Árpád versus Saint István

Competing Heroes and Competing Interests in the Figurative Representation of Hungarian History

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Symbolic representations of national heroes are a rich field for the analysis of changes in national ideology and politics. This paper looks at the making of two Hungarian heroes: chieftain Árpád and Saint István, both belonging to the pantheon of the nation's founders.

Over the centuries they have symbolized two different sets of ideas about Hungary and Hungarianness and formed the basis of two competing national iconographies. Through the medium of the figurative arts we can follow how these national symbols have been used by different interest groups over the centuries and how their representations have been charged with new meanings: the East versus the West, the nationalists against the Habsburgs, Protestantism against Catholicism, tribal history versus royal legitimacy, etc.

This dualistic character of national consciousness, which can be found in many other national settings as well, must not only be seen as a symbolic battle arena for competing interests, but also as an instrument for compromises and reorientations in the construction and reconstruction of national identity.

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Referring to Franz Joseph as "another Árpád" was a favourite conceit of the phraseology connected with the millennial celebrations of 1896. These were to mark the first thousand years of Hungarian history in the Carpathian Basin since Árpád's conquest of the country. The second thousand years were now spoken of in terms that allotted the role of a "second Árpád" to Franz Joseph, as Hungary's Habsburg ruler (Fig. 1).

This political sleight of hand was designed to suggest that the Habsburg emperor was a legitimate as well as national ruler. However, his legitimacy during the first twenty or so years of his rule is somewhat in doubt. As is well known, he was not crowned until 1867, the year of the *Ausgleich*, and even after that a significant part of the Hungarian lesser nobility continued to deny his legitimacy in particular, and that of the Habsburgs in general.

What made matters worse in the eyes of Hungarians was that this particular emperor, Franz Joseph, insisted on the dogma of the so-called "forfeiture of right". This expression was used not only by the Habsburgs to refer to the "rebellious" Hungarians after 1849, but also by Hungarians themselves to describe those Habsburgs whom they thought anti-Hungarian.

The contemporary opposition liked to describe Arad – where the leading generals of the war of independence were executed by the Habsburgs on 6th October 1849 – as the Hungarian Golgotha, so this plaque, which is imbued with nationalist feeling, is undoubtedly intended to call the legitimacy of Habsburgs into question.

If we look through works of art made after 1867 which express the official attitude, what strikes the eye is that the symbolic figures who were used to support Franz Joseph's legitimacy had been replaced by others by the end of the century. While it is Saint István who legitimizes the emperor's rule until the 1890s, this
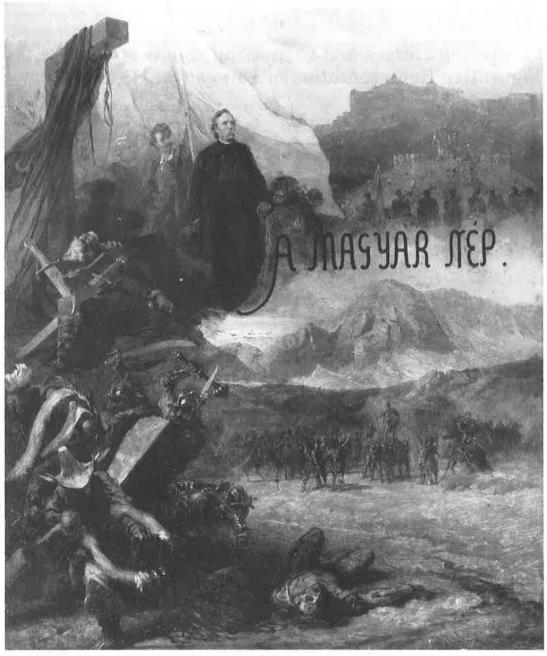
Fig. 1. Zichy, Mihály: "Hungarian nation", 1894. To the left: Ferenc Deák as a guard of the Holy Crown, in the background battle scenes recalling the struggles of Hungarian history, and the gallows of Arad. Right, below: Árpád elevated on a shield; above: coronation ceremony of Franz Joseph. The picture once belonged to Mór Jókai.

role is gradually taken over by Árpád from then on.

A good illustration of the difference between the two attitudes is the plaque issued in 1867 to commemorate Franz Joseph's coronation (Fig. 2). The change in symbols used to legiti-

Fig. 2. Jànos, Wagner – Bèla, Udvarlaky: Memorial poster of the activity of King Istvàn, the founder of the state. Around 1880. The visual representation of Saint Istvàn's ideal of the state.

mize in the 1890s is a sign of a change in the structure of power. Let me illustrate how far this change went by one example.

