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# *Moving Borders in Medieval Central Europe*

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Special Editors of the Thematic Issue

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# Finding Batu's Hill at Muhi: Liminality between Rebellious Territory and Submissive Territory, Earth and Heaven for a Mongol Prince on the Eve of Battle*

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This study offers a reconstruction of a crucial event of pan-Eurasian historical significance—namely, the Battle of Muhi in 1241—by focusing on two primary source accounts of Batu Khan ascending a hill shortly before the battle. The two sources are not related to each other, and they represent two fundamentally different source groups related to the battle. By using a complex analytical approach, this article tries to identify the character and significance of the hill in question—something made difficult by the fact that there are no hills or mountains near the battlefield today. The attested purposes that Mongol rulers and troops had for ascending mountains are explored for clues. A hypothesis emerges according to which Batu likely ascended two different types of hill, one being a small mound (kurgan) of the type which characteristically dotted Hungary's landscape around the battlefield. The other hill, which he ascended for religious ritual purposes, was probably one of the more prominent features in the area of Szerencs about thirty kilometers from the site of the clash. Several earlier attempts to identify the hill are now revisited in this study with two different types of approaches. Combining a unique range of textual accounts with recent archaeological findings, we suggest a drastic and perhaps more accurate reinterpretation of the course of events leading up to the important battle than the interpretations which have been proposed so far. Furthermore, by looking closely at the different narrative structures of the sources we can identify attempts by medieval authors of Central European and Asian texts to contextualize this event within their general interpretations of the battle. Thus, the main arguments of this article cross real and figurative frontiers in contemporary accounts of the episode and in their modern interpretations. This research forms part of an interdisciplinary research project carried out by a group of scholars dealing with the historical, archaeological, and topographical aspects of the Battle of Muhi.

Keywords: Mongol invasion of Europe, Batu, Mongol Empire, Battle of Muhi, battlefield archaeology, kurgan, Kingdom of Hungary

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## *Introduction*

In the ruling ideology of the Mongol Empire, a distinct dichotomy was drawn between two types of polity. In relationship to the Mongols and their heaven-ordained empire, any other nation could only exist as a submissive people (*il irgen*) or a rebellious people (*bulya irgen*).[1] Therefore, when the Mongols invaded the territory of a recalcitrant foe who refused to submit to Mongol demands, this represented a passage from peaceful submission to chaos and war. Indeed, this transition across the border to break down rebellious nations that put up resistance to their authority must have carried symbolic weight, particularly for Mongol leaders and princes, when they set out on campaigns. In the case of Batu Khan and his fellow Chinggisid princes advancing through the passes of the Carpathian Mountains to invade the Kingdom of Hungary in early 1241, this sense of liminality must have been particularly stark. The passage through the rugged Carpathians at the outset might have been an omen of things to come. Hills and mountains played a significant role in the historical events of the Mongol invasion period in the kingdom, most notably as refuges for the populace and sites of rare successful resistance.[2] That story is well known. However, for descendants of Chinggis Khan, hills held an additional and unique spiritual significance. They were sites of another type of liminality between Earth and Eternal Heaven (*Möngke Tengri*), a place of communication between a ruler of the world and its divine overseer.

Therefore, it is interesting to note that in two primary sources, written within a couple decades of the events, a hill plays a role in the Battle of Muhi. Fought in April 1241 between the Hungarian royal army and the Mongols under Batu and the famed general Sübe'etei, the battle was the most important episode in the entire invasion, and it was a clash of global historical significance.[3] Yet the two accounts of Batu ascending a hilltop are very mysterious, because the battle occurred in a flatland area of the Great Hungarian Plain. The general area of the engagement is known today, but there are no real hills near the medieval village of Muhi, the presumed site of the Hungarian camp, or on either side of the Sajó River, where, according to the sources, the battle unfolded. Granted, there are the Carpathian Mountains to the north in the present-day Slovakian

1 Allsen, "Mongol Census Taking in Rus'," 50.

2 Laszlovszky et al., "Contextualizing the Mongol Invasion," 423–31, 437; Nagy, *Tatárjárás*, 175–201; Pow, "Hungary's Castle Defense Strategy," 234–36.

3 Laszlovszky et al., "Reconstructing the Battle of Muhi," 30.

border region and those farther away in Transylvania. Closer by are the hills of Zemplén, more than thirty kilometers to the northeast, but none of these hills or mountains are close enough to the battlefield that they could have played any role in the events there.

This study attempts to identify Batu's hill, as we might call it. Our hypothesis is that this detail as described in two different sources cannot be simply neglected, and we should explore why the authors of the accounts of the battle included this element in their descriptions. To that end, we will first describe both primary source accounts related to it. Then, we explore the larger body of references to the Mongols and their activities involving hills. In this discussion, we will show that there were two broad categories of activity for which the Mongols specifically sought a hilltop. In this context, the role of hills in military tactics and religious-ritual activities are taken into consideration. Finally, we offer a plausible identification of the hilltop—or possibly hilltops—and a hypothesis which is intended to explain the sequence of events in this battle of pan-Eurasian significance.

At different times, Hungarian historical research has dealt with the issue of the hilltop episodes related to the Battle of Muhi, but even according to the most recent studies, the various explanations which have been offered so far are not convincing.[4] More recently, the Hungarian sinologist Sándor P. Szabó proposed new solutions in his study dealing with the place names in Chinese sources connected to the Battle of Muhi and mentioned the hill problem.[5] The historian John Man personally drove around the area of the battlefield and concluded that the accounts of a hill in the preliminary events to the battle must simply be an error by medieval authors.[6]

Before accepting a wholesale dismissal of the claims found in the sources according to which Batu, the principal Mongol commander, mounted a hilltop shortly before the engagement at Muhi, this essay first aims to identify the hill, or hills, in question. This is important, because the Battle of Muhi retains a degree of mystery, and our present knowledge of exact places where stages of the battle unfolded is far from precise. As we pointed out in an earlier study, in order to make better sense of the battle as a series of events, we must pinpoint more accurately the geographical locations where various key events mentioned in the surviving sources occurred. These manmade and natural features include

4 Négyesi, "A muhi csata," 302; B. Szabó, *A tatárjárás*, 128.

5 P. Szabó, "A muhi csata és a tatárjárás," 259–86.

6 Man, *Genghis Khan*, 271.

a bridge where the engagement was centered, the Hungarian camp which was surrounded by the Mongols, the highway along which the Hungarians retreated, and of course the hilltop which Batu ascended before ordering his troops to attack.[7] Some past excavations have uncovered significant finds associated with the events, including an excavation of the medieval village of Muhi, while recent battlefield archaeological research utilizing metal detectors has unearthed new artifacts, such as weapons and jewelry.

More significantly, the same project has identified the medieval village of Hídvég (literally meaning "end of the bridge"). Perhaps surprisingly, the medieval settlement has a different location from the present-day village of Sajóhídvég (literally meaning "end of the bridge at the Sajó River"), even though it was depicted in eighteenth-century maps at its present location. This is a very important topographical point, as the first extant mention we have of the settlement Hidvég is a charter written in 1261. Granted, that was two decades after the battle itself, but this late appearance is due to the destruction of earlier charters in the invasion; the villages of the settlement system in the region only appear in the written sources towards the end of the thirteenth century or in the first half of the fourteenth century. Archaeological evidence, however, confirms that most of these villages were already present in the area in the earlier centuries of the Árpád Era. Thus, the medieval village Hídvég, appearing in the charter of 1261 as *Hydueghe*, can now be identified. We cannot be absolutely sure that the bridge mentioned in the accounts of the battle was located at this village, though it seems likely. Some wooden structures have been identified in the Sajó at various parts of the riverbed, but their exact dating is currently being worked out with the help of underwater archaeological investigations and dendrochronological studies which are now underway. This is also a part of the present research project, which plans to identify a significant number of topographical points connected to different events of the battle. By and large, the site of the battlefield can be quite accurately identified within a zone of at least 25–30 square kilometers. This means that the landscape features, including any related hills or mountains, can be analyzed in the context of the descriptions of the battle.

We have also tried to make better use of the scanty but valuable details of the battle in Asian sources. For instance, the site of the battle in the Chinese–Mongolian biography of Sübe'etei is recorded as the "Huoning" River (滹寧)—

7 Laszlovszky et al., "Reconstructing the Battle of Muhi," 32–33.

the original Mongolian was perhaps something like "Qorning." Previously, this place name was not identified. An earlier translation of the biography by György Kara did not offer any suggestion for this name as it appears in the source.[8] More recently a solution for this problem has been offered; in all likelihood, it is a reference to the Hernád River (in Slovakian it is called Hornád), which forks off the Sajó close to the medieval crossing point. Identifying the river as the Hernád/Hornád sheds some light on the preliminary troop positions from a Mongol perspective on the eve of battle.[9] This interpretation of an important Asian source, originally recorded in Mongolian not long after the events, would help confirm that the area of the battlefield can be found near Muhi, and the "hill" mentioned in other sources should be sought in the general area if one wishes to interpret that detail of the sources as well. It should be noted that there is another interpretation for the Huoning River. Szabó argues that it is in fact meant to convey "Kerengő-ér" (Kerengő-stream), another feature in the area which has been proposed as the site of the Hungarian camp.[10] In the context of his recent study, he also raised the issue of the hill. In any case, his conclusions do not change the general localization of the battle, and therefore we should still be seeking a hill in the same area.

## *The Two Accounts of Batu Ascending a Hill*

Both accounts according to which a hill played an important role in the events surrounding the Battle of Muhi were recorded in the mid-thirteenth century. However, the very different social, geographical, and linguistic contexts of their composition make it certain the two narratives did not inform each other in any way. The first account we will look at is found in the *Historia Salonitana* of Thomas of Split (1200–1268), a high-ranking clergyman in Split (Spalato), a city on the Dalmatian coast which was under the rule of the kings of Hungary at the time. The author was a personal acquaintance of King Béla IV and other leading magnates of the kingdom. According to his account, Batu, the Mongol prince and supreme commander of Mongol forces during their westward campaign in Europe in 1241–42, used a hill for military-reconnaissance purposes. The story relates that a body of Mongol troops had retreated slowly from the central part of the kingdom (the area of the Hungarian camp near Pest), pursued by the

8 Katona, *A tatárjárás emlékezete*, 83–84.

9 Pow and Liao, "Subutai: Sorting Fact from Fiction," 65–66.

10 P. Szabó, "A muhi csata és a tatárjárás," 270–75.

Hungarians to the Sajó River in the northeast part of modern Hungary. Having crossed the river, the Mongols were then encamped and made a stand. The Hungarian and Mongol armies faced each other across the river, though according to Thomas of Split, the Hungarians could see only some of the Mongol forces, as the Mongols had hidden in thick woods along the bank. The Hungarians likewise made their camp, which would be the site of the ensuing battle. At that point, the Mongols' senior commander Batu "ascended a hill to spy out carefully the disposition of the whole army." The specific terminology ("*in quondam collem conscendens*") implies that this was just *some* or *any* hill—certainly not a mountain or some defining feature of the landscape that was of any particular importance. The term applied to the landscape feature, *collis*, is etymologically related to "hill" or mound. In the context of the Hungarian Plain, medieval charters describing floodplain zones in this region used "mountain" (*mons*) for higher, elevated places, even if they are only 15–25 meters higher than the surrounding area.[11] Thus, *collis* here probably means a mound (kurgan) on the plain. In any case, having seen the cramped disorganization of the Hungarian camp, Batu returned to his comrades and told them to be confident, since their enemies had taken poor counsel, obviously lacking military sense, by laying out their camp as a sort of sheepfold. Then, "the very same night," he ordered a surreptitious advance across the Sajó against the Hungarians. He managed to surround their camp and won a decisive victory after they began to flee in panic.[12]

The second account of the Battle of Muhi which makes mention of a hill is found in the *Tarikh-i Jahan-gusha* by the famous Persian historian and administrator, Juvayni (1226–1283). According to this account, upon advancing into Hungary, Batu sent his brother Shiban ahead with 10,000 troops to determine the size of the Hungarian army. Shiban came back to Batu after a week, having scouted out the enemy position. He reported that the advancing Hungarian forces outnumbered the Mongol forces twofold in terms of numerical strength. Faced with this news and with the Hungarian and Mongol armies coming into proximity, Batu anxiously ascended a hilltop. For one day and night he "prayed and lamented; and he bade the Moslems also assemble together and offer up prayers."[13] The following day, the Mongols prepared for battle, and Batu ordered an attack which initiated a hotly contested struggle that ultimately ended in his victory when the Mongols entered the Hungarian camp and overturned the tents

11 Laszlovszky, "Dedi etiam terram," 9–24.

12 Thomas of Split, *History of the Bishops*, 262–63.

13 Qazvini, *Tarikh-i Jahan-gusha-yi Juvayni*, 325; Boyle, *History of the World Conqueror*, 270–71.

of the king. Regarding the terminology for the hill Batu ascended, it is referred to as a *pushta* (پشته), which is defined in Francis Joseph Steingass's *Comprehensive Persian–English Dictionary* as, "A little hill, an embankment; declivity; a heap; the shoulder-blades; a load; a faggot; a buttress, prop; a vault; a quay."[14] Like the Latin account, the Persian narrative states that Batu "went up on *some* hill" ("*bar pushta-i rafi*"), in this case by using the suffix -i to indicate indetermination. This was "some" or "any" hill, rather than a particularly special location. It was certainly not a high mountain, since the word for that is *koh* (کوه).[15]

Thus, in passages from two unconnected sources, we see that the specific language in both cases paints a picture of a nondescript or modestly sized hill, rather than a prominent mountain. However, the described purpose for Batu's ascension differs in the two sources. In the account offered by Thomas of Split, Batu ascended the hill or mound with a strictly military purpose in mind—to view the positions of the Hungarians. According to Juvayni's account, Batu's ascension had a fundamentally religious purpose—to seclude himself and pray for victory. The different explanations offered for why the Mongol leader ascended the hill invites a wider discussion here of source accounts of the Mongol practice of climbing hills and the reasons for it.

## *Mongol Purposes for Ascending Hills: Military and Religious Functions*

In the available sources, we can find many accounts of Mongols—often those in leadership roles—ascending hills for purposes that fall into two broad categories: pragmatic, military purposes and ceremonial, religious purposes. Looking at the first category, we see that hilltops were useful to the Mongols, particularly as vantage points from which to conduct reconnaissance, but also as strategically valuable strongpoints. There are many records of commanders of campaigns initially climbing a hill like Batu did to survey the enemy's positions and the lay of the land. Chelota, the Mongol general overseeing the campaign to subjugate Korea in 1256, is recorded to have unfurled his banners and climbed a prominent mountain, Munsusan, with several other leaders to view the topography of Kangdo (Ganghwa), the island where the Korean monarchy was holding out.[16] Likewise, Khubilai, still a prince and not yet khan, was campaigning against the Song Dynasty in 1259 and ascended the mountain Xianglushan (香鑪山) to

14 Steingass, *Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*, 252.

15 Ibid., 1064.

16 Schultz and Kang, *Koryosa Choryo II*, 352.

survey the Yangzi River, along which the Song were conducting an effective defense. His efforts paid off. He saw a vulnerable ferry crossing on the river, ordered an attack on it, and some of his troops even succeeded in breaking through the defenses to the southern riverbank.[17] These accounts lend credence to the report by Thomas, since they indicate that the surveying he described was part of the customary military tactics used by Mongol leaders.

In addition to top commanders, ordinary Mongol troops also made a strategic habit of occupying hilltops during their advances into enemy territory. A report of Song Chinese emissaries to the Mongols in the 1230s, the *Heida Shilue*,[18] noted that during their advances, the Mongols intensely feared ambushes, so they sent out light vanguard cavalry, who habitually climbed high hills to gain vantage points. These scouts then reported their observations, along with information taken from captured locals, back to the main army.[19] Elsewhere, we read that the very first thing the Mongols did during invasions was to ascend the local hills to inspect the terrain and glean the true situation of the enemy.[20] In a very different context, the French Dominican friar Simon of Saint-Quentin made observations about vanguard Mongol troops and their strategic use of hills:

> When they set out to invade another territory […] they occupy the whole extent of the land […] They ascend the mountains in the immediate vicinity all night long. Morning having come, they send out their vanguard troops, mentioned above, into the plains. The local people, struggling to escape the vanguard troops, flee to the mountains believing to save themselves there. Instantly, they are killed by the Tartars who were in hiding and descended on them.[21]

The Mendicant friar's references to light vanguard troops (*cursarios*) and the references in the Chinese reports to vanguard or advance troops (前鋒/先鋒), which in both cases are reported to have ascended mountains to reconnoiter, in all probability refer to the same type of troops and habitual tactics. The papal emissary, Carpini, described how the vanguard troops (*praecursores*), very lightly equipped with only their tents, arms, and mounts, went ahead of the main army with the sole task of killing or putting the inhabitants to flight; plunder would

17 *Yuan Shi*, 61–62.

18 For the Chinese text of the *Heida Shilue*, see: https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=922402#p62

19 Olbricht and Pinks, *Meng-ta pei-lu*, 183.

20 Ibid., 190.

21 Richard, *Histoire des Tartares*, 43.

be collected after the main army advanced into the area.[22] The *Tartar Relation* by Minorite friar C. de Bridia contains unique information which supports the general picture of Mongol forces advancing in segments. The author describes how, when the Mongols invaded a country, their army moved swiftly but cautiously in wagons and on horses, bringing along wives, children, slaves, herds, and all their property. Vanguard skirmishers (*cursores*) went ahead to spread havoc and kill, preventing the mobilization of local resistance, while the larger multitude with the families and property followed at a distance, as long as serious resistance was not encountered.[23] Thomas of Split mentioned that when the Mongols first broke through the frontier barriers and entered the Kingdom of Hungary, they basically rushed by the first peasants they encountered without showing their "ruthless nature" yet, something which could suggest that the vanguard troops had a more important mission of reconnaissance at that early stage.[24] Rashid al-Din, referring to a Mongol campaign in China in 1231, described the Mongols advancing in a wide hunting battue (*jerge*), ascending mountains, and moving across the plains.[25]

The sources mention other instances when the usage of hills blended military aims with ritual functions. Simon of Saint Quentin mentioned that when Mongol forces took a city or castle by siege, "as a sign of their glory and victory and for certainty about the number of those killed, and to strike terror in other people, they erect one of the fallen in a lofty and eminent place as a marker of a thousand, suspended upside down by his feet."[26] Old nomadic traditions long before the Mongol Empire may have seen the strategic usage of hilltops combined with ceremonial and religious practices. The semi-legendary record of the Magyar arrival in Hungary, the *Deeds of the Hungarians* [*Gesta Hungarorum*] (c. 1200), mentions that when the Magyar tribes first migrated into the Carpathian Basin, three of their chieftains raced to the top of Mt. Tokaj on horseback, and in fact the mountain was named after the figure who allegedly reached the summit first. They surveyed the landscape and then held a ritual feast, an *áldomás*, sacrificing a horse on the spot.[27] Though legendary, this account might show that Mt. Tokaj, jutting out imposingly on the plains, was immediately recognized

22 Van den Wyngaert, *Sinica Franciscana*, 80; Dawson, *The Mongol Mission*, 35.

23 Painter, "The Tartar Relation," 98–99.

24 Thomas of Split, *History of the Bishops*, 260–61.

25 Thackston, *Rashiduddin*, 310.

26 Richard, *Histoire des Tartares*, 46.

27 Bak, Rady and Veszprémy, *Anonymus and Master Roger*, 44–45.

by nomadic invaders as both useful militarily and sacred. It is interesting to note that the route of the main Mongol forces in 1241, as much as we can reconstruct it from sources, must have passed near Mt. Tokaj, a very significant landscape feature, much higher than anything else in this region and perched on the edge of the Great Plain with its remarkable volcanic shape. It is curious that the author whose work shows a strong familiarity with the geography of northeastern Hungary in particular[28] suggested one could ride a horse up the rugged hill. In any case, returning to Mongol accounts specifically, we see this mixed usage of hilltops again when we read that, as a young man, Temujin (Chinggis Khan) went up a tall hill for the pragmatic purpose of surveying the landscape to see if enemies were near but felt as though God (*Tengri*) were communicating something to him when the saddle slipped off his horse.[29]

This relates directly to the other major activity related to ascending hills that we frequently find in the sources—a religious ritual for which Chinggis Khan himself seems to have set the precedent. Before a serious and dangerous military undertaking, we read of Chinggis Khan several times ritualistically being alone to commune with the divine on or near a mountain. Juzjani, a historian in the Sultanate of Delhi, related that when Chinggis Khan was going to go to war against the powerful Altan Khan of the Jin Dynasty in 1210–11, he first assembled his people at the base of a mountain and they fasted for three days, repeatedly chanting, "Tengri!" During that time, Chinggis Khan sat in a tent with a rope around his neck, and on the fourth day he dramatically emerged, shouting that Tengri would grant him victory.[30] They then marched to war and won against amazing odds. In Rashid al-Din's version of this event, Chinggis Khan actually ascended "the hill" alone, "as was his custom," and prayed for victory and vengeance on the Jin Dynasty.[31]

Chinggis Khan repeated this practice when his next major war erupted against the Khwarazmian Shah in 1218, following the well-known massacre of his merchants by the governor of Otrar. According to Juvayni, upon receiving news of the massacre, Chinggis Khan went alone to the summit of a hill, feverish with rage, bared his head, and for three nights he prayed for vengeance, since he was not the instigator of the conflict.[32] Descending the hill, he immediately

28 Ibid., xxiii.

29 Thackston, *Rashiduddin*, 46.

30 Raverty, *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, 954.

31 Thackston, *Rashiduddin*, 283.

32 Qazvini, *Tarikh-i Jahan-gusha-yi Juvayni*, 169; Boyle, *History of the World Conqueror*, 80–81.

made ready for war, in which he again would emerge as victor and which would make him a figure of global historical memory. The wording employed in this passage, "He went alone to the top of some hill" (*tanha bar bala-yi pushta-i raft*), is the same terminology used again later to describe Batu's hilltop seclusion before the Battle of Muhi. The only difference is that it emphasizes that Chinggis Khan went (*raft*) to "the top of" (*bala-yi*) a hill. An indeterminate suffix clearly indicates that Chinggis Khan ascended "some hill," rather than a particularly special hill. The idea that Batu's ritual before the battle with the Hungarians was made in conscious imitation of his grandfather was evident to contemporaries. Rashid al-Din essentially copied Juvayni's account of the Battle of Muhi, but in describing Batu's going up a hill, he added, "as had been Chinggis Khan's custom."[33] Related to Batu's conscious imitation of a ritual which Chinggis Khan is recorded to have performed before two very daunting wars against powerful enemies, it is interesting to note that Juvayni concludes his account of the Mongol victory at Muhi by noting that it was "one of their greatest deeds and fiercest battles."[34]

The apparent Mongolian custom of seclusion on a hilltop seems to mirror old Middle Eastern and Near Eastern traditions of ascetics or prophets in the wilderness, at least when this practice was described by Islamic and Christian authors. Indeed, Chinggis Khan is presented as an almost Moses-like figure in Simon of Saint-Quentin's account of his followers choosing him as khan:

> They all unanimously approved of his counsel and chose him, and his successors, as their ruler, and they promised to be obedient to him forever […] Having thus been elected, the next day while they all convened, he ascended a high mountain [*in montem altum ascendit*] and, exhorting them, said, "You all know that until now three sins have always been rampant amongst us—namely lying, thieving, and adultery…[35]

However, while in Persian, Arabic, Greek, or Syriac hagiographical texts, a holy ascetic would likely ascend a proper "mountain" (*koh, jabal, oros, tur*), Juvayni recorded that Chinggis Khan climbed more modest "hills." This might well be a conscious variation from the established literary precedent rather than something accidental.[36] Another interesting element is Juvayni's claim that

33 Thackston, *Rashiduddin*, 321.

34 Boyle, *History of the World Conqueror*, 271.

35 Richard, *Histoire des Tartares*, 28–29.

36 Special thanks to Georg Leube (Bayreuth) for his deep literary and philological insights on this point.

Batu instructed the Muslims in his army to pray shortly before the Battle of Muhi. This fits with the general Mongol policy of allowing their subjects to practice any religion openly, provided they loyally served the Mongols. Simon of Saint-Quentin seemed surprised at the degree of Mongol liberality in this regard, noting, "The law of Muhammad is proclaimed five times a day openly by Saracens within earshot of [the Mongols'] army and in all the cities they have subjugated in which Saracens dwell. As well, the Saracens in their army and all their cities preach [Islam]."[37] So, there is nothing improbable about this episode, but what is interesting is what Juvayni as a Persian administrator and scholar in the Islamic tradition might have intended by highlighting it. As a subject of the Mongols, he perhaps wished to describe an episode which revealed sympathy for Islam among the highest princes of the empire, as this story might encourage his fellow Muslims, faced with the awkward situation of Mongol rule, to believe that a conversion of the animist nomads was imminent. Moreover, because it highlighted the important role that the Muslims had played in the victory, his account again appears to have been motivated by a desire to present a picture of harmony between Mongol princes and their Muslim subjects. Though this particular passage from Juvayni's narrative is not the topic of our present investigation, its interpretation would benefit from further studies connected to the Islamization process of the Mongols. Batu is clearly shown in the episode to be following an old tradition begun by Chinggis Khan but also relying on the spiritual influence of his Muslim followers. The combination seems to have brought about success even in what was evidently a very difficult struggle.

## *The Reconstructed Scenario and Identity of Batu's Hilltop at Muhi*

The discussion above has established that a clergyman in Split and a Persian governor of Baghdad both separately described Batu ascending a hill shortly before the Battle of Muhi in 1241. In both cases, the terminology suggests a relatively modest hill, rather than an imposing mountain, but the accounts diverge fundamentally on the reason for which Batu ascended the hill. Based on several descriptions in sources of Mongol invasion tactics, the scenario described by Thomas fits with the practice of commanders and "vanguard" forces climbing a hill for reconnaissance. The ascension of a hill by a grandson of Chinggis Khan for religious reasons, as the event is described by Juvayni, fits more with the

37 Richard, *Histoire des Tartares*, 47.

image of a Mongol khan performing a traditional preparation for an important war—a ritual activity not undertaken in the actual course of a battle. Given the evidence of Mongols ascending all the hills in an area for scouting purposes and the many examples of the ritual, quasi-ascetic seclusion of khans on hilltops, we have to at least consider the possibility that the two accounts are describing episodes on two different hilltops.

The following hypothetical reconstruction of the events, based closely on the source material, suggests candidates for the hilltop activities described by Thomas of Split and Juvayni. Regarding Thomas of Split, he unquestionably provided the fullest account of the battle, and, when combined with the description provided by Rogerius, we can reconstruct the movements, activities, and positions of the Hungarians before the Battle of Muhi with a good degree of accuracy. Because of the nature of their informants, these authors obviously could not provide similar levels of detail concerning the activities of the Mongols, and they disagree on a fundamental issue. Rogerius stated that Batu himself advanced with his army within half a day of Pest on March 15, 1241. Rogerius implied that the entire Mongol army under its chief commander advanced close to the Hungarian camp at Pest, and when the Hungarian army moved against it at last, the whole army under Batu withdrew.[38] Rogerius' account seems to be confused, because it states that the Mongols broke through the border defenses at the Russian Gate, likely the Verecke Pass in the Carpathians, only on March 12, 1241.[39] This would suggest that the entire Mongol army (evidently with baggage, wagons, herds) moved 300 kilometers across most of Hungary in three days—a feat which is doubtful even for a small detachment, let alone the whole army. In contrast, Thomas claimed that Batu was the senior commander of the army, but "they sent on ahead of them a squad of cavalry. These troops rode up to the Hungarian camp, making repeated shows of themselves and challenging them to battle" before taking off in rapid flight, firing arrows, when the Hungarians at last pursued them.[40]

On this crucial issue, Thomas must be correct. His claim echoes the descriptions of the Mongol use of vanguard troops, which quickly moved far ahead of the more cautious main army, a practice detailed in many sources, including those outlined above. More importantly, his account agrees with the Asian sources, which provide versions of the invasion of Hungary originating

38 Bak, Rady and Veszprémy, *Anonymus and Master Roger*, 168–69, 180–81.

39 Ibid., 156, 160–61.

40 Thomas of Split, *History of the Bishops*, 260–61.

from Mongol accounts. Juvayni related that Batu sent ahead his brother Shiban in advance with a detachment of 10,000 troops to do reconnaissance on the Hungarian army. Shiban returned after a week and reported to Batu that the Hungarian army was twice the size of the Mongols' forces, news which caused the chief commander to ascend a hill as the armies drew close, praying and lamenting in apparent anxiety about the coming battle.[41] Sübe'etei's biography in the *Yuan Shi*, which was translated from a lost Mongolian original written in the mid-thirteenth century, states that the Mongol princes were divided along five different routes as their forces broke through the Carpathians and entered the Kingdom of Hungary. Sübe'etei operated in "the vanguard" unit, which went ahead, executing a plan to "lure" (誘) the king's army to the "Huoning River" ("速不台出奇計誘其軍至潡寧河").[42] The translation into Persian of a Mongolian report on the invasion found in Rashid al-Din's historical compendium agrees that the Mongol princes had entered Hungary along five distant routes. Thus, it appears that Batu, Shiban, and Sübe'etei were facing Hungary's royal army without the contingents of the other Chinggisid princes, who were in Transylvania and Poland attacking other enemy forces simultaneously.[43] This might partly explain the widespread anxiety in Batu's army documented in the *Yuan Shi* and in Mendicant reports.[44]

Asian sources, which are more reliable when it comes to the Mongol perspective, create a picture of a vanguard detachment having gone ahead of Batu and having carried out a premeditated plan to lure the Hungarians to a site chosen well in advance of the battle. This means that Batu and evidently the bulk of his army, including followers, herds, wagons, etc., were *already* east of the Sajó River well before the Hungarians arrived in pursuit of a vanguard contingent. Judging by his version's agreement on these details, Thomas of Split was well informed. He was aware that the Hungarian forces outnumbered the Mongols at the battle and he also stated that when the Hungarian forces arrived at the Sajó River, they realized that "the whole multitude of the Tatars" (*universa multitudo Tartarorum*) was already encamped on the other side of the river.[45] This suggests the premeditated choice of the battlefield long in advance. In other words, there seems to have been a plan for the vanguard to lure the Hungarians

41 Boyle, *History of the World Conqueror*, 270.

42 Pow and Liao, "Subutai: Sorting Fact from Fiction," 63–66.

43 Boyle, *The Successors*, 69–70.

44 Painter, "The Tartar Relation," 82–83; Richard, *Histoire des Tartares*, 77.

45 Thomas of Split, *History of the Bishops*, 282–83, 260–61.

to Batu's already waiting main army. This position was likely chosen because the Sajó and Hernád Rivers provided a defensive line from which the Mongols could choose the time and place to attack. The natural gallery forest that runs along the floodplain of the Sajó would have concealed Mongol movements as they executed their plan to surround the Hungarians from several directions. There is textual evidence that this obscuring strategy was effective against the Hungarians. In a letter dated to July 1241, Emperor Frederick II offered an account of the battle based on what he had heard directly from the bishop of Vác, who had come to his court as an ambassador of the king of Hungary to seek help. The armies were thought to be still five miles apart from each other (*distarent quinque tantum miliaribus*) when the advance Mongol unit suddenly sprang forward and surrounded the Hungarian camp at dawn.[46] This suggests that the Hungarians thought the Mongols were still a considerable distance away since, in addition to the night darkness, the gallery forest along the Sajó obscured the Mongol positions and movements.

Most significant for our understanding of the battle, this interpretation of the sources suggests that vanguard forces were deployed in the leadup to the fighting, while Batu and the main body of the Mongols remained in the northeast of Hungary, never venturing as far as Pest before their victory. Thus, it is feasible that Batu was even considerably east of the Sajó River in the days before the battle, which then means we should consider hills that were not in the immediate vicinity of the site, especially since the sources on Mongol tactics note that they habitually ascended all the hills in a region during an invasion.

A key issue in determining the hilltop from which Batu reportedly viewed the Hungarian camp relates to the location of the camp itself. Several sources agree that during the battle, the Mongols struggled to force their way across the Sajó River in the area of a bridge spanning its banks. This crossing became the focal point of some of the heaviest fighting before the Mongols managed to force the Hungarians back and surround their camp.[47] The exact identifications of the site of the Hungarian camp and the bridge on the river are still tasks for the present research project. There is evidence that the courses of the Sajó and Hernád have shifted somewhat in the intervening centuries. For instance, a detailed map made in 1771 indicates the remains of an old bridge (*Vestigum Pontis antiqui*) east of Ónod and the Sajó. So, these questions are further complicated by

46 Luard, *Matthaei Parisiensis*, 114. A mile in medieval terminology is ambiguous but often could be considerably longer than the modern designation.

47 Painter, "The Tartar Relation," 82–83; Pow and Liao, "Subutai: Sorting Fact from Fiction," 66–67.

the problem of the interflow of the Hernád and Sajó rivers. The exact location of the confluence in the mid-thirteenth century is still a research problem, but there is clear evidence for its being situated at a different place compared to the present-day interflow. In fact, the very latest archaeological surveys of the area confirm that the site of medieval Hídvég—and therefore the location of the bridge over the river—must have been located at a site between the present

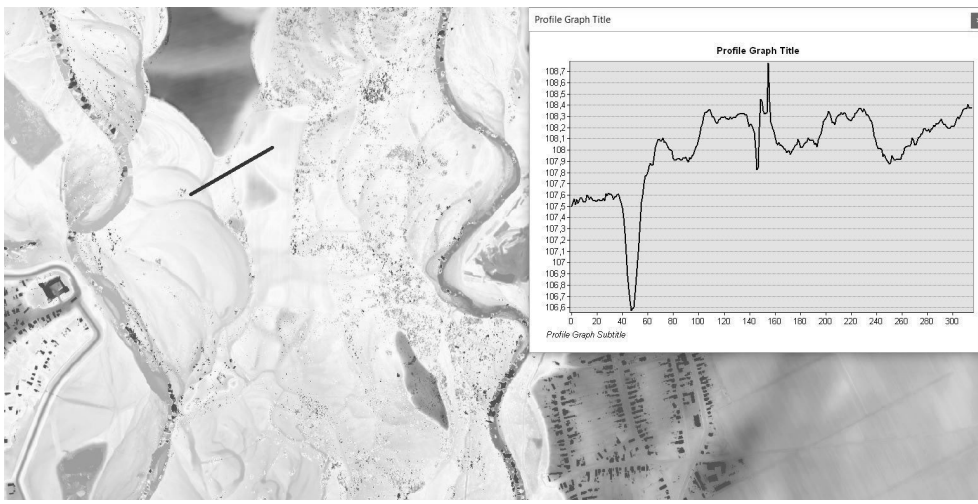


Figure 1. Interpretation of historical changes of watercourses of the Sajó near Ónod and of the river confluence site of the Sajó and Hernád based on geomorphology, cross sections, and LIDAR survey. The upward spikes on the graph are representative of trees.

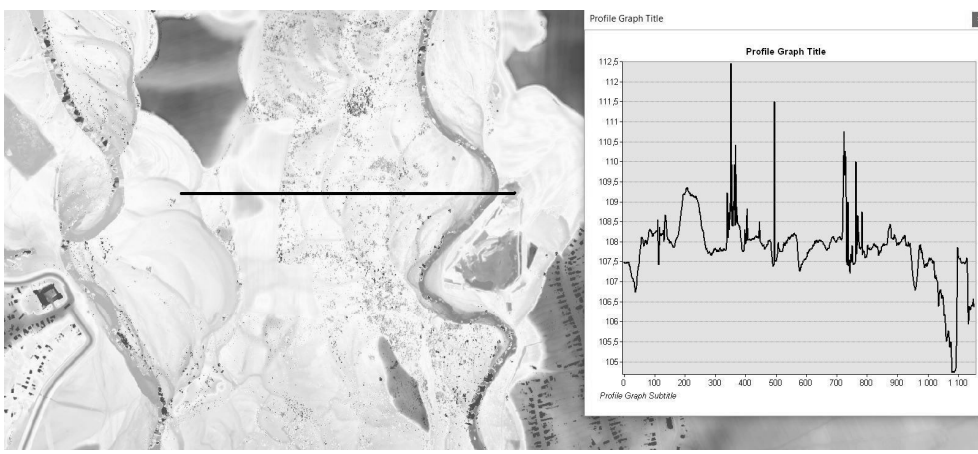


Figure 2. Another interpretation of historical changes of watercourses of the Sajó near Ónod and of the river confluence site of the Sajó and Hernád based on geomorphology, cross sections, and LIDAR survey. The upward spikes on the graph are representative of trees.

channels of the rivers Sajó and Hernád, rather than at modern Sajóhídvég (east of the Hernád), as has long been assumed (Figs. 1 and 2).

The map produced in the First Military Survey of Hungary undertaken by the Habsburg Empire (1782–1785) allows us to see the eighteenth-century landscape and road network.[48] This is very useful, because though five centuries had passed between the battle and the survey, it still depicts the area before the utterly transformative effects of modernization and huge population growth on the landscape. The general vicinity of the Hungarian camp was Muchi Rudera (Fig. 3), literally the ruins of Muhi, the actual location of the Árpád-era village and late medieval market town after which the battle was named in the modern secondary literature and general public discourse. Archaeological excavations have confirmed the existence of the medieval village at the site indicated in the survey.[49] The present-day village of Muhi on the riverbank was in fact called Poga in the Middle Ages, and it was renamed Muhi only in 1928 to commemorate the battlefield. Besides the village ruins, we notice on the survey map the existence of several small kurgans west of the Sajó River and to the east of the medieval village. These artificial prehistoric burial mounds (*kunhalom*) can be found in

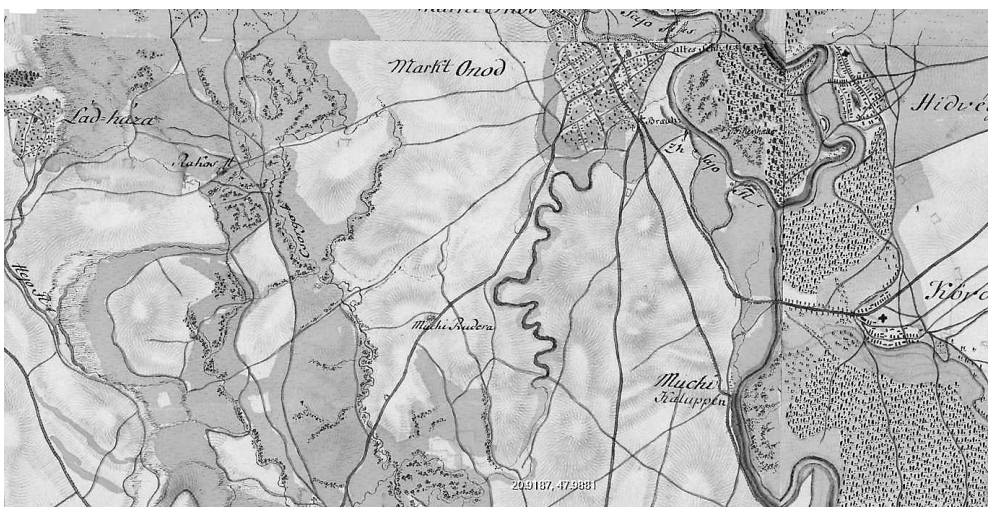


Figure 3. "Muchi Rudera," the ruins of the medieval town of Muhi in the First Military Survey Map. Source: "Königreich Ungarn (1782–1785) – First Military Survey." Digitized by Arcanum. https://mapire.eu/en/map/firstsurvey-hungary/?layers=147&bbox=2109136.4761014967%2C6019595.635189405%2C2134914.8638906726%2C6026283.875164358

48 The First Military Survey of the Kingdom of Hungary (1782–1785) is accessible at: https://mapire.eu/en/map/firstsurvey-hungary/

49 Laszlovszky et al., "Reconstructing the Battle of Muhi," 33.

many parts of Hungary. There are also natural mounds near the Sajó, on the western side of the river, in the area of the battle; some can be quite high, and they were used as permanent settlement sites for a long period in the Bronze Age.[50] These are in fact close to or in the immediate area of the Kerengő-ér, discussed earlier and sometimes proposed as the site of the Hungarian camp (Fig. 4). Recent archaeological investigations with metal detectors have found evidence of weapons and other artifacts located west of the Sajó River at a site where the remains of one of these mounds stand, suggesting that fighting took place there between the Hungarians and Mongols; clearly such features of the local landscape played a role in the battle. However, it is important to note that any mound that Batu might have used to survey the Hungarians before the fighting commenced must have been on the eastern side of the river.

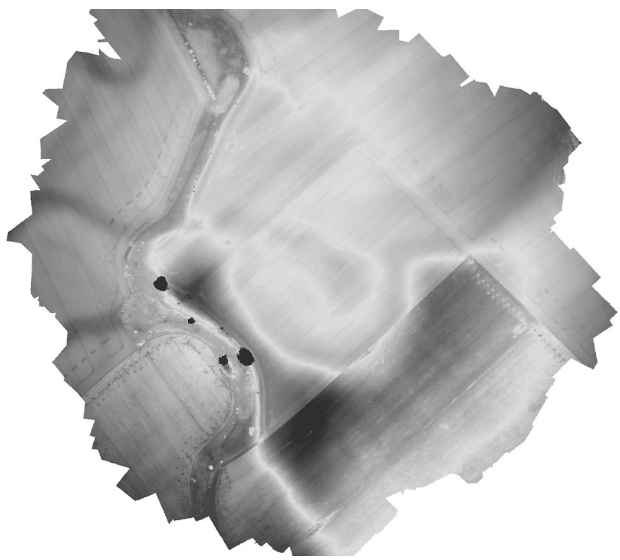

Fig. 4. UAV-based surface model of a supposed battle location (Csüllő) suggested in past scholarship on the basis of finds.

Regarding Thomas of Split's account, it is plausible that Batu used a kurgan as his vantage point. While the First Military Survey map shows several natural mounds on the western side of the river where the Hungarians were situated, we do not find artificial burial mounds (kurgans) in the immediate vicinity of the east side of the bank, where the Mongols were situated before the battle. However, on the map we see three mounds north of Tiszaluc, that is, east of

50 Fischl, "Bújócskázó bronzkori lelőhelyek."

the Sajó River and present-day Sajóhídvég. These mounds have already been discussed in the secondary literature in the context of the text of Thomas of Split,[51] but we wish to offer some new points of argumentation concerning the wider interpretation of this Latin source. The relevant mounds (kurgans) are situated roughly ten kilometers from what is likely the site of the medieval bridge or crossing on the river on a very prominent elevated landscape dotted with three kurgans, two of which were important enough to be named in the survey (Fig. 5). There is one with no name, and close to it is another kurgan named "Eperiesi Halom" (Eperjesi halom). It is interesting that Eperjesi halom is right next to a road which leads to the Sajó River crossing at Köröm, a place which has been often identified as a possible crossing on the river during the battle. Much more intriguing for the purposes of this study is the third mound of a higher elevation and seemingly greater importance named "Strásahalom" (Strázsahalom), which means a hill used for reconnaissance, i.e. a vantage point used for viewing enemies. There are similar mounds with the same name in other parts of the Great Plain (for example Strázsahalom near Cegléd or Strázsahegy near Hatvan), where the same explanation is given for the name. At the same time, we need to note that this name is modern, as it is derived from a South

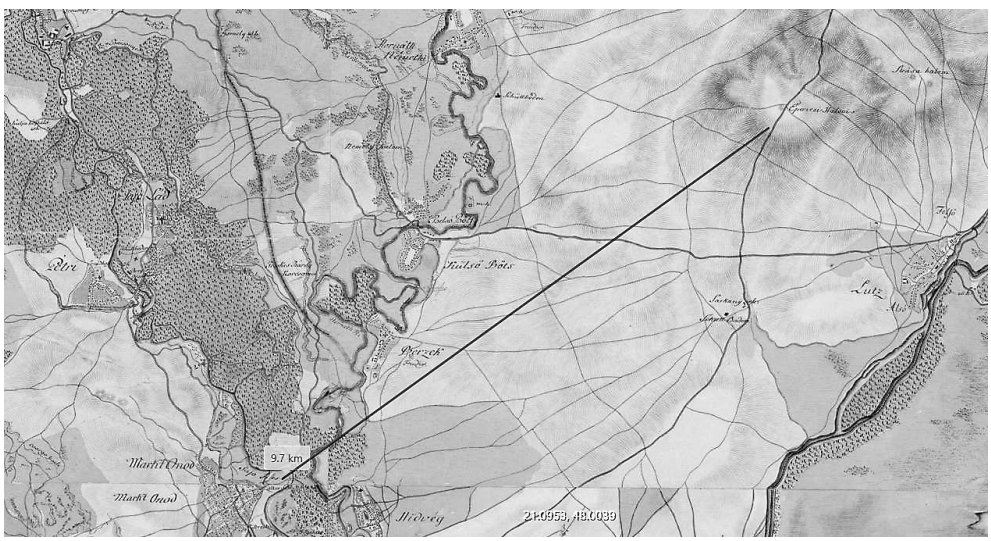


Figure 5. The distance between the likely vantage point area and the supposed crossing point of the Sajó near Ónod. Source: "Königreich Ungarn (1782–1785) – First Military Survey." Digitized by Arcanum. https://mapire.eu/en/map/firstsurvey-hungary/?layers=147&bbox=2109136.4761014967%2C6019595.635189405%2C2134914.8638906726%2C6026283.875164358

51 Négyesi, "A muhi csata," 302–3.

Slavic language milieu and was not used in the Middle Ages. While Eperjesi halom is a typical kurgan site, relatively small with steep sides in a very flat area, Strázsahalom and its landscape is quite different. It is situated on a high plateau north of the Tisza River and the kurgan was erected on the highest point of this natural elevated slope. It is significantly higher than anything else in the area and offers a splendid viewpoint from where one can see Mt. Tokaj, the mountains near to Szerencs, the gallery woodland of the Tisza, the Sajó and Hernád Rivers, and the whole plain on the eastern side of the Sajó.

In any case, without a closer option, it is possible that Batu made use of this distant hill; its name proves that it was used for reconnaissance at some point in the past, and it was the most significant high ground in the general area. As evidence of that, it was depicted again in the Second Military Survey's map (1819–1869), with only the "Strázsa" kurgan being named among all local kurgans (Fig. 6). It is indicated on the map as the highest point in the landscape.


Figure 6. "Sztrázsa domb," the only named kurgan in the region in the Habsburg Second Military Survey. Source: "Hungary (1819–1869) – Second military survey of the Habsburg Empire." Digitized by Arcanum. https://mapire.eu/en/map/secondsurvey-hungary/?layers=5&bbox=2108467.652103985%2C6020316.891614754%2C2134246.039893161%2C6027005.131589707

On the Third Military Survey's map, created in the late nineteenth century, both the Eperjesi and Strázsa mounds are indicated. Eperjesi is marked without a name, but it is indicated to be 136 meters above sea level, while Strázsahalom is named and listed as being 156 meters above sea level. As such, it was the highest

point in the area. As clear evidence of this, this third survey's map offers another name for the mound in brackets, "Messzelátó." This means literally a vantage point from where you can see a long distance (Fig. 7). Thus, Strázsahalom must

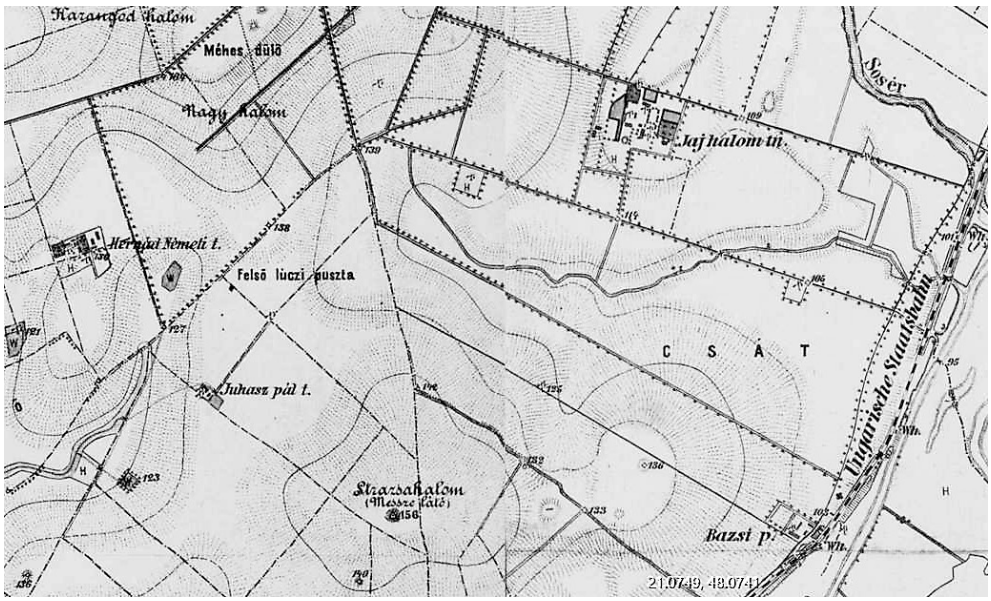


Figure 7. Strázsahalom as depicted in the Habsburg Third Military Survey, with altitude (156 m.) and a comment that it offered a distant view of the surrounding area. Source: "Habsburg Empire (1869-1887) – Third Military Survey (1:25000)." Digitized by Arcanum https://mapire.eu/en/map/ thirdsurvey25000/?layers=129&bbox= 2108620.5261604865%2C6019892.496637743%2C2134398.9139496624%2C6026580.736612696

have been the most significant landmark in the Middle Ages and the highest point in this otherwise flat area. In the framework of our new research project on the Battle of Muhi, we will conduct some visibility experiments at the site, and with the help of GIS analytical methods, we will also be able to investigate various aspects of the topographical situation. While the shape and size of Eperjesi halom did not change, as it has never been ploughed, the area and the kurgan itself of Strázsahalom has been under agricultural cultivation and because of erosion, some changes have occurred. This means that it must have been higher in the Middle Ages than at present.

Modern agriculture has also worked changes on the surrounding landscape, but it is possible to see Strázsahalom and determine the view it provided. Granted, it was distant enough that Batu could not have viewed clear details of the Hungarian camp from it. Still, we must be aware of a key detail in our source on the matter. Thomas of Split noted that Batu viewed the Hungarian

camp, determining from its overall layout that the Hungarian king was a poor strategist, and "then, the very same night" (*tunc, eadem nocte*), he ordered his troops to attack.[52] From our own personal survey of the site it seems very probable that the torches and campfires of the Hungarian camp, situated on a mound on the western side of the Sajó river, would be clearly visible during a night in April. After all, it could be that Batu only saw a torchlight outline or the campfires of the troops (in early April it is ordinarily cold), something which would be visible for dozens of kilometers on a clear night. It is only 11 kilometers from Strázsahalom to the site of the Sajó River in the direct vicinity of medieval Hídvég, so if the Hungarian camp was somewhere nearby on the other side of the river, it was likely not more than 12–13 kilometers away from the vantage point. Another factor we should take into consideration is the presence of gallery woodlands in the floodplains of the Sajó River, which would have obscured the view of the other side if one were trying to conduct reconnaissance close to the river, even from a local kurgan. However, if one were to move farther away to a significantly higher point, one could then see the campfires or torchlights above the trees on a clear night from quite a distance. For what it is worth, the battle occurred very shortly before the new moon, when, under ordinary conditions, it would have been a dark night.[53]

In addition to the landscape features suggested above as candidates, we can also consider the remote possibility that similar kurgans *once* existed nearer the eastern banks of the Sajó and Hernád Rivers, across from the Hungarian camp, before the military surveys were conducted. On that side, there are some modest points of elevation, like Kövecses halom (110 m. today) and Németi halom, another *kunhalom* which appears in the First Military Survey. Perhaps there were nearby mounds that were already leveled in earlier centuries for agricultural purposes long before the Habsburg military surveys were made. In the earliest survey, one notices much agricultural land already along the Hernád River. But this is not a likely scenario. The type of agricultural practice that involved leveling the landscape and flattening kurgans started only in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The gazetteers of the Great Plain's kurgans give a very clear indication of these modern losses.[54] Furthermore, the term "Strázsa" indicates that Strázsahalom was a far higher mound than the surrounding features. So, all things considered, it seems to be the most likely candidate in the area for Batu's vantage point.

