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Capysranus: An anonymous English epic poem printed in London in 1515¹

The above mentioned and below published English epic poem's original title is unknown. Hungarian scholars have known about its existence only since 1937, when Éva Róna, a literary historian, researcher of the Hungarian-English relations published her article about this metric romance in the *Angol Filológiai Tanulmányok* [English Philological Studies] the most important journal of Hungarian English Studies, founded by László Országh. After a reaffirming and careful scan of the literature of the English Studies we can clearly conclude that Éva Róna's study, *Hungary in a Medieval Poem. "Capysranus", a Metrical Romance* reported first on the literary work in question.²

The later Hungarian research - probably because of the political change after the Second World War - seemingly forgot the 'Capysranus'. The ice broke in 1986 when *The New Hungarian Quarterly*, an English language journal founded in 1959 published the 'Capysranus' text alongside a study.³ The reasons behind this were the 600th birthday of John of Capistrano and the 530th anniversary of the victory of Nándorfehérvár, and most of all that not long before 1986 the literary- and cultural historian

1 A Hungarian version of the article, without the textual edition of the Capysranus poem was published in: Peregrin Kálmán – László Veszprémy (eds.), *Európa védelmében. Kapisztrán Szent János és a nándorfehérvári diadal emlékezete* [In the defence of Europe. John of Capistrano and the remembrance of the triumph of Nándorfehérvár]. Budapest, 2013. 126-134.

2 Éva Róna, *Hungary in a Medieval Poem. „Capysranus”, a Metrical Romance.* = *Angol Filológiai Tanulmányok* [Second series] 3, 1937. 60-70. Unaltered text re-issued: Brahmer, Miechisław-Helsztyński – Stanisław-Krzyżanowsky, Julian (eds.), *Studies in Language and Literature in Honour of Margaret Schlauch.* Warszawa, 1966.

3 Capysranus. (An Anonymous English Epic Poem printed in London in 1515). The text edited by William A. Ringler, Jr. = *The New Hungarian Quarterly* 27, 1986. No. 104. 131-139.; István Petrovics – György Endre Szőnyi, „Capysranus”. A Late Medieval English Romance on the 1456 Siege of Belgrade. Ibid. 141-146. It should be noted that the research of the historical relations of England and Hungary – thanks to József Laszlovszky and Attila Bárány – from the 1980's onward received an increased impetus again. We can say without exaggeration that in the 1980s a new era of research started in Hungary. For a summary of the achieved results and of the research history of medieval English-Hungarian relations cf: Attila Bárány – József Laszlovszky – Zsuzsanna Papp, *Angol-magyar kapcsolatok a középkorban.* I-II [English-Hungarian relationships in the Middle Ages]. Máriabesnyő, 2008-2012.

György Endre Szőnyi got acquainted with Professor William A. Ringler, Jr. (1912-1987) an American expert of the (mainly English) literature of the 14-17th centuries. Professor Ringler with the help of György Endre Szőnyi published the text for the Hungarian and international research in modern spelling, followed by his own emendations and annotations. Almost 50 years after Éva Róna's report the epic poem still called 'Capystranus' became available for study again.⁴

It is important to state that the text edited and published by William A. Ringler, Jr. in 1986 can be considered the first full edition not only in Hungary but also internationally. There was an attempt to publish the 'Capystranus' abroad previously, but Douglas Gray's *The Oxford Book of Late Medieval Verse and Prose* published in 1985 cited only a lengthy part of the full text.⁵ At this point we have to note that only three known copies exist of the small octavo booklets published around 1515 by the London printing house of Wynkyn de Worde, the successor to the first English printer William Caxton. Unfortunately all of them are fragments. The title page and the ending are missing, and an additional problem is that the pages were originally unnumbered. A copy considered to be the most complete from 1515 contains twelve and a half pages and two beautifully crafted woodcuts. The variant made by the collating of the three existing copies narrates the siege of Nándorfehérvár (today Beograd, Serbia) in 1456 and the preceding events in 579 lines divided into five sections.⁶

Two of the three copies bequeathed to posterity are part of the collection of the United Kingdom's national library, the British Library formed in the 1st of July 1973 following the separation from the British Museum. One of these, namely the one made around 1515 and numbered STC 14649, Brit. Lib. C 71, c. 26 was acquired by the British Museum in March 1922, when Mr. S. R. Christie Miller donated the booklet containing the most complete text to the illustrious institution, which always considered itself the world's leading museum. Of the second copy owned by the British Library [STC 1649.5, Brit. Lib. C. 40. m. 9(18)] we only know that it was published by the printing house of Wynkyn de Worde possibly in 1527. The third, likewise fragmentary copy also printed

4 The title page of the booklet containing the poem is missing. On the inside cover there is an old handwriting: 'Capystranus – sold at Roxb. Sale 4.10.0 – 6.5.' On the first page is another note with old handwriting: 'Capystranus a metrical Romance probably by Winken de Worde'. The title we use today came from this note. Cf. Róna, 'Capystranus', 60.

5 Gray, Douglas (ed.), *The Oxford Book of Late Medieval Verse and Prose*. Oxford, 1985. 199-203. (lines 360-521.) Cf. The notes on page 459.

6 Róna, „Capystranus”, 60-61.; Petrovics-Szőnyi, „Capystranus”, 141-142.

by Wynkyn de Worde is now in the collection of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, the oldest library in Europe and Great-Britain. Its number is STC 1465, Douce frag. f. 5 and was printed possibly around 1530.⁷

Romances were the most popular works of the medieval English literature performed by minstrels and common people, but after the mid-fourteenth century – as Geoffrey Chaucer in his *Canterbury Tales* notices – became less prevalent. All that changed in the early 16th century,⁸ when with the appearance of the printing press, printers wanted to entertain their readers with interesting stories. This situation is well illustrated by the fact that out of the 640 books printed by Wynkyn de Worde 150 books were romances.⁹ If there was demand for them, some works were reprinted several times depending on their curiosity and actuality. The expansion of the Ottomans in Europe, the fall of Constantinople and the successful defence of Nándorfehérvár were precisely that kind of subject.¹⁰ It is not surprising at all that the ‘*Capystranus*’ was published three times in the first part of the 16th century. Unfortunately none of the

7 Róna, „Capystranus”, 60-61.; Ringler, „Capystranus”, 140.; Petrovics–Szőnyi, „Capystranus”, 141. For Wynkyn de Worde and his activities cf: Plomer, Henry R., *Wynkyn de Worde and His Contemporaries to 1535*. London, 1925.; Duff, Edward Gordon, *A Century of the English Book Trade: Short Notices of All Printers, Stationers, Book-binders, and Others Connected with it from the Issue of the First Dated Book in 1457 to the Incorporation of the Company of Stationers in 1557*. London, 1905. As an interesting fact we note that Plomer was not aware of the ‘Capystranus’. In his later work Edward Gordon Duff notes only that this interesting work issued by the printing house of Wynkyn de Worde is privately owned and difficult to access. Cf: Róna, „Capystranus”, 66-67. For the activities of Wynkyn de Worde see: Róna, „Capystranus”, 66-67.; *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Literature*. Second Edition. Revised by Dorothy Eagle. Oxford University Press, 1970. 620.

8 Róna, „Capystranus”, 61.

9 Ibid. 61. In the literature there are different numbers about de Worde’s publications, primarily relating to books. The above cited *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Literature* for example mentions 800 *books* which number of course includes the re-publications and the broadside issues too.

