



Research Article

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Angelology and Anthropology: A Regional Case Study of the Weighing of Souls

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Abstract

The article examines how the Weighing of Souls or Psychostasis, the very starting point of the afterlife, was imagined by medieval Christians in territories that belonged to Hungary from the tenth-century foundation of the state until the 1400s. Since the crucial task is traditionally assigned to Saint Michael in Christianity, the article provides a concise overview of the Archangel's cult in the region and examines more in detail written and visual sources associating him with the Psychostasis. The examination of the source material delineates a medieval idea of the Psychostasis as a moment where Saint Michael's warrior profile counterbalances his role in divine judgment, and fashions the Archangel as the *milites Dei* able and willing to provide custody against expectable machinations of evil, in earthly life and beyond. From a methodological point of view, the enquiry also highlights the complexity of text-image relationship in shaping ideas about death and the afterlife.

Keywords: Weighing of Souls; Psychostasis, Hungary; Middle Ages; Saint Michael the Archangel; *Halotti beszéd és könyörgés* ('Funeral Sermon and Prayer'); Pelbartus de Themeswar, sermon; fresco; cheating devils

Introduction

Angels are commonly delineated by how and to what extent they differ equally from human and divine, which makes angelology a rich source for anthropology. The heavenly messengers are believed to accompany humans along the winding paths of life. They are assigned a variety of responsibilities including the implementation of divine will, physical and spiritual guidance, protection, inspiration, encouragement in the challenging moments of earthly life. Angels are also entrusted with various forms of care and guardianship at the end of life, however, in the delicate moment of death and even beyond. The decisive act of weighing a person's good and bad deeds to determine the soul's otherworldly fate, called the Weighing of Souls or Psychostasis, takes place in a preternatural realm defined not by location but by time: either in the moment of death or at the Last Judgment. Despite its obscure origins, the task is crucial in Christianity, and it is traditionally

assigned to Saint Michael the Archangel. The following article will examine how this very starting point of the afterlife was imagined by medieval Christians in a region with unexplored angelological traditions: territories that belonged to Hungary in the Middle Ages, embracing the period from the tenth-century foundation of the Hungarian state approximately until the year 1500. The approach is admittedly wide both in a territorial and in a chronological sense, but considering that no similar overview has yet been presented from the area, the article hopes to serve as a first step that can facilitate further refinements in the future [1].

Saint Michael the Archangel

In Hungary or elsewhere, there is no consensus in research about the reasons for Saint Michael's association with the Weighing of Souls. Mary Phillips Perry argued that the task shifted from

Anubis, the Egyptian god in charge of death and the afterlife, to Hermes, the main messenger of Zeus in Greek mythology, and eventually to Archangel Michael, who unified the two functions in Christianity [1].¹ Without denying the relevance of the continuity of religions, Karl Künstle suggested that the divine scales in Christian Psychostasis compositions could have been held originally by God, Christ, or the Manus Dei representing them, and the latter was eventually replaced by an angel as angels are themselves personifications of the Manus Dei. This angel, Künstle continued, might have grabbed a lance or a sword to keep away the usual multitude of devils within Last Judgement compositions, and eventually became identified with the warrior Archangel, who had been traditionally differentiated depicted carrying various weapons as his attributes [2].² The end result of the process in both scenarios was the formidable task growing into a firm, unchallengeable, and inalienable reason for Saint Michael's veneration by the Middle Ages.

In medieval times much as well as today, Hungary was sooner considered peripheral than central or in any sense defining in context of the cult of angels. Despite the prohibition declared at the fourth-century Synod of Laodicea [3],³ the veneration of angels was common practice by the early Middle Ages and Archangel Michael received particular attention among them. As the chapter devoted to him in Jacopo de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea* also demonstrates, he was fully integrated into the echelon of saints;⁴ and once the Archangel was chosen as patron of the Byzantine Empire, the spread of cultural patterns included various aspects of his cult. The Lombards attributed the conquest of Italy to the Archangel's aid and they also designated Michael as patron of their kingdom, perhaps in an attempt to imitate imperial traditions. Italy and France became the key centres of Saint Michael's medieval cult in the West, owing much to the steadily growing popularity of Monte Gargano and Mont Saint-Michel as the Archangel's acclaimed apparition and pilgrimage sites. Outside France and Italy, Skellig Michael on the West coast of Ireland was a third prominent pilgrimage site; and Michael was also one of the most popular saints in early Christian

