



The Public Defense of the Doctoral Dissertation of

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entitled

**Between Personal Devotion and Political Propaganda:
Iconographic Aspects in the Representation of the *sancti reges Hungariae*
in Church Mural Painting (14th – Early-16th Century)**

will be held on

Wednesday, 28 March 2018, at 2:00 pm

in the

Senate Room – Monument Building

Central European University (CEU)

Nádor Str. 9, Budapest

Examination Committee

Chair	László Kontler (CEU, History Department)
Members	Maria Silvia Crăciun (Babeş-Bolyai University, History and Philosophy Department)
	Gábor Klaniczay (CEU, Medieval Studies Department) (supervisor)
	József Laszlovszky (CEU, Medieval Studies Department)
	Béla Zsolt Szakács (CEU, Medieval Studies Department) (supervisor)
External Readers	Zsombor Jékely, (Museum of Applied Arts) – present
	Vinni Lucherini, (University of Naples Federico II, Humanistic Studies Department) – not present

The doctoral dissertation is available for inspection on the CEU e-learning site.
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Summary of the Doctoral Dissertation

This doctoral dissertation examines the cult and iconography of the *sancti reges Hungariae* during the fourteenth to the early-sixteenth century as they appear from the perspective of religious mural painting. Judging by the great number of surviving murals with their image, the representation of the holy kings of Hungary on the walls of churches was a highly popular phenomenon during the Late Middle Ages, which served both religious and political purposes.

The collective representation in church painting of the holy kings of Hungary – namely, St. Stephen (r. 1000/1001-1038), the founder of the Christian Kingdom of Hungary, who deserved his sanctity for having ruled as *rex iustus* and having converted his people to Christianity; St. Emeric (1000/1007-1031), the former's son, a pious and chaste prince, who was educated to become a virtuous Christian ruler, but died before succeeding his father to the throne; and St. Ladislas (r. 1077-1095), ideal ruler and knight, the country's defender against pagan enemies, and *athleta patriae* – appeared as a consequence of their joint cult which emerged around the mid-fourteenth century in the royal milieu. During the reigns of King Louis I of Anjou (1342-1382) and King Sigismund of Luxemburg (1387-1437), this collective depiction spread in great extent among the noblemen of the kingdom. It then continued to be popular among the country's various estates and ethnic groups throughout the following century and until the spread of the Reformation.

The first chapter of the dissertation offers a general overview of the cults of the three holy kings of Hungary from their emergence as individual cults (around 1083 and around 1192, respectively) to their configuration as the cult of holy predecessors for the last Árpáadian and first Angevin rulers, and as a politically-motivated joint cult during the reign of King Louis the Great of Anjou. The combined discussion of both written and visual sources is meant to offer an integrative perspective to the complex cults of the three holy kings of Hungary, underlining their various stages of evolution. The chapter discusses first the characteristics of the holy kings' individual cults and then looks for evidence in the time's written sources for the merging of the individual cults into a joint cult of the holy predecessors of the Árpáadian and Angevin dynasts. It underlines the royal support of this cult and highlights its various purposes, i.e., to revere one's holy predecessors as a guarantee of things' good functioning, or to acquire sacred capital and political legitimacy. By looking both at the Hungarian (Árpáadian and Angevin) and foreign (Neapolitan Angevin) visual evidence, it establishes the moment of emergence of the iconography of the three *sancti reges Hungariae* around the mid-fourteenth century. Although the support of this cult is mainly a royal affair during the second half of the thirteenth and the first half of the fourteenth century, other supporters and promoters (e.g., ecclesiastical figures, noblemen, burghers, etc.) started to appear during the second half of the fourteenth century.

These new supporters and promoters contributed to the generalization of the cult, that is, the spreading and transformation of the *sancti reges Hungariae* into the patron saints of the country. Because the first murals with the holy kings' collective image started to appear only during the late-fourteenth century, this first chapter has the purpose to offer the background information for the cult of Hungary's holy kings and the premises for understanding their representation in religious mural painting.

