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**LES TRADITIONS APOCALYPTIQUES
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THE VIEW OF THE TURK IN HUNGARY :
THE APOCALYPTIC TRADITION
AND THE LEGEND OF THE RED APPLE
IN OTTOMAN-HUNGARIAN CONTEXT

THE FIRST CENTURY
(DOWN TO THE BATTLE OF MOHÁCS)

After the Ottomans had crushed the Balkan states one after the other in the late fourteenth century and had reduced the Serb principality into vassalage following their victory in 1389, they arrived at the borders of the Hungary. In 1390, for the first time in history, Ottoman armies invaded the country.¹

At that time the Kingdom of Hungary was one of the largest states of Europe. Due to its accomplishments in civilization, its military force and its century-long service in the defence of the southern and eastern frontiers of the Christian community (*respublica christiana*) the country was held in high esteem in the western world. The Hungarian kings wore such respectful titles as "the defender of Christianity" (*defensor christianitatis*), "the champion of Christ" (*athleta Christi*) or "the warrior of Christian faith" (*miles fidei christiane*), while their country was regarded by the whole of Europe as its eastern "gate" (*porta*).² The Hungarian state not only contained the attacks from the East (for example the Mongol invasion or the raids of the Golden Horde) but, with the support of the Papacy, it also led a series of "missionary" campaigns against the neighbouring states, the Patarens (or Bogomils) and Eastern Christians, who were considered "heretics", "schismatics" or "rebellious". It was during such a campaign that the Hungarian king first encountered Ottoman troops (1375).

1) Elemér Mályusz, *Zsigmond király uralma Magyarországon 1387-1437*. Budapest, 1984, 102-132. Pál Engel, *Magyarország és a török veszély Zsigmond korában (1387-1437): Századok* 128:2 (1994) 273-286. Ferenc Szakály, *Phases of Turco-Hungarian Warfare Before the Battle of Mohács (1365-1526): Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 33 (1979) 67-85.

2) Lajos Terbe, *Egy európai szállóige életrajza (Magyarország a kereszténység védőbástyája)* : *Egyetemes Philológiai Közlöny* 60:7-12 (1936) 307, 309-311, 346.

At the beginning the leaders of Hungary did not realize that the new enemy was different in every respect from the ones they had previously met in the region. The appearance of the Ottomans only meant for them (and for the other leaders of Europe, too) that in the future they would have to face a new type of "heresy" in the Balkans. The merging of "schismatics" and "Muslims" was also facilitated by the fact that the Balkan peoples tended to appear on the battlefields as the allies of the Ottomans. Thus in the Hungarian view it was more than natural to rank the "Turk" among the "heretics" and it took them quite a while to recognize the enormous difference between the two categories. King Sigismund himself (1387-1437), who was the first to become aware of the dangers of the Ottoman expansion, in the beginning viewed the "Turkish" enemy in the same manner. In a document dating from August 14, 1390 he mentioned a struggle against "the cruel schismatic Serbs and Turks allied in crafty guile".³ The Diet of October 1397 decided on the reorganization of the country's defence system by referring to "the attacks and assaults of the Turks and other schismatics", which reflects that the Hungarian nobility shared the king's opinion concerning the Ottomans.⁴ This view survived in the next decades, but, also parallel to it, new definitions emerged (mainly after 1396), which slowly ousted the previous ones and determined the image of the Ottomans in Hungary for a long time. First of all the "savage, heathen and godless Turkish nation" became the "chief enemy and persecutor" (*inimicus capitalis, persecutor*) of the royal dignity (*rex*) and the country (*regnum*), which from time to time was also called "Tartar" or "Turkish-Tartar pagan".⁵ The latter was obviously a deliberate but rather suggestive exaggeration: in Hungary, which still had dreadful memories of the Mongol invasion, nothing could express the amount of danger more vividly than associating the new enemy with the Mongols.⁶ As the king and the nobility regarded themselves as the representatives of the Christian community and the attacks they suffered as the grievance of universal Christianity, they at the same time identified the Ottomans with "the enemy and persecutor of Christ's cross and of Christian faith".⁷ The Ottomans as "persecutors of the country and faith" presented a twofold challenge to which the Hungarian ruling class responded unanimously: it confronted them and called for relentless struggle against them. A document by King

3) *Középkori históriák oklevelekben (1001-1410)*. Selected, introduced and commented by Gyula Kristó. Szeged, 1992, p. 221.

4) *Decreta Regni Hungariae. Gesetze und Verordnungen Ungarns 1301-1457*. Collectionem manuscriptam F. Döry, additamentis auxerunt, commentariis notisque illustraverunt G. Bónis and V. Bácskai. Budapest, 1976, 160.

5) Gy. Kristó, *Középkori históriák*, 224, 244-245, 257, 260, 271.

6) On the view of the Tatars in Hungary, see János B. Szabó, *Vázlat egy ellenségkép történetéről*. I. A tatárok emlékezete Erdélyben, 1241-1621 : *Aetas* 1995:1-2, 5-22.

7) Gy. Kristó, *Középkori históriák*, 244-245.

Sigismund listed those motives which necessitated resistance and counterattack: 1. compassion for the sufferers, 2. "the honest duty of defence", 3. the injustice against Christians and 4. against the Saviour.⁸ Thereby he exclaimed that the defence of the country and the retaliation (that is an offensive war) for the "injustice" committed by the Ottomans was the moral, political and religious duty of the country's leaders, mainly that of the king. As a result, the latter soon became "the shield and bulwark of Christian faith" (*scutum atque murus*) both in domestic public opinion and in the eyes of the authorities of the Christian republic, as it was first formulated by Pope John XXIII in 1410.⁹ From his position it followed that, should he be unsuccessful during the performance of his duty (that is defeated by the Ottomans), it could only happen with "the consent of God's secret verdict".¹⁰

The Hungary of the Hunyadi and Jagiellonian era basically maintained the image of the Turks and its own role that was formed during Sigismund's reign, but under the influence of everyday experience and new ideological trends (humanism, ecclesiastical spiritual movements, etc.) this image underwent some modifications: certain elements were underlined, others were removed and it was enriched by some new features. The Ottomans continued to be the "chief enemy", what is more they were promoted to be the "arch or eternal enemy". It became a general conviction that the Ottomans were a "natural" foe, who not only wished to defeat their enemies but sought to annihilate their identity; they were threatening their neighbours because they were guided by hatred and revenge. The letter of János Hunyadi to Pope Nicolaus V on September 17, 1448, written by the excellent humanist János Vitéz summarized this idea expressively: "If my memory does not fail me, the spiteful weapons of the Turks have been lurking around Europe for a hundred years now. They conquered Greece, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Albania in quick succession... enslaving them, depriving them of their religion, forcing onto them foreign face, foreign morals, foreign laws and the language of the infidels. They showed no mercy either to the rights of the people or to those of God. ... The devastating plague spread from there to the direction of all the other neighbours. Recently it nearly got as far as the centre of Europe, and now it set foot at the door of our country and homeland... For more than sixty years we have been facing the flaming anger of war, only by ourselves, with the arms of one nation. We are holding out, though we are exhausted by the numerous defeats, warfare and mourning... To sum everything up in a few words: we have not suffered so much by any other foe before, and apart from the memory of freedom we are left with nothing else but weapons and courage, as many a time we have got into extreme peril..."

8) *Sopron vármegye története. Oklevéltár*. Vol. I. 1156-1411. Ed. by Imre Nagy. Sopron, 1889, 546 (1401).

9) L. Terbe, *Egy európai*, 304.

10) Gy. Kristó, *Középkori históriák*, 238, 242.

Because there is no such cruelty that has not been committed against us and it will never end, either we lose or win: the enemy will always be on us for its hatred supersedes even its strength. Our enemy... even now wants not victory, but to take revenge on us."¹¹

The idea that the Ottomans would not relinquish the intention to conquer Hungary (or as more and more thought, the whole Christian world) did not paralyze the spirit of resistance at all, instead it awakened it. János Hunyadi, who was regularly defeated in his decisive battles, was admittedly preoccupied with how the "pagans" could be expelled from Europe. The war against them "will be completed only if we persecute the defeated enemy, and we will not give up until our hope is achieved by expelling them from Europe", he wrote to Pope Nicolaus in September 1448.¹² This thought became so heavily rooted in public opinion that, at the beginning of the 16th century, when the victory over the Ottomans lacked every real footing, Bálint Hagymási still encouraged the Hungarians to try to vanquish them in his poem entitled *Ad Pannoniam* in 1509:

Sweep this immense rabble off to death at last,
Grown fat by now on ravaging the peoples.
People have all the right to thirst for their blood
Let even the name of Ottomans be erased!¹³

In relation to this concept, following the propaganda of the papal court and of foreign and Hungarian humanists, Hungary was called with increasing frequency "the bulwark of Christianity" (*propugnaculum et antemurale christianitatis*) towards the middle of the 15th century. The metaphor "shield" and "wall", which was originally applied only for the Hungarian king, was gradually extended to the whole of the country and her inhabitants and the symbolic function of the "bulwark", although claimed by other countries as well, became the prerogative of Hungary in the European and Hungarian public opinion.¹⁴ Though the Hungarian ruling class did not deny this privilege to the Polish either (due to the political unions and common fate the

11) *Magyar humanisták levelei, XV-XVI. század*. Publ. by Sándor V. Kovács. Budapest, 1971, 120-121. Cf. *Vitéz János levelei és politikai beszédei*. Publ. and introd. by Iván Boronkai, transl. by Ibolya Bellus and Iván Boronkai. Budapest, 1987, 13-132.

12) *Magyar humanisták levelei*, 100-101, 122. *Vitéz János levelei*, 96, 134.

13) Mihály Imre, "Magyarország panasza". *A Querela Hungariae toposz a XVI-XVII. század irodalmában*. Debrecen, 1995, 151. (Csokonai Könyvtár, Bibliotheca Studiorum Litterarium, 5. Ed. by István Bitskey and András Görömbei).

14) L. Terbe, Egy európai, 297-350. Kálmán Benda, *A magyar nemzeti hivatástudat története (a XV-XVII. században)*. Budapest, 1937, 10-38. Magda Horváth, *A török veszedelem az európai közvéleményben*. Budapest, 1937, *passim*, 48-83. (Minerva-könyvtár, 112). Lajos Hopp, *Az "antemurale" és a "conformitas" humanista eszméje a magyar-lengyel hagyományban*. Budapest, 1992. (Humanizmus és reformáció. Ed. by József Jankovics, 19.) M. Imre, "Magyarország panasza", 143-166.

