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The Medieval Anti-Ottoman Combat and Its Emblematic Figure Saint Ioannes da Capistrano in Late Transylvanian Franciscan Plainchant

Keywords: Manuscript I. 3. Batthyaneum Alba Iulia, 18th century, antiphon, *Alleluia*

INTRODUCTION

The topic of liturgy and plainchant in the political context of the Crusades and the anti-Ottoman combat has recently gained more attention of researchers (Linder 2003; Housley 2013). Amnon Linder's monography makes a large and systematical overview of the masses *Contra paganos* or *Contra turcos*.¹ The book, however, only examines the sources found on a territory comprised between the Iberian Peninsula and Budapest. The Central-Eastern European territories (Poland, Bohemia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the historical lands of present-day Romania: Transylvania, Moldavia, and Wallachia) are missing from Linder's discussion, yet these are the areas known for the most intense anti-Ottoman battles in the late Middle Ages. Linder's solid historical research in the fields of politics, liturgy, and mentalities does not include any musicological point of view.

Another referential work on a case-study on a similar topic, this time a musicological one, was published by Manuel Pedro Ferreira, who wrote about the Franciscan protomartyrs of Morocco who were killed in 1220 by Muslims in Marrakesh (Ferreira 2014: 411-449).

¹ This mass was compiled during 1453-55 by bishop Bernard of Kotor (a city today in Montenegro, which was at that time under the ruling of the Venetian Republic) and confirmed by Pope Paul II in 1470. Its melodies are also kept in some manuscripts of Transylvanian origin (Șorban 2000: 156-162).

Franciscans were active in Eastern Europe as well, for instance in Transylvania and even outside the Carpathian arch, that is, in the area of the later Moldavia and Wallachia, all the way to the Black Sea (the Cuman territories of the 13th century).²

My research on the topic of the *Missa contra paganos* in the Central-European area is still work in progress. This paper, on a related subject, intends to show how the geographically marginal plainchant of Transylvania was enlivened as late as the 18th century through poetry and melodic paraphrases to pay homage to a newly sanctified figure and emblematic personality, Ioannes da Capistrano, praised in the Franciscan manuscript of the Bathyanum Library, Alba Iulia (Romania), MS. I. 3.

IOANNES DA CAPISTRANO

The life of Ioannes da Capistrano (1386-1456), a future Franciscan monk, attained “the highest [point] the medieval European person could reach: to be recognized as a saint” (Kulcsár 1987: 5). After a successful career in his Italian fatherland as a civil lawyer, he applied for admission into the Franciscan Order, and then he started to organize its rigorous observant branch.

As it was customary at the time, his activities were many and varied: he was a monk, an agitator, a peacemaker, an inquisitor, a conqueror of princes and crowds, and he pursued all of these from Italy to Flanders, and from France to Transylvania (Karácsonyi 1923: 336 and 1924: 73). He sentenced, attended executions, and organized pogroms against the Jews (see Gottheil and Rosenthal). On the other hand, he served as a priest and healer. He came to Transylvania to convert Eastern Orthodox “schismatics” as well as Hussites. In doing so, he passed through the cities of Cenad, Lipova, Timișoara, Oradea, Caransebeș, Alba Iulia, Turda, Teiuș, Hunedoara, and Hațeg.³ As a crusader,

² Some liturgical poems translated by Franciscans into the Cuman language are preserved. A facsimile of *Saginsamen bahasiz kanini*, f. 75r, 75v of the 1330 *Codex Cumanicus* (Library of St. Mark, Venice, Cod. Mar. Lat. DXLIX) is published with a melodic transcription made by myself in Tomescu 1991: 125-129. The same text, found in a codex preserved at Biblioteca Comunale di Todi is mentioned in Ferreira 2014: 421.

³ The Transylvanian German toponyms were given by the Saxon inhabitants of this region, who settled from the beginning of the 12th century onwards. The Latin, Hungarian and German names and also the medieval significances of the localities enumerated above in Romanian are given in parentheses: Cenad (Morisena/Csanád/Tschanad; *capitulum* seat), Lipova (Lippua/Lippa/Lippa; Franciscan monastery), Timișoara (Timisvaria/Temesvár/Temeschburg; residence city in Banat), Oradea (Varadinum/Nagyvárad/Grosswardein; bishopric seat), Caransebeș (Sebusvar/

he led the Catholics, but also Eastern Orthodox Romanians and Serbians, Hussites, Jews, heretics and pagans to the victory against the Turks at Belgrade (1456), in the name of Jesus (Kulcsár 1987: 185).