10 The interest in the Ottoman’s expansion in Europe is well signified by the work of Sir Thomas More which he wrote during his imprisonment in the Tower of London, titled *Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulations*, in which the fictional conversation of two Hungarian lords, Antal and Vince takes place in the eve of the battle of Mohács. More, Thomas, *A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation*. Edited by Martz, Louis L. and Manley, Frank. New Haven, 1976. Hungarian translation: Péter Benedek Tóta, *Morus magyaros ország-magyarázata: közelítés Morus Tamás Bátorító párbeszéd megpróbáltatás idején című dialógusához*. [More’s explanation of the country in a Hungarian perspective]. = *Vigilia* 67, 2002. 322-330. The interest in the same topic is also shown by the metrical romance ‘The Squire of Lowe Degree’ which will be discussed later.

existing copies refers to an original poem or a manuscript on which it is based, if such thing existed at all. Therefore the *Capystranus*'s date of origin is impossible to determine. It is not an exceptional situation: Henry VIII's dissolution of monasteries between 1536 and 1541 destroyed most of the manuscripts used by the first English printers.¹¹ Even if the printed copy contains direct reference to the year of publishing it is of no help to us in determining the time of origin, because the texts were "modernized" in accordance with the linguistic requirements of the time. With regard to the printing process, we must note that - as it was mentioned before - the three surviving copies' extents are different from each other. The explanation is - among others - that during the reprint it was common - especially if it was a 'facsimile' - to abridge the original text several times to reduce the scope of the work.¹²

It is certain that the '*Capystranus*' can be originated between 1456 and 1515. We haven't got much clue about the author's person either. Éva Róna assumed that the author was Wynkyn de Worde himself; more precisely Róna thought that de Worde heard the original poem before he came to England, during his stay in the Netherlands and compiled it to its final form later.¹³

It is important to recall that the famous printer was born in Wörth, Alsace. In his youth he moved to the city of Bruges in the Netherlands, and worked in the printing house of William Caxton and Colard Mansion. William Caxton and de Worde left the Netherlands in 1476 and soon established a printing house in London.¹⁴ It is possible that before 1476 de Worde met some Hungarians, who reported to him the successful defence of Nándorfehérvár, viz. several Hungarians visited that region of Europe even before the Reformation. We also know that a Hungarian called Adrian de Tolna, who became a printer in London moved there from the Netherlands.¹⁵

Wynkyn de Worde had a special interest in Hungary. This fact is demonstrated by the '*Capystranus*' and '*The Squire of Lowe Degree*', a metric romance, which was published by Wynkyn de Worde around

11 Róna, „Capystranus”, 65.

12 Ibid. 65.

13 Ibid. 66.

14 The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Literature, 88., 620.

15 Duff, A Century, 160.; Róna, „Capystranus”, 65.

1520. It is interesting for us because it is set in Hungary.¹⁶

Contrary to the opinion of Éva Róna, Professor Ringler thought the ‘*Capystranus*’ follows the tradition of the medieval heroic romances and shows similarities with the early Charlemagne poems. Its author probably was a minstrel and the poem made its way to the press by word of mouth. Ringler therefore ruled out the possibility that the author of the ‘*Capystranus*’ was de Worde himself, and dated the poem much earlier than 1515.¹⁷ The earlier origin and the oral tradition would explain the deformation of the name of Hunyadi and many others occurring in the poem. The famous captain for example is called ‘Obedianus’ which is certainly a corrupted, but for a Hungarian speaker totally understandable form of the name John Hunyadi [in Hungarian: Hunyadi János – Obed(i) Ianus].¹⁸

The name ‘Gottauntas’ which according to the ‘*Capystranus*’ is the name of the biggest university in Hungary (*‘To an university he took the way / The greatest in Hungary I dare well say / Gottauntas it hight’*) is much more problematic. The poem states that John of Capistrano brought with him from there 26000 men to defend Nándorfehérvár. The problem is that at that time there was not a single university working in the Kingdom of Hungary. The name is also problematic. The ending ‘untas’ may refer to the Latin ‘universitas’, but the name of the town where it was situated is unfathomable. There is a possibility that the poet thought of Krakow where John of Capistrano indeed stayed between the August of 1453 and the May of 1454 and during that time he probably visited the university too. In fact he met in that town László Hunyadi, who had accompanied there Elizabeth, sister of King Ladislaus V, the later wife of Casimir IV King of Poland.¹⁹ The Hungarian youths visited the university in Krakow in some numbers²⁰, but it would be a mistake to place it in the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary, not to mention the fact that according to the

16 Ibid. 66-67.; Petrovics–Szönyi, „Capystranus”, 143. Published In. Kooper, Erik (ed.), *Sentimental and Humorous Romances: Floris and Blancheffour, Sir Degrevant, The Squire of Low Degree, The Tournament of Tottenham, and The Feast of Tottenham*. Kalamazoo, Michigan, 2006.

17 Petrovics–Szönyi, „Capystranus”, 142.

18 Róna, „Capystranus”, 66.

19 Petrovics–Szönyi, „Capystranus”, 145.; Péter Kulcsár, *Kapisztrán János*. [John of Capistrano] (Magyar História. Életrajzok) Budapest, 1987. 150.

20 For the Hungarian students of the university of Krakow cf. *Metryka Uniwersytetu Krakowskiego z lat 1400-1508*. I-II. Biblioteka Jagiellońska rkp. 259. Wydali Antoni Gašiorowski – Tomasz Jurek – Izabela Skierska przy współpracy Ryszarda Grzesika. Kraków, 2004.

available sources John of Capistrano during his recruiting visited only the counties Baranya, Bács, Bodrog, Csanád and Csongrád lying near Nándorfehérvár.²¹

The problems shown above lead us to a most important question, namely to what extent does the poem reflect the historical reality. But before we answer this, we have to describe its structure and content briefly.

As mentioned earlier the text reconstructed by William A. Ringler, Jr. contains 579 lines divided into five sections. The first section contains 59, the second 103, the third 164, the fourth 209 and the fifth 46 lines.²² In the first section, after the obsecration to God the poet states that he wants to speak to those who like not the simple stories but those of brave knights, who fought for Jesus Christ. In the following we read about Charlemagne and how gloriously he recovered from the pagans the relics of Christ's sufferings: the spear, the crown of thorns, and the nails used for his crucifixion. In the second section the author tells us how the Turks took Constantinople in 1453, and how they demolished the city walls by their cannons. It is also mentioned that during the fight the streets of Constantinople run red with blood and many of the besiegers died. The poem describes in detail the cruelty of the Muslims, who spared not even the priests and churchmen. In the third section appears Capistrano of whom the author of the poem speaks with great admiration. The poet states: there were only a few monks like Capistrano, who by recognizing the enormous evil visited the Holy Father on his own volition. Capistrano begged the pope on his knees for help to save the Kingdom of Hungary. For the friar it was clear that the aim of the Ottomans was to conquer Hungary. Capistrano warnings the pope, that if the town and castle of Nándorfehérvár fell, all of Hungary will fall. (*'If he win the royal city / All Hungary is forlon'*). (We must note here that the author of the poem uses not the Hungarian Nándorfehérvár or the Slavic Belgrad/Beograd name of the town but the slightly deformed German form, Grecuswissinburgh.) Capistrano's begging and persuasion reached its aim. The Holy Father was extremely touched by Friar John's pleading and assured him of his complete support: he issued a bull, made a flag which he consecrated, blessed Capistrano three times and also gave him money. Capistrano started to recruit crusaders and collect gold and silver as a financial foundation of the undertaking. The first part of the fourth section is about

21 Gábor Barta, *Nándorfehérvár 1456*. Budapest, 1986. 217.; Kulcsár, Kapisztrán, 186.

22 Ringler, „Capystranus”, 131-139.

Capistrano's journey in Hungary: he first visited the university called Gottauntas, the biggest university of the kingdom from where he took 26000 people with him. After that he turned his way to Nándorfehérvár, where he met with János Hunyadi, the captain general (*'captain principal'*) and they joined their armies. According to the poem the men of Capistrano came from different countries (*'men of diverse country'*). The most interesting claim of the poet is related to the Christian army: he mentions that with Friar John and Hunyadi came two strange knights to fight the heathens, by name Richard Morpath from England and Sir John Black, who 'was a Turk' (*'And Sir John Black, I understand / That was a Turk before'*). They both fought bravely and killed a great many heathens. According to the author of the poem, the siege lasted for 14 weeks. The Turks attacked with a huge army and 500 cannons. After razing the walls they launched a general attack against the town. Soon a murderous battle ensued. While the leaders of the defenders, Obedianus, Richard Morpath and John Black were already bleeding from several wounds, new troops came to help the besiegers. In the critical situation Capistrano seized a crucifix and climbed on top of a high tower from where he begged for the mercy of the Almighty God and Holy Mary. His sonorous voice raised even the dead (*'Twenty, thousand dead for to see, / Within the twinkling of an eye / To life again they rose'*). The Christian force with renewed strength drove out the besiegers from the town. The fifth section is short and unfinished, containing only 46 lines. In this we read about a new victory of the Christian army who pushed back the Turks on every side.

