

# A long trace of an early modern historical phenomenon: The 1903 Rákóczi pilgrimage to Constantinople

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## ABSTRACT

Ferenc Rákóczi II, Prince of Transylvania, the leader of the Hungarian war of independence against the Habsburgs between 1703 and 1711, was the first legend of Hungarian national independence at the turn of the century. In the early years of the 20th century, after decades of social and political struggle, the transportation of the prince's body from his original burial place in Constantinople to Hungary came within reach. Until that happened, his tomb was visited several times and for various purposes by Hungarian historians, politicians, religious leaders, and public figures – visits known as the Rákóczi pilgrimage. The most significant was the Rákóczi pilgrimage of 1903. It involved important rituals of cultic attitudes: visiting the tomb of a saint, participating in cultic ceremonies, and collecting relics. The event was one of the most important modern pilgrimages of the early 20th century, with historical roots dating back to the early modern period.

## KEYWORDS

cult, pilgrimage, ritual, collecting relics

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## GENERAL AND SPECIFIC FEATURES OF HISTORICAL CULTS IN MEMORY CULTURE AND HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION

Common evidence of all religious, literary, and historical cults, regardless of time and place, is that they all develop a set of customs, which basically have five major areas: visiting places that are practically considered sacred, collecting relics, their devotional care, celebrating anniversaries and participating in rituals. The cultic way of speaking, and the topos set of laudations are the communicative features manifested in these areas. This dual but closely overlapping system can be seen as a model that practically covers the way a cult works, be it religious, literary, or historical. Our starting point is that this system can be applied to all cultic manifestations of universal human culture. Cult phenomena, like all cultural phenomena, have analogous features across universal culture, such as festive rituals, which can be found in a wide variety of social systems in different historical periods and even at the level of groups, since one of their tasks/functions is to connect the different social strata. In parallel with this, there is another specificity of cultic phenomena: uniqueness, and non-repetition, which is the totality of the features of a cultic phenomenon or cultic ritual. And what defines the speciality and the uniqueness of the cultic ritual? The social, cultural, and religious context in which the cult is created and can function. This is also an important part of memory culture. Consequently, since cult research cannot exist without exploring the social-historical context, it requires a strong historical approach. The study of cults – be they religious, literary, or historical – cannot be carried out without historical reconstruction.<sup>1</sup>

The research on the cult of Hungarian historical figures can also be placed in this schematically described system, among which the historical and political cult of the Transylvanian prince Ferenc Rákóczi II (1676–1735) can be included. The cult of Rákóczi (like all historical cults) is a complex phenomenon of memory culture,<sup>2</sup> one of the important issues of which is the localisation of the cult of the prince: the mapping of the real and/or symbolic places in space and time where cultic acts and rituals were manifested. Following the “classical” saint cult, these spaces include the tomb of the saint – in our case Rákóczi’s. Due to the inaccessibility of Rákóczi’s tomb – until the return of his ashes in the autumn of 1906 and his reburial in Kassa (today: Košice, Slovak Republic) – the adherents of his cult created other symbolic places associated with him by setting up memorials: plaques, statues, and monuments in honour of Rákóczi. Real and symbolic spaces of Rákóczi’s memory culture were created through the commemorative signs. These spaces include, in a broader sense, all other places where the cult of Rákóczi was manifested, such as town halls, community halls, hotels, school ballrooms and all the places where ceremonies and festive municipal and community assemblies were held in Rákóczi’s memory, where a painting of him was placed, or perhaps where charity events, cultural programmes, theatre performances, assemblages, social dinners, concerts, and many other events were organised to create monuments to Rákóczi.

<sup>1</sup>The first to point out the need for a historical approach in literary cult research was: [Dávidházy \(1989\)](#) 207. The approach became evidence in just over a decade, see: [Lakner \(2005\)](#), 11–30.

<sup>2</sup>For the definition of the content of the Rákóczi cult, see most recently: [Kincses \(2021a\)](#).



## THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE RÁKÓCZI PILGRIMAGES IN A NUTSHELL

After his death on 8 April 1735, Ferenc Rákóczi II, Prince of Transylvania, was buried in accordance with his will in the Jesuit church of Constantinople (Galata) in Turkey (after the dissolution of the order, the church of St. Benoît of the Lazarist mission), next to his mother, Ilona Zrínyi (1643–1703). The idea of returning the ashes of the prince had already been raised in the Reform Era, and after a decade and a half of silence following the 1848–1849 War of Independence, from 1862 onwards, several politicians and public figures reiterated the need to do so. The reason for this was, on the one hand, to finally place the ashes of the prince, who had been buried in a foreign country, in his native land, thus ending his hiding, and on the other hand, to have a place to remember him, a place to pay national respect, since only a select few were able to reach Turkey. A long process of more than four decades began, during which, in 1867, after the Compromise with the House of Habsburg, Kálmán Thaly (1839–1909),<sup>3</sup> researcher of the Rákóczi era and the tombs of the prince and his fellow exiles, started a long line of publications about the circumstances of the burial of Rákóczi (and of his fellow exiles from 1870 onwards), the tombs, and the inscriptions in the historical journal *Századok* [Centuries], and, in parallel with this, he advocated with great fervour in pro-independence political circles and the press that the ashes be brought home. Thus, at the end of the 19th century, Thaly became a central figure in the process of bringing the ashes of the prince and his fellow exiles home, and he played a major role in the creation of the political cult of the prince in the 19th and 20th centuries, to which the so-called Rákóczi pilgrimages also contributed.<sup>4</sup> His work was successful, and from the 1870s the issue was frequently discussed in political forums, at the county assemblies (first in Zemplén on 8 March 1873), then at the meetings of other jurisdictions, and in the House of Representatives of the Parliament, where an increasing number of submissions were received on the matter. On 14 June 1873, the House of Representatives referred the matter with a unanimous decision to the Prime Minister's Office, with instructions that the Government should take act on the matter.<sup>5</sup>

After the lengthy preliminaries – county speeches, address proposals, diplomatic negotiations, the excavation of tombs and the general political considerations, the birth of the royal

<sup>3</sup>Kálmán Thaly, poet, historian, and politician, was a prominent researcher of the Rákóczi War of Independence, author of numerous source publications and studies. He wrote poems and ballads in the spirit and tone of the 16th and 18th centuries, which he published as part of the authentic literary heritage. As a historian, he had published numerous source publications and studies on the Rákóczi era and intended to write a three-volume biography of Ferenc Rákóczi II, of which only the first volume, up to 1703, was published (Thaly, 1881). He was a leading exponent and shaper of the cult of Rákóczi and was also a member of the Hungarian parliament (vice-president) of the Independence Party, from 1878 until his death, and was at the head of the cult's political line.

<sup>4</sup>To summarise, see the main and most recent literature on the issue (without aiming to give an exhaustive list): Balla (1935); R. Várkonyi (1961) 278–300; Gyulai (1988); Köpeczi (1996); Zádorné Zsoldos (1996); Halász et al. (2004); Köpeczi and R. Várkonyi (2004), 552–562; R. Várkonyi and Kis (2004), 623–773; Köpeczi (2006); R. Várkonyi (2006); Seres (2006); Engi (2008); Gleszer (2009); Gayer (2011); Ilyés (2013); Gyulai (2014); Pap (2016); Tóth (2016); Tóth (2017a, 2017b); Gayer (2020); Thaly (2021). My own publications on the subject: Kincses (2003); Kincses (2021b); Kincses (2021c, 2021d). The term pilgrimage was used by the contemporaries themselves in 1903 and is also used in the call (see below).