52 Thomas of Split, *History of the Bishops*, 262–63.

53 Négyesi, "A muhi csata," 296.

54 Ecsedy, *The people*; *"Ex lege" védett*; Rákóczi, "Újabb lépések," 1–11.

Regarding the hill in Juvayni's account, the vague terminology allows us to imagine some modest artificial mound like Strázsahalom serving a double purpose of vantage point and site of ritual seclusion. Yet, these drastically different purposes suggest that Batu may well have used a different hill; Juvayni made no mention of Batu seeing or attempting to see the Hungarian army during his time on the hill. In fact, the passage implies that the Hungarians had not yet arrived. Moreover, it is hard to believe that a Chinggisid prince on the eve of battle would have considered a modest artificial mound as a suitable site to commune ritualistically with Tengri in the model of his divine ancestor. About 30 kilometers northeast of the medieval ruins of Muhi, the isolated, impressive, and natural hills in the vicinity of Szerencs–Nagy-hegy and Fuló-hegy–seem likely candidates (Fig. 8). We might also consider Bekecs-hegy, which is one of

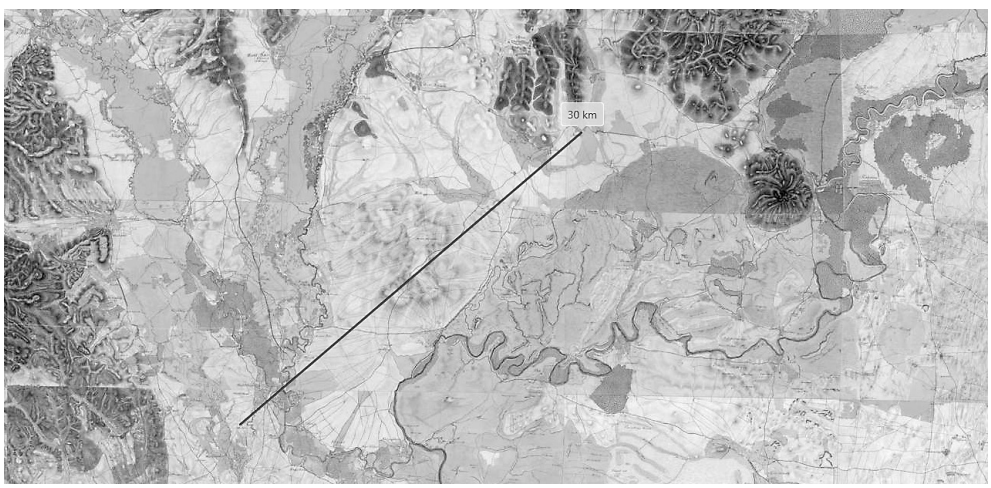


Figure 8. The distance between Szenrenc and the ruins of the medieval town of Muhi. Source: "Königreich Ungarn (1782–1785) – First Military Survey." Digitized by Arcanum. https://mapire.eu/en/map/firstsurvey-hungary/?layers=147&bbox=2109136.4761014967%2C6019595.635189405%2C2134914.8638906726%2C6026283.875164358

the most impressive hills on the edge of the Great Hungarian Plain, and which is situated very close to Szerencs. If one were travelling from the northeast, as we know the Mongols were in 1241, these three would be the most "hill"-like landscape features, and they stand out rather dramatically on the plain. Certainly, this general area and particularly Nagy-hegy (called Mount Szerencs in medieval works) were interpreted to have been both sacred and useful to earlier nomadic invaders of the Carpathian Basin.

The Mongols are recorded to have broken through the forests and wooden barricades in the northeast Carpathian border region, employing 40,000 men with axes to clear the way.[55] If we believe the *Deeds of the Hungarians*, a work thought to have been written around 1200 and predating the Mongol invasion, the Magyar tribes, when they entered the Carpathian Basin, proceeded by the same route and even employed peasants to clear a pathway through the Carpathians, like Batu and the Mongols allegedly later did.[56] The semi-mythical account tells us that their leading chieftain, Árpád, was immediately drawn to the hills of Szerencs, from which he examined the surrounding landscape. He made his base there initially. Indeed, the name "Szerencs" in Hungarian is tied to luck, suggesting this favorable association.[57] According to the story, the Magyar chieftain allegedly remained at the site and sent his followers deeper into the country to conquer and explore. When they returned with reports of victories, Árpád held a pagan feast for a week at Szerencs, and then the whole body of the nomadic Magyars camped by the Sajó River at the site of the later battle of 1241 before advancing into the heart of the Carpathian Basin.[58] If the possibility had not been ruled out on the basis of the paleographic study of the manuscript,[59] the similarities between the Magyar and Mongol invasions almost invite a renewed discussion of whether Anonymous could in fact have been Béla IV's notary rather than the notary of Béla III.[60] However, evidence suggests that the conventional view is valid.

The stories in the *Deeds of the Hungarians* might be mere myths, but then the startling parallels between the routes and actions of the Magyar prince, Árpád, and the Mongol prince, Batu, become even harder to explain. These parallels might support the view that the traditional accounts of the Magyars' arrival in the Carpathian Basin have a historical basis. Regardless, the hills of Szerencs and more distant Tokaj have a striking appearance on the flat plains, and they would be strategically valuable sites for nomadic invaders. Just as legends held that Árpád cautiously remained in the Szerencs area and sent vanguard divisions to explore the land, it is possible that Batu chose a similar strategy several centuries later. This scenario is more realistic than the notion that the Mongols brought families and

55 Thomas of Split, *History of the Bishops*, 258–59.

56 Bak, Rady and Veszprémy, *Anonymus and Master Roger*, 34–35, 160–61.

57 Ibid., 47.

58 Ibid., 58–59.

59 Ibid., xix–xxiv.

60 Vékony, "Anonymus kora."

carts full of property very close to the location of a battle which they feared they might well lose, with their herds scattered all over the area. The friars and Chinese diplomatic reports mentioned that Mongol troops brought their families during major invasions, as mentioned, and we can be sure this was the case in Hungary. We read details of Mongol children and women taking part in massacres of the local population in 1241.[61] Mongol armies included the family members of the highest leaders, as we see in an account of an unsuccessful second major Mongol invasion of Hungary in 1285. The Jochid royal campaign leader and future khan of the Golden Horde, Töle Buqa, "with his wife," retreated to his territory east of the Carpathians under desperate circumstances.[62]

Thus, it is plausible that the Mongol army followed a complex strategic system in 1241, and when Shiban was far ahead provoking the royal army near Pest, Batu was somewhere around Szerencs or Tokaj. While Tokaj is the most striking feature of the landscape (it figures prominently in the *Deeds of the Hungarians* for instance), it seems too far from the Muhi battlefield, so the hilly area near Szerencs was more likely the site where Batu ascended a hill (or two). The masses of the non-combatants, herds, and plunder were situated there at some distance from the battle and much closer to the mountains so that in the event of defeat, they could escape. In this scenario of uncertainty, Batu would have engaged in his ritual of spiritual preparation mentioned by Juvayni, going to a hilltop after having received news that he was facing daunting odds in the impending struggle. If so, this mirrors descriptions of Mongol behavior on campaigns detailed in Asian and Franciscan sources, which assert that Mongols were extremely cautious during advances into enemy territory, and they kept their families back in highly risky situations.

## *Conclusions*

This paper has offered new speculative suggestions concerning which hill(s) Batu ascended near a battle site which was likely preselected by the Mongols because of the river barrier and gallery forest along it, which would conceal their movements (Fig. 5). It was an aim of the Mongols to conceal their positions and advances across the river in order to encircle the Hungarian camp in the predawn darkness. Regarding the crossing, the bridge where there was

61 Thomas of Split, *History of the Bishops*, 272–73.

62 Perfecky, *The Hypatian Codex*, 96.

documented fighting between the Mongols and Hungarians is the key feature and, as mentioned earlier, we are now taking steps to identifying it as another aim of the larger project.

Less speculatively, this paper has also highlighted the two broad purposes for climbing hills described in the sources. The hills near Szerencs would be suitable for a solemn religious tradition described by Juvayni, an activity which can be interpreted as a movement between the frontiers of the earthly and heavenly spheres, whereas any sufficiently high, nearby kurgan would suit the purpose of reconnaissance described by Thomas of Split. This sort of military reconnaissance signified movement between the territory secured and pacified by the advance of the Mongols and the frontier zone of conflict with the Hungarian army. For Batu, it would have been the frontier between territory in submission and that which was still in rebellion.

Batu may only have ascended a single hill (or perhaps none). If he only ascended one hill, it is interesting to consider that a Persian and a Dalmatian author each saw a very different purpose in the act. Continued battlefield archaeological work at Muhi is right now revealing new findings which enrich our understanding of the events. Even for the connected topographical or landscape archaeological investigations, it is essential to analyze why different textual sources refer to significant landmarks in the area of the battle. Perhaps the issue of the hilltop, too, will be further clarified and deepen our understanding of the Mongol political, military, and spiritual associations with hills and mountains. At the same time, this hilltop episode illustrates how very different sources which emerged independently in European or Mongol-ruled milieus can mutually contribute to our understanding of the important battle. The episode also underlines that such details should be discussed within the narrative structures of each text, carefully contextualizing the aims of the authors behind these sources. While for Thomas of Split, details of the military tactics of the invading army were regarded as particularly important issues, the religious spiritual aspects of a Mongol ruler's behavior and its connections to a Chinggisid tradition were far more important issues for a Persian author writing a history of the Mongol Empire.

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The basic concept of this article was developed by S. Pow. Historical events in the written sources on the invasion were discussed by both authors. General interpretations of these sources were made by S. Pow, while the discussion of

relevant Hungarian secondary literature is the work of J. Laszlovszky. The issues connected to the battlefield archaeological investigations and the topographical features of Muhi were discussed by J. Laszlovszky. We wish to thank Georg Leube (University of Bayreuth) for his helpful advice on Persian philological issues. We would also like to thank Balázs Nagy (Department of Physical Geography, ELTE) for his advice on the battlefield site and for supplying useful figures. We are very grateful for the LIDAR survey results provided by HELM Solutions for our present research project.

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# On Two Sides of the Border: The Hungarian–Austrian Border Treaty of 1372

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The present paper explores the history of the emergence of mixed Hungarian–Austrian commissions in the late Middle Ages. The history of the mixed commissions offers insights into the process during which royal power shifted, in the strategies it adopted in order to address everyday and manifold breaches and dissensions which were common along the border, by negotiations rather than by military intervention. As attested by the sources, this negotiation-based system of conflict resolution between the two neighboring countries appeared in the last decade of the thirteenth century. In the next century, the idea of dividing the Hungarian–Austrian border into sections and submitting the regulation of issues concerning the territories on the two sides of the border emerged, first in 1336 and, then, at the very end of Charles I's reign in 1341. Under Charles's son and successor, King Louis I, the first attempt to establish a mixed Hungarian–Austrian commission was made in 1345, resulting in a fairly complicated system. The first documented session of the mixed commission can be connected to the year 1372; it was the border settlement agreed on then that was renewed and adjusted to the requirements of his own age by King Sigismund of Luxemburg in 1411.

Keywords: Hungarian–Austrian border, fourteenth century, mixed commissions, Angevins, Habsburg, Sigismund of Luxemburg

The Western border of the Kingdom of Hungary, which ran along the eastern provinces of the Holy Roman Empire (which at the time were under Habsburg rule), is interesting from the perspective of the historian for several reasons. Not only are there numerous written sources on the history of this border, but these sources suggest that this border was often the site and subject of events which suggest that the histories of the two neighboring polities were much more connected by the border than divided. These connections included the tensions which arose in issues such as the everyday lives of the estates which stretched across the border, the leaseholders' attempts to cultivate the vineyards and ploughlands of the neighboring countries, the nobles' changes of allegiance to the side of neighboring rulers, the movements of thieves and rogues who were fleeing from one side of the border to the other, the long-distance traders traveling through provinces with rich stocks, the retailers with local interests,

the landholders who shared utilities and owned ferries on the two banks of the border rivers, and taxpayers who paid their taxes in the currency of the neighboring country. These recurrent and, from the perspective of political history, seemingly insignificant conflicts could have had an impact on the relationship between the two countries. In settling disputes, royal power could waver between two possibilities; it could choose armed intervention, by which it could further worsen the diplomatic balance, or it could choose to solve a problem through negotiations. Because of the high number of infringements and the diversity of the cases, negotiations required permanent, recurrent, and, because of the special location, bilateral negotiations, investigations, and legal remedies, which rulers executed with the assistance of representatives. This led to the formation of the mixed Hungarian–Austrian commissions in charge of border disputes in the fourteenth century. The present study gives an overview of the stages of the formation of this commission and provides a detailed analysis of a so far entirely neglected document from 1372 which is the first evidence of a meeting of these commissions. However, as the source is known only in fragmented transcriptions, the starting point of the present work is the renewal of the treaty from 1411, the period during which Sigismund ruled.

## *"Antecedents" in the Sigismund Period*

On October 7, 1411 in Pressburg (today Bratislava), the king of Hungary, Sigismund of Luxemburg, betrothed his two-year-old daughter Elisabeth to the eleven-year old duke of Austria, Albert V of Habsburg, who took measures actively supported by his future father-in-law to be freed from the guardianship of his older relatives, Ernest and Friedrich IV.[1] Two days before this event, the king of Hungary and his young protégé issued a document in which they renewed a treaty *(dieselbe ordnunge wider czu vernewen)* that which was concluded by their predecessors, the late Hungarian King Louis I, and the dukes of Austria Albert III and Leopold III, but put in action by six members of the noble elites (*sechs redlicher manne*) from Hungary and the Habsburg provinces. The document in question, signed on October 5, 1411 in Pressburg (most probably similarly to its Angevin-period predecessor), in order to facilitate agreement and peace

1 On the betrothal, see Mályusz, *Zsigmond király uralma,* 123; Hönsch, *Kaiser Sigismund,* 142. On the state of Austrian internal policy: Niederstätter, *Die Herrschaft Österreich,* 198–99.

between the two countries, concentrated solely on the border.[2] At the time of the renewal of the border agreement, Sigismund started to reclaim the strategically important castle, Devín.[3] He ordered the voivode of Transylvania, Stibor, to redeem the castle that stood at the confluence of the Danube and Morava rivers and was considered one of the western gates of the Kingdom of Hungary, with its belongings along with the castle of Ostrý Kameň from Lesel der Hering, to whom it had been in pledge for a long time (*vor czyten*).[4] We know about Hering that in 1397, as a loyal subject of the Habsburg family in Austria, he received Walterkirchen on the border of the Margravate of Moravia and Austria as a pledge from Albert IV and William, dukes of Austria[5] and that, along with numerous members of the Austrian elite, he appeared at the provincial assembly of Eggenburg at the end of May 1411, where the supporters of the young Albert V secretly took an oath to support the child kept in custody,[6] setting the stage for the border agreement and the betrothal in October.

The 1411 border agreement, however, probably has roots not only in the Hungarian estates pledged to Austrians. Violent acts were committed on both sides of the Hungarian–Austrian border, and the people who committed these

2 The quotations in the main text come from: MNL OL DF 287 078. Edition and summary of the document: *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae,* vol. 10/5, 125–30, *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár,* vol. 3. no. 1022.

3 Redeeming Devín certainly was not successful in 1411. In an undated memorandum that can be dated to between the autumn 1412 and the beginning of 1414, Sigismund, who was abroad, advises the ailing Stibor to take military action against Hering, who had been keeping the castle of Devín in his hands for years. In his detailed order, he suggests that it is needless to build siege bastions opposite the castle, as his bigger cannon, which, including the big ballista, was at Buda, along with Master Mihály ("non oportet, ut ec adverso castri Dewyn bastitas parare facias, quoniam bambarda nostra maior cum magna mangana seu machina, que unacum magistro Michaele Bude existunt, unde sufficiunt ad expugnacionem predicti castri…"). He furthermore ordered that the voivode, in accordance with János, archbishop of Esztergom, should call Péter Forgács, bishop of Győr, and the other royal nobles and the nobles of the neighboring counties to launch an insurrection and a siege of Devín. Heimpel, "Aus der Kanzlei Kaiser Sigismunds" 179–80. The campaign however, probably due to the death of Stibor at the beginning of 1414, was not completed. Devín finally was redeemed from Hering by palatine Miklós Garai in 1414. Engel, *Archontológia 1301–1457,* vol. 1. 300.

4 For the edition of the Sigismund diploma: Wenzel, *Stibor vajda,* 145, *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár,* vol. 3. no. 1085. Devín was redeemed by Sigismund from the Moravian margrave, Jodok in 1390, and probably was pledged to Hering then. Cf. Engel, *Archontológia 1301–1457*, vol. 1. 300. Sigismund redeemed the castle of Ostrý Kameň in 1390 from the Moravian margrave Prokop in 1390 and then donated it to Stibor Stiboric in 1394. It is not clear when was it pledged, but the castle was probably redeemed in 1411, along with Devín. Cf. Engel, *Archontológia 1301–1457,* vol. I. 308.

5 StiAscho Urkunden 1397-04-02. (I used the image available on Monasterium.net, where the document is under the register number: 1397 IV 12.)

6 WStLA – HA Urk no. 1882. (I used the image available on Monasterium.net.)

acts spared neither the lives of the locals nor the lives of the landowners nor their wealth. The case of the Scharfenecks, who owned lands in Moson County by the border *(quasi in metis seu regni nostri confiniis situate)* from the first decade of the fifteenth century, offers a good example.[7] Frederick von Scharfeneck and his brother, Hermann, whose father John, originating from the Electoral Palatinate, had been living in Hungary since 1376, held the castle of Kittsee beginning in 1390. In the donation charter of the castle, they obliged themselves that no matter who they pledged or sold the castle and its belongings to, namely Pama, Mannersdorf am Leithagebirge, and Hof am Leithagebirge, these lands could not be alienated from the Kingdom of Hungary and the territory of the Hungarian crown.[8] The building of the castle of Scharfeneck or Sárfenék in Moson County can be associated with the two boys (hence Hungarian historiography refers to them as Sárfenekis).[9] According to the sources, the estates of the Scharfenecks by the border were threatened from the Austrian territories. As is clear from an account from March 1409, two of their villages, Mannersdorf am Leithagebirge and Hof am Leithagebirge, were threatened by complete depopulation due to the raids of plunderers and rogues, in answer to which the Scharfenecks received permission to resettle them.[10] Frederick Scharfeneck neither seem to have tried to keep away from a little fray himself. According to a record dating to the beginning of 1412, he made forays into Austria and plundered the land of Pilgrim and Hans von Puchheim called Seibersdorf on the right bank of the River Lajta (in German Leitha), and he set the manor on fire there, occupied their castle, and, heading towards the lower course of the Lajta, did the same with the estate of the Hundsheimers.[11] These forays might have happened in the previous year, so exactly when the border agreement was concluded.

If a ruler gave away or pledged Hungarian incomes to the members of the Habsburg family, this created a hotbed of conflict in the form of enduring violations of the border. In 1402 Sigismund, in compensation for his 16,000

7 *Sopron vármegye története,* vol. 1. 590.

8 April 24, 1390: MNL OL DF 104 816, *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár,* vol. 1. no. 1463; Engel, *Archontológia 1301–1457*, vol. 1. 407.

9 The castle was named after their family castle in the Holy Roman Empire. In 1416, following the extinction of the Scharfeneck family, István Kanizsai took it as a pledge. A year later, he handed it on to the Wolfurts. See Engel, *Archontológia 1301–1457,* vol. 1. 348. and vol. 2. 261.

10 "Per creberimas invasiones predonum, profugorum et proscriptorum australium quasi ad totalem devenissent desolacionem…" *Sopron vármegye története,* vol. 1. 590.

11 Lampel, "Die Leithagrenze," 126; Lichnowsky. *Geschichte des Hauses Habsburg,* vol. 5. CXXV–CXXVI. no. 1365.

golden florins of debt, pledged the incomes of the thirtieth customs places of Pressburg, Rusovce and Sopron *(dreissigist zu Prespurg, zu Kerphemburg und zu Ödemburg)* to Albert IV, duke of Austria, so that Albert could then run with his own thirtieth collectors and staff, which means that they had the right to assess and collect the customs on foreign trade at these three places in accordance with the thirtieth and chamber laws and customs *(als des dreissigisten und unser kamerrecht und gewonheit ist).*[12] It is probably needless to say that these kinds of positions in the economy created numerous opportunities for abuse, and the foreign toll collectors could provoke hostility among the inhabitants of the kingdom, while the relationship between the towns close to the border and the Habsburg provinces was not untroubled at all.

Sopron, which in the fourteenth-century sources is referred to as a town on the border, as a gate of the Kingdom of Hungary *(civitas Supruniensis in confmio Theutonie sita, quasi porta regni),*[13] made a complaint in 1408 to Leopold IV, duke of Austria, because of a raid against the town *(von des angriffs wegen)* in answer to which the duke buffered his responsibility by remitting the case to his brother, Ernest, claiming that the burghers of Sopron themselves also believed that he may have been behind the action as initiator.[14] An entirely different view is reflected in a letter of a supporter of Duke Ernest, Erhart Sechel, who informed his lord of the plunders committed by the people of Sopron and the "people from the surroundings of Sopron" *(gancz gegent)* in Styria and Austria. Sechel, who probably was about to come to Hungary to merchandize, did not dare travel on his own, but despite his precautions, his goods were taken from him, and he himself was caught and brought to the castle of Bernstein *(Pernstein).*[15] Accordingly, it is likely that, in the restriction of the personal freedoms of the Habsburg subjects, the castle that stood in Vas County (certainly not in the vicinity of Sopron) and its owners, the Kanizsai family, had some role. A royal diploma dating to June 1388 indicates that at the beginning of the Sigismund period, there was a practice in place of holding up *(arrestatio)* merchants from Vienna and Austria *(mercatores de Vienna vel de Austria)* at Óvár and Győr.[16] By every indication, the town of Sopron had serious conflicts with a member of the Stuchs family *(mit demselben Stüchsen)*, who had holdings on the other side of

12 MNL OL DF 287 048, *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár,* vol. 2. no. 2019.

13 *Sopron szabad királyi város*, vol. 1/1. 27.

14 MNL OL DF 201 991 (erroneously dated to May 27, 1408 in the MNL OL DL-DF database).

15 *Sopron szabad királyi város,* vol. 1/2. 8–9.

16 *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae,* vol. 10/1. 431–33.

the River Lajta around Trautmannsdorf.[17] This is why, in 1408, Leopold IV was pleased that the town planned to keep peace with him and ordered his subjects not to attack the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary.[18]

One further change has to be noted in the first decades of Sigismund's reign that affected the western section of the border of Hungary, namely, the final dissolution of the Árpád era border defense system. In 1391, Sigismund made a donation to László Sárói, *ispán* (*comes*) of Temes, estates in Zaránd Country in return for his service to King Louis I, king of Hungary, Queen Elisabeth, and Queen Mary since Queen Mary's childhood.[19] The *ispán* then exchanged these estates with the king for the estate of Güssing and the market town of Kőszeg that year. Thanks to the exchange, Sárói had an estate complex by the Hungarian–Austrian border that held the promise of major income. In addition to the market and customs incomes of Kőszeg, he also gained possession of Őr (*Ewr*; present-day Oberwart), Rudersdorf (*Radalfalva*), Kalteneck (*Hydegzeg*; part of present-day Bernstein), and Heiligenkreuz im Lafnitztal (*Kerezthur*), along with the customs collected at these places, Stegersbach (*Zenthelek*), with its customs and market incomes, and twenty smaller settlements.[20] Sárói's newly acquired estate complex was bordered by the River Lafnitz, which from the Sigismund-period onwards was referred to as a border river.[21] Sárói, however, was not satisfied with the size of his lands, and in November, he picked out the Őrség, the area at the headwaters of the River Zala. This time, the donation hit a snag, or moreover met with opposition. As the local community, commonly referred to as Zala-defenders (*universos spiculatores nostros vulgariter zalaewr nuncupatos*), whose ancestors were settled in the area before the castle system became established to act as guards by the border, did not fail to express their protest and outrage. In February 1392, their delegates visited the king, who was staying at Eisenstadt,

17 It was probably Georg Stuchs. See Trauttmannsdorff, *Beitrag*, 78–86.

18 MNL OL DF 201 996.

19 *A Balassa család levéltára,* no. 196.

20 Ibid., no. 197.

21 The River Lafnitz formed the Styrian and Vas County section of the Hungarian–Austrian border between Neustift an der Lafnitz and Königsdorf. There are only few references to the river from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and in the perambulation of Buchschachen in 1331 the river is not referred to as a border river. MNL OL DL 99 934; *Anjou-kori oklevéltár,* vol. 15. no. 347. The earliest reference to the river as a border river dates to 1423, when János Gersei, *ispán* of Vas and Zala counties, informed the noble judges that one his noblemen was attacked at Gattendorf and was taken to the Austrian border and thrown into the Lafnitz with his head tied between his legs. Arrows were then shot at him, and he was murdered with exceptional cruelty. "Ad terminos et metas Austrie deducendo et capite eius inter pedes ipsius ligato ad aquam Lapynch proiciendo…" *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár,* vol. 10. no. 1174, and no. 1512.

and drew his attention to the fact that László Sárói committed violations of rights when he asked for giving these people along with their lands to him, as they had not been given away by any previous kings, and they were free and were obliged with defending the country. Accordingly, they crabbed the installing of Sárói into the land. The king brought the case to the royal council, according to the decision of which Sigismund had acted rightfully when, excusing the guards from the obligation and burden of guarding the region *(a iugo, conditione et onere ipsius spiculatoris servitutis)*, he had given them and their lands to Sárói as a donation, as they were subjects and were some extent committed to their lord *(hereditarii subditi forent et conditionaliter obligati)*.[22] Following this, on January 20, 1393, the king turned to the chapter of Esztergom and asked it to install László Sárói under the title of the previous donation to the lands of the Zalafő (*Zalafew*) estate and its belongings, namely Őriszentpéter *(Zenthpetur),* Ispánk *(Yspank),* Kisrákos *(Rakos),* Pankasz *(Pankaas),* Nagyrákos *(Naghrakos)*, including its customs income, Szatta *(Zatha),* Szomoróc *(Zomorok*; part of present-day Kercaszomor*),* Kapornak *(Kapurnuk),* Hodoš *(Hodoos),* including its customs, and seven further settlements, despite the fact that he did not have himself installed within the given time, not having taken into account the possible objection of the defenders.[23] The fate of the speculators of the Őrség, whose settlement was made possible by the order of Stephen V issued in 1270,[24] was sealed with the act in February 1393. The assessment and position of guards (who originally belonged to the group of service peoples, but whose function – *officium* – was not to produce material goods, but rather to guard the frontier), because of their armed service in the Árpád era, was probably better than that of most service peoples.[25] Some of their groups could also maintain their favorable position during the reign of the Angevin kings. In 1355, King Louis I transcribed the privilege letter of the royal guards of Őrimagyarósd confirmed by King Charles I in 1329.[26] In 1327, Charles did the same with the guards who lived and owned lands between the Güssing and Berstein castles,[27] and in 1339 he confirmed the freedoms and service of the royal guards of Gattendorf (*spiculatores regiae maiestatis de Katha*).[28] The decrease

22 *A Balassa család levéltára,* no. 199.

23 Ibid., no. 204, and no. 206.

24 *Hazai okmánytár*, vol. 8. 129. The order of Stephen V issued in 1270 to the guards of Őrimagyarósd has been discussed by Attila Zsoldos, see Zsoldos, "Confinium és marchia," 110–12.

25 Ibid., 111.

26 *Anjou-kori oklevéltár,* vol. 13. no. 645.

27 *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae,* vol. 8/3. 179.

28 Ibid., vol. 8/4. 375–76.

of the social status of the *speculator*s of Zala to tenant peasants is not imperative, as we know guards whose families Ladislas IV raised from the community of guards by granting them five hides of land *(de consortio et collegio ipsorum speculatorum cum quinque aratris terrarum)*,[29] and Charles I confirmed their status at the request of their descendants.[30] These people first belonged to the group of *servientes regis*, then to the nobility, who went to war in the army led by the king *(inter nobiles regni nostri computentur sub vexillo regio militantes)*.[31] The dissolution of the aforementioned Árpád-era relic in the first decades of the reign of Sigismund cannot be solely attributed to the personal endeavors of László Sárói, but rather to the outdating of the arms of the guards on the western confines, which were not effective in the new military challenges of the fifteenth century.[32] The extent to which it posed a threat for the Hungarian king or the Habsburg dukes to give a contiguous territory along the border which previously had been in royal hands to a landlord is another question. In the history of the Hungarian–Austrian border section, it was a recurrent event that either a Hungarian oligarch, using his land of significant size by the border, raided and plundered the provinces of the Habsburg dukes for decades or a noble who owned lands by the border taking advantage of the location of his holdings, partially or fully changed, from the side of Hungarian kings and swore to serve the Habsburg dukes.[33]

It was a general endeavor in the first decades of the Sigismund-period to settle the question of the Hungarian–Austrian border section and the desire to maintain peace on both sides of the border. With almost no exceptions, the preference was to see disputes settled through negotiations at conference tables. In the second year of his reign, in June 1388, Sigismund informed his subjects, mostly the inhabitants of Óvár and Győr, that he and Duke Albert III had decided to send some from their lords to the border *(ad confinia regni,* and *ad limites Austriae)* to negotiate and discuss the remedy, correction, and redemption of the incursions across the border, damages, harms, and discontents of the peoples of the two countries.[34] On June 4, 1389, Sigismund addressed a

29 *Az Árpád-házi királyok okleveleinek kritikai jegyzéke*, no. 2635.

30 *Anjou-kori oklevéltár,* vol. 11. no. 428.

31 *Az Árpád-házi királyok okleveleinek kritikai jegyzéke*, no. 2635.

32 Mályusz, *Zsigmond király uralma,* 135.

33 On the relationship between the fourteenth-century landowners by the border and the Austrian provincial elite and dukes, see Groß, "Zur Geschichte." On the second half of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth, see Péterfi, *Egy székely két élete*; Péterfi, "A Lajtán innen." On the Austrian connections of the Kőszegi family in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, see Skorka, "A mohó farkas."

34 *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae,* vol. 10/1. 432.

letter from Buda to the duke informing him of his decision to appoint István Lackfi, palatine, Imre Bebek, judge royal, Leusták Jolsvai, master of the court, and Miklós Kanizsai, master of the treasury, to participate in the negotiations in question.[35] Lackfi at the time, apart from being palatine, was also *ispán* of Moson and Győr Counties. Kanizsai also held the countships of Zala, Vas, and Sopron.[36] So, because of their positions and lands, they were involved in the circumstances of the counties along the border. The document issued after the meeting has been preserved. It informs us of the negotiations of the appointees of Albert III, Hermann, count of Cilli,[37] Johann von Liechtenstein marshal, Wulfing von Stubenberg, and Johannes von Dietrichstock master of forests in Austria *(magister forestariorum Austrie)* with the Hungarian party, which were held in Sopron on 18 June. However, one can identify a change in the delegates of Sigismund compared to those named on June 4, as instead of Leusták Jolsvai, master of the court, János Hédervári, the bishop of Győr, was present. On the Hungarian side, a prelate became a member, which as we shall see, had a tradition. According to the agreements reached at the meeting in Sopron, both rulers had to appear in person on the Day of Saint Giles (1 September) in the towns of Pressburg, and Hainburg so that the remaining disputed questions, on which no resolution had been reached, could be investigated and settled in the coming months. The two rulers and their subjects had to keep to the resolutions of the commission. It was also stated that both parties would attest that their people would not hold the subjects of the other ruler imprisoned or impede their free movement. In Sopron, resolutions were also made specifically on merchants; it was put down in writing that whoever participated in trade (whichever accepted route he took) should be able to do so as had been customary in the period of King Louis, Dukes Albert II, and Rudolf IV. If a new inequality were to raise its head, and should it appear in Hungary, it has be reported to the palatine and the master of the treasury, and if this were to happen in the lands of the Habsburgs, Johann von Lichtenstein and Wulfing von Stubenberg should be notified, the four of whom then should meet at a given place and date, and if necessary, negotiate and settle the question.[38] The meeting at Sopron clearly indicates the intention of the rulers: to speed up and automatize the investigation and the remedy of the various incursions (which as noted above were frequent) by a

35 MNL OL DF 258 468. (Photo 43–45.)

36 Engel, *Archontológia 1301–1457*. vol. 1. 4, 38.

37 It was Hermann II, the future brother-in-law of Sigismund, who died in 1435.

38 MNL OL DL 39 269, *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár,* vol. 1. no. 1063.

mixed commission and to ensure that the rulers would intervene in this process only in cases of absolute necessity. The intent in the case of Sigismund could be explained by the fact that at the beginning of his reign, in order to solidify his rule in the Hungary, he was held spellbound by more important internal political difficulties than by the incursions across the borders, and he had to consider his ambitions in foreign policy, and this of course could ease the situation of the ruling Habsburg dukes as well, who frequently came into conflict with one another. However, as we shall see below, the system of the border commissions was not a Sigismund-era innovation, but rather was part of the Angevin-era legacy, as were the permanent unresolved disputes of the Hungarian–Austrian border sections.

There is no sign of the royal meeting settled for September 1 by the meeting at Sopron in the sources, and it is certain that Sigismund resided in Buda between August 20 and September 12,[39] while in all likelihood Albert III was in Vienna.[40] One cannot be certain that the two rulers met at all before the death of Albert III in 1395 in order to make up for the postponed meeting to negotiate the question of the border. On October 24, 1398, however, Sigismund issued a diploma at Ilok (*Neunhofen*), in the southern part of the country, in which he notes his agreement with the son of Albert III, Albert IV, and his cousin, the eldest member of the Habsburg family at the time, Duke William, in order to secure peace between the Kingdom of Hungary, Styria, and Austria. According to their agreement, every inhabitant of the countries in question, whether rich or poor, prelate or noble, ordinary (*unedel*), merchant and pilgrim, should be able to travel from these countries to the other with their goods freely, without the hindrance of his or her person or belongings. It was also stipulated that if a Hungarian subject were to lay a claim against a subject of the dukes, he would have to bring the case to the country which was legally authorized. Sigismund assured the dukes that no attack or other kind of incursions from the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary would take place in their provinces with his consent and any Hungarian subject who did not keep this agreement would be held accountable. If domestic people or foreigners caused loss and injustice in Austria or Styria and then sought protection in Hungary, the Hungarian king forbade his subjects from giving the person refuge. It was also stipulated that a subject of the Hungarian king could only buy or hold estates as pledges in Austria and Styria from that time on with

39 Engel and C. Tóth, *Itineraria,* 62.

40 Lichnowsky, *Geschichte,* vol. 4. DCCLXXVII. no. 2177–2184.

the knowledge and consent of the dukes. If this were to happen against the will of the dukes, the buyer would immediately get his money back and had to eschew the property. The holdings that had already been *(altes erb)* in other hands, including vineyards and plow lands, *(weingerten und ekerpau)* however, were exceptions and could be kept without any obstacles. Finally, the Hungarian king appointed deputies who, in his absence, were entitled to serve in his stead in the disputes of the Hungarian–Austrian border section. By the border in Pozsony County *(grafschefften Prespurger)*, Count Péter Szentgyörgyi and András Stiborici "Podczesfi," i.e. one of the most influential noblemen in the county and the brother of the *ispán* of Pozsony were appointed. By Óvár (*Altenburger)* (indeed Moson), Sopron *(Ödenpurger)* and Vas *(Eisenburger)* counties, the as participants of the 1389 Sopron meeting already introduced János Hédervári, bishop of Győr, Miklós Kanizsai, former master of the treasury and István Kanizsai, master of the court were in charge. It is worth remembering that the latter family played a role in holding Erhart Sechel prisoner in Bernstein in 1408. And in case of a need for action on the border of the Wendish March[41] and Styria, the king appointed Eberhart, bishop of Zagreb and Miklós Garai, ban of Slavonia.[42] With regard to the 1398 arrangements, which mostly but not exclusively were meant to maintain peace by the Hungarian–Austrian border, some aspects are worth emphasizing. The most important of these aspects was the lack of mutuality. The points only seem to have applied to the subjects of the Hungarian kings, and only represented their perspective. It is possible that the two Habsburg dukes also issued a document similar in content which concerned their subjects; these documents, however, did not survive (if indeed they existed). The other circumstance that is worth noting concerns not the royal appointees authorized in the border issues, but the division of the border section, which also was not an innovation introduced by Sigismund of Luxemburg (I will return to this later).

As is clear from the incidents discussed above from the first decades of the fifteenth century, the 1398 arrangements certainly did not fulfill the hopes of the parties involved. This is how, in 1411, Sigismund signed a border treaty with Duke Albert V, who was freed from the guardianship. Unlike in the cases of his previous efforts, Sigismund considered an Angevin-period document signed between the two countries as an antecedent.

41 It belonged to Carniola in the second half of the fourteenth century.

42 MNL OL DF 258 005.

## *Antecedents from the Angevin Era*

At the beginning of this article, I noted that the border treaty signed in Pressburg on October 5, 1411 renewed a document originating from the period of Louis I, Albert III, and Leopold III. The late-Angevin-period source is almost entirely unknown to historians,[43] and it is known only in eighteenth-century transcriptions. It is also important to note that none of the transcriptions preserved the text in its entirety,[44] so when analyzing its contents, we can only base our conclusions on the 1411 confirmation, although there are differences between the texts of the two agreements, as I will indicate in my discussion of the relevant passages.

The border treaty in question was signed in October 1372, almost on the anniversary of the armistice between Charles IV, Holy Roman emperor, and his supporters, the Austrian dukes, and the opposing Louis I, king of Hungary and Poland and his Bavarian allies, which was in effect until June 5, 1373.[45] After that, in October 1372, Louis I negotiated with Charles IV on the Hungarian–Czech border. On October 16, he sat down with the Austrian dukes, Albert III and his brother Leopold III, in Sopron to settle disputes. At the Sopron meeting in 1372, similarly to the negotiations in 1389 in the same town, the focus was on the Hungarian–Austrian border section. The rulers put down in writing their intention to prevent new incursions across the border and hostilities along the border of their countries in the future. The Hungarian king vowed that neither he nor his subjects would attack the other side of the border,[46] but if that were to happen, the two dukes or a duke and his master of the horse had to inform the palatine and the bishop of Zagreb at their earliest convenience, and the palatine and the bishop of Zagreb would then have two months to investigate and rectify the case.

43 The existence of this source is only referred to in an inauguration speech to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences held by Imre Nagy on the history of the Lajta as a border river. See Nagy, "A Lajta mint határfolyam," 459.

44 MNL OL DL 24 809 (fragment), MNL OL DL 87 470, MNL OL DF 258 468, and MNL OL DF 286 412. The quotations in the present study are from the following document: MNL OL DF 258 468 (images 39–43). The text of the transcription of the border treaty was published in printed form in 1830: Böheim, *Chronik von Wiener-Neustadt,* vol. 1. 96–99.

45 The conflict unfolded concerning ownership of the Margravate of Brandenburg; for the diplomatic events, see Skorka, "A Habsburgok és a magyar Anjouk," 652–54.

46 "Wir, noch die unsern dheinen angriff newung noch ufflouf tun noch machen sullen uber die gemerke unsrer Lande…" MNL OL DF 257 995.

In addition to the plundering and incursions across the border, there were other old unresolved issued concerning the border in question. These issues were negotiated six days after the Sopron meeting on October 22, in Wiener Neustadt. In the Styrian town, the rulers were represented by appointees consisting of three persons on each side; on the side of the dukes, Heidenreich von Maissau master of the cup-bearers and master of the horse, Albert von Puchheim, master of the table, and Kadold von Eckartsau, the Elder; on the Hungarian side, István Kanizsai, bishop of Zagreb (*Stephan Gottes gnaden Bischof ze Agram*), Imre Lackfi, the palatine (*Emerich großen graff ze Hungern*), and a third person unidentifiable on the basis of the transcription.[47] (Lackfi is the brother of the abovementioned István, who took part in the 1389 negotiations, and also was *ispán* of Vas and Sopron at the time.) Based on the Hungarian members of the border commission, by the time of Sigismund's reign the bishops of Zagreb, the Kanizsai family, and even the Lackfis must have had some experience in settling disputes by the border. The members of the commission asked Hermann, count of Cilli in consort, to have the final word in the case of a tie. The count can certainly not be identified as Hermann, count of Cilli, who participated in the meetings of 1389. Rather, it must be his father, who lived until 1385, but the Cilli counts, who then only owned lands in the territory of the Holy Roman Empire, were definitely major authorities in the questions of Hungarian–Austrian border disputes.

The decisions made on October 22, 1372 certainly addressed the issue of fishing rights *(vischwaide)* on the River Morava, which divided the part of Austria that fell to the north of the Danube River from Pozsony County, which according to the document on Austrian side were due to the landlords by the bank, and on the Hungarian side, the castellan of Dévénykő[48] *(burggraffe auf dem Tebenstain)*, who shared the river fifty-fifty.[49] In the 1411 confirmation by Sigismund, it is clearly expressed at this point that the River Morava is the border between Hungary and Austria, and neither of the two parties can enter the territory of the other *(da sol di March die grenicz und das gemerke sin zwischen Ungern und der Österreich, und sol ouch ein teyl, den andern an seinen teyle nicht ubergryffen)*.[50] The 1372 treaty, however, held the fishing rights of those who had this privilege from

47 Based on the transcriptions, the name reads as *Eschliniunus,* or *Oschlinang.*

48 It is probably the same as the castle of Devín.

49 On the importance of the mills, fishing and other riparian rights in the pre-industrial period, see: Winiwarter et al., "The Environmental History," 108–18.

50 *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae,* vol. 10/1. 126.

ancient times. The border treaty also touched on the subjects of the dukes who owned vineyards in Hungary and put them in a position of advantage, as they did not have to pay the thirtieth on the vine they produced there, but only had to pay the tithe and the vineyard tax, (*die uff dem ungrischen weingarten ligen haben, von dem das in dorynne wechset, und es sy dorinne verpawch, keinen dristigsten geben sollen, doch ussgenommen bergrecht und czehenden*) which were the same as the duties paid by the Hungarian inhabitants. The arrangement made it possible for everyone who had had the right to do so from ancient times to pay the duties on vine in Viennese denars. It was also stated that the border was by the River Lajta, where the river runs along the border, but where the border and the river split, the old borders had to be kept. Hence, the order stated that no one could divert the Lajta with a ditch or dam *(soll die Leutha niemand abkehrn weder mit graben noch mit wühren)*.[51] If anyone had holdings on the Hungarian side of the border, they could not be disturbed, but if anyone had a related claim, the claim had to be made in Hungary. The same was true vice versa, i.e. the claims related to lands of the Austrian side of the Lajta had to be enforced in Austria (which reminds us of one of the points of the 1398 arrangements of Ilok discussed above). According to the treaty of 1372, the same principles were applied with regard to the fishing rights on the Lajta and other border rivers as on the River Morava. On the Hungarian side, the subjects of the Hungarian king and on the Austrian side the subjects of the dukes had the right to build mills and mill buildings *(müllen und müllhäuser)* by the bank. In order to provide water for the mills, the water could be backed up by dams directly upstream from the mill. However the earlier rights related to mills had to be respected. With regard to the importance of the arrangements, before 1372, there was only one treaty in the Hungarian–Austrian relationships that addressed similar questions. It was the 1225 peace treaty, which allowed Hungarian soldiers to build mills by the rivers along the border, even on both sides, but the water could not be diverted in a manner that would cause the majority of the water not to flow in the original riverbed.[52] With regard to the ferry between Devín *(Teben)* and Rottenstein *(Rotenstein)*, the 1372 agreement declared[53] that the subjects of the Hungarian king could transport anyone and anything to the Austrian side, but they could not pick up anything or anyone at Rottenstein, as there, the men of Hans Straissing had the right to ferry to the Hungarian side, from where they could not ferry anyone

51 On the border river diversions, see the article of Bence Péterfi in the present issue of the journal.

52 *Urkundenbuch des Burgenlandes,* vol. 1. 101–2.

53 On the ferry between Devín and Rottenstein, see Walterskirchen, "Zur Geschichte."

or anything to the Austrian side.[54] It was also stipulated that anyone had the right to choose freely what they produced on their lands. It is only included in the 1411 confirmation that punishment and fine was due if someone arrested or had somebody arrested in his lands *(endhalden noch endhalden lassen soll)*, but in the meantime, no one could let anyone cross his lands if the man or men in question were about to threaten or attack anybody else (*angryffen oder beschedigen wollte*). But because of the document issued in Sopron on October 16, 1372, these stipulations may have been included in the border agreement of Wiener Neustadt as well.[55] According to the 1411 confirmation, if anyone had a claim against an inhabitant of the other country, he had to announce this claim in the territory of the Hungarian and Austrian towns, according to the customs and laws, and he had to respect the laws of that country under pain of punishment. If someone failed to respect the laws of that country or committed perfidy, he joint efforts would be taken against him.[56]

The border treaty reached by the mixed commission in 1372 and the circumstances of its formation, namely the lack of specific regulation of the establishment and functioning of the commission, alludes to the customary nature of border commissions in settling similar disputes. Traces of this tradition go back to the last decade of the thirteenth century, to the peace treaty of Hainburg signed in 1291. The peace treaty, which put an end to the military campaign of the last Árpád ruler, Andrew III, is interesting from a number of perspectives, but in the context of the current article, the circumstances of its formation and one specific passage of the document are particular relevant.[57] The treaty was reached during a meeting of a body consisting of eight representatives appointed by the two rulers on August 26 in the friary of the Friars Minor at Hainburg. Each of the two parties were represented by two clerics and two members of the lay elite.[58] According to one stipulation of the treaty, the Austrian party chose two Hungarians and the Hungarians chose two Austrians and, in Styria, each party chose one person. These people were invested in the provinces in which they resided with full power to investigate, inform the ruler, chastise people who

54 The name Hans Straissing is not present on the confirmation of 1411, only that of the Austrian dukes. The agreement is interesting, as in his inauguration speech to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Imre Nagy suggested that Rottenstein belonged to the castle of Devín from "beyond memory." Nagy, "A Lajta mint határfolyam," 451.

55 *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae,* vol. 10/1. 128–29.

56 Ibid., 129.

57 On the history of the military campaign, see most recently: Skorka, *Előjáték egy házasságkötéshez*.

58 Ibid.

caused damages, and return the goods taken within a month of learning about the losses suffered.[59] Though the text of the peace treaty indicates that four people were to be appointed at the next meeting of the two rulers, i.e. Albert I, duke of Austria, and Andrew III, there is no trace of their selection in the sources, nor is there any indication that the tasks assigned were actually performed. The plan to settle conflicts in the treaty of Hainburg can be considered a forerunner to the similar structure and purpose of the plans which were reached in the mid-fourteenth century.

The next document in chronological order which testifies to the attempts to address the issues of the Hungarian–Austrian border dates to the Angevin era. In 1336, Charles I, king of Hungary, signed an armistice with Albert II and Otto I, dukes of Austria, with the mediation of John, king of Bohemia.[60] According to the document, for the period until June 8, 1337, both sides of the Hungarian–Austrian border were placed under the control of three border supervisors (*tres custodes limitum*), one to the north of the Danube, one to the south, and the third was in charge of the issues of the Styrian–Carniolan section of the border.[61] This kind of north-south division of the border adumbrates the abovementioned 1398 Ilok arrangement of Sigismund, which basically sketched out the same triple division.

In the last years of the reign of Charles I, the conflict resolution methods envisaged by the 1291 agreement with regard to the Hungarian–Austrian border section were clearly adopted. On November 13, 1341, close to the end of his life, the king came to an agreement with Duke Albert II at Pressburg according to which they both chose three people from the counselors of the other person who would then be present on March 6, 1342 at Pressburg and Hainburg and would begin negotiations concerning the common border to investigate the losses and trespasses and remedy and make recompenses for them. The duke chose Peter, bishop of Srijem, Pál Nagymartoni, judge royal, and Tamás Szécsényi, voivode of Transylvania from the Hungarians, while the king chose Ulrich von Bergau, Ulrich von Pfannberg, and Ludwig von Otting. They also chose substitute members, Miklós Zsámboki, *ispán* of Turóc and Konrad von Schaunberg, so that in case of illness or absence of the members, the commission meeting would not be cancelled.[62] Nagymartoni's family had holdings in Sopron

59 *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae,* vol. 6/1. 180–85.

60 For the antecedents to the armistice and its details, see: Skorka, "A csökkentett vámtarifájú út."

61 *Diplomataria sacra ducatus Styriae,* vol. 1. 275.

62 *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae,* vol. 8/4. 495–97.

County along the border and, moreover, he had Austrian connections, as he had married the daughter of the landgrave, Albert von Pottendorf, Elisabeth.[63] It is also striking that, with regard to the representatives of the king, a member of the ecclesiastic elite was on the commission. This later became a common phenomenon, while it was not characteristic of the Austrian side at all. It cannot be ruled out that the membership of a cleric on the commission was a guarantee of literacy.[64] Despite the careful preparations, nothing indicates that the 1342 commission meeting actually took place.

The tendency, however, could have been promising, as Louis I, the successor of Charles I, already committed himself to setting up a mixed commission at the very beginning of his reign. Following the change of the ruler in the summer of 1342, the diplomatic overtures between the Austrian and Hungarian parties on the border section restarted in May 1345. In his diploma, issued at Visegrád, Louis stated to the subjects of the Austrian duke Albert II that he is open to providing compensation for the damages and losses caused by the Hungarian party.[65] In the middle of December 1345, Louis I arrived for a meeting at Vienna, where he came to the conclusion with Albert II that they should continue and, furthermore, improve the negotiation system initiated in 1341. According to the decision of the Hungarian king and the Austrian duke (similarly to the armistice of 1336), the Hungarian–Austrian border section was to be divided into parts. (The division of the north-south positioned confines is not a fourteenth-century thought, as the structure decided in 1336 and is 1345 was almost identical to the territorial division of the former Carolingian marches.[66]) Furthermore, judges were ordered from both the Austrian and the Hungarian sides to preside over the border sections. Their task was to investigate and remedy the unlawful acts and damages of the previous period. Accordingly, people with territorial competence in the issues were appointed from the Kingdom of Bohemia to the Danube, from the Danube to Hartberg in Styria, from Hartberg to the River Drava, and from the Drava to the Wendish March (*Marchia*). To the section by the River Morava, on the Hungarian side Csenyik Ugodi Cseh, castellan of Červený Kameň, and Tamás Vörös, castellan of Újvár, were appointed, while on the Austrian side Konrad von Schaunberg and Leitold von Kuenring were chosen. To the section by the River Lajta, the

63 *Anjou-kori oklevéltár,* vol. 26. no. 184.

