

Habsburg Rulers as Hungarian “National” Kings in György Pray’s Work Entitled *Historia regum Hungariae stirpis Austriacae*

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The Historia regum Hungariae, the three-volume work by György Pray (1723–1801), Jesuit historian, was published in 1801. The third volume of the *Historia* discusses the historical events until the end of the reign of Maria Theresa, 1780. In addition, this first volume had already been published separately before the first two ones with the title *Historia Regum Hungariae stirpis Austriacae* in 1799. The last decade of György Pray’s life, as well as the fairly intricate story of the creation of the *Historia* are now adequately explored and documented, in spite of the fact that no modern edition or translation of the historical work has been issued so far. However, there still exist unsettled questions deserving elaborate answers. What could discourage Pray from accomplishing his original goal, writing something completely dedicated to the state and constitutional history? Furthermore, exactly what kind of ideas and historical perspectives does this work represent, especially in the case of the third volume portraying the Habsburg rulers as Hungarian kings? Did Pray serve only imperial interests? Also, was he able to square the aulic perspective with the ‘national’ sentiment?

[Baroque History Writing; Neo-Latin; Hungarian Kings; György Pray, Historical Approach]

György Pray’s three-volume historical summary entitled *Historia regum Hungariae, cum Notitiis Praeviis ad cognoscendum veterem regni statum pertinentibus* (shortly *Historia*) was published at the end of his life in 1801, preceded by the third volume *Historia regum Hungariae stirpis Austriacae* also published separately in 1799. Beside other works his summary of the Hungarian prehistory entitled *Annales veteres Hunnorum, Avarorum et Hungarorum, ab anno ante natum Christum CCX. ad annum Christi CMXCVI*, in which he completed the traditional theory of the Hun- Hungarian (and

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Avar) kinship with data deriving from Chinese annals through French transmission, came out as early as 1761. Relying on these findings he identified the Huns with the Turks mentioned there. As a continuation of this, in 1774 he published the treatise entitled *Dissertationes historico-criticae in Annales veteres Hunnorum Avarorum et Hungarorum*, in which he established the Hun origin for all Finno-Ugric peoples after János Sajnovics (1733–1785), also a member of the Jesuit order, had proved the kinship of Hungarian and Lapp language (1770). With these historic treatises György Pray – whether he wanted or not – justified the tradition of the Hun-Hungarian myth popular with the Hungarian nobility.

Besides the Hungarian prehistorical works the *Annales regum Hungariae, ab anno Christi CMXCVII. ad annum MDLXIV* (in short *Annales*) (1763–1770) is his main work, which summarises the history of Hungary until the death of Ferdinand I (1564) in five volumes. In fact, the Jesuit historiographer created the first professional historical review of medieval Hungary which is based on sources and their critical use, as well as the clarification of chronological issues. Before the continuation of this work, the publication of *Historia*, this modern historical summary played a substantial role in directing attention to medieval Hungary and – from the historical distance of Pray’s time – to a glorious era of the House of Árpád and the kings of mixed dynasties in the last decades of the century.

The (Secret) Assignments of the *Historiographus Regius*

After the general dissolution of the order (1773) Pray was awarded the title *historiographus regius* (royal historiographer) by Maria Theresa. Besides, he was also appointed as the director of the University Library of Buda from 1777 on. He received his appointment letter as the canon of Nagyvárád in 1790, which was somewhat overshadowed by the fact that he was dismissed from his job as a librarian in the very same year.²

As a royal historiographer György Pray received only minor assignments during the reign of Maria Theresa, while his major tasks were related to Joseph II’s foreign policy, endeavor to acquire new territories and plans for reform. According to the 1782 agreement between Joseph II and Russian Empress Catherine II, in case of the division of Turkey the Habsburg Empire could claim the so called side territories including

² O. BÁTHORY, Pray György *Epitome Rerum sub Josepho II. Leopoldo II. et Francisco I. regibus Hungariae gestarum című műve* (bevezető tanulmány és szövegközlés), Dissertation, Debrecen 2009, p. 8.

