

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE HOMILETICS OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE: MARTYROLOGY AS A (RE)INVENTED TRADITION IN THE PARADIGM OF EARLY MODERN HUNGARIAN PATRIOTISM

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János Komáromi, the most faithful servant of Imre Thököly, in exile with his master first in Constantinople, then in Nicomedia, wrote in 1701 a remarkable entry in his diary. Deeply impressed by the history of the region, he not only remembered the Christian martyrs persecuted and killed there during the rule of Emperor Diocletian, but he found a moving parallel between their own exile and the persecution of the early Christians: “I feel as a release that *our martyrdom* has been ordained to this place. Blessed be God!”¹

Although the quotation’s textual context refers to a violent episode of church history, Komáromi’s parallel did not imply a religious experience on his part or any kind of religiously motivated sacrifice. He simply equated their present status, that of political refugees, with the condition of the Christian martyrs. Since no religious or confessional references are implied by the expression of “our martyrdom”, one should accept that Komáromi’s discourse had a secular aspect. Furthermore, the analogy between the supreme sacrifice of the martyrs, that is, their death for the early Christian church, and the refugees’ sufferings for their homeland and ultimately the possibility of their death as a sacrifice, suggests a political interpretation of martyrdom relying on the topos of *pro patria mori*.²

Accordingly, the aim of this article is to explore the political connotations³ potentially available in the exile account of János Komáromi.

¹ *Késmárki Thököly Imre secretariusának Komáromi Jánosnak törökországi diariumja s experienciája* [The diary and experience of János Komáromi, the secretary of Imre Thököly of Késmárk, in Turkey] ed. Iván Nagy (Pest: Ráth Mór, 1861), 76.

² Ernst Kantorowicz, “Pro Patria Mori in Medieval Political Thought,” *American Historical Review*, 56 (1951): 479–92.

³ Pocock asserted that the study of political thought consists of the exploration of political language: J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on*

For the diary and his other writings conceived and written during his exile (1697–1705) convincingly exhibit a particular discourse promoting a proto-nationalistic⁴ view of the concept of *patria* and of the patriot as martyr. Consequently, I will attempt to decipher the historical, literary and poetical contexts of Komáromi's discourse⁵ in order to reveal those probably (re)invented tradition(s),⁶ such as the Protestant and especially Calvinist martyrology, which articulated the textual representation of exile as an extreme experience and attributed political significance to it. Moreover, I will assess the functions and uses of these (re)invented traditions in order to exhibit the homiletics of this political discourse. I will conclude my argument by suggesting that early modern patriotic discourses were strongly connected not only to the medieval heritage of political theology but to the homiletic tradition of the 16th and 17th century as well. Thus the multiplicity of political reality rendered into representations by homiletic practice⁷

Political Thought and History (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 15.

⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, *Nation and Nationalism since 1780*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 76.

⁵ According to Quentin Skinner, the primary task of the intellectual historian is to see and think as his ancestors, and my interpretation is committed to this methodology, relying on an exhaustive contextualization which, hopefully, will result in a plausible explanation of this complex historical phenomenon. Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 51.

⁶ I rely on the concept proposed by Hobsbawm: "Invented tradition is taken to mean a set of practices normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a virtual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past." Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 2.

⁷ Hungarian historians commonly underestimate the political significance of early modern Hungarian sermon-literature. In spite of the impressive ideological potential and persuasive power of the genre, few historians have attempted to estimate the social and political impact of this homiletic corpus. During the Middle Ages homiletics were continuously engaged in the task of adapting pagan rhetoric and poetic traditions to the use of the Church. The Reformation made a further major contribution to the political uses of homiletic devices. Melancthon in his rhetoric, *Elementorum Rhetorices libri duo*, set aside a fourth *genus*, the *genus didascalicon*, solely for the homiletic, theological and political function performed by the Reformed *sermo*. In consequence, starting with the sixteenth century the Reformed sermon, as an oration delivering political messages, had a remarkable influence on the Christian political attitude toward the Ottoman expansion. The main corpus of the so-called *literatura antiturcica* which proliferated in Germany after the battle of Mohács consists mainly of sermons; these employ an impressive repertoire of homiletic devices in urging the German estates to stop the pagans before it was too late. However, the primary target of those involved in the exploration of political rhetoric has been the analysis

resulted in a large variety of patterns meant to conceptualize proto-national bonds⁸ and political or national identities.

Historical contexts revisited: the emergence of Imre Thököly and the persecution of Hungarian Protestants

Since the time the peace treaty of Vasvár (1664) was signed, loyalty to the Habsburgs, even within the territory of Upper Hungary, was in continuous decline. The Hungarians' hostile attitude was fuelled by the Habsburg administration's unpopular activities which patently promoted the imperial interests, quite often against the expectations and immediate interests of the Hungarian estates. Thus conflict, indeed rebellion, was unavoidable. Although the Habsburgs had managed to uncover the initial conspiracy (1671) and execute its protagonists, the supporters of the opposition were still far too numerous and a military conflict was unleashed. The rebellion, led first by Mihály Teleki (1672) and then by Imre Thököly (1680), was sustained by the Ottoman Porte and assisted by the principality of Transylvania.⁹

Amidst the sometimes entangled and multiple political interests Thököly at first seemed to be more successful than his predecessor,

of historiography and pamphlet-literature, and only the literary historians seemed to have been preoccupied with the homiletic tradition and its political functions. See Mihály Imre, "*Magyarország panasza.*" *A Querela Hungariae toposz XVI–XVII. század irodalmában* ["The Complaint of Hungary." The *Querela Hungariae* topos in the literature of the 16–17th centuries] (Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó 1995); Mihály Imre, ed., *Retorikák a Reformáció korából* [Rhetorical literature from the Reformation period] (Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 2000).

⁸ Reflecting upon nationalism, Hobsbawm defined the concept of proto-national bonds: "... in many parts of the world, states and national movements could mobilize certain variants of feelings of collective belonging which already existed and which could operate, as it were, potentially on the macro-political scale which could fit in with modern states and nations. I shall call these bonds proto-national." E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nation and Nationalism since 1780: Program, Myth and Reality*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: University Press, 1990), 46.

⁹ On various interpretations of these events in the Hungarian historical tradition, see Gyula Pauler, *Wesselényi Ferenc nádor is társainak összeesküvése, 1664–1671* [The conspiracy of Palatine Ferenc Wesselényi and his fellows, 1664–1671] (Budapest, 1876); Zsolt Trócsányi, *Teleki Mihály. Erdély és a kuruc mozgalom 1690-ig* [Mihály Teleki and the *Kuruc* movement in Transylvania up to 1690] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1972); László Kontler, *Millenium in Central Europe* (Budapest: Atlantisz, 1999), 179–84; Ágnes R. Várkonyi, *Erdélyi változások* [Transylvanian changes] (Budapest: Magvető, 1984); idem, *Magyarország visszafoglalása* [The reconquest of Hungary] (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1987).