The iconographic analysis of the murals depicting Hungary's holy kings commences with the next chapter which examines the main iconographic features (both individual and collective) of the representation in religious mural painting of the Hungarian royal trio. By looking into the question of patronage and commissionership, it establishes that the donors' motivation for venerating the *sancti reges Hungariae* and for having their images in church decoration were both devotional and political. It then shows how the pictorial trio of Hungary's holy rulers was employed in various historical circumstances for the purpose of political propaganda and how, by means of complex visual and heraldic strategies, the collective image of the *sancti reges Hungariae* conveyed efficiently ideological messages.

Continuing the iconographic analysis, the following chapter examines in detail another iconographic type which gathers only the effective rulers and excludes St. Emeric. After examining in detail the iconographic characteristics of this group of murals which selects Sts Stephen and Ladislas only, places them on the pillars of the triumphal arch, and depicts them in the company of the Old Testament Prophets, the analysis turns to the discussion of a number of various written sources (e.g., political-theoretical and historical works, saints' lives and offices, sermons, etc.). They reveal the attempt of medieval authors at shaping the image of the two holy kings after the model of the two Old Testament Kings Solomon and David, presenting thus St. Stephen as a predominantly wise and righteous ruler and St. Ladislas as a predominantly brave and strong ruler. These sources help one understand the reasons why the two Hungarian holy kings have been depicted in the company of the Old Testament Prophets, whereas the architectural symbolism of the place their images were located in (i.e., the pillars of the triumphal arch) reveals the awareness of medieval iconographers that Sts Stephen and Ladislas have been ambivalent figures, both sacred (saints) and secular (kings), and that they have been the embodiment of the two main royal virtues, namely, wisdom and strength. The examination of the frescoes' chronological distribution reveals that this iconographic type precedes the depiction of the *sancti reges Hungariae* as a trio, whereas looking into the problem of commissionership establishes another interesting devotional pattern for the donors of murals depicting Sts Stephen and Ladislas.

Examining both written and pictorial evidence, the next chapter addresses the diffusion of St. Sigismund's cult from Bohemia to Hungary during the late-fourteenth century and the saint's subsequent transformation during the fifteenth century into one of the patrons of the

country. In so doing, it assesses the significance of King Sigismund's actions to promote his personal patron in Hungary and shows that the king emulated the model of his father, Charles IV of Luxemburg. King Sigismund promoted his spiritual patron within his country and associated him with St. Ladislav, the traditional patron of Hungary; he succeeded, thus, to accommodate the foreign saint to a new home and to transform him for a short interval into one of Hungary's holy protectors. The natural consequence of this "holy and faithful fellowship" was the cult's transfer from the royal milieu to that of the kingdom's nobility. Willing to prove their loyalty to the king, Hungarian noblemen decorated their churches with St. Sigismund's image and depicted him in the company of the *sancti reges Hungariae*. This chapter illustrates how a period's political transformations facilitated the spreading of a new saint's cult from his cult center to another region, and that a saint's veneration was sometimes motivated politically.

The next chapter is a complex case study which examines in detail those representations of holy kings that have been commissioned or used by Orthodox Romanians, as well as those depictions made by painters of Byzantine tradition, who worked for either Catholic or Orthodox patrons. After a brief overview of scholarship and several methodological clarifications concerning the question of hybridity in medieval religious art, the pictorial and devotional hybridity of these images is analyzed at several levels, namely: the murals' internal features, the saints' accompanying inscriptions, the images' iconographic context, and their commissioners. This analysis reveals that the discussed levels of hybridity functioned in different ways, depending on the images' specific contexts of creation, commissioning, and usage. When painting these Catholic saints, the artists formed in the Byzantine, artistic tradition made continuous adjustments in the process for conveying the meaning requested by their commissioners, but their low familiarity with these saints has led to iconographic departures or peculiarities in the iconography of the *sancti reges Hungariae*. These saints' accompanying inscriptions in Old Church Slavonic or mixed languages reveal, on the one hand, the awareness that Hungary's holy kings belonged to a different cultural and confessional background than that of the painters and their commissioners, and, on the other hand, they show the artists' and patrons' attempt at assimilating these Catholic holy rulers. The examination of the relationship between these images and the neighboring representations in the Orthodox churches in Crișcior and Ribița indicates that their particular iconographic setting enriched the meaning of the three *sancti reges Hungariae*, who were perceived by the two churches' patrons as originators and guarantors of legal rights. The discussion of donors established new patterns of devotion and artistic patronage which reveal that the artistic and devotional hybridity of these images was equally meaningful for their painters, commissioners, and medieval audience. The transgression of artistic and confessional borders by the three *sancti reges Hungariae* was undoubtedly the direct consequence of their high popularity during the Late Middle Ages,

Hungary's holy kings succeeding to acquire a political, social, and also devotional relevance for the larger community of faithful, Catholic and Orthodox alike.

