



## The Captivity of Peter Perény, István Majlád and Bálint Török Príni Péternek, Majlát Istvánnak és Terek Bálintnak fogságokról

### Text Information

Author | Sebastian Tinódi

Language | Hungarian

Period | 16th Century

Genre | Event poetry

Source | Kolozsvár, Tinódi Sebestyén összes költeménye

Collection | Cross-Cultural Encounters in the Premodern World; Making History: Chronicles, Legends and Anecdotes

URL | [sourcebook.stanford.edu/text/tinodi\\_captivity\\_peter\\_pereny/](http://sourcebook.stanford.edu/text/tinodi_captivity_peter_pereny/)

Transcription, translation and introduction by Maria Dobozy.

### Introduction to the Text

This song, composed on April 24, 1542, was included in *Cronica*, Sebastian Tinódi's printed song collection of 1554. The songs in *Cronica* were accompanied by melodies and intended for performance before varied audiences as well as for private reading. The general topic of the collection is the defensive struggle of Hungarians against the Ottoman armies, and its songs can be described as event poetry (a genre which typically combines a narrative account of contemporary, momentous events with implicit or explicit political-cultural commentary). Tinódi significantly advanced the genre of event poetry in Hungarian literature and became a model for those who followed.

In contrast to "The Loss of Buda and Captivity of Bálint Török" (also presented in the *Global Medieval Sourcebook*), this song exhibits fewer oral compositional elements and illustrates how Tinódi eventually developed a more definitive literate style with fewer formulae and repetitions. Nevertheless, for greater effect in performance, he deftly employs direct speech to admonish his audience and also to console his captive lord, Bálint Török.

In this song, Tinódi laments the entrapment of three Hungarian magnates by the Sublime Porte (the Ottoman government). Each magnate's arrest is described along with the resulting personal misfortune for the family, even though details are sparingly given. The fate of these nobles then forms the basis for a comparison of Ottoman and Hungarian beliefs and actions. Primary themes are the guile of the Ottomans on the one hand, and on the other, the factiousness, gullibility, imprudence and lack of Christian morality of the Hungarians. The opening lament (stanzas 1-2) contrasts the dire situation for the Hungarians with Ottoman glee. As the Sublime Porte gains from Hungarian foolhardiness, several stanzas admonish Hungarian lords severely in a direct address (stanzas 3-7, 32-34). The implication is that the Ottomans are united under one sovereign and one belief system, whereas the Hungarians are constantly divided. Thus the song blames the Hungarians themselves for their country's calamities.

### Introduction to the Source

*Cronica*, Sebastian Tinódi's songbook of 1544, contains this song and twenty-one others together with his own musical compositions. It was printed in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca, Romania). A few original copies are extant as facsimile editions. The source for this translation is the standardized transcription accessible on the Hungarian Electronic Library website, Tinódi Sebestyén összes költeménye: <http://mek.oszk.hu/01100/01100/index.phtml>.

### About this Edition

The goal has been to render the Hungarian in clear and smooth English prose. The original is composed of 50 monorhyming quatrains of morphemic rhymes using the popular 12 syllable line. This translation conforms to the quatrain structure while avoiding rhyme and meter. Each stanza expresses a complete thought or idea. This parallel stanza format facilitates comparison of translation to original. Punctuation follows the needs of modern English. Sometimes sentences have been split to accommodate English syntax and others have been connected. Names of well known, high-ranking persons have been anglicized; others have been modernized. All Hungarian names are given surname second. Places and persons named are capitalized and identified in the notes. Specific historical details mentioned are also explained in footnotes. Sections containing direct address are marked by syntax as the singer's voice, and seldom lend themselves to setting off with quotation marks. Quotation marks are used only to indicate the speech of a character within the text.



### Further Reading

Czigány, Lóránt. *Oxford History of Hungarian Literature from the Earliest Times to the Mid-1970s*. Oxford, Clarendon, 1984. pp. 40–43. <http://mek.niif.hu/02000/02042/html/index.html>

- Short, reliable introduction to Tinódi. Available electronically.