64 Even in the case of the treaty of Pressburg concluded in 1491 one finds examples of deputies of the Hungarian aristocracy who were illiterate. Cf. Neumann, "Békekötés Pozsonyban," 297.

65 *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae,* vol. 9/7. 484.

66 Brunner, 'Der burgenländische Raum." 247.

aforementioned Pál Nagymartoni judge royal, whose family had local interests by the castles of Forchtenstein and Kobersdorf, and for the first time (but as we know not for the last time in the history of the border commissions), the Lackfi family was also represented, namely by István Lackfi, voivode of Transylvania. From the Austrian side, to the same area, Ulrich von Pfannberg and Eberhard von Wallsee were appointed. Along the river Lafnitz, on the Hungarian side, palatine Miklós Zsámboki and, again, judge royal Pál Nagymartoni were chosen, while on the Austrian, Ulrich von Wallsee and the Styrian Gottschalk von Neidberg had jurisdiction. For the southernmost border section, Miklós of the Hahót kin, ban of Slavonia and Cikó of Pomáz, castellan of Cheresig, were chosen, while the two Styrian nobles were Rudolf, count of Cilli (who also established the role of his family in issues of the Hungarian–Austrian border) and Ott von Liechtenstein. The mandate of the appointees lasted until February 2, 1346, by which time they had to investigate and remedy the previous alleged injustice. The importance of the case is indicated by the fact that on the Hungarian side, the most important office holders from among the barons also took part in the work. The rulers in December 1345 also thought of the long-term peace of the border sections. Namely, they also stipulated in writing that if in the future new damages were done, then the commission with jurisdiction in the area should reassemble and settle the case by coming to a decision within a month's time. Prepared for everything, they also decided that if a commission would not be able to decide on the compensation correctly, the harmed person could not take the case in hand and seek redress or revenge, but rather should seek compensation from his lord.

At the Viennese meeting in December, decisions between the two rulers were made on further issues as well, namely on the issue of the Hungarian agricultural lands which were close to the border, with special regard to the Austrian lessees of vineyards.[67] The question had been a source of tension between the two powers long before. In February 1324, Charles I took measures against the long-term Habsburg-subject lessees *(a longo tempore retroacto)* of lands in Moson and Sopron counties bordering the Duchy of Austria because the piece of lands called *Alramus* by the River Sár, i.e. the Lajta, was torn from the Hungarian king and the country *(a nobis et regno nostro reputis metis nostris)* by violating the border and was given as lease to Austrians.[68] At the end of the same

67 On the vineyards, see Prickler, "Zur Geschichte des burgenländisch-westungarischen Weinhandels;" Prickler, "Adalékok a szőlőművelés történetéhez;" Prickler, "Weingartenbesitz."

68 *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae,* vol. 8/2. 536. On *Alramus*, see Kring, "A magyar államhatár kialakulásáról," 14–15.

year, the king ordered the *ispán* of Sopron County and his vice-*ispán* to forbid the Austrians from using the lands of the country and the incomes from its crops *(prohibeat quoslibet Australes ab usu et perceptione usus fructuum et utilitatum terrarum regni nostri)*. He also stipulated that Hungarians could not work in vineyards or forests and could not cultivate lands in the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary or by the River Lajta that are in Austrian hands by his or his predecessors' grace and permission.[69] The actions of Charles went against a system that had been in place for a long time by then, which let lands in lease, mostly vineyards by the border to Austrians for cultivation during which period upon paying the ordinary taxes the lessees could own their lands freely.[70] The Habsburgs took all the measures to protect the interests of their subjects, so they could not bow to the aggravations of the Hungarian king, and in 1328, they got Charles I to accept Austrian lessees holding vineyards to continue vine cultivation on the border of the Kingdom of Hungary upon paying the usual land tax. It is also clear from the diploma of Albert II, duke of Austria, which settlements along the border were most interested in leasing vineyards in Hungary. On June 24, 1339, the duke gave permission to the burghers of Hainburg to bring the vine they produced or bought *(pauwein und kaufwein)* from harvest until the day of Saint Martin (November 11) from Hungary to Hainburg, but the latter they were not allowed to transport their goods any further than the town.[71] Albert issued a permission with similar content to the burghers of Wiener Neustadt on November 8, 1342 allowing them to take the vine they produced in the Kingdom of Hungary through the Semmering Pass to Bruck an der Mur and Judenburg and through Schladming to Friesach and Rottenman.[72] The 1345 agreement again provided the lessees of the vineyards of Devín *(Dewen)* Mountain with benefits, who from that time on did not have to pay more than half a Viennese denar as vineyard tax, which was the customary sum. In connection to this, one may recall the 1372 agreement, which specifically allowed the paying of the land tax in Viennese denars to those who had had the right since ancient times. The importance of the question of vine cultivators is well reflected by the fact that

69 "Non permittendo laboratores laborare in vineis Australium quorum-cunque, nec percipere silvas vel coli alios agros suos, quos quidem Australes in regno nostro circa aquam Saar de nostra vel progenitorum nostrorum gratia et concessione hactenus possederunt." *Sopron szabad királyi város,* vol. 1 /1. 87.

70 "Sub antiquo et consuetu censu et pensione solita reservamus, sine quovis impedimento colendas, et pro ipsorum usibus libere possidendas." *Anjou-kori oklevéltár,* vol. 12. no. 422.

71 Lichnowsky, *Geschichte des Hauses Habsburg,* vol. 3. CCCCXLIII. no. 1207.

72 Ibid., no. 1317.

the decision dates to the same day and the renewal of the Hungarian–Austrian political alliance, and that rulers felt that they had jurisdiction in this issue.[73]

The system of mixed commissions set up in 1345, which was complicated in comparison with earlier attempts to address the issues at hand, became clearer when put into effect in 1372. The importance of the latter case is enhanced by the fact, that unlike on previous occasions, the commission was not only set up in writing but actually functioned in practice. The overview of somewhat more than a century in the history of the Hungarian–Austrian mixed commissions which were founded in order to maintain peace along the border offers insights into and examples of the process during which royal power shifted, in the strategies it adopted in order to address everyday and manifold breaches and dissensions which were common along the border, by negotiations rather than by military intervention. The stages of this practice can be identified in the Angevin era, from the change of perspective at the end of the reign of Charles I to the signing of the agreement of 1372. The points of the arrangement held true in the first decades of the fifteenth century, which is why it deserves special attention. Moreover, this is the first known document by neighboring rulers which set up a mixed commission. The text of the document has only been preserved in fragmented transcriptions, but its thanks to the renewal in 1411, it can be reconstructed. One of the lessons of the mixed commission system that was in charge of the Hungarian–Austrian border section is that while it aimed to unburden the rulers from decision making, it actually brought the two neighbors closer.

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# Debates Concerning the Regulation of Border Rivers in the Late Middle Ages: The Case of the Mura River*

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It has been well known for ages that atypical elements of a border line, such as ditches, large trees etc., may have served as points for orientation. Literate societies, however, have had the privilege of conserving the knowledge not only by oral tradition but also by various kinds of written word. In the following, I present an especially well-documented conflict between Styrian and Hungarian families regarding the riverbed of the River Mura, which was the border of the two polities for some 20 kilometers. The debate emerged in the beginning of the sixteenth century and lasted until 1546. The Mura-question was one of the most permanent ones in the political discourse of the first third of the sixteenth century. Although we can grasp hardly any of it, the conflict involved a fear on the part of the estates of both countries that they might lose lands. First, my goal is to show the dynamics of such phenomena as an archetype of border conflicts in a nutshell. Second, I seek to identify the main reason why the conflict was so protracted and explain how eventually the issue was addressed in order to put an end to the conflict in 1546.

Keywords: Austria, Styria, Hungary, River Mur(a), river regulation, border disputes

In March 1573, the Styrian estates informed Archduke Charles II of Austria (1564–1590) that the Hungarians again had diverted the Mura River and, in doing so, had wronged the German lands. This happened despite the fact that, until then, regulation was prohibited by a strict agreement (*"bis letzlich ein starkher vertrag aufgericht, dardurch die Hungarn von sollichn ihrem fürnemen abstehen müesten"*).[1] Within a short period of time, the Styrian estates informed the Lower Austrian Chamber of the archival research they had carried out at the request of the estates, and, though they had found some of the documents concerning the problem, they

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1 March 9, 1573, Graz, the Styrian Estates to Archduke Charles II. StLA Laa. A, Antiquum I, Karton 7, Heft 30, [no pagination].

had not found the 1546 treaty.[2] Some months later, Emperor Maximilian II of the Holy Roman Empire (1564–1576) himself (in part at the request of his brother, Archduke Charles II) ordered the Lower Austrian Chamber, then half a month later – this time as king of Hungary – the Hungarian Chamber, to retrieve the agreement concluded between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Duchy of Styria from their registry books.[3] The archduke also contacted the Lower Austrian Chamber, from which he eventually got a copy of the treaty.[4] The copy that today is held in the archive of the Styrian estates may have been produced from this version.[5]

What importance does this treaty have, and what was the investigation for? According to the sources, it put an end to a border conflict of different intensity which lasted a good forty years, and it had an impact which proved unusually strong, even if not put in print,[6] as its strength and memory only started to fade about a generation after its conclusion. This, in the circumstances of the period, was an extraordinarily long period of time. In this article, I will sketch out in short the stages that led to the conclusion of the treaty. During the negotiations, which lasted almost two decades, the Styrian and Hungarian estates followed different and, with respect to the issue to be discussed here, in many ways contradictory legal traditions, but one may ask whether this was of any real relevance, as the success may have depended on something else. How could the parties approximate their stands to a point which generated peace for such a long time?

## *Permeability and Malleability of Borders*

While unlike in the case of the Early Middle Ages[7] there can be no doubt that each geographical/political entity had well defined borders, it would still not be appropriate to project our present ideas and preconceptions onto the Late

2 March 12, 1573, Graz, the Styrian Estates to the Lower Austrian Chamber. StLA Laa. A., Antiquum I, Karton 7, Heft 30, [no pagination].

3 October 19, 1573, Vienna, Emperor Maximilian II to the Lower Austrian Chamber, November 5, 1573, Vienna, King Maximilian I to the Hungarian Chamber, ÖStA AVA FHKA AHK HFU, rote Nummer 25, Konv. Oktober 1573, fol. 66r–67v. Cf. ÖStA AVA FHKA AHK HFÖ Geschäftsbücher 306 (Protokoll Registratur, 1573), fol. 414v, 439v.

4 ÖStA AVA FHKA AHK HFÖ Geschäftsbücher 304 (Protokoll Expedit, 1573), fol. 499r.

5 February 4, 1546, Vienna, StLA Laa. A., Antiquum XIII, Schachtel 236, [no pagination].

6 For (international) agreements and the impact of their printed versions, see e.g. Péterfi, "… nach vermungen," 193–99, especially 199, note 33.

7 Rutz, *Die Beschreibung*, 75–104.

Middle Ages. In the context of the late medieval period, one can hardly speak of state power in the modern sense, so Peter Moraw's statement that border and border could significantly differ and the abilities of the landlords to enforce their interests could carry weight can be confirmed.[8] This in many cases could hold for state borders, as these borders were also estate borders, and their keeping count – that being land or riverine border – could not differ.[9] "The border of the Kingdom of Hungary is well known both for Germans and Hungarians," wrote nobleman Ferenc Batthányi (or Batthyány) around 1529.[10] On the other hand, for a given polity, conflicts that crossed borders, were obvious matters of prestige. However, because of the immature form of concluding a case, enforcing one's interest went uneasily, therefore again, recalling Moraw's statement cited above, much could depend on the aptitude and influence of the claimant and the other side when it came to putting an end to a dispute or conflict. The number of similar conflicts in the sources is countless, as well as the attempts to resolve them, the diversity of which starts to become clear beginning in the 1530s in the Hungarian source material.[11]

"Previously, people had walked straight across the boundary; aristocrats, men of letters and merchants crossed it quite naturally. The *frontière* only existed for soldiers and princes, and only then in time of war," as Lucien Febvre writes in one of his essays.[12] The apropos of the petition of Ferenc Battyányi, quoted above, comes from the nature of crossing the (state) borders on a daily basis: a conflict and then a lawsuit arose with the Polheim family, landowners with holdings on the other side of the River Lafnitz,[13] which was the border between

8 "Das Problem der Grenze wird noch dadurch kompliziert, daß man gerade im späten Mittelalter häufig nicht von einer einheitlichen »staatlichen« Gewalt sprechen kann, daß vielmehr einzelne Anteile von verschiedenen Herren wahrgenommen wurden. So konnte es Grenzlinien unterschiedlichen Verlaufs und unterschiedlichen Gewichts geben." Moraw, *Von offener Verfassung*, 43.

9 Cf. Auer, "Die Jagdgebiete," 188–89. On the relationship of estate complexes and polities in the Middle Ages: Rutz, *Die Beschreibung*, 58–75. Rutz, *Die Beschreibung*, 105–82 gives a general overview of the ways to define borders and their concrete forms of demarcation.

10 "Mÿnd nemethnek s mÿnd magyarnak nÿlwan wagÿon az Magiarorzagh hattara…" MNL OL P 1313, Senioratus, Lad. 4/1, no. 8/b/1.

11 For the conditions before the fourteenth century, see Krones, *Landesfürst*, 62–74; Wertner, "A stájer Treun;" Kos, "K postanku;" Kring, "A magyar államhatár;" Posch, "Siedlungsgeschichte;" Gruszeczki, "Die Stubenberger," 116–17; Pirchegger, *Landesfürst*, 215–16. For the fourteenth century, see Groß, "Zur Geschichte," and the study of Renáta Skorka in the present issue of the journal. For the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Házi, "Határszéli;" Legler, "Grenzlandstreitigkeiten."

12 Febvre, "*Frontière*," 214. For a general overview on the topic of borders, see also Constable, "Frontiers."

13 Ca. 1529: "Flavius (!) enim nomine Lapunch utriusque partis terminos tam regni Hungarię quam etiam Germanis (!) dirimit…" MNL OL P 1313, Senioratus, Lad. 4/1, no. 6/b. See also the study of Renáta Skorka in the present issue of the journal.

the Kingdom of Hungary and Styria. The Polheims therefore counted as inhabitants of the Empire. The stake was how and how much seigniorial duty the subjects of the Polheims should pay after their possessions in the estate of Battyányi which was settled by an agreement between the two families in 1546. The conflict unfolded despite the fact that in the previous century the same problem has been regulated a number of times (1429, 1440, 1452). Apart from extorting better conditions, two things can be seen behind the questioning of lordship: first, the tithe of Hungarian plots of the Styrian peasants was collected by their Styrian lords who paid it to the bishop of Győr. Second, one cannot contest that the Styrian tenants had cultivated the lands on the other side of the Lafnitz collectively since before anyone could remember, and because of the routine, these lands on the Hungarian side had been counted as part of the lands on the Styrian side of the border.[14] The case in itself is extraordinary, but the problem is not, as the Austrian–Styrian burghers had vineyards in Western Hungary for centuries.[15] Moreover, the mostly German speaking people who lived in the border area were in had close ties to one another, so one cannot be surprised by the appearance of some legal customs of the Empire, such as the legally binding private charters in Western Hungary.[16]

Some of the estate complexes in Western Hungary that got into the hands (a smaller part as pledge, the majority by arms) of Emperor Frederick III (1440–1493) or his younger brother, Archduke Albert VI of Austria (1458–1463) during the years of the civil war and weak royal power in the 1440s and 1450s in Hungary further increased the degree of interlocking and "disturbed" the perception of the border. Most of these areas remained under the authority of the Habsburgs until 1647. In some cases, they were considered part of the Archduchy of Austria, and not without any reason, since beginning in the 1530s, they were under the financial control of the Lower Austrian Chamber. Despite this, in most cases they still were considered parts of the Kingdom of Hungary. The way they were acquired, however, has been rewritten in collective memory, according to which the peace treaty of Bratislava in 1491, which put an end to the war between the Habsburgs and the Jagiellonians (who finally took the

14 Prickler, "Typen und Problemen," 2–6; Prickler, "Zwei mittelalterliche Grenzverträge."

15 Prickler, "Zur Geschichte;" Prickler, "Adalékok;" Prickler, "Typen und Problemen," 17–19; Prickler, "Weingartenbesitz."

16 Cf. Lakatos, "Kismarton város," 287, and legally binding private charter is preserved from 1434, also with the seal of the town of Eisenstadt. (I acknowledge the information provided by Bálint Lakatos.)

Hungarian throne in the autumn of 1490), had an important role. This treaty handled the estates that ended up under Habsburg control in all manner of ways the same way. In fact, only two of them were achieved by pledging, most of them were taken by arms unlike how the well-known narrative in the Austrian, and Hungarian scholarship goes about the 1463 contract between Emperor Frederick III and Matthias Corvinus (pledging Western Hungary for Holy Crown of Hungary held by the Emperor that time).[17]

Based on what has been said so far, the case of Sinnersdorf on the Styrian–Hungarian border becomes clearer. The village originally belonged to the estate complex of Bernstein in Western Hungary, which the Habsburgs acquired in the 1440s. Sinnersdorf was donated in 1499 by King Maximilian I (1493–1519) to his influential Styrian councilor, Georg von Rottal. It was then attached it to his Styrian estate complex, Thalberg. While by the mid-seventeenth century in lay matters, the settlement, otherwise in almost every direction bordered by the Hungarian Pinkafeld, became an organic part of Styria (for instance, it paid taxes to Styria), in ecclesiastic matters it still belonged under the jurisdiction of the parish of Pinkafeld, which means it was part of the bishopric of Győr. Similar problems occurred in the case of Zillingdorf and Lichtenwörth along the River Lajta, as well as in the case of four villages of the estate of Scharfeneck (Mannersdorf, Sommerein, Au, and Hof). While in the middle of the fifteenth century, the six settlements practically were torn from the Hungarian crown, in an ecclesiastic sense they still belonged to the authority of the bishop of Győr. This is how the peculiar situation arose in which the villages of the bishop of Wiener Neustadt, Zillingdorf, and Lichtenwörth, which the bishopric owned as a landlord, continued to pay the tithe to the bishop of Győr.[18] This also indicates that the borders of dioceses could be more permanent than state borders.

Finally, two examples of permeability are worth mention: Hornstein, which until the mid-seventeenth century as one of the aforementioned estates in Western Hungary was under Habsburg authority, was joined to Seiberdorf on the Austrian side of the River Lajta during the fifteenth century by Ulrich von Grafeneck, and the latter became the center of the dual estate complex. The reason for this may have been the little income of the small estate complex of Hornstein and the ruined state of the castle of Hornstein.[19] The Counts

17 Csermelyi, "A határon innen." For the pledged estate complexes, see Bariska, *A Szent Koronáért*.

18 Prickler, "Typen und Problemen," 10–12.

19 Mohl, "Szarvkő," 629–30; *Der Verwaltungsbezirk Eisenstadt*, vol. 2/1, 72; Haller-Reiffenstein, "Ulrich von Grafeneck," 149.

of Montfort administered the estate complex of Rohrau together with their Rohrau estate in the Archduchy of Austria and other lands in Hungary,[20] even if their acquisition in Hungary (1419, 1435) took place only many years after their acquisition in Austria (1404). The Hungarian parts were also acknowledged by the representatives of the vendor, Count George III of Monfort, and the buyer, Leonhard von Harrach, in front of the chapter of Bratislava when, in December 1524 (i.e. significantly later), for the sake of safety, had transcribed with the chancellery of King Louis II of Hungary.[21] In both cases, practical reasons and more effective farming were in the background of joining the parts of different origin, yet the border remained unchanged.

## *"Variations on a Theme"*

Being a neighbor went with the presence of conflicts, which the parties first tried to negotiate between themselves. However, when they were unsuccessful, the parties may have had trust in the royal-imperial court(s) so that the ruler(s) would appoint some kind of committee to evaluate the causes of the disagreement. Of most border disputes one can only have a fragmented view, as in the majority of cases neither the first nor the last step in the course of the events can be known, and moreover, what is generally missing is the different opinions of the two parties. From the 1510s on the sources become more abundant. Nevertheless, the complaints of the Austrian party are much better known than those of the Hungarians because of the ways in which the sources were preserved and stored. Most of the similar documents can be found in the *Österreichisches Staatsarchiv* and the Austrian provincial archives (Graz, Sankt Pölten).[22]

The Styrian–Hungarian border was fixed along rivers in a number of its sections: for forty kilometers it ran along the abovementioned Lafnitz, for a few kilometers the Feistritz Stream, one of the tributaries of the Lafnitz, formed

20 "Slos unnd herschafft Roraw im lannd Osterreich unnder Prugkh an der Leytta gelegen sambt allen unnd yeden sein zuegehorungen und gerechtigkhaiten in bemeltenn lannd Osterreich unnd in Hungern dartzue gehorig…" ÖStA AVA FA Harrach U 1524 IX 30. "Totale castrum suum Roraw appellatum intra terminos ducatus Austrie prope civitatem Prwkh vocatum adiacens simulcum cunctis oppidis, villis, possessionibus portionibusque et quibuslibet iuribus possessionariis ad ipsum castrum Roraw spectantibus, illis etiam bonis et iuribus possessionariis incerta sui parte intra limites predicti regni nostri Hungariae adiacentibus…" ÖStA AVA FA Harrach U 1525 IX 7.

21 ÖStA AVA FA Harrach U 1524 XII 15 (copy from the eighteenth century: MNL OL DL 24 024, pp. 6–9), 1525 IX 7. Cf. Burmeister, "Graf Georg," 14.

22 Cf. Házi, "Határszéli;" Legler, "Grenzlandstreitigkeiten."

the border, and then, further to the south, the Mura River was the border for ca. 22–23 kilometers, followed by the River Dráva for approximately the same length, and then almost at its full length, for 90 kilometers, a tributary of the River Sava, the Sutla. Moreover, the Dráva and the Mura in the border sections are old rivers; they have numerous branches, and they are scattered with islands. This means that major floods that could change the flood plain even more than once a year always remained a source of conflicts for the people who lived by the river and worked to harness it.[23]

Moreover, at least in theory, in such cases, the legal stance of the two parties, here the Austrian or Styrian and the Hungarian, may have been different. According to the Roman legal tradition, which by the Late Middle Ages was used throughout the Holy Roman Empire, as a supplement in a case of riverbed changes, borders did not change. Hungarian practice, however, was the opposite (the borders moved with the river beds), although in the customary law collection of István Verbőci (or Werbőczy) compiled in 1514 a different opinion based on the Roman tradition also appeared. In the sixteenth century, however, this view was still not accepted generally.[24]

The abovementioned short section of the Mura was split between Vas and Zala Counties, and the county border reached the river somewhere opposite the Styrian Veržej (Wernsee). The Mura River was referred to as a border river between the "German" territories (i.e. Styria) and Hungary in 1331 for the first time,[25] however it probably is not an overstatement to suggest that the border, if it did not along the Mura, was not far from it from the thirteenth century onwards,[26] as a source from 1249 tells of the Germans earlier (sometime in the 1230s) having dammed up the Mura River, which flooded the lands of many villages.[27] In the Late Middle Ages, the estate complex of Grad (Vas County) and that of Lendava (Zala County) ran along the bank of the Mura River. Both gave names to important aristocratic families, the Szécsi (or Széchy) family of Grad (Felsőlendva) and the Bánfi (or Bánffy) family of Lendava (Alsólendva),

23 On another section of the River Dráva with the same patterns, see Viczián, and Zatykó, "Geomorphology."

24 Degré, *Magyar halászati jog*, 137–40. Recently with the same opinion: Tringli, "A magyar szokásjog," 262. Cf. Wesener, *Einflüsse*. See also the article by András Vadas in the present issue.

25 *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, 15. 118 no. 208. (I am indebted to Renáta Skorka for the data.)

26 The southern border of Petanjci *terra* in 1234 was the River Mura, which the author of the document, unlike in the case of its western section, did not mention as a border: "A meridie eciam participat metam cum Mura et ab occidente tenet metas cum Theutonicis." *Urkundenbuch des Burgenlandes*, 161, no. 215.

27 *Urkundenbuch des Burgenlandes*, 224, no. 322. (I am indebted to Renáta Skorka for the data.)

respectively. In the border conflicts along the Mura in the Late Middle Ages, these two families played the most important role, especially the count of Vas County, Tamás Szécsi (1501–1526),[28] his son, István, and to some extent Antal, Jakab, and Zsigmond Bánfi, as well as their tenants and noble retinue, who sometimes were ready to act without the knowledge of their lords. On the Styrian side of River Mura we could find the Pernegg family with a seat in Negova (Negau) as well as the Schweinpecks with a residence in Ljutomer (Luttenberg).[29]

An agreement survived from 1504 concluded with the mediation of imperial councilor Georg von Weißenegg and Kaspar von Khuenburg, Styrian provincial lieutenant (*Verweser*), between Bartolomäus von Pernegg of Styria, and Tamás Szécsi of Hungary. The complaints connected to the agreement had already been appealed to the provincial administration.[30] Both parties were aggrieved and felt they had been caused damage, as becomes clear from the text of the agreement. According to the Styrian nobleman, the subjects of Szécsi, who owned vineyards in the slopes next to his village called Turjanci (Siebeneichen), kept him out of grape juice, in answer to which he took the harvest of the past eight years and brought it to the castle of Negova. As Szécsi did not bring up any arguments in defense of his tenants, they agreed that the confiscated goods would remain with Pernegg, but in the near future, the vineyard owners would present their documents, and all the affairs connected to the sale and purchase could only happen with the consent of the Styrian nobleman. Finally, the tenants of Szécsi in the coming three years (probably as a reduction of the confiscation) did not have to pay seigniorial dues. The other case is probably difficult to dissociate from what happened at the vineyards, but one cannot be certain which one was first (or whether it was just part of the daily back-and-forth squabbles). The Hungarian aristocrat did not deny anything: he had the course of the Mura River diverted by a dam, as a consequence of which part of Turjanci owned by Pernegg was destroyed. While the Styrian nobleman argued that the diverted river should be returned to its original bed, this either would have been very costly or not possible at all. For this, and because Szécsi had a good relationship with the brother of Bartolomäus, Stefan, he offered

28 *Megyék*, 331–32. In 1516, for certain reasons Tamás Szécsi was decorated with a barony by Emperor Maximilian I. December 9, 1516, Haguenau (Hagenau), MNL OL DL 101 816.

29 For the historical topography of Lower Styria/Untersteiermark (i.e. the lands situated south of the River Dráva, nowadays belonging mainly to Slovenia), see Pirchegger, *Die Untersteiermark*.

30 Cf. *sine dato* [between 1502–1504, according to Roland Schäffer's dating], *sine loco*, ÖStA HHStA Maximiliana, Karton 38, Konv. "s. d. I/1–4," I/2, fol. 33v.

personal assistance for the son of Stefan, and as a redemption, keeping in mind the suggestions of the uncle and his friends, he offered to cover the costs of the education of his nephew and legal guardian until his adulthood as if he were his own son. This, as Szécsi cynically argued, would have been more useful for the youngster than a village with 50 tenants (*ihm sein hilff und freündschafft lieber und nutzer sein soll, dann ain dorff, darinnen fuefzig bauren haußlich sitzen*).[31]

Be that as it may, we learn from the distance of two decades that in 1511, at the call of the steward of the Styrian provincial estates (*Vizedom*), a building master set out with laborers to modify the course of the Mura River to the benefit of the Styrian side. However, the building master was arrested by Szécsi and was kept in custody until his death. Szécsi had the existing dam strengthened and three ditches cut, allegedly in order to detach a major piece of land from the territory of Styria. As a result of the work, three villages were flooded by the river.[32]

But not only can the blackmailing potential be seen in the attempts to divert the river: the earlier riverbed modifications probably had to be repeated from time to time, since the Mura River could not be kept in the its bed and in its current course without securing the banks.[33] As the most important viewpoint was the protection of their own lands, the Hungarians obviously erected the dams and deepened the ditches so that the water would spare the left bank, i.e. their bank. This, of course, went with the right (Styrian) bank being increasingly endangered by the destruction of the water, to which the locals and landowners gave voice. In addition to protecting the settlements themselves, the flood plains may also have been used for fishing or animal herding, and they may have provided favorable places for watermills. All of these factors may have been important to local communities. Thus, modification of water systems could even be done for such purposes (maintenance, improvement etc.).[34]

The changes in the course of the Mura River may have been closely tied with the different endeavors of the neighbors, too. Most of them are complaint letters which one has to read with some precaution, as they usually only represent

31 December 10, 1504, *sine loco*, MNL OL DL 104 143. Further copies: StLA Laa. A., Antiquum I, Karton 7, Heft 30, [no pagination], MNL OL P 396, Lad. Scs, Fasc. B, no. 3.

32 Steinwenter, "Materialien," 108–9, no. XXVI.

33 Cf. *sine loco*, *sine dato* [1539]: "Mura fluvius sine munitione riparum in alveo et cursu suo conservari non potest." MNL OL N 80, Lad. RR, Fasc. U, no. 6, fol. 92r.

34 For the River Danube, see Andrásfalvy, *A Duna mente*; Andrásfalvy, "Die traditionelle Bewirtschaftung." More recently Ferenczi, "Water Management."

the viewpoint of one of the parties, in this case usually that of the Styrians.[35] Beginning in the 1520s, the names of Tamás Szécsi and his neighbor Jakab Bánfi occur again and again in the documents, probably for different reasons, but they both took aim at the same settlement along the Mura; in 1520 they raided Veržej.[36] The Styrian party appears as a perpetrator only exceptionally because of the nature of the source material. For instance, in 1519 one of the men of Jakab Bánfi was murdered at the fair of Radkersburg,[37] or when, in December 1522, the retinue of the Hungarian nobleman raided Styria, because allegedly one of their tenants was being kept in custody.[38] A letter written by a Styrian nobleman named Hans von Schweinpeck from December 1522 tells of his continuous conflicts with the Szécsis (*Zetschy krieg*): eighty of his cattle were said to have been drawn away by the servants of the Hungarian aristocrat. Schweinpeck answered violence with violence, and he also had captives taken.[39] In another undated letter which certainly was written at the time, Schweinpeck notes similarly unfortunate circumstances, telling of his relation with the Bánfis in a number of cases and reiterating the claims he had made in his previous letter.[40] The conflict with the Szécsis was still an issue in 1523.[41]

## *Negotiation Attempts in the 1520s and 1530s*

There is no clear answer as to why it was possible not only to bring the two parties to a table to negotiate, but also to spur them to come to an agreement in 1504. It is similarly unclear why there was no similar thing after the above conflicts. Moreover, in the course of 1523–1524, the Austrian–Hungarian commission members met at least once in Sopron, although the issues there strictly concerned the regional conflicts that crossed the border of the Austrian

35 Most of these in forms of excerpts were published in: Steinwentner, "Materialien," in which he also provides a short summary of the problem (ibid., 92–99). On the same problem, based on the documents of Styrian provincial diets (in this term, similarly to Steinwentner): Burkert, "Ferdinand I," 112–18.

36 Damage list: MNL OL DF 276 047 (originally as ÖStA HHStA UA AA, Fasc. 1, Konv. D, fol. 30r–42v).

37 May 6, 1519, Innsbruck, MNL OL DF 290 345, p. 181.

38 MNL OL DF 276 016–018. (originally as ÖStA HHStA UA AA, Fasc. 1, Konv. C, fol. 12r–15v). Cf. StLA Meiller-Akten, X-a (Landeshauptmannschaft, 1523–1526), no. 1–4, no. 6.

39 MNL OL DF 276 016. Cf. MNL OL DF 276017.

40 MNL OL DF 276 089 (originally as ÖStA HHStA UA AA, Fasc. 1, Konv. D, fol. 158r–159v).

41 MNL OL DF 276 037 (originally as ÖStA HHStA UA AA, Fasc. 1, Konv. D, fol. 18r–19v).

Archduchy and the Kingdom of Hungary.[42] This regional division of border conflicts was not be new, as a similar system existed already in the fourteenth century.[43]

The Styrian party apparently turned to King Louis II of Hungary through Archduke Ferdinand of Austria in vain. The royal orders sent to Tamás Szécsi and/or Zsigmond Bánfi in roughly the same period in (1524–1525) to destroy the newly built dams were proven to be pointless,[44] just as when the provincial procurator (*Verweser*) sent them in response to pressure from the Styrian estates to, for instance, Szécsi.[45] (Allegedly, in 1524, the Szécsis made the members of the committee who were sent to the bank of the Mura leave at the point of the sword.[46]) One of the complaints of the Styrian estates from 1533 directly addressed the fact that when Tamás Szécsi had diverted the Mura River, he had gone against the treaty concluded between Emperor Frederick III and King Vladislas II of Hungary (the treaty of Bratislava of 1491), as his acts were in sharp contradiction with the peace reached in the treaty.[47] Probably in the middle of March 1528 or in May 1529[48] at a commission meeting on the border conflicts held in Sopron, Wilhelm von Pernegg sent an envoy who claimed that the promises Szécsi made in the agreement of 1504, namely on his education, had not been kept.[49]

Even though, Tamás Szécsi died probably in late spring or early summer in 1526,[50] this did not change anything with regard to the conflicts concerning the Mura River. Instead of his name, the name of his son, István Szécsi, appears in the legal documents, and in the late 1520s and 1530, documents again testify to the dam building activities of the Szécsis and the Bánfis. (Although it is not always

42 Házi, "Határszéli viszályaink," 63–70; Gruszecki, "Cuspinian," 75–78; Legler, "Grenzlandstreitigkeiten," 74–85.

43 See the article of Renáta Skorka in the recent volume.

44 August 9, 1524, Buda, MNL OL DL 39 346 (originally as SI AS 1063, 1227), December 6, 1525, Buda, StLA Meiller-Akten XIII-nn, no. 3 (fol. 55r–56v, German version), no. 13 (fol. 87r–v, Latin version). For a full edition and Slovenian translation of the royal mandate of 1524: Zelko, *Zgodovina*, 65–66.

45 July 9, 1524, Graz, StLA Meiller-Akten XIII-nn, no. 3 (fol. 54r–v, German version), no. 13 (fol. 86r–v, Latin version).

46 Steinwenter, "Materialien," 109, no. XXVI.

47 Ibid., 108, no. XXVI.

48 The date of the Sopron meeting of 1528 and 1529 (Oculi Sunday and Jubilate Sunday respectively) is preserved by MNL OL P 1313, Senioratus, Lad. 4/1, no. 3/b. Cf. Házi, "Határszéli viszályaink," 71; Gruszecki, "Cuspinian," 79. See also two undated invitations to the Sopron summit of 1528: StLA Laa. A., Antiquum I, Karton 5, Heft 20, [no pagination].

49 StLA Meiller-Akten XIII-nn, no. 12.

50 Reiszig, "A Felsőlendvai," 71.

clear from the complaints whether these were renewals of older dams or entirely new dams.) After 1526, the Hungarian estates did not invest major energy into solving this. In the shadow of the threat of the Ottoman Empire and the conflict between King Ferdinand I and his rival, John Szapolyai (who was also elected as king of Hungary) that quickly escalated into a civil war this problem did not seem so significant. This was further complicated in the Hungarian Chamber by a lack of financial and personal assets for the above reasons. It was not unique that the councilors ordered to the different negotiations did not receive any money or only received money with difficulties.[51] In the summer of 1531, news spread that the supporters of the John Szapolyai again diverted the Mura, as they wanted to extend the Hungarian authority towards Styria and in the meantime guard the bank of the river with firearms. It was to be feared that the conflict would end in violence.[52] Meanwhile (at the end of July 1531), the Styrian estates brought in a person who had great respect among the Hungarian elite. This is how their choice fell on one of the key figures in the war against the Ottomans, Hans Katzianer, whose presence they hoped would lead to changes to their advantage in the Styrian issues.[53] For King Ferdinand I, the utilization[54] of joint commissions was in focus, which had been written down in the 1491 treaty of Bratislava.[55] However, this must have been rather a theoretical consideration. Finally, Katzianer is unlikely to have attended the commission's meeting called for on August 24, 1531 at Radkersburg. He was not the only person who missed the meeting. To the surprise of the Styrian estates, so did the Hungarians, and Hans Ungnad complained to King Ferdinand I that the Hungarians gave no explanation for not having attended, even after four days.[56] One of the most influential Hungarian noblemen in the court of King Ferdinand I, Elek Thurzó, reasoned for the overburdening of the Hungarian councilors in a letter dated to the beginning of September 1531, in which he also asked for the postponement of the commission meeting. [57] But similar queries had also been shared with

51 E.g. Steinwenter, "Materialien," 99, no. I.

52 Steinwenter, "Materialien," 100, no. III; *I. Ferdinánd*, 240, no. LIV. Cf. Steinwenter, "Materialien," 99–100, no. II.

53 Steinwenter, "Materialien," 101, no. V.

54 Cf. *Ausgewählte Urkunden*, 427–28 (§6), 435–36 (§29, §31), 438 (§38).

55 Steinwenter, "Materialien," 100, no. III; *I. Ferdinánd*, 247, no. 21.

56 Steinwenter, "Materialien," 102–3, no. VIII. On Hungarians being absent from the meeting, see: ibid., 103–4, no. X.

57 Steinwenter, "Materialien," 102, no. VII; *I. Ferdinánd*, 265–68, no. 73.

the king by the Hungarian councilors six weeks earlier, as by then he must have known that the diet was set for September 8 to Bratislava.[58]

What was discussed there may not have had a major impact on the conflicts, as two years later, on July 25, 1533, a joint commission meeting was held, again at Radkersburg. Three long complaints were written against the late Tamás Szécsi and his son István, and one concerned the abuses of the retinue of Antal Bánfi,[59] but they did not have any visible impact. Only the Styrian appointees traveled to the Styrian town, and similarly to what had happened two years before, no one from the Hungarians appeared.[60] After the death of István Szécsi in spring 1535,[61] the abovementioned Elek Thurzó,[62] the new landlord[63] of estate complex of Grad, the foster father of István Szécsi and second husband of Magdolna Székely of Kövend/Ormož (Friedau) (i.e. widow of Tamás Szécsi), was named liable for the abuses in the past and the present. In July 1537, he made a complaint fairly similar to those the Styrian estates had written before, as they did not attend the joint commission meeting called for March 11, 1537. The Styrians, protected by armed men, were said to have diverted the water of the Mura River into a ditch by which his plow lands and forests were detached from the estate complex. After that, the men of Thurzó entrenched the ditch, and the Styrians destroyed it.[64] The results of the joint commission meeting held good half a year later (called first for September 1537, then for mid-October, and finally for the end of November, for the last time probably to Radkersburg[65]) are unknown, and neither do the sources give any details concerning the allegedly futile meeting held at the end of March 1538 at Murska Sobota (Muraszombat).[66] As for the negotiations held at Petanjci by the Mura River in October 1539, it is the one and only occasion when we are aware of the dynamics of the discussion between the parties. The arguments were not based on classical legal principles but solely on highly technical aspects of water management as well as damages caused by the Mura River. In the end, the parties managed to settle all the points,

58 Ibid., 101, no. IV; *I. Ferdinánd*, 262, no. 72.

59 Ibid., 108–12, no. XXV–XXVIII.

60 Ibid., 112, no. XXX.

61 He must have died some time before May 14, 1535: Reiszig, "A Felsőlendvai," 72.

62 Steinwenter, "Materialien," 115–16, no. XXXV.

63 Cf. 28 April, 1535, Vienna, ÖStA HHStA UA AA, Fasc. 26, Konv. D, fol. 26r–v.

64 Steinwenter, "Materialien," 116–17, no. XXXVI. Cf. ibid., 117–18, no. XXXVII–XXXIX.

65 Steinwenter, "Materialien," 118–20, no. XL–XLVII.

66 *Hrvatski saborski spisi*, 192, no. 116. (I am indebted to Szabolcs Varga for drawing my attention to this document.) Steinwenter, "Materialien," 122, no. LI–LIII, 127, no. LXIV.

but for some reason their decisions were never implemented.[67] A letter sent by King Ferdinand I from January 1540 makes it clear that Thurzó was somewhat resentful of the newly initiated "armistice" (though actually we do not know how many times it was initiated), as he definitely wanted to have his dam on the Mura River, which was under construction at the time, completed.[68] For this, a new meeting was set to February 25, 1540,[69] and even if, of course, there were complaints in the first half of the 1540s (in the majority of the cases about Hungarians, most importantly the Bánfis[70]), the number of complaints dropped significantly. It is also telling that there is no further information on joint commission meetings. The death of Elek Thurzó on January 25, 1543, who as noted above stood in for the male line of the Szécsi family, probably had a major role in this.[71]

## *The Agreement of 1546*

A private diary of the Hungarian diet of 1546 gives a good summary of the basic problem in this case, as well as the general functioning of the border commissions: all the involved parties tried to favor themselves.[72] Therefore, the king decided to take the questions to a special committee consisting of Czechs and Moravians,[73] which the Hungarians also acknowledged. (The tasks of the delegated judges included not only the Mura case, but also possibly other litigations, e.g. on the Dráva River.)[74] The decision concerning the course of the

67 MNL OL N 80, Lad. RR, Fasc. U, no. 6–7. Copies from the 18th century: ibid., no. 5. StLA Laa. A., Antiquum I, Karton 7, Heft 30, [no pagination]. Cf. Steinwenter, "Materialien," 127–31, no. LXIV–LXIX.

68 Steinwenter, "Materialien," 130, no. LXXI.

69 Ibid., 131–32, no. LXII–LXXIV.

70 Ibid., 132–35, no. LXXV–LXXX. Cf. October 6, 1545, Český Brod, ÖStA HHStA UA AA, Fasc. 54, Konv. B, fol. 74r–v.

71 Ludiková, Mikó, and Pálffy, "A lőcsei Szent Jakab-templom," 345.

72 "Quod quamdiu rex Hungariae esset, semper variae dissensiones inter eos fuissent et saepius commissarios constituisset, sed semper Hungari commissarii favebant Hungaris, Germani vero Germanis." Paulinyi, "Az első magyar," 228.

73 Their earliest mention in the documents of the Styrian provincial estates: Steinwenter, "Materialien," no. LXXXI. They have yet to be identified. The diary of the 1546 diet mentioned only one person by name (Paulinyi, "Az első magyar," 228): "castellanum videlicet supremum Pragensem marschalkum Wolfgangem Schlyk," but this may be (partially) wrong information, as Wolfgang Kraiger von Kraigk the Elder (Krajíř z Krajku in its Czech form) stood at the head of the castellany of Prague. At this point, neither Schlick, nor Kraiger can be associated with the 1546 royal commission that was meant to settle the Styrian–Hungarian border dispute.

74 *Sine dato*, *sine loco*, ÖStA HHStA UA AA, Fasc. 54, Konv. A, fol. 99r–104v.

Mura River was made two days before the arrival of the king to the Hungarian diet in Bratislava,[75] on February 4 in Vienna.

What conclusion did the Czech and Moravian appointees arrive at? The narrative elements, which with some exaggeration were repeated for decades, were presented: the Styrians complained that the Hungarian nobles had modified the course of the Mura River by building ditches and/or dams, which had caused damages to the landlords on the right bank, and moreover relocated animals and people of the Styrians. The Hungarian Bánfis either denied these accusations or reasoned that their actions had been a counterstrike to compensate for damages they had suffered. The appointees decided that, as the three dams built by the Bánfis were rather new and they indeed had caused damages to the Styrian neighbors, they had to be eliminated, including the piles put down four weeks before the agreement. Regarding the future, they also advised the "opposite neighbors" along the river to negotiate and determine where the banks should be strengthened. And if that had been done, dams should be built on both sides out of earth and not sand in a width of four Viennese fathoms (7.584 meters[76]). However, the regulation of the smaller branches of the river (in the form of dams or ditches) would have been everyone's individual task. The appointees declared that the riverbed should be kept in its present form, and the parties should cease causing losses to each other.[77]

The claims against the Szécsis were more complicated than those against the Bánfis, as Tamás Szécsi has been dead for twenty years and his son István had been dead for eleven years. After the death of the second husband, Elek Thurzó, Magdolna Székely (who was marrying for a third time) and her daughter, Margit Szécsi, would have been the people to have to face consequences because of the acts of the late male members of the family. It was enlightening to read, after the long lists of complaints, that the biggest abuse of the Styrian party was caused by Tamás Szécsi back then when he had caused damages to the village of Turjanci with a newly built dam. The husband of Margit Szécsi, Niklas Graf zu Salm (the Younger), however, successfully persuaded the commissioners that the living members of the family could not be punished for the crimes of their forefathers, so all related claims were disregarded. The regulations on the main and the smaller branches of the river were the same as in the case of the agreement of the Bánfis and the Styrian estates. The violator of the agreement

75 *Magyar országgyűlési emlékek*, 4.

76 Bogdán, *Magyarországi hossz- és földmértékek*, 87.

77 StLA Laa. A., Antiquum XIII, Schachtel 236, [no pagination].

had to pay 50 marks within three months.[78] It seems that the agreement paid off even in the short term, and in 1549, the Styrians actually wrote that by then they did not have any border disputes with the Hungarians, except for the complaint concerning the Zrinski/Zrínyi family and the Styrian town of Ljutomer.[79]

## *Conclusions*

King Ferdinand I probably wanted to accelerate the decision so that he could show progress for the Hungarian estates in at least some questions at the 1546 diet of Bratislava, which the estates took with satisfaction. From the point of view of the estates, who took all the measures to guard over the border of the country, especially in the period of the Ottoman conquests, the ruler made an apt decision. He could say, that with a simple technique, choosing members for a committee who were entirely independent and came from another country ruled by him, he managed to do away with conflicts which had lasted for at least two and a half decades. The seemingly moderate committee decisions managed to address the complaints raised in the letters, and even if the Styrian and Hungarian territories followed different legal principles, the decisions of the committee in the present situation can be considered a generous resolution. This may have had major significance for the parties, who were probably fed up with the lasting conflicts.

It is also clear, if one can believe the complaints made in the letters of the Styrian estates and other rather sporadic evidence, that strong men like Tamás Szécsi could even deny royal orders. Elek Thurzó, who was even more important and influential, may have also used his political connections to settle his own issues, though there are fewer concrete signs of this in the sources.

Obviously, even before the sixteenth century, a frequently changing geographical boundary such as the Mura River was inevitably a source of sharp conflicts. However, these conflicts usually broke out because of changes in private landownership rather than changes in state borders This is well reflected in the 1504 and 1546 treaties as well as in the files of the failed negotiations of 1539 held at Petanjci. It may have been totally clear to people at the time that the course of the Mura River could not be preserved without human intervention, neither on the short term nor on the long term. Even if from time to time one could find a solution either because of the death of someone involved or, in a

78 StLA Laa. A., Antiquum XIII, Schachtel 236, [no pagination].

79 Steinwentner, "Materialien," 99, 136, no. LXXXIII as well as Ziegerhofer-Prettenthaler, "Ferdinand I.," 136. Cf. May 25, 1549, Prague, ÖStA HHStA UA AA, Fasc. 55, Konv. B, fol. 69r–v.

more lucky case, with some kind of compromise concerning the problem of the changing flow of either the Mura or other rivers, the damages going back to the different, not necessarily ill-intentioned water management systems were hard to address simply. The Mura River along the Hungarian–Styrian border splits into numerous branches, and the riverbed changed constantly. Year by year, the dam and ditch system had to be modified. It was precisely this border situation that increasingly triggered the people to take action. This is why in the eighteenth century on a number of occasions (1717–1718, 1753–1755, and 1793) bilateral commissions were set up to negotiate not only the riverine but also the land borders. The sources on the abovementioned conflicts were partly preserved thanks to these negotiations, as the historical documents had an important role in defining the new borders. The parallel running of the border and the crooked course of the Mura were separated during the long negotiations in the 1750s, which is how the almost straight running *Linea Theresiana*[80] came into existence in 1755 as the new Styrian–Hungarian borderline. From then on, the changing of the bed of the Mura River was merely a hydrological issue.

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# Border by the River – But Where is the River? Hydrological Changes and Borders in Medieval Hungary*

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Medieval estate borders were mostly formed by natural borders, such as hills, ditches, forests, meadows, etc. Of course, in many cases trees were marked in some form, or small mounds were built to clarify the running of estate borders. Almost none of these would seem at a first sight as firm as a border along rivers and streams. However, a closer look at law codes, customary law collections, and legal disputes that arose in connection with estate borders makes clear that, as borders of estates, bodies of water could be a basis for conflict. In this essay, I discuss sources from the medieval Kingdom of Hungary from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries that concern the problem of the change of land ownership as a consequence of changes in riverbeds. In the late medieval compilation of the customary law of Hungary by Stephen Werbőczy, the *Tripartitum*, a surprisingly long section is dedicated to this problem. He clearly suggests that landownership does not change if a piece of land is attached to another person's land by changes in the course of a river. Historians have drawn attention to this section of the *Tripartitum* and have suggested that this is one of the few parts in which Werbőczy does not apply Hungarian customary law, but rather uses Roman law. In my paper, which is based on a collection of similar lawsuits, I aim to demonstrate that there are a number of examples of cases in which Roman law prevailed before Werbőczy's work, and, thus, the land in question was left in the hands of the previous owners as well as decisions according to which the shifting riverbed went with a change in ownership.

Keywords: Legal history, water history, customary law, rivers, boundaries

## *Introduction*

> This river [the Tiber] moreover circles that splendid mountain on which the city of Perugia is situated and while flowing a great distance through its district, the river itself is bordered by plains, hills and similar places (…) when I was resting from my lecturing and in order to relax, was travelling towards a certain vacation house situated near Perugia above the Tiber, I began to contemplate the bends of the Tiber, its alluvion, the islands arising in the river, the changes of the river-bed

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> as well as a host of unanswered questions which I had come across in practice. (…) I began to consider in various ways what the legal position was, not believing that I would take it any further (…) while I slept that night, I had a vision near dawn that a certain man, whose countenance I found gentle, came to me and he said the following: 'Write down what you have begun to think about and since there is a need for illustration, provide mathematical diagrams[.]'[1]

The quotation above is from the prologue of a treatise by Bartolus de Saxoferrato (Sassoferrato), one of the most celebrated jurists of the fourteenth century. Bartolus, who was probably one of the most influential and, by 1355 (when this text was written), busy professors at the University of Perugia, decided to take some time off during the year. As is mentioned in the text, he headed to a villa (the location of which has not been identified by historians) overlooking the valley series of the Tiber. There, he began considering the question of who the islands emerging in the river belonged to and what happens with the ownership of a certain piece of land when the river which constitutes its border starts to meander along a different path, eroding parts of one person's property and adding them to the far bank.

As suggested by the prologue, which is not lacking in topoi, Bartolus first thought it was an eccentric idea to discuss an issue like this in a treatise until a mysterious man, who occurred in his dream, urged him to do so. The anecdotal story behind the inspiration of the treatise known as *Tractatus de fluminibus seu Tyberiadis* (or sometimes referred to in an abbreviated form simply as *Tyberiadis*) may not have had much connections to what actually happened, and it is difficult to believe that the whole treatise could have been completed in just a few weeks' time, as Bartolus suggests. Existing scholarship on the treatise attributed major importance to the circumstances of the formation of the work, especially the possible vacation and the location of the villa mentioned.[2] These questions are important, of course, from the point of view of Bartolus himself, but they are probably less crucial with respect to the present essay. What is more interesting in the context of this discussion is simply that a major authority on Roman law at the time engaged in writing a work dedicated to the topic. It is worth noting

1 du Plessis, *An Annotated Translation*, 35. (I consulted the translation, but corrected it at certain places.) For the best edition of the prologue, see Cavallar, "River of law," 84–116. For the printed editions of the work, see Bartolus *Tractatus* [1576] and Bartolus, *Tractatus* [1960] (with the reprint of the 1576 edition of the text).

