

## KING MATHIAS IN HUNGARIAN AND EUROPEAN FOLKLORE

VILMOS VOIGT

*Eötvös Loránd University (Budapest)*

Kralj Matjaž King Mathias of the Slovenes, successor to Kresnik, and legendary conqueror of the Turks. Like Kresnik, Matjaž too was married to his sister, Alenčica, whom, in legend, he rescued from the Turks, or in Slovenian traditional ballad, from the underworld. Matjaž is also a king in the mountain, sleeping till the day of Slovenia's utter need, when he will emerge and save everything...

It is said that during World War II the peasants thought King Matjaž would ride again and save Slovenia.<sup>1</sup>

In Hungary and the bordering countries it is a well-known fact that the deeds of King Mátyás (Mathias) Corvin (original family name: Hunyadi) are of interest today not only to historians and cultural historians, but also to folklorists. This is due quite simply to the fact that tales, legends, myths, proverbs, etc. in which the king figures have been recorded not only in Hungarian folklore, but also in Slovenian, Slovak, and Ruthenian folklore of the past several centuries (practically speaking up till the present day). A succession of prominent Hungarian and non-Hungarian researchers of folklore have examined these themes. While the folklore phenomena of the Carpathian Basin or the northern and western areas of the Balkans are interrelated in thousands of other respects, the figure of the Hungarian king, who perished more than half a millennium ago, is possibly the most recognized common subject in this region, which itself can only be truly assessed within the framework of international research<sup>2</sup>.

The fact that for a long time innumerable stories have surrounded the Romanian origins of the father of King Mathias, János Hunyadi (? 1407/1409–1456, the famous military leader who defeated the Turks) and the possible lineage of the Hungarian

---

<sup>1</sup> *Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore Mythology and Legend*, vol. I, editor: Maria Leach, New York, 1950, p. 589–590. This is the only entry in up till now the most famous Folklore Dictionary, where King Mathias appears.

<sup>2</sup> In this review I refer to the well-known facts, thus I do not have to list here general works on the mentioned historic events.

king Sigismund of Luxembourg (1387–1437, while in 1410–1437, also the Holy Roman Emperor) is part of this international perspective. Numerous Hungarian heroes (including the young János Hunyadi, as Jankula, Mathias' uncle Mihály Szilágyi, and even King Mathias and his captains) regularly figure in Southern Slavic heroic epic poetry. And even these broader relationships cannot be comprehended entirely if we fail to take into consideration the further and more remote historical and folklore data and interpretations of this data, including materials also from Albanian, Moravian, Czech, Austrian and Italian sources.

The imagology of King Mathias is a highly illuminating topic in European comparative folklore, a topic to which we can recently add further parallels, even those of a typological (i.e. not genetic) nature. Here we can list only some motifs, e.g. the boy born amidst miraculous premonitions, the Christian ruler battling with the pagans, the king who protected the people and was the scourge of the lords, the ruthless yet fair ruler, the sovereign who is not only of non-aristocratic lineage, but of an outright peasant origin and who explores the country in disguise, and finally, the figure of the immortal returning hero – all these patterns could have been concocted in folklore of numerous peoples.

The birth and certain blossoming of humanism and renaissance in the 15<sup>th</sup> century Hungary, the influx of Italians and other nations, the until then unheard of splendor for Hungary, the spread of court culture, the carefully tailored political and military propaganda, the breaking of the ideological monopoly of the Church, and eventually, the final disbanding of the much feared professional soldiery (the so-called royal Black Army) into a gang of robbers represented new phenomena that could easily have been transformed into motifs of local or comparative folklore.

Neither was the private life of King Mathias short of novelistic twists and turns. The execution of László (his elder brother), his captivity in Prague, the betrothal to the daughter of the Czech ruler Jiří (George) Poděbrad, the election of the very young Mathias as king of Hungary by the common people on the “frozen waters of Danube”, the decision of the king to soon turn against his earliest supporters, the averting of several conspiracies (in which the majority of his favored Hungarian humanists in fact took active part), his ceaseless and endless military campaigns, his second marriage to a princess of Naples, his long and multifarious relationship with the historical Dracula (Vlad Țepeș), the capture of Vienna, his ambitions to become King of Bohemia, prince of Silesia, and indeed prince-elector of the Holy Roman Empire, and ultimately, his unexpected and peculiar death and the fate of the illegitimate son, János Corvin (1473–1504) chosen as his successor – all of them could seemingly be recorded not simply as history but as fiction. And indeed his contemporaries themselves must have often conversed and debated or invented explanations concerning such events. Considering that within the span of only a few decades after his death the greatest peasant war in Hungary took place (1514), the Hungarian kingdom itself ceased to exist following the defeat at Mohács in 1526, the southern and central regions of the country were conquered in the coming 150 years by the Ottoman Empire, and afterwards the century of Reformation and religious

struggles began, – the period of Mathias Heyday's rule could soon have been seen by the following generations as part of an irretrievable "golden age", while to some in Hungary it does seem so even today.

Folklorists have known for some time that an idealized image of the king emerged invariably in the folklore of the above-mentioned peoples. Ever since these texts were recorded in the folklore of these nations (essentially since the 19<sup>th</sup> century) the question was raised: where do the origins of this international agglomeration of multi-genre texts mentioning King Mathias lie? In the case of Hungarians (Croats and Slovaks) one could suppose that by this time (in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) the already long and official historical consciousness in Hungary had become part of the broader consciousness of the people (however, presumably through intermediaries), though in the case of Slovenian and Ruthenian, Romanian (etc.) folklore such an explanation is by no means self-evident<sup>3</sup>.

As early as 1842–1843, Matija Majar Ziljski published (in German) Slovenian songs about King Mathias. The first scholar of comparative folklore concerning King Mathias was the Galician philologist Zenon Kuzelja, a student of Vatroslav Jagić, the famous Slavist in Vienna. In a monograph (Kuzelja, 1906) he summarized these traditions of Slavic peoples (and Hungarians). Kuzelja is a representative of the comparative study of Slavonic languages and literatures of his time, most notably accepting the views on the migration of themes and motifs held by the eminent Russian philologist, A. N. Veselovsky. While we may be familiar today with a far broader array of information and texts, the methods and conclusions of Kuzelja (and of his teachers) nevertheless still deserve attention. A monograph published half a century later by a Slovak folklorist Ján Komorovský (1957) essentially adopted his approach, at most supplementing it with more historical and cautionary Marxist social commentary. In Slovenian philology several generations of outstanding scholars examined this subject. Ivan Grafenauer first surveyed the legends (1951a) and later the songs (1951b). He also gave scholarly consideration to the hypothesis that in Slovenian folklore Mathias could be considered a substitute for an almost mythical figure of earlier texts. The possibility of an "ancient, mythical" interpretation arose in particular in the case of Slovenian narrative or epical-lyrical songs; this interpretation was also maintained by scholars examining novels and novelists to the extent that they substituted Mathias not for the figure of the Hungarian king, but for the outlaw barons and rebels from amongst the people. Fortunately, some distinguished Slovenian scholars such as Milko Matičetov, Vilko Novak, Vlado Nartnik and others took a fairly cautious stance on this question. They and their colleagues drew attention to the fact that the themes of the texts mentioning Mathias also contain well-known international motifs (nearly all of which can be analyzed individually and point to various and divergent directions). Of these, the most notable is the Orpheus-motif known from the antiquity, and later the so-called Kyffhäuser

