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STUDIEN ZUR SPRACHE, GESCHICHTE UND KULTUR DER TÜRKVÖLKER

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Identity and Culture
in Ottoman Hungary

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in the case of women due to the traditional notion of their greater passivity. We observed this situation when women attempted to escape an unwanted marriage. Some such women moved far away from their previous place of residence and remarried abroad, thus evading Christian marriage regulations; while others, those who faced different conditions, among them the wife of Ferenc Csiszár, relocated to the Ottoman world, where they could legally remarry. We also observed the factors that enabled these individuals to become boundary-crossers. The ethnic and religious diversity of the eastern and southern regions of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary, primarily the daily coexistence of Latin and Eastern Christians, as well as the receptive behavior of the Ottoman Turks who appeared in these regions made it possible to cross the Christian-Muslim boundaries and to thereby transform personal identity.

Further research is necessary to explore the actions of rational and well-informed individuals who were able to exploit the differences in the Christian and Islamic systems of norms in order to increase the security and stability of their lives and improve their socio-economic status by turning Turk. Also, it seems more fruitful to focus our attention on the mediating role of Christian women marrying Muslim men and to observe the ways in which such mixed marriages shaped the boundaries of divergences and similarities between cultures in clash.

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THE RISE AND FALL OF A NOTORIOUS RENEGADE
THE STORY OF SÁSVÁR/ŞEHSUVAR BEY, 1580

After his appointment in September 1578, Kara Üveys Pasha was discharged from Buda under so far unclarified circumstances in May 1580.¹ To whom can he have been an obstacle? The aged and seasoned Ottoman politician was – to quote Sándor Takáts, the renowned historian of the Ottoman Hungary – “like the pea planted by the footpath. Trodden down now, and then repeatedly revived, its tendrils wound themselves round even a strong tree trunk... He knew he’d better only talk under the cloak, for if he spoke his mind straightforward, he would break his neck. He had his enemies do in each other, let dog bite dog”, yet he was given the sack.² The ambassador of the “Viennese king” (that is, the Habsburg emperor) to the Porte, Joachim Sinzendorf attributed the sudden fall of the governor-general (*beylerbeyi*) of Buda, earlier chief treasurer of the Ottoman Empire, to “intrigues in Constantinople”.³ A different story was told here, in the Turkish and Hungarian marches: a successful plot by the district governors (*beys*) of Ottoman Hungary underlay, allegedly, his rapid fall out of favour. Conspiracy, a plot, finally dismissal – all could, of course, be steps in a logical story line. What could have been the underlying truth?

Apparently, certain events in the period of the “wartime peace years” (1568–1591)⁴ were perpetuated most meticulously and suggestively by literary sources, and a Hungarian language versified story may help answer the questions so cautiously evaded by Sándor Takáts. The embroilments around

- 1 I am much indebted to Anna Horváth Szilágyi and Géza Pálffy for assisting my work with a store of data.
- 2 Antal Gévay, *A' budai pasák* [The pashas of Buda]. Bécsben, 1841, 11–12. Géza Dávid, ‘Incomes and Possessions of the *Beglerbegis* of Buda in the Sixteenth Century’, in Gilles Veinstein (publ.), *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps. Actes de Colloque de Paris. Galeries Nationales de Grand Palais 7–10 mars 1990*. Paris, 1992, 389.
- 3 Sándor Takáts, ‘Kara Ovejsz basa [Kara Üveys Pasha]’, in Idem, *A török hódoltság korából. Rajzok a török világból* [From the period of Ottoman rule in Hungary. Sketches from the Turkish world]. Vol. IV, Budapest, [1928], 135–136.
- 4 Ambassador Joachim Sinzendorf’s reports to Archduke Ernest of Austria (26 May and 8 June 1580). Cf. Takáts, ‘Kara Ovejsz basa’, 149.
- 5 About the concept, see Géza Pálffy, *A tizenhatodik század története* [History of the 16th century]. (Magyar Századok, 6.) Budapest, 45–46.