Teleki. After having consolidated his position as supreme commander of the rebels—the so-called “Bújdosók” (the Refugees)—in 1682, he concentrated on his own political ambitions. With Ottoman support he occupied the strategically important cities of Upper Hungary, married Ilona Zrínyi, the widow of Ferenc Rákóczi (and daughter of Péter Zrínyi, one of the leaders executed in 1671), and then launched his claim for the title of King of Hungary. The lack of reaction from the Habsburgs’ side, due in part to Vienna’s preoccupation with the war against France, and the continuous political and military support provided by the Ottomans, facilitated his political success markedly. Thus by 1682, as an *atname* sent by the Porte attests, Thököly had become the King of Upper Hungary.

Yet his rule proved to be fugitive. The frustrations caused by a demoralizing series of military defeats made the Ottomans reconsider their political and military strategies. Disgraced, Thököly ended up in an Ottoman prison (1685). Still, in the precipitating events of the years to come he was given a new chance, and he was resolved to exploit the newly emerging conjuncture. Even though the Ottomans lost Buda (1686) and Transylvania was occupied by the Habsburgs (1687), the year 1690 revived their hopes. Thököly’s unexpected victory at Zernyest (*Rom. Zărnești*) over the joint Transylvanian and Habsburg forces created the impression, in the context of the contemporary events, that the Christians might still lose the great war against the Ottomans. Thököly’s attempt to push the advantage of his position was, however, only partially successful. He became prince of Transylvania, but was subsequently forced to leave the principality together with his “kuruc” army. Then the lost battle of Zenta (1697) and the peace treaty of Karlowitz (1699) nullified all his political ambitions. In exile in Turkey, the Ottomans provided him a residence in Nicomedia (1701), where he lived for only four years longer. He was buried by his faithful servant János Komáromi in 1705.

These various military conflicts were not isolated from other major events taking place in the confessionally demarcated region of East Central Europe in the second part of the 17th century. Tripartite Hungary, situated between the Christian and Muslim worlds, was itself confessionally divided. The principality of Transylvania, as the last bastion of Western civilization, was a Calvinist state, while the Hungarian Kingdom, although inhabited by Lutherans as well, was transformed due to the escalating Jesuit and Habsburg pressure into a predominantly Catholic region. The confessional differences, and

especially the ebullient fanaticism of the religious debates, were intertwined with political intentions, interests and motivations. The problematic church-state antagonism as an expression of apparent balance was often the result of political challenges and responses conceived in regional and confessional contexts.

It seems plausible that the unfortunate military expedition against Poland (1657–1658) undertaken by Transylvania undermined its power and authority as the regional protector of Protestantism. Thereupon the Habsburgs under the plausible pretext of uncovering a conspiracy organized a merciless campaign against the intellectual elite, mostly Protestant priests (both Calvinists and Lutherans) and teachers, accusing them of ideological agitation and of inciting the population against their ruler the emperor. The elimination of the leaders who might have mobilized military units or gained foreign political support was followed by a second wave to eliminate the ideologically and politically influential strata of intellectuals, the representatives of the Reformed Churches, and in April 1674 three hundred Calvinist and Lutheran priests and teachers were sentenced to death on the charge of treason against the Emperor and the Kingdom.¹⁰

Eventually, those Calvinist and Lutheran priests who had refused to recant were sent to labor as galley-slaves (1675).¹¹ Those who survived were released only after the political intervention of the Netherlands, when the Habsburgs, probably under the international political pressure and burdened by multiple wars, decided to withdraw the initial sentence (1676). In the meantime a number of parishes were violently occupied and Calvinist or Lutheran communities and their priests regularly persecuted. It is notable that the seemingly separate chain of events—the military actions undertaken by the refugees under the command of Wesselényi, Teleki and Thököly, and the persecution of the Protestant priests, converges in some relevant consequences. The Habsburgs' political, military and confessional attitudes created widespread discontent among Hungarians living in the different regions of tripartite Hungary.¹² The sufferings of the priests and the heroic fight

¹⁰ Katalin Péter, “A magyarországi protestáns prédikátorok és tanítók ellen indított per 1674-ben” [The process against the Hungarian Protestant priests and teachers in 1674], in *A Ráday Gyűjtemény évkönyve* 3 (1983) 31–39.

¹¹ László Makkai, *A magyarországi gályarab prédikátorok emlékezete* [The memory of the Hungarian priests sent to the galleys] (Budapest: Helikon, 1976), 5.

¹² Miklós Bethlen, the son of the chancellor of Transylvania, János Bethlen, wrote a Latin letter to all the priests sent to the galleys, as a gesture of his solidarity with

and death of the rebels must have been regarded as the almost martyr-like undertakings of a small number of extraordinary men. Moreover, political freedom became identified with religious and confessional freedom. Thus “national church” and the “homeland” were again brought closer to each other and integrated in the common desires, expectations and actions of both suffering priests and fighting rebels. Most importantly, due to their often similar end—their unavoidable death occurring in combat or during persecution—both priests and soldiers might have easily become *martyrs*, or they could represent the quintessence of the *nation*, which was to define itself in this extreme experience.

Theological and political literature of the “Persecutio Decennalis”

Having briefly surveyed both the military operations of the followers of Thököly and the persecution of the Protestant priests, we can reasonably assume that an ideological link was created between these two series of events.¹³ It is quite possible that the ideological sources animating the Hungarians’ opposition was organically related to the theologically and homiletically formulated discourses of the Hungarian Calvinist Church. Indeed, the Catholic expansion launched against the Hungarian Protestants was overtly sustained by Vienna. The Habsburg administration provided military troops or sent clear orders to the military forces garrisoned on the territory of Upper Hungary to contribute to the (re)occupation of churches and parishes. The military interventions often descended into extreme violence. In addition to this, the humiliating experiences endured by the priests on the galleys directly contributed to the emergence of the concept and collective

their noble cause and to focus the attention of the other Protestant states on the events taking place in the Hungarian Kingdom. The letter was published in the Netherlands: *Epistola Nicolai Bethlen Sedis Siculicalis Udvarhelyi, Capitanei Supremi, ad Ministros Exules tam Helveticae quam Augustanae Confessionis, Ex Hungaria per hodiernam persecutionem ejectos* (Ultrajecti, 1677).

¹³ The Hungarian literary historian Mihály Imre, after analyzing the sermon-literature of the 1670s, has pertinently pointed out the overlapping perspectives of the events and ideologies displayed. Mihály Imre, “Nemzeti önszemlélet és politikai publicisztika formálódása egy 1674-es prédikációskötetben” [The formation of national self-reflection and political discourse in a volume of sermons published in 1674], *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 2 (1988) 1: 18–45.

memory of “*persecutio decennalis*,”¹⁴ the decade of persecution, referring to the period 1671–1681.

