemporary *táltos*, related legend motifs and the data of two eighteenth-century *táltos* trials. He proclaimed that the Hungarian *táltos* preserved Finno-Ugric based Turkic shamanism and was its westernmost representative and considered the narrative motifs of the *táltos* surviving into the twentieth century to be remnants of a shamanism that still existed at the time of the Conquest and at the time Hungarians adopted Christianity (in the tenth and eleventh centuries). This reconstruction did not yet include the world tree which later came to play a central role in the initiation rite of the *táltos* as a shaman.

The world tree appears in Hungarian folklore

Róheim’s comparative method and his inverse research approach proved to be an inspiration for folklorists who aspired to flesh out this construct with certain elements of existing shamanisms which otherwise did not constitute parts of Hungarian

13 Sebestyén, “A magyar varázsdob,” 433–46.

14 See e.g.: Kálmány, “Összeférhetetlen tátosainkról,” 260–66.

15 Róheim, *Magyar néphit és népszokások*, 8–20.

16 Such elements include the shaman drum (Buryat), the initiation (Chukch), battles in animal form (Yakut and Sami), shamanic headgear (Teleut) and diviners (Khanti) etc., see: Róheim, *Magyar néphit*, 8–20.

folk beliefs. There was no trace of a world tree in Hungarian folk beliefs, while it played a very significant role in the shamanism of certain Ural-Altaic peoples. These researchers were also aware of related European notions—thus, for instance, they knew of Edda, the Old Nordic world tree, as well as the generally wide-spread distribution of world tree notions. This became mixed and mingled with ideas of a probably even more universal tree of life, or notions of a tree cult in general, which further expanded the circle.¹⁷ All of this acted as an inspiration to look for and find the world tree also in Hungarian ancient religion.

These motifs had come to the focus of attention through the work of scholars of textual folklore and archaeologists even before researchers of folk beliefs and vernacular religion began to pay attention. In its earliest period, Hungarian fairy tale research followed in the footsteps of the Finnish historical-geographical school when it looked, primarily in India and Western Asia, for the origin of one or another type of fairy tale and the directions in which it had spread. Later, in the 1920's and 1930's the excellent folklorist, Sándor Solymossy, clearly inspired by researchers of the ancient religion, began to look for the 'eastern' elements of Hungarian folk tales, some of which were later incorporated into the broader concept of the *táltos* as an ancient Hungarian shaman which had already emerged by then. Solymossy pointed out four motifs or *sujets* which were missing from the European corpus of fairy tales, as far as he was aware at the time, and thus seemed to him to be uniquely Hungarian—the motifs of 'bathing in mare's milk'; 'cushions jumping out'; '*táltos* battle' and 'the tree with no top', in other words 'the tree that reached up to the sky.'¹⁸ As far as this last is concerned, the following account may be offered based on Ágnes Kovács's entry in the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* and Katalin Benedek's summary from 2003. The beginning of the fairy tale provides a common frame for a wide variety of *sujets*—the hero uses his axe to cut notches into the trunk of a tree that reaches up to the sky or climbs higher and higher along it using some other means (e.g., magic shoes); on the branches of the tree he sees new worlds, a forest, a palace and various supernatural creatures; until finally, after a great many adventures he obtains what he had set out for.¹⁹

These adventures and the subsequent sections of the tale have many variants and subtypes registered in the relevant folk-tale catalogues. In our present context the first two types of *sujets* deserve the most attention: a tree that reaches up to the

17 According to Szőke, Voigt, and Tolley the world tree is an ancient Indo-European legacy: Szőke, "Spuren des Heidentums," 126–27; Voigt, "Az élet és az élet fája," I–II; Tolley, *Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic*, Vol. I–II, 108. It was also known among German, Slavic and Romanian peoples. See e.g.: Pócs "The Hungarian shamanism."

18 Solymossy, "Magyar ősvallási elemek," 133–52; Solymossy, "A magyar ősi hitvilág," 340–82.

19 Kovács, "Baum: Der himmelhohe Baum," 1381–86; Benedek, "Az égig érő fa," 76–100.

sky grows in the king's courtyard and the king promises his daughter's hand to anyone who will fetch from the top of the tree the fruit of eternal youth or of a healing plant; and, in the other, a dragon living on top of the tree abducts the princess and the hero must liberate her (this *sujet* often includes the motif of the hero's 'dismemberment'),²⁰ while in certain variants the hero acquires a horse once on top of the tree. According to other, related fairy tale *sujets*, a poor fisherman goes up to heaven where he tells St Peter, the Virgin Mary or some other heavenly being about his wish. Various 'lie tales'²¹ also begin with the motif of climbing up to heaven on the stalk of some plant (e.g., a beanstalk). Solymossy placed these tales and tale motifs within the framework of the 'ancient religion' (mentioning only the Hungarian variants in his 1922 study), and sought to justify the role played by 'the tree with no top' in Hungarian shamanism by drawing a parallel with the Ural-Altaic world tree or shaman tree.²² In the chapter "The ancient belief world of the Hungarians" in the comprehensive multi-authored volume "Hungarian Ethnography" Solymossy published his reconstruction of the ancient religion, now complete with the motif of the world tree, in 1937.²³ In the same work, the chapter on "Folk tales" was written by János Berze Nagy²⁴ who also discussed, briefly, the tale of the tree that reached up to the sky among the 'remnants of the ancient religion.' His writing, however, is less coherent, his mythological parallels are cited from a range of different sources and his audiences did not seem to find him as thought-provoking and inspiring as Solymossy's more impressive and well-organized texts (Vilmos Diószegi did not refer to him, either).

Solymossy's writings may have been the inspiration for Sándor Szűcs's interest in the world tree, starting in the 1940s. In 1936, as a museologist ethnographer, he began publishing belief texts that he had collected from shepherds in the Sárrét and Nagyunság regions about witches, *táltos*, healers and dragons. In 1945 he published an overview in the journal *Ethnographia* summarising the texts that contained motifs of the world tree, shaman tree and the related act of initiating the *táltos*, under the title "Égbenyúló fa a sárréti néphitben" [The sky-high tree in the folk beliefs of the Sárrét region.]²⁵ The only bibliographical reference in this article is Solymossy's text

20 In the international catalogue of folk tales: Aarne and Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale*, 468; in the Hungarian catalogue of folk tales: MNK 468 I*–MNK 462II*.

21 The 'lie tale' is a category within the genre of folk tales: a witty tale usually about the opposite of experiential reality, or about non-existent absurdities (Aarne and Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale*, 1875–1999).

22 Solymossy, "Keleti elemek népmeséinkben," 30–44; Solymossy, "Magyar ősvallási elemek"; Solymossy, "A magyar ősi hitvilág," 340–82.

23 Solymossy, "A magyar ősi hitvilág."

24 Berze Nagy, "Mese," 226–89.

25 Szűcs, "Az égbenyúló fa," 23–6.

of 1937. He adopted Solymossy's views and identified the trees featuring in his belief narratives with the former's fairy-tale tree that reached up to the sky.

Let us take a look at a few of these colorful stories. Szűcs quotes from the village records at Sárretudvari from 1821 that one Balázs Hő can see everything from the top of a tall tree and "said that on the tall tree that he knows for sure, the sun shines even at night, and he will go up there and turn the judge into a he-dog..." (Szűcs calls this *táltoskodás* [acting as a *táltos*].)²⁶ In the next data item we hear the story of a shepherd who "used to roam along with the flock even as a child around the sedge-meadows of Bihar and Békés. And in these immense marshes he would often bump into an old crane-catcher called Bütöm..." And it was from him that he had heard that,

"[...] somewhere in the world there was this wondrous great tree which had nine branches in all directions, and each was as big as a forest. Once they started swinging and swaying, that gave rise to a great wind. This is such a marvellously great big tree that not only the moon, even the sun used to travel through its branches. But no one can find this tree or know where it is unless he was born with teeth and took nothing other than milk in his mouth for a whole nine years. And anyone will tell you that that kind of person is a *táltos*."²⁷

In another text collected by Szűcs it is said of an old willow-tree that that is where witches gather at night to quarrel. People hear the sound of pipes and bells and a '*táltos* stud' also turns up out of nowhere (thus, here the *táltos* are the witches' enemies).²⁸ Szűcs includes in this group data items which feature the *táltos* on a tree or a treetop. One of these is a story about Vicsak, the *táltos* of Sárret, who was sitting on top of a willow-tree on a thin little branch. Some people had hidden under the tree to protect themselves from a cloudburst and heard Vicsak singing above them,

"Let the rain bubble,
let the wind up and down rest,
let the humans' fur coat
and the beasts' fur get soaked."²⁹

Although Szűcs included these texts in the group marked by the world tree, he did not explicitly state that these trees were 'world trees.' He categorized as 'lookout

26 Szűcs, "Ősi mintájú ábrázolások," 23.

27 Szűcs, "Ősi mintájú ábrázolások," 23.

28 Szűcs, "Ősi mintájú ábrázolások," 25.

29 *Eső bugyborékolják, / Széll lenn, fenn nyugodják, / Ember szüre, jószág szöre / Hadd ázzék...*, Szűcs, "Az égbenyúló fa," 25–6.

tree' a tree that was later recategorized as a shaman tree by Diószegi. (A lookout tree was a tree that had notches cut into it, or spikes attached to it on a pole, to fashion a ladder-like contraption that shepherds, marsh-dwellers and other people of the meadows would climb up to orient themselves).³⁰ At the same time, however, Szűcs also suggested that "people passing down the traditions of the Sárrét region may have known some kind of ceremony in relation to the tree that reached up to the sky", and comes to the conclusion, "as a belief notion of some kind related to the figure of the *táltos*, the tree that reached up to the sky was preserved at Sárrét down to our own time, along with the memory of the associated ceremony."³¹

Reading Sándor Szűcs's texts we may grow sceptical whether these are one hundred percent authentic. His pre-World War II manuscripts have perished, along with all other materials of the museum of Karcag,³² thus we cannot compare his notes with the published texts. This is why I only advance my doubts as cautious suppositions. The two most problematic points are the following.

1. The unexpected appearance of texts featuring world-tree data shortly after Solymossy's publications on the 'tree with no top.' Szűcs's writings featuring *táltos* written between 1936–1940 completely lack even the mere mention of a world tree or '*táltos* tree.' All manner of *táltos* beliefs known on the Great Plain of Hungary occur in these narratives,³³ but the trees under which witches gather, for instance, are not attributed a world tree role. The *táltos* Vicsak, who first appears in a 1936 paper, is not yet sitting up in a tree or singing a 'shaman song' of rain magic—he is simply seen roaming and offering fortune-telling.³⁴ By the time the 1945 paper is written, all of this assumes, although in a slightly sceptical tone, a more 'shamanic' character.
2. The style of the texts. Sándor Szűcs himself repeatedly made it clear that his texts were not verbatim transcriptions of the utterances of his informants, but his own writings or at least transcripts (e.g., he earned a great deal of professional respect by his overview, *A régi Sárrét világa* [The World of Old Sárrét].)³⁵ The stories he put in the mouth of old shepherds also frequently appeared re-written and stylized, their narrative manner reminiscent of the colorful, somewhat

30 Szűcs, "Ősi mintájú ábrázolások," 25.

31 Szűcs, "Ősi mintájú ábrázolások," 26.

32 According to a letter written by Sándor Szűcs in 1957 to Gyula Kaposvári, then director of Damjanich János Museum of Szolnok.

33 Fighting, vocation, trial (but not on a '*táltos* tree') etc.; for data on all of this, see: NNVA group *Táltos*.

34 See: Szűcs, "Táltosok és boszorkányok a Nagysárréten," 151–55; Szűcs, "Nagysárréti babonák és mendemondák," 299–304; Szűcs, *A régi Sárrét*, 38–41, 125–34.

35 Szűcs, *A régi Sárrét*.

loquacious, quasi-literary style known from his own publications (his contemporaries referred to him as a ‘great story-teller’), rather than of the authentic texts of any ethnographic collection, even if we think of the most articulate informants. From this point of view, the rain song quoted above is the most revealing. This supposed shamanic song was later repeatedly quoted, based on Sándor Szűcs, by Hungarian researchers of religion and folk poetry as evidence of ancient Hungarian shamanism. (Not to mention that a weather magician is not necessarily a shaman.) Based on my familiarity with several thousand verbal charms and magic songs³⁶ (due to these stylistic features uncharacteristic of folk poetry and the complete lack of analogous cases) I dare say that this is not a preserved shaman song, nor is it the poetic imagination of the ‘folk’ that brought it into existence but rather, at least partially, that of Sándor Szűcs.

There are a few further factors that support this view. Not much has survived of Sándor Szűcs’s original notes and records. The section of his legacy to be found today at Püspökladány includes but a few sheets of paper, none of which offer verbatim records, only brief sentences by the collector or, often, he notes down topics or themes only.³⁷ The notebook recording his collecting work at Kide, which forms part of the inventory of the Ethnological Archives, is similar—he describes in his own words the belief or rite in question (sometimes with an interjected quote), or simply names the topics about which he collected information.³⁸ In a letter written to Sándor Szűcs in 1942, László K. Kovács offers an enthusiastic laudation of Szűcs’s book *A régi Sárrét világa* [The World of Old Sárrét].³⁹ He remarks that this is the way in which Hungarian ethnology should be pursued, much rather than in the dry, ‘academic’ manner used by the Germans—in other words he commends Szűcs’s stylized, story-telling manner.⁴⁰ This is just one of many opinions prevalent at the time, but it clearly reflects a general ambiance in which Szűcs could easily have felt justified in using his not-so-exact manner of writing. In this context I must mention a relevant point from much later—the excellent archaeologist István Fodor, an expert on the Hungarian Conquest wrote about Sándor Szűcs’s texts, in response to one of my articles,⁴¹ that he could not fathom why certain scholars will not accept Szűcs’s data as authentic. “Perhaps his main »sin« was”, he mused, “that alongside

36 See: Pócs, *Ráolvasások*.

37 Notes held in the archives of Karacs Ferenc Museum, Püspökladány under inventory no. 84.4100.1–3.

38 Collected at Kide, Museum of Ethnography, EA 31188.

39 Szűcs, *A régi Sárrét*.

40 Karacs Ferenc Museum, Püspökladány, 84.1448.2.

41 Pócs, “The Hungarian Táltos.”

being an excellent scholar he also had a literary vein and wrote good prose?”⁴² I should have replied at the time that good prose is no sin, indeed it is a virtue, but if the folklorist goes on to write in place of his informants, or if he re-writes their words—yes, that is indeed a capital sin in the world of scholarship.

The emergence of such stylized variants of Szűcs's texts may also partly be due to the influence of Vilmos Diószegi, but in this respect we are speaking about far more than mere style. Diószegi used Szűcs's data to create his own construct and actively supported Szűcs's ambitions in relation to *táltos*, that way extending to him his own inverse research attitude. His visit to Karcag and his correspondence with Szűcs allowed him to get acquainted with the latter's unpublished material and he encouraged Szűcs to collect further *táltos* material, as he considered him to be the man best acquainted with the shepherd traditions of the Great Hungarian Plain and their most committed guardian. He also asked him to try and collect more of certain specific types of data (the *táltos* 'is sleeping like one who had been dismembered' or on the *táltos* drinking nothing but milk until he is nine years old). In 1953, upon Szűcs's request, Diószegi sent him a photograph of a 'tree with no top', that he referred to as shaman tree.⁴³ In 1957 he encouraged him to gather his material "that fits the [topic of the] belief world of the conquering Hungarians" as he would happily support its publication in book form.⁴⁴ All of this had an inspiring effect on Szűcs, who clearly committed himself to the cause of expanding the shamanism construct.

We see the effect of similar processes in connection with the world tree representations the inclusion of which into the ethnographic discourse was also initiated by Sándor Szűcs, but it had a precedent in an archaeological publication. Gyula László (leading archaeologist and expert on the Migration Period in European history during the first millennium AD) was the first to feature a world tree relevant to Hungarians in a 1942 publication—an image carved into an Avar container found in Mokrin⁴⁵ in the Bánát region. Named 'tree of life' by László, the tree stands on top of a hillock surrounded by animals, as well as the sun and perhaps also the moon. László speaks of the connection of the image to world trees appearing in the shaman drum images of Inner Asia, of the Altaic Avars and other peoples and of a shared legacy from the age of the joint Ural–Altaic existence of these peoples, but he

42 Fodor, "Sámánok voltak-e a táltosaink," 510–23.

43 The photograph is likely to have come from a Soviet publication, however, the provenance and the original source of the image could not be ascertained from the Diószegi–Szűcs correspondence available so far.

44 Letters from Vilmos Diószegi to Sándor Szűcs, Karacs Ferenc Museum, Püspökladány, 84.730.1–2; 84.729.1–2.

45 In Homokrév what is today in Voivodina (Serbia).

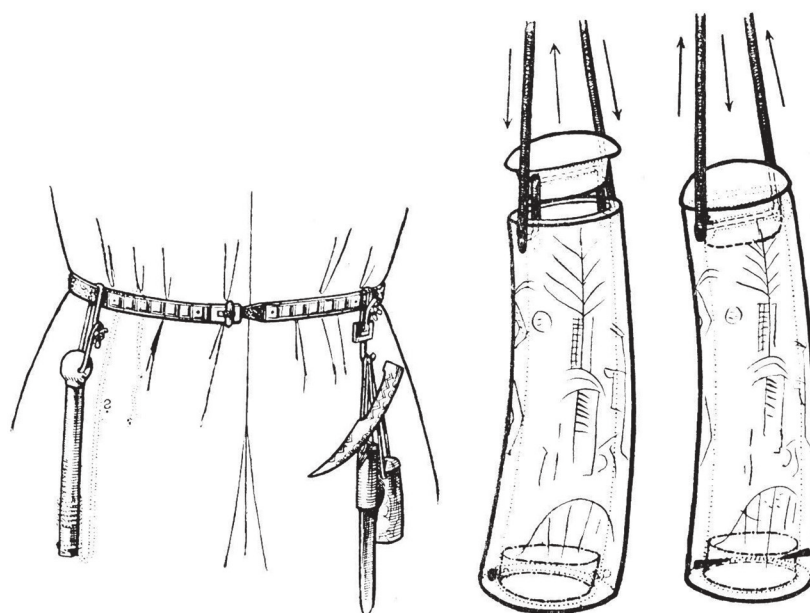


Figure 1 The Mokrin container, based on Gyula László's work (László, "A népvándorlás lovas népeinek ősvallása").

also raises the possibility that, in line with his by now discredited theory of 'double conquest',⁴⁶ the container may have been the personal possession of a Hungarian individual involved in the early conquest.⁴⁷

Gyula László's publication gave Sándor Szűcs the motivation to publish the representation of this container in a spread-out version in an article⁴⁸ entitled "Representations of ancient motifs on shepherd's tools", along with the image of a tree he had collected in the Sárret region, probably with the idea of the ancient connection in mind.

In this paper Szűcs published further similar incised, carved, or inlaid ornamentation from his own collection—copies made of the everyday objects of old shepherds or their descendants. After some hesitation he decided to regard these images, carved

46 László, "A »kettős honfoglalás«-ról," 161–90. According to this mistaken theory, a group of Hungarians had been present in the Carpathian Basin earlier than the commonly accepted late ninth century, along with late Avars since the seventh century.

47 László, "A népvándorlás lovas népeinek ősvallása," 63–105. A first, essentially identical version of the paper was written by László in 1942, for a planned memorial volume on Antal Hekler which was eventually not published. In 1947 the paper was published in an independent volume by Erdélyi Tudományos Intézet [Transylvanian Scientific Institute]. Szűcs, and later Diószegi and Timaffy are referring to this later edition.

48 Szűcs, "Ősi mintájú ábrázolások," 160–66.

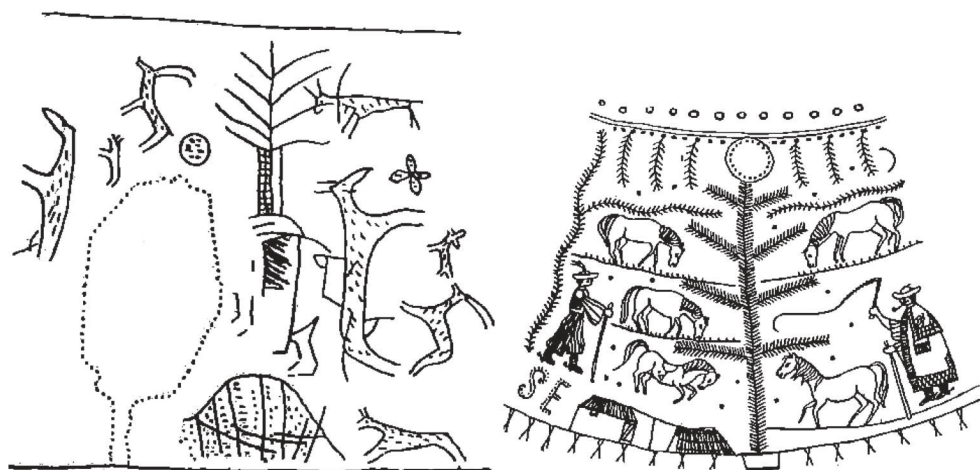


Figure 2 Spread-out rendering of the Mokrin container following Gyula László (László, "A népvándorlás lovas népeinek ősvallása") and the ornamentation of a 'horn salt cellar' from Sárrétudvari, collected by Sándor Szűcs, in Szűcs (Szűcs, "Ősi mintájú ábrázolások pásztori eszközökön," 161).

or etched into containers and mirror boxes as well as the wood or bone inlay of whip handles or staffs as evidence of the identity of Hungarian *táltos* = shaman, and the legacy of Hungarian ancient religion. In 1941 László K. Kovács invited Sándor Szűcs to Kolozsvár (Cluj, then part of Hungary), to take part in the ethnographic collecting work of the Erdélyi Tudományos Intézet (ETI) [Transylvanian Scientific Institute]. Szűcs took the opportunity and launched a tour collecting folk beliefs at Kide, Kolozs County with plans to publish.⁴⁹ In a letter written to Szűcs, K. Kovács expressly urged the exploration and preservation of the ancient legacy of the Hungarians.⁵⁰ Besides Gyula László's similar efforts at Kolozsvár, this may have inspired Szűcs to collect and publish data belonging to this sphere of ideas. Problems of authenticity or stylization may again emerge with respect to these visual representations. When presenting his first overview⁵¹ of these drawings, Szűcs still expressed certain doubts. He mentioned that the shepherds themselves who owned the objects he had copied did not refer to the plants there as 'trees with no top' and that in fact they were flowers much rather than trees. For instance, the maker of one of the objects said, "We put a fine, big flower on the middle of it." "So, he did not call a tree what we had taken for one."⁵² In another instance, "The depiction of the vegetation reflects the way in which the

49 Under the title "Természezeletti erők a borsavölgyi nép hiedelmeiben" [Supernatural forces in the beliefs of the people of Borsavölgy].

50 Karacs Ferenc Museum, Püspökladány, 84.1448.1.

51 Szűcs, "Az égbenyúló fa," 23–6.

52 Szűcs, "Ősi mintájú ábrázolások," 164.

rosemary is represented in the shepherd art of the Tiszántúl region. But this does not necessarily preclude us from considering the plant in the center, in terms of its size and form, a tree, even though it does seem to grow out of a flowerpot or box.”⁵³ In other words, the idea lingering in the background here is that although they do not represent a world tree, they may as well be seen as one. Finally, the author comes to the conclusion (referring to his own texts of uncertain authenticity) that since the tree that reached up to the sky was known in the Sárrét ‘as a belief notion,’ it may be assumed that the similarity with the world tree of the Mokrin container is no accident, but the imprint of a similar notion.⁵⁴ Based on Szűcs’s doubts, however, we, too, need to be skeptical whether the incised images indeed represent a world tree and shaman tree. Seconding the author’s own doubts, we, too, are compelled to question whether the figures incised on these objects do actually represent a world tree and a shaman tree. The uncertainty is further enhanced by the fact that neither of the objects from which the author made the drawing is in evidence any more either in the Karcag museum or anywhere else, nor are there surviving photographs.

The questions of stylization which occurred in the context of texts surface once again with regard to the drawings. Lajos Vargyas mentions poorly stylized drawings⁵⁵ associated with Szűcs’s publication in two letters to him, so stylization was definitely something Szűcs was known to practice. The presumably original, first drawings have been lost⁵⁶ with two exceptions which can still be viewed among Sándor Szűcs’s legacy at the Püspökladány Museum. One is the original of the image published in the book “Pusztai krónika” [Chronicle of the Plains]⁵⁷—a drawing transferred from a horn saltcellar to tracing paper and traced with ink. Comparing this and the published version it becomes clear that (at least in this one case) Sándor Szűcs went rather overboard in completing a design that on the original had worn off.

As far as the other image is concerned, I am not aware of the existence of a published version, but the original itself deserves attention. A marginal note on the page reveals that Szűcs was truly eager to find a world tree with a sun and a moon wherever he could.

Visual imagery seems to have enticed Sándor Szűcs even more to become enmeshed in the inverse research attitude and deferentially following certain trends

53 Szűcs, “Az égbenyúló fa,” 161.

54 Szűcs, “Az égbenyúló fa,” 166.

55 Letters from Lajos Vargyas to Sándor Szűcs from 1956 and ’57. (Karacs Ferenc Museum, Püspökladány, 84.2395.1–3).

56 According to the inventory book of the Karacs Ferenc Museum of Püspökladány, the legacy includes a few more examples of a world tree, but in the folder corresponding to their inventory number (845134.1–7.) all I could find in October 2022 was the single drawing I mentioned.

57 Szűcs, *Pusztai krónika*.

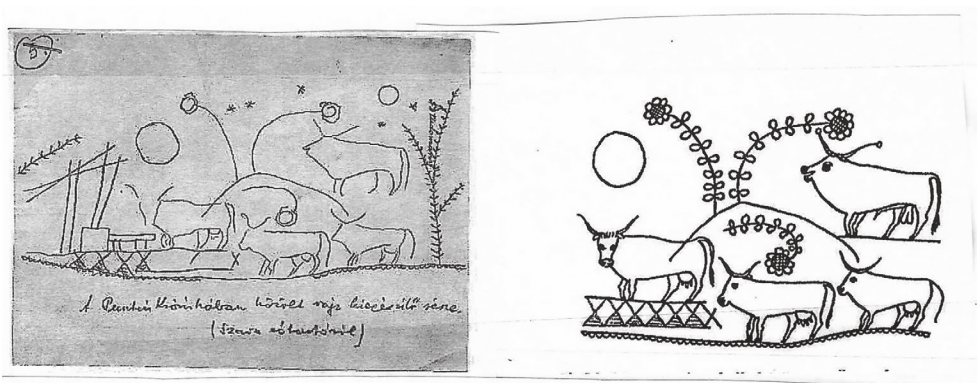


Figure 3 The original and the published image from the horn saltcellar (Füzesgyarmat-Szeghalom); Karacs Ferenc Museum, Püspökladány, Inv. no. 84.5134.1–7 (Szűcs, *Pusztai krónika*).

than did texts. This may be proved with an instance of the image not of a *táltos* tree, but of a battle between two *táltos*. Szűcs published this drawing in a brief review of his data on *táltos* battles in 1952.⁵⁸ In the text commenting on the image Szűcs speaks about the case of a *táltos* called Pista Takács. “The shepherd Demeter was so intrigued by the *táltos* battle that this was the scene that he incised on the side of his saltcellar in his youthful years by way of decoration.”⁵⁹ By contrast the truth is the following. “At the request of Uncle Sándor [Szűcs] Uncle Lőrinc Vákánt carved two fighting bulls on a container for scabies ointment. Whether he originally ever knew of such a legend, I don’t know.”⁶⁰ (If Szűcs’s published statement is also true, then it must refer to another container and the commissioned ‘fake’ drawing of the carving by the ‘shepherd Demeter’ below was made from memory, or the object has been lost in the meanwhile.)

The sum of our doubts relating to Sándor Szűcs’s contributions brings us to conclude that unfortunately, the use of these data in academic reasoning is untenable and it threatens to undermine the very foundations of the construct of the world tree.

Vilmos Diószegi’s *táltos* construct

Using Róheim’s and Solymossy’s model as an ideological foundation Diószegi based his reconstruction of the figure of the *táltos* of the ancient religion and at the time of the Conquest (mostly relying on contemporary belief data and also incorporating

58 Regarding an object held in the museum of Karcag which Szűcs acquired from its owner in the early post-war years.

59 Szűcs, “Ősi mintájú ábrázolások,” 4.

60 By courtesy of Dr. Julianna Örsi, retired director of the museum at Túrkeve, in a letter dated November 2022.

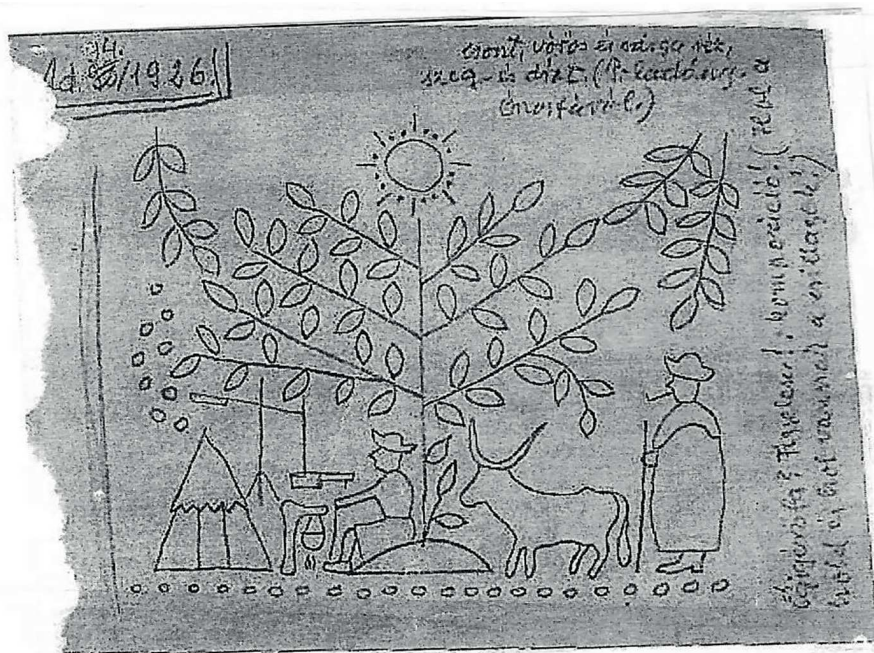


Figure 4 Original drawing from the leaded wood ornamentation (Püspökladány), Karacs Ferenc Museum, Püspökladány, Inv. no. 84.4546.1.

Sándor Szűcs's findings). This is someone who is born with a sign (a tooth or possibly six fingers) or has a 'superfluous bone' such as a double line of teeth; they become initiated on the world tree or the shaman tree and come into contact with the spirit world during a public ritual performance through ecstasy induced by drumming. This picture thus featured the world tree as the center of the cosmogony of an assumed ancient Hungarian shaman and the symbolic representation of his path to the spirit world. The shaman tree also appeared, seen as the model or representation of the world tree, as the physically existing means of initiating the shaman.⁶¹

I shall say more about Diószegi's reception later, but I should indicate at this point that recent research has raised considerable doubt around the reconstructed notion of the shamanism of the age of the Conquest associated with the names or Róheim, Solymossy and Diószegi. One of the most conspicuous shortcomings of this construct, also noticed by non-Hungarian researchers,⁶² is that it was based on a

61 Overviews of his research results are: Diószegi, *A sámánhit emlékei*; Diószegi, *A pogány magyarok*. Short overviews for the international public are Diószegi, "Die Überreste des Schamanismus," 97–135; Diószegi, "Hungarian Contribution to the Study of Shamanism," 553–66.

