

## ABSTRACT

Astronomy is perhaps one of the oldest sciences to come under the scrutiny of mankind. The changes taking place in the sky, the movements of the stars, and the transformations of the moon have given birth to many beliefs and superstitions among those observing the sky. Of all of them, the sudden, unexpected and frightening appearance of strange objects that came to be called comets have inspired mankind's imagination the most. The attitudes of ordinary people to these celestial phenomena and, moreover, the evolution and changes in the world of faith that such phenomena have brought about over the centuries, gives an insight into how human thinking has developed and how astronomy was born as a science.

The book lists the comets detected and recorded in the Hungarian-speaking area, and in the case of Transylvania, the German, Romanian, Turkish, and even Latin sources, and compiles them for the first time, richly illustrating them with images from that age. During the presentation of the sources, we encounter lesser-known chronicles, chroniclers and diaries. By following these notes in chronological order, an authentic picture emerges, not only of the beliefs born of comets, but also of the development and evolution of the Hungarian language.

Tracing developments in human thinking becomes all the more intriguing when science begins to decipher the nature and movement of comets, particularly as it challenges previous beliefs. Do scientific results affect beliefs that have been formed up to that point? Do they change the way people think? Comet records following scientific discoveries reveal that beliefs formed over the centuries are stubbornly holding on, and are often stronger than any attempt by logic or science to disprove them. What is even more intriguing is that there are abundant examples of this, even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century!

The book shines a light on the gap that is sometimes prevalent between science and everyday life. Realizing this fact can prove very instructive for readers who may recognize similar situations in their environment or even in their own thinking. This adventure in the history of science suggests that man is more of an emotional than rational being. Thus, the book will be a valuable resource not only for astronomers (as we relate the sightings of comets observed in the Carpathian Basin) but also for interested linguists (as we explore many old Hungarian language quotations), and for those whose aim is to enhance the dissemination of natural science knowledge and to make education more effective.