

Theses of Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

Kristóf Szuromi

**In the shadow of the enemy stereotype: European aspects of the
Ottoman image –
Positive approaches in the 16th–17th century**

Supervisor: Sándor Óze DSc

Pázmány Péter Catholic University

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Doctoral School of History



Segment of the Epitaph in Zwickau (Zwickau, Marienkirche,1574)
(photography: Kristóf Szuromi)

I. Preliminaries of the research, raising the problems

The purpose of this dissertation is to introduce, compare and analyse the more positive images and opinions about the Ottomans in the 16th–17th century. Due to a depiction, that has not yet been published, this dissertation aims to analyse a rarely discussed and quite a positive 16–17th century topos, which also had confessional connections: the depiction of the Merciful Samaritan as a Turk.

The dissertation attempts to give answers to several questions: What are the possible explanations to the Merciful Samaritan-simile? In what context do these sort of illustrations occur? Is this only an individual case, concentrated to a single territory, or a topos, that can be found in other parts of Europe? What are the chances of a similar comparison existing in 16th–17th century Hungary or Transylvania?

There are also more general questions, which are important for the research: What similarities, or differences of the Ottoman image and its more positive aspects can be found in different parts of Europe? How much could the various countries influence each other in this case? What are the factors that define the negativity, or apocalyptic features, or even the positive opinions of the Ottoman image? And also what are the common points, mutual overlaps between the Catholic and Protestant Ottoman images and when can we definitely draw the line between the two sides?

The research considering the early modern Ottoman image, and most of all its negative aspects, nowadays has a vast amount of

well elaborated literature both at home and abroad. This well researched state was also made possible by the plentifulness of contemporary sources. In contrast, the research of the positive aspects, which were present in a much smaller proportion, only began to be truly exploited in recent years. Publications about this topic are far less in numbers, and we can mostly see them as part of the works concerning the Ottoman image in general. Those publications, which are clearly about the positive aspects, usually concentrate on the period prior to 1529 (which is understandable, since before the siege of Vienna, the Ottoman image and the opinions about the war against the Turk were more divided, and it is easier to find writings with a more positive tone from this period). From the 15th to the early 16th century it is easier to find sources for this, since many respected the Ottomans for their military strength, discipline, confessional unity and piety. The other main period of the positive image is the 18th century, which is also the time when Orientalism flourished. By this time the negative and cruel images of the Ottomans began to fade away from a significant part of Europe, giving place to the curiosity and admiration towards the majestic and mysterious Orient. The period between these two phases, which is the age of the negative and apocalyptic Ottoman image, had been examined less often searching for positive aspects. Although the negative image was the obvious dominant one in the majority of 16th–17th century Europe, the Ottoman image was never entirely homogenous and it is still not impossible to find a more positive opinion from this period.

II. Methods used for the dissertation

In order to detect possible positive images from the 16th–17th century, it is recommended to look at source materials, which could have been met by a wider audience (thus showing the possible influences left in the society), for example: sermons, news papers, pamphlets, dramas, paintings or other illustrations. There is a large emphasis on visual sources, partially due to the fact that the most important discoveries of the research are connected to 16th–17th century illustrations, and also because the widest spectrum of people could have been moved effectively through these illustrations (church paintings, line-works on pamphlets) and visuality. The presentation, analysis, interpretation of these help us to further tone our knowledge of this topic.

Thanks to the combined application of several methods we can gain a deeper, more colorful, more novel point of view even about the already known information as well. During this research the methods of comparative analysis, cultural transfer, cultural remembrance and historical visual culture (which are less exploited in Hungary) were used. Not only these methods complete for example the more traditional, Positivist approaches, but also provide more depth to the topic, and allows us to view it in a more complex, wider spectrum.

The source material used for this dissertation consists mostly of contemporary sermon collections, journals, pamphlets and

other written tractates, sources that could have been accessible to a wider audience. In this way we can receive information about the social and cultural effect of a certain approach.

