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# New Hungarian Mythology Animated.
## *Self-Portraits of the Nation*

László Attila HUBBES
Applied Social Sciences Department
Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania
Faculty of Technical and Social Sciences, Miercurea Ciuc
"Semeistos" Research Group for Web-Semiotics and Online Communication
hubbeslaszlo@sapientia.siculorum.ro

**Abstract.** Hungarian civil religion in general, and various ethno-pagan spiritualities in special are deeply unsatisfied with the canonical version(s) of ancient national history. Screening history is an act of powerful pictorial mythologization of historical discourses and also a visual expression of national characterology. In recent years two animated films were released, telling the ancient history of Hungarians, but the stories they tell are very different. Not long after Marcell Jankovics's *Song of the Miraculous Hind*[1] (*Ének a csodaszarvasról,* 2002), a long fantasy animation based on ethnographic and historical data, another similar long animation: *Heaven's Sons* (*Az Ég fiai*, 2010) started to circulate on YouTube and other various online Hungarian video-sharing channels. It seems as if the latter, an amateur digital compilation by Tibor Molnár, would have been made in response to the first film, to correct its "errors", by retelling the key narratives. Built mainly on two recent mythopoetic works: the *Arvisura* and the *Yotengrit* (both of them holy scriptures for some Hungarian Ethno-Pagan movements), Molnár's animation is an excellent summary of a multi-faceted new Hungarian mythology, comprising many alternative historical theses. My paper aims to present two competing images of the Nation on the basis of several parallel scenes, plots and symbolic representations from the two animations. A close comparative investigation of these elements with the help of the Kapitány couple's mythanalytic method will show the essential differences between the two national self-conceptions expressed through the imaginary.

**Keywords**: alternative history, cultic animations, national mythology, Arvisura, Yotengrit, Turanism

1 The film is registered on the Internet Movie Database (IMDB) with this title: *Song of the Miraculous Hind* (*http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0309114/*) and so it appears on the personal website of the director Marcell Jankovics as well (*https://sites.google.com/site/jankovicsmarcell/bemutatkozas/curriculum-vitae-angol-nyelvu-*). Still, considering the slang- and other connotations of the English word 'hind'—meaning 'female red deer' (as exact translation of Hungarian: *szarvasünő*)—for this article I prefer using the *Song of the Miraculous Deer*.

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# 1. Introduction

The self-image of a community is a reflection of its cultural consciousness, an expression of its collective identity. However, it is not as definite, pre-defined and unchangeable as a mirror image would be. On the contrary, it depends very much on the beholder's active projection, it requires voluntary, intentional participation in the process of drawing the self-portrait. It is an interactive image, constructed through the stories of cultural (or collective) memory (Assmann 1995, 2004). Cultural memory is the collective identity of an ethnos, of a nation, represented by the past built up from remembrance, fantasy, narrative and myth (Hall 1990). Such historical narratives work best in cultural memory if they fulfil their mythomotor role as genuine myths (or if—as we will see later—they are perceived as such, even if they are not meant to be myths) – in opposition to objective history (Assmann 2004: 75-76; 79-80).

In our contemporary world so saturated by electronic media—both traditional and virtual—the most spectacular (and maybe most effective) way of identity formation by storytelling is the visualization of historical narratives on screen. A group of historians analysed various history films on the premise that "visual media are a legitimate way of doing history – of representing, interpreting, thinking about, and making meaning from the traces of the past" (Rosenstone 1995: 3). In addition, Astrid Erll (2008) emphasized the power of fictional historical media in shaping collective imagination by pointing out how the mythicizing mode of the rhetoric of cultural memory works in cultic movies inspired by recent historical events (Erll 2008: 391). Similarly, in an essay analysing American and Japanese animations, Kaori Yoshida (2011) concluded that historical animation, as a powerful medium for conveying ideas and ideologies, plays a significant role in constructing national identity by reinforcing or re-evaluating stereotypes of the Self and of the Other. Both Erll and Yoshida conceive historical fiction media as mythic narratives, with far more significance than mere entertainment fantasies. In similar terms, the following study will approach two recent Hungarian animation films presenting historical narratives as animated mythologies, regarding them as myths rather than as animation cartoons.

From another aspect, for discussing certain aspects of the narratives presented in the selected animations, I will rely on the idea that national history, as central ideology of nationalism, may constitute a special type of religiosity. Szilágyi (2008) adapts Bellah's concept of civil religion (Bellah 1967 in Máté-Tóth and Feleky 2009) for 'Hungarianism' as a synonymic political religion. In this respect, while discussing the treatment of ethnic prehistory in contemporary Neopagan circles, Hungarian researchers speak about this phenomenon as the sacralization of the Nation (Szilárdi 2013), or the mythic reinvention-reinterpretation of ancient vestiges, sacred places (cf. Marosi 2013; Povedák 2013), that is, (re-)mythologization of national consciousness.