After the brief description of the content and structure of the poem let us speak a few words about its reality. It should be clear that the *'Capystranus'* is a literary work about historical personalities (Giovanni da Capestrano, János Hunyadi) and major historical events (the fall of Constantinople, the siege of Nándorfehérvár). It also demonstrates that after the fall of Constantinople and the conquest of the Balkans not even the remote England remained indifferent to the Ottoman advances. The fall of Rhodes, the island controlling the Levantine trade to Suleiman I in 1522 aggravated the situation further. This also meant the fall of the last crusader base in the eastern Mediterranean. The loss of Rhodes held the Ottoman conquest in the forefront of European interest. Hungary could hope and get financial or military help only from the pope, Venice and the Holy Roman Empire, but it cannot be ruled out, that perhaps English help might have been expected in this fight, especially financially but also even in military terms.

Unfortunately, as we mentioned earlier, we know almost nothing about the identity of the author of the poem. Whoever he was, that much is certain: in his work he wanted to commemorate John of Capistrano truly. The whole poem is focused on the deeds of the Observant Franciscan. It is true, that in the recruiting and leading of the crusader army Capistrano had undying merits; but it is not, that he initiated the crusade. It was Calixtus III's own decision, as the Holy Father was fully aware of the Turkish threat. It is proved by a number of measures that have served the purpose of raising funds for an anti-Turkish campaign. In addition the pope negotiated with a number of European sovereigns and sent legates to the Holy Roman Empire, Poland and Hungary to recruit volunteer crusader troops. In Hungary it was Cardinal Juan Carvajal whose urging voice called John of Capistrano to Buda in February 1456, who previously was a missionary sent to the Romanian and Serbian population in the southern part of the Kingdom. This activity of Capistrano, which he considered as his main task, changed soon: his duty became the recruiting of crusaders. On 6th of February 1456 accompanied by Ladislaus V Cardinal Juan Carvajal arrived to Buda, and on 15th of February, after the high mass he declared the crusade. After reading the papal bull, the legate pinned the cross consecrated by Calixtus III, on Capistrano. The author of the poem fails to mention these important circumstances, and also remains silent about how Capistrano appeared in Central Europe after 1451, where he initially fought against the Hussite movement. In Poland, Moravia and Silesia he took actions against the Jews also. He burned many of them; just in Boroszló (today Wrocław, Poland) 41 people died this way. In Hungary his original aim was to convert the schismatics and the heretics, but later, shortly before the siege of Nándorfehérvár he realized that *'in this difficult time the Serbs, the schismatics, the Vlachs, the Jews, the heretics and heathens must be considered as a friend, if they willing to fight by our side. Now, we must fight the Turks.'* In this regard we must note, that John of Capistrano in the meeting of the Hungarian magnates held in Győr at the beginning of June 1455 greatly insulted George Branković, of whom he demanded to give up his orthodox faith and be baptized in the Roman rite. The old despot who offered significant military aid was not willing to do that and indignantly went to the fortress of Szendrő (today Smederevo, Serbia). It is not surprising at all that Serbs are not mentioned in the poem. However we know that many of them gave their life in the defence of Nándorfehérvár on the 14th of June in the battle fought on the river Danube. Not only the Serbs are neglected by

the poet but also the fortress' original defenders. János Hunyadi's figure was unavoidable, but the poem is silent about his brother in law, Mihály Szilágyi and János Geszti castellan of Miklós Újlaki who directed the defence of Nándorfehérvár, and is also silent about János Kórógyi Ban of Macsó and his banderium of thousands of tried horsemen. For the author the crusader army and its leader were important not the regular army.

The narrative of the siege is mostly accurate, although the 14 week battle and the 500 cannons are obviously exaggerations. It is also problematic that the poem makes no mention about the river-battle which took place on July 14 and allowed Hunyadi to supply the well trained regular troops and munitions to the surrounded town and castle.

The number of the troops involved in the siege and defence is also problematic. To hold the number of the Turkish army to 100 000 is an exaggeration but not an unsubstantiated one. The information concerning the biggest Hungarian university, the Gottauntas and its 26000 crusader is much more fanciful. Small but noteworthy inaccuracy that the sultan ordered the general attack not on 22nd of July the day of (Mary) Magdalene, but on 21st of July after the breach of the wall.²³

All in all we can say that the poet did not make serious mistakes when presenting the siege. This is certainly explained by the fact that – thanks to the medieval chroniclers – János Hunyadi's fighting against the Turks including the triumph of Nándorfehérvár were well known everywhere in Western Europe, including England. The life, the political and military career of János Hunyadi were introduced most thoroughly by Jean de Waurin, nonetheless the chronicle of John of Whethamstede and the correspondence of Thomas Bekynton also contain valuable information in relation to Hungary.²⁴ The famous English historian Maxwell Lyte

23 For the announcement of the crusade, the recruitment of crusaders and the siege of Nándorfehérvár cf. Barta, Nándorfehérvár; Petrovics–Szönyi, „Capystranus”, 141-145.; Kulcsár, Kapisztrán; Tamás Pálosfalvi, *Nikápolytól Mohácsig 1396-1526* [From Nikopolis to Mohács]. Budapest, 2005. 108-117.; István Petrovics, A Délvidék és a török veszély: a nándorfehérvári diadal és előzményei. [The southern regions and the Turkish threat: the triumph of Nándorfehérvár and its antecedents] = *Bácsország. Vajdasági Honismereti Szemle* 37, 2006. 2. 11-19.; András Kubinyi, *Nándorfehérvártól Mohácsig. A Mátyás- és a Jagelló-kor hadtörténete*. [From Nándorfehérvár to Mohács: Military history of the Mathias- and Jagiellonian era] Budapest, 2007. 11-29.

24 Johan de Waurin, *Recueil des chroniques et anciennes istories de la Grant Bretagne*. Ed. W. and E. L. C. P. Hardy for the Rolls Series with an English translation. I-V. London, 1864-1891. V. 7-367.; *Whethamstede's Chronicle*. Ed. H. T. Riley. London, 1870-1871.; *The Official Correspondence of Thomas Bekynton Secretary to King Henry VI*. I-II. London, 1872. Cf.: Éva Róna, *Középkori angol krónikák magyar*

(1848-1940) in his work about the history of the Oxford University noted: when the news of the triumph of Nándorfehérvár reached Oxford, the multitude of the teachers and students went to the temple of the patron saint of Oxford, Saint Frideswide/Frithuswith for thanksgiving. In the church they solemnly sang the *Te Deum* and listened to the ad hoc sermon of Sir Thomas Gascoigne.²⁵ Sir Thomas Gascoigne (1404-1458) was a noted theologian who between 1434 and 1445 acted as the chancellor and vice-chancellor of the Oxford University several times. In his main work, *Liber Veritatum* he also remembered the above mentioned occasion. Gascoigne wrote that a Hungarian priest called Erasmus Fullár brought to England a letter sealed with Hunyadi's own seal about the triumph of Nándorfehérvár and gave it to Thomas Bourchier the Archbishop of Canterbury. Gascoigne who saw the letter with his own eyes and met with Erasmus Fullár in Oxford himself, mentioned that the English archbishops and bishops were not seemed particularly enthusiastic. However this surprisingly cold behaviour was compensated well by the celebration of the enthusiastic Oxonians.²⁶

Overall we can say, that although the '*Capystranus*' is not belonging to the masterpieces of literature and contains a number of minor historical mistakes, it is an important and unique work, because after its printing in 1515 it drew the attention of the English public to the Ottoman expansion and the heroic efforts of Hungary to restrain it.