Dobozy, Maria. "Two Cultural Perspectives on the Battle of Lippa, Transylvania, 1551." *Fifteenth Century Studies*. (2013) Vol. 38, pp. 21–39.

- Discusses the influence of German event poetry on Tinódi and the historical accuracy of the two poems.

– "Sebestyén Tinódi Lantos." *Christian-Muslim Relations 1500 - 1900*. Ed. David Thomas. Brill, 2015. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2451-9537\\_cmrii\\_COM\\_26618](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2451-9537_cmrii_COM_26618)

Seláf, Levente. "Between Lyric and Epic: The Great Turkish War in German, Italian and Hungarian Ereignisliedern," *Controversial Poetry, 1400–1635*. Ed. Judith Keßler, Ursula Kundert, Johan Oosterman. Brill, 2020. pp. 61–86.

- Analyses genre and function of Italian, German, and Hungarian poetry that deals with religious, political and military conflicts.



## The Captivity of Peter Perény, István Majlád and Bálint Török Príni Péternek, Majlát Istvánnak és Terek Bálintnak fogságokról

Sírva vesziköl mast szegín Magyarország,  
Mert tőle távozik hangosság, vigaság,  
Belőle kikele sok fénös gazdagság,  
És fogságban esék egynéhány uraság.

Poor Hungary now sounds the hue and cry  
Because its merriment is silenced,  
Much splendid wealth departs,  
And many a lord falls into captivity.

Ezön örvend, vigad az terek császárság,  
Hogy magyar urakban vagyon oly bolondság,  
Hiszik, hogy őbenne vagyon oly jámborság,  
Hogy fogadásában nem volna ravasság.

5 The Turkish Sultan is gleeful and cheered about this.  
The Hungarian lords are deluded enough  
To believe that he is so humble  
That his oaths are without cunning.

Bolondság tőletök fejenként magyarok,  
Terek álnok hitit meg nem gondoljátok,  
Maga csak tőlem es sokszor hallottátok,  
Sok fejedelmeket mind csaltak, tudgyátok.

Hungarians, this is foolish of every one of you.  
10 You don't even reflect on the perfidious beliefs of the Turks  
Although you have heard it often from me as well.  
They have duped many a lord; mark my word.

Az tereknek hiti erőssen aszt tartja,  
Ha hittet, szép szóval kavort megcsalhattya,  
Ajándokkal, vagy lopva elragadhattya,  
Isten azért néki mennyországot adgya.

The faith of the Turks strongly asserts that if,  
With promises, sweet words they deceive a non-believer  
15 And attract him with gifts or capture him,  
God will give them heaven in return.

Sőt ugyan nagy parancsolat ez űkösznök,  
Miként az szeretet parancsolat néknek,  
Ha az szeretetöt ti jól tisztölnek,  
Az terek hitinek bizon nem hinnéknek.

Indeed, it is quite an important commandment to them  
Whereas to you, the commandment is love.  
If you truly honored love,  
20 Then surely you would not believe the Porte's promises.

Tuggyátok, magyarok, hírsök valátok,  
Míg nagy szeretettel egymást hallgatátok,  
De mihelt kösztetök ti meghasonlátok,  
Ottan országtokban, ím, mint pusztulátok.

Hungarians, know that you were famous  
As long as you listened to each other with great love.  
Yet soon your divisiveness split you into factions.  
So there you see how in your own country you perished.

Ím az terek császár mindezön öröle,  
Álnok hálója ottan elteröle,  
Jelös főhalakat véle megkeröle,  
Kikkel gazdagságot, sok szépségöt lele.

25 The Turkish Sultan is glad for this habit  
When he casts his deceiving net.  
He scoops up the high-ranking fish  
From whom he collects great, resplendent wealth.



Álnok hálójában egyszer el-béejté  
Az jó Príni Pétört mikort elviteté,  
Hitit, fogadását császár elfelejté,  
Az nemes úrfiat nagy fogságban veté.

Nagy somma kincsével magát ő megváltá,  
De semmi lőn néki kincse oda-volta,  
Csak fiátúl ne lészön vala megváltá,  
Kit, nem lőn mit tenni, császárnak hozata.

