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## Turning Turk as Rational Decision in the Hungarian–Ottoman Frontier Zone

This essay will attempt to offer a glimpse into the situations and considerations that played a role in the decisions of Christians, primarily women, who voluntarily stood among the Turks in the Hungarian–Ottoman contact zone. This insight will highlight marriages that spanned the Christian–Muslim borders. On the one hand because the letters of papal pardon which abandoned Christian spouses submitted to the Apostolic Penitentiary in order to gain permission to remarry serve as the basis for analysis; and on the other hand because marriage typically served as the gateway through which people entered the opposite culture. This essay places emphasis on those individual and group experiences that made voluntary movement between cultures possible and the situative character of individual and religious identity at the time.

Keywords: voluntary conversions to Islam, conversion for marriage, female agency, Christian–Muslim frontier regions.

### *Introduction*

In this essay I deal with the consequences of war on the agency of ordinary women and men.<sup>1</sup> The stress is on female social practices, which are more illuminating in comparison to the male experience. The war in question is not a single battle, but the long struggle between the medieval Kingdom of Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. The political-military consequences of the conflict are common knowledge: the middle regions of the Hungary came under Ottoman rule until the end of the seventeenth century.

Hungarian Ottomanists reconstructed the military and economic administration of Ottoman Turks in subjected Hungary as well as on its border zone. As a byproduct of this immense work with serial sources produced by Ottoman and Hungarian authorities in their effort to more profitably exert their power over their subjects, we also have occasional glimpses into the experiences of the population at large: danger and fear, mass killings, deserted

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and depopulated areas, refugees, captivity and enslavement of huge masses or, at best, paying taxes to both Ottoman and Hungarian authorities.<sup>2</sup>

Here I direct the reader's attention to another face of "contact zones," the spaces of cross-cultural encounters in which historically separated peoples come into contact and establish ongoing relations, involving coercion, unequal power relations and conflict.<sup>3</sup> The protagonists of this essay are the less familiar figures of Ottoman Hungary who voluntarily crossed the Christian–Muslim border. Standing at the center are stories of a woman and of a man, both of whom opted to go from Christian regions to lands occupied by the Turks, leaving a Christian spouse for the sake of an Islamic one. The liberty of their decision thus cannot be compared to those renegades who subjected themselves to the Ottomans, either voluntarily or by force, while living under their authority. The present study aims to better understand the rationality underlying their exceptional choices.

The stories told about them must be read with circumspection, since they were constructed by their abandoned spouses to serve their prevailing objectives. Sin is a central concept of these stories, their genre being the supplication to the pope asking for his pardon.<sup>4</sup> Although their narratives were clearly influenced both by the procedure of issuing a pardon, which involved the transcription of a petition by a professional proctor who followed a prescribed protocol, and also by the legal demands to which they had to conform, petitioners were the unquestionable authors of their own narratives.<sup>5</sup> The way they presented the story of their first marriages was a tactic in the process of negotiating the validity of

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2 See, for example, Pál Engel, "A török dúlások hatása a népességre: Valkó megye példája," *Századok* 134 (2000): 267–321; Éva Sz. Simon, "Flight or Submission: Changing Identities in the Ottoman–Hungarian Borderlands. The County of Zala in the 1570s," in *Osmanischer Orient und Ostmitteleuropa*, ed. Robert Born and Andreas Puth (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2014), 33–46; Géza Dávid, *Pasák és bégek uralma alatt. Demográfiai és közigazgatás-történeti tanulmányok* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 2005); Klára Hegyi, *Egy birodalom végvidékén* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1976); Pál Fodor and Géza Dávid, eds., *Ransom Slavery along the Ottoman Borders* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

3 On the concept of "contact zone" see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 2008) first edition 1992, esp. 7–8.

4 The requests were handled by the officers of the Holy Apostolic Penitentiary, which in the fifteenth century dealt with violations of canon law ranging from irregular clerical ordinances and irregular marriages to such heinous crimes as murder, sodomy or sacrilege. See more recently Kirsi Salonen and Ludwig Schmutge, *A sip from the "Well of Grace." Medieval Texts from the Apostolic Penitentiary* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009).

5 In this respect, the scenario of papal pardoning was very similar to the process of royal clemency in sixteenth-century France. Cf. Hélène Millet, ed., *Suppliques et requêtes: Gouvernement par la grâce en Occident (XIIIe–XVe siècle)* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2003).

their second marriages with local and central authorities. A prerequisite of this was to have their first marriage declared void. Petitioners used the “apostasy” of their spouses—with a broad interpretation of canonical regulations—as an argument to this end.<sup>6</sup> Yet, we need not suspect gross lies. To have the marriage annulled, it usually sufficed to present a plausible story of being abandoned, waiting in vain for the return or failed recalls of the stubborn spouse. Petitions had to be both efficacious and credible so as not to lose their convincing potency. In other words, women and men turning Turk in the Christian–Muslim contact zone of Hungary were authentic figures for both the authors and the readers of these stories. Moreover, their content was checked during the official procedure of papal pardoning and had to be ratified by witnesses. Unsurprisingly enough, domination and agency were both inherent in the complex scenario of pardoning, just as the dialectic of the same two processes shaped the intercultural social practices—most importantly Christian women freely marrying Turks—discussed here. This documentation of the late medieval papal regulation of Christian–Muslim relations is exceptionally illuminating, since it opens a window unto an early phase (otherwise underrepresented in the local source material) of Christian–Muslim interactions in Hungary.

Historians have recently found interest in women leaving a Christian marriage for the world of Islam, since in these stories women exceptionally appear as active agents capable of shaping their own lives. Additionally, their voluntary marriages with Muslim men seem to question the subordination of women to men in the Islamic world. It is crucially the figure of litigating women appearing in court documents that dominate the corpulent scholarly literature, which portrays women as having spheres of autonomous action (economic transactions, pious endowments, divorce suits) in contrast to the traditional image of their subordination and passivity.<sup>7</sup> Women negotiating their familial and social relations before the *kadis* provided the historical lesson that it was possible for capable women to subvert patriarchal relations. Christian women converting to Islam at court also questioned traditionally imagined husband–

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6 From the standpoint of canon law, difference in religion did not represent an impediment to marriage, though could serve as the basis for annulment of marriage (without the possibility for remarriage). Péter Erdő, *Egyházjog a középkori Magyarországon* (Budapest: Osiris, 2001), 292.

7 The classic work on this theme: Donald C. Jennings, “Women in the Early Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Judicial Records: The Sharia court of Anatolian Kayseri,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 18 (1975): 53–114.

wife relations.<sup>8</sup> The vivid historical narratives of distinguished Venetian women remarrying in Istanbul highlighted the strategic use of converting to Islam: a way for young people to escape from arranged marriages or get rid of unpleasant spouses.<sup>9</sup>

In the present study I attempt to portray from their own perspective the situation of women who chose to marry Ottoman men in the Hungarian–Ottoman frontier zone and in Ottoman Hungary (the middle parts of the medieval kingdom), which will make it possible to contribute to the scholarly discourse on the independence of early modern women. Writing recently about litigant female serfs who possessed their own property and played the role of head of family, Katalin Péter stated that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries represented a particularly advantageous period in terms of the exercise of independence for such women in Hungary.<sup>10</sup> However, the Christian woman choosing a Muslim husband is, to the contrary, an unknown or obscure figure that occasionally emerges only incidentally as a minor character in both contemporary and modern historical narratives. Symbolic of such figures is the person of Zsuzsanna Goda from the market town of Gyöngyös in Ottoman Hungary: Goda married a Turk from Vác named Fāti in the 1660s, thus rendering her a Turk, which entailed impalement, the punishment due to criminals, argues Ferenc Szakály, one of the leading experts on Ottoman Hungary.<sup>11</sup> We hear, exceptionally, of Zsuzsanna because the chief magistrate purchased from her a vineyard, which the *kadi* had awarded to her in a lawsuit against a Christian, and—in the eyes of the noble *comitatus*, the refugee Hungarian authority that laid the exclusive claim to the administration of property affairs in Ottoman Hungary—he had thus committed the offense of “Turkism” (*turcismus*) as a result of doing business with “the Turk [in other words Zsuzsanna]” for which he was condemned to execution by impalement.<sup>12</sup> Hungarian authorities did

8 See, for example, Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr, “Women, Law and Imperial Justice in Ottoman Istanbul in the Late Seventeenth Century,” in *Women, the Family and Divorce Laws in Islamic History*, ed. Amira El Azhary Sonbol (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 81–95; Leslie Peirce, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (Berkeley–Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003).

9 See the following two case studies: Eric Dursteler, *Renegade Women: Gender, Identity, and Boundaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

10 Katalin Péter, “Nők önállósága, férfiak önállósága a társadalomban,” in idem, *Magánélet a régi Magyarországon*, 13–23, here 17; Idem, “Női családfők Sárospatakon a 16. és a 17. században,” *Századok* 123 (1989): 563–604.

11 Ferenc Szakály, “A gyöngyösi ispotály-per 1667–1668-ban (A ‘törökösség’ fogalmának értelmezéséhez),” *Archivum. A Heves Megyei Levéltár Közleményei* 10 (1981): 5–26.