The political impact caused by the impressive corpus of Hungarian,¹⁵ Latin,¹⁶ English¹⁷ and German writings performed a double function. Firstly, by promoting anti-Habsburg political feelings to converge with the traditional confessional dichotomy (Protestantism vs. Catholicism), they cemented the ideological grounds for both confessional and political counter-attacks. Secondly, by invoking Protestant solidarity they successfully transformed this internal affair into an international scandal. Due to its vivid and multilingual European reception, the sufferings and persecution of the Hungarian Calvinists and Lutherans received an enormous amount of sympathy and political support. In addition, the political and military rivals of the Habsburg, such as the French, eagerly exploited the political benefits of the discontents.

Yet the most important consequence of the persecution consisted in the formation of a political-ideological paradigm promoting a sophisticated and homiletically shaped discourse in early modern Hungarian political and cultural life. It was this particular language that reinvented the originally theological tradition of martyrology and transferred it

¹⁴ Pál Okolicsányi used this term for the first time in his book dealing with the history of the Evangelical estates: “...eruperit dira illa persecutio decennalis ab Anno 1671. usque ad Annum 1681.” Pál Okolicsányi, *Historia Diplomatica de statu religionis evangelicae in Hungaria* (Frankfurt, 1710), 51.

¹⁵ The sermon literature of the period was intensely preoccupied with these events and their somber consequences; see Miklós Técsi, *Lilium Humilitatis* (Kolozsvár, 1675); Mihály Szöllösi, *Az Úrért s Hazájából el széledett és számkivetett bujdosó Magyarok Füstölő Csepűje...* [The smoking flax of the Hungarians persecuted for their God and fatherland] (Kolozsvár, 1676). Mihály Tholnai, *A sűrű kereszt-viselésnek hajjai közt csüggedező leleknek lelki Bátorítása...* [The encouragement of the soul despaired by continuous afflictions] (Kolozsvár, 1673).

¹⁶ Bálint Csergő Kocsi (1647–1700) was one of those priests who survived this harsh experience and wrote a Latin memoir entitled *Narratio brevis*. Péter Bod (1712–1769) as a Protestant priest and historian was strongly interested in the history of Hungarian martyrs and translated this text into Hungarian. Péter Bod, *Kősziklán épült ház ostroma* [The siege of the house erected upon rocks], ed. Sándor Szilágyi (Leipzig, 1866).

¹⁷ In 1675 an anonymous book was published in London, providing an account about the Protestants in France and also containing a shorter text referring to Hungarian Protestants. “The Case of the Persecuted and Oppressed Protestants in some Parts of Germany and Hungary: laid open In a Memorial, which was lately presented at Vienna to His Majesty, By His Majesty the King of Sweden’s Ambassador Extraordinary, the Count of Oxenstierna, Bengt Gabrielsson,” in *A True Relation of the Sad Estate of the Reformed Church in France* (London, 1675), 1–16.

to the use of political argumentation and persuasion. While the early Christian martyrs were revered for their sacrifice undertaken for the *Ecclesia*, the early modern, especially Calvinist, martyrology emphasized the politically relevant sacrifices of the contemporary martyrs for the *national church*, and ultimately for the nation and *patria* as well. Thus in Hungary, the Calvinist and Lutheran priests committed themselves to a long-lasting and dangerous ideological war in order to mobilize the population's anti-Habsburg feelings and determination. It was István Szőnyi Nagy, himself a victim of the persecution, who in 1675 published two books¹⁸ which set forth the determining concept of the movement. Szőnyi provided a new concept of the martyr—without the slightest similarity with the saints of Catholicism—which promoted the idea that everybody could become a martyr. In point of the fact, Szőnyi, in the spirit of Foxe, did not simply redefine the concept of martyr and martyrology, but fused it with the discourse of patriotism.

In order to adequately assess the impact and functions of Hungarian Protestant martyrology, it is useful to outline its historical and ideological contexts. The most important Protestant antecedent of Szőnyi's martyrology was Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. Available both in Latin¹⁹ and English²⁰ versions in early modern Europe, the *Book of Martyrs* was quite soon incorporated in the spirituality of Hungarian Protestantism. During the sixteenth century, through the Latin version, Foxe's work had a direct influence upon Mihály Sztárai's writings.²¹ Later on,

¹⁸ István Szőnyi Nagy, *Kegyés Vitéz...* [The pious champion] (Debrecen, 1675); idem, *Mártírok Coronája...* [The Crown of the Martyrs] (Debrecen, 1675).

¹⁹ RERVVM IN ECCLESIA GESTARVM, quae postremis et periculis his temporibus euenerunt, maximarumq; per Europam persecutionum ac Sanctorum Dei MARTYRVM, &c., Commentarij. In quib primū de rebus per Angliam et Scotiam gestis, atque in primis de horrenda, sub MARIA nuper Regina, persecutione, narratio continetur. Autore IOANNE FOXO Anglo (Basel: per N. Brylingerem, et. Io. Oporinum, 1559).

²⁰ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments of these latter and perilous dayes, touching matters of the church*. [The Book of Martyrs] (1563). When quoting from Foxe, I use the following edition: *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe*, ed. Rev. Stephen Reed Cately (London: R. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1841).

²¹ Mihály Sztárai was so impressed by the story of the martyr Thomas Cranmer that he subsequently wrote a version in Hungarian, offering a moving example of Protestant martyrdom. Mihály Sztárai, *Historia Cranmerys Thamas erseknek az igaz hitben valo alhatatosagarol, ki mikor az papa tudomaniat hamisolnaia, Angliaban Maria kiralme aszszony által szörnüü halalt szenuedet. Stárai Mihaly által enekben szerzetetett* [The history of Bishop Thomas Cranmer...] (Debrecen, 1582). RMKT V., 241–262.

the Hungarian translation of Bailey's *Practice of Piety*²² helped spread the concept of martyr as Foxe had conceived it. Finally, Szőnyi and all the other priests working on the theme of martyrdom during the 1670s, made use of the Latin version and transposed Foxe's ideas into a convincing homiletic scheme.

Although the widely accepted thesis presented in Haller's study of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* is undoubtedly the idea of the emergence of elect nationhood, his interpretation²³ cannot be reduced to this single idea. He also reflects upon the narrative and conceptual particularities of Foxe's work. The conceptualization of the theme of two churches (true vs. false church) and the invisible community of the elect as martyrs²⁴ are in fact the basic components of Foxe's theological and political vision about the national church and the nation as well. Furthermore, Foxe's particular treatment of church history, his deliberate gesture of omitting the Catholic Middle Ages with its impressive and universal hagiography, had a political message. In this reinvented history the "true Church" starts with the early Christians and abruptly resumes with the Reformation and its martyrs. The provocative dismissal of the Catholic church, its saints and its history during the Middle Ages because of its deplorable contemporary ethical and sinful condition, otherwise a recurrent motive of Protestant discourses, involved a highly problematic fictionalization about the history of the "true" church.