2 For the political context of the writing, see Walther, "Wasser in Stadt und Contado," 889–90. See also: Cavallar, "River of law."

that it seems from the above quote that he did not consider the question worthy of similar treatment.[3] The prologue is somewhat controversial, as Bartolus also states that he encountered similar problems during his legal practice.

Bartolus' work consists of three parts and focuses on two questions: who owns the land if an island emerges from a river and, when the river changes course, how should the borders of the connected estates be demarcated? One of the most important features of the treatise is that, in its argumentation, it combines legal reasoning and geometry. Bartolus drew numerous geometric figures with which he meticulously described how newly emerging islands or newly emerging lands connected to the existing lands should be divided. There are several variants of these drawings (because of the manuscript tradition), but an autograph fragment of the *Tyberiadis* preserved many figures which can be associated with Bartolus himself.[4]

Although as noted above, historians have tended to focus on the circumstances of the creation of the work and have dealt less with the text itself, the problem touched upon by it does come up in a number of law codes, customary law collections, and different documents related to lawsuits. And as mentioned, the very fact that Bartolus engaged in writing such a work suggests that the problem was not as rare as it may seem at a first glance. To what extent were the questions he was raising important as matters of theory? To what extent did he mean to offer an example, with this text, of the potentials of combining geometry and law instead of simply addressing a legal problem? Does the Hungarian source material offer insights into similar problems? How were such cases resolved in medieval Europe and in Hungary? In this essay, I discuss these problems on the basis of legal evidence, more specifically, the example of legal codes, customary law collections, and, most importantly, diplomas that settled similar, land-related disputes.

Despite the fact that Bartolus' work discusses in detail what happens if a piece of land emerges on the bank of a river because of alluvial activity, he partly disregards a problem which, in light of the Hungarian source material, appears to have been a recurring issue.[5] He never considers what exactly happens if

3 "Et circa multa dubia que de facto ocurrerant et alia ego ipse ex aspectu fluminis excibatam, quid iuris esset, cepi aliqualiter intueri, non tamen credens ultra procedere, ne recerationem propter quam accesseram inpedirem" Cavallar, "River of Law," 84 (Appendix).

4 Cf. Cavallar, "River of law."

5 Although the problem of emerging islands also appear in Hungarian legal documents. E.g. *Anjoukori okmánytár*, vol. 1. 94– 95 no. 87; ibid., vol. 4. 10–12 no. 10. See also the case referred to in note 40.

the piece of land in question used to be the property of the landlord of the other bank of the river, i.e. it did not emerge from the river, but was detached from one person's property and attached by the river to a property belonging to someone else. In the cases Bartolus discusses, the principles of geometry can be applied using geometrical diagrams. The general principle he suggests is quite easy to explain in the sense that it aligns the ownership of the islands on a bank to the parallel landownership. In Bartolus' treatise, the same applies to lands which emerge from the alluvium in consequence of years of accumulation. This phenomenon in Roman law is usually referred to as *accretion*, and it was adjudicated in the ancient legal tradition in the same manner as used by Bartolus.[6] This was not only important in cases of meandering rivers, but also in the case of lands emerging along seashores.[7] Of course, in the medieval Kingdom of Hungary and probably with a few exceptions, everywhere in Europe, the formation of new lands was a consequence of shifts in the flow of rivers rather than the movement of seawaters. This process in legal tradition is usually referred to as avulsion. It can be considered a special form of accretion. As noted, Bartolus did not suggest a definitive solution to this question. It is not clear why was the question partly omitted by Bartolus. It can be connected to the fact that the most important motivation for the work was to demonstrate the possibilities of integrating geometry and law. This works well in the classical cases of accretion, but in the case of avulsion, the legal principle is the main question, and there is little space for geometry. Even if Bartolus disregarded this particular problem, it nonetheless was clearly a recurrent issue in historical times going back to the period before the birth of pragmatic literacy.

As a consequence of this, historians have devoted some attention to the problem for quite some time now. It has been discussed in at least three quite distinct fields of research: property rights in general, history, and geography/geomorphology. Historians were the first to study the problem. In most cases, they analyzed emblematic events on a local scale and considered how the processes in question impacted societies and economic and political structures. The most important example was a major hydrological change in the valley of the River Po. The event, usually referred to as *Rotta della Cucca* (Cucca breach), first attracted the attention of Italian historians in the eighteenth century. Ludovico Antonio Muratori, one of the pioneers of the study of medieval Italy, was the

6 Sax, "The Accretion/Avulsion Puzzle," 305–67.

7 Augustyn, "Evolution of the dune ecosystem," and Augustyn, "De evolutie van het duinecosysteem."

first historian to discuss the Cucca breach.[8] The basis for the assessment of the event is a chapter in Paul the Deacon's *History of the Lombards*, in which Paul describes the floods of 589. As he notes, in this year, several floods occurred along different rivers in Italy of which the most dangerous was that of the River Adige.[9] Scholarship, building a great deal on the work of Muratori, saw the event as the main force in the transformation of the riverine landscapes and the course of the Po and Adige Rivers. It created extensive marshlands in the surroundings of the mouth of the two rivers and transformed the borders of properties in Veneto. In recent decades, historians have criticized this oversimplifying view of the landscape changes in the region and have tended to see it as a long process during which the channel system maintained by the Roman administration and taken over by the Lombards was intentionally abandoned. The marshes that came into being as a consequence of the end of the maintenance works proved to useful as a form of protection for the northern Italian territories against the Exarchate of Ravenna.[10]

In the explanation of the processes involved, the change in the landholdings was only a marginal issue, but it nonetheless drew the attention of scholars to the fact that riverine landscapes were not nearly as fixed in the Early (or High or Late) Middle Ages as they became in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, by which time most of the rivers in the densely inhabited areas of Europe has gone through long regulation processes. This probably is the most thoroughly studied medieval landscape change brought about by shifts in riverbeds, but at least one further area is worth emphasizing. Going back to the nineteenth century, research on the changing waterscapes of the Low Countries also generated interest among Dutch and Flemish historians. As was true in the Italian case, the most important element of the geographical processes which caught the attention of historians was not primarily the change in individual

8 For Muratori's reading of the 589 floods, see idem, *Annali d'Italia*, 339. On this, see Squatriti, "The Floods of 589," 801.

9 "Eo tempore fuit aquae diluvium in finibus Veneciarum et Liguriae seu ceteris regionibu Italiae, quale post Noe tempore creditur non fuisse. Factae sunt lavinae possessionum seu villarum hominumque pariter et animantium magnus interitus. Destructa sunt itinera, dissipatae viae, tantum tuncque Atesis fluvius excrevit, ut circa basilicam Beati Zenonis martyris, quae extra Veronensis urbis muros sita est, usque ad superiores fenestras aqua pertingeret [...] Urbis quoque eiusdem Veronensis muri ex parte aliqua eadem sunt inundatione subruti." Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, III. 23. For its edition, see Paulus, *Historia Langobardorum*, 127–28.

10 Until now the most detailed treatise of the problem is: Squatriti, "The Floods of 589," 799–826. With a thorough criticism of the earlier secondary literature.

estate borders, but rather the major transformation of long stretches of the seashores. Documentary and cartographic documents were the first sources used by historians in the Low Countries, but as is true in the case of Italy, in the last half century, research done by geographers and geomorphologists has significantly widened the opportunities to study the hydrological processes of the Holocene, or in this case, the Late Holocene. Geographers in most cases working together with historians, have shown the potential of research on the avulsion histories of particular rivers in the Low Countries,[11] southern France,[12] and other parts of Europe.[13]

The use of written, cartographic evidence combined with geomorphology not only lead to studies on changes in riverine landscapes and, accompanying this, the connected land holding structure in Western Europe, but also produced studies addressing the problem in Central Europe and in Hungary in particular. A number of works were dedicated to the changes in the waterscape around Vienna in the late medieval period and the Early Modern times, changes which resulted in a series of lawsuits between the landowners by the Danube.[14] Research also demonstrated significant changes in the riverine landscapes in the Carpathian Basin in historical times, including the Danube River,[15] the Rába river,[16] the Tisza River,[17] and the Dráva River[18] valleys.[19] Most of the above mentioned studies, however, addressed the riverbed changes and the alluvial development of major rivers in Europe. Much less attention has been dedicated to minor rivers and streams, despite their potential relevance. There is ample and adequate source material in part because, like the major rivers, in many cases minor rivers were also boundaries of estates, as is evident on the basis of

11 Kleinhans, Weerts, and Cohen, "Avulsion in action." See also: Törnqvist, "Middle and late Holocene avulsion," 711–14, Soens, "The origins of the Western Scheldt," and Trusen, "Insula in flumine nata."

12 Provansal, Pichard, and Anthony, "Geomorphic Changes in the Rhône Delta," and Carozza et al., "Lower Mediterranean plain accelerated."

13 Thoen et al., *Landscapes or seascapes*.

14 Sonnlechner, Hohensinner, and Haidvogl, "Floods, fights and a fluid river," and Hohensinner et al. "Changes in water and land." See also: Hohensinner et al., "Two steps back, one step forward: reconstructing the dynamic Danube."

15 E.g. Pišút, "Príspevok historických," 167–81; Pišút and Timár, "A csallóközi (Žitný ostrov) Duna-szakasz," 59–74 or Székely, "Rediscovering the old treasures of cartography."

16 Vadas, *Körmend és a vizek,* 22 and 67.

17 E.g. Timár, Sümegi, and Horváth, "Quaternary Dynamics of the Tisza River."

18 Kovács and Zatykó, *"Per sylvam et per lacus nimios,"* esp. the contribution by István Viczián, "Geomorphological research in and around Berzence."

19 See more recently the contributions of Bence Péterfi and Renáta Skorka to the present issue of the *Hungarian Historical Review*.

hundreds of perambulation documents, boundary markers, and cartographic data. The Hungarian source material, especially up to the late fourteenth century, is somewhat exceptional in this sense, as perambulations make up probably as much as seven to eight percent of the whole of the medieval legal source material.[20] In case of legal disputes concerning the riverbed changes, this group of sources will be of crucial importance to this discussion, as perambulations in most cases were done as stages of legal disputes, and one of the most important kinds of disputes (if not the most frequent) involved changes in riverbeds. These legal disputes concerned not only natural changes in the hydrogeography, but also artificial riverbed modifications for mill races, fish ponds, irrigation, etc. which in some cases went with changes to the borders of estates. Along with historians and specialists in geomorphology, as mentioned earlier, legal writers also devoted attention to the legal problems created by the changing riverbeds in sections where the rivers were boundaries themselves. They mostly contributed to the problem by analyzing the collections of Roman law and considering the contemporary implications of avulsion.[21]

All of the approaches listed above are important with respect to the present paper, as in many cases they contribute to the contextualization of the results based on the Hungarian source material. In the next subchapters, drawing on the source material from the medieval Kingdom of Hungary, I will argue that the problem raised by Bartolus is not entirely theoretical, and there was a more or less stabilized customary law concerning how to resolve the similar disputes, even if it was not based on the principles he argued for.

## *The Border between Ľubotín and Orlov – What can a Single Case Reveal?*

In 1349, one of the landlords in Sáros County, Rikalf son of Rikalf, supplicated to King Louis I according to which the Poprad River had detached a tract from his land called Ľubotín (Lubotény). While the river had demarcated his land from the village of the king called Orlov (Orló), when its course changed, it flowed through his estate, Ľubotín.[22] The question of the ownership of the lands of Ľubotín may have not been simple, as only a quarter of a century earlier, the

20 On the source type, see Szabó, "Sources for the Historian of Medieval Woodland," 268–71. On the proportion of perambulation documents in the surviving documentary evidence, see: Szabó, "Medieval Trees and Modern Ecology," 12–17.

21 E.g. Sax, "The Accretion."

22 MNL OL DL 68 894 (September 14, 1349) and 68 895 (July 5, 1349 and October 5, 1349).

family had had to appeal to King Charles I as Phillip Druget, the influential Italian nobleman and member of the king's entourage, had attempted to obtain some of the lands that belonged to Ľubotín.[23] The endeavor of the Drugets may not have come as a surprise, as this was the period in which the family rapidly extended its power in the region, but the Poprad River's changing riverbed may not have been among the potential threats with which Rikalf had calculated.[24] In answer to the appeal, King Louis ordered Sáros County to investigate the case. The investigation was led by a noble magistrate (*iudex nobilium* or *szolgabíró* in Hungarian) of the county named Tivadar and a bailiff (*homo provincie*), a certain Jacob son of Sükösd.[25] In the course of the investigation, they interrogated the local nobility and tenant peasants, especially those of two nearby settlements, Plaveč (Palocsa) and Gerlavágása (a lost settlers' village somewhere close to three previously mentioned settlements). The investigation came to the conclusion that the supplicant was right and the Poprad River indeed had detached pieces of lands from Rikalf's property.[26] According to the documents related to the case, the change in the riverbed happened without human intervention. It was probably caused by floods which changed the hydrography of the area, although this was never explicitly stated in the sources.[27]

Despite the verification of Rikalf's claim, the case was probably not settled, as ten years later, in 1359, the question was again brought to the court by Rikalf's family. Based on the documents issued in 1359, it is safe to assume that the lands in question during the ten years between the cases were used by the kings' tenant peasants, and the territories in question were never returned to Rikalf and his family. This is interesting in light of the fact that obviously the intention of Rikalf in 1349 was to get back the lands in question, and the investigation concluded with the acknowledgement that lands originally had been in his possession. This suggests that in these cases, land was thought to belong to the original owners, in this case Rikalf. But apparently it took ten years to gain back these pieces of land in response to the complaint of Rikalf and Peter son of Ladislaus, from the same family. In the end, the lands were reassigned not (or not only) because

23 MNL OL DL 68 795 (April 10, 1324). Cf. Zsoldos, "Hűséges oligarchák," 347.

24 On the Drugets, see Zsoldos, *A Druget-tartomány.*

25 On the noble judges of Sáros County, see Kádas, "Sárosi 'reform'Miklós fia Miklós ispánsága idején," 127–44. For Tivadar ibid., 135.

26 MNL OL DL 68 895. (For a summary, see *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. 33. 255 no. 505), MNL OL DL 68 894. (For a summary, see *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. 33. 335–36 no. 684), and MNL OL DL 68 895 (for a summary, see: *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. 33. 364 no. 745).

27 On similar cases, and the role of floods in that, see Kiss, *Floods and Long-Term Water-Level Changes.*

they originally belonged to Rikalf's family, but because of the merits of the family in service of King Louis I.[28] This time, the document clearly referred to the reason for the change in the riverbed. As was already probable from the documents from 1349, the river's main flow was not modified artificially, but was identified as a consequence of the rapid current of the river. This time, the case was settled with a reinstitution of the previous owners to the lands in question in the presence of a deputy of the chapter of Szepes (Spišská Kapitula) and a *homo regius*. As usually done in these cases, a new perambulation of the land in question was carried out in which a section is described as the former bed of the Poprad River.

Even if, in 1359, the land in question seems to have been clearly reassigned to Rikalf and his family, the case was not settled for the rest of the Middle Ages. Almost fifty years after this episode, in 1405 at the noble assembly of Abaúj and Sáros Counties held in Košice, the noble judges and vice-counts (*vicecomites*) of the latter county testified that the same lands that had been disputed in 1349 and 1359 originally belonged to Ľubotín and thus rightfully belonged to the successors of Rikalf.[29]

The set of documents relating to the case of the lands by the Poprad River between Ľubotín and Orlov reveals a number of important issues. In 1349, according to the surviving sources Rikalf attempted to prove that the Poprad River had changed its bed because proving this would have allowed him to keep using the lands despite the fact that by then they were on the other bank of the Poprad River. This suggests that even if the change in the riverbed of the Poprad River took place as part of a natural process, this still would not have changed the landownership. However, the picture is less clear in the case of 1359, when the lands in question were (re)instituted to the Rikalf sons in return for their service and not because they had belonged to the family. Nonetheless, the fact that the same lands were reinstituted to the Rikalf family suggests that the question was also connected in some way to the notion of previous ownership. In light of the seemingly contradictory documents, it is certainly worth considering whether there was a customary law in medieval Hungary which would have applied to similar cases.

28 MNL OL DL 68 916 and MNL OL DL 68 917.

29 MNL OL DL 68 950 (for a summary, see *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. 2/1. 641 no. 5091).

## *Riverbed Changes and Estate Borders – Was There a Medieval Customary Law in Hungary?*

In an article cited above a number of times, István Tringli not only discussed mill construction but also devoted some attention to the problem I am addressing here. He suggested that the changes of estate borders in consequence of riverbed changes may have been a problem of minor importance in medieval Hungary, and these issues were certainly minor compared to the lawsuits concerning water mills. Simply the number of lawsuits related to the two problems shows that milling rights were more frequently occurring problems than lawsuits related simply to riverbed changes. By the thirteenth and especially by the fourteenth century, the number of mills in Hungary was high enough that the buildings had become obstacles to one another. As was shown, this gave ground to the formation of a relatively well-defined customary law related to the use of waters and the construction of water mills.[30] However, the lasting struggle for the ownership of the lands between Ľubotín and Orlov suggests that with regard to riverbed changes, the norm either was anything but clear or the tenants of Orlov, who belonged to the land of the king, attempted to use their favorable position against Ľubotín. The picture is not clear based on this one case study, but it becomes somewhat clearer if one looks at a number of cases. But before doing so, I turn to the seemingly most self-evident source one can touch upon when discussing whether there was a customary law on a specific question, namely the *Tripartitum* by Stephen Werbőczy, compiled in the 1510s. Webőczy discusses the question in a surprisingly extensive manner compared to its seemingly minor importance:

> Then, as the boundaries and borders of many free cities, villages, estates and many towns and deserted lands are set and defined by rivers and streams; and by the flood and force of these waters often large pieces of land, meadows and woods are separated, carried away and attached to the area of another neighboring city, town or estate; since the river, driven by vehement flood often strays and spills from its usual course, flow and bed into a new bed; so some people think and believe that the lands, meadows and woods that were annexed and attached to the area of another neighboring free city, town or village due to a change in the flow, course or bed of the river ought to belong to and come into the

30 Tringli, "A magyar szokásjog a malomépítésről," and Vadas, "Terminológiai és tartalmi kérdések." The latter in a shortened English version is available in Vadas, "Some Remarks."

> possession of that free city, town or village; arguing and stating that their boundaries are set by the flow, course and bed of the river. But this opinion is not correct.
> [1] For, this way many frauds could be committed, and the waters and rivers—with hidden canals, and sometimes by making shallow dikes, or raising dams or filling up the bed—could be driven into a new course and bed in any direction, according to will; thus someone could easily usurp another's lands, woods and meadows.
> [2] Therefore the opposite opinion shall be accepted as correct (…)[31]

These points of Werbőczy's work were discussed first in the nineteenth century. In his discussion of this part of the *Tripartitum*, Rezső Dell'Adami suggests that, unlike in the overwhelming majority of the work, in this case, Werbőczy applied the principles of Roman law and not Hungarian customary law.[32] In the 1930s, Alajos Degré came back to the question and also drew attention to the fact that Hungarian customary law was different from what Werbőczy actually applied. Unlike Dell'Adami, Degré gathered a number of documents which support this contention.[33] Following in the footsteps of Degré, Tringli also accepted that the origin of this part of Werbőczy's work is in Roman law. Roman law and the Digest itself is not as unambiguous on this question as Werbőczy's text or what has been suggested by the later scholarship.[34] The Saxon Mirror (*Sachsenspiegel*) compiled in the early thirteenth century offers a similar resolution to the problems as the solution proposed in the *Tripartitum*, but in the case of the Saxon customary law compilation, the influence of the Digest is more clear-cut according to research.[35] When addressing changes to the waterscape, all three law sources start from the principle that in the case of a rapid shift in the course of a river, the detachment of a piece of land from someone's property and its attachment to someone else's property would not result in a change of landownership. However, while the two customary law collections from the Middle Ages did not include any exception to this principle,

31 Werbőczy, *The Customary Law*, I/87 (168–70).

32 Dell'Adami, *Az anyagi magyar magánjog*.

33 Degré, *Magyar halászati jog a középkorban*, and Tringli, "A magyar szokásjog a malomépítésről."

34 See e.g. Engels, "Der verklagte," 204, and Sax, "The Accretion/Avulsion Puzzle."

35 "Svat so dat water afschevet deme lande, dat hevet die verloren des dat lant is. Brict it aver enen nien agang, dar mede ne verlüset he sines landes nicht. § 3. Svelk werder sik ok irhevet binnen enem vliete, svelkeme stade he nar is, to dem stade hort die werder; is he vormiddes, he hort to beiden staden. Dat selve dat die agang, of he verdroget." *Sachsenspiegel Landrecht* II. 56.

the Digest did include a very important one, namely if this shift in the flow of the river proves lasting.[36]

From the point of view of this paper, the most important question is whether the points made by Werbőczy represented practice by the late medieval period or not. The picture that unfolds on the basis of an analysis of court cases from the period up to the early sixteenth century is not straightforward. Based on the above example from the Poprad River valley, one may suggest that Werbőczy summarized the existing customs, but in the following pages, I discuss a number of cases on the basis of which I conclude that, in many respects, Werbőczy applied a different principle than what was prevailing in his time.

In this, the most important step was to gather at least a statistically relevant number of cases. The existing secondary literature refers only to a few examples, but based on an investigation of the most important regesta collections and cartularies, I identified almost sixty relevant cases as part of my research. There would be no point in discussing each case one by one, mostly because, for the most part, little information is provided on the background of the legal case. I chose rather to analyze either cases which for some reason seemed important to an understanding of the different legal norms or cases which showed shifts in practices.

The earliest lawsuit which may illustrate the application of customary law dates from 1338. As indicated by the document, a certain Ivánka son of János Turóci submitted a complaint to the *ispán* (*comes*) of Zólyom County, Master Doncs. According to Ivánka, his interests were harmed by a land transaction that had taken place on Galovany, an estate neighboring his own. Provost Pál son of Gele and Gál son of Jakab son of Albert agreed to exchange certain pieces of land. According Ivánka's complaint, Pál came into possession of the piece of land that neighbored his. While Ivánka was engaged in growing crops, Pál was herding animals, and according to Ivánka, Pál's animals caused losses to his ploughlands and meadows. Pál, however, claimed that Ivánka had erected boundary markers on fields which he (Pál) had received from the *ispán* himself, Doncs. Ivánka insisted that it was Pál who had erected these boundary markers. Doncs called Pál and fifty witnesses to appear at the convent of Turóc (Kláštor pod Znievom) and testify that it was Ivánka who had erected the boundary markers. The case was further complicated by the fact that Pál was the notary

36 Dig. 41.1.7.2.

of Doncs. It turned out that it was Pál himself who penned the charter and that it was Ivánka who erected the markers. This element of the case became somewhat obsolete, as the boundaries later changed when the stream called *Porouathka* found a new riverbed and detached a piece of land from Ivánka's estate and attached it to that of Pál.[37] This strongly suggests that, according to both parties, independent of the boundary markers, the boundary between the two properties changed with the change of the stream's bed.

Another case from the following year suggests that similar cases were not always considered in the same way in the Angevin period. In 1339, a case unfolded on the running of the border between two estates, Čoltovo and Lekeňa (part of present day Bohúňovo) in Gömör County, not very far from the area involved in the previous case. The boundary between the two estates at one of its sections was the stream called *Hablucapataka* until the point where it reaches the Sajó River. The litigants were Pál son of Gallus, who owned Čoltovo, and the sons of Miklós Forgách, András and Miklós, who owned Lekeňa. Both parties contended that the other side had taken possession of lands which belonged to them. According to András, Pál artificially let the stream into a new riverbed. The witnesses, however, testified that the change in the course of the river had been caused, rather, by floods. The alluvium carried by the floods, according to the witnesses, filled up the former bed of the stream, and thus the water changed course. The importance in proving that the change in the riverbed was artificial or natural shows that the two cases were assessed differently. Of course, it was the change in the natural riverbed that meant a boundary shift in the period and not the artificial modification of the riverbed. Despite the fact that in this case the riverbed change would have resulted in a change in the ownership of this piece of land, this did not take place. It turned out, during the trial that the whole area in question indeed fell in the land of András Forgách. Thus, the land in question remained in his hands.[38]

From the very same decade, however, there is a case which suggests that for the parties involved not even natural changes to the course of a river implied a change in landownership. For instance, this was the case in 1340 when the boundary between two pieces of lands, Szentmárton and Kóród in Transylvania

37 MNL OL DF 249 510. (For a summary, see *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. 22. 12–13 no. 5.)

38 MNL OL DL 102 905. (September 4, 1339) For the edition of an incomplete version of the document (MNL OL DL 58 505): *Anjoukori okmánytár*, vol. 3. 597–98 no. 394. For a summary, see *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. 23. 250–51 no. 529. See on this case in the context of floods Kiss, *Floods and Long-Term Water-Level Changes*, 245–46.

(today both within the borders of Coroisânmărtin), was demarcated, a section of which was formed by the Holt-Küküllő River (a branch or backwater of the Târnava Mică River). Probably because of the less clearly defined riverbed, the two parties decided they would erect boundary markers in the dry section of the bed together. They did so in order to fix the boundary between the lands in case floods washed away the riverbed.[39] This indicates that even natural changes to the boundaries were not associated with a change in ownership or at least that sometimes parties could come to an agreement that went against custom. Probably the show of caution in this case was in the interests of both parties, as it may not have been evident which path the river would choose in if the old riverbed were filled, so none of the landlords would have known if they would have won or lost territories. It is difficult to identify the exact reason for this kind of agreement, as by the time of the First Military Survey (1782–1785), therefore the first precise mapping of the area, this branch of the Kis-Küküllő (Târnava Mică River) had disappeared entirely.

Even clearer proof of the not fully crystallized customary law regarding these cases is provided by a boundary dispute from 1347. The two parties involved were the bishopric of Eger and István son of Pál of Ónod. One section of the boundary between Ónod and Hídvég (present day Sajóhídvég) was the bed of the Sajó River. However, as time passed, the hydrography of the area changed, and two islands emerged with lands (*duabus angulationibus vulgo zygeth vocatis*), as well as a place for fishing (*loca piscaturarum*), on the Ónod side of the river. As part of this hydromorphological change, the main course of the Sajó River started to run within the borders of Hídvég. The sheet of the First Military Survey did not allow the identification of a former bed of the Sajó River between Hídvég, but a detailed mid-nineteenth century manuscript map of the area does.[40] The bishopric of Eger tried to take possession of the abovementioned land, which was worth 13 marks, but István raised an objection against the bishopric's claim. Pál Nagymartoni, the chief justice of Hungary, obliged István and thirteen other nobles to swear an oath that the land in question had belonged to him. As István took the oath along with the noble witnesses required, the lands in question were returned to him. Furthermore, because he had made a false claim, Miklós

39 MNL OL DL 11 742. (January 2, 1340). For a summary, see *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. 24. 9 no. 2.

40 MNL OL S 73. no. 102. (Pál Szattmári, *Borsod megyebeli Ónod m. város és határának szabályozás előtti térképe*, 1852 [The map of the town of Ónod and its borders before the water regulations, 1852]). Accessed on December 14, 2018: https://maps.hungaricana.hu/hu/MOLTerkeptar/11395/

Dörögdi, the bishop of Eger, had to pay 13 marks as a fine.[41] This suggests that, according to the chief justice, the case was clear, and ownership of the land was not changed simply by the fact that it had been shifted from one bank of the river to the other. The fact that the bishop had to pay a fine suggests that Nagymartoni considered this the norm at the time. In light of the few cases discussed above, this is not as clear as is suggested by the chief justice's decision. Rather, this case may have been part of an attempt to create a custom in evaluating similar cases.

Analyses of every single case in which similar issues were involved would be superfluous, as very few considerations would arise which have not been raised by the disputes discussed above. While based on the above discussed examples it is not entirely clear how similar cases were handled in legal norms from the late fourteenth century on, there were only a few cases in which the change in the riverbed did not result in a change in the ownership of lands in questions.[42] Of course, this does not mean that similar riverbed changes did not prompt lawsuits. With the systematic study of similar cases, probably a few hundred such cases could be uncovered. In all likelihood, they would point to the same process identified here, of course, providing a more solid foundation for the conclusions I am suggesting here.

Some of the examples discussed above, apart from the fact that they point to different practices than the late medieval cases, are exceptional from another perspective as well. Among the almost sixty cases discovered, there are only about a dozen that point to natural riverbed changes. In the majority (about three fourths) of the cases, at least some human intervention contributed to the formation of the new riverbeds. Most of the related disputes were centered on the nature of the riverbed modifications. In some cases, this was not as evident as it may seem. Probably due to the less regulated flow of the rivers in the Carpathian Basin, as well as elsewhere throughout Europe, the rivers changed their beds much more frequently than they did in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when major regulation works began in the Carpathian Basin. This is

41 "Autem dominum Nicolaum episcopum Agriensem pro indebita earumdem particularum terrarum litigiosarum requisicione in emenda estimacionis earumdem, scilicet in predictis tredecim marcis contra eundem Stephanum filium Pauli commisimus sentencialiter aggravari." MNL OL DL 3932. (September 14, 1347), Edited (with parts left out): *Anjoukori okmánytár*, vol. 5. 118–20 no. 55; for a summary, see *Anjoukori oklevéltár*, vol. 31. 445–47 no. 862. See on the document, Kiss, *Floods and Long-Term Water-Level Changes*, 259–60.

42 MNL OL DL 98 381. (For a summary, see *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. 8. 251–52 no. 859). See Kiss, *Floods and Long-Term Water-Level Changes*, 293.

not only true for the smaller river branches but also in the case of the major rivers. Of course, in the case of smaller rivers and streams, shifts in the riverbeds were probably almost an everyday process, especially in the lowlands and the hilly areas of the Carpathian Basin. The question in many cases was not the change itself, but whether the river would find its way back to its old bed and would continue to flow in it or not. This is probably why Domitius Ulpianus' *Edict*, which was included in Justinian's *Digest*, forbade any intervention that would change the flow of a "public river" (as he and Roman authors usually refer to permanent waters) after a flood or under any other circumstance. This goes back to the assumption that rivers the course of which had shifted would eventually return to their original beds, presumably at the lowest water-level, which was generally reached in the summertime.[43] This is why the *Digest* had different principles on the basis of which short-term and long-term modifications of riverbeds that also constituted estate borders were adjudicated.

Nonetheless, in many cases riverbeds were modified after earthworks which caused rivers to find a new bed. Sometimes these works were probably difficult to identify, as indicated by the legal evidence from a number of cases from medieval Hungary.[44] In some cases, pieces of lands considerable in size were attached to other land in this way.[45] In these cases, because of the major income that was foreseen from the lands in question, the river walls were torn down and channels were dug to divert the waters. Since many of the lawsuits were centered around the way in which a river's flow had been modified, it is more or less obvious that the two were treated differently in the legal practice of the late medieval period. While the change of a river's flow as a consequence of natural hydromorphological processes without direct human intervention went with a change in the ownership, in case the opposite–direct human intervention to a

43 Dig. 43. 12, 13. 1–13, 15. For an English translation, see *The Digest of Justinian*.

44 E.g. MNL OL DL 52 420, 91 893 (For a summary, see *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. 2. 186 no. 61), DF 207 457. (For a summary, see *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. 1. 15 no. 138; edited in: Dreska, "A pannonhalmi konvent hiteleshelyének," 13), DL 53 871 (For a summary, see *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. 5. 191 no. 571, edited: Ortvay and Pesty, *Oklevelek Temesvármegye és Temesvárváros történetéhez*, 511–12), 53 984. (For a summary, see *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. 6. 380 no. 1377, edited: Ortvay and Pesty, *Oklevelek Temesvármegye és Temesvárváros történetéhez*, 543), DL 53 990 (*Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. 6. 405 no. 1499), 66 938, 16 498, 39 456 (for a summary, see Fekete Nagy, "A Petróczy levéltár középkori oklevelei," 261–62 no. 202), 36 393 (here: p. 87–88 no. 2. For a summary, see Jakó, *A kolozsmonostori konvent*, vol. 1. 717–18 no. 2022), 17 372. (Olexik, "Középkori levéltártörténeti adatok," 270–71 no. 9), 65 632, 83 932, 95 726, 106 744 (K. Németh, "Vizek és vízgazdálkodás, I," 7 and idem, "Vizek és vízgazdálkodás, II," 9. (erroneously dating the document to 1505), 29 981, and 63 037.

45 E.g. MNL OL DL 30 554.

river's flow–was demonstrated during court cases, it did not touch the ownership of the lands in question.

One further note should be made at this point. These alterations to the flow of rivers were probably not always intended as a way of gaining possession of someone else's land. A case from the early fifteenth century indicates the extent to which some of the interventions to a river had unexpected and, more importantly, unwanted consequences, even for those who actually committed the intervention. In 1405, two sons of Pető of Gerse, János and Tamás, submitted a complaint regarding the construction of a new channel by the Sárvíz Stream between their Gerse and Sármelléke estates (now both part of Gersekarát) and the estates of the nobles of Telekes. The Pető sons had made the new channel, which was meant to provide water for a new mill they had built. The stream most probably had a small discharge, so the whole of its flow was diverted into this artificial channel. It is reasonable to assume that the stream was small, since the valley in question today lacks a permanent water flow and only fills with water after rainfall. The construction of mills by similar (similarly small) streams was not unique to pre-modern times. Later, these mills were often referred to in Hungarian as *pokolidő* (meaning "storm time") or *felhőt kiáltó* ("sky squalling") mills, as they only could function when the runoff of stream they were built on grew as a consequence of rainfalls.[46] Because of the diversion of the water, the old riverbed, which from that time on probably received no water for most of the year, started to silt up. The nobles of Telekes used this change to their advantage. They started to consider the channel as the new riverbed and border between Telekes and the estates of the Petős, and they started to use the meadows between the two branches of the river as their own. Even if the new riverbed was meant to serve the interests of the Pető family, it resulted in the detachment of their estate and the occupation of these areas by the nobles of Telekes.[47]

## *Conclusions and Outlook*

This paper was intended to provide an overview of the Hungarian legal customs under a special legal circumstance in the Middle Ages. Before any further conclusions it is worth noting that the problem raised by Bartolus in his treatise quoted in the introduction, marginal as it may seem at a first sight,

46 Anon., "Vízimalmok," 169–87. Available online: http://mek.niif.hu/02100/02152/html/03/23.html (accessed on: May 16, 2019) and Takáts, *Művelődéstörténeti tanulmányok*, 177, 350.

47 MNL OL DL 92 239 (for a summary, see *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. 2/1. 446 no. 3726).

probably had some actual practical relevance. Although the almost sixty cases identified by me in the course of my research and presented here are anything but comprehensive, they provide a sample which nonetheless allows us to identify different practices and customs. A systematic study of a more significant proportion of the available source material probably would have yielded similar results, although the formation of the legal customs in similar cases may be seen in a more nuanced manner. The sources discussed above nonetheless suggest that from the Angevin period on, the changes in riverbeds caused recurrent property disputes. While the cases from the fourteenth century do not show a clear pattern, from the fifteenth century on, in an overwhelming majority of the similar cases, the change of the riverbed went hand in hand with a change in the ownership of the connected piece of land. This suggests that by the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, there was a more or less settled customary law on the basis of which similar cases were adjudicated. In the meantime, the sources also point to the fact that most of these riverbed changes were not or not solely outcomes of natural hydromorphological processes, but rather were results of intended interventions in the flow of the rivers. Of course, in these cases the legal customs mentioned immediately above did not apply.

In many cases, however, it was not easy to identify these human interventions, especially because, as shown above, sometimes these processes were partly artificial and partly natural, and sometimes these changes were not intended by the persons who ordered earthwork or construction work by a river. Although none of the above mentioned cases suggest this per se, in many cases probably the change in the riverbed may have been caused indirectly by interventions at entirely different sections of the same water flow. The rather ambiguous nature of these changes was identified already in the Middle Ages, which is probably why Werbőczy attempted to change the existing legal customs in his *Tripartitum*. As noted, to some extent, he applied Roman law by building on some of the points of Justinian's *Digest*. In contrast to what has been suggested in the earlier secondary literature, however, he did not fully accept the Roman legal tradition, but modified it to clarify similar situations as much as possible. By stabilizing the borders of estates even in cases involving changes to the bed of the border river, he probably thought he had put an end to similar disputes.

Although the focus of this paper is not the Early Modern period, it is certainly worth considering the relevance of the conclusions I have drawn to similar legal procedures in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, the collection in this case could hardly be considered comprehensive, unlike in the case of the

Middle Ages, so it would be foolhardy to generalize. However, at least one thing is clear from the few sources on which the existing literature rests. First, in the period of roughly 100 years following the compilation of the *Tripartitum* and the fall of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary to the Ottoman Turks, the legal principles put down in writing by Werbőczy were not systematically applied. Rather, the *consuetudo* was in effect.[48] Nonetheless, almost 150 years after the completion of Werbőczy's *Tripartitum*, his principles were accepted as law. In 1655, Act 81 took the relevant passages of the *Tripartitum*: "With regard to lands which by [flash] floods or floods that happened or happen slowly were carried away from a land and were attached to another, Book 1 Title 87 of the *Tripartitum* has to be applied."[49] Although by this time many points of the *Tripartitum* had become standard points of reference and many of them were also accepted as laws of the Kingdom of Hungary, the practice in the problem discussed above still was not consistently applied. There is a source from the year in which Act 81 was accepted by King Ferdinand III which points to an unresolved problem. In December 1655, the *provisor* of one of the most influential noble families in Transdanubia, the Batthyány family, was involved in a lawsuit in Dobersdorf (part of present day Rudersdorf) which concerned pieces of land by the Lafnitz River. In the letter, it was Magdolna, the sister of Ádám Batthyány (1610–1659), the landlord of the estate complex of the family informed him of this property dispute. According to the letter, the family insisted that, even if the river changed its bed, the lands would not change hands.[50] The opposing party, however, took a different position. This may be due to the fact that the Lafnitz River in this section was the border between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Habsburg duchies,[51] so the legal practice was different. In such cases, there was no reason to give a priority to the Hungarian legal system. Nonetheless, it was probably in this period that similar lawsuits almost entirely disappeared from Hungarian court cases.

48 For legal practice that was not in accordance with the *Tripartitum*, see e.g. Szádeczky, *Székely oklevéltár*, 5. 61–63 no. 935 and 63–65 no. 936 (Cf. Degré, *Magyar halászati jog*, 138 and Tringli, "A magyar szokásjog," 262 [1547]). See also Tóth, *Vas vármegye közgyűlési*, 243 no. 719 (November 23, 1600)

49 "In facto territoriorum, per exundationem; vel sensim factam aut fiendam alluviem aquarum, ab uno territorio avulsorum, et alteri adjectorum; observetur tit. 87. partis 1. §." *1608–1657. évi törvényczikkek*, 632.

50 "S egiebirantis az dobrai főldeket az ide valo hatarhoz szakasztotta az Raba visza, de attal ugian nem idegenithetik el Dobrától" ("The Rába did attach the lands in the borders of Dobra to our borders but it does not mean that they could be alienated from Dobra") The letter of Magdolna Batthyány to Ádám Batthyány, MNL OL P 1314 no. 5104. (December 30, 1655).

51 See the contributions of Bence Péterfi and Renáta Skorka in the present issue. See also: Vörös, "Ein Grenzkonflikt zwischen Steiermark und Ungarn."

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# Colluding with the Infidel: The Alliance between Ladislaus of Naples and the Turks*

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In October 1392, King Ladislaus of Naples (1386–1414) sent letters and an embassy to the court of the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid (1389–1402) offering to establish a pact against their common enemy, King Sigismund of Luxembourg (1387–1437). According to the "indecent proposal," this "unholy alliance" was supposed to be sealed and strengthened by a marriage between King Ladislaus and an unnamed daughter of the sultan. Though the wedding never took place, messengers were exchanged and a tactical pact did materialize. It was manifested through military cooperation between Ladislaus' Balkan supporters and the Ottoman marcher lords, who undertook joint attacks against the subjects of King Sigismund and their territories. Although mentioned briefly in passing, this incredible episode and the resulting alliance have never before been analyzed in depth by historians. Attempting to shed some light on the topic in general, this article proposes to examine the available narrative and diplomatic sources, assess the marriage policy of the Ottoman sultans as a diplomatic tool in the achievement of their strategic goals, and the perceived outrage that news of the potential marriage caused among the adversaries of King Ladislaus. In addition to studying the language of the letters, which extended beyond subtle courtesy, the essay will also explore the practical effects and consequences of the collusion between Ladislaus and the Turks for the overall political situation in the Balkans during the last decade of the fourteenth century and first decade of the fifteenth.

Keywords: King Ladislaus of Naples, King Sigismund of Luxembourg, Sultan Bayezid, Stephen Lackfi, John Horváti, Hrvoje Vukčić, Kingdom of Hungary, Kingdom of Naples, Ottoman Empire, Kingdom of Bosnia

## *Introduction*

The online Merriam-Webster dictionary defines *collusion* as a "secret agreement or cooperation especially for an illegal or deceitful purpose" and offers the following example of the word being used in a sentence: "acting in collusion with the enemy." Basically, *collusion* can be interpreted as an understanding between two or more

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parties who come together secretly in order to achieve a common objective, usually to the detriment of a third side. Its synonyms include *conspiracy*, *collaboration*, and *intrigue*, while the term itself comes from the Latin *colludere* (*col-* together, *-ludere* to play), meaning to have a secret agreement. This paper will treat one such instance of blatant collusion between King Ladislaus of Naples and the Ottoman Turks, who were at the time perceived as infidels and enemies of Christendom. The "impious alliance" itself was directed against their mutual enemy, King Sigismund of Luxembourg, and it was supposed to bring long-term benefits to both sides.[1]

Historians have known that this "unlikely" pact existed, and they have written about it, but the whole episode has been treated almost as a curious footnote in the busy reign of the somewhat controversial and ruthless Italian king. Born in 1377, Ladislaus was only properly King of Naples, a keen candidate for the crowns of Jerusalem and Sicily, and rather more notoriously for those of Hungary, Dalmatia, and Croatia. He inherited these titles and claims from his father, Charles of Durazzo, King of Naples and Hungary, who died as a consequence of a brutal assassination in Buda in February of 1386. After his death, the nine-year old Ladislaus ruled in Italy under the regency of his mother Margaret, while the Kingdom of Hungary became embroiled in a deep and intense succession crisis that eventually polarized the whole country into two mutually conflicted camps.[2] Confined to his Italian possessions and unable to achieve effective control of Naples, as the city was held at the time by his opponent and distant cousin King Louis II (1389–1399), the underage Ladislaus could not play any part in the struggle for the Hungarian throne, which came to be held by King Sigismund of Luxembourg.[3] It was only after he was officially

1 The expression "impious alliance" to describe Christian collaboration with the Ottomans was used first by Pope Gregory XI in 1374. Having heard that Emperor John V (1341–1391) was paying tribute to Sultan Murad (1362–1389), he interpreted this arrangement as an "impious alliance" between Greeks and Turks directed against the believers of Christ: "inter Grecos et Turcos quedam impia colligatio adversus fideles Christi." Halecki, *Un Empereur de Byzance à Rome*, 301 n. 3; Dennis, *The Reign of Manuel II Palaeologus*, 35; Ostrogorski, "Byzance, Etat tributaire de L'empire Turc," 49−58. The same phrase was used later to label the agreement signed between King Francis I of France (1515–1547) and Sultan Suleyman (1520–1566) in 1536. See Isom-Verhaaren, *Allies with the Infidel*, passim; Devereux, "'The ruin and slaughter of … fellow Christians'," 115.

2 A good general overview of the main events and topics concerning the Hungarian succession crisis are found in: Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 169–70, 195–202; and Süttő, "Der Dynastiewechsel Anjou-Luxemburg in Ungarn," 79–87; cf. the older but still useful work of Huber, "Die Gefangennehmung der Königinnen Elisabeth und Maria von Ungarn," 509–48.

3 On Sigismund's early years as King of Hungary, see Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund in Ungarn*, 7–59; Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 64–92.

recognized as King of Naples in 1390 by Pope Boniface IX, and after the death of Bosnian King Tvrtko (1353–1391) in March of the following year, that Ladislaus was able to pursue a more aggressive stance towards the Balkans and stake a more forceful claim for the Holy Crown of St. Stephen. Therefore, in October 1392, he took concrete diplomatic steps to create an overseas network which could help him achieve his goals, and these initiatives ultimately resulted in contacts with the Ottoman court.

As Ladislaus was the last male of the senior Angevin line (which became extinct with his death in 1414) and also quite an active political figure, a lot has been written about him and the various aspects of his rule, including the projections he had for an alliance with the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid. His principal biographers, including Gyula Schönherr,[4] István Miskolczy,[5] and Alessandro Cutolo,[6] have always incorporated this story in their works. Also, authors who wrote about the Angevins of Naples in general, such as Bálint Hóman and Émile Léonard, have likewise not failed to indicate that Ladislaus proposed a treaty with the Ottoman Sultan.[7] Furthermore, this fact was introduced to Croatian historiography via the early works of Franjo Rački, Vjekoslav Klaić, and Ferdo Šišić,[8] although apart from merely mentioning it, none of the named authors paid too much attention to this cooperation or to its deeper implications. On the other hand, the whole issue is conspicuously absent from the books and papers written by historians of the Ottoman Empire, who primarily dealt with the contemporary reign of Sultan Bayezid or the more wide-ranging topic of relations between the Ottomans and Europe, such as, for instance, Colin Imber and Rhoads Murphey, to name just two of the more prominent authors.[9] Apart from Halil İnalcık and Elizabeth Zachariadou, who only comment upon this incident in passing,[10] they all omit to mention the existence of any interactions between the courts of Ladislaus and Bayezid, probably not deeming any such

4 Schönherr, "Nápolyi László trónkövetelésének külföldi vonatkozásai," 237–66.

5 Miskolczy, "Nápolyi László (I. közlemény)," 330–50, 499–523.

6 Cutolo, *Re Ladislao d'Angiò-Durazzo*.

7 Hóman, *Gli Angioini di Napoli in Ungheria*, 492; Léonard, *Gli Angioini di Napoli*, 626. Cf. Pór and Schönherr, *Az Anjou ház és Örökösei*, 415.

8 Rački, "Pokret na slavenskom jugu koncem XIV i početkom XV stoljeća," vol. 3. 149, vol. 4. 16–17; Klaić, *Povjest Hrvata*, vol. 2. 281; Šišić, *Vojvoda Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić*, 83–84. Cf. Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 69.

9 Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 37–54; Murphey, "Bayezid I's Foreign Policy Plans and Priorities," 177–215.

10 İnalcık, "The Ottoman Turks and the Crusade, 1329–1451," 248; Zachariadou, "Marginalia on the History of Epirus and Albania (1380–1418)," 205.

interactions too significant in the overall eventful reign of the dynamic Ottoman ruler.

By the last decade of the fourteenth century, the Ottomans had established relatively close relations with several Italian princes and states, most notably with Gian Galeazzo Visconti of Milan and the Republic of Genoa.[11] Nevertheless, even though it has been underrepresented in historical works, the alliance with Ladislaus of Naples still constitutes a prime example of early cooperation between the Ottomans and the Catholic rulers of the West. Therefore, this study proposes to investigate the reasons why Ladislaus colluded with the Ottomans, how his decision to do so impacted the development of political and military events in Southeast Europe at the time, whether the idea of an alliance with the Turks came from Ladislaus himself or from his Balkan allies, and, last but not least, what was the ultimate outcome of this political adventure.

## *Sigismund's Accusations*

Most of the historians who touched upon the interactions between Ladislaus and Bayezid did so on the basis of accounts given by two famous fifteenth-century historians of Hungary who described the Angevin–Ottoman conspiracy in some detail: János Thuróczy († 1489) and Antonio Bonfini († 1503). In recounting the fate of Voivode Stephen Lackfi, one of the major insurgents against King Sigismund, Thuróczy notes how, after the disaster at Nicopolis in 1396, while Sigismund was still sailing home, this Stephen committed a particularly devious crime (in addition to the other appalling villainies he had treacherously performed). Namely, according to this report, he had clandestinely dispatched messengers to Bayezid, ruler of the Turks, and had given his word to arrange a marriage between Bayezid's daughter and King Ladislaus on condition that the sultan supplied him with military assistance against King Sigismund. And so it came to pass that he introduced large hordes of Turks into the regions of Hungary between the Sava and Drava Rivers, where they pillaged and plundered. Thuróczy then writes that this occasion was the first hostile encroachment of Turks into Hungary, and he says that the Turks caused considerable destruction

11 For Visconti's ties with the Ottomans, see Atiya, *The Crusade of Nicopolis*, 13; and for Genoa: Fleet, "The Treaty of 1387 between Murād I and the Genoese," 13–33; Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade in the Early Ottoman State*, 4–12. See also: Fleet, "Turkish–Latin Diplomatic Relations in the Fourteenth Century," 605–11; Fleet, "Turkish–Latin Relations at the End of the Fourteenth Century," 131–37.

in the towns of Syrmia, which were even in his time (almost a century later) still bereft of their buildings, testifying to the extent of the damage.[12]

Bonfini says almost exactly the same thing,[13] and the fact that these two fragments are so similar is not surprising, since Bonfini relied heavily on Thuróczy's chronicle, and comparisons between their respective works have been extensively analyzed in historiography.[14] Both authors were court historians who had access to the royal archives, so the information they provide seems to have been based on real events and was probably not completely invented. Fortunately, it is not too difficult to identify the source of their accounts in the contemporary diplomatic documents issued by the chancery of King Sigismund.

One such charter, dated to March 1397, confirms King Sigismund's decision to grant the Kanizsai the estates that had previously belonged to the heirs of Lack, also known as Lackfi (or Lackovići in Croatian), because certain disgraced members of this family, such as Voivode Stephen of Csáktornya and his nephews, Stephen of Simontornya and Andrew of Döbrököz, had conspired against Sigismund in the interest of Ladislaus. In the document, the king refers to them as "our notorious infidels," who plotted against him as "cunning and deceitful

12 "Hunc Stephanum wayuodam preter cetera infanda sua facinora in lesam regie dignitatis maiestatem perpetrata eadem tempestate, cum rex Sigismundus post cladem sub Nicapoli receptam marittimis demorabatur in partibus, tale scelus commisisse accusabant. Etenim illum ad cesarem Thurcorum Pasaiithem nuncios misisse filiamque illius regi Ladislao, quem inducere conabatur, ea conditione, ut illi contra regem Sigismundum adiumento fieret, iugo matrimoniali ducere spopondisse et in huius documentum ingentia Thurcorum agmina Hungaricas in partes inter flumina Zawe et Drawe situatas induxisse gravesque ibidem per eosdem depopulationes edidisse dicebant. Ante hec Thurci nondum Hungaricas lustraverant terras. Iste fuit ingressus Thurcorum in Hungariam primus, eo tunc illi ingentes, quas cernimus in civitatibus Sirimiensibus, edidere vastitates, quas civitates etiam nunc loca illarum suis orbata edificiis non parvas fuisse testantur." Thurocz, *Chronica Hungarorum*, vol. 1. 220; Thuróczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, 69. For the earliest Ottoman attacks on Hungary, see Engel, "A török–magyar háborúk első évei 1389–1392," 561–77; Engel, "Ungarn und die Türkengefahr zur Zeit Sigimunds (1387–1437)," 55–71; Rázsó, "A Zsigmond kori Magyarország és a török veszély, 1393–1437," 403–41; Szakály, "Phases of Turco–Hungarian Warfare before the Battle of Mohács (1365–1526)," 65–111.