12 Ibid.

not harass Zsuzsanna Goda and the motives for her choice have not yet raised the interest of researchers of Ottoman Hungary. According to Klára Hegyi, who may know the most about the society of Ottoman Hungary,<sup>13</sup> women who chose Turkish husbands, alongside the socially diverse cross section of men who entered Turkish military service, represented one of the territory's small groups of voluntary renegades perceptible in Ottoman sources.<sup>14</sup> Marriage contracts concluded before *kadis*, for example, in some instances suggest that the wife had previously been a Christian (that is, a Hungarian or an Orthodox Christian South Slav).<sup>15</sup> This observation is compatible with the 1550s description of the school rector from Tolna, a wealthy market town in Ottoman Hungary. For Pál Thuri Farkas, Christian women who married Muslims represented the sole group of voluntary renegades: unmarried women who had given birth to the children of Turkish men, ladies who had fled from their well-to-do husbands on the council to Turks and, typically, widows. The moralizing justification for their act is not surprising when considering the constraints of the genre of the humanist letter. The degree to which general stereotypes affected stories regarding women who left violent Christian husbands for Turks and the silence of their humiliated spouses and the extent to which these stories were based on the personal observation and experiences of the author is open to question.<sup>16</sup>

The woman and the man in our story became renegades in the first years of Ottoman rule in central Hungary and some decades before the first law against renegades was encoded. In other words, at the very beginning of the legal process of constructing criminals of renegades, in contemporary words people who were *de societate Turcica suspectus*, as the first such law sanctioning the selling of Christian children to the Turks and the spying for the Turks in 1567 put it.<sup>17</sup> The estates gathered at the national assembly held in Pozsony (Bratislava, Slovakia) in 1574 attempted, in cooperation with county officers, to inhibit the custom,

13 Her most important works include Klára Hegyi, *A török bódoltság várai és várkatonasága*, 2 vols. (Budapest: MTA, 2007).

14 Klára Hegyi, "Kereszténység és iszlám az Oszmán Birodalom balkáni és magyar tartományaiban," *Korunk* 7 (1996): 32–42, here 38.

15 Records of the activity of the *kadis* in Ottoman Hungary are very fragmentary. According to Klára Hegyi, the Karánsebes-Lugos records suggest the conversion of a few wives of Hungarian origin. I would like to thank Klára Hegyi for reviewing these Turkish sources from this perspective for me.

16 Pál Farkas Thuri, "Idea Christianorum Hungarorum in et sub Turcismo [1556–57]," printed first in 1613 and 1616. Edited in Latin and Hungarian by Géza Kathona, *Fejezetek a török bódoltsági reformáció történetéből* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1974), 61–69.

17 Dezső Márkus, ed., *Corpus Juris Hungarici. Magyar Törvénytár 1000–1526* (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1899), anno 1567, art. no. 30.

spreading among both serfs and nobles living in border zones, of voluntarily (*sponte*) subjugating themselves to the Turks—that is, voluntarily paying taxes to them.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the inhabitants of border zones who ensured their survival through the payment of taxes to Ottoman authorities, but did not change their religious identity, the fate in Ottoman Hungary which has long engaged historians is that of captives and slaves.<sup>19</sup> In the writings of Sándor Takáts, who in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was the sole historian to deal with the lives of everyday people in Ottoman Hungary, voluntary renegades—spies, guides, henchmen, scribes performing in the service of the Turks—appear as characteristic, unexceptional figures.<sup>20</sup> Takáts’s prism originated partially from his research of Viennese *Hofkammer* documents in which reports of submissive renegade “malefactors” and attendance to matters related to them were commonplace. *Hofkammer* officials regarded the “malefactors” of Ottoman Hungary who “hobnob with the Turks” with antipathy similar to that of the Pozsony estates. The antipathy of Takáts toward imperial policy and the Viennese lords turned the prism: the historian formed a romantic image of the chivalrous Turks and those women and men who in the hope of attaining material benefit and career and social advancement became Muslims, either in order to avoid conflict with authorities or out of true love. Only in the writings of Takáts do we discover that several *pashas* and *beys* had taken Hungarian women as wives or that the Hungarian spouse of the Turkish commander of the castle in Veszprém also spied for the Hungarians.<sup>21</sup>

The voluntary renegades, among them women who left their Christian husbands for Muslim men and chose to live under Ottoman rule—be they exceptional or characteristic figures of the age—do not conform to the notion that religious identity formed the foundation of personal identity in the age of Ottoman Hungary and was one that could be changed only under compulsion.<sup>22</sup> The question thus emerges: do texts from this period suggest that religion can be

18 Ibid., anno 1574, art. no. 15. The law cites *tributarios colonosról és nobiles unius sessionis*—tax-paying nobles. This was reconfirmed in the following laws: 1575/10. tc., 1588/23. tc.

19 See studies in Fodor and Dávid, ed., *Ransom Slavery*.

20 See above all: Sándor Takáts, *Rajzok a török világból*, 2 vols. (Budapest: MTA, 1915–1917). For a bibliography of this author’s works see Sándor Takáts, *Művelődéstörténeti tanulmányok a XVI–XVII. századból*, ed. Kálmán Benda (Budapest: Gondolat, 1961), 377–408.

21 Takáts, *Rajzok*, vol. 1, 294, 328, 330.

22 Pál Fodor, “Török és oszmán: az oszmán rabszolga-elit azonosságtudatáról,” in idem, *A Szultán és az aranyalma* (Budapest: Osiris, 2001), 29.

interpreted as a situative identity?<sup>23</sup> The recent analyses of religious conversions, setting a broader social and cultural context in place of the traditional Christian narrative of conversion entailing the total transformation of the self,<sup>24</sup> interpret it as a social practice and a tactic used by people in the context of their everyday encounters with a dominant system.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore if we want to better understand the actions of the Christian inhabitants of Ottoman Hungary, it would be worthwhile for us to examine the situations that prompted them to convert to the religion of the “mortal foe of Christianity.” In other words, when the religious difference was neutral for them and they followed a different rationale?<sup>26</sup> Did they, for example, consider the world in which they found security or social advancement to be stronger? And what kinds of previous experiences and capabilities helped them to adapt to another culture? Who was able to turn the constraints and opportunities lying within the new system at the intersection of Christianity and Islam to their own advantage, how were they able to do so and under what circumstances? If we approach the issue of voluntary conversion from below and regard it as a rational act aimed at taking control of one’s own destiny amid external constraints, then Christian–Muslim conversion does not appear to be abnormal and deviant, but a mode of operating in everyday life, thus making the issue of representativity irrelevant. At this juncture we can refer to Peter Burke, who argues that exceptional cases are suggestive since they show moments when social mechanisms fail to work.<sup>27</sup> Is it possible that the social integration of those who went over to the Turks ended up in failure?

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23 For theories of identity see Stuart Hall, “A kulturális identitásról,” in *Multikulturalizmus. Kultúra, identitás és politika új diskurzusai*, ed. Mária Feischmidt (Budapest: n.p., 1997), 60–85.

24 Paula Fredriksen, “Paul and Augustine: Conversion Narratives, Orthodox Traditions, and the Retrospective Self,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 37 (1986): 3–34.

25 On the concept of everyday “tactics” see Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). I will quote below the most relevant literature on conversions from the perspective of cultural history or historical anthropology.

26 Klára Hegyi outlined the general reasons for which the majority of Hungarians did not embrace Islam: Hegyi, “Kereszténység és iszlám.” For the perspective of the Ottomans see Pál Fodor, “A kincstár számára a hitetlen a leghasznosabb? Az oszmánok magyarországi valláspolitikájáról,” in idem, *Szűljelmán szultántól Jókai Mórig. Tanulmányok az oszmán-török hatalom szerkezetéről és a magyar-török érintkezésekről* (Budapest: MTA BTK, 2014), 258–71.

27 Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 42.

*A Runaway Christian Wife Marries a Turk in Buda*

Ferenc Csiszár, who lived in the diocesan town of Várád (Oradea, Romania), was abandoned by his wife for the sake of a Turkish man living in Buda. The events were subsequently narrated by the abandoned husband in his supplication addressed to the pope: his wife, who was the mother of his child, “instigated by diabolic inspiration, during the time he stayed away from his homeland, sold all their goods and ran away. She went to the city of Buda, in the regions of infidels, where she married a Turk.” He was unable to divert her from this intention, although “he sent many of his men after her, calling her back, some of whom were killed by the Turk, which put him to huge expenses.”<sup>28</sup> We have no reason to doubt his words. It is uncharacteristic of men to take pride in being cuckolded (which was rather an issue raised by slanderers). Moreover, Ferenc appears as a man of strict morals. Contrary to others, in 1548 he turned to the pope not in order to obtain permission to remarry, but for permission to take the sacraments despite his disordered marital affairs. Obviously there must have been many people who got into similar situations, but never wanted or needed to restore their legal and spiritual status.

