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**FORGOTTEN FRENCH SOURCES AS A REFLECTION OF
THE PERCEPTION OF THE HUNGARIANS IN THE
18TH CENTURY**

Abstract of a PhD thesis

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I. Choice of subject, objectives

The PhD thesis titled *Forgotten French sources as a reflection of the perception of the Hungarians in the 18th century* examines the way the French of the 18th century perceived Hungarians. Its objective is to elaborate on and, in a given case, to refute the general commonplace statement deeply inherent in the subject's bibliography that emphasises the forgotten Hungary of the given age. This opinion was rooted in the works of Batsányi János and from that time on this statement survived as a commonplace almost until the present day.

Undoubtedly, the rapidly changing system of the political conditions of Europe in the 18th century objectively reinterpreted the historic role of the Hungarians in terms of the ever-varying European status quo. It is obviously the heroism of the anti-Turkish wars that the second part of the 16th century gave prominence to but the Hungarian soldiers' heroism turned barbaric in the confusion of the 17th century (the Fifteen Years War, the Thirty Years War, the Kuruc revolts).

The Hungarians of the national history, as viewed from the outside and getting increasingly worn out between the two pagans, became seen as an inconstant, shifty, lazy and barbaric people that was eager to co-operate even with the Turkish. This view, however, was more and more successfully suggested by the Vienna propaganda. This opinion, even though the truth was more complex, remained prominent until the middle of the 18th century and then was followed by a more elaborated, colourful and comprehensive view of the Hungarians in the second part of the century. The objective of this thesis is to introduce this process.

II. The structure, the sources, the methods and the contents of the thesis

In a chronological structure, his thesis introduces the 17th century roots of the perception of the Hungarians, what forms they appeared in and then were altered in the 18th century and finally, as an outlook, it introduces both the future possibilities of the view of the Hungarians as depicted by the French and the values that the Hungarians provided for the French and, consequently, for Europe.

Besides introducing how the contemporary French authorities viewed the presence of the French, more precisely the Lorraine employees in Hungary, who emigrated to and settled in this country for economic reasons, this thesis is based on the following types of sources. The static data of the contemporary *geographic and historic dictionaries*, which are also historiographic judgements, will not be presented for the sake of completeness but as some representative sample. The basis of the sources is constituted by the collection of sources compiled by Kecskeméti Károly (*Notes et rapports français sur la Hongrie au XVIII^{ème} siècle. Recueil des documents, avec une introduction*, Bruxelles, 1963.), the *reports and records of diplomats* complemented with *a few corresponding documents*

from the Archives of Nantes, the travel narratives and a specific set of sources that has not ever been investigated yet, the *recollections of the French prisoners of war who were captured in Hungary during the revolutionary wars*.

The method was to let these sources speak in an analytical way in the sense that the factual mistakes of the authors will not be corrected. Instead, the characteristics of the ways they saw the Hungarians and the variants of these ways will be made tangible as a reflection of the given historical background.

The main content elements of the thesis are: As an initial step, an attempt was made to collect the basis of sources of the ways the French saw the Hungarians in the specific historical age, *i.e.* the *contemporary bibliographies*. The first among them is the collection by Bongarsius [Bongars, (Bongarsius Jacobus) Jacques: *Rerum Hungaricarum scriptores varii. Historici, geographici*, Francofurti, Apud heredes Andreae Wecheli, Claudium Marnium, & Ioan. Aubrium, 1600.]. The data of Jacques Bongars were updated at the end of the 17th century by the works of Claude Vanel (1644-1703) in the way that the author complemented them by the best of the travel narratives and lexicography of his century. Claude Vanel presented a rather inaccurate list of names without actual references to works. On this ground did we prepare the Vanel-bibliography, which was based on the 1686 database. The data of these two bibliographies were made complete by the 18th century geographical dictionaries so on these bases there are three important catalogues of the perception of the Hungarians in the 18th century such as the Lenglet Dufresnoy (1713), the Moréri-Coignard (1725) and the Langelet Dufresnoy (1735) bibliographies.