62 See e.g.: Hutton, *Shamans*, 145; de Blécourt, *Tales of Magic*, Chapter 6.

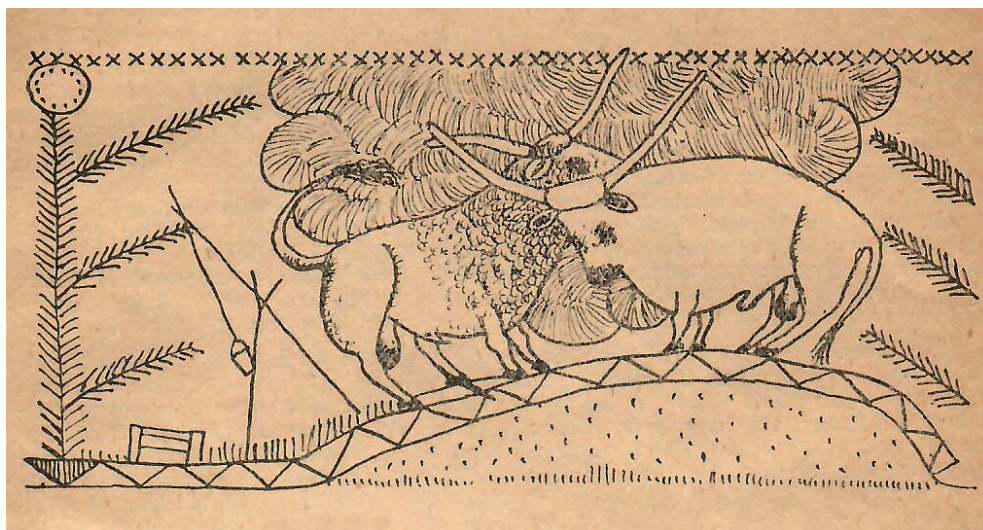


Figure 5 Táltos bulls battling. (Incised decoration on a horn saltcellar.)
Collected by Sándor Szűcs (Szűcs, “Viaskodó táltosok,” 4).

model compiled from the attributes of the shamanism of different peoples and from different time periods. The ideal image of ‘the Eurasian shaman’ does not strictly correspond to the shamanism of any of the linguistic relatives of Hungarians—no such ‘perfect’ shaman has ever existed. The attribution of qualities to the shaman of the ancient Hungarian religion of which no data, relic or trace of any kind has survived, simply to be able to tick off each element of the model is a characteristic example of the vanities of the inverse research attitude.

Another problematic aspect is that the reconstruction has mostly been compiled from contemporary folklore data (and, as I have already mentioned, these referred not to a magic practitioner active in the period, but a mere belief figure and the legends relating to him). It is a perennial problem of ethnographic research that there are usually not enough data to carry out a historical examination of the past, and thus we are compelled to make do with indirect inferences, e.g., based on analogies and comparisons. This may lead to a number of pitfalls—many scholars are unable to stop at the point where they can make no further valid inferences; the pseudo-scholar—and the general public—usually want more and fall into the trap of their preconceptions. Vilmos Diószegi wrote in a summary of his investigations, “as a result of a range of explorations in a number of different directions we have found out that a whole line of traits in our belief world goes back to the time of the Conquest.”⁶³ Accordingly, as Róheim had already pointed out, we are talking about ‘pagan’ relics of the ancient Hungarian religion of the Conquest period.

63 Diószegi, *A pogány magyarok*, 134–35.

One of the most important elements that play a part in the reconstruction, the battle of the *táltos* was a motif in the folk beliefs of the early modern period. Vilmos Diószegi himself contributed a great amount of data in innumerable variants. In fact, researchers had already borrowed certain other attributes of the *táltos* from widely known belief motifs even before Diószegi (such as the *táltos* being born with teeth, their headgear, certain elements of their ‘initiation,’ as well as trance or ecstasy). It was more difficult to prove the relevance of those contemporary data which were not *táltos* beliefs but had been imported from the attributes of other mythical beings, religious/magical specialists, or even from outside the bounds of religion. Characteristic examples are the following: the shaman drum, where attempts to prove its existence relied, beyond a single data item of a drum, on rather remotely connected data on sieves and some children’s rhymes;⁶⁴ the Christian visions of the dead-seer (*halottlátó*) comprised in the reconstruction in the absence of any beliefs testifying to visions in the state of trance on the part of the *táltos*; the traits of the witch seen at Christmas from St Lucy’s chair (e.g., her horns) were associated with the figure of the *táltos* battling in the shape of a bull or were even interpreted as surviving elements of the shaman’s costume.⁶⁵ (Thus, one non-existent thing, as it were, served as proof of the other non-existent thing.)

How do the notion of the world tree and the assumed material existence of the shaman tree appear in this context in Diószegi’s works? After a few papers on particular subjects and a work laying out his methodological foundations,⁶⁶ his first great overview published in 1958 puts the emphasis more on the shaman tree and the related initiation rituals, while the cosmogonic notion of the world tree did not come to play an important role until Diószegi’s 1967 publication—a work on a smaller scale and aimed at a more popular audience (as the most important representation in the ancient Hungarian world view). In 1969 he published a review of the Ural–Altaic parallels of the ‘sun and moon’ and ‘birds’ variants of the world tree complete with some new data.⁶⁷ Two long chapters in his 1958 book (“Climbing the tree that reached up to the sky and initiating the shaman candidate”⁶⁸ and “The *táltos*’ tree that reached up to the sky, his ladder and the shaman tree”⁶⁹) disclose a great number of data about the world tree notions of the various Ural–Altaic-speaking

64 There is absolutely no trace or evidence of the existence of the shaman drum or of a *táltos* drumming like a shaman either at the time of the Conquest or later. For more detail on this, see: Pócs, “The Sieve and the Drum,” 197–212.

65 For more on these dubious points of the reconstruction, see: Pócs, “The Hungarian *Táltos*.”

66 Diószegi, “A honfoglaló magyar nép,” 20–65.

67 Diószegi, *A pogány magyarok*, 11–68.

68 Diószegi, *A sámánhit*, 149–68.

69 Diószegi, *A sámánhit*, 270–93.

peoples (Ostyaks, Samoyeds, Yakuts, Mongolians, Turks, Evenkis, Nanays, etc.). He couples these with initiation rites collected among various Siberian and Inner Asian peoples which the shaman performs using the symbolic equivalent of the world tree, shaman tree (with steps or a ladder) on (or beside) which he passes tests and performs sacrifices. Diószegi presents these items as comparative material testifying to the Hungarian shamanic connections, publishing the Hungarian items in tandem as evidence (this, again, is a manifestation of the inverse research attitude). Diószegi had no data of his own collection directly relating to the world tree or shaman tree, and the few thoughts he gave to initiation concerned not the *táltos*, but popular magical experts such as the *halottlátó* [dead-seer], *garabonciás* [weather magician] or *tudós* [wise man/woman, cunning folk].⁷⁰ These had European, rather than 'shamanistic' parallels (which former Diószegi did not use, indeed, perhaps was not even aware of). The motif of the cunning-man/woman being initiated into knowledge⁷¹ while standing on top of a sprout that grew to the moon or on weeds growing very tall are legend motifs associated with magical specialists or witches all over Europe and internationally (cp. the already mentioned lie-tale of the bean stalk that grew to the sky/moon, which Diószegi himself did not consider pertinent). Even more doubtful is a motif borrowed from a novel by József Nyírő according to which the future was divined by someone climbing on top of a 'holy poplar tree' at the summer solstice using a ladder made from nine types of pines.⁷² There is no doubt whatsoever that this is a literary construct by a person who is a layman from the point of view of folklore studies, which drew on sources such as Solymossy's Hungarian world tree and Transylvanian folklore items with Romanian connections (divination during the summer solstice).

Diószegi's rather meagre database was usefully supplemented by Sándor Solymossy's fairy tales and their analyses (which the latter himself had already declared shamanistic) with regard to both the notion of the world tree and the initiation motifs associated with the world tree or shaman tree, as well as by Sándor Szűcs's drawings and stories involving a world tree, and finally by a few pieces of MS data sent by mail by teacher-ethnographer László Timaffy.⁷³ All of the above constitute almost the most important pieces of evidence of the book chapters mentioned above. Sándor Szűcs's data, regarding which I have signaled my serious misgivings above, were accepted by Diószegi without reservation. To illustrate the supposed connection, Diószegi included every drawing of world trees offered by Szűcs along

70 Diószegi, *A sámánhit*, 149–155, 270–275; as well as Diószegi, *A pogány magyarok*, 87–90.

71 Diószegi, *A sámánhit*, 149.

72 Diószegi, *A sámánhit*, 273–74.

73 Timaffy published his data on the world tree and the *táltos* initiation after the publication of Diószegi's work.

with various Ural-Altaic world tree representations in both of his comprehensive monographs, as the sole Hungarian data for world tree representations featuring the sun and the moon.

Besides the above, Diószegi has but one data item from Nagyszalonta stating that *táltos* Gyurka Árva from Szalonta “was hopping from one tree to the next.”⁷⁴ (Let me note that if a *táltos* is hopping from one tree to the next, this does not mean that any of those trees is necessarily a ‘shaman tree.’)

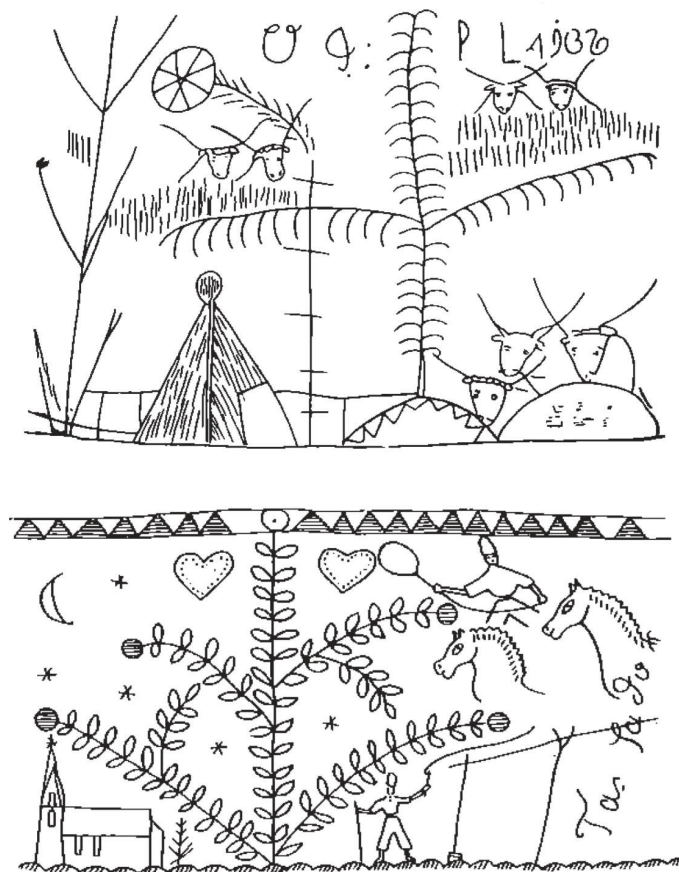


Figure 6 Two world trees complete with sun, moon and animal figures (based on Diószegi, *A sámánhit emlékei*); World tree and shamanic ladder on a saltcellar made of horn (Biharnagybajom, collected by Sándor Szűcs, based on Diószegi, *A sámánhit emlékei*); “Stylized world tree on a container made of horn; the sun on its tip, the moon on its left, stars and horse-heads among its branches” (Berettyóújfalu, collected by Sándor Szűcs, based on Diószegi, *A sámánhit emlékei*).

74 Diószegi, *A sámánhit*, 271; based on Fazekas, “A »lidérc« és a »táltos« a szalontai nép hiedelmében,” 38.

Timaffy's and Szűcs's texts, as well as Szűcs's drawings are the only Hungarian data testifying to the idea of a world tree with the sun and the moon and to an initiation rite associated with the shaman tree. Diószegi speaks of two methods for initiating a *táltos*, based on his data from Siberia and Hungary—one is the rite related to the shaman tree, the other is when the would-be shaman goes into a trance and experiences being called and 'dismembered'. Hungarian parallels to elements such as climbing on a shaman tree or initiation practically exclusively consist of fairy tale motifs mediated by Solymossy or the rather dubious data of Szűcs and Timaffy. The fairy tale hero climbing up the tree that reaches up to the sky is actually the Hungarian shaman who does this in order to acquire his horse (or drum),⁷⁵ as well as to pass a trial and thus become initiated. Diószegi incorporates Solymossy's assumption without question in his reconstruction, little minding that a fairy tale motif from the modern period cannot directly reflect an element of the world view of the conquering Hungarians (Solymossy's critics only noted this considerably later, too). This is "the fairy tale version of the »trial« in the set of beliefs surrounding the *táltos*"—he writes.⁷⁶

As regards the 'dismemberment' type of initiation of the *táltos*, Diószegi had practically no access to any data testifying to folk belief. The handful of data he published on *garabonciás*, dead-seer or two items on *táltos* do not speak of dismemberment (at best they feature someone talking about dismemberment); the few data items springing from Christian visions have nothing to do with the *táltos*; the single data item he had collected himself in this respect states that the *táltos* kidnap a child born with teeth and twist his arms and legs (which is not the same as 'dismemberment').⁷⁷ Diószegi himself admitted that this was a sporadic phenomenon in Hungarian folk beliefs.⁷⁸ He incorporated into his work pieces information sent to him by mail by Szűcs and Timaffy, but even these were not actually about dismemberment even if they could be explained that way. For instance, in one data item coming from Timaffy a cunning shepherd known to be a cunning man from the Szigetköz region is initiated by three witches and they discuss options of possibly torturing him.⁷⁹ Similarly to Szűcs's data, the authenticity of Timaffy's data is highly questionable. His descriptions are too much 'in line' with the contributions from Siberia and Inner Asia—it seems that when publishing his collected data he placed allusions to Diószegi's theses in the mouths of his informants and used them to support Diószegi's theory.

75 In this view great importance was attached to the identification 'drum = horse' in both Diószegi's and Róheim's thoughts, which later also turned out to have been erroneous concerning Hungarian data on horses.

76 Diószegi, *A sámánhit*, 151.

77 Szihalom, Heves megye, Diószegi, *A pogány magyarok*, 45.

78 Diószegi, *A sámánhit*, 73–109.

79 Diószegi, *A pogány magyarok*, 44.

One item from Mongolia, for instance, says that the candidate is sprinkled with blood whilst on top of a tree—by way of a parallel to this Diószegi published a data item from Timaffy: in the Szigetköz region the would-be *táltos* “had to climb, while still a young lad [...], to the tip of a tall poplar tree, there the devil would sprinkle him with blood and this is how he acquired all his knowledge.”⁸⁰

Diószegi also made up for the absence of data on dismemberment by using fairy-tale motifs, relying, besides the previously mentioned dismemberment motif from *The Tree that Reached up to the Sky*, on an episode of the tale about *The Magician and his Pupil*⁸¹ whose hero is first cut into pieces by a witch and is then revived by another hero. Diószegi was aware of this being a tale of Indian origin with an extremely broad distribution, but he identified a characteristic trait which seemed Hungarian to him—the motif of ‘passively acquiring knowledge’. This, however, is of little significance (as opposed to learning magic from books) as a textual motif supposedly proving the existence of shamanism among the ancient Hungarians (in fact both types of knowledge acquisition are widely known in the European legend tradition in the context of several magical or religious specialists).⁸² As regards the few sporadic Hungarian data on dismemberment, the legend tradition of ‘ripping to pieces / dismembering / taking out the bones—reassembling / resurrecting’ were widely known in the nineteenth–twentieth centuries on the Balkans and in the Alps in relation to a varied range of belief figures.⁸³ Certain types of it belonged to the ‘Lord of animals’ tradition still existing in these parts at the time rather than to any assumed shamanistic notions.⁸⁴

Another notion that pertains to dismemberment beliefs in certain parts of Eurasia, as attested by Diószegi’s Nganasan, Teleut, Yakut etc. data, is the notion of the superfluous bone or missing bone (the candidate is dismembered so that they can examine whether he has any superfluous or missing bones). Parallel Hungarian data attest to the (extremely widespread) belief that *táltos* are born with teeth or a double row of teeth.⁸⁵ This is a fairly weak link in the chain of the reconstruction since, as many of Diószegi’s critics have noticed, notions of a superfluous bone or being born with teeth are intermingled in his work,⁸⁶ while data of dismemberment are false or

80 Diószegi, *A sámánhit*, 165–66.

81 Aarne and Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale*, 325.

82 Diószegi, *A sámánhit*, 86–95.

83 Stojanović-Lafazanovska, *Tanatološkiot prazvor na životot*.

84 The entire literature on European notions of the Lord of animals lies outside of the scope of this paper; for more on this, see e.g.: Schmidt, “Der »Herr der Tiere«”, 509–38.

85 Diószegi, *A sámánhit*, 123–48.

86 László, “A magyar táltos alakjáról,” 44–49; Demény, “Európai-e a sámánizmus,” 147. Diószegi himself was also aware of this problem and did in fact provide some sort of an explanation: Diószegi, *A pogány magyarok*, 55.

dubious and are not related to beliefs concerning the *táltos*'s teeth (except for a few data from Timaffy) and so the motif of the *táltos*'s teeth carries little weight as proof.

Diószegi attempted to mobilize data in order to bridge the gap between the assumed shamanism of the age of the Conquest and folk belief data in the modern period. These include quotes from historical sources which he interpreted as possible evidence of the shaman tree. One such source is the account of the pagan uprising in 1061 as reported in the *Illuminated Chronicle* which states, "the common people chose for themselves leaders and erected for them a wooden stand [... and ...] the leaders of the people, seated on high, sang abominable songs against the faith."⁸⁷ Diószegi believed, based on the similarity with Nyírő's data that this 'wooden stand' may have corresponded to the *táltos* tree of eleventh century Hungarians,⁸⁸ but his argumentation is not very convincing. The minutes of a witchcraft trial held at Szentandrás (Békés County) from 1721 indicting one András Suppony for witchcraft included a passage according to which András Suppony and his accomplices used to 'sing in a pagan fashion' in the dark night in the middle of the dense forest.⁸⁹ Diószegi believed that a group of singers may have gathered in the thick forest around a *táltos* tree or shaman tree (not mentioned in the text). Unfortunately, this quote from the supposed minutes of a trial is probably a fake, intentionally modified to seem 'shamanistic'—coming from a transcript that was manipulated post factum.⁹⁰ Naturally, Diószegi himself used the text in good faith, but even so it does not enhance the number of his historical data convincingly.⁹¹

Diószegi saw the various subgroups of data on initiation as a complete whole and as evidence for his ideas. The set of beliefs concerning the way in which the Hungarian would-be shaman received his knowledge emerged in front of our eyes—groups of archaic notions such as 'sleeping at great length', 'dismemberment' and 'superfluous bone'. This led to conclusions like the following, "Thus the ritual of initiating the Hungarian *táltos* has proved, in comparison, to correspond to the initiation ritual of peoples with shamanic beliefs related to Hungarians." "Thus, in the Hungarian *táltos* tree we may see scientific evidence of the remnants of the shaman tree of the related peoples."⁹²

87 *Chronica de gestis Hungarorum*, 184–85.

88 Diószegi, *A sámánhit*, 276; based on the edition of the *Chronicle* in *Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum* I, 360.

89 Diószegi, *A sámánhit*, 275, based on Oláh, "A boszorkányperek Békésvármegyében," 158; for the entire trial, see: 149–61.

90 For more on this, see: Pócs, "Shamanism or Witchcraft," 280–82; Tóth, *Táltosok és rokonaik*, 161–63.

91 Pócs, "Shamanism or Witchcraft," 280–82.

92 Diószegi, *A sámánhit*, 147, 293. I have no space in the present paper to discuss phenomena of extended sleep and shamanic trance.

The use of a large number of data of dubious standing has in itself weakened the results of Diószegi's comparative work regarding the world tree, shaman tree or shaman initiation. Added to this is a tendency for over-generalization, to readily declare certain data to be about the figure of the *táltos* or *sámán* and thereby make it into a general rule. In its mildest form this is manifested when Sándor Szűcs's captions such as 'ornamentation on saltcellar' or 'ornamentation on container made of horn' would appear in Diószegi's work as 'world tree standing on top of a hill' or 'stylized world tree', or the drawing of the 'lookout tree' in Sándor Szűcs's Figure 6 is described as a shaman ladder.⁹³

More extreme examples of such 'shamanification' may be observed in the summaries of individual sections of his analysis. E.g., in the summary of data on dismemberment Diószegi writes, "chosen by supernatural beings, the candidate will sleep for an extended period of time (usually three days). During this time, he is dismembered by the *táltos*. Traces of this are detected even in the lifeless body—lying unconscious, the person is covered in blood. The dismembered body is thereupon re-assembled by the *táltos*, the candidate is re-awakened, now replenished with knowledge."⁹⁴ (The blood-covered body is represented by data on a single dead-seer lying in a trance who was not dismembered and not reassembled by the *táltos*). Also, Timaffy's only data item on the sprinkling of blood gives way to this summary statement: "similarly to the Hungarian notion, the sprinkling or smearing of blood on the would-be shaman is also practiced among peoples with shamanic beliefs."⁹⁵ Once again, we see that the errors of an inverse research attitude based on assumptions can be the source of much confusion, error and erroneous generalization in the work of even the most serious scholars. Furthermore, the acceptance of the erroneous results and additions of Solymossy, Szűcs and Timaffy without reservations seemingly rounded out the whole reconstruction, but in fact made it more uncertain and doubtful. And: it set in motion new harmful processes, on which I will shed light in the next section.

After Vilmos Diószegi

Diószegi, primarily through his painstaking, selfless and fruitful research in Siberia, his charismatic personality, but perhaps also through his commitment to his preconceived notions of historical continuity, has become a canon maker. Most of his contemporaries, as well as the vast majority of scholars working after him, accepted his results without doubt or criticism, treating his construction of the ancient

93 Diószegi, *A pogány magyarok*, illustrations in the Appendix.

94 Diószegi, *A pogány magyarok*, 120.

95 Diószegi, *A sámánhit*, 15.

religion as axiomatic. This served as a basis for the writings of Tekla Dömötör, later of Mihály Hoppál, and other researchers still active today on *táltos* and the ancient religion,⁹⁶ as well as, to an increasing extent, the arguments of ‘pseudo-scientific works’. For some seventy-eighty years, ‘lay’ misunderstandings about the world tree have continued more or less unabated.

Let us first look at the mistakes of those researchers who had already contributed to the instability of Diószegi’s building with a couple of faulty bricks. Even after the publication of Diószegi’s summary works, Sándor Szűcs continued his *táltos* publications—now in support of and supplementing Diószegi’s views that have become well-known—in some of his texts, allusions to Diószegi’s theses can be discovered. Another important element of the Diószegi construct, the shaman drum (whose serious credibility problems I have already alluded to⁹⁷), is not our subject matter here. Yet I have to mention it here, because Sándor Szűcs in his last article on Hungarian shamanism⁹⁸ provided some evidence for this, when he published data on divination and healing with the sieve, which he presented as the *táltos*’s shaman drum or ‘horse’ (cp. the shaman’s trance-inducing drumming and the above-mentioned drum = horse identification). The article contains motifs relating to the use of the sieve as a shaman drum of which there are no other examples among the hundreds of collected data of the *táltos* of Hungarian folk belief. The problems of text forgery mentioned in connection with the world tree are also very much in evidence in this work (for example, there are also some highly suspicious words of invocation to spirits and fragmentary texts of shaman songs). This article—and its afterlife—clearly illustrates the harmful effects of the transmission and the conjunction of researchers’ mistakes, which foster new misconceptions: further research based on Diószegi’s construction of course already took the existence of these Hungarian ‘shaman drums’ for granted. The correction of a single error could, in a chain reaction, bring down the whole edifice.

The situation is similar with the activities of László Timaffy, who, after some of his manuscript data had been used by Diószegi, published a collection on the Szigetköz in 1964 from data collected in the latter’s spirit. In the introduction to the book, he described the results of Diószegi’s research on the ancient religion, saying that “I wish to insert the results of my research into his system [...] I accept the results of Diószegi’s methodological investigations and compare my existing data with them.”⁹⁹ He presented his data in line with the points of Diószegi’s overview. As for the dismemberment of the would-be shaman upon initiation, as I mentioned, there was a notable lack

96 Dömötör, “The Hungarian female *táltos*,” 423–30; Hoppál, “Traces of Shamanism,” 156–75, 430–49; Hoppál, “Hungarian Mythology,” 251–76.

97 See: note 65.

98 Szűcs, “A samanizmus emléke,” 45–54.

99 Timaffy, “A honfoglaló magyarság,” 309–33.

of Hungarian counterparts to the examples of the various Ural-Altaic peoples. Let us examine a Teleut data item collected by Diószegi with regard to dismemberment:

“According to the Teleut, the individual selected to become a shaman would be boiled by the spirits in a cauldron, his flesh would be cut into chunks and examined at length and with great care; his bones would be counted. If the would-be shaman had a bone missing, he had to die, if he had an extra bone, no matter how hard he resisted, he would become a shaman.”¹⁰⁰

Let us now look at two data items that Timaffy published in 1964, well after Diószegi’s publication, from his own collection on the Szigetköz region. I get the impression that this enthusiastic collector kind of ‘helped out’ Diószegi by providing Hungarian data according to which the *táltos*, similarly to the Teleut, dismember the unconscious *táltos* candidate, count his bones, then reassemble and revive him.

“When this kind of *táltos* child disappears from home, first he would be taken ill. He will lie lifeless somewhere out in the fields, just as if he had died. Then the *táltos* come and take his body into little pieces and count his bones to see if he has any superfluous. He’ll have one or he’ll have several—the teeth that he was born with. Then they put him back together again and glue his body together with their own blood. By the time he wakes up he will have become a real *táltos*, all he has left to do is climb up a tall ladder, that’s where he rests up from all of this. Then he can already turn into a bull and can go and battle his enemies.”¹⁰¹

Timaffy introduced the topic of the shaman tree as follows. “[The *táltos*, i.e., the ancient Hungarian shaman] relied very much on his shaman tree. In the beginning it was a tall pole with crossbars. This was later replaced in our traditions by the ladder. It is climbed for the purpose of performing tasks beyond the strength of man.” Here he refers to the appropriate place in Diószegi,¹⁰² followed by the data he had collected himself: a young shepherd ‘sees’ the *táltos* coming at night and climbs to the top of the ladder to escape him; ‘from then on he was a *táltos*’.¹⁰³

The following text develops the theme of the ‘shaman tree’ further: now the ladder used for smoking meat also becomes part of the picture which lends it a local color:

“[a shepherd aged twenty from Kunsziget] ... once pretended that he had died and lay unconscious for three days. During this time the *táltos* took

100 Diószegi, *A sámánhit*, 139.

101 Timaffy, “A honfoglaló magyarság,” 313.

102 Diószegi, *A sámánhit*, 270–73.

103 Diószegi, *A sámánhit*, 312.

him to pieces and counted his bones. Once they had found his superfluous bone, they put him back together again and glued him together with *táltos* blood. When he woke up, he had become a *táltos*. He had one more trial to accomplish [...], he ran into the shepherds' hut, and through the chimney climbed out onto the roof. He climbed up into the chimney on the little ladder used to hand the meats into the smoke. This is how he got his knowledge.”¹⁰⁴

Timaffy published a range of other data regarding the climbing of all sorts of ladders and treetops which are not known from anywhere else, from any Hungarian folklore collection, except for the contributions of Sándor Szűcs.¹⁰⁵

Even if the telltale signs of style are ignored (e.g., the way the peasants of Szigetköz talk about the ‘superfluous’ bones of the *táltos*), one can still suspect forgery for a purpose that was obviously important to the collector. The problem is especially grave when such dubious data appear not in popular literature, but in academic journals (like the ones cited), and therefore, as presumably credible data, which then find their way into scholarly arguments more easily. In our case, this communication also retroactively discredits the data that Diószegi received in manuscript form from the same author before the publication of his book and incorporated into his construction.

Almost without exception, the inner circles of ethnography and folklore scholars accepted Diószegi's reconstruction and made it the basis of their own research. The world tree is almost always in the picture, usually in an important, central position. Let's see how the scholar who researched Eurasian shamanism and Hungarian folk beliefs in 1998 saw the world-tree image of the ‘ancient Hungarian belief system’, in this case based solely on the evidence of fairy tales:

“In the mythological worldview that can be reconstructed with the help of Hungarian folk tales, the image of the *tree that reaches up to the sky* or the *tree with no top* (the world tree of other Finno-Ugric peoples) plays a central role. This huge tree symbolically connects heaven and earth, i.e., the upper world of the gods and the world of human life, while its roots reach into the underground world, and a hole at its base provides access to the dark underground world. Only the hero with shamanic powers (the young pigherd) can climb this huge pillar to reach the house of the Moon and the Sun, the silver and the golden castle.”¹⁰⁶

104 Timaffy, “A honfoglaló magyarság,” 316.

105 Timaffy, “A honfoglaló magyarság,” 316–18.

106 Hoppál, “Az ősi magyar hitvilág,” 25.

For Diószegi's followers, it was natural to examine the phenomena covered in his works from the perspective of 'Hungarian shamanism'; they usually added a few further traits to the reconstruction, which would make the original basic formula even more doubtful and increased its incoherence. The generalizations from a paucity of data mentioned in connection with Diószegi's summaries are also more prevalent in the work of his successors. Mihály Hoppál, in a volume of studies published together with Anna-Leena Siikala in Helsinki, gives a brief summary of *táltos* beliefs. In it he lists all the doubtful points for which Diószegi has only one or two dubious data (the *táltos* initiate is tormented by spirits, suffers from convulsions, is dismembered, struggles in a trance, asks for milk on his 'return' from hiding, etc.) as leitmotifs; and he presents the figure described by these as the depository of the shamanic traditions of the Conquest period.¹⁰⁷ Foreign researchers interested in the subject could this way consider the questions of Conquest-era shamanism of the Hungarians to be solved. For example, Owen Davies, an eminent British scholar of historical folklore, in the chapter *European Comparisons* of his book on cunning folk, gives an account of the Hungarian *táltos*, and, referring to this Hoppál article, among others, gives the description of a non-existent mythical figure who "had profound psychological experiences in childhood, such as being tormented by ghosts or having visions of his own dismemberment."¹⁰⁸

Hungarian folklorists Linda Dégh and Ágnes Kovács, who were researching Hungarian folktales, initially fully embraced the Solymossy-Diószegi theory of "ancient Hungarian shamanism preserved in fairy-tale motifs." They wrote the first professional overviews of the 'shamanistic' fairy-tale material of the 'tree that reached up to the sky'—progressing along the Solymossy-Diószegi line, following the idea of the Hungarian shaman's world tree.¹⁰⁹ In her 1963 study, published in 1978, Linda Dégh, very well-versed in European fairy-tale research, rejected several motifs considered shamanistic by Solymossy (e.g., the lie tale about the person who goes to the moon on the beanstalk) from the sphere of the ancient Hungarian shaman, but considered all the variants of the tree that reached up to the sky existing outside the Hungarian language area to be of Hungarian origin and an imprint of ancient Hungarian shamanism.¹¹⁰ Dégh's and Kovács's encounters with European researchers of fairy tales and myths, their conference talks and publications in English and German made these views known and—through the authority of these researchers—accepted in the West as well.¹¹¹ In the meantime, János Berze Nagy,

107 Hoppál, "Traces of Shamanism," 160.

108 [Who] "...during childhood [...] underwent some profound psychic experience such as being tormented by spirits or having visions of dismemberment": Davies, *Cunning Folk*, 180.

109 Kovács, "Das Märchen vom himmelhohen Baum," 74–84, 176–80.

110 Dégh, "The Tree That Reached Up to the Sky," 263–316.

111 For example, Bäcker's encyclopaedia entry *Schamanismus* dedicates special attention to

following in Solymossy's footsteps, and with considerable knowledge of mythology in his background, attempted to draw a general picture of the world tree that could be expressed in fairy tales and myths, pieced together from mosaic pieces from almost all the peoples of the world. Regrettably, his data cannot be used for a serious comparative study and his results are illusory. With some of his views, he also gave further weight to the erroneous ideas of the Hungarian world tree: thus, by bringing together a group of motifs composed of Eurasian occurrences of the motif 'the top of the world tree = the dwelling place of a god/goddess',¹¹² he supplied those who reconstructed ancient Hungarian religion with further data. (For example, he contributed to the creation of the cult of 'Babba Mária,' which is not discussed here.)