13 "Stephanum vaivodam preter alia gravissima scelera, que patrarat, id potissimum ausum fuisse memorant. Post Nicopolitanam cladem, cum in maritimis oris Sigismundus moram traheret, hunc ad Pasaythem Turcorum regem tabellarios misisse ferunt clamque cum eo de filie nuptiis cum Ladislao rege egisse et ea quidem condicione, ut generum ad eiicendum Pannonie regno Sigismundum copiis auxiliaribus et opibus adiuvaret; rem per internuncios eo adduxisse, ut sub hac spe affinitatis oblate, quam tantopere profanus barbarus appetebat, nonnullas Turcorum legiones ad labefactandas Sigismundi vites inter Savum Dravumque induxerit, unde magna Ungarie appendicibus calamitas vastatioque illata; hunc igitur primum Turcorum ingressum in inferiorem Pannoniam fuisse perhibent. Quare tunc Syrmiensis ager, qui tot urbibus oppidisque florebat, ita populatus et eversus est, ut vix nunc tot civitatum perpauca vestigia supersint." Bonfinis, *Rerum Ungaricarum Decades*, vol. 3. 43.

14 Juhász, *Thuróczy és Bonfini krónikájának összehasonlítása Zsigmondtól Mátyásig*, 5–6, 24–27.

serpents," wanting to eliminate, exclude and exterminate him and his subjects from their kingdoms. Sigismund then says that both Stephens, descendants of the aforementioned Lack, obtained and procured letters from Ladislaus, the "perfidious" King of Apulia, confirming them both as his general deputies in these parts. And to please him as well as to subdue more easily Sigismund's subjects, they had messengers sent in his name to Bayezid, Emperor of the Turks, with the aim of arranging a matrimonial bond between Ladislaus and the sultan's daughter so that, thus joined, they could immediately be crowned with the sacred crown of the Kingdom. Furthermore, Sigismund's charter declares that in order to achieve this, they brought cohorts of Turks who attacked the kingdom between the Drava and Sava Rivers, causing great disruption, killings, and abductions and enslaving many individuals of both sexes.[15]

Word by word, almost the same text is reproduced in a charter issued in Buda in December 1398, when King Sigismund confiscated the estate of Szentbertalan from Stephen called Ördög, or Vrag, meaning *Devil*, who was a well-known rebel against Sigismund's authority and an accomplice in the treachery conducted by the Lackfi. The seized land was then given to the loyal members of the Kanizsai family.[16]

15 "[…] interim praetaxati viri perfidi, vterque Stephanus, vna cum Andrea, filio quondam Nicolai Vajuode, filii dicti Stephani, filii Laczk, praedicti de Debregesth fratre et fautoribus suis, ex cordiali prisco et mero doloso desiderio, cunctis nisu et nixu suis, anhelantes nos cum nostris fidelibus subditis antefatis, more et astutia subdoli serpentis, de dictis regnis nostris eliminare et excludere, obtentis a Ladislao, rege Apuliae, nato scilicet quondam Caroli Regis, huiusmodi litteris, vt iidem viri perfidi, vterque Stephanus, successores ipsius Laczk, in antefatis regnis nostris vicarii ipsius Ladislai regis essent generales et praecipue communiterque in dictis regnis et cum regnicolis nostris praefati vterque Stephanus, in persona et auctoritate ipsius Ladislai regis disponerent, ordinarent et donarent, ac sponderent, cuncta illa idem Ladislaus Rex acceptaret, ratificaret et perenniter extremo roboraret. Et vt celerius ac facilius annotati Stephanus Vajuoda, et alter Stephanus de Simonytornya, vna cum dicto Andrea, filio Nicolai Vajuodae, fratre eorum, ipsos regnicolas nostros ad eiusdem Ladislai regis beneplacitum et obedientiae commoda explenda potuissent subdere, et inclinati, nunciis suis ad Payzath, Turcorum Imperatorem, super eo, vt ipsius Payzath filiam dicto Ladislao regi matrimoniali foedere molirentur copulare et copulatos similiter litteris ipsius Payzath, imperatoris Turcorum, exinde prius obtentis, sacro regio diademate ipsius regni nostri coronare, indilate destinatis, validum et saeuissimum dictorum Turcorum coetum et faleratam cohortem ad territoria regni nostri, inter fluuios Drauae et Sauae existentia, hostiliter introducere et per eosdem incendia valida et homicidia, ac spolia grandia et detentiones, abductiones Nobilium et Ignobilium vtriusque sexus immensae pluritatis hominum perpetrari facere, nequiter veriti non fuerunt." MNL OL DL 87 647. March 4, 1397; *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae*, vol. 10/2. 416–17; *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. 1. no. 4656.

16 "[…] interim praetaxatis viris perfidis, vtrisque Stephano et Andrea, fratre ipsorum, idem Stephanus, dictus Vrdung, adherens cunctis ipsorum nisu et nixu, nos cum praefatis nostris fidelibus, nostro lateri adhaerentibus, ad instar subdoli serpentis, de dictis regnis nostris eliminare, excludere et exterminare moliebantur. Nam iidem vterque Stephanus, quibus idem Steph. Vrdung adhaeserat, nobis, vt prefertur, in naufragio procelloso laborantibus, huiusmodi litteras a Ladislao, rege Apuliae, nato scilicet quondam Caroli regis, procurantes obtinuerunt, vt iidem viri perfidi, vterque Stephanus, successores ipsius Laachk,

An identical narrative appears once again in a document issued in Trnava in January 1401, confirming that King Sigismund confiscated the castle of Rezi in the county of Zala, which had belonged to the Lackfi and had given it to Eberhard, the Bishop of Zagreb, and his kin.[17] And finally, the same account is also described in a charter issued in May 1408, when Sigismund gave Stephen Ördög's former assets and properties to Emeric Perényi.[18]

in antefatis regnis nostris, vicarii ipsius Ladislai regis essent generales, et praecipue quidquid in dictis regnis cum regnicolis nostris ipse vterque Stephanus in persona et authoritate ipsius Ladislai regis disponerent, ordinarent et sponderent, cuncta illa idem Ladislaus rex acceptaret, ratificaret et perenniter ex nouo roboraret; et vt celerius et facilius annotati Stephanus, quondam Waywoda, et alter Stephanus de Simontornya, vna cum Andrea fratre ipsorum; nec non praefato Stephano, dicto Vrdung, ipsos regnicolas nostros ad ipsius Ladislai regis beneplacita et obedientiae commoda explenda potuissent flectere et inclinare, nunciis et syndicis suis ad Bajzath, Dominum Turcorum super eo, vt ipsius Bayzat filiam eidem Ladislao regi matrimoniali foedere copulare et post copulationem sacro regio diademate ipsius regni nostri immediate voluissent coronare, solicite destinatis; validum et saeuissimum dictorum Turcorum coetum et falleratam cohortem ad territoria regni nostri, inter fluuios Drauae et Zauae existentia, hostiliter introducere et per eosdem incendia, valida et homicidia ac spolia grandia et detentiones, abductionesque nobilium et ignobilium vtriusque sexus immensae pluralitatis hominum fidelium nostrorum, in regno et territorio nostris antefatis; prout haec cuncta ipsorum facinora fideles nostri dolorosis eorum gemitibus, nostro in conspectu reuera reprobarunt, nequiter perpetrari facere veriti non fuerunt." MNL OL DL 8376. December 1, 1398; *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae*, vol. 10/2. 558–59; *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár,* vol. 1. no. 5603.

17 "[…] interim pretaxati viri perfidi uterque Stephanus unacum dicto Andrea, filio condam Nicolai voivode, filii dicti Stephani, filii predicti Lachk de Debregezth fratre et fautoribus suis, ex cordiali presto et mero doloroso desiderio cunctis nisu et nixu suis anhelantes, nos cum nostris fidelibus subditis antefatis more et adinstar subdoli serpentis, de dictis regnis nostris eliminare, excludere et exterminare, optentis a Ladislao rege Apulie, nato scilicet condam Karuli regis, huiusmodi literis, ut iidem viri perfidi uterque Stephanus, successores ipsius Lachk, in antefatis regnis nostris vicarii ipsius Ladislai essent generales et precipue quitquam in dictis regnis nostris cum regnicolis nostris prefati uterque Stephanus in persona et auctoritate ipsius Ladislai regis disponerent, ordinarent ac donarent et sponderent, cuncta illa idem Ladislaus rex ex novo roboraret, et ut celerius ac facilius annotati Stephanus vaivoda et alter Stephanus de Simontornya unacum dicto Andrea filio Nicolai vaivode fratre ipsorum eosdem regnicolas nostros ad eiusdem regis Ladislai beneplacita et obediencie comoda explenda potuissent subdere, flectere et inclinare, nunciis subditis ad Bayzat dominum Turcorum super eo, ut ipsius Bayzat filiam dicto Ladislao regi matrimoniali federe molirentur copulare et copulatos sacro regio dyademate ipsius regni nostri immediate valuissent coronare, indilate destinatis, validum et sevissimum dictorum Turcorum cetum et falleratam cohortem ad territoria regni nostri inter fluvios Drawe et Zawe existencia hostiliter introducere et per eosdem incendia valida et homicidia ac spolia grandia et detenciones abduccionesque nobilium et ignobilium utriusque sexus immense pluralitatis hominum fidelium nostrorum in regno et territoriis nostris antefatis, prout hec cuncta facinora fideles nostri dolorosis eorum gemitibus nostre in conspectu approbaverunt maiestatis, perpetrari facere nequiter veriti non fuerunt nec expavescere maluerunt." MNL OL DL 92 259. January 6, 1401; Šišić, "Nekoliko isprava," 131; *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. 2/1. no. 802.

18 "[…] interim pretaxatis viris perfidis, vtrisque Stephano et Andrea fratribus ipsorum, idem Stephanus Vrdugh adherens nos cum prefatis nostris fidelibus, nostro lateri adherentibus, ad instar subdoli serpentis de dictis regnis nostris excludere, et exterminare machinabantur. Nam idem vterque Stephanus, quibus idem Stephanus Vrdugh toto posse, vt prefertur, nobis in naufragio periculoso laborantibus, huiusmodi

The literal expression used in the text to describe the coming together of the two potential newlyweds was *matrimoniali foedere copulare*, meaning to join in matrimonial alliance. The term bore the obvious implication that this union would ultimately lead to an unthinkable scenario whereby the grandchild of Sultan Bayezid could sometime in the future wear the Holy Crown of St. Stephen. One can only imagine the consternation that news of such a union would have caused among Sigismund's followers and god-fearing Catholics. In one document from 1404, Sigismund described Bayezid as "the abominable enemy and persecutor of the Christ's Cross and the whole Orthodox faith," presenting the sultan as the "principal rival" of his royal majesty.[19] Certainly, at the time, cooperation with the Turks was equivalent to high treason, which meant that it would be punished with the harshest penalties, and it is therefore easy to consider that these one-sided charges might have constituted unjustified allegations or possibly biased claims with the intention of discrediting Sigismund's adversaries.

Nevertheless, upon closer inspection, almost all the accusations against Voivode Stephen Lackfi of Csáktornya, a.k.a. Čakovec, appear to be true. Namely, the text of the charters clearly alleges that he conspired against Sigismund in favor of Ladislaus of Naples, and Stephen was actually one of the most prominent supporters of the Angevin cause on the east coast of the Adriatic. As a member of a very powerful noble family which had estates all over the kingdom, in various periods of his political career he was ban of Croatia and

litteras ab Ladislao rege Napulie, nato scilicet, quondam Karuli regis obtinuerant, vt ydem viri perfidi vterque Stephanus, successores ipsius Lachk, in antefatis regnis nostris vicary ipsius Ladislai regis essent generales, et precipue quidquid in dictis regnis cum regni incolis nostris ipsi vtrique Stephanus, in persona et auctoritate ipsius Ladislai regis disponerent, ordinarent, et sponderent, cuncta illa idem Ladislaus Rex acceptaret, ratificaret, et perhenniter ex nouo roboraret; et vt celerius et facilius annotati Stephanus Woyuoda et alter Stephanus de Simonytornya, vna cum Andrea fratre ipsorum, nec non prefato Stephano dicto Vrdurgh ipsos regnicolas nostros ad ipsius Ladizlai regis beneplacita et obediencie commoda complenda potuissent subdere, flectere, et inclinare, nunciis – – suis ad Bayzath Dominum Turcorum super eo, vt ipsius Bayzath filiam eidem Ladislao regi matrimoniali foedere copulare, et copulatam sacro diademate ipsius regni nostri immediate voluissent coronare, solicite destinatis validum et seuissimum Turcorum cetum et faleratam cohortem, ad territoria regni nostri inter fluuios Draue et Saue existentia hostiliter introducere, et per eosdem valida incendia, et homicidia, ac spolia grandia et detenciones abduccionesque nobilium et ignobilium, vtriusque sexus hominum, fidelium nostrorum in regno et territorio nostris antefatis, prout hec cuncta eorum facinora fideles nostri dolorosis eorum gemitibus nostri in conspectu reuerea comprobarunt, perpetrare facere veriti non fuerunt nequiter." MNL OL DL 9404. May 4, 1408; *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae*, vol. 10/8. 485–86; *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár,* vol. 2/2 no. 6078.

19 "[…] nefandissimus Crucis Christi, immo totius Orthodoxae fidei, hostis et persecutor, Bajzath, Dominus Turcorum, capitalis nostrae Maiestatis aemulus […]" *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae*, vol. 10/4. 295–96. April 4, 1404.

Dalmatia, palatine of Hungary, voivode of Transylvania, and count of Zadar, to name just some of the most important offices he held.[20] Sigismund also claimed that Stephen maintained a correspondence with Ladislaus, who delegated him as one of his representatives in the Kingdom of Hungary, and in October 1392, Ladislaus really did send a series of letters to his Balkan allies, including one addressed to "Stefano de Luczlris [!]," palatine of the Kingdom of Hungary.[21] So the allegation that Stephen obtained letters from Ladislaus are also true. The serious accusation of plotting to achieve a marital alliance with the sultan was likewise quite possibly genuine, since Ladislaus was eligible for marriage at the time. He had been briefly married in 1389 to the twelve-year-old Costanza, the daughter of Sicilian nobleman Manfredi Chiaramonte, Count of Modica and Malta, ruler of Palermo. But the bride's father died in 1391, and after her brother Andrea was executed by hostile Aragonese forces in Sicily the following year, the marriage became politically inconvenient and unprofitable for Ladislaus. He managed to obtain an annulment by decree of pope Boniface IX, and in July 1392, the Bishop of Gaeta and Cardinal Acciaiuoli announced the dissolution of the marriage in church. The supposed reason for the termination was the age of the couple, who were both twelve at the time of the nuptials.[22]

The only problem with the sources presented here is that both Bonfini and Thuróczy, as well as Sigismund's charters, say that the alliance and Ladislaus' proposal to marry the sultan's daughter occurred during Sigismund's military campaign against the "savage and ferocious Turks and other pagans" in the Kingdom of Bulgaria, and at a time when Sigismund was suffering with his allies during a stormy voyage across the Mediterranean, dating it to the year 1396. However, other available documents shed a somewhat different light on the chronology of the whole matter and suggest that the establishment of an Angevin-Ottoman alliance was expected several years before the battle of Nicopolis.

20 Karbić, "Lackovići (Lackfi) iz plemićkog roda Hermán," 21–29. See also: Majláth, "A Laczk nemzetség," 21–29; Lázár, "A két Laczk család eredete," 110–12; Karácsonyi, "A kerekegyházi Laczkfyak családfája," 166–73. Cf. Hóman, *Gli Angioini di Napoli in Ungheria*, 460–62, 480–82, 505–9.

21 Probably a misreading of "de Laczhis." Barone, "Notizie raccolte dai registri di cancelleria del re Ladislao di Durazzo," 728. Cf. Wenzel, *Magyar diplomaczziai emlékek az Anjou-korból*, vol. 3. 720. October 15, 1392.

22 Valente, "Margherita di Durazzo, vicaria di Carlo III e tutrice di re Ladislao," vol. 43:184–85.

## *Ladislaus' Letters*

On October 18, 1392, just a few days after he dispatched the aforementioned messages to his allies across the Adriatic, three other letters were devised in Ladislaus' chancery in Gaeta, addressed to Sultan Bayezid and two of his senior officials in the Balkans. Regrettably, the original documents were part of the *Angevin registers*, which were completely destroyed by fire during World War II.[23] However, before they were destroyed, the letters were published and made available in 1876 by Gusztáv Wenzel in the collection *Hungarian diplomatic monuments from the Anjou age*, also known as the third volume of *Monumenta Hungariae Historica*'s *Acta Extera*.[24]

The first of the three letters was addressed to the "most Serene Ruler, Lord Bayezid, Emperor of the Turks" – *maiori fratri nostro* – who was greeted with "brotherly and sincere affection." In the message, Ladislaus regretfully conceded that the physical distance between the two of them made it impossible for them to meet personally, and he thus found it useful and necessary to write to him and to send an orator who could faithfully deliver the message and commendably complement it. He then says that he wanted to discuss some issues with the sultan which, due to the distance, he could not explain in words, so he entrusted the matter to a messenger whose name was, curiously, not stated, but Ladislaus nevertheless referred to him as a noble, a *familiaris*, and a loyal subject. Therefore, the letter continues, relying on the sincere benevolence and brotherly love of the sultan's imperial majesty, the king recommended the messenger and requested that he be trusted with confidence in all things he said about Ladislaus' agenda. And finally, the king revealed his desire to hear about Bayezid's prosperity, since he was impelled by fraternal zeal to be joined to him by bonds of consanguinity, and thus asked to be informed in writing, along with his mother Margaret and sister Johanna, about the sultan's opinion on this matter. The document itself was sealed with Ladislaus' great pendent seal.[25]

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23 Borghese, "Les registres de la chancellerie angevine de Naples," 171–82; Jamison, "Documents from the Angevin Registers of Naples," 87–173; Capasso, *Inventario cronologico-sistematico dei Registri Angioni*, 384; Filangieri, *L'Archivio di Stato di Napoli durante la seconda guerra mondiale*; Palmieri, *Degli archivi napolitani*, 249–52.

24 Wenzel, *Magyar diplomacziai emlékek az Anjou-korból*, vol. 3. 720–22. October 18, 1392.

25 "Serenissimo Principi domino Pazait Imperatori Turcorum, maiori fratri nostro Ladislaus Dei gratia Rex etc. salutem et fraterne et sincere dilectionis affectum. Quod plerumque perfici atque refferri personaliter locorum distantia prohibet, inuentus, immo utilis et necessarius scribendi modus, ac Oratorum persepe fides exequitur laudabiliter atque supplet. Habentes itaque cum Serenitate Vestra certa conferre que — — — — distantes a nobis eidem Vestre Serenitate uerbo non possumus explicare; nec minus de

On the very same day, two other letters, identical in content, were composed, one to "illustri Amortas" and the other to "illustri Aguphasa," both of whom were referred to as "amico nostro carissimo." Amortas was evidently Kara Timurtaş Pasha, while Agupasha was probably a Latinized corrupted version of the name Yakub Pasha.[26] These two high-ranking dignitaries were especially active in spreading Ottoman authority throughout southeast Europe during the last decade of the fourteenth century, and they even appeared together as Ταμονρτάσης and Γιαγονπασάς in a Byzantine *Short chronicle* for the year 1397, when they besieged and conquered Venetian held Argos in the Peloponnese.[27] The letters informed them that Ladislaus had sent a messenger to Bayezid in order to negotiate certain issues concerning his honor and position, and that the same messenger will be visiting them as well. Among the other diplomatic and courteous phrases, the king then stated that he was particularly grateful for their friendship, and he placed himself at their disposal.[28]

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viro nobili ... familiari et fideli nostro dilecto ab experto confisi, ea sibi sub credencie fide commisimus; qui de iussu et parte nostris illa Vestre Serenitati, ad eius se conferens presentiam veniet, est relaturus. Ideoque Imperialem Serenitatem Vestram sincere beniuolentie et fraterne dilectionis affectu precamur, quatenus ... predicti relatibus, quem in agendis nostris et alijs sibi expedientibus fiducialiter Vestre Serenitati reconmictimus, velit eadem Vestra Serenitas fidem tamquam nobis adhibere credentie, Nosque de statu vestro, quem impellente nos fraterno zelo et consanguinitatis nexu quo inuicem iungimur, prosperum audire et esse cupimus, vestris litteris ad nostri recreationem animj, cum habilitas modusque patuerint, informare, statum nostrum, ac Serenissime Domine domine Margarite eadem gratia dictorum Regnorum Regine reuerende genitricis, et illustris Johanne sororis nostrarum fore gratie omnium Conditoris incolumem, ipsi Vestre Serenitatj serie presentium intimantes. Has autem nostras litteras exinde fierj et magni nostri pendentis sigilli jussimus appensione munirj. Data Gayete in absentia Logothete et Prothonotarj Regni nostri Sicilie eiusque Locumtenentis per virum nobilem Donatum de Aretio Legum Doctorem etc. anno Dominj MCCCLXXXXII. die decimo octauo mensis Octubris prime indictionis, Regnorum nostrorum anno sexto." Wenzel, *Magyar diplomacziai emlékek az Anjou-korból*, vol. 3. 720–21. October 18, 1392.

26 On Timurtaş, see *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. "Timurtaş," vol. 11. 372–74 (M.C. Şehabeddin Tekindağ). Unfortunately, there is no equivalent approach to the biography of Yakub Pasha.

27 Schreiner, *Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, vol. 1. 245. On the campaign, see Loenertz, "Pour l'histoire du Péloponèse au XIV$^{e}$ siècle (1382–1404)," 187.

28 "Ladizlaus Rex etc. illustri Amortas amico nostro carissimo salutem et sincere dilectionis affectum. Pro aliquibus agendis nostris honorem et statum nostrum concernentibus virum nobilem ... familiarem et fidelem nostrum dilectum ad presentiam Serenissimi Principis domini Pazait Imperatoris Turcorum maioris fratris nostri, ut quedam Eius Serenitatj nostri parte referat, presentialiter mictimus; cuj similiter certa, fidutialiter commisimus per eum vobis eadem nostri parte verbotenus referenda. Quapropter Illustrem Vestram Amicitiam presentium tenore precamur, quatenus eiusdem ... relatibus fidem tamquam nobis adhibere credentie, et ipsum tam in agendis nostris quam in alijs sibi expedientibus recommissum suscipere nostrj amore et contemplatione velitis. Vt ipsi Vestre Illustri Amicitie, ad cuius placida nos offerimus, propterea specialiter teneamur. Has autem nostras licteras exinde fierj et magni nostri pendentis sigilli jussimus appensione munirj. Data, Gaiete in absentia, Logothete et Prothonotarij Regni nostri Sicilie et

To the uninformed observer, the contents of these letters might appear quite shocking and improbable, but the conclusion of a pragmatic alliance with the Ottomans, along the lines of the maxim *the enemy of my enemy is my friend*, represented a logical step in Ladislaus' policy towards the Balkans. At that time, he had absolutely nothing to lose, and the envisaged "Gaeta–Edirne axis" was supposed to orchestrate a two-pronged attack against King Sigismund, helping both Ladislaus and Bayezid achieve their interests. But what does look strange in these letters is the proposal to seal and strengthen the alliance through a wedding, since it was highly unlikely that a sultan of the Ottoman Empire would allow his Muslim daughter to be married to a Catholic monarch, regardless of any potential strategic or diplomatic benefit he might have gained. Throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Ottoman rulers practiced royal intermarriage by marrying members of ruling dynasties from neighboring countries, even if they were Christians. An early example is Emir Orhan, who in 1346 married the daughter of Emperor John VI,[29] and even Bayezid himself married Olivera, the daughter of Knez Lazar.[30] But Muslim law is quite strict regarding these mixed marriages, and it states that a Muslim man may, under special circumstances, marry a non-Muslim woman, yet a Muslim woman was unequivocally and strictly forbidden from marrying a non-Muslim man.[31] Therefore, it is far more likely that the Ottomans opted to use these marriage negotiations as a simple diplomatic device intended to sustain interest in the alliance for as long as possible, without any serious consideration of actually accepting the wedding proposal.

One can also attempt to wave Ladislaus' proposition off as something that was, perhaps, planned but never realized, since we cannot know for sure whether the letters and the emissary were indeed ever sent to the sultan's court. However, less than a year after the messages were formulated, the Venetian Senate deliberated about a rather peculiar incident. On September 11, 1393, the Senators decided that they would respond to Francesco Bembo, their captain of the Adriatic Gulf, saying that they had understood the letters that he had sent

eius Locumtenentis, per virum nobilem Donatum de Aretio etc. anno Dominj millesimo trecentesimo nonagesimo secundo die XVIII. mensis Octobris prime indictionis, Regnorum nostrorum anno sexto." Wenzel, *Magyar diplomacziai emlékek az Anjou-korból*, vol. 3. 721–22. October 18, 1392.

29 Bryer, "Greek Historians on the Turks: the case of the first Byzantine–Ottoman marriage," 471–93. Cf. Zachariadou, "Notes on the Wives of the Emirs in Fourteenth-Century Anatolia," 61–68. See also: Werner, "Johannes Kantakuzenos, Umur Paša und Orhan," 255–76; Gill, "John VI Cantacuzenus and the Turks," 55–76.

30 Purković, *Kćeri kneza Lazara*, 107–12.

31 Qur'an, 2:221.

them from Split on 28 August, in which, among other things, he mentioned that a certain Nicholas from Trogir had told him that he had been ordered by his lord to transfer with his brigantine to Apulia a Turk who was an ambassador of lord *Basait*. According to the letter, the Turk was apparently heading to King Ladislaus in order to complete nuptials which were agreed upon between him and the daughter of the said *Basait*.[32] In the response, captain Bembo was ordered specifically to check and be sure that the Turkish envoy was not planning to work towards a certain "dishonest cause" which could damage the interests of the Venetian Republic. In that case, and if he were ever to get his hands on the ambassador, he was instructed to let him be and protect the said brigantine from injury or violence. In fact, the captain was told that the messenger should be honored with appropriate words and conduct so that he would have reason to praise their government and the captain himself.[33]

This letter is more or less a *corpus delicti*. It confirms that Ladislaus and the Ottomans had indeed attempted to exchange embassies and that a potential marriage alliance had been in the cards since the early 1390s.[34] Of course, such activities could not have gone unnoticed and would certainly have sparked revolt

32 "Anno MCCCLXXXXIII. indictione II. die XI. Septembris. Capta: Quod scribatur ser Francisco Bembo Vicecapitaneo Culphi in hac forma: Intelleximus litteras vestras, quas misistis, nobis, datas supra Spalatum XXVIII. mensis Augusti, in quibus inter alia fit mentio, qualiter ille Nicolaus de Tragurio vobis dixit, quod habet in mandatis a Domino suo de faciendo poni cum uno brigentino unum Turchum in Apuleam, qui est Ambaxator domini Basaiti, et vadit ad dominum Regem Vencislaum pro complemento nuptiarum tractatarum inter ipsum dominum Regem et filiam dicti Basaiti..." ASV, *Deliberazioni Misti del Senato*, reg. 42, fol. 129r. September 11, 1393; Wenzel, *Magyar diplomacziai emlékek az Anjou-korból*, vol. 3. 742–43.

33 "[...] et quod vos estis dispositus ire ad apostandum eum in aquis Manfredonie, quia habetis, quod debeat illuc capitare; et si casus dabit, quod veniat in manus vestras, reddere sibi meritum pro suis bonis operibus. Unde consideratis omnibus, que consideranda sunt super ipsa intentione vestra, et maxime quod dictus Turchus Ambaxator non vadit in cursum, nec pro aliqua alia, quantum ad nos, causa inhonesta; fidelitati vestre cum nostris Consiliis scribimus et mandamus, quod in casu quod veniret in manus vestras eundo vel redeundo, vos non debeatis ei, nec suis in personis vel rebus, nec dicto brigentino aliquam iniuriam vel violentiam facere, sed debeatis ipsum honorare cum illis verbis et per illum modum, qui vestre sapientie videbitur, ita quod habeat causum laudandi nos, Dominium nostrum et vos; agendo vos taliter in executione istius nostri mandati, quod possitis apud nos de bona observantia commendari." Ibid. On relations between Venice and Ladislaus of Naples, see Szalay, "Nápolyi László trónkövetelése és Velencze," 557–64, 643–55, 751–59, 836–44.

34 Elizabeth A. Zachariadou believed that the proposed marriage alliance was not supposed to be concluded between Ladislaus and the daughter of Sultan Bayezid but rather between Ladislaus and the daughter of the famous marcher lord of Skopje, Pasha Yiğit. Zachariadou, "Marginalia on the History of Epirus and Albania (1380–1418)," 205. This confusion apparently emanated from the similarity between their names and the way that they were transcribed into Latin. Zachariadou, "Manuel II Palaeologos on the Strife between Bāyezīd I and Ḳāḍī Burhān al-Dīn Aḥmad," 479–80. Regardless of this opinion, other

among the devout and pious Christians. Nevertheless, the document itself does not give us sufficient cause to conclude with certainty that Bayezid's ambassador ever reached Gaeta, since indisputable confirmation of his presence there is yet to be found. In this regard, there is one interesting though unsubstantiated claim from an important early modern historian, Scipione Ammirato († 1601), who published a biography of King Ladislaus in 1583. In this text he says that Ladislaus planned to establish relations with Bayezid, the ruler of the Turks, and to do so he traveled to Rome, where he requested papal dispensation from Pope Boniface IX while Bayezid's ambassadors remained by his side. In the end, Ammirato states that nothing came of the whole scheme, mostly because it was difficult for Ladislaus to ensure the security of the agreement more than anything else.[35]

The anticipated marriage clearly never materialized, and many historians thought that this implied a breakdown in the negotiations and a premature end of the Angevin-Ottoman alliance. It is true that contemporary documents do not provide any more indication of the reasons why the wedding was abandoned, but the course of events after 1393 leave little doubt that the two sides maintained further contacts and continued to undermine the reign of King Sigismund in Hungary.

## *The Alliance in Practice*

This is perhaps best demonstrated by the political and military developments in Bosnia, Croatia, and Dalmatia where Ladislaus had numerous supporters who could implement the Angevin-Ottoman cooperation in practice. In this respect, one letter particularly stands out among other available sources, as it unambiguously explains what went on during a dense period of defining incidents which occurred throughout 1393 and 1394, further complicating the already convoluted political landscape of the Balkans. The message was sent from Venice in July 1394 by Florentine merchant and diplomat Gherardo Davizi. It was addressed to Donato Acciaiuoli, the older brother of Neri Acciaiuoli, the Duke of Athens. In it, Davizi described how he had recently seen a letter from the

documents leave no doubt that King Ladislaus intended to marry into the Ottoman ruling family in order to further cement his alliance with the Sultan.

35 "Ma in questo mezzo egli non perdea tempo precioche volendo in ogni modo cacciar il nimico di casa, hauea tenuto pratiche d'imparentarsi con Baiazet principe de Turchi, quello che preso poi da Tamburlano, fini miseramente la vita sua in gabbia. Andò per ottener dal Pontefice dispensa di questo parentado in Roma; essendo tuttauia ambasciadori di Baiazet appo il Re. Ma come che la cosa non hauesse hauuto effetto più per la difficoltà ritrouata nella sicurtà del capitolare che per altro…" Ammirato, *Gli opuscoli*, 114–15.

Bosnian King Dabiša (1391–1395), who informed the Venetians about a recent Bosnian victory over the Turks. According to the king's report, the outcome of the battle caused a rift among his subjects, whereby his former allies, the Horváti brothers, Bishop Paul and Ban John, had abandoned him and had traveled to the court of Sultan Bayezid who, at their initiative, proclaimed a different man as the new King of Bosnia and gave them a large army in order to help them install this new king in his newly acquired royal position. As he was unable to deal with this threat alone, Dabiša came to an agreement with Sigismund in Đakovo, relinquishing his claims on Croatia and Dalmatia and declaring Sigismund his designated successor on the Bosnian throne in exchange for military assistance in defeating the insurgents.[36] Seeing as the Horváti brothers were the principal advocates of the Angevin cause in the Balkans (especially Ban John, who was named by Ladislaus as his general deputy in the Kingdom of Hungary),[37] the contents of this letter clearly imply that the supporters of King Ladislaus and his main representatives on the eastern coast of the Adriatic maintained concrete and substantial connections with the Ottoman court of Sultan Bayezid, using his military support to influence regional politics in their favor.

Although their attempts to replace the Bosnian King with a person who would be loyal to King Ladislaus initially proved unsuccessful,[38] as the combined

36 "Secondo posso sentire, questo jorno venonno lettere alla Signoria, dallo Re di Bossina, il quale scrive della rotta diè alli Turchi, de' quali furono morti più di Turchi V$^{M}$, con alchuno preso. Apresso scrive di messer Gianbano, il quale andò allo gran Turcho a farsi suo huomo, e a fare il Turcho facesse uno altro re di Bossina; e così dice à fatto uno altro re, uno paesano. E questo re novello e messer Gianbano, e llo suo frate, con aiuto e gente ebbono dallo Turcho, sono venuti nelli paesi di Bossina per mettere in possesione questo re novello, e dice sono circha XL$^{M}$, e alchuno paesano è co' lloro. Scrive, secondo per l'altra v'avisai, come i' Re d'Ungheria venne nelle contrade di Bossina, e come furono a parlare insieme, e ànno fatto buono acordo e legha insieme, e come questo re, fatto per lo Turcho e messer Gianbano, con tutta loro gente, si sono rinchiusi in certi boschi in luogho forte, nello quale luogho essi gli ànno asediati e stretti assai, per modo sperano coll'aiuto di Dio avranno victoria d'essi. Anchora come questo re e messer Gianbano ànno mandato uno fratello di messer Giabano e uno suo figliuolo allo Turcho per soccorso e per aiuto. Pensasi per tutti che per certo i due re andranno adosso allo Turcho, questo è; però lo Re scrive anchora come insino a mo' ànno più di persone XL$^{M}$, dove sono forestieri assai." Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, *Carteggio Acciaiuoli II*, no. 212. July 30, 1394. For more on this: Filipović, "Bosna i Turci za vrijeme kralja Stjepana Dabiše," 273–301. Cf. Ćirković, "O Đakovačkom ugovoru," 3–10.

37 "Johanni bano Machoviensi in regnis predictis nostro vicario generali […]" Rački, "Izvadci iz kralj. osrednjeg arkiva u Napulju," 36. October 8, 1391. On the Horvat brothers and their rebellion, see Wilczek, "A Horváthy család lázadása, és a magyar tengervidék elszakadása," 617–33, 705–15, 804–22.

38 The identity of this candidate for the royal throne of Bosnia is not directly revealed in the sources, however, it is highly likely that this was Ikach, son of Iktor de Oryaua. Filipović, "Bosna i Turci za vrijeme kralja Stjepana Dabiše," 292–94. See also: Klaić, "Tko je to 'rex Ikach'," 12–15; Ćirković, *Istorija srednjovekovne bosanske države*, 176, 370, n. 4; Mályusz, "Ikach rex Bosnensis," 259–67.

forces of the Bosnian and Hungarian armies defeated the rebels at the castle of Dobor in northern Bosnia, members of the Angevin faction were prepared to bide their time. After Dabiša passed away in September 1395,[39] Sigismund could not fulfill the provisions of the Đakovo pact and crown himself with the Bosnian crown, since in the same year his pregnant wife also died as he was busy fighting the Ottomans on the Lower Danube.[40] Obliged by the agreement of the two monarchs, the Bosnian nobility arrived at a solution by proclaiming Dabiša's widow Helen as queen (1395–1398), which meant that she would simply extend the reign of her dead husband until Sigismund finally became free and available to crown himself King of Bosnia.[41] The Bosnians maintained this arrangement even after Sigismund suffered defeat at the Battle of Nicopolis in 1396, as he did not present a tangible threat for them, but as soon as he regained any semblance of control in the kingdom, they got rid of Helen and elected King Ostoja (1398–1404; 1409–1418) in her place.[42] This was a calculated step which was supposed to reflect the stance of the Bosnian nobility and their wish to guide the kingdom towards an openly pro-Angevin political course. On the issue of Hungarian succession, the new monarch sided with King Ladislaus of Naples, and this position also came to be reflected in his relationship with the Ottoman Turks. It is even assumed that his path to the throne could have been paved by an Ottoman military campaign carried out during the previous winter with the aim of destabilizing Bosnia.[43]

Numerous contemporary sources confirm this profound political change and illuminate how the Angevin–Ottoman alliance was practically implemented with the assistance of the Bosnian king and his nobles. For instance, already in March 1399, representatives of the merchant commune of Ragusa were informed that King Ostoja intended to travel to the southern parts of his realm in order to meet with a Turkish ambassador.[44] Furthermore, in June 1399, an intriguing inscription in the minutes of the Ragusan Senate states that the

39 Truhelka, "Kroničke bilješke u 'Liber Reformationum' dubrovačke arkive," 268.

40 Thallóczy, "Mantovai követjárás Budán 1395," 283–92; Muresan, "Avant Nicopolis: la campagne de 1395 pour le contrôle du Bas-Danube," 115–32; Salamon, "On the Credibility of an Item in Jan Długosz's Chronicle," 164–70.

41 On the reign of Queen Helen in Bosnia, see Fostikov, "Jelena Gruba, bosanska kraljica," 29–50.

42 "Prima pars est de eundo ad maius conscilium pro elligendo ambassiatam nostrorum nobilium ad Regem Hostoyam nouiter creatus regem Bossine." DAD, *Reformationes*, vol. 31, fol. 116v. June 19, 1398.

43 Filipović, "The Ottoman-Serbian Attack on Bosnia in 1398," 119–25.

44 "Algune nouele de nouo non auemo de schriuer, saluo che chredemo, che miser lo Re desendera in tera de Chulmo, chome aueua spato li annbasatori de Turchi." DAD, *Diversa Cancellariae*, vol. 32, ad fol. 234. March 12, 1399.

"Bosnians are in concordance with the Turks."[45] At the very same time, King Ostoja and the other Bosnian nobles were engaged in an armed struggle against King Sigismund, and they still supported King Ladislaus in his attempts to gain the Hungarian throne, so it seems that despite all the turbulent events of the early 1390s, the Bosnians, Angevins, and Ottomans still managed to end the decade on the same political wavelength.[46]

There is other evidence to support this claim. For instance, in August 1399, an Ottoman embassy traveled through Ragusa in order to get to the other side of the Adriatic. Similarly, in 1400 new Ottoman envoys arrived to the market town of Drijeva, which was then a part of the Bosnian kingdom, but mostly populated by Ragusan merchants, and they wanted to resume their journey to Apulia. Unlike the delegation from the previous year, this party was obstructed by the Ragusans and prevented from going any further. This act provoked Voivode Hrvoje Vukčić, a prominent supporter of King Ladislaus, who was described by King Sigismund in June of 1398 as "a perfidious follower of treachery" and accused of joining the Turks, "the monstrous infidels of Christ's Cross."[47] Hrvoje wrote a protest note to the Ragusan government stating that "the Lord King Ostoja is complaining" since their men stopped "the Turkish envoys and prohibited them from going across the sea." In their defense, the Ragusans devised a diplomatic response, justifying themselves by claiming that this had happened without their prior knowledge, since they do not come "between the King of Bosnia, the King of Hungary, and the Turks," and they promised that they would find and punish the guilty individuals.[48] As an additional pledge of their innocence, the Ragusans reminded King Ostoja of the case from August 1399, when they had allowed the Ottoman envoys "to pass across the sea" despite the protests of Dmitar, the son of Serbian King Vukašin, who advised them not to do so.[49] This document proves that cordial contacts and interactions between Ladislaus

45 "Prima pars de dicendo consilio maiori quia castellanus Almixe nobis scripsit et quia Pasayt nobis misit dictum quod nos sumus una cum Bossignanis qui sunt concordati cum Turchis, essere bonum quod nostri ambaxiatori reperirent se apud nostrum dominum nostro." DAD, *Reformationes*, vol. 31, fol. 134v. June 31, 1399.

46 Kranzieritz, "Változások a Délvidéken Nikápoly után," 97–108.

47 "[…] quod Hervoya vayvoda, veluti perfidus alumnus proditionis, ductus malignitate, nostrorum immensorum regalium beneficiorum immemor, se ipsum in cetum infidelium crucis Christi, Turcorum videlicet, connumerare et coadunare […]" Smičiklas, *Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*, vol. 18. 345. June 2, 1398. For the biography of Voivode Hrvoje, see Šišić, *Vojvoda Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić*.

48 DAD, *Lettere di Levante*, vol. 1, fol. 23v; Stojanović, *Stare srpske povelje i pisma*, vol. 1. 448. April 8, 1400.

49 Ibid. Cf. Ćirković, "Poklad kralja Vukašina," 153 n. 1; Fostikov, "O Dmitru Kraljeviću," 56–57.

and Bayezid continued well after 1393, regardless of the failed attempt to create a union through marriage, and that they were facilitated by representatives of the pro-Angevin faction within the Bosnian Kingdom. These exchanges steadily became a genuine feature of political affairs at the time, and they clearly had repercussions for the whole of the Balkans and for Bosnia in particular.

The alliance between the Angevins and Ottomans was upheld even after the calamitous collapse of Sultan Bayezid's reign at the battle of Ankara in 1402 and Ladislaus' coronation in Zadar the following year. This is confirmed in a letter sent from Rome on August 28, 1406 by Peter von Wormditt († 1419), Procurator General of the Teutonic Knights and their representative at the Holy See, to Konrad von Jungingen († 1407), Grand Master of the Order. Wormditt informed his superior about the imperial and territorial ambitions of King Ladislaus, who aimed to surround Rome both by land and by sea. He then reported how he was told by a reliable source that one of the sultan's sons; the one who escaped Tamerlane, evidently Prince Suleyman, had his messengers at the court of King Ladislaus, where they offered him an alliance and friendship. Apparently, Suleyman was ready to employ all his might in helping Ladislaus become King of Hungary. The letter continues to say that the messengers were still in Italy at the time of writing and that it was not known whether an agreement would be reached. Moreover, Wormditt ended his communication by stating that on June 24 of the same year, while King Sigismund was engaged in peace negotiations with Austrian Herzog Wilhelm of Habsburg, Prince Suleyman arrived with a great army to the land of Bosnia, "which belongs to Hungary," where he caused great damage, dislodging more than 14,000 Christians in the process, and where he still remained with a considerable force.[50]

50 "Der koning von Napels steet gancz dornoch, das her keißer moge werden, und her hup am grosten an. Her meynte, her welde Rome czum ersten haben und den bobst, so hette hers als. Nu im das nicht mochte geen, nu hat her einen frede alhie gemacht, und wirt im der kirchen sodener czu czihen. Und gewynnet her Pyse in, so steet im Lucke czu gebot itczunt mit aller herschaft. So hat her noch von der kirchen wegen ynne Campania und Maritima. So mag her denne lichte Senas und Perus gewynnen und dornoch Viterbie. So hat her Rome alumb beyde czu wasser und czu lande, das her denne also, gan ims got, des ich nicht enhoffe, synen willen an aller dank behalden mag. Mir hat gesagt ein erbar apt us dem konigrich, der nu mit den sendeboten wider kegen Rome quam, das des Turken son, der dem Czemmerlan entging, als her dem alden öberlag, syne boten habe by dem konige von Napels und hat im gelobt: welle her einen bunt und fruntschaft mit im machen, her welle im helfen [mit] all synem vermogen, das her konig czu Ungern sulle werden. Und die boten syn noch im lande. Was her mit in wirt schaffen, des weys man noch nicht. Man sagt ouch alhie vor wor, das derselbe Turke an sand Johans tage, als der konig von Ungern mit herczoge Wilhelm von Osterich, dem got gnade, vorricht würde, mit einem grossen heere in das lant czu Bosna, das kegen Ungern gehort, were gekomen und hette aldo großen schaden gethon und hette (von dannen) me denn 14 000 cristen von

This means that by 1406, after a relatively short period of respite from Ottoman involvement in their internal affairs, the Bosnians once again began to rely on the Turks in their conflict with Sigismund.[51] In that sense, the King of Hungary was faced with a double threat, and there are numerous documents which indicate this cooperation by conflating and fusing the Bosnians and the Turks as one common enemy. The broader historical context and the sheer number of such examples show that this was not merely accusatory discourse or pejorative rhetoric which dishonestly labeled Bosnians as Turks, but that the two sides actually collaborated and assisted each other in their efforts to reach a common goal.[52] There are numerous instances in the preserved sources that mention this cooperation. For example, the "perfidious Turks" and "schismatic Bosnians" were grouped together, along with other enemies of and rebels against Sigismund, in two charters from April and October 1406,[53] and then on a few occasions in 1407,[54] at least a couple of times in 1408,[55] and throughout Sigismund's reign, for instance in 1417, 1418, 1425, and 1437.[56] Regardless of

dannen lassen tryben, und lege noch aldo mit großer macht." Koeppen, *Die Berichte der Generalprokuratoren des Deutschen Ordens an der Kurie*, vol. 2. 79–80. August 28, 1406. For the activities and reign of Prince Suleyman in the Balkans, see Dennis, "The Byzantine–Turkish Treaty of 1403," 72–88; Zachariadou, "Süleyman çelebi in Rumili and the Ottoman chronicles," 268–96; Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, passim.

51 The wars between Bosnia and Hungary in the first decade of the fifteenth century are described by Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 119–68.

52 See the contrasting interpretation presented in: Lovrenović, "Modelle ideologischer Ausgrenzung," 18–55.

53 "[…] per huiusmodi nostros infideles ceterosque nonnullos rebelles et inimicos nostros videlicet Horwoyam, Wlkchith ac Bosnenses […] adducta quasi innumerabili pluralitate perfidorum turcorum et Bosnensium scismaticorum ad dominum et possessiones ipsorum fidelium nostrorum, qui commissis ibidem predis, spoliis, rapinis, adulteriis, stupris, hominum interemptionibus, tandemque totale dominium et possessiones in favillam redactis abscesserunt […]" Thallóczy and Barabás, *Codex diplomaticus comitum de Blagay*, 220. April 22, 1406. "Quia nonnulli Turcy, Boznenses et alii nostri emuli et rebelles coadunati regnum nostrum latesscentes et devastantes iam hostiliter subintrarunt […]" *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár,* vol. 2/1 no. 5036. October 4, 1406.

54 "[…] vtputa Turcorum et aliarum perfidarum nacionum, nec non Paterinorum Boznensium a parte Regni Bozne […]" Wenzel, "Okmánytár Ozorai Pipo történetéhez," 25. December 7, 1407. "[…] nonnullorum Infidelium Crucis Christi nostrorum, vt puta et regni nostri aemulorum, signanterque Turcorum, et Boznensium […]" *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae,* vol. 10/4. 609. December 9, 1407.

55 "[…] contra nonnullos nostros et regni nostri emulos, videlicet Boznenses et turcos […]" Barabás, *Codex diplomaticus Teleki de Szék,* vol. 1. 339–40. May 26, 1408. "[…] dictorum nostrorum emulorum Turcorum videlicet et Boznensium tirannicam rebellionem […]" Šišić, "Nekoliko isprava," 319. December 29, 1408.

56 "[…] demum vero pridem in exercitu nostro regali contra nonnullos nostros et ipsius regni aemulos, vtputa Turcas Bosnenses et alias nationes barbaricas pro tunc instaurato […]"*Codex diplomaticus Hungariae,* vol. 10/5. 810. September 29, 1417. "[…] primum contra et adversus perfidissimos Turcom, crucis Christi inimicos, et alias nationes barbaricas et scismaticas, versus partes inferiores Themesienses, demum vero

whether Sigismund was referring to battles from the first decade of the fifteenth century or speaking in general, the idea that Bosnians and Turks worked together stuck in his mind long after these conflicts had passed.

The implications of King Ladislaus' collusion with the Turks left an indelible mark on Bosnia, extending even beyond his own interest in the region. After Sigismund's decisive victory over his enemies in 1408, which forced Hrvoje Vukčić to switch sides and submit himself to his authority, Ladislaus sold his possessions and royal rights over Dalmatia to Venice for 100,000 ducats, basically abandoning his trans-Adriatic ambitions.[57] However, irrespective of this inglorious outcome of the decades-long struggle to support Angevin aspirations for the throne of the Hungarian Kingdom, some Bosnians refused to come to terms with the political reality of the time. They continued to maintain close connections to Ladislaus, and through him with the Ottomans. A case in point is Bosnian Voivode Sandalj Hranić. In 1409, he sent a messenger to Ragusa to explain that King Ladislaus was still his "friend" and that he would be willing to perform any honorable service for him, stating that he could rely on military aid both from Apulians and from the Turks.[58] And his Ottoman ties did not end there. On one occasion in 1411 when Sigismund complained to the Pope against the Venetians who had purchased the Dalmatian fortress of Ostrovica from Voivode Sandalj, the Venetians defended their position by declaring that they had bought the castle in the interest of the whole of Christendom, because Sandalj had many Turks and could have just as well have given Ostrovica to them.[59] In the same year, the Venetians sent a letter to the commune of Kotor

contra Boznenses, puta tunc nostros infideles et rebelles […]" Fejérpataky, *Magyar czimeres emlékek*, vol. 1. 49. March 29, 1418. "[…] contra sevissimos Turcos, crucis christiani persecutores, presertim vero adversus Bosnenses, nostros eotunc et regni nostri notorios emulos et rebelles […]" Thallóczy, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens und Serbiens im Mittelalter*, 354. September 5, 1425. "[…] quod dum alias quondam Zandal wayuoda de Bozna paterinae iniquitatis alumpnus, non paucis Boznensibus necnon Turcis, crucis Christi et totius orthodoxae fidei persecutoribus, nostris videlicet et regnorum nostroroum aemulis caterva falerata congregatis […]" Thallóczy and Áldásy, *A Magyarország és Szerbia közti összeköttetések oklevéltára*, 112. September 27, 1437. Cf. Lovrenović, "Modelle ideologischer Ausgrenzung," 18–55.

57 Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant, 1204–1571*, vol. 1. 403.

58 Stojanović, *Stare srpske povelje i pisma*, vol. 1. 276–77. August 5, 1409. Cf. Kurtović, *Veliki vojvoda bosanski Sandalj Hranić Kosača*, 195.

59 "[…] quod dictum castrum Ostroviz non accepimus in displicentiam dicti domini regis, sed habentes et cognoscentes, illud esse in manibus cuiusdam domini Sandalis capitanei Bosinensis, qui habet multos Turcos secum, et cuius Sandalis dictum castrum ex patrimonio erat, ne capitaret ad manus aliorum et potissime Teucrorum, pro bono universe christianitatis et pro bono nostri dominii illud emimus […]" Ljubić, *Listine*, vol. 6. 139–40. February 10, 1411. Cf. Šunjić, *Bosna i Venecija*, 131; Kurtović, *Veliki vojvoda bosanski Sandalj Hranić Kosača*, 195.

telling them that Sandalj had with him, "as it is said," 7,000 Turks.[60] By that time, however, the situation for Sandalj became untenable, and he soon joined the camp of King Sigismund.

## *Concluding Remarks*

Although the envisaged wedding never took place, there is no question that messengers were exchanged between the courts of Gaeta and Edirne, resulting in a real and tangible Angevin-Ottoman alliance that was executed through concrete military cooperation between Ladislaus' representatives in the Balkans and their Ottoman counterparts in the form of combined attacks against King Sigismund and his subjects. Viewed in the appropriate historical context, the accusations that King Sigismund directed against Ladislaus and his Balkan allies blaming them for cooperating with the Turks, which were previously waved off as possibly biased or unfounded allegations, turn out to have been grounded in reality and based on actual events.

