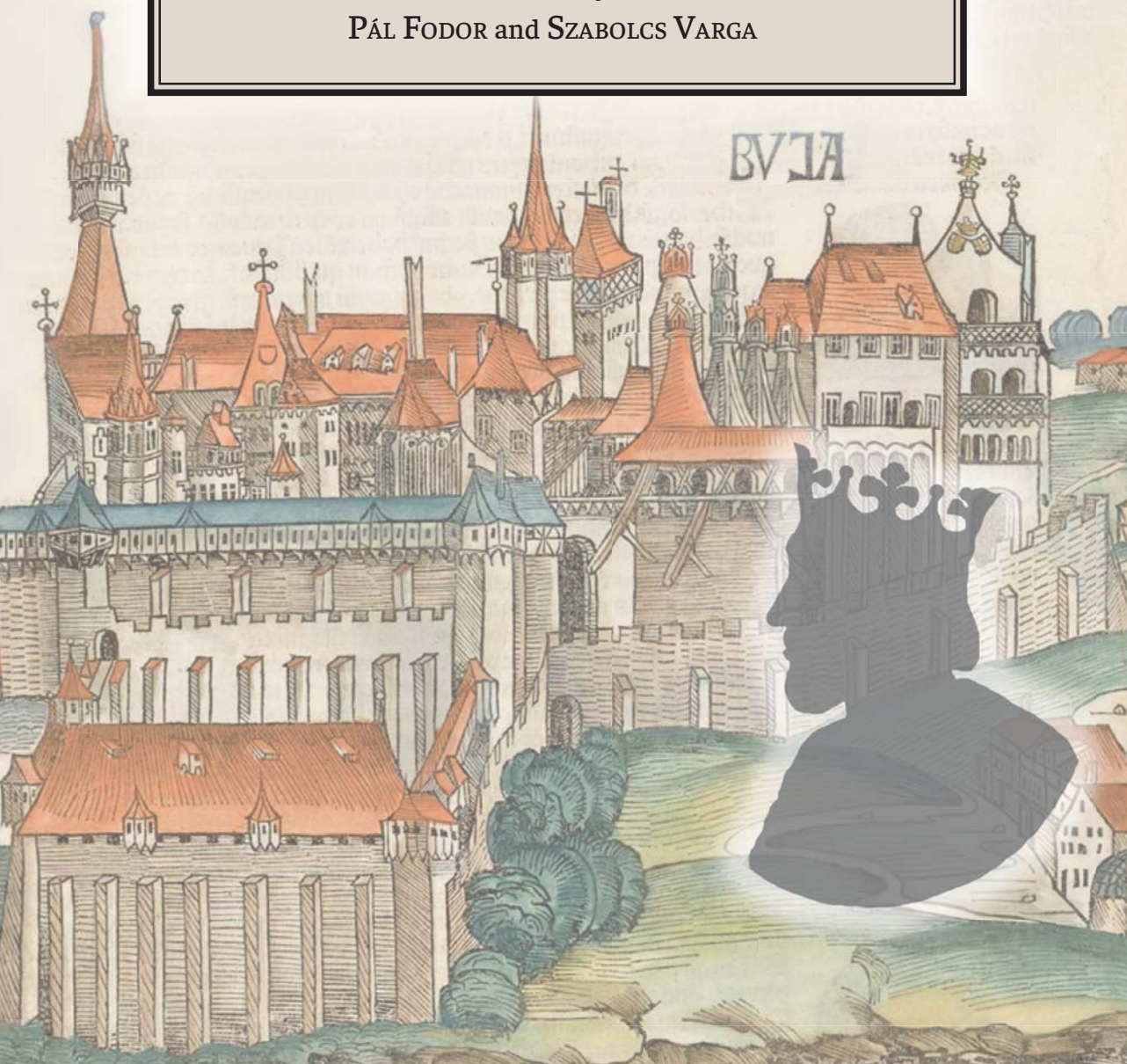


Buda urbs hungarie clarissima regum sedes: in litore danubij sita: hungaria enim ultra et citra danubium latissimas terras occupat: quod citra danubium est: olim pannonia fuit. que ab oriente mesiam ab occidente noricum habuit. septentrione et danubius. austrum illirici montes excepere: que transdanubium hungaria iacet: pars sunt et dacos. non qui nunc in regno: sed palustri populo qui vicinam occupant vicinam valaciam adhuc territorium est quod in quo meritis salubris: et efficitur in bos: inde rex dux qui palatium sunt. Anno eius superius et ambitione iectas natione

MOHÁCS 1526–2026
RECONSTRUCTION AND REMEMBRANCE

A FORGOTTEN HUNGARIAN ROYAL DYNASTY: THE SZAPOLYAIS

Edited by
PÁL FODOR and SZABOLCS VARGA



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Series editors

Pál Fodor and Norbert Pap

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2020

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Acta Tomiciana</i>	<i>Epistole, legationes, responsa, actiones, res geste serenissimi principis Sigismundi, eius nominis primi, regis Polonie, magni ducis Lithvanie, Russie, Prussie, Masovie domini ... per Stanislaum Gorski. Vols. I–X. Posnaniae, 1852–1899.</i>
<i>Arch. I.</i>	Norbert C. Tóth, Richárd Horváth, Tibor Neumann and Tamás Pálosfalvi, <i>Magyarország világi archontológiája 1458–1526. Vol. I: Főpapok és bárók.</i> (Magyar Történelmi Emlékek, Adattárak) Budapest, 2016.
<i>Arch. II.</i>	Norbert C. Tóth, Richárd Horváth, Tibor Neumann, Tamás Pálosfalvi and András W. Kovács, <i>Magyarország világi archontológiája 1458–1526. Vol. II: Megyék.</i> (Magyar Történelmi Emlékek, Adattárak) Budapest, 2017.
Brodericus, <i>De conflictu Hungarorum</i>	Stephanus Brodericus, <i>De conflictu Hungarorum cum Solymano Turcarum imperatore ad Mohach historia verissima.</i> (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Medii Recentisque Aevorum. Series Nova, VI.) Ed. Petrus Kulcsár. Budapest, 1985.
Brodericus, <i>Epistulae</i>	Stephanus Brodericus, <i>Epistulae.</i> (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Medii Recentisque Aevorum. Series Nova, XVI.) Edidit, introduxit et commentariis instruxit Petrus Kasza. Budapest, 2012.
<i>EOE</i>	Sándor Szilágyi (ed.), <i>Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek / Monumenta Comititalia Regni Transylvaniae. Vols. I–XXI.</i> (Magyar Történelmi Emlékek, III; Magyar Országgyűlési Emlékek) Budapest, 1876–1898.
<i>ETE</i>	Vince Bunyitay et al. (eds.), <i>Egyháztörténelmi emlékek a magyarországi hitújítás korából / Monumenta ecclesiastica tempora innovatae in Hungaria religionis illustrantia. Vols. I–V.</i> Budapest, 1902–1912.
<i>Fons</i>	<i>Fons. Forráskutatás és Történeti Segédtudományok,</i> Budapest

ABBREVIATIONS

Istvánffy, <i>Historiarum de rebus</i>	Nicolai Isthvanfi Pannoni <i>Historiarum de rebus Ungaricis libri XXXIV</i> . Coloniae Agrippinae, 1622.
Istvánffy, <i>Magyarok dolgairól</i>	Istvánffy Miklós <i>Magyarok dolgairól írt históriája Tállyai Pál XVII. századi fordításában</i> . Vols. I/1–I/2. (Történelmi Források, I.) Edited by Péter Benits. Budapest, 2001–2003.
<i>Memoria rerum</i>	1504–1566 <i>Memoria rerum</i> . Magyarországon legutóbbi László király fiának legutóbbi Lajos királynak születése óta esett dolgok emlékezete (<i>Verancsics-évkönyv</i>). (Bibliotheca Historica) Edited with an afterword and notes by József Bessenyei. Budapest, 1981.
MNL OL DL	Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára, Diplomatikai Levéltár (National Archives of Hungary, Collection of Medieval Charters), Budapest
MNL OL DF	Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára, Diplomatikai Fényképgyűjtemény (National Archives of Hungary, Collected Photocopies of Medieval Charters), Budapest
MOE	Vilmos Fraknói (ed.), <i>Magyar Országgyűlési Emlékek / Monumenta Comitalia Regni Hungariae</i> . Vols. I–XXXII. (Magyar Történelmi Emlékek, III; Magyar Országgyűlési Emlékek) Budapest, 1874–1899.
OSZK	Országos Széchényi Könyvtár (National Széchényi Library), Budapest
ÖStA AVA FHKA HFU	Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Wien, Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv, Finanz und Hofkammerarchiv, Hoffinanz Ungarn
ÖStA HHStA UA AA	Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Wien, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Ungarische Akten, Allgemeine Akten
Szapolyai oklt.	Tibor Neumann, <i>A Szapolyai család oklevéltára</i> . Vol. I: <i>Levelek és oklevelek (1458–1526)</i> . (Magyar Történelmi Emlékek, Okmánytárak) Budapest, 2012.
Szerémi, <i>Emlékirat</i>	<i>Szerémi György II. Lajos és János királyok házi káplánja emlékirata Magyarország romlásáról 1484–1543</i> . (Monumenta Hungariae Historica, II; Scriptores, 1.) Published by Gusztáv Wenzel. Pest, 1857.
Szerémi, <i>Magyarország romlásáról</i>	György Szerémi, <i>Magyarország romlásáról</i> . (Monumenta Hungarica, V.) László Erdélyi's translation adapted by László Juhász. Introduction and notes by György Székely. Budapest, 1961.

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4. Palatine Imre Szapolyai’s († 1487) tomb in Szepeshely (Spišská Kapitula)
5. Palatine István Szapolyai’s († 1499) tomb in Szepeshely (Spišská Kapitula)
6. Voivode John Szapolyai’s signet ring from 1516
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2. Nicolo Nelli: Portrait of John Sigismund, Prince of Opole, 1566
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INTRODUCTION

This collection of essays hopes to settle an old debt to Hungarian historiography, while it is also an act of reckoning that seeks to re-evaluate the Szapolyai family's major but questionable role over more than a hundred years in the history of the Kingdom of Hungary. A debt, because even though the family gave the country both a crowned king, King John I (1526–1540), and an elected king, John II (John Sigismund; 1540–1571), posterity has treated these kings with negligence. No exhaustive monographs have been written on King John's life path, and more research also needs to be done on the country's history during the reign of the so-called 'Szapolyai heirs', i.e. Isabella and her son. Of course, the Szapolyais are not unknown in Hungarian historical memory, but Hungarian historiography has never attempted to give a systematised view of the role of the family that rose to power in the early 15th century. This work can therefore also be regarded as an act of reckoning: over the past few years detailed research has been carried out and we have reached a point at which these new findings can be presented to readers. We believe it is particularly important that on the basis of these findings a book also be published about the family in English, since the last few decades have seen a spurt of scholarly literature on the Jagiellonian, Tudor and Vasa dynasties, among others, while the Szapolyais, being of Hungarian origin, have remained almost entirely unknown figures of the European political relations of the early modern period.

A great number of lessons can be learnt from the Szapolyai family's fate and political legacy, as these are an almost impeccable reflection of the Kingdom of Hungary's ever-decreasing room for manoeuvre. This era, during which the European monarchies of the early modern period were born, was full of suffering; in the Carpathian basin, due to the Ottoman conquest, it had even more tragic consequences. The transformation of Hungarian society took place in the 16th century amidst constant military pressure, continuous defeats and political instability; during much of this period, the country was led by the Szapolyais. We can therefore state with all certainty that their reign, the Szapolyai era (1526–1571), was one of the most critical periods in Hungarian

history. So it is no coincidence that, with hindsight of almost 500 years, the family has once again received a great deal of attention.

The present collection of 15 essays is the result of research on one of the major turning points in Hungarian history: the Battle of Mohács. Readers will see the story of the Szapolyai family's rise during the late Middle Ages unfold before their eyes, while there has also been a focus on re-evaluating King John's historical role as a monarch. King John's wife and widow Isabella Jagiellon is an undisputable member of the dynasty, as, following the fall of Buda, she reigned for a considerable period in the eastern part of the country on behalf of her son, as guardian and queen mother. The queen's life path and her importance as a monarch is presented in the first volume in our series: Ágnes Máté and Teréz Oborni (eds.), *Isabella Jagiellon, Queen of Hungary (1539–1559)*. Some of the essays examine the period following the queen's death, when the eastern part of the Kingdom of Hungary was under the rule of King John II.

*

“Everything whole is in shattered parts, / every flame just a fitful ebb” – wrote Endre Ady, an early 20th-century Hungarian poet (translated by Donald Gordon). The thought conveyed in his moving poem *Kocsi-út az éjszakában* (Night-Ride on a Cart) holds true for both the Szapolyais and the period of their reign. Perhaps this is no accident, as the historical contexts are very similar: the family ascended to the throne at the time of the Kingdom of Hungary's disintegration, amidst constant blows from the Ottoman Empire, while the poem was written after the loss of the First World War (1914–1918), on the eve of the country's renewed dismemberment (1920).

The question arises, however, of how to evaluate the Szapolyai family's performance during the breaking points of the era, i.e. during the decades around the Battle of Mohács and the fall of Buda in 1541. This volume seeks to find an answer to this question, without aiming to be exhaustive. Reading the series of essays, two questions are worth noting: one is the Szapolyai family's success story, which followed one of its members all the way to the throne; the other is how the performance of the various members of the dynasty, mainly that of King John, can be assessed.

No reasoned, thorough and comprehensive answer has yet been given to the first question, because the rise of the Szapolyai family has not been systematically examined by Hungarian history writing. This is surprising, however, as our historiography has always attached great importance to national royal dynasties. In Hungary's case, such dynasties included the heirs of Grand Prince Árpád (1000–1301), Matthias Corvinus (r. 1458–1490) and also the Szapolyais (1526–1570), as opposed to the group of so-called foreign royal dynasties, which included the House of Anjou (1301–1382), the House of Limburg-Luxembourg through King Sigismund (r. 1387–1437), the House of Habsburg (1437–1457; 1526–1918) and the House of Jagiello through three of its members, Vladislaus I and II, and King Louis II (r. 1440–1444; 1490–1516; 1516–1526).

Although an assessment of the Szapolyai family is not at all independent from the achievements or the memory of either the Jagiellonians or the Habsburgs, these kings are only slightly touched upon in this collection.

There is a sharp contrast between how Hungarian historical memory treated the rulers of the House of Árpád and King Matthias and how it dealt with the Szapolyais. While the former were perceived positively, and their reign has for centuries been regarded as the height of the Hungarian nation, the Szapolyais and their era were not viewed so favourably. They were coyly avoided and no attempts were made to include them as a 'national dynasty' in the pantheon of Hungarian memory. Let us acknowledge that the public mind in Hungary regarded the Szapolyais unworthy even of being mentioned on a par with our greatest kings. In their case, noble descent did not automatically lead to a positive attitude towards them. It is indicative that the period or reign of the Capetian House of the Anjou – Charles I (1301–1342) and Louis I (1342–1382) – was also ranked more favourably, as in their case their foreign descent was not stigmatized. On the contrary, as regards the Szapolyais, even contemporaries were gossiping that with John being crowned king of Hungary the Holy Crown had been placed on the head of a monarch of Slavic origin. Despite obvious parallels between the Hunyadi and Szapolyai families, despite King John seeing himself as the successor of the Hunyadis' rule, despite having renovated the tomb stone of John Hunyadi, the great 'Defeater of the Turks', in the cathedral of Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia), and despite the lesser nobility's fear during these decades of everything that was foreign, not a single spark of the glory surrounding the Hunyadis shone upon the Szapolyais.

In spite of the Szapolyai family's spectacular rise, King John did not become the successor of the Hunyadis – though let us add that, compared to Matthias, he was not given much room for manoeuvre – and yet no one could foresee this during the decades in which the foundations for the family's advancement were laid. The achievements of the first generation of Szapolyais can actually be compared to the Hunyadis' career a couple of decades earlier: Imre (Emeric) and István Szapolyai made great careers in Matthias's immediate surroundings, and their sons, John (János) and György, continued to thrive. The first generation reached the top of the political hierarchy when István Szapolyai was appointed to the post of palatine (Hung. *nádor*), only one step away from the royal title. That the family was able to obtain a set of domains and fame that made it possible for John to successfully aspire to the crown is also testament to the efforts and achievements of the first Szapolyai generation.

When examining the family's political and governmental achievements, we can state that the family had nothing to be ashamed of, and the same can be said of the cultural ambitions of its members. Imre the 'Literate', who laid the foundations of the Szapolyai family's influence, gained the trust of John Hunyadi and Matthias with his knowledge and expertise. King John himself also had an advanced knowledge of Latin, and was familiar with classical writers, while his son John II had obtained a high level of literacy, albeit of another kind. True, John II was educated mostly in Poland, and returned home to try to establish

a university in Szászsebes (Sebeș). Neither did the members of the family have anything to hide in terms of aristocratic and later royal representation and patronage. They carried out major construction works at their main residences in Szepesvár (Spišský hrad) and Trencsén (Trenčín). Their castles and domains can be compared to the castle of Vajdahunyad (Hunedoara), the ancient residence of the Hunyadi family. Those visiting Szepesvár would rightly have the impression that they had arrived at the court of a family with serious ambitions, destined to greatness. Their chapel in the church of Szepeshely (Spišská Kapitula) declared the founders' glory and fear of God for ever, while they were included in the prayers of several Pauline monasteries they supported. Due to the many churches founded and constructed by the family, their coat of arms with a wolf became widely known across the country; in the Szepesség (Spiš) region the family seat was established within a couple of decades, and in 1465 the family also obtained the title of 'count' (Germ. *Graf*; Hung. *gróf*) of Szepes, and subsequently ruled the area as if it were a minor kingdom.

We have hitherto had little knowledge of how the Szapolyais administered their own estates. On the basis of the most recent research, as presented in this volume, there is no doubt that they were good masters who carefully developed their domains and strove to operate them as effectively as possible. As a result of its successful management, the family had considerable revenues from its domains, which were used to finance its luxurious lifestyle, representation worthy of its rank, costly housekeeping and a private army. It is beyond all doubt that the Szapolyai family was the wealthiest family in the Kingdom of Hungary, something they were aware of themselves and which was also well known throughout the country. It is not surprising, therefore, that when Borbála (Barbara), daughter to István Szapolyai and Hedwig of Teschen (Cieszyn), married King Sigismund the Old of Poland in 1512, the family entered the élite circle of European royal dynasties. If we recall how difficult it was for King Matthias to find a wife of appropriate standing to suit his rank, it is easy to see that the Szapolyais surpassed the Hunyadis in this regard: it took almost 18 years of his reign and several victorious wars for Matthias finally to lead Beatrice of Naples to the altar in 1476. By contrast, John Szapolyai already had royal relatives at the time he seized power, and as a bachelor he was ready further to increase the family's integration into Europe.

The essays in this volume give an account of the various family members' political achievements. Generally speaking, the members of the Szapolyai family were successful in their roles that entailed national and royal assignments. Whether it was Imre carrying out the task of a treasurer, or István carrying out the tasks of a palatine, the family gave little cause for disappointment. Moreover, István, as a 'kingmaker', smoothed the way for Vladislaus II to the Hungarian throne, yet John surpassed them by becoming voivode of Transylvania. Between 1510 and 1526 he governed the province of Transylvania with a firm hand and defended it against external attacks. In 1514 he acted in a prompt and decisive manner to end the peasant revolt led by György Dózsa, and by taking military and diplomatic action he preserved the security of the province. He possessed

a major military force and was a highly respected military leader, so when King Louis II died in 1526, and the road to the Hungarian throne opened, there was no question that John of the Szapolyai family was the only person within the country's borders worthy of and suitable for the throne. The question was what use the wealth, prestige and military power that proved sufficient at home, that is in the Kingdom of Hungary, would be in the theatre of European politics, squeezed between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans. To sum up the answer to the first question: the Szapolyai family obtained the throne of the Kingdom of Hungary through real political achievement, just as the Hunyadi family had done.

The road to power may have been similar in the case of both dynasties, yet the international situation in 1526 was entirely different from the situation Matthias's followers had to face in 1458. The Habsburgs living beyond the western border of the country were not the same, and the head of the Ottoman Empire, Sultan Süleyman, did not contemplate the Kingdom of Hungary from a distance, either. On the contrary, he was on his way back home from the burnt ruins of Buda when the surviving Hungarian aristocracy gathered to elect John. The new king had to grasp the levers of power under much less favourable conditions, while prospects for the future were either bad, or worse. While the strength of his *familiares* (the nobles in the service of the family) was enough for Matthias to win the support of the entire country and keep his enemies away from the throne, King John was never able to manage this. In the absence of unified support, he was never able to become the king of the entire country, and when the army of King Ferdinand I of Habsburg (also a legitimate king but on different legal grounds) was launched against him, it turned out that John did not even have sufficient strength to defend his throne. Neither the family's power nor its wealth would prove enough to retain the country entrusted to him. Led by his wish to preserve his Hungarian kingship, King John expected peace and support from the sultan for his fight against his enemy, when circumstances forced him to enter into an alliance with the sultan in 1528. Yet despite his prestigious family, his huge stock of estates, and internal support, King John, a member of an emerging dynasty foreign to the royal courts of Europe, was unable to achieve any success. His room for manoeuvre was limited: even if he had controlled the entire country, he would not have had enough military power to resist the Ottoman attacks and his policy of rapprochement was met with polite coolness at the courts of Europe. The achievements of the first generation and a half were thus of no use; the family's popularity quickly eroded due to the events following the Battle of Mohács.

Hungarian historiography has for centuries been concerned about how to define the kingdom of the Szapolyais, more precisely the state that existed during the reign of King John I and his son John Sigismund between 1526 and 1570. The reason for this is that even in Hungarian-speaking areas it is not easy to present the process in which legally-elected King John's Kingdom of Hungary evolved within five decades into the Principality of Transylvania. If this statement is true for the Carpathian basin, it applies many times over to international historiography, where presenting this change on the basis of

analogies seems incomprehensible. Yet the key to understanding today's Central Europe lies in understanding the changes the area went through during the early modern period, so the idea of treating the early modern Kingdom of Hungary merely as a territory located at the point of intersection of two world powers dangerously simplifies the development of the Hungarian state and does not take into account its inner life that evolved from the Middle Ages onwards. It is therefore important to make it clear at the outset: King John I was not present in the political history of Hungary in 1526–1540 as an 'anti-king'; rather, he controlled the country as its sovereign king with full rights. In order to glean a more realistic picture of his reign, it is worth comparing its characteristic features to those of the first 15 years of the great and successful reign of Charles I (1308–1342), or to those of the rather shaky start to the rule of King Sigismund of Luxembourg (1387–1437).

It is true that a monarch's success cannot be objectively evaluated until he reaches the finish line, i.e. until he dies, and it appears the Szapolyais did not do very well in this regard. Within a year after King John's death in 1540, Ottoman soldiers were loitering around behind the walls of the capital city, Buda. The widowed queen shamefully left the court and set off to the east with the one-year-old new king in her arms. This picture was so deeply engraved in Hungarian historical memory that it became the most important trope of the Szapolyais' power (or lack of it). Possessing half a country is, of course, much less good than possessing the whole of it, but let us not forget that there were far worse scenarios: Sultan Süleyman could just as well have occupied and annexed the eastern part of the Kingdom of Hungary – at least we can see no army that would have been able to stop him. On the other hand, King Ferdinand I of Habsburg did not obtain a substantially larger part of Saint Stephen's realm, either. In better times, Hungarian kings controlled a territory of 120,000 square kilometres from Pozsony (Bratislava) and Vienna, while the area of historical Transylvania was about half this size. The areas beyond the river Tisza, the so called Partium, did, however, remain under the Szapolyais' control, so all in all the area was over 100,000 square kilometres, making the difference between the size of the two dominions rather less significant.

Even when it comes to a more thorough examination of the capacities of the two halves of the country, the Szapolyais have nothing to be ashamed of. Apart from a brief interlude (1527–1528), King John ruled over a larger and thus wealthier part of the country. Until 1534 he even had a considerable group of supporters in Slavonia, and he also controlled a large part of Transdanubia. Pursuant to the logic of *realpolitik*, Isabella and her government lost the territories west of the river Danube, but the salt mines of Máramaros (Maramureş), the precious metal mines in Transylvania, the artisans of Saxon cities, and the fertile land along the river Maros, all in areas that were retained, provided enough wealth for the members of the Szapolyai family ruling the eastern part of the country. Under Queen Isabella's rule, Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), Lippa (Lipova) and Várad (Nagyvárad/Oradea) continued to grow, and in general we can speak of a continuous growth of settlements in the areas under her control. The same

can be said of foreign trade, as the roads towards the Kingdom of Poland, Moldavia, Wallachia and the Ottoman Empire remained open. Moreover, as has already been pointed out by Hungarian historiography, merchants setting off from the kingdom of the Szapolyais retained their contacts in the west. We can also venture to add that until the general devastation of the Long Turkish War (1593–1606) and the punitive campaigns following George II Rákóczi's detrimental expedition to Poland (1657), inner Transylvania and the counties pertaining to it were less affected by the constant attacks. Nevertheless, contemporaries were aware that Gyulafehérvár was not Vienna, and that it was much more advantageous to live along the eastern borders of the Habsburg monarchy than in the northern province of the Ottoman Empire, but this is not a situation the Szapolyais can be held responsible for.

“Not a single day was certain in my life, and the end of one misfortune was only the beginning of the other” – exclaimed King John desperately one day, and these words, jotted down by chronicler Farkas Bethlen when recording an event, may have been no exaggeration. The Szapolyai family came to power during the most critical period in Hungary's history, and faced a situation that, in the absence of allies, they were unable successfully to solve. Driven by retrospective foresight, we dare to state that no one could have cut the Gordian knot Hungary was faced with in the fact of the confrontation between Ottoman and Habsburg powers; that is to say, not even a much better and smarter government would have been able to preserve the country's integrity.

Having read the essays in this volume, we are nevertheless left with the impression that, even if the members of the Szapolyai family were unable to become a recognized dynasty, they did what fate meant for them to do. Despite their vulnerability, they embodied the increasingly fictitious unity of the Kingdom of Hungary; their reign in the eastern part of the country preserved all the social, political and governmental structures in which the Hungarian state could survive in the eastern Carpathian basin to form the basis of the Principality of Transylvania. If this was meant to be their historical mission, we can say that they accomplished it successfully.

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Szabolcs Varga

Tibor Neumann*

TWO PALATINES AND A VOIVODE, OR THE SZAPOLYAI FAMILY'S JOURNEY TO THE ROYAL THRONE

AN OBSCURE ANCESTRY

Historical research has understandably shown an interest in the Szapolyai family's ancestry and unique rise. Given the lack of sources, the huge gap yawning between their being unknown and then suddenly gaining fame and wealth within just a few years after King Matthias's (1458–1490) accession to the throne could only be bridged by speculation: our predecessors either linked the Szapolyai family to old noble families or assumed it to be related to the House of Hunyadi.¹ Today's researchers must admit that there is still no satisfactory answer to the question of the family's background: after a critical filtering of the data found in old genealogical literature and in essays written on the history of the family, and of the conclusions drawn from these, and after excluding all mistakes, we are left with a very scarce amount of source data that is reliable.² Attention can and should be given to certain new aspects, but until

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1 Károly Wagner was of the opinion that the family was descended from the Russian voivode János Kaplai: Carolus Wagner, *Analecta Scepusii sacri et profane. Pars IV. Posonii et Cassoviae*, 1778, 3–4. On the basis of estate history, there are several theories that the family was related to and descended from the Borics kinship of Pozsega county or another local family: Mór Wertner, 'Családtörténeti adalékok', *Erdélyi Múzeum* 21 (1904) 24–30; Lajos Thallóczy, *Jajca (bánság, vár és város) története 1450–1527*. (Magyarország Melléktartományainak Oklevéltára, IV.) The collection of documents was edited by Sándor Horváth. Budapest, 1915, cvii; Juraj Čuk, 'Požeško plemstvo i požeška županija od doba prvih sačuvanih imena i naziva do polovice četrnaestoga vijeka', *Rad JAZU* 100 (1924) 60, 81–84. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the most lurid ideas were born regarding the family's origin, which I decline from enumerating. On their being related with the Hunyadi family, see below.

2 On old traditions about the family's ancestry and the need for the elimination of these, see Tibor Neumann, 'Régi genealógiai legendák nyomában. Szapolyai István nádor házasságai, leányai és leánytestvérei', in Gábor Mikó, Bence Péterfi and András Vadas (eds.), *Tiszteletkör. Történeti tanulmányok Draskóczy István egyetemi tanár 60. születésnapjára*. Budapest, 2012, 431–438.

new sources are discovered, our possibilities will indeed remain limited, and our results uncertain. Some points can be mentioned, nonetheless.

It has been known to both contemporaries and posterity that the family's roots lie in one of the southern frontier counties of the Kingdom of Hungary, namely Pozsega (Požega).³ Zapolje (whose name has been transformed in the Hungarian language to Szapolya and Zápolya) still exists as a small settlement to the east of Nova Gradiška in Croatia. In the Middle Ages, however, the name denoted an estate of considerable size located between the Psunj mountain and the river Sava, on the territory of which several villages had formed by the end of the 15th century: according to a charter from 1523, the would-be royal family possessed landed properties of various sizes south of Zapolje, in Bodovaljci, and on the territory of Staro Petrovo Selo, established during the modern period.⁴ Several kinships bearing the name Szapolyai lived in the villages that evolved on the territory of the old Zapolje. The principal among these was the Dénesfi family, one of whose members served King Louis I (1342–1382) as a diplomat and rose to become bishop of Bosnia, Győr and Veszprém in the 14th century.⁵ Yet no ancestors of King John (János) can be linked either to him or to any other families bearing the name Szapolyai. John's grandfather László Vajdafi emerges as a local landowner in 1444 and 1455,⁶ and, despite examining the entire source material of Pozsega county, no trace can be found of the family from prior to this date. Is this because the sources are incomplete or because the family did not live in Pozsega county before the 1440s?

When in 1527 the Hungarian magnates of the realm opposing John wrote a letter to King Henry VIII of England requesting help (no doubt alongside similar letters to others), they mentioned not only John, but also the rise of his family. As they wrote, the king's "father, István, was of low birth and came to Hungary from Bosnia as a child; after a while, with some support from his patrons, he became King Matthias's favourite, and obtained significant wealth and influence from the generous monarch. Yet, thanks to the mercy and generosity of Vladislaus, the father of our king, now mourned amidst constant sighs and grief, had already had his wealth increased to an extraordinary level, since he had obtained for himself even the office of palatine, which ranks second after the king."⁷ The text is of course simplifying things (the wealth of the

3 For example, see the works of Ferenc Forgách (Francisci Forgách *De statu reipublicae Hungaricae commentarii*. [Monumenta Hungariae Historica, II; Scriptores, 16.] Pest, 1866, 168) and Miklós Istvánffy (*Historiarum de rebus*, 185). Cf. Ludovici Tuberonis *Dalmatae abbatis commentarii de temporibus suis*. Ed. Vlado Rezar. Zagreb, 2001, 239 (chapter 286).

4 I treat the issue and the history of the Szapolyai family in Pozsega county in detail in my work, still in manuscript form: Tibor Neumann, *Szapolya és a Szapolyaiak*. See the charter of 1523 in MNL OL DF 232623.

5 Tibor Neumann, 'Péter püspök és rokonsága (Az első Szapolyaiak)', *Acta Universitatis Szegediensis. Acta Historica* 127 (2007) 59–70; cf. Idem, 'A Szapolyaiak erdélyi ága – a Mikeszázai Horvát család', *Acta Universitatis Szegediensis. Acta Historica* 132 (2011) 73–88.

6 1444: MNL OL DL 33790; 1455: MNL OL DL 34077.

7 *Est hoc in regno Ioannes comes Scepusiensis, cuius pater Stephanus obscuro natus loco ex Bosna puer in Hungariam adducitur, ac post aliquod temporis spatium in regis Mathie gratiam patronorum opera*

family was in fact founded by István's brother, Imre [Emeric]), and tries to portray the Szapolyai family in as negative a light as possible, to which end possible Bosnian origins, i.e. emphasizing that the family was not only low-born but also of foreign descent, appeared to be an especially effective tool. Despite this, it would be a mistake to exclude the possibility of a Bosnian heritage, as one chronicler suggests. Ferenc Forgách, working in the 1560s and 1570s, mentions that King John originated from Bosnia, just like his close relative, Péter Petrovics. His explanation shows clearly that in the eyes of the public the family's origins in Pozsega county, bordering Bosnia, reinforced by memories of Imre Szapolyai holding the office of governor of Bosnia and by family relations with the Petrovics family, may have morphed into this story of Bosnian heritage, especially as the result of propagandistic rumours against King John that spread in 1527: "because John's motherland, the market town of Szapolya, which gave the family its name, was also close to Jajce."⁸ Other historiographers regarded Pozsega county or Slavonia to be the family's place of origin, on the assumption that Pozsega belonged to Slavonia, which was not the case at the time. As an example, Hans Dernschwam's memoirs from 1563 can be mentioned.⁹ Miklós Istvánffy not only regarded Szapolya in Pozsega county as the motherland of King John,¹⁰ he even replaced the mention of the Kingdom of Bosnia in Forgách's manuscript with Pozsega county.¹¹ This correction was definitely erroneous in that Péter Petrovics did in fact come from Bosnia (more precisely, Orbász county),¹² but as regards the Szapolyai family this only proves that, like many

insinuatus magnas opes a principe liberali, magnam auctoritatem est consequutus, sed Wladislai regis, quem nunc assiduo gemitu et merore desideramus, patris gratia et liberalitate mirum in modum suas auxerat facultates, nam palatini quoque magistratum, cuius secunda est a rege auctoritas, obtinebat. ÖStA HHStA UA AA Fasc. 3, Konv. C. fols. 34r–36v. (I received a copy of the source years ago from Bálint Lakatos, for which I hereby express my gratitude.)

8 Petrovics natione erat ex Bossinae regno ad Jajczam, uti et Johannes rex; nam et Zapolia oppidum paternum, Jajcza haud procul aberat, ab quo familia Johannis cognomen accepit. Forgách, *De statu reipublicae*, 168.

9 *seind windischer Art, und aus dem Ort Zapoln genant geburtig.* Hans Dernschwam, 'Beschreibung des Mitternhaus im Neusohl gelegen', in Johann Christian von Engel, *Geschichte des ungrischen Reichs und seiner Nebenländer*. Vol. I. Halle, 1797, 193–194. I note that the name 'in Poszka' (i.e. Pozsega), intended to define Zapolje, was erroneously altered in the text by the publisher to 'in Bosna' (*ibid.*, 194); because of this, and with regards to the family ties with the Petrovics family, György Pray believed the Szapolyais were from Bosnia: Georgius Pray, *Epistolae Procerum Regni Hungariae. Pars I. Posonii*, 1806, 312, 360.

10 Istvánffy, *Historiarum de rebus*, 185.

11 Forgách, *De statu reipublicae*, 168.

12 In 1501, Péter's father was involved in a possessory action in Orbász county: Lajos Thallóczy and Sándor Horváth (eds.), *Alsó-szlavóniai okmánytár (Dubicza, Orbász és Szana vármegyék) 1244–1710*. Budapest, 1912, 255–257, and in 1505 he was Orbász county's delegate to the diet: *Arch.* II. 516. The words Zraklin or Zuraklin used in their territorial designation cannot be identified, but they obviously correspond to the castle of Zaraklyn, acquired by King Louis in 1379 by way of exchange from the ancestors of the Zákányi family. According to the geographical standards of the time, the castle was situated in "Slavonia, at the border of Bosnia", which can best of all be applied to Orbász county (MNL OL DL 100172; DL 100354).

other families from Pozsega county, they had close ties with the nobility on the other side of the river Sava, in the territories of Orbász and Bosnia.

It cannot thus clearly be verified whether the statement of the Hungarian magnates of the realm in 1527 relating to István Szapolyai's origins in Bosnia had any grounds. Although the silence of the sources prior to 1444 and the kinship in Orbász county do not exclude the possibility, they do not prove it, either. Estate history even suggests King John's ancestors had acquired the estates of the Treutel family of Nevna (who died out in 1421) in the vicinity of Zapolje, and did thus not move to the eponymic settlement of Szapolya before 1421.¹³ Yet, even if we accept this supposition, burdened with uncertainty, it would not bring us any closer to the solution: on the basis of their family name 'Vajdafi' they may have descended from a (vice) voivode of Transylvania, as well as from a noble of the neighbouring Kingdom of Bosnia holding the office of a (vice) voivode.¹⁴

Alongside the many uncertainties, two statements can be made. One is that Imre and István Szapolyai had close emotional ties with Pozsega county: although from the 1460s the centre of the family's estates was in the northern parts of the Kingdom of Hungary, in the 1470s Imre bought a castle domain (Kővár/Kamengrad) in the north-western part of Pozsega county, while his brother – and, after his death, also his son John – felt it important from the 1490s to hold the office of the *ispán* (*comes*) of the county, at least nominally.¹⁵ This clearly supports the view that they regarded Pozsega county as their motherland. The other observation concerns the family's use of language. We know of several noble families who moved from Szapolya to other areas of the country during the 15th and 16th centuries. In the Hungarian linguistic environment their names were extended with a surname indicating their 'nationality': two of them came to be called '*Horvát*' (meaning Croatian), while one received the name '*Bosnyák*' (meaning Bosnian).¹⁶ This suggests that the Szapolyai brothers' mother tongue must have been the Slavic language spoken in Pozsega county, and that they most likely learnt Hungarian in their childhood. Speaking a Slavic language must have made it easier to learn Czech, which, according to the Silesian historiographer

13 For more details on this, see Neumann, *Szapolya és a Szapolyaiak*. (The uncertainty is caused by the fact that in the 1470s Imre Szapolyai also acquired the castle of Kővár, once in the possession of the Treutel family of Nevna, in Pozsega county, and the estates around Zapolje, or a part of them, may also have entered into their possession as domains attached to the castle.)

14 Cf. Richárd Horváth, 'Szatmár és a Szapolyaiak', in Juan Cabello and Norbert C. Tóth (eds.), *„Erősségénél fogva várépítésre való”. Tanulmányok a 70 éves Németh Péter tiszteletére*. Nyíregyháza, 2011, 345. I, however, rule out the possibility that the title voivode, a frequent office in the Slavonian domains, might have appeared in the name of the family (Wertner, 'Családtörténeti adalékok', 25–26), since the function of a surname was to increase the prestige of the family.

15 *Arch.* II. 185.

16 Neumann, 'A Szapolyaiak erdélyi ága', 85–86. (Szapolyai/Mikeszázai Horvát és Szapolyai/Illéri Horvát families). In 1511 András Bosnyák of Szapolya/Zapolje acquired estates in Szabolcs county; see MNL OL DF 253825, photo 601.

Eschenloer, the would-be palatine István spoke well.¹⁷ Indirectly linked to this is the fact that decades later István married a woman from Silesia and the language the family living in Trencsén (Trenčín) spoke came to be Czech and not Hungarian. Therefore, it can be stated that both King John and his brother spoke both Czech and Hungarian as their mother tongue.

IMRE DEÁK (LITTERATUS), THE GOVERNOR

The unique rise of the Szapolyai family is connected to László Vajdafi's eldest son, Imre. We know very little of the early career (prior to 1458) of the young nobleman, born, as mentioned earlier, in Pozsega county in the early 1430s.¹⁸ According to the narrative of the comital title awarded in 1465, from an early age "he was educated in accordance with the guidelines and under the care of the king's father", governor John Hunyadi, where he showed the first signs of his loyalty "in his position as secretary, which he obtained as a result of his talent and honesty".¹⁹ The same is suggested in a report by an envoy in 1490, according to which Imre, of rather low birth, started his career in the royal – in reality the gubernatorial – chancery.²⁰ He must have entered into the service of the governor around the early 1450s, as it is very likely that his father building a fortified mansion on the territory of Tiszovc (Tisovac) in Pozsega county prior to 1455²¹ was the result of Imre's outstanding career. The same is implied by the Szapolyai brothers receiving their first royal donations of several estates in Pozsega and Orbász counties – most likely at Hunyadi's intervention – before the death of King Ladislaus the Posthumous in 1457.²²

17 *Er was ein Hunger vnd kundt wol behemisch, adir tewtsch künde er nicht.* Peter Eschenloer, *Geschichte der Stadt Breslau. Teilband II. Chronik ab 1467.* Herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Gunhild Roth. Münster, New York, München, Berlin, 2003, 983–984. The place of the source is quoted by Márton Gyöngyössi, 'Egyszarvú vagy farkas? Még egyszer a Szapolyaiak címerhasználatáról', *Turul* 86 (2013) 66.

18 For Imre's short biography, see Richárd Horváth, 'Imre Szapolyai (c. 1435 – 12 September 1487)', in *Matthias Corvinus, the King. Tradition and Renewal in the Hungarian Royal Court 1458–1490. Exhibition Catalogue.* Budapest, 2008, 269–270. For more details on his career until 1465, see Horváth, 'Szatmár és a Szapolyaiak', 345–356.

19 *hic namque a iuvenili aetate sua apud quondam illustrem genitorem nostrum et inter curam et inter directionem eius enutritus, priusquam ob ingenii morumque honestatem inter secretaria officia constitutus prima fidelitatis fundamenta iecit ac futurae de se spei in ipsius parentis nostri oculis clarissimum specimen dedit, nec fefellit iudicium eius.* MNL OL DF 286487, fols. 19v–21r; cf. Carolus Wagner, *Analecta Scepusii sacri et profane. Vol. I.* Viennae, 1774, 145–147. It is, of course, uncertain if the expression *secretaria officia* can be interpreted as secretarial tasks, but it certainly means a confidential position.

20 *il quale da vilissima conditione vene in cancellaria regia, et dopoi reuschi in tanta dignita.* Iván Nagy and Albert Nyáry (eds.), *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek Mátyás király korából. Vols. I–IV.* (Monumenta Hungariae Historica) Budapest, 1875–1878 (= *MDE*), IV. 196.

21 1455: MNL OL DL 34077.

22 An undated entry in the charter issued by Ladislaus the Posthumous in the Szapolyai family's charter register: Elemér Varjú, 'A Hunyadiak síremlékei a gyulafehérvári székesegyházban', Gyula Forster (ed.), *Magyarország műemlékei. Vol. I.* Budapest, 1905, 94: note 1. (For an elaboration of the charter register, see István Kenyeres's essay in this volume.)

But how did the young nobleman from Pozsega county enter the circles of the governor? I do not consider the widely accepted theory that Imre was a close relative of Matthias, or even the illegal son of John Hunyadi, to be a likely one, even though it would indeed provide a logical answer to the question of what triggered the unprecedentedly fast rise of the Szapolyais, and of why the coat of arms of the Hunyadi and Szapolyai families feature side by side on some contemporary works of stonemasonry, and also of how the family managed to remain in the king's favours despite having participated in various plots, even in those against King Matthias.²³ The fact that not even the well-informed Italian envoys mention a family connection between the king and Imre makes this theory less likely, however, as this can only mean that no one knew about this circumstance at the royal court, and hence that neither contemporaries nor posterity were able to draw a straight line between the issue of the rise of the Szapolyais and Imre's ancestry.

If we do not accept this unverifiable and unlikely theory, we have to seek another explanation, and it is not difficult to find one: in 1451 John Hunyadi sent one of his leading *familiars* as an envoy to the Serbian despot George Branković in the city of Szendrő (Smederevo).²⁴ The name of the envoy was László of Orbova (Vrbova); he too was from Pozsega county. This may, of course, be a mere coincidence, but we should bear in mind that the coat of arms (depicting a wolf, with a six-armed star behind it and a crescent moon in the front of it) of the Jakusith family of Orbova, who were descendants of László, is almost exactly the same as the one to which Imre surprisingly switched his own (an arm holding a sword and a coach wheel) around 1459.²⁵ There is thus a serious

23 András Kubinyi believed that the oldest of the Szapolyai brothers, Imre, may in fact have been John Hunyadi's illegitimate son: András Kubinyi, 'Törvénytelen gyermekek a magyar középkorban', *História* 21:7 (1999) 21–22; Idem, *Mátyás király*. (Tudomány-Egyetem) Budapest, 2001, 17–18; Pál Engel, *Szent István birodalma* (História Könyvtár. Monográfiák, 17.) Budapest, 2001, 259; András Kubinyi, 'A Szapolyaiak és familiárisaik (szervitoraik)', *Publicationes Universitatis Miskolciensis. Sectio Philosophica* 13:3 (2008) 229. The idea of the Hunyadi and Szapolyai families being related has probably gained ground in scholarly literature because of the tombstone in Gyulafehérvár depicting John Hunyadi holding the coat of arms of the Szapolyai family (cf. Varjú, 'A Hunyadiak', 95–96). In the meantime, however, it was revealed that the reason the coat of arms of the Szapolyai family was depicted on the tombstone is that it had been made on the order of King John in 1533: Ágnes Ritoókné Szalay, 'Hunyadi János († 1456) gyulafehérvári síremlékének domborművei', in Árpád Mikó and Katalin Sinkó (eds.), *Történelem-kép. Szemelvények múlt és művészet kapcsolatából Magyarországon*. Budapest, 2000, 297–298. That the Szapolyais participated in the plot of 1471 seems uncertain to me; see below.

24 József Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*. Vol. X. Pest, 1853, 311. Jakab (Jakus) Orbovai's son László appears in sources between 1414 (MNL OL DL 10282) and 1466 (MNL OL DL 34216); in 1469 he appears as deceased (MNL OL DL 34219). In 1438 he appears as vice *ispán* of Tolna county, most likely in the service of Miklós Újlaki, or perhaps of the Garai family: Pál Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája 1301–1457*. Vol. I. (História Könyvtár. Kronológiai, Adattárak). Budapest, 1996, 208.

25 The coat of arms of the Jakusith family of Orbova in 1607 is the same; the only difference is that the wolf is holding a sheep in its mouth: Géza Csergheő, *Der Adel von Ungarn sammt den Nebenländern der St. Stephans-Krone* (J. Siebmacher's grosses und allgemeines Wappenbuch).

possibility that László of Orbova was in fact either Imre Szapolyai's grandfather or uncle on his mother's side, and that it was through him that his close relative entered the circles of the governor. Apart from this, Imre's early career path may also have been paved by his aunt's husband, Albert of Szvinna (Svilna), notary of the office of the palatine and a well-known lawyer of the age,²⁶ who, together with László of Orbova, received an estate in Pozsega county in 1455 as a royal donation.²⁷ Yet, neither can we disregard vice palatine Pál Perneszi, who married Imre's cousin, Orsolya Szapolyai, although only in the late 1450s.²⁸

Shortly after the death of John Hunyadi in August 1456, Szapolyai, still in his twenties, held leading positions in the mining town of Nagybánya (Baia Mare) in Szatmár county, as castellan and presumably also as chamber *ispán* (*comes camerae*).²⁹ The charter on the comital title of Szepes also mentions that at the time of László Hunyadi's execution and Matthias's imprisonment, Imre was (with only slight exaggeration) the only person not to leave the house of the Hunyadis, which was on the brink of collapse.³⁰ Another royal charter from 1462 reports that at the same time, i.e. around 1457, Imre successfully defended the besieged city of Nagybánya.³¹ It cannot be ruled out that retaining the mining town, together with its mint chamber, and thus securing the money minted there was of primary importance for the victory of the Hunyadi family,³² which, upon Matthias's accession to the throne, furthered the rise in Imre's career. Similarly to many other members of the court during the Middle Ages, even Imre was referred to both in domestic and foreign sources by the name he bore when entering the court, or, more precisely, when he became widely known: 'Literate' (*litteratus*; Hung. 'diák/deák') Imre.³³ The epithet attached to his name denoted

Nürnberg, 1893, tables 265 and 201; cf. Tibor Neumann, 'A Szapolyai család legrégebbi címere', *Turul* 84 (2011) 124–125. On the coat of arms of the Szapolyai family, see the essay on representation in this volume.

26 The family relationship is confirmed by the aforementioned charter from 1455 (MNL OL DL 34077); cf. Kubinyi, 'A Szapolyaiak', 229). Between 1446 and 1448 Szvinnai was the lawyer of the city of Pozsony (Bratislava) at the judicial body of the court (MNL OL DF 242075, 242100, 242190, 292781). His latest mention is from 1470 (MNL OL DL 88509).

27 MNL OL DL 33880.

28 Neumann, 'A Szapolyai család legrégebbi címere', 125: note 23. Perneszi, who previously served the Garai family, is mentioned as Szapolyai's Slavonian vice-*ban* in 1464–1465: *Arch.* I. 93.

29 Horváth, 'Szatmár és a Szapolyaiak', 346.

30 MNL OL DF 286487, fols. 19v–21r; cf. Wagner, *Analecta Scepusii*, I. 145–147.

31 Horváth, 'Szatmár és a Szapolyaiak', 346.

32 The need to occupy Nagybánya for King Ladislaus the Posthumous is mentioned in a letter from 9 May 1457, according to which Jiskra and Miklós Drágfi were mobilised because of this: MNL OL DL 48282, quoted by Tamás Pálosfalvi, 'Tettes vagy áldozat? Hunyadi László halála', *Századok* 149 (2015) 418.

33 Some examples in sources written in Italian: at the time of his office of governor of Bosnia, in 1464: *Jemmeridiach* (vestigia.hu, Infocus [= Vestigia] 3091, quoted by Tamás Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács. A History of Ottoman–Hungarian Warfare, 1389–1526*. (The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage. Politics, Society and Economy, 63.) Leiden, Boston, 2018, 217). In the 1470s, at the announcement of the king's barons: *Emericho diako* (Vestigia 2935). In 1490: *Hermerico diaco id est letterato* (Vestigia 246, cf. MDE IV. 196). In Hans Dernschwam's work written in German in 1563: *Embrich/Emrich Diaghk/Diaghk* (Dernschwam, 'Beschreibung', 193–194).

for his contemporaries, alongside the taking of the minor orders, familiarity with official literacy, in Imre's case probably skill in economic matters.

Matthias, who took the throne in early 1458, first employed his faithful *familiaris* in the administration of the royal finances, in a rather important position: he became *ispán* of the Transylvanian salt chambers. In this position he came to work together with the economic expert from Florence, Angello Manini.³⁴ It appears that, by the end of 1458, Imre and his companion already supervised Hungary's entire production and sale of salt,³⁵ and in all likelihood Imre also continued to head the mint in Nagybánya.³⁶ The significance of the former position is easily recognized if we recall that the salt monopoly provided a yearly revenue of about 80,000–100,000 gold florins for the monarch.³⁷ It may therefore come as no surprise that Matthias decided in the spring of 1459 to appoint Szapolyai as royal treasurer.³⁸ Soon after, Imre received his first castle domain, Tokaj, in Zemplén county, which had for a short period become the family residence, worthy of their baronial status.³⁹ It was also during this time that he acquired the aforementioned new coat of arms that depicted a wolf.

From this time on, the continued rise in Imre Szapolyai's career seemed unstoppable, essentially due to two factors: first, the unconditional and certainly earned trust placed in him by the Hunyadi family, i.e. by governor John Hunyadi, then, later, that of King Matthias. It is no coincidence that Antonio Bonfini lists Imre among the friends of the king's father, even ranking him first on the list.⁴⁰ Second, it was a result of the political situation burdened with civil wars during the first years of Matthias's reign that made the king concentrate a larger than usual amount of material resources and a significant military force in the hands

34 István Draskóczy, *A magyarországi kőszó bányászata és kereskedelme (1440–1530-as évek)*. (Magyar Történelmi Emlékek, Értekezések) Budapest, 2018, 44–45; 365.

35 A charter from 19 January 1459 referred to him and Angello as *comites universarum camerarum salium nostrorum* (Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora*, X. 613); cf. *Szapolyai oklt.* 41. I personally think this means that they also supervised the salt mines of Máramaros (Maramureş). *Ispáns* of salt chambers with authority in the entire realm existed earlier, as well, especially among the members of the Manini family: Draskóczy, *A magyarországi kőszó*, 41, 365. The charter excludes the possibility of Imre being appointed treasurer as early as 1458 (cf. Horváth, 'Szatmár és a Szapolyaiak', 346). It has previously been suggested that during the vacancy of the post of treasurer in 1458–1459, Imre Szapolyai administered the financial matters of the country (*Arch.* I. 128: note 421), but no clear evidence of this has yet been found, though we do know he administered a major part of incoming revenue.

36 Apart from the data referring to 1457 above, only one source from June 1458 (MNL OL DL 81297) and one from May 1459 prove that Imre held the position of *ispán* of the chamber in Nagybánya, but in the latter case he was also treasurer (*Szapolyai oklt.* 41–42). Since his first mention as *ispán* of the salt chambers is from August 1458, continuity is not certain, but might of course be possible. Cf. Ferenc Soós, 'A középkori Magyarország gazdasági- és pénzügyigazgatási tisztségviselői', *Numizmatikai Közlöny* 112–113 (2013–2014) 103.

37 Draskóczy, *A magyarországi kőszó*, 66–67.

38 *Arch.* I. 129.

39 On the family's acquisitions, see István Kenyeres's essay in the present volume.

40 Antonio Bonfini, *A magyar történelem tizedei*. Translation by Péter Kulcsár. Budapest, 1995, 401 (3.10.10.), 408 (3.10.210.).

of his talented treasurer. In his capacity as captain general of Upper Hungary (*Partes regni superiores*), the young Szapolyai became the leading figure in the battles in the north-eastern parts of the country.⁴¹ A skilful organizer, Imre had an excellent knowledge of how to raise the necessary funds for the wars, the compensation for which he requested, as was customary in the period, from the king. The king then returned the favour and paid off his debt by granting him or offering as security one castle and town after the other, or by simply acknowledging the violent, legally seemingly ungrounded occupation of these.⁴² Although Imre was likely an excellent military organizer, he transferred the everyday burden of waging wars to his deputies – first and foremost to his brother István, who was a soldier to the core.⁴³ He also managed to see to it that his other brother Miklós († 1468–1469) be appointed as bishop of Transylvania in 1462, which provided him with considerable wealth.⁴⁴ The achievements of the three brothers became manifest not only in the gradual pacification of the north-eastern part of the country, but also in their acquisition, on various legal grounds, of half a dozen castles and castle domains prior to 1465 (among them the castle of Szepes [Spišský hrad]).⁴⁵ The *homo novus* members of the Szapolyai family thus became elevated to a level on a par with wealthier barons.

The next change of direction in Imre's life occurred in 1463. While, as a member of the delegation sent by King Matthias to Emperor Frederick III (1440–1493), he was conducting negotiations to retrieve the Holy Crown of Hungary,⁴⁶ Sultan Mehmed II (1451–1481) occupied Bosnia and had the country's last sovereign king executed. At the end of the year, the Hungarian king led a campaign to the other side of the river Sava to retake the territory. As a result, Northern Bosnia and the city of Jajca (Jajce) came under Hungarian rule for decades. Imre Szapolyai was appointed governor of the newly acquired territories, and, to ensure more effective organization of the defence of the territory, he was also named Dalmatian-Croatian-Slavonian *ban*, and received the immense estates of the bishopric of Zagreb and the priory of Vrana.⁴⁷

41 On this position and on Szapolyai's activities, see Richárd Horváth, 'A Felső Részek főkapitánysága a Mátyás-korban', *Századok* 137 (2003) 929–954.

42 For a plausible description of this, with specific examples, see Horváth, 'Szatmár és a Szapolyaiak', 345–356.

43 Horváth, 'A Felső Részek', *passim*.

44 Norbert C. Tóth, *Magyarország késő középkori főpapi archontológiája. Érsekek, püspökök, illetve segédpüspökeik, vikáriusai és jövedelemkezelőik az 1440-es évektől 1526-ig.* (A Győri Egyházmegyei Levéltár Kiadványai. Források, Feldolgozások, 27.) Győr, 2017, 59. When his brother was treasurer, Miklós may have acted as *ispán* of the chamber of Nagybánya: Soós, 'A középkori Magyarország', 103; cf. Gyöngyössi, 'Egyszarvú', 69–70.

45 On the expansion of the family's estates, see István Kenyeres's essay in this volume.

46 Horváth, 'Imre Szapolyai', 269.

47 On the campaigns to Bosnia and on the establishment of the governorate, see Péter E. Kovács, 'Jajca 1464. évi ostroma', in Gábor Hausner (ed.), *Az értelem bátorsága. Tanulmányok Perjés Géza emlékére.* Budapest, 2005, 403–418; Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis*, 208–223; cf. Richárd Horváth, 'The Castle of Jajce in the Organization of the Hungarian Border Defence System under Matthias Corvinus', in Ante Birin (ed.), *Stjepan Tomašević (1461.–1463.) – sloj srednjovjekovnog*

Had the Szapolyai family really originated from Bosnia, this would certainly have had a role in Imre being appointed governor; yet, with his homeland in Pozsega county, his local connections and his knowledge of a Slavic language could also have helped him to carry out his new tasks. Because of the uncertain origins of the family, it is today difficult to tell what motivated Szapolyai to earn this position. One thing is certain: occupying the post of governor in a kingdom offered a social prestige of such dimensions that it could not be belittled at the time, and seems this was enough to make Imre renounce his post as treasurer, which he had held for years.⁴⁸

He was, however, unable to keep his position as governor for long. After the coronation of Matthias in the spring of 1464, the king led another campaign to Bosnia. Even though Szapolyai played an important role in freeing the city of Jajca from the siege of the Ottomans and in the occupation of Szrebernik (Srebrenik), it appears the king held him responsible for the defeat at Zvornik at the end of the year. The underlying reason for their conflict may of course have been something else, but it is still a fact that Imre left Bosnia in early 1465 to return to his estates in north-eastern Hungary.⁴⁹ How influential a person Imre was is, however, demonstrated best of all by the fact that the king sought an agreement with him: according to a report sent to Milan, the king and the governor settled their differences in Buda in the days before 17 June, and, like the agreement of 1453 between Ladislaus the Posthumous and governor John Hunyadi, Szapolyai resigned from his post as governor and Matthias awarded him the title of 'count' (Germ. *Graf*, Hung. *gróf*).⁵⁰

The 'County (*Grafschaft/grófság*) of Szepes' (Spiš) was created at this time, and its importance in the family's life cannot be overstated. In the Kingdom of Hungary it was not customary to award titles of the peerage: the Hungarian title of count (*gróf*) was established in the mid-15th century, following the example of the Holy Roman Empire. Although it did not give any further power to its bearers, it provided significant privileges, such as the use of red wax, an address (*spectabilis et magnificus* in Latin) higher than those used for barons holding offices, or immunity from prosecution, which allowed only the king to pass sentences on counts.⁵¹ The established Hungarian families of barons did not, at this time, strive to obtain this title; rather, it was important for those who, by acquiring it, wished to compensate for their low birth. Szapolyai was the fifth person in line, after governors John Hunyadi (1453) and Mihály Szilágyi (1458), the Bohemian mercenary leader Jan Vitovec (1462), and Miklós Újlaki (1465),

Bosanskog Kraljevstva. Zbornik radova sa Znanstvenog skupa održanog 11. i 12. studenog 2011. godine u Jajcu. Zagreb, 2013, 89–98.

48 *Arch.* I. 129, specifically note 423.

49 Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis*, 217–223.

50 *Vestigia* 3094, quoted by Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis*, 223.

51 Tibor Neumann, 'Hercegek a középkor végi Magyarországon', in Attila Zsoldos (ed.), *Hercegek és hercegségek a középkori Magyarországon*. (Közlemények Székesfehérvár Történetéből) Székesfehérvár, 2016, 95–98. For more details, see the essay on the family's representation in this volume.

who came from an old, established family.⁵² Imre requested his comital title for the recently acquired castle of Szepes and its domains situated near the Polish border, an area which from then on he considered his primary residence until the end of his life. He also called himself 'count of the land of Szepes' (*comes perpetuus terre Scepusiensis*).⁵³

The agreement did not bring complete peace either to Szapolyai or the monarch, however. Even though it has been suggested by researchers that Imre returned to his position of treasurer, this is unlikely: in his charters he never refers to himself as treasurer; moreover, between 1465 and 1467, everything he issued was signed far from Buda.⁵⁴ Even though the family was allowed to keep its estates and also retained its influence in its vicinity, the Szapolyai brothers were left out of the closest circles of the increasingly powerful Matthias. This may have forced them to participate in the plot against the king in Transylvania in 1467.⁵⁵ After the rebellion had been suppressed, the monarch once again reached an agreement with Imre in February 1468, and, like all other magnates who had participated in the plot, he was pardoned, and an amnesty was also guaranteed to all of his *familiares*.⁵⁶

It appears 1468 was exactly the year that brought about a major change in the relationship between the king and Szapolyai: from this time on, Szapolyai continued to receive major assignments from the monarch. Together with his brother, he took part in the Bohemian campaigns,⁵⁷ and from 1471 he directed the country's defence against attacks coming from the Kingdom of Poland. Once again, he frequently visited Buda and appeared in the king's circles.⁵⁸ True, until 1486 he did not receive any further baronial offices from Matthias. That their

52 On the origin of the Hungarian comital titles most recently, see Tibor Neumann, "Treffen in Konstanz. Der Grafentitel „zu Castell“ der ungarischen Familie Kórógy im 15. Jahrhundert", in Peter Bahl and Eckart Henning (Hrsg.), *Herold Jahrbuch. Neue Folge, 20. Band*. Berlin, 2015, 129–140. (The list above does not include the Kórógyi family's titles acquired in Germany or the Tallóci family's titles acquired in Croatia.)

53 *Szapolyai oklt.* passim. For more details, see the essay on the family's representation in the present volume.

54 *Arch.* I. 129: notes 426–427 – the charter MNL OL DL 64412 of Sáros county from 1466, mentioned here, which refers to the vice *ispán* as Szapolyai's treasurer, is worth considering, yet it does not match the use of language of the other county charters, and the arguments mentioned above do not confirm its accuracy. I see no reason why he would have kept his office secret from the addressee of his letters. See his letters and charters from this time in *Szapolyai oklt.*

55 Horváth, 'Imre Szapolyai', 269.

56 Two such letters of mercy have come down to us from 10 February 1468: MNL OL DL 73132, and MNL OL Q 283, Mohács előtti oklevélmásolatok V, 1468. On the reconciliation between the king and Imre, see Bonfini, *A magyar történelem tizedei*, 424 (4.1.230.). On the uprising of 1467 and the royal pardons, see Árpád Nógrády, 'Mennyit ér a kegyelemlevél?', in Tibor Neumann and György Rác (eds.), *Honoris causa. Tanulmányok Engel Pál tiszteletére*. (Társadalom- és Művelődéstörténeti Tanulmányok, 40; *Analecta Mediaevalia*, III.) Budapest, Piliscsaba, 2009, 235–249.

57 Bonfini, *A magyar történelem tizedei*, 429–436.

58 *Szapolyai oklt.* passim.

relationship once again turned confidential is proved not only by the fact that Imre often participated in the meetings of the royal council,⁵⁹ and that his brother returned to captainship, but also by Imre's frequent assignments from the king, who was waging wars abroad in the 1470s, to take measures on matters affecting the country's defence and inner peace and stability while the king was away.⁶⁰ It should be noted that Imre is not likely to have participated in the plot led by János Vitéz in 1471, or, if he did, he acted much more carefully than on the previous occasion, and chose to opt out of the plot rather soon.⁶¹

But why was this obvious influence not accompanied by a specific baronial office? Most likely because, after holding the office of governor of Bosnia, Imre could only be offered positions that brought less prestige, which he, satisfied with his title of count (*gróf*) that elevated him from among other magnates of the realm, was not very keen to take. This is also suggested by the fact that, although he had resigned from his post as governor in 1465, everybody still called him 'governor', including the burghers of German speaking royal towns who always referred to him simply as '*der gubernator*'.⁶² The bishop of Eger, Gabriele Rangone, who, together with Imre, was sent as envoy to the emperor in 1477, wrote of him that "count and governor Imre" was one of the most influential leaders of the country.⁶³ King Matthias himself, when speaking to the pope about him and Jób Garai, stressed that "they are both powerful and from among the main barons of the country", whose differing opinions could cause damage to the country and to him as well.⁶⁴ Even foreign envoys were misled by this phenomenon (the combination of the office of governor and the extraordinary influence): a report written by an envoy from Milan in the 1470s, which ranks the 'literate Imre' second after the palatine, even refers to him as the governor of the country, who according to this source possessed 32 castles at the time.⁶⁵ At the end of 1486 the envoy from Ferrara added to the

59 András Kubinyi, 'Bárók a királyi tanácsban Mátyás és II. Ulászló idejében', *Századok* 122 (1988) 167, 207.

60 Horváth, 'Imre Szapolyai', 269; Norbert C. Tóth, *A Magyar Királyság nádora. A nádori és helytartói intézmény története (1342–1562)*. MTA Doctoral Dissertation. Budapest, 2016, 143–145.

61 It has been suggested in the literature that Imre initially sympathised with the plot, presumably on the basis of the uncertain mention by Bonfini (Bonfini, *A magyar történelem tizedei*, 437 [4.3.10.]). See, for instance, Kubinyi, 'Törvénytelen gyermekek', 22; Horváth, 'Imre Szapolyai', 269. Even the most detailed work on the plot of 1471 mentions Imre on the kings' side only: József Huszti, *Janus Pannonius*. Pécs, 1931, 239–255.

62 E.g. 1466, Lőcse: MNL OL DF 214325 (*Bártfa szabad királyi város levéltára 1319–1526. Vol. I: From 1519 to 1501*. Compiled by Béla Iványi. Budapest, 1910, No. 1624); 1489, Pozsony: *Herr Stefan des gubernator bruder* (MNL OL DF 277104; photo 57), etc.

63 *domino comite Emerico gubernatore ac eodem Nicolao Banfi precipuis principibus regni Hungarie*. MDE II. 361.

64 *cum uterque sit potens et de maioribus baronibus huius regni*. MDE IV. 320. On the argument between Garai and Szapolyai, see Richárd Horváth, 'Pápától a pápáig. Garai-Szapolyai várbirtok változások Veszprém megyében a Mátyás-korban', in István Hermann and Balázs Karlinszky (eds.), *Megyetörténet. Egyház- és igazgatástörténeti tanulmányok a veszprémi püspökség 1009. évi adománylevele tiszteletére*. Veszprém, 2010, 345–368.

65 Vestigia 2935.

mention of the office of palatine that it referred to the country governor.⁶⁶ In light of the above, the idea of Imre being seen as one of the *éminences grises* of the second part of the reign of King Matthias was right to emerge in the specialist literature.⁶⁷

There was only one position that would not have meant a step back in Imre's career, namely the office of the palatine. The office had been occupied by Mihály Ország of Gút since 1458, and became vacant after his death at the end of 1484, making the election of Imre as palatine possible after more than a year, in early 1486.⁶⁸ Szapolyai was unable to enjoy his new post for a long time, however: one and a half years later, on 2 September 1487, he died at his residence in Szepesvár, presumably in his late fifties.⁶⁹ As far as we know, he had no children by his wife Orsolya Bebek of Pelsőc; his only heir was thus his brother István. By 1487, the Szapolyais had become the largest property owners in the country (not counting the king's illegitimate son, Prince John Corvinus, who inherited all the assets of the Hunyadi family, and whose wealth Matthias increased to an extraordinary degree in the 1480s): Imre increased his domains even after 1465, through marriage, acquisitions and agreements.⁷⁰ The combination of his wealth, comital title and the office of palatine can be the reason why after his death his brother referred to him with the Latin epithet *illustris*, which at the time was only used for dukes and princes.⁷¹

ISTVÁN THE TREASURER

A report from the early 1490 written by a Milanese envoy described István, the youngest Szapolyai brother and the father of the future King John, as "a sturdily-built man of 48-50 years",⁷² from which it can easily be deduced that he was born around 1440–1442, and was thus basically of the same age as King Matthias. The remark on his build is no surprise: Imre's and István's famous tombstones in Szepes faithfully reflect the division of labour between them, which could be observed for decades. According to this, István, who looked like a giant alongside the gaunt Imre, was inevitably the one who carried out military tasks. The excellent historiographer of the age, Antonio Bonfini, even compared Imre to Odysseus and István to Agamemnon.⁷³

⁶⁶ *fratello del conte Pallatino Gubernatore dil Regno*. MDE IV. 230.

⁶⁷ Kubinyi, 'Bárók a királyi tanácsban', 178.

⁶⁸ *Arch.* I. 80.

⁶⁹ The date of his death was preserved by a calendar in Szepes, copied into the opening pages of a breviary: Elemér Varjú, 'A gyulafejevári Batthyány-könyvtár. Hetedik közlemény, egy melléklettel és a szöveg közt öt hasonmással', *Magyar Könyvszemle* 9 (1901) 28; cf. *Arch.* I. 80: note 17.

⁷⁰ Cf. the story of the Garai family's estates in Veszprém county: Horváth, 'Pápától a pápáig'.

⁷¹ Neumann, 'Hercegek', 96.

⁷² *homo de eta de 48 in 50 anni, grande de statura*. MDE IV. 196.

⁷³ Bonfini, *A magyar történelem tizedei*, 429 (4.2.90.); cf. with another characterisation by Bonfini: "In our times here [i.e. in the Szepesség region] in this remote land, Imre ... and his younger

We know nothing of István's childhood: according to a statement from Hans Dernschwam, which we are unable to verify today, he started his career in the castle of Esztergom, where he served as captain of the infantry and as doorkeeper. It was from here that his brother helped him move to the royal court.⁷⁴ If the Italian source can be trusted, he was hardly 18-20 years of age when, on behalf of his brother and in his capacity as captain general of Upper Hungary (*Partes regni superiores*), he led a campaign to the north-eastern part of the country,⁷⁵ earning his fame as a soldier throughout the country. Since at this time his older brother held the office of treasurer, he came to be called, in line with the custom of the era, István the Treasurer. Despite the fact that he had never held a position as treasurer, this name probably remained in use until his death, but certainly until he was appointed palatine in 1492.⁷⁶

After the five years he spent in his position as captain general (1460–1465), he disappeared from Matthias's military leadership due to the conflict between his brother and the king, only to return in 1468: he fought first in the Bohemian campaign and later against Poland.⁷⁷ After the Polish front had been closed, the king once again ordered him to the provinces of the Czech crown: on 21 April 1475, the king appointed him captain general of Silesia and Upper Lusatia (the six cities). Alongside this title Szapolyai also put his title of captain of the Duchies of Schweidnitz (Świdnica) and Jauer (Jawor) in the charters he issued. Since he was often away, his provinces were often governed by royal captains only nominally subjected to him.⁷⁸ This was when István stepped out of his brother's shadow: according to the charter issued on the occasion of the acquisition in 1477 of his future residence, the castle of Trencsén, the purchase

brother Count István rule a vast area of land, one of them stands out with his deep wisdom while the other excels in loyalty, bravery and the use of arms" *Ibid.*, 20 (1.1395).

74 derselbe Embrich Diagk hat seinem Bruder Istwahn oder Stephan an Khunig Matthiassen Hoff geholfen, ist zuvor zu Gran auf dem Schloss ein Trabanten Hauptman gewest, und Thorsteher. Dernschwam, 'Beschreibung', 194.

75 Horváth, 'A Felső Részek', 953–954.

76 E.g. 1478, Pozsony: *quinsstarto Ysstfan oder schatzgubernator*. MNL OL DF 277096, photo 115. He features as István *Kenchtharho* in the tax register of 1488, as well: László Solymosi, 'Veszprém megye 1488. évi adólajstroma és az Ernuszt-féle megyei adószámadások', in *Tanulmányok Veszprém megye múltjából*. (A Veszprém Megyei Levéltár Kiadványai, 3.) Veszprém, 1984, 201. The form "Stefano Renchardi" in the aforementioned envoy's report from 1490 can clearly be interpreted as the distorted form of the Hungarian word *kincstartó*, meaning treasurer (*MDE* IV. 196).

77 According to Bonfini, during the Bohemian and Polish wars, "not in a single battle" was István "absent from the king's side". Bonfini, *A magyar történelem tizedei*, 447; cf. 429, 436, 443. The battles against the Poles is mentioned also in the charter of Trencsén, the content of which is presented by Bonfini, as well: MNL OL DL 17981 (1477). For defence measures against the Poles, see the *Szapolyai oklt. passim*.

78 Luděk Březina, *Mezi králem a stavy. Dolnolужицké zemské fojtsví na prahu novověku (1490–1620)*. Praha, 2016, 46–49; Mlada Holá, 'Integrační tendence ve správě Slezska za Matyáše Korvína', in Lenka Bobková et al. (eds.), *České koruna na rozcestí. K dějinám Horní a Dolní Lužice a Dolního Slezska na přelomu středověku a raného novověku (1437–1526)*. Praha, 2010, 119–125. (My thanks go to Petr Kozák for his help with the Czech scholarly literature.)

was the result of his own military achievements. Imre featured on the charter only as secondary beneficiary.⁷⁹

After the signing of the Peace of Olmütz (Olomouc), at the very beginning of 1480 (officially in the summer), bishop Jan Filipec took over his role as captain general,⁸⁰ as King Matthias had requested his general to participate in the Austrian wars, so Szapolyai spent the following couple of years fighting there.⁸¹ Shortly after the occupation of Vienna in 1485, the ruler named him captain general of Austria,⁸² a post he held until the king's death in April 1490, and continued to hold it for a couple of months even after that.⁸³

Upon receiving the news of his brother's death in September 1487, the captain general rode from Pápa to the castle of Szepes within a few days and took over the administration of the entire family property after the funeral, while also separating off those estates worthy of the widowed countess Orsolya Bebek.⁸⁴ This made István the wealthiest baron in the country. According to the aforementioned envoy's report from the early 1490, this nobleman who was said to be very loyal to Matthias, and who according to some was even his ally, had an annual income of 30,000 gold florins.⁸⁵ Signs of his power and authority can be detected in several sources of the period. Suffice to mention the *series dignitatum* of royal charters issued in 1488–1489, after his brother's death; during the compilation of these charters, those working in the royal chancery often felt the need to include Szapolyai (contrary to tradition) among the officials holding baronial offices, even though he held the offices of *comes* of Szepes and Trencsén, which, in the traditional sense of the word, were not to be regarded as baronial offices (the Latin word *comes* meant both count [*gróf*] and *ispán*).⁸⁶ The family's prestige was further strengthened by István being able in 1486 to marry (presumably with support from Matthias) a descendant of the princes of the Piast dynasty ruling in Teschen (Cieszyn), Duchess Hedwig, who was

79 MNL OL DL 17981; cf. István Kenyeres, 'A Szapolyai család és Trencsén', in *Publicationes Universitatis Miskolciensis. Sectio Philosophica* 13:3 (2008) 177–179.

80 Holá, 'Integrační tendence', 119–125.

81 In March 1480 he was already commander-in-chief at the skirmishes at Radkersburg: András Kubinyi, 'Adalék a katonák fegyelmezéséhez Mátyás hadseregében és a királyi kapitány hatásköre', in Idem, *Nándorfehérvártól Mohácsig. A Mátyás- és a Jagelló-kor hadtörténete*. (A Hadtörténeti Intézet és Múzeum Könyvtára) Budapest, 2007, 106–111. In April 1485 the king is referring to Szapolyai as his *capitaneus gentium nostrarum*: *Sopron szabad királyi város története I. rész. 6. kötet. Oklevelek és levelek 1482-től 1520-ig*. Published by Jenő Házi. Sopron, 1928, 30.

82 In December 1485 at the latest: András Kubinyi, 'Mátyás király ausztriai kormányzata', *Levéltári Közlemények* 63 (1992) 118.

83 Szapolyai oklt. passim.

84 MNL OL DF 215336; cf. Arch. I. 80: note 17; Tibor Neumann, *Regstrum proventuum regni Hungariae. A Magyar Királyság kincstartójának számadáskönyve (1494–1495)*. (Magyar Történelmi Emlékek, Okmánytárak) Budapest, 2019, 143, line 400.

85 MDE IV. 196. – The same yearly income is reported in another source dated around this time: *ibid.*, 212.

86 Arch. I. 266–272.

almost thirty years younger than him.⁸⁷ Even though in the spring of 1486 István and Hedwig renounced their right to inherit the duchy,⁸⁸ their marriage secured a line of royal blood to their children, including John, and it also established family relations with several European dynasties.⁸⁹ The wedding took place in December 1486 in Vienna, in the presence of the king and queen, who presented the ‘young couple’ with valuable gifts.⁹⁰

The death of King Matthias on 6 April 1490 was followed by struggles for the Hungarian throne, from which, eventually, Bohemian king Vladislaus II (1471/1490–1516) emerged victorious. His first act was to make Szapolyai, entrusted by the Hungarian estates with the defence of Austria, take his side. Judging from his promissory note dated in early May, the captain general did not sell himself cheap, however: in return for his support, he requested the royal cities of the Szepes region, previously offered as security to the King of Poland,⁹¹ which would nicely complete his county of Szepes. The events of the next couple of months did presumably not increase his reputation in the country: many believed that a great part of Austria, including Vienna and Wiener Neustadt, had been lost due to his negligence.⁹² It is difficult to assess how adequate Szapolyai’s strategy for Austria was.⁹³ It is likely that he redeployed a part of the troops stationed in Austria to the north-eastern part of the kingdom, where the majority of his estates were also situated, to defend the country from the attacks of the Polish duke John Albert.⁹⁴ It was mostly thanks to these troops that Vladislaus did not lose this part of the country. The one-and-a-half-year-long Polish–Hungarian struggles, of varying intensity, and during which Szapolyai became captain general of Upper Hungary (*Partes regni superiores*)⁹⁵ again, ended near Eperjes (Prešov) on 1 January 1492, when the joined forces of Szapolyai and Jan Haugvic defeated the Polish duke,⁹⁶ whose gilded lance Szapolyai sent

87 On Hedwig’s life, see Veronika Kucharská, *Ducissa. Život knážnej Hedvivy v časoch Jagelovcov*. Bratislava, 2014.

88 Szapolyai *oklt.* 165–166.

89 For more details on the importance of the marriage, see the essay on the family’s representation in this volume.

90 *MDE* III. 229–231; cf. *ibid.*, 257; Wertner, ‘Családtörténeti adalékok’, 29–30.

91 András Kubinyi, ‘Két sorsdöntő esztendő (1490–1491)’, *Történelmi Szemle* 33 (1991) 17, 49.

92 Bonfini, *A magyar történelem tizedei*, 544 (5.2.85.). Cf. the description by Istvánffy: Gábor Nagy, ‘Szapolyai István és János alakja Istvánffy Miklós *Historiae*jában’, in *Publicationes Universitatis Miskolciensis. Sectio Philosophica* 13:3 (2008) 267–270.

93 Kubinyi, ‘Két sorsdöntő esztendő’, 29–30.

94 Cf. Tibor Neumann, ‘A kassai hadjárat. II. Ulászló zsoldosserege és a lengyelek elleni harc (1490–1491)’, in László Pósn and László Veszprémy (eds.), *Elfeledett háborúk. Középkori csaták és várostromok (6–16. század)*. Budapest, 2016, 395; note 214.