During the dissertation the more important European regions were examined and compared. The Holy Roman Empire fulfills a central role, since the negative Ottoman image was the most definitive, and due to the Confessional tensions, perhaps the most complex. Also the examined pictural topos was found on German territory. Traces of this topos can be found in the Netherlands, where due the anti-Habsburg and pro-Ottoman attitudes there was hope in finding further interesting contexts. Apart from Protestant territories it is also worthwhile to examine the Catholic side as well, in this case the tendencies in Poland and the attitudes of the Jesuits in Italy. Not only this provides a counterweight, but we can also see how the Catholic and Protestant sides had an effect on each other, what common sources common points they had regarding the Ottomans.

Compared to the mainstream images of that time period, it is a real curiosity to represent the Samaritan as a Turk on certain illustrations, which also have Confessional ties. Since Hungary was in the center of the contemporary military events and also had contacts with the German territories, during the dissertation some Hungarian and Transylvanian examples of the Ottoman image are examined.

The widely accessible newspapers (e.g. *Neue Zeitung*), the vast amount of different anti-Turkish sermons (*Türkenpredigten*),

speeches, prayers (*Türkenrede, Türkengebete*), verses, songs and dramas complicates the European Ottoman image we know, and strengthens the contemporary *Turcica*-literature. These materials can be found for example in the old prints collection (RNYT) of the National Széchényi Library in Hungary, in Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, in the VD16 and VD17 collections of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich, also in Martin Luther University's Universitäts-und Landesbibliothek Sachsen Anhalt and the Universitätsbibliothek of Leipzig in Germany.

There is also valuable material for this research in the library of the Jagiellonian University, Krakow (Biblioteka Jagiellońska), the Czartoryski Library and also in the Jesuit Archives in Rome (Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu). Apart from the written sources we must not forget about the artistic material, since a considerable amount of paintings, engravings, statues, etc. remained to this day, which also carry valuable information. In this case (apart from the image collections of the institutions mentioned above) the collections of the Hungarian National Museum, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the Netherlands and the Groeningemuseum in Brugge, Belgium provides significant support, as well as the German Foto Marburg (Deutsches Dokumentationszentrum für Kunstgeschichte) and the digital archives of Prometheus.

III. New results

The results of the researches for this dissertation can be summarised in the following theses:

1. The sermons examined to interpret the depiction of the Merciful Samaritan as a Turk confirm the explanation, that the Ottomans, being the creatures of God and as human beings are also capable of doing merciful deeds and they also deserve mercy.
2. The simile shows the Confessional conflicts and also a more open and hopeful mentality, of which Saxony became the home of one of the largest and so far quite a unique concentrations in Europe.
3. Despite the initial assumptions this simile was not only known by Lutherans, but among German Catholics as well.
4. This visual simile was not only an individual, isolated case, but also occurred in the dominantly Protestant parts of the Netherlands, which aimed to get independence from the Habsburgs and also made political and commercial gestures towards the Ottoman Empire. However the illustrations found here did not have such a deep meaning and were not in churches, unlike their Saxon counterparts.
5. We do not have knowledge about the existence of this simile in other Central-European Catholic circles so far, but

there were other positive aspects for example in Poland, where next to the Muslim-Christian cooperation and coexistence the historical remembrance preserved also positive memories of the Tatars. The other example is from the Jesuits of Italy, and in particular from the not yet discussed illustration of Giulio Mancinelli, where the Turk is shown as a misguided person, who is open to the Christian teachings and can be converted.

6. Despite the significant cultural transfer during the 16th–17th century, it is highly unlikely for the Merciful Samaritan-simile to exist in Hungary or Transylvania, and even the very few positive(ish) remarks have a menacing tone, or just fall out of the examined time period, or just occurred as an isolated case.
7. Even in territories, that were allied with the Ottomans or had been subjugated by them we can not find a simile with such a positive and optimistic tone, where the Turk is depicted as the Merciful Samaritan.

