



The Public Defense of the Doctoral Dissertation of

Emese Muntán

on

**Negotiating Catholic Reform: Global Catholicism and Its
Local Agents in Northern Ottoman Rumeli (1570s-1680s)**

will be held on

Monday, 21 June 2021, at 4:00 pm

Examination Committee

Chair: László Kontler, CEU, Department of History

Members: Gábor Klaniczay, CEU, Department of Medieval Studies

Tijana Krstić, CEU, Department of Medieval Studies
(supervisor)

Antal Molnár, Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA),
Institute of History, Budapest

Katalin Szende, CEU, Department of Medieval Studies

External Readers: Eleni Gara, University of the Aegean, Department of Social
Anthropology and History, Mytilene

Ronnie Hsia, The Pennsylvania State University (PSU),
Department of History

The doctoral dissertation is available for inspection on the CEU e-learning site.
Should you wish to access it and/or join the defense that will take place online,
contact Csilla Dobos (dobos@ceu.edu)

Dissertation Abstract

In my dissertation, I examine the plural manifestations of Catholicism in seventeenth-century Ottoman Europe, with a focus on Bosnia, Slavonia-Srem, and the Banat—regions to which I collectively refer as northern Ottoman Rumeli. My work engages with a number of research questions that have been central in the international scholarship on early modern global Catholicism, but which so far have rarely been asked in the context of Ottoman Europe. These questions include: 1. What did it mean to be a Catholic in different contexts throughout the world in the early modern period? 2. What were the criteria according to which someone was regarded as belonging to one denomination or the other in the eyes of religious authorities? and 3. How did global, local, and microregional variants of Catholicism interact and shape one another?

While I address these issues and analyze the complexity of the regional variants of Catholicism in seventeenth-century northern Ottoman Rumeli, in the process I also situate the area in the history and historiography of early modern Catholic missions. My work specifically focuses on how the sacramental reforms of Trent were received and negotiated in the religiously and legally pluralistic context of these areas. Within this interpretative context, I primarily analyze two topics, *marriage* and *baptism* in the context of communities where people with various ethnic and denominational backgrounds lived in close proximity. At the same time, I also examine the multilayered local contexts and multi-confessional agency that could create such local variants of confessional meaning-making. Thus, while I demonstrate what it meant to be a Catholic missionary as well as a Catholic subject in early modern northern Ottoman Rumeli, I introduce other, non-Catholic actors who also shaped the impact of Tridentine reforms in this region, in particular the Serbian Orthodox clergy and the local Ottoman judges (*kadis*). With this approach, I shed light on heretofore less explored interactions between Catholic missionaries and other local communal representatives. At the

same time, I bring various groups of people in the center of analysis, who were the catalysts of these interactions, but who, in the traditional institutional history of the missions, figure as rather ‘passive’ participants.

The timeframe of the dissertation encompasses the period between the second half of the sixteenth and the end of the seventeenth century. In terms of primary sources, I draw primarily on published and unpublished Catholic missionary letters and reports and cross-read them with other types of primary sources of mainly Ottoman provenance. In particular, my analysis focuses on different missionary expressions of doubt regarding the local practices of administering the sacraments, i.e., on questions that were addressed to the congregations of the Roman Curia and which are commonly referred to as *dubia circa sacramenta* in canon law. In terms of methodology, the dissertation engages with recent research questions and debates from the fields of early modern global Catholicism, confessionalization, theology, Ottoman studies, anthropology of religion, and Eastern Christian studies.

The doctoral thesis is divided into five chapters. In the first chapter, I discuss the conceptual framework, historiographical background, territorial focus, terminology, sources, as well as the theoretical and methodological background that inform and underpin my analysis. In terms of historiography, I have sought to bridge the gap and mitigate the disconnect between the international and regional scholarship on early modern Catholic missions within as well as outside of Europe and at the same time situate my research in these historiographical traditions. Moreover, I have also addressed a number of pressing research questions in current Ottomanist historiography regarding the Ottoman politics of managing religious diversity in the confessional age. In terms of history, I devoted special attention to present the peculiar historical evolution and geopolitics of the analyzed regions, mainly focusing on the history of the medieval polities encompassing Bosnia, Slavonia-Srem, and the Banat, the ethno-religious composition and demographic transformations of these regions, the nature of the

