

E-STORY IO1 – Observatory

HUNGARY – ANALYSIS OF TV PROGRAMMES ON A SELECTED DAY: 20th of August

The description and historical importance of 20th of August in Hungary:

20th of August is the leading national holiday in Hungary, commemorating the foundation of the Hungarian State and King Saint Stephen, the first King of Hungary, the founder of the Kingdom of Hungary. He was born a pagan but was baptized as a Christian. He was the first Christian king of Hungary and brought Christianity to the country. King Saint Stephen (997–1038) fought for the unity and protected the independence of the kingdom against pagan warlords and foreign invading troops. Thus 20th August is both a national and Christian holiday, traditionally symbolizing the 'Thousand Years old (Christian)' Hungary.

In the interwar years the commemoration of 'Saint Stephen's State' was evidently intertwined with the revision of the treaty of Trianon (and the mutilation of historical, Thousand Years old Hungary). During the Socialist decades August 20th became Constitution Day because it was on August 20, 1949 when the Stalinist constitution was declared. The day was meant to be the representative starting point of the new foundational myth and historical narrative of the new, Sovietized Hungary. Besides Constitution Day 20th of August was usually named a 'the day of the new bread'. The importance of 20th of August as the leading Hungarian national holiday was restored after the political changes of 1989.

Nowadays August 20th is celebrated with day-long festivities, culminating in evening fireworks throughout the country.

THE PROGRAMME OF THE PUBLIC CHANNELS:

Duna Channel

Short general description of the channel:

It is the "national main channel" of the Hungarian public broadcasting system since 15th March 2015. The other public channels had been designated to special programming: news channel, kids channel, sport channel etc.

More information on the history of Duna Channel (formerly Duna Television):

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duna_TV

The program of the channel on 20th of August:

What is the genre of the text?

During the day there were live broadcasted from the most important events of the day, representing the several types of celebrations (from the official celebrations of the state to the celebrations of the Catholic church, and the public events like the evening fireworks)

- at the morning the raising of the Hungarian flag on Kossuth square (in front of the Parliament)
- award giving ceremony of Hungary's highest state award the Order of Saint Stephen
- High Mass at St Stephen's Basilica, followed by the procession of St. Stephen's Holy Right Hand

- fireworks

What are the dominant formal aspects?

Narration: (1) is there a narrator/reporter? (2) is the narrator/reporter visible or only audible?

There were live broadcast with live voice, combined with voice over narration of the celebrations.

Rhetoric: (1) does the narrator/reporter merely report, or (2) openly explain/provide context for the historical event presented?

The reporter almost all along merely reported on what had happened.

Visuals: any elements of the (1) image (shot scale, composition, angles, depth, camera movement, light and colours) and (2) editing (construction of space and time) that stand out?

No. The live television broadcast was organized according to the general standards, providing visually interesting and arresting coverage of the events.

Setting: (1) studio – is there an audience in the studio? (2) on location

On location.

Footage: does it use (1) archival footage, (2) re-enactments, (3) inserts such as graphs, charts, maps

No archival footage, no re-enactments were used.

What is the immediate audiovisual context of the text?

How is the text part of the television flow: (1) what precedes and follows it? (2) is it thematically related to these texts? (3) Is it interrupted by commercials?

The whole day's programmes were organized around the celebrations and commemoration. Live television broadcasts were preceded and followed by thematically related feature films and television documentaries. The programme structure of the day, listing the relevant items, was as follows:

8.30-9.25: live broadcast: the raising of the Hungarian flag on Kossuth square

10.30-11.00: Hungarian Saints – Saint Stephen (television documentary) -- see detailed analysis later

11.00-12.00: live broadcast: Order of Saint Stephen, award giving ceremony

12.00-12.30: news

13.25: Prisoners of God (Hungarian feature film from 1942)
15.00-15.30: portraits on the recipients of 2016's Order of Saint Stephen
16.55-19.30 live broadcast: the procession of St. Stephen's Holy Right Hand
19.30-20.00: news
21.00-21.30: live broadcast: tűzijáték
22.40: The Man with the Golden Touch (Hungarian feature film from 1962)

