



## **The Happy Times of Peace**

Building the Myth of George Bernády in Târgu Mureş \*

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**Abstract.** The study examines an account of the past and local identity creating mechanisms by giving an example of the mythical figure of the twentieth century mayor of Târgu Mureş, George Bernády. The paper specifically makes inquiries about what stereotypes construct the past centred around the individual, what stereotypical rituals and discourses the community uses, how it builds up its own spatial and temporal boundaries and why they resort to this figure from the past to construct their collective consciousness. In order to preserve the reconstructed past certain ceremonies are created, establishing the ritual space and time, and they define activities that are symbolic in nature and are rule-driven; they produce discourses, narratives that legitimise the guarding of the respective past. The subject of the investigation is the pictorial representation of George Bernády's cult, too, the narratives formed around it and the elements of the personal cult. The cult of the legendary mayor calls forth various forms of manifestation in the local society. His figure is always defined by the current situation, it is not final but perpetual, and it exists in the series of re-creations by the use of constant and variable elements. His remembrance gains functionality within the limits of an ongoing communication and interaction of the social group.

**Keywords:** cultural memory, memory location, commemorative ceremonies, festive speeches, George Bernády's cult

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People need stereotypes in order to achieve the understanding of the present times, the development and relative completeness of individual and social identity. Thinking in stereotypes, inherent in the thinking mechanism itself, is a part of cognition (Katona 1996). This thinking in categories is also extended to historical cognition, as well as to a group's creation of a collective identity, which is based on the reviewing of its own history. My research focuses on the collective memory of Târgu Mureş, with the main emphasis on George Bernády, the mayor in charge at the beginning of the twentieth century, and on his age. The first and most important question that arises in this context is: why would the identity development of the years 1900–2000 reach back to an era nearly a hundred years earlier; what are the values found then that are missing at the end of the twentieth century, which the city so gladly identifies with after such a long time. Why is it particularly this mayor that the very strong cult is built around? The answer seems obvious: this is what comes naturally. It was in the early 1900s, during the management of Mayor George Bernády, that Târgu Mureş, the provincial town became an urbanised city. The city dwellers walk daily past the buildings that were built in that period, so these buildings are something that cannot be ignored. Why is this part of collective memory so prominent? It is because the political elite seek to nurture this cult, at the same time trying to strengthen the collective consciousness of the Hungarian ethnic group as well.

This paper tries to establish an account of the past and local identity creation mechanisms by giving a stereotypical example of the figure of the twentieth century mayor, specifically asking what stereotypes construct the past centred around the individual, what stereotypical rituals and discourses the community uses and how it builds up its own spatial and temporal boundaries. In addition, through remembering to what extent does the community identify with the memory of a bygone era and to what extent it dissociates itself from it?

George Bernády was born in Bethlen on April 10, 1864. He came from a family of pharmacists. He was still a child when he moved to Târgu Mureş with his family. His father purchased the Golden Stag (*Aranyszarvas*) Pharmacy in the main square of the town. George Bernády graduated the Reformed College in Târgu Mureş, then he continued his studies first in Cluj, then in Budapest. First, he held a doctorate of pharmacy, and then he also received his doctorate from the Faculty of Political Science and Law. After finishing his studies he began to work in his inherited profession, he became a pharmacist. Soon after he became involved in public life as a parliamentary representative, in 1890 he was a member of the municipality; in 1900 he functioned as the Chief of Police. For many decades he was also the Chief Elder of the Reformed Church in the Castle Church and in the Reformed College. In 1902 he was elected mayor with acclamation (Marosi 2006). First he was a mayor till 1913, then for five years he served as a high sheriff. In January 1919, the city came under Romanian administration; as a result the bulk of

Hungarian officials were removed from public institutions and a strong policy began to turn Hungarians into Romanians. The implementer of this process over time was Mayor Emil Dandea and his team. Between 1926 and 1929, however, as a settlement on the basis of party politics, George Bernády was elected mayor again (Pál-Antal 2007). From 1926 he became the Member of Parliament representing Maros-Torda County. In 1930, he seceded from the National Hungarian Party and founded the Civic Democratic Block, thus continuing to participate in political life. He was still working hard for the interest of his own nation, nationality; however, the population of Târgu Mureş largely remembers him as Mayor Bernády.