Towards the end of the last century, semiotic research gained momentum in Hungary and this, partly due to the influence of Mihály Hoppál, who mediated and popularized such studies, led to the appearance of views related to various 'cultural languages,' which held that such elements (for example folklore texts, woodcarvings or embroideries) could preserve the memory of the 'mythological thinking' of the past.¹¹³ These views reaffirmed the tendency to include fairy-tale motifs in mythological reconstructions that were otherwise already weakening.

Diószegi's reconstruction was also generally accepted by researchers of related disciplines. Most interested in the matter were the archaeologists involved in researching the Conquest period who, as scholars less versed in ethnography and folklore, treated Solymossy's and especially Diószegi's doctrines as evidence formulated by the great authorities of another profession. In this way, many of them easily became prisoners, to a greater or lesser extent, of the 'inverse attitude': that is, they (often unwittingly) evaluated their archaeological finds, which were difficult to decipher in many ways, as evidence of the shamanism of the Conquest era. It was primarily Gyula László, István Dienes, and later István Fodor, aspiring to produce a general overview, searched for—and believed to have found—archaeological evidence based on fairy-tale motifs and shepherd carvings from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for presumed tenth-century 'shamanistic' images and rituals.¹¹⁴

Hungarians among European peoples, since they have the closest linguistic and ethnic ties to Eurasian peoples who practice shamanism. He lists 'world tree' types of fairy-tales that had been emphasized by Hungarian research and which, he claims, indicate shamanism in a number of ways, and declares that the *táltos*, cunning man and diviner of Hungarian belief legends were all derived from the shaman: Bäcker, "Schamanismus," 1215.

112 Berze Nagy, *Égigérő fa*, 147.

113 Cp. Hoppál, "Hungarian Mythology."

114 László, "A népvándorlás lovas népei"; László, "A magyar táltos alakjáról"; László, "A kettős honfoglalásról"; Dienes, "A honfoglaló magyarok," 77–108; Dienes, "Der Weltbaum," 202–7; Fodor, "Honfoglaláskori művészetünk" 32–40; Fodor, "Über die vorchristliche Religion,"

Gyula László's statement from 1970 is highly characteristic: "The fact that the story of the tree reaching up to the sky is known throughout the Hungarian-speaking world proves that the belief in the world tree, the shaman tree, was much more widely known in earlier times, at the time of the Conquest and before."¹¹⁵

Source material for the notion of the world tree—and the 'tree of life' which archaeologists often fail to distinguish from the former—was mostly provided by Iranian–Sasanian style ornamentation on handicraft articles from the age of the Hungarian Conquest (silver pots, belt buckles, sabretache plates, containers, etc.). (Gyula László, who elaborated the theory of the 'double conquest' included Avar relics from the same period in his investigations.¹¹⁶) The examination of the Sasanian silverware was particularly important for archaeologists exploring the Conquest period, because, as István Fodor explained, this was by far the most influential artistic trend all over the Steppe region at the time when the Hungarians resided there, and the greater part of the known wealth of Eastern European relics was created by artisans of this Hungarian population. The Sasanian style of Iranian relics from the third to the seventh centuries was prevalent in the region of Central Asia and the Caucasus and survived into the age of the Hungarian Conquest.¹¹⁷ The question emerged to what extent the 'palmette' motifs of these ornamented objects may be seen as world tree representations and tied in with the shamanism of pagan Hungarians. Discussing the pre-Christian religion of the Hungarians, István Fodor wrote in 2003 that the image of the tree of life or world tree, which appeared in many different forms in the works of tenth century Hungarian silversmiths, survived in folk tales¹¹⁸ and folk tradition and folk art¹¹⁹ in general until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and thus it is certain to have played a central role in the belief world of tenth-century Hungarians.¹²⁰ István Dienes came to similar conclusions¹²¹ and both he and Fodor identified unique Hungarian traits on the objects found at Hungarian archaeological sites. One such is the 'world tree with bird.' István Fodor

327–51; Fodor, *A magyarok ősi vallásáról*; Fodor, "Az ősi magyar," 11–34. Although Béla Szőke talks about the broad European distribution of the respect for trees, of the life tree or tree of notions, etc. and about the ancient veneration of trees in general, he mentions the role of the Hungarian–Finno-Ugric world tree with the sun and the moon within the same framework, accepting Diószegi's results (Szőke, "Spuren des Heidentums," 121–30).

115 László, "A »kettős honfoglalás«-ról," 172.

116 László, "A »kettős honfoglalás«-ról."

117 Fodor, "Honfoglaláskori művészetünk," 32.

118 Fodor, "Über die vorchristliche Religion."

119 Szűcs, "Az égbenyúló fa;" Szűcs, "Ősi mintájú ábrázolások."

120 Fodor, "Über die vorchristliche Religion," 329.

121 Dienes, "Der Weltbaum."

stated in 2005,¹²² based on Sarmata images from the Southern Ural mountains, that the world tree with a bird at its peak may well have been a part of the Hungarian belief world well before the Conquest. (Both were aware of Diószegi's theory built on a text and a representation published by Sándor Szűcs.)¹²³



Figure 7 Representations of world tree with bird on Sasanian silverware (based on Fodor, "Honfoglaláskori művészetünk").

Prompted by the clearly recognizable eagle figure in certain representations, Fodor, similarly to some other researchers, brought it in connection with the bird Turul, the totemic ancestor of the lineage of Árpád in connection with notions of the world tree; he also proposed the idea of the shaman's bird as a *psychopompos* ('soul transporting') bird.¹²⁴ (With this he also alludes partly to Róheim's view¹²⁵ on the *halálmadár*—'the bird of death.')

All of these notions may well have existed, but their direct representation on practical objects seems fairly improbable. The reverse is always true—their presence there can hardly be seen as evidence of the existence of such ideas.

122 Fodor, "Az ősi magyar vallásról."

123 Diószegi, *A pogány magyarok*.

124 Fodor "Über die vorchristliche Religion," 329–32.

125 Róheim, "A halálmadár," 23–36.

The other supposed distinctive Hungarian or Ural–Altaic trait is the world tree with the sun and the moon, the presence of which on objects was acknowledged—also following Diószegi¹²⁶—by all the archaeologists dealing with the Conquest period mentioned here. Evidence for this is provided by the drawings of Sándor Szűcs and the text quoted above about a ‘shaman tree’ placed in the mouth of a shepherd in Sárrét, whose branches “not only the moon..., but the sun also passes through,”¹²⁷ as well as by palmette decorations on objects from the period of the Conquest, which may also depict celestial bodies among the branches of the tree of life. Fodor pointed out as early as 1973¹²⁸ that Turkic, Mongolian and Manchu world trees differed from that of peoples speaking Indo-European languages that they envisaged the sun and the moon on the tip of or among the branches of the tree; this way he marked out the place of the assumed Hungarian world tree among these peoples. He dedicated a large-scale study to the ‘world tree/half moon’ ornamentation of a tenth to eleven centuries pair of discs discovered in the cemetery of Sósartyán. He contended that while the moon images of Iranian–Sasanian ornamentations were related in Khorezm, in the areas of Georgia and Armenia, and elsewhere to the cult of a moon deity, similar representations found on the discs at Sósartyán were ‘re-interpreted according to their own belief world’ by Hungarians, in other words for them this meant the Hungarian tree of life or world tree, in which the celestial bodies also had a place.¹²⁹

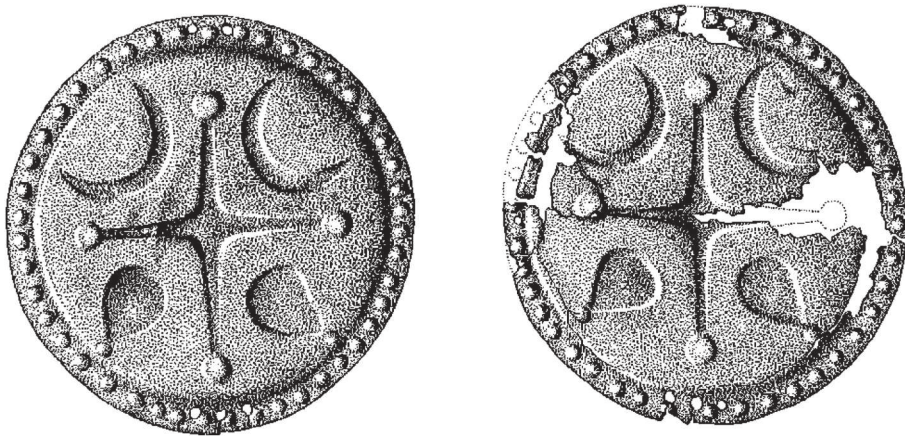


Figure 8 The Sósartyán discs, based on Fodor, “Über die vorchristliche Religion.”

126 Diószegi, “A honfoglaló magyarok.”

127 Szűcs, “Az égbenyúló fa,” 23.

128 Fodor, “Honfoglaláskori művészetünk,” 33–4.

129 Fodor, “Über die vorchristliche Religion,” 37–8.

The question I would like to cautiously ask at this point is—how can we know what the ornamentation of a practical object worn on the body meant for a tenth- or eleventh-century individual?¹³⁰ A further problematic point in this line of argumentation is that the concepts of the tree of life and the world tree become mingled or merged in them: in fact the tree of life seems a far more universal phenomenon than world tree notions which have a distinct geographic area of distribution. However, regardless of whether we consider the tree of life a manifestation of the world tree, its appearance as an ornamental motif can in no way be identified with a ritual requisite of the shaman, the shaman tree.¹³¹

A more serious problem in relation to the ornamentation of objects, as well as the use of oral tradition texts is the disregard for the methodological constraints of folklore research (equally true for the arguments of Sándor Szűcs and Vilmos Diószegi). Unfortunately, we do not have the space to go into this subject in detail here, but it should be noted that we cannot treat either contemporary or modern-era folklore text motifs or decorative art representations, nor modern beliefs, as direct imprints of Conquest era notions or rites, or as the ‘memory’ of religious ideas from 1000 years earlier.¹³²

Deconstruction

Towards the end of the twentieth century, the voice of the experts, especially of folk tale researchers became more and more reserved regarding the accepted views whereby ‘the world tree of fairy tales = the ancient Hungarian shamanic tree.’ Ágnes Kovács, in her above-mentioned encyclopaedia entry, described the so-called shamanistic motifs as traces of an old, widespread mythical idea. She referred to Solymossy’s and Diószegi’s opinions of these, but she herself did not take a position, nor did she mention these motifs as a Hungarian speciality.¹³³ In her studies, the question of the literary origins of several fairy-tale motifs was raised, for example, in 1984 she spoke of ‘folk tales’ composed by Elek Benedek.¹³⁴ Although Linda Dégh classified the fairy-tale episode of dismemberment as a “shamanistic survival” (i.e. a shamanistic tradition that has survived to this day), she also warned that the elements explained as shamanistic did not prove the survival of ‘pagan Hungarian religion,’ and that *táltos*

130 A question on an even more cautious note: can we be sure that the relevant dead in the cemetery of Sósartyán were all Hungarians?

131 On the question of life tree = world tree, see: Voigt, “Az élet és az élet fája.”

132 My analysis of the question of the shamanic drum in the spirit of these thoughts, and of the shamanic construct in general, has led to rather negative result: Pócs, “The Hungarian Táltos.”

133 Kovács, “Baum.”

134 Kovács, “Das Märchen.”

beliefs (birthmarks, initiation, battles, etc.) did not occur in fairy tales; the fairy tale as an artistic composition has had no connection with modern folk beliefs.¹³⁵ It has also become clear that stories of the tree that reached up to the sky did not become widespread in Hungary until the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century—data from outside Hungary have also come to light, in other words theories of an exclusively Hungarian origin have become untenable.

Almost immediately after its publication, critical voices regarding Diószegi's reconstruction also appeared outside the field of folktale research, both in the fields of ethnography and archaeology. Gyula László, Gábor Lükő, Lajos Vargyas, Vilmos Voigt had doubts regarding the overall reconstruction, or at least they disagreed with different aspects of Diószegi's results. As regards the motifs related to the world tree/initiation, László began to have doubts about the etymology of the word *táltos*, more narrowly about the 'dismemberment' motif within the initiation of the *táltos*, and he did not think that the *táltos* had a connection with the tree that reached up to the sky.¹³⁶ Lükő, writing in 1960, commended Diószegi's book mostly for its use of data on Hungarian folk beliefs collected by himself, but reprimanded Diószegi, whilst accepting his basic concept, for his dubious historical data and errors in the use of the comparative methodology.¹³⁷ Later, István Pál Demény expressed some doubts about the motifs of the world tree: in his opinion, the fairy-tale motifs did not reflect the idea that the *táltos*, as a healing shaman, climbed up the rungs of the world tree in search of the departed soul of the sick (although he also considered the motifs of the fairy-tale tree to be 'shamanistic').¹³⁸ Vilmos Voigt also saw no connection between the motifs of fairy-tale heroes traveling to heaven and to the underworld and the world tree images.¹³⁹ By 2012 he considered the majority of Diószegi's points to be unproven (including the existence, ever, of 'the tree that reached up to the sky' or the shaman drum).¹⁴⁰ Others may have accepted the basic concept proposed by Róheim and Diószegi, but associated the 'shamanistic' motifs found in Hungarian fairy tales not with the supposed practicing *táltos* of the pagan Hungarians, or at least not directly, but considered them to be part of the epic poetry of the age of the Conquest (they also found or believed to have found 'oriental' parallels to such epic motifs). Demény explored the possible survival of the heroic epic of the age of the Conquest in other genres. In the process, whilst accepting without reservation Diószegi's conception of Hungarian shamanism,

135 Dégh, "The Tree."

136 László, "A magyar táltos."

137 Lükő, "A sámánhit emlékei," 199–208.

138 Demény, "Európai-e a sámánizmus."

139 Voigt, "A magyar samanizmusról," 85–98.

140 Voigt, "A magyar samanizmusról."

he expressed his doubts as to the legitimacy of using fairy tale motifs (pointing out that these were wide-spread all over Eastern Europe, including Russian and Romanian territories).¹⁴¹ Vargyas considered the motifs of the tree that reached up to the sky (as well as the *táltos* horse, *táltos* battle or the battle of dragons in the underworld) as ‘shamanistic’ textual motifs of the various epic genres of the age of the Conquest (fairy tale, heroic song).¹⁴² Voigt also considered the motifs of the tree that reached up to the sky (and the battles of dragons and *táltos* battles) to be elements of the epic literature of the age of the Conquest with Turkic connections.¹⁴³ The most important element here was that these scholars did not approach the question of pre-Conquest or Conquest-era religious phenomena solely from a shamanism-centered point of view and thereby they contributed to dismantling the shaman-centric construct.

The full-scale deconstruction of the construct was accomplished by Dutch folklorist, Willem de Blécourt. Relying on the investigations of Central and Eastern European scholars, he established for each and every relevant fairy-tale type, one by one, that it either had literary origins or came from the renderings of nineteenth-century tale collectors or was not of Oriental origin or was equally wide-spread in the West as it was in the East. Besides, he repeatedly emphasized that the motifs of migratory legends or of fairy-tales cannot legitimately be used for mythological reconstructions and that motifs from literary tales cannot be interpreted as the surviving legacy of archaic rites or beliefs.¹⁴⁴ Not being myself a fairy-tale researcher, I cannot judge where are the points at which de Blécourt’s deconstruction might, if at all, be exaggerated, but I do not find it surprising that the process of deconstruction itself should be carried out by a foreign scholar, entirely free of the conscious or unconscious ‘priming’ in shamanistic thinking that ‘home-grown’ Hungarian scholars had received during their training, and who was thus probably better suited to debunk the research myth of ‘the world tree of the Hungarian shaman’ than his Hungarian colleagues.

Survival and revival of the construct

Alongside the generally more skeptical tones, erroneous reflexes also remained in evidence. Certain scholarly opinions today remain fully committed to Diószegi’s

141 Demény, “A magyar hősi epikának,” 210.

142 Vargyas, “Honfoglalás előtti, keleti,” 107–21; Vargyas, “Magyarság a folklórban,” 108–59; Vargyas, “A hősenek maradványa,” 398–413.

143 Voigt, “A magyar ősvallás kérdése I,” 365–418; Voigt, “A magyar ősvallás kérdése II,” 71–96.

144 De Blécourt, *Tales of Magic*, Chapter 6. “Journeys to the other world.”

reconstruction, making certain additions which usually render the situation only more confused and result in further misunderstandings. In one example, Turkologist Attila Mátéffy includes motifs of the tree that reaches up to the sky from a range of different fairy-tales in a paper written in English and intended for publication abroad, focusing partly on fairy-tale connections of the legend of the miraculous stag. Together with the figure of *Tündérszép Ilona*, *Babba Mária*, supposed goddess of the ancient Hungarians also appears, alongside her supposed sun symbolism, on the tree (invoking the idea of ‘goddess on the world tree’ imported by Berze Nagy), in a fairly confused array.¹⁴⁵

I would like to present a personal experience of the survival of these misguided reflexes. In a paper mentioned above,¹⁴⁶ I tried to offer an overarching critique of Diószegi’s construct of Hungarian shamanism and invited critical contributions from relevant professionals. István Fodor sent me a detailed answer—but no critique.¹⁴⁷ In his paper, without having given consideration to the problems I had raised, he reiterated Diószegi’s theses, each of which he considered justified. To my critical remarks he responded with Diószegi’s own arguments or his very words, e.g., at one point he stated that I could not be right, because, as Diószegi had explained, “It is not one isolated phenomenon or another that turns out to have been a part of the belief world of the conquering Hungarians but an organically interconnected set of notions! [...] The groups of ideas associated with the belief world of the pagan Hungarians and the shamanism of the related peoples fit together like two cogwheels, interlinked, with no missing or superfluous cogs.” And (Fodor himself went on), “it is admirable that ancient beliefs have survived in our folk beliefs in such abundance and such a recognizable form—not only in patches limited to one or two locations, but practically in the entire Hungarian-speaking area.”¹⁴⁸ Or, “the image of the tree of life is not overcast by the fog of generalization, since it is connected in concrete, characteristic and unique forms to shamanism.”¹⁴⁹ These were in fact the very points I had refuted! The inverse research attitude manifests doubly in this case, almost like a double twist. It is given further support by an excessively deferential attitude to authority. Quoting my statements pointing out Diószegi’s incoherence, István Fodor expressed his doubts, whether “a renowned scholar of the stature of Diószegi, acknowledged by international research [...] could possibly make such a fundamental mistake worthy of any true dilettante in such a fundamental question.”¹⁵⁰

145 Mátéffy, “Mother Mary in the,” 80–94.

146 Pócs, “The Hungarian Táltos.”

147 Fodor, “Sámánok voltak-e.”

148 Fodor, “Sámánok voltak-e,” 516; quoting Diószegi, *A pogány magyarok*, 137.

149 Fodor, “Sámánok voltak-e,” 517; referring to Dienes, “Der Weltbaum,” 204.

150 Fodor, “Sámánok voltak-e,” 516.

Let us now take a final look at the misconceptions of the laymen. They have been looking, and indeed finding, ever newer evidence in the twenty-first century for the *táltos*-shaman and the related world tree. One teacher who had served the cause of ethnography with excellent folklore collecting activities wrote in 2004 in the introduction to his book on folk belief at Kecel, “the beginning of the twentieth century brought significant and lasting partial results marked by the works of Lajos Kálmány, János Berze Nagy, Gyula Sebestyén, Vilmos Diószegi, Mihály Hoppál, Marcell Jankovics or Lajos Vargyas. I am quite certain that popular belief at Kecel also retains some elements that may complement and strengthen the statements of the above mentioned researchers. Certain elements mentioned in the chapter *World view* of our collection look archaic even at first sight, and we may suspect in them fragments of the ancient world view.” Added to the world tree of the ‘ancient world view’ is a motif of the legend of the ‘wise coachman’, according to which a carpenter working on the church roof exerts his magical powers to ‘bind’ a wagon passing by, in response to which the coachman strikes the beam with his axe and the carpenter dies a terrible death. According to the author, “the church that figures in the story stands in the very middle of the world and is a model of the world tree, while the carpenter [...] working on it, corresponds to the shaman carrying out the ritual according to the testimony of Hungarian folk poetry, as is also stated by János Berze Nagy.”¹⁵¹

I do not wish to multiply further the number of false notions of the world tree that could be quoted from several other authors and can only sincerely hope that in cases like this we do not need to fear scholarly use. I suspect, however, that certain harmful reflexes are likely to persist in academic circles at least for the foreseeable future. The foremost factor keeping them alive is their adherence to their presuppositions dictated by a desire to see continuity with the Hungarians of the Conquest-era. I began this paper with one such example, let me conclude it with a similar, subjective example which I quote from István Pál Demény from a piece of criticism he wrote on one of my earlier papers. “It may well be that some authors are concerned that we point out Oriental features in the Hungarian tradition and that way hinder our European integration. It is possible to consider European integration as our goal, but this does not mean we need to deny our own traditions.”¹⁵² I believe this remark requires no commentary.

151 Fehér, *Mondták a régi öregek*, 14–5.

152 Demény, “Európai-e a sámánizmus,” 144. I shall not discuss here the author’s other critical remarks which are valid and for which I am grateful.

Summary

So how do we stand with the world tree, after all? Perhaps the above was sufficient to make it clear that, once we summarize such a wide range of research and pseudo-research notions, there is only one possible reply to that question: the notion of the world tree may have existed; shamanic rituals related to the world tree may also have existed; the *táltos* may have been a shaman and may have practiced such rites—but we have absolutely no evidence of any of this: the existence of world tree notions or shaman tree rituals among the pagan Hungarians has *not* been proven. Contemporary belief data, even if referring to the *táltos*, do not constitute proof: there are no data from the age of the Conquest or the Middle Ages to bridge the millennium that has passed since the Conquest, nor do we have any other example of a belief or rite surviving intact through 1000 years. Existing contemporary data, as we have seen, are surrounded by a host of doubts, as is the material evidence surviving from the age of the Conquest. If we disregard the handful of suspicious, unauthenticated data, if we do not build on ornamental and folk tale motifs, the number of data items to be regarded as evidence is close to zero. The data on world trees/shaman trees that turned out to be false contributed to demolishing rather than enhancing the theoretical construct of Conquest-era shamanism which came about through the interplay of ethnographers, archaeologists and amateurs who started out from a certain set of preconceptions. Thus, the present paper has been a testimony not to the existence of the world tree among the conquering Hungarians, but, at best, to the harmful effects on scholarship of certain misconceptions.

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Being a Historian of Central Europe: The Survey of HSCE

The main goal of *Historical Studies on Central Europe* is to provide an interdisciplinary and international platform for disseminating new findings on Central Europe and enhancing the dialog on it. In this spirit, the editors have decided to launch a series asking prominent scholars of the region: their personal motivations for choosing Central Europe as their field; their view on central questions of methodology, trends, and definition, as well as their opinion on the status of the field.

Miroslav Hroch¹ is professor emeritus at Charles University (Prague), where he founded a Seminar in Comparative History in 1994. He wrote pioneering comparative works on the question of nation formation, most notably *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe* (1985; originally published in German in 1968). With his comparative researches on national movements, Professor Hroch earned international recognition, in 1997 he received an honorary doctorate from Uppsala University, Sweden. His other significant books include *In the National Interest. Demands and Goals of European National Movements of the Nineteenth Century: a Comparative Perspective* (2000); *European Nations. Explaining their Formation* (2015, originally published in German in 2005).

A response from Professor Miroslav Hroch

HSCE: *The historian's interests may have very different origins: they may be inspired by the scholar's family background, personal experiences or even certain dilemmas concerning their own era which they seek to comprehend through studying the past. What is your motivation for studying Central Europe?*

Maybe I have to start my answer with a statement: I never considered myself a specialist on the history of Central Europe. This does not mean that I ever questioned the existence of a European macro-region called Central Europe. Nevertheless, I have focused my academic work on problems which overstep the bounds of Central Europe. In my younger years, my main interest was the uneven development in Early Modern Eastern and Western Europe and the role of Baltic trade in this process. In my later years, it was nation formation, a process that took place everywhere

1 hrochmir@seznam.cz; Charles University, 1/2 Jana Palacha, 116 38 Prague 1, Czech Republic.

in Europe. For this reason, I have to modify your question and ask what my motivation was for studying European history. Naturally, there was one precondition to all these reflections: knowledge of languages.

This motivation was multiple and changed with time. As a student, I found it exciting to read (and write essays) about distant countries and events. It was some kind of 'exotic' experience to me at a time when our mobility was extremely limited. Since we were not allowed to cross the border, all that was behind this border was attractive, including its history. For example, my motivation to write my MA paper on Wallenstein's politics on the Baltics in 1628–30 was some kind of romantic enthusiasm to write about ships, trade, and harbours, as I was born and bred in a country with no access to the sea. Another, less irrational drive resulted from my interest in defining the place of my nation in the context of other European countries. Do we belong to the East or the West? Asking this question, I was concerned about the different levels of economic prosperity and political culture. Another motivation was based on my interest in the Czech national movement. Was it a unique event? It was not. Then we have to ask, 'Where are we in comparison with other small European nations?'

Growing older, a methodological aspect modified my interest in European history. Trying to minimize 'narrative' elements in my work, I understood the past as a structure, not as a sample of singular events. I focused my historical research on processes, on the history of changes and of transformations, trying to explain and conceptualize them. To fulfil this task, we cannot be limited by national borders or by the history of our own nation. In the 1960s, this was my point of departure for developing comparative history. By the way, comparative history in my understanding allows to adopt some principles and procedures that are demanded by 'transnational history' or *l'histoire croisée* today. Naturally, the easiest and most promising way is to apply this concept of 'transnationality' to countries in your neighborhood, i.e., on Central Europe, but this is not the only choice.

HSCE: *Perhaps it is no exaggeration to state that the notion of 'Central Europe' is one of the most disputed terms in historiography. To recall but only a few from the diverse definitions: in the Anglo-Saxon milieu, they often refer to Germany as Central Europe, while others mean the Danubian region of the Habsburg Empire; in the meantime, there are still other definitions that integrate the Baltic states into the notion. Some consider that the German notion of 'Mitteleuropa' should not be used as it is ideologically charged, implying a German hegemony. Certain thinkers believe that Central Europe is simply undefinable. Moreover, inspired by cultural studies, some scholars aim to break with the traditional geographical approaches and conceive Central Europe as a space of communication. Which of these definitions do you agree with? Have you created a new definition for Central Europe which is more adequate to your own research?*

You are right, the geographical localization of 'Central Europe' is extremely differentiated. To your examples, I would like to add the concept of Central Europe, where Poland is underrepresented, the Baltic countries are ignored, but Romania is included. There are, however, two cardinal mistakes or misunderstandings in most of these debates. First, they are timeless, they ignore the factor of time, as if the phenomenon 'Central Europe' always existed in the same territory, starting in the Middle Ages and lasting to our time. This was not the case. Second, ideas (visions) and geographical space are not always distinguished, or worse, contemporary ideological aims are consciously mixed with historical data.

In my earlier years, I used 'Central Europe' as a neutral 'technical' term, as a name given to the territory between the east and the west of Europe, and between the Baltic Sea and the Alps. Studying the crisis of the seventeenth century, I found important differences in the economic development and social life between the north and the south of Central Europe. The dividing line was the River Main in the west, then the mountains in the north of Bohemia and Moravia, and the Carpathians in the east. Without a doubt, under conditions of the seventeenth century, I regarded the Holy Roman Empire as a western part of Central Europe.

Thirty years ago, I had to deal with the fashionable confessions of faith in Central Europe, which was initiated by Milan Kundera in 1980s. I was not convinced that this ideological concept of our region could become a helpful instrument of scientific research of the past. I redefined Central Europe, asking if we could construct a macro-region as an actually existing territory, whose inhabitants shared the same or a similar destiny during the Early Modern time, i.e., political and cultural experiences, dangers, transformations, which we do not find in the history of other European macro-regions, such as Western, Eastern, Northern Europe, Southeastern Europe, and the Mediterranean. And vice versa: they created some kind of '*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*' using a term borrowed from Otto Bauer.

I tried to define the borders of this macro-region during the Early Modern period. In the North and South, there was no other choice than the Baltic coast and the Alps, while in the West and East, it was not easy, since some regions were always transitional. On the Western border, Rhineland and Switzerland were transitional regions. The distinct difference with Western Europe was the absence of colonial expansion. Eastern Europe is in my mind defined by Orthodoxy, but there were transitional territories, like the Orthodox part of the former Grand-Duchy of Lithuania, i.e., the core of present-day Belarus and Western Ukraine, originally the eastern part of the Polish Rzeczpospolita. In my construct, Transylvania represented a transient territory in a double sense: both towards Eastern and to Southeastern Europe.

This territorial demarcation makes sense only if we define concrete ties and interactions that forged this territory into a community of a shared destiny

(a common fate). I have to be very brief, giving you only some indications or allusions. We could start from far back in the past: this territory was almost completely at the opposite (northern) side of *Limes Romanus* and adopted Latin Christianity only some centuries after the decline of the Roman Empire. It received also later innovations, like urbanization and colonization from the West. Nevertheless, the decisive steps towards Central Europe started around 1500 with two great events: the European overseas expansion, where Central Europe was absent, and secondly, the Reformation, which in contrast was born in Central Europe and expanded towards the West, provoking wars of religion. After some decades, wars ended everywhere in Europe, except Central Europe, by the victory of one side. Scandinavian countries became Protestant, France Catholic, England Protestant, etc. In Central Europe, both camps survived as conflicting parties, culminating in the Thirty Years' War, but later ended in some kind of religious 'cohabitation' in most countries. This war, however, was in my opinion a strong collective experience for Central Europe, not only because it required an extremely high level of suffering, but also as an object of collective memory during the following two or more centuries. There was a similar case with the 'Turkish thread:' everywhere in Central Europe, people were involved in wars against the Ottoman expansion—directly in battlefields or indirectly through the 'Turkish tax'.

A significant feature of state development in Central Europe is its remarkable discontinuity. None of the present states in our macro-region have evolved in continuity out of the Middle Ages into a modern nation state like France, Denmark, Spain, or England. Some medieval states in our macro-region were engulfed by a larger political unit during the Early Modern period (Bohemia, Lithuania, and Hungary). Combining this discontinuity with the disintegration of the Holy Roman Empire and with ethnic diversity, Central Europe developed into a region with exceptionally complex overlapping identities. Regional patriotism overlapped with dynastic state patriotism and with ethnic identity.

This complicated crisis of identities resulted in a search for new identities i.e., in nation formation. This process had three specificities in Central Europe. Firstly, it proceeded as a national movement; second, these national movements started earlier than in other parts of Europe; third, linguistic and cultural arguments were prioritized and acknowledged as political ones (hence the label of 'ethnonationalism'). Nevertheless, we cannot form an ideal type of 'Central European' nation formation. Simplifying, we have to distinguish two types and one transitional case. There are movements with a strong focus on political goals (German, Polish, and Magyar), and movements without any elements of statehood and without a political program (Slovaks and Slovenes), and the Czechs constitute a transitional case. Most of these national movements defined themselves in opposition to the German

cultural dominance and, at the same time, they were to varying degrees influenced by German culture. Sooner or later, the German cultural dominance was in some cases accompanied by the struggle for political dominance.

In connection with ethnicities, we must not forget that after having been granted equal rights as citizens, the Jewish community's contribution to cultural and scientific advancement in Central Europe was more marked than in any other European macro-region.

Trying to identify the Central European specificity during the process of modernization, we find a significant asymmetry between the highly developed education and the modest development of industrialization. Starting in the second half of the eighteenth century, attendance in elementary schools was made obligatory; consequently, a significant majority of the population in Central Europe (except for parts of the Polish and Hungarian territories) acquired literacy by the mid-nineteenth century. With the exception of Scandinavia, this is unparalleled in Europe.

My concept of Central Europe is limited in time. As I have said before, it became a distinct territory around 1500 and started to fall apart after some 350 years. The first step was the successful movement for the German unification under Prussian hegemony. After having defeated the Austrian Empire in 1866, Prussia could unify Germany. Consequently, Central Europe was divided into two parts: the German 'Second Empire' and the territory between the eastern German border and Orthodoxy. This territory was increasingly becoming a German sphere of interests. This division changed through World War I only in that the former eastern part of Central Europe consisted of seven or eight nation states, and that the German hegemony over this territory was replaced by the dominance of the two competing great powers—Great Britain and France. Already before World War II, German scholars started to use '*Ostmitteleuropa*' (East Central Europe), maybe as an allusion to recovering the German influence. Paradoxically, this space between the eastern German border and the western Soviet border survived as a *sui generis* macro-region as the territory behind the 'Iron Curtain' and, at long last, with the V4 as an eastern part of the EU.