Serbia, Bosnia and Wallachia. To acquire legal basis to annex these territories, the court ordered the Hungarian Royal Chamber to justify the Kingdom of Hungary's relevant claims on the bases of historical documents. Moreover, it made the researches in the archives extended to Moldavia, Bessarabia, and Bulgaria, as well as Dalmatia and the Adriatic Sea, the territories most desired by Joseph II.³ The assignment of making the draft of the claim for Dalmatia was given to the royal historiographer himself (1783), who enjoyed the trust and appreciation especially of State Chancellor Kaunitz. Although the draft soon completed met the expectations⁴ of the chancellor, he was commissioned to elaborate it only two years later in 1785. Pray got down to work vigorously, but he was soon stuck as he had no access to the secret documents of the archive of the royal chamber. He applied for permission to chamberlain Count Ferenc Balassa (1736–1807) so that he and his historian-librarian colleague Dániel Cornides (1732–1787) could examine the records of the archives. Balassa readily forwarded the request to the Hungarian chancellery but Count Kristóf Niczky did not support Pray's examination in the archives, for fear that certain documents revealed would not serve the interest of the court or they would even lead to diplomatic problems. Niczky gave in only through the good offices of Kaunitz, making Pray swear that he would strictly obey the safeguards and he would not have any of his findings printed.⁵ Pray completed the commission of the court. At the same time Kaunitz himself realised that these writings might hurt the Habsburg's interests if the Hungarians become aware of the fact that Joseph II intends to expand his empire on the right of the Hungarian kings. Consequently, in accordance with Count Nicky's precautions, Pray's findings were not printed, but the manuscripts were locked in the secret archives.⁶

The royal historiographer sent the fair copy entitled *Commentatio historica qua Regibus Hungariae jus in Dalmatiam et mare Adriaticum competere*

³ G. LISCHERONG, *Pray György élete és munkái*, Budapest 1937, p. 95. Comp. L. SZÖRÉNYI, Pray György történetírása és alkalmi költészete, in: L. SZÖRÉNYI, *Önfilozofia. Irodalomtörténeti rejtélyek*, Budapest 2010, p. 157.

⁴ L. THALLÓCZY, Pray György, s a magyar korona mellékartományai, in: *Századok*, 22, 2, 1888, p. 524.

⁵ THALLÓCZY, pp. 523–528; LISCHERONG, pp. 95–96; BÁTHORY, p. 9.

⁶ THALLÓCZY, p. 532; LISCHERONG, p. 99.

*ostenditur*⁷ to the state chancellor in spring 1786. Kaunitz was so contended with the work completed, that he immediately gave Pray a commission to examine the legal claims for the other side territories as well. By the end of 1786 the work relating to Bosnia, Serbia, and Bulgaria (*Commentatio historica de iure Regum Hungariae in Bosniam, Serviam et Bulgariam*)⁸ had been completed, which was followed by the third part entitled *Commentatio historica de iure Regum Hungariae in Moldaviam, Valachiam et Bessarabiam*⁹ on Moldavia, Wallachia and Bessarabia in July 1787.

In spite of the fact that Pray had sworn it, he didn't fully keep his promise to handle his findings related to the side territories confidentially. In fact, the royal historiographer supported the endeavours of Joseph II with two short epics combining *historia* and *fabula* (the real and fictive elements), not lacking propagandistic content either.¹⁰ In *Taurica*, which came out in 1787 (*Taurica iuri Russico a Catharina II. autocratrice bello, et pace asserta*, Pest, 1787), he promoted the Russian-Austrian alliance,¹¹ while in *Taurunum* (*Taurunum auspiciis Iosephi II. Aug. Recuperatum*, Pest, 1789)¹² published in 1789 he declared the Hungarian Kingdom's claim for Serbia. The purpose of the latter work was to provide the Hungarians with sufficient motivation for another war against the Turks and justify its legitimacy and

⁷ The original copy of the manuscript can be found at the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (HHStA) Wien, Handschriftenabteilung in Vienna under the reference W 512. In the Böhm catalogue it is numbered as 1011. Comp. C. E. BÖHM, *Die Handschriften des kaiserlichen und königlichen Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchivs*, Wien 1873, p. 279. For more on this work of Pray see THALLÓCZY, pp. 529–530; LISCHERONG, pp. 96–97.

