

The first Hungarian monograph of Saint Kinga

Magyar, Zoltán: *Árpád-házi Szent Kinga. Történelem, kultusz, kultúrtörténet* [Saint Kinga of the House of Árpád. History, cult, cultural history]. Kairosz Kiadó, Budapest, 2022. 208. pp. ISBN 978 963 514 152 4

Éva Teiszler

Institute of Hungarian Research, Budapest

In 2024 the Hungarian Catholic Church will celebrate the 800th anniversary of the birth of Saint Kinga of the House of Árpád and the 25th anniversary of her canonization. No scientific monograph has yet been published by a Hungarian author about the once-living Hungarian princess, only a few studies.¹ Zoltán Magyar's book, published in 2022, fills this gap.

The renowned folklorist has been researching the traces of saints of the House of Árpád in folk tradition and in cultural history for a long time. In addition to his comprehensive works and numerous partial studies on this topic more books² were published on Szent

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- 1 Some examples: Hála, József: Boldog Kinga és Szent Miklós tisztelete a bányászok körében [The veneration of Beata Kinga and Saint Nicholas among miners]. In Küllös, Imola ed.: *Vallási néprajz* 10. (1999) 139–152.; Czaja, Mariusz – Jaksa, Helga – Vass, Erika eds.: *Árpád-házi Kinga és Hedvig emléke egy lengyel faluban* [The memory of Kinga and Hedvig from the House of Árpád in a Polish village]. *Honismeret* 28. (2000) no. 5. 79–83.; Dankó, Imre: A máramarosi Kunigunda-monda kérdései [The questions of the Kunigunda-fable from Máramaros]. In Csoma, Zsigmond – Gráfik, Imre (eds.): *Kapcsolatok és konfliktusok Közép-Európa vidéki életében*. Vas Megye Önkormányzata, Szombathely, 1997. 79–86.; Szabados, György: Megszentelt kötelékek. Árpádok és Piastok. A lengyel-magyar kapcsolatok élő századai [Sacred bonds. The Árpáds and the Piasts. Living centuries of Polish-Hungarian relations]. *Rubicon* 32. (2021) no. 7. 4–11.
 - 2 Magyar, Zoltán: *Az Árpád-ház szentjei* [The Saints of the House of Árpád]. Kairosz, Budapest, 2005.; Magyar, Zoltán: *Az Árpád-kori szentek legendái* [Legends of the saints of the Árpád era]. Kairosz, Budapest, 2010.; Magyar, Zoltán: *Hungarian Royal Saints. The Saints of the Arpadian Dynasty*. Schäfer, Herne, 2012.

István (St Stephen),³ Szent Imre (St Emericus),⁴ Szent László (St Ladislaus)⁵ and Szent Erzsébet (St Elisabeth of Hungary).⁶

Generally speaking, Zoltán Magyar's books were preceded by personal folklore collection trips and a thorough collection of specialist literature, and not only in his narrow field of expertise. In each case, he tries to place the saint of the Árpád House he studies within the historical and ideological framework of their own time and to process the ethnographic and cultural history collections recorded by himself and others as fully as possible. The type index and motif index,⁷ which also elaborates the ecclesiastical legend of the given saint, are always an essential part of the author's works. In his opinion, the study of the legendary circle of a historical person surrounded by religious veneration can only be complete if it includes, in addition to the recent oral tradition, narratives recorded in church history sources.⁸

The foreword of the Saint Kinga monograph, published in 2022, summarizes the aim and content of the work as follows: „The aim of this volume is to summarize the surviving traditions, the written and oral memory of St. Kinga of the House of Árpád more completely