IV. Publications related to the dissertation:

Presentations in conferences:

Merciful Arch Nemesis: The European Aspects of the Early Modern Ottoman Image (Presentation in Hungarian). Doctoral Students Conference, Péter Pázmány Catholic University, Budapest, Hungary, 5 February 2016.

The Image of the Turk During the Thirty Years War (Presentation in German). Remembering the War: War Perception and War Interpretation in Central Europe During the First Half of the 17th Century. Tübingen University, Germany, 18-20 September 2014.

The „Cruel” and the „Samaritan”: Image of the Turk in Early Modern Europe and Hungary (Presentation in Hungarian). Space, Identity, Confessions and Culture in the Carpatian Basin and in Central Europe. Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Piliscsaba, Hungary, 28 November 2013.

From „Bloodhound” to „Samaritan”: Positive Images of the Turk from the 16th and 17th century (Presentation in German). 13. International Graduate Colloquium for History and Present Day of the Danube-Carpatian Region. Bad Kissingen, Germany, 31 October 2013.

Armenian and Hungarian Images of the Ottomans During the Early Modern Period (Presentation in English). Workshop on Historical

Dimensions of Armenian-Hungarian Relations. Yerevan State University, Armenia, 18 October 2013.

The Evolution of Positive and Negative Images of the Ottomans in Europe from the 16th, to the First Half of the 18th Century. (Presentation in Hungarian) XXXI. OTDK Winners' Conference. Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Piliscsaba, Hungary, 09 May 2013.

The Evolution of Positive and Negative Images of the Ottomans in Europe from the 16th, to the First Half of the 18th Century. (Presentation in Hungarian). XXXI. National Student Research Conference (OTDK)- Section of Humanities, University of Debrecen, Hungary, 03-05 April 2013. Awarded

Publications:

Book:

Balázs, József – Szuromi, Kristóf: *The European Image of Islam in the Light of Theodor Bibliander's Collection. (Az európai iszlámkép Theodor Bibliander gyűjteményének tükrében).* PPKE Történettudományi Intézet, 2016.

Studies in volumes:

Szuromi, Kristóf: „Merciful Arch Nemesis”: European aspects of the early modern Ottoman image. („Irgalmas Ősellenség”: A kora újkori oszmánkép európai aspektusai.) In: Balázs J – Bojtos A – Paár T –

Tompa Zs – Turi G – Vadász N (ed.): *Studia Varia Tanulmánykötet*. Budapest, 2016. pp. 482-495.

Szuromi, Kristóf: The „Cruel” and the „Samaritan”: Image of the Turk in Early Modern Europe and Hungary. (A „kegyetlen” és a „szamaritánus”: törökkép a kora újkori Európában és Magyarországon) In: Kránitz P - Szuly R. (ed.): *Társadalom térben és időben: Tanulmányok az új- és modernkori Magyarország eszme-, művelődés- és társadalomtörténetéből*. Piliscsaba, 2015. pp. 71-101.

Szuromi, Kristóf: The „Cruel” and the „Samaritan”: Image of the Turk in Early Modern Europe and Hungary. (A „kegyetlen” és a „szamaritánus”: törökkép a kora újkori Európában és Magyarországon) (Summary). In: *Tér, Identitás, felekezetek és művelődés a Kárpát-medencében és Közép-Európában*. Piliscsaba, 2013. pp. 8-9.

Szuromi, Kristóf: The Evolution of Positive and Negative Images of the Ottomans in Europe from the 16th, to the First Half of the 18th Century. (Az oszmánokról kialakult pozitív és negatív képek alakulása Európában a 16. századtól a 18. század első feléig) In: J. Újváry, Zsuzsanna (ed.): *Győzteseink szárnypróbálásai*. Piliscsaba, 2013. pp. 327-351.