95 Horváth, ‘A Felső Részek’, 950–951. In the second half of 1491, Szapolyai even received permission from King Vladislaus to seize property in his capacity as captain general and donate it in the name of the king: Tibor Neumann and Géza Pálffy, ‘Főkapitányi és főhadparancsnoki adományok a 15–16. századi Magyarországon’, *Levéltári Közlemények* 80 (2009) 213–215; also MNL OL DF 269681.

96 Tibor Neumann, ‘Békekötés Pozsonyban – országgyűlés Budán. A Jagelló–Habsburg kapcsolatok egy fejezete (1490–1492) (Második közlemény)’, *Századok* 145 (2011) 303–306.

to King Vladislaus in Buda.⁹⁷ At the end of March, following the victory, the diet elected a palatine after the position being vacant for five years. No other candidate was more suitable for this office than the brother of the previous palatine, István, count of Szepes,⁹⁸ who was also entrusted with the task of defending the castle of Sáros (Šarišský hrad), retaken by him from the Poles. The task also entailed the defence of the entire region around the castle; in return for these services, Szapolyai received a yearly payment from the treasury.⁹⁹ Partly due to this fact, in the 1490s István held the office of *ispán* in several counties in Upper Hungary.¹⁰⁰

Palatine István was one of the key figures of the 1490s. He stood out from among the other magnates not only because of his rank and position as palatine and guardian of the crown (from 1493), his immense landed property that kept growing thanks to various agreements and acquisitions, his office as *ispán* of several counties and his extended network of *familiares*, but also because of his possession of royal revenues that he had been given since the struggles for the throne as compensation for the treasury's debts to him, e.g. the thirtieth customs duty of Upper Hungary or the royal free cities of Nagyszombat (Trnava) and Szakolca (Skalica).¹⁰¹ He was regarded as the treasury's top creditor, in return for which he often received permission to collect and keep taxes that were meant to be paid to the king.¹⁰² All this entailed severe risks from the perspective of the crown, as clearly demonstrated by the occurrences of 1493–1495: the palatine, together with several aristocrats, opposed a group of magnates and prelates governing the country along with the king, which almost drove the country, at war with the Ottoman Empire, to chaos. The palatine arbitrarily occupied several of John Corvinus's castles, and almost intervened in the war on the side of his ally Lőrinc Újlaki, a proclaimed rebel against whom the king had launched a punitive campaign.¹⁰³ After Lőrinc's defeat, the palatine made peace with the king in May 1495.¹⁰⁴ From this time on, Szapolyai was always present

97 MNL OL DF 245150.

98 Arch. I. 81.

99 Neumann, *Registrum proventuum*, 343, line 2037. On the castle of Sáros and its possession by the Szapolyai family, see Tibor Neumann, 'Várat vennék, de miből? Perényi Imre szerzeményei az 1490-es években', *A Nyíregyházi Jósza András Múzeum Évkönyve* 59:1 (2017) 101–102.

100 Arch. II. passim.

101 Tibor Neumann, '„Minden időkből kegyelmes uratok kívánunk lenni”. A királyi városok adóztatása a 15. század végén', in István Kádas and Boglárka Weisz (eds.), *Hatalom, adó, jog. Gazdaságtörténeti tanulmányok a magyar középkorról*. (Magyar Történelmi Emlékek, Értekezések) Budapest, 2017, 30–31. On the thirtieth customs duties of Nagyszombat, Szakolca, Bártfa (Bardejov), possessed from 1490, and for the main thirtieth customs duty of Kassa (Košice) administered from 1491, see the *Szapolyai okl.* 181, 186, 192, 257 and passim.

102 Neumann, *Registrum proventuum*, passim.

103 On the conflict between Szapolyai and John Corvinus, see Tibor Neumann, 'A gróf és a herceg magánháborúja (Szapolyai István és Corvin János harca a lipői hercegségért)', *Századok* 148 (2014) 387–426; on the campaign against Prince Lőrinc, see Tamás Fedeles, *A király és a lázadó herceg. Az Újlaki Lőrinc és szövetségesei elleni királyi hadjárat (1494–1495)*. (Szegedi Középkortörténeti Könyvtár, 27.) Szeged, 2012.

104 Neumann, 'A gróf és a herceg magánháborúja', 409–411.

in King Vladislaus's immediate entourage: in 1497, when the king left for his first journey to Bohemia, he named palatine István his procurator for the time he was away.¹⁰⁵ This is the first year when we first hear of the Szapolyai family possibly having royal ambitions: at the diet, the palatine was accused of wishing to make his son king in the event of Vladislaus's death.¹⁰⁶

Palatine István died in the castle of Pápa at Christmas 1499. He was approximately sixty years old: the priests were just about to call him to Midnight Mass when they found him dead. According to the report on his death, contemporaries believed his 'unworthy' death (his loved ones were not present) was God's punishment for the laws or sentences the palatine passed against the church.¹⁰⁷ The text of the codicil to the palatine's will, written two days prior to his death, reveals that the seriously ill palatine was not sure whether, as minors, his sons would inherit all his property and influence. Stressing the services he had rendered to both the king and his country, the palatine entrusted his sons to the king and the most influential lords of the country, waived huge amounts of debts the ruler and the estates owed him, and he even left valuable gifts for the king.¹⁰⁸ His efforts were completely understandable, as following his death everybody in the country expected that "his sons would not inherit everything after him, as he possessed many items that belonged to the crown and that the king wants back, and the king has even given orders to occupy Trencsén, and is moving on to the other ones".¹⁰⁹

'JOHN NÁDORISPÁNYI' (JOHN, SON OF THE PALATINE)

At the time of István's death, his four children, John (János), György (George), Borbála (Barbara) and Magdolna (Magdalene) were all minors, so the administration of the family estates were, for a long time, taken over by István's widow, Duchess Hedwig.¹¹⁰ It is perhaps thanks to her that the family managed to start the new century without any major financial losses. We do not know exactly when the topic of the domestic political situation brought about by the death of the palatine was discussed at the royal council, but it was perhaps as early as February 1500.¹¹¹ Despite the aforementioned Italian report from 3 February, sources mention no cases of property being sequestered. It can therefore be assumed there was some kind of agreement between the king and

105 *Arch.* I. 79.

106 Vilmos Fraknói, *A Hunyadiak és a Jagellók kora (1440–1526)*. (A Magyar Nemzet Története, IV.) Budapest, 1896, 363. On his princely ambitions, see the essay on the family's representation in this volume.

107 A report written in Italian from 3 February 1500 in the Archives of Modena: Vestigia 1457. (I am grateful to György Domokos for helping me interpret the Italian text.)

108 *Szapolyai oklt.* 255–258.

109 Vestigia 1457.

110 For her biography, see Kuchárska, *Ducissa*.

111 On 19 January, the king requested the presence, among others, of Miklós Várdai, because he wished to discuss with him certain matters that had emerged: MNL OL DL 82159. Also, Duchess Hedwig, returning to Trencsén, called her leading *familiares*: *Szapolyai oklt.* 259.

the Szapolyai family. There is no doubt that of all the crown possessions, the royal towns of Nagyszombat and Szakolca, together with the castle of Sáros, which came into the possession of the Szapolyais through being mortgaged, remained in the hands of the family, while the thirtieth customs duty of Kassa (Košice), administered in the 1490s by István, was soon, in May at the latest, channelled back to the monarch.¹¹² The king and his entourage also had to decide on the further fate of about a dozen offices of county *ispáns* that had hitherto been held by the palatine. The decision taken was a rational one: only counties where the Szapolyais were the largest landholders or where they possessed the castle to which the position of *ispán* traditionally pertained remained in the hands of the Szapolyais. These were: Trencsén, Turóc, Gömör, Torna, Szepes, Zemplén, and, as an exception, the family's home county, Pozsega. These came into the possession of István's elder son, John. The other counties came to be headed by *ispáns* appointed by the king from among the members of his royal household.¹¹³ It appears this decision did not become fully popular among the county nobility; perhaps they did not wish to remain under the authority of a child or his mother. At the diet of Bács (Bač) in the autumn of 1500, delegates from several counties intervened on the matter of Count John holding multiple offices as *ispán*. At the end of the year, the king and his council ordered the nobles of Zemplén county to adhere to his decision and accept John as their *ispán*.¹¹⁴ Within about a year and a half they agreed to the request of the county and appointed Antal Pálóci to replace the count in his office of *ispán*, however.¹¹⁵

Contemporaries may definitely have augured a bright future for John, the new head of the Szapolyai family. In their eyes, his title as count (*gróf*) of Szepes, his wealth inherited from his father and his mother's royal heritage¹¹⁶ were all further enhanced by the office of palatine that was held by both his father and his uncle: in the first decade of the 16th century, until taking the post of voivode of Transylvania, John was called 'John Nádorispánfi' (John, son of the palatine) both within the country and abroad.¹¹⁷ This clearly shows the prestige and rank

112 MNL OL DF 269286.

113 Imre Perényi, master of the tables in Abaúj county, as well as courtiers Ferenc Semsei in Sáros county and László Sztritei in Ung county. The office of the *ispán* in Külső-Szolnok county is uncertain; see *Arch.* II. passim. An undated document has come down to us in which King Vladislaus appoints Count John to head one of the counties in Upper Hungary (*Partes regni superiores*), or more explicitly leaves the ispánate in his hands after the death of his father: MNL OL DF 263781.

114 MNL OL DF 216337; for its edition, see *Arch.* II. 484–485.

115 *Arch.* II. 374.

116 On these, see the essay on the family's representation in this volume.

117 I only know his surname, in the form of *Nagrespanffy*, from a source from 1504 (Imre Nagy [ed.]. *Sopron vármegye története. Oklevéltár. Vol. II.* Sopron, 1891, 593), but this seems to be confirmed by the fact that he is mentioned in an Italian envoy's report from 1505 as *il conte Paladim Zouene* (Gusztáv Wenzel, 'Marino Sanuto Világkrónikájának Magyarországot illető tudósításai II.', *Történelmi Tár* 12 [1877] 136), and in another from 1506 as *il fiol dil conte palatino* (*ibid.*, 144). He is referred to by the same name in a note by János Budai Kakas, as well: *filio*

the title conferred at the time. But exactly how old was John when he nominally became the head of the Szapolyai family?

King John's date of birth is still uncertain. According to an old local tradition, he was born in the castle of Szepes, where visitors in the 18th century were even able to see his crib.¹¹⁸ The date associated with his birth in 1487¹¹⁹ has with time proved to be definitively wrong, as an Italian envoy's report, written after King Matthias's death on 6 April 1490, stressed that István Szapolyai had as yet no sons.¹²⁰ Because of the temporal proximity, this cannot exclude the possibility that the almanac of Paul Eber, published in Wittenberg in 1550, contains the right birth date for King John, namely 29 March 1490. The entry in the almanac not only emphasises that John was born in the very same year in which King Matthias died, but also mentions that he came into this world at a place situated eight miles from Vienna towards the border to Hungary.¹²¹ The positioning is likely to refer to the city of Ebenfurt, which is fifty kilometres from the centre of Vienna, and where István Szapolyai's wife, Duchess Hedwig, had her residence until late summer or autumn of 1490, i.e. until her husband moved their residence to Trencsén due to the advancement of German troops.¹²² Eber's data coincides not only with a Venetian envoy's report, preserved with Marino Sanudo and dating from autumn 1505, which puts John's age at fifteen,¹²³ but also with two charters, one from May 1490, and the other from November of the same year, which mention the theoretical inheritance right of an unnamed son born to István.¹²⁴ There is at the same time no doubt that the name John appeared first in a charter from September 1492,¹²⁵ so arguments for his birth having been later, around 1492, can also be raised. This could be confirmed by the piece of information from 1510, provided by the governor of the bishopric of Eger, Ercole Pio, who knew the count of Szepes personally, and who, when

palatini Iohanne vocato (András Kubinyi, 'Budai Kakas János és történeti feljegyzései', in Idem, *Főpapok, egyházi intézmények és vallásosság a középkori Magyarországon*. [METEM Könyvek, 22.] Budapest, 1999, 209).

118 Matthias Bél, *Hungariae antiquae et novae prodromus*. Norimbergae, 1723, 100. The issue around the birth of John was most recently studied by Veronika Kucharská in her *Ducissa*, 40–43.

119 Wagner, *Analecta Scepusii*, IV. 33–34; cf. Wertner, 'Családtörténeti adalékok', 29–30.

120 *MDE* IV. 196.

121 Paulus Eber, *Calendarium historicum*. Vittebergae, 1573, 123.

122 *MDE* IV. 211. On the role of the residence in Ebenfurt, see the essay on the family's representation in this volume.

123 Wenzel, 'Marino Sanuto', 136.

124 It should be mentioned here that I do not know of any property-related charters concerning the Szapolyai family issued between November 1490 and September 1492 in which it was absolutely necessary to include John, had he been alive. On the other hand, there is no doubt that a royal charter for the castle of Trencsén dated November 1490 states that the domain controlled by István Szapolyai, on the grounds of it being offered as security, cannot be redeemed prior to the death of István or one of his male heirs, which may suggest that István already had a son by then (MNL OL DL 19691). The situation is similar in the case of King Vladislaus's obligation from May, written in Czech; see Kucharská, *Ducissa* 42–43.

125 MNL OL DL 50614; cf. Tibor Neumann, 'Dózsa legyőzője. Szapolyai János erdélyi vajdasága (1510–1526)', *Székelyföld* 18:11 (2014) 95.

writing about him, put his age at eighteen.¹²⁶ Even though I think it is Eber's data that is most probably correct, and John may thus have had his tenth birthday three months after his father's death, there is only one thing we can say with all certainty, and that is that he was born between 1490 and 1492.¹²⁷ By contrast, the birth of his brother György and sister Borbála can be established, if not to the day, but still very clearly: they were born as twins in the spring of 1495,¹²⁸ and were followed in the last years in the life of palatine István by Magdolna, who died at an early age.¹²⁹

Not much is known about the education and youth of the Szapolyai siblings. Undoubtedly, the two boys were trained, in accordance with the spirit of the age and the decision of their father, to become soldiers. On the basis of later letters of donation, palatine István entrusted his leading *familiars* János Tornaljai and Imre Ládonyi, among others, with the task of educating the children. Later, János Tornaljai even accompanied Count John to Transylvania, where he administered the affairs of his lord's court.¹³⁰ Imre Ládonyi, on the other hand, was presumably the prefect of the family's court in Trencsén.¹³¹ The educators did not neglect the education of the children in more theoretical matters: two handwritten letters have come down to us from John in 1517 that clearly illustrate that he had excellent written and even spoken knowledge of Latin.¹³² Even György appears to have signed his charters with an experienced hand.¹³³ Given their parents' background, they were native speakers of both Hungarian and Czech.¹³⁴

The year 1504 was of maximum importance in the family's life. At the beginning of the year, King Vladislaus II, who had no male heirs, suffered a stroke,¹³⁵ from that time on he was frequently ill, which arose grave concerns in the country, since, pursuant to current international agreements, the unpopular

126 György Domokos, *A Jámbor Herkules. Estei Hippolit bíboros egri kormányzója, Ercole Pio beszámolója Magyarországról 1508–1510*. Budapest, 2019, 165.

127 It is clear that the later a source on John's age is, the less reliable it is. As an example, some Venetian envoys estimated the age of the voivode to be 32 in 1519 and 34 in 1525: István Balogh, *Velencei diplomaták Magyarországról (1500–1526)*. Szeged, 1929, xxxii, lxxi; cf. Norbert C. Tóth, 'Egy legenda nyomában. Szapolyai János és ecsedi Bátori István viszonya 1526 előtt', *Századok* 146 (2012) 448.

128 Kucharská, *Ducissa* 43–44. The date of 20 February as featured here is modified to March by Queen Beatrice requesting information on 3 April from the castellan of Visegrád on whether the child of the palatine's wife had been born yet (MNL OL DL 102659). That Borbála was György's twin sister is revealed by a charter from the summer of 1495, which mentions them both (*Szapolyai oklt.* 220), and it is not likely that it had been created by assigning the document to an earlier date.

129 In 1502 he was still alive, and his name appears after that of Borbála: MNL OL DF 274757. (I am grateful to Tamás Pálosfalvi for acquainting me with this document.)

130 *Szapolyai oklt.* 384–385; cf. MNL OL DL 38785.

131 *Szapolyai oklt.* 483–484.

132 Tibor Neumann, 'János király saját kezű levelei', *Turul* 85 (2012) 110–114.

133 See the charter photos in the attachment to the *Szapolyai oklt.*

134 See above, at the end of the introductory chapter.

135 Wenzel, 'Marino Sanuto', 109.

Maximilian, King of the Romans, would have inherited the throne.¹³⁶ Moreover, on 4 October 1504, King Matthias's son Prince John Corvinus died, followed a couple of months later by John's son Christopher.¹³⁷ This provided new impetus for the Szapolyais' ambitions to occupy the throne, as their wealth and descent made them the only prominent family among the country's aristocracy. It is well known that Duchess Hedwig did all she could to seize the opportunity. She eagerly sought to engage her son John to King Vladislaus's daughter (and also her own god-daughter), Princess Anna; and her younger son, Count György, to the heiress of the Hunyadi fortune, Erzsébet.¹³⁸ In the meantime, certainly not regardless of the Szapolyai family's plans, the country entered turbulent times, and at the frequently convoked diets the nobility expressed ever more strongly its demand that the issue of succession be discussed in order to prevent Maximilian from gaining more ground. The critical situation was finally solved by Prince Sigismund of Poland, King Vladislaus's brother, who arrived in Hungary in the summer of 1505 and undertook to mediate between the court and the Szapolyai family.¹³⁹ During his visit to Trencsén, Sigismund offered Duchess Hedwig to marry her daughter Borbála. In return, he presumably asked the House of Szapolyai to decline the marriage with Princess Anna and to contribute to the consolidation of the situation. Hedwig must have accepted the offer, and as a result, the royal couple also reached an agreement with Count John in Buda.¹⁴⁰ Subsequently, the monarch convoked a diet for Michaelmas (29 September). On the last day of the sessions, on 13 October, the estates, in the presence of the immediate entourage of the king, passed a statement (the so-called decision of Rákos), according to which, were King Vladislaus to die without a male heir, only kings of Hungarian origin would be elected. Because Maximilian's attack was expected, the fifteen-year-old Szapolyai participated in the diet with two thousand cavalry soldiers,¹⁴¹ and although the document drawn up of the decision does not mention his name, it was all too obvious that should a Hungarian king be elected it would most likely be him.

The decision of Rákos was, of course, not directed against King Vladislaus. Rather, it was directed against Maximilian, who, while launching attacks against Hungary to defend his rights, also entered into secret negotiations with the Hungarian royal couple. Although the birth of Prince Louis on 2 July 1506 took

136 Dezső Szabó, *Küzdelmeink a nemzeti királyságért 1505–1526*. Budapest, 1917, 81–109; cf. István Tringli, 'Der Weg des ungarischen Hofs zur Doppelheirat', in Bogusław Dybaś und István Tringli (Hrsg.), *Das Wiener Fürstentreffen von 1515. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Habsburgisch-Jagiellonischen Doppelvermählung*. (21st-Century Studies in Humanities) Budapest, 2019, 247–253.

137 Tibor Neumann, 'Mátyás herceg (Szerény adalék a Hunyadi családfához)', *Turul* 88 (2015) 72.

138 Stanisław A. Sroka, *Jadwiga Zapolya*. Kraków, 2005, 45–53; Kucharská, *Ducissa*, 115–116.

139 Szabó, *Küzdelmeink*, 93–94; Tringli, 'Der Weg', 250.

140 Tringli, 'Der Weg', 250.

141 Wenzel, 'Marino Sanuto', 136; *Szapolyai oklt.* 275; cf. Szabó, *Küzdelmeink*, 91. An undated fragment of a report, mixed with sources from the 16th century, also mentions that Szapolyai arrived at the diet accompanied by 2,000 cavalry soldiers, and as cause for the upheaval it reveals that Cardinal Bakóc was busy with organizing the wedding of one of the grandchildren of Maximilian with the princess. Vestigia 1810.

Maximilian's claim to the throne and the Szapolyai family's similar ambitions off the agenda for a long time, the short Austrian-Hungarian war in early 1506 brought yet another important change to John's career: this was the year he was first elected captain general and his companion came to be palatine Imre Perényi.¹⁴² It appears that both were re-elected in 1507 and held the office even in 1508.¹⁴³ Szapolyai's appointment could, of course, hardly have been motivated by his military experience. Instead, it was the result of the power of his family and of the military force he showed at the diet of Rákos. As for the other important political offices, we do not know whether or not the position of guardian of the crown remained with the family after István Szapolyai's death. It is certain, though, that as early as 1508 Count John was a guardian of the crown alongside Imre Perényi. It was therefore evident that during the coronation of Prince Louis they held the Holy Crown above the child's head, and that following the ceremonies they transported the crown back to Visegrád Castle.¹⁴⁴ From this time until the Battle of Mohács, the Szapolyai brothers can be found as guardians of the crown.¹⁴⁵

The first decade of the 16th century generated further economic wealth to the family. György Szapolyai and Erzsébet Corvinus's marriage did not ultimately take place,¹⁴⁶ and Erzsébet's death made it possible for King Vladislaus in 1509 to pass on a large part of the Hunyadi inheritance together with betrothal to John Corvinus's widow for his own nephew, George, Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach.¹⁴⁷ After lengthy negotiations between 1505 and 1507, the Szapolyais still managed to obtain the castles of the Duchy of Liptó (Likava and Orava) from the Corvinus inheritance, which also entailed the ispánate of Liptó and Orava;¹⁴⁸ in 1509 they then also obtained the domain of Debrecen.¹⁴⁹ John's influence and popularity is perfectly illustrated in the reports written about the diet of Tata in 1510 by Ercole Pio, cardinal Ippolito d'Este's governor of Eger. One recurring element in the work is the idea that the cardinal, sojourning in Italy, should, in his own interest, make the count of Szepes side with him by sending him

142 On this, see the charters of the captains general: *Szapolyai oklt.* 282–287; cf. Kubinyi, 'Budai Kakas János', 209.

143 Gábor Mikó, 'Ismeretlen országgyűlési emlék a Jagelló-korból. Adatok az 1507 és 1514 közötti országgyűlések történetéhez, valamint Werbőczy *Hármaskönyvének* elkészültéhez', *Történelmi Szemle* 56 (2014) 461–462. Szapolyai's mention as captain general in a charter from 1508: MNL OL DL 37838.

144 Brodericus, *Epistulae*, 46–47.

145 Cf. László Iván, *A visegrádi vár története a kezdetektől 1685-ig*. Visegrád, 2004, 200.

146 According to the statement of the *familiars* of Corvinus's widow, Duchess Hedwig did not in the end ratify the agreement: MNL OL DL 37809. Later the king supported the marriage of Erzsébet and Mihály Pálóci: MNL OL DL 37811. Shortly after the betrothal, Erzsébet died, however; see Kucharská, *Ducissa*, 88–90.

147 On the political consequences of this, see most recently Tibor Neumann, 'Dienstleister der Dynastie. Die neue Aristokratie von König Wladislaw II. und der Wiener Fürstentag', in Dybaš und Tringli (Hrsg.), *Das Wiener Fürstentreffen*, 181–183.

148 Neumann, 'A gróf és a herceg', 421–423; *Szapolyai oklt.* 266–272; *Arch.* II. 144.

149 Domokos, *A Jámor Herkules*, 27; cf. *Szapolyai oklt.* 300.

presents (a worthy present would have been an Italian suit armour, as John was very keen on arms). Szapolyai entered a rather distinguished circle: only palatine Imre Perényi, bishop of Pécs György Szatmári, secret chancellor, and the king and his children are featured in similar contexts. Meanwhile we are also informed that the count is “a young, but rather powerful lord and is respected in the entire country”, and that he is extremely popular in the country both among the aristocrats and the nobles, and “everybody who can please him is happy”. We also learn that he arrived at the diet accompanied by a considerable army, and that near Tata he met cardinal Bakóc, who, should the need arise to elect a governor because of the illness of the king, would support him (the other candidate for the post was palatine Imre Perényi). Furthermore, to confirm his proposition, he also shared the news that the king of Poland allegedly became betrothed to John’s younger sister.¹⁵⁰ Against this background it came as no surprise to John’s contemporaries that, with Count Péter Szentgyörgyi soon retiring from his post as voivode of Transylvania due to his illness,¹⁵¹ the king appointed John Szapolyai as the head of the province in November 1510,¹⁵² which opened a new chapter in the count’s life.

‘LIBERATOR REGNI’

The office of the voivode of Transylvania was the second-highest-ranking baronial office in the country at the time, preceded in rank only by the office of the palatine. In the late Middle Ages, the position was backed up by several measures: on the one hand, from the 1460s, the voivode also held the office of *ispán* of the Székelys, which increased the scope of his authority and also the number of military personnel under his command.¹⁵³ On the other hand, the voivode often held the third most important office in the realm, namely that of the judge royal, as István Báthori had done from 1479 and as had Szapolyai’s predecessor, Count Péter Szentgyörgyi. This may have increased the prestige of the voivode even more.¹⁵⁴ The officials appointed to the highest position of Transylvania had one thing in common: they were all large-scale landholding barons who were rightfully regarded as good soldiers and military leaders. The reason for this was that voivodes had to defend Transylvania against Ottoman attack and sometimes also had to intervene in the affairs of the two Romanian

150 Domokos, *A Jámor Herkules*, 156, 165, 169, 174. (Many thanks to the author for his help in interpreting the sources.)

151 On the voivode’s illness, see Bálint Lakatos, ‘Haag, Mrakes, Cuspinianus és Helianus. A német és francia követek tárgyalásai a magyar elittel az 1510-es tatai országgyűlés idején’, in *Komárom-Esztergom Megyei Múzeumok Közleményei* 17. Tata, 2011, 234. The royal letter sent to the Székelys about John’s appointment to the post of voivode and *ispán* mentions that Szentgyörgyi himself requested he be replaced: Zsigmond Jakó, ‘Az erdélyi vajdák kinevezéséről’, in *Idem, Társadalom, egyház, művelődés. Tanulmányok Erdély történelméhez*. (METEM Könyvek) Budapest, 1997, 84.

152 *Arch.* I. 88.

153 *Arch.* I. 83.

154 *Arch.* I. 87–88.

polities regarded as vassal states of Hungary, Wallachia and Moldavia.¹⁵⁵ Voivodes also had to provide military support, if needed, to the captain of the frontier area west of Transylvania, i.e. the captain general of the Lower Parts of Hungary (*Partes regni inferiores*).¹⁵⁶ These military duties combined with governmental and some judicial tasks to insure domestic peace and tranquillity,¹⁵⁷ required the bearer of the title to spend most of his time in his province and not at the royal court or in his home.

There were several aspects that made John Szapolyai's appointment appear special: during its centuries-old history, Transylvania had never before had such a young (twenty years of age at most) voivode. Szapolyai was also different from his predecessors in that he did not have extensive military experience when he arrived in the province. True, alongside the palatine, he had been one of the captains general of the country in 1506 and in 1507–1508, but this was more a tribute to the rank of his family and power than to his military competence. It is obvious that the same political rationale lay behind his appointment in 1510: according to the mindset of the era, it was imperative for the grown-up child of this powerful family to be given a high authority position – preferably one of the most important positions. This was not only to make him prove his loyalty to the crown and his governmental and military competence. Equally important was that by taking on a direct duty the House of Szapolyai would contribute to the everyday stability of the realm at both a local and a regional level. If John really was as popular in the country as our sources suggest, many were likely to welcome the fact that he had been entrusted with a position that entailed a high level of responsibility. On the other hand, some political interest groups may have welcomed the idea because the permanent duties of the voivode would keep him further away from the royal court in Buda. Appointing the richest barons for the task of defending borders can nevertheless appear reasonable, because the court was not always able to pay its officials in time, so very often the funds for the defence of the province had to be advanced by these barons.¹⁵⁸ Szapolyai is likely to have been appointed to his post with similar conditions to those in place in 1494 and 1504: presumably he received an annual salary of 12,000 florins, an amount he had to use to keep 200 men-at-arms equipped.¹⁵⁹ Apart from this, the armies of the Saxons, the Székelys and of the Transylvanian

155 On the list of mobilizations during John's time as voivode, see Neumann, 'Dózsa legyőzője', 99–100.

156 On this mutual assistance, see first and foremost the text of a letter from 1493: *Ceterum disposui, quod dominus Paulus rursus ad Themeswar descendat cum ea auctoritate et dispositione, quam habuit tempore domini nostri regis Mathie etc. et quod quandocunque opus erit, partibus illis Transsilvanis personaliter et cum omnibus viribus regiis ac suis succurrat, idem wayvode illi Transsilvani eidem domino Paulo facere debebunt etc.* MNL OL DF 283439; cf. Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis*, 273.

157 On his duties, see Neumann, 'Dózsa legyőzője'.

158 Numerous examples could be mentioned of this phenomenon; see e.g. Arch. I. 125; 140–141.

159 Neumann, *Registrum* 340 (line 2031); Thallóczy, *Jajca*, 183.

nobility, which varied in size, but sometimes amounted to as many as several thousand men, were under his leadership.¹⁶⁰

Count John's young age, his possible lack of military experience and the interesting fact that it was only in Transylvania that the Szapolyai family did not have any estates did definitely not hinder him from assuming the office. The period of his voivodeship, which lasted until 1526, can best be described as well-functioning on local administrative level, that is, in those areas which depended on the voivode's personal involvement.¹⁶¹ Prior to John's voivodeship it was quite common for voivodes to end up in various increasingly serious conflicts with the Transylvanian nobility, the Saxons or the Székelys. Our sources show that this phenomenon became less frequent and less intensive during his time as voivode.¹⁶² There may have been several reasons for this. Alongside Szapolyai's personal charisma, which cannot be examined today, the first of these was the extent of the family's influence in the country, strengthened by the marital relationships with the Jagiellonian dynasty established in 1512: to the wedding of King Sigismund the Old of Poland and Borbála Szapolyai the voivode invited also people from Transylvania.¹⁶³ Those disgruntled are likely to have thought twice before acting against the most powerful baron of the country, who was even related to the royal family, and who governed his province not only through

160 On this, see the essays by Norbert C. Tóth and János B. Szabó in this volume.

161 Neumann, 'Dózsa legyőzője', 96; Tibor Neumann, 'Bulgária–Erdély–Temesvár. Szapolyai János és a parasztháború', in C. Norbert Tóth and Tibor Neumann (eds.), *Keresztesekből lázadók. Tanulmányok 1514 Magyarországról*. (Magyar Történelmi Emlékek, Értekezések) Budapest, 2015, 106.

162 On the Székelys unrest in Csíkszék in 1519 and on the reasons behind the negotiations of the Transylvanian nobles and Székelys in 1524 against the voivode, see Neumann, 'Dózsa legyőzője', 96, 100; on their social background, see Zsigmond Jakó, 'A székely társadalom útja a XV–XVI. században', in Idem, *Társadalom, egyház, művelődés*, 42. Some examples of earlier conflicts: Richárd Horváth and Tibor Neumann, *Ecsedi Bátori István. Egy katonabárá életpályája 1458–1493*. (Magyar Történelmi Emlékek, Értekezések) Budapest, 2012, 116–117; Tibor Neumann, 'Drágfi Bertalan politikai szerepe II. Ulászló király idején', in Géza Hegyi and András W. Kovács (eds.), *A Szilágyság és a Wesselényi család (14–17. sz.)*. Kolozsvár, 2012, 231–234. During Péter Szentgyörgyi's term as voivode, the king, after a long period of time, once again appointed a separate Székely *ispán* in 1504, who had held his office until 1507: *Arch.* I. 123; cf. András Kubinyi, 'Tárcai János, az utolsó székely *ispán* (Genealógiai és prozopográfiai tanulmány)', *Mediaevalia Transilvanica* 7–8 (2003–2004) 128–136. In the case of Drágfi and Szentgyörgyi, the underlying reasons for the conflicts with the Transylvanian estates were that they only visited their provinces rarely, when the military situation made this absolutely necessary, and they neglected the judiciary matters, which were central for the estates. Cf. for example the decisions of the Union of Segesvár (Sighişoara) in 1506: Teréz Oborni, 'From Province to Principality: Continuity and Change in Transylvania in the First Half of the Sixteenth Century', in István Zombori (ed.), *Fight Against the Turk in Central-Europe in the First Half of the 16th Century*. Budapest, 2004, 169–170.

163 *Szapolyai oklt.* 328. (Invitation to the city of Szeben and the Seven Saxon Seats.) More details of the marriage are provided in the essay on the family's representation in this volume.

his *familiares* but also put numerous local lords in his service,¹⁶⁴ and had his own court in Transylvania, mostly in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca).¹⁶⁵

Even though Szapolyai's predecessor, Péter Szentgyörgyi, had kept his prestigious post as judge royal until his death in 1517, and this post was later assigned not to Szapolyai, but Prince Lőrinc Újlaki,¹⁶⁶ Szapolyai was well compensated by being elected captain general of the country several times after 1513. In reality this meant that he commanded the troops (or part of the troops) equipped by the country's prelates, lords and counties, and he is likely to have been regarded as the superior of all the officers of the frontier castles.¹⁶⁷ At this time (1513–1516), he was even head of the banate of Szörény (Severin).¹⁶⁸ Although we cannot focus on Szapolyai's anti-Ottoman military campaigns here,¹⁶⁹ it is a well-known fact that the peasant's revolt led by György Dózsa, which made the voivode highly regarded by his contemporaries, had originally been a planned anti-Ottoman campaign that, during the course of events, unfolded into a rebellion.

The exact aim of the crusade of 1514 can still not be established with all certainty, as the movement of the crusaders marching against the Ottomans had turned into an uprising well before they reached the borders.¹⁷⁰ It is certain, though, that the immediate causes of the events are to be found in the hostilities between the Ottomans and the Hungarians, constant from 1512, in the loss of the banate of Szreberník (Srebrenik) in autumn 1512, and in the consequences of these. The royal court faced ever greater difficulties in paying the troops stationed at the borders to defend the country.¹⁷¹ While the crusader army – radicalized by the ban on recruitments issued on 15 May – under the leadership of György Dózsa, a military officer of a frontier fortress, defeated the army of István Báthori, *ispán* of Temes (*comes Temesiensis*) at Nagylak (Nădlac) in Csanád county on 23–24 May, and had the bishop of Csanád captured and killed on 28 May,¹⁷² John Szapolyai was on a raid in Bulgaria, presumably in the vicinity of Vidin. The aim was most probably to cause confusion among the Ottoman border defence force before the crusaders reached the front. Since Szapolyai was one of the country's captains general from early 1513, there is hardly any doubt

164 Arch. I. 88, and Arch. II. 391–418; Szapolyai *oklt. passim*.

165 Neumann, 'Dózsa legyőzője', 95–96.

166 Arch. II. 90–91.

167 On the appointment in 1513, see Mikó, 'Ismeretlen országgyűlési emlék', 466–470. On the captains general, see C. Tóth, *A Magyar Királyság nádora*, 218–221. On the powers granted to Szapolyai, see Neumann, 'Bulgária–Erdély–Temesvár', 112–114.

168 Arch. I. 153.

169 See the essay by Norbert C. Tóth in this volume.

170 On the revolt of Dózsa most recently, see the essays in the volume entitled *Keresztesekből lázadók*, referenced above. Cf. Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis*, 345–348, and Bálint Lakatos, 'Dózsa György, Jean Hannart és a „ceglédi kiáltvány”. Három újabb forrás az 1514. évi parasztháború eseménytörténetéhez', *Történelmi Szemle* 58 (2016) 277–302.

171 Neumann, 'Bulgária–Erdély–Temesvár', 112–118.

172 Norbert C. Tóth, 'Az apátfalvi-nagylaki csata. A keresztes főserég útja Pesttől Nagylakig', in C. Tóth and Neumann (eds.), *Keresztesekből lázadók*, 81–101.

that he was also the commander-in-chief of the crusade. From the Bulgarian campaign he returned to Karánsebes (Caransebeș) on 3 June, and immediately started to organize the resistance against Dózsa: he is likely to have deployed a part of his army to strengthen the city of Temesvár (Timișoara), while he quickly returned to Transylvania to be sure to get in front of Dózsa, who was gradually occupying the area of the river Maros and moving eastwards.¹⁷³ Although the fact that it was possible to suppress the rebellion within two months may give a false sense that the sudden fall of the crusaders was predestined, the truth is it also required the assertiveness of the voivode-captain general as well as the considerable military experience he had since acquired.

As a result of the growing danger, Szapolyai put aside the customary negotiations with the estates and ordered a fast deployment of the Transylvanian army, this time larger in size than usual, and to ensure tranquillity in the 'hinterland' he essentially declared martial law in his province against those wishing to join the crusaders. He was, however, forced to leave some of the troops that had gathered on 18 June near Nagyenyed (Aiud) in Transylvania. The reason for this was that Dózsa, while turning towards Temesvár with the main crusader army, sent priest Lőrinc, who had looted the city of Várad (Nagyvárad/Oradea), to northern Transylvania via the Szilágyság (Sălaj) region in order to force the voivode to divide his troops. This did not, however, prevent Szapolyai from appearing on 15 July near Temesvár, where, perhaps after a short battle, he had György Dózsa captured. Then, for purposes of deterrence, he had him brutally tortured and executed. Subsequently he set off to return to Transylvania, while he sent a part of his troops to Várad under the leadership of Pál Tomori. Soon after, between 18 and 26 July, the voivodal troops left in Transylvania defeated priest Lőrinc in a bloody battle at Szamosfalva (Someșeni), near Kolozsvár; after a couple of days Tomori also liquidated the rebellious hotspots in Bihar county, with which the uprising was basically ended.¹⁷⁴ John Szapolyai's younger brother, Count György, also took part in the suppression of the revolt: he marched into Buda at the head of an infantry army to protect the king, and in his capacity as captain general set off at the end of July to southern Transdanubia to liquidate the rebel movement there.¹⁷⁵

Because of its initial successes, the crusaders' revolt caused widespread alarm among the nobility: no doubt the rebels spared neither the lives nor the wealth of the nobles they claimed to be their enemies. The voivode is likely to have arrived at the diet in the autumn as part of a real victory march; the grateful nobles declared him the 'saviour of the country' (*liberator regni*) and voted in favour

173 Neumann, 'Bulgária–Erdély–Temesvár', 105–126.

174 *Ibid.*, 126–153.

175 *Monumenta rusticorum in Hungaria rebellium anno MDXIV*. Maiorem partem collegit Antonius Fekete Nagy, ediderunt Victor Kenéz et Ladislaus Solymosi atque in volumen redegit Geisa Érszegi. Budapest, 1979, 135, 137, 149, 161. The charter written by George Szapolyai in his capacity as captain general of the current campaign against the evildoers on 22 July of an unknown year can presumably be linked to the occurrences of 1514: *Szapolyai oklt.* 531.

of an extra tax of twenty denarii for his benefit, payable by each household.¹⁷⁶ At the diet, the voivode also received the title 'captain general of his majesty the king',¹⁷⁷ which recalled the former title of John Hunyadi.¹⁷⁸ Clearly, the nobles saw the young Transylvanian voivode as the future hero to fight the Ottomans. The idea of this role was actually not very far from Szapolyai's intentions. In a letter to one of his *familiares* four years later, evidently criticising his political opponents and noting that the Ottoman Empire's pressure on the Hungarian frontier castles had decreased, he wrote: "take it for granted that this sultan may be chased to the other side of the sea with two florins, that is if a tax of two florins, or three at most, is levied and paid."¹⁷⁹ Clearly, the popularity he gained reached its peak in 1514, yet due to his defeat at Zsarnó (Žarnov/Havale) near Nándorfehérvár (Belgrade)¹⁸⁰ in May 1515 he was not able to use the political advantages it entailed. This is demonstrated by the fact that, although he clearly specified his title as captain general in all of his own charters until the death of King Vladislaus in 1516,¹⁸¹ the final version of the decree of 1514, issued by the king after the defeat of Zsarnó and the meeting of princes in Vienna in the summer of 1515, did not include any of the articles describing the authority associated with the captaincy general.¹⁸² This was a sign that the voivode's direct influence on the royal court had weakened. That the death of his younger sister Borbála, queen of Poland, in October 1515 contributed to this development can of course not be excluded.¹⁸³ Yet it is quite striking that the voivode appeared for a short while as *ispán* of Sopron county, neighbouring Austria, right after the congress in Vienna. Research has yet to provide an explanation for this, however.¹⁸⁴

176 Wenzel, 'Marino Sanuto', 282; *Decreta regni mediaevalis Hungariae. Tomus IV. 1490–1526*. E copiis manu scriptis Ferenc Döry critice recensuerunt et Anglice reddiderunt Peter Banyo et Martin Rady, Janos M. Bak assistente. Idyllwild, Budapest, 2012 (henceforth *DRMH IV.*) 178.

177 Gábor Mikó, 'Az 1514. évi Lukács-napi országgyűlés törvénykönyvének megszületése. A dekrétum eredeti változata', in C. Tóth and Neumann (eds.), *Keresztesekből lázadók*, 295.

178 Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis*, 349.

179 *certi sitis, quod ipsum cesarem cum duobus florenis, hoc est, si duos aut ad maximum tres ordinaremus et daremus, ultra mare pellere possemus et aufugare*. Szapolyai oklt. 408.

180 See the study by Norbert C. Tóth in the present volume.

181 Szapolyai oklt. 363, 372, 374.

182 Mikó, 'Az 1514. évi', 290–292.

183 For the date, see Sroka, 'A Szapolyai család genealógiája', *Turul* 79 (2005) 99.

184 *Arch.* II. 230, 236. For a better understanding of the matter, it is important to know that György Trenka of Nagypalugya, who preceded Szapolyai in the post of *ispán* of Sopron, was subsequently the recipient as security of the very castle of Vöröskő (MNL OL DF 254594; cf. MNL OL DL 106083, fol. 58) in Pozsony county that became the security given to the Szapolyai family by judge royal Péter Szentgyörgyi (Slovenský Národný Archív, Bratislava, Hodnoverné miesto Bratislavskej Kapituly, Prot. V. extraseriale fols. 230v–231r; Szapolyai oklt. 475–476, 479–480).

THE UNKNOWN VOIVODE

It is evident that Szapolyai's military and governmental involvement briefly described above cannot be separated from his activities in the field of domestic policy or from his relationships, based on friendship, alliances or conflicts with major political actors. Yet we must acknowledge that, due to the lack of basic research, we know as yet very little about the House of Szapolyai's and mainly John's (far from static) political relationships, and would only be able to shed light on some moments taken out of their context. At the time, András Kubinyi was right to stress that the domestic policy of the Jagiellonian period could not be described merely by presenting the struggles of certain court and noble, or Habsburg and national parties. Rather one has to consider various, rapidly changing interest groups that often formed into leagues. It is also obvious that Szapolyai usually sided with groups of prelates and aristocrats rather than those of nobles. It is, of course, another question that he very eagerly tried to make the dominant figures of the nobility take his side, only to exert, often successfully, an influence on the outcomes of diets and on public opinion.¹⁸⁵

If we really intend to define the voivode's place on the political palette, we are only able to make some general statements. It appears that his most stable relationship, one that can definitely not be characterized as hostile, was his relationship with István Báthori,¹⁸⁶ who was appointed *ispán* of Temes and captain general of the Lower Parts of Hungary (*Partes regni inferiores*) at the same time as Szapolyai, and with whom Szapolyai coordinated his actions against the Ottomans in the 1510s. Earlier scholarly literature described their relationship (especially by projecting backwards the conflicts they had after 1526) as explicitly hostile and their conflicts as harmful for the country.¹⁸⁷ This despite the evidence for their cooperation in several cases in addition to their joint military actions, for example during the election of the palatine in 1519. Following the death of Imre Perényi, Szapolyai had for the first time the possibility to obtain, as his father had once done, the most important office in the country, that of the palatine. Accordingly, the voivode participated in the diet: together with Báthori, he was a member of a league that, among other things, joined in an alliance to promote its own interest during the election of the new palatine. In the end, however, John returned to Transylvania prior to the election. This clearly indicates that he voluntarily turned down the possibility to obtain the position, to which his companion-at-arms István Báthori was eventually elected.¹⁸⁸ The underlying reasons for this strange election are still

185 András Kubinyi, 'A magyar állam belpolitikai helyzete Mohács előtt', in Lajos Rúzsás and Ferenc Szakály (eds.), *Mohács. Tanulmányok a mohácsi csata 450. évfordulója alkalmából*, Budapest, 1986, 77–80; cf. Idem, 'Országgyűlési küzdelmek Magyarországon 1523–1525-ben', in Neumann and Rácz (eds.), *Honoris causa*, 126.

186 Kubinyi, 'A magyar állam', 78: note 108. One of the best, longest-known sources on their cooperation: *Szapolyai oklt.* 409–411.

187 C. Tóth, 'Egy legenda nyomában', 443–448.

188 *Ibid.*, 453, 457–458.

unknown. I can only think that certain interest groups of the royal court, for the sake of royal power and their own influence, wished to prevent Szapolyai from further increasing his dominance in the government. They were however willing to elevate one of the voivode's allies, of whom they also approved, to the position of palatine. The compromise they made prior to the election at the same time contributed to the increase of the voivode's own prestige: this was when he received authorization from the king to grant on his behalf the estates of his province that escheated to the crown (within certain limitations). Although this was a personal privilege tailored explicitly to Szapolyai, it was later incorporated into the privileges of the voivodes taking office after 1526.¹⁸⁹

The cooperation between the voivode and palatine Báthori is well documented, even after the fall of Nándorfehérvár in 1521. The two of them were appointed commanders-in-chief of the campaign which was launched to retake the frontier castle and then ended because of the epidemic. Subsequently, at the diet held at the end of the year, they were once again elected captains general of the country. They held the office until spring 1523, i.e. until the return of the royal couple from Bohemia,¹⁹⁰ a period during which Szapolyai led two successful campaigns to Wallachia to divide the attention of the Ottoman troops in the frontier region.¹⁹¹ They both were also members of the aristocratic league formed in May 1525.¹⁹² It cannot be ruled out that the underlying reason for King John not appointing his own palatine until 1530 was exactly this relationship of theirs, one based on alliance (or friendship?) perceptible throughout the period:¹⁹³ it was as if he had been waiting for Báthori to switch back from Ferdinand's side to his.¹⁹⁴

Many examples can of course be given of political actors who found themselves in serious conflicts with the voivode on several occasions. We can name the two tutors of Louis II (1516–1526): János Bornemissza, castellan of Buda and *ispán* of Pozsony (Bratislava), and the king's uncle, George, Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach. Bornemissza had been Báthori's and Szapolyai's committed opponent as early as 1518,¹⁹⁵ and in 1522–1523 he fiercely attacked the two captains general of the country, namely palatine Báthori, at that time acting as procurator, and the voivode; this may have contributed to Báthori's removal.¹⁹⁶

189 Tibor Neumann, 'The Beginnings of the Voivode of Transylvania's Right of Donation', *Banatica* 26 (2016) 279–296.

190 C. Tóth, 'Egy legenda nyomában', 453–455.

191 Norbert C. Tóth, 'Szapolyai János erdélyi vajda 1522. évi havasalföldi hadjáratai. Havasalföld korlátozott függetlenségének biztosítása', *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 125 (2012) 987–1014.

192 C. Tóth, 'Egy legenda nyomában', 456.

193 Cf. voivode John and his brother György's valuable presents for the palatine's wedding in February 1523: Norbert C. Tóth, 'Ajándékok az ifjú párnak. Bátori István és felesége, Zsófia mazóviai hercegnő nászajándékai', *Acta Universitatis Szegediensis. Acta Historica* 142 (2017) 79.

194 C. Tóth, 'Egy legenda nyomában', 462.

195 Szapolyai oklt. 409–410; Dezső Szabó, *A magyar országgyűlések története II. Lajos korában*. Budapest, 1909, 122–125; C. Tóth, 'Egy legenda nyomában', 452–453.

196 C. Tóth, 'Egy legenda nyomában', 458–459. For the sources, see *Politikatörténeti források Bátori István első helytartóságához (1522–1523)*. (A Magyar Országos Levéltár Kiadványai, II; Forráskiadványok, 50.) Published by Norbert C. Tóth. Budapest, 2010, passim.

The Szapolyai family's relationship with the margrave may have deteriorated when the latter, at the request of King Vladislaus II, married John Corvinus's widow in 1509, and thus obtained a major part of the Hunyadi estates, which were also claimed by the Szapolyais. To solve the conflict, the margrave offered Count John the hand of his sister Margaret, but the negotiations failed.¹⁹⁷ After the suppression of the Dózsa revolt, the voivode, at the peak of his career, was not willing to give the margrave back the castles of Lippa (Lipova) and Solymos (Şoimoş) in Arad county, which he had retaken from the crusaders and which had also formed part of John Corvinus's domains. Upon the request of King Vladislaus, King Sigismund I the Old undertook to mediate between his nephew and his brother-in-law, most likely during the meeting of the kings in Pozsony at the beginning of the summer.¹⁹⁸ Even though we know of a draft agreement in which the voivode agreed to purchase the castles from the margrave for 27,000 florins,¹⁹⁹ no agreement was eventually reached. The unresolved issue of the castles of Lippa and Solymos was in the end solved in 1516: through the mediation of the emperor and the king of Poland, Imre Perényi bought the castles from the margrave in the name of the voivode for 22,000 florins,²⁰⁰ then handed them over to the voivode and his family in return for 11,000 florins and also the castle of Sáros, which had earlier formed part of the domains of his family before coming into the hands of the Szapolyais.²⁰¹

The issue of aristocratic alliances during the Jagiellonian era – through which voivode John's current political ambitions and position could be more easily mapped out and his personality perhaps become easier to understand – still remains an equation with multiple variables, whose solution requires lengthy future research.²⁰² Not only do we have to learn more about these aristocratic alliances, but the information gained from them has to be compared with the various credit and property interests of the Szapolyai family: the wealthiest family in the country often provided loans to the ruler and the royal court as well as to certain members of the political élite, and established business relationships

197 Reinhard Seyboth, *Die Markgraftümer Ansbach und Kulmbach unter der Regierung Markgraf Friedrichs des Älteren 1486–1515*. Göttingen, 1985, 398. Subsequently, perhaps in 1520, the voivode appeared as a suitor at Casimir, Margrave of Brandenburg-Bayreuth, see the essay on the family's representation in this volume. On their conflicts, see, for example, MNL OL DL 37930 (1513).

198 Cf. MNL OL DL 37968.

199 *Szapolyai oklt.* 366–369.

200 MNL OL DL 37990–991. The agreement was welcomed also by Emperor Maximilian: MNL OL DL 37992.

201 MNL OL DL 22779; Zsuzsanna Hermann, *Az 1515. évi Habsburg–Jagelló szerződés. Adalék a Habsburgok magyarországi uralmának előtörténetéhez*. (Értekezések a Történeti Tudományok Köréből. Új Sorozat, 21.) Budapest, 1961, 45–46; cf. Neumann, 'Várat vennék', 102; cf. MNL OL DL 37976.

202 Apart from many examples, also the interpretation of the phenomenon, observed from 1523, namely that the *familiars* of Queen Mary served the voivode, is uncertain. András Kubinyi suggested that either the voivode was forced to hand over his people, or he made an alliance with the queen: Kubinyi, 'A magyar állam', 86.

with them. Of all the 'strongmen' of the government, the Transylvanian voivode and judge royal Péter Szentgyörgyi, palatine Imre Perényi and chancellor György Szatmári kept especially frequent contact with the family.²⁰³ This does not, of course, indicate a long lasting or permanent alliance, but there may have been some kind of a temporary cooperation between them.

So, despite the many unknown factors, what can be said in general about voivode John's political activities prior to the Battle of Mohács? First and foremost, we have to stress the interaction between royal power and the influence of the Szapolyai family. Scholarly literature is often written in a spirit that makes the Szapolyai family appear as one of the most powerful Hungarian aristocratic families. Yet there is no doubt that the family was far more than that. With only a touch of exaggeration, they can be described as 'a state within the state': in my other essay in this volume, I compare their power to that of the Cilli family prior to 1436,²⁰⁴ but the Hunyadi family could also be mentioned as a parallel. Consequently, royal power, in the absence of anything better, had but the following two strategies to pursue: on the one hand, it sought to prevent a further increase in their power, while on the other hand it sought to use their power in the service of the country's governance by entering into alliance with them or by ensuring their cooperation. It is fully clear that, by donating the Hunyadi fortune to George, margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach, King Vladislaus intended to create a counterpower to strengthen the position in domestic policy of his son, the would-be King Louis II.²⁰⁵ (The conflict between the young monarch's two tutors, the creators of this policy, and the voivode thus became obvious.)²⁰⁶ But the aforementioned election of the palatine in 1519, and the seizure and donation by the king in 1525–26 of Lőrinc Újlaki's huge estates, which the Szapolyai family wanted to obtain,²⁰⁷ demonstrate the same trend. On the other hand, it is also clear that the Jagiello–Szapolyai marriage in 1512, supported by King Vladislaus, which gave an extraordinary boost in the family's prestige both at home and abroad, was also aimed at securing Szapolyai's loyalty to the Hungarian king, as it is also emphasized *expressis verbis* in the charter issued on the occasion of the alliance between King Sigismund I the Old and

203 For some examples of the credit and business dealings of those listed and of the Szapolyai family, see *Szapolyai oklt.* 297–298 (a loan of 8,000 florins to Imre Perényi to buy the castle of Siklós), MNL OL DL 21515 (a loan of 7,000 florins to Péter and Kristóf Szentgyörgyi), MNL OL DF 254594 (36,100 florins on paper to Péter Szentgyörgyi to redeem his castles in Moravia), *Szapolyai oklt.* 450–451 (György Szatmári, as creditor, received the castle of Torna from voivode John as security; see above also Szatmári's sale of the domain of Debrecen in 1509 to the Szapolyais).

204 See the essay on the family's representation in the present volume.

205 Cf. Neumann, 'Dienstleister', 181–183.

206 The domains of Hunyad (Hunedoara) and Fogaras (Făgăraș) in Transylvania entered into the possession of the Brandenburg and Bornemissza families, which gave them some degree of influence.

207 Vilmos Fraknói, *Werbőczy István 1458–1541*. (Magyar Történeti Életrajzok) Budapest, 1899, 224; Kubinyi, 'Országgyűlési küzdelmek', 141.

the Szapolyai brothers, formed after the wedding.²⁰⁸ John's appointment to the post of Transylvanian voivode in 1510 also falls in this category, yet rewarding his brother György with the title of Dalmatian-Croatian-Slavonian *ban* would have exceeded the scope of prestige and power considered desirable by the royal court, so this did not take place either in 1512 or subsequently.²⁰⁹ It was thus John's title of voivode that was the reason Count György never rose to become one of the dignitaries of the realm: due to the family's status, neither could he have ambitions to obtain an office below the rank of a voivode or *ban*. This does not mean, however, that he never carried out governmental tasks: one only needs to think of the judicial assignment with which he was sent to Zala county in 1524.²¹⁰ Royal power was seeking some kind of an equilibrium: it both limited and supported the Szapolyai family's claims to power at the same time. This seems only natural, for ruling the country in peacetime after openly breaking with the Szapolyai family would have been almost impossible, as clearly demonstrated by the events of 1505. This consideration was clearly the reason the royal couple decided not to remove voivode John (unlike palatine Báthori) from his office in 1523, even though the voivode had himself feared this would happen. Moreover, the crown property, then in the possession of the voivode, was not returned, either, and this was certainly not because, as he rightly claimed before the king and queen, the family had letters of privilege for all of them.²¹¹ There is no doubt that the Szapolyai family's excessive power, which can mostly be traced back to the period of King Matthias's reign and to the interregnum in 1490, forced the two Jagiellonian kings to follow a series of complex political manoeuvres.

It is also worth examining the relationship between the Jagiellonian kings and the Szapolyais from the other side. I hardly wish to idealize the family's role, but considering their wealth, power and dynastic bounds, having royal ambitions was quite natural, and it would be naïve to contemplate this fact from a moral point of view and to pass judgement on their desire constantly to increase the number of their estates or their political influence. What is at issue is rather whether or not the aforementioned stream of accusations formulated in the letter by some pro-Ferdinand lords in 1527 – which even had an indirect effect on posterity's opinion of the voivode – were true, or

208 Władysław Pociecha, *Krolowa Bona 1494–1557. Czasy i ludzie odrodzenia. Vol. II.* Poznań, 1949, 429–430.

209 In 1512 King Sigismund I the Old intervened for the appointment of György to the post of *ban*: *Acta Tomiciana*, II. 61–62; cf. Tamás Pálosfalvi, 'Bajnai Both András és a szlavón bánág. Szlavónia, Európa és a törökök, 1504–1513', in Neumann and Rác (eds.), *Honoris causa*, 286.

210 At the beginning of his charters the title *in comitatu Zaladiensi per regiam maiestatem iudex specialiter deputatus* features. His first charter is dated from 6 November (MNL OL DL 36746), while his last is dated from 21 December (MNL OL DL 67897).

211 Kubinyi, 'A magyar állam', 84–85. The author suggests that replacing the entire 'government', as had happened in Bohemia, was not possible, due to the expected Ottoman attacks; *ibid.*, 86; cf. Idem, 'Országgyűlési küzdelmek', 131. The crown property in the hands of John Szapolyai was a recurring issue in the entire period. See e.g. *DRMH* IV. 178; Kubinyi, 'A magyar állam', 92–93; Idem, 'Országgyűlési küzdelmek', 130, 141, 145.

whether they contained any elements of truth. According to the letter, after his father's death John missed no opportunity to prevent the old Vladislaus from exercising his power; he even sought to obtain the throne upon his death. After the king died, John was constantly mobilizing against the child Louis: he supported various parties with money and promises, with which he once again incapacitated the king. "He felt such a disdain for kings" that in his capacity as the prefect of Transylvania he did not give them any of the revenues of the rich province, and he never intended to launch the enormous Transylvanian army in support of king or country. It has been concluded that, on account of his unfitness and rebellious behaviour, it is not only John's fault that the country was lost, but that, had he acted differently, even King Louis would have lived.²¹² There is no doubt that the text, tendentious because of the election of two kings, uses half-truths to depict a false image. It does not mention that the family never revolted against the ruler, that following the birth of Prince Louis they visibly pushed their royal ambitions to the background, or that they definitely played their role in defending the country against the Ottomans and fighting alongside the king and his circle against the crusaders. The claim that the voivode limited the collection of Transylvanian revenues for the treasury appears totally ungrounded, while the accusation regarding his absence from the Battle of Mohács²¹³ is refuted in general by the voivode's numerous campaigns. True, Szapolyai did support some political groupings, but whether this involved mobilising against the king or simply increasing his influence is a question to which only future research can provide a definitive answer.

One thing is certain: when voivode John was elected king in November 1526, it was not only his outstanding power that was acknowledged, but his military and governmental experience was also considered, and it is hardly in doubt that his contemporaries were strongly influenced by his military glory that made him popular in the country. His earlier career and military activities do nothing to increase the credibility of the gossip of the time according to which he was intentionally late for the battle, failing thus not only his king but also his younger brother, who, as one of the commanders of the Hungarian army, died in the fighting. So I now conclude my essay with an openly unhistorical and subjective statement: had John Szapolyai arrived at the Battle of Mohács on time, he would have entered the public mind as the epitome of a successful figure who died a heroic death in the wars against the Ottomans.

212 ÖStA HHStA UA AA Fasc. 3, Konv. C. fols. 34v–35r.

213 On the issue, see the essay by Norbert C. Tóth in the present volume.

THE SZAPOLYAI FAMILY'S REPRESENTATION OF POWER

THE FAMILY'S RISE

When the events of 1512 were recalled at the Polish royal court, the wedding of King Sigismund I the Old (r. 1506–1548) and Borbála (Barbara) Szapolyai (1495–1515) in February was, of course, first to be mentioned. The characterization of the young queen began with a presentation of her parents: her father, the late István (Stephen) Szapolyai, who was count of Szepes (Spiš) and palatine of Hungary, was famous for his enormous wealth, military and political achievements and his large military escort. As the author puts it: “in his name, wealth and power he was almost equal to kings.” Wedding Hedwig of Teschen (Cieszyn) from the Piast dynasty to him was thus not considered to be beneath her dignity. Three children were born out of this wedlock: Borbála and her brothers János (John) and György.¹ The emphasis in the aforementioned letter, however, was on the word ‘almost’ (*prope*), by which the Polish chronicler cautiously pointed out that some people did not consider Sigismund’s choice distinguished enough (*impar*).² But did the marriage with the Szapolyai family really mean that the

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1 *Acta Tomiciana*, I. 1: *Erat in Hungaria Stephanus de Zapola, dominus in Threnczin, comes perpetuus Scepusiensis, idem palatinus Transilvanie* [!], *amplissimo patrimonio dives, possessionibus, arcibus, civitatibus, thesauris diu repositis, rebus etiam feliciter gestis clarus, clientelis virorum militarium circumfusus; cuius nomen, conditio, potentia par prope regio statui erat. Is accepta in coniugium illustri virgine Hedvigi, filia Casimiri* [!], *ducis Thessnensis, suscepit ex ea Georgium et Janussium filios, ad belli gloriam natos, filiam vero unicam Barbaram.*

2 On the background to the marriage, see Mária Reketyés, ‘Adalékok Szapolyai Borbála lengyel királyné trónrajutásának előzményeihez és uralkodásához’, in *Publicationes Universitatis Miskolcensis. Sectio Philosophica* 9:3 (2004) 119–135. There is no doubt that the idea of the marriage was raised as early as 1505: István Tringli, ‘Der Weg des ungarischen Hofes zur Doppelheirat’, in Bogusław Dybaś and István Tringli (Hrsg.), *Das Wiener Fürstentreffen von 1515. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Habsburgisch–Jagiellonischen Doppelvermählung.* (21st-Century Studies in Humanities) Budapest, 2019, 250. And a report written in Italian already took the marriage

Polish king married below his rank? What did the epithet ‘almost royal’ mean in this case? What was this wealth and prestige enough for, knowing that Borbála’s brother, John, obtained the title of king of Hungary in 1526, and in 1539 he led a Jagiellonian princess, Isabella to the altar? Because there is no doubt that the Szapolyai family, and mostly its second generation, viz. the aforementioned counts (Germ. *Graf*, Hung. *gróf*), John and György, was indeed surrounded by some kind of princely glory that certainly rested on the family’s wealth and their title of count of Szepes, the offices of palatine the family filled in a row, and of course the family’s marriages with the House of Jagiellon.

This study does not elaborate upon the family’s landed property,³ yet it is certain that in this respect the Szapolyais stood out from the Hungarian high aristocracy by a considerable margin.⁴ From the time the family obtained the comital title (*Grafentitel*) of Szepes (1465) we can witness its continuous rise, culminating in its taking the royal throne (1526). As early as the end of the Matthias era, in the 1480s, the Szapolyais were considered to be the wealthiest family in Hungary, not counting Matthias’s illegal son and heir to the throne, Prince John Corvinus († 1504). Moreover, in 1495, they surpassed even him.⁵

The family did not hide its riches. As Antonio Bonfini recorded with regards to the meeting of princes in Lőcse (Levoča) in 1494: when the Polish magnates “decorated themselves with loads of precious stones and pearls merely in order to boastfully demonstrate their wealth, and one Pole covered himself with pearls from head to toe, upon which the palatine [i.e. István Szapolyai], who during these days did not wear a single piece of clothing that cost less than three thousand gold coins, felt this was a provocation on the part of the Pole, so he immediately put on a stone of such value that the Pole recognized his defeat at the first sight of it, and burnt his adorned clothing with which he wanted to dazzle the Hungarians.”⁶ The extraordinary wealth of the family was demonstrated by the castles it owned, of which the ones in Trencsén (Trenčín) and Szepes, used as family residences, were among the most imposing fortresses in the country, or by the exquisite burial chapel in Szepeshely (Spišská Kapitula), to mention

of Sigismund and Barbara for granted at the diet of Tata in 1510: György Domokos, *A Jámor Herkules. Estei Hippolit bíboros egri kormányzója, Ercole Pio beszámolója Magyarországról 1508–1510*. Budapest, 2019, 174. Cf. Tibor Neumann, ‘Dienstleister der Dynastie. Die neue Aristokratie von König Wladislaw II. und der Wiener Fürstentag’, in Dybaš and Tringli (Hrsg.), *Das Wiener Fürstentreffen*, 181–183.

3 On the family’s landed property, see István Kenyeres’s essay in the present volume.

4 For an outline of the biography of the family members, see Tibor Neumann’s essay in the present volume.

5 Pál Engel, ‘A magyar világi nagybirtok megoszlása a XV. században’, in Idem, *Honor, vár, ispánság. Válogatott tanulmányok*. (Millenniumi Magyar Történelem, Historikusok) Selected, edited and with notes by Enikő Csukovits. Budapest, 2003, 15–16, 52. The palatine increased his wealth in the 1490s partly to the detriment of John Corvinus; see Tibor Neumann, ‘A gróf és a herceg magánháborúja (Szapolyai István és Corvin János harca a lipői hercegségért)’, *Századok* 148 (2014) 387–426.

6 Antonio Bonfini, *A magyar történelem tizedei*. Translation by Kulcsár Péter. Budapest, 1995, 557 (5.4.35.).

but their best-known buildings. Yet the country's inhabitants encountered the family's extraordinary power only when some members of the family entered Buda or went to war accompanied – as mentioned in the Polish source – by their large retinue. In February 1491, István Szapolyai arrived in the Szepesség (Spiš region), escorted by 500 mounted soldiers, then joined King Vladislaus on his way to Kassa (Košice) with another 4,500 infantry soldiers;⁷ Count John arrived at the diet of September 1505 in the company of 2,000 men,⁸ while the family travelled to the wedding and coronation in Krakow in 1512 with an entourage of 800 equestrian soldiers.⁹ The retinue of the Szapolyai family almost resembled that of a royal family.¹⁰

Unfortunately, we know of only one festive occasion from the late Middle Ages during which the Szapolyai family played the leading role. The *Spervogel* chronicle contains a colourful description of Duchess Hedwig's funeral procession. The cortège, led by Count György, proceeded from Trencsén to Szepes, and arrived at Lőcse a couple of days before 12 May 1521,¹¹ several weeks after the death of the princess on 16 April. The city council and the burghers and priests of the town marched out to greet them; on the orders of the count, money was distributed among them. At the lead of the procession that proceeded in the rain, a cart drawn by eight large black horses carried the princess's dead body, with four priests continuously reading psalms. Five footmen walked on each side of the cart, carrying torches. These were followed by the grieving Count György riding on a white horse. Then came the family's three councillors, the princess's courtiers riding on 60 horses, followed by 15 wagons with mourning women and maidens, and 30 hussars at the end of the procession. The burial took place on 12 May, and was attended by the bishop of Nyitra (Nitra) and 400 priests and monks who received 75 denarii each from Count György.¹² Of course, many others attended the funeral, of whom no mention is made in the record, as the invitation to the funeral made to the burghers of Kassa, regarded as friends of the House of the Szapolyai (*velut domus nostre amicis*), has come down to us.¹³ The source sheds thus light on how the family spared no time or expense in arranging a funeral worthy of the princess's rank.

7 True, part of these were most likely the king's mercenaries: Tibor Neumann, 'A kassai hadjárat. II. Ulászló zsoldosserege és a lengyelek elleni harc (1490–1491)', in László Pósz and László Veszprémy (eds.), *Elfeledett háborúk. Középkori csaták és várostromok (6–16. század)*. Budapest, 2016, 391–392.

8 Gusztáv Wenzel, 'Marino Sanuto Világkrónikájának Magyarországot illető tudósításai II', *Történelmi Tár* 12 (1877) 136.

9 *Acta Tomiciana*, II. 1–2.

10 András Kubinyi, 'A Szapolyaiak és familiárisaik (szervitoraik)', *Publicationes Universitatis Miskolcensis. Sectio Philosophica* 13:3 (2008) 236–237, 248–253.

11 The description mentions the date of 1 May, but in light of the fact that Count György was still in Trencsén on 29 April, this can be doubted. *Szapolyai oklt.* 452.

12 *ETE* I. 34; Cf. Veronika Kucharská, *Ducissa. Život knážnej Hedvigy v časoch Jagelovcov*. Bratislava, 2014, 178–181.

13 *Szapolyai oklt.* 452.

COMITAL TITLE AND PRINCELY MANNER

A major milestone in the family's rise occurred in 1465, when Imre (Emeric) Szapolyai was awarded the title of count (*Graf/gróf*) of Szepes.¹⁴ The charter issued for the occasion contains a lengthy enumeration of Imre's merits, followed by the king's statement, according to which "Imre, his sons and issues" were "solemnly" named "perpetual and free counts of the castle and district of Szepes", and the aforementioned *comitatus*, together with the castle of Szepes and certain cities, were donated to Imre and his heirs.¹⁵ The circumstances in which the title was awarded and the formulae of the charter very much resemble those in which the comital title of Beszterce was granted to John Hunyadi (1453) and Mihály Szilágyi (1458) and that of Zagorje was granted to Jan Vitovec (1462).¹⁶

From this time on, Imre referred to himself as *comes perpetuus terrae Scepusiensis* in his charters.¹⁷ The word *comes* in the medieval Kingdom of Hungary had several meanings, the most common being that of 'ispán' or 'county ispán' (*comes comitatus* or *parochialis*), who were appointed by the kings of Hungary to lead a county for a period they saw it fit (*durante beneplacito*). In order to make a clear distinction between the title of count used in the Holy Roman Empire and the Hungarian title *ispán*, the practice of adding the epithet 'perpetual' (Lat. *perpetuus*) to the word *comes* developed in the first half of the 15th century for when the title was used in the sense of 'count' (*Graf/gróf*).¹⁸ The Szapolyai family's aristocratic title should thus be interpreted as 'Count of the Land of Szepes', i.e. 'Count of Szepes', as is referred to in the later German and Bohemian variations of Imre Szapolyai's titlature, which are basically mirror translations: *ewiger graf im Zips*, and *věčný hrabě země*

14 No original copy of the original charter has survived, only an incomplete text of it has come down to us in several books of formulas from the 16th and 17th centuries. Mátyás Cocavianus's formulary of Lőcse: MNL OL DF 286487, fols. 19b–21a; Werbőczy's formulary: MNL OL DF 281415, fols. 87v–88v.

15 *ipsum Emericum de Zapolia ac filios et heredes suos universos super castro et districtu Scepusiensi in perpetuos et liberos comites – observatis omnibus illis ceremoniis, quae in talibus observandae sunt – solenniter creamus et praeficimus ... praefatum comitatum Scepusiensem cum castro Scepusiensi ac civitatibus NN appellatis ... memorato Emerico suisque heredibus et posteritatibus universis dedimus, donavimus et contulimus.* MNL OL DF 286487, fol. 20v. – On the charter granting the title and on its recent interpretation, see Dániel Locsmándi, 'A Szapolyaiak szepesi örökös ispánsága', in Adrienn Kapitány and Dániel Locsmándi (eds.), *Memoriae commendamus. Tanulmányok a XI. Eötvös Konferencia történeti üléseiről*. Budapest, 2011, 69–79.

16 The comital diploma of the Hunyadi family: MNL OL DL 37618, DL 14605. That of Mihály Szilágyi has not survived; cf. MNL OL DL 30839; Vilmos Fraknói, *Szilágyi Mihály, Mátyás király nagybátyja*. Budapest, 1913, 93. On that of János Vitovec: MNL OL DF 231479; Bódog Schiller, *Az örökös főrendiség eredete Magyarországon*. Budapest, 1900, 318–320; cf. Tamás Pálosfalvi, 'Vitovec János. Egy zsoldoskarrier a 15. századi Magyarországon', *Századok* 135 (2001) 459–460.

17 Szapolyai oklt. passim.

18 From the early 14th century, the term *comes perpetuus* did in the case of prelates refer to a perpetual office of an *ispán*. In its 'comital' sense it appeared first in the titlature of the Kórógyi family in the first half of the 15th century: Tibor Neumann, 'Treffen in Konstanz. Der Grafentitel „zu Castell” der ungarischen Familie Kórógy im 15. Jahrhundert', in Peter Bahl and Eckart Henning (Hrsg.), *Herold Jahrbuch. Neue Folge* 20. Band. Berlin, 2015, 137.

FIGURE 1. THE TOMBSTONE
OF MRS. PÁL PERNESZI NÉE ORSOLYA SZAPOLYAI
(†1500) IN PORVA
PHOTO © INSTITUTE FOR ART HISTORY, RCH,
PHOTO ARCHIVE

The coat of arms, depicting a half cartwheel and an arm holding a sword, had originally belonged to the Vajdafi family of Zapolje. Between 1459 and 1461, Imre Szapolyai, upon obtaining his first baronial office (treasurer), changed it to one depicting a wolf, presumably considered to be more refined.

spišské.¹⁹ On the basis of the charter granting the title it is evident that the expression *terra Scepusiensis* does not include the entire Szepes region, or Szepes county, but refers rather to the wider surroundings of the castle of Szepes, hitherto in the hands of the monarch, which included the Saxon cities that were not under Polish rule and other domains (of all the cities in the area, Lőcse remained in the king's possession, while Késmárk [Kežmarok] had earlier been transferred into the ownership of the Szapolyais).²⁰ Despite this, since the title of *ispán* of Szepes was traditionally awarded to the person who owned the castle of Szepes, from this time onwards, the counts of Szepes also held the office of county *ispán*.²¹

The importance of the title of count should be viewed in light of the fact that in the medieval Kingdom of Hungary aristocratic titles were not widely used. In the 15th century, most ancient aristocratic families did not usually strive to obtain hereditary titles. The comital title is therefore likely to have had a greater importance at the international level than at the domestic one. Because of their comital title, the Szapolyais had to be addressed not only by the phrase 'your Lordship' (*magnificus*), used to address magnates, but also, following the



19 See, for example, *Szapolyai oklt.* 165, 179–186. – For more recent work on comital titles, see Géza Pálffy, 'A grófi cím a 16–17. századi Magyarországon és Erdélyben', in Veronika Dáné, Teréz Oborni and Gábor Sipos (eds.), *„...éltünk mi sokáig két hazában...” Tanulmányok a 90 éves Kiss András tiszteletére*. Debrecen, 2012, 177–191.

20 On the Szapolyai family estates in Szepes county, see Pál Engel, *Magyarország a középkor végén: digitális térkép és adatbázis*. CD-ROM, 2001.

21 Richárd Horváth, 'Funkcionári spišskej župy v neskorom stredoveku 1459–1526', *Z minulosti Spiša* 20 (2012) 7–24.



FIGURE 2. IMRE SZAPOLYAI'S LARGER SEAL
ON A CHARTER FROM 1476
MNL OL DL 17866.

The new family coat of arms, obtained between 1459 and 1461, remained the primary coat of arms until the family died out. It depicts an angel supporting a blue shield with a silver wolf emerging from a green trimount with a silver crescent of the moon in front of it and a golden six-armed star behind it.



FIGURE 3. ISTVÁN SZAPOLYAI'S SEAL FROM 1494,
USED IN HIS CAPACITY AS PALATINE
MNL OL DL 86018.

A wolf can be seen in the first and fourth fields, and a unicorn in the second and third ones. The latter did not appear in the family's coat of arms until 1486; it may have been included as a result of the process to shape a more refined heraldic representation, possibly in connection with Imre's appointment to the position of palatine and István's princely marriage. The silver coloured rampant unicorn was depicted against a red background.

imperial example, by the phrase 'your honourable Lordship' (Lat. *spectabilis et magnificus*, Ger. *wohlgeborn*). Similarly to prelates and members of the royal family, they also had the privilege of sealing their letters with red wax, and counts could only be sentenced by a court of 'the king's personal presence' (*personalis praesentia regia*).²² To this we have to add the princes' 'habit' of using only their first name and their comital title when signing a document: during the 1480s, it was evident in Central Europe that the form 'Count István' (*Stephanus comes*, *Graf Stefan*) meant István Szapolyai, count of Szepes.²³

During Imre Szapolyai's life, there are no traces of any demand for princely status. His marriage (to Orsolya Bebek of Pelsőc), as well as the way he had to be addressed prior to his being appointed palatine (lord governor),²⁴ and the

22 Tibor Neumann, 'Hercegek a középkor végi Magyarországon', in Attila Zsoldos (ed.), *Hercegek és hercegségek a középkori Magyarországon*. (Közlemények Székesfehérvár Történetéből). Székesfehérvár, 2016, 97–100.

