



# Kings and Saints

The Age of the Árpáds



INSTITUTE OF  
HUNGARIAN RESEARCH

**Kings and Saints**  
**The Age of the Árpáds**

Publications of the Institute of Hungarian Research 6.

# KINGS AND SAINTS

## The Age of the Árpáds



Budapest – Székesfehérvár, 2022



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The photos of the exhibits in the book were taken by Dániel Cser.

The cover features the poster of the Kings and Saints – The Age of the Árpáds exhibition and the front of the gold seal hanging on Béla IV's charter of 1251 (National Archives of Hungary, HU-MNL-OL-DL 50617) and part of a corpus from a cross from a 13th century procession (Janus Pannonius Museum, Pécs, JPM Ltsz: 61.89.1.).

The design and the related graphics of the exhibition were created by Pazirik Informatikai Kft. and Grafit Műterem Kft.

Editorial board of the Institute for Hungarian Studies: László Tamás Vizi (president), Bence Fehér, József Álmos Katona, Attila Kovács, Márton Mati, Péter Pomozi

The publication of the book was supported by



MINISTRY OF CULTURE  
AND INNOVATION

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<https://doi.org/10.53644/mki.kas.2022>

ISBN 978-615-6117-65-6

ISSN 2939-6867

# CONTENT

<b>Foreword</b> .....	9
Miklós Kásler .....	9
Antal Spányi .....	11
András Cser-Palkovics .....	13
Gábor Horváth-Lugossy .....	14
Krisztián Pokrovenszki .....	17
<b>Miklós Makoldi:</b> Thoughts from the curator on the book accompanying the <i>Kings and Saints – The Age of the Árpáds</i> exhibition: the geopolitical significance of the Carpathian Basin in the age of the grand princes and kings of the Hungarian House of Árpád and in the preceding period .....	21
<b>László Blazovich:</b> Hospes rights and Árpád-era towns .....	47
<b>Zsófia Demeter:</b> Finding the burial place of King Béla III and Anne of Antioch in 1848. ....	65
<b>Pál Diószegi Szabó:</b> Hungarian-Byzantine relations in the Árpád era. ....	89
<b>Attila Hesz:</b> Blessed Eusebius and the Pauline hermits. ....	115
<b>Csaba Hidán:</b> War events in the Árpád era .....	137
<b>Attila Horváth:</b> The Golden Bull of 1222 and the historical constitution ..	153
<b>Ágnes Kerékjártó – Gyula Klima:</b> Holiness and asceticism: Saint Margaret of Hungary (1242–1270) .....	171
<b>Attila Kovács:</b> Early royal power in the Carpathian Basin and some interesting connections. ....	193
<b>László Kovács:</b> Depictions of Saint László in Upper Hungary. ....	207
<b>Tamás Kőfalvi:</b> Written records at places of authentication in the Árpád era .....	229

<b>László Lukács:</b> The cult of King St. Stephen in the Hungarian folk tradition .....	243
<b>Endre Neparáczki:</b> Current and expected results of genetic research on the Árpád dynasty .....	259
<b>Ádám Novák:</b> Use of seals in the Árpád era .....	277
<b>Szabina Reich:</b> The topographical development of Székesfehérvár in the Árpád era .....	295
<b>Csilla Szöllősy-Frigyes Szücsi:</b> Székesfehérvár defence barriers from the Árpád era .....	309
<b>Zoltán Terplán:</b> Diplomatic interactions between the Crusades and the Árpád-era Kingdom of Hungary .....	321
<b>Tibor Török:</b> Relations among the historical populations of the Carpathian Basin in light of recent archaeogenetic findings. ....	351
Authors of the book .....	365





Coronation oath cross, 12th century, Dommuseum, Salzburg

# PREFACE

MIKLÓS KÁSLER

Dear Reader,

You are holding in your hands a volume of studies accompanying an exceptional exhibition that fills a niche. The *Kings and Saints – The Age of the Árpáds* exhibition set itself the goal of no less than presenting the lives, legends and legacy of the monarchs and saints of the Árpád dynasty and the period they lived in, which, thanks to the Árpáds, was a prosperous and glorious era in the history of Hungarians and the Kingdom of Hungary, both from an intellectual and material perspective.

The Árpád dynasty is the element that binds our past, present and future together, an integral part of our identity underlying everything we call Hungarian today. In the past thousand years, the Hungarian people have shown they are faithful to their ancient roots, their Christian faith, their unique culture, the Holy Crown and their homeland.

The Christian Hungarian state, which has stood the test of time, was founded by Saint Stephen, our greatest Árpád monarch. This exceptional statesman, a believer in God, recognised that the future of the Hungarians could only be secured and could only flourish if Christianity was adopted as the state religion and this faith already present among Hungarians for centuries was reinforced, if a system of religious and public administration institutions was established based on Christianity, and if people are shown the way. His legacy was preserved, enriched and passed on by the clan of the holy kings, later known as the new Árpád dynasty.

The phrase “Szent Királyok nemzetsége” [clan of the holy kings] became widely known in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, after King Stephen I and his son Prince Emeric were elevated to the rank of saints in 1083, and King László I in 1192.

King Stephen received not only the crown from the Pope, but also an apostolic title, which was unparalleled in the world, and thereafter certain sources refer to Hungary as the Arch-Kingdom. This is the foundation of the Holy Crown concept, which was finally fulfilled by Matthias Hunyadi, and is still the most important cornerstone of our state. Although the male branch of the Árpád dynasty died out in 1301, the female branch lived on much longer, and our Anjou monarchs and Sigismund of Luxembourg were proud to claim themselves members of the “clan of holy kings” in their times.

The history of Hungary has been a long and treacherous road. Over past centuries, nations far greater in number than the Hungarian one have disappeared, lost their country, their national identity, culture and language. Owing to the work of our Árpád monarchs and holy kings, the Hungarian people preserved their faith and customs, and a millennium later still live in the Carpathian Basin forming a strong state and nation, proud of its traditions.

The Szent István Király Museum in Székesfehérvár provided a worthy home for the exhibition, helping younger generations gain a deeper knowledge of this outstanding period of our history. This book may provide a fascinating and useful read not only for researchers, but also for anyone interested in the period.

July 2022

Prof. Dr. Miklós Kásler, former minister

# GREETINGS FROM THE BISHOP

ANTAL SPÁNYI

On the last day of his life, Saint Stephen gathered his strength and went from his palace to the magnificent church he had built – one of Europe’s greatest churches – to offer to God his soul’s grief at the tomb of his son, Prince Emeric, because he had no heir to whom he could entrust his people and this country with a clear conscience, who would strengthen and protect the Hungarian people, who would reinforce the faith and the Church and spread its teachings. So he dedicated his country to the Blessed Virgin Mary, who took it under her protection at the king’s request.

Hungarians are alive today, yet looking at history, how many times would it have been logical for this people to disappear into the abyss of time without a messenger? How many fierce battles, how many betrayals, what great storms of time, how many corruptions of morals have lurked like mortal enemies upon our nation, just like on many other nations? But there have always been saints, heroes and brave men, who dared and could make sacrifices for the fate of Hungarians, for the homeland and its preservation. The Árpád era was particularly rich in outstanding Hungarians, who, either as leaders of the people or by renouncing power, gave up their lives to ensure the survival of our nation.

How can we interpret this? How could all this have happened had it not been for King Saint Stephen’s faith at the beginning, for the prayer of the first Hungarian Holy Family and the protective motherly love of the Magna Domina Hungarorum? We exist, we are here, we set an example and bear witness to the truth of life as our history has taught us, but always at the cost of much struggle. As if we are only hearing the word of the Scripture: *“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.”* (Matthew 24, 12-13)



King St. Stephen made the right decision because he listened to God, and followed the call of his conscience. Today, when once again we are attacked by many, and therefore many are worried, we must live, work and preserve our values according to his guidance and the teachings of our history, and not abandon our roots, and then we will not have to fear the present, or the future, nor threatening voices and betrayals, because under the Virgin Mary's protection, we have a life, a present and a future!

*King St. Stephen, Blessed Queen Gisela, Prince St. Emeric, pray for the Hungarian families living today. As you once led this nation to life with your prayers, devoted lives and everyday sacrifices, so help our families to live happily today, and find refuge under the protection of the Hungarian Holy Family, as under the coronation mantle embroidered by Gisella. May the example of your lives and your intercessory prayers help all Hungarian families. God bless the Hungarian people for your intercession!*

Székesfehérvár, 26 July 2022, upon the celebration of Saint Joachim and Saint Anna, the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Antal Spányi  
Bishop of Székesfehérvár

# RECOMMENDATION FROM THE MAYOR

ANDRÁS CSER-PALKOVICS

Dear Reader,

It is a great pleasure and honour to hold in our hands an unparalleled book of studies on the *Kings and Saints – The Age of the Árpáds* exhibition. This display of unrivalled richness and value has brought home to Székesfehérvár the treasures and relics of the dynasty that gave our country outstanding statesmen, military leaders and thinkers. The fate and life work of the Árpád dynasty are closely intertwined with Székesfehérvár, the historical capital of the nation. The events of that time can only be understood in the context of the former coronation town.

Thus we can rightly and justifiably feel that the exhibition organised jointly by the Institute of Hungarian Research, the Hungarian National Museum and the Szent István Király Museum has deservedly been welcomed in the heart of Székesfehérvár, attracting tens of thousands of visitors. In addition to viewing and getting to know the artifacts, we can also gain extensive knowledge of certain chapters of the Árpád era through this book of studies. We are grateful to the authors, who have researched and edited their work with scientific rigour, and made it available for the public.

I hope that the scientific papers summarising the research will be of interest to a wide range of readers.

July 2022

Dr. András Cser-Palkovics  
Mayor of Székesfehérvár

# FOREWORD OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

GÁBOR HORVÁTH-LUGOSSY

Székesfehérvár is the City of Kings. The *Kings and Saints – The Age of the Árpáds* exhibition could not have opened in a more deserving place than here, where our kings from the Árpád dynasty and their successors were crowned and buried. You hold in your hands a book accompanying an exhibition that has never been seen in this form before in the world. In the book, a series of scientific studies deal with the period of the Árpáds, and with the deeds of the Árpád monarchs whose artifacts are on display at the exhibition.

Why is the exhibition and this book of studies so important? Why do we Hungarians have to deal with the Turul dynasty, or the Árpád dynasty as they were called for two hundred years, as well as with the era of the Árpáds?

The answer is simple, yet multifaceted, so it requires a complex explanation.

On the one hand, various results of genetic research on the ancestors of Hungarians reveal that the Carpathian Basin was “occupied”, or rather taken over, by the Hungarian chief Árpád from a kindred people, who, according to recent linguistic research, could have spoken the Hungarian language. It is therefore conceivable, that Árpád – not without precedent – did not flee from the attack of other peoples known in the East, but in a deliberate, military way came to the aid of the Avars, a related people already living here, who archaeological evidence suggests handed over their entire remaining system of power, thus facilitating the establishment of the 10<sup>th</sup>-century “Hungarian State”, which research has so far known little about, and which formed the barely known basis of the foundation of Saint Stephen’s state and therefore the Kingdom of Hungary and its future.

We must assume that Árpád carried out a “conquest”, or rather a territorial takeover of power, where he seized the entire Carpathian Basin from peoples

considered to be related to him, without any actual fighting, as proven by archaeological and genetical methods.

Chief Árpád was probably also aware that the people he led into the Carpathian Basin had not one but many ancestors who had been influential in terms of rulership and trade – so it is perhaps no coincidence that for four more centuries after his conquest his descendants led the most dominant state in Central Europe. Owing to his dynastic family ties, and to the dominant ruling power of the Árpád monarchs, the Árpád dynasty became one of, if not *the*, greatest ruling family in Europe. We have this dynasty to thank for giving us the strength to stop the Tatars, later the Ottomans, and we have been living here in the Carpathian Basin as Hungarians for 1100 years.

On the other hand, the answer to the question of why we need to research the Árpád dynasty is fairly simple because such an exhibition has never been organised in Hungary or anywhere else in the world. These archaeological findings and historical documents have never been seen together. Only between the two World Wars was there an effort to draw the attention of the profession and the general public to the glory and significance of the Árpád dynasty, but unfortunately, such endeavours were shattered by World War II, and since then there has been no demand for the academic world to deal more extensively with the Árpád dynasty and treat it in a place worthy of its significance.

For these reasons, and to strengthen national identity as a preserving foundation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Government of Hungary decided to launch the ambitious Árpád Dynasty Programme, which made this exhibition and the book itself possible.

When reading this book, I ask you to think about why the longest reigning ruling family of Hungary has not been treated properly by historiography so far? Why is it that the story of monarchs such as the Hungarian chief Árpád, Saint Stephen, Saint László, Béla III, András II or Béla IV is barely known, if at all, outside the world of historians? Why is everyone not aware of the story of the dynasty that gave the world the most saints, and at the same time became the leading ruling dynasty of Europe's dominant country?

One thing is certain: we must do something about the current situation: assuming that we want to live here as Hungarians, and hear Hungarian words

in the Carpathian Basin in the next fifty or a hundred years. We must familiarise both the Hungarians of today and future generations with the era of the Árpáds, their glorious deeds and stories, the holy kings and princesses living devoted lives, who fill us all with pride. Because even today they convey the qualities of sovereignty, sacrality and integrity that have been the mainstay of our ancestors for thousands of years.

Both the exhibition and the accompanying book of studies was created for this reason and in this spirit. This book not only covers the objects displayed in the exhibition and their stories, but also delves into scientific questions that have so far not been in the forefront of research, yet whose research is in the national interest. In light of these facts, I wish you a pleasant read.

July 2022

Dr. Gábor Horváth-Lugossy  
Director-General of the Institute of Hungarian Research

# WELCOME FROM THE DIRECTOR

KRISZTIÁN POKROVENSZKI

The imposing exhibition entitled *Kings and Saints – The Age of the Árpáds* is connected to a significant event in the history of the Szent István Király Museum : the renovation and modernisation of the main museum building. This exhibition opened up an opportunity for the museum that will define its exhibition policy for many decades, both in the national and even international context. The exhibition displaying the legacy of the Árpád dynasty in 17 rooms over two floors, and organised with the expertise of the Hungarian National Museum and the Institute of Hungarian Research, could not have been located in a more deserving place than in the city of King St. Stephen, in the museum that bears his name.

The Fehérvár of the Árpád era – which not by chance is called “the City of Kings” – always played a defining role in the history of Hungary. A coronation and burial site of the kings, a sacred centre, and thanks to the most recent research of the museum we now know that the historic city centre today was surrounded by a stone wall as soon as the early 11<sup>th</sup> century, which was rare in Europe as there were only a few cities of such significance at that time. And now in 2022, on the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the proclamation of the Golden Bull, this city accommodates a defining collection of relics for Hungarian history.

The purpose of the exhibition is to showcase the most important moments of the Árpád era through artifacts from the period of the Hungarian conquest until András III's death. This is a salient moment not only for Székesfehérvár but also for Hungary, since these wonderful relics collected from Hungary and abroad and representative of the importance of the Kingdom of Hungary have never been displayed together in one place.

As it is customary to accompany great exhibitions with guides, catalogues and books of studies, this is no different. The academically ambitious studies

in this book detail this period from the perspective of all scientific disciplines in a more easily readable format. This is precisely why I recommend this book not only to professionals, but to anyone interested in the period, the history of Hungary or archaeology, hoping that visitors to the exhibition in Székesfehérvár will read these lines and gain appropriate insight into the greatness of our ancestors and their accomplishments.

July 2022

Krisztián Pokrovenszki  
Director of the Szent István Király Museum







Fragment of Mary relief from Abasár, late 13th century (?),  
István Dobó Castle Museum, Eger

MIKLÓS MAKOLDI

**THOUGHTS FROM THE CURATOR  
ON THE BOOK ACCOMPANYING  
THE *KINGS AND SAINTS –  
THE AGE OF THE ÁRPÁDS*  
EXHIBITION: THE GEOPOLITICAL  
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE  
CARPATHIAN BASIN IN THE AGE  
OF THE GRAND PRINCES AND  
KINGS OF THE HUNGARIAN  
HOUSE OF ÁRPÁD AND IN THE  
PRECEDING PERIOD**

The exhibition entitled *Kings and Saints – The Age of the Árpáds* opened in Hungary's historical sacred capital, the coronation town of the kings of the House of Árpád, on 18 March 2022. The archaeological artifacts and historical documents on display at the exhibition reveal the history of the Hungarians from Árpád's arrival in the Carpathian Basin to the extinction of the House of Árpád upon the death of András III in 1301. The exhibition presents the history and material culture of a ruling family which – having arrived as an equestrian people of the steppe and later making Christianity a state religion – gave the world not only an apostolic king but also the highest number of saints from

one family, and ruled the Carpathian Basin with a very strong hand for four hundred years, influencing almost all of Europe through its extensive dynastic connections.

In my curatorial introduction, I would like to highlight why Árpád's Hungarians – coming from the East – stopped in the Carpathian Basin, why they did not go further, and why they chose this area, where our nation has been living for more than 1100 years, as their homeland. I would like to draw attention to the exceptional strategic and geopolitical importance of the Carpathian Basin and why it has always been important to the Hungarians.

To understand the geopolitical significance of Hungary and the Carpathian Basin in the Árpád period, we need to go back to the distant past; at the same time, we need to clarify the historical significance of the House of Árpád itself, and to understand the purpose and geographical origin of the Hungarians who arrived in the Carpathian Basin, led by Árpád, to the territory of present-day Hungary.

## **The importance and role of the geographical location of the Carpathian Basin in each historical period**

Let us start with the historical background, with the historical processes that led to the arrival of the Hungarians and why the territory of the Hungarian homeland is so important for both European peoples and Eastern peoples of steppe origin.

If we look at the map of Eurasia, we can clearly see that Western Europe is well separated from the areas east of the Carpathian Basin. In the East, there is a 7,500 km long east-west steppe belt, which has always been an easily accessible area for horse-riding peoples, whereas Western Europe is a region of mountains and river valleys, which is more difficult for the steppe horse-riding peoples to travel and inhabit. The last steppe station to the west is the eastern half of the Carpathian Basin, the Great Hungarian Plain east of the Danube, which

covers an area of 52,000 km<sup>2</sup> and has a difference in level between its lowest and highest points of barely more than 100 metres.<sup>1</sup>

A similar endpoint of the steppe region is the Gobi Desert and its surroundings<sup>2</sup> in present-day Mongolia and Inner Mongolia, surrounded by mountains rich in wood and wildlife from almost every direction, just like the Carpathian Basin is surrounded by the Carpathians and the Alps. Between these two extremes lies a grassy steppe, very liveable with and accessible by horse and favourable for trade, which has been home to numerous equestrian and later equestrian-archer nations for thousands of years.

The steppe area has an additional important advantage. With almost 7,500 km between the two end points, it has many links both with the cultures of the Middle East, Iran, India and South-East Asia to the south, and with the wood and game-rich Siberian or European areas to the north, which are also home to the peoples known as Finno-Ugric. And the two most important steppe regions, the two end points, are bordered in the east by the Chinese Empire and in the west by Europe; moreover, the Carpathian Basin is a strategic location in the middle of Europe. It is worth noting that the Great Wall of China, which marks the border between the steppe trade zone and China, is only 90 km from Beijing, the capital of modern China.

This is why the territory of today's Hungary is geopolitically important, since the country is the western trade's commercial and cultural endpoint of the steppe region, or if you like, the interconnection point for wholesale trade, and on the other hand, the western bridgehead of the steppe zone. It is a cultural and commercial endpoint, a conduit to Europe not only of trade goods but also of steppe civilisation, art and culture.<sup>3</sup>

1 Kovács Gergelyné 1983

2 Yembuu 2021

3 For a better understanding of the relationship between the steppe civilisation and the Hungarians, see Csáji 2017.

## Steppe peoples in the Carpathian Basin before the settling Hungarians

We have described the geopolitical conditions of the territory of historical Hungary, and now we will briefly review what eastern peoples lived here in the course of history. To understand this process, we have to go back to surprisingly early times, all the way to the Copper Age, when the first definitely Eastern steppe people appeared in the Great Plain: a so-called Pit-Grave culture<sup>4</sup>, whose people buried their dead under kurgans. They came from the area dominated by the Yamnaya culture<sup>5</sup> (from the northern shores of the Black Sea to the western shores of the Caspian Sea), travelling along the lower Danube to the Great Hungarian Plain during the Middle and Late Copper Age (between 4000 and 2800 BC).

This first demonstrable presence of an Eastern people is interesting because the Pit-Grave culture is the first “elite” kurgan-building culture in the Carpathian Basin, and they are most likely to have introduced the horse as a domestic animal into the area; this is also the time when goldsmithing began to flourish, in addition to copperwork, and the first carriage models appeared in the Carpathian Basin, which indicates the use of the four-wheeled carriage. The steppe culture essentially arrived in the Carpathian Basin with this people, characterised so markedly by the use of horses and carriages, copper and goldsmithing, along with the construction of earthen mounds, or kurgans, over the tombs of chiefs. It is worth noting that these kurgans are still among the highest mounds in the Carpathian Basin, sometimes reaching a height of 15 metres, and sometimes as old as 6,000 years.

Just try to imagine how many cubic metres of earth were needed to build such a kurgan, and who built them over the tombs of a leader or prince! The people belonging to the Pit-Grave culture were very few in number compared to the

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4 Ecsedy and Bökönyi 1979

5 Most recently see: Jarosz, Koledin and Włodarczak 2022

local population (the Bodrogkeresztúr culture in the Middle Copper Age and the Baden culture in the Late Copper Age). We have to consider the possibility that the kurgans may have been built with the help of the local population for the eastern horsemen, who brought innovations to the Carpathian Basin that changed life in this region forever. These included the introduction of horse-keeping, the culture of horsemanship, the use of carriages, and the bringing of certain innovations in copper- and goldsmithing to the Carpathian Basin.

There is evidence that the domesticated horse, and presumably horse-riding itself, appeared in the Carpathian Basin at the same time, in the Middle-Late Copper Age,<sup>6</sup> but it is also worth mentioning that a type of ceramic statue depicting “centaurs”, i.e. four-legged creatures with human bodies, appeared as early as the Middle Neolithic age (around 5500 BC). This type of sculpture bears such a striking resemblance to horsemen and to the first early Greek descriptions of early horsemen (mainly Scythians) that one cannot help but wonder whether people who domesticated horses and could ride them may have been worshipped as gods on the eastern steppes as early as around 5500 BC, and their fame may have spread as far as the Carpathian Basin.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the early centaur statues, it is also important to note here that the first evidence of horseback riding dates back to around 4000 BC in the Botai culture of the Southern Urals (a culture that evolved from the Yamnaya culture), where archaeologists have found what is probably a horse tooth worn by a leather tongue-bit, and the first horse tombs date from the same

6 Although there is no concrete evidence of horseback riding from the Carpathian Basin at this time (tongue-bits for example), it is certain, based upon the animal bone material unearthed at archaeological sites, that the horse as a domestic animal appeared in Hungary at this time. And since in the East, in the eastern branch of the Yamnaya culture (Botai culture), horse teeth worn by a tongue-bit are known from around 4000 BC, it is safe to say that the people of the Pit-Grave culture in the Carpathian Basin could already ride, since they belonged to the same eastern horse-keeping cultural unit as the Botai culture. For the first horse riders, see Anthony 2010.

7 There is no archaeozoological or archaeological evidence for such an early appearance of horse-riding, but the “centaur” sculptures that appear at this time are clearly human-headed but four-legged depictions that involuntarily remind us of a rider. Of course, there is also the opinion that these are not people on horses, but possibly on bulls, or bulls with human heads. Kalicz and S. Koós (2000), pp. 45–76.

period.<sup>8</sup> Horse-keeping and horse-riding were probably already established in the Carpathian Basin at this time, at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC; nevertheless, the first evidence of horse-riding, i.e. the first leather harnesses with bone sides, became widespread only from the Middle Bronze Age, around 1500 BC.<sup>9</sup> But of course, this date does not exclude the possibility that several peoples had lived in our country preceding this time who could ride horses; it is only that the horse harnesses of these peoples were all made of leather, and unfortunately, not many archaeological traces of these survived to our times. Furthermore, indirect evidence of horse-riding in the Carpathian Basin is that the peoples of the Great Plain always maintained good contacts with the peoples of the Eastern steppe since the time of the Pit-Grave culture. This is proven by the fact that after the Yamnaya culture the trade goods and folk artifacts of the Strednij Strog, Catacomb Tomb and then the Bronze Age Timber Frame culture also appeared in Hungary, pointing to a continuous equestrian presence in the Great Plain and Eastern Hungary even before the appearance of the first bone side-plated tongue-bits.<sup>10</sup>

This presence did not cease later on either: in the second half of the Bronze Age the descendants of the eastern Timber Frame culture formed a cultural unit (the Gáva-Noua-Holíhrad cultural circle), of which the Great Plain Gáva culture was an integral part; the ceramic art of this culture survived almost intact beyond the beginning of the Iron Age, when the first truly equestrian-archer people, the pre-Scythians, arrived in the Carpathian Basin at the beginning of the Iron Age, in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>11</sup>

The pre-Scythians represent a real turning point, as they were the first equestrian people to possess iron commodities, iron swords and iron weapons, and to demonstrably attack with reflective bows; also, they clearly did not massacre the people of the Gáva culture living on the Great Plain, given that

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8 Anthony 2010

9 Kovács 1977

10 Anthony 2010, pp. 160-467 provides a good basis for an overview of eastern Copper and Bronze Age equestrian cultures.

11 Visy 2003

the pottery of this people survived almost unbroken until the Scythian period.<sup>12</sup> The pre-Scythians are also unique in that they are the first people proven to have come west from Inner Asia, from Lake Baikal around the region of Mongolia, and are therefore the first “eastern” people, who, after having migrated eastwards since the Copper Age, turned back and rode across the entire steppe zone, conquering the eastern part of the Carpathian Basin, bringing with them new types of tongue-bits, weapons and fighting styles developed in Inner Asia. In fact, they managed to cover this distance of 7,500 km in less than a few years or a decade, given that the objects existing in the area of Tuva in the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC were already spreading throughout the Carpathian Basin by the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>13</sup> This people is therefore the first to show that such a distance, which would be incomprehensibly long on foot, can be covered without any problems in no more than a generation – but more likely even in 2-3 years.<sup>14</sup>

The beginning of the Iron Age thus brings to the Carpathian Basin the first people to return from the East, the pre-Scythians, whose direct descendants are the Scythians, who in the 7<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC overlaid the pre-Scythian peoples, reached the Hungarian Great Plain and became the unprecedented dominant rulers of the steppe. The Scythians are the people who, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, both physically and culturally dominated the steppe belt from present-day northeast China to the Danube. Admittedly, this vast empire was divided into several cultural units (from east to west: North China Scythians, Pazyryk culture, Tagar culture, Tuva Valley of the Kings, Sakas, Sauromatians, Caucasian Scythians, Royal Scythians and finally the Carpathian Basin Scythians: the Szentes-Vekerzug culture), but culturally, in terms of their fighting style and material culture, these cultures form a single entity. Its art, in gold, silver, bronze, wood and stone, is characterised by the Scythian animal style, its fighting style by the culture of the equestrian archer shooting backwards while sitting in the saddle, and its culture by a free equestrian lifestyle, which fundamentally differs from the Greco-Roman, Mesopotamian,

12 Kenenczei (2007) pp. 41–62

13 Fodor and Kulcsár 2009

14 Parzinger, Menghin and Nagler 2007



Indian or Chinese urban slave-owning societies, previously also called “high cultures”. The Scythian steppe civilisation is fundamentally different – it is a steppe equestrian culture that relies on the mobility of the equestrian way of life, is unbeatable in combat using the advantages of the horse’s speed, has an organic culture and system of signs and, last but not least, its few surviving written artifacts belong to the family of runic writing.

The Scythian Empire<sup>15</sup>, as we can safely call it, was therefore the cultural unit, the civilisation that 2500 years ago united the steppe and the peoples who lived there. It is no wonder that many of the steppe peoples living today consider the Scythians to be their oldest ancestors. This is also true of the Hungarians, whom the Hungarian chronicles trace back to the Scythians (or to the Huns). In his chronicle, Anonymus also writes that the Hungarians started their journey from Scythia and then arrived in the Carpathian Basin.<sup>16</sup> So it is clear that the Scythians played a decisive role in the life of the peoples of the steppe, that this was the heyday, or the golden age if you will, which all descendant peoples looked back on with pride. It is safe to affirm that this period was the first and perhaps the brightest in the six-thousand-year history of the steppe civilisation. This civilisation also had a huge impact on Western Europe, as the Celtic culture that would determine the fate of Europe as a whole was born about a hundred years after the Scythians’ arrival in the Carpathian Basin. The chronology of this cultural development is obviously not a coincidence; in fact, the Scythian animal style arriving from the East must certainly have played a decisive role in the development of the Celtic animal motif.<sup>17</sup>

But just like all empires, the Scythian empire declined at one point (2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC); the disintegration of the great unity, however, created a series

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15 The Scythians are not usually regarded as an empire in the archaeological sense; instead, the “Scythian cultural koine” or the “Scythian peoples” are the scientifically accepted terms. However, it is a fact that the Scythians ruled the entire steppe from northeast China to the Great Plain in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, and even though they were made up from territorial groups, they basically formed a cultural, commercial and military unit. So in my opinion, they can be called an empire, even if their state organisation differs fundamentally from that of the Greek, Roman or Chinese empires.

16 Pais 1977

17 Szabó (1971) p. 11

of independent kingdoms and states, which, by forming a closer-knit alliance system, survived in many cases until the 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries as Scythian successor kingdoms.<sup>18</sup> In the Carpathian Basin, the Scythians were overlaid by the Celts arriving from the west, but in more sheltered areas such as the Bodrogeköz, typical Scythian settlements with no or only occasional Celtic pottery could be found until the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.<sup>19</sup>

However, the weakening of the Scythians in the Carpathian Basin was noticed not only by the Celts, but also by the Romans, who attempted to dominate the area, starting with the conquest of the Transdanubia region (Pannonia) in 9 AD. This military process seriously threatened the western bridgehead of the steppe civilisation, the Great Hungarian Plain, as for the first time in history a southern state cut off the east-west trade route to the west. In any case, it was not long before the East responded: in 19 AD, the Sarmatians, direct descendants of the Sauromatians, a Scythian tribe from the southern Urals, arrived in the Great Plain. This ensured the eastern military reinforcement of the Great Plain, which had almost lost its Celtic-Scythian leadership by the time of Christ's birth, as well as the maintenance of the western bridgehead.

The Sarmatians performed this task for a long time, under increasingly difficult conditions, as the growing expansion of the Roman Empire (establishment of the province of Dacia in Transylvania and Walachia, 106-271 AD) and the decline of the power based on the weakening alliance system on the steppe left the Sarmatians for a time on their own, in the grip of Rome. They survived, however, even in this situation, preserved their eastern identity and did not let the steppe's western trading centre, the Great Plain, fall militarily and politically, but kept it and traded actively with the Roman Empire.<sup>20</sup>

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18 Bánosi and Veresegyházi 1999

19 A good example is the Pácin-Alharaszt archaeological site in the Bodrogeköz, excavated between 2005 and 2007 by Gábor András Szörényi. Here, in a house with rich Scythian pottery the archaeologists unearthed Celtic graphite pottery supposedly from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, which reliably dates the building (the finds from this period of the large-scale excavation are still unpublished).

20 Havasy 1998

The Roman Empire was never able to conquer the territory of the Sarmatians and after 165 years the province of Dacia itself fell, thus the Lower Danube route to the eastern steppes reopened. At this time, another huge mass of people was arriving from the east to the Great Plain, as evidenced by the numerous traces of settlements from the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries along the Tisza River. Once again, the East provided the western endpoint, and the Great Plain was once again united with the steppe. And when the Sarmatian state also weakened because Rome was constantly trying to bring the coveted Great Plain under its military and, failing that, economic influence, another steppe people appeared: the Huns!<sup>21</sup>

The Huns (meaning the Huns of Europe, Attila's Huns) can be identified – in light of recent genetic research<sup>22</sup> and also based on archaeological finds<sup>23</sup> – with the Asian Huns moving westwards in the period from the time of the birth of Christ to the time of the first Huns in Asia. In the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD, they fought serious battles with the Huns in the south, who were becoming increasingly Chinese, and were eventually forced to abandon their ancestral homeland, present-day Mongolia and Inner Mongolia, due to combined attacks by the southern Huns and the Chinese.<sup>24</sup> This westward-migrating Hun population spent two to three hundred years in the southern Urals, the suspected ancestral homeland of the Hungarians, before moving westwards, probably into the territory of the Sarmatians, who were losing their power, to conquer the western bridgehead of the steppe. Archaeological evidence suggests, however, that in the meantime they certainly mixed with a population that had been developing locally since the Bronze and Iron Age, possibly comprising the ancestors of the Hungarians.<sup>25</sup>

The arrival of the Huns represented a turning point in the Carpathian Basin, as they did not stop at the Danube, the former natural border, but conquered the region of Transdanubia, defeating the Roman Empire and carrying out

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21 Speyer 2007

22 Maróti et al. 2022

23 Botalov 2013

24 Jeong et al. 2020

25 Maróti et al 2022; Botalov 2013

campaigns in Western Europe, as the Hungarians did later in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. Recognising that Rome was a threat to the commercial interests of the steppe, the Huns secured political and military power in Western Europe through deliberate, pre-planned campaigns – just as the Hungarians did five hundred years later in their military campaigns against the Carolingian Empire in what were wrongly called “incursions”, but were in fact pre-planned and were performed with political purpose.

At the height of the Hun Empire, when it was clear that the Huns were militarily in the same league, or perhaps even surpassed the Roman Empire, Attila died unexpectedly – presumably of poisoning. This event shattered the fate of the empire; the Germanic peoples rebelling against the Huns, led by the Gepids, defeated Attila’s sons, and thus the Huns retreated eastwards to the southern Urals, from where they then headed south to found the White Hun Empire, better known as the Hephthalite Empire.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, a people originally subordinate to the Huns, the Gepids, and a western Germanic people, the Langobards, took over the Carpathian Basin for nearly a century. This period, lasting for roughly a hundred years, is the first one since 4000 BC without any demonstrable eastern presence in the Great Plain. However, after the fall of the Hephthalite Empire (roughly 561-565 AD),<sup>27</sup> a new powerful eastern people appeared in the Carpathians, the Avars (called *varhjon* in Byzantine sources), who, according to historical sources, were a combined army of the Var (=Avar, most probably identified with the Zhuanzhuan people of Inner Asia) and the Hjon, i.e. the Huns (most probably the Huns of southern Urals and the Hephthalites who migrated there, and possibly some elements of the peoples who could be regarded as Hungarians and Hungarians who lived there).<sup>28</sup> Within two years, this newer eastern people had recaptured the entire Carpathian Basin from the Gepid and Langobard rule, and the Langobards, who had occupied the western Transdanubia region, voluntarily surrendered the Transdanubia region and, in return for an undisturbed retreat, left for Italy

26 Csáji 2004

27 Bivar (2003) pp. 198–201

28 Csáji 2004

in the spring of 568, where they founded the Kingdom of Longobard in the territory of Lombardy, which still exists today.<sup>29</sup>

The Avars took a hard-handed approach and seized the legacy of Attila's Huns – the entire Carpathian Basin – and established a solid power structure, a stable state formation, which in every respect is the predecessor of the Kingdom of Hungary founded by Saint Stephen of the lineage of Grand Prince Árpád, a kingdom that became the most significant state in Europe in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the Avars established a state based on a strong central power and pre-planned foreign campaigns under Bayan I, which flourished until the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century under the leadership of Bayan's successors. Yet thereafter the state weakened, resulting in new elements from the East (Ogurs, Hungarians?) arriving in the Carpathian Basin, who, given their numbers, began to expand the central area of occupation to the whole Carpathian Basin. In the early Avar period, the occupied area was roughly the area of present-day Hungary; outside this area, Avar finds are rarely discovered. This area is essentially a grassland, as it was in the times of the conquest. However, an intensive expansion took place in all directions of the Carpathians from the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and by the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century almost the entire Carpathian Basin became populated with new peoples arriving from the east (e.g. the “griffin and tendril” culture) and the growth of the local population.<sup>30</sup> Yet one area “missed out” on this expansion: the territory of the present-day Zemplén and Bodrogek, where no Avar tombs and settlements have been found to date, although the Avar presence along the Hernád and Tisza rivers was continuous from the 6<sup>th</sup> century to the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and Avar expansion is well documented – for example, along the Hernád River northwards to the Carpathians.<sup>31</sup> Why did the Avars not spread in Zemplén and Bodrogek, which were both rich in fish and game? There is no logical explanation for this other than what Gyula László has already suggested<sup>32</sup> – that other peoples lived here at that time...

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29 Bóna 1974

30 Visy 2003

31 Makoldi 2008

32 László 1978

But what peoples? Which people's artifacts can be found in Zemplén and Bodrogek? We have to conclude that the Avar presence south of the Upper Tisza and west of the Hernád River was very strong in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, with an extremely dense network of settlements and a series of cemeteries.<sup>33</sup> By comparison, Zemplén and Bodrogek seem to have been devoid of humans, apart from the poor finds and the negligible presence of what is considered to be Slavic sites.<sup>34</sup> In the 10<sup>th</sup> century, however, everything seemed to change very suddenly: a very dense Hungarian presence appeared in the area. In fact, it was not only dense, but also very rich in settlements and cemeteries, with tombs of chieftains ornated with metalwork plates and the chieftains' entourages.<sup>35</sup>

It is worth reflecting on how it was possible that the Avars did not occupy the area in the 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, apart from the few Slavic populations that left behind difficult-to-date artefactual material and that are likely to have been present here. And what is the reason for such a dense presence of Hungarian artifacts from the 10<sup>th</sup> century in this area? Is it not as if the Hungarians lived here for several hundred years compared to the density of findings sites in other areas of the country? Could it be that we should take Gyula László's theory out of the drawer again and dust it down? What if the Hungarians really did arrive in the Bodrogek area earlier – as also pointed out by Anonymus?

Science must make use of its archaeogenetic and dating possibilities, and we should consider the possibility that the territory of Bodrogek, Zemplén and Transcarpathia may have been Hungarian territory from as early as the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century – this being the reason why the Avars did not move here – and that is why most of the finds of grand princes or leaders of the conquest are concentrated in a relatively small area. And that is why Anonymus writes that the eastern half of the Carpathian Basin was conquered from the Bodrogek-Tokaj-Szerencs area. Since this is not contradicted by archaeological evidence, we must leave open the possibility that the early Hungarians had already reserved the Zemplén and Bodrogek areas as a strategic bridgehead for

33 cf.: Szentpétery 2002

34 For the finds considered Slavic see Pintér-Nagy-Wolf 2017, pp. 139–164.

35 See for example: Fodor 1996; Révész 1996; Horváth 2019

themselves – in alliance with the Avars as a brotherly people – even before the conquest, i.e. the settlement of Árpád's Hungarians. Of course, further research and scientific studies are needed to clarify this idea. However, it may be worth reconsidering the examination of archaeological chronology not only here, but also at other sites that were important in the early Árpád period in the country, namely in areas where the centres of power of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries are surrounded by earlier Avar cemeteries. Research into possible Avar-Hungarian cohabitation or, in some places, direct continuity will be a very important task for future disciplines.

But let us return to the thread of history. So the Avars established a Central European state, which laid the foundations for the structure of the later Kingdom of Hungary. Yet the West did not take kindly to this, and the Carolingian Empire launched several attacks against the Avars, the most devastating of which was Charlemagne's campaign in 804, when a wing of Carolingian armies, bypassing the main Avar army, managed to raid the treasury of the Avar Kagan seat called the Hring, seizing and stealing several chests of gold from the country. It is worth mentioning that the Hungarian equivalent of Hring was Gyűrű (i.e. ring), a version of the name of Győr also meaning round castle.<sup>36</sup> This was a huge blow to the Avar state organisation, but did not cause its ultimate decline. According to recent research, the Avars most probably still lived in the area during the Hungarian conquest, not only as a scattered people, but in large numbers, possibly with existing power structures, i.e. a still existing and functioning system of military and power, but certainly considerably weakened.

So what happened when a steppe military power weakened in the Carpathian Basin? A new wave of Eastern peoples arrived from the East; according to archaeological evidence they did not occupy the Carpathian Basin by war, nor by conquest, but probably by simply taking over a large part of it from the Avars, the former main population. In this case, this newer wave of people were the Hungarians, i.e. Árpád's Hungarians, whose leaders, representing the royal

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36 Szádeczky and Kardoss 1998

bloodline of the Turul dynasty, went on to consolidate Hungarian power in the Carpathian Basin with a royal dynasty that ruled for four hundred years and gave the world the most saints, and which has remained stable since Árpád's arrival, at least for 1127 years. Not to mention the presumably much earlier military presence in the Zemplén-Bodrogköz region.

To summarise what has been described so far: the Carpathian Basin is a geostrategic site of immense geopolitical significance, which was a major trading endpoint of the steppe region not only in the 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, but at least since the Copper Age, from the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC, and which the steppe peoples controlled continuously for thousands of years to spread the steppe civilisation, the steppe culture, and last but not least, the steppe trade goods westwards. The main lesson is that the western endpoint of the Eurasian steppe zone has always been a privileged location for the peoples of the East, including the Hungarians. This system always cooperated with the whole territory of the steppe, up to the eastern endpoint, present-day Mongolia, thus creating an alternative to a steppe trade route north of the subsequent southern Silk Road. This route was not only a bridge between East and West, but also connected the whole of Eurasia at that time via several southern and northern connection points. It is important to underline that the Hungarians were part of this system from the very beginning, and according to new genetic evidence,<sup>37</sup> it was the steppe zone where they became a people, a nation, and where they still live to this day, preserving its ancient culture, art, way of thinking and probably its language as well.

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37 Maróti et al.



## **Árpád's Hungarians: the Turul dynasty and its people – what was the purpose and route of the Hungarian conquest?**

We can deduce from the above why Árpád arrived: certainly to help the Avars – who were surely related – living in the Carpathian Basin against the combined assaults of Carolingian invasions and Byzantine influence, and also to save the Carpathian Basin, the territory of the steppe nomadic equestrian peoples, which had been occupied by them for thousands of years, and which was in a key geostrategic position in the heart of Europe. But do we know where they came from? Who were they? By what route did Árpád's Hungarians arrive – and how long did it take them at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century – in what is now the country of Hungary? Recent genetic and archaeological research may provide answers to these questions.

Let us return to the Hungarian chronicles, which state that the Hungarians arrived in the Carpathian Basin as descendants of the Huns from the Scythians' territory. In fact, until the rise of the Habsburg Empire in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, all Hungarians considered this as a fact, while afterwards, only the Kuruc, freedom fighters, revolutionaries, and then revisionists, system-deniers and "enemies" of the communist state thought the same.

But what do the latest findings of archaeology and archaeogenetics as a new scientific discipline reveal? According to archaeogenetics, the closest ancestors of the occupying Hungarians and the ruling House of Árpád, i.e. the Turul nation, are to be found among the Bashkirians, a present-day ethnic group living in the south-eastern part of the Urals.<sup>38</sup> Going further back in time, genetic ancestors of the Hungarians and the Turul nation can also be found in the area of present-day Mongolia, who can be identified both in time and age with the population of the Asian Hun Empire that existed there between

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38 Nagy et al. 2021

the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC and the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, genetics goes back to even earlier times, demonstrating that the most ancient known ancestor of the Turul nation was first identified in the later Bactria, situated in today's northern Afghanistan, in a region of Central Asia considered to be one of the cradles of the Bronze Age.<sup>40</sup> The results of archaeogenetics therefore show that the earliest known ancestors of the leading ruling dynasty of the Hungarians went from Central Asia to the area of present-day Mongolia, from where they moved westwards as Asian Huns to the region of present-day Chelyabinsk, Yekaterinburg, where the present-day Bashkir ethnic group best preserves their genetics – and from there they came to the Carpathian Basin in a short time as conquering Hungarians – since, between the two areas, we have not yet found any people or archaeological culture whose genetics are related to that of the Hungarians.

The genetic evidence also shows that the eastern side of southern Urals shows a development of local origins, perhaps lasting until the Copper Age, but certainly from the Bronze Age through the Iron Age to the first millennium AD, which covers a substantial basic population, overlaid by the Scythians and Sarmatians between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC and then by the Asian Huns in the 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD.<sup>41</sup> Later this local population, overlaid by the Scythians and Huns, representing one culture and living one way of life with them, arrives in the Carpathian Basin in the 9<sup>th</sup> century and, under the leadership of Árpád, takes possession of it, overlaying the Carpathian Basin population, which has always been superior in numbers and has been here since at least the Bronze Age and a significant part of which, incidentally, is made up of the earlier waves of people arriving from the East.

According to the latest results of archaeological excavations, it appears that the closest finds to the Hungarian occupation finds of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries are to be found in the southern Urals, south of the present-day cities of Chelyabinsk and Ekaterinburg, on the Kazakh-Russian border, in and around

39 Keyser et al. 2021

40 Nagy et al. 2021

41 Maróti et al. 2022

Bashkiria. These finds are so Hungarian in character that their connection with Hungarian artifacts from the Carpathian Basin is undeniable, and some of them could almost have been made in the same workshop.<sup>42</sup>

Furthermore, it is also evident that the rural aboriginal population of the southern Urals became archaeologically part of the Scythian empire in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, and was overlaid by the Asian Huns arriving from the east beginning with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD.<sup>43</sup>

So what do all these findings suggest? That the new results of archaeogenetics and archaeology place the Hungarian conquest in a completely new context, and the results of the two disciplines are mutually supportive and parallel.

So let us ask the question again: what was the purpose and the route of the Hungarian conquest? The answer is becoming increasingly clear: its purpose was not to let the Carpathian Basin – a geostrategic site of such importance for the steppe peoples – which was the western commercial and military endpoint of the steppe zone, be lost to the hostile Carolingian and Byzantine attacks, but to come to the aid of the Avar Empire (its sister nation) that was on its last legs. This maintained the commercial and cultural network created by the peoples of the East, and the western bridgehead of the steppe civilisation was preserved in the land of the ancestors, the former Huns.

The other issue, the route, is also starting to become clearer. In my opinion, the Hungarians have never left the steppe belt since they became a people; they did not go up north like the Ob-Ugric peoples and they were not born in the north and came down from there, as science has thought until now, but have always been on the steppe. Its ancestors may have been there in the European steppe region occupied by the Yamnaya culture of the Copper Age, as briefly described earlier, then moving eastwards may have settled in the lands of the south-eastern Urals and northern Afghanistan in the Bronze Age, then to the state of the Asian Huns in Mongolia in the Iron Age, and finally moved back again to the lands of the south-eastern Urals in the migration period. It is apparent from archaeological evidence that the Hungarians are

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42 Szeifert 2022

43 Botalov 2013

among the ancient peoples of the steppe civilisation, whose “conquest” carried out by Árpád’s Hungarians was launched from an area that has always been a key staging post for the steppe peoples: the region of the south-eastern Urals and northern Caucasus, where the Bronze Age cultures of the Sintashta and Andronovo and then the Iron Age Saragatska culture met the ethnogenic elements of the Scythian, Sarmatian and Asian Hun equestrian peoples. It was from this area that the predecessors of the conquering Hungarians set out and entered the Carpathian Basin.

However, the archaeological and genetic data also show that there are no genetically identified related peoples in the intermediate areas; therefore we can assume the conquest was rapid, i.e. the arrival from the Southern Urals, Caspian Sea and the Caucasus lasted not hundreds but only a few years, since the archaeological finds from the East and the Carpathian Basin are so similar that they could have been made by the same hand. Consequently, Anonymus’ chronicle is much closer to the truth than the archaeological and historical research of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which suggests that the process took roughly 300 years.

Contrary to the earlier position, the scientific position that can now be stated is that the settlement of the Hungarians took place over only a few years, perhaps a decade, just as Anonymus describes it. This is confirmed by both the archaeological and archaeogenetic evidence presented earlier.

What conclusion can we draw from this? The Hungarian invasion was a deliberately organised military operation carried out over a short period (1-15 years), aimed at preserving the Carpathian Basin – of exceptional geostrategic importance – for the steppe belt of interest (or civilisation in earlier archaeological periods). Furthermore, by maintaining the territory of present-day Zemplén and Bodrogekőz, the Avars may have been allies of the Hungarians, probably a fraternal people – another archaeological sign of conscious military empire-building in the history of the steppe peoples.

For these reasons, it is important to note that there was probably no “Khazar supremacy” in Hungarian history, and no 150-year oppression between Levédia and Etelköz. The people of Álmos and Árpád entered the Carpathian Basin as part of an organised military and migratory campaign and the accompanying

background activity, deliberately taking over its administrative, political and cultural power from the existing Avars and the remaining power structure of the Avars.

According to the new research, the conquest was therefore a conscious series of actions aimed at taking possession of the geostrategically important area of the Carpathian Basin for the steppe peoples; as a result, the Hungarians, under the leadership of Árpád, took possession of a country which, by transferring the power structures built up by the allied Avar people, also formed the basis of the state of Árpád and later of Saint Stephen.

St. Stephen must therefore have been well aware that, as the ruler of the Turul ethnic group ruling over a steppe civilisation with very deep traditions that had existed for at least 5000 years, he had to protect the Carpathian Basin from the continuous hostile occupation and power pressure of the Western and Southern powers, which dated back thousands of years. Therefore, respecting Eastern traditions, he established his then and still unique apostolic kingdom, independent of the German-Roman Empire, Rome and the Pope as well as of Byzantium, thus preserving the sovereignty of the Carpathian Basin and its links with the peoples of the East, which was only ended by the Tatar invasion. St. Stephen was the first of the Eastern peoples to make Christianity a state religion – seeing that there was no other way to build dynastic relations in Europe – but he did so without committing himself to any Western power, without giving up his independence and without breaking his traditional ties with the East. Indeed, he would be the only ruler of Europe to be canonised by the Church in the West and later in the East. St. Stephen thus laid the historical foundations for the establishment of Hungary, the first Christian steppe state in the world, which would have a crucial influence over the destiny of Europe for centuries to come.

So if I would like to describe the geopolitical significance of the Carpathian Basin in the era of the Árpád grand princes, St. Stephen and the subsequent rulers of the Árpád House in a few sentences, I could summarise the results in light of the new archaeogenetic and archaeological findings described above by stating that Prince Árpád, when leading the Hungarians into the Carpathian Basin, knew exactly which route he was taking and where he was going. The

princes of the Árpád dynasty knew exactly how to protect the interests of the country, how to secure them through military campaigns, and how to assert their interests. St. Stephen knew exactly why he was making Christianity – already known to the Hungarians – a state religion, and why he was creating an apostolic kingdom independent of the West, Byzantium and, in part, the Pope, which he offered to the Virgin Mary as possession of the Holy Crown. Also, it is no coincidence that the descendants of St. Stephen, the Árpád dynasty kings and their families, gave the world the most saints and blessed from a single family – as recognised by the pope in Rome.

The geostrategic position of the Carpathian Basin is therefore clear: it is located “on the border between the West and East”, i.e. in the middle, it is still the heart of Central Europe, despite the attempts of the world powers to break it apart in 1920. But the proof is right here that in four hundred years, Árpád and his successors created a reign during which the monarchy not only gave Hungary and the world the most saints, but was able to remain the ruler of a geostrategically vital area of the world, which all the great powers have fought for throughout history, and yet since 4000 BC it has been part of the steppe civilisation’s predecessor, main line or last western bridgehead.

This is the key geostrategic role of our country, not only in the Árpád era, but also in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. So we should appreciate the unparalleled archaeological and historical artifacts that the public can see together for the first time in Hungary at the *Kings and Saints – The Age of the Árpáds* exhibition, which opened in March 2021.

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Chest with bone carving, 13th century,  
Flóris Rómer Museum of Art and History, Győr

LÁSZLÓ BLAZOVICH

## HOSPES RIGHTS AND ÁRPÁD-ERA TOWNS

The great migration upset the geographical location and legal order of the peoples who had lived in Europe until then, and gave birth to new states; nevertheless, the migration of individuals and groups for various reasons did not stop there. Movements from north to south and vice versa continued, but the dominant direction was from west to east. Overpopulation was the driving force behind much of the migration. In the north, the Frisians and the Dutch set off towards the Polish territories and the Principality of Kiev, while further south, many of the Walloons and French began their migratory journeys. Many of them reached the Carpathian Basin, probably at that time already travelling along the Danube, or rather its valley. In time, these peoples were followed by the Germans. These foreigners with free status were called *hospes*, 'guests' or 'guest settlers' in Hungary, regardless of their social status, whether they were clerics, knights, craftsmen or peasants. Later, Hungarians and Slavs who migrated individually and in groups within the territory of Hungary were also called *hospes*.<sup>1</sup> Just one example from the Great Plain, a region rarely mentioned in this respect: a *hospes* named Imre Borsos arrived in Hódvásárhely in 1463.<sup>2</sup>

The *hospes* brought with them their right of origin (*lex originis*), which they had their landowners that settled them agree to during their negotiations and agreements. This right dates back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century, when in the Frankish Empire, for example, tribes intermingled and the principle of a right of descent

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1 Fügedi 1981, pp. 398–418; Kubinyi 1994, p. 273

2 Hódmezővásárhely története 1954, p. 306

owned by the individual was established, which was only granted to a specific group of persons and protected the owners of the right wherever they lived. It was enforced by a declaration of the right, an adherence to the right of descent (*professio iuris*) before the judge, who had to rule on this basis.

As early as the Carolingian period, there was an increasing effort to transfer the scope of this right to the principle of territoriality, which is also reflected in the *capitularies*. However, it was not until the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century that the territorial principle replaced the right of origin and the *professio iuris*. Nevertheless, it still existed in Italy in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and there are also cases referred to in the *Saxon Mirror*.<sup>3</sup> The reasons for its disappearance can be traced back to slow social changes; but its influence did not fade easily, as it was vividly remembered by the *hospes* arriving in Hungary, and was also used in their new homeland.

The *hospes* came from the western part of the former Roman Empire, and must have lived for several centuries in the legal system they brought with them. Within the personal and material dependency linking them to their lord, they disposed of the former earlier. They were therefore able to undertake the migratory journey and to retain this freedom in their new homeland. It is known that medieval European law was essentially based on Roman and Germanic law. It presumably stemmed from the survival of the former law, and was closely related to town law, which continued to exist in a modified form in the towns, particularly in Italy and the German Empire.<sup>4</sup>

The Walloon, French and Italian (Neo-Latin) populations were called Latins by the contemporary Hungarian sources. Only some of them are discussed here, mainly groups of people living on royal estates, because, as the literature has already established, they were mostly settled on such estates<sup>5</sup>, presumably as a result of dynastic connections. In the royal town of Esztergom, the Latin part of the town was attached to the southern side of the market square. Here, a

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3 Ruszoly 2011, p. 30

4 On Italian town law and its relationship with Roman law, see Parthenopeis 2021. Especially Book I, chapters 55-65.

5 Solymosi 1998, p. 14; Zsoldos 2010, p. 36

population of French, Walloon and Italian merchants and industrialists settled, who were granted the right to issue charters and use seals in 1255.<sup>6</sup> The merchant “Italians” who arrived in Fehérvár (Székesfehérvár) in the 11<sup>th</sup> century probably received similar privileges to the people settled in Esztergom.<sup>7</sup> The settlement that appears in the sources as *Franca villa* (Nagyolaszi, Mandelos), settled by a king in the Szerém region (today partly in Croatia and partly in Serbia, and called Srijem or Srem respectively) with French-speaking Walloons, became really important in the 13<sup>th</sup> century as one of the settlements of the famous Szerém wine region.<sup>8</sup> The population of medieval Zagreb was made up of Croats (Slavonians), Hungarians, Germans and Latins (Italians or Walloons).<sup>9</sup> As we have seen above, the Árpád-era *hospes* were made up of farmers, craftsmen and merchants, and from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards these groups played a significant role in the social and economic development of the country, establishing viticulture and wine production. The history of the priests and soldiers from the West, also *hospes*, who served in the royal town, is not considered part of this topic.

Walloons or Italians also arrived in Patak (Sárospatak). They received the first surviving *hospes* charter from King Imre in 1201. In the charter, the king granted the *hospes* public, private and economic legal privileges in accordance with the modern branches of law. He allowed the free election of judges, granting the *hospes* their own judicial and administrative freedom, and designated his own or his palatine's court as the court of appeal. He thus removed the *hospes* from the jurisdiction of the castellan or the ispán (county head). The management of taxes and services, i.e. financial and in-kind contributions, was delegated to them in full, meaning the services arising from the material dependence were not performed individually, but jointly, which meant sharing burdens and collecting contributions. They were responsible for these not individually, but collectively, as a commune.

6 Györffy 1987, p. 256, p. 259

7 Zsoldos 2010, p. 18; Takács 1994 p. 477

8 Engel 1994, p. 595

9 Rokay, Takács and Wehli 1994, p. 739

A further privilege affecting the whole of the *hospes* commune is the one by which the king forbids any harm from the nobles and gentry of the country, which perhaps forbids not only any violence committed by these against the *hospes*, but also their accommodation, meaning the lodging and provisioning of the passing lords and their retinue, which was a great burden. However, this did not preclude the king and his entourage from taking up accommodation.<sup>10</sup>

In the field of private law, a more archaic form of inheritance was handed down to us by the charter, according to which only sons inherited; if there were none, the testators were free to leave their property to their daughters, their grandsons and granddaughters, or to whomsoever they had adopted. This is included in Italian town law. On this issue, Raymundus Parthenopeis writes: “According to the old law, female heirs have no right to paternal inheritance as long as the male heirs are alive.”<sup>11</sup>

There is a dispute in the literature, which we will not discuss in detail, as to whether the king granted the privileges to the *hospes* of Patak or (Bodrog)Olasz. What is noteworthy for us is the legal status of the privileged. If the privileges were granted to the *hospes* of Olaszi, their descendants remained serfs, while if they were granted to those of Pataki, they became peasants in the market town. However, Raymundus’ assertion of the *hospes*’ Italian origins, also confirmed by the place name Olaszi, is unquestionable.

The charter issued to the *hospes* of Pataki contains the core of the *hospes*’ rights: the free election of judges, which, in the old expression, ensured the administration of justice within the commune, which went hand in hand with the right to appeal to the king, circumventing the authority of the ispán, the freedom of inheritance while maintaining the blood bond, which included the right to dispose of houses and land, and the right to pay taxes jointly, presumably in one sum. These freedoms were further extended, expanded and detailed by the more recent charters recording the *hospes*’ privileges. Subsequently, they were included in the town charters and town law books.

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10 Blazovich 2018, pp. 389–392. On the provision of accommodation see Solymosi 1998, 55–57.

11 Parthenopeis 2021, p. 134

The castle *hospes*, who were settled by the kings on castle lands, occupied a special position among the *hospes*. Although they had previously enjoyed full personal freedom, the ‘public or golden’ freedom, they were still forced to give up some of it. Their ties were manifested in the fact that they were ruled over by a castle ispán or gaoler, had to perform military service for the castle ispán, and could be forced to pay certain lump sums. This made their status ambivalent, as they became bound *libers*. The way out of this situation led in two directions. Either they were sold by the king, along with their property, to a private landlord, against whom they were not always able to defend their former freedom and were reduced to serfdom, or they defended their freedom, were judged by their village chief and could appeal to the king or one of his officials, as in the case of other free royal *hospes*,<sup>12</sup> like in the case of the *hospes* of Patak.

Another distinct group of *hospes* were the Saxons (settled in Transylvania and the Szepesség – today partly in Slovakia and partly in Poland, called Spiš and Spisz respectively), who arrived in Hungary in various sized groups from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The name ‘szász’ meaning Saxon developed later, perhaps coincidentally, as did the uniform name of Swabian for the Germans who arrived in Hungary after the Ottoman period. The population known as the Saxons came from many corners of the German Empire.

The Saxons of Transylvania settled in larger numbers during the reign of King Géza II (1141-1162), and the *Andreanum* itself mentions the privileges they received from Géza II. The king granted privileges to those who settled in Altland, on both sides of the Nagyszeben-Újegyház-Nagysink axis, and the agreements, presumably oral, were added to the more recent ones in the *Andreanum* issued after 1214 by King András II, which contained all the freedoms that could be granted at that time. This ensured the Saxons the most complete *hospes* liberties, in the form of territorial autonomy, while the peasants in their villages and the craftsmen and merchants in their later towns, as the constituent elements of the towns, retained their privileges until the end

12 Szűcs 1981, p. 115; Kristó 1991, pp. 25–35



of the discussed period and even beyond.<sup>13</sup> This is why it is worth reviewing this soon to be 800-year-old charter of privileges.

The charter of privileges<sup>14</sup> first and foremost defined the territory of the Saxons, extending it to areas they had not previously occupied. It marked the western end at Szászváros (meaning Saxon town, today: Orăștia, Romania) and the eastern end at Barót (today: Baraolt, Romania). It also extended the territory to the land of the Szeklers, which was not the same as the later Szekler territories, Sebes (or Szászsebes, today: Sebes, Romania) and Daróc (or Honoróddaróc, today: Draușeni, Romania). The area was bordered by Hunyad County (today: Hunedoara, Romania) to the west, the border of the country to the south, Land of Fogaras (today: Făgăraș, Romania), Szeklerland to the east, and Küküllő and Fehér (today: Alba, Romania) Counties to the north. In connection with these the Saxons received forests and waters, which could be used by rich and poor alike. The king could not grant land from the donated territories to others.

The Saxons chose their own magistrate, who performed judicial and administrative functions, and the king appointed the Saxon ispán and himself as their appeal forum. They could choose witnesses from their own region for financial litigation. The charter returns to this theme at several points. They could also choose their own priests, or parish priests, which was important because the Church was present in the daily life of the people of the time. They were partially exempted from the burden of providing accommodation. What was new compared with the privileges of the *hospes* of Patak was the freedom to travel and to sell goods, with the right to buy and transport salt on certain days; this represented a step towards town privileges, as was the right to use their own seal, an important guarantee of their autonomy.

In return for the privileges received, the subjects owed something in return. They paid 500 marks a year to the chamber. They were also obliged by the king to

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13 Blazovich 2007, pp. 509–526. In particular, pp. 509–514. For the relevant literature, see the bibliography of the study.

14 Reg. Arp. 1923, no. 413 Anjou-era archives 1996, no. 173. See there for a detailed bibliography. The Latin text was translated into Hungarian in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was rewritten and translated using today's spelling, but striving to preserve the original style, by Érszegi 1998, pp. 101–105.

ensure provisions for the collectors of the money. The mark was not a currency, but a means of payment for measuring the weight of gold and silver. The Saxons were also required to perform military service, which is mentioned in the town-founding charters too; namely, they had to provide 500 soldiers for the king's army within the country, 100 outside the country, but only 50 if the army was led by a chief officer. From these figures we can conclude that the number of Transylvanian Saxons at that time was around 10,000. The *Andreanum* has been discussed in more detail here because it provides a link between the law of the *hospes* and the law of the towns in respect of the rights listed therein. Its content replaces the town *hospes* privilege letters (e.g. Székesfehérvár, Pest), which formed the basis of the town-founding privilege letters. Before turning to this subject, let us look at another family of Saxon law, that of the Saxons of the Szepesség.

The Saxons of the Szepesség (*simplices homines*) came to their territory, the Szepesség (*Zips*), after the Mongol invasion. They were recruited from various places, but given that they later used the Magdeburg law in their towns, most of them must have come from Saxony, crossing the passes and straits of the Carpathians from Poland. Their rights and obligations were later put down in writing by King Stephen V (1270-1272) in 1271, and amended and confirmed by King Charles I in 1317. Their privileges included the free election of judges and parish priests, as well as free hunting, fishing and mining rights. They were free to choose their own ispáns (counts), who passed judgments together with the respective county head (*Burggraf*) of Szepes, which also ensured state supervision and control over the Saxons. The two judges ruled together because the Saxon ispán knew their rights. The Saxons of Szepes lived in their villages and towns. Lőcse (today: Levoča, Slovakia) was already mentioned in the charter of 1271 as the capital of the district (*civitas provinciae capitalis*). The Saxons could not be summoned to a judicial court by anyone outside their district. In exchange for these privileges, they paid 300 fine silver marks and were required to contribute 50 soldiers to the king's army. They also surely performed border protection duties.

The name 'Szepesség' derives from the genitival form of the Hungarian adjective 'szép' meaning beautiful, and the laws of the Saxon *hospes* of Szepesség

are contained in the *Zipser Willkür* (Szepesség laws), the law book of the province, written outside the discussed period in 1370, which contains rules on public law, property law and contract law, as well as the organisation of the law, procedural law, criminal law, and rules on industry and trade. The influence of the *Saxon mirror* can be seen in the *Zipser Willkür*. Kálmán Demkó and Heiner Lück have pointed out similarities between the two in several articles. After a systematic review, 37 rules can be found in which the influence of Eike von Repgow's work can be detected in whole or in part.<sup>15</sup>

As mentioned above, the charters and seals issued to the *hospes* were the forerunners and sources of the town privilege letters. Attila Zsoldos clearly demonstrated this using a study by András Kubinyi, when he explains that the first surviving charter of Fehérvár was issued in the name of “the judge of Fehérvár, his twelve jurors and all the citizens of the same fortress”, while the seal on the charter bears the inscription *S[igillum]Latinorum civium Albensium* (S[eal] of the Italian citizens of Fehérvár). The seal indicates that it was issued to the Latin citizens of Fehérvár as a *hospes* commune, and the formal elements of the seal also suggest this fact.<sup>16</sup> Attila Zsoldos analyses in detail the fragments remaining of the privilege charter of 1237 issued in Fehérvár, and discusses what other parts it may have had. He is on the right track, given that contemporaries and successors who knew the original charter could only have referred to the law of Fehérvár on the basis of these items, and future generations can learn about the content of this law from them.<sup>17</sup>

As is well known, this is why the donor kings were able to refer to the law of Fehérvár – and later to the law of Fehérvár and Buda – in the subsequent letters of privilege of the towns, even though they were no longer familiar with their details. Towards the end of the pre-Mohács era, in 1498, when King

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15 Kordé 1994, pp. 618–619; Blazovich 2005, pp. 43–70

16 Zsoldos 2010, pp. 35–36.; Kubinyi 1972, p. 152. There may have been similar phases in the use of seals in Pest-Buda: see Kubinyi 2009, 271–306. On the use of seals, also see Ladányi 1996, 155.