It is this refashioned line of evolution which might well have provided a direct relation between the Protestant saints and their early Christian ancestors, but it still needed a historical, theological and presumably political justification. Foxe's daring argumentation, transgressing the traditional anti-papist discourse, was something like an invention or reinvention of martyrology as a tradition for the sake of a highly influential, first of all ideological/political and then theological argumentation validating the present status of the English Church.

²² Bailey's well-known book was first translated into Hungarian by Pál Medgyesi in 1636. The book contains a reference to Martyr Glover and his heroic attitude in front of the unavoidable death to come. Pál Medgyesi, *Praxis pietatis, Azaz: Kegyesség gyakorlás, melybe befoglaltatik, mint kellyen a keresztyén embernek, Isten és a maga igaz ismeretiben nevedetni* [Praxis Pietatis that is, the Practice of Piety, which contains the rules concerning the education of the godly Christian...] (Lőcse, 1641), 870.

²³ William Haller, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1963).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 135.

Haller in turn was quick to point out the passionate and prejudiced character of the narrative provided, especially in the later English editions of the *Book of Martyrs*, nevertheless, he not only revealed the historical, theological and eschatological interferences,²⁵ but convincingly grasped its astonishing political/ideological impact as well.

All the same, Foxe's martyrology, with its dominant secular tone and focus upon the possible and plausible martyr condition of the average Protestant as opposed to the supporters of Catholicism, can be best modeled relying on Hobsbawm's concept of invented tradition. Hobsbawm claims that the main function of invented traditions is to build an ideologically and politically functioning link with the past, in order to validate certain values and norms of behavior for the sake of a *continuity*.²⁶ Moreover, he argues that the peculiarity of invented traditions consists of the fact that this continuity proves to be largely fictitious.²⁷ He also asserts that especially political institutions or ideological movements, including nationalism, are disposed to undertake the fabrication of historical continuity by inventing an ancient past. Foxe's martyrology, as promoted by his impressive collection of martyr narratives ideologically loaded with English and Latin prefaces, matches convincingly this concept. In Foxe's discourse the authentication of both Elizabeth's reign and the condition of the Church under her rule was so urgent that the contrasting reminder of Mary's rule had to be supplemented with a fictitious but efficient ideological artifice, that is, the redesigning of early martyrology as the immediate, but in fact invented, historical, theological and ideological/political antecedent of the persecutions during the 1550s.

The continental impact of this martyrology produced remarkable consequences and applications, well beyond the primary English political context in which it had emerged. The distinct and somehow independently circulated "invented tradition of martyrology" would become firstly, *the* Protestant, and then, the Calvinist version of a more and more secular sainthood which ignored hagiographic antecedents but became more and more infused with proto-national feelings and political agendas. The debate²⁸ over whether Foxe's work or English Protestantism did or did not contribute to the emergence of

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 130.

²⁶ Hobsbawm, *Invented Tradition*, 1–2.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁸ J. C. D. Clark, "Protestantism, Nationalism and National Identity 1660–1832," *Historical Journal*, 43 (2000) 1: 249–76.

an English national identity based upon the idea of an elect nation will surely have further repercussions, but for the moment I will confine myself to underlining the invented character of Protestant martyrology and its incorporation into the political discourse of confessionally organized European Protestantism. Briefly put, Foxe's work, although primarily rooted in a typically English early modern political reality, not only reshaped the theological and political paradigm of Elizabethan England, but arguably had a powerful impact upon the formation of continental Protestantism and Calvinism later on as well, including such distant states as the kingdom of Hungary and the principality of Transylvania.

In the light of this historical, theological and ideological/political context in which Hungarian Protestant martyrology was embedded, it is possible to decipher the subtleties of the Hungarian discourse which sought to mobilize public opinion against the Habsburgs. István Szőnyi Nagy (1633–1709) promoted a powerful pattern of martyrology which seems to have had a remarkable reception during the decade of persecution. Szőnyi studied first in Debrecen, then in Utrecht and Groningen. After his return to Hungary he became the minister of Torna, but was unable to remain, since he was driven out by the Jesuits with the military support provided by the Habsburgs (1671). This humiliating event deeply influenced his life. Forced to leave, he went to Debrecen, then to Zilah (*Rom. Zalău*) in Transylvania. In 1675 he joined the army of the refugees and was active as a preacher. His deep commitment to the cause is illustrated by his literary activity as well.

His first work, signed with the telling *nom-de-plume*, *Philopatrus*, was entitled "The Pious Champion" and ostensibly dedicated to the memory of Gustavus Adolphus, the great protector of European Protestantism. In fact, Szőnyi's intention was to adopt the motif of the *miles Christi* or *athleta Christi* modeled on Gustavus' example, in order to explore the implications of the struggle for religious and political freedom. The subtitle of the work, "The Short History of the Pious Champion or the Late Sovereign Gustavus Adolphus King of Sweden and his most praiseworthy fight for bodily and spiritual freedom," clearly reveals his preoccupation to create multiple parallels between the deeds of the late king, the spiritual fight of the Protestant priests and the military combat undertaken by the refugees.²⁹

²⁹ Szőnyi, *Kegyés Vitéz*, Ar.

The construction of “bodily and spiritual freedom” as a perspective or motive for military resistance refers to the core of the ideology formulated by Szőnyi. The religious discourse in fact displayed an impressive repertoire of homiletic devices designed to persuade the readership of the organic link between the urgent need to liberate both the Church and the fatherland from their common enemy. Cast in the form of a long sermon upon the example of the pious Swedish king, Szőnyi’s work sets forth the ideal behavior pattern of all true Christians, that is, to undertake the moral, spiritual and, if needed, the physical fight against the enemy threatening the Church, the fatherland and their freedom. Thus he emphasized that the main purpose of his work is to exhibit “in a steel mirror... the indissoluble unity between Bravery and Piety.”³⁰

Szőnyi’s ideological argument introduced a new concept, the existence of a dichotomy between the private and common good (*privatum* vs. *publicum*). He claimed that most importantly everybody should give up desperate selfishness or individual welfare for the sake of common values. Thus, his political argument set the need for individual survival against the undertaking of the common, even social burden for the sake of collective rights and freedom:

Forget the continuous striving to attain your own personal comfort (*Privatum*) and try to obtain the common good (*Publicum*), the glory of God, the restoration of the bodily and spiritual freedom of your religion. If you gained this, you would possess in the Common good (*Publicum*) a plenty of private goods (*Privatum*) as well.³¹

Szőnyi’s attempt to amalgamate piety with bravery, and the spiritual and physical dimensions of the struggle, resulted, it seems, in a coherent propaganda focused upon *freedom* as an unalienable right in both a political and a religious-confessional sense. Moreover, Szőnyi sought to equate military combat with religious and confessional resistance by attributing a common motivation, aims and ideology to their supporters, namely soldiers and priests. Thus a common propagandistic background had been devised to validate the resistance as ideological war and military combat as well. However, Szőnyi’s greatest merit was the formulation of individual and collective behavior and identity patterns complemented by his preoccupation to interpret this in the context of

³⁰ Ibid., Alr.