Magyar szentek és boldogok – Szent István / Hungarian Saints – Saint Stephen

Besides live broadcast the one and only relevant programme of Duna Channel is a part of a television documentary series on Hungarian saints. The author-director-narrator of these films is Marcell Jankovics, one of Hungary's most famous animation film-makers. Besides his films and works as graphic artist, Jankovics has published several books on Hungarian art and cultural history. His new television documentary series 'Hungarian Saints' belongs to this fields and topics of his oeuvre.

What is the genre of the text?

The documentary is structured around the talk of Marcell Jankovics. He sits in a cosy chair, in front of a bookshelf and reads his text from a dossier. The text is illustrated and accompanied by inserted images and film clips.

What are the dominant formal aspects?

Narration: (1) is there a narrator/reporter? (2) is the narrator/reporter visible or only audible?

The narrator is visible. He is not only the main source of the information but, as an authentic public person and intellectual, validates the narratives and the 'historical truth'.

Rhetoric: (1) does the narrator/reporter merely report, or (2) openly explain/provide context for the historical event presented?

The narrator not merely summarizes the historical facts (the life of St. Stephen and the cult of the saint-king) but explains the historical context.

Visuals: any elements of the (1) image (shot scale, composition, angles, depth, camera movement, light and colours) and (2) editing (construction of space and time) that stand out?

The television documentary lack any special visual tool or technique. It uses the most common and ordinary techniques: the narrator is all the time filmed from a neutral medium shot; the rhythm and change between the narrator and the inserted clips is calculable and simple.

Footage: does it use (1) archival footage, (2) re-enactments, (3) inserts such as graphs, charts, maps

The film uses a lot of clips, ranging from archive footage (newsreels), excerpts from thematically related documentaries and inserted images (photographs, letters, documents).

Content of the programme

The discussion of the life and cult of St. Stephen is basically follows the mainstream historical narrative and interpretations. The narrator recites the historical facts and contexts, avoids political-ideological valuation and confines itself to the neutral description of the cultural-historical context. For example the discussion of the political use and rejection of St. Stephen's cult by the different political regimes in the XXth century is neutral and unbiased. However this makes the text a bit plain and featureless.

What is the immediate *audiovisual context* of the text?

The programme was preceded and followed by the aforementioned live broadcast on the celebrations of the day.

M3

Short general description of the channel:

M3 is part of the Hungarian public broadcasting system. It was launched in December 2013 as M3 Anno and operates as “retro” channel focusing on archive programmes of the national public television (reruns of successful series, television plays, entertainment programmes and quiz shows but also documentaries and television dramas). The channel is only available on pay TV.

The program of the channel on 20th of August:

Magyar évszázadok: Szt. István intelmei (Hungarian Centuries: The Admonitions of St. Stephen)

Content of the programme

This is an educational short film is about the Admonitions of St. Stephen (the first Hungarian king) to his son. The text (written around 1030 AD) is considered one of the first royal decrees of Hungary.

In the context of the present political situation the most interesting part is the film's last two minutes. The narrator states: "The most often quoted and most often questioned part of the Admonitions is the paragraph about the foreigners living in the country and the treatment of them", and a quote from the original text follows: "The country that has only a single language and a single culture (tradition) is weak and frail. Henceforth I command you, my son, to help with good will the foreigners (aliens) living in the country and treasure them in order to make them favour to stay in your country not in another."

What is the genre of the text?

It is a 14 mins long episode of the 54-part historical educational television series produced by the Hungarian television in 1986. This is the first episode of the series.

What are the dominant formal aspects?

Narration: (1) is there a narrator/reporter? (2) is the narrator/reporter visible or only audible?

There is an invisible narrator. He summarizes the historical facts about the document, its importance and the circumstances of its production. The excerpts from the original text are read out by different (invisible) actors.