---

<sup>3</sup> In the following parts of my paper I do not give full references of all the works mentioned, because the summarizing works – included into my bibliography – contain detailed further references.

motif of the hero waiting in a cave and returning with his army (see Lukács 2001). Igor Kercha (2001) links the duration of the Ruthenian Mathias' tradition to the present day with the historical consciousness of the local population of the most north-eastern part of the historical Hungary, which has existed for as long as folklore texts have been collected in this sub-Carpathian region.

As far as Hungarian researchers of folklore are concerned, although from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> theoreticians of this field (Mátyás Rát, Miklós Révai, István Kultsár, Ferenc Kölcsey, János Erdélyi, or even János Kriza, Arnold Ipolyi, Pál Gyulai, etc.) considered contemporary Hungarian folklore as depository of the historical past, it was precisely the figure of King Mathias that they did not place in the foreground. While they published narratives containing the figure of Mathias, they failed to emphasize their "historical" importance. The Hungarian national poet Sándor Petőfi revealed why he advised no (modern) heroic epic to be written about Mathias: "Just don't take a king as your hero, not even Mathias. He too was a king, and one is a dog and the other is another dog" (i.e. one as bad as the other; see his letter to the famous Hungarian fellow poet, János Arany, February 23, 1847). After some hesitant initiative of Lajos Abafi, in fact Elek Benedek was the first (in 1902, in other words, fairly late) to place Mathias in the spotlight of Hungarian publications for the general public on folk poetry. The "anecdotes" related to the king were published by Béla Tóth in a six-volume series of common anecdotes in Hungary in a scattered way (*Magyar anekdotakincs* from 1898 onwards). It constitutes a work of exceptional importance for the Hungarian national and historical identity, but it is not a collection of proper folklore texts. It is also from here that Hungarian belletrists borrowed their stories of Mathias once inspired by folklore. However, the writers and the folklorists in Hungary were unaware at first of the role of Mathias in oral tradition being not at all unique to the Hungarian culture.

Needles to say, this is not applicable any more to the scholarly study of folklore in Hungary. Ágoston Pável was the first (in 1909) to connect the Slovenian "Orpheus theme" with the Hungarian texts. Actually, until the end of his life he endeavored to provide a monographic survey of the Slovenian and Hungarian King Mathias' lore, which he was not able to complete, however, notwithstanding the lectures he gave at the beginning of the 1940s at the University in Szeged. István Szémán (1912) reviewed Kuzelja's book, Rezső Szegedy (1916) examined the role of the Hunyadi family in Southern Slavic epic poetry, and József Ernyey in his various writings (1921) called for the importance of the Czech Mathias' tradition. On numerous occasions various scholars in Hungary expounded on the wealth of the Southern Slavic folklore. It is therefore all the more surprising that in the most prestigious ethnographic reference work (*A Magyarorság Néprajza*) published during the interwar years, professor Sándor Solymossy (1935: 218–227, 253–254), the leading Hungarian folklorist of the period, basically failed to recognize the majority of the outstanding international connections of Hungarian folklore concerning King Mathias. As early as the 1940s, however, his student Gyula Ortutay focused precisely on this international context in his articles and university lectures, urging the completion

of a comparative monograph (Ortutay 1942). His efforts, unfortunately, were in vain and he himself failed to write the so much heralded summarizing essay. János Horváth, the most notable positivist literary historian of the interwar years (who incidentally took interest in Hungarian folklore, at least that of the 19<sup>th</sup> century), did not discuss the stories pertaining to King Mathias in his writings. Another literary historian, Béla Zolnai (1921), also concerned himself exclusively with the literary history of the official Mathias' tradition.

Fortunately today the situation is quite different. Imre Ferenczi, Zoltán Ujváry, and in recent decades Ildikó Kriza (2007), Zoltán Magyar and others discussed the Mathias' tradition on innumerable occasions as it has figured in historiography and folklore, to mention only the most outstanding, well-known scholars. István Lukács (2001) provided an overview of the Slovenian material, while András Dávid (1978) and recently Károly Jung (2008) examined Southern Slavic folklore connections. Among literary historians, Tibor Kardos attempted – in sometimes hardly credible, but always ingenious manner – to assemble the information from the Mathias' era into a unified whole. István Fried reviewed the results of the comparative Hungarian philology. One may hope with good reason that the current anniversary year 2008 of the King Mathias' rule will bring further scholarly achievements.

After this introductory survey, two questions remain to be dealt with: what are the historical layers of this inter-ethnic Mathias' folklore; and how might one characterize this from a social-historical perspective? In spite of the difficulty of the task and the limits of the scope provided here, I shall attempt to reach some answers.

### **“Mathias’ folklore” before King Mathias?**

Given that the international parallels of several texts have old records (examples include e.g. the heroic older strata of *Solomon and Markolf* texts), the possibility arises that the name of the king was inserted into them later. This is conceivable but hard to prove. And there are no such examples dating back this far in Hungarian, despite the parallels in motifs.

About the stratification of the Orpheus and Kyffhäuser motifs, I already repeated above the common view in comparative folklore<sup>4</sup>.

### **Newly emerging genre(s) in the age of King Mathias**

It was Tibor Kardos (1955) who thought of the *trufa* (*jest*, *fabliaux*, *Schwank*) genre in Hungarian to be of Italian origin, to which there are references dating from the time of King Sigismund of Luxembourg. This is somehow conceivable, although

---

<sup>4</sup> For the broader context of Orpheus motif (unsuccessful return by the power of music from the other world) see the entry *Orpheus* in the international encyclopaedia of folk narratives (Ranke 2000, vol. 10, issue 1, p. 373–376). For the broader context of Kyffhäuser motif (immortal hero and his troops sleep in a cave, and will return in case of great danger) see the paragraph 7 of the entry *Entrückung* in the same encyclopaedia (Ranke 1984, vol. 4, issue 1, p. 53–54). See also the motto of my paper.

no one has come across such texts from Hungary, but the only information available concerning the *trufa* even from the era of King Mathias is of philological plausibility. At this historical point the references to *practical joke* appear in Hungary. (Examples include the story of the “traveling showman throwing peas through a keyhole” who is rewarded by King Mathias with a basket of peas so that he can practice; or the story “there was once a dog-market in Buda,” which might be rendered in an English tale as “once it came to pass, but only once”.) With respect to the first occurrences of these and their later transformation as part of the tradition, little more than conjecture has been made. On the other hand, the propaganda value of such stories is clear: the (hidden) message is that the King has a most modern technique in his castle, including doors with key-holes (a novelty in Europe of the time), or he has constantly developing markets with surprising new wares to purchase.