Scandinavia. The Archangel's cult further intensified in France after the Hundred Years War; and the sharpening warrior profile gradually overshadowed the Byzantine healer as Michael's Biblical battles with evil turned into symbolic representations of the spiritual struggles of Christians in trying times [5].⁵

Christianity was introduced in the Hungarian state by Stephen I, the first king of Hungary (1000-1038), who consecrated a cathedral to the Archangel in Veszprém; though it should be noted that a Carolingian church dedication suggests that Michael's cult was present in the Carpathian basin before the Magyars' arrival [6].⁶ Besides Frankish connections, apocalyptic expectations could also have directed the Hungarians' attention to the Archangel around the millennium; and the increased attention to Saint Michael could equally have been inspired by the relations between Stephen's father, Géza Grand Prince (972-997) and the Holy Roman Emperor Otto I (962-973) [7].⁷ For any case, Michael's annual ecclesiastical feast was now officially celebrated in the next century, under both King Ladislaus I (1077-1095) and Coloman (1095-1116) [8].⁸

Angelology and Funeral Practices

At the end of the same century, the oldest surviving contiguous Hungarian text associated the Archangel with death. The 1192-1195 *Halotti beszéd és könyörgés* ('Funeral Sermon and Prayer', Budapest, National Széchényi Library MNy 1, fol. 136r) calls for the Virgin and Saint Michael's custody for the dead soul: 'And let us implore the Holy Lady Mary, the blessed Archangel Michael and all the angels, to pray for him (the deceased) [9].'⁹ The sacramentary sheltering the sermon, called *Codex Pray*, also preserved a Latin text that apparently provided considerable source material for the Hungarian version. The call for intercession by the graveside comprises approximately half of the Hungarian text as opposed to roughly one third in the Latin original; and the latter lacks the enumeration of saints expected to intercede, among whom Saint Michael is second only to the Virgin in the former. Considering that Michael's name started to frequent in predications in the 1100s but his brief mentions were limited almost exclusively

¹Perry MP (1912) 94-102.

²Künstle K (1926-28) 249; Eszenyi E (2016).

³Synod of Laodicea (4th-century). In: Catholic Encyclopedia Online, accessed July 13, 2020, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3806.htm>, accessed 13 July 2020.

⁴Maggioni, GP (1998) 986-993.

⁵Michael's name appears five times in four places in the Scriptures (Daniel 10:5-21 and 12:1-4, Jude 9, Revelations 12:7-9), which not only makes him the most frequently mentioned biblical angel but also creates a contrast with the gentle and peaceful image of angels, given that in all these occasions, Michael is found in some kind of combat with evil forces. Otranto G (2003); Harrison D (1993); Beaune, C. (1985).

⁶Bogyay T (1994); Gutheil J (1979).

⁷Bálint S (1997)

⁸The First Code of Law Chapter 38 by King Ladislaus I listed Michael's annual feast in the ecclesiastical calendar, it was further mentioned in the Third Code of Law Chapters 13 and 20; as well as in King Coloman's First Code of Law Chapters 2 and 79. Závodszy L (1904), 79, 85, 164, 177, 178, 184, 193.

⁹'Et oremus Sanctam Dominam Mariam, Beatum Michaellem archangelum et omnes angelos, ut orent pro eo.' Budapest, National Széchényi Library, MNy 1, fol. 136r. Madas E (2002) 83-126.

to the ecclesiastical feast of angels until the 1200s [10],¹⁰ these details accentuate the inclusion of Saint Michael as a characteristic addition to the Hungarian version .

Edit Madas found the closest parallel of this section of the text in the *absolutio* at the end of the 11th century *Chartvirgus Pontificalis* (also referred to as *Hartvik* or *Hartwick Agenda*, or simply *Agenda Pontificalis*, Zagreb, *Metropolitanska Knjižnica MR 165*). The pontifical similarly lists the Virgin and Saint Michael in the first place among saints to turn to for intercession [11].¹¹ Madas also hypothesized German influence on the Hungarian sermon, German speaking territories being the only other area bequeathing contemporaneous examples of funeral sermons on scholarship [12].¹² She pointed out that German literacy being centuries ahead of the Hungarian in the 1100s, the fact that a Hungarian funeral sermon was also noted down roughly at the same time with German pieces, and even included in a sacramentary, suggest that the very practice of funeral sermons must also have been more widespread in Hungary than in the rest of Europe [13].¹³