Finally we note that in this review we did not examine all the problems of the '*Capystranus*' and did not analyze it meticulously. We only wanted to make a general observation and pose the most important questions. We hope that this brief summary will convince the reader that the republication of the poem's text was useful, and may encourage the experts to make a more in-depth research.

vonatközös adatai. [Hungary-related data in medieval English chronicles] = *Egyetemes Philológiai Közlöny* 60, 1936. July-December: 377.; Róna, „Capystranus”, 69. It is worth mentioning that a copy of pope Calixtus III's letter to János Hunyadi after the triumph of Nándorfehérvár in which he expresses his best wishes is in the collection of Lambeth Palace Library. See: György Kurucz, *Guide to documents and manuscripts in Great Britain relating to the Kingdom of Hungary from the earliest times to 1800*. London – New York, 1992. 50. (20.3)

25 Lyte, Henry Churchill Maxwell, *A History of the University of Oxford: From the Earliest Times to the Year 1530*. London, 1886. 334. Cf. Róna, „Capystranus”, 69.

26 For Thomas Gascoigne cf. E. A. Livingstone, Gascoigne, Thomas. In: *The Concise English Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Oxford, 2000.; Lajos Kropf, Fullár Erasmus. (Adalék az 1451. és 1456. évek történetéhez.) [Erasmus Fullár. Additions for the history of years 1451 and 1456]. = *Századok* 30, 1896. 223-227. Cf. Róna, „Capystranus”, 69.

Capystranus

I.

O mighty Father in heaven on high,
One God and persons three,

 That made both day and night,
And after, as it was thy will,
Thine own Son thou sent us till
 In a Maiden to light.

Sith the Jews, that were wild,
Hanged Him, that was so mild,
 And to death Him dight.

When He was dead, the sooth to say,
To life He rose on the third day
 Through His own might.

Then to hell he went anon
And took out souls many one
 Out of that hold he hent,
Maugre the fiends that were bold,
He took the prisoners out of hold,
 With them to heaven he went.

On his Father's right hand he him set,
That all should know withouten let
 That he was omnipotent.

And after wisdom He was sent
That all should keep his commandment
 And for to believe in Him verray.

That is our Savior
That born was of that blessed flower
 That hight Mary I say,
That shall us deem withouten miss,
Some to pain and some to bliss
 At dreadful doom's day.

Those that believe on him aright
To bliss they gone with angels bright,
 To bliss and joy for aye.

Now Jesu, as thou bought us dear,
 Give them joy this gest will hear
 And harken on aright.
 Some men loveth to hear tell
 Of doughty knights that were fell,
 And some of ladies bright,
 And some miracles that are told,
 And some of venturous knights old
 That for our Lord did fight—
 As Charles did, that noble king
 That heathen down did bring
 Through the help of God almighty;

He won from the heathen hounds
 The spear and nails of Christ's wounds,
 And also the crown of thorn,
 And many a rich relic mo
 Mauger of them he won also,
 And killed them even and morn.
 The Turks and the pagans bold
 He felled down many a fold,
 Durst none stand him befor.
 Charles gan them so affray
 That the caitifs might course the day
 And the time that they were born.

II.

Now Machamite, that Turk untrue
 To our Lord Christ Jesu
 And to his law also,
 Many Christian men slain hath he,
 And won Constantine, that noble city,
 With many towns mo.
 He brent and slew, and left none on life,
 Neither man, child, ne wife,
 To death he made them go;
 Young innocents that never did guilt
 That false Turk hath them spilt.
 He played the king Pharaoh.

ISTVÁN PETROVICS

All the streets of Constantine
Ran blood, redder than wine,
 That marvel was to see.
There could no man his foot down set,
I give you knowledge withouten let,
 But on a dead body.
The Christian men went to wrack.
The churches and our images they brake
 That were made of stone and tree;
The crucifix of our Saviour,
They cast it down with dishonor,
 And also Our Lady.

They slew our priests at the mass,

...

 God's men had no grace.
They killed them down in every stead,
Both priests and clerks they put to dead,
 Within God's holy place.
The Turks, keen with shield and spear,
Our priests before the high altar
 They ran through in a race.
Many gan die for Christ's love;
Angels their souls bare above
 To bliss and much solace.
Thus the Turk, the wicked qued,
Christen people he put to dead
 And left few upon live.
The heathen cried with great despite
On Mahound and Machamite,
 The Turks men full rive.
There was none that durst on Jesu cry
But they were taken and slain in high,
 Anon and that believe.
The Turk himself a cry did make
There should no man a prisoner take.
 God let them never thrive.

Then the dogs that believed on Mahound
The Christian people killed to the ground;
 No gold might be their meed.
The Christian saw that they should die,
And on their masters laid hand quickly,
 And fought a well good speed.
Every prisoner then on live
Killed of the Turks four or five:,
 To hell their souls yede.
Or our prisoners after were take,
Many a Turk they made blake,
...

There was no helm, nor habergeon,
Plate, or mail, nor good acton,
 Their dints might refrain.
Machamite saw his men so die,
And loud on Mahound he gan cry;
 In heart he was not fain.
Our Christian needed no weapon crave,
The streets lay full, take who would have,
 To fight with men of main.
Anon, within a little throw,
Five thousand Turks on a row
 In the streets lay slain.
When Machamite that spied,
Out on Mahound he cried,
 And as a fiend did yell.
Our Christian stood in full great doubt,
As doughty men laid fast about
 Upon the hounds of hell.
Our Christian men were then too few,
For the Turks came ever new,
 In sooth as I you tell.
Our men hewed on hastily
And made [the] Turks loud to cry.
 The false [Turks] down they fell.

Thus 'countered with Saracens keen
Till eighty thousand were laid bedene,
 In a little thought.
Machamite was never so wo
To see so few so many slo,
 His sorrow was not short.
He cried ' Mahound' as he would brast.
Our Christian on Jesu cried fast,
 That all the world wrought.

Some 'scaped away with God's grace,
On live mauger the Turk's face;
 But many then gan die.
At the destruction of Cyvys
Were not so many slain iwis
 As were on both party.
Alas, save Christian will of heaven,
Our Christian were made uneven
 With a false company,
For of the Turks and Saracens keen
An hundred were, withouten ween,
Against one of our meinie.

III.

The emperor of Constantine,
A doughty man at a time,
 ...
The Turk him took, that heathen hound,
And gave him many a grisly wound,
 I pray God give him grame.
He bound him till the blood out brast,
And bade him forsake Jesu in haste,
 Or else thou shalt have shame;
"Have done anon and him defy,
And also his mother Mary,
 That thou callest his dame."

Valerian answered and said,
 “Nay, Thou shalt never see that day
 That I shall Him forsake.
 Turn thee, Turk, and all thy men,
 Or else in hell thou shalt bren
 Among the fiends black.
 Live in Jesu, full of might,
 And that Maiden that He in light,
 For Christian men’s sake.”
 Then the Turk waxed evil apaid,
 Commanded his men, at a brayd,
 Anon to make him naked.

He bade them beat him with scourges keen,
 And after bore out his eyen
 With wimbles hot and red.
 They plucked his heart by and by,
 And both his ears on high;
 They cut off his head.
 With pincers his teeth they brake;
 Bade him anon his God forsake,
 Or he should never eat bread.
 They saw in no wise that it would be
 Anon they made a saw of tree
 And sawed him to dead.
 Then the Turks, with much pain,
 This doughty man have they slain,
 For Christ’s sake I say.
 And so they did with many mo.
 The Turks might curse the time also
 That they there came that day.
 Of Christ’s people was many a part mart
 There was no Turk paid of his part,
 By the last end of the fray.
 They had hell for their fight;
 The Christian went to heaven bright
 To be in bliss for aye.

ISTVÁN PETROVICS

Thus is Constantine, the noble city, won,
Beaten down with many a gun,
 And Christian people slain.
There the Turk with his meinie
Keeped still that noble city,
 Durst no man him with-sayen.
Forty mile round about
Durst no man by him route,
 Neither on hill ne plain.
The Turk kept the field many a day,
Christian people in the country,
 Of him were dread I sayen.

Where they might any Christian get,
I tell you now withouten let,
 They left their life to wed.
All suffered death for Christ's sake,
That this Turk might overtake,
 But thus they from him fled.
Thereof heard a holy friar
The works of the fiends far,
 And to Rome him sped.