17 Zsoldos 2010, pp. 36–41. The Latin text and the Hungarian translation of the contents and transcriptions of the charter have been published by Tibor Neumann (Neumann 2010, 43–122).

Ulászló II confirmed the privileges of the people of Szeged, he still referred to the freedoms of Fehérvár and Buda.<sup>18</sup> Towards the end of the period, the people of Szeged probably inscribed the law of Fehérvár because they wanted to emphasise the ancient nature of their privileges.

Attila Zsoldos had already raised the issue of the lack of town law systems in Hungary. This is despite the references to the law of Buda and Fehérvár. This is because the hierarchical system between certain towns, the essence of which was embodied in the borrowing of rights, did not play a role in the development of individual town rights, and those who moved out of a “parent town” took the rights of their town with them to their new settlement. Also, they often turned to the “parent town” for a decision in contentious disputes. Such was the case, for example, when, long after the end of the period, the people of Lőcse appealed to the Magdeburg jury in a case.<sup>19</sup> However, a group of towns, the treasury towns, was established in Hungary. These towns, called free royal towns, used the treasury law based on the law of Buda, and the delegates of the individual towns (Buda, Sopron, Pozsony, Nagyszombat, Bártfa, Eperjes, Kassa, and, as the eighth, Pest) ruled as a joint court with the treasurer. Many of them possessed the Buda Code of Laws and the quoted work of Raymundus Parthenopeis. It was not by chance that Lőcse, with its Saxon-Magdeburg law, and Fehérvár, with its Walloon roots, were left out.

As we have seen, the Hungarian town law was rooted in *hospes law*, but the European town law itself developed from merchant law. In the old *gilde*, which appear in sources dating from the early 11<sup>th</sup> century, a different law from those applied at the time came into force. The development of town law and town communes went hand in hand.<sup>20</sup>

Town development in Western Europe was a long process, but certain ‘moments’ stand out, such as the birth of the charter and the building of town walls to enclose the whole town. The town walls were not a romantic appearance for the townspeople of the time, but a defence against attacks. The increased

18 Reizner 1900, p. 88, translated by Gyula Kristó. Oltvai 1968, pp. 30–31

19 Reggow 2005, pp. 53–54

20 Dilcher 2006, pp. 37–50

population could not be contained within the narrow confines of the fortress, so the surrounding area was also walled. Thus the topographical dichotomy between the fortress and the town was eliminated. At the same time, the town walls enclosed a special legal area, the town, where the rights were very different from the rights of those living outside it. The stone wall not only provided a safer life for the town's craftsmen and merchants, but also enhanced the prestige of the civil order and marked intrinsic cultural aspects, such as symbolising the specific town legal system mentioned above. The wall building was the largest collective enterprise of the townspeople, often with the support of the town lord. Its construction forged a community, a commune, of people arriving from near and far, both in terms of local identity and local law. Besides, a particular intermediate form of freedom-endowed settlements also existed, that of freedom-endowed villages. These included the villages settled by the *Soltész* in the Szepesség, few of which rose to the town level. Many *hospes* settlements in Hungary enjoyed these rights, but they remained in the feudal environment, their inhabitants ultimately remaining serfs and forming the upper layer of the class.<sup>21</sup>

Thus the medieval town and its society and law were born, the analysis of which is facilitated by the clarification of four cornerstones: town peace, town liberty, town law and town constitution. These rights were brought to Hungary by the *hospes* that founded towns after arriving in our country. Town peace was different from national and provincial peace: it was characterised by permanence, violating it was punishable by law, and it applied to all the inhabitants of the town. All forms of private feud were excluded, and thus a special island of peace was created. This peace was further sub-divided, for example, with rules laying down the peace of the house and the peace of fairs in addition to the town order. Since it was widespread, this basic requirement is not emphasised in the letters of privilege, but it was included in more than one article of the town law books.<sup>22</sup>

Town freedom can be understood in two senses. On the one hand, it means the constitutional status of a town as a legal entity (commune), which implied

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21 Ennen 1987, pp. 78–110; Isenmann 2014, pp. 99–102; Teiszler 2007, pp. 39–45

22 Dilcher 1996, pp. 71–73, pp. 99–101

different content in relation to each town, while on the other hand it meant the personal freedoms of citizens. In accordance with the specific conditions of the Middle Ages, the freedom of citizens of large and small towns was varied, and the degree of freedom achieved by citizens in each town was different. These privileges, as we have seen, were already included in the *hospes* rights.

The freedoms of the town as a legal entity, the freedoms of the commune of citizens, included the independent election of judges and councillors, set out in detail in the town constitutional law, as well as the election of parish priests in many places, the building and defence of the town walls, and economic privileges: the right to hold fairs and exemption from customs duties. The freedom of citizens meant the ownership and inheritance of town land and the houses built on it without any obligation, and the right to marry freely. Citizens were subject to the jurisdiction of the town court. The freedom to choose their occupation (craftsman, merchant, farmer) was also part of the individual freedom of citizens. Ultimately, citizens were freed from the personal and material dependence of the town lord, and their freedom was exchanged for taxes. This was the meaning of the slogan “town air makes you free”. It should be remembered, however, that only citizens with full rights enjoyed these freedoms, while day labourers, servants and maids did not; also, the town lord and the nobles who lived in the town, as well as their officials and servants, enjoyed other rights. The freedom of the town’s commune and its members, the citizens, was not acquired by each town at the same time. A long road had to be negotiated to become the ideal town, and there were some towns that never reached it.<sup>23</sup>

The religious life of the lay members of the church was primarily confined to the parish. Lay priests and monks lived under canon law. Canon law provided for the parish priest and parishes the right to perform baptisms, marriages and burials, a right that was not granted to the monastic orders. The parish was also the scene for the life of the lower clergy. From the acolytes to the ordained priests, and in the larger parishes from the chaplains to the altar servers and

23 Fügedi 1961, p. 44, 52, 57; Dilcher 1996, pp. 101–104

the various benefices, the parish priest was responsible for the spiritual care of the population that belonged to the parish. The parish and the church were also a forum for community life, where the population gathered for Sunday Mass and could get involved not only in the liturgy of the Mass, but also find out about the affairs of the town and the world, which provided an opportunity to influence the faithful, spiritually and mentally; this is why the town leaders considered it very important to have the right to elect the parish priest.<sup>24</sup>

Town law is based on town peace and town freedom, and was born out of the dismantling and practical application thereof. It was based on the charter of the town's privileges, the recorded town laws and the decrees of the main town officials. Town law includes public law, private law, criminal law, enforcement law and procedural law, not in their classic modern form of division into branches of law, but often mixed in the various norms. Separating these laws is not an easy task on the basis of today's legal thinking. The rules are laid down in town law codes.

The *articuli* of family law, treated then in conjunction with personal law, define the duties of men and women, the position of children within the family, and even describe how they should be fed. In the law of succession, there are *articuli* on the forms of succession by law and by will, which were not always the same in the Hungarian towns. The town law contained building regulations, and provided for the maintenance of houses. Some rules of neighbour law are still in force today. Market law described the place where certain goods could be sold within the market, and set forth the order of the market. A number of rules were included to facilitate the exchange and movement of goods.

Town law responded to social changes in society, throwing off the shackles of tradition. It was developed by agreement between the parties concerned, expressed by a declaration of common will. It could be changed, nuanced and renewed by decisions of the council, despite its strong roots in customary law.<sup>25</sup>

It was also based on town freedoms that the town constitution was drawn up as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century, developed individually by each town. It

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24 Kurze 1966, pp. 451–460; Isenmann 2014, pp. 631–633

25 Dilcher 1996, pp. 104–110

brought together the various groups in the town, the merchants' associations and the craftsmen's guilds, which also established their own organisational and administrative rules. The town constitution contained the forms of governmental power, which it described independently of personal power. First and foremost, it included a system for electing the judge and the council members, the notary and the parish priest, bringing together the above-mentioned occupational groups of the town as well as the inhabitants of the districts (streets, boroughs), who elected their officials initially by personal participation in the popular assembly and then by delegates. This custom ruled out any open power struggles that might have led to unrest.<sup>26</sup> While the town council and the court were headed by separate people in Western Europe, in Hungary the two offices were held by one person, the town judge, until 1848. This is why the name mayor is unknown in the period discussed.

Part of the town charter is a description of the administration and the organisation of the town chancellery, which can be described based on the *Articuli of the Buda Code of Law*. The town was governed by a judge and a council. They were in charge of administrative matters, town institutions and ecclesiastical matters relating to the town. The office (chancellery) was governed by the notary, who kept the council and court records. The notary was in charge of the clerks, who were paid by him, as well as of the minions of the law, jailers, the executioner and commercial agents. He controlled the treasurer, who in turn had treasurers and tax collectors as his subordinates. The town institutions were governed by a judge and a council. They managed the treasury, the seal, the town walls, the xenodochium, the market, the town scales, the slaughterhouse and other items as the town's own property, and had a say in the affairs of the parish, other churches and monasteries. The administration of the law was carried out by the council members under the leadership of the judge. The activity of the money judge, the deputy money judge and the market judge were also related to the administration of the law. In Buda, appeals could be made to the king, and later to the treasurer.<sup>27</sup>

26 Isenmann 2014, pp. 207–227

27 Mollay 1959, pp. 12, 22, 51, 53, 54, 56, 62, 105, 153–154, 236 a, b, 238–243



The town constitution complied with the socio-economic structure of the town, to the flow of trade and traffic, and to social mobility. At the same time, it expressed the power relations within the town. This was achieved in a way that was adaptable to changes within the town. As a consequence, the town constitution can be seen as an important area for subsequent constitutions.

The four cornerstones of town law mentioned above persisted in towns until the beginning of the bourgeois era. In Hungary, all of these were established by *hospes* law. Even though they were no longer needed in the subsequent period with the advent of legal unity within individual states, they provided numerous examples of the legal organisation of civil states, and have therefore not been completely consigned to the dustbin of legal history.

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Installation imitating a cloister,  
Exhibition “Kings and Saints - The Age of the Árpád Dynasty”

ZSÓFIA DEMETER

## FINDING THE BURIAL PLACE OF KING BÉLA III AND ANNE OF ANTIOCH IN 1848

On 5 December 1848, the grave of the first, and so far the last, royal couple whose identity was confirmed with certainty – by common consent – was found in Székesfehérvár. We should also add that this was the last proven burial of a ruler of the Árpád dynasty in the capital of the royal house (since the burial place of the child László III, who died in 1205, is unknown).<sup>1</sup>

The finds were, and still are, interesting, not only because they were undisturbed: neither conquerors nor treasure hunters had managed to rob the graves. This was also of particular importance from a historical and cultural history perspective, since János Érdy's archaeological excavation method and the results are still considered exemplary by his scientific successors. It was the excavation and the interest generated around it that led scientists to investigate the person, age, historical role and greatness of Béla III, and the excavation is the only source from which we know about the representation of the ruler in death.<sup>2</sup> The original state of the king's grave and the other graves in the vicinity can be reconstructed from the excavation documentation, such as the drawings made by János Varsányi on site (although Varsányi himself drew the queen's grave based on the accounts of those on site,<sup>3</sup> after the outer coffin had been opened before his arrival). Admittedly after many ups

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1 Kásler and Szentirmay 2019, pp. 32–33; Szabados 2016, p. 200

2 Zsoldos et al. 2016, p. 101

3 Éry 2008, p. 17

and downs, the royal skeletons discovered became the subject of study by generations of Hungarian anthropologists. In 1935, Lajos Bartucz expressed the importance of re-examining all the bones that had been discovered by that time: “They will shed some light on the inheritance of certain anthropological stamps in the family of the Árpáds.”<sup>4</sup> It is fitting and just that the finds of the graves discovered in 1848, six hundred years later, are now at the centre of archaeogenetic studies.<sup>5</sup>

## **“At the real seat of the Great King”<sup>6</sup>**

Our subtitle is a quote of the last verse of the chant in honour of Saint Stephen, well-known as a folk song. The first line of the stanza, “Rejoice, royal town!”, is often quoted as the main title of the most important events of Székesfehérvár, especially the St. Stephen years (1938, 1988, 2013). I myself have also quoted it in connection with the discovery of the resting place of Béla III and his wife in Székesfehérvár, because of similar thoughts.<sup>7</sup>

According to written sources, it is certain that 15 kings were buried in the grounds of the collegiate chapter church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, i.e. the royal basilica in Székesfehérvár. Until 1540 (the burial of János Szapolyai), royal burials were mainly associated with Fehérvár. It was in the last century of the Árpád dynasty that the town gained real importance in this respect: the 12<sup>th</sup> century rulers of the Árpád dynasty, first of all King Kálmán (1095-1116) and his successors, considered it particularly important to be buried near the grave of St. Stephen.<sup>8</sup>

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4 Bartucz 1935, Vol. V, p. 28

5 Kásler and Szentirmay 2019

6 Kovács and Medgyessy 2014, pp. 162–166

7 Demeter 1999a, pp. 220–229; 1999b, pp. 25–35; 1999c, pp. 11–23

8 Szabados 2020, 206; Szabó 2018, 177; Based on the details of the reconstruction shown to have been performed in the period, Szabó considers it possible that Kálmán the Learned and his first wife are the royal couple buried in the graves found in 1848. In this case, he agrees with Endre Tóth: Tóth 2006, 141–161. The identification results of the last complex archaeogenetic study were summarised in Kásler-Szentirmay 2019, 62–64.

We know from contemporary sources that the walls of the Royal Basilica were still standing in the 1770s, and were demolished only in 1800 when the bishop's palace was built. It was used by the first bishop of Székesfehérvár, Ignác Séllyei Nagy (1777-1789), who had the surviving and covered parts of the basilica converted for episcopal ceremonies; for example, he had the cathedral chapter invested here in 1777.<sup>9</sup> In 1848, therefore, there were still people alive who had seen the walls of the royal basilica and knew, and indeed were proud of, the fact that it was a royal burial place. However, this was news for most people, even though only 50-70 years had passed! This is a warning sign for any temptation to demolish.

The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of the royal graves is an occasion to remember János Érdy (1796-1871), the archaeologist who excavated the tombs, the importance of the royal basilica, King Béla III (1172-1196) and his queen (1172-1184), as well as the circumstances and significance of the discovery of the finds. It was this multiple objective that led the Local Government of Székesfehérvár and the King St. Stephen Museum in Székesfehérvár to mark the anniversary by unveiling a commemorative plaque and organising a scientific conference and chamber exhibition on 4 December 1998.

My own work at the conference covered the discovery of the royal grave finds and the reaction to it. Now, recalling part of my presentation at the conference, I would like to go into detail regarding the historical circumstances and the events of the excavation. I obviously cannot examine the individuals who were found, their historical role, their identification, their grave artifacts and their skeletons. However, December 1848 must be discussed in the context of the war and the particular atmosphere in the town.

<sup>9</sup> Fejér 1818, p. 42; Pauer 1849, p. 26; Szvorényi, 1851, p. 417; Henszlmann 1864, p. 26, p. 36; Lukács 1868, p. 294; Török 1894, p. 207; p. 311; Károly II. 1898, p. 87; Forster 1900, p. 8; Polgár 1936, p. 31; p. 35, p. 42



## Székesfehérvár between Jelačić's two attacks

After the great relief of the Battle of Pákozd (29 September 1848) and the disarming of Jelačić's garrison in Székesfehérvár (3 October 1848), events which gave the people of Székesfehérvár the right to think of their own heroism, the leaders and people of Székesfehérvár and Fejér County were accused of treason. Lőrinc Tóth and László Madarász accused them of waiting for Jelačić's troops "with open arms" and feeding them,<sup>10</sup> while László Csányi criticised the poor feeding of the Hungarian soldiers.<sup>11</sup>

Ede Eischl, the chief notary, responded to the accusations in a voluminous and indignant open letter in the pages of the newspaper *Közlöny*. He based his defence rejecting the accusations on the minutes of the council meetings of Székesfehérvár, and said in essence that "not a single hat was raised in honour of the enemy."<sup>12</sup> The particular value of the letter lies in its authentic description of the popular uprising in the town on 3 October, which disarmed the enemy garrison and prevented it from uniting with the reserve.<sup>13</sup>

This is how Mihály Boross wrote about the offence caused by the accusations: "Having got rid of the Croats, we were harassed by our own government."<sup>14</sup>

The town and its leaders, however, were not only offended, they also entered into an alliance of defence and defiance against the investigators. Even before the arrival of the government commissioners, the boards had discussed and approved in all respects the previous actions of the town leaders. The actions of the government commissioners here had paralysed the officers' corps, and now, on the eve of a new offensive, it would have been

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10 *Közlöny* (1848), 119, 7 October, National Assembly, pp. 601-603

11 Erdős 1998, pp. 195-196

12 Eischl Ede, town chief notary, *Közlöny* (1848), 126, 14 October, p. 631

13 Demeter 2017, pp. 52-60

14 Boross 1881, p. 110

necessary to concentrate forces again,<sup>15</sup> since the autumn war events were followed by others in the winter. The Hungarian legal revolution could expect an attack from the whole empire.

In the autumn of 1848, both the military party led by Duke Windisch-Grätz and the imperial family were busy preparing for a change of ruler on the throne. The Schwarzenberg government was formed on 21 November 1848. The new emperor, Franz Joseph I – crowned on 2 December – along with the government promoted a programme for a united Austria.<sup>16</sup> The fact that Franz Joseph was not crowned Hungarian king and thus did not take an oath to respect the Hungarian constitution played not just a formal role in this change. It was for this reason that his accession to the throne was in the interests of the monarchy as a whole, and was unacceptable from the point of view of the Hungarian War of Independence.

Duke Windisch-Grätz was given the authority to restore order in Hungary, i.e. to attack, which he did on 14 December. The Hungarian army was then faced with a force that it was unable to stop in Transdanubia: Artúr Görgei surrendered Győr on 26 December, and Mór Perczel's army was defeated at Mór on 30 December, against the I. Corps led by Jelačić. In the midst of a deep political and military crisis, neither Székesfehérvár nor the capital could be defended after the retreat and defeat: Pest-Buda was occupied by the imperial forces on 5 January 1849, and Székesfehérvár on 7 January.<sup>17</sup>

Amidst the troubled times, repeated threats, self-esteem crisis and unjust accusations, Székesfehérvár desperately needed something glorious, something national and heroic. It was in this situation that news of the discovery of the king's grave erupted. This explains the elementary interest that the town showed in the truly glorious and national artifacts evoking a heroic past.

15 Erdős 1998. p. 200

16 Hermann 1996, p. 221

17 Boross 1881, pp. 111–127; Hermann 1996, pp. 229–231; Erdős 1998, pp. 215–222; Magony 1998, p. 43

## The site

In 1851, Elek Fényes, in his description of the country, considered not the royal graves but the artesian well drilled in Fehérvár in 1834 worthy of note.<sup>18</sup> At that time there were already three artesian wells in the town.<sup>19</sup> The digging or drilling of wells in the Inner Town, which did not have much good drinking water, was always a central issue. By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the town had a permanent well-master, and news of successful drilling spread far and wide: Both Kaposvár and Debrecen borrowed the local well-master Máté Birghoffer.<sup>20</sup> János Érdy himself claims that the first artesian well in the country was drilled here in 1831.<sup>21</sup>

In 1838, Bishop László Barkóczi (1837-1847) borrowed the town's artesian well-drilling tools, and in 1839 a well was drilled in the courtyard of the bishop's palace.<sup>22</sup> A drawing of the well was presented to the council.<sup>23</sup>

The water from the well was also drained into the basin outside the walls of the bishop's garden in Fazekas utca (now partly the National Memorial Site and partly the area of Koronázó tér (Coronation Square)), and the first graves were found and destroyed during the digging of the drainage canal.<sup>24</sup> The 1839 well digging was accompanied by grave robberies: some of the jewellery was taken to Vienna, other parts to the National Museum, but some pieces were also looted by the workers.<sup>25</sup>

In 1846, the water yield of the well in the bishop's garden deteriorated, so the outlet channel had to be lowered. The calculations of the well-master Máté Birghoffer and mason Ferenc Máder did not convince the council: they decided

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18 Czuczor, Gergely 1851, II, pp. 8–9

19 Kállay 1988, p. 406

20 Kállay, 1988, pp. 403–406

21 Érdy 1853, p. 43; Török 1894, p. 177

22 Kállay, 1988. pp. 329–330

23 Archives of the Town of Székefehérvár (hereinafter referred to as SzVL), Council Minutes, 1839. 840, No. 1454.

24 Érdy 1853, p. 43; Lukács 1868, p. 294; Fodor 1992, p. 50

25 Henszlmann 1864, p. 224; Nemeskéri 1983, pp. 110–111; Kégl 1987, p. 14; Fodor 1992, p. 50

to drill a new well outside the bishopric's wall, because they feared that the old well would no longer be able to supply the inner town.<sup>26</sup> The drilling of this new well was only "put in motion" on 14 February 1847 because of the lack of wood for the pipe.<sup>27</sup>

In early September, during excavations around the well, the wall of an old building was discovered. The council looked at it and decided that it should be drawn by the engineer Izidor Kállinger and "out of deference [...] should be removed by those who know how."<sup>28</sup> The town regularly employed a special person to "decipher" the discovered walls, who was paid according to the amount of stone and earth extracted.<sup>29</sup> The quarryman had already stipulated in 1840 that he would only undertake the quarrying if he could own the treasures he found.<sup>30</sup>

## **Actions of the council and the commission on the discovery of the graves of Béla III and his wife<sup>31</sup>**

In 1848 the excavations around the well continued: on 5 May, the engineer Kállinger reported that the stones had been removed, but "in one corner of the rectangular pit dug out there is still a coffin, which can only be excavated after the well is finished."<sup>32</sup> The council ordered the work to continue.

26 SzVL. Council Minutes 1846, 4082; 4124; 4321

27 SzVL. Council Minutes 1847, 3872

28 SzVL. Council Minutes 1847, 3558; Kállay 1996, p. 151

29 Kállay 1988, p. 330

30 SzVL. Council Minutes 1816, 508; 1839, 244; 1840, 106

31 The archivist Károly Moenich's report on the minutes he reconstructed. Manuscript. SZIKM, Local History Collection 70. 364. 1.

32 The archivist Károly Moenich's report on the minutes he reconstructed. Manuscript. SZIKM, Local History Collection 70. 364. 1. SzVL. Council Minutes 1848, 1596; Pauer, 1849, p. 2

Entry 4509 in the council minutes of 5 December 1848 mentions the discovery of marble gravestones “2 and 3 fathoms southeast of the artesian well” and the opening of the first marble coffin. The record vividly describes the “brittle bones of the human body” found in the coffin, which “on examination by the medical gentlemen, was found to be the remains of a woman about 40 years old”. In a tone of utter awe, the minutes describe the “simple crown of 15-lot silver...” and the “pieces of silk veil interwoven with gold threads”. In the decision<sup>33</sup> on the case, “as the circumstances show the human remains to be royal and probably of the Árpád clan”, the artifacts were sent to the museum with Ede Eischl, the notary.<sup>34</sup> Eischl took a letter to the academic secretary János Luczenbacher and the Defence Commission about “this interesting find”; the letter also mentioned that another grave was visible next to the one that had been opened. To open the other grave, they invited the “expert antiquities researcher of national repute”.

It is interesting to note that until his arrival the scientist was always referred to as Luczenbacher, although his name change to Érdi (with an “i”) was published in the newspapers *Közlöny* on 2 July and *Kossuth Hírlapja* on 8 August.<sup>35</sup> It was obviously him who warned the town councillors of the name change when he arrived.

On 5 December at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, at the request of the mayor Hadhalmi, the first skeleton found was examined by the doctors in the town. Their opinion reflects a surprising amount of experience: they were able to determine the sex and age of the first skeleton, as well as the probable date of its burial, to the admiration of modern anthropologists.<sup>36</sup> Town surgeon Mihály Marbik, assistant town surgeon Károly Hellensteiner, chief town physician Ferenc Say, chief physician of Fejér County Ferenc Hanekker, chief physician János Schaller and county physician József Aschner described in their report a “female person” of “advanced age” who had been buried “six hundred years

33 SzVL. Council Minutes 1848, 4509

34 The receipt of the National Museum confirming the transfer bears the number 4573. The recipient is Ágoston Kubinyi, who received the finds as a gift.

35 *Közlöny* (1848), 23, 2 July, p. 92 l.; *Kossuth Hírlapja* (1848), 23, 8 August, p. 149.l.

36 Éry et al. 1999, pp. 9–15

ago”.<sup>37</sup> At the public meeting held on 7 December, the presiding mayor explained the circumstances and the board decided to continue the excavation<sup>38</sup> and to “have it supported by the authorities”.<sup>39</sup>

The jewellery taken to Pest was entered by Érdy in the acquisition diary on 6 December under number 61.<sup>40</sup> He noted in his study that he had presented them to the competent authorities and, as he wrote, “I was immediately instructed to travel to Fehérvár to seize the jewellery and marble slabs found there for the Hungarian national museum, to bring them up here, and to continue the excavation if necessary, with the intervention of the authorities”<sup>41</sup>. On 7 December, the *Kossuth Hírlapja* already knew about Érdy’s mission<sup>42</sup>. József Szvorényi immediately informed the *Közlöny* about the opening of the first grave in a reproving manner: “the disturbed corpses have already been picked up into baskets by profane hands”.<sup>43</sup>

The work of János Érdy and the engineer János Varsányi, who arrived with him on 8 December, was followed in the minutes from 12 December. According to these, the second coffin, which contained the King’s bones and jewellery, was opened at 9 a.m. before “a large number of spectators”. The description of the grave is very accurate, which suggests that it was perhaps dictated by Érdy himself, as it reflects his later observations. For example, unlike János Pauer, he describes a chain around the king’s neck, but fails to note that the ring is an openable case.<sup>44</sup>

The minutes also note that on the very day of the opening and drawing of the king’s grave, the finds were received with great interest. The jewellery was presented to the public at the site and later in the town hall, i.e. “exposed to the public eye”<sup>45</sup>. The great interest was noted by all witnesses. János Érdy writes:

37 SzVL. Council Minutes 1848, 4510.

38 Ibid. 4542

39 Ibid 4579

40 Forster 1900, p. 9

41 Érdy 1853, p. 43

42 *Kossuth Hírlapja* (1848), 7 December, p. 137, p. 597

43 Szvorényi *Közlöny* (1848), 191, 18 December, p. 901

44 SzVL. Council Minutes 1848, 4613

45 Ibid 4579

“The beautiful spectacle was met by an excited crowd in the otherwise quiet square. They jumped down into the pit in groups, and the inspector was not able to forbid anyone to see [...] [the skeleton] from eight o’clock in the morning until noon; even while it was still being drawn, crowds of people kept rushing in from all parts of the town. Here one could experience the warm sympathy the people of Fehérvár had for the past of their town, and several thousand people saw this scientific treasure in its entirety; I even had to have the jewels displayed in a room of the town hall.”<sup>46</sup>

János Pauer (1814-1889), then 34 years old, educator of seminarians and teacher at the seminary, later bishop, member of the academy, writes: “at the sight of them a great multitude flocked together”<sup>47</sup>. The other eyewitness, József Szvorényi (1816-1892, linguist, literary scholar), a Cistercian teacher who also reported for the *Közlöny*, affirms in the source quoted above that “we are hanging on with a tense desire to discover the reality hidden in the obscurity.”<sup>48</sup>

The entry of 14 December tells of the discovery of the new graves containing only bones and that the finds were going to be taken to the museum – the National Museum – and that the costs of the excavation would be borne by the “public constitution”, i.e. the state.<sup>49</sup>

If the note from a few years earlier is to be believed, János Érdy’s work was very well received given that, according to the editor’s comment, “Mr. Érdy was financed for this excavation in Fehérvár with only 200 forints [...]”<sup>50</sup>

In the commission president’s publication announcing the arrival of János Érdy and his team in Fehérvár, the request was made that “some of the antiquities found should be kept for the town”.<sup>51</sup>

It is known that Érdy arrived with the order of the National Defence Commission to seize the artifacts for the museum and transport them to Pest. In his report of 12 December, József Szvorényi called Érdy no less than

46 Érdy 1853, p. 44

47 Pauer 1849, p. 4

48 Szvorényi, *Közlöny* (1848), 191, 8 December, 901. l.

49 SzVL. Council Minutes 1848, 4619

50 Érdy 1853, p. 48, editor’s comment

51 SzVL. Council Minutes 1848, 4579

a government commissioner,<sup>52</sup> and let us add that at that time, any person arriving with a government mandate had the right to this title.

At the general assembly of 14 December, i.e. after the discovery of the grave of Béla III, when Érdy was still working here, Grand Provost Ferenc Farkas proposed to petition the government to keep part of the finds “as a token of the glory of this town from the cemetery of kings”. The general assembly was disciplined in stating that the “request would be contrary to the purpose of the national museum”, and therefore did not support the proposal, but decided that “the place of the graves will be marked with an ornate column, and the date of their discovery will be noted on it for the later generations”.<sup>53</sup> If not the decorative column, the promise of a note for later generations was completed with the unveiling of a commemorative plaque at the entrance to the ruin garden on the anniversary in 1998, 150 years later.

The last record of Érdy’s stay in Székesfehérvár in the minutes is a receipt dated 17 December, in which he acknowledges receipt of the finds of the excavation performed from 11 to 16 December “for transport to Pest for the National Museum”.<sup>54</sup> This receipt must have been written immediately before the departure, as the passport for the transport of the finds for Ferenc Balogh Jr., signed by mayor Pál Hathalmi and vice-notary Vilmos Orsonits, was issued on the 16<sup>th</sup>,<sup>55</sup> and it bears Érdy’s signature, dated 19 December, confirming receipt of the finds in Pest. János Érdy entered the finds transported to Pest into the National Museum’s records under the number 1848/64.<sup>56</sup>

The story of finding the graves also includes the question of why the work had to be stopped. Both János Érdy and János Pauer referred to the “fierce winter” as the cause.<sup>57</sup> Those who reflected on the discovery later rightly note that the war was another reason why the work could not be continued. Both circumstances are fair enough, but in my opinion, the situation was much

52 Szvorényi *Közlöny* (1848), 191, 18 December, p. 901

53 SzVL. Council Minutes 1848, 4619

54 SzVL. Council Minutes 1848, 4664

55 SzVL. Council Minutes 1848, 4684

56 Éry 2008, p. 17.

57 Érdy 1853, p. 43; Pauer, 1849, p. 5



simpler. Érdy did what he was commissioned to do: he excavated the finds visible and accessible from the opened pit, and had them transported to Pest. This is not to say that in the period following 17 December the excavation could not have been continued, despite the weather or the war, but the fact remains that Érdy himself had no regrets about the halting of the work and did not blame external circumstances for it.

## **“Science must not be forgotten, even in the midst of fighting”<sup>58</sup>**

In the local history literature of Székesfehérvár, Gyula Lauschmann<sup>59</sup> sometimes makes the remark that Lajos Kossuth would have visited the excavation in Székesfehérvár. I have just presented several entries in the minutes of the council meetings; in these, the well-master, the town engineer, the doctors, the canon and the teacher are all mentioned. I find it impossible to believe that if Kossuth had visited here by the morning of 17 December 1848, he would not have been mentioned in the minutes.

On the other hand, one record indicates that Kossuth viewed the finds in the National Museum in Pest on 22 December.<sup>60</sup> If we accept the date, we can deduce that Kossuth would not have had time for a lengthy visit on that day: this was when he issued his call for a general popular uprising in defence of the homeland.<sup>61</sup> The day before, he appointed István Batthyány as the Government Commissioner of Székesfehérvár and Fejér County and charged him with organising the free mobile troops. To support this activity, the Ministry of Finance transferred 12,000 forints to Batthyány.<sup>62</sup>

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58 Decree of Lajos Kossuth as Chairman of the National Defence Commission, published on 30 November 1848 in the *Közlöny* of 2 December 1848, No. 175, 825.l.

59 Lauschmann III, 1995, p. 253

60 Hermann 1996, p. 10

61 Kossuth XIII, 1952, p. 839

62 Kossuth XIII, 1952, p. 837

Érdy, who returned to Pest, was demonstrably occupied with the finds of the royal graves. He wrote that in one of the rooms of the museum in Pest, the finds were “assembled as I found them”; he organised a professional presentation for 27 December. At this time, he had the bones examined by renowned physicians,<sup>63</sup> and according to later recollections, in his lecture given around the same time he expressed his views on the dating and identification of the finds.<sup>64</sup>

The National Museum, as the first Hungarian public collection, was placed under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Education by the national government on 19 December.<sup>65</sup> This was preceded by a series of provisions that helped to bring the heritage of the past into the National Museum. In 1804, a provision was made for the surrender of the obligatory deposits of prints, and in 1836 the Jankovits collection was purchased. It is typical and interesting that the sarcophagus of King Stephen, found in Székesfehérvár in 1803, was transferred to the National Museum in 1814 on the initiative of the Palatine Joseph,<sup>66</sup> and was only returned in 1936. The same procedure was applied to the royal graves found in 1848 in Székesfehérvár: together with the bones and other artifacts found, the pieces of the red limestone outer coffins were taken away as well.<sup>67</sup> The latter were returned to Székesfehérvár in 1936, and are now on display in the lower section of the Episcopal Cathedral.<sup>68</sup>

The opening sentence quoted in the subtitle rightly continues as follows: “To cultivate [science] is our duty at all times.”<sup>69</sup> It was in this spirit that Kossuth, at the suggestion of Count József Teleki, President of the Academy, formulated his decree on the obligation to hand over the antiquities found during the fortification and rampart construction works.<sup>70</sup> Minister of War Lázár Mészáros

63 Érdy 1853, p. 45. No further information is available on the identity of the doctors.

64 Henszlmann 1864, p. 215; Török 1894, p. 176

65 Hermann 1996, p. 10; Fodor 1992, p. 8

66 Fitz 1980, p. 77; Buzinkay 1986, p. 39

67 Éry ed. 2008, p. 17

68 Demeter and Gelencsér 2002, p. 152

69 Decree of Lajos Kossuth as Chairman of the National Defence Commission, published on 30 November 1848 in the *Közlöny* of 2 December 1848, No. 175, 825.l.

70 Kossuth Lajos Összes Munkái XIII, 1952, pp. 594–595; Szabad 1994, p. 129

opened the arms depots for the museum's collection,<sup>71</sup> one of the sources of the historical weapons collection. Károly Szász, a person particularly committed to the preservation of antiquities, was appointed as head of the State Secretariat for Cultural Affairs attached to the National Defence Commission.<sup>72</sup> At this time, however, the idea had already been formulated that not only antiquity, but also present-day relevance could make objects worthy of being placed in a national museum. During the capitulation at Ozora (7 October 1848), the 5 captured flags of the reserve army of 9,000 soldiers led by Roth and Philippovich were also placed here after being presented at the National Assembly.<sup>73</sup>

## News of the “dead kings”

Many of the witnesses immediately promoted the Székesfehérvár finds. Of course, János Érdy himself, keeper of the National Museum and leader of the excavation, spoke about them at the site and at the presentation of the temporary exhibition in Pest on 27 December. The events were also reported by József Szvorényi, then a high school teacher in Fehérvár, in the *Közlöny* on 12 December, and by Mihály Boross (1815-1899), a lawyer, then a member of several committees and later second deputy ispán of Fejér county, as a correspondent for the *Közlöny* and *Kossuth Hírlapja*. The scientific work of János Pauer, then a seminary teacher in Székesfehérvár, published in 1849, can also be considered a contemporary writing;<sup>74</sup> as Aurél Török rightly remarked, “[...] I am of the opinion that in our dear country there has never yet been a book published which provides such a remarkable and interesting discovery for Hungarian scientific circles at six pengős as Pauer's book.”<sup>75</sup> Érdy's scientific summary, the ideas of which he is said to have already presented in a lecture on 27 December 1848, was only published in 1853. The editor described the work

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71 Hermann 1996, p. 10

72 Buzinkay, 1986, p. 42

73 Hermann 1996, p. 10

74 Pauer 1849

75 Török 1894, p. 197

as follows: “Among our Hungarian antiquities, our national artifacts, no other discovery exists that would be more noteworthy and important. It may justly be regarded as the most outstanding achievement of Hungarian historical finds to date.”<sup>76</sup>

In the 1850s, neither József Szvorényi, nor Imre Palugyai or Elek Fényes mentioned the then unpresentable affair of 1848.<sup>77</sup> János Érdy was the only one who could do so, as a scholar and the most knowledgeable person on the subject, and he himself mentioned János Pauer and József Szvorényi as eyewitnesses.<sup>78</sup>

The news of the royal graves inspired János Garay’s poem entitled *Síri hang az élőkhöz* (*A Voice from the Grave to the Living*),<sup>79</sup> in which he also aimed to use the relics of ancestors to inspire his contemporaries to fight for freedom:

“[...] the grave of your forefathers was opened to you,  
So that your heart might beat faster at the sight of the dead,  
Not for he may have been a king, but for he was a son of an age  
When our homeland was glorious, free and independent.”

It is interesting and characteristic that the new emperor, Franz Joseph, whose accession to the throne was not recognised by the Hungarian Parliament, is mentioned several times in the poem. The fourth stanza in the original poem scourges “the infidelities of the apostate king”, and the sixth stanza the fact

“That his faithless king, transgressing his holy faith,  
betrayed, sold, destroys his ancient people.”

The poem was also published in an appendix by Aurél Török, the first anthropologist to examine the skeletons,<sup>80</sup> but he replaced the parts compromising the king with suspension points. This was no coincidence, since

76 Érdy 1853, p. 42. The editor’s comment.

77 Szvorényi 1851; Fényes 1851, Palugyai 1853

78 Érdy 1853, p. 45

79 Garay 1956, pp. 135–136; cited by Török 1894, pp. 156–157

80 Török 1894, pp. 154–157

by that time Franz Joseph I had already been crowned as the Hungarian king, and after a new examination of the bones, the nth funeral, ordered by the king and financed with 25,000 forints, took place on 21 October 1898, this time in the Chapel of the Holy Trinity of Matthias Church in Buda.<sup>81</sup>

János Garay reports on the enthusiastic mood in which he wrote the poem in a letter to Sándor Petőfi on 25 December 1848.<sup>82</sup> Here he expresses his opinion about the graves in prose: “the day after tomorrow, we scientists are invited to the Museum to view the ancient finds of Székesfehérvár. I, who have so much reverence for the great age of our ancestors, am filled with joy to see an Árpád king, even if only in his skeleton, not because he is a king, but because he is a Hungarian from an age in which this nation was free, independent and great. Would that from his bones such a miasma might spread through our foul air as would make us all feverish for freedom!”

Sándor Petőfi was then living at 2555 Színház utca in Debrecen, and since 15 December he had been primarily occupied with the birth of his son Zoltán. Unfortunately, his letters to Garay have not survived,<sup>83</sup> but we do know his views on the royal grave. In his note of 12 January 1849, found among his notes on history, he of course expresses a very different opinion, worthy of a true republican: “For several centuries the place where kings were once buried in the town of Székesfehérvár had been forgotten. Towards the end of 1848, the grave and in it the bones of two Árpád kings were found. This would have been a national holiday only a year earlier; now, except for a few antiquity-loving scholars, nobody was interested [...], as the nation was fighting a war against kings. It was as if these dead kings had come out of the grave to drag their living successors from the throne to the dust.”<sup>84</sup>

The poetic image is different – one might say it reflects a movement in the opposite direction – yet the report written by Mihály Boross in *Kossuth Hírlapja* on 20 December 1848 suggests a similar view. “When the crown of the

81 Forster 1900, pp. 269–270; p. 276; Békefi 1900, pp. 279–292

82 Petőfi 1974, pp. 529–530, cited by Török 1894, pp. 155–156; Buzinkay 1986, p. 47

83 Petőfi 1964, p. 457

84 Petőfi VII, 1964, p. 142

Habsburgs falls into the dust on the one hand, the crowns of the deceased kings rise from the dust on the other.”<sup>85</sup>

A number of other examples could be given here, but it is clear from the ones mentioned that our ancestors had different perceptions of the discovery of the “dead kings”. The enthusiasm of the scientists is understandable, the judgment of the known persons is as can be expected in light of their views, and the elemental enthusiasm of the locals is natural.

## The afterlife of desires

The yearning of the town expressed in 1848 to recover some items from the royal graves did not cease. In the process of developing Székesfehérvár in the 1930s – the main aim of which was to prepare for the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of King St. Stephen – this goal was linked to urban planning both under the mayor Aladár Zavaros (1919-1931)<sup>86</sup> and the mayor Dr. Emil Csitáry (1931-1941), who was to define the whole era. The restoration of the cathedral, the renovation of the lower section, the completion of the square in front of the entrance and the monument to the heroes were all part of this process. The Pásztor-Hikisch composition was completed by adding the figure of the reclining soldier, which could only be erected in the space created by the demolition of the Szigethy house. It was then that Heroes’ Square was opened.<sup>87</sup>

The restoration of the cathedral also reflected the expectation that, following the initiative of Arnold Marosi (1873-1939), the museum director who had recently been awarded the title of Chief Advisor to the Government,<sup>88</sup> the mayor Emil Csitáry wanted to have the remains of Béla

85 Boross, 1848. *Kossuth Hírlapja* (1848), 148, 20 December, p. 641.l.

86 *Székesfehérvári Napló* (1929) 25 December.

87 Schmidl 1940, p. 168

88 Repository of King St. Stephen Museum, Repository of Museum History. Secretarial report, 22 May 1932

III and his wife returned to the town in 1931.<sup>89</sup> The effort was supported by Bálint Hóman himself when, in 1933, Arnold Marosi “put forward a proposal for the recovery of the royal graves found in the basilica”.<sup>90</sup> However, the grand plan failed; although the *Székesfehérvár Friss Újság* already reported in enthusiastic articles about the negotiations on the return of the remains<sup>91</sup>, only the original hard limestone pieces of the outer coffins were taken back to the town<sup>92</sup>. Mayor Emil Csitáry wrote in his memoirs: “We have recovered the original red marble coffin of the great King Béla III and his wife, the lower slab of which beautifully shows the figure of the royal couple thanks to secreted acid. (This also shows what a giant man Béla III was.) These coffins were placed in the lower section of the cathedral, the lower slabs of the coffins being placed under a glass wall.”<sup>93</sup>

In 2017, the figure of Béla III was brought to life at the Coronation Festival Games in Székesfehérvár. In a related exhibition, the King St. Stephen Museum presented the original grave artifacts found in 1848 and the grave paintings were reconstructed (with copies) as well. The exhibition entitled “His body rests in Fehérvár” was opened on 12 August 2017. The curator of the exhibition, Dr. György Szabados, mentioned that the king was venerated as Béla the Great by his successor (and grandson) Béla IV. His reliably identifiable grave finds were found in 1848 in Székesfehérvár, the Árpád-era capital of Hungary. Béla III himself designated the burial place between the grave of his first wife and that of his grandfather Béla II the Blind (1131-1141).<sup>94</sup> This honouring of the blind king is understandable since he was the forefather of all our subsequent Árpád dynasty kings.<sup>95</sup>

89 Dormuth 1935, I.II, p. 6. *Székesfehérvári Friss Újság* (1938), 8 July, p. 10, p. 12, p. 24

90 Dormuth 1938, p. 2

91 *Székesfehérvári Friss Újság* (1938), 7 July, p. 10, p. 12

92 *Székesfehérvári Friss Újság* (1938), 24 July; Szarka and Láng 1939, p. 9

93 Csitáry 2013, 148-149; On the outer coffins: Kégli 1987, 13-17; Buzinkay 1986, 91; Éry et al. 1999, 12-14.

94 <http://www.mebt.hu › radioadas › 180702-teste-fehervarott-nyugszik>. Kontakt Rádió. Tárlatról tárlatra. 20 August 2018. Downloaded on: 7 January 2022; Kásler and Szentirmay 2019, p. 32

95 Szabados 2020, p. 207

Dr. András Cser-Palkovics, mayor of Székesfehérvár, said the following about the artifacts of the graves of Béla III and Queen Anne at the press conference introducing the games: “An inhabitant of Fehérvár can never give up the desire to have a place in the former coronation town at some point in the future, in accordance with the King’s will.”<sup>96</sup>



The place of coronation and burial of Hungarian kings, a miniature of the former Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

“Kings and Saints – The Age of the Árpáds”

96 <https://magyarhirlap.hu/cikk/91612>. Downloaded on: 7 January 2022. *Magyar Hírlap* (2017), 28 June; <https://www.szekesfehervar.hu> Székesfehérvár Városportal – This year’s Coronation Ceremony Games bring Béla III’s life to the stage



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Interceding Theotokos engolpion with enamel icon, late 13th century,  
Treasury Basiliek Onze-Lieve-Vrouw 'Sterre der Zee' Maastricht

PÁL DIÓSZEGI SZABÓ

# HUNGARIAN-BYZANTINE RELATIONS IN THE ÁRPÁD ERA

## Towards the Carpathians

Even before they settled in the Carpathian Basin in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Hungarians had already been in contact with the Byzantine Empire. This is evidenced by sources written mainly by Christian authors, which commemorate our ancestors in the context of a single episode. In all likelihood, Hungarians first encountered Christianity through Byzantine contacts from the East. The role of Byzantine culture as a bridge between Europe and Asia was clearly visible. Byzantium became the main source of a culture built on Roman statehood, the Greek language and Christianity, a culture that gave it its essence throughout the Middle Ages.

In Greek Byzantine sources, Hungarians are most often referred to as Turkics (οἱ Τοῦρκοι) and thus are considered one of the Turkic peoples. Only the Hungarians are referred to as ‘ungroj’ or ‘ungaroj’ (οἱ Οὐγγροί, Οὐγγαροί), but other ancient peoples also have the Magyar name behind them, such as the Pannonian, Paionian, Sauromatian, Getaean, but especially Scythian (οἱ Σκύθαι).<sup>1</sup>

In the ninth century, the Byzantine Empire was in what is known as the Middle Byzantine period. In addition to the iconoclastic ideological infighting,

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1 Moravcsik 2003, p. 30; AMTBF, p. 10.

it launched its Christian missions to neighbouring peoples such as Great Moravia and the conversion of the Bulgarians also established Constantinople's religious hegemony (868-870). The accession of the founder of the Macedonian dynasty, Emperor Basil I (867-886), brought a new boom, ushering in a period known as the "Macedonian Renaissance" both in politics and culture.

According to Byzantine sources, the military and inter-state relations of the Hungarians began with their involvement in the Bulgarian-Byzantine War. Fortunately for us, the succeeding emperors recorded important information about neighbouring peoples. The two most important imperial authors even had personal contact with the Hungarians. Both Emperor Leo VI the Wise (886-912) in his *Tactics* and Emperor Constantine VII (Porphyrogenitus) (945-959) in his work *De administrando imperio* (abbreviated as DAI), a work containing internal state information, already reported on the Hungarians settling in the Carpathian Basin. Leo VI the Wise wrote down his observations on the military systems of various peoples, including the Hungarians.

The official Byzantine contact with the Hungarians was therefore military in nature and related to the Byzantine-Bulgarian war. The instigator of the war was Simeon, son of Boris, the Bulgarian Khan, who, having been baptised and brought up in the Byzantine capital, was well acquainted with Byzantine culture. According to the successor of Byzantine source, Georgius Monachus Continuatus, Leo VI the Wise, who was busy with the Arab war at the time, entered into an alliance against the Bulgarians with Árpád and Kusál (Ἀρπάδη καὶ Κουσάνη), who were then appearing at the Lower Danube.<sup>2</sup> The Hungarian success was swift and devastating, Simeon had to turn to the Pechenegs to help him out against the Hungarians. The Byzantine emperor would have allied himself with the Hungarians against the Pechenegs as well, but the Hungarians were not prepared to do so. The Hungarian settlement into the Carpathian Basin was accelerated by the Kangar-Pecheneg invasion from the east.

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2 Kristó 1998, p. 48; AMTBE, Vol. VIII, p. 59.

## War and peace: Hungarian-Byzantine relations with changing omens (917-970)

Taking advantage of the infighting following the death of Emperor Leo VI the Wise, Simeon also aspired to the imperial throne, but was forced to halt his army outside the walls of Constantinople. In the battle of Ankhialos in 917, which ended in a Bulgarian victory, the Hungarians and the Pechenegs fought together in a Bulgarian alliance against Byzantium. Simeon took the title “Emperor of the Bulgarians and Greeks” to emphasise his equality with the Byzantine emperor. From then on, an anti-Byzantine period followed in the history of Hungarian-Byzantine relations. We do not have much data on these. For example, in 934 a joint Pecheneg-Hungarian attack took place that reached as far as Constantinople. The empire was even willing to pay an annual sum (tax) in exchange for peace.

A major turning point in this was the appearance of Hungarian leaders in Constantinople, which may have taken place during the reign of Emperor Constantine VII, presumably in 948. At the end of chapter 40 of the scholar emperor’s *De administrando imperio* (DAI), he recalled that during the reign of Chief Fajsz (Falicsi), Tormas (Termacsu) of Hungary came to the Byzantine imperial court with Bulcsú: “It is to be known that Teveli had died, and his son is our friend Termacsu, who came the other day with Bulcsú, the third Prince and karcha of Turkia.” (original translation into Hungarian by Gyula Moravcsik). In addition, Kál, the father of Bulcsú, held the office of ‘horka’ (ὁ καρῆας).<sup>3</sup> Among the Byzantine sources, the 11<sup>th</sup>-century Byzantine historian Ioannes Scylitzes gives a more extensive account of the events. The author reports on the visits of Bulcsú and Gyula of Transylvania to Constantinople, the latter around 953.<sup>4</sup> “Bulcsú [...] was baptised and Emperor Constantine became his godfather, and, being honoured with the title of patrician, returned

3 Bórbanszületett Konstantin 2003, pp. 178–179; AMTBF, Vol. VII, p. 49

4 Bréhier 1997, p. 140; Szabó 2012



to his country as the lord of much money.” (original translation into Hungarian by Gyula Moravcsik).<sup>5</sup> Apart from the fact that, according to him, Bulcsú had accepted the Greek rite of baptism, another major effect of Bulcsú’s visit would have been to root Christianity in Hungary, since Gyula had brought with him Bishop Hierotheos of Constantinople, whose task as bishop of “Turkia”, i.e. our country, would have been to convert the Hungarians to the Greek Christian faith. The Hungarian state became a Byzantine missionary target area.<sup>6</sup>

However, not all Hungarian tribes may have complied with the above agreement, as we have data on this as well. Forcing the payment of taxes was not always successful. The story of the Botond legend indicated this, as captured by the 14<sup>th</sup> century *Illustrated Chronicle*. A warrior in Chief Apor’s army, Botond defeated the Greek in vain, but “[...] when the Hungarians asked for the tax, for which the duel was staged and fought, the Greek emperor laughed at the demand for the tax” (original translation into Hungarian by János Bollók).<sup>7</sup> Another possible Byzantine aspect of the Botond legend is linked to a Hungarian children’s game. Before the duel, Chief Apor ordered Botond to show his strength at the gate of the city. “And when he came to the gate, legend has it that he struck it so hard, and opened such a gap in the gate that a five-year-old child could comfortably walk in and out through that opening.”<sup>8</sup> This episode was based on tradition even in the 14<sup>th</sup> century *Illustrated Chronicle*. Anonymous (in his work, *Gesta Hungarorum*) called this ore gate a golden gate: “Botond also cut open the golden gate of Constantinople (“portam auream”) with his axe.” He also mentioned tradition as his source: “I could not find this in any of the books of the historians, but only heard it from the false tales of the peasants.” (original translation into Hungarian by Dezső Pais).<sup>9</sup> We know it was possible to pass the walls of the Byzantine capital through 13 gates, the most famous of which was indeed the Golden Gate (Χρυσή Πύλη), through which important guests, ambassadors or the emperor himself arrived

5 Moravcsik 2003, pp. 53–54; AMTBF Vol. XVI, p. 85

6 Ostrogorsky 2000, p. 239

7 Képes Krónika 2004, p. 40

8 Képes Krónika 2004, p. 40

9 Anonymus 1977, p. 116

in Constantinople. Its iron gate was covered with gold plates, hence its name. Passing the golden gate through the opening reminds us of our folk song with the opening *Hide, Hide Green Branch, Little Green Leaf...* which, in my opinion, has preserved an episode of Constantinople in its ranks for centuries, and which has survived in folk tradition.

The defeat in Augsburg in 955, which ended the Hungarian campaigns in the West, not only resulted in the cruel execution of Bulcsú, but also in the foreign policy change of Grand Prince Taksony. Instead of Byzantium, he began to approach the rising Kingdom of Germany, then the Holy Roman Empire and its creator, Otto I (962-973). A change in religious direction came from the Pope. In 963 Pope John XII ordained a converting bishop by the name of Zacheus. Byzantium also recovered, and after the Hungarian failure of 955 in the West, Byzantium presumably cancelled the payment of the peace money (annual money, tax) paid to the Hungarians.

Bishop Hierotheos also left the country. The Byzantine attempt to push the Greek Church to the Hungarian people seemed to have failed.<sup>10</sup> However, besides Constantinople, a closer religious centre was being formed at that time, which later had a great impact. In 963, St. Athanasius founded the Megisti Lavra of Athos, which became the oldest monastery of the Athosian monastery.

The years following the reign of Constantine VII brought an eventful period in the Byzantine Empire with a series of warlord emperors who were the legal guardians of the underage royal successors. When the Bulgarian-Byzantine war broke out again, the alliance with the Prince of Russia brought success to Byzantine Emperor John I Tzimiskes (969-976). However, the prince conquered Bulgaria of Danube, but Sviatoslav asked too much of the emperor.

The year 970 brought the war against Byzantium to an end for Hungarians. The Hungarians joined the Bulgarian-Byzantine conflict and joined the Russian, Bulgarian and Pecheneg armies as part of a large coalition. At Arkadiopolis, however, the Byzantine emperor John I Tzimiskes destroyed the joint army. In 971, he also drove the Russian prince out of Bulgarian territory.<sup>11</sup> From this

10 Bréhier 1997, p. 140

11 Bréhier 1997, p. 155; Makk 1996, pp. 24–25

point on, Byzantine power was a real threat to our country. Hungarian foreign policy then entered the path of balancing and navigating between the German and Byzantine great powers until the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup>

## **Rome and Byzantium? – Grand Prince Géza and the Age of St. Stephen I**

Géza, the son of Grand Prince Taksony brought an eastern orientation with his marriage. His wife Sarolt, daughter of the Gyula of Transylvania, was raised in Eastern Christianity. In foreign policy, however, Géza stopped the southern campaigns against Byzantium. Out of the two great powers, i.e. the Holy Roman Empire and Byzantium, he took a very bold step and approached the former. Otto I gladly accepted this and sent a converting bishop in the person of Friar Bruno of Sankt Gallen. He baptised Géza, who was named Stephen. And his brother received Michael in baptism. Sarolt may have brought Greek priests with her. In any event, a monastery of nuns with Greek rites was founded in Veszprémvölgy, which according to the Greek-language charter, known and maintained in the Latin transcript, was founded by “the Christian Stephanus himself, king of all of Ungria” (Στέφανος χριστιανός ὁ καὶ κράλης πάσης Οὐγγρίας).<sup>13</sup> In the debate among researchers, it was also questioned whether this name meant Géza, or rather his son, the Christian King Stephen.

In Byzantium, the new ruler of the Macedonian dynasty, Basil II the Bulgar Slayer began his reign (976-1025), who initiated the conversion of the new power, the Russians, to the Christian faith in the east of Hungary. After his baptism, Grand Prince of Kiev St. Vladimir the Great married the sister of the Byzantine emperor. This is why it was important where Grand Prince Géza was guiding his country. By shifting the Hungarian Principality towards Greek Christianity, the religious centres of the people of the Kievan Rus and the

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12 Makk 2011, p. 112

13 AMTBF Vol. XV, p. 80

Balkans would have pointed towards Constantinople. The main objective of the Byzantine Emperor in the Balkans was the final destruction of the Tsardom of Bulgaria. Samuel regained the title of Tsar of Bulgaria, and turned against the Byzantine Emperor. But he had a dangerous edge not only in this, but also in that in 982 the crown was sent by Pope Benedict VII. And with that the western orientation of the Bulgarian Ohrid-based church was a real possibility.

The Bulgarian case also polarised Hungarian foreign policy relations. Grand Prince Géza's opposition to Byzantium was marked by his German orientation and his turning towards Rome. In 973, he settled his political relationship with Otto I in Quedlinburg. A peaceful relationship began, which kept Byzantium's power aspirations at bay. From then until the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, there was competition for the Hungarian state in the struggle of the two great powers.<sup>14</sup>

Géza pursued a Bulgarian-friendly policy in the Byzantine-Bulgarian struggle. He married one of his daughters to the Bulgarian heir, Gavril Radomir. In 996 Géza had his son Stephen marry Gizella, the sister of Prince Henry of Bavaria. Although, according to a remark by Bruno of Querfurt, the Greek Christian Princess Sarolt managed Prince Géza and the foreign relations of the country at that time, this did not lead to a rapprochement towards Byzantium, the Western orientation and the beginning of Christian conversion from there remained definitive. As a topos, Prince Géza's semi-Paganism and semi-Christianity were also presented in scientific works, according to which he was rich enough to sacrifice to two gods at once. Perhaps we could also think of this as referring to the Western and Eastern rituals, not just the Christian and pagan gods. However, all such interpretations are based on an inaccurate translation of the relevant Latin sentence in the chronicle of Thietmar of Merseburg.<sup>15</sup>

14 Makk 1996, p. 38

15 For the accurate translation, see Makk 2011, p. 114. Quote: "He made sacrifices to God the Almighty and various imaginary gods. When his high priest reproached him for it, he replied that he was rich and powerful enough to do so." (original translation into Hungarian by György Györffy). "He sacrificed to God Almighty, but also to various vain ideas of (other) deities, and when he was reproached by his high priest for this, he asserted himself to be rich and powerful enough to do so." (original translation into Hungarian by Gábor Thoroczkay) Államalapítás 1999, p. 113

After the death of Géza, the consolidation of power by Grand Prince Stephen was well indicated by the acquisition of the royal title and the episode of sending the crown. In 1000, Stephen asked for a crown not from the German ruler, but from the Pope of Rome. The Kingdom of Hungary thereby joined Roman Christianity, not the Byzantine one, in canon law. Or, using the notion of the famous Byzantinologist Dimitri Obolensky, the country did not become part of the “Byzantine Commonwealth”. This was taken into account and supported by Pope Sylvester II (999–1003) as well as German Emperor Otto III (983–1002), who was also in Rome at the time. Historians emphasise that despite the German orientation the country did not become subject to the German state.

The new and first Hungarian king also faced tribal states of Greek Christian interest in his struggle for territorial power. However, the Gyula (Prokuj) of Transylvania and Keán heading its South Transylvanian area of Bulgarian interest, were allies of the Bulgarian Tsar Samuel, who fought against Byzantium. We should not only look at the foreign policy of King St. Stephen I from the point of view of the German orientation, as the continuation of the Byzantine war prompted the king to take a new view. With a shift to the east, in 1002 he made an alliance with the Emperor Basil II. The victories of Chief Ajtony and Stephen prevented the territories of Gyula and Keán from falling into Bulgarian hands. The simultaneous good relationship with the German and Byzantine empires was also made possible by the fact that the king's brother-in-law became the German ruler under the name Henry II (1002–1024). However, the alliance with the Byzantine emperor could also bring with it the Byzantine recognition of Stephen's royal title. The marriage of his son, Prince Imre, to the Byzantine princess (around 1023) also fit into this plan. Returning from his wars in Asia, Emperor Basil II launched a decisive strike against the Bulgarians in 1014, resulting in the complete destruction of the Bulgarian state. At the same time, King Stephen led an attack on the Transylvanian Chiefs Gyula and Keán. In 1015, Stephen's troops left the country and participated in the siege of the Bulgarian capital Ohrid.<sup>16</sup>

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16 Makk 1996, p. 60

Chief Ajtony, ruler of the areas along the river Mures, adopted Eastern Christianity in Viddin and received Byzantine support.<sup>17</sup> With his defeat around 1028, this tribal state also ceased to exist, and the king established a new episcopate with Csanád as its centre in 1030. At the headquarters of Ajtony, in the old town of Marosvár, there were Greek monks in a monastery consecrated to the name of St. John the Baptist.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, it is worth examining the church organisation of Stephen's era from a Byzantine point of view. Not only in foreign policy, but also in the church organisation, the West and the East could live side by side.

The rebirth of Byzantine influence was well illustrated by church history. Byzantine ecclesiastical seals bearing the inscription "Bishop of Turkia" have been found. The file of the Council of Constantinople in January 1028 was also signed by "Ioannes, the metropolitan of Turkia" (... μητροπολιτ .ν... .ωάννου Τουρκίας).<sup>19</sup> All this raises the theory that a newly established metropolia existed on the territory of the country in 1028, which may be related to the establishment of the archdiocese of Kalocsa.<sup>20</sup> The legend of St. Stephen tells us that the king had a church built in Constantinople too.<sup>21</sup> We also know that Hungarian soldiers served under the Byzantine flag and settled in the Byzantine territories of southern Italy. For example, we know about a person called Ungros living around 1050. One of the parcels of today's Reggio di Calabria retirement home was "the suburban estate of Ungros, which includes a vineyard, about the size of 2 modios" (original translation into Hungarian by Terézia Olajos).<sup>22</sup>

17 Moravcsik 2003, p. 56

18 Moravcsik 2018, p. 30

19 Makk 1996, p. 61. Excerpt published in: Olajos 2014, Vol. XIII, pp. 83-84

20 See in more detail: Baán 1995, pp. 19-26; Baán 1995a, pp. 1167-1170

21 Moravcsik 2003, p. 59

22 Olajos 2014, Vol. XV, pp. 90-92, p. 94

## Byzantine policy of the Árpád dynasty from the Vazul branch: *pax Byzantina*

The struggles for the throne after the death of King Stephen were probably closely followed in the Byzantine Empire. After the death of Basileius II in 1025, which marked the end of the power of the Macedonian dynasty, the empire was no longer the same, and in the absence of a male heir, the age of the female lineage, the “husband emperors” began. The selection of Péter Orseolo, the Hungarian heir apparent to István’s succession, set a western path for Hungary to follow. The reign of Samuel Aba has shown an exciting direction and underpins the aforementioned duality. The cross-shaped, centrally arranged floor plan of the Feldebrő lower church also shows Eastern-style architectural elements. Excavations in Abasár, the centre of the Aba clan, may also yield important findings for Byzantologists. On the forehead of the Virgin Mary statue fragment, there appears to be a representation of an equilateral Byzantine cross.<sup>23</sup>

We know that the sons of King Stephen’s relative, Vasul, were expelled from the country. András and Levente fled to Russia with its Greek rites. While Levente remained in the faith of his ancestors, in Kiev András was baptised with the name of Saint András. Returning home, King András I (1046-1060) continued the journey started by King Stephen to strengthen Christianity. His Russian wife, Princess Anastasia, was also responsible for the king’s favourable stance toward Orthodox rites. After all, in addition to founding the well-known Benedictine monastery of Tihany, he founded another in Visegrád in honour of St. András. In Zebegény, there was a hermitage run by Greek monks. In addition to Tihany, friars of the eastern rites settled in Oroszkő. As far as we know, András I was the last king of the Árpád dynasty to establish a basilite monastery. Many Greek monasteries probably existed in later centuries, which later fell

23 The excavation conducted by the Institute of Hungarian Research reached layers from the 11<sup>th</sup> century. M5 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JEqf3xfiE4> (0:30–0. 41.). Downloaded on: 29 January 2022.

into the hands of the Western orders. For example, Dunapentele dedicated to St. Panteleimon (commonly known as Pantaleon), monasteries dedicated to St. Demeter of Byzantium (St. Demetrius) in Szávaszentdemeter, and the church of St. Demeter of Szeged in Csanád County. As well as the previously mentioned Veszprémvölgy, which fell into the hands of the Cistercians in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>24</sup>

Sustainable political relations under the pressure of the German and Byzantine great powers were also a serious difficulty for King András. One of the stated aims of the well-known German campaign of 1051 was to bind Hungarians to the “Christian faith”. After the campaign, a peace treaty entered into force, but an alliance was established with Byzantium, the Kievan Rus and Poland during the reign of the Hungarian king.<sup>25</sup> He had a closer foreign policy relationship with Constantine IX Monomachos (1042-1055), the husband emperor of the Macedonian dynasty at the time. Hungarians participated in the Byzantine fights against the Bulgarians, and the fortress of Nándorfehérvár (Belgrade) was under Byzantine rule. As a Byzantine border castle, the name Görögfehérvár (*Alba Graeca*) originated from here.<sup>26</sup> A very exciting issue not only from an archaeological aspect is whether Constantine IX sent the so-called Monomachos crown found in Nyitraivánka to King András I of Hungary? The Byzantine emperor and his two co-regents, his sister-in-law Theodora and his wife Zoe, are also featured on this excellent goldsmith work.<sup>27</sup> Also during the reign of King András I, in 1054, the great schism occurred, which permanently distinguished the Western and Eastern Christian churches, now organically separate. From then on, any position taken in favour of Byzantium also carried with it the rise of the different canon law of orthodoxy.