This interest in elaborate funeral practices is likely to have encouraged the cult of Archangel Michael, who integrated particularly well into the patron saints of the moriens. His biblical dispute with the devil over the corpse of Moses in Jude 9 turned Michael into the angelic defender of the dying body, while the Archangel's care of the soul was understood from his fight with the apocalyptic dragon in Revelations 12:7-9 [14].¹⁴ From as early as the fourth century on, Michael was considered the right person to turn to in the moment of death, being the angelic defender simultaneously of the soul and the body [15].¹⁵ Several funeral chapels were dedicated to him as *psychopompos* throughout the

Middle Ages. Hungarian examples documented this practice from Kassa (Košice, Slovakia, 1300s) and arguably from Barcaszentpéter (Sânpetru, Romania, 1350-1400) [16].¹⁶

By the time these Hungarian chapels were built, the cult of angels intensified in the region due to the *corona angelica* tradition, according to which the Holy Crown of the country had been delivered by an angel. This belief, difficult to overstate in its significance for Hungarians as a nation even today, had widely diffused in the country by the 1300s [17].¹⁷ The number of settlements named after the Archangel as well as the number of churches dedicated to him also showed a significant increase in the same century [18].¹⁸ Meanwhile, Michael's association with death continued to linger. He now also appeared in another literary genre, the otherworld journey accounts of George Grissaphan (1353) and Lawrence of Tar (1411) in the next century, both featuring Michael as the guide of the protagonists, who pay a short visit the otherworld in their lifetimes [19].¹⁹ Towards the end of the same century, the layman historian János Thuróczy's *Chronica Hungarorum* (1488) documented a battle where the Archangel's support was sought, which suggests that the warrior profile still fashioned the Archangel as a holy warrior next to his association with death and the dying [20].²⁰

Sermon Literature

Hungarian sermon literature of the Later Middle Ages continued to deliver the same image of Michael, now also highlighting his role in the *Psychostasis*. The Archangel became a distinguished character in scholastic sermons [21],²¹ the lead Hungarian publisher of which was the Franciscan Pelbartus de Themeswar's (c. 1435-1504). Pelbartus' influential *Pomerium sermonum: Sermones de sancti* included four sermons on angels, one of which was dedicated

¹⁰Bériou N (2003)

¹¹"...intercedente Dei Genetrice Maria, et beato Michaelae archangelo" (Zagreb, *Metropolitanska Knjižnica MR 165*, fol. 63r), Madas E (2002) 101.

¹²Among non-Hungarian parallels of the *Halotti Beszéd*, Madas mentions the Latin sermon told at the funeral of Otto, bishop of Bamberg, who died in 1139. The intercession of the Virgin and Saint Michael is also mentioned in Otto's sermon, though in his case the reason might be related to the foundation of the Bamberg cathedral and its dedication to Saint Michael. Madas E (2002) 107-108.

¹³Madas E (2002) 115-116.

¹⁴According to Jewish traditions, Michael buried Moses in an unknown place to prevent the body from becoming a subject of idolatry, which explains the devil's interest in the corpse. Szilárdy Z (1968)

¹⁵Keck D (1998) 159; Ariès P (1991) 103; Mâle E (1986) 354-355.

¹⁶Tkáč A (2000) 136. The church of Barcaszentpéter was turned into a fortress in the 1400s, when a bastion was built around a square-shaped, vaulted chapel northeast of the church, preserving a large scale and in church interiors rather rare depiction of the Fall of the Angels; as well as a *Psychostasis* composition. The double representation of Saint Michael in the small space, with special regard to the distinct size and allocation of the Fall of the Angels in the uppermost triangular field of an interior triumphal arch, suggest a funerary chapel function with a likely dedication to the Archangel.

