

**The „Exotic” as a Threatening Other:  
The Presentation of Ottoman Turks in  
the Croatian National-Historical Opera  
*Nikola Šubić Zrinjski* (1876) by Ivan  
Zajc**

Petra Babić

# Wars with Ottoman Empire

- 15th - 18th Century
- Battle at Krbava field (1493) - large number of prominent Croatian nobles perished in the battle
- Battle at Mohács (1526) - King Louis II killed, Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom disintegrated
- Battle of Siget (1566) - great Ottoman army stopped on the way to Vienna, sultan Suleyman the Magnificent died during the siege (of natural causes)
- Battle of Sisak (1593) - first Ottoman defeat at Croatian territory, end of period of great conquests



“Reliquiae reliquarum” – Croatia in the time of Ottoman conquests (orange)  
(Modern Croatian borders in red)

# Battle of Siget (1566)

- Nikola Zrinski - renowned commander - distinguished in the battles of Vienna (1529), Pest (1542), first battle of Siget (1556), and in countless border conflicts and minor battles
- Siege of Siget: 5 August - 7 September 1566
- 117 000 Ottoman army vs. 2300 Zrinski's soldiers
- Casualties: 25 000 Ottomans / all but 7 defenders

26 **Pomposo**

Meh. Nek' A - lah pra - ti vijek tvoj sva - ki hod! — Nek' sla - vom e - va - ti svak' tvog dje - la plod! —  
 Gott Al - lah mö - ge, Herr, stets schüt - zen dich — und dei - ner Sie - ge Ruhm soll e - wig blihn. —

Mus. Nek' A - lah pra - ti vijek tvoj sva - ki hod! — Nek' sla - vom e - va - ti svak' tvog dje - la plod! —  
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Port. Nek' A - lah pra - ti vijek tvoj sva - ki hod! — Nek' sla - vom e - va - ti svak' tvog dje - la plod! —  
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**Pomposo**

30

Meh. Ti nas po - ve - di sad slav - ni u boj. — Ni - kog ne šte - di nas, rob svak' je tvoj! —  
 Du sollst nun füh - ren uns ruhm - reich zum Sieg. — Nie - mand soll flie - hen, uns win - ket der Sieg. —

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T. — — — — —

B. — — — — —

MIC 13.3302 25

Choir of Ottoman Soldiers “May Allah always guard your steps...”

**Allegro giusto**  
**Marciale e grandioso**  
*pesante grandioso*

10a. Vojnički zbor

Klavir

6

11

16 *pesante grandioso*

21 *Marziale i cori italiani: Allegro e Zupino*

T. — — — — —  
 A - la - pić i Ju - ra - nić,  
 A - la - pić und Ju - ra - nisch,

B. — — — — —  
 A - la - pić i Ju - ra - nić,  
 A - la - pić und Ju - ra - nisch,

25

T. na - sa di - ka, na - sa čast, na - še mi - lje, na - sa čast!  
 eu - re Sie - ge fei - ern wir. Eh - re euch, Sol - da - ten - zier.

B. na - sa di - ka, na - sa čast, na - še mi - lje, na - sa čast!  
 eu - re Sie - ge fei - ern wir. Eh - re euch, Sol - da - ten - zier.

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Choir of Croatian soldiers “Alapić! Juranić! Our pride and glory...”

[https://youtube.com/clip/Ugkx1MwVXw-Xn\\_B1izVvUoyKcvNBAQyjI7Dv](https://youtube.com/clip/Ugkx1MwVXw-Xn_B1izVvUoyKcvNBAQyjI7Dv)

## **Ottoman military march**

Commanders:

May Allah follow every step you take!

May your every deed for glory make!

Lead us to victorious battle in waves;

Spare no one, we are your slaves! //x2 (choir)

Commanders:

Let glory be yours with Allah's blessing!

Our glorious leader, lead us where you will! //x2 (choir)

**Timoleon:**

The young Hungarian [king  
Louis II Jagellonian] rised  
Against our Sultan,  
But he felt the might  
Of our mace and ram.  
The young king lay dead  
With his troops so low.  
Slain by the Ottomans,  
Oh, what a blow!

*largo*

Like a bird, like a majestic hawk,  
The Sultan slays them with a stroke.  
The fields are bloody in his wake,  
The country can but tremble and  
shake.

That's what happens when a worm  
Takes up arms against a lion!

*joyful  
oriental*

<https://www.youtube.com/clip/UgkxE4KPHRjx-T3Jb8ITWwpuNouCLiLqRKfe>

**Fantastic oriental dance**

# Sokolović's *stretta* („taking over the power”)

Sokolović (approaches Suleyman):

Ah! He's dead!

Now I wield all might,

Zrinjski will soon feel it:

I'll show him fear tonight,

He'll follow the Sultan to the pit.

First I'll take Siget;

And then to Istanbul!



# Awerness of acquired glory

**Levi (to Suleyman):**

(...)

For forty glorious  
years

you've ruled with  
zest! (...)

**Suleyman:**

But I'll work each  
night and every day,

So that when I die,

my glory will never  
decay.

**Zrinski:**

(...)

So shines our time  
upon earth:

One moment: at the  
height of glory,

And at the the next:  
death has its mirth,

And the heavenly sun  
sinks on our debris.

# Absence of the fear of death

**Suleyman (to his physician Levi, I Act):**

Do I need ten long years

To live like a worm and rot?

To have my heart in sorrow clad?

To wait for the blood in my veins to clot?

Another year, and I'll be glad,

But I'll work each night and every day...

**Suleyman (to Levi, III Act):**

Levi, Levi, do you think,

That a true hero is reluctant to die?

But provide me a cure this once,

So I may see his head

Before my feet.

**Zrinski (to his soldiers, I Act):**

As knowing soldiers,

With courage and joy,

Let us go to that holy battle, to death!

**Zrinski (to his wife Eva, III Act):**

'Tis time for me to like a Croat die:

My sacred oath I will not belie.

Zrinski will fall,

And his small troop too,

But Croats will stand tall,

And bounds of slavery undo!

(before the final charge):

To die for our homeland, what delight!

# Suleymans last scene

Suleyman:

Oh, Zrinski,

Oh, Zrinski,

I'll take you with me when I go!

← desperate

decisive

(...)

Suleyman: Siget must fall, and Zrinski with it! Onwards! Onwards!

Ali Portuk: I cannot, mighty Emperor!

Suleyman (angirly throws a dagger at him): Be damned!

Charge! Charge! (he dies)

# Conclusion: functions of exoticism

descriptive and decorative function

confirms existing collective memory of the Ottomans

reminds the audience of the wars fought for several centuries

national integrative function

Thank you for your attention!

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