To form an idea of the depth of the change we have only to think of the fact that the Habsburgs had been using ceremonial customs involving the Hungarian royalty for centuries but had never made such emphatic reference to Árpád as a legitimizing figure before the period in question. Until the last decade of the 19th century the central motifs of Habsburg political mythology were Saint István and the cult of Mary associated with him. To give a more comprehensive account of the political changes underlying the change in use of symbols, it is necessary to dwell on the historical background to the heroes themselves – Saint István and Árpád – and on a number of notions which were habitually to be associated with them.

The changing image of Saint István down the centuries

The traditional Habsburg worship of Saint István is undoubtedly connected with the dynasty's own concept of a Christian ruler. The ideal of a ruler has its origin in the middle ages and came to be expressed through a special hagiolatry. The worshipping of holy kings, as they were called, is not uncommon elsewhere in Western history. The Habsburg respect for medieval saints parallels the Hungarian worship of holy kings in the Anjou era, but its cult figures are different (Gábor 1927; Bartoniek 1934: 314–337; Szekfü 1938; Deèr 1938; Bálint 1977: I, 196–224).

The protagonists of the Hungarian version are Saint István, the first Hungarian king and saint, his son Imre the Chaste and his descendant the chivalrous Saint László. The respect for

Fig. 3. Central altarpiece from Mateóc representing Saint István and Saint Imre. An example of the honouring of the medieval royal saints.

the holy kings is rooted in the Christian teaching on virtue. According to this teaching, Saint István is the personification of the virtues of wisdom and generosity, Imre of chastity and László of chivalry.

The main altar of Mateóc, built in the mid-1400s, is a good case in point, showing Saint István and Imre in the middle altarpiece (Fig. 3). The left-hand wing displays two scenes from Saint István's life which illustrate his virtue. In the upper one the king forgives the man who wanted to murder him, thus exemplifying mercy; the lower one shows him facing death with resignation. On the pediment above Saint István we can see king Salomon's half-length portrait, and above Imre, David's, as allusions to the Hungarian kings' analogical counterparts in the Old Testament (Török 1980: 64–69).

The late medieval figure of a passive and merciful Saint István undergoes considerable changes in the 16th century to reemerge as that of a fighting defender of Christianity.

He is reinterpreted as a man of martial prowess who not only shatters the idols of the

so-called "heresy" of Protestantism, but is also the "shield" of Christianity against the impending danger of the pagan Ottomans (Galavics 1971: 17: Galavics 1986: 73–75). An essential element of Saint István's baroque iconography is the theory of *Regnum Marianum* (Fig. 4). According to a passage of the Hartvik legend, Saint István put his country at Mary's disposal; thus it is Mary's country and Mary is the protector of the Hungarians. The most frequent iconographical scene in baroque representations of Saint István is that of his dedicating the country to Mary. It was directed not only against the Ottomans but also against those among the Protestants who did not exhibit any special respect for Mary. The counter-reformatory measures promoted by the Viennese court are sometimes also associated with this type of iconography (Szekfü 1938: 14–18).

There is no doubt that the Habsburg worship of Mary, widely propagated in the 17th and 18th centuries, also goes back to this repre-

Fig. 4. The most widespread representation of Saint István in the Baroque period: the king offering the country to the Virgin Mary.

Fig. 5. Pierre Joseph Verhaghen: Saint István receives the papal envoys bringing the crown, 1770. A historical symbol of the Hungarian kingdom as a separate state.

sentation of Saint István. Acting in the spirit of this cult, Leopold II solemnly dedicated the country in 1693 – clearly alluding to his fore-runner and predecessor Saint István's similar gesture – to the Queen of Heavens, Our Lady (*Magna Hungariae Domina*) (Coreth 1957). The Habsburg worship of Mary and the recon-version of part of the Hungarian gentry to Ca-tholicism led to the setting up of several places of pilgrimage, the most important one being Maria-Zell. It was one of the most frequented places of worship in the Habsburg Empire, a sacred spot visited by people from areas on both sides of the river Leitha.

Under Maria Theresa the cult of Saint Ist-ván was enriched by the revived veneration of the Holy Right Hand, a relic connected with the revered king. The Empress succeeded in obtaining the valuable relic from Ragusa and had it ceremonially brought to the royal castle in Buda. The worship of this Holy Right Hand has been part of the Saint István cult since 1771 up to the present. Naturally, the Pro-testants did not take part in its worship, reject-ing by faith all reliquary cults and worship of saints. Later, in the 19th and 20th centuries, a lot of tension was again caused by the forcing of Protestants to take part in the Saint István ceremonies, which had become a national cele-bration by then (Gábor 1927).