23 See, for instance, MNL OL DF 277104, 85–87, DF 277105, 85; photographs.

24 On Imre Szapolyai's governorship of Bosnia (1464–1465), see Tibor Neumann's essay in this volume.

certain aristocratic examples he followed (founding a Pauline monastery near the city of Tokaj) reveal the image of a rich magnate.²⁵ His obtaining the post of palatine in 1486 and his brother István's marriage the same year marked a turning point in this regard. Following the occupation of Vienna in 1485, István became captain general of the Duchy of Austria, while his brother, pursuant to the intentions of King Matthias, was elected by the diet of early 1486 as palatine of the Kingdom of Hungary.²⁶ In the spring of 1486, Count István, who was in his mid-forties, betrothed, with the king's support, to Duchess Hedwig, the 16-18-year-old daughter of Przemyslaus II, duke of Teschen (1431–1477) of the Piast dynasty. The wedding was held in December of that year at the royal court in Vienna, an occasion at which King Matthias and Queen Beatrice presented the 'young' couple with valuable gifts.²⁷

It was not the first time that a Hungarian aristocratic family had chosen a wife from Silesian ducal families, or from the Piast dynasty of Mazovia. One example is the Garai family, which also held the office of palatine, and a member of the family married a princess from Mazovia while another family member married a princess from Teschen. The Szentgyörgyi family, on the other hand, had chosen a princess from the Duchy of Troppau.²⁸ The Piast family, despite the dispersion of the territories controlled by the various lines of the family, had royal descent. It is therefore no coincidence that the proud line "he was worthy of a wife from a royal tribe"²⁹ found its way into palatine István's epitaph in Szepeshely. Apart from the fact that John, the future king, and his siblings were of royal descent on their mother's side, the Szapolyais acquired distinctly noble relatives. Around 1529, a study was prepared in the circles around King Ferdinand, regarding the family ties between the Habsburgs and the Szapolyais, which revealed that the two families were not very distantly related: Duke Przemyslaus II and Emperor Frederick III were first cousins (their mothers were princess sisters from Mazovia), which made Duchess Hedwig the second cousin of Emperor Maximilian. The study also pointed out that the first

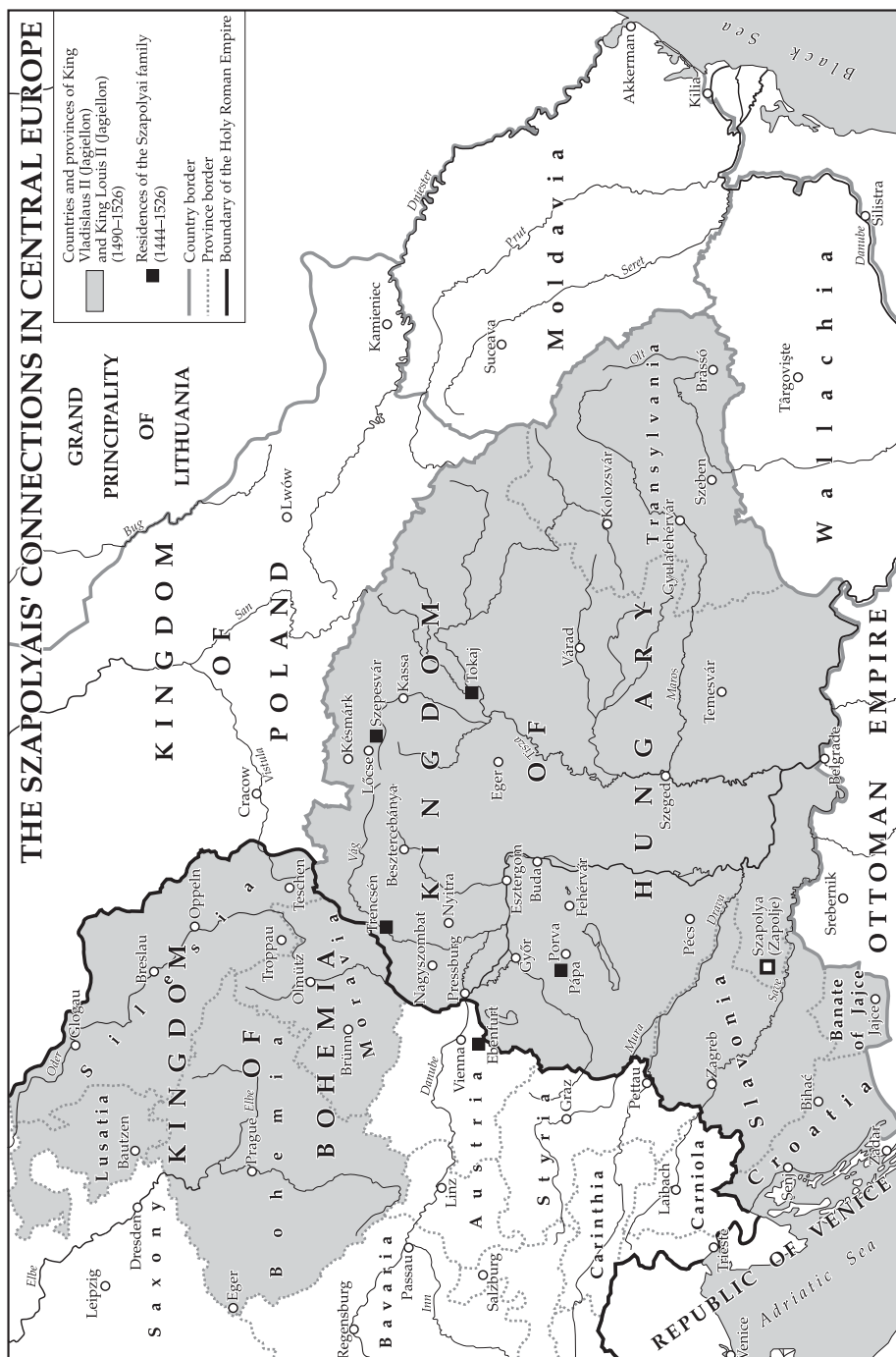
25 Imre's wedding took place in Tokaj in May 1463: Csaba Csapodi and Klára Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Bibliotheca Hungarica. Kódexek és nyomtatott könyvek Magyarországon 1526 előtt. Vol. I.* Budapest, 1988, 118 (we thank Bence Péterfi for the data). The first evidence regarding the marriage in a charter is from 1469: MNL OL DL 16947. On the address of 'governor' see the summary on his biography in this volume. On the establishment of the Pauline monastery, see *Szapolyai oklt.* 143–144.

26 See the chapter on their biography in this volume.

27 Iván Nagy and Albert Nyáry (eds.), *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek Mátyás király korából. Vols. I–IV.* (Monumenta Hungariae Historica). Budapest, 1875–1878 (= MDE), III. 229–231; cf. *ibid.*, 257; Mór Wertner, 'Családtörténeti adalékok', *Erdélyi Múzeum* 21 (1904) 29–30; Kucharská, *Ducissa*, 35–38.

28 On princesses marrying into Hungarian families, see Pál Engel, *Középkori magyar genealógia*, CD-ROM. Budapest, 2001, passim; cf. Neumann, 'Hercegek', 112.

29 The epitaph was published and translated by József Köblös, 'Szapolyai István nádor Pápán írott végrendelete', in Zsolt Mezei (ed.), *Istennek, Hazának, Tudománynak. Tanulmányok a 95 éves Nádasy Lajos tiszteletére.* (A Pápai Művelődéstörténeti Társaság Kiadványai, 19.) Pápa, 2008, 140–141.



common ancestor of the two families, the Lithuanian princess, Alexandra, was the wife of Siemowit IV, duke of Mazovia († 1426), and the sister of Vladislaus II (1386–1434) the Jagiellon, who occupied the Polish throne. In light of the above, it is easy to deduce that Vladislaus II, king of Hungary and Bohemia († 1516), and Duke Przemyslaus II were also second cousins. The comments written to complement the study also mention, of course, the family's relations in Teschen, i.e. Hedwig's cousin, Duke Casimir II (1477–1528).³⁰ Casimir played an important role in bringing about the marriage between the Jagiello and Szapolyai families, and also had considerable influence on the Jagiellonian court, having held the position of captain general of Silesia for decades.³¹

The couple established their first place of residence in Ebenfurt, as it appeared more appropriate for this purpose due to its proximity to Vienna.³² It was not until King Matthias's death that they moved their residence to the castle of Trencsén, obtained by István in 1477, as from there it was easier to keep contact with Silesia, mainly Teschen, than from the castle of Szepes.³³ That Count István's authority increased so remarkably by the last years of the Matthias era was likely the result not only of his political actions but also of his princely marriage and his inheriting the whole of the family estates after Imre's death in 1487.³⁴ When, at the diet of 1492, the estates issued a diploma for King Maximilian of the Romans, in which they acknowledged his and his successor's right to the Hungarian throne in the event Vladislaus would die without an heir, Szapolyai, who did not at the time possess a baronial office, was ranked third on the list of Hungarian nobles, preceded only by Prince John Corvinus and the Transylvanian voivode and judge royal István Báthori;³⁵ a couple of weeks later, after his election as palatine, he was to advance even higher on the list.

An aspiration to princely representation of power can definitely be demonstrated in the case of Count István, mainly due to his marriage. It is also likely that the idea of pursuing royal ambitions, to obtain the royal throne, that is, was also raised by him (and not by his widow, Duchess Hedwig). Even though Sigismund von Herberstein's story, recorded in the 1540s and frequently used to support the

30 ÖStA HHStA UA AA Fasc. 2. Konv. B. 1526. VII–IX.

31 Cf. *Acta Tomiciana*, II. 1–2, 5.

32 MDE IV. 211. In 1490, the majority of his letters were written in Vienna and Ebenfurt, see *Szapolyai oklt.* 173–185. It cannot be ruled out that King John might also have been born here. On this, see Tibor Neumann's other essay in this volume. On Ebenfurt as a Szapolyai estate, see István Kenyeres's essay in this volume.

33 This may be confirmed by the office of the *comes (ispán)* of Trencsén, which was also emphasized in the *series dignitatum* (list of dignitaries) from 1487 onwards (cf. *Szapolyai oklt.* 186). The choice of the residence may of course have been influenced by the proximity to Austria and the fact that Trencsén was his own acquisition.

34 For example, the *series dignitatum* of Hungarian royal charters also feature his name as *comes* of Szepes and Trencsén, despite the fact that he held no baronial office that would have secured his place on these lists of names. *Arch.* I. 266–272.

35 Friedrich Firnhaber, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte Ungerns unter der Regierung der Könige Wladislaus II. und Ludwig II. 1490–1526', *Archiv für Kunde österreichischer Geschichts-Quellen* 3 (1849) 511.



FIGURE 4. PALATINE IMRE SZAPOLYAI'S (†1487)
TOMB IN SZEPESEHLY (SPIŠSKÁ KAPITULA)
PHOTO © INSTITUTE FOR ART HISTORY,
RCH, PHOTO ARCHIVE



FIGURE 5. PALATINE ISTVÁN SZAPOLYAI'S (†1499)
TOMB IN SZEPESEHLY (SPIŠSKÁ KAPITULA)
PHOTO © INSTITUTE FOR ART HISTORY,
RCH, PHOTO ARCHIVE

The image of the wolf can be seen in the shield on the right, as well as on the banner, while the shield on the left depicts the unicorn.

With the coat of arms parted quarterly in the right shield (cf. Fig. 3), a wolf in the left shield and a unicorn on the banner.

serious accusations against John, and according to which the count told his son John as early as 1490, after Matthias's death, that had he been somewhat older, he could have been king of Hungary,³⁶ sounds like an amusing anecdote, there is no doubt that as early as 1497 the palatine had been accused of wishing to obtain the throne for his son.³⁷ The story clearly illustrates that he did not regard himself to be worthy of the throne, but that he clearly did consider his son, having royal

36 *Rerum Moscoviticarum commentarii Sigismundi liberi baronis in Herberstain, Neyperg et Guettenhag.* Basileae, 1556, 148; cf. Kuchárska, *Ducissa*, 41.

37 Vilmos Fraknói, *A Hunyadiak és a Jagellók kora (1440–1526)*. (A Magyar Nemzet Története, IV.) Budapest, 1896, 363.

descent on his mother side, to be worthy. The family did not, of course, think of rebellion. They did, however, consider the possibility of being eligible for the throne, besides John Corvinus, in the event of a king being elected. The king's illness and John Corvinus's death in 1504 increased their chances of obtaining the throne, and the famous decision of Rákös (13 October 1505) also confirmed this, but the birth of Prince Louis, King Vladislaus's son, in 1506, postponed the issue of royal elections for twenty years.³⁸

It is only evident that, contrary to palatine István, his sons John and György were both born into the princely environment. Duchess Hedwig's oft-analysed marital strategy of finding a wife for her sons from the House of Jagiello and the House of Corvinus³⁹ clearly reveals that choosing a wife from a Hungarian aristocratic family was, at this time, not an option for the Szapolyai family. The idea of John marrying one of the daughters of the margrave of Brandenburg arose several times.⁴⁰ At the same time, in order to get closer to the counts, some Hungarian barons even undertook to choose their spouses from among the counts' relations, even ones who could hardly be regarded as distinguished: János Drugeth of Homonna for example married one of palatine István's nieces, Krisztina, in 1495, and in the 1510s Zsigmond Lévai also chose a relative on the distaff side, Anna Petrovics.⁴¹

Signs of John's outstanding social standing can be found in several sources from the era. In 1510 rumours circulated that he wished to purchase the Duchy of Troppau in Silesia through his uncle, Casimir, duke of Teschen.⁴² An Italian letter from 1510 states that John, claimed to be eighteen years of age at the time and without any office, was the country's first-ranking baron and that he enjoyed great popularity among the nobles.⁴³ It is obvious that this "ranking first among the barons" as well as the Szapolyai family's major military escort paved the way for John to become one of the country's captains general, at the young age of 16, alongside the palatine, Imre Perényi, in the campaign against the Germans (1506).⁴⁴ The same can be observed on a symbolic level, as well: no medieval sources containing the order in which the seats were to be allocated among the participants of council meetings or other ceremonial occasions have

38 For more details on this, see the chapter on the family's history.

39 Stanisław A. Sroka, *Jadwiga Zapolya*. Kraków, 2005, 45–53; Kucharská, *Ducissa*, 115–116.

40 On Margrave George of Brandenburg-Ansbach's marriage plans for his sister Margit and John, see Reinhard Seyboth, *Die Markgräflümer Ansbach und Kulmbach unter der Regierung Markgraf Friedrichs des Älteren 1486–1515*. Göttingen, 1985, 398. Count John's marriage proposal to one of the daughters of Casimir, margrave of Brandenburg, was conveyed by the Hungarian king's envoy Ambrus Sárkány in Cologne, presumably in 1520. (Brandenburg-Preußisches Hausarchiv, Rep. 41. I. W6. 5. – We thank Bence Péterfi for these two pieces of information). We know that Sárkány had negotiations with Emperor Charles V in Cologne in 1520: András Kubinyi, 'Egy üzletelő és diplomata várúr Mohács előtt: Ákosházi Sárkány Ambrus', in Nóra Pamer (ed.) *Gerő László nyolcvanötödik születésnapjára. Tanulmányok*. Budapest, 1994, 278.

41 MNL OL DF 223999 (1495); MNL OL DL 36600 (1524).

42 *Acta Tomiciana*, I. 75.

43 Domokos, *A Jámbor Herkules*, 165.

44 *Szapolyai oklt.* 284–287. See also the biographical essay in this volume.

come down to us. There is, however, another type of source that reveals a lot about a certain person's position of power: charters with many seals that recorded the decisions of the royal council or those of the estates. On the charter of the decision of Rákos (13 October 1505), the seal of the fifteen-year-old John Szapolyai comes third among the secular magnates. Only the palatine of the country, Imre Perényi, and the country's judge royal and voivode of Transylvania, Péter Szentgyörgyi, both with comital title, preceded him.⁴⁵ In 1511, when John had already been elevated to the position of Transylvanian voivode, he preceded Szentgyörgyi, still holding the office of judge royal, and thus came second in the ranking.⁴⁶ It can hardly be a coincidence that at the christening of Princess Anna, daughter of King Vladislaus, in 1503, the two godmothers came to be John's mother, Duchess Hedwig, along with the wife of Péter Szentgyörgyi.⁴⁷ At the coronation ceremony of the young Prince Louis in 1508, it was Imre Perényi and John Szapolyai who, in their capacity as guardians of the crown, held the crown above the child's head.⁴⁸

Yet what really made the family "almost royal" was undoubtedly the marriage between the Jagiello and Szapolyai families in 1512. It is easy to assess how much authority a Hungarian magnate was able to gain from calling the kings of Hungary, Bohemia and Poland his brothers-in-law, and vice versa. When King Sigismund I the Old of Poland visited his brother Vladislaus in Pozsony (Bratislava) in 1515, the envoy from Gdansk, also present at the meeting, made a list of participants that he complemented with remarks on the seating plan. According to his description, the seats at the front were occupied by the members of the royal family. They were followed by Cardinal Tamás Bakóc, archbishop of Esztergom, who was "always the first after the kings". The next in line was Vladislaus's cousin, the imperial prince, Margrave George of



FIGURE 6. VOIVODE JOHN SZAPOLYAI'S
SIGNET RING FROM 1516
MNL OL DL 22788.

All the members of the family used the coat of arms with the image of a wolf; the unicorn was depicted on larger seals only.

45 MNL OL DL 39335.

46 MNL OL DL 22154. Cf. Dezső Csánki, 'Harminczhat-pecsétes oklevél 1511-ből', *Turul* 5 (1887) 1–11, 49–59.

47 Gusztáv Wenzel, 'II. Ulászló magyar király házasságának élete', *Századok* 11 (1877) 822; József Főgel, *II. Ulászló udvartartása (1490–1516)*. Budapest, 1913, 126.

48 Brodericus, *Epistulae*, 46–47.

Brandenburg, “who was always entitled to the first place after the cardinal”, and who was immediately followed by György Szapolyai, count of Szepes, who came ahead of all ‘bishops’ except Bakóc, thus also the archbishop of Kalocsa-Bács, Gergely Frangepán.⁴⁹ Thus did the Szapolyai family gain admission to the royal family,⁵⁰ which, through Sigismund, also entailed a serious supporter, as the Polish monarch often smoothed the way for them in the royal court of Buda.⁵¹

During the period prior to the Battle of Mohács, certain princely ‘attitudes’ could be observed among the Szapolyai counts. Putting aside their aforementioned habit of signing documents by using only their first name and their comital title, another custom of theirs was to insist upon a separate camp in times of campaigns. This was expressed in a letter written by Count György to one of his confidants in 1526: “it is not acceptable for us to gather at the same place that other troops gather; let us have our own camp.”⁵² In a private grant to one of his *familiares* in 1516, Count John stressed that “good princes” are characterized by politely returning the favours done for them.⁵³ Another sign of royal ambitions may be when, upon the death of Imre Perényi in 1519, an election of a palatine took place, and, after they came to an understanding, Count John let István Báthori have the position – a gesture that the royal court, hardly independently of John’s intention, rewarded by ensuring him the right to make donations in Transylvania, during his time as voivode, in the name of the king.⁵⁴

To gain a better understanding of the family’s power, it is perhaps useful to shed light on the parallels between the counts of Cilli, originating from the Duchy of Styria, and the Szapolyai family. We believe that around 1500 the Szapolyais possessed as much authority and financial and political power as the counts of Cilly had done a century earlier: both families had comital titles, both relied on overwhelming wealth in their efforts to establish international

49 *Generosus et magnificus d. Georgius de Zapolia comes perpetuus terrae Scepusiensis, qui immediate sequebatur praelibatum dominum marchionem Brandenburgensem et post eum omnes eiusdem regni episcopi sequebantur dempto cardinali Strigoniensi, qui post reges erat primus*. Xawery Liske, ‘Dwa dyarysze kongresu wiedeńskiego z roku 1515’, in *Scriptores Rerum Polonicarum*. Vol. IV. Cracoviae, 1878, 167.

50 This is plausibly expressed in a royal charter from 1513, which states the following of family relations with the Szapolyais: *illustris Iohannes de Zapolya comes ... cuius affinitatem nos quoque ob generis sui nobilitatem non fuimus aspernati*. MNL OL DL 38785. (It is quite unique that in the charter Count John is addressed with the Latin *illustris* [your highness], used for princes. The same year, the Bosnian chapter used the same address for him and his brother: MNL OL DF 233512.)

51 *Acta Tomiciana*, II. 61–62.

52 *nam in uno loco simul convenire nobis cum aliorum gentibus non convenit, sed ut propria castra habeamus*. Szapolyai oklt. 525. Cf. John and his troops’ camp at the diet of Tata in 1510 in a village near Tata: Domokos, *A Jámber Herkules*, 169. It may of course be that this time it was the limited possibilities that made the arrangement for separate camps necessary.

53 Szapolyai oklt. 384–385: *nos digna mentis consideratione perpensantes perspicacique meditatione recensentes ad bonos pertinere principes suorum obsequiis subditorum dignis remunerationibus et recompensis providere seu occurrere non esse pretermittendum*.

54 Tibor Neumann, ‘The Beginnings of the Voivode of Transylvania’s Right of Donation’, *Banatica* 26 (2016) 279–296.

and dynastic relations, and both families showed their princely ambitions quite early in their careers. While the counts of Cilli became imperial princes in 1436,⁵⁵ and from this time on their heraldic image was extended and became princely,⁵⁶ in the case of the Szapolyai family this crucial moment occurred in 1526, when it obtained the Hungarian throne. The most important milestones on the road to success of the counts of Cilli were, among others, their marriages with the Luxemburg and Jagiellonian dynasties, by which they intended to make allies against their own vassal lord, the Habsburgs. There was thus hardly anything new in the Szapolyai family's well-established strategy; their princely ambitions – given their wealth and power – were inevitable, and from this perspective, although King Sigismund would probably have been able to find an even more distinguished wife among the contemporary dynastic 'repository', the marriage could not be regarded as a *mésalliance* by the Jagiellonians, either. By the 1520s, the Szapolyais did reach the top of their career in the Kingdom of Hungary, and they were ready to take over the direction of the country, should an extraordinary situation arise.

OBTAINING ROYAL POWER (1526–1527)

After King Louis II died on 29 August 1526, leaving the Hungarian and Bohemian throne empty, John was ready for a takeover in the Carpathian basin. His estates, wealth and personal skills, as well as his fame due mainly to his military power, dispelled any doubts in the country as to his being the only potential candidate for the Hungarian throne. As voivode of Transylvania he had for decades demonstrated his leadership skills and his decisive actions only served to confirm this image during the weeks after the Battle of Mohács. He saved his army, gathered the majority of the surviving nobles around him, announced a meeting, asked the widowed Queen Mary to marry him, and in October, at the head of his army of several thousand hussars, he marched into the capital city of Buda. Meanwhile, one of his generals took the coronation city of Székesfehérvár, while another occupied the cities of Tata and Komárom (Komárno) for him.⁵⁷ In Buda, the voivode learnt that Louis's body was in Székesfehérvár, and immediately ordered a burial crown, worth one hundred gold florins, to be made for the deceased. This was a major symbolic gesture on his part, as, pursuant to Hungarian customary law, succession could meaningfully be discussed only after the final tribute had been paid, and arranging the funeral was usually the task and privilege of the successor, who by this act represented the continuity of

55 On the rise of the counts of Cilli and their obtaining the imperial principality, see Peter Štih, 'The Counts of Cilli, the Issue of their Princely Authority and the *Land of Cilli*', in Idem, *The Middle Ages between the Eastern Alps and the Northern Adriatic. Select Papers on Slovene Historiography and Medieval History*. Leiden, Boston, 2010, 338–379.

56 See for example MNL OL DL 37145, DL 37147.

57 For more scholarly literature on the series of events, see Gábor Barta, 'An d'illusions (Notes sur la double élection des rois d'après la défaite de Mohács)', *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 2 (1978) 25–30.

power.⁵⁸ According to chaplain György Szerémi, “the bishops clothed him in a dalmatic, put sandals on his feet and a pure gold diadem on his head, and we celebrated a solemn memorial for his soul, with the monks and priests making offerings to him. The voivode gave one mark, and ordered it to be offered to him at the altar of the Cross. Then the body was placed in a marble tomb.”⁵⁹ John had thus won the race of the first weeks, and, having been elected king by the diet on 10 November, he was crowned the next day in accordance with Hungarian laws with the Holy Crown in Székesfehérvár.

Unfortunately, few sources have survived on the coronation; of those present at the ceremony, only György Szerémi gave a detailed account.⁶⁰ Thanks to him, we know that the church was adorned with baize and candles in honour of the Virgin Mary. During the mass, John was vested in the sacristy in clothes claimed to have once belonged to Saint Stephen, and the coronation mantle was placed over his shoulders. He was then girded with Saint Stephen's sword, and the sceptre and the orb were placed in his hands. Then, he was crowned in the centre of the church by István Podmaniczky, bishop of Nyitra,⁶¹ and finally he was seated on a throne. After this, he mounted a horse at the entrance of the church and rode out of the city to the statue of Saint Nicholas, where he, following the old custom, swung his sword towards all four corners of the earth, signalling that he would defend the country wherever it may be attacked from. The solemn ceremony ended with a coronation dinner in the palace of the provost, with high dignitaries dining beside the king, while those of lower ranks were seated at tables further away. Even though we know of no foreign envoys, and in the absence of a reginal household few women were present, the feast took place in accordance with usual customs, and the atmosphere of the banquet was heightened with the music of zithers, drums and flutes. Apart from the Hungarian language, many Serb words were heard, and even the king spoke Serbian to one of his subjects, Bosics Radics. The only major incident that occurred at the feast was when Péter Perényi, guardian of the crown, requested that the crown, placed on the royal table, be given back to him. With regret, John had no choice but to grant his request.⁶² During the upcoming days, the new king stayed in Fehérvár and started to appoint his followers to key positions, while also forming his royal household.

58 Péter Szabó, ‘Uralkodói temetéseink kérdéséhez’, in Ágnes R. Várkonyi (ed.), *Magyar reneszánsz udvari kultúra*. Budapest, 1987, 329; Gábor Barta, ‘Meghalt a király, éljen a király. II. Lajos temetése’, *História* 11:3 (1989) 9–10.

59 *...induerunt eum episcopi in dalmatica, et in pedibus sandaliam et in capite diademam de auro puro inponen., et solenniter commemorationem fecimus pro anima ipsius religiosi, et sacerdotes sacrifican. pro eo, et vnam markam fecit ac mandauit, ut offerant ad aram crucis pro eo. Et posthec in vna tumba marmorea condiderunt.* Szerémi, *Emlékirat*, 135.

60 For a summary of events, see Géza Pálffy, ‘Koronázási lakomák a 15–17. századi Magyarországon. Az önálló magyar királyi udvar asztali ceremóniarendjének kora újkori továbbéléséről és a politikai elit hatalmi reprezentációjáról’, *Századok* 138:5 (2004) 1010–1011.

61 According to Szerémi, he was crowned by Pál Várdai, archbishop of Esztergom, and Péter Perényi, guardian of the crown, but he remembered this wrong: Szerémi, *Emlékirat*, 137.

62 Szerémi, *Emlékirat*, 137–139.

Everything appeared to be under control, and by the mercy of God and the will of the estates John was king of all of Hungary, Croatia and Dalmatia, which he consequently pointed out in his charters until his death, and the coats of arms of the usual kingdoms also featured on his seals.

He managed to take over the country's mints without any major troubles, he controlled the royal residence of Buda, and one of his most experienced followers, Kristóf Frangepán, was already planning an incursion into the Austrian territories.⁶³ Unfortunately, storm clouds were gathering over his reign; within a year, John's power was in ruins. But what were the circumstances that contributed to the rapid fall of his royal power?



FIGURE 7. THE CIRCUMSCRIPTION ON KING JOHN'S SEAL: "SIGILLUM SERENISSIMI PRINCIPIS DOMINI JOANNIS DEI GRATIA REGIS HUNGARIE DALMACIE, CROACIE"

BASED ON *ARS HUNGARICA* 41:1 (2015), p. 166.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF JOHN'S POWER

King John came to power in the wake of an enormous defeat and a serious tragedy. Although the exact number of the casualties of the Battle of Mohács is not known, more than 10,000 soldiers died in the battlefield, including many magnates, prelates and the majority of the Hungarian political élite.⁶⁴ This inevitably meant the disintegration of the established order, and the situation was aggravated by the fact that Ottoman troops had destroyed Buda, the capital city of the realm, then left the country, looting and plundering on their way. John thus acquired the throne of a country whose rich central part had been ravaged like never before, and whose élite circles had been decimated and whose available army had dispersed.⁶⁵

In fact, King John never ruled the entire territory of the country. The great landholding nobility along the western frontiers rejected him from the outset, as did the Croatian nobility. The latter had long been supported by Ferdinand, archduke of Austria, in its fight against the Ottomans, and they did not believe

63 János Zermegh, 'Emlékirat a Ferdinánd és János, Magyarország királyai között történt dolgokról', in *Krónikáink magyarul. Vol. III/2*. Selected and translated by Péter Kulcsár. Budapest, 2007, 139.

64 János B. Szabó and Norbert C. Tóth, '„Árnyékboksz az árnyéksereggel” – avagy már megint mindenért Szapolyai a hibás. A magyar elit 1526. évi szerepvállalásáról Botlik Richárd új könyve kapcsán', *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 131:2 (2018) 287–320.

65 A monograph on the events of the war following the battle, still considered a fundamental work, is: Pál Jászay, *A magyar nemzet napjai a mohácsi vész után. Vol. 1*. Pest, 1846.

John would be able to defend them.⁶⁶ The Austrians launched an attack in the summer of 1527 and routed John in Buda and Transdanubia; the following years saw the loss of the estates of Szepes and Trencsén, which had hitherto been considered the Szapolyai family's private property.⁶⁷ The representative secular and ecclesiastical buildings erected during earlier decades did thus no longer spread the glory of the family. As an example, the case of the city of Kassa can be mentioned, where the burghers of the city rid of the Szapolyai coat of arms in a humiliating manner,⁶⁸ by which act they not only affronted John, but also deprived him, symbolically, of his royal dignity.⁶⁹

From early on, John had to reckon with considerable opposition, the major political figures being Queen Mary and palatine István Báthori. The latter appeared after the death of King Louis II in the circles around Queen Mary, and until his death in 1530 he remained one of the most important allies of the Habsburgs. His undying merits included the election of Ferdinand as king of Hungary by the diet of Pozsony on 16 December 1526,⁷⁰ and his one-hour speech in front of thousands of people in Fehérvár the following year, on how John's reign was illegitimate.⁷¹ All this constituted an act of high treason, yet John was powerless to deal with him. Perhaps he still believed that the palatine would someday switch to his side. In any case, he did not appoint another palatine until 1530, which signalled even to his supporters the narrow limitations of his power.⁷²

Queen Mary had an even greater role than the palatine, as her political intentions made a great difference. John was aware of this, and, prior to his coronation, by way of his envoys, he asked her to marry him. In terms of rank, nothing except Habsburg dynastic interests hindered the marriage. Even Pope Clement VII considered the marriage possible; Mary nevertheless refused the proposal, and put all her strength into having her brother Ferdinand elected

66 Szabolcs Varga, 'Az 1527. évi horvát-szlavón „kettős királyválasztás” története', *Századok* 142:5 (2008) 1127–1129.

67 On this, see István Kenyeres's essay in this volume. On the events in the Szepesség, see Carolus Wagner, *Analecta Scepusii sacrii et profani. Pars II.* Viennae, 1774, 15. On the basis of this: József Hradszky, *Szepesvár és környéke*. Igló, 1884, 68.

68 *Interim armam suam super parietem aplicatam luppum retraxerunt et ad unum caniculum ligaverunt cum straminibus, et insuper mingerunt cum vrinis suis et destercoraverant postea eum humana stercora. Et insuper incenderunt strameam super canem et dicebant blasfema: "Ecce Rex canis; ecce Rex canis"*. Szerémi, *Emlékirat*, 197. On this, see István H. Németh's essay in this volume.

69 Zoltán Erdős, 'Farkas vagy kutya? Hatalmi jelképek és politikai program Zsámboky János emblémáján', *Fons* 17:2 (2010) 238–239.

70 Norbert C. Tóth, 'Ecsedi Bátori István nádor pozsonyi tartózkodásának számadáskönyve. Adalékok Magyarország 1526 végi politikatörténetéhez', *Levéltári Közlemények* 80 (2009) 169–208. On the exact date of the royal election, see Lajos Gecsényi, 'I. Ferdinánd udvarmesterének levelei Augsburg városához az 1527. évi magyarországi hadjárat eseményeiről', in Gabriella Erdélyi and Péter Tusor (eds.), *Tanulmányok Péter Katalin 70. születésnapjára*. (CD attachment to the *Történelmi Szemle*) Budapest, 2007, 16.

71 Gecsényi, 'I. Ferdinánd udvarmesterének levelei', 17.

72 Norbert C. Tóth, 'Egy legenda nyomában. Szapolyai János és ecsedi Bátori István viszonya 1526 előtt', *Századok* 146:2 (2012) 462.

king.⁷³ Since in the summer of 1526 Louis appointed her to exercise the royal right of patronage, she could nominate new dignitaries to ecclesiastical offices that had become vacant. Thanks to her reginal estates she was one of the wealthiest landowners of the realm, so her relationship with John mattered greatly. Her strength is clearly shown by her being able, in the last months of the year, to establish a separate centre of power in Pozsony.⁷⁴ We do not know what would have happened had Mary accepted John's proposal. It would perhaps not have brought a solution to Hungary's tragic political situation unless it had entailed more substantial Habsburg support than ever before, but we can exclude this possibility. The civil war could, however, have been avoided, and John would have been in a quite different position during his negotiations with both east and west. Yet all this is mere speculation. The fact is that, thanks to Queen Mary, John had to confront major opposition in the country even at the height of his career (in early 1527), which was no secret either within the country or abroad, and it certainly made the image of the king even worse.

Diplomacy is an important area of the representation of power, one in which John found himself at a disadvantage right from the beginning. One of the main reasons was that no one really wished to upset the opposing Habsburgs (not counting the French, of course), because, following the victorious Battle of Pavia in 1525, the brothers Charles and Ferdinand were in fact the strongest family on the continent. Another reason behind John's isolation is that the envoys of the European courts simply did not reach Hungary; most of the time they were held up in Habsburg territory. This is what happened in 1527, for example, with King Henry VIII's envoy John Wallop, who did not manage to meet the Hungarian king despite his being assigned to do so.⁷⁵ The geographical fact that John's country could only be accessed from the west, through the countries of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and Ferdinand I, made nurturing diplomatic relations difficult from the outset, and inevitably pushed John towards the only free direction apart from the cautious shuttlecock policy of Poland: the Ottoman Empire.

John's form of administration is best revealed by his military defeats. Late medieval Europe can provide many examples that confirm that, however weak a monarch's legitimacy, military and governmental achievements can make this handicap disappear. In the most critical moments, however, King John always lost, and the military reputation he had built up was completely ruined within two years. He was defeated on 27 September at Tokaj and on 20 March 1528 in the Battle of Szina, near Kassa; this last defeat even forced him to leave his

⁷³ Barta, 'An d'illusions', 25.

⁷⁴ On patronage rights, see C. Tóth, 'Ecsedi Bátori István', 170. On the estates, see István Kenyeres, 'A királyi és királynéi „magánbirtokok” a 16. században', *Századok* 138:5 (2004) III10–III12.

⁷⁵ Dávid Angyal, 'Erdély politikai érintkezése Angliával (első közlemény)', *Századok* 34 (1900) 311–312. More recently, see Richárd Botlik, 'Szapolyai János londoni váltója. Adalékok a mohácsi csata utáni angol–magyar szövetség pénzügyi hátteréhez', in József Bessenyei and István Draskóczy (eds.), *Pénztörténet – gazdaságtörténet. Tanulmányok Buza János 70. születés-napjára*. Budapest, Miskolc, 2009, 71–72.

country.⁷⁶ One and a half years after his coronation, he was forced to give up the country's religious and political centre, the Esztergom-Székesfehérvár-Buda triangle, and was unable to recover his control over the region through his own resources. John's military weakness was known throughout Europe, and no one wanted to tie their fate to a monarch whose future was so insecure.⁷⁷

Finally, mention must be made of the negative effect the alliance with the Ottoman sultan had on John's reputation. Because no matter how intense the diplomatic relations several European kingdoms maintained with the Porte, and no matter how many good luck wishes Süleyman was sent in autumn 1526 upon the news of the Battle of Mohács and then again in 1529 upon John's re-coronation in Buda,⁷⁸ the news of an alliance with the former enemy severely eroded the prestige of the Hungarian royal court. There were, of course, some major milestones that signalled John's shrinking room for political manoeuvre. While, from a distance, the armistice agreement of Istanbul signed on 29 January 1528 may have appeared to be an agreement between two sovereign rulers, the choreography of the meeting between Sultan Süleyman and John on 19 August 1529 in Mohács clearly showed the nature of their relationship. John and his retinue kissed the hand of the padishah in return for Ottoman military defence and support, meaning that he prostrated himself in a spectacular act before the sultan. Even though the sultan's entourage attached no specific importance to it ("He came to my court, and having kissed the stool of my sultanic throne, I imparted the grace of the padishah upon him," Süleyman's letter of victory recorded),⁷⁹ the meaning of the gesture was well-known in Europe. Despite the efforts of Franciscan monk and humanist diplomat Ferenc Frangepán, archbishop of Kalocsa, and member of the Hungarian king's retinue, to explain John's action to the Pope by comparing it with the Christian faithful's homage to the pope, in his bull of 21 December 1529 Pope Clement VII excommunicated King John and his country.⁸⁰ Habsburg diplomacy of course did everything in its power to denigrate King John: it spread the rumour that it was he who had invited the sultan's army to Hungary, which of course was not true.⁸¹ Still, it was Süleyman who captured Buda and who recovered the royal insignia, which he later presented to John. These gestures carried a high price, however. In late October 1529, John was crowned once again, this time in an unprecedented way: of the sultan's will. According to János Zermegh, a loyal follower of the Hungarian king, this happened as follows: "See, today I place this castle and the city of Buda and the entire Kingdom of Hungary in your hands, and I pronounce you and advertise you as King of Hungary ... remember the

76 On this, see János B. Szabó's essay in the present volume.

77 On this, see Péter Kasza's essay on King John's diplomatic efforts in this volume.

78 Lajos Kropf, 'Történeti irodalom', *Századok* 34 (1900) 741–742.

79 The imperial letter of victory (*fethname*) describing the campaign of 1529, in *Török történetirők. Vol. I. (Török–Magyarkori Történelmi Emlékek)* Translated by József Thüry. Budapest, 1893, 387.

80 Péter Szabó, 'Szapolyai János kézsókja', in Erdélyi and Tusor (eds.), *Tanulmányok Péter Katalin 70. születésnapjára*, 30–31.

81 *Ibid.*, 33.

mercy of God and myself. Take thus the crown and all the royal jewels, and may these bring you and your heirs good luck in the future. Having said this, the emperor left the castle, crossed the bridge over the Danube, and, leaving John in Buda, returned home.”⁸² Should this not have been enough, the sultan also left Venetian adventurer Lodovico Gritti behind, hanging around John’s neck, whom the king had to appoint governor at the end of 1530, which further narrowed his already small room for manoeuvre. The main issue for John from this time onwards was how to behave, despite the desperate reality, as if he still had real power, how to preserve his royal dignity, and how much he could retain of his ever-fading sovereignty.⁸³

Drawing up the balances of the two years from 1527 to 1529, the picture we get is tragic. Ferdinand I of the House of Habsburg emerged as another legitimate king, backed by his brother, the Holy Roman Emperor. His army was in ruins, and so was his royal seat, while a permanent Ottoman garrison was stationed in Buda. The family’s most important estates, the rich cities of western Hungary, as well as the mint chamber of Körmöcbánya (Kremnica), were all lost.⁸⁴ He became excommunicated by the pope, and his only ally came to be the Ottoman Empire, whose demand for global power became ever more apparent. Anything left of the country’s territory was only left thanks to the sultan’s goodwill. All this shows that the wealth and power considered remarkable within the country was, in fact, of almost no value in the international arena if it was not backed up by any allies. All the wealth and influence the Szapolyai family possessed was insufficient to confirm John’s power.

Despite this, the other side of the scales was not totally empty. John still had clever diplomats, skilful professionals, and the majority of the country still viewed him as the country’s king. His money was accepted, and his knowledge recognized. In 1530, he successfully defended the castle of Buda against the Habsburgs, a victory that was secured after a siege lasting one and a half months rather increased his supporters’ loyalty to him.⁸⁵ Over the next couple of years, he pursued construction works of various size and in various cities, and the Szapolyai family’s well-known coat of arms with the wolf on it appeared ever more frequently in areas that remained under his control. Even though the size of his kingdom shrank, he still had the strength to reign and his subjects still regarded him as their king.

82 Zermegh, ‘Emlékirat’, 151.

83 Ágnes Máté, ‘Fabula és história határán: két festői történet a XVI. század Magyarorszájáról’, *Antikvitás és Reneszánsz* 1 (2018) 99–112.

84 Róbert Ujszászi, ‘Szapolyai János király elfeledett évszámú körmöci dénárja’, *Az Érem* 67:2 (2011) 7–9.

85 Gritti’s appointment and the amplification of his coat of arms with the head of a lion took place during the days after the siege, and similar information can be found in the grant of arms granting nobility to the burghers of Buda. In it, the old coat of arms was complemented by a banner with a lion holding three human heads, claiming that “the lion, which is the most noble of all animals, can only refer to the lion-like bravery you manifested during the siege while repelling our enemies.” Elemér Varjú, ‘János király czimerbővítő levele Gritti Alajos részére’, *Turul* 19 (1901) 89.



FIGURES 8–9. LIONS SUPPORTING KING JOHN'S COAT OF ARMS
ON THE GATE OF THE PRISON IN SZAMOSÚJVÁR (GHERLA)
PHOTO © ANDRÁS KOVÁCS (2008). BASED ON KLÁRA P. KOVÁCS,
A SZAMOS MENTI ÚJ VÁR. SZAMOSÚJVÁR A 16–19. SZÁZADBAN. BUDAPEST, 2019.

POLITICAL IMAGE

Ever since John and Süleyman entered into an alliance with each other in 1528, the presence of Ottoman auxiliary forces in King John's surroundings had become an everyday reality. That his reign was maintained with Ottoman military support had become clear for his contemporaries in 1529 at the latest. It is therefore more than surprising that references to the Hunyadi family as his ancestors and an anti-Ottoman rhetoric started to emerge. The most emblematic works of art testifying to this are the Hunyadi tombs in the cathedral of Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia), the epitaphs on which have long been given various interpretations in the art historical literature. Recent research has clarified that János Statileo had the tomb of John Hunyadi in Gyulafehérvár erected upon the request of King John, in 1533.⁸⁶ John's entourage demonstrated by this the continuity of the Hunyadi family's anti-Ottoman policy and its intention to make John be regarded as a worthy successor to Matthias Hunyadi. This is why the Szapolyais' coat of arms depicting a wolf was put side by side with the Hunyadi family's raven on the raised cover stone of the tomb, while the side stones feature battle scenes and Hungarians driving away defeated Ottomans. The grave slab confirmed the political programme that John, in the spirit of the Hunyadis, would once again undertake and continue the role of '*antimurale christianitatis*'.⁸⁷

86 Ágnes Ritoókné Szalay, 'Üzenet a kövön. A gyulafehérvári Hunyadi János-síremlék mint politikai manifesztum', in Eadem, *Kutak. Tanulmányok a XV–XVI. századi magyarországi művelődés köréből*. (Humanizmus és Reformáció, 33.) Budapest, 2012, 166–174.

87 *Ibid.*, 173.

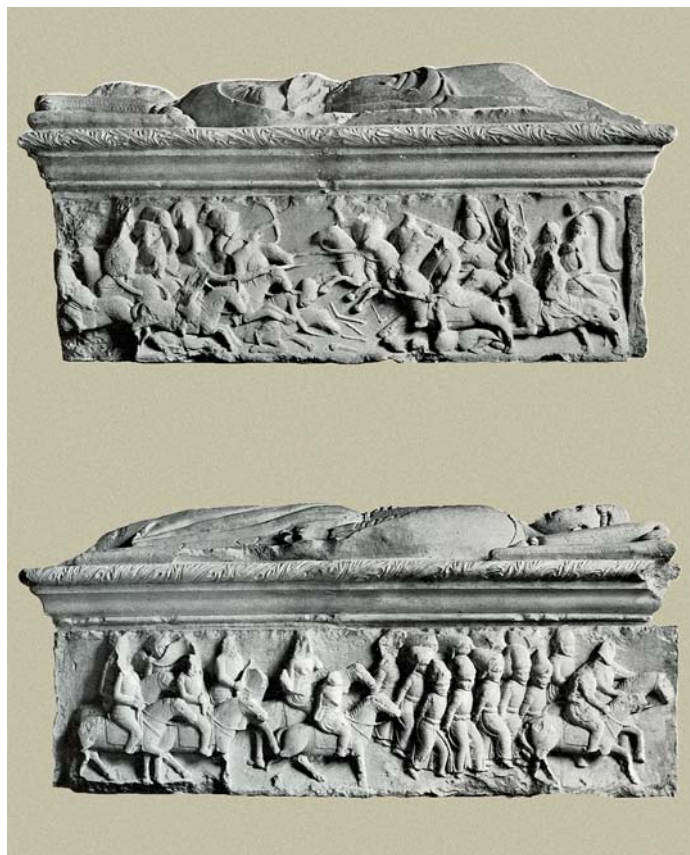


FIGURE 10.
THE SIDE STONE OF
JOHN HUNYADI'S TOMB,
MADE IN 1533.
GYULA FORSTER (ED.),
MAGYARORSZÁG
MŰEMLÉKEI. VOL. I.
BUDAPEST, 1905,
PLATE II, AFTER P. 60.

As part of this programme, the Szapolyais' coat of arms is likely to have found its way onto the royal well of Visegrád and the well of the Dominican cloister in Buda. The more places that featured the Hunyadis' raven side by side with the wolf, the easier it was to find a link between the two families. The gossip that Matthias was John's godfather⁸⁸ and that he had miraculously foreseen his coronation⁸⁹ is also likely to have taken root in John's entourage. In view of the above, it is clear why Queen Isabella chose the southern nave of the church of Gyulafehérvár as the final resting place for herself and for her son

88 *Et inter hec Stephano thesaurario Deus altissimus dedisset ac creasset de uxore sua unus masculus; et ad Regem cucurrit, et Regi referavit, quod sibi Deus unum propaginem dedisset, et Rex gravisus est. Et Regem Mathiam supplicavit et rogavit, ut esset compater, et Rex spondit. Et baptizare fecit cum Rege et cum aliis magnatibus, ut esset Joannes nomen ejus.* Szerémi, *Emlékirat*, 26.

89 *[t]um rex Matthias, ex Mathematicorum observatione compertum habens, quis effret tunc coeli et siderum situs, quidve ille designet, conversus ad Stephanum dixisse fertur: Hodie natus et Hungariae Rex; ac ut Deus ratum id esse velit, egregio voto illum cumulavit.* Wolffgangi de Bethlen, *Historia de rebus Transylvanicis*. Vol. I. Cibinii, 1782, 48.

John II.⁹⁰ In the northern part of the vestibule of the church, a Szapolyai coat of arms indicates that the family intentionally chose the cathedral of Gyulafehérvár to be the new sacral building, thereby openly admitting the continuation of the Hunyadi's rule.⁹¹

THE WEDDING

The peak of John's career and international recognition was undoubtedly marked by his marriage to Isabella Jagiellon.⁹² To find a wife from a major dynasty, suitable in rank for a nearly fifty-year-old vassal king of the Ottoman sultan, required existing family connections, the political plans of the Polish royal court, the recognition of the Habsburgs and all the skill of John's diplomats. It was no easy task. Meanwhile the only portrait of King John considered to be authentic is likely to have been painted by Erhard Schön at one of these meetings. This work may have been a so-called betrothal portrait, made for the bridal family, and it most likely enhanced the monarch's best features.⁹³

The wedding, held on 2 March 1539 in Székesfehérvár, required extensive preparation. Compiling the guest list entailed a great deal of political struggle and work on protocol: the actual wedding ceremony had to be postponed by a week merely because the Habsburg envoys were infuriated when they learnt about the invitation of an Ottoman delegation and declined to attend the event. Eventually the wedding and the subsequent banquet took place undisturbed, amidst a series of grandiose festivities at which the invited dignitaries and city envoys were able to hand over their wedding gifts to the couple. This was the last occasion at which the entire country was represented, and the coronation of Isabella was also the last ceremony of its kind arranged in the cathedral of Székesfehérvár and at the royal court of Buda. The Habsburg monarch was represented by Archduke Niklas Graf zu Salm, leading a delegation of 60 people, while most likely all the relatives of the Hungarian lords attended the event, including the Drugeth family, Péter Perényi, Bálint Török, Friar George, István Werbőczy, István Brodarics and also Pál Istvánffy, who wrote a poem in Hungarian for the young couple.⁹⁴ The event

90 Péter Szabó, 'Térszimbolika a gyulafehérvári főtemplomban. Rekonstrukciós kísérlet a fejedelmi sírok eredeti helyének meghatározásához', *Ars Hungarica* 34 (2006) 22–23. On the other hand, the issue of how Friar George found a place here still requires an explanation.

91 Vince Bunyitay, *A gyulafehérvári székesegyház későbbi részei s egy magyar humanista*. Budapest, 1893, 13.

92 Péter Molnár, 'The Coronation of Queen Isabella – March 2, 1539', in Ágnes Máté and Teréz Oborni (eds.), *Isabella Jagiellon, Queen of Hungary (1539–1559)*. Budapest, 2020, 23–43; Ágnes Máté, 'A Literary Image of Renaissance Queenship: The Marriage of Isabella Jagiellon', in *ibid.*, 43–61; György Palotás, 'Literary Tradition in the Cracovian Epithalamia in 1539', in *ibid.*, 61–77.

93 Enikő Buzási, 'Mátka-portrék – egy képtípus 16–17. századi története és példái', in Anna Ridovics (ed.), *A szépség dicsérete. 16–17. századi magyar főúri öltözködés és kultúra*. (Exhibition Catalogue, Hungarian National Museum) Budapest, 2001, 43–45.

94 The description of the wedding: Endre Veress, *Isabella királyné (1519–1559)*. (Magyar Történeti Életrajzok) Budapest, 1901, 49–50. Recently: Gyöngyi Komlóssy, 'Griseldis története: A királyi nászajándék', *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 113:6 (2009) 651–652.



FIGURES 11–12. THE OBTVERSE OF THE GOLDEN FLORIN WITH THE SZAPOLYAI–JAGIELLONIAN COAT OF ARMS, MINTED IN NAGYSZEBEN (SIBIU) IN 1540, AND ITS REVERSE, WITH THE FIGURE OF ST. LADISLAUS
HUNGARIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM, COINS COLLECTION

could not compete with the pomp of the weddings of King Matthias, Vladislaus II or Louis II, and yet it appears to have been John's greatest diplomatic achievement. After several decades, a family connection was once again established with the House of Jagiello, which even in Europe had the reputation of being a high-ranking royal dynasty, so there really seemed to be a possibility of establishing a royal dynasty via the young queen.

FUNERAL

King John died on 22 July 1540 in Szászsebes (Sebeş), during his campaign in Transylvania, while surrounded by his supporters. His wife and his son, just a couple of weeks old, were sojourning in Buda, so could not be present during the king's last days. Even though the monarch's ill health was common knowledge, his condition did not deteriorate until one week before his death. He did not suffer long, and after he died it was obvious that he was to be buried in Székesfehérvár. The funeral procession made slow progress towards its destination and did not reach the ancient burial place of Hungarian kings until early September. That the country was in turmoil is demonstrated by the fact that no eyewitness account of the event has survived, and we do not even know its exact date. All we know is that "King John's body was taken to Székesfehérvár, and honourably buried".⁹⁵ It is certain that the queen, because of her condition, was not yet able to attend this event, so she missed the last royal burial to take

⁹⁵ *Memoria rerum*, 50.

place in Hungary. After the burial, the procession continued to Buda, and at the diet of Rákos the baby was elected king of Hungary under the name John II.

King John was not able not rest long in his original tomb. In 1543 the Ottomans took the city; two years later they opened the royal graves and took everything of value that could be moved. This time, there was only one king whose mortal remains were untouched, and this was King John. The Ottoman treasurer of Buda had him removed from his grave, entrusting the Hungarian sheriff of the city, Tamás Szigethy, to bury him elsewhere. Thanks to the Hungarian dignitary, the body was transferred without any particular ceremony to the St. Michael church in Sziget, at the edge of the city, and was later destroyed in one of the sieges of Fehérvár, together with the church.⁹⁶ It is telling that, while the tombs of King John's father and uncle have survived the centuries unharmed, his body was lost forever, despite having obtained the crown, and therefore did not find its way into the power representation of his heirs. Queen Isabella and John II did maintain the Szapolyais' power in the eastern part of the country, so the family's influence did not end with John.

OUTLOOK

On 23 May 1571, a large crowd gathered to witness the last burial of the Szapolyai kinship. They followed John II, elected king of Hungary, on his final journey. Before the procession set off, they opened the coffin for the last time, but what they saw was far from a pleasant sight: the young king's face was distorted, one of his eyes was open, and his left hand had turned completely black. The body was then clad in red crimson and covered with a black cloth. There was a horseman in the procession carrying an upside-down shield and rusty weapons, to symbolize to the crowd that the deceased was the last male member of the family.⁹⁷

The Szapolyais remained nominally present in Hungarian history even into the Báthory era, after the family had died out. In 1574, John Sigismund's palatial decorated war tent was proudly shown to the Frenchman Pierre Lescapier. The tent had canvas walls with scalloped pediments that from a distance looked like stone walls, and had large gates both at the front and at the back. Inside it was divided into four halls, and there were another four rooms where clothes and equipment were stored. The stalls and the horsemen's lodgings were located by the walls, and all the ropes were made of silk. On the next day, he was shown the water conduit also made on the orders of the late prince, which conducted water to the palace from several kilometres away.⁹⁸

96 Pál Fodor, 'A török hódítók és a királysírok', *História* 11:3 (1989) 11–12.

97 *EOE* II. 396. Quoted by: Péter Szabó, 'Uralkodói temetéseink kérdéséhez', in R. Várkonyi (ed.), *Magyar reneszánsz udvari kultúra*, 330, 333.

98 *Pierre Lescapier utazása Erdélybe [1574]*. (Bibliotheca Historica) Published by Kálmán Benda and Lajos Tardy. Budapest, 1982, 85–86. Unfortunately, we have no details on the tent. It cannot be ruled out that he received it as a gift from a high-ranking Ottoman official. We know of Dervish, the first *sanjakkbeyi* of Szeged, that he had a military tent worth 800 golden

The effects of this grand display persisted: at the court of Prince Stephen Báthory the ancestors were frequently mentioned, and the tombs of Isabella and John II stood in the cathedral of Gyulafehérvár as a memento. It is also certain that in 1606 Prince Stephen Bocskai intentionally arranged to be buried next to John Sigismund, thus embracing the latter's political heritage.⁹⁹ The glory of the Szapolyai family continued to glow, albeit less brightly, until the early 17th century.

In summary, we can say that the most important events in the family's life were the granting of the comital title in 1465, the appointment to the office of palatine in 1486, and the marriage of István and Hedwig the same year. From that time, at the latest, the Szapolyais entered a narrow circle of the European élite, from where the road to obtain the royal crown was open. The next milestone in their career was the marriage between the Szapolyai and Jagiellonian families in 1512, and then John's coronation as king of Hungary in 1526. But the power and influence that was enough for their rise proved insufficient to keep control of the entire country. The Szapolyais obtained the royal crown of Hungary at the worst possible time, and, jammed between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs, could only retain it at the cost of restricted sovereignty. Nevertheless, John and Isabella Jagiellon's wedding in 1539 and John's funeral in Székesfehérvár in 1540 were in line with the pomp and circumstance of Hungarian kings during the Middle Ages. Even though the Szapolyais were not able to keep their royal power and dignity in terms of strength and influence after 1526, they were definitely able to do so in terms of image and representation of power.

florins, and used it when he went to war during the sultan's campaigns: Géza Dávid, 'Az első szegedi bég, Dervis életpályája', *Aetas* 14:4 (1999) 11.

⁹⁹ Péter Szabó, 'Kultusz és kultuszhely', in Idem, *Jelkép, rítus, udvari kultúra. Reprezentáció és politikai tekintély a kora újkori Magyarországon*. (TDI Könyvek, 7.) Budapest, 2008.

István Kenyeres*

THE ESTATES OF THE SZAPOLYAI FAMILY PRIOR TO 1526

The aim of this study is to examine the financial resources of the Szapolyai family in the late medieval Kingdom of Hungary. I was primarily interested in what economic background the family, whose star was in the ascendant from the mid-15th century, could rely on prior to the Battle of Mohács (1526): how many and what kind of estates did they possess, and what we know about the administration of these estates and the income they generated. The type of economic trends and the total revenues that could be earned are also important. In order to depict a more realistic picture of the family's wealth, I have tried to compare the data on the administration and revenues of the Szapolyai family with those of other major estates and landlords.

THE NUMBER OF THE SZAPOLYAI ESTATES

Trying to give a summary of the growing number of estates owned by the Szapolyai family is not an easy task. According to calculations made by Ignác Acsády on the basis of the so-called 'treasury account book' of 1494–1495, which contains considerable data on the estates of Hungarian landlords, there were 157,131 ½ tax-paying tenant plots in the 41 counties surveyed. Of these, István Szapolyai possessed 12,308 ½ tenant plots in 25 counties, which, at a nationwide level, corresponded to approximately 8 percent. This made him the greatest landowning magnate in Hungary, followed by Prince John Corvinus, the natural son of King Matthias I, who, as reported in the same survey, owned 'only' 5,937 tenant plots. In the opinion of Ignác Acsády, the first to process the sources, the Szapolyais in fact possessed even more estates; this data only includes the minimum of their immovable assets. We also know that not all John Corvinus's estates were included in the survey, either (only those found in eight counties); on the basis of other data, it appears certain that the number of John Corvinus's

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landed estates surpassed that of the Szapolyais. The Szapolyais could thus count themselves as the second wealthiest landlords of the realm.¹

How much the Szapolyais were in a position of power can perhaps better be illustrated by the number of castles they possessed than by the number of their tax-paying tenant plots. The reason for this is that, from the late 13th century, possession of castles was crucial in the Kingdom of Hungary: it not only entailed the possession of a military building, but also the possession of the domains organized around the castle, and thus it included the right of jurisdiction over the people living on the castle domains, as well as patronage rights. Together, these rights ensured the owner's military and economic strength, and ultimately the number of castles and castle domains defined the owner's rank among the powerful élite of society.² According to Kálmán Demkó, John (János) Szapolyai owned 72 castle domains, of which 27 castles were situated in Upper Hungary.³ In Demkó's book, there is no evidence of the Szapolyai family's possession of 72 forts, and neither can this be proved by any sources available to us.⁴ In any case, Demkó identifies 27 castles owned by the Szapolyais in Upper Hungary, to which 314 settlements belonged. Demkó also mentions nine additional castles in

1 Ignác Acsády, *Régi magyar birtokviszonyok, 1494–1598*. (Értekezések a Történeti Tudományok Köréből, XVI/3.) Budapest, 1894, 30–35; László Solymosi convincingly proved the deficiencies in Acsády's methods, yet in order to demonstrate the possessions of the Szapolyai family at a national level it is still worth quoting the data published by him: László Solymosi, 'Az Ernuszt-féle számadáskönyv és a középkor végi népességszám (A középkori megyei adószámadások forrásértéke)', *Történelmi Szemle* 28 (1985) 431–432. The treasury accounts of 1494–1495 were most recently published, with notes, after a late 18th century edition, by Tibor Neumann. When preparing the account, Neumann identifies the estates of palatine Imre Szapolyai just as he comes to mention them: Tibor Neumann, *Registrum proventuum Regni Hungariae. A Magyar Királyság kincstartójának számadáskönyve (1494–1495)*. (Magyar Történelmi Emlékek, Okmánytárak) Budapest, 2019.

2 Erik Fügedi, *Vár és társadalom a 13–14. századi Magyarországon*. (Értekezések a Történeti Tudományok Köréből. Új Sorozat, 82.) Budapest, 1977, 14–15; Pál Engel, 'Honor, vár, ispánság. Tanulmányok az Anjou-királyság kormányzati rendszeréről', in Idem, *Honor, vár, ispánság. Válogatott tanulmányok*. (Millenniumi Magyar Történelem, Historikusok) Ed. by Enikő Csukovits. Budapest, 2003, 101–102; Idem, 'Vár és hatalom. Az uralom területiális alapjai Magyarországon', in *ibid.*, 162–172; Idem, *The Realm of St Stephen. A History of Medieval Hungary, 895–1526*. London, New York, 2001, 152–153, 199–201, 325–326; Richárd Horváth, 'Várak és uraik a késő középkori Magyarországon. Vázlat a kutatás néhány lehetőségéről', in Tibor Neumann and György Rácz (eds.), *Honoris causa. Tanulmányok Engel Pál tiszteletére*. (Társadalom- és Művelődéstörténeti Tanulmányok, 40; *Analecta Mediaevalia*, III.) Budapest, Pilisecsaba, 2009, 76–84. Not all castles were, of course, surrounded by a castle domain (e.g. border castles, and the southern frontier castles) and not all castle domains had a castle at their centre.

3 Kálmán Demkó, 'Felsőmagyarországi várak és várbirtokok a XVI. században', *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 15 (1914) 212.

4 As regards the 72 castles of the Szapolyai family, Demkó must have insisted on the historical 'tradition' dating back to the 18th century. He used the same figure for the number of estates, as well: Carolus Wagner, *Analecta Scepusii sacri et profani. Pars IV. Viennae, 1778*, 3. He was also quoted in József Hradszky, *Szepesvár és környéke*. Igló, 1884, 70. The 'myth' of the 72 castles was even adopted by the *Biographical Encyclopedia of Hungary*: Vol. 2, L–Z. Editor-in-chief Ágnes Kenyeres. Budapest, 1982, 707.

Syrmia and in Eastern Hungary.⁵ A map of the Szapolyai estates was published by Gyula Szekfű in his work *Magyar történet* (Hungarian History), considered one of the key works of the inter-war period. The map was drawn up on the basis of archival sources, and showed about 30 castle domains.⁶ Like Szekfű, Gábor Barta was of the opinion that Szapolyai certainly owned about 30 castles, not counting his voivodal ones in Transylvania, and it is also likely that he owned an additional 6 castles, as well.⁷

An analysis of Pál Engel's cartographic database reveals the following: the family owned 34 castles, 6 towns, 46 market towns, 402 villages and 19 hamlets.⁸ It must be admitted, though, that we are aware of the shortcomings of Engel's otherwise outstanding cartographic database, which raises some questions in connection with the Szapolyai family, mainly regarding the southern counties: it is widely known that the Szapolyai family originated from Pozsega county (in Southern Hungary), yet only four estates from this county can be found in the repository, while there are 14 estates in neighbouring Valkó county. It is also known that there were other estate grants in the family's possession, in Croatia and Lower Austria, which do not feature in Engel's register.⁹ It should also be noted that Engel did not classify all domain centres as castles. If we take every piece of information into consideration, then the number of castle domains possessed by the Szapolyais could indeed amount to about 50 during the two generations of the family, yet only the possession of 34 castle domains can be proved for the period prior to the Battle of Mohács (1526).¹⁰

Engel's database contains approximately 27,000 estates (castles, cities, market towns, villages, hamlets); only 1.9 percent of these can be said to have been in the hands of the Szapolyai family. The 'quality' of the estates reveals well-established characteristic features, however: 34 of the 393 castle domains listed in the database (8.3%) were in the possession of the Szapolyais, as were 6 of the 52 cities (11.5%) and 46 of the 842 market towns (5.5%). This possession rate did indeed, prior to Mohács, make the Szapolyai family one of the most powerful landowners in the country. As mentioned earlier, John Corvinus,

5 Demkó, 'Felsőmagyarországi várak', 212.

6 The title of the map designed by Gyula Szekfű: 'Zápolyai családi birtokok Imre, István és János kezén a XV. század végén és a XVI. század elején', in Bálint Hóman and Gyula Szekfű, *Magyar történet. Vol. III.* Budapest, 1935 (second, extended edition; reprint: 1991), 33.

7 Gábor Barta, *La route qui mène à Istanbul, 1526–1528.* (Studia Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, 195.) Budapest, 1994, 20.

8 Pál Engel, *Magyarország a középkor végén.* [Budapest, 2002.] Map. CD-ROM. I have supplemented the figures here with data found in the course of my research in the charter register presented later in my essay.

9 On this, see the chapter entitled 'The land acquisitions of the Szapolyai family: lessons learned from a charter register'.

10 That certain domain centres are classified as forts (castles) is problematic: in several places even fortified market towns and mansions functioning as domain centres were regarded as forts. There is also no explanation of how certain castles appeared in the possession of the Szapolyai family. See the list of castles in the Appendix and the notes attached to it. The Appendix contains 49 castle domains in total. On the period of the Battle of Mohács, see note 13 below.

who died in 1504, may have been the only person who owned more property,¹¹ perhaps queen consort Mary of Austria, who moved to Hungary shortly before the catastrophe of 1526 (in 1522), owned a wealth of property, in the form of 'reginal estates', that may have been equal to that of the Szapolyais.¹² This means that during the first two decades of the 16th century the Szapolyai family owned the largest, or at the very least the most significant, collection of property in Hungary.¹³ An important feature of the Szapolyai land tenure is that the estates, serving as the power base for the family, were demonstrably spread throughout 29 counties, i.e. over almost half of the country.

In the late 15th century, the Szapolyai estates were located around three main clusters: firstly, we have to mention the major domains that had been obtained first, like that at Tokaj (1459) and its surroundings, which included the castles of Regéc, Tállya and Boldogkő (in Abaúj and Zemplén counties).¹⁴ From here this expanded through Torna (Turna nad Bodvou) and Szádvár, all the way to the Szepesség (Spiš) region and the castle of Sáros (Šarišský hrad). With its centre at Szepesvár (Spišský hrad), obtained in 1465, this became the largest cluster.¹⁵ The second largest cluster of domains was formed in the mid-1460s, mostly in Veszprém county in Transdanubia, around the castles of Pápa, Ugod, Somló and Csesznek.¹⁶ In the late 15th century, it was extended to include the castle domains of Trencsén (Trenčín) and a series of other north-western castle domains, obtained first as a security in 1477, then permanently in 1493.¹⁷

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- 11 According to Schönherr, Corvinus owned around 50 castles: Gyula Schönherr, *Hunyadi Corvin János 1473–1504*. (Magyar Történeti Életrajzok) Budapest, 1894, 287–288.
 - 12 István Kenyeres, 'Verwaltung und Erträge von Königin Marias ungarischen Besitzungen in den Jahren 1522 bis 1548', in Martina Fuchs and Orsolya Réthelyi (Hrsg.), *Maria von Ungarn (1505–1558). Eine Renaissancefürstin*. (Geschichte in der Epoche Karls V., 8.) Münster, 2007, 179–207.
 - 13 We know of a two-page register, dated in the years following the Battle of Mohács (around 1527–1528), and which contains a list exclusively of Szapolyai-owned castles. 34 castles and estates are listed in the register. Egyetemi Könyvtár. Kézirattár, Litterae et epistolae originales, No. 244. Referenced by Richárd Horváth, 'Szatmár és a Szapolyaiak', in Juan Cabello and Norbert C. Tóth (eds.), *„Erősségénél fogva várépítésre való”. Tanulmányok a 70 éves Németh Péter tiszteletére*. (A Jósza András Múzeum Kiadványai, 68.) Nyíregyháza, 2011, 350; note 35. I would hereby like to thank Richárd Horváth for giving me access to this document. For details of the register, see the Appendix.
 - 14 On the acquisition of these domains, see Richárd Horváth, 'Adalékok a Szapolyaiak északkelet-magyarországi felemelkedéséhez', in Tibor Neumann (ed.), *Analecta Mediaevalia. Vol. I: Tanulmányok a magyar középkorról*. S. I., 2001, 99–112. On Tokaj, see *ibid.*, 100–101. On the acquisition of Tállya, Regéc, Boldogkő, see *ibid.*, 102–103. On Tokaj, see Péter Németh, 'A tokaji uradalom kialakulása', *Századok* 139 (2005) 434.
 - 15 Horváth, 'Szatmár és a Szapolyaiak', 348–349.
 - 16 Richárd Horváth, 'Pápától a pápáig. Garai–Szapolyai várbirtok változások Veszprém megyében a Mátyás-korban', in István Hermann and Balázs Karlinszky (eds.), *Megyetörténet. Egyház- és igazgatástörténeti tanulmányok a veszprémi püspökség 1009. évi adománylevele tiszteletére*. (A Veszprém Megyei Levéltár Kiadványai, 22; A Veszprémi Egyházmegye Múltjából, 22.) Veszprém, 2010, 345–368.
 - 17 István Kenyeres, 'A Szapolyai család és Trencsén', in József Bessenyei, Zita Horváth and Péter Tóth (eds.), *Tanulmányok Szapolyai Jánosról és a kora újkori Erdélyről*. (Studia Miskolcinsensia, 5.) Miskolc, 2004, 135–136.

It is worth noting that, according to what we currently know, the family had no private estates in Transylvania, despite the fact that John Szapolyai, elected king of Hungary after the Battle of Mohács, was, from 1510 onwards voivode of Transylvania and would thus have had the opportunity to obtain local estates. It appears he was content with the estate land assigned to him as estate for his service (*pro honore*) as voivode.

PURCHASING ESTATES: IMRE AND ISTVÁN SZAPOLYAI

The acquisition of the Szapolyai family's property is attributed to two prominent figures during the reign of King Matthias I (1458–1490), brothers Imre and István Szapolyai. The domains were acquired by a wide variety of means: royal donations, purchase, exchange of property, inheritance agreements, seizures, and even occupation by force. The older brother, Imre, started his career at the side of governor John Hunyadi. He was even called *literatus*, which means he could read, write and count. This last skill explains why he initially received assignments in the field of the economy and made gradual progress there. As a *familiaris* of Hunyadi, he started off as castellan and *ispán* of the chamber (*comes camerae monetarum*) of Nagybánya (Baia Mare). His real career started to soar when Matthias ascended the throne: he first became *ispán* of the Transylvanian salt chambers, then royal chief treasurer (1459–1464). These assignments suggest that Imre had indeed an understanding of economic and financial matters. In 1460 Matthias named him captain general of Upper Hungary (*Partes regni superiores*) so he must also have been skilled in battle (1460–1463). Between 1464 and 1465 he was *ban* of Dalmatia-Croatia-Slavonia and governor of Bosnia. It was during his time as chief treasurer and captain general of Upper Hungary that he obtained the family's first major castle domains: Tokaj in 1459, first as a security and later as a perpetual grant. This was followed between 1460 and 1464 by the neighbouring castles of Tállya, Regéc, Boldogkő and the castle of Dunajec in Szepes county. As captain general, he occupied Gölnic (Gelnica) and Rihno (Richnava) around 1463, during the battles against the Hussites of Bohemia, for which he subsequently received a letter of grant. In return for his political support, between 1464 and 1466 he received the castle domains of Pápa and Ugod in Transdanubia from Jób Garai, descendant of palatine László Garai, the greatest landowner of his time, who once took part in a plot against King Matthias. Imre's subsequent acquisitions were a result of his marriage. By marrying Orsolya Bebek, the Szapolyai family obtained the major estates of the Bebek family of Pelsőc (Plešivec), whose male line died out in 1469. These estates included Palocsa (Plaveč), Szádvár, Murány (Murán), Rákos (Rákoš), and half of the castle domain of Krasznahorka (Krásna Hôrka), as the castle remained in the possession of another branch of the Bebek family. The last major acquisitions took place in the mid-1470s. Imre received the castles of Torna and Kővár (Kamenski Vučjak) in Požega county in 1476, and as a security he received Trencsén (Trenčín) in 1477. From 1460 Imre did not take on any court functions until 1486, when he was appointed palatine, the office he held

until his death the following year.¹⁸ By becoming palatine, Imre Szapolyai, a man of uncertain descent, obtained the most cherished position among the Hungarian aristocracy, one that was surpassed only by the king.

Shortly thereafter, Imre's brother, István Szapolyai, started his career: he was also named captain general of Upper Hungary between 1460–1465 and subsequently he took part in King Matthias' campaign in Silesia. Between 1474 and 1481 he was governor of Silesia, in 1490 he was governor of Austria, and later, from 1492 till his death in 1499, he held the office of palatine.¹⁹ Regarding the acquisitions, we note that, after a while, Imre included his brother István in the letters of donation, purchase or mortgage agreements concerning the domains he had acquired. István's first own acquisition was Késmárk (Kežmarok). After the death of Imre, István's acquisitions aimed mainly to expand the family domains in north-western Hungary: he managed, first as a security, and later permanently, to obtain the castles of Leva (Ilava), Lietava and Kasza (Košeca), around Trencsén, the city which had already functioned as a domain centre.²⁰ He obtained the castles of Bajmóc (Bojnice), Szklabinya (Sklabina) and Sáros from John Corvinus, and he also purchased Lipótújvár (Liptovský Hrádok).²¹ His sons, John (János), later known as King John I (1526–1540), and his younger brother György, increased the family property to a small extent, for example by acquiring Árva (Orava), Likava and Debrecen, which formed part of the Corvin property their father had intended to obtain.²²

THE LAND ACQUISITIONS OF THE SZAPOLYAI FAMILY: LESSONS LEARNED FROM A CHARTER REGISTER

Full research into the Szapolyai estates still remains to be carried out; so far, only the data of some minor details have been processed and published.²³ Below, I will try to establish some conclusions regarding the Szapolyai family's property acquisitions, on the basis of a list of charters that is hardly unknown,²⁴ and yet

18 Horváth, 'Szatmár és a Szapolyaiak', 346–347; Idem, 'Pápától a pápáig'; Idem, 'Szapolyai Imre', in Péter Farbaký et al. (eds.), *Hunyadi Mátyás, a király. Hagyomány és megújulás a királyi udvarban 1458–1490*. Budapest, 2008, 269–270.

19 Not even a short biography has been written about István Szapolyai. For the relevant entry in the biographical encyclopedia, see note number 4 above. See further Tibor Neumann, 'Út a királyi trónig: A Szapolyaiak: Imre, István és János király', *História* 34:2 (2012) 8–10; Idem, 'A Szapolyai család legrégebbi címere', *Turul* 84:4 (2011) 123–130; Idem, 'A gróf és a herceg magánháborúja. Szapolyai István és Corvin János harca a lipóti hercegségért', *Századok* 148 (2014) 387–425.

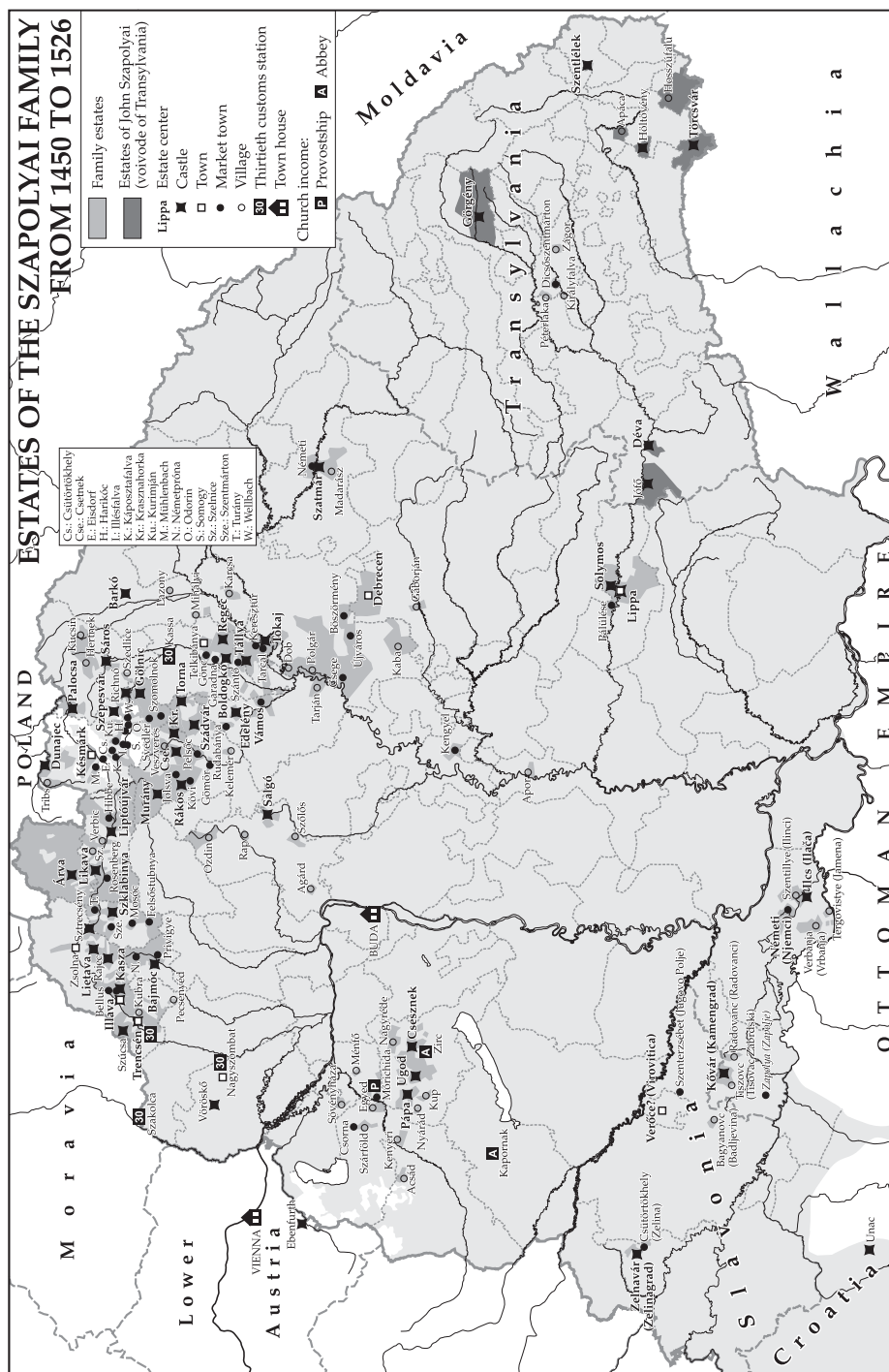
20 Antal Fekete Nagy, *Magyarország történelmi földrajza a Hunyadiak korában. Vol. IV: Trencsén vármegye*. Budapest, 1941, 408–411.

21 Neumann, 'A gróf és a herceg', 390–397, 414–422.

22 Neumann, 'A gróf és a herceg', 422–423; György Módy, 'A debreceni és a tokaji uradalom (Régió kutatási kísérlet)', in *A Debreceni Déri Múzeum Évkönyve 1989–1990*. Debrecen, 1992, 172.

23 Horváth, 'Adalékok a Szapolyaiak északkelet-magyarországi'; Idem, 'Pápától a pápáig'; Idem, 'Szatmár és a Szapolyaiak'; Neumann, 'A gróf és a herceg'.

24 The source is referred to in Elemér Varjú, 'A Hunyadiak síremlékei a gyulafehérvári székes-egyházban', in Gyula Forster (ed.), *Magyarország műemlékei. Vol. I*. Budapest, 1905, 94: note 1.



that has not been studied in detail. According to its title, the source is a register of existing charters of the estates of the Szapolyai family. The register is not dated, and judging from the handwriting it is from the mid-16th century. The circumstances of its origin are unknown.²⁵

Relying on the findings of scholarly literature and taking into consideration the characteristic features of the handwriting, it can be assumed that the register may have been compiled during the peace negotiations at Várad (Oradea) in 1538, or during the negotiations of the Treaty of Gyalu in 1541, or perhaps at the negotiations of the Habsburg–Szapolyai Treaty of Nyírbátor in 1549. During the preparatory negotiations for the Treaty of Várad, back in 1535, King John I (Szapolyai) made an attempt to recover all the estates that had once been in the family's possession. According to the peace treaty of 1538, in the event of his death King John I would give up the part of the country he possessed to King Ferdinand I of Habsburg. Should a child be born to him, however, the child had to be compensated with the 'Duchy of Szepes' to be formed around Szepesvár.²⁶ During negotiations for the Treaty of Gyalu, signed in late 1541, the compensation of King John's son, John Sigismund, was once again on the agenda. This time the talks mainly concerned the 'Duchy of Szepes', already mentioned in the Treaty of Várad. At subsequent meetings the names of particular domains were mentioned: Szepesvár, Késmárk, Gölnic and Telkibánya.²⁷ In the Treaty of Nyírbátor, signed in 1549, the intention of the Habsburgs was to compensate John Sigismund not with property in Hungary, but rather with the Duchy of Oppeln (Opole) and Ratibor (Racibórz) in Silesia.²⁸ The circumstances suggest, however, that the register is more likely to have been drawn up during the negotiations in 1549, as this was the year when several territories, like the ancestral domains of the Szapolyais, came into the possession of Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I. One example of such a domain was the former family residence of Trencsén, offered as security by the Thurzó family, and redeemed in late 1548 and taken over by the king in 1549.²⁹ The castle of Murány, occupied during King Ferdinand's campaign in Upper Hungary in 1549, is another example.³⁰ Yet a much more important argument is that, based on the Treaty of Nyírbátor, the Szapolyai family, which prior to the Battle of Mohács had possessed property that was considered major even at a nationwide level, had to be compensated with donations in proportion to the value of the family's estates. This is what

The register was used by Gyula Szekfű to prepare the map mentioned in note 6: Hóman and Szekfű, *Magyar történet*, III. 577.