King András’ successor, Béla I (1060–1063) was raised in Poland in Western Christianity. However, during the reign of Solomon, the Byzantine relationship of the Árpád dynasty experienced a revival. At that time, however, Byzantium was once again engulfed in throne struggles, and the sons of Solomon and

24 Moravcsik 2003, pp. 60–61

25 Makk 1996, p. 93

26 Szabó 2015, p. 180

27 Obolensky 1999, p. 200



Béla, Géza and László, supported the conspiracy against the Byzantine emperor Constantine X Doukas (1059-1067) around 1066/67. However, in 1071, the incumbent emperor, Romanos IV Diogenes (1068-1071), suffered two fatal defeats of the Byzantine Empire. In 1071, the Normans conquered the last Byzantine city of southern Italy, Bari. With this, the former Byzantine authority in southern Italy was permanently terminated. In 1071, he suffered a defeat from the Seljuks in the Battle of Manzikert, in which he himself was taken prisoner.<sup>28</sup> Thus Hungarian military expansion was once again possible in Europe on the Byzantine-Hungarian border. In 1071-72, fighting broke out at the siege of the then Byzantine border castle, Nándorfehérvár.

After the Hungarian internal war and struggle for the throne with King Solomon, Géza I (1074–1077) contacted the current emperor of the Doukas family, Michael VII Doukas (1071–1078). Shortly thereafter he also received a wife, Synadene, from Byzantium, although not from the imperial family. This closed the tense period of Byzantine-Hungarian relations caused by the occupation of Nándorfehérvár.

At the same time, the marital relations of the kings of the Árpád dynasty with the Byzantine princesses could begin. This was well suited to Byzantine foreign policy in Central and Eastern Europe. It was a renewed bond for the establishment of the Byzantine “Commonwealth” here.<sup>29</sup> This bond was already well demonstrated by the family relationship of Géza’s brother, King Saint László I (1077–1095). His daughter Piroška, who was probably born from his second marriage, was married to the Byzantine emperor John II Komnenos, and is still respected as a saint in the Orthodox Church under the name of Eirene. For the first time, the Hungarian princess of the Árpád dynasty became a Byzantine empress and later a saint. This Byzantine line was facilitated by the foreign policy and papal pressure, which we have already mentioned in the case of Géza. László did not accept Pope Gregory VII’s demand to become a vassal until the Pope finally acknowledged him as the Hungarian king. His relationship with Byzantium deteriorated at the end of his reign. On the one

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28 Bréhier 1997, p. 291; Ostrogorsky 2000, p. 302

29 Obolensky 1999, pp. 200–201

hand because in the context of the resettlement of the Eastern English in Byzantium he also made a demand for the control of the area in Moesia, while on the other hand, in 1091 he occupied Croatia with the intervention requested during infighting there.<sup>30</sup>

In Byzantium, with the rise of the Komnenos dynasty to the throne, an emerging era began (1085-1185). However, the fall of Jerusalem – the religious centre of the entire Christian world – to the Seljuk Turks in 1077 triggered significant changes in the life of Byzantium.

## **Under the threat of the Byzantine great power: Hungarian-Byzantine wars**

The first crusade in Clermont proclaimed in the year of the death of King St. László in 1095, and subsequently the others, re-polarised the intricate relations of the European great powers, thus changing and shaping Byzantine-Hungarian relations as well. In turn, the Slavic peoples adjacent to the kingdom and living under Byzantine rule were encouraged to secede from Byzantium, either in alliance with Hungary or with the crusaders. The success of the first crusade (recapture of Jerusalem in 1099) and the creation of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and other independent states triggered by the crusades had to be accepted by Byzantium, even at the price of losing some of its own territories to these new entities. Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118) did not like that László's successor, Kálmán the Learned (1095–1116) once again conquered Croatia, which had already been independent of Byzantium and joined Rome, and crowned himself as King of Croatia. He also complained about it because he had already settled the Hungarian-Byzantine relationship with the above-mentioned marital relationship between his son John and Piroška.

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30 Kristó 1998, p. 135

With the rise of Emperor John II Komnenos (1118-1143), Empress Piroška/Eirene made gracious donations and founded the Monastery of the Pantokrator in Constantinople, the charter of which has been preserved.<sup>31</sup> Her biographers highlighted, among other things, her “lack of resentment, that she was never angry, aggressive or abusive towards anyone.”<sup>32</sup> In the Byzantine capital of today’s Istanbul, the Hagia Sophia’s mosaic still shows her image with her imperial husband. Nevertheless, the Emperor was already at war with the Hungarians (1127–1129) under the reign of King Kálmán’s son, Stephen II (1116–1131). Although this was a commercial conflict that affected the important Nándorfehérvár-Barancs-Nis-Sofia-Constantinople road, it ended with a peace settlement in 1129. The Byzantine Emperor also played a role in the conflict by giving refuge to Prince Álmos, who had been blinded by his brother King Kálmán the Learned and then settled in the Byzantine Empire. However, he received no armed assistance from the Emperor. However, Béla the Blind, Álmos’s son, did not follow his father into exile.

During the beginning of the Byzantine-Hungarian War, Serbian efforts to separate from Byzantium also gained strength in the Northern Balkans. For this reason, the Grand Župan of Raska oriented himself towards the Hungarians, and Uroš I sought a connection with Stephen II. Eventually Prince Béla the Blind, who stayed in Hungary, married his daughter Ilona. This was significant in relation to royal succession. For Stephen, having no son, had appointed Saul, his sister’s son to succeed him. But after the early death of Saul, he took Prince Béla the Blind to his royal court and after the death of Stephen, Béla could take over the crown (1131–1141). However, John II also took in Prince Boris, who was born from the Russian Princess Euphemia, who was sent away by her husband King Kálmán the Learned for infidelity, and Boris considered himself the son of the late king, so he laid claim to the Hungarian throne. He married a Byzantine wife, Princess Anna Doukaina. However, he did not receive any military assistance from the Byzantine Emperor for his purposes, and he eventually sought support in Poland. The instances above clearly indicated that

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31 AMTBF Vol. XXIV, p. 109

32 AMTBF Vol. XXV, A, pp. 115–116

at that time, Byzantium did not want to intervene directly in Hungary's internal affairs by supporting a specific pretender to the throne. Also, the actions of the Hungarian king in the Balkans did not cause serious tensions.<sup>33</sup>

Béla II the Blind nurtured the family tradition, had the body of his late father Álmos brought home from Byzantium, and buried in the basilica of Székesfehérvár. Bela had four sons, the eldest of whom, Géza II (1141-1161) followed him on the throne. In Byzantium, Manuel I Komnenos (1143-1180), the most talented member of the Komnenos dynasty, the son of John II and Piroška/Eiréne, took the throne, who, after the Norman attack was launched against him, joined forces in 1148 with Holy Roman Emperor Conrad III. The golden age of the Middle Byzantine period began with the reign of the Byzantine emperor of half-Hungarian origin. In the second crusade (1143-1148) the emperor's authority was strengthened, but the new German ruler Frederick Barbarossa I no longer advocated the cooperation of the two emperors in a common war in southern Italy and the establishment of a restored, universal empire under Byzantine rule. Norman ruler Roger II, on the other hand, supported the Hungarian king and the Serbs against Byzantium. An axis of alliance was born to realign the whole of Europe in the face of the possibility of German-Byzantine-Venetian cooperation.

King Géza II, one of the Árpád monarchs with the most active foreign policy, fought against Byzantium among his many wars. His aim was twofold: on the one hand, he supported the independence of the Serbs in Raska and Uros II's struggle to increase the power of the Hungarian king there, and on the other hand, Géza II also intervened in the Byzantine infighting by helping Andronikos Komnenos' claim to the throne.

In any case, Manuel had to wage a war against the Serbs. There were two campaigns (1150, 1153) in which the former *status quo* was essentially preserved. One memorable episode of one of the campaigns was even included in the legends of the emperor, although the emperor himself wore its "mark" on his face. Comes Bágyon attacked the Emperor with his Hungarians and

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33 Makk 1996, p. 173, 180

almost killed him in a duel. Greek sources depicted Ispán Bágyon (Βακχῖνος ὁ ζουπάνος) as a giant. Historian Ioannes Kinnamos described the famous duel fought with swords in great detail. Finally, “[...] Bakhinos struck the emperor on the jaw with his sword, but he could not cut through the face shield that hung from the helmet. Nevertheless, the blow was so powerful that the clips, which were pressed deep into the flesh, mostly left their mark on the emperor’s face.” (original translation into Hungarian by Gyula Moravcsik).<sup>34</sup> The situation was complicated even more by the fact that Boris, who destroyed the Temes region and was supported by the Byzantine Emperor and used against the Hungarian king, also fought in this Byzantine army. Serbia’s fight for independence failed, as did Andronikos’ action. The threat level was increased by the fact that German-Hungarian relations were hostile at that time, and in the spring of 1156 Manuel I made an offer to Frederick I to join forces and start a war against Hungary. The situation was saved by the German emperor’s reluctance to see Byzantine expansion into the Carpathian Basin. Géza also saw this threat, so he tried to normalise the relationship, and in 1157 he even helped the German ruler with a military unit in his war in southern Italy. This was the end of the active foreign policy engagement of the Hungarian king, after which the issues of internal division and succession became the focus of his efforts.

The king’s younger brother, Prince Stephen, finally sought refuge in Byzantium after his failed conspiracy due to the German indifference. Manuel secured a distinguished wife for him, his own niece, Maria Komnene. The elder royal brother, Prince László, also turned against King Géza II, but around 1160, after also failing, he chose Byzantium as his place of refuge. Manuel I – if he wished to intervene into the struggles for the Hungarian throne – immediately found two candidates. His chance to do just that arrived after Géza II’s death. Géza was followed by his firstborn son Stephen III (1161-1172), during whose reign Byzantine-Hungarian relations deteriorated more than ever. E m p e r o r Manuel I now wanted to intervene directly in the succession to the Hungarian throne, and his aim was to conquer the country by helping to the throne a

34 AMTBF Vol. XXXVIII, p. 204

Hungarian king who paid him taxes. After his success on the eastern battlefields, the Emperor focused his attention on the west. The period between 1162 and 1165 saw the most violent Byzantine-Hungarian war. The emperor's troops marched all the way north to Nándorfehérvár, then in 1164 the Hungarians attacked in Dalmatia. Manuel got as far as Bács. In 1165, the Byzantine troops occupied Syrmia, invaded Bosnia, Dalmatia and Croatia. Only with clever diplomacy and with Czech and Halichi help was Stephen III able to prevent further advancement. Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I was content with not intervening.

In this situation, Manuel supported Géza's brother, László, as ruler, who held the power in his hands for a short period of six months (1162-1163), but Archbishop Luke of Esztergom refused to crown him, so the Archbishop of Kalocsa performed the ceremony. However, László soon died. The next candidate of the Byzantine Emperor for the Hungarian throne was Stephen IV (1163-1164), the younger brother of King Géza, but he could not consolidate his position either, and was defeated by the dethroned Stephen III at Székesfehérvár. He fled the country and tried to ask Manuel for effective help. However, the emperor realised that he could not achieve results with the anti-kings, and therefore he started negotiations with Stephen III.

He had already agreed in 1163 to take with him Stephen III's younger brother, Prince Béla, to Constantinople, and also the territories of Dalmatia, Croatia and Syrmia. In return, he agreed that the young prince would marry his daughter Mary, who was born to the Emperor's first wife of German descent. And so it happened. In the capital, Béla converted to Orthodox Christianity, was given the name Alexios and the title "despotes" (Ἀλεξίος δεσπότης), which was the second highest honour after the emperor. His name and signature are visible on official documents and treaties.<sup>35</sup> The Byzantine emperor made Alexios/Béla his officially declared heir to the throne. There was a legal opportunity for a prince from the Árpád dynasty to sit on the throne of Byzantium. Prince Béla was in a rather difficult situation, because in Manuel's Hungarian military

35 Olajos 2014, Vol. XXII, p. 143

campaign he had to participate on Stephen IV's side.

In 1164, the Hungarian-Byzantine war resumed, and the area near the border castle of Zimony was the scene of heavy fighting several times. After Stephen IV was poisoned in the castle in 1165, Stephen III succeeded. In 1166, the Byzantine Emperor no longer personally fought against him, but instead he sent his commanders. In 1167 at the "Battle of Zimony", despite the resistance put up by Dénes (Διονύσιος) Comes of Bács, the former fleet commander of Damietta and the relative of the Emperor and now Commander-in-Chief Andronikos Kontostephanos won the battle. The Byzantine emperor also included the entry "ungrikos" among his titles. According to some researchers, he thereby expressed that until the end of his reign, the Hungarian king was subordinated within the Byzantine "commonwealth".<sup>36</sup> Despite the Byzantine attacks, King Stephen III was able to hold on to power. However, the young Hungarian Árpád monarch did not have a son, and after his death his brothers Béla and Géza claimed the royal title in 1172.

The fate of Prince Béla had changed in the meantime, with the birth of a son named Alexios to Emperor Manuel in 1169. At the turn of 1170–1171, the Emperor broke up Béla's engagement, stripped him of the title of Despot and Crown Prince, and gave him the title of Kaisar (καῖσαρ, *caesar*). As a new wife, the Emperor married his new wife's older sister, Princess of Antiocheia Agnes Châtillon (Anna), to Béla. The crusader state of the Principality of Antioch was also important in the plans of Emperor Manuel. At the end of the 1150s, Manuel was able to force the principality under Byzantine rule and chose his second wife, a daughter of Châtillon Raynald from there, and even acquired the right to appoint a Patriarch of Antioch. The emperor was thinking of occupying Egypt in a Byzantine-led crusade in alliance with the king of Jerusalem. Prince Alexios/Béla also visited Antioch. In addition to the birth of the Byzantine Crown Prince, with the death of King Stephen III of Hungary in 1172 Béla became important in Hungary, and Hungarian-Byzantine relations took a different path.

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36 Obolensky 1999, p. 203

## Hungarian-Byzantine relations under the reigns of Béla III and Imre

Emperor Manuel supported Béla in taking the Hungarian throne, and he let him go home with sizable support (money, large escort). He even deployed a Byzantine army on the Hungarian-Byzantine border. In Sofia, he took an oath from the future Hungarian king to represent Byzantine interests. In other words, not to take action against the empire, nor to support Serbian secessionist efforts.<sup>37</sup> The coronation, however, was delayed, and Archbishop Luke again refused to crown Béla for fear of the spread of Eastern Christianity. Literature also considered that Béla III was a vassal of the Byzantine Emperor. However, this can be disproved by his good relationship with the Pope. In the struggle between the Holy Roman Emperors and the popes, Béla supported Pope Alexander III against the anti-pope of the emperor, and recognised Alexander as the legitimate Pope. This way he reassured both the Pope and the Hungarian high priests, who were opposed to Byzantine Christianity. Thus, Alexander III authorised the Archbishop of Kalocsa to crown Béla. The new king maintained good relations with the Byzantine Empire as well. He also provided military aid to Manuel for the war against the Seljuk Turks in 1171 in Asia Minor, which ended in Byzantine defeat at the Battle of Myriokephalon.<sup>38</sup>

In the second phase of his reign (1180-1196), King Béla III pursued a foreign policy of conquest, which also affected Byzantine interests in the Balkans. The death of Emperor Manuel II in 1180 gave him the opportunity. The empire was weakened by internal wars and throne struggles, in which Béla sided with the widowed Empress. The new emperor, the 12-year-old Alexios II Komnenos, was not in power for long, he was soon ousted. The elderly Andronikos I Komnenos (1183-1185) was no longer a friend of the “Westerners”; he was succeeded on the Byzantine throne by Isaac II (1185-1195) of the new Angelos dynasty. The

<sup>37</sup> Font 2019, p. 81

<sup>38</sup> Makk 1996, p. 208



Hungarian king retook the Croatian, Dalmatian and Syrmian territories that Manuel I captured. He occupied the areas between Nándorfehérvár and Sofia. He became a supporter of the independence struggle of the Serbs in Raska, during which Stefan Nemanja broke away from the empire. At the same time, it gave the Bulgarians favourable conditions for the anti-Byzantine uprising led by Petar and Ivan Asen, which led to the establishment of the second Tsardom of Bulgaria at the turn of 1186. The struggle for independence of the Balkan peoples was also fuelled by the intensifying German-Byzantine conflict, which materialised against Byzantium during the third crusade when Serbians and Bulgarians joining the crusaders made an alliance. The Hungarian king was not a partner in this.

In the summer of 1185, Byzantine emperor Isaac II made peace with Béla III, and they arranged a dynastic marriage. Emperor Isaac married Margaret, daughter of the Hungarian king. In his speech, Byzantine chronicler Niketas Choniates highlighted the beauty of the princess: “[...] she was the empress of all in beauty.” (τῷ κάλλει πασῶν βασιλεύσα).<sup>39</sup> Once again, a Hungarian empress of the Árpád dynasty sat on the Byzantine throne. The Hungarian king did not intervene in the Bulgarian fight for freedom, “thereby” supporting his imperial son-in-law. In 1189 he did not join the third crusade that marched through the country (1189–1192). He observed the tension closely between the crusaders, especially the Germans and Byzantium. Emperor Frederick I wanted to lay siege to Constantinople and occupy the city in 1190. In contrast, Béla managed to make peace between the two emperors in Adrianopolis, and Frederick I continued his crusade. The Hungarian King and the Byzantine Emperor discussed the Balkan situation resulting from the Serbian and Bulgarian wars in Syrmia in 1191. Upon the mediation of Pope Celestin III, Béla eventually renounced the conquest of the Serbian territories in favour of the Byzantine emperor. At the same time, it was also clear that towards the end of his reign, with the decline of Byzantium’s power in the Balkans, the Hungarian king wanted to take the place of the emperor himself. This was symbolically demonstrated by the fact that he incorporated the Byzantine double-cross into his coat of arms and even his money.

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39 AMTBF Vol. XLIII, p. 261

At the same time, dissatisfaction with the intensified orthodoxy was also visible during this period, especially among the Hungarian clergy. In a letter in Greek(!), the Archbishop of Esztergom Jób had a dogmatic discussion with the Emperor, and with Demetrius Tornikes writing a letter on his behalf, rejecting the Orthodox origin of the Holy Spirit from the Father alone, which was the essence of the Filiôque canonical and dogmatic question. This also indicated a deeper knowledge of the Greek language in the archbishop's environment.<sup>40</sup> The same Tornikes also wrote a letter to the Pope complaining that, despite his oath to the Byzantine Emperor, Béla had attacked Serbian territory without permission.<sup>41</sup> All this did not mean that King Béla himself opposed Eastern Christianity as he even had the relics of the Bulgarian warrior St. Ivan of Rila brought into Hungary for a while; and he donated the Basilian monastery of Szávászentdemeter to the Lavra of Jerusalem.<sup>42</sup>

Béla III was followed by his eldest son, King Imre (1196–1204) to the throne; Isaac II was deprived of the Byzantine throne by his own uncle, who then ruled under the name of Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203). The relationship between the two was defined by the Serbian infighting. In the war between the sons of Nemanja, the older son, Vukan, asked for the support of the Hungarian ruler, King Imre. The actual power, however, was exercised by Stephen Jr., who had a Byzantine wife. With the intervention of King Imre, he banished Stephen Jr., and made Vukan Grand Župan, who later had to acknowledge the supremacy of the King of Hungary, and included the title of King of Serbia among the titles of the King of Hungary.

The fourth crusade (1202–1204) launched to overthrow the Byzantine Empire and accompanied by the occupation of Constantinople and the creation of the Latin Empire, took place during the reign of King Imre, and opened the period of the Late Byzantine Era (1204). Isaac II was deprived of his throne and blinded in the Byzantine infighting. His widow, the Hungarian king's sister

40 Bornemann and Risch 1999, p. 5 (Ritoók, Zs.: Előszó); Ritoók 2021, p. 12; AMTBF Vol. XL, pp. 249–251

41 AMTBF Vol. XL, p. 252

42 Makk 1996, p. 220

Margaret, was then married by Boniface of Montferrat. At the beginning of the crusade, King Imre was forced to tolerate even the Christian siege of the town of Zara, which had sided with the Kingdom of Hungary.

## **Hungarian-Byzantine relations in the late Byzantine period (1204–1301)**

Divided and deprived of its capital, the Byzantine Empire's power was crushed, and this also reduced the strength of and potential in Hungarian-Byzantine relations. The main successor state of the Byzantine Empire was the Empire of Nicaea, whose ruler was Theodore I Lascaris (1204–1222), a relative of the imperial family. Relations of King András II (1205–1231) with both "Byzantine" states led to a dynastic entanglement. In 1215, after the death of his first wife, the German-born Gertrude, he married Yolanta of the Latin Imperial Courtenay family of Constantinople. When the throne of the Latin Empire became vacant, even the King, along with his father-in-law, became potential heirs to the throne. Pope Honorius III, however, supported Peter of Courtenay. King András II's fifth crusade was not in vain, although it was not by the power of his weapons that he achieved his objective. With an excellent diplomatic sense, on his way home András also visited Emperor Theodoros in Nicaea, whose wife was the sister of András' wife. He then engaged Theodoros's daughter, Mary Laskaris, to Prince Béla, his elder son. It was the first time that a prince (and later king) of the Árpád dynasty married the daughter of a Byzantine emperor. The engagement was followed by a happy and harmonious wedding in 1220, thereby providing a personal example of Hungarian-Byzantine relations.

The fighting of and also between the Byzantine successor states ended in 1261 by the fall of the Latin Empire of Constantinople and the return of the Byzantine capital without a fight. However, the power was not grabbed by Laskaris but by the Palaiologos dynasty. Related to the Laskaris family via his wife, the options of King Béla IV (1235–1270) were limited in Byzantine

matters. However, what we know from the Greek-language Chronicle of the Morea about the era is that Hungarian troops were also involved in the conflict between one of the Byzantine successor states, the Despotate of Epirus and the Emperor of Nicaea by fighting on the side of the latter.<sup>43</sup>

Michael VIII Palaiologos (1259-1282), as the founder of the dynasty, built his power with a strong hand and maintained his relationship with the Árpád dynasty. The successor of Béla IV, King Stephen V (1270-1272), did not forget in his short but very active foreign policy the dynastic relationship with Byzantium during the period of Béla III, and on the Byzantine side the military aid provided to Emperor Michael. Against the states of the Balkans seeking independence, Hungary remained a potential partner for Byzantium, as it was back in the days of Béla III. Michael VIII was worried to see the gains of the Anjou family, Charles I of Anjou's successes with the Balkan Serb-Bulgarian Federation, and their land acquisitions in the Greek territories of Morea. He also saw that the anti-Byzantine policy of the King of Naples and Sicily was favourable for Pope Martin IV, who sought to re-establish the Latin Empire. Therefore, the Byzantine Emperor also contacted the Hungarian king. In 1272, the son of the Byzantine Emperor, Andronikos (II) Palaiologos married one of the Hungarian king's daughters, Ann. This was the third time that a Princess of the Árpád dynasty became the wife of a Byzantine emperor. Unfortunately, this connection ended with Ann's death in 1284, and the second wife of Andronikos II (1282-1328) became Eirene, daughter of the Marquis of Montferrat.<sup>44</sup>

The emperor's reign started the last prosperous era of the late Byzantium, known as the Palaeologan Renaissance. Michael IX, the son of Emperor Andronikos II born to the Emperor's wife from the Árpád dynasty, would have been the next emperor but he died in his father's lifetime, though he was a co-regent already. Emperor Andronikos' second wife, Eiren, had a grudge against him, and would have preferred to see their own child as heir to the throne.<sup>45</sup>

43 AMTBF Vol. XLVI, p. 318, p. 319

44 Ostrogorsky 2000, p. 417

45 AMTBF Vol. LI, p. 337

The changing international power relations were clearly indicated by the fact that the Hungarian king had already established a kinship with the Anjou family in 1270 with the marriage of his son, László to Charles I's daughter, Isabel (Elizabeth). During the reign of András III (1290-1301), the Anjou influence of Naples only intensified in the camp of those who opposed him. In 1300, King Charles II (the Lamé) of Naples sent his 12-year-old grandson, Charles Robert, to Hungary. In 1301, the Byzantine-Hungarian cooperation was also interrupted by the extinction of the Árpád dynasty on the male branch.

With the accession to the Hungarian throne of the Anjou dynasty, who were interested in the Mediterranean, a new era began and, for a while, the idea of helping Byzantium, which was oppressed by the strengthening Ottoman Turks, ended. With the loss of Asia Minor, the Byzantine state was already reduced to Europe and the period of small Byzantine statehood began.



Shepherd's staff made of walrus ivory, mid-11th century,  
Dezső Laczkó Museum, Veszprém

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ATTILA HESZ

## BLESSED EUSEBIUS AND THE PAULINE HERMITS

The history of Blessed Eusebius and the Pauline Order has been the subject of a considerable number of scholarly studies in recent decades.<sup>1</sup> The possible features of the early history of the Pauline Order have been discussed from a variety of perspectives. One inevitable subject of these analyses is the manuscript *Vitae fratrum*<sup>2</sup> compiled by the Pauline Gergely Gyöngyösi<sup>3</sup>, and the examination of the veracity of the information it contains. One school of thought treats the person of Eusebius as a purely fictional character, while another sees him as a real-life protagonist of events. This study aims to make some contributions to the complex issue of historical reality.

### Gyöngyösi's sources and literary intentions

According to the current state of the research, the earliest work on the one-time canon of Esztergom, Blessed Eusebius, is Gergely Gyöngyösi's *Vitae fratrum*. In it, the interested reader will find an account of the life of Eusebius. We learn

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1 Guzsik 2003; Hervay 2007; Koszta 2009; Mályusz 1945; Mályusz 1971; Mezey 1979; F. Romhányi 2010; Sarbak 2007; Scheffer 2020; Tarnai 1984; Török 2003; Hesz 2021. This study is a revised version of the latter.

2 Gyöngyösi, G., pp. 1472–1531. See: Sarbak 2010

3 Gyöngyösi 1988



from it that he was born in Esztergom and rose to become a member of the Chapter. As a canon, he also conversed with visiting hermits, who exchanged the baskets they had made for bread. During these conversations he grew so fond of them that he decided to become a hermit himself. After a long period of reflection, his decision came true after the Mongol invasion. Near Esztergom, in the Pilis Mountains, he built a monastery in honour of the Holy Cross. In 1262 he visited the court of Pope Urban IV and died in 1270, as provincial head of the hermit brothers.<sup>4</sup> These are roughly the facts that emerge from Gergely Gyöngyösi's work, and we can safely accept them as historically authentic for the person of Eusebius.<sup>5</sup>

At the beginning of his book on the life of the Paulines,<sup>6</sup> Gergely Gyöngyösi freely used the genre of legend to tell future generations about Eusebius. He himself commented on the sources of his work in the preface<sup>7</sup> and in the chapter on Márk Dombrói.<sup>8</sup> He certainly drew his information not only from monastic documents but also by word of mouth in the monastery. In addition, the *necrologia* of each monastery, recording the names of the members of the order who died in the monastery and the day – but not the year – of their death, were probably available after 1308. It was the duty of the prior to keep the relevant records up to date.<sup>9</sup> It is likely in these records where Gyöngyösi could find a written, though lost, source for the names of the successive prelates of the Monastery of the Holy Cross. Another interesting addition to the sources is Gábor Sarbak's remark that "a historical record predating Gyöngyösi's time existed in the order, so perhaps Mark Dombrói did not follow an unbroken path either."<sup>10</sup> József Török is also convinced of this: "There was a conscious effort to preserve and collect the events of the

4 Gyöngyösi 1988, pp. 38–47

5 Török–Legeza–Szacsvay 1996, p. 15

6 Gyöngyösi 1988, pp. 33–204

7 Gyöngyösi 1988, p. 33

8 Gyöngyösi 1988, p. 167

9 Świdziński 2009, p. 36. It must be mentioned that a similar provision is currently in place. Furthermore, the founder of the monastery is very strongly remembered by the inhabitants of the house, even going back centuries.

10 Sarbak 1984, p. 50. This is corroborated by Tarnai 1984, p. 202

history of the order, and the chronicle of Gergely Gyöngyösi, cited multiple times, goes back to a serious background.”<sup>11</sup>

Gyöngyösi’s work was intended for his fellow monks. This is indicated by the fact that it did not appear in print until modern times, only manuscripts have survived.<sup>12</sup> Eusebius is treated separately from the other biographies, the term *vita* being used in the first chapter on him to determine the topic: *Incipit vita fratris Eusebii adhuc secularis*.<sup>13</sup> The emphasis serves to underline the importance of the person. The essence of his message is, “behold, a distinguished person, both among the excellencies and among the leaders of the Order.” For a long time, the genre of the *vita* was considered to be an account of a notarised authenticity, as it was in other cases, such as that of Saint Paul the First Hermit.

The *vita* is a possible form of legend writing. The value of the *legend* as a source has changed considerably over the last century. Révai’s Great Lexicon still defines the legend as a reality-based work that bears moral witness,<sup>14</sup> while a literary history published in 1964 considers it merely as a propaganda tool supported by the Church.<sup>15</sup> Thus what was a specific approach to reality, in terms of an exemplary, gospel-inspired way of life, has become simply unreliable, ideological material. Such a change in the assessment of the information contained in the *vita* and the *legend* naturally has a negative impact on the credibility of what is being communicated. For us, however, an interpretation free of any ideological background seems closer to reality. As a thorough and emphatic source-critical processing of historical documents in the field of legendary writing cannot be avoided, so too the avoidance of an ideology-driven approach to questions about the existence or non-existence of a person serves to strengthen scientific credibility. In the case of Blessed Eusebius, we can reasonably assume that he existed. It is not a legend, but only a parable, that is usually created about a non-existent person. It is not advisable to confuse the two concepts, as they have different meanings. This is the reason

11 Török 1990, p. 91

12 Sarbak 2007, p. 233

13 Gyöngyösi 1988, p. 38. “The chronicle of the secular life of Brother Eusebius begins.”

14 Révai 1915, pp. 579–580

15 Klaniczay 1964, p. 62

for Gyöngyösi's use of the word. He also wanted to respond to the Dominicans' attack on the Paulines in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century and to provide his fellow monks with arguments.<sup>16</sup>

## **The figure of Eusebius in the *Vitae fratrum* and later historical literature**

Gyöngyösi first presents the origins of the hermits in Hungary, from the reign of King St. Stephen (997 – 1038) to the time of Béla IV (1235 - 1270). The direct antecedents, in his view, are the hermits of the monastery of Saint James near Pécs, to whom Bishop Bertalan of Pécs gave a very brief code of rules.<sup>17</sup> He then describes the events of the life of Eusebius from chapter five to the end of chapter thirteen.

From this work, we learn about his birth in Esztergom, his early fervent religious zeal, his progress in the sciences and his being a priest, which led to his election among the canons of Esztergom. In this dignity he was frequently visited by the hermits of the area, and he enjoyed their company. He wished to exchange his canonical status, together with his friends and early followers, for the solitude of the hermits, but the Mongol invasion (1241 - 42) prevented him from doing so. After the situation had settled down, surrounded by other companions and adhering to his resolve with great perseverance, Eusebius took leave of his former life and joined the hermits, where he served as a priest.<sup>18</sup> Emphasis on the struggle for vocation and the resulting perseverance in the life of Eusebius, as well as the descriptions in the biographies of the abbots,

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16 This will be discussed in detail later, in the context of the naming of the Paulines, because it concerns the order and not Eusebius.

17 Mályusz 1971, p. 257. According to Mályusz, the Rule attributed to Bishop Bertalan was written much later.

18 Gyöngyösi 1988, p. 43

considered schematic,<sup>19</sup> which emphasise personal religiousness, seem to support the more recent view that Gyöngyösi's writing was intended to serve as a guide and a mindset-shaping *opus* for the members of the order. During his monastic life, he stood out among his peers in the virtue of hospitality, which he had already practised earlier. The kind-worded hermit was joined by Brothers Benedict and Stephen, who later succeeded him at the head of the province. The site of their hermitage was the Monastery of the Holy Cross near Esztergom, not far from the Hármas-barlang (Triple Cave), where, by a spring, Eusebius and six of his companions led a life of devotion to God.

The founding of the monastic centre is attested to by the author's remark, which reads (in free translation): "[...] he began the foundation of the said monastery so it would become the seat of a regulated way of life someday."<sup>20</sup> So he lets us know that, although the monastery of Saint Lawrence above Buda was the seat of the order at the time of writing, the centre was previously in the monastery of the Holy Cross, and that the monks were far from living according to the *Regula*. At best, they could build on each other's good example and efforts. The mention of six companions could also be a reference to the perfection inherent in the number seven, but it is also in line with the currently accepted view of the number of monks in Hungarian Pauline monasteries in the Middle Ages.<sup>21</sup>

A striking habit for the modern reader is the insertion of a *distich* at the head of each chapter, typically the author's own poems, to summarise the point of the respective chapter. With this, Gyöngyösi follows the editorial principles of the Buda Chronicle.<sup>22</sup> By way of illustration, he publishes a poem by the Pauline poet István Varsányi on the foundation of the Holy Cross monastery in Pilis, in which he commemorates Eusebius, the holy man, hermit and priest, who asks the Pope for the granting of the *Regula* of Saint Augustine.<sup>23</sup> These lines also set

19 Málýusz 1944, pp. 95–100

20 Gyöngyösi 1988, p. 42 "[...] quoddam monasterium, regularis observantiae sedem futuram inchoavit."

21 Kubinyi 2007, p. 49

22 Gyöngyösi 1983, p. 11

23 Gyöngyösi 1988, p. 43

the scene for an important charter issued by Paul, bishop of Veszprém in 1263, by authority of Pope Urban IV, approving the operation of the monasteries. Sándor V. Kovács, in his accompanying study of the three poems preserved by Gyöngyösi, one of which is Varsányi's, notes that it was customary to write poetry in Hungarian at the time, and that a poet only translated poems into Latin if he wished to share it with the public.<sup>24</sup> In this context mention should be made of Levente Hervay's criticism who, in his study, expresses his conviction that Varsányi probably wrote his poem about Eusebius at Gyöngyösi's request.<sup>25</sup> The claims of the *vita* formulated by Gyöngyösi in relation to the period preceding the hermitage period of Eusebius' life have been convincingly analysed by recent research, which has pointed to a possible interpretation that confirms Eusebius' connection with Esztergom and his status as a canon.<sup>26</sup>

According to Gyöngyösi, hermits visiting Eusebius often visited the canon's house to exchange their baskets for bread.<sup>27</sup> An interesting addition to this is Ferenc Kollányi's study of the Esztergom canons, in which he states that "long before 1397, each canon received one loaf of bread a day from the archbishop. The archbishop redeemed this debt [...] by conceding tithes. The daily dividend, however, remained [...] the members of the chapter [...] received bread enough for one day and 3 denarii."<sup>28</sup> Here, then, either Gyöngyösi is incorporating into his narrative a custom that had survived to his day, or else we are dealing with a highly authentic passage. Further research is needed to decide upon this question.

Gyöngyösi's manuscript became known to other important historians of the Baroque period. In 1663, Pauline Andreas Eggerer published a book, edited in the newest style of his time, based on the *Vitae fratrum*, expressly commissioned by the Grand Chapter. He does not shy away from interpreting

24 Gyöngyösi 1983, pp. 19–20

25 Hervay 2007, p. 61

26 Scheffer 2020, pp. 25–31

27 Gyöngyösi 1988, p. 39. "Proinde fratres antra desertorum passim incolentes et ideo de heremo dicti domum suam frequenter adibant, ut sportulas viminibus contextas panis alimonia commutarent."

28 Kollányi 1900, XVII

Gyöngyösi's data, which results in his source being thoroughly explained, and a considerable amount of additional information being added to the canon of Pauline historiography. His aim is to formulate the founding of the order in a way that meets the needs of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The means he uses for this is inserting the dates into the life of Eusebius and describing his vision.<sup>29</sup> In this way, his writing becomes a reference for later works on the person of Blessed Eusebius. Afterwards, his data were used as a source and were considered credible.

New information compared with the previous data is that Eggerer, referring to old memories of the order, believes that Eusebius resigned the dignity of canon in 1246.<sup>30</sup> The other theme, which goes beyond Gyöngyösi's wording, is Eusebius' miraculous vision of the flames joining together;<sup>31</sup> after the appearance of the vision and much prayer, he decided to gather the hermits living in the Pilis around him and, together with six others, he erected a small church in honour of the Holy Cross. In terms of the description of the vision, it should be added that Eggerer certainly knew some Greek and was familiar with the *Book of Wisdom* from the Holy Scriptures. This knowledge influenced the description of the vision, but not its content.

The Greek name *Eusebius* means pious, devout, godly.<sup>32</sup> In the third chapter of the *Book of Wisdom*, the fate of the pious and the wicked are compared. Verse seven reads, "The righteous light up and are like a spark that rushes through the reeds."<sup>33</sup> In a translation: "...they shall shine, and shall dart about as sparks through stubble..."<sup>34</sup> Eggerer adopts this phrase almost verbatim, integrating it into the life of Eusebius in his description of the night vision of the flames.<sup>35</sup> Eusebius would later ask for the regulation of the hermits of Jakab-hegy (Mount

29 Eggerer 1663, p. 74

30 Eggerer 1663, p. 73

31 Eggerer 1663, p. 74 "[...] flammulae in unum coire [...]"

32 Hervay 2007, p. 61

33 Bölcs (Wisdom) 3, p. 7. "Fulgebunt iusti et tamquam scintillae in arundineti discurrent."

34 See The New American Bible, Wisdom 3,6

35 Eggerer 1663, p. 74. "[...], ignes aliqui per sylvam tanquam scintillae in arundineti discurrent; [...]"

Jacob), who, recognising his excellence, join the Pilis hermits and elect the former canon of Esztergom as their magistrate, provincial. The remainder of the *vita* in Eggerer's book faithfully follows Gyöngyösi's description. The date of death is given here as 20 January. A simple copying error may explain this discrepancy.<sup>36</sup> At the end, he justifies Eusebius' title, 'Blessed', by saying that it is well supported by the works of various authors.<sup>37</sup>

In 1692, Gábor Hevenesi published a summary of *Ungaricae sanctitatis indicia* with biographies of saints and blessed who lived in or connected with Hungary.<sup>38</sup> In collecting and processing the biographies, he certainly took into account the data collection criteria of the Bollandists. The experience he gained in editing the work may have influenced the methodology he formulated a few years later: "By giving detailed instructions to researchers, it sets out a precise direction for the collection of sources. In addition to the extraction of printed works and bibliographical descriptions, he placed the main emphasis on the collection of sources supported by charters, but he also stressed the importance of collecting written artifacts and authentic oral traditions. With regard to the latter, he warned against recording tales and idle gossip. He required collectors to give precise details of the location and other external circumstances of the source data and the copied sources, and to copy proper names alphabetically."<sup>39</sup>

It was during the extraction of printed works that he came across the legend of Blessed Eusebius. The memorial, compiled after Eggerer, already contains all the elements. The birth in Esztergom, the membership of the Chapter, the waiving of income and the retreat to the hermitage in 1246, the vision of the flames, the foundation of the hermitage of Pilis in 1250, the efforts to obtain the *Regula* of Augustine, the action of Paul, Bishop of Veszprém, the provincial office held for twenty years and the death on 20 January 1270, when Eusebius gave his innocent soul back to heaven.<sup>40</sup> Hevenesi's work, along with many other medieval Hungarian saints, brought Blessed Eusebius nationwide fame.

36 Gyöngyösi 1988, pp. 21–24

37 Eggerer 1663, p. 82

38 Hevenesi 1692

39 Hóman 1925, p. 456

40 Hevenesi 1692, pp. 94–95

## Relations between the evolving hermit order and the Hungarian elite

Eggerer's biography of Eusebius is quoted almost up to the present day. Indeed, it was even expanded with further details. In his study on the bishops of the Diocese of Pécs, László Koszta states that Bishop Achilles led a Chapter, as Provost of Esztergom, and Eusebius was a member<sup>41</sup> although this is doubted by several researchers.<sup>42</sup> This places Eusebius among the important figures of his time, with an extensive number of acquaintances, although the latter is unlikely.

The successor of Achilles, Bishop Job,<sup>43</sup> readily took on conflicts. One example of this was the rejection of the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Esztergom by Job's representatives at the Synod of Buda in 1263. This and other contradictions, not described here, may answer the question why Gyöngyösi is silent about the joining of the hermits around Pécs and their further support by the bishops, although this should logically follow after the demonstrable goodwill of Bishops Bertalan and Achilles. Bishop Job preferred to support other causes.

After his death, from 1287, the diocese was led by Bishop Paul, who was initially the administrator. Bishop Paul was the nephew of the former Bishop of Veszprém<sup>44</sup>, also named Paul, who in 1263, at the request of the Pope, had examined the financial situation of the hermits in his diocese. Several members of the family of Paul, Bishop of Pécs had been in the service of the queens for decades. This earned him considerable influence, and he also enjoyed the confidence of Archbishop Lodomér, who appointed him head of the Esztergom Cathedral Chapter in 1287. Until his death, he was a loyal supporter of András

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41 Koszta 2009, p. 78

42 Pl.: Hervay 2007, pp. 57–65

43 Koszta 2009, pp. 77– 83. Achilles was the head of the Diocese of Pécs in 1251–52, and Job between 1252 and 1280.

44 Koszta 2009, p. 84, pp. 1262–1275



III (1290 - 1301) and then immediately of Charles Robert I (1301-1342). His successors, Bishops Manfred and Peter<sup>45</sup>, followed the same path. Bishop Peter was accompanied by Cardinal Gentilis, papal legate,<sup>46</sup> in 1308-1309. This was the latest time when the hermitage monasteries of the diocese of Pécs could join the Pauline Order. The role of the bishops of Pécs, as described above, makes more personal the statement of Beatrix Romhányi F. that “the Hungarian ecclesiastical and secular elite worked fairly in unison to pave the way for the Paulines between 1291 and 1308”<sup>47</sup>.

The relationship between the Paulines and the secular elite should also be mentioned in relation to the hermitages of Pilis. On the basis of the research by Zsuzsa Pető<sup>48</sup>, Beatrix F. Romhányi analyses the above question in detail in her study.<sup>49</sup> The charter issued by Paul, Bishop of Veszprém in 1263 and later amended by his successor, Bishop Benedict in 1291, was cited in its entirety only once by Gergely Gyöngyösi. In the transcription, he only noted the difference: he inserted two new hermitages before the previous seven. These are the Church of the Holy Cross in Pilis and the Church of St. László in Kékes, followed by Fülöpsziget, first mentioned in the 1263 charter, and the others.<sup>50</sup> In the charter of 1263, Bishop Paul forbade the founding of another hermitage in his diocese. In 1291, however, the names of two new hermitages are mentioned, which preceded the earlier foundations in prestige. The reason for this is probably that hermits were highly popular among the common nobility at this time. Through their intercession they were able to gain the support of the Archbishop of Esztergom and the King, as well.<sup>51</sup>

Béla IV spent the last five years of his reign in Esztergom, in and around the archbishop's seat. The Holy Cross hermitage is about fifteen kilometres from

45 Koszta 2009, p. 89–91. Manfréd elected bishop 1306, I. Péter 1307–1314

46 VMO I/2 title page data. The mandate of Cardinal Gentilis de Monteflorum in Hungary lasted from 1308 to 1311.

47 F. Romhányi 2016, p. 16

48 Pető 2014, pp. 52–57 and Pető 2018, pp. 20–22

49 F. Romhányi 2015, pp. 755–764

50 Gyöngyösi 1988, p. 45

51 F. Romhányi 2015, p. 757

here. In the royal forest of Pilis, even a simple hermitage could only obtain possessions and a settlement permit “with the king’s knowledge and consent, in short, from his donation”<sup>52</sup>. A charter of 1289,<sup>53</sup> which commemorates the benevolence of King Béla IV towards the hermits of the Holy Cross and the approval of László IV (1271 - 1290), refers to this early situation. The successive charters of 1289 and 1291 show the close support of the king and his court. The development of the hermitages after 1260, and their approval by the bishops, can only be truly appreciated if we take into account the strong tensions, even leading to military campaigns, between King Béla IV and his son King Stephen V (junior king from 1262 - 1270) during that decade. This development seems all the more valuable in the light of the following remark: “In the year of our Lord 1289, the same King László [IV] donated to the monastery of the Holy Cross certain grassland and uninhabited land as compensation for the damage which it had suffered by his will and with his knowledge.”<sup>54</sup>

The later order’s headquarters, the St. Lawrence monastery near Buda, was founded at the end of the reign of King András III: “It was closely connected with the rise of the country’s new capital. The growing importance of Buda is reflected in the increasing number of royal charters dated from here.”<sup>55</sup> In the 1290s, the unification of the future hermit order gained considerable momentum. The foundation of Budaszentlőrinc must be interpreted in this light.

The events leading to the recognition of the order in 1308 also point to a close connection to the royal power. The hermitage of St. László in Kékes is the site of a negotiation between Cardinal Gentilis and the provincial lord Máté Csák. The building’s insignificance and location ensured that both parties could avoid surprises. The consequence of the successful negotiations was that the hermits were granted permission to use the *Regula* of Saint Augustine.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, at the end of the Middle Ages, there were nine Pauline monasteries in the *Medium*

52 F. Romhányi 2015, p. 757

53 Gyöngyösi 1988, p. 50

54 Gyöngyösi 1983, p. 54

55 F. Romhányi 2015, p. 759

56 Gyöngyösi 1988, p. 58

*Regni* (“center of the kingdom”), predominantly founded by monarchs. This number is proportionally superior to the other orders. “Many elements of this system of relationships were already in place at the time the order was created. This is reflected in the appearance of the order in the immediate vicinity of Esztergom around 1270 and the transfer of its headquarters from the monastery of Szentkereszt to Szentlőrinc around 1300.”<sup>57</sup>

The study by Beatrix Romhányi F. analysing the relationship between the *Medium Regni* and the Paulines sheds light on why it was possible to ignore the excommunication clause of the 1263 charter issued by Bishop Paul. The application of the formula in 1263, however, requires an explanation. It was in the middle third of the 13<sup>th</sup> century that the decades-old conflict between the Hungarian cathedral chapters and the lower clergy over the distribution of revenues was settled by the king. The process can be traced through the events of the diocese of Veszprém, where between 1226 and 1262 there were several periods of litigation between the parish priests and the members of the cathedral chapters.<sup>58</sup> In the last round of the litigation, around 1260, Pope Alexander IV appointed the Dominican and Franciscan provincials and the provincial head of the Augustinian hermits as judges. Together with the chapter, Zlaudus, Bishop of Veszprém protested against the judge’s appointment of the provincial of the Augustinian hermits<sup>59</sup>. They claimed that the person in question is biased against the diocesan leadership because he intends to occupy three churches in Zala county. The titles of the three churches, Saint James, Saint Helena and Saint Mary Magdalene, may be of interest. The same titles were given to the hermitages of Bakony, Fülöpsziget and Kőút. According to Solymosi, the appeal could have been rejected and therefore the canons and parish priests reached a compromise instead.<sup>60</sup> It is more likely that the majority of dioceses were affected by the financial tension between the chapter and the parish priests, as well as by the royal decrees that sought to settle the

57 F. Romhányi 2015, p. 762 and Pető (2014) 2018, pp. 54–56

58 Mályusz 1971, pp. 49–53

59 1244–1262

60 Solymosi 2005, p. 19

tension. This may also have resulted in a compromise between the stakeholders of the diocese of Veszprém. The aim was to restore peaceful relations within the church among the various parties with different interests.<sup>61</sup> This certainly also applied to the hermits. This is how the excommunication clause of the 1263 charter becomes understandable.<sup>62</sup> According to this clause, the bishop left the royal monasteries of the former Williamite foundation in his diocese in the hands of the Augustinians,<sup>63</sup> thus following the papal decree, while the hermitages founded by nobles, which the Augustinians wished to annex, were placed under the authority of the provincial governor of the hermits, the later Paulines. In this way, he both showed mercy to the future Paulines and asserted the peace efforts of Béla IV within the Church, and, in essence, did not undermine the papal will either. This solution indeed suited the Queen's chancellor, Bishop Paul, who had shortly before been appointed as head of the diocese of Veszprém.<sup>64</sup>

## The naming of the Paulines

Embedded in the life of Eusebius was how Gyöngyösi presented the uncertainties surrounding the naming of the order. Chapter XI of the work discusses why they were called the Order of Bishop Saint Augustine. An example is the monastery of Sátoraljaújhely, which was sometimes called the house of the Pauline hermits but sometimes also the house of the Augustinian hermits. In fact, both orders had monasteries in the small town.<sup>65</sup> This uncertainty can also be found in the diocese of Eger and in Zala county. The situation in Sátoraljaújhely is unique, while in other cases the solution to the problem has to be sought elsewhere. The main reason is the similarity of the names. This is reflected in the title of a work

61 Mályusz 1971, p. 52

62 Holler 2007, pp. 121–133. Holler holds a different view.

63 F. Romhányi 2005, p. 92

64 MREV I, p. 150. Bishop Paul took over the governance of the bishopric of Veszprém in 1262.

65 Guzsik 2003, p. 61

by Gergely Gyöngyösi: *Directorium singulorum fratrum officialium ordinis sanciti Pauli primi heremitaie sub regula Beati Augustini epscopi militantium*.<sup>66</sup> The contemporary name of the Augustinians was *Ordo heremitarum Sancti Augustini*, as attested by the charter of the Chapter of Eger.<sup>67</sup> This may indeed lead to misunderstandings, and it caused uncertainty. But it is not just a matter of everyday word usage. In 1256, with his bull *Licet ecclesiae catholicae*, Pope Alexander IV created the Order of Augustinian hermits from the various European hermit groups, including the Williamite Order.<sup>68</sup> This was reaffirmed ten years later by the Apostolic Holy See in relation to the houses of the Williamites in Hungary.<sup>69</sup>

In Chapter XII, Gyöngyösi describes the fact that a document issued by Cardinal Gentilis in 1308, which constituted a papal confirmation, addressed them as *fratribus Sanctae Crucis de heremo*<sup>70</sup>. From this we learn another – also common – name for the order at this time: the Hermit Brothers of the Holy Cross. This name, according to the charters, continued to accompany the Paulines for some time,<sup>71</sup> even though Pope John XXII already called them the Brothers of Saint Paul the Hermit.<sup>72</sup> For Gyöngyösi, it was extremely important to clarify the name of the order. In the face of the attack on the Dominicans in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, which was caused by considerable tensions within the Dominican order, he wanted to prove the only correct name for the Pauline order and its ancient origins.<sup>73</sup> As a general prior, he obtained a charter from

66 Gyöngyösi 1988, p. 14

67 Schier and Rosnak 1778, p. 69

68 Hervay 1993, Vol. I, p. 84

69 F. Romhányi 2005, p. 92

70 VMO I/2. p. 180

71 Gyöngyösi 1988, p. 46. The problem of the naming of the order was a matter of great interest to Gyöngyösi. Cf. Sarbak 1984, p. 148. The time when Gyöngyösi was abbot of the order is established by a document from Cardinal Bakócz, dated 1521, concerning the correct naming of the order.

72 Gyöngyösi 1988, p. 61

73 Gyöngyösi 1988, p. 97. The reason for the malicious attack was most probably the internal conflict within the Dominican order. At that time, the Hungarian Dominican province was being drawn into the so-called observant movement, pervaded by reformist aspirations, which ensured the renewal of the order. Cf. Harsányi 1938, p. 34

Cardinal Tamás Bakócz, with which he unified the naming of the community after Saint Paul the First Hermit in the order's charters.<sup>74</sup> This was certainly applied retrospectively in subsequent transcriptions as well. The next step was to prove the ancient origin of the order. For Gyöngyösi a proof of this origin was a regulation, dated 1215, given by Bertalan, Bishop of Pécs, to the hermits of Jakab-hegy.<sup>75</sup> According to this, the foundation would have occurred one year earlier than that of the Dominicans. This attempt by Gyöngyösi to clarify the origin of the order from a legal point of view was used by Eggerer to support the foundation of the order.

Another 13<sup>th</sup>-century phenomenon is worth noting in connection with the naming of the order. Very often, the official name of a monastic order does not contain the name of the founder, but the central objective and charisma of the order. The Latin name of the monastic order known in current Hungarian colloquial usage as the Franciscans ("ferencesek") is still *Ordo Fratrum Minorum*,<sup>76</sup> i.e. the Order of Minor Brethren. The members of the order seek to serve the Church and follow the example of Saint Francis of Assisi by living their humble simplicity. Also known colloquially as the Dominicans, the official name of the order is still *Ordo Fratrum Praedicatorum*,<sup>77</sup> i.e. the Order of the Preaching Brethren, who follow the example of Saint Dominic through their scholarly and well-prepared preaching. The Cistercian Order founded a century earlier, *Sacer Ordo Cisterciensis*,<sup>78</sup> takes its name from the site of the first monastery, expressing their desire to follow the way of life practised there. Similar logic applies to the Olivetines, founded in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, who also took the name of their order from their first house, *Congregatio S. Mariae Montis Oliveti, OSB*.<sup>79</sup> The implicit logic behind the naming of each order is that monks who follow the monastic tradition take their name from the first house of the order, while those orders that live an active pastoral life seek to

74 Gyöngyösi 1988, p. 180

75 Mályusz 1971, pp. 257–258. He considers the charter to be false.

76 *Annuario Pontificio*, 1983, p. 1248

77 *Annuario Pontificio*, 1983, p. 1247

78 *Annuario Pontificio*, 1983, p. 1242

79 *Annuario Pontificio*, 1983, p. 1240

express their specific vocation. This may explain why the future Paulines could be called *fratres Sanctae Crucis de heremo* in the charter of Cardinal Legate Gentilis, and why the Paulines insisted on preserving the hermit tradition throughout the Middle Ages.

## Summary

The cautious, restrained communication of Gergely Gyöngyösi's *Vitae fratrum* regarding Eusebius was elaborated in detail by historians in later centuries, especially in the Baroque period. It was this gradual exposition that earned the distinguished hermit of Pilis criticism bordering on denial from some authors.<sup>80</sup> What is logically certain, on the basis of Gyöngyösi's work, is the authenticity of the person of Eusebius, his close connection with the Esztergom Chapter, the foundation of the Holy Cross hermitage near the Hármas-barlang by him, and the sudden strengthening of the leading role of the *eremitorium* at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. There is no doubt about the hermit nature of the order in the Árpád era, as it is the source of the veneration of Saint Paul the First Hermit and his hermit traditions, which continue to this day. Further, more in-depth research is needed to analyse Gergely Gyöngyösi's intentions as a writer; the relationship of the Paulines with the king and the nobles; and the study of the relationship between the Pauline hermits and the church leadership. We hope that our modest study will help to explore these questions.

According to Gergely Gyöngyösi, Eusebius' "noble lineage encourages us to follow noble virtues, his education inspires us to learn, his asceticism challenges us, his leadership sets an example of proper community life, his atoning devotion encourages patriotism and responsibility. He is one of ours, as a Pauline monk of any era might have thought, and so might we, who as his heirs have been witnessing his influence for eight hundred years."<sup>81</sup>

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80 E.g. Mályusz 1971, p. 257

81 Bojtos 2020, p. 567

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Part of the hall of the exhibition titled “Kings and Saints – The Age of the Árpád Dynasty” dedicated to the Age of the Hungarian Conquest

CSABA HIDÁN

## WAR EVENTS IN THE ÁRPÁD ERA

The development of a mode of warfare or weaponry is shaped by closely related, interacting factors. The primary determinant is the given historical period. Other determining factors are geographical, i.e. topography and climate. In hot tropical areas with high humidity, thick felt or leather armour cannot be worn. Here, a light, thin sword or sabre with a more flexible blade is sufficient to cut through or pierce thin linen cloth. These light weapons would bounce off stronger armour and would not have enough stability and stab torque. There are weapons and fighting techniques, however, that have been used for over a thousand years in a variety of battlefields and conditions.

Such is the case with the “nomadic” fighting style with steppe roots. A fighting style characterised by reconnoitring and quickly storming the enemy, feigning retreat and counter-attacking, and then relentlessly pursuing and annihilating the fleeing enemy, was the typical fighting style of the Huns, Avars, settling Hungarians, Turks and Mongols. In essence, the frontier castle warriors fought in a similar way: “hideaways by the roads are the scene of hard fighting [...] where pursuers are often faced and defeated”<sup>1</sup> by the Kuruc and the modern Hussars and Cossacks. This fighting style “survived” the heavy Roman infantry, the Crusades and the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century Western heavy cavalry era, and became successful in the New World as well. The creator of the US cavalry was Karcag-born Hussar Colonel Mihály Kovács. One of the main virtues of this style of fighting and weaponry is that it is more adaptable to terrain and can overcome long distances more easily than other types of weaponry.

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1 Eckhardt 1951, p. 143

In addition to these direct factors, the lifestyle and culture of the area or ethnic group of the historical period under study are important as well of course. Where there is a centuries-old tradition of martial arts, of warfare, it is easier to train and equip a troop or individuals. The way of life, the background culture and religion of a given area or ethnic group cannot be neglected either. These factors are not isolated, but continuously interact with each other.

The steppe fighting style has a centuries-old tradition among Hungarians. Oriental, Byzantine and Western chronicles and annals record the campaigns, weaponry and fighting styles of the Hungarians in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>2</sup> After the successful establishment of their homeland by Álmos and Árpád, the Hungarians fought 47 campaigns from their home in the Carpathian Basin. 42-43 were victorious, while 5-6 were unsuccessful.

In their battles, the Hungarians, both as allies and as enemies, reached distant parts of Europe such as the Ebro, the Danish border, southern Italy and Thessaloniki, crossed deep rivers (Danube, Rhine, Seine, Po, Brenta) and high mountains (Alps, Balkans, Apennines, Pyrenees).<sup>3</sup> They were also able to fight in winter, a great achievement in itself: they conquered Basel in 917, fought in central Italy in 922 and fought around Worms in 937. They defeated various enemy armies in major open battles (899 Brenta, 907 Pozsony, 908 Eisenach, 910 Lechfeld, 919 Püchen, 923 Brescia, 942 Rome).<sup>4</sup> On occasions when they were defeated, the foreign invading army did not win the battle in the Carpathian Basin, they stopped the Hungarian troops in some far-off foreign land. For more than 100 years, no enemy set foot in the Carpathian Basin. This allowed for continuous growth and development. The campaigns did not involve a central princely army or a ruling prince. Apart from the Hungarians, the Vikings were probably the only people in the 10<sup>th</sup> century who had a realistic knowledge of the geopolitical situation in Europe.

After 1000, during the reign of King St. Stephen, the Hungarian army changed in some respects. This not so much affected the way of fighting and

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2 Recommended literature on the topic: Kristó 1996; Györffy 1975; Hidán 2018

3 Bóna 2000, p. 61

4 Ibid. p. 60

the weaponry, but rather the social composition of the armed forces. However, in the royal and aristocratic-papal centres, a type of force generally equipped with Christian-European weaponry also appeared. Yet the majority of the army may still have been armed with traditional old-style weapons. In the battle of Nagyősz, Csanád defeated the army of Ajtony deploying traditional steppe warfare. The following is the account of the battle given in the 14<sup>th</sup>-century *Greater Gellért Legend*: “After crossing the Tisza, they fought Ajtony and his army. There was a great clamour and uproar; the battle lasted until noon, and many fell wounded from here and there, from both sides. At the end, Csanád’s army set off on the run [...] while Csanád camped that night on a mountain which he called Oroszlános. Ajtony camped in the field called Nagyősz. And soon that night they fell upon each other. And Ajtony’s army, which was encamped on the plain, turned their backs and ran. And the army of Csanád killed Ajtony on the battlefield.”<sup>5</sup> If we sketch the story on a map, we can see the following: Ajtony’s army arrived from the direction of Marosvár, with the fortress covering its rear. After the first battle, the royal army “took flight”, which was probably a tactical feint, luring Ajtony’s army away from Marosvár, which provided a secure defence. The second battle was at Nagyősz, 40 km from Oroszlános. It is very likely that another royal army, hiding in the reedy areas of the Tisza, cut off Ajtony’s return to the fortress and crushed the army, tired from the 40 km journey and the previous day’s fighting. Whether it was the royal army in hiding or the royal army that had retreated the day before that turned back and defeated Ajtony’s troops, the tactical retreat and “turning back to face the enemy” is a typical steppe fighting style that the king’s commander could hardly have fought back against with his heavily armed and armoured troops in the floodplains of the Tisza and Maros. While it is true that it is difficult to reconstruct the events of a battle on the basis of a legend alone, in this case the location and sequence of events do not contradict logic.

The Hungarians used a similar fighting style to defeat the invading army of Conrad II in 1030. The animals were driven off, the population fled before the

5 Blazovich 1996, pp. 27–28



invading enemy arrived, and the “scorched earth” tactic worked. The German army near the Rába was starving and soon the Hungarian army was on the offensive. Conrad was forced to retreat and, according to a German source, “he returned from Hungary with no troops and having achieved nothing, as the army was threatened by famine and was captured by the Hungarians in Vienna.”<sup>6</sup>

In 1044, Henry III’s army, which defeated Samuel Aba’s army, included Hungarians as well as Germans.

During the reign of András I, the Pechenegs were settled for the purpose of border protection and to strengthen the army. As early as the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the Pechenegs from the Talmács tribe guarded the entrance to the Vöröstoronyi Pass and the mountains to the west of it were called the Forest of the Pechenegs. The Pechenegs of the Talmács tribe can also be found settled in the border regions of Styria along the Mura, as well as in Moravia in the Morava Gorge, regions still under Hungarian rule in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> These Pecheneg settlements in the border defence region fit in with the idea of border protection at the time. In the interior of the country, around Székesfehérvár and at the crossing points of the Tisza, there were also settlements of Pechenegs. Written sources mention the participation of the Pechenegs in the battle in connection with the events of 1051. Although the 14<sup>th</sup>-century chronicle was written well after the battle and relied on several sources, it is likely that it tells the essence of the battle as it happened. “When the emperor invaded Hungaria and reached the burnt lands, he found neither food for his soldiers nor horsemen, nor did he know where his ships were, so he could not receive any help from them either. Crossing the forests, he reached the Bodokot mountains, though he was short of food of all kinds. In the meantime, Bishop Gebarth arrived at Geurinum and sent a letter to Emperor Henry asking where he should wait for him. But the bearer of the letter, God willing, was captured by King András’ raiders and brought to him. When they learned about the contents of the letter through the interpretation of Bishop Nicholas, they wrote a letter of reply to Bishop Gebarth and sent it to

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6 Kristó 1986, p. 58

7 Havassy 1996, p. 14

him with a guest settler. The latter, pretending to have been sent by the emperor, took the letter to Bishop Gebarth, which contained the following: 'Learn, good Bishop Gebarth, that the great and grave affairs of our empire compel us to return from Hungaria to Teutonia, for our enemies have invaded our empire. Come, then, make haste, destroy the ships as quickly as possible, and join us at Ratispona. It is no longer safe for you either to remain in Hungaria.' Bishop Gebarth, taking note of the message, fled urgently to Teutonia. The emperor, disappointed in his hope of receiving help from the ships, almost starved to death; a miserable famine threatened his whole army, along with the horses and beasts of burden. Moreover, the Hungarians and the Pechenegs disturbed them incessantly from night to night, killing them with poisoned arrows, stretching ropes between their tents, and thus kidnapping many men who were doing some service. The Teutons, fearing the arrows that rained down on them and consumed them, buried themselves in the earth, and, covering themselves with their shields, lay alive in the same grave with the dead. For in the grave which they dug for the dead, the living lay by night, and that which they dug for the living by night was occupied by the dead by day."<sup>8</sup> Simon Kézai describes an event typical of the steppe way of fighting, concerning the Germans who fled at Bársonyos: "[...] and when the emperor's sentries, with bewildered glances, saw the Hungarians galloping back and forth, they thought there was some trick in the agreement, and, informing the army of this, said that they had come in pursuit of them."<sup>9</sup>

In 1068, Hungary was attacked by a joint army of Pechenegs and Oghuz Turks. The Hungarian army pursued them and forced the Pecheneg army into battle at Kerlés. The chronicle composition also mentions advancing archers in the Hungarian army, led by Prince Géza: "Prince Geysa, who was always cautious, climbed the gentler slope and attacked the Cumans with arrows. His brother László, on the first attack, killed four of the fiercest of the heathens; the fifth wounded him severely with his arrow, but he killed him immediately. Divine mercy then quickly healed this wound. The heathens shamefully fled

<sup>8</sup> Kristó 1986, pp. 117–118

<sup>9</sup> Veszprémy 2001, p. 113

from the Hungarians who threatened them with horrible death. The Hungarians, however, pursued them still faster, and made their sharp, thirsty swords drunk with the blood of the Cumans. The freshly shaved heads of the Kumans were cleaved off with their sword strokes like unripe pumpkins.”<sup>10</sup>

In 1091, when King László marched against the Croats into the Capella Mountains at Tengerfehérvár (Biograd na Moru, today: Croatia), he reached the Adriatic Sea. At this time the Cumans invaded Transylvania and parts of the Bihar and Tisza regions. According to the 14<sup>th</sup> century chronicle composition, as soon as the king was informed of this, “he returned faster than he could, and with his soldiers he quickly went after the Cumans”. Although the Cumans were then retreating laden with booty, and therefore could no longer move as fast as they could without prisoners and stolen goods, the speed of the Hungarian army was admirable, since the distance between Tengerfehérvár and the river Pogács is about 530-550 km. Saint László defeated the Cumans in two battles.