Hungarian and Polish tradition is full of common elements¹⁵), it was convinced that the country played a unique role in Europe. István Brodarics, a partisan of King John (1526-1540) and the Ottoman political orientation, at the beginning of his account about the battle of Mohács, did claim that not only the preceding 70-80 years (from the emergence of the topos) but the whole of Hungarian history had consisted of constant sacrifices in the defence of Europe: "Since that time when we came out of Scythia led by the gracious Christ God and we accepted the faith of Christ, we have always been the shield and bulwark of all other Christians and... in this service to Christianity, which in our opinion has been excellent, we have already lost two kings, ... besides them so many aristocrats, so many noblemen and soldiers, the innumerable multitude of commoners. We will think even afterwards [after the battle of Mohács] that our actions in favour of the Christian society deserve praise, even if [somebody] should find another nation which would defend it against the enemy with its own blood and at its own expenses for more than five hundred years."¹⁶

The way of thinking of the peasantry in the 15th century is not so well-known as that of the aristocrats and churchmen, but what is known reflects an attitude identical to that of their lords. Apparently, all layers of Hungary identified themselves in a surprising unanimity with the profession outlined in the symbol of bulwark, so the Ottoman threat greatly reinforced the feeling of interdependence and coherence within the country. In one of János Vitéz's letters (written in the name of János Hunyadi) a remark can be found which is quite unexpected of a lord; according to him "no one should be excluded" from the sale of indulgences to cover the costs of the crusade "due to his sex or social status, once he belongs to the same nation, his homeland and his cause is the same, his faith is common and his homage binds him to the Apostolic See."¹⁷ There is no doubt that in the peasant's mind the "common faith" had predominance over the notion of "common homeland". The records of the miracles done by Giovanni da Capestrano (mid-15th century) testify that it was mainly for religious reasons that even commoners suffering captivity in the Ottoman Empire rejected the Ottoman rule. In the testimony of a carpenter kidnapped from Southern Hungary and fortunately escaping later on it can be read that during his slavery he prayed in the following manner: "Rescue me, my Lord from the hands of the enemy of the Christians, so that I should not lose my Catholic faith... so that I should not despair due to the mul-

15) L. Hopp, *Az "antemurale" és a "conformitas"*.

16) Stephanus Brodarics, *De conflictu Hungarorum cum Solymano Turcorum imperatore ad Mohach historia verissima*. In: *Mohács emlékezete...* Selected by Károly Kiss, ed. by Tamás Katona, transl. by Péter Kulcsár. Budapest, 1979, 11-12.

17) *Magyar humanisták levelei*, 163. *Vitéz János levelei*, 181-182. Cf. Tibor Kardos, *A magyarországi humanizmus kora*. Budapest, 1955, 111-112.

tiplication of my sins, and I should not get to eternal damnation."¹⁸ It seems that the parallel drawn between becoming an Ottoman subject (slave) and damnation was not restricted to the upper layers, but it permeated the thinking of the whole of Hungarian society.

After the mid-15th century the view of the Turks and the model of behaviour towards them became more and more imbued with theological-eschatological elements. This process was obviously fed by the growing Ottoman pressure and by the bitter experience that, despite all efforts, the country continued to perish, its resources were at low ebb and it was increasingly left alone with the "common" enemy. Already in the letters of János Hunyadi the image of "deterioration" or even "final perishing" emerged, the vision that the country on her own would not be able to cope with the uneven struggle.¹⁹ That it was not a mere rhetorical means is clear from the fact that Hunyadi (i.e. his spokesman János Vitéz) several times referred to the possibility of *martyrdom* symbolized by "the celestial crown".²⁰ Apparently, it is in connection with this view that the commander and his chancellor regularly explained the misfortunes of the anti-Ottoman warfare by reference to the divine will. They wrote about the battle of Várna (1444) that there "we suffered not from the enemy but from the strikes of divine judgement, and it was only due to our sins that the barbarians could defeat us."²¹ After the battle at Kosovo (1448) they claimed that "it is too little we have suffered so far compared to our sins",²² and that the disaster resulted from "God's will to punish".²³

This concept was by no means original. Since the beginning of the eighth century, when the work of Pseudo-Methodius concerning the Muslim expansion was translated into Latin and its ideas were spread by the apocalyptic (mainly Joachimist) currents, it had been considered a common-place in the western world that the Muslims (Saracens) had belonged to the apocalyptic nations, who were sent against the Christians by God to punish them for their sins.²⁴ This view emerged

18) Erik Fügedi, Kapisztrán János csodái. A jegyzőkönyvek társadalomtörténeti tanulságai. In: idem, *Kolduló barátok, polgárok, nemesek. Tanulmányok a magyar középkorról*. Budapest, 1981, 49-50.

19) *Magyar humanisták levelei*, 71; cf. 258-259. *Vitéz János levelei*, 66.

20) See i.e. the following passage: "I am firmly determined to die clad in armour and shield rather than continue to watch the sufferings of my nation". *Magyar humanisták levelei*, 118, *Vitéz János levelei*, 127. Cf. K. Benda, *A magyar nemzeti hivatástudat*, 26-29.

21) *Magyar humanisták levelei*, 70, *Vitéz János levelei*, 64.

22) *Magyar humanisták levelei*, 130, *Vitéz János levelei*, 148.

23) *Magyar humanisták levelei*, 127, *Vitéz János levelei*, 143.

24) Paul Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*. Los Angeles-Berkeley, 1985. Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages*. New York, 1979. Bernhard Töpfer, *Das kommende Reich des Friedens. Zur Entwicklung chiliastischer Zukunftshoffnungen im Hochmittelalter*. Berlin, 1964. Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages. A Study in Joachimism*. Oxford, 1969. Yoko Miyamoto, *The Influence of Medieval Prophecies on Views of the Turks. Islam and Apocalypticism in the Sixteenth Century: Journal of*

in Hungary already in the mid-13th century when King Béla IV attributed the "storm" of the Mongol invasion to the "sins of mankind".²⁵ Thus, by referring to sinfulness and punishment, Hunyadi and his circle did nothing else but go back to the universal tradition; at the same time, they added something very important to it, which became the source of consolation and hope for those fighting against the Ottomans. In their opinion, one must not argue with the rightfulness of divine punishment; instead one must do penance, then God will have mercy on the sinners. This was all the more so because they firmly believed that "heaven punished with the aim of instruction, not devastation".²⁶ At the same time, they found hope in the instructive purposes of heaven: "we are consoled by seeing educational warning in heaven's punishment, not murderous intent".²⁷ They concluded from all this that it was silly to worry about the outcome of events as it was a matter within God's competence; the "instructed ones" could only do one thing: prepare for the war against the Ottomans with undaunted hope.

The notions of educating or instructing God and the Ottomans as a tool of His were such thoughts that were to occupy an important part of Luther's tenets seventy years later. Luther, upon similar considerations, called the Ottomans "schoolmasters" because in his view they embodied the chastising power of God.²⁸ While, however, it took Luther a long struggle to get from this point to agreeing to the fight against the Ottomans, the Hungarian leaders of the mid-15th century never for a minute concluded from "God's punishments" that they should relinquish the defence of their homeland and Europe.

In the late 15th century the Hungarian image about the conquerors was greatly enriched by the birth of the first comprehensive apocalyptic interpretations of the Ottomans. An outstanding example of this is the work of the Dominican friar Georgius de Hungaria born in Transylvania, which fundamentally altered the European view of the Ottomans and the Muslim religion. Friar Georgius wrote and published his book on the religion, life and intentions of the Ottomans in Rome at around 1480 entitled *Incipit prohemium in tractatum de moribus conditionibus et nequicia Turcorum*.²⁹ Although Hungarian historical

Turkish Studies 17 (1993) 125-145 (with recent literature). Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist. Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (I used its Hungarian translation, Budapest, 1995). Cf. Suliman Bashear, *Apocalyptic and Other Materials on Early Muslim-Byzantine Wars: A Review of Arabic Sources: Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Third Series) 1:2 (1991) 173-207.

25) József Deér, *A magyar nemzeti öntudat kialakulása. A Magyarságtudomány Tanulmányai* III. Budapest, 1936, 8-9.

26) *Magyar humanisták levelei*, 130, *Vitéz János levelei*, 148.

27) *Magyar humanisták levelei*, 128, *Vitéz János levelei*, 144.

28) Carl Göllner, *Turcica*. III. Bd. *Die Öffentliche Meinung Europas im 16. Jahrhundert*. Burearest-Baden-Baden, 1978, 176. (Bibliotheca Bibliographica Aureliana, 70). M. Imre, "Magyarország panasza", 120. For the literature concerning Luther's view of the Turks, see Y. Miyamoto, *The Influence*, 135: note 74.

29) For a recent survey of Georgius de Hungaria's work, see Y. Miyamoto, *op. cit.*, 128-136. I used the Hungarian version of the *Tractatus*, translated by Győző Kenéz and published by Lajos Tardy in the collective volume *Rabok, követek, kalmárok az oszmán birodalomról*. Budapest, 1977, 50-143.

research has not studied the impact of the work on Hungary yet, I suppose for several reasons that it was not unknown, primarily in ecclesiastical circles. It is also possible that the birth of the *Tractatus* cannot only be attributed to Georgius' captivity and experiences in the Ottoman Empire but that he may have carried his receptivity to the Ottoman issue from Hungary. As the questions raised in the treatise were in close connection with contemporary Hungary and it undoubtedly had a Hungarian background, it is probably not without justification to insert it into the line of the Hungarian interpretations of the Ottomans.

By the intention of its author, the *Tractatus* was to be a guide for Christians in Ottoman captivity on how to preserve their faith, but in actual fact it was more than that: it provided a comprehensive theological-historical explanation to the Ottoman success, and at the same time, a harsh, almost "reformational" critique of the pharisaic religious practice of the Christian world. Following Joachimus de Fiore and his adherents, the author believed the Ottomans to be an apocalyptic people signalling the imminence of the Last Judgement, and he took their "sect" for the church of Antichrist in which the reign of the devil had begun. He identified the Ottomans thus described with the second animal in John's Revelation, which put a spell on the entire world by its attractive appearance and false miracles, and unlike the first animal, brought eternal damnation to its victims not by force (externally) but by the destruction of their soul (internally). This identification was the chief argument he found to explain the great achievements of the Ottomans, and to reveal the major danger implied by them. For him the strengthening of the "sect" (that is, the rapid expansion of the Ottoman Empire) formed part of the divine plan: it was a tool to stimulate complete repentance, a tool to purify the just. Formally, the Christian faith was becoming ever weaker, for, he argues, even many of the clergymen, who only pretended to be religious, would surrender to the beast the very first moment, so they were Antichristians rather than Christians. However, by means of the elect hiding in caves and pits, the faith was actually strengthening. The more they suffered, and the crueler the persecution they had to face up to, the surer they would participate in redemption and eternal salvation.