25 The register can be found in MNL OL E 148 Neo-regestrata acta Fasc. 1596. No. 16. The document consists of 16 pages. Below I will rely on the elaboration of this document. I am also planning to publish the register later on.

26 Teréz Oborni, *Az ördögös Barát. Fráter György (1482–1551)*. Pécs, Budapest, 2017, 52–58.

27 *Ibid.*, 116–119.

28 László Makkai and András Mócsy (eds.), *Erdély története a kezdetektől 1606-ig*. Budapest, 1986, 430.

29 Kenyeres, 'A Szapolyai család és Trencsén', 145.

30 Béla Sarusi Kiss, *A természet által megerősített vár. Murány végvár és uradalma a 16. század második felében*. (Disszertációk Budapest Főváros Levéltárából, [1.]) Budapest, 2008, 37–44.

led to the idea of taking stock of the Szapolyai estates, whose ownership could be proved by letters of grants or other charters.³¹

The person who compiled the register was clearly using the documents in the Szapolyai family archives. They were first of all interested in which kings had granted certain members of the Szapolyai family estates, proven by charters of donation, and which other documents (e.g. mortgage or purchase agreements) the family possessed in connection with their estates. On the subject of the survival of the Szapolyai family archive, it is also noteworthy that at the end of the 15th and at the beginning of 16th centuries the archives were kept in Trencsén, the family's last place of residence. Subsequently, pursuant to the capitulation agreement signed after the Habsburg siege of 1528, the archives may have been taken away by King John's men. The archives could thus remain in the family's possession and were probably kept in Transylvania.³² The author of the register is thus likely to have collected the data from the original material kept in the family archives. The compiler of the list registered not only the privileges involving the donations, but also charters of transfer of custody and possession, together with other documents characterizing the economic situation of the Szapolyais, such as mining licences, documents regarding the thirtieth customs duties, city rentals, ownership rights of buildings in Vienna and Buda, inheritance agreements, and wills.

The register contains the description of a total of 150 charters: in a rather laconic way (if not always consistently), it defines the type,³³ issuer, estate and subject matter of the charter. To our greatest regret, the date of origin of the documents was not recorded.³⁴ The register lists 34 letters of grants, 7

31 The register is most likely to have been prepared after the death of King John I, as neither in the title of the compilation or in the entries is there any mention of his royal or voivodal title used by the pro-Habsburg party.

32 That the treasury and the archives of the Szapolyai family were kept in Trencsén until 1528, that is until it came into the hands of King Ferdinand, is evidenced by two points in the document drawn up upon the surrender of the castle. Pursuant to point 1, the gold, silver and other treasures belonging to John Szapolyai and kept in the castle could be used to pay the captains and their men. Pursuant to point 3, the captains were allowed to hold on to the privileges relating to Szapolyai and kept in the fort; only the charters and registers regarding the castle and county of Trencsén had to be handed over. Štátny archív v Trenčine Listiny, Cista III. Fasc. 10, No. 15. Nor does the register presented below contain any letters of privilege regarding Trencsén or the Szapolyai family, while these have come down to us in original in the Archives of the Hungarian Chamber; see Charter issued by King Matthias I for the Szapolyais about the mortgage of Trencsén Castle, 28.08.1477: MNL OL DL 17981; Report by the chapter of Nyitra on the transfer of the Trencsén estates to the Szapolyais: MNL OL DL 17982; Charter issued by King Vladislaus II about the donation of the castle Trencsén to István Szapolyai, 24.02.1493: MNL OL DL 19967.

33 Examples: *Littera privilegialis*, *donationalis*, *venditionalis*, *judicialis*, *statutorum*, *introduciturum*, together with numerous *fassio*.

34 Only in two cases does the register feature dates, the charters on which dates are shown do not play any role in acquisitions of estates. One is a charter from 1511, issued by King Sigismund the Old of Poland on the betrothal of Borbála (Barbara) Szapolyai, while the other is a charter issued by King Louis I (the Great) in 1366, which contains information on the Némethi (Nijemci) and Szentillye (Vinkovce) estates in Valkó county.

letters of hypothecation, and 5 charters on purchase agreements and 22 charters on transfer of possession issued at places of authentication (*loca credibilia*). These charters name 141 domains, which is 29 percent of the known Szapolyai estates. It should be added that in several cases the charter register features only the name of the castle received, while the market towns and villages that belonged to a certain castle are not mentioned. If we compare the structure of the Szapolyai estates registered in Engel's database with that of donations listed in the charter register, we find that these donations are likely to cover most of the major Szapolyai estates. Of the 34 castles, 6 towns and 46 market towns listed in Engel's database, the register contains data on 29 castles, all 6 towns, and 34 market towns. The largest difference is shown in the number of villages: while Engel enumerates 402 villages, only 61 settlements of this kind are mentioned by name in the register, and when it comes to hamlets, only 5 out of the 17 are featured in the register. At the same time, the register features two town houses, one in Buda, the other in Vienna, and four rentals of the thirtieth customs duty (external trade customs duty) and other estates that were situated outside the territories of the Kingdom of Hungary (such as Ebenfurt), or beyond the southern territories that are better known to Hungarian researchers of the Middle Ages (e.g. in Orbász or Tinin [Knin] counties).³⁵ In view of the above, the information available to us makes it possible to outline the Szapolyai family's methods of acquiring property.

The register provides information on how a certain property was acquired by the family in 116 cases: 89 were received as donations (76.7%), 12 as mortgaged property (10.3%), 10 were purchased (8.6%), and 3 were obtained as a result of negotiations, while 2 estates entered into their possession as private donations. The way the properties were acquired is of course a more complex issue, as several estates were received by the family first as security, and only subsequently did it obtain a letter of grant for them (e.g. Tokaj, Trencsén). Or a property was obtained as a payment for a debt or by way of other agreements, sometimes in a rather violent manner. In any case it is striking that a quarter of the estates came into the possession of the family via hypothecation or purchase. In 13 of the cases involving hypothecation or purchase, the charter register also shows the amount of the security or purchase. All together these amounted to 124,703 gold florins, which was considered an astonishing amount! In King

35 For mention of the estates in Orbász county, see note 40 below. The register contains a mention of the castle of Unac in Tinin (Knin) county, donated by King Matthias I to Imre and István Szapolyai (*Littera Mathie regis super castro Wnacz in comitatu Thininiensi Emerico et Stephano de Zapolya et eorum heredibus*). The location of the fort is uncertain; presumably it was situated somewhere between Bihać and Bosanska Dubica, near the border between today's Bosnia and Croatia. In the mid-14th century Unac belonged to Ivan Nelipić. Milán Sufflay, 'A Nelipicsek hagyatéka (Adalék a hamisítványok történetéhez). Második közlemény', *Turul* 25 (1907) 78. (I would hereby like to thank Bálint Ternovác for his help in localizing Unac.) Not much is known about the county of Tinin around Knin, either, but it may have existed for a short period in the 1480s. On its mention in 1485, see MNL OL DL 88712.

Matthias' time, this was equivalent to 18–20 percent of annual state revenues;³⁶ in the Jagiellonian era it was equal to 38–57 percent!³⁷ The largest collateral amount, 60,000 florins, was set in the case of the thirtieth customs duty of the city of Kassa (Košice) mortgaged by King Vladislaus II to István Szapolyai, the local mint, and the cities of Szakolca (Skalica) and Nagyszombat (Trnava) and the thirtieth customs duty in these cities. There was a special charter issued on the thirtieth customs duty of Kassa, mortgaged by queen consort Beatrice to István Szapolyai, which was also included in the previously mentioned charter, the only difference being that the security amount for this thirtieth customs duty was 22,000 florins. The amount of the security in the case of Ebenfurt in Lower Austria, mortgaged by Matthias I to Imre Szapolyai, was also significant: 26,000 florins.³⁸ The fourth largest amount taken as security on our list was 10,000 florins, paid by Imre (and István) Szapolyai for Szatmár and Némethi (Satu Mare).³⁹ In the case of acquisitions, the highest purchase price was 10,800 florins, paid for the castle of Torna, followed by the sum of 4,000 florins, paid for Liptóújfár (Liptovský Hrádok).

In the case of 85 estates, the king who donated or mortgaged a given estate to the family also features in the register: Ladislaus V the Posthumous provided for 4 estates (4.7%), Matthias I Corvinus for 59 (69.4%), and Vladislaus II provided for 22 estates (26%). These figures make it apparent that the main patron of the Szapolyais was King Matthias, as the family received 70 percent of its estates from him; the rest was essentially granted by Vladislaus II. It was hitherto hardly known, but seems certain on the basis of the register, that the Szapolyai brothers had received donations in Pozsega and Orbász counties as early as during the reign of Ladislaus the Posthumous, in areas where scholarly literature expects to find their 'ancestral domains'.⁴⁰ It is also noticeable that

36 King Matthias's revenues are estimated at around 612,000, 628,000 and 678,000 florins for the 1470s and 1480s, excluding the dominions in Austria and Moravia: Erik Fügedi, 'Mátyás király jövedelme 1475-ben', *Századok* 116 (1982) 501; András Kubinyi, 'A Mátyás-kori államszervezet', in Gyula Rázsó and László V. Molnár (eds.), *Hunyadi Mátyás. Emlékkönyv Mátyás király halálának 500. évfordulójára*. Budapest, 1990, 104–116; János Barta Jr. and Gábor Barta, 'III. Béla király jövedelmei. Megjegyzések középkori uralkodóink bevételeiről', *Századok* 127 (1993) 424–425. (These authors corrected Fügedi's and Kubinyi's data on King Matthias's revenues.)

37 The yearly income of the Jagiellonian rulers is estimated at around 219,000 florins for the year 1516 and 260,000–314,000 florins for the 1520s: János M. Bak, 'Monarchie im Wellental: Materielle Grundlagen des ungarischen Königtums im fünfzehnten Jahrhundert', in Reinhard Schneider (Hrsg.), *Das spätmittelalterliche Königtum im europäischen Vergleich*. Sigmaringen, 1987, 359; András Kubinyi, 'Hungary's Power Factions and the Turkish Threat in the Jagiellonian Period (1490–1526)', in István Zombori (ed.), *Fight against the Turk in Central Europe in the First Half of the 16th Century*. Budapest, 2004, 121–123; Norbert C. Tóth, 'A Magyar Királyság 1522. évi költségvetése', in Boglárka Weisz (ed.), *Pénz, posztó, piac. Gazdaságtörténeti tanulmányok a magyar középkorról*. Budapest, 2016, 117–127.

38 Szapolyai's possession of Ebenfurt was already assumed by Neumann, as the charter register clearly proves, and the pledge amount is now also known: Neumann, 'A gróf és a herceg', 393.

39 On this, see Horváth, 'Szatmár és a Szapolyaiak', 351–352.

40 The register features Ladislaus the Posthumous's donations of the estates of Dravice, Upper and Middle Dubovcsák, Petőfalva and other estates in Pozsega and Orbász counties (*Littera*

there is no information in the register on charters issued to the Szapolyai family by Louis II, which, given the political and historical background, is not really surprising.

It is worth analysing the charter register from yet another aspect: which members of the Szapolyai family did increase the family property and to what extent? Of all the estates included in the register, the beneficiary of grants, hypothecations and purchases is known in 137 cases. The person to enlarge the family property the most was Imre Szapolyai, who accounted for the acquisition of 34 estates (24.8%). Later on, pursuant to the family strategy, he saw to include his brother István in the donation letters: their names feature in the case of 51 estates (37.2%), while István Szapolyai alone appears in the case of 12 grants (8.8%). In subsequent acquisitions, István regularly included his sons John and György in the charters, as displayed in 25 charters (18.2%). The next generation, John and György, feature in a total of 11 estates (8%), while John (without his brother György) appears as a beneficiary in 4 cases (3%). In summary, we can conclude that 89 percent (!) of the 137 estates was obtained by Imre and István Szapolyai, while István's sons increased the family property by a minimal extent only (11%).

THE SZAPOLYAI RESIDENCES⁴¹

The Szapolyai brothers established the family residence in Tokaj, presumably Imre's first major acquisition. Then, from 1463–1464, Késmárk became the family seat.⁴² Around the year 1466, however, the two brothers transferred the

Ladislai Regis qui regnavit ante Mathiam super donatione possessionis Drawycze, Felswdwbwchacz, Kezepszewdobowchacz, Pethewffalwvacz et multarum aliarum in comitatu de Posega et Orbacz Emerico et Stephano de Zapolya et heredibus eorundem). These may thus have been the Szapolyai brothers' first donations, prior to Matthias's succession to the throne. On the basis of the available literature, the identification of the estates mentioned in the charter has not as yet yielded any solid results. Csánki mentions the village of Dubovcsacz in Pozsega county, and on the basis of the charters he makes reference to, this estate belonged to other families, among others to the Garai family in the 15th century: Dezső Csánki, *Magyarország történelmi földrajza a Hunyadiak korában*. Vol. II. Budapest, 1894, 407.

41 The criteria for an aristocratic residence in the Realm of Hungary were laid down by András Kubinyi, 'Nagybirtok és főúri rezidencia Magyarországon a XV. század közepétől Mohácsig,' *A Tapolcai Városi Múzeum Közleményei* 2 (1991) 221–228. According to this, it was to be examined where the lord himself or his family was residing most of the time, and where they made investments for representational purposes, such as castle construction or burial places, or from where they (or the relatives of the lord who was often away) administered the estates, and where the family treasury and archives were.

42 Kubinyi believed that Imre Szapolyai established his seat in Tokaj, while his brother did so in Késmárk: Kubinyi, 'Nagybirtok és főúri rezidencia', 215. We do not know of any letters written in Tokaj by Imre Szapolyai in the named period, that is prior to 1466, but two letters have come down to us from 1463, written on matters of domain administration by the mother of the Szapolyai brothers, Katalin, widow of László Szapolyai Vajdafi. This may suggest that the family did indeed live there: *Szapolyai oklt.* 76: No. 50. There are also numerous letters written by István Szapolyai in Késmárk from 1462 onwards (e.g. *Szapolyai oklt.* 65–66: No. 36; 68–69: No 40, etc.), and Imre Szapolyai issued some charters in Késmárk (*in civitate nostra Kesmark*)

family seat to Szepesvár.⁴³ The immense and well-built castle of Szepesvár was perfectly suited as the seat of the family: the market town below the castle provided a stable economic hinterland for the supply of the family residence, while the chapter of Szepes, situated on the hill opposite the castle, may have been important from an administrative point of view. Also, the church of the provostry was suitable for sacral and entertainment events. It also became and remained the burial place of the Szapolyai family even after its subsequent changes of residence.⁴⁴ The family also had a treasury established in Szepesvár, where the family treasure and the family archives were kept.⁴⁵

Following the death of his brother, István Szapolyai did not wait long before moving the seat of the family from Szepesvár to Trencsén.⁴⁶ It is impossible to define the exact date, but it is most likely that the transfer took place around 1492–1493 and became definite in 1494.⁴⁷ This is demonstrated by the fact that, as the family had moved its seat to Trencsén, the administration of the estates in north-eastern Hungary, around the former seat of Szepesvár, had to be organized centrally. In 1494 István Szapolyai therefore commissioned Pál Darholtz, captain of Szepes, his deputy and quasi captain general, to manage his “affairs in Upper Hungary”. He also assigned the task of managing the revenues of these territories to György Csanádi *deák* (*litteratus*), castellan of Tokaj.⁴⁸

from 1464 onwards (*ibid.*, 95–96: No. 73), which suggests that the family residence was from that time not in Tokaj, but in Késmárk.

43 The number of letters written in Szepesvár by the Szapolyai brothers, mainly by Imre, increased from 1466 onwards. A letter written in Szepesvár that year by Imre to the town of Késmárk, containing an order regarding the town's tax to the landlords, have come down to us. The letter provides evidence of the transfer of the family residence and of the administration centre for its domain. *Szapolyai oklt.* 114–115: No. 96; for further letters, see *ibid.*, ff.

44 Kubinyi, ‘Nagybirtok és főúri rezidencia’, 215; Kenyeres, ‘A Szapolyai család és Trencsén’, 139. Meanwhile, a sister of Szapolyai, Magdolna, was buried at the fort in Trencsén (*ibid.*).

45 István Szapolyai's invoice to captain Pál Darholtz of Szepes for keeping the treasury of Szepesvár (*domum nostram thavernicalem*) intact. Torna, 14 June 1494. *Szapolyai oklt.* 213: No. 231. That a part of the archives was kept here is known from documents on the siege of 1528, pursuant to the agreement drawn up at the handover of the fort to Ferdinand I; all documents that had been kept in the fort regarding matters of the Szapolyai family and of the country had to be handed over to the representatives of the Habsburg monarch. This material was later kept in Pozsony (Bratislava). Hradsky, *Szepesvár és környéke*, 68; Jeromos Bal, *Szepesvára története*. (A Szepesmegyei Történelmi Társulat Évkönyve, 13.) Lőcse, 1914, 50. Law LXXI of 1548 determined that these documents be revised and if needed returned to their owners, which suggests that, in addition to the documents on the domains in Szepes county, documents regarding other families and administrative bodies (e.g. Szepes county) may also have been kept here. *Corpus Juris Hungarici / Magyar törvénytár 1526–1608*. Budapest, 1899, 250–253.

46 Kubinyi, ‘Nagybirtok és főúri rezidencia’, 215; János Károlyi, *A trencsényi vár*. Trencsén, 1910, 49; Kenyeres, ‘A Szapolyai család és Trencsén’, 135–145.

47 István Szapolyai regularly resided in Trencsén from 1492 onwards. On the year 1492, see *Szapolyai oklt.* 206–208: No. 220–222; 1493: *ibid.*, 209–210: No. 225–227.

48 *Szapolyai oklt.* 212–213: No. 230. In 1500, István Szapolyai's widow, Duchess Hedwig of Teschen, named the castellan of Sáros, István Máriásy, as captain of Upper Hungary for the time of Pál Darholtz's illness: *ibid.*, 259–260: No. 291.

There may have been both economic factors and reasons of convenience for moving the family seat. The centre of the domains in Trencsén county is likely to have functioned as a link between the two large domain clusters: it was closer to the domains in Transdanubia and to the ancestral estates in Slavonia, while the domain cluster in Szepes was not far, either. As in the case of Szepesvár, the new residence in Trencsén was unusually located, i.e. was not at the 'centre' of the estate. Yet, as has been stressed by András Kubinyi, this feature was characteristic of other aristocratic residences, as well.⁴⁹

This may not be the only reason the family moved its seat to Trencsén, however: the castle and a palace more formidable than that of Szepesvár were better suited to their rank; kings of Hungary, especially Sigismund and Matthias, often sojourned there for longer periods.⁵⁰ Good transport connections were also in Trencsén's favour: from Buda, it was easily accessible via the valley of Vág (Váh) river. We can also assume that István Szapolyai moved the family seat to Trencsén to please his second wife, Hedwig of Teschen (Cieszyn). Although Teschen was geographically closer to the previous seat in Szepesvár, it could be reached more easily via the Jablonka pass from Trencsén. Another reason may have been the city itself. Trencsén already enjoyed a wide variety of privileges and considered itself a royal free city. As such, it was able to offer suitable supplies for the new residence, as its market offered many of the luxury items that were indispensable attributes of an aristocratic household. This fits the contemporary European trend of aristocratic residences 'moving' to the immediate vicinity of cities. Another argument in favour of Trencsén may have been that the thirtieth customs duty collected in the city was also handed over to the Szapolyai family as a form of security.⁵¹ The thirtieth customs duty of Trencsén is likely to have been one of the largest revenues in the country, as the city was one of the main locations for the collection of this duty along the major trade route to Silesia. Thus this locally-accrued customs revenue ensured an easy and continuous cash supply for the aristocratic household. The Szapolyais added fortifications to the castle, surrounded the city with a wall, and extended the residence with a side wing. In Trencsén they also undertook domestic improvements: István Szapolyai had a flower garden built for his wife Hedwig near the fort, traces of which survived until the mid-16th century. Another such investment was a deer park established by John Szapolyai, to which the deer were driven all the way from distant Temesköz.⁵²

49 Kubinyi, 'Nagybirtok és főúri rezidencia', 218.

50 Pál Engel and Norbert C. Tóth, *Itineraria Regum et Reginarum (1382–1438) / Királyok és királynéik itineráriumai (1382–1438)*. (Segédletek a Középkori Magyar Történelem Tanulmányozáshoz, 1.) Budapest, 2005, 155; Richárd Horváth, *Itineraria regis Matthiae Corvini et reginae Beatricis de Aragonia (1458–[1476]–1490)*. (História Könyvtár. Kronológiák, Adattárak, 12.) Budapest, 2011, 180.

51 The named charter register contains a letter of hypothecation issued by Vladislaus II to John Szapolyai regarding the thirtieth customs duty of Trencsén (that of Nagyszombat and Szokolca is also included in the letter). In 1515 it was definitely the Szapolyais who collected the thirtieth customs duty of Trencsén: Kenyeres, 'A Szapolyai család és Trencsén', 138.

52 Kenyeres, 'A Szapolyai család és Trencsén', 142–145.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SZAPOLYAI ESTATES

The Szapolyais administered their estates from their residences. From the mid-1460s to the 1490s Szepesvár was the administrative centre of their domains, so their various revenues were collected there.⁵³ Subsequently, the castle of Trencsén became the administrative centre not only of the surrounding estates but also of all the Szapolyai estates, and both the family treasury and the archives were kept there, although, as we have seen, it appears that a part of the archives and the treasury had been left in Szepesvár. We possess a great amount of data that proves that the immense Szapolyai latifundia were administered from Trencsén. It was from here that Duchess Hedwig had governed the largest complex of landed estates in Hungary,⁵⁴ and after her death, György Szapolyai governed the estates from Trencsén.⁵⁵ There were, of course, additional sub-centres in this vast system of estates. Szepesvár remained one such sub-centre, and continued to receive financial revenues from the Szepesség region.⁵⁶ The account statement of the Szapolyai estates in north-eastern Hungary for the years 1518–1519 has come down to us;⁵⁷ it contains the revenues and expenses of the castle domains in and around Tokaj. On the basis of the structure of the accounts, we can conclude that the revenues of the estates in Zemplén, Torna, Abaúj and Szatmár counties were all collected in Tokaj. Hence Tokaj was also a kind of an administrative sub-centre for the nearby estates. In Transdanubia, Pápa was a similar sub-centre, where the castellan of Pápa was responsible for administering the revenues of the nearby Szapolyai estates, including those of Csesznek and

53 By way of example, between 1477 and 1479 Imre Szapolyai issued invoices in Szepesvár for the payment of the taxes of Késmárk: *Szapolyai oklt.* 146–147: No. 138; 148–149: No. 142; 149: No. 143. In 1482, in the fort of Torna, Imre ordered that the burghers of Késmárk should pay the tax to be collected in Szepesvár: *ibid.*, 159–160: No. 158.

54 A considerable amount of data on this is found in the *Szapolyai oklt.* Hedwig of Teschen's first known order from Trencsén dates back to January 1500: *ibid.*, 259: No. 290. Her last known letter, written shortly before her death, was from Trencsén on 1 April 1521: *ibid.*, 451–452: No. 531.

55 György Szapolyai took over the direction of the estates almost immediately. Trencsén, 9 June 1521: *Szapolyai oklt.* 453–454: No. 534. His last letter, written in Trencsén on an estate administration matter, is dated 29 April 1526: *ibid.*, 521–522: No. 622.

56 István Szapolyai's order to the council of Kassa, according to which they were obliged to make a payment of 2,000 florins (an amount that they were likely to pay as rent for the thirtieth customs duty of Kassa, a city in the hands of the Szapolyais) in the fort of Szepes. Trencsén, 24 September 1496: *Szapolyai oklt.* 233–234: No. 258.

57 MNL OL DL 26161. The source has been used by many in the scholarly literature, but no complex analysis has been made as yet. Cf. István Szabó, *A magyar mezőgazdaság története a XIV. századtól az 1530-as évekig.* (Agrártörténeti Tanulmányok, 2.) Budapest, 1975, 60; Árpád Nógrády, 'A paraszti napszámbér vásárlóértéke a középkor végi Magyarországon', in István Rácz (ed.), *Szabó István emlékkönyv.* Debrecen, 1998, 109. On the publication of the part regarding Tokaj, see Németh, 'A tokaji uradalom kialakulása', 444–446. See the analysis of the source below.

Ugod. At the same time, we have a considerable amount of data on the castellan of Pápa taking the revenues of these domains to Trencsén.⁵⁸

THE FINANCIAL CONDITION OF THE SZAPOLYAI ESTATES IN NORTH-EASTERN HUNGARY

The following analysis was made on the basis of the aforementioned account statement of Tokaj,⁵⁹ the date of which is not easy to establish. At the beginning of the statement we find an account of the wine distributed by Mihály Csallóközi for sale in pubs in 1517 in Tokaj and its surroundings.⁶⁰ Csallóközi was the main caretaker or so-called '*factor*' in the Szepesség region, who was assigned in September 1517 to collect and administer the wine tithe in the area of Tokaj and Tállya.⁶¹ From this it follows that the beginning of the document shows the account of wine distributed by Csallóközi for sale in pubs after the vine harvest in 1517. In the mid-16th century, wine could be sold in the domain of Tokaj from the vigil of St. Thomas the Apostle (20 December) until the following year's harvest; the same may have been the case a couple of decades earlier.⁶² The income from the wine distributed by Csallóközi at the end of 1517 must thus have been collected during the second half of 1518, presumably in the autumn. For the rest of the revenues, only the due date for collection is given in the document, in the following order: on the day of John the Baptist (24 June), the *taxa* of one florin (war tax) was paid,⁶³ followed by the census of the day of St. Michael (29 September) and St. Martin of Tours (11 November). The following year, the *taxa* of half a florin was collected on the day of Epiphany (6 January), as were the census of St. George (24 April) and the half a florin tax on Borsod county to finance local nobles' participation in the diet of Buda. The latter referred to the diet held on

58 13 January 1519: *Szapolyai oklt.* 415: No. 482; 30 October 1519: *ibid.*, 433: No. 504; 30 November 1519: *ibid.*, 434: No. 506; 1 February 1520: *ibid.*, 435: No. 508; 1 August 1521: *ibid.*, 459: No. 541; 14 September 1523: *ibid.*, 487: No. 576; 13 October 1523: *ibid.*, 487: No. 577.

59 Below, I intend to give the first complex analysis of the account statements for Tokaj, while noting that the entire text and a more in-depth analysis of the source would require a separate publication.

60 *Introitus precia vinorum per Michaellem Charlokezy in Anno 1517 ad educillandam distributorum.* MNL OL DL 26161.

61 Duchess Hedwig of Teschen's order to the castellans and officers of Tokaj and Tállya commanding them to obey Mihály Csallóközi, the caretaker of Szepes (*factor nostri generalis Scepusiensis*), on matters regarding the collection of the tithe. Trencsén, 20 September 1517: *Szapolyai oklt.* 401–402: No. 464.

62 István Kenyeres, *Uradalmak és végvárak. A kamarai birtokok és a törökellenes határvédelem a 16. századi Magyar Királyságban.* (Habsburg Történeti Monográfiák, 2.) Budapest, 2008, 285.

63 After the military reforms of 1498–1500, a part of the war tax (*pecunia exercitulis*) was collected by the lord bannerets themselves on their estates; the Szapolyais and other aristocrats were even able to collect the part of the war tax payable to the king (*contributio, subsidium, taxa*) on their estates. István Kenyeres, 'The Economy of Castle Estates in the Late Medieval Kingdom of Hungary', in József Laszlovsky, Balázs Nagy, Péter Szabó, and András Vadas (eds.), *The Economy of Medieval Hungary.* (East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450, 49.) Leiden, Boston, 2018, 401, 404, 406, 410.

St. George's Day with the task of electing a palatine.⁶⁴ A point of reference among the expenses is the payment period for servitors: they received their pay between the day of St. Barnabas (11 June) of 1518 and St. Barnabas' Day the following year. In addition, they received board wages around St. James' Day (25 July) for taking part in the diet of Tolna, and around Christmas (24 December) for participating in the diet of Bács (Báč). Both diets were held in 1518.⁶⁵ Subsequently, the servitors who were personally present at the diet of Buda, alongside John and György Szapolyai, were paid at the diet of Buda on St. George's Day (in 1519). We can therefore conclude that the account statement contains the income and expenses of the estates around Tokaj of 1518–1519, and is most likely a report from a financial year between June 1518 and June 1519.

The account statement includes the income and expenses of the following domains: Tokaj (23 estates), Hernádnémeti (7 estates), Edelény (3 estates), Szatmár (4 estates), Vámos (6 estates), Tállya (8 estates), Regéc (8 estates), Szádvár-Krasznahorka (26 estates),⁶⁶ Torna (16 estates), Boldogkő (4 estates). The source provides information on the income and expenses of the financial year of 1518–1519 of a total of 105 estates (market towns, villages, hamlets) on 10 domains. In connection with the sale and supply of wine to public houses, the domains of Murány, Rákos and Debrecen are also included in the statement. The most significant of these domains were those of Tokaj, Szádvár-Krasznahorka and Torna, with their well-fortified castles and numerous estates. The following market towns were situated in the territory of the estate complex: Tokaj, Tarcál, Keresztúr, Gönc (all part of the domain of Tokaj), Edelény, Szatmár and Németi, Vámos (Sajóvámos), Szántó (Abaújszántó), Tállya, and Torna, a total of 11 market towns. Our data suggests that, on the basis of the number and the quality of the estates, the statement of account contains information on about a third or a quarter of the entire stock of Szapolyai estates.

64 On the diet of Buda in 1519, about 3,000 lesser nobles gathered to elect a palatine, among them the servitors of the Szapolyai family: Dezső Szabó, *A magyar országgyűlések története II. Lajos korában*. Budapest, 1909, 39–42.

65 The diet of Tolna in 1518 was in fact convoked for the day of St. James on 25 July, while the assembly of Bács was convoked for the day of St. Michael, 29 September: Szabó, *A magyar országgyűlések*, 19, 27. The literature has traced the account statement of Tokaj to various dates: István Szabó dated it to 1517 (Szabó, *A magyar mezőgazdaság*, 60), and Péter Németh to 1517–1519 (Németh, 'A tokaji uradalom', 437: note 50).

66 The Szapolyai and Bebek families each possessed half of Krasznahorka (Horváth, 'Szapolyai Imre', 270), excluding the fort, so the revenues of the domain were collected as part of the revenues of the fort of Szádvár. According to the statement of account, 17 estates belonged to Krasznahorka and 8 to Szádvár.

TABLE 1. REVENUES OF THE SZAPOLYAI ESTATES IN NORTH-EASTERN HUNGARY, 1518–1519

Source of income	Florins	%
Wine sale	5,932.00	53.2
Royal war tax (<i>dica</i>)	3,627.16	32.5
Census	1,110.05	9.9
Customs and ferry tolls	173.08	1.6
Sale of fish	156.00	1.4
Sale of grain	92.98	0.8
Extraordinary tax	65.75	0.6
Total	11,157.02	100.0

Three items generated the largest part of the income: the yearly census paid by tenant peasants, the royal war tax (*taxa, dica*) to which the Szapolyais were entitled in their capacity as lord bannerets, and the ‘large-scale’ sale of wine carried out on the estates as the sign of a new era. These three income types constituted 95 percent of the cash revenues of the estates. The rest of the cash inflow (tolls, fish and grain sales, extraordinary taxes) was not significant. The statement also includes the quite considerable income from wine: 569 barrels⁶⁷ of wine, the large part of which originated presumably from wine collected as a tithe.

TABLE 2. EXPENSES OF THE SZAPOLYAI ESTATES IN NORTH-EASTERN HUNGARY, 1518–1519

Expenses	Florins	%
Payments to the landlord	7,047.000	65.3
Payment of servitors	1,948.075	18.1
Purchase of cattle and pigs	757.760	7.0
Travel costs and other minor administrative expenses	127.290	1.2
Construction costs of the Tokaj mansion, the castle of Regéc and the mill in Hernádnémeti	123.450	1.1
Vine cultivation	116.910	1.1
Horse care	82.850	0.8
Transport costs	57.000	0.5
Donations	55.200	0.5
Wages of infantry and guards	47.000	0.4

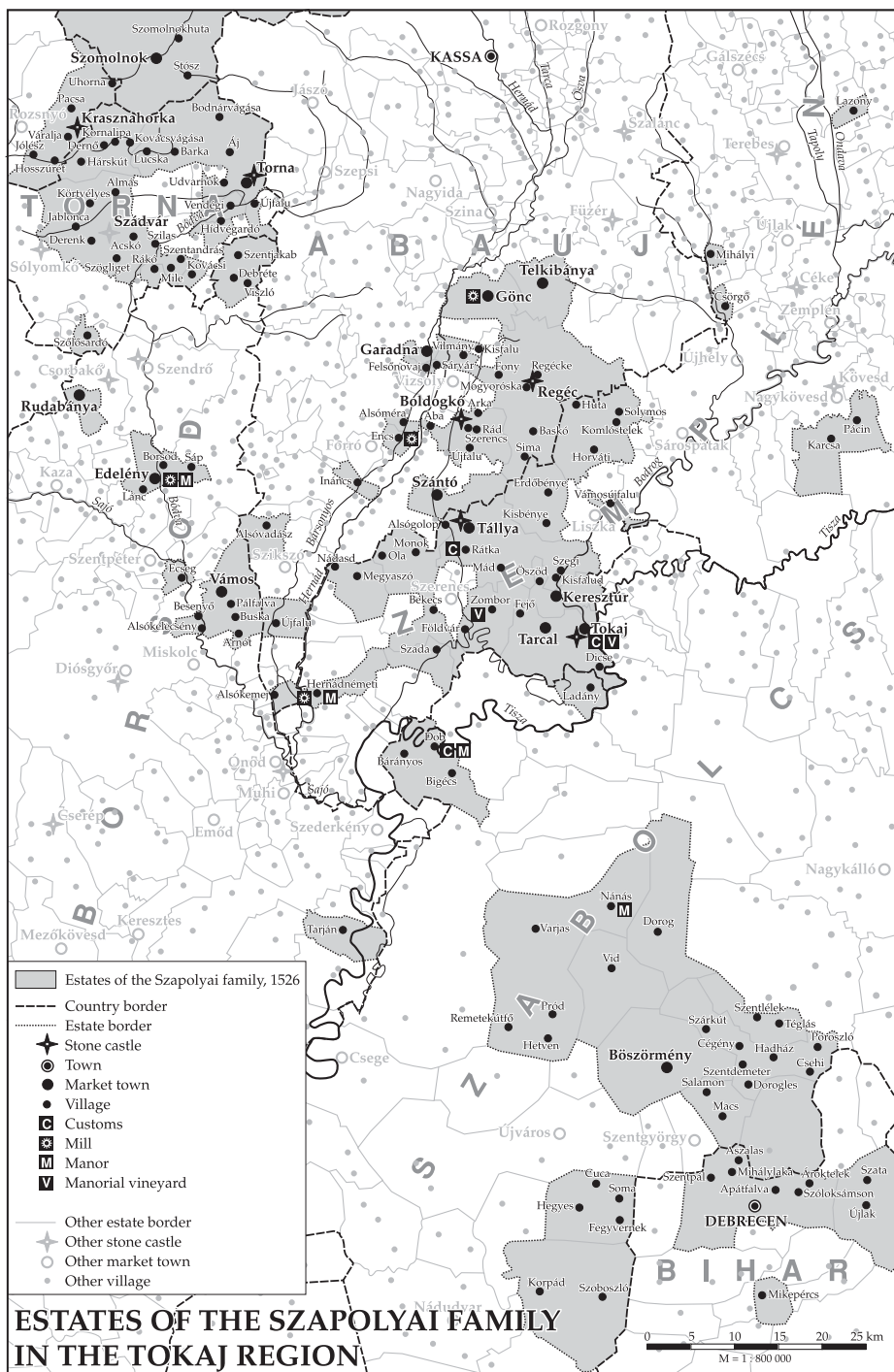
⁶⁷ Presumably, so-called ‘Tokaj barrels’ were used, which in late 16th century were 271.5 litre barrels. The amount of wine mentioned above was presumably 1,544.8 hectolitres: István Bogdán, *Magyarországi űr-, térfogat-, súly- és darabmértékek 1874-ig*. Budapest, 1991, 184.

Expenses	Florins	%
Ships	22.970	0.2
Employees of the manor	18.680	0.2
Necessities of the <i>familiares</i>	7.750	0.1
Other	375.50	3.5
Total	10,787.435	100.0
Balance	+369.585	3.4

The largest item of expenditure was the payment of the net income from the estates (i.e. the amount available after the administration costs and the wages of the *familiares* had been paid), sent to Trencsén or to other locations where the landlord was residing. The amount represented a total of more than 7,000 florins. In six out of the eight cases, the sum amounting to 5,997 florins were sent to Trencsén, while in two cases it was sent to John Szapolyai, sojourning in Buda: 500 florins were sent on the first occasion, and 550 on the second. 65 percent of the net income from revenues was thus forwarded directly to the administrative centre, Trencsén. This amount is rather considerable, as it included only the net income from the estates. The statement also includes data on the wages of the *familiares*, at the time called servitors, that is, the nobles in the service of the Szapolyai family. This constituted 18 percent of the expenditure of the estates.⁶⁸ The yearly salary of a Szapolyai *familiaris* was usually 75 florins. In addition, they received further allowances, but they were obliged to use these to keep additional mounted soldiers. The majority of servitors served in the Szapolyais' *banderia*, and, as mentioned earlier, in 1518 they accompanied their landlord to the diets of Tolna and Bács, and in 1519 to the diet of Buda. For this, they were given extra board wages: 185 florins for the diet of Tolna, 376 florins for the diet of Bács, and 145 florins for the diet of Buda. The salary of 25 florins paid to estate prosecutor (*director causarum dominarum*) Ferenc Csorbai has been included in the item showing the wages of servitors.

A substantial part of spending (7%) was allocated to the purchase of cattle and pigs. On the basis of the statement, it appears that the residence of Trencsén was supplied with livestock from this territory; all in all, 197 cattle and 108 pigs were driven to Trencsén on four occasions in 1518–1519. The livestock was purchased in the neighbourhood, either in Dob or in Nánás. On one occasion cattle were priced at 2 florins and 10 denarii, and on another at 2 florins and 97 denarii; on most occasions they cost 3 florins. Pigs were bought for either 1 florin and 40 denarii or 2 florins and 45 denarii. The cost of transporting the livestock to Trencsén was between 12 and 20 florins. The area also supplied

⁶⁸ András Kubinyi processed the data on Szapolyai's servitors and *familiares*, including the data in the aforementioned statement; cf. András Kubinyi, 'A Szapolyaiak és familiárisaik (szervitoraik)', in Bessenyei, Horváth and Tóth (eds.), *Tanulmányok Szapolyai Jánosról*, 169–194.



the garrison of Visegrád with grain and cattle, because John Szapolyai was also a guardian of the crown. This meant he had to provide for the guards of Visegrád, a task he shared with Péter Perényi, the other guardian of the crown of the time. During the period presented in the statement, 20 cattle and 50 pigs were bought and driven to Visegrád. On two additional occasions the guards were supplied with grains. A total of 168 florins and 55 denarii were allocated for supplies for the guards in Visegrád. Part of Trencsén's wine supply was also provided from Tokaj and its surroundings: 17 barrels, more than for any other castle, were sent after harvest to Trencsén; only 12 barrels were left in Tokaj, while 6 barrels were transported to Szepesvár.

Travel and other administrative costs were low. Mostly, the cost of travel by castellans and other servitors relating to the domains was covered, but a carriage with a coachman was also sent to Buda because John Szapolyai needed it, and to salt suppliers in Trencsén. This item also included the costs incurred by a stableman who took two horses to Pápa. We also find many other lines in the budget with small but interesting amounts.

It is apparent that the Szapolyais also invested in their domains: the amounts spent on contract workers employed to cultivate the vines around Tokaj, on the purchase and repair of barrels, on the maintenance of manors in Nánás and Keresztúr, on the construction of a mill in Hernádnémeti, and on the purchase of a ferry in Tokaj, all testify to this. Additional sums were spent on construction works: a mansion was built in Tokaj, and the fort in Regéc was expanded.

In the light of the total expenditure, the 7,000 florins sent to the landlord for his own use was a substantial income, which suggests well-organized domain administration, since the domain complex had substantially lower expenses than revenues in the period, so this period closed with a relatively positive financial outcome.

OUTLOOK: THE PROFITABILITY OF LARGE-SCALE ESTATES IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 16TH CENTURY

According to András Kubinyi, during the late Middle Ages “a large part of domain revenues was spent on administration” in Hungary, and “however large a baron's estates were, his revenues from it did not necessarily cover the costs of his lordly representation”.⁶⁹ Kubinyi believed that large-scale landholdings were saved from serious crises by the military reforms introduced in 1498–1500; the reason for this was that they allowed the landowner officially to receive part of the state war tax. Also, as pointed out by recent research, the extraordinary dues, the so-called *taxa extraordinaria*, which the landlord had the right to levy any time he pleased, also played a key role in this regard.⁷⁰

69 András Kubinyi, *Változások a középkor végi Magyarországon*. (História Könyvtár. Előadások a Történettudomány Műhelyeiből, 2.) Budapest, 1993, 15.

70 *Ibid.*, 16; Idem, ‘Politika és honvédelem a Jagellók Magyarországaiban’, *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 111 (2000) 397–416; Árpád Nógrády, ‘Taxa – extraordinaria? Széljegyzetek Kanizsai László

As we have seen, collection of the state war tax was indeed crucial for the Szapolyai family, as it constituted one third of its income. At the same time, when it comes to the domain complex of Tokaj, the extraordinary tax did not play a significant role. We have also seen that the estates provided considerable profits for their owner, and that the Szapolyai family was able to extract considerable funds from them.

Let us now have a look at how this issue affected other landlords with considerable domains. Below, I compare the data on the Szapolyai estates with those of other large-scale landholdings, namely the two large estates of Gyula and Vajdahunyad (Hunedoara), owned by George of Brandenburg-Ansbach-Kulmbach, who had acquired a large part of the Corvinus property, the middle-sized estate of Krapina in Varasd county, and the data on Ónod, property of the Perényi family, to be found in the specialist literature.⁷¹ I am going to examine the cash inflow from these domains, and its ratio to the income from war tax, extraordinary dues (*taxa*), other seignorial incomes and the sale of wine. Regarding expenses, I am going to examine how much money was spent on *familiares*, servitors, military matters, administration and maintenance of estates, so as to find out whether landlords were able to obtain significant incomes from their estates and whether or not the amount they earned was actually spent in their domains. I am also trying to establish whether or not the Szapolyais were careful owners of their estates or if they could have managed their property in a better way.

The aforementioned estates of George of Brandenburg generated the following income: on the basis of account statements from 1518, 1521 and 1522, the average yearly income of Vajdahunyad was 2,820 florins; between 1524 and 1527 the income of the domain in Gyula was 5,157 florins; between 1515 and 1517 the average yearly income of Krapina was 332 florins. This gives a total of 8,309 florins. This amount is close in magnitude to the Szapolyai family's income earned in Tokaj (11,157 florins). The income obtained by the Perényi family from their domain in Ónod was a mere 1,065 florins in 1518. The amount of war tax transferred by the king to the landlord made up a significant part of these incomes everywhere: 22 percent in Vajdahunyad, 24 percent in Gyula, 60 percent in Krapina, and only 11 percent in Ónod; in the case of the Szapolyai estates it was 32 percent. The extraordinary dues amounted to 11 percent in Vajdahunyad,

kapuvári-sárvári számadáskönyvének margójára', in István Lengvári (ed.), *In memoriam Barta Gábor. Tanulmányok Barta Gábor emlékére*. Pécs, 1996, 125–148; Idem, 'A földesúri pénzáradék nagysága és adóterhe a késő középkori Magyarországon', *Századok* 136 (2002) 451–468.

71 On the account statements for Vajdahunyad in 1521 and 1522, see Iosif Pataki, *Domeniul Hunedoara la începutul secolului al XVI-lea. Studiu și documente*. (Biblioteca Istorică, 39.) București, 1973, 47–48. The information on the accounts of Gyula for the period between 1524 and 1527 was processed on the basis of the following extract: Endre Veress, *Gyula város oklevéltára, 1313–1800*. Budapest, 1938, 116–121: No. 138. Krapina: MNL OL DF 267246. More recently on the economy of the Brandenburg estates: István Kenyeres, 'A gyulai uradalom a Brandenburgi-birtokok rendszerében', in Julianna Erika Héjja and Ádám Erdész (eds.), *Város, uradalom, vár. Tanulmányok Gyula 15–18. századi történetéből*. Gyula, 2017, 33–51. Ónod: based on Szabó, *A magyar mezőgazdaság*, table 64.

25 percent in Gyula, and 28 percent in Ónod. No extraordinary dues were levied at this time in Krapina, and on the Szapolyai domains they were negligible. The census and the other seignorial taxes constituted 67 percent of the income in Vajdahunyad, 51 percent in Gyula, 40 percent in Krapina, 31 percent in Ónod, and 14 percent of the incomes on the Szapolyais' estates. Wine sales were found only in Ónod, and there these constituted 30 percent of the income, while on the Szapolyai estates they constituted 53 percent of the income. The latter fact shows that production on the Szapolyai estates was characteristic of the early modern period. The Szapolyai family knew that wine sales, that is, supplying public houses with wine, was the most profitable business in this period. Since the extent to which tenant peasants were allowed to sell wine was regulated by the landlords as they saw fit, a stable and considerable permanent cash income could thus be secured. The main source of income from wine sales during the late Middle Ages and the early modern period was the tithe, which the landlords could, on their own estates, collect on behalf of the church.⁷² We have information that the Szapolyai family also collected the tithe on its estates.⁷³

We know the following details of the expenses of the estates: in Vajdahunyad, 37 percent of the expenses was used in 1522 on the wages of the castellans, the soldiery and the servitors; in 1524–1525 wages constituted 25 percent of expenses in Gyula, and 50 percent in Krapina. 1,297 florins were sent to George of Brandenburg from Vajdahunyad in 1522, an amount that made up 40 percent of the expenses, and in 1524–1525 he was sent 1,900 florins, which is 33 percent of the expenses from Gyula. True, these sums differed both in magnitude and proportion from those for the Szapolyai estates, it is nevertheless apparent that larger estates also proved profitable elsewhere, and large-scale landholders were able to 'produce' significant cash in excess of the administration and maintenance costs as well as of the wages of local *familiars*.

THE SZAPOLYAI FAMILY'S INCOME PRIOR TO THE BATTLE OF MOHÁCS

How much money could the Szapolyais expect from their estates each year? Due to a lack of sources, no answer can be given to this question, but estimates, albeit cautious ones, can be made. It is important to stress that the landlord's position of power was determined by the number of his castles, castle domains and servitors. The provision of these and the wages of the *familiars* could be financed from the income generated by the local domains. The amount retained after the administration costs and wages had been paid could freely be used by the landowner. As we have seen, the Szapolyais had a yearly income of 7,000 florins that accrued from their estates around Tokaj. The profitability of their estates in Transdanubia is revealed by another piece of data, according

72 For a summary, see Kenyeres, *Uradalmak és végvárok*, 384–401; Idem, 'The Economy of Castle Estates', 414–416.

73 Reference has been made to Duchess Hedwig of Teschen's order regarding the estates in Tokaj and Tállya, see note 61.

to which, in 1520, the castellan of Pápa handed over 3,210 florins of the income generated in 1517–1518 from the castle domains of Pápa, Ugod, Csesznek, the provostry of Mórchida and the abbeys of Kapornak and Zirc to Duchess Hedwig of Teschen.⁷⁴ The Szapolyais were thus able to obtain a net income of up to 10,000 florins from these two administrative centres and 13 castle domains. Assuming that this income was accrued from one half or one third of their estates, in the 1520s and 1530s the Szapolyais could, without any further ado, expect to have at least an additional 20,000–30,000 florins a year for their private purposes. To the best of our knowledge, this amount is likely to have amounted to 10 percent of the country's revenues, so it was no small income.⁷⁵ Again, it should be pointed out that the amount may have been even larger still, and that we have to add to it the servitors' wages, which, based on the account statements from Tokaj, could have come to an additional 6,000–8,000 florins. At the time, only prelates had an income similar to this: according to a report by a Venetian envoy, the archbishop of Esztergom could expect an income of 25,000–35,000 florins, while the bishops of Várad, Pécs and Transylvania were likely to have an income of about 24,000–26,000 florins each.⁷⁶ At the same time we know that between 1488 and 1490 the average yearly income of the archbishop of Esztergom was in fact 17,700 florins, and that this amount was consumed by the archiepiscopal court, the servitors' wages and their attire; the income of the bishop of Eger in 1500–1501 was 'only' 16,000 florins.⁷⁷ It follows that the income of 20,000–30,000 florins that the Szapolyai family could freely dispose of was indeed among the highest at the time.⁷⁸ The economic strength of the Szapolyai family is demonstrated by its ability to pay 100,000 gold florins as a betrothal gift to King Sigismund the Old of Poland, when he married Borbála (Barbara) Szapolyai.⁷⁹ The income earned enabled the family to create an economic foundation for hospitality expenses, domain acquisitions, securities and loan transactions.⁸⁰

74 Szapolyai oklt. 434: No. 507.

75 See note 37 above on the income of the Jagiellonians.

76 Erik Fügedi, 'A XV. századi magyar püspökök', in Idem, *Kolduló barátok, polgárok, nemesek. Tanulmányok a magyar középkorról*. Budapest, 1981, 97–99.

77 Erik Fügedi, 'Az esztergomi érsekség gazdálkodása a XV. század végén', in Idem, *Kolduló barátok*, 114–237; Péter E. Kovács, *Estei Hippolit püspök egri számadáskönyvei, 1500–1508*. Eger, 1992, 7–27; Kenyeres, *Uradalmak és végvárak*, 523, 545–553.

78 True, it is not certain that prior to Mohács the Szapolyais collected the most money from their estates. King Louis II's young wife, Mary of Austria, may have had a yearly income of 40,000–45,000 florins from her reginal estates, to which the revenues of the salt chamber of Körmöcbánya (Kremnica) and Máramaros (Maramureş) have to be added. Kenyeres, *Uradalmak és végvárak*, 64–69; Idem, 'Verwaltung und Erträge von Königin Marias', 184–191.

79 Mária Rekettyés, 'Adalékok Szapolyai Borbála lengyel királyné trónrajutásának előzményeihez és uralkodásához', in *Publicationes Universitatis Miskolcensis. Sectio Philosophica* 9:3 (2004) 125.

80 Sources reveal that the Szapolyais also suffered from short- or long-term liquidity problems, because of which they had to take up loans (e.g. John Szapolyai took a loan of 1,000 florins from Transylvanian bishop Ferenc Várdai on 14 October 1519: Szapolyai oklt. 431: No. 502). True, their domains were suitable security for their loan transactions. E.g. in 1521 John

SUMMARY

Prior to the Battle of Mohács, John Szapolyai and his brother György were the owners of the most significant complex of estates in the Kingdom of Hungary. The immense stock of estates was accumulated in the course of the great careers of Imre and István, the Szapolyai family's first generation, mostly thanks to the patronage of King Matthias. The two younger Szapolyais, John and György, hardly added anything to the acquisitions of their uncle and father, but they strengthened the family's positions. In the case of both the first and second generation, the Szapolyai brothers acted together to acquire additional estates, and they maintained a joint residence, which demonstrates a strong bond within the family. Excluding Transylvania, the vast stock of estates was spread far and wide, from the country's north-eastern edge to its most extreme tip in the south-west. Yet, by way of the royal estates assigned for the term of office (*pro honore*) as voivode of Transylvania, John Szapolyai also obtained significant bases in Transylvania. The possession of castle domains provided the Szapolyai family with major military power and a substantial income, while through their *familiars* the family was able to exert a dominant influence on the more densely populated areas of the country. By the standards of the era, they implemented modern economic governance on their estates, they invested in their domains and used the income opportunities available to provide them with substantial cash reserves. This all put them in a position similar to that of the Hunyadi family during the succession wars after the death of King Ladislaus V. After the Battle of Mohács, John Szapolyai, far the richest and most powerful noble in the realm, was, thanks to his economic situation, ready to take power.

Szapolyai had to pledge the castle of Torna to György Szatmári, bishop of Pécs, due to an unpaid debt: *Szapolyai oklt.* 450–451: No. 530.

APPENDIX

LIST OF THE CASTLE DOMAINS POSSESSED BY THE SZAPOLYAIS¹

Name of castle	County	Register of the Szapolyai charters	Engel: Map	EK	Other
Árva	Árva	x	x	x	
Bajmóc	Nyitra	x	x	x	
Barkó	Zemplén				x ²
Boldogkő	Abaúj	x	x	x	
Csesznek	Veszprém	x	x		
Csetnek ³	Gömör			x	
Debrecen ⁴	Bihar			x	
Dunajec	Szepes	x	x	x	
Ebenfurt	Lower Austria	x			
Edelény ⁵	Borsod			x	
Gölnic	Szepes				x ⁶
Kasza	Trencsén	x	x	x	
Késmárk	Szepes			x	
Kóvár	Pozsega	x	x		
Krasznahorka	Gömör	x	x		
Ilcs ⁷	Valkó			x	
Illava (Leva)	Trencsén	x	x	x	
Lietava	Trencsén	x	x	x	
Lippa	Arad		x	x	
Likava	Liptó	x	x	x	
Liptóújvár	Liptó	x	x	x	
Murány	Gömör		x	x	
Németi (Nempti)	Valkó		x	x	
Ozdin	Nógrád	x	x		
Palocsa	Sáros	x	x	crossed out ⁸	
Pápa	Veszprém	x	x	x	
Pelsőc	Gömör			x ⁹	
Rákos	Gömör	x	x	x	
Regéc	Abaúj	x	x	x	
Richnó	Szepes		x	x	
Salgó	Nógrád	x	x	x	

Name of castle	County	Register of the Szapolyai charters	Engel: Map	EK	Other
Sáros	Sáros		x		
Solymos	Arad		x	x	
Szatmár	Szatmár				x ¹⁰
Szádvár	Torna	x	x	x	
Szepesvár	Szepes	x	x	x	
Szklabinya	Turóc	x	x	x	
Sztrecsény	Trencsén		x	x	
Szúcsa	Trencsén		x	x	
Tállya	Zemplén	x	x	x	
Tiszovc ¹¹	Pozsega				x
Tokaj	Zemplén	x	x	x	
Torna	Torna	x	x	x	
Trencsén	Trencsén	x	x	x	
Ugod	Veszprém	x	x		
Unac	Knin county	x			
Vámos	Borsod			x	
Verőce ¹²	Verőce	x			
Vöröskő	Pozsony		x		

Notes to the Appendix

- 1 I have marked the source for each castle included in the compilation: Szapolyai charter register = MNL OL E 148 Neo-regestrata acta Fasc. 1596. No. 16; Engel: Map = Engel, *Magyarország a középkor végén*. EK = Egyetemi könyvtár. Kézirattár, Litterae et epistolae originales, No. 244. This latter source is likely to have been written around 1527–28, since it includes the castles occupied by King Ferdinand's army. Likava, (Liptó-)Újvár and Szepesvár are marked as already being in Pekry's hands. Leva (Illava) was currently under siege. We know that Hans Katzianer, King Ferdinánd I's captain, occupied Szepesvár in early April 1528, while Likava and Liptóújvár were at the same time taken by his general Lajos Pekry: István Kenyeres, 'A trencsényi vár a XVI. században', *Fons* 2 (1995) 7–8. I hereby thank Richard Horváth for helping me compile the register of Szapolyai castles. The sources for the data featured under the heading "other" are shown in the notes.
- 2 Csánki, *Magyarország*, I. 333.
- 3 Csetnek and Pelsőc (Gömör county) was originally owned by the Bebek family at this time; we do not know of any ownership on the part of the Szapolyai family.
- 4 Mention of *Curia et castellum* from 1484: Csánki, *Magyarország*, I. 595.
- 5 Edelény (Borsod county), as a separate domain unit, belonged to the castle domain centre of Tokaj; a minor fortified mansion may have been there, near today's castle. Engel and Csánki, *ibid.*, 165. mention it as a market town.
- 6 Its castle is mentioned by Csánki, *Magyarország*, I. 248. Engel features it as a market town. Data on the ownership of the Szapolyai family from the year 1502: *Szapolyai oklt.* 262–263: No. 295.

- 7 This is Ilcs, in Valkó county, which is featured as a village by Engel, while Csánki, *Magyarország*, II. does not mention it among the settlements of the county. It must have had a fort, as suggested by the fact that István Bárdi, John Szapolyai's *familiaris*, was castellan of the forts of Ilcs and Némethi in Valkó county: Kubinyi, 'A Szapolyaiak és familiárisaik', 189.
- 8 On the copy of the EK the name of Palocsa was rightly crossed out, because that castle was handed over by the Szapolyais to Mihály Horváth of Lomnica around 1505–1507, in exchange for the castle of Árva: *Szapolyai okl.* 269–270: No. 305; Neumann, 'A gróf és a herceg', 422–423.
- 9 See note 83.
- 10 Data on the castle of Szatmár is provided from 1460 by Csánki, *Magyarország*, I. 467. On the problems concerning the construction of the fort (castle) of Szatmár, see Horváth, 'Szatmár és a Szapolyaiak', 345, 352.
- 11 Csánki, *Magyarország*, II. 387, 394. The Szapolyai family's possession of Tiszovc is evidenced only by the data from 1455 published here; as yet, we have no other data on subsequent ownership. Engel refers to Tiszovc in 1470 as a village in the possession of the Tiszovci (Arleus) family.
- 12 The ownership of Verőce, mentioned in the Szapolyai charter register (*Littera Mathie regis quod idem donavit Emerico de Zapolya castrum Wrewcze cum oppido et possessionibus alys in comitatu de Werewcze Emerico et Stephano de Zapolya et heredibus eorum*) is highly questionable, as according to Engel it belonged first to the Marcali family between 1448 and 1459, and later to the Ellerbach family (1459–c.1467), and to Miklós Csupor (c.1467–1474), and finally to the Bánffy family of Alsólindva (from 1474). According to Richárd Horváth, after the death of László Marcali, Matthias granted it to his son John Corvinus, and subsequently it was given to the Bánffy family: Horváth, 'Szatmár és a Szapolyaiak', 355: note 57.

Norbert C. Tóth*

THE ANTI-OTTOMAN STRUGGLES OF VOIVODE JOHN SZAPOLYAI OF TRANSYLVANIA (1510–1526)

INTRODUCTION

To date, no exhaustive study has been made of the role of John Szapolyai, voivode of Transylvania, in the anti-Ottoman struggles and the protection of Hungary's border. In the absence of basic research, the present study cannot offer a comprehensive analysis, either. So this work therefore provides a contrasting picture: on the one hand it gives a summary of the specialist literature written on the known and researched military campaigns (to Bulgaria and Wallachia). On the other hand, it presents the occurrences of one particular event, the defeat of Zsarnó (Žrnov, Ottoman Havale/Güzelcehisar, today Avala, part of Belgrade), through an exploration of all the relevant source material, thus hinting at some future research opportunities. John Szapolyai's undertakings in 1512–1513 (currently the subject of research) and his policy of 1524–1526 are only mentioned in passing. Furthermore, I have not examined the general military situation, the plans of the Hungarian and Ottoman military leadership, the espionage activity of the two parties, or the situation created by the news received; I present an overview of the armistice and peace agreements of the examined period only in as much as this is strictly necessary.

THE FIRST YEARS (1510–1513)

On 8 November 1510 (or a couple of days earlier) King Vladislaus II of Hungary appointed the hardly twenty-year-old¹ John Szapolyai as voivode of Transylvania.² John, count (Hung. *ispán*, Lat. *comes*) of Szepes, had received an excellent

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1 Tibor Neumann, 'Dózsa legyőzője – Szapolyai János erdélyi vajdasága (1510–1526)', *Székhelyföld* 18:11 (2014) 95.

2 Zsigmond Jakó, 'Az erdélyi vajdák kinevezéséről', in Idem, *Társadalom, egyház, művelődés. Tanulmányok Erdély történelméhez*. Budapest, 1997, 84; *Arch.* I. 88.

education; even though, due to his age, he had no experience of battle, I would not call him incompetent, because in 1506, during the wars against King of the Romans Maximilian I of Habsburg, he fought alongside palatine Imre Perényi and captain general of the Lower Parts and *ispán* of Temes Józsa Somi, as the third captain general.³ The position of voivode of Transylvania became vacant upon the resignation of Count Péter Szentgyörgyi (who also held the office of judge royal), who, due to his illness, was unable to remain in office as it entailed military duties.⁴ At the same time the other border protection commander, the *ispán* of Temes (*comes comitatus Temesiensis*), was also appointed, although the post had by then been vacant for two years because of the death of Józsa Somi. This position was obtained⁵ by István Báthori of Ecsed, nephew of a previous voivode of Transylvania of the same name.⁶

Neither the time of the appointments nor the identical family background of the two men can be regarded as a coincidence. The former was motivated by the military situation: the seven-year peace treaty with Sultan Bayezid (1481–1512) had expired, and in 1510 only an armistice agreement could be negotiated with him. Furthermore, neither did news about his heir, Selim, augur well for the Hungarian military leadership.⁷ On the other hand, paying frontier soldiers serving at border castles and occasionally employed mercenaries was the task of the current *ispán*-captain general or of the voivode, who made the payments retrospectively. This means that military commanders able to perform these duties ‘with their own resources’ had to be found for both positions, or more correctly for all three, if we also include the region of the Dalmatian-Croatian-Slavonian banate.⁸ By this time, the Szapolyai family had without any doubt become the wealthiest family in the country, preceded only by the king; there were approximately 10,000 tax-paying tenant plots on their domains.⁹ The

3 Neumann, ‘Dózsa legyőzője’, 95; Dezső Szabó, ‘Magyar országgyűlések 1505–1508’, *Századok* 42 (1908) 711.

4 Bálint Lakatos, ‘Haag, Mrakes, Cuspinianus és Helianus. A német és francia követek tárgyalásai a magyar elittel az 1510-es tatai országgyűlés idején’, in *Komárom-Esztergom Megyei Múzeumok Közleményei* 17. Tata, 2011, 234.

5 Báthori István, judge royal (1471–1493) and voivode of Transylvania (1479–1493): *Arch. I.* 87; Richárd Horváth and Tibor Neumann, *Ecsedi Bátori István. Egy katonabáró életpályája 1458–1493.* (Magyar Történelmi Emlékek, Értekezések) Budapest, 2012, 48.

6 Norbert C. Tóth, ‘Bátori (III.) István politikai pályafutásának kezdete (1503–1511)’, in Sarolta Szabó and Norbert C. Tóth (eds.), *Az ecsedi Báthoriak a XV–XVII. században.* (Báthori István Múzeum Kiadványai, 34.) Nyírbátor, 2012, 134; *Arch. I.* 124–125; Norbert C. Tóth, ‘Incepturile carierei politice a lui Ștefan Bátori al III-lea (1503–1511)’, *Banatica* 24:2 (2014) 324.

7 Pál Fodor and Géza Dávid, ‘Hungarian–Ottoman Peace Negotiations in 1512–1514’, in Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (eds.), *Hungarian–Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Relations in the Age of Süleyman the Magnificent.* Budapest, 1994, 10–16.

8 On the turbulent situation in the banate, see Tamás Pálosfalvi, ‘Bajnai Both András és a szlavón bánág. Szlavónia, Európa és a törökök, 1504–1513’, in Tibor Neumann and György Rácz (eds.), *Honoris causa. Tanulmányok Engel Pál emlékére.* (Társadalom- és Művelődéstörténeti Tanulmányok 40; *Analecta Mediaevalia*, III.) Budapest, Piliscsaba, 2009, 251–300; *Arch. I.* 98–100.

9 Pál Engel, ‘A magyar világi nagybirtok megoszlása a XV. században’, in *Idem, Honor, vár, ispánság. Válogatott tanulmányok.* (Millenniumi Magyar Történelem, Historikusok) Selected,

second and the third places on our imaginary podium were occupied by György, István and András Báthori of Ecsed, with approximately 8,000 tax-paying tenant plots under their command.¹⁰ To this we can add that both newly appointed captains were about the same age: as we have seen, John may have been born in 1490 or 1491, and István a couple of years earlier, sometime between 1485 and 1490,¹¹ so they must also have been on good terms because of their age.

Ever since their appointment, the two commanders had carried out their border protection tasks in constant cooperation.¹² They began harmonizing their military activities as early as autumn 1511, when Szapolyai was sojourning in Southern Transylvania, demonstrably ready for action,¹³ while we can only suspect that Báthori was, in all likelihood, within the territory under his command, since a general mobilisation had been declared along the southern frontier.¹⁴ The reason for the deployment of military forces in the region was that the one-year armistice agreement had expired in August.¹⁵

In the autumn of 1512, the Ottoman army launched a massive attack along the entire front.¹⁶ The underlying reasons can be traced back to spring of the same year: in order to extend the armistice agreement, the Hungarian ruler sent envoys to Sultan Bayezid. By the time the Hungarian delegation arrived in Istanbul, however, the sultan had been deposed (and later even poisoned) by his son Selim. Since Selim's intention was to eliminate his brother Ahmed, who himself was also aspiring to the throne, he offered peace rather than a truce. Yet the Hungarian delegation insisted on keeping to its original plans and therefore returned to Buda without having reached an agreement.¹⁷ To emphasize his dominant position at the meeting table, Selim ordered the district governors along the border to disturb the Hungarian defences, which, unexpectedly, resulted

edited and with notes by Enikő Csukovits. Budapest, 2003, 15, 52; Neumann, 'Dózsa legyőzője', 93–94.

10 Norbert C. Tóth, 'Az ecsedi Báthory család birtokgyarapítási törekvései a XV. század második felében', in Alice Horváth (ed.), *Báthory Miklós váci püspök (1474–1506) emlékezete*. Vác, 2007, 188–189.

11 Norbert C. Tóth, 'Ki kicsoda az ecsedi Bátor családban? A Bátor család ecsedi ágának tagjai 1377–1541', *Szabolcs-Szatmár-Beregi Szemle* 44 (2009) 27.

12 Cf. Norbert C. Tóth, 'Egy legenda nyomában. Szapolyai János és ecsedi Bátor István viszonya 1526 előtt', *Századok* 146 (2012) 450ff.

13 See the letter dated 5 September 1511 (*Szapolyai oklt.* 324–326). See also MNL OL DL 59994 (adjournment of the case due to the expedition against the Ottomans). John Szapolyai sojourned in Beszterce (Bistrița) on 3 September, in Torda on 11 October, in Kolozsvár on 11 November, in Szászsebes on 21 December, and once again in Kolozsvár on 28 December (*Szapolyai oklt.* 326–328).

14 See MNL OL DF 217089, 265885.

15 Fodor and Dávid, 'Hungarian–Ottoman Peace Negotiations', 10–12, 15.

16 Cf. Pálosfalvi, 'Bajnai Both', 291–293. For more details on the occurrences, see Gábor Mikó, 'Kísérlet a szreberniki bánág visszahódítására 1513-ban (Törökellenes hadjáratok lehetőségei a 16. század elején)', *Századok* 154 (2020) 577–620.

17 Fodor and Dávid, 'Hungarian–Ottoman Peace Negotiations', 19–20.

in one troop occupying the castles in the banate of Szrebernik (Srebrenik).¹⁸ At approximately the same time, the *bey* of Semendire (Szendrő/Smederevo) invaded the territory of the captaincy general of the Lower Parts, but the *ispán* of Temes, István Báthori, defeated the Ottoman troops near Illyéd (Ilidia) on 12 October.¹⁹ In the meanwhile, John Szapolyai secured Transylvania with his troops, as he had been tasked to do.²⁰

At the diet held at Epiphany the following year (6 January), the decision was taken to launch a campaign and retake the banate of Szrebernik.²¹ Therefore, and as a consequence of news coming from the Ottoman Empire, almost the entire Hungarian élite was at the southern frontier in the summer (their troops had been there earlier, at the beginning of the year). Palatine Imre Perényi made arrangements on 11 July from the fort of Pekrec (Pakrac),²² while John Szapolyai sent his orders to the Saxons from the city of Szeged on 4 July. In his letter, he called on them to gather with their armies near Alvinc (Vințu de Jos), as the Ottomans were preparing to attack the fort of Szabács (Šabac).²³ This was not the voivode's only task: he was assigned by King Vladislaus II to renovate the fort and the city wall of Pét (Dubova) in the banate of Szörény (Severin). On 13 July the king therefore asked the Saxons to send some craftsmen there to carry out these works.²⁴ In the meantime, Szapolyai left Szeged, and, via Csanád (Cenad), where he sojourned on 16 July,²⁵ he went on to Déva (Deva).²⁶ In August, the Ottoman forces made an incursion from Bosnia, but

18 András Kubinyi, 'A szávaszentdemeter-nagyolaszi győzelem 1523-ban', in Idem, *Nándorfehérvártól Mohácsig. A Mátyás- és a Jagelló-kor hadtörténete*. Budapest, 2007, 123; Idem, 'The Battle of Szávaszentdemeter–Nagyolaszi (1523). Ottoman Advance and Hungarian Defence on the Eve of Mohács', in Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (eds.), *Ottomans, Hungarians, and Habsburgs in Central Europe. The Military Confines in the Era of Ottoman Conquest*. (The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage, 20.) Leiden, Boston, Köln, 2000, 71–88; Mikó, 'Kísérlet a szreberniki bántáság visszahódítására'.

19 Fodor and Dávid, 'Hungarian–Ottoman Peace Negotiations', 17–20; András Kubinyi, 'Budai Kakas János és történeti feljegyzései', in Idem, *Főpapok, egyházi intézmények és vallásosság a középkori Magyarországon* (METEM Könyvek, 22.) Budapest, 1999, 211; Ferenc Szakály, 'Nándorfehérvár 1521-es ostromához', *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* N. S. 25:4 (1978) 488–489.

20 Neumann, 'Dózsa legyőzője', 99; cf. MNL OL DF 255177 (7 October 1512). On 25 December, John Szapolyai was still in Kolozsvár (*Szapolyai oklt.* 333). Sometime around Christmas, a letter of command was written in his name in Torda (MNL OL DL 30999).

21 Gábor Mikó, 'Ismeretlen országgyűlési emlék a Jagelló-korból. Adatok az 1507 és 1514 közötti országgyűlések történetéhez, valamint Werbőczy Hármaskönyvének elkészültéhez', *Történelmi Szemle* 56 (2014) 468.

22 MNL OL DF 232380; cf. Pálosfalvi, 'Bajnai Both', 299.

23 *Szapolyai oklt.* 337; Neumann, 'Dózsa legyőzője', 99.

24 MNL OL DF 245726 (*Commissio propria domini regis*).

25 *Szapolyai oklt.* 338 (16 July 1513).

26 *Szapolyai oklt.* 339 (30 August 1513). On 8 August (MNL OL DF 277734), 1 September (András W. Kovács and Antal Valentiny, *A Wass család cegei levéltára*. [Az Erdélyi Nemzeti Múzeum Levéltára, 3.] Kolozsvár, 2006, No. 600) and 15 September (MNL OL DL 30537), charters are issued in his name in Déva, but they may have been issued by his protonotary. This is reinforced by the fact that his vice-voivode, Miklós Túróci, also signed some documents there (e.g. Kovács and Valentiny, *A Wass család*, No. 599).

the newly appointed Dalmatian-Croatian-Slavonian *ban*,²⁷ Péter Beriszló, bishop of Veszprém, inflicted a serious defeat on them at Dubica (today in Bosnia and Herzegovina). Meanwhile John Szapolyai, voivode of Transylvania, started besieging the fort of Szendrő, with the clear intention of bringing relief to the *ban*.²⁸ After the ‘war season’ and the campaign ended, the voivode returned home, or better to say to Buda, and did not arrive back in his province until the end of the year.²⁹ (See the map on the following page.)

THE BULGARIAN CAMPAIGN (1514)

John Szapolyai most likely celebrated New Year’s Eve in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), from where, at the end of February, he travelled to Székelyvásárhely (Marosvásárhely/Târgu Mureş) to administer justice at the court of the Székelys. After the meeting drew to a close, he travelled to Görgény (Gurghiu), where he spent two weeks before continuing his trip to Szászsebes (Sebeş) in southern Transylvania.³⁰ Pursuant to the war plan adopted at the diet of 1514,³¹ and after he had held up the Ottoman envoy on his journey back home from Buda, he is likely to have set off to catch up with his troops.³² In Tibor Neumann’s apposite words, we “in essence know nothing” of the raid,³³ but, thanks to some indirect information, certain things at least are clear. The army led by Szapolyai is likely to have crossed the border in the middle of May. Since the campaign came to be coined as ‘Bulgarian’, they must have entered the territory of the Ottoman Empire at Szörény, and, following the line of the river Danube, they may have reached the area around the castle of Vidin. Transylvanian troops did not take part in the raid, as it did not concern the defence of the province, but the *banderia* controlled by prelates, barons, and also by counties (possibly in the Lower Parts) did do so (this would also explain the initial successes of the rebelling troops led by György Dózsa in May and June).³⁴ In a letter written immediately after his return, Miklós Túróci, deputy voivode of Transylvania, called the raid a “lucky tour”,³⁵ and there is no reason for doubt in this respect: the aim of the incursion into Ottoman territory may clearly have been to cause a disturbance, and to highlight the Hungarian peace proposal made to Sultan

27 *Arch.* I. 100.

28 Pálosfalvi, ‘Bajnai Both’, 298; Fodor and Dávid, ‘Hungarian–Ottoman Peace Negotiations’, 26.

29 Tibor Neumann, ‘Bulgária–Erdély–Temesvár. Szapolyai János és a parasztháború’, in Norbert C. Tóth and Tibor Neumann (eds.), *Keresztesekből lázadók. Tanulmányok 1514 Magyarországról.* (Magyar Történelmi Emlékek, Értekezések) Budapest, 2015, 110.

30 *Ibid.*, 110; Norbert C. Tóth, ‘Az 1514. márciusi országgyűlés. Politikatörténeti események Magyarországon a parasztháború kitöréséig’, in C. Tóth and Neumann (eds.), *Keresztesekből lázadók*, 44–45.

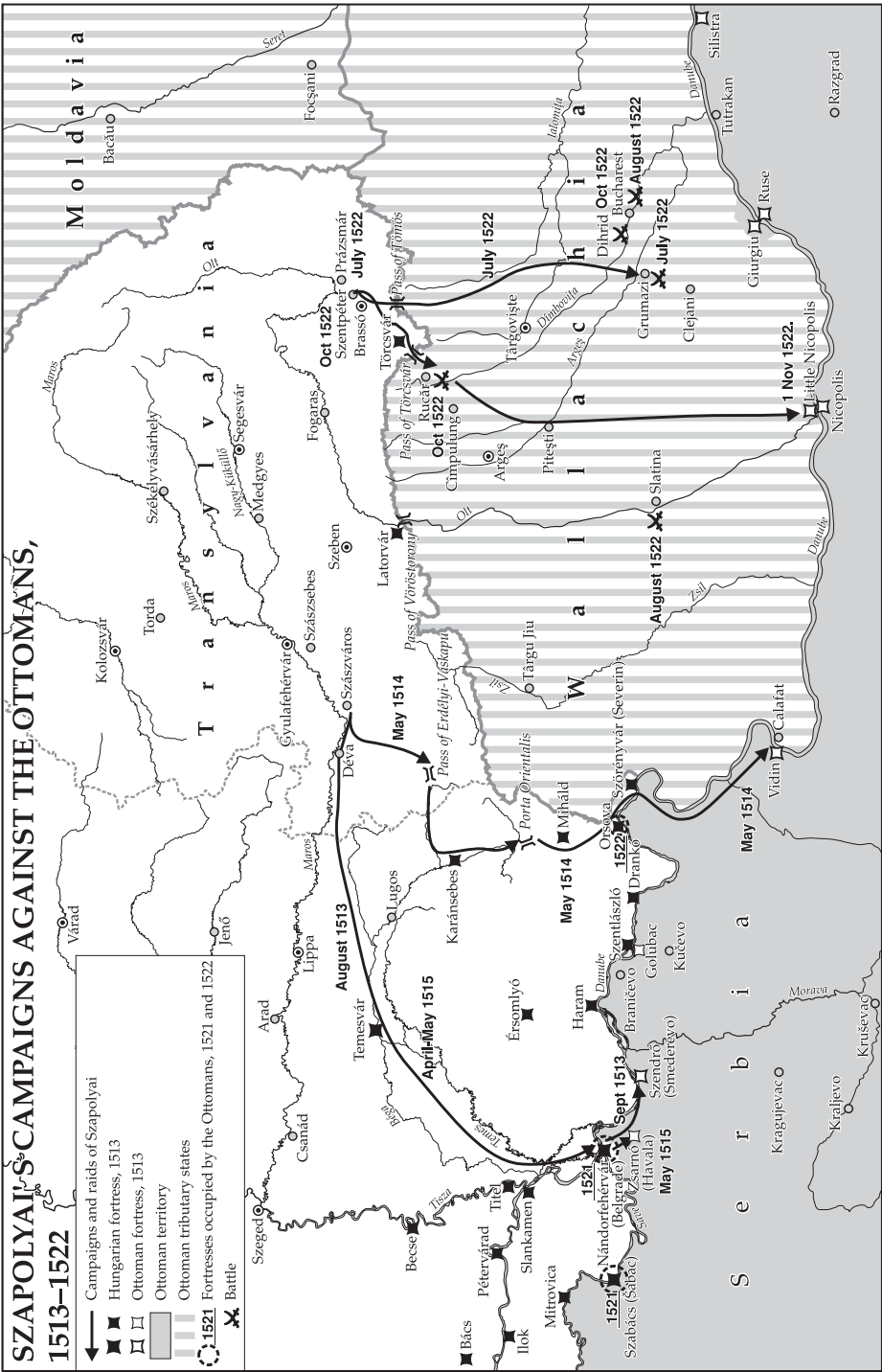
31 On this, see C. Tóth, ‘Az 1514. márciusi országgyűlés’, 63–69.

32 *Ibid.*, 66.

