



The Loss of Buda and Captivity of Bálint Török | Buda veszéséről és Terek Bálint fogságáról

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_loss_buda/

Transcription, translation and introduction by Maria Dobozy.

Introduction to the Text

Sebastian Tinódi (1505–1556) was an excellent lutanist, a prolific poet and a popular performer of secular “event songs”. In 1554, he printed his poems with accompanying melodies in the first songbook ever published in Hungarian, *Cronica*. Its success fulfilled his stated goal to celebrate and commemorate the heroic deeds of Hungarians for both his contemporaries and for posterity. His songs are comparable to the narrative songs that memorialized and commented on epoch-making events, and which were common throughout Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries.

“The Loss of Buda and Captivity of Bálint Török” deals with very recent events in Hungarian history, namely the loss of the city of Buda following the death of King Janos I of Hungary. Initially the hero, Török, allies his forces with the Turks to defeat the Habsburg besiegers. Even though Török and his allies are victorious, the Ottoman sultan, Suleiman I, takes control of the city and imprisons Török, sending the queen and the infant king—Janos’s son, Janos II—to Transylvania to set up a Hungarian court as vassals of the Ottoman Empire. Few lines are devoted to recounting the action; instead the hero is repeatedly praised for his loyalty. In this way, the narrative forms the frame for a lament: a lament for the loss of the capitol city, for the loss of the king, and for the poet’s loss of his patron.

Previously, scholars studied Tinódi primarily for what they assumed to be a historically accurate depiction of events. Recognizing the tendentious nature of the genre of event poetry, the emphasis has more recently shifted to assessing his literary impact and the possible influences of other European literatures on his work. In this song, Tinódi imitates oral compositional style, which can be seen in the redundancy, repetition and formulaic phrases—all typical features of oral style in Hungarian. Indeed, his repetitions are often reminiscent of a refrain (some of these repetitious phrases have been omitted from the translation so that the text will not be tedious for the modern reader). Another notable stylistic feature is the direct address to the audience. Tinódi’s compositions were all intended for performance, and he himself sang them to various audiences. Direct address would have helped to enliven his performance and establish a closer rapport with his listeners.

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 mono-rhyming 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.

Dobozy, Maria, "Sebestyén Tinódi Lantos." *Christian-Muslim Relations 1500 - 1900*. Ed. David Thomas. Brill, 2015. 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 Loss of Buda and Captivity of Bálint Török | Buda veszéséről és Terek Bálint fogságáról

Siralom adaték sok rendbéli népnek,
Ki hírével lészön föld kerekiségének,
Mert vége lőn immár mi víg életünknek,
Eszte tévé fogsága kegyös vezérünknek.

Eszteőkben vegyétök ez úrnak fogságát,
Jó Terek Bálintnak tőlünk így elváltát,
Lám, minden értotte jámborul szolgáltatát,
Mindenik urának mindönbén hív voltát.

Benn Erdélyben lőn János király halála,
Ottan ő udvara igen megpusztula,
Urakban egynéhány mert ott meghasonla,
Kik miatt ez ország ím mind elpusztula.

Ágyúkkal némötök ottan készülének,
Kincses Buda alá hamar sietének,
Törést és nagy rontást ők nagyot tévének,
Azért az Budában nem férköszhetének.

Serénsége vala jó Terek Bálintnak,
Mert igen hív vala az király fiának,
És övéle öszve az szegín országnak,
Rettenetös vala mind az némöt pártanak.

Terek császár hallá némötnek erejét,
Hamar készítetté az ő nagy erejét,
Basáit, szancsákit, sok rendbéli népét,
Memhet basát hagyá, mint császári képét.

Igen parancsolá császár az basának,
Hitöt, szép szót írta az magyar uraknak,
Jelösben mindennél jó Terek Bálintnak,
Szóval, ajándékval magad ajáld annak.

Lamentation is the fate of many regular soldiers
on hearing the tidings going around the entire globe
because our joy-filled life has come to an end,
caused by the imprisonment of our benevolent commander.

Keep secure in your memory the captivity of this magnate
the forced departure of trustworthy Bálint Török.
Everyone can well see his dependable service
as well as his unfailing loyalty toward each of his lords¹.

When King János died in Transylvania²
His court there turned barren as
several of the magnates split into factions;
because of them this entire country crumbles.

The Germans made ready their canons³
in their hurry to reach treasured Buda.
They succeeded in a great breaching of walls
but they cannot occupy the castle of Buda.⁴

Worthy Bálint Török is much occupied
because he's completely faithful to the king's son⁵
binding himself to the struggling nation
and intimidating the Habsburg party.