From what has been said it would seem as though the figure of Saint István was part and parcel of the imperial Habsburg ideology and that it can thus be seen as a symbol of the imperial unity which the Habsburg court de-sired. In actual fact, however, Saint István was

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used to express not only the Habsburg imperial ideology but also Hungarian autonomy in constitutional law, which was periodically affirmed during the life of the Empire. Apart from the Habsburg worship of Saint István there was an independent Hungarian Catholic Saint István cult in the 17th century, which sometimes emphasized different aspects of the saint from those stressed by Habsburg piety. The medieval Hungarian worship of holy kings was extended to the more general worship of Hungarian saints in the baroque era. This is shown in its ultimate richness in *Ungaricae Sanctitatis Indicia*, published by Jesuit Gábor Hevenesi (first published 1693, Nagyszombat). The assembly of holy Hungarians, or the "Hungarian Heaven" reflected Hevenesi's concept of the nation. This kind of national consciouness has been called by native historians "*hungaricus*" consciousness to distinguish it from 19th century Hungarian national consciousness which had a linguistic foundation. Hevenesi's *hungaricus* consciousness included not only the holy members of the Árpád dynasty but all those who had any conceivable connection with the Hungarian people or the mother country. In this way Hevenesi's book "Hungarizes" even those who had some connection with the Huns and Avars. This motif, as part of the theory of a Hun-Hungarian continuity, had already been part of the gentry's cultural tradition since the Middle Ages (Szücs 1974:211–218). But the saints of Pannonia were also counted with the Hungarians, along with even the remotest relatives of Hungarian royalty. Hevenesi's "Hungarian Heaven" is a symbolic expression of a national consciousness which was moulded by the religious concepts of the 17th century and based on Catholic universalism. Although certain members of the assembly of Hungarian saints lived in different historical eras, their holiness implied a specific, extra-temporal, imaginary presence. The "historical character" of the Hungarian Heaven differs considerably from the idea of time underpinning the concepts of profane history based on humanist principles. What the latter assumed was not a completed past considered as an example, but a continuum in which the past was still alive in the present. This motif remained an important

element of Saint István worship and of the forms of national consciousness which were manifest within the context of Catholic piety. The first sign of a secularization of Saint István's image can be found in representations which can be brought into direct connection with the Doctrine of the Holy Crown (Fig. 5). Academic works in the "*histoire*" genre like the one by P. J. Verhaghen showing Saint István receiving the delegates bringing him the crown, testify to the advancement of a secular approach to history. Although a piece of courtly art, it is the offspring of a modern historicism differing considerably from the mythical baroque concept. This new historicism represents the historical event as an occurrence in a particular place at a time in the past, rather than as one in a series of mythical events outside real time. Executed in 1770, the painting seems to argue that the Habsburg ruler is legitimized as king of Hungary by Saint István's crown.

During the Enlightenment this more learned version of historical legitimization, i.e. a "legalistic" approach to historical events, was soon embraced by the Hungarian clergy, who were opposed to the court, and sought to defend the integrity of Hungarian constitutional and clerical law (Eckhart 1941; Kardos 1983: 79–107).

In reaction to this highly imperial policy on Joseph II's part, the doctrine of the holy crown grew in importance among the Hungarian nobility towards the end of the century. The doctrine itself is of late-medieval origin and its importance started to increase after the Árpád dynasty had died out. On its emergence in the Middle Ages the historian Szekfü Gyula writes: "The more the awareness of the king as a descendant of Saint István faded in the era of the Anjous and their descendants, the more prominent the holy crown became and, in connection with the development of the orders, the more marked the separation of the crown from the king" (Szekfü 1938: 14–18). The increasing power of the orders is reflected in the Doctrine of the Holy Crown put forward in Verböczi's legal corpus, according to which power originally rested with the assembly of the people, the *communitas*, and was later conferred upon

Fig. 6. Picture of Árpád the leader from the work entitled *Mausoleum Regni Apostolici Regum et Primorum ...*, 1664. It points out that legitimacy of the state dates from the period of occupation preceding the adoption of Christianity.

the Holy Crown by the last such public assembly. According to this order-based interpretation of the doctrine the power of the crown is dependent on the orders which are supposed jointly to elect a king. Joseph II's refusal to have himself crowned with Saint István's crown was a clear indication of his consistent imperial policy.

The further secularization of the doctrine and the increasing influence of order-conscious attitudes is reflected by the book *The History of the Hungarian Crown and Insignia*, by Sámuel Decsy, a representative of the "Enlightenment", which was published in 1792 in Vienna. Apart from describing the crown, Decsy also sets out to present its history. Although he is writing about the holy crown, the tone and the

historical arguments used are overtly directed against Saint István and the clergy. His work is thus a convenient source to use for presenting certain elements of the order-based concept of power and history, which is what follows.