### **Kinds and genres of royal propaganda**

It is common knowledge that the Italian renaissance marked the beginning of a new era in the thousand years-old rulers’ propaganda in Europe. Hungary and especially King Mathias followed the new trend, bringing to his kingdom specialists educated specifically for this task. One of them, Antonio Bonfini, not only created the family genealogy (*De Corvinianae domus origine libellus*), but also wrote an ambitious work, the complete “Hungarian history” (*Rerum ungaricarum decades*), which took into consideration writings of the Hungarian historians. Janus Pannonius (1434–1472), an extremely talented poet from the Hungarian Croatia schooled to be a minion to the king, was among other tasks charged with provision of a heroic epistle collection from the battlefield, or a similarly magnifying poetic description of the king’s battles (*Annales*); but instead the haughty and individualistic poet wrote reflective elegies about the allegedly too long time that he spent with the royal army fighting the Turks (speaking almost exclusively about his own health, dreams and astrologic speculations). The Latin verses written by Janus Pannonius remained familiar to European humanist poets, but no folklore concerning King Mathias originated with him. Bonfini, on the other hand, for centuries remained an inexhaustible source for Hungarian historians.

One of the most interesting of these Corvinian propagandistic works is the small collection of reports entitled *De egregie, sapienter, iocose dictis ac factis regis Matthiae /ad ducem Johannem, eius filium liber/* (“The excellent, clever and witty sayings and deeds by King Mathias” /dedicated to his son/) by Galeotto Marzio (ca. 1427–1497), from which dozens of anecdotes could be borrowed at any times. Galeotto became a friend of Janus Pannonius while studying in Verona. It was on Janus’ invitation that he made a short visit to Hungary in 1461. The Italian humanist came for a longer stay in 1465 only to return home in 1472 at the time of conspiracy against the Corvin king. Because of his heretical work (*De incognitis vulgo*, 1477) Galeotto was imprisoned in Venice during the Inquisition and was only set free through the intervention of (among others) King Mathias. Following this he came to Hungary on many occasions to meet with Mathias, though he wrote the above-



mentioned collection of anecdotes not in Hungary, but in Italy in 1485, dedicating it to the King's son, János Corvin. It is not likely that Galeotto ever returned to Hungary after this year. We know little of the last years of his life (he died by 1497). The typical "itinerant humanist" with a life full of twists and turns was therefore the first hireling of King Mathias, and later joined the opposition against him, only to find himself in his debt at the end. In the small collection of stories (*De ... dictis ac factis...*) depicting life in the Hungarian court (which might be referred to as brief sketches in contemporary journalism) he proved to be a clever PR-specialist and a staunch adherent of the modern and cultured king. The Italian author ascribed to the Hungarian king some proverbs (with more or less credibility), which might be a good topic for further research (e.g. the well known quotation from Cicero [*Pro Mil.* IV. 10]: *Silent leges inter arma* was referred to in a vernacular document written later as one of the favorite sayings by Mathias in an innovative form: *Inter arma silent Musae*, which actually is not registered in international paremiology, but well-known in modern Hungarian<sup>5</sup>). We don't know how well Galeotto's Latin work was familiar in Hungary at the time of his contemporaries and afterwards. And although quite a few people looked for signs of what might be called "heretical" ideologies in this work, none were found.

Ultimately apart from generalities we have little idea of how the Hungarian king made practical use of the propagandistic works that he himself commissioned.

### **On the trail of the "political officers" of the Black Army**

In addition to the texts adapted by official historians, in Hungarian language literature there are "popular" stories about the era of King Mathias: first in the chronicle by István Bencédi Székely entitled *Cronica ez világnak jeles dolgairól* ("Chronicle about the Notable Affairs of This World", 1559) and later, in the work by Heltai entitled *Krónika az magyaroknak dolgairól* ("Chronicle about the Affairs of the Hungarians"), which was published posthumously by his widow in 1575. The author mentioned the popular stories as texts that he had heard from the "former soldiers of the Black Army".

Székely, born in Bencéd (Bențid in Romanian) in the region of Udvarhelyszék (Transylvania) sometime after 1500, studied first as a Franciscan monk and then as a student at the university in Cracow. From 1538 onwards he was an evangelical (Lutheran) pastor (later belonging to the so-called sacramentarian movement in the church). We know of his printed works dating from that time, written with intention of addressing all the social strata of Hungary. These included calendars, hymnals, catechisms and translations of psalms. He even embarked on a Hungarian translation of the Bible. The Transylvanian Saxon Kaspar Helth (Gáspár Heltai) was a decade younger than Székely. Born around 1510 in Heltau, today Cisnădie (Nagydisznód in Hungarian), he began as a Catholic priest. He learned Hungarian only around 1536

---

<sup>5</sup> I thank my colleagues László Szörényi and Gyula Paczoly for this reference.

and became a Lutheran (later also becoming a sacramentarian and indeed at the end of his life – an outright anti-Trinitarian). He joined hands with another Saxonian in Transylvania, the printer Georg Hoffgreff of Kolozsvár (Klausenburg, today Cluj / Napoca) in 1550. Heltai's remarkably diverse printing activities led to the wide range publication of popular and educational materials in Hungarian. It is not easy to say whether or not in 1530s István the “Székely” and the Saxon from Heltau did meet with the discharged soldiers of the Black Army who allegedly recounted the Mathias' stories. It was with the help of this army that the seventeen years-old János Corvin unsuccessfully attempted seizing power at the time of the death of King Mathias in 1490. In 1492, Pál Kinizsi, once the chief commander of the king's army and a very cruel soldier, routed the Black Army. Kinizsi died only a few years later (1494) and János Corvin, who in the meantime had taken side with the Jagellonian King Wladislaw (Ulászló) II of Hungary and as the viceroy (*banus*) of Croatia and Slavonia oversaw the defense of the country's south-western territories against the Turks, died in 1504 – just above his thirtieth birthday. This constituted the point in time until which former soldiers of King Mathias' army, or at least small contingents of them, might have stayed together, sharing some “common folklore”. By 1530 these soldiers would have been around 70 years old. It is conceivable that people listened with greater interest to their recounting in Transylvania, which in contrast to the rest of the country the Ottoman armies had largely avoided. We know little more, however, of exactly how and where István Székely or Heltai might have come into contact with this oral tradition. Nevertheless, their works are distinguished both by knowledge of the contemporary public opinion and understanding of the common folk. We have no reason to doubt that the soldiers of the Black Army were “ideologically” instructed by “political officers.” Undoubtedly one of the main themes was about the professional and mercenary army, not only well-trained and successful, but also forceful and ruthless in waging war in the name of “righteous and noble” goals in lands that usually lay far away from Buda. As for the “mother tongue” of the majority of these soldiers we can admit Hungarian, Czech, German, and further languages, because the soldiers were recruited from several regions. It made the international spread of narratives easier. Like so many iron-fisted kings of the feudal times, Mathias himself regularly came into conflict with the nobility, and although life of the common people was certainly not easy under the rule of the bellicose king, who constantly attempted to collect increasing amount of taxes in order to finance military ventures, yet under subsequent rulers the burdens continued to grow, while the benefits dwindled. It is conceivable that from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, popularity of the “our once great king” grew. *Mathias obiit, iustitia periit* “King Mathias died, justice ceased existing”, popular opinion might have said.