When Bernády occupied the mayor's chair, the population of Târgu Mureş was only 19,522, which by 1915 increased by 10,000 inhabitants. At the beginning of his career, Bernády applied for huge amounts of money, which he could use to start businesses. In 1903, for the first time after 80 years, the city closed the financial year with profit. Thus, the city became creditworthy, the mayor asked for millions in loan, only the bankers knowing about this. The city council only knew about hundreds of thousands in order to avoid frightening the members of the council. Modernisation mainly occurred in city planning. The entire city and its limits were remapped, the land registers were organised, followed by the opening or upgrading of 117 streets and squares. All of them were covered in stone, asphalt, granite or ceramic stone. On the sides of the new streets rows of trees were planted; hundreds of acres of parks were created. Channels were built in the city, the public lighting was introduced, the Maros River was regulated, dams and bridges were built, the city was equipped with plumbing, an electric station was inaugurated, and the city received a gas plant, brick factories, and warehouses. Those who wanted to establish industrial companies, factories, were granted significant reductions in the custom duty, discounts for the plots and construction material and transportation benefits as well. Sixteen small and medium-sized plants were established. The petroleum refinery, a number of customs houses, greenhouses, nurseries, the slaughterhouse, the Trade and Industry Chamber, the Palace of Pensions and the Art Nouveau-style new City Hall were built during this period. Thus, a significant modernisation of public life occurred. At the same time a series of educational, social and cultural institutions were established: the orphanage, five elementary schools in the city's different districts, a higher elementary school (today's Technical University), later, the commercial school (now also a technical university), a secondary school for girls (now secondary school), the public administration school, the military school (now the Medical University) were built; the urban music school, the public library and an art gallery were founded. In the last few years of peace the Cultural House closed the list, thus the modern city centre of Târgu Mureş was completed (Szepessy 1993). In the first decade of the 1900s three banks were built.

As a result of the establishment of institutions, the cultural events commenced, therefore, in 1909, through the intermediation of George Bernády, the first symphonic concert took place with the participation of a symphonic orchestra formed by musicians from the ceased People's Theatre in Budapest. In 1910 the city's own philharmonic orchestra held their first concert. In 1912 an acclaimed Erkel-concert took place in the Transzilvánia building. In the same year Béla Bartók performed another highly successful concert. In 1913 a concert was held to inaugurate the organ of the Palace of Culture, there and then the cinema screened the first films as well. The societies and associations formed in the second half of the nineteenth century continue to actively operate. A growing number of theatre performances took place, at the same time the sports life also flourished. New magazines, newspapers were published, as well as many Yearbooks, Calendars and Almanacs (Sebestyén 1999). George Bernády's modernising activity created more space to the civil recreational activities as well. Summer cold baths, later warm steam baths were opened. The building of the Somostető was started; the inn and the sport shooting range were inaugurated, at the same time picnic sites with stoves were set up. The newly developed bank of the Maros River was also suitable for the weekend holidays, common urban picnics.<sup>1</sup>

In the press and publications appearing at the beginning of the twentieth century a growing number of traders posted advertisements. References are made to several cafès, hotels, restaurants, men's and women's fashion stores, drug stores, department stores selling home appliances and other mechanical devices (Flórián 2003b). The existence of these commercial units implies the demand for goods among the inhabitants of the city. On this basis, all those ads and commercials constitute the proof for the economic prosperity and the process of bourgeois development. George Bernády also took significant steps in preserving the national and local memory. It was at his initiative that the bust of Ferenc Rakóczy II was erected in 1907. A few years later, in 1912 the Petőfi-column was unveiled. These and the previously erected monuments were removed after Bernády's mandate and even after the change of regime in the state system (Flórián 2003b).