Nevertheless, the notion of Central Europe has survived. Since I do not think that it is a relevant methodological instrument, I was not interested in its different definitions over the last decades. For this reason, I cannot answer the concluding part of your question. Only one more remark. It seems to me that in recent discussions the term concerns above all the 'idea' of Central Europe as a value, i.e., it has declined to the level of a mere ideology. I do not mean that Central Europe is a value. There is no specific Central European citizen, no specific Central European nation-forming process. If I were to use this concept, then only as a research tool of historical processes, not as a political program. It has its legitimacy as a chapter in the history of ideas and ideologies.

HSCE: *As every field of history, Central Europe has its influential scholars whose thoughts and approaches have inspired researchers or even a whole generation. Who are the scholars that you consider as your masters? Whose oeuvre and approach has influenced your work?*

This is a key question for my generation. We started our studies at university only a few years after the communist purges. Compared with the traditional curriculum, we were 'self-taught persons'. The teaching staff consisted mostly of young people, party members, who replaced the 'bourgeois' professors of interwar Czechoslovakia. They were interested in contemporary history and trying to misuse history for political indoctrination. Nevertheless, some of the pre-war historians stayed. One of them was Josef Polišenský, an excellent scholar in the European history of the seventeenth century. He was my master during my studies, I attended his seminars, and wrote an MA paper in his seminar. After having finished my studies, I was his assistant for three years. He was an excellent scholar in the traditional 'narrative' sense and he managed to maintain contact with Western historians—if not personally, then following their work. As his assistant, I could benefit from his knowledge and read, among others, recent works of the Annales School or of British Marxists. Among them, I was strongly impressed by the early works of Eric Hobsbawm (*The Age of Revolution*). Another important influence came from personal contact (and reading) with a group of Polish colleagues of my age, who belonged to the 'school' of Marian Malowist, especially Antoni Maczak. In addition, I was inspired by the work of Witold Kula. This all concerns my younger years up to 1964, when I was interested in economic history and wrote a PhD on Baltic trade in the seventeenth century. Then, 'rekindling' my interest in nation formation, I was really a 'self-taught scholar', since there was nobody in Prague that I could talk to about my problems, concerning both methodology (comparative method) and the issues of concrete national movements. Concerning methods, almost nothing had been published before the 1960s. The most important influence to me were K. W. Deutsch, Eugen Lemberg, and Otto Bauer. Concerning national movements, I was in correspondence and in personal contact with some colleagues in Norway, Finland, Estonia, and Belgium. But, in this case, they were neither my masters, nor my influences. However, it is important that I took a negative stand to Hans Kohn's concept of 'nationalism' that was dominant at the time.

HSCE: *The researcher of Central Europe has to face numerous difficulties which are not present in the case of other subjects—the most evident being the multi-lingual makeup of the region. For you, what has constituted the greatest difficulty in your research on Central Europe?*

You are right, you have to know more than one foreign language if you intend to do research into Central Europe, even if we do not take into account the Baltic nations.

This was, by the way, always irritating for me, these Americans, who came to Prague and regarded themselves as qualified for studying Central Europe, being familiar only with their own and one Central European language (in most cases, German!). I always said to my Czech students that it is enough for a historian to be able to read in a foreign language, that they do not need an active knowledge. By the way, also for the study of Western Europe and the Balkans, you need to be familiar with (i.e., read in) more than two languages. As I said in my first answer, I am not an expert on the history of Central Europe, and I could not be, since I know only German and Polish, ignorant of Magyar and Romanian.

HSCE: What do you think of the current state of research on Central Europe's history? In your view, how does research into Central Europe fit into the major trends of European historiography? What do you consider the most debated questions? What do you think the most pressing issues are in the field? Where do you detect deficiencies?

Unfortunately, I cannot give a sufficient answer to these questions—because, as I am repeating, this is not—and never was—my field of research. I can only give some impressions and recommendations. The first, maybe erroneous, impression is that there are very few books published on the history of Central Europe (in Czech only one). Perhaps such works are more frequent by Western authors. Second, in those books, I know, no one presents a comparative history, but merely narratives of singular national histories. Third, there are some authors who write about Central Europe as an idea, as a concept, but in my eyes, this is not history in the proper sense of the word, but something different, something like the history of ideas or ideologies. Fourth, if we accept my above delineated 'definition' of Central Europe, then research on the history of this macro-region suffers from the ignorance of its temporality, i.e., neglecting the changing borders in this region over the centuries.

Maybe the fluid borders of this macro-region and, above all, the fact that it does not exist today, is the main reason why it is so difficult to write a genuinely synthetic or comparative history of Central Europe.



The Mongol Invasion of Hungary in Its Eurasian Context*

József Laszlovszky 

Central European University, Quellenstraße 51, 1100 Vienna, Austria; laszlovj@ceu.edu

Balázs Nagy 

Department of Medieval Studies, Faculty of Humanities, ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, 6–8
Múzeum körút, 1088 Budapest, Hungary; nagy.balazs@btk.elte.hu

János B. Szabó 

Budapest History Museum, 2 Szent György tér, 1014 Budapest, Hungary; szabo.janos@btm.hu

Dorottya Uhrin 

Department of Medieval History, Faculty of Humanities, ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, 6–8
Múzeum körút, 1088 Budapest, Hungary; uhrin.dorottya@btk.elte.hu

Abstract. This report gives an account of the historiography of the Mongol invasion of Hungary in 1241–1242, and the ongoing research of the project “The Mongol Invasion of Hungary in its Eurasian Context.” The research has been carried out by an interdisciplinary team comprising representatives of diverse academic institutions and fields. The primary objective of the project was to reassess existing scholarship by comparing it with the findings of the project team members, ultimately generating new scholarly insights. The team members concentrated on various aspects, including archaeology, military history, and the short- and long-term impacts of the Mongol military invasions in the mid-thirteenth century.

Keywords: archaeology, battle of Muhi, medieval Hungary, Mongol invasions

In 2018, the interdisciplinary research project “The Mongol Invasion of Hungary in its Eurasian Context” was approved by the National Research, Development, and Innovation Office of Hungary. It aimed to conduct a comprehensive program focusing on one of the key events that had long-lasting effects on medieval Hungarian

* Based on the earlier research reports on the project: B. Szabó et al., “The Mongol Invasion,” 223–33; B. Szabó et al., “New Results,” 271–82; B. Szabó et al., “The Mongol Invasion of Hungary: From the Field Survey,” 203–18; Nagy et al., “The Mongol Invasion in Hungary,” 44–62.

history—the Mongol invasion of Hungary in 1241–1242 and its context. This period is significant not only for understanding Hungarian history but is also integral to a momentous historical process, namely, the expansion of the Mongol Empire. The scholarly interpretation of the impact is situated within its broader Eurasian context.¹

The project commenced in 2018 and is scheduled to continue until 2023. The research is conducted by an interdisciplinary team that includes representatives of various academic institutions and fields. The coordination is overseen by József Laszlovsky, Balázs Nagy, János B. Szabó, and Dorottya Uhrin. The primary academic fields covered by the team include archaeology, history (with a focus on economic, social, and church history), military history, Mongol studies, numismatics, Oriental Studies, and languages. In addition to these main fields, a broader circle of scholars from diverse academic backgrounds is contributing to the project. The extended group includes experts in art history, ethnography, community archaeology, and battlefield research, providing valuable perspectives to the program. The project emphasizes the importance of the Eurasian context, which is supported by a substantial international research network involving team members and their respective institutions.²

Historiography and state of research

The Hungarian historical research on the Mongol invasion of Hungary has a rich and extensive history, spanning over a century. Over the past two decades, there has been a concerted effort to synthesize information from various local and foreign sources, resulting in a harmonized account of this significant historical event. This approach has yielded major results and contributed to a deeper understanding of the invasion.

A significant contribution to this research comes from a volume on the Mongol invasions, published in 2003.³ It is a collection and Hungarian translation of crucial primary sources related to the invasion. It provides not only historical accounts but also an overview of the period's historiography and of contemporary scholarly perspectives. It also incorporates the first comprehensive summary and discussion of archaeological research on the Mongol invasion of Hungary. This aspect is particularly significant as archaeological studies have revealed new sites and sources shedding light on the events of the period.⁴

1 *The Mongol Invasion of Hungary and the Mongolian Conquest and its Eurasian Context*, supported by the National Research, Development, and Innovation Office K 128880. E-mail address: tatarjaras1241@gmail.com.

2 Uhrin, "The Mongols."

3 Nagy, ed., *Tatárjárás*.

4 Laszlovsky, "Tatárjárás és régészet," 453–68.

In addition to presenting the findings of archaeological research, the study also outlines potential research directions and approaches for future investigations. This forward-looking perspective contributes to the ongoing development of our understanding of the Mongol invasion.

János B. Szabó's comprehensive book on the impact of the Mongol invasion in Hungary, published in multiple editions, is the latest summary of the topic, primarily focusing on military historical aspects.⁵

Furthermore, the Hungarian National Museum has played a key role in disseminating the research findings to a broader audience. It organized a nationwide exhibition based on archaeological discoveries from the Mongol invasion period. A corresponding volume was published to accompany the exhibition, presenting the latest research results. The project was part of a larger international exhibition titled *Genghis Khan and His Heirs, The Great Mongol Empire*, which aimed to introduce several centuries of Mongolia's history and culture to a broad international audience.⁶

The combination of these volumes about the Mongol invasions of Hungary, the exhibition at the Hungarian National Museum, and the broader international exhibition reflect the current state of research into the Mongol invasion of Hungary. In fact, recent archaeological finds have confirmed the ideas they proposed.

An important conference organized at Kiskunfélegyháza in 2011 also emphasized the exploration of new archaeological sites associated with this period. *Carmen miserabile* (2014), the edited Hungarian volume stemming from the conference and dedicated to András Pálóczi Horváth, a renowned expert in the field, showcases significant advancements in research methods and approaches.⁷

Pálóczi Horváth's academic contributions are crucial for comprehending the history of the Mongol invasion of Hungary, particularly in his leading role in researching the Cumans—an ethnic group originating from the steppe regions of Eastern Europe that migrated to Hungary due to the expansion of the Mongol Empire. Following the 1241–1242 invasion, the Cumans settled in the plains of the Kingdom of Hungary. The archaeological interpretation of their material culture is indispensable for studying the invasion and assessing its enduring impact on the

5 B. Szabó, *A Tatárjárás*.

6 The stations of the exhibition *Dschingis Khan und seine Erben. Das Weltreich der Mongolen* were in Bonn, 16.06.2005. – 25.09.2005; Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Munich, 25.10.2005 – 29.01.2006; Schloss Schallaburg, Österreich, 31.03.2006 – 01.11.2006; Sakip Sabanci Museum, Istanbul, 07.12.2006 – 08.04.2007; Hungarian National Museum, Budapest, 24.05.2007 – 02.09.2007. Ritoók and Garam, eds, *A tatárjárás*; Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, ed., *Dschingis Khan*.

7 Rosta and V. Székely, eds, '*Carmen miserabile*.'

country.⁸ The archaeology of the Cumans is relevant also for the research of late nomads (for example, the Pechenegs), and for other ethnic groups that originated from various areas of Eastern Europe or Asia (for example, the Iasians) and lived in Hungary in the Late Middle Ages. A similar conference held at Lakitelek in 2022 summarized the recent results of multidisciplinary research on the impact of the thirteenth-century Mongol invasion of Hungary, with a strong focus on archaeology and defense strategies against the Mongols.⁹

More recently, using new research methods and approaches, a more complex interpretation of this period has been enabled by archaeology. An article published in *Hungarian Archaeology* online journal in 2016 dealt with the archaeological discoveries connected to the invasion of the country, indicating the sites where we have direct evidence of fights and Mongol destruction.¹⁰ This study, as well as some other publications, raise methodological questions and issues about the extent archaeology can contribute to the understanding of a very short historical period and about the way invasions and their long-term consequences can be detected in material culture. All this may be considered to have represented the state of the research field up to the recent past. However, further publications in the last few years about ongoing archaeological excavations, along with publications about earlier finds, have offered new clues that help us shed light on the Battle of Muhi and surrounding events.

This project's general approach has been confirmed by an important international scholarly debate, which emerged before the launching of the new program. The cause of the sudden Mongol withdrawal from Hungary in 1242 has been an intriguing research question ever since the first scholarly studies about the history of the Mongol invasion in Europe. Recently, two leading scholars in the academic fields of oriental studies and climate history have proposed a new solution, thereby generating a lively discussion.¹¹ In response, we, the members of the present research project, jointly with other Hungarian scholars, have published a discussion paper on the new study, offering an environmental-historical solution to the puzzle of the withdrawal. We argue for a more complex, multi-causal explanation of the sequence of events in 1242.¹² This scholarly debate has also contributed to the shaping of the present research project and to the methodological approaches used in the complex research framework of the program. Thus, the Mongol invasion of Hungary is now discussed in a broad international framework, connected to a large geographical region, because one of the key factors of these new interpretations is related to the impact of climatic changes occurring at the time.

8 Pálóczi Horváth, *Pechenegs*; Pálóczi Horváth, "Steppe Traditions."

9 http://files.archaeolingua.hu/2022NY/Upload/Konf_02_02.pdf, Accessed: 29 November 2023.

10 Laszlovszky, Pow, and Pusztai, "Reconstructing," 29–38.

11 Büntgen and di Cosmo, "Climatic," 1–9.

12 Pinke et al., "Climate of Doubt," 1–6.

These new academic results, scholarly discussions, recent research projects, and investigations have made it clear that a new research project can only be successful if it applies an interdisciplinary approach, embracing a wide range of methods and disciplines. Thus, the present project and the research team offer a framework and a common research platform for new results. It is also one of the main goals of our project to summarize new findings and to present them in the form of conferences and publications to the widest possible international scholarly audience. This publication aspect and research strategy are crucial also because many previous important studies are unavailable to the wider academic public, since they are in Hungarian and in the languages of the Central European countries affected by the Mongol invasion. In this way, we make an effort to share research results currently available in Polish, Czech, Slovak, Croatian, and other publications.

As a result, the present research project can deal with several important issues, giving us a chance to re-interpret the crucial historical questions of the period concerned. In the following section, we offer a short summary of some of the main research questions and problems connected to the expansion of the Mongol Empire and its impact on Central Europe.

The Battle of Muhi

The Battle of Muhi, fought in April 1241 between the royal army of the Kingdom of Hungary and the Mongols, is not simply a crucial episode in Hungarian history: it occupies a position of Pan-Eurasian historical significance.¹³ It is therefore of utmost importance that serious efforts should be made to offer a reliable historical reconstruction not only of the battle itself, but also of the short and long-term impact of the related Mongol invasion and occupation of Hungary. Recent innovative historical interpretations and archaeological finds offer a complex, multidisciplinary approach, which may be the basis of a large-scale research project. Therefore, “The Mongol Invasion of Hungary in its Eurasian Context” is a project aimed at improving our understanding of the episode and its broader historical context through a fuller analysis of the surviving textual records and the most recent archaeological finds.

The Battle of Muhi (in medieval sources the nearby settlement was called Mohi) was one of the decisive events in a decades-long historical process, which saw the Mongol Empire occupying Central Asia, defeat the Russian principalities, and drive into the region of Central Europe, attacking Hungary and the duchies of Poland. That the battle was significant is evinced by the wide and disparate range of sources, European and non-European, which record a range of its aspects. As an example,

13 B. Szabó, “The Hungarian View.”

Juvaini, the Persian official and historian in the employ of the Mongols, described it as “one of their greatest deeds and their fiercest battles.”¹⁴ It also appears to be the only battle fought on European soil of which we have a descriptive medieval Chinese account: it is found in Sübētei’s biographies in the *Yuan Shi*, the official history of the Mongol Yuan Dynasty.¹⁵ A version of Juvaini’s account persisted in the work of the fifteenth-century Timurid court historian, Khwandamir¹⁶ and a very garbled version, which shifted the events to Moscow, is found in the seventeenth-century Turkic history of the Khanate by Khiva’s Abu al-Ghazi Bahadur.¹⁷

New archaeological surveys and battlefield research at Muhi

Improving our understanding of the Battle of Muhi as a series of events is concomitant with an improved identification of the geographical sites where various episodes of the battle occurred. Based on the sources, the battle was actually a series of sporadic engagements at different sites that unfolded in prolonged stages. From the same records, we are aware of certain key natural and manmade landscape features of the sites where the events took place (e.g., the hotly contested bridge spanning the Sajó, the Hungarian camp surrounded by the Mongols, the village of Mohi, a highway along which Hungarian troops retreated, and others). Nevertheless, the location of many important features remains conjectural. In large part, this has to do with the fact that scholars have attempted to reconstruct the battle mainly through the written sources, supplemented with some geographical and settlement history research.

Our project intends to integrate and synthesize findings from a range of disciplines wider than previously been attempted. Key to this is the integration of archaeological findings into the picture. Several recent Hungarian articles give details of at least two excavated sites that may be connected to the battle. Mária Wolf has excavated a settlement site in the framework of the M3 motorway rescue project near Hejőkeresztúr. The research reveals a sunken-floor house from the Árpád Age (1000–1301) with archaeological finds not characteristic of the average material culture of contemporary villages.¹⁸ She concludes that the finds can be connected to the Battle of Muhi. This aspect of the site has been discussed in the context of the Mongol invasion in an article by József Laszlovsky.¹⁹ Furthermore, in Wolf’s thorough publication about the swords and one

14 Boyle, trans., *Genghis Khan*.

15 Pow and Liao, “Subutai,” 37–76.

16 Thackston, trans., *Khwandamir*.

17 al-Ghazi Bahadur, *History of the Turks*.

18 Wolf, “Hejőkeresztúr-Vizekköze,” 44–47.

19 Laszlovsky, “Az ország,” 39–43.

piece of an armor, she argues that “based on the archaeological finds, here we can see the material culture of a larger than average rural settlement mixed with the objects of those who were running away from the battlefield.” She formulates the hypothesis that the site is connected to the route along which Prince Coloman fled the battlefield. She also points to the importance of studying the medieval historical-geographical situation and its relevance for the localization of various elements of the battle.²⁰ Also connected to the events, another significant discovery is the deviant burials described by Tamás Pusztai.²¹ Two burials with highly significant objects were found in a pit near the settlement remains of Mohi, at the edge of what was the thirteenth-century village. The sabretache and scabbard of a knife were attached to the belt of one of the skeletons, while near the other body, a bridle and eight coins dating back to the years 1235–1241 have been excavated. An octagonal-shaped iron mace was also found near the first body, which must have belonged to a warrior of Asiatic origin fighting in the battle. A mace of the same type has also been found in a deserted Hungarian village site, the destruction of which can be connected to the Mongol invasion.²² Furthermore, a similar find was excavated at Hlynske village, in present-day Ukraine at an archaeological site also connected to the Mongol expansion.²³ Based on their additional features and a detailed study of the objects (bridle and knife-scabbard) from the medieval settlement of Muhi, it seems certain that the two briefly described deviant burials belonged to casualties of the Battle of Muhi.

This most recent archaeological literature and the work already carried out on the former medieval settlement of Mohi serve as our starting point for a thorough investigation of the historical geography of the larger battle area. For example, based on the new interpretation of the settlement archaeology of the Mohi site, we can establish the position of the important medieval roadway going through the settlement and leading to a crossing on the Sajó River. Placing the road into the settlement network of the region and its dating are crucial for our understanding of the movements of different troop contingents during the battle. The use of written documents from the thirteenth century and later periods, particularly charters and perambulations included in charters, will offer us a better chance to reconstruct the surrounding settlement and road system to see how it was during the Mongol invasion. This work has already been started by the archaeologists of the Herman Ottó Museum at Miskolc and by the researchers of the Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County Archive.

This reconstruction is accompanied by an intensive archaeological survey, including the application of metal detectors in specific targeted areas. This part of

20 Wolf, “Régészeti adatok,” 69–80.

21 Pusztai, “Buzogánnyal,” 141–50.

22 Pusztai and Boldog, “A Prismatic,” 181–96; Szilágyi and Serlegi, “Nád közé,” 127–40.

23 Pugolovok, “Navershye bulavy s Hlynskoho,” 161–64.

the project is supported by recent methodological developments in battlefield and conflict archaeology. These research fields have proved to be among the fastest-developing areas of archaeological investigations. The special team of the Hungarian Military History Institute has already produced significant results through their complex interdisciplinary research into battlefields of later periods, which are of high importance for Hungarian history.²⁴ Systematic metal detecting with the help of amateur detectorists is one of the main contributions to this project. Therefore, we have developed a special scheme with the Hungarian National Museum, the National Park of Bükk, the Ferenczy Museum Center, the Herman Ottó Museum at Miskolc, and with the recently established Association for Community Archaeology to conduct a systematic large-scale metal detector survey in the battlefield area.

During several weekend campaigns in 2018 and 2019, more than fifty volunteers checked the area of Muhi and the nearby settlements, looking for traces of the medieval battles and villages. All the data about the finds were entered into a GIS system, together with the track records of all participants. Furthermore, historical and archaeological data of relevance for the medieval settlement system were entered into this database, as well as the complex information gained from georeferenced historical maps. As a result, prior to the fieldwork, the archaeological and historical data were compared and summarized on a map. This map contains the medieval villages with church sites and settlement borders. Combining these research maps with the archaeological data from the new field surveys offers us a new basis of interpretation for the battle. Different levels and layers of this spatial database show 1) the modern geographical conditions of the area with the historical changes in the environment, 2) the medieval settlements system based on written evidence and the archaeological field survey, 3) the contemporary finds from the area, along with the various reconstruction attempts for the localization of the battlefield. This first survey helped us narrow down the possible site of the battle, as well as to specify the location of the medieval village Sajóhídvég (the placename means: at the bridge end of the Sajó River), where the medieval bridge used to be.

In 2019, the project team, jointly with the museums involved, organized a novel field survey program. This time thirty volunteers with metal detectors combed through the site. The archaeologists in the team (József Laszlovszky, Tamás Pusztai, and Tibor Rácz) and a researcher dealing with the history of the nearby villages (Tamás Bodnár) gave presentations to the volunteers, as training is crucial for the methodological development of this community archaeological project. During the short research campaign, the volunteers joined our archaeologists on the site of the medieval village of Hídvég. They found a medieval golden ring, a spur, a piece of a book binding, and localized the place of the medieval church based on a fragment of

24 Négyesi, *Csaták néma tanúi*; Polgár, "Oszmán-török."

its walls. Thanks to local informants, we managed to identify another research area near Szakáld, where we found arrowheads of different types. The most outstanding finding of this weekend was a medieval seal ring. The ring depicts an ox-head with stars and a moon on its sides. The ox-head links the ring to the Hahót-Buzád family, however, the exact identification requires further investigation. Since there had been no medieval settlement in this area, the location the project has identified is most probably connected to the Battle of Muhi.

We planned to continue these searches in 2020 as well, but the Covid pandemic limited our opportunities. Therefore, we have focused on the publication of the field survey results. The methodological aspects of this research are discussed in an article in the Community Archaeology section of the *Hungarian Archaeology* journal (Winter 2020), covering the period of the Mongol invasion and summarizing the results of our research project.²⁵ This time, József Laszlovszky and Tibor Rácz's article on the Muhi battlefield does not focus on the new finds, but on the insights gained from an interdisciplinary research project integrating the work of enthusiastic volunteer metal detectorists with established field methods of battlefield archaeology. The identification of the battlefield site has greatly contributed to a better understanding of the events of 11 April 1241. The course of events as we know them was established according to subjective written sources often based on indirect information. The identification of geographical circumstances will provide new information and make it possible to reconstruct the tactical options open to the leadership of the Hungarian and Mongolian forces and to establish how the location influenced the outcome of the battle. Research concerning the battlefield of Muhi gained momentum through the assistance of volunteers associated with several museums, using metal detectors. In this article, the authors investigate the opportunities community archaeology may provide in the interdisciplinary investigation of a battlefield from the Árpád Age, and they demonstrate the practical and methodological problems research faces when using metal detectors.

Despite certain logistical challenges, the chance of discovering a relatively small number of finds connected to the battle is multiplied by having a large number of people equipped with metal detectors. It is relatively easy to recruit volunteers for battlefield research. Most volunteers with metal detectors have an active interest in military history. Many have been attracted to archaeology through the collection of world war relics. In addition, for many of our volunteers, the lecture series connected to our research project is an attractive program.²⁶ This article concludes that

25 Laszlovszky and Rácz, "Research Using," 71–81.

26 The lectures can be found on the YouTube channel of the project: 1241 Tatárjárás, Youtube channel, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0g0VCgxNMVNWUHQ_BcqCg, accessed: 29 November 2023.

in addition to survey strategies, organizing work with volunteers requires particular attention. The seventy-eighty people who participate in a fieldwork campaign cannot be treated as a single group but should be divided into smaller units with well-defined subtasks. Sufficient professional staff should also be provided. The work of each unit should be supervised by an archaeologist, while the documentation is assisted by archaeology students. Since different volunteer organizations have developed different rules for how their members operate, training should reflect these rules, while being dependent on the number and previous training of the actual volunteers. Both the discovery of the Abaújvár treasure (also discussed in the present study) and the investigation of the Muhi battlefield highlight how fieldwork involving metal detecting surveys can contribute to a better understanding of a particular period.

Another noteworthy element of the project is related to underwater archaeology. Of particular importance is pinpointing the location of the bridge around which, according to a range of accounts, much of the fighting took place. This will be done partly by the investigation of the archaeological finds in the area, such as the wooden posts in lakes and riverbeds. Earlier research has already identified one of these sites near Köröm, but our goal is to collect more data and samples. To localize the medieval bridge, underwater archaeologist János Attila Tóth, and diver trainer László Lengyel went down a lake near the ferry of Köröm and took samples from the timber structure to determine the age of the wood by dendrochronology.

Furthermore, the complex reconstruction of the battlefield at Muhi requires the geo-morphological and hydrogeographic analysis of the area to offer a better reconstruction of the thirteenth-century course of the Sajó River. Particularly when we consider the high degree of meandering of the Sajó, we may rightly suppose that its floodplain and riverbed might have changed over the last centuries. A similar investigation proved to be successful in reconstructing the medieval changes of river courses in the area of the Drava, which was crucial for the interpretation of the contemporary land-use and settlement network.²⁷ Assisted by the head of the Physical Geography Department of Eötvös Loránd University Balázs Nagy, we have defined the medieval beds and the locations of floodplains of the rivers and runnels in the area. Moreover, the company HelmSolutions prepared the LIDAR survey of the territory, which offers detailed topographical material for the 3D terrain model of the area.²⁸ This survey was also combined with drone recordings done by the Faculty

27 <http://osdravaprojekt.ovf.hu>, accessed: 29 November 2023; Viczián, “Geomorphological Research,” 75–91.

28 The LIDAR survey was carried out in the framework of the project: “Creating a research center for the development of new measuring technologies and documentation processes targeting protected cultural and natural heritage. GINOP-2.1.1-15-2015- 00695” (Hungary). We acknowledge the help of HelmSolutions (<https://lidar-wmt.hu>) for the LIDAR survey of the area.

of Science of Eötvös Loránd University. This reconstruction of the local hydrogeographic conditions and of the road and settlement system will enable us to better describe how the various stages of the battle unfolded, including the engagement at the bridge and the subsequent attack on the Hungarian camp. It will also help reconstruct the road network along which the retreat took place. Thus, it will serve as the basis for further archaeological investigations. The first results of these investigations were presented at the Hungarian environmental-history conference in 2019.²⁹

Connected to the ongoing historical-geographical investigation of the battlefield, József Laszlovszky and Balázs Nagy (geographer) have recently published their results about the geographical changes in the area of Muhi.³⁰ Recent geographical surveys, geomorphological and hydrological studies, combined with historical-geographical interpretations, offer a complex, multidisciplinary reconstruction of the environmental changes in the region and the natural processes connected to the Rivers Sajó, Hernád, and Hejő in the wider area. A new LIDAR survey, drone flights, and 3D surface elevation studies have demonstrated large-scale riverbed changes in the Sajó with significant transformations in the floodplain areas of the three rivers. Based on this survey and the study of historical maps, the article discusses the places of possible crossing points on the River Sajó in the thirteenth century, which is crucial for the reconstruction of the battlefield. These geographical studies also serve as the basis for the large-scale community archaeology research (using metal detectors) of the project. The authors present the first results of a project aimed at improving our understanding of environmental changes and landscape transformation in the area over the last eight hundred years. Through a fuller analysis of surviving textual records and the most recent archaeological findings, the results are placed into the broader historical context of the battle.

Another important study dealing with geographical and historical aspects of the battlefield at Muhi is also among the first results of the new research project. By focusing on two primary source accounts of Batu Khan ascending a hill shortly before the battle, József Laszlovszky and Stephen Pow use a wide range of methods and approaches in their revised reconstruction of the Battle of Muhi.³¹ The two sources are not related to each other; moreover, they represent two fundamentally different source groups concerning the battle. By using a complex analytical approach to the sources, the article tries to identify the character and significance of the hill in question—an inquiry made difficult by the fact that today there are no hills or mountains near the battlefield. For clues, the authors explore the attested purposes that Mongol rulers and troops had for ascending mountains. The hypothesis emerges that Batu is likely to

29 30 October 2019. Nagy and Laszlovszky, “Új földrajzi,”

30 Laszlovszky and Nagy, “Új földrajzi, környezettörténeti,” 139–59.

31 Laszlovszky and Pow, “Finding Batu’s Hill,” 261–89.

have ascended two different types of hills. One was a small mound (*kurgan*) of the type that characteristically dotted Hungary's landscape around the battlefield. The other hill, which he climbed for religious ritual purposes, was probably one of the more prominent features around Szerencs, about thirty kilometers away from the site of the clash. The study revisits several earlier attempts at identifying the hill, using two different types of approaches. Combining a unique range of textual accounts with recent archaeological findings, the authors suggest a drastic and perhaps more accurate reinterpretation of the course of events leading up to the decisive battle than the interpretations proposed so far. Furthermore, by looking closely at the different narrative structures of the sources, we see attempts by medieval authors of Central European and Asian texts to contextualize this event within their general interpretations of the battle. Thus, the main arguments of this article cross real and figurative frontiers in contemporary accounts of the episode and in their modern interpretations.

New studies and results about the archaeology of the Mongol invasion of Hungary

The Winter 2020 issue of the *Hungarian Archaeology* online journal includes several articles that discuss various aspects of the Mongol invasion of Hungary in 1241–1242, although from different perspectives and using different approaches. First among them is a preliminary study of the treasure from the time of the 1241 Mongol invasion.³² Research into archaeological traces of the Mongol invasion has long discovered that hoards consisting of coins, jewelry, and other valuables come to light in various parts of the country,³³ and the coins are connected to the 1241–1242 attack. In other places, hidden iron objects, predominantly agricultural tools, are usually discovered by accident rather than by planned archaeological excavations. This is why, the finding that emerged in July 2019 from the Abaújhvár earthwork fortification of Abaúj County, dating back to the Árpád Age, is so special. The coins, jewelry, and other unique objects, such as the textile remains woven with golden threads, as well as the contemporary importance of the fort made it worthwhile to briefly publish the initial results, even though the processing of the full material is still ongoing. The Abaújhvár site is known from the period's written sources, and the archaeological investigation of this earthwork fortification has been underway for many decades. A little more than a year after its discovery, Mária Wolf and Csaba Tóth make their assessment of the site and the treasure, while Gábor Bakos and Enikő Sipos discuss the community archaeology aspects and the restoration issues of the finds.

32 Bakos et al., "A hoard from the period of the Mongol invasion."

33 See also the recent study by Csaba Tóth noted in a later part of this article: Tóth, "A tatárjárás kori kincshorizontról."