⁸ THALLÓCZY, p. 530; LISCHERONG, p. 98. The original manuscript can be found at the HHStA, Handschriftenabteilung under the reference W 179, while the duplicate is at the National Archives of Hungary (MOL, I 7, Vol. 67). Comp. BÁTHORY, n. 27; BÖHM, p. 108.

⁹ HHStA, Handschriftenabteilung, W 180. Comp. THALLÓCZY, p. 531; LISCHERONG, p. 98; BÁTHORY, n. 27. It is numbered as 305 in the Böhm catalogue. BÖHM, p. 108.

¹⁰ For its theoretal background see S. M. TÓTH, *Uralkodók, hadvezérek, csaták. Történelmi témák a 18. századi magyarországi neolatin költészetben*, in: E. BÉKÉS – P. KASZA – R. LENGYEL (eds.), *Humanista történetírás és neolatin irodalom a 15–18. századi Magyarországon*, Budapest 2015, pp. 187–189; S. M. TÓTH, *Irodalmi köntösbe rejtett történelem(?) Pray György Taurunum című kiseposzának szövegszintjei*, in: P. KASZA – F. G. KISS – D. MOLNÁR (eds.), *Scientiarum miscellanea. Latin nyelvű tudományos irodalom Magyarországon a 15–18. században*, Szeged 2017, pp. 160–162; S. M. TÓTH, *„Belgrád! sok vitéz lelkeknek / Felejtethetlen ára / A Császári címereknek / Helytengedsz utoljára!” Belgrád 1789-es visszafoglalásának emlékezete a neolatin irodalmi hagyományok tükrében*, Dissertation, Szeged 2019, pp. 253–274.

¹¹ A content overview of the work is provided by SZÖRÉNYI, pp. 158–161.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 163–167.

necessity on a historical basis. The topic of *Taurunum* and the footnotes longer than the main text gave Pray a great opportunity to release at least partly (and not conspicuously) his unpublished findings. Although his act didn't have direct consequences, it may have contributed to the fact that he could continue his profession as a historian only under strict supervision and guidance in the last decade of his life.¹³

From *Historia statistica* to *Historia regum Hungariae*

The recognition gained by the *Commentarius* brought Pray a new commission: in 1788 on the recommendation of József Izdenczy (1733–1811), the first Hungarian member of the State Council, he received an assignment from the emperor for writing the history of the Hungarian state (*historia statistica*), in fact the constitutional history of the Hungarian state. As a result, in 1801 the three-volume summary *Historia regum Hungariae* was published, with the third part covering the history of Hungary during the reign of the Habsburg rulers (1527–1780). This volume had already been released to the public two years earlier, in 1799, under the title *Historia regum Hungariae stirpis Austriacae*.

By now the rather intricate beginning of the *Historia* is adequately explored and documented, though neither modern edition nor translation of this historical work has been released. Most recently we could read a thorough summary in Hungarian in the dissertation written in 2009 by Orsolya Báthory, whose main topic was Pray's *Epitome Rerum sub Josepho II. Leopoldo II. et Francisco I. regibus Hungariae gestarum* (shortly *Epitome*). This work can be considered the continuation of *Historia* ending with the reign of Maria Theresa, as its manuscript covers the history of Hungary from 1780, the reign of Joseph II to the death of the Jesuit historiographer, 1801.¹⁴

Although the first two volumes of *Historia*, which cover the history of Hungary from Saint Steven's coronation to the Battle of Mohács, the death of Louis II, are in fact the extracted summaries of the *Annales*, this work deserves attention for several reasons. On the one hand at the beginning of the first one there is a 154-page summary entitled *Notitiae praeviae* about the history of the state and the constitution, dating their

¹³ For the data provided in the footnotes of *Taurunum* see S. M. TÓTH, „Minősített adatok” nyilvánosságra hozása egy neolatin kiséposzban. Pray György *Taurunum* című művének történelmi forrásairól, in: *Forum. Acta Juridica et Politica*, X/2, 2020, pp. 253–274.