Vala nagy bánatja szép asszon társának,  
Fiát, hogy megérté, vinnék az császárnak,  
Erő szakaszkodék kezének, lábának,  
Földhöz öté magát, ott sokan sírának.

Sokat szép fiának ő nem szólhat vala,  
Mert nagy keserőség szívét folta vala,  
Ölelgeti, sírva apolgatja vala,  
Egy hintószekérben úgy öltette vala.

Lőn Príni Pétörnek így szabadulása,  
És az ő fiának odamaradása,  
Az magyar uraknak lőn példaadása,  
Néki mind éltiglen nagy fohászkodása.

Ím minap Erdélyben császár béereszté  
Kucsig Bali béköt, kinek aszt jelönté,  
Hogy az Majlát Istvánt ő el-kihitetné,  
Fogaras várából néki fogva vinné.

Tőn égetést, rablást Bali bék Erdélyben,  
Majlátnak izene házában helyében,  
Hitöt, fogadást tőn az császár képében,  
Hogy királlyá teszi Erdélynek földében.

Édös beszédökkel őt hívattya vala,  
De az Majlát néki ott nem hihet vala.  
Az moldvai vajda: Pétör vajda vala,  
Ki az Bali békkal akkoron ott vala.

At one point he captures in his treacherous net  
30 The stalwart Peter Perényi whom he has taken away<sup>1</sup>.  
The sultan's promises and oaths are now forgotten  
And the noble lord is thrown into prison<sup>2</sup>.

Perényi would ransom himself with his great fortune  
But this wealth now avails him little.  
35 He regains freedom only by giving his son in exchange.  
There was no choice but to have him sent to the Porte.

His wife is overcome with deep sorrow.  
When she hears her son is to be taken to the sultan,  
Her arms and legs go numb  
40 As she collapses on the ground. Many a lamentation begins.

She can barely speak to her dear son  
Because bitter grief makes her heart race.  
Sobbing, she hugs and caresses him  
And places him in a carriage.

45 With this arrangement Peter Perényi is released  
While his son is made captive.  
May this be an example to Hungarians  
And for him [Perényi] a lifelong prayer.

Then one day, the Sultan sent into Transylvania  
50 Kucsuk Bali Beg, whom he informed<sup>3</sup>  
That he should lay a trap for István Majlád<sup>4</sup>  
And take him captive at his castle at Fogaras.

Bali Beg raids and burns in Transylvania  
Sends to Majlád at his residence  
55 Gives his oath and promise in the Sultan's name  
That he will make Majlád king in Transylvania.

With sweet words Bali Beg requests that he come talk  
But Majlád does not trust him.  
Peter, the voivode of Moldova<sup>5</sup>  
60 Is together with Bali Beg at the time.



Rejá gondolának, nem sokat szólának,  
Három szegín bojért előhozátának,  
Aranyas ruhákat reájok adának,  
Szép patyolatokat fejökben rakának.

They think about Majlád, but say little.  
They engage three poor boyars<sup>6</sup>,  
Dress them in gold-trimmed clothing  
Set rich-looking turbans on their heads.

Az Majlátnak hamar ők ím eszt izenék:  
Hogyha ő nem hiszön az császár hitinek,  
Ím, három fővajdát küldünk kegyelmének,  
Csak adgya ő magát egynéhán beszédnek.

65 To Majlád they soon send the message,  
If he does not believe in the Sultan's promise,  
Then three ranking voivodes will be sent to his lordship<sup>7</sup>,  
If he would simply consent to a meeting.

Termetök jó vala, ruhájok szép, fénös,  
70Ebből Majlát nem lőn hozzájuk kétségös,  
Ottan el-kiméne, hogy légyön beszédös,  
Kinek odamente lőn nagy kellemetös.

The three are well built, their clothes are sumptuous.  
70 For this reason Majlád is not suspicious.  
He then goes out to speak with them and  
Once he is outside, he encounters a cruel surprise<sup>8</sup>.