John Capistranus the friar hight,
I dare say he was God's knight,
 An holy man was he.
To the Pope anon he wan,
Capistranus that holy man,
 And kneeled upon his knee.
He said, "Father, for Christ's love of heaven,
That made this world and days seven,
 Harken now to me.
There is a Turk, I understand,
That burns and slays God's land;
 Great dole it is to see.

"The Turk his purpose is,
I let you wit withouten miss,
 To win all Hungary.

Therefore, Father, put thy holy hand
 And help to warre God's land,
 His true vicar if thou be.
 He burneth churches in every place;
 Christian men goeth to death apace,
 To behold is great pity.
 Now, Father, help with thy succor,
 For Mary's love, that sweet flower,
 Our hope is much in thee.

“With two hundred [thousand] this same day
 To Grecuswissinburgh he took the way,
 This is no scorn;
 Many a thousand there shall die
 If he win that royal city,
 All Hungary is forlorn.
 I am the messenger of Jesus,
 Truly, Lord, it will be thus,
 As I have said beforne;
 Therefore help with all thy might
 For God's love for to fight
 That was of Mary born.”

Then the Pope said anon,
 “Good brother, Friar John,
 As I understand,
 Thou preachest God's words wide
 In the country on every side,
 In many a diverse land.
 Thou knowest many a noble man;
 Take a captain where thou can,
 Whether that be he free or band;
 And, as I am God's vicar true,
 This false Turk his rese shall rue,
 And thereto my holy hand.”

Now, Father, I thank thee heartily,
 To choose a captain ye bid me,
 Certain without any miss.

ISTVÁN PETROVICS

Now, Holy Father, withouten lain,
This shall be my captain,”
 He said the Pope iwis,
“A banner of Christ’s Passion,
That man’s soul did redemption
 And brought them from pain to light.
Hallow it with thy hand,
The people may the better stand
 That under it doth fight.

“This shall be my captain.
Another would I have fain,
 That is thy bull of lead,
That all that under it doth fight
For God’s love most of might
 Ever in any stead
If it happen them to be slain,
That their souls come never in pain
 After that they be dead.”
The Pope said, “Blessed might thou be;
A holy man I hold thee,
 I will do after thy rede.”

Anon the banner was made and hallowed,
The bull sealed and up folded,
 And the pardon of grace
Delivered to the Friar truly.
The Pope blessed him times three,
 And thus his leave he takes.
Barefoot he bare out of the town
The banner of Christ’s Passion,
 Toward the Turk he hastes
And preached God’s law as he yede,
And much people to him gan speed
 To get their soul’s solace.

Great gold and silver was him given,
And ever he dealt it even
 The people that with him yede.

So certainly, as I you say,
 All Rome for him did pray,
 And so it was great need.
 Such Friars we have too few;
 Pray all we Christ Jesu
 To be his help and speed.
 For of this I find a fit
 Further; and ye will sit,
 Harken and take good heed.

IV.

This friar went to Hungary
 And many men with him truly
 That for Our Lord did fight,
 To an university he took the way
 The greatest in Hungary I dare well say
 Gottauntas it hight.
 Out of the university there went in fere
 Six and twenty thousand with the friar
 Of religious men full right,
 The most part was priests I say,
 Everich proved him that day
 That he was God's knight.
 The friar with great devotion
 Bore the banner of Christ's Passion
 Among the people all,
 Displayed abroad great joy to see
 Men of diverse country
 Fast to him gan fall.
 Thus passed forth Capistranus
 And met with the good Earl Obedianus
 A captain principal,
 Twenty thousand and mo
 Among them was but knights two,
 And thus men doth them call

Richard Morpath, a knight of England,
 And Sir John Black, I understand
 That was a Turk before,

ISTVÁN PETROVICS

And now he is a courteous knight,
I let you wete, and a wight
And steadfast in our lore.

...

Many a Turk hath grieved sore
Their lives they left behind.
He hath made them hop headless,
Many one withouten les,
Where he might them find.
There twenty thousand met in fere
With Obedianus and the friar
In helm and hauberk bright.
To Grecuswissinburgh he took the way
There the Turk at siege lay
With many a knight.
Fourteen weeks the Turk had been there
And put the Christian to much fear,
To him they had no might,
Five hundred guns he let shoot at once,
Brake down the walls with stones,
The wild fire lemed light.

To hear it was great wonder
The noise of guns, much like the thunder,
That was a fearful din,
The noise was heard many a mile,
Obediance the mean while
Entered the town within,
At six of the clock the sooth to say
After noon on the Magdalen day,
And neither less ne mo;
And Capistranus, good friar John,
Assoiled our men everichone
To battle or they did go;

And cried loud with voice clear,
“Let us fight, for our supper
In heaven is ready dight;

Our banner shall I bear today
And to Jesu fast shall pray
 To speed us in our right.”
Anon they together met,
Five thousand deed withouten let,
 In helm and hauberk bright.

Obedianus, that noble man,
Slew them fast that served Satan.
 Through Christ their crowns had care.
All that he with his falchion hit
There was no slave, I let you wit,
 That ever might heal that sare,
There was no Turk that he with met
But he had such a buffet
 That he grieved never Christian man mare.
He was a doughty knight,
The false he felled for God’s right:
 I pray God well might he fare.

Morpath and Black John
That day killed Turks many one,
 Certain withouten let.
There was none so good armor
That their dints might endure,
 Helm nor bright basinet.
They hew upon the heathen on high,
The fire out of every side gan fly,
 So boldly on they bet.
Many a Turk there was cast,
Beaten till the brains brast;
 Their masters there they met.

Many a thousand of priests there was;
The Turks heard never such a mass
 As they heard that day.
Our priests Te Deum sang,
The heathen fast down they dang,
 Then pax was put away.

ISTVÁN PETROVICS

There was schoolmasters of the best,
Many of them were brought to rest
That would not learn their lay.
Thus our Christian people did fight
From five of the clock on Magdalen night
Till ten on the other day.

Then came the Turks with new battail,
Clean clad in plate and mail,
A hundred thousand and mo.
On dromedaries gan they ride
And killed our men on every side,
Two thousand were there slo.
Our men to stand they had no main
But fled to the town again
With wounds wide and blo,
Twenty thousand of our men
Were borne down at the bridge end,
The Turks were so thro.

Dromedaries over them ran
And killed down both horse and man:
In the field durst none abide.
Obedianus had many a wound
Or he would flee the ground,
For all the Turks' pride
Morpath and Black John
Had wounds many one
That bloody were and wide.
To the town they fled on foot,
They saw it was no better bote,
Their steeds were slain that tide.

The Turks followed into the town
And killed all before them down
Great dule it was to see;
Into the town the great Turk wan
And killed wife, child, and man,
The innocents thick gan die.

John Capistranus see that it was thus
And hent a crucifix of Christ Jesus;
 Ran up til a tower on high;
The hallowed banner with him he bare,
In the top of the tower he set it there
 And cried full pitifully.

He said, Lord God, in heaven on height,
Where is become thine old might
 That men were wont to have?
O my Lord, Christ Jesus,
Why hast thou forgotten us?
 Now help of thee we crave.
Look on thy people that do thus die;
Lord, once cast down thine eye
 And help thy men to save.
Now Lord send down thy much might
Against these fiends for to fight,
 That so thy people disprave,

Think, Lord, how I have preached thy law,
Gone barefoot both in frost and snaw
 To please thee to thy pay.
I have fasted and suffered disease,
Prayed all only thee to please,
 The Psalms oft I say.
For all my service I have done thee,
I ask no more to my fee,
 But help thy men today;
For, and thou let them thus spill,
I am right in good will
 Forever to forsake thy lay.

“Now Mary maiden help me today,
Or else thy matins shall I never say
 Days of all my life,
Ne no prayer that thee shall please
But if thou help now our disease,
 Ne menye thy joys five.

Appoint is for thy maidenhead
That all this people suffereth death;
 Now help to stint our strife;
Now, Lady, of thy men have pity,
Pray for them to thy son on high,
 As thou art maiden and wife.

“Lord, Father omnipotent,
Think on the miracle that thou Charles sent,
 That for thee did fight.
Through his prayer and grace
The sun stood still three days space
 And shone with beams bright.
Pharaoh thou drowned in the sea;
Those that thou let go free,
 Away thou led them right.
This day, Lord, thou help thy men;
Thou art also big now as thou was then
 And of as much might.”