The changing historicism of the lesser nobility's interpretation of royal power

In his book, Decsy devotes a long chapter to the prehistory of the Hungarians, emphasizing their Eastern origin. This prehistory, which is based largely on the romantic notions of literati, e.g., on the theory of the Hungarians being descendants of the Huns, was first put forward by Simon Kézai in his famous chronicle around 1280 (Eckhardt 1940: 185–226; Szücs 1974: 415–515). Kézai put great emphasis on Hun-Hungarian identity, which was then used as justification for the conquest of the country by Árpád. According to this theory, Árpád invaded the country which had once been conquered by his legendary forefather, Attila; thus Árpád's deed came to be interpreted as the recovering of the lawful heritage of his people. From the 18th century on, there evolved, inspired by this work and European Attila legends, an image of Attila which differed greatly from the Western one and which performed a legalizing function for different eras. Matthias Corvinus, who was not of royal origin, was often referred to as "Attila Secundus" by his court historians, to mention just one example (Vayer 1967: 191–196).

The theory of Hun-Hungarian identity was really embraced by the noblemen and was given artistic expression through the ancestor galleries which started to be fashionable from the middle of the 17th century. Some of these families had commissioned paintings of the Hungarian tribal chieftains before Saint István, or Attila, as proof of the family's prehistoric ties and independence of royal power. The copper engraving of a family tree made by Tobias Sadler (commissioned by Pál Esterházy) represents the Esterházy family as descendants of Adam himself, tracing the first Esterházy back to the chieftain Örs, thence to Attila, to Hunor and to Noah! This mythology of

Fig. 7. Hesz, János Mihály: Vajk's – the later Saint István's – christening, 1825. Sketch for the main altarpiece of the Primatial Cathedral of Esztergom. The emphasis is on the Christian origin of royal power.

lineage among noblemen was formulated in the publication *Mausoleum Regni Apostolici Regum et Primorum militantis Ungariae Ducum*, printed in 1664 in Nürnberg and illustrated with engravings. Discussing the history of Hungarian kings, the book also presents their pagan forefathers. Its popularity is evident from the fact that several reproductions of its paintings and murals have been preserved (Fig. 6) (Rózsa 1973 69–70; Galavics 1986).

This tradition of an Eastern origin among the nobility was given new momentum in the last third of the 18th century. The aforementioned work by Sámuel Decsy is another example of a mixing of the older noble tradition and the historicism of the Enlightenment. The rea-

son why his work is important for us is that it is the first source where we can identify motifs of the anti-Saint István and anti-Catholic attitudes which were to develop fully in the 19th and 20th centuries.

According to Decsy's description, Saint István was not a saint since he was fallible and had his relative Kupa (Koppány) murdered and Gyula imprisoned. The reason that he wanted a crown, says Decsy, was not the country's need for a king but his very human vanity; he was evidently delighted with the royal title bestowed upon him by Pope Sylvester. Yet one of the reasons why he did not really need the crown he received from Sylvester was that he already had one, namely Árpád's crown, the one with which Attila had been crowned in 401. Until King Sámuel, Hungarian kings had always been crowned with this ancient crown dating back to Attila and Árpád. However, Henry III had the crown taken to Rome and it was never returned. This radical negation of the Hungarian political tradition based on Saint István is explained by the anti-Habsburg feeling among the Protestant lesser nobility. The set of beliefs held by the lesser nobles did not differentiate between the Habsburg mythology conceived for the whole empire and the *hungarus* doctrine of the Hungarian higher nobility and clergy. It was the lesser nobility which emphatically embraced the ideology of conservative noble romanticism in the early 19th century and whose vocabulary was laced with expressions evoking "the ancestral glory" and pervaded by an anti-foreign attitude. We can find no major artistic expressions of these theories at the beginning of the century. The politically inspired cult of prehistoric forefathers can be reconstructed mainly from linguistic and literary sources. One reason for this is the general narrowness of the Protestant tradition of artistic representation and its taboo in respect of pictures. Although in theory this taboo related only to religious themes, in pratice Protestants used pictures much less than Catholics and generally impeded pictorial representation until profane historical genres gained ground (Tüskés 1987: 217–233).

The ancestral galleries continued to be built well into the 19th century and often included

the well-known scene from the legend of how Árpád acquired the country. The story is that Árpád bought the land from the reigning prince Svatopluk in exchange for a white horse, a jugful of Danube water and a handful of grass. A representation of this scene was most likely to supplement the pictures of ancestors in manors and castles east of the river Tisza, which used to belong to Protestant noblemen.