The Turkish Sultan learns the strength of the German troops
and quickly assembles his strong forces,
collects his pashas, sanjaks and many regular troops,
appoints Mehmet pasha his commander-in-chief.

The Sultan issues orders to his pasha to send
with sweet words assurances to the Hungarian magnates
and most especially to daring Bálint Török:
"With words and gifts seek his good will."



Az basa indula, Eszékre ha juta,
Jó Terek Bálintnak hamar elírata,
Nagy szép szókkal őtet hozzà hívattatá,
Minden jóval lenne, császár aszt fogatta.

Nagy gongya lőn erre jó Terek Bálintnak,
Eszť ő megjelönté fő-fő szolgáinak,
Oly tanács adaték ez nemes úrfinak,
Hitlevelét kérje az terek császárnak.

Úrfi így felele bánatos beszédben:
„Ha én hitőt kérök az én levelemben,
Kezd kétségök lenni az én hívségőmben,
De csak bízom magam én jó Istenőmben.

Sokak szidnak engőm az hajas tereknek,
Szerető uraim nyilván vagyón néktők,
Terek barátsága úgy nem kell kedvemnek,
Mint olyan hitetlen ragadozó ebeknek.

Lám, mi nem láthatánk oly jó fejedelmet,
Ki megrontja vala gonosz terek népet,
Szabadítja vala ez keresztyén népet,
Értők szerencsére vetőm én fejemet.”

Indula, Tárdánál az táborban juta,
Egy sátort az basa hamar vonyattata,
Ott nagy tisztősséggel abban szállattatá,
Fő-fő terekkel néki udvartata.

Jó Verbőczi Imre nála kedves vala,
Mint egy attyafiát úgy szereti vala,
Mert nagy szíve szerént néki szolgál vala,
Basa sátorában akkort véle vala.

Terekék csudálják szépőn termőtt voltát,
Mert régőn hallották ő jó vitéz voltát,
Azomban elhozák császár ajándokát,
Azután elhozák basa ajándokát.

And the pasha set out, arriving in Eszék⁶
rapidly sending to brave Bálint Török
his summons with many gracious words:
“All will go well; the sultan has promised”

This missive worries Török gravely,
he conveys this to his most trusted retainers.
They advise the nobly born man to
ask for safe conduct from the Turkish sultan.

The nobleman responds with sorrowful words
“If I ask for safe conduct in my letter
then they will begin to question my loyalty.
Thus I place my trust in my own true God.

Many defame me as the hairy Turk.
My loving nobles, it’s clear to you
that I do not favor the friendship of the Turks
because they are infidel dogs.

Now since we can find no good ruler
who could defeat the wicked Turkish army
and liberate our Christian nation,
for them I will wager my head.”

He departs and finds his way to the Turkish camp at Tárda
Immediately the pasha sets up a tent for him
and arranges elegant accommodations.
The high-ranking Turks come to do him honor.

Worthy Imre Werbőczi treats him with affection⁷.
Because he loves him like a brother,
he serves him with great generosity of heart;
they are together in the pasha’s tent.

The Turks admire his well-proportioned beauty
for they have long heard of his famed prowess.
First they bring in the sultan’s gifts
then they bring in the pasha’s gifts:



Öltözött lovakat, aranyas ruhákat,
Avval az császárnak nagy kegyelmes voltát,
És Memhet basának minden barátságát
Úrfi ott ajánlá nagy hív szolgálattját.

Rajta az basa lőn oly nagy vigasságban,
Hamar béhívatá az ő sátorában,
Szép édös beszéddel lőn véle tanácsban,
Hogy császárnak lenne hív szolgálattjában.

Termetét, szömlényét basa megszömlélé,
Udvara népit es széllé megszömlélé,
Szebben termött embört soholt ő nem lele,
Az úrfival basa ott arról beszéle:

Udvara népével Budára sietne,
Szolgálna császárnak, és ott véle lenne,
Mit császár akarna, mindaz-tévő lenne.
Úrfi elbúcsúzik, basátul elméne.

Sok multság nem lőn akkort ő dolgába,
Házátul siet az romlott Budába.
Immár basa vala Kányánál táborba,
Szent Gellérnél vannak némötök barlangba.

Dunát béállották nagy vízi erővel,
Magokat béásták környül nagy vermökvel,
Megrakták álgýukval, vannak bátor szívvel,
Memhet basát várják fejenként víg kedvvel.

El-bé Terek Bálint ha juta Budába,
Az budai sok jó lőn nagy vigasságba,
Az magyar urakval lőn ő oly tanácsba:
Népöket szállíták kinn az hegy aljába.

Tőnek ostromokat az némöt táborra,
Elvegy terekkel együtt mennek harcra,
Kösztek Török Bálint szíve bátorságra,
Csudaképpen siet némötök sáncára.

Well-trained horses, gold-stitched clothing.
The sultan thus displays his generosity
and Mehmet pasha his unreserved friendship.
The young lord offers his loyal service [in return].

The pasha was greatly pleased with him
and soon invited him to his own tent.
He began the council with honey-sweet speech
to commit him to the sultan's loyal service.

The pasha observed his bearing, his demeanor
and reviewed each of his court retainers as well.
Never had he seen a more stalwart man.
The pasha then speaks to the young lord,

Asks him to advance his troops to Buda
with due speed and there help the sultan, stand by his side,
do the sultan's bidding according to his needs.
The young lord takes his leave from the pasha and departs.

He was not pleased with this turn of events
Leaving home he hurried to battered Buda
By now the pasha has encamped by Kánya
and the Germans are ensconced in the caves of St. Gellért Hill.

The Danube they have secured with artillery boats.
They have dug protective trenches around themselves
and filled them with canons, those brave hearted men.
Each one awaits Mehmet pasha with happy anticipation.

Once Bálint Török arrived safely in Buda
The many good warriors fell to rejoicing.
He came to take counsel with the Hungarian magnates:
Their soldiers they transported to the base of the hill.

They [Hungarians] pounded the German camp.
The Turks joined forces with them and entered the fighting.
Foremost among them, Bálint Török of courageous heart,
rushed marvelously swiftly at the German encampment.



Jó Príni Pétörrel ő szömbe lött vala,
Ki nagy szép szavával igen kéri vala,
Hogy az terek mellől hamar elállana,
Mert az császár hiti végre őt megcsalná.

Nagy hitleveleket néki jelent vala,
Császár, basa, szancsák kiket attak vala,
Mely hitlevelekre császárhoz ment vala,
Hittel őt megcsalván, megfogatta vala.

Ott jó Terek Bálint ezzel sem gondola,
Urához, herceghöz igaz szível vala,
Kiért ő halálát ott nem szánja vala,
Attya szerelméjért ím mely nagy kárt valla.

Dráván terek császár immár elkült vala,
Az némöt táborba hamar hír jött vala,
Császár hatalmátúl úgy rettentek vala,
Titkon Duna vizén ők költöznek vala.

Jó Pest városában sokan elkelének,
Bennök az táborba kik ott rekedének,
Terek, magyar miatt mind megöletének,
Terekek úsztatnak, sokan elkelének.

Nagy hamar terek Pestben bémenének,
Nagy gazdagságokat, álgúkat nyerének,
Némötország felé némötök sietnek,
Vízérvél öszve el-felsietének.

Császár Scambriához azomba eljuta,
Nagy szép sátorokat ott ő felvonyata,
Nagy hálákat ada, Allát kiáltata,
Az ő basáihoz víg kedvet mutata.

János királynénak Budában izené,
Hogy az királ fiát őnéki küldené,
Menni főúr vagyon, őt alákésérné,
Mindenik hívségét azzal jelöntené.

He came upon the brave Peter Príni⁸
who with eloquent speech tried to convince him
to leave the Turkish alliance right away
because the sultan will betray him in the end.

Of what value are those letters of safe conduct,
the ones given by sultan, pasha, and sanjak?
Whoever has relied on them and gone before the sultan
has been betrayed, has been imprisoned.

But valiant Bálint Török remains undaunted.
He stands with resolute heart behind his lord John Sigismund
for whom he would not regret giving his own life.
For love of his father [the late king], take note what a grave loss he suffers.

The Turkish sultan has already crossed the Drava River⁹.
The German encampment soon hears word of it;
they so fear the sultan's might
that secretly they retreat across the Danube.

Many Germans cross the river to Pest the fair city
Those who remain in the encampment
are all killed by the Turks and Hungarians
as many Turks chose them across the river.

The Turks move into Pest rapidly
and capture much equipment and several canons
The Germans head directly toward Germany
fleeing together in their artillery boats.

Meanwhile Sultan Suleiman reaches Sicambria¹⁰
And pitches large, elegant tents.
He calls out to Allah giving him profuse thanks
and shows his pashas a well pleased countenance.

He sends to John's Queen Isabella in Buda¹¹
that she should send the king's son to him.
All the lords were to accompany him
thereby to demonstrate their loyalty¹².



Vala nagy bánattya királné asszonnak,
Véle egyötömbe az magyar uraknak,
Nem hihetnek vala nyilván az császárnak,
Azért királfival aláindulának.

János herceg vala aranyas szekérben,
Az urak körül vannak késérésben,
Mikoron jutának császár eleiben,
Császár látá őket, vala víg kedvében.

Tanácsában császár mondá az basáknak,
Herceget megadná királné asszonnak,
Az urakban ötöt megtartóztatnának,
Herceget felvivék, urak meg maradának.

Az basák beszéllek hatalmas császárnak
Nagy jó vitézségét jó Terek Bálintnak,
Mindönöknél feljebb dicséretöt adnak,
Hogy mind az két párton jobb vitézt nem monnak.

„Te felségöd hogyha mast esztelbocsátta,
Vannak sok vitézi, hogyha feltámasztja,
Az Drávát felségöd míg által halaggya,
Hátul való néped ő mind levágattya.”

Eszt császár hogy hallá, hagyá őt megfogni,
És az több urakat Budába bocsátni.
Budának városát hagyá elfoglalni,
Az szolgáló népet mind el-kibocsátni.

Szép szóval úrfiat vivék egy sátorban,
Ott az több urakat bocsáták Budában,
Tereknek menének sokan az városban,
Császárnak foglalák, vannak nagy vígságban.

Igen kiáltatá császár nagy felszóval:
„Az ki szolgáló nép, menne hamarsággal,
Mert fél óra múlva büntetik szablyával.”
Minden, ki eszt hallya, siet gyorsasággal.

The queen is sorely distressed
as are the Hungarian lords along with her.
Clearly they cannot trust the sultan; yet
nevertheless they escort the prince.

Prince János is in a golden carriage.
The lords surround him and protect him.
When they reach the sultan's presence,
he observes them and is well pleased.

In council the sultan tells his pashas
the prince is to be returned to the queen [his mother]
and five of the lords will be detained.
They then send the prince back; the lords must remain¹³.

The pashas describe to the powerful sultan
the great bravery of undaunted Bálint Török.
They praise him above all others
claiming that in both camps no commander is better:

“If your majesty permits him to leave now
he has plenty of soldiers to call on.
Then while your majesty crosses the Drava River,
He will cut down your rear guard.”

After the sultan hears this, he orders him arrested
and the remaining lords sent back to Buda.
He orders the city of Buda occupied
and all the hired troops expelled.

With sweet words they took the worthy lord into a tent;
the remaining lords they sent back to Buda.
A great many Turks invaded the city,
taking control gladly on behalf of the sultan.

The sultan had a warning loudly proclaimed:
“Those who are hired for service, leave immediately
or in a half hour you will be punished with the saber.”
All who hear this take flight.



Igen fosztogaták őket, úgy bocsáták,
Az királyné asszont mind felrakottaták,
Minden ő kincsével el-kiindították,
Császár hagyásából békével bocsáták.

Gyorsan az urakkal asszony kisiete,
Lippa felé császár ötet késértetvé,
Budának szép várát sírva megtekinté,
Azzal önnönmagát igen keseríté.

Ez jó Terek Bálint marada fogságban,
Rusztán basa tartja az ő sátorában,
Szolgáinak izent ő nagy bánatjában,
Hívsséggel lennének ő szolgálatyokban.

Terek Jánost, Ferencöt, néki két szép fiát
Hallgatnák egyemben ő asszony szép társát,
Fogadnák mindenben ő parancsolását,
Gondolnák az Pökri Lajosnak példáját.

Hitlen terek császár hitinek nem álla,
Ez nemes úrfiat véle vivé alá,
Az Szulimán basát Budán hatta vala,
Így nagy nyereséggel ő el-alászálla.

Fohászcodik vala és igen sír vala
Jó Terek Bálintné, hogy hírt nem hall vala,
Mert ő vitéz urát igen félti vala,
Hogy az terek hiti végre meg ne csálná.

Egy levelet néki ha megmutatának,
Hogy fogsága volna ő vitéz urának,
Erő szakaszkodék kezének, lábának,
Földhöz üté magát, ott sokan sírának.

Csudaképpen töri, fárasztja ő magát,
Sírva apolgatja futosó két fiát,
Oly igen kesergi urának fogságát,
És az két fiával az nagy árvaságát.

They [Turks] stripped them of their valuables before they let them go
The queen they packed up
with her treasures and sent her off
in peace as the sultan had ordered.

The queen hastened away with the lords.
The sultan gave them an escort to Lippa¹⁴.
As she looked back at beautiful Buda castle she wept;
it caused her even deeper grief.

Worthy Bálint Török remained captive;
Rustan Pasha held him in his own tent.
In his great distress he sent to his retainers
a request that they remain in faithful service.

János and Ferenc Török, his two handsome sons
together with his fair wife desired to attend him
and to carry out his every command.
They would follow the example of Lajos Pökri¹⁵.

The faithless Turkish sultan went back on his word.
He took the noble lord with him and
left Suleiman Pasha in charge of Buda¹⁶.
With great winnings he then departed.

Bálint Török's virtuous spouse prays and weeps constantly¹⁷
for she has received no word from him
and she fears for that valiant man's life,
fears that the Turks will betray him ultimately.

One letter is shown to her
that her courageous husband is being held captive.
The strength in her arms and legs melts,
she throws herself to the ground; many lament loudly.

She beats herself tirelessly, punishes her body
and with lamentation she cares for two strong sons.
She bemoans her husband's captivity
and the distressing, orphaned status of her boys.



Ígyen éjjel-nappal hallják kesergését,
Immár nem alítja világban élését,
Hallya meg az Isten az ő könyörgését,
Hogy hamar láthassa ura megjövését.

Her wailing can be heard night and day.
No longer does she assert that he is still lives;
yet beseeches God to hear her prayer
that she may see the homecoming of her lord.

Ti jó keresztyénök, tegyünk áldozatot,
Hogy Isten hallgasson tőlünk imádságot,
És megszabadíccsa jó Terek Bálintot,
Hívön szolgálhassa ez szegín országot.

You good Christians, let us make an offering
that God may accept our prayers
and set free our worthy Bálint Török.
May he faithfully serve this wretched land.

Ezörötszáznegyven és egy esztendőben
Budáról császárnak el-alámentében,
Szigetben ki szörzé, vala nagy fektében,
Vitéz urán való nagy kesergésében.

After the Sultan departed from Buda,
in 1541, the author composed this
while in his sick bed in Sziget¹⁸
out of great sadness for his valiant lord¹⁹.

Critical Notes

Translation

- 1 This appears to imply that Bálint Török has been loyal to 3 parties in sequence, that is, Ferdinand of Austria, Sultan Suleiman, and King János I Szapolya of Hungary. See Ferenc Szakály. *Tinódi Sebesytén Kronika*. Budapest: Europa Kiado, 1984 p. 570.
- 2 John (János) I Szapolya, Governor (voivode) of Transylvania and King of Hungary, 1526-1540.
- 3 The besiegers are called "Germans" and their place of origin is called Germany, although these are German speakers and other mercenaries from Habsburg territories, and not necessarily imperial troops.
- 4 Begun March 12, 1541 by Ferdinand's army, the siege lasted 6 months.
- 5 This is John Sigismund, King elect of Hungary and Prince of Transylvania, 1540-1571.
- 6 Osijek, Croatia
- 7 Imre Werböczi is king's commissioner.
- 8 Príni is Peter Perényi, a powerful magnate, supported at times King John Szapolya and Ferdinand of Habsburg at others. His warning of Turkish duplicity is confirmed in historical sources. Szakály, p. 572.
- 9 The Drava River valley was the chief passage through which invaders from the southeast came into Hungary and Austria.
- 10 Sicambria (Obuda) is the old town of Buda, upriver of Buda hill and castle.
- 11 Isabella (Jagiello) widowed queen of John I. The baby and heir to the throne is John II Sigismund. Suleiman had promised to support him.
- 12 Specifically orders the king's counselors to come.
- 13 The five magnates detained were Friar George Martinuzzi regent, István Werböczi, Péter Petrovics, Bálint Török, Orbán Batthyány; Szakály, p. 570.
- 14 Queen Isabella and John Sigismund set up the Hungarian court in Lippa, Transylvania.
- 15 The comparison is unclear. Lajos Pekry fought intrepidly against the Turks. Ferdinand arrested him 1537. He then spent 6 yrs in Turkish captivity whereas Török spent 9. Tinodi could not have known this in 1541. Szakály, p. 571.



- 16 Suleiman Pasha was the first commander of Buda. Szakály, p. 571.
- 17 She was Kathleen Pemflinger.
- 18 The court of Szigetvár, Baranya County.
- 19 Since the Sultan withdrew about September 15, 1541. Tinódi composed this probably in October of that year.