Possibly the key problem in the whole issue is whether the idea of an alliance with the Turks came from Ladislaus himself or from his followers in Dalmatia, Croatia, and Bosnia. More research will have to be done in order to answer this question properly, but in the geopolitical context of the time, an alliance with the Turks was a natural and rational step for both Ladislaus and his Balkan supporters. This was, in fact, a classic case of political opportunism, in which Ladislaus expected that the sultan's military help would be a useful tool in achieving full control of what he believed rightfully belonged to him. The language of his letters to the sultan extended beyond mere diplomatic courtesy and showed his readiness to achieve an alliance at almost any cost. It was an unscrupulous Machiavellian move, a century before Machiavelli, in which the end justified the means. In that sense, the Holy Crown of St. Stephen was deemed a prize worthy enough to vindicate even "collusion with infidels."

The local nobility in the Balkans was aware that the sultan disposed of seemingly endless resources and had already by that time began directing his armies north across the Danube, through Bulgaria and Serbia. If they could not beat the Ottomans, they could join them and try to achieve their own goals by launching joint attacks against Hungary from Bosnia and Croatia. On the other

60 "[…] et precipue nunc, quum Sandali habet secum, ut dicitur, VII mille Turchorum […]" Ljubić, *Listine*, vol. 6. 139–40. May 25, 1411. Cf. Kurtović, *Veliki vojvoda bosanski Sandalj Hranić Kosača*, 196.

hand, the Ottoman Turks sought to impose themselves on the Christian lords by pursuing a policy of *divide et impera*, supporting conflicts among them and not leaving them much choice other than to call upon Ottoman assistance in their internecine struggles. As Ladislaus and his court in Italy were almost completely reliant on local political factors in the Balkans, it seems far more likely that plans for this military and diplomatic collaboration with the Turks were devised among Ladislaus' overseas advisors. If it can indeed be proved that the idea originated from Croat or Bosnian nobles, particularly from the Horváti or Hrvatinić brothers, who might have initially suggested it to Ladislaus, then this would just highlight the depth of the chasm between Sigismund and his rebels, who evidently preferred working with the aggressive Sultan Bayezid over being ruled by the "Czech swine," as they affectionately referred to the King of Hungary.

Regardless of whether the idea came from his Balkan or Italian counsellors, Ladislaus' decision to reach out to Sultan Bayezid had practical effects and far reaching consequences, and it greatly impacted overall political events in Southeast Europe at the end of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth. This was especially the case in Bosnia, where supporting Ladislaus eventually came to mean sustaining an open and public alliance with the Turks, as well as potentially forever being tainted with the stain of collaboration and ultimately alienating those from whom help was needed most when Bosnia struggled against the very same Turks at a later stage. It proved to be a naive, narrow-minded policy which involved the sacrifice of long-term goals for short-term benefit, as this outlandish political adventure ended in 1408 in spectacular failure for Ladislaus, when he was forced to retreat definitively from his ambitions of ruling over Hungary. By doing so, he had abandoned his Bosnian supporters, whose land had already become a base for advanced Ottoman conquests towards the west and north. Irrespective of its failed final outcome, this strategic three-way alliance left a profound impression on the history of the region. Further exposing the mechanisms by which it functioned would help us understand the actions and conduct of all those who were involved in the struggle for political supremacy at the time and would hopefully allow us to arrive at a clearer image of the events which decisively shaped the political landscape of the Balkans for decades and even centuries to come

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# Militarization of the Serbian State under Ottoman Pressure*

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After the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, Serbian territories were under strong Ottoman pressure. Turkish vassals soon became their rulers. Under these circumstances, they endeavored to fulfill their obligations to the Sultan and to strengthen the defense of their states. For these purposes, the ruling families, the Lazarevićs and Brankovićs, introduced new taxes during the last decade of the fourteenth century. Also, Despot Stefan Lazarević (1389–1427) established a different type of military service, placing emphasis on the defense of the country's borders. Based on archaeological material and written sources, one can conclude that Serbian rulers paid great attention to the construction and restoration of fortresses. In the first decade of the fifteenth century, Despot Stefan began to reform the local government system. The new administrative units were organized according to the model of former marches (*krajišta*), which were headed by voivodes. Finally, the fresco painting of Serbian monasteries also offers evidence of the militarization of Serbian society during the period of the Ottoman threat.

Keywords: Militarization, Serbia, Ottomans, Hungary, taxes, warriors, fortresses, marches

The Battle of Kosovo in June 1389 was an important milestone for Serbian territories. Prince Lazar, the most powerful Serbian local ruler,[1] was killed in the Battle.[2] His successors were in a difficult position. In addition to the Ottoman pressure, their territory was threatened by the Hungarian King Sigismund in the north, who wanted to secure the border of his state from the Turks.[3] These factors may well have prompted Lazar's successors to accept supreme Ottoman

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1 The territory of Prince Lazar encompassed the valleys of three Morava Rivers. See Mihaljčić, *Lazar Hrebeljanović,* 110.

2 See Mihaljčić, *The Battle of Kosovo*, 43–51; Ćirković, "The Field of Kosovo," 81–90.

3 *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. 1. nos. 1190–1193, 1197, 1203–1204, 1265, 1275, and 1280; Trpković, "Tursko-ugarski sukobi," 96–102; Szakály, "Phases of Turco-Hungarian Warfare," 74; Rokai, "Kralj Žigmund," 145–46, 149; Engel, "A török–magyar háborúk első évei," 562–65.

authority before the middle of 1390.[4] On the other hand, Vuk Branković,[5] the son-in-law of Prince Lazar, resisted attacks of the Turks until the autumn of 1392, when he also submitted himself to Sultan Bayezid I (1389–1402).[6] He tried to become the supreme ruler of the Serbs between 1389 and 1391. [7]

The Ottoman vassals had two main obligations. First, they had to send auxiliary troops for the Sultan's campaigns. Second, they had to pay the annual tribute, known as the *haraç*. Also, they had to treat the Sultan's allies and enemies as their allies and enemies.[8] The failure to perform these duties was regarded as a form of defiance of the Ottoman ruler.[9] The charters which have survived indicate that Lazarević family and Vuk Branković introduced a new tax to finance payment of the tribute. Vuk Branković noted in his charter to the monastery of Chilandar from November 1392 that he determined how much every estate would pay to cover the Turkish tax.[10] The payment of this tax in the Lazarević' state was mentioned only in their charter to the Great Lavra monastery of Saint Athanasius from 1394/1395. It was referred to as "service to the great master" (*rabota velikom gospodaru*).[11] Nevertheless, it is certain that this tax also existed later, when Stefan Lazarević was brought under the rule of the Ottoman Sultans. The obligation of tax payment was noted in two charters of the Branković family, one from 1410 and one from 1419.[12] The term *haraç* also appears in a later manuscript edition of *Dušan's Code*.[13] However, Serbian sources do not contain information about the amount of this tax. Despot Đurađ Branković (1427–1456) paid 50,000 ducats in the name of *haraç*.[14] At some point during his reign, the amount of this tribute rose to 60,000 ducats.[15] His heir, Despot Lazar

4 Trpković, "Tursko-ugarski sukobi," 102; *Istorija srpskog naroda*, 48.

5 Vuk Branković held territories from the region of Upper Lim to the Upper Vardar. See Dinić, "Oblast Brankovića," 148–59.

6 Vuk's decision was the result of the Turkish conquest of his town of Skopje. Bojanin, "Povelja Vuka Brankovića," 149–51, 153–54, 158; Šuica, *Vuk Branković,* 139–48.

7 Šuica, *Vuk Branković,* 119–35.

8 *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 4, s.v. "Kharādj," 1053, 1055; *Leksikon srpskog srednjeg veka*, s.v. "Harač," 773; Inaldžik, *Osmansko carstvo*, 17, 164; Imber, *The Structure of Power*, 13, 93 180; Spremić, "Turski tributari," 275–76.

9 Inaldžik, *Osmansko carstvo*, 17–18; Imber, *The Structure of Power*, 93; Šuica, "Vuk Branković i sastanak u Seru," 259, 263, 265.

10 Bojanin, "Povelja Vuka Brankovića," 153–54.

11 Mladenović, *Povelje i pisma*, 223.

12 Stojanović, "Stari srpski hrisovulji," 32–33.

13 Bubalo, *Dušanov zakonik*, 118, 223.

14 Broquière, *Voyage d'Outrmere*, 206; Spremić, "Turski tributari," 290.

15 Makušev, *Istorijski spomenici*, 90–91; Spremić, "Turski tributari," 292.

Branković (1456–1458), had to pay 40,000 ducats, since he ruled the diminished territory.[16]

Furthermore, at this time, the Lazarević family established another new tax known as the "unče." This fee was also mentioned for the first time in the Lazarević family's charter to the Great Lavra monastery of Saint Athanasius in 1394/1395.[17] The term "unče" originated from the name of the monetary unit, which was worth twenty dinars.[18] The acts from the first decades of the fifteenth century point out that there were winter and summer "unče."[19] Consequently, historians have concluded that this fee amounted to 40 dinars, or almost one Venetian ducat, per year.[20] In the same documents, Serbian rulers used the terms "vojnica" and "danak gospodstva mi" for the summer and winter unče.[21] One of these acts reveals the purpose of the new tax. Đurađ Branković (1427–1456), the heir to Despot Stefan, emphasized in the charter for the monastery of Saint Panteleimon (issued between 1427 and 1429) that the summer "unče" ("vojštatik") was collected by his treasury for the purpose of equipping the army.[22] The documents indicate that the monastery's properties were not automatically exempted from this fee. Around 1415, Despot Stefan Lazarević (1389–1427) exempted new estates of the monastery of Mileševa from the winter "unče" for two years and the summer "unče" ("vojnica") for five years.[23] A few months before his death, he freed new estates of the monastery of Great Lavra from all obligations, except the summer "unče."[24] All of these obligations fell upon dependent peasants.[25]

It should be noted that many Serbian noblemen were killed in the Battle of Kosovo. This particularly applies to the army of Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović.[26] That is the main reason why his successors, widow Princess Milica and son Prince Stefan, tried quickly to restore the military power of their state. The

16 Makušev, *Istorijski spomenici*, 215; Spremić, "Turski tributari," 292–93.

17 Mladenović, *Povelje i pisma*, 223.

18 *Istorija srpskog naroda*, 122; *Leksikon srpskog srednjeg veka,* s.v. "Unča" 762; Veselinović, *Država srpskih despota*, 166, 171–72.

19 Novaković, *Zakonski spomenici*, 528; Božić, *Dohodak carski*, 56; Veselinović, *Država srpskih despota*, 166–67, 223.

20 Božić, *Dohodak carski*, 58–59; Veselinović, *Država srpskih despota*, 171–72; *Istorija srpskog naroda*, 122.

21 Mladenović, *Povelje i pisma*, 193; Božić, *Dohodak carski*, 56.

22 Novaković, *Zakonski spomenici*, 528.

23 Veselinović, "Povelja despota," 198.

24 Mladenović, *Povelje i pisma*, 260.

25 Božić, *Dohodak carski*, 54–55; Veselinović, *Država srpskih despota*, 221.

26 Šuica, "Vlastela kneza Stefana," 10.

fact that Prince Stefan and his troops played a significant role in the battles led by Sultan Bayezid I indicates that he achieved this goal to a certain extent. It is well known that Prince Stefan made a crucial contribution to the Ottoman victory in the Battle of Nicopolis.[27] Stefan's troops also played a significant role in the Battle of Angora.[28] Certainly, thanks to these efforts, he had a significant influence on the outcome of the conflict among Bayezid's sons after the Battle of Ankara in 1402.[29] Hungarian King Sigismund (1387–1437) also respected his military power. Despot Stefan became the vassal of the Hungarian ruler at the end of 1403 or the beginning of 1404.[30] In return, he received from the Hungarian king the town of Belgrade, part of the Banate of Mačva, situated to the south of the Sava River, and a major complex of lands in northwestern Serbia called *terra Dettosfelde*.[31] Their ties strengthened in the following period, as indicated by the fact that Despot Stefan was the first among the baron members of the Order of the Dragon in its foundation charter from December 1408.[32]

On the other hand, Vuk Branković remained the Sultan's vassal until 1394.[33] Ottoman forces captured his territories in 1396.[34] The major part of his estates belonged to Prince Stefan, who was a faithful vassal of the Turks.[35] However, the sons of Vuk Branković managed to redeem their father's state from the Sultan in 1402 before the Battle of Ankara.[36] They were in conflict with the Despot from 1402 to 1411 or 1412, when Đurađ Branković made an agreement with his uncle Stefan Lazarević.[37] From that time on, they worked together, and Đurađ became the despot's heir, since Stefan did not have children. This was formalized at the

27 Atiya, *The Crusade of Nicopolis*, 82, 87, 93–94; Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 60–64; Šuica, "Bitka kod Nikopolja," 113–18; Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 84.

28 Alexandrescu-Dersca, *La campagne de Timur*, 73–78; Nikolić, *Vizantijski pisci o Srbiji*, 38–46; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 54; Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 43–44.

29 Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 57, 59, 61, 124–26, 137–38, 143–44, 150–53, 159–60, 168–70, 180–93.

30 Dinić, "Pismo ugarskog kralja," 93–97; Wenzel, *Okmánytár* 1, 22; *Istorija srpskog naroda,* 70–71; Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 232.

31 Konastantin Filozof, "Život Stefana Lazarevića," 284; Purković, *Knez i despot Stefan,* 73–75; Kalić, *Beograd u srednjem veku,* 83–84; Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 232–33; *Istorija srpskog naroda,* 70–71.

32 *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae*, vol. 10/4, 682–94; Antonović, "Despot Stefan," 15–22; Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 210, 213, 232, 234.

33 Šuica, "Vuk Branković," 155, 157–58.

34 Dinić, "Oblast Brankovića," 160–61; Šuica, "Vuk Branković," 162–65.

35 Orbin, *Kraljevstvo Slovena*, 102; Dinić, "Oblast Brankovića," 161; Šuica, "Vuk Branković," 166–67.

36 Stojanović, *Stare srpske povelje i pisma,* 143–46; Orbin, *Kraljevstvo Slovena,* 103; Dinić, "Oblast Brankovića," 165–66; Spremić, *Despot Đurađ Branković*, 50.

37 Spremić, *Despot Đurađ Branković,* 61; *Istorija srpskog naroda*, 116–17; Veselinović, *Država srpskih despota*, 118; Nikolić, *Vizantijski pisci o Srbiji*, 72.

State council in 1425 or 1426.[38] It should be underlined that the tax system on the Branković family's territory was similar to that of Despot's state. Indeed, the region under the control of the Branković dynasty retained its specificity until the fall of Ottoman rule.[39]

The charters which have survived indicate that the estates of monasteries were not completely exempted from some of the new obligations even after the end of the Ottoman civil war in 1413. In connection with this, it is worth noting that Despot Stefan and his nephew Đurađ Branković reestablished vassal relations with new Ottoman Sultan Mehmed I.[40] In 1419, Đurađ Branković and his wife Irene freed two villages of the Athonite monastery of Saint Paul from all obligations and taxes except for a tribute to the Turks.[41] Since the Serbian Despotate entered the war with Ottomans in 1425,[42] it is not surprising that in 1427 Stefan Lazarević did not exempt the new estate of the monastery of Great Lavra from the summer "unče."[43] In addition, it should be borne in mind that Despot Stefan provided military assistance to the Hungarian king. Despot's troops participated in Sigismund's campaigns against Hussites in 1421 and 1422.[44] Also, from 1421 to 1423, Stefan Lazarević led a war against Venice with the aim of reigning over the coastal towns of Zeta (today Montenegro).[45]

The complex political circumstances also influenced the organization of military service in the Serbian lands. The charter of Despot Stefan to the monastery of Vatopedi from July 1417 gives information on various types of military obligations in the Lazarević state. The monastery's new possession, the village of Koprivnica (near the town of Novo Brdo), was exempted from the obligation of performing military service except for sending auxiliary troops to the Turks and participating in warfare on the *march* (*krajište*) of Novo Brdo.[46] Ten years later, Despot Stefan stipulated three exceptions for the villages which

38 Konastantin Filozof, "Život Stefana Lazarevića," 316; Spremić, *Despot Đurađ Branković,* 70; Veselinović, *Država srpskih despota*, 237.

39 For more information, see: Dinić, "Oblast Brankovića," 168–69, 173–76; Spremić, *Despot Đurađ Branković*, 66.

40 *Istorija srpskog naroda*, 90; Nikolić, *Vizantijski pisci o Srbiji*, 76–77; Spremić, *Despot Đurađ Branković*, 62–63.

41 Stojanović, "Stari srpski hrisovulji," 32–33.

42 The cause of this war may well have been Stefan's close relationship with Hungary: *Istorija srpskog naroda*, 212–14; Purković, *Knez i despot Stefan*, 130–31.

43 Mladenović, *Povelje i pisma despota Stefana*, 260.

44 Konastantin Filozof, "Život Stefana Lazarevića," 314; *Istorija srpskog naroda*, 209.

45 *Istorija Crne Gore*, 135–46; Stanojević, *Borba o nasledstvo Baošino*, 16–63.

46 Lascaris, "Actes serbes de Vatopedi," 172; Veselinović, *Država srpskih despota*, 165–66, 192–93.

were bestowed to the monastery of Great Lavra on Mount Athos. First, these settlements had to send troops if the ruler personally led the army. Second, the villages had the obligation to participate in actions against brigands and in warfare on the *march* when the local voivode summoned the army.[47] There are no reliable data indicating how many soldiers were sent to the Ottomans by Serbian rulers. Byzantine writer Doukas noted that Prince Stefan had a detachment of 5,000 lancers in the Battle of Angora,[48] while Chalkokondyles stated that at least 10,000 Serbian warriors participated in the battle.[49] Allegedly, the Serbian detachment which participated in the siege of Constantinople in 1453 numbered 1,500 horsemen according to Konstantin Mihailović, who was a member of the unit.[50] It may be that the number was not fixed, but depended on circumstances. Considering that the estates of the monastery had to take part in equipping these armies, it is clear how difficult this duty was.

The military campaigns which were led by the ruler were probably considered the most important. Consequently, no one was excluded from these operations. One later charter from 1458 confirms that were no exceptions to military service when the ruler organized a campaign.[51] After the collapse of the Serbian state, the Ottomans took over a similar system of military organization. The Turkish legal provision for the *Sancak* of Smederevo from 1536 determined that the *Vlachs* had to send one horseman for every five houses in the case of Sultan's campaign or service at the borders.[52] Vlachs were a pastoral population with specific military obligations in medieval Serbia and the Ottoman Empire,[53] but it can be assumed that other people sometimes had similar duties. This kind of recruitment system was not unknown at the time. In October 1397, the Diet of Hungary in Timisoara ordered all landowners to equip one horse-archer for every 20 peasants for war.[54] This proportion changed several times over the course of the fifteenth century. According to the decision of the Diet in 1435,

47 Mladenović, *Povelje i pisma despota Stefana*, 260; Veselinović, *Država srpskih despota*, 165, 193.

48 Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium*, 93.

49 Chalkokondyles, *Histories*, 242–43; Nikolić, *Vizantijski pisci o Srbiji,* 39.

50 Mihailović, *Memoirs of a Janissary*, 90–91.

51 Rački, "Prilozi za sbirku," 158.

52 Bojanić, *Turski zakoni*, 47; Bojanić-Lukač, "Ko je učestvovao u zamičnoj vojsci," 242; Isailović, "Legislation Concerning the Vlachs," 38; Veselinović, *Država srpskih despota,* 168.

53 Bojanić, *Turski zakoni*, 47; Isailović, "Legislation Concerning the Vlachs," 30–31, 36–40.

54 Bak, Engel and Sweeney, *Laws of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary*, vol. 2, 22; Borosy, "The Militia Portalis," 63; Held, "Military Reform," 131–32; Held, "Peasants in Arms," 81; Rady, *Nobility, Land and Service*, 149–51; Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 21–22.

every nobleman had to lead three mounted archers to the war for every peasant tenant. This kind of army is known in the secondary literature as a *militia portalis*.[55]

Both charters point out the obligation of to participate in warfare in the border areas that were called *krajište* in medieval Serbia. It is worth noting that *Dušan's Code* emphasizes the responsibility of noblemen from border areas to defend the country. They had to make up for all the damages inflicted by the enemy army which entered and came passed through their border areas.[56] The importance of these regions increased as a result of the Ottoman threat. Turks used the akinji[57] detachments, which often disturbed border zones.[58] The aforementioned Ottoman regulation stipulated that every house of Vlachs give one cavalryman or infantryman in the case of urgent tasks in the border areas. This kind of recruitment was called *zamanica*, which was a Serbian term indicating the origin of this institution.[59] The aforementioned charter from 1458 points out that no one was exempted from the obligation of *zamanica*.[60] Furthermore, it is assumed that the army was gathered in a similar way in the regions *krajište* in the Serbian Despotate.[61] It is certain that this kind of system of mobilization was applied in actions against brigands.[62] The question is how effective the armies recruited in these ways were, because probably most of the peasants did not have adequate equipment or weapons for war. When it comes to Hungary, historians have concluded that the detachments were made up of peasants and had a secondary role, while the backbone of the army was still heavy cavalry. That is the reason why Hungarian kings spent a lot of money on hiring mercenaries in the fifteenth century.[63] The situation was to a certain extent different in the Serbian state due to the presence of the Vlach population. However, it seems that Vlachs and peasants could be effective against akinji or bandits, but it is hard to imagine that they made a significant contribution to the

55 Bak, Engel and Sweeney, *Laws of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary*, vol. 2, 78; Borosy, "The Militia Portalis," 64; Held, "Military Reform," 133; Held, "Peasants in Arms, " 82; Rady, *Nobility*, *Land and Service*, 150; Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 23.

56 Bubalo, *Dušanov zakonik*, 85, 166.

57 Akinji troops were irregular cavalry during the first centuries of the Ottoman Empire: *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 1, s.v. "Akindji," 340.

58 Imber, *The Structure of Power*, 190, 252, 254, 256, 260–65, 353.

59 Bojanić, *Turski zakoni*, 47; Bojanić-Lukač, "Ko je učestvovao u zamičkoj vojsci," 242; Veselinović, *Država srpskih despota,* 190–91.

60 Rački, "Prilozi za sbirku," 158; Veselinović, *Država srpskih despota,* 190.

61 Veselinović, *Država srpskih despota,* 190–92.

62 Ibid, 165, 193.

63 Rady, *Nobility*, *Land and Service*, 151–56; Held, "Military Reform," 135–36.

conflicts against organized Ottoman armies. Various sources testify that Serbian Despots hired foreign mercenaries.[64] King Sigismund once pointed out that Despot Stefan paid them more than one golden florin per campaign. Namely, he stipulated a salary of one florin for mercenaries in 1432/1433.[65] He certainly used revenue from new taxes for this purpose.

The Ottoman threat was the reason for the expansion of the institution of *pronoia* in Serbian areas.[66] As was the case in Byzantium, Serbian rulers from the Nemanjić dynasty granted nobles this kind of estate in exchange for military service. Under this condition, *pronoia* differed from patrimony (*baština*), even when it could be passed on to an heir.[67] The *pronoia* retained these main characteristics during the time of the Lazarević and Branković dynasties.[68] This was the crucial reason why Serbian Despots gave *pronoiai* rather than patrimonies.[69] Thus, the prominent noble Logthete (chancellor) Stefan Ratković had more than 20 villages as pronoia before 1458. He did not have a patrimony.[70] For the sake of comparison, it should be noted that roughly 30 years earlier, the most powerful nobleman *Čelnik* (comes palatinus) Radič possessed a patrimony that consisted of around 60 villages.[71] The system of *pronoia* also expanded in Byzantium after 1371.[72]

It is impossible to estimate accurately the military potential of the Serbian state in the first half of the fifteenth century. The draft of the defense plan of King Sigismund from 1433 foresaw that the Serbian Despot would be obliged to equip 8,000 cavalrymen. Primarily, this calculation concerned his estates in Hungary.[73] According to one estimate, Despot Đurađ participated in the "Long campaign" with 8,000 warriors.[74] Allegedly, the despot's voivode Altoman led 12,000 soldiers during the campaign in Zeta in 1452. The members of this detachment also included Turks.[75]

64 Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium*, 183; Konastantin Filozof, "Život Stefana Lazarevića," 313, 319–20; Ćirković, "Cena najamnika," 16, 18; Veselinović, *Država srpskih despota,* 184–85.

65 Döry, Bónis and Bácskai, *Decreta Regni Hungariae*, 411; Ćirković, "Cena najamnika," 18.

66 Ostrogorski, *Pronija*, 149.

67 Ostrogorski, *Pronija*, 135–36; Bartusis, "Serbian pronoia," 191, 210.

68 Ivanović, "Pronija u državi srpskih despota," 326–32.

69 Ibid, 337.

70 Rački, "Prilozi za sbirku," 156–58.

71 Stojanović, "Stari srpski hrisovulji," 3–5; Ivanović, "Pronija u državi srpskih despota," 337.

72 Bartusis, *Land and Priviledge*, 551–58; Ostrogorski, *Pronija*, 109–11.

73 Held, "Military Reform," 136; Ćirković, "Cena najamnika," 18.

74 Iorga, *Notes et extraits* III, 109.

75 Spremić, *Despot Đurađ Branković*, 380–81.

To improve the defense of the state, Despot Stefan introduced significant changes to the local government system in the first decade of the fifteenth century. It should be underlined that this reform was not carried out simultaneously on the whole territory of the Lazarević family.[76] The new administrative units were organized according to the model of the former marches (*krajišta*) headed by voivodes.[77] The regions under their authority were called "vlasti." The head offices of these administrative units were usually in fortified towns.[78] The voivode was mentioned for the first time in a town in 1411.[79] Indeed, there was an important difference between the former administrators of marches and voivodes. The first were the most powerful noblemen in their marches, while the voivodes were appointed directly by the ruler, who could change them at any time.[80] These nobles lost the title of voivode after they left or were removed from office.[81] The military duties of new commanders were certainly primary. Unfortunately, the surviving sources do not provide much information about how they performed these obligations. The charter of Despot Stefan for the monastery of Great Lavra from 1427 confirms that the voivode led the army in his march.[82] In major towns such as Belgrade and Novo Brdo, they had assistants in military affairs who carried the title *the voivode of the tower* (*kulski vojvoda*).[83] Quite certainly they had similar responsibilities to defend the country as commanders of marches. In addition to military duties, the voivodes also had a range of civilian competencies. On the basis of the *Novo Brdo Legal Code* from 1412, one can conclude that the voivode decided in cases of criminal offenses concerning murder, robbery, banditry, burning, and kidnapping.[84] Together with authorities from other towns, he judged in civil litigations.[85] The regulations of the same code enumerate different revenues of the voivode from customs and court fines. Thus, the voivode received the entire amount of the fines for criminal offenses.

76 Ivanović, "Jedan pogled," 170–71.

77 Blagojević, "Krajišta srednjovekovne Srbije," 40, 42.

78 Stojanović, "Stari srpski hrisovulji," 3–6; Lascaris, "Actes serbes de Vatopedi," 184; Rački, "Prilozi za sbirku," 157–58; Dinić, "Vlasti za vreme Despotovine," 237–39, 242; Blagojević, "Krajišta srednjovekovne Srbije," 40; Blagojević, *Državna uprava*, 294; Veselinović, *Država srpskih despota,* 255.

79 Ćirković, Ćuk, and Veselinović, "Srbija u dubrovačkim testamentima," 39; Dinić, *Iz dubrovačkog arhiva*, 28; Dinić, *Za istoriju rudarstva*, 72.

80 Blagojević, "Krajišta srednjovekovne Srbije," 40–42,

81 Ivanović, "Jedan pogled," 171; Božić, "Zetske vojvode," 187–88.

82 Mladenović, *Povelje i pisma despota Stefana*, 260; Veselinović, *Država srpskih despota,* 165, 193.

83 Radojčić, *Zakon o rudnicima*, 51; Veselinović, "Vladarsko i komunalno" 134.

84 Radojčić, *Zakon o rudnicima*, 51; Ivanović, "Jedan pogled," 172–73.

85 Radojčić, *Zakon o rudnicima*, 52.

He shared other revenues with comes (*knez*) and the councils of burghers.[86] He also received many products made by craftsman free of charge.[87] It is most probable that other voivodes supported themselves in a similar way. Based on documents, one can conclude that the voivodes of Zeta (a coastal province of the Serbian Despotate) had special authorities which made them a kind of ruler's governors.[88] However, the new administrative organization was not introduced in the whole state. In the case of the Mačva area (the northwestern part of the Despotate), the reason may lie in the fact that Hungary claimed supreme authority over this area.[89] Furthermore, this region was less threatened by the Turks compared to other areas of the Serbian state. Also, the "vlasti" were not organized in the region of the Brankovićs because of its special status with regards to the Ottomans.[90] The institution of *kephale* remained until this area fell under the Turkish rule in 1455.[91] Some data indicate that this region also had a governor with similar authorities as the voivode of Zeta.[92] The main goal of such local government organization was to strengthen the defense of the country.[93]

The Serbian ruler paid great attention to the construction, restoration, and defense of the fortresses from the last decades of the fourteenth century. The dependent population in medieval Serbia had the obligation to build, renew, and defend fortifications.[94] Prince Lazar built Kruševac as his capital in the 1370s.[95] The construction of his foundation Ravanica together with the fortress was completed by the beginning of the following decade.[96] His nobleman Nenada constructed Koprijan south of Niš in 1371/1372.[97] The town of Stalać, northeast of Kruševac, was also built during his reign.[98] Furthermore, in 1387,

86 Ibid., 51–53, 55.

87 Radojčić, *Zakon o rudnicima*, 54; Veselinović, "Vladarsko i komunalno," 135.

88 Božić, "Zetske vojvode," 178–80; Spremić, *Despot Đurađ Branković*, 144.

89 Rački, "Prilozi za sbirku," 156–57; Mišić, "Posedi velikog logoteta," 12–13; Ivanović, "Jedan pogled," 176.

90 Dinić, "Vlasti za vreme Despotovine," 242–43.

91 Ibid., 243; Blagojević, *Državna uprava*, 274–77.

92 Ivanović, "Jedan pogled," 176–77; Spremić, *Despot Đurađ Branković*, 328, 354.

93 Dinić, "Vlasti za vreme Despotovine," 238; Blagojević, *Državna uprava*, 293; Ivanović, "Jedan pogled," 171, 177.

94 *Leksikon srpskog srednjeg veka*, s.v. "Gradozidanije,"; "Gradobljudenije," 125–26.

95 Spremić, "Kruševac u XIV i XV veku," 108–9; *Leksikon gradova i trgova*, "Kruševac," 152.

96 *Istorija srpskog naroda*, 168.

97 Tomović, Gordana, *Morfologija ćiriličkih natpisa*, 78–79; *Leksikon gradova i trgova*, "Koprijan," 140.

98 Minić, and Vukadin, *Srednjovekovni Stalać*, 7–11. 163.

Prince Lazar and Vuk Branković decreed that Ragusans, who had real estate in their towns, should have the obligation to build and defend fortresses.[99] The same regulations also applied at the time of their successors.[100] After the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, fortresses were even more important, because the Serbian army was not big enough against the Turks in the open field. Despot Stefan Lazarević made great efforts to building a Belgrade fort. His court was located in the Belgrade Upper Town.[101] Constantine the Philosopher, his biographer, wrote that the despot's capital was surrounded by rivers on three sides and that the town had two ports.[102] Belgrade was the last refuge of the despot when his brother Vuk attacked him, together with Turkish forces, in 1409.[103] The aforementioned charter of Stefan Lazarević for the monastery of Great Lavra from January 1427 indicates that the Despot was concerned about fortifying Belgrade until his death. This document envisaged that people from new estates of the monastery had to take part in the construction of his capital.[104] The villages that had this obligation were more than 150 kilometers away from Belgrade.[105] This example shows how this obligation could be difficult for the dependent population. One should not exclude the possibility that this obligation was transformed into a cash fee. From 1406/1407 to 1418, Despot Stefan built the monastery of Resava, his main foundation.[106] The monastery was inside the fort, which had eleven high and powerful towers.[107] We know less about the activities of the Branković family in this field during the same period. It is certain that they constructed the fortress of Vučitrn, where their court was located.[108]

According to the Treaty of Tata, Đurađ Branković had to hand over Belgrade to Hungarian King Sigismund at the end of September or beginning of October 1427, after the death of Despot Stefan Lazarević.[109] That is why he decided to build the new capital city of Smederevo. The founder's inscription on

99 Mladenović, *Povelje kneza Lazara*, 193; Šuica, and Golubović, "Povelja Vuka Brankovića," 101.

100 Veselinović, "Povelja despota Stefana Lazarevića," 157; Stojanović, *Stare srpske povelje i pisma*, 16.

101 Popović, *The Fortress of Belgrade*, 29–37; Popović, "Dvor vladara i vlastele," 44–45.

102 Konastantin Filozof, "Život Stefana Lazarevića," 286–87.

103 Ibid, 291–92; Purković, Miodrag, *Knez i despot Stefan Lazarević*, 88–91.

104 Mladenović, *Povelje kneza Lazara*, 260.

105 About the geographical location of these villages, see Blagojević, "Manastirski posedi kruševačkog kraja," 45.

106 Konastantin Filozof, "Život Stefana Lazarevića," 288–90; Stojanović, *Stari srpski rodoslovi i letopisi*, 224; Stanojević, Mirković and Bošković, *Manastir Manasija,* 2.

107 Stanojević, Mirković, and Bošković, *Manastir Manasija,* 11–20.

108 *Leksikon srpskog srednjeg veka*, s.v. "Вучитрн," 79.

109 Krstić, "Kralj Žigmund u Borči," 115, 118–26.

one town tower suggests that the construction of the fortress was completed in 1429/1430.[110] Historians assume that by that time the *Small Town* with six towers had been built.[111] The court of Đurađ Branković was there.[112] The *Great Town* with nineteen massive towers was erected by 1439.[113] The fortress had a triangle shape and was surrounded by the two rivers. The walls toward the land were over four meters thick, while the others were around two meters thick. The towers were over twenty meters high and more than eleven meters wide.[114] Smederevo was the largest Serbian medieval fortress according to the area it encompassed.[115] The construction of the fort left a negative trace in the folk tradition, which blamed Đurađ's spouse Irene for the great effort of the population during the works.[116] The strength of the fort was demonstrated during the Ottoman siege of 1439. The defenders handed over Smederevo to Turks after three months due to exhaustion and hunger.[117]

Finally, frescoes in Serbian monasteries also offer evidence of the militarization of Serbian society during the period of the Ottoman threat. Depictions of "holy warriors" were given a significant place on the walls of prominent monasteries. Sixteen holy warriors were painted in Ravanica, the foundation of Prince Lazar. Their number was particularly large compared to the total number of saint figures in the lower zone of the naos.[118] The protective aid of the holy warriors was also emphasized on the walls of other monasteries at the time which were built by monks or by Lazar's noblemen. The main foundation of Despot Stefan, the monastery of Resava, contains a depiction of fourteen holy warriors. On the basis of the selection of the figures, one can conclude that the despot regarded his father's monastery as a model. The unknown painters followed the Byzantine iconographic canon. As a result, the Resava holy warriors resemble Roman centurions more than they do Serbian soldiers of Despot Stefan. Nevertheless, some of the weapons, such as the

110 Tomović, *Morfologija ćiriličkih natpisa*, 110; Popović, *Smederevo Fortress*, 24–26; Spremić, *Despot Đurađ Branković*, 130

111 Popović, *Smederevo Fortress*, 22–32; Spremić, *Despot Đurađ Branković*, 126, 130.

112 Popović, *Smederevo Fortress*, 6, 8, 27, 30–31, 45, 50, 53, 55–56, 60, 62–64.

113 Popović, *Smederevo Fortress*, 57, 64; Spremić, *Despot Đurađ Branković*, 126, 130.

114 Popović, *Smederevo Fortress*, 22–29, 34–42; Spremić, *Despot Đurađ Branković*, 125–26.

115 *Istorija srpskog naroda*, 225.

116 Karadžić, *Srpske narodne pjesme*, 1–2; Spremić, *Despot Đurađ Branković*, 131.

117 Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium*, 177; Orbin, *Kraljevstvo Slovena*, 111; Stojanović, *Stari srpski rodoslovi i letopisi,* 232; Spremić, *Despot Đurađ Branković*, 241–15; Nikolić, *Vizantijski pisci o Srbiji,* 105–6, 110–12.

118 Marković, "Sveti ratnici iz Resave," 192–93, 195.

triangular shield, the mace, the saber, and the bow quiver, can be tentatively used to reconstruct the military equipment of Serbian warriors from that time.[119] Contemporary medieval armor is present in the images of the holy warriors from the Kalenić monastery.[120] Nun Jefimija in her literary work urged the Holy Prince to ask the holy warriors to help his sons Stefan and Vuk.[121]

Finally, the first half of the fifteenth century bore witness to a strengthening of chivalric culture in the Serbian state. Constantine the Philosopher, biographer of Stefan Lazarević, noted that one despot's knight won at a tournament at "the council of all princes."[122] It is assumed that this tournament was held in 1412 at the Hungarian royal court in Buda.[123] He also pointed out that the despot had the right to pronounce royal knights. According to him, these Hungarian noblemen were proud because Stefan gave them the marks of chivalry.[124] Also, Serbian versions of chivalrous narratives, such as *The Romance of Alexander the Great* and *The Romance of Troy*, were very popular in this period.[125]

The militarization measures failed to prevent the Serbian medieval state from falling under Ottoman rule in 1459.[126] However, the efforts of Serbian rulers had long-term consequences. As already mentioned, Turks took over some forms of Serbian military organization. The population of Vlachs had a significant military role in Ottoman border areas in the Balkans.[127] On the other hand, in 1463/1464, Hungarian King Matthias Corvinus (1458–1490) began to attract Serbian nobles to his territory and granted them estates.[128] In this way, the Hungarian ruler got warriors who knew the terrain under Turkish rule well.[129] Therefore it can be said that Serbs were a significant factor in the Ottoman-Hungarian wars.

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119 Ibid, 197–216.

120 Škrivanić, *Oružje u srednjovekovnoju*, 51, 61, 71, 89. 103–4, 116, 125, 128, 133, 143, 149.

121 Monahinja Jefimija, *Književni radovi*, 47–48.

122 Konastantin Filozof, "Život Stefana Lazarevića," 312.

123 Filipović, "Viteške svečanosti u Budimu," 285–304; Bojanin, *Zabave i svetkovine*, 356–57; Purković, Miodrag. *Knez i despot Stefan Lazarević*, 101–2; *Istorija srpskog naroda*, 87.

124 Konastantin Filozof, "Život Stefana Lazarevića," 312.

125 Pavlović, "Roman u staroj srpskoj," 12–13; Marinković, "Roman kao književni rod," 21–35; *Istorija srpskog naroda*, 340–41.

126 Spremić, *Despot Đurađ Branković*, 544–45.

127 Miljković-Bojanić, *Smederevski sandžak*, 227–41; Miljković, and Krstić, *Braničevo,* 62–64; Isailović, "Legislation Concerning the Vlachs," 35–40.

128 *Istorija srpskog naroda*, 376–78, 431; Krstić, "Which Realm Will You Opt For," 145–46, 149.

129 *Istorija srpskog naroda*, 379.

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# Notevole larghezza, notizie così gravi e gelose and un uomo che amava spacciarsi: Human Resources of Diplomatic Exchange of King Alfonso V of Aragon in the Balkans (1442–1458)*

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During his reign in Naples, between 1442 and 1458, King Alfonso V of Aragon exchanged a series of diplomatic communications with the Christian East, namely with Byzantine Emperors John VIII (1425–1448) and Constantine XI Dragases (1449–1453) and their close kin, but also with the most prominent feudal lords of the Balkan peninsula (Herzeg Stjepan Vukčić Kosača, George Castrioti Skanderbey, etc.). The basic historical details of these missions are largely known to modern scholarship, which usually regards them as part of the king's attempt to secure individual allies in his planned anti-Ottoman crusade and expansion towards the imperial throne in Constantinople. Scholarship, however, is limited on the details of these relations, partly due to the fragmentary nature of the sources and partly because of the missions' secret character. In this paper, I am attempting to learn more about King Alfonso's attention to the Balkans by observing the human resources which sustained not just his missions, but also other forms of the kingdom's exchange across the Adriatic. The inquiry, which is based on the study of the available prosopographic data concerning individuals who appear to have been prominent in this, indicates that the basic circle which sustained this process consisted of Catalan bankers and highly ranked notaries, all resident in Naples since Alfonso's access to the throne of the kingdom in 1442, but this circle also received several local commoners loyal to the king, with Simone Caccetta as their leading figure. His networks show that the king's diplomatic exchange with the Balkans was largely characterized by a specific form of corruption, by which the bankers who invested their money in the king's diplomatic activities in the Balkans received lucrative positions in the royal customs and local administration of Puglia, which they further used to enhance their access to the kingdom's economic exchange with the Balkans and, consequently, to augment their wealth. This process was heavily scrutinized by Simone Caccetta, who involved in it an entire circle of small traders and soldiers directly loyal to him, thus affirming their positions but also his own position in the Aragon service and Aragon courtly society.

Keywords: Alfonso V of Aragon, Aragon Naples, diplomacy, Medieval Balkans, feudal lords in the medieval Balkans, prosopography

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The interest taken by King Alfonso V Aragon (1442–1458) in the eastern Mediterranean, a topic familiar to modern historiography, is most commonly perceived as an important element of his "imperialism."[1] Centrally focused on his plans to defend and restore Constantinople from the Ottomans and to maintain commercial ties with the Fatimids of Egypt and other Ottoman rivals in the East (see Map 1),[2] Alfonso's political ambitions, however, can be debated for their


Map 1. Europe in the 1440s (Map drawn by Béla Nagy)

1 Among numerous interpretations, I am referring to the ones that reflect the most common positions found in the modern historiography: based upon the documents of the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón/ Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó in Barcelona, Cerone, "La politica," XXVII: 2 (1902), 380–XXVII: 3 (1902), 555–634 and XXVIII: 1 (1903), 154–212; Spremić, "Vazali," 455–46; Ryder, "The Eastern Policy, 7–26; Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous*; Marinescu, *La politique orientale*, 95–99, 119–24; Bisson, *The Medieval Crown*, 144–46; Spremić, "Alfonso il Magnanimo, 741–53; Navarro Sorni, *Calixto III Borja*; Spremić, "Balkanski vazali," 355–58; Ryder, *The Wreck of Catalonia*, 28, 44; Abulafia, *The Western Mediterranean Kingdoms*, 204–6, 211; Sabaté i Curull, "The ports of the medieval Adriatic, 11–23; Aloisio, "Alfonso V and the anti-Turkish crusade, 64–74. Cf. Cuadrada Majó, "Política italiana de Alfonso V de Aragón (1420–1442)," 269–309. For Alfonso's relations with other parts of the East, including Ethiopia, which his documents identified as the mythical kingdom of Prester John, see Cerone, "La politica," vol. 27: 1, 20–88; Garretson, "A Note on the Relations," 37–44; Salvadore, *The African Prester John and the Birth of Ethiopean-European Relations*, 36–53; Figliuolo, "La Terrasanta nel quadro della politica orientale di Alfonso V," 484–515.

2 Alfonso's turn to the East as the part of his plans for the restoration of Constantinople was mentioned in his letter to Francesco I Sforza, Duke of Milan from February 14, 1458. Cf. Cerone, "La politica," vol.

meager results.[3] This is particularly the case with the Balkan peninsula, where he made various attempts to tie the local lords of the region to the Kingdom in Naples, even though he was facing diverse political challenges from Florence, the Kingdom of Hungary, and the Republic of Venice, all of which were aspiring to assert control and influence over the region (see Map 2). Alfonso's ambitions in the Balkan peninsula can also be debated from the perspective of the primary


Map 2. Southern Balkans in 1410. At: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_the_southern_Balkans,_1410.svg, Copyright: Cplakidas. Licence: Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International

28, 159–60, also referring to his earlier letter to Duke of Genoa on August 5, 1455, in which he proposed first to sort his Italian affairs before turning against the Ottomans; also, cf. letter to Pope Nicholas dated September 8, 1453 advocating a Christian coalition and its anti-Ottoman agenda. More on this, Marinesco, "Le Pape Calixte III," 77–97; Ryder, *Alfonso*, 45; 294 and n. 110; 295–97; 304–12; Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 67; Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 4; 19.

3 Ryder, *The Eastern Policy*, 7–25; Setton, *Papacy and the Levant*, vol. 2, 170–71.

evidence, since the sources attesting to his interest in this region give only the basic details of its chronology and prosopography, largely hiding the details of its content behind claims of diplomatic confidentiality.[4] To find out more about how the king's diplomacy towards the Balkans was modeled, in this paper, I focus on the structures that sustained his diplomatic activities in this region. What were the human resources with which the king attempted to assert his interests in the Balkans, and how did their use reflect his ambitions in this region?

## *The Diplomacy of Alfonso V of Aragon in the Balkans (1442–1458): A Prosopographic Approach to its Structure and Dynamics*

In focusing on the prominent figures of Aragon diplomacy and how they contributed to the king's political presence in the Balkans, it is important to note that the primary evidence on this issue is greatly limited due to the destruction of the Neapolitan State archives (*Archivio di Stato di Napoli*) in 1943. Hence, a more detailed approach can be made by studying some particular figures involved in Alfonso's diplomacy. This approach focuses on the recorded micro-details of these people's lives and career agencies, which might, at first sight, give the impression of a patchy descriptive narrative concerning some outstanding individuals. However, when these people's daily routines and connections mentioned in the remaining sources are put together and compared to other materials concerning Aragon rule in Naples, they offer a more detailed picture of the resources on which the king's diplomacy replied in the Balkan peninsula.

Another important assumption for the analysis of the Aragon diplomacy in the Balkans is that it had a varying dynamics. Its key stages were largely influenced by the Ottoman advancement in the region and the attempts of Christian Europe to prevent these advances, but it was also shaped in part by the king's relations with the major Christian powers of the time, namely the Papacy, the Republic of Venice, Florence, and Milan. Certainly, more intensive stages of these relations were the periods around the Varna "Crusade" (1444), its aftermath, and the second Kosovo Polje battle (1447–1448), the final Ottoman offensive against Constantinople (1451–1453) and its aftermath, when Popes Nicholas V and Calixtus III (1455–1458) called for the restoration of the Byzantine Empire. Each of these stages, however, reflected different political aims of the

4 For his documents, see Cerone, "La politica," vol. 27 and 28. For a wider interpretation, see Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. 2, 283–84; Gegaj, *L'Albanie et l'invasion turque*, 83, proposing to focus on the political impediments which the King faced from the rulers of Italy and the Christian West.

participating Christian forces, so the king's diplomatic efforts in the Balkans varied accordingly in their structures and agendas. The prosopography of his missions shows that his focus in 1443–1444 was on the Byzantine Palaiologoi in Constantinople and on the Peloponnese, from where he received Greek diplomats who were asking for help and support (the "incoming" diplomatic activities for the Aragon administration),[5] while in the 1450s, it was the Aragon representatives who were more frequent visiting individual lords of the Adriatic and its hinterland in the Balkans ("outgoing diplomacy"), attempting to attract them more formally to the Aragon throne.

## *The Diplomacy of Alfonso V of Aragon in the Balkans (1442–1458): Emissaries and Visitors*

Certainly, the most visible structure of the Aragon apparatus that dealt with the Balkans was the king's diplomats.[6] The ambassadors from Aragon Naples to the region came with particular frequency in 1451–1453, when they sought to establish firm alliances with individual lords in order to ensure background loyalty and support for the "rescue" of Constantinople from the Ottomans.[7] These embassies were highly confidential, so it is of no wonder that the Aragon diplomats sent to the region in this period were figures who had the king's greatest confidence and who had been chosen from his closest entourage. Most of them were Catalans by origin, some even still linked with Barcelona or other parts

5 On major embassies from the Palaiologoi in this period, Cerone, "La politica," XXVII: 1, 431 (November 27, 1444); 436 (May 26, 1447); 442 (August 30, 1448); 449 (August 22, 1448). For visits of Demetrios' man and Fonoleda's interaction with him, Cerone, "La politica," XXVII: 3 568, n. 1 (January 18, 1451), etc. These men were followed by envoys of the local feudal lords, particularly active among whom were those sent by Herzeg Stjepan Vukčić Kosača, Albanian leader George C. Scanderbeg, and "Latin" rulers of Greece, King of Cyprus John II of Lusignan, John Assanes Zaccharia of Achaia, and Leonardo III Tocco of the Ionian islands. Some of these visits have been well-researched, cf. the relations with Scanderbeg, Muhaj, "La política oriental de Alfonso V de Aragao," 237–48, but need to be more substantially compared with the pontifical policies in the region, cf. Gill, "Pope Calixtus III and Scanderbeg,", 534–62. In the same period, Alfonso kept close contacts with Ragusa and Croatian Frangipanes, cf. Thallóczy and Barabás, *A Frangepán család oklevéltára*, vol. 2, XXXIX–XL; Thallóczy, *Studien* (August 5, 1453), 393–94; Spremić, "Ragusa tra gli Aragonesi di Napoli e i Turchi," 187–97.

6 Dover, "Royal Diplomacy in Renaissance Italy," 57, notes the comparative "backwardness" of Naples' diplomacy in comparison with the glory of other centers in Renaissance Italy, explaining it with a "lack of the narrative of the emergence of 'new diplomacy.'"

7 As pointed out by Ryder, *Alfonso*, 300, Alfonso's claims to Hungary deriving from his takeover of the Angevin throne in Naples were evoked in 1447 by János Hunyadi, who attempted to create an anti-Ottoman coalition, but failed largely because of Alfonso's dissensions with Florence and Venice.

of the Aragon dominion in the western Mediterranean. For their diplomatic missions, they were prepared and surveyed by the royal council,[8] which checked various conditions according to which individual lords could become the formal vassals of the Aragon Kingdom in Naples.[9] The most notable figure among these envoys was Alfonso's protonotary, Arnaldo Fonoleda (*Arnau Fenolleda*), renown as the king's treaty-maker for his detailed follow-up of the kingdom's political and foreign affairs. Originating from a Catalan notary family of Barcelona and initially educated by the king's main secretary Johannes Olzina (*Joan Olzina*) (who largely focused his attention on Sicily), Fonoleda accompanied Alfonso on his Italian travels, acting on some occasions as his creditor, too.[10] Between 1444 and 1455, Fonoleda surveyed or wrote the majority of Alfonso's communications with the Balkan lords, and in some situations, he even appeared there as the king's envoy.[11] Another distinguished Catalan in Alfonso's notary service who participated in the king's diplomatic missions relating to the Balkans was Francesco Mortorell (*Francesc Martorell*). His family also had origins in Catalonia, namely the juridical district *Sant Feliu de Llobregat* near Barcelona, from where it further expanded to Morella (today's region of Castillón) and other parts of the

8 On their embassies in the Balkans, as based upon the evidence of the Archivio della Corona de Aragon, see Thallóczy, *Studien*, nos. XXVII–XXIX (February 15–19, 1444), 356–63; no. XXXV (October 16, 1446), 370; LII (September 11, 1450), 384–85; LVIII (November 10, 1452), 389–91, LXIII (June 1, 1454), 394–400; LXXVII (August 3, 1457), 414–15. Ćirković, *Herceg Stjepan Vukčić Kosača*, 213.