The inter-war era was hardly favourable for further urban development. Later, the powerful communist policy of minority assimilation also sought the destruction of cultural values, among these attempting to destroy the values surviving after Bernády's time, as well. Although some of the Hungarian intellectuals living in the city arose to the tacit protection of these values, they could not do more than that. Due to the constraint of the regime, the symbolic occupation of space by the Hungarians was out of the question. The continuously controlled public speeches were not supposed to contain even a shred of reference to the former Hungarian

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<sup>1</sup> There was a situation when, during the campaigns prior to the governmental elections, László Borbély (ethnic Hungarian politician representing Târgu Mureş today in the Romanian parliament, editor's note) attempted to organise such common urban picnics again.

city or its builder. Therefore, the nourishing of his memory was pushed back into the private sphere. The cult became public and suddenly powerful after March 1990 thus referring to the fact that Bernády's figure corresponded from every point of view to the mechanisms of the preservation and amplification of local identity.

The remembrance of traditions is a complex process. The past is produced within the knowledge that the community shapes and made public (Fejős 1996). And this does not only mean the accumulation of the knowledge of the events, but also a selection process in which the remembrance plays a role as important as forgetting. The community inducts so-called "cover memories" in order to prevent access to disturbing memories.<sup>2</sup> Thus, remembrance becomes a simplifying process in which the cultic person monopolises an era, thus becoming a symbol of it, and in this way allowing for the formation of stereotypes. In this spirit, George Bernády is that cultic person in Târgu Mureş who becomes a symbol of the conjunctural time. From the cult of this era certain motifs have been preserved, such as the enrichment of the town with bourgeois houses, the building and functioning of civic, educational and cultural institutions, the development of cafés, bars, and the emergence of common spare-time activities such as the picnic on the banks of the Maros River. And to all of these we can link George Bernády's name, whose person is surrounded by such stereotypes as: Bernády the city builder, the outstanding organiser, the George Bernády who is faithful to his principles, who accomplishes all his plans for urban renewal in spite of all hindrances, the George Bernády with an excellent economic sense, who lifted the city out of the sea of mud, who developed the province into an urbanised town; George Bernády who is able to descend to the little people, the mayor who is able to find a solution to any problem.

The specific knowledge resulting from the recollection is characterised by a specific discourse, as well as by ritualised behaviours and symbolic actions that constitute this discourse. This complex is the "social memory," which is individual, biographical, and collective, as it applies to historical events experienced in a shared environment. In addition, the collective memory has a diffuse nature imbued with emotions (Fejős 1996). This is proven also by the memorial ceremonies related to George Bernády in Târgu Mureş.

In 1992 the George Bernády Cultural Foundation was established, whose members – city councillors, doctors, and journalists – worked continuously in the following years in order to develop the Bernády cult. As a first step a statue of George Bernády was erected in the square named after him. A few years later the Bernády-days started to be organised. Since 1997 this event has taken place in the city annually, on a regular basis memorials are erected, inaugurations, wreathing, speeches are presented, various texts are published. An integral part of the event is

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<sup>2</sup> For current research carried out about social memories, see Olick and Robbins (1999: 19-43).

the awarding of a memorial plaque, which is usually given to honour the citizens who brought significant benefits to the city through their work. In the following I shall attempt to describe these cultic events and the discourses formed around them as well.

The activity spaces of the remembrance-ceremonies in each case are in some way linked to the name of George Bernády (cf. Keményfi 2002: 140). The full figure statue was erected in the square named after him. During the annual celebrations this statue and the tomb of the former mayor in the Protestant Cemetery are decorated with wreaths. The students' competitions or drawing competition that are held on these occasions usually take place either in the Bernády House, or in the festival hall of the Bolyai Farkas Theoretical High School. This association brings us to think of the fact that George Bernády used to be the Chief Elder of the college. In 2004 this festival hall was named the George Bernády Hall to honour his name and a memorial plaque was solemnly placed at its entrance. In 1998 a scientific session was held in the memory of the former mayor and his age in the main hall of the City Hall, which had also been built by Bernády. On the occasion of the Bernády-days in 2002 in this very place a relief was unveiled representing the hero's face. The venue of the Gala held on these occasions is always the main hall of the Palace of Culture which was also built by George Bernády. Book launches, lectures are mostly held in the small hall of the building or in the Bernády House.