¹⁷Eszenyi E (2019)

¹⁸The 1200s total of 21 place names more than doubled to 48 by the 1300s, following one example from the eleventh- and twelfth-centuries, and followed by a mere 11 from the 1400s and two from the 1500s. The case is similar with church dedications, with 190 Saint Michael churches' first documentation dating from the 1300s as opposed to 58 in the 1200s, three in the eleventh-century, and 71 in the 1100s. The number of Saint Michael dedications was the highest in Nyitra (18), Zala (17), and Pozsega (13) counties, the best-known Saint Michael churches are Gyulafehérvár (first mentioned in 1198), Margitsziget (1225), Tihany (1267), Sopron (1278), Vác (1319), and Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca, Transylvania, 1348). Mező A (1996); Mező A (2003).

¹⁹Eszenyi E (2011)

²⁰Galántai E, Kristó Gy, Mályusz E (Editors, 1985-88), 227.

²¹Bériou N (2003)

exclusively to Michael [22].²² After the discussion of Michael and 'his' angels' biblical battles against evil, the last third of the sermon was dedicated specifically to Michael's angelic responsibilities, describing more in detail the Psychostasis. With reference to Saint Bernard, Pelbartus claimed that good and bad angels gather in the moment the soul is separated from the body. They recall the good and bad deeds of the soul, following which either personally Michael or 'his' angels weigh the merits of the soul in the scales of divine justice and direct the soul to Heaven, Hell, or Purgatory. Pelbartus understood this role as one of the reasons why Michael deserves veneration even more than other angels [23].²³ Pelbartus' Pomerium is generally recognized as the main source of the c. 1525 Codex Érdy, the largest Old Hungarian collection of sermons and legends, which also designated the ecclesiastical feast of angels with a sermon dedicated specifically to Michael. This sermon also detailed the Psychostasis in Pelbartus' style, listing his role in it as a special reason why Michael deserves additional veneration, following his victories over evil[24].²⁴

Amidst the overall similar depictions of the Psychostasis in the two sermons, they differ in a rather peculiar detail. As opposed to the other tasks of Michael, neither Pelbartus nor the Codex Érdy provides biblical references at the explanation of the Archangel's association with the Psychostasis, but Pelbartus makes a reference to visual representations: "Tertium privilegium (Michaelis) est ponderandi officium habere ut patet in picturis quae sunt libris laicorum[25]."²⁵ This unusual reference to 'pictures' in 'books of the laymen' is missing from the later sermon of the Codex Érdy, but also surfaces in contemporaneous German sermons at the explanation of the Psychostasis. It is included in the works of the acclaimed Dominican sermon writer Iohannes Herolt; and Michael Lochmaier, canon of the Passau cathedral, professor of canon law and theology in Vienna, and preacher in both cities[26].²⁶

What purpose could this unusual reference serve? References to other iconographical types from the rich visual imagery of the Archangel are missing from the sermons. From a practical point of view, a handy visual reminder certainly assisted comprehension more effectively than complex theological doctrines could ever have done. It should also be noted, however, that in case of the Psychostasis, no Biblical explanation was available for the association of the task with Saint Michael, and this task of the Archangel is markedly different from his battles in this respect. In accordance with the growing dominance of the warrior profile in Europe, Dragon Slayer Saint Michael compositions grew in popularity by the high and late Middle Ages, and they were rivalled by the Psychostasis as the Archangel's two most common iconographical types[27].²⁷ While the slaying of the Apocalyptic dragon is solidly grounded in Revelations 12:7-9, however, neither the Bible nor the apocrypha made explicit connections between Michael and the Weighing of Souls, even though weighing as a metaphor of divine judgment was used by Christian writers as early as the fourth-century[28].²⁸ In the regional context of medieval Hungary, the popularity of Psychostasis representations may also explain Pelbartus' reference. The extant source material, combined with 1800s watercolour copies of now lost or badly damaged frescoes in the collections of the Gyula Forster National Centre for Cultural Heritage Management in Budapest, suggest that the Psychostasis was Saint Michael's most common iconographical type in the region[29].²⁹

The Psychostasis in Visual Arts

Although the Psychostasis started to become a common episode of the Last Judgment as early as the eleventh and twelfth centuries[30],³⁰ Psychostasis compositions embedded in Last Judgment narratives were apparently in a minority in medieval

²²The first point of the divisio discusses Michael and 'his' angels' five great battles against evil: the one in Heaven against the dragon, the liberation of Israel in Egypt, the debate with the devil for the corpse of Moses, the general defence of Christians, and the defeat of the Antichrist. The second point is the protection and care angels exercise over humans, with particular emphasis on Michael's tasks. Library of the Eötvös Loránd University, EK Inc.75., sermo 38. Laczkó E (2004).