The concluding chapter of the dissertation summarizes the main findings of this new research on various devotional and political aspects in the iconography of the *sancti reges Hungariae* in religious mural painting between the fourteenth century and the early-sixteenth century. Secular and sacred figures alike, the three holy kings of Hungary were highly cherished for the role they played in the existence of both the Hungarian Kingdom and its Catholic Church, having managed to acquire their sanctity precisely on account of their major part assumed during their lives in the country's political and religious affairs. The veneration of the *sancti reges Hungariae* by the kingdom's various estates and ethnic groups, and the subsequent commissioning of murals with their image functioned sometimes as a statement of the donor's political allegiance either to the king or directly to the kingdom. However, the political component of these depictions did not exclude the personal veneration of the three royal saints by the murals' commissioners, many of them being (or having their family members) named after them. The *sancti reges Hungariae* succeeded to become a powerful symbol of the country, which was used equally by Hungarian kings and nobility: the former for proving their legitimacy to rule the kingdom, whereas the latter for showing their political allegiance to the ruling king or – whenever the king's person was considered unsuitable to rule – directly to the kingdom and against the king himself. During the fifteenth century, the veneration of St. Stephen, St. Emeric, and St. Ladislav disseminated in various degrees among all the kingdom's estates (i.e., Hungarian and Szekler noblemen, Saxon citizens, etc.), ethnic groups (i.e., Hungarians, Saxons, Slovaks, Szeklers, Vlachs/Romanians, etc.), and even confessions (i.e., Catholic and Orthodox). The outcome of this long process was the final transformation of the *sancti reges Hungariae* into veritable symbols of the country/kingdom.

Curriculum Vitae

Education

- 2010- PhD in Medieval Studies, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary (supervisors Gábor Klaniczay and Béla Zsolt Szakács)
- 2008-2009 MA in Medieval Studies, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary (supervisors Gábor Klaniczay and Béla Zsolt Szakács)
- 2005-2008 BA in History and Theory of Art, National University of Arts, Bucharest, Romania (supervisor Corina Popa)
- 2000-2005 BA in Communication and Public Relations, University of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania (supervisor Nicolae Perpelea)

Scholarships, Grants, Awards

- 2016 ICR Scholarship for Romanians Abroad, Romanian Cultural Institute, Bucharest, and “1 December 1918” University, Alba Iulia, Romania
- 2014-2015 ARCS US-based Pre-doctoral Fellowship, American Research Center in Sofia, Bulgaria
- 2013-2014 PhD Student Scholarship CEEPUS-III, “Sts Cyril and Methodius” University, Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria
- 2013 PhD Student Scholarship, National Scholarship Programme of the Slovak Republic, University of Trnava, Trnava, Slovakia
- 2012 CEMS Teaching Fellow, “Ivane Javakhishvili” Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, Georgia

Conference Papers Relevant to the Dissertation

- 2016 “Sfinți regali și propagandă politică: Cultul Sf. Sigismund de Burgundia și regele Sigismund de Luxemburg (1387-1437)” [Royal Saints and Political Propaganda: The Cult of St. Sigismund of Burgundy and King Sigismund of Luxemburg (1387-1437)], Public Lecture, *Seminar of the Department of Medieval and Pre-modern History and Art History*, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
- 2016 “A *sancta et fidelis societas... Hungarica?* The Cult and Iconography of St. Sigismund in Late-medieval Hungary”, Public Lecture, *The Middle Ages in Motion (Středověk v pohybu) Lecture Series*, Art History Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic
- 2015 “Hybrid Art or Hybrid Piety? The Representation of the Catholic Holy Kings of Hungary in Medieval Orthodox Churches of Transylvania”,

Art Readings 2015: Heroes/Cults/Saints. On the Occasion of the 500th Anniversary since the Martyrdom of St George the New Martyr of Sofia, Institute of Art Studies of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria

- 2014 “King Sigismund of Luxemburg’s Promotion of St. Sigismund of Burgundy’s Cult and Its Artistic Expression in Late-medieval Hungary”, *International Medieval Congress*, University of Leeds, Leeds, United Kingdom
- 2014 “Patronage as Means of Mobility for the Cult of Saints: The Case of the Arpadian Saints in the Fourteenth Century”, *Circulation as a Factor of Cultural Aggregation: Relics, Ideas and Cities in the Middle Ages*, Masaryk University in Brno, Institute of Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, University of Lausanne, Telč, Czech Republic
- 2013 “A Holy Bishop among Holy Kings in the Murals of Mălâncrav (Malmkrog, Almakerék)”, Public Lecture, *OTKA Saints Colloquia Series*, Department of Medieval Studies and OTKA Saints Project, CEU, Budapest, Hungary
- 2013 “The Pillars of the Hungarian State and Church: Shaping the Image of St. Stephen and St. Ladislav after the Old Testament Kings Solomon and David”, *International Medieval Congress*, University of Leeds, Leeds, United Kingdom
- 2010 “The *Apostles* of the Hungarian Church: The Altar Space Iconography of the Hungarian Kingdom’s Medieval Churches”, *Matérialités et immatérialité de l’église au Moyen Âge* Colloquium, New Europe College, Bucharest, Romania

Publications Relevant to the Dissertation

- 2017 [with Anna Adashinskaya] “New Information on the Dating of the Murals of St. Nicholas Church in Ribîța: A Hypothesis”, *MuseIKON. A Journal of Religious Art and Culture/Revue d’Art et de Culture Religieuse* 1 (2017): 25-44.
- 2017 “A Holy Bishop among Holy Kings in the Frescoes of Mălâncrav (II)”, *Transylvanian Review/Revue de Transylvanie* Vol. XXVI, No. 2 (Summer 2017): 94-110.
- 2017 “A Holy Bishop Among Holy Kings in the Frescoes of Mălâncrav (I)”, *Transylvanian Review/Revue de Transylvanie* Vol. XXVI, No. 1 (Spring 2017): 90-104.

- 2016 “A New *sancta et fidelis societas* for Saint Sigismund of Burgundy: His Cult and Iconography in Hungary during the Reign of Sigismund of Luxemburg”, *The Hungarian Historical Review. Acta Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae – New Series. Special Issue “Saints Abroad”* Vol. 5, No. 3 (2016): 587-617.
- 2016 “The Social Status of Romanian Orthodox Noblemen in Late-medieval Transylvania According to Donor Portraits and Church Inscriptions”, in *Études Byzantines et Post-Byzantines*, edited by Nicolae Șerban Tanașoca and Alexandru Madgearu, vol. 7, 205-265. Bucharest and Brăila: Editura Academiei Române and Muzeul Brăilei “Carol I” – Editura Istros, 2016.
- 2016 “Patterns of Devotion and Traces of Art. The Pilgrimage of Queen Elizabeth Piast to Marburg, Cologne, and Aachen in 1357”, *Umění/Art* LXIV/1 (2016): 29-43.
- 2015 “Patterns of Devotion and Traces of Art. The Diplomatic Journey of Queen Elizabeth Piast to Italy in 1343-1344”, in *Convivium. Exchanges and Interactions in the Arts of Medieval Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterranean. Seminarium Kondakovianum Series Nova II/2*, 98-111, edited by Michele Bacci and Ivan Foletti. Turnhout: Brepols, 2015.
- 2012 “The *Pillars* of the Medieval Hungarian State and Church”, in *Matérialité et immatérialité dans l’Église au Moyen Âge. Actes du Colloque organisé par: Le centre d’Études Médiévales de l’Université de Bucarest, Le New Europe College de Bucarest et L’Université Charles-de-Gaule Lille 3 à Bucarest, les 22 et 23 octobre 2010*, edited by Stéphanie Diane Daussy, Cătălina Gârbea, Brândușa Grigoriu, Anca Oroveanu, and Mihaela Voicu, 453-466. Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2012.
- 2010 “Political Aspects of the Mural Representations of *sancti reges Hungariae* in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries”, *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU*, Vol. 16, 93-119, edited by Katalin Szende and Judith A. Rasson. Budapest: Central European University, Department of Medieval Studies, 2010.