Georgius de Hungaria did not pronounce clearly on the behaviour to be adopted towards the Ottomans, but he evidently did not see any other option but passive acquiescence, the acceptance of God's will. Although he felt the liberation from the Ottomans was close, he made it clear that it would not be a human achievement but a deed of God who, in his view, would soon sit in judgement over Antichrist, the second beast. With the constant advancement of the Ottomans, full penance and the perseverance of the chosen few alone carried a chance of eternal life for the Christians.

From this argumentation, which recalls Martin Luther's pre-1529 position both in contents and the set of concepts it uses (it cannot be an

accident that the 1530 edition of the *Tractatus* was prefaced by the Reformer), the idea of acquiescence could not be widely responded to in Hungary. Other motifs, however, such as the tenet of sinfulness, the feeling of being the elect and the closely related notion of the Turk as equivalent to Antichrist, as well as some chiliastic expectations had found a fertile soil in the monastic orders here; particularly among the Paulines founded in Hungary, the Observantine Franciscans, the Carthusians, and through them they affected a large part of the peasantry, too. The Ottoman issue, the social problems it ushered to the surface and the general climate of crisis evoked massive Joachimist currents already back in the mid-15th century among the Paulines and the Observantine Franciscans. Some groups in the Pauline order began to translate into practice the principles of the Joachimite third status (*ordo monachorum*). Although these initiatives were soon repressed by the superiors of the order, they also viewed the progress and events of the world within the conceptual framework of the Calabrian Abbot.³⁰ Proof of this was the vast Apocalypse commentary by the provost of the order Gergely Gyöngyösi (1472-1540), which, though written after the battle of Mohács, revealed a mental attitude typical of the Later Middle Ages rather than of his decades.³¹ Similarly to Joachimus de Fiore, Gyöngyösi divided the time that passed since the birth of Christ into seven periods (or seven waves of the persecution of Christians), but adjusting to the situation of Hungary, he identified already the persecutors of the fifth period with the Ottomans in league with the heretics. Awaiting the reign of the "greatest Antichrist" in the forthcoming sixth period, he severally concluded that the Ottomans were actually the people of Antichrist (whom he variably labelled Dragon or Lion commenting on diverse loci in the Revelation [9, 17-18]). He also narrated the origin of the Ottomans and their expansion, advocating his conviction that they would never rest until they brought Germany under their sway. He claimed that "the hideous horse of Mahumet and all Mohammedan" only received their power "to ravage every corner of the earth with swords, hunger, death and the beasts of the earth, so that the sword is material [threat], hunger is corporeal, death is the plague and the beasts of the earth are lions and bears to which wretched Christians are often hurled in disdain."³² At the same time, he shared the view of the Hungarian humanists that the "cruel monster" was God's punishment that people deserved "for their sins", especially the vices of the clergy. However, he also believed that all this would eventually be beneficial for the sinners: tribulations would come to an

30) Andor Tarnai, "A magyar nyelvet írni kezdik". Irodalmi gondolkodás a középkori Magyarországon. Budapest, 1984, 109 ff, esp. 109-115.

31) Coelius Pannonius, *Collectaneae in sacram Apocalypsim*. Paris, 1571. Cf. A. Tarnai, *op. cit.*, 142-152.

32) This and the following quotations are from Sándor Eckhardt, Az Antikrisztus legendája: *Katholikus Szemle* 1936, 164-165.

end, and "with the passing of the time he [the Turk] would perish with it". Gyönyösi did not think of, or incite to armed resistance, because he hoped the Father "could not forget" his children and would soon revoke the power he had given the Muslims.

The Franciscans of the late 15th century used similar motifs, but their conclusions were completely different. Pelbárt Temesvári (c. 1435-1504), who earned a Europe-wide reputation with his collection of sermons, was convinced that world history patterned upon the six days of the Creation was approaching to a close, and in the last, the seventh period the rule of Antichrist would come.³³ More of a politician, Osvát Laskai, Temesvári's disciple (c. 1450-1511, the vicar of the Franciscan province for several years at the turn of the sixteenth century) went further and in a sermon of 1498 he identified Antichrist with the Ottomans. For him, just as for Georgius de Hungaria, the appearance of Antichrist was a sign of the imminent last age, and the rest of the signs he perceived also had much in common with those listed by the Dominican friar: the diminution of faith, the spread of wickedness and heresy, secularization, etc. But unlike Friar Georgius, Laskai blamed all this on the mighty of the secular world who seized the goods of the church, mercilessly exploited their subjects, and who would be the first followers of Antichrist. From all this he concluded that God sent "the people of ungodly Mohammed" upon the Christians for these sins.³⁴

Laskai rejected, however, that the advance of the eschatological enemy should be viewed inactively. In his opinion the resistance, the defence of the "homeland" (*patria*) was a moral obligation of the whole society, without distinction between gentlefolk and peasantry (thus far superseding the contemporary position of the nobility who excluded the peasantry from the concept of the nation). Thus he conceived the Hungarian nation as an organic community which he finally identified with the "elect" (*electi*), a central concept in Joachimism and 15th century spiritual mysticism; for him not only the upper classes or those performing constant military services but the whole of the Hungarian people were God's chosen people whose duty was to carry the shield of Christianity "against the Grand Turk, so that Holy Christianity could enjoy the much-desired peace by means of their eminence and audacity".³⁵

33) A. Tarnai, "A magyar nyelvet", 113, 207: note 328. For Temesvári's selected works, see *Temesvári Pelbárt válogatott írásai*. Ed. by Sándor V. Kovács. Budapest, 1982.

34) For Laskai and his ideas, see Jenő Szűcs, *Nép és nemzet a középkor végén*. In: *idem, Nemzet és történelem. Tanulmányok*. Budapest, 1974, 570-580. On the very similar views among the Carthusians in Hungary, see K. Benda, *A magyar nemzeti*, 58. Andreas Pannonius, *Libellus de virtutibus Matthiae Corvino dedicatus*. In: *Két magyarországi egyházi író a XV. századból*. Publ. by Vilmos Fraknói és Jenő Ábel. Budapest, 1886, esp. 104-110. (Irodalomtörténeti emlékek, 1.)

35) J. Deér, *A magyar nemzeti öntudat*, 35. L. Terbe, *Egy európai*, 345. J. Szűcs, *Nép és nemzet*, 579.

Several elements in the ideology of the Franciscan spiritual elite, especially the ones which touched on social injustices and anti-Ottoman defence, were highly influential among the lower strata of the society. Underlying this was the wide social embeddedness of the Franciscans: while other orders were gradually declining in the second half of the 15th and the first quarter of the 16th centuries, the Observantines founded one monastery after the other. As they were in contact with every layer of society, royal power could rely on them for disseminating propaganda against heretics or inciting to a crusade or resistance against the Ottomans. Though the concept of the "elect" had already assumed a great weight in the Hussitic movements of the 1420s in the southern areas of the country, it was primarily due to Franciscan propaganda that the peasants were basically motivated by the chiliastic concept of being chosen both in the defensive war of 1456 and the crusade of 1514. They believed themselves to be "soldiers of Christ", "the blessed people" who, when defending the country's frontiers, actually protected the Christian faith against the apocalyptic enemy. In 1514, when they transformed the crusade into an enormous peasant rising, they justified the turn by referring to the "treason" of the "infidel" noblemen who hindered them in executing their mission symbolized by the "holy sign", the cross.³⁶

The peasants' conviction of being selected for a mission was coupled with the belief that by participating in the war against Antichrist they could redeem their souls from sin. Being Christ's soldiers also meant accepting martyrdom. Just as in the case of Hunyadi and the humanists, the symbol of the "celestial crown" gave expression to their commitment; as chaplain György Szerémi noted in his chronicle, the leader of the peasant army, György Székely, encouraged common people to join the crusade by claiming that Archbishop Tamás Bakócz had brought the holy cross from Rome "for our salvation and for the attainment of the celestial crown".³⁷ Thus, anti-Ottoman fighting and salvation were linked both in the popular ideas about crusade and in the elite culture of Hungarian humanism. A similar correlation can be detected concerning another ideological element: analogies between themselves and the Jewish people of the Old Testament were often established by various groups of the Hungarian society. The semblance in the sufferings of the chosen new people and the Jews had already been stressed by the Hungarian Hussites of the early 15th century. The view that the plight of the Hungarians could best be illuminated by the example of the Jewish people, must have widely spread in the country by the early 16th century. They thought that the tribulation of God (i.e. the Turk) afflicted them for their sins, but if they would understand the educa-

36) For the ideology of the peasant rising, see T. Kardos, *A magyarországi humanizmus*, 370-387. J. Szűcs, *op. cit.*, 589-595. Jenő Szűcs, *Dózsa parasztháborújának ideológiája*. In: *Nemzet és történelem*, 601-667.

37) Quoted by T. Kardos, *op. cit.*, 379.

tional intention of God, that is, they would repent and execute their divine duties – the protection of Christianity –, God would eventually receive them in his grace and liberate them from the persecutions. Had this argumentation not been well-known in Hungary, then in the early 1520s Tubero, the Ragusan chronicler, could not have ascribed the following words to the peasant leader György Székely ostensibly uttered in his famous oration in Cegléd: "It is written in the Scriptures, Hungarians, that the best and greatest God had in days of yore taken mercy upon the Jews in their abject servitude, and freeing the people, upon whom he wished to found his own country, from Egyptian tyranny, the royal yoke and dire misery, he not only granted them freedom but also made them to be the fan of their neighbours and master of their foes."³⁸ True, this comparison primarily served to expose domestic political (social) antagonisms, but it also implied significant conclusions as to the Ottoman issue. It reflected a conviction shared by both the revolting peasants and the leading humanist personalities that no solution to the social problems could be found without defeating the neighbour, the Ottomans.

During the hundred years or so before the battle of Mohács, Hungarian society gradually recognized that the Ottoman expansion was not simply a foreign policy issue, but also a problem that threatened it with the loss of the country's internal equilibrium and identity. This recognition awoke the spirit of resistance in the overwhelming majority of society, and every stratum formulated (or adopted) an ideology for its resistance and an image of the Turk resulted from the former. Despite the huge social differences and the conflicts between nobility and common people, these ideologies displayed surprising similarities. Both the governor-general, whose letters were written by prominent humanists, and the mobilized peasants ascribed the appearance of the Ottomans to the tenet of sinfulness, and both hoped that by doing penance, following God's counsel, they could banish the ills from the country. In harmony with European tendencies, they increasingly placed the irresistibly advancing Ottomans in eschatological dimensions, seeing them as the apocalyptic people of the Last Days, the embodiment of Antichrist. They therefore derived the duty of resistance not only from the drive of natural instincts but also from Christian eschatological mysticism, assuming the role of defender of the country and Christianity. This generated a sense of selectedness which was expressed by the humanistic elite in the metaphor of "the bulwark of Christianity" and by the spiritual leaders of the lower strata (most of them friars) with the chiliastic concepts of "blessed people", "soldiers of Christ". The belief in the selectedness and in the analogies between the destinies of Jews and Hungarians was strength-

38) Ludovicus Tubero, *Commentariorum de rebus suo tempore gestis libri XI*. In: *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum...* Tom. II. Cura et studio Joannis Georgii Schwandtneri. Vindobonensis, 1764, 332.

ened by the feeling that "the Hungarian people ordered to be the shield of Christianity" became increasingly isolated in their fight against the apocalyptic enemy. However, the seemingly hopeless situation only reinforced the awareness of the importance of their mission, the idea that by persevering, by sacrificing themselves, they could defeat the Ottomans, or at least obtain the gift of salvation.