The hoard consists of a total of 890 coins, four silver and a bronze buckle, two silver and two golden rings, two pairs of silver earrings and three additional, drop-shaped earring parts, one silver ring that probably belonged to an earring, four golden knobs with gems, one piece of rock crystal that must have been part of a ring or pendant, a heavily worn Roman silver coin, a small metal artifact in the shape of a *fleur-de-lis*, and pieces of textiles interwoven with golden thread. Further archaeological finds that came to light both in the excavation area and outside it suggests that this fort of the county was attacked by the Mongol army. Written sources as well as the archaeological remains witness that the fort survived the siege and may have served as an important hub in the counterattack actions, as is indicated in a 1242 document. Further surveys inside the fort and in the rampart will contribute to a better understanding of the role this fort played in the history of the Mongol invasion.

Coin hoards are key research sources for the history of the Mongol invasion, and for a long time, numismatic studies have been addressing their various aspects. A more recent, highly important article in *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* [Papers in Military History] is about the hidden treasures connected to the Mongol invasion, demonstrating the find horizon of the invasion.³⁴ At present, we know of roughly 100–150 coin hoards from the Carpathian Basin, most likely hidden during the Mongol invasion in 1241–1242. This range of coins, introduced in a complex way only in recent decades, covers the entire territory of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary, although their spread is not geographically uniform. A typical coin hoard from this age (or a mixed treasure containing jewelry and hack silver) may basically consist of two groups of coins. Foreign currencies are mainly represented by twelfth- and thirteenth-century *Friesacher Pfennigs*, but there are also *Wiener Pfennigs*, and to a lesser extent, coins minted in Cologne and England. Almost all the Hungarian coins were minted during the first phase of the reign of Béla IV (1235–1270), while earlier Hungarian coins are rarely found. The existence of the find horizon raises several issues, such as the spatial distribution pattern, hoards as indicators of the destruction during the invasion, the contemporary money economy, economic historical aspects, foreign trade issues, and others, the reinterpretation of which has only recently begun.

Another aspect of the archaeological studies of the research project is not connected to new fieldwork, but to the complex analysis of the archaeological finds dating from the period of the Mongol invasion. In addition to the investigation of the ceramics of Hejőkeresztúr-Vizekköze, a recent article gives a thorough analysis of the copper findings of the same site, using archaeological and metallographic methods.³⁵ The site is located about 700 meters south of Hejőkeresztúr, in the current location of the M-30 motorway. The excavation was carried out in 1995–1996

34 Tóth, “A tatárjárás kori,” 592–603.

35 Wolf and Barkóczy, “Hejőkeresztúr-Vizekköze lelőhely,” 604–28.

and covered about 12,000 square meters². The uncovered settlement was richest in findings and objects from the late Árpád Age in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Due to the high number of finds, especially iron tools, it may be concluded that the settlement was abandoned very suddenly, potentially when its inhabitants were forced to flee. Since the Battle of Muhi was fought close to this area, the flight is most likely to have been due to the battle. The material represents a combination of tools from the settlement, as well as weapons left behind by soldiers in the battle. The paper describes the archaeological and metallographic analysis of the copper findings. These objects must have served various purposes. Some of them were day-to-day tools (bowls and plates for scales), jewelry forming part of an apparel (rings and belts), furniture (parts of a door or chest), or were used in religious ceremonies. Some of the artifacts were impossible to identify. They are not typical of other excavations from the Árpád Age. Their detailed examination has revealed that their manufacturing was not uniform. Some were produced using simple methods, while others demonstrate more advanced technologies. This suggests that the village did not have its own metal workshop, and the objects were produced elsewhere, but not all in the same place. Therefore, we may conclude that the settlement was involved in a busy commercial activity and the locals were affluent enough to buy cheap mass products as well as more exclusive high-quality goods.

Archaeological studies carried out in the framework of the project are connected not only to the finds and sites in Hungary but also to archaeological research carried out in the Eurasian context. In order to better understand this battle and the Mongol invasion of Hungary in general, we should be familiar with the army of the Mongolian Empire, of which Gergely Csiky offers a detailed analysis.³⁶ The Mongol Empire (*Yeke Mongol Ulus*) was the largest continental empire at the time due to its efficient, complex, and well-organized army, which was far more sophisticated than the former nomadic hordes composed mainly of mounted archers. The army was disciplined, had a well-defined command-line, with the cooperation of various branches including heavy and light cavalry, infantry and artillery, and its specially trained warriors were drilled in encircling hunts. The army was also characterized by a combination of highly mobile tactical movements, an empire-wide logistical system (*yam*), the mass use of corvée labor, and the application of cutting-edge military innovations. Csiky's paper presents this military system by describing its organization, manpower, tactical units, weaponry, equipment, military training, tactics, and strategy as well as the technical novelties deployed in sieges. Beyond the stereotypes frequently applied to nomadic armies, contemporary descriptions reflect an army building on steppe nomadic traditions, but combining them with technical, tactical, and strategic elements adopted from neighboring and subjected civilizations,

36 Csiky, "A Nagy Mongol Birodalom," 528–57.

including China and Islamic Central Asia. Due to its highly militarized state ideology, building on the notion of constant conquest of a world empire, the Mongol military system created the largest and most effective army of the thirteenth century, which contributed to the empire's swift expansion resulting in the large-scale devastation of huge territories, the extinction of populated cities, and mass deportation. At the same time, it formed the so-called *Pax Mongolica*, that facilitated the spread of goods, ideas, people, and innovations in a huge area under the same polity.

New historical studies connected to the Mongol invasion of Hungary

An important goal of the research is understanding the Eurasian historical aspects of the Mongol invasion. In this context, several articles have been published about the resumed discussion of the relevant historical sources, the international contacts right after the invasion, as well as about their later interpretations.

László Veszprémy's article analyzes the memory of the invasion in contemporary chronicles.³⁷ The Mongol attack of Eastern and Central Europe shocked Europe, especially after the bloody victories against the Poles and the Hungarians in April 1241. Many of the chroniclers conveyed the vision of total destruction, including the German annals, the Hungarian chronicles, and the most widespread handbooks, like the *Speculum historiale*, and the world chronicle of Martin of Troppau. A unique and controversial source is the work of the Armenian prince Hayton, the "*Flos historiarum*," which gives a description of a Mongol defeat by the duke of Austria, where according to the author—in contradiction to historical records—the Mongol captain, Prince Batu met his death. For a long time, Hayton was labelled as an unreliable source, or at least a reckless storyteller. However, the article argues that there was an independent Mongol—partly oral—tradition of the war events in Hungary that survived in Oriental sources. These Arab, Persian, and Chinese sources (Ibn al-Said al-Maghribi- al-Fida, Jovayni, Rashid al-Din /Rashiduddin, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*) may be recognized behind the vivid battle scene as portrayed by Hayton. The Mongol defeat at a certain bridge that Hayton mentions may be identified as the famous fight for the bridge at the Battle of Muhi, in April 1241, which is described by Thomas of Spalato.

Attila Bárány's article investigates the news, reports, relations, dispatches, and letters that reached the West about the 1241 Mongol invasion in Hungary and (partly) Poland.³⁸ It also explores how the Christian princes reacted to the increasing number of exhortations to take up arms in the kingdoms that were at the mercy of the Infidel.

37 Veszprémy, "A tatárjárás," 459–85.

38 Bárány, "A tatárjárás híre," 486–527.

The article offers an overview of the information that was communicated mainly to Germany, France, and England, and the channels used for this. It also discusses how the Western courts were notified by personally affected rulers, like Otto, Duke of Braunschweig, or King of Bohemia Wenceslas I, and how the news arrived in Paris or London via the wide network of the Church, especially the Mendicant Orders, and some individually concerned prelates, e.g., the Archbishop of Magdeburg. We find out what the West learned about the Tatars' devastation in Hungary and Silesia and when, and also who considered the threat to be serious from the outset, taking defense efforts in their own hands, particularly after Pope Gregory IX died, and Emperor Frederick II was engaged in warring his Guelph adversaries in Italy. It is seen how some pillars of the crusading zeal, the Duke of Brabant and Henry Raspe made sacrifices on the altar of the *negotium Christi*. The study seeks to re-interpret the report of Henry II that the Duke of Brabant received in March. It was long held in Hungarian historiography that the letter was written by Hermann, Landgrave of Thuringia, which, however, as the article proves, is impossible, since Hermann had died by that time, and the real writer was Henry Raspe, the new landgrave.

Two articles investigate the papal diplomacy and issues of Franciscan envoys and missionaries. Szilvia Kovács examines the relationships between the Latin West and the Mongol Empire after the Mongol invasion of Eastern Europe (1236–1242).³⁹ The focus is the missionary activities of the members of the Franciscan Order. Kovács seeks answers to questions about the time and way the Franciscan friars appeared in the territory of the Mongol Empire with missionary purposes and how they started to build their missionary network in the Golden Horde. Based on written sources, the author states that the missionaries appeared in the Mongol Empire in the 1250s and their missionary institutions were founded in the 1280s.

Dorottya Uhrin's article examines the relations of the reports of the two Franciscans, Johannes de Plano Carpini and C. de Bridia, and reviews the creation of their works and their manuscript tradition.⁴⁰ The Franciscans' reports are crucial, because the aim of the legation was not only to establish diplomatic connections between Europe and the Mongols, but also to acquire intelligence, which was vital if, indeed, an expected second invasion were to happen. For that, besides the strategic data, the Franciscan authors carefully described the cultural and geographical features they encountered. The main difference between the reports of Carpini and Bridia is that the latter puts more emphasis on readability, compared to Carpini's factual mode of presentation. Bridia's goal was not to encourage action against the Mongols; instead, he intended to demonstrate the divine punishment which afflicted Christians. Thus, he represented the Mongols more negatively than his colleague.

39 Kovács, "A nyugati keresztény," 572–82.

40 Uhrin, "Johannes de Plano Carpini," 583–91.

The difference between the two versions of Carpini's work is largely a matter of style. While the first version was a report for the pope, the second is a more colorful work, targeted at an interested audience while also satisfying historiographical needs.

The new research project also deals with the critical aspects of various national, local, and regional narratives, as well as with different scholarly traditions of the interpretation of the Mongol Empire's expansion. János B. Szabó analyzes the historiography of the Mongol invasion in Hungary.⁴¹ Modern historical literature on the Mongol invasion of Hungary has displayed very interesting trends over a period of nearly a century and a half. An event that occupies a prominent place in Hungarian national historical consciousness, even appearing in Ferenc Kölcsey's *National Anthem*, has received surprisingly scant attention from professional historians. One possible reason has been the lack of historical problems requiring investigation. The invasion was short-lived, and the Hungarian narrative sources were known very early. Apart from some scattered data, it had been a long time before any sources that might present a research challenge emerged. Master Roger's contemporary report on the invasion seemed to have done all the work for subsequent historians, who could do little but reproduce his account. The narrative of the Mongol invasion has been of limited utility in public discourse, seldom used as a parable or as historical justification for current events. Perhaps the most prominent exploitation of its potential in this respect was by the post-1945 communist regime. The breakthrough finally came with the upsurge of Oriental Studies in Hungary, which is ongoing and has restored the Hungarian events of the Mongol invasion to their international context.

In 2022, a major volume of collected studies was edited by members of the project team János B. Szabó and Dorottya Uhrin.⁴² The contributions in the volume entitled *Mongol Invasions against Europe, 1236–1242* are grouped into four major parts. The first "The Mongol Threats" explains the emergence and rise of the Great Mongol Empire, its army, and the military preparation of the Mongol troops. The second main chapter entitled "The Target: Europe" gives an overview of the main political entities of Europe at the time of the Mongol invasions and discusses in detail the main military conflicts of the period in Southern, Western, and Eastern Europe and in Asia Minor. The chapters in the third unit discuss the Mongols' Western campaigns, the preparations for them and the course of events, focusing on the impact of the military activity in Hungary. The concluding part of the volume, "The Rule of the Mongols in Europe" concentrates on the presence of the Mongols in Eastern Europe, in the Balkans, and in their later campaigns up to the end of the thirteenth century. The individual chapters are written by sixteen specialists, including some non-Hungarian scholars.

41 B. Szabó, "Most rabló," 559–71.

42 B. Szabó and Uhrin, eds, *Mongol invázió*.

Dissemination of results

One of the main goals of the project is to present new findings to the public. The public lecture series *A tatárjárásról sok szemmel: régi kérdések, új válaszok* [About the Mongol Invasion from Many Perspectives: Old Questions, New Answers] started its fifth semester in 2021. The members of the project are eager to present their research to interested audiences. Other distinguished scholars also contribute to the sessions and shed light on various aspects of the Mongol invasion and the Mongol Empire. On a special occasion, Ambassador of Mongolia to Hungary Batbayar Zeneemyadar also attended a roundtable discussion about the present-day image of the Mongolian Empire. These lectures are available on the project's YouTube channel.⁴³ Moreover, the results have been published in archaeological and cultural heritage magazines, such as *Határtalan Régészet* [Borderless Archaeology] or *Várak, Kastélyok, Templomok* [Castles, Palaces, Churches]. In these publications, we summarize the main aims of the project, its possible outcomes, and research methodologies, and introduce recently discovered archaeological findings. In connection with research methodology, the article published in the journal dealing with castles, palaces and churches, has presented the preliminary results of a new investigation of the spatial distribution patterns of place names with the suffix *-egyháza* ('church') and of Romanesque village churches, both groups used as indicators for the impact and destruction of the Mongol invasion in 1241–1242.⁴⁴

A major element in providing the public with information about the activity of the research project was the series of regular interviews with members of the research team, published by the online news site 24.hu. Between February 2021 and July 2023, thirty interviews were published on various aspects of the ongoing research project. The interviews made by Dániel Bihari reached many people and generated significant public interest.

The current findings of the research program confirm that initiating the research was justified. The history of the Mongol invasion in Hungary had not previously been a focal point of scholarly inquiry. Both experts' and the general public's interest affirm that there was a need for new research in this field. While the project may not have yielded satisfactory answers to every open question, it does confirm that employing interdisciplinary methodology and revisiting the topic may generate new scholarly insights.

43 1241 Tatárjárás. Youtube channel, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0g0VCgxNMVNW WUHQ_BcqCg/videos, accessed: 29 November 2023.

44 B. Szabó et al., "Új régészeti eredmények," 88–91; Laszlovszky and F. Romhányi, "A tatárjárás pusztítása," 32–35.

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The First V4 Summer School in Economic History, Prague, 2023

Antonie Doležalová 

Institute of History of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prosecká 809/76, Prague 9, 190 00, Czech Republic; a.dolezalova@hiu.cas.cz

In the last week of August 2023 (27 Augustus – 2 September), the first V4 Summer School in Economic History was held in Prague. It was organized by the Institute of History of the Czech Academy of Sciences in cooperation with the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, and the University of Warsaw. The event was financially supported by the Visegrad Fund.

The long-term target of the Ph.D. Summer School in Economic History was to incorporate the V4 historiographies of economic history into international networks. It intended to encourage the young generation of economic historians to enter the international scene and participate in an open academic discussion.

After 1989, economic history, which before 1989 had been a dominant stream of historiography in the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, and Poland, was moved to the periphery in all post-socialist countries. This happened partly because economic history as a history of the workers' movement, jointly with philosophy, political economy, and scientific communism, was at all universities in socialist countries part of the institutes of Marxism–Leninism that were dissolved. Their former members either left academia or retrained in more convenient fields of expertise, such as microeconomics, macroeconomics, or political science; some of them found new positions in the departments of history at newly created, state or private, often regional, universities as most of these new universities focused on the humanities and social sciences. In addition, historians refocused their research on more attractive, previously prohibited areas of political, cultural, and social history.¹

Consequently, economic history in post-socialist countries is not an adequately recognized field of European or even world historiography due to the modest number of publications in prestigious journals and low participation in joint

1 Antonie Doležalová, "Epilogue," in *Behind the Iron Curtain: Economic History During the Cold War, 1945–1989*, edited by Antonie Doležalová and Catherine Albrecht, 248. London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-31578-7>

multinational projects. In the early 1990s, the exile community of scholars from former socialist countries helped open post-socialist academia to the world by inviting colleagues from post-socialist countries to participate in international projects. British–Austrian–Czechoslovak economic historian Alice Teichová (1920–2015) played a significant role in this regard, as she opened doors to the international scientific community to an entire generation of Central European economic historians, by inviting them to projects, conferences, and publications she organized. After she had completed her last project a few years after the beginning of the new millennium, nobody from the Central and Eastern European region replaced her.

In the view of the Summer School organizers, establishing a platform for young and senior economic historians to meet and share their experiences in this framework seems to offer a valuable option for scholars from V4 countries to break out of their isolation and return V4 historiography into the global mainstream. To achieve its targets, the Summer School gave economic history students a full understanding of the latest research trends in the field.

Organizers of the Summer School welcomed applications from the broadly defined field of economic history, including business history, social history, and the historiography of economic history. Doctoral projects focused on Central European issues were particularly welcomed. Organizers accepted fifteen applications, fourteen of them from V4 countries.

Students' theses represented a broad spectrum of economic history topics. From a thematic point of view, the projects covered topics from economic and social history, through the history of international economic relations and business history, to intellectual history. From the time-scope perspective, two projects dealt with the early modern period (*Local Economic Markets in the Sixteenth Century through the Example of the Sandomierz Voivodeship; The Economic Background of the Radvanszky Family in the Eighteenth Century*). Three projects dealt with the long nineteenth century (*Economic Relations of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy Outside Europe, Focusing on Brazil between 1867 and 1918; The Occupational Structure in the Lands of the Congress Kingdom in the Nineteenth Century; Water Management and Its Socio-economic Impact in Hungary under Dualism: The Regulation of the Lower Rába Region in the Belle Époque*). Eight projects addressed twentieth-century issues (*Corridor Transport on the Slovak–Hungarian Border after the Vienna Award in 1938–1945; A Two-year Plan in Czechoslovakia; The Problem of the Restitution of Monetary Gold Looted by the Third Reich: Poland and the Tripartite Gold Commission; FDI and Its Role in Shaping the MNE–State Relations and Policies: A Case Study of the Czech Republic; Forbidden Faith: The So-called Religious Sects and Communist Dictatorship; Multinationals and the Making of the Post-war Dutch Tax Regime in 1940–1960; Relations in the Power Structure in the Soviet Type Economy: Institutional Analysis of the Polish People's*

Republic in 1970–1983; Relations of Hungary with the Countries of the Third World in the Socialist Era in 1962–1990). In the latter group, six projects elaborated on the socialist period. Two projects covered the long-term period between the mid-nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth century (*The Development of the Chemical Fertilizers Market in the Bohemian Lands with an Emphasis on the Superphosphate between the 1870s and 1938; The Formation of the Concept of Ownership in Belarus and Estonia*).

The program of the Summer School, housed in the picturesque Villa Lana, incorporated lectures and seminars on recent methodological developments in economic history, including quantitative methods, available archives, and databases suitable for economic history research, philosophy of historiography, and recent historiographical developments. Lectures were delivered by scholars from organizing institutions and prestigious universities and workplaces not only in V4 countries but also in the U.S. (Harvard University, Ohio Northern University). A significant part of the program was devoted to tutorials about individual students' Ph.D. theses and papers in progress. This gave students the opportunity to discuss their research with senior scholars and their peers.

Based on the feedback that organizers collected in the closing session, the Summer School provided significant help in improving the participants' writing, their understanding of the importance of theory in historiography, in broadening their perspective on how to look at the history of Central Europe and how to incorporate in economic history various aspects of history and various methodological tools, including quantitative analysis. Students appreciated most the opportunity to participate in intense debates about their papers in assigned and individualized tutorials, which encouraged them to publish their research results in foreign journals. Finally, they were pleased to have been able to practice their speaking and writing in English in an academic context.

The overall experience from the first run of the V4 Summer School clearly shows that the School opened an innovative mode of incorporating V4 historiographies into the international network. Students coming from V4 countries had the opportunity to establish contacts that they would utilize in their future research projects. Senior scholars opened the discussion about joint research and publications activities. Thus, the School made a direct social impact beneficial to the community of V4 scholars and other internal and external stakeholders, such as academies of sciences and universities. Organizers firmly believe that the Summer School should be continued with the second V4 Summer School in Economic History in 2025, as it offers (1) a new and effective way to surpass the weak penetration of Central European historiography into the European and global mainstream; (2) strengthening the inclusiveness of Central European historiography for the generation of

young scholars; (3) the training of upcoming generations of scientists in the latest methodological developments in the field of economic history; (4) creating an inclusive network of junior and senior scholars in V4 countries that could become a firm foundation for broader Central and Eastern European cooperation in social sciences and humanities. In this regard, network building can rely on the social media platforms already created for the V4 Summer School.



Roman Religion in the Danubian Provinces: Space Sacralisation and Religious Communication during the Principate (1st–3rd Century AD). By Csaba Szabó.

Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2022. 312 pp. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2v6pcph>

Tünde Vágási 

Semmelweis University, Department of Languages for Specific Purposes, 26 Üllői út, 1085 Budapest, Hungary; vagasitunde6@gmail.com

In the book under review, Szabó combines Roman religious studies with provincial archaeology, which represents an innovative scientific method in this field, and according to the author's proposal, he wants to trigger dialogue between disciplines that are rarely applied in Central East Europe (p. 15). Csaba Szabó is currently a research fellow at the Department of Religious Studies of the University of Szeged, and this book is the result of a three-year research effort (from 2018), which is supported by a postdoctoral research grant from the Hungarian state (NKFI Postdoctoral Research Grant 127948).

The main focus is Roman religious communication in the Danube provinces during the Principate from different perspectives. Based on the large and rich material evidence of Roman religion in the Danubian provinces (e.g., the Alpine provinces: Raetia, Noricum; the central part of the Danubian area: Pannonia inferior and superior; and the lower Danubian region: Moesia Inferior and Superior and Dacia) the book presents some aspects of the traditional urban and provincial units of the Roman Empire and a new taxonomy of space. The focus is on sacralized spaces, which were represented in macro-, meso- and micro-spaces across the provinces mentioned in the book. These sacralized spaces shaped Roman religion in the first to third centuries AD and created many religious glocalizations and appropriations. In the first three centuries AD, significant changes (structural, demographic, and political) took place in the Roman world, which indicated new divine agents, new sacralized spaces, and new strategies of religious communication.

The book focuses on three main aspects of Roman religion: lived religion and strategies of religious communication; forms of the space sacralization and glocalization of Roman religion; and the religion of individuals. Through five main chapters—"Emerging Roman Religion: The Beginnings"; "Lived Religion and Its

Macro-spaces in the Danubian Provinces”; “Space Sacralization in Meso-spaces Religious Experience in Micro-paces: Housing the Gods”; “Conclusions: Beyond the Materiality of Roman Religious Communication”—the author focuses on these aspects of Roman religion in the seven provinces of the Danubian area.

The author (as he writes, p. 204) struggled with methodological approaches and their limitations and therefore only took epigraphic material as the basis of his investigation since the number of sources of non-epigraphic, figurative material and small finds cannot be estimated due to their large number.

At the beginning of the volume, he explains why the Danube provinces should be considered together and not according to Roman provincial boundaries, but as we progress in examining the different provinces, it becomes clear that each one underwent unique forms of development and individual changes in religious processes as well. The Danube region was never homogeneous in terms of culture, history, politics, geography, and climate, and it had localities and peculiarities. The author mentions here that in Raetia, continuity or reuse can be observed in the *Brandopferplätze*; in Noricum, there were many ‘native’ gods who were constantly honored, and their sacred places remained in continuous use, only these were transformed into ‘Roman’—Roman-type sanctuaries with inscriptions on them, and Roman ceremonies performed. So only the divine name remains native, like that of Noreia (p. 50), although it is also Latinized; and the individual religiosity of believers became much more important. There are macro-regional differences from province to province, and some divinities were obviously popular in some provinces, such as Mercurius in Raetia, the Nymphs in Pannonia, and Asclepius in Dacia. The provinces were not homogenous; they were differentiated into linguistic, territorial, and even tribal sections. However, there was some connection among one or two groups, e.g., the Mithras communities, but the same cannot be said of the religiosity of these provinces as a whole.

The first of the three main theoretical concepts and approaches deals with lived religion. Human agency (dedicants, their status, origin, connection, and mobility) and small groups of believers are the focus of the chapters according to different aspects. The second approach is the sacralization of space, especially the physical, social, and imagined simultaneity of landscapes. The author distinguishes three large types of sacred places at different levels (p. 79, Fig. 1.4): 1. micro-spaces, characterized by religious individuality (domestic spaces: house shrines, corner shrines, rooms, corridors, private gardens, cellars, etc.); 2. meso-spaces or small group religious spaces (assembly houses, synagogues, small-group religious meeting places, *spelaeum*/caves, Mithraea, springs); and, 3. macro spaces (complex sanctuaries, healing shrines, pilgrimage sites, mountains, forests, etc.).

In the first major chapter, “Emerging Roman Religion: The Beginnings,” the author uses new concepts instead of older ones. Glocalization is one of the key points

for religious groups—the relationship between the local and global complex in the context of religious studies; the aim is to replace the notion of ‘native’ and ‘Roman’. Indeed, this concept focuses on the mobility, connectivity, and global connectivity of local religious groups. The Danubian provinces represent a unique area in which the pre-Roman cultures (Celtic, Illyrian, Hellenistic, Thracian) were connected within the new administrative, economic, and cultural units of Roman provinces and networks outside them. This chapter focuses on pre-Roman religious communication and its continuity and presents some peculiarities of the area through important case studies. Noricum was under the influence of Celtic tribes and had small hilltop settlements. Similarly, the early republican Roman presence (Roman *emporium*) greatly impacted local, indigenous communities due to its connection with some temples and their Roman followers (i.e., Magdalensberg). In the two Pannonian provinces, István Tóth identified three major regions with different religious characteristics, and Szabó followed his territorial distribution and ideas about the pre-Roman religiosity of *Pannoniae* with some additions.¹ What happened in these areas after the Roman period? The author describes it as the slow process of *interpretatio Romana* and *indigena*, adding the complex interaction of human, material, and divine agents of religious communication. The most important question in this chapter is: can we talk about spatial and functional continuities in pre-Roman sacralized spaces? Some Raetian case studies show that there are no or very few definite traces of settlement or population continuity, although there were some *Brandopferplätze* in continuous use (Döttenbichl) or after a long historical hiatus. In Noricum, the continuous use of a rich variety of Celtic theonyms can be observed after the early Roman period. The author emphasizes Isis Noreia as the personification of the province, although his reconstruction is not entirely convincing.² The goddess shares her name with a Roman province, but it also refers to Noreia, which, according to Caesar, was the capital of the province of Noricum. We must be careful with the author’s conclusion that she was a “general, provincial” goddess because all inscriptions are centered around Virunum and Celeia, where there were also two Noreia settlements (modern Althofen and Deinsberg). The altar from Celeia, which shows the goddesses Celeia and Noreia of the two settlements, represents its local importance even more (CIL 3, 5188). The author could have focused more on the fact that in Noricum, the veneration of settlements as personified gods is common, e.g., Celeia, Noreia, Atrans (CIL 3, 5117), and Bedaius (CIL 3, 5572, 5574–75, 5580–81, 11777–78). The Pannonian representation of pre-Roman religion is very difficult to identify; one of these religious ideas concerns the question about Iuppiter Teutanus and Carnuntinus. These two gods may have been pre-Roman divinities, but the problem is that the sanctuary

1 Tóth, *Pannóniai vallástörténet*, 22–3.

2 Hainzmann, “(Dea) Noreia-Isis”; Grassl, “Ein erkannter Kultbrauch,” 231.

in Pfaffenberg was not used before the Roman conquest,³ and we do not know exactly where the sanctuary of Teutanus was in Roman times.⁴ The Silvanus cult in Pannonia was very popular, and due to the many iconographic variations and divine epithets (Magnus, Magusenus, Viator), can be interpreted as the pre-Roman aspects of Silvanus (pp. 63–6). Earlier religious knowledge and traditions are shown in local features of the various pre-Roman gods: Aecorna, Nutrices, Vidasus, and Thana, but in almost every case, they were associated with a ‘Roman’ type of religious practice. The author should have investigated two issues regarding the former pre-Roman religion: the local significance of the cult of Diana and its rural aspect (as in Balatonfőkajár, Sólápa, and Pusztavám),⁵ primarily in the light of the cave sanctuary in Csákvár;⁶ as well as the chariot burials⁷ and the depiction of chariots in graves⁸ in connection with the death ceremonies. The *interpretatio Dacica*, concerning the survival of Dacian divinities, is a so-called Dacian paradox, according to which there is no trace of the Dacian elite or indigenous divinities and no continuity of practice in Roman times (p. 67). In Moesia superior and inferior, the traditional idea among researchers was that any unusual Latin or Greek epithet is hapax or a unique relief, and epigraphic attestations or unusual religious rituals were associated with indigenous gods, as shown by the case of IOM Paternus; this association with only one god or one ethnic community is very problematic.⁹

Chapter 3, “Lived Religion and Its Macro-spaces in the Danubian Provinces” (pp. 89–152), is dedicated to the problem of the provincial limits of Roman religion in macro-spaces, with a detailed analysis of the epigraphic and archaeological evidence of religious life in forts and civilian settlements. In this regard, the *publicum portorii Illyrici* is an economic macro-unit. This customs system played an essential role in the mobility of objects and ideas of the new cults, especially in the spread of the cult of Mithras. The other macro-network in this chapter is the Roman *officium* and the *beneficiarii*. This network was dominated by Iuppiter Optimus Maximus in the stations, which were religious places with a huge amount of altars.

Another main issue addressed in the chapter is the relationship between urbanity and religiosity. The Danube region brings together a wide variety of urban

3 Kremer, *Das Heiligtum des Jupiter Optimus Maximus*.

4 Kovács, “Megjegyzések a civitas Eraviscorum.”

5 Kerényi, “Die Göttin Diana,” 220, 111.6, 220, Fig. 4; F. Petres, “Angaben zum römerzeitlichen Fortleben,” 229, Pl. V, la–b.

6 Fehér, “Diana’s Cave Sanctuary.”

7 Mráv, “Útas két világ között.”

8 Visy, *Wagendarstellungen der pannonischen Grabsteine*; Palágyi and Nagy, *Römerzeitliche Hügelgräber in Transdanubien*.

9 Kovács, “Iuppiter Optimus Maximus.”

settlement peculiarities and religiosity of its urban inhabitants, which is investigated by the author. He uses a model (p. 109 and p. 110 with Fig. 3.7) to connect these two major factors. The fact is highlighted that 68 percent of the votive epigraphic and figurative material was produced in the urban settlements. The case studies examine four types of urbanity: *canabae*, cities near auxiliary forts, *civitates* transformed into Roman cities, and *coloniae deductae*. The well-documented urban centers are Carnuntum and Aquincum, both of which produced a huge number of votive inscriptions (Aquincum – 566 inscriptions and Carnuntum – 615 votive inscriptions) and have numerous sacralized spaces of different types. Roman forts are another type of macro-space in religious communication, which were inseparable from the military *vici* and *canabae* and civilian settlements.¹⁰

Figurative religious monuments of divine figures are the focus of macro-spaces, e.g., the temples and sanctuaries in the Danubian provinces: the *fora* with the Capitolum (p. 59, Capitoline triad in Scarbantia) and sanctuaries of decisive size (Iseum in Savaria). The opinion of Endre Tóth, who questions whether the statues in Savaria really represented the Capitoline triad, would have been important here.¹¹

The following chapter (pp. 152–90) deals with space sacralization in meso-spaces, with particular attention to religious knowledge and its specialists. These provinces were rich in priests and religious specialists (about 400 inscriptions mentioned them), and in the case of some cults, their activities and distribution work were decisive. Religious specialists were highly mobile, especially the priests of Iuppiter Dolichenus. These religious groups are analyzed in the context of group formation, mobility, and cognitive features; according to Szabó's methodology, he examines small religious communities starting with the founder. In his opinion, small community religions go through a specific process of growth, beginning with the religious idea of a charismatic person through the growth and spread of doctrines across larger borders at an imperial level. The defining point of this process is the continuation after the death of the founder or central figure, which can be observed in all the small religious groups along the Danube (p. 153). Among these, the cult of Mithras was the most successful, which, in a short period of time, created many small groups whose believers possessed complex philosophical knowledge, exotic visual narratives, and soteriological messages. The cult was associated with prominent figures in Pannonia and Dacia, among whom the author includes those responsible for renovating the sanctuaries (p. 160, Tab. 4.1). This is acceptable in the case of Noricum, where there were governors and city dignitaries, but the Pannonians

10 Tünde Vágási's dissertation, written at the same time as the publication of the volume, which examines the religious inscriptions of the Pannonian military, analyzes this meso-space in detail. Vágási, "A pannoniai katonaság."