The memorials unveiled during the Bernády-days are usually also placed into these buildings. In addition to the formerly mentioned memorial plaque and relief, his bust was inaugurated in the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Culture in 1998; in 1999 a memorial plaque was placed on the mayor's former house on St. George Street. In 2007 the Bernády Memorial Room was opened on the first floor in the Palace of Culture. Therefore, the scenes are, in most cases, justified. The resulting memorials play a role in the development of the mental maps of the commemorating community and in binding their historical memory to a particular space. Thus the local community sets a monument, marks in space the events of its own history (cf. Barna 2002: 154). The monuments, as well as their establishment and the recording of their narration, narratives, their conservation receive a special role and importance. These objects become the means to keep alive and further perpetuate memories, it is due to them that the neutral physical space becomes a sacred space that bears a symbolic content and which is inseparable from the history of the community (Barna 2002).

To the mentioned scenes, in each case, a ritual, a celebration is associated, which serves to transpose the past into the present. Such a relationship that is connected to the past shapes the identity of the remembering community. Thus, the collective identity is not displayed in the mundane but in the ceremonial communication.

The first public memorial ceremony was the unveiling of the full figure statue of George Bernády in 1994, in the Bernády Square. The event was held on the 56<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the former mayor's death. The inauguration was preceded by several years' preparation, thus the selection of elements, the determination of the sequence of events were all very thoughtfully planned. The ceremony was opened by two choral pieces, Mihály Vörösmarty's *Summons*, as well as a piece composed for the occasion entitled "To the Founder of the City;" Boldizsár Csíky's piece for choir uses the lyrics of Sándor Reményik and András Sütő. Then two speeches followed, an entrusting and a receiving opening speech. The President of the George Bernády Foundation, László Borbély has entrusted the care of the statue, on behalf of the authors, to the city of Târgu Mureș, the Mayor, Győző Nagy, accepted the custody of the statue, also on behalf of the city. This was followed by its unveiling, then the wreathing. Speeches were held by the county prefect, Ioan Racolța, by the writer and Kossuth Prize winner from Târgu Mureș, András Sütő, and then by the President of the World Federation of Hungarians, Sándor Csoóri. After these other choral works and poem recitations followed. On the site memorial badges and Târgu Mureș city blazons were sold.

The process of the memory assertion is therefore saturated with symbols referring to the mayor who built the city. The text of the choral pieces composed for the occasion bear obvious references to the situation of the Hungarian minority subjected to the assimilation propaganda during the communist era: "Great son of Atlantis, city builder, / as a statue you can no longer see your peers! / Kossuth, Rákóczi sank deep into the sea; / you alone send your consolatory bronze. / Târgu Mureș, our towered hope, / your old city picked up from the dust / quotes you and bears the siege!" (Nagy 1999). The reference to the removal of the statues of Rákóczi and Kossuth appear as the collective symbols of local identity. At the same time Bernády and his age appear as a reference. The remembrance of this ensures the preservation of identity, even in difficult times, in the time of the sunken city as well. The lyrics of the song undoubtedly serve the preservation of the ethnic identity through the mechanisms of memory.