<sup>5</sup>Szadeczky (1904a); Kincses (2003), 136; Halász et al. (2004), 5.



consent (18 April 1904), and finally, but not least, the abolition of Article XLIV of 1715, which declared Rákóczi a traitor – the repatriation of the prince’s ashes finally took place between 27 and 30 October 1906. Rákóczi was buried again in a solemn ceremony in Kassa, creating the main symbolic space for the cult of the prince, now accessible to everyone, in the northern crypt of the St. Elisabeth Cathedral.

However, until this could take place, the principal symbolic site of the cult of Rákóczi was the prince’s resting place in Turkey. In the eyes of contemporaries, the Rákóczi pilgrimages were both the visits to and the archaeological excavation of the tomb.

## THE RÁKÓCZI PILGRIMAGES

Our study examining the relationship between pilgrimages to Constantinople and cultic affiliations is not without precedent; the issue was first exposed by György Tverdota in an excellent work of popular science.<sup>6</sup> In this he pointed out that the pilgrimages to the tomb of the outlawed prince in Constantinople were initially considered politically risky until the Compromise of 1867, and that paying homage in this way was therefore a commitment, creed and risk-taking at the same time. This risk-taking, although it forms the basis of a cultic attitude, was, in his view, initially motivated by individual reasons. Concurrently, it was also the starting point for a norm-setting undertaking that mobilised a wider community. For the reconsideration of György Tverdota’s findings and for the composing of our work we have used contemporary recollections and reports of the period as sources in addition to the literature on the excavation of the ashes,<sup>7</sup> as well as the writings of Kálmán Thaly, Transylvanian historian Lajos Szádeczky (1859–1935), Kálmán Tóth Szentesi (1875–1946), mayor of Karcag, press releases regarding the 1903 pilgrimage, and other press reports of the time.

The so-called Rákóczi pilgrimages, which involve visiting and exploring the burial place of Ferenc Rákóczi II in Turkey, are one of the most important manifestations of the Rákóczi cult. There were four pilgrimages altogether. The first one took place in 1861, the second in 1889, these two can be considered as antecedents of the third, the 1903 pilgrimage, furthermore, the reburial of 1906 can also be interpreted as a pilgrimage, since the ashes were transported from Turkey to Kassa in a solemn ceremony, accompanied by a large group of politicians and public figures. In our paper we will now focus on the first three.

István Seres names the first pilgrimage as the 1861 expedition, during which three members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences – Ferenc Kubínyi senior (1796–1874), palaeontologist and member of the Parliament, Imre Henszlmann (1813–1888), art historian, architect, archaeologist, physician and member of the Parliament, and Arnold Ipolyi (1823–1886), historian, archaeologist, parish priest of the church of Törökszentmiklós – paid a visit on the official grounds that they were looking for the Corvinas of King Matthias in Istanbul, but in fact they wanted to visit the houses of Rákóczi and Thököly in Tekirdağ and İzmit and find out the exact location of their tombs.<sup>8</sup> Clearly, the journey was a risky move politically, in the period following

<sup>6</sup>Tverdota (2007).

<sup>7</sup>See note 3.

<sup>8</sup>Seres (2006), 1465–1466. (The author called it a pilgrimage afterwards.)



the fall of the 1848–49 Revolution and War of Independence.<sup>9</sup> The real purpose of the travellers was not a secret, as it was clear that the members of the group, which included a palaeontologist, archaeologists, a doctor and architect – in terms of their composition alone – were not looking for manuscripts...