These briefly described events suggest that a dramatic conflict of interest and emotion lay in the background. Csiszár seems to have been not only a stern and disappointed man, but a stingy one as well, as if he valued the goods his wife was taking more than his wife herself. Material losses could play an important role in the conflict between husband and wife, as it did in similar cases for example in early modern England.<sup>29</sup> It seems likely that the hapless messengers that Csiszár sent to Buda also demanded a return of the “stolen property,” which his wife obviously believed was rightfully hers. The emotional and material aspects of this episode are palpable in the story presented to the pope. Unfortunately we do not find out from the account if their child remained with the husband in Várád or moved with the wife to Buda.

What might have prompted Mrs. Csiszár to abandon her husband? She appears to have planned and prepared her daring move in advance, utilizing the temporary absence of her husband to make her escape. Mrs. Csiszár does not appear to have been a woman who ignorantly set out into the bigger world.

28 Archivio Poenitentiarum Apostolica (Roma), Registra Matrimonialium et Diversorum [APA], vol. 121, fol. 64rv (January 1548).

29 Sara M. Butler, “Runaway Wives. Husband Desertion in Medieval England,” *Journal of Social History* 40 (2006): 337–59, here 342–43.

What enticed her to leave Várad for Buda, the foreign-occupied former capital of the Kingdom of Hungary where the muezzin's call to prayer could be heard in place of the ring of church bells? At the same time, Várad, due to its sacral character deriving from the cult of Saint Ladislaus, King of Hungary as well as its important role in long-distance trade and military government, continued to flourish and was considered at the time the potential capital of the divided kingdom.<sup>30</sup> Was she seduced by the higher social standing, power and prestige of her new husband, whose resolute, aggressive conduct suggests that he was more likely a member of the Buda garrison or a member of the new civil service rather than a trader? Based on his name, her first husband may have been a gunsmith, likely a respected member of the local blacksmith or spurrier and bladesmith guild.<sup>31</sup> How might she have met her new husband? Had she already been to Buda or the “Turk” in Várad? Or had she heard from elderly residents of Várad that the Turks had already devastated the city (in 1474) and decided that she would not risk their return to burn her home and carry away her family? She may have obtained first-hand information about the horrors of slavery from people like Bertalan Georgievics, who precisely in 1547 travelled to Várad, where he engaged in a public religious debate at a Franciscan cloister with a dervish who was in the city to hold talks with the bishop.<sup>32</sup> That is, Magdolna was searching primarily for security, fleeing from the hostile sword as a survival strategy into the bed of the enemy?

One cannot exclude the possibility that love inspired the woman from Várad to leave her Christian husband, thus placing her in the company of renowned female figures, notably Othello's Desdemona, who enthralled the readers of Renaissance literature of both high and low quality. We do not therefore know if she made a planned escape from a failed marriage in search for a new husband or if she was captivated by unexpected love. However, regardless of whether emotion, necessity or cold calculation served as the primary motive for her

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30 András Péter Szabó, “Várad. A három részre hullt ország virtuális fővárosa. Egy oklevél olvasatai,” in *Tiszteletkőr. Történeti tanulmányok Draskóczy István egyetemi tanár 60. születésnapjára*, ed. Gábor Mikó, Bence Péterfi, and András Vadas (Budapest: ELTE Eötvös, 2012), 341–48.

31 On the guilds: András Kubinyi, *Városfejlődés és városbálázat a középkori Alföldön és az Alföld szélén* (Szeged: Csongrád megyei Levéltár), 92. Prior to 1565 we find among the smith guild masters a man named Oszvald Csiszár, who may have been a relative of Ferenc Csiszár. Jolán Balogh, *Varadinum. Várad Vára*, vol. 2 of 2 (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1982), 338.

32 Groszmann Zsigmond, *Georgievics Bertalan XVI. századbeli magyar író élete és művei* (Budapest: Wodianer F. és fiai, 1904), 9, 28–31.

flight, the question emerges: what made it possible for the woman of Várad to adapt to another culture with such apparent ease?

### *The Practice of Local Re-Marriages and The Making of Christian Bigamy*

According to Jesuits who engaged in missionary activity in Ottoman Hungary, the flight of both women and men from ruined marriages frequently led them across the Christian–Muslim frontier.<sup>33</sup> King Matthias Hunyadi (1458–90) drew the attention of the Roman Curia to the impact of the Ottoman–Hungarian wars on marriages in the Kingdom of Hungary:

There are several inhabitants of the various parts of our country, whose spouse had been dragged away by the Turks. Husbands mourn their wives and wives lament over the unhappy fate of their husbands; they do not live in a marriage any more, but they are left in uncertainty concerning the life or death of their spouse, which makes them unwilling to remarry. [...] Many, losing hope of ever being able to give birth to children, leave or ruin their inheritance and go to other regions, often to those held by the enemy, while others give rise to scandals.<sup>34</sup>

In the opinion of the authorities, those who did not move elsewhere to remarry because they were attached to their old homes, villages and relatives caused the scandals.<sup>35</sup> Thus the king requested that the pope should give license to remarry for those who lost their spouse and looked for him/her in vain among the infidels. According to the king's diagnosis, some of those who lost spouses took the difficult step of leaving their homes for foreign lands, often those under Ottoman–Turkish dominion, in order to start new families. The wife of Illés Klokocsi apparently did this. Upon returning to his home in Zagreb following seven years of captivity in Turkey, Klokocsi did not find his wife, who

33 Antal Molnár, "Jezsuiták a hódolt Pécsen (1612–1686)," in *Pécs a törökök korban*, ed. Ferenc Szakály (Pécs: Pécs Története Alapítvány, 1999), 236, 257. Fragmentary data can be found in the accounts and yearbooks of Jesuits beginning in the 1570s.

34 Letter of King Matthias, written in 1480, addressed to Cardinal John of Aragon, protector of Hungary at the Curia. Sándor V. Kovács, ed., *Mátyás király levelei 1460–1490* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1986), no. 61.

35 The dangers of local remarriage are apparent in the dramatic story of János Segnyey of Lápispaták, whose wife determined that he had died after an absence of seven years and married her second husband, a Czech officer, in northern Hungary on the very day of his return. The two men fought a duel to resolve the crisis. Takáts, *Rajzok*, 1, 195.

must have had enough of waiting for him and decided to move away to find another spouse.<sup>36</sup> In 1500 Klokocsi thus wrote a petition to the pope to legalize his second marriage.

Seen within the context of everyday life in the Ottoman–Hungarian border zone, the actions of the woman from Várad were therefore not at all exceptional. It is conceivable that she went so far in order to escape an undesirable husband; though it is also possible that she believed that her “husband absent from the homeland” had been forever lost and she was aware that local Catholic authorities would not officially recognize her remarriage and could charge her with bigamy if her husband’s death could not be proven.<sup>37</sup>

Várad was the most important town in eastern Hungary at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Many women living in Várad under the lordship of either the bishop or the chapter, nevertheless decided to take the risk of remaining in the city to remarry, thus placing themselves in a very difficult position. The commissioned lawyer took care of another matter at the Roman Curia at the same time as that of Ferenc Csiszár: Anna Vadasi and Máté Agasi were reported at the court of the diocesan vicar because Anna had been betrothed to Máté when she was still married to her previous spouse.<sup>38</sup> Her first husband may well have been the person who reported her to the vicar’s court. The decision of Anna and Máté to marry was rather heedless, entailing the foreseeable consequence of their forced separation and legal prohibition on living together again. However, their petition reveals that they nevertheless continued to reside under the same roof and even produced children. They were thus excommunicated from the Church on the grounds of bigamy and could not therefore attend mass or take

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36 APA vol. 48, fol. 536r (*Helias de Clokocz laicus habitator opidi Grecz Zagradiensis diocesis*). Another concrete example of moving abroad and remarrying: Banat noble Balázs Necpali, who for years strove unsuccessfully to find and redeem his wife and three children, to which end he mortgaged his southern estates and finally moved to his estates in North Hungary, where he remarried and had two daughters in the 1470s. Enikő Csukovits, “Miraculous Escapes from Ottoman Captivity,” in Fodor and Dávid, ed., *Ransom Slavery*, 7.

37 Several men from Slavonia requested that the Church regard their second marriages and resulting children to be legitimate after their first wives had fallen into Turkish captivity. These petitioners lived in their second marriages without being bothered for decades, which illuminates the general social acceptance of remarriage as well as the degree of official control. *Petrus de Podagaris*: APA vol. 48, fol. 485rv; *Valentinus Piscete laic. de villa Toplice*: *ibid.*, vol. 48, fol. 490r.

38 In both cases the name of the lawyer was Aspra, who authorized them on January 15, 1548. APA vol. 121, fol. 63v–64r. There is little chance that petitioners from Várad can be identified, since in 1660 Janissaries destroyed the city’s medieval cathedral, chapter, and municipal archives. Zsigmond Jakó, “Várad i siralmas krónika. Könyvtár- és levéltárügy Nagyváradon a múltban és a jelenben, Magyar Egyháztörténeti Vázlatok,” *Regnum*, no. 1–2 (2004): 93–97.

sacraments. However, this did not bother the couple as much as the fact that their children were considered to be illegitimate. Thus when Anna's first husband died, they requested papal absolution, the legitimation of their children and permission for their legal remarriage. The vicar of Várad, István Ilosvai,<sup>39</sup> may have prompted Anna and Máté to address their petition to the pope, though it is also possible that they simply decided to bypass the local court that had already passed judgement against them and turned directly toward Rome. However, in the end they were not able to avoid the Várad court, since prior to their absolution the vicar had to conduct an examination to verify their allegations. That is, the court questioned local residents about the death of Anna's first husband and the related circumstances.