The need to preserve collective memory, the momentum of the conscious creation of tradition and the collective preservation of identity can also be perceived in the delivered ceremonial speeches. The Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation emphasised the importance of the strengthening of self-consciousness and common local identity:

Time is incorporated into the body of this statue, an entire era, the turn of the century, a piece of history. It was a true joint venture all along, the city's collective public act, the evidence that Târgu Mureș has not forgotten his mayor who was the builder of this city. This statue is proof that the hosting

world, the so often despised, misjudged barbecue town, our Târgu Mureş, knew very well how to value Bernády's performance.<sup>3</sup> (Mózes 1994: 3)<sup>4</sup>

This and other ceremonial speeches also reveal that the statue of George Bernády represents that artificially created memory location from the past which the community does not want to break away from. The statue is the means for the local historical memory to permanently strengthen itself (Gyáni 2000). Some of the commemorative speeches bring back other cults as well, besides the cult of George Bernády. Let us take, for example, the speech of András Sütő:

The bells talk about the year of '49<sup>5</sup>, when they had descended and Áron Gábor cast cannons from them, which made the dictatorship dread them even ten years later... George Bernády and his era had created the values of the city which the regime tried to ruin. Injustice, which brings prejudice not only for the Hungarian population of Transylvania, but also violates the traditions of the Romanians, should never be accepted. The melting of the statues of Kossuth, Petőfi, Rákóczi does not abuse the Hungarian spirit only, but also the spirit of those who live in these parts. We look forward to such an era when every city and town should belong to those who build its spirit, culture, keep and maintain its libraries, those who build, sweep its streets, those who make all this possible through their work. No city is obliged to steer its values to the place where ordered, but it can use them to the benefit of their self-government. [...] I'll be happy when I see children climbing onto Bernády's shoulder and no one wants to lock them up for this. (Mózes 1994: 3)

Each ceremonial speech refers to the previous period, the regime of the communist dictatorship; once being freed from it, the collective identity can be openly assumed. For example, Sándor Csoóri's festive speech was:

Here, in the alluring vicinity of this statue, which will soon be unveiled, our first thought could be addressed to this deranged, abominable century of ours. As suffering witnesses we could proclaim with other hundreds of millions, that in our era many have reigned over us, those who have erected not only sculptures, but cold and cruel city-monuments with the profligacy and wobbly arrogance of Byzantium have erected over us the deterioration, destruction itself as a monument. In contrast with their work of art, erecting a statue to

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<sup>3</sup> The speeches held both at the unveiling of the full figure statue of Bernády, as well as at the unveiling of other monuments associated with the cult were published in the columns of the local newspaper called *Népújság* (*The People's Newspaper*) on the days following the speeches.

<sup>4</sup> The translations of the articles belong to the author (editor's note).

<sup>5</sup> Reference to the revolution in 1848 (editor's note).



honour the mayor that lived a meaningful and useful life almost seems like bagatelle. It seems like placing on a pedestal a speck of dust while joggling around with rocks and myths. And yet this is not the case! On the contrary, it is a bold attempt to restore a derailed world. It means administering justice to the past, to labour, to the self-esteem of the trodden. Because, as of today, the statue of George Bernády will be more than a subtle and silent adornment of this city. This statue, similar to the person it was modelled after, will be working hard. Remember, remind! (Mózes 1994: 3)

The events and texts of the 1994 inauguration of the statue preserve the virtually Transylvanist manifestations that followed immediately after the communist dictatorship; the organising and coordinating role of the ethnic elements is highly perceptible. This may be regarded as one of the so-called restoration processes of the ethnicity displayed by the publicity that is organised and managed by the ethnic elites (Biró 1996). This is not the situation in the later cases of memorial ceremonies. As the years went by, the memories of the former regime increasingly faded away. The collective remembering naturally still carries elements of ethnic identity-preservers, and it is still a tool for the symbolic use of space, but the hidden references to the previous system gradually subside.