³¹ Ibid., 6.

the *privatum* vs. *publicum* relation. His vision, beyond the immediate historical context of the 1670s, was also remarkable as a theological and political effort to project a political order inhabited by (imagined) political communities, in which individual interests, at least theoretically, would be subordinated to the common good.

Szónyi's second book, also published in 1675, crowned his previous efforts to design a Protestant martyrology following the example of Foxe. This time he presented the archetype of the martyr equally committed to the true Church as *Ecclesia* and the homeland as *Patria*. Like Foxe, his main concern was to impregnate the notion of martyr with a certain everyday rationality so as to persuade his readers that every Christian potentially could become a martyr. In this way, the saint of the Catholic hagiographic tradition, whose superhuman character was illustrated by the miracles he so easily performed, was replaced with the much different character of the *elect*, the godly but average man, willing to undertake the renewed task of the martyr which involved not necessarily death, but the act of witnessing:

He who witnesses the Justice of Christ and undertakes in any possible manner suffering for the Gospel's truth is declared to be a martyr. In this broad sense, therefore, all those persons who serve honestly with their mind and soul the Lord every day, are considered to be martyrs, for they are witnessing the Truth.³²

At the same time, Szónyi incorporated in this secularized concept of martyrdom the traditional attributes of true Christians, such as patience, constancy and unconditional obedience to God. The common spiritual heritage of Protestantism and Neo-Stoicism must have certainly been determining factors, for Foxe³³ and

³² Szónyi, *The Crown of Martyrs*, 5.

³³ Foxe, while narrating the events relating to John Hooper (*The Story of John Hooper*), introduced a most convincing artifice in order to strengthen the persuasive power of his book; he simply added to the narrative the martyr's supposed last letter (To all my Dear Brethren, my Relievers and Helpers in the city of London, September 2nd, anno 1554). This text, in spite of its probably fictive origin, was a suggestive example of the patience and obedience shown by the martyrs in their most extreme moments. The letter, resembling a testament or a farewell, must have had devastating propagandistic impact: "... and from my heart I wish Their salvation, and quietly and patiently bear their injuries, wishing no further extremity to be used towards us. Yet, if the contrary seem best unto our heavenly Father, I have made my reckoning, and fully resolved myself to suffer the uttermost that they are able to do against me, yea death itself, by the aid of Christ Jesus, who died the most vile death of the cross for us wretches and miserable sinners. But of this I am assured, that the wicked world, with

Justus Lipsius³⁴ were highly influential exponents of these ideas. According to Szőnyi, “all those who patiently suffer their afflictions are martyrs.”³⁵

It is this recurrent concept of *patience* which became the main attribute of the Protestant martyr—who, in the context of double predestination, was willing to undertake without the least complaint whatsoever had been foreordained to him. This particular patience had the function of enabling the martyr to endure all extremities and afflictions during exile.

Thus, all those who patiently suffer, even though their lives were spared, could become martyrs: “Martyrs are those persons who bore witness to Justice, suffered prison or any kind of affliction, even though they did not meet their death.”³⁶ While the early Christian martyrs or the saints of the Middle Ages were often declared martyrs because of a major sacrifice they had undertaken, the Protestant and especially Calvinist martyrology appreciated more the act of witnessing and patient suffering than deliberate death. Protestant martyrs seemed to be more preoccupied with earthly duties and values, which meant the heroic but passive undertaking of death did not have the same significance. Although the supreme sacrifice was also appreciated, suffering and survival was more important than a passive death. According to Szőnyi, “All those who were delivered into the hands of their persecutors are surely martyrs, for this is a sign that God sends them to

all its force and power, shall not touch one of the hairs of our heads without leave and license of our heavenly Father, whose will be done in all things. If he will life, life be it: if he will death, death be it. Only we pray, that our wills may be subjected unto his will, and then, although both we and all the world see none other thing but death, yet if he think life best, we shall not die—not although the sword be drawn out over our heads: as Abraham thought to kill his son Isaac, yet, when God perceived that Abraham had surrendered his will to God’s will, and was content to kill his son, God then saved his son” (Foxye, *The Acts and Monuments*, 671).

³⁴ The most popular product of European neo-Stoicism was Justus Lipsius’ *De Constantia Libri Duo*. After its first edition in Leiden (1584) it was translated into Hungarian by János Laskai. János Laskai, *Iustus Lipsiusnak az alhatatosságrol irt két könyve. Kikben főkeppen (Lipsiusnak és Lángiusnak) a közönseges nyomorságokban való beszélgetések foglaltatik. Mostan magyarra fordittattak Laskai Ianos által* [The two books of Iustus Lipsius about Constancy...] (Debreczen, 1641). See also Orsolya Hanna Vincze’s article in this volume.

³⁵ Szőnyi, *Mártírok Coronája*, 5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

martyrdom and glorifies Himself through the persons of these most dear Christians.”³⁷

One can conclude that the shift from passive death toward patient suffering and survival added a new perspective to the Christian view of martyrdom. Indeed, one might argue that the very act of witnessing had thoroughly changed. While in the Catholic tradition the death of the martyr was the ultimate act of witnessing and commitment, early modern Protestantism and most importantly Calvinism preferred the survival of the martyr and so refused to identify martyrdom with the obligatory suffering of death. The political and ideological functions attributed to Protestant martyrology might have been more easily performed by *living martyrs* than by dead persons, whose cult often proved to be problematic and controversial. Moreover, the escalating tendency to associate *Patria* with *Ecclesia* definitely favored the extreme experience of exile or persecution over passive death. It was this extreme experience of exile, the necessity to leave one’s homeland, church or religion, which underpinned Szőnyi’s concept:

Martyrs are those persons who are refugees, who fled from the bloody hands of the persecutors, for they witnessed the Truth. Therefore, they lost all their fortune, houses and values and became servants among strangers and foreign peoples. They are in continuous necessity, and they are crying and sighing. Petrus Martyr writes about them: *Est enim ipsa fuga confessionis species. Quis enim non maluerit domi suae manere, bonis suis frui, suae gentis hominum familiaritate uti, quam pauper et ignotus in longinquam regionem peregre proficisci?* (Fleeing from persecutors is, so to say, a way to witness the Truth. For, who would rather not stay at home at his own place and house, keep all his fortune and live amongst his own nation, than migrate in exile to distant places?)³⁸

An illustration of these theoretical considerations was also provided by Szőnyi. The extreme experience of exile, during which, although one is not killed, one is forced to leave one’s home and give up one’s preoccupations and activities, was something directly experienced by him. I have already referred to the fact that he was himself persecuted in 1671 when he was forced to leave the parish of Torna. The humiliating experience, the fact that he as a pastor had to leave his flock, surely became incorporated in his concept of martyrology. Furthermore, he clearly felt the need to make a direct association between the theory

³⁷ Ibid., 6.