György Korláth's daughter, Anna, belonged to an entirely different social group—the distinguished urban nobility. Anna thus found herself in a more difficult position when as an adult she balked at living in marriage with the man to whom she had been betrothed as a child—as she claimed at least.<sup>40</sup> Several factors provide an indication of the family's social standing. The guardian of the girl, who became an orphan at an early age, was the canon of the cathedral chapter and archdeacon of the diocese.<sup>41</sup> He engaged the five-year-old Anna in marriage to Pál Szabó, whose name suggests that he was a master artisan, a member of the tailor's guild. Following her engagement, Anna was placed under the tutelage of Poor Clare nuns at the Saint Anne monastery in the Venice district of Várad. According to Anna, the nuns persuaded her to formally confirm her engagement to Pál Szabó at the age of ten (which is more likely to have happened when she reached canonical adulthood at the age of twelve): which probably means that the betrothal and the marital vow took place.<sup>42</sup> However, the betrothed couple was never united in matrimony, because either Anna or her canon guardian presumably reconsidered the betrothal a few years later, in view of a more favorable match.<sup>43</sup> Likely at the instigation of the forsaken fiancé, this case was subsequently heard at the court of the vicar of Várad and, in the second instance, at that of the Archbishop of Esztergom and both Anna

39 Vince Bunyitay, *A várad-i püspökség története alapításától a jelenkorig*, vol. 2 (Nagyvárad: n. p., 1883) 55–57.

40 APA vol. 93, fols 162rv (1536).

41 See the following work for information regarding the tailor's guild in Várad: Jolán Balogh *Váradinum. Várad Vára*, vol. 2 of 2 (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1982), 55, 309.

42 “*Dicta sponsalia manum eidem Paulo porrigendo confirmasset*”; Cf. Dániel Bárány, *Esküvő, keresztelő, avatás: Egyház és népi kultúra a kora újkor Magyarországon* (Budapest: n.p., 2005), 106–07.

43 Her petition reads: *ad pubertatem deveniens dictis sponalibus et confirmationi contradixit et dictum Paulum in virum suum habere nolle asserit.*

and her guardian were excommunicated. The noble origin of Anna Korláth is proven by the fact that this matter was also brought to the royal court of appeal (that is, to the Szapolyai court that spent much time in Várad), which decided that she must marry Pál Szabó. According to the customary law of the nobility, breaching the vow of marriage constituted infidelity and entailed the forfeiture of property.<sup>44</sup> In a state of both Church and secular illegitimacy, Anna and her guardian looked to the Papal Court for support against local authorities in their effort to gain permission for her to marry a man other than Pál Szabó.

Regardless of the outcome of the above cases, they clearly demonstrate that both Church and secular supervision over the local residents of Várad operated efficiently even during the civil war in the country. Those who maintained a significant degree of mobility caused the greatest amount of trouble for local authorities.<sup>45</sup> The previously mentioned Mrs. Csiszár was quite aware of this situation and acted smartly: in order to live legitimately and free of official harassment with her chosen husband, she moved from Várad to the Islamic world in the neighboring state of Ottoman Hungary. It thus appears that under these circumstances, the difference in religion was of relatively little importance to Mrs. Csiszár, who would have qualified as a bigamist had she remained at home and therefore been subjected to excommunication from the Church for decades on end.

What might have those Christians who voluntarily moved to Ottoman Hungary known about this world? Did Mrs. Csiszár fear the well-known subjugation of women in the Islamic world? Did she know anything about how Islamic law (sharia'h) regulated the conditions of women before running into the arms of a Turkish man, one might suppose, out of true love? To what degree did she perceive the religion and culture of Ottoman Hungary to be contrasting and foreign?

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44 See, for example, Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (MNL OL), Diplomatikai Levéltár (DL) 99775.

45 Synod decrees urging the lower clergy to retain pre-wedding announcements because many husbands were leaving their wives and remarry abroad serve to substantiate this. László Solymosi, ed., *A veszprémi egyház 1515. évi zsinati határozatai* (Budapest: Argumentum, 1997), 67; The Council of Trent took similar measures: Josepho Alberigo et al., ed., *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta* (Bologna: Istituto per le Scienze Religiose, 1973), 758.

*The Experience of Religious and Ethnic Coexistence*

The woman who placed herself under Ottoman authority in order to switch her Christian husband for a “Turk” was likely neither audacious nor enamored, but had simply made a rational appraisal of the benefits and drawbacks of doing so.<sup>46</sup> As a resident of the Ottoman–Hungarian border zone, she may have possessed concrete knowledge and experience regarding the status of women in Islamic religion and law. She could have seen that the Turkish polygamy about which Christians who had returned from the interior of the Ottoman Empire had written so much, did not exercise an influence on everyday life on the periphery of the empire. Ottoman ordinary men and soldiers were happy if they could support even a single wife.<sup>47</sup> Maybe she had heard that Ottoman men had the right to discard their wives at any time—a prerogative that a Dominican monk who had spent 20 years as a slave in the inner Ottoman Empire had not neglected to describe in detail.<sup>48</sup> But even this prospect could not have been that daunting, since she may well have known Christian women whose husbands had simply sold them to others in order to settle a debt or simply get rid of them.<sup>49</sup> And the possibility cannot be excluded that she met with Muslim women who had successfully petitioned the *kadis* for divorce on the grounds that their husbands were violent or had not provided for their subsistence.<sup>50</sup> And she may have also been aware that Islamic law permitted women to remain Christians even after marrying Ottoman Turkish husbands.<sup>51</sup> The latter right proceeded in paradoxical fashion precisely from the social differentiation between men and women in

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46 Such rational decision-making also characterized communal choices: according to recent research, the significant reduction in taxes played a great role in the mass Islamization of village communities in the Balkans. Nenad Močanin, “Mass Islamization of Peasants in Bosnia: Demystifications,” in *Melanges Prof. Machiel Kiel*, ed. Abdeljelil Temini (Zaghouan: Fondation Temimi pour la Recherche Scientifique et l’Information, 1999.), 353–58.

47 Cf. Klára Hegyi, “Etnikum, vallás, iszlamizáció. A budai vilájet várkatonaságának eredete és utánpótlása,” *Történelmi Szemle* 40 (1998): 229–56.

48 See “Magyarországi György barát értekezése a törökök szokásairól, viszonyairól és gonoszságáról,” in *Kimondhatatlan nyomorúság. Két emlékirat a 15–16. századi oszmán fogságról*, ed. Erik Fügedi (Budapest: Európa: 1976), 59–60.

49 Sándor Takáts writes about the buying and selling of women in the border zone surrounding Ottoman Hungary: *Rajzok*, I. 289–94, 324–27.

50 Marc Baer, “Islamic Conversion Narratives of Women: Social Change and Gendered Religious Hierarchy in Early Modern Ottoman Istanbul,” *Gender and History* 16 (2004): 425–58, 426.

51 *Ibid.*, 428; According to Lajos Fekete, women were not forced to convert due to the common belief that they automatically became Muslim when they had contact with Muslim men. Lajos Fekete, *Budapest a török korban* (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1944), 267.

terms of religion and marriage: the Islamic state was not interested in the religion of wives, because the religion of children depended exclusively on that of their father.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, a Christian woman living with a Muslim man theoretically maintained the same rights as a Muslim wife and could exercise her religion as well.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps she had even seen women who due to the expectations of the community or her husband had converted to Islam, though had nevertheless baptized their children and travelled to Marian shrines at the time of the parish feast.<sup>54</sup> The husband of the runaway woman was not unlikely a converted new Muslim, himself the offspring of Balkan peoples who continued to observe Christian customs and rites.<sup>55</sup> New Muslims were not, however, more tolerant in terms of religion: in fact, as a result of the increasing interconnection between Ottoman identity and Islam, they were often more insistent upon the conversion of their wives.<sup>56</sup> It may have also been the case that the family of “the Turk living in Buda” was religiously split, which was a common strategy among the Balkan peoples living under Ottoman authority.<sup>57</sup>

Of course Mrs. Csiszár may not have been able to make a clear distinction between Muslims and Eastern Orthodox, which assumption is supported not only by the mixed religion of new-Muslims from the Balkan, but also by the shifting perception of Eastern Orthodox people in Hungary. She had likely encountered people of the Eastern Orthodox faith during her life in the Partium region, where by the sixteenth century Hungarians, Romanians, Serbs and Bosnians had long

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52 Contrary to that, renegade men had to convert to Islam before marrying, since Muslim women were permitted to marry only Muslim men in order to ensure that their children would be of the Islamic faith. Baer, “Islamic Conversion,” 428, 431–32.

53 Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 66.