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It is exactly this sacred-religious, mythic aspect that explicitly offers itself for interpretation in the two selected animations. The mythanalytic methodology elaborated by the Kapitány couple (2001) will help us discover the emergence and formation of mythic narratives and symbolism, and observe their variations and contrasts predefined by the two opposing historical paradigms.

## 2. The Controversy of Images

The central issue at stake in the controversy between the various approaches to the nation's past is the legitimacy and validity of the given approach itself – as opposed to the counter-approach(es). Apparently, the debate revolves around a Finno-Ugric and a Turanic ethnogenesis of the Hungarian nation, but the problem has deeper roots: it is based on the question whether investigating distant past is a matter of science or a subject of faith. Or, to put it differently, is Hungarian (pre)history an imposed false ideology under the guise of objective scientific historiography or is it the confession of one's true faithfulness to the Nation? This dichotomy surpasses the classical Assmannian distinction (2004) between cold versus hot cultural memory: it is the hegemonic concurrency of discourses to "own" historical reality. The aim is to determine the "founding history" and through it the "normative past" (Assmann 2006) and thus implicitly impose a normative set of values for the nation's present. In this race for the truth, the two main paradigms struggle for the exclusive authoritative founding myth: whether Hungarians are a European or an Asian nation.[2] As a last remark to this delicate question that divides Hungarian public opinion, I start my investigation from the premise that the discourses regarding the national ethnogenesis[3] ultimately form a mythical founding history. This founding myth of the origins is of utmost significance, since it reflects—or rather it projects—the self-image of the Nation.

It is impossible to fail to notice the almost deliberately emphasised application of myth as a legitimating discourse in presenting the real image of the nation by both discursive paradigms. In the canonized Finno-Ugric discourse this is not so obvious at first sight because of the scientific stance and language of academic historiography, linguistics or ethnography. Still, the "applied" official version of schoolbook national history is full of quasi-mythic narratives.[4] The propagators of

2 There is more at stake in this question: a strong emotional aspect, which is always emphasized by every different representative of the Turanist paradigm: are Hungarians a European nation—BUT of *humble, primitive, unimportant* Finno-Ugric origin, or are they an Asian ethnos—BUT with a *glorious, superior, civilized* archaic origin? The latter case also implies a distinctive chosenness and a universal historical mission of Hungarians.

3 Whether strictly scientific or "romantic", both paradigms borrow reciprocally—though assumedly—certain empirical and narrative approaches from the other.

4 This phenomenon of "official history" impregnated by myth is repeatedly analysed by Lucian

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the Turanist idea[5] rely more confidently on mythic narratives, over-emphasizing the normative role the founding myth bears in the formation of national identity of present and future generations.[6]

Historical cinema, as a narrative genre with exquisite visual power, is even more susceptible of unwittingly mystifying historical events. The more so, if the film is meant to be an incursion into the ancient past and the gloomy prehistory of a people, and deliberately uses mythic elements in telling the story of the beginnings. This is the case of the two Hungarian animated films chosen for analysis: the *Song of the Miraculous Deer* and *The Heaven's Sons* presented briefly below.

## 3. Two Concurrent Mythic Animations

Marcell Jankovics's *Ének a csodaszarvasról* (official English title: *Song of the Miraculous Hind*) is an 89-minute-long fantasy animation based on ethnographic and historical data. The movie, released in 2002, distributed by Budapest Film, was created in the Pannónia Film Studios.[7] It was made with national government subsidy, visibly as an educational history film.[8] The second example is a similar 60-minute-long animation film: *Az Ég fiai* (*Heaven's Sons*),[9] produced in 2010—an amateur digital compilation directed by Tibor Molnár—, started to circulate on YouTube and other video-sharing networks.[10]

Boia (1997, 2000), who emphasizes that "history is a discourse of the present about the past, a multiform discourse bound to sensitivities and ideologies", a product of the imaginary beyond "true" and "untrue", a combination of hard facts and invented stories (Boia 2000: 164-165).

5 The Turanic paradigm is not at all a unitary discourse, it proved to be extremely varied during our recent investigations concerning contemporary Hungarian Neopagan movements (Hubbes 2012).

6 I wish to higlight two prominent cases: one is the website of "Dobogó", a Hungarian history journal displaying the phrase "*Mythic Hungarian History*" („*Mitikus Magyar Történelem*") on its header (*www.dobogommt.hu*); the other is a network community named "*Fans of the Hymn of the Ancestors' Land*" („*Az Őshaza Himnuszának Kedvelői*"), which alludes to a mythomorphic attitude towards history (*www.osihimnuszunk.network.hu*).