Ioannes da Capistrano and the anti-Ottoman combatant voivode Ioannes Huniades (c. 1406-1456) had written letters to each other before they met in person. Due to the intervention of Huniades, the observant Franciscans received a monastery in Târgu Mureş;⁴ the voivode also proposed to build them a monastery in the village of Chilieni⁵ in Eastern Transylvania, but this plan was not accomplished (Boros 1927: 39).

The future king of Hungary, Matthias Corvinus (son of Huniades) attributed his release from captivity in Prague (1458) to the vow to intercede for the sanctification of Capistrano (Kulcsár 1987: 104).

Capistrano's sanctification was proposed immediately after the death of Nicholas of Ilok (Bosnian king and Transylvanian voivode; 1477), but the legal procedure did not start then, although Matthias Corvinus appealed several times to the Pope, and numerous miracles were attributed to the deceased monk (Kulcsár 1987: 218). The Holy See permitted in 1515 that his commemoration day (23 October) shall be celebrated in Capistrano itself and in its diocese (region of Abruzzo), and in 1622 the permission was extended to all Franciscan monasteries (Kulcsár 1987: 222).⁶ When the Ottoman danger advanced to Vienna and the Hungarians fought for the liberation of their already occupied country, the figure of Ioannes da Capistrano came to the fore once again. The Hungarian capital Buda was delivered in 1686 and the celebration of Capistrano's sanctification took place in 1690. The final decision regarding his sanctification was only made in 1724 (Kulcsár 1987: 211-227).⁷

Karánsebes/Karansebesch; a stronghold), Alba Iulia (Alba Iulia/Gyulafehérvár/Weissenburg; middle-age capital of Transylvania), Turda (Thorda/Torda/Thorenburg; at that time a Transylvanian voivodal residence city), Teiuş (Spinorum/Tövis/Dornstadt; Franciscan monastery), Hunedoara (Huniad/Vajdahunyd/Hunnedeng; residence of the medieval noble family Hunyadi), Haţeg (Hatzag/Hátszeg/Hötzing; Franciscan monastery).

⁴ Latin: Novum Forum Siculorum; German: Neumarkt am Mieresch.

⁵ Latin: Kylien; German: Kilön; today's Covasna county.

⁶ This delay is similar to that of the Franciscan protomartyrs in Morocco, killed in 1220, whose cult was promulgated in Portugal in the middle of the 15th century and who were canonized only in 1481 (Ferreira 2014: 422).

⁷ In the USA, they are two San Juan Capistrano Spanish Franciscan Missions: in today's Bexar County, Texas (founded in 1731) and in Orange County, California (founded in 1776).

THE MANUSCRIPT AND ITS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Manuscript I. 3. from the Batthyaneum Library in Alba Iulia is dated 1730. On its leather binding is pressed the inscription “R[esidentia] V[incziensis] F[ratrum] B[ulgarorum] MDCCXXX”.

Some Franciscan monks and merchant families arrived in Vințu de Jos⁸ around 1700, fleeing from Bulgaria after Hungary was freed from the Turkish occupation (Veszely 1863: 444-445; Boros 1927: 102; György 1930: 132; Karácsonyi 1924: 256).⁹ Other refugees spread to Alba Iulia, Deva and in the region of Banat (Veszely 1863: 446; György 1930: 132). The Franciscans who settled in Vințu de Jos held their services first in the Orthodox church, then in 1729 they built a church and a monastery of their own (Veszely 1863: 446). The compound was designated as a *residentia* and it stayed that way until 1736, then, as its population grew in numbers, it became a convent (Veszely 1863: 446; György 1930: 135). The manuscript was probably made for this house, and the cult of Capistrano that it expresses could be related to the Franciscan tradition, the anti-Ottoman struggle and the ending of the sanctification.

Another interesting aspect of the local Capistrano cult is that this name appears several times as a monk appellative in contemporary writings: it is mentioned once in the 1690s and eight times in the 18th century, but it fades out in the next century when it is mentioned only once (Veszely 1863: 446-447; György 1930: 205-430; Karácsonyi 1923: 499).