54 For the exercise of crypto-Catholicism among women living in areas under Ottoman authority see: Antal Molnár, “La Schiavona. Egy bosnyák lány viszontagságai a 17. században,” *Történelmi Szemle* 49 (2007): 227–47, 245; Szabolcs Varga, “Gods in the Part of Hungary under Ottoman Rule. Popular Religiousness and Religious Syncretism in South Transdanubia and in the Southern Part of the Kingdom of Hungary in the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> Centuries,” in *Cultus Deorum: Studia Religionum ad Historiam: in Memoriam István Tóth*, ed. Ádám Szabó and Péter Vargyas (Pécs: Pécsi Tudományegyetem, 2008), 113–22.

55 On the the South Slavic (coming from Hercegovina, Bosnia, northern Serbia, Sirmium and the regions of Posega and Vidin) ethnic origin of the military forces in the Vilayet of Buda see Hegyi, “Etnikum”. On the religious indifference and syncretism of new Muslims in the Balkans with further literature see Fodor, “A kincstár,” 260–61.

56 Bartolomé Bennassar and Lucile Bennassar, *Les Chrétiens d'Allah. L'histoire extraordinaire des renégats (XVIe–XVIIe siècles)* (Paris: Perrin, 1989), 290–91.

57 Molnár, “La Schiavona,” 245–47.

lived together.<sup>58</sup> The Western Church officially referred to Eastern Christians as schismatics (*scismatici*), though they were often called heretics and pagans at this time as well.<sup>59</sup> A letter to the papal office of the Penitentiary in 1512 asking for the legalization of Tamás Tót's second marriage stated, for example, that his first wife, Magdolna Rachaz, had “left Tamás and, guided by an evil spirit and forgetting about the salvation of her soul, run off to a pagan and schismatic with whom she united in marriage, which they consummated.”<sup>60</sup>

Who might Magdolna's “pagan and schismatic” husband have been? An increasing number of Romanians, Eastern Orthodox South Slavs (Bulgarians, Serbs, and Bosnians) moving northbound from the Turks as well as Hussite “heretics” from the north and Patarenes and Bogomils from the south took refuge in the Csanád Diocese in which Magdolna and Tamás lived, particularly in the southern portion of the district.<sup>61</sup> As a result of the Catholic missionary activity, the number of converted Catholics from among the new immigrants was considerable. “Turkish” soldiers who made incursions across the Hungarian–Ottoman border along the lower Danube were either Eastern Orthodox or converted Muslims. Magdolna Rachaz's new “pagan and schismatic” husband may well have been a South Slav conqueror who had converted from Eastern Orthodoxy to Islam, though an Eastern Orthodox Romanian or South Slav seems a more likely possibility. The surname of Magdolna's first husband, Tót, was used in Hungarian to refer to Slovaks, Slovenes and Croats, thus indicating that he might have also been a South Slav who had converted to Catholicism. Although her abandoned husband accused her of “apostasy,” Magdolna had consequently may have just returned to her original religion and ethnic community.

Mátyás, the son of Lőrinc Antusui, crossed the boundary separating religions and ethnicities not in flight from a bad marriage, but from an Observant Franciscan cloister in Transylvania:

58 Jakó, *Bihar megye*, passim, for example 70, 75; Gyula Kristó, *Nem magyar népek a középkori Magyarországon* (Budapest: Lucidus, 2003), 81–120, 191–218. For a summary see: Klára Hegyi, *Török berendezkedés Magyarországon* (Budapest: MTA TTI, 1995), 190–202.

59 The designation “pagan” clearly refers to the Eastern Orthodox: Elemér Mályusz and Iván Borsa, *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. 5 (Budapest: Magyar Országos Levéltár, 1997), 65, no. 33. (1415–16); Pál Lukcsics, *XV. századi pápák oklevelei*, vol. 2 (Budapest: n.p., 1938), no. 833.

60 APA vol. 57, fol. 697v.

61 For an overview of South Slav immigration in the period before 1526 see Ferenc Szakály, “Remargues sur l'armée de Jovan Tcherni,” *Acta Historica* (1978): 59–63; For the religions of people living in this region see Kálmán Juhász, *A csanádi püspökség története 1434–1500* (Makó: n.p., 1947), 16–17.

He went among the pagans, where passing himself off as a pagan he married Axianna, a pagan woman of another religion. They consummated the marriage conducted according to the customs and rituals of his wife's religion. However, the fear then overtook him that it might become known that he was, in fact, a Christian and they would therefore try to take his life. Though his conscience also inspired him to leave his pagan wife and come to Rome.

In Rome, Mátyás asked the pope to annul both his monastic vow and his marriage because he wanted to marry a Christian woman.<sup>62</sup> I believe that Mátyás probably did not flee to Ottoman lands, but moved to a Romanian-inhabited territory within Transylvania or, perhaps, to one of the adjacent Romanian principalities. In this case, *the paganus* that Mátyás had married was likely an Eastern Orthodox Romanian rather than a Muslim.

In Mátyás's story, geographical mobility and the traversing of boundaries between cultures represented a conscious survival strategy and a means of taking cover. Dissimulation and the change of identity, achieved by disguising himself as a "pagan" and, subsequently, as a "Christian" were also part of this survival strategy. For others, conversion between Eastern and Latin Christianity served as a vehicle for social advancement. Margit, daughter of the late János Nadabor Hunyadi, travelled from Transylvania to Rome in 1517 in order to petition at the Office of the Apostolic Penitentiary for permission to marry Nan, the son of Dan Bérci Török (*Naan filio Daan Thererk de Beervz*). Nan was not only a distant cousin, but a "schismatic" who, based on his Christian name, was likely Romanian. Margit requested that the marriage be permitted despite their kinship because Nan would thus be won over to the Catholic faith and Jesus Christ (*orthodoxe fidei et Domino nostro Jhesu Christo lucrifacto*), that is, he would be baptized as a Latin Christian.<sup>63</sup> Margit was taking the prescriptions of canon law into account when she promised that her schismatic fiancé would be rebaptized in the course of marriage. The Roman Church did not recognize the validity of marriages to non-Christians, a category to which Eastern Christians belonged.<sup>64</sup>

However, in addition to the Church, Hungarian secular authority also expected Margit's fiancé to be rebaptized as a Catholic. King Sigismund issued

62 APA vol. 55, fol. 196r (1510).

63 Ibid., vol. 61, fol. 20r (1517).

64 Erdő, *Egyházjog*, 292; Szabolcs Anzelm Szuromi O. Praed., "Az egyházi házasságra vonatkozó kánoni szabályok történetének vázlatá," *Iustum Aequum Salutare* 4, no. 3 (2008): 39–48.

a decree in 1428 that was intended to promote the conversion of Eastern Orthodox Romanians and South Slavs living in Transylvania and the “South Country” (*Délvidék*), who frequently allied themselves with the Turks, through the prohibition of baptisms conducted by Eastern Orthodox priests and the requirement that all Eastern Rite Christians be baptized pursuant to Catholic ritual upon marriage to a Latin Rite Christian.<sup>65</sup> Matthias Corvinus enacted a similar measure in 1478, suggesting that marriages between people of different religions and ethnicities were still common at that time and served as a means of converting Romanians.<sup>66</sup> The Nadaboris of Hunyad were distantly related Romanian *kenez* (*cneaz* in Romanian, meaning distinguished) families owning adjacent lands in Hunyad County.<sup>67</sup> The fact that János Cseh, the husband of Margit’s sister, Anna, was a Hunyadi vice-castellan in 1515 and the *familiaris* of the owner of the estate, George the Brandenburg-Ansbach (1484–1543) provides an indication of the status of the Nadaboris, whose family name indicates that they were Catholic and had become Magyarized through marriage.<sup>68</sup> The social ascent of the Nadabori family is also reflected in their land purchases. The *kenez* Török family also travelled along the path of enrichment from the neighboring village of Bérc.<sup>69</sup> The marriage between the families and the conversion to Catholicism of the Eastern Orthodox spouse represented a customary strategy of ambitious Romanian noble families, one that also promoted their assimilation. István Vajda’s 1510 petition from the Várad Diocese records an instance in which Romanians living in the Partium were Catholicized in the course of marriage. Vajda, whose name suggests that he was a Romanian noble, married his “schismatic” lover following the death

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65 Ignác Batthyány, ed., *Leges Ecclesiasticae Regni Hungariae et Adjacentiarum Provinciarum*, vol. 3 (Albae-Carolinae: Typis Episcopalis, 1827), 405–08.

66 MNL OL DF 275475, 1478. július 26. See also Juhász, *A csanádi püspökség*, 130–31. For information regarding the Catholic Romanian nobility beginning in the fifteenth century see Antal Molnár, “Jezsuita misszió Karánsebesen (1625–1642),” *Történelmi Szemle* 47 (1999): 127–56.

67 I would like to thank Géza Hegyi for his help in charting the Nadabori family. Dezső Csánki, *Magyarország történeti földrajza a Hunyadiak korában*, vol. 5 (Budapest: Állami Könyvtérjesztő Vállalat, 1985), 211–12, 241; Nadabor (Nădrap, Romania) belonged to the Vajdahunyad domain continually until the fifteenth–sixteenth centuries. Iosif Pataki, *Domeniul Hunedoara la începutul secolului al XVI-lea* (București: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1973), 133, 142, 158, 215.