Rhetoric: (1) does the narrator/reporter merely report, or (2) openly explain/provide context for the historical event presented?

The narrator summarises the historical context, presents the most important stylistic and thematic features of the historical text. The narration presents that there are different opinions about the authorship and the circumstances of the genesis of the text, and provides a clearly argued position about the most historically possible solution according to historical research and documents.

Visuals: any elements of the (1) image (shot scale, composition, angles, depth, camera movement, light and colours) and (2) editing (construction of space and time) that stand out?

The overall composition of the shots and the editing style is somewhat lyrical. There are shots of nature that supposed to represent "the land of Hungary" and artistically lighted pictures of the most important historical artefacts that represent Hungarian statehood (the crown, the sceptre, the royal cope of Stephen I). The close-ups of details of the artefacts play central role visually. The soundtrack also uses ecclesiastical chorus music as accompaniment of the pictures.

Footage: does it use (1) archival footage, (2) re-enactments, (3) inserts such as graphs, charts, maps

Except the few natural landscapes at the beginning and end of the film, the visual material is comprised of pictures showing historical documents (the original books and papers the Admonitions were preserved in), and the historical artefacts that represent Hungarian statehood and Stephen I (crown, sceptre, cope), and some architectural objects that is dated from the 11th century.

What is the immediate audiovisual context of the text?

How is the text part of the television flow: (1) what precedes and follows it? (2) is it thematically related to these texts? (3) Is it interrupted by commercials?

This programme was shown at 6.30 a.m., after the half-hour morning news programme that opened the daily broadcast of the channel. It was followed by old Hungarian television entertainment series produced in the 1980s and 1990s.

There were commercials before and after the programme.

Magyar ereklyék, szent jelképek: A Szent Korona (Hungarian Relics, Sacred Symbols: The Sacred Crown)

Content of the programme

This is a 15 minutes short (educational) film produced in 1993. It is more like a visual poetry dedicated to the historical relic: the crown of Stephen the 1st that is the symbol of Hungary as a Christian state, and represents the foundation of the state and its recognition by the Catholic church.

This programme is probably not a historical programme in the narrow sense. It is rather a merger of a film about an artwork and a poetic love letter to this artefact. It represents the special audio-visual tone that is often present when objects of sacral importance are represented.

What is the genre of the text?

It is a poetic educational/documentary short, that summarises the historical origin of the crown then gives a detailed description of the artefact.

What are the dominant formal aspects?

Narration: (1) is there a narrator/reporter? (2) is the narrator/reporter visible or only audible?

There is an invisible narrator who recites the history of the crown and gives detailed description of the object.

Rhetoric: (1) does the narrator/reporter merely report, or (2) openly explain/provide context for the historical event presented?

The film provides a simple description of the most basic historical data. No mention of problematic details or controversies about the history, the historical and political status of the object.

Visuals: any elements of the (1) image (shot scale, composition, angles, depth, camera movement, light and colours) and (2) editing (construction of space and time) that stand out?

The short film is especially lyrical and subjective in tone and has the aura of reverence towards the object/topic. This is stressed by the frequent use of dissolves in editing, the use of pictures of nature (especially clouds), and the visual motif of candle lights.

Footage: does it use (1) archival footage, (2) re-enactments, (3) inserts such as graphs, charts, maps

The film concentrates on the detailed presentation of the object (the crown) itself. But the introduction comprises the pictures of clouds and a short scene where three actors play the role of the Virgin Mary and two angels. The Virgin Mary holds the crown in her palms while they are approaching. The film closes as the three person are leaving (supposedly after they delivered the crown to their rightful owner).

What is the immediate audiovisual context of the text?

The programme was preceded and followed by other archive television programmes (music programmes and episodes of old television series) and commercials.