During their stay in Constantinople, which lasted barely a day (they did not reach İzmit), Ipolyi celebrated a mass in the former chapel of Rákóczi, then the pilgrims visited a house bequeathed by the prince to the Roman Catholic ecclesia of Tekirdağ, Rákóczi's dribbling fountain, as well as the Greek church that held the tombs of other exiles (Miklós Bercsényi, Antal Esterházy and Miklós Sibrik). Ipolyi also made notes on the Roman Catholic registers, and Henszlmann drew a sketch of Rákóczi's house with its porch paintings and dribbling fountain, as well as the tombs of the three exiles mentioned above, together with their inscriptions. In a later recollection, Ipolyi also mentioned that he travelled the coast with Kelemen Mikes' book in his hands, and even recognised Mikes' former place of residence based on his *Letters from Turkey*.<sup>10</sup>

The next event, in the autumn of 1889, is closely related to the history of the Rákóczi cult, and was a real pilgrimage in a religious sense, a clear manifestation of cultic behaviour. During the 24-day journey, Kálmán Thaly, leader of the pilgrimage group, had the church of the monastery opened with the permission and help of the Lazarists of Constantinople, and excavated the tomb in the side gate, which contained the earthly remains of Rákóczi and his mother, Ilona Zrínyi. The group accompanying him consisted of three members not participating in the previous pilgrimage, and the official aim was the same as in 1861: to find the Corvinas of Matthias. This excavation was within the frameworks of a classic pilgrimage: not only was there scientific excavation – the discovery of the remains and archival research in the Galata monastery of the Lazarists of Constantinople – but also a series of cultic acts of veneration for the prince were carried out.<sup>11</sup> The permit for excavation was only granted on the promise that the area would remain closed to the public. However, the compliance with this would have made the basic objective of the pilgrimage, which was to get as much publicity as possible, unachievable. Thus, Kálmán Thaly chose the following solution: he divided the pilgrimage into two ritual phases. The first one was the excavation of the remains with a small number of travellers and local missionaries. The second was a holy mass celebrated by Vilmos Fraknói (1843–1924), titular bishop of Arbe, who accompanied Thaly – and who was the national superintendent of museums and libraries “in civilian life” – at the primary cultic place, “the altar afore the tomb of Prince Rákóczi, before a large audience on the following Sunday”. With this public mass the pilgrims compensated themselves for the fact that nobody was allowed to enter the closed area during the excavation.<sup>12</sup> The report of Thaly reveals that several people

<sup>9</sup>Tverdotá (2007), s. p.

<sup>10</sup>István Seres also reviewed the history of the other journeys in his study, which, being simple visits, are not considered pilgrimages in a classical sense. Seres (2006), 1466–1467.

<sup>11</sup>Thaly was granted permission on condition that only he, Vilmos Fraknói, and the members of the order abroad were allowed to participate in the excavation; it had to be prevented that the excavation would be surrounded by a crowd; and the results of the excavation had to be kept a secret, since in 1839, when the tomb was first opened, a huge crowd was said to have gathered, and “a whole procession went to Galata”. Halász (2003), the citation: 43. The circumstances of the excavation were summarised in detail: Köpeczi (2006), 1207–1208.

<sup>12</sup>Thaly (1890), the citations: 2.



visited Constantinople at the same time as the excavation, and a memorial service was held in the presence of a large audience a week after the bones were found. At the service, Thaly and Kubínyi, despite being Protestants, were allegedly filled with rapture, kneeled throughout the service, and burst into tears.<sup>13</sup> As for the events of the circumstances of the discovery of the bones a week earlier, Thaly's later recollection of 1893 also reveals the personal nature of the ritual, which can be seen as a naturalistic, extreme manifestation of the cultic attitude. While Kubínyi was struggling with his indisposition, "with the merciful hands of Rákóczi's historian [i.e. Thaly] I tenderly wrapped and clothed the glorious head of my old commander-in-chief in royal velvet, in golden purple..."<sup>14</sup> for Thaly, the leader of the pilgrimage, the archaeological excavation thus becomes a sacred act, which involved the excitement of anticipation, the thrill of the excavation, the falling to his knees, the awe, and even the crying and the prayers,<sup>15</sup> and then the same affected the elderly historian during the Catholic mass.

Despite Thaly's tireless press campaign – which Lajos Szádeczky elegantly described as "[t]he reports on this in 1892 renewed interest in the memory of Rákóczi"<sup>16</sup> – the next pilgrimage had to wait until 1903, since "no official steps were taken to bring the venerable ashes home".<sup>17</sup> Another long wander began for the prince: his unearthed remains were in wooden crates for years, waiting to be laid in their final resting place.