²³"Unde Bernardus in Dial. dicit: *In puncto separationis animae a corpore obseratis corporis sensibus angeli boni et mali conveniunt, qui omnia bona et mala hominis opera ad memoriam revocant ita, quod statim iudicet Dominus omnia sua merita vel demerita. Tunc itaque Michael per se vel per suos angelos ponderat in statera iustitiae divinae merita animarum et vacuas bonis mittit in infernum, plenas autem charitate et perfectas ducit in caelum. Semiplenas mittit in purgatorium, ut satisfaciant.*" Transcription from Laczkó E (2002) 41. See also Boissard E (1953).

²⁴The list of Michael's victories is almost identical to Pelbartus' list, save for the replacement of the debate over the corpse of Moses with the liberation from the Babylonian captivity. Following the introduction, the sermon contemplates human weakness and the appreciation of angelic guidance as the reason behind the veneration of angels. The sermon enlists eight reasons why Michael should be venerated particularly strongly among angels, and concludes with a detailed analyses of the angelic hierarchy. The codex was made in a Hungarian monastery of the Carthusians by an anonymous author according to its preface. Madas E (1985).

²⁵Transcription from Laczkó E (2002) 41.

²⁶Herolt, I (1480) sermon 38; Lochmaier, M (1497) sermon 85.

²⁷Künstle K (1926-28), 249; Mâle E (1986), 258-259.

²⁸The Bible, in fact, makes only vague mention even of the act of weighing itself. Perry MP (1912) 103-104; Charlesworth JH (1983) 890, note e.

²⁹The number of Psychostasis compositions I have found amount to 27, while other compositional types such as the Dragon Slayer and the Fall of the Rebel Angels, combined even with scattered examples of angel figures that could possibly be interpreted as the Archangel on the basis of some sort of distinction among angels within the composition, amount to less than ten throughout the period examined. Eszenyi E (2006). I am ever indebted to Tamás Pál Horogszegi for granting me access to the collections of the Gyula Forster National Centre for Cultural Heritage Management; as well as to Beatrix Gombosi for sharing pieces of her photo collection made for in Gombosi B (2004-2005). Several of the church interiors mentioned in the present article are still waiting for art historical examinations, for extended bibliographies of other examples mentioned an excellent source is Lionnet M (2004).

³⁰Künstle K (1926-28) 538. Note that earlier examples also exist, e.g. the c. 923 Muirdach cross in Monasterboice. Perry MP (1912) 101-102; Eszenyi E (2016) 73.

Hungary[31].³¹ As soon as it appears in the Last Judgment around the mid-1300s, the peak of the Archangel's local cult, the Psychostasis secedes from the narrative in the region. I have found 22 examples of this latter type[32],³² more than four times the number of depictions within the Last Judgment narrative, with a mere four examples of the depiction of the Psychostasis within as well as outside the Last Judgment in the same church[33].³³ Did the Psychostasis compositions *pars pro toto* stand for the Last Judgment or was the aim to highlight particularly Michael in the period when his cult also intensified in the country? The two parallel processes were probably related and mutually strengthened each other.

The physical location of Psychostasis compositions once again hints at the Archangel's protective role. Within the sacred space of the church interior, the Psychostasis may appear virtually anywhere from the lowest zone of the northern wall of the nave in Cserkút (c. 1355) to the southern wall of the apse in Velemér (1378), just to mention two sharply contrasting examples. In later representations, however, the Psychostasis starts to appear on the exterior walls of churches, as in Rimabánya (1385-90), Sorokpolány (1400s) and Beszterce (c. 1400). This movement is probably rooted in the tradition of depicting Saint Michael beside city and church gates, which he was supposed to guard like he guards the gates of Paradise in the role of Praepositus Paradisi[34].³⁴ The same idea of heavenly protection by gates could also have inspired Psychostasis representations in tympanums, including a fresco in Mártonhely (1392) and a relief above the entrance of the funerary chapel in the Kassa cathedral (Košice, Slovakia, 1300-1350) [35].³⁵