Szent Istvánról Aachenben (About Saint Stephen in Aachen)

Content of the programme

This 31 minutes long documentary was shot in Aachen in 1988 when the 950th anniversary of the death of Stephen the 1st was commemorated in Aachen. This German city has strong historical connections to Hungary and it is one of the important places of pilgrimage for Hungarians as many relics of Hungarian kings are kept in the cathedral of Aachen and its Hungarian chapel.

The film was shot in November 1988 and an interesting document of the time of its making. The bigger part of the film is a travel documentary type of introduction to the city of Aachen and a recollection of the historical connection between Aachen and the Hungarian kingdom. But at the end of the film there are several short interviews with Hungarian politicians who participated at the event. These interviews make the film an interesting document of the time: politicians speak about the historic connections between the western part of Europe and Hungary just before the political changes of 1989.

What is the genre of the text?

31 minutes long educational documentary film produced in 1988.

What are the dominant formal aspects?

Narration: (1) is there a narrator/reporter? (2) is the narrator/reporter visible or only audible?

There is an invisible narrator who recite the information about the city, the historical facts, and the details of the celebratory event. At the end there is a visible reporter who asks questions from the politicians/public figures participated at the event.

Rhetoric: (1) does the narrator/reporter merely report, or (2) openly explain/provide context for the historical event presented?

The narration provides plain description of the city and the historical events.

Visuals: any elements of the (1) image (shot scale, composition, angles, depth, camera movement, light and colours) and (2) editing (construction of space and time) that stand out?

Visually the film concentrates on the images of the city, and especially on the cathedral and its architectural and artistic details. The whole film is a combination of a travel documentary, a historical educational film and a television reportage about a public event.

Footage: does it use (1) archival footage, (2) re-enactments, (3) inserts such as graphs, charts, maps

At the end short interviews can be seen with Hungarian public figures about the importance of the commemoration and about the meaning of Stephen the 1st at the present time.

What is the immediate audiovisual context of the text?

The programme was preceded and followed by other archive television programmes (educational documentary about the history of Hungarian literature, travel program about Asia, China, Europe) and commercials.

Magyarország 2000 – Nemzeti ereklyénk: a Szent Jobb (Hungary 2000 – National Relics: The Holy Dexter)

Content of the programme

The history of the Holy Dexter (Stephen the 1st intact right hand) from 1038 A.D. till 1999.

What is the genre of the text?

30 minutes long educational documentary produced in 1999.

What are the dominant formal aspects?

Narration: (1) is there a narrator/reporter? (2) is the narrator/reporter visible or only audible?

The programme uses a visible narrator. The narrator is a canon, the official guard of the Holy Dexter. The film is dominated by his sitting figure in the picture while he is narrating the history of the Holy Dexter. Sometimes there is also an invisible narrator explaining historical details while historical documents and buildings are visible on the screen.

Rhetoric: (1) does the narrator/reporter merely report, or (2) openly explain/provide context for the historical event presented?

The visible narrator tells the (hi)story without reflections. He tells a moderate catholic interpretation, mentions only limited amount of miracles connected to the relic.

Visuals: any elements of the (1) image (shot scale, composition, angles, depth, camera movement, light and colours) and (2) editing (construction of space and time) that stand out?

Visually the programme is extremely conservative. The sitting figure of the narrator dominates the programme (approx. 70% of screen time is filled with his figure shot with a fixed camera).

Footage: does it use (1) archival footage, (2) re-enactments, (3) inserts such as graphs, charts, maps

There are several pictures of historical documents and footage presenting some of the places that has a historical connection with the Holy Dexter.

What is the immediate audiovisual context of the text?

The programme was preceded and followed by other archive television programmes and commercials. One of the preceding programmes was a television drama (78 minutes, produced in 1992) telling the story of the final years of the life of Stephen the 1st.