The growing of the cult is shown by the foundation of the Capistrano Province of the Hungarian Franciscans in 1757. Furthermore, the “Bulgarite Province” ceased to exist in 1851, and its monasteries – including Binstum – were attached to the province named after St. Ioannes da Capistrano (Boros 1927: 194; György 1930: 132-133).

The Batthyaneum manuscript has 98 folios¹⁰ with original page numbering and some illuminated initials. It is a *graduale* with mass *proprium* and a few pieces from the *officium*. It is an atypical codex, containing parts from the feasts of All Saints, the Immaculate Conception (the “Bulgarite Province’s” patronymic); Christmas, Epiphany, Easter and Pentecost (including the three-day celebration for each of these); and *Corpus Christi*. The *sanctorale* contains only Franciscan feasts: the stigmata of St. Francis, the feast of St. Francis, the Blessed Capuchin Saints (later canonized), Ioannes da Capistrano, Petrus

⁸ Latin: Binstum; Hungarian: Alvinc; German: Unterwintz or Wintzendorf.

⁹ There are minor chronological discrepancies among the works cited.

¹⁰ 518 x 384 mm. For further codicological description, see Szentiványi, 1958: 19.

de Alcantara, Bishop Ludovicus [d'Anjou] and Margaritha de Cortona.¹¹ *Officium* parts appear only to Ioannes da Capistrano and Margaritha de Cortona. The codex ends with 12 *altus-tenor-bassus* cadences in part notation.

THE CAPISTRANO CULT IN THE 17TH AND 18TH-CENTURY REGIONAL MUSIC

My researches in Hungarian, Austrian and Polish libraries have turned out no sources connecting Capistrano and plainchant. To the best of my knowledge there are no published studies on this topic. But his name and cult as a saint do appear in later, non-plainchant styles.

The musical material from the 17th and 18th centuries of the neighboring Marian Province (subsuming the present-day territories of Slovakia, Burgenland and the Hungarian areas south of the Danube to the Lake Balaton) was thoroughly inventoried by Ladislav Kačić (Kačić 1991: 5-107; Murányi 1997: 123-128); recently, also the sources of the whole Carpathian Basin have been inventoried as well by Pál Richter (Richter 2007).

According to the Kačić catalogue, the characteristic styles of the Franciscan masses of the time are the choral and the Baroque styles. The “choral style” means the Flemish and Italian *a cappella* polyphonies (Kačić 1991: 7), and the Baroque style is the figural language of the *missa concertata* (Kačić 1991: 11-12). The latter one was still banished by the Franciscan *Deffinitorium* of 1709, which recommended that the choir masters should teach the youth the plainchant: “Magistri chori iuventutem illo cantu Gregoriano exercean, et a cantu figurato abstineant”.¹² This recommendation, however, is not found in the 1730 regulations of the Marian Province (Kačić 1991: 12). I suppose this was due to the spreading of modern styles in contemporary musical practice. Nevertheless, in Transylvania in the same year plainchant was still a practiced style.¹³

The mentioned Kačić catalogue of 81 manuscripts contains four masses in honor of Ioannes da Capistrano, copied between 1717 and 1740 (Kačić 1991: 50, 52, 54, 58-59). There are two mass-ordinaries (one in one copy, the other in three) – according to the cited incipits (Kačić 1991: 95), both in Renaissance style. They have the same music as other ordinaries, but the title in each case specifies the name of Capistrano.

¹¹ I am giving the original orthography of the codex.

¹² *Acta capitularia*, 1709 (Kačić 1991: 11).

¹³ A comparison between Transylvanian Franciscan music and the music of the Marian Province is best achieved when studying the *Organo missale* (1667) of Friar Ioannes Caioni (Kačić 1991: 8).

The Richter catalogue lists a mass *ordinarium*, titled *Missa S. Ioannis Capist.*, found in a 1717 manuscript choir book originating in Gran, Hungary (the commissioner is one of the 18th-century monks with the “Capistran” name).¹⁴

THE CHANT PIECES OF BATTHYANEUM MS. I. 3.