Two authors will closely be investigated in terms of the 17th century roots of the 18th century perception of the Hungarians. The first is the English traveller Edward Brown, who travelled to Hungary in 1669-1670. His work was published in London in 1673 in English but in one year's time its French translation was completed and ran into a number of editions later on. Edward Brown's thorough and minutely detailed travel narrative is inevitable because he was one of the most important sources for the French authors, even though they often did not even mention his name. A number of elements of the way he perceived the Hungarians reappeared at the end of the 18th and even at the beginning of the 19th centuries.

Brown's Hungary was a country of rivers, fertile planes, mines, spas, mineral springs and delicious wines. He thought of the Hungarians as a witty and hard-working nation and in his opinion the Hungarians had grown to prefer war to commerce through their history. He also believed that they were endowed with the wits, industry and talent to get involved with sciences and the free arts. Following Brown, such fixed attributes were articulated that greatly influenced the way the French viewed the Hungarians as the image of a gallant nation which had turned militant through its history and did not display much affinity for commerce and the sciences. It was also Brown who added the fur-decorated splendid Hungarian noble outfit to the image of the country and it was he who introduced the mining towns as the most important parts of the country.

The geographical dictionaries are considered as one of the most important sources of the perception of the Hungarians because they are the vehicles of informative historiography.

Claude Vanel's works on Hungary, completed in the 1680's, determined the way the French saw the Hungarians for more than fifty years. In this thesis, his own perception of the country was reconstructed on the basis of his *Le Royaume de la Hongrie ou description nouvelle, Chronologique, Géographique de ce Royaume selon d'estat auquel il se trouve à present et des choses les plus memorables y arrivées*, published in Cologne in 1686. Claude Vanel's work is considered important for two reasons. On the one hand, he practically provided the cross-section of the entire Hungarian history, and on the other he was the first to compile a geographic and historic dictionary about Hungary satisfying the criteria of dictionary making. His description is a history communicated through entries of the names of the towns combined with comprehensive and introductory chapters containing general information. Vanel could not accept the Hungarian revolt against the Habsburgs because the faith put in the legitimate monarch was the cardinal principle of his view of history. (All rebels are fickle and bring the country into ruin.)

As for the geographical and historical works of the 18th century, we have examined the Hungarian history and its consequences in the forgotten great "dictionary of the world" by Bruzen de la Martinière. His conclusions are important because he used the latest results of his age and they finely matched the history of the Hungarians. (He emphasised that the Huns and the Hungarians had probably had nothing in common and he used the model of Persian historians as translated by the French orientalist Pétis de la Croix to characterise the Hungarian prehistory.) The Hungary of Bruzen de la Martinière was exceedingly swampy due to the unregulated waters, the air was not particularly healthy but the land was rich in corn, wine, fruits and in pasture. The wine was strong and excellent and Hungary was able to supply Austria and Poland with it. The Tokaj wine was outstanding. The pastures fed a large number of cattle. The small and the big game appeared so ordinary that everyone was free to hunt them in order to prevent the damage these animals might cause and even the peasants could often eat the meat of wild-boars and deer. There were many mineral springs and they provided water for a number of spas.

His Hungarians were quite militant but were charged with cruelty, pride and a vengeful spirit and they were lacking in unity so much that it was no surprise they had fallen prey to the Barbarians. This is the 17th century picture suggested by Vanel but Bruzen de la Martinière handled it with care when saying: they were charged with them. The language of his slender Hungarians was a dialect of the Slavic language. He gave high priority to the mining towns relying upon the findings of Jacobus Tollius, who visited Hungary twice in 1660 and 1687 in order to investigate mines and had prepared very detailed economic, geographic and historical analyses of the regions.

This thesis will survey the French interpretation of the Hungarian present of the 18th century in the entry *Hongrie* in the dictionary by Vosgien, in Sané's portrait, and in the travel narratives, the reports of diplomats, the French settlers and the prisoners of the revolutionary wars.