The *Képes Krónika* (*Pictorial Chronicle*) separately mentions the battle of Olsava in 1116 between the Pechenegs and the Szeklers. The battle between Stephen II and Vladislav, Prince of Bohemia, ended with a victory for the Czechs, and the *Képes Krónika* reports on the events according to a chronicle of Stephen III’s time, which has since been lost.<sup>11</sup> However, Cosmas of Prague tells us that “even before the word of command was uttered”, some Hungarian troops “crossed the frontier river in front of them” and attacked the Czech camp. Their attack was so fast that the Czech prince was forced to flee.<sup>12</sup>

In April 1146, after Boris – supported by King Conrad III of Germany and Henry, Duke of Bavaria and Margrave of Austria – invaded Hungary and took Pozsony, Géza II quickly rushed to liberate the fortress. Pozsony was very quickly surrounded by archers and various siege engines.<sup>13</sup> The battle along the river Lajta in 1146 ended in victory for the Hungarians. Although we read again in the interpolated part of the *Képes Krónika* that “the bad Pechenegs

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10 Kristó 1986, p. 133

11 Györffy 1990, p. 119

12 Makk 2000, p. 46

13 Ibid., p. 84

and the despicable Szeklers all ran at once like sheep before wolves”, it is likely that their fleeing was a feint. It was their job to start the battle, to confuse the enemy troops, to lure them out of their positions, so that the Hungarian heavy cavalry could then intervene at the right time and place. At the end of the battle, however, it was once again the task of the light cavalry to pursue the enemy, as it had done in 1146, as far as the Fischa River. Ottó Freisingi, in his contemporary work *Gesta Friderici*, when describing the same battle, writes not of Szekler and Pecheneg troops, but of two Hungarian troops of archers at the front of the Hungarian army, led by two ispans.<sup>14</sup> For foreigners, this is thus a characteristic of the Hungarian army. When Géza II sends help to Frederick according to his promise in 1157, the Hungarian army consisted of about half a thousand archers. The Hungarian troops, in the army of Henry Jasomirgott, Duke of Austria, took part in the battles around Milan together with the Czechs and distinguished themselves with their excellent archery.<sup>15</sup>

Byzantine sources also mention the Hungarian army in connection with the Hungarian-Byzantine War of 1167. According to these sources, the Hungarian army led by the Hungarian ispan Dénes consisted of fifteen thousand cuirassier cavalrymen, archers and light infantry.<sup>16</sup> The Byzantine opinion on the outcome of the battle is interesting. They attribute the Byzantine victory in part to the fact that they were also equipped with maces, which they used instead of swords that had been chipped in the long battle.<sup>17</sup>

A noteworthy part of Anonymus' *Gesta Hungarorum* is where the author writes about Árpád and the chiefs marching into the town of Attila. The presentation of the twenty-day celebration was probably based on a late 12<sup>th</sup>, early 13<sup>th</sup>-century war game, but it is worth mentioning that, in addition to describing the jousting tournament with spears and shields, Anonymus also writes that the young men played and had fun with bows and arrows in the old pagan manner.<sup>18</sup>

14 Gombos 1937, pp. 1766–1768

15 Makk 2000, p. 144

16 Kristó 1986, p. 92; Moravcsik 1984, pp. 242–245

17 Moravcsik 1984, p. 245

18 Kristó 1995, p. 332

The year 1230 marked the death of the Austrian prince Leopold VI, who remained on good terms with his cousins, the Hungarian kings Imre and András II for decades. His successor, Frederick, had a belligerent nature and as a result, Hungarian-Austrian clashes began along the border. In 1233, the Hungarians pushed into Styria, and after retreating, they suddenly turned around to face the pursuing Styrians and the ambushing teams also attacked the pursuers. The vast majority of the Styrians were killed in the battle.<sup>19</sup>

In the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the only threat to the existence of the Hungarian state came from the Mongol invasion. The Mongol invasion of 1241-42 caused terrible destruction and losses. The failure, which included military defeat, was not only of a military nature. Hungary was hit by this powerful attack at a time when the country was already in internal crisis and struggling to find a way out. The disintegration of the old fortress and court estate structure and the royal counties brought about social change. Despite this, it would be a mistake to attribute the defeat and destruction of 1241-42 solely to the internal crisis in Hungary and to faulty military action. The argument in classical military history that the small number of armoured soldiers in the Hungarian army caused the defeat at the Battle of Muhi is also a mistake. Besides, the Hungarian army had troops fighting in the old steppe way, just as the Mongols did. For a good sixty years after 1206, when Genghis Khan raised the flag featuring a nine-legged white yak at the source of the Onon, the Mongols were not defeated.<sup>20</sup> The Mongols conquered the entire land from Korea to the Carpathian Basin. The distance between the northern and southern Mongol armies (the Orda and Bajdar armies in the north and the Borundaj in the south) attacking and encircling Hungary was 850-900 km. The main army led by Batu and Subutai attacked almost in the middle. In view of the actual situation in Hungary in 1241, this army could not have been stopped by the river Sajó or by the wooden barricades of Dénes Tomaj, nor by any armoured western-type force. At Lignitz (Legnica), Silesian armoured forces were no match for Orda's and Bajdar's armies, just like the armoured forces of Khorezm were easily defeated by Genghis and Subutai.

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19 Kristó 1986, p. 108

20 Ligeti 1962, p. 90

It is true, however, that a well-armed and well-led force with adequate offensive and defensive equipment could have fought the Mongols more successfully. It is worthwhile analysing the Mongol way of fighting and its possible countermeasures from contemporary Eastern, Hungarian and Western sources. In his *History of the Armenians*, Kirakhoz Gandzakeci (1200-1271), describes the destruction of the cities of Dumanis, Samsuilde, Tiflis and Lori.<sup>21</sup> In addition to the usual reconnaissance, deterrence and feigned retreat, strategies by which the great towns of Central Asia were taken, we also read here of the undermining and blowing up of walls. Without exception, the fortifications mentioned had strong stone walls. The description of the Battle of Mohi by Sung Lien in the book Yuan Li is very interesting.<sup>22</sup> According to the Chinese historian, at the bridge over the Sajó river thirty of Batu's cuirassiers and one of his lieutenants, Bakatu, fell. Even if the number cannot be verified, the very fact that the Mongol army included cuirassiers confirms other sources about the Mongols' use of scaled armour and cuirassiers.

Master Rogerius, like other sources, mentions a dense and continuous shooting of arrows as one of the Mongols' main battle strengths.<sup>23</sup> War machines are also mentioned several times by both Rogerius and Dean Thomas of Spalato. Only the latter author speaks in detail about tactical retreat, which can be strategic (from Pest to the Sajó river), and about war machines used in open battle.<sup>24</sup> Their equipment is also described in detail by Thomas of Spalato and Johannes de Plano Carpini.<sup>25</sup> In addition to the general questions of the Mongol invasion, and thus of homeland defence, he also mentioned the need for troops equipped and trained for battle on the plain. In Hungary, the insight of Béla IV and his advisers lay precisely in asking the towns to provide armoured troops, while also calling the Cuman back into the country and starting extensive fortress building.<sup>26</sup>

21 Katona 1981, p. 77

22 Ibid., p. 83

23 Ibid., pp. 129-130

24 Ibid., pp. 174-181

25 Ibid., pp. 238-249

26 As early as 16 November 1242, he confirmed the privileges of Petrinja, Szamobor (today: Samobor, Croatia) and Varasd (today: Varaždin, Croatia) and adopted a new measure

The reform of the armed forces affected the entire armed forces of the country, from the “loyal barons” of the king, through the middle strata of society to the subordinate elements.<sup>27</sup> In 1249, in response to the border fighting initiated by the Austrians, Béla IV led a large army into Austria, in which the Cumans were involved. During the fighting in July, Hungarian and Cuman troops wreaked havoc on Austrian soil as far as Mariazell and Kirchschlag.<sup>28</sup>

In 1259, a total of 1500, or according to other versions of the text, 3000 or 13000 mounted archers, carefully selected, arrived from Hungary to assist the ruler of Nicaea.<sup>29</sup> In addition to the Hungarians, the Byzantine army also included auxiliary troops from Hungary, Bulgaria and Seljuk at the Battle of Pelagonia. These troops aimed to move quickly and exhaust the opponent, in typical steppe fighting style.<sup>30</sup>

The Hungarians had already won a battle against Ottokar II in 1271 in the Rábca region (today: Rabča, Slovakia), where the Czechs were chased away by a dense barrage of arrows, but the big clash took place in 1278 at Dürnkrut. The decisive battle was fought on 26 August 1278. From the Hungarian side, the battle could almost be a textbook example of good cooperation between light and heavy armoured troops at the right time. Simon Kézai describes the preparations for the battle very vividly. From his chronicle we learn that

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near Verőce. He ordered that the flourishing trading settlement of Zagreb-Váralja (ricus Latinorum) be moved to the “Gréc” (Gradec) hill and fortified with walls. He obliged the new community to send ten soldiers to the royal army in the event of a campaign, thus not only laying the foundations of the free royal city of Zagreb, but also revealing a new principle. The concept of the town as a legal-topographical unit of defence. Similar measures can be seen later concerning Buda Castle (1244), Körmend (1244) and Nyitra (today: Nitra, Slovakia) (1248). For more on the topic c.f.: Szűcs 1993, p. 11, pp. 24–25

27 Subordinate elements are to be understood as servants such as horse tenders, stewards, cupbearers and armour-bearers. Jenő Szűcs describes the case of a cupbearer named Milosz from the village of Dejter. If the two sons of the person concerned agreed to take part in the campaign against Ottokar in full armour (*in armis militaribus*), the family would be exempted from its conditional service. Milos’ two sons fulfilled this pledge and were elevated to the rank of royal warriors (*exercituales regii*) in a charter of 15 June 1252. For more on the topic c.f.: Szűcs 1993, p. 22

28 Kristó 1986, p. 134

29 Lukinich 1925, pp. 225–240

30 Darkó 1934, p. 95

Rudolph's army moved very slowly because of its heavy armour, and when King László the Cuman became aware that Ottokar was preparing for battle, he quickly approached the Czech army and surrounded it on all sides. The text mentions Hungarian as well as Cuman archers.<sup>31</sup> Thus the attack was launched by the Hungarian and the Cuman archers, and the Czech leader Milota Dedič's soldiers, who had suffered heavy losses from arrows, ran away, followed by the Polish soldiers. Then the heavy-armed fighters of the Hungarian army engaged the Czechs in close combat. On the other flank, Rudolph's German troops clashed with Czech, Meissen, Thuringian, Bavarian and Polish fighters. Rudolph's Germans, in a desperate situation, were saved by the intervention of the Hungarian army when they attacked the advancing Czechs from the side. Meanwhile, the Cumans, retreating from the close combat, captured the Czech king's camp. Ottokar attempted to turn the seemingly lost battle around by setting a personal example, but he fell from his horse in the clash. The fleeing Czechs were then pursued and the battle of Dürnkrut became a total victory for László the Cuman and Rudolph Habsburg. King László and the Hungarian army returned home with many prisoners and spoils of war, and the captured Czech flags and shields were hung on the walls of the cathedral in Fehérvár to commemorate the victory.<sup>32</sup>

The battle of Hód Lake fought in 1280 or 1282 between the rebellious Cumans and László IV is interesting. The Hungarian chronicle dates the battle to 1282 and tells the story as if the country had been invaded by a foreign force. The battle ended with the king's victory and some of the Cumans left the country, while those remaining accepted the king's terms.<sup>33</sup> What is noteworthy in the description of the battle is the heavy and unexpected downpour of rain against the heathens, "who trusted in their bows and arrows, but because of the heavy rain, according to the words of the prophet, they became like the dirt of the earth." The quote from the *Book of Psalms*, whether describing actual rain or just a topos, is typical in every way. In the narratives of many medieval and

31 Veszprémy 2001, p. 218

32 Kristó 1986, pp. 144–146

33 Ibid., pp. 229–230



migration-period battles, the victory over the arrow-striking Eastern enemy is also attributed by the chroniclers to the rapid and heavy rain.<sup>34</sup> It is true that the compound, rigid-horned recurve bow sags when wet, but it is also true that heavy cavalry cannot charge adequately on wet and loosened ground either.

In 1285, Hungary was attacked by the Tartars. Under the fortress of Torockó, the Szeklers of Aranyosszék defeated the Tartars, liberated more than a thousand people and captured many of the Tartars. The Tartars who remained in the country, later joined the royal army and were called “nyögér” (*partners, servants, soldiers of the king*).<sup>35</sup> Between 1285 and 1290, both King László IV and Prince Albert of Austria and Styria, the son of King Rudolph IV of Germany, were increasingly troubled by the Kőszegi family, who were holding more and more castles in the western part of Transdanubia. Prince Albert attacked in 1285. According to German chronicles, the Austrians and Styrians living by the border warned Albert’s soldiers that the Hungarians could not be fought as if they were French knights, but by alternately fleeing and attacking, as the situation demanded. When the armoured Germans stood up, the Hungarians, shooting their arrows, sometimes fled and other times attacked. When the Germans contemplated sending a messenger to the Hungarians and asking them to stop shooting and fight like knights, the Hungarians even shot down the messenger. The many hours of shooting arrows had its effect, and Albert’s army surrendered. The written report specifically highlighted typically steppe-style warfare that was disadvantageous for the Germans<sup>36</sup>.

Also German sources such as Ottokar von Steier, the *Annales Wormatienses* and the *Chronicon Colmariense* speak of typical Hungarian warfare and

34 The significance of rain, and more precisely of sudden showers, is not restricted to European chronicles. In medieval Chinese and Central Asian historical literature, a sudden downpour of rain, fatal for one of the combatants, is mentioned repeatedly. Researcher Ágnes Birtalan, an expert in Mongolian folklore and beliefs, has found a Mongolian belief about the fighting activities of rain-bearing shamans. In Si Naj-an’s book, entitled *Suj Hu Csuán* (Európa Könyvkiadó, 1961, translated by Barnabás Csongor) we find several spells to cast a storm and send rain, but also reverse such in the description of various battles.

35 Németh 1953, pp. 304–318

36 Kristó 1986, p. 149

weaponry in connection with the Battle of Gölheim in 1298. King András III had supported his father-in-law, Prince Albert, with a few hundred horsemen in order to win the German kingship. The battle on the left bank of the Rhine ended with Adolf's death and Albert's victory. The German sources record that the Hungarian army led by Demeter, son of Nicholas of the Balassa family, had no heavy weapons but bows and arrows, swam safely across deep rivers on their horses, and had their hair and long beards braided.<sup>37</sup>

One of the reasons for Hungarian victories in the Árpád era was that the right troops were thrown into battle at the right place and time. In addition to the troops that traditionally fought with steppe equipment and in a nomadic style, a small but select force with European-style heavy weaponry was created. The country was also protected by a system of fortifications built over the centuries. The Szekler and Cuman populations, living under a special administrative system, were given special military tasks.

In the Árpád era, the Hungarian army successfully defended Hungary. Not only did the Hungarian state not suffer any territorial losses, it even managed to grow in comparison to the state of St. Stephen.

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37 Wertner 1915, pp. 58–84

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Charter of András II with gold seal to Mrs Tota, 1221,  
National Archives of the National Archives of Hungary,  
Budapest (HU-MNL-OL-DL 39250)

ATTILA HORVÁTH

## THE GOLDEN BULL OF 1222 AND THE HISTORICAL CONSTITUTION

András II (1205-1235) imposed new taxes to be able to support his lavish lifestyle, but he mostly outsourced the collection of these taxes. To increase the number of his allies despite the general discontent, the king gave away royal estates one after another. In response to the protests of the royal servants and the lords on Imre's side, András II issued the Golden Bull of 1222, in which he promised to abide by the law and to abandon his lavish lifestyle.<sup>1</sup>

The Golden Bull was named after the pendant seal that authenticated the charter. From the time of King Béla II onwards, the king used a gold seal on all important documents, but only the Golden Bull of 1222 is usually written with capital letters. It should be added that our historiography also mentions two other golden bulls: the second one was issued by András II in 1231 at the request of the high priests and two of his sons. The third golden bull was issued by King Béla IV, together with his two sons, Stephen the Younger and Béla, Prince of Slavonia.<sup>2</sup>

From the time of the pamphlet-writing of the 1790s onwards, *Magna Carta Libertatum*, issued by King John Lackland of England on 15 June 1215, was widely held to be the model for the Golden Bull. It was around this time that people began to analyse the supposed or real similarities between the English and Hungarian historical constitutions.<sup>3</sup> Inspired by this, Count István Széchenyi

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1 Zsoldos 2011, p. 1

2 Eckhart 1946, p. 34

3 Aranka 1790; Concha 1880, 2, pp. 33–44; Andrassy 1927, pp. 161–178; Fest Sándor: *Magna* 1934, pp. 273–289; Fest 1941, pp. 105–134; Haendel 1942, 1–3, pp. 123–128; Závodszky 1987, 1, p. 10–18

wrote in his diary on 15 October 1832: “Magna Carta and the Golden Bull were born, as it were, from the same brain as a result of the crusades.”<sup>4</sup> József Gerics, on the other hand, has confirmed in several studies that the Golden Bull of 1222 is a product of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the “juristic century”, which began under the influence of the Fourth Council of the Lateran<sup>5</sup> of 1215.<sup>6</sup> Canon-law rules stipulated that the state could only function according to legally ordered rules. The Golden Bull of 1222 is our first law that was drafted at the request of the political nation and in which the king agrees to a limitation of his rights,<sup>7</sup> although it only became the basis for the fundamental rights of the nobility with the law of Lajos the Great issued in 1351.<sup>8</sup> This was the beginning of the development of legislative legal policy in Hungary.

The Golden Bull was also the opening of a new era. Familiarity, the Hungarian version of feudalism, was prevailing increasingly strongly.<sup>9</sup> Although the feudal contract was not concluded between people of equal rank, it did not result in unconditional obedience. A vassal owed allegiance to his liege, but was only required to perform military service or administrative duties that did not conflict with the dignity of a free man and respect for the church or the king. The liege was also bound by the contractual relationship. In exchange for loyalty, he was obliged to give consideration and protection to his vassal. If the liege failed to honour the contract, which was a reciprocal obligation, the vassal was released from his obligations.

Several provisions of the Golden Bull of 1222 can be considered true accomplishments of our historical constitution. The Golden Bull is the cornerstone law of the Hungarian historical constitution, confirmed by Lajos I (the Great) in 1351, Queen Mary in 1384, Matthias I in 1464, István Werbőczy

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4 Széchenyi 2002, p. 636

5 The Fourth Council of the Lateran was convened by Pope Innocent III (also known as the “Jurist Pope”) based on a bull of 19 April 1213, and was held from 11 to 30 November 1215. See: Gergely 1982, p. 92

6 Gerics 1976, p. 97; 1980, p. 90; 1987, p. 237

7 Kristó 2014; Érszegi 1990; De bulla aurea 1999

8 Eckhart 1946, p. 29

9 Szekfű 1912; Bónis 1947, p. 111; Szűcs 1993, p. 19

in his *Tripartitum* and in the royal letters of avowal. This was the first time in the history of Hungarian legislature that an attempt was made to limit executive power by means of positive laws.<sup>10</sup> It is also a symbol of constitutional traditions, as it declared certain freedoms and, for the first time, limited the power of the king by secular legislation. The king undertook not to arrest royal servants without a legal ruling (Article 2). On this basis, István Werbőczy declared in Article 9 of Part I of his *Tripartitum* that nobles “may not be arrested in person anywhere and by anyone without a prior warrant or summons to a lawsuit and a legal sentence, at the urging, complaint or request of anyone.” (Cf. with Sections 95, 97, 101, 141-147, 152, 153, 158, 165, 170, 267, 268, 296, 476, 537 of Act XXXIII of 1896).

The Golden Bull declared some of the property rights of the royal servants and gave them the right to go to court to redress their alleged or real grievances. This is because the king undertook that every year, on St. Stephen’s Day, he would hold a legislative day in Székesfehérvár, and that all royal servants could appear there freely if they wished (Article 1). Another section states, as we would say in modern language, that no one may be deprived of their rightful judge. This is why we consider the Golden Bull the foundation of fundamental constitutional rights.

Since these laws also bound the King, to secure this the palatine was gradually given not only private but also public judicial powers. Article 6 of the so-called Palatine’s Articles of 1485 stated this power regarding the palatine: “He shall settle any discord between the King and the inhabitants of the country.” Another statement by Matthias can be quoted regarding the powers of the palatine: “If anyone wishes to bring a suit against our person, he will find a judge in the person of the palatine, who represents the nation (*universitatem regni*).”<sup>11</sup> István Werbőczy’s *Tripartitum* testifies to the same: “The royal majesty must bring all complainants and litigants before the palatine of the country and respond through the director of his affairs.” (*Tripartitum* Part II, Art. 39.). The independence of the office of the palatine

10 Bónis 1947, pp. 164–166, p. 169

11 Quoted by: Timon 1919, p. 693



was also ensured by the fact that he was elected by Parliament beginning with the entering into force of Act II of 1439.

The clause of the Golden Bull empowered the nobles, collectively and individually, to resist the ruler's measures (*jus resistendi*): "We have also decreed that if any one of us or our successors should at any time desire to act contrary to these decrees of ours, by virtue of this charter both the bishop and the other serfs<sup>12</sup> and nobles of our country, collectively and individually, shall have liberty, now and hereafter, for ever and ever, to resist and oppose us and our successors without any fault of disloyalty."<sup>13</sup>

In other countries, the right of resistance stemming from feudal law slowly vanished,<sup>14</sup> but in Hungary it was reaffirmed in István Werbőczy's *Tripartitum* (*Tripartitum* Part I, Section 9, Art. 6.) Even the *Quvadripartitum*, which was written in opposition to the *Tripartitum*, contained the full text of the Golden Bull.<sup>15</sup> Thereafter, the Hungarian estates constantly invoked their right of resistance against the Habsburgs' absolutist aspirations. In 1604,<sup>16</sup> István Bocskai gave an expansive interpretation of the right of resistance, saying that it should be asserted even if the king violated the rights or customary laws of the country.<sup>17</sup> In 1605, in a proclamation<sup>18</sup> to the public of Europe, the Hungarian estates condemned Rudolph for not caring for the welfare of the nation, for disregarding divine law and for behaving like a tyrant. This was the first time in history that the resistance clause of the Golden Bull was invoked by the estates.<sup>19</sup> Gábor Bethlen himself, when he joined the anti-Habsburg alliance in 1619, had Peter Alvinczy prepare a proclamation in Latin and Hungarian entitled

12 At that time, serfs were still understood to be the nobility of the country.

13 Cf.: "If any of the successors of the chief Álmos and any of the descendants of the other princes should break the agreements concluded under oath, they shall be cursed for ever." Anonymus: *Gesta Hungarorum* <https://mek.oszk.hu/02200/02245/02245.pdf>, p. 5

14 Degré 1980, 6, p. 369

15 Illés 1931, p. 8

16 Eckhart 1933, p. 133

17 Révész 1934, 7–8, pp. 271–272 For the question, see: Péter 1984, pp. 66–71; Varga 2006/1, pp. 29–41

18 Károlyi 1899, p. 168

19 Benda 1971, p. 326

*Querela Hungariae Hungary's Complaint*, which was later published in several editions. In it, the violations of religious freedom and of the constitution of the estates are listed at length, as he wanted to justify his campaign.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, the Transylvanian estates also wanted to secure the right of resistance against Gábor Bethlen. For this purpose, at the time of the prince's election, the *jus resistendi* was confirmed by law: "since many of the princes who had been ruling over the principality and exercised authority over it, became abusive and forgot the right of election, *rapinam arbitrato principatum*, readily committed lawlessness and many other indecent things, from which a terrible danger to our country has always resulted: we have therefore decided that if the prince should act in an exorbitant manner, and innovate anything *contra jurimentum nobis praesitum*, the cities, councils, Szekler and other captains and officers will be freed from loyalty and may assemble, so they may be able to resist him *absque nota infidelitatis, juxta contenta decreti*."<sup>21</sup> In fact, they went even further in extending this constitutional right not only to Szeklers and Saxons, but even to citizens of the towns.<sup>22</sup>

George Rákóczi I followed Gábor Bethlen's example when he sent his troops against the Habsburgs in early February 1644. After the capture of the fortification of Kálló, he addressed a proclamation to the Hungarian estates,<sup>23</sup> in which he listed at length the religious grievances of the Protestants and the Habsburgs' desire to make Hungary a hereditary dominion. He declared that he had not taken up arms for his own self-interest, but because he wanted to restore the country's liberties.<sup>24</sup>

A similar declaration was attempted by those involved in the Zrínyi-Frangepán-Wesselényi conspiracy<sup>25</sup>. Imre Thököly, who founded an independent principality in northern Hungary in opposition to the Habsburg absolutism, claimed in 1684 that, because of the resistance clause, the law of

20 Török 1883, p. 4. Cf.: Imre 1995

21 Szilágyi 1880, pp. 359–360

22 Makkai and Szász 1987, p. 645; Rácz 1992, p. 117

23 Rákóczi 1644

24 Horváth 1872, pp. 444–445

25 Pauler 1876, I–II

Andrew (András) of Jerusalem was the soul of Hungarian freedom, which completely and utterly released the practitioner of law from the accusation of rebellion.<sup>26</sup>

After the defeat of the war of independence led by Imre Thököly and the recapture of Buda, the Habsburgs regarded Hungary as a province conquered by force of arms. Therefore, at the Diet of 1687, the intimidated estates renounced their right for resistance<sup>27</sup> with the following justification: “Besides, the status and estates recollected the benevolent proposal of His Most Holy Majesty, which is intended to correct the only clause contained in the 31<sup>st</sup> article of King Endre the Second, issued in the year 1222, that is, rather the freedom to resist and to oppose kings for the reasons stated therein, although in the said part of the same article the right sense was only sought to be twisted into some other perverse sense by the ill-willed interpretation of some, and it never came into the mind of the more judicious status and estates of his Most Holy Majesty that, pursuant to it, anyone might rise in arms and revolt against their lawful king and lord (as it was perverted by the evil intentioned and rebellious).” (Act IV of 1687). However, Hungarian public opinion still held that the right of resistance remained in force, since the estates only renounced it under pressure.

Ferenc Rákóczi II issued his proclamation starting with the words “*Recrudescunt inclytae gentis Hungariae vulnera*” (“*The wounds of the great Hungarian nation have opened again*”)<sup>28</sup> in Latin and French to the Christian world in 1703, on the causes and purpose of the War of Independence, at Munkács (today: Mukachevo, Ukraine),<sup>29</sup> at the start of the War of Independence. In it, he describes how Gabriel Báthory, Bocskai and Bethlen, George Rákóczi and Thököly had taken up arms earlier because of the violation of ancient liberties.

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26 Hóman and Szekfű 1935, p. 203

27 Bartonek 1987, p. 98

28 The proclamation was drafted in beautiful Latin by Rákóczi’s closest collaborator, confidant and later chancellor, Pál Ráday, and Rákóczi made corrections in the text himself. It has been translated into Hungarian, while translations of it in Polish, Dutch, German and Turkish, as well as an English extract, are also known.

29 Rákóczi’s proclamation, 2004

One after the other, he listed the violations, even mentioning legal provisions, highlighting the abolition of the right to freely choose a king, and the resistance clause of the Golden Bull.

Rákóczi wrote two works on the philosophy of state in French between 1722 and 1725: *Réflexions sur les principes de la vie civile et de la politesse d'un chrétien* (A Christian's reflections on the principles of civil life and politesse); *Traité de la puissance* (Treatise on power). To the latter, he added, as an appendix, a French translation of *St. Stephen's Admonitions to Prince Imre*, and quotes from the Golden Bull. The two closely related works, together with Rákóczi's will of 1732, were later published in print under the title *Testament politique et moral du Prince Rakoczi*.<sup>30</sup> He also produced a Latin version of the *Traité* for the Hungarian nobility, entitled *Tractatus de potestate*.<sup>31</sup> In his *Treatise on Power*, Rákóczi described the way in which a king should exercise his power. He stated that a ruler has the right to rely on the nation to counter unlawful attacks. He supported his statement with the Golden Bull and St. Stephen's Admonitions.<sup>32</sup>

The noble-school reformers of 1790 referred unanimously to Article 31 of the Golden Bull.<sup>33</sup> Among them, Ignác Martinovics – who held the most radical views – and his companions were beheaded on the Vérmező on 20 May 1795. A gentle priest-teacher,<sup>34</sup> Benedek Virág, subsequently translated the Golden Bull into Hungarian.<sup>35</sup>

The *vis inertiae* right of the noble counties, i.e. the right to passive resistance, was also derived from the Golden Bull's resistance clause, which was abolished

30 Political and moral will of Prince Rákóczi (The Hague, 1751).

31 Ferenc Rákóczi, one of the most literate persons of his time, was able to write in Hungarian, Latin and French to a high standard.

32 Political and moral will of Prince Rákóczi II. (Study and subject notes by Béla Köpeczi; Latin text edited by István Borzsák; French texts edited by Ilona Kovács = *Testament politique et moral du prince François II Rákóczi / avec une étude et des commentaires de Béla Köpeczi; texte latin établi par István Borzsák; textes français et appareil critique établis par Ilona Kovács*. Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest 1984); Bene 2007, pp. 1035–1058; Havas 2006, 1–2, p. 138

33 Degré 1980, 6, p. 369

34 Benedek Virág introduced himself as “the former royal teacher of the gentle sciences.”

35 Virág 1805

by Act IV of 1687, but was considered to apply only to active, armed resistance, while the counties retained their right to passive resistance.<sup>36</sup>

A rule was first established on the basis of Articles 4-6 of Act I of 1504, which authorised the deputy ispan (county head) to refuse to execute royal decrees and orders, in tax matters, that had not been voted by the National Assembly and not adopted as law. This principle was raised to a general level by Act XXXIII of 1545, which was issued under the title *Letters from the King or his Governor contrary to the laws of the country, which are not to be retained in the return of property*. Thus the practice developed whereby the jurisdictions did not enforce the objected royal or government decree, but merely addressed a remonstrance (*remonstratio*) to the king in which they listed their grievances.<sup>37</sup> If, at the monarch's repeated urging, the decree was not enforced, a royal commissioner was appointed to the county, and as a last resort the county house was occupied by the military. In response, the officers of the most determined counties resigned their offices. The idea of punishing the county officials was raised in the Vienna government, but no appropriate legal provision was found to this end.<sup>38</sup>

The constitutional protection role of the noble counties was also necessary, as there were multiple instances in which the Habsburg rulers did not convene a national assembly and tried to govern, collect taxes and raise soldiers by decrees. This practice began during the reign of Leopold I (1657-1705). As an accomplishment, Joseph II (1780-1790) was convinced to revoke his unconstitutional decrees on his deathbed.<sup>39</sup>

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36 Egyed 1929, p. 76, p. 109

37 As a continuation of this, the jurisdictions retained the right under Article 19 of Act XXI of 1886, according to which: "The judicial authority may, within the limits of this Act, appeal against a government decree before its enforcement if it considers the decree to be contrary to the law or inappropriate in view of local conditions. But if the Minister, notwithstanding the reasons given, demands enforcement, or if he prohibits the authority of the law from enforcing its decision the second time, the government decree shall be complied with and shall be enforced immediately and unconditionally [...]"

38 Soós 2007, 1, p. 112

39 Stipta 2020, p. 196

The last major constitutional defence action by the noble counties took place in 1822-23.<sup>40</sup> Francis I had not convened a parliament since 1812 and ruled by decrees in an unconstitutional manner. He also tried to limit the autonomy of the counties and the functioning of their institutions, while raising the war tax two and a half times. Of the 52 counties, 42 complained against the decrees, 15 of which backed down after the first royal reprimand letter. After two royal decrees, 19 counties refused to implement the tax decree. By the autumn of 1822, there were still eight counties (Trencsén, Nyitra, Bars, Nógrád, Zemplén, Sopron, Zala, Veszprém) which continued to stubbornly resist both matters, while four counties (Varasd, Vas, Komárom and Ung) continued to resist only the taxation. The king then appointed royal commissioners and sent military to the centres of the individual counties that had shown resistance. In protest, the whole of Bars county council resigned their offices to prevent enforcement.<sup>41</sup> In the end, the counties won again, as the king was forced to convene the National Assembly of 1825-1827, which also marked the beginning of the reform era. In the proceedings of the National Assembly of 1827, it was declared that “*Quippe congregationes comitatum legalia potestas executia in aere legum custodes sunt.*” (“The county assemblies are not only the executors of the law, but also its guardians.”).<sup>42</sup> Ferenc Deák stated in 1833: “[...] the counties were the utmost guardians of our civil liberty.”<sup>43</sup> In his 1935 speech he also stressed that the counties were also the guardians of individual rights.<sup>44</sup> In recognition of all these merits, Lajos Kossuth included in the preamble of Act XVI of 1848 the statement, which has become a byword, that the counties are the “bastions of Hungary’s constitutionality.”

The historical constitution is a set of cardinal laws, customary rules and principles laid down by jurisprudence (legal literature) from different periods.<sup>45</sup>

40 Horváth 1868, p. 107, pp. 111–112

41 Praznovszky 1987, p. 119; Molnár 2003, p. 389; Erdmann 1989, pp. 8–11; Völgyesi 2009, pp. 173–198

42 Quoted by: Szivák 1906, p. 25

43 Molnár 2001, p. 107

44 Stipta 2020

45 Horváth 2014, p. 23; Mezey 1995, p. 207

The Fundamental Law declared in the National Avowal that the historical Constitution is part of the collective memory of the nation: “Our Fundamental Law shall be the basis of our legal system. It shall serve as an alliance of Hungarians of the past, present and future. It is a living embodiment of the nation’s will, an expression of the ideals by which we collectively aspire to live.” Article R(3) of the Fundamental Law adds: “The provisions of the Constitution must be interpreted in accordance with their purposes, the National Avowal and the achievements of our historical Constitution.” Again, the historic Constitution is mentioned in the National Avowal: “We honour the accomplishments of our historical Constitution and the Holy Crown, which embodies the constitutional continuity of Hungary and national unity.”

The term “accomplishment” has undoubtedly not been widely used in Hungarian legal literature, since it comes from European legal literature (*acquis communautaire*).<sup>46</sup> In my opinion, the legislator’s intention was to apply constitutional principles that have stood the test of time. That is to say, one cannot arbitrarily pick out a piece of legislation from the last thousand years which, for some reason, is to our liking, but which has already been repealed. Nor, for example, have forgotten laws ever been part of the historic Constitution. The volumes of the *Corpus Juris Hungarici* were initially compiled by private collectors, and for various reasons some laws were omitted from them. For example, they were researched by Márton György Kovachich<sup>47</sup> (1744-1821), keeper of the university library, and his son, József Miklós Kovachich (1798-1878), archivist at the National Museum (e.g. the Golden Bull of 1231, the laws of 1267, 1290, 1298, 1385, 1397, 1440, 1444). It was discovered that more than thirty laws were not included in the *Corpus Juris Hungarici* at all, while others were published with incorrect wording, based on copies.<sup>48</sup>

The historical constitution is an important reference point for the interpretation of the law, but it is also possible to refer to specific laws that are

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46 Varga 2016, 4, p. 88; Zlinszky 2005, p. 3; Balogh 2014, pp. 23–44

47 V. Windisch 1947; 1998;

48 Vestigia, pp. 1790–1801

not outdated and do not contradict the concept of modern, changing law. This is a task for the Constitutional Court and jurisprudence.

We must therefore agree with Gejza Ferdinandy: “The state-preserving power of historically evolved institutions is undoubtedly much greater than that of those which have been encapsulated in precise legislation by a juristic mind contemplating precise laws.”<sup>49</sup>

In Hungary, the primacy of law has always been preserved by the relatively continuous operation of the National Assembly. This principle was also declared in Acts X and XII of 1791. As a consequence, there was no need to apply a different source of law principle to the so-called fundamental laws (*lex fundamentalis*). Fundamental laws were invoked in countries under absolute government: for example, in France from the 1570s<sup>50</sup> and in the hereditary provinces of the Habsburgs, where the ruler created the highest level of legislation in a sovereign manner. In our country, the so-called cardinal laws (*leges cardinales*) were only selected for their content and not for their place in the hierarchy of legal sources. According to Gyula Szekfű, the term ‘cardinal laws’ has been used since the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>51</sup> Ferenc Toldy and Gyula Schwarz, among others, described these laws as “being the cornerstone of our Constitution.”<sup>52</sup> According to Tivadar Pauler: “In view of the structure of the itemised legal science and the development of our legislation, the laws which are considered cardinal laws are, first of all: those which the legislature expressly calls as such or has undoubtedly characterised as such by its actions, but since our legislature has never attempted a systematic listing of the fundamental laws, they were never defined in detail and their scope was never established exhaustively; and secondly: the laws which, by virtue of their content incorporating the fundamental principles of the constitution, have proved to be cardinal laws.”<sup>53</sup>

László Trócsányi gives a narrower interpretation of the term ‘cardinal laws’ when he states that “In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the concept of constitution was linked

49 Ferdinandy 1902, p. 4

50 Sashalmi 2006, p. 21

51 Hóman and Szekfű 1929, p. 170

52 Schvarcz 1887; Toldy 1866

53 Pauler 1860, p. 347



to the cardinal laws, and laws were distinguished according to their content. Laws which regulated the structure and functioning of the organisation of the state were called cardinal laws.”<sup>54</sup>

The cardinal laws were collected by József Hajnóczy,<sup>55</sup> Elek Fényes<sup>56</sup> and István Széchenyi<sup>57</sup>, among others. All collectors regarded the articles of the Golden Bull of 1222 as cardinal laws.

The Golden Bull is also a symbol of the Hungarian constitutional tradition, which is why the Constitutional Court of Hungary chose the pendant seal of the Golden Bulla as its symbol. The members of the Constitutional Court wear a copy of the seal of the Golden Bull around their necks during public sittings.

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54 “Bevezetés az alkotmányjogba” 2016, p. 48. Cf.: Szalma 2012, 11–12, pp. 499–505; Szalma 2002, 9, pp. 378–386

55 Hajnóczy 1958

56 Fényes 1842–43, p. 1

57 Széchenyi 1864

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ÁGNES KERÉKJÁRTÓ – GYULA KLIMA

## HOLINESS AND ASCETICISM: SAINT MARGARET OF HUNGARY (1242–1270)

“She was locked up, as is customary, in the cloister  
inhabited by the bodiless sisters of the  
Order of Preachers [the Dominican order].”<sup>1</sup>  
(The Legend of Margaret, Life of Saint Margaret 1510)<sup>2</sup>

### Oblatio puerorum

Saint Margaret of Hungary was born on 27 January 1242, at a time when Hungary was in desperate need of exemplary personalities. She was the ninth child King Béla IV of Hungary (1206-1270) and the Byzantine imperial princess Maria Laskarina (1206-1270), during the Mongol invasion. Her birth was preceded

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- 1 The phrase “bodiless sisters” is a translation error, but it is pertinent as a historical “Freudian slip”. In monastic parlance, the term “sorores incorporatae” referred to the sisters registered (“incorporated”) in the cloister, although “incorporata”, can also mean “incorporeal”, “disembodied”, “bodiless”.
  - 2 All quotations of the legend in this study have been taken from Lea Ráskai’s *Legend of Margaret*. The texts have been taken from the digital version with modernised spelling produced at the University of Debrecen: [https://deba.unideb.hu/deba/Margit-legenda\\_Szent\\_Margit\\_elete\\_1510/index.html](https://deba.unideb.hu/deba/Margit-legenda_Szent_Margit_elete_1510/index.html)



by tragic historical and family events. On 11 April 1241, the country perished at the Battle of Muhi. King Béla was forced to flee for his life on horseback and sought help from the Austrian Prince Frederick of Babenberg (1211-1246). However, instead of ensuring protection, Frederick robbed and blackmailed him. After his ally's betrayal, Béla, his wife, six daughters and his son Stephen set off for Zagreb. On the way, her younger brother, Prince Kálmán, died of the grave injuries he had sustained at Muhi. The heroic prince was buried in secret in the Dominican monastery of Mary Magdalene in Chazma [Čazma, Croatia].<sup>3</sup> Protected by the rest of his faithful, Béla continued his journey towards the Adriatic Sea, the army of Kadan Khan pursuing him. Finally, he took his family to safety in the rock fortress of Klissza (today: Klis, Croatia) in Dalmatia. Here, an outbreak of the bubonic plague took the lives of their two daughters, thirteen-year-old Catherine and St. Margaret's namesake, sixteen year old Margaret. They were laid to rest in a single stone coffin in the cathedral of Spalato (today: Split, Croatia). Under the dark shadow of their country's ruination as the queen was expecting their ninth child, they vowed to dedicate their unborn child, if a girl, to God in thanks for the deliverance of themselves and Hungary.

In early 1242, the royal couple had a daughter, whom they named Margaret after her deceased sister.<sup>4</sup> Shortly afterwards, events in Hungary took an unexpected turn: the Mongols suddenly withdrew and left the country. Béla IV hurried home to begin rebuilding, while his wife and children followed him to Hungary a few months later.

The parents kept their promise: In 1246, at the age of three, they sent their daughter Margaret to the monastery of Saint Catherine in Veszprém, where she was educated for seven years, and in 1252 she was transferred with seventeen of her fellow nuns to the monastery of the Blessed Virgin Mary, founded for her on the Island of Rabbits (Nyulak szigete) in Buda.

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3 Hungarian Catholic Encyclopaedia online: Csázma, <http://lexikon.katolikus.hu/C/Cs%C3%A1zma.html>

4 Both princesses were named after Saint Margaret of Antioch, who was highly revered in Hungary and throughout Europe at the time.

“Vt tamen aliquo modo reuerencie, quam erga ipsam nostram dominam Virginem gerimus Gloriosam, exhibeamus expressius argumentum; filiam nostram karissimam dominam Margaretam inter sorores in ipso Monasterio sub religiosi habitus honestate Domini nostri et Genitricis eiusdem, Regine Celestis, studuimus obsequijs deputare, vt uirginis vocis organo laudet uirginem, et a matre misericordie misericordiam satagat implorare. Verum quia religiosam uitam ducentibus congrua debemus consideratione prospicere, ne cuiuslibet necessitatis occasio pro defectu temporalium, sine quibus spiritualia in hoc mortali corpore non subsistunt, robur sancte in eis contemplationis dissoluat; contulimus, dedimus et donauimus eidem Monasterio Matris Regine Celestis in perpetuam elemosinam villas, quarum nomina ilico subiiciuntur.”<sup>5</sup>

“However, to give somehow more express evidence of the reverence with which we worship the Glorious Virgin, we have chosen our dearest daughter, Lady Margaret, to dwell among the Sisters of the Monastery, in the honour of religious garments, to the service of Our Lord and of Her Mother, the Queen of Heaven, that she may praise the Virgin with the instrument of her virginal voice, and seek to beg mercy from the Mother of Mercy. But since we must give due attention to those who live the monastic life, lest, in the absence of earthly goods, without which spiritual goods cannot be preserved in this mortal body, some necessity should occasion the relaxation of the austerity of their holy contemplation, we grant, give, and bestow the villages below as perpetual alms to the monastery of the Mother of the Heavenly King.”<sup>6</sup>

In that year the General Chapter of the Dominican Order of Bologna designated Buda as the site of the next *capitulum generale*.<sup>7</sup> This choice was a great tribute to Béla IV for his ecclesiastical policy in favour of the Dominicans, and also an expression of respect for the deep religiousness of the royal couple. In 1254, the chapter was held in the convent of Buda, where Princess Margaret took her first vows, after which she lived her life as a Dominican nun until her death.

In the early Middle Ages, this kind of offering of children, the so-called *oblato puerorum*, was common and generally accepted, following the biblical

5 Wenzel 1873, p. 319, pp. 458–459

6 The translation of the Latin texts into Hungarian, with the exception of Saint Margaret’s chant, was produced by Gyula Klima.

7 Kertész 2017, p. 7

example of the prophet Samuel. Early offerings were considered irrevocable.<sup>8</sup> By the time of Béla IV, however, this had changed, and the parental promise no longer bound the child for life; instead, it allowed the child to decide over his or her own fate as an adolescent.<sup>9</sup> It is important to emphasise this fact to show that Margaret's life was not shaped by compulsion, or merely by obeying her parents' will. As she grew up, she would have been free to choose to leave the convent, according to the Church's rules in force. But she did not, as we know from the surviving texts on her life.

## Narrative sources

We know relatively little about the life of Saint Margaret of Hungary. The Latin records of two successive sainthood investigations initiated shortly after her death are of great value. The first record was written between 1271 and 1274,<sup>10</sup> and it was sent to Pope Innocent V in 1275, who determined that the material collected was not sufficient for the canonisation of Margaret.<sup>11</sup> However, the text started its own life because there were others besides the Pope who read, interpreted and further reflected on it. It was thanks to these readers of the period that the testimonies, recorded almost immediately after Margaret's death, were not lost to posterity but were incorporated into later legends, such as the *Legenda vetus* of the 1270s, also known as the Marcellus legend after its author.<sup>12</sup> Friar Marcellus, who was then the head of the Hungarian Dominican Order, was not only the author but also a character in the legend. As Margaret's confessor and spiritual guide, he was personally involved in carrying through a successful canonisation process, and was therefore certainly familiar with the record of the first investigation, which has since been lost. He wrote the story of Margaret's life on the basis of this record and his own recollections to facilitate

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8 De Jong 1996, p. 192

9 De Jong 1996, p. 193

10 Pongrácz 1943, pp. 1037–1043

11 Bóle 1944, pp. 5–15

12 Csepregi et al. 2018

the canonisation of his spiritual disciple.<sup>13</sup> He follows the chronological scheme of a *hagiography*, emphasising Margaret's special virtues and describing her miraculous deeds.

In 1278, during the second sainthood investigation, another record in Latin was drawn up, in which 40 of Margaret's fellow nuns recall the miraculous events of her life with the vividness of personal experience. Here, the distance between the author and the saint is somewhat greater in time, but even this text, like the other two mentioned above, is a product of short-term memory and based on the testimony of contemporaries and eyewitnesses.

## The legend in Hungarian

The legend of Marcellus and the second record were further passed down into the Hungarian-language legend of Saint Margaret, which survives from 1510. The original Latin script from which the translation was made has not yet been identified by philological research. However, we do know<sup>14</sup> that the copyist, and possibly also translator, of the text was Lea Ráskai, a later fellow nun of Saint Margaret's. At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Lea Ráskai was the most important copyist and librarian of the *scriptorium*, the copy workshop at the monastery of Margaret Island. Her library was the cradle of Hungarian literature.

Ráskai made minor changes to the text, which reveal her personal involvement: she identified the monastic settings of the text – reflecting 13<sup>th</sup>-century conditions – with the monastic settings of her own time. In doing so, she also emphasised that Saint Margaret had lived in the monastery on the island and was one of them, thereby bringing her closer to her fellow nuns to follow as a role model. The text was written for community use, presumably for

13 This is exactly what happened with Saint Elizabeth of the Árpád dynasty as well. Her confessor, Conrad of Marburg, wrote the *Summa vitae* and sent it to the Pope with a list of miracles to ask for the canonisation of the deceased, which was granted in 1235, four years after Elizabeth's death.

14 Her name was found by György Volf at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century on page 368 of the *Cornides Codex*. Nyelvelmléktár VIII. Budapest, 1879. Előszó, IX.

community reading. Ráskai accompanies the narration of the life story with enthusiastic exclamations, sighs, and exhortations for good deeds addressed to her fellow nuns, thus complying with the decision of the Grand Chapter held in London in 1335 that the biography of the saints should be written in a fervent style, not as a dry set of data. It is assumed that the body of Blessed Margaret was removed from her tomb around 1510, around the time the Hungarian legend was written, because the sanctuary of the church on the island had been rebuilt and the tomb was placed behind the sanctuary.<sup>15</sup> This is confirmed by Lea Ráskai in one of her interpolations, when she says of Margaret's tomb on the island<sup>16</sup>: "in which now this holy virgin still lies". The relocation was probably necessary because Margaret's tomb had become a cult site immediately after her death, and was visited by a large number of pilgrims.

## **The Hungarian forerunner of asceticism and sanctity of life: Saint Andrew Zorard**

The legend of Saint Margaret of Hungary suggests that denial of the body was of paramount importance in her religiosity. The idea that the ascent of the soul to God is hindered by the earthbound, fallible nature of the human body is not unfamiliar to modern man either. Yet the kind of almost bodiless existence that unfolds in the legends of Saint Margaret of Hungary is strange to us. Researchers into the life of Saint Margaret have tried to dispel this strangeness with various explanations. Elemér Mályusz sees in Margaret the first Hungarian representative of medieval mysticism,<sup>17</sup> while László Mezey associates her with *Beguine* religiousness, which did not fully coincide with the official ecclesiastical conception, especially that of the Dominican order.<sup>18</sup>

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15 Feurené Tóth 1971, p. 249, p. 251

16 According to the legend, her first tomb was made of red marble by Lombardy craftsmen.

17 Mályusz 1933, p. 39

18 Mezey 1955, p. 25

All this aversion, however, is perhaps a peculiarity only of our secular age. It is therefore legitimate to ask to what extent Saint Margaret's ascetic religiosity was unique in her time.

Perhaps a good point of reference is the example of the first ascetic saint canonised in Hungary, Saint Andrew Zorard, whose canonisation was initiated by László I in 1083, and who won the respect of his contemporaries precisely by the extreme denial and mortification of his body.<sup>19</sup>

A copper engraving from 1620 shows Zoerard's self-mortification in full detail.<sup>20</sup> During the forty days of Lent, Zoerard took only forty walnuts for his food. He sat for entire days and nights on a tree stump surrounded by sharp reed thorns, and hung stones from a tree trunk around his head so that he would not ever be in the mood to lie down for sleep. His cilice, or penitential belt, was an iron chain that over the years had become so embedded in his flesh that skin grew around it, and legend has it that when it was removed from his corpse, it could be heard grinding against his ribs. The final line of the etching's inscription ends with a question that, accordingly, is literally cutting into the flesh:

<p>“Haec toti Zoerarde orbi spectacula praebe Perdus et pernox sic Zoerarde sedes Cum pigro tam saeva geris certamina somno Si tu sic dormis, quis vigilare potest?”</p>	<p>“There, Zoerard, these are the spectacles thou offer to this world. Thou keep sitting thusly, Zoerard, through all day and night, bringing such fierce torments onto idle sleep. If thou sleep thus, who can be awake?”</p>
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19 Zoerard's hagiography is preserved in the work of Blessed Mór, Bishop of Pécs, written around 1064–1070. For reference, see the following note.

20 Jean le Clerc: Saint Andrew Zoerard, 1620. Based upon the work of Martin de Vos and Jan Sadeler. Copper etching, paper, 24.1 × 19.2 cm. A reproduction of the copper engraving can be found in the following study: Ilkó 2012, pp. 33–44. According to the study, the etching is the property of the author of the study. Unfortunately, the author did not provide permission to reproduce the image in this study.

The obvious answer to the question is that we sleep even when we are awake compared to Zoerard's wakefulness; our consciousness compared to his is like the consciousness of Plato's cave-dwellers compared to that of those living on the surface. The similarity with Plato's thought is not a coincidence. Zoerard's cultural background was in fact the tradition of Greek hermits who, in the spirit of a "baptised Platonism", continued their ascetic practices to free the soul from the body in this lifetime.<sup>21</sup>

## **Asceticism and holiness of life according to Thomas Aquinas**

But would the same mentality have guided the ascetic practice of a Dominican nun? After all, by Margaret's time, Thomas Aquinas' Aristotelian theological anthropology posited a much more intimate metaphysical union between body and soul, and also, based on theological considerations, he gave the union of body and soul a much more important role than Platonic spirituality.

From a metaphysical point of view, the unity of body and soul is not like the unity of, say, a hand puppet and the hand that moves it, or, in Aristotle's example often cited by Thomas, like the unity of a ship and its pilot. For this unity is merely a unity of cooperation, not of existence. This is the reason why, in the Platonic understanding, the soul, separated in its existence, is merely the occasionally reluctant mover of the body, while the body is often an obstacle to, rather than a helper of, the soul's own spiritual mode of being, which the soul, enclosed in the body and struggling through earthly existence, had better deny even in this world in its preparation for a purely spiritual existence after the death of the body.

By contrast, in Aquinas' Aristotelian conception, the soul is a substantial form of the body; in itself an incomplete part of an existentially unified,

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21 See more on this in Krisztina Ilkó's study cited above.

complete being. The soul is therefore in its natural place in the body, in which it fulfils the functions of its natural material powers (such as its vegetative and sensory powers) through the body's organs. But, uniquely in material nature, the human soul also possesses a purely spiritual power of its own, the human intellect, whose activity, thinking, is not the activity of any bodily organ, not even the brain, which merely supplies the sensory data necessary for thinking.<sup>22</sup> Its existence therefore enables the human soul to survive the death of the body, since it can continue to function without the existence of any bodily organ but, in order to continue this function, it must exist. This existence, however, is no longer the existence of the whole human person, but of a purely intellectual part of the person. In the earthly life of the complete human person, the body is therefore not the prison of the soul, but the completion of its material powers, and thus the natural place of the soul. This point has very important theological implications.

First, if the human soul, separated from the body, is not in its natural place, it naturally longs for reunion with the body, the resurrection of the body. And this is precisely the promise of Christ's resurrection; it is the faith in the fulfilment of this promise that is expressed in the Apostles' Creed.

Second, and in direct connection with asceticism, if the soul is the natural place of the body and thus a gift of nature's Creator, then it is not to be destroyed but nurtured.

But, of course, nurturing the body does not mean that all its desires should be satisfied, nor that it is not necessary to subject both body and soul to trials for their training. After all, Aquinas was no stranger to the idea of testing the body as a path to spirituality. As he writes:

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22 This last statement is not self-evident, of course, and thus requires proof. See more on this: Klima 2016, pp. 49–75



“Manifestum namque est quod humanum cor tanto intensius in aliquid unum fertur, quanto magis a multis revocatur. Sic igitur tanto perfectius animus hominis ad Deum diligendum fertur, quanto magis ab affectu temporalium removetur. Unde Augustinus dicit in libro LXXXIII quaestionum quod venenum caritatis est cupiditas temporalium rerum, augmentum vero eius est cupiditatis diminutio; perfectio vero nulla cupiditas. Omnia igitur consilia, quibus ad perfectionem invitamur, ad hoc pertinent ut animus hominis ab affectu temporalium avertatur, ut sic liberius mens tendat in Deum, contemplando, amando, et eius voluntatem implendo.”

“And it is evident that the human heart is the more strongly attracted to one thing, the more it withdraws from others. Likewise, the more the soul of man is attracted to the love of God, the more it withdraws from the influence of temporal things. This is why Augustine says that the poison of love is the desire for temporal things, and that the growth of love is the diminution of this desire, and its perfection is there being no desire. Every counsel, therefore, which invites perfection, urges us to turn away from the desire for temporal things, so that the mind may turn rather to God, contemplating, loving, and doing his will.”<sup>23</sup>

But it is essentially with the same thought that he begins his other polemical writing on the perfection of the monastic life:

“Christianae religionis propositum in hoc praecipue videtur consistere, ut a terrenis homines revocet et spiritualibus faciat esse intentos. Hinc est quod auctor fidei et consummator Iesus, in hunc mundum veniens, saecularium rerum contemptum et facto et verbo suis fidelibus demonstravit.”

“What Christian religion puts forth appears to consist chiefly in calling men away from earthly things, and making them attentive to spiritual things. It is for the same reason that Jesus, the author, and fulfiller of faith, when he came into this world, demonstrated to his followers, by deed and word, his contempt for worldly things.”<sup>24</sup>

23 De perf. c. 6.

24 Contra doct. c. 1.

Thus, the Thomistic ideal is a *fully human life*, which, in its perfect form, following in the footsteps of Christ, does not find joy in worldly things, but, despising these, turns towards spiritual things, towards the love of God and of our neighbour. Thus, as in so many other matters, Thomas seeks and finds a kind of delicate balance between nature and grace, body and soul, materiality and spirituality, albeit emphasising that this balance, in its perfect form, can be achieved in a spiritual life that denies temporal, corporeal things in three ways: 1) by renouncing external goods, money, wealth, property; 2) by the “mortification” of the body, i.e. fasting and other ascetic practices; and finally, 3) by denying one’s own will (or wilfulness) by totally submitting one’s will to the will of God.

But exactly where, for whom and how this balance is achieved varies from individual to individual and from age to age. Thus, for example, when it comes to the renunciation of earthly goods, Thomas raises the problem that if spiritual perfection consists in abandoning earthly goods, then no one who is wealthy can reach salvation, and so, for example, Abraham, who died rich, could not have entered the kingdom of heaven. This is what he says about the solution to the problem:<sup>25</sup>

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25 De perf. c. 7.

“Quae quidem quaestio solvi non posset, si perfectio Christianae vitae in ipsa dimissione divitiarum consisteret. Sequeretur enim quod qui divitias possidet, non possit esse perfectus. Sed si verba domini diligenter considerentur, non in ipsa divitiarum dimissione perfectionem posuit; sed hoc ostendit esse quasi quandam perfectionis viam, ut ipse modus loquendi ostendit, cum dicitur: si vis perfectus esse, vade, et vende omnia quae habes, et da pauperibus, et sequere me: quasi in sequela Christi consistat perfectio, dimissio vero divitiarum sit perfectionis via. [...] Potest ergo contingere quod aliquis divitias possidens perfectionem habeat, caritate perfecta Deo inhaerens; et hoc modo Abraham divitias possidens perfectus fuit, non quidem habens animum divitiis irretitum, sed totaliter Deo coniunctum. [...] Magna ergo virtus fuit Abrahae quod etiam divitias possidens, a divitiis liberum animum habuit; sicut magna virtus fuit Samson, qui absque armis cum sola mandibula asinae multos hostes prostravit: nec tamen inutiliter consilium datur militi, ut ad bellum procedens assumat arma ad hostes vincendos.”

“This question could not be resolved if the perfection of Christian life consisted in the abandonment of earthly goods. For it would follow that whoever possesses earthly goods cannot be perfect. But if we consider carefully the Lord’s words, we shall see that he did not say that perfection consists in the abandonment of goods, but that the abandonment of goods is a path to perfection, as is proved by his manner of speaking, when he says, ‘If you desire to be perfect, go and sell all you have, and give it to the poor, and come, follow me’; that is, perfection consists in following Christ, and the abandonment of goods is the path to perfection. [...] It is possible, then, to be rich and yet perfect, clinging to God with perfect love, and this is how Abraham was rich and yet perfect, for his soul was not entangled in the net of riches, but was wholly attached to God. [...] Great, then, was the virtue of Abraham, that even though he was rich, his soul was free from riches, as was great the strength of Samson, who, unarmed, slew many enemies only with the jawbone of an ass. Yet, it is not without benefit to the warrior to advise him that when he goes to war, he should arm himself to defeat the enemy.”

Thomas solves the problem of denying carnal pleasures in a similar way, where the problem is caused by Abraham’s polygamy that seems to be in conflict with spiritual perfection.<sup>26</sup> For just as it is good advice for the warrior to arm himself in preparation for war, so it is good advice for the one preparing for spiritual life to rid himself of bodily temptations, even though a strong

26 Ibid., c. 8.

soul, like the unarmed Samson, can triumph over them even when exposed to temptation. To this we may add, of course, that to strengthen the soul, it must be trained in the same way as the body. And to whom, when and how much ‘training’ is needed varies from person to person and from age to age. So how was this matter in the case of Margaret?

## Margaret’s asceticism and sanctity of life

Margaret’s religiosity can only be understood in this spiritual context. The very centre of women’s religious movements of the 13<sup>th</sup> century was the ideal of *imitatio Christi*. According to this idea, Christ crucified on the cross shows the way to God, and anyone who wishes to be saved must become like him. Beyond deep compassion, one must share in the sufferings of Christ. The ideal of *imitatio Christi* was set as an example to be followed by all of Margaret’s fellow nuns. Where Margaret goes further is the degree of implementation. Her faith and religious fervour in following the suffering Christ led her, beyond the veneration of the Holy Cross and the profound spiritual experience of the Easter cycle, to an almost total denial of her own bodily needs. How did she achieve this? Her renunciation of earthly goods and privileges is evident in the utter simplicity of her dress, her abstemious eating habits, her humble performance of the most menial tasks, her self-sacrificing care of the sick and her charity. But she goes even further: she never bathes, wears torn and worn clothes, forgoes cleaning her clothes and often her sleep, wears a *cilice* and stockings with nails, and beats herself with a rod, or if she lacks strength, asks others to beat her.

According to legend, Margaret’s confessor and spiritual director, Friar Marcellus, taught her the path to perfection according to a vision he had had. Lea Ráskai describes Marcellus’ vision of “what the perfection of the holy fathers of old had been”:

“There was a friar [Marcellus], a preacher of the monastery, who was at that time a provincial. This provincial often contemplated, and with great piety begged the Lord God that he might be worthy to be shown, to be presented with, what the perfection of the holy fathers of old was, of those who ascended

for His sake to the pinnacle of good works, and to such a great sweet knowledge of the Lord God, as the Scriptures record of them, he said. Therefore, a book was brought and shown to this provincial, written in letters of gold, and the provincial heard the words, “Arise, brother, and read this.” And the friar read, and these things were written in the book: *‘This is the perfection of the holy fathers of old: to love God; to hate oneself; to hate no one; to judge no one.’* And the vision passed away, and the friar awoke from his sleep; and began to recite this lesson often, lest he might forget it.”

The teaching of Marcellus thus suggests the same thing as the contemporary idea of the *imitatio Christi*: renounce earthly goods because they are an obstacle to pure spirituality. Margaret expressed the same idea as follows: “For the cloister is not a dwelling and place of feasts for those who seek the present goods, the goods of this world, but for those who seek the heavenly things to come.”

But, of course, Margaret did not wish everyone to realise holiness in exactly her way. She knew that everyone had their own measure, and she gave her fellow nuns advice accordingly. “She also taught other sorors to this devotion, especially a cantrix named soror Katerina. She was the daughter of the squire András Váradi. This soror often asked this holy virgin to teach her how to worship, serve and pray to God. This holy virgin, Saint Margaret, said to this soror Katerina: ‘Offer your body and your soul to the Lord God, and let your heart be always with the Lord God or facing the Lord God, so that neither death nor any other cause may deprive you of the love of God.’”

That is, she does not say that soror Katerina should wear the penitential belt too, but just that whatever she does, she should have her heart with the Lord God. She does not even tell soror Katerina to pray like she does, because she knows that the way she prays is not for everyone. Because according to legend, this is usually how her prayer happened: “So sweetly did this holy virgin pray at all times, that in whatever very cold time it was, when other sorors went to their rooms to warm themselves after divine service, this holy woman, Margaret, remained in the gallery, only in a robe or a cowl, in the great cold, so that she turned blue all over, as if she were dead. She was often found in this state by the sorors before the altar of the Holy Cross in the gallery. For Saint Margaret was very fond of praying

before the altar of the Holy Cross, because at that time the sacrament, the holy body of Christ, was suspended before the altar of the Holy Cross.”

Thus, on the one hand, she does not force anyone to follow her ways, and on the other hand, she does not flaunt her habits; she simply enters a state of rapture, thus setting an example for others that is respectable, but not necessarily to be followed in every detail. Nothing could be further from her habit of helping others in all things with tender humility than pompous ostentation.

By royal descent, she is of the highest rank among the nuns, but this does not occur to her even when a spoiled fellow nun spills the dishwater on her in anger at being made to do such menial work. Rather, she gently appeases her abuser, and almost apologises for the other’s arrogance: “One day, when, as was her custom, Saint Margaret wanted to take the basin with the swill of the washing water out of the refectory, but could not because of the multitude of waters, she called a soror to help her, soror Csenge, the daughter of the county head of Bodold. So, this soror went, and when they carried the swill outside the refectory, this named soror began to splash Saint Margaret in the face with the swill. But this holy virgin endured it all in peace, and smiling, only said, ‘Beloved sister, what are you doing?’”

To be sure, while she could be so lenient with others, she was harsher with herself than with anyone else. Regarding the means of her asceticism, we read in her legend: “The treasures of this holy virgin in her chest were these: in it were two cilices. One of them was now broken from being worn so often, and the other cilice was new, and in the chest was a girdle made of iron, with which the cilice was girded underneath for great stiffness, and a rod, on which was tied the skin of a hedgehog with the bristles, with which the holy virgin whipped herself, and also in the chest were a pair of felt footcloths, studded on both sides with small pointed iron nails, which the holy virgin wore on her feet.”