Ottoman conquest, and the concomitant population migrations across the Balkan peninsula during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The second chapter introduces the main agents who were involved in the local realization of Catholic missionary endeavors in seventeenth-century northern Ottoman Rumeli. In the first part of the chapter, I discuss the issue of protecting and representing various Christian communities throughout the Ottoman realm and what this process and ideal of protection would actually entail in a specific local context, such as northern Rumeli. I have especially focused on the ‘safeguarding’ role of the Franciscans of Bosnia, on the repercussions of the consolidation of the Serbian Orthodox Church for the local Catholics, and the role local *kadis* could potentially assume in the everyday lives of Christian communities. In the second part of the chapter, I present the motivations that informed and underpinned the papacy’s missionary reform program in the analyzed regions and the factors that circumscribed Rome’s understanding about the number and nature of Catholic communities in this part of the Ottoman realm. At the same time, I also discuss the local dynamics of these areas and the interactions between various agents that decisively shaped and complicated the course of Catholic missionary activities and the implementation of Tridentine sacramental reforms in this region.

In the third chapter, I examine the inter- and intra-communal dynamics of various forms of illicit and invalid marriages and analyze these phenomena from a comparative perspective and both on local and trans-imperial levels. First, I provide a background analysis of the theological and legal development and understanding of the institution of matrimony in Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Islam. Then, I present the ways in which Catholic missionaries active in northern Ottoman Rumeli as well as local Catholics made sense of the new marriage regulations of Trent, and occasionally, made them more agreeable to their own needs. At the same time, this part of the dissertation seeks to reevaluate the function of Orthodox priests and Ottoman *kadis* in Catholic matrimonies,

approaching them not merely as confessional rivals with whom the missionaries always had to compete but as agents active in shaping local articulations of what it meant to be a Catholic. The chapter, thus, sheds light on the ways in which Catholic missionaries and local Catholics interacted not only with one another but also with other ‘religious and communal brokers’ and groups in a particular local context, where they were part of the complex religious and legal economy of the Ottoman Empire.

In the fourth chapter, I analyze the problem of mixed marriages and baptisms in seventeenth-century northern Rumeli. In the first part, I provide a short introduction about the Catholic impediments of the disparity of cult as well as mixed religion that circumscribed the understanding of Catholic-non-Christian and Catholic-Orthodox mixed marriages, respectively in the analyzed period. Then, I illustrate how Catholic-Muslim as well as Catholic-Orthodox mixed marriages would create distinct constellations of religious coexistence and reconfigure confessional boundaries. In the second part of the chapter, I discuss how the sacrament of baptism was molded and contested in various Orthodox-Catholic encounters. At the same time, I also tackle the issue of how baptism was occasionally appropriated by Muslims and what were the potential motivations that would prompt various Muslims to seek Christian baptism.

Overall, the dissertation demonstrates that the implementation of Tridentine reforms in the analyzed areas was informed, circumscribed, and complicated by a range of factors, including local demography, geography, the specific nature of the local communal and religious leaders as well as the peculiar dynamics of their interactions, and not least, the local articulations of communal as well as denominational belonging. Accordingly, the shaping of different decrees eventually became a sort of ‘power game’ among Catholic missionaries, the Roman congregations, Orthodox clerics, Ottoman judges, and various local groups and individuals (Catholics as well as non-Catholics) on the ground.