The friar loud on God cried.
A long mile on every side
 The people heard his voice.
Twenty, thousand dead, for to see,
Within the twinkling of an eye
 To life again they rose.
Each one a weapon in hand hent
And freely began to fight [?-ent]
 And felled down fast their foes.
The good earl Obedianus
Fought freely for our Lord Jesus
 On every side sprung his los.

He drove the Turk out of the town,
The Christian felled the false **down**
 And drove them to the field **again**.
Twenty thousand with them met,
Or else the Turk, withouten let,
 Surely had been slain.

Then were they fain for to fight,
Then ever was foul of day light,
 Certain withouten lain.

V.

Now beginneth a new battail,
I let you wit withouten fail,
 Of mighty men of main;
Each one hew on other with ire
That all the field seemed fire,
 Also light as learn of thunder;
Every man hurt other in haste
And laid on basonets to brains brast,
 And ever the false fell under;
The blood ran all the field
Of doughty men under shield,
 To see it was great wonder.

There was hewing from the hals,
The helms and the heads als,
 Rich knights were unknit.
Many a Turk, withouten fail,
Tumbled top over tail
 That never rose yet.
So hard on helms they hew
That there were Turks but few
 That in saddle could sit.
There was no Turk there
But he might tell of much care,
 I let you well wit.

There was sticked many a steed,
Great dromedaries made bleed.
 Though they for faint fell,
The Christian men had quarrels good,
They dread nothing to shed their blood
 When Jesu did them call.

ISTVÁN PETROVICS

They hewed on with swords keen,
Of helms with the heads bedene,
 Tumbled as a ball.
So dealt they strokes on a-braid
That no Turk held him apaid,
 The proudest of them all.

There was hurtling in fere,
Broken many a sharp spear,
 And drawn many a knife.

...

...

 Steeds started out of strife
And cast their masters in the way

...

 Utterly belive.
Many a heathen in their gear
His fellow gan down bear
 And to the earth him drive.

The blood ran through the breast,

...

CAPYSTRANUS

Ismeretlen angol szerző epikus költeménye

1515

I.

Ó, fenséges Atya a magasságos égben,
egy Isten három személyben,

 ki napot és éjt teremtett,

s azután, mert úgy akartad,

hozzánk küldted saját fiad,

 egy szűznek ki született.

De a zsidók, vad népesség,

szelíd fiad megfeszíték,

 és tőlük halála lett.

Mikor elhalt – s szavam igaz –

harmadnap feltámadott az:

 saját erejéből ilyet tett.

Aztán rögvest szállt pokolra,

sok lelket onnét kihozva,

 bugyraiból a mélységnek,

letarolva vad ördögöket,

tőlük foglyokat kimentett:

 velük szállt a Mennyeknek.

Leült az Atyának jobbára,

hogy mindenkinek adja tudtára:

 mindenható herceg.

Az ő bölcsessége úgy akarja,

törvényét mindenki megtartsa,

 s benne hitet tartsanak.

Mert a mi Megváltónk ő,

áldott virágnak születő:

 akit hívnak Máriának.

Ő fog ítélni mindünket:

áldásra, kárhozatra lelkünket,

 ha jó a szörnyű ítéletnap.

Akik helyesen hisznek őbenne,

fényes angyalokkal szállnak Mennyekbe,

 hol áldás és öröm várnak.

Mármost, Jézus, ki szeretsz minket:
áldd meg, ki hallja e történetet
és arra illőn odafigyel.
Soknak abban lelik kedve,
ha vitéz lovagról szól a rege,
mások beérik nemes hölgygel,
másokat nyűgöznek varázslatok,
régmúlt kalandozó lovagok,
kik vívtak Krisztus-hittel,
mint a nemes Károly király tette,²⁷
aki a pogányt leterítette
a Mindenható segedelmével.

A kutya pogányoktól elnyerte
a lándzsát s a szöveget, mi Urunkat átverte
és a töviskoronát
és még sok más ereklyét
őket gyilkolva elért,
reggel s este irtott pogányt.
Vad hitetlent és törököt
vastag sorban ő ledöntött:
előtte meg egy sem állt.
Károly nekik oly csatát adott:
a kalifákátkozzák azt a napot,
mikor meglátták napvilágát.

II.

Mármost Machamite, a török hitetlen,²⁸
aki nem hisz Jézus istenben
és nem tartja törvényit,
sok keresztényt legyilkolt,
foglalta híres Konstantinápolyt,
meg sok egyéb várost is.
Ölt és pusztított, életet nem hagyott
férfit, nőt, gyereket gyilkoltatott,
küldte őket halálba mind;

27 I. (Nagy) Károly frank király és császár (ur. 768-814).

28 II. Mohamed oszmán szultán (ur. 1444-1446 majd 1451-1481).

sosem vétkes ártatlan csecsemőt,
 a pogány török mind leölt,
 a Fáraó szerepe szerint.

Konstantinápoly utcáin mindenhol
 folyt a vér, veresebb, mint a bor:
 csoda volt annak, aki látta.
 Ember lábát úgy nem tette le
 - elmondom ezt neked, hitemre –
 hogy holttesten ne járna.
 Pusztította a keresztény fiakat,
 rombolt képeket s templomokat,
 amit véstek kőbe, fába;
 Krisztus urunk keresztjét
 dicstelenül ledöntötték
 s Miasszonyunk is így jára.

Papjainkat a misén ölték le
 [...]
 Úr szolgálainak nem kegyelmeztek,
 gyilkolták őket mind egy szálig,
 papot, klerikust levágtak szablyáik
 a szent házában Istennek.
 Pajzsot, kardot a kezükbe fogva
 a szentséges oltárnál papjainkra
 rohantak, mint örültek.
 Sokan haltak Krisztus hitéért:
 lelkük az égbe angyalok vitték,
 hogy ott vigaszt leljenek.

Így a török, gonosz fajzat,
 irtott keresztény fiakat,
 keveset hagyva csak életben.
 Pogányok szörnyűn üvölték
 Mahound²⁹ és Machamite nevét:
 török férfiak nagy bőszen.
 Senki sem mert Jézust kiáltni,
 elfogatni, kardélre jutni,

29 Mohamed, a próféta.

mert az lett sorsa menten.
A török vezér azt kiáltja:
foglyot nem ejtünk hiába!
Hogy verje meg az Isten!

Mahound hitetlen kutyái ekkor
keresztényt mind lekaszabol,
pedig érte pénzt sem vártak.
Keresztények látták, halál vár rájuk:
üldözőikre emelték hát karjuk,
derekasan harcnak láttak.
Minden fogoly, ki még mozgott,
négy-öt törökkel végzett legott,
lelkük küldve alvilágnak.
Mielőtt hőseink legyűrettek volna,
sok töröknek lettek ők gyilkosa,
[...]

Sem sisak, sem vértzet,
páncél, láncing, bőr mellényzet
csapásuknak ellen nem állt.
Machamite látta, emberi hullnak,
Mahoundhoz kiált erre hangosat,
szívében a félelem rág.
A mieinknek fegyver sem kellett,
az utcára rohanva hoztak többeket
a sokaságot, hogy megvívniák.
S még egy pillanat sem telt bele,
ötvenezer török leverve,
holtan borítja az utcát.

Mikor ezt Machamite látta,
Mahoundhoz hangosan felkiálta,
mint az ördög, úgy rivall.
Keresztényeink kétség gyötri,
ahogy vitézül mentek vívni
a pokol kutyáival.
A keresztények kevesen voltak,
törökök jöttek folyvást újak –

szólok igaz szavakkal.
 A mieink vadul csapkodtak,
 vágásuktól törökök jajongtak,
 hullottak el nagy számmal.

Így vágták a szaracénokat,
 míg nyolcvanezren nem pusztultak,
 rövid összecsapásban.
 Machamite ilyet még nem látott,
 kevés győzzön nagy sokaságot:
 volt is sokáig gyászban.
 Torka szakadt: „Mahound!” – kiált,
 mire a keresztény mondja Isten fiát,
 hogy hallja mind e világban!