In reaction to the conservative historicism cherished by the conservative nobility, there was a change in the religious representations of Saint István at the beginning of the 19th century. Although there had been one or two representations of the christening of Vajk – when Vajk acquired the name of István – the theme received special attention only after 1820. The first monumental historical picture elaborating the theme was made for the high altar of the cathedral in Esztergom in 1825 (Fig. 7) commissioned by the primate prince of the Roman Church, Sándor Rudnay. He was assigned the post of Primate of Eszergom in 1809, which had then been vacant for nine years. The Josephinist court in Vienna had reduced the earlier power of the church in many ways. Rudnay, who was of lesser noble origin, transferred his seat to Esztergom, the earlier seat of the primacy, and launched a number of large-scale construction projects. In 1822 he summoned what was called a national council, intended to discover the causes of "faltering devotion" and "loose morality". The decisions of the council were vetoed by Metternich and so could not be announced publicly (Meszlényi 1932). It was then that the bishop commissioned János Mihály Hesz, an academic painter, to commit to canvas the picture on the high altar of the basilica, which was then being built: a representation of Vajk being christened István.

Although evoking a moment in history, it is obviously a didactic painting. It expresses the recatholicizing programme of the Catholic church which was directed against the enlightened members of the Viennese court, as well as against the theories of ancient Hungarians cherished by the nobility. The theme of Vajk's christening was meant to counter the "people

Fig. 8. Benczur, Gyula: Vajk's christening, 1875. Expression of the political ideology of the Liberal Party.

of the East" ideology, which was gaining ground in the early 1900s. The theme was taken up several times during the 19th century, but the most spectacular representation of Vajk's Eastern nature is Gyula Benczúr's painting from 1875 (Fig. 8). A good portion of 19th century Saint István representations are religious works of art. The first monumental profane representations of the theme appeared only as late as the end of the 19th century; when Saint István's statue was erected in a public place together with great mural projects designed to display his deeds. One reason for this was the failure of the 1849 war of independence. After the defeat, the court did not allow the celebration of Saint István's day as a national holiday, and only religious celebrations were approved. This situation changed in 1860; from then on, town and county authorities were allowed to take part in the Saint István Day processions, just as they had done before 1849.

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Fig. 9. Memorial of World War I with the Holy Crown.

In 1875–1905, when the Liberal Party was in power, the official political rhetoric was centred upon Saint István's ideal of the state, that of a multi-national empire. In contrast, the Independence Party proclaimed the supremacy of the Hungarian ethnic group (Hanák 1984: 55–72). By the time this party came to power in 1905, the cult of Saint István was declining. After the Treaty of Trianon (1919), however, it again became the dominant ideology. In the inter-war period Hungary was a kingdom without a king, and the political power of that time owed its legitimacy to the Holy Crown itself (Kardos 1985). This idea was expressed by means of several war memorials erected to the memory of the victims of World War I (Fig. 9).

After World War II, and particularly following the political turning point of 1949, the Government enunciated a socialist programme and ideology. In this political scene the cult of Saint István was neglected, or rather replaced by other cults such as Constitution Day, and the Day of New Bread. Recently, and especially since the return of the Holy Crown from the United States, Saint István's personality has gradually come back into the limelight. The Holy Crown has become a symbol of the integrity and cultural unity of all Hungarians irrespective of their citizenship (Sinkó 1987: 2, 27–50).

If we go back to the events at the turn of century, we can see the cult of Árpád growing at the time when the Independence Party was increasing in power. This cult dates back to the Reform Period in the first half of the 19th century. At this time the favourite themes of representation were the chieftains sealing their contract with blood and lifting Árpád on a shield (Fig. 10).

Both are symbolical renderings of the favourite political slogan of the era – the "union of interests" – which also expressed a political programme (Fenyö 1973: 116–172). Mihály Kovács's painting, which was very widely reproduced, shows not only the tribal chieftains' unanimous choice of a leader, but also represents the people as participants in the act of choice. Representations of the blood contract are another kind of symbolic expression of the unity of the Hungarian race. Towards the end of the century, the same theme was also used to express the continued reference of the ancient origin and original nature of the people. Bertalan Székely, the artist who painted the picture for the Kecskemét town hall – another representation of the blood contract – selected with great care from peasants living in the area those who he thought had the most characteristically Hungarian faces (Fig. 11).

The great boom for the Árpád theme came in the last decade of the century, most probably influenced by the millennial atmosphere. The memorial plaque "Glorification of the creator of the Homeland, chieftain Árpád" (Fig. 12) illustrates lucidly the philosophy of history behind one body of opinion which was inspired by the approaching millennium. The plaque shows, gathered around Árpád's statue, historical figures who were selected by the democra-

Fig. 10. Kovács, Mihály: Elevation of Árpád on a shield, 1854. A symbol of national consensus.

Fig. 11. Székely, Bertalan: The Blood Contract, 1902. Ceremonial Hall of the Town Hall of Kecskemét. A symbol of the unity of the Hungarian nation.