¹⁴ BÁTHORY, pp. 13–61; comp. LISCHERONG, pp. 106–112.

foundations between 742 and 1,000, in the age of the princes.¹⁵ Indeed this part ending with the formation of the state and Saint Stephen's coronation represents the original aim of the work. On the other hand, while the *Annales* ends with the year 1564, the death of Ferdinand I, the *Historia Regum Hungariae stirpis Austriacae* discusses the historical events as far as the end of the reign of Maria Theresa in 1780, even if it is written more succinctly, relying mainly on the historical events. The 432-page work is preceded by an introduction dedicated to Francis I, the ruler during that period. After that Pray reports the most important events from 1527 to 1780 annually, mentioning ten rulers. The work features Rudolf I (the fifteen-year war – 52 pages), Leopold I (the expulsion of the Turks – 75 pages), Joseph I (Rákóczy's War of Independence – 34 pages), Charles III (28 pages) and Maria II, i.e. Maria Theresa (38 pages) at greater length. It still devotes the most pages (122 pages altogether) to the period of Ferdinand I and the country's split into two, respectively three, already having been discussed in *Annales*, here being only abstracted. The main text of the work is followed by 230 footnotes including explanations and sources.

Shortly after this commission, by the spring of 1789 Pray texted a draft (*Conspectus Statisticae Regni Hungariae, et provinciarum adnexarum*), whose major part is identical with the *Notitiae praeviae* placed before the first volume of *Historia* in 1801, which is in fact the extended version of *Conspectus* – claims Báthory. The points of the draft cover issues related to public law, such as the succession to the throne, the privileges of the nobility and their right to uprising, and it mentions the Saint Crown sent by Pope Sylvester II. Besides, – in relation with Joseph's war against the Turks – it describes the territorial changes of the country, the legal basis of the conquests, as well as the recovery of the side territories lost. Among others Pray declares (taking József Izdenczy's remarks into account on several occasions) that since Hungary was occupied by the princes, who assigned the major power to Prince Álmos (thus subordinating themselves to him), the rural title was inherited by the right of the firstborn, not by election. The only exception to this was when both the male and female lines died out. Consequently, the highest authority is delegated exclusively to Álmos and his descendants, while the other princes (later the nobility) may take part in the deliberations if the situation requires it. Although their privileges are acknowledged, the legislative power cannot

¹⁵ BÁTHORY, pp. 31–33.

be shared between them and the king. The major debate between Pray and Izdenczy is about the sacredness of the crown: the state councillor straightforwardly representing an aulic position doubts the fact that the sacredness and the rights of the crown existed as early as the age of the Árpáds.¹⁶

Although Izdenczy, apart from some remarks, was contented with the draft, and supported its elaboration, the royal historiographer still had to face the fact that he had to complete his work under much stricter supervision and ideological guidance – probably because he failed to handle the data of the secret commission related to the side territories fully confidentially. With the *historia statistica*, the court aimed to be able to include the Hungarian Kingdom in the governing system of the constant territories, supporting the reforms of Joseph II, as well as to justify the emperor aspiring to absolute power against the noble ranks in the emerging issues related to public law.¹⁷

Pray complains to Izdenczy about the fact that the Chamber withholds certain documents for fear that someone would justify the royal prerogatives by them and because his reputation is less and less favourable, as many consider it as a betrayer of the rights of the nobility. This also makes it more difficult for him to have access to the necessary documents. In spite of all these difficulties by the October of 1790 Pray finished the *Notitiae praeviae*, and the first half of the Árpád age, while the complete first volume was finalised by 1792. Although the royal historiographer would have liked to have the complete work ready by 1797, in the end the third volume published in 1799 (the *Historia regum Hungariae stirpis Austriacae* already mentioned several times) became the first outcome of his commission to be released. However, the work was received with shock and disappointment both by the readers and the critics, as it covered only the historical events happened during the reign of the Habsburg rulers with an annalistic approach instead of the promised thematically structured constitutional history. In addition, it was written only in one single volume, less detailed than expected. Besides, the *Notitiae praeviae* was published only in 1801 along with the complete three-volume *Historia*.¹⁸ We can also notice that the adjective *statistica* had already disappeared from the title by then. However, the court was

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 33–39.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 29–30.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 39–44.

so satisfied with Pray's work that – while the university level *statistica* was not suitable for education – the *Ratio Educationis* (1806) appointed the volumes of *Historia regum Hungariae* as history books for middle and high schools (72. §, 73. §, 92. §).¹⁹

Pray doesn't give a reason for the change of his intention, but we could rightfully ask whether the royal historiographer was only discouraged by the fact that he had more difficulty accessing the necessary sources. To be able to find the answer to this question, we need to consider what ideas and historical views he represented, as well as to examine the criticism Pray received because of his relationship with the court and the representation of national interests.

