

Ablonczy, Balázs. *Go East! A History of Hungarian Turanism*

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Those of us studying and teaching Eastern European—or, more specifically in this case, Hungarian—history often benefit from reading our colleagues' work written in their native languages. I very much appreciate Indiana University Press's willingness to make some of these works available in English under the recently launched Studies in Hungarian History series (edited by László Borhi). The book under review is written by Balázs Ablonczy, one of the leading Hungarian scholars of modern Hungarian history. The book is a translated version of the author's *Keletre, Magyar! A magyar turanizmus története* (Jaffa, 2016).

Turanism or pan-Turanism originated in the nineteenth century. It is a theory that sought to provide a cultural and political framework—based on supposed ethnic kinship, cultural, and linguistic ties—that would unite the various people that shared inner and central Asian origins. Ablonczy's book is not simply an account of an esoteric theory. It masterfully explores the intellectual origins, practical applications, and evolution of the concept within the context of modern Hungarian history from the nineteenth century to its recent re-emergence in relation to the current Hungarian government's policy of “Eastern opening” (*keleti nyitás*).

Ablonczy's exploration of Hungarian Turanism starts with the beginning of Hungarian orientalism in the nineteenth century. While the theory has roots in medieval tradition, it really arrived on the intellectual map as a result of Hungarian efforts that hoped to find the origins of the Hungarians/Magyars. Scholars (such as Sándor Kőrösi Csoma and Ármin Vámbéry), enthusiastic aristocrats, and artists continued to explore real and imagined kinship connections—some even convinced themselves about the kinship between Hungarian and Tamil language—thus providing a lively debate between those in the academic establishment promoting the idea of Finno-Ugric linguistic connections and those in support of Turanian/Ural-Altai origins.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the scholarly and intellectual debate also provided a foundation for what Ablonczy calls “a unique brand of Hungarian imperialism” that sought to make advances toward the Balkans and the Middle East (35). The foundation of the Turanian Society in 1910, as explained the first issue of the organization's periodical in 1913, aimed to realize the “sympathy-based colonization” (50). Turanism, as Ablonczy convincingly illustrates, means different things to different people. Some engaged with the theory/concept because of scholarly interest; some were hoping to establish closer cultural, economic, and political ties in support of Hungarian imperialist dreams; while others aimed to prove that Hungary was part of the Orient, or at least could serve as a bridge between the Orient and the Occident (9–10). It was the theory's multifaceted nature, argues Ablonczy, that led to its growing popularity and prestige whereby the Turanian Society's membership included politicians, current and future prime ministers, scholars, and the leading figures of Hungarian intellectual and artistic life.

In my opinion, the middle chapters of the book—especially the chapter titled “Silver Age”—offer the most illuminating description of the interwar Hungarian intellectual climate. Through the lens of Turanism, Ablonczy explores the turbulations and frustration caused by the Treaty of Trianon—whereby Hungary lost two-thirds of its pre-World War I territory—the growing fear of Bolshevism, and the potent influence of the radical Right and its antisemitism. The author does not try to overstate the influence of Turanism. As matter of fact, he makes it clear that “despite the participation of so many government officials and notwithstanding the demands of the intransigent Turanists,

Hungarian foreign policy never turned in a Turanian direction” (104). Yet, as the author shows, the Turanists’ presence was far from being insignificant. Despite the internal struggle between the mainstream and radical factions, Turanists were able to affect how Hungarians viewed themselves. From their publications and radio programming, through their participation in cultural institutions and governmental work, to their influence on architecture and everyday life, Turanists left their mark on interwar Hungarian history.

World War II and the establishment of the communist regime all but destroyed Turanism. Ablonczy illustrates that Turanism largely survived through émigrés until the 1989 fall of the regime. The idea was resurrected in the political chaos that was a result of disillusionment and disappointment that many Hungarians felt as their hopes of catching up to the West was ultimately unfulfilled. Once again, not unlike during the interwar period, Hungarians were between and betwixt.

This is a fascinating book. It is not a handbook for understanding the current Hungarian government’s policies, nor is it a study of an obscure intellectual current. Ablonczy, by using a breathtaking array of sources, has produced the kind of interdisciplinary scholarship that is highly recommended to anyone interested in how and why Hungarians struggled—and continue to struggle—to navigate their place between East and West.

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Marchand, Suzanne L. *Porcelain: A History from the Heart of Europe* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020. Pp. 544.

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A history of porcelain in the heart of Europe over three hundred years is an ambitious endeavor. The timespan chosen by Suzanne Marchand covers the industrialization of Europe’s economies and the modernization of their societies. It also corresponds to the momentous process of nation building that led a myriad of German states, comprised in a medieval imperial structure, to unify as a Reich that would be destroyed and rebuilt multiple times, to be left, after World War II, divided into two very different political entities. This wide range of analysis is dictated by the author’s research question: how could a product once considered an alchemical secret second only to the philosophers’ stone become a neglected object, relegated to thrift shops and the trash bin?

The usual histories of European porcelain concentrate on the epic years of the trade—the discovery of the secret recipe and the founding of the first mythical manufactories from Meissen to Doccia—or its golden age in the second half of the eighteenth century. Few have the courage to show the descending part of the parabola, the corruption of the artistry by the imposition of market logic and the spread of mass consumption, not to mention the negligibility of contemporary production. Marchand does not shy from the task, and her book neatly traces the difficult transformation of the porcelain sector from courtly manufactories to big businesses dedicated to the production of technical porcelain: tiles, pipes, insulators, and toilets. She repeatedly addresses the failure of factory managers and critics from the artistic milieu to comprehend that they must appreciate the eclectic, backward looking, and at times cacophonous tastes of their multiplying bourgeois customers to remain profitable once the princely demand ebbed out. Marchand’s book is not a reading of the history of European porcelain that follows artistic fashions and clearly delimits, for example, rococo from neoclassicism. The mish-mash of popular taste, in her interpretation, is the reason why design and functionalism could not