³⁸ Ibid., 5–6.

of martyrology and his own persecution. Consequently, he added a short narration to his book, entitled: “The Sad Story of the Persecution and Exile of István Szőnyi Nagy from the Parish of Torna.”³⁹ The story is a detailed account of how the Jesuit Pater Hirco, sustained by military forces, occupied with violence the Calvinist church of Torna and caused him to flee.

However, the significance of the story, as a form of memoir, is multiple. The strong link between, the theory of martyrdom and his experiences of persecution are more than a late justification or a sort of Calvinist self-fashioning. It is the ultimate confirmation of all the claims made in the book about the nature, function and importance of martyrdom. By the integration of the story about his persecution he was clearly offering an illustration, an example, confirming the assertions he had introduced in his book. He was relying on the very basic rule of homiletics (*applicatio*), that the theoretical argument must always be applied to or illustrated with examples (*exempla*). The ideological and political message has thus been delivered through the mediation of homiletics. Szőnyi followed the prescription of devotional literature, which demands that every text, written or oral, conceived according to the rules of homiletics, must be employed to perform the idea of *docere, delectare, flectere, movere*.⁴⁰

Teaching, delectation, persuasion and moving are the basic rules upon which the universal devotional literature and homiletics has been built. Szőnyi, as a good priest, chose to exemplify his theological teaching with a gripping illustration proving his own involvement and commitment. But he also managed to add further propagandistic value and political significance to his martyrology, since he witnessed the truth, confessed his experiences and presumably convinced his readership. We cannot claim that János Komáromi ever read this book, but his diary and other writings convincingly illustrate the powerful

³⁹ Ibid., O5r–O8v.

⁴⁰ In the twelfth chapter of his *On Christian Doctrine* (*De Doctrina Christiana*), Augustine, referring back to Cicero, asserts that the aim of the Christian orator is to teach, to delight, and to move. Then he adds: “To teach is a necessity, to delight is a beauty, to persuade is a triumph.” And he also asserted that “the eloquent divine, then, when he is urging a practical truth, must not only teach so as to give instruction, and please so as to keep up the attention, but he must also sway the mind so as to subdue the will. For if a man be not moved by the force of truth, though it is demonstrated to his own confession, and clothed in beauty of style, nothing remains but to subdue him by the power of eloquence.” (<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/jod/augustine/ddc4.html>). Accessed on 5 December 2008.

impact produced by Szőnyi's martyrology on the Calvinist believers of the period.

“Martyr of his sweet fatherland”: János Komáromi's case

The invented character of Protestant and especially Calvinist martyrology of the 17th century as a tradition and its political/ideological uses in an English and an European context, introduced in the previous part of this article, functions as a primary context providing relevant connotations to Komáromi's considerations about his and Thököly's *martyrdom*. The aim of the present section is to reevaluate Komáromi's concept of martyrology contextualized in the interpretive frames of early modern Protestant martyrology.

Even though the two first met as enemies on the battlefield of Zernyest in 1690, János Komáromi (d. 1711) was soon to become the follower of Prince Thököly. Since Komáromi's former lord and Thököly's great political rival, Teleki, died in the battle, he apparently accepted to join the *kuruc* army and serve their leader. Yet, their relation seems to have had a previous background. Thököly might even have known him fairly well, as testified by a letter written by him to János Komáromi in 1678.⁴¹ However, it must have been a decision that proved of benefit to both parties, because János Komáromi faithfully served the *kuruc* leader and proved his unfailing loyalty in the most extreme situations. He looked after both Imre Thököly (d. 1705) and his wife Ilona Zrínyi (d. 1703) until their last moments, and afterwards arranged their burials.

Although we lack detailed information about Komáromi's life, it seems clear that he embodied the type of the literate servant or familiar,⁴² whose task it was, thanks to his literate skills, to serve his lord as

⁴¹ The letter dated March 18, 1678 was published in a volume of Imre Thököly's correspondence (*Gróf Thököly Imre levelei, a Gróf Teleki család Marosvásárhelyi levéltárából* [The letters of Count Imre Thököly from the archive of the Teleki family], ed. Farkas Deák (Budapest, 1882), 229–30.

⁴² This is the typically Hungarian version of clientelism, which still functioned according to feudal principles. The young noblemen, especially those who had lost their lands and held only the titles attached to them, were often engaged by richer aristocrats to undertake all kinds of military or even diplomatic duties. The longer the period they spent with him, the more intimate a relation united them with their patron, who not just paid them but helped them to arrange a good marriage or any other means for social advancement (András Koltai, introduction to András Koltai,

a *secretarius*, that is, a confidential secretary. Already while in service with Teleki, Komáromi proved his reliability as a *secretarius*, writing letters in both Hungarian and Latin, delivering messages and performing various diplomatic missions. It seems reasonable to assume that he performed similar tasks while in Thököly's service. We lack information about his studies, but we can presume that while he may have studied abroad, he was neither a priest nor a student of theology. He followed Thököly into exile, first in Constantinople, and then to Nicomedia. He recorded his experiences of exile in a diary, starting from 1697, after the lost battle of Zenta, and continuing to 1705. Moreover, in 1699 he also found time to translate from Latin into Hungarian the book of the Jesuit Hieronimus Drexel entitled *Gymnasium Patientiae*.⁴³

Komáromi's choice to translate the work of a Jesuit could be considered, at very least, interesting, given Komáromi's patently expressed Calvinism as revealed in a number of entries in his diary. Yet it seems that Drexel was a favorite with all confessions. The work was widely read and, most importantly, translated during the 17th century and even after: two English (1640),⁴⁴ a French (1633), a Czech (1633) and three Italian (1639, 1803, 1889)⁴⁵ translations were published, giving the book the status of an early modern European bestseller. Moreover, this extraordinary multilingual reception coincides with the notable fact that the book seemed to deliver a supra-confessional message. For the *Gymnasium Patientiae*, as a detailed and artfully presented allegory, uses a set of homiletic devices in order to teach, persuade and move and provide spiritual "delectation" for all true believers, no matter what their confessional affiliation.

ed., *Magyar udvari rendtartás. Utasítások is rendeletek* [The Organization of early modern Hungarian courts. Statutes and directions], (Budapest: Osiris, 2001), 7–13.

