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THE JUDITH AND HOLOFERNES THEME ON STOVE TILES FROM THE 16TH CENTURY DISCOVERED IN CLUJ-NAPOCA¹

ILKA BOÉR*

*During the archaeological and art historical exploration of the Unitarian episcopal house at Cluj-Napoca (one of the few houses of the city conserving medieval structures) a considerable amount of stove tiles was discovered in the past few years. Among other types, dating from various periods, many fragments of both glazed and unglazed stove tiles with representations of the crucial scene of the decapitation from the biblical story of Judith and Holofernes dating from the 16th century were found in the filling of the vaults. The fragments depict the scene under a renaissance semi-circular arcade decorated with rich floral ornamentation. Judith is standing on the left side, still holding the sword in her right hand and Holofernes's head in her left. On the right side, her maid is leaning forward, holding a sack for the severed body part. The tent of the general, and the dead general himself lying on his bed can also be seen in the background, between the two female figures. This type of stove tile is known from several locations in Transylvania, but no similar analogies have been found in other regions by far. The theme itself in its 16th century context can be interesting for many reasons: with the rise of Protestantism adorning stove tiles with scenes from the Old Testament became more popular in general, but in the Transylvanian milieu with its very specific historical reality the use of this motif may have had a special significance. In the middle of the 16th century at Cluj Napoca two historic songs (in Hungarian *históriás ének*) about Judith and her heroic and courageous deed were published. The works of Sztárai Mihály and Tinódi Lantos Sebestyén can probably give an insight into how the appearance of the scene on 16th century Transylvanian stove tiles could be explained.*

I. BOÉR

During the researches² that accompanied the rehabilitation works of the House of Religious Freedom (before known as the Unitarian Episcopal House of Cluj-Napoca [Boulevard 21 December 1989, number 14.]), a considerable amount of stove tiles was discovered in the fillings of the vaults of the house, dating from various periods ranging from the 15th to the 19th century. The findings, mostly of good quality, belong to many types, out of which one of the most intriguing ones is that the tiles belonging to which are adorned with the representation of a scene from the Old Testament, or, more

precisely, from *The Book of Judith*: the moment when Judith puts Holofernes's head in a sack. In medieval context the house is situated inside the city walls, once on the Street of the Hungarians, today the 1989 December 21 Boulevard, and the building is one of the few dwelling houses of the city of Cluj, which preserved its medieval parts in relative great proportions. Written sources mention the existence of the street starting 1370. In the 15th century basically there were two different houses, which were united around 1500 (fifteen hundred) by constructing a vaulted gateway between the two

¹ This research was carried out in 2016–2017 with the support of the Babeş-Bolyai University by awarding their grant of performance (*Bursă de performanță*). The paper was presented on the international colloquium entitled *Medieval Material Culture in the Carpathian Basin (11th–16th Centuries). Small Finds between Function, Use and Reuse* organized by the Mures County Museum and the Central European University in December 2016 in Târgu. Mureş. Also, here I would like to thank Zsolt Kovács, Radu Lupescu and Árpád Furu their precious help and advices during the research.

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² The art history researches were carried out by Radu Lupescu and Zsolt Kovács, while the archeological works were coordinated by Zsolt Csók.

building, above which they formed rooms for living. Unfortunately we know the owners of the house just starting 1590, when the sources mention different artisans. The house was transformed more significantly during the 18th century, when the Wesselényi family owned it, then again at the end of the 19th century.³

The fragments of the discussion were found in the southern room of middle tract of the building, in the E03 and E04 rooms, as mentioned before from the filling of the gateway's vault, with the exception of one fragment from type 4, which has been discovered in the attic of the building. It is highly probable that at least a certain proportion of these tiles were once parts of the house's stoves.

In total, twenty fragments depict the aforementioned scene, which are parts of at least five different stove tiles. For better understanding and referencing, the surviving fragments will be categorized to four types (type 1–4) and will be described and referred to as such. They do not stand far from each other in their material and burning, type 2–3 are little bit closer alike. The similarities are visible in the very details of the

representations too. From the surviving parts we can assume that they had the same image in the same setting, Judith putting Holofernes's head in the sack hold by her waitress. In general the composition is framed by a renaissance arcade, hold by elegant columns, we see the participants in front of an open tent, on the left with Judith, holding the commander's sword and the severed head, while on the right the waitress leaning forward with the sack. The head is practically in the middle of the composition, in a very accentual place. Also, in the background the remaining body parts are shown, laying on a bed. Under the arcade, above of the tent the in between register is filled by vivid floral ornaments, while the framing is varied by different smaller elements.

Although the formation itself seems to be a little bit rudimental, on all of the pieces can be observed plasticity of high range, the reliefs are so high they almost part from the surface. Certain details form some quite an elegant solution, like the pleating of the dresses, the decorations of tent on the remaining parts of type 2, also the general framing of the tiles.

TYPE 1

Fragments of stove tiles covered with engobe and bright vivid green glaze, made out of a middle quality paste, with an uneven burning (oxidant and redundant). On the verso of the tile clear textile prints can be observed. The back rim was made on a potter's wheel. The outlines of the representations are slightly blurred, the frame's ornaments are barely visible in some places, generally the reliefs are formed relatively high, though. In total nine fragments were discovered, which belong to two stove tiles; the dimension of the tiles cannot be measured out.