Serving National or Foreign Interests? Charges against György Pray

Examining these charges thoroughly, we can immediately discover an apparent contradiction also noticed by Lajos Thallóczy and Gáspár SJ, two eminent researchers of the life and work of the historiographer at the end of the 19th century, respectively in the first half of the 20th century, both arguing in defence of György Pray, as the writings of the historiographer include both aulic and national features.²⁰

The aulic view is shown by the fact that he doesn't agree with the noble privileges in all respects, his commitment to Catholicism (obviously this fact is hard to find fault with as owing to his education and training he keeps on representing Jesuit values even after the dissolution of the order), as well as his belief that it is the catholic Habsburg dynasty, having expelled the pagan Turks, too, that can protect the country. Certainly, for those following noble-national views these ideas meant that Pray was an unconditional servant of the absolutistic Habsburg power, thus hurting national interests.

On the other hand, strangely enough, the followers of the aulic views, loyal to the court, charge him with describing the events unduly with Hungarian interests in mind, from Hungarian point of view. It is true that beside criticising the noble privileges and defending the Catholic belief, it is also typical of the royal historiographer that he doesn't agree with the Habsburg politics in all respects. Maintaining the trust of the court he slightly defends the feudal constitution, and he never gives up

¹⁹ I. MÉSZÁROS, *Ratio Educationis. Az 1777-i és az 1806-i kiadás magyar nyelvű fordítása*, Budapest 1981, pp. 256, 265; comp. BÁTHORY, pp. 60–61.

²⁰ LISCHERONG, pp. 101, 106, 123; THALLÓCZY, p. 523.

the idea of preserving the integrity of the Hungarian state, so he can't support the Habsburgs' (especially Joseph II's) endeavour to centralise aiming to integrate Hungary as one of the constant territories. Pray was always concerned that the ruler should govern the country by respecting its own laws and traditions. A suggested example showing this type of compromise is the option at the national assembly in 1790/1791 for not only supporting the election of a palatine after the death of Lajos Batthyány in 1765, but for appointing Archduke Alexander Leopold to this position. Beside these national features Lischerong also points out that he always spoke up for Hungary when his country was disparaged in different writings.

Consequently, Pray was too national for the Habsburg supporters and too aulic for those with noble-national views. The blending of these features representing different views shows that the period when the Habsburgs were the rulers, especially the period after the expulsion of the Turks, when the country became part of the Habsburg Empire without merging into it, after the noble ranks reconciled with Leopold I, Charles III, and Maria Theresa, cannot be simply described by following a national or aulic approach. The palette is far more colourful and complex. One major approach is the national-aulic view, which supposes that Hungary's liberation from the pagan Turkish occupation, its development and the preservation of its integrity, as well as the survival of the Christian-Catholic culture can be ensured by the Habsburg rulers. Accordingly, in this *national-aulic* view we can find all the national and aulic characteristics for which the ex-Jesuit historiographer is criticised sometimes by the representatives of the noble-national views, sometimes by those with the aulic views. Now let's take a closer look at what we mean by *national-aulic* view.

The *National-aulic* Historical Approach

The main aim of the *national-aulic* historical approach is to raise the Habsburg rulers into the line of the *national* kings.²¹ Its beginnings date back to the time when István Werbőczy drafted the "Rákos Resolutions" in October 1505. In this document the lower nobility unanimously declared its opposition to the foreign claimants to the throne and its insistence on a *national* king. The effect of this resulted in the double election of

²¹ S. A. TÓTH, *Tertina Mihály, a lapszerkesztő és a latin poéta II. A neolatin versköltő*, Szeged 2013, pp. 299–312.

the king. In November 1526 the lower nobility, János Szapolyai and his party read the resolution adopted at the diet of Rákos in 1505, then in accordance with it (and reconfirming it) elected Szapolyai as Hungarian king. At the same time in December 1526 at the diet, convened lawfully by Palatine István Báthory, the large landowners supporting the Habsburgs and the high priests declared Ferdinand Habsburg as Hungarian king in Pozsony.