We have used three different editions of the dictionary by Vosgien. They are the ones published in 1767, 1801 and 1811 because the entry *Hungary* in the 1767 edition reflects the Hungary of the first part of the 18th century, the 1801 edition describes the country in the second part of the century and the 1811 edition introduces Napoleon's Europe. By

contrasting the various texts it is plain to see that the currently dominant political considerations of Europe were imprinted on the geographic dictionaries as well. For instance, the 1801 edition underlined that if the Hungarians were less lazy they would have a different opinion of this fruitful kingdom. The 1811 edition, however, highlighted the former individual Hungarian statehood.

The fundamental change in the way the Hungarians were viewed occurred in the second part of the 18th century due to the travel narratives of the visits that were paid to Hungary. These travellers who had gathered misleading information in Vienna had a pleasant surprise in Hungary. The road conditions were not that terrible, there was enough food, and the country was fertile and mostly cheap. It is no surprise that the French prisoner of war Francois Dellard wrote that in spite of the arduous journey and all the trials of their captivity "we lived quite well, the food was cheap and easy to buy. A goose for instance cost not more than six or seven sous, a pound of mutton or beef was not more than three sous and lots of kinds of vegetables were available and a bottle of wine cost only four sous."

As for the travellers, the thesis will examine in detail the records by the Lyon merchant Jean-Claude Flachat, the secretary of Marqui l'Hôpital, Saint Priest and Charles-Marie d'Yrumberry Salaberry. A wide range of travellers came to Hungary such as *employees, travellers in search of scientific knowledge, diplomats, tourists wishing to have a nice time, to satisfy their curiosity or to gain experience and also the French traveller who had left his country because of the Revolution.*

The Hungarian economy mainly attracted the diplomats of the second half of the 18th century. It became a generally accepted idea that it was not only the Turkish oppression that caused Hungary's backwardness but also the short-sighted Vienna economics that kept giving preference to the hereditary provinces even though Hungary had it all it took to become a rich country.

So, in the second part of the 18th century Hungary had become the land of possibilities both for the French diplomacy and the settlers who arrived here for bread-and-butter worries. The basic idea of the economic plan worked out by the French consul of Trieste De la Vergne was that the Hungarian economy could be linked to the Mediterranean world-trade system by encouraging the Adriatic commerce. (Naturally, the French diplomacy was interested in causing damage to the English in the Mediterranean commerce and in this respect the Hungarian corn and a number of products could have become marketable throughout the world. De la Vergne's report, in fact, was examining a historical possibility that failed to materialise.)

On compiling the catalogue of the hungarics relating to the 18th century (see the appendix) the intention was to include all the works that provided important data on the image of the Hungarians. The appendix also includes the records of two French prisoners of the revolutionary wars, those of François Dellard and Joseph Hautière, whose notices have not been known so far.

III. The findings of this thesis and the possible aspects of further work

The most important findings of this thesis are as follows.

1/ By examining these sources the thesis primarily aims at grabbing and introducing the process by which the French of the 18th century (influenced by all the temptations of the imprints of the past) discovered Hungary, the country which the first two centuries of the modern age reduced to the bastion of Christianity, for Europe and for themselves. Starting out of the 17th century roots, the thesis uncovers the modification the image of the Hungarians went under in the 18th century. It is especially the 1760's that this image became an elaborate one on the one hand and not exclusively dependent on politics on the other because the experiences of individuals obtained a more and more important role.

2/ On compiling the bibliographies, the collection of the hungarics relating to this subject have been expanded.

3/ When examining the way the French perceived the Hungarians in the 18th century, this thesis is the first to have used two sources that had not been known before: the French ambassador to Constantinople Sain Priest's observations and the records of the first prisoners of the revolutionary wars captured in Hungary.

4/ We touch upon the French reception of this image of the Hungarians when we investigate De la Vergne's report, a historical possibility that did not come out.)