THE PROGRAMME OF THE COMMERCIAL CHANNELS:

RTL Klub:

Short general description of the channel:

RTL Klub is Hungary's leading commercial television station founded in 1997. The station is owned by the Luxemburg-based RTL Media Group. The channel's main target group is young urban population. When in 2014 the government tried to tax the entire Hungarian media marketplace, RTL was hit hardest as the largest commercial broadcaster. Since that point onwards, the station has adopted a critical voice against the Fidesz-led government in its news shows. Many critics have pointed out that the adopted critical tone of the channel is only due to the financial interests of the company.

The program of the channel on 20th of August:

On this channel, no programming item hinted at national commemorative day celebrating St. Stephen's Day in Hungary. It was only the daily news show "Híradó" at 6pm that had two reportages about the celebrations connected to the commemorative day. Although basically no historical references were present in these two segments. The first (and longer) piece was a detailed presentation about all the preparations for the biggest event of the day: the fireworks in Budapest, and also contained short interviews with the people participating in the entertaining programmes available during the day and preparing for the fireworks. The second, shorter segment summarized the official state celebrations and quoted the speech of the president of Hungary. But even this part was able to avoid any substantial historical references. Basically no historical content was present on the channel all day.

TV2:

Short general description of the channel:

TV2 is the second largest commercial television station in Hungary, which has been operating since 1997. Originally it was owned by the German media conglomerate ProSiebenSat1. After a series of changes in the structure of ownership, TV2 was bought in 2015 by entrepreneurs closely aligned with Fidesz, the governing right-wing party in Hungary. Since the takeover, the station's news programs broadcast tabloid-style government propaganda.

The program of the channel on 20th of August:

On this channel, no programming item hinted at national commemorative day celebrating St. Stephen's Day in Hungary. While on 15th of March (another important national holiday) a canonical Hungarian historical film was showed by the channel, on 20th of August no specific programmes were dedicated to commemoration. Although it is partly due to the fact that films dealing with (or related to) the topic of St. Stephen are not abundant in Hungarian film history. (The only counter example, the rock musical 'Stephen he King' and its film version

from the mid-1980s which is actually overused in Hungarian television around St. Stephen's Day.)

The only programme in which the celebrations were noticed was the daily news show "Tények" at 6pm. Although this show had reportages about the celebrations connected to the commemorative day, no historical references were present in it.

In the early evening hours (6-7pm), TV2's daily news show "Tények" (Facts) was broadcast.

TÉNYEK (daily news show)

What is the immediate audiovisual context of the text?

It is preceded and followed by entertainment programming entirely unrelated to the commemorative aspects of the national holiday (the news show was preceded and followed by American blockbusters like Garfield and Avatar). Tények is not interrupted by commercials which, however, directly precede and follow it. Political, historical, social or cultural news items are clearly outbalanced by tabloid news, such as thefts, crashes, violent crime, etc.

What is the genre of the text?

Tények program is a classic news show in the sense that the studio reporter introduces short events, coverages about internal and international political events, which are then followed by brief on-location reports.

On 20th of August the leading news were the Hungarian team's 8th gold medal at the Olympic Games. It was followed by the reportages on the events and celebrations of the day. The block began with a reportage on the security preparations on the evening fireworks at Budapest, contrasting 2016 with 2006 when the National Holiday fireworks were hit by storm: five died and hundreds were injured. Implicitly this reportage's silent subtext was suggesting the opposition between the 'unsafe' 2006 (under Ferenc Gyurcsány's Socialist government) and the 'safe' 2016 (under Viktor Orbán's Conservative government). However the focus of the reportages were not political and were loosely connected to the historical context of the commemoration. The topics of the reportages were rather commercial-entertaining events like 'Street of Hungarian Flavors' or the Festival of Folk Arts which is held in Buda Castle and also celebrated at St Stephen's Day weekend. These events were only culturally connected to the historical commemoration: they were to represent the country's unique and essential folk / cultural heritage. The keynote of the reportages might be summarized by the opinion of one of the interviewees of the festive events: "Here are everything is nice and good."

What are the dominant formal aspects?

The coverage uses several reporters' voice-over intercut with short interviews.