This conviction was also visualized, which expressed the anti-Ottoman feelings of the contemporary Hungarian society much more clearly than the written declarations did. A curious form of this "visual attitude" is mentioned in a letter by the envoy of Modena, Tommaso Daniero, who wrote the following about the Lord's day festivity in Buda in 1501: "During the Lord's day procession – attended not only by a whole crowd of people but His Royal Majesty as well – an interesting spectacle was performed. For according to a prediction, the Mohammedan religion will be over when Mohammed's coffin is destroyed. This was produced as follows: Mohammed's mosque was erected in front of our house and the coffin was hanging in it surrounded by [the figures of] the sultan and the pashas. As His Royal Majesty and the procession came to the mosque, the coffin was struck by a great fire-brand and was enveloped in flame, together with the Turks around it. And what had not burnt down was attacked and ground to dust with cudgels and stones by the Hungarians who tore them also by their teeth. In fact, it was a great pleasure to watch this assault..."³⁹

THE INTERLUDE OF MATTHIAS CORVINUS OF HUNYAD : AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW OF THE TURK

In addition to generally accepted anti-Ottoman ideology and image of Turks described above, a substantially different concept emerged during the reign of Matthias Corvinus (1458-1490). Its source was the personality and political ambitions of the king.

Towards the Christian world, the ambitious ruler advocated the country's role of protecting the religion even more emphatically than his father had done. This propaganda bore fruit, for by the 1480s the spiritual authorities of the age had come to regard him and his empire as the bulwark which could protect Europe from the dual threat of Ottoman and Czech heresies (Islam and Hussitism). The leading Italian humanists saw him as the person to bring glory to the new concept of crusade which abandoned the old missionary idea and laid stress upon the protection of Christian civilization and the liberation of

39) Régi magyar utazások Magyarországon és a Balkán félszigeten 1054-1717. Selected and annotated by István Szamota. Budapest, 1891, 497-498. Cf. Géza Galavics, *Kössünk kardot az pogány ellen. Török háborúk és képzőművészet*. Budapest, 1986, 13.

its begetter, the Greek world.⁴⁰ King Matthias was not averse to the myth emerging around his person and even nurtured it. He adapted to the declaration of the humanists that he was the new Hercules capable of superhuman achievements, or the new Alexander the Great who was called to defeat the Ottoman sultan identified with Darius.⁴¹ Antonio Torquato, a physician from Ferrara living in his court, confirmed the belief in the fall of the Ottomans via astrology: in 1480 he predicted that the sultan's empire would collapse before 1538.⁴² (Nota bene, Darius to be defeated, that is Mehmed II, also identified himself with Alexander the Great, whose missionary duty was to unite the eastern and western Roman Empires under his rule.⁴³)

Every inch a Renaissance ruler, Matthias actually used the crusading ideology to veil over his intention: the building up of a central European empire. While proclaiming the "bulwark" theory to the West (and complaining about the loneliness of the country), inside the borders he increasingly gave prominence to the idea of the Hunno-Hungarian relationship which had already been formulated at the end of the 13th century. As a result, he had himself celebrated by his propagandists as the "second Attila". The parallels between Hun and Hungarian history, between Attila and King Matthias, served to justify the western wars and to display the main political ideas of the king. By resuscitating, or more precisely, constructing a "pagan" (pre-Christian) Hungarian political and cultural tradition, Matthias and his propagandists elaborated an ideological scheme by which the notion of centralized monarchy, state church, political sovereignty, and the national consciousness of the Hungarian nobility as a domestic political background to the former, could be promoted and disseminated in the country. An intention to weave together the shreds of Hungarian past and present were also reflected in an unfinished plan of the king. He was informed by Russian merchants that descendants of ancient Hungarians who had remained in the East were still living there; he dispatched envoys inviting them to Hungary to populate the southern territories which had been devastated by the Ottomans.⁴⁴

This modern program for his age (aimed at creating a nation state separated from the Christian community) entailed a certain revaluation of the relationship with the "heathen". Matthias realized that Mehmed

40) Tibor Klaniczay, A keresztshad eszméje és a Mátyás-mítosz. In: *Hagyományok ébresztése*. Budapest, 1976, 166-190.

41) For this, see further István Borzsák, *A Nagy Sándor-hagyomány Magyarországon*. Budapest, 1984, 22-36.

42) There is a considerable controversy about this prophecy, see M. Reeves, *The Influence*, 363-364. Kenneth M. Setton, *Western Hostility to Islam and Prophecies of Turkish Doom*. Philadelphia, 1992, 25-27. (Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society, 201.)

43) Franz Babinger, *Mehmed der Eroberer und seine Zeit. Weltenstürmer einer Zeitenwende*. Munich, 1959² 546-549.

44) T. Kardos, *A magyarországi humanizmus*, 174-181.

II was practically doing the same as he: systematically building up his empire, which, despite religious differences, Matthias did not find objectionable as long as the sultan did not interfere with his power interests. We may even feel tempted to presume that Mehmed's successes and absolutist methods inspired his respect for the Ottoman sultan. An indirect evidence of this assumption may be that János Thuróczy, who was the first to name King Matthias *secundus Attila* in his chronicle published in 1488, made Sultan Mehmed utter the greatest praise of his ruler: "For is not it he [i.e. Matthias], who – as is spread far and wide – was meant by the Emperor of the Ottomans, Mohamed, who frightened and rocked the entire globe at our time, and who could rightly be called Mohamed the Great after his great deeds, when he said: 'I and he, we two of all the monarchs of the world are the ones who truly deserve to be called by the name: ruler.'"⁴⁵ At any rate, the scanty information at our disposal show that in his diplomatic connections with the Ottomans, Matthias was not only very cautious of using the crusading idea or phraseology, but practically made no allusion to it and laid stress on the mutual observation of *raison d'Etat*. In 1480 he wrote to Mehmed that peace between the two sides would be desirable because "instead of contention, it would be easier to extend the territories under our respective rule to the detriment of other princes."⁴⁶ This was plain and not unusual talk for a Renaissance prince. But he went further and stated, which seems really surprising, that he would prefer friendly and good-neighbourly connections to hostility with Mehmed "because the same blood is flowing in our veins, and we are seeking to please your majesty our elder brother at any cost."⁴⁷ Some historians maintain that the king's reference to the kinship is completely ungrounded and it must have been destined to have some role in the long diplomatic struggle for the acquisition of Prince Djem. In order to support his claim, Matthias ostensibly invented and disseminated the story that long ago the sister of his grandmother had been kidnapped by Ottoman troops, and this lady was to become Murad II's wife and Mehmed II's mother.⁴⁸ Whatever the truth

45) János Thuróczy, *A magyarok krónikája*. Transl. by János Horváth. Budapest, 1978, 445. After all, the Renaissance principle that the prince was a "living law" was very close to Mehmed's ideals; another striking analogy is that not long after the law on the fratricide had been enacted in the Ottoman Empire, Antonio Bonfini, Matthias' historiographer expounded at length on the reasons why Attila [Matthias] had to kill his brother Buda, etc. Cf. Antonio Bonfini, *A magyar történelem tizedei*. Transl. by Péter Kulcsár. Budapest, 1995, 80-83. Cf. T. Kardos, *op. cit.*, 178. On the Renaissance character of Matthias Corvinus' state, see Gyula Szekfű, *Magyar történet*. II. Budapest, 1936², 467 ff.

46) *Magyar humanisták levelei*, 263.

47) *Op. cit.*, 264. Cf. *Mátyás király levelei 1460-1490*. Ed. by Sándor V. Kovács. Budapest, 1986, 154.

48) On the basis of a report of the papal ambassador to Buda (1489), Vilmos Fraknói was the first to mention this story: *Hunyadi Mátyás király 1440-1490*. Budapest, 1890, 298-99. (Magyar történeti életrajzok). Its authenticity was questioned by Péter E. Kovács, *Matthias Corvinus*. Budapest, 1990, 143-144.

might have been, the important point is that Matthias was, without any scruples, willing to accept kinship with "the arch-enemy of Christianity", and it can hardly be a mistake to presume that beneath his readiness was the same motivation as the one that encouraged him to propagate the Hunno-Hungarian ideology. The similarity of political aims and means, the (constructed or presumed) common Scythian (*Szittyá* in Hungarian) origin mitigated the repugnance rooted in the religious difference, and must have largely contributed to Matthias' capability of handling the Ottoman issue without the usual ideological limits.

The neo-platonism that gradually penetrated his royal court, which attributed little significance to the concrete forms of religion, also propelled him in this direction. Matthias and his court humanists primarily condemned the Ottomans as devastating barbarians and not as the enemies of religion; it was a clear expression of this pragmatic approach that in famous a letter of his Matthias Corvinus described the foe of the country as "a wild boar ravaging our sown fields".⁴⁹

After the death of the great monarch, the principle of the "Ottoman kin" and "kindred Ottoman politics" vanished from the Hungarian royal court, giving way again to the traditional one-sided image of the enemy. But the Corvinian intermezzo did not perish without any trace. It was under its influence that the former head of the king's illuminating workshop, Felix Petantius, the last warden of the famous Corvina collection and a diplomat, who knew oriental languages wrote a brief work about the roads leading into the Ottoman Empire, to promote the realization of the revived plan of an anti-Ottoman offensive (1502). It must have still been due to the lasting inspiration of the humanist court of Matthias that around 1510 Felix Petantius produced the first Hungarian scholarly work about the Ottoman Empire; it was the *Genealogia Turcarum Imperatorum*, soon enlarged into an Ottoman history (*Historia Turcica*), which, through German humanists, became an important source of European *turcica* literature.⁵⁰

FROM THE BATTLE OF MOHÁCS (1526) TO THE END OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

The fall of the independent Hungarian state, the Ottoman occupation and the division of the country into three parts shattered the image the Hungarian society had developed in one and a half centuries about the Ottomans and the resistance against them. However, shards of this image survived, and contemporary Hungarians took only a few

49) T. Kardos, *A magyarországi humanizmus*, 192-193. *Magyar humanisták levelei*, 22. T. Klaniczay, *A kereszteshad eszméje*, 188.