7 For more technical information see: *http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0309114/*

8 According to the *Index.hu* news portal, the film was created from a budget of 245 million HUF, integrally afforded, based on a tender, by the Hungarian Ministry of National Cultural Heritage (see *http://index.hu/kultur/mozi/csodaszarvas/*).

9 Or "*The Sons of the Sky*" according to an English transcript attached to the film on the transcriptvids.com online video-sharing network (*http://transcriptvids.com/v/HbodRT2bA_Y.html*).

10 According to the author Tibor Molnár, who published it on YouTube on his private channel (*http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNdHpmHlKjA*), it is an "amateur animation film, about the ethnogenesis of Hungarians, based on Imre Máté's Yotengrit and Zoltán Paál's Arvisura books. The Hungarian nation is compound mostly of Scythian, Hunnic and Avar peoples." Besides being circulated on online video-sharing networks, the film was also commercialised in its CD version in specialized book stores.

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### 3.1. The Enchanted Deer

The first animation is a fantasy story presenting a half documentary—half imaginary history of Hungarians in consecutive interdependent scenes beginning from the last Ice Age up to the first kings of the Árpád dynasty—lined up according to various legends of the enchanted deer. The title itself: *Song of the Miraculous Hind* alludes to János Arany's 19th-century romantic epic poem *Rege a csodaszarvasról* (*The Legend of the Wondrous Hunt*), an epic reformulation of legends from folklore tradition and mediaeval chronicles. According to some critics, the governmentally funded work is a slightly nationalistic campaign, a "course animation film" (Földes 2002). Others perceive it as a political prophecy with ideological connotations (Bóna 2002)—on the eve of Hungary's accession to the European Union. The film was created by the internationally recognized animation director, culture historian and ethno-semiotician Marcell Jankovics, who had prepared several symbolic anthropological and cultural history studies on the theme of the *enchanted deer* both before and after the making of the cartoon (Jankovics 1996, 2001, 2004). The music of the film was composed by Levente Szörényi, co-author of *Stephen, the King* rock opera.[11] The plot represents a relatively close (though not doctrinal) interpretation of the official Finno-Ugric paradigm. However, it treats history with the artist's freedom—it blends myths, folklore fantasy and medieval codex legends with scientific facts. The film makes use of the work of the most prominent scholars like Gyula László (archaeology), András Róna-Tas (history), József Erdődi (linguistics), Vilmos Diószegi, Mihály Hoppál (ethnography), Géza Róheim and István Kiszely (anthropology)—to name but a few of them.[12]

The historical material spanning four thousand years "from the mammoths to Prince Géza" (Földes 2002) is organized in four chapters. Each chapter is symbolized by an emblematic scene of the four-faceted golden jar No. 2 of the Treasure from Nagyszentmiklós.[13] *Ancestral Land* (*Őshaza*) deals with the role of the deer in the life of ancient Siberian peoples from most distant mythic past. *Hunor and Magyar* (*Hunor és Magyar*) retells the story of joining the taiga and steppe Nomadic peoples through the allegorical story of the legendary twins and their wondrous hunt. *On and On* (*Etelköz*) presents the adventures of the proto-Hungarian tribes in the Khazar Empire during the Migration Period and the "first" Settlement (László 1978). Finally, *Pannonia* takes us from Árpád's Settlement in the Carpathian Basin to the Christianization of ruling prince Géza. The leitmotif of the entire film is the *enchanted deer* (hind/stag) recurring in every crucial moment

11 The cultic rock opera of the eighties was also dedicated to the early history, namely to the first king of Hungary, and the tribulations of the Christianization of Hungarians (a topic revisited also in the film).

12 For a complete list of the scientific arsenal used in the film it is worth consulting the bibliography of the referred studies of Jankovics (1996, 2001, 2004).

13 For description of the jar, see László–Rácz 1984.

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of the plot. It plays the leading role of the stories undergoing countless animal and human metamorphoses that continually fluctuate between heaven and earth. These metamorphoses of totemic animals are meant to symbolize the transformations of the ethnic characteristics forming the image of the Hungarian nation.

### 3.2. Heaven's Sons

The second animated film, *Heaven's Sons*, does not display any affiliation to a studio or animation workshop. According to its technical solutions in graphics, sound and even in plot development, it is clearly an amateur work.[14] According to the credit roll, it was realized by Tibor Molnár, together with a small enthusiast staff; probably from private funds and limited technical equipment.[15] The amateurish nature of the film is not a depreciative peculiarity—on the contrary, the very simple language and the primitivistic graphic execution work in perfect synergy. The overall aspect of *Heaven's Sons* radiates an atmosphere of an e-folklore, naïve art creation, created with modern technical instruments, in a contemporary medium and in the context of social networking and popular culture environment.

