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

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## Wars with Ottoman Empire

- 15th 18th Century
- Battle at Krbava field (1493) large number of prominent Crotian 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

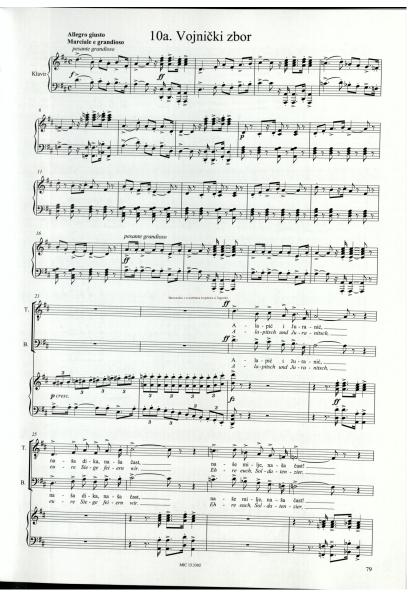


"Reliquiae reliquarum" – Croatia in the time of Ottoman conquests (orange) (Modern Croatian borders in red)

# Battle of Siget (1566)

- Nikola Zrinski renowed commander distinguished in the battles of Vienna (1529), Pest (1542), first battle of Siget (1556), and in countles 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

Meh sla-vom cva-ti sval sva - ki hod Mus. Port. 9: 5 000 PF P Lev. 9: 5 Beg. lah pra-ti vijek sva - ki hod! \_ Nek' sla-vom cva-ti svak' 630 7 8 7 8 7 8 7 8 7 8 7 Meh. ve - di sad Mus. no - ve - di sad Port. 9:52 Lev. 9: 5 Beg. 9:00 (9:00 MIC 13 330



Choir of Ottoman Soldiers "May Allah always guard your steps..."

Choir of Croatian soldiers "Alapić! Juranić! Our pride and glory..." 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)

all translations by Tomislav Pisk

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!

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.

largo

joyful

oriental

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

### Absence of the fear of death

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.

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?

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

But provide me a cure this once,

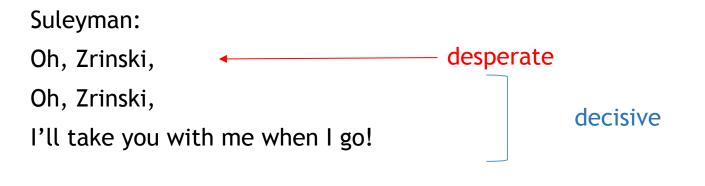
So I may see his head

Before my feet.

Zrinski (to his soldiers, | 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: 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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