50) Florio Banfi, (review of) *Johann Cuspinianus Briefwechsel* (Munich, 1934): *Századok* 1938, 390. Elena Berkovits, *Felice Petanzio Ragusino*. Budapest, 1941. T. Kardos, *op. cit.*, 255-57.

decades to reconstruct fully a picture that was conspicuously similar to the original in detail, but on the whole different from it. The task of assembling the pieces was not so easy, either. They had a new try at times, they faced difficulties in finding the right place for certain elements, while at other times, they dissembled ready details and pieced them together in another form. The situation was aggravated by the fact that even the minimum of collaboration was lacking among the assemblers. A part of the aristocracy and the lesser nobility sided with the Habsburgs, the other part with the Szapolyai dynasty. And as a corollary to this, the Reformation was rapidly spreading, dividing the politically scattered country by religion as well. In spite of all that, by the second half of the century Hungarian society had developed an ideology which, disregarding confessional and territorial frontiers, set the Ottoman issue into a coherent system, able to offer consolation and hope and to formulate the attitude to be adopted under the given circumstances. Until that point was reached, however, there was a long and thorny path to be trodden.

Not only the cream of the Hungarian elite perished in the battle of Mohács, but their militant Hunno-Scythian consciousness also sustained a crushing blow. Nevertheless, the aristocracy and the nobility (including even those who assisted Szapolyai, an ally of the Ottomans) preserved their anti-Ottoman attitude, but in a period when complete disorder was prevailing and the magnates were abruptly changing political sides, this could not have been a model for the lower classes any more. The less so, since the helpless Hungarian peasants, who earlier proved to be the carriers of the crusading ideal, also reacted to the shocking changes with the "Balkan syndrome". In the Balkan peninsula the advance of the Ottomans and their promises often turned the serfs against their lords. In his letter of 1461 to the Pope, the Bosnian king exposed the problem in the following manner: "The Ottomans are very friendly to the peasants. They promise that every peasant who joins them will be free. The small-minded peasantry are unable to realize the deception and believe that this freedom will last for ever. It may easily happen that misled by these lies, the people will be disloyal to me..., the magnates abandoned by the peasants will not be able to persevere in their castles for long."⁵¹ The successive defeats and the collapse of the country served as a proof for the Hungarian serfs, too that the Ottomans were invincible, that they "were made of iron" (accord-

51) F. Babinger, *Mehmed der Eroberer*, 232-233. For the phenomenon of *Türkenhoffnung* or "Turkish dream" in Europe and the Mediterranean world, see Hans Joachim Kissling, *Türkenfurcht und Türkenhoffnung im 15./16. Jahrhundert*. Zur Geschichte eines "Komplexes": *Südost-Forschungen* 23 (1964) 15-18, and the comprehensive study by Bartolomé Bennassar and Lucile Bennassar, *Les Chrétiens d'Allah. L'histoire extraordinaire des renégats, XVI^e et XVII^e siècles*. Paris, 1989. For the cooperation of Christians with the Ottomans, see further Michel Balivet, *Romanie byzantine et pays de Rûm turc. Histoire d'un espace d'imbrication gréco-turque*. Istanbul, 1994.

ing to the humanist Cuspinianus the latter was common talk in the 1520s).⁵² Ideas that resistance was useless for God had turned away from us, and the God of the conquerors was stronger than ours, struck root and strengthened. The mental disintegration was accelerated by two contributory factors: the common people hated their lords who, without giving the necessary protection, were grinding them down, and with the crumbling of the Catholic church organization they were deprived of their spiritual support. By the mid-16th century all this coalesced into a realistic threat of the peasantry going over to the Ottomans and even attacking the remnants of Hungary in cooperation with them. The Hungarian defence of Transdanubia, for example, became paralyzed in the early 1540s because of constant fear of a peasant rising, so that the aristocrat high command did not dare to utilize the military potential of the serfs.⁵³ In 1562 Ákos Csányi, the official of palatine Tamás Nádasdy in the border fortress Kanizsa, still judged the situation highly delicate and gave a realistic description of the peasants' changed mentality: "...I have an additional fear which I wrote to you, Sir, and told you: subservience has sweetened the people. The serf hates his lord. With reason, too, and there is no one in the peasantry to learn the word of God from; they indeed believe that the Ottomans are the people of God and the true faith is theirs, wherefore God is on their side. I am afraid they will not run in front of the Ottomans but turn against their lords, as they shouted at many places on their way from Hegyesd. 'The barons dare not call us in, because, quoth they, they are afraid of us lest they should fare as badly as with György Székely [the leader of the peasant rising in 1514], and so it ought to be'. The Germans and Czechs hate us, and if our own people should chase and persecute us together with the Ottomans, it might be truly said that the mountains have collapsed upon us and buried us under. Gracious God, take pity on us for your Holy Son!"⁵⁴

Although the nightmare Csányi envisioned – the alliance of the Ottoman conquerors and the Hungarian peasants – did not eventually come true, illusions about the Ottomans were long to linger among the lower classes. This induced the noted historiographer János Baranyai Decei to condemn such "heresies" in his propaganda verse (or versified sermon) of 1597:

52) *Oratio protrepica Ioannis Cuspiniani ad Sacri Ro. Imp. principes et proceres...* Transl. by Péter Kulcsár. In: *Mohács emlékezete*, 252.

53) Ferenc Szakály, *Az első magyarországi szandzsák és megszervezője*, Kászim bég: *Keletkutatás* 1995 spring, 5 ff.

54) Sándor Öze, *Ötszáz magyar levél a XVI. századból. Csány Ákos levelei Nádasdy Tamáshoz 1549-1562*. Budapest, 1996, No. 495. With some important omissions, he also quoted this passage: "A kereszténység védőpajzsa" vagy "üllő és vérő közé szorult ország". A modern nemzettudat átforgalmazása a 16. század közepén a dél-dunántúli végvári katonaságnál. In: *Magyarok Kelet és Nyugat között. Tanulmányok*. Ed. by Tamás Hofer. Budapest, 1996, 106.

The dull-witted peasant also longs for the Turk
Entreating God to let him see the Turk
That he may see the demise of his own lord.
Alas, you silly lot, you don't know what you are asking
Instead of a good fortune you are asking for a serpent
By wishing to replace a Christian lord with a pagan lord.

Weren't it better to serve your nation
To do your blood and your brethren grace
To worship the one true God with your community?

Your lot is hard service, but harder it will be
You will become *sarahors*, you'll be poorer than beggars
You will replace donkeys, oxen, buffaloes, camels, horses.⁵⁵

An eventual split in the Hungarian society and the Islamization of the common people could only be avoided because in the meantime Reformation had triumphed in the country (around 1570 some 75-80% of the population were Protestant), equipping the hesitants with effective tools of self-defence. In multinational Hungary two currents of the Reformation were prevalent: the Lutheran confession spreading chiefly among city dwellers (who were mostly Germans) and the inhabitants of Western Hungary, and the Calvinism which became the "national" religion of the Hungarian speaking population in Middle and Eastern Hungary.⁵⁶ From the moment of their emergence (1550-70), Protestant churches were in sharp conflict with one another. However, their evaluation of the Ottoman issue (with the possible exception of the Anti-Trinitarians, or Unitarians as they were called in Hungary) was practically identical. At first sight, the Protestant position was the simple adaptation of the Wittenbergian theology and view of history elaborated by Luther and Melancton. In actual fact, however, the Hungarian tradition shattered a few decades earlier and arranged it in a new system on the bases of the apocalyptic, eschatological determinism of Wittenberg.⁵⁷ In the final analysis, the successes of Protestantism in Hungary can probably be attributed to the fact that its doctrines contained little new and what it taught concerning the

55) Gernot Nussbächer, *Neue Beiträge über das Druckwerk "Török császárok krónikája"*: *Magyar Könyvszemle* 86 (1970) 392: verses 239-242.

56) Mihály Bucsay, *Der Protestantismus in Ungarn 1521-1978*. Vienna-Cologne, 1977-1979. Katalin Péter, *A reformáció és a művelődés a 16. században*. In: *Magyarország története 1526-1686. Magyarország története tíz kötetben*. Vol. 3/1. Editor-in-chief Zsigmond Pál Pach. Ed. by Ágnes R. Várkonyi. Budapest, 1985, 475-604. *Eadem, Papok és nemesek. Magyar művelődéstörténeti tanulmányok a reformációval kezdődő másfél évszázadból*. Budapest, 1995. Ferenc Szakály, *Mezőváros és reformáció. Tanulmányok a korai magyar polgárosodás kérdéséhez*. Budapest, 1995. (Humanizmus és reformáció, 23.)

57) On this point I agree with K. Péter, *A reformáció és a művelődés*, 488.

life-and-death issue of the country, the Ottomans, was well known and acceptable to the majority of the population. The only difference was that the dissemination of the new ideology took place in far better organized and more efficient fashion than previously in case of other conceptions, and since it occurred in the vernacular, it could permeate the whole of society. A definite proof is that even the disunited Catholic side, unable to produce ideological responses adopted the Protestant explanation of history in full.

At the core of this ideology is the explanation: the illumination of the country's necessary fall and the inseparable consolation.⁵⁸ The Protestants argued that the victory of the Ottomans and devastation in their wake was the punishment of God whose wrath was brought about by the sins of the Hungarians. To quote Gáspár Károlyi: "...the decay of such a glorious and mighty country and such a noble and strong nation is never without the will of God.... For it would never pass the mind of the Ottoman Emperor to destroy Hungary, were it not for God's motivation."⁵⁹ The list of sins is long, including cardinal sins (pride, avarice, lust, envy, etc.), sins committed against God (idolatry, lechery, sloth, intemperance, strife, etc.) and social vices (committed by the leaders against the community: abuse of power, exploiting the common people, neglect of protection, etc.). God did not place such a blow on the Hungarians for naught: like the Jews in days of yore, now He liked this nation best, He had chosen them for his purpose; his wrath served the good of these people, his blows were meant to edify and stimulate repentance. If the chosen people understood his intention and became purified, God would embrace them again and bring liberation from the Ottomans.

While the reformers freed the individual from the burden of self-accusation by the idea of collective punishment addressed to the chosen people, they also acquitted the community from their responsibility for the excessive might of the Ottomans by the unprecedented use of eschatology and apocalypticism. In the sermons and tracts of the preachers the country became a battlefield because the end of the world was approaching; the Ottomans became the people of Gog, the physical Antichrist, the ravaging emissary of Satan. In keeping with the dual Antichrist conception of Wittenberg, most set the Pope, the spiritual Antichrist next to the Ottomans. The clash between the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires was described as the encounter between the apocalyptic powers of the Last Age, and the territory of Hungary was regarded as a stage where the crucial events of world history occurred. The expectations concerning the outcome of the fight of

58) In the following discussion I relied to a large extent on the rich documentary evidence in the book of Sándor Öze "Büneiért bünteti Isten a Magyar népet". *Egy bibliai párhuzam vizsgálata XVI. századi nyomtatott egyházi irodalom alapján*. Budapest, 1991. (Bibliotheca Humanitatis Historica a Museo Nationali Hungarico Digesta, 2.).