The tile is framed by a thin and short frontal rim, which is accompanied on its inner side by a row of leaves of various sizes; this whole frame is parted with a simple narrow stripe from the further decorative elements. In the

background of the tile, under an architectural structure consisting of an elegant column with a rather interesting pedestal ending in the form of starched leaves and coroneted by a floral capital, carrying a semicircular arcade, decorated with some flowers, there is a conical shaped tent, of which plasticity is accentuated by the smooth pleats of the textiles. The remaining parts between the tent and the arcade are filled by rich, spirally formed floral ornaments. A woman (Judith) is standing on the left side of the foreground with a bonnet on her head, in a dress which fits tight on her body on the bust, while the rest of the it falls down in rich, vivid pleats, her body is turned toward the viewers, keeping her arms slightly bending from her elbow. Her legs in slightly pointed shoes are turned into an anatomically impossible

³ LUPESCU-KOVÁCS 2015, 11–12; LUPESCU-KOVÁCS 2018.

position compared to the rest of the body. In her right hand she holds diagonally downwards the hilt of a sword, but the actual blade is not visible – as there are no traces of fractures, it was formed originally like this. In her left hand we should imagine the head of Holofernes. The moment of the head's putting in a sack is visible only by a stipe, which is the edge of the sack. The torso on the bed of the commander

has broken off of the tile. On the right side of the stove tile there should be the figure of the handmaiden, in these fragments only the head and neck are preserved. Remains only one, very blurry detail to mention: between the tent and the arcade there is an inscription: IIDVI, which practically is the mirror image of the misspelled Iudit. (Plate I, 1, 3)

TYPE 2

Fragments of a stove tile covered with dark green glaze, made out of a middle quality paste, with an uneven burning (oxidant and redundant), on some fragments with traces of secondary burning marks on the front. On the verso of the tile clear textile prints can be observed, only in smaller details, though. As the tile is very thin (0,5–0,7 cm), at the back of the high reliefs the plate was strengthened by additionally, manually pressed clay bands. Generally, the reliefs are formed relatively high. The representation itself is more clear and more sharp, the formation of it is a little bit more elegantly developed. In total four fragments were discovered, which belong to at least one stove tile; the dimension of the tile cannot be measured out.

The tile is framed by a thin and short frontal rim, which is accompanied on its inner side by a row of leaves of various sizes. On the right

side of the tile, a woman (the maid), wearing a dress with a tight bodice, decorated with pearls on the neckline and on the belt, with a pleated skirt, is a slightly bending her knees, is holding a sack in her hands for the head. Behind her figurine, in the centre of the tile, under the tent, there is the beheaded torso of the commandant. On the edges of tent sheet, starting from the top of the structure, two decorative ropes are put. The attempt to use perspective is rather rudimental, perceivable only by the fact that the bed and body in the background are smaller than the figures of the foreground. The bed itself is not really perceptive, it looks like as it would stand vertically on its shorter side. The further compositional parts are most probably similar to those of type 1. (Plate I, 2; Plate II, 3, 8, 9)

TYPE 3

Fragments of an unglazed stove tile, made out of a middle quality paste, similar to those of type 2, with an uneven burning. The paste was pressed into the mold with a wooden plate or with hands, later smoothened with a piece of wood. The back rim has broken off. The tile is quite thin, with an average thickness of 0,5–0,7 cm. The representations are quite blurry. In total three fragments were discovered, which probably belong to the same stove tile; the dimension of the tile cannot be measured out.

The tile is framed by a thin and short frontal rim, which is accompanied on its inner side by a

row of rectangles and of leaves, which are more likely to a zig-zag line. The image of the tile is framed by a semi-circular arcade, decorated with five petaled flowers, carried by an elegant, spirally formed column, with a simple pedestal and coronated by a simple capital. The upper corners are filled with a rich leave ornament. In the background there is the edge of a conical shaped tent with decorative ropes. In the foreground, in the left side of the tile, a woman (Judith) is standing in a dress which fits tight on her body on the bust, while the rest of the it falls down in rich, vivid pleats, with her body turned

toward the viewers, keeping her arms slightly bending from her elbow. The details of its decorations are blurry, but it seems to have a similar pearl decoration the maid's dress on the type 2 example. In her right hand she holds diagonally downwards a sword. In her left hand we should imagine the head of Holofernes. However the

rest of the image has broken off, compositionally it should match with the elements known from the rest of the types. The additional frame element was probably added while copying the tile, which results in the decrease of its original size. (Plate II, 5, 7)

TYPE 4

Fragments of a stove tile covered with polychrome, green, white, yellowy, blue and brown glaze, made out of fine quality paste, with an uneven burning (oxidant and redunant), with traces of burning marks on the back. On the verso of the tile textile prints and smoothening traces can be observed. The back rim has broken off. The reliefs of the tile are formed high. In total four fragments were discovered, which probably belong to the same stove tile; the dimensions of the tile cannot be measured out.

The tile is framed by a thin and short frontal rim, with a row leaves. Next to the frame can be seen a lower part of a column and a pedestal. In the foreground, in the left side of the tile, a woman (Judith) is standing in a dress which fits tight on her body on the bust, while the rest of the it falls down in rich pleats, slightly different

than the other examples, with her body turned toward the viewers, keeping her arms slightly bending from her elbow. The dress itself is brown, with a blue line on the neckline and the lower edge of the sleeves, while the skirt is decorated with multiple white stripes, also it seems like she's wearing a white apron. In her right hand she holds diagonally downwards a sword. In the background the edge of the tent can be observed. The upper corner is filled with a rich stylized white leave ornament. The chromatically, the background is green on the outer parts, while a it is yellowy colour in the inner side, the pedestal is also green, while the column and the tent are white, just like the skin of Judith. (Plate II, 1–2)

Two further fragments were too fragmentary to be categorized to a certain type. (Plate II, 4, 6.)