68 MNL OL DL 22696.

69 Bérc also belonged to the Vajdahunyad domain (1482: DL 37653; Pataki, *Domeniul*, 133, 142, 158, 215), though the village no longer exists. A total of five *kenez* and 21 serfs lived in Bérc around the year 1512 (*Ibid.*, 166). For the family’s land acquisitions see MNL OL DL 29655.

of his first wife.<sup>70</sup> His new wife, Margaret of Wallachia (*Margaretha Valache*) was rebaptized a Catholic at the time of their marriage.<sup>71</sup>

The previous cases provide a clear reflection of instances in which the boundaries between the faiths and ethnicities of those living in the Partium, Transylvania and the South Country shifted as a result of intermarriage and religious conversion. The essential difference between the second husbands of the woman of Várada and Magdolna Rachaz lay not in their religions (new Muslim and Eastern Orthodox) and ethnic affiliations (presumably either Bosnian or Serb), but in the radical disparity in their social status. The fact that the second husband of the woman of Várada served as a representative of the Ottoman conquerors and new lords of the land indicates that she may have been the type of woman who was attracted to strong and influential men.<sup>72</sup>

The convergences and commonalities arising from religious and ethnic heterogeneity softened the differences between people living in the previously cited regions, thus making it possible for Christian women to consider marriage to a “Turkish” husband and conversion to another faith. Moreover, Mrs. Csizsár did not go abroad, but to Buda, which just a few years previously had been the capital of the Kingdom of Hungary. Perhaps she even had relatives and acquaintances living in the city. The connections between Buda and Várada manifested themselves in the large number of people who moved from the former to the latter in order to get away from the Turks.<sup>73</sup> However, not everybody attempted to flee from the Turks when they took Buda in 1541. In 1546, the Turks registered 238 Christian (with the departure of the Germans, primarily Hungarian) families in Buda, thus making Latin Christianity the most common faith in the increasingly heterogeneous city ahead of Judaism, Islam and Eastern Orthodoxy.<sup>74</sup> Many residents of Buda, both poor and rich, had therefore made the understandable decision to remain in the city even after it had come under Ottoman dominion. Christians living in the city were at this time still permitted

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70 Unless the name referred not to his residence, but to the Hungarian-serf-inhabited Bihar County village of Vajda. Jakó, *Bihar megye*, 377.

71 APA vol. 55, fol. 532v (1510).

72 Constructivists argue that the role of status in mate selection is culturally determined: men are attracted to beauty and women to social and economic status, while strong personality is a cross-cultural tendency. Ayala Malakh-Pines, *Falling in Love: Why We Choose the Lovers We Choose* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 83–104.

73 Fekete, *Budapest*, 146–47.

74 *Ibid.*, 149–50; Géza Dávid, *Pasák és bégek uralma alatt* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 2005), 79–84; Káldy-Nagy, *Harács-szedők*, 106ff.

to practice their faith communally, in public and with their own clergy at the Mária Magdolna Parish Church. The Turks had only prohibited the ringing of the church bells. That Mrs. Csiszár wound up in Buda is also unsurprising if one considers the fact that many of the several thousand Ottoman garrison soldiers and civil servants in the city were either single or had left their wives at home, thus increasing the local demand for women.<sup>75</sup> Complications did, however, surface when the abandoned husband sent his men to Buda to recover property and, perhaps, even the unfaithful wife. In this event, wives who had not previously adopted the religion of their Muslim husbands could do so in order to invoke the Islamic law invalidating previous marriages in the event of conversion.<sup>76</sup> Thus if the *kadi* “celebrating” marriage between a Christian woman and a Muslim man at the empires’s borderlands had not been interested in the woman’s past (her undissolved marriage) and was willing to conduct the secular rite of the Muslim wedding without her religious conversion (but in return for a fee), it was still worthwhile for her to adopt Islam.<sup>77</sup>

### *A Slavonian Nobleman Turning Turk*

Just as the woman of Várad, István Velikei (Velika, Croatia) of Radovanc made a free and deliberate decision to stand among the Turks. At least this is what his abandoned wife, Fruzsina Kasztellánfi of Szentlélek (Sveti Duh, in Croatia) claimed. However, contrary to Ferenc Csiszár, Fruzsina, daughter of the nobleman János Kasztellánfi, turned to Catholic authorities in order to gain permission to remarry.

Fruzsina presented two versions of her petition. The first, submitted to the Apostolic Penitentiary during the first half of 1541, was founded upon two pillars: first, that she had vowed to marry (*sponsalia iuramento vallata*) István Velikei of Radovanc as a minor, at the age of only nine or ten years old, though they never slept together due to her young age and she had not reconfirmed the betrothal when she had reached the age of majority; and second, that following their betrothal, her fiancé had “gone to the Turks, donned their clothing, and together with them attacked and plundered the settlements of the Christians and

75 Fekete, Budapest, 149–55; Káldy-Nagy, *Harács-szedők*, 112–13.

76 See the story of Fatima Hatun, who remarried and converted to Islam in Istanbul in order to parry the demands of her first husband from Venice: Dursteler, *Renegade Women*, 1–33.

77 Hegyi, *Egy birodalom végvidékén*, 119–26, 145–57.

perhaps even delivered his own castle, Velike, into the hands of the Turks.<sup>78</sup> Fruzsina claimed in her first petition that she was not obliged to honor her betrothal vow because Velikei “committed adultery, keeping a Turkish woman as a concubine, who had borne him daughters”. She thus requested that, taking these circumstances into consideration, her vow of betrothal be annulled in order that she might marry another man. Fruzsina’s case was complicated by the fact that she initially submitted her petition to Bishop of Modena Johannes de Morono, who served as the papal nuncio in the royal court of King Ferdinand I of Hungary and Croatia.<sup>79</sup> The nuncio decided that the betrothal of Fruzsina and István had, in fact, represented a valid marriage and that the remarriage of the former was therefore impermissible. The nuncio’s verdict suggests that Fruzsina, who was born around 1521,<sup>80</sup> had been an adult at the time of her betrothal—that is, at least twelve years old. Fruzsina’s first petition therefore represented an appeal to Pope Paul III of the nuncio’s decision.

Fruzsina submitted a second petition to the Apostolic Dataria, undoubtedly in order to increase her chances of gaining a positive decision. In light of the papal nuncio’s rejection of her first petition, this seems to have been a completely understandable and rational decision. People of Fruzsina’s social standing could afford to apply for the more expensive and authoritative Dataria permits issued with the pope’s personal seal. The Kasztellánfis, who were named after one of their two Körös County castles—either Szentléleki or Bikszádi (Bisag, Croatia)—were an old and locally distinguished family of medium-range land owners.<sup>81</sup> Fruzsina, though she identified herself as a simple noble (*nobilis*) in her petition, in fact bore the title of *egregius*, or “well-to-do noble,” as the daughter of János Kasztellánfi of Szentlélek and Barbara Ósi.<sup>82</sup> Her father—who by 1541 was no longer living—had stood in royal military service in addition to performing

78 APA vol. 106, fol. 667v–68r (Zagreb, August 27, 1541). The date indicates that on which the office approved the petition, not on which it was submitted.

79 Johannes de Morono (Giovanni Morone), Bishop of Modena (1536–1542) and beginning in 1542 cardinal. Conradus Eubel, ed., *Hierarchia Catholica Medii et Recentioris Aevii*, vol. 3 (1503–1592) (Regensburg: Monasterii Sumptibus et typis librariae Regensbergianae, 1913), 252.

80 For the date of Fruzsina’s birth see Pavao Maček and Ivan Jurković, *Rodoslov Plemića I Baruna Kaštelanovića od Svetog Huda (od 14. do 17. stoljeća)* (Slavonski Brod: n.p., 2009), 180.

81 For the most recent version of the family history see Tamás Pálosfalvi, *The Noble Elite of the County of Körös (Križevci), 1400–1526* (Budapest: MTA BTK TTI, 2014), 179–89. The latter book corrects the following in several respects: Maček and Jurković, *Rodoslov*, 152–61. They gained possession of Bikszád from the residents of the village via marriage around the year 1474.