The protective nature of the Archangel is further emphasised in the region by several details of the Psychostasis imagery. The Sűvete (mid-1300s), Karaszko (1350-75) and Székelyderzs (1419) compositions depict Saint Michael in full armour; and two of them predate the 1400s increased frequency of armoured Saint Michael figures in European art[36].³⁶ The earlier compositional type, where the Archangel is depicted wearing a tunic, is in a decisive majority in medieval Hungary, but a sword in the right hand of the Archangel commonly reminded the audience of the protection the divine warrior could provide even in these cases[37].³⁷

All the more so as it appears that Michael needs the sword to chase away smaller, anthropomorphic devil figures trying to negatively influence the tilt of the scales by all imaginable effort. The cheating devil figures are general subsidiary characters in medieval Hungarian Psychostasis compositions [38],³⁸ and apparently showed the greatest activity in Johannes Aquila's now largely damaged Velemér fresco (1378). Its 1800s watercolour copy shows a devil, identified as Sathanas by an inscription, clinging to the negative pan of the scales together with an unnamed colleague; with a third devil sitting on the beam and a fourth one clinging to it; while their fifth colleague, Belsebu(b), is just about to place a little tower either onto the beam or into the negative pan in order to increase the weight of the soul's sins [39].³⁹ More typically, the afore-mentioned armed Saint Michael compositions feature a pair of cheating devils each: one is clinging to the pan and the other devil is sitting in it in Karaszko (1375-1380) and Székelyderzs (1419), while the little devil in the pan is holding up his colleague by the tail

³¹Examples include frescoes in the churches of Lelesz (Leles, Slovakia, end of the 1300s), Homoródszentmárton (Martiniş, Transylvania, 1350-1400), Marosszentanna (Sântana de Mureş, Romania, 1350-1400), Nagyölyves (Ulieş, Romania, date unknown), Petőszinye (Svinica, Slovakia, 1330-50).

³²Examples include frescoes in the churches of Abaújvár (early 1300s), Barcaszentpéter (Sinpetru, Transylvania, end of the 1300s), Bántornya (Turnișce, Slovenia, before 1383), Beszterce (Bistrița, Romania, late 1300s), Cserkút (c. 1335), Csécs (Čečejevce, Slovakia, 1350-1400), Etréfalva (Turíčky, Slovakia, c. 1400), Jákóhodos (Hodos, Transylvania, date unknown), Kacsány (Kvačany, Slovakia, early 1400s), Karaszko (Kraskovo, Slovakia, 1375-1380), Mártonhely (Martjanci, Slovakia, 1392), Mohos (Poruba, Slovakia, c. 1400), Ófehértó (1350-1400 - I could not see this example), Rimabánya (Rimavská Baňa, Slovakia, 1350-1400), Segesvár (Șighișoara, Romania, 1480s), Sorokpolány (1400s), Sűvete (Šivetice, Slovakia, mid-1300s), Svábfalva (Svábovce, Slovakia, mid-1300s), Székelyderzs (Dârjiu, Transylvania, 1419), Tarpa (1450s); Velemér (1378); and the central panel of the Szepeshely Saint Michael altar (Spišská Kapitula, Slovakia, 1470-75).

³³These include Cserkút (c. 1355), Velemér (1378), Bántornya (1383); and Rimabánya (1350-1400), where Michael was depicted on the outer wall of the church. The examination of the possible difference between the dates of the Last Judgment and the Psychostasis might provide further information about the coexistence of the two image types.

³⁴Frazer M (1973) 158.

³⁵A Dragon Slayer Saint Michael statue was placed in the entrance tympanum of the Saint Michael church of in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, in 1442. Grandpierre E (1936) 22, 45.

³⁶Perry MP (1912) 102-103; Mâle E (1986) 67-68.

³⁷Even among Psychostasis scenes within the Last Judgment narrative, there is only one which might have featured the archangel in full armour, namely the highly damaged Petőszinye image. Note that the sword is missing from the single panel representation in Szepeshely (1475-80); and it is difficult to confirm this detail in the highly damaged frescoes of Abaújvár (early 1300s), Bántornya (before 1383), Homoródszentmárton (1350-1400), Marosszentanna (1350-1400), Jákóhodos (date unknown), Kacsány (early 1400s), and Rimabánya (1350-1400). Michael is holding the sword with both hands and the scales are practically hollowing in the air in Cserkút, though this might as well be the result of the extended restorations. The double and possible triple representation of the Archangel in this church might also signal a Saint Michael dedication. Horogszegi TP (2005) 70.