JUDITH SCENE IMAGINARY ON STOVE TILES – ANALOGIES⁴

Specialized literature knows of a relatively large number of analogies for the aforementioned tiles. The earliest mention comes from the notes of István Téglás, who also presents a sketch. The piece has been discovered among other archaeological findings during the works at the south-eastern side of the reformed church of Turda Veche in 1904. It seems highly probable that the tile is now lost, from the notes, however, we know that it was exhibited in

December 1913 on the memorial exhibition of Gabriel Bethlen.⁵ The first researcher to present the type in print is Imre Holl, who discusses two pieces (a fragment and a whole tile), which he dates to the middle of the 16th century. The first one comes from the Bánffy castle at Sâncrai (Alba County, RO), presently it is in the collection of the museum of Aiud. The fragment (9,2 × 8 × 0,6 cm)⁶ is part of an unglazed, redly burnt stove tile, representing a part of a female

⁴ Meaning those pieces, which are matching in their composition. In other formations there are known pieces depicting Judith from Hungary and Slovakia too. (GRUIA 2013, 351, 465).

⁵ TÉGLÁS ms. (without numerotation).

⁶ MARCU ISTRATE 2004, 265.

figure on the right, while in the left of the fragment an arm, holding a head. Holl identified the scene as *Judith and Holofernes* with the help of a photograph⁷ from the Museum of Applied Arts (Budapest, HU). This photograph shows an entire stove tile, so the whole composition can be seen: under a semicircular arcade, supported by two elegant columns, decorated with spirally rewound ribbons, there is an open tent. On the left side of the picture there is Judith, holding in her right hand a sword pointing downwards and in her left Holofernes's head, while on the opposite side her maiden leans forward with a sack, prepared for the severed body part. As Holl points out, this glazed tile is much more worn than the fragment from Sâncrai. All we know about the provenience of the whole piece is that according to J. Höllrigl's comment from 1936 on the back of photograph, it has been found somewhere in Transylvania. Holl estimates that size of the original piece was approximately 30 × 40 cm.⁸

Studying at the composition itself, Holl comes to the conclusion that the unknown potter must have had a model of fine quality to work with, even if his product does not reflect its presumable elegance: its plastic execution is of a modest quality, and the tile itself is not comparable to the products of the most outstanding workshops.⁹ Holl also remarks that he could not find analogies from abroad, nonetheless, in a footnote he implies that the model may have derived from a painting by Lucas Cranach the Elder, from 1531, entitled *The death of Holofernes*, and to the engravings made after this particular image, comparing the

representation of the scene on the tile to these,¹⁰ without, however, giving further details about the engravings themselves.

Many more, similar representations are presented in the synthesis of Daniela Marcu Istrate from 2004, in which she collected the known pieces of this type as well, most of the pieces discussed (including the fragment from Sâncrai¹¹, for which Holl only provides a short description, but no illustration) have specified descriptions and drawings attached to them. In 1995, on what is known today as I. Bob Street (nr. 12.) of Cluj-Napoca (at that time it was called Prahovei Street), Viorica Crișan¹² excavated a pottery workshop, which was active in the 15th century and at the beginning of the 16th,¹³ with traces of a furnace, surrounded by several fragments of stove tiles and a negative mold.¹⁴ In this layer another fragment of a stove tile which lost some of its green glaze representing Judith (9,5 × 15 cm;¹⁵ thickness 0,3–1,3 cm¹⁶) was found. On the left side of the fragment the decorative architectural frame, the edge of the tent and the body of a woman, holding in her right hand a sword pointing downwards are partially visible. In a parenthesis Marcu mentions two more similar fragments; one of them, with a greenish-yellowish glaze, has a short description¹⁷ according to which it presents the same scene. As for the other fragment, she provides no further information (provenience or current depositary place) about it.¹⁸

Similar fragments coming from the Martinuzzi Castle of Vințu de Jos (Alba County, RO), where a bunch of stove tile fragments were excavated are also presented. Among these there

⁷ HOLL 1993, 292.

⁸ HOLL 1993, 291–292.

⁹ HOLL 1993, 291–292.

¹⁰ HOLL 1993, 292.

¹¹ MARCU ISTRATE 2004, 265, pl. 131/B.1.

¹² CRISAN 1996, 385–401.

¹³ GRUIA 2013, 63–64.

¹⁴ CRISAN 1996, 388.

¹⁵ GRUIA 2011, 44. 46.

¹⁶ MARCU ISTRATE 2004, 191, pl. 23/17.

¹⁷ MARCU ISTRATE 2004, 197.

¹⁸ MARCU ISTRATE 2004, 85.

are three small pieces ($7,5 \times 7 \times 0,6$ – $1,6$ cm; $5,5 \times 5,4 \times 0,3$ – $1,3$ cm;?),¹⁹ which likewise depict a scene with Judith, the composition of the scenery quite possibly being identical with that described above. Two of them show Judith herself, one shows a relatively huge part of her body along with the fragment of the downward pointing sword she holds, while the other carries the upper part of the body with the tent in the background. On the third piece the head of the handmaiden can be observed, with the tent appearing again in the background. To these she adds yet another fragment (thickness: 0,8 cm)²⁰ from the collection of the Mureş County Museum; this one is practically the upper left side of a tile with rich ornamental details and the upper part of the tent. She also mentions a fragment akin to this latter piece, found at Mălăieşti (Hunedoara County, RO) – the visible parts (such as the upper part of the tent, the frame and the ornamental details) and what we see on the Mureş-fragment are indeed similar.²¹

Whilst in the appendices of her work Marcu Istrate dates most of the enumerated pieces to the 16th century, she says otherwise when summarizing the type she gets to the fragment from Street Prahovei. She thinks that stylistically speaking the stove tile and especially its framing exhibits many gothic features. Taking this into account, she places the fragment to the second half of the 15th century or to the beginning of the 16th century.²² (Whereas in the case of the piece from Sâncraia, for instance, she establishes a date around 1500 as the *terminus post quem*.)²³ She stresses this once again at the end of her discussion of the type, debating Holl's dating the tiles to the middle of the 16th century, arguing that the presence of gothic elements suggests that the theme must have already

been present earlier than that. She deems the stove tiles with Judith to have been quite widespread throughout Transylvania, considering them strictly regional products and generalising her dating regarding the fragment of Street Prahovei.²⁴ Otherwise these very statements are also formulated in one of her studies from 2003, where she puts emphasis on the fact that no analogies are known from outside Transylvania. This left her to assume that their model could have been locally created.²⁵ It is important to mention that Marcu is the only one who suggests that this type appeared at such an early point.