82 On the Ósi family see Pálosfalvi, *The Noble Elite*, 186, 189. (The Ósi and the Kasztellánfi families were bound by repeated marriages.)

the family's customary county-level offices and serving as the *familiaris* of an aristocrat.<sup>83</sup>

We know of Fruzsina's second petition only through the apostolic response to it: in March 1542, the Pope Paul III instructed Bishop of Zagreb Simon Erdődy to invalidate the betrothal. This decision was exceptionally favorable for the petitioner because it did not call for further examination of the case as was customary. We do not know if somebody intervened personally at the papal court on behalf of Fruzsina or if the arguments contained in her petition had alone convinced the pope to order that her betrothal be annulled. Her story was framed in this second petition completely differently. It portrayed the marriage not as an affair between two individuals, Fruzsina and István, but in a more accurate reflection of actual events as a family matter. The head of the family, János Kasztellánfi, played the primary role in organizing the first marriage rather than Fruzsina, herself. The petition clearly reveals that Kasztellánfi gave his daughter to the neighboring noble from Pozsega (Požega, Croatia) before she had reached adulthood. The two families knew each other well, their estates were located close to one another and they were related by marriage via the most prominent family in the region, the Szencseis.<sup>84</sup> The Velikeis held parts of Velike and Petnyevára castles, though evidence suggests that by this time these portions had begun to decrease since the daughters inherited them following the extinction of the male line and they had thus become very much in demand.<sup>85</sup> The kinship between the Radovancis and the Velikeis of Pozsega also emerged as a result of such a marriage: at the end of the fifteenth century, the royal chancellery notary, László Radovánci, married Dorottya Velikei.<sup>86</sup> This Kasztellánfi–Velikei

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83 Regarding his offices (court *familiaris*, royal tax collector, member of the light cavalry attached directly to the royal court) during the reign of King Louis II (1516–26) and King Ferdinand I (1526–64) see Pálosfalvi, *The Noble Elite*, 189; Emilij Laszowski, ed., *Monumenta Habsburgica Regni Croatiae Dalmatiae Slavoniae*, vol. 2 (1531–1540) (Zagreb: n.p., 1916), 36, 72, 80, 105–106, etc. On the institution of court hussars see Géza Pálffy, “Mi maradt az önálló magyar királyi udvarból Mohács után?,” in *Idővel paloták... Magyar udvari kultúra a 16–17. században*, ed. Nóra G. Etényi and Ildikó Horn (Budapest: Balassi, 2005), 45–59, 50.

84 Pálosfalvi, *The Noble Elite*, 448, 466–67.

85 The Szencseis and the Fánsecs, who had previously married Velikei daughters, had their own castellans at both Velike and Petynevára castles in 1502. Pálosfalvi, *The Noble Elite*, 328. The Velikeis and the related Bekefis shared possession of Velike castle and market town in 1435.

86 MNL OL DL 88511. I would like to thank Tibor Neumann for sharing his collection of data regarding the Velikeis with me. For the medieval family tree (the Velikeis of Zsadán clan) see Pál Engel, *Magyar középkori adattár. Középkori magyar genealógia*, CD-ROM (Budapest: Arcanum, 2001).

marriage therefore may have served to strengthen the alliance between two families of relatively equal status.<sup>87</sup>

In the case of the prestigious noble family from Slavonia, parental compulsion was not an issue: according to the established custom, the father made the decision about the marriage of his young daughter. Fruzsina's petition does not mention a single word about the fact that she had not yet reached the recognized age of adulthood and had not consummated their marriage upon betrothal (which were important arguments against the validity of their matrimony in her first petition). In the system of arranged marriages this was considered to be self-evident. And of course it was also the father who, according to the petition, had “wanted to defend the honor of his daughter and give her in marriage to another” following the apostasy and betrayal of the husband he had selected for her. It remains a question why he chose to request the papal nuncio rather than the locally competent Bishop of Zagreb, Simon Erdődy, who, as he, was a supporter of King Ferdinand I, that the marriage be officially annulled.. Anyway, it turned out to be an unwise decision. The father of Fruzsina died in the interval between the submission of the two petitions. However, Fruzsina remained a minor figure in the narrative of the second petition as well, playing a secondary role to her widowed mother. Fruzsina's old widowed mother, as the petition that won papal approval stated, cannot herself take care of six young children and at the same time defend three castles— Szentlélek,<sup>88</sup> Bikszád and Zelnjak (Sirač, Croatia)—under threat from the Turks, which if lost, would gravely undermine the security of the region. She therefore needed a forceful and energetic son-in-law to be the husband of her seventh child and eldest daughter, Fruzsina. Barbara Ósi, who oversaw the affairs of her large family with extraordinary skill, thus presented herself as a hapless widow in the request for the pope's annulment of her daughter's marriage. While playing the role of

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87 Our István Velikei was the son of Benedek Velikei (deceased before 1519), who was the product of the marriage between Dorottya Velikei and László Radovánci, while his siblings were Ferenc and Katalin. MNL OL DL 74679 (1507, 1519). Following the death of his father, Péter Markos Kerekszállási, *ispán* (count) of Pozsega from 1524 to 1526, became his stepfather. After the Battle of Mohács in the latter year, Péter Markos Kerekszállási became a supporter of János Szapolyai as king of Hungary. Richárd Horváth, Tibor Neumann and Norbert C. Tóth, “Pontot az ű-re. A Magyarország világi archontológiája című program múltja, jelene és közeli jövője,” *Turul* 86 (2013): 41–52, here 49. The fact that János Kasztellánfi's mother, Helen of Corbavia, was the descendant of an aristocratic family and that the Velikeis were related to the Bosnian royal family may have served to elevate his rank. Pálosfalvi, *The Noble Elite*, 188.

88 If fact they had already been pushed out of Szentlélek by this time. Pálosfalvi, *The Noble Elite*, 188. King Ferdinand I donated Zelna castle in Zagreb County to János Kasztellánfi in 1537, though it is doubtful that the family ever actually gained possession of the stronghold. MNL OL *Libri Regii*, vol. 1, 324.

the “*miserrima orphana*,” she gained the backing of one of the most prestigious aristocratic families in the region, the Batthyánys, in the defense of her property and support of her children.<sup>89</sup>

As a result of the fiancé’s betrayal, the family context in the petition became interconnected with the issue of defending Christianity. The narrative supplemented with new details the story of the fiancé turning Turk: yielding to the temptation of the Turks, István abandoned not only the Catholic faith that he had received upon baptism, but when the Ottomans invaded the territory in which Pozsega was located in 1536, he delivered provisions to the attackers and even ceded to them his own, well-fortified Velike castle, in betrayal of the relatives with whom he held joint possession of the stronghold; moreover, István adopted a Turkish voivode as his brother and maintained friendly relations with many Turks.<sup>90</sup> The pope’s annulment of Fruzsina’s marriage so that she could wed a Catholic man therefore served to not only to preserve her personal honor and that of family, but to promote the interests of Christianity in general.

Fruzsina’s marital affair could presumably be depicted as an issue related to the overall state of the Christian faith because the fall of the capital of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary, Buda, on August 19, 1541, has awakened European public opinion and decision makers to the magnitude of the Turkish threat: in the spring of 1542, when Fruzsina’s case appeared before the pope in Rome, the German imperial estates in Speyer were discussing the issue of the Turkish aid (*Türkenhilfe*). This common trauma may well have guided the pen of both the author of the petition—likely Fruzsina’s widowed mother for the most part—as well as that of the adjudicator, Pope Paul III and his officials. Although Pozsega had long suffered the depredations of the Turks, it suffered its greatest losses in 1536 and 1537, when the Ottomans again ravaged the region, defeating the armies of King Ferdinand I near the River Gara early in the latter year and

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89 The success of Barbara Ósi in governing the affairs of her family is shown in the fact that in 1569 her then-eldest son, Péter, earned the baronial title for the family through his courtly and military services. MNL OL, A Batthyány család levéltára, Missiles, no. 24255–60: The letters of Barbara Ósi between 1542 and 1552 to Kristóf Battyhány and his wife, Erzsébet Svetkovic; Géza Pálffy, *A Magyar Királyság és a Habsburg Monarchia a 16. században* (Budapest: MTA BTK TTI, 2011), 170. According to Maček and Jurković, Ósi had eight children—five boys and three girls, the oldest of whom was, indeed, the 21-year-old Fruzsina. In her petition, she specifies seven children—four girls and three boys. Fruzsina presumably died soon thereafter, because she is not listed among her siblings designated as the beneficiaries of property endowments that the family received in the 1540s and 1550s. MNL OL, *Libri Regii*, for example vol. 2, 122–23 (1546) and vol. 3, 649 (1559).

90 Archivio Segreto Vaticano, *Dataria Apostolica, Brevia Lateranensia*, vol. 33, fol. 76r–77v, March 20, 1542.

took Pozsegavár (Slavonska Požega, Croatia) located just 20 kilometers south of Velike.<sup>91</sup> However, it was not until the fall of Buda in 1541 that the fate of the southern region of Pozsega became a matter of European importance and István Velikei, who had “removed his Christian clothing and dressed as a Turk” and maintained a Turkish concubine, was deemed unworthy of marriage to a Christian woman.

There are several morals to this story. First, as the cases in Várad also demonstrated, official control of marriages functioned efficiently even amid the conditions of civil war. The calculation of the Kasztellánfis that the fiancé’s turning Turk would be an effective argument in favor of dissolving the marital bond in the first case proved mistaken. The papal nuncio in Vienna, acting in accordance with canon law, did not permit the disgraced girl to remarry. We thus see again the family and the girl who wanted to remarry locally in a difficult position. This story likewise clearly demonstrates how giving daughters in marriage was an important tool of forging family alliances of the landed nobility. It is furthermore clear that even if we do not know what truly happened, Velikei was portrayed as a trickster crossing Christian–Muslim boundaries with ease. Since the petitioners aspired to maintain their authenticity, people who transformed their personal identity, joining the Ottoman conquerors, converting to their religion and living with their women, must have been familiar figures of the time.