11 Tóth, "A savariai capitolumi triász."

provided only the resources needed for the renovation of the sanctuaries and did not play a decisive role in the spread of the ideas of the cult or the cities' everyday life. Various religious experiences can be observed according to the author from the material evidence: sacrifice (sacrificial scenes), initiations (especially the cults of Mithras, Isis, and Liber Pater), and sensorial effects (divination, epiphany, haruspicy, prodigy). Oral storytelling based on visual narratives (mythological scenes in macro-spaces) is also very important, especially in the case of those cults (Magna Mater, Liber Pater, Isis, Mithras, Dolichenus, Sabazios) for which we have neither literary sources nor authentic texts. Some unusual narratives came from Danubian provinces, e.g., *ubi ferrum nascitur* in the cult of Iuppiter Dolichenus; and some visual narratives, the so-called panel reliefs of Mithras. Occasionally, the author tries to connect a phenomenon to the Danube provinces, even though it does not only occur there, e.g., the *ubi ferrum nascitur* formula is also known from Germania superior (Nida, CIL 13, 7342b), and from Rome (CIL 6, 30947) and none of them have a demonstrable connection to the investigated provinces.

The last, shorter chapter (pp. 190–98) deals with religious experience in micro-spaces, which is the least tangible part of the religious sphere in archaeological sources. Small finds, house shrines (*lararia*), private spaces of individuals, and small road shrines are the sources for this area of study. At the same time, these objects often come from unsystematically excavated sites and are therefore difficult to examine without context.

The concluding Chapter 6 (pp. 198–208) does not summarize the different topics of the book but rather analyzes a huge amount of epigraphic data. In less than 160 years, the population of Dacia produced more votive inscriptions than the two provinces of Moesia and Noricum in nearly 250 years, which is both truly impressive and, on closer inspection (concerning the fact that these 150 years included the period of the epigraphic boom in the second century AD and the beginning of the third century), is not at all surprising, since the neighboring Pannonia was also at that time the most productive in inscriptions, under similar economic and social conditions.

At the end, in the Appendices, the book also presents for the first time a comprehensive list of sacralized spaces (*templa*; *loci sacri*), sacralized spaces within forts and fortresses (*aedes signorum*), and the divinities of the Danubian provinces. The author's analysis of the 260 deities clearly shows that many local and specific, occasional, and regional epithets can be observed. Among the divinities, a few are attested to only in one province or even on a single known epigraphic monument. Although such an overview table is essential for detailed analysis, the author sometimes inaccurately uses the names he lists – some are in the dative case (e.g., “Sideri”

instead of Sidus, “Vidaso” instead of Vidasus, “Itunae et Ituno” instead of Ituna et Itunus), especially when there are several gods (e.g., “Artavis” instead of Artaviae, “Dis Maioribus” instead of Dii Maiores, “Dis Reducibus” instead of Dii Reduces, “Diis Propitiis” instead of Dii Propitii, “Diis Auguralis” instead of Dii Augurales, “Dis Dauadis” instead of Dii Davadi, etc.). Names of others are incorrectly listed: e.g., “Dea Vagdavercus” instead of Dea Vagdavercustis; “Casuotanus” instead of Casuontanus; “Deus Attonipal,” who was reinterpreted in the newer publications as Deus Tatonis Patrius;¹² “Diana Plestrens” instead of Diana Plestrensis (derived from the name of the city and Dominus Plester); “Dii Conservatorii” instead of Dii Conservatores; “Dii Maximii” instead of Dii Maximi; “Dis Angelis” instead of Deus Angelus; “Apio Delmatarum,” while the stone has Apto – this god Aptus is known from Viminacium, Moesia inferior,¹³ etc. These gods are completely lacking from the reader during the examination due to the poor interpretation, even though they would have been worth investigating as pre-Roman divinities.¹⁴ In another case, an erroneous interpretation seems to have created new gods: the author mentions “IOM Brigetionis,” but the reading of the inscription is *Brigetionenses* (community of the city of Brigetio), i.e., *dederunt* to IOM. There are also epithets, such as IOM Melcid (ILJug-2, 523), where again there is a problem with the conjugation when interpreting the inscription; the epithet Melcidius or as a personal name Melcidianus (?) also comes up. There are also severe grammatical errors in the use of Latin and Greek termini, such as “*centurioni*” (p. 126) instead of *centuriones* and “*loca sacra*” (p. 208) instead of *loci sacri*. Another problem is the identification of *orcus* as a divinity in the *suscepta fide ex orco* context (CIL 3, 3624), where *orcus* is the underworld and not a god from which the *beneficiarius* has quasi returned (from death). Some citations, such as Kremer 2004,¹⁵ which the author refers to several times (p. 84, note 316; p. 85, note 326; p. 145, note 215, and p. 216), are missing from the literature.

Despite the problems briefly listed here, the book tries to outline the religious history of the Danubian provinces with the help of archaeological and epigraphical material and contains many important and interesting observations in the case studies. All things considered, Szabó's book is a good starting point for further in-depth research with a thorough look at the latest research results of Hungarian, Slovenian, Austrian and Romanian researchers in particular on religious issues affecting the Danubian area, with a number of methodologies that may be applied.

12 Grbić, “The Thracian Hero,” 8.

13 Ferjančić et al., “New Greek and Latin Inscriptions,” 235.

14 Borhy and Sosztarics, “Dii Itinerari, Itunus és Ituna.”

15 The book by Kremer, “Das Heiligtum des Jupiter Optimus Maximus.”

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The Late Medieval Cult of the Saints. Universal Developments within Local Contexts. By Carmen Florea.

London–New York: Routledge, 2022. 326 pp. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003130635>

Dorottya Uhrin 

Institute of Historical Studies, Department of Medieval History, ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, 6–8 Múzeum körút, 1088 Budapest, Hungary; uhrin.dorottya@btk.elte.hu

The Late Medieval Cult of the Saints. Universal Developments within Local Contexts by Carmen Florea was published within the series *Global Sanctity* under the aegis of the Hagiography Society. The author is a lecturer at the Department of Medieval History and Historiography at Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. Her monograph explores the dynamics of sanctity in late medieval Transylvania.

The investigation of the cult of saints has been a popular topic in the last few decades. Several scholars have scrutinized the different aspects of sanctity on a macrohistorical level, such as the genesis of this phenomenon and the changing of saintly models through the centuries. At the microhistorical level, there are different options for a scholar: one can investigate a certain saint or type of saint within a specific geographical- and/or timeframe or examine the cult of saints in a region in a narrow period. There are advantages and disadvantages to all approaches. If one deals with a saint or a type of saint, one can track the changes within the cult and compare them to the European parallels, but it is hard to put this into a bigger frame and see the real position of the holy figure(s) among other saints. While if someone investigates the cult of saints in a region, they may generate a more complete picture, but it is difficult to concentrate on the details.

Carmen Florea has chosen the latter option. The author investigated the late medieval (from ca. 1300 to the Reformation) cult of the saints in Transylvania with excellent results: she has been able to sketch a complete picture of the history of propagating saints in Transylvania, yet has also managed to go into detail. Transylvania as a region was a good choice since it was a well-defined region of medieval Hungary under the administration and jurisdiction of voivode. The co-existence of different ethnic groups, Hungarians, Germans, and Romanians, made the religious life of the territory more colorful, thus it is an interesting area for investigation.

The difficulty of such an investigation is that, besides the multilingual and multidisciplinary source material, the above-mentioned three national historiographies deal with the topic in their own national languages. Carmen Florea not only knows the German, Hungarian, and Romanian literature and historiography about the different topics she touches upon in-depth but is equally familiar with the general trends associated with the cult of different saints in Western and Eastern Christianity. Also, she introduces the reader to hagiographical research in Central Europe and sketches the general trends of the spread of the different cults in the region.

The author divided her book into three parts, which also denote the book's structure. In a historical analysis, it is always a hard question what to omit from a book and how to approach the different cults. Florea has again chosen an excellent methodology and approach. In the first chapter, she analyses the different cults of saints from the perspective of the cathedral of Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár) and the dissemination of the veneration of holy figures from there. The second chapter deals with the role of the mendicant orders in the spread of different cults. The third chapter concentrates on different case studies about religious life in the most important Transylvanian towns, mainly based on sources connected to guilds. The book also contains numerous illustrations that strengthen the author's argumentation and facilitate the reader's understanding. She has carefully arranged the most important photographs of altarpieces, panel paintings, and churches. Moreover, the author also made available the reconstructed medieval layouts of the analyzed towns, which all help to understand the dynamics within the city walls.

In the first chapter, the basis of her research was the altars in the Saint Michael's Cathedral of Alba Iulia. She starts from the thirteenth century since this was when the sources about the altars started to appear, and the parochial network was developed by that time. However, she goes back to earlier periods when necessary. As she summarizes, "The detailed analysis of the initiatives of the Transylvanian bishops and the clergy of the cathedral chapter offers the starting point for the exploration of the way saints' cults multiplied in the cathedral and reverberated in the Transylvanian ecclesiastical units." (p. 13). Through this detailed investigation, she was often able to identify the reason for the initiation of a new cult and its dissemination and propagation on the parish level. Also, she has identified the popularity of each saint in the episcopal milieu. Not surprisingly, the Virgin Mary, Saint Michael, Nicholas, Peter, and John were the preferred patrons in the bishopric of Alba Iulia. A very interesting part of Florea's book is when she demonstrates how the celebration of the feast of the Apparition of Saint Michael contributed to the growth of the cult. Also, the author analyzes how the different religious trends and cults reached Transylvania, such as the Christocentric devotion due to the emergence of the cult of Corpus Christi, or the cult of the Virgin Martyrs, Mary Magdalene, or Saint Anne,

whose cults became popular in the later Middle Ages in connection with female religious movements and the deeper beliefs about the intercessory power of saints. The author also sheds light on why the cult of the newly canonized saints did not become popular, except for the cult of the Árpadian saints. Their figures were highly popular in Transylvania, related to the fact that they were strongly connected to the introduction of Christianity, and their cult was also favored by the noble elite.

The second chapter focuses on the saintly models promoted and propagated by the Dominican and Franciscan friars and the tensions between the friars and the local clergy. As her research shows, one of the main features of the Transylvanian mendicants was their adaptability and innovation. They frequently integrated old, traditional cults and innovated them. This process is clearly visible in the case of the Virgin Mary, who was one of the most popular saints of the Late Middle Ages, and whose veneration was strengthened by the newly established forms of devotion, such as that of the Rosary, the feast of the Visitation, and Our Lady of the Snows. However, the mendicant orders were similar and thus rivals from several perspectives; they followed different paths regarding the promotion of saints. The Dominicans preferred those saints to their patrons whose penitential lifestyle embodied their goals. Thus, the Dominicans esteemed the cult of Anthony and Mary Magdalene, whose cults became popular Europe-wide. This was in contrast to the Observants' way of choosing their favorite saints, who centered their devotion on the holy family, visible through the Marian devotion and belief in the Immaculate Conception.

The third main chapter of the book concentrates on the third important factor of late medieval religiosity: the dwellers of towns. During the Late Middle Ages, the burghers' growing involvement is visible regarding the veneration of saints and the organization of their cults. Florea offers four case studies about the four most important towns, Sibiu (Nagyszeben), Braşov (Brassó), Bistriţa (Beszterce), and Cluj (Kolozsvár). These four towns developed rapidly in the Late Middle Ages, and all of them enjoyed wide liberties and privileges, such as the free election of their priests, thus these towns are perfect examples for an inquiry into the urban developments and features of the cult of the saints. With the help of administrative sources, indulgences, charters about the guilds, and art historical sources, the author makes several important observations about the dynamics of the cult of saints. There were general phenomena and patterns by which the parochial cults were transformed into civic cults in these towns.

The case study about Sibiu shows how the patron saint of the parish church became more and more important. Besides the general growth of the cult of the Virgin Mary in the Late Middle Ages, as Florea demonstrates, the importance of the mother of Christ increased further for residents of Sibiu. As she formulates: "The concentration of power so visible and well documented in the functioning of

the city council has been matched, most likely under strong impulses, towards control and reform of religious life, by a concentration of sainthood represented by the exclusivist favoring of the parish-based patronal cult of the Queen of Heaven on the part of the town's leading elite." (p. 230)

Regarding Braşov, Florea thoroughly analyzed and separated the different layers of the cult of saints. The town itself emerged from several smaller parts, the most important of which was *Corona* (now a district of Braşov), and these units bore unique features. The town's oldest church was dedicated to Saint Bartholomew due to the Saxon settlers and the presence of the Teutonic Order in the thirteenth century. I found the investigation of the patron saint of the church in *Corona* one of the most interesting parts of the book. With the help of the written sources and evidence about sacral architecture, the author shows that the church of the Virgin Mary in Braşov bore another dedication: it was also dedicated to the early medieval female martyr Saint Corona. This cult most probably arrived with Premonstratensians, who founded a monastery there in the thirteenth century but disappeared due to the Mongol Invasion.

Cluj was different from the other three towns regarding its habitants. While Sibiu, Braşov, and Bistriţa were predominantly German-speaking, in Cluj, Hungarians and Germans became the two most important groups by the mid-fifteenth century. This also resulted in the cult of saints, as the author demonstrates, since another parish church emerged, which served the religious needs of Hungarians.

Florea analyzed the dynamics of saintly patronage in Transylvania with an interdisciplinary approach. She has used a great variety of historical, art historical, and liturgical sources. I must stress again that the book offers an innovative approach in that Florea has analyzed the spread of saints' cults through three main agents: the diocese, the mendicant orders, and towns. The book's numerous findings make it a must for future scholars who deal with the medieval cult of saints in the Carpathian Basin.



Bishop John Vitez and Early Renaissance Central Europe: The Humanist Kingmaker. By Tomislav Matić.

Beyond Medieval Europe. Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2022. 237 pp.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2pvf6w1>

Kornél Illés 

Doctoral School of History, ELTE Eötvös Loránd University; 6–8 Múzeum körút, 1088 Budapest, Hungary; illes.kornel.an@gmail.com

Tomislav Matić has carried out a long overdue task of Central European historiography with his recent book. The topic he tackles in the volume reviewed here is of no secondary importance regarding the history of the region. John (Vitéz) of Zredna—whose life Matić attempts to grasp—was one of the most influential men in the Kingdom of Hungary in the fifteenth century. He started his career as a notary, became the bishop of Oradea (Várad in Hungarian), later the archbishop of Esztergom, and served two kings of Hungary, Ladislaus V (1444–1457) and Matthias (1458–1490), as chancellor. His cultural influence, however, may be even more important than his career as a statesman: he is often heralded as the first humanist of medieval Hungary.¹ In spite of his undeniably enormous significance, the only comprehensive biography about him until the publication of the reviewed book was the work of Vilmos Fraknói, written in 1879.² While the achievements of Fraknói as a historian are hard to deny, the mentioned book is by no means compliant with the standards of modern history writing, not just due to the advances of scholarship in the late nineteenth and twentieth century that produced substantial new knowledge, but also because of the methodology and handling of sources. For example, on the first pages of the book, the source of a piece of information is only referenced as “the charter [i.e., the charter mentioned, but not further described in the main text]

1 That John (Vitéz) of Zredna was the first humanist in the Kingdom of Hungary is a well-established commonplace in Hungarian historiography from the nineteenth century onwards. For a more recent iteration of this point, see Zsupán, “János Vitéz’ Book of Letters,” 119–22. One may find valuable insights into John’s role in the appearance of humanism in the Carpathian Basin in Kiss, “Origin Narratives.”

2 Fraknói, *Vitéz János*.

in the Provincial Archives of Zagreb,”³ without any further information that could help the curious reader to locate the exact document. While more recently, in the 1990s and early 2000s, Ferenc Szakály and András Kubinyi attempted to outline the political activities of John (Vitéz) of Zredna in several articles,⁴ these texts clearly cannot supplant a proper, exhaustive biography, hence the book by Matić is certainly a welcome addition to the scholarly literature.

The book structures the life of John according to the roles he assumed during his lifetime—the politician, the priest, and the humanist—and devotes separate chapters to each role. That particular mode of biography-writing is far from new; for example, Michael Clanchy used a similar framework in his seminal book about the life of Peter Abelard.⁵ However, Matić introduces a chronological division: he covers the events before the reign of King Matthias separately from when he was the ruler of Hungary, thus duplicating each chapter devoted to each different role. Therefore, we have a total of seven chapters with a separate *Introduction*. The *Introduction* mainly situates the book itself according to the historiographical background and has a short section about the family of John Vitéz. On the one hand, this highlights that Vitéz was mainly viewed in past historical research as a humanist, and his political and ecclesiastical endeavors were often overlooked. On the other hand, the *Introduction* expounds that the bishop came from a Slavonian noble family that cannot be considered one of the leading clans in the region despite having some distinguished members.

The second chapter mainly deals with the role of John in Hungarian politics before King Matthias. According to Matić, John started his career in the lower ranks of the Hungarian chancellery in the period of Sigismund, king of Hungary (1387–1437) and Holy Roman Emperor (1433–1437), and gained more influence with the help of John of Dominis, not through the patronage of Matthias of Gotalovac, as previous research usually claimed. The first important political endeavor in which Vitéz played a role was the mission sent to Krakow to the Polish king, who later became ruler of Hungary as Wladislas I (1440–1444). Matić once again questions the notions of past historians regarding this mission, as he states that Vitéz was not neglected and left without proper reward after the accession of the said Wladislas, as has previously been claimed, especially by Ferenc Szakály. It was simply not possible to reward him immediately after the services he performed in favor of the new king in Krakow due to the chaotic state of the Hungarian Kingdom. According to Matić, Vitéz eventually got his proper reward when he became the provost of Oradea. His ecclesiastical career was boosted when his superior, John of Dominis,

3 Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 4.

4 Szakály, “Vitéz János”; Kubinyi, “Vitéz János és Janus Pannonius”; Kubinyi, “Vitéz János.”

5 Clanchy, *Abelard*.

bishop of Oradea, was killed during the battle of Varna in 1444, and due to the backing of the immensely powerful John Hunyadi, John (Vitéz) of Zredna became his successor. Matić argues that Hunyadi probably aided Vitéz in seizing the bishopric because he thought the newcomer cleric could easily be controlled. While this can only be considered a conjecture, it is sure that the close partnership formed between John Hunyadi and John (Vitéz) of Zredna in the following years helped the new bishop to enter the scene of Europe-wide diplomacy. However, he reached the height of his pre-Matthias career when he became the privy chancellor of Ladislaus V in 1453. According to Matić, he evolved into one of the most powerful men in the court of the young king. A breaking point came in his career when he became entangled in the conspiracy against Ulrich of Celje, led by Ladislaus Hunyadi, the elder son of John Hunyadi and his successor as the head of the family estates, as the older Hunyadi died during an outbreak of plague in 1456 after he defeated the Ottomans at Belgrade. However, following a short incarceration, he became close to King Ladislaus once again, as he was in his court when the ruler left this world at a surprisingly young age.

The third chapter mainly focuses on the matters in the life of John that may be connected to his bishopric. Matić argues that Vitéz was probably not very well off during his first years of being a prelate, mainly due to his lack of personal wealth. Nevertheless, as the bishop was one of the main landowners in the region of Oradea, he routinely participated in everyday matters concerning his assets. He also tried to become a part of the local alliance system of landowners by associating himself with Albert Losonci. Matić also points out that John mainly delegated duties connected to the bishopric to clerics who were reasonably well educated but were also newcomers at Oradea, as he could easily control these individuals.

The fourth chapter covers the cultural endeavors of John before Matthias became king of Hungary. The most important claim of this chapter is that John, who could not rely on the power of a distinguished family, needed to enhance his personal prestige to really stand his ground among the great lords of Hungary. According to Matić, he tried to achieve this by emulating the strategy of Italian princes and gaining a reputation by becoming a patron of the arts. Matić argues that Vitéz mainly achieved this in two ways: on the one hand, he sent material gifts to humanists and financed the studies of men interested in humanism. On the other hand, he also composed a considerable collection of books. This is a quite new approach to the humanism of John and innovative in the sense that scholarly literature has not considered the motivation for his becoming involved in the humanist movement. To completely understand the nature of the prestige he could achieve this way, we underscore that being a patron of the arts was probably not an effective way to gain the admiration of the great secular lords of Hungary, as humanism

did not have a high standing in the Carpathian Basin at the time.⁶ What plausibly really mattered regarding John's career were the relationships he built with influential diplomats, such as Aenaeas Sylvius Piccolomini, through their shared interest in humanism. Basically, the humanistic elements of the eloquence of John, as well as his embeddedness in the international circles of humanist learning, which became more and more intertwined with diplomacy and state administration during the discussed period, ensured that Vitéz was apt to carry out diplomatic tasks of the highest importance.⁷ The book rightly concentrates on this international element by demonstrating, for example, the considerable fame John gained in Italy through individuals he supported.

The fifth chapter inaugurates the part of the book that discusses the endeavors of John during the reign of King Matthias by outlining the political activities of the prelate in these years. Matic argues that John was very influential in the court of King Matthias to the extent that he sometimes even acted against the will of his ruler. For example, Matic asserts that John most probably negotiated the fundamentals of a draft peace treaty between Matthias and Frederick III without the consent of the king, who was not particularly happy about the arrangements John made. According to the author, we may detect a clear political program in the actions of John: Matic thinks that his main aim was to keep up good and peaceful relations between Hungary and its neighbors, especially the Holy Roman Empire, in order to obtain enough resources to counteract the impending Ottoman attack. These policies faded away as King Matthias started becoming increasingly involved in the Bohemian Crusade against George Podebrady, king of Bohemia (1458–1471), eventually weakening John's influence. However, Matic argues that in fact he did not participate wholeheartedly in the conspiracy of 1471 that is often directly linked to him: in his opinion, John certainly was not one of the main plotters; he was instead just a mild supporter of the cause, with the probability that he saw the whole conspiracy as a means of exerting some concessions from Matthias. In line with that notion, Matic also claims that he escaped the conflict relatively untouched, and the famous house arrest that ended with his death was probably a result of him still keeping contact with the Polish king, whose son the schemers wanted to make the king of Hungary after the conspiracy was basically shattered.

The topic of the sixth chapter is the ecclesiastical affairs John was involved in during the reign of Matthias. Certainly, the most important event in that timeframe and the career of John as a prelate was his becoming the archbishop of Esztergom and,

6 John himself wrote lengthily about the woeful state of the humanities in the Kingdom of Hungary in his Epistolary, see: Iohannes Vitéz de Zredna: Epistolarium, letter 2, sentences 14–16. Boronkai, ed., *Iohannes Vitéz de Zredna*, 38.

7 This was rightly pointed out by Kubinyi, "Vitéz János," 78.

thus, head of the Hungarian church. He quickly seized control over his diocese, partly thanks to the loyal men he could rely on. However, Matić points out that his influence was limited by the strong-willed king Matthias, even in mainly ecclesiastical matters. For example, during the longstanding affair of the bishopric of Zagreb, the king was often unfavorable towards Demetrius Čupor despite his being an ally of John. The seventh and final chapter is devoted to the cultural enterprises John undertook between the accession of Matthias and his death. Matić demonstrates that John was very well respected in international circles of humanists at the height of his career, largely thanks to his protégés spreading his fame, among whom Janus Pannonius was the most well-known. John also devoted considerable attention to his library, acquiring and emending several manuscripts during the mentioned timeframe. According to Matić, he was mainly interested in classics and theological and astronomical works, but we may also find some medical books in his library. It is also worth noting that his interest in astronomy, which he probably picked up when he was a student at the Viennese university, continued to define his intellectual orientation to a certain extent. His biggest intellectual project of the time was unquestionably the founding of the University of Bratislava, which turned out to be quite short-lived.

As the lengthy bibliography shows, Matić utilizes an ample number of primary sources as well as a good amount of academic literature. He bases his research on an apt combination of narrative and archival sources and applies the necessary amount of criticism toward them. Regarding the sources, we may mention a small but not insignificant issue: the volume only cites the 1568 edition of the *Rerum ungaricarum decades*, a work about the history of Hungary by Antonio Bonfini, the court historian of King Matthias, despite the fact that the text has a modern critical edition from the first half of the twentieth century that is accessible online.⁸ As the totality of a historical topic may never be fully grasped, we probably should not condemn the author for leaving out certain aspects of the life of John. However, it probably would have elevated the already substantial importance of the book if it had also incorporated some remarks on John of Zredna as a writer. Matić devotes a considerable amount of attention to his humanism and his activities as a patron of the arts, but his literary output, which mainly consists of his letters and speeches, is not considered lengthily in the reviewed book. It is probably also worth mentioning that according to the present state of research, bishop John never used the surname Vitéz during his life; he was most probably simply called John of Zredna. While Matić mentions the problems concerning the name of John in the *Introduction*, he still uses the form John Vitéz throughout the book, which is not the most precise way to name the prelate he is writing about, but certainly justifiable due to the fact that the name John Vitéz is widely known and recognized throughout academia, while the form John of Zredna has yet to become broadly used.

8 Főgel, Iványi, and Juhász, ed., *Antonius de Bonfinis*.

In conclusion, we may say that Tomislav Matić has authored an important book that will surely be useful for students of fifteenth-century Central Europe. This volume, written with immense knowledge both about John (Vitéz) of Zredna and his period, can genuinely serve as a modern and comprehensive biography of the mentioned prelate. Maybe the most valuable parts of the book are those focused on political history and the role John played in policy-making, as they not only expound the strategies and motives that defined the political actions of the bishop but also contain a large amount of relevant information regarding the period that may be immensely useful for researchers—there is no exhaustive, scholarly handbook about the fifteenth-century history of the Carpathian Basin, thus if one wants to navigate among the various political events of the period, they must rely on books like the one reviewed here. The separate analysis of John as a bishop is also a worthwhile contribution of Matić, as this aspect of the life of the famous politician and humanist is often overlooked. One may also read a good overview of John the humanist and patron of the arts in this book that looks at the endeavors of the mentioned prelate from a quite new perspective.

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“Nekünk nincsenek gyarmataink és hódítási szándékaink.”
Magyar részvétel a Monarchia gyarmatosítási törekvéseiben a
Balkánon (1867–1914) [“We have Neither Colonies, nor Ambitions
to Conquer.” Hungarian Participation in the Colonisation Efforts
of the Monarchy (1867–1914)]. By Krisztián Csaplár-Degovics.
Budapest: Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Történettudományi
Intézet, 2022. 452 pp.

Miklós Tömöry

Institute of History, HUN-REN Research Centre for the Humanities, 4 Tóth Kálmán utca, 1097
Budapest, Hungary; tomory.miklos@abtk.hu

Krisztián Csaplár-Degovics is a senior research fellow at the HUN-REN Institute of History in Budapest. His research focuses on the nineteenth-century history of the Balkans, with a special emphasis on the Albanian national movement, as well as the diplomatic, political, and scientific relations between the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy and the Balkan states. His most recent volume was published in the *Monumenta Hungariae Historica* series in 2022. The monograph analyzes Hungarian participation in Austria–Hungary’s colonization efforts in the Balkans. The quotation in its title, “We have neither colonies, nor ambitions to conquer,” is taken from the 1910 parliamentary speech given by Ákos Bizony, a member of the oppositional Party of Independence and ‘48. In his speech, Bizony spoke up against the allegedly large budget contributions for the Austro–Hungarian army by referring to the generally accepted narrative of the Hungarian elite. According to that narrative, the Kingdom of Hungary is a state built upon liberal nationalism with a long pre-history of fighting for freedom. Therefore, the state refuses most forms of contemporary colonialism, as well as territorial and economic expansionism. This claim, convincingly refuted by the author, was a recurring motif in Hungarian public discourse, often used as a sort of moral high ground over other nations. However, recent historiographical works offer a more critical and nuanced picture of the—not so innocent—relationship between Hungarian nationalism and colonialism using the approach of (post-)colonial theories and New Imperial History. The author draws on the work

of Trutz von Trotha,¹ Jürgen Osterhammel and Jan C. Jansen,² Clemens Ruthner,³ Ignác Romsics,⁴ Bálint Varga,⁵ Imre Tarafás⁶ and Zoltán Ginelli.⁷ Moreover, a great inspiration for the work of Csaplár-Degovics is the extensive research conducted by Imre Ress on Hungarian influence in the Balkans.⁸ Csaplár-Degovics honors his mentor, Ress, by dedicating the present volume to him.

The author provides an in-depth analysis of the development of Hungarian political thought on colonialism and imperialism, its individual and institutional actors, and its embeddedness into the international ‘cloud’ of imperial knowledge.⁹ Csaplár-Degovics has conducted extensive research, exploring previously unknown archival sources (using the collections of the Austrian State Archives, Hungarian State Archives, the State Archive in Rijeka, the Hungarian Natural History Museum, the Austrian National Library, as well as the National Széchényi Library in Budapest). At the same time, he provides a reinterpretation of already-known sources, reading them through the lens of New Imperial History. The author argues that creating a compilation—a (German–Hungarian) ‘colonial dictionary’—of Austria–Hungary would be of great importance for identifying colonial discourses in the written sources of the era. The narrative of the book is centered around two dominant historical figures: Benjámín (Béni) Kállay, Austro–Hungarian Minister of Finance and governor of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1882–1903), and the anglophile scholar, politician, lobbyist, and expert of Albanian lands, Ferenc (Franz) Nopcsa. The volume provides an analysis of their colonial endeavors, highlighting their substantial personal and institutional autonomy but also their intellectual environment consisting of colonial experts and propagandists. Subsequently, the author shows how their views on Austria–Hungary’s ‘civilizing mission’ were shaped by contemporary British, French, and Russian discourses on colonization. In doing so, he highlights how, Nopcsa and Kállay understood themselves as simultaneously officials and/or agents of the common empire and members of the Hungarian liberal political elite.

Through numerous case studies, Csaplár-Degovics’s work provides a detailed and nuanced analysis of imperial thought and its dynamically changing relation to Hungarian nationalism in the second half of the long nineteenth century. Inspired

1 von Trotha, “Colonialism.”

2 Osterhammel and Jansen, *Kolonialismus*.

3 Ruthner, “Habsburgs,” 2–14.

4 Romsics, *A magyar birodalmi*.

5 Varga, “A Magyar Birodalom,” 1187–206.

6 Tarafás, “Civilizáló gyarmat,” 57–75.

7 Ginelli, “Global Colonialism.”

8 E.g., Ress, “Bosznia-Hercegovina,” 73–103.

9 Kármán and Kreienbaum, “An Imperial Cloud,” 164–82.

by Hungarian liberalism and Austrian orientalism, but also by European colonial ideologies and practices, Kállay and his circle of subordinate clerks, as well as artists and scholars (Lajos Thallóczy, Mór Jókai, Henrik Marczali, etc.), envisioned the transition of the Kingdom of Hungary into a 'Hungarian Empire.' In their view, this profound but hidden transformation would secure Hungary's existence among the empires of Europe. This message is also implied in Mór Jókai's metaphorical-humorous novel *Kassári Dániel* (1890). The main protagonist of the piece is a modern, economically successful *bey* from Tuzla who integrates into the Hungarian *gentry* elite. According to Csaplár-Degovics, the above-mentioned novel reveals the importance of Bosnia and Herzegovina for imperial imaginaries of a future Hungary. As the hidden message in the novel reveals, the province should not be formally transformed into a colony—neither in Transleithania nor in Cisleithania—however, it has to be colonized, 'civilized,' and played into Hungarian hands.