### **The splendid image of the Corvinus kingdom in contemporary Europe**

The tidings of a dynamic reformer and a rich, splendor-favoring king spread quickly: mainly across Austrian, Czech, Italian, and Romanian territories, but also in the more remote lands, like Germany and Poland, the Balkans and even



the Ottoman Empire. His envoys traveled widely in Europe and foreign delegates, who were masterfully dazzled in his court, came to Hungary from all directions, including Stambul and Rome, the Holy German Empire and even Muscovy. The king was indeed an erudite, a sovereign ruler who had firm opinion on numerous issues. People delivering weapons, luxury items, and splendidly decorated books to Hungary, returning back to their home countries undoubtedly told of the ruler who assured such an immensely rich market. Yet this could not have been the thematic basis for the “European folklore” about Mathias Hunyadi. If we take into consideration that in 1477 Eleonora, duchess of Ferrara, sister to the queen Beatrix of Aragon (from Naples), sent 56 varieties of carnival masks to Hungary, while on other occasions lions (who – according to the narratives – subsequently died just on the day of Mathias’ death!) were delivered to the king’s court, this nevertheless does little more than create the impression of a wealthy and somewhat barbarian country (like nowadays’ Kuwait or Abu Dhabi), in which there was money to spend on all sorts of luxury. And the idea that Mathias was the “hero” of Machiavelli’s work *Il principe* (“The Prince”, 1513) or that he was one of the main protagonists of the work by the German Emperor (1493–1519) Maximilian I entitled *Weiskunig* (“The Wise King”, with a pun to ‘The White King’), an allegory and illustration of the court pomp and splendor, is a mere suggestion put forward only by the subsequent scholars. It is nevertheless certain that inscriptions and depictions in many places immortalized the Hungarian king, and not only in Vienna, the place of his death, but even on the wall of a watch-tower in the Silesian town of Bautzen (in Lusatia). It is possible that in 1541, when the Turks sacked the royal library in the Buda castle containing magnificently illuminated Corvina codices, the soldier carrying the voluminous volumes had no previous knowledge of the great Hungarian king, but he must have noted the clear traces of unusual splendor, and the bulk of the treasures sooner or later reached the Sultan’s treasure house in Istanbul<sup>6</sup>.

Thus there was some foundation on which folklore concerning King Mathias could develop – and not only Hungarian. When in the first tale of the second night of *Le piacevoli notti*, the famed collection of tales by Giovanni Francesco Straparola (published in Venice in 1550), we read that Galeotto<sup>7</sup>, the rich king known from the so-called “Breton stories” of European tales, married *la figliuola di Mattias re di Ongaria, Ersilia per nome chiamata* (“the daughter of the Hungarian king Mathias named Ersilia, in comparison with whom there was in her time no one more beautiful, virtuous or refined in courtly life”), we notice that the notorious wealth of the Hungarian king goes without saying, as does the name of the daughter he never actually had.

Peter Burke in the sixth chapter of his well-known book *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (first published in 1978), speaks on the prototype of the “ruler” and mentions King Mathias, who fought against the Turks and after whose reign “justice ceased to exist”. When discussing other stereotypical rulers he mentions the king

---

<sup>6</sup> On the *carnival-like* features of life in Corvinian, and later – Hungarian court, see my paper: Voigt 2000.

<sup>7</sup> A popular family name in Italy, with no affiliation to the King Mathias’ court humanist.

traveling in disguise (i.e. the Harun al-Rasid *topos*) and lists Mathias among the examples of the Kyffhäuser motif. He is correct in all this and he draws a broad range of examples. Yet precisely because so many figures mentioned in his chapter, starting with King Arthur and Saint Olaf, the founder of the feudal Norwegian Kingdom, and including the “real czar” figures as pretenders to the Russian throne and the bellicose Swedish King Charles the XII from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, seem to embody this “prototype”, there is no explanation as to how national or international folklore about a particular ruler – in this case King Mathias – practically develops.

Folklore is international by nature; however, development of individual works and genres must in each case be carefully and separately examined.

### **The first non-Hungarian folkloric texts concerning Mathias**

Czech scholars (such as Čeněk Zíbrt and Otakar Hostinský as early as 1888 and 1892) alluded to the fact that from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century there are traces of songs mentioning King Mathias in Czech hymnals<sup>8</sup> (see 1564: *Pán Bůh z své milosti nyní lid sobě vybírá...* “By the All-Merciful Lord the people have elected...”; 1612: *Bože nebeský, ty věrou spojuješ* “O Heavenly God, connected with the faith”; the same appears in 1620 in an evangelical hymnal as well). Komorovský assumed that these texts were also sung by Slovaks. In a poem by Aleš Knobloch written in 1561 the melodies that are of relevance to the Mathias’ folklore get mentioned twice (*Zpívá se jako starodávná píseň vojenská o Králi Matyášovi, Králi Uherském...* “On the melody of the very old soldiers’ songs about King Mathias, the king of Hungary...”). But we can not say whether these were Czech, Slovak, or Hungarian songs, translated into a Slavic language.

Among Slovenian scholars, Simon Rutar mentioned in 1879 the comment by Marcantonio Nicoletti (1536–1589), notary of Cividale, about the Slovenes in the seaside region of Tolmin who “sang in their mother tongues not just about Christ and the saints, but also about the Hungarian King Mathias and other heroes of that people” (*Usano essi cantare in versi ne’ varii modi della loro lingua le lodi di Christo e de’ Beati, nonche di Mattia re d’Ungheria e di altri celebri personaggi di quella Nazione*). Since then this record, which can be dated by the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, was mentioned by all philologists examining the Slovenian Mathias’ tradition. Still, we do not know to which nation the *altri celebri personaggi* belong<sup>9</sup>.