Vivék fogva ötet az terek császárnak,  
Három szegín bojért hagyák Majlátnénak,  
Örök siralom lőn az tisztös asszonnak,  
És nagy emléközet egynéhán országnak.

They take him captive to the Turkish Sultan.  
His wife is left with the three unfortunate boyars.  
75 Endless wailing is the fate of this honorable woman  
And a serious warning for many a country.

Sőt mégis hallyátok császár hamis voltát,  
Hogy jobban tudgyátok ónni magatokat,  
Hogy hálóját veté császár Buda alatt,  
Ott benne fogata jó jelös halakat.

Now hear even more about the Sultan's duplicitous moves  
So that you can better protect yourselves.  
Hear how the sultan cast his net over Buda  
80 With which he caught superior fish.

Drága halat egyet közzülük választá,  
Kinek sérínsége többit feljülmúlta,  
Aszt császár magának bárkájában tartá,  
Az alábbvalókat ő mind elszalasztá.

From among them he selected the choicest one  
Whose diligence stands above the others.  
The Sultan kept him for himself in his boat and  
The lesser ones he tossed back.

Ez lőn Terek Bálint, ki jó vitéz vala,  
Kinek terek császár sok hitöt ad vala,  
Az basák, szancsákok hitöt adtak vala,  
Szép ajándékokval őt elcsalták vala.

85 This catch is Bálint Török, the excellent warrior<sup>9</sup>  
To whom the Turkish Sultan made many promises  
And pashas, sanjaks gave vows, then  
Together with precious gifts they lured him away.

Terek Bálint, kiknek oly igen hitt vala,  
Hívségét hercegnek úgy mutattya vala,  
Mindeneknél feljebb némöttel vív vala,  
Teste szakadását ő nem szánja vala.

Bálint Török who has such true devotion  
90 And demonstrated his loyalty to the Crown Prince<sup>10</sup>  
Above all, as he battled against the Germans  
Paying no heed to his own life<sup>11</sup>.



Intése nem teccék az Príni Pétörnek,  
Ki megmondta vala ez nemes vitéznek  
Minden csalárdságát az császár hitinek,  
De ő bátorsággal álla vitésségnek.

Nagy sokan terekek azon csudálának,  
Hogy bátrabb vitézt ők soha nem láttanak,  
De aszt őfelőle mondák bolondságnak,  
Hogy il igön elhitt török szép szavának.

Óh, ez nemes vitéz mely igen csalaték,  
Hiti az császárnak mind elfeletteték,  
Mert ő megfogaték és aláviteték,  
Minden szép javitúl ő megfosztattaték.

Duna mellett mongyák Nándorfejérvárba  
Csak harmadmagával tartják nagy fogságba,  
Mast es mondgyák, vagyon nagy bátorságába,  
Mit tőle kívánnak, aszt nem fogattába.

Hallottam példába régen, hogy mondották,  
Az jó acélt soha úgy nem paskolhatták,  
Tiszta vassá ötet hogy ellágyíthassák,  
Hogy soha acélnak ötet ne mondhassák.

Fohászkodik mostan sok gyakor sírásval  
Asszony-feleségöd az két szép fiadval,  
Mert ők élnek mostan az nagy árvaságval,  
Nagy sok bosszúságval, gyámoltalanságval.

Örömök soholt nincs te jó szolgálidnak,  
Kik szível szeretnek, gyakran fohászkodnak,  
Egynéhán közzülök tétova búdosnak,  
Ha megszabadulnál mégis sokan várnak.

Csuda mint ohítnak az te jó barátid,  
Még azok is, hogy kik voltak ellenségid,  
Lennének nagy somma kinccsel segítségid,  
Csak kiválthatnának az te szeretőid.

With his commitment Perényi disagreed  
Since he already told this worthy soldier  
95 About all the guile behind the sultan's vows.  
But Török upholds his valiant stance undaunted.

A great many Turks are in awe because  
They have never seen a more courageous fighter.  
And yet they call it folly that he  
100 Really believed the sweet words of the Turks.