33 Neumann, ‘Bulgária–Erdély–Temesvár’, 110.

34 *Ibid.*, 111–112.

35 *Ibid.*, 111: note 41.



Selim, who at the time was heading to Asia Minor.³⁶ By the time the army, led by John Szapolyai, returned to Karánsebes (Caransebeș), the situation in Hungary had changed substantially, and the military manoeuvres planned at the diet were cancelled.³⁷

THE SIEGE OF ZSARNÓ (1515)³⁸

In December 1514, John Szapolyai, voivode of Transylvania and royal captain general,³⁹ was already back in Kolozsvár, where he remained until February 1515, presumably to deal with the consequences of the uprising.⁴⁰ He subsequently left Transylvania, and in mid-February we find him on his own domains in Lippa (Lipova),⁴¹ from where he travelled to the territory of the banate of Szörény: one of his letters from the first half of March was written in Lugos (Lugoj).⁴² The next reliable item of evidence on Szapolyai's whereabouts is from 21 May, when he was once again in Szászsebes, Transylvania.⁴³ The first information on what happened between the two dates can be found in the will of Imre Török, *ban* of Nándorfehérvár (Belgrade), dated 1 May: according to the will, Imre Török dictated his final wish while he was preparing for a campaign against the Ottomans.⁴⁴ That the campaign did indeed take place is proved by several sources: the first of these, which also gives an account of the voivode's defeat, is a letter dated 15 May and sent by King Sigismund of Poland to his wife Borbála, John Szapolyai's sister.⁴⁵ The second can be found in Imre Perényi's letter of command from 13 June,⁴⁶ while the third is also a letter of command, but written by John Szapolyai on 3 August.⁴⁷ Unfortunately, our charter sources fail us in

36 *Ibid.*, 112, 152; C. Tóth, 'Az 1514. márciusi országgyűlés', 65.

37 Neumann, 'Bulgária–Erdély–Temesvár', 151.

38 For a summary on the campaign, see Tamás Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács. A History of Ottoman–Hungarian Warfare, 1389–1526* (The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage, 63.) Leiden, Boston, 2018, 351–353; C. Tóth, 'Egy legenda nyomában', 452: note 60.

39 *capitaneus generalis regie maiestatis* – the title first appears by his name on 1 December 1514 (MNL OL DF 245739). The last known information on his office on this occasion is from 8 March 1516 (*Szapolyai oklt.* 374).

40 *Szapolyai oklt.* 359–360.

41 *Szapolyai oklt.* 361 (18 February 1515).

42 MNL OL DF 254967. Between 1513 and 1519 John Szapolyai also held the office of *ban* of Szörény (*Arch.* I. 153).

43 MNL OL DL 63004.

44 *ingressus ad partes infidelium pro tuicione huius incliti regni Hungarie*. MNL OL DL 89052, edited in *Enyingi Török Bálint*. Introduced and published by József Bessenyei. Budapest, 1994, charter No. 1.

45 *Acta Tomicianae*, III. 371: *Ceterum Mti. vre. incognitum esse nouimus, clarissimum dnum. vojevodam, germanum Mtis. vre., generum nostrum charissimum, nuper in Turcas ita aduerso Marte pugnasse, ut, copiarum parte amissa, prelio excedere sit coactus. Licet autem nondum nobis satis constet, quanta christianorum militum clade depugnatum sit, certum tamen est, rem ab orthodoxe pietatis hostibus bene ac prospere gestam.*

46 MNL OL DF 269734: *quod quamvis superioribus diebus, tempore quo scilicet domino wayvoda Transilvanis (!) in expeditione contra Thurcos se preparabat.*

47 MNL OL DL 63005: *hiis novissimis diebus, tempore scilicet expeditionis nostre contra Thurcos.*

this respect, as no further information is preserved about the campaign in any of them.⁴⁸

The most detailed account of these events can be found in the work *Memoria rerum*, according to which the army led by voivode John, István Báthori, *ispán* of Temes, Imre Török and Mihály Paksi, *bans* of Nándorfehérvár, and the 'king's lieutenant' László Chertinger⁴⁹ left for the campaign on 24 April on the king's orders. Soldiers from the Jaksics and Szakolyi families also took part in the manoeuvre. The troops set out from Nándorfehérvár and, following the line of the Danube, reached the fort of Zsarnó and started besieging it. Yet Sinan [recte: Bali], the *sanjakbeyi* of Semendire (Smederevo), "struck back against them with some Turks and some local people. There, the Hungarians were defeated, routed, and they lost two lords, Mihály Paxy and the king's previously mentioned German lieutenant, and had to leave behind outstanding fighters, entire camps, cannons, treasure, coaches, and those who were able to leave left, in great shame and having suffered great damage, and returned to Nándorfehérvár. In the struggle, Sinan Bey drove away the enemy as one would drive away animals; ten Turks, as they say, drove away one hundred armed soldiers."⁵⁰

This description from an unknown author is well complemented by a report from the other side, prepared for Prince Süleyman by Báli, *sanjakbeyi* of Semendire. According to this report, the Hungarian army crossed the Danube on 21 April and started besieging the fort of Zsarnó. The Ottomans mobilized the entire soldiery of Rumelia and ordered it to gather in Szendrő. In the end they did not wait for the entire force to gather, as the defenders of the fort in desperation asked for assistance, and so, under the leadership of Bali Bey, a counterattack was launched against the Hungarians. According to the report, one of the Ottoman troops attacked the infantry, another the camp, and after a long and violent struggle the army, led by Szapolyai, had to retreat, but did so in an organized manner. Two of the Hungarian generals – Mihály Paksi, *ban* of Nándorfehérvár, and Gáspár, *ban* of Szabács – lost their lives in the struggles, and their heads were sent to the sultan.⁵¹

48 This is somewhat surprising, as at least a dozen letters dated between early May and late June 1515 are known to exist, in which one would, with our current mindset, expect the event to be mentioned: the envoys of Brassó did not mention this in their letter sent from Pozsony to their city on 17 May (MNL OL DF 246708); likewise, no mention of it was made by Ferenc Vajai in his letter from Pozsony (Bratislava) on 29 May (MNL OL DL 97646), even though he reported about many other things (the uprising of the tenant peasants [Hung. *jobbágy*] in Carinthia; the occupation of the forts of Bočac and Kotor in Bosnia by the Ottomans).

49 We know his full name from Tamás Pelei's 'notes on the history of the period' (Bálint Lakatos, 'Az erdélyi káptalan és a püspöki udvar tagjai görbe tükörben. Történeti bejegyzések Pelei Tamás főesperes Erasmus kötetében [1515–c.1530]', *Fons* 16 [2009] 456) and from 1513, when he was captain of the Transylvanian army (C. Tóth, 'Az 1514. márciusi országgyűlés', 46).

50 *Memoria rerum*, 18–19. The deaths of Paksi and Csertinger were also reported by Pelei (Lakatos, 'Pelei Tamás', 456).

51 The report sent to the members of the imperial council by Prince Süleyman has been published, in English translation, by Pál Fodor: 'Wolf on the Border: Yahyapaşaoğlu Bali Bey (?–1527): Expansion and Provincial Elite in the European Confines of the Ottoman Empire in the Early

On the basis of these two reports and the aforementioned charters, it seems possible to reconstruct the essence of the campaign. The Hungarian army, led by John Szapolyai, voivode of Transylvania and royal captain general,⁵² which represented a major military force,⁵³ set out from Nándorfehérvár on 21 April (around the day of Saint George)⁵⁴ to the fort of Zsarnó, only 16 km away. The nearly identical dates presented in the two reports contrast with the previously cited will of Imre Török, dated 1 May, which, judging by its text, had been drawn up before the troops departed.⁵⁵ Until further evidence is uncovered, the contradiction can be resolved in two ways: one possible explanation is that Imre Török joined the army later, possibly after the counterattack of the Ottomans had been launched; another explanation may be that the *ban* wrote his last wish before the clash with the Ottoman relief forces. As the news of the defeat reached Pozsony (Bratislava) on 15 May, the siege of the fort must have lasted for at least two weeks, including the time needed for deployment, so the battle itself is likely to have taken place sometime before 10 May.⁵⁶ (The news from Nándorfehérvár reached the negotiations in Pozsony within five days.)⁵⁷

Several major figures in the Hungarian army lost their lives in the fight against the relief forces. Even though each source mentions two names, the names listed only partially overlap. The death of Imre Török's companion, Mihály Paksi, *ban* of Nándorfehérvár, is mentioned in both aforementioned sources, as well as in the notes of Tamás Pelei and in the letter written in Pozsony on 22 May by György Szatmári, bishop of Pécs.⁵⁸ László Chertinger's name features among the deceased in the *Memoria rerum* and in the works of Tamás Pelei and Szerémi. The name of Gáspár Paksi, however, only appears

Sixteenth Century', in Pál Fodor, Nándor E. Kovács and Bence Péri (eds.), *Šerefe: Studies in Honour of Prof. Géza Dávid on His Seventieth Birthday*. (21st-Century Studies in Humanities) Budapest, 2019, 77–79.

52 John Szapolyai's title of royal captain general explains how he was able to lead the troops to territories far beyond his place of duty: as captain general he was more senior than all *bans* and the count (*ispán/comes*) of Temes, who in turn was also the captain general of the Lower Parts. For more details on this, see Mikó, 'Ismeretlen országgyűlési emlék', 466ff.

53 Apart from the names of the Hungarian leaders listed, this is also confirmed by the report of the Venetian envoy, which states that many soldiers were deployed (Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 351).

54 According to György Szerémi this took place in May (Szerémi, *Magyarország romlásáról*, 71–72), while according to Miklós Istvánffy it occurred in July (Istvánffy, *Magyarok dolgairól*, I/1. 154). Both works need to be treated critically; for such criticism, see Gábor Nagy, 'Szapolyai István és János alakja Istvánffy Miklós *Historiae*jában', *Publicationes Universitatis Miskolcensis. Sectio Philosophica* 13:3 (2008) 267–294, especially 273, 276, 278.

55 See earlier in the article.

56 On 2 May the people of Pozsony did not yet know of Mihály Paksi's death (MNL OL DL 47103). In his letter to István Rozgonyi sent from Buda on 8 May, secretary János Gosztonyi gave an account of various developments, but he did not mention the anti-Ottoman campaign (MNL OL DL 25562).

57 The distance was approximately 550 km, and a mounted envoy could generally travel a distance of 110 km a day.

58 MNL OL DL 89054.

on the list of casualties due to a case of mistaken identity. The Ottoman report mentions only a “*ban* of Szabács” (without giving his name),⁵⁹ so this person could not have been Gáspár Paksi, as he had been *ispán* of Arad since 1522⁶⁰ and had never held the office of *ban*. Count György Merzini (Korbáviai), on the other hand, who was at the time the *ban* of Szabács, did indeed die at Zsarnó, at least according to Szerémi’s chronicle.⁶¹ Furthermore, we have evidence that, in addition to voivode John Szapolyai of Transylvania, *ispán* István Báthori of Temes, *bans* Imre Török and Mihály Paksi of Nándorfehérvár and *ban* György Merzini (Korbáviai) of Szabács, royal captain László Chertinger and the *barones banderiat*⁶² István and/or Márk Jaksics⁶³ and János Szakolyi,⁶⁴ both Miklós Derencsényi⁶⁵ – later the Szapolyais’ castellan and *ispán* of Torna⁶⁶ – and Jakab Bánfi of Alsólendva⁶⁷ also participated in the campaign. As far as can be judged on the basis of the information available to us, the voivode’s campaign was the result of concerted action in accordance with decades of cooperation between the three captains defending the borders: while the Dalmatian-Croatian-Slavonian *ban*, Péter Beriszló, bishop of Veszprém, was at the frontier of his banate ready for action,⁶⁸ the Transylvanian voivode and the captain general of the Lower Parts, István Báthori, launched a pre-emptive attack within their own confines to ease the situation in the banate.

After the failed siege, those who survived returned to their places of duty. So the voivode of Transylvania returned to Transylvania, where he stayed until the middle of October,⁶⁹ and worked on organizing the defence of the southern borders of the province against Ottoman invasion, which did not in the end happen.⁷⁰

59 Fodor, ‘Wolf on the Border’, 79.

60 *Arch.* II. 31.

61 *Arch.* I. 148.

62 Cf. act 22 of 1498: *Decreta regni mediaevalis Hungariae / The Laws of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary 1490–1526*. (The Laws of Hungary, Series I/4.) From a manuscript by Ferenc Döry, edited and translated by Péter Banyó and Martyn Rady, with the assistance of János M. Bak. Idyllwild, 2012, 102.

63 Pál Engel, *Magyar középkori adattár. Magyarország világi archontológiája 1301–1457. – Középkori Magyar genealógia*. (Arcanum Digitéka–CD-ROM) Budapest, 2001, Jaksics (Nagylaki).

64 *Ibid.*, Gútleked kindred, 1st Rakamazi line, table 3: Szokoli (correctly: Szakolyi).

65 MNL OL DF 269734-5 (was adjourned for the period of the military campaign).

66 *Arch.* II. 278.

67 MNL OL DL 63005 (his servitor is mentioned as a participant in the military campaign).

68 Cf. his letter written from Pekrec on 13 April 1515 (MNL OL DL 68498), and the letter of King Vladislaus II written to the Slavonian estates on 19 April 1515 (MNL OL DF 268172).

69 See his letters (*Szapolyai oklt.* 363–364, 366, 370, 372).

70 Neumann, ‘Dózsa legyőzője’, 100 (table).

NÁNDORFEHÉRVÁR (1521)⁷¹

The failure at Zsarnó brought a half-decade interruption to John Szapolyai's anti-Ottoman wars. While, with the exception of two years, Szapolyai spent an ever longer period in his province each year, only once, in the summer of 1519, did he have to mobilize the Transylvanian army to protect Moldavia – though, in the end, no armed intervention took place.⁷²

At the time of the Ottoman siege and occupation of Nándorfehérvár in 1521, Szapolyai was, pursuant to his official duties, carrying out the defence of his province: at the end of July he was in Szászsebes⁷³ and in Szászváros (Orăștie), the usual gathering place for Transylvanian troops.⁷⁴ From there he travelled to Kolozsvár, from where, after a couple of days' sojourn,⁷⁵ he travelled on through Lippa,⁷⁶ then Vanna (Svetozar Miletić), Bodrog county, where he had left his troops,⁷⁷ arriving at the royal camp in Bâta on 13 September.⁷⁸ Here they discussed the military situation,⁷⁹ and, after the sultan's army withdrew, and in order to try to retake the border fortress of key importance, the king and his councillors, at the camp near Mohács,⁸⁰ appointed István Báthori and John Szapolyai captains of the troops to be launched. They also convoked another armed diet to be held in Újlak (Ilok).⁸¹ In the end, however, the campaign did not take place, due to an

71 For the siege and occupation by the Ottomans, together with the earlier literature, see Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 372–395.

72 Szapolyai oklt. 386–390 (1516), 393, 395, 397–400 (1517), 418, 420–421, 427, 431 (1519); Neumann, 'Dózsa legyőzője', 100 (table).

73 26 July 1521 (Szapolyai oklt. 457).

74 29 July 1521; 4 August 1521 (Szapolyai oklt. 458–459).

75 18–31 August 1521 (MNL OL DF 275293; Szapolyai oklt. 460–461).

76 Ede Margalits, *Horvát történelmi repertorium. Vol. I.* Budapest, 1900, 336.

77 *Memoria rerum*, 22.

78 MNL OL DL 25632.

79 Cf. MNL OL DL 23584, DL 25632.

80 On 13 September, they are still in Bâta (MNL OL DL 23584, *manu propria*), the king is demonstrably in Mohács from 19 September (MNL OL DL 104408, *Commissio propria domini regis*) until 30 September (*Documenta ad historiam familiae Bátori de Ecsed spectantia. Vol. I. Diplomata 1393–1540.* [A Nyíregyházi Jósza András Múzeum Kiadványai, 67.] Ad edendum praepraverunt Richardus Horváth, Tiburtius Neumann, Norbertus C. Tóth. Nyíregyháza, 2011, 322). On 2 October, the court is likely to have been there: András Kubinyi, 'Főúri étrend tábori körülmények között', in Pál Fodor, Géza Pálffy and István György Tóth (eds.), *Tanulmányok Szakály Ferenc emlékére.* (Gazdaság- és Társadalomtörténeti Kötetek, 2.) Budapest, 2002, 249–261. – For the meeting, see Ferenc Szakály, *A mohácsi csata.* (Sorsdöntő Történelmi Napok, 2.) Budapest, 1975, 17.

81 *Acta Tomiciana*, V. 401: *Stephanum de Bathor palatinum et Joannem comitem Scepusiensem, vojevodom Transilvanie, capitaneos hujus expeditionis generales pari auctoritate prefecimus eosque primum ac civitatem Vilak misimus, ubi die dominico proximo (6 October) conventum optimatum, procerum ac totius nobilitatis nostro edicto celebrabitur.* 1 October 1521, Mohács, King Louis II's letter to King Sigismund I the Old of Poland. On 18 October Szapolyai was in Újlak (Szapolyai oklt. 461).

epidemic that had broken out among the soldiers;⁸² at a meeting held in Pécs,⁸³ it was decided that it should be postponed until the following year, and that, in order to secure the defence against fraying Ottoman armies, the palatine should be sent to Pétervárad (Petrovaradin), while Szapolyai and his army should stay in Syrmia.⁸⁴ In addition, a diet was convoked in Buda on the day of Elisabeth. The king left Pécs at the end of October (he was still there on the 26th)⁸⁵ and returned to Buda (on 3 November);⁸⁶ on 8 November, Szapolyai was already in Nagytaranya (today a destroyed settlement near Savino Selo, Serbia) in Bács county,⁸⁷ and it was at about the same time that Báthori went to Buda, as well.⁸⁸

CAMPAIGNS IN WALLACHIA (1522)⁸⁹

At the diet of 1521, held on the day of Elisabeth, both Báthori and Szapolyai were elected captain generals of the following year's anti-Ottoman campaigns, and, as soon as the king left for Bohemia, they became actively involved in the planning of the country's defences. They started recruiting soldiers, preparing border fortresses, and they also decided on personnel matters: they appointed János Kállai Vitéz instead of Miklós Gerlistyei to lead the fort of Szörény, and sent infantry soldiers there and to Titel, while they dispatched Miklós Macedóniai to Temesvár (Timișoara). After all this, and shortly after the royal couple had left Buda, John Szapolyai set off – leading one thousand five hundred mercenary soldiers he hired with the money provided by the royal treasurers – to defend the place where he served, Transylvania.

At almost the same time as the occupation of Nándorfehérvár, Neagoe Basarab, ruler of Wallachia, died. Even though he was followed on the throne by

82 Istvánffy, *Magyarok dolgairól*, 183.

83 The king's presence can be shown from 6 October (MNL OL DL 31164, *commissio propria*; his order to captain general John Szapolyai).

84 *Wayvoda Transilvanus ad confinia recessit cum paucis, si quid efficere poterint, palatinus adhuc in vado circa Peterwaradya iacet*. Lajos Thallóczy and Antal Áldásy (eds.), *A Magyarország és Szerbia közötti összeköttetések oklevéltára 1198–1526*. (Magyarország Melléktartományainak Oklevéltára, 2.) Budapest, 1907, 355: 7 October 1521, Pécs, letter from János Bebek to Ferenc Dóci, castellan of Óvár; cf. Istvánffy, *Magyarok dolgairól*, 182. Dezső Szabó interpreted all this as showing that the voivode had left King Louis in Pécs (Dezső Szabó, *A magyar országgyűlések története II. Lajos korában*. Budapest, 1909, 47).

85 MNL OL DL 86102 (*manu propria*). – On the 28th he was probably still in Pécs (MNL OL DL 86756, record of Tamás Szalaházi, the parish priest of Beregszász, and royal secretary).

86 MNL OL DL 47438 (record of Fülöp Móré, grand provost of Eger, royal secretary). According to Dezső Szabó, the king was already in Buda on 13 October (Szabó, *A magyar országgyűlések*, 47, on the basis of charter MNL OL DL 23589, the date on which is indeed the same [*in festo Colomanni*], but, as it is a copy, it is almost entirely certain that at the time the scribe misread the name of the holiday).

87 Szapolyai *oklt.* 463.

88 *Memoria rerum*, 23.

89 For more detail, see Norbert C. Tóth, 'Szapolyai János erdélyi vajda 1522. évi havasalföldi hadjáratai. Havasalföld korlátozott függetlenségének biztosítása', *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 125:4 (2012) 987–1014.

his son Teodosie, several pretenders appeared in the country. Initially, the leader of the territories neighbouring Wallachia, Mehmed Bey, district governor of Silistra, intervened in the battles for the throne on Teodosie's side. Nevertheless, in December 1521, he had the voivode executed. The throne was occupied for a short period by Radu de la Afumați, but he did not enjoy the support of Mehmed Bey, either. What is more, in March 1522, he was even defeated by him at the settlement of Clejani, after which he fled to Transylvania. The royal court of Hungary did not stand still in the wake of these events. Although the royal couple, Louis II and Mary, left for their coronation and to settle other matters in Bohemia at the end of February 1522 (and did not return until the end of April 1523), the two captain generals of the country, palatine István Báthori, *ispán* of Temes and captain general of the Lower Parts, and John Szapolyai, hereditary count of Szepes and voivode of Transylvania, took the necessary countermeasures.

John Szapolyai left Buda in the middle of March 1522 and headed for the place he was stationed, Transylvania. He spent the rest of the year near Brassó (Braşov), in the company of Transylvanian and other mercenary troops. Since having a Hungarophile voivode on the throne of Wallachia was of key importance for the defence of Transylvania, Szapolyai tried to cooperate with Radu to change the situation. The first campaign, which took place between 7 and 18 June 1522, had only partial results: although the *bey* was defeated at the settlement of Grumazi, and Radu could be repositioned to the lead of the voivodeship, Mehmed Bey returned in the beginning of August and fought three victorious battles (Ghergița, Bucharest and Slatina) against Radu, who once again fled to Transylvania. The second campaign took place in the autumn. This time, serious preparations had been made to ensure the outcome: firstly, the campaign was scheduled for Autumn (14 October–14 November); secondly, the two captain generals coordinated manoeuvres. While István Báthori put on a display of power in the Lower Parts, Szapolyai joined Radu and made an incursion into Wallachia. At the exit of the Törcsvár (Bran) pass, near Rucăr, they defeated the entire army of Mehmed Bey, upon which the armies separated. Radu led his troops to the capital of his country, Tirgovîște, and fought a decisive battle against Mehmed Bey's remaining army, approximately 50 km south-east of Didrih. He won a full victory, the Ottomans retreated beyond the river Danube, and he retook the princely headquarters.

In the meanwhile, John Szapolyai, voivode of Transylvania, continued his southward journey through the city of Pitești, and, after travelling about 210 km, may have arrived at the siege camp in Kisnikápoly (Turnu Măgurele) before 1 November. Even though he was not able to occupy the fort, he pillaged the neighbourhood and collected a tremendous amount of booty before returning to Hungary the same way he had come. As a result of the two campaigns, despite some struggles that flared up over the next two years, and despite Radu having to flee to Transylvania several times because of Ottoman attacks on his voivodeship, he and his descendants were able to preserve Wallachia's limited independence from the Porte.

It is noteworthy, and certainly not a coincidence, that István Báthori, *ispán* of Temes county, was along the southern frontier, more explicitly in Futak (Futog), at exactly the same time (October–November) as Szapolyai was fighting in the neighbouring principality of Wallachia (16 October–13 November). The Hungarian military leadership was thus aware of the opportunities provided by the enemy's attention being divided. It can be no accident that in the summer of 1526 they suggested a diversion in Wallachia.⁹⁰

MOHÁCS (1526)⁹¹

The present essay is unable to offer a detailed presentation of the events of 1526, as the sources describing the occurrences prior to the battle have not yet been uncovered. Therefore we will have to be content to reconstruct Szapolyai's movements until the end of August on the basis of charters issued by the voivode in the same year. (I will not touch upon the historically inaccurate issue of whether or not the voivode was deliberately late for the battle; modern historical literature has already provided an answer to that question.)⁹² From late November 1525, John Szapolyai was in his province, in Déva. He attended the wedding between the Wallachian voivode Radu and the daughter of the earlier voivode, Basarab. He also gave commands regarding the garrison of the fort of Pojnár (Poenari), located in the territory of said voivodeship.⁹³ From here, he moved his seat to Szeben (Sibiu), a settlement he left after some 'excursions' in March,⁹⁴ after which he moved to Enyed (Aiud), the assigned mobilization point for the Transylvanian forces.⁹⁵ From the provincial diet of Enyed he travelled to Szászsebes, from where he kept an eye on the southern borders of Transylvania, and made reports to King Louis II on the situation and on the intention of the Ottomans.⁹⁶ At the same time, preparations were also made to protect themselves from Ottoman incursions.⁹⁷ He convoked a provincial diet to be held in the following month in Medgyes (Mediaș),⁹⁸ where it was decided to mobilize the entire Transylvanian army because of the expected Ottoman attack.⁹⁹ From Medgyes, John Szapolyai returned via Szeben¹⁰⁰ to Szászsebes, where we know he was present until late July.¹⁰¹ While he was there, he returned for a short time to Medgyes, since the king's envoy, who arrived on 27 July, informed the attendees of the partial provincial diet of the royal (council's)

90 János B. Szabó, *A mohácsi csata*. Budapest, 2006, 169–170.

91 For a summary, see Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 424–444.

92 See B. Szabó, *A mohácsi csata*, 168–171.

93 *Szapolyai oklt.* 506–508 (1 December 1525).

94 2, 17 January 1526; 25 February 1526 (*Szapolyai oklt.* 518, 510–511).

95 Neumann, 'Dózsa legyőzője', 100; *Szapolyai oklt.* 512–513 (12–13 March 1526).

96 16 March–29 April 1526 (*Szapolyai oklt.* 514–515, 517–519).

97 *Szapolyai oklt.* 521 (29 April 1526).

98 *Szapolyai oklt.* 520 (29 April 1526).

99 *Szapolyai oklt.* 522–524; Neumann, 'Dózsa legyőzője', 100.

100 24–25 May 1526 (*Szapolyai oklt.* 522–523).

101 10 June–31 July 1526 (*Szapolyai oklt.* 524, 527–528).

resolution. Consequent to the resolution it was then decided that a major part of the Transylvanian military forces should gather in Kolozsvár on 9 August¹⁰² and then head to Hungary. The voivode was demonstrably in the city from 11 August¹⁰³ and he may have set off by stagecoach to attend the king sometime after 24 August¹⁰⁴ (as was reported in detail in the work of István Brodarics).¹⁰⁵

SUMMARY

The decade and a half of John Szapolyai's rule as voivode of Transylvania can be judged as successful from the point of view both of contemporaries and of posterity. The province was not attacked during this period, not even once. Furthermore, with the consent and mandate of the royal court, the voivode led several campaigns and raids to the areas neighbouring Transylvania, and even to territories further away. With the exception of the siege of Zsarnó, his campaigns and raids were successful, and his two expeditions to Wallachia during the same year stand out from the military history of the era in every respect. Apart from his anti-Ottoman struggles, he earned his fame as a successful military leader rather early, by squashing the uprising of 1514 without any major sacrifice; not even the failure suffered at Zsarnó the following year could tarnish his glory. For the Hungarian nobility, eager to continue the anti-Ottoman wars, it may thus have seemed an obvious choice to make John Szapolyai, who had already proved himself in these campaigns, king of Hungary.

102 *Szapolyai oklt.* 528; Neumann, 'Dózsa legyőzője', 100.

103 *Szapolyai oklt.* 530.

104 On this day he was still in Kolozsvár (*Szapolyai oklt.* 531).

105 István Brodarics, *Igaz leírás a magyaroknak a törökkel történt mohácsi összecsapásáról*. Translation by Tibor Kardos, in Tamás Katona (ed.), *Mohács emlékezete*. Budapest, 1976, 30.

BETWEEN TWO GREAT POWERS: THE HUNGARIAN KINGDOM OF THE SZAPOLYAI FAMILY

THE SEPARATION OF THE EASTERN PART OF THE COUNTRY (1526–1541)

After the loss of Belgrade (1521) and the defeat at Mohács (1526), the medieval state of Hungary started to disintegrate. Ferdinand I of Habsburg, who claimed the throne on the basis of dynastic treaties with the Jagiellonian kings, gained ground in the west. In the east, forces aiming to defend the independence of the state by electing a king from among Hungarian noblemen gathered around the figure of John Szapolyai, voivode of Transylvania (1510–1526). This latter group based their claim on a decree of 1505, which had not come into effect, but which stated that after the Jagiellonian dynasty died out “no person of foreign descent or speaking any other language would be elected king, but only and solely a person who is Hungarian and able to officiate in this governmental position shall be made king, and nowhere else but on the Field of Rákos”.¹ The Ottomans occupied the Szerémség (Syrmia) region and watched the occurrences in the country with their senses on full alert.²

From the very beginning, the anti-kings were not in the same league. To compensate for the unfavourable conditions, King John (for the first time in history) placed the part of Hungary he ruled under an Ottoman protectorate (1528).³ Although the alliance treaty signed by King John’s envoy Hieronymus

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1 András Kubinyi, ‘Az 1505. évi rákosi országgyűlés és a szittya ideológia’, *Századok* 140:2 (2006) 361–363.

2 Géza Pálffy, *The Kingdom of Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy in the Sixteenth Century*. (East European Monographs, DCCXXXV; CHSP Hungarian Studies Series, 18.) Boulder, Co., Waine, NJ, 2009, 35–71.

3 Gábor Barta, *La route qui mène à Istanbul, 1526–1528*. (Studia Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, 195.) Budapest, 1994.

Łaski in Constantinople did not initially involve tax liability, it forced Hungary into a situation of dependence on the Porte. The diplomatic enquiries in Europe that preceded the alliance, to which King John had attached particular value, did not yield any results. John's envoys were stymied by the widespread and remarkably active Habsburg diplomatic network. Moreover, however clever and well-prepared these envoys, representing a new dynasty, may have been, they were met with reservation at the courts of Europe.⁴ Before Łaski sat out for his journey to Constantinople, he wrote a letter to his friend, Polish hetman Jan Tarnowski, about the decision King John was forced to make: "If his highness is left in the lurch by his allies, it is to be feared that he would pursue the friendship of foreign nations, and, being unable to get help from crowned kings, he will receive it from one who wears linen on his head."⁵ In the struggle for the Kingdom of Hungary, Ferdinand also tried to win the sultan's heart. His envoys Johannes Habardanecz and Sigmund Weichselberger arrived in Constantinople at the end of May 1528 with the mission of reaching an armistice agreement with the sultan. Even though they were held up at the Porte for months, they were still not able to bring back a favourable response to their king. Moreover, Ottoman incursions into the territories under Ferdinand's rule continued. Ferdinand then turned to Jagiellonian King Sigismund I the Old of Poland and asked him to convey his new offer to the sultan: he would be willing to pay a yearly amount of 40,000 or even 100,000 florins for control over Hungary.⁶

Although these attempts failed in the end, King John's alliance and Ferdinand's enquiries at the Porte were clear signs of what had been obvious: Hungary's and Central Europe's fate no longer depended on the decisions of Hungarian political leaders, but rather on the result of the impending war between the Ottoman and the Habsburg great powers.

The first phase of the war, during which the Ottomans intended to knock their rival off his perch by striking on Ferdinand's main territories and on the city of Vienna (1529–1532), essentially ended in a standoff. The failed Ottoman attacks made the country's partition, considered temporary at first, permanent. Under the protection of Ottoman troops, King John's fragile kingdom gradually consolidated. So much so that Ferdinand was eventually forced to enter into negotiations and reach an agreement with him (Treaty of Várad, 1538). In 1540–1541, fighting resumed, and during the siege wars that lasted until 1566 each superpower

4 For a more comprehensive summary of this subject, see László Bárdossy, *Magyar külpolitika a mohácsi vész után*. Budapest, 1943; Barta, *La route qui mène à Istanbul*; Richárd Botlik, 'Statileo János diplomáciai küldetési János király (1526–1540) uralkodásának idejéből', *Századok* 147:4 (2013) 813–854; Idem, 'Szapolyai János londoni váltója. Adalékok a mohácsi csata utáni angol-magyar szövetség pénzügyi hátteréhez', in József Bessenyei and István Draskóczy (eds.), *Pénztörténet – gazdaságtörténet. Tanulmányok Buza János 70. születésnapjára*. Budapest, 2009, 65–76.

5 Barta, *La route qui mène à Istanbul*, 73.

6 Gábor Barta, 'Bevezetés', in *Két tárgyalás Sztambulban. Hyeronymus Łaski tárgyalása a töröknél János király nevében. Habardanecz János jelentése 1528. nyári sztambuli tárgyalásáról*. (Régi Magyar Könyvtár. Források, 5.) Compiled by Gábor Barta. Essays and notes by Gábor Barta and Pál Fodor. Documents translated by Gábor Barta and József Kun. Budapest, 1996, 23–30.

intended to expand its territories several times at the expense of the other. Despite all their efforts, however, they were unable significantly to alter established power relations: by the 1570s, the tripartite political structure (the Kingdom of Hungary, Ottoman Hungary and the tributary state of the Transylvanian Principality), so characteristic of the Ottoman era, had irrevocably been established. In light of the above, the impression may easily arise that John's kingdom, dependent as it was on the Ottoman Empire, evolved directly, with no major obstacles, first into the eastern Hungarian Kingdom, which had similar status and remained under the Szapolyais' rule, then into the Principality of Transylvania.⁷ This is especially true if we take into consideration the obvious signs of continuity: both states were ruled by the Szapolyai dynasty, Friar George played a decisive role in both of them, both relied on the same social forces, etc.⁸ This all seems so simple only if we are looking back on the events from the perspective of today. If we have a closer look at the political ideas of the dominant powers of the age (the Ottoman and the Habsburg courts) as well as of the estates of Hungary, and we also examine how these ideas developed, we see that, originally, none of them planned to divide up the Kingdom of Hungary, or to establish an independent or a vassal eastern Hungarian Kingdom. Even more so, initially, they did everything in their power to avoid this. It is therefore no coincidence that after the fall of Buda it took more than three difficult decades during the reign of the Szapolyais for a new Hungarian state entity, the Principality of Transylvania, to be born out of the eastern part of the country. Below, we will provide an overview of the long-term goals the various forces had, what goals they were able to achieve, and how the fate of eastern Hungary under the Szapolyais' rule evolved while squeezed in-between two great powers.

The Ottomans and Hungary

At the time he ascended to the throne in 1520, Sultan Süleyman had inherited an empire that stretched over 1,500,000 square kilometres, over three continents, and that had a population of 10 to 12 million.⁹ His treasury appeared to be inexhaustible, and his army invincible (rumours had it in the Christian world that the Ottomans were "made of steel"). During Selim's reign (1512–1520), the terrifying armada conquered everything worth conquering in the Black Sea, in the Near East, and in the eastern basin of the Mediterranean Sea. The part of

7 This view is expressed in, among others, Viorel Panaite, *The Ottoman Law of War and Peace: The Ottoman Empire and Tribute Payers*. (East European Monographs, DLXII.) New York, 2000, 163–164, 168–170, 214, etc.

8 Gábor Barta, *Az erdélyi fejedelemség születése*. (Magyar História) Budapest, 1979; Teréz Oborni, 'A "Devilish Monk" in the Kingdom of Hungary: The Lieutenant Governorship of Friar George (1541–1551)', in Philippe Chareyre, Álvaro Adot Lerga and Dénes Harai (eds.), *Les alter ego des souverains. Vice-rois et lieutenants généraux en Europe et dans les Amériques (xiv^e- xvii^e siècle)*. Pau, 2020 (forthcoming).

9 On the following: Pál Fodor, *The Unbearable Weight of Empire: The Ottomans in Central Europe – A Failed Attempt at Universal Monarchy (1390–1566)*. Budapest, 2016.²

the army stationed in Europe (Rumelia) also wanted its share of the war booty acquired during the imperial campaigns and they voiced, ever more loudly, their demand to resume the conquests in the west. Their demands were well suited to Süleyman's ideas. The disintegration of a common European policy (the crusader ideology), the decline of papal authority, and the struggle between the Habsburgs and King Francis I of France for supremacy in Europe seemed to be opportunities too good to be missed. Süleyman was also urged by the political traditions of his dynasty. After the occupation of Byzantium (1453), the Ottoman state saw itself as the successor to Rome. Ever since Mehmed the Conqueror (1451–1481), sultans had been preaching about being the new Alexander the Great, arriving from the east, with a mission to unify the Byzantine and the Roman empires. In the early 1520s Süleyman judged that he possessed both the economic and the military power necessary to realize the dream of establishing a universal empire. Attacking and occupying Hungary was only the first step in this grandiose plan. The aforementioned victories (Belgrade, Mohács) increased the young sultan's and his grand vizier Ibrahim Pasha's confidence to such an extent, they made the following decision: they would not bother to occupy Hungary, which lay at their feet and was therefore treated as part of the empire. Instead, they would turn against the neighbouring great power, the Habsburg Empire, and once they had ridden roughshod over it, Hungary would immediately be incorporated into the empire, without any further military campaigns. So, in order to secure the through-route for the armies headed towards the west and in order to ensure their supply, they temporarily embraced John's Hungarian kingship; yet, had this Ottoman endeavour proved successful, the kingdom, formally an ally but in fact a vassal state, would soon have been liquidated.

During the campaigns launched to occupy Vienna in 1529 and 1532, it turned out the sultan had overestimated the power of his forces. Although the Ottoman army put all its efforts into the campaign, reaching as far as Vienna and the Austrian border, it was unable to carry out long-lasting and successful military actions at such a distance. The events of the 1532 campaign also clearly showed that, by relying on the German Empire, the Habsburgs were indeed able to mobilize the necessary opposing forces were the Ottomans to exert a direct threat on their main territories. Despite this, it took more than twenty years and a number of additional failures for Süleyman to learn the obvious lessons from his adventures to the west. Having defeated the shah of Iran and then Emperor Charles V on the Mediterranean front in the 1530s, the sultan once again turned against Central Europe, and tried to continue where he had left off in 1532. In 1541, in order to bring his supply bases closer, he occupied Buda; then, in 1543, he turned against the Habsburg capital again. This time, however, he was unable to reach it, and so he called a halt to preparations for the next campaign to Vienna, planned for 1545. The same year he signed an armistice agreement with the Habsburg brothers, which was followed two years later by a peace agreement, pursuant to which, in return for an annual tax payment, he handed the territories, *de facto* controlled by the Habsburg monarch, over

to Ferdinand. By doing so, he also acknowledged that he was not even able to conquer Hungary, let alone the western world, even if throughout his life he regarded himself as the supreme lord of the *entirety* of Hungary *de jure*.

As long as Süleyman ignored the realities, the fate of Hungarian 'state torsos' created or supported by him was hanging by a thread. The only reason King John's country did not vanish into the void of history after 1532 is that the sultan was temporally able to use it to counterbalance Ferdinand's power aspirations. Despite this, in 1541, when his interests so required, he ruthlessly liquidated it. We know today that Süleyman came to Buda in 1541 with the intention of invading Szapolyai's part of the country and capturing the leaders of the pro-Ottoman elite. Following the occupation of the Hungarian capital, he modified his plans, however: he handed over the territories situated outside the main path of the invasion, namely the Transtibiscan area and Transylvania, to King John's son, elected king by the name John II (Sigismund) and to Friar George (John II's guardian), while he handed over the Temesköz region to Péter Petrovics. Yet, the prince and his two men received their offices not as leaders of the allied Hungarian state but as Ottoman *sanjakbeyis* with the task of preparing the eastern part of the country for the Ottoman occupation, which would take place after Süleyman had crushed Ferdinand's power. That the idea of creating an eastern or Transylvanian Hungarian tributary state had not even crossed Süleyman's mind is clearly illustrated by the fact that in 1540 he strongly rejected Transylvanian magnate István Maylád's proposition aimed at creating such a tributary state under Maylád's rule.¹⁰

The Habsburgs and Hungary

Ferdinand took the throne in 1527; like Süleyman, he also harboured illusions for decades.¹¹ Prior to his election, he promised his supporters he would restore the country's unity and drive the Ottomans out of the country. His ambition to obtain the Hungarian throne rested on agreements regulating, *inter alia*, the transversal succession between the Habsburg and Jagiellonian dynasties. It has, however, already been pointed out in works of legal history that the family's claim, based on the regal status of Anna Jagiellon, could not have been supported by those agreements, because, according to earlier agreements (1491, 1506) confirmed in 1515, in the event of King Vladislaus's death it was not the inheritance

10 Pál Fodor, 'Ottoman Policy towards Hungary, 1520–1541', in Idem, *In Quest of the Golden Apple: Imperial Ideology, Politics, and Military Administration in the Ottoman Empire*. (Analecta Isisiana, 45.) Istanbul, 2000, 141–161.

11 On the era in general: Thomas Winkelbauer, *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht. Länder und Untertanen des Hauses Habsburg im konfessionellen Zeitalter. Teil 1. Österreichische Geschichte 1522–1699*. Wien, 2003, particularly 123ff; Martina Fuchs, Teréz Oborni and Gábor Ujváry (Hrsg.), *Kaiser Ferdinand I. Ein mitteleuropäischer Herrscher*. (Geschichte in der Epoche Karls V., 5.) Münster, 2005; Alfred Kohler, *Expansion und Hegemonie. Internationale Beziehungen 1450–1559*. (Handbuch der Geschichte der internationalen Beziehungen, 1.) Paderborn, 2008; Pálffy, *The Kingdom of Hungary*, 53–186.

rights of his daughters that would be acknowledged, but rather the succession of the male heir of Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I of Habsburg whom the estates elected of their free will. So King Ferdinand did not become the lawful king of Hungary by way of a female line of inheritance or some legally uncertain inheritance agreements, but rather by way of election.¹² Doubts regarding the agreement may actually have also been raised on the Habsburg side, as in 1515 it was not the seriously ill King Vladislaus II (with limited legal capacity at the time) who signed the agreement, but his older brother, King Sigismund I the Old of Poland, who was not in fact entitled to do so.¹³ In spring 1527, Ferdinand also believed election formed the legal basis of his becoming king of Hungary.¹⁴

During 1528–1529, the political and military situation initially favoured Ferdinand, but when King John returned from his exile in Poland he once again found himself in a more advantageous position. John's kingdom was strengthened by the Ottoman campaign of 1529, during which the sultan stopped in Buda on his way home, and again handed over the castle and the country to John. By this act Hungary was split into two parts: Transdanubia and a major part of Upper Hungary came into the hands of Ferdinand, while the eastern and central part of the country, together with Transylvania, came under the rule of John Szapolyai, and in Buda, for the time being, the Ottoman army safeguarded John's power.

During his long reign, King Ferdinand had to face the same issues that prevented him from implementing his plans: French–Habsburg rivalry, as well as the Protestant movement, which absorbed the Habsburg dynasty's energies in the west for a long period of time, and because of which Charles V was not able to provide him with any major support. And without Charles's support, Ferdinand's efforts to unify the country were doomed to failure. This was what he himself felt when he, in 1532, in vain requested from his older brother that the huge imperial army equipped for the defence of Vienna be deployed to Hungary: "I can hardly believe that I will ever have a pleasure in my life able to make me forget the pain of this frustration."¹⁵

12 *Quod ad Jus uxoris ipsius pertinet, dicimus nunquam in Regno Hungarie feminas successisse, nisi quandoque, ad preces et ob merita patrum, maritos earum fuisse electos in Reges, libera eleccione, quod expresse asserunt Historie nostre quod hoc sit verum ipsimet in contracto cum Wladislao Rege facto constituerunt, ut filie Regum, si que masculis non extantibus, essent superstites, per ipsos exhaerederent, et dos eis solvatur.* King John's letter to King Francis I of France (1527): Ernő Simonyi (ed.), *Magyar történelmi okmánytár a londoni könyv- és levéltárakból 1521–1717.* (Magyar Történelmi Emlékek, I; Okmánytárak, 5.) Pest, 1850, 142; Cf. István Csekey, *A magyar trónöröklési jog. Jogtörténelmi és közjogi tanulmány oklevélmellékletekkel.* Budapest, 1917, 91.

13 Botlik, 'Statileo János diplomáciai küldetése', 825–826.

14 *in qua quidem Diaeta sane desuper consilio, maturaeque deliberatione praehabita, juxta arbitrium, et beneplacitum Omnipotentis Dei, pure, libere, et spontanee in verum, legitimum Hungariae regem assumti, electi et publicati fuimus...* King Ferdinand's letter to the Hungarian estates, 29 June 1527: Georgius Pray, *Epistolae Procerum Regni Hungariae. Pars I.* Posonii, 1806, 300.

15 Barta, *Az erdélyi fejedelemség születése*, 42. All this is true even though recent research has found that the emperor's support was more substantial than previously thought; see Zoltán Korpás, *V. Károly és Magyarország (1526–1538).* Budapest, 2008.

Despite this, he tried again and again, with a stubborn consistency. Whenever he lost on the battlefield, he dispatched his diplomats to Istanbul, where he systematically disclosed all his agreements he had signed with Hungarian pro-Ottoman circles, and offered to pay several hundred thousand florins a year in taxes if Süleyman recognised him as the ruler of Hungary. In the 1530s, he also continued his struggles with John, persistently if with varying intensity, for supremacy over the country, both on the battlefield and at the negotiating table.

The negotiations between the two Hungarian monarchs were, apart from the king of Poland, also supported by Pope Clement VII, who alternately encouraged the parties to conclude a peace.¹⁶ The negotiations, facilitated by Poland, started in Poznań in October 1530, and continued in Passau, Megyer, Vienna, Rozgony (Rozhanovce) and Várad (Nagyvárad/Oradea). The negotiations in Vienna ended with an armistice, signed in 21 August 1535, which brought an end to the conflict until March the next year.

In 1535, John's envoys presented the request that their king now wished to establish contact with Emperor Charles V instead of Ferdinand. His request was granted,¹⁷ and the basic document prepared for the meeting with the emperor foreshadowed the details of the future agreement.¹⁸ Papal diplomacy urged for an agreement between the kings of Hungary in order to defend the *Respublica Christiana* and for the sake of their common anti-Ottoman struggles. This caused difficulties for John, as, *pro forma*, he had been the sultan's ally, indeed his subject, since 1528. In a letter to the pope's secretary dated September 1537, the papal nuncio in Vienna, Giovanni Morone, bishop of Modena, wrote that Ferdinand made it clear to him that the Holy Father should not believe that the agreement to be made with John would in fact mean an alliance against the Ottomans. For had the 'voivode' really wanted to enter into an alliance with him against the Ottomans, peace would already have been concluded – yet John avoided the issue.¹⁹ Ferdinand believed that if the 'voivode' remained Ottoman-friendly his country would be subject to constant Ottoman incursions.²⁰

The Treaty of Várad, which in principle ended the hostilities between the two kings, was drawn up on 24 February 1538. The agreement divided the country between the two monarchs, but it also envisaged a future unification. At the time the agreement was signed, King John was in a more advantageous

16 Vilmos Fraknói, 'János király és a római Szent-szék', *Századok* 36 (1902) 795–798.

17 On István Brodarics, one of John's envoys, see Péter Kasza, *Egy korszakváltás szemtanúja. Brodarics István pályaképe*. Pécs, Budapest, 2015; Brodericus, *Epistulae*; Teréz Oborni, 'King John I of Szapolyai's Diplomat: István Brodarics', *Podravina. Časopis za Multidisciplinarna Istraživanja* IX:18:1 (2010) 23–34.

18 Mihály Hatvani (ed.), *Magyar történelmi okmánytár a brüsseli országos levéltárból és a burgundi könyvtárból. Vol. I: 1441–1538*. (Monumenta Hungariae Historica, I; Diplomataria, 2.) Pest, 1857, 318ff.

19 Giovanni Morone's letter to the secretary of the pope, Vienna, 19 September 1537: Lipót Óváry, III. Pál pápa és Farnese Sándor bíbornok Magyarországra vonatkozó diplomáciai levelezése (1535–1549). (Monumenta Hungariae Historica, I; Diplomataria, 16.) Budapest, 1879, 19.

20 [Ferdinand] *ne ha voluto, ne vole concordare senza questo capitolo, perche se il Vayvoda restasse amico del Turco, il paese suo sarebbe subietto alle continue escursioni de ditto Turco... Ibid.*

position, since he ruled over two thirds of Hungary. Yet the agreement brought greater success to Ferdinand. For the articles of the peace treaty, after stipulating that the signatory parties mutually recognised each other as kings and divided the country's territory between them according to the *status quo*, stated that, in the event of King John's death, Ferdinand was to occupy John's part of the country, even if a son were born to John in the meanwhile.²¹ On the issue of succession, the parties stated on the one hand that, in the event of John's death, they recognized the succession rights of the House of Habsburg. They also declared that after Ferdinand's death his direct descendants would, without any particular legal act (i.e. an election), inherit the Hungarian royal throne, and, should his line die out, the descendants of Emperor Charles V would occupy the throne. The Kingdom of Hungary could only be inherited by John's descendants if both lines of the House of Habsburg died out, and free royal elections could take place only after both dynasties had died out (article XL). On the other hand, the articles of the peace treaty provided that, in the event of Ferdinand's death, "the country is obliged to elect, by mutual consent", his first-born son Maximilian "as king" (article VII). This last provision obviously contradicts the previous one.²² These articles were, from a legal point of view, rather dubious, since royal succession could only be determined after obtaining the consent of the country's estates, by a parliamentary decree; that is, King John did not have the right to make a statement in this matter in his own right.

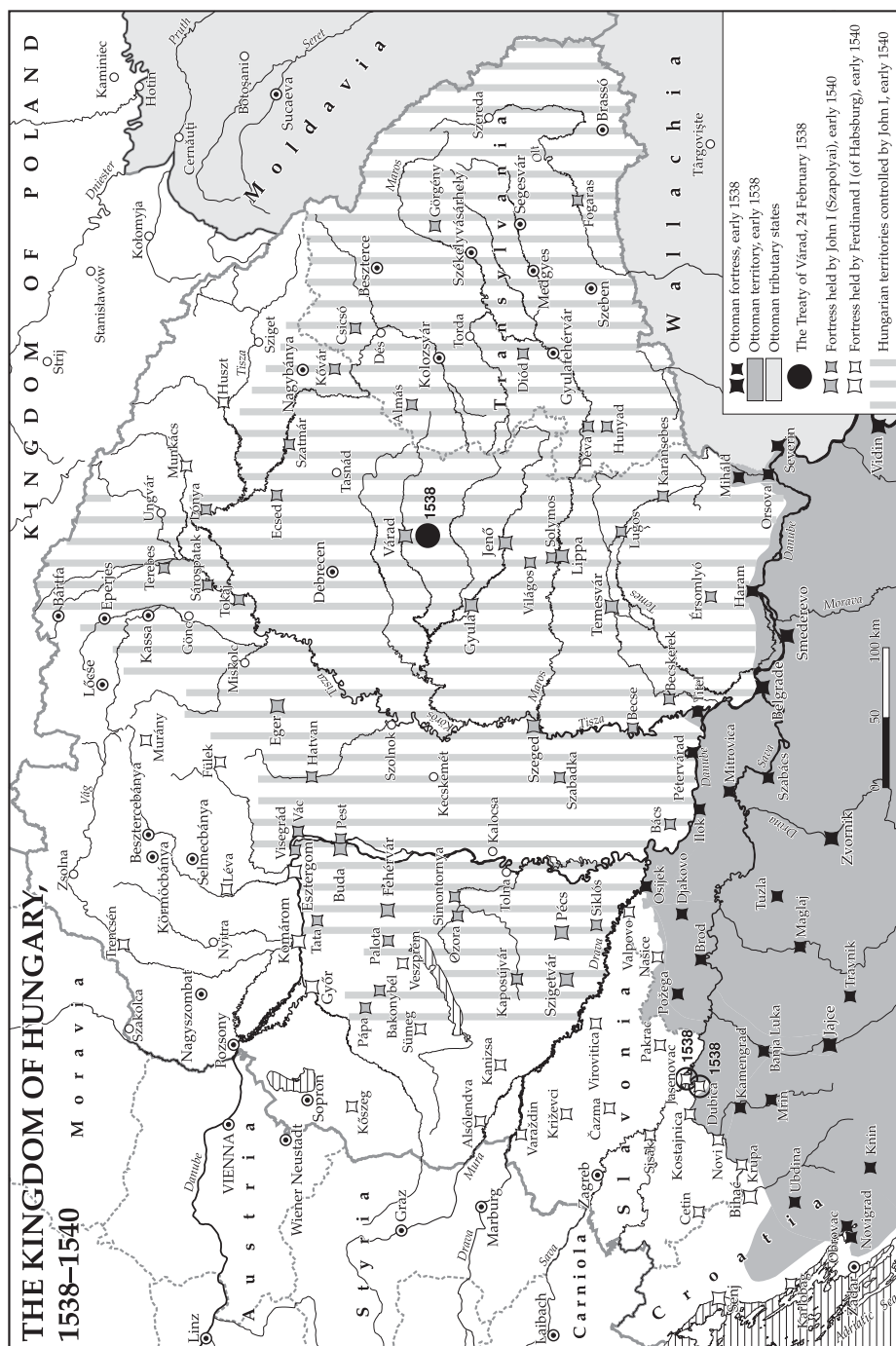
To announce the articles of the treaty, a joint diet was planned to be convoked with the participation of the estates under both kings. At this diet, to symbolize the unity of the country, a single palatine was to be elected. King John promised to end his alliance with the Ottomans, and the parties also agreed jointly to fight any enemy attacking the country. Ferdinand signed the Treaty of Várad on 10 June in Wrocław. Charles V did so later, in Toledo. The contracting parties' intention was to keep the treaty secret, but in the meantime Hieronymus Łaski, who entered into the service of the Habsburgs, revealed their secret to the Porte in 1539.

The Treaty of Várad in fact came to be threatened when King John married Isabella Jagiellon, and a son was born to them within a year. Two weeks later, on his deathbed in Szászsebes (Sebeş), John ordained that his loyal men keep his kingdom for his son, at any price. By this, he explicitly ordered them to ignore the Treaty of Várad. It is no coincidence that Farkas Bethlen wrote in connection with King John's death that "the unratified and unpublished Treaty of Várad also ceased to be valid".²³

21 Documents of the peace agreement: Roderich Gooss, *Österreichische Staatsverträge. Fürstentum Siebenbürgen*. Wien, 1911, 49–113, and Árpád Károlyi, 'Okiratok és levelek a nagyváradi béke történetéhez 1536–1538', *Történelmi Tár* 3:1 (1878) 713–817; Idem, *Adalékok a nagyváradi béke s az 1536–38. évek történetéhez*. Budapest, 1879; Bárdossy, *Magyar külpolitika*, 187–232.

22 As was already established by Vilmos Fraknói in his *A magyar királyválasztások története*. Budapest, 1921, 182–183.

23 Wolffgangi de Bethlen, *Historia de rebus Transylvanicis*. Vol. I. Cibinii, 1782, 323.



In September 1540, John's son, then two months old, was elected king of Hungary by John's supporters, yet he was not crowned then, nor was he crowned later.²⁴ Under the guidance of the late king's councillor, Friar George, the pro-Szapolyai magnates did everything in their power to keep Ferdinand from obtaining supremacy over the entire country. The military forces that arrived in Buda to support Queen Isabella tenaciously defended the castle against Ferdinand's besieging army. Yet Ferdinand remained firm: in his capacity as the king of Hungary, bearer of the Holy Crown, he never waived his claim to the eastern part of the country, ruled by the Szapolyais.²⁵

The Hungarian nobles in the grip of two great powers

For a long time, the Hungarian nobility insisted more strongly on preserving the country's and the state's unity than did the two competing great powers. Initially, therefore, the estates unanimously backed John. After his failure, though, they were just as unanimous in their support for Ferdinand. This is why, in the early 1530s, they were experimenting at the so-called 'kingless' diets to find a political solution that would not involve the two rulers; this is why they so fiercely rejected any proposal or agreement that entailed a division of power (e.g. the Treaty of Várad) or any armistice or peace agreement with the Ottomans. The underlying reason for the first diet-like assembly of the Hungarian estates, held in the absence of the kings, was the armistice agreement signed by the two monarchs in Visegrád in January 1531, which aroused great fear and indignation throughout the country.²⁶ The key point in the agreement was that each king should rule and collect taxes in the territories in his possession, which effectively implied a division of the country, even if only on a temporary basis.²⁷

The fear of a permanent division urged the estates to join forces and side with a monarch who could be expected successfully to defend the country from the Ottomans. Finding themselves in an extremely difficult situation, the Hungarian estates even contacted the estates of neighbouring countries and provinces and invited them to participate in their meetings. It was not long, though, before it turned out (by 1532) that no uniform action could be adopted, because kings used these occasions to generate propaganda against one

24 The diet is mentioned in *Verancsics Antal összes munkái. Vol. VI. Vegyes levelek 1538–1549.* (Monumenta Hungariae Historica, II; Scriptores, 9.) Published by László Szalay. Pest, 1860, 150; Bethlen, *Historia*, I. 344.

25 This is why Cristina Feneşan came to the conclusion that the day of the signing of the Treaty of Várad was the real 'birthday' of the Principality of Transylvania. According to her, in the long run, this led to its formation and secession from the Hungarian Crown: Cristina Feneşan, *Constituirea pincipatului autonom al Transilvaniei*. Bucureşti, 1997, 321.

26 József Bessenyei, 'A tractatus diaetalis I. Ferdinánd uralkodása idején', in Tamás Dobszay, András Forgó, Iván Bertényi, Géza Pálffy, György Rác and István M. Szijártó (eds.), *Rendiség és parlamentarizmus Magyarországon a kezdetektől 1918-ig*. Budapest, 2013, 90–91.

27 The agreement: Gooss, *Österreichische Staatsverträge*, 14–15; cf. Richárd Botlik, 'Az 1531. évi krakkói alku. Titkos megállapodás az I. Ferdinánd párti erdélyi területek katonai utánpótlásának kérdéséről', *Századok* 137:3 (2003) 597–601.

another, while magnates and prelates on the opposing sides, unable to decouple themselves from the guidance of their kings, could not reach an agreement. Private deals were in fact made between various groups of nobles and the kings, and a great many political leaders switched sides, hoping for and indeed gaining certain privileges from the king on the other side, yet no common position of the estates was drawn up.²⁸ That Tamás Szalaházy and Elek Thurzó, appointed lord-lieutenants by Ferdinand in 1531, also unanimously rejected the diets held in the absence of monarchs, only contributed to this failure: Szalaházy was thought to be convinced that Ibrahim Pasha stood behind these diets, and that his aim was to rid the country of the two kings and to help a third person, perhaps Péter Perényi, to occupy the royal throne.²⁹ The main reason for the failure was, of course, that neither of the kings was willing to renounce the throne, despite the estates making it clear that they would regard any partition of the country as a tragedy.³⁰ In a memoir submitted to Ferdinand, the Hungarian councillors expressed this as follows: “there is no hope for Hungary to survive if it does not have one unique king.”³¹

Even though the unfolding negotiations between the kings was welcomed by Ferdinand’s supporters,³² they were still disappointed when, at the diet of Pozsony (Bratislava) in 1539, they were presented with the articles of the Treaty of Várad. They complained that they could not be present at the meetings, and expressed their regrets regarding the country’s partition into two. Therefore they decided once again to meet the magnates supporting John Szapolyai in order jointly to defend the country.³³ In his answer, Ferdinand categorically forbade the Hungarian estates to do so, explaining that he had signed the Treaty of Várad so that one day unity could be forged out of the country’s current partition. He also reassured the councillors and his supporters present that later on, when the time would be right, he would include them in the upcoming negotiations.³⁴

28 For more details, see Teréz Oborni, *Erdélyi országgyűlések a 16–17. században*. Budapest, 2018, 60–65.

29 This was not unfounded, in that Ibrahim Pasha did indeed encourage the movement of the estates, but he did so in order to support King John and not Perényi. See the grand vizier’s letter to Perényi from spring 1531: Fodor, ‘Ottoman Policy’, 166–169.

30 *De negotiis publicis ita iudico, pacem omnino futuram, vel cum divisione, vel sine divisione regni, nam utrumque contingere posset*. Brodarics’s letter to Tamás Nádasdy, Buda, 18 March 1533: Gábor Kujáni, ‘Brodarics István levelezése 1508–1538. Második közlemény’, *Történelmi Tár* 9 (1908) 325.

31 Bárdossy, *Magyar külpolitika*, 122.

32 *...intelligimus nunc quoque suam Majestatem cum adversario suo in tractatibus pacis esse constitutam, quam quidem pacem, licet nos omnes summo desiderio cupiamus et expectemus, ex quo tamen illam non nisi unione et concordia omnium regnicolarum bono modo, bonoque ordine fieri posse credimus*. MOE I. 583.

33 MOE II. 126; see also: Bessenyei, ‘A tractatus diaetalis’, 94–95.

34 MOE II. 132–133.

THE SZAPOLYAIS' PART OF THE COUNTRY IN 1541–1571

After the occupation of Buda by the Ottomans in 1541, the constitutional status of the territories in eastern Hungary under the Szapolyais' rule was characterized by the same three elements that had characterized the sometimes antagonistic power political ambitions leading up to its current status. Of the concepts of the actors presented earlier, that of the court of Istanbul proved to be dominant, so we must begin with an overview of that.

The part of the country under the Szapolyais' rule within the Ottoman imperial system

The separation of Transylvania and the territories in eastern Hungary from the body of the Hungarian state was triggered by the sultan's decisions taken in his camp in Óbuda (north of Buda) in early September 1541. These decisions entirely overwrote the promises of the Porte made in autumn 1540. In a letter written on 16 October 1540, Süleyman, at the request of the Hungarian estates and by stating that Hungary belonged to him pursuant to the "right of the sabre", confirmed the elected but never crowned King John Sigismund II (called King Stephen in Turkish), in his father's 'realm', i.e. he recognised him as king, in exchange for an annual tax of 50,000 golden florins.³⁵ After occupying the capital, the sultan withdrew these promises and declared his claim to the central and eastern parts of the country, i.e. parts that had been under the late King John's rule. In the central part of the country, he established the *vilayet* of Buda, but – in a departure from his original plans – he did not send any army to either eastern Hungary or Transylvania. Instead, as mentioned earlier, he divided the area into three *sanjaks* and entrusted them to the hands of three Christian *sanjakkbeyis*. Accompanied by an imperial standard (*sanjak*) and an appointment diploma (*berat-i hümayun*), John Sigismund was given the historical region of Transylvania, while Friar George received some parts of the Transtibiscan regions, and Péter Petrovics was assigned the Temesköz area.³⁶ At the same time, Süleyman considered these territories, similarly to the two Romanian principalities, as his own country conquered by a sword, and as an organic part of the "well protected empire", the inhabitants of which he considered as tax-paying subjects (*haracgüzar, reaya, zimmi*). In almost all his letters, the sultan pointed out that John Sigismund, small and unfit to rule, received the Transylvanian *sanjak* only because his father, King John "was a loyal servant [i.e. vassal] of the felicitous threshold".³⁷ The reason Friar George and Petrovics were given his attention was

35 Sándor Papp, *Die Verleihungs-, Bekräftigungs- und Vertragsurkunden der Osmanen für Ungarn und Siebenbürgen. Eine quellenkritische Untersuchung*. (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse. Schriften der Balkan-Kommission, 42.) Wien, 2003, 159–160.

36 Fodor, 'Ottoman Policy', 153–161.

37 Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor, „Az ország ügye mindenek előtt való”. *A szultáni tanács Magyarországra vonatkozó rendeletei (1544–1545, 1552)*. (História Könyvtár. Okmánytárak, 1.) Budapest, 2005, 228: No. 18.

because he had many times been satisfied that they were “like other *beys*, the sultan’s true and useful servants”.³⁸

In 1541, Süleyman seceded a huge part of the country, which included a major part of the areas east of the river Tisza,³⁹ and consciously put it in the hands of the members of the downgraded Szapolyai dynasty and their major supporters. Yet neither the partial compensation for the withdrawn promise of the kingdom nor the constant referral to King John, his former ally, were honest: in reality, Süleyman was still preparing to annex the eastern parts of the country. He only postponed this in order to be able to deploy all his forces in the main direction of his expansion, namely against the Habsburgs. His real intentions are clearly revealed by internal Ottoman documents. A list dated from early 1543 features not only Transylvania but also the hitherto unoccupied city of Temesvár (Timișoara) as accessories of Buda (it was a habit of the Ottoman government, even in later times, to feature their ‘claimed territories’ as ones pertaining to the empire).⁴⁰ Another list, one from 1550–1551, contains the “*vilayet* of Transylvania” and its *sanjaks*: some of these can be identified as Csanád (Cenad), Becse (Bečej), Temesvár, while others cannot, and there are also some whose names are left empty.⁴¹ During the first decade, the Porte kept the three *sanjaks* under close control, and the Hungarian leaders were being treated and ordered as regular Ottoman district governors.

The situation gradually changed, however, due to the unexpected twists and turns of great power politics. While in 1541–1544, the Ottoman army achieved one success after the other, and had high hopes of invading the Western world, in early 1545, the sultan, as mentioned earlier, called off his new campaign, which had been planned to be the greatest ever.⁴² He gave up his plans of occupying Vienna and routing Ferdinand, and concluded first an armistice agreement and later, in 1547, a peace treaty with the Habsburg brothers. In the meantime, the conflicts on the Iranian front and in the Persian Gulf worsened, pushing eastern Hungary gradually into the background. At the same time, it also enhanced the value of the country and that of the loyalty of the district governors who were expected by the Porte to defend Ottoman interests against Ferdinand’s Hungarian Kingdom. Yet, when Ottoman power over the country seemed to collapse as a

38 Cf. *Ibid.*, 95: No. 59; 70: No. 38; 100: No. 62.

39 It appears that the river Tisza initially formed the demarkation line; see Dávid and Fodor, “*Az ország ügye*”, 159–160: No. 106.

40 The list is presented in Géza Dávid, ‘Incomes and Possessions of the *Beglerbegis* of Buda in the Sixteenth Century’, in Gilles Veinstein (ed.), *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps / Süleyman the Magnificent and His Time. Acte du Colloque de Paris. Galeries Nationales de Grand Palais. 7–10 mars 1990*. Paris, 1992, 395: note 3.

41 Feridun M. Emecen and İlhan Şahin, ‘Osmanlı Taşra Teşkilâtının Kaynaklarından 957–958 (1550–1551) Tarihli Sancak Tevcih Defteri’, *Belgeler* 19:23 (1998) 63–64; vö. Feridun M. Emecen, ‘Osmanlıların Tuna’nın Kuzeyine Yönelik İlgileri: Erdel Örneği’, in Idem, *Osmanlı Klasik Çağında Siyaset*. İstanbul, 2009, 230–235.

42 Mihnea Berindei and Gilles Veinstein, *L’Empire ottoman et les pays roumains 1544–1545. Études et documents*. (Documents et recherches sur le monde byzantin, néohellénique et balkanique, 14.) Paris, 1987, 17–46.

result of Friar George switching sides, of the civil war that followed, and of Ferdinand's invasion of Transylvania in the summer of 1551, the sultan decided to implement his old, oft-postponed, plan. The aforementioned *sanjak* list from 1550–1551 and the orders of the imperial council prove that the sultan sent his troops to Hungary in 1551–1552 to conquer and annex its eastern part for the empire.⁴³ The development of events on the battlefield, the simultaneous military engagements on various fronts and the change in the balance of power made him (once again) change his original idea. So, Transylvania luckily escaped being directly invaded, but in the meantime the Ottomans considerably advanced their positions by occupying Temesvár and other fortresses in the Temesköz and along the river Maros. In order to retake Transylvania from Habsburg occupation, the sultan now chose to adopt a policy of exhaustion and of winning over the Transylvanian estates. Since Friar George had disappeared from the scene, he once again placed his bet on John Sigismund, Isabella and Péter Petrovics, who in the meantime had left for Poland: he demonstrated a willingness to lift the House of Szapolyai and eastern Hungary out of its humiliating situation (similar to that of average *sanjaks*) and to revive John Szapolyai's kingdom in these territories. In order to do so he made serious concessions, and urged John Sigismund, his mother Isabella and his main followers to return as soon as possible. By sending threatening letters, he urged the estates of Transylvania to recall the Szapolyais and to recognize them as their rulers. In early spring 1553, at John Sigismund's request, the sultan gave him back the "*sanjaks* of Karánsebes (Caransebeş) and Lugos (Lugoj)", the inhabitants of which had yielded to the Porte back in August 1552. He even agreed to let Petrovics govern the area in his absence. In the 'noble appointment diplomas' (*berat-i şerif*) that recorded these donations, John Sigismund, usually called *kral oğlu* ('king's son'), had already featured as "King of Transylvania and Hungary" in the hope that in this way all Hungarians would recognize him as their lord, and it would be easier to reconquer Transylvania.⁴⁴ The documents and the standard necessary for his appointment were sent to him, and in 1554 he was even promised a crown.⁴⁵ After the imperial council confirmed his appointment (April 1555), and the estates of Transylvania once again elected him prince and king (March 1556), John Sigismund returned with his mother in autumn 1556, and resumed power.⁴⁶

Through this, Transylvania's and Hungary's annexed parts (*partes adnexae*) once again came under total Ottoman suzerainty. In terms of Islamic law and the dynastic concept of the state, the newly formed power structure remained, *pro forma*, a country conquered by arms, and came to be attached to the imperial system as a so-called *darü'l-zimma* ('house/abode of the pact'). Consequently, the inhabitants became the sultan's tax-paying subjects (*reaya*), equal to all other Christian subjects of the empire, who, in exchange for payment of the collective

43 Fodor, *The Unbearable*, 106–107.

44 İstanbul, Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Kepeci 210, 311 (7 March 1553).

45 Papp, *Die Verleihungs-, Bekräftigungs- und Vertragsurkunden*, 65–72, 167–170: Nos. 6–7.

46 *Ibid.*, 70.

poll tax/tribute (*harac*), enjoyed the sultan's protection.⁴⁷ Due to their *zimmi* status, they could not be taken captive, and within the empire their traders could trade under more favourable terms than the ones that applied to real foreigners. The monarch was considered the sultan's servant (*kul*) and official, one who held an office similar to that of the Ottoman governors (*ümera*), with no right to pursue an independent foreign policy.⁴⁸

Despite this dependence, Transylvania/eastern Hungary came to enjoy a degree of self-government during the Szapolyai era, which far surpassed both the level it enjoyed during the 1540s and that of many other tributary states. Based on its real status, it belonged more to the category of *darü'l-sulh* or *darü'l-ahd* ('the house/abode of truce or covenant'), occupying an intermediate position between the Ottomans and their enemies.⁴⁹ Hungarian research has already listed those features that made Transylvania occupy a place in the Ottoman hierarchy far above that of the Romanian principalities, whose status was much closer to the ordinary imperial *zimmis*. These features are the following:

1. Unlike the Romanian (and Tatar) capitals, no Ottoman garrison troops were stationed in the capital of Transylvania.
2. Romanian voivodes were appointed directly by the sultan, whereas in Transylvania they were elected freely; the sultan merely confirmed them in their post.
3. Romanian voivodes were forced to give away their sons as hostages, while the rulers in Transylvania were not obliged to do so.
4. Despite being economically less developed, the yearly tax payable by the Romanian voivodeships by far exceeded that of Transylvania (the amount in Transylvania was 10,000 florins before 1575, and 15,000 afterwards).
5. Transylvania was not burdened by delivery quotas for foodstuffs and war materials similar to those that faced the Romanians (not counting the 1540s, when foodstuffs were also requested for the sultan's campaigns from Transylvania).

47 On such tributary states in general, see Panaite, *The Ottoman Law of War and Peace*, 406–445; Gábor Kármán and Lovro Kunčević (eds.), *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. (The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage, 53.) Leiden, Boston, 2013; Oliver Jens Schmitt (ed.), *The Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans: Interpretations and Research Debates*. Wien, 2016.

48 Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor, „Ez az ügy fölöttébb fontos”. A szultáni tanács Magyarországra vonatkozó rendeletei (1559–1560, 1564–1565). (História Könyvtár. Okmánytárak, 6.) Budapest, 2009, 270–271: No. 155; 311: No. 208 (9 July 1565): “By the grace of God, the territory of Transylvania is the sultan's country, conquered by force; the king's son owns it by way of the standard (*sanjak*) received from him, and his actions, like those of the other emirs, depend on the padishah's orders. So how then would a peace concluded with Maximilian's captains general and captains, without his consent, be useful (i.e. valid)?”

49 Antal Molnár rightly emphasizes this in his *Magyar hódoltság, horvát hódoltság. Magyar és horvát katolikus egyházi intézmények az oszmán uralom alatt*. Budapest, 2019, 47–48.

6. In the Ottoman international world (in the diplomatic life of Istanbul) the situation of the Transylvanian envoys was closer to those representing sovereign states than to those representing other tributary states.⁵⁰

In the light of sources uncovered in the past few decades or that have recently received more focus in the literature, the list can be extended to include:

1. From 1553 onwards, the title of Transylvania's ruler in the official Ottoman nomenclature was not '*sanjakbeyi*' or 'voivode', but 'king' (*Erdel kralı, Erdel ve Macar kralı*). Meanwhile the title 'king's son' (*kral oğlu*) continued frequently to be used for John Sigismund.⁵¹
2. Before rulers of Transylvania were inaugurated, they went through an appointment procedure that consisted of several stages, beginning with an 'appointment diploma' (*berat*), and ending with a 'letter of pact/agreement' (or 'charter'; *ahdname*); Romanian voivodes were only inaugurated with a *berat*.⁵²
3. The insignia sent by the Porte for the inauguration of new rulers were basically the same for every tributary state (the most important of these were the standard with the finial and the robe of honour). The collection of insignia suggests, however, that Transylvanian rulers occupied the same place in the hierarchy as governors-general (*beylerbeyis*) who had the rank of vizier (thus the pashas of Buda), while Romanian voivodes were on a par only with ordinary *beylerbeyis*.⁵³
4. John Sigismund often (especially at the outset) received 'orders' (*hüküm*) from the sultan's chancellery, but with time he was contacted by 'noble/imperial letters' (*name-i şerif/hümayun*), which were a type of document usually sent to sovereign monarchs, the Tatar khan or to the sharif of Mecca; by contrast, Romanian voivodes were always sent orders.⁵⁴
5. The packaging of the sultan's documents sent to John Sigismund (and later to Transylvanian voivodes) also differed from those sent to Romanian voivodes. Originally, the Transylvanian ruler was supposed to receive the documents wrapped in a sateen pouch and furnished with a silver *kozalak* (a metal box containing a stamp), but John Sigismund

50 Vencel Bíró, *Erdély követei a portán*. Cluj–Koložsvár, 1921; Idem, 'Erdély és a porta', *Századok* 57 (1923) 76–93; Georg Müller, *Türkenherrschaft in Siebenbürgen*. Hermannstadt, 1929; Klára Hegyi, 'A törökök berendezkedése meghódított országaikban', *Történelmi Szemle* 24:3 (1981) 392–404; Géza Dávid, 'Administration in Ottoman Europe', in Metin Kunt and Christine Woodhead (eds.), *Süleyman the Magnificent and His Age: The Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern World*. London, New York, 1995, 88.

51 Dávid and Fodor, „Az ország ügye”; Idem, „Ez az ügy”.

52 Papp, *Die Verleihungs-, Bekräftigungs- und Vertragsurkunden*, particularly 135–140, 215.

53 János B. Szabó, 'The Insignia of the Princes of Transylvania', in Ibolya Gerelyes (ed.), *Turkish Flowers: Studies on Ottoman Art in Hungary*. Budapest, 2005, 131–142; Gábor Kármán, 'Transylvanian Envoys at Buda: Provinces and Tributaries in Ottoman International Society', in Jan Hennings and Tracey Sowerby (eds.), *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c. 1410–1800*. Abingdon, 2017, 44–64.

54 Dávid and Fodor, „Az ország ügye”; Idem, „Ez az ügy”.

was often honoured to receive letters from the sultan in a brocade pouch and furnished with a golden *kozalak* (or in a brocade pouch and with a silver *kozalak*). This way he became elevated to the level of the Habsburg, Spanish, French and Polish kings as well as that of the grand duke of Russia and the doge of Venice. As opposed to this, Romanian voivodes, like ordinary *beys*, were sent documents wrapped in simple cotton or linen pouches, without any *kozalaks*.⁵⁵

6. The court of the sultan recognized not only John Sigismund but also the Transylvanian estates, the 'three nations', as political factors. In times of conflict and change of ruler the Porte maintained particularly intensive relations with the estates, relying on them during the consolidation of powers and when selecting the next prince. This kind of 'partnership' with the country's political forces is observed to a lesser extent in the case of other tributary states.⁵⁶

To sum up, the Ottoman invasion fatally subverted the life of eastern Hungary, including Transylvania. Compared to the central parts of the realm under Ottoman rule, in 1541 the area found itself in a slightly better position, because it became incorporated into the Ottoman Empire after having been split into several small *sanjaks* of low prestige that were constantly fighting with each other; often it was only the unexpected twists and turns of the 'great strategy' of the Ottoman Empire that saved the area from sharing the fate of Ottoman Hungary. The slow but visible changes in power relations, as well as the empire's various political engagements, urged Süleyman to give up his plans of annexing eastern Hungary, and, in order to achieve his now less drastic political aims, to rely on it as a tributary state instead. So, even though Süleyman's direct rule over Hungary began with the liquidation of pro-Szapolyai Hungary, the sultan slowly and gradually revived Szapolyai's kingdom in the eastern parts of the country. It was to this end that he recalled John Sigismund, recognized him as king of Hungary and Transylvania, and granted so many concessions that Transylvania, with its increased territory, became one of the most independent tributary states.⁵⁷ (The constant Habsburg threat also contributed to the

55 *Ibid.* For contemporary regulation of the issue, see İstanbul, Bayezid Devlet Kütüphanesi, Veliyüddin Efendi 1970, 3a–3b; cf. B. Szabó, 'The Insignia', 4. Another entry in the quoted manuscript reveals that this privilege was granted only to John Sigismund, and that it was later abolished: "It was ordered that noble commands for the voivode of Transylvania from now on be sent in a red saten pouch and with a silver *kozalak*. On the first day of rebülevvel of the year 980 [= 12 July 1572]. The name of the current voivode is Christofer Bátori." BDK Veliyüddin Efendi 1970, 12a.