There is little doubt that both the Czech and the Slovenian records in a way refer to the Hungarian king, which indeed is how they were interpreted by the late authors themselves. Yet the contents and texts of the songs are unknown, as is the manner in which they became part of both the Slovenian and Czech (and Slovak) tradition. If there are references to heroic deeds and soldiers’ songs, the simplest way would be to link these songs to the Mathias’ army. This constitutes little more than a readily available hypothesis, however. Nor do we know if these songs were translated from

<sup>8</sup> Data quoted by Kuzelja, Komorovský and others.

<sup>9</sup> Data quoted by Grafenauer, Lukács and others.

Hungarian, or if it was only the subject matter, possibly only the name of King Mathias that was Hungarian.

The first folk narratives from Romania, referring to King Mathias, are available to us thanks to a German agricultural engineer Arthur Schott, who worked in 1836–1841 and again in 1844–1852 in Oravița (Banat, then in southeastern part in Hungary), collecting Romanian folklore. Together with his brother Albert he published the very first collection of Romanian folktales: *Walachische Märchen* (Stuttgart and Tübingen, 1845), which does not contain stories about King Mathias. But among the texts from his second collection, published originally in the German journal *Hausblätter* (1858, vol. 4, p. 367–371) there is a legend about the “Emperor Matei Corvin”, who learned the language of the animals, and being a magician visited Tsarigrad (Constantinople). Schott remarked that one could read about this trip “in books”<sup>10</sup>. Thus the oldest known Romanian folklore text about King Mathias might stem from written sources at least to some extent. All the subsequent Romanian folk legends<sup>11</sup> were collected in Transylvania<sup>12</sup>.

Recently, a noted Transylvanian Hungarian folklorist József Faragó mentioned two Romanian folk ballads, with the hero’s name *Mateasiu Craiu* or *Mateias Crai* (King Mathias)<sup>13</sup>.

The famous Romanian folklorist Atanasie Marian Marienescu published the first ballad in a journal *Albina* (1866, No. 20), and afterwards in his collection of Romanian ballads<sup>14</sup>. The story tells of King Mathias, who while punishing his treacherous nobles destroyed by gun-shooting (!) the castle of Buda (!) with all its inhabitants. The story is unknown elsewhere in Romanian or Hungarian balladry. Most probably it stems from the Romanian Banat, where Marienescu was working as a lawyer from 1862. In his rich collection of Romanian folk literature he searched for motifs possibly related to historical persons, such as Marius, Sulla, Hadrian or Aurelian from Ancient Rome.

A teacher Iona Papa recorded the second ballad in November 1898, in the Brassó/Brasov region (Alsókomána) of Transylvania. It is a popular European ballad (international type number *Child* 75), with numerous variants both in Hungarian and in Romanian. Yet Papa’s version is the only one, in which the hero is named King Mathias.

In both cases we find very late and corruptible texts, which do not represent any historical traces of King Mathias in Romanian folklore in the proper sense of the term.

---

<sup>10</sup> See the modern edition: Schott 1971: 300–305.

<sup>11</sup> See the entries in the modern type index of Romanian historical legends: Brill 2006, Nos. 14632–14637, p. 295–298.

<sup>12</sup> I owe the correct references to Schott and Brill texts to Professor Nicolae Constantinescu. I also thank the Academician Sabine Ispas for making the complete edition of Brill’s legend catalogue accessible to me.

<sup>13</sup> See Faragó 1997 and also the subsequent publication. Faragó gives data of the first Romanian publications, together with data concerning Hungarian translation of the texts.

<sup>14</sup> *Poezia populară. Balade* (“Popular Poetry. Ballads”), vol. II, Vienna, 1867, p. 92–94.

For centuries Hungarian heroes were included as characters in the heroic epic poetry of the Southern Slavic peoples (Serbian, Bosnian, and Croatian). As examples of such texts reaching us are from later times, the task of unraveling their historical layers is far from simple<sup>15</sup>. We find some songs mentioning *kralj Matijaš* already in the *Erlangen manuscript*<sup>16</sup> of Southern Slavic heroic songs. Serbian philology and folklore use this material for establishing the historical development of Southern Slavic epic poetry. Folkloric or popular variants occur in the 19<sup>th</sup> century collections. We can however claim with some certainty that songs collected later also had certain precedents. They essentially represent the Southern Slavic point of view, so while we may be able to explain the heroes or events on the basis of events and characters of Hungarian history (as e.g. *Janko vojvoda*, *Jankula vojvoda*, *Sibinjanin Janko* = János Hunyadi, *Mihailo Svilojevič* = Mihály Szilágyi, *varadinski ban Petar Dojčin* = most probably Péter Dóczi, etc.), we should not however assume that they represent Serbian (etc.) adaptations of completed Hungarian texts<sup>17</sup>.

On the contrary, we must take into consideration the fact that until now scholarship has devoted little attention to the images of Hungarian rulers in the Balkans and Romania during the time of King Mathias. In this case it would be informative to specify both the similarities and the differences.

As for the literary traditions praising or mentioning King Mathias, a thorough and detailed study should be made.

Leafing through any later publications, we find interesting details, but no explanations for them. E. g. in the third volume of Fessler's *Gemälde aus den alten Zeiten der Ungarn* (Karlsruhe, 1809) on the frontispiece of *Mathias Corvinus, König der Ungarn* we find an ideal portrait of the king (with an appropriate inscription). But, on the opposite page there is a drawing of a historical scene, which we are unable to identify. Five men meet and greet each other at an unidentified event. The third from the left looks like a Lutheran bishop. The central figure looks like the young Mathias, on the opposite page, but without Hungarian royal insignia. This could mean that Mathias is depicted before the coronation, as the fifth figure, an elderly man, might be either the Czech George Poděbrad, as the future father-in-law, or Mihály Szilágyi, governor of Hungary. Since the costumes are "historic", but not specific, the image is also open for different explanations.

---

<sup>15</sup> I do not enter here into the very complicated problem of the historical stratification of Southern Slavic epic poetry. For summaries see e.g. Burckhart (1968: 3.1, p. 60–63. *Petūr ban und Kral Mateja*), Krstić (1984: s.v. *Matijaš*, *Matija*, p. 524–525). For a folkloristic treatment of several motifs in "non-historical" Serbo-Croatian "epic songs", see Milošević-Djordjević 1971, about King Mathias especially p. 220–221.

<sup>16</sup> A collection of 220 song texts, the majority of which possibly come from oral sources. The manuscript can be dated to 1717 and 1730, and some of the texts belong to earlier time of the Serbian-Ottoman wars. Their attitude is clearly against the Turks, and represents Serbian rather than Hungarian point of view.