³⁸While the condition of the frescoes makes it difficult to confirm the cheating devils' presence in Abaújvár (early 1300s), Bántornya (before 1383), Jákóhodos (date unknown); Nagyölyves (early 1300s), Rimabánya (1350-1400), and Sorokpolány (1400s), I do not know about any example where their presence can clearly be excluded.

³⁹On Beelzebub see Lurker M (1994) 79; Oliver ED, Lewis JR (1996) 61; Eszenyi, E (2014) 167-168. On Velemér see Wehli T (1989) 81; Höfler J, Janez B (1992) 25.

in Süvete (mid-1300s). All three devil couples have also attached a millstone to the negative pan, another common motif in medieval Hungary familiar from the Bible but, similarly to the cheating devils themselves, not directly associated with divine judgment [40].⁴⁰ The very idea of devils cheating the divine scales is more likely to have developed from early Psychostasis compositions where, in lack of a tilt, larger angel and devil figures situated by their respective pans identified the positive and negative sides [41].⁴¹ Later the devil diminished in size but did not disappear, and the smaller scale cheating devils remained visual renderings of the idea that the Archangel will emerge victorious over the forces of evil at the Last Judgment once again.

He will not be alone, though, according to the Psychostasis compositions, which occasionally also signal positive support at the weighing. With the help of the little tower, Belsebu(b) is probably hoping to outwit and outweigh an unnamed angel placing a church model on the positive side of the beam in Velemér (1378). Generally identified as the guardian angel of the soul being weighed, this detail is a rare, and on a regional level apparently unique example of the positive impartiality being represented by an angel. Somewhat more commonly, various saints occasionally also tend to influence the divine scales. Medieval Hungary presents two examples of them, the earlier one of whom is a female figure behind the positive pan in Mohos (c. 1400) [42].⁴²

Another mysterious female figure appears in Székelyderzs (c. 1419), in a Psychostasis composition distinct from any other medieval Hungarian example. A small scale female figure is sitting on the left forearm of the Archangel here, looking up at Michael and praying. Her nakedness suggests that she might be the very soul being weighed, all the more so as the restored composition depicts a similar female figure in the heavier pan today – though it should also be noted that the 1800s aquarelle copy of the fresco in the collections of the Gyula Forster National Centre for Cultural Heritage Management in Budapest (FM 133) shows no

traces of femininity in the pan [43].⁴³ Alternatively, the lady might be praying for another soul just being weighed. The figure of the mysterious lady might also link the scene to the Conversion of Saul, depicted next to the Psychostasis on the south wall of the nave and mentioning a lady in an inscription. Conversion scenes being rare in the region, the one in Székelyderzs is supposed to have been motivated by personal requests of the commissioner, meaning that the Psychostasis could also owe its peculiarities to a personalized iconographical programme as a fourth and final possibility [44].⁴⁴

Even more distinct than the mysterious female figure is the double manifestation of evil in the Székelyderzs Psychostasis, where, uniquely in the medieval Hungarian source material, the apocalyptic dragon also appears under the positive pan of the scales. This detail makes Székelyderzs the only simultaneous rendering of the Weighing of Souls and the Dragon Slayer Saint Michael in medieval Hungary. Moreover, Michael is piercing through the gaping mouth of the dragon with a lance as though saving the blessed soul, which also highlights Székelyderzs as the only medieval Hungarian Psychostasis where the Archangel's weapon is a lance and not a sword. Since the apocalyptic dragon is not directly connected with the Psychostasis in the Bible, the artistic combination of the Dragon Slaying and the Weighing of Souls is the result of pictorial traditions within Saint Michael's iconography from roughly the 1400s on [45].⁴⁵ It is often difficult to decide which aspect is more prominent in these compositions: is the focus of the ever victorious opponent of evil whom the scales help to identify, or is it the personification of divine justice served by the dragon as an attribute? Is divine judgment, the triumph of good over the evil, or the veneration of Saint Michael the key message of the image [46-50]?⁴⁶

Conclusion

The aim of the present article was to juxtapose pictorial and written sources of the Psychostasis or Weighing of Souls in medieval Hungary, in order to examine the regional perception of afterlife judgement. Although Hungary did not belong to the medieval