Even though these are no exact analogies, compositionally similar polychrome glazed fragments are known from the castle of Lăzarea, and presented by Mónika Kémenes. The design of the pieces is different from that of those treated by far, compared to them the image of the scene appears to be flipped horizontally. The framing of these tiles is also different, as is the style of Judith's clothes. Kémenes dates them to the 16th century, and along with their analogies, she connects them to local workshops capable of producing high quality ceramics.²⁶

In 2011 Ana Maria Gruia presented a selection of stove tiles from the collection of the National History Museum of Cluj-Napoca, among which the fragment from Prahovei Street was discussed again. In its description she dates the piece to the beginning of the 16th century. What is more, besides the nearest analogies and the finding context of the fragment, she also refers to Holl's assumption concerning the painting of Lucas Cranach (which Marcu did not mention at all). In the broader context of the history of mentality, Gruia underlines the influence of the reformation upon the religious imagery in general.²⁷

¹⁹ MARCU ISTRATE 2004, 286, pl. 158/68a-c.

²⁰ MARCU ISTRATE 2004, 271, pl. 141/2.

²¹ ESKENASY-RUSU 1982, 53–92, fig. 13/a.

²² MARCU ISTRATE 2004, 86.

²³ MARCU ISTRATE-SCROBOTĂ 2003, 144.

²⁴ MARCU ISTRATE 2004, 85.

²⁵ MARCU ISTRATE-SCROBOTĂ 2003, 144.

²⁶ KÉMENES 2005, 59–60, 147, pl. 30.

²⁷ GRUIA 2011, 44–46.

She returns to discussing the Judith theme's appearances on stove tiles a little more in detail in her book from 2013. The material she worked with (and of which she also made a catalogue appended to the rest of the book) contains several tiles on which Judith appears – in fact scenes from the story of Judith are among the more frequently portrayed ones from the Old Testament.²⁸ Out of these, all those tiles which represent the story as a vivid scene come from Transylvania and from within a roughly 110 km radius of Cluj-Napoca, with the exception of the piece with unknown provenience.²⁹ (It is to be mentioned that she does not discuss the fragments from Târgu Mureş and Mălăieşti.) To the question whether the Reformation contributed to the relative popularity of these tiles or not, she cannot give a comforting answer. She points out that the religion of the potter is largely irrelevant, as his supply was a function of his customers' demands. In case the fragments from Vinţu de Jos were parts of a stove that stood inside the castle in Martinuzzi's time, they would have been used in a catholic medium, which, however, does not imply that such tiles could not have appeared in a protestant one as well.³⁰ As a possible model she mentions the Cranach painting (which she refers to as an engraving), attaching as an illustration the sketch from Holl's 1993 study without giving further and more concrete clues.³¹

The fragments of stove tiles presented above and their analogies seem to be closely related to each other, the composition, the features of the persons depicted, as well as the background

are practically identical on all tiles. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify minor differences between these as far as the details are concerned – for instance the design of the columns on the photograph from the collection of the Museum of Applied Arts diverges from the general pattern: here the columns are decorated with ribbons, and the pedestal is also missing. In the case of the material from the House of Religious Freedom, the tent's edges on type 1 and 4 differ from what can be seen on type 2 and 3. On type 1, only the hilt of Judith's sword is visible. On the other hand, many shared features, like the prolific floral ornaments above the tent or the distinctive way in which Judith's clothes are pleated can also be observed – these elements are practically identical on all pieces. It is quite probable that they were all produced in the same period, at around the middle of the 16th century and no later than its second half. All pieces come from Transylvania, and thus it is highly feasible that they were made in Transylvania, probably in Cluj-Napoca. This is implied by the relatively narrow geographical dispersion of the specimens and the fact that a fragment of this sort was found in the Prahovei Street workshop.

With regard to differences of the details it is worth mentioning, that in a certain period a potter workshop used more than one model for the production of particular types of stove tiles, and these models were not necessarily identical down to the last detail. It is also important to note that when being in use, the tiles inevitably suffered abrasion, which can also account for differences between the fragments.³²

JUDITH'S ICONOGRAPHY IN 16TH CENTURY EUROPE AND TRANSYLVANIA

Adorning stoves with religious imagery (scenes from the Old and the New Testament or the depictions of various saints) was commonplace during the Late Middle Ages and Early

Renaissance; several Transylvanian stoves of this sort are known, most of them dating from the 15th or 16th century.³³ From among the scenes taken from the Old Testament

²⁸ GRUIA 2011, 49.

²⁹ GRUIA 2013, 213

³⁰ GRUIA 2013, 213–214.

³¹ HOLL 1993, 292. GRUIA 2013, 214.

³² MARCU ISTRATE 2004, 27.