Like the previous one, this animation is also a collage of mythic stories, doctrinal teachings and long ethnological descriptions. The main thread of the plot is the ethical-spiritual attitude of the ancient Hungarian (Turanic) tribes presented in contrastive superiority in comparison to any other ethnic formations. The plot extends from the time of Creation to Árpád, the Home Settler, divided into two chapters: *Level—Az Égi Lovasisten fia* (*The Son of the Heavenly Horse God*); and *Árpád—Az Égi sólyom fia* (*The Son of the Heavenly Hawk*). The titles, however, are somewhat misleading. The first chapter is indeed focused onto a single story, the legend of the hunter twins Hunor and Magyar, adapted to the lone figure of prince Level, according to the *Yotengrit* mythology. The second chapter jumps to and fro in time from the mythic Ataisz to the Settling of Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin, based mostly on the stories from the *Arvisuras*. It seems that the story deliberately avoids a strict chronological order, unlike the one followed in the *The Song of the Miraculous Deer.* In turn, it concentrates on the moral and religious doctrines that these stories express or allegorically exemplify.

*Heaven's Sons* is directed towards a restricted target audience: namely the adepts or sympathisers of the Turanic/alternative historical worldview; and circulating consequently in limited channels and networks. Apparently, the animation is created as a firm answer to the *The Song of the Miraculous*

14 It is not the aim of this study to aesthetically analyse or criticise, nor even to compare the two animations on such terms, however, it is unavoidable to present the indispensable basic facts and technical characteristics of the two works, whatever this description may imply.

15 There is no information available other than the short staff list at the end of the animation.

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*Deer*. It seems an apologetic counter-myth for the in-group addressees meant to reinforce them in their beliefs, correcting (what they may perceive as) the errors and manipulations of the historical realities distorted by the previous film. For this reason, the makers of this animation use some of the legendary narratives accepted as common ground, like the story of Hunor and Magyar, the princely siblings with their wondrous deer hunt, or the totemic dreams and fantastic events around prince Álmos, the forefather's birth. But they use these stories not as symbolic narratives but as real myths, as authentic history, and present them from another, salvation history perspective.

Although they use various legends and folk traditions, and even certain scholarly studies, like László Koppány Csáji's researches concerning the Hunza people in Central Asia (Csáji 2005),[16] the main authoritative sources of the story are two mythopoetic texts that form the basis of two mutually excluding, concurrent Ethno-Pagan religious doctrines. These two contemporary Hungarian mythopoeic systems are Zoltán Paál's *Arvisura (Arvishura) and* Imre Máté's *Yotengrit*. A short presentation of both mythologies is needed for a better understanding of *Heaven's Sons*.

### *3.2.a. The Arvisura*

Resuming my previous articles (Hubbes 2011, 2012), *Arvisura* is a vast literary work written by Zoltán Paál (1913–1982), a steelworker who got initiated during the Second World War by a Siberian Mansi (or Vogul) shaman named Tura Salavare, then soldier in the Soviet Red Army. An anonymous translation[17] circulating on the Internet cites from Zoltán Lakatos's (1998) Arvisura-commentary:

> It contains the guarded literary works and traditional customs of the shamans of the 24 Hun confederated tribes. It would be difficult to identify its literary genre; instead, it most closely resembles the style of the ancient world. The monumental, yet unique historical method, which unfolds before us as we read this prehistoric work, seems to lead us from mythology to our present day. The Arvisura history begins with the sunken ancient homeland of Ataisz, which land is similar to Plato's written description of Atlantis, but is still not one and the same. According to the saga, or legend ('rege'), it is from here (Ataisz) that the Huns came to be in Ordosz by way of Mesopotamia, where, in 4040, before recorded time, they formed the

16 Which is at least paradoxical, considering the fact that Csáji is highly critical of the fantasising Turanists (and, admittedly, of the uncritical Finno-Ugric exponents as well) (see Csáji 2007).

17 It is not clear whether Zoltán Barta, the maintainer and (co-)editor of several Hungarian websites and also an English site dedicated to the Arvisura, made the translation himself or he just edited someone else's translation of the published Arvisura fragments and commentaries. See the article: What is Arvisura? (Barta, s.a.) (*http://cometogetherarticles.yolasite.com/the-arvisuras.php*).

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> association of the 24 tribes. The 'Palócok Regevilága'[18] concisely describes the 24 Hun tribes' lives, nation by nation, from about 4040 B.C. all the way to King Matthias, including Maria Theresa. [Barta, s.a.]