Kállay's imperial vision did not receive unanimous support at the time of its formulation. The question of whether and under what moral and legal conditions the Kingdom of Hungary could participate in the occupation and annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was often raised in the Hungarian parliament and press. In the Hungarian public, the pre-*Ausgleich* period (neo-absolutism and the Schmerling provisory) was widely seen as a sort of political and economic colonization of Hungary by Austria. The 'colonial exploitation' of Hungary was, according to the Independentists, still ongoing in the dualist period. Csaplár-Degovics's discourse analysis centers on the meanings of 'empire,' 'colony,' and 'imperialism' and reveals the transformation of opposition political thought regarding the occupation (1878) and annexation (1908) of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Whereas in the 1870s and 1880s, the opposition harshly opposed the rule of Hungarians over another nation, in 1908, politicians of the same political tradition almost unanimously demanded the direct annexation of the said provinces to the Kingdom of Hungary. Such a move, they believed, would shift the gravity of the Empire from Vienna towards Budapest. An important turning point in this ideological-political process of embracing imperialism is the 'colonial scandal' over Kállay's governance of Bosnia and Herzegovina in parliament in Budapest in 1900. The accusations of a Muslim delegation (conveyed by the MP Soma Visontai) about the alleged violation of church autonomy led to harsh criticism by the opposition regarding Bosnia-Herzegovina's status and demands for the establishment of its constitutional order and parliamentary representation. The critique of independentist MPs was directed towards the desirable 'export' of Hungarian political traditions to Bosnia, establishing a 'good despotism' instead of Kállay's 'bad despotism.' As Csaplár-Degovics points out, this momentum can be compared to the impeachment process of the general governor of Bengal, Warren Hastings (1788), in London. The persecution led by Edmund Burke did not succeed in impeaching Hastings. Nevertheless, Burke's thoughts on colonial rule

profoundly shaped the British Empire. Ultimately, as a result of the debate, the existence of the colonial state was differentiated from Hastings' 'bad practices.' Similarly, as consequence of the parliamentary debates in Budapest, the image of a 'Hungarian' Bosnia and Herzegovina was created, and rule over the province was accepted both by the government and the majority in opposition.

In the years after Benjámín Kállay's death (1903), the idea of the 'Hungarian Empire' became increasingly accepted among all major factions in Hungarian politics and the public. This, however, did not mean unconditional support for all colonial efforts of Austria-Hungary initiated by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Agenor Goluchowski (those in Rio de Oro and Tianjin), and the first decades of the twentieth century were marked by the increased interest of the Hungarian industrialists in the Balkans as well. Csaplár-Degovics highlights the developments in the years after Bosnia's annexation: the creation of the Privileged Agrarian and Commercial Bank of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1908) and its failed monopoly over the redemption of the *kmet* (serf) lands. The volume characterizes the associations the Hungarian Asia Company (Turan Association; 1910) and the Hungarian-Bosnian and Eastern Economic Association (1912) as institutionalized colonial interest groups. As the "Epilogue" shows, these emerging groups intended to extend their influence on the occupied territory of Serbia during World War I.

In the fifth and sixth chapters, the author deals with the 'Albanian policies' and the diplomatic and military 'Albanian actions' of the Dual Monarchy. Csaplár-Degovics highlights the participation of Hungarian individuals and associations in colonial endeavors there from 1896 (memorandum of Ferit bej Vlora, *Albanienkonferenz* in Vienna) until the birth of the new state (1912) and the beginning of the war. A chapter is dedicated to the adventurous life of Ferenc Nopcsa and his participation in the 'Albanian actions' of the Monarchy. Particular emphasis is put on his—sometimes troubled—relation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and his role as an expert on Albanian issues, as a politician (as a claimant of the Albanian throne in 1913), and even as a scholar (paleontologist, geographer, and ethnologist).

In conclusion, Krisztián Csaplár-Degovics has published a rich and thought-provoking volume, which reveals the complex relationship between Hungarian nationalism, Austro-Hungarian imperialism, and the dynamics between the Cisleithanian and Transleithanian 'sub-empires' through a series of well-written case studies. The monograph resolves the above-mentioned contradiction between the Hungarian anti-colonial discourse and somewhat hidden colonial practices by highlighting their embeddedness in broader Western and Eastern European contexts. However, one might miss a more detailed analysis of the discourses of non-Hungarian (especially South Slavic) national elites *within* the Kingdom of Hungary. This could have provided a more complex picture of the approaches to (Hungarian) colonialism of

the dualist era. Csaplár-Degovics presents parallel biographies of Hungarian and European politicians and experts serving comparable imperial projects and operating with such discourses (see the comparison of Kállay and Konstantin P. von Kaufman or of Nopcsa and Mary Edith Durham) and reveals how international colonial institutions directly influenced their (Austro-) Hungarian counterparts. The present volume can be characterized as a pioneering piece on the development of Hungarian imperial thought and informal and formal colonial practices in the Balkans. It provides a persuasive theoretical and conceptual framework for researching Hungarian imperial endeavors and highlights new research problems. The monograph, which will hopefully be translated into English, has tremendous potential to inspire further research by historians on the (Austro-)Hungarian imperial project and conceptual history within that context.

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Histoire de la nation hongroise: Des premiers Magyars à Viktor Orbán. By Catherine Horel.

Paris: Éditions Tallandier, 2021. pp. 381.

Gergely Romsics 

Research Center for the Humanities, HUN-REN Hungarian Research Network, 4 Tóth Kálmán utca, 1097 Budapest, Hungary; Department for Modern and Contemporary International History, ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, 6–8 Múzeum körút, 1088 Budapest, Hungary; romsics.gergely@btk.elte.hu

Catherine Horel's book represents the most radical attempt on record to reorganize components of a 'standard' national history of Hungary, yielding a highly conceptual and novel synthesis. The experiment was conducted—one would assume—in order to escape the drabness of a bird's eye narrative that had been told one too many times, but also to make an important point about this history. Horel, who is a leading expert on Central European, especially Habsburg and post-Habsburg intellectual, social, and cultural history while also the author of a well-regarded monograph on Miklós Horthy, is certainly the right person to attempt such a reconstruction of Hungary's 'national story'. Commanding a vast reservoir of knowledge about the country and the broader contexts of its history, she skillfully connects chronologically distant events and processes in the non-linear narratives that make up her book. The emerging image is not only unusual and far from boring—it is genuinely insightful: documenting the anxieties and obsessions of modern elites with nationhood, territory, and sovereignty, Horel succeeds in making a convincing case about how to interpret the dilemmas of belated modernization and nation-building, fragmented, non-sovereign experiences of statehood, and pervasive intercommunal conflicts that frame the past of not only Hungarians, but those of most East Central European peoples, as well.

The insecurities that plague the nation-building efforts of Hungarian elites in the modern period have historical antecedents. As a prelude of what is to come, Horel offers an observation early on in her book about three uncertain, pliable relationships across the centuries that—unlike in Western European states—failed to achieve stable, institutionalized forms (p. 10). Uncertainty about territory (where do our lands end? how secure are we in their possession?), about the state-nation nexus (whose state is it? that of a dynasty, an ethnically defined nation, or a political community or that of several political communities?), and even about the boundaries of

the political, communal self (what is the Hungarian nation after all?) emerge early and refuse to go away as history only seems to further complicate these ambiguous categories and relationships.

Following the shortest (yet still informative) summary of Hungarian history ever read by this reviewer (only sixteen pages: pp. 19–35), Horel embarks on a thorough questioning of her three major ‘nodes’, where different centuries and representations intersect, each yielding a conundrum that contributes to fears and uncertainties about the national state, that curious object of desire that modern elites have set themselves as a goal. Territory is perhaps the most conventional and comes first in the survey. The inability to firmly control, retain, and populate ‘national territory’ feeds anxieties that become especially pronounced from the nineteenth century onward, but have their roots in medieval and early modern fiascos of state-building. The mythical moment of claiming territory during the Conquest of the late ninth century haunts national imaginaries and helps the reader understand the dynamics that have contributed, *inter alia*, to cementing the standing of such leaders as Miklós Horthy, who, appearing as a consolidator of national territory built his myth on leading the nation from a collapse and the accompanying loss of territory to the gradual aggrandizement of Hungary (pp. 49–52).

Horel correctly observes that language and territory are intimately linked: only areas where Hungarian is predominantly spoken can really be considered Hungarian territory, and only once Hungarian is elevated to the same rank as other ‘civilized’ languages can the speakers of Hungarian rightfully claim their place amongst fellow Europeans. The latter dimension is accomplished in the course of the nineteenth century, but the former remains a failure, which, for Hungarian nationalism, has since represented a problematic experience intimately tied in with the experience of losing two thirds of the kingdom’s territory in the wake of World War I. During the crisis-ridden years of 1918–1920, the elites of the other nations co-inhabiting the realm opted for joining their kin-states built on the ruins of the Habsburg lands, and gaining the blessing of the victorious powers at the Paris peace conference to do so. Horel skillfully demonstrates how territory remains, in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a dual concept for Hungarian nationalism: always looking to expand, elites are also fearful of losing what they control, and nowhere is this simultaneous ambition and fear as clearly represented as in the case of gaining access to the sea at Fiume (Rijeka) and the re-integration of Transylvania into Hungary—with both dimensions of territorial ambition destroyed in 1918–1920. The book makes it clear that these defeats were not without antecedent: the hold of Hungarian elites over these territories had remained ever tenuous—even if they were loath to admit it, ever since the defeat at the hand of the Ottomans destroyed the medieval kingdom of Hungary in 1526.

Historical setbacks and fears explain the significance of state-building as a recurring concern of Hungarian elites across the centuries. A durable and strong state controlling its territory was one of the vanishing points of the efforts of national leaders, who at the same time were faced with the challenge of Habsburg domination. A strong(er) state was an available option on the political horizon, yet fully embracing it would have eliminated the sovereignty of Hungary not just in practice, but also in theory. Anti-Habsburg revolts and periods of cooperation define the early modern and modern era, until in 1867 the state-building, nationalizing elites succeeded in gaining acceptable terms: a kingdom within the empire of the Habsburgs, but with far-reaching autonomy (pp. 160–63). As is well known, the Compromise of 1867 failed to save, in the long term, both the empire and the Kingdom of Hungary nested in it, and the twentieth century was to be defined by various imperial centers exercising various amounts of—but always considerable—influence over the small state that emerged after the Treaty of Trianon.

Horel's contribution is considerable. As much as the shifts of territory and the accompanying frustrations of East Central European national elites have been discussed in the existing literature, the complex elite mentalities informed by these experiences of national expansion and implosion remain both under-researched and underrepresented. This book goes a long way to remedy this state of affairs, as Horel explains how territory is tied in with the ambiguous historical experiences concerning the struggle for sovereignty and how the lack of long-term historical experience of independence creates political reflexes and public attitudes that view outside (great power) influence as an ever-present threat to the nation, explaining, at least in part, the sovereigntist policies one sees periodically re-emerge in Hungarian history—the current governments of Viktor Orbán included (pp. 164–67, 194–98).

For this reviewer at least, the third major unit of the book, on the Hungarian 'Pantheon' proved the most fascinating. Having demonstrated the importance of territory and sovereignty, as well as the anxieties linked to these concepts in the thinking of Hungarian elites, Horel holds what seems like a master key to unlocking the logic of memorialization in Hungarian history. Personalities navigate these recurring challenges, face similar anxieties, and are distinguished first and foremost by the kinds of responses they offer to the question of how to regain the (imagined) paradise lost of powerful and independent medieval Hungary. The pre-modern Hungarian pantheon is accordingly populated by powerful kings—but a dis-identity is inscribed into the succession of the crowned heads when the Habsburgs inherit the throne. The unresolved standing of the longest ruling dynasty in Hungarian history itself attests to the dilemmas faced by memory entrepreneurs and politicians alike: what are we to make of these rulers who oppress and protect, integrate but also safeguard Hungary—sometimes all at the same time. Candidates hailing from more

recent centuries for the national pantheon were themselves often bitter rivals due to their differing attitudes to the dynasty. What to make of rebels who allied with the Ottoman Turks against the Habsburgs? Was István Széchenyi right in his insistence on promoting the development of the country while remaining loyal to the dynasty, or was the ever more anti-Habsburg Lajos Kossuth the national leader who deserves pride of place? Horel highlights how these dilemmas not only remain unresolved in the Hungarian historical consciousness but are compounded by the superimposed stories of other revolutionaries—first and foremost Imre Nagy, the executed reform communist premier of the country during the 1956 revolution (p. 196).

Ultimately, however, as Horel correctly observes, the sovereignty-deficient history of the country calls for a culture of remembrance organized around resistance and periods of growth and prosperity. The latter are reflected by the built heritage of Budapest especially, while the former feeds into a cult of sovereignty that informs even current distrust towards supranational (and post-Westphalian) politics in some sections of society and much of the Hungarian political right.

Horel's expertise shines through in many places in this book, but perhaps nowhere else as clearly as in her dissection of the memory struggles of the new millennium. She highlights how this memory culture is all too often and all too easily mistaken for 'regular' right-wing radicalism on a collision course with the emergent Western canon of transnational memory organized around the memorialization of the Shoa. Frictions abound, as Hungary's current political and cultural leaders do in fact seek to construct a national community of victims of foreign (German, Soviet, etc.) interventions in the twentieth century. Jews and non-Jews are often placed on an equal footing in this victim community. This is, however, not a simple expression of anti-Semitic reflexes, instead it is best interpreted as another reflection of the insistence on seeing Hungarian history as a continuous struggle for sovereignty and the tragic consequences of foreign domination. In Horel's assessment, this anomaly can also be understood by reconstructing this history which, in the mode of mythology, involves both the temporal present and a past which, due to persistent anxieties and traumas, is still a lived, felt presence in society (pp. 325–29).

As the above review intended to suggest, Catherine Horel's synthesis of Hungarian history succeeds in offering a historical entry point to understanding Hungary and Hungarians, without either turning this history into a heroic narrative or a story about a backward political community clinging to its tribal idols. Given its focus, it is not a total history of a country and a national community—such an enterprise would likely prove impossible anyhow. Instead, it offers a convincing, productive, and intellectually engaging approach to the complexities of dealing with the past. Where there are gaps, these gaps are the necessary consequences of the chosen perspective. One will need to consult other sources for more detailed accounts of social

history: medieval serfs and industrial workers of modernity appear less frequently than they would in such an alternative synthesis. But where Horel's focus falls she does not fail to convince: as far as laying out the dynamics of elite mentalities, histories of representations, and political imaginaries, her work is a lasting contribution which due to its nuanced analysis will serve and inspire experts as well. Factual errors are almost absent. This reviewer could really only disagree with some of the miscellanea about the nationalizing policies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century—as in the case of the 1879 legislation on schools and the teaching of Hungarian—which did not make Hungarian the only language of education in primary institutions (p. 76). The myriad personalities, their actions, institutions of state- and nation-building, of representation and remembrance are referenced correctly and with attention to detail. This reliability, coupled with a strong conceptual focus, make this *Histoire de la nation hongroise* [History of the Hungarian Nation] into a book that is as important as it is enlightening, often forcing the reader to turn the page and keep on reading, taken by the sovereign (!) force of the author's exemplary academic, yet flowing prose.



Understanding Unconventional Medicine. Social Sciences on Traditional, Complementary and Alternative Therapies in Slovakia. By Ivan Souček and Roman Hofreiter.

Brno: Masaryk University Press, 2022. 141 pp.

Gabriella Vámos 

Institute of Ethnology, ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, 6–8 Múzeum körút, 1088 Budapest, Hungary; Library and Archive of the History of Medicine, Hungarian National Museum, Semmelweis Museum, 1–3 Apród utca, 1013 Budapest, Hungary; vamos.gabriella@btk.elte.hu, vamosgabriella@semmelweis.museum.hu

Ivan Souček and Roman Hofreiter have co-authored an exciting and inspiring volume that promises to be useful reading “for students and other scholars in the field of sociology and anthropology of medicine and the history of medicine, as well as for policy makers and professional medical experts [...] interested in the fascinating world of medical pluralism” (p. 7). This monograph provides a comprehensive overview of the historical context, features, significant trends, causes, utilization patterns, and factors that impact the efficacy of alternative therapies in Slovakia. It is concise yet informative and covers all the necessary information to understand the topic fully.

The authors also point out that social science studies in the field usually look at each therapy from one of three perspectives: the doctors, the alternative healers, or the users. Although the views of both doctors and healers are presented throughout the volume, the focus is on the users of the therapies, who “make the decisions regarding various healthcare options in a highly diverse medical environment” (p. 9).

The authors have combined sociological and anthropological approaches. This is not surprising, considering that Souček, an anthropologist, and Hofreiter, a sociologist, have been accomplished researchers of the subject for many years.¹ This interdisciplinary approach not only broadens the horizons of the analysis but also allows us to gather information on the social characteristics of unconventional medicine users through questionnaires and interview data. The book is structured

1 Souček and Hofreiter, “Komplementárna a alternatívna”; Souček and Hofreiter, “Complementary and Alternative Medicine”; Souček and Hofreiter, “Medical Pluralism.”

into three major chapters that examine the historical, political, social, economic, and cultural aspects of alternative healing practices in Slovakia.

In the first part, entitled “Understanding Unconventional Medicine: General Overview,” there are four sub-chapters and about forty pages on the concept of unconventional medicine, its main forms in Slovakia, its development, institutionalization, and professionalization. The authors point out that the identification of those healing practices that “have evolved without the direct influence of Cartesian dualism, such as acupuncture, herbal medicine, yoga or homeopathic treatment” (p. 16) is a major challenge for both doctors and practitioners as well as researchers in the field. During the late 1990s, the term ‘unconventional medicine’ gained significant popularity among researchers and reflected the fact that the terms ‘folk,’ ‘complementary,’ and ‘alternative’ medicine were approached from the perspective of their relationship with academic medicine. The concept seemed wide-ranging and value-neutral enough to encompass different healing methods, including those stemming from ‘medical pluralism,’ which has gained widespread acceptance worldwide, including in Slovakia. However, the therapies associated with unconventional medicine “are not universal, unchanging traditions” (p. 19), and the practices vary significantly across different countries, so it is essential to examine them in a country-specific and regional development context.

It is important to note that Slovakia witnessed the emergence of several alternative therapies in the mid-nineteenth century, as documented in the book. In this period, it was difficult to distinguish between orthodox and non-conventional medicine due to the eclectic and broad range of healing practices. Although the number of university-trained doctors increased, the two fields were closely intertwined. The professionalization of medical training and the development of biomedical knowledge in the early twentieth century brought about the change. Despite the professionalization of medical training, there was growing distrust in the public healthcare system, which led to the emergence and spread of alternative therapies. In Slovakia, like many other European countries, homeopathy, mesmerism, and hydropathy gained popularity, and formal, academic medicine was sharply criticized by the founders and followers of these therapies. Their nature-oriented approach greatly contributed to their popularity.

As the authors point out, the history of unconventional medicine in Western, Central, and Eastern Europe has been varied due to the different paths of healthcare development in each country. In the case of Eastern European countries, including Slovakia, the period of communism brought drastic changes, as the materialist doctrine of Marxist ideology banned all medical practices that could not be scientifically justified. According to the principle of cultural evolutionism, folk medicine, and its associated practices were viewed as primitive superstitions that needed to be

eliminated. Despite the oppressive tactics of communism and the transformation of rural areas, the use of folk medicine and medicinal plants persisted. The political turn of 1989 granted healthcare system representatives the freedom and legitimacy they deserved. Unconventional therapies managed to emerge during the socialist period despite restrictions: e.g., the research of Chinese medicine and acupuncture has shown that from the 1950s onwards, several practitioners learned the methods in North Korea or China and then used them in Czechoslovakia. In 1965, a book was published, and a conference was held on the subject. In 1977, the Ministry of Health implemented a guideline that is still applied, stipulating that only licensed doctors are allowed to perform needle-sticking techniques. Ayurvedic medicine and yoga were known in the early twentieth century but gained popularity in the 1960s and 1970s. Despite the limitations imposed by socialism, literature on various forms of Eastern spirituality spread as *samizdat* in Slovakia. As a result, yoga shifted its focus towards physical exercise. The dilution-based method of homeopathy was banned in 1950, branded pseudo-scientific, leading to its unfavorable fate since the nineteenth century. The authors demonstrate that the liberal climate that emerged after 1989 was not the genesis of these therapies. Alternative therapies have been utilized to treat illnesses, and those healing methods that fall outside of academic medicine have existed for a considerable time. Slovakia followed suit and passed legislation regulating unconventional medicine, clearly outlining the qualifications and circumstances under which practitioners could operate.

The second chapter, titled “Understanding Unconventional Medicine: A Sociological Investigation,” presents the results of a representative survey that analyzed patterns and trends in the use of unconventional medicine in Slovakia. The survey looks at the prevalence of different types of unconventional medicine and attitudes towards alternative healthcare. In September 2019, FOCUS, the research agency, collected data from 1027 respondents, comprising 494 men and 533 women, through an omnibus survey. To gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of unconventional medicine and its different aspects, the questionnaire was divided into three parts: the first concerned the types of unconventional therapies and their frequency. In the second section of the survey, participants were asked to report their frequency of visits to unconventional therapists. The third section delved into their level of satisfaction with these therapies. The construction of this was unequivocally influenced by the results of the International Questionnaire to Measure the Use of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (I-CAM-Q) and previous research on the undeniable prevalence of unconventional medicine. Using the comparative method, the authors effectively situate Slovak data within a European framework. This process notably illuminates country-specific traits, such as the comparatively lesser prevalence of acupuncture and chiropractic practices, as well as the heightened

employment of herbal medicine. It is important to note that Slovakia boasts a significant number of herbal specialists, making herbs readily accessible, reasonably priced, and frequently recommended by medical professionals as complementary treatment. Although not all details can be presented here, the survey data highlights that regular users of unconventional medicine are often dissatisfied with academic medicine, distrustful of doctors, and turn to alternative practitioners for philosophical, moral, or religious reasons. A critical question to consider is how patients acquire knowledge about different therapies. Interestingly, it is not the media or the internet that drives recommendations but rather the opinions of friends and relatives. Throughout the book, the authors emphasize that medicine is a complex cultural system and should not be interpreted in isolation. They suggest that data and conclusions should be considered in the context of formal medical care.

Chapter three of the book, “Understanding Unconventional Medicine: Anthropological Examination,” discusses the ongoing debate surrounding the effectiveness of unconventional medicine. It examines the needs satisfied by therapies and identifies their effectiveness in promoting healing. What distinguishes the methodology of an alternative therapist from that of a traditional physician? How does the doctor examine the patient and search for the causes of illness? The interviews within this volume unequivocally demonstrate that non-traditional practitioners fill a crucial void that formal medical care fails to address. They consider illness from physical, mental, social, and spiritual perspectives, utilizing bricolage techniques to choose treatments and disregard medical diagnoses. The interviews help us understand the various aspects and motivations behind unconventional medicine. This chapter is fascinating and takes us one step closer to comprehending the intricate connection between theory and practice in the field of medicine.

I believe that the co-authored work of Ivan Soucek and Roman Hofreiter has attempted an interdisciplinary presentation of a relevant topic. It reflects on the complex structure of the courses of action that can be taken to overcome illness as an emergency. It looks at unconventional medicine in a broad historical, social, and cultural context, and the data and questions it raises should be of interest to an international readership.

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Die Renaissance der ruralen Architektur. Fünf Beiträge zu traditional vernakularen Hausformen im östlichen Europa. Edited by Michael Prosser-Schell and Maria Erb.

Schriftenreihe des Instituts für Volkskunde der Deutschen des östlichen Europa 23. Münster–New York: Waxmann, 2022. 312 pp.

Bence Ament-Kovács 

Institute of Ethnology, HUN-REN Research Centre for the Humanities, 4/B Tóth Kálmán utca, 1097 Budapest, Hungary; kovacs.bence@abtk.hu

In the book series of the Institut für Volkskunde der Deutschen des östlichen Europa (Institute for the Folklore of the Germans of Eastern Europe) in Freiburg, the editorial collaboration between the Institute's Senior Research Fellow Michael Prosser-Schell and Maria Erb, Associate Professor at the ELTE Institute of Germanic Studies, has once again produced an exciting and innovative publication. Inspired by the presentations of the 2017 and 2018 workshops, the volume's introduction, authored by the above-named editors, and its five case studies address the history, ethnographic/anthropological connotations, and heritage-related appreciation and rediscovery of the built heritage of the German-speaking minority in East Central and Eastern Europe.

To the reader—at least to the author of this review—the editorial theme of the volume is very appealing. It seems a fortunate decision that the subject of the work is not merely the Germans of Hungary nor just the eighteenth-century Danube Swabians. Hungarian researchers tend to forget that the eighteenth-century settlement of Germans in Hungary should be seen primarily in the context of historical Hungary, which, by the way, can be interpreted as a grandiose process of eastward German emigration, extending all the way to the Black Sea, Bessarabia, and the Volga region. Not to mention the fact—and this is also rightly reflected in the book—that there were already Germans living in the region at that time (think of the Germans in Western Hungary resettling from Burgenland and Lower Austria, or the Saxons of Transylvania and Spiš/Szepes), who already had a locally universalized building practice. The editors of the volume have selected the case studies along this colorful theme, their focus extending from the second half of the twentieth century to the present day, but at the same time, the buildings they examine were usually erected much earlier than that.

After a very thorough historical introduction, Maria Erb's study of the 'German open-air museum in Hungary', the settlement of Feked in Baranya County, examines the character of farm buildings (e.g., barns, crop storage units, cellars), as well as representative elements (stucco, colored and sandblasted doors and windows, 'capstones' indicating the builder and the time of construction, etc.). It also examines other elements of the townscape (church, calvary, public buildings), the social changes induced by the displacement of Germans and the Kádár era (1956–1989), and the wide-ranging historic revitalization of the settlement (affecting natives as well as the urbanites who acquired vacation homes there, including Germans, Swedes, Belgians, Dutch, etc.), and the drivers of the process, the points of reference in restorations, and forms of remembrance.

In the second study, Michael Prosser-Schell and Ágnes Tóth both elaborate on their own research topic, the post-displacement fate and culture of the Germans of Hungary in Hungary as well as in Germany (primarily in the Federal Republic of Germany/West Germany). At the same time, they focus on an underexplored topic: the housing conditions (primarily newly built homes) following expulsion (*Vertreibung*), the confiscation of property, and ethnic discrimination (1950s–1960s). Since the author of these lines also investigated the building practices in a German settlement in Hungary and experienced the architectural fashion-shaping consequences of family visits in Germany, he considers the parallel nature of the investigation to be truly pioneering and encourages the authors to extend their research to the 1980s and 1990s.

Irmgard Sedler's case study focusing on Transylvanian Saxons provides an excellent parallel to Erb's writing. From Hungary's point of view, it is unique that the author was able to provide data from as early as the late 1500s on rural residential buildings of an ethnic group that has existed continuously since the mid-twelfth century. The study points to the standardization of the Ceaușescu era, alongside the more notorious 'selling out' of the Saxons, and the impact of agricultural cooperatives from the 1980s onwards. It makes a fascinating transition from these phenomena to the examination of the heritage discourses of post-socialist Romanian society and provides a richly illustrated account of the growing interest in vernacular architecture in the 1990s and 2000s and the consequences of the inscription of individual buildings on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Jörg Stadelbauer's study takes us to Georgia, one of Europe's more remote regions, sparsely populated by the German minority. In the Caucasian villages that are presented, the standardization of the appearance of the residential buildings with balcony facades had already begun in the 1920s, so the paper focuses on the pre-socialist Georgian rural spaces (*Ländliche Räume*), mainly residential buildings and sacral buildings, from a cultural-geographic perspective. Although the

Germans—who immigrated there mainly during the nineteenth century—were deported after World War II, their dwellings can be found in the villages to this day, so the author has taken into consideration both local and international (UNESCO) heritagization processes of commemoration and musealization, and—to the delight of the writer of these lines—the rural manifestations of modernism.

In the final study of the volume, Michael Prosser-Schell and Aušra Feser focus on the specific architecture of Nida, a fishing village in Lithuania, now a resort town. The paper describes the architectural features of the village—and the Baltic region—related to fisheries from the eighteenth century onward, the artistic and scientific attention paid to the region, and the country's history of occupation in the twentieth century. The study reveals how collectivization took place and led to a change in local lifestyles and the loss of function of buildings. As part of this process, Nida was developed into a resort area, and from the 1960s and 1970s, the fishermen's houses—later listed by UNESCO—were repeatedly discovered, renovated, and musealized as 'folk architecture'.

The case studies in this volume thus focus mainly on the vernacular-architectural heritage of the German minority cultures of East Central and Eastern Europe, especially its rediscovery, revitalization, and heritagization, which is still ongoing, as well as on the motifs of its preservation, and the non-museum—though, in my view, sometimes musealized—representations of identity in the built heritage. Attention is also paid to the increasingly important issues of sustainability, green living, and 'slow living', which make the publication useful for people from different disciplines.



Wilson and the Segregation of the Eastern European ‘Races’^{*}

Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe. By Larry Wolff.
Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020. 304 pp.

Péter Csunderlik 

Eötvös Loránd University, 6–8 Múzeum körút, 1088 Budapest, Hungary; Institute of Political History, 11–13 Villányi út, 1114 Budapest, Hungary; csunderlik.peter@btk.elte.hu

There has hardly been an American president with a more interesting personality than Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924); it is no coincidence that Sigmund Freud himself wrote a seminal work on psychohistory about him, and according to the doctor’s diagnosis: “His Super-Ego was insatiable.”¹ President Woodrow Wilson, who intervened in World War I and sent troops across the Atlantic Ocean, thought of himself not simply as a politician but as a political messiah whose mission was to “make the world safe for democracy.” This is why the realist Henry Kissinger wrote in his book *World Order* that Wilson’s entire career “would appear more the stuff of Shakespearean tragedy than of foreign policy textbooks.”² After all, all the conservatives’ negative prejudices were confronted by the ideas of the progressive American president, Woodrow Wilson, an ‘egghead’ Princeton professor and university president who came into politics from the outside and had a scientific degree (Ph.D. in history and government), who wrote a book about constitutional government and then wanted to implement his ideas in practice.

In Hungary, in early 1919, Wilson was still seen as a savior, a symbolic figure ensuring the ‘self-determination of nations.’ On 1 January 1919, Mihály Károlyi summed up his foreign policy in three words: “Wilson, Wilson, Wilson” (p. 102). However, the Hungarian political elites quickly became disillusioned with Wilson, as Peter Pastor presented in a book from 1976, *Hungary between Wilson and Lenin*. In the USA, Americans considered him one of the ‘great’ presidents until recently: the peak of the American Wilson cult was during World War II, the emblematic product of which is the 1944 biographical film *Wilson*, which celebrated Wilson

^{*} This study was supported by the János Bolyai Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

1 Freud and Bullitt, *Thomas Woodrow Wilson*, 94.

2 Kissinger, *World Order*, 268.

and his vision of the League of Nations as a precursor of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the soon-to-be-born United Nations. However, in recent years, the racism of the Democratic president (between 1913 and 1921) has been highlighted: namely, Wilson believed that—in the emblematic words of Rudyard Kipling—“the white man’s burden” was to civilize and make the world better.

It is a strange contradiction that, while the Black Lives Matter movement has been mobilizing Americans to get rid of the memory of the racist Wilson who practiced segregation (as a result, in 2020, the management of Princeton University decided that the School of Public and International Affairs would omit the president’s name from its designation), initiatives are being launched in Eastern Europe precisely to restore memorial sites honoring Wilson. Although Wilson never visited Eastern Europe, the ‘small nations’ that gained independence after World War I erected statues to him in gratitude. Although the Wilson statues were removed one by one by the Nazis and the Communists, they returned after the transition. For example, the Wilson statue in front of Prague’s main railway station (named after Wilson between 1945 and 1948) was reerected in 2011.

The great merit of Larry Wolff’s book *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe*, published in 2020, is that it resolves the contradiction between Wilson’s domestic policy-supported racial segregation, which has been considered reactionary, and his progressive foreign policy in favor of separate nation-states. According to Wolff’s thesis, the Wilsonian principle of national self-determination can also be identified as a type of ‘segregation’ of nations aimed at eliminating the problem of the coexistence of different ‘races’ (namely nations). According to the idea of ‘nation-states’—which undergirded the ideology of the redrawing of Eastern Europe—the kinds of states must be created in which the state framework is filled by a specific national community. Sitting behind the desk in the White House, this idea did not seem impossible, but when the peacemakers tried to put the idea of the ‘self-determination of nations’ into practice, it turned out to be utopian. According to an anecdote, Wilson only realized when on board the USS George Washington while sailing to the Paris Peace Conference that there were three million Germans living in the Czech Republic: “That’s curious! Masaryk never told me that!” Wilson cried out (p. 169).