³³ MARCU ISTRATE 2004, 80.

those from the story of Judith and Holofernes, Samson's fight with the lion and scenes from the life of Moses seem to stand out as particularly popular themes.³⁴

Owing to the spread of the Reformation, representations of scenes from the Old Testament began to appear more frequently on stove tiles from the 16th century onwards; sporadic examples from before this period, nonetheless, also do attest their existence prior to the aforementioned point.³⁵ Studying these pieces from such a perspective is, however, problematic in a number of ways. It is unclear who the owners of the House of Religious Freedom could have been at the time when the stove tiles were ordered and produced. Their ethnicity is also difficult to determine, and the location of the building tells little, if anything about that. Benkő Elek in a work of his from 2004 points out that originally the toponym „Magyar Street” was presumably descriptive of the ethnic proportions characteristic of the Outer Magyar Street, the village of Szentpéter, and not the area where the Episcopal House stood. The contents of tax lists from the 15th and 16th century indicate that throughout this period the Inner Magyar Street, the section of the area within the city walls had an ethnically mixed population comprised of Saxons and Hungarians.³⁶ In the 1530s Lutheran Protestantism started to gain ground in the city, primarily among the ranks of the Saxon community,³⁷ while the majority of the Hungarian population converted to the Unitarian faith in the second half of the same century. Whatever the case may be, if the fragments do indeed originate from the middle or the second half of the 16th century, ethnicity as an aspect is of no relevance.

The material gathered from the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary that Gruia studied includes nine tiles that attest the scene with Judith, the type being thus the third most

popular one representing a scene from the Old Testament.³⁸ Referring back to those stated in the previous chapter it can be noted once more that even if we take into consideration the analogies as well, the tiles with a Catholic background (such as the ones from Alvinc) cannot be clearly differentiated from those with a Protestant one (although even Lucas Cranach's painting which Holl proposed as a possible model for these tiles comes from a Protestant milieu, having been painted for a Protestant count, Philip I of Hessen).³⁹ Therefore it is difficult to draw any major conclusion setting out from the religious views held by the owners of given pieces.

Regardless of the framework of interpretation to be used when discussing these representations, before we would examine the pictorial analogies (which is to say, the engravings), it is worth taking a closer look at the basic iconographical elements associated with the figure of Judith. These elements have the Latin Bible and its translations into vernacular languages (which made the Scripture accessible for a wide array of readers) as their primary sources – among the German language variants of the Bible predating Luther's translation we find at least four 14th century texts which were still in use in the following centuries, and which contained the story of Judith. When these texts were printed, the woodcuts inserted into these as illustrations set the basics of Judith-related iconography. This is also the point when Judith's handmaiden came to be regarded as a figure who deserves some attention and gained the name `Abra'.⁴⁰ There are two scenes in *The Book of Judith* that often feature in allegorical collections from the period in question: the binding of Achior (an Ammonite officer in Holofernes's army who advises the general against attacking God's chosen people) as a reference to the flagellation of Christ and the beheading of Holofernes,

³⁴ MARCU ISTRATE 2004, 85.

³⁵ GRUIA 2013, 49.

³⁶ BENKŐ 2004, 24–26, 28.

³⁷ BENKŐ 2004, 38.

³⁸ GRUIA 2013, 49.

³⁹ BRINKMANN 2008, 202–204.

⁴⁰ CILETTI-LÄHNEMANN 2010, 51–52.

a scene considered to be an antetype of Mary's triumph over the devil.⁴¹

As the reception of the story evolved, Judith came to be perceived as a prefiguration of Mary and the Church embodied, an instrument of divine will and a saviour of her people, capable of overpowering the devil and sin in general, instead of being regarded as a mere allegory of chastity. The heroine therefore became associated with the virtues of fortitude and justice as an embodiment of traits such as wisdom, magnanimity and eloquence, whereas her enemies became symbols of tyranny, identified as archetypal *foreign heathens*.⁴²

The earliest known pictorial representation of Judith was part of a fresco cycle from around 404 AD meant to reconcile by means of pictures the two Testaments, which is to say, the holy scriptures of Jewish and Christian tradition. This fresco which, alongside a depiction of Esther, flanked the entrance to the basilica of Nola (now part of Naples) is no longer extant.⁴³ A further early example would be yet another Italian fresco created around 705–707 AD and decorating a wall in Rome's church of Santa Maria Antiqua. Based on the surviving fragments we may assume that it represented an entire scene from *The Book of Judith* rather than the figure of Judith alone: apparently the camp of the Assyrians and within that, the tent of their general, as well as Judith (standing for Mary and the Church) with Holofernes's head and the inhabitants of Bethulia were all depicted here. From the 9th century onwards it became common for Judith to appear on miniatures accompanying the text of various editions of the Bible as illustrations; pictures portraying Judith beheading Holofernes – a manner of representation which remained prevalent up until the 14th–15th century – can oftentimes be found inside initials. At around the second half

of the 15th century, depictions of Judith began to grow much less uniform, scenes other than that of Holofernes's decapitation came to be represented and besides the mariological interpretation of Judith's figure the duplicity of her character came to be focused on as well. Judith was portrayed ever more frequently holding the general's head in one hand and a sword in the other regardless of the medium used and of the (religious or secular) context in which the representation appeared.⁴⁴

The headless body, the severed head, the person that carries out the beheading and the instrument used for this purpose are all elements the presence of which is needed for the proper depiction of a decapitation. All these feature with a satisfactory prominence in the episode represented. The gesture of separating the head from the body carries a symbolic value: emotions, power and the soul itself were all traditionally believed to reside in the head, which thus could exercise control over the body – without the head the body is powerless, unfeeling and abandoned by the soul that used to govern it.⁴⁵ Holding the head in the left hand and holding the weapon that detached it from the body (in this particular case the sword) emphasizes the fact that the enemy has been defeated.⁴⁶ Although it is her beauty that entices and disarms Holofernes, according to the story Judith succeeds in retaining her chastity – whether portrayed as a young woman or a matron, the handmaiden standing between the two as a reliable witness of the events is added to the composition from the Renaissance onwards exactly in order to highlight this.⁴⁷ When pictured, Judith typically appears as a gorgeous young woman with elegant clothing (an aspect stressed by the *Book of Judith* itself as well) and she is by no means infrequently placed in the foreground, facing the onlooker holding sword

⁴¹ CILETTI-LÄHNEMANN 2010, 52–53.