⁴³ This unpublished translation I discovered in 2004 is unknown to Hungarian scholars. János Komáromi, *Békességes Tűrésnek Oskolája, Mellyet Édes hazáján kívül való boldogtalankodásában Deákból magyarra fordított KOMÁROMI János, Magyarországi s Erdélyi bujdosó Fejedelem Secretariussa, s édes Hazája Martyrja* [The School of Patient Endurance translated from Latin into Hungarian by János Komáromi, the *secretarius* of the exiled prince of Hungary and Transylvania, and the martyr of his sweet fatherland, while in exile] (1699), 251 v.

⁴⁴ Both translations were finished in 1640 by R. Daniel and R. Stanford. See A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, eds., *A Short Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475–1640*, 2nd ed. (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1986), 325.

⁴⁵ *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*, nouvelle édition, ed. Carlos Sommervogel SJ (Bruxelles-Paris, 1892), 193.

Though Drexel did not take special care to avoid the use of a typically Catholic style or references, the “plot” of the book provides, indeed, a universally valid and most fitting devotional message.⁴⁶ Thus the book, divided in three parts, firstly describes what kind of punishments and crosses are to be endured in the “school of patience”;⁴⁷ secondly, demonstrates that afflictions do indeed teach us fortitude and fidelity;⁴⁸ and finally, persuades the reader that afflictions are to be endured patiently.⁴⁹ The main aim and conclusion of this teaching is that afflictions are to be suffered in conformity and resignation to the will of God (*Afflictiones omnes perpetiendas esse cum Conformatione Humana ad voluntatem divinam*).⁵⁰

The amazing popularity of Drexel’s work cannot be attributed merely to its supra-confessional character and its promotion of traditional Christian themes (obedience, patience, modesty and persevering trust in God). Of notable importance in this respect are the two English translations, published seven years after the appearance of the *editio princeps*. It can scarcely be denied that a number of similarities between 17th century English, mostly non-conformist, puritan religiosity and Drexel’s ascetic devotion fundamentally contributed to the making of the English translation. Indeed, the stoic attitude to endure all afflictions, recommended by Drexel, could have been associated or even equated with the popular teaching of Protestant neo-Stoicism, promoting something very similar in the concept of *constantia*. Moreover, the genre and homiletic particularities of the book, its deliberate aim of teaching, persuading and providing pious delectation, might have seemed familiar for a readership accustomed to the conduct book, the leading genre of puritan devotional literature.

Still, it seems likely that another significant factor is at work as well. In its English version (*The School of Patience*) Drexel’s work promoted the most important attribute of Foxe’s martyrology, that is, patient

⁴⁶ The edition that I have used for citation is Hieronimus Drexel, *Reverendi Patris. Hieremiae Drexelii e Socie: Jesu OPERA OMNIA, in Duos Tomos nunc distributa* (Mainz, 1645), 1–91.

⁴⁷ “Quae poenarum genera, seu quae cruces sint in gymnasio patientiae ferendae.” Drexel, *Gymnasium Patientiae*, 3–35.

⁴⁸ “Afflictio docet Fortitudinem et Fidelitatem.” *Ibid.*, 35–62.

⁴⁹ “Afflictiones sustinendas esse patienter.” *Ibid.*, 62–91.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

suffering,⁵¹ which was the most important distinguishing mark of the early modern Protestant martyr.⁵² In the spiritual context of a more and more haunted puritan imagination mercilessly opposing election to eternal damnation, the martyr represented the elect person freed from the pressure of religious despair.⁵³ Therefore, a book providing advice and teaching on how to perform the practice of piety with the deliberate aim of assimilating the total obedience to God was surely welcome. Furthermore, it could also render into practice the idealistic behavior of the martyrs promoted by the great variety of narratives available in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. It is, therefore, quite possible that Drexel's Latin work was integrated, thanks to translation as an act of cultural transfer, into the devotional literature promoting the Protestant martyrology.⁵⁴ We may therefore conclude that Drexel's Protestant reception implies a process of cultural transfer too, since the hermeneutical act of understanding, explaining and applying resulted in a rather innovative (mis/ab)use of the original text.

Accordingly, it might prove productive to assess Komáromi's use of martyrology in this particular context. Drexel's Latin work in his translation is directly associated with the Protestant and especially the Hungarian Calvinist martyrology promoted by Szőnyi. He made his translation/transfer very clear. The title of the manuscript is eloquent: "The School of Patient Endurance translated from Latin into Hungarian by János Komáromi, the *secretarius* of the exiled prince of Hungary and Transylvania, and the martyr of his sweet fatherland, while in exile."

The immediate textual context of this translation is also relevant and revealing. Komáromi finished his translation in 1699, but in the

⁵¹ "...when I weighed with myself what memorable acts and famous doings this latter age of church hath ministered unto us by the *patient sufferings of the worthy martyrs*, I thought it not to be neglected, that so precious monuments of so many matters, meet to me recorded and registered in books, should lie buried by my default, under darkness of oblivion." Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, 521.

⁵² Master Hooper's Prayer: "Lord I am hell, but thou art heaven, I am swill and a sink of sin, but thou art a gracious God and a merciful Redeemer. Have mercy therefore upon me, most miserable and wretched offender... But all thing that are impossible with man, are possible with thee: therefore strengthen me of thy goodness, that in the fire *I break not the rules of patience*, or else assuage the terror of the pains, as shall seem most thy glory." (Ibid., 657)

⁵³ Michael Macdonald, "The Fearfull Estate of Francis Spira: Narrative, Identity, and Emotion in Early Modern England," *Journal of British Studies* 31 (1992): 32–61.

⁵⁴ For the evaluation of this cultural phenomenon see John R. Knott, *Discourses of Martyrdom in English Literature 1563–1694* (Cambridge: University Press, 1993).

meantime he had been keeping a diary covering, essentially, the whole period of exile started in October 1697 and ending in 1705. The fact that the diary, which covers systematically this period of eight years, does not contain any entries for the year of 1699 might indicate he was preoccupied with the translation during this time. In all the following years, excepting 1704, longer or shorter entries were written on more or less regular base.