- 3 Some examples from recent years: Magyar, Zoltán: Szent István-hagyományok Veszprém vidékén [Saint Stephen traditions in the region of Veszprém]. *Veszprémi Szemle* 24. (2022) no. 2. 54–65.; Magyar, Zoltán: Bihari Szent László-hagyományok [Saint László traditions in Bihar]. In Angi, János – Lakner, Lajos – Szabó, Anna Viola (eds.): *A Debreceni Déri Múzeum Évkönyve*, (2022) 72–77.; Magyar, Zoltán: Szent László Torda-vidéki hagyományköre [The Legends of Saint László in Turda Area]. *Erdélyi Múzeum* 84. (2022) no. 2. 26–49.; Magyar, Zoltán: A kerlési csata és a lokális emlékezet. Szent László-hagyományok Észak-Erdélyben [The battle of Kerlés and the local memory. Saint László traditions in Northern Transylvania]. In Mayer Gyula – Slíz Mariann eds: *Regum gemma, Ladislai. Tanulmányok Szent László királyról*. Typotex, Budapest, 2022. 139–156.
- 4 Magyar, Zoltán: *Szent István a magyar kultúrtörténetben* [Saint Stephen in the Hungarian cultural history]. Helikon, Budapest, 1996.; Akadémiai, Budapest, 2023². <https://doi.org/10.1556/9789634549161>; Magyar, Zoltán: *Szent István a magyar néphagyományban* [Saint Stephen in the Hungarian folk tradition]. Osiris, Budapest, 2000.
- 5 Magyar, Zoltán: *A lilomos herceg. Szent Imre a magyar kultúrtörténetben* [The prince with lily. Saint Imre in the Hungarian cultural history]. Európa, Budapest, 2000; Kairosz, Budapest, 2008².
- 6 Magyar, Zoltán: „Keresztény lovagoknak oszlopa”. *Szent László a magyar kultúrtörténetben* [„Column of Christian knights”. Saint László in the Hungarian cultural history]. Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, Budapest, 1996.; Magyar, Zoltán: *Szent László a magyar néphagyományban* [Saint László in the Hungarian folk tradition]. Osiris, Budapest, 1998.
- 7 Magyar, Zoltán: *Árpád-házi Szent Erzsébet. Történelem, kultusz, kultúrtörténet* [Saint Elisabeth of the House of Árpád. History, cult, cultural history]. Kairosz, Budapest, 2007.
- 8 The type and motif index are important tools for the research on wandering motifs and topos in the cultures of many peoples. Its aim is to show the connection between the cultures of individual peoples on the one hand, and the specific memory and unique characteristics that appear in the cultures of different peoples on the other hand. A significant part of Zoltán Magyar's work can be linked to this international research trend that began in the early 1900s. Some examples of Zoltán Magyar's extensive work on this subject: Magyar, Zoltán: A Toldi-mondakör típusmutatója [The type index of the Toldi-legends]. In Hoppál Mihály – Magyar Zoltán (eds.): *Toldi*. EFI – Magyar Napló – Fokusz Egyesület, Budapest, 2021. 215–244.; Magyar, Zoltán: *Erdélyi magyar hiedelemmonda-katalógus. Típus- és motívumindex* [Catalogue of Transylvanian Hungarian belief legends. Type and motif index] I–IV. Kairosz, Budapest, 2021; Magyar, Zoltán: *Erdély védőszentje. A Szent Lászlóról szóló mondák típus- és motívumindexe* [Patron saint of Transylvania. Type and motif index of legends about St. László]. Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, Kolozsvár, 2021.

than ever before from a Hungarian perspective, in the Hungarian language. The pages of this volume, divided into separate chapters, present the age of St. Kinga, the diverse and eventful decades of the 13th century both from a historical and ideological point of view, [...] in György Balanyi's lyrical interpretation, Kinga's life path and historical figure, and for the first time in Hungarian from humanistic point of view: Jan Długosz' biography of St. Kinga. Another chapter of the book reviews Kinga's ecclesiastical legend in the form of an index (type index and motif index) giving its content and typological essence. The volume also includes a discussion of the medieval cult and iconography of the princess and, finally, her rich folk tradition, which in some elements can also be linked to medieval Hungarian traditions."⁹

In the first chapter (Holy-life princesses from the House of Árpád),¹⁰ we get a comprehensive picture of the Christian traditions of the Hungarian ruling dynasty, how the ideal image of women changed in the beginning of the 13th century and the role played by Saint Clare in this, as well as about the lives, activities and influence of the 13th-century princesses of the Árpád House, especially St. Elizabeth of Hungary and her nieces, the daughters of king Béla IV.

The volume then republishes in its entirety the comprehensive study of Saint Kinga published in 1941 by György Balanyi (1886–1963), a Piarist monk, historian, church historian, high school teacher and professor (György Balanyi: Historical Figure of St. Kinga).¹¹ The author's aim in republishing Balanyi's writing was to give an insight into the historical knowledge of the time and the veneration of St. Kinga in Hungary at the beginning of the 20th century.