The *Arvisura* tells—as its second title suggests: *Truth-telling*—the "true stories" about ancestors from the Sirius and a sunken prehistoric island from where the Hun-Magyars originate back six thousand years ago. This fantastic mythopoetic work "resembling the style of the ancient world" in other words: the mythic language, is a founding myth for several Hungarian Neo-Shaman, Ethno-Pagan groups. Controversially, as if countering in advance the strong Turanist message of its animated adaptation, the *Arvisura* draws and builds up from undeniable Finno-Ugric elements,[19] starting already from the initiator Mansi Shaman.

### *3.2.b. Yotengrit*

The *Yotengrit* is a similar mythopoetic system—a rather religious-philosophical text written[20] by Imre Máté, poet and shaman ("táltos" or "bácsa"), former Western émigré. He was the founder and leader of a short-lived (2007–2009) homonymous institutionalized Neopagan church in Hungary. According to the Yotengrit adepts,[21] there has been a closed secret community in the Rábaköz region in Western Hungary that has preserved the tradition of a hidden knowledge of the "Táltos" shamans[22] originating from as ancient times as the Ice Age. The legendary oral history, healing practices, folkloric-philosophical teachings together sum up as the heritage of the ancient persecuted *BÜÜN* religion—Hungarian spirituality, *par excellence*. While the *Yotengrit* ideology proclaims itself as a religion of peace, love and harmony (suspiciously resembling New Age spirituality), its practices, on the one hand, and its cross-references, on the other, make it a stronghold of Ethno-Pagan Hungarianism. The Yotengrit books also contain the famous *Prophecy of Nyirka*—a highly allegoric and apocalyptic Nostradamus-

18 '*Palócok Regevilága*'—a subtitle of the Arvisura, meaning '*The Palóc World of Legends*', where the Palóc are a regional ethnographic subgroup of the Magyar people.

19 According to several critics, the Arvisura is an "anti-Hungarian pamphlet", a manipulatory Finno-Ugrist conspiracy (Friedrich 2007; Szántai 2005).

20 As in the case of Zoltán Paál, the author of the *Arvisura*, stating that he only put down what the Mansi shaman had bequeathed to him, Imre Máté regards himself not as the writer of the *Yotengrit* books, but rather the one who recorded them from still living folk wisdom traditions.

21 See the official site of the *Yotengrit Community*: *http://yotengrit.hu/* .

22 Important to mention that in spite of certain similarities "táltos" and "shaman" are not quite the same. Beyond the "usual" doctrinal and prestige-related controversies among the different Magyar Ethno-Pagan communities, this issue is of special significance, being the source of reciprocal accusations and mocking. "Táltos" is more specifically Hungarian, being a half legendary mysterious sorcerer-figure (capable of transforming into animals, and bringing storms) of Christian times in live folk-traditions, while shaman is more commonly known as the medicine-man of Siberian and Central Asian ancestors and contemporary kin peoples of the Magyars.

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like set of prophecies referring to future events regarding Hungary and global politics. This prophecy came to live a separate life, circulating on the Internet predominantly on conspiracy theorist websites with strong political involvement on the extreme right occultism.[23] The *Yotengrit* doctrine, as its full name: the Sea-Infinite Ancient Spirit (Tengervégtelen Ős-Szellem) suggests, takes its roots also from ancient *Tengrism*—a still living or revitalised shamanic religion among Turkic people of Central Asia. The Tengriist origins make the *Yotengrit* a perfect choice for a Turanist discourse; again, even if it is charged by its critics with hidden Finno-Ugrist ideology (Papp 2006; Szakács 2007).

*Heaven's Sons* thus succeeds in blending the two competing doctrines by their common ground, the Turanic paradigm, closing an eye to their contradictory stories and teachings, and disregarding even the suspicion of their Finno-Ugric inspiration. It simply uses exclusively those elements that support and express the nationalist ancient mythology, the alternative views of prehistory and draws the Hungarian people's portrait with rugged Central Asian, Turkic features, meant to be universally human.

## 4. Mythic Images – A Comparative Analysis

In what follows, we will approach the two animations not as films but as mythologies, presuming that they are powerful instruments for the re-mythologization of Hungarian national self-image. For this purpose, we will rely on the myth-analytic and symbolic-semiotic methodologies elaborated by Ágnes Kapitány and Gábor Kapitány. We will also keep an eye on their researches concerning the Hungarian national symbols (2002b). The first method, described in the Kapitánys' *Modern Mythologies* (2001), offers an opportunity to observe how the mythomotoric function works, respectively, how ancient myths are transformed and constructed into contemporary mythic narratives; important for us because it shows a model to capture the self-image of a nation in the process of its formation. The second way is presented (among others) in their *Symbolism of the Eras* (2002a)—which is a methodology of symbolic anthropology research by participatory observation in one's own society. The most notable idea to be remembered from the Kapitánys' series of research concerning national symbols[24] is that their general results partially contradict the image(s) showing up from both analysed animations.