56 Dávid and Fodor, „Az ország ügye”; lidem, „Ez az ügy”; Papp, *Die Verleihungs-, Bekräftigungs- und Vertragsurkunden*.

57 In certain areas, in diplomatic protocol for example, it preceded even Ragusa (while the envoy of Transylvania was allowed at the meeting of the imperial council to sit on a stool (*iskemle*) opposite the pashas, the envoy of Ragusa was denied this), despite the fact that Ragusa is regarded as the most independent of all tributary states. For the situation of the city-state in general within the empire, see Nicolaas H. Biegan, *The Turco-Ragusan Relationship According*

extension of concessions: the sultan believed it would improve Transylvania's attitude towards the Porte.)⁵⁸ In the mid-1550s he also tried to mark the borders;⁵⁹ although this was not very successful, it still contributed to the territorial consolidation of the new political entity, which was one of the major characteristic features of separate statehood.⁶⁰ This way – in what would be one of history's great ironies – by the end of his life the sultan had become the main constructor and protector of the eastern Hungarian Kingdom, and did everything in his power to ensure that in a polity called *Erdel vilayeti* ('country of Transylvania') in Turkish, the Kingdom of Hungary, which he had once ravaged, would continue as a regional power that could be controlled but which could also stand on its own feet and be able to fulfil its role as a counterweight to both the Hungarian Kingdom of the Habsburgs and the neighbouring Romanian principalities. His gestures (e.g. receiving John Sigismund in Zimony [Zemun] and overwhelming him with gifts in 1566),⁶¹ and his threats (which he often used against the Transylvanians in 1552 and subsequently) implied that the key to the territory's 'independence' and welfare was the sultan's support, as he was able to protect it and the "Hungarian way" from the German lust for power.⁶² The success of Süleyman and the eastern Hungarian élite relying on him is demonstrated by the fact that, even though Süleyman's successor Selim II degraded the 'kingdom' to

to the *Firmāns of Murād III (1575–1595) Extant in the State Archives of Dubrovnik*. The Hague, Paris, 1967, 29–42; Vesna Miović, *Dubrovačka Republika u spisima osmanskih sultana*. Dubrovnik, 2005, 33–135.

58 Attention is rightly called to this by Feneşan, *Constituirea*, 327–328.

59 Papp, *Die Verleihungs-, Bekräftigungs- und Vertragsurkunden*, 216–217: note 640. Cf. Dávid and Fodor, „Ez az ügy”, 4: note 8. The editors' explanation of one of the earliest (dated 19 June 1559) of the sultan's orders regarding the delineation of the areas: “This is the earliest Ottoman document on a century-long dispute that was not settled until the fall of Várad in 1660. It appears that in 1553–1554 Süleyman, having decided to solve the political crisis in Transylvania by recalling Isabella and John Sigismund, he also proposed, as an incitement, some territorial concessions on the territories of the later Partium (it is probably no accident that the Transylvanians believed the sultan promised them these ‘Parts’; cf. Endre Veress, *Izabella királyné 1519–1559*. [Magyar Történeti Életrajzok] Budapest, 1901, 433). The sultan was unable or perhaps unwilling to keep this promise, however. Moreover, neighbouring *beys* kept expanding towards Transylvania, and in the mid-1550s several disputed villages were registered in the land survey registers and then assigned as prebends. Due to the many interests involved, the sultan's court avoided giving a strong statement, so many ... cautious commands were given to resolve border issues, alternately favouring both parties, which only led to one thing: the persistence of the conflict.”

60 Its importance is emphasized in Károly Kisteleki, ‘Alárendeltség vagy önállóság? Adalékok jogi nézőpontból az Erdélyi Fejedelemség önálló államiságának kérdéséhez’, *Századok* 150:4 (2016) 1031–1032.

61 Ferenc Forgách, *Emlékirat Magyarország állapotáról Ferdinánd, János, Miksa királysága és II. János erdélyi fejedelemsege alatt*. Translated by István Borzsák, in *Humanista történetírók*. (Magyar Remekírók) Selected, edited and with notes by Péter Kulcsár. Budapest, 1977, 851–855; József Bessenyei (ed.), *Zay Ferenc: János király árultatása, Kis Péter: Magyarázat, [Bánffy György:] Második János ... török császárhoz menetele*. Budapest, 1993, 119–131.

62 The court of Süleyman had, from the second half of the 1520s, deliberately made use of the Hungarians' anti-German feelings.

a 'voivodship' after John Sigismund's death, Transylvania, which in the meantime had become a 'principality' in Hungarian eyes, was able to retain (and sometimes even increase) its inner autonomy and room for manoeuvre until the tragic years from 1658 into the 1660s.⁶³

The Habsburg–Szapolyai struggle for the kingdom: claims and reality

Upon the sultan's orders, the Szapolyai heirs left Buda and started to organize their rule in the eastern part of the country. It became clear to Ferdinand that it was the sultan's decision that transferred the eastern half of the Kingdom of Hungary to King John's heirs, and that his personal fight (which was also that of the Habsburg dynasty) for supremacy over the entire realm did not come to an end. He could not have high hopes of a quick success, but the occupation of Buda and the subjugation of the central part of the country brought him a supporter he had never dreamed of: Friar George, the pro-Szapolyai political leader of whom Ferdinand remarked that he did not begrudge anything to John but the Friar, whose talent equalled that of ten thousand soldiers.⁶⁴ Friar George quickly proved his worth: by late December 1541 he had drawn up an agreement according to which the Szapolyai heirs would renounce their territories in favour of Ferdinand if and only if the Habsburg king brought to Transylvania an army large enough to rout the Ottomans from the country. The Treaty of Gyalu (Gilău), signed on 29 December, was a failure, however, because Ferdinand was not able to provide effective support, and the estates of Transylvania, fearing retaliation from the Ottomans, was forced to retreat at the diet in December 1542: "We have decided to recognise our late [king]'s son as our prince, to pay taxes to the Turks, and we ask Ferdinand not to put us in danger if he cannot help us, but to let us take care of ourselves."⁶⁵

The territory in the possession of the Szapolyai heir was made up of Transylvania, some castle domains of considerable size and importance, and some major regions located in its remote areas. This part of the country remained the eastern part of the Kingdom of Hungary, and was under the jurisdiction of an elected Hungarian king. Even though the Treaty of Várad, which did not enter into force, involved a territorial division between the two kings, it did so on the grounds that there was a single Kingdom of Hungary. Neither the treaty of Gyalu (1541) nor that of Nyírbátor (1549) mentioned two countries. As yet, there were no other states in the Carpathian Basin apart from the Kingdom of

63 An interesting discovery made over the past few years is that while the Romanian principalities, similarly to the Muslim subjects of the empire, joined in the so-called 'grievances procedures' (*şikayet*) established to examine and provide a legal remedy for grievances, Transylvania was left out completely; on this, see Nándor Erik Kovács, 'The Legal Status of the Danubian Principalities in the 17th Century as Reflected in the *Şikayet Defteris*', *Güney-Doğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi* 25:1 (2014) 1–24.

64 Bethlen, *Historia*, I. 423.

65 EOE I. 172; cf. Teréz Oborni, 'A gyalui szerződés', in Márta Font and István Kajtár (eds.), *A magyar államiség első ezer éve*. Pécs, 2000, 133–146.

Hungary, even if its territory was shared by two, not at all equal, dynasties, and both kings claimed to be kings of the same country and its annexed parts (*partes adnexae*).

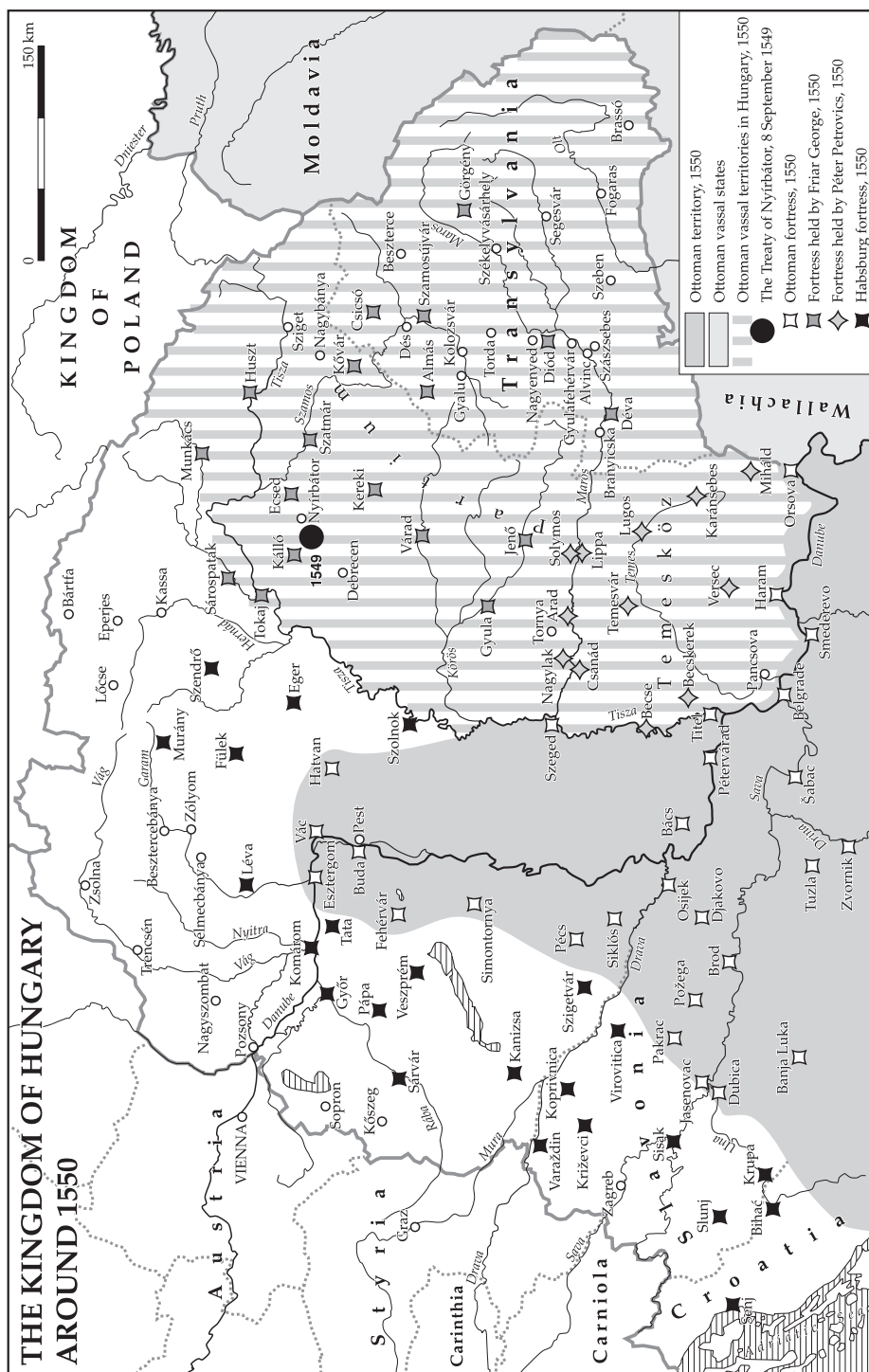
How the estates defined the eastern part of the country, now under new rule, can be clearly followed in the documentation of the diets. At the first diet, held in January 1542, those present called themselves the estates of the “Transtibiscan parts and region of Hungary and Transylvania (*Regio et Pars Regni Hungariae ultra Thyciam et Regnum Transylvanicum*)”. In another article of law adopted at the same diet, the term “Transylvania and the part of King’s son in Hungary (*Transylvania et portio Regni Hungariae Filii Regii*)” was used.⁶⁶ Later on, the area, including regions beyond Transylvania but which still belonged to it, was simply called ‘our country’ (*Regnum nostrum*) or ‘Transylvania’. At the diet of Torda (Turda) in August 1544, at which the Transtibiscan counties legally joined the areas controlled by the Szapolyais, laws were passed by the estates of “Transylvania and Hungary under his majesty’s rule (*Transsylvaniae et Hungariae ditionis Majestatis suae*)”. The various names thus consisted of two elements: Transylvania (sometimes written as ‘the country of Transylvania’) and those parts of Hungary, mentioned as regions, *pars* or *portio*, where the Szapolyais were recognized as kings. These latter parts were often referred to as *ditio*, which also denoted a part of the Kingdom of Hungary under their rule.

In the 1540s the reins of power in the eastern part of the country were held by Friar George, who ruled in the name of Isabella and her son. Friar George, in his capacity as royal lord-lieutenant (*locumtenens*), did everything in his power to hand the eastern part of the country over to the Habsburgs, as he believed that the only way to rid the country of the Ottomans was with the help of this dynasty. He thought that a queen consort and a child king were not able to restore the country’s unity, and therefore gave up some of his earlier commitments to the Szapolyais. After a decade-long determined diplomatic effort, his efforts finally paid off in 1549, when, in the Treaty of Nyírbátor, he managed to make Isabella and her son renounce for the second time the territories under their rule to Ferdinand of Habsburg. In one of his letters written to Emperor Charles V in 1551, he recalled the past decades as follows: “I have known for a long time what I owe to the royal child [John Sigismund] and what I owe to my crowned king [Ferdinand I], and I think I cannot please the child in a way that pushes the power of my crowned king or the good of the country into the background, ... I believe the interests of the late king’s son may not go hand in hand with the fall of the country...”⁶⁷

Isabella and her son left for Poland in the summer of 1551; at the same time, the Holy Crown was handed over to general Giovanni Battista Castaldo

⁶⁶ EOE I. 77.

⁶⁷ ...*Quamvis igitur ego iam antea quid puero huic regio, quid vero coronati regi meo deberem, noveram optime, nec ita puero illi favendum esse sciebam, ut vel regis coronati auctoritatem vel salutem regni huius illius causa mihi posthabendam esse iudicarem; ... rationem filii demortui principis mei cum detrimento huius regni nullo modo habendam esse putavi...* Friar George’s letter to Charles V, Enyed, 31 March 1551: Árpád Károlyi, *Fráter György levelezése 1535–1551*. Budapest, 1881, 215–216.



and his retinue, who had arrived in the country on behalf of the Habsburgs. The queen had managed symbolically to betroth her son John Sigismund to Princess Johanna of Austria in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), which offered some hope that the Kingdom of Hungary could someday be recovered. Castaldo took over power as military lord-lieutenant (*locumtenens bellicus, vicesgerens in rebus bellicis*) on behalf of Ferdinand, who expected the arrival of a mercenary army in Transylvania to ensure his peaceful rule over the eastern part of the country.⁶⁸ Castaldo's secretary, Ascanio Centorio degli Hortensii, wrote of the Transylvanian campaign in his chronicle; he mentions a royal army of 6,000-7,000 men, noting that "I believe we can say the same of this small army that King Tigranes said of the Roman army marching against him under the leadership of Lucullus: it is too big for an embassy, and too small for a war."⁶⁹ According to more recent research, however, the royal army sent to Transylvania and the Partium may have consisted of a total of 10,600 men, which should have been enough to occupy a province the size of Transylvania.⁷⁰ In the case of Transylvania, however, it was not only that local inhabitants met foreign (German and Spanish) mercenaries with an ill disposition or that they were not able to establish good relationships with local military leaders (including Friar George), but also that they had to reckon with an Ottoman retaliation campaign, for which the Habsburg mercenaries were not prepared. Likewise, Ferdinand's plans to have the Porte acknowledge the occupation through diplomatic channels also came to nothing, in spite of Ferdinand's crafty arguments that this would not violate the peace and division of power arranged in 1547, as Transylvania would still remain in Catholic hands (i.e. the treaty stated that both parties may retain what hitherto had been theirs).⁷¹

68 Ferdinand undertook the Transylvanian 'adventure' despite the fact that the current circumstances of the Habsburg Empire was not at all favourable for it, even if his personal position against his brother, Charles, improved considerably; on the domestic situation of the empire, see Barnabás Guitman, Zoltán Korpás, Ferenc Tóth and János B. Szabó, 'A magyarországi török várháborúk nemzetközi háttere, 1547–1556', *Világtörténet* 9 (41):2 (2019) 253–293.

69 *Facevo detto di Tigrane contra l'essercito di Lucullo che per ambasciatori erano troppi, e per combattere pochi*. Ascanio Centorio degli Hortensii, *Commentarii della guerra di Transilvania*. Vinegia (Venezia) 1565, 66; cf. Zoltán Korpás and János B. Szabó, "If They Came as a Legation, They Are Many, If They Are Soldiers, They Are Few" – The Military Background of the 1551 Attempt to Unite Hungary', in Ágnes Máté and Teréz Oborni (eds.), *Isabella Jagiellon, Queen of Hungary (1539–1559)*. (Mohács 1526–2026: Reconstruction and Remembrance) Budapest, 2020, 143–162.

70 Not including the troops sent to the Hungarian front in 1552 by the Habsburg administration; see Korpás and B. Szabó, "If They Came as a Legation", 148–149.

71 The other arguments used by Ferdinand were: 1. Transylvania is his inherited asset, also by way of his wife, Anna, who was recognized by the Hungarians as queen. 2. The requirement of Christian brotherhood. 3. King John also named him heir, he left the kingship to him, which Isabella also accepted. 4. He also pays the taxes that were paid by Isabella, the Friar and Petrovics. 5. He firmly keeps the peace (also bearing in mind that the sultan is waging war in the east), but Kasım Pasha of Buda is constantly breaking the peace. 6. He took over Transylvania with the consent of its inhabitants and Isabella. On all this, see Sándor Papp, 'Die

The devastation wrought by the Ottoman campaign (1551–1552) that was launched in response, as well as yearly threatening letters from the Porte to the estates of Transylvania and a mistrust of Habsburg support, led to the following decision being taken by the estates at the diet of Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureș) in December 1555: “We cherished the idea of succumbing to a Christian monarch and being linked to the Holy Roman Emperor. But God did not want this to be permanent: because of the proximity of the enemy, its multitude, its power, and the fear that, upon being freed of his troubles in Asia, he would threaten us with all his force. Because he had conveyed his message that he would destroy our motherland with fire and sword, and would eradicate us, our women, our children and our families. And anyone who saw Lippa (Lipova) and Temesvár fall knows for certain that he would do so. Of two things we thus request just one: that your majesty consents either to send us support of a size enough to fight Soliman, or to release us from our oath.”⁷² Even though, a couple of years prior to this occasion, the political leaders of an emerging country had received the news of a Habsburg–Ottoman reconciliation (1545, 1547) with great indignation, from this moment on Ottoman orientation became the cornerstone of Transylvanian politics. Deviations from it were rare, as every single deviation inflicted immeasurable suffering on the country.

Eventually, on 14 June 1556, Ferdinand I renounced his right to rule the eastern parts of the country and gave it back to Sultan Süleyman, better to say to queen consort Isabella and her son.⁷³ The Szapolyai heirs returned to Transylvania in October 1556 and continued to organise their country. Since the decision of the estates, enacted in 1542, Isabella had ruled Transylvania, and the counties of the Transtibiscan region that joined it, as queen (*tamquam regina Hungariae legitime coronata*) and guardian of her son.⁷⁴ With the help of her Polish and Hungarian councillors, she set up the government, sought to establish diplomatic relationships with the French, and even tried to reach an agreement with Ferdinand (to achieve this, she once again urged the marriage of John Sigismund and Princess Johanna), hoping to retain for her son the part of the country under their rule. Ferdinand’s goal, however, did not change: he still wanted supremacy over the entire country. He launched military operations to Upper Hungary under the Szapolyais’ rule, and he continued to do so even after the queen’s death (1559). The aim of these campaigns was to chase away John II, the elected king, and to unite the country, since he still had a claim to

diplomatischen Bemühungen der Habsburger um Siebenbürgen in den Jahren 1551 und 1552’, *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 89 (1999) 109–133.

72 EOE I. 475; cf. Géza Pálffy, ‘Egyesítendő tartományból az ellenségig: Erdély a Habsburg politikai és hadvezetés célkitűzéseiben a 16. század közepén (Báthory András 1555. évi tanácsának tanulságai)’, in Violeta Barbu and Kinga S. Tüdös (eds.), *Historia manet: Volum omagial Demény Lajos Emlékkönyv* 75. București, Cluj, 2001, 67–84.

73 King Ferdinand I’s letter to Verancsics, Zay and Busbeck, Vienna, 15 June 1556: Verancsics Antal összes munkái. Vol. IV: *Első portai követség. 1555–1557*. (Monumenta Hungariae Historica, II; Scriptores, 5.) Published by László Szalay. Pest, 1859, 198–199.

74 EOE II. 53–72; Bethlen, *Historia*, I. 598–600.

it pursuant to the Treaty of Várad and his capacity as the only crowned king of Hungary.⁷⁵

The main question of John II's reign was how an agreement with the king of Hungary could be reached on the legal status of the territories under his rule (*ditio*) relative to the whole of the Kingdom of Hungary and on his own royal title. The conflict between the two dynasties had been going on since the Treaty of Várad, and continued well into the 1560s with the same tools, alternating between fighting on the battlefield and at the negotiation table. The result of the war did not depend on the attitude and willingness of the opposing parties, however. The Ottoman Empire, with partial rule over Hungary, also had a say, as did Poland, which had a smaller yet not negligible influence over the country compared to that of the Ottomans.

Ferenc Zay, captain general of Ferdinand in Kassa (Košice), despite the armistice agreements of 1560 and 1562, launched an attack in the frontier area of Upper Hungary; together with Menyhárt Balassa, who in the meantime had joined the pro-Habsburg groupings, he conquered major areas. John II was left with no more than the landed nobility of Bihar and Máramaros counties.⁷⁶ It was against this backdrop that the battle of Hadad (Hodod) took place on 4 March 1562. John II's captains general, Ferenc Némethy and István Báthory of Somlyó, suffered a devastating defeat at the hands of the Habsburg royal forces. John II managed to win time by signing an armistice agreement on 12 April 1562, which would last for a year, and which after that period was extended for another year.⁷⁷ That the troops of the pashas of Buda and Temesvár had already arrived in Bihar county, and that it was feared they would intervene, contributed to the agreement. John Sigismund did indeed lose the counties of Bereg, Szabolcs, Szatmár, Ugocsa and a part of Közép-Szolnok, but he was given time to catch his breath, so he tried to establish order in his part of the country.

The negotiations in 1563 focused mainly on John II's regal titles. The title that was expected by the pro-Szapolyai groupings would have been: 'John, son of the late and the most merciful King John of Hungary, Dalmatia, Croatia, etc., by the Grace of God Prince of Hungary and Transylvania.' The court of Vienna, though, having heard the opinion of the Hungarian councillors, always responded with a counterproposition: 'John Sigismund, son of the late and merciful King John of Hungary, Croatia, Dalmatia etc., by the Grace of God Prince of Transylvania and Parts of Hungary.' At other times, in their correspondence they returned to the opinion that the title "Duke of Transylvania (*dux Transsylvaniae*)" was the highest that could be accepted.⁷⁸

75 Teréz Oborni, 'Die Pläne des Wiener Hofes zur Rückeroberung Siebenbürgens 1557–1563', in Fuchs, Oborni and Ujváry (Hrsg.), *Kaiser Ferdinand I.*, 277–298.

76 EOE II. 199–201; Imre Lukinich, 'Az északkeleti várháborúk történetéhez 1561–65. Második közlemény', *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 14 (1913) 584–605.

77 The wording of the armistice agreement: EOE II. 199–201; Gooss, *Österreichische Staatsverträge*, 159–163.

78 *Joannem Sigismundum merito posse aut debere contentari eo titulo, quo vocetur dux aut princeps Transylvaniae*. Ferdinand's response to the ideas submitted to him by István Báthory, Vienna,

Throughout the negotiations, John II insisted on the title of king, which he justified with the following arguments: first, all the territories in his possession were given to him by the Ottomans, they came with the title, and the sultan required him to use that title; second, this title was passed down to him from his father; third, his subjects, who had elected him and who recognized him, also requested the use of it. Moreover, it was by being in possession of this dignity, authority and jurisdiction that he wished to continue to own his country, like any other legitimate king of Hungary.⁷⁹ Ferdinand's Hungarian councillors were of the opinion that John Sigismund should keep nothing but Transylvania, and even this he should only keep until his death, after which the province should revert to the Holy Crown.⁸⁰ Should he have an heir borne to him by Ferdinand's daughter, then, upon the request of the king of Hungary, he was obliged to hand over Transylvania in exchange for two duchies and domains, as promised earlier.⁸¹ Another opinion of the contemporary councillors stated in writing that John II could not receive the title 'Prince (*princeps*) of Hungary and Transylvania' that he wished. One reason for this was that by possessing this title he could also wish for certain royal rights for himself. The other reason was that to be 'Prince of Hungary' the person needed to be 'King of Hungary' at the same time. They believed that if Ferdinand voluntarily renounced his rights to the parts in Upper Hungary, it would mean he renounced his title of king and admitted that the country had split into two parts, the larger and better of which, unoccupied by the Ottomans, would be transferred to Transylvania.⁸²

In his answer Ferdinand declared that he believed it was absurd that John II called himself *electus rex*, when he, Ferdinand, was the legitimate, crowned king of Hungary, and that the diet convoked on the occasion of the crowning of Maximilian, king of the Romans as king of Hungary, had been announced, which would mean that one and the same country would have three kings at the same time. He firmly requested that John Sigismund not wait until the sultan died to renounce his royal title, but rather do so immediately. He also claimed the territories on both sides of the river Tisza. If the territories outside Transylvania were handed over, he wrote in his reply in July 1563, peace and tranquillity would be ensured for the entire country. In this case Ferdinand would also see to it that John Sigismund, as the duke or prince of Transylvania,

18 July 1563: Sándor Szilágyi, 'A bécsi titkos levéltár okleveleiből. XIV.', *Történeti Lapok* 2 (1875) 854.

79 The letter of John II to his envoy István Báthory, Ecsed, 2 March 1563: Georgius Pray, *Epistolae Procerum Regni Hungariae. Pars III. (1554–1711)* Posonii, 1806, 166–169.

80 Sándor Szilágyi, 'A bécsi titkos levéltár okleveleiből. XII.', *Történeti Lapok* 2 (1875) 825–827.

81 Porro Transsylvaniam quoque non nisi certis sub conditionibus illi relinquendam censeremus: videlicet ut eam vita sua durante teneret integram cum plena jurisdictione, ita tamen, tanquam membrum regni et corone Hungarice... *Ibid.*, 826.

82 ...quod si sacra Maiestas Vestra hac in parte, postulatis ipsius filii quondam Regis Joannis consentire vellet, (quod tamen nos pauci, qui sumus consilarii nulla ratione consulere possumus) manifesta regni fieret divisio, et maior meliorque eius pars que quidem a Turcis superest, illi cederet, preter Transsylvaniam... The opinion of the Hungarian councillors, 16 July 1563: Sándor Szilágyi, 'A bécsi titkos levéltár okleveleiből. XIII.', *Történeti Lapok* 2 (1875) 841.

had the right to donate and take back property, but that he would not be able to alienate any property of the Hungarian Crown possessed due to ancestral rights; in addition, he would be granted the right to rule on legal proceedings and he would also have implementation rights, together with all other rights available to him as duke or prince.⁸³ The proposal written in Ferdinand's name continues by stating that all of the above did not mean that he would want to separate Transylvania from the Hungarian Crown, of which it always had been, still was and always must be the most precious part. On the contrary, he wished to describe a permanent coupled status and also considered it equitable and necessary that, in recognition of Transylvania's subordination and loyalty, John and his heirs be obliged to swear an oath of allegiance to Ferdinand and his heirs, i.e. to the kings of Hungary succeeding him on the throne. He also wished that in the future, in order to defend and save the country, Transylvania's dukes or princes – in their capacity as subjects of his majesty the king of Hungary and his successors, and as members of the Hungarian Crown – provide their support to his majesty their lord and master for every need the country might have. In return, the kings of Hungary would, in a fatherly manner, defend Transylvania, their subject and an outstanding member of the realm.⁸⁴

Numerous military confrontations (triggering Ottoman intervention and campaigns led by the sultan, leading to further territorial losses in Hungary, such as the loss of Szigetvár and Gyula in 1566) and the long series of negotiations that took place in the 1560s all resulted in the Treaty of Speyer in 1570, which, like the Treaty of Várad, theoretically conserved Hungary's unity and foresaw the future unification of the parts of the country by the Habsburgs should John II die without a male heir. Pursuant to the treaty, John II renounced his title as "elected king (*electus rex*)", and took up the title of "Prince of Transylvania and the annexed Parts of Hungary (*Princeps Transylvaniae et partium regni Hungariae eidem annexarum*)"; in his letters written to the Ottomans he would still be allowed to use his royal title. The agreement

83 *Et hoc casu maiestas sua caesarea concedet ei tanquam duci vel principi Transylvaniae et haeredibus eius masculis in ipsa Transylvania liberam et plenam auctoritatem et potestatem vel pro se retinendi vel fidelibus suis subditis donandi et conferendi bona, quae successu temporis ad fiscum devolventur, dummodo nihil alienetur ex iis bonis, quae antiquitus et jure ad coronam Regni spectant, item causas dijudicandi et judicata executioni demandandi, cum aliis functionibus solitis et principi ac duci competentibus.* Sándor Szilágyi, 'A bécsi titkos levéltár okleveleiből. XIV.', *Történeti Lapok* 2 (1875) 855.

84 *Caeterum cum maiestas sua caesarea per huiusmodi tractatus nequaquam cogitet Transylvaniam a corona Regni Hungariae cuius semper fuit atque etiamnum est et in posterum esse debet nobilissimum membrum omnino separare, sed potius cum eo perpetuo coniunctum manere cupiat, aequitas ipsa suadet et necessitas etiam exposcit, quod illustrissimus dux et haeredes ac successores eius masculi maiestati suae caesareae ac dictis successoribus suis Hungariae Regibus in signum recognitionis pro ipsa Transylvania in perpetuum debito fidelitatis et subiectionis iuramento astricti sint, et tanquam subditi ac membrum maiestati eius caesareae ac dictis successoribus suis ipsique coronae ut domino et capiti in omnibus Regni necessitatibus pro conservatione et defensione eius fideliter assistant, prout viceversa maiestas sua caesarea et successores eius Reges Hungariae ipsi illustrissimo duci et dictis haeredibus suis ac saepedictae Transylvaniae tanquam subditis et praeclaro Regni membro benigna et paterna cura, protectione et defensione nusquam sunt defuturi.* *Ibid.*, 855–856.

stated that the prince and his descendants would possess Transylvania and the Parts (*Partes*) peacefully, “as free princes (*tamquam liberi principes*)”, and would enjoy all the rights associated with the status of free princes (the right to rule on legal proceedings, to execute laws, and to donate properties). Yet they would not have the right to alienate crown property by right of inheritance (they would only be able to offer such property as security), because only the king would have the right to dispose over such property in the future; furthermore, should the prince die without a legal successor, Transylvania should pass into the possession of the king of Hungary as a “real and inseparable part (*tamquam verum et inseparabile membrum*)” thereof. The treaty also included the stipulation that the prince and his offspring should recognize his holy imperial and royal majesty as the head of all of Christianity and as the king of Hungary and acknowledge that he was superior to them, and should consider Transylvania and the Parts in the prince’s possession as “members of the Kingdom of Hungary (*pro membro Regni Hungariae*)”. It was also added that, were the prince or his offspring for any reason to lose Transylvania, the king of Hungary would compensate them with the Duchy of Oppeln (Opole) and Ratibor (Racibórz). During the next decades, the treaty also served as a reference point for future treaties between the Habsburg kings of Hungary and the princes of Transylvania, as its content kept reappearing in those, mainly secret, agreements.

The Treaty of Speyer, which created a separate principality of the eastern parts of the Kingdom of Hungary, was signed by John II in Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia) on 1 December 1571, and was ratified by Maximilian on 10 March 1571. John Sigismund, the first prince of Transylvania, died four days later, however. The estates, referring to their right to elect the prince freely, a right granted to them by the Porte in 1566, elected Stephen Báthory of Somlyó as their prince. Fearing an expected attack from both great powers, Stephen Báthory used only the title ‘voivode’ for about five years, using this to signal to both great powers his own and his country’s subjected status. The reason for this, as he expressed it, was the following: “Taking into consideration that this province is situated between the two most powerful rulers in the world, ... there is no other way to safeguard and govern it than by winning the mercy of both emperors.”⁸⁵ Shortly after being elected, Stephen Báthory swore allegiance to King Maximilian I of Hungary, while at the same time he also acknowledged himself and his country as subject to Sultan Selim II (1566–1574). Báthory did not use his title of ‘prince’ until 1576, when he became king of Poland; this can explain why many are of the opinion that this date marks the birth of the principality.⁸⁶

85 Wolffgangi de Bethlen, *Historia de rebus Transylvanicis. Vol. II. Cibinii*, 1782, 333.

86 Teréz Oborni, “The Artful Diplomacy of István Báthory and the Survival of the Principality of Transylvania (1571)”, in Arno Strohmeyer and Norbert Spannenberger (Hrsg.), *Frieden und Konfliktmanagement in interkulturellen Räumen. (Forschungen zur Geschichte und Kultur des östlichen Mitteleuropa, 45.)* Stuttgart, 2013, 85–93.

The statehood of the eastern Hungarian Kingdom – interruptions and continuity

The new political and power arrangement in the eastern part of the country, organized under the name of the elected king John II, rested on a constitutional foundation built up over the centuries. In Transylvania, a province of the Kingdom of Hungary, the nations of estates, enjoying specific privileges, practiced their form of governance with partial diets, i.e. provincial assemblies. At these diets they had limited authority to make decisions about themselves and on public matters; statutes could be adopted, but, as stated by the *Tripartitum*, “The Transylvanians ... are not to make decisions contrary to Hungary’s general provisions and laws, and they do not have the authority to impose orders on anything.”⁸⁷

The situation changed radically when the eastern parts were seceded from the rest of the realm and those living in the separated areas were to build a new country. The Transylvanian and Transtibiscan estates started to organize the state at the diets of the 1540s. On the basis of the Kingdom of Hungary’s former constitutional order and customary law, they adopted their own fundamental laws, which determined the constituent estates, the person of the ruler, designated the organisations and people with right to exercise certain powers, and laid down the basic elements of government.⁸⁸ At the diet of Torda, opened on 20 December 1542, the alliance of the estates, the so-called union that held the country together, was confirmed; throughout the existence of the principality, this came to symbolize the state itself.⁸⁹

For a prolonged period during the early 1540s, it was unclear who the Transtibiscan counties allied themselves with. The politically volatile county estates had several joint assemblies in 1542–1543, and initially they declared their political affiliation to be with Ferdinand.⁹⁰ Then, at the partial diet of Gyula, opened on 11 February 1543, Friar George, representing the Szapolyais, was entrusted with the major tasks of the government, principally the management of the treasury and the administration of justice.⁹¹ In this period, it was Lénárd Czecezy, the queen’s captain of Kassa, who ensured the supremacy of

87 *Tripartitum*, Pars III. Tit. 2. § 2. For a summary, see Oborni, *Erdélyi országgyűlések*, 38–45.

88 Andor Csizmadia, ‘Generalis congregatiok és diéták Erdélyben’, *Jogtudományi Közlöny* 35:10 (1980) 622–636; Katalin Péter, ‘Az erdélyi országgyűlés a kora újkori magyar fejlődésben’, in Kálmán Benda and Katalin Péter, *Az országgyűlések a kora újkori magyar történelemben*. (Előadások a Történettudományi Intézetben, 6.) Budapest, 1987; Gábor Barta, ‘Az önálló erdélyi állam első országgyűlése’, *História* 2:4 (1980) 5–6; for a summary: Oborni, *Erdélyi országgyűlések*, 104–118.

89 ...domini Regnicolae trium nationum Transilvanarum in conventu Thordensi congregati ... omnes unanimi consensu, longa praehabita deliberatione, paribus sententiis convenerunt, ut futuris temporibus ... verum fraternamque amicitiam servant ... animis ac voluntatibus ad tuendum Regnum convenient ... mutuo protegant et defendant. EOE I. 164.

90 MOE II. 466.

91 MOE II. 470; Imre Lukinich, *Erdély területi változásai a török hódítás korában 1541–1711*. Budapest, 1918, 45–47.

the Szapolyais in Upper Hungary.⁹² The massive expansion of the Ottoman Empire in the first half of the 1540s isolated the counties between the river Tisza and Transylvania from the western part of the country, which made the inhabitants tilt towards a unification with Transylvania. The diet of Torda in 1544 was therefore of paramount importance.⁹³ The reason for this is that the participating counties expressed their loyalty to John II and Isabella, and declared that in the upcoming period they would participate in the assemblies of the Transylvanian estates. This codified decision marked the legal union of the estates of Transylvania and eastern Hungary proper in public law, and the structure of the estates of the realm in the eastern part of the country was thereby established. At this point, the estates called themselves the “Community of lords and noble subjects of Transylvania and the Kingdom of Hungary under the rule of his royal majesty (*universitas dominorum et nobilium Regni Transsylvaniae et Hungariae ditionis Majestatis suae*)”, and termed their meeting a “general assembly (*generalis congregatio*)”.⁹⁴

At the diet of Torda, opened on 24 April 1545, the estates forged an even closer alliance between the powers holding their country together. First, they declared that their common homeland (*una nobis omnibus patria sit*) meant they were obliged to strive together for its welfare, and therefore, in accordance with the country’s (viz. Hungary’s) old customary and national law, the burdens of the country had to be borne jointly and equally by the three estates (*onera Patrie, juxta antiquam Consuetudinem et Constitutionem Regni, omnes tres nationes equaliter perferant*). Apart from the queen, only lord-lieutenant Friar George received authorization to maintain contact with the territories not under the Szapolyais’ jurisdiction. Apart from the queen, only the lord-lieutenant was granted the right of donation in connection with estates that reverted back to the crown by way of the right of escheat (*Jus Regium*). With this, they clearly wanted to end Ferdinand’s existing right of donation in the Szapolyais’ *ditio*, a right he still practised as a royal prerogative pursuant to the Treaty of Gyalu.⁹⁵ At the partial diet of Székelyvásárhely (Târgu Mureş), another law was passed in order to ensure the country’s unity and equal payment of taxes: if two nations agreed to bear the burden afflicting the country, and committed themselves to covering the costs in equal measure, the third nation had to do likewise.⁹⁶

The work of the 1540s to organize the country was continued after the Szapolyai family’s return from Poland. This time, the estates received effective help from Isabella and continued to issue national laws upon which the principality’s later political establishment was founded. The queen and her son’s

92 Sándor Takáts, ‘Czeczey Lénárd kapitány’, in Idem, *Régi magyar kapitányok és generálisok*. Budapest, 1922, 25–30.

93 Gábor Mikó, ‘Az 1544. évi tordai országgyűlés (Adatok a Magyar Királyság és Erdély 1544. évi politikatörténetéhez)’, *Acta Universitatis Szegediensis. Acta Historica* 142 (2017) 141–158.

94 *Singulis annis celebrentur huiusmodi congregationes generales, omnibus ordinibus ditionis Maiestatis suae tam Hungaris quam Transsilvanis*. EOE I. 190.

95 *Ibid.*, 217–220.

96 Lajos Szádeczky (ed.), *Székely oklevéltár*. Vol. V. (1296–1603). Kolozsvár, 1896, 58–60.

first diet, opened on 25 November 1556, was of utmost importance. It not only recognized the queen as the ruler of the new country; it also made an oath of allegiance to her obligatory, on pain of death and confiscation of property. The foundations of the royal family's and the country's treasury had thus been laid: citing an earlier article, from 1542, it was decided that the assets of all ecclesiastical institutions and persons must be devoted to the common good and the needs of the country and used to cover the costs of the queen and her son.⁹⁷ For the restoration of public order, it was deemed important to continue the upper-level jurisdiction according to the old customs. Judges, protonotaries, jurors and legal directors (*causarum regalium director*) were to be elected, in order to entrust the latter with the task of treasury management and to start the work of jurisdiction as soon as possible. The new laws prescribed how to rule on specific matters: in cases that involved Transylvanians, the old Transylvanian customary law was to be applied, whereas, in cases involving Hungarian nobles from Hungary proper, laws issued at the diets in Pozsony were to be applied.⁹⁸ Initially, Isabella did not wish to name a treasurer, and kept the administration of financial matters for herself. Despite this, the office of treasurer was created by the estates in June 1558, and Jakab Pókay, former *provisor* of Gyulafehérvár, was appointed to hold the position.⁹⁹

When describing the political establishment of the eastern kingdom, mention has to be made of the great number of people arriving in Hungary from Poland with Isabella and John II as members of their entourage, because, according to a contemporary letter, it was rumoured in the entire country that the queen did not want to appoint either a voivode or a treasurer, and instead that she wished to fill all positions with her Polish courtiers.¹⁰⁰ This was only partly true, though Isabella did indeed appoint many of her Polish courtiers to key positions. Moreover, she even had a list of councillors that she had prepared back in Krakow.¹⁰¹ The settlement of national realities was difficult due to the

97 The decision of 1542: EOE I. 189–190; 1556: *...ut bona episcopatum, capitulorum, conventuum, praepositorum, aliarum item ecclesiasticarum personarum, non reddantur illis, a quibus ademptae sunt, quinpotius, quemadmodum nobis Filiisque nostro Illustrissimo paribus votis et obsequentia per ipsos oblata et deputata existunt; ita in bonum et necessitates regni publicas, ex dignitate nostra, Filiisque nostri Illustrissimi exponantur.* EOE II. 64–65; Emőke Gálfi, 'Az egyházi javak szekularizációja és az erdélyi fejedelmek székvárosának születése', *Erdélyi Múzeum* 78:1 (2016) 26–35.

98 EOE II. 72–76; cf. Zsolt Bogdándi, 'Az erdélyi és a partiumi jogügyigazgatók a 16. század második felében', in Zsolt Bogdándi and Tamás Fejér (eds.), *Hivatalnok értelmiség a kora újkori Erdélyben.* (Erdélyi Tudományos Füzetek, 287.) Kolozsvár, 2017, 9–24.

99 Ildikó Horn, *A hatalom pillérei. A politikai elit az Erdélyi Fejedelemség megszilárdulásának korszakában (1556–1588).* DSc Dissertation. Budapest, 2012, 94; Emőke Gálfi, 'A gyulafehérvári udvarbírák és az általuk igazgatott uradalom a 16. század közepén', in Emese Egyed and László Pakó (eds.), *Certamen III. Előadások a magyar tudomány napján az Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület I. szaksztályában.* Kolozsvár, 2016, 261–270.

100 Gáspár Serédy's letter to Ferdinand, Makovica, 3 January 1557: Pray, *Epistolae Procerum*, III. 110.

101 Horn, *A hatalom pillérei*, 88–89. Isabella's noteworthy Polish politicians were, in the order of whom she liked best: Stanisław Nieżowski, Stanisław Ligęza, Jan Maluski, Marcin Ostrzyński and Paweł Secygniowski.

tense expectations of the Transylvanian magnates: almost all of them wished to receive from the queen some prestigious position that entailed high authority and remuneration.¹⁰²

After Queen Isabella's death in September 1559, Ferdinand, and then his son Maximilian, launched renewed attacks against John II's rule. The inner tranquillity of the country was also disturbed by the rebellion of the Székelys (1562). The severe laws enacted at Segesvár (Sighișoara) after the suppression of the rebellion made the system of bondage legal in the society of the Székelys, traditionally built on equal freedoms, and tied the bonds of the Székely nation of the estates closer to the other estates of the newly-built country.¹⁰³ In the mid-1560s, securing internal order in the country seemed a great challenge for John II, despite the fact that his chancellor and former educator, Mihály Csáky, was at his side, and even able to support him when he was entrusted with the office of lord-lieutenant in 1565.¹⁰⁴ The laws issued in the second half of the decade, aimed at consolidating internal order, levying taxes on a regular basis and at organizing domestic military preparedness in order to protect public order. The judicial system was also changed several times, leaving it up to each Transylvanian nation to choose the days allocated to and the form of judicial hearings.¹⁰⁵

John Sigismund was frequently ill during these years, so, inevitably, the question of succession surfaced. Although, at the meeting in Zimony in 1566, the sultan permitted free elections, it was not until the spring of 1568 that the envoys coming home from the Porte brought Selim II's permission to elect – as they put it – a voivode.¹⁰⁶ The right to free election had already been converted into law, however, at the diet of Gyulafehérvár in September 1567, when the executors of the will, the designated commissioners and the entire royal household, together with all the main dignitaries, swore to keep John II's will and unanimously to elect themselves a prince after his death.¹⁰⁷ It was

102 The brothers Kendy (Ferenc and Antal), the ambitious Menyhárt Balassa and Ferenc Bebek played an important role and hoped for great influence. A recent work on Menyhárt Balassa's career path: Nándor Virovecz, 'Száműzetéstől főkapitányságig. Balassa Menyhárt és az erdélyi hatalomváltás (1549–1552)', *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 128:1 (2015) 31–54; Idem, *Balassa Menyhárt élete és a kora újkori magyar politikai kultúra*. PhD Dissertation. Budapest, 2017.

103 *Székely oklevéltár*, II. 161–167; *EOE* II. 203–204.

104 Mihály Csáky (1492–1572), canon of Gyulafehérvár, secretary of the queen, chancellor of Transylvania (1556–1572); see Zsigmond Jakó, 'Csáky Mihály (1492–1572) erdélyi kancellár származásáról', in Idem, *Társadalom, egyház, művelődés*. Budapest, 1997, 91–97; Ildikó Horn, *Hit és hatalom: Az erdélyi unitárius nemesség 16. századi története*. Budapest, 2009, 161–170.

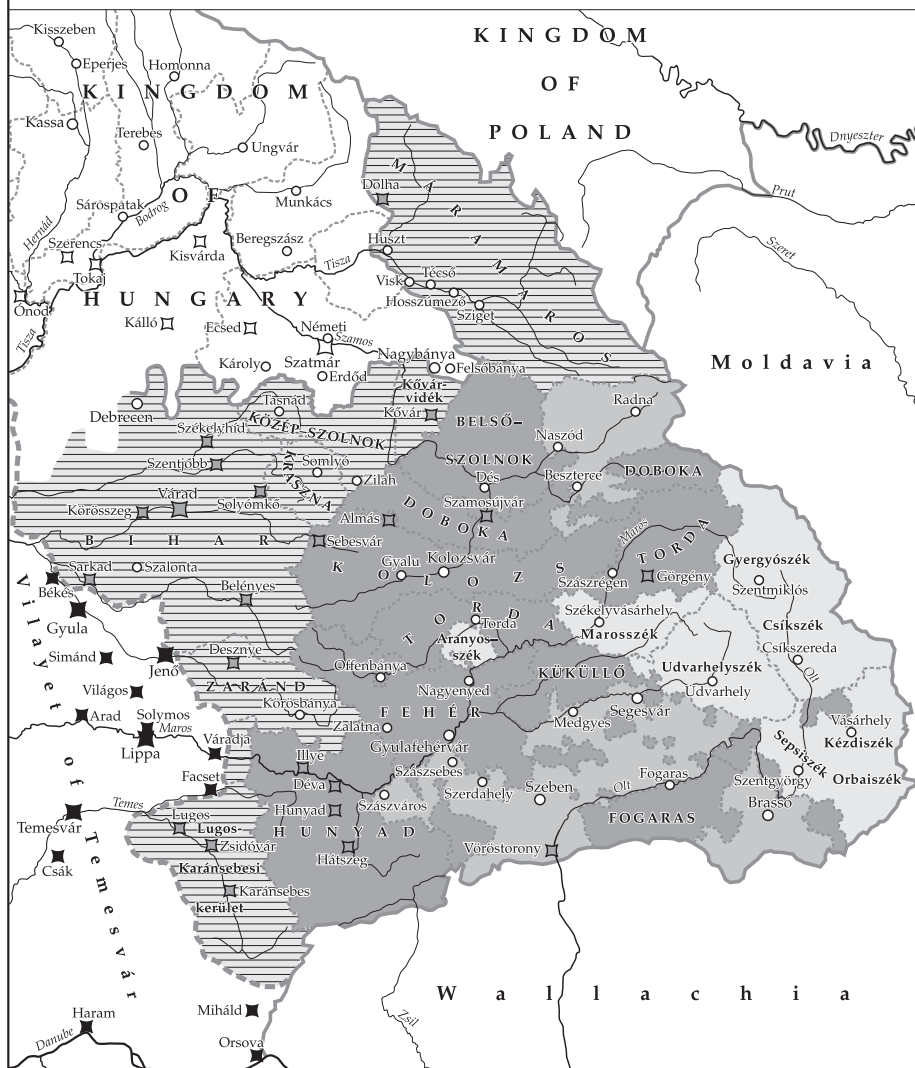
105 See, for example, *EOE* II. 302, 313–314, 322ff, *passim*.

106 *Similiter et Transsylvanis concessa est facultas, vajvodam ex sese deligere, si is qui nunc illis praesit, Joannis regis filius sine liberis decessisset*. Antal Verancsics's report, 1568: *Verancsics Antal összes munkái*. Vol. V. *Második portai követség. 1567–1568*. (Monumenta Hungariae Historica, II; Scriptores, 6.) Published by László Szalay. Pest, 1860, 264.

107 *EOE* II. 264–265, and *ibid.*, note 1. "...His majesty mercifully made us all swear that, when God takes him from this world, we should not fight among ourselves, which would only bring devastation, but should with equal will choose a prince for ourselves, according to the permission he received from his majesty the sultan, and which permission he also, at great

THE PRINCIPALITY OF TRANSYLVANIA, 1571

- Territory of the Transylvanian counties
- Territory of the Saxon seats and districts
- Territory of the Székely seats
- Partium (former parts of Hungary)
- Border of the Ottoman dominion in Hungary
- Ottoman fortress
- Transylvanian fortress
- Hungarian (Habsburg) fortress



ordered that all high dignitaries of the realm, county dignitaries and officials of the Székely and Saxon seats swear an oath to this decision of paramount importance, of which a memorandum was to be prepared and presented at the court. This unusually strict provision is a clear illustration of how important the matter was. The *libera electio*, i.e. the free election of princes, came later to be one of the main building blocks of the public law of the state of Transylvania. It frequently came up as a topic at preparatory negotiations with the Habsburg kings of Hungary, and it also came to be incorporated into their agreements.

After fierce struggles, these decades saw the birth of an unparalleled religious diversity, even in a European context, which had a dominant influence on the formation of the identity of the eastern Hungarian state and the principality.¹⁰⁸ The Roman Catholic ecclesiastical institutions suffered a great loss when the Transylvanian estates secularized all the church's assets and revenues in 1542 and 1556, deciding to use the money to cover the costs of the state and the royal court. As a result, membership of the Roman Catholic church dropped considerably in this part of the country. Articles of law allowing for Protestant sermons were issued as early as the 1550s, but ardent preachers of the new faith mostly did not conduct intense theological debates until the 1560s. An interesting phenomenon is that early Protestant ecclesiastical organization in Transylvania was initiated on a national basis: the Saxons' bishop of Szeben was responsible for areas where the inhabitants were Protestant Saxons, while a Hungarian bishop of Kolozsvár led the Hungarians who had adopted the new faith, regardless of whether this meant the Lutheran, Helvetian or the Antitrinitarian (Unitarian) faith that appeared in 1566.¹⁰⁹

Behind the ecclesiastical legislative activity of the 1540–1560s in Transylvania, where people had personal experience of the disintegration of the Kingdom of Hungary, there was a drive to establish and protect the unity, internal order and peace of the new state. This was manifest in the law of 1564, which separated the religious tradition of Szeben from that of Kolozsvár, i.e. Lutheranism from Calvinism, and which was born explicitly to preserve the peace of the inhabitants of the country (*pro quiete regnicolarum*).¹¹⁰

On the other hand, attacks against Catholics continued: according to an article of the diet from 1566, clergy insisting on 'papal science' and who do not want to convert to the new faith should be removed from the country.¹¹¹ Even

cost, managed to receive in writing." *Ibid.*, 335. See also Lajos Rácz, *Kormányzás és főhatalom az Erdélyi Fejedelemségben*. Budapest, 1992, 101.

108 On the peculiarities of the Hungarian Reformation, see Antal Molnár, 'Miért világtörténelmi kuriózum a magyarországi reformáció?', in Erika Kiss, Márton Zászkaliczky and Zsuzsanna Zászkaliczky (eds.), *Ige-Idők. A reformáció 500 éve. Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum 2017. április 26–november 5. Vol. 1. Tanulmányok*. Budapest, 2019, 15–25.

109 Mihály Balázs, 'Tolerant Country – Misunderstood Laws. Interpreting Sixteenth-Century Transylvanian Legislation Concerning Religion', *The Hungarian Historical Review* 2:1 (2013) 85–108.

110 *EOE* II. 231; cf. Ágnes Várkonyi, 'Pro quiete regni – for the Peace of the Realm. The 1568 Law on Religious Tolerance in the Principality of Transylvania', *The Hungarian Quarterly* 34 (1993) 99–112.

111 The diet of Torda, 10–17 March 1566, art. X: *EOE* II. 302; cf. Mihály Balázs, 'Az új ország és a katolikusok', in Veronka Dáné, Teréz Oborni and Gábor Sipos (eds.), *„Éltünk mi sokáig két hazában...” Tanulmányok a 90 éves Kiss András tiszteletére*. Debrecen, 2012, 37–53.

though later, in 1588, the Transylvanian estates, looking back, stated that they restricted no one's right to keep a priest of the faith of their choice on their property, it is true that inhabitants remained Roman Catholic on only very few noble estates and in certain parts of the Székely Lands.

The famous law of the diet of Torda in January 1568 was a milestone for the advancement of the Protestant confessions, in that on the basis of freedom of conscience it allowed various interpretations of the Bible without denoting the confession in question.¹¹² In the Principality of Transylvania, the process of institutionalizing a genuine, regulated church organisation based on the equality of the four recognized confessions (*recepta religio*) ended with the law issued at the diet of 1595, which for the first time stipulated the following: "As concerns the matter of religion, we have ordered, over the entire country, that the recognized confessions, namely the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist and Unitarian ones, be freely practised everywhere (*Az mi a religió dolgát nézi, végeztük országul, hogy az recepta religiók, tudniillik, catholica sive romana, lutherana, calvinistica, et ariana libere mindenütt megtartassanak*)." The diet also repealed the regulation of 1588 that banned Jesuits from Transylvania. These decisions may though have been substantially influenced by the fact that outside the walls of the princely castle the soldiers of the Roman Catholic prince were eagerly awaiting the result.¹¹³ Even if Transylvania was not without confessional struggles at this time, nor was it during the later periods of the principality, this country of multiple ethnicity accepted people of many beliefs. Safeguarding peace between religions and the freedom of religion always remained the basis of the prince's domestic policy and for keeping the country together.¹¹⁴

112 EOE II. 343: "His Majesty, after closing the matter of religion at the previous meeting with his countrymen, confirms at this meeting that preachers should preach and spread the Gospel everywhere, according to their interpretation of the word, and if the public wishes to accept this, that is good, but if not, no one shall force them to do so to console their own soul; but everyone shall be able to keep a preacher whose teachings he likes. And no one shall therefore ... punish or opprobiate preachers for their religion. ... and no one shall threaten anybody with captivity or removal from office due to his teachings, because faith is the gift of God, born out of listening, listening that is of the word of God (*Urunk őfelsége, miképpen ennek előtte való gyűlésibe országával közönséggel az religió dolgáról végezött, azonképpen mostan ez jelen valógyűlésébe azont erősíti, tudniillik hogy mindön helyökön az prédikátorok az evangéliumot prédikálják, hirdessék, kiki az ő értelme szerint, és az község ha venni akarja, jó, ha nem pedig senki kényszerítéssel ne kényszerítse az ű lelke azon meg nem nyugodván; de oly prédikátort tarthasson, az kinek tanítása önékie tetszik. Ezért pedig senki ... az prédikátorokat meg ne bánthassa, ne szidalmaztassék senki az religióért senkitől. ... és nem engedtetik senkinek, hogy senkit fogsággal, avagy helyéből való priválással [elküldéssel] fenyőgessön az tanításért, mert az hit istennek ajándéka, ez hallásból lészön, mely hallás istennek ígéje által vagyon*)."

113 Mihály Balázs, '„A hit ... hallásból lészön.” Megjegyzések a négy bevett vallás intézményesüléséhez a 16. századi Erdélyben', in Pál Fodor, Géza Pálffy and István György Tóth (eds.), *Tanulmányok Szakály Ferenc emlékére*. Budapest, 2002, 51–73.

114 This is also one of the basic thoughts in Prince Gabriel Bethlen's will (*Bethlen Gábor fejedelem végrendelete*. Published and notes by József Koncz. Maros-Vásárhelytől, 1878, 16): "If they come united, show real respect and have fear of God, ... do not argue about religion, but leave the matter to be decided by the great priest who resides in heaven, where he pays everyone their due: no priest should be made and no redemption should be made by force; pursuant to the

SUMMARY

The status of the eastern Hungarian Kingdom being formed due to the Ottoman conquest and placed under the rule of the Szapolyais cannot be defined by simply looking at it from a single point of view. The ambitions and legal opinions of the three political power factors described above prevailed at the same time, but not exclusively. From the perspective of the Ottomans, the eastern Hungarian Kingdom by the name *Erdel* was a tax-paying (tributary) state. It was also an integral part of the empire, with all the consequences thereof.

From the Habsburg point of view, the unity of the Kingdom of Hungary (the Holy Crown) still prevailed, in theory at least, and, together with other territories, Transylvania remained a member (*membrum*) of the kingdom, as a province; since, however, only one king (Ferdinand) had been crowned with the Holy Crown, his laws had to be accepted in the entire country, from Kézdivásárhely (Târgu Secuiesc) to the river Leitha. Transylvania was thus part of the Hungarian state. The ruler of Transylvania (and of the annexed parts) was thus a subject of the king of Hungary, and, due to external interference, his territory was temporarily separated from Hungary proper. The almost half-century-long battle for supremacy in the Kingdom of Hungary between the Habsburgs and the Szapolyais was initially fought by the fathers, Ferdinand and John. Subsequently their sons, Maximilian and John Sigismund, took over with no less force and commitment, until the Treaty of Speyer finally bought relief as expected: it established the legal status of the Principality of Transylvania, seceded from the Kingdom of Hungary, as well as that of the prince.

The Hungarian and Transylvanian estates had to choose between the two dynasties; this was not an easy choice to make, since both emperors of the respective global empires were far away, yet always cast their shadow over them. The reason for this was that the armed struggles between the Habsburgs and the Szapolyais, as well as the intervening Ottoman Empire's fierce responses in its capacity as arbitrator, hit the country's population most of all. The response of the estates of eastern Hungary and Transylvania to the situation was not so much 'either or' as 'both': they formally yielded and came to be integrated among the Ottoman Turk subjects. In practice, though, they created an old-new Hungarian state and a new Hungarian world: first the eastern Hungarian Kingdom, then the Transylvanian Principality. Out of necessity had a 'fairy garden' been sown.

country's constitution, may anyone be free to accept any of the four recognized confessions (*Ha magokban egyesek lesznek, az Istent igazán tisztelik, félik ... a religió felett egymással nem veszekednek, hanem annak megítélését ama nagy papra bizzák, aki lakik a mennyben, és hol kinek-kinek, amint érdemben megfizet: ne legyenek papokká, ne idvezítsenek erővel senkit, legyen szabadságban az ország constitutioja szerint a négy recepta religió közül ki melyiket amplectálja*)."

Péter Kasza*

FINDING THE WAY WITH NO ROOM FOR MANOEUVRE: JOHN SZAPOLYAI'S DIPLOMATIC ENDEAVOURS (1526–1540)

INTRODUCTION

From the point of view of political and diplomatic history, the Szapolyai era, starting with King John's accession to the throne in 1526 and ending with the death of his son John Sigismund (John II) in 1571, can be divided into two well-defined parts. Even though the death of King John in the summer of 1540 would appear an obvious end to the first part, the actual conclusion of the first phase of the period was the loss of the capital city of Buda to the Ottomans in 1541. Following the fall of Buda, Ottoman rule expanded rapidly in the central areas of the country, which brought about significant changes in the framework conditions, forcing the successor on the throne and his entourage to reconsider the politics conducted by King John. After the first fifteen years (1526–1541) of bogus independence, the leaders of the eastern territories had to face *de facto* vassalage during the second half of the period (1541–1571) and had to conduct politics within this framework. This essay does not, however, go so far ahead in time; it only gives an overview of the diplomatic characteristics of the reign of King John. The aim is not to provide an exhaustive view, but rather to highlight the key milestones along the path from initial illusions to the reality of vassalage.

Even though the reign of King John I falls within the first third of the Szapolyai era, there is hardly a 15-year period in the era characterized by a more varied foreign policy and more frequent changes in direction than the 15 years between 1526 and 1541. Taking into consideration only the most important endeavours, this one and a half decades can be divided into at least four sub-periods. The first lasted from the election of John Szapolyai in November 1526 until King Ferdinand's attack on Hungary in July 1527, when the tactics of negotiations and finding an acceptable compromise ended and were replaced

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by open civil war. This second period lasted for several years, from the summer of 1527 till at least January 1531 – in a certain sense until the early spring of 1533. Between 1533 and 1538 fights flared up from time to time between the parties, and in particular between their supporters, and both sides sought to establish more advantageous territorial positions. Yet the period was essentially marked by negotiations, which led to the signing of the compromise at Várad (Nagyvárad/Oradea). The last four years, between 1538 and August 1541, can be assessed as the failure of the Treaty of Várad. Let us have a closer look at the characteristic features of each of these sub-periods.

NEGOTIATIONS AND ILLUSIONS (NOVEMBER 1526 – JULY 1527)¹

Although clear evidence will likely never to be found for whether or not John Szapolyai, voivode of Transylvania, the most eminent lord in the country, was deliberately late for the Battle of Mohács, we can be more or less certain that he did not act intentionally. Even if Szapolyai had secretly wished to take the throne and even if he had expected the defeat of the Hungarian army, chances were very small that King Louis II would also lose his life in the battle. Suffice to say that, prior to King Louis II, 30 kings had occupied the Hungarian throne (not counting the anti-kings), and only one of them, the Jagiellonian Vladislaus III (Vladislaus I in Hungary, 1440–1444), had died in battle, in the distant city of Varna.² Even King Béla IV was saved by his bodyguards in the Battle of Muhi (1241), a battle that caused a catastrophe similar to that of Mohács. There was thus merely a mathematical chance of voivode John coming closer to the throne because of the unexpected death of King Louis II. Whether John Szapolyai speculated on this possibility or not (the latter seems the more plausible), King Louis II did not in fact return from the Battle of Mohács, and the Hungarian and Bohemian throne was left without a legal successor.

At the partial diet of Tokaj in 1526, John's followers convoked an electoral diet to be held in Fehérvár (Székesfehérvár), making no attempt to hide the fact that they already had a candidate for the post: the voivode of Transylvania. John Szapolyai was elected king on 10 November 1526, and was crowned on the following day. Two of the three requirements needed for a lawful coronation were fulfilled: the coronation took place in Székesfehérvár, and the Holy Crown was used for the ceremony. True, since the archbishop of Esztergom had died in the Battle of Mohács, the new king was anointed by István Podmaniczky, bishop of Nyitra, so the third requirement was not fulfilled. Given the circumstances,

1 Very useful specialist literature on the rule of John I Szapolyai: Gábor Barta, 'An d'illusions (Notes sur la double élection des rois d'après la défaite de Mohács)', *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 2 (1978) 1–40; Idem, *La route qui mène à Istanbul, 1526–1528*. (Studia Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, 195.) Budapest, 1994.

2 Gergely Kovaliczky, 'Lovagkirályok alkonya. II. Lajos a mohácsi csatában', *Rubicon* 30:4 (2020) 70–76.

everything was done as legally as possible.³ The majority of the lesser nobility supported King John, as did a part of the aristocracy, but it was clear from the very beginning that, in the shadow of the constant threat of the Ottomans, his throne would rest on extremely precarious grounds unless he managed to have his election recognised abroad. Diplomats and envoys were therefore immediately deployed to European courts to announce John's accession to the throne and to obtain the recognition of other crowned monarchs. King John definitely counted on the support of the pope and the king of Poland, his former brother-in-law. He also sought to establish contact with the kings of England and France. The main task of the diplomats, however, was to neutralize the Habsburgs. Although István Brodarics tried to make John's claim of the throne appear evident, the numerous agreements and direct family relations provided just as firm a basis for the two Habsburg brothers, Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor and king of Spain, and his younger brother Ferdinand, archduke of Austria, to formulate their claim.⁴ Moreover, the thought of renouncing the opportunity that had suddenly fallen from the sky did not even cross Ferdinand's mind.

John's supporters were of the opinion that the situation could be solved through negotiations. The Jagiellonian inheritance consisted of two countries, and Szapolyai claimed the throne of Hungary only. By leaving the Bohemian throne to Ferdinand, he believed he could create the basis for reaching an agreement. It was in this context that John I's envoys visited the court of Vienna, where the parties agreed to continue the negotiations in Olmütz (Olomouc), with Polish mediation, to address the situation. John I's diplomats sought to convince Ferdinand to recognize the election of the unmarried, childless John, to concede the throne of Hungary to him for the rest of his life, and to join efforts with Hungary and together take up arms against the Ottomans who were threatening the Austrian provinces just as much as Hungary.

The negotiations took place between 1 and 15 June 1527, but ended in complete failure.⁵ It became clear that all Ferdinand wanted was to play for time, time he used to recruit troops that could be launched in order to exercise his rights. He had absolutely no intention of reaching an agreement with the 'voivode'. It is rather telling that, in their diplomatic correspondence, Ferdinand was always called 'King of Bohemia' (*rex Bohemiae*) by the Szapolyai side, while the Habsburg refused to use the royal title in connection with Szapolyai, using only the title of 'voivode' when referring to him. After the troops of Ferdinand's brother sacked Rome on 27 May 1527 (*Sacco di Roma*) and won the latest

3 Cf. Géza Pálffy, *The Kingdom of Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy in the Sixteenth Century*. (CHSP Hungarian Studies Series, 18; East European Monographs, 735.) Translated from the Hungarian by Thomas J. and Helen D. DeKornfeld. Boulder, Co., Wayne, N. J., 2009, 37–41.

4 *Ibid.*, 27–33.

5 The negotiations in Olmütz have not yet been fully studied, although there is plenty of archival material available on the topic: ÖStA HHStA UA AA Fasc. 4. In Konv D several detailed reports can be found, written by Ferdinand's delegates. One of them, Beathus Widman, subsequently summarized the course of the negotiations in a separate volume. For the work preserved in manuscript form, see Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Wien, Ms 1532 and 8498.

round of the Italian Wars,⁶ Ferdinand obtained enough battle-wise soldiers in Central Europe, and in July 1527 his army crossed the Hungarian border. The negotiations were suspended for years, and civil war broke out between the two monarchs.

WEAPONS DO THE TALKING (JULY 1527–1532)⁷

Following the coronation, King John's committed supporter Kristóf Frangepán, a mercenary leader of great experience who took part in the Italian Wars, is said to have advised King John to attack Ferdinand first. Yet, with the Ottomans at his heels, this step would not only have been risky, but also difficult to explain to the European courts, so the king rejected this idea.⁸ It is somewhat surprising, though, that the Habsburg attack in the summer of 1527 caught King John unawares to such a degree. Without facing any resistance, his troops surrendered the entire Transdanubian region, left Buda, and retreated all the way to the river Tisza. The first major battle took place there, at Tokaj. The Habsburg army was smaller in size, but more experienced; the battle eventually ended in a Habsburg victory.⁹ As a result of the defeat, King John was forced back to the eastern part of the country for good. It became clear that, without external help, he would not be able to cope with Ferdinand's mercenaries. He therefore looked at other possibilities: his two leading diplomats, István Brodarics and Ferenc Frangepán, travelled to Poland to request military support from King Sigismund.¹⁰ János Statileo made preparations to travel to France to arrange for King John's accession to the anti-Habsburg League of Cognac.¹¹ These were the traditional

6 Cf. most recently: Michael Mallett and Christine Show, *The Italian Wars 1494–1559*. London–New York, 2014, 160–164.

7 Unfortunately, the civil war between John and Ferdinand has not been studied in detail. Apart from the material kept in the archives of Vienna, the work entitled *De bello Pannonico*, written by Ferdinand's court historiographer, Caspar Ursinus Velius, is an excellent narrative source: *De Bello Pannonico Libri Decem Ex codicibus manu exaratis Caesaris nunc primum in lucem prolati... illustrati, studio et opera Adami Francisci Kollarii*, Typis Joannis Thomae Trattner, Vindobonae, 1762; in Hungarian: Caspar Ursinus Velius, *Tíz könyv a magyar háborúról (De bello Pannonico libri decem)*. Translation, notes and afterword by Zsolt Szebelédi. Máriabesnyő, 2013. Another good source on these years is Szerémi's work: Szerémi, *Emlékirat*; in Hungarian: Szerémi, *Magyarország romlásáról*.

8 Cf. Barta, *La route qui mène à Istanbul*, 53–54; see the essay by János B. Szabó in this volume.

9 The military history of the civil war between John and Ferdinand has not been studied in sufficient depth. Recently, János B. Szabó has dedicated an essay to the subject that presents a new approach. In his work he also quotes the previous, rather scarce specialist literature: János B. Szabó, 'János király döntő csatái. Tokaj, 1527 és Szina, 1528', in László Pósnán and László Veszprémy (eds.), *Elfeledett háborúk. Középkori csaták és várostromok a 6–16. században*. Budapest, 2016, 426–442; see also B. Szabó's study in the present volume.

10 On the activities of Brodarics and Frangepán in their capacity as envoys, see Brodericus, *Epistulae*, 187–206, and Péter Kasza, *Egy korszakváltás szemtanúja. Brodarics István élete és működése*. Pécs, Budapest, 2015, 82–90.

11 János Statileo (Lat. Statilius, Cro. Statilić) (1472–1542), provost of Óbuda, later John Szapolyai's bishop of Transylvania (1528–1542). For more on his life, see Pongrácz Sörös, 'Statileo János életéhez', in *A pannonhalmi szt. benedekrendi főiskola évkönyve 1915–1916*.

directions of Szapolyai diplomacy. There was one thing, though, that King John had not done prior to his defeat at Tokaj: to seek contact with the Sublime Porte. After the lost battle, a significant change occurred in this regard. According to the unknown writer of *Memoria rerum*, Franciscan friars (called 'cseri' because of the colour of their attire) understood the Gospel to mean that those who helped King John should be regarded as kinfolk,¹² i.e. the possibility of an alliance with the Ottoman sultan should not be discarded if King John could benefit from it. In the autumn of 1527, the Polish adventurer Hieronym Łaski set off to Constantinople in his capacity as King John's envoy, which brought a major turnaround in the Szapolyai court's foreign policy. Hungarian rulers had waged many wars against the Ottoman Turks, and had also signed many armistice and peace agreements, but they had never before forged an alliance against another Christian ruler. This was a gamble that later brought serious consequences.

John's former brother-in-law, the king of Poland, Sigismund I the Old, was reluctant to providing military support to John. Officially, he even forbade anyone to hire themselves out as soldiers abroad without his prior authorisation.¹³ He was, however, unable (or perhaps simply reluctant) to prohibit King John's men from hiring Polish, Lithuanian and even Tatar troops as mercenaries and launching an attack in the spring of 1528.¹⁴ Yet by the time this support was able to depart, King John had already suffered his next, decisive, defeat at Szina (Seňa) on 8 March 1528. After the battle, even John's remaining supporters deserted him, and in the company of a small entourage he fled from the country and found refuge in Tarnów, Poland.

While exiled in Poland, he received the news that Łaski had managed to obtain support from the Ottomans on favourable terms: the sultan was not requesting any taxes from Szapolyai, not even formally, and was willing to support him as his ally during his campaign of the following year.¹⁵ An alliance with the Ottomans must have been embarrassing in every aspect, but, looked at from exile in Tarnów, John's future reputation seemed even worse. That the king of Hungary would forge an alliance with the Ottoman sultan to defend his throne against the Habsburgs was one thing, but a displaced, unsuccessful

Pannonhalma, 1916, 3–56, and Domagoj Madunić, *Vinko Pribojevic and the Glory of Slavs*. MA thesis, CEU. Budapest, 2003, 19. For more recent work on Statileo's diplomatic endeavours, see Richárd Botlik's comprehensive if not always precise essay: Richárd Botlik, 'Statileo János diplomáciai küldetesei János király (1526–1540) uralkodásának idejéből', *Századok* 147:4 (2013) 813–855.

12 Cf. *Memoria rerum*, 34.

13 For the text of the order, see *Acta Tomiciana*, IX. 228.

14 From Brodarics's correspondence, we know that as early as in Autumn 1527 several thousand mercenary soldiers from Poland were hired despite the royal ban: Brodericus, *Epistulae*, 192–196; at the same time, Sigismund himself exempted Marshal Piotr Kmita from this order, specifying that he may go to Hungary to wage war, provided Sigismund is not informed about it officially; cf. *Acta Tomiciana*, IX. 283.

15 On Łaski's activities in Istanbul, see *Két tárgyalás Sztambulban. Hieronymus Łaski tárgyalása a törökknél János király nevében. Habardanecz János jelentése 1528. nyári sztambuli tárgyalásáról*. (Régi Magyar Könyvtár. Források, 5.) Compiled by Gábor Barta. Essay and notes by Gábor Barta and Pál Fodor. Documents translated by Gábor Barta and József Kun. Budapest, 1996.

pretender being put on the throne by the sultan was quite another. Thus not even at the level of appearances would Szapolyai be more than any Moldavian or Wallachian voivode, who were replaced as and when the Porte saw fit.

For the refugees of Tarnów it therefore became essential to return to Hungary before the Ottoman attack reached the borders in the summer of 1529. They were lucky: Ferdinand returned to Vienna in the spring of 1528, making it clear that the real centre of his emerging empire would not be Buda. As usual, he could no longer pay his army, so most soldiers scattered to the four winds. The Ottoman troops along the borders kept looting the southern parts, and made the castles in Bosnia and Croatia, still in Christian hands, surrender one after the other.¹⁶ The Hungarian élite soon understood that whatever promises Ferdinand had made with reference to his brother, the Holy Roman Emperor, he was not able to guarantee the integrity of the remaining territories, let alone reconquer the lost ones. It was therefore not a coincidence that when John I's newly-recruited army appeared at the Polish–Hungarian border in September 1528 they were met with no major resistance.¹⁷ The Hungarian nobles once again swore loyalty to him, while the Habsburg administration panicked. King John established his new court in Lippa (Lipova), and met the captain of the first Ottoman auxiliary troops, Mehmed Bey, near Tápé at the confluence of the rivers Tisza and Maros.¹⁸ Then in the summer of 1529 he visited the padishah, who was camped near the field of Mohács, to kiss his hand.

Once again, John I seemed ready to win. The Habsburgs were apparently also unable to halt the Ottoman campaign, so, in the eyes of the Hungarian nobility, accepting partial dependence appeared a better solution, because King John's territories were not devastated by the Ottomans, and the city of Buda, recaptured from the pro-Ferdinand Tamás Nádasdy, had also been given back to King John. The Ottoman army marched all the way to Vienna, but for all their efforts the Ottomans were not able to occupy the imperial city. Even though, on their way home, Süleyman reinforced John in his role as king, and even handed him the Holy Crown that in the meantime had come into his possession,¹⁹ these

16 Gábor Barta, 'A Forgotten Theatre of War 1526–1528 (Historical Events Preceding the Ottoman–Hungarian Alliance of 1528)', in Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (eds.), *Hungarian–Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Relations in the Age of Süleyman the Magnificent*. Budapest, 1994, 93–130; the need for John Szapolyai's return was, according also to a recently published document, *Obsidio Budaë*, in the Verancsics collection, motivated by the loss of forts in Croatia: "While, around the domains of the king [i.e. Szapolyai], Ferdinand was waging war, he let Croatia, Jajca, Slavonia and the southern parts of Hungary be looted and occupied. John, Hungary's god-fearing king, is contemplating this miserable devastation from Poland, and swears loyalty to the Turkish sultan, promises to pay taxes and to be obedient, to avoid the whole of Hungary being plundered." Fanni Csapó and Gábor Pesti, 'Ismeretlen forrás Buda 1541. évi ostromáról', *Fons* 25:2 (2018) 232.

17 On the sporadic battles that took place, see the report by Brodaries: Brodericus, *Epistulae*, 224–228.

18 On this, see Szerémi's colourful description: Szerémi, *Magyarország romlásáról*, 222–223.

19 On these events, see János Zermegh, 'Emlékirat a Ferdinánd és János, Magyarország királyai között történt dolgokról', in *Krónikáink magyarul*. Vol. III/2. Selected and translated by Péter

gestures barely concealed the fact that a decisive victory over the Habsburgs had not taken place.

Ferdinand's troops recaptured the most important forts in western Hungary as early as the turn of 1530, and Pope Clement VII, upon making peace with Charles V, excommunicated John I because of his alliance with the Ottomans. The Hungarian élite was thus forced to admit that the path it had hitherto followed to preserve the country was no longer viable. The national kingdom failed at Tokaj and Szina, and the illusion of joining the Habsburg federation of states faded, due to John I's undisturbed return to Hungary and the Ottoman army's campaign to Vienna in 1529. Since the Ottomans were unable to occupy Vienna, and western Hungary also remained under Ferdinand's rule, the campaign did also show up the deficiencies of the Ottoman army. That a pro-Ottoman policy was no solution to Hungary's problems became evident during the second Ottoman campaign in 1532, during which Süleyman did not even reach Vienna, and neither did he engage in a battle with the huge Christian army that had gathered there. It became obvious that neither Ferdinand and the Habsburgs nor John I was able to keep the entire country in their possession by the use of arms. Once again, the task of finding a solution was left to diplomacy.

FROM NEGOTIATIONS TO A PEACE AGREEMENT (1533–1538)

The negotiations of Olmütz broke down, but the parties took up the reins of dialogue as early as 1530. After lengthy consultations and with Polish mediation, King John's and Ferdinand's envoys sat down to the negotiating table. The consultations did not yield any results, however, mainly because Ferdinand's troops besieged King John while the talks were still in progress. When the siege led by Wilhelm von Roggendorf failed, the Armistice of Visegrád, guaranteeing more time for further negotiations, came to be based on the articles of the Treaty of Poznań.²⁰ Prior to the upcoming Ottoman campaign, no substantive agreements were formulated by the parties; the independent actions of the Hungarian nobility in 1531–1532, i.e. the diets held without the presence of the king, where the participants sought to find a solution independently from the two monarchs, had also remained fruitless.²¹ After 1532 it became clear that no

Kulcsár. Budapest, 2007, 151. Szapolyai also reported to the people of Buda on the capture of Péter Perényi, guardian of the crown and *ispán* of Temes, who already sided with Ferdinand, and used the example of the unfaithful magnate to try to convince them to keep the oath of alliance they had sworn to him; cf. ÖStA HHStA UA AA, Fasc. 12. Konv A, fol. 88. For more recent work on the relationship between Perényi and Szapolyai, see Anett Puskár, 'Szapolyai János és Perényi Péter', *Publicationes Universitatis Miskolcensis. Sectio Philosophica* 13:3 (2008) 295–313. On the fate of the crown, see Szabolcs Varga, 'Volt-e a Szent Korona Péccsett?', *Pécsi Szemle* 12:1 (2009) 18–24.