<sup>17</sup> See the works e.g. Dávid 1978, and especially Jung 2008 – with detailed textual history of some variants. A recent summarizing publication of Hungarian narratives on King Mathias from the Vojvodina (Raffai 2008), mostly with recently collected and hitherto unpublished texts, does not show direct Serbian-Hungarian textual interferences.

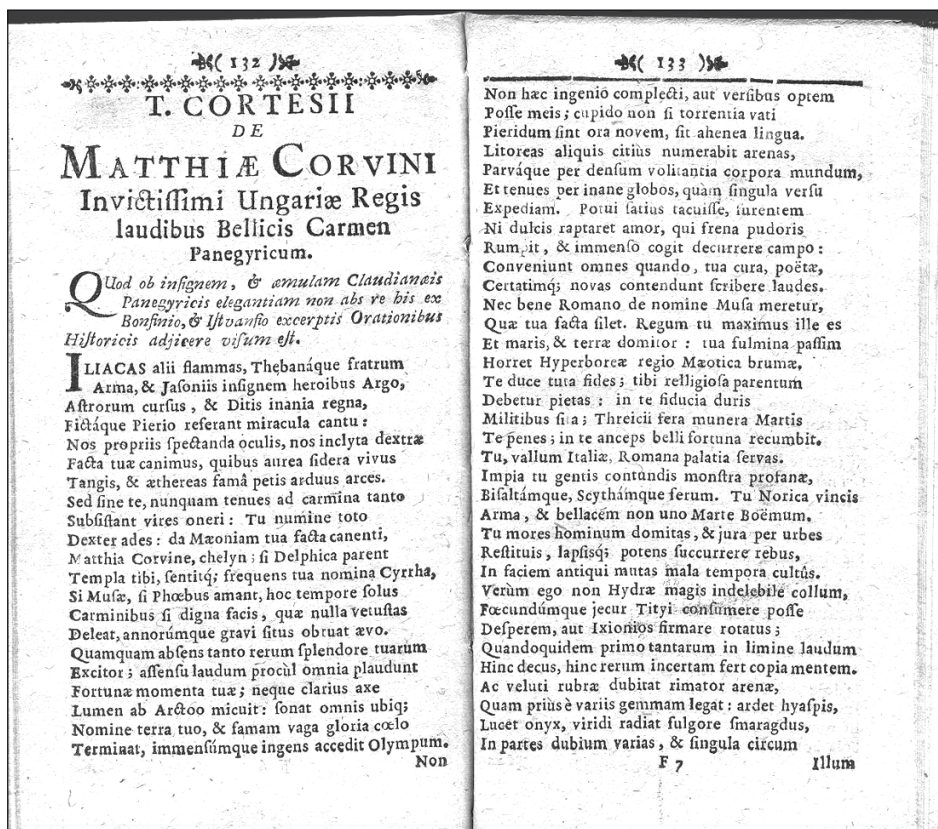


*Mathias Corvinus, König der Hungarn*, erster Band, von Dr. I. A. Feßler, Carlsruhe, 1809 (without the publisher's name), front pages

In order to show how complicated those traditions might occur I shall give here just one more example. It is well-known that an Italian humanist in the court of the Hungarian king, Alessandro Tommaso Cortese wrote (in 1487–1488, i.e. when his patron king was alive) a *Carmen panegyricum* in Latin hexameters honoring him. A later edition of the poem (Hagenau, 1531) was included by the famous Hungarian scholar Johannes Sambucus (János Zsámboky) as an appendix to his new edition of that time (1606) of the Italian court historian of Mathias, Antonio Bonfini's summary of the Hungarian history: *Rerum Hungaricarum Decades*. Cortese's epic poem could thus serve as one of the sources for the "Meditations about King Mathias" (as well as for the baroque heroic poem *Obsidio Sigetiana*) by the famous Hungarian poet and statesman, Nicolaus Zrini (Miklós Zrínyi). When, even considerably later, in Kassa (Kaschau, Košice) a sample of Bonfini's and Istvánffy's Hungarian history was published (*Livii Hungaric... Antonii Bonfini... Nicolai Istvanfi...*), at the end of the book (on pages 132–166) there is Cortese's literary work *De Matthiae Corvini invictissimi Ungariae Regis laudibus bellicis* – a poem among the historical sources, and 250 years after its first publication<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> See the ingenious remarks by Szörényi 1993: 26–31.





The first pages (p. 132–133) of Cortese's panegyrics: *De Matthiae Corvini...*,  
in: *Livii Hungarici... Antonii Bonfini... Cassoviae*,  
Typis Academ per Joan Henrie, Frauenheim, 1732

To summarize it must be stated that, when examining the Hungarian Mathias' folklore it would be worthwhile to demonstrate the old and the international connections. This would serve not only to promote the comparative study of folklore, but also to further interpretation of the Hungarian historical records.

There are two major problems involved here. First, it is not easy to distinguish between the "international" and the "historical" contextual data. Second, it is not easy to prove the historical "continuity" of texts, narratives, motifs etc. In many cases, folklore publications from the 19<sup>th</sup> century can only be dated back to popular historical works, literary works, schoolbooks, calendars from some earlier times. There are "optimistic" and "pessimistic" scholars in constructing the "continuation" of the "King Mathias' lore". I definitely belong to the second group.

It is not difficult to demonstrate that there are many tasks that remain to be completed, even if we deal with seemingly "long traditions" of that lore.

Among the most well-known elements in the iconography of the Hunyadis, there is a raven (*corvus* in Latin, from which the word *Corvinus* was forcefully derived),



carrying a (golden) ring in its beak. We do not know for sure the actual origin of the adopted family name *Corvin/us*<sup>19</sup>. Though several scholars have studied this heraldic motif, we nonetheless have no precise knowledge of its origins. The old references do not describe the story relating to it precisely, instead alluding at most to some kind of ostensibly commonly-known explanation<sup>20</sup>.

The best candidate to prove the continuity would be the proverbial lore, i.e. proverbs and sayings mentioning King Mathias. Actually, there are such texts, but most of them are modern and can not be traced back through centuries. With only some possible exceptions, they represent school lore. All the recent Hungarian collections of proverbs<sup>21</sup> mention the well-known maxim: *meghalt Mátyás király, oda az igazság* ("King Mathias died, justice is gone", which however is connected to Antal Szirmay's book *Hungaria in parabolis* (1805), a common source centuries later). The history of this saying, used not only in Hungary and not only in Hungarian, is an interesting, complicated and international topic, which needs further investigations.<sup>22</sup>

The other phrase, less well-known today (*Király Mátyás és Mátyás király* "Mathias the King and King Mathias", i.e. there is a great difference between seemingly identical names) appears in the very personal collection of proverbs by Antal Dugonics (written from 1792 onwards, and published in 1820) entitled *Magyar példabeszédek és jeles mondások* ("Hungarian parables and notable sayings", Szeged, by Orbán Grün, vol. I, p. 44)<sup>23</sup>. Dugonics, who also wrote literary works about the age of King Mathias, had a penchant for transforming proverbs known to him, contriving explanations for them if nothing else. In other words, we cannot prove when about twenty sayings concerning King Mathias that figure in his writings came into being. In some cases he refers to Galeotto Marzio's work.

