

## BOOK REVIEWS

Buda oppugnata: Források Buda és Pest 1540–1542. évi ostromainak történetéhez [Buda oppugnata: Sources on the history of the sieges of Buda and Pest in 1540–1542]. Edited by Péter Kasza. Budapest: Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Történettudományi Intézet, 2021. 571 pp.

“The science of history in Hungary is fortunate if such ambitious volumes can be created as a by-product of various projects.” These words were spoken at the book launch of this volume in Budapest, and rightly so. This publication is the product (one might say, the unexpected fruit) of two research undertakings., Péter Kasza’s NKFIH project *Buda oppugnata – Wolfgang Lazius elfeledett történeti műve* (Buda oppugnata – the forgotten historical work of Wolfgang Lazius) and *Mohács 1526–2026. Rekonstrukció és emlékezet* project (*Mohács 1526–2026. Reconstruction and Memory* project).

The volume is a monumental edition of a text which fills an important lacuna in the historical scholarship and can perhaps best be compared to the volume *Örök Mohács* (Eternal Mohács) in the abovementioned series. While the latter collected and published in Hungarian translation the contemporary and later sources on the Battle of Mohács, the volume under review here makes the predominantly contemporary sources on the sieges of Pest and Buda between 1540 and 1542 available to a wider audience. The range of sources is broad, both linguistically and in terms of genre, but even the sources published here show some variation in their date of origin and reliability. The palette ranges from eyewitness accounts (such as those offered by Wolfgang Lazius and Hans Ungnad) to writings by secondary users of sources, with a mix of pro-Habsburg and anti-Habsburg authors and even narratives representing the Ottoman perspective are included. The sources of the published texts were predominantly accessible, but they were nonetheless unknown. Indeed, until now it has been customary to discuss the fall of Buda on the basis of five or six texts (first and foremost, the texts by Sebestyén Tinódi Lantos and György Szerémi and the *Memoria rerum*), so thanks to this new and more complete edition of texts, historians can now begin to deal with the subject in a more meaningful way, analyzing and comparing a broader array of sources.

After a close reading of the sources, Kasza divides the military events of the three years in question into eight phases, but he finds it preferable to organize

these eight phases into three larger chapters. The first covers the period between 1540 and April 1541, from Leonhard von Vels' campaign to the Turkish siege of Pest. The second examines the campaign of Wilhelm von Roggendorf and the Turkish invasion of Buda, i.e., the events of 1541. In the third, Kasza examines the sources on Joachim of Brandenburg's campaign, i.e., the efforts in 1542 to retake Buda and Pest. Unsurprisingly, the second part contains the most sources. The ominous antecedents to the fall of Buda, the failed attempts to avoid tragedy (such as the attempted treason by the citizens of Buda), and the tragic outcome are interwoven into an almost seamless story. Given the manner in which Kasza has divided the narrative into three phases, the presentation of the longer sources is broken at the pivotal points, but at least the descriptions of events that took place at the same time are placed side by side and thus can be more readily compared. Each of the almost 30 sources is a valuable and interesting reading on its own, but together, they make an even more engaging narrative.

As for the merits of this edition, the sources published here will not only provide important points of reference for researchers of the period but will also be of interest to the lay readership. Should a reader weary of the details offered in the sources, he or she can enjoy the rich array of sumptuous illustrations. The volume includes 33 high-quality illustrated supplements, including both maps of the sieges (Virgil Solis's engravings in high resolution) and portraits of the characters in the book. Military historians, historians, and literary historians will be perhaps the most pleased with this volume, as it offers new information on, for example, the Saturday Gate or the Vienna Gate, several different narrative perspectives on the same events, and meticulous editing and rhetorical elaboration of the texts and the use of ancient topoi, which allows for a number of new interpretations. The different points of view come together like the pieces of a mosaic: the capture of Buda and the ruse used by the Ottomans, familiar to the Hungarian reader, are not even mentioned in the account of Sultan Suleiman and Djalalzade Mustafa of Jalalzaade, for example. It dwells, rather, only the battle and the flight of August 21–22. The reception of little John Sigismund by the Sultan is mentioned in the account by Lütfi Pasha, but this narrative does not resemble the account found in the Hungarian and Western (Piotr Porebski's report) sources. In Lütfi Pasha's text, Isabella sent her son with gifts, while in the version more widely known in Hungary, the widow only wanted to send gifts, and it was the Sultan who insisted that she also send her son.

It is also worth pausing to note the genres of the sources. They include historical works, fragments of letters (by Elek Thurzó, Andreas Kolár, and

Lucas Górká), and lyrical works, such as poems and narrative songs and even a fragment from a drama (an excerpt from Daniele Barbaro's *Tragedia della regina Isabella*). Five different poetic works in four different languages (by Johann Lange, Klemens Janicius, the aforementioned Sebestyén Tinódi Lantos, and Mavro Vetranović) offer narratives of the fall of Buda. It is interesting to note how the genre of sources changes over time. The earliest sources are letters, reports, and new announcements, while the tragic events only later began to appear in the narratives in popular genres, such as Barbaro's drama (1548), Lange's *Pannoniae luctus* (1544), and Janicius' *Tristia* (1542) in the collection *Pannoniae luctus*, Vetranović's poem (*Budavár panasza*), and Tinódi Lantos' historiographical songs (c. 1553 and 1554). The events of the summer of 1541 seem to have been the only ones dramatic enough to have found expression in a variety of genres and then to have been deemed worthy of recording in narrative in later years. This is interesting if one keeps in mind that the events leading up to 1541 were also full of ominous twists and turns foreshadowing the impending tragedy (such as the attempt by the burghers of Buda to "bail out"), but the focus in the sources remains on the events of late August 1541.

The texts in this volume are mostly translations into Hungarian, some of which have been published now for the first time. The translations are, in general, admirable successes and make for pleasant reads. In compiling this body of texts, Kasza used existing translations (by historians such as Pál Fodor, József Bessenyei, László Juhász, Dezső Tandori, and László Geréb), but he also assembled a wonderful team of translators. Almost all the most prominent scholars of the period (including neo-Latinists, historians, Germanists, Turkologists, etc.) took part in the project. The thorough but not overwhelming accompanying notes and the reader-friendly translations enable readers to immerse themselves in the history of the sieges of Buda and Pest in 1541–1542.

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