Of these objects, the penitential belt of iron is preserved in the Christian Museum of Esztergom. It is easy to imagine that this way of life, which totally contrasted with Margaret’s royal descendancy, sometimes caused aversion even among her fellow nuns. But that is the way of holiness: to go beyond the boundaries, to do something extraordinary in the name of love, goodness, justice, and divine values. And why did she choose to do all this?

## Margaret's mission

Margaret had a mission: Her parents offered her to God for the salvation of Hungary even before she was born. She then, of her own free will, took on this sacrificial role when she grew up, vowing to be betrothed to Christ alone. Therefore, she always refused the offers of marriage that came to her, although in the case of King Ottokar of Bohemia in particular, her parents and her entire environment exerted great pressure on her to accept the offer. But she, in the spirit of the third path proposed by Thomas Aquinas, submitting her own will to the will of God, strictly adhered to her vows.

The last lines of a contemporary sermon, erroneously attributed to Thomas, which, or a sermon like it, Margaret herself might have heard, given that the text is preserved in the *Leuven Codex*<sup>27</sup>, could have been written about Margaret.<sup>28</sup>

“Inventa una pretiosa margarita, abiit, et vendidit omnia quae habuit, et emit eam, Matth. 13.	“Having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. Matthew 13:46.
In his verbis tria dicuntur. Primum margaritae inventio; secundum margaritae commendatio; tertium ejusdem margaritae emptio.	These words refer to three things: 1) finding the pearl, 2) praising the pearl, 3) buying the pearl

27 On the origins of the Leuven Code, see Keréjkártó 2020.  
<https://mki.gov.hu/hu/hirek-hu/evfortulok-hu/leuveni-kodex-titokzatos-tortenete-es-hazakerulese>

28 Although it is more probable that the sermon is about Saint Margaret of Antioch. But interestingly enough, historically it is also not clearly excluded that it is about Saint Margaret of the Árpád dynasty, considering her rapidly spreading cult in Italy at that time. Regardless of the historical facts, however, the description fits Saint Margaret of the Árpád dynasty as well.

<p>Per margaritam istam intelligitur Dei filius [...] Talis margarita est lapis parvus, invenitur in profundo maris, in ventre piscis, et in mensa campsis. In his tribus locis consuevit inveniri margarita: sic Christus invenitur in mari, idest Maria, per incarnationem. [...] In pisce, idest in Christo homine per unionem. [...] In altari, per sacramenti transubstantiationem.</p>	<p>[...] By this pearl we mean the Son of God. [...] Such a pearl is a tiny stone found at the bottom of the sea, or in the belly of a fish, or on a banker's table. The pearl is usually found in these three places, just as Christ is found in the sea [<i>in mari</i>], that is, in Mary, by the incarnation. [...] In the fish, that is, in Christ who became man, by the union [...] And on the altar, by the transubstantiation of the sacrament. [...]</p>
<p>Circa tertium sciendum, quod margarita emitur triplici denario: scilicet aeneo, argenteo et aureo. Aeneus est substantia mundi, argenteus corpus, aureus anima. Aeneo emit qui dat divitias pro ista margarita; argenteo, qui dat corpus; aureo, qui dat animam. Primum fit per renuntiationem divitiarum; secundum per corporis mortificationem; tertium per propriae voluntatis abnegationem[...] Possunt autem exponi de ista beata, quae fuit pretiosa margarita propter speciositatem virginitatis, propter praedicationis utilitatem, et propter insuperabilem soliditatem: quam invenit mercator caelestis et emit sanguine suo Christus Deus noster, qui est benedictus in saecula. Amen.”<sup>29</sup></p>	<p>We should know that pearls can be bought with three types of coin: ore, silver and gold. Ore is the substance of the world, silver is the body and gold is the soul. Whoever buys it with ore gives his wealth for this pearl, with silver if he gives his body, and with gold if he gives his soul. The first is done by giving up earthly goods, the second by mortification of the body, and the third by denying one's own will. [...] But all this may be understood as referring to this blessed woman, who was a pearl of great price (pretiosa <i>Margarita</i>), by the beauty of her virginity, the usefulness of her words, and her unsurpassed firmness, who was found and purchased by the blood of the heavenly merchant, our Christ the Lord, who is blessed for ever. Amen.”</p>

The example of Margaret's holiness of life already inspired great respect and admiration during her life, but even more so immediately after her death. Her patronal role in her chant has been preserved in collective memory since the turn of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries (and perhaps more famously in the *Hymn of the Hungarian Saints* dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century):<sup>30</sup>

29 Aldobrandinus de Cavalcantibus, *Sermones*, pars 2 n. 52

30 Translation into Hungarian: *Vigilia*, 1971, pp. 297–299



“Gratuletur Hungaria  
de Christi beneficio,  
cuius extat vicaria  
salutari suffragio.”

“Rejoice and celebrate, Hungarian  
homeland,  
for Christ is so gracious to you,  
there is now one who would speak for  
you,  
and grants you salutary intercession.”

*(Chant in verse by Saint Margaret of Hungary, 1276-1320)*<sup>31</sup>

In our secularised, individualistic, hedonistic age, it may seem that the Thomistic “balance” between corporeity and spirituality found by Margaret is perhaps tilted too much towards the latter. However, as we have said, Margaret herself would never have imposed her own path to spiritual perfection on others. Perhaps she would rather have said that this was her path, this was her mission, this was her example, but everyone should find his or her own path and mission learning from her example.



Codex containing the legend of St Margit of Lea Ráskai in Hungarian, 1510,  
National Széchényi Library, Budapest

<sup>31</sup> Collection of texts on the history of Old Hungarian literature – Middle Ages (1000-1530)  
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Hungarian Coronation insignia displayed as an interior.  
“Kings and Saints – The Age of Árpáds”

ATTILA KOVÁCS

## EARLY ROYAL POWER IN THE CARPATHIAN BASIN AND SOME INTERESTING CONNECTIONS

It is common knowledge that the victory over Koppány brought about the establishment of the Hungarian Christian kingdom, which also finalised the cultural direction change of the Carpathian basin that played a key role in the region. The power setting in which the Hungarian elite found itself – headed by its ruling clan – was a structure already in a hegemonistic situation in Europe, and Christianity was an inevitable part of it. However, this power model underwent a significant change by the time it reached the Vistula-Carpathians line, and from the collapse of the Western Roman Empire until the turn of the millennium.

The early Christian power underwent significant changes in the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries. After the Carolingians rose to power, a new variant of legitimation had to be established, since the most significant power in the West at that time had undergone a dynastic change. The Carolingians did not have royal ascendants or lineages that went back to pagan chief deities. The ruling family had an increased need to legitimise their power. The Franks, who were successful against the Muslims, were also to be an important supporter of the Papacy too. This is why it is not surprising that they could deservedly rely on the church in consolidating their power. Therefore, the belief in being chosen by God and suitability came to the fore as opposed to being of royal descent.<sup>1</sup> This model

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1 This is well summarised by Richárd Szántó (Szántó 1997, pp. 150-157).

change resulted in the development of a new type of sacrality in the Christian empires, and this new approach is what the Hungarian elite encountered at the start of the millennium.

The Hungarian situation was peculiar in the sense that it was not a small pagan elite of different ethnic and language backgrounds that settled on a Romanised base population, but rather, what was typical of the Hungarian tribal structure is that most of the nobles as well as the common people belonged to the same cultural and language environment. And in this milieu there was continuity.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the princely family of the Hungarian, nomadic tribal structure, the Árpáds, had sacrality right before the establishment of the Christian kingdom (we have no information on when this developed, but probably in the 10<sup>th</sup> century). This independent development could have offered a serious competitive advantage in building an empire, if only the pagan power model had not been forced out of the area in the meantime. So a new type of legitimisation was needed to establish a new type of order. This is what Grand Prince Géza prepared for his son, Vajk, since Christianity had already gained ground in the area, and it had to be taken into account that this would have an impact on dynastic relations as well.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> century, nomadic Hungarians knew and understood the means and symbols of the steppe peoples' legitimacy they encountered in the East.<sup>3</sup> The legitimacy of the princely rule was also ensured by aptitude and by divine (or spiritual) blessing, while the fortune and special skills of the ancestors were transferred to the ruler thanks to the legendary ancestors. The Prince was considered to be the embodiment of the heavenly, cosmic order.<sup>4</sup> The demands of the vertical Hungarian society<sup>5</sup> had to be taken into account during a ruler

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2 See a summary of this in the work of Jenő Szűcs (Szűcs 1984, pp. 84–91).

3 In nomadic empires, sense of duty, designation for a task as well as suitability were all considered indispensable characteristics of a ruler. These rulers had to bear the traits of a hero as well as of a sage. It is through them that the laws of heaven were enforced, and they were also directly responsible for the wellbeing of the people (Zimonyi 2012, pp. 42–45).

4 Márton, 1997, pp. 72–79

5 For more on the structure and operation of the contemporary Hungarian society c.f.: Kovács 2021, pp. 111–128.

election, and local traditions were still strongly present among common people even in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> So although in the pagan cultural setting the Hungarian society of the millennium thought along other legitimacy norms,<sup>7</sup> this, of course, did not mean that they rejected the Christian forms of legitimacy. Traditionally, the nomads had a flexible relationship with the different religions. That is, the pagan Hungarian elite interpreted an inauguration based on Christian rites as an affirmation of suitability according to pagan traditions.

By supporting Vajk/Stephen on the issue of throne succession, the newly baptised Hungarian nobles used Christian legitimisation alongside the contemporary pagan one to prove the legitimacy and suitability of their chosen ruler.<sup>8</sup> Vajk was still a pagan successor of the prince when he clashed with Koppány.<sup>9</sup> According to sources, Vajk was girded before the battle of the opposing armies.<sup>10</sup> Opinions diverge on the reasons why he was girded. According to some, he was appointed commander-in-chief of the army in line with western (knight) traditions, while according to others, he was declared of age in line with eastern traditions.<sup>11</sup> From the perspective of our topic, it is of paramount importance that we know Árpád-descendants were fighting for the contemporary title of the Hungarian prince and not for the subsequent title

6 Kornél Szovák mentions in particular that the customary law and system of beliefs were still going strong even after the elite had changed religion (Szovák 2015, pp. 145–148).

7 A later but rather detailed description gives account of the aspects of legitimacy in connection with nomadic peoples, which provides a good analogy for the earlier power perspective of the Turkish peoples. The book entitled *A Dzsingisz-legenda könyve (The book of the Gengis Legend)* gives account of the expectations made by steppe peoples of their rulers. There were six such criteria: they had to be charismatic, they had to expand or protect their empire, they had to follow and enforce the laws of the nomadic society, they had to be just/useful, they had to be ruthless towards their enemies but also exercise mercy, and finally they had to be good organisers (Ivanics 2001, pp. 161–171).

8 An initial manifestation of the change in legitimisation can be observed among Hungarians at this time (Dobrovits 2011, pp. 100–102).

9 István R. Kiss draws attention to a special opportunity of succession, treating the closeness to the dynasty-founding ancestor as a subvariety of the principle of seniority. Accordingly, the specific age was only decisive in the hierarchy of adult male descendants within a given lineage (R. Kiss 1928, pp. 733–765).

10 “Then he collected his army and went to face the enemy. The first time they girded him with a sword was next to the Garam river;” (Geréb 1993, p. 22).

11 For a summary on this topic see Sándor László Tóth (Tóth 2010).



of king. So we should primarily give way to nomadic power symbolism in the context of the story. This means Vajk had to be declared of age for his succession to the throne to be legitimate in opposition to Koppány. Nevertheless, from the perspective of western supporters, it must have been important that the ruler proved his suitability as commander of the army, and that he appeared as the chosen one of Christ as head of the Christian-led armies immediately before the battle with the pagans. We have already briefly explored the nomadic power attributes. To ensure he could support pagans composing the majority of contemporary Hungarian society, Vajk had to present criteria of the ruler which were legitimate from the perspective of the nomads. By being declared of age, Vajk became entitled to rule, since similarly to his challenger, he was a member of the Árpád dynasty. So now he could legitimately confront Koppány, although due to the principle of seniority, Koppány still had legal grounds to the throne. By leading the armies (even if this was only symbolic), Vajk met the criteria of courage too. With his victory, Vajk also testified that he was God's chosen one, and he also proved the criteria of being valiant as a future ruler. These indicators not only signified the legitimacy of his rule among the elite, but also among the common people. József Deér noticed that after Vajk/Stephen rose to power, there were no pagan uprisings for the entirety of his reign.<sup>12</sup> I believe this follows from what is described above. The principality, for which Vajk had to seriously fight, had to be converted into a Christian kingdom. King Stephen demonstrated extraordinary organisational skills when he took over Transylvania, which not only brought peace, it also helped our Christian neighbours and relatives on a dynastic basis. Thus he also protected/expanded the country (growing the inland area under Stephen's reign), which was also strong feedback and a clear indication of his divine blessedness. King Stephen was one of the rare rulers who never lost a single battle during his reign. It was well known that, unlike other contemporary rulers, he could read and was skilled in other things as well. His preserved laws and admonitions paint a picture of a literate, insightful, suitable and consolidated ruler, which

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12 Deér 2007, pp. 84–86

means he also complied with the nomad term of being a wise ruler. One event, preserved in sources, proves the ruler's generosity/graciousness as well as that he enforced laws with a firm hand and without any partiality.<sup>13</sup> During his reign, King Stephen not only strengthened the borders of the country, but his church organisation work was also significant. In addition, he competently handled the distribution and utilisation of the country's resources (salt, fur, ores). He also minted independent money, and in his legislation, he endeavoured to Christianise contemporary Hungarian customary law, then insert it into the rule of law securing the operation of the empire, which at that time was a combination of Greek-Roman law and Germanic customary law. At that time, the Church was not only responsible for nurturing people's souls, it was almost entirely responsible for public administration too. In addition, it also influenced international relations. Furthermore, the Church ensured sacredness within the dynasty, which converted to Christianity.<sup>14</sup> Due to his Bavarian relations, King Stephen actively participated in the German-Polish conflict (embodied in the Kievan struggle for the crown). As head of his armed forces, he launched a successful military campaign to help the Byzantines in the Balkans, which was a serious gesture to his powerful and strong neighbours, and ensured a good long-term relationship with the Byzantine Empire. In this context, it should be noted that he did not launch a separate military campaign abroad. Over our borders, he fought battles strictly as part of international cooperations, which

13 "[...] Since his name has spread all over the world, and even his judgments were praised everywhere, the 60 [Pecheneg] men (whom I mentioned above) departed from the area of the Bulgarians and headed towards the borders of Pannonia with their carts loaded with all their cargo, gold and silver and all kinds of jewellery. However, a group of servants, whose souls may be inclined to evil, flared up from the fire of evil, and attacked them. They killed some of them with a sword, stole all their things, and left them there half-dead. Leaving the events and what they suffered to the judgment of the King, they continued their journey, hurried straight ahead before him, falling on their knees. [...] In accordance with the wisdom in his soul, the king did not threaten either with his gaze or with his words; instead [...] he called for the men who attempted to kill the Pechenegs. "Why did you violate the laws of God's ordinance and judged innocent men mercilessly?" [...] After the judgment was pronounced, they were led out, and they met their death by being hung in twos at crossroads all over the country." (ÁKÍF pp. 310–311).

14 Sándor Domanovszky presented the patterns of western exercises of power and succession in Hungarian practice in detail (Domanovszky 1913, pp. 367–398).

was beneficial to the perception of him and the security of the country. After the birth of his son Imre, Stephen rightfully hoped that thanks to his connections as well as his personal charisma, the country, which had become powerful and strong, would not be considered as prey by its neighbours, but rather as a partner, which they should keep a peaceful relationship with by means of dynastic relations. However, the death of the highly talented Prince Imre completely changed the situation. The country not only had to face attempts of occupation from abroad, they also had to find a legitimate heir. After the death of Stephen, Peter Orseolo ascended the throne (1038–1041; 1044–1046), whose legitimacy was questioned from several sides.<sup>15</sup> On behalf of the elite, in addition to fear of German influence, Peter also managed to antagonise the Church with the changes in personnel he made in the dignitaries. In addition, in the eyes of the still mostly pagan common people, matrilineality was not considered legitimate as long as there was an adult male descendant in the line of the Árpáds.<sup>16</sup> During this unstable and temporary period, the Hungarians' devotion to Christianity was also questioned. The pagan uprisings raised doubts in neighbouring countries too, which posed an extreme threat to the Hungarians. This is because it could have created legal grounds for close and strong neighbours to intervene.

The following decades were turbulent with two pagan uprisings and external military interventions. The Kingdom of Hungary needed all its strength to avoid having a dependent relationship with the Holy Roman Empire or the Byzantine Empire, or even worse, having to face the dismemberment of the country. In this period, members of the Árpád dynasty had to strike a balance between the common pagan people, the Hungarian Church, and the neighbouring empires. This took place on two levels. At the lower level, well-being and security were basic conditions. If these were met, they did not have to fear an uprising since

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15 Teiszler 2021, pp. 537–549 <https://www.doi.org/10.53644/MKIE.2020.537>

16 In terms of royal succession, the dominance of the Church in legitimisation issues was unquestionable in the 10–12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Besides this though, other aspects prevailed too, depending on the strength of local traditions. So seniority dominated the dynasty in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, while in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the emphasis was on primogeniture (Bartoniak 1926, 785–841).

the malcontent commoners would not incite the immediate relatives of the family for a coup. Also, if the hinterland was stable, they could successfully launch successful defensive or conquest campaigns. At the higher level, dynastic connections meant a network of contacts which they could rely on in case of serious conflicts. Sacredness had particular importance in the diplomacy toolbox when the powers of contemporary Europe were the ones who decided in the question of peace and war. Christianity was a fundamental but necessary minimum, its existence ensured a sort of moral/legal boundary in the conflict of the opposing parties. That is, during diplomatic machinations and wars there was a certain “from/to” boundary, the crossing of which could lead to serious sanctions. Those outside the Christian community could not count on such controlled aggression. But all of this only worked perfectly in theory. This is why sacredness had major importance, since strong legitimization was necessary in this system of power relations typical of Christian states. Strong legitimization presented significant security and scope for Christian dynasties.

The power relations of the ruler in the Kingdom of Hungary were not independent from the manners of investiture and the special local relations. The Rus were the closest relations, but the nature of their power was still different.<sup>17</sup> King St. Stephen was most likely crowned according to the *ordo* of Mainz. Thus according to the western approach (of Roman-Germanic tradition), the ruler was *rex et sacerdos*, so it was within his scope of authority to establish dioceses and the Pope only approved it. At the same time, coronation was not widespread in 11<sup>th</sup> century Rus. The investiture took place by enthronement.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, churches in the Kingdom of Hungary enjoyed independence in such a way that the anointed king could independently expand his organisation and the allocated economic assets (fish lakes, arable land, ferries, servants, etc.). The other pillar of power was accessible through the establishment of a unified system of lands and taxing. The implementation of Christian power could be achieved most efficiently by the establishment of counties. In light of this, the

17 The innovative approach to the genealogy of the Árpáds as well as its thorough literature/methodological research is provided by Péter Báling (Báling 2021).

18 For more on this see the work of Márta Font (Font 1998, pp. 10–12).

Hungarian king was able to create an order of loyal, secular (as independent from him) nobles, who had various obligations to their ruler.

There were two fundamental theories with regard to early royal power. According to one, the Hungarian royal counties were built on the former clan areas of occupation. This was achieved by creating new counties from two-thirds of the clan's occupation areas, with someone at the head who was only dependent on the ruler, not on the local clan. The remaining one-third was left in the hands of the clan, led by one of the local elites supporting Stephen.<sup>19</sup> The other theory outlined an entirely different organisational principle. In this other theory, the secular and ecclesiastical structure developed in parallel to each other during the reign of King St. Stephen and the kings following him. Each archdeaconry within the diocese corresponds to an area of county administration. The counties were led either by strangers who arrived from abroad, or by one of the king's (Stephen's) trustworthy, extended relatives.<sup>20</sup> The new power structure strongly affected what royal power would be like. This is why holding power and the uprising against the king – i.e. the attempt to seize power – was interesting in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, since it was based on power sharing and the Duchy system that grew out of it. Dániel Bagi conducted a thorough and in-depth analysis of the Duchy system, so we can refrain from a lengthier analysis of the topic. However, we should note that according to some, such a separation of power can be traced back to the reign of King András I and King Béla I (or even later), while others attribute it to a direct nomad antecedent, which can already be observed in connection with Prince Géza and Koppány. It is clear that the Duchy, whenever it was established, certainly had a military function besides its administrative and economic ones.<sup>21</sup> The intermediate position is represented by Márta Font and Attila Zsoldos, according to whom, the establishment of the Duchy as a form of power sharing that can be seen as an agreement within the (royal) family can be traced back to the era of

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19 Györffy 1977, pp. 192–227; 1983, pp. 366–388

20 Kristó 1980, pp. 436–490

21 Bagi 2017, pp. 39–74

King St. Stephen.<sup>22</sup> Of course, sharing power was important for the grantees and guardians since their position largely depended on the outcomes of these negotiations. However, within the royal family, seniority could have been a significant basis for legitimation.<sup>23</sup> This could have been particularly important vis-a-vis primogeniture, but only until one of the claimants to the throne rose to power. From then on, he himself had an interest in primogeniture to exclude any collateral relatives. So even if the brilliant idea of István R. Kiss cannot be proven directly in the case of the Árpáds, the existence of such a special type of primogeniture (the critical nature of being genealogically close to the dynasty founder, which enjoyed primacy within the principle of age appropriateness), contemporary Árpád descendants could still make efforts to maintain this tradition as long as it was in their best interest. Charisma played an important role in the argumentation of such heirs, who, in addition to the general and afore-mentioned special type of seniority, were older than their rivals (a good example of this is Koppány and Vajk), or were of the same age, but despite their younger age they could have still been genealogically closer to the dynasty founder or the previous ruler (see Boris's claim to the throne over Béla II (the Blind). On the other hand, charisma could have been a good argument for many, because due to them being older they had had an opportunity to prove their suitability and divine blessedness (during battles, diplomatic events etc.),<sup>24</sup> against their sometimes still underage rivals (we can see this with Solomon and Béla I). So it is not the case (as some mistakenly assumed) that an extremely ancient and pagan customary law had a strong presence in an unchanged form. But rather, this special rulership argument prevailed through a lack of regulation in inheritance, not as a general legal principle based on consensus, but as one of the arguments of the current heir, as long as their case coincided

22 Font 2007, pp. 65–70; Zsoldos 2005, pp. 72–76

23 This was especially important in the era in question since international recognition of the ruler was mostly due to support from the Church. However, the primacy of legitimation and suitability in the question of throne succession was inconsistent in the Kingdom of Hungary, even in the 11–12<sup>th</sup> centuries. The divine origin of the king's power, though, was still well-established in the era (Thoroczkay 2020, pp. 95–109).

24 Dümmerth 1986, pp. 117–121

with the old title. Of course, this was independent of whether the person still believed in the pagan rules or was already a Christian.

Thus a lack of regulation surrounding throne succession in the young Kingdom of Hungary left many questions unanswered. This provided leeway for both the members of the Árpád dynasty as well as for those on the lower, but still dominant, level of power to interfere with the exercise of power, and by doing so, increase their own assets and improve their position. Such a bending of power in the new system might substantially have modified the situation of the obligated/vassals and other allies. In the case of certain conflicts of interest, this created an opportunity for the opposing parties to continue their conflict at a lower level, indirectly, i.e. through their allies, subjects and confidants. Therefore, not all conflicts of power were handled at the highest levels, or they could be kept at a local level, so the conflicts which were not acute could be resolved. Of course, the Church played the lead role in this mediation.<sup>25</sup> This also contributed to power struggles not spreading across the whole country, so from the outside the situation did not seem as chaotic that it needed intervention from conquerors, unless it was a dynastic call for help. From the aspect of the common people – who were mostly still pagan – and the superficially Christian elite, the guidelines for forms of legitimation were important in the transitional period in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Within the new power structure, the Church was the point of reference, and international relations also took place based on the guidelines of Christian customary law. As a result, there was a certain duality in Hungary, which was simultaneously based on the inherited, pagan forms of legitimation as well as the legalising forms of the new organisation principle. These were irreconcilably opposed, since, as previously mentioned, the nomads

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25 As a result, world events were observed from the perspective of the Church in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Their view of history was only legitimate through Christian glasses, while the pagan past was only understood as an aberration of their ancestors. The motherland was also considered to be a terrible place, which weighed down on the shoulders of the ancestors due to the sins of paganism. However, the Carpathian Basin was given as a rightful claim to the successors by converting to Christianity (Mályusz 1963, pp. 4–8). The sole criterion of the Church temporarily overruled clan traditions, since not only legitimation but also public administration and diplomacy were almost entirely in the hands of the Church.

treated religion and politics flexibly. The legitimate and suitable ruler, who had divine blessing, tried to dispose of his rivals since they not only posed a threat to him, but to the country as a future bequest. There was a consensus that only the descendants of Árpád were eligible as legitimate rulers. The inheritance of power, however, was unregulated. Primogeniture and seniority could equally be considered a basis of reference for seizing power. As to which was dominant, that depended on which was more beneficial for the heir. In addition, it also carried a lot of weight which forms made it most possible to seize and stabilise power in the administrative/military/economic relations of early power. In light of this, it is interesting whether the ruler who recently came to power had to share his power or not. If yes, how did he do so? Which areas and assets within the country could satisfy the needs of the person holding the title of prince? And all of this while actively helping the ruler defend the Kingdom, if the ruler, in exchange for sharing power, expected the prince to do his part in defending the country. Therefore, the agreement had to be reasonable. This was decided upon by the current throne heirs, as close/distant family members, but it also had to be deliberated on by the officials of the established power. Namely, power positioning could substantially have modified the nature of an agreement as well as its compliance (attaining/retaining a guardian position or acquiring ecclesiastical assets and titles, as well as retaining or obtaining the title of ispan, chief baron and other titles), and leaving its mark on the functioning of the entire system of early royal power. It is through these we should observe dynastic power struggles within the Árpád dynasty.<sup>26</sup> We should analyse the lack or existence of pagan uprisings, the expulsion of Peter Orseolo, the renunciation of Levente in favour of András, the agreement between András I and Béla I, the struggles of King Solomon, Géza I as well as the accession to power of Saint László, Kálmán the Learned, already a clergyman, in place of his brother. The era is an exciting and important part of the history of the Kingdom of Hungary. The early relations of the Kingdom had a significant impact on the Hungarian power regime and thus also on the leeway of the Árpád dynasty.

26 Teiszler 2021, pp. 552–555. <https://www.doi.org/10.53644/MKIE.2020.537>



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LÁSZLÓ KOVÁCS

# DEPICTIONS OF SAINT LÁSZLÓ IN UPPER HUNGARY

## The memory of Saint László

We can say with absolute certainty that Saint László is still a living figure of our history, for he has surely survived his death more than nine hundred years ago through his foundations, institutions, relics, customs, chronicles, legends, folk tales, hymns, and in the inspiration he has given to artists, poets, writers, historians and philosophers.

The author of the legend of Saint László, created at the time of his canonisation in 1192, places him alongside Saint Stephen and assesses his historical role in the following manner: “When he reigned, all of Pannonia flourished with such order and prosperity that never since the time of Saint Stephen has it sparkled so wonderfully. Hungary began to surpass almost all other countries in rank and glory.”<sup>1</sup>

If we call Saint Stephen the founder of the country, it is all the more deserving to call Saint László the preserver of the country. With Saint László's accession to the throne, the most turbulent period of the state established by Saint Stephen, which had experienced constant throne disputes, pagan rebellions, and attacks from the west and especially from the east endangering our sovereignty, ended. While still a prince, László defended the country from

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1    Érszegi 2004

the invasion of the eastern Pechenegs. The story of saving the Hungarian girl from a Cuman raider is connected to one of these victories, the Battle of Kerlés (today: Chiraleș, Romania).

He consolidated the economic life of the country mostly by what today would perhaps be considered strict laws against theft. It was under his reign that the organisation of the church, shattered by pagan rebellions (think of the martyr death of Bishop Gellért), but also religious life were solidified. In this activity, it was significant that in 1083, by his decree, “the bodies of those who had sown the seeds of faith in Pannonia and led the country to God through their sermons and deeds were elevated”<sup>2</sup> – wrote the chronicler about the canonisation of Saint Stephen, Saint Imre, Saint Gellért, Andrew Zorard and Saint Benedict. But he also consolidated religious life with his laws and was a mediator of the cult of the Virgin Mary to the West when he added three Marian feasts to the list of festivities at the Synod of Szabolcs. He founded dioceses and monasteries, and tradition has it that the establishment of the collegiate chapter and provostry of Pozsony (today: Bratislava, Slovakia) was also inspired by him.

The canonisation of King László took place 97 years after his death, in 1192, at the initiative of King Béla III (with the approval of Pope Celestine III) who honoured in László the ideal of a chivalrous king. László was not a martyr, so it was not his death but his life that earned him the grace of sanctity. He became a Christian ideal owing to his true Christian way of living.

The miracles that occurred after his death and canonisation, were preceded by wondrous events that happened to him or through him during his life. These were not only preserved in the saint’s biography, but also in folk tradition, in legends and folk tales about him, almost up to the present day. Many of these were already recorded in the text and images of the Anjou Legendarium of the early 14<sup>th</sup> century.

The most characteristic motifs of the Saint László legends can be incorporated in one central narrative: the enemy invades the country (Cuman,

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2 Bollók 2004

Tatar, Ottoman) and as they are overwhelming in number, the king (and his army) has to flee. However, the pursuers are hot on his trail, and are about to catch up with him, when, by divine inspiration, László scatters his money, and while the enemy soldiers are busy picking up the treasure, he escapes. Afterwards, the discarded coins turn to stone. But the pagans continued with their pursuit of the king, and again are closing in dangerously, when László again prays to God and his appeal is heard: the mountain behind him splits in two and his pursuers plunge into the opened chasm. However, his vicissitudes persist: the Hungarian army finds no food on the barren land, but at the king's prayer, God sends gentle deer to feed them. The thirsty army needs water too though, and a life-saving body of water either spurts out from under the horseshoe of László's horse, or the king himself breaks the rock with his sword and draws water.<sup>3</sup>

## **Saint László memorial sites in Upper Hungary**

Saint László spent the majority of his life in Upper Hungary (today: Slovakia), and some of the miraculous events of his life occurred here too, so it is natural that this is where most of the memorial sites associated with him can be found. Three sites in particular should be highlighted.

### **Pozsony (today: Bratislava)**

Saint László's cult in Pozsony has been continuous since the Middle Ages. Many chapels and churches were dedicated to his memory, and he was portrayed on murals and sculptures. The most important memorial sites in Pozsony:

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3 Magyar 1998

## Old Town Hall

The earliest Saint László relics can be found in the Old Town Hall building. The underpass next to the tower and the Gothic chapel of Saint László were built around 1350. One of the keystones of the vault depicts the crowned head of Saint László. One of the figures on the frescoed ornaments under the vault of the sanctuary is Saint László. It is assumed that the full-body statue of Saint László, which now stands on a console on the outside wall of the town hall, was also made at this time. The statue depicts Saint László as a knight king with the orb in his right hand, and his left hand resting on the escutcheon with the double cross. Originally it could have stood indoors, because the statue is much smaller than a human, and the lower part of the leg is not finely carved.

## Church of St László

The classical building of the church erected in honour of Saint László and the so-called “polgári ápolyda” [civil nursery home] next to it stood on the corner of Kórház or Ispotály utca. At the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, a xenodochium of the Augustinian order summoned by Saint László stood at the site of the present-day building, to which the Saint László Chapel was later added. This building was demolished in 1529. However, in 1543 a new xenodochium was built to which the new single-nave Saint László Chapel was attached. But by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, this too had fallen into such a state of disrepair that it had to be completely demolished.

The present-day classical Church of St László and the civil nursing home was built on the site in 1830. Behind the classical facade lined with towers, the church nave has an oval floor plan with chapels adjoining on each side. The altarpiece of the high altar was painted by Ferdinand Lütgendorf. The picture depicts the apotheosis of Saint László, with the building of the hospital and church building below.

## **Primate's Palace [Primaciálny palác]**

Relics of Saint László can be found in one of the most famous buildings of Bratislava, the Primate's Palace. There was already an ecclesiastical building on this site in the Middle Ages, the so-called "Püspökház" [Bishop's House]. In 1454, Dénes Széchy, Archbishop of Esztergom had a chapel built here dedicated to Saint László. The Primate's Palace of today was built by Archbishop József Batthyány between 1776 and 1781. The octagonal Saint László Chapel, built in the new building, stands on the site of the old one on all three floors.

The altarpiece of the high altar was painted by András Zallinger and depicts the apotheosis of Saint László. The ceiling fresco of the dome was painted by Maulbertsch in 1780 and it depicts the scene of László drawing water. In the multi-figure picture, three figures from among Saint László's soldiers wearing special clothing represent three Hungarian social groups: the nobility, the clergy and the serfs. The Hungarians of Bratislava hold their annual Saint László commemoration here.

## **Nyitra (today: Nitra)**

The castle and town of Nyitra played an important role throughout the Árpád era. It is already known from the time of St. Stephen that Vasul, Saint László's grandfather, was kept then blinded here. As the centre of the Duchy, it was the seat of his father Prince Béla, then of Saint László during Géza's time. According to the chronicles, he died here in 1095.

The cult of Saint László had increased significance in Nyitra from the very beginning. The high altar of St. Emmeram's Cathedral has magnificent statues of the kings Saint Stephen and Saint László, and the relief above the bishop's chapel also depicts Saint László.

The Episcopal Seminary was originally named after Saint László, but its title was changed to Saint Gorazd in 1990. The altarpiece of the chapel of the seminary also depicts Saint László.



A “plague statue” erected in 1739 stands in the square in front of Nyitra Castle. On the four corners of the column are the figures of Saint Stephen, Saint Imre, Saint Adalbert and Saint László.

The Piarist Monastery and the Church of Saint László can be found in Alsóváros [Lower Town] in Nyitra, and the King Saint László Secondary School of the Piarists also operated here from 1698 until 1919. The present-day Baroque Church of Saint László was built in 1741 on the site of the Chapel of Saint László, next to the monastery. The high altar picture shows Saint László drawing water from a rock, sitting on a white horse with the Holy Crown on his head.

In the historic coat of arms of Nyitra county, Saint László is depicted in armour striking down on the Cuman fighter with an axe in his right hand and his left hand resting on a shield decorated with the Hungarian coat of arms. In the current coat of arms of Nyitra county the colours have been changed, and on the escutcheon there is only a double cross instead of the Hungarian coat of arms.

## **Debrőd (Debrad)**

The village is the most well-known place of worship dedicated to Saint László in Upper Hungary. The Debrőd of Abaúj-Torna county is today situated in the district of Košice. The village was an ancestral property of the Premonstratensian Provostry of Jászóvár. On the edge of a clearing on the village border, there is a spring, the creation of which is associated with the name of Saint László in the folk tradition. People attributed healing powers to the spring water through Saint László, and this led to a spontaneous pilgrimage. The Premonstratensian order were famous for their Saint László cult, thus the Chapel of Saint László was built near the spring during the time of Provost Domonkos Báthory around 1500. Hungarian *Simplicissimus*, published in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, reads: “They point to a spring in Jászó, which was created [by Saint László] on a high, rocky mountain, when on one occasion he and his army were driven up there and suffered from a lack of water. I saw it with my own eyes during a pilgrimage,

because it is customary to make a pilgrimage here every year, on the day of Saint László. He is said to have begged for water from God, in the following way. He was fervently praying on his horse when suddenly the horse jumped with him against the rock, and the water gushed out and the holy spring is still there today.”<sup>4</sup>

However, despite the regular pilgrimages, the state of the chapel deteriorated so badly that it was demolished. Although the number of visitors to the place of worship declined after the destruction of the chapel, the people of the village continued to hold the feast of Saint László for a long time. In 1952 there was also a Marian apparition at the spring.

Next to the Saint László spring, on the foundations of the old ruins, a Plant Church was consecrated in honour of Saint László, and the long-lasting tradition of the pilgrimage was relaunched in 2007.

## **Saint László churches in Upper Hungary**

A manifestation of the cult of saints included appointing them as patron saints of churches, chapels and ecclesiastical institutions. In the Middle Ages (until the 16<sup>th</sup> century), many churches were dedicated to Saint László. Many of the churches built in the Baroque era chose Saint László as their patron saint, but several of those built in the 19<sup>th</sup> and even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century are also named after Saint László. The number of place names with patronage is quite significant, in addition to which, Saint László appears in the coat of arms of villages and towns too.

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4 Tűrőczy and Trostler 1956.

## Churches bearing the name of Saint László in Upper Hungary

### Medieval Saint László churches still standing today

- **Bodafalva** (Bodice, today part of Liptószen tmiklós [Liptovský Mikuláš]) – the Church of Saint László already existed in 1360.
- **Csejte** (Čachtice) – its church is mentioned in 1373, its altarpiece is from 1787: Saint László worshipping the Virgin Mary – the coat of arms of the village also bears the figure of Saint László.
- **Csütörtökhely** (Spišský Štvrtok) – the former name of the village was *Szentlászló* [Saint László], its church was built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, its carved altar statue depicts Saint László, and the town's coat of arms also bears his figure.
- **Dobóca** (Dubovec) – its church was built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, its altarpiece from the 18<sup>th</sup> century depicts Saint László.
- **Kassaújfalu** (today part of Košice [Kassa]) – its church was mentioned in 1297, the present-day church was built in 1771, also bearing the name of Saint László, a colourful carved statue of Saint László decorates the altar.
- **Lévna** (Livina, Nitra county) – its church was already standing in 1332, and the coat of arms of the village also depicted Saint László.
- **Liptómattyasóc** (Liptovské Matiašovce) – its church was built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Saint László's statue stands on the altar, and the coat of arms of the village depicts his figure.
- **Lutilla** (Lutila) – its church was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Saint László's carved statue decorates the altar, and the coat of arms of the village depicts his figure.
- **Nagypaka** (Veľká Paka) – its church was built in 1317, the name of the village was *Szentlászlópaka*, on the wall of the shrine there is a modern Saint László picture, the village coat of arms depicts his figure.
- **Necpál** (Necpaly) – Saint László's church was built around 1250, it has a series of images depicting the Saint László legend in the sanctuary and the attic, and the village coat of arms depicts his standing figure.

- **Rajec** – its church is mentioned in 1332, the altarpiece is from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Saint László prays in front of the Virgin Mary, on the coat of arms of the town Saint László is depicted with an axe and a shield.

### Modern Saint László churches

- **Dluha** (Árva county) – its church was built in 1811, altarpiece: Saint László draws water.
- **Fülekkovácsi** (Filakovské Kováče) – its church was built in 1899, altarpiece: Saint László draws water.
- **Koszorús** (Kosorin, Bars county) – its church was built in 1803, it was renovated in 1926, altarpiece: a standing Saint László with an axe and a shield; coat of arms depicts Saint László on horseback.
- **Ógyalla** (Hurbanovo) – Saint László's church was built in 1718, altarpiece: Saint László draws water.
- **Pusztafödemes** (Pusté Úľany) – its church was built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, altarpiece: Saint László draws water.
- **Szete** (Kubáňovo) – its church was built in 1737, its altarpiece is an 18<sup>th</sup> century Baroque work of art of Saint László drawing water; the coat of arms of the village depicts Saint László on horseback.
- **Sajószentkirály** (Kráľ) – according to tradition, it was Saint László's village, its church of St László was built in 1773, altarpiece: Saint László prays in front of the Virgin Mary; the coat of arms of the village features Saint László's crown.
- **Zsemlér** (Žemliare) – its church was built in 1806, altarpiece: Saint László draws water, the coat of arms depicts Saint László's figure.

### Medieval Saint László churches which are derelict or have changed name

- **Bodófalva** (Bodovice, Túroc county) – the church of Saint László is mentioned in 1422, it is an evangelical church.
- **Hanva** (Chanava) – The Church of Saint László is mentioned in 1332, it is a reformed church.

- **Karaszko** (Kraskovo) – the church today is owned by the evangelical church, it is decorated with wall paintings of the Saint László legend.
- **Kecső** (Kečovo) – The Church of Saint László is mentioned in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.
- **Kissalló** (Tekovské Lužianky) – The Church of Saint László was already standing in 1293.
- **Kövi** (Kameňany) – the Church of Saint László in the mining town is owned by the evangelical church, a Saint László mural decorates the church wall.
- **Pozsonyszőlős** (Vajnory) – its Church of Saint László was mentioned in 1278, its title from 1968 is “Our Lady of Sorrows”.
- **Szinyelipóc** (Lipovce, Sáros county) – the Church of Saint László is mentioned in 1299.

## Depictions of Saint László in the churches of Upper Hungary

Like the Saint László cult, its artistic depictions as manifestations of the cult were at their peak in the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Saint László cult was reinforced by the Baroque era, which naturally resulted in Baroque works of art, particularly in the genres of altarpieces and altar statues, and Baroque ceiling frescoes. In more recent times, individual sculptural and other plastic representations also appeared.

In this brief overview, only the medieval works of art, murals, altarpieces, altar statues and other works of plastic art from Upper Hungary are presented.

### Saint László on medieval murals

- **Cserény** (Čerín) – A Saint László picture can be seen on the southern wall of the church nave in Cserény, in Zólyom county. The king was depicted

with a bearded, crowned head and a halo around it. In his left hand he holds the sceptre, in his right, the orb. On the left side of the picture, the donor is shown as a much smaller figure.

- **Pónik** (Poniky) – In the church in Pónik, under the framed series of the images of the Saint László legend, the saint is depicted in a portrait-style votive image, also framed.

## Saint László among the three Holy Kings

- **Csetnek** (Štítník) – The three Holy Kings of Hungary can be seen in the intrados of the semi-circular transverse arch of the church nave in Csetnek, the picture on top depicts the crowned, haloed figure of Saint László with a shield and an axe.
- **Csécs** (Čečejevce) – The murals of the church in Csetnek are from the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century. On the inner wall of the triumphal arch is the figure of Saint László: a crowned head with long hair, a sword in his right hand and his left hand open.
- **Kövi** (Kameňany) – Saint Stephen and Saint László's larger-than-life figures can be seen in the shrine of the church originally dedicated to Saint László. Unfortunately, only a part of the figure of Saint László with a haloed head and a raised sword can be seen.
- **Zsigra** (Žehra) – In the church in Zsigra, Saint Stephen is depicted on the intrados of the triumphal arch with Saint László opposite him. In the picture, the king is shown wearing an ermine cloak and a long-sleeved robe in the French fashion of Lajos the Great. In his right hand he holds a sceptre, in the right a golden orb.
- **Gömörrákos** (Rákoš) – In the sanctuary of the church of Gömörrákos, the line of apostles also includes the three Holy Kings of Hungary in the same size. Saint László is depicted with a bearded, crowned and haloed head with an axe and orb in his hands.
- **Pelsőc** (Plešivec) – The frescoed images of the three Holy Kings of Hungary greet the visitors on the southern external wall of the church, above the

archivolt portal. In reality, the picture now only shows Saint László in armour, with an axe and orb, and Saint Stephen.

- **Krasznahorkaváralja** (Krásnohorské Podhradie) – In a framed painting in the church nave, the three Holy Kings are shown standing in a colonnaded gallery. Saint László is depicted in armour wearing faulds and holding a striped shield in his left hand and an axe in his right.
- **Lelesz** (Leles) – In the St. Michael Chapel in Lelesz, the half-length image of the three Holy Kings of Hungary can be seen underneath the fresco fragment of Saint Elisabeth. Opposite, on the right, only Saint László's head is visible.

## The biblical Three Kings – The three Holy Kings of Hungary

There was a Hungarian tradition that on wall paintings commemorating the Christmas festivities, the three biblical kings, the Magi, were depicted in the shape of the three Holy Kings of Hungary. The old king, Saint Stephen is kneeling before the Virgin Mary (the motif of offering the crown), the bearded, middle-aged king is Saint László, and the young king is Saint Imre.

- **Karaszko** (Kraskovo) – In the church in Karaszko, under the sequence of images of the Saint László legend, you can see the picture of the *Adoration of the Magi*. The old king, Saint Stephen is kneeling in front of the Virgin Mary. In the centre of the image is the bearded King Saint László with his crown and a halo around his head. Behind him is Saint Imre. All three kings are depicted with haloes around their heads, which are not there on the depictions of the biblical three kings.
- **Pónik** (Poniky) – In the church in Pónik, the picture entitled the *Adoration of the Magi* can also be found under the sequence of images of the Saint László legend. Saint Stephen is kneeling before the Virgin Mary. On the right of the throne, the bearded Saint László is also kneeling with the crown on and a halo around his head.

- **Rimabrézó** (Rimavské Brezovo) – The sequence of images presenting the life of Mary includes a scene of *The Adoration of the Magi*. The three king figures: the old King Saint Stephen kneeling, and the two other kings, the bearded Saint László and the young Saint Imre facing each other.
- **Etrefalva** (Turičky) – The frescoes of Etrefalva in Nógrád county were painted around 1370. On the sequence of *The Adoration of the Magi*, the kneeling King Saint Stephen is depicted with the crowned Saint László and the young Saint Imre on his left.

## Saint László on altarpieces and altar statues

The depiction of the Hungarian saints on altarpieces was common all round Upper Hungary, and not only in the churches whose patron saint was a Hungarian saint. Saint László is generally portrayed together with Saint Stephen and Saint Imre.

- **Pónik** (Poniky) – Saint Stephen and Saint László are depicted in the top right-hand picture of the winged high altar, made around 1520. Saint László holds an axe, his left hand resting on a shield decorated with the double cross and red stripes.
- **Gánóc** (Gánovce) – The winged altar of Gánóc was made in János Weysz's workshop in Košice in 1490. On the left-hand side of the altar, you can see the full-body statue of Saint László. The king is shown in armour with a large crown decorated with lilies, the sceptre and orb in his hands.
- **Szepeshely** (Spišská Kapitula) – In St Martin's Cathedral in Szepeshely, Hungarian saints decorate several of the altars. In the top left picture on the high altar, the three Holy Kings of Hungary are depicted in lavish, colourful clothes. On the left is Saint László in armour with a brown beard, an axe and the orb. In the lower left picture on the painted altarpiece on the wings of the Altar of Mary's Dormition, Saint László is shown in armour, with a pleated cloak above him, an axe in his hand and holding a double-cross shield. The Altar of the Coronation of Mary stands in the Zápolya Chapel,



the façade of which is decorated on the left with the carved, painted statue of Saint László, with an axe and a double-cross shield in his hands.

- **Bártfa** (Bardejov) – On the late Gothic altarpiece of the Basilica of St Giles, Saint László is depicted with an axe and the orb.

## Medieval sculptural representations of Saint László in the churches of Upper Hungary

Sculptures, including those of saints, were a complementary element of architecture in the Middle Ages, a period dominated by the Romanesque and Gothic styles. These were in fact stone carvings, which were used as ornamental elements for archivolt portals, keystones of vaults and consoles. The Gothic period created new genres: individual devotional statues, winged altar statues. In addition to stone carvings, wooden sculptures gained in significance too.

- **Pozsony (today: Bratislava, Slovakia)** – On the keystone of the vault of the Saint László Chapel above the Town Hall, Saint László is depicted wearing a beard and crown, and on the external wall, his statue holds a shield and the orb in his hands.
- **Egyházgelle** (Kostolná Gala) – Saint László's bust stands as the console under the Gothic tabernacle of the St. Peter and Paul Church. The king's crowned, bearded head bears the features of Saint László.
- **Besztercebánya** (Banská Bystrica) – The ribbed vaults of one of the chapels of the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Besztercebánya end in busts, including the painted, gilded busts of the three Holy Kings of Hungary among whom Saint László was depicted with the crown, an axe and the orb.
- **Eperjes** (Prešov) – Stone busts decorate the consoles of the Gothic vault of the St. Nicholas Church, which depict the three Holy Kings, among them Saint László with an axe and orb.
- **Kassa** (Košice) – The St Elisabeth Cathedral in Košice accommodates several plastic representations of the Holy Kings of Hungary. The painted

king statues stand on the pillars of the vault running under the gallery on the western side of the nave of the basilica. Saint László was depicted with the crown, his hair cascading down, and dressed in armour with the sceptre and orb. The full-bodied king statues are erected in the side chambers of the northern gate of the basilica. On the right, Saint László is seen with the sceptre, a sword in his belt and the double-cross shield, and on his chest the cross of the crusaders.

## Depictions of the Saint László legend in Upper Hungary churches

The fresco cycle is based on the episode after the Battle of Kerlés (Cserhalom) in 1068, when Prince László saved a Hungarian girl from her abductor, a Cuman warrior. The fresco cycle usually comprises five or six pictures, or scenes: **Leaving** – László leaves Várad (today: Oradea, Romania) with his soldiers; **The Chase, The Battle** – László pointing his spear forward begins chasing the Cuman warrior galloping away with the Hungarian girl while shooting arrows backwards, this incident is often portrayed as part of a whirling battle scene; **Wrestling** – the girl drags the Cuman warrior off his horse, and László wrestles with the man on foot. (This is usually a visual representation of a metaphorical duel, the haloed, holy king is fighting to protect Christianity from the Cuman symbolising paganism. One explanation for the tongue of fire that shoots out from the Cuman's mouth is that this is also a symbolic battle between Good and Evil, which is usually emphasised by the fresco artist's use of the opposing light and darkness.) In the end, the girl comes to the rescue of the king and cuts the Achilles tendon of the warrior with an enormous axe; **The Beheading** – László grabs the defeated Cuman by the hair, and the girl strikes down on his neck with an axe or a sword; **Resting** – the king lays his head in the girl's lap, and the girl leans over him.<sup>5</sup>

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5 László 1993

In various degrees of completeness, this series of images appear in the following churches in Upper Hungary: in Csallóköz (Žitný ostrov): Gútor and Szentmihályfa; in Gömör: Gömörrákos, Karaszkó, Rimabánya; in Szepesség and Sáros county: Kakaslomnic, Szepesmindszent, Vitfalva, Zsigra, Veresalma; in Liptó, Turóc, Zólyom, Nitra counties: Liptószentandrás, Necpál, Pónik, Nyitrakoros.

- **Gútor** (Hamuliakovo) – On the northern wall of the nave of the Church of the Holy Cross in Gútor is a fresco cycle of the Saint László legend which could have been painted around 1370. One interesting fact is that the pictures of the given scenes are not positioned linearly, but one above the other. The Chase is visible most clearly.
- **Szentmihályfa** (Michal na Ostrove) – The series of scenes of the Saint László legend can be seen in the top row on the northern wall of the church of Szentmihályfa. Only three pieces of the series are visible: The Chase, Wrestling and The Beheading.
- **Gömörrákos** (Rákoš) – In the Holy Trinity Church in Gömörrákos, the linearly positioned frescoes of the Saint László legend can be seen in the top strip on the northern wall of the nave. In the various parts of the frescoes, Saint László is sitting on a white horse in armour with a halo around his head. The images of the Saint László cycle in Gömörrákos follow each other like scenes in a movie.
- **Karaszkó** (Kraskovo) – The Saint László legend in Karaszkó was probably painted by a master from the royal court of Buda around the 1370s. The mural cycle is complete, it consists of six scenes. The sequence is interesting because of its white background and the extremely detailed, individualised faces.
- **Rimabánya** (Rimavská Baňa) – The 13<sup>th</sup> century church was painted a century later and includes a 10-metre-long depiction of the Saint László legend. The opening picture shows the town of Nagyvárád (today: Oradea, Romania) and a blond girl in a long dress standing in front of one of the towers of the castle wall, an image that does not appear in any other depictions of the legend. Saint László is shown on a white horse in a knight's armour, but without a helmet, wearing the crown. His hair is blonde, which

is rare in Saint László images, but matches the hair colour in the portraits of Sigismund of Luxembourg.

- **Kakaslomnic** (Veľká Lomnica) – The Saint László legend in Kakaslomnic is one of the most well-known, owing to the fact that after its uncovering (1957) and restoration, it was found to be one of the earliest depictions of the legend. The series of images suggest that the master of the pictures in Kakaslomnic was in contact with the royal court. The fresco can be seen at eye level in the sacristy of St. Catherine's Church. Three scenes are clearly visible: the figure of the abductor Cuman warrior on horseback, the two men wrestling without weapons and the beheading of the Cuman warrior.
- **Szepesmindszent** (Bijacovce) – The frescoes representing the Saint László legend in Szepesmindszent could have been painted around 1400. These ended up in the attic when the church was reconstructed. It survived in fragments only, but it is a very nice, stylistic depiction of the Saint László legend.
- **Vitfalva** (Vítkovce) – The legend cycle in the church in Vitfalva is unique among the Saint László legend depictions. The picture series from the 14<sup>th</sup> century is a folkloristically naive depiction, as the usual scenes are uniquely illustrated by the painter in the style of children's tales. The Vitfalva fresco cycle contains elements not seen anywhere else. Such an element is the devil who has a spiked head, a three-pronged beard, and carries the human soul on his shoulders.
- **Zsigra** (Žehra) – The church in Zsigra was painted after its construction in around 1280, and the Saint László legend cycle was painted in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, partially covering it. In 1638, a depiction of the Holy Cross was found under the cycle, and as a result of it being uncovered, just a fragment of one of the most rarely depicted scenes, the dismounting of the Cuman from his horse, is visible now.
- **Liptószentandrás** (Liptovský Ondrej) – The western wall of the church in Liptószentandrás is decorated with the scene of the Saint László legend. On the right side of the rather ruined picture, you can see the departure scene from Nagyvárád. It is precisely this scene that is usually missing from the Saint László cycle painted in the churches of the Szepesség.

- **Necpál** (Necpaly) – The church dedicated to Saint László was decorated around 1380; the sequence of the Saint László legend can be seen on the northern wall. At the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the nave was given a new vault, so these frescoes ended up in the attic. They are in a relatively good state, but because of the covering of the vault only The Chase and two parts of The Battle scenes are visible.
- **Pónik** (Poniky) – The fresco cycle depicting the Saint László legend can be found in the top part of the southern wall of the nave in the church of Pónik. The peculiarity of this fresco cycle is that the individual scenes have painted frames.
- **Vörösalma** (Červenica pri Sabinove) – The 13<sup>th</sup>-century church received its fresco decoration in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In 1733, the nave was covered with a new, lower vault, so most of the frescoes ended up in the attic. Unfortunately, a large portion of the pictures of the cycle are covered by the vault today; roughly four scenes can be identified in the remaining visible parts. It can be clearly seen, however, when the girl pulls the Cuman warrior off his horse.
- **Nyitrakoros** (Krušovce) – The fresco cycle of the Saint László legend in the St. Nicholas Church in Nyitrakoros was created in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, although part of it is now in the attic because of a lower vault subsequently installed. Most of The Chase scene survived, Saint László's figure on a horse is visible in its entirety.

## Saint László in Upper-Hungarian folk tradition

The figure of King Saint László has been present in our folk traditions from the very beginning, almost until today. The most important surviving stories of the Saint László collection of legends were gathered in the villages of Gömör and Abaúj, in the eastern part of Upper Hungary.

## Saint László's money, Cuman gold

It is one of the most popular medieval tales of Saint László. In fact, it is an aetiological tale that tries to explain the strange shape of the fossilised remains of unicellular Nummulites.

The following version was recorded by József Mató in 1992:

“Saint László once waged war against the Cumans. He had already defeated them once, but the Cumans were preparing for another war. Saint László confronted them a second time and the Cumans began to flee. Saint László then pursued them, but they started to throw away a lot of money so the Hungarian soldiers would stop to collect it, and while doing so, the Cumans would turn back and attack them. Saint László realising the imminent danger prayed to God to turn the money into stone. God listened to his plea and turned the coins into stone. Saint László continued the pursuit of the Cumans, and for the third time won a glorious victory over them.”<sup>6</sup>

## The legend of cracking the mountain in two

The legend of the Torda rift was recorded by Zsigmond Szendrey in 1925: the tale of how the Zadiel Valley was created was recounted by Ferenc Demeter from Méhész (Abaúj-Torna county) with the following words: “Our great king had often visited our land. And on one occasion the following happened. Once, while hunting, they failed to notice the approaching enemy. The king only recognised them when they were already close. Almost at the last minute, he jumped on his horse and rode away from his pursuers. He rode from one forest to the other. His horse was dripping with sweat, and was already showing signs of fatigue and exhaustion. His enemies were fast catching up. In his final desperation, the king looked up to the sky and cried out to God for help: “Lord, help me, save me from the enemy.” God heard the

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6 Magyar 1998

prayer of our gracious king, and a miracle occurred: Behind Saint László, the mountain cracked and a huge valley was formed. All his pursuers fell into the abyss to their death there.”<sup>7</sup>

## The miraculous drawing of water

Along with the adventure at Kerlés (today: Chiraleș, Romania, the miraculous drawing of water is the most popular and widespread Saint László legend, and the mystical cult of the Baroque era made it even more well-known. It is known throughout the Hungarian language area.

Dénes Lengyel published the following story from Debrőd based on a folk tale from the Abaúj-Torna region:

“When King Saint László marched with his army past the villages of Jászó and Debrőd in pursuit of the fleeing enemy, they ran out of food and water. The soldiers were tormented by insatiable thirst, so much so that they began to cry out loud in agony. The leader of the Tatars heard this, and asked King László with mockery in his voice:

‘Do you hear this, King? Why are your soldiers wailing so much?’

‘Because they want to fight you so bad’ – replied King Saint László.

But before the battle began, the holy king started to pray to God to refresh his weary soldiers. God once again heard his begging, and behold, water bubbled up in the wake of his horse’s shoes, and an abundant spring burst. The spring refreshed the soldiers, and since then its gushing water has never run dry or dried up. This spring is still called Saint László Well.

The delicious water of the Saint László Well is still there at the border of Debrőd to quench the thirst of anyone passing by.”<sup>8</sup>

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7 Magyar 1998

8 Lengyel 2019

## The story of deer and buffaloes

The story appears in Saint László's legend, and has its origins in the Old Testament, where the Lord, upon the begging of Moses, sent the Jews in the wilderness manna and an army of quails. In the legend of Saint László, this is the story of the second miraculous act.

Mrs Beniczky from Debrőd told the story in her own words in 1995: "They had nothing to eat in the great forests. Then Saint László prayed to the good God to have mercy on him, otherwise his army would perish. At that moment, wild animals flocked out of the woods in such great numbers that they could catch enough without shooting at them. They immediately started to roast and cook, and prepared them the best they could."<sup>9</sup>

## His horse was called a "Táltos"

The *Táltos* [shaman] horse of our folktales and the surviving wall paintings of the legend may have had an influence on the inclusion of the *Táltos* motif in the Saint László legends.

Gizella Dunajszky from Debrőd connects the *Táltos* horse motif with the story of Kerlés:

"Knights who protected the faith had horses like the *Táltos* horse. In battles, the *Táltos* horses were always at the front, they led the way. It was said that Saint László had a *Táltos* horse as well. So when the girl threw herself down, it picked her up. The horse. Yes, indeed."<sup>10</sup>

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9 Magyar 1998

10 Magyar 1998



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TAMÁS KŐFALVI

# WRITTEN RECORDS AT PLACES OF AUTHENTICATION IN THE ÁRPÁD ERA

## Significance of places of authentication

Places of authentication (*loca credibilia*) were a special institution in the Hungarian legal development, unique at a European level too, which obtained significant prestige and social acceptance through the connection of law and written records. Their existence eclipsed the institution of public notaries which was more widespread in Western Europe. Their activities were complex and wide, and covered civil law, criminal law and public administration law as we perceive them today. The degree of their integration into the Hungarian legal system is shown by the fact that they were indispensable – albeit to varying extents at times – in the functioning of Hungary until practically the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>. The study of their charters is crucial for medieval church history, legal history, cultural history, institutional history, the history of estates and families, and a number of other sub-disciplines of historical science. This is justified not only by the content of the charters they issued, but also by their number: around a third of the surviving charters from medieval Hungary were issued by places of authentication. Their importance is only enhanced by their micro-historical value, as they provide glimpses into everyday lives, despite their official nature.

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1 Pursuant to Section 214 of Act 35 of 1874, places of authentication could only issue copies of the charters they held, but could no longer issue new documents.

## Formation of places of authentication

The legal order of the early Árpád era was dominated by the oral tradition. This was particularly true for litigation procedures, where the individual acts of the trials were not carried out in writing, but orally. The defendant was summoned to appear before the law by orally sending out a bailiff (*pristaldus*). The competent judge sent the defendant his own summoning stamp (“billog”) with his bailiff, who identified himself by presenting it, then gave the summons orally, while presenting the summoning stamp. The bailiff also participated in the trial as an official witness and an executor (e.g. registration of ownership).<sup>2</sup> The most important means of proof in legal proceedings were also oral: parties could take an oral oath to support their claim, the evidential value of which could be reinforced by involving “oath-helpers”. In criminal trials, witness testimonies played an important role and were also given orally during the procedure. Private law transactions (for instance sales, will arrangements, exchanges) were also executed orally, so in these cases the participation of the witnesses was of special importance: they had to prove the legal act that had taken place, and its content, in subsequent legal disputes. Naturally, the uncertainty caused by relying on human memory grew in proportion to the time that had elapsed. Recalling the borders and boundary markers of an estate accurately in a land ownership dispute several years or even decades later was very difficult. It is no coincidence that after the spread of written records, the permanence of writing was very often used as a justification for the issuance of charters, in contrast to the transience of human memory.

Before the spread of written records, trial by ordeal was a widespread form of evidence in legal actions. In doing so, an attempt was made to uncover the truth in cases of uncertain outcome, based on existing information and a faith in the infallibility of the divine power. In Hungary, the most widely used form of trial by ordeal was trial by red-hot iron. A total of about 20 cathedrals and

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2 Solymosi 2002, pp. 523–524

larger provostries were entitled to carry out such procedures under the law of King Kálmán the Learned (1095-1116). The most well-known proceedings took place in front of the chapter of Várad. In these trials, the party trying to prove their claims had to carry a heated piece of metal in their bare hands a certain distance. The hands of the person sentenced to the trial were bandaged for several days before and after the trial, and, to prevent fraud by herbal treatment for instance, the bandage was closed by the seal of the church providing the site for the procedure. If the wound started to heal within three days, the person credibly proved his or her case. The chapter of Várad kept records of the trials, which constitute significant Hungarian linguistic relics, and the collection of these is the *Váradi Regestrum*.<sup>3</sup>

Already in the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the major ecclesiastical centres most certainly possessed all the means which later enabled them to play a direct role in the administration of justice: an authentic seal with probative value and the knowledge required for the written administration of affairs. The development of their activities as places of authentication was therefore only dependent on the emergence of demand for such.

The appearance of place of authentication activities was thanks to the development of the judicial system in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the spread of written records, which was also partly linked to this. It was a characteristic element of this process when King Stephen II (1116-1131) discharged the palatine from his courtly – mainly economic – duties, and vested him with independent judicial jurisdiction. Within a century, the judicial seat of the palatine gained national jurisdiction.<sup>4</sup> Part of the process was that by the early 13<sup>th</sup> century the court duties, including judicial duties, were taken over from the palatine by the chief ispán (*curialis comes*) for whom judicial duties dominated, as reflected by the new name of the office: the judge royal (*iudex curiae regiae*) represented the king's personal presence in the judicial procedures of the court with a

3 For the text, see Solymosi and Szovák 2009. For the elaboration of the place names in it, see: K. Fábíán Ilona 1997

4 Petrovics 1994, p. 473; Solymosi 2002, pp. 521–522

jurisdiction extending to the whole country.<sup>5</sup> An institutionalised judicial organisation was established through the vice palatine, the deputy noble judge and the protonotaries functioning beside the chief justices. In addition to the above, more important judicial powers were exercised by officials with territorial jurisdiction (bans, the Voivode of Transylvania) and the treasurers primarily conducting economic affairs and also managing the supreme judicial seat of privileged settlements (towns).

The spread of written records was partly a spontaneous process that went hand in hand with the development of the economy, both in size and complexity, but was also accelerated by conscious decisions of the ruler. Perhaps the best known of these was the reform of the chancellery by King Béla III (1172–1196), who – around 1181 – ordered that all matters brought before him should be in writing. In so doing he made the royal chancellery one of the most significant scriptoriums in the country, also functioning for some time as a place of authentication, and in many respects a model of charter-issuing practices. King Béla IV (1235–1270) linked administration to written applications for the nobles, which is described by Rogerius (around 1205–1266) in his work preserving the memory of the Mongol invasion as the fourth reason for the animosity among the king and the Hungarians (i.e. the nobility).<sup>6</sup>

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5 For more on the Árpád-era history of the judge royals, see: Bertényi 1976, pp. 51–59

6 “They also complained very often that the king, contrary to the customary law of the land, and oppressing their will at his own pleasure, had decreed that the nobles, however distinguished their rank, should not bring their cases before his court, nor tell him their affairs by word of mouth, but should petition the chancellors, and wait for the conclusion of their cases. For this reason, many stayed so long at the court on the most insignificant of matters that they were forced to sell their horses and other belongings to cover the expenses and often had to leave without having their affairs settled. Because, as it was commonly said, the chancellors oppressed or elevated some people, as they pleased, since the king could only be talked to after discussing the matter with them first. So people generally and openly declared that *they* were the kings, and they had no other king.” Katona 1981, p. 115

## Places of authentication – launch of activities

The places of authentication began their activities in cathedrals and major collegiate chapters (bodies of canons living together under common rules) in the last third of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Their related written records could have been preceded by the preparation of memoranda on their own litigations and other matters for themselves. Later, the literacy of the members of chapters were used by private individuals as well, either voluntarily based on the trust placed in these bodies, or out of necessity dictated by the growing reliance on the written form in administration and procedural law. As the need to record various legal transactions in writing increased, the more prestigious monastic communities (convents) also became involved in the activities of places of authentication from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> Some of these were royal convents, others were privately founded Benedictine, Premonstratensian or Johannite convents. The spatial boundaries of their functioning, though varying through time, developed spontaneously, mainly through their clientele, and were limited to a specific small or large region. The chapter in Buda and Székesfehérvár and the Johannite convent in Székesfehérvár had national competence.