Jumping back in time a little, the following pages contain excerpts of Kinga's 17th-century Polish legend translated into Hungarian by Dóra Kovács (Biography of Saint Kunigunda, Clarissa nun and Polish princess).¹² This is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable parts of the publication, as this version of the legends has been the best-known among Poles since its publication (1617), but it has never been published in Hungarian or any other language. This version of the Kinga legend written by Preczław Mojecki¹³ in the early 17th century is based on, but not identical to, the late 15th century Latin biography of Kinga in Latin by the renowned Polish humanist Jan Długosz (1415–1480).¹⁴ Historical and hagiographical literature has paid little attention to the differences between the two legends, focusing mainly on Kinga's earliest biography, written in the 14th century.¹⁵

9 Magyar 2022, 163.

10 Magyar 2022, 9.

11 Magyar 2022, 11–25. Original title and publication of the study: Balanyi, György: *Boldog Kinga*. In Lippay, Lajos ed.: *Hősök és szentek. Magyar szentek*. Révai, Budapest, 1941. 279–310.

12 Magyar 2022, 26–57.

13 Magyar 2022, 58–115.

14 *Zywot S. Kunegundy Zakonu świętey Klary Xiężney Polskiey*, za powodem W. X. Iana Foxa arcydiakona krak. et wizytatem tegoż Zakonu, z łańskiego na polskie przez X. Przeclawa Moieckiego, dziekana kamienieckiego przetłumaczony. Kraków, 1617.

15 Critical edition: Johannes Długosz: *Vita Beatae Kunegundis*. In Alexander Przeździecki ed.: *Johannis Długossii seu Longini canonici Cracoviensis Opera omnia*. Tomus 1. Kluczycki, Cracovia, 1887. 183–336.

The author himself previously dealt with the 14th-century legend of Kinga and the associated lists of miracles, compiling their type index and motif index¹⁶, which he expanded with the data of the legend by Mojecki in this monograph¹⁷. The monograph accurately indicates the similarities and differences between the 14th and 17th century versions¹⁸, while one of its important findings is that the legend and cult of Kinga is in many respects related to that of St László¹⁹.

Among the novelties of the publication, we must definitely mention the publication of folkloristic researches in the Hungarian-speaking area. The chapter entitled Veneration of St. Kinga²⁰ presents the area in south-eastern Poland where the cult of Kinga has been the strongest since the Middle Ages. In describing the individual locations, the book not only introduces the elements of the local cult, but also its historical background. Using the results of the latest historical research, the author highlights the reality behind the creation of the so-called ring legend preserved in various versions, as well as the written and oral tradition associated with the princess, her role in repopulating in the depopulated Polish areas after the Tatar invasion, showing how Kinga became the patron saint of the Poles and salt miners, how she was portrayed and respected in Poland, in the area of the former Szepesség, Máramaros, and today's Hungary until the present day.

The volume concludes with a thorough compilation of the narrative tradition linked to the figure of Kinga, which can be found in the legends of Kinga and in folklore (The figure of St. Kinga in folk tradition).²¹ Here, the author describes, among other things, the oral tradition related to Kinga collected during his own fieldwork, as well as analyses in detail the veneration of St László and St Imre in Poland, which he also compares with elements of the Kinga tradition. The volume is richly illustrated in black and white and colour, presenting the veneration of Kinga.

16 Critical edition: Vita et Miracula sanctae Kyngae ducissae Cracoviensis. In Wojciech Kętrzyński ed.: *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*. Tomus 4. Gubrynowicz i Schmidt, Lwów, 1884. 662–731.

17 Magyar, Zoltán: *Az Árpád-kori szentek legendái* [Legends of the saints of the Árpád era]. Kairosz, Budapest, 2010. 67–73.

18 Magyar 2022. 116–146.

19 Ilona Dobos also dealt with the issue earlier. See Dobos, Ilona: *Szent László-mondák Dél-Lengyelországban* [Legends of St. László in Southern Poland]. *Új Tükör* 19. (1982) no. 36. 18–19.; Dobos, Ilona: *Paraszti szájhagyomány, városi szóbeliség* [Peasant oral tradition, urban orality]. Gondolat, Budapest, 1986.

20 Magyar 2022. 147–162.

21 Magyar 2022. 163–200.