The notation is in square neumes on four-line staves. There are two melodies with the same text in honor of St. Ioannes da Capistrano: an *Alleluia* (see Ex. 1) and a *canticum* antiphon (see Ex. 2).¹⁵ It is worth mentioning that no other Transylvanian manuscript contains any piece that would refer to Capistrano (Șorban 1995: 467-472; Șorban 2000). The liturgical significance is accentuated by the presence of both Vespers (of the Eve and of the Evening); the same piece, *In utriusque vesperis, et ad Benedictus*¹⁶ is also used for the Lauds. The four-fold repetition of the text may be due to a certain convenience of the respective decadence period of the chant. The rhymed text is not without its own value: it invokes the dedicatory in seven ways, reviewing Capistrano’s activity, concluding with a two-lined *supplicatio*.

The *Alleluia* melody in mode 6 pertains to the latest style of plainchant and resembles the St. Francis *Alleluia* melody,¹⁷ as both are melismatic *contrafacta* of the melody *O consolatrix pauperum* (Szendrei 1990, 2: 292) – which is frequently found in the Hungarian sources from the 14th century onwards (Szendrei 1990, 1: 71).¹⁸

The Capistrano mass *proprium* is only represented by this item. The rest of the proper material must have been taken from the *De confessoribus* section of some other Franciscan codex.

¹⁴ Deposited at *Magyarországi Központi Ferences Könyvtár és Levéltár* [Central Library and Archive of the Franciscans in Hungary], Mus. 6, titled *Sacra Psalmodiographo in ordinem digesta ritu sacrae religionis Franciscanae . . . sub admirando Patrae Capistrano Sebach Venerabilis Conventus Strigoniensis . . . Provinciae Mariana in Hungaria custode emerito, conscripta. Per Patrem domulum Mlinarics, Organistam et Concio[natorem] . . . 1717* (pages 16-31 of the codex), (Richter 2007: 40-41, 100); its melodies are in the Richter catalogue in category II, “without Gregorian origins”. Yet there are notable similitudes between the *Sanctus* melody of H-Bfr Mus. 6 (Richter, II/704: c-d-e-c-f-e-d-c, continued a fifth higher: g-a-h-g-c’-h-a-g) to the *Magnificat* antiphon of Batthyaneum I. 3. (see Ex. 2).

¹⁵ Both music examples are given in the transcription of the author of this study.

¹⁶ On the page 176 of the codex Batthyaneum MS. I. 3.

¹⁷ On the pages 142-146 of the same manuscript.

¹⁸ This piece is given and treated in Schlager 1987: 331-332, 703-711.

Ex. 1. *The Alleluia dedicated to Ioannes da Capistrano – Batthyaneum MS. I. 3., pages 157-159.*

Ex. 2. *The canticum antiphon dedicated to Ioannes da Capistrano – Batthyaneum MS. I. 3., pages 176-178.*

The *canticum* antiphon is in mode 5, pertaining to the same newest plainchant style. It shows the technique of adapting modal stereotypes to fresh text, instead of composing a new melody. This antiphon applies the general patterns of mode 5, in a balanced construction of the melodic lines and cadences. It also uses contrasted text painting to correspond to the text. I have found the following parallels for the melodic construction (Dobszay and Szendrei 1999):

- OFM-122. MMM V/5143* (first line profile and general melodic development);
- Str-2, 4. MMM V/5124 (similar general melodic development);
- Str-3. MMM V/5073 (octave skip at the text contrast and its melodic continuation).

Concerning this last-mentioned characteristic, I wish to emphasize the contrast relationship between the words *virtutum* and *exterminator* and also the melodic culmination represented by the line *exterminator turcarum*.¹⁹

CONCLUSIONS

The anti-Ottoman content is a constant preoccupation in the Transylvanian plainchant over the centuries. The Transylvanian cultural area at the beginning of the 18th century is still adding *contrafacta* to the Western plainchant repertory. The formatting of the *Alleluia* and *canticum* antiphon follows the specific melodic rules of their respective mode and genre. According to research to date, this text and the pieces in honor of Capistrano seem to be unique in the Central-European plainchant repertory. The individual of whom the Hussites sang sarcastically at the time (Kulcsár 1987: 130) was praised in liturgical chants in Transylvania a quarter of a millennium after his death, due to his contribution to the anti-Ottoman victory.

And a final remark, the life-motto of St. Ioannes da Capistrano (Kulcsár 1987: 96) – “CApio, PIScor, TRAho, NOSco” [I comprehend, I fish, I obtain, I know] – retains its significance to this day.

¹⁹ Such illustrative processes are characteristic for Western plainchant, according to research in theoretical treatises and analytical demonstrations by Kohlhaas 2001.

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