The building and nurturing of the cult of George Bernády commenced at the very beginning of the 1990s, when the leaders of the still evolving local political party, the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) established the George Bernády Cultural Foundation, thus creating the framework for the nurturing of his memory. Beyond the previously mentioned statue inauguration, from 1997 the systematic memorial nursing process began with the organisation of the Bernády-days. The event is held in the autumn of each year, usually spreads over a couple of days, and lasts from Friday afternoon until Saturday evening, and there are constant elements that – as concomitants of the myths – provide the ritual nature of the event. Thus, on each occasion, after the Saturday morning student competition, a wreathing ceremony takes place at the statue of George Bernády on the Bernády Square. The Foundation, the mayor's office, Maros County Council, the Castle Church, county and city RMDSZ members of the district participate in the wreathing ceremony each year. This ceremony is accompanied by ceremonial speeches, fanfare, choral works, and recitations. The memorial evening or gala evening is also held as a permanent motif each year, and on these occasions alongside various presentations, speeches or other festive events the Bernády memorial plaque is handed over to the person who has played an important role in the progress of the city. The plaque depicts the Town Hall built by George Bernády and serves as an award, an encouragement, deference to that person. For example, such persons were Mayor Imre Fodor, architect Gyula Keresztes, Ottó Darabán, the director of the waterworks, etc. Various cultural events also receive a regular place.

Thus, most commonly, photo and painting exhibitions are opened, books are launched, and performances of different styles of music are organised, indicating that George Bernády boosted the city's cultural life as well. Beside the constantly recurring segments of the events the organisers always try to offer something new to the inhabitants of the city in order to keep the memory alive. In this way the city builder's bust was unveiled in the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Culture, his memorial plaque at his former house, his portrait in relief in the building of the County Council and the memorial room was opened in the Palace of Culture.

In 1998, at the above-mentioned wreathing ceremony of the full-size statue, the speech of the mayor of the time illustrates emotionally heated cult-nurturing:

We honour with reverence the memory of Dr. George Bernády, on the sixtieth anniversary of his death, and we thank him for his leading by example. (...) He was not only a pharmacist, a Member of Parliament, a police captain, a mayor, a politician, the city's politician, but also a Chief Elder of a church and a college. He has created something enduring in these qualities of his, as well. In 1934, on his seventieth birthday, László Gagyí, a college student and later a teacher greeted him with a poem, in which, among other things, he said: 'One deed means more than a hundred polished speeches, / The lesson is already worn in the flesh / A generation fighting for a new future / I wonder if we are wearing the edification in our flesh today?' I think as far as good will, desires and piety is concerned (see the statue of Bernády, the Bernády-days and our presence at the Bernády-days), the answer is yes. (Nagy 1999: 69)

This text highlights the need to record the historical past, it enumerates the merits of George Bernády, and it encourages the audience to honour him as a role model. Similarly, it is primarily the emotional attachments and the emphasis of his being an ideal that are reflected in the speech of the Vice-President of the Foundation's Board of Trustees at the unveiling of the bust in the same year.

The population, the Hungarians of Târgu Mureş probably think of the House of Culture as the closest to their hearts from among all of the Bernády-works, this great tabernacle, where music and theatre, library and art gallery, science and literature, past and present, tradition and innovative spirit alike found a home. As the mayor sensed the need to build another floor on that American cruise ship, and he promptly took action for his idea to prevail, similarly we must all make haste to build further and further levels on our knowledge, our spiritual ascent. Thus we can grow constantly stronger in our Hungarian nationality while also becoming competitive by European standards as well. This is the suggestion, the warning that George Bernády's portrait gives us starting from today; we gathered here in such an impressed state of mind and

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in such an intimate atmosphere to set this statue up. Over the years the attitudes these memories evoke have changed somewhat in character.

This also proves that a hero is not final, not an *a priori* given figure, but it exists in an ongoing series of re-creation. He is always adapting to the new social and political situation, to the new demands. The solidarity, the microsociology-type group cohesion, the need for unity are however a constant theme in the act of keeping the memory alive. (Fejős 2001)

The expression of the merits of the cultic hero with the outstanding work of a life-time seems sometimes redundant, as well as the encouragements to follow his example. In this respect, the local community uses epic clichés and constant colloquialisms such as: “Such people are needed by the Hungarians in Transylvania,” “everyone’s moral obligation” to do something to maintain traditions or in order to maintain Bernády’s memory; let us bring back and re-live the “happy times of peace;” “George Bernády’s city” flourished and should flourish, “the benefactor of Târgu Mureș,” the legacy, the intellectual heritage of the “city builder Bernády” should be nurtured.