Clients' need for charters expanded and became general, leading to a slow but significant change above all in the functioning of the *scriptoriums* ("places for writing") of the chapters and convents. One obvious component of this was the gradual increase in the volume of written material, which, given the complex and highly organised process of issuing charters, also involved a number of other activities (such as obtaining and preparing the necessary materials, drafting the charter texts). We can only deduce the intensity of charter issuance at places of authentication from the surviving charters. The centuries of the Árpád era can by no means be considered the age of mass charter issuing. During this period, the

<sup>7</sup> For more on the charter issuances of Benedictine convents as places of authorisation, see: Solymosi 1996

practice of issuing charters at places of authentication was only in its infancy and undergoing an upswing. The collections of charters of the larger chapters (Győr, Veszprém, Nyitra, Fehérvár, Buda, Zágreb, Pécs), which survived from the Árpád era in various forms, contain 100 to 200 documents each, while that of the most significant convents (Ség, Somogy, Jászó, Zala, Fehérvár, Pécsvárad) have a few dozen charters only. The Esztergom chapter stands out among the chapters with 350 surviving charters, and among the convents the Hospitaller Convent of Esztergom which has 100 surviving charters. It must be emphasised, though, that the number of surviving charters can at most give an indication of size, and it is difficult to draw conclusions about the individual institutions because of the haphazard nature of the survival of charters. The convent in Lelesz is a good example where the number of surviving Árpád-era charters is less than twenty, but it has more than 14,000 documents from the period of the kings of mixed dynasties.

With the activity of places of authentication, the certification of issued documents and the recording of charter-issuing activity (by retaining copies for instance) appeared as new elements in comparison to records for private purposes. In the case of convents, a particularly important change was that functioning as a place of authentication made a significant dent in the spiritual and physical isolation of the monastic communities because of the inevitability of contact with secular people.

The 13<sup>th</sup> century saw the emergence of a new area of activity for places of authentication which would also grow significantly in volume in later years: participation in procedures on behalf of official bodies and the issuance of charters thereon. Based on general public trust, to regulate and make more reliable the work of the bailiffs (which was based on the oral tradition and therefore prone to abuse), in the renewal of the Golden Bull in 1231 King András II (1205–1235) ordered that “since many people in the country suffer harm because of false bailiffs, their summons or testimonies shall only be valid with the verification of the county bishop or chapter [...], and in minor cases the verification of neighbouring convents and monasteries shall be valid.”<sup>8</sup> From

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8 Lederer 1964, p. 77

then on, places of authentication became the supreme certifiers of various legal proceedings, and the presence of their commissioner was required to ensure legality and prevent abuse. The legal act itself (for instance, summoning, perambulation, registration of ownership) remained the duty of bailiffs – later the king's, palatine's etc. man – but their actions were only considered legal if a commissioner of a place of authorisation confirmed it as a witness.<sup>9</sup> The confirmation was contained in a charter issued by the place of authorisation.

## Stages of the activity of places of authentication

The places of authentication carried out their authentication duties essentially for two large client groups, and on that basis two main forms of their activity developed. One group constituted private clients who asked these authorities to handle their various legal matters (sale and purchases, mortgages, exchanges, arrangements of wills, commissioning of legal counsel), and thereby gained written, certified evidence, a charter on the completed legal action declared by them. Certainly, the clients most frequently made their declarations (*fassio*) in the church. The parties involved could appear before a place of authentication not only in person, but also through their authorised representatives, legal counsels (*procuratores*). For these representatives, separate commissioning letters were drawn up which could be valid for a single case, for a set period, or with general validity.

Another group using places of authentication included official bodies involved in legal life<sup>10</sup>, who – in relation to actual phases of any legal procedure – commissioned places of authentication by separate mandate letters

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9 For the analysis of the external activity of the place of authorisation carried out by the chapter of Pécs, see: Koszta 1998, pp. 105–116.

10 In practice, places of authentication could be called to perform a legal action by any official participant of legal life (king, palatine, judge royal, castle district, ban, etc.).



(*mandatum*) to carry out certain legal actions (perambulation, registration of ownership, inquisition, transcription of charters, etc.), after which the places of authentication prepared written reports (*relatio*). There may have been cases where the places of authentication carried out external procedures at the request of private individuals, but these cases always had a well-defined reason. In most cases, the illness or bedridden condition of the person making the avowal – usually a will – was the reason for calling a witness from a place of authentication. Another reason for calling a person from a place of authentication was if women wanted to make an avowal, because they were often afraid to set out on the journey to a place of authentication due to the dangers of travelling.

The selection of witnesses from places of authentication was most probably determined by various elements collectively. Since external authentication work involved having to spend days away from the community of the chapter or convent, and what is more in a secular environment, which caused serious problems for keeping discipline and liturgical obligations, especially for monks, they most probably tried to send more mature, reliable people to carry out authentication activities outside the place of authentication. Maturity was not only important for the person to resist the temptations of secular life more easily, but also because during the procedures, and the preparation of the documents, stable compositional and writing skills were in great need, and the commissioners had to be deeply familiar with the details of the legal procedure. Since the chapters and convents carried out authentication activities, mainly charter-issuing for a fee, their involvement in the work of a place of authentication, especially for poorer communities, had financial motivations as well.<sup>11</sup> In practice, of course, the quantity of work would have principally determined the scope of commissioners sent out from the places of

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11 Considering the conditions of travel and public safety in the Middle Ages, external authentication work was extremely tiring and not safe at all, so clergymen who were not necessarily in need of such income – because they had a profitable prebendaryship for instance – tried to pull themselves out of such commissions. In the chapters, such tasks were typically performed by canons, who were called “serving canons” by József Köblös. Köblös 1994, pp. 79–80

authentication. If the number of external procedures was too great for a place of authentication to confine the work to one of their members, the chapters or convents in question could also commission the priests of the parishes under their jurisdiction to carry out such duties.<sup>12</sup>

The operation of the places of authentication covered the entire territory of the country. As in the case of external proceedings, to prevent possible abuses more places of authentication were commissioned with the same procedure, so the scope of the work of places of authentication, in effect, overlapped with each other. The main principle in selecting a place of authentication was that it should be situated in the county of the particular legal case. However, this principle was often overruled if a place of authentication in the neighbouring county was closer.

## Charter-issuing at places of authentication

The drafting and issuance of the charter finalised the authentication process, both in internal and external cases. In the case of avowals and/or procedures accomplished outside the place of authentication, a memorandum was prepared. The draft charters and, eventually, the charters themselves were produced on the basis of these memoranda. When drafting the charters, certain existing formulae were used, collected in separate books, formularies, or taken from documents issued earlier. Several “charter formulae” survived that were written only to provide model texts for the different types of legal cases. The completed charter was read through and if necessary corrected by the person in charge, usually the *lector* or his deputy, the *sublector*<sup>13</sup>.

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12 When appointing parish priests, it was not necessary for the given parish church to be under the jurisdiction of the place of authentication. In the practice of the chapter of Pécs, for instance, the main criterion was that the parish church should be located near the estate involved in the case. Koszta 1998, p. 109

13 From the fifteenth century, the fact that the checking was carried out was indicated

The last but perhaps most substantial phase of the charter-issuing process was the authentication itself. The early method was to prepare a chirography (*chirographum*) when the content of the charter was written down twice, one below the other, separated by the first letters of the alphabet, and afterwards the document was cut into two through these separating letters. One part of the charter was given to the entity receiving the charter, while the other copy (*par*) remained at the place of authentication. The most important authenticating instrument was the seal kept by the *custos* or his deputy, the *subcustos*. The seal was most frequently affixed to the charters as a pendant or impressed thereon. Places of authentication used one-sided seals. In some places two different seals were used simultaneously, the major one (*sigillum maius*) used for issuing privilege letters and the smaller one (*sigillum memoriale*) used on any other charters. The seal usually portrayed the patron saint and/or emblem of the given chapter or convent. In addition to the seal of the given place of authentication, on several cases the seal of the head of the community, its abbot or provost, was also placed on the charter.

The applicant had to pay for the issuance and the sealing of the charter.<sup>14</sup> The fee, primarily, depended on the character and type of the charter itself, that is, how richly it was decorated and how elaborately it was composed. From the fee paid for issuing the charter, the lector and the notary (*notarius*) usually got a separate sum. The places of authentication preserved the texts of the charters issued in the form of copies or by copying them into registers, so later they were able to produce transcripts about the original documents. In the beginning, these copies, together with the treasures of the church, were usually stored in the sacristy. Later, due to the growing number of documents and their more frequent use, they were placed in separate rooms (e. g. in the scriptorium).

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increasingly frequently on the back of the charters as well. The language of the charters was Latin until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Apart from sporadic vulgar expressions, however, from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, certain parts (e. g. attestations) were put into the charters in Hungarian. However, from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the entire *context* of the charters drafted by the parties could be in Hungarian. Section 6 of Article VI of 1840 instituted the compulsory usage of Hungarian in issuing charters, even though the places of authentication were barely functioning by that time.

14 For the issuance fee of charters, see Kumorovitz 1929.

## Form and content of charters

Charters were regulated not only in their appearance, their text was also subject to a number of constraints. Some of these formulaic parts, which became permanent and changed little, are still used on official documents today. The text of the charters usually comprised three main parts. The most important and indispensable element of the introductory part (*protocollum*) was the self-designation (*intitulatio*) of the issuer of the charter. For place of authentication bodies, this usually comprised the first person plural pronoun “We...” (“Nos...”), the designation and the name of the institution (chapter/convent). Sometimes, in addition to the community of the place of authentication, its head was also named. It was also mandatory to name the receiver of the charter (*inscriptio, adresse*). Furthermore, the introductory part often contained some sort of greeting (*salutatio*) addressed to the reader of the charter. For instance, “...salute the Lord”.

The most extensive part of the charter text explaining the essential message was the *contextus*, which, if they wished to elevate the solemnity of the charter, contained general wisdoms, ethical messages, religious lessons or a formulaic preamble stating the reason for the issuance of the charter (*arenga*). However, in the general practice of places of authentication, this is either completely missing, or only appears in some simpler wording. This is followed by the promulgation (*promulgatio*) addressing everyone, leading into the reasoning for the provision set out in the charter or the narration of the case so far, or for proceedings at a place of authentication, the given case or commissioning (*narratio*). The most important content element of the charters was the provisioning part (*dispositio*) recording the legal content of the fact(s). This part of the charters issued by the places of authentication records the occurrence of a private transaction (such as a sale and purchase, exchange) and its various conditions, and, in the case of an official commissioning, the account and the outcome of the procedure or its ineffectiveness. Charters often set out punishments (*santio*) to ensure compliance with the provision set out in their text, and respect for the legal

fact(s).<sup>15</sup> The *contextus* was concluded with a textual description of how the charter was validated.

The concluding parts of the charter (*eschatocollum*) contained the date of issue, the list of the witnesses or the officials of the place of authentication at the time of the issue, and possibly an optional prayer (*apprecatio*).

It is important to bear in mind that the form and the content of each charter was primarily determined by the purpose for which it was issued. In addition to the more ornate and richly worded privileges affixed with a pendant seal and issued to clients by a place of authentication, they also issued a large number of open or closed charters confirmed by an impressed seal containing only the most important elements of the formula, whose significance was only temporary as their text was transcribed, word by word or only contextually, to subsequent charters issued in the course of the case.

In the history of the places of authentication, the Árpád era was the period they were established and their operational framework evolved. It was during this period that ecclesiastical bodies found their role in the administration of justice through their written records and authenticating seals. Their popularity was demonstrated by their steadily growing numbers, and after the larger church institutions, more and more smaller convents started to perform authentication duties. However, these sometimes fell under the influence of a landlord or advowee, therefore King Lajos I (1342–1382) reviewed the scope of ecclesiastical institutions functioning as places of authentication in his Act of 1351, and deprived unreliable bodies of their right to use a seal. From then on, however, places of authentication constituted solid pillars of the Hungarian legal system until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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15 For more on the sanctioning clauses in the charters of the Pécsvárad convent as a place of authentication, see Kőfalvi 2000.

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Saint Stephen relic holder with relic, Domkapitel, Aachen

LÁSZLÓ LUKÁCS

## THE CULT OF KING ST. STEPHEN IN THE HUNGARIAN FOLK TRADITION

During his life and in the decades following his death, our state-founding and church-organising king was not popular among the masses who still clung to paganism, the ancient Hungarian faith. Barely any folk tales were created of him in his life or directly thereafter. However, stemming from ecclesiastical customs and the legends about him, the veneration of our king, canonised in 1083, was very strong for a thousand years.<sup>1</sup> The customs associated with the personality of the state-founding king, his deeds, laws and the Hungarian crown were carefully cultivated by later kings and the nobility as well.<sup>2</sup>

Bálint Hóman repeatedly touches on the development of the cult of St. Stephen: “The roots of the national cult of St. Stephen date back to the time of his canonisation when in the eye of a generation that had lived through every atrocity and torment for half a century, internal and external wars, tyrannical rages and pagan riots, the character of King Stephen had been cleansed of all human weaknesses, only his virtues remained intact, and in light of these, the mighty figure of St. Stephen rose ever higher.”<sup>3</sup>

It was the official, national, ecclesiastical veneration of St. Stephen that shaped and nurtured the folk traditions associated with him. His name, deeds,

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1 Karsai 1938, pp. 156–256; Kósa 1980, p. 17; Török 1988a; 1988b, pp. 33–43; Török (ed.) 1988; Radics 1988; Sulyok 1989, pp. 41–47; Magyar 1996, p. 2000.

2 Klaniczay 1981, p. 276; 1986, p. 68; Kardos 1989, pp. 21–25

3 Hóman 1938, p. 4



battles with internal and external enemies and with paganism are not only recorded in our medieval legends, chronicles and historical songs, but also in our historical folk tales.

The following folk tale, collected at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Lajos Kálmán in Szőreg (Torontál county) illustrates the royal devotion of Stephen as a child: “When St. Stephen was a boy, he used to play a game at the seaside: he’d build a castle from pebbles. Then the king came along with his servants, and when they did not greet him, he became furious: ‘I am the lord of my castle, why did they not greet me?!’ ‘How stupid!’, he said. ‘They pass me by and don’t utter a word.’ ‘What?’, asked the king, ‘What did you say?’ ‘I’m just saying, after all I am a king in my own castle!’ God may help you! And finally he became one.”<sup>4</sup>

A group of the historic folk tales connected to King Stephen depict his fight with the pagans. Numerous elements of these tales originated from the Saint László and Matthias collection of legends, but were only later connected to St. Stephen.

In 2002, in Hari (Alsó-Fehér county) József Magyar recited the creation of the Torda Rift, the horseshoe print of King St. Stephen’s horse in this manner: “As I heard the tale, the Tatars caught up with the king, with St. Stephen, not Saint László, with St. Stephen. And I saw it at the Torda Rift, his horseshoe was precisely imprinted in the stone. The horse galloped through here, and the rock split in two, then the Tatars fell behind, and plunged into the hole, and St. Stephen survived. It was by God’s grace. Up there on the edge of the rift, the place is marked with a horseshoe imprint. You can see it properly, there is a circle like a big plate.”<sup>5</sup>

King Stephen came across some shepherds offering a pagan sacrifice on the border of Hangony (Gömör and Kishont counties). Their shaman was doubting Christ’s miraculous power, one of the shepherds prompted him to make water flow from the stone. Upon King Stephen’s strong prayer, water began to sprout from the rock split in the shape of a cross. The spring and well thus created is still called King Stephen’s well by the people in the Hangony area.<sup>6</sup>

4 Kálmány 1891, Vol. III, p. 302

5 Magyar 2008, p. 148

6 Balogh 2007, pp. 47–53

According to the tradition of the people of Torda (today: Turda, Romania), Saint László pursued by the Cumans, scattered gold coins to get away. The print of his horse's octagonal horseshoe is still preserved in a rock called "Patkoskő" [Horseshoe Rock] at the Torda Rift.<sup>7</sup> We find the same legendary elements in the following folk tale of Stephen, which explains the building of the Gisela Chapel in Veszprém: "When the pagans charged against Veszprém, only Queen Gisela was at home. Her husband, King St. Stephen was out in the country gathering an army. When he heard of the malady, he strode home immediately without an army. Of course, it was no longer possible to enter the castle from the flat side of the town because the enemy had blocked all the roads. So St. Stephen went around towards the high cliffs. He knew his wife usually took a steep hill to bring water for lunch up from the valley. But he didn't even have time to get off his horse, as the pagans noticed him and charged at him. His wife was praying for him in the big church. By the time she ran out upon hearing the commotion, St. Stephen had already jumped onto the cliff. As the frightened queen, in her haste, had brought a shiny crucifix with her, she began to wave it to show her husband which way to turn his horse. This way he was lucky to find the precipitous walking path, but the pagans would have caught up with him, had he not cast off his cloak, his sword, his pouch and his golden necklace. While the pagans were quarrelling over the precious items, and trying to free his golden horseshoe from the rocks, St. Stephen reached his wife at the top, unharmed. At the news of this, the pagans got so scared that they ran away of their own accord. On that very day, St. Stephen had a chapel built at the site where Gisela was waving the cross. The small chapel and the imprint, where his pursuers tried to free the horseshoe from, are still there today."<sup>8</sup>

After the conquest, the Hungarian ruling tribe occupied the Bakony region, a protected royal forest estate until the 14<sup>th</sup> century, where the names Szentkirályszabadja, Királyszentistván, Bakonyszentkirály all refer to our great king ["szent király" - Saint King, "Szent István" - Saint Stephen].<sup>9</sup> From

7 Cf. 1992, pp. 188–190

8 Sebestyén 1906, p. 483

9 Vajkai 1959, pp. 12–13

the diary of Noble János Székely for the years 1808-1866, joint landlord in Csögle village (Vas county): “You can find the village of “Szent Gál” here, that was granted hunting rights by our first King Saint Stephen. There is also a village here called “Szent István” [St. Stephen], where our King St. Stephen used to live. Nearby is Szent Király Szabadja, which was also our King St. Stephen’s manor. Szent Gál served him with game and Szent Király Szabadja with food.”<sup>10</sup> The royal hunters of Szentgál paid their taxes in game, which they brought up to the royal court for Christmas. Folk tradition considered the Bakony a royal hunting ground, where the people of Szentgál first had to offer royal swineherds, then royal hunters. The name *Szentkirályszéke* preserves one of King St. Stephen’s favourite hunting and resting places, where he would take a rest on his way from Fehérvár to Felsőörs. *Királykút* above Lovas also commemorates the great king.

According to local tradition, two geographical names preserve the memory of the battle of 997 between Stephen and the rebel Koppány at the borders of Királyszentistván and Sóly in the field in the Séd valley surrounded by hills. It is the name of a group of rocks on the border of Királyszentistván: *Márton vára* [Martin’s fortress] and *Vencel-lik* [Wencelas’ Hole]. Before the battle, Prince István asked Saint Martin for help. We know that his military flags were also decorated with the image of Saint Martin. Vencellin, the German knight, was the commander of the prince’s bodyguard and the ancestor of the Ják clan.

Travelling minstrels [*regősök* in Hungarian], who kept the pagan tradition alive, and sang of the origins, the battles and the leaders of the Hungarians, were placed under state supervision by King Stephen. In every county, they were moved to one village, which was supervised by the ispán. Their treasured knowledge was no longer up-to-date, their descendants went to serve the new times, Christianity and the Árpád dynasty. So only fragments of our heroic songs and historic tales survived, mostly on the edges of the Hungarian-speaking area or on archaic “enclaves”.<sup>11</sup> Such fragments survived as *regölés* in

10 Hudi 2004, p. 139

11 Györfy 1977, pp. 362–363

Western Transdanubia, and *hejgetés* in Szeklerland (today: Romania) [*regölés* and *hejgetés* are folk traditions of singing and reciting Christmas folk songs]. On the day of the martyr St. Stephen, our minstrels went from house to house, most often presenting themselves as servants of St. Stephen, and with their songs they brought prosperity and fertility to the families. In Dozmat (Vas county), the minstrel songs did not feature the protomartyr, but the Saint King:

Where a wide, ornate road appears,  
There rise stars of *Pisces* in the sky.  
Hey, I hide in song, I hide in song!

It is covered in tiny sedges,  
And frequented by the *Miraculous Deer*.  
Hey, I hide in song, I hide in song!

»Though, if you went out, oh sire, *King St. Stephen*,  
To hunt for game and bird,  
And found no game, no bird,  
Only caught sight of the *Miraculous Deer*.  
Hey, I hide in song, I hide in song!

»Do not rush, do not rush, oh sire, *King St. Stephen*,  
To my death.  
I'm no game to shoot down,  
But a messenger from the heavenly Father,  
Who cometh to you.  
Hey, I hide in song, I hide in song!

»*The bright rising sun* touches my forehead,  
The bright, wondrous moon on my side,  
On my right kidney are *stars of the sky*.  
Hey, I hide in song, I hide in song!

I have antlers, with a thousand branches,  
And the tips of my antlers like *myriad torches*,  
Light up without a spark, go out without a blow.  
Hey, I hide in song, I hide in song!<sup>12</sup>

István Zsírai (1889), born in Dozmat, was a farmer and a village judge who served with Szekler soldiers in the First World War. From local tradition he knew that a group of the pagan Hungarians from Olad in Vas county migrated back to their “motherland”, to the embrace of the Transylvanian mountains, to avoid Christianisation. They are the ancestors of the Szeklers. He noticed the kinship between his fellow Szekler soldiers and the Hungarians of Dozmat through the popular language, folk customs (*regölés*), and the expectation of the returning hero. The intelligent peasant, who had completed six years of elementary school, drew a parallel between the western and the eastern “guards” (people from the Őrség [a western region of Hungary today] and the Széklers), and discovered the relationship between them due to their common origin. “Dozmat was not always such a small village. In old times, this used to be the centre of the region, because King Stephen had earlier had a church built here for ten villages. Olad, Sé, Ondód, Torony and Bucsú also belonged here, and some other villages, that have since perished. In truth, Olad would have been the centre, many say, because it is next to Szombathely, but King Stephen was a Christian man, and did not like pagans, and Olad was a pagan centre. On the bank of a stream on Hosszúrét stood a huge, ancient oak tree. The elderly say its roots reach down to the centre of the Earth, and its branches up to heaven. Here, under this tree, our ancestors sacrificed white horses because the people of Olad were famous horse-breeders. Even our father Árpád took over the country with their horses. When the Hungarians had to convert to Christianity, many in the ten villages packed their belongings, rose up and set off on a journey back to their motherland. The runaways were mostly young people. They crossed over to a faraway land, over the Danube

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12 Sebestyén 1902, pp. 42–43

and the Tisza to reach the Transylvanian mountains. They settled down, and have lived there ever since. I know all this because I was with them on the Russian front during the war. They talked like us, even their minstrel singing was the same as those of the lads in Dozmat. They are awaiting Prince Csaba, like we are waiting for Rudolf. The rocks are still there on the bank of the stream. No longer are white horses sacrificed under the tree. But the souls of our ancestors have remained here like images of fairies. They moved into the “Malomfej”, played on the Hosszúrét, and bathed at the rock. The village people used to bathe here in the summer heat, and the children played here all summer long.”<sup>13</sup>

The folk tale from Ságújfalu in Palócföld, depicts King Stephen as a man with magical powers, a shaman, i.e. a ‘táltos’ in Hungarian: “King St. Stephen was a shaman king. He was chased after all the time. He was still in Ágasvár when the bells started to toll, and when they stopped he was already at Szentkút (at Verebély) [today a sacred site at Mátraverebély-Szentkút], and the four hooves of his horse are still imprinted there in the natural stone. It is called King Stephen’s jump.”<sup>14</sup>

In the historical tale from Regöly in Tolna county, elements of the Matthias collection of legends are associated with the figure of King Stephen. One such element is the carriage driver requesting entrance to the besieged castle with an ironless wheel. The folk tale from Regöly, which describes the defeat of Koppány who rose up against Stephen, is also the tale explaining the name of the village of Oroszló in Baranya county: “This is a tale about King Stephen and Prince Kupa, and about the fortress of Regöly, which had an iron gate in front of the present-day church, and a deep ditch filled with water in front of it. From Majsza and Koppány, the fortress was lined with ramparts recessing inwards to the fortress, where the guards could hide unharmed, no men could be seen from these recesses. Prince Kupa and his soldiers defended the fortress, and Stephen occupied Szigetdomb with his soldiers. Then Stephen, dressed as a beggar, requested entrance to the fortress with a rim-less wheel to have iron

13 Landgraf 1998, p. 67

14 Kálmány 1891, Vol III, p. 303

fitted to it. At the inn, he had three eggs, and left a paper on the plate saying that Stephen had been there. Then they stormed the fort, first firing some low projectile cannons from Szigetdomb, then shooting at the aforementioned gate, and finally storming in. Prince Kupa fled on his speeding horse, which understood the human voice. Around where Oroszló is today, Stephen told the horse that he did not want to hurt him, only his owner. And then he said to Kupa's horse: Ó, rossz ló! [Oh, bad horse!] – Since then the village where Stephen cut down Prince Kupa is called "Oroszló".<sup>15</sup>

The people of the village of Bény in Esztergom county [today: Slovakia], known for its Romanesque church, also believe that King St. Stephen captured the rampart fort of Bény from the pagans by means of a trick. This is how my data source, Ferenc Csókás, related to me the historic tale of Bény in 1989: "It happened before the coronation of King St. Stephen that a group of pagan Hungarians nested themselves in the rampart fort of Bény. Since Bény lies not too far north of Esztergom, near the Garam river, Stephen was greatly disturbed by the fact that pagans were camping near him. He ordered a large number of wagons to be loaded with rocks. He said not to grease the axles of the wagons. And on each side of the wagons, put as many straw men dressed as soldiers as would fit in a row. Each wagon had to be drawn by two pairs of oxen. There was only one human on each wagon to drive the oxen with a large whip. When they were ready, he set them off towards Bény. They were approaching on the old Roman road at the border of Kéménd, then they turned towards Bény under Várhegy. The wagons loaded with heavy cargo were screeching, squeaking and rattling. The drivers were fiercely cracking the whips, calling on and nagging the animals with loud cries. The guards on the Cénepart in Bény heard them, looked in that direction, and were surprised to see the army approaching from Várhegy. They quickly retreated to the rampart fort, reported to their commander, that Stephen was coming towards them with a large army, and would soon reach the Cénepart, and through it the southern entrance not far away. Inside the fort, huge alarm broke out among the pagan Hungarians.

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15 Hegedüs 1987, p. 6

The commander issued the order to flee quickly through the main western entrance. By the time the wagons reached the outer rampart, the scared pagans were nowhere to be found, they were running away. St. Stephen immediately marched into the rampart fort at the head of a small group and easily occupied the central main square.”

Another group of historic folk tales associated with King Stephen depict a deeply religious ruler who distributes alms, forgives even his assassins, builds churches, is eager to visit pilgrimage sites, and who deservedly earned his place among the saints with his life.

In Fejér county, the establishment of the popular pilgrimage site in Bodajk is attributed to King Stephen and Prince Imre and their zealous acts there. In Székesfehérvár-Felsőváros, it is often mentioned that King Stephen travelled from Fehérvár to Bodajk on a raft, because in his time, everything between Fehérvár and Bodajk was still marshland and water. In Bodajk, my data source Mária Takács, born in 1931, told me the story with these words:

“The older people always said that King Stephen and Prince Imre often came to Bodajk together. In their time they prayed here, and that is why the Bodajk pilgrimage site is so famous. Some people said they came from Fehérvár by boat, because at one time there was water here. I heard from the elderly that once there was water here. I also heard that some people came on foot.”

The origin tale of the village of Moha near Székesfehérvár also preserves the memory of King St. Stephen’s pilgrimage to Bodajk on waterways. It was collected by József Gelencsér in 1992 from József Szűcs, a resident of Moha, born in 1914, who heard the following from his father: “The easiest way for the king and his entourage to get from the then capital Fehérvár to the holy place of Bodajk was by boat. On one occasion they crossed the waterland this way, on the Gaja river, which had a lot more water then. Suddenly, however, a giant beluga weighing some 2-300 kg disrupted their peaceful journey, capsizing the king’s boat. The monarch fell into the water, fainted, but was saved from drowning by one of his knights who dragged him out onto a nearby mound rising out of the marshy landscape. When the king regained consciousness, he woke up and said to his soldier: ‘My son, you saved my life, so I give you this land. And build a church on top of this mound.’ This is how the church in



Moha was founded, which is actually situated slightly higher, on a hill. Then the village was established around it, and since the soldier was called Mohai, the village was named after him.”<sup>16</sup>

There is a tradition in and around Bodajk that there are no frogs in the lake in Bodajk, because their croaking disturbed King Stephen in his prayers, so he cursed them.<sup>17</sup> A beautiful version of the folk tale was collected by János Udvardy in Csákberény, near Bodajk, before the First World War: “When Stephen was king, he went to Bodajk to pray in the holy church. Then there were frogs in the lake, busily squeaking (croaking). And since the church was close, the croaking could be heard in there too. He sent his servant or valet, or whoever was loitering around, to tell the frogs to be quiet. The servant went out, then informed the frogs that King Stephen sent word to be quiet. The servant went back, but the frogs did not stop croaking. He sent his valet out for the second time to order the frogs to shut up, because King Stephen is saying his prayers inside. The servant did the same, but the frogs kept on croaking. Now King Stephen commanded him to go out, and tell them to shut up. Get out of there! The servant went out to the lake for the third time, and said ‘King Stephen says you’d better shut up now! Get out of there forever!’ Upon this, all the frogs disappeared. I was over there at the fair last Sunday because I had to buy a pair of boots for Ferus, I looked, but I could not see any frogs in that lake. They have all disappeared.”<sup>18</sup>

The formation of the human-shaped stones in the sand quarry in Fehérvárcsurgó is explained by the fact that God turned the Tatar enemy – who outnumbered the Hungarians – into stone at the plea of King Stephen. This is an element taken over from the Saint László collection of legends. In the *Érdy Codex* written in the first third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century you can read about King László turning the fleeing Tatars into stone by the power of strong prayer. I collected a historic tale of a similar act by King Stephen in Bodajk, Fejér county, told by Mrs Barabás Pálné born in 1909: “Well, my life was definitely not easy

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16 Gelencsér 1992, p. 8

17 Szendrey 1925, p. 49

18 Udvardy 1912, p. 199

because my sister and I would carry white sand, that's how we provided for food. My sister and I would both carry the white sand from Fehérvárcsurgó. We were orphans. We took the sand to Balinka where we traded it for food. The Germans used it for whitewashing. So as a child I was very fond of it, and I was interested in everything. I saw there stones in the shape of men and so I asked the old people why they were there? Once an old man told me: 'You know, at the time of King Stephen, there was so much fighting here, and the Tatars could count more men. Then King Stephen bowed down, and asked the good Lord to turn them into stone.' I always remembered it when I was a child and whenever I filled my sack, King Stephen, the founder of the country, turned the Tatars into stone."

The donation letter of King St. Stephen issued in Soly in 1009 for the diocese of Veszprém already mentions Úrhida near Fehérvár. According to the folk tale tradition, the Hungarian king visited this place too. Anna Borbála Józsa, who was born in Szabadbattyán in 1945, recited a tale she heard from her ancestors from Úrhida: "They found a stick with a shrike-head on it, and this shrike-head also decorated a stamp. It is placed in the National Museum. [A stick end or whip handle with a bird head carved in bone dated to the early 10<sup>th</sup> century and found in the cemetery from the conquest period in Szabadbattyán can be seen in the permanent archaeological exhibition of the King St. Stephen Museum in Székesfehérvár: Hatházy n.d., no page number. Photo disclosed by: Dienes 1972, image 71]. When King Stephen went to Veszprém by boat, he lost it here somewhere in the rushes and reed, where boats used to travel along the Sárvíz and the Séd streams. He lost the stick here, somewhere around Úhida, because they usually stopped in Úrhida on the way from Fehérvár to Veszprém.

The noblemen of Csallóköznység (Bratislava county) derive their privileges from our King Saint Stephen. The origin of the privilege letter was cleared by Arnold Ipolyi. "Near Várkony lies *Nyék*, a tiny village and famous only for the old donation of its noble owners which they received from Stephen III in 1165. The story of this document is even more interesting. Several of the princes receiving it later thought it was St. Stephen's document, and had it transcribed as such, due to the name and particularly because Stephen III's father, Géza,

was mentioned in it. His landowners boasted about it the same way St. Stephen's noblemen did up until more recent times, when a more accurate investigation cleared up the misunderstanding. It was also an interesting scene when in the last century [18<sup>th</sup>] the document was shown as evidence at a Pozsony (today: Bratislava, Slovakia) tribunal by its owner, a squire at the time, and the entire tribunal stood up to pay their deepest respect for the relic, which they considered a document of our holy king, ceremoniously warning the modest noblemen that this document is such a treasure regarding his family ancestry that no renowned family in Hungary can boast to possess one."<sup>19</sup>

The majority of the Hungarian population in the village of Fajsz (Bács-Kiskun county), bearing the name of Prince Árpád's grandson, survived the Ottoman era, so it has existed continuously in the Kalocsa region.<sup>20</sup> Its nobility is also derived from King St. Stephen. In the 1960s, Mihály Petróczi Sr. recounted in the nearby Foktő how the people of Fajsz earned their nobility from the king: "The nobility of Fajsz comes from when King St. Stephen was captured by his enemies, whether they were German or pagan no-one knows, but they wanted to take him out of the country on the Danube. The people of Fajsz learnt about this, and did not want to let the king be taken. They headed for the forest. With their axes they cut down countless stolons, so many that when they weaved them together they blocked the waterway. Not even the boats could get through. Then with their "bodon" boats [special fishing boats carved from one piece of wood] they surrounded the boat and freed King Stephen, who rewarded the people of Fajsz by eliminating their debts towards anyone as long as they lived in Fajsz. (But things were not always the way he ordered them.) And the people of Fajsz even named their church after him. That is why they have a fair on King Stephen's day."<sup>21</sup>

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Lajos Kálmán recorded a folk tale about the Holy Right in Deszk, which was created independently of the influence of the church: "When King Stephen was travelling to Babylon with his mother, she

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19 Ipolyi 1993, p. 61

20 Bárh 2005, p. 574

21 Kuczy 1980, p. 77

said to him: “Not even God could pull it (the Tower of Babylon) down’. Saint Stephen became so angry that he slapped his mother, and for that he cut off his own hand, which is still preserved today.”<sup>22</sup>

The cult of King St. Stephen spread to the whole Carpathian Basin, where his veneration is still alive in Hungarian folklore, as attested to by the folk tales presented herein.



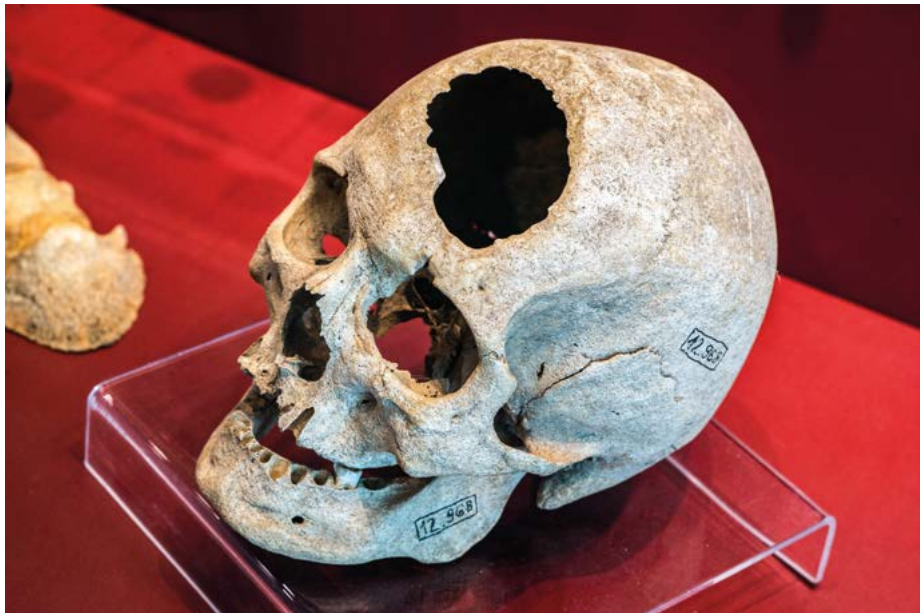
Photograph of the corridor of the exhibition  
“Kings and Saints - The Age of the Árpád Dynasty”

22 Kálmány 1891, p. 302

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Trepanned skull of a conquest-era warrior,  
Hungarian Natural History Museum, Budapest

ENDRE NEPARÁCKI

# CURRENT AND EXPECTED RESULTS OF GENETIC RESEARCH ON THE ÁRPÁD DYNASTY

## Introduction

Two undoubtedly outstanding figures of early Hungarian history are Álmos and his son, Prince Árpád, whose name is associated with the conquest of the Carpathian Basin and the establishment of Hungarian central power. However, thanks to their successful policies, they not only laid the foundations of the later Christian Kingdom of Hungary, but their names also mark the beginning of the first Hungarian royal dynasty, the Árpád dynasty (or, as Simon Kézai called it, the Turul clan), which ruled for nearly 300 years. Their role was therefore of paramount importance in shaping the Hungarian identity that can already be found in written medieval Hungarian sources. They appear in Anonymus' *Gesta Hungarorum*: "The Hungarian people, terrifying in their brave military ventures, as we intimated above, are descended from the Scythians, referred to as *Dentü-Mogyer* in their own language. Their land was so full of the multitude of peoples born there that it could neither feed them nor accommodate them, as we already noted. Thus the seven princes, who to this day are called *hétmagyar* [the Seven Hungarians], no longer tolerating the inadequate size of the land, took counsel to leave their native country and occupy territory which they could populate, and to this end they did not shy away from armed warfare. Then they chose the land of Pannonia, which was said to belong to King Attila, the descendant of Prince Álmos, the father of Árpád [emphasis added by the



author]. The seven princes then came to a joint and final decision that they could only complete the journey they had begun by choosing for themselves a prince and a commander. Thus by the free will and common consent of the seven men, they chose Álmos, son of Ügyek, and the descendants of his clan, as prince and ruler for themselves and for the sons of their sons, down to the last generation. This is because the son of Ügyek, Prince Álmos, and his descendants proved to be of nobler birth and more fit for war. The seven princes were all of noble birth, warlike and steadfast. Then they unanimously said to Prince Álmos: “From this day on, we elect you our prince and commander. Wherever destiny leads you, we will follow.” Then the men confirmed their oath to Prince Álmos: they poured their blood into a vessel, as was the custom of the pagans. Though they were pagans, they kept their oath of allegiance until their death, as follows:” (Translated into Hungarian by László Veszprémy)<sup>1</sup> and also in the chronicle tradition: “Having thus presented the origin of the Huns, their fortunate and unfortunate battles, and the number of times they changed their land, let us now see when they returned again to Pannonia; who were the captains of those who returned, and how many were their armed men. [...] Now, of these captains, Árpád of the Turul clan, son of Álmos, grandson of Előd, great-grandson of Ügyek, was richer than the rest, and his army was stronger. So this Árpád, with his army, was the first to penetrate the Ruthenian mountains, and the first to make camp by the Ung river, for his clan – compared to the other tribes of Scythia – enjoys the privilege of leading the army, and of being the last to retreat. After crossing the Danube and arriving in Pannonia, Árpád himself pitched his tents on the site where the city of Fehérvár was to be built. This place became the first lodging of the leader Árpád.” (Translated into Hungarian by János Bollók).<sup>2</sup>

Another important and recurring element in both sets of sources is the emphasis on the connection with the Huns. On the one hand, this implies the kinship of the Huns and the Hungarians in two separate threads of history, and on the other hand, it includes the origin of the Árpád dynasty, which, as we read

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1 Veszprémy and Bollók 2004, p. 13.

2 Veszprémy and Bollók 2004, pp. 103–104

in several places in Master P's work, was traced back to Attila, the Great King of the Huns. However, source-critical studies of the above excerpts and of the source works themselves have revealed a number of uncertainties (e.g. as regards the identity of the author(s), possible sources, particularities of the genre, date of writing and reason for writing<sup>3</sup>). Consequently, the authenticity and assessment of this information are not uniform and are still the subject of theoretical debate.<sup>4</sup> The opinions differ strongly as some schools completely rejected the possibility of a Hun connection and regarded it as a motif borrowed from Western sources,<sup>5</sup> while others accepted it as authentic.<sup>6</sup> In addition, some stances regarded parts or certain forms of the information as authentic.<sup>7</sup> There is no doubt that the interpretation of these sources presents many pitfalls and problems, and that an analysis of written data only is unlikely to lead to any meaningful progress. However, the question of whether there may be a kinship (biological) link between the two populations, and whether the royal dynasty may have had ancestors in the Hun population (or more narrowly among the Huns), based on the sources and the historiographical analysis, opens up the possibility of interdisciplinary studies. This set of problems also provides working hypotheses that can be investigated using methods of other disciplines, including archaeogenetics.

Thanks to dynamic technological developments as well, the study of early Hungarian history<sup>8</sup> and the origins of prominent families<sup>9</sup> has in the last decade been joined by the discipline of archaeogenetics, which focuses on the study of human DNA. In humans, there are three types of inheritance: offspring inherit their body chromosomes from their parents in roughly equal proportions (autosomal inheritance), children inherit mitochondrial DNA exclusively from their mothers (maternal inheritance), and sons inherit

3 Szabados 2020

4 B. Szabó and Sudár 2021

5 Hunfalvy 1876, pp. 299–303; Kristó 1983; Györffy 1993, p. 126

6 Szabados 2014; 2015

7 B. Szabó and Sudár 2021; Veszprémy 2013

8 Csáky et al. 2020; Csősz et al. 2016; Maár et al. 2021; Neparácski et al. 2017; 2018; 2019; Tömöry et al. 2007

9 Dissing et al. 2007; Keyser et al. 2020; Malmström et al. 2012; Nagy et al. 2020; Olasz et al. 2019; Wang et al. 2021

their Y-chromosomes almost unchanged from their fathers (Y-chromosomal inheritance). Research consists of extracting hereditary information directly from human bone remains under special laboratory conditions. So alongside archaeology and anthropology, archaeogenetics supports an understanding of the past by providing a constantly expanding and direct (primary) database. This is particularly important for understanding early Hungarian history (or Hungarian prehistory), since the number of written sources on the period is extremely low and, as indicated above, their interpretation is often problematic.

During the reign of the Árpád dynasty kings, only men were allowed to rule in the Kingdom of Hungary, and in most cases the throne was inherited by male members of the dynasty according to the custom, i.e. the determination of the Y-chromosomal genetic group (Y-chromosome haplogroup; abbreviated as Y-chr.hg) and its phylogenetic origin are excellent tools for investigating the dynasty's origin.

Székesfehérvár has a special role in the context of the dynasty, as it was traditionally the site of the coronation ceremonies<sup>10</sup> and the burial place of many Hungarian kings. The provostry of the Virgin Mary was founded and built by Stephen I (Saint Stephen) (1000/1001-1038), and was rebuilt and extended several times in later centuries.<sup>11</sup> His son, Prince (Saint) Imre, was the first to be laid to rest in the church, and later Stephen, the king who founded the Hungarian state, was also buried there. According to historical records, seven other kings of the Árpád dynasty (Kálmán, Béla II, Géza II, László II, Stephen IV, Béla III, László III) and one other prince of the Árpád dynasty (Álmos) were buried in the basilica.<sup>12</sup>

During the Turkish occupation, however, the condition of the basilica, one of the most important sacred centres of our country, deteriorated, and by the 19<sup>th</sup> century was largely destroyed and completely buried.

The church and the graves came to the attention of the public again when, in 1848, royal burial spots containing crowns and gold jewellery were discovered

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10 Bartionek 1987.

11 Búzás 2019; Szabó 2010; 2018

12 Engel 1987

in the courtyard of the Bishop's Palace of Székesfehérvár, in the area of the former Basilica of Our Lady of the Assumption, during the construction of a well house. The remains recovered from the graves were transported to Pest after the excavation. The skeletons were identified as King Béla III and his wife, Queen Anne of Antioch, based on historical, archaeological and anthropological research.<sup>13</sup> During the following century and a half, further excavations were carried out (1848, 1862, 1874, 1936-37, 1967-2002), which resulted in the discovery of more than 900 skeletal remains of individuals.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, the adversities of past centuries and the difficulties encountered during excavations have led to the mixing up of many of the bones, often preventing their separation even at the level of the individuals. After the excavation and processing of the finds, to avoid further damage and confusion, most of the anthropological material (more than 600 skulls and almost as many skeletal remains, representing the remains of more than 900 individuals) was deposited in the ossuary in Székesfehérvár, established on the site of the former basilica. The skeletons of a few individuals, including those of Béla III and Queen Anne, were deposited in the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption in Buda.<sup>15</sup> Most of the archaeogenetic research carried out so far has been based on the anthropological finds unearthed here.

## Results

The archaeogenetic study of the Árpád dynasty began with the analysis of the skeletons of Béla III and Anne of Antioch, as well as of 8 other individuals who were buried in Székesfehérvár and reburied in Budapest.<sup>16</sup> As a result of this genetic research, the Y-chr.hg of the Árpád dynasty, bearing the mark R1a, was determined. In the sample set, a male genetic marker set corresponding to Béla III was also determined from the skeleton marked HU52; thus a previously

13 Szabados 2016

14 Éry 2008

15 Éry 2008

16 Olasz et al. 2019

unknown royal or princely burial of the Árpád dynasty was identified. Unfortunately, the skull of skeleton HU52 was lost following the excavations, and its unequivocal identification requires further research. Genetic data shows that he is two generations removed from Béla III, i.e. he could be the king's grandfather, uncle, nephew or grandson.

In recent years, advances in molecular biology techniques have made it possible to perform much deeper, high-coverage Y-chromosome sequencing even on archaic samples. Using this method, the haplotype of the Y-chromosome of Béla III, and thus of the Árpád dynasty, has been determined with nucleotide accuracy. By detecting these markers it is now easy to determine whether the given sample can be assigned to the haplogroup characteristic of the House of Árpád (R-ARP), i.e. we can identify the rulers and princes of the Árpád dynasty. Furthermore, by genetically studying people alive today, we were also able to model the pathway by which the genetic pattern typical of the male line of the Árpáds might have spread.<sup>17</sup>

To illustrate the organisation of groups that can be formed from the genetic pattern inherited from the male line, so-called lineage trees are most suitable, into which all men living today can be classified. As time progresses, these groups become more and more diversified, like the branches of a tree. The rulers of the Árpád dynasty belonged to the R1a group, which split into two major branches around 3500 BC: one of these shows a European spread, and the other an Asian spread. The members of the Árpád dynasty belong to the latter, Asian sub-branch. As we move up the tree, the branches become thinner and thinner, i.e. we can define increasingly specific groups. The members of the Árpád dynasty are part of the so-called Prescythian branch of the Asian branch of R1a, which developed around 2500 BC. Within this, further examination of the markers leads to the group Y2632, which is most characteristic of the Mongols and Bashkirs living today. However, within this group, the Árpád dynasty split from the Bashkir-specific SUR51 group to form a new group, named ARP after the Árpád dynasty (Figure 1).<sup>18</sup>

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17 Nagy et al. 2020

18 Nagy et al. 2020

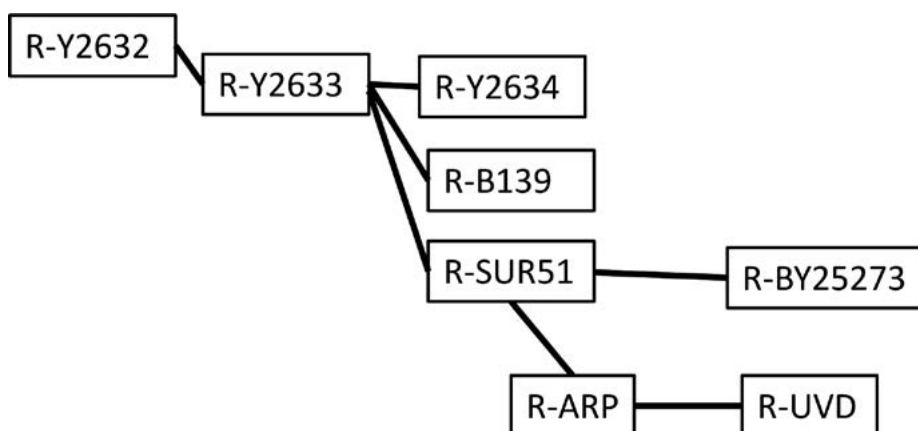


Figure 1. The evolutionary relationship of the R-ARP Y-chromosome haplogroup of the House of Árpád

Projecting the above data onto a map, we find that the R1a-SUR51 group branches off from the R1a-Z2123 group to the Bashkirs of the Volga-Kama region, from which the R1a-ARP group – specific to the Árpád dynasty – branches off again (Figure 2).

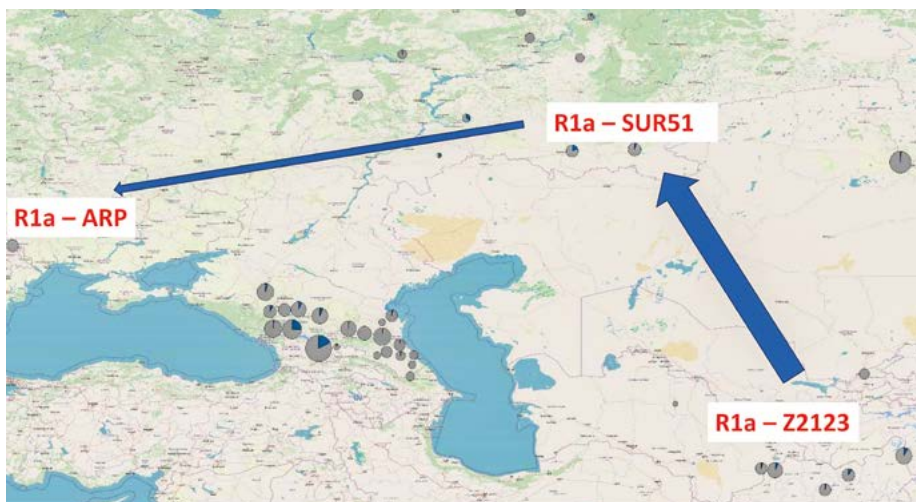


Figure 2. Distribution path of R-ARP of the Árpád House compared to recent samples

The distribution pattern of the male branch of the Árpád dynasty is thus compared with the data of people living today (Figure 2). At the same time, the genetic characteristics of an increasing number of archaic samples from Asia have also become known in recent years. These give us the opportunity to compare archaic samples already published, including those of King Béla III. This way, we can make the pathway outlined by the recent samples more accurate, and confirm or refine the estimated time of divergence of each sub-branch.

In 2020, Keyser et al. published a study in which they sequenced samples from the Tamir Ulaan Koshu cemetery, linked to the Asian Huns, using classical archaeogenetic methods. On comparing the results of the archaic finds with archaic samples found in international databases, a haplotype match was described between the examined Asian Hun samples and the Árpád dynasty.<sup>19</sup>

On this basis, and drawing on what we know so far about the genetics of the Asian Huns, if the archaic samples are taken into account the male group known to have contributed to the genetic component of first the Asian Scythians and then the Asian Huns until the Iron Age may have appeared in members of the so-called BMAC culture.<sup>20</sup> This lineage may have reached the Volga-Kama region with the arrival of the European Huns, from where it was demonstrably introduced into the Carpathian Basin with the Árpád dynasty (Figure 3).

## Outlook

Data on the first genetically characterised king of the Árpád dynasty has opened up the possibility of examining further bone remains and relics associated with the Árpád dynasty. It should be noted, however, that such attempts had been made before. One example is the interdisciplinary study of the skull relic from the Saint László herm,<sup>21</sup> the archaeogenetic part of which was closed unsuccessfully.

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19 Keyser et al. 2020

20 Gneccchi-Ruscione et al. 2021; Jeong et al. 2020

21 Kristóf et al. 2017

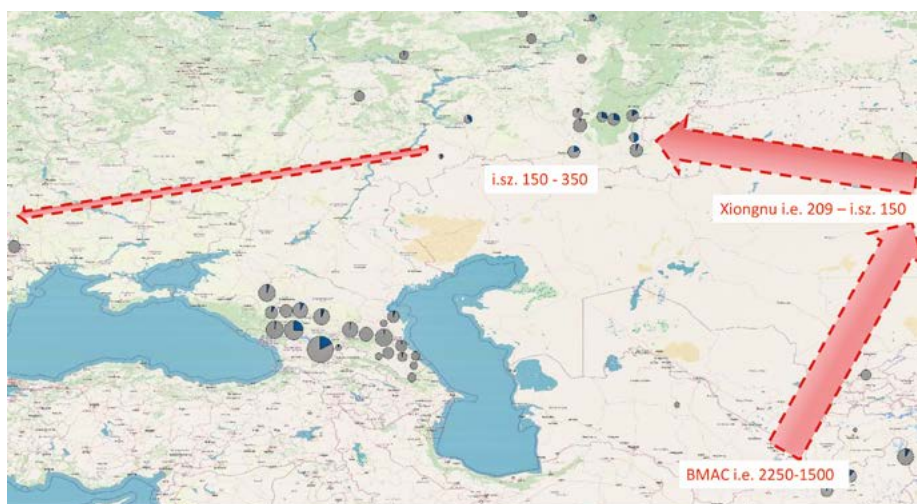


Figure 3. Distribution path of specific markers to the House of Árpád, also taking into account archaic data

In 2021, the bioarchaeological investigation of the Árpád dynasty was given new impetus. In the summer of 2021, another interdisciplinary research project was launched, also for the purpose of studying the herma and the skull relic guarded in it. The Archaeogenetic Research Team of the Institute of Hungarian Research and the University of Szeged succeeded in isolating high-quality DNA. The scientific evaluation of the results and the conclusions that can be drawn from them are currently being published.

In 2021, major renovation work was started in the church of Tihany Abbey, as part of which a project was launched entitled *Multidisciplinary Research of the Tihany Royal Crypt*. The research is based on historical data, according to which King András, who died in the Zirc manor house, was buried in the Benedictine monastery of Tihany in 1060, in accordance with his will. Around 1090, his son, Prince David, was also laid to rest here. No scientific or scientific-education data on the status, or the possible success or failure, of the genetic studies had been published by the time this manuscript was completed. According to published press reports, the remains of the bones deposited in the crypt were transported to Budapest, where samples were taken for archaeogenetic analysis and radiocarbon dating. According to preliminary



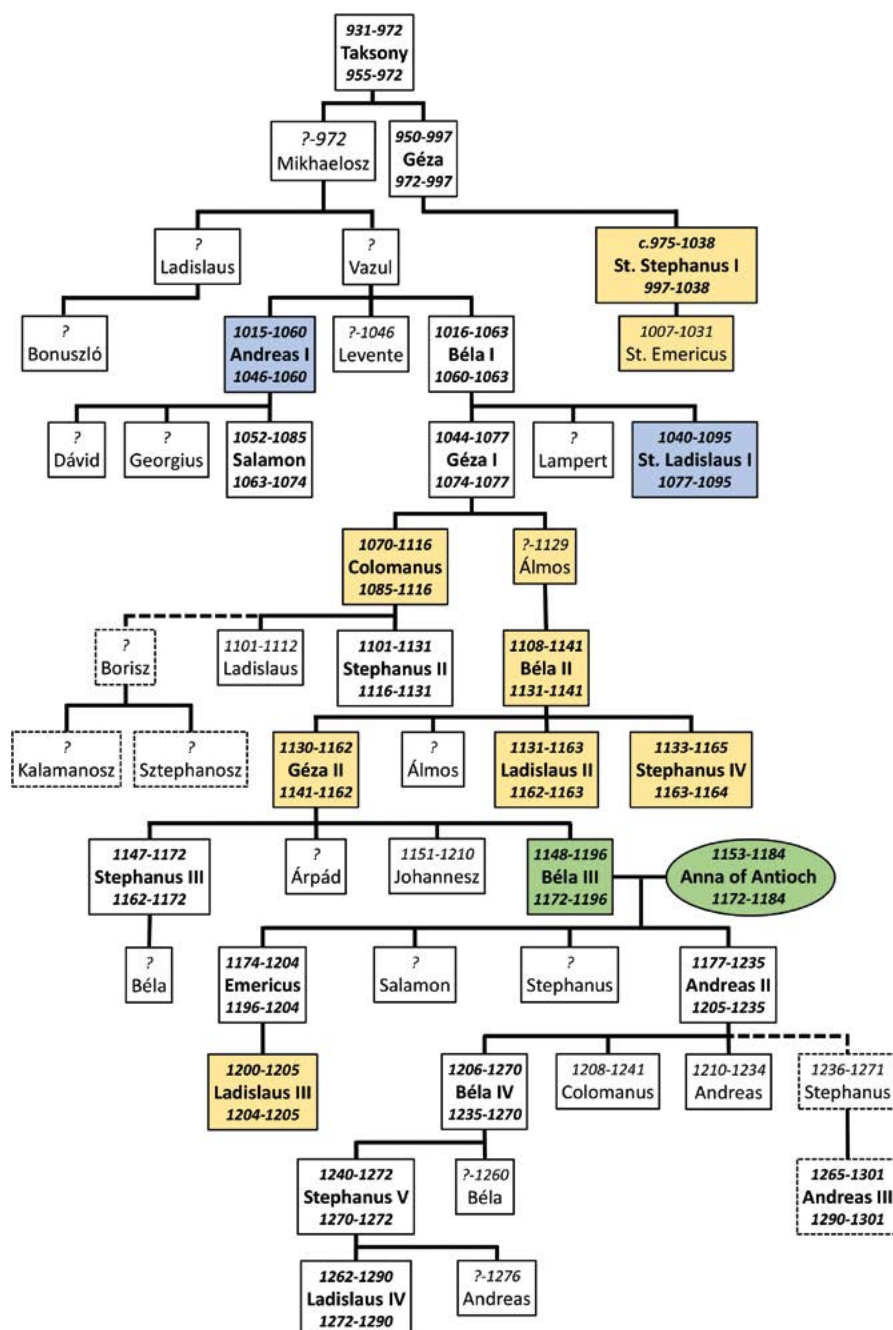


Figure 4. Family tree of the House of Árpád (detail)

data, “at least two bone remains, presumably of adult males, certainly represent the earliest period of the crypt’s use, the 11<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>22</sup>

The Archaeogenetic Research Team of the Institute of Hungarian Research launched a monumental project on the kings of the Árpád dynasty in early 2021, when it began a systematic archaeogenetic study of the ossuary in Székesfehérvár. Sampling and DNA extraction from the skull remains of suitable specimens (rock bone or intact tooth roots) have been and are being carried out in the first phase of the research. The complete genetic material of 204 samples has now been processed, and samples showing a genetic relationship to the kings of the Árpád dynasty have been successfully identified. A further 102 samples are currently being processed and evaluated. A specialist publication containing an evaluation summary of the research phases completed so far will be published this year. The project is rendered more complex by the fact that, according to historical data, the ossuary also contains the anthropological material of several mixed-house rulers. The genetic identification of the associated anthropological finds has still to be conducted, as we do not have the certain points necessary for making a comparison. So parallel with the examination of artifacts in the ossuary, we have started the search and examination of the remains of the Anjou, Jagello and Szapolyai families, in relation to which the Institute of Hungarian Research is engaged in advanced discussions.

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22 Szénizotópos 2021.

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Charter of the Veszprém Chapter, 1247. National Archives of Hungary,  
Archives of Vas County, Szombathely (HU-MNL-VaML 1033)

ÁDÁM NOVÁK

## USE OF SEALS IN THE ÁRPÁD ERA

Seals used to authenticate documents are reference sources in the special area between written and material sources. They were indispensable starting points for the study of Árpád-era history. The Golden Bull, our most important medieval document with legal power, was named after the golden seal it was certified with.<sup>1</sup> Royal seals, combined with the results of numismatic studies, have enabled researchers to reconstruct the heraldic programme of the Hungarian kings.<sup>2</sup> The seals of church figures and institutions provided sources for art historians to help examine changes in the artistic styles of the Árpád era.<sup>3</sup> The seals of secular officials grant insight into the use of coat of arms by ancient clans, and a collection of these imprints provide important family history data for a period with very few sources.<sup>4</sup>

This is precisely why the present study cannot undertake to give a detailed account of the emergence, development and certain aspects of seal usage in the Árpád era. Fortunately, this work was carried out in sufficient depth by the historical research of recent centuries, thanks to the collections of Jesuit

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1 I take this opportunity to remember Professor Géza Érszegi, who died recently at the age of 78. As an archivist, researcher and teacher, his contribution to the auxiliary sciences was immense. His name is particularly associated with one medieval source: the Golden Bull of King András II. His written works remain with us, however, including his monograph (Érszegi 1990) and his catalogue of royal seals (Érszegi 2001). For the latest on the Golden Bull in English, see Zsoldos 2022.

2 Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to say that the most extensive historiographic guide on the topic is Terézia Kerny's work, even if she herself did not consider it all-encompassing: Kerny 2015. Here are three selected works of analysis regarding the use of regal coats of arms: Kumorovitz 1941; Kumorovitz 1942; Körmendi 2011A.

3 Bodor 1984; Takács 1992; Takács 2012, pp. 64–68.

4 Rácz 1992; 1995; Körmendi 2009; 2010; 2011B; 2011C.

historiographers,<sup>5</sup> the depositaries of Hungarian diplomacy and sphragistics,<sup>6</sup> and to cultivators of art history research<sup>7</sup> as well as scholars of the related sciences, such as numismatics,<sup>8</sup> genealogy, archontology and heraldry. Apart from the fact that the writer of this paper is not able to, the size of the study also limits the possibility for writing such a synthesis. Therefore, a brief definition of seals and a list of their types is provided below. Royal seals and the sealing customs of ecclesiastical and secular officials are summarised without striving to provide an exhaustive summary.

## Seals, a means of authentication<sup>9</sup>

The word “seal” (*sigillum*, *sfragis*) signifies two notions: *typarium* or seal matrix as a certifying device with a negative image carved in a hard material (e.g. metal, stone, clay) and the seal imprint, which is the positive impression of the former in a soft medium. It is important that we can only speak of a seal if it clearly identifies its owner and expresses said owner’s acclamation and possession. It is used to close and certify documents from antiquity until today. Its heyday was undoubtedly the Middle Ages, when – with the spread of written records – it became necessary to warrant the content of documents unequivocally.<sup>10</sup>

The most rudimentary type was the summoning seal or *billog* in Hungarian. This single, medal-like bronze seal with a handle made it possible in an age of widespread illiteracy for the holder of judicial power to express their will in an authenticated form, through their representatives, i.e. the fact of being summoned to court or the execution of a sentence. Thus the summoning seal authenticated what was expressed orally, even without writing. Anyone who presented it could speak on behalf of its owner. The process of document

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5 An emblematic work: Pray 1805. Cf. Kerny 2015, pp. 178–180.

6 Szentpétery 1930; Kumorovitz 1938; Kumorovitz 1993.

7 Bodor 2001; Takács 2012, pp. 78–153.

8 A more recent example: Tóth 2020, pp. 71–73, p. 97.

9 The overview is primarily based on Kumorovitz 1993, Bodor 2001 and Bertényi 1998.

10 For several studies on the development of written records, see Solymosi 2006.

authentication was launched by affixing the summoning seal on a document. The ever-increasing number of charters were produced with the authenticating impression of a seal, often accompanied by a *monogram* on royal charters, and a *chirograph* in the case of other charters.

The origin of the use of seals by ecclesiastical bodies should be explained here. According to literature, as early as the late 11<sup>th</sup> century, during trials by ordeal, the bandaged wound was sealed by the seal of the church conducting the red-hot iron trial. This procedure was also recorded in the *Váradi Regestrum* in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, although the charter-issuing activity of the chapters had already begun by that time. The impression of seals used in trials by ordeal still appear on some charters from the 1230s. Later, when trials by ordeal were discontinued, and in the wake of the destruction caused by the Mongol invasion, new seals were prepared in most places, which served as the seals of the places of authentication.<sup>11</sup>

In the 11<sup>th</sup> century seals were appended on charters. One or two intersecting parchment strips were passed through two parallel incisions in the parchment membrane with their ends on the same side of the parchment. These strip ends were attached to the membrane by pressing them in wax.

In Hungarian seal usage, pendent wax seals appeared at the turn of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. A bun-shaped “nest” was made of harder wax, and softer wax was poured into the middle in which the final imprint was pressed. A strip of parchment or twisted silk or hemp cord was used to affix it. Originally, they were threaded through the middle of the charter, but the heavy seal pendant often tore them out, so they created the *plica* by folding the bottom edge of the parchment once or multiple times. A string was pulled through two holes pierced in the thickened parchment, the ends of which were pressed into the wax of the seal. Wax seals were generally made of beeswax with natural colouring ranging from light yellow to dark brown. Other materials were often added to make it harder. Coloured seal wax only appeared in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

11 For the catalogues of chapters and convents, see Takács 1992. For seal usage during trials by ordeal, see Solymosi 1989, 2009.