## THE PILGRIMAGE OF 1903

Generally, the aim of pilgrimages was to foster the repatriation of the ashes. The aim of the pilgrimage in 1903 was not only to promote the repatriation of the ashes, but also the political rehabilitation of the exiled Rákóczi and his companions.<sup>18</sup> The idea of the next pilgrimage emerged on occasion of the 200th anniversary of the Rákóczi War of Independence.

The reburial did not take place at that time due to political reasons. Therefore, instead of burying Rákóczi's ashes, new symbolic places were erected for the celebration in 1903. An exhibition of Rákóczi relics was organised in Kassa, the reconstruction of the Rákóczi House in Tekirdağ was planned to provide a place for the cult relics collected in the meantime, and the issue of the Rákóczi's equestrian statue in Kassa also attracted large crowds. In this way, newer and newer memorials were created, which temporarily replaced or would have replaced the function of the final burial place.<sup>19</sup> There was another trip to Turkey as part of all this in 1903. The central figure of this pilgrimage was no longer Kálmán Thaly – who had lost control

<sup>13</sup>Tverdota (2007), s. p.

<sup>14</sup>Thaly (1893), 229. For the discovery see in detail: Seres (2006), 1468-1470. Interpretation of the sentence: when Rákóczi's remains were excavated, the prince's skull was wrapped in a piece of velvet.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Thaly (1889).

<sup>16</sup>Szádeczky (1904a), 284.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid. For the further events see: Seres (2006), 1470-1471.

<sup>18</sup>The goal was achieved, the Habsburg Emperor and King of Hungary Franz Joseph I agreed to the abolition of Article XLIV of 1715 outlawing Rákóczi and his companions and on 18 April 1904 he allowed the ashes of the prince to be transported to Hungary. Kincses (2003), 141; most recently Gayer (2020).

<sup>19</sup>The reconstruction of the Rákóczi House had not yet been completed at the time, and the national monument in Kassa was never finished.



of the official duties by this time – but the diplomat and historian Lajos Thallóczy (1857–1916),<sup>20</sup> and the organiser of the pilgrimage, the Transylvanian historian Lajos Szádeczky, who, despite not being an archaeologist, discovered the graves of the fellow exiles: Bercsényi, Esterházy and Sibrik (and in December 1904 he also excavated the ashes of Thököly). First, Szádeczky made a solo, private visit to Tekirdağ and İzmit in the spring of 1903 before<sup>21</sup> the official trip in October. He reported on his travels in the *Erdélyi Múzeum* [Transylvanian Museum] and the *Századok*.<sup>22</sup>

The idea of organising a pilgrimage from Hungary to Rákóczi's tomb in Constantinople was born at the opening of the central celebration, the Rákóczi Exhibition of Artifacts (20 July – 20 September 1903) in Kassa.<sup>23</sup> The programme of the national pilgrimage was intended to conclude the large-scale national commemorations.<sup>24</sup> The brainstormers immediately thought in terms of large crowds. The movement was headed by a committee of prominent members of scientific and public life, consisting of Kálmán Thaly, Member of Parliament, Ármin Vámbéry (1832–1913), university professor, Aurél Dessewffy (1846–1928), politician, publicist, and ministerial councillor, Baron Jenő Nyáry (1836–1914), head of the Upper House, Lajos Szádeczky, historian, professor at the University of Cluj, and Mór Wosinsky (1854–1907), abbot of Szekszárd, and archaeologist “in civilian life”.<sup>25</sup>