In the discourses, on the one hand, the outstanding work of the hero is displayed. This is the past that is deeply embedded in the local community’s system of knowledge; these are the relations of the elements that hardly, if ever, fall out of the memory precisely because of their frequent use in texts. This item of the persistence of the cultural memory mainly refers to the preservation of such texts that play a role in the upholding of the ethnic identity of a community (Hoppál 2002). This important role of George Bernády’s remembrance is demonstrated by the references to the contemporary age accompanying the merits of the mayor, that appears in those texts.

The language tools canonised in public speeches become the building blocks of the wording of personal memories. The previously mentioned discourses seek to maintain the local culture’s own identity, and this is achieved through channels. On the one hand, texts are presented in public spaces, at gala-evenings, inauguration ceremonies; on the other hand, the knowledge is passed on during the student contests. Finally, in addition to the orally communicated knowledge, a large number of written texts are present as well. As the members of the Foundation seek to erect a new monument, a new memorial place each year, they also reproduce something from it in written form each year. The local publications can be segmented in the same way from the point of view of the content as they can be segmented from the point of view of the oral narratives. Similarly, they lay emphasis on the former mayor’s achievements, also publishing public summons, encouragements to preserve memories. Beside these, contemporary texts related to George Bernády appear, such as the mayor’s writings and his correspondence, anecdotes about him, publications, and poems. All of these play a great role in the

process of turning him into a mythic hero. The publications have appeared under the attendance of the George Bernády Cultural Foundation. The sequence has begun with a photo-album that appeared in 1993 entitled *The City of George Bernády*, which was edited by László Szepessy, and it contains the documentary-report of Barna Marosi with a foreword by András Sütő. In 1994, at the inauguration of the full-figure statue, a small booklet was issued entitled *The Bernády Memorial Day*. This was followed by the volume *The Memory of George Bernády*, in which Miklós Kund Nagy collected and edited the materiel that was presented at the 1999 Bernády-day scientific session. In 2002 a photo album entitled *Preserving Otherness – Tuenda alteritas* was published edited by the same Miklós Kund Nagy; a small booklet introducing the Dr. George Bernády Hungarian Cultural Centre was also released to the public. Then, in 2004, Zsigmond Bálint's photo album followed with the title: *From Christmas to Pentecost*. A new album was issued in 2005 authored by the textile-artist Kati Bandi. In the same year, the Dr. George Bernády Cultural Foundation published a new debut pamphlet entitled *The Bernady House*, this time both in Romanian and Hungarian. In 2006 the documentary-report of Barna Marosi entitled *The City of George Bernády* was re-released, its precedent actually being a volume about Bernády from 1962. Finally, in 2007, edited by Miklós Kund Nagy, some of George Bernády's memoirs appeared. Every one of the publications is of high quality, well edited, with colour pictures. In the texts there are discourses that are mostly characterised by pathos used by the authors to suggest the emotional impact and the emphasis of the mythical space and time. The similarly well-printed, realistic pictures mostly portray cultic objects: monuments, historical documents, diplomas, objects that were created in the course of Bernády's activity (the glass paintings in the Palace of Culture, relief, the objects from the memorial room, etc.). In the same way, there is more than one web page that either specifically aims at the maintaining of the Bernády-cult or the familiarisation with the old image of the city, its history and its famous people as well – and a significant part of this is constituted by the Bernády-cult.

Similar to the local publications, there are texts appearing on the Internet introducing George Bernády's lifelong activity accompanied by local historical writings. The aim of the writers is also to maintain the local memory, and the methods are similarly relying on the emotional sphere.