---

<sup>19</sup> Perhaps it originated from the name of the town Kovin at the borderline of Southern Hungary, which in fact was owned by the Hunyadi family. But there is no direct evidence supporting this suggestion.

<sup>20</sup> The difficulty related to interpretation of the *Corvinus-raven* is mentioned in several historical books.

<sup>21</sup> There is no concise historical publication of Hungarian proverbs, thus I can give here only general remarks. I thank my colleague Gyula Paczolay for some valuable – although negative – references.

<sup>22</sup> There is at least one (perhaps two) reference(s) from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. About some complications of this tradition see Jung 2008: 96–98.

<sup>23</sup> Dugonics tells an explanatory story, most probably created by him. A shoemaker, with the name *Király Mátyás* ("King Mathias") lived in the capital Buda, and on the name's day of the Corvin King, he went to the royal castle to greet the ruler. The guards stopped him, and the shoemaker told them that he shared the name with the king, and had come to greet his namesake. The guard replied that the difference between King Mathias and Mathias the King is equally great, as is the difference between a king and a shoemaker. Yet from historical documents concerning the development of family names in Hungary it is evident that at King Mathias' time nobody could have the form 'King' as a family name and Mathias as a Christian name, especially people from the lower social strata. Even a possible construction *Varga Mátyás* ('Shoemaker' + Mathias) became frequent from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The name's day, i.e. celebrating someone's first name (in Hungarian, Christian name) on the patron saint's day in the calendar is attested much later as a common family event. The explanation by Dugonics was also repeated in subsequent collections of Hungarian proverbs.

Incidentally, Hungarian sayings more frequently mention *Jégtörő Mátyás* “Icebreaker Mathias” on February 24<sup>th</sup>, and the weather forecasts in connection with this date, than they do of the king himself.

As stated earlier, there are many popular texts collected from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. These and the official Hungarian Mathias’ tradition, however, must form the topic of another paper.

After my paper was completed, a rich exhibition was organized at the Ethnographic Museum in Budapest: *Legendary Beings, Enchanting Flowers – The Renaissance We All Know and Love* (Fejős 2008). Its aim was to “rethink the relationship between the Renaissance and Hungarian folk artifacts of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries”. According to the imposing catalogue, numerous showcases and rooms were filled with printed books and woodcuts, stove tiles, guild-woven cloth, illuminated documents and manuscripts, figural images on painted wooden church ceilings, decorative vessels, furniture craft, embroidery on linen and hemp. In all cases the historical continuity and the social affiliation of the exposed items were very complicated and the labels (e.g. “folk”) raised many doubts. In description and bibliography the international context was present, and many of the artifacts stemmed from Hungary, but not necessarily were “Hungarian”. All this is demonstrating again the difficulty of comparative and historical interpretation of the Renaissance in Hungary and its possible “folklore continuation”.

Of course, we congratulate the splendid exhibition with its 500 items carefully presented and described. Only after such collection of data was accumulated, it is possible to start the thorough analysis of the “renaissance impact” on the Hungarian folk culture.

Needless to say, that in all domains of the exhibition the motifs were of wide international character, reaching far beyond the borders of the Hungarian kingdom of the time. Not only the renaissance is an “all-European” phenomenon, but also the artifacts and motifs resembling the renaissance in the folk cultures in Europe are of the very same character.

## REFERENCES

Note. Because of the summarizing character of my paper I am not giving here a full bibliography (even of the works mentioned in my text). I quote only some recent publications containing further references to other works.

Brill, Tony 2006. *Tipologia legendei populare românești, 2: Legenda mitologică, legenda religioasă, legenda istorică* [Type-Index of Romanian Folk Legends, 2: Mythological, Religious and Historical Legends], ediție îngrijită și prefată de I. Opreașan, București: Saeculum.

Burke, Peter 1978. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, London: Maurice Temple Smith.

Burkhart, Dagmar 1968. *Untersuchungen zur Stratigraphie und Chronologie der südslavischen Volksepik*, München: Otto Sagner.

Dávid, András 1978. *Délszláv epikus énekek magyar történeti hősök* [Southern Slavic Epic Songs and Hungarian Historical Heroes], Újvidék: Forum Könyvkiadó.