9 In 1451 and 1452, Fonoleda took part in several treaties concluded between Alfonso and the lords of the Balkans: with Herzeg Stjepan Vukčić Kosača, with the ambassadors of Scanderbeg (March 26, 1451), and with Latin lords in Greece, Leonardo III Tocco (Zečević, "Confirmation grant of King Alfonso V of Aragon," 9–21) and Michael Assanes Zaccharia. A similar arrangement was made with Demetrios Palaiologos in the Peloponnese, whom Alfonso, though, did not condition with vassalage, but rather promised his help in exchange for the presence of his navy in the waters of the Peloponnese and Ionian Sea. See, Cerone, "La politica," XXVII: 3, 623; Ćirković, *Herceg*, 74–75; Ryder, *Alfonso*, 303–5.

10 His family originated from Barcelona's urban officials, and his father Francesco was also a notary. Arnaldo's career seems to have started around 1436, when he began to follow the king on his royal itinerary and diplomatic travel, thus becoming the king's most confident diplomatic secretary (cf. his use of formula "*Rex mihi mandavit*"), leaving his master Olzina to control the regular procedures of grant-issuing in Naples. Ryder, *The Kingdom*, 230–32 notes that he held several other offices, and he was mentioned in Sicily in 1448 as the general bailiff of Catalonia. The names of the king's favorites and institutions active in his diplomacy towards the Balkans will be mentioned in this paper in their original forms, as quoted by the primary sources; the italicized forms indicate either specific forms mentioned in the sources or their Catalan versions, also documented in the primary materials. The names of the most notable rulers and highest royal dignitaries will be used in their English forms.

11 An example of his direct participation in Alfonso's secret diplomatic affairs comes from Cerone, "La politica," 27: 3 (May 24, 1453), 621, when Fonoleda was mentioned as just about to come in person to Constantinople and deliver the king's letter to Constantine Palaiologos. This never happened, since only five days later Constantinople was already in Ottoman hands.

Kingdom of Valencia and the Baleares. In the mid-1440s, Mortorell recorded Alfonso's diplomatic activities with Herzeg Stjepan Vukčić Kosača (1435–1466). He then advanced to the administration of the kingdom's customs, where he became a portulan master (before 1456/7), and, in this year, the "*baiulus* of the Jews."[12] Other, less elevated notaries of the Catalan origin involved in Alfonso's diplomacy dealing with the Balkans were *Arnaldo di Castello* (1447) and *Giovanni Felin* (1451).[13]

Local commoners from the Italian towns were also deployed in some of these missions. Among them, a notable figure was *Filipo Pantella* of Piacenca, the king's envoy, mentioned in Albania in June 1451.[14] His recruitment seems to have greatly relied on his social connections and familial links across the Adriatic. Pantella's brother traded in Ragusa with acorns, while several of his relatives resided in Ragusa's immediate neighborhood, on the island of Curzola, in the town of Cattaro, and at marketplaces at Narenta and Gabella, all ensuring regular trade exchange between the two sides of the Adriatic and focusing in particular on the shores of the Aragon kingdom in Puglia and the ports of Bari and Barletta.[15] Filipo Pantella was a frequent traveler of the era, and he maintained close links even with Florentine traders whom Alfonso had expelled from the kingdom between 1447 and 1453 during his conflict with the Florence's then ally, the Republic of Venice. Such connections with "adversaries" furnished Pantella with various news and intelligence which the king certainly needed in order to plan his activities in the region.[16]

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12 Thallóczy, *Studien*, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX (all on February 15–19, 1444), 356–63; *The Jews in Sicily*, vol. 18, 12030.

13 Under his authority, in 1446 we find one other notary in charge of fixing the king's correspondence with Herzeg Kosača, an Arnaldo di Castello, Thallóczy, *Studien*, no. XLV (July 24, 1447), 378.

14 On his diplomatic travel, see Cerone, "La politica," vol. XXVII: 3, 585 (October 17, 1451) and ibid. (December 10, 1451); Pantella's fixing of the arrangement with Golem Arianiti took place on June 7, 1451, Cerone, "La politica," XXVIII: 1, 176–77. This document was signed by Pantella and sealed with the Arianiti seal.

15 While the Pantellas originated from Piacenza, his kinsmen Pietro (perhaps his nephew, as suggested by Hrabak, "Trgovinske veze Pezara i Dubrovnika," 26) traded grain and other food with Ragusa, as is known from the correspondence of Giuliano Marcovaldi of Ragusa. Pietro was a tintore in Ragusa, interested to commercialize his products, with factories which colored and sold textiles in Trani, San Severo, San Giovanni Rotondo, Manfredonia and Fortore, and also to Florentines Girolamo di Giovanni Marchionni e Cristofano di Giovanni, see more in *Il Carteggio Marcovaldi*. Other Pantella's relatives operating in the East Adriatic cf. Dinić, *Iz dubrovačkog arhiva*, vol. III. On Peter Pantella and his connections, see Dinić Knežević, *Petar Pantela*.

16 Among other confident envoys of Alfonso, we also find Marquise of Gerace, dispatched to visit his own grandson Leonardo III Tocco and his neighbor, Assanes Zaccharia (September 4, 1454 and April, 5,

To accomplish his diplomatic agenda, the king occasionally also relied on incoming ambassadors and envoys sent by his counterparts to negotiate with him. Some of these envoys were destined to visit other European courts too (Milan, Burgundy, Habsburgs), and with such mandates, they represented a rich source of intrinsic diplomatic information collected from multiple parts of the Christian West. On several occasions, the collaboration of these envoys with Alfonso seems to have been arranged by his effective bribes,[17] while some of these informants may also have been motivated to collaborate because of personal loyalties and familial connections they had with the Aragon realm. One such case was that of the envoy of the Byzantine Emperor, a certain Pietro Rocco (*Ritzo*, *Rotzo*) of Salerno (October 12, 1443), whose close family originated from the Aragon-governed Italian South,[18] like that of *Giovanni Spagnolus*, diplomatic representative of Constantine Palaiologos in early 1452, whose family was scattered around the Aragon domain between Catalonia and Italy.[19] Other informants of the king from the Byzantine East were Greeks or Italians who served various Latin lords in Greece, as well as the Palaiologoi

1455), Cerone, "La politica," XXVII: 3, 624. This communication was done orally, and we know that the king received the news with the utmost joy and pleasure.

17 Cerone, "La politica," XXVII: 3, 596, quoting Angelo di Constanzo, who noted Alfonso's exceptional preference for spending money on spies, "more than any other ruler." In some cases, it seems that the exquisite gifts Alfonso gave to some incoming envoys were also part of these bribes. Cf. Cerone, "La politica," XXVII: 4 (January 29, 1454), 817, according to which the king prepared 20 falcons which his envoy Johannes Claver was to deliver to Giorgio Donna of Candia, while on August 14, 1454 (Cerone, 27: 4, 825–6), he ordered vestments and boots for a Demetrios Caleba, the "camerlench of the Greek Emperor." As pointed out by Ryder, *Alfonso*, 294, by October 1453, this help had already been exhausted, to the point that Alfonso foresaw needing three years of taxes to restore his finances and prepare his military for another potential conflict.

18 Del Treppo, *I mercanti Catalani*, 491. Cf. Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant*, 291–92. A possibility to connect this figure with a family from Salento was hinted at by from *Prosopographisches Lexikon,* vol. 10. no. 24305, 122 (Ῥιτζος), referring to a Peter Rizzo of Salento from the same period, as from de Capmany y Montpalau, *Memorias históricas,* t. II, 218, 231, 266, 273: append. 61, 66, showing the presence of the Catalan consuls in Constantinople in 1428, 1434, 1437, 1445, 1448 and 1453.

19 *Spagnolus* was mentioned in several relations of the court in Naples between mid-1452, for instance in Cerone, "La politica," XXVII: 3 (August 30, 1452), until August 30, 1452. The family's Spanish origins are documented by ASNA, Regia Camera della sommaria, Processi, Pandetta generale o seconda, sec. XVI–1808, busta 386, fasc. 9432 (*Spanuolo Giovanni Glorio, commune di Barca*). In 1506, a Giovanni *Spagnuolo* was mentioned with several other Aragon officials in Abbruzzo, while resisting Ottoman attacks on these shores in 1506, as from ASNA, Regia Camera della Sommaria, Processi, Pandetta generale o seconda sec. XVI–1808; busta 509, fasc. 15305. Some Spaniards were mentioned in the early 1440s in Andrubitsa in the Peloponnese, as from *Prosopographisches Lexikon*, vol. 4, 132, no. 8315 (a Niccola 'Ισπανὸς in 1440). For Frapperio's presence, see Cerone, "La politica," XXVII: 3 (March 30, 1453), 611.

in the Peloponnese.[20] Among these figures, a remarkable one was Athanasius Laskaris, the offspring of a high aristocratic Byzantine family who resided on the Ionian islands at the time, which were governed by Latin lord Leonardo III Tocco (1448/9–1479).[21] Laskaris was recorded in Naples in 1451 while representing Despot Demetrios Palaiologos (1449–1460), on which occasion he promised loyalty to the Aragon king in the capacity of a subject of Leonardo III Tocco.[22] The case of *Ioannes Torsellus* was similar. Torsellus was an envoy of the Byzantine Emperor originating from a Venetian family which exported wine from the Greek islands to the European West. Alfonso's officials designated Torsellus as a man ready to show off and plot, hinting at his openness to share information about the situation in Byzantium, but also strategic information he exchanged with Western Christian rulers he met on his travels, such as the Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good (1419–1467).[23] Between 1455 and 1458,

20 On February 25, 1448, a Manuel Disipatus was mentioned as the Byzantine imperial envoy in Naples; some time earlier, in 1435, he seems to have been one of the attendees of the Council of Basel, cf. Landon, *Manual of Councils of the Holy Catholic Church*, 85. His noble title was stressed in his diplomatic credentials and Alfonso's reports on this (*nobilem militem Manuelem disipatum ad vestram claritudinom legatura, mittimus* […]). More on his diplomatic activity in *Prosopographisches Lexikon*, vol. 3, nos. 5540, 54 Δισύπατος: 1437–1448; in 1437 meeting Emperor Sigismund in Eger; 1438 he was in Venice, and in 1449 in Naples, cf. V. Laurent, *Les Memoires de Sylvestre Syropoulo*, 180; 182; 274–78; 300.

21 This is, apparently, a branch of the renown Byzantine ruling family (Laskaris/Tzamantouros). See more in *ODB*, vol. 2, 1180–1181; Trapp, "Downfall and Survival of the Laskaris Family,", 45–49. The family's connections with the Venetians and Naples through the Peloponnese has been noted in *Prosopographisches Lexikon*, vol. 6, no. 14521, p. 145: Kaballarios in Morea, 1450, 1451; Archon; οἰκεῖος of Demetrios Palaiologos, while the activities of Athanasius were recorded in 1450–1451 also in Venice, Florence and Ferrara. On Athanasius' letter to the Florentines, see Spremić, "Vazali," 462–64. In 1672, a Lascaris Giovanni Battissta, was mentioned as a Fisico Regio, as from ASNA, Regia Camera della Sommaria, Processi, Pandetta generale o seconda, XVI–1808, unità 860.

22 On his mission, see Cerone, "La politica," XXVII: XXX, 572 and 573 (January 18, 1451). Apart from him and Manuel Disipatos, other envoys coming from the Palaiologoi were Andronikos Leander, and John Apokaukes. Among the Latin emissaries from the East, in April 1447, we find Filip Celano, ambassador of the King of Cyprus and Michael Assanes (September 4, 1454 and April 5, 1455), a liege of Demetrios Palaiologos (1455), and Assanes' man, Francesco d'Ariano, as noted in Cerone, "La politica," XXVII: 4 (April 5, 1455), 835; this person was Δαριάνω Φραγγίσκος = Francesco d'Ariano, μισὺρ Captain of the Tocco stronghold on Zakynthos in 1461, MM, *AD*, vol. 5, 69; cf. for a Jacob Ariano under Carlo I Tocco (b. c. 1375–d. c. 1429), Zečević, "The Italian Kin of the Tocco Despot", 243–55. For a *Todoros*, captain of Krujë, also registered as an envoy in Naples. See *Prosopographisches Lexikon*, addenda zu fascikel 1–12 (1995), no. 93405, p. 36.

23 Cerone, "La politica," XXVII: 3 (May 26, 1447), 439–40. *Torsellus*, calling himself a "chevalier, serviceman and chamberlain of Emperor in Constantinople," acted as the Byzantine envoy among the Ottomans allegedly for twelve years. For his advice to the Duke of Burgundy on how the West should confront the Ottomans, see *Curiosa lettera di Giovanni Torzelo a Filippo di Borgogna,* 263–68. The Aragon reception of him was far more negative, as he was noted as a man who liked to show off, ready to provide

Alfonso's diplomats made wide use of the Greek Humanist Nicolaus Secundinos (*Sagundinus*) (1402?–1464), then subject to Venetian dominion in Crete, who visited Naples in the entourage of Matthew Palaiologos Asen, governor of Corinth at the time (1454–1458). In Naples, where his translation of Plutarch had already been highly appreciated, Secundinos' practical knowledge of the Ottomans and their military resources was inserted into Panormita's translation of Onosander's Strategikos, while Secundinos' glorifications of the king's model of "power pedagogy" influenced the education of future Christian rulers.[24]

## *The Diplomacy of Alfonso V of Aragon in the Balkans (1442–1458): Building up Human Resources*

To support his emissaries to the Balkans and to reward his informants from the Balkans, King Alfonso had to expand his material resources significantly. This is why, in the early 1450s, he started reinforcing ship-building in Naples' marina, developing from 1452 another new ship-building facility in Trani, where galleys and caravels were built for traffic across the Adriatic. The funds for this endeavor were provided by the Aragon *Escribano de ración*, a royal office surveying the king's expenditures (including those in the Balkans), tightly controlled by the king's loyal Catalans.[25] Similarly to a model previously set by Angevin rulers Charles II (1285–1309) and Robert the Wise (1309–1343), who, at the beginning of the fourteenth century used Florentine banking finances (largely those of Niccolo Acciauoli, their renown Florentine banker-ally) when planning their "Crusading" attempts on Sicily and in the Byzantine East, to finance his activities in the Balkans, the Aragon king turned to the banking institutions of Naples. Since 1442, these institutions had largely been held by his Catalan compatriots, who, in exchange for the money, received important privileges and posts in the royal administration, thus infiltrating the kingdom's bureaucracy.

intelligence but also do many other actions which enabled secret double diplomacy. While in Naples, Torsellus was seen as a mirror of Alfonso's main diplomat involved in the affairs on the Apennines, Luiz des Puig. A person of the same name was mentioned in Τοφτζέλος, *Prosopographisches Lexikon*, vol. 12. no. 29144. p. 22. *Torcello*?; *Turtzelos*, as selling wine in Venice in 1470; Schreiner, Texte zur spat-byzantinischen Finanz-und Wirtsschaftsgeschitche, 4/2, 41, 44, 53.

24 *Ad serenissimum principem et invictissimum regem Alphonsum Nicolai Sagundini oratio*. This model of Alfonso is particularly apparent in the depiction of the Archduke of Austria in his *Elegiarum de rebus gestis archiducum Austriae libri duo*. On Alfonso's propaganda that followed his policy, see Delle Donne, *Alfonso il Magnanimo e l'invenzione dell'Umanesimo monarchico*.

25 Ryder, *The Kingdom of Naples*, 295.

There, they further privatized their new positions, using them to augment their private cash flows. Particularly influential figures in this circle were several bankers who maintained close familial and business connections with Barcelona and some other parts of the Aragon dominion (e.g. Sicily), while leading their businesses in Naples. One of them was Piero Cimart (*Piro Cimert, Pere Cimert*), whose wealth had originally relied upon his trading links with the knights of St. John, and a bank he had established in Naples around the time when Alfonso Aragon came to power (1442).[26] Cimart was exceptionally loyal to Alfonso, and he financed the king's takeover of the throne in Naples from the Balzo Orsini rival fraction. Thus, it is not surprising that, in 1447, after the king expelled the Florentine merchants who had previously credited the throne (1447–1452) from Naples, Cimart took on the supply of the king's larger credits.[27] Specifically in Alfonso's Balkan affairs, in 1451, Cimart financed the royal gifts to Andreas, Bishop of Albania, assigning, on one occasion, 72 ducats to cover the purchase of luxurious garments for the Bishop and 25 ducats for his *salvus conductus* to Albania.[28] In the same year, Cimart also provided 500 ducats in cash to bribe Athanasius Lascaris, the aforementioned Tocco subject from the Ionian islands, then in the service of Despot Demetrios Palaiologos.[29]

Yet the key figure to assume control of the royal finances and the king's policy in the Balkans was an Italian from the local neighborhood of Trani,

26 Cerone, "La politica," 27: 3, 566–68, about his property and citizenship status in Barcelona, as well as his connections with the Order of St. John. His wife was *Sibilla*, and they had a daughter named *Eulalia*, married to a *Bartomeu Simo*. His property in Barcelona consisted of a corridor de canvi of three houses in the street of *Sant Cugat alcarred d'en Ombau* (today's *carrer de Gombau*); he also had some land in parish of Cencen de Sarria, near the Monastery of Santa Maria de Jesus, and a corridor *d'orella* in the parish of *Santa Maria de Sants al Iloc* which was called *Los Pins d'en Llull* and was governed by the Hospitallers. This may explain his immediate connection with them. In 1451, Cimart was active in financing the king's relations with the Balkan lords, most notably Albanian envoys, but also a *Guido Storjone*, a man of the Despot of Arta (Leonardo III Tocco) who was recorded in Naples, Athnasio Laskaris (*lasqujrj*), Cerone, "La politica," XXVII: 3, 566. His banking activities were aligned with Alfonso's main banking liaison, the institution held by Giovanni Miraballo, through which his main courtiers were paid. Navarro Espinach, "Las elites financieras de la monarquía aragonesa 23, n. 41.

27 On October 17, 1451, Cimart negotiated with a Florentine merchant named *Damianus Lotteri* (who seems to have originated from Piedmont), even though the Florentines had already been banned from Naples. As noted in Cerone, "La politica," XXVII: 1, 71 and 75, Cimart also financed diplomats communicating between Egypt and Ethiopia. In this, he cooperated with another Catalan, Andreas Ferrer, who carried diplomatic gifts to Africa.

28 This kind of financing was applied to a number of traders whose contributions were always requested when the king had to regulate the debt to his creditors, cf. Cerone "La politica," XXVII: 3 (October 17, 1451), 572.

29 Cerone, "La politica," XXVII: 3 (January 18 and 28, 1451), 573, and ibid. (October 17, 1451), 586.

Simone Caccetta (*Caczetta*, *Cazzetta*). He started his career in the early 1420s[30] as an ambitious commoner on a temporary juridical post in the small provincial center of Trani.[31] Caccetta's swift ascent certainly coincided with the beginning of Alfonso's rule in the Italian South (1442), when he, like Cimart, supported the king against Giovanni Antonio Balzo Orsini (1393?–1463).[32] Demonstrating exceptional skills in stirring urban uprisings and creating civil unrest against his master's rivals,[33] Caccetta gained lavish profits from his loyalty (Figs. 1–3), first with the position as Trani's notary,[34] then with a royal donation of an important hereditary income of 1/3 of taxes to iron and steel circulated through this town. By the end of the 1440s, Caccetta can be seen as financing the king with 3,000 ducats, for which he received the influential position of the *magistro portolano e secreto per la Puglia e Capitanata*.[35] From this position, he was able to control royal diplomatic communication with the Balkan lords directly,[36] supplying, for instance in 1452, a "rescue" operation for Herzeg Stjepan Vukčić Kosača, when

Figure 1. Palazzo Cacceta, Trani, Italy – 15th c. (detail), as from https://www.tranilive.it/news/cultura/674050/arnia-simone-caccetta-lamicizia-con-pietro-palagano-e-la-sua-ascesa-socio-politica, n.c.

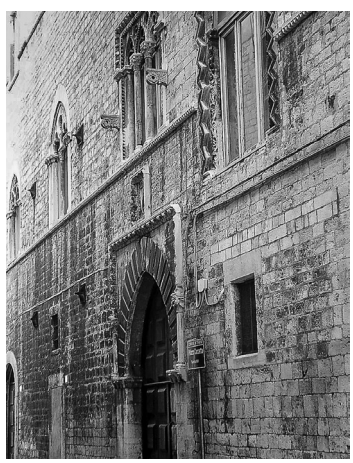

Figure 2. Palazzo Cacceta, Trani, Italy – 15th c. (detail), as from downloaded from https://mapio.net/pic/p-15052658/ (©Davide Salieva)

30 His origins in Trani cannot be traced back long in time, hence some assume that he may have possibly come from Calabria, cf. Pilato, "Simone Caccetta."

31 Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous*, 273–90.

32 Latanzio, and Varanini, *I centri minori italiani nel tardo medioevo*, 383.

33 *Il Libro Rosso della città di Trani*, 25.

34 "Frammenti di Cedole della Tesoreria di Alfonso I," 108 (December 21, 1449).

35 Frammento del Registro Curie Summariae," 143–44. For his activities during the early 1450s, see *Il Registro della Cancellaria di Alfonso d'Aragona*, 111–12; 238–39; 302–4; 311–12; 330; 336–37.

36 In 1452, he was mentioned as collecting the toll on silver and iron in Trani, cf. Ryder, *Alfonso*, 259, n. 4. Ryder, *The Kingdom of Naples*, 345 n. 143, discussing his first mention in this capacity on June 9, 1449.

Figure 3. Palazzo Cacceta, Trani, Italy – 15th c., as from https://www.salentoacolory.it/trani-viaggio-nel-medioevo/ by Salentoacolory

Kosača claimed his town of Novi was isolated and called for help to reinforce its defenses.[37] In April 1453, Caccetta's finances backed his personal participation in Alfonso's diplomatic negotiations with Manuel Angellos, envoy of Despot Thomas Palaiologos (1428–1460) of the Peloponnese, when he was also in charge of providing the despot additional supplies.[38]

37 Thallóczy, *Studien* (November 10, 1452), 389–91; Ćirković, *Herceg*, 154–218.

38 Simone Caccetta was mentioned in documents for the first time on September 13, 1423, when he acted as a giudice upon a contract, replacing his colleague who had just died. On December 27, 1437 he received a hereditary 1/3 customs on taxed iron and steel in Trani, which seems to coincide with his participation in a local uprising (December 5) organized by the local noble Palagano, who favored Alfonso. In 1449, Caccetta was nominated *maestro portolano e secreto per la Puglia e Capitanata*, to receive the title of *miles* and *regius consiliaris* by 1450. His advancement is well-reflected in a palace and several houses he built in Trani and Molfetta, as well as in his daughters' marriages: Restituta to Palamede Pignatelli, Pascarella to Ettore Zurlo (later to Giovanello Caracciolo), and Angelella in 1452 to Giacomuccio Barille. In 1456, he took a feudum in Vieste in exchange for 10,000 ducats with Neapolitan banker Petro Lomaro, and he also received fiscal income from Trani. He helped the advancement of his brother *Baldassare*, who was the captain of Molfetta and custom officer in Giovinazzo. Balthazar was violent, and his office met with many complaints, which he seems to have evaded based of the fact that he financed the armament of one galleon dispatched to attack the Ottomans (*Guerra da corsa*). Caccetta had another brother, Angelo, whom he also employed in customs until 1456. Following Alfonso's death, he rebelled against King Ferrante, for which he was imprisoned. Eventually, he sought the protection of Giovanni Antonio Orsini, together with his son Nardò, and he was stationed in Bisceglia, where he organized partisan groups against Ferrante. By July 9, 1459, he was mentioned as dead. The still visible material assets of Caccetta's power are his palace (1456) in Trani's Via Ognisanti 5, facing the palace of the local knight Giovanello Sifola, and the town's piazza St. Marco. For more on him and the town's events in this period, see Giovanni Beltrani, *Cesare Lambertini e la società famigliare in Puglia durante i secoli XV e XVI*, vol. 1 (documenti) (Napoli, etc.: Vecchi, 1884); Vito Vitale,

## *The diplomacy of Alfonso V of Aragon in the Balkans (1442–1458): The Uses of Human Resources*

The Aragon conflict with the Venetians in the early 1450s allowed Caccetta to enhance his personal status by developing some important private networks.[39] The first such network was his connection with the kingdom's most powerful administrators and nobility of the Neapolitan residential quarter (*seggio*) of Nido (1451–1452),[40] resulting in his knightly title of *miles*. This title eventually allowed him to attain the high post of a *regius consiliarius* and become part of the king's closest entourage, which, consequently, prompted further familial attachments to the core aristocracy of Naples' Nido quarter, such as the families Zurlo, Pignatelli, and Barille. Caccetta's other network was of a business character, stemming from his position as the master of the ports. Through this network, Caccetta kept under direct control all custom officers dealing with the commercial circulation and supplies going to and coming from the Balkans. He also controlled local traders of agricultural goods (cereals, salt, cheese) from the region's large farms (*massarie*) and those who handled the exchange of the strategic natural resources (metals such as steel and iron), all streaming through the kingdom's southern Italian ports to the Balkan lords,[41] thus turning his private strategic connections into a full-scale "customs' diplomacy."[42] Caccetta softly racketeered with many of the traders involved in this circulation by taking them under his "protection" while using their money to finance the supplies he

*Trani dagli Angioini agli Spagnoli: contributo alla storia civile e commerciale di Puglia nei secoli XV e XVI* (Bari: Vecchi, 1912), 109; 152; 175; 202–7; 601; 671–92; Gentile, "Lo Stato napoletano sotto Alfonso I d'Aragona," 36.

39 Other people from this network included the *castellanus* of Trani, Pietro Palagno (in 1436 maintaining 100 lances and 100 infantry troops in support of Alfonso) and Angelo Rocca, also from Trani, well-linked to various mercenary troops. See Vilia Speranza. "Edizione e studio di fonti per la storia della Puglia nel periodo di Alfonso Magnanimo." Ph.D. dissertation, Barcelona University, 2014, 221, cap. IX, 2,

40 Compared to all Aragon possessions, their importance did not exceed the measures of the bordering provinces to the south of the Apennines, yet for Alfonso's relations with the Balkan lords, he was certainly one of the crucial figures of the so called "doganal economy" and Alfonso's diplomacy.

41 The Custom house of Foggia was founded in 1447, largely coinciding with Alfonso's initiative to enforce diplomatic communications and exchange with the Balkans. Portulan masters were active also for the ports of Foggia, Trani, Manfredonia, Barletta, and Bari, all oriented around the traffic with the eastern side of the Adriatic. Sources for this period of the Dogana have not survived, hence these prosopographic data are highly important in the reconstruction of the first stages of the office. On the economy of the kingdom and modes of exchange, see Marino, *Pastoral Economics in the Kingdom of Naples*, and Sakellariou, *Southern Italy in the Late Middle Ages*.

42 This involved him in the control of the contributions for the ports and import-export taxes. See *Fonti Aragonesi*, vol. 1, 91–98, about traders who paid loans controlled by the creditors.

organized for the Balkans, giving his protégées, in return, access to the lower positions in the customs' office.[43] One of his favorites was Catalan merchant Dalmatino Fenoles (*Dalmau Fenoses*),[44] who, in November 1453, Caccetta ordered be supplied with luxurious materials by Ragusan diplomat Junius Gradić, then in the service of the Serbian "Kralis" (Despot George Branković, 1427–1456).[45] Following a number of several other similar favors, Fenoles was granted a post in the local royal administration, ultimately ending up at the high position of the kingdom's treasurer.[46] The ascent of *Michael Freperios* and *Michael Caretefa* was similar. They were both required by Caccetta in 1451–1452 to supply ten galleys of the Neapolitan royal admiral, Bernardo Villamarin (*Bernat Villamari*), which went out on a "privateering campaign" against the Venetians and the Ottomans in the Adriatic and the Aegean.[47] One other merchant, a *Gaspare Fabricius*, likewise, dispatched two ships with grain to Constantinople in May 1450, to be later awarded, at Caccetta's intervention, with control of the kingdom's office of *rationum*.[48]

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43 Ciuffreda, "Massari e mercanti di piazza," 175–79.

44 As can be seen from Alfonso's letters to Constantine Palaiologos dated March 17, March 21, and April 2, 1453. Dalmau Fenoses was also recorded earlier (November 5, 1450) and just prior to the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans, for instance in Cerone, "La politica," XXVII: 3 (May 25, 1453), 573, for delivering grain supplies to the East. Usually, he seems to have operated with Gabriele Fabriquez and Gaspar Fabricius, who later became officers in charge with *officio racionis domus nostre* ("La politica," XXVII: 3, 616). Del Treppo, *I mercanti catalani*. For Dalmau Fenoses, see *La calamità ambientali*, 371, n. 161. Fenoses' son Esteve seems to have remained on the Iberian Peninsula, taking care of the family's property there. Fenoses was mentioned by the Venetians as also trading in slaves from the East (Rhodes), Duran I Duelt, "De l'autonomia a la integració," 80, n. 49

45 On November 16, 1453, Alfonso was recorded as exchanging gifts with Junius Gradić, envoy of the Serbian *Kralis* (Despot George Branković, 1427–1456). Fenoles appeared in the position of treasurer since 1449, acting as an intermediary between tax collectors and the treasury, cf. Ryder, *The Kingdom of Naples*, 178, n. 149; on his visit to Flanders at the end of 1450 as the official of the treasury, carrying some secret correspondence with him, see Marinesco, "Les affaires commerciales en Flandre d'Alphonse V d'Aragon," 33–48.

46 In 1453, May 24, p. 621, Fenoses and his companions, Gaspare Fabriquez were designaged as nobles.

47 Ryder, *The Kingdom of Naples*, 305–7; 311. Villamarin was mentioned as the captain of the galleys as early as 1444. In campaigns like this one, the king was entitled to one fifth of the booty, ibid. 307, n. 96. In 1450, Villamarin established Aragon control over a small island of Castelorizo near Rhodes, from where the Aragon troops could raid the Syrian coast, watching, at the same time, the situation on Rhodes. In March 1453, Villamarin appeared again in the waters of the Ionian Sea, where he also had a diplomatic mission to accomplish and could contact Leonardo III Tocco, Zečević, *Tocco*, 114; 120, n. 154 For his service, he was later granted large farms (*massa'rie*) in southern Italy.

48 Cerone, "La politica," XXVII: 3, 621. Similar activities were noted in Ciufreda, "Massari e mercanti," 171, for consul Dario di Florio, who indeed took part in the export of grain.

Following the fall of Constantinople on May 29, 1453 and Alfonso's plans to lead a crusading retaliation against the Ottomans, the circle of Alfonso's *homines novi* centred around Simone Caccetta was enlarged by some new members. Their background was in the military or the royal navy, and they had personal experience in challenging the Ottomans on the battlefield. For these services, like Caccetta's protégées, these men were granted privileges which allowed them to enter the royal administration. One of them, Johannes de Nava, a skilled ship patron, ended up as the supervisor of the royal chamber (camerlench); another, Comes of Molise Campobassa, regularly patrolled the waters around the Peloponnese in 1456, prompting Alfonso's idea of the "Ottoman antemurale," functioning in the Byzantine east to defend the Italian shores.[49] Another prominent favorite of the Aragon king was Alfonso's familiaris and creditor, *Bernal Vaquer*, who in May 1451 led an Aragon mission designed to install the Neapolitan troops in the Albanian capital Krujë.[50] Following this mission, he was granted the post of *portolano for Puglia* (subordinate to the *magister portulanus*), and he was put in charge and given immediate control of the ships circulating around the coast of the kingdom.[51] Vaquer originated from a military family which recruited its members for the Aragon missions in the east. Many of them were substantially rewarded for their services. One of them was Vaquer's brother Balthazar, captain of Molfetta, who commanded a galleon which patrolled the waters and remained ready to confront the Ottomans. He later received a post which controlled the customs' in Giovinazzo, which, following the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, became one of the key entry posts for the Balkan refugees and news streaming to the realm from the East. In 1456, Vaquer's relative Angelo took over this post, and he later left it as part of his inheritance to his son Nardò, thus challenging the traditional practice according to which the control of these incomes belonged to the king. The positions of these Vaquers enabled them to establish direct links with the Greeks of the Aegean, and it is through these links that, following Alfonso's death in 1458 and the family's rebellion against the king's successor Ferrante, they arranged a refuge on Paphos for several of their kinsmen.

The participation of Alfonso's men in arms in the local customs and offices of rationals was closely surveyed by Caccetta. His control extended to officers

49 In 1455, de Nava was ordered to do a similar thing as from Ryder, *The Kingdom of Naples*, 58, n. 17, to be entitled with the honorary title of a warrior-chamberlain.

50 Cerone, "La politica," XXVIII, 179–80 (May 31, 1450). The Vaquers, although ancestrally linked to the Iberian Peninsula, were in fact, from Cagliari.

51 Ryder, *The Kingdom of Naples*, 189.

of a lesser rank, whom the king also directed to the East to perform confidential military observations and preparations. Among them was *Nunyo Mexia*, a soldier sent in winter 1455 to observe and estimate the defense resources of the Peloponnese and Albania.[52] Another one, *Rinaldo del Duca*, had to train and incite Albanians to launch an uprising in January 1456, for which task Caccetta provided him with 300 ducats from the royal treasury. Caccetta also surveyed the engagement of condottieri, foreign mercenaries who entered the royal army from all over Europe. The sources reveal among them an Italian named *Giovanni de Giotto*, German head of the ballisters *Gisert Rasfon*, and an Englishman, John of Newport. In August 1455, two of them, *Leonardo Besutoso* of Naples and *Jean Calala*, found themselves in Albania as the king's deputies, waiting to receive supplies from the kingdom. The supplies consisted of food and weapons, and they were delivered through Trani, as had already become usual practice. A galleon which reached these soldiers was fully loaded with fish, vegetables, water, and candles, all amounting to 830 ducats worth of cargo, thus marking the beginning of Alfonso's "crusade" on the sea. As usual, the supplies for the kingdom's forces on this occasion were arranged and closely monitored by Simone Caccetta, this time with finances coming from a new type of a rising favorite, Calabrian merchant Sirilo Gallinaro—not the Catalan, but, like him, originating from the local milieu.[53]

## *Conclusion*

What do these prosopographic details tell us about the human resources which managed and sustained the king's relations with the Balkan lords? Most importantly, they show that the king's diplomacy did not rely on emissaries who were occasionally sent or received. Among the people on whom he depended, his secretaries and members of the nobility and clergy were the most apparent,

52 Cerone, "La politica," XVIII: 1, 185.

53 Cerone, "La politica," XXVIII: 1, 181–82 (September 25, 1455), mentioning gifts which *mesire xerillo gailinaro* had to carry with him and two other envoys to Albania (*John Claver* and *Miguel de Bellprato*). Cerone, "La politica," XVIII: 1, 206–206 (June–July 1456), also mentions him as working with *leonart bezutzo* and *Sullo battifulla*, also sometimes involving a Thomas Atani, a Florentine trader, while paying taxes to Jean Calala. As noted in Cerone, "La politica," XVIII: 1, 200–201, and n. 1, since 1455, Gallinaro supplied Nava and Campobasso with arms (December 12, 1455–February 3, 1456), and he was also involved in supporting one other Albanian mission which appeared in Naples (April 23, 1457) asking for help. The Gallinaros were tied to Calabria; at the end of the eighteenth century, they were mentioned there as the supporters of the Sanfedisti movement against the Parthenopaean Republic.

as it a characteristic element of medieval diplomatic practice. The king's diplomatic apparatus, instead, involved a far wider and more elaborate local network operating within the kingdom (most apparently in Puglia, which had immediate trading and navigation connections across the Adriatic), a group consisting primarily of his personal favorites, who traded wealth for political power—skillful banking Catalan entrepreneurs, but also some loyal commoners originating from southern Italy. By winning the favor of the king or his closest entourage through the funds they invested in his relations with the Balkan lords, these entrepreneuring *homines novi* basically entered the royal bureaucracy through a special form of corruption which converted their investments of capital to direct control of the kingdom's provincial resources, taxes, and customs, all directly used in the king's diplomatic activities and the related trade across the Adriatic. Coordinated and structured in detail by Simone Caccetta, the king's most prominent official involved in his Balkan affairs, this group also operated as a parallel structure which nominally controlled diplomatic exchange across the Adriatic for the king, directly augmenting Caccetta's interests and private funds, as well as the resources of other involved bankers, lower-ranked local traders, and military involved in this group through Caccetta, who thus used the king's aspirations in the Balkans for their own positioning in the royal administration of Puglia and the courtly society of Aragon Naples.

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# BOOK REVIEWS

## A History of the Hungarian Constitution: Law, Government and Political Culture in Central Europe. Edited by Ferenc Hörcher and Thomas Lorman. London: I.B. Tauris, 2018. 366 pp.

The enactment of the new Hungarian Basic Law has triggered a considerable amount of literature on the Hungarian constitution today and in the past. This volume belongs to the second category: it describes Hungarian constitutional history from a predominantly historical-political perspective, focusing mainly on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Since the present Basic Law is to be interpreted in light of the "achievements of our historical constitution," as it sets out in article R) section (3), constitutional history is not only *l'art pour l'art*, but has an at least potential impact on today's constitutional practice. Unsurprisingly, most works on constitutional history are written by lawyers. This volume, however, is edited by a philosopher (Hörcher) and a historian (Lorman), and most of the authors are British or Hungarian historians.

The connection between today's Basic Law and the development of Hungarian historical constitutionalism is made in the first chapter of the book. The subsequent eight chapters describe and analyze Hungary's constitution from the late Middle Ages until 1946. Special attention is given to the reform debates in the eighteenth century and their influence on the Parliament of 1790/91, the early nineteenth century and the "revolutionary" laws of 1848, constitutional theory and practice after the Settlement of 1867, the interwar period, and the reestablishment of Hungarian constitutionalism in 1946, including the transition into the socialist constitution of 1949. After these descriptive and interpretative parts, the final two chapters look at the modern Basic Law and ask how a development of several centuries can or cannot be incorporated into present-day law, as well as whether it is desirable to do so at all.

The first two chapters show that the "constitution" did not start as such. Until the late eighteenth century, we only find a constant struggle for power between the crown on the one side and the nobility on the other. Alongside this continuous political dualism, the Tripartitum by István Werbőczy caused legal thinking to stagnate on a late medieval level so that no constitutional impulses could come from legal science. This changed when the late eighteenth century discovered "[ancient] constitution" (*[ősi] alkotmány*) as a term and an inter alia legal concept, retroactively construing a "historical constitution" for the country,

mainly as a source of legitimacy for the ruling elites and their ancient privileges, such as the exemption from taxation, as well as for the Catholic church. Thus, the ancient constitution became an argument primarily designed to preserve and legitimize social and religious inequality. Even the 1848 laws did not bring about a radical change, as Hörcher's analysis of that legislation and its "father," Lajos Kossuth, explains.

A certain focus lies on the constitutional history of the time after the Compromise (1867–1919), which is justified because that epoch, alongside 1946, is the primary point of reference of the allusion to "our historical constitution" in today's Basic Law. The Compromise era shows a failure of the democratic ideals of 1848 and the prevalence, in contrast, of late feudal structures defended by a nobility clinging to their antediluvian privileges. In defense of these privileges, the "ancient constitution" played an important role, because it was endowed with historical-national prestige, but as it was not laid down in a charter, it did not have a clearly defined content, and this allowed the governments of the day to say whatever they pleased (whatever best suited their needs in a given situation) about constitutional rules. This book also shows that Hungarian governments never failed to set aside a constitutional or statutory rule if they felt that it hampered their political ambitions. One prominent example of this is the Nationalities Act of 1868.

After 1920, Hungary pursued an insecure middle passage between the need to change (in part because of the state's independence) and the desire to preserve the old constitutional system or at least the image of it, branded with the misleading term "legal continuity." Here, it becomes clear how much the ideology of an "ancient constitution" can prevent necessary adaptation to new circumstances. On the other hand, the "Small Constitution" of 1946 is presented as a relatively successful effort to modernize the ancient constitution without abandoning entirely the tradition it represented. Balázs Fekete argues this case quite convincingly and thus persuasively proves the dominant view wrong according to which act 1946:I terminated historical constitutional continuity.

The last two chapters by Kálmán Pócza and Ferenc Hörcher try to determine the extent to which the historical processes described in the previous chapters can be used in the interpretation of the Basic Law of 2011. They approach the question from a politological point of view, thus circumventing the majority opinion of legal science according to which the Basic Law's reference to "the achievements of our historical constitution" is at best symbolic. Pócza uses a theoretical approach, which does, as such, not give an immediate answer

to the question, but it shows paths for further research which may make the historical constitution useful for today's constitutional and legal purposes and requirements. Finally, Hörcher and Pócza ask whether incorporating ancient law into a modern constitution is useful and desirable. They assemble the pros and cons of the usefulness of such an enterprise and refer to future insights from the perspective of desirability.

The book contains several appendixes with the English translations of several crucial constitutional documents from 1222 until 2011. Some of these documents have now been published for the first time in English.

This book neither gives a comprehensive description of the "ancient constitution" nor does it analyze the "achievements of our historical constitution" from the point of view of modern constitutional law. It does serve, however, as a starting point for a predominantly politological analysis of what the "ancient constitution" can mean to a modern political-constitutional culture. As such, it is of interest not only to political scientists, but also to lawyers who get the opportunity to take a step back and look at an overall picture extending beyond the limitations of legal discourse. Finally, a reading public interested in the general political structures of Hungary will find a wealth of information in this volume.

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The Ottoman Threat and Crusading on the Eastern Border of Christendom during the 15th Century. By Liviu Pilat and Ovidiu Cristea. East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450, 48. Leiden: Brill, 2018. 337 pp.

Despite the abundance of literature on the crusades, *The Ottoman Threat and Crusading on the Eastern Border of Christendom during the 15th Century* serves as an important monograph which will further an understanding of the complexity of the crusade movement in the late Middle Ages. With very few exceptions, the historiography tends to reflect a Western perspective on the crusade movement, centered on France, England, the Papacy, and the Italian merchant cities. Liviu Pilat and Ovidiu Cristea's monograph, which has been published as part of the Brill series *East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450*, shifts focus to a less familiar crusade frontier, the Northern Black Sea region. Described by Gheorghe Bratianu as a "plaque tournante" of international commerce in the late Middle Ages, after 1204, the Black Sea area became an important crossroad in the Euro-Asian commercial system. Thereby, Latin Christendom expanded towards the east, but its interests clashed eventually with Ottoman expansion in the region. However, the struggle for hegemony was complex, and involved it Christian and Muslim powers alike who, despite their religious differences, at times built alliances in their struggles against factions within the two larger spheres. Thus, on many occasions, "Christians allied with Muslims against Christians, and Muslims allied with Christians against Muslims" (p.15).

The framework of Pilat and Cristea's research highlights how Ottoman power and the Ottoman empire's expansion collided with the Italian merchant cities and Hungary and Poland's economic and strategic interests in the Black Sea region. The authors adopt a chronological approach from the Fourth Crusade (1204) to the 1503 general peace of Buda between Christendom and the sultan. The first two chapters of the book focus on the struggle for commercial supremacy and hegemony between the Porte and its commercial rivals in the area (Venice, Genoa, Hungary, and Poland). With a meticulous sense of detail, the authors describe the political and commercial realities which led to the advance of the Ottomans in Central Eastern Europe. Despite the crusade efforts and plans, from "1479 onwards the trade in the Black Sea was rigorously controlled by the Porte," ending the role of the Black Sea "as a cornerstone of international trade in the Later Middle Ages" (p.63).

In the subsequent two chapters, the authors focus on the papal crusade policy in the Black Sea region in the fifteenth century and the change of the local ruler's politics after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. There is also discussion of the religious aspects in the efforts of subsequent popes to use the "union of the Churches" as a *sine qua non* commitment of the Byzantine emperor to send military aid to the empire. Nonetheless neither the emperor nor the Patriarch of Constantinople had the authority to impose the union anywhere other than in the Byzantine empire. Therefore, the rejection of the Florentine Union had not only religious consequences in Central Eastern Europe, but also political particularities with permanent ramifications. Mehmed II's conquest of the Byzantine capital created new political and economic realities to which the regional powers needed to adapt. Given the fact that both Hungary and Poland had major commercial interests in the area, the objective of the Holy See was to establish good relations between the two major players in Central Eastern Europe. Therefore, Pilat and Cristea argue that "good relations between these two Eastern polities were absolutely necessary for accomplishing the general crusade against the Ottomans" (p.134).

In the last two chapters, the authors examine the consolidation of Ottoman power in the Black Sea and the failed attempts to recover the two important strongholds in the region: Kilia and Akkerman. The expansion of the empire's frontiers brought more challenges to the neighboring states: the strategic location of the two cities allowed raids in their territory. Pilat and Cristea argue that this conquest caused "restlessness, and the pope's calling was received with much more interest" (p.223). Despite the strategic value of Kilia and Akkerman, the proposals for a reconquest of these two cities in a crusade-like campaign were pure fantasy. As the authors underline, the failure of this crusade policy was due to the "divergent political interests of the Christian states," which "finally led to the consolidation of Ottoman domination in the northern Black Sea region" (p.230).

One important element that is constantly underlined by the authors is the relationship between crusading and local political power. The local rulers used the crusades to legitimize their political and commercial goals, and as the authors astutely emphasize, these ambitions conflicted with the crusading ideology. This conflict is reflected by the struggle to maintain a long-lasting political alliance, as every power had divergent interests and hegemony claims over the trade routes in the Black Sea. As Pilat and Cristea note, "before the Ottoman threat, the crusade represented a state of mind and an ideal, whose purpose

was the recovery of the Holy Land, but at the same time the crusade was an extremely powerful political instrument in periods of crisis" (p.288). Through the examples of John Hunyadi, Mathias Corvinus, Stephen the Great, and John Olbracht, we are introduced to the crusade rhetoric of the fifteenth century. This was fueled by the need for Christian solidarity, the defense of the faith, and a growing fear inspired by the Turks. A different perspective from other theaters emerges: the complex relationship between the Catholics and Eastern Orthodox. For the latter, a crusade was not the same enterprise as it was for the Catholics in the West. The Orthodox princes were not interested in the spiritual rewards offered by the popes. They considered the crusade "an expression of Christian solidarity" (p.292), and they only accepted the guidance of the pope to obtain financial support and military aid from the West.

Pilat and Cristea's book is well researched, and they are versed in the history and the interactions in the northwestern Black Sea area. The use of secondary literature written in different languages (Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, Italian, French, English) is impressive, as the large amount of documents and narrative sources used to shape this study. Though national historiographies tend to present the history of the later crusades in Central Eastern Europe in a contradictory (and sometimes quite biased) manner the authors have succeeded in untangling this massive corpus of secondary literature. With a rigorous insistence on maintaining a clear perspective and careful attention to fine detail, they guide their reader through the intertwined political, religious, and economic specter of Central Eastern Europe in the fifteenth century. Though the abundance of detail and information in the book may make it less appealing or less accessible to the larger reading public, *The Ottoman Threat and Crusading on the Eastern Border of Christendom during the 15th Century* constitutes an original contribution to our understanding of the crusades in the frontier zones, and it establishes certain guidelines which future scholars will not be able to ignore.

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## L'économie des couvents mendiants en Europe centrale: Bohême, Hongrie, Pologne, v. 1220–v. 1550. Edited by Marie-Madeleine de Cevins and Ludovic Viallet. Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2018. 447 pp.

The need for a new approach to the history of mendicant orders has increased in recent decades. This volume presents a new generation of historians interested in this field of research and active all across Central Europe. The selection of contributors is the result of the MARGEC – *Marginalité, économie et christianisme. La vie materiélles des couvents mendiants en Europe centrale (v.1220–v.1550)* project, developed between 2012 and 2016 under the supervision of French historian Marie-Madeleine de Cevins, who coordinated the volume together with Ludovic Viallet. At the core of their interest in mendicant orders lies the legacy of Jacques Le Goff, who was among the first to identify the presence of one or the other orders in the development of urban life in the Middle Ages. This approach has represented a way of seeing the mendicant orders as agents of change, rather than narrating their histories from within.

The volume was devised to contain four sections, each of which comprises thematic studies. Thus, the authors contributing to the first part, *Entre stabilité et précarité: le défi de la pauvreté* [Between stability and precarity: the challenge of poverty], marshal a series of examples showcasing the contradictions within various European mendicant convents, the dynamics of which indicated a shift from the ideal of poverty. The second section, *Les Mendiants et la terre, ou le défi de la propriété* [The mendicants and their landed estates, or the challenge of ownership], examines the mendicant establishments that went on to attain landed property outside their urban communities through donations or acquisition. The studies included in the third part, *Autour des frères: soutiens matériels et flux immatériels* [Around the friars: financial benefactors and flow of intangible assets], emphasize the nature of benefactors and strive to identify them, primarily on the basis of accounts of support granted for the development of mendicant convents. The last section, *Les Mendiants dans l'économie du salut* [The mendicants and the economy of salvation], closes the volume with a series of examples of the religious privileges awarded to the mendicants by the Holy See, namely the right to grant indulgences or to bury members of the lay community within the convents' premises. The book also contains a name index, a place index, and a list of the contributing authors, thus making it easier for the reader to find passages which are more relevant to particular interests.

The studies in the first section examine some cases of convents "struggling" to keep in line with their respective rule or their ideal of poverty. The areas of mendicant presence chosen by the authors contributing to this section are the ones assumed by the volume's coordinators, namely to a large extent from Central Europe, for instance the articles by Dominika Brudzy ("Poverty Put to the Test in both Dominican Friaries of Sandomierz up to the Sixteenth Century"), Rafał Kubicki ("The Economic Situation of Mendicants in Royal Prussia in the Fifteenth and First Half of the Sixteenth Century"), and Martin Ollé and Rudolf Procházka ("The Cloister in Early Franciscan Architecture in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia during the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries"). This part includes also two case studies on the mendicants' history in medieval England and Ireland, as well as two other interconnected studies concerning the level of education and culture gained by the friars within the mendicant convents. Marie Charbonnel's paper describes the development of libraries belonging to these convents in Central Europe, and Kerzy Kaliszuk considers the example of Poland in the Middle Ages.

The second section, *Les Mendiants et la terre, ou le défi de la propriété*, seems more homogenous from the spatial perspective, the areas of interest being more related to one another, whether the studies in question examine the case of mendicants' landed estates in the Hungarian realm (Beatrix Fülöpp-Romhányi), in rural Bohemia (Petr Hlaváč), in Brno (Adrien Quéret-Podesta), or in Prague (Christian-Frederik Felskau). The papers focus on the ways in which landed estates were acquired. They also identify the benefactors, who were members of the nobility or the royal family. The section stands out with a study on the nature of donations given to mendicants in medieval Poland based on the example of the Poor Clares' convent in Strzelin (Olga Miriam Przybyłowicz), this being the only paper dedicated to a mendicant women's order.

The section chapter, *Autour des frères: souteins matériels et flux immatériels*, builds on the first two, bringing further information about the mendicants' benefactors, including examples concerning the Franciscan convents in Silesia and Upper Lusatia in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Ludovic Viallet), the Franciscans in Bohemia in the early sixteenth century (Petr Hlaváček), and the donation-based economy of the Dominicans in Sieradz, Poland (Grzegorz Wierzchowski) and the Franciscans in Zadar, Croatia (Sanja Miljan, Suzana Miljan). For the region of Prussia, many donations to the mendicant orders were made by the Teutonic Order in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Piotr Oliński). The involvement

of benefactors and patrons was visible even in the furnishing provided for the churches of the mendicant orders all over Central Europe (Marie Charbonnel).