Both the local publications and the websites are supposed to serve the continuity of recollection, that is to say, the tradition itself. Here we can also observe the demand to display the past as history. The texts and pictures published both in printing and in electronic formats may be considered memory locations as much as the special elements of the cult.

The formerly mentioned set of topoi that appears in spoken texts, local publications and online texts is also significantly published in the press.

Descriptions presenting George Bernády's activity receive space from time to time in the columns of *Népújság*. At the same time they will continue to inform the public about the memorial ceremonies. The linguistic instruments applied are the same as in spoken and published texts. The explanation is simple, the journalists who publish such writings are the same as the ones who are also involved in the organisation of the cult, and they are mostly members of the Foundation.

Thus, the role of the concept of the culture-hero can be outlined in the creation and the sustaining of the community's forms of identity. In turn, this role is embodied in the establishment and strengthening of social ties.

George Bernády's leader-personality embodies the power of collective desire. In the course of maintaining his memory other social ties are considered almost worthless, the leader's mysterious strength and power, the supreme law of his will become dominant (Cassirer 1997). The build-up of the cult is also reflected from the topoi-set of the written and oral narratives. Therefore, George Bernády can become, if needed, the instrument of political representation, or the means of cohesion, or a means of strengthening the historical past. In all cases, he fulfills the need of group-cohesion. By remembering him the local community achieves the division of time.

Historian Sándor Pál-Antal distinguishes five distinct periods in the life and the development of the twentieth-century Târgu Mureş according to the new direction, the frame that the determining events imposed on the history of the town. Accordingly, the twentieth century began with the age of Bernády or the age of urbanisation, followed by the inter-war period, the first "Romanian-era", then the period of World War II, that is the "Hungarian-era"; the age of communism, and finally the time after the '89 revolution or on the way towards Europe (Pál-Antal 2007). Only two of these have been preserved in the city's memory, two stereotype eras: the age of George Bernády who was active in the first half of the twentieth century and the socialist-communist era that dismantled the human-civil values. The first period is the age when the city's image changed. It is the liveliest period in the history of Târgu Mureş, when the city takes a huge step forward on the road of civilisation, it turns from a rural settlement into an urbanised centre, the infrastructure is improved, education and culture are developed; these are the happy times of peace, to which later on the collective memory returns. The second period, the time of communism, is the time when the economic and social conditions are violently changed, it is the time of nationalisations, deportations, imprisonments, the individuals considered dangerous to the new system are placed at a disadvantage, it is the time of industrialisation and centralisation, the time of the elimination of the inheritance.

From among these stereotypical ages the local reminiscence has chosen to date back to the beginning of the twentieth century, thus the division into periods is intertwined with George Bernády's figure, of whom the surviving articles, press releases speak in a biased tone, testifying to the fact that he was well respected both by the elite and the people of the city due to his activity, to his elegant but strict codes of conduct. The articles in the contemporary press reveal that during his service as a Mayor he also received special attention indeed, but we must not lose sight of the further process of turning him into a myth, process which embellished the past. I have found articles from the 1920s about Bernády's unifying efforts, an article that refers to the riots, accusations against him. However, this was not the only manifestation of hostility. Various surviving anecdotes also illustrate the occasional disapproval of the inhabitants of the city against Bernády's aspirations and energetic attitude. The fact that nowadays his person is described with positive stereotypes is mostly demonstrated by the statement of Miklós Kund Nagy, the Vice President of the George Bernády Cultural Foundation:

Bernády already divided the city during his time. Thus, there were those who supported him in everything, and there were those who strongly opposed him, there were the little people who loved him, worshiped him because they felt that he was one of them, and there were those who considered him their enemy. Now, this image, of the enemy, has completely softened – that is, the image of the enemy that settles upon us, as all-powerful ruler of the city, but with time this has completely softened. Now sometimes, where there are reminiscences, such as life work summaries, there are references to this, that he had opponents as well, and he was also mocked at, and so on, but this is only marginal, because by now his merits are the ones that fully culminate.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Miklós Kund Nagy's verbal disclosure (March 2008)

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