After the country had broken into three in 1541, the Hungarian Kingdom under Habsburg rule was mostly seen as the successor to the medieval state fighting against the pagan Turks, protecting the Christian-Catholic Europe, most similar to the state of Matthias Corvinus (Mátyás Hunyadi), as opposed to the Turkish occupation under pagan rule or the protestant Principality of Transylvania often sympathising with the Turks. All this was reinforced by the fact that among the three parts of the former country, it was the Catholic Habsburg dynasty that could welcome and support the Counter-Reformation properly. Even at the end of the 17th century the imperial court used the charge of being pro-Turkish in its propaganda against Imre Thököly, though the alliance with the Turks was not judged so negatively by then.²²

Following the Peace Treaty of Karlócz in 1699, when almost the whole territory of the medieval Hungarian Kingdom (and the administratively separate Transylvania) came under the rule of the House of Habsburg (that is under foreign rule), in the endeavors of the noble ranks the Hungarian self-awareness present in the Rákos Resolutions (1505) underwent repeated revival.²³ At the same time, following the peace treaty concluded at Szatmár, as the feudal constitution was ensured by the diploma inaugurale of Charles III (1712), and the noble ranks accepted the female inheritance (*Pragmatica Sanctio*, article 1723:I–III.) issued in 1713, another interpretation appeared, also based on the Rákos Resolutions, but moving further away from that, loyal to the dynasty. The representatives of this aulic national self-awareness – instead of endeavoring to make the Hungarian Kingdom independent – aimed to raise the Habsburg kings into the line of the Hungarian kings, as they judged their activities by their deeds done for Hungary, not by blood.

²² N. G. ETÉNYI, Közzétett sikerek, eltitkolt kudarcok, politikai propaganda a XVII. század végén, in: *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, 116, 2003, p. 681.

²³ A KUBINYI, Az 1505. évi rákosi országgyűlés és a szittya ideológia, in: *Századok*, 140, 2006, p. 370.

László Szörényi pointed out that it was the Jesuits, considered unconditionally loyal to the Habsburgs by both public opinion and learned literature, who first started to form a historical approach conciliating the interests of the Habsburg rulers and those of the Hungarian ranks, after the Peace Treaty of Szatmár. The activities of the Jesuits in the 16th and 17th century were indeed related to the Catholic part of the country under Habsburg rule, but it didn't mean that the Hungarian Jesuits (Jesuits living in Hungary) – even after several debates within the order – couldn't accept or identify with the Hungarian historical approach of the noble ranks.²⁴ Accordingly, Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér asks the question “*how could one explain the great number of plays with national characteristics performed at the Jesuit order based on international and intercultural principles*”. To answer this question she relies on the fact that in the period of settling down and integration it was the political interest of the order, even vital for them that the national traditions should be taken into account, and later on when educating the generations of the new Hungarian members of the order, there was an inner need for covering national issues.²⁵ Also, the shock that Ferenc Rákóczi was acting firmly for the expulsion of the Hungarian members of the order could have a huge role in the members of the Jesuit order staying loyal to the House of Habsburgs while following *national* views.²⁶ This *national-aulic* view became determinative by the second half of the 18th century, the last period of the rule of Maria Theresa. In this approach the commitment to the Hungarian culture, and the fight against the pagan Turks were equally fundamental features, and proved their belonging to the Christian Europe at the same time. Károly Ferenc Palma (1735–1787), the Jesuit historiographer, for example, regarded the rule of Maria Theresa as the next most outstanding period in Hungarian history after the reign of Saint Stephen and Matthias Corvinus. He highlighted the issue of *Ratio Educationis* as the most important measure within this period, referring to it as the apex of Hungarian education. With this Károly Ferenc Palma raised Maria Theresa to the line of the Hungarian

²⁴ L. SZÖRÉNYI, Politikai iskoladráma Savoyai Jenőről és konzultáció az ideális államformáról, in: L. SZÖRÉNYI (ed.), *Philologica Hungarolatina. Tanulmányok a magyarországi neolatin irodalomról*, Budapest 2002, p. 133; L. SZÖRÉNYI, Előszó, in: L. SZÖRÉNYI (ed.), *Hunok és jezsuiták. Fejezetek a magyarországi latin hősepika történetéből*, Budapest 1993, pp. 5–6.