59) K. Benda, *A magyar nemzeti hivatástudat*, 60.

the two empires became more and more pessimistic after the mid-16th century; the number of those who thought that liberation would only come from God and the Last Judgement was increasing.⁶⁰

The deterioration of political prospects and the fear caused by the wavering of the common people urged the reformers to work out new behavioral forms against the Ottomans which radically differed from the old models. They acknowledged the armed resistance of soldiers in the border castles as justified (though they warned against acting in the name of Christ), but they advised the people under Ottoman rule to make full submission. They admonished them to tolerate the Ottoman domination for the sins of the community; one had to give even a wicked prince his dues (be that your wife or child), for all princely power was of divine origin. If one's religion was not offended, one could even hold an office in the state of the heathen. The only point at which opposition was permissible was when the Ottomans forced one to commit a sin (e.g. deny one's faith) in which case martyrdom had to be suffered.⁶¹

It is obvious that this position, which apparently implied defeatism, was in fact a rational compromise. It aimed at giving the people a religiously sanctioned framework of their integration into the Ottoman system, thus affording them shelter from the menace of Islamization. However, it was hardly a pure coincidence that quite a few people regarded this attitude as dangerous and so rejected it. It was, for instance, refused by the mostly Protestant soldiers of the border castles, who, while accepting the notion of the guilty nation and that of Hungaro-Jewish relationship, adhered to the conception that Hungary was the "bulwark of Christianity" and that their holding out was the guarantee of the survival not only of the Christian faith, but also of the country itself. This warrior caste avowed with Melancthon that "*quanto satis est semel in acie mori, quam tali condicione vivere*".⁶² What is at stake in this struggle is "the preservation of our country, our beloved child and wife", so it is one's duty to resist "those heathen people". This is the notion that was already spread among the soldiers by the popular historical songs (*históriás ének* in Hungarian) when the reformers still preached a passive resignation to their flock.⁶³

60) S. Öze, "Büneiért bünteti Isten...", 80-124. The German world chronicles written in the spirit of the Wittenberg theology played an important role in the popularization of these doctrines and inspired the composition of such works also in Hungarian. For this, see Martin Haeusler, *Das Ende der Geschichte in der mittelalterlichen Weltchronistik*. Cologne-Vienna, 1980, esp. 156 ff. (Beihefte zum Archiv für Kulturgeschichte, 13.) Katalin Péter, On the First Hungarian World Chronicle and its Author István Benczédi Székely: *History Department Yearbook* (Central European University, Budapest) 1994, 23-36.

61) S. Öze, "Büneiért bünteti Isten...", 124-134.

62) M. Imre, "Magyarország panasza", 112. There is a great deal of similar utterances from the 16th century, see K. Benda, *A magyar nemzeti*, 42-43, 51, 54, and S. Öze, "A kereszténység védőpajzsa", 99-106.

63) The quotations are from the following historical songs: István Temesvári,

The stiffening of the combat zone and the revival of the hope of expelling the Ottomans at the end of the century forced many adherents of the Reformation to modify their former opinion. They stopped propagating the notion of acquiescence and passively awaiting the coming of the end of the world, and began instead to incite to positive action and proclaimed more and more assertively the view that a morally purged, united and bravely fighting Hungarian society could itself liberate its own country. However, in order to raise the morale of the people who were to fight against the enemy, it was an absolute necessity to disperse the apocalyptic mist which had long been whirling around the Ottomans and degrade the latter to the state of a worldly, vincible power. In a word, the teaching which had up to that time been the most impressive explanation for the Ottoman occupation had to be definitively abandoned. It is, however, an interesting contradiction that while the reformers carried out the demystification of the Ottomans and propagated their imminent fall, they continued to support their reasoning with the instruments of eschatology (prophecies, legends, etc.). And, what is even more astonishing, to achieve their aim they not only drew extensively on the traditions of the Hungarian and European Protestantism, but also made use of the ideological conceptions of their Ottoman rival.

THE "RED APPLE" IN HUNGARIAN-OTTOMAN CONTEXT

Those apocalyptic pieces of evidence, which proved beyond doubt that the Ottoman Empire had already reached its apogee, seem to have been best summarized in two small writings of the eminent humanist historian, János Baranyai Decsi (c. 1560-1600). These two works are in fact twins of each other, since they set forth the same conception in two different compositions. The first variant, written in verse and in Hungarian, was born sometime during 1597, possibly at the end of that year. It is that fragmentary historical song which is generally known as the *Török császárok krónikája* (Chronicle of the Turkish Emperors) and whose authorship is only conditionally attributed to Baranyai Decsi by scholars.⁶⁴ The recently published second version is a Latin exhortation (*Oratio de bello adversus Turcam fortiter et constanter persequendo*) which was composed in the beginning of 1598 and con-

Históriás ének az jeles győzelemről... Erdélbe a Kenyérmezőjén (1569) and János Temesvári, *A Béla királyról, mint jöttek be a tatárok, és elpusztították mind egész Magyarországot* (1571), in: *Históriás énekek és széphistóriák*. Ed. by Szabolcs Molnár. Bucarest, 1981, 84, 108.

⁶⁴ János Baranyai Decsi, [*Török császárok krónikája*]. In: *Régi magyar költők tára*. I. Publ. by Béla Stoll. Budapest, 1959, 86-102; 524-527: commentaries (henceforth *Krónika I.*). In his above mentioned article (note 55) G. Nussbächer published further fragments of the poem, and these are of great importance for our discussion (henceforth *Krónika II.*). On Baranyai Decsi and his works in general, see Emma Bartoniek, *Fejezetek a XVI-XVII. századi magyarországi történetírás történetéből*. Kézirat gyanánt. Budapest, 1975, 259-275.

tains the name of the author, and makes it clear that the two works could only be written by one and the same person, that is, Baranyai Decsi himself.⁶⁵

It is the prose Latin version which tells us the author's intentions: having heard about the Ottomans putting out feelers in order to make peace, he wants to incite Sigismund Báthory, Prince of Transylvania, to continue waging war against them. The basic notion of the "dual" work is that it is forbidden to negotiate, not to say cooperate, with the Ottomans, since they aim at the destruction of the Christian faith and civilization even under the pretext of peace. The author demonstrates minutely that the Ottoman rule constitutes an immediate menace to the survival of every single social group, then, in the oration, calls for a holy war in which "we must be victorious with the help and direction of Christ, or else sacrifice ourselves to the last man for our homeland".⁶⁶ This war is inevitable, says the author, and if the military reforms proposed by him were carried out (and here he emphasizes for the first time among the Protestants the importance of relying upon one's own forces and so the creation of a national army), success would surely follow. The historical song is not so bellicose in its spirit. Here Baranyai Decsi chooses to enlighten the expansion of the Ottomans, their "perfidious" methods (it is to illustrate this point that the introductory Ottoman history is inserted), and at the same time goes into a serious self-criticism: he lengthily describes the sins of the Hungarians, the abandoned state of the country and the lack of unity within the Christian world. On the other hand, he treats in both versions with equal attention and in nearly the same way those facts (e.g. the power of the European countries, their richness, their war potential) and motives and signs, which can arouse self-confidence, hope and courage, and which clearly attest that the Ottoman expansion had already reached its limits.

These signs generally correspond to the most important anti-Turkish arguments of contemporary Protestant eschatology. Baranyai Decsi evokes the Lutheran interpretation of the four empires in the book Daniel, the favourite parable of the Protestant chroniclers about the tree which has been pruned but is still intact in its roots, the book of Ezekiel, where "God clearly promises the destruction of Gog and Magog, who, as many scholars think, are not else but the Turks, and

⁶⁵ Mihály Balázs-István Monok-András Varga-Ibolya Tar, Baranyai Decsi Jánosnak a török elleni háborúra buzdító beszéde 1598-ból. In: *Lymbus. Művelődéstörténeti Tár*. II. Szeged, 1990, 37-99: text edition and Hungarian translation (henceforth *Oratio*). Two of the publishers had previously written a short review of the exhortation but in both cases they failed to realize the similarities between the *Oratio* and the *Krónika*: Mihály Balázs-István Monok, *Történetírók Báthory Zsigmond udvarában* (Szamosközy István és Baranyai Decsi János kiadatlan műveiről). In: *Magyar reneszánsz udvari kultúra*. Ed. and introd. by Ágnes R. Várkonyi. Budapest, 1987, 255-259.

⁶⁶ *Oratio*, 68-69.

that this will happen in our own time, is revealed by John the Divine in his Book of Revelation". He also refers to Abbot Joachimus, then to those prophecies, derived from chiliastic traditions, "which spread about the destruction of the Empire of Mohammed which will not last for more than a thousand years from its foundation", and to that opinion, shared by many a wise man, that "the family of the Ottomans has almost reached the end of the line of its emperors, and just as their power was established during the reign of Emperor Rudolf I, it will vanish in the time of another Rudolf" (an allusion to Rudolf II of Habsburg).⁶⁷ In view of all this he thinks that the prophecies of Lactantius (240-c. 320) and the Franciscan Hiltenius (middle of the 15th century) about the continuing rule of the East are not valid any more, and draws the conclusion that:

Howsoever those Pagans in their rage fury
Howsoever they assail the Christians in our day
They will never succeed in putting us all to death.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, what gave Baranyai Decsi the greatest hope, was that – as he wrote it in his oration – "the heathens themselves have a prophecy about the red apple (*de rubeo pomo*), that is, about their own destruction and the triumph of the Christians".⁶⁹ In Baranyai Decsi's opinion this prophecy was so well known that it was unnecessary to repeat it. Happily enough for the historian, when he wrote the historical song he had not come to this conclusion yet and so inserted into his work the entire legend of the "red apple". Curiously enough, this seems to be the first written version in Hungary of this prophecy which is said to have been so widespread:

Or don't you know the prophecy of the Turks
In which they foretell the peril which awaits them
And their own prophets preach their destruction.

When, so they say, we take the red apple
Our empire will come to an end there
If we come under a fierce attack from Christians (?)

If they will not rise within seven years
And the loss of the red apple does not drive them into despair
They will serve us for twelve years.

When, I say, the Turks will take the red apple
God will drive them to immediate perdition
As it is clearly told by their own prophecy.

67) *Oratio*, 76-79.

68) *Krónika* I. 96: verse 160.

69) *Oratio*, 78-79.