Bullae, i.e. metal round seals were made of gold or lead. Lead seals were usually solid in design, while golden seals were assembled from two separate thin sheets. Hungarian bullae were modelled on the seals used by the Byzantine imperial and the papal chancelleries. Bullae were attached to the charters as pendants, often with a closing function. Researchers presume that the appearance of double seals can be traced back to bullae. Medal-like, double royal seals appeared in Hungary from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, and they became an important expression of regal power up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the Middle Ages, illiterate people turned to people who could put their cases and avowals in writing. So non-royal charters may have been issued in their own or for other people's cases. It was in connection with the authenticity of this latter group that the concept of the authentic seal emerged from canon law. Documents affixed with *authentic* seals were considered evidentiary by the courts. Two types of these are known: seals with authenticating effect for anybody's cases, or those only for cases falling within the jurisdiction of the seal owner.<sup>12</sup> According to seal owners, seals can be categorised into five broad groups: royal seals, seals of church dignitaries, ecclesiastical bodies, secular dignitaries and secular bodies.

As seals were used for authentication, if they lost this function, for example when their owners died or were replaced, they were most often destroyed or damaged. As a result, only a few seal matrices have survived for posterity. Numerous medal-engraving goldsmiths became seal-makers, as evidenced in many cases by the striking similarity of royal seals and the mint designs issued by the monarchs. The top of the rim of the few millimetre-thick metal seal matrix depicting a circular inscription [*legend*] and an image was fitted with a lug so it could be hung around the neck. The upper edge of the seals produced with such a *typarium* is marked with a wide, semi-cylindrical or angular groove (longitudinal groove), which is the impression of the lug. A pliers-like, articulated tool was used to press the bullae. Two engraved matrices with four lugs equally spaced around the rim of each were used to create double wax

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12 For more detail see: Kumorovitz 1936.

seals. The parts of the clamping device that were pushed through them ensured the exact fitting of the two matrices. In the case of double royal seals, it quickly became common for the *typarium* on the front and the back to be entrusted to different guardians to prevent abuse.

Examining the authenticity of the seal was essential, especially in judicial proceedings, so *sphragis*, i.e. the method and later the science of studying seals, emerged parallel to the seals. Seal forgery also developed concurrently with seal usage,<sup>13</sup> which was considered a case of *nota infidelitatis*, i.e. high treason. Punishment could amount to capital punishment or loss of property, but the perpetrators were often branded on their faces.

## Royal seal usage over the centuries<sup>14</sup>

When discussing the founding of the state by Saint Stephen, the laying of the foundations of the ecclesiastical system of institutions is always emphasised, which is closely linked to the beginnings of royal charter-issuing and seal usage. Not one original charter has survived from the age of our state-founding monarch. However, the texts of nine Latin and one Greek charter were preserved as transcriptions and copies. Six of the Latin texts proved to be later forgeries, and three are interpolated versions of the original charters<sup>15</sup> Thus none of King Stephen I's original seals survived, yet research established that he used at least two seals, as texts of his charters reveal that the closing seal on the charter of Veszprémvölgy could not be identical to the one imprinted on the

13 The two symbolic examples of seal forgery from the Árpád era were the two summoning seals described by Pál Rainer: Rainer 2000. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the use of metal detectors has led to an increasing number of similar findings: Rábai 2020; Novák and Pánya 2020.

14 Art historian Imre Takács compiled a catalogue of Árpád-era royal seals in 2012. Despite its minor flaws (Kurecskó 2013), we can safely state it is the most up-to-date and complete catalogue on the subject. Based on the catalogue and Imre Bodor's publication (Bodor 2001), we will briefly summarise the development of royal seal usage. For the chancellery history summary of the topic, see Kumorovitz 1937. For the history of the Árpád period in English, cf. Engel 2001.

15 Szentpétery 1938.

founding charter of Pannonhalma (*anulus-sigillum*), because the latter must have been larger.<sup>16</sup> In relation to this, it is also accepted by research that it may have been similar to the *maiestas*-type throne seal of Holy Roman Emperor Otto III. This means that the monarch could have been depicted seated on the throne, his hands raised, holding the sceptre in his right, and the orb in his left as the symbol of the universe. This similarity also shows that Hungarian royal charter-issuing followed a European (principally German) pattern.<sup>17</sup>

Researchers have very little source material regarding the use of seals by the direct descendants of Stephen I. However, it is typical that the monarch's name appears in the nominative case with the attribute "king of the Hungarians" (VNGARIORVM/VNGARORVM) added to the legend. One lead bulla with Byzantine influences survived from Peter Orseolo, and only documentary references to the Great Seal of King András I, and two copies of his summoning seal are known. Since András I reverted to the practice of Stephen I as regards minting, we can assume he did the same in his seal usage, so these fragments help us form an image of the seal of our state-founding king.

Only one broken piece of Béla I's seal survived, which was most probably the middle part of the round royal seal. A lead bulla associated with King Solomon was unearthed during the excavation of the Castle of Belgrade. While King Géza I's seal is only referred to in a charter clause issued by him, the first wax seal somewhat intact but seriously damaged – broken in two – survived from King (Saint) László I. The pendant imprint appended on a charter kept in the archives of the Benedictine Archabbey of Pannonhalma is a throne seal, the legend of which is different from the earlier ones. So in the SIGILLVM LADESLAI REGIS text, the ruler's name is in the genitive case. The throne seal of his successor King Kálmán dates back to 1109, when it was used to authenticate the founding charter of the nuns in Veszprémvölgy. This is the last appended seal in the catalogue of our kings' seals.

New types of throne seal were produced from Béla II to Béla III, which are also referred to in literature as Great Seals. The enlarged seal "nest" with

16 Jakubovich 1933.

17 Kumorovitz 1993, pp. 11–12.

a rounded back was attached to charters as a pendant. While King Coloman's seal measured 86 mm in diameter, Béla II's known seal was 110 mm. In the new era, the legends of wax seals bear the kings' names in the genitive case, and the names of their countries are given instead of the formerly common practice of their people's name.

The first gold seals were made in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The gold seal of Géza II is mentioned in the 1156 donation letter of Archbishop of Esztergom Martyrius. However, only one copy of King Béla III's golden bull is known to exist, which was bought by the Hungarian National Museum without a certificate in 1871. The medal-like seal made of two golden plates was engraved on both sides and follows the patterns of the lead seals of Péter, Solomon and Géza II.

King Imre broke with the tradition of his predecessors and introduced a new, French-influenced image of the king sitting on the throne on his Great Seal.<sup>18</sup>

In his right hand, the king is holding the double-cross orb. His crown, sceptre, feet resting on the throne stool, and the claws of the sculpted, richly detailed animal by the side of the throne extend into the legend. King Imre's golden bull from 1202 brought about a new innovation. The legend on the front continues on the back. Unlike on his Great Seal, the front of his bulla shows a bench-like throne with a tall backrest. This is the first Hungarian double seal whose back image shows the coat of arms of the monarch. This is the first depiction of the escutcheon with seven stripes which later became the coat of arms of the Árpád dynasty and the country.<sup>19</sup>

Imre's golden bull served as a model for the seal reform of András II. This is because he also used a double royal seal in addition to his Great Seal. Earlier, charters providing privileges and ensuring rights could only be verified with the Great Seal, and in special, ceremonious cases with the golden seal. During András's time, the double wax royal seal can be proven to have appeared on these charters from 1213, alternating inconsistently with the Great Seal. It is not impossible that the assassination of Queen Gertrude was the reason why he saw

18 Bartoniek 1924, p. 14.

19 More recently, for the origin story of the coat of arms, see: Bertényi 2009.



the need to use such a new type of seal. It is conceivable that one or the other was more closely linked to him, and thus he could pursue more diversified politics. He had three Great Seals made during his lifetime. Introducing the third was necessary due to abuse. No intact copy of his second double royal seal survived,<sup>20</sup> but the fragments show similarities to his golden seal, which he used from 1214. His most solemn seal was a bulla with a diameter of 67 mm and the image of the king sitting on the throne on the front. To the left and right are the Sun and the Moon, with a star. On the back is an almond-shaped escutcheon with the seven stripes, in stripes 2, 4 and 6 two lions on each side face each other with a heart in the middle, and there is a single lion in the eighth stripe.<sup>21</sup>

During his reign, Béla IV only used wax double seals and golden bulls. The two types of seal became legally equivalent. His golden bull with a diameter of 69 mm differs primarily in size from the 90-mm wax double seal. During the time of Béla IV, the seven-striped escutcheon with lions known from Imre and András II was replaced by the double cross in a triangular shield with rounded corners. This escutcheon then becomes dominant on the back of the monarchs' royal seals.

It is worth mentioning here a seal depicting the Lamb of God (Agnus Dei) bearing the inscription SIGILLUM ADALBERTI REGIS, i.e. "seal of King Adalbert". The bronze *billog* [summoning seal] found in the vineyard of Nyírcsaholy was added to the collection of the Hungarian National Museum in 1938. Among others, András Kubinyi, György Györffy and Zsuzsa Lovag tried to identify it.<sup>22</sup> All but the first of our kings named Béla were believed to have been identified by the Adalbert name, but they were unable to connect it to any of them with clear reasoning beyond all doubt. In his work in 2011, Takács

20 For more on the fragmented seals and the processing potential see Novák 2016.

21 Two copies remain, neither on the famous Golden Bull. DL 39250. (1221); DF 238574. (1233). A plastic copy of the former was prepared for the seal copy collection of the Art History Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (V8.1168), of which we made a 3D copy with the MTA-DE: "Hungary in medieval Europe" "Momentum" Research Group. Its digital model is available on the Sketchfab website: <https://skfb.ly/o7OLG> Downloaded on: 1 February 2022.

22 Kubinyi 1984; Györffy 1998; Lovag 1999, p. 85.

classified the seal as fake.<sup>23</sup> In 2018, a very similar piece was found in the Piarist Museum during a collection reorganisation, which only differed in one letter.<sup>24</sup> So it is questionable whether these are two very similar forgeries, or whether they can indeed be linked to one of the monarchs as a summoning seal.<sup>25</sup>

The double royal seal established under Béla IV became permanent under the last Árpád rulers. Significant changes were made primarily to the legends and the attributes of the cross on the back.<sup>26</sup> The queens' seals followed the pattern of the royal seals, although they were not larger than around 80 mm in diameter and the cross on the back was not enclosed in a shield. We know of seals from Queens Maria (Béla IV), Elisabeth (Stephen I), Isabel (Laidslau IV), Fennena and Agnes (András III), and more than one from Elisabeth and Isabel.



Pendant seal of Queen Erzsébet (Izabella) (front and reverse),  
Archiv mesta Kosice, Archivum Secretum, GARADNA K Nr. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Takács 2012, pp. 18–19.

<sup>24</sup> [https://mandadb.hu/tetel/667680/Agnus\\_Deit\\_abrazolo\\_bronz\\_medaillon](https://mandadb.hu/tetel/667680/Agnus_Deit_abrazolo_bronz_medaillon) Downloaded on: 1 February 2022.

<sup>25</sup> More on this issue: Ritoók 2020.

<sup>26</sup> Internal strife that flared up under László IV forced the monarch to change his seal four times, and his wife to change hers twice: Takács 2012, pp. 49–50.; Novák 2014.

The practice of younger kings in issuing charters is equally important for legal as well as charter and seal study reasons. The later Béla IV, when young, used royal gem counter-seals,<sup>27</sup> and oval seals similar to his father's Great Seal, but smaller in size. Stephen V's younger royal seal was already a double seal. The front was a traditional throne seal, the back depicted a galloping knight in armour and a great helm. The figure is holding a flag in his right hand with its end extending among the letters of the legend. On his left arm is a triangular shield. Before 1258, the flag and the shield depicted the double cross of the Árpád dynasty, later a panther rearing up, evoking the coat of arms of Styria. This later version is used on the original charter disclosed in the publication by Imre Szentpétery, which is not included in the DL-DF database of the Hungarian National Archives. Today the charter can be found in the Ljubljana archives of the Slovenian State Archives.<sup>28</sup>



Pendant seal of King-junior Stephen of Eastern Hungary, (front and reverse)  
Archiv mesta Kosice, Archivum Secretum, A (Cassovie) Nr. 1.

27 On antique gem seals, see Gesztelyi and Rácz 2006. Also included are the counter-seals of Stephen III, Béla III and Imre, not explained in detail above.

28 This later version is used on the original charter disclosed in the publication by Imre Szentpétery, which is not included in the DF database of the Hungarian National Archives. Today the charter can be found in the Ljubljana archives of the Slovenian State Archives. Reg. Arp. 1756. Original: Arhiv Republike Slovenije AS 5769.

Ducal seals are also known from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The earliest ducal seal, which can be studied, albeit in a heavily damaged state, is from Prince Béla, Béla IV's younger son, who died in 1269. A lancer knight riding to the right can be seen on the single seal, his shield on his left indistinguishable today. Prince András, later András III, like the Slavic prince Béla, used a single seal depicting a horseman with the striped escutcheon of the Árpád dynasty on his shield.<sup>29</sup>

## Ecclesiastical and secular seals

The charter-issuing activity of ecclesiastical people began in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century. Bishops and archbishops issued charters or made private donations in their judicial capacity. In many cases, they acted as judges upon royal commissioning. Their seals were generally mandorla-shaped, pointy at both ends, which was exclusive to bishops and archbishops, and also common for lower-ranking dignitaries, but they often had round seals. They always used single seals, without exception. All high priests only had one seal, except for the Archbishops of Esztergom who had both a larger and a smaller seal. The seals were most often around 55x35 mm in size. In all cases, the matrix shows the high priest standing or seated on a throne bench, with the bishop's mitre on his head, his right hand raised in blessing, and holding a crosier in his left.<sup>30</sup>

The first secular seal holders were dignitaries who had to issue charters as part of their official function, such as the palatine, the judge royal and their deputies, as well as the Voivode of Transylvania and the bans. Royal seal usage served as a clear model, but apart from a few examples, they all used single seals. Their seals bore the insignia of the ruling dynasty, the stripes and the double cross, which also showed how they followed the royal patterns and symbolised the grounds for their judicial practice. We have a rich collection of *ispán* seals. *Ispáns* [i.e. county heads] acted in the affairs of one or several

29 On the history of princes and dukedoms, see Zsoldos 2016.

30 Kumorovitz 1993, pp. 58–59; Analysis by Erik Fügedi: Bodor 1984, pp. 11–20; 2002, pp. 11–12.

counties entrusted to them, issuing sealed charters when necessary. On their seals, clan coats of arms appeared as early as the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>31</sup>

For both ecclesiastical and secular usage of seals, we can say the spread of written records meant that lower levels of society also adopted seals. However, the circle of seal users only began expanding from the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Authentic seals used by the clergy and secular officials were sufficient to certify charters in most cases. Yet we already know of charters with several and multiple seals from the Árpád era.<sup>32</sup> In particular, they sought to enhance the evidential value of the charters by means of multiple authentication. In many cases, the written case involved more than one actor. It was common for a judicial body to adjudicate a given case, with each of the members putting their seal imprint on the charter. Their seal was sometimes affixed to the charter as an acceptance of the text written on the parchment. A specific type of such charters comprised those with a “guardian seal”, which were issued by the royal chancellery, but, in addition to the royal seal, they were also authenticated by the seals of the high priests and barons. Even if not all of these survived in original form, several of these charters were issued in the last decades of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>33</sup>

## Summary

The above clearly shows that the subject is extremely complex, so it is impossible to give a comprehensive description of it in this format. It is also clear that this period led many researchers with great expertise in historical and associated sciences in the narrow sense to analyse seal usage. Lajos Bernát Kumorovitz’s comprehensive monograph, first published in 1944, has been supplemented and

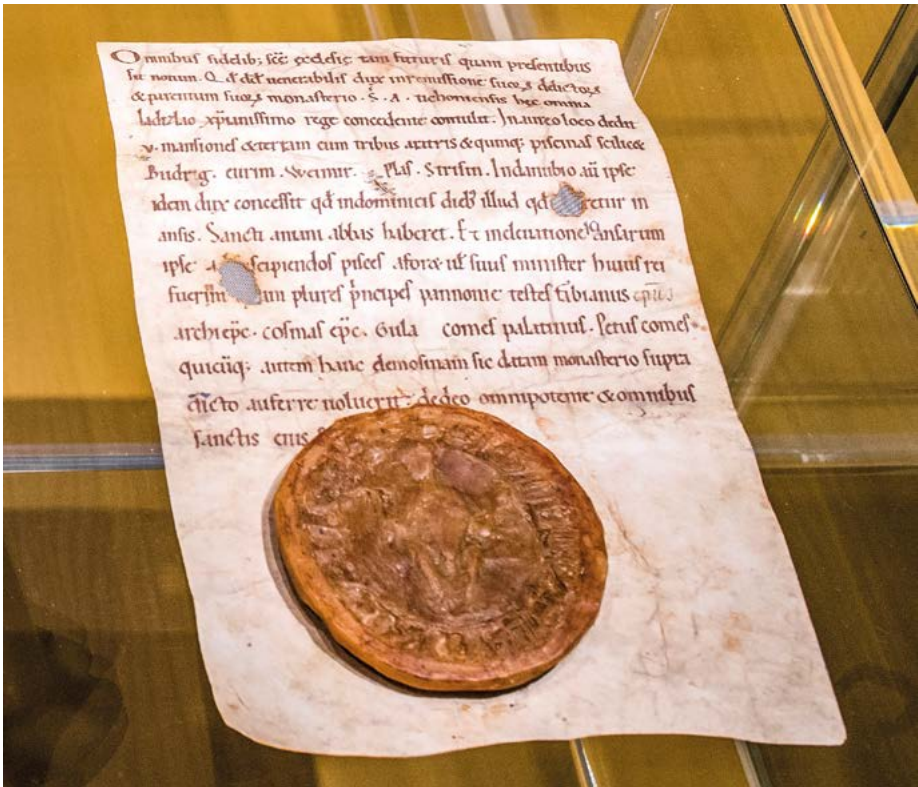
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31 Kumorovitz 1993, pp. 59–62; Bodor 2002, pp. 13–14; Körmendi 2009.

32 Due to length constraints we are unable to list and analyse them. However, here are some excellent examples from the online repository of the Diplomatic Archive of the Hungarian National Archive: DL 209. (1236); DL 221. (1237); DL 40076–77. (1268); DL 1473. (1297); DL 2216. (1299).

33 Kumorovitz 1993, p. 14, pp. 82–84. On the later period, see Lővei 2015.

refined by a number of partial studies since its second edition in 1993. It is partly the reason why we have an almost complete catalogue of the corpus of royal seals, nearly exhaustive from an art history perspective, which can be polished from an auxiliary sciences point of view. However, it may still be necessary to collect the seal materials preserved abroad, especially as regards non-royal seals. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, digitalisation has made great progress in neighbouring countries too. Fortunately, Hungary is at the forefront of digitalising and publishing medieval charters online, so organising such sources into online photo databases is not nearly as impossible an endeavour as it seemed decades earlier. Not to mention that wax seals are affected particularly badly by the adversities of time.



Letter of donation of Prince Dávid to the Abbey of Tihany, Archives of the Archabbey of Pannonhalma (Archives of the Abbey of Tihany, fasc. 1. nr. 3.)

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Baptismal font, 12th century,  
Szent István Király Museum , Székesfehérvár

SZABINA REICH

## THE TOPOGRAPHICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SZÉKESFEHÉRVÁR IN THE ÁRPÁD AGE

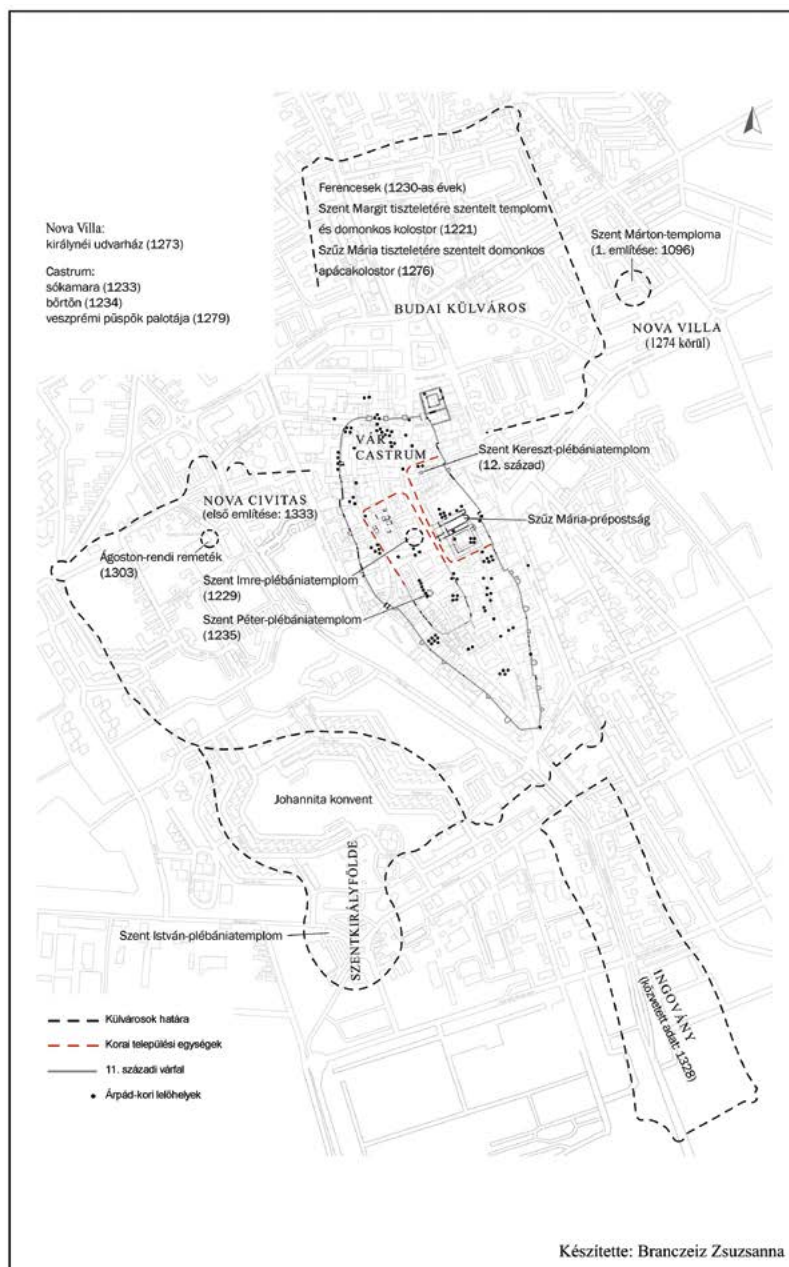
The geographical location of the area largely determined the development and expansion of the medieval *civitas*. Székesfehérvár [in short: Fehérvár] is situated on island-like elevations at the junction of depressions formed by two perpendicular faults in the southern opening of the Mór valley towards Mezőföld. The largest dryland accommodated the mediaeval town centre (*Castrum*), to the north of that was the “Budai” suburbs (*Exterior/Suburbium*), to the west the Island (*Insula*), and to the south the “Ingovány” [Swamp]. *Nova Villa*/New Village could have been located near the “Buda” suburbs, in the western part of the settlement called *Novaj*/Kisfalud (image 1).<sup>1</sup>

Important trade routes passed through the town, and already the founding charter of the Tihany Abbey (1055) mentioned the “military road” going through it.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Opinions on the location of *Nova Villa* are divided. Attila Zsoldos, examining the land ownership of *Novaj* on the basis of perambulations from 1298, found that “Újfalú” [New Village] could be located in the western part. *Novaj* may have been situated in the area bordered by Battyán, Pákozd, Méd and Börgönd which was shared among three owners (the king, the queen and a noble relative of unknown origins) (Zsoldos et al. 2016, pp. 231–233).

2 Fügedi 1967, pp. 27–28; Hoffmann 2010, pp. 130–132



Picture 1: Székesfehérvár in the Árpád era. Prepared with the help of historical and archaeological data by Zsuzsanna Branczeiz

## The development of the medieval town

The earliest written mention of the name of the town (*Alba Civitas*) comes from 1009 from the boundary-description certificate of the diocese of Veszprém, which indicated that it was a comes centre [seat of the county head] from the reign of (Saint) Stephen I, gradually acquiring the character of a royal seat.<sup>3</sup>

At the time of the occupation of Transdanubia (920-950), the seat of the prince was located in the Upper Tisza region.<sup>4</sup> The cemeteries around the town (Demkóhegy, Maroshegy, Rádiótelep) were spread out on the hillsides on the southern edge of Sárret, well aligned with the tracks of the road leading to the Úrhida ferry crossing, already used in the Middle Ages. The community buried here played an important role in owning the crossing that controlled the traffic going through.<sup>5</sup>

Some researchers (György Györffy, Alán Kralovánszky) date the beginnings of the town to the time of Prince Géza.<sup>6</sup> It could have become an important centre under the reign of Stephen I indicated by the establishment of the Provostry of the Virgin Mary (around 1018).<sup>7</sup>

## The Castrum

The spatial structure of the medieval town centre was defined by the roads coming from the north (from Buda, Győr and Esztergom) and from the west (from Veszprém, Keszthely and Pécs) which, according to the surviving engravings and town plans, merged outside the town, and led through the Budai gate in the north and the Palotai gate in the west into a widening space, the marketplace (*Theatrum Civitatis*).<sup>8</sup>

3 CD I. p. 289; Zsoldos et al. 2016, pp. 211–214

4 Bakay 1967–68, p. 75; Bóna 2000, p. 42

5 Petkes 2019

6 ÁMF II. p. 325.; Kralovánszky 1984, pp. 196–197

7 Györffy 1983, p. 317

8 Fügedi 1967, pp. 32–33

The town wall of the early Árpád age (first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century) approximately encircled the area of the medieval *Castrum*.<sup>9</sup>

As concluded from the historical and archaeological data currently available, the earliest unit of settlement was established southwest of the Provostry of the Virgin Mary, which was the highest point of the town (today: the area between the Megyeház utca, Városház tér and Kossuth utca). The excavations and salvage excavations carried out here brought to surface pottery findings from the Árpád era, which support the fact of an early settlement here.<sup>10</sup>

Alán Kralovánszky came to the conclusion of the existence of a princely seat<sup>11</sup> from a four-lobed church he dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century, which is probably identifiable with St. Peter's Parish Church, while Gyula Siklósi deduced the same from the curtain walls unearthed during his excavations. In the area, he outlined a fortress with 80×85×60×60-metre-long side walls and a gate tower in the north-west corner.<sup>12</sup> The assumption arising most often regarding the origin of the town's name is that it was named after the white stone walls of its early fortification.<sup>13</sup>

Between 2014 and 2018, the Árpád-age fortification walls, built in several periods and unearthed in the Hősök tere [Heroes' square], made it clear that a separate centre of rulership was built in this area inside the 11<sup>th</sup>-century walls demarcating an area later called the *Castrum*, but due to the lack of a greater number of findings with dating potential, their priority compared to the *Castrum* walls cannot be confirmed. This way, it is also impossible to define whether this was the area accommodating the comes castle or the area of the later *Castrum*, as Attila Zsoldos assumes.<sup>14</sup> The wall remains, built with

9 Horváth et al. 2018, pp. 170–180; Szűcsi et al. 2020, p. 63. For more on this, see the Szöllőssy and Szűcsi study in this volume.

10 Lásd Siklósi 1992, Figure 3

11 Kralovánszky 1990, p. 79. The building with a four-lobed outline encompassing a central square of 10x10 metres is identified by most researchers as St. Peter's Parish Church: Zsoldos et al. 2016, pp. 214–215. The archaeological excavations did not reveal any layers of dating value, so the age of the building cannot be clearly determined.

12 Siklósi 1999, pp. 10–17, Figure 69. For a criticism of the concept, see Zsoldos et al. 2016, pp. 211–222

13 Györffy 1983, p. 318; Zsoldos et al. 2016, p. 211

14 Zsoldos et al. 2016, pp. 211–214



different mortar and of different structures, suggest the continuous expansion of the fortress and the creation of a smaller but better defended core (image 2).<sup>15</sup>



Photo 2: South-eastern pillar foundation of the hall-like building and excavated part of the fortification wall (sunken due to a cesspool) erected after the demolition of the building. Photo: Szabina Reich (SZIKM)

Sections of ditches were uncovered at several points in the area. Alán Kralovánszky excavated a short section near Heroes' square, under 1 Arany János utca.<sup>16</sup> According to Gyula Siklósi, the part found in Kossuth street connected to the fortress wall,<sup>17</sup> while this could not be verified for the parts unearthed at the southwest tower of the cathedral and inside the church.<sup>18</sup>

15 For more details see *Reich Szabina ásatása* [Szabina Reich's excavation] Szent István Király Museum (SZIKM), Repository, 9042/2018 (hereinafter: Reich 2018.)

16 From the section of the ditch stretching west to east, he presumed the existence of a 10<sup>th</sup>-century oval rampart. Kralovánszky 1990, p. 79

17 Gyula Siklósi's research, Szent István Király Museum (SZIKM), Repository, 6310/92

18 Reich 2018



The excavations found that landscaping had been carried out to enlarge the area suitable to build on.<sup>19</sup>

The existence and location of the royal palace divides researchers.<sup>20</sup> In 2018, the parts of the remains of a large, hall-like building (its east and west end walls and three pillar bases) were unearthed in the area between the town hall and the Episcopal Cathedral (image 3).<sup>21</sup>

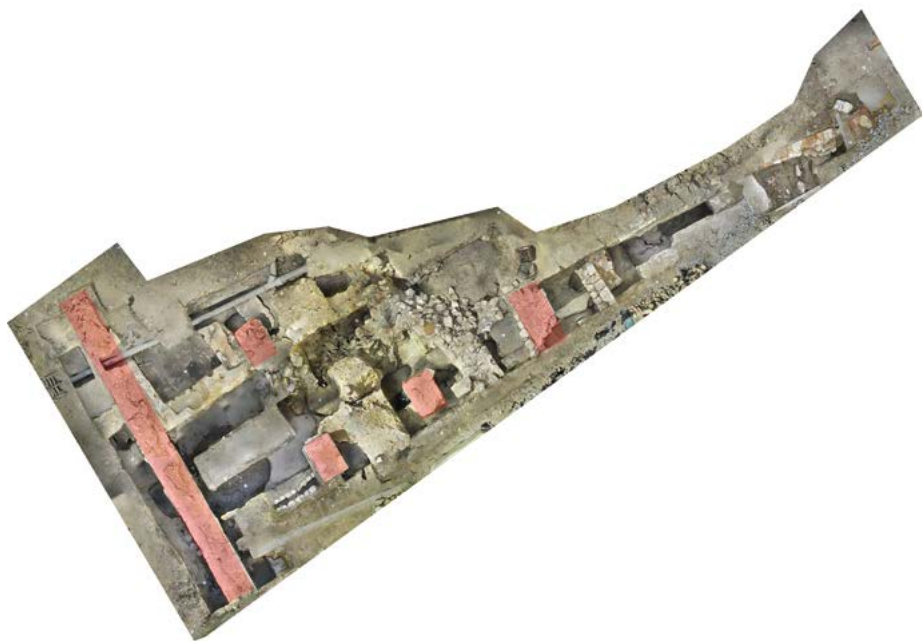


Photo 3: Remains of the walls of the hall-like building excavated in Heroes' Square, Székesfehérvár. Orthophoto by GeoMontan Ltd

Based on parallels (Wawel in Krakow), the possibility of identifying this as a palace with a representative role also emerges.<sup>22</sup>

19 Siklósi 1988, pp. 12–14; Reich 2018

20 For a recent discussion of this, see: Zsoldos et al. 2016, pp. 217–218

21 The width of the excavated building part is 12.77 m, the distance between the foundations of the supports is 3 m. For a detailed description, see Reich 2018.

22 Pianowski 2000, p. 481. Figure 325.

Another unit of settlement of the early medieval *civitas* was the Provostry of the Virgin Mary and its estate (Rózsa utca–Fő utca–Városház tér–Kossuth utca–Táncsics utca), where the chapter's serfs lived.<sup>23</sup> Alán Kralovánszky associated the early walls excavated southwest of the Royal Basilica with this ecclesiastical institution, which he considered a separate enclosure.<sup>24</sup>

These two units were located along the market in the former *Theatrum Civitatis* (today: Városház tér). As regards localisation, we only have data from the late Middle Ages, but it is reasonable to assume that it was inherited from the Árpád period within the small *Castrum*.<sup>25</sup>

The spiritual needs of the people living in the territory of the chapter were provided for by the Parish Church of the Holy Cross (12<sup>th</sup> century), which, according to late medieval sources, stood in the graveyard of the provostry.<sup>26</sup> Alán Kralovánszky identified the church remains excavated on the properties at 3-5 Rózsa utca with the above-mentioned church, but it cannot be definitely proven due to the lack of topographical evidence. The floor plan and the hair ring found in its graveyard confirms that the building dates back to the Árpád era.

The earliest documentary evidence related to the St. Imre Parish Church dates back to 1229.<sup>27</sup> In 1470 it is specifically mentioned on the edge of the marketplace (“in acie fori”).<sup>28</sup> The De Prati map of 1720 shows a church on the property of the Franciscans (today: Városház tér), which raises the possibility that the order was given land where a church building already existed in the Middle Ages.<sup>29</sup>

The Mongol invasion was an important milestone in the evolution of the topography of the town. Following the passing of the Mongols, Béla IV moved the citizens living in the suburbs into the castle.<sup>30</sup> The only remnant of this latter

23 Kralovánszky 1967, pp. 40–42; Fényi 1977, pp. 127–140; Zsoldos et al. 2016, pp. 212–213

24 Kralovánszky 1967–68, p. 256

25 Fügedi 1967, p. 44

26 *Codex Albensis* 1963, p. 24, fol. 58v; 1439: MREV II, p. 605; p. 1454: *Codex Albensis* 1963, p. 1343

27 ÁMF II, p. 379

28 Zsoldos et al. 2016, p. 175

29 Nagy 1972, p. 209

30 Zsoldos et al. 2016, p. 161

event was the burnt remains of a beam-framed pit-house built around 1250, excavated on the square in front of the present-day St. Anne's Chapel.<sup>31</sup>

According to Gyula Siklósi, this was when a complex of buildings he called the late royal castle and palace was constructed in the north-eastern corner of the town centre. Based on his observation, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century depictions show a slightly irregular square fortification with a courtyard lined with palatial wings.<sup>32</sup> Research connects the 2.1-3 m wide walls excavated at the Országzászló tér, and in Bástya utca and Fő utca to this building complex.<sup>33</sup> The surviving remains, however, do not allow for a full reconstruction and there are no known findings of dating potential from along the walls either.

The walled and moated town centre became a densely populated settlement by the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. The network of streets was fully formed by this time, which, based on evidence provided by 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century engravings and town plans, had only been slightly altered since then. The medieval outline of streets can be identified in the present-day Jókai (*Vicus Sancti Bartholomei/Vicus Canonialis*); Juhász Gyula; Oskola (*Vicus Canonialis*); Megyeház; Arany János (*Vicus Sancti Petri*); Táncsics; Ady (*Buda utca*); Bástya, Lakatos, Fő (*Vicus Magnus*) and Kossuth (*Vicus Teutonicalis*) streets, and in the Templom köz (*Parva Platea*).<sup>34</sup>

Within the town centre, sources mention several administrative buildings (1233: salt depot, 1234: prison, 1487: town hall) as well, which cannot be located based on the available data.<sup>35</sup>

The bishop of Veszprém had his own palace (1279) in the town, but its exact location is unknown.<sup>36</sup>

31 Two floor levels were identified inside the building with two layers of fill between them. Probably only a short period passed between them because a penny of Ottokar II (1251–1276, CNA B 159, L51) was found in the bottom layer: Reich 2018.

32 Siklósi 1999, pp. 31–36

33 Dormuth 1935, pp. 89–91; Siklósi 1999, pp. 31–36; Szöllősy 2018, p. 239

34 Fügedi 1967, note 97. During the Ottoman rule, upon the building of the new Budai gate the northern end of the *Vicus Magnus* shifted to the west, as reflected by the current outline of Fő utca: Nagy 1972, p. 207.

35 CD III/2. p. 352; PRT Vol. I, p. 727; Csánki 1894–1913, III. p. 309. The town hall may already have stood, despite the late medieval source.

36 Károly 1898, p. 688

## Civitas Exterior

The Budai suburbs could be considered the earliest part of the town established outside the castle, which is confirmed by the foundation of the Provostry of St. Nicholas (first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century) and the settlement of the Latins (second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>37</sup> To the north of the medieval town centre, the roads from Győr and Buda converged in these suburbs, as mentioned above.<sup>38</sup>

Owing to the transit traffic and the “Italian” population that initially lived here, begging orders settled in this part of the town (1221: Dominicans, 1280: Franciscans), but traces of their buildings have not yet been found.<sup>39</sup>

## Insula (Island)

The dryland west of the town centre was the site of several settlement units in the Middle Ages, the earliest of which could have been the Hospitaller Convent in the western part.<sup>40</sup> The building of the monastery was initiated by Martyrius, Archbishop of Esztergom (1150–1158), and after his death the work continued under the support of Euphrosyne Mstislavna.<sup>41</sup>

Szentkirályföldre in the south-west belonged to Fehérvár in terms of the settlement structure, but in legal terms it was under the Hospitaller Convent.<sup>42</sup> The date of the construction of the monastery implies that settlement in the town began in the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It was named after the parish church dedicated to St. Stephen (1192).<sup>43</sup>

37 Its boundaries: Palotai út–Mészöly Géza utca–Rozgonyi utca–Forgó utca–Mikszáth utca–Széna tér–Rákóczi utca: Hatházi 1996, 25; Zsoldos et al. 2016, p. 223

38 17<sup>th</sup> century depictions of the roads: Siklósi 1999, Fig. 4, 5.

39 Reich 2013, pp. 46–47

40 Fügedi 1967, p. 35

41 Fügedi 1967, p. 35. Gyula Siklósi carried out excavations in its territory: Siklósi 1982, pp. 6–11. For more detail on his findings, see: Reich 2015, pp. 111–128

42 Fügedi 1967, p. 32

43 ÁMF Vol. II, p. 382

*Nova Civitas* may have been established in the northern part of the western dryland at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, as the monastery of the Augustinian hermits here was already mentioned in 1303.<sup>44</sup>

The *Insula* was protected by a marshland from the west, so it could not have had any serious fortification in the early period.

## Ingovány

The land of the collegiate chapter of the Virgin Mary called *Ingovány* [Swamp] could have been established south of the town centre from the end of the Árpád era.<sup>45</sup>

## Nova Villa

The formation of this district of the town may be indicated by the fact that Queen Elisabeth, King László IV's mother, donated "Újfalu" in *Novaj*, her own part of the estate, to the citizens of Fehérvár in around 1274.<sup>46</sup> She probably also had a manor house in this area, as her son stayed here during his coronation.<sup>47</sup>

Research links the Church of Saint Martin to *Nova Villa* on the basis of the 1096 crusade.<sup>48</sup>

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44 Károly 1898, p. 174

45 Zsoldos et al. 2016, p. 243

46 Zsoldos et al. 2016, p. 231

47 1273: CDCr Vol. V, p. 51

48 György Györffy places the church north of Fehérvár between the roads to Győr and Esztergom: ÁMF Vol. II, p. 377. Attila Zsoldos also puts it here because Gottschalk could have reached Fehérvár and several important roads pass through the suburb (Zsoldos et al. 2016, p. 55). Two late sources tell us that the four sword swings associated with the coronation ceremony took place at this building: Velius 1762, pp. 187–188; Callimachus 1600, p. 307.

## Summary

According to the historical and archaeological data available, in the early Árpád age Fehérvár consisted of an early centre of rulership/castle (today: II. János Pál pápa tér and its environs) with the surrounding area (*suburbium*), and the provostry with its estate also formed part of the settlement. It is not yet clear whether the fortification on the II. János Pál pápa tér or the walled area of the later *Castrum* were developed first. From the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards, *Alba Civitas* showed an image of an increasingly urbanised settlement owing to the arrival of foreign merchants, pilgrims and the settling Latins. The increased population and economic prosperity led to the development of suburbs around *Castrum*, but the topography of the settlements, which were under constant attack, is mostly preserved only in scattered late-medieval sources.



Column capital, The Provostry and Church of the Virgin Mary,  
St. Stephen King Museum, Székesfehérvár

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CSILLA SZÖLLŐSY AND FRIGYES SZÜCSI

## SZÉKESFEHÉRVÁR DEFENCE BARRIERS FROM THE ÁRPÁD ERA

Efforts to reconstruct the fortification that once surrounded the city centre of Székesfehérvár began as early as the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first clues were the early modern written and pictorial sources, since the walls were gradually demolished, in many places almost to the ground, from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In recent decades, a number of research projects have been carried out to determine the layout, structure and period of construction of the fortification.<sup>1</sup> Thanks to the (re)processing of the material from these salvage excavations expanded with natural scientific investigations, and the recent excavations in Jókai utca conducted by the Szent István Király Museum<sup>2</sup>, significant new evidence was unearthed connected to the subject, especially concerning the early Árpád-era history of the city (image 1).

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1 More details on the research history background available in: Horváth et al. 2018, pp. 169–170; Szücsi et al. 2019, p. 10; Szöllősy 2020, pp 371–373

2 Horváth et al. 2018; Szücsi et al. 2019; 2020.

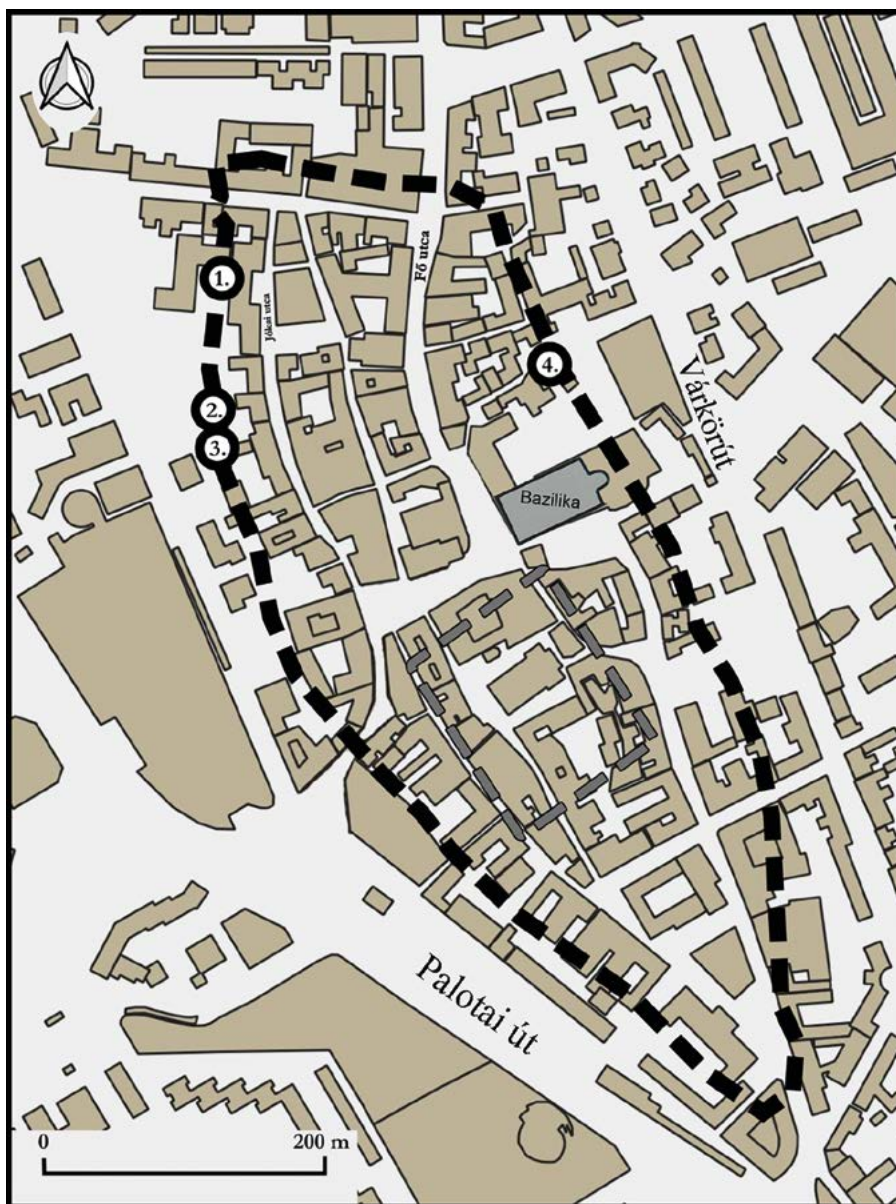
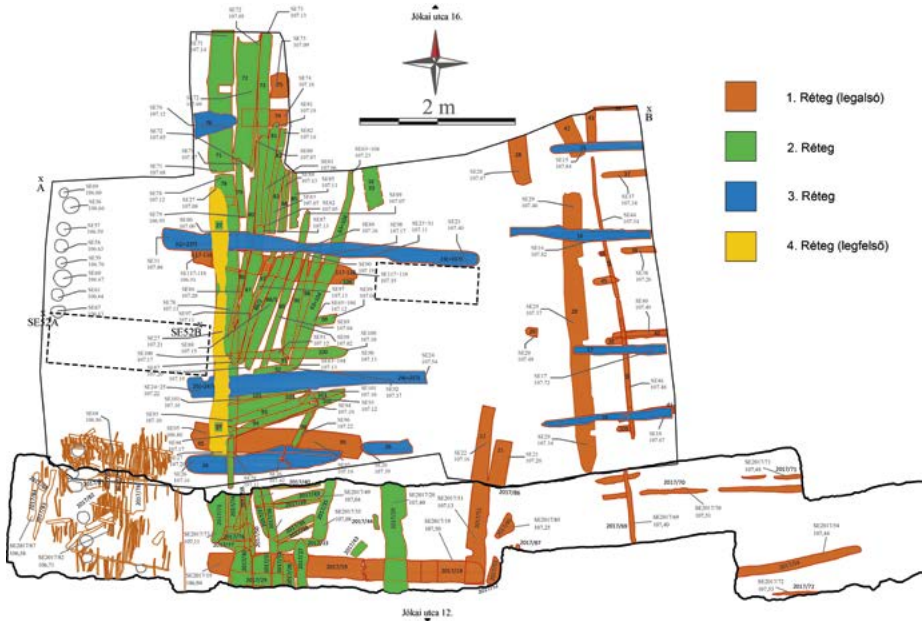


Photo 1. Black dashed line: the trace of the 11th century stone wall of the lower castle (= medieval city wall) (1: Jókai street 20, 2: Jókai street 14, 3: Jókai street 12, 4: Lakatos street 7). Grey dashed line: the trace of the stone wall of the 11th century inner castle (= early royal castle? / castle of comes?)

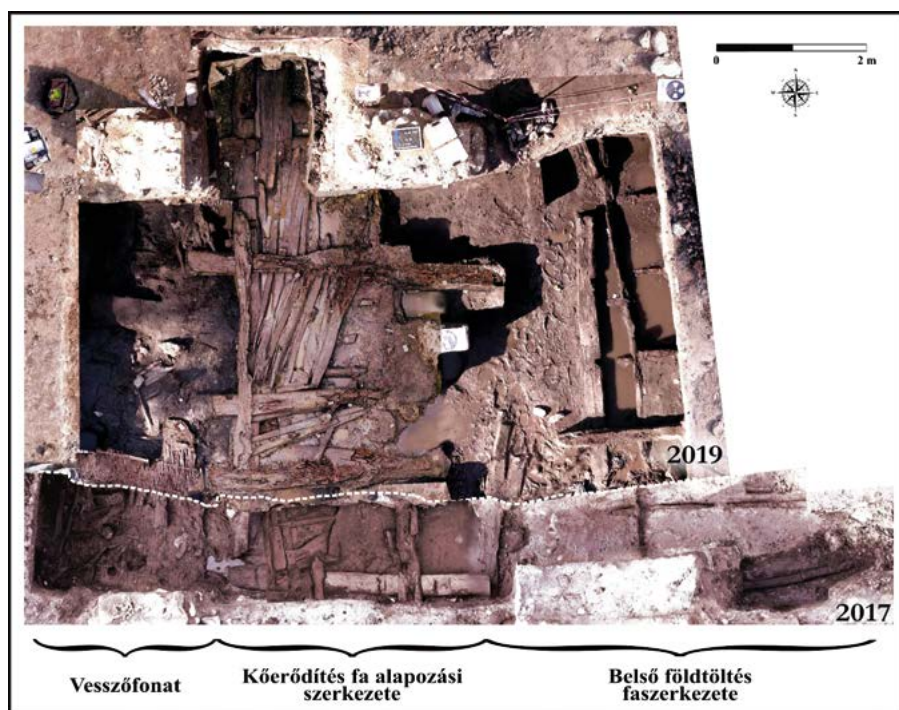
## Structure of the town/castle wall

The excavations at Jókai utca 14 in 2017 and 2019 provided evidence of the foundation structure made of wood, earth and stone – as known from some earlier salvage excavations – coupled with the stone town wall.

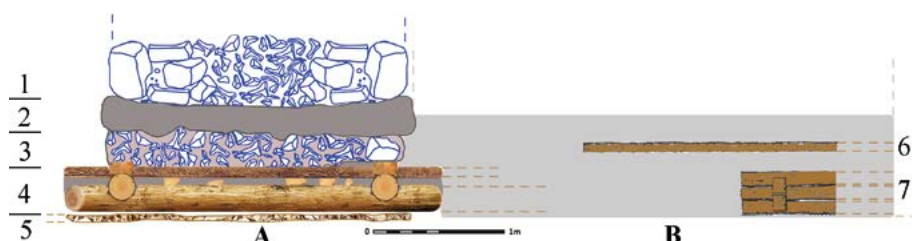
The work on the largest contiguous area thus far allowed for a fairly good reconstruction of the structure of the town wall (images 2-4).



Picture 2. Digitised surface plan of the wooden structures based on orthophotos (digitised by Gábor Molnár, Emese Csoltkó). The research trenches are marked with dashed lines.



Picture 3. The excavated foundation structure with the wooden structure of the inner earth filling and the wickerwork at the outer side of the fortification (orthophoto by Tamás Belegrai, Krisztián Pokrovenszki)



Picture 4. The castle wall and foundation structure (A): 1. Stone wall with mortar. 2. Black clay-silt layer. 3. Crushed stone layer bound with black clayey silt. 4. Bar grid foundation with black clay-silt infill. 5. Evenly distributed wood waste layer. Earthen bank (B) with two types of timber framing along the inner side of the castle wall: 6. Fibrous (?) wood structure. (7) Coffered wood structure

A beam grid was laid on the bottom of the foundation lined with waste wood that is necessary on marshy land. Planks were laid on top of the beam grid and a layer of black clay-silt was used to fill the crevices, forming a homogenous layer on top. On top of this was a layer of crushed rocks bound by mud, followed by an evenly applied layer of black silt. This provided the foundation for a wall made of large ashlar on both sides and smaller stones fixed in mortar in the middle. To the east of the foundation of the stone fortification, another much less robust wooden structure was found with beams and planks arranged in several layers, parallel and perpendicular to each other. At the lowest level, the planks were laid flat to form coffers. This structure made of wood and earth can be interpreted as the inner earth filling of the stone fortification. The dendrochronological analysis of the unearthed pottery fragments and wood samples prove the simultaneous construction of the two structures, thus confirming the hypothesis.

## Construction period of the town/castle wall

The considerable amount of wood excavated in Jókai utca was examined by two dendrochronology laboratories, independent of each other<sup>3</sup>, and they produced similar dating results: they estimated the construction of this section of the town wall at around 1045–1050.<sup>4</sup> This was also confirmed by the radiocarbon dating carried out on the selected timber<sup>5</sup>, as the last (latest) growth ring could be dated back to somewhere between 998 and 1057 with

3 The investigations were conducted by Emil Horváth, András Morgós and András Grynaeus (Morgós et al. 2020, pp. 85–109; Grynaeus 2020, pp. 111–121).

4 It is important to emphasise that the two investigations were based on different references, which confirms the age determination. Since bark or bark remains were also observed on the piece of wood whose last growth ring was dated back to 1049–1050, the wood must have used relatively quickly after felling (Morgós et al. 2020, p. 103).

5 During the calibration via wiggle matching of the radiocarbon dating carried out with AMS technology at the ATOMKI (Institute for Nuclear Research) in Debrecen, in addition to the samples previously excavated under number 14, pieces of timber unearthed from under/near the western section of the town wall (Jókai utca 12, 20) were also examined: Morgós et al. 2020, pp. 99–101.

93% certainty. The pottery fragments collected from the foundation could also be dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup>

Based on all this, it seems likely that the section of the town/castle wall under and near number Jókai utca 14 was built during the reign of King András I. The dendrochronology dating of the three beam fragments from the foundation of the stone wall under Lakatos utca 7 in the northern section of the eastern town wall<sup>7</sup> salvaged in 2019 – during archaeological monitoring for earthworks and thus unfortunately not well documented – raises the possibility that the construction of the town wall may have already begun during the reign of King Saint Stephen in the 1010s, but further research is necessary to prove this hypothesis.

There is not yet enough data on the completion date of the town/castle wall, or when the building of the Budai and Palotai gates – opening to the north and southwest respectively and already known in the late medieval period – can be dated to.<sup>8</sup> The rectangular and horseshoe-shaped towers dissecting the town wall were first known about from the Italian layout plan of 1601, the French engraving depicting the 1601 siege of the town, then from 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century surveys and town plans.<sup>9</sup> According to the results of an as yet unpublished radiocarbon survey, the wall was either originally sectioned by horseshoe-shaped towers when constructed in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, or the towers were added sometime before the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup> Based on a 13<sup>th</sup> century pot found at the tower foundation at Jókai utca 20, the construction of the rectangular towers – together with the demolition of the wall – could have taken place no earlier than in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Therefore, the line of the late medieval and Ottoman-era town wall outlined based on the sources and smaller salvage excavations was certainly identical

6 Szücsi et al. 2020, pp. 61–63

7 Romát and Pokrovenszki, 2019, p. 72

8 Feld, 2011, p. 12; Siklósi, 1999, Fig. 65; 2013, p. 12.

9 Siklósi, 1999, Fig 2, 4, 5, 10, 12.

10 The referenced radiocarbon dating was carried out at ATOMKI in Debrecen on behalf of the Szent István Király Museum. The sampled beam comes from the foundation of the object identified by Gyula Siklósi as a horseshoe-shaped tower in the area of the Music School (Szabadságharcos út 3, today: Mátyás király körút 3). Previously, Gyula Siklósi had suggested that the construction of the horseshoe-shaped towers was likely to be in the late 13<sup>th</sup> / early 14<sup>th</sup> century (Siklósi 1999, p. 59; 2013, p. 12).



to the line of the 11<sup>th</sup>-century stone fortification on the northern side of the western (Jókai utca 12,<sup>11</sup> 14, 20<sup>12</sup>) and eastern sections (Lakatos utca 7<sup>13</sup>) already mentioned. However, there are still no wood samples from the foundation of the southern part of the defence barrier, so we cannot establish with certainty whether here too the lines of the two walls ran in the same place. If so, the stone fortification examined by us encompassed an area of around 17 hectares, i.e. the entire medieval core of the city.

The question is of great importance for interpreting the smaller (around 0.8–1.2 ha) and earlier (?) square stone fortress, which stood at the highest point of the city, today II. János Pál pápa tér and its surroundings (image 1).<sup>14</sup> This is because the two fortresses could have co-existed for nearly two and a half centuries, between roughly 1050 and 1300. Although we have no evidence of the construction date for the small stone fortress inside the large stone fortification we have been researching, which probably surrounded the entire medieval town centre, indirect data points to an earlier construction than in the case of the fortification protecting the larger area.<sup>15</sup> Based on the data available today, we can presume that the purpose of the smaller stone fortress

11 Szücsi et al., 2019, pp. 20–25

12 Horváth et al. 2018; Szücsi et al., 2019, pp. 11–18

13 Romát and Pokrovenszki, 2019, p. 72; Morgós et al., 2020, p. 86

14 Dimensions of the fortress: Siklósi 1999, p. 13, p. 16. Most of the researchers who have taken a position on the issue assumed an early construction of the fortress, in the last quarter of the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Kralovánszky 1984a, pp. 197–198; Siklósi 1999, pp. 10–17; 2013, p. 12), while others doubted this idea, because “it was fundamentally based on an interpretation of the city’s name” (Feld 2011, p. 91). Siklósi considered the remains of the wall to be part of the early royal palace, István Feld questioned this interpretation, Attila Zsoldos went as far as to recognise the ispan castle in them (Zsoldos 2010, p. 10).

15 Examples of such indirect data seem to include *Alba Civitas*, i.e. “Fehérvár”, the name of the town known from 1009, which according to the most accepted view was given to the settlement based on its stone wall (Siklósi 1999, p. 15; 2013, p. 6; Zsoldos et al. 2016, p. 25). However, since we have no (wood) findings from the southern parts of the town wall to determine the date from, we cannot rule out the possibility that it was constructed earlier, in which case the name could also refer to it. Another piece of indirect data is the location of the Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary established by King Stephen, as this church of outstanding significance was not built at the highest point of the city, most probably because another building of great importance was already standing there (see in more detail: Szücsi et al. 2020).



(inner castle) was to protect the royal palace and the seat of the ispan,<sup>16</sup> while the larger fortress (lower castle) was built primarily to protect the Provostry and Church of the Virgin Mary. There are military considerations in favour of erecting walls on the boundaries of dry land, but this way there were initially still large uninhabited areas within the walled area. So the medieval town core of Székesfehérvár was developed on the territory of the castle (lower castle) built within the boundaries of the dry land.<sup>17</sup>

## The importance of the early stone fortification of Fehérvár

Generally speaking, stone castles and town walls in the Kingdom of Hungary, with a few exceptions, started to be built in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>18</sup> and walls became widespread only in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Among the early exceptions are the stone castles of Esztergom and Veszprém, which can be compared to the inner castle of Fehérvár.<sup>19</sup> While the latter belongs to the smaller castles of ispans (county heads), the lower castle of Fehérvár far exceeds the size of the largest ispan castles in the Kingdom of Hungary with its area of 17 hectares, provided the line of the town wall south of the inner castle is in the same place as that of the 11<sup>th</sup>-century lower castle.<sup>20</sup> The stone wall surrounding the medieval town centre can also be considered the earliest newly built town

16 Reich 2020, pp. 47–48

17 Zsoldos 2010, pp. 10–11; Zsoldos et al. 2016, p. 214. On the terminology (royal castle, *civitas*, *castrum*), see Mordovin 2016, pp. 77–81

18 Janeš, 2019, p. 230, Fig. 6. For a very long time, the Mongol invasion was considered the main reason for building stone walls (Sándorfi 1979, p. 248), however, the transformation of medieval society, the rise of the nobility, the development of estates, and the threats the Kingdom of Hungary faced from its western neighbours played an equally important role (Janeš 2019, p. 235).

19 Similarly small ispan castles were Hont (0.75 ha) and Borsod (1.7 ha) (Szende 2013, p. 128; Mordovin 2016, Catalog, Hont, Borsod).

20 Larger ispan castles included Abaújvár (3.9 ha), Moson (4.5 ha), Pozsony (today: Bratislava, Slovakia) (5.5 ha) and the largest in Sopron (8.7 ha) (Szende 2013, pp. 128–129).

wall (i.e. without any links from the Roman era) in the Kingdom of Hungary, due to its similarity to the 11<sup>th</sup> century castle wall.

In Central Europe, in the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries, fortresses were mostly constructed of wood and earth.<sup>21</sup> In Italy and north of the Alps, the first stone walls enclosing entire urban settlements appeared around 1000 following the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire. However, most stone town walls, replacing castles and residential towers, were built throughout Europe only in the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>22</sup>

By the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century, the building of the wall around Fehérvár was most certainly ordered by the king, given the expenses and the fact that in the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries building stone walls around settlements was a royal prerogative throughout Europe.<sup>23</sup> In addition to defence considerations, wall building was also justified by the prestige a respectable stone wall carried, which was further reinforced by the fact that the pilgrimage route to the Holy Land that opened in 1018 passed by here.



St. Jacob shell (pilgrim badge) Szent István Király Museum , Székesfehérvár

21 The castle of Stará Boleslav in Bohemia can be mentioned as the only exception (Charvát 2010, p. 158; Mordovin 2016, p. 90, p. 146; Szücsi et al. 2020, p. 70)

22 Gerő 1975, p. 25; Peyer 1995, p. 10.

23 Peyer 1995, p. 10; Janeš 2019, p. 229.

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ZOLTÁN TERPLÁN

# DIPLOMATIC INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE CRUSADES AND THE ÁRPÁD-ERA KINGDOM OF HUNGARY

“Post hec Andreas Terram Sanctam visitavit ad mandatum pape.”

The aim of this study\* is to provide an overview of the diplomatic interaction between the Árpád-era Kingdom of Hungary and the Crusades from 1018, when St. Stephen opened the pilgrimage route through Hungary to Jerusalem, until the 1220s, up to the end of András II's military campaign to the Holy Land. As the scope constraints of the study do not allow a detailed overview of the entire five crusades of the era, I would like to highlight three events of decisive importance.<sup>1</sup>

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\* I would like to thank Dr. László Veszprémy and Dr. László Tamás Vizi for their professional assistance in preparing the study.

1 The topic is part of the diplomatic history of the Árpád-era Kingdom of Hungary, which has not been summarised since Miklós Asztalos' 1935 medieval Hungarian foreign policy history work (Miklós Asztalos, *A magyar külpolitika a kezdetektől 1526-ig* (The Hungarian Great Power I–II. Hungarian foreign policy from the beginning to 1526). Reprint Edition, Attraktor Kiadó, Máriabesnyő, 2003). In recent years, as part of the 2014 Lendület II (Momentum II) programme of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA), a research group led by Attila Bárány has written studies on relations between medieval Hungary and Western Europe: Attila Bárány, “Magyarország helye és képe a középkori Európában” (The place and image of Hungary in medieval Europe). (Presentation of the objectives of the programme awarded in the 2014 Lendület II (Momentum II) programme of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA) and introduction of the research group). *Debreceni Szemle* (2014), 3, pp. 268–274.

After an overview of the diplomatic history surrounding the opening of the land pilgrimage route to Jerusalem, I will focus on the First Crusade as it was the beginning of a series of nearly two centuries of events that moved the entire Christian world, and coincided with the beginning of the reign of Kálmán the Learned, a prominent ruler of the Árpád dynasty. Next is the diplomatic history review of the Third Crusade, in which King Béla III played a decisive political role in the successful period of medieval Hungarian history: the Hungarian ruler resolved a situation threatening a serious military conflict between the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I and Byzantine Emperor Isaac II. The third topic is the diplomatic history review of the Fifth Crusade led by András II: this was significant not only because of the ruler who issued the Golden Bull of 1222, but also because it was the last of the Crusades in which the Árpád-era Kingdom of Hungary was directly involved.

## Crusades to the Holy Land

To reclaim the Holy Land from the Muslims, for centuries Latin Christianity led Crusades, or, as they are sometimes called, wars between 1095 and 1291.<sup>2</sup> The chroniclers of the First Crusade use the word “*iter*” or “*peregrinatio*” to describe the event itself, and those who went to the Holy Land were called either “*populus Dei*”, “*Exercitus Dei*” or simply “*peregrini*”. These names show that in the ideology of Latin Christianity at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, two ideas were closely intertwined: the concept of the pilgrimage itself and the war for the recapture of the Holy Land.<sup>3</sup>

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2 The literature on the Crusades can fill a library, but here I highlight only a few. Fordham University’s online resource collection, which includes an extensive literary compilation, can be used quite well: <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/sbook1k.asp>. The bibliographies of Bozsóky 1995 and Runciman 1999 include the sources of the Crusades and international literature, as well as Hungarian literature. Note that the assessment of the causes, antecedents, goals and results of the Crusades have been the subject of debate among historians for centuries, but this is probably not only because historians’ beliefs and perceptions differ from each other, but also because the drivers of the centuries-long Crusades were complex too.