Isten kegyéből volt, ki túlélte,
 ahogy a török őket leölte,
 de sokkal több kidől.
 Cyvys pusztulásakor bizonyos,
 hogy annyi el nem hullhatott,
 mint akkor a két seregből.
 De jaj, az ég legyen irgalmas,
 a keresztények meginganak,
 most a gonosz seregtől.
 Mert vad török és szaracén,
 száz is jutott – nem túlzok én –
 egyre a miéinkből.

III.

Konstantinápoly császára,
 egykor fenséges királya,
 [...]
 Török elragadta, pogány kutya,
 testét súlyos sebekkel sújtotta,
 az Isten verje érte!
 Kötéllel húsába vágva,
 kényszerítnék Krisztus-tagadásra,
 vagy szégyenítés lesz a része.

„Most azonnal tagadd meg őt,
és Máriát, az anyját, a nőt,
akit így neveznétek!”

Valerian³⁰ így szólt, mondva:
„Oly’ nap néked nem virradna,
hogy én megtagadjam őt!
Kotródj innen, minden embereddel,
vagy a pokol tüze emészt majd el,
fekete ördögök között.
Hiszek Jézusban, mindenhatóban,
és a szűzben, kibem megfogam,
hitem kereszthez kötött.”
A törökben gazság forrong,
emberinek parancsot mond,
a császár hogy levetközzön.

Kívánta, csípős korbáccsal verjék,
aztán tolják ki szemét,
kampóval, mi izzó, veres.
Szívét átdöfték újra meg újra,
füleit nyesték azon nyomba’:
megcsonkítják a fejet.
Fogókkal a fogát törték:
csak tagadja meg istenét,
vagy kenyeret már nem ehet.
Látván, hogy meg nem törik,
egyiküket fűrészért küldik,
s azzal oltottak életet.

A törökök nagy kín alatt,
így ölték meg e nemes urat,
én mondom, a Krisztusért.
Így tettek még sok mással is,
deátkozzák majd napjait,
hogy lábuk a városba tették.

30 XI. Kónsztantinosz bizánci császár (ur. 1449-1453).

Krisztus népéből sok lett mártír,
 ami a törökre nem áll így,
 mire a csata véget ért.
 A török tettéért jut Pokolra,
 keresztényre meg vár égi hona,
 hol kárpótolják szenvedését.

Így nyerték el nemes Konstantinápolyt,
 sok ágyútól fala leomolt,
 sok keresztény is elhullt.
 Ott a török seregével,
 nemes várost némán figyel,
 féltében mind elnémult.
 Negyven mérföldre közelébe menni,
 emberfia nem mer senki,
 se síkon, se hol domb vonult.
 Sok napig a török táborozik,
 a keresztények színét rettegik,
 - mondom én ezt igazul.

Ha nyomát lelték kereszténynek,
 - elmondom rögvest tinéktek –
 azt ott helyben levágták.
 Mind meghalt a Krisztusért,
 akit a török épp elért,
 előle futottak hát.
 Hallott arról egy szent szerzetes,
 az ördög messze mit cselekedett,
 így indult látni Rómát.

Capistranus János volt a neve:
 Krisztus lovagja – nem túlzok vele:
 egy szentéletű férfi.
 Rögvest a pápához³¹ ment,
 Capistranus, az igaz szent,
 s menten térdet hajt néki.
 Szólt: „Atyám, az égi Krisztusért,
 kinek műve a világ, s annak napja: hét,

31 III. Callixtus pápa (1455-1458).

szavaim hallgassad ki!
Úgy hallottam, van egy Török,
aki Isten földjein öldös:
de siralmas azt nézni!

Ez töröknek az a célja,
elszólom mit sem habozva:
Magyarországot, hogy igázza.
Ezért, atyám, avatkozz be,
tetted Isten földjét segélje,
ha vagy néki igaz pásztor.
Templomokat éget mindenütt,
keresztényeket halálra küld:
siralmas a látványa.
Mármost, atyám, segíts erőddel,
szép virágra, Máriára légy tekintettel,
reményünk benned áll ma!

Kétszázezerrel éppen máma,
Grecuswissinburgh³² alá álla.
Nem megvetés szavam célja:
sok ezren fognak elhullani,
királyi várost, ha az beveszi,
elvész egész Hungária.
Én Jézus hírnöke vagyok,
s bekövetkezik, mit mondok,
szóról szóra, meglátja.
Ezért segítsen minden erővel,
eme harcban, Isten szerelmével,
ki Máriának egy fia.”

A pápa rögvést így beszél:
„János barát, jó testvér,
ha én jól értesültem,
Isten szavával szónokolsz,
ahogy az országban kóborolsz,
mindenféle vidéken.

32 Nándorfehérvár, Belgrád.

Számos jeles férfit tudol,
 kapitánynak egyet mondol,
 szabad vagy szolga légyen;
 én mondom, az Úr helytartója,
 a török fut majd tőle tova,
 s szent földem lesz békében.”

„Atyám, szívből hálás vagyok,
 kapitányt, hogy választhatok,
 s nem kellett késlekednem.
 Szent atyám, nem beszélek mellé,
 kapitányom nem lesz csekély
 - pápának így szóla menten –
 Krisztus szenvedésének jelvénye,
 aki lett lelkek megmentője,
 kiknek helye lett a fényben.
 Áldd meg saját kezeiddel,
 hogy alatta ki harcol, ember,
 legyen bőven erőben.

Ez lesz az én kapitányom,
 de egy kérés még van a számon:
 ólombullás leveled;
 hogy ki megvív az alatt,
 szolgálva mindenható Urat,
 jó szolgálatot ki tesz,
 ha elesnék a csatában,
 lelke legyen makulátlan:
 ha kilehelte, üdve lesz.”
 A pápa felelt: „Áldás rajtad,
 valóban szent ember vagy,
 kívánságod mind meglesz.”

Zászlót varrtak, felszentelték,
 hajtott levelet pecsételték,
 s adtak kegyelmes áldást
 a derék János barátira,
 őt a pápa háromszor megáldja,
 így vette a búcsúját.

Csupasz lábbal a várost elhagyja,
kezében zászló: a passió rajta.

A török felé vette útját,
útján szólt, mi isteni ige,
emberhad gyűlt hamar köribe,
hogy lelkük megtisztítsák.

Arannyal, ezüsttel halmozták,
ő meg azt egyenlőn adja át,
minden útitársának.

S igaz, amit nektek szólok,
egész Róma érte imádkozott:
szükségét látták annak.

Az ilyen barátból igen kevés van,
imádkozunk is érte az Úrban,

Jézus Krisztus segítsen annak.
Erről fogok szólni nektek,
ez lesz tárgya az új éneknek,
figyeljenek s hallgassanak.

IV.

Ment a barát Magyarországra,
és sokan mentek őutána,
hogy Urunkért harcoljanak.

Egy egyetemre vette útját,
mi ott a legjobb, mondhatnánk,
annak neve Gottauntas.

Az egyetemről tartott véle,
huszonhatezer, hogy segítse,
mind hívei ők az Úrnak.

Többségük pap, úgy tudom,
de bizonyították aznapon,
hogy lovagjai Krisztusnak.

Nagy odaadással a barát,
vitte Krisztus lobogóját,
szét az emberek közé.

Nagy örömet kelt látványa,
 minden ország sok fiába',
 akik szegődtek mellé.
 Így vonult hát Capistranus,
 s lelt rá nemes Obedianus,³³
 a legfőbbik hadvezér.
 Katonája húszezer vagy annál több,
 de lovag csak kettő közöttök,
 őket így nevezik nevén:

Richard Morpath, angol lovag,
 és Sir John Black, akit úgy tartanak,
 hogy török volt korábban,
 de most mégis nemes lovag,
 és mily derék – halld szavamat:
 rendítetlen hitt Krisztusban.
 [...]