The last section, *Les Mendiants dans l'économie du salut*, emphasizes or brings forth elements of the histories of some of the orders which led to conflictive relations with the regular clergy, mostly due to the privileges they received from the outset: the right to grant indulgences and to bury laymen within the premises of their convents. The examples included in this section of the volume reflect these particularities in the cases of Central Europe between 1225 and 1275 (Étienne Doublier) in general and, more narrowly, in the Hungarian realm in the late Middle Ages (Gergely Kiss) or in Český Krumlov in the Czech Republic of today (Adrian Quéret-Podesta). Beatrix Fülöpp-Romhányi's study stands out. She emphasizes the importance of the interdisciplinary approach with examples of pertinent findings from the field of archaeology, which are combined with insights based on written sources. This section ends with another contribution by Stéphanie Vocanson-Manzi regarding the Franciscan involvement in the burials of laymen in fourteenth-century Lausanne.

From the very outset, the editors aimed to include a significant number of scholars in the development of the project and in the composition of this volume. In my view, one of their greatest achievement is encouraging and presenting a new generation of historians, young researchers, whose work is dedicated to the history of mendicant orders in Central Europe. The project and, more specifically, this book will do a great deal to suggest avenues for further inquiry to the next generation of historians.

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Secular Power and Sacral Authority in Medieval East-Central Europe. Edited by Kosana Jovanović and Suzana Miljan. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018. 186 pp.

The past decade has seen a significant number of works dedicated to Central Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages published in English. The volume under review here is another sign that the trend is being "institutionalized," putting Central Eastern Europe more firmly on the map of Medieval Studies. The volume has its roots in the international conference *Second Medieval Workshop*, which was held at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka (Croatia) on October 10 and 11, 2014. The aim of the series of conferences is to provide young scholars with a forum in which to present their work. However, the volume also reveals a side which is usually left unmentioned, namely the work of more experienced scholars whose assistance is invaluable to young scholars. The *Foreword* by the editors is followed by János M. Bak's paper ("Folklore of the Medieval Kings of Hungary: Preliminary Research Report"), which tries to address the question of what one can say about how the kings' subjects responded to and were influenced by the royal symbolic communication. In order to answer this question, Bak turns to the *memoria* of rulers of Hungary–Croatia preserved in folklore. Likewise, the paper by Katalin Szende and Ivan Jurković ("Variations on Nobility in Central and South-Eastern Europe: An Introduction") should be seen as another example of the support given by more experienced scholars. In this essay, the authors give an overview of eleven papers that follow, focusing on the social group which dominates most of the papers: the nobility. Judit Gál ("The Changes of Office of Ban of Slavonia after the Mongol Invasion in Hungary (1242–1267)") looks at the changes in the royal policy regarding the bans of *tocius Sclavonie* in the period after the Mongol Invasion, especially in their connections to the towns of Split and Trogir, in whose internal (communal) developments the author finds the reason for the more focused attention given to them by Bela IV. Maja Cepetić Rogić ("The Reconstruction and Role of Roads in the Formation of a Medieval Cultural Landscape: The Example of Episcopal Estates of Dubrava, Ivanić and Čazma") and Nikolina Antonić ("Late Medieval Village in Turopolje (Slavonia): The Example of Donja Lomnica"), rely both on written sources and, heavily, on archeological works in their inquiries. The former focuses on how the roads of Roman Antiquity influenced the road network in one part of Medieval Slavonia and, in turn, how these roads determined the sites and structures of settlements.

The latter looks at the archeological remains at one site in Turopolje, which in the Middle Ages belonged to the group of castle warriors, and on the basis of this, sheds light on the material conditions of the lives of members of this group of conditional nobility. The same social group, also from Medieval Slavonia, is in the focus of the contribution by Éva B. Halász ("From Castle-Warrior to Nobleman: Case Study of a Family of Slavonian Lesser Nobility"), which looks at the castle warriors from Križevci through the prism of social mobility. Kristian Bertović ("Economic Development and Transformation of the Pauline Monasteries near Senj under the Frankapan Patronage") looks at two Pauline Monasteries, Holy Savior in Ljubotina and St. Helen, and their relations, expressed mostly through nexus of land donations, with their social environment, the most significant elements of which were the citizens of Senj and the Frankopan magnate family. István Kádas ("The Society of the Noble Judges in Northeastern Hungary during the Reign of King Sigismund (1387–1437) presents a comparative study of a group within the nobility which held the office of noble judge in Abaúj, Gömör, and Sáros Counties. Kádas convincingly argues that we can speak of a well-defined group within the county nobility. However, the author shows significant differences in the social relations of the nobility, especially concerning *familiaritas* (either as *vicecomites* or in the service of the magnates), which he traces to the differences in the overall structure of the nobility in respective counties. These insights call into question the conclusions reached in some earlier studies, which tried to represent these differences as widely regional. Valentina Zovko ("Development of Ragusan Diplomatic Service in the First Half of the Fifteenth Century: Father and Son at the Court of Duke Sandalj Hranić") traces changes in Ragusan diplomacy from a Medieval framework towards the development of proto-Modern practices, through the embassies of Marin de Gondula and his son Benedict to Duke Sandalj Hranić of Bosnia. She looks at the duration of their services, their expenses, their methods of persuasion, and the nature of their communication with Ragusan authorities. Silvie Vančurova ("Croatian Students at the University of Prague in the Fifteenth Century") shows the receptions of the ideas of Jan Hus among Prague students from Croatia, or at least among those few who can be identified as such for certain, but she warns that there are no indications that these students managed to spread Hus' ideas after returning to their homes more widely. Neven Isailović's paper ("A Contribution to Medieval Croatian Diplomatics: Cyrillic Charters of Croatian Nobility from the Franciscan Monastery on Trsat in Rijeka") traces the use of the Cyrillic script in Medieval Croatia and offers diplomatic analyses of

several charters preserved in Rijeka. Tomislav Matić ("Peter of Crkvica, a Man Who Could Be Trusted: The Career of a Middle-Ranking Cleric and Diplomat in the Kingdom of Hungary in Mid-Fifteenth Century") presents a case of a member of the lower nobility who, as a cleric, served John Hunyadi and John Vitez, and his role as a small cog in the wheel of high politics. Miloš Ivanović ("The Nobility of the Despotate of Serbia between Ottoman Empire and Hungary (1457–1459)") looks at the political decision of the Serbian nobility clinched between two powers, the Ottomans and the Kingdom of Hungary–Croatia. He contextualizes their alliances. The papers collected here offer clear examples of the work of young authors with the skills necessary to pursue the science of history, well accomplished in dealing with sources and familiar with the relevant secondary literature. However, it is hard not to notice unevenness among the various articles, which can perhaps be seen as a reflection of different stages of their research. Some show ability to address larger issues (Kádas first and foremost, but also Zvoko and Ivanović), while some papers tend to be restricted to micro problems, and in these the main frame of the volume, Central Eastern Europe, and its various distinctive aspects, tend to disappear in the background. With more experience, these budding historians may overcome this minor shortcoming.

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Hit, hatalom, humanizmus: Bártfa reformációja és művelődése Leonhard Stöckel korában [Faith, power, and Humanism: The Reformation and culture in Bártfa/Bartfeld in the age of Leonhard Stöckel]. By Barnabás Guitman. Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 2017. 260 pp.

This book by Barnabás Guitman was published in 2017 as a revised and expanded version of his doctoral dissertation, which he defended in 2009 at Pázmány Péter Catholic University. In his preface, Guitman notes that there are very few works of secondary literature in Hungarian which offer detailed and penetrating presentations of the denominational shifts which took place in the course of the early Reformation in the cities of the Kingdom of Hungary and the very significant social changes which accompanied these shifts. Guitman's book unquestionably addresses this lacuna in the scholarship. The preface offers an explanation of the relationships between the three key terms in the title. Guitman notes that the relationship between faith and power was much more a matter of stark contrast in the period in question than it was in the periods before the Reformation. Yet, as he also observes in connection with Humanism, the question of the early Reformation cannot be limited simply to denominational history. One must also place at least as much emphasis on aspects of cultural history. Guitman seeks to examine these aspects in a wider European context, and he does just this, deftly contextualizing the issues in question into tendencies in social and denominational history in Europe. One strength of his work which merits particular mention is his use, alongside sources on the Kingdom of Hungary, of German, Silesian, and Czech sources as well.

In the chapter which reflects on the sources and the works of secondary literature on which the book is based, Guitman offers a thorough survey of the relevant primary and secondary literature. He also explains its thematic and geographical organization. This presentation of the relevant groups of sources offers clear evidence of the rich array of works on which Guitman has based his research, and it also provides a useful survey for other scholars who are dealing with the period in question. I would add only that, perhaps as a continuation of this line of inquiry, Guitman hopefully will continue his work and expand on the source material on which he has drawn with the inclusion of documents from other significant institutions which preserve sources. At the same time, the survey of the Hungarian secondary literature on urban history, alas, is not exhaustive.

The presentation of the secondary literature on the Reformation culminates with an assessment of the theory of confessionalization associated with Heinz Schilling and Wolfgang Reinhard. Alongside this theory, Guitman also presents arguments which have called it into question in his discussion of the works and lectures by Heinreich Richard Schmidt, Péter Tusor, and Gábor Kármán. As far as the relevance of this theory to an examination of the early Reformation processes in Bártfa is concerned, according to the introduction, the reader will find an answer to this question in the last chapter. The theoretical system in the historiography and Guitman's own research (and the conclusions drawn in both) are organically connected in the discussion of the theory of confessionalization, though the applicability of this theory to the early Reformation is a question of subjective selection.

Guitman briefly touches on how changes in confessional identity played a role in the emergence of conflicts in foreign relations at the time, and because of the dynamics of informal denominational networks, the influence of these informal networks extended beyond state borders.

After the summary of the theoretical background, we are given insights into religious life in Bártfa at the time, as well as the pious societies, relations between the city and the Church, and economic life. It is worth noting that, the title of the subchapter notwithstanding ("Characteristic features of the late Medieval city"), Guitman reflects primarily on early modern processes. Drawing on the theories of Hamm and Weber, Guitman provocatively interconnects questions concerning economics and mindset. The burghers' fervent religiousness, expectations placed on the Church, and the urban community's growing demand for independence (a Pan-European phenomenon) had a strong influence on relations between the city councils and the Church institutions found in the cities. Regrettably, in his discussion of this, Guitman uses the term hospital ("kórház") when the term spital ("ispotály") would have been more accurate.

With an examination of cultural developments in the city in the early sixteenth century, Guitman offers an engaging presentation of the activities of the Humanists who came to Bártfa through a discussion of the issue of schooling in the cities of upper Hungary. The detailed consideration of their work offers insights into the theme of the book more narrowly understood. The presentation of the relationship between Bártfa and Valentin Eck is organically connected to this. Guitman offers an important analysis which addresses a lacuna in the secondary literature, since many questions come up concerning Eck's life and political career. We do not know all the details concerning why Eck ended

up coming to the city, and Guitman himself only mentions the intercession of Elek Thurzó. It is quite certain, in any event, that Eck's presence led to a stronger relationship between Krakow and Bártfa. For Guitman, the real significance of Eck's work lies in the fact that the school in Bártfa developed into an outstanding representative of Humanist thought when Eck served as rector, and in doing so, it provided an excellent foundation for the later work of Leonhard Stöckel.

The next section of the book, which is a coherent whole from the perspective of its content, addresses the first period of the Reformation in Bártfa. Dividing his narrative into clear points, Guitman examines the relationships between the influences of the media (by which I mean the explosion of information at the time) and the personal networks among the Reformation thinkers and Humanists who were active in the region. He refers to the process of confessionalization mentioned in the introduction. This process can be said to have begun in a given area with the consolidation of a given tendency of the Reformation.

Drawing on the example of the Augustinians, Guitman offers a cross-section of the coexistence of the community (or communities) of monks and the city, as well as of their conflicts at the time of the proto-Reformation. He reaches back to one of the points of the earlier subchapter and shows how, as is commonly known among historians of the era, these conflicts stretched into the early Reformation, and in the case of many cities, they played a decisive role in the acceptance of the Reformation. Guitman emphasizes the earlier mentioned significance of the social network of the schoolmasters, preachers, and notaries who had some knowledge of Humanist teachings. In connection with the case of the Augustinians, he briefly sheds some light on the functionings of the power centers (such as the episcopal faculty) and the social forces (such as the Catholic nobility) lying outside the city, though the reader is given little more than some insights into their unsuccessful attempts to intervene in the internal affairs of the city in the early Reformation.

In his discussion of the reformers who were active in Bártfa, Guitman examines first and foremost the work of Wolfgang Schustel, the city chaplain. He draws on the extensive research of Zoltán Csepregi and raises precise questions concerning Schustel's life and career. However, we are given no answer to the question of the relevance of the detailed discussion of Schustel's family background to his work in Bártfa. The title of the subchapter, "Wolfgang Schustel, Bártfa's first Reformation thinker?" suggests a certain ambivalence concerning the assessment of Schustel's role and work. On the basis of the sources used by Guitman, there was palpable tension surrounding Schustel after

1527. Schustel's conflict with parish priest Kristóf offers insights into numerous general phenomena which can be seen as important moments in the history of the cities at the time. The leaders of the city sided with Schustel and opposed the unaccommodating "master Kristóf." King of Hungary, John Zápolya, who at the time exerted less and less influence in the region, tried to intercede on Kristóf's behalf. Bártfa asked the magistrate of Kassa (today Košice, Slovakia) for advice on how to address the deadlock. Given the upheaval created by the civil war, it was essential for the city to remain aware of the latest developments in order to ensure its safety and security, so correspondence among many parties provided important information concerning events beyond the city.

Guitman, however, fails even in the remaining section of the chapter to identify the reason for the uncertainty suggested in the title of the subchapter. He notes that, at the turn of the 1520s and 1530s, Schustel urged reform in the teachings of the Church many times in his letters to the city council, and although Guitman does conclude (drawing again on Csepregi) that, in the end, Schustel did not succeed in having all of his suggestions adopted, the suggestions he made indicate that his ideas were clearly shaped by the spirit of the Reformation. Ultimately, Guitman identifies Schustel not as a "Reformer" (i.e. an unambiguous representative of the Reformation), but rather as a "preacher who represented the spirit of the Reformation." At the end of the subchapter, Guitman again distances his discussion a bit from the urban community and quite astutely emphasizes that the causes of the conflicts between the burghers of Bártfa and the local Catholic institutions were not exclusively questions of religious reform or theological difference. Rather, relations between the different linguistic communities also played a role, as did political and economic interests.

After Schustel's departure, in the search for a new preacher who would be acceptable for the city, the network among Humanists and preachers who were active representatives of the spirit of the Reformation played a decisive role, as Guitman touches on earlier in the book several times. The magistrate was not to be deterred in this effort, neither by the continuous interventions of Ferdinand's military leaders in the region nor by the interventions of the ruler's military leaders. In the end, with the mediation of the city of Besztercebánya (today Banská Bystrica, Slovakia), the position of preacher was taken by Michael Radaschin, who had studied in Wittenberg and who in all likelihood also knew Leonhard Stöckel. Radaschin was in Bártfa by 1544 at the latest, and he was active as the pastor there for 22 years. In their work together, Radaschin and

Stöckel, who was the school rector, played a decisive role in the history of the city in the sixteenth century.

The Synod of 1546 in Eperjes (today Prešov, Slovakia) was a significant event in the course of which commitment to the Augsburg Confession and Melanchton's *Loci Communes* was declared. Guitman persuasively argues that Stöckel was not among the authors of the 1559–1560 version of the *Confessio Pentapolitana*. With regards to the *Confessio pentapolitana*, the secondary literature in German (for instance Gottfried Seebaβ and Max Josef Suda) often notes merely that the authors drew on the Augsburg Confession. With acute critical acumen, Guitman quite rightly draws attention, in contrast, to the differences.

The chapter entitled "Theological debates and rivals," begins with a lengthy presentation of the Prussian Reformation, which is only indirectly related to Guitman's topic, more narrowly understood. The discussion of the work of Lauterwald in Eperjes, however, constitutes an integral part of the questions addressed in the book.

The chapter in which Guitman examines the writings of Leonhard Stöckel also begins with a lengthy discussion of antecedents. From the perspective of Stöckel's work, considering the intellectual and theological influences to which he was exposed early on and his later relationships, the detailed presentation of relations in Breslau (today Wrocław, Poland) is entirely justified. As a kind of analogue to the situation in Bártfa, relations in Breslau offer insights into the ways in which the city, which had also embarked down the path of the Reformation, transformed its educational institutions. The mentality of Wittenberg had already exerted a strong influence on Stöckel, and in the early 1530s he also enrolled at a university considered one of the citadels of the Reformation.

In 1538, Stöckel returned to the city of his birth. The work he did as rector in Bártfa drew to a large extent on the experiences he had had during his years in school. The studies he pursued with Humanists like Valentin Eck, Leonhard Cox, and Johann Agricola (from his time in Eisleben) were a decisive part of these experiences. Stöckel was strongly influenced by Melanchton in his efforts to transform the relationship between the Church and the secular powers. With the consent and support of the Bártfa councilors, he put the school under the authority of the city, organized the incomes set aside for education, and separated them from the parochial sources. The school and its instructors, however, thus were more dependent on the city leaders than they had ever been before.

Guitman offers an excellent overview of everyday life in the Bártfa school by presenting the daily schedules of the students and teachers. He contends that, within a relatively short period of time, the school in Bártfa had become one of the most frequented institutions in the country. Both burgher families and families belonging to the nobility were eager to send their children to the school, and within a few years, the school had acquired an impressive reputation even beyond the borders of the country. Students came from Transylvania, Silesia, Poland, Moravia, Austria, and even Prussia and Russia. As a consequence of his dedicated organizational work, which won him wide renown, Stöckel was given the title *Praeceptor Hungariae* by his contemporaries.

In the next subchapter, Guitman shifts focus and examines Stöckel's work in the school by analyzing his pedagogical writings. In the composition of his works, Stöckel followed very much in the path of Erasmus. His commentaries on the Gospels were not necessarily written with concrete pedagogical goals, though his books of sermons were definitely composed with teaching in mind. Not surprisingly, in his explanations of Scripture, he clearly supports Lutheran teachings. Guitman raises the important question of the consistent use of Latin. He suggests that Stöckel may have had two goals: first, given the universal nature of Latin as a language of the Church and of education, he wanted the teachings of Christ to reach the widest possible audience and, second, Stöckel was better able to make use of the rhetorical and aesthetic toolbox of Latin than he would have been of the vernacular languages. In connection with Stöckel's work as a teacher, Guitman touches briefly on theatrical art in the school and also on two of the less well-known students who attended the institution, Jacob Heraclides and Georg Henisch.

In the last larger thematic unit of his book, Guitman offers a thorough overview of Stöckel's writings in defense of the faith, writings in which the question of the danger posed by the Ottoman Empire is given considerable emphasis. Guitman provides a detailed discussion of the experiences of the cities of upper Hungary with the Turks, again touching on the more important aspects of the relationship between the central power and the cities (for instance communication and military questions). Stepping out of this system of relationships, he presents Luther's views on the Ottomans as well. In connection with the image of the Ottomans in Stöckel's writings, Guitman draws attention to the points at which the Bártfa rector's views concerning the Turks do not overlap entirely with those of Luther. He praises Stöckel for remaining in Bártfa in the 1540s and 1550s, even though he would have been able to return to

Breslau, which was safer. Guitman shows a gift for thorough source analysis in his discussion of the description of the martyrs of Libetbánya (today Ľubietová, Slovakia), descriptions attributed at the level of the base text to Stöckel. He also subjects the contentions made in the source to critical analysis.

In summary, Guitman has offered his reader a thematically lucid and coherent book in which he presents conclusions which are based on extensive knowledge and study of the secondary literature and archival sources, conclusions which in many cases bring to a close debate which have gone on for decades now or which convincingly dismiss fundamentally mistaken views. He uses the appropriate terminology, and his style is flowing and clear. The system according to which he has organized his references is also clear and easy to follow. He is consistent in his use of the basic principles of transcription and terminology presented in the introduction. The tables included in the appendices offer persuasive support for various parts of the main text. The second, third, fourth, and fifth tables in particular offer an excellent summary of the central themes of the book, more narrowly understood. Guitman essentially accomplishes the task he sets for himself in his introduction, according to which he seeks to put the issue of the Church and schooling in Bártfa into the larger European context. In the end, the central idea presented in the introduction could most certainly be continued, for with his book, Guitman has done a great deal to further a deeper knowledge and more nuanced understanding of the denominational and accompanying social changes which took place in the course of the early Reformation in the cities of the Kingdom of Hungary.

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Untertanen des Sultans oder des Kaisers: Struktur und Organisationsformen der beider Wiener griechischen Gemeinden von den Anfängen im 18. Jahrhundert bis 1918. By Anna Ransmayr. Vienna: Vienna University Press, 2018. 764 pp.

Introduced to a wider, international academic public through the publication of Traian Stoianovich's seminal article "The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant" in 1960 in the *Journal of Economic History*, the immigration of Greek and other Orthodox merchants from the Ottoman Balkans into the Habsburg Empire during the eighteen and nineteenth centuries has been a field of interest for different historiographic traditions. First and foremost, it has been significant for histories of the modern Balkan nation states which in a retrospective and often arbitrary way have identified these states as migrant merchants' homelands, and it has been particularly important for the Greek historiography, in which historical diaspora studies have a long tradition and are still a pool of vibrant scholarly production. On the host countries' side, it was the Romanian and especially the Hungarian historiography that incorporated the history of the Greek merchant colonies into narratives of their Habsburg past. Historians such as Iván Hajnóczy, Endre Horváth, Ödön Füves, and Olga Cicanci have made significant contributions to the history of the Greek merchant diaspora in the Habsburg lands by bringing to light a rich corpus of archival material and generating wider interest in the subject, along with numerous publications. The topic found much less resonance among Austrian historians, despite the prominent position of Vienna in the network of the Greek merchant settlements in the Habsburg Empire and the significant presence of the Greek entrepreneurs in the economic life of the city throughout the nineteenth century. Paradoxically, as visible as the material imprints of this presence in the commercial heart of the old city are ("Griechenviertel," Holy Trinity Church, Saint George Church), the Greeks are just as invisible from the historiographic narratives on the multireligious and multiethnic nineteenth-century Viennese bourgeoisie.

Anna Ransmayr's monograph *Untertanen des Sultans oder des Kaisers,* an edited version of a dissertation defended in 2017 at the Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies of the University of Vienna, is the first comprehensive history of the Greeks in Vienna in German. Based on the existing scholarly production in Greek and the relevant contributions in German, Ransmayr moves the research further in two ways. She does so, first, by making use of sources from the archives of the two Greek communities in Vienna, to which there was

no access before 2005–2007, and, second, she extends the time scope of the research to 1918, i.e. well beyond the conventional (in the relevant accounts) limit of the second half of the nineteenth century.

The book consists of six chapters (conclusions included) which could be grouped into two major thematic parts. The first examines the institutional history of the two Greek communities in Vienna, while the second deals with the demographic and social structure of the Viennese Greeks and their settlement patterns, as well as with issues of their identities, affiliations, and self-recognition. A voluminous section containing edited archival sources on the history of the two Greek communities is also included.

The book's center of gravity lies in the first part, which constitutes the author's key contribution to the history of the Greeks in Vienna. Although the use of new sources from the communal archives does not change the overall picture we have had so far, it nevertheless substantially complements our knowledge and supports older cases with new evidence. In this direction, Ransmayr's contribution in challenging the essentialist perception of the communities as embodiments of a national character is particularly important, as she not only documents the older position, according to which the organization of the Orthodox immigrants in communities was imposed by the Habsburg authorities, but also shows clearly that both Greek communities themselves were specific Habsburg institutions.

However, the use of new sources has primarily enabled the author to write the institutional history of a small immigrant cluster, in which the reader can detect the major processes associated with the transition from empires to nation states in Southeast and Central Europe and their impacts on diasporic groups' and imperial subjects' loyalties and identities. Through a thorough examination of the sources, Ransmayr follows the institutional organization of the Greeks in Vienna from the foundation of the first Orthodox church and the granting of imperial privileges to the Saint George's brotherhood of the Ottoman Greek Orthodox merchants of the city and the Holy Trinity's community of the Habsburg naturalized Greek and Vlach Orthodox communities in 1776 and 1783 respectively, until their demise, which, not accidentally, coincides with the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire. The book offers a coherent account of the transition from an "imperial" pattern of community organization based on the criteria of common religion and allegiance to a sovereignty (*Sultan*, or *Kaiser*) to another, in which ethnic affiliation gains weight, without, however, calling imperial loyalty into question. Signs of this transition are to be observed

as early as the first half of the eighteenth century, with the exclusion of the Serbs from the administration of the Saint George's chapel, and intensified in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the creation of national states in the Balkans and the presence of other Orthodox populations in Vienna combined with the rapid decline of the Greeks in the city led to an increasing ethnicization of the identity discourse. But as the book shows, the ethnicization process of the communities was far from being linear and without tensions. In so far as it was not imposed from above, the existence of two Greek-Orthodox communities, one for the Ottoman and one for the Habsburg subjects, set its seal institutionally, too, on the differing economic and social orientations within the Greek diaspora. Instead of a linear course, the third chapter of the book describes how two imperial institutions, such as the Greek communities, tried to adapt to the new national realities and political loyalties in the places of origin and how the Habsburg authorities reacted to them.

In sum, the book can be read as a case study both of the history of the Greek diaspora and the history of the religious and ethnic groups of the Habsburg monarchy. Greater theorization of the findings and a closer connection with the relevant historiographic debates in Greece, Austria, and Hungary would better serve the venture. In any case, it is an excellently documented book which fills a historiographical gap and is worth reading.

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Reformations in Hungary in the Age of the Ottoman Conquest.
By Pál Ács. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019. 333 pp.

It is always a pleasure to see a good volume appear on the history and culture of Hungary in English. Fortunately, in recent years, we have more and more specialized English books on subjects which have always had broad appeal in Europe, including the Reformation and the Ottoman occupation. *The Reformations in Hungary in the Age of the Ottoman Conquest* offers selected essays on both of these major themes. It is the first English-language volume by the renowned historian of Hungarian literature and culture, Pál Ács, who is senior research fellow at the Institute for Literary Studies at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Curiously, Ács, who is originally a scholar of Hungarian literature, teaches presently as an honorary professor of history proper at Eötvös Loránd University (Budapest).

Ács is a man of essays. He has written over 200 published scholarly articles, and several of his previous books are collected volumes of studies. He unquestionably has an original interest in a wide range of different themes and topics. With the curiosity of a humanist antiquarian, he searches for stimulating threads of the past, which lead him to exciting stories, figures, and historical problems. Consequently, it is not easy to find a single common narrative for the eighteen studies in the volume. As Ács notes in his introduction, it is impossible to grasp reality entirely, even less the "reality" of the past. However, if we can solidly support our views, organize our subject matter, and narrate it well, we may convince others of our way of comprehending "reality" as experienced by historical agents. Yet there is a major common ground to the author's varied interests, and this is the question of how late Renaissance men (especially ethnic Hungarian intellectuals of the sixteenth century) reacted to two major challenges of their times: the Reformation (or the Reformations in the plural) and the Ottoman presence in divided Hungary. While the Reformation concerned the spiritual and intellectual life of Hungarians, the Ottoman presence influenced their essential experience of culture and otherness, as well as their security and prosperity. Alongside these two major themes, the Reformation (part two) and the Ottoman presence (part three), two shorter parts deal with the question of Erasmian humanism (part one) and seventeenth-century Catholic renewal (part four).

Part one, entitled "Erasmian Challenges," offers a general introduction to Erasmus's Hungarian influence and two case studies. It underlines the ways Erasmus paradoxically contributed to the advancement of the Hungarian

language. In Ács's analysis, Erasmus most importantly represented a new model of the independent learned man, especially the one who desired spiritual renewal but had ambivalent feelings about the Reformation. Erasmus taught them the philosophy of Christ, which was neither Catholic nor Lutheran but was purportedly based purely on the Bible, above all on the New Testament. If this new Christian philosophy was to reach the individual and teach him morality, it needed to be translated into the vernacular. This was realized by the first Bible translators, who wished to create a book, as János Sylvester, the Hungarian translator of the New Testament, put it, "in which the Savior Christ himself speaks in Hungarian."

Benedek Komjáti, another translator, translated only Saint Paul's letters. Appearing in 1533, his was the first Hungarian vernacular book. As Ács reveals (in chapter three), the translation was based on the edition and interpretation of Erasmus. It thus merits our attention for several reasons. One of these is the relationship between vernacularism and female readership (the patron of the work was the widow Katalin Frangepán), a relationship familiar from Western contexts but little studied by Hungarian scholars. Ács does not pursue this question either. For him, Komjáti's translation matters both from the perspective of the new "print Hungarian," that is, the problem of written Hungarian, and from the perspective of a new linguistic community defined by its language, which Komjáti's book was about to create self-consciously. One of Komjáti's questions was how Hungarians ought to react to the military and political disaster created by the Ottoman occupation. In Ács's reading, one possible answer to this question was the book itself: Hungarians could find their way out of the political crisis through spiritual and subsequent cultural and literary renewal, following in the footsteps of Christ, as explained by Erasmus via the teachings of Saint Paul. Yet Komjáti also had a more specific answer, which related his work to the ideas of many sixteenth-century Protestants, namely that Hungarians could become God's newly chosen people.

An aspect of this Jewish–Hungarian parallel is the subject of the complex and exciting study on the Protestant reception of a characteristically Catholic hagiographic story on the martyrdom of the Holy Maccabees in Hungary. This is the subject of chapter two, which emphasizes Erasmus's influence on this reception history but which could also easily be placed in part two of the volume, entitled "Protestant Reformations in Cultural Contexts."

Part two also has an introductory chapter, in which Ács argues that the Renaissance and the Reformations had similar intellectual goals, namely the

recovery of a lost golden age. One of the theses of the chapter concerns the interrelatedness of the different denominational movements in the sixteenth century. Ács claims that distinct confessional cultures in Hungary only began to develop in the seventeenth century, when the initial goal of the different Reformations (Christian unity) was essentially abandoned.

Chapter seven deals with an early work by Mátyás Dévai entitled *On the Sleeping of Saints*. Dévai, who was a leading figure of ethnic Hungarian Lutheranism, studied in Wittenberg and compiled his work in 1531, shortly after his return to Hungary. This text was lost, but since Dévai discussed the question again six years later, we can reconstruct the original. The major context in which the article places Dévai's work was the Protestant discussion of the fate of the human soul after death and before Doomsday. This was obviously a tricky question. One could gain much popularity by rejecting the notion of Purgatory as a human construction, but there were many pitfalls to avoid concerning Hell, resurrection, and the mortality/immortality of the soul. Oddly, Dévai was interested in the debate only to the extent that it gave support to arguments against the cult of the saints. If the saints' souls were sleeping after their death, they could not be invoked by the living. For Dévai, this was also the case with the Virgin Mary, Hungary's patron saint, and this constituted a radical, unpatriotic, and unpopular claim. The problem with Dévai's theory of soul-sleeping was that it was dangerously close to the Anabaptist doctrine of the death of the soul. Consequently, Dévai modified his earlier theory and tempered its claims. Nonetheless, he continued to target the cult of the saints, which says much of the context of the early Reformation in Hungary, which involved violent attacks by the people against images of the saints.

Part three of the book ("The Changing Image of Ottoman Turks") collects studies from Ács's more recent and very fruitful research on the Ottomans. Some of the articles have already inspired further research, especially the ones that concern geographical areas where mixed and fluid identities were the order of the day. As a Hungarian researcher, Ács is in a privileged position to observe historical agents moving between Christian Europe and the Ottoman Empire, yet the way he composes his narratives on the basis of less familiar or hidden information sheds light on the most intuitive and creative aspects of his scholarship.

Chapter eleven puts the story of Alvise Gritti in context. Having grown up in Constantinople, Gritti was the illegitimate son of a doge of Venice. He had so much influence in Constantinople that even Sultan Suleyman followed

his politics for a while. This chapter explains the less studied international and Ottoman dynamics which resulted first in Gritti's sudden rise in Transylvania and then his eventual fall and brutal death in 1534.

The following three chapters all deal with Ottoman renegades with Hungarian contacts or origins. Chapter twelve calls attention to Ibrahim, the Ottoman brother-in-law of the humanist diplomat Andreas Dudith. It caused an enormous scandal when Dudith, as the bishop of Pécs, married a Polish noblewoman in 1567. The scandal would have been even greater if people had known that his new wife's uncle was a renegade, one of the most powerful and dreaded dragomans of the age. There were now two members in the same family serving two inimical emperors. It is thanks to Ács's research that we know about this unparalleled relationship, however scarce the information concerning their personal contacts may be (Ibrahim's supposed financial help of Dudith's family is not substantiated).

Chapter thirteen uncovers the origin and activity of an Austrian and a Hungarian renegade, Tarjumans Mahmud and Murad, who were apparently captured at the same time in or after the Battle of Mohács. They were both educated men, proficient in several languages, and authors of different works, Murad of a Muslim catechism, Mahmud of a historical work on Hungary *(Tarih-I Ungarus)*, in which he might have relied on the assistance of Murad. As the article shows, these two dragomans knew each other well and kept in touch. Murad (who allegedly spoke Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Latin, Hungarian, and Croatian) also translated historical works, most famously an Ottoman chronicle into bad Latin for the use of the humanist Johann Löwenklau, the protagonist of a later chapter. Even more exciting is the involvement of these two dragomans in Christian religious disputes. It appears that the famous Antitrinitarian Adam Neuser, who converted to Islam in Constantinople, was hosted by Mahmud. It also appears that the same Mahmud, probably as much a latitudinarian as Neuser, openly supported the Unitarians against the Calvinists in a dispute in Transylvania, sentencing the Calvinist György Alvinczi to death with the excuse that he made derisory comments about the Quran.

Chapter fourteen is similarly suggestive on the history of Ottoman–Christian relations. It demonstrates the Hungarian origin and knowledge of the protagonist Sehsuvar Bey, one of the most dreaded and cruelest Ottoman soldiers of occupied Hungary. Sehsuvar did all he could in order to earn the trust of the Constantinople court fighting against Hungarians as a Hungarian renegade, still he remained repeatedly frustrated in his career hopes. His is the

story of the overcompensation of the neophyte, a story which we know all too well from other historical contexts.

Equally fascinating is chapter fifteen on the humanist Johann Löwenklau, whose Greek and Byzantine interests developed by the end of the century into interests about the Ottomans. Once again, we learn here about the intriguing connection between religious heterodoxy and intellectual openness. The article explores Löwenklau's Ottoman scholarship and places it in the contexts of a growing humanist interest in the East and an earlier Protestant interest in a religious mission to Ottoman areas. Ács argues that Löwenklau's activity should be understood as the result of these two intersecting interests.

Chapter sixteen explores the Oriental travels of István Kakas, the wealthiest and at the same time one of the most erudite citizens of Cluj/Kolozsvár. How Kakas ended up as the leader of a diplomatic mission to the Persian Shah 'Abbas I in 1602 is a question that places the whole expedition into an entirely unexpected context. We find out that the mission, starting from Rudolf II's Prague, had much less to do with the military designs of the Habsburg Empire staying in war with the Ottomans since 1591 than with the plans of adventuring English traders eager to create new intercontinental networks and commercial routes.

Finally, part four, "The Catholic Reforming Movements in the Early 17th Century," is rather sketchy compared to the previous ones, and the promise of the title is only partially fulfilled. On the one hand, we would need an introductory chapter here too; on the other, chapter seventeen, which is about a poem by one the most remarkable aristocrats of the period, Pál Esterházy, says more about Baroque secular Hungary than Catholic movements. In contrast, the last study on Péter Pázmány's Catholicism is highly suggestive of new potential approaches towards Catholic Renewal. Pázmány's historical interpretation appears to have provided new answers to real intellectual needs, answers that Protestant historical works failed to offer. While the enormous success of seventeenth-century Catholic Counter-Reformation is most commonly explained with reference to the efficiency of the Catholic Church and its power relations in the context of a Catholic empire, this chapter suggests that their success might also partly be explained with reference to their religious message. In a country fighting for its survival, the Protestant dogma of Predestination might not have been a strong motivating force and might have failed to correspond to the needs of a generation that struggled to find a way out of political crisis and liberate occupied Hungary.

The merits of the book are far greater than the very few points I have mentioned, sometimes with critical remarks. It offers a valuable contribution to historical knowledge about early modern Hungary's culture, literature, and religion for non-Hungarian scholars interested in the region.

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## De l'exotisme à la modernité: Un siècle de voyage français en Hongrie (1818–1910). By Catherine Horel. Montrouge: Éditions du Bourg, 2018. 225 pp.

Catherine Horel, an outstanding French historian whose research touches on the history of Central Europe from an array of perspectives, is rightly considered one of the finest international scholars of Hungarian history. She has published a great deal of articles based on her impressive research on topics including the Hungarian Holocaust and the history of Central Europe. Not long ago, she won acclaim for her scholarly biography of Miklós Horthy. In her most recent book, she offers an exhaustive presentation and penetrating analyses of the texts of French travel writers who journeyed to Hungary between 1818 and 1910. The antecedents to this topic in her work stretch back relatively far. In several earlier articles, Horel dealt with this subject, so her new book can be seen as a synthesis of the findings of a longer research endeavor.

In the introduction, which is comparatively long, Horel defines the theme and outlines her methods. The period in question could be called, just for the sake of simplicity, "the short nineteenth century," which began with the travels of the famous French geologist François Sulpice Beudant to Hungary and came to a close with the first decade of the twentieth century which bore witness to the birth of the automobile which revolutionized travel (the visit to Hungary of a tourist by the name of Pierre Marge, who traveled by car, offers a symbolic end to the era). The period, which lasted essentially from the end of the Napoleonic wars until the outbreak of World War I, was remarkably varied from the perspective of both French and Hungarian history. It was an era of reforms and modern ideals, as well as the emergence of modern nationalisms, revolutions and freedom fights, and the various compromises with which these events often drew to a close. It was also a time in which, alongside the shared interest felt by the two nations in each other's culture and plights, fundamental differences began to appear, as well as the distorting effects of false images. The authors of the travel accounts came from numerous layers of the intelligentsia of the era, including scholars, members of the nobility who were performing either military or diplomatic functions, conservative representatives of the Church, émigré aristocrats, and enlightened journalists. The quantity and, of course, the nature of the information they left for future generations were shaped by the variety of backgrounds from which they came. Travel at the time was still part of a lifestyle that was accessible only to the social elites, the aristocracy, the nobility, the upper

middle classes, and the intelligentsia. In her monograph, Horel attempts to call attention to the distinctive features of the travel writings of the French authors who journeyed to and through Hungary by presenting the most characteristic texts in her body of source material.

In the first chapter of the book, Horel examines the stereotypes which were prevalent in the era (some of which persist to the present day). Alongside the romantic image of the blue Danube and the "Puszta," she focuses on the cities, the dynamic development of which can be seen as one of the signs and symptoms of urbanization in Hungary at the time. In the second section of the book, Horel discusses another group of stereotypes, the elements of so-called Hungarian national character. Her discussion touches on ideas concerning the origins of the Hungarians and the cultural history of the idea of Hungarian hospitality, as well as religious and political questions. As a kind of counterpoint to the notions of Hungarian national character, Horel also presents the images given by the French travel writers of the national minorities and the larger religious and ethnic minorities living in Hungary, including the Croats, the Romanians, the Slovaks, the Germans, the Serbs, the Ruthenians, the Jews, and the Roma.

The protagonist of the second chapter is Budapest, the capital of the Kingdom of Hungary as of 1873 and a city which rivaled Vienna as a political and cultural center. As Horel has already published a very successful monograph on Budapest in French, it is hard to offer the French reader something new about the city, which was one of the most dynamically changing metropolises of Europe, so we are given more of a sample of the nineteenth-century French sources. Horel likes to let the sources speak for themselves, as they are. She uses copious citations, which she complements with insightful notes and useful explanations. In this central part of the book, we bear witness to the birth of the Budapest mythos, which is still very alive today for the average French tourist.

In the last chapter, Horel uses a structure which resembles a triptych to present the French mirror image of political relations in Hungary. In the first section, she discusses the great patriots (primarily Lajos Kossuth and Ferenc Deák) of the Reform Era and the *Vormärz*. The second section offers an examination of the problems of the 1848 Revolution and War of Independence from the perspective of France. Here, Horel draws attention to the failure of the approach and policies adopted by the Hungarian independence movement to the national minorities and also to social problems in Hungary at the time. Horel presents the era of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy created by the

Compromise of 1867 by examining shifting sentiment among the travel writers. On the one hand, Horel offers her reader glimpses of outbursts of sympathy for Hungarians in some of the narratives, but at the same time, in her summary of the geopolitical realities of the period leading up to the outbreak of World War I, she notes the failure of the attempts by France to pursue a pro-Hungary foreign policy. In the summary of the book, she continues this line of thinking, presenting the changes which are discernible in the images of Hungarians in the narratives of French travel writers over the course of this short nineteenth century. Among the major fateful shifts in these images was the fundamental transformation of the romantic notion of Hungary and the Hungarians and the change which took place as, when it came to reports on the peoples of Central Europe, the narratives of travelers and discoverers, which were largely literary in nature, were replaced towards the end of the era by the descriptions given by French geographers and Slavophile journalists and writers. An array of carefully selected illustrations and the detailed bibliography also make Horel's book an enjoyable read.

This captivatingly written and persuasively argued work of scholarship has numerous merits, but there are perhaps a few minor shortcomings which also deserve mention. Horel's use of the term "French" may be a bit confusing for the reader. In the case of most of the travel writers in her account, the term refers simply to France as country of origin, but in the case of the Swiss authors, it means "French speaking." It might have been worth clarifying this minor ambiguity in the introduction. Also, though she makes very precise use of an exhaustive range of sources, one or two important sources are still missing from her account. It made have been worth including, for example, the travel narrative by Cyprien Polydore, a parish priest from Périgueux (*Voyage en Allemagne, en Autriche-Hongrie et en Italie*. [1888]) who traveled through the country by train and who offered a fascinating example of a travel narrative by a deeply religious pilgrim. It also would have been useful had Horel offered some reflection on works in the secondary literature on the subject written in the recent past by Hungarian scholars, for instance the works by historian and literary scholar Géza Szász, a member of the faculty at the University of Szeged.

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Transnational Patriotism in the Mediterranean, 1800–1850: Stammering the Nation. By Konstantina Zanou. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. 248 pp.

At a time when the Mediterranean Sea is in the focus of international audiences, especially because of flows of migrants from the global south towards Europe, it seems that the Mediterranean space has begun to meet with new interest in scientific research, as well. Numerous studies which in recent years have re-analyzed this area from the perspective of its history have focused primarily on the scope, frequency, and diversity of mutual transfers, exchanges, entanglements, and interactions along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The monograph by Kostantina Zanou, Assistant Professor of Italian at Columbia University and a historian specialized in the history of nineteenth-century Mediterranean, is part of this research. Zanou's work, however, is not a general overview of the history of the Mediterranean. The main characters of her book are not the countries, empires, and nations still featured in much of the traditional historical narratives, but rather the life stories of people who lived amid (and some of them through) the historical changes that this region witnessed in the first half of the nineteenth century. This was the time when the Venetian Republic collapsed after a long period of almost complete domination in this part of the world. It was also the period in which the first germs of nationalism, an ideology which in only a few decades did away with century-old empires and gave rise to semi-nation-states in their stead, emerged on the horizon. The book does not focus on the entire Mediterranean space. The geographical analytical framework is the seven Ionian Islands in the southeastern corner of the Adriatic Sea, which were situated at the crossroads of the Venetian and Ottoman worlds and which during that time shifted sovereignties among the French, British, Russian, and Habsburg Empires. The changing geopolitical conditions are intertwined with multiple histories of individuals into a novel attempt to describe these complex processes from a point of view which combines microhistory with macrohistory. As she writes, Zanou is attempting "to look at the big picture through the small details" (p.2). Particularly the intellectuals, who became heralds of the nation and the national idea in the individual national movements (especially the Greek and Italian) are examined in a new light which reveals their other role: non-national or, rather, trans-national patriots whose perceptions of themselves different significantly from the perceptions posthumously imposed on them by nation builders. In their diasporic wanderings and experience as exiles, they represented a bridge

between cultures and languages, marking a time and space not yet codified into national paradigms.

The introduction brilliantly presents the essential focus on Zanou's inquiry and outlines the direction of the analysis, which then extends over four parts. These parts are based primarily on the personal profiles of intellectuals such as Ugo Foscolo, Andreas Kalvos, Dionysios Solomos, Mario Pieri, Andrea Papadopoulo Vretto, and Andrea Mustoxidi, which intertwine in the text with many other characters, ranging from noted politicians and prominent diplomats, such as Ioannis Kapodistrias, and influential scholars, like Adamantios Koraes, to perhaps less familiar names, such as Alexandros Vogorides, Christodoloulos Clonares, Spiridion Vlandi, and Spiridion Naranzi, mostly from the Ionian environment, who in different ways and on different levels left a mark on much broader regions.

The second part in particular, in which Zanou describes the strategic presence of Russia in the southern Adriatic and the role that Orthodox Christianity played in patching up the "plot gaps" in national ideology, is one of the main strengths of the book. By the eighteenth century, the Mediterranean had become part of the Russian political horizon. Even at the time of the Russo-Turkish war between 1768 and 1774, the Russian navy successfully countered the Turkish forces and further reinforced its presence and role in the period to follow. Despite the superiority of the British and the growing appetites of Italian irredentism and Austro-German expansionism in the Balkans, from the nineteenth century on, Russia was an important international force in shaping the Mediterranean environment. The study reveals the complexity and diversity of options and choices available to the protagonists of this book over a relatively short period of time in the wake of the collapse of *la Serenissima* and Napoleon's ambitions for the eastern Mediterranean. By examining the choices made by the figures who are the protagonists of her narrative, Zanou leads the reader to an understanding of the Ionian version of patriotism. Although it mainly deals with the intertwining of Italian and Greek cultural and political milieus, the work is not (nor does it aspire to be) a study of Italian and Greek literary cooperation in the pre-national era. The personages represent paradigmatic figures compatible with a broader Mediterranean environment, standing alongside Niccolò Tommaseo, likely the best-known *Kulturträger* of mutual transnational dialogue along the Adriatic shores during the period in question. Based on assorted archives and personal legacies, as well as secondary literature in several languages, Zanou thus provides the reader with new perspectives on the issue of the Greek Revolution and its

actors, philhellenism, European post-Enlightenment society, the concrete traps of post-imperial governance, different understandings of *patria* and patriotism, the intermingling of religion and nationalism, and the significance of linguistic diversity in Europe at the time.

The questions regarding how the disintegrating empires, changing sovereignties, emerging states, shifting loyalties, and imagined national communities were reflected in the writings of these southern Adriatic intellectuals evolve into fulcrums of European history. This becomes especially clear in the conclusion, which shows that nationalism in practice proved much more complex and problematic than nationalism as a set of theoretical concepts. In this context, the Ionian Islands were no exception. Rather, they could be seen more as a European paradigm of the changes that marked global developments. Thus, this book will be engaging not only for the ever more numerous enthusiasts who have taken an interest in the Adriatic region in recent years, but also for readers looking for a novel, fresh perspective on Europe and the Mediterranean during a crucial period of their histories.

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Wien 1918: Agonie der Kaiserstadt. By Edgar Haider. Vienna: Böhlau, 2018. 418 pp.

The hundred-year anniversary of the end of World War I has witnessed the publication of a number of studies in Austria and abroad that explore the nature of the 1918 regime change in Central Europe. In the vein of his previous portrait of the imperial capital at the start of the war (*Wien 1914: Alltag am Rande des Abgrunds*, [2013]), in his latest work, Edgard Haider chronicles life in Vienna four years later, in 1918. Other recent books might offer more detailed archival research on the collapse of the Empire viewed from its capital city, but Haider's study provides a very enjoyable tour through the streets, cafés, parks, and palaces of Vienna. Based mostly on newspaper sources (as well as published diaries and memoirs), it gives an atmospheric account of the last year of the war and uncovers many distinctive aspects of urban life in wartime, such as traditional celebrations, burial customs, lighting, housecleaning, fashion, and rubbish collection.

While not organized strictly chronologically, the structure loosely follows the unfolding of the calendar year with its main festivals and seasons, starting with the celebration of New Year's Eve and ending with preparations for Christmas. The first chapters provide some context on the international and internal situation of the monarchy and on the Habsburg dynasty. The core chapters of the book, however, deal with everyday life in wartime Vienna, detailing the impact of the conflict in various areas. The hunger crisis of the last years of the war plays a major role in this narrative, as dwindling food supplies shaped new behaviours and daily rhythms, from constant queuing to trips to the countryside and changes in eating habits. Haider relates episodes which can be seen as symptoms of the crisis: the disappearance of sausages as a snack and their replacement with corn on the cob or the shooting of a polar bear in a zoo by a man who considered them not worth feeding, as humans were starving. Haider also presents the health consequences of malnutrition for children and the difficult living conditions created by the shortage of housing. Other descriptions give a sense of the transformations in street life, as Haider paints overcrowded tramways, the fate of bourgeois buildings, missing door handles, and empty shop windows. The most interesting chapter focuses on the celebration and adaptation of regular rituals (carnival, lent, Easter, summer vacations, confirmations) in times of war and penury, contrasting them with pre-war customs. In the middle of the book, a form of excursus discusses the

death of several key artists of the Viennese Modern Age, whose passing can be seen as a sign of the end of an era (for instance Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, Otto Wagner, and Koloman Moser, all of whom died in 1918). This section, however, also includes artists such as Ferdinand Hodler and Peter Rosegger whose relationship to Vienna is more tenuous and feels more disconnected from the rest of the book. Finally, the volume comes to a close with two more general chapters depicting the end of the monarchy and the birth of the Austrian Republic. The political transformations are also embodied in the fabric of the city: the chaos of these few weeks is illustrated through the confusion at railway stations and the removal of imperial insignias.

The book, which has neither an introduction nor a conclusion, functions more as a series of well-chosen vignettes (without much transition from one to the next) than as a scholarly argument. Richly illustrated, it also includes many enjoyable newspaper excerpts, cited at length, which give a nice feel for contemporary humour and language. Some of them are particularly delightful, such as the *feuilleton* on the all-encompassing Ersatz products by Ludwig Hirschfeld (pp.127–130). The glossary of period and Viennese terms at the end of the book is in this respect a very useful addition to help the reader appreciate the original sources. The result is an impressionistic picture of Vienna in 1918, filtered through a slightly nostalgic lens and covering a wide range of topics related to the urban experience. It highlights the profound repercussions of the war for all of Vienna's inhabitants regardless of class, as the events and aftermath of the war left hardly any corner of urban activity untouched. However, this work does not present many new elements on the collapse of Austria–Hungary for specialists in the field. The main political and military developments of the period are probably better covered elsewhere, as are the social and economic consequences of the war for Vienna's population. Also, the specificities of the year 1918 as opposed to 1917 or 1919 (in terms of hunger levels, for example) do not appear as clearly as they should, given the focus on that particular year. Overall, *Wien 1918* gives insights into the mood on Viennese streets one century ago with an eye for improbable and revealing details. It provides more atmosphere than analysis, but it nicely complements other works on the topic.

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