The New York University professor and the author of the paradigmatic monograph *Inventing Eastern Europe – The Map of Civilization in the Mind of the Enlightenment* (1994), Larry Wolff, started to deal with President Wilson, the main proponent of the redrawing of our region after World War I, from the perspective of Eastern European history, not the American one. Wolff’s opus belongs much more to the genre of intellectual history than diplomatic history because the author answers the following questions: why did an American president embark on this

superhuman enterprise that exceeded his strength and, according to his critics, caused more trouble than it solved? What did Wilson think about the East European region, its empires, and its peoples? With what kind of topoi and schemes did he interpret the problems of Eastern European history, and how did he project his ideas onto the region? Overall: what ‘mental map’ did Wilson have of Eastern Europe, where he had never been? For this reason, among the epigraphs of the book appears a quote from the Tintin comic book *King Ottokar’s Sceptre* (1939), set in an imaginary Balkan country, Syldavia.

Larry Wolff emphasizes that Wilson was not really interested in Eastern Europe before World War I, and what he did know about it was related to the burning ‘Eastern question’ during his university studies. The Ottoman Empire appeared in his imagination as a source of crisis and as an outdated, despotic power that had been pushed out of Europe—and, of course, as a devout Christian, Wilson’s mind was full of anti-Muslim prejudices. Wilson considered the Ottoman Empire a geopolitical and moral anomaly, and what is particularly interesting is how Wilson projected this negative image onto the Habsburg Empire—the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy—after 1917. Looking at both multi-ethnic empires, Wilson saw the emerging cause of oppressed peoples fighting for their sovereignty. Wolff’s monograph thoroughly documents Wilson’s intellectual ‘development’ during World War II, which—in addition to the Inquiry, a group of experts established in September 1917—was greatly influenced by Eastern European intellectuals and politicians. The chapter entitled “Wilsonian Friendship: Personal Sympathy and Geopolitical Transformation” deals with them as a whole.

During the reorganization of Eastern Europe, the biggest change involved the re-creation of Poland, which had disappeared from the map of Europe after its third partition in 1795. Wilson announced the reestablishment of independent Poland as one of his Fourteen Points, published on January 8, 1918. This special attention Wilson paid to the ‘Polish question’ was partly due to positive, romanticizing topoi about the ‘freedom-loving’ Polish people and partly for domestic political reasons. There was a significant Polish community in the USA, so with the promise of an independent Poland, the president wanted to pull a bloc of voters to the side of the Democrats: the most important figure in the Polish lobby was the pianist Ignaz Paderewski, who played Chopin in the White House in 1916.

Roman Dmowski, who was Polish as well, recommended to Wilson in November 1917 that among the aims of the war should be not only the restoration of an independent Poland but also the ‘emancipation’ of the nationalities oppressed in the Habsburg Empire. The term ‘emancipation’ particularly resonated in American political culture (thanks to Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation). By 1919, the term ‘enslaved nations’ had entered Wilson’s dictionary, and the President wanted to

make the European settlement of the World War accepted by the American public an 'emancipation project': "The struggle against slavery, for Wilson, was an ongoing campaign, reaching back to Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and culminating now in the Treaty of Versailles." (p. 114). We may reasonably believe that Lincoln became Wilson's 'super-ego.' This assumption is supported by the fact that the Lincoln Memorial was built in Washington during Wilson's presidency (between 1912 and 1920).

It is a postmodern principle that the key words that structure our thinking not only describe reality but also construct it, so it is particularly interesting how the dictionary of Wilsonism was put together. The term 'national self-determination' was still missing from the speech announcing the Fourteen Points: it was only later taken from Lenin by Wilson and his Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, and initially only used in quotation marks. The term 'small states' was borrowed from Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, who gave a lecture in London in 1915 entitled "The Problems of Small Nations in the European Crisis."

In order to achieve his political goals, Masaryk himself played with the analogy with Lincoln, flattering Wilson and appealing to his vanity. After the intention to create an independent Czechoslovakia was stated in the Pittsburgh Agreement on 31 May 1918, Masaryk gave a speech addressed to Wilson on the Gettysburg battlefield at the beginning of September:

"At an historical moment of great significance Lincoln formulated these principles which were to rule the internal policies of the United States—at a historical moment of world-wide significance you, Mr. President, shaped these principles for the foreign policies of this great Republic as well as those of the other nations: that the whole mankind may be liberated, that between nations, great and small, actual equality exists—that all just power of governments is derived from the consent of the governed." (p. 95)

The struggle of Lincoln for emancipation was reincarnated in Wilson's struggle for the liberation of the 'small nations', which nations—in Wilson's interpretation—had to be separated from each other to prevent further conflicts. Wilson was also afraid of the integration of 'races' in the USA: Wilson was born and raised in the South; his Virginian family supported the Confederate States of America in the Civil War, so it is not surprising that despite being a progressive politician, Wilson played an important role in the resegregation of the federal government. According to perhaps the most inspiring statement in Larry Wolff's book, Wilson's view of the necessary segregation of races may be paralleled in the way Wilson thought about nations, so it is significant that Wilson used 'race' in the sense of 'nation' (because this practice was very common at the time).

Finally, the question arises: to what extent did the ‘new’ Eastern Europe, structured along the lines of nation-states instead of a supranational imperial structure, become functional? As a result of the ‘Wilsonian’ arrangement, two states—Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia—were formed, which Wilson—mistakenly—considered ‘nation-states,’ even though they were not, and later disintegrated into their components, precisely along the principle of national self-determination. In addition, the ‘new’ Eastern Europe, reorganized after World War I, not only did not fully realize the idea of national self-determination, but the resulting ‘small states’ later proved to be weak against Hitler’s conquering aspirations: a great power vacuum was generated in the region, so Nazi Germany first economically, then politically, and finally also militarily invaded the ‘sovereign’ small states.

According to Larry Wolff, historians have a duty to remind us that President Wilson was a racist and segregationist and to shed light on this dark side of the progressive politician’s career. But if the purifiers of identity and memory politics erase the Wilson memorials, the opportunity to debate his legacy will disappear—like the present-day map of Eastern Europe, more or less.

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Rival Byzantiums: Empire and Identity in Southeastern Europe. By Diana Mishkova.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. 357 pp.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108759557>

John R. Lampe

Department of History, University of Maryland, 2115 Francis Scott Key Hall College Park, MD 20742,
Washington, DC, United States; jrlampe@umd.edu

Much Western historical scholarship in the current century has turned away from the emphasis on national identity and the nation-state characteristic of the previous two centuries. The new global history focuses instead on the major transnational empires. Once the early modern empires that covered and defined the Balkans had been replaced by nation states, the modern history of Southeastern Europe does not fit comfortably into a transnational global model.

Diana Mishkova's new book shows that comparative regional history will be able to connect the Balkans and Southeastern Europe across the millennium, as favored by the globalists. Working from her base in the Center for Advanced Studies in Sofia, her book concentrates on the modern region, including Turkey. She tracks the interplay between national identity and transnational aspects. She takes the early medieval Byzantine Empire, which covered most of the region, as a base point from which to compare the historiographies of Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, and Turkey. Already in the "Introduction" (p. 2), she presents Byzantium as a model for the multi-ethnic, transnational empire as set down in the Oxford Russian historian Dimitri Obolensky's post-1945 volumes. The chapters that follow detail the varied efforts to revise this version in favor of national identity across the five historiographies. The five chapters in Part I cover the period before World War II, and the five in Part II the postwar years into the twenty-first century.

Mishkova begins with an "Enlightenment" chapter in the late eighteenth century. There we see regional figures sharing Edward Gibbon's and François Voltaire's disdain for Byzantium in favor of the Roman Empire and ancient Greece. The Bulgarian Father Paisiy of the Hilendar monastery found no positive role in his history of the Byzantine regime surrounding two Bulgarin kingdoms. Nor did several Greek writers who called themselves Hellenes. They denied any Byzantine connection to the sacred

legacy of Ancient Greece. Moving into the nineteenth century, Mishkova tracks a new appreciation of the Byzantine Empire but with a romanticist link to national identity. Political activists with a historical interest took the lead: on the liberal side of national and also European identity, we see Nicolae Balcescu of Romania's 1848 movement and Vladimir Jovanović of Serbia's 1860s movement for parliamentary responsibility. Hristo Botev, leader of the Bulgarian revolt against Ottoman rule, favored the earlier Byzantine regime. Romanian appreciation of Byzantium remained primarily tied to the earlier Roman settlement. The Greek reconnection followed as a way of denying the German ethnologist Fallmerayer's denial of any connection between ancient Greece and Byzantium. But Greek leaders of emerging political parties soon expanded the national claim from the territory of modern Greece to virtually the entire Byzantine Empire. Recapturing its huge territory became the 'Great Idea' that dominated Greek politics for the rest of the century. Serbian Minister Ilija Garašanin claimed that Tsar Dušan's brief regime over Macedonia and Greece, as well as Serbia and Kosovo, was a Serbian kingdom. Still, his idea of a Greater Serbia was based on a common language and not on Byzantine borders.

Academically trained historians took over the debate in the early twentieth century and founded chairs or institutes of Byzantine studies in the interwar years. Working from archival evidence, they pursued the evolution of Byzantium as an empire, as we see in the first of Mishkova's two seminal chapters called "In Search of the »Scientific Method«." Her next chapter compares the region's rival studies of Byzantium's subsequent influence into the Ottoman period. The Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga took the lead in pursuing what he called *Byzance après Byzance*. Iorga argued that its agrarian and cultural influence provided a continuing Romanian connection to Roman origins and European civilization, rather than to the Slavic influence. In Sofia, pre-war medievalist Vasil Zlatarski and his successors authored a less positive appraisal of the Byzantine economic influence as binding Bulgarian landholders to a Byzantine Greek set of *pronoia* estates, a precedent for the Ottoman regime. He also dated Bulgarian conversion to Christianity before the Byzantine missionary efforts.

In Belgrade, the medievalist Stanoje Stanojević drew on Russian scholarly connections to lead Serbian historiography away from the romantic version of Tsar Dušan's Serbian kingdom. His critical eye recognized the diverse population in the Tsar's huge empire and saw its Serbian leadership seeking to follow and, subsequently, to replace the Byzantine framework. By the 1920s, Russian *émigré* influence grew with the arrival of the eminent Georgije Ostrogorski. His volumes established the framework of a multi-ethnic empire with an unoppressive Serbian core. Byzantine studies in Belgrade became a model for the wider region, as detailed in Chapter 4. National identities remained the basis of rival evaluations of the Byzantine legacy.

Appropriately including Turkey in Southeastern Europe, Mishkova concludes the pre-World War II section with a chapter on the late Ottoman period and Kemalist Turkey. The initial attention of Turkish historians dismissed the late Byzantine Empire as morally corrupt in contrast to the high standards of the servants of the Sultan's regime. After 1900, trained Turkish historians turned to Turkology. Several appreciated the artistic and archaeological legacy of Byzantium as a Second Rome, as well as the parallel between the two huge imperial frameworks Byzantine and Ottoman. Herbert A. Gibbons, a historian from Istanbul's Robert College, spread the thesis of almost ethnic continuity between the Turks and Byzantine Greeks. The new generation of Turkish historians in the interwar republic were quick to dismiss any such continuity. However, the rising number of internationally trained Turkish historians of the interwar and postwar period did recognize elements of continuity between the Byzantine and Ottoman land regimes and economic institutions. The influential sociologist and Turkologist, Mehmet Fuat Köprülü worked along the same lines but added the concern that Islamic sources were neglected.

The five post-1945 chapters are devoted to the national historiography of Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, and Turkey. I depart from that order to address comparable features in Bulgaria and Serbia, and then in Greece and Romania. Turkey included, these chapters provide detailed references to a number of historians and their differences, which is a testimony to rising scholarly standards across the region. In this review, I will concentrate only on the main figures for comparison and contrast.

The two chapters on Bulgaria and Serbia trace the respective paths of their historiography from Marxist criticism to Slavo-Byzantine and Serbo-Byzantine frameworks, respectively. We see the harsher initial view in Bulgaria, where the native peasantry was subjected to the 'slave-based system' of Byzantine estates (p. 221) without a chance for a feudal class to arise. By the 1970s, the prewar and wartime scholarship of Petar Mutafov and the postwar work of Dimitur Angelov had restored the thesis of the influence of the Byzantine economic framework on the Bulgarian trade and land regime that had already emerged in the First Bulgarian Kingdom in the seventh to the tenth centuries. Ivan Duychev added the cultural connections formed between the Slavs in general and the Byzantine Empire, discounting a Greek linkage. In Serbia, another Russian *émigré* interwar historian Georgije Ostrogorski also criticized the Byzantine estates for subjecting peasant smallholders to a feudal, although not slave-like regime. He soon toned down this emphasis to address the nature of Tsar Dušan's regime as a multi-ethnic empire and not an assimilationist Serbian kingdom. Other Serbian historians joined the Serbian Orthodox Church in keeping Kosovo as a Serbian religious center. Macedonia's republic status allowed its historians to pursue its separate national identity. The leading postwar Serbian

medievalist Sima Ćirković argued for a Serb core to Dušan's empire, defined by its Byzantine interrelations and ambitions for replacing the entire empire with his own. He saw the major result of the Serb–Byzantine connection not as the origin of a Serbian state but as a joint linkage to European cultural history. Belgrade's Byzantine Institute continued to flourish into the post-Communist period, culminating in a major international conference of Byzantinists in 2016.

Historians in both Greece and Romania asserted their national identity over the Byzantine Empire rather than interrelations. Greek historians had no initial period of Marxist synthesis with the Byzantine land regime beyond the *émigré* publication of Nikos Svoronos in France. In anti-Communist Greece, the reconnection of ancient Hellenism with the Byzantine period proceeded apace. However, led by the Greek American historian Anthony Kaldellis, it rejected the idea of Byzantium as an empire. Instead, he characterized its regime, at least in the territory of modern Greece, as a nation-state. But he did not accept the notion of mass ethnic consciousness the way historians in Greece increasingly did. They saw a Greek national identity proceeding from ancient Hellenism through Byzantium to the modern state. Mishkova takes only brief note of the Roman influence linking ancient Greece and Byzantium. She persuasively argues for its role in Romanian historiography based on the several early centuries of Roman occupation. As late as 1969, an authorized history volume not only emphasized the political framework in Roman Dacia but made no mention of any Byzantine influence. Then the 100-year anniversary of Nicolae Iorga's birth in 1971 obliged the Ceaușescu regime to expand the acknowledgement of the Byzantine influence beyond art and architecture. Thus, interwar medievalists like Constantin Giurescu were allowed to publish on Byzantine political influence. They were soon joined by the younger historians Valentin Georgescu and Iorga's grandson, Andrei Pippidi. The regime kept the gates open to protect its reputation at the International Congress of Historical Sciences in Bucharest in 1980. Afterwards, a restrictive emphasis on the independent Romanian state traced it back through the Byzantine period to the Roman occupation, and even earlier. Mishkova welcomes the full reopening after 1989, citing one Romanian historian who called the Ceaușescu regime's historiography 'neo-Stalinist' (p. 282). I would say, instead, that it is better described as 'neo-nationalist.' This recent publication joins Greek, Bulgarian, and Serbian scholarship in seeing the Byzantine Empire as part of their connection to European civilization.

A final chapter in Part II on Turkish scholarship does not find a European cultural connection. Köprülü continued to be a major figure after World War II, who again stressed the need to examine Islamic sources. Otherwise, postwar Turkish historiography was distinguished by an emphasis on Ottoman economic history, recognizing a linkage with the Byzantine land regime. First came several *émigré*

historians, led by Halil İnalcık at the University of Chicago through the 1970s. Resident Turkish economic historians like Sevket Pamuk followed, and since 2000 Turkish historiography has overcome a long-standing aversion to Byzantium. A new university has even been devoted to Byzantine studies.

Mishkova's uses her "Epilogue and Conclusions" reverse the usual order. Here she reviews the current state of Byzantine studies across the five countries and expresses her hopes that their younger historians will revive the Byzantine model to escape the confines of single ethnic identities and fixed territorial borders. She understands the challenge to such hopes in light of the recent struggle between Greece, Bulgaria, and Macedonia over the border for what is now North Macedonia. She acknowledges that due to the rise of post-colonial studies in Western historiography Byzantine studies have been set aside in favor of the British and French colonial empires. But she cites the hope of Serbian historian Vlada Stanković, which I share, that regional studies are a better framework for comparison than global history. In conclusion, Mishkova sees promise in the past and present state of Byzantine studies across the region as a point of reference that connects the national narratives with each other and with the mainstream of European medieval history. Her dispassionate account of their rival approaches to Byzantium has given us an instructive comparison of the five evolving historiographies. Despite their differences, we see them all proceeding with the common best practice of European national scholarship.



State Socialism in Eastern Europe. History, Theory, Anti-Capitalist Alternatives. Edited by Eszter Bartha, Tamás Krausz, and Bálint Mezei.

London: Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2023. 356 pp. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-22504-8>

Róbert Takács 

Institute of Political History, 11–13 Villányi út, 1114 Budapest, Hungary; takrobi78@gmail.com

State socialist regimes and historical alternatives

The volume edited by Eszter Bartha, Tamás Krausz, and Bálint Mezei is a collection of studies that encompass, at first sight, quite heterogenous topics, ranging from economic analysis through labor history to politics of remembrance. Not even the title, *State Socialism in Eastern Europe*, establishes real cohesion among the papers collected in the book. Some authors expand the investigation to the entire state socialist period, while others focus on shorter periods, such as the 1970s or the years of the transition.

The territorial focus of the volume is also somewhat blurred. The editors promise to embrace Eastern Europe, however, most of the studies analyze the region primarily through the Hungarian example. Except for one Russian case study, the term (East) Central Europe might therefore appear more appropriate, but while also citing Jenő Szűcs, who elaborated the characteristics of three different historical regions of Europe,¹ the editors prefer the concept of Emil Niederhauser, who differentiated between two characteristic development paths, Western and Eastern.² In this understanding of European development, Eastern Europe—a term that includes the Russian, Belorussian, and Ukrainian territories—highlights the importance of the state (absolutism, authoritarian government) during subsequent modernization efforts.

It is also worth taking a closer look at the subtitle *History, Theory, Anti-capitalist Alternatives*. Although only half of the authors are historians, as Attila Antal, Péter Szigeti, and György Wiener are legal and political scientists, while András Pinkasz

1 Szűcs, *Vázlat Európa három történeti régiójáról*.

2 Niederhauser, *Kelet-Európa története*.

and Tamás Gerőcs are economists, and Chriss Hann is a social anthropologist, they are all committed to the historical analysis of their subject. Their might diverge, but the demand for theoretical foundations and socio-critical thinking is a common denominator. This critical approach towards capitalism explains the research interest in the history of anti-capitalist experiments.

This reviewer, however, is inclined to highlight another expression from the subtitle: *alternatives*. Encountering dilemmas concerning historical—and political—alternatives is a common thread. In many of these papers, one can grasp the intellectual struggle to detect and examine alternatives to both capitalist and socialist development. On the other hand, they also understand the history of the state socialist ‘world’ as an alternative—modernizing—project challenging capitalism. Some pose the question whether macro-level alternatives could have emerged at all (György Wiener, Tamás Krausz), while others add their contribution on the micro or local level (Chris Hann, Susan Zimmermann).

Furthermore, the authors tend to discuss alternatives in the frames of constraints and determinism. Depending on the characteristics of the region, which they define as the (semi)periphery of capitalism, these constraints determine which alternative was finally realized. For example, Péter Szigeti stresses that the state socialist alternative was not in itself doomed, but that its failure was a consequence of global economic changes. Speaking of alternatives, we should add that most of the authors do, did, or wanted to believe in a possible third—democratic leftist—alternative between capitalism and the existing state socialism. Opportunities for such a third way alternative appear most prominently during periods of storm and stress, in historical moments like 1968 or 1989.

Amongst the plethora of topics, two overarching perspectives avail themselves for interpreting the volume—one negative, the other positive. The negative dimension uniting these diverse papers is the refusal of adopting the concept of totalitarianism as productive for historical analysis. They consider it an ideologically driven approach (not) to understand state socialism, a product of the Cold War opposition. Also, as the “Introduction” emphasizes, this paradigm was challenged already in the 1970s by a group of diverse scholars usually listed under the banner of revisionist historians. These historians—e.g., Stephen Kotkin, Sheila Fitzpatrick³, and others—strove to reintroduce society into the academic discourse about Soviet history and, therefore, to break with the simplistic dichotomy of oppressors and the oppressed, or in even more simplified terms, the mythological fight between good and evil. These authors did much to overcome such narratives and examine state socialist societies in their complexities and explain how these regimes could gain

3 See: Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*; Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*.

public support, while others emphasized the existence and impact of individual attitudes and choices (*Eigensinn*) in dictatorships. Also, the editors make it clear that, during and after the transition, the totalitarian paradigm was highly welcomed by both rightist and liberal elites, who had earlier been—or defined themselves as—the opposition to Communist rule.

From a 'positive' perspective, we should emphasize the authors' thorough social critical approach and Marxist analysis of historical development. This is reflected not only by the names we most often encounter—for example Antonio Gramsci and Karl Polányi, besides the re-reading of Marx, Engels, and Lenin—, but also the most important years that are analyzed on the pages of the volume. These symbolic years that the authors anchor their argumentation on are 1953, 1968, and 1973 in particular. Naturally, the first two are also milestones related to foundational political events, but here the primary emphasis is on their economic relevance. 1953 is not only the year when Stalin died, which resulted in changes in party leadership and decision making, easing total party control over society, and a shift in Cold War struggle, in general the political side of de-Stalinization, but also—more importantly for the authors—departure from the much-discussed priorities and structures of Stalinist economic policy. This was characterized by the growing significance of light industry, establishing realistic targets for industrial growth, emphasizing qualitative development—all in all, a shift towards different distribution policies, or as the authors put it, an attempt at 'consumer socialism'. It is important to underline that the papers discuss 'consumer socialism' and not a socialist consumers' society, which would open a larger debate about the existence of the latter, given the limited scale and choices of consumption compared to the capitalist center. Nevertheless, the volume also highlights that people—including workers—of the Soviet bloc in fact started to compare their standards of living and the quality of consumers' goods to Western living conditions, which they were increasingly able to do. Thus, the story of how state socialist regimes lost the ideological battle to define 'welfare' in a different, more complex way than income or abundance of consumer goods starts in 1953.

This process leads us to the second outstanding moment, 1968. This year is read differently in Hungarian, in Eastern European, and in Western historiography. Nevertheless, the time frame for discussing this moment of crisis and transformation can invariably be expanded to the 1960s. It is not specifically the events of the students' movement, but rather the Marxist renaissance of the sixties which is more important from the authors' perspective. In these years, the capitalist mainstream had to face a leftist intellectual challenge from the inside. In Hungary, the economic reform—the so-called New Economic Mechanism—was launched in January 1968, but from the middle of the decade onwards the quest for economic reform alternatives became a general phenomenon everywhere from Moscow to Prague. However, Budapest took the largest step towards reintroducing market incentives into macro

and micro levels of economic management, while Prague was the only capital to extend such experimentation to the domain of political reforms.

The New Economic Mechanism, which most authors touch upon, raises the question of the uniqueness of Hungarian development. The studies in the volume do not directly address this issue, and in many aspects emphasize the common features, problems, and challenges most Eastern European societies shared. However, it is exactly the economic reform—its survival and revival in the 1970s and 1980s—along which they seem to differentiate the Hungarian state socialist model from others, rather than based on its more liberal or less authoritarian political or cultural attitudes. This reviewer does not recall reading about the Helsinki Accords or the issues of civil rights in any of the studies, and cultural policy or its prominent—but, in Moscow, frowned upon—shaper, György Aczél is also hardly ever mentioned.

Let us take a closer look at one example that highlights the uniqueness of the Hungarian experience. In the first section called “A Third Road in Eastern Europe?”, a unique feature of the Hungarian legal system is noted: in 1967, collective enterprises (to be exact, agricultural cooperatives) were given the same rights as state-owned companies. In the chapter “Front Matter,” Tamás Krausz observes that, in the Soviet Union, such legal equality was only granted during Gorbachev’s perestroika. The time gap is more than twenty years: what was introduced in the heydays of state socialism in Hungary only appeared in its final phase in the Soviet Union. The Hungarian economic reform was clearly a terrain that in the 1970s differentiated Hungary within the Soviet bloc—despite their common economic challenges like indebtedness, the struggle to gain and keep Western markets, the thirst for hard currency, etc.—, and which made Hungary a prime place to study economic alternatives for Wojciech Jaruzelski’s Poland, Gorbachev’s Soviet Union and Deng Xiaoping’s China throughout the decade. Furthermore, this shared reformism, not only in the optimistic decade of the 1960s, but also in the crisis-ridden second half of the 1980s was one of the binding ties that, according to Csaba Békés, led to virtual coalitions within the Soviet bloc.⁴ But Hungary was also a ‘proving ground’ for some Western scholars, among them leftist sociologists, anthropologists, and economists like Michael Burawoy and one of the authors, Chris Hann. Burawoy visited the steel-works of Diósgyőr (Miskolc), while Hann ended up in Kiskunhalas, not far from the Yugoslav border. They both came to study the Hungarian development for the same reasons as others: partly because of its uniqueness, and partly because they were allowed to. Nevertheless, these scholars were not antagonistic opponents of state socialism. On the contrary, Attila Antal argues that the Hungarian reforms actually fertilized the thinking of Western neoliberal economists.

4 Békés, *Enyhülés és emancipáció*.

Finally, let us not forget about the third crucial year, 1973, the oil crisis and its economic consequences, which appear as the almost mandatory starting point for the analysis of the transition for those who emphasize the impact of economic processes. It is an important turn that triggered the neoliberal and neoconservative breakthrough in the West while also causing economic slowdown and leading to, indebtedness, and the consequent failure of consumer socialism in the East.

Here we should emphasize two further central concepts of the volume: catching up and modernization. The authors interpret state socialism as an 'alternative' experiment to catch up with Western capitalism, in other words, as an alternative modernization model. In this regard, 1953 is not a sharp rupture, as the preceding Stalinist era had been characterized by the same deeper economic goals. What the post-Stalinist decades offered was a modified, adjusted quest for modernization, with the efforts becoming especially evident in the reformist thinking of the 1960s. In this interpretation, the incapability of catching up with Western capitalism led to their failure.

It is also worth noting the *longue durée* perspective of some of the studies, especially those of Tamás Gerőcs, András Pinkasz, and Attila Antal. Gerőcs and Pinkasz analyze the successes and failures of the so-called Hungarian 'bridge model' in the framework of dependency theories. The bridge model describes Hungary's dual economic integration to the Eastern state socialist world and to Western capitalist structures. It underlines the significance of 1973 and the economic processes of the 1970s, because these upheavals fundamentally rearranged the international economic context, therefore by the 1980s had rendered this bridge model unsustainable. Taking their inspiration from world-system theories, Gerőcs and Pinkasz also draw attention to the fact that, in this region, catching up was not solely a socialist project, but a continuous and never fulfilled program the semi-peripheries. From their perspective, the characteristics of the peripheries' dependence on the center offer a valid explanation for the failures of post-socialist catch-up efforts as well.

The same studies also draw attention to long-term processes leading to 1989: they do not regard the regime change as a rapid and unprecedented event but try to grasp the decades-long integration of the state socialist economies into the world economy, which was one of the factors that caused the failure of this alternative modernization effort. Attila Antal carefully documents that the transformation of the legal system had started well before the market-friendly laws passed in 1987–1988 (the introduction of value added tax, personal income tax, and the companies act). His study also contributes to our understanding of professional networks and transfers, which—he shows—were also possible between the East and the West in the Cold War era in such ideologically sensitive areas as economic policies. Moreover, Antal stresses that the flow of knowledge was not the one-directional

stereotypical West–East pattern: Western neoliberalism could also learn lessons from the Hungarian reform experience, most importantly the notion that the state can propel neoliberal change.

Two writings—the chapters by Susan Zimmermann and Eszter Bartha—discuss gender policies of the Kádár regime from different perspectives, but they both point out the contradictory nature of the emancipatory promises of state socialist regimes and the constraints of economic realities.

Susan Zimmermann's case study illustrates this dilemma through the regulation of women workers' nightshifts. The author unfolds a complex labyrinth of interests including conflicting trade union and industrial policies, foreign policy priorities, and constant pressure due to export goals for goods intended for western markets. Furthermore, she points out the hierarchies between male and female labor, skilled and unskilled workers, and explains relations with international non-governmental organizations.

Eszter Bartha utilizes interviews with male and female workers about their different levels of professional motivations and career objectives, which clearly underline the gender differences in work attitudes. Nevertheless, Bartha offers more than a sensitive gender analysis of her interviews with Hungarian workers: she also presents the sociological approaches that emerged during the state socialist period in Hungary, both those analysts who remained within the constraints of the official public sphere and those who stepped beyond these narrow realms of legality. She stresses that both these groups used class as the prime category or reference in their analysis, while even for dissident thinkers, gender remained marginal. Even the defenders of the official ideology failed to perceive gender as ideologically challenging Marxism–Leninism.

The two studies in the section called “System Change and the Alternatives” discuss questions of the economic transition. Tamás Krausz sharply focuses on the last years of the Soviet Union and analyzes the political debates of the late Soviet leadership. Unfortunately, this is a topic which has gone largely undiscussed in Hungarian historiography, despite the rich literature of the transition. Krausz concludes that the *perestroika* era concepts of economic and therefore social democratization, especially the workers' say in the direction of enterprises and workers' ownership, was not supported either by the nomenklatura elites or by the workers themselves. The standpoint of the first group was in line with their interests, as they were trying to transform political into economic capital and found out that privatization held out exactly this promise. On the other hand, workers, whose labor position and negotiating power were dramatically worsened by privatization, had little faith in to another socialist alternative. Chris Hann sketches the almost century-long development of Kiskunhalas from a traditional agricultural town to a post-socialist municipality.

He uses a term borrowed from Karl Polányi to interpret the processes after 1990 as ‘disembedding’ the economy from society.

The studies in the section called “The New Canon” offer a different perspective on state socialism. Slávka Otčenášová and Bálint Mezei examine post-1990 history school textbooks in Slovakia and Hungary, thereby exploring the politics of memory of East European post-socialism. Perhaps the authors could have reflected on each other in order to underline the impact of the different political dynamics of the state socialist development in these two countries: both Hungary and Czechoslovakia experienced a political explosion during the state socialist period that determined their later development. While following the Hungarian 1956 revolution, a more than three-decade long process led to practices of power directed towards reconciliation with Hungarian society, the ‘normalization’ of the Husak regime resisted political concessions even in 1989. This must have left its imprint on the genuinely liberal schoolbook policy in Hungary between 1990 and 2010, when schools were able to choose from several alternative textbooks. In the meantime, in Slovakia, as Otčenášová points out, one authorized textbook had to fit the needs of all elementary schools. Similar tendencies prevailed in Hungary after 2010, however, and as school history books tend to be less sophisticated than academic positions, interpretations anchored in the concept of totalitarianism made their return, as well.

The volume ends with two theoretical studies in the “Concluding Essays” section that intend to provide a comprehensive understanding of state socialism. György Wiener revisits the writings of Marx and Engels to argue for using the term ‘state socialism’ to describe the countries of the Soviet bloc. He emphasized that, in contrast to Marx’s vision, it was not in the most developed countries that the revolution triumphed. He concludes that the fact that reforms and democratization efforts of state socialism led to the restoration of bourgeois society confirms rather than refutes the validity of Marxist analysis. Finally, analyzing both the historical stages of state socialism and Marxist thinkers’ views about it, Péter Szigeti offers an alternative model of dialectical democracy for the formation of public interest by adding, in addition to party organs, the so-called ‘agora’ for democratic decision making.

With its thematical heterogeneity and propensity to draw conclusions from or generalize through the example of the Hungarian case, the volume offers a wide understanding of state socialist development. Most of its studies reveal the authors’ strong commitment to theoretical thinking, but their analysis is more bound to economic processes than ideology. Despite the Hungarian focus of some studies, the volume contributes to a more subtle analysis of state socialist regimes and consistently raises the question of historical alternatives.

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