The organisers published an announcement in the Hungarian press more than a month after the opening of the relic exhibition, on 27 August (and in the following one or two days in the countryside), calling the action the highest expression of homage, which is a clear example of the cultic attitude towards Rákóczi. 1903 was the paramount year and one of the peaks in the history of the Rákóczi cult, during which the expedition aimed at visiting the most exalted national places of pilgrimage, the Turkish tombs, and the bones of Rákóczi (and his fellow exiles), crumbling in foreign soil. The text of the call is the perfect example of the romantic and cultic use of language in terms of expressions and phrases. The text echoes the national pantheon of the Romantic period: while Rákóczi could physically enter this pantheon, there was a “pious expectation” “in the hearts of patriots” to make a pilgrimage to the sacred ashes. The declared purpose of the pilgrimage is to draw inspiration and strength in the struggle for the national concept, and to pray for the fulfilment of the glorious idea of Rákóczi, the most illustrious hero of freedom: Hungarian independence. In practice, this meant the creation of an independent Hungarian statehood, the will to make the idea of independence triumph, i.e., the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, which is what the Independence Party stood for. Since the tomb of Richard Guyon, hero of the 1848–49 struggle for freedom, was also in Istanbul, the intertwined cult of Rákóczi and the heroes of '48 was also expressed in this politically motivated pilgrimage. The political content of the call was also understood and conveyed by the members of the press who published the call for the pilgrimage. According to the *Budapesti Napló* [Budapest Journal],

<sup>20</sup>Kincses (2021a), 238–239.

<sup>21</sup>Szádeczky (1904a), 284.

<sup>22</sup>Szádeczky(1904a); Szádeczky (1904b).

<sup>23</sup>Unfortunately, it is not clear exactly who suggested the idea in the first place. At the 1903 exhibition of Rákóczi relics, more than 3,300 documents and objects from the period were put on display, of which only three were specifically attributed to Rákóczi. See the catalogue: Mihalik (1903), 224–230.

<sup>24</sup>*Budapesti Napló*, *Budapest*, 27. 08. 1903, 5.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.



“what gives the pilgrimage its special significance right now” is that “the nation has once again entered into battle with the centuries-old enemy with which Ferenc Rákóczi had already fought, Vienna”.<sup>26</sup> Thus, during the political crisis of the summer–autumn period of 1903, when any mass event could almost immediately turn into a political demonstration, the Rákóczi ceremonies – including the call for pilgrimage – were a means and forum for direct anti-Vienna political agitation.<sup>27</sup> The preliminary programme, in the spirit of independence and propaganda, was to visit the tombs of Rákóczi, the other 18th-century Turkish emigrants, and Guyon, the hero of ’48. This program, according to the call, was complemented by a tour in Constantinople and ended with a tribute to the Turkish Sultan. Anyone could apply to the organising committee. The press envisioned a huge crowd of applicants.<sup>28</sup> News reports on 28 September said that many people had already signed up for the trip in just one day, which, due to the turmoil around the eastern railways, specifically the unrest in Macedonia, will pass through Romania.<sup>29</sup>

Newspaper headlines on 1 September reported that “[t]he pious plan to lead Hungarian patriots on a pilgrimage to the tomb of the greatest hero of our freedom, Ferenc Rákóczi II, has aroused great enthusiasm throughout the whole country”.<sup>30</sup> Already in the first few days, hundreds of people are said to have expressed their wish to take part in the journey, which was planned to commence on 10 October. The pilgrimage led by Thaly primarily inspired the followers of the Independence Party, which is not surprising, since it was this party that made the Rákóczi-question a political issue at the turn of the century.

By 10 September, the final route had been set: the pilgrimage will start from Nyugati railway station in Budapest, with one or two special trains depending on the number of applicants – based on this, Thaly and his party had indeed expected several hundred people. One of the trains was planned to run through Orşova, while those from Transylvania will join them in Bucharest, approaching from Braşov. Sleeping and dining cars will be connected to both trains. The pilgrims will stay in Bucharest for half a day, then continue their journey through Romania to Constanţa, touching Cernavodă, the resting place of the son of the Prince, József Rákóczi (1700–1738). In Constanţa, the “luxuriously decorated fast ship” called King Charles [Regele Carol I] will pick up the passengers.