3 However, it was not until the 1200s, in other words, in the later phases of the Crusades,

This concept was then reflected in the ideology of church law in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries: “from a legal point of view, the Crusade is a direct continuation of the pilgrimage.”<sup>4</sup>

The primary objective of the Crusades between 1095 and 1291 in the understanding of the age of the Crusades was to recapture the Holy Land from the Muslim rule prevailing since the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and the secondary objective was to assist Latin Christianity in helping Eastern Christianity to end the schism that began in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The ideals of the Crusades were influenced by the Byzantine Empire’s struggles against Islam as well as the military actions of the *Reconquista* on the Iberian peninsula and the fights against the Arabs in southern Italy, which had been in progress since the beginning of the Arab conquests, i.e. the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. Oscar Halecki’s idea is rightly considered appropriate: “There is nothing more characteristic of the era in European history that the common language refers to as the Middle Ages than the Crusades,”<sup>5</sup> along with the Investiture Controversy.<sup>6</sup>

In the long run, however, the Crusades did not yield a solution in either a military or religious sense: the Holy Land could not be permanently reclaimed from the Muslims, and the schism between the Latin and Orthodox Christians only eased, it did not actually end.<sup>7</sup>

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that it was possible to “distinguish between those who had set out for the protection of the Holy Land and those who wanted to travel there for a merciful purpose. It was then that the words *crusade* and *crusader* spread, although in the 15<sup>th</sup> century the terms *Peregrinatio* and *Peregrini* still appeared when it came to these military expeditions.” Sigal 1989, pp. 11–14. These two ideas, i.e. pilgrimage and the armed struggle against the Muslims, which was regarded as one in the 11<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries, were not well understood or were misunderstood by the historians of later times, influenced by the ideas of 18<sup>th</sup> century enlightenment and liberalism. Another contributing factor was that Christianity, which had been the decisive moral and spiritual norm of the medieval centuries and determined the lives of people, was overshadowed by the advancement of liberalism and the rise of the totalitarian ideas of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, the thinking of “*Christian universalism*” (Halecki 1993, p. 123), which applied to both Latin Christianity and Eastern Christianity, was often not understood or was misunderstood by historians and medieval researchers in recent centuries.

4 Sigal 1989, p. 13

5 Halecki 1993, p. 161

6 Matthew 1989, p. 87

7 It was not until more than 600 years after Acre’s fall in 1291 that the Holy Land and Jerusalem came under the control of a Christian state again when British troops entered the area occupied by the Ottoman Empire in December 1917.



## **Historical background of the Crusades in the 11th century in Hungary, King St. Stephen and the opening of the pilgrimage route to Jerusalem in Hungary**

Jerusalem occupies a central place in the history of monotheistic religions. There is no other city in the world that believers of three religions that fear a single God would regard as their holy place: the Jewish (Israelites), the Christians, and the believers of Islam consider Jerusalem their holy city.

“Jerusalem is built,  
As a city that is compact together,  
Where the tribes go up, The tribes of the Lord,  
To the Testimony of Israel,  
To give thanks to the name of the Lord.”<sup>8</sup>

For this reason, even before the Muslim conquest of the Holy City, there was a serious war between the Byzantine Empire and Sasanian Persia under the reign of Emperor Heraclius (610-641) and Khosrow II the Great (591-628). Between 610 and 620, the Persian armies invaded the eastern parts of the Byzantine Empire, taking the major cities of Antioch, Alexandria and then Jerusalem in 614. The Persian army killed tens of thousands of people in the city, and together with several other churches and monasteries destroyed the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, plundering the cultivated areas around the city. Zechariah, the patriarch of Jerusalem, was taken to Persia with the majority of the surviving population as well as the relic of the Holy Cross. It was not until more than a decade later, in 629, that Heraclius was able to defeat the Persians and return the relic of the Holy Cross to Jerusalem triumphantly.

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8 Psalm 122, pp. 3–4.

A few years later, one of the two “most aggressive”<sup>9</sup> military campaigns of the first millennium” began, the Muslim Conquest. Emperor Heraclius – who was regarded as the first crusader in the 13<sup>th</sup> century by the French knights who set out to take the Holy Land, and by French chroniclers, despite the fact that, at that time, the Byzantine Empire was regarded almost as an enemy in Western Europe – could not resist the attack of the Muslim armies. Damascus was occupied by Caliph Umar’s soldiers in 635, who defeated the Byzantine army a year later at the Yarmuk River in 636, and then entered Jerusalem in 638, after a siege lasting more than a year. One contributing factor to the Muslim military successes was that the Byzantine Empire’s treasury was empty after nearly two decades of wars against the Persians, and the Arab invaders used this difficult situation and the internal Byzantine struggles well to achieve their goals.<sup>10</sup>

The situation of Christian pilgrims in the Muslim-occupied Holy Land and Jerusalem was often difficult, but at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century it not only got worse, but serious. The Caliph al-Hakim (996-1021) of Egypt destroyed the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in 1009 along with many other churches and monasteries, expelled the monks and ordered the Muslims of the city to loot the Christians. In addition, he obliged both Jewish and Christian inhabitants to carry a “distinctive” sign: Jews had to wear a wooden calf’s head on a chain and Christians had to wear a heavy copper cross around their necks.

After the death of Al-Hakim, these laws and decrees considered cruel even by the standards of the time were abolished, and after 1027 pilgrims from Western Europe arrived in masses in the Holy Land, who wanted to celebrate the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the torture, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem. However, a serious prerequisite in this context was for Jerusalem and other Christian holy places not only to be reachable by sea, but also on land.

“At that time, the Hungarian people who lived in the Danube region, together with their king, converted to the Christian faith. Their king, who was baptised Stephen, and was rightly considered the most Christian, [...] was given Emperor Henry’s sister as his wife. At this time, almost everyone who wanted to go from

9 Armesto 2001, p. 19

10 Bozsóky 1995, p. 28

Italy and Gaul to Jerusalem to the tomb of the Lord, began to ignore the usual route through the surging sea, and instead started to pass through the homeland of this king. And he guaranteed everyone a safe journey, and every pilgrim he met was received as a brother, and gave them great gifts. Inspired by this grace, an immeasurable mass of nobles and commoners went to Jerusalem.”<sup>11</sup>

Rodulfus Glaber, a monk of Burgundian origin, often describes events inaccurately in his history book, but he is not mistaken in this detail: at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, “almost everyone” who tried to go from Western Europe to Jerusalem, to the Holy Land, began to ignore the “usual route through the sea”.

Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, our historians have linked the opening of the Jerusalem pilgrimage route to St. Stephen,<sup>12</sup> which was not primarily the demand of Western European Christianity, but the decision of King St. Stephen originating from within.

According to György Györffy, the pilgrimage route could have opened when the Byzantine-Bulgarian war was over, and Bulgaria became part of the Byzantine Empire. In the final phase of this war, in 1018, Basil II (976–1025) and St. Stephen struck a military and political alliance against Tsar Ivan Vladislav (1015–1018), who was put on the Bulgarian throne by means of murder. St. Stephen marched to the Balkans, where he met the Byzantine Emperor, and together they defeated the Bulgarian Tsar. “The end of the Bulgarian campaign meant that Hungary had become a bridge between the Holy Roman and the Greco-Roman empires. Cut off from the circulation of Europe since the migration, “Pannonia” became the main artery between the West and the East, on which material goods and ideas flowed, and thus inaugurated a secluded Hungary as an integral part of Europe.”<sup>13</sup>

In Gyula Kristó’s opinion, which resonates with Györffy’s statement, this decision was most probably made around 1018: “One of the greatest services Stephen did for the Christian Church was to open the pilgrimage route to

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11 Az államalapítás korának 1999, pp. 185–186

12 Pauler 1899a, p. 69

13 Györffy 1983, p. 289

Jerusalem through Hungary. Previously, those travelling to the Holy Land could reach their destination only by the much riskier sea route, as the Carpathian Basin crossing was dangerous even in the first two decades of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. [...] It appears that from around 1018 (when conditions in the Balkans also normalised with the end of the Byzantine-Bulgarian war) a new opportunity for a safe passage through Southeast Europe opened up.”<sup>14</sup>

With this historical event at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the participation of the Árpád-era Kingdom of Hungary in the pilgrimages to the Holy Land of Latin Christianity began. These pilgrimages were a kind of antecedent to the Crusades, in which Hungary’s participation in the military actions of the Crusades became direct, even though, to the best of our knowledge, Hungarian military forces did not join those who wished to go to the Holy Land during the first two Crusades. According to James Ross Sweeney, this was a kind of “*passive*” attitude, which was replaced by Hungary’s “*active*” involvement between 1169 and 1217 in the history of the Crusades.<sup>15</sup>

However, is it perhaps more accurate to distinguish between the diplomatic and military relations of the Crusades and the Hungarian state of the Árpád era from the perspective whether they were *direct* or only *indirect*? From the opening of the pilgrimage route to Jerusalem until the beginning of the 1220s, Hungary was *directly* involved in both the pilgrimages and the Crusades from 1095. Namely, it was possible to participate in these events not only with weapons, but also by helping pilgrims and armed knights to achieve their goal, whether that goal from the Christian perspective was peaceful or, stemming from the common perspective of the time, more violent.

This *direct diplomatic and military relationship* from the early 1220s all the way up to 1291, until the fall of Acre, was only *indirect* – for example, St. Elizabeth’s husband joined the Crusade as Emperor II. Frederick’s vassal – so conditions changed compared to the events of the two centuries between 1018 and 1220: the territory and kings of the Kingdom of Hungary were no longer directly affected by the events of the last three Crusades of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

14 Kristó 2001, p. 97

15 Sweeney 1984, p. 114

## King Kálmán and the first Crusade

Pope Urban II (1088–1099) was the first to devise an armed pilgrimage to liberate the Holy Land from Muslim rule that actually did happen.<sup>16</sup> In addition to the serious problems of Western Christianity, Urban also took into consideration the issues faced by Eastern Christianity, as the excommunications in Constantinople in 1054 and the defeat of the Byzantine Empire at Manzikert in 1071 created a new situation within Christianity. Both Urban II and Emperor Alexios I wanted to resolve these grave political situations. As a first step, at the Council of Melfi in 1089 Urban acquitted the Emperor of the excommunication proclaimed by Pope Gregory VII. Subsequently, Alexios assured the Pope that Latin Christians in Constantinople were free to perform their masses according to their own rituals. The theological questions, which raised many problems, were wisely avoided, so Alexios distanced himself from the anti-pope, even though supporting Clement III was in the best interest of the Byzantine high priests.<sup>17</sup>

Then, in the spring of 1095, the Council of Piacenza took place, where the envoys of Alexios asked the Western Christians for military help.<sup>18</sup> The Byzantines not only referred to the dire situation of the Holy Land, but also to the fact that, at that time, Seljuk rule showed signs of crisis, it had weakened and militarily became more vulnerable. The Pope thought of immediate military assistance to combine the strength of the Christian knights in a united war: this was his plan that Urban II revealed at the council held in Clermont in November of the same year.

“For your brethren who live in the east are in urgent need of your help, and you must hasten to give them the aid which has often been promised them. [...] On this account I, or rather the Lord, beseech you as Christ’s heralds to publish

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16 For details about the relationship between Pope Urban II and the Crusades see: Runciman 1999, p. 90.

17 Runciman 1999, p. 91

18 Runciman 1999, p. 93; Duroselle 1991, p. 143

this everywhere and to persuade all people of whatever rank, foot-soldiers and knights, poor and rich, to carry aid promptly to those Christians [...]. Let those who have been accustomed unjustly to wage private warfare against the faithful now go against the infidels and end with victory this war which should have started long ago. Let those who have been robbers for a long time now become knights. Let those who have been fighting against their brothers and relatives now fight in a proper way against the barbarians.”<sup>19</sup> Urban II’s speech and appeal at the Council of Clermont had an unexpected response, first in the French territories, of course, as the Pope was French and the council was held in the Kingdom of France, and then the German territories also received news of the call for an armed pilgrimage.<sup>20</sup>

In the following year, the First Crusade that started 1096 was organised in two different periods in different parts of Europe. First in the spring along the Loire and Rhine, then in early summer in other areas of Western Europe. The former evolved “spontaneously”, the latter was organised militarily and was timed for the departure date of the Pope on 15 August 1096, the celebration of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>21</sup> It was precisely because of the differences in timing that the “People’s Crusade” arrived at the Hungarian border on their pilgrimage to Jerusalem that led through Hungary towards Constantinople in May 1096, but the knights’ armies that waited until the official departure date of 15 August arrived at Moson and the Croatian territories only in the second half of September.

At this time, before the arrival of the crusaders from Western Europe between the summer of 1095 and the spring of 1096, intense political events took place in the Kingdom of Hungary. In late July 1095 King St. László died, leaving the Hungarian throne to his younger nephew, Prince Álmos, whom he earlier made King of Croatia. He appointed Kálmán, his older nephew, as bishop, but Kálmán left for Poland with his followers in the first half of 1095

19 Foucher de Chartres: *Gesta Francorum Hierusalem Peregrinantium*. Translation: *Szöveggyűjtemény* 1999, pp. 206–207.

20 Bozsóky 1995, p. 44

21 Veszprémy 1999, p. 131

when László was still alive, because he wanted to seek out allies so he could still be crowned king based on his right of being the first born. Prince Álmos stayed in Hungary with his followers, but he did not get himself crowned, at least that is not reported in the sources. Rather, it is likely that the supporters of the two young men (Kálmán must have been 23–24 years old and his younger brother Álmos was around 20–21) started to negotiate with each other. These talks proved successful, and in the spring of 1096 the two princes reached an agreement without an armed conflict.<sup>22</sup> Subsequently, Kálmán was crowned king, and Álmos was given the previously known position of duke, which was vacant under St. László. In light of the events that took place shortly thereafter, we can say this agreement was very important for the Kingdom of Hungary, because the situation could have been very serious if the participants of the First Crusade had arrived at the western borders with an internal war raging in Hungary, or if Kálmán had been crowned king without a political agreement, and had been forced to watch the crusade march for months while fearing that Álmos would stab him in the back and try to seize the throne.<sup>23</sup>

Between the beginning of May and the end of August in 1096, tens of thousands of armed and unarmed pilgrims marched across Hungary in five large groups.<sup>24</sup> The first crusaders arrived at the western Hungarian border at the beginning of May, the fifth group led by Count Emicho von Leiningen and the French Guillaume de Melun, around mid-July. Having just taken the throne, the young Kálmán I provided free passage to this first group, as simple pilgrims, and, in return for payment of course, access to food markets on the pilgrimage route through Hungary, which had been used since the end of the 1010s. However, neither they nor those who came after them behaved as expected. The next group of crusaders led by Peter of Amiens, were also granted permission

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22 Makk 1996, p. 139

23 Magyarország története 1987, p. 948

24 First, the crusaders of Walter the Penniless also called Walter Habenichts by German sources and Gautier Sansavoir by French sources. Next up was Peter of Amiens, also known as Peter the Hermit and his followers, then the German “Adventurer Knight” Volkmar and his army. The fourth group was led by the priest Gottschalk, Peter the Hermit’s “disciple”, and the fifth by Count Emicho von Leiningen and the French Guillaume de Melun.

of free passage by Kálmán, with the addition that the Hungarian king would retaliate to any looting. While marching through Hungary, the crusaders laid siege to Zimony, and according to foreign sources, killed thousands of soldiers and civilians, then distributed the animals and valuables found in the city among themselves. After Kálmán drove them out of the country, they continued the robbery, destruction and looting in Byzantine territory.

Volkmar led the groups of the new crusaders arriving from the west to the Hungarian border, we know nothing for sure about their origin.<sup>25</sup> They already became infamous while in the Rhine region, and then in Prague they began to kill the Jews at the end of June, even though Bishop Kozma and the secular authorities had taken vigorous action against them. Then they entered the territory of Hungary from the northwest, where the Hungarian army defeated and crushed them at Nitra, but Volkmar's fate remains unknown.

The next group of crusaders was led by the priest Gottschalk, Peter the Hermit's disciple, who arrived from Regensburg to Moson in mid-June, only a few days after Kálmán's troops destroyed Volkmar's army. According to Pál Gerő Bozsóky, even though Gottschalk's group asked for permission to pass, they entered the country on the usual pilgrimage route without waiting for a response, and like Volkmar, they wanted to continue the same thing they started west of Hungary: robbery, looting and killing people. However, it was not the Jews they attacked here, but the Hungarian population; as the chronicler Abbot Guibert de Nogent wrote: "Although our sons were foreigners {in Hungary}, they reached such a peak of madness that they trampled the people of the countryside with their feet. The Hungarians, as good Christians to Christians, were happy to sell their goods, but our insatiable pilgrims, forgetting about the hospitality they received, engaged in a fight with their hosts for no reason, believing that they were so pious they would not dare to oppose them. And so they shamefully set fire to the public granaries, raped the girls, and kidnapped the wives, shaved the beards of the men, or branded them with a hot iron. From then on, there was no mention of buying the things necessary for their

25 Pál Gerő Bozsóky considers him an "adventurer knight"; Bozsóky 1995, p. 47.



survival, but everyone threw themselves into the robbery and bloodshed with all their energy, shouting slogans like this: “And we will do the same to the Turks {Muslims}.”<sup>26</sup>

Next, the Hungarian army defeated Gottschalk’s army with a trick, surrounded them and forced them to lay down their arms, and then massacred them: Gottschalk fled the country at Moson.

The next and the last army of the people’s crusade probably reached the western border of the Kingdom of Hungary at the same time: Count Emicho von Leiningen’s large army of German and French troops plundered the Rhineland in May and June. The Jewish population of the archbishop and bishop cities of Mainz, Cologne, Trier and Metz were killed and looted, and then they left for the Hungarian border in early July. The army led by Count Emicho included French knights, Clarambald of Vendeuil, Thomas of La Fère, and the most notorious, William the Carpenter, the vicomte of Melun. They besieged the Castle of Moson, but the Hungarian army led by Kálmán drove them out of the country in a western direction.<sup>27</sup> Several of the Frenchmen who escaped and did not return home, including Knight William, joined one of the more orderly and disciplined armies of knights that left for the Holy Land at the end of August and early September.

After the first crusader units of the period between the beginning of May and the end of August, the two knight armies arrived at the western borders of Hungary and the southern borders of Croatia, which left for the Holy Land on the day of the departure announced by Pope Urban II, i.e. on 15 August 1096. The first army of knights to reach the Hungarian border in the autumn, which, of course, were not only made up of soldiers, nobles, and people of wealth, but also poor, simple, unarmed men, women and children, were led by Godfrey of Bouillon.<sup>28</sup> Two of his brothers also took up the cross with him: his younger

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26 Cited by Foss 2000, p. 86

27 Count Emicho and the Germans returned home after this humiliating failure, as did most of the French, who were greeted at home with “mockery and the quibble that they wanted to go to Jerusalem and only managed to harvest – in French Miosson, i.e. Mosony.”

28 These crusaders organised, left and marched from Lorraine to the Hungarian border without any serious complications. The commander himself was Duke of Lorraine, and

brother Baldwin, the first ruler of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, marched with him with his wife and children, while his elder brother, Eustace III, the Count of Boulogne, set out by sea.

Due to his bad experiences with the earlier groups of crusaders, King Kálmán called the leaders of the knight army to a meeting, where they agreed on the conditions for crossing Hungary. The crusaders were represented at the meetings by Count Ascha, who knew King Kálmán from earlier, so they obviously trusted each other. Kálmán first convinced the crusaders that he did not smash the army of the People's Crusade because of his hostility to the Christians, but because of legitimate self-defence, and secondly, he asked for assurances from the army led by Duke Bouillon that the robberies, lootings and murders that took place in the previous months would not be repeated. They agreed with the delegation of the Crusade that the Duke's brother Baldwin and his family would stay with Kálmán as hostages until the army crossed the Sava river into Byzantine territory at Zimony, and in exchange for their money they would be provided with appropriate markets from Sopron to Zimony. Baldwin did not want to take on the role of hostage at first, but eventually went to Kálmán's camp with his family.<sup>29</sup>

After that, the army led by Duke Bouillon crossed the country without any trouble, confrontation or major problem: it is true that the Hungarian royal army was watching their every move on the left bank of the Danube, and this was obviously enough as a deterrent. Before the crossing in Sava, the crusaders rested at Zimony for five days, and then began their crossing into Byzantine territory. King Kálmán said goodbye to the duke and the hostages by exchanging a sign of peace and giving gifts to the leaders on their way to the Holy Land. The first two dominant personalities of the Kingdom of Jerusalem from 1099, Godfrey of Bouillon, and his little brother Baldwin, therefore crossed Hungary

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on his mother's side he was a descendant of Charlemagne and was nearing the age of fifty. He was a devotee of Henry IV, but at the same time he definitely considered himself a good Christian, and it was natural for him to set out to the Holy Land at the Pope's call. In 1099, after taking Jerusalem, he became the *Advocatus*, the Defender of the Holy Sepulchre, because he refused to rule as king in Jerusalem.

29 Bozsóky 1995, pp. 50–51; Borosy 1996, pp. 22–23

without any issues or problems, and even said goodbye to the young King Kálmán in friendship.<sup>30</sup>

The other army of knights also crossed an area that belonged to the Kingdom of Hungary since the conquest of St. László in Croatia. In October 1096, the crusader army from the southern French territories had two leaders of the same importance as those who marched on the pilgrimage route through Hungary. It was this army that Adhemar, the bishop of Le Puy joined, who was entrusted by Pope Urban II to lead the crusade, and Raymond IV, Count of Toulouse, or rather, as he called himself, the Count of Saint-Gilles, an older man in his sixties was also travelling with this army. He himself had previously expected that Urban II would entrust him with the military leadership of the crusade, but this did not happen. He hoped, however, that if he and Bishop Adhemar went to Jerusalem together, sooner or later his military leadership would be necessary. That moment arrived in the Dalmatian mountains where the crusaders were attacked several times by “uneducated, savage, thieving and murdering” peoples living there, as William of Tyre described these ethnic groups in his work written a few decades later.<sup>31</sup>

For nearly forty days they marched in this “mountainous, impassable and barren country” as another chronicler, Raymond of Aguilers, wrote,<sup>32</sup> but thanks to Count Raymond they reached Durazzo without great losses. The army was joined by many Southern French nobles, such as Rambald, the Count of Orange, William of Montpellier, and church dignitaries such as William, Bishop of Orange. They reached Byzantine territory at Durazzo, and continued their journey through the ancient Via Egnathia to Constantinople.<sup>33</sup>

By comparing the estimated numbers of the population of contemporary Hungary and that of the crusaders side by side, we can conclude that about one tenth of the population of the country at that time, nearly one hundred thousand people, passed through peacefully or fought, ravaged and looted

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30 Pauler 1899, pp. 196–200; Runciman 1999, pp. 120–122

31 Cited by Szamota 1891, p. 24

32 Cited by Szamota 1891, 23

33 Pauler 1899a, pp. 198–199; Runciman 1999, pp. 130–131

during these six months, between May and October 1096. To supply such a large mass, to manage it militarily and diplomatically, was no small feat, since even Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV, who was very hostile to the crusaders, could not prevent the destruction of the Rhine territory. In his letter to Prince Álmos, he rejoiced at Kálmán's victory over the robbing, plundering people's crusaders, and did not want him to stop at the western borders of Hungary in his pursuit of the crusaders, but to carry on into Bavaria against Prince Welf of Bavaria. However, being a follower of Urban II and the Papacy, Kálmán, of course, did not do so.<sup>34</sup>

The young Hungarian king was a strong and capable ruler who defended the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary and the interests of its subjects, as Györffy put it quite accurately: "In the first year of his reign, Kálmán was immediately caught up in events of world politics at that time, and held his position in such an exemplary fashion that for nine centuries, the historians of the crusaders have been paying him tribute with a wreath of recognition."<sup>35</sup>

## King Béla III and the Third Crusade

The most talented diplomat of the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and a brave and smart warlord of Muslim territories, Sultan Saladin had been attacking the crusader states of the Holy Land since the beginning of the 1180s.<sup>36</sup> As it had been unable to form an alliance with Byzantine Emperor Manuel, the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem was drifting in the midst of crises of constant dissension and political conflict. King Baldwin IV (1174-1185) died young at barely 24 years of age, and the little Baldwin V (1185-1186) was only 9 when he passed away. There were partisan fights and conspiracies of the lords in the struggle for the throne. The internal situation was aggravated by the lack of proper military leadership of the crusader armies in the Holy Land. This ultimately led to the

34 Magyarország története 1987, p. 946

35 Magyarország története 1987, p. 947

36 Bozsóky 1995, pp. 78–82

Christian defeat at Hattin on 4 July 1187, which proved fatal in the long run, and started the Muslim recapture of the Holy Land. The victorious Saladin reached Jerusalem on 17 September, and after a short siege and bargaining he marched into the city on 2 October. Even though there was no bloodbath similar to the summer of 1099 when the crusaders took the city, those who could not be freed from among the Christians for ransom were sent to slave markets.<sup>37</sup>

Reactions to the news of the fall of Jerusalem were different in Byzantium and Western Europe. Emperor Isaac II, Béla III's son-in-law, "congratulated" Saladin on his victory at Hattin and the capture of Jerusalem, but in Western Europe the news was tragically received and they were shocked, and the organisation of the third crusade began without delay. This work was started by Pope Clement III, elected on 19 December 1187. Clement first wished to contact Emperor Frederick I while Archbishop of Tyre Josias sought help from the kings of France and England. However, the news preceded the Archbishop even before he arrived in France: Henry II's eldest son Richard, the Count of Poitiers, had already taken up the cross.<sup>38</sup>

While the Archbishop in Western Europe verbally recounted the tragic fate of the Holy Land, Conrad of Montferrat, the defender of Tyre, wrote a letter to the Western European princes, including Béla III, the king of Hungary, urging them to set out immediately to defend the Holy Land.<sup>39</sup>

In January 1188 in Gisors, Henry II and Philip II "on the border between Normandy and the French kingdom, under a huge elm tree where the rulers of the two countries used to meet from ancient times, came together, embraced each other and took up the cross".<sup>40</sup> Archbishop Josias met here with the two kings to make peace to end the war that raged between them for years and to leave for Jerusalem as soon as possible. The two kings agreed with each other and each imposed a so-called "Saladin tithe" to cover the costs of the campaign. The archbishop then headed back to the Holy Land and thought that the crusade

37 Runciman 1999, pp. 604–612; Bozsóky 1995, pp. 82–85

38 Runciman 1999, pp. 645–646; Bozsóky 1995, p. 86

39 III. Béla emlékezete 1981, p. 75

40 Pauler 1899 b, p. 1

would start soon. Henry II thought the same, because he wrote a letter to Béla III as early as in 1188 to ask for permission and help for the English crusader army to pass through Hungary. In his reply written in the same year, Béla, as a good Christian king of course, made that promise like his predecessors who received the crusades earlier.<sup>41</sup>

However, soon the fighting between Henry II and Philip II resumed, and Richard abandoned his father and sided with the French king. The elderly Henry II could not endure these tribulations and died in Chinon on 6 July 1189. His son, Richard II and Philip, Béla III's brother-in-law, eventually did not choose the land route through Hungary, but a sea route when they travelled to the Holy Land to fulfil their pledge for the crusade.

However, in the summer of 1189, when Henry II died, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I marched across Hungary, then in the Byzantine area around Barancs with his German crusader army towards Constantinople and Jerusalem. Ever since Frederick I returned from the Second Crusade as a young Duke of Swabia, he always wanted to return to the Holy Land to lead a successful campaign against the Muslims. On 27 March 1188, he took up the cross again in Mainz at the age of almost 70. He prepared for the journey for more than a year before the German crusader army under his command set out at the beginning of May 1189. He entrusted his eldest son, Henry, the future Emperor Henry VI to govern the Holy Roman Empire, and took his younger son, Frederick, the Duke of Swabia, on the campaign. He wrote letters to all the rulers whose lands he wished to cross: King Béla III, Emperor Isaac II and even Sultan Kilij Arslan I, the victor of the Battle of Myriokephalon.<sup>42</sup>

Based on the negative experiences of the previous years with Frederick, Béla prepared cautiously for the passage of the German crusaders, but, of course, he granted his permission in return for discipline in the army. In the same way, Kilij

41 Árpád- és Anjou-kori levelek 1960, p. 105

42 The old emperor also wrote a letter to Sultan Saladin: In November 1189, he challenged him to a duel, and demanded that the Sultan return the occupied areas of the Holy Land to the Christians. Saladin's response was polite but dismissive: he would release the Frank prisoners, return the monasteries to their owners in the Holy Land, but he was willing to do more than that only through war.

Arslan promised help and granted permission to pass, while a delegation from Isaac II met with Frederick I in Nuremberg to discuss the terms of the crossing.<sup>43</sup> According to the description of Abbot Arnold of Lübeck's description, Frederick sent hundreds of undisciplined people back to their country at Vienna, before they reached the Hungarian border, and the crusade arrived at the western borders of Hungary on 24 May. They celebrated Pentecost on 29 May, then crossed the Hungarian border on 31 May. Béla "welcomed him via his envoys, willingly opened the country's door before him, and promised that they could buy all kinds of goods as they pleased."<sup>44</sup> The rulers negotiated with each other for four days in Esztergom, and confirmed that the German crusaders would pass peacefully through Hungary. Béla, who was afraid of Frederick, was able to ensure the German crusaders crossed the country without serious incident or looting as a result of his hospitality and several days of negotiations. However, the journey took a long time, a good five weeks, because the two rulers spent several days not only negotiating but also hunting.

Back in Esztergom, at the ceremonial reception, Queen Margaret gave Frederick a magnificent gift, in exchange for which she asked Frederick to try to persuade Béla to release his brother Géza, who had been imprisoned for more than ten years after he was sent to prison around Béla's coronation in 1173 on charges of conspiracy.<sup>45</sup> Emperor Frederick fulfilled the Queen's request and discussed Géza's case with Béla. Finally, they agreed on Géza's release: "The King {Béla III}, who received the Emperor with such great respect, not wanting to sadden him, not only released his brother from his captivity at his request, but also arranged for him to proceed before the Emperor to prepare and show the way with the two thousand Hungarians at his disposal."<sup>46</sup>

Béla released his brother, but obviously the condition was for Géza to leave the country, and a good opportunity arose: Géza joined the German crusaders with a small army. This force of two thousand was not enough for Géza to turn

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43 Runciman 1999, pp. 649–650

44 III. Béla emlékezete 1981, pp. 75–76

45 III. Béla emlékezete 1981, p. 77

46 III. Béla emlékezete 1981, p. 77

against Béla, but in the eyes of Frederick the number of Hungarian crusaders did not seem offensively low, and actually included ten lords: this was the first time in the history of the Crusades that Hungarian crusaders joined a campaign to the Holy Land.

Before the German crusaders led by Frederick crossed into Byzantine territory, a good political relationship developed between the two rulers: Béla donated several carts of flour to the crusaders in Esztergom, then at Szalánkemény, and four camels loaded with gifts to the emperor, worth “about five thousand marks”, and Frederick gave all his ships, which transported the crusaders from Regensburg to Hungary, along with their cargo, to Béla.<sup>47</sup> The good political relationship was also sealed by an alliance in the form of the engagement between Prince Frederick and one of King Béla’s daughters.<sup>48</sup> This favourable atmosphere left such a good memory in the imperial family that the emperor’s son, the later Henry VI, had the reception of his father in Hungary painted on one of the frescoes of his palace in Palermo.<sup>49</sup>

After the army left the Kingdom of Hungary behind and crossed into the Byzantine Empire, however, the political relationship between the two emperors was not that good, even though in Nuremberg in 1188 they agreed on the conditions for the crossing of the western crusaders. One reason for this was that Frederick not only met the Serbian prince and his brother in Niš, but also the two brothers who led the Bulgarians’ anti-Byzantine rebellion, Ivan and Peter Asen. This shocked Isaac II, who even learned that his own envoys had turned against him and sided with Frederick. Isaac reacted poorly to these events: he had the envoys of Frederick – who were distrustful of the Byzantines and sent to Constantinople – captured and held hostage in an attempt to prevent Frederick from doing the same as what had happened during the previous crusades: robberies, violence, hostilities. However, these events could not be prevented by the Byzantine emperor: Frederick conquered Philippopolis in a

47 III. Béla emlékezete 1981, p. 78

48 Borosy 1996, p. 32. Prince Frederick died in the Holy Land in 1191, so the engagement did not become a marriage, just like the engagement of Prince Imre – later King Imre – and the daughter of Frederick in the early 1180s.

49 Makk 1996, p. 178



proper siege, sent his son Prince Frederick to ravage the Byzantine territories upon learning the news of his envoys' capture, and sent a message home to his son Henry to gather a fleet against Constantinople. Next, he contacted Pope Clement III so he could capture Constantinople as part of the crusade, and he planned to lay siege to the city in the spring of 1190.<sup>50</sup>

At this critical point, Béla III tried to mediate between the hostile rulers. As a first step, in November 1189, he wrote to Frederick asking him to release the Hungarians in his crusader army.<sup>51</sup> Frederick interpreted this move as if Béla preferred his own son-in-law, Emperor Isaac, to him, but he did not hold back the Hungarians who wanted to return to Hungary on Béla's orders. In December, under the command of the Bishop of Győr and six ispans, most Hungarians in Frederick's army turned back,<sup>52</sup> but "three Hungarian ispans or barons" as well as Prince Géza continued their march towards Constantinople. However, Frederick sent an envoy to Béla with the returning Hungarians because he did not want to get into a conflict with his new ally.

Of course, such a conflict was not in Béla's interest either, nor was it to weaken the Byzantine Empire against the Holy Roman Empire. So in January 1190, he wrote a letter to his son-in-law, Emperor Isaac, the contents of which he also revealed to Frederick, "in which he warns him {Isaac} that his stubbornness is very harmful and dangerous to his whole country."<sup>53</sup> Finally, shortly afterwards, in February 1190, the two emperors made peace with each other in Edrine, and they agreed that Isaac would transport the German crusaders to the Asian continent not at the Bosphorus, but at the Dardanelles, and that he would also provide them with food in Asia Minor.<sup>54</sup> The crossing of the Dardanelles took place in March 1190, but a few months later, on 10 June 1190, the old Emperor Frederick drowned in the Salef River. The campaign continued after the death of the emperor, but it was no longer as powerful as Frederick himself leading the German crusaders.

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50 Runciman 1999, pp. 651–652

51 Pauler 1899b, p. 5; III. Béla emlékezete 1981, p. 80

52 III. Béla emlékezete 1981, p. 80

53 III. Béla emlékezete 1981, p. 81

54 Runciman 1999, p. 652

Béla III discussed the passage of Frederick I's crusader army across Hungary and the Byzantine territories with Isaac II over a year after the events, in the autumn of 1191. At the face-to-face meeting held in Syrmia, the two were probably satisfied with the way this difficult foreign policy issue was resolved, mostly thanks to Béla, who cleverly and skilfully resolved the political problems as they emerged.<sup>55</sup>

## A Hungarian king in the Holy Land

In addition to the *Illustrated Chronicle*, Antonio Bonfini also praised the military virtues and conduct of King András II:

“But it is said that he only coveted the throne in order to do something worthy of himself and his ancestors.”<sup>56</sup>

This deed “worthy of his ancestors” would have been his campaign in the Holy Land that he had repeatedly vowed, but since he delayed, Pope Innocent III repeatedly called upon him when he was still a Prince. However, after being crowned king by Archbishop John of Kalocsa on 29 May 1205, András did not depart for more than ten years to fulfil his vow.

Pope Innocent knew, and this was confirmed by the tragic outcome of the Children's Crusade in 1212<sup>57</sup>, that only a well-organised army of western crusaders could win in the Holy Land, one that stopped and repressed the Muslim attack at the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa. To this end, in 1213 he sent Robert of Courson as his legate to France to start organising a new crusade, and he convened the universal council by 1215, one of the most important issues of which was to organise this crusade. In April 1213 the Pope sent his letter convening the council to both the Western and Eastern patriarchs, archbishops and bishops.<sup>58</sup>

55 Makk 1996, p. 221; Kristó 2001, p. 178

56 Bonfini 1995, p. 386

57 Bozsóky 1995, pp. 168–174; Runciman 1999, pp. 745–749

58 Török 1999, pp. 65–66

With that, Pope Innocent again urged András to fulfil his crusader vow, but in February 1213 he allowed the king to postpone his departure to the Holy Land for three years, in light of the situation in his country. An excerpt from one of András's letters dated in 1214 reveals that after the murder of his wife he was even more interested in the idea of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In that letter, the king appealed to the Pope that certain Hungarian high priests should not have to attend the universal council to be held next year because of the planned crusade. András wanted to start his campaign to the Holy Land in 1215, before the Council of the Lateran. For this reason, we cannot accept the view that András only started to prepare to fulfil his vow when he had the opportunity to be crowned Latin Emperor in Constantinople, for which he would have had the opportunity only after the death of Henry I on 11 June 1216, while András wanted to depart at the beginning or the summer of 1215, but before the council was to convene on 1 November.<sup>59</sup> Why this did not happen is explained in the letter written by András at the end of 1215, i.e. during the Council of the Lateran: "[...] our request for our son {Kálmán} to be crowned King of Galicia {Halych} was granted by apostolic decree, although the people of Galicia have recently turned away from the oath of loyalty to our son, and the army recruited from the surrounding Ruthenians even laid siege to the Castle of Galicia, where he stayed with his followers. For this reason, we had to rush there in such a hurry and unexpectedly that [...] we could not even wait for our army."<sup>60</sup> So the political reason was that his son Kálmán, the king of Halych, had to be given immediate military aid to stop the rebels rising against him. Eventually, order was restored at the end of 1216, and the power of Kálmán was reinforced.

The other reason for postponing the crusade to the Holy Land planned for 1215 was not primarily political, but since the marriage of a king in that age was also a political step, we can even consider it as such: after the murder of his wife, Gertrude, András II remarried in 1215. His young wife, Yolanda de Courtenay was the daughter of Peter of Courtenay, cousin of French king Philip II and Count of Auxerre and Namur, and her mother, Yolanda of Flanders, was the elder sister of

59 For more details on this issue, see the studies Bárány 2013 and Bárány 2016; Veszprémy 2008, p. 114

60 Árpád- és Anjou-kori levelek 1960, p. 128

Latin Emperors of Constantinople Baldwin and Henry.<sup>61</sup> Emperor Henry (1206-1216) and Margaret, Queen of Thessaloniki, András' elder sister probably played a key role in bringing about the marriage. The political background may have been an emerging French-Hungarian-Serbian alliance against the Bulgarian and Greek states of the Balkan peninsula. András' father-in-law was a relative of Philip II, and so the Hungarian king was already connected to the French ruler on two fronts, since his first wife Agnes, Gertrude's sister, married Philip, although Pope Innocent III protested several times because their relationship was not legal by church law.

In 1215, the year András married Yolanda, Emperor Henry invited András and the Serbian prince to a meeting. Although the meeting in Niš proved fruitless in the long run, it did indicate that András was paying ever more attention to the political situation in the Balkans.<sup>62</sup> However, before he could take action on this matter, on 11 November 1215 the Fourth Council of the Lateran convened, which regarded the proclamation and organisation of a new crusade as one of its main jobs.<sup>63</sup> The Hungarian church was represented by Archbishop of Esztergom John, Bishop of Veszprém Robert and Abbot Pannonhalma Uriah, although András had asked Pope Innocent III in his letter written in 1214 that they would not have to attend the council. Most likely they were able to attend the council because of the delay of the crusade, and later, Abbot Uriah also participated in the campaign in the Holy Land.

The Fourth Council of the Lateran proclaimed the gathering and departure of the crusader army by 1 June 1217. The call of the universal council did not trigger much response in English, French and Italian speaking lands, and no significant armies could be recruited from these territories. Apart from András II of Hungary, only the south-eastern German territories mobilised: Dukes Luis Wittelsbach of Bavaria, Leopold VI of Austria and Otto VII of Merania took up the cross. Leopold was András' cousin, while Otto was Gertrude's brother, so the Hungarian king left with his German relatives for the Holy Land.<sup>64</sup>

61 Pauler 1899b, p. 54

62 Magyar történet 1935, pp. 437–438

63 Jedin 1998, pp. 53–56

64 Magyar történet 1935, pp. 440–441

However, before the actual organisation began, Latin Emperor Henry died unexpectedly in Thessaloniki in June 1216, so the Latin Emperor's throne became vacant; and in July 1216 Pope Innocent III also died, and King András asked his successor, Pope Honorius III (1216–1227), to allow him to depart with his army for the Holy Land as early as the beginning of 1217. Pope Honorius, who had previously urged András in his letter to fulfil his vow as soon as possible, promised the Hungarian king at the end of January 1217 that he would call the crusaders to war on Easter Day of that year. In the same year András introduced new taxes, the extraordinary tax and the eightieth tax, to cover the costs of the crusade.

András chose the sea route, but he planned to leave not from the ports of Sicily or southern Italy, as decided at the Fourth Council of the Lateran, but from the Dalmatian coastal port city of Spalato. For this voyage, the ships were chartered from the great opponent of the Kingdom of Hungary, Venice, which played a dishonourable role in the occupation of Zadar during the Fourth Crusade.<sup>65</sup>

The preparations for the crusade were thorough, and this is also shown by how Christians were received in the Holy Land, and how contemporary chroniclers wrote about the arriving crusader army.<sup>66</sup> When András and his army arrived in Cyprus, they held the first military council. Three kings were present at this meeting: In addition to András, John of Brienne of Jerusalem (1210–1237) and Hugh I of Lusignan, the young Cypriot ruler (1205–1218), and Count of Tripoli Bohemond IV (1187–1233). This first part of the military campaign, which took place in the Holy Land, is also called the “crusade of the three kings” by some chroniclers.<sup>67</sup> At the military council of Cyprus, they could not discuss any concrete military action or military command issues, as they did not want to make any decision about the campaign without Leopold

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65 Pauler 1899b, p. 60

66 Sweeney 1984, p. 123. In light of these sources, especially the chronicle of Jacques de Vitry, we cannot accept the assumption raised so often by historians since Henrik Marczali that this venture on the part of András would have been a “crusade without military significance”, a simple “relic deal”, just a kind of “tourist trip”.

67 Bozsóky 1995, p. 127

VI and the Duke of Bavaria, who were already in Acre at the time. András and the other rulers therefore continued their voyage to Acre, where on 3 November the patriarch of Jerusalem presented the remaining part of the relic of the Holy Cross to the crusaders: King András and Duke Leopold walked barefoot before the Holy Cross and kissed it.<sup>68</sup>

A larger military council was held in Acre, in András' tent, which meant he was considered, if not officially, the commander of the military campaign. This can also be explained by the fact that the Hungarian crusader army was the largest in number, as no matter what the estimate was – from a few thousand to 20,000 – what is certain is that, according to the eyewitness chronicler Jacques de Vitry, there had not been an army in the Holy Land as large as the Hungarian one since the third Crusade. The crusader army of Hungarians, Germans and Austrians, who had no appointed leader, launched three attacks in November and December from their camp in Acre, none of which yielded any major result that could have assisted in the Christian occupation of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, we cannot regard these military operations as completely flawed and ineffective. András did not participate in the second and third operations because he returned sick after the first one, and after the siege of the fortress on Mount Tabor he travelled to his cousin Count of Tripoli Bohemond IV with King Hugh of Cyprus. The reason for the visit was the wedding: Bohemond married Hugh's half-sister, Melisenda. However, a few days after the wedding, there was a funeral: on 10 January 1218, the young Cypriot king Hugh died in Tripoli. His throne was left to his infant son, Henry, with the regent being his widow, Alice of Jerusalem.<sup>69</sup>

At the same time András decided to return home. He marched with his army across Asia Minor all the way to Constantinople, then across the Balkans to Hungary, where, according to a letter he wrote to Pope Honorius, he was faced with a serious situation. However, over the course of the journey of several months, he made political alliances which at first glance seem very strange. Since Gyula Pauler, historians have studied these marital alliances

68 Pauler 1899b, p. 63

69 Bozsóky 1995, pp. 128–134

decided on the way from the Holy Land to Hungary, not forgetting, of course, that according to the norms of the age, a king was not primarily looking for a spouse for his sons and daughters, but was trying to increase the number of his potential political allies.<sup>70</sup> In 1219, the year after his return home, he wrote a letter to the Pope in which he revealed important details about his marriage plans.<sup>71</sup> The first half of the letter depicts the dire situation of Hungary rather vividly, perhaps exaggerating the severe conditions that András faced after his return, but the second part deals with the political situation, which, of course, he describes to the Pope as benefiting the Holy Land: “[...] we could not stay beyond the sea as intended, but even though we returned for reasons beyond our control and will, on our fortunate journey home we gained no less partiality for the Holy Land than if we had stayed longer around Jerusalem.”

Then, in his letter, he described his first marriage plan: King of Armenia Minor, who received the royal title from Emperor Henry VI, was Leo II (1185–1219), who wished to marry his daughter with the son of the Hungarian king, Prince András, and entrust him with the throne of the country. The young Christian kingdom was growing stronger at the time: Leo’s eldest daughter was married to King of Jerusalem John of Brienne, so by the planned marriage András would have become related to the King of Jerusalem, with whom he fought in the military campaign.

The next state along the mainland route was the Sultanate of Iconium, where “the Sultan of Iconium sent us an envoy with a message that if we were to marry one of our daughters or relatives to him, he would no longer be an infidel but would convert to Christianity and be baptised,” wrote András in his letter. At that time Izz ad-Din Kaykaus I was the Sultan of Iconium (1210–1220), who would have been willing to convert to Christianity if András had married one of his daughters or other female relatives. This was a request of great importance, since the idea from a Muslim ruler to convert to Christianity was very rare, and we do not even know of any other Muslim ruler making such a decision in that age.

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70 Pauler 1899b, pp. 69–70

71 Árpád- és Anjou-kori levelek 1960, pp. 130–132

The next agreement was made in Nicaea with András' brother-in-law, the (Greek) emperor Theodore I Laskaris (1208-1222) where they engaged their children, Mary and Béla, the future King Béla IV, to reinforce their alliance.<sup>72</sup>

We do not know whether he then met his mother-in-law, Yolanda, the regent in Constantinople, but we do know that Bulgarian Tsar Ivan Asen II (1218-1241) asked for the hand in marriage of Mary, András' daughter.

András could have returned to Hungary towards the end of 1218, and if we look at the map, we can see that he surrounded his mother-in-law, Yolanda, who was a regent in the imperial seat in Constantinople at the time, with relatives and allies from the County of Tripoli, Bulgaria and the Kingdom of Thessalonica, and even the Sultan of the Muslim Iconium sought András' friendship. When we look at these, we cannot clearly say that András' ideas of making alliances were haphazard, even though these ideas changed in the coming years.<sup>73</sup>

After András returned home, the events of the Fifth Crusade continued, and in the spring of 1218 military operations even intensified. The crusaders of Duke Leopold VI of Austria, including a Hungarian unit under the command of Bishop of Eger Thomas, were joined by crusaders from Western Europe and laid siege to Damietta, which eventually failed in the same way as András' military operations in the Holy Land. The siege was long and tough, many of the crusaders fell, including two Hungarian bishops: Gyula Pauler mentions Peter, the Bishop of Győr, and Simon, the Bishop of Várad.<sup>74</sup> Bishops Thomas and Robert returned to Hungary around 1220, after the failed siege of Damietta, and they probably met Saint Francis of Assisi in the camp of the Crusaders.

72 Incidentally, the journey that had been without hostile attack or other inconvenience thus far was disturbed by a political conflict in Nicaea: The sons of Géza, uncle of András II, whom the Hungarian lords wanted to invite to the Hungarian throne back in 1210, argued with András. Nonetheless, András continued his journey undisturbed.

73 András probably did not plan to be elected as a Latin Emperor later, which is shown by the fact that when his brother-in-law Robert of Courtenay was elected emperor – most likely on the advice of Pope Honorius III – after the death of his mother Yolanda, András spent the winter of 1220-1221 in Hungary without suggesting that he wanted to take the emperor's throne. In fact, when Robert continued his journey to Constantinople in March 1221, András and his son Béla accompanied him to the Bulgarian border, where they attended the wedding of Mary and Tsar Ivan.

74 Pauler 1899b, p. 71



In the summer or autumn of 1223, Pope Honorius sent a letter to King András and asked him to take up the cross again and join Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, who had promised to launch a crusade to the Holy Land in 1225: “[...] How great Hungary’s preparation for this assistance would be, the country that is so terrible for the enemies of the cross! Far be it from the people of Endre {András II} not to arm themselves in the fight for the Son of God and let their swords rust and forsake victory.”<sup>75</sup>

András was not averse to the plan, and several bishops and lords even took up the cross, but Hungarian crusaders eventually did depart for the Holy Land. Nearly two hundred years after King St. Stephen opened Hungary to pilgrims from Western Europe, direct Hungarian participation in the crusade movement, the armed pilgrimage, came to an end. Hungary did not break away from the idea of the crusade, but later the country’s involvement took a different form. The first chapter of the crusades, which was important for Hungary, was closed.



Fragments of the tomb of Queen Gertrudis, c.1235,  
Museum of Fine Arts - Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest

75 Quoted by Pauler 1899b, pp. 85–86

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# RELATIONS AMONG THE HISTORICAL POPULATIONS OF THE CARPATHIAN BASIN IN LIGHT OF RECENT ARCHAEOGENETIC FINDINGS

## Introduction

The most important objective of the joint archaeogenetic laboratory of the Institute of Hungarian Research and the University of Szeged is to reconstruct the population history of the Carpathian Basin, during which our initial efforts were focused on exploring the origins of the conquering Hungarians. Since the beginning of our work, we have kept up with methodological developments in the field, as reflected in our scientific publications. In our most recent work, we analysed a large number of samples from the Hun, Avar and conquest periods at the whole genome level<sup>1</sup>. This is considered the most modern and highest resolution investigation given that it analyses the entire hereditary material set, from which it is possible to reconstruct the ancestry relations with high certainty. I will present these results in this paper, but I wish to note at the outset that our previous results from the analysis of maternal and paternal

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1 Maróti et al. 2022

lineages were not contradicted by the genome results, but merely clarified to a considerable extent.

## **The origin of the European Huns**

It is most convenient to begin the presentation of the material chronologically, with the Hun period. Given the short duration of the Hun period in the Carpathian Basin (late-4<sup>th</sup> century AD – mid-5<sup>th</sup> century AD), the Hun finds are modest in comparison with other periods, and the number of finds that may actually be the legacy of the Huns entering the Carpathian Basin is negligible. To focus our investigations on the latter category, with the help of expert archaeologists we collected remains typically discovered in solitary graves of Mongoloid or mixed anthropological type, along with typical jewellery and weaponry of the period. One of the most important questions of the period is whether the European Huns were related to the Asian Huns (Xiongnu). Fortunately for us, in the 2020 publication by Jeong et al.<sup>2</sup>, which outlines the genetic history of Mongolia, among others 60 genomes were published from the Mongolian Xiongnu period (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC – 1<sup>st</sup> century AD), providing an excellent benchmark for answering this question.

In this context, it is worth mentioning the oft-heard layman's objection that kinship with the Huns cannot be genetically proven because there is no "Hun gene", since the adjective "Hun" does not denote an ethnic group but a political formation. These empires were multi-ethnic and multilingual states forged from many peoples. This sounds convincing because the second half of the statement is true; nevertheless, the first half is false. It is easy to understand why by looking at the example of the Xiongnu genome analyses. In Mongolia, just before the Asian Hun period, two very different human genetic types existed. The western half of Mongolia was inhabited by the descendants of the Asian Scythians of European origin, and the eastern half by the descendants

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2 Jeong et al. 2020

of the ancient Mongoloid Slab Grave culture of Siberian origin. From the studies of Jeong et al.<sup>3</sup> we know that the two populations intermingled with each other and with an Iranian population from the Turan lowlands in the Xiongnu period, which also mixed with Chinese and Sarmatian populations during the late Xiongnu period. Of course, there is indeed no uniform “Asian Hun gene”, or more correctly “genome type”, but instead there is a large number of genome spectra specific to a particular place and time. In other words, the above admixtures have produced several unique genome formations specific to the Asian Huns that did not appear anywhere else in the world. This is the key reason why genetic relatedness can be established despite genetic diversity, which is made possible by advanced genome analysis softwares. For example, in the Jeong’s publication<sup>4</sup> they were able to identify Chinese, Iranian and Sarmatian admixtures in the Xiongnu, all of which were also descendants of earlier admixtures, because genome analysis algorithms can find the optimal sources of an examined genome from a large number of possible sources and determine admixture proportions. Consequently, genome analyses can indeed answer the question of whether or not the European Hun genomes we are studying can be traced back to any of the known Asian Hun genome types.

After this methodological digression, we can now return to the presentation of our results. From the 9 Hun genomes we analysed, two armed men buried with partial horse remains definitely had Mongolian ancestry, and their genomes corresponded to the genome type that was typical exclusively to the particular Late Xiongnu, which showed a Scythian–Slab-grave–Chinese admixture. What is more, these Carpathian Basin Hun genomes appeared to be almost identical to another European Hun genome (*Kurayly\_Hun\_380CE*) discovered near the Ural Mountains.<sup>5</sup> A third Hun genome we studied was found to be an admixture of Xiongnu and local Carpathian Basin ancestry. One other genome from the Hun period was identified by the program as 100% Sarmatian, two others as Sarmatian-local admixtures, and one as an Asian Scythian-local admixture.

3 Joeng et al. 2020

4 Joeng et al. 2020

5 Gneccchi Ruscone et al. 2021

Two further Hun finds were clearly of Gothic-Germanic ancestry. Our results show that some of the European Huns certainly had Asian Hun ancestry, while others were of Sarmatian and Germanic ancestry integrated along the way, which is almost exactly what we would expect based upon the historical sources. Of course, the composition of the European Hun empire was different from that of the Xiongnu, but it inherited its political structure<sup>6</sup>, and according to our data, part of its population as well. Importantly from the perspective of further studies, we have identified a specific genome composition that can be traced back to the Xiongnu, but is now specific to the European Huns.

## The origin of the Avars

The age of the Huns was followed by the Avar period (568-850 AD), and the number of Avar finds excavated in Hungary is very high. The Avar period was very heterogeneous in archaeological and anthropological terms<sup>7</sup>, so with the help of archaeologists and anthropologists we have tried to compile a representative sample set including of all the human and archaeological types from the cemeteries excavated in the various regions of the Great Plain. To obtain a realistic picture of the period as a whole, we have analysed 40 samples from the Early Avar period, 33 samples from the Middle Avar period and 70 samples from the Late Avar period, from a total of 35 cemeteries.

The analyses showed that more than a third (55) of the 143 individuals had a distinctly local, European genome, while 88 had varying proportions of Asian heritage, i.e. they could be immigrants or an admixture of immigrants and locals. We have shown that 12 individuals carrying purely Asian genomes, devoid of any European components, descended from the same former population. Of these 12 individuals, 10 were buried in 8 different cemeteries in the Early Avar period, and 4 of them could have been members of the early elite based on the artifacts buried with them. These 12 individuals can be

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6 Kim 2013

7 Fóthi 2000

considered the prototypes of Avar immigrants and were therefore analysed in detail. Their genome composition clearly indicated an ancient Mongolian origin, and they proved to be descendants of the early Xiongnu. This suggests that the Avars and the Huns were descended from distant common ancestors, but to avoid any misunderstanding, it should be stressed that we are talking here only about the presumably elite strata of Avars and Huns originating from Mongolia.

Of the other 76 individuals carrying Asian ancestry, 26 proved to be an admixture of immigrant Avar elites and the local population in the Carpathian Basin, while a further 9 also had Hun and Iranian components. The analysis showed that the remaining 41 individuals lacked the heritage of the Avar elite, and instead were an admixture of Hun and Iranian ancestry as well as varying proportions of the local population in the Carpathian Basin. The Hun component was identified by our own European Hun samples and the Xiongnu genomes.

The data suggests that the local, migrant Avar and Hun communities were initially well separated by place of residence and burial. For example, no or hardly any Asian genetic traces were found in the cemeteries of Alattyán-Tulát, Homokmégy-Halom, Mélykút-Sáncdűlő, Szeged-Makkoserdő, Székkutas-Kápolnadűlő and Kiskundorozsma-Kettőshatár-I, and the Szeged-Fehértó-A, Szeged-Kundomb, Kiskundorozsma-Daruhalom, Kiskőrös-Pohibuj-Mackó dűlő and Sükösd-Ságod communities were also mainly composed of descendants of local indigenous people. By contrast, the former communities of the Csepel-Kavicsbánya, Kiskőrös-Vágóhídi dűlő, Kunpeszér-Felsőpeszér, Csólyospálos-Felsőpálos, Kiskundorozsma-Kettőshatár-II, Tatárszentgyörgy, Madaras-Téglavető, Ároktő-Csík-gát and Felgyő-Ürmös-tanya cemeteries were mainly composed of Avar immigrants. As already mentioned, a third group of Avars was dominated by the Hun heritage, such as the Avar period communities of Makó-Mikócsa-halom, Árkus-Homokbánya, Szarvas-Grexa-Téglagyár, Dunavecse-Kovacsos-dűlő and Szegvár-Oromdűlő.

In conclusion, the Avars and the Huns were related in two ways. On the one hand, the elites of both immigrant groups came from Mongolia, with early Xiongnu ancestry, and on the other hand, a significant part of the Avar



immigrants were remnants of the former European Hun Empire. Our data suggests that with the arrival of the Avars in Europe, the peoples previously living there were only overlaid by a smaller group arriving from Mongolia. This fits well with the picture of Kim<sup>8</sup> reconstructed from the historical data, according to which both the Huns and the Avars continued the political structure of the Xiongnu Empire, and the Avars replaced only the leading layer of the former Hun Empire.

## The origin of the conquering Hungarians

The Avar era was followed by the arrival of Árpád and his people, the Hungarian conquest. We significantly expanded our pool of samples from the cemeteries of the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries, analysing 48 genomes from 18 so called “campsite” cemeteries representing the 10<sup>th</sup> century elite, and 65 remains from 9 so called “village” cemeteries, representing mainly the common people of the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries. As with the Avars, again we found that almost half of the 113 individuals (48) had local European genomes, while the remaining 53 genomes contained varying proportions of Asian components. The 12 individuals with the highest Asian proportions were shown to have a high degree of genomic similarity, and to belong to the same contemporary population despite being from 9 different cemeteries. Since these 12 individuals can genetically be considered as prototypes of the immigrant conquerors, we analysed their genome composition in detail to shed light on their ancestry.

The genomes of the 12 “conqueror prototypes” most closely resembled those of the Bashkirs and the Volga and Siberian Tatars among the populations living today, confirming the conclusion we had previously drawn from the results of maternal and paternal lineages. Among the ancient populations, the most similar in chronological order were the following: The Bronze Age Okunevo and Karasuk samples excavated in the Minusinsk Basin, the Iron Age

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8 Kim 2013

Sakas excavated in Kazakhstan, the Asian Scythians excavated in the Tuva-Altai region and in the western part of Mongolia, members of the Sargat culture excavated east of the Urals, and the Xiongnu samples excavated in western Mongolia. These mark a well-defined geographical region, corresponding to the forest-steppe area east of the Ural Mountains, extending as far as the Altai, where the Asian Scythians lived.

As genome similarity alone does not shed light on ancestry, we will now address this issue. We found that the 12 “conqueror prototypes” can be traced back to ancestors common to our closest linguistic relatives, the Mansi (Vogul), the Samoyed-speaking Nganasan, Selkup and Enet peoples. Meanwhile, the highest-resolution analysis (*qpAdm*) showed that the “conqueror prototype” genome can be modelled from 50% Mansi, 35% early or late Sarmatian, and 15% Xiongnu or Asian Scythian genomes. Significantly, only the Sarmatian genomes found in the Ural region fitted the model, besides a few unusual Asian Scythian genomes with a considerable Mongolian Slab Grave heritage. From the genomes we can also determine the dates of the former admixtures: we managed to demonstrate that the Sarmatian admixture occurred between 643 and 431 BC, and the Hun or Scythian admixture between 217 and 315 AD. These results suggest that ancestors of the “conqueror prototype” once belonged to a common ancient population with the ancestors of the Mansi, and that the two peoples separated in the Iron Age. Following this separation, the ancestors of the conquerors mixed with the early Sarmatians to a considerable extent, followed 700 years later by a second mixing, which dates immediately before the European Hun period. This second admixture occurred with the distinctive Scythian–Slab-grave–Chinese genotype, which undoubtedly identifies the descendants of the Asian Huns, but the admixture date was much closer to the European Hun period. Having shown above the genetic continuity between the Asian and European Huns, and moreover, having found in the European Huns this very Scythian–Slab-grave–Chinese admixture genome heritage, it can be stated that the last admixture with the European Huns occurred shortly before they crossed the Volga and were first mentioned in written sources.

Genome analysis also allows for the identification of more distant ancestors, so this issue was investigated too. The result has shown that the common

ancestors of the Mansis and the “conqueror prototype”, which can now be called “proto-Ugric” on the basis of linguistic models, originated from an almost 50/50 admixture of the Late Bronze Age Mezhovskaya culture and the ancestors of the Nganasans (a group of Samoyeds). The Mezhovskaya were the dominant culture of the Late Bronze Age in the forest-steppe zone of the southern Urals between 1300 and 700 BC, but their territory extended from the European side of the Urals to the Altai, and their members are considered by many researchers to be ancestors of the Ugric people<sup>9</sup>. The Mezhovskaya strand points to the same area in northern Kazakhstan as the other genome analyses. In addition, Mezhovskaya is archaeologically linked to the earlier Karasuk culture, so the similarity of the Karasuk genomes to those of the examined conquerors cannot be coincidental either. Both Bronze Age peoples practised mixed farming with crop production, fishing, hunting and animal husbandry, and the horse played a prominent role in their way of life.

The distant past of the “conqueror prototype” can be placed in an even broader context based on the known genome data. The Asian Scythians have previously been shown to be descended entirely from an admixture of the Middle Bronze Age Sintashta-Andronovo population of European descent and the indigenous Siberian population of Asian descent<sup>10</sup>. Since the Mezhovskaya population is also of Sintashta-Andronovo descent<sup>11</sup>, and the Nganasans are an ancient Siberian population, the early history and geographic location of the “conqueror prototype” coincides with that of the Asian Scythians. In other words, their Iron Age ancestors may have formed a group of Asian Scythians.

Now that we have the genome history of the 12 “conqueror prototypes”, let us examine the 53 other individuals who also carried eastern genome components. Since most of these represented the population of village (commoner) cemeteries of the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries, we hypothesised that they may have originated from a admixture of immigrants and the local indigenous population of the Carpathian

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9 Koryakova and Epimakhov 2007

10 Narasimhan et al. 2019; Gneccchi and Ruscone et al. 2021

11 Allentoft et al. 2015

Basin. The analysis showed that the genomes of 31 individuals could indeed be modelled well as an admixture of the 12 “conqueror prototypes” and the local people, while 5 samples also contained Hun and Iranian components. In the remaining 17 individuals, however, the program found no traces of “conqueror prototype” heritage, instead showing them to be of Hun or Avar descent, with varying degrees of Iranian and local admixtures. Most of these belonged to the population of the “campsite” (elite) cemeteries.

The results show that, like the Avars, the conquering Hungarians were also heterogeneous in their composition. The majority of them came from the population of the “conqueror prototype”, but they were also joined by a significant proportion of the population of the former Hun and Avar empires. Some of them may have united with the Hungarians before the conquest, while the rest did so in the Carpathian Basin. The conquering Hungarians were also related to the Huns in two ways. On the one hand, they mixed with the Huns in their ancestral homeland between 217 and 315 AD, and on the other hand, they integrated a significant proportion of Hun descendants. One of the most striking pieces of evidence for this is that the father of individual *K2-61* excavated in the Karos-2 cemetery was the individual *K1-3286* of Hun origin excavated in the Karos-1 cemetery, while his mother belonged to the “conqueror prototype”. Our data suggests that the conquerors also integrated the local population very effectively, as evidenced directly by the fact that the daughter or sister (*SH-3*) of the individual (*SO-5*) excavated in the Sárrétudvari-Órhalom campsite cemetery was buried in the neighbouring Sárrétudvari-Hízófold village cemetery.

## Summary

The large sample size and careful sampling of the Avar and conquest-period genomes we have analysed certainly provide a good representation of the population composition of the two periods. This is why we can say that our high-resolution genome analyses have reconstructed the population history of these periods to the highest accuracy currently available. We have successfully

identified groups representing the immigrant elite from both periods, and have traced their most likely origins back to the Bronze Age. Our data showed that the local European Bronze Age population outnumbered the immigrants in both periods. This can also be said for the Hun period, despite the fact that here the purposive sampling was primarily directed at immigrants. Our results also help to answer a number of questions that have been debated until now. The biological continuity demonstrated between Asian and European Huns confirms the continuity between the two ethnic groups and the two empires, which has been questioned until now. The Mongolian origins of the Avar elite support the theory of their Juan-Juan origin. The high degree of overlap between the populations of the Avar and Hun periods may explain why the Avars are absent from the Hungarian chronicles. Our data also shows that the ancestors of the conquerors always lived in the forest-steppe and steppe zones, and that the Mansi moved to their northern habitat after the Iron Age split, as had been indicated by the common Ugric vocabulary for horse-keeping<sup>12</sup> and the mythological traditions of the Mansis concerning the horse<sup>13</sup>. Our data confirms the relationship of the Hungarians with the Huns, which may provide historians with new evidence to reassess their earlier doubtful position<sup>14</sup>. The history of the conquerors reconstructed back to the Bronze Age may also help to clarify previous linguistic hypotheses, for example, the Iranian-origin loanwords<sup>15</sup> in the Hungarian language may be linked to the Sarmatians, while the earliest Turkish loanwords<sup>16</sup> may well be attributed to a contribution from the Huns.

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12 Zaicz et al. 2006

13 Napol'skikh et al. 2008

14 Rady 2018

15 Abondolo 1998

16 Róna-Tas et al. 2011

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Hungarian flag from the Konigsfelden Monastery, 1st half of the 14th century,  
Bernisches Historisches Museum, Berne. Photo N. Frey





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This book was published by the Institute of Hungarian Research (MKI)

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Chief publisher: Gábor Horváth-Lugossy, Director General of MKI

Editor in charge: Márton Mati

Graphic design, technical editing: Mihály Tóth

Press and bookbinding: OOK-PRESS Nyomda, Veszprém

Manager in charge: Attila Szathmáry



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