⁴² CILETTI-LÄHNEMANN 2010, 46.

⁴³ CILETTI-LÄHNEMANN 2010, 53–54.

⁴⁴ CILETTI-LÄHNEMANN 2010, 53–56.

⁴⁵ ROBERTS 1998, 119.

⁴⁶ ROBERTS 1998, 121.

⁴⁷ ROBERTS 1998, 121.



Fig. 1. Hans Schäufelein: *Judith with the Head of Holophernes* (from *Das Büchle Memorial*; 1533) Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; accession number: 31.54.2.

and head emphatically in her hands.⁴⁸ All traditional elements associated with the portrayal of said scene (as presented above) are present on the stove tiles discussed in this paper.

Holl makes mention of engravings modeled after Cranach's painting. While it is difficult to identify the exact works Holl is referring to, it is all too evident the theme was indeed a popular one. Numberless engravings of a similar design could be enumerated here with the tent, the

body, Judith and the handmaiden in the foreground, the sack and of course the head all visible. The presence of these elements, nonetheless, hardly betrays the influence of specific works or connections between the works in question – in all probability, it has more to do with the iconographical tradition.⁴⁹ From the 16th century we know two engravings that can be considered closely analogous to the images on the tiles from the House of Religious Freedom: Hans

⁴⁸ APOSTOLOS-CAPPADONA 2001, 88–89.

⁴⁹ ROBERTS 1998, 120. Also, here I would like to thank Zsombor Jékely his precious remarks regarding the iconography of Judith and the possible analogies.

Schäufelein's woodcut⁵⁰ from 1533 and a work by Hans Weiditz,⁵¹ also from the first half of the aforementioned century. It is primarily the composition that makes the similarity between these representations striking: the arrangement of the figures is virtually identical and the tent placed between the female figures of the foreground occupies the central part of the background in all cases. The second half of the 15th century also presents us with an engraving by Israel van Meckenem⁵² where the elements making up the composition are likewise organized in a way not dissimilar from what can be seen on the stove tiles. It is important to note that Meckenem was an influential engraver, whose compositions were widely copied and imitated. The composition of the image on the stove tiles is well conceived and well structured, and thereby it is unambiguous that it must have had some foreign engraving as its model and it is unlikely that it was a local invention. Consequently, we cannot exclude the possibility that the composition has its origins in the 15th century and may derive from that devised

by Meckenem, whose influence does not limit itself to the 15th century as a result of numerous later copies following his exemplar in the 16th century as well.

When interpreting these representations, we must not overlook their specific historical and geographical context (which is to be briefly outlined in the next chapter): they are Transylvanian products. Thus it would be a mistake to disregard the fact that irrespective of what denomination the owner of the stove belonged to (something that is difficult to determine anyway), the representation of the scene on stove tiles is likely a certain kind of a subtle reaction to the Turkish threat. This way the scene depicted gains an actual political significance – Judith thereby may have been viewed as a patriotic figure protecting her nation, as well as an archetype of the female warrior. Meanwhile, Holofernes, as the commander of the Assyrian forces was often presented as a symbol of the Turks throughout the Christian parts of Europe (and not exclusively in East-Central Europe) in dramatic works, for instance.⁵³

JUDITH IN LITERARY TRADITION

Since the source of the image is the Scripture, the 16th century Hungarian literary parallels, also, of course, based on the same loci of the *Vulgata*, are worth being discussed as well. According to the story, Judith is a strikingly beautiful and pious widow that lives in the town of Bethulia, in Israel. By order of Nebuchadnezzar, an army led by Holofernes lays siege to Bethulia. With the defendants of the town on the verge of surrendering, Judith, in order to save town and people, chooses to enter Holofernes's camp, where she insinuates herself

into the favours of the commander, and ultimately manages to behead him. She then takes the severed head to Bethulia, where it is placed atop the walls; at the sight of it, the army besieging the town flees.⁵⁴

The Book of Judith is one of the apocrypha, which survived to this day in two different translations. According to István Lőkös is „no romanesque depiction of an age, but rather a work of public history, permeated by religious pragmatism.”⁵⁵ Its author, moreover, did not intend to narrate real events providing

⁵⁰ Judith with the Head of Holofernes, in Die Büchle Memorial (Johann von Schwartzberg: *Ein Büchle, genannt Memorial der Tugend* CIX verso).

⁵¹ On a multiple sample titel-border, from the collection of the British Museum (1919,0616.47) < https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1919-0616-47 >

⁵² One of the existing examples of the print is also in the British Museum (E,1.93). < https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_E-1-93 >

⁵³ CILETTI-LÄHNEMANN 2010. 63.

⁵⁴ BOOK OF JUDITH, I–XVI.