Curriculum Vitae

Education

- 09/2015–06/2021 PhD, Central European University, Department of Medieval Studies, Budapest, Hungary
- 08/2012–06/2014 MA, Comparative History of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary
- 09/2010–06/2012 MA, Hungarian Language and Literature, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary
- 10/2007–06/2010 BA, English-Hungarian Language and Literature, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Research Experience

- 09/2015–12/2020 Junior Research Fellow, Central European University, Department of Medieval Studies, OTTOCONFESSIO ERC Project (“The Fashioning of a Sunni Orthodoxy and the Entangled Histories of Confession-Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th –18th Centuries,” Project ID: 648498, PI: dr. Tijana Krstić), Budapest, Hungary
- 10/2019–12/2019 Visiting Researcher at Freie Universität Berlin, Friedrich Meinecke Institut

Fellowships and Awards

- 2020/2021 Award for Advanced Doctoral Students, CEU, Vienna—Budapest
- 2019 RefoRC (Reformation Research Consortium) Paper Award 2019 for the paper, “Uneasy Agents of Tridentine Reforms—Catholic Missionaries in Southern Ottoman Hungary and Their Local Competitors in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century”, presented at the Ninth Annual RefoRC Conference on Early Modern Christianity in Bologna, 15–17 May 2019 and published in the *Journal of Early Modern Christianity*
- 2018/2019 Global Teaching Fellowship Program Fellow at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest
- 2013/2014 Religious Studies Best Thesis Award, CEU, Budapest
- 2013/2014 Hanak Prize for the Best Thesis at the Department of History, CEU, Budapest

Key Publications and Research/Innovation Products

“Brokering Tridentine Marriage Reforms and Legal Pluralism in Seventeenth-Century Northern Ottoman Rumeli”, to appear in Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu (eds), *Entangled Confessionalizations? Dialogic Perspectives on the Politics of Piety and Community Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th-18th Centuries*, (Gorgias Press, forthcoming 2021)

“Uneasy Agents of Tridentine Reforms—Catholic Missionaries in Southern Ottoman Hungary and Their Local Competitors in the Early Seventeenth Century”, *Journal of Early Modern Christianity*, Vol. 7, Issue nr. 1(2020): 151-175.

“Jezsuita „informátorok” és szerepük a Dél-Hódoltság ortodox közösségeinek megítélésében a 17. század első évtizedeiben” [Jesuit “informants” and the Orthodox communities of southern Ottoman Hungary in the early seventeenth century] in B. Székely Dorottya Piroska et al (eds), *Közvetítő rendszerek, médiumok és hatalomgyakorlás a kora újkori Európában* [Knowledge transfer, media, and the exercise of power in early modern Europe], (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 2021), 134-154.

“Felekezeti határok áthágása — Törvénytelen és vegyes házasságok a 17. századi Temesközben és a Szörénységben” [Confessional transgressions – illegitimate and mixed Marriages in seventeenth-century-Banat] in Gábor Itzész (ed.), *Viszály és együttélés: Vallások és felekezetek a török hódoltság korában* [Conflict and coexistence: Religions and denominations in Ottoman Hungary], (Budapest: Universitas, 2017), 89-107.

Five Key Scientific Talks and Presentations, Conference Contributions

Situating Ottoman Europe, Workshop at Princeton University, 6-7 December 2019, invited speaker. The title of my talk: “Approaching Global Catholicism in Early Modern Ottoman Europe”

Forschungskolloquium zur Geschichte der Frühen Neuzeit, Wintersemester 2019/2020, 11 November 2019, Friedrich-Meinecke-Institut, FU Berlin, invited speaker. The title of my talk: “Early Modern Global Catholicism and Ottoman Europe: Approaches, Sources, and Challenges”

Ninth Annual RefoRC Conference on Early Modern Christianity, Fondazione per le Scienze Religiose Giovanni XXIII, Bologna, 15-17 May 2019. The title of my talk: “Uneasy Agents of Tridentine Reforms—Deviance and Conflict in the Catholic Missions to Southern Ottoman Hungary (ca. 1572–1630)”

Entangled Confessionalizations? Dialogic Perspectives on Community and Confession-Building Initiatives in the Ottoman Empire, 15th-18th Centuries, Central European University, Budapest, 1-3 June 2018. The title of my talk: “Brokering Marriages and Baptisms in Northern Ottoman Rumeli in the Seventeenth Century”

Global Reformations – Transforming Early Modern Religions, Societies, and Cultures, University of Toronto, 27-30 September 2017. The title of my talk: “Confessional Transgressions in the Household – Negotiating the Legitimacy of (Inter)marriages in Seventeenth-Century Banat”