What the red apple is, nobody knows
Whether it is Győr (Raab/Yanık), Vienna, Rome or Cologne
Only God and the time will tell it to us.
But whenever they read this prophecy
The old, the young and the women lament
And weep over their coming destruction.⁷⁰

The legend given by Baranyai Decsi is apparently the one that was made known to the European public a couple of decades earlier by the Hungarian-Croatian Bartholomaeus Georgievits. It was during his captivity in the Ottoman Empire that Georgievits heard about the beliefs concerning the "golden apple" (Turkish *kızıl elma*), and he published them immediately after his liberation in a booklet which was accompanied by his own explanatory remarks.⁷¹ This "Turkish" prophecy, which had been published several times afterwards, acquired enormous popularity, since it was the Turks themselves who foretold their ultimate fall in it.⁷² However, recent scholarship has come to question the authenticity and the Turkish origin of the legend, and tends to derive it from the best known contemporary European apocalyptic prophecies.⁷³ There is even a scholarly opinion which holds that the main motives of the prophecy were originally spread in the Ottoman Empire by various intermediate groups (captives, renegades), whose other members later brought them back to the Christian world as genuine Turkish notions.⁷⁴ There is in fact a certain contradiction between the version given by Georgievits and the conception of the *kızıl elma* which can be grasped in Ottoman sources. The most important difference is that for the Ottomans the *kızıl elma* is above all the symbol of world domination and that of continuous and successful conquest, so

70) *Krónika* II.: verses 166-171.

71) W. Heffening, Die türkischen Transkriptionstexte des Bartholomaeus Georgievits aus den Jahren 1544-1548. Ein Beitrag zur historischen Grammatik des Osmanisch-Türkischen. In: *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 27:2 (1942) 27-28, 33-37. A. Fischer, 'Qyzıl elma', die Stadt (das Land) der Sehnsucht der Osmanen: *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 74 (1920) 171. Cf. Y. Miyamoto, The Influence, 139-142. K. M. Setton, *Western Hostility*, 29-46.

72) The text of the prophecy as given by Georgievits is as follows (my English version amalgamates the renderings by K. M. Setton, *Western Hostility*, 31. and Y. Miyamoto, The Influence, 140): "Our emperor will come, and will capture the kingdom of the unbelieving prince, and capture the red apple, bring it into his possession. If unto the seventh year the sword of the Christians shall not have arisen, he shall rule for twelve years. He will build houses, plant vineyards, put hedges around the gardens, and beget children. After twelve years (from the time the red apple shall have been made to submit to his power), the sword of the Christians will appear, which will drive the Turk into flight. It is to be noted, that the prophecy is not to be read in the Koran, but in other books which have great authority and reverence. For they have all our prophets and many of theirs".

73) Karl Teply, *Türkische Sagen und Legende um die Kaiserstadt Wien*. Vienna-Cologne-Graz, 1980, 34-73.

74) Y. Miyamoto, The Influence, 142. See also Stéphane Yerasimos' contribution in the present book.

they – quite understandably – normally omit the end of the story which did not promise any good for them. (This, however, does not imply that they did not know it.) Despite this fact I stick to the opinion that both the symbol of the golden apple and the corresponding motive of the “last combat” (which brings about the defeat of the Turks) can conveniently be derived from the Byzantine tradition. Since I have already put forward the bulk of my arguments elsewhere,⁷⁵ here I will restrict myself to some important remarks: 1. Among the Ottomans the *kızıl elma* originally referred to the city of Constantinople, and evidently took its origin from the symbolism of the statue of Justinian. 2. After the capture of the city the *kızıl elma* became a threefold symbol: firstly, it referred to other cities (mainly royal residences) which were to be conquered by the Ottomans; secondly, to that ultimate and mystical place where the Ottoman conquests would come to an end; and thirdly, to the world domination which resulted from the preceding two points. This complex symbolism had long been used by the Ottomans before the beginning of the supposed European influence. 3. The Ottomans had for a long time avoided defining the last *kızıl elma* (they placed it somewhere far in the Occident [*gün batısına*]), and only began to identify it with Rome in the second half of the 17th century. This reluctance can easily be explained by a natural defensive reflex: as long as the ultimate end was unknown, conquests could be continued endlessly, and there was a hope that the catastrophe of the Muslim world predicted in the prognosis would not ensue before the achievement of that ultimate end. Consequently, the legend of the *kızıl elma* gave birth to two diametrically opposed interpretations: while the Ottomans thought that it foretold their continuous increase in power, the Christians, and among them the Hungarians, inferred from it the imminent end of the Ottoman Empire.

Although János Baranyai Decsi seems to have found the Turks’ “own prediction” in European sources (possibly in one of Georgievits’ editions), it is highly probable that he also knew its essence from the rumors which circulated in Hungary. This can be inferred from the fact that the poetic version uses the expression *veres alma*, a literal translation of the Turkish *kızıl elma*, which was frequently translated as “golden apple” (*goldener Apfel*, *Goldapfel*) in the German Empire, not least because of the influence of the Christian apocalyptic literature.

75) Ungarn und Wien in der osmanischen Eroberungsideologie (im Spiegel der Târih-i Beç krâli - 17. Jahrhundert): *Journal of Turkish Studies* 13 (1989) 86-88; note 19; 97-98. On the messianic and apocalyptic expectations in the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire in general, see Barbara Flemming, Şâhib-krân und Mahdî : Türkische Endzeiterwartungen im ersten Jahrzehnt der Regierung Süleymân. In : *Between the Danube and the Caucasus...* Ed. by György Kara. Budapest, 1987, 43-62. Cornell H. Fleischer, The Lawgiver as Messiah : The making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleymân. In : *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps. Actes du Colloque de Paris. Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais 7-10 mars 1990.* Ed. by Gilles Veinstein. Paris. 1992, 159-177.

This hypothesis is borne out by another work of Baranyai Decsi (a chronicle of the events between 1592 and 1598), where he says that the Ottomans also used the symbol of the *kızıl elma* relating to Transylvania. Since this identification has no traces in Ottoman or European sources, it must have been came across by Baranyai Decsi in Hungary.⁷⁶ Baranyai Decsi’s remark that no one knows about the whereabouts of the *veres alma* (red apple) and the fact that at the same time he names several possible *kızıl elma*, also indicates direct Ottoman influence and underlines all that we have said about the symbol’s meaning above. That Hungarians heard something about the legend of the *kızıl elma* or other similar prophecies already in the first half of the 16th century, thus preceding the publication of Georgievits’ pamphlet, can be shown to have left a somewhat vague trace in the works of the famous minstrel Sebestyén Tinódi. One of his poems, which describes the struggle between Sultan Süleyman and “Kazul pasha” (that is to say, the Ottoman-Persian wars of the first half of the 16th century), is finished with the three following stanzas:

It has been foretold in olden times,
That one will witness miracles in the Last Ages,
The pagans will have great power,
And those in the true faith will roam about.

When the great might of Sultan Suliman
Will not be much short of the wise Alexander’s,
God will destroy his power,
And will raise Christian people again.

A young gentleman said this with great certainty,
When he came from the Emperor and was in high spirit,
The literate Sebestyén Tinódi noted this
In his book in the year of [15]46.⁷⁷

Although in these lines we cannot find either the terms of the legend of the golden or red apple nor its place or time references, we are obviously faced by the same basic structure as in the case of Georgievits or Baranyai Decsi: The fall of the Ottoman Empire will ensue when the sultan’s power reaches its height and the suffering of the Christians becomes greater than ever before. It deserves special attention that Tinódi was told about this comforting prediction by such a “young gentleman” who had just returned from the Ottoman Empire;

76) *Baranyai Decsi János magyar históriájá* [1592-1598]. Transl. and introd. by Péter Kulcsár. Budapest, 1982, 64.

77) Sebestyén Tinódi, *Krónika*. Publ. by István Sugár, introd. by Ferenc Szakály. Budapest, 1984, (Bibliotheca Historica), 424-425. (XIV. Szulimán császár Kazul basával viadaljáról [On the fight of Sultan Suliman with Kazul pasha].)

consequently it was from there that he had brought with himself these motifs reminding us of the *kızıl elma*. Thus we have to presume that, on the basis of oral traditions, Hungarians got acquainted with some form of the *kızıl elma* legend independently of Georgievits's report, and this explains why Baranyai Decsi could brand it as so well-known at the end of the 16th century.

In connection with the *kızıl elma* it is worth mentioning the Ottoman-Hungarian ideological struggle about the royal statues of Várád (Nagyvárad/Großwardein/Varad/Oradea). It has seemingly nothing to do with the golden apple but it gives an insight into how the Ottomans may have learnt the use of the symbol from Byzantium.⁷⁸ The royal statues made by famous Kolozsvári brothers, János and Márton, were set up in Várád at the end of the 14th century: St. Stephen (1001-1038) holding a "golden apple" in his hand (as it stands in a description from 1609), the figures of St. Emericus (son of St. Stephen) and St. Ladislaus (1077-1095), and the mounted statue of St. Ladislaus, who held a battle-axe in his hand reaching out. The latter is particularly interesting because this was the first mounted statue displayed outdoors since the time of Justinian. The Hungarians attributed magic power to the statues of the saint kings: they believed that the Ottomans could not capture the town until these were standing there. The Transylvanian historian István Szamosközy reported on the basis of common talk that this belief spread among the Ottomans as well and may have played a role in the unsuccessful siege of the fortress in 1598: "Rumour has it – who knows whether it is true or only a figment of the imagination – that news spread among the Turks because they are a superstitious people that the above mentioned bronze horse of St. Ladislaus neighed so loudly that even the Turks heard it and explained it as a joyful miraculous sign for the besieged ones... although their strength was not exhausted yet, they abandoned the besieged fortress for they had no hope to capture it".⁷⁹ The information of the historian is supported by a letter of Archduke Matthias from 1598. According to him, during the siege the Hungarians discouraged the attackers by shouting to them several times: they could not do them any harm owing to their statues. In response the Ottomans erected a high mound and tried to shoot the statues from there without any success. This explains why the Ottoman troops, when they occupied Várád in 1660, first dashed at and damaged heavily the royal statues regarded as the *talisman* of the town. Later on the relics were transported to Belgrade and melted into guns, which were derisively called "the God of Hungarians", wrote another historian, János Szalárdy.⁸⁰ Thus the fate of the royal sculpture of Várád underlines again that, although the vic-

78) For this, see Zoltán Magyar, A Kolozsvári testvérek váradi királyszobrai: *Századok* 129:5 (1995) 1155-1166.

79) *Op. cit.*, 1161.

80) *Op. cit.*, 1164.

torious side always intends to destroy the enemy's symbols, it often takes over, reinterprets and uses their ideological content for its own purposes. This happened to the Hungarian royal crown, which became the basis of the Ottoman legal claim for the whole of Hungary after the battle of Mohács,⁸¹ and the same may have befallen to the red apple of Justinian's statue in Constantinople, which, after the fall of the city, propagated the Ottoman claims for world domination.