The description of the process of conversion conforms to that which is known about it, thus increasing the authenticity of the narrative. In this case as well, outsiders were able to discern religious conversion primarily in terms of external factors. In both of her petitions, Fruzsina mentions that Velikei “dressed as a Turk, abandoning his Christian clothing.” At other times they referred to the change of names in connection to the change of religions.<sup>92</sup> It is a well-known fact that adoption of a Muslim name constituted part of the formal, though very simple, rite of switching religions: following the pronouncement

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91 Ferenc Batthyány wrote the following regarding the Ottoman destruction of Slavonia, above all neighboring Kőrös County, in 1538: “*regnum vero Sclavoniae iam fere totum est desolatum et depopulatum.*” Pálffy, *A Magyar Királyság*, 71.

92 With regard to Körmend noble Gergely Bakó: “his wife similarly dropped the name Erzsébet hoping that her husband would be promoted as a pasa.” Letter of vice-comes István Keserű to Ferenc Batthyány, September 11, 1605. MNL OL, Batthyány család levéltára, Missiles (P 1314), no. 26397. For the switching of Gergely Bakó, who had unsuccessfully defended Körmend castle, to the side of Bocskai and the Turks see Péter Dominkovits, “*Egy nemzetek lévén*”. . . *A Nyugat-Dunántúl Bocskai István 1605. évi hadjárata idején* (Budapest: Martin Opitz Kiadó, 2006), 76–77.

of the one-sentence confession of faith, the assumption of a Muslim name symbolized a break with the past and the rebirth of the individual in question in the true religion. The newly converted then received gifts, among them, according to long-established custom, clothes.<sup>93</sup> The perception of outsiders actually offers a clear reflection of the essence of the process of conversion, which in practice consisted solely of external forms and appearances. Contrary to the ideals and practices of Christian conversion, adoption of Islam did not require internal transformation: the Muslim community did not attempt to determine the motives or sincerity of those who converted to Islam, requiring only that converts followed their customs.<sup>94</sup> Ottoman Muslims did everything under their power to integrate newcomers: not only did they provide them with clothing and monetary gifts, but also attempted to promote their integration through provision of a spouse and material livelihood.<sup>95</sup> The complaints of the Kasztellánfis regarding the converted Velikei also reflect the receptive behavior of the Ottomans that facilitated conversion to Islam: “he adopted as his brother (*in fratrem sibi iuravit*) a voivoide, a leader of the Turks and to such an extent behaves on friendly terms with him and other Turks.”<sup>96</sup>

The integrative attitude of the Ottomans must have smoothed the conversion of István Velikei. But what prompted the Pozsega noble to leave his family and property behind in order to stand among the Turks? The story of the abandoned fiancée suggests that his decision was driven by the prospect of social and economic advancement. He obviously weighed his prospects in the Christian world at the frontier of the advancing Ottoman Empire and determined that he had better career opportunities as a Turk. Velikei had two choices: flee to territory that was better defended from the Ottomans, thus abandoning his lands in Pozsega; or remain in place.<sup>97</sup> Unlike the majority of nobles, he chose

93 Anton Minkov, *Conversion to Islam in the Balkans: Kısve Bahas Petitions and Ottoman Social Life, 1670–1730* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 152–53, 156–57.

94 Yasin Dutton, *Conversion to Islam: The Qur’anic Paradigm in Religious Conversion: Contemporary Practices and Controversies*, ed. Christopher Lamb and M. Darroll Bryant (London: Cassel, 1999), 151–65; Evgeni Radushev, “The Spread of Islam in the Ottoman Balkans: Revisiting Bulliet’s Method on Religious Conversion,” *Oriental Archive* 78 (2010): 363–84.

95 Richard W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge, Mass.–London: Harvard University Press, 1979), 33–64.

96 On the custom of adopting Turkish–Hungarian brothers in Ottoman Hungary see Takáts, *Rajzok*, vol. 1, 315; see also Hegyi, “Kereszténység és iszlám,” 33–34.

97 On the movement of the Croatian nobility to territories protected from the Turks see Géza Pálffy, *Miljenko Pandžić and Felix Tobler, Ausgewählte Dokumente zur Migration der Burgenländischen Kroaten im 16. Jahrhundert* (Eisenstadt–Željezno: HKDC, 1999). For such movement away from the Zala border zone

the latter option. Family memory may have played a role in Velikei's decision to cooperate with the conquerors rather than resist: two generations previously, one of his distant relatives, Katalin Velikei, was the wife of Prince Radivoj, the illegitimate brother of King Stephen Thomas of Bosnia and claimant to the throne.<sup>98</sup> Following the seizure of Jajce in 1463, which brought the Kingdom of Bosnia to an end, the victors executed Radivoj. Though this is just speculation, relinquishing the castle of Velike, the ancient family base, to the Turks may have actually represented a means of reacquiring the castle within the context of a conflict between members of the family. Unfortunately, we do not know if István Velikei's decision to join the Turks served to promote his interests in the Ottoman Sanjak of Pojega formed around the year 1538.<sup>99</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Historians argue based on their knowledge of renegade life-histories in the Mediterranean region that women most often converted to Islam for family reasons, while men most often did so to gain greater socioeconomic opportunity.<sup>100</sup> However, individual strategies were more complex than this. On the one hand, marriage was an important channel of upward social mobility. Was the wife of Ferenc Csizsár driven primarily by emotions or material prospects

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see Simon, "Flight or Submission"; on fleeing in general: Szakály, *Magyar adóztatás a török hódoltságban* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1981), 44–45.

98 Pálosfalvi, *The Noble Elite*, 220, 276.

99 Ferenc Pribék (alias Bey Huszein), who orchestrated the transfer of Füleke castle to the Turks in 1562 and in return was named the commander of the Ottoman castle in Szabadka, was also a voluntary renegade. In the 1570s, Pribék lived in the capital of Ottoman Hungary, Buda, as the influential head of the Turkish spy-network (Szakály, *Mezőváros és reformáció*, 271–72). For information regarding the career of the castellan Pál Márkházi (alias Bey Ibrahim), who delivered the castle of Ajnácskő (Gömör County, Hanačka, Slovakia) to the Turks in 1556, see Sándor Papp, "Die Verleihungs-, Bekräftigungs- und Vertragsurkunden der Osmanen für Ungarn und Siebenbürgen. Eine quellenkritische Untersuchung," *Schriften der Balkan-Kommission der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 42 (2003): 91–107. Notwithstanding these and some more individual examples, very few among the Ottoman high dignitaries and the administrative and military leaders of Ottoman Hungary can be identified as Hungarians. Cf. Ferenc Szakály, "Magyar diplomaták, utazók, rabok és renegátok a 16. századi Isztambulban," in id., *Szigetvári Csöbör Balázs török miniatúrái (1570)* (Budapest: Európa, 1983), 45–47.

100 Dursteler, *Renegade Women*, 13. See also the retrospective stories of women who later reconverted to Catholicism from Islam in Venice: Nathalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

when she chose a more influential and wealthy Turkish husband in Buda?<sup>101</sup> The nobleman of Pozsega, on the other hand, may have regarded conversion to Islam as a means of regaining possession of family property. I would therefore contend that traversing the Christian–Muslim boundary provided women with the possibility to achieve radical social advancement that would have been otherwise inconceivable. Both men and women who were willing to cooperate with the new proprietors of power were able to switch faiths in the interest of security and social improvement.<sup>102</sup> For women, marriage represented the gateway to crossing the boundary in the course of transforming their identities.

The figure of the woman exchanging her Christian marriage for a Muslim one also helps us to take a more nuanced approach to the issue of female agency. Mrs. Csiszár acted autonomously and outside of social expectations when she escaped her husband. The fact that she immediately remarried, however, challenges the often underlying scholarly assumption that women, independent of time and place, strove to break loose from their subordination to men within the patriarchal family.<sup>103</sup> Her empowered position to negotiate new social relations and change her life—similar to that of women converting before sharia courts in Istanbul in order to divorce<sup>104</sup>—was temporary. This enabled women to rid themselves of problematic husbands; however as the wife of a Muslim man in the Islamic world, it also brought them under an even greater degree of control. Although escape was an act of exerting their free will, it did not represent an attempt to gain independence: to the contrary, flight from a man whose violation of the norms of husband–wife relations assumed dangerous proportions provided women with protection and security alongside another man, even if his Muslim religion served to curtail her rights in comparison to those she had possessed in the Christian world.

The optimistic view of female agency becomes further “tamed” if one acknowledges that the meeting of cultures and religions offered greater room for maneuver to both men and women who were endowed with sufficient daring and the ability to orient themselves within the system of legal and institutional

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101 The dilemma whether action and motivation is determined by interest or emotion becomes irrelevant if we consider both as socially constituted. Cf. Hans Medick–David Warren Sabean, ed., *Interest and emotion. Essays on the study of family and kinship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 3.

102 This is what Bulliet called “social conversion.” Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam*, 35–41.

103 For a criticism of this “feminist approach” see Saba Mahmood, “Anthropology,” in *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures*, ed. Suad Joseph, vol. 1, *Methodologies, Paradigms and Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 307–14.

104 Baer, *Islamic Conversion*, 427.

plurality, though this change was more conspicuous and surprising 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 socioeconomic 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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