On a first observation we may notice several basic similarities and contrasts between the two animation films. Both are built up from the combination of myths,

23 e.g. *http://kataklizma.info/*

24 Their repeated investigations started in 1997 concerning s*ymbols of Hungarian national identity* were republished several times in various forms and contexts (e.g., 2002b, 2002c, 2012, the most relevant ones, used for the background of my analysis.)

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legends, folklore. But while the *Miraculous Deer* completes them with explicit or implicit scientific knowledge, in *Heaven's Sons* much stress is laid upon religious teachings and verbal and visual propaganda. The first film represents the mainline or "official" academic (and political) discourse(s), bearing a certain extent of mild nationalism,[25] showing a Europe-centric attitude (possibly perceived by critical views as EU-propaganda), counterbalanced, however, with subtle ironic scepticism. The other animation represents alternative views of a small but rapidly extending minority, with apologetic and subversive attitude, dominated by radical nationalism.

Following closely the Kapitány-methodology (2001) of myth-analysis, the first question that arises is whether we are dealing with genuine myths or not. The two animations are very different in this respect. The *Miraculous Deer* is not meant to be a myth, but rather an educational school documentary animation executed on a very high artistic level. Nonetheless, it is *perceived* as myth by the (Ethno-Pagan) makers of *Heaven's Sons*, who apparently regard it as a falsifying or deceptive myth, for which a corrective response is needed. Thus the latter animation may be considered as an apologetic and authoritative counter-myth. The *Miraculous Deer* does express a common conviction of the mainline public opinion. Still, the canonized discourse behind it cannot be considered a belief. It has no cults—if we do not count the political commemorations of the millennial and mille-centenarian jubilees of the AD 895-896 Settlement, respectively, the tourist-educational "pilgrimages" to Ópusztaszer Memorial Park with the round panorama painting of Árpád's Entrance or to the monument in the Verecke Pass, and similar memorial places. The film, just as its background narratives, is built both on scientific knowledge and legends, and in strict terminological sense it may not be considered a proper myth. *Heaven's Sons* exemplifies the opposite case: representing not a simple belief but a complex belief-conglomerate with genuine religious aspects. There are important cults related to both the *Arvisura* and the *Yotengrit* as these are absorbed by various movements of Hungarian Ethno-Paganism (see Povedák 2011, Szilárdi 2013, Hubbes 2012). Sacred places (e.g. the Pilis-mountains, the /Csík-/Somlyó-mountain) are frequented, astronomical holidays are revered as revived ancient Pagan or forgotten shamanic celebrations. The animation, while being an anti-establishment dogma-film, explicitly represents the used mythopoeic works as a genuine complex mythology, containing even a well-elaborated catechism of the expressed doctrines.

Concerning the second aspect of the Kapitánys' myth-analysis, namely the classification criteria and relations to transcendence, the two animations show again sharp contrasts. The *Miraculous Deer* is basically non-transcendent, but containing narratives on the transcendent. The ever-present allusions and visualisations of the cosmic (heavenly) scenes are consciously constructed

25 Some critics (Bóna 2002, Földes 2002) find even this slight nationalism as striking.

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allegorical representations of earthly events, the other-world being only symbolic in the film. *Heaven's Sons*, on the contrary, is strongly transcendent. The cosmic, heavenly aspects are projected as real events, together with their earthly historical correspondents, but the other-world is hardly ever represented, alluded only in invocation of deities and ancestors. There is, however, a simultaneously cosmic and otherworldly myth adapted from the *Arvisura.* This myth presents the ancestors of Huns (Hungarians) as semi-gods coming from the Sirius, via a sunken legendary utopian continent in the middle of the Pacific Ocean called *Ataisz*.[26]

In terms of identification, the *Miraculous Deer* plays skilfully with the totemistic ideas of ancestral symbolic animal pairs (deer and horse, wolf and hawk). These totemic figures identify Hungarians as the result of the meeting and mixture of the (Finno-Ugric) "people of the (rein)deer" and the (Iranian-Scythian; Turanic-Turkic) steppe nomad "people of the horse". *Heaven's Sons* avoids the totemic element, and instead, stresses upon the unitary character of the Turkic nomad people. It virtually identifies all Central-Asian steppe nomads with the ancestral Hungarians. According to the Arvisura, the 24 tribes of the sacred Hun-Hungarian Confederation descend from the same mysterious ancient ethnos originating from the continent of *Ataisz*. Thus both films, no matter how differently they present the origins, may be considered primarily aetiological, cosmogonical, culturo-genical myths (or presentation of such myths). The only major difference is that the Ethno-Pagan animation bears a strong implicit messianic-civilisatory character as well, referring to the mission of the Nation.