According to the programme, the pilgrims will spend the day after their arrival carrying out their pious purpose. They will make a pilgrimage to the Church of the Lazarist Fathers in Galata, where, after a celebratory worship and a eulogy, they will lay wreaths on the graves of Ferenc Rákóczi II, Ilona Zrínyi and the exiles. Afterwards, in the Hungarian part of the Protestant cemetery, they will visit the tomb of Ambrus Láng, Rákóczi’s court physician, and the grave of Turkologist Dániel Szilágyi (1831–1855). They will then sail to Işkodra and place wreaths on the grave of Count Richard Guyon, the hero of Pod Branisko, in the English cemetery. The following days will be used to visit the sights of Constantinople, and the leaders of the pilgrimage will pay a courtesy call on the Sultan.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>27</sup>The independent press went even further and was more outspoken when it referred to a timely and active struggle in the introduction to the publication of the call. *Független Magyarország, Budapest*, 27. 08. 1903, 8–9.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>*Független Magyarország, Budapest*, 28. 08. 1903, 9; *Hazánk, Budapest*, 29. 08. 1903, 6.

<sup>30</sup>*Független Magyarország, Budapest*, 01. 09. 1903, 10.





Safety issues were of particular attention both during the organisation and the trip. On 31 August 1903, at half past three in the morning, (probably) Macedonian extremists committed a terrorist outrage on the passengers of the Hungarian steamboat called Iron Gate, which was sailing between Galați in Romania and Constantinople, via Constanța (Romania) and Varna (Bulgaria). This greatly reduced the number of applicants to the pilgrimage: the initial estimate of several thousand was eventually realised at around a hundred.<sup>31</sup> The low number of applicants was also due to the high expenses: it cost 375 korona for those travelling first class, 275 korona for second class passengers and 150 korona for students. Because of the hesitation of the authorities and social organisations, and the low number of applicants, the organising committee extended the deadline for applications until 28 September. (Moreover, applications were accepted even after this deadline.<sup>32</sup>) In the last days of September, on the one hand, recruitment was still going on, especially among the university youth, and on the other, the celebrations abroad were being organised, finalised during the last meeting of the organising committee on 3 October.<sup>33</sup> In addition to the county and city delegations and mayors – Budapest, Békés county, Szepes county, Abaúj-Torna county, Bratislava, the city of Győr and Karcag, Torontál county, and Sopron county being officially represented –, members of the two houses of Parliament, representatives of the churches – including the Benedictine Order and the Franciscan Order – and on behalf of organisations and associations the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the National Casino and the Lawyers' Association were present. The parties were not represented officially. Lawyers, bankers, tribunal judges, doctors, and university professors participated privately, together with their wives, similarly to members of historical families such as the Dessewffy, Apor, Kemény or Nyáry families, as well as other landlords.<sup>34</sup>

With some modifications to the previous plans, the pilgrims finally arrived in Bucharest by train in three groups. The first Budapest group departed from Keleti station in the evening of 10 October, and the second from Nyugati station on 11 October at 2:30 PM. The group that left on the 10th was led by Ármin Vámbéry and Kálmán Thaly, and the group that left on the 11th was led by Baron Jenő Nyáry and Manó Láng, director of the central ticket office of the state railways. They travelled via Orșova to the Romanian capital, where, on the morning of the 12th, they joined the third group of pilgrims coming from Transylvania, who started their journey on the afternoon of the 11th. They continued their travel together by a special train from Bucharest to Constanța on the morning of the 12th. However, before they moved on, the pilgrims were greeted at the Bucharest train station by the public of the Romanian city. The pilgrims then took a tour in the Romanian capital, “and went to the Hungarian Home, where a party was held in their honour with the participation of a group of about 150 local Hungarians.”<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup>The names of the participants were published by: *Szentesi Tóth (1904)*, 81–83.