20 For more information on the negotiations in Poznań, see Péter Kasza, "...hogy az lengyel király általa lenne köztek valami békisség." Az 1530. évi poznaíni tárgyalások anatómiája', *Történelmi Szemle* 55:2 (2013) 271–289.

21 For more information on the so-called 'kingless' diets, see MOE I. 311–363. Also see the essay by Pál Fodor and Teréz Oborni in the present volume.

military solution could prevent the country from facing total devastation. The fronts solidified at the very centre of the country: Süleyman's troops were stuck near Kőszeg, while John was unable to occupy Esztergom, a city of strategic importance for the occupation of Buda. This stalemate led to another round of negotiations: on behalf of Szapolyai, the most experienced diplomats, István Brodarics and Ferenc Frangepán, travelled during the first months of 1533 to Megyer, Óvár and later to Pozsony (Bratislava) in order to negotiate with the Habsburg envoys there.²² John wanted to prevent a formal recognition of the partition of the country at any cost; Ferdinand, on the other hand, considered the status quo as the basis for the negotiations. John's envoys therefore sought to convince the Habsburg ruler to accept their master's claim to the entire country, with the proviso that following his death everything would be transferred to Ferdinand. They argued that renewed Ottoman attacks could be avoided only if it were Szapolyai who ruled the entire country, as he enjoyed the support of the Sublime Porte, and, through his established contacts with the Ottomans, was able to prevent the destruction of the country and to preserve its unity for a brighter future.

This was the reason why John's envoys were taken aback by the news that Ferdinand's envoy, Jeromos Zárai, had signed an armistice agreement in Istanbul. The sultan and the Habsburg diplomacy had thus simply gone over King John's head. His vanity hurt, the king immediately recalled his envoys, and once again diplomatic relations fell to a low ebb.

The prevailing impasse was unlocked by a murder: in 1534, John's governor Lodovico Gritti, with considerable influence even on the Porte, had Imre Czibak, bishop of Várad killed. The infuriated nobles of Transylvania chased the governor to the city of Medgyes (Mediaş), where he surrendered and was later executed.²³ Gritti was regarded as one of the sultan's men, so his execution caused great panic at the court of Buda, as people had a legitimate fear of the padishah's revenge. In order to guard himself somewhat against a possible Ottoman attack, King John once again entered into negotiations with Ferdinand; the head of the delegation was again Brodarics, whose speech delivered in Vienna in March 1535 has come down to us.²⁴ In the meantime, Gritti's main patron, Grand Vizier Ibrahim, fell out of favour, and was also executed in 1536, so in Istanbul the Gritti case was withdrawn from the agenda. Despite all this, the Szapolyai court did not abandon the idea of finding a solution through negotiations. Having learnt lessons from the incident in 1533, when Ferdinand

22 Cf. Kasza, *Egy korszakváltás szemtanúja*, 96–103.

23 For more on the life of Gritti (with a detailed bibliography), see Ferenc Szakály, *Lodovico Gritti in Hungary 1529–1534: A Historical Insight into the Beginnings of Turco–Habsburgian Rivalry*. (Studia Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, 197.) Budapest, 1995. An assessment of his work as governor: Gábor Barta, 'Ludovicus Gritti magyar kormányzósága (1531–1534)', *Történelmi Szemle* 14:3–4 (1971) 289–319; more recently on his life: Adriano Papo and Gizella Németh Papo, *Lodovico Gritti: un principe-mercante del rinascimento tra Venezia, i turchi e la corona d'Ungheria*, Venice, 2002.

24 Brodericus, *Epistulae*, 446–451.

made a deal with the sultan over John's head, the court came to the conclusion that this time negotiations were not to be entered into with Ferdinand. Instead, they believed that direct negotiations should be established, and an agreement should be reached with Charles V, who had the real power, and who viewed the situation in Hungary from a different perspective.²⁵ John's two top diplomats, Brodarics and Frangepán, therefore left for Italy in autumn 1535. They caught up with Charles near Naples, and were travelling across Italy with the court for almost a year.²⁶ Their efforts were not in vain. Charles V had to stand his ground on a number of fronts: in Italy, he was fighting against the French; in Germany, he aimed to curb the spread of Protestantism, and as king of Spain and Naples, he had to fight off the ever-growing Ottoman threat in the western basin of the Mediterranean. He was thus quite keen to sign an agreement that would establish peace, at least temporarily, on the distant Hungarian front, especially if the peace agreement would guarantee that the crown of Hungary would be passed on to his brother, peacefully, in the event that his opponent died. The archbishop of Lund, Johann Wese, appeared in Várad as early as 1536, as the envoy of the emperor – a definite sign of Charles' commitment. Wese was the emperor's best 'crisis manager': he played a very important role in drawing up the Treaty of Linz, for example, which served to sooth hostile Bavarian–Habsburg relations.²⁷ Wese had experience in solving sensitive and difficult matters. Yet even for him it took more than a year and several rounds of negotiations before the parties signed the Treaty of Várad on 24 February 1538, which coincided with the emperor's birthday and the thirteenth anniversary of his glorious victory at Pavia.²⁸ This result was also facilitated by the severe defeat of Ferdinand's last military action in autumn 1537,²⁹ and by the threat of John's most committed supporters, Brodarics and Frangepán, to desert him if he was unwilling to sign the compromise peace treaty.³⁰

By signing the peace treaty, King John renounced the idea of a united country, because the agreement was de facto based on the partition of the country. Both parties could retain the territories already under their rule, they reciprocally recognised each other as legitimate rulers (from this time onwards John was

25 On the role of Charles V: Zoltán Korpás, *V. Károly és Magyarország (1526–1538)*. Budapest, 2008, 155–203.

26 Cf. Kasza, *Egy korszakváltás szemtanúja*, 120–123.

27 On the circumstances in which the Treaty of Linz was concluded: Hans Martin Klinkenberg, 'Der Linzer Vertrag zwischen Bayern und Österreich vom 11. September 1534 nach Münchener Akten', *Historische Zeitschrift* 194 (1962) 568–598.

28 For documentation on the diplomatic activity prior to the signing of the peace treaty, see Árpád Károlyi, 'Okiratok és levelek a nagyváradi béke történetéhez 1536–1538', *Történelmi Tár* 3:1 (1878) 713–817.

29 Although Katzianer's defeat at Eszék (Osijek) was one of the most important Habsburg campaigns of the decade following the Battle of Mohács, it has not been adequately investigated. The only existing systematic summary: Leopold Kupelwieser, *Johann Katzianer's Zug gegen die Türken 1537*. Wien, 1899. More recently: Szabolcs Varga, 'Nádasdy Tamás horvát-szlavón bánsága (1537–1539)', *Századok* 144:4 (2010) 810–815.

30 Brodericus, *Epistulae*, 515–516.

referred to as king in Habsburg diplomatic correspondence), and joint committees were set up to redress disputes and abuses of power. In the long run, the peace treaty favoured Ferdinand, because the ageing and unmarried John was childless, and thus without a possible heir, so it seemed plausible that the peace agreement would put an end to the devastation caused by the civil war and automatically solve the issue of succession and the unification of the country after John's death. The only uncertain factor was the opinion of the sultan, as the agreement – or rather the clause in which King John promised that if he died childless his part of the country would be passed on to Ferdinand – had not yet been disclosed to the Ottoman ruler.

THE LOSS OF BUDA

One of the key elements in the Treaty of Várad was of course that John should remain unmarried and have no heir to complicate the situation. The legitimization and international recognition it obtained were, however, used by the Szapolyai court to find a high-ranking wife for the monarch. The choice fell on Isabella, princess of Poland, born into the second marriage of King Sigismund the Old.³¹ The wedding took place in Buda, in the early spring of 1539. The young queen consort soon became pregnant and, in the summer of 1540, she bore a son, i.e. a potential heir to the throne.

King John might, at first sight, be rightly accused of being irresponsibly selfish for giving in to the temptation of establishing a dynasty and getting married, given that the birth of a legal successor put the delicate peace agreement at risk. Yet, there was an article in the agreement which the Habsburgs failed to comply with: it was agreed in Várad that if John and his part of the country was exposed to retaliation for making the peace treaty in secret from the Ottomans, an auxiliary army of sufficient number would be sent by the Habsburgs to support Szapolyai. Pursuant to the treaty, 3,000 armed soldiers had to be sent to secure Buda alone.³²

Shortly after the signing of the Treaty of Várad, Süleyman set off at the head of his army towards Hungary. The purpose of his campaign was not known, but an act of retaliation against John cannot be ruled out.³³ The king immediately requested help from Ferdinand, who had a hard time putting together about 2,000 soldiers who did not reach the river Tisza before autumn.³⁴ By then it had

31 For more details on the life of Isabella: Endre Veress, *Isabella királyné (1519–1559)*. (Magyar Történeti Életrajzok) Budapest, 1901; Ágnes Máté and Teréz Oborni (eds.), *Isabella Jagiellon, Queen of Hungary (1519–1559)*. (Mohács 1526–2026: Reconstruction and Remembrance) Budapest, 2020.

32 On this, see the memorandum written to Ferdinand by Brodarics in June 1538: Brodericus, *Epistulae*, 528–531.

33 The campaign was preserved for posterity by Antal Verancsics: Antal Verancsics, 'Péter moldvai vajda elűzése (1538)', translation and notes by Éva Gyulai, in *Gesta* 7:1 (2007) 46–56.

34 On this, see the rather gloomy letters written by Brodarics in September and October 1538: Brodericus, *Epistulae*, 567–573.

become clear that the main purpose of the campaign was to expel the Moldavian voivode, Petru Rareș, and that this time the sultan was not personally going to attack the country. It had also become obvious, however, that should the Porte intend to occupy the Kingdom of Hungary, regardless of the Treaty of Várád, Ferdinánd would still be unable to equip a military force effective enough to support Hungary after it broke its alliance with the Ottoman Empire.

Seen like this, it is understandable that Szapolyai's court was of the opinion that sticking to a shuttlecock policy was in the best interests of the country.³⁵ This required a legal successor and heir to the throne, however. That is why the proposal and the marriage took place, followed by the birth of an heir. That this was well understood within the court is demonstrated by the fact that one of those instrumental to the Treaty of Várád, István Brodarics, himself led the proposal delegation, while he must have been aware that a marriage might severely affect the peace agreement.³⁶

Knowing all the prevailing conditions, the Szapolyai entourage proved to be right: the sultan did not conquer Hungary, did not devastate the territories ruled by John I (or only exceptionally),³⁷ and there were no signs of him intending to change this. At the same time, it was also clear that the desired Christian collaboration had not developed to such an extent as to be able successfully to counteract an Ottoman attack. It could perhaps defend Vienna and its surroundings, as it did in 1532, but Hungary would, in the event of an Ottoman invasion, succumb to Ottoman rule.

The only circumstance that was not taken into consideration was King John's unexpected death in 1540, which would create a new situation. The Szapolyai party collapsed: some of its members sided with Ferdinand, pursuant to the Treaty of Várád,³⁸ while others remained on the side of the queen consort and infant John Sigismund, and wished to act on King John's will and have the prince

35 In the wedding song written by Mihály Verancsics on the occasion of King John and Isabella's wedding, the Hungarian lords encourage the king to give up his life as a bachelor and get married. See the modern edition of the poem in György Palotás, "The Scythian-Sarmatian Wedding" and the Epithalamion of Michael Verancius (1539)', in Neven Jovanović, Branko Jozić, Francisco Javier Juez Gálvez and Bratislav Lučin (eds.), *Colloquia Maruliana XXIII: Anticka Bastina u Renesansom Tekstu*. Split, Marulianum, 2014, 99–118; Idem, 'Verancsics Mihály nászdala Szapolyai János és Jagelló Izabella esküvőjére (1539)', in Gábor Ujváry and Réka Lengyel (eds.), *Lymbus 2012–2013. Magyarságtudományi Forrásközlmények*. Budapest, 2014, 25–43; Idem, 'Az 1539-es krakkói „nászdalverseny”', *Corollarium* 1 (2013) 6–19.

36 Cf. Kasza, *Egy korszakváltás szemtanúja*, 131–138.

37 When Mehmed Bey arrived in 1530 to support Szapolyai, he unexpectedly encountered opposition, so, instead of plundering Austrian territories, he destroyed the valley of the river Vág. Ferdinand's envoy Albert Peregi reported from Krakow in the first days of October 1530 that the Ottomans drove away 40,000 men from the Moravian frontier, and after they retreated, 1,000 slaughtered boys were found on just one of Elek Thurzó's estates; cf. *Acta Tomicianae*, XII. 309.

38 The two main figures switching sides were Ferenc Frangepán and Péter Perényi. Brodarics did not have to make this decision, as he died in November 1539.

crowned under the auspices of the Ottoman Empire.³⁹ In this delicate situation King Ferdinand took up arms again and sent his troops against Buda, first under the leadership of Leonhard von Vels and six months later under the leadership of Wilhelm von Roggendorf.⁴⁰ Even though he was unable to occupy the fortified city and the castle, the sieges convinced the sultan that his positions in Hungary could only be maintained by a direct military presence. He therefore occupied Buda in 1541 and left only eastern Hungary and Transylvania for the Szapolyais to rule. With the capture of Buda by the Ottomans, the fall of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary was complete, and it was under new conditions that the Szapolyai party had to meet the challenges of the future.

39 In the newly arisen situation, the guardians appointed by John, Friar George (Martinuzzi), Péter Petrovics and Bálint Török, came to play key roles. On Petrovics, see the essay by Péter Kasza, Teréz Oborni and Szabolcs Varga in the present volume.

40 For more recent work on the siege of Buda in 1541, see *Buda oppugnata: 1541 – egy korszakhatár a magyar történelemben*, in *Tanulmányok Budapest Múltjából* 42 (2017) 9–280.

István H. Németh*

KING JOHN SZAPOLYAI'S URBAN POLICY

THE INTERNAL POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT

“News came this year that King Louis of Hungary, after an ill-fated battle against the enormous army of the Turks ... was routed, defeated and allegedly drowned in a swamp at the age of twenty. ... The very same year, after the death of King Louis, queen consort Mary and István Báthory, together with other magnates convoked an assembly to be held on the day of St. Catherine [25 November] in Komárom (Komárno). On the other hand, John Zápolya, hereditary count of Szepes county and voivode of Transylvania, held an assembly in Székesfehérvár where he was hastily crowned on St. Martin’s day by his supporters, upon which the lords of the country became infuriated, and, at the diet of Pozsony (Bratislava), elected Ferdinand king. The people of Kassa (Košice), however, having sided with voivode John, went to Esztergom upon his election, where they swore an oath of allegiance and handed over some valuable gifts; this act of theirs caused the most serious inconvenience to the other four cities. For, in this way, the other cities were obliged to introduce themselves and hand over gifts to the king on the day of Annunciation – they did not swear the oath of allegiance, however.”¹

This is how the news of the defeat at Mohács and the ensuing uncertain political situation was reported by Conrad Sperfogel, a contemporary, whose account – due to its importance – was inserted in its original (Latin) version into the chronicle written by his 17th-century successor Caspar Hain, councillor of Lőcse (Levoča). The direct consequences of the defeat, which marked the beginning of a new era, was felt mainly by cities in Transdanubia, while the indirect consequence, namely the collapse of state power, was also experienced by other cities. The effects of the civil war on the kingdom were felt even in

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¹ Caspar Hain, *Zipserische oder Leütschaverische Chronica vndt Zeit-beschreibung. Hain Gáspár Lőcsei krónikája. Vol. 1. Lőcse, 1910, 32–33.*

the most remote north-eastern part of the country, however. It is specifically this crisis situation brought about by the civil war that makes the study and assessment of John Szapolyai's relationship with the royal free cities so difficult. We can hardly speak of a conscious urban policy on the part of monarchs in the early 16th century. Letters of command issued to cities mainly provide evidence of the collection of taxes and other military duties. Apart from these, during the period of King John I's and King Ferdinand I's rule urban policy was mostly dominated by the issue of sacking adversarial cities or making them switch to the side of a particular monarch. In this internal political situation burdened by civil war, it was the position taken by cities and their burghers, together with the role the burghers played in establishing financial backing for the war, that was most likely to constitute a political nexus with the monarchs.

After the Battle of Mohács, the positions taken by the cities were characterized mostly by perplexity. Mary of Austria and her brother Ferdinand fled towards Vienna, so initially only a small part of the country fell under their jurisdiction. The majority of royal free cities thus attended the assemblies convoked by John I. Pursuant to the decisions taken at the partial assembly in Tokaj, delegates from the mining cities of Lower Hungary, as well as some from other cities, attended the coronation of King John in Székesfehérvár. The delegates from Kassa, presenting King John with gifts as a sign of their admiration, also acted on behalf of the members of the Town Alliance of Upper Hungary, a considerable distance from Esztergom. Perplexity is indeed likely to have lain hidden behind the decisions of the authorities in royal free cities. As for the cities in Upper Hungary, Kassa was at this point clearly on the side of Szapolyai, while other members of the alliance (Eperjes [Prešov]), Bártfa [Bardejov], Lőcse and Kisszeben [Sabinov]) seem to have been less dedicated supporters of his. This is suggested by the letter from four members of the Town Alliance, written in the name of the council of Eperjes to two pro-Ferdinand captains stationed in Bártfa and Eperjes. In the letter they claim their decision was influenced by the will of the authorities of Kassa and by the proximity of King John's troops. We can assume that the other cities sided with King John for similar reasons. Amidst the political instability, cities used all available opportunities to position themselves appropriately, as Ferdinand's invitation to the diet to be held in Komárom must have arrived only after the aforementioned letter had been sent.² Apart from the pro-Szapolyai city of Kassa, all the other cities prepared for the journey, but eventually the majority (including those in Upper Hungary) did not attend the diet, which in the end was held in Pozsony instead of Komárom.³ That the cities of Upper Hungary and even some others were absent from the diet is confirmed by a letter of command issued by Ferdinand following his election, in which he called upon the cities to notify him of their confirmation

2 Štátny archív v Prešove, Pracovisko Archív Bardejov, Magistrat Mesta Bardejova (= MMB), Listy No. 5568. Pozsony, 9 October 1526.

3 István H. Németh, *Várospolitika és gazdaságpolitika a 16–17. századi Magyarországon. A felső-magyarországi városszövetség. Vols. I–II.* Budapest, 2004, I. 83–87.

of his election.⁴ Instead of sending envoys, the Town Alliance of Upper Hungary tried (not unsuccessfully) to make a deal with the then pro-Szapolyai *ispán* of Temes county, Péter Perényi, on the issue of taxes payable to maintain the army. The letters written by Ferdinand in the first half of 1527, in which he calls upon the cities to submit to him, did not yield any results. Meanwhile, delegates from almost all the royal free cities, with the exception of the mining towns in Lower Hungary, attended the diet of Pozsony convoked by King John. Furthermore, to ingratiate themselves with him, the delegates of cities in Upper Hungary handed over the letters written to them by Ferdinand.⁵

In the summer of 1527, the political situation changed substantially. In July, after the failed negotiations in Olmütz (Olomouc) and the expiration of the ceasefire announced there, Ferdinand launched his troops; while he was on his way to the Kingdom of Hungary, circular letters were distributed in which (*inter alia*) the cities were called upon to be loyal to him. In view of this, in August Ferdinand's royal commissioner, Baran von Bartsch, encouraged the Town Alliance of Upper Hungary to do the same. The appearance of Habsburg troops urged the city councils to take immediate action; one by one, they yielded to Ferdinand. The Battle of Tokaj, which sealed Upper Hungary's fate, eventually convinced even the council of Kassa, similarly to other cities, to defect from Szapolyai's side.⁶ At the coronation ceremony of Ferdinand almost all the royal free cities were present,⁷ while the cities of Upper Hungary greeted the monarch with a glorifying poem written by the judge of Bátfá, Valentin Eck.⁸ The changed view of the burghers of Kassa is vividly described by György Szerémi, who, as he was sojourning in Kassa at the time, had direct experience of the changes. The people of Kassa, who sided with Ferdinand because, with his army nearing, they perceived him to be stronger, forced Szerémi to leave the city. Subsequently, the judge of Kassa, Michael Kukkelbrecht, delivered a one-hour speech to the local burghers on how the political situation had changed. The coat of arms of the Szapolyai family was torn down, soiled, then tied to a dog and lit. The dog, yowling in pain, was then chased away amidst loud cries of 'Canis rex'. Not even King John's envoy was admitted to the town; what is more, the burghers of the city stole the silver that had been collected for the mint of Kassa.⁹ After the coronation, the royal free cities complied with their tax and military obligations to Ferdinand; they also attended all the diets convoked

4 MOE I. 54–55.

5 H. Németh, *Várospolitika és gazdaságpolitika*, I. 86–87.

6 *Ibid.*, 87–89.

7 Cf. Hain, *Lőcsei krónikája*, 34.

8 On the pledge of alliance taken by the cities, see Archív mesta Košice (= AMK) Collectio Schwartzbachiana (= Schw.) No. 1146 (1527), No. 1248 (1528); ÖStA HHStA UA AA Fasc. 7. 1527. s. d. fol. 3. The poem was handed over to the monarch in the name of the cities of Kassa, Lőcse, Bátfá, Eperjes, Kiszzeben and Késmárk.

9 Szerémi, *Magyarország romlásáról*, 149–152.

by him.¹⁰ During the period that followed, the majority of royal free cities remained loyal to Ferdinand, whether covertly or openly. Despite its member cities being situated along the military route to Poland, the Town Alliance of Upper Hungary was in continuous cooperation with the troops of the Habsburg monarch. Moreover, the paid soldiers of the cities also took up arms against Szapolyai's local troops. Cooperation remained constant even when King John, coming back from Poland, occupied a significant part of Hungary and moved his capital to Buda. Cities without the support of the royal forces allied with the pro-Ferdinand lords of the region several times in order to secure their protection. This way they were able to provide military support to each other. Apart from armed resistance, individual political action was also needed. From time to time cities made peace or entered into ceasefire agreements, sometimes jointly, with adversary pro-Szapolyai lords, which provided longer or shorter periods of relative peace for the town dwellers.¹¹

Cities that sided with Ferdinand suffered much damage during this period because of looting by troops supporting John Szapolyai. The ever-growing number of thieves exploiting the chaotic situation also caused these cities a great deal of trouble.¹² In the mining towns of Lower Hungary, located closer to the capital of Buda, we can find the same phenomena as in the cities of Upper Hungary. The mines were of strategic importance, so mining cities had to be more skilful in their politics, as their region was almost entirely in the hands of pro-Szapolyai landowners. Mining towns attempted to side with the Habsburgs, as the estates were, in a stricter sense, owned by Mary of Austria. Since they were located in the immediate surroundings of the part of the country that was ruled by King John, however, he considered them as belonging to his territorial jurisdiction. Therefore John kept sending letters urging these cities to pay their taxes and provide him with armed men and other supplies. The leaders of the mining towns tried to comply with these demands, but in many cases it is doubtful whether the taxes were indeed paid, the armed men sent and whether or not these cities attended the diets convoked by King John, as in the majority of cases it was exactly because of the noncompliance with these obligations that these letters of commands were sent repeatedly.¹³

Throughout the civil war between the two monarchs, the cities had to function against the backdrop of this unpredictable political setting. Although the

10 H. Németh, *Várospolitika és gazdaságpolitika*, I. 88–90. On the taxation of cities of Lower Hungary, see Štátny Archív v Banskej Bystrici, Pracovisko Archív Banská Štiavnica, Magistrat Mesta Banská Štiavnica (= MMBŠt), Spisy No. 171, 3 November 1527. On the diets, see *MOE* I. 190, 504, 507, 544, 547.

11 Hain, *Lőcsei krónikája*, 35; AMK Supplementum H, Listy a listiny (= H I.), 1365/86, I, 16, 42, 36, 75, 30, II, 6; MMB Listy No. 8332, Bártfa, 23 November 1536.

12 H. Németh, *Várospolitika és gazdaságpolitika*, I. 90–94.

13 MMBŠt Spisy, 6 October 1530, 10 January 1530, 19 April 1530. On the amount payable to governor Lodovico Gritti, see *ibid.*, 23 January 1531. For letters with similar content written by queen consort Mary and King Ferdinand I, see *ibid.*, passim. For the diet of Nagyszombat (Trnava) in 1531, see *ibid.*, 11 April 1531.

continuous military campaigns were from time to time interrupted by temporary ceasefire agreements between the two rulers, all the mining towns and cities of Upper Hungary along the front line, or even those within it, except the cities in Western Hungary, existed in isolation. A major change in the jurisdiction of cities during the struggles for the throne (which lasted till the death of John Szapolyai and the loss of Buda) occurred with the occupation of Kassa in 1536. The loss of the centre of Upper Hungary could indeed have dragged the other cities into submitting to King John. Yet, after the reaction of the city council of Eperjes, one that reflected uncertainty and fear, it was the pro-Ferdinand attitude of Lőcse and other cities that prevailed. A major factor in their decision was the behaviour of the commanders of Ferdinand's troops stationed in the region: within a short period of time they sent military units of suitable size to protect the most vulnerable cities. Soon, Habsburg military forces led by commander-in-chief Leonhard Freiherr von Vels arrived, and although they were not able to retake Kassa, they did occupy the forts that constituted major threats to cities: Makovica (Zborov), Kapi (Kapušany) and Sáros (Šariš).¹⁴ Vels was replaced by the Spanish Tomaso Lascano. Lascano tried to retake Kassa in the summer of 1539, but King John's army surprised the Habsburg troops, as, together with the burghers of Eperjes, they were on their way to Kassa. Lascano, together with some of his soldiers, including a burgher from Eperjes, were killed in the battle. About a 150 burghers from Eperjes were captured and not released until more than a year later.¹⁵ Following Lascano's ill-fated military endeavour, King John's captains gradually obliged city merchants to pay the 'thirtieth' customs duty, and even the ninth, as well as the tithe.¹⁶ The remaining members of the Town Alliance tried to seek protection in Vienna, but their situation did not improve until they had come to an agreement with captain Lénárd Czecey of Kassa, according to which they would pay him 'protection money'; in return he would not hinder trade in the city and would not rob its merchants.¹⁷

14 Béla Wick, *Kassa története és műemlékei*. Kassa, 1941, 57–58; Sándor Takáts, *Régi magyar kapitányok és generálisok*. Budapest, 1922, 19–20; Hain, *Lőcsei krónikája*, 75; H. Németh, *Várospolitikai és gazdaságpolitika*, I. 97–103.

15 ÖStA HHStA UA AA 23 June 1539, fol. 75–84, 26 August 1539, fol. 41; cf. Takáts, *Régi magyar kapitányok*, 22–23.

16 Takáts, *Régi magyar kapitányok*, 25–26; ÖStA HHStA UA AA Fasc. 48, fols. 24–25, 30 August 1543; MNL OL Post-Mohács collection, R 314 (City archives) Lőcse, Eperjes, 16 December 1543.

17 The sum of the yearly payable tax-like financial allowance (imposed on the towns in a lump sum) was initially 600, then 1,000 forints. MMB Eperjes, 31 December 1540. Upon receiving the negotiated sum, Czecey issued a document similar to a guarantee of safe conduct, in which he granted free movement to city merchants; *ibid.*, Kassa, 23 December 1540, 17 September 1541, 16 October 1541, 4 November 1541, 9 March 1543.

TAX POLICY AND STATE CONTROL

During the late Middle Ages, prior to the Battle of Mohács, the amount of tax payable by the two major cities, Buda and Pest, was particularly high compared the other cities of the Kingdom of Hungary: they usually paid 2,000-2,500 forints each.¹⁸ By comparison, as a consequence of the simultaneous election of two kings and of the Ottoman challenge, cities had to face a significant increase in their military expenditure as well as a change in the nature of their other obligations. Data on King John's tax policy is very limited, because the documents of the treasury have all since been destroyed: only a few indirect items of data from a handful of cities are available. Yet it seems that cities had to cope with an ever-increasing burden. Previously, if the tax levied on a city had surpassed 1,000 forints, this was considered a significant sum. After the death of King Louis II, however, the taxes levied on cities far exceeded this amount. In the case of the mining towns of Lower Hungary, in 1529 King John set taxes at 2,000 forints, while in the following year he demanded they provide him with 500 soldiers. Furthermore, mining towns were also obliged to supply the military forces with certain foodstuffs.¹⁹ Mihály Piszkey, King John's chamberlain and chief commissioner requested either 100 men of arms or 500 forints from the city of Besztercebánya (Banská Bystrica) alone.²⁰ The burdens imposed on mining towns were not unique; following the Battle of Mohács, the cities of Upper Hungary had to send 200 soldiers to John Szapolyai. The payment of mercenaries meant an additional expenditure of 1,000 forints. The following year King John requested another 200 men, but this time the cities refused to comply with his request. The city of Kassa, a supporter of King Ferdinand from 1527, spent a total of 4,816 forints on warfare in 1528. This tremendous amount was covered partly from the city's own revenues and partly from loans provided by wealthy burghers.²¹

Another important change was that King John interfered more in city life. Due to the constant war footing, he maintained a permanent garrison both in Buda and Kassa, while also confiscating and bestowing more city buildings than he had done previously.²² This can be explained by the troubled domestic situation and by the increased number of acts of high treason due to the existence of two kings. In any case, that the monarch removed a great number of residential buildings from the jurisdiction of the magistrate and handed them over mainly to noble families had an adverse effect on municipalities. It is no coincidence that this custom was not forbidden even in the letters of privileges issued to Buda, as King John could not afford to eschew the rewarding of

18 András Kubinyi, 'Budapest története a későbbi középkorban Buda elestéig (1541-ig)', in László Gerevich (ed.), *Budapest története. Vol. II: A későbbi középkorban és a török hódoltság idején*. Budapest, 1975, 172.

19 MMBŠt Spisy, 30 November 1529, 10 January 1530, 9 February 1531.

20 MMBŠt Spisy, 4 January 1530.

21 H. Németh, *Várospolitikai és gazdaságpolitika*, I. 335–339.

22 Kubinyi, 'Budapest története', 224; Takáts, *Régi magyar kapitányok*, 20.

his followers. We know that similar changes took place in Kassa as well, so these cities saw an increase in the proportion of military personnel and noble inhabitants.²³ This phenomenon had a strong impact on 16th-century urban policy, even if the practice was itself soon abandoned.

During King John's reign, city municipalities became subject to strict control. In Buda, royal power was exercised via the treasurer and the castellan, as demonstrated by fiscal officer Miklós Turkovith being elected judge of Buda. In Buda, the castellan often had a stranglehold on the provision of supplies both to the royal court and to the treasury. He was also the person who intervened directly in the rights of the city municipality, mainly for financial reasons. In Kassa, the same type of direct interference was exercised by captain Lénárd Czecezy, who controlled all city matters in order to ensure the protection of the town and provision of its supplies. The captain also came to hold the keys of the city. This meant that the right to supervise the city walls, perceived as symbolic at the time, was also transferred to him. Czecezy, citing strategic reasons, limited the use of the city gates.²⁴ All this foreshadowed similar practices by later captain-generals in Upper Hungary.²⁵ The castellan of Buda and the captain of Kassa also had a major influence in choosing the prefects of their respective city, so a large number of local military officers featured among the members of each city council.

When it comes to the free election of parish priests, we can observe the delegated powers of the municipalities being restricted. The sources reveal that King John took vigorous action against the Reformation; this is especially clear in the case of cities under his jurisdiction. This seems to be confirmed by the correspondence between King John and Kristóf, parish priest of Bártfa, in which the latter requested help in countering Lutheran teachings and in protecting himself against burghers constantly harassing him. In his letter of response, John assures him that he will restore Kristóf to his position as parish priest as soon as he has an opportunity to do so.²⁶ In Buda, King John was not able to repress the followers of the Reformation by force, and, as a consequence, Mátyás Dévai Bíró was initially able to preach freely in the city. However, local preachers of the new teachings, who arrived in Hungary mainly from German-speaking areas, i.e. as members of the German priesthood, had left the city during the siege of 1529. Members of German religious associations in Buda had also fled from the city, so the Corpus Christi Confraternity and the St. Catherine Association are likely not to have been restored; their assets were channelled to Nuremberg

23 András Végh, *Buda város középkori helyrajza. Vol. 1.* (Monumenta Historica Budapestinensia, 15.) Budapest, 2006, passim; Kubinyi, 'Budapest története', 221–222, 224.

24 Kubinyi, 'Budapest története', 224; Takáts, *Régi magyar kapitányok*, 20.

25 Géza Pálffy, *Katonai igazságszolgáltatás a királyi Magyarországon a XVI–XVII. században*. Győr, 1995, 151–153; István H. Németh, 'Kassai polgárok és katonák a 16. században. A hadsereg beköltözésével járó társadalmi és közigazgatási jelenségek a felsőmagyarországi városok életében a Mohácsot követő évtizedek során', *Levéltári Közlemények* 68 (1997) 143–197; Idem, *Várospolitikai és gazdaságpolitika*, I. 314–317.

26 AMK H I. 1113/81.

to compensate members of the municipality who had fled from Buda in 1541.²⁷ The majority of cathedral chapters and religious orders in the vicinity of Buda survived the battles that followed the defeat of Mohács, and a great number of them returned to the capital. As mentioned earlier, Buda and Kassa were supporters of the Catholic faith, and the inhabitants of these cities did not adopt the teachings of Luther in a uniform way, nor did they invite any priests of the new faith. While Miklós Turkovith, judge of Buda, became a follower of Luther and himself recommended Dévai, fleeing from Buda, to the attention of Tamás Nádasdy, a greater part of the city remained within the Catholic church, and we have no knowledge of church property being taken away and transferred to city ownership.²⁸ That the St. Elisabeth Cathedral and both mendicant orders of Kassa packed their monstresses in 1537 to have them transported can be interpreted as a solid sign of the unstable domestic political situation and of the weakening of local monasticism. This happened despite the fact that in 1532 Kassa still had a beneficiary, although his confessional identity is doubtful, as in one of his letters to the city of Bártfa he used the following opening phrase: *gratiam et pacem in Christo Jesu*. The assets of the altar benefice were not, however, returned to the city council until 1550.²⁹ The change of confession in Kassa occurred in the same decade, as opposed to towns around Kassa where it took place in the 1530s; this can mainly be explained by the region being under King John's jurisdiction at the time of the change.³⁰

ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES FOR BURGHERS DURING THE CIVIL WAR

It is difficult to see King John's economic policy on cities as one coherent system, as neither the era in general nor the period in particular, hit by the civil war, was suitable for implementing a calm and mature economic policy. In the case of cities under Habsburg jurisdiction, it is clear that economic measures were taken to force them to side with King John. The opposing parties plundered one city domain and agricultural territory after the other. A well-known consequence of military raids is that merchants were frequently looted and security deteriorated along trade routes. Even if this did not constitute the greatest obstacle to effective trade in Hungary during the 16th and 17th centuries, during the conflict between the two monarchs these issues seriously burdened the burghers. During the 1530s and 1540s it was all too frequent in times of political instability for enemy soldiers to rob merchants of all their goods, causing them thousands of forints in damage. City delegates often complained about this at the diets convoked by either Ferdinand or John, as well as at the

27 József Bessenyei, *Menekültek... A kereskedelem helyzete Magyarországon 1526 után, Bornemisza Tamás és a budai menekültek működésének tükrében*. Miskolc, 2007, 20–21.

28 Kubinyi, 'Budapest története', 163–164, 220–221, 223; Bessenyei, *Menekültek*, 20–21.

29 Štátny archív v Prešove, Magistrat Mesta Prešova, Spisy No. 2779; MMB Spisy No. 6914.

30 István H. Németh, 'A rekatolizáció államigazgatási háttere a magyarországi szabad királyi városokban', in Szabolcs Varga and Lázár Vértesi (eds.), *Katolikus egyházi társadalom a Magyar Királyságban a 17. században*. Pécs, 2018, 241–260.

diets held without the kings being present. Yet maintaining trade routes and restoring secure trade was in everyone's interests. This can be illustrated with the following example: since King John's closest foreign ally was King Sigismund I the Old of Poland, one could be right in thinking that pro-Habsburg cities could not expect much when heading to a market in Poland. Yet what we see is that the first steps to restore the previously flourishing trade flows were actually taken rather soon, as a result of pressure from Polish merchants with a vested interest in undisturbed trade. The city of Krakow, together with cities in its surroundings, sought in 1531 to squeeze out an agreement between King Ferdinand and King Sigismund in this regard,³¹ which was followed by compromises recommended by royal captains along the borders and by the estates of the two countries.³² These issues were eventually resolved by the peace treaties between the monarchs.³³

In any event, ensuring trade was important for King John not only because of the alliance with the king of Poland, but also in order for him to be able to finance both the state under his jurisdiction and the war effort. The thirtieth customs duty made up the largest and most secure part of the treasury's income in this era.³⁴ The expected revenue from this customs duty made it especially important to ensure free and undisturbed trade. Rulers could obtain great earnings from trade, more exactly from the export of foodstuffs, and not only indirectly, in the form of taxes, but also directly. Both John and Ferdinand introduced export bans, but these were only partly aimed at ensuring that supplies reached military troops stationed in the Kingdom of Hungary.³⁵ The bans were also introduced because of the existence of well-organized 'state' trade and because of permits that became valuable specifically because of the bans.³⁶ King John supported the activities of city merchants from the very beginning of his reign: in one of his earliest letters of command he confirmed the exemption from customs duties for royal free cities and protected them against customs levied by landlords.³⁷ Since economic opportunities were mainly determined by those who operated in the economy, in the following I shall analyse the situation of burghers in cities under King John's jurisdiction, together with their economic activity.

31 H. Németh, *Várospolitika és gazdaságpolitika*, II. 10–28.

32 MMB unnumbered, Žmigrod, 14 September 1540, *MOE* II. 567; III. 8–9, 14–15, 37, 40, 255.

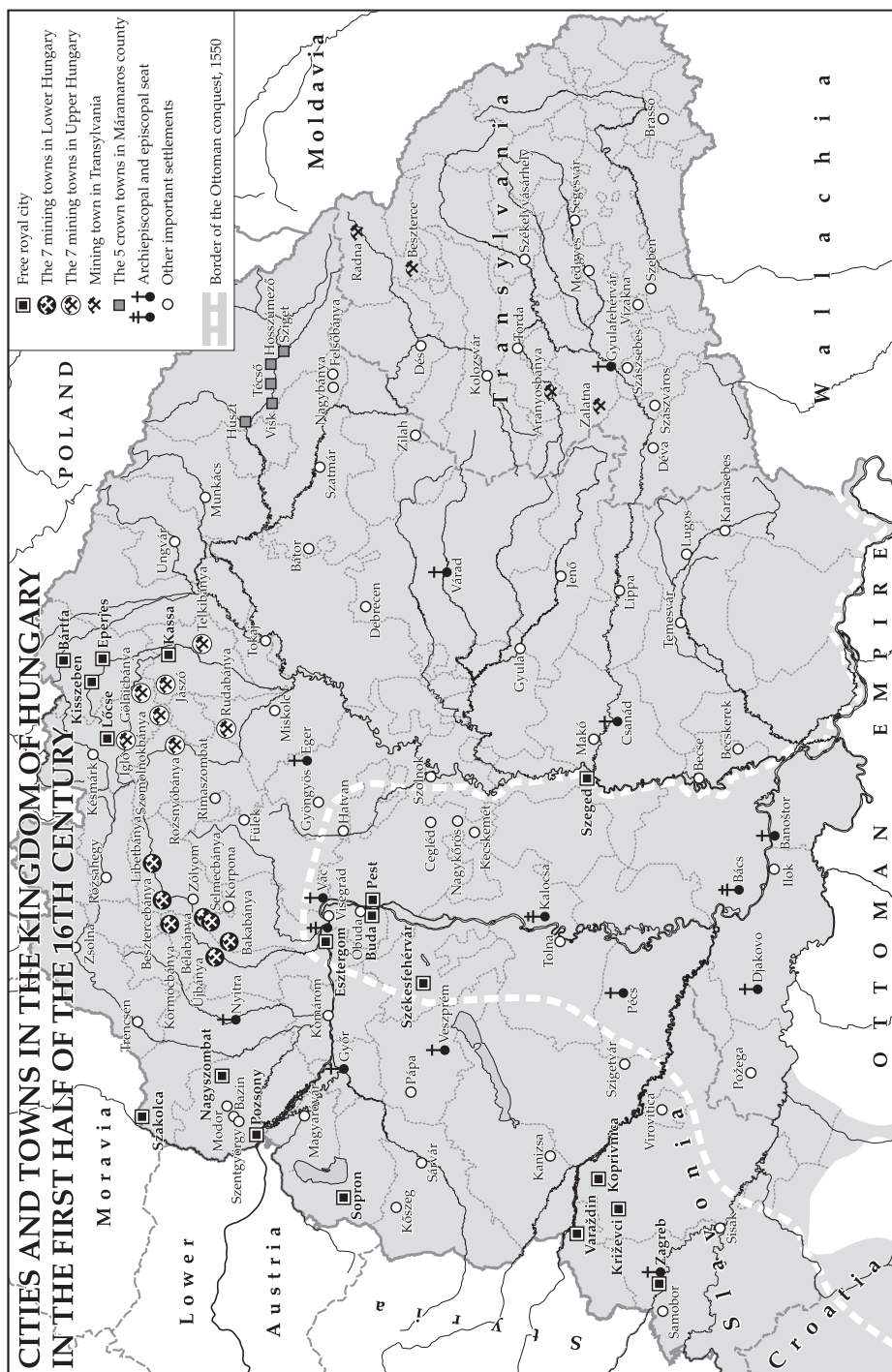
33 MNL OL Family fonds, archives, Károlyi Archives, P 396 (*Acta publica*) 5. t. fols. 3–9, 790–793.

34 István Kenyeres, 'A királyi Magyarország bevételei és kiadásai a 16. században', *Levéltári Közlemények* 74 (2003) 59–103; Idem, 'A Habsburg Monarchia és a Magyar Királyság pénzügyei és hadi költségei a 16. század közepétől a 17. század első harmadáig', *Történelmi Szemle* 55 (2013) 541–568; Idem, 'A Magyar és a Szepesi Kamara bevételei és kiadásai a XVII. században', *Fons* 24 (2017) 3–67.

35 H. Németh, *Várospolitika és gazdaságpolitika*, II. 18–28.

36 Kubinyi, 'Budapest története', 210, 213–214; József Bessenyei, 'Szapolyai János gazdaságpolitikai törekvései, a magyarországi városok és az ország kereskedelmi útvonalainak összefüggésében', *Tanulmányok Budapest Múltjából* 38 (2013) 31–40.

37 MMBSt Spisy, 30 March 1527, 18 October 1529, 19 April 1530.



The economic entity of the combined unit of Buda–Pest–Óbuda, which was undoubtedly the most important in the country and which was clearly more successful than other cities, underwent an economic decline after the Battle of Mohács. The reason for this was that, after news of the defeat reached the city, the queen, as well as the majority of Italian and German burghers, economically tied to the royal court, fled from the capital. Upon arriving in Buda, the sultan had the Jews of the city transported to Constantinople. Three years later, after John had, with Ottoman support, occupied the city, any remaining Germans were also deported. Some of them left together with the German garrison retreating from the siege led by Süleyman I. Not far from the city, however, they were slain by Ottoman troops. Others were deported by King John upon his victorious arrival. His decision was clearly motivated by military and political considerations, since the German burghers were, together with the pro-Ferdinand garrison, actively involved in the defence of Buda, and were thus considered unreliable, or potential spies. When it comes to Buda, the deportation was almost total (even though, with time, some German families were allowed to return), whereas in Pest, it was only partial.³⁸ The majority of families fled to the places from which they had originally come to Buda. The members of the Kochaim, Harber and Gailsam families, originating from Pozsony, returned to their home town, which had, in the meantime, become the capital of Hungary under King Ferdinand. The Kretschmer family did likewise. Some members of the prestigious Haller family also found refuge in Pozsony, while other members moved either to Kolozsvár (Cluj) or Kassa. They were replaced by inhabitants of nearby areas, mainly Hungarian burghers of the city of Pest.³⁹ Hungarian burghers from cities in southern Hungary, e.g. Pécs, who had direct experience of the devastation of the Ottoman army, arrived in Buda in great numbers, most likely settling in houses abandoned by German families.⁴⁰ A great number of empty houses were given to supporters of King John. They settled as nobles in the city, which was gradually becoming the centre of King John's rule. Deportation as a tool was also applied in other cities that had significant numbers of German inhabitants, and where the homes of those deported could be filled with a Hungarian merchant-burgher population from nearby areas or from cities that had come under Ottoman rule. Kassa was occupied in December 1536, and soon afterwards the decision was taken: the elite burgher population was to be moved to market towns controlled by King John (Szeged, Gyula, Makó, Csanád [Cenad], Simánd [Şimand], Várad

38 Kubinyi, 'Budapest története', 200–203, 208–209.

39 Bessenyei, *Menekültek*, 14–15; András Kubinyi, 'Die Nürnberger Haller in Ofen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Südosthandels im Spätmittelalter', *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg* 52 (1963/64) 80–128.

40 Ferenc Szakály, 'Schreiber Farkas, pécsi bíró (1527–1542) (Pályakép néhány gazdaság- és társadalomtörténeti tanulsággal)', *Janus Pannonius Múzeum Évkönyve* 20–21 (1975–1976) 75–102; Szabolcs Varga, *Írem kertje. Pécs története a hódoltság korában (1526–1686)*. Pécs, 2009, 12–20; Idem, 'A püspök városa vagy az Oszmán Birodalom előretolt helyőrsége?', in József Vonyó (ed.), *Pécs története. Vol. II: A püspökség alapításától a török hódoltságig*. Pécs, 2015, 298–301.

[Nagyvárad/Oradea], Temesvár [Timișoara], Lippa [Lipova], Túr/Mezőtúr), while the rest of the German burgher population would be forced to leave. There were so many in this latter group that, as early as in January 1537, the council of Lőcse protested against admitting further refugees.⁴¹

Following the disappearance of the German burgher population, trade volumes in both towns fell considerably: the loss of the German population also meant the loss of connections to southern Germany, and the financially strong cattle-trading burghers of Pest could only partially make up for the shortfall caused by the deportations. And even though the quality and quantity of merchants could partly be offset by the work of Hungarian cattle traders, the same could hardly be achieved in the field of craftsmanship. The artisans of Buda declined both in number and in their level of specialization; the same can be said of the quality of their products. The decline was even more distinct in the luxury sector, which disappeared almost completely. Goldsmiths were the only such craftsmen we know to have been present in Buda under King John. This can be explained by the decreased pomp of the royal court: compared to the Jagiellonian–Habsburg one, Szapolyai's court is likely to have been considerably more modest and more provincial. Many positions had become vacant as a consequence of the deportation and partial elimination of the German population. These were then filled by a class of wealthy Hungarian burghers, one that did not bear comparison to the previous, German one. The city council of Buda came to be comprised partly of Hungarians who had belonged to the earlier establishment and partly of people from the lower or middle echelons of the new middle class. Some members of this latter group arrived from cities already under Ottoman rule, while others had belonged to the previous middle class, usually on the periphery of the city and with only moderate wealth.⁴² It would of course be a mistake to underestimate the members of the new élite of Buda, as their economic importance was limited only in comparison to that of the German burghers of earlier times. The wealthiest merchants actively involved in trade; for instance, Tamás Bornemisza and his companion Johann Paur and Péter Pálczán, judge of Buda, conducted long distance trade using capital of tens of thousands of forints. They obtained their capital from cattle export, supported by King John, and invested it in the import of cloth, thus filling the niche left by the disappearance of the German merchants.⁴³ That they could obtain a dominant market position was due to royal support and to the fact that the last German company (owned by the Fugger family) had already

41 AMK Supplementum H. Mestské knihy a registre, Knihy mestskej administratívy, Súpis dedičských vkladov a závetí (Protocollum hereditatum) 1. fol. 11; Hain, *Lőcsei krónikája*, 78–79; Ferenc Szakály, *Makó a török hódoltság idején*. (Makói Monográfia Füzetek, 6.) Makó, 1993, 185.

42 Kubinyi, 'Budapest története', 209, 214–215, 218–221. On the role of the élite of Pest in cattle trade, see András Kubinyi, 'Buda és Pest szerepe a távolsági kereskedelemben', *Történelmi Szemle* 36 (1994) 1–52.

43 József Bessenyei, 'Hans Paur budai kereskedő élete', in József Bessenyei, Zita Horváth and Péter Tóth (eds.), *Tanulmánykötet Heckenast Gusztáv emlékére*. Miskolc, 2001, 67–78; Bessenyei, *Menekültek*, 61–84.

left the country in the early 1530s. Italian merchants remained in Buda thanks in part to King John's support for exports to Italy and moreover to the economic policy under the governorship of Lodovico Gritti.⁴⁴ Buda was thus able to retain its leading role in long-distance trade. The Hungarian burgher population of Buda played a part in both international and national trade, but with a different role: Hungarian merchants who had previously worked mainly in the field of domestic trade and the domestic organization of the cattle trade, for example Péter Pálczán, Miklós Turkovith, Ferenc Bácsi, Ferenc and Tamás Bornemisza and Imre Siri, became active in the animal trade as well as in the distribution of goods from the West.⁴⁵

After the unsuccessful siege carried out by pro-Ferdinand troops in 1530, King John tried to support this group of Hungarian burghers moving to Buda from Pest with further privileges. He granted nobility to all burghers of Buda, which ensured customs exemptions for city merchants. The city was also given a new coat of arms, which ensured its otherwise rather debateable place among the Hungarian estates. This was important, as during the late Middle Ages cities were not always invited to the diets. King John tried to enhance the economic influence of the Hungarian burghers of Buda by introducing nationwide bans on animal exports, from which he issued exemptions only to those burghers of Pest and Buda who supported him. These measures were meant to increase the capital intensity of the new social class of Hungarian burghers and to counterbalance the loss of south-German capital. By lifting the ban on the movement of serfs, John I wished to avoid the urban population declining. The ban introduced on cereal exports created a monopolistic situation for the interested parties, while at the same time ensuring the provision of supplies for Buda.⁴⁶ The burgher population of Kassa was formed mainly of burghers moving to the city from nearby market towns. Compared to Buda, it seems to have been of less importance, especially during the period prior to King John's death. It was only subsequently, mainly after the fall of Buda in 1541 and after the major centres in the Great Plains had come under Ottoman rule, that the economic standing of the Hungarians in Kassa increased. Hungarians leaving Buda and Pest often had to travel via Szeged, Kolozsvár or even Várad to arrive in the regional centre of Upper Hungary, at the time ruled by Szapolyai's widow.⁴⁷ Those merchants in both Buda and Kassa who were able to make use of the new commercial possibilities, methods and routes of the 15th century, and to join the buoyant cattle trade of the turn of the century with large amounts of capital, were in a position to become major players in international and regional

44 Kubinyi, 'Budapest története', 213–215; József Bessenyei, 'Szapolyai János és a magyarországi városok', *Acta Academiae Paedagogicae Agriensis Nova Series. Sectio Historiae* 41 (2013) 111–119.

45 Bessenyei, 'Szapolyai János gazdaságpolitikai törekvései', 31–40.

46 Kubinyi, 'Budapest története', 211–213.

47 György Granasztói, *A városi élet keretei a feudális kori Magyarországon: Kassa társadalma a 16. század derekán*. Budapest, 2012; József Bessenyei, 'Budai és pesti menekültek Északkelet-Magyarországon a XVI. században', in József Bessenyei and Csaba Fazekas (eds.), *Város és társadalom a XVI–XVIII. században*. Miskolc, 1994, 35–43; Bessenyei, *Menekültek*, 36–39.

distribution. The political situation saw trade in Hungary change substantially during the early modern period. The most important commercial commodity was large-bodied Hungarian cattle. Its export to Austria and Germany was not possible without the effective cooperation of the burghers stuck in the market towns under Ottoman rule (as procurers and traders) and the merchants of the Kingdom of Hungary (as reliable transporters).⁴⁸ The opportunities created by the commercial conditions could most effectively be used by merchants arriving from settlements in southern territories already under Ottoman rule. The changes in trade methods and in the people involved in it are well illustrated by the fact that while animal trade and trade in goods from the West had previously been conducted by different groups, from the first third of the 16th century (as we have seen in the case of the capital) both activities became concentrated in the hands of one and the same group.⁴⁹

During the Jagiellonian period, merchants of Hungary mostly used trade routes leading to the south-German provinces via Lower Austria and Vienna for the export of their livestock and for the import of western European products (textiles, iron goods, luxury items, etc.). In addition, Hungary maintained its traditional exchange with regions in Lesser Poland (Krakow, Nowy Sacz, etc.) and with areas around Venice in the south-west. While we have a substantial amount of specialist literature on the former commercial activity, we know much less about the latter. This despite the fact that, from the second half of the 16th century, foodstuff exported by the Zrínyi family had its final destination in Venice and its surroundings. King John tried to strengthen this economic link, which can be regarded as traditional, by relying on his connections with Venice. Almost immediately after his coronation he sent envoy Ferenc Jozefics, bishop of Zengg (Senj), to visit Andrea Gritti, the doge of Venice. The envoy delivered the new king's message to the doge in mid-December. King John promised to send all traditional export goods (mainly livestock and leather) to Venice and not to the German provinces, which would have meant an export of 15,000 heads of cattle. He repeated this offer in the following year as well, and, even though the main transport nodes along the route to Venice (Croatia, Pettau [Ptuj] and Laibach [Ljubljana]) were controlled by Ferdinand, these endeavours became even more marked during Lodovico Gritti's period as governor.

48 Vera Zimányi, *Magyarország az európai gazdaságban 1600–1650*. Budapest, 1976; Harald Prickler and Vera Zimányi, 'Konjunktúra és depresszió a XVI–XVII. századi Magyarországon az ártörténet és a harmincadbevételek tanúságai alapján', *Agrártörténeti Szemle* 1–2 (1974) 79–201; Lajos Gecsényi, 'Bécs és Magyarország kereskedelmi kapcsolatainak történetéhez a 16–17. század fordulóján', *Századok* 127 (1993) 469–485; Idem, 'Az Edlasperg-ügy. A magyar kereskedők bécsi kapcsolatai a 16. század első felében', *Történelmi Szemle* 35 (1993) 279–295; Idem, 'Bécs és a hódoltság kereskedelmi összeköttetései a 16. században. Thököly Sebestyén felemelkedésének hátteréhez', *Századok* 129 (1995) 767–790.

49 Ferenc Szakály, *Mezőváros és reformáció. Tanulmányok a korai magyar polgárosodás kérdéséhez*. (Humanizmus és Reformáció, 23.) Budapest, 1995, 33–91, 172–218, 388–412. On the careers of traders moving away from Szeged in the mid-16th century: Bessenyei, *Menekültek*, 34–52.

Gritti gave high priority to the development of Buda and its role as a commercial centre. According to Szerémi, "Lord Gritti wished to develop the city with trade so that Buda would be without equal". Following the death of Gritti, the treasury was taken over by Friar George (Martinuzzi), who was also the castellan of Buda. Friar George was well aware of the methods of trade and their importance, and he based the sovereign revenues of King John's state on the well-established method of export bans, which placed the monarch in a monopoly situation. With this, he achieved a considerable increase in price, and the products whose value was thus driven up were sold either within his own network or were transported to suitable markets, chiefly by those merchants from Buda who had previously received individual licences. In this period the majority of goods were most likely transported along the traditional routes through Vienna, and supplied the regions of southern Germany with meat and raw materials.⁵⁰ At the end of the 1530s, with the increasing value of traditional commercial routes, the interests of pro-Szapolyai merchants from Buda required good relations with the Habsburgs, and so it was no coincidence that it was precisely these merchants who took part in the 'treason' committed by the municipality of Buda in 1541.⁵¹

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE HIERARCHY OF THE NETWORK OF CITIES IN HUNGARY IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 16TH CENTURY

The period with two kings is interesting from the point of view of the transformation of the network of cities. In terms of trade, the advancement of Ottoman expansion pushed the traditional centres of the southern and middle part of the country to the background, even though they continued to function as regional hubs.⁵² With the deportation and partial elimination of the German burgher population, the economic entity of Buda–Pest–Óbuda lost its dominant position in national long-distance commerce and in industry. This group of cities continued to function as an economic node of the country, however, and King John himself sought to develop it, trying to incorporate new market areas in order to switch from the commercial centres of southern Germany to trade with Italy, although this showed little promise in the long run. Merchants fleeing from Buda had by this time already moved their headquarters to Vienna and Pozsony; after the fall of Buda, together with Hungarian burghers fleeing from Pest, they settled in centres that rose to prominence in this period from among the network of cities in Hungary. The commercial role of Buda was eventually taken over, not by a city in Hungary, but by Vienna, which became the capital city of the Habsburg Monarchy. Of the Hungarian cities, it was the regional

50 Bessenyei, 'Szapolyai János és a magyarországi városok'.

51 Bessenyei, *Menekültek*, 19–20.

52 András Kubinyi, 'Városhálózati a késő középkori Kárpát-medencében', *Történelmi Szemle* 46 (2004) 1–30; György Granasztói, 'A dunai térség városodása (XVII–XVIII. század)', *Demográfia* 32 (1989) 157–187.

centres that become significant, conducting large scale animal trade from Hungary through Vienna to markets on German soil, as well as the trade in goods from the West to the Kingdom of Hungary. It was during this time that the city of Pozsony, by then the country's centre of administration and domestic policy, also became the largest town in Hungary.⁵³ Apart from Pozsony, Nagyszombat (Trnava), Magyaróvár and Győr also came to be inescapable parts of this trade network.⁵⁴ Merchants from Sopron were no longer involved in the vastly profitable animal trade, and instead produced wine, an easily transportable product of the region, managing the trade in wine to Lower Austria and Silesia. One sign of the importance of the Sopron wine region is that in the second half of the 16th century its wines even appeared in Krakow. Yet it could not compete with wines transported from Tokaj-Hegyalja, the profit from which mainly benefitted merchants from Upper Hungary, especially those from Kassa and Eperjes. Villages in the Little Carpathians, like Modor (Modra), Bazin (Pezinok), Szentgyörgy (Svätý Jur), based their economic development on vineyards on the slopes of the mountains and on the exchange of wine, but their importance cannot be compared to that of the aforementioned cities. Pécs retained its role in trade with the southern Hungarian territories even after their occupation, but after it came under Ottoman rule in 1543, as Székesfehérvár had done, the central role in commerce between Hungary and Venice along the Görz–Laibach–Pettau route shifted to Pettau. Pettau thus became the main point of connection in the cattle trade to Venice, and also came to occupy a special place among the commercial hubs of the Austrian provinces.⁵⁵ At the regional level, the place of Pécs, and especially that of Székesfehérvár, was assumed by Pápa.⁵⁶ In 1541 Buda

53 Géza Pálffy, 'A Magyar Királyság új fővárosa. Pozsony a XVI. században', *Fons* 20:1 (2013) 3–76.

54 Lajos Gecsényi, 'Győr kereskedelmi kapcsolatainak történetéhez a XVII. században', *Győri Tanulmányok* 13 (1993) 103–118; György Granasztói, *A barokk győzelme Nagyszombatban: tér és társadalom, 1579–1711*. Budapest, 2004.

55 Othmar Pickl, 'Der Funktionswandel der Stadt Pettau/Ptuj am Handelsweg zwischen Ungarn und Oberitalien vom Frühmittelalter bis zur Gegenwart', in Franz Tichy and Jürgen Schneider (eds.), *Stadtstrukturen an alten Handelswegen im Funktionswandel bis zur Gegenwart. Referate des 6. interdisziplinären Colloquiums des Zentralinstituts*. Neustadt a. d. Aisch, 1984, 57–70; Idem, 'Pettau – ein internationaler Handelsplatz des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts', *Zeitschrift des Historischen Vereines für Steiermark* 62 (1971) 87–109; Herbert Knittler, 'Städte-landschaften in Österreich im Spätmittelalter und in der Frühneuzeit', in Holger Gräf and Katrin Keller (eds.), *Städte-landschaft, Réseau Urbain, Urban Network. Städte im regionalen Kontext in Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit*. (Städteforschung, A/62.) Köln, Weimar, Wien, 2004, 132; Erich Landsteiner, 'Strukturelle Determinanten der Stellung Wiens im interregionalen Handel', in Peter Cseneds et al. (eds.), *Wien. Die frühneuzeitliche Residenz (16. bis 18. Jahrhundert)*. Wien, 2003, 187–200; Varga, *Írem kertje*, 37–45.

56 Lajos Gecsényi, 'Adatok Pápa szerepéhez a XVI. században a Rába menti tájegységben', in István Hermann and Balázs Somfai (eds.), *Tanulmányok Pápa város történetéből. Vol. 2. Pápa, 1996, 75–80*; Idem, 'Bécsi kereskedők memoranduma a kelet-nyugati kereskedelemről, 1615', in János Kalmár (ed.), *Miscellanea fontium historiae Europaeae. Emlékkönyv H. Balázs Éva történész-professzor 80. születésnapjára*. Budapest, 1997, 79–88; Ferenc Szakály, 'Pápa a török korban', in András Kubinyi (ed.), *Tanulmányok Pápa város történetéből. A kezdetektől 1970-ig*. Pápa, 1994, 125–200.

and Pest also fell under Ottoman rule, and their role in the cattle trade was taken by cities such as Szeged, Gyula and Temesvár, previously overshadowed regional cities that now came to the fore. When these cities fell to the Ottomans, however, their role was taken over by Debrecen, which thereby became an interregional centre.⁵⁷ The network of cities in Upper Hungary also underwent change: the city of Eperjes emerged alongside Kassa and Lőcse, the two major players in the region. The changes that took place at this time in the commercial relations between Hungary and Poland did not benefit the city of Lőcse in the Szepesség (Spiš) region. Lőcse, previously an important actor in the copper trade with Poland, lost its status as a commercial node, because the largest trade traffic was carried out by merchants in cities along the commercial routes passing through Sáros and Abaúj counties, such as Kassa, which became the real capital of the region, and Eperjes, which was developing at an ever greater pace.⁵⁸ The commercial role of Eperjes was enhanced by being granted staple rights by King Ferdinand I after Kassa fell into the hands of John Szapolyai. Even though this grant was only temporary, Eperjes was able to retain the privilege it had earned. The importance of these cities increased due to their outstanding role in promoting the wine trade of the Hegyalja region and to the fact that the cities of Upper Hungary, apart from acting on the Polish market, ever more frequently became involved in Austrian foreign trade.⁵⁹ Major cities located on the periphery of Transylvania, like Várad and Kolozsvár, acted as intermediaries for the region of Upper Hungary.

CONCLUSION

During the decade and a half after the Battle of Mohács, King John cannot be said to have had any consciously pursued urban policy. Neither public administration nor sovereign tax policy had been developed to such a degree at the time. With civil war raging, John had very limited opportunity to develop these areas. Despite all this, certain trends and efforts can be observed. For the two legally elected kings, Ferdinand I (of Habsburg) and King John I (Szapolyai), the most important question on the matter of cities was their political persuasion: whose side did they take, and whether they did so voluntarily or as a result of the use of military force. We see considerable uncertainty on the part of cities on this issue, but this applies to the entire domestic political situation. The economic interests of the burgher population of cities were essential. It was especially important to consider these interests when a monarch, by granting various privileges, put the cities in his debt. Furthermore, it was in every

57 Vera Bácskai, *Gyula gazdasága és társadalma a XV–XVI. században*. Gyula, 1991; Lajos Gecsényi, 'Kelet-magyarországi kereskedők a nyugati távolsági kereskedelembe 1546-ban', *A Hajdú-Bihar Megyei Levéltár Évkönyve* 18 (1991) 25–35; Idem, 'Az Edlasperg-ügy', 287.

58 Sándor Domanovszky, *A szepesi városok árumegállító-joga: Lőcse és Késmárk küzdelme az árumegállításért 1358–1570*. Budapest, 1922.

59 H. Németh, *Várospolitika és gazdaságpolitika*, II. 9–51.

monarch's interest to support the burgher population: as long as the country was tormented by civil war, kings needed all kinds of support, be it financial or military. Military considerations often overruled economic ones, however, as evidenced by the deportation of German burghers from Buda and Kassa, or the support given to the Hungarian burghers of Pest. The economic connections established by the German burghers could not be replaced by the members of the new élite moving to the cities; as a consequence, Buda's economic role diminished noticeably, and that of Kassa significantly. King John tried to counteract this trend by finding new trading partners: instead of the clearly pro-Ferdinand trading partners in southern Germany, he set his eyes on opportunities in the direction of Venice. The envoys sent out for this purpose did not enter into negotiations with the leaders of Venice to represent the interest of the country's burgher population so much as to obtain their support for the organization of export as operated by the monarch and Friar George. Because of the devastation caused by the civil war between the two monarchs and because territories came to be occupied by the Ottomans, the network of cities changed considerably during this period, and the role of certain regions shifted elsewhere, while new economic centres also emerged.

The role of Buda and Pest was taken over by Vienna, and the burgher population of the capital, dispersed to other cities, tried to operate its old commercial networks from the new trading hubs (Kassa, Pozsony, Nagyszombat). As well as these cities, new market towns emerged (Debrecen, Várad, Győr, Magyaróvár, etc.) due to shifting trade routes and to the development of a new network and of new trading methods in the cities under Ottoman rule and those in the Kingdom of Hungary.

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JOHN SZAPOLYAI AND THE CITIES OF TRANSYLVANIA

It is generally known that the House of Szapolyai ruled the country in a critical period of the history of the Kingdom of Hungary: during the half-century of its reign, the country split first into two parts, then into three. The partition itself determined the country's politics throughout the period in question, and it inevitably affected the urban policy of King John I Szapolyai.

Because of his roles as hereditary count¹ and later as voivode of Transylvania,² there are many examples of measures taken by John Szapolyai in connection with cities that date back to even earlier than 10 November 1526. Documents reveal that, as a result of his official duties, he was aware of the situation in the country's cities (at least those in Szepesség [Spiš] and Transylvania). On the other hand, during his time as voivode, and especially during the repression of the peasant revolt led by György Dózsa, he had need of the financial and military strength of the Transylvanian cities; he was therefore very much aware of their economic and strategic importance.

After King Ferdinand I was elected king, the majority of the country still sided with John I. Even though treasury revenues were slow to come in, Szapolyai still controlled the customs houses – with the exception of the one in Pozsony (Bratislava) – and the chambers of mining and the mintage chambers, together

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1 Permit to establish a guild, as issued in 1510 to the tailors of the city of Pápa, owned by the family, or respect for the burghers' exemption from paying the 'thirtieth' tax and customs in 1511: *Szapolyai oklt.* 352, 357.

2 For instance, his order of 10 July 1514, written to the council of Brassó (Braşov), to capture a robber named Székely; his order of 5 June 1515, written to the council of Beszterce (Bistriţa), to send one fourth of their troops to the district of Hátszeg, because, according to his spies, a major Ottoman incursion was to be expected; in accordance with a charter from 1515, issued by King Vladislaus II, the inhabitants of Abrudbánya (Abrud) were discharged from military service: *Szapolyai oklt.* 402, 412; Zsolt Simon, 'Az aranykitermelés kezdetei a középkori Erdélyben', in Emese Egyed, Zsolt Bogdándi and Attila Weisz (eds.), *Certamen II. Előadások a Magyar Tudomány Napján az Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület I. szaksztyáiban*. Kolozsvár, 2015, 226.

with the cities these were established in, namely Buda, Besztercebánya (Banská Bystrica), Körmöcbánya (Kremnica), Nagybánya (Baia Mare), Szeben (Sibiu).³ As a recognition of King John's power, all 53 remaining counties, together with the cities of Buda, Pest, Lőcse (Levoča), Bártfa (Bardejov), Eperjes (Prešov), Kisszeben (Sabinov), Nagyszombat (Trnava), Székesfehérvár and Esztergom, sent their representatives to the diet of Buda in March 1527, where the spokesmen of Transylvania and Slavonia were also present.⁴

It is well known that, in order to protect their rights following a change of rules, urban communities usually made a new monarch reformulate and confirm the charters assuring their privileges. This was even more justified by the conditions after the Battle of Mohács. There is little data on this, especially from the beginning of the period dealt with here.⁵ Yet, among the first charters issued by John Szapolyai, elected on 10 November 1526, we can still find a few that, apart from other matters to be handled, also contain administrative orders relating to cities or provisions aiming to protect public order (examples of such orders might include the one obliging the city of Kassa [Košice] to provide a carriage to some Polish envoys returning home, or the order sent to János Gosztonyi, bishop of Transylvania, to respect the privileges of Kolozsvár [Cluj-Napoca]).⁶ These charters were all sealed with John Szapolyai's seal from the time he was voivode of Transylvania. The provisions passed during the first months of the period did not, however, differ in character from the standard provisions of the era.⁷

The situation changed radically in July 1527, when King Ferdinand I launched his troops against King John I.⁸ Ferdinand's army crossed the Hungarian border

3 Gábor Barta, 'Konszolidációs kísérlet Magyarországon a mohácsi csatavesztés után (Szapolyai János kormányzása 1526. november – 1527. augusztus)', *Századok* 111:4 (1977) 660–668.

4 MOE I. 103; Barta, 'Konszolidációs kísérlet', 675.

5 At the request of the city authorities, King John I confirmed Kolozsvár's exemption from customs and duties on 24 February 1527: Ágnes Flóra, 'Kolozsvár és a központi hatalom kapcsolata a Mohács utáni évtizedekben', *Urbs. Magyar Várostörténeti Évkönyv* 8 (2013) 37. On 7 April 1527, at the request of the magistrate of market town Muzsna (Moşna), King John I confirms their right to freely choose their *gräve* (the judge of the Saxon Community): Arhivele Naţionale Române (= ANR) Sibiu, Fond Parohia evangelică C.A. Mediaş Seria 2. Acte No. 153. F. 110.

6 Barta, 'Konszolidációs kísérlet', 650.

7 For example, on 7 January 1527 the inhabitants of the city of Dés (Dej) complained to the king that, despite their being exempt from taxes, customs duties were regularly being imposed by the *familiars* of Mihály Jakcsi on their carriages transporting salt and other goods. Therefore the king forbade Jakcsi to tax the inhabitants of Dés in the future. ANR Cluj, Fond Primăria oraşului Dej No. 116. On 15 February 1527 King John I made this announcement to the authorities of Bihar, Szatmár, Külső-Szolnok and Szabolcs counties: the magistrate of Nagybánya (Baia Mare) submitted to him that despite the privileges granted to them by earlier kings, according to which they are exempt from customs in Bihar, Szatmár, Külső-Szolnok and Szabolcs counties, these privileges were not always respected and they were often faced with having to pay customs and duties. Therefore it was the king's order that the privileges of the burghers of Nagybánya be respected: ANR Maramureş, Fond Primaria oraşului Baia Mare. Seria 2, Documente privilegiate No. 35.

8 Gábor Barta, 'An d'illusions (Notes sur la double éléction des rois d'après la défaite de Mohács)', *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 2 (1978) 36–37.

on 31 July 1527, upon which Szapolyai emptied the city of Buda and retreated towards the east. Subsequently, after the Battle of Tokaj (27 September 1527), he was forced back to Transylvania. From the perspective of the events that began in the summer of 1527 in Transylvania, and the development of King John's urban policy concerning Saxon burghers, Georg Reicherstorffer and the activities he carried out in Transylvania were of major importance:⁹ he launched the movement that contributed to the *Universitas Saxonum* (Saxon Community) representing one of the main economic powers in Transylvania, defecting from Szapolyai to King Ferdinand I.

Reicherstorffer, who claimed to have originated from Szeben, first emerged in 1523 as a notary public in his hometown; he then served at the court of Queen Mary as early as in 1525.¹⁰ On 2 June 1527 he was appointed royal secretary by King Ferdinand I, and a few days later he was given a letter of credence and sent to Moldavia, where his assignment was to win the support of voivode Peter (Petru Rareș).¹¹ Reicherstorffer set out on his journey from Vienna on 27 June; he travelled through Poland to Moldavia, where he engaged in negotiations with the voivode of Moldavia, negotiations which he considered short but fruitful. Subsequently he set off to Transylvania in order to win the support of Saxon cities and make them side with King Ferdinand I.¹² King John I must have been informed of Reicherstorffer's intentions quite early, because in August he ordered the people of Beszterce to arrest Queen Mary's secretary, a certain Georg, and to hand him over to the voivode of Transylvania.¹³ In the meantime, both kings urged the Saxons to be loyal and not to desert to the enemy.¹⁴

Reicherstorffer found no difficulty in convincing the Saxons, tied to German territories by deep family, economic and cultural links, to side with the Habsburg monarch; as a result of his successful propaganda, the council of Brassó was the first to succumb to King Ferdinand on 8 September 1527.¹⁵ But the process by which the Saxons changed sides was by no means a smooth one. One month later

9 On Reicherstorffer and his work in Hungarian, see Georg Reicherstorffer, *Chorographia Transilvaniae. Chorographia Moldaviae*. Edited and translated, with an accompanying essay and explanations, by István Szabadi. Debrecen, 1994, 117–128.

10 Joseph Trausch, *Schriftsteller-Lexicon oder biographisch-literärische Denk-Blätter der Siebenbürger Deutschen. Vol. III*. Kronstadt, 1871, 86–87.

11 Friedrich Schuller, 'Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte Siebenbürgens von der Schlacht bei Mohács bis zum Frieden von Grosswardein. Aus dem k. u. k. Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in Wien (1526–1538)', *Archiv des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde* 26 (1894) 256–257: No. 9; 259: No. 11.

12 Johann Karl Schuller, 'Georg Reicherstorffer und seine Zeit', *Archiv für Kunde österreichischer Geschichts-Quellen* 21 (1859) 233; Szabadi, *Georg Reicherstorffer*, 118.

13 ANR Cluj, Primăria orașului Bistrița, Seria 1, No. 894.

14 Ferdinand's request to the Saxons from 15 August 1527 not to support Szapolyai in any way. ANR Cluj, Primăria orașului Bistrița, seria 1, No. 898. King John I's statement to the Saxons from 28 August 1527: having obtained information about Ferdinand's wish to make them disloyal, he forbids them, with the threat of capital punishment for non-compliance, from defecting and taking part in the national assembly convoked by Ferdinand. ANR Sibiu, Colecția de documente medievale. Seria U. IV. No. 323.

15 Szabadi, *Georg Reicherstorffer*, 118–119.

Reicherstorffer still called the inhabitants of Szeben disloyal, and criticised them for participating in the diet of Medgyes (Mediaș), convoked by vice-voivode Miklós Macedoniai.¹⁶ In the meantime, King John requested burning arrows from the inhabitants. In this politically sensitive situation, that is, the city was thus hesitant.¹⁷ On 15 October, however, Reicherstorffer entered the city with his army; the burghers took his side rather than that of the magistrate, so Szeben became a supporter of King Ferdinand.¹⁸ In November, the envoy managed to win the support of Medgyes, as well.¹⁹ As this shows, events took place in rapid succession, and it seems that even Szászsebes (Sebeș), briefly held by Szapolyai, finally took Ferdinand's side, as on 18 October the city authorities informed the residents of Szeben that 400 of Szapolyai's soldiers had seized Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia), and were plundering and setting fires, and that János Gosztonyi, bishop of Transylvania, and a supporter of King Ferdinand, had been taken captive. They even requested immediate assistance, as the army was expected to reach Szászsebes the very same night or the following day at the latest.²⁰ Based on this letter, the bishop's exact time of death can also be determined: the description by György Szerémi reveals that the prelate was tortured and that he died on the day after he had been captured from the injuries he had sustained.²¹

In several respects, the loss of Szeben marked a turning point in the civil war in Transylvania, and in the subsequent urban policy of King John I. One of the consequences was that in October 1527 Szapolyai transferred the mint from Szeben to Kolozsvár.²² This measure is described in the literature as a grant made for the benefit of Kolozsvár.²³ And, indeed, the king rewarded the city's loyalty by granting an exemption from an annual tax of 300 forints. After the defection of Szeben, and with it the loss of the mint there, the question was not whether or not to transfer the mint, but rather where to transfer it to. One reason to move it to Kolozsvár was that Szapolyai knew the city well: as voivode of Transylvania he had had his own court there, led by seneschal János Tornaljai.²⁴ Although, during the peasant revolt of Dózsa in the summer of 1514, Kolozsvár had admitted priest Lőrinc and his retinue into the city and provided food for the crusading army, now, in the wake of the Battle of Szamosfalva (Someșeni), as proof of its loyalty, the city opened its gates to the soldiers of

16 5 October 1527. ANR Sibiu, Magistratul orașului și scaunului Sibiu. Colecția de documente medievale. Seria U. V. No. 297.

17 8 October 1527. ANR Sibiu, Magistratul orașului și scaunului Sibiu. Colecția de documente medievale. Seria U. IV. No. 282.

18 Trausch, *Schriftsteller-Lexicon*, 90; Schuller, 'Georg Reicherstorffer', 239; Szabadi, *Georg Reicherstorffer*, 118–119.

19 Trausch, *Schriftsteller-Lexicon*, 91.

20 ANR Sibiu, Colecția de documente medievale. Seria U. V. No. 1260.

21 ETE I. 351: No. 348.

22 ANR Cluj, Fond Primăria municipiului Cluj-Napoca. Seria A. Privilegii și acte. Subseria A. Privilegiile orașului No. 45; Flóra, 'Kolozsvár', 26, 38.

23 Flóra, 'Kolozsvár', 26.

24 Tibor Neumann, 'Dózsa legyőzője', in Lajos Balázs (ed.), *Dózsa. Dózsa György halálának 500. évfordulója alkalmából szervezett konferencia előadásai*. Csíkszereda, 2016, 88.

the voivode, and burghers who had joined the crusaders were handed over to one of Szapolyai's men, namely János Tornaljai.²⁵

During the period in question, after Szapolyai had lost Transylvania, even Kolozsvár swore loyalty to King Ferdinand I, as shown in the letter written by royal secretary Reicherstorffer, addressed to the three nations of Transylvania, on 18 December 1527. The letter ordered that, in the parts of the country that had voluntarily submitted to the rule of King Ferdinánd, people joining the rebellious Count (*comes*) John²⁶ and sowing discord should be arrested and their assets be confiscated.²⁷ There are some indications, however, that the city was reluctant to side with Reicherstorffer and that it had some serious conflicts with him: in early 1528, in his letter written to the city of Brassó, Reicherstorffer requested the magistrate to give supreme judge Lucas Hirscher and Johannes Benckner goods worth 500 Hungarian forints from the Brassó 'twentieth' customs duty. This was to be compensation for their goods confiscated in Kolozsvár by Ferenc Kis, who was in turn acting upon his own goods having been seized by Reicherstorffer in Brassó.²⁸ Although this last charter is likely merely to bear witness to a conflict between rich merchants, it is nevertheless true that Kolozsvár switched back to the side of John I at the earliest opportunity, an act that was rewarded by the ruler with the endowment of the villages of Bányabükk (Válcele) and Szentmárton (Sänmartin), situated in Torda county, on 16 July 1529.²⁹ In years to come he would express his generosity several times (in 1531, 1537, and 1538) to the city that had given him its full backing.³⁰ That the city had switched sides can also explain why, in September 1529, city authorities captured city parson Johann Klein, presumed to be a follower of King Ferdinand, and handed him over to royal governor István Báthory of Somlyó, a supporter of Szapolyai. Klein was released, following the intervention of some influential burghers, and after taking it upon himself, on pain of a penalty of 4,000 forints, that he would not initiate any legal proceedings against the city.³¹

25 Tibor Neumann, 'Bulgária–Erdély–Temesvár. Szapolyai János és a parasztháború', in Norbert C. Tóth and Tibor Neumann (eds.), *Keresztesekből lázadók. Tanulmányok 1514 Magyarországról*. Budapest, 2015, 140, 142.