Oh, this noble warrior was painfully deceived.  
The Sultan's promises were all forgotten, every one  
When he was arrested and taken away.  
They stripped him of all his privileges and possessions.

105 By the Danube in Belgrade they claim  
He is kept in captivity with two others.  
They also say he is very brave.  
Whatever they want from him, he refuses.

A long time ago I heard a saying that  
110 Good steel cannot be transformed  
Into pliable metal by hammering.  
So they can never say he isn't made of steel.

Your wife with your two noble sons  
Is praying now amidst much weeping  
115 Because they are currently living in dire orphan status  
In vexation, in helplessness.

No joy do your good servants find anywhere,  
Those who love you are in frequent prayer.  
A few are tentatively hiding away  
120 yet should you be freed, many still await you.

Marvel at what your excellent friends desire,  
Even those who were your enemies.  
They would aid you with their great wealth  
If only your loved ones could ransom you.



Jól értitök immár hitit az tereknek, Urak úgy higgyetök hitetlenségöknek, Egymást szeressétök, jobb ti fejetöknek, Úgy léssen romlása gonosz terök népnek.	125 You now understand well the faith of the Turks. My Lords, knowing this, believe their faithlessness and Love each other, the better to save your own heads And the better to ruin the wicked Turks.
Tanácsot sokáig, kérlek, ne tarcsatok, Ha ez két víz között ti lakni akartok, Mert ha csak hallgattok, szömben ti nem vívtok, Félök, hogy sokáig itt nem uralkottok.	Don't hold lengthy councils, I beseech you 130 If you want to live between these two rivers <sup>12</sup> . For if you merely keep quiet and do not attack directly, I fear you won't be in control here for long.
Ezörötszáznegyven és két esztendőben Baronyában ki szörzé Szent György innepébe, Nevét jelöntötte versnek kezdésében, Ez urakról való megemlékösztében.	In the year one thousand, five hundred and forty-two, This song was composed on St. George's Day in Baranya <sup>13</sup> . 135 His name is stated in the acrostics <sup>14</sup> In remembrance of these magnates.

## Critical Notes

- 1 Called Príni in the songs, Peter Perényi (1502-1548) was the wealthy landowner and voivoda (ruler) of Transylvania and also the Guardian of the Hungarian Crown. He assisted at the coronation of King John I Szapolya in 1526, and the coronation of the competing Archduke Ferdinand of Austria in 1527. Perényi primarily supported Ferdinand.
- 2 Perényi was imprisoned twice by the Porte, in 1529, and 1532. The first time he was ransomed. Tinódi refers here to the second when the Porte required that he send his son to Constantinople in exchange. See Ferenc Szakály. *Tinódi Sebesytén Kronika*. Budapest: Europa Kiado, 1984, p. 571.
- 3 Kucsuk is probably Malkoçoğlu Bali Bey (1495–1555) who became the governor of Buda eyalet Feb 1542 - May 1543.
- 4 István Majlád (1502-1550) voivode (ruler) of Transylvania, supporter of the Habsburgs was taken prisoner in 1541 during the Turkish campaign in Transylvania and later died in captivity.
- 5 Peter Rareş, voivode campaigned with Kucsuk Bali Beg at that time, Szakaly, pp. 571-2.
- 6 Romanian privileged landed gentry.
- 7 The term for a Transylvanian ruler.
- 8 Taken prisoner in July, 1541.
- 9 Török (1502–1550) is the protagonist of "The Loss of Buda" song, that tells of his fighting against the Habsburg army and his imprisonment. At the writing of this poem, he was thought to be held in Belgrade.
- 10 This is the rex electus John II Sigismund, the infant son and heir of John I.
- 11 This stanza and the next refer to events in "The Loss of Buda and Captivity of Bálint Török."
- 12 The reference here is to the region between the Danube and Tisza rivers.
- 13 Baranya county, southwestern Hungary.
- 14 The date of the song is April 24, 1542. Tinódi refers here to the acrostic in this poem: *Sebastianus Literatus de Tinodh föcit(E)* (Scholar Sebastian Tinódi made it).