[...]
 Sok török szomorú gyászban:
 életétől meg nem válna.
 Lemetszette ő fejüket nyomban,
 késlekedéssel nem volt e dologban,
 ahol éri, őket ott vágja.
 Húszezer férfi gyűlött egybe,
 Obedianus és a szerzetes serege,
 csillog sisakja, láncruhája.
 Grecuswissinburghba vették útjukat,
 amit a Török hadai ostromoltak,
 sok a lovagjai száma.
 Tizenegy hete tart már az ostrom,
 keresztény szívekben nagy félsz vagyon:
 semmik voltak a számára.
 Ötszáz ágyúval lövette egyszerre,
 hullott tőle a falak köve,
 ég vad tüzek ragyogása.

33 Hunyadi János.

Hallani is csodaszám megy:
ágyúk zaja, döngő fergeteg,
 rettentő egy hangjáték,
sok mérföldre elhallat.
Obedianus ennek alatt
 a városba most belép,
igazat szólok - hat órakor,
délután, Magdolna-napkor,
 nem előbb-később, akkor épp.
És Capistranus, jó János barát,
minden embere előtt járt,
 csatába vezet ekképp:

Tiszta hangon imígy kiált:
„Harcba, vacsoránk terítve vár
 a magasságos Mennyekben!
Én viszem zászlónkat ma,
közben Jézushoz imádkozva,
 tartson minket erőben!”
Akkor ott ők összecsaptak,
ötezret a halál elragad,
 fényes sisak-, vasvértben.

Obedianus, nemes ember,
Sátán-szolgát bőszen szedel,
 Krisztus akaratából fejük bezúzza.
Akit szablyával lecsapott:
nincs oly szolga – igazat mondok -
 aki azt meggyógyítsa.
Ami törökkel szembeszállt,
arra olyan csapást vált:
 kereszténynek nem lesz gondja.
Vitéz ő, derék lovag,
Istenért irt pogányokat,
 az Urat kérem, vigyázza óvva.

Black John és Morpath
sok török végzete lett,
 - szólok én színigazat –

nem volt olyan jó vértzet,
 mi csapásukat kivédhetett,
 sem sisak, sem páncélzat.
 Sújtottak az ellenségre:
 harci kedvük lett megtörve,
 az ő vitézségük miatt.
 Sok törököt legyilkolnak,
 csapják, amíg agyuk hasad:
 bennük emberük akadt.

A seregben sok ezer a pap,
 töröknek misét úgy tartanak,
 amilyet soha sem még:
 felzengett a Te Deum ajkukról,
 közben a pogány hull a karjuktól,
 félretették ők a békét.
 Ott voltak a legjobb tanítómesterek,
 kik sokat a földre vetettek,
 ha nem tanulta meg a leckét.
 A keresztények így harcoltak,
 este öt órájától Magdolna-napnak,
 tízíg másnap reggelén.

Akkor jött új török sereg,
 rajta tiszta páncél, vértzet:
 százezernél is többen.
 Tevéken ülve nyargalnak,
 a mieinkre halált hoznak,
 elhulltak akkor kétezeren.
 Seregünk nem bírta tovább,
 várnak vették hát az irányt,
 testük véres, kék sebesen.
 Húszezer emberünk vágta le,
 a városhíd végébe érve
 a törökök kíméletlen.

Tevék vágattak rajtuk át,
 eltíporva embert és lovát,
 kinn maradni nem mert senki.

Obedianust sebek borítják,
mire otthagyja csata forgatagát.

A török örvend nagyon neki,
Black John és Morpath vitéz
testét borítja ezer sebzés:

mind széles és vér színezi.
Gyalog rohantak a városba,
jobb menedéket nem találva,
hisz levágták már lovaik.

A török a városba követte őket,
ki elé került, gyilkolva mindet:
mily gyászos látni olyant!
Bevonult a városba a nagy Török,
hol asszonyt, gyereket, férfit ölt,
sűrűn irtva az ártatlant.
Capistranus János barát mindezt látta,
Jézus keresztjét markába zárta,
s magas toronyba felrohant;
a szent jelvényt magával vitte,
s a toronycúcsra azt kitűzte,
majd siralmasan így rikkant:

„Úristen a magas Mennyben,
régi hatalmad hová leend,
mellyel néped segítetted?
Ó Jézus Krisztus, én Uram,
népednek rád szüksége van,
miért feledtél el minket?
Nézd, hogy halnak híveid,
Uram, emeld rájuk szemeid,
s biztonságba vidd őket!
Uram, küldd le égi hatalmadat,
ördöggel, hogy szembe szálljanak,
így segéld a híveket!

Emlékezz: törvényed mint prédikáltam,
hóban, fagyban mezítláb mint jártam,
hogyan téged engeszteljelek!

Böjtöltem és betegséget nyögtem,
 de végig hozzád könyörögtem,
 tőlem zsoltáraid zengtek.
 Érted tett szolgálatoméért,
 nem kell jutalom egyéb:
 csak ma segíts a híveknek,
 mert ha elvesznek miattad,
 bánatomban megtagadlak,
 örökre elhagyom hitedet!

Szűz Mária, most segíts meg,
 vagy nem dicsérek én már téged,
 soha többé életemben;
 ahogy imát sem nem mondok,
 ha gyötrelmünk nézni bírod,
 öt örömöd nem zengem.
 Szégyen volna szüzességedre,
 ha ez a sok ember ma elesne:
 csillapodjon a gyötrelmem!
 Asszonyom, irgalmazz nekünk,
 szent fiadhoz imádkozz értünk,
 ki szűz vagy és anya egyben!

Uram, mindenható Atyám emlékezz,
 Károly királynak mily csodát küldesz,
 ki viaskodott miattad!
 Imájára és áhíthatára cserébe
 a Nap három nap állt egy helybe',
 úgy ragyogott sugarat.
 Fáraót a tengerbe ölted,
 s kiket szabadnak engedted,
 mutattál nekik jó utat.
 Segíts, Uram, a mai napon,
 ki fenséges vagy mindenkoron,
 és bírsz minden hatalmat!"

A barát Istenhez ezt kiáltotta,
 hangját mindenki meghallotta,
 egy széles mérföldön át.

Húszezer halott – így történt –
egy szempillantás telt csak épp,
hirtelen feltámadva állt.
Mindjük fegyvert ragadt kézbe,
vagdalkozni azzal kezdve
ellenséget gyorsan levág.
A jó Obedianus, a nemes,
Jézusért vívni nem volt rest,
nevét mindenki áldva kiált.

Kiűzte a törököt a városból,
pogányt a keresztény mészárol,
s zavarja a nyílt mezőre.
Húszezer állt ott szembe velük,
s ha ezek nem állnak elébük,
lett volna mindnek vége.
Voltak azok oly harciasak,
amennyire utálják a napsugarat
- szavam igazság vivője.

V.

Új csata kezdődött mostan,
éneklek is nektek nyomban,
harcos, erős vitézekről;
haraggal egymásnak esve,
harcmező, mint tűzben égne;
könnyen, mint villám az égből,
mind egymásnak ugranak,
sisakon agyat loccsantanak:
a pogány hullik ezektől.
A mezőt vér áztatja el,
harcosé, ki pajzsot emel:
látni is megdöbbentő.

Lecsaptak a nyakra,
a fejre és sisakra,
gazdag lovagokat öltek.

Számos török – nem hazudok –
felbukott akkor és ott,
 azóta ők fel nem keltek.
Oly vadul vágtak sisakjukra,
hogy kevés az, ki ott maradna,
 s megüli még a nyerget.
Nem volt ott olyan török,
Aki bajjal nem küszködött,
 elmondom ezt tinektek.

Sok lovat ott ledöftek,
dromedárok kivéreztek.
 És bár majdnem összeestek,
a keresztények tovább vívtak,
vérontástól nem riadtak,
 ha Jézusért küzdhettek.
Éles kardokkal lecsaptak,
lemetszve fejeket, sisakokat,
 mik golyóként gördültek.
Úgy sorjázták csapásaik,
a török állni nem bírt nekik,
 légyenek bár vitézek.

Mindenütt egymásnak estek,
hegyes lándzsát sokat törtek,
 majd elő kést rántottak.
[...]
[...]
Lovak a csatából elrohantak,
magukkal ragadva lovasokat
[...]
 mind egyetlen pillanat.
A nyergükben sok pogány,
saját társán vágtat át,
 és a földre tiporja azt.

Vér patakszik mellükön,
[...]

Fordította: Kiss Sándor