The very first reference to martyrology in this diary is the one already cited, which was recorded in Nicomedia (1701) and makes an association with the persecution of early Christians. It is worth revisiting: "I feel as a release that *our martyrdom* has been ordained to this place. Blessed be God!"⁵⁵ At this particular point, a number of pertinent contexts are available for exploring the meanings and significance of the statement. The use of the construction *our martyrdom* is neither a coincidence nor an extravagant assertion caused by the remembrance of the Christian martyrs. By the time Komáromi arrived to Nicomedia, he had already finished a translation dealing with the Christian duty of Patience, and most importantly he had previously defined himself as a *martyr* of his dearly loved homeland.⁵⁶ Furthermore, by the time Thököly and his court reached Constantinople and started their *martyrdom*, that is, their exile, both the tradition of European Reformation, especially Foxe, and the Hungarian Calvinists, especially Szőnyi, had worked out and promoted an ideological-political discourse centered on the figure and pattern of the martyr. This latter concept was rooted in a shared experience, namely, the common persecution endured by the refugees and the humiliated priests during the 1670s. Komáromi not only assimilated the concept of *patience* associated with the neo-Stoic concept of *constantia*, he might also have read Szőnyi's works and surely was acquainted with the more and more secular ideology of the martyr as a patriot promoted by Thököly and his supporters.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Komáromi, *Diárium*, 76.

⁵⁶ An almost similar statement was written by him in his translation (1699), when he referred to his condition of martyr, a status of suffering and deprivation. "As an old man being forced to stay in exile amongst strangers I have to endure all kinds of afflictions, but blessed be the Lord for that, for He takes all those who do not want to attend His school of Patience and teaches them most severely in his School of Justice" (Komáromi, *Békességes túrés*, 4r).

⁵⁷ Katalin Péter, while exploring the different meanings and references of the *homeland as Patria* in tripartite Hungary, emphasized the particular ideological discourse promoted by the refugees, often suggesting that their sufferings were meant to be a *sacrifice for the homeland (Patria)*. Katalin Péter, *Papok és nemesek. Magyar*

Similarly in a way to Szőnyi, who added the narrative of his persecution as a diary to the “Crown of Martyrs” and thus promoted the theory of Hungarian Calvinist martyrology and its immediate application, Komáromi, while in exile, combined the narrative of the diary with his translation. Thus, the reference to martyrology recorded in an entry of his diary (1701) anticipated by his translation which also makes references to his martyr status, creates a similar impression; the translation as the theory of martyrology was exemplified by its application, that is, the experiences narrated in his diary. Still, Komáromi was not a priest and had not received the education or the training of a student of theology. His religiosity was surely augmented by his hopeless situation, thus his decision to accomplish the translation did not have a typically religious motivation. This consideration is also confirmed by his approach to the whole issue of martyrdom.

Even though the determining influence of the Protestant and especially Calvinist paradigm starting with Foxe and continued by Szőnyi cannot be denied, it is worth pointing out the major differences of Komáromi’s discourse. Foxe and Szőnyi added a strongly confessional character to their martyrology, meaning that the opposition between the True Church and False Church implied a second antagonism as well, Catholicism vs. Protestantism. This suggested that only Protestants (Lutherans and Calvinists) were to become martyrs. However, Komáromi simply ignored the criterion of confessional identity. Thus Thököly, who was born Lutheran by birth but under the pressure of the French became Catholic for a short period of time, was also considered by Komáromi a martyr. While narrating the circumstances of Thököly’s burial he depicted the monument erected to honor the memory of the prince, “so that everyone could see and say that for his long exile and his martyrdom undertaken for his nation and dearly loved fatherland: REQVIESCAT IN PACE. AMEN.”⁵⁸

The likely explanation for this phenomenon is that the common experience, rendered into a common political/ideological discourse, which had been promoted in the 1670s both by the refugees and the persecuted priests, entered a new phase of development under

művelődéstörténeti tanulmányok a reformációval kezdődő másfél évszázadból [Priests and noblemen. Studies on the cultural history of Hungary during the one and a half century starting with the Reformation] (Budapest: Ráday Gyűjtemény, 1995), 230–31.

⁵⁸ Komáromi, *Diárium*, 89.

the influence of the events that had taken place during the decade of the 1690s. The incorporation of Transylvania (1687–1691) in the Habsburg empire, the ultimate and decisive failure of the policy based upon directing the Ottoman influence against the Habsburgs must have revealed that not solely the theologically conceived notion of True Church (*Ecclesia*), but a more comprehensive, politically determined unit, the homeland's existence (*Patria*), was imperiled. The danger influencing all social strata, the experiences and feelings related to this somber perspective, might have percolated the collective even if confessionally divided consciousness of the population.

It is therefore quite plausible to claim that it was with this particular modification that Komáromi, though influenced by the Protestant and especially Calvinist martyrology, set forth a discourse transgressing the limits of confessionality. Moreover, his applied martyrology bearing the signs of a more secular and politically functional translation/transfer, had already conceived and promoted exile as an extreme experience equivalent with religious persecution. Accordingly, his concept of martyrdom was no longer organically linked to the Church, having freed itself from the perspective of the struggle between the True Church and False Church, in order to focus upon its most important component, that is, instead of Church (*Ecclesia*), the fatherland (*Patria*). Consequently, he used the theological teaching about the patient endurance of affliction to promote the pattern of the martyr, but with the deliberate aim to demonstrate the relevance of the *pro patria mori*⁵⁹ concept without any theological references. Thus, solely love towards the homeland (*patria*), or exile as an extreme experience undergone as a consequence of this feeling and attitude, was promoted as the chief criterion of his Martyrology, in fact, his patriotism.

While the martyr/patriot in his discourse seemed to be the direct descendant of the persecuted Protestant, the community of the martyrs/patriots could not be related to the Invisible Church. For they, most importantly, constituted an imagined, political community and its structure or functions did not rely on solely theological sources. The popular concept of elect nation promoted especially by Protestant propaganda was replaced by another fiction which attempted to cross the limits of confessional identity and transpose all the confessionally

⁵⁹ Kantorowicz, *Pro Patria Mori*, 487–88.

delineated groups into the frame of one comprehensive concept of community.

Conclusion

This article's main concern has been to reveal how the tradition of Protestant martyrology was "reinvented" and applied first by the representatives of the Calvinist Church and then by secular persons to exploit its ideological connotations and create political representations. Furthermore, contrasting the set phrases readily used about the rhetoric of early modern political language, I have sought to exhibit a different perspective emphasizing the role played by homiletics in early modern political discourses in the context of theological politics. Finally, I have attempted to formulate a plausible explanation of the re-configuration of "patriotic" political discourse, while keeping in mind that the emergence of patriotism or national identity writ large were but small components of the multi-layered political reality of the early modern period.

One can draw the conclusion that the emergence of the martyrological discourse around the exiles of Thököly and the remnants of his court, commemorated by Komáromi, witnesses to the evolution starting with the Reformation and culminating in the repeated attempts of liberation undertaken by a multilingual, multi-confessional and multicultural community to formulate a shared identity. Analyzing Komáromi's writings we could grasp this proto-nationalistic process imbued by confessional and regional initiatives during the 16th and 17th centuries, tracing the formation of patriotism and the political communities conceived in this frame, ready to incorporate all the inhabitants of the *Patria* in those sophisticated political representations and fictions which eventually endowed the modern Nation with political, legal and historical substance.