In regard to the issue of origins and development, both films originate in a well-defined concept of national identity expressed through the views on the gloomy field of prehistoric ethnogenesis. The *Miraculous Deer* represents the hegemonic Finno-Ugric paradigm, built upon more than two centuries of scientific research (historiography, linguistics, ethnography) highlighted by scholars like Gyula László, Károly Rédei, Vilmos Diószegi. The scholarly elements are combined with legends both from the oral folkloric tradition and from mediaeval chronicles like the *Gesta Hungarorum* of Anonimus[27] (1196–1203) or the *Chronicon Pictum* (*Képes Krónika*) of Mark de Kalt (bef. 1360). *Heaven's Sons* is combined from living (or invented) traditions, historical legends and the two mythopoetic systems described above. The "chronicles" of the *Arvisura* rely on the older but long marginalized idea of the Turkic–Scythian–Hun origin and kinship (that is,

26 A clear reference to the mythic continent of *Atlantis*, but—by its placement into the Pacific—also to the legendary *Mu* continent.

27 An anonymous notary of Hungarian King Béla III (1172–1196), curiously concretised in the cultural memory as a person named *Anonymus*, even depicted by a well known sculpture in Budapest (to which several serious and ironic allusions are made when portraying the chronicler narrator/s/ of Jankovics's film).

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the Turanic paradigm).[28] The same Turanism is present in the oral chronicles told by old 'táltos' shamans in the *Yotengrit* books. There are numerous propagators of the Turanic idea rooted in deeper layers of the cultural (folk) memory. Many personal mythopoetic narratives stem from these rich traditions, forming a coherent but bushy entanglement of ethnogenesis mythology. *Heaven's Sons* explicitly relies on two of these personalities and their works: Zoltán Paál, the author or "recorder" of the *Arvisura*, and Imre Máté writer or "perpetuator" of the *Yotengrit* tradition. In this respect, the film strives to reinforce the idea that it tells the true story of the nation and represents the organic, living tradition, using these personalities as authority arguments. This aspect, together with the implicit exploitation of István Kiszely's vast anthropological-historical work (especially Kiszely 1996), and the direct references to Koppány László Csáji's ethnographic researches in Central Asia (2005), unavoidably act against the argumentation of organic genuineness, giving a strong appearance of artificial mythology.

The first animation has no intended religious aspects, and is an educational product of the elite culture for the enlightenment of the masses, supported by state politics and mainstream mass media. In contrast, the second film is strongly and intentionally religious. It also bears explicit (but figurative) subversive political messages. *Heaven's Sons* spreads among the circles of peripheric and counter elite culture, in various religious and radical nationalist subcultures. It represents and also affects the ideas increasingly infiltrating general Hungarian pop culture, with the help of alternative new media. In this respect, the involuntary or intentional amateur creation of *Heaven's Sons* in all aspects results in a side effect of folklore art character of the animation—worthy of a deeper ethnographic analysis.

The two animations are best conceivable as contrastive mirror-myths, one debunking the other. *The Miraculous Deer*—even if made earlier, tacitly seems to mean to deconstruct the increasingly spreading alternative views of history,[29] like those expressed in *Heaven's Sons.* The first film presents the canonical (official ideological) discourse for the primarily targeted youth in an easily digestible and placid aesthetic way. The latter film is like a statement formulated by the true defenders of the Nation against the concentrated assault of the official historical discourse of the Academia, the political and economic Power, and even the Church.[30] More closely, the amateur animation is a direct counter-attack against the *Miraculous Deer*, perceived as a mendacious myth. *Heaven's Sons* concretely debunks some of the previous film's narratives by retelling them in the

28 The undeniable Finno-Ugric elements of the *Arvisura* are tacitly neglected in *Heaven's Sons*.

29 Suspected and charged by the exponents of the academia with ignorance, romantic idealism, exclusive emotional motivation and argumentation, and supposed xenophobia, hatred, distorted superiority consciousness.

30 Suspected and charged by the propagators of Turanism with deliberate malevolence, cowardice, gainsaid emotional motivation and interest-driven manipulation, latent Hungarophobia, and false intellectual superiority.

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correct version (e.g. the Wondrous Hunt of the twins Hunor and Magyar, princess Emese's dream, the stories of chiefs Álmos and Árpád). It also virtually redraws all the historical maps presented in the *Miraculous Deer* (see Hubbes 2013).