²⁵ I. VARGA – M. Zs. PINTÉR, *Történelem a színpadon. Magyar történelmi tárgyú iskoladrámák a 17–18. században*, Budapest 2000, p. 47.

²⁶ SZÖRÉNYI, Politikai iskoladráma, p. 133.

rules (what is more, beside Saint Stephen and Matthias Corvinus) based on her deeds done in the interest of Hungarian culture, often referring to documents which proved the Queen's affection for the Hungarians.²⁷

By then the Hunyadi period, considered a golden age of the medieval Hungarian Kingdom, became symbolic in the historical memory not only thanks to the renaissance court of Matthias Corvinus, but to the successful battles against the Turks, too. Thus, according to the *national-aulic* view we can regard Leopold I, Charles III and Joseph II (in spite of his edicts and the fact that he was not crowned) as *national* kings too. Having fought the pagan Turks successfully again and liberated the country after almost 150 years, they continued the traditions of the Hunyadis, so following the line of the greatest Hungarian kings. Being Holy Roman emperors the rulers of the Habsburg dynasty took the empire of Charles V as a model, while being Hungarian kings they considered the state of the rulers of the Árpád dynasty or – especially in respect of the fights against the Turks – the one of King Matthias as an example to be followed.

At the same time we cannot ignore the fact that we can find the characteristics of this view (especially regarding the promotion of culture) in the last third of the 18th century, in the ideology of the enlightenment already. Accordingly, Saint Stephen and Matthias Corvinus are presented not as *national* rulers, but having characteristics in common with Maria Theresa or Joseph II, being sensitive, educated and enlightened rulers. However, we believe that the ideal of an enlightened ruler does not take the place of the *national* historical view, but it is present parallelly (or maybe entwined) with it. It becomes typical primarily of the protestant authors following neoclassicism, who especially favour the enlightened ideas of Joseph II, mainly because of the Patent of Tolerance. As for the (ex-)Jesuits or the students receiving Jesuit education, the *national-aulic* features will remain dominant, though. Here we need to emphasise again that according to the *national-aulic* view we don't consider the Habsburg rulers Hungarian by blood (*ius sanguinis*), but because of their outstanding deeds performed for the good of the country.²⁸

²⁷ L. SZÖRÉNYI, Palma Ferenc Károly történetírói munkássága, in: L. SZÖRÉNYI (ed.), *Studia Hungarologica. Tanulmányok a régi magyar és neolatin irodalomról*, Budapest 1999, pp. 165–166.

²⁸ TÓTH, „Belgrád! sok vitéz lelkeknek”, pp. 126–160.

Summary

We can see that the *national-aulic* historic view did not necessarily mean total commitment to the dynasty. The *national-aulic* view of György Pray was already proved in his writings related to the war of Joseph II against the Turks. In these works he doesn't regard the campaign against the Turks as a dynastic ambition, but as a Hungarian interest undertaken by the dynasty and sees the continuation of Catholic traditions in it. It is no different with the commission discussed either. The royal historiographer believes that it is the Habsburg authority that can ensure the protection of Christian-Catholic interests and values, as well as the survival and development of the country, doing his best to create the historical (legal) background serving these aims. However, when he feels that the Hungarian traditions and rights are at risk (even if he doesn't necessarily agree with the noble prerogatives in all respects), he can't identify with the aims of the ruler. Consequently, we can claim that despite all the difficulties that prevented Pray from having access to the proper sources, he didn't intend to support the absolutist efforts, more precisely merging Hungary into the constant territories. These ambitions were definitely against his own *national-aulic* views, which put the country and the Hungarians before the interests of the empire. Accordingly, Pray cannot be accused of betraying national interests as even the realization of the *historia statistica* failed partly in order not to serve the Habsburgs when hurting the integrity, the laws and traditions of the country. Thus, he might have decided against writing a *historia statistica* because of the irresolvable disagreement between the severe guidance of the court and his own historical views, and that was the reason why (from a historical perspective) the outcome could have failed to meet the expectations.