<sup>32</sup>Cf. *Pesti Napló, Budapest*, 30. 09. 1903, 14.

<sup>33</sup>*Magyarország, Budapest*, 27. 08. 1903, 8; *Hazánk, Budapest*, 27. 09. 7; *Alkotmány, Budapest*, 27. 09. 1903, 7.

<sup>34</sup>The names of those who went from Budapest was published in: *Magyarország, Budapest*, 30. 09. 1903, 12. Those from Cluj and Transylvania: *Magyar Polgár, Kolozsvár*, 30. 09. 1903, 4.

<sup>35</sup>*Szeged és Vidéke, Szeged*, 13. 10. 1903 (evening issue), 3. Hungarian Home is an Association of the Hungarian Society of Bucharest. The history of this long-established association remains unexplored. In 1921, it merged with the King St. Stephen Association, and was renamed the Hungarian Association United with St. Stephen.



Upon arrival at the port of Constantinople, the party was taken directly from the ship to Pera, the European part of the city, in carriages waiting for them at the port, to stay at the. The Rákóczi pilgrims were welcomed in Constantinople by the Lazarist chief of police, Turkish officials, dragomans, members of the Hungarian embassy and the Hungarian community in Constantinople, headed by pasha Ödön Széchenyi (1839–1922). The Turkish ambassador put his own steam yacht at the disposal of the organising committee, which, under the leadership of Artur Dessewffy, immediately went to the palace of the embassy on the day of their arrival.<sup>36</sup> Throughout the whole pilgrimage, the party was accompanied by the Sultan's aide-de-camp and other Turkish officials assigned to the ceremonial service. The guards, wherever the Hungarians went, saluted with arms.<sup>37</sup> The programme continued the next day, as described above, including a courtesy visit to the Sultan to pay respects. The smaller part of the group concluded the programme with two excursions from Constantinople: one to Tekirdağ, where Ferenc Rákóczi II and his companions spent the years of their exile, and the day before to İzmit through the stormy Sea of Marmara, to the tombs of Imre Thököly<sup>38</sup> The first group of pilgrims arrived back in Budapest on 20 October. Those returning expressed their hope that the pilgrimage would further the cause of bringing the ashes back home.<sup>39</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The Rákóczi pilgrimage of 1903 fitted well with the established customs of the cult at several points, and it was one of the most prominent events of the Rákóczi cult. During the journey the tomb, or rather tombs – since the Rákóczi pilgrimage linked the memory and cult of the Rákóczi War of Independence and the War of Independence of 1848 – that were considered practically sacred by the pilgrims were visited, and relics were also collected during the excursions. And finally, since it was a milestone anniversary, its celebrations and participation in cultic ceremonies was also organised. The cultic manner of speech, the topos set of laudations, which was echoed in the follow-up reports and news of the time, also suggest that as a conclusion of the Rákóczi Bicentenary celebrations one of the most important modern pilgrimages of the early 20th century took place in 1903.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *Alkotmány*, Budapest, 16. 10. 1903, 5.

<sup>37</sup> *Pesti Napló*, Budapest, 16. 10. 1903, 10; *Alkotmány*, Budapest, 16. 10. 1903, 5.

<sup>38</sup> *Budapesti Hírlap*, Budapest, 13. 10. 1903, 6.

<sup>39</sup> *Budapesti Napló*, Budapest, 20. 10. 1903, 5; *Budapesti Hírlap*, Budapest, 20. 10. 1903, 6; *Pesti Napló*, Budapest, 20. 10. 1903, 7; *Pesti Napló*, Budapest, 20. 10. 1903, 7.

<sup>40</sup> On 8 June 1903, the first memorial to the Rákóczi War of Independence was erected, the so-called Dolha Memorial Column. For a summary, see recently Kincses (2021c). More about the following sculptures: Ilyés (2020); Tüskés (2021); Kincses (2021c), 159–302.



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