Fig. 12. Lenz, O. after Kacziány, Ö.: "Glorification of Árpád the Leader, Founder of Our Homeland at the Millennial celebration of the Foundation of Our Homeland", 1896. The figures represent: Árpád, István Báthory, Lajos Batthyány, Gábor Bethlen, István Bocskai, Ferenc Deák, Lajos Kossuth, Kelemen Mikes, Sándor Petőfi, Ferenc Rákóczi II, István Széchenyi, László Teleki, Imre Thököly, Ilona Zrinyi.

tized persons of the Independence Party to express their view of history. Significantly, the pantheon of their heroes did not include Saint István, but we see instead the princes they considered nationally important – Gábor Bethlen, Bocskay, Rákóczy – together with the political and literary notables of the age of reform.

This work is a clear example of the Pro-testant concept of history. Looking back on the events of the 1880s, the Protestant bishop István Révész describes the protagonists of this history as follows:

"Their common destiny is with all those defendants of our national and political autonomy against the international forces of the Emperor and Pope, and against the intention

Fig. 13. Zala, György: Árpád and the group of chieftains in the centre of the Millennial Monument, Budapest, 1897–1929. The Millennial Monument represents the balance of political ideologies associated with the names of Saint István and Árpád.

to assimilate us, who were impelled and inspired by their Protestant upbringing and family background to serve the nation we call Hungarian: Bocskay, Gábor Bethlen, the Rákóczys" (Révész 1937: 393–407).

By the end of the century, the cult of Árpád had led to the demand for memorials (Fig. 13). One of them, the millennial monument, became the scene of a number of political rituals later on (Sinkó 1987: 2, 27–50). The fact that it was shaped by the order-based history concept is evident not only from the central position assigned to Árpád but also from the spatial separation of the crown from the kings. Another turn-of-the-century relic connected with Árpád is the Panorama of the Conquest (1894), the first of its genre in Hungary. The painter – Árpád Feszty – novelist Mór Jókai's son-in-law – incorporated all eastern elements described by the writer in his novels in connection with prehistoric ancient Hungarians: the sacrifice of the white horse and the abduction of young women, the procession of tribal princesses and the bright chieftains, as well as Árpád himself (Sinkó 1986: 12–20).

To come back to the special case described in the introduction – the ceremonial appearances which suggested a parallel between Árpád the conqueror of the land and Franz Joseph – the aim of this strange political manoeuvre is not difficult to see. By assuming the persona of a second Árpád, Franz Joseph made a dramatic departure from traditional Habsburg courtly ideology, giving a hint as to his readiness for a compromise. However, the two themes, or systems of symbols, continued to polarize even after the Monarchy ceased to exist. After the 1920s Saint István's pagan counterpart is no longer his princely ancestor, Árpád, but his contemporary enemy, Koppány, who was quartered on István's orders. The opposing symbolic content of these two figures is given clear expression by the patriotic – or rather demagogic – lines put down by Dezsö Szabó in 1922:

"The great historical symbol of Hungarians as a race is not the right hand of the German woman's husband, Saint István; their tragic, everbleeding symbol is Koppány, who was cut into four" (Szabó 1922).

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Fig. 14. Memorial of World War I with the Turul Eagle on the top, holding Attila's sword.

symbolizations of two different sets of ideas which came to be opposed in the course of their history. The traditional representations of the historical figures of Saint István and Árpád evolved in the course of a symbolization process to stand for different, and even contrasting ideas. The figure of Saint István represents the following notions as listed below, not in any order of importance:

Catholicism, universalism – because István was the founder of a Christian kingdom of West-European type; the *West* – because the state and culture which evolved as a result of his efforts connected the Hungarian nation to the western culture of Europe; *royalty* – because he broke the ancient Hungarian tribal traditions and established a more advanced, feudal system; *multinationalism* – because he stressed in his testimony that "a nation consisting of a single language and single culture is weak"; *imperialism* – indicating both the multi-national state and its integration into the Habsburg empire; *sainthood* – because of the specific cult attached to his figure; *law-giving* – because he issued the first laws in Hungary.

Árpád bears the following characteristic associations: *Pagan princehood* – because he came to power owing to the will of the nation rather than through the "creation" of the clergy; *legitimacy obtained through his arms* – because his rule was legitimized by the occupation of the country; *paganism* – because he maintained the ancient faith of the Hungarians; the *East* – because he represented the origin and continuity of Hungarian cultural traditions rooted in the ancient homeland; *homogeneousness of the nation* – because the notions attached to his figure do not comprise national minorities; *national independence* – because his personality recalls the Hungarians' self-reliance, and perseverance and their struggles to defend their own (Várkonyi 1961: 101–160, 243–482; Lendvai 1986: 243–283).