On a syntagmatic level the two films show more resemblance, but with certain differences. The *Miraculous Deer* is rather mosaic-like, though somehow coherent, incorporating and closely resembling other anthropologically or linguistically relative (northern, Siberian, Central-Asian) peoples' myths, legends and even Hellenic-Roman myths. All the adapted or alluded myths suggest a kind of universality of these totemic origin narratives. In turn, *Heaven's Sons* shows up as organically blended, yet controversial, sometimes incoherent narrative. It incorporates and resembles (the only accepted Central-Asian) relative peoples' myths, legends, blending these origin-myths with the Platonic and Western Atlantis-mythology (Ataisz from the *Arvisura*), as well as a considerable infusion of Oriental (Hindu, Tao) and New Age religious ideas (via the *Yotengrit*).

If we take into account the structural mythic and symbolic elements of the two films, we may observe sharp contrasts again. Jankovics's animation rallies ancestral and animal totemic spirits, an Old Father God (resembling the Ob-Ugrian Numi Torem) and a Mother-of-Beings, as well as the central pair of the twin Hunters. Most prominent, however, is the Deer God/dess in its numerous animal and anthropomorphic incarnations. The *Miraculous Deer* aligns folk-tale-like and well-known historical heroes, among them shamans, hunters, herders, warlords and princes. There are many female personalities both among the godlike and the human ancestors (Hind Goddess-Mothers, Swan Ladies)—implying natural archetypal or historical gender relations. Tibor Molnár's film avoids explicit totemism, and brings to life or invokes anthropomorphic ancestor-gods/goddesses (Ata-Izis, Maa-Tun, Ukkon, Anya-Hita) and (half-)elf forebears. Among the human heroes the táltos/shaman spiritual leaders seem to play a more predominant role than the traditional military and royal heroes—a motif supported by both the *Arvisura* and the *Yotengrit*. The female presence on both divine and human level is highly accentuated: there are Goddess Mothers (Ata-Izis), ancestral mothers (Anya-Hita), wise shaman-women called literally "harlot-girls" („rima-lányok"—*Arvisura*). Beyond the prominent role of female figures, gender equality is emphasized in the doctrinal (*Yotengrit*-)teachings repeated along the plot.

Dualistic structures can be found in both films. In the *Miraculous Deer* this aspect remains on the level of complementary binaries of geometrical opposites (upper world, underworld), animal pairs (reindeer stag and hind, wolverine and hawk, deer and horse, wolf/hound and eagle). In anthropological terms, this dualism is represented by human doubles (winged hunter and bloody-handed hunter, Hunor and Magyar twins, chieftains Levedi and Álmos, princes Géza and Mihály), lover pairs (White Man and Mother-of-Beings, Eneh and Ménrót, the hunter twins and their fairy spouses). There is no apparent moral

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dualism of good and evil, either in internal oppositions, or between (ancestors of) Hungarians and their historical antagonists (other nomadic people, Khazars, Byzantines, Romans, Germans). *Heaven's Sons* is more biased in its dualistic structures. The complementary gender dualism is expressed in beautiful fairy tale-like love stories both in the case of Level and Gyöngyvér,[31] and in the case of Ügyek and Emese. The moral dualism is projected onto an anthropological level. The Turanic people (representing the ancestors of Hungarians or the Hungarians themselves) are the good, the noble, the morally right ones. In turn, every other (that is, non-Turanic) real or imaginary nation is antagonist, hostile, thus implicitly (sometimes explicitly) evil and/or inferior (e.g. the 'Kinays' / the Chinese/, the Arabs, the 'Thursday Priests' /Zoroastrians/, the Jews, and the 'Atlantean locust peoples').

## 5. Closing and Conclusions

Due to the strict limits of this article it is not possible to perform the thorough analysis on all levels proposed by the Kapitány couple. But even this restricted comparative examination, touching only the most important aspects and elements of the two animations, has clearly shown that—although with different background and intent—both of them possess definite mythological features.

The question raised by these films is whether there is one single true history of the nation. Consequently: is there only one firm portrait of the nation or are there several others? The *Miraculous Deer* and *Heaven's Sons* show two—not only distinct, but opposing—images of the nation. Are these twin images of the nation or two sides of the same face? Our comparative analysis went round the implicit claim of single truth expressed by both films, avoiding thus the trap of judging the imaginary reality. Instead, it came clear that both animations tell the tales of the origins in a distinct paradigmatic frame, and work as founding myths, fulfilling their mythomotoric role in the cultural memory of the Nation. They project images of the Hungarian people as viewed from (and through) its past—but these images are accepted as authentic only by their own dedicated audiences. The self-perception and self-appreciation of the members of the ethnic community depend on these images that build up a coherent national identity—coherent and intelligible only for those who accept the premises of either one paradigmatic approach or the other.

31 This plot is a typically corrected story of Hunor and Magyar raping the daughters of prince Dúla as presented in the *Miraculous Deer* (where again the conventional legend is also enriched by folk fairy-tale elements: the bathing girls being disguised as swans, water birds).

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