- Dugonics, András 1820 [2009]. *Magyar példa beszédek és jeles mondások, öszveszedte, és megvilágosította – királyi oktató* [Hungarian Parables and Sayings, Collected and Interpreted by A. D. Royal /University/ Professor], Szeged: Grün Orbán. [Reprint Szeged: Bába Kiadó, 2009.]
- Ernyey, József 1921. Mátyás király a cseh néphagyományban [King Mathias in Czech Folk Traditions], *Ethnographia*, [No.] XXXII, p. 92–100.
- Faragó, József 1997. Két román népballada Mátyás királyról [Two Romanian Folk Ballads on King Mathias], *Helikon*, VIII, Nr. 4 (234), p. 17–18.
- Fejős, Zoltán, (szerk.) [ed.] 2008. *Legendás lények, varázslatos virágok – a közkedvelt reneszánsz* [Legendary Beings, Enchanting Flowers – The Renaissance We All Know and Love], Budapest: Néprajzi Múzeum. [With English Summary.]
- Galeottus, Martius Narniensis 1934. *De egregie, sapienter, iocose dictis ac factis Regis Matthiae*, dd.: Ladislaus Juhász, Lipsiae: Teubner.
- Grafenauer, Ivan 1951a. *Slovenske pripovedke o kralju Matjažu* [Slovenian Narratives on King Mathias], Ljubljana: Slovenska Akademija Znanosti in Umetnosti.
- Grafenauer, Ivan 1951b. Slovenske ljudske pesmi o kralju Matjažu [Slovenian Folksongs on King Mathias], *Slovenski Etnograf*, [vol.] III–IV, p. 184–240.
- Habovštiak, Anton 1970. *Prorocstvo král'a Mateja: Povesti z Oravy* [King Mathias Foretelling the Future: Stories from the Orava Region, Banská Bystrica: Stredoslovenské vydavateľ'stvo.
- Jung, Károly 2008. *Tanulmányok a Mátyás-tradíció délszláv kapcsolatairól. Déli szláv Mátyás-énekek és Mátyás-mondák eredetiben és magyar fordításban* [Studies on Southern Slavic Contacts of King Mathias' Traditions. Southern Slavic Songs and Legends in Original, with Hungarian Translations], Újvidék: Forum.
- Kardos, Tibor 1955. A "trufa". Egy régi magyar irodalmi műfaj jellege és európai összefüggései [The "Jest". Characterization and European Context of a Medieval Hungarian Literary Genre], *Filológiai Közlöny*, [vol.] I, p. 111–138.
- Kerča, Igor 2001. *Matjaš, korol' Rusinuv* [Mathias, King of the Ruthenians], Užgorod: PoliPrint.
- Komorovský, Ján 1957. *Král' Matej Korvín v l'udovej prozaickej slovesnosti* [King Mathias Corvin in Folk Narratives], Bratislava: Slovenská Akadémia Vied.
- Kristić, Branislav 1984. *Indeks motiva narodnih pesama balkanskih slovena* [Motif-Index of Folksongs of the Slavs in Balkans], Beograd: Srpska Akademija Nauka i Umetnosti.
- Kríza, Ildikó 2007. *A Mátyás-hagyomány évszázadai* [Centuries of King Máthias Traditions in Hungary, Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó.
- Kuzelja, Zenon 1906. *Ugors' kij korol' Matvij Korvin v slavyans' kij ustnij slovesnosti* [The Hungarian King Mathias in Slavic Oral Tradition], L'vov: Naukovo Tovaristvo im. Ševčenka.
- Lukács, István 2001. *A megváltó Mátyás király színeváltozásai a szlovén néphagyományban és szépirodalomban* [The Fortune of King Mathias, the Savior, in Slovenian Folk Tradition and Literature], Budapest: Lucidus Kiadó.
- Milošević-Djordjević, Nada 1971. *Zajednička tematsko-sižejna osnova srpskohrvatskih neistorijskih epskih pesama i prozne tradicije* [Themes and Plots of a Synthetical Background of Serbo-Croatian Non-Historical Epic Songs and Prose Narratives], Beograd: Filološki Fakultet Beogradskog Universiteta.
- Ortutay, Gyula 1942. König Mathias in der mündlichen Überlieferung der Donauvölker, *Ungarn*, [No.] 3 (April), p. 221–230.
- Pável, Ágoston 1909. Az Orpheus-monda rokonai a délszláv népköltészetben [Variants of Orpheus Legends in Southern Slavic Folk Poetry], *Ethnographia*, [No.] XX, p. 321–340.
- Perfeckij, Eugen 1926. *Podkarpatské a haličoruské tradice o králi Mátyášovi Corvinovi* [Subcarpathian and Galician-Russian Traditions on King Mathias Corvin], Bratislava: Universita Komenského.
- Raffai, Judit 2008. *Vajdasági történetek Mátyás királyról* [King Mathias Narratives in the Vojvodina], Újvidék-Szabadka: Forum.
- Ranke, Kurt von 1975. *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, Berlin–New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Schott, Arthur und Albert 1971. *Rumänische Volkserzählungen aus dem Banat: Märchen, Schwänke, Sagen*, Neuausgabe besorgt von Rolf Wilh. Brednich und Ion Taloş, Bucureşti: Kriterion Verlag.
- Solymossy, Sándor 1935. Monda [Legend], in: *A magyarság néprajza* [Ethnography of the Hungarians], Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, p. 183–254.
- Szegedy, Rezső 1916. Mátyás királlyá választása a délszláv népköltészetben [Election of King Mathias in Southern Slavic Folk Poetry], *Ethnographia*, [No.] XXVII, p. 47–60.

Szémán, István 1912. Korvin Mátyás magyar király a szláv népköltészetben (néphagyományban) [Hungarian King Mathias in Slavic Folk Poetry (Folklore)], *Századok*, No. 46, p. 138–144.

Szörényi, László 1993. *Hunok és jezsuiták. Fejezetek a magyarországi latin hősepika történetéből* [Huns and Jesuits. Chapters from the Latin Language Heroic Epic in Hungary], Budapest: Amfipressz Kiadó.

Szövérfy, Joseph 1968. History and Folk Tradition in Eastern Europe: Mathias Corvinus in the Mirror of Hungarian and Slavic Folklore, *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, [No.] 5.1, p. 68–77.

Ujváry, Zoltán 1990. *Mátyás király Gömörben: Mondák, anekdoták a néphagyományban* [King Mathias in Gömör County: Folk Legends and Anecdotes], Debrecen: Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem, Néprajz Tanszék.

Voigt, Vilmos 2000. Karneválunk kérdései [Carnival Issues in Hungarian Traditions], in: Vilmos Voigt. *Világnak kezdetétől fogva: Történeti folklorisztikai tanulmányok* [From All the Beginning on...: Studies in Historical Folklore], Budapest: Universitas Kiadó, p. 287–306.

Zolnai, Béla 1921. Mátyás-mondáink eredete és fejlődése [Origin and Development of Hungarian Legends about King Mathias], *Irodalomtörténet*, X, p. 126–137.

For general references see also:

Kubinyi, András 2008. *Mathias rex*, Budapest: Balassi Kiadó.

Horváth, Iván (ed.) [et al.] 2008. *Proceedings of the International Conference, May 20–25, 2008. Budapest “Mathias Rex 1458–1490. Hungary at the Dawn of the Renaissance*, Budapest, in press. With further references to Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovak and Slovenian etc. traditions, especially by Constantinescu, Kerča, Lukács, etc.

## KARALIUS MATIAŠAS VENGŖŲ IR KITŲ EUROPOS TAUTŲ FOLKLORE

VILMOS VOIGT

### Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjamas populiarus daugelio Europos tautų folkloro ir istoriografinių tekstų personažas – pusiau legendinis vengrų karalius Matiašas. Pasitelkus lyginamosios folkloro analizės ir istoriografinių metodus, gretinami šio įvaizdžio atspindžiai vengrų, slovākų, čekų, rumūnų, Balkanų tautų folklore, stengiantis atskleisti, kiek įvairių žanrų ir įvairiomis kalbomis skirtingais laikotarpiais užfiksuotuose tekstuose pasitaikantis Matiašo įvaizdis susijęs su istorinio karaliaus figūra, o kiek jis tėra populiaraus stereotipo apie charizmatišką (žiaurų, bet teisingą, išsilavinusį, turtingą ir šlovingą) valdovą išraiška. Autoriaus samprotavimai pasižymi kritišku požiūriu į šaltinius; jis gana skeptiškai vertina galimybę nagrinėjama tema pateikti kokius nors vienareikšmius vertinimus ar atsakymus. Vis dėlto straipsnis imponuoja erudicija, akiračio platumu ir yra puikus šiuolaikiško lyginamosios folkloristikos metodų taikymo pavyzdys.

Tekstą anglų kalba redagavo ir santrauką parengė *Lina Būgienė*

Gauta 2010-03-15