An example of a chance that did materialise was the Fourcroy-plan, inspired by the Mining Academy of Selmec, that established the predecessor of the famous École polytechnique, the institution of the École des travaux publics in Paris.

1/ The full analysis of the bibliography by Vanel may reveal new and important bits of information.

2/ The catalogue of the hungarics relating to the 18th century could and must be expanded because there are innumerable expanded re-editions to individual pieces of work. What is added or taken away when a re-edition is published? The result is quite informative as it can be seen as the thesis contrasts the three Vosgin editions.

3/ The best of the biographies relating to the 18th century image of the Hungarians have not yet been made. (It is not only the 1715 biography of Fráter György by Béchet that we mean since the matters of various kinds of famous persons, e.g. kings, women and generals relating to Hungary have not been widely examined at all.)

4/ We believe that the thorough reconsideration of the history of the Hungarian-French technical and mechanical relations may also reveal new results.

IV. A list of my publications

(Relating to the subject of the French perception of the Hungarians in the 18th century)

1/ Les principes de base de la monarchie universelle napoléonienne d'après un pamphlet bonapartiste hongrois. In. Actes des 113^e 114^e Congrès Nationaux des Sociétés Savantes /Strasbourg, 5-9 avril, 1988 et Paris, 3-9 avril 1989/. Section d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine. Révolution française, Paris, C.T.H.S. 1991. 241- 254.

2/ Les premiers prisonniers de guerre de la Révolution française en Hongrie. In. Actes des 113^e 114^e Congrès Nationaux des Sociétés Savantes /Strasbourg, 5-9 avril, 1988 et Paris, 3-9 avril, 1989/. Section d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine. Révolution française, Paris, C.T.H.S. 1991. 467-474.

3/ Egy francia hadifogoly magyarországi feljegyzései /1793 1795/. (The notes of a french prisoner of war in Hungary /1793 95/.) Acta Historica, Szeged, 1991. 59-64. Különszám. 3. Nemzetközi Hungarológiai Kongresszus /Szeged, 1991. aug. 12-16./ tiszteletére.

4/ La Hongrie de l'ère des réformes (1825-1848) dans les relations de voyage françaises contemporaines. In. J. NAGY László (szerk.:) Mediterrán tanulmányok, Szeged, 1993. 157-164.

5/ Francia katonák, telepesek és utazók a 18. századi Magyarországon. In: J. Nagy László -- Szász Géza (szerk.:) Francia eszmék. Tanulmányok a francia forradalomról, Szeged, 1995. 54-68.

6/ Soldats, colons et voyageurs français en Hongrie au XVIII^e siècle, Cahiers d'études hongroises, 9/1997-1998, 179-194.

7/ L'histoire des experts militaires et colons français en Sud-Est Hongrie du XVIII^e siècle, Impacts. Une Culture pour l'Europe d'aujourd'hui. Tome 32 – Année 1998 – N° 2-4, p.51-58. 1.

8/ Un rapport français sur l'expansion commerciale hongroise dans la Méditerranée (env. 1760) In: Kukovecz György (szerk.): La Méditerranée et l'Europe: Histoire et Politique, JATE Szeged, 1998, 89-92.1.

9/ La Hongrie au XVIII^e siècle vue par les Français, in J.Nagy László (szerk.:) Régions – Nations-Europe, Univ. De Szeged, 2000, 109-118.1.

10/ La réception de la Hongrie d'après Bruzen de la Martinière ; in :PAYET, Marie-TÓTH Ferenc (szerk.:) Mille ans de contact, Relations franco-hongroises de l' an mil à nos jours, Szombathely, 2001, 205-212.

11/ Les officiers du génie français et la Hongrie au 18^e siècle, in: HUNYADI Zsolt (szerk.:) Chronica, Szeged, 2002, 74-79.

12/ La vie quotidienne hongroise dans la deuxième moitié du XVIII^e siècle par les voyageurs français, in: J. NAGY László (szerk.:) Mediterrán tanulmányok, Szeged, 2002. 53-61.