The legend of the red or golden apple has a further Ottoman-Hungarian parallel, which takes us back to earlier periods, to the era of Sultan Mehmed II and King Matthias, Konstantin Mihajlović, the author of the *Memoirs of a Janissary* written at around 1500, who lived in the Ottoman Empire between 1455 and 1463, recorded the following story about Sultan Mehmed II. The latter, having heard about the preparations for the crusade organized by the Pope, was afraid that the Christians of the occupied territories would also turn against him, therefore summoned his statesmen and asked them for counsel. They proposed that he should launch a preventive war because it was much better to fight on the enemy's land. The sultan answered them with the following parable:

"And the Emperor ordered a great rug to be brought as an example and to be spread out before them, and in the center he had an apple placed, and he gave them the following riddle, saying: 'Can any of you pick up that apple without stepping on the rug?' And they reckoned among themselves, thinking about how that could be, and none of them could get the trick until the Emperor himself, having stepped up to the rug took the rug in both hands and rolled it before him, proceeding behind it; and so he got the apple and put the rug back down as it had been before. And the Emperor said to the lords: 'It is better to torment the kaury (*giaur*) little by little than to invade their land all at once. For we are so insecure that if we had a small setback there, then all our lands that we have conquered from the kaury would be against us and rebel' ... And so they all praised his speech and the Emperor's example."⁸²

Ferenc Móra (1879-1934), the outstanding Hungarian writer and scholar, who painstakingly collected the Hungarian historical legends, tells us the following story about King Matthias (he unfortunately does not refer to his source but apparently it is from his own ethnographic collection): The King was just holding war council distributing the military tasks when a herald arrived: the Polish king was also about to invade Hungary. King Matthias decided to send the brightest out of his

81) On this, see my Ungarn und Wien in der osmanischen Eroberungsideologie, 90.

82) Konstantin Mihajlović, *Memoirs of a Janissary*. Transl. by Benjamin Stolz, historical commentary and notes by Svat Soucek. Ann Arbor, 1975, 145-147.

seven pages to contain the enemy. He showed all seven to the hall of coats-of-arms in the middle of which "there was a large rug spread out, in the middle of it there was a golden apple. 'Well, my lords, the commander will be the one who picks up the apple from the rug' - waved King Matthias to the pages... 'You have to pick it up without stepping on the rug'". The boys tried with sticks, nets, hooks, but they could not reach the apple. They were about to give up when "the eyes of one of them sparkled suddenly. 'I know' he said. Then he bowed, lifted the carpet and creased and rolled it up until he reached the middle. Then he picked up the apple, held it in his hand kneeling before King Matthias. The king entrusted him with the commandership at once and the clever youth was grateful for the trust: he surrounded the Polish forcing them to surrender. As a reward he was given a noble coat-of-arms on which "an armoured hand is holding a golden apple in a sky-blue field".⁸³

So far I have not come across this story in any contemporary (15th-16th century) source, though the formation of myths about the figure of King Matthias had started very soon, many stories were recorded about him already since the end of the 15th century. As an example of a powerful, clever and just ruler he became the hero of several tales, legends, anecdotes, proverbs and literary works in the following centuries but, according to my own research, the story cited here seems to be unknown.⁸⁴ Therefore it is to be treated with great care. Still, the two stories have a lot in common, and it is also a fact that the Ottoman (or Balkan) version had already been put down at around 1500 at the latest. From this it can be concluded that, even if not exactly in the form published by Ferenc Móra, a contemporary Hungarian version must have existed. In it the apple symbol must have been connected with the royal power and its purposes in a more explicit way - similarly to the Ottoman version, where it undoubtedly expressed world domination (or rule over the Christian world). If we now recall the political aims of the two rulers and Matthias' attitude towards the Ottomans, then it does not seem to be a mere coincidence that both sovereigns used the same example or, broadly speaking, the same ideological language to demonstrate their intentions. I have no knowledge about which party borrowed the example from the other, what is more, it seems probable that it is a wandering motif so far unknown to me. But the main point is that both rivals, who considered themselves the new Alexander the Great or, as King Matthias, Attila, made similar use of the symbolism and ideological possibilities of the golden (red) apple.

83) Ferenc Móra, *Titulász bankója. Történelmi elbeszélések, mesék*. Publ. by Magda Sulyok. Budapest, 1977, 92-94.

84) Cf. Ildikó Kriza, *Rex iustus - rex clarus* (Mátyás király a néphagyományban). In: *Hunyadi Mátyás. Emlékkönyv Mátyás király halálának 500. évfordulójára*. Budapest, 1990, 363-410.

Another story that was recorded by Johannes Cuspinianus, the humanist diplomat of Ferdinand of Habsburg, also testifies to the widespread use by the Ottomans of the golden apple symbol. In his anti-Ottoman exhortation at the Imperial Diet in 1526 he illustrated the intentions of the "insatiate dragon", the Ottoman Empire, with the following example:

"Mohamed II, the Emir of the Turks, as they called their King, once gave his son sitting at the table a whole apple to swallow, but the boy looking at his father asked for a knife to cut it with. How shall I swallow it as a whole, oh my father, he asked. You speak well, said the father, because the apple must be cut and the slices swallowed one after the other. I suggest that you swallow the Christians in a similar way, tear the countries and provinces gradually, one after the other and finally swallow them."⁸⁵

In Cuspinianus' parable the role of the apple is the same as in that of Konstantin Mihajlović. All this draws attention to the fact that the apple-motive, either a simple parable or in apocalyptic context, was known to all opposing forces (Ottoman, Habsburg, Hungarian). Still, it seems that from the late 15th century the Ottomans attributed special significance to the golden apple symbol. This, however, did not prevent the enemy or the defeated sides from time to time expropriating and using for their own purposes the ideas that had originally served the ideological foundation of the Ottoman world domination.

The Ottomans residing in Hungary also borrowed ideological elements from their Hungarian counterparts if they seemed useful for displaying their own political aims. The chronicler İbrahim Peçevî was one of the few Ottoman learned men who utilized "infidel" (i.e. Hungarian) sources as well when composing his Ottoman history.⁸⁶ Among others he had several passages translated and cited from the work entitled *Krónika az magyaroknak dolgairól* [A chronicle on the affairs of Hungarians], which was written and published by Gáspár Heltai in Hungarian (1575).⁸⁷ Heltai, for his part, based his *Krónika* on the great Hungarian history in Latin composed at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by Antonio Bonfini.⁸⁸ But Heltai abridged the text to some fifth of its original extent, adding several passages to it from other sources or from his own earlier writings. It was in such a chapter that he described the palace of the Archbishop of Esztergom, János Vitéz. In his original version Bonfini only mentioned

85) *Oratio proreptica*, in: *Mohács emlékezete*, 269.

86) On the Hungarian sources of Peçevî, see József Thúry, *Pecsevi viszonya a magyar történetíráshoz: Századok* 26 (1892) 393-410, 476-488, 560-579, 658-678, 740-746.

87) Gáspár Heltai, *Krónika az magyaroknak dolgairól*. Ed. by Margit Kulcsár, introduced by Péter Kulcsár. Budapest, 1981.

88) Antonio Bonfini, *A magyar történelem tizedei*. Transl. by Péter Kulcsár. Budapest, 1995.

that Vitéz had a large dining hall built in the castle and he had the portraits of all Hungarian kings and "the Scythian ancestors" painted on its wall.⁸⁹ Heltai took over and embellished this short statement in the following way: the Archbishop had also the pictures of future Hungarian kings (i.e. who would come after King Matthias Corvinus) "written" in the windows so that, as a kind of prognosticon, they should exhibit the country's fate for the subsequent generations. He had four compositions made and after the glorious period of King Matthias had passed, everything turned out as the pictures foretold it. For the first figure proved to be identical with the helpless Wladislaus II (1490-1516), the second with Louis II, who was defeated in the battle of Mohács, and the third with Ferdinand of Habsburg (1526-1564) and John Szapolyai (1526-1540) respectively, who were masters of the country simultaneously. In the fourth picture a furious lion could be seen "which was lying on the ground and holding a muslin embellished with a crown in its claws. This figure was to express that the Turkish Emperor would seize the dignity of the Hungarian royal empire that he would have for eternity. For there were no window and picture after that window and figure but this was the last one".⁹⁰ This *post festum* prediction, which announced the Ottoman domination over Hungary to be permanent, did not escape the attention of Peçevî who, with some modifications, included it in his history.⁹¹ The most important alteration was that he wrote of a "crown wrapped up in muslin", instead of the original "muslin embellished with a crown". With this he unmistakably aimed at referring to the crown of Saint Stephen that was widely known as the token of Hungary's independent statehood, thus lending further credit to the prediction.

He also took over the subsequent passage in Heltai's work which – without any reference to this fact – loosely recapitulated the famous prophesy by Johannes Lichtenberger (1488). The main point of this prediction was that the Turkish Emperor would penetrate into German territories as far Cologne where, at the golden tree, he would be defeated by the Emperor's armies and he would perish. In Heltai's interpretation this story changed in such a manner that "the Turkish Emperor would loose his head at the red chapel" in Cologne. Peçevî, in his turn, reproduced this statement so that "the padishah might de cease". Nevertheless, the baleful prophesy did not drive the Ottoman chroni-

89) *Op. cit.*, 783-784.

90) G. Heltai, *Krónika*, 324-325.

91) *Târîh-i Peçevî*, I. 115-117. "Dördüncü pencerede bir erkek yavuz arslan tasvirin yazdırmış idi ki yer üzerinde yatar ırgalanırdı. Ve iki ön ayakları tırnakları ile üzerine dülbend sarılmış bir korona [crown] tutardı. Bundan dahi ima vü işaretleri Türk padişahı Macar kıralının vilayetini ayakları altına alsa ve koronaya zafer bulsa gerekdi. Zira bu pencereden sonra bir pencere ve bir yazı [picture] ve suret dahi yoğidi. Heman sonu bu idi. Ve bu cümlelün malumi olmuşdur ki aynıyle böyle oldu ve olacaktur" (117).

cler into despair. Although he expressed his desire if only "the Turkish padishah" reached Cologne, his last phrases revealed that he had not seriously reckoned with this possibility. As he mentioned in the introductory part of this chapter, he exposed the Christian views about Cologne and the apple tree (or red chapel) there only in order to give an explanation to his correligionists of the whereabouts of the *kızıl elma* which had always remained somewhat mysterious for them. But his attempt occurred too late to promote the diffusion of the Western apocalyptic prophesy in the Ottoman Empire (he wrote his work after 1640!). In any case, his composition reveals also from Ottoman side that the conflicting parts in Hungary sought to learn each other's ideological programmes, and they occasionally borrowed elements from the enemy adjusting them to their own political language. This means that the ideological frontiers between the Christian and Muslim worlds in Hungary were not so rigid as it had generally been supposed.

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