⁵⁵ LÖKÖS 1992, 19.

historically and geographically accurate details, the aim of this author was to teach: to deliver a religious message. Much like that of other apocryphal scriptures, the canonical status of the book varied due to theological works treating it understandably taking various, changing approaches to it as time passed; debates became especially taut in the wake of Erasmus, his stance and works, in the first half of the 16th century, and only came to a halt when the Council of Trent decreed in 1546 that the *Vulgata* is to be considered the sole authentic variant of the Bible. The frequent changes of attitude towards the text, as well as – needless to say – the aforementioned religious pragmatism and didactic intent may all have contributed to adaptations of the story in both literature and the visual arts becoming more and more numerous during the Middle Ages, and especially the Renaissance.⁵⁶

It is important to note that the most influential source for these adaptations was the text of the *Vulgata*; Jerome in his preface to *The Book of Judith* clearly defines how the text is supposed to be interpreted, stressing three key aspects. Firstly, he underlines the fact that *The Book of Judith* is apocryphal, something that he tried to make salient by means of translating the text in a more readable style (Jerome remarks that he translated the text in Latin in the course of a single night as a mere literary pursuit). Secondly, he puts emphasis on the exemplary chastity of the widow – for Jerome this is the essence of the story's message, and accordingly he translates the original text in a shortened form so that this aspect stand out better. Thirdly, in Jerome's reading the story besides serving as an example can also function as a source of exultation.⁵⁷ Embodying chastity as a virtue, Judith became not only an embodiment of the Church, but also a prefiguration of the Virgin Mary – this view remained an element of mariology during the Counter-Reformation of the 16th century as well.⁵⁸ To counter this

Catholic Judith, Reformation also produced its own interpretation of the biblical figure, and thus a version of *The Book of Judith* based on the *Vulgata*-variant became part of Luther's Bible. Thereby, the story is present as a subject in Protestant dramatic literature, Joachim Greff's work from 1536, entitled *Tragoedia Judith* being one of these pieces, for instance.⁵⁹

From among the multitude of European literary adaptations, 16th century creations from Central Europe deserve particular attention here, since to this paper these bear most relevance. István Lőkös enumerates five such works (all of them coming from the same, relatively short time interval!): a narrative poem written by Croatian author Marco Marulić in 1501, a Polish prose adaptation from 1539, Tinódi Lantos Sebestyén's historic song from the same year, a school drama authored by the Czech Mikuláš Konáč and another historic song, that of Mihály Sztárai from 1552. With regard to these, Béla Varjas writes the following: „Apart from the Polish one, all four authors, the Croat, the two Hungarians and the Czech utilized Judith's example independently from each other for inciting their people into resisting the preponderant Turkish forces, for according to their faith and conviction even one single courageous woman can save a people that confides in divine aid from its ruthless enemies.”⁶⁰ The Croatian and Hungarian texts are also closely related as far as their genre is concerned; functionally they all pertain to the strand of national anti-Turkish narrative poetry. Additionally, these stories share their moral conclusion as well: „a numerically inferior but unified community of superior moral purity can overcome a preponderant foreign, if you like, pagan force.”⁶¹

The Latin text spelled out by the stanza initials of Tinódi's *Judit asszon históriája* from 1539 or 1540 sheds light to the extent to which Tinódi's work was of a purposive nature:

⁵⁶ Lőkös 1992, 19–20.

⁵⁷ CILETTI-LÄHNEMANN 2010, 42–45.

⁵⁸ CILETTI-LÄHNEMANN 2010, 45.

⁵⁹ CILETTI-LÄHNEMANN 2010, 46.

⁶⁰ Lőkös 1992, 21.

⁶¹ Lőkös 1992, 21.

“SEBASTIANVS LITERATVS DE TINÓD
IN LINGVA HVNGARICA ECS BIBLIA
CANENDVM CONVERTENS BELLVM
HVNGARICVM PERSCRVTANS FECITE”⁶²
– translated from Latin it would read: “the

literatus Tinódi Sebestyén versified [this story] from the Bible in Hungarian, contemplating the wars of the Hungarians.” What is more, the last stanzas of the historic song also reiterate once more the moralizing message as follows:

*„Keresztényök ez jó példa tinéktök,
Példa az ó törvény az új törvénynek,
Ha parancsolat szerint ti élnétek,
Minden ellenségöt megverhetnétek.*

*Inkább az Istennek ellene vattok,
Próféták módgyára nem hadakosztok,
Nem csuda, hogy il igen nyomorgotok,
Istentől il igön ostorosztattok.*

*Támadgyatok fejenként igaz hitben,
Ti éljetök az igaz szeretetben,
Reménségtök légyön csak az Istenben,
Minden ellenség lészön kezetökben.”^{63, 64}*

Mihály Sztárai, a significant representative of the Hungarian Reformation published his *A Holofernesz és Judit asszony históriája* in 1552, primarily with an anti-Turkish intent (it is worth mentioning that Sztárai participated in the Battle of Mohács).⁶⁵ The date of publication is of some importance as well, due to the fact that 1552 was the year when a great Turkish offensive began against Hungary and Slavonia, resulting in several castles being captured by the Turks – with the notable exception of Eger. The

example of Eger serves as an excellent illustration for the message of the historic song as well, and therefore the possibility that these events may have catalyzed the creation of Sztárai's work cannot be excluded.⁶⁶ Sztárai stresses Judith's courage, intelligence and determination, her consistency doubled by heroism.⁶⁷ He and Marulić follow the text of the *Vulgata* in a fairly faithful manner, which is markedly true for certain key features: the way in which the

⁶² VARJAS 1982, 142; LŐKÖS 1992, 27.

⁶³ TINÓDI, XII.

⁶⁴ *It's a good example to ye Christians,
The old law is example for the new one,
If ye lived by the commandments,
Ye could all your enemies beat.//
Instead ye turned against your God
Ye don't wage war like the prophets did,
No wonder, ye are in such deep misery,
Being flogged this hard by God.//
Rise up each of ye in true faith,
Live your lives in true love,
Your hope be only in God,
Ye'll have power over all enemies.* (Trans. by the author of this article.)