It must be stressed that I am using the words "Catholic" and "Protestant" not in their narrow religious meaning, but rather to refer to two internally coherent cultures or cultural patterns. In my interpretation the two cultural patterns approach the creation and use of sym-

This was a reference to the division of the country into four parts. As a reaction against the growing German influence, the myths of oriental origin became widespread. The associated movements used the ancient Hungarian totem animal, the Turul eagle, as their main symbol (Fig. 14). According to the legends, it would fly in front of the Hungarian troops, with Attila's sword in its claws. The Turul as a symbol is also the pagan counterpart of the main formal symbol, the Holy Crown. After World War II the myth of oriental origin and the associated symbols were preserved above all by the Hungarian immigrants to America (Ipolyi 1929[2]: 150, 240–242).

The representations of the two historical figures – Árpád and Saint István – described above took shape in the course of a general process of symbolization. The two figures are

bols in radically different ways. It may not be far-fetched to hypothesize that due to the Protestant taboo against religious representation, the general human need for symbolization found satisfaction in the field of political symbols. Part of these human needs were met in the Catholic cultural circle by the religious worship of images. The difference between the two is still palpable in the 19th century in terms of the way both noblemen and peasants used pictures. In Protestant areas the taboo against religious themes resulted in the swift multiplication of Hungarian historical representations (Tüskés 1987; Hofmann 1983: 23–79).

From what has been said it would seem that the figure of Saint István is – to borrow the terminology for nationalism used by Eugen Lemberg – more a symbol of nationalism from above, originating from the empire or the state, while Árpád is an expression of what he calls *risorgimento* nationalism.

One of the important features of the process of symbolization is the dynamic aspect of the representations. The exaggerated size of the figures indicates the expansion of the ideology behind the works of art. The heroic character of the symbolic figure makes a demand on the viewer, a demand which has the "nature of faith". This means that the representation does not rest content with just evoking, or "citing", the historical events which are familiar but demands an act of faith, or religious response, from the potential audience. Saint István and Árpád, as I have argued, also express a certain polarity, a dualism in our historical consciousness (Hanák 1975: 343–356). A similar polarity can be observed in the other periods of the history of Hungarian national consciousness as well, e.g., *kuruc-labanc*, Kossuth-Széchenyi, 1848-er-1867-er, folk-oriented – urban, etc.

This dualistic character of national consciousness is by no means peculiar to the Hungarians, however. A similar polarization can be detected in the Czech national consciousness, for instance in terms of differences between "Bohemian" Czechs who tried to find a compromise with the imperial ideology, and the Hussites. In Polish history we come across the dualism of Piastean and Jagiello nationalism.

German national consciousness used to polarize around the extremes of smaller German and greater German ideology. Polarization of ideas was always followed by polarization of symbols. The Czech, Polish and German heroes can be shown to centre around two poles like their Hungarian counterparts (Kohn 1962; Lemberg 1964, 1967; Mosse 1976).

This polarization, a bifurcation of national consciousness, is not a "curse on Hungary". A similar twofold structure can be observed in Austrian, German, Czech, Polish and Russian national consciousness and views of history. Functionally speaking, this polarity of national consciousness is a tool of adjustment to historical realities. As has been shown by our examples, in the course of historical changes this polarity enables ideas to be applied as appropriate to the actual situation; it facilitated the proclamation of the idea of "independence" or, on the other hand, "reconciliation", and it balanced alternately the influences coming from the East or the West. Although internal social conflicts are inherent in this dual nature of national consciousness, it is also a guarantee of national survival.

Conclusion

Some of the important components of Hungarian national consciousness – which is far from being unique in this respect – are those heroic national figures which have served as historical models for political endeavours at various times in history. These figures have been referred to not merely for their historical interest, but with the purpose of legitimizing those endeavours.

Surveying the pantheon of Hungarian national heroes, one soon realizes that most of them fall into types according to the nature or bias of the historical justification they were used for. Some heroes in the national pantheon are most directly related to doctrines of legitimacy which form the very basis of political power, while others are rather expressions of particular interests, of the more temporary pursuits of particular groups.

Two protagonists in the legitimacy doctrines

are Saint István and Árpád. They are related by blood, but as far as their historical relationship is concerned, there have always been different interpretations throughout history. Árpád, a pagan prince, is Saint István's ancestor; but, in terms of the political aspirations the two kings symbolized, they are in historical opposition in the national consciousness. Árpád's name is associated with the conquest of the territory which was to become Hungary. Árpád had a descendant called Vajk who was later baptized and christened István (Stephen). He became the first Hungarian king and the first Hungarian to be canonized. He was also the founder of the state in a Western sense.