26 That is, King John I.

27 ANR Braşov, Primăria oraşului Braşov. Colecţia de documente Schnell, Vol. III. No. 78.

28 ANR Braşov, Fond Primăria oraşului Braşov. Colecţia de documente Schnell, Vol. III. No. 93.

29 Flóra, 'Kolozsvár', 38.

30 We should note that, as regards the history of Kolozsvár, there is no written record of King Ferdinand I's rule there; at least, we have no knowledge of it. Flóra, 'Kolozsvár', 30–31, 38.

31 It is interesting to note that Adorján Enyedi (Wolphard), who came to occupy Johann Klein's place in Kolozsvár, had previously been stationed in Törpény, which was actually given to Klein in January 1530 as the result of an intervention on the part of Wolphard: *A kolozsmonostori konvent jegyzőkönyvei (1289–1556) Vol. II*. Abridged edition and forward by Zsigmond Jakó. Budapest, 1990 (hereinafter *KmKvJkv*), 4270–4271, 4275; Géza Hegyi, 'Kolozsvári plébánosok a középkorban', *Református Szemle* 99:6 (2006) 759–760; ANR Cluj Primăria oraşului Bistriţa Seria I. No. 1091; Albert Berger, *Urkunden-Regesten aus dem Archiv der Stadt Bistritz in Siebenbürgen 1203–1570. Vol. I*. Ed. by Ernst Wagner. Köln, Wien, 1986, 1198.

Royal support had its effect: it launched a process of continuous growth lasting until the end of the 16th century, during which Kolozsvár became the “first and most famous city”³² of this part of the country. So much so, its trading volume during the last decades of the century surpassed that of Brassó and Szeben, the two main cities of Transylvania.³³

To return to Reicherstorffer, it is clear that, as a result of his activities, the eastern region was a firm supporter of King Ferdinand I as early as at the turn of 1528.³⁴ During this time, Reicherstorffer used his own influence to rid himself of his personal enemies. By so doing, however, he caused confusion more than he promoted the king’s case. His brother, had János Morgondai and Péter Geréb of Thabias killed in a bath in March 1528³⁵ accusing them of being supporters of Szapolyai. The two were confidants of judge royal (*iudex regius*) Márk Pemfflinger (Geréb was even a relative of Pemfflinger by way of his deceased wife).³⁶ Their assets were frittered away and their wives and children deprived of their wealth. Had Péter Perényi not intervened, Márk Pemfflinger would have been killed, together with other leaders of the town, as is reported by the nephew of the judge royal in one of his letters. The offenders were therefore sentenced to death by John I.³⁷ On 16 April 1528 Reicherstorffer fled from Szeben to Prague via Buda.³⁸ He continued to receive assignments from the Habsburg monarch (1531, 1535), and in 1532 King Ferdinand I granted nobility to him.³⁹ The case well illustrates the limits of John I’s power, as well as the methods the Habsburgs used to exert political pressure.

Even during the rule of the Habsburgs, the political situation in Transylvania remained uncertain. The difficulties of the Transylvanian cities are typified by the fact that, no matter which king they sided with, they were unable to create the conditions for a peaceful life. By way of example, the Fugger family, with its huge European network of contacts, experienced a decline in its economic activity in Transylvania, recording a loss even at the time of Ferdinand.⁴⁰ The civil war also substantially weakened the financial situation of the Transylvanian

32 István Szamosközi, *Erdély története [1598–1599, 1603]*. Budapest, 1977, 380.

33 Mária Pakucs-Willcocks, *Sibiu–Hermannstadt. Oriental Trade in Sixteenth-Century Transylvania*. Köln, 2007, 73; Flóra, ‘Kolozsvár’, 29–30.

34 Reicherstorffer’s decree of 18 December 1527 to the three nations of Transylvania: ANR Braşov, Primăria oraşului Braşov. Colecţia de documente Schnell, Vol. III. No. 78. 28 February 1528: the representatives of the Fugger company and treasurer Miklós Gerendi agree on the transferral of salt mines: István Draskóczy, *A magyarországi kőszó bányászata és kereskedelme (1440–1530-as évek)*. Budapest, 2018, 110–111; on 3 March 1528 King Ferdinand I confirms the privileges of mints in Szeben, Körmöcbánya, Kassa and Nagybánya: ANR Maramureş, Fond Primăria oraşului Baia Mare. Seria documentelor privilegiate No. 182.

35 *quem in balneo occidere fecit*. Schuller, ‘Urkundliche Beiträge’, 268.

36 Károly Fabritius, *Pemfflinger Márk szász gróf élete különös tekintettel a reformáció elterjedésére az erdélyi szászok között*. Budapest, 1875, 12.

37 Schuller, ‘Urkundliche Beiträge’, 267–270: No. 19; Szabadi, *Georg Reicherstorffer*, 119.

38 Schuller, ‘Georg Reicherstorffer’, 246.

39 *ETE* II. 138: No. 151; 165: No. 184; Szabadi, *Georg Reicherstorffer*, 119. Schuller, ‘Georg Reicherstorffer’, 227, 274–276; Trausch, *Schriftsteller-Lexicon*, 94.

40 Draskóczy, *A magyarországi kőszó*, 115.

Saxons, who constituted one of Transylvania's major economic strengths. On 2 May 1529, treasurer Miklós Gerendi and voivode István Maylád requested 22,000 forints from the *Universitas Saxonum*. Of this amount, 4,000 forints were needed to pay the mercenaries' wages for a month and a half, and the rest was a loan that had to be repaid, for, as expressed in their letter, the costs of the war had hit them very hard.⁴¹ Here mention should be made of Miklós Gerendi's order of 17 May 1529, in which he commanded the people of Beszterce to send him the tax imposed by the assembly of Medgyes without any further delay.⁴² For a complete illustration of the situation, it is also important to mention the letter from Szászsebes dated October 1530, in which Sebestyén Székely requested the city of Szeben to send the people of Szászsebes their monthly pay, as prices were very high and the newly-minted coins were only worth one third of the old ones. He also requested that those not accepting payments made with the new coins be punished.⁴³

As regards the eastern part of the country, the Battle of Földvár (Feldioara), near Brassó, on 22 June 1522, marked a turning point in the struggle between King John I, allied with the Ottomans, and the pro-Habsburg forces. On this occasion, the troops of voivode Peter, coming to the rescue of King John I, defeated the troops led by Bálint Török, regarded as a follower of Ferdinand I. On 30 July 1529, Bálint Török, Elek Bethlen and István Maylád were still encouraging the inhabitants of Brassó to stand up to the supporters of Szapolyai,⁴⁴ despite the fact that King Ferdinand had by then already lost the city: it was governed, on behalf of John I, by voivode Peter.⁴⁵ King John I did not forgive the city of Brassó until 1531,⁴⁶ when he confirmed as many as five letters of privileges for Brassó while he was sojourning in Medgyes.⁴⁷

Szapolyai was also very generous to Peter, voivode of Moldovia: he granted him the city of Beszterce, together with the castle of Bálványos, sometimes prior to 15 July 1529. The soldiers of Peter were looting and pillaging the city

41 ANR Braşov, Fond Primăria oraşului Braşov, Col de doc Schnell, Vol. 3, No. 106; ANR Sibiu, Fond Magistratul oraşului şi scaunului Sibiu, Colecţia de documente medievale U IV, No. 335.

42 ANR Cluj, Primaria oraşului Bistriţa. Seria I. No. 1038.

43 ANR Sibiu, Fond Magistratul oraşului şi scaunului Sibiu. Colecţia de documente medievale. U V. No. 1273.

44 ANR Braşov, Fond Primaria oraşului Braşov, Colecţia de documente Stenner. Seria II, No. 106.

45 On 8 January 1530 King John I, at the intervention of Moldovian voivode Peter, provided four burghers of Brassó, who in front of the voivode had sworn fealty to the king (*iidem super observanda nobis fidelitate iuramentum eidem waywode prestitissent*), with safe conduct to travel to his court, appear in front of him and submit their case: ANR Braşov, Colecţia de documente privilegiate No. 392. On 14 January 1530 voivode Peter ordered Lucas Hirscher and the city of Brassó to adhere to the agreement signed on 3 November 1529. He stated that under no circumstances would he hand over Transylvania to Ferdinand; he would do so only to Szapolyai: ANR Braşov, Fond Primăria oraşului Braşov, colecţia de documente Stenner.

46 On 2 April 1531 voivode Peter requested King John I to restore the inhabitants of Brassó and Barcaság to his favour; they had left King Ferdinand's side and been loyal to him for as long as two years. ANR Braşov, Fond primăria oraşului Braşov. Colecţia de documente Fronius. Vol I. No. 230.

47 ANR Braşov, Fond Primăria oraşului Braşov, Colecţia de documente privilegiale No. 403.

on a daily basis, so on this date the voivode of Moldavia sent his servitor, Ioan, to address the problem. At the same time, he ordered that once the traitors of Christianity had been chased away, the city should no longer listen to the supporters of Ferdinand I.⁴⁸

In the second half of 1529, in addition to Brassó and Beszterce, King John I obtained all the salt offices of Transylvania, with the exception of the one in Vizakna (Ocna Sibiulu).⁴⁹ During the following year (1530) the city of Medgyes switched sides again, and swore loyalty to the king.⁵⁰ The year 1531 – when, as mentioned earlier, the king was sojourning in Transylvania for a longer period – was marked by consolidation.⁵¹ This is illustrated by the numerous decrees he issued, with the aim of carrying out administrative tasks and also re-establishing public order and security. In Medgyes, the leaders of the army were thereby forbidden to quarter their soldiers in the houses of priests belonging to the deanery of the city. In Gyulafehérvár, the Transylvanian authorities were ordered not to limit the ability of the inhabitants of the market town of Teke (Teaca) to trade in their goods; in Déva (Deva), another market town, János Szerecsen of Mesztegyő was ordered not to interfere with the established privileges of the inhabitants.⁵²

Szapolyai struggled to restore his rule everywhere, however. Although István Brodarics wrote in a letter dated 12 November 1534 that the whole of Transylvania had switched back to supporting King John, this was not entirely true. The city of Szeben, for example, did not switch back to his side until 1536. This can be concluded from the armistice agreement signed by the two kings in 1535 not being extended until King Ferdinand had in February 1536 promised not to attack Transylvania, on the condition that Szapolyai's troops would in return not sack Szeben.⁵³ The city, as the centre of the *Universitas Saxonum*, thus played an important role in the political horse-trading between the two monarchs.

While busy restoring order in Transylvania, it did not slip Szapolyai's mind that he should reward those cities that had maintained their loyalty to him throughout this period. Apart from Kolozsvár, the city of Lippa (Lipova), Szapolyai's inherited estate to which he returned after his exile in Poland, has to be mentioned as an example. In 1529 he elevated the city to the rank of a royal free city, and bestowed upon it the legal system of Buda.⁵⁴ This is especially noteworthy, as no other market town in the eastern part of the country (except

48 ANR Cluj, Primăria oraşului Bistriţa, Seria I, No. 1052; Berger, *Urkunden-Regesten*, 1159. I have Géza Hegyi to thank for the data in the charter.

49 Vizakna was recovered by Szapolyai in 1531: Draskóczy, *A magyarországi kőso*, 126.

50 ANR Braşov, Fond Primăria oraşului Braşov, Colecţia de documente Fronius, Vol I, No. 222.

51 *KmKv/Jkv* II. 4345.

52 13 April 1531: ANR Fond episcopia Bisericii Evanghelice CA. din Transilvania. Colecţia de documente episcopale No. 140; 5 May 1531: ANR Sibiu, colecţia Brukenthal. Seria 40. RS. 1–10, No. 410; 10 July 1531: ANR Cluj. Fond fam. Kornis. I. Documente medievale No. 56.

53 Brodericus, *Epistulae*, 235 (432–433), 258 (466–467).

54 27 June 1529: *Az erdélyi káptalan jegyzőkönyvei (1222–1599)*. (Erdélyi Történelmi Adatok, VIII/1.) Published with indexes and notes in regestas by Zsolt Bogdándi and Emőke Gálfi. Kolozsvár, 2006, 158.

for Marosvásárhely [Târgu Mureş]) would in later times be elevated to the rank of royal free city by the rulers of the Principality of Transylvania. Szapolyai visited the town several times from 1529 onwards, as it was very favourably located: it was close to Várad (Oradea).⁵⁵ Thus Lippa had by the mid-1530s become one of the king's residences. At the end of 1541, the city also hosted queen consort Isabella for a short period of time. This explains why she let those burghers of Lippa and Temesvár (Timișoara) who had, after the fall of both cities, settled in Gyulafehérvár, form their own local self-government.⁵⁶

The situation of German burghers living in Buda was also affected by the developments in Transylvania and by the position taken by the Saxon cities: Szapolyai had become ever more wary of them, and finally had the German population deported from Buda in 1529 and from Kassa in 1536.⁵⁷

King John took over Buda from Süleyman in 1529. Thereupon a part of the German population, spearheaded by judge Wolfgang Freiburger, left the city, together with the German guards. In an act of treachery, however, they were attacked and killed by the Turks. Szapolyai then 'allowed' the remaining German burghers to leave in peace. They were proclaimed traitors, however, and their property confiscated and given to the king's supporters. The city lost thus its most prosperous and most reputable burghers.⁵⁸ As regards these events, we should also recall the occurrences in Kassa⁵⁹ and Gyulafehérvár. The Germans were forced to leave Kassa, as well; in the Transylvanian city of Gyulafehérvár, on the other hand, a similar procedure, although not one aimed at the German burghers, was applied. In 1556 queen consort Isabella let all those who proved to be disloyal leave the city, but their property was transferred to the members of her court.⁶⁰

55 That the king chose Várad to be the capital city between 1534 and 1538 was no coincidence. The city and its castle had continuously been retained by bishop Imre Czibak, and did not submit to King Ferdinand I in 1527. Vince Bunyitai, *A várad püspökség története. Vol. I. Nagyvárad*, 1883, 384.

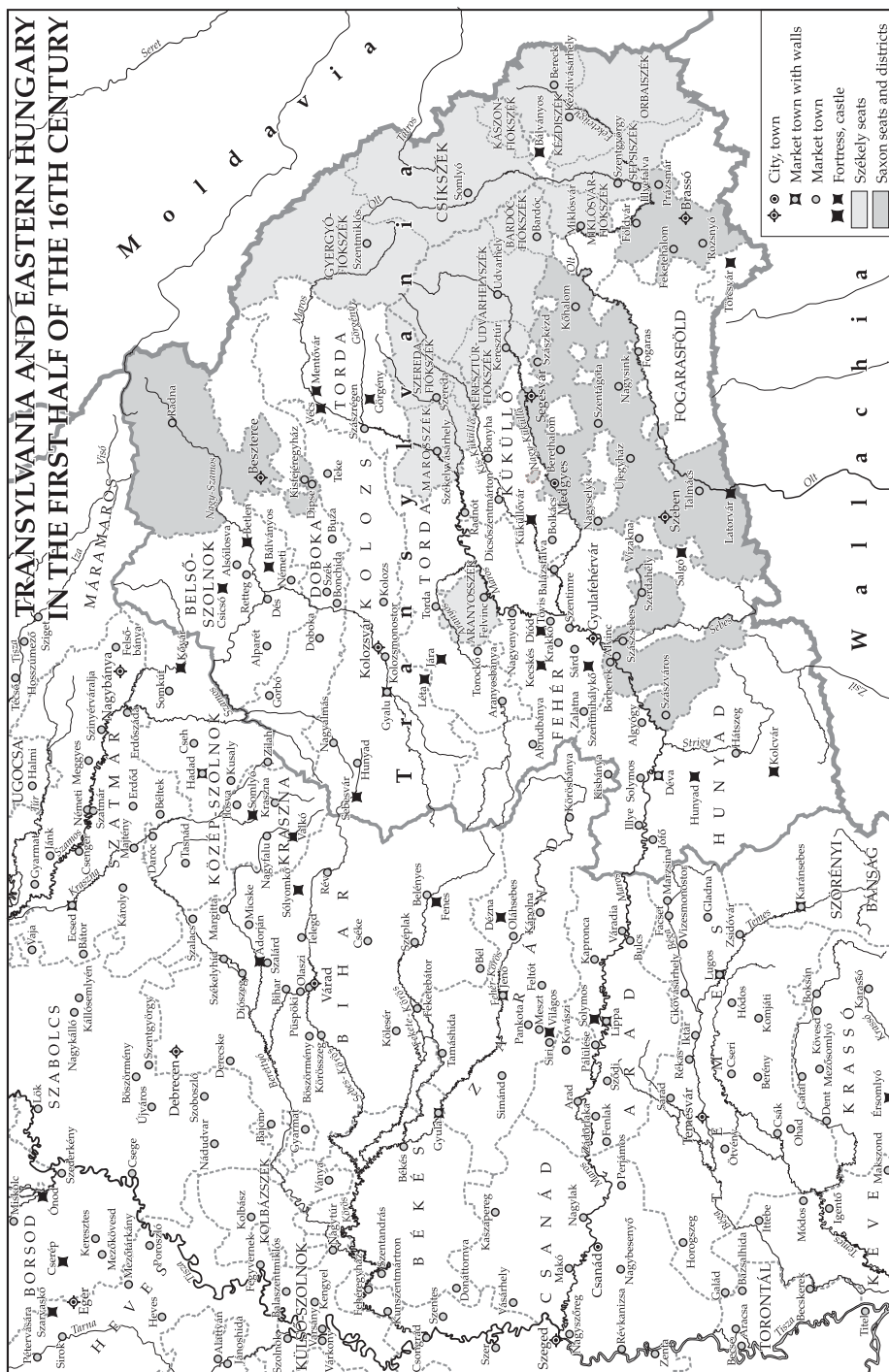
56 Emőke Gálfi, 'A gyulafehérvári Lippa fertály és a lippai menekültek a 16. század közepén', in Veronka Dáné, Mária Lupescuné Makó and Gábor Sipos (eds.), *Testimonio litterarum. Kolozsvár*, 2016, 143–150.

57 For the situation of the city of Kassa and other cities in Upper Hungary, see the essay by István H. Németh in the present volume.

58 András Kubinyi, 'Budapest története a későbbi középkorban Buda elestéig (1541-ig)', in László Gerevich (ed.), *Budapest története. Vol. II: A későbbi középkorban és a török hódoltság idején*. Budapest, 1975, 208–209.

59 On the deportation of the inhabitants of Kassa, see the essay by István H. Németh in the present volume.

60 Emőke Gálfi, 'The Society of the Residence of the Transylvanian Princes in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century', *The Hungarian Historical Review* 7:4 (2018) 767–770.



Following the siege and the successful resistance of Buda in 1530, King John confirmed the old privileges of the city in early 1531, and even added new ones. Most likely inspired by the example of Poland, the burghers of the city were granted nobility in 1531. In 1533 the city was also granted the right of high justice (the right of life and limb) and the right to augment its coat of arms.⁶¹ By this act of ennoblement, the merchants of the city became exempt from the obligation to pay customs and duties, though this also meant that burghers were obliged to provide military service in the event of war. This same pattern was followed in Várad, when Christopher Báthory (voivode of Transylvania in 1576–1581) ennobled the city and the inhabitants of the castle in 1580, and also in Kolozsvár, the city which served as a frontier stronghold after the fall of Várad (1660).⁶²

The relationship between the king and Buda, as well as the activities in the city of Lodovico Gritti, royal governor and Friar George, provisor (court judge) of Buda, offer further parallels to the understanding of King John's urban policy. Since King John was often absent, these two people represented the monarch; they often disregarded the privileges the city had previously earned.⁶³ It is widely known that the king named Lodovico Gritti governor at the end of 1530. Gritti himself came from a family of burghers, which helps explain why he supported the cities. After his death in 1534 he was succeeded in his post by Friar George, originally appointed as provisor of Buda, who thereby came to hold the positions of treasurer, castellan and provisor at the same time.⁶⁴ Szapolyai tried to establish a castle domain around Buda, and entrusted the provisor with its management. The territory provided an income from which Friar George was able to supply the needs of the castle.⁶⁵

The development of the relationship between the central power and the capital city, as outlined above, explains many aspects of the future fate of Gyulafehérvár, residence of the Transylvanian princes. There is little data from the early period of queen consort Isabella's reign (1542–1551) that relates to the relationship between the monarch and Gyulafehérvár, the former episcopal see. One thing is certain: that in matters of jurisdiction, the ruler was represented by the provisor in post at the time. This was no different from how things had been under the episcopate.⁶⁶

61 Kubinyi, 'Budapest története', 211–212.

62 MNL OL Archives of the Hungarian Chancellery, A 57. Libri Regii, Vol. 5, 451–454; *Az erdélyi fejedelmek Királyi Könyvei. Vol I: Báthory Kristóf Királyi Könyve (1580–1581)*. (Erdélyi Történelmi Adatok, VII/2.) Published with indexes and notes in regestas by Tamás Fejér, Etelka Rácz and Anikó Szász. Kolozsvár, 2003, 41; András Kiss, 'Kolozsvár levéltára rendjének fejlődése a XVI. századtól a XVIII. század végéig', in Idem, *Források és értelmezések*. Bukarest, 1994, 19.

63 Kubinyi, 'Budapest története', 221, 224.

64 Teréz Oborni, *Az ördögös Barát. Fráter György (1482–1551)*. Pécs, Budapest, 2017, 48.

65 Kubinyi, 'Budapest története', 213, 224.

66 Emőke Gálfi, 'A gyulafehérvári udvarbírák és az általuk igazgatott uradalom a 16. század közepén', in Emese Egyed and László Pakó (eds.), *Certamen III. Előadások a Magyar Tudomány Napján az Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület I. szaksztyályában*. Kolozsvár, 2016, 261–270.

After the return of the queen consort in 1556, the plan previously elaborated by King John in Buda was implemented. On the recommendation of the social estates, church property in Transylvania was secularized in 1556, and the large domain of the chapter of Transylvania, situated around Gyulafehérvár, together with the domains of the bishopric of Transylvania, was passed over to the treasury (these consisted of a connected area of almost 70 settlements); the latter had been given to the queen consort as early as in 1542, to provide a source of income for her court. The castle domain came to be led by the provisor, in his capacity as representative of the monarch, and his main responsibility was to ensure the provision of the castle. He also acted as a court of appeal for the inhabitants of the estate.⁶⁷

Gyulafehérvár was never elevated to the rank of royal free city; the reasons for this may partly lie in the situation of Buda prior to 1541. A royal free city enjoyed autonomy, which to a certain extent tied the monarch's hands and limited the full implementation of his will. If a city and its domains were owned by the prince, on the other hand, the ruler could enjoy his or her seigniorage unhindered. The same applied to the services the inhabitants of the city had to render to the prince. Yet the prince was not entirely unhindered in his rights: he could not give away his assets, as they provided the basic needs of his court.⁶⁸ This was to a certain extent counterbalanced by the fact that the ruler took by escheat the property of his subjects who died childless (parts of estates, buildings, plots, vineyards); this property could be given away in any part of the domain. In royal free cities such property was passed on to the city, so the right of escheatage motivated the monarch to retain the capital city's status as a market town.

Of the rights the ruler exercised, the right of billeting was not of minor importance. A good example of this is the city of Beszterce: in early 1542 the queen consort was planning to come to Transylvania, and Friar George and his troops were entrusted with preparing her visit, but they were not admitted into the city. When asking for admission to Beszterce, the governor cited the poverty of the neighbouring villages, but the city authorities claiming there was not enough space inside the walls declined, so, in the end, the soldiers were admitted only into the outskirts.⁶⁹ In Gyulafehérvár the soldiers of the prince were – so it appears – billeted in the houses of the burgher inhabitants. Exceptions included houses that the ruler exempted from this obligation. This led to numerous abuses later on, however.⁷⁰ Although, it was in the interests of the princes to keep the towns on a tight leash, they were also dependent on their support throughout.

67 Emőke Gálfi, 'A gyulafehérvári uradalom birtokainak mobilitása a 16. század második felében', *Magyar Gazdaságtörténeti Évkönyv 2019. Uradalom – vállalat*, Budapest, 2019, 61–73.

68 EOE I. 189.

69 13 March 1542: ANR Sibiu, Fond Magistratul oraşului şi scaunului Sibiu, Colecţia de documente medievale. U. V. No. 432.

70 Gálfi, 'Residence of the Transylvanian Princes', 776.

In my essay I have summed up the main features of John Szapolyai's urban policy in Transylvania. I have also outlined the processes that led to the special development of Transylvanian cities, unlike that of cities in Hungary. I have argued that political events in Transylvania had a great effect on King John's urban policy concerning the German population, and that this can partly explain the rise of Kolozsvár. Through the cities of Szeben and Lippa, I have presented the main elements in Szapolyai's urban policy; in the case of Buda, I have shown the atrocities that affected the German population. Lastly, I have presented the new situation of Gyulafehérvár and the changes that took place in urban policy after the return of queen consort Isabella in 1556, which in many respects arose as a result of the urban policy regulations issued by her husband, King John.

THE ARMY OF THE SZAPOLYAI FAMILY DURING THE RULE OF JOHN SZAPOLYAI AND JOHN SIGISMUND

(BARONIAL, VOIVODAL AND ROYAL TROOPS, 1510–1571)

THE ARMED FORCES OF THE SZAPOLYAI FAMILY PRIOR TO 1526

The Szapolyais became one of the most prestigious families during the reign of King Matthias Corvinus I (1458–1490). The family's noble standing was attained by one of John Szapolyai's uncles, Imre, who at the time of his death in 1487 possessed about twenty castle domains, making him the second wealthiest lord in the country. Another uncle, István, had about 11,000 tax-paying tenant plots in 1494–1495, mostly in Upper Hungary.¹ We know very little, as yet, of the *banderium* equipped and mobilised by the family (or of any other military units), since the family archives preserved in Trencsén (Trenčín) were lost after the siege of the Habsburgs in 1528.² On the basis of the fragmentary data, András Kubinyi has outlined the network of *familiars* and Szapolyai relatives who made up the officer corps of the family *banderium*. Many members of this network continued to play an important role in John Szapolyai's government and command staff even after his being elected king in 1526.³

The military capacity of the domains in Upper Hungary, of the network of *familiars* and of the counties under the jurisdiction of family members as *ispán* (*comes*) must have been significant. According to Sigismund von Herberstein, count John and his mother "attracted the most prestigious nobles with provisions

* Budapest History Museum; janos.bszabo2018@gmail.com.

1 Pál Engel, 'A magyar világi nagybirtok megoszlása a 15. században', in Idem, *Honor, vár, ispánság. Válogatott tanulmányok*. (Millenniumi Magyar Történelem, Historikusok) Selected, edited and notes by Enikő Csukovits. Budapest, 2003, 15, 52. For more information on the subject, see the essays by István Kenyeres and Tibor Neumann in the present volume.

2 *Szapolyai oklt.* 9; István Kenyeres, 'A Szapolyai család és Trencsén', in József Bessenyei, Zita Horváth and Péter Tóth (eds.), *Tanulmányok Szapolyai Jánosról és a kora újkori Erdélyről*. (Studia Miskolcinsensia, 5.) Miskolc, 2004, 141–142. On the siege, see Emil Vlahovics, 'Trencsén várának ostroma 1528-ban', in *A trencsényi kir. kath. Főgymnasium értesítője az 1882-83. tanévről*. Trencsén, 1883, 3–11; István Kenyeres, 'A trencsényi vár a XVI. században', *Fons* 2 (1995), 8.

3 András Kubinyi, 'A Szapolyaiak és familiárisaik (szervitoraik)', in Bessenyei, Horváth and Tóth (eds.), *Tanulmányok Szapolyai Jánosról*, 169–194.

and payments, either in the form of a yearly sum or as a service payment.”⁴ In the campaign of 1526, voivode John’s brother, György Szapolyai, joined King Louis II in the city of Tolna with “three hundred or more cavalymen in light and heavy armour, and approximately one thousand two hundred foot soldiers”. This data can even be verified on the basis of a report written by papal legate Antonio Burgio: the army of the count of Szepes consisted of 200 heavy cavalry soldiers, 100 light cavalry soldiers and 1,200 infantry soldiers.⁵ In 1528, John Szapolyai’s officers were able to mobilize an army of 2,000 men to defend the fort of Trencsén – and according to a general belief at the time, the best foot soldiers were born right there, along the river Vág (Váh) in Upper Hungary.⁶

THE TROOPS OF THE TRANSYLVANIAN VOIVODE PRIOR TO 1526

From 1510 onwards John Szapolyai held the titles of voivode of Transylvania and count of the Székelys (*comes Sicolorum*), and thus became one of the four paid senior royal servants responsible for the defence of the southern frontiers: article 21 of the law of 1498 named, for the first time, the offices that were to keep 400 mounted soldiers in arms at all times. These were the voivode of Transylvania, the count of the Székelys, the *ispán* of Temes (*comes Temesiensis*) and the *ban* of Croatia.⁷ Even though there were several occasions when this requirement was not fulfilled, we know that John Szapolyai presided over a much larger military force.

Due to its slightly different social development from the other parts of the Kingdom of Hungary, Transylvania had an extremely important role within the army as a whole. The voivodeship of Transylvania, which at the end of the 15th century had an estimated population of only 500,000, was considered the most militarized region in Europe.⁸ Modern research estimates the maximum population bearing arms in the late 15th century at 50,000. True, only a small fraction of this could be mobilized outside the borders of the province; for this reason they could be mostly used for defence.⁹

4 Cited in Kubinyi, ‘A Szapolyaiak’, 236–237.

5 János B. Szabó (ed.), *Mohács* (Nemzet és Emlékezet). Budapest, 2006, 142.

6 Kenyeres, ‘A trencséni vár’, 7. At the same time, Ursinus Velius, the chronicler of King Ferdinand I, knew only of 800 defenders: Caspar Ursinus Velius, *Tíz könyv a magyar háborúról* (*De bello Pannonico libri decem*). Translation, notes and afterword by Zsolt Szebelédi. Máriabesnyő, 2013, 62–63; Pál Jászay, *A magyar nemzet napjai a Mohácsi vész után*. Vol. 1. Pest, 1846, 341.

7 Dezső Márkus (ed.), *Corpus Juris Hungarici*. Vol. I. Budapest, 1899; András Kubinyi, ‘Hadszervezet a késő középkori Magyarországon’, in Árpád Rácz (ed.), *Nagy képes millenniumi hadtörténet. 1000 év a hadak útján*. Budapest, 2000, 76–78; Tibor Neumann, ‘Dózsa legyőzője – Szapolyai János erdélyi vajdasága (1510–1526)’, *Székelyföld* 18:11 (2014) 93–107.

8 András Borosy, ‘The Militia Portalis in Hungary before 1526’, in János M. Bak and Béla K. Király (eds.), *From Hunyadi to Rákóczi: War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*. New York, 1982, 71.

9 András Kubinyi, ‘Hadszervezet a késő középkori Magyarországon’, in Idem, *Nándorfehérvártól Mohácsig. A Mátyás- és a Jagelló-kor hadtörténete*. Budapest, 2007, 201.

The nobility of the Hungarian counties held the smallest weight in the military organization of the province of Transylvania, built on the special privileges of the three 'nations' (*natio*), i.e. the Hungarians, the Székelys and the Saxons.¹⁰ The reason for this was that, in periods when nobles were not personally bound to take up arms, the seven counties had to equip a total of only 300 soldiers.¹¹

The government of the Saxon territories, the so-called *Universitas Saxonum*, formed in the wake of King Andrew II's letter of privilege issued in 1224, came to be led by the count of Szeben (Nagyszeben/Sibiu), count of the Saxons. Nagyszeben and the seven Saxon seats had to send 500 soldiers to the ruler if the king himself led the army within the country's borders, 100 if the troops were commanded by one of his commander-in-chiefs, and only 50 if the campaign was directed outside the borders of the realm.¹²

During our period, alongside the nobles, the Saxons were also personally obliged to render military services. They could, however, redeem this by making payments or by hiring mercenaries. Armies of 500 to 5,000 men were equipped on various occasions. Their importance at the time was increased by the fact that it was only really these troops that possessed firearms in the province and that it was their duty to provide the Transylvanian army with supplies and cannons. In addition, according to demand, the rich cities could hire various (Székely or Wallachian) mercenaries, some even mounted, to substitute for their own infantry soldiers.¹³

The strongest armed group was that of the Székelys. Collectively, they counted as nobles, so within the borders of the province they were obliged personally to enlist in the army.¹⁴ Because of their compulsory military service, the Székelys were, according to some 16th-century records, able to send as many as 30 to 50,000 men to war.¹⁵ Yet, as reported by a Venetian envoy, Matthias Corvinus had only 16,000 mounted Székely soldiers armed with spears, shields and hand bows, who were "regarded as the best archers in the East and who have very fast horses" – most likely only a minor part of this force could actually

10 On Transylvania's military organization in the early modern period, see János B. Szabó and Győző Somogyi, *Az Erdélyi Fejedelemség hadserege*. Budapest, 1996.

11 *Nobilitas Transsilvanie tota Illc.*: Norbert C. Tóth, 'Szapolyai János erdélyi vajda 1522. évi havasalföldi hadjáratai. Havasalföld korlátozott függetlenségének biztosítása', *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 125:4 (2012) 1009: note 180.

12 Katalin Szende, 'Sub nostro vexillo regali: Katonaállítási kötelezettség a középkori magyar városi és hospes-kiváltságlevelekben', in Katalin Mária Kincses (ed.), *Hadi és más nevezetes történetek. Tanulmányok Veszprémy László tiszteletére*. Budapest, 2018, 542–551.

13 László Szokola, *Magyarországi városok zsoldos-állításának társadalmi és gazdasági háttere a késő középkorban – Az erdélyi városok katonaállítása*. Manuscript.

14 Elek Benkő, *A középkori Székelyföld. Vol. I*. Budapest, 2012, 176–179, 186–189, 450–452.

15 Ákos Egyed, 'A székely hadkötelezettség és hadszervezet, különös tekintettel a XVI. századra', in Samu Benkő, Lajos Demény and Károly Vekov (eds.), *Székely felkelés 1595–1596. Előzményei, lefolyása, következményei*. Bukarest, 1979, 50.

be sent into battle.¹⁶ Apart from the defence of the province, the military force of the ‘nations’ could only be mobilised to a very limited extent for military purposes outside the borders of the province, however.

Shortly after the appointment of Szapolyai, military activities intensified along the southern frontiers of Transylvania. The voivode played an active part in both major Turkish wars of the Jagiellonian era (1511–1519, 1521–1526), during which he proved to be an agile and mostly successful captain general of the frontiers.¹⁷ Subsequently, after being elected king, he was accused by his political opponents of cowardice, treason, and of being an incompetent military leader. Yet, even in the case of the often satirized and unsuccessful siege of Zsarnó (Žrnov) in 1515 – the last military endeavour of its kind on the part of Hungary – an Ottoman Turkish source appeared, which, unlike the general opinion of posterity, depicts a more nuanced picture of events.¹⁸

THE ARMIES OF KING JOHN, 1526–1540

Elected king in the autumn of 1526, after the defeat at Mohács, John Szapolyai soon found himself facing two enemy forces from two different directions: the Ottomans threatened with another invasion from the south,¹⁹ while Ferdinand I, archduke of Austria, pretender to the throne, was preparing to obtain the Hungarian crown. In this situation, the Hungarian military forces were commanded by two generals who in the Hungarian context can be regarded as both experienced and successful. Both were appointed commanders-in-chief in the anti-Ottoman wars in 1526, yet neither of them arrived at the Hungarian camp before the day of the Battle of Mohács. At the end of 1526 the Hungarian army was led by John Szapolyai, meanwhile elected king of Hungary, and a Croatian count, Kristóf Frangepán.²⁰

16 Zoltán Kordé, *A középkori székelység. Krónikák és oklevelek a középkori székelyekről*. (Múltunk Könyvek) Csíkszereda, 2001, 139, 145, 148; Lipót Óváry, ‘Jelentés olaszországi kutatásaimból’, *Századok* 18 (1884) 509; C. Tóth, ‘Szapolyai János erdélyi vajda’, 1009: note 181.

17 For example, in 1513–1514: Tibor Neumann, ‘Bulgária–Erdély–Temesvár. Szapolyai János és a parasztháború’, in Norbert C. Tóth and Tibor Neumann (eds.), *Keresztesekből lázadók. Tanulmányok 1514 Magyarországról*. (Magyar Történelmi Emlékek, Értekezések). Budapest, 2015, 103–154; In 1522: C. Tóth, ‘Szapolyai János erdélyi vajda’, 987–1014; Neumann, ‘Dózsa legyőzője’, 101.

18 Pál Fodor, ‘Wolf on the Border: Yahyapaşa-oğlu Bali Bey (?–1527). Expansion and Provincial Elite in the European Confines of the Ottoman Empire in the Early Sixteenth Century’, in Pál Fodor, Nándor E. Kovács and Benedek Péri (eds.), *Şerefe. Studies in Honour of Prof. Géza Dávid on His Seventieth Birthday*. (21st-Century Studies in Humanities) Budapest, 2019, 77–79.

19 Gábor Barta, ‘A Forgotten Theatre of War 1526–1528 (Historical Events Preceding the Ottoman–Hungarian Alliance of 1528)’, in Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (eds.), *Hungarian–Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Relations in the Age of Süleyman the Magnificent*. Budapest, 1994, 93–130.

20 János B. Szabó, *Mohács. Régi kérdések – új válaszok. A Magyar Királyság hadserege az 1526. évi mohácsi csatában*. Budapest, 2015, 59–67; Attila Györkös, ‘Magyar hadvezér a páviai hadjáratban? Adatok a Frangepán család történetéhez és Frangepán Kristóf I. Ferenc francia királyhoz fűződő kapcsolatához’, *Turul* 85:2 (2012) 41–45.

Purely out of habit, Frangepán suggested launching a pre-emptive attack on Austria.²¹ Taking the initiative, invading and terrorizing enemy territories could, as proved by King Matthias's war against Austria in 1477, have yielded major military and diplomatic advantages.²² At the same time, it also posed the risk of being regarded as an aggressor by the Holy Roman Empire, a risk that King John did not take this time, even though his military strength, consisting in part of light cavalry, would have been suitable for such an endeavour.²³

When the enemy crossed the western borders of Hungary in early August 1527, King John I's deployable army was already fighting along the southern frontier against the Serbian peasant leader Jovan Nenad, who had sided with Ferdinand.²⁴ The king was thus unable to provide effective assistance to fortifications that had to confront the enemy as it progressed, which led to garrisons relinquishing forts after just a few days of siege.²⁵

It is interesting to note that, according to Ferdinand's chronicler, Ursinus Velius, both parties tried to deploy a mass of armed peasants on their side. It is perhaps not surprising that this fact was not often mentioned in communist Hungary during the decades after 1948, as the mobilizing activities of King John would not have squared with the picture created of the bloody, even sadistic Transylvanian voivode suppressing the peasant revolt of 1514.²⁶ It appears

21 Gábor Barta, *A mohácsi csatától a sztambuli egyezségig (I. János király története, első könyv)*. Phd Dissertation. Budapest, 1983, 245, 258.

22 Bonfini described the role of Matthias's light cavalry in the Austrian campaign in 1477 as follows: "upon receiving permission, the lightly armed Rascians invade this part of Austria on their horses; they exploit the opportunity with ill intent, ransacking everything, burning homesteads and they vandalize and kill everyone at hand, regardless of age and gender, and prefer blood over captives; they believe the more they plunder the greater the benefit; they destroy everything with fire and sword, sack the churches, inhumanely ruining all that is heavenly and mundane. The locals are therefore in such fear everywhere that nearby settlements voluntarily offer to surrender. Since the camp was at Peterdorf, who could have denied that they were besieging Vienna? The slaughter committed by the hussars has made the neighbourhood so unsafe that nobody dared to go outside; what is more, people in the outskirts were so scared that they organized permanent patrols. Since everyone was beset with great fear, fourteen settlements in the vicinity of Vienna, surrounding the city like a wreath, surrendered to the king on one single day. ... This surrender obstructed the food supply to the inhabitants of Vienna to such an extent, it appeared they would soon be hit by starvation..." Antonio Bonfini, *A magyar történelem tizedei*. Translation by Péter Kulcsár. Budapest, 1995, 816–817.

23 János B. Szabó, *A honfoglalóktól a huszárokig A középkori magyar könnyűlovasságról*. Budapest, 2010, 172–178.

24 Ferenc Szakály, 'Remarques sur l'armée de Iovan Tcherni', *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 24 (1978) 42–82.

25 Velius, *Tíz könyv a magyar háborúról*, 5–14.

26 In his notes, an unknown pro-Habsburg contemporary also gave an account of the peasant troops on John's side: Jászay, *A magyar nemzet napjai*, 341. On the background to this issue, see Ignác Romsics, 'Dózsa György: haramia és/vagy népvészér?', in Idem, *A múlt arcai. Történelem, emlékezet, politika*. Budapest, 2015, 134–158. For a revision of the "black legend" surrounding the peasant revolt and Szapolyai, see Gábor Barta and Antal Fekete-Nagy, *Parasztháború 1514-ben*. Budapest, 1973.

that King John's experienced commander-in-chief, Kristóf Frangepán, did not underestimate the importance of deployable peasant soldiers, either: "We will certainly await that [King Ferdinand's] army with Slavic peasants, who are not dressed in clothes as colourful as the German spearmen, but still they will defend their motherland."²⁷ It is interesting that it was Frangepán, a veteran of the battlefields of Europe, who spoke of the irregular peasant soldiery in such terms; true, apart from his *banderium* of a few hundred men, he did not have many other resources to rely on.

King John, on the other hand, took a step back in light of the invasion from the west, and waited. He even let his rival take the royal seat of Buda, plundered in the previous year. Instead, he gathered an army from the territory near his family estate in Tokaj, by the river Sajó, and it was also there that he wanted to wait for the expected reinforcement troops from Poland. The Polish monarch forbid this recruitment, however, so no major auxiliary forces were able to arrive from the north.²⁸

On the basis of past experience, King John believed time would be on his side. The poor archduke of Austria seemed to have failed to keep his significant army permanently combat-ready, despite financial support from his brother, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V.²⁹ As demonstrated several times during King Matthias's first war against Austria and also during Maximilian's interrupted invasion in 1491,³⁰ the empty-pocketed Habsburgs were, despite their significant military successes, unable to exert military pressure for longer periods. Each time they started running out of money they had to settle for compromise agreements, and chances were it would be no different this time, either. Because the soldiers were not paid, the military column sent to Upper Hungary in 1528 proved to be completely useless in the manoeuvres around the fort of Trencsén.³¹

King John's positions were threatened by the 'main' Habsburg forces (consisting of a total of 3,000 *landsknechts*, and 1,000 German heavy and 1,300 light cavalymen),³² led by Niklas, count of Salm, veteran of the Italian Wars. The count faced severe supply problems all the time, as the life of his soldiers was made difficult by the dangerous incursions of King John's troops.³³

According to Ursinus Velius, "the enemy – confident in their strength and on suitable terrain, being informed, among other things, of the small number of our men and of the scarcity in the camp – have, after a consultation, decided to

27 Kristóf Frangepán's letter to Ferenc Jozefics, Velika, 11 July 1527: Lajos Thallóczy and Antal Hodinka (eds.), *A horvát véghegyek oklevéltára. Vol. I: 1490–1527*. Budapest, 1903, 679.

28 *Acta Tomiciana*, IX. 288.

29 Zoltán Korpás, *V. Károly és Magyarország (1526–1536)*. Budapest, 2008, 69–79, 89–92.

30 László Veszprémy, 'Reddidit amissum fugiens Germanus honorem'. Az 1459-es körmeneti ütközetek historiográfiájához', in Idem, *Lovagvilág Magyarországon*. Budapest, 2008, 43–49; Tibor Neumann, 'Békekötés Pozsonyban – országgyűlés Budán. A Jagelló–Habsburg kapcsolatok egy fejezete (1490–1492)', *Századok* 144 (2010) 335–372; 145 (2011) 293–347.

31 Barta, *A mohácsi csatától*, 297.

32 Velius, *Tíz könyv a magyar háborúról*, 20.

33 Barta, *A mohácsi csatától*, 252–253.

raid our needy men at night in the vicinity of the camp. Having determined the exact time of the attack, when night had fallen they raided us amidst loud cries to scare us. After attacking the first line of the guards, they reached as far as the cannons and destroyed them with their huge axes.”³⁴

Subsequently, on 26–27 September 1527, the Battle of Tokaj took place as the result of another, properly misfortunate Hungarian nighttime strike. This battle can thus not in the slightest be regarded as a pre-planned, regular military encounter. Yet it had severe consequences.³⁵ On the one hand, the middle part of the country – the area within the line bounded by Fehérvár (Székesfehérvár), Buda and Esztergom – was lost, together with the major religious and political centres. On the other hand, the outcome revealed King John’s military weakness, namely that he was unable to withstand even a modest Habsburg attack. From this time onward, he strove to ensure foreign military support at all times.

Polish auxiliary troops

After the defeat at Tokaj, King John, retreating, set up his new headquarters on his domains in the city of Debrecen, from where he was able to organize a counterattack to be launched in the spring. In the meantime, Ferdinand’s autumn offensive stalled, and his military strength decreased significantly. This would have led to a more equal balance of power in the spring of 1528, but King John once again let a chance at military initiative slip out of his hands: his attack launched to retake Kassa (Košice), a city of utmost strategic and economic importance, was a complete failure, as once again the Habsburg army defeated King John’s troops, this time at Szina (Seňa).³⁶

King John, similarly to the entire Hungarian war council in 1526, felt the lack of experience in his military commanders. The problem demonstrated by József Kelenik in connection with the German, French, and Italian commanders-in-chief of the empire still persisted. Due to the specific circumstances of the region, the local (Hungarian, Austrian or Bohemian) military élite did not and could not possess the knowledge or experience needed to fight large-scale conflicts, a problem that the Habsburgs for a long time sought to remedy by ‘importing’ generals.³⁷

Despite being described as a “quite valuable general” in a report by Francesco Massaro, the Venetian resident envoy was still of the opinion that Szapolyai “still did not know as much as would be required from a general in a country like

34 Velius, *Tíz könyv a magyar háborúról*, 21.

35 János B. Szabó, ‘A Magyar Királyság hadszervezete és hadserege (1490–1529)’, in János B. Szabó and Pál Fodor (eds.), *Új korszak határán. Az európai államok hadügye és hadseregei a mohácsi csata korában*. Budapest, 2019, 88–90.

36 Barta, *A mohácsi csatától*, 265–275, 280–284.

37 Géza Perjés, ‘Gróf Zrínyi Miklós (1620–1664)’, in Béla Király and László Veszprémy (eds.), *A magyar hadtörténelem évszázadai*. Budapest, 2003, 109–112; József Kelenik, ‘Igaz képek a magyar múlt tarlójáról. Hadsereg és haditechnika a 16. század második felében’, *Rubicon* 6:5 (1995) 16.

this”.³⁸ This assessment is reinforced by works written on Szapolyai’s activities in 1514, and his campaigns to Zsarnó in 1515 and to Wallachia in 1522.³⁹ Within the Hungarian context, King John was considered as an experienced military leader. This proved insufficient against the main army of the sultan and the Habsburgs, however, and King John was himself aware of this. After the failure at Tokaj, he therefore sought to find a leader abroad with experience in German warfare. Somewhat surprisingly, he believed he had found the right person for the task in the shape of Albert Hohenzollern, grand master of the Teutonic Order, whose brother, Casimir of Brandenburg-Bayreuth, had commanded the troops of King Ferdinand in the previous year against King John in Hungary. Albert, on the other hand, was a vassal of the king of Poland, so there was no obstacle to his invitation.⁴⁰

Winning over the veterans of the king of Poland appeared to be another key factor for success. In the end, a major contingent did indeed arrive at King John’s camp. Unfortunately, the correspondence between the king’s diplomats only reveals how big an army was expected to arrive: in the beginning, 1,000 horsemen and 500 foot soldiers were hoped for, but later the expectations grew to 200 Polish horsemen, 500 foot soldiers, 500 Lithuanian archers and 1,000–2,000 Tatars from Poland.⁴¹ We also know the impressive list of names – as requested by Hungarian diplomats – of the officers’ corps.⁴² Hetman Jakub Secygniowski, an experienced senior officer and veteran general of the war against the Teutonic Knights, that is, someone tried and tested in battles against *lands knechts*, was appointed to lead the Polish contingent.⁴³

According to the account given by Ursinus Velius, Szapolyai had already gathered a considerable force in time for the next encounter: “there were two thousand light cavalymen, three hundred knights (armoured cavalymen) and five hundred Tatar horsemen, as well as one thousand Polish infantrymen and the same number of *hajdús* in his army, together with an additional two thousand hastily recruited soldiers.” Even according to the well-informed Elek Thurzó, the king had about 5,000 real soldiers and also some levied peasants.⁴⁴ On the other

38 Report by secretary Francesco Massaro from 1523: István Balogh, *Velencei diplomaták Magyarországról, 1500–1526. Forrástanulmány*. Szeged, 1929, LVIII–LIX.

39 Fodor, ‘Wolf on the Border’, 57–89; also see Sándor Papp, ‘A török béke kérdése a Dózsa-féle parasztháború idején’, in Emese Egyed and László Pakó (eds.), *Certamen III. Előadások a Magyar Tudomány Napján az Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület I. szakosztályában*. Kolozsvár, 2016, 239–240.

40 Gábor Barta, *La route qui mène à Istanbul, 1526–1528*. (Studia Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, 195.) Budapest, 1994, 78.

41 Richárd Botlik, *Szapolyai János lengyel szövetségesei*. Szilvásvárad, 2008, 106, 108–110.

42 For biographies of the Polish officers mentioned in the source, see Marek Plewczyński, *Obertyn 1531*. Warszawa, 1994, 118–145.

43 Marek Plewczyński, *Wojny i wojskowość polska w XVI wieku. Tom I. Lata 1500–1548*. S. I., 2011, 301; Idem, ‘Jakub Secygniowski’, in Henryk Markiewicz (ed.), *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*. Vol. XXXVI/I. S. I., 1995, 122–125.

44 Elek Thurzó’s letter to Ferenc Batthyány, Magyaróvár, 4 March 1528: *Bethlenfalvi Thurzó Elek levelezése (Források a Habsburg–magyar kapcsolatok történetéhez)*. Vol. I: 1526–1532. (Lymbus

side, Habsburg commander-in-chief Hans Katzianer had only 3,000 German infantrymen, 500 German heavy cavalry and 1,300 Hungarian hussars, so King John's troops outnumbered them. As was pointed out by Elek Thurzó, however, the Habsburg soldiers were all experienced and battle-wise veterans.⁴⁵

"Between the enemy camp and our troops," wrote Velius, "there was a dense forest with bad roads and impenetrable narrow terrain. Even though it was difficult to pass through it, and would indeed be impossible to do in a closed formation, there was no doubt that our men would manage to get through if dispersed. ... Thus, upon getting out of the forest safe and sound, our men stopped on the plain about two miles from the enemy camp. Once there, Katzianer immediately ordered to fortify and surround the infantry with carriages from every side. Leonard von Vels, who had been made responsible for the foot soldiers, and who had more experience in this field than many others, quickly deployed the men and formed the phalanxes, thanks to which they did not miss the opportunity to form the frontline in a more appropriate and faster way. With equal speed and diligence, he deployed the cavalry units suitable for battle in three parts. Bálint Török and Lajos Pekry led no more than three hundred horsemen. ... Upon conquering the hill, he led all the troops there at the same time, together with the field cannons that, fired frequently and effectively, drove the enemy out of their camp. Amidst tremendous cries, they launched an attack against the first line of our soldiers, and fought from the downhill area with unexpected bravery. In the event, the enemy infantry attacked the German cavalry, while the German infantry was attacked by the enemy cavalry. German horsemen were not frightened by the fusillade and by the handguns of the steadily shooting soldiers; moreover, they even showed great courage in confronting it, and, even though conditions were unequal and the terrain unpropitious, they engaged in the fight. In order to prevent the swift Tatar horsemen as much as possible from disturbing our front line from the west flank and from behind, Leonard von Vels cautiously confronted enemy attempts on one of the openings in the line of carriages. This was greatly beneficial for our men. Once the clash started, both sides fought very courageously. Soon, however, the valour of our soldiers held up the enemy troops, and, by vigorously using all the strength they had, they immediately defeated and routed them."⁴⁶

According to this account, the greatest burden of the Battle of Szina was born by the Polish, even though near combat was not the 'speciality' of Bohemian and Polish mercenaries.⁴⁷ In this period, they were mostly used as traditional defence

Kötetek, 1.) Published with a foreword by Gabriella Erdélyi. Budapest, 2005 (hereinafter *Bethlenfalvi Thurzó*), 122.

45 *Bethlenfalvi Thurzó*, 122. The Habsburg court chronicler essentially confirms this data: Ursinus Velius, *Tíz könyv a magyar háborúról*, 50.

46 Velius, *Tíz könyv a magyar háborúról*, 50–52.

47 The same may also have applied to the Hungarian infantry in the second half of the 15th century; see Árpád Nógrády, 'Pozsonyi gyalogosok Mátyás seregében', in László Veszprémy (ed.), *Rex invictissimus. Hadsereg és hadszervezet a Mátyás kori Magyarországon*. Budapest, 2008, 193–200.

arquebusiers. Yet we need to consider the gradual change in the profile of the Polish infantry, suggested in the account by Szerémi, who personally took part in the infantry attack: an ever growing number of arquebusiers, hitherto almost entirely unprotected in close combat, now came to be equipped with some kind of melee weapon, which made them effective even in close combat with the infantry and which also increased their 'willingness to attack'.⁴⁸

In the Battle of Szina in 1528 the Polish auxiliary troops fought in a definitely aggressive attack mode, however, while the infantry of the Habsburg army, led by Katzianer, adopted a defensive tactic within the protective walls of a wagon fort. This despite their weapons and usual tactics being better suited to an offensive action. There were several reasons to switch to these new tactics: on the one hand, Katzianer, as a nobleman from Krajna (Carniola) fought a good deal against the Ottomans in the 1520s along the Croatian frontier, so he would have been well acquainted with the prevailing customs in Central Europe. On the other hand, his defensive tactics may have been caused by a fear of being outnumbered and of the enemy's effective cavalry. The Habsburg general's presumptions proved right, and the usual investment manoeuvre of the Tatar forces arriving with the Polish troops remained ineffective. All this was well suited to the East-Central European military environment.⁴⁹

In the face-to-face struggle at the open end of the wagon fort, King John's Hungarian hussars, equipped with lances, and his Polish horsemen could hardly have been able to rout the famously battle-wise German mercenaries. Moreover, even the attack by the heavy cavalry was broken by a wall of German infantry.⁵⁰ The 300 heavy cavalymen mentioned by Ursinus Velius were likely to be part of the king's retinue; they played, at least in the early stages of the battle, an active part in the fighting.⁵¹

Janissaries in Buda

After his defeat in Szina, Szapolyai lost his ground in the country. He fled to Poland, and was only able to return in early 1529, and with Ottoman support. At the time of his return, King John had sent 400 mounted and 600 mercenary soldiers from Poland ahead of him, who were soon joined by an Ottoman Turkish cavalry unit consisting of 600–700 horsemen. This showed just how much the king depended on military support from the Ottoman sultan.⁵² Upon occupying Buda in 1529 and returning the city to his favourite, King John,

48 Szerémi, *Magyarország romlásáról*, 202; László Szokola, 'A Lengyel-Litván Államszövetség hadszerzete és hadserege', in B. Szabó and Fodor (eds.), *Új korszak határán*, 62–64.

49 János B. Szabó, 'A huszita hadviselés hatása és adaptációja Kelet-Közép-Európában', in Attila Bárány and László Pósn (eds.), *„Causa unionis, causa fidei, causa reformationis in capite et membris.” Tanulmányok a konstanzi zsinat 600. évfordulója alkalmából*. Debrecen, 2014, 432–437.

50 Szerémi, *Magyarország romlásáról*, 203.

51 *Ibid.*, 202.

52 *Ibid.*, 225, 229, 241. The mercenaries of the Polish king were led to Hungary by Simon *deák* of Athina. Pongrácz Sörös, 'Athinai Deák Simon', *Századok* 39 (1905) 499.

Süleyman also left 3,000 horsemen alongside him, together with the crew of his Danube flotilla, just in case.⁵³ From this time on, an Ottoman garrison was permanently stationed in Buda, and in the next decade there were hardly any major endeavours organized by the Szapolyai side that were without the armed support of the sultan's soldiers.

From 1529 onwards, King John's political room for manoeuvre was subject to the relationship between the Habsburgs and the Ottoman Empire. Following the sultan's unsuccessful campaign against Vienna, an immediate Habsburg counter-attack was to be expected, which King John was also aware of. As early as 24 November, he ordered one of his court members to take his horsemen and go to Buda, as he had heard that Ferdinand intended to attack him at his headquarters.⁵⁴ Even as the expected attack was delayed, King John requested Ottoman auxiliary troops as well, to be sure. As Szerémi notes, he "set up three guards: [Turkish] voivode Mumin on water, [Turkish] voivode Kászon (Kasım) on land, and the third, János Bánffy, in the city of Buda."⁵⁵ We do not have exact data on the number of Ottoman contingents stationed in some internal parts of the country (Pest, Székesfehérvár), but in 1534 Gritti said that the number of soldiers was more than 6,000.⁵⁶

Shortly afterwards, the king set out on a counter-attack with the army he had levied; the sultan's auxiliary troops played an important role in the operation. Anticipating the event, voivode Kasım's troops, together with Tamás Nádasdy and János Szerescsen's Hungarian army, swung into action in Southern Transdanubia against Bálint Török, who had defected. The siege of the fort of Szigetvár, in which, according to estimates by the defenders, 2,000 soldiers took part, failed, however.⁵⁷

Mehmed, featuring as Mumin in Szerémi's description, did not have much time to rest on his laurels, as the *bey* had to return to Szapolyai's side, because, as the Ottomans believed: "John, who had been made king by the high court to govern and protect that distant province, he whose tongue of courage remained silent due to laxity and who himself was but a hiding mouse in the whole of timidity. He stood not his ground in the battle with the faithless Bohemians, as to the matter of fighting he proved to be unknowledgeable. Since he was stupid and ignorant of military science, he was very much inclined to run."⁵⁸ This time, however, Szapolyai would not have been able to retreat any further even if he

53 Henrik Kretschmayr, *Gritti Lajos, 1480–1534*. (Magyar Történeti Életrajzok) Budapest, 1901. <http://mek.niif.hu/05700/05721/html/index.htm> (accessed: 20 June 2019)

54 Béla Iványi, 'Buda és Pest sorsdöntő évei', *Tanulmányok Budapest Múltjából* 9 (1941) 41.

55 Szerémi, *Magyarország romlásáról*, 249.

56 Anton Gévay, *Urkunden und Actenstücke zur Geschichte der Verhältnisse zwischen Oesterreich, Ungarn und der Pforte im 16. und 17. Jahrhunderte*. Vol. 2. Wien, 1839, 48.

57 Istvánffy, *Magyarok dolgairól*, 284–285; József Bessenyei, *Enyingi Török Bálint okmánytára*. Budapest, 1994, XIII. <http://mek.oszk.hu/02200/02211/html/> (accessed: 15 June 2019); Szabolcs Varga, 'Szigetvár története 1526–1566', in Sándor Bősze, László Ravazdi and László Szita (eds.), *Szigetvár története: Tanulmányok a város múltjából*. Szigetvár, 2006, 45–93.

58 Dzsélalzade Musztafa, *Az országok osztályai és az utak felsorolása in Török történetirők*. Vol. II. Translation and notes by József Thúry. Budapest, 1896, 188–189.

had wanted to, as in the meantime a Habsburg army of 10,000 men started laying siege to Buda.

The commander of the besieging army, Wilhelm Roggendorf, surrounded the city on 31 October 1530, yet, despite heavy fighting, he was not successful. In vain did he keep the city under a blockade for more than 50 days; in the meanwhile, Mehmed Bey appeared near Pest with a cavalry of 1,500 to 2,000 men, and Roggendorf had to retreat without achieving any successes.⁵⁹ For the mixed Hungarian and Ottoman army of 4,000 men stuck in the castle area, the siege was a genuine life-and-death battle, in which not only did voivode Kasim and Péter Ocsárovics take part in leading the Ottoman troops, but also King John himself, as well as Lodovico Gritti, who had arrived as the sultan's envoy, with 200 soldiers.⁶⁰ Subsequently, the raiding army of Yahyapaşa-oğlu Mehmed Bey, district governor of Semendire (Smederevo/Szendrő), set off to fight against Austria; under the 'colours' of King John, it caused tremendous destruction in Upper Hungary, as well as in the region of Csallóköz (Žitný ostrov).⁶¹

Mehmed Bey and his soldiers were often stationed in the capital of the Kingdom of Hungary in the 1530s. In 1537, voivode Kasim secured Buda with 3,000 men, while Mehmed appeared south of the river Drava and participated in the Battle of Gara (Gorjani) against Hans Katzianer. It is less well-known that a Habsburg army of unprecedented size died in this battle; the death toll is likely to have exceeded that of the Battle of Mohács.⁶²

After 1529, we see a fatal narrowing of King John's room for manoeuvre. In December 1530, Lodovico Gritti was named governor in the sultan's will, upon which Gritti became the country's second-most important dignitary after the king. In early 1532 he set out from Constantinople to Hungary at the head of 500 mounted and 200 Balkan and Ottoman foot soldiers, including 100 janissaries, who were joined by further recruited soldiers along the way, and an additional 200 hussars were hired as mercenary soldiers in Hungary.

59 Iványi, 'Buda és Pest', 43–45; *Török történetirók*, II. 85, 188–189.

60 Szerémi, *Magyarország romlásáról*, 222–223; Géza Dávid, 'An Ottoman Military Career on the Hungarian Borders: Kasim Voyvoda, Bey, and Pasha', in Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (eds.), *Ottomans, Hungarians, and Habsburgs in Central Europe: The Military Confines in the Era of Ottoman Conquest*. (The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage. Politics, Society and Economy, 20.) Leiden, Boston, Köln, 2000, 269–271.

61 Istvánffy, *Magyarok dolgairól*, 284–285; Peter Ratkoš, 'Die Slowakei während der osmanischen Expansion der Jahre 1526–1532. Der erste osmanische Feldzug in die Slowakei vom Jahr 1530', in *Actes du I^{er} Congrès international des études Sud-Est européennes*. Vol. 3. Sofia 1969, 737–752.

62 Iványi, 'Buda és Pest', 46–47; Dávid, 'An Ottoman Military Career', 269–272. On the clashes of 1537, see Leopold Kupelwieser, *Johann Katzianer's Zug gegen die Türken 1537*. Wien, 1899 (Separatdruck aus der *Neuen Armee-Zeitung*, Jahrgang 1899); Ive Mažuran, 'Turska osvajanja u Slavoniji (1526–1552)', *Osječki Zbornik* 6 (1958) 97–103; Nada Klaić, 'Ostaci ostataka: Hrvatske i Slavonije u XVI st. (od mohadžke bitke do seljačke bune 1573. g.)', *Arhivski Vjesnik* 16 (1973) 255–257; see also Aleksandar Fotić, 'Yahyapaşa-oğlu Mehmed Pasha's Evkaf in Belgrade', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 54:4 (2001) 440–441.

The court cavalry of King John consisted, at the same time, of not more than 826 armed cavalry men and hussars.⁶³

In 1523, at the time of Sultan Süleyman's campaign to Kőszeg, Gritti led the army of the Kingdom of Hungary against Esztergom. He allegedly besieged Esztergom, the seat of Pál Várdai, archbishop of Esztergom, with 10,000 men, including 3,000 Ottomans and the auxiliary troops sent by the voivode of Wallachia. Yet the 1,000 Spanish mercenaries sent by King Ferdinand and the archbishop's army of 500 successfully defended the fortification rising above the river Danube.⁶⁴

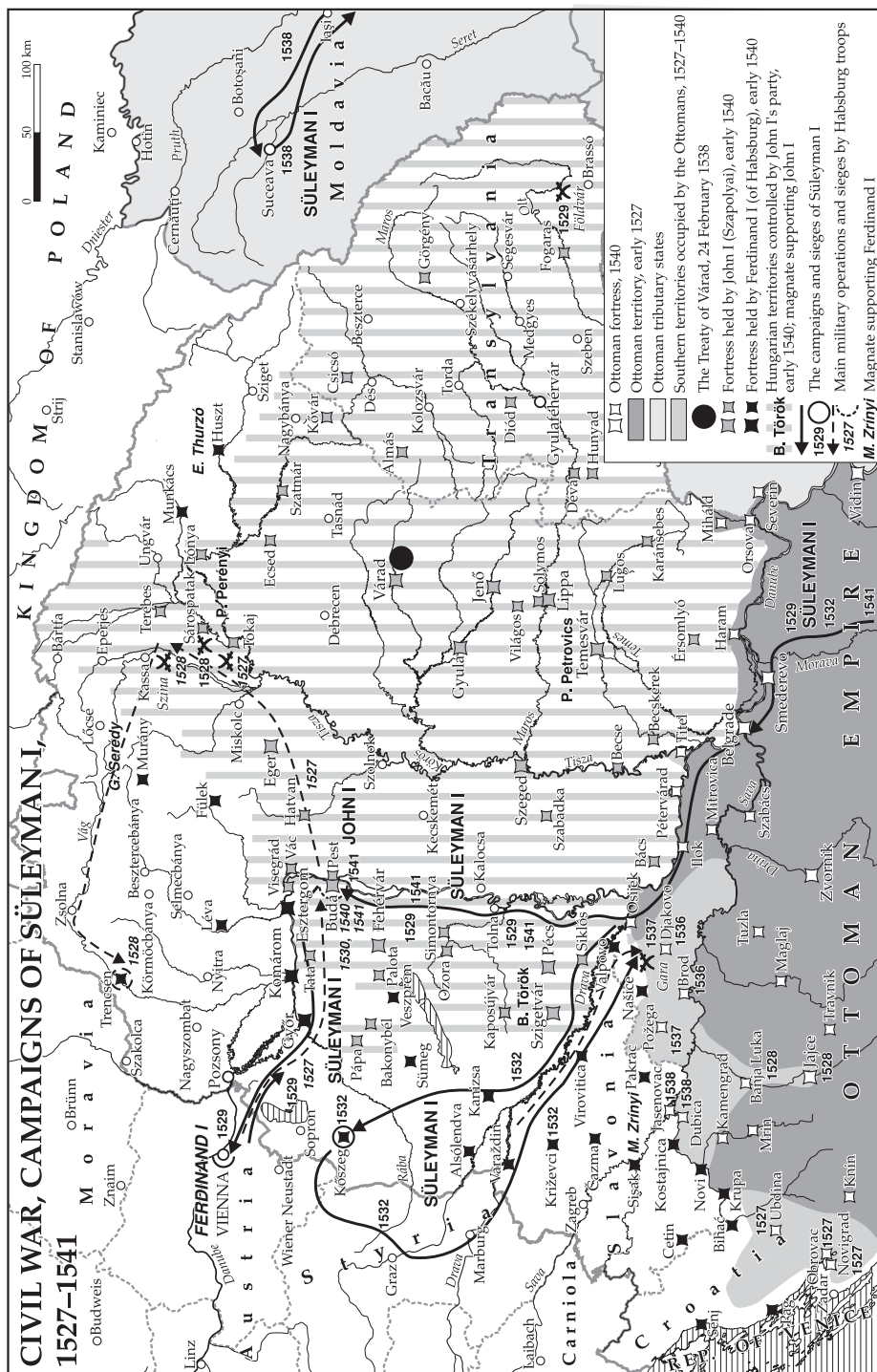
In spring 1534, Gritti travelled to Hungary again, this time accompanied by 4,000 soldiers. When the army arrived in the country, it consisted of 1,000 Greek and Ottoman foot-soldiers from the Balkans (including 200 janissaries), approximately 800 Ottoman cavalry soldiers, joined at the Transylvanian border by about 800 to 1,000 mounted soldiers. This 'entourage' was then joined by an additional 800 to 1,000 Hungarian cavalymen near Brassó (Braşov).⁶⁵ The troops were also joined by soldiers from the royal cavalry unit and from among those officers of the royal mercenary infantry who had been recruited by Gritti as governor and captain general. Eventually, however, not even this immense force was able to save Gritti from being routed in Medgyes (Mediaş). The indignant Transylvanians surrounded him in the city, most of his soldiers defected from him, and in the end he was forced into the hands of the besiegers, who executed him.

Sources from the time of the incident allow for some conclusions to be drawn: it appears that during the decades after the Battle of Mohács, it was not the Hungarian state that maintained the troops in the first place. Rather, it was the entourage of wealthy nobles, fulfilling state functions and acting as 'warlords' of a kind, together with other armed men, mobilized from territories under their supervision, who came to form the backbone of the Hungarian military. At least, we currently have a much poorer and more fragmented image of the king of Hungary's Hungarian army than of his foreign auxiliary troops. The reason for this is in part that most of the charters of the period have not yet been adequately investigated and that narrative sources mark the various contingents of several hundred (or even several thousand) men mainly with the names of loyal or disloyal magnates (such as Bálint Török, Péter Perényi, Imre Czibak and Friar George [Martinuzzi]). According to Antal Verancsics's description, for example, upon defecting to King John, Ferenc Bebek "sent three hundred cavalry soldiers from among his own mercenary soldiers, the same

63 Kretschmayr, *Gritti Lajos*; Zsolt Simon 'Szapolyai János familiárisainak egy lajstroma 1531-ből', *Publicationes Universitatis Miskolciensis. Sectio Philosophica* 13:3 (2008) 320, 328–329.

64 Korpás, V. Károly, 232–233.

65 Ferenc Szakály, *Lodovico Gritti in Hungary 1529–1534: A Historical Insight into the Beginnings of Turco-Habsburgian Rivalry*. (Studia Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae. 197.) Budapest, 1995, 13, 22–23, 25.



amount of foot soldiers equipped with *archibusia*,⁶⁶ and an exquisitely-built cannon of impressive size to the king” as a sign of his loyalty.⁶⁷

Spaniards in Debrecen

In the second half of the 1530s, after a series of diplomatic failures and humiliations, King John actively sought an agreement with the Habsburgs. When, in around 1537, a large European Christian alliance started to take shape under the leadership of Charles V, Szapolyai also joined it by signing the Treaty of Várad (Nagyvárad/Oradea).⁶⁸ Within the framework of the treaty, John and Ferdinand entered into a separate agreement on 19 May on the defence of Buda. Pursuant to this agreement, Ferdinand offered 600 sappers for the construction of the fortifications of Buda. In addition, he also promised to send 5,000 German or Bohemian soldiers for the protection of Buda, Pest and the fortification on Gellért Hill. In return, King John undertook to retain 4,000 men to defend Buda and Pest, and would, at his own expense, also bring an additional 400 craftsmen from Bohemia with experience in construction.⁶⁹

In the end, the great plans of the Christian alliance came to nothing: the planned great offensive in the Balkans did not take place. The Spanish troops occupied, temporarily, just one military base on the shore of the Adriatic Sea. Although the agreement did not remain a secret from Sultan Süleyman, in the summer of 1538 he did not launch an attack on Dalmatia or Hungary. Instead, he deployed his army against the Moldavian voivode Peter (Petru Rareș), while his flotilla clashed with the unified fleet of the Christian powers at Preveza on 28 September 1538.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, King John was prepared to defend the borders of Transylvania. Luckily, the Carpathian basin had at this time escaped any attack from the main Ottoman army. Yet, pursuant to the Treaty of Várad, a minor Habsburg auxiliary army set off to the eastern part of the country. Apart from the Hungarian hussars, it was the *tercio of maestre de campo* Cristobal Morales that constituted the main force of the army. Morales, at the head of 2,000 Spanish infantry soldiers, reached as far as the city of Debrecen.⁷¹ Since the campaign of the sultan was not carried out, no battles took place. It cannot therefore be determined what the army, joined by Szapolyai's Hungarian troops, would have been able to achieve.

66 Kulcsár translated this as ‘crossbow’, but it is much more likely to be a rifle of some kind.

67 Antal Verancsics, ‘Két könyv Szolimán moldáviai és erdélyi hadjáratáról. Harmadik könyv Erdély, Moldávia és Havasalföld fekvéséről (1538–1539)’, in *Krónikáink magyarul. Vol. III/3*. Selected and translated by Péter Kulcsár. Budapest, 2008, 84–85.

68 László Bárdossy, *Magyar politika a Mohácsi vész után*. Budapest, 1943, 175–232; Teréz Oborni, *Az ördögös Barát. Fráter György (1482–1551)*. Pécs, Budapest, 2017, 50–60.

69 Iványi, ‘Buda és Pest’, 48–49.

70 Gyula Káldy-Nagy, *Szulejmán*. Budapest, 1974, 144–146.

71 Bárdossy, *Magyar külpolitika*, 222–223; Korpás, V. Károly, 454.

Transylvania divided

Transylvania's military situation developed in unusual fashion in the 1530s. Thanks to agents of the Habsburgs, one of the three 'nations', the Saxons, sided with Ferdinand. Even though after 1529 most Saxon cities switched back to King John, the city of Szeben remained firm for a long time. King John could not therefore really count on the military power of the Saxons.⁷² In order to restrain them, he used the Székelys. In return for their loyalty, he brought his acknowledgment of their freedom and privileges to their attention in the form of numerous spectacular acts.⁷³

For a short period of time during the struggle for the throne, the Székelys community was divided. Some joined the group of Transylvanians supporting Ferdinand, but eventually, on 22 July 1529, during the Battle of Földvár (Feldioara) fought between the pro-Szapolyai and pro-Ferdinand groups, the Székelys sided with the Moldavian voivode, who supported Szapolyai, which sealed the outcome of the battle.⁷⁴ In 1531, when King John paid a personal visit to Transylvania, the Székelys unequivocally recognized him as their lawful king and provided him with mercenaries for his battles against the Saxons.⁷⁵ In 1535, the Székely assembly of Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş) ordered the *Landsurm* (edict invoking a people's reserve militia) to side with King John and to attack the domains of the voivode of Moldavia, who in the meantime sided with Ferdinand.⁷⁶

In 1536, the Székely army was needed again, because King Ferdinand's troops had occupied the Transtibiscan city of Szatmár (Satu Mare). King John sent one of his best officers, Gotthárd Kun of Ozsdola, to lead the Székely troops and retake the fort.⁷⁷ The Székelys were also mobilized in 1538 by the diet of Torda (Turda) against the expected Ottoman invasion: under the leadership of István Maylád, they were sent to the most threatened point of the country, the Ojtoz (Oituz) pass. Fortunately, however, the attack of the main Ottoman army was not forthcoming.⁷⁸ Subsequently, in 1540, they had to take up arms on the side of King John against his rebellious voivode, István Maylád: Miklós Kornis of Udvarhelyszék and Márton Andrassy of Csíkszék sent troops to support the royal

72 Karla Dolleschall, *Ferdinand I. und die Sächsische Nationsuniversität im Thronstreit gegen Johann Zápolya*. Dissertation. Graz, 1951; Péter Szabó, 'V. Károly és az erdélyi szászok', *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 115:2 (2002) 375–380. See also the essay by Emőke Gálfi in the present volume.

73 Judit Balogh, 'A székelyek Szapolyai Erdélyében', *Publicationes Universitatis Miskolciensis. Sectio Philosophica* 13:3 (2008) 21; Neumann, 'Dózsa legyőzője', 93–107.

74 For a description of the battle, see Hieronymus Ostermayer, 'Chronik', in Graf Josef Kemény (ed.), *Deutsche Fundgruben der Geschichte Siebenbürgens. Vol. I*. Klausenburg, 1839, 14; László Kőváry, *Erdély történelme. Vol. III*. Pest, 1859, 26–27.

75 Kőváry, *Erdély történelme*, III. 33.

76 Lajos Szádeczky-Kardoss, *A székely nemzet története és alkotmánya*. Budapest, 1927, 108.

77 Farkas Bethlen, *Erdély története. Vol. I*. Budapest, Kolozsvár, 2000, 126–127; Elek Jakab and Lajos Szádeczky-Kardoss, *Udvarhely vármegye története a legrégibb időktől 1849-ig*. Budapest, 1901, 246.

78 Kőváry, *Erdély történelme*, III. 59.

army.⁷⁹ This proved insufficient, however, and it was only the army of Süleyman that managed to eliminate Maylád from the political life of Transylvania.

THE ARMIES OF THE EASTERN PART OF THE KINGDOM OF HUNGARY, 1541–1572

The death of King John and the Ottoman conquest of Buda were a great shock to Hungary. After 1541, the Szapolyai dynasty, twice, by mercy of the sultan (1541, 1556), establishing its rule in the eastern parts of Hungary,⁸⁰ sought, due to the constant hostilities, to modernize the military organization of the territories under its rule. Even though the unity of the Kingdom of Hungary was restored in 1550–1555, the developments during the short reign of King Ferdinand had shown that Transylvania was not able to maintain large numbers of foreign mercenaries, and that the royal troops stationed with the voivodes would only have been effective had they formed the nucleus of a major army. On their own, however, they proved ineffective. The province thus had to continue to defend itself using its internal resources.⁸¹

County troops

Theoretically, it remained the task of the counties to provide the main armies, the military power of which had originally rested on three pillars: the peasant militia (*militia portalis*), the noble insurrection, and if necessary, the *Landsturm*.⁸² These were, during certain periods, complemented by the *banderia* of landowning magnates (troops under the banner of the lords) and the soldiery of princely castle domains.

The noble insurrection was the oldest of these three institutions: in return for their privileges, every Hungarian noble personally had to take up arms and go to war to defend the country. This obligation was subsequently renewed on several occasions by the national assemblies of the Principality of Transylvania. Depending on the severity of the threat, the monarch called either for a partial insurrection, i.e. one that applied for certain counties only, or a general insurrection (*insurrectio generalis*). If the prince went to war himself, all the nobles were obliged to join him. Obligatory military service also applied to

79 Szabolcs Varga, 'A Maylád-féle lázadás történetének kritikai vizsgálata', in Balázs Mátyás (ed.), *Grastyán Endre Szakkollégium. Tanulmánykötet 2. Szekszárd