⁴⁰Perry MP (1913) 210. Perry linked the very presence of the devil at the Weighing of Souls to the *Legenda Aurea* claiming that the devil will bring up accusations at the Last Judgment in order to claim the soul. Perry MP (1912) 103. János Végő pointed out that the argument for the soul is a key element of *Tribunal misericordiae* compositions and images of private judgment. Végő J (1984) Devil figures in Last Judgment compositions in other genres, however, predate both the *Legenda Aurea* and the latter iconographical types, demonstrating the pre-existence of the idea of the devil's presence at the Last Judgment. See, for instance, the c. 923 Muirdach cross in Monasterboice; or Gislebertus' c. 1130 Last Judgment tympanum in Autun. Eszenyi E (2016) 73.

⁴¹Examples include the c. 1200 Last Judgment mosaic in Torcello; an 1100s relief on the north jamb of the west facade in Arles; and the earliest known English wall painting in the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul in Chaldon, Kent, c. 1170. Perry MP (1913) 216.

⁴²Her identification as the Virgin Mary or the locally venerated Saint Helen or Elisabeth is still debated. Krása J, Stejskal K, Dvorakova V (1978) 134; Perry MP (1913) 215; Hildburgh WL (1947).

⁴³While the content of the pans show great variety throughout the Middle Ages, in the majority of cases little human figures symbolize good and bad deeds of the soul, one expressing joy, the other lamenting. The damaged state of the source material unfortunately makes it difficult to find examples where the contents of both pans can be established with certainty in Hungary. Plausibly due to attacks at the cheating devil figures as improper characters within the sacred space, positive pans at large in a better condition. They usually contain a little human figure, and this figure is a female in Süvete. Perry MP (1912) 103-105.

⁴⁴Jánó M (2006)

⁴⁵Perry MP (1913) 217.

⁴⁶There are numerous examples of the combination of the Dragon Slayer Saint Michael and the Weighing of Souls iconographical types in Western art, a 1476 alabaster relief in the Severikirche of Erfurt even shows a little human figure on the left forearm of the Archangel, similarly to the 1419 Székelyderzs example. The influence of early depictions in Monte Gargano must also have played a role in combining these two tasks of Saint Michael, providing an idea that multitudes of pilgrims could transport to their homelands. Belli D'Elia, P (Editor, 1999) cat. nr. 17-18 (p. 82); Eszenyi E (2016) 74-75.

centres of his cult, the veneration of Saint Michael the Archangel, who is traditionally entrusted with performing the crucial task in Christianity, goes back to a long tradition in the country. It is documented in Hungarian territories from the tenth-century foundation of the state, and the available source material suggests the 1300s as a period when the Archangel's cult intensified [50-57].

This is also the period the majority of the local Psychostasis representations date from. The Psychostasis constituted Saint Michael's most common iconographical type in medieval Hungarian art, and frescoes the most frequent artistic medium for the visual rendering of the invisible Archangel. The typical iconography depicts Saint Michael dressed in a tunic, holding the scales in the left hand while raising a sword in his right to strike down multiple cheating devils trying to tilt the impartial divine scales. There are, of course, occasional variations of this general pattern, among which a fresco in Székelyderzs stands out with its unique details, including the single example of the combination of the Dragon Slayer Saint Michael and the Weighing of Souls iconographical types in the region.

The association of the Archangel with the Psychostasis is also traceable in written sources related to the country, from the very beginnings of Hungarian literature. While the relevant textual material is significantly scarcer than the visual, it is fortunate in preserving examples equally from the very early and very late Middle Ages, and both from the same genre. Sermons therefore suggest that the association of the Archangel with death and the dying overarched the Middle Ages in Hungary. By the later Middle Ages, his persona was that of a holy warrior and protector, able and willing to provide supernatural custody against the expectable machinations of evil at the Weighing of Souls.

The juxtaposition of the written and visual source material results in a versatile coexistence of text and image. In lack of the doctrinal association of Saint Michael with the Psychostasis, sermons used images as points of reference; while subsidiary figures within pictorial compositions led to an ever wider liberation from the limited textual base. The result is an interlace of independent development and close interdependence between text and image, where the latter becomes a point of reference endowed with an implicit doctrinal value. The overall Psychostasis source material earns a decent place for medieval Hungary in a European context, and proffers uncharted territories for both angelology and anthropology.

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Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

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