Although he has been a cult figure for longer than his ancestor, Árpád, Saint István cannot be called a champion of Hungarian nationalism. Rooted in late-medieval Christian universalism, his cult goes back to times well before the emergence of nationalism. The worship of Saint István was enriched by the cult of the holy kings – István, Imre, László – in the late Middle Ages, and then by the ideology of the *Regnum Marianum*, a special kind of "mariology"; it did not leave the confines of the church until the end of the 18th century. This cult retained much of its original universalist streak even after it was secularized in the 19th and 20th centuries.

From the viewpoint of the struggles for legitimacy, the most important point was the dogma of the Holy Crown connected with Saint István's crown, which was used to express quite contradictory political aspirations. The clerical-royal interpretation of this dogma was countered as early as the 15th century by another interpretation which reflected the attitudes of the nobility and the orders. The latter holds that the crown can only be given to a king accepted or chosen by the orders, which means that by that time the doctrine of the Holy Crown had received an interpretation which supported the power of the orders and limited that of the king. This order-oriented concept appeared later in the Verböczy bill of rights, the *Opus Tripartitum* (1517). By the middle of the 16th century the two conflicting interpretations of the crown as the symbol of royal power on the one hand and as that of

Hungarian statehood on the other had also taken shape.

During the 150 years of Turkish occupation the country fell into three parts. The dogma of the Holy Crown and its nobility lived on in the part of the country which was ruled by the Habsburgs. The situation was further complicated by the fact that most of the Hungarian orders converted to Protestantism, so that the dispute between the dynasty and the orders continued in the guise of religious movements. In the course of these struggles the interpretation of the dogma of the Holy Crown became polarized. The religious worship of Saint István and *Regnum Marianum* – which was supported by the Habsburgs – aimed to legalize the absolutist rule of the king and was sharply opposed by the Protestant nobility, who had become an important class by then. According to the underlying ideology of *Regnum Marianum* the divided condition of the country is entirely due to religious aberration, or "heresy".

The Hungarian Catholic national concept in the 17th century tried, despite its Catholic bias, to offer an indigenous cult of saints to compete with that of the Habsburgs. Although the idea of *Regnum Marianum* and the cult of Saint István was part of the prevailing ideology of the Habsburgs and their ceremonial customs, and set itself the aim of making the empire homogeneous in terms of religion, the theory and the ways in which it was applied simultaneously supported the "imaginary existence" of an independent Hungarian kingdom.

There is a host of art relics connected with the ideas of the 17th-18th century followers of *Regnum Marianum*. One distinctive group of these is the body of works which were part of the ceremonial customs of Hungarian nobility and were used to express the independence and power of the orders.

The change in the policy of the orders is discernible in the ceremonial customs of families as well: family trees proving the noble origin of the family and galleries with pictures of their ancestors began to spread. The family trees and galleries of ancestors often included the historical beginnings before Saint István,

listing Árpád and the seven chieftains or even Attila. Towards the end of the 18th century the Protestant aspirations of the orders can be traced not only in the special interpretation given to the doctrine of the Holy Crown, but also in the beginning of worship of pagan ancestors. The latter became one of the inspirations for the ideology of "people of the East" which gained ground in the age of romanticism. In accordance with this, some representatives of the national doctrine upheld by the Protestant lesser nobility rejected more and more brazenly the worship of Saint István as a saint, the cult of relics and the ideology of *Regnum Marianum*. The ceremonies and works of art connected with this concept are less in quantity than those expressing the range of ideas associated with Saint István, not only because they were in direct opposition to the latter, which had been promoted to the status of official ideology of the empire, but also because, unlike the tradition of Catholic sacral representation, they had to rest content with profane methods of representation. A great deal of the profane representations of history which evolved gradually during the 19th century can be assigned, on the basis of their themes, to one of the two ideologies described above. The various historical motifs are not only artistic "reproductions" of the real historical events, but are also expressions of the ideological preferences outlined above. Thus, although they depict events, they may be designated as symbols. The historical themes are polarized in an ideological sense and there is, as it were, a "dialogue" between them. A good example of this is the kind of representation of Vajk's christening which became prevalent in 19th century art, which is opposed to, or "catholicizes" the "people of the East" ideology. Nevertheless, the 19th century saw the advance of the profane worship of Árpád, which reached its peak with the millennium celebrations marking the 1000th anniversary of the conquest. In the second half of the last century, in the age of mass-producing traditions, to use a phrase of Hobsbawm (1983), the two concepts of history and national consciousness had become quite clear-cut, crystallizing around ideas embodied by Saint István or Árpád. This was reinforced by a similar polarization of the ideology based on the 1848 war of national independence, and later the ideology taking the *Ausgleich* of 1867 as its starting point.

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