⁶⁵ LŐKÖS 1992, 29

⁶⁶ LŐKÖS 1992, 32

⁶⁷ LŐKÖS 1992, 35.

plot is constructed, the balance of forces and the virtuous character of Judith are presented.⁶⁸

Consequently it is evident that perceiving a connection between representations of the subject and actual politics is more than a far-fetched theory (as it is easily demonstrated in the case of Hungarian literature). It is worth pointing out that literary creations of this period with a biblical subject tend to actualize this subject, and thereby they mostly contain references to contemporaneous realities.⁶⁹ This is of course not necessarily a trademark of this particular age: with the rise of vernacular literature an interest in rendering biblical contents into vernacular languages also arose alongside a tendency to read these contents from the perspective of actual events.⁷⁰ An early instance for such a usage of the story of Judith (and thus an early analogy for the adaptations discussed above) can be identified among the texts that make up Old English literature as well, the context the work in question (composed around the year 1000) can be associated with being that of the Viking invasions. The fragments of this Judith-poem survived to posterity in the *Nowell Codex*; its heroine takes upon herself the duty to serve as an agent of God in the conflict between good and evil, meanwhile also appearing as

the embodiment of the qualities typical of the Anglo-Saxon „good lord”. The attributes that accompany the figures of the two central characters also put an emphasis on the good-evil dichotomy: whereas Judith is described as *blessed*, Holofernes is presented as a *heathen hound*. In another work of his, the author of a Judith-homily from the same period, Aelfric states that Judith sets an example for all people by defending her country.⁷¹

It is Tinódi's work in the case of which the anti-pagan, anti-Turkish sentiment is more immediately conspicuous; the very same thing, however, is not missing from Sztáray's historic song, either. Since both historic songs did appear in Cluj, the former in Tinódi's own collection of his poems, published in 1554,⁷² the latter among the writings that were selected to be part of the *Hoffgreff-cantionale*, the printing of which began in the same year, 1554⁷³ (and thus shortly after Sztáray's text having been published for the first time), it is neither impossible, nor improbable that when ordering a stove, the owner of the house in the Street of the Hungarian may have been aware of what the (quite popular) figure and story of Judith stood for.

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⁶⁸ Lőkös 1992, 32.

⁶⁹ Ács 2000, 49.

⁷⁰ CILETTI-LÄHNEMANN 2010, 49.

⁷¹ COOPER 2010, 169–172, 178.

⁷² Tinódi Lantos Sebestyén: *Chronica*, Kolozsvár, 1554.

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Plate I. Fragments of tiles from type 1 (1, 3) and type 2 (2).



Plate II. Fragments of tiles from type 2 (3, 9), type 3 (5-7) and type 4 (1-2); 4 and 6 are two fragmentary to be categorised to a certain type.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AASzeged</i>	Acta Universitatis Szegediensis. Acta Antiqua et Archaeologica
<i>Acta MN</i>	Acta Musei Napocensis
<i>Acta MP</i>	Acta Musei Porolissensis
<i>AJug</i>	Archaeologia Jugoslavica
<i>ArchÉrt</i>	Archaeologiai Értesítő
<i>ArchHist</i>	Archaeologia Historica
<i>AnB (S.N.)</i>	Analele Banatului
<i>Apulum</i>	Apulum. Acta Musei Apulensis
<i>APregl</i>	Arheološki pregled. Arheološko društvo Jugoslavije
<i>ATr</i>	Ars Transsilvaniae
<i>AVFSL</i>	Archiv des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde
<i>Balkanica</i>	Annual of the Institute for Balkan Studies in Belgrade
<i>Balcanoslavica</i>	Balcanoslavica. Centar za istraživanje na staroslovenskata kultura
<i>BCȘS</i>	Buletinul Cercurilor Științifice Studentești
<i>BAR (-IS)</i>	British Archaeological Reports (-International Series)
<i>BudRég</i>	Budapest Régiségei
<i>Crisia</i>	Crisia. Muzeul Țării Crișurilor
<i>Dacia (N.S.)</i>	Dacia. Recherches et découvertes archéologiques en Roumanie, I–XII (1924–1948), Nouvelle série (N. S.): Dacia. Revue d'archéologie et d'histoire ancienne
<i>DolgKoložsvár (Ú.S.)</i>	Dolgozatok az Erdélyi Nemzeti Múzeum Érem- és Régiségtárából, (új sorozat, 2006–), Kolozsvár
<i>ErdMúz</i>	Erdélyi Múzeum
<i>EphemNap</i>	Ephemeris Napocensis
<i>GPSKV</i>	Grada za proučavanje spomenika kulture Vojvodine
<i>Istros</i>	Istros. Buletinul Muzeului Brăilei
<i>Marisia</i>	Marisia (V–), Studii și Materiale
<i>PBF</i>	Prähistorische Bronzefunde
<i>REByz</i>	Revue des études byzantines
<i>RMV (=RVM)</i>	Rad Muzeja Vojvodine/ Rad Vojvodjanskih Muzeja. Vojvodjanski muzej u Novom Sadu
<i>Sargetia (N.S.)</i>	Sargetia. Acta Musei Devensis
<i>SCIA-AP</i>	Studii și cercetări de istoria artei. Seria Artă plastică
<i>SCIV(A)</i>	Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche (și Arheologie 1974–)
<i>Starinar</i>	Starinar. Arheološki Institut Beograd
<i>ZborRadBeograd</i>	Zbornik radova Vizantinološkog instituta Beograd Recueil des travaux de l'Institut d'études byzantines
<i>ZfB</i>	Zeitschrift für Balkanologie
<i>Ziridava</i>	Ziridava. Studii și cercetări
<i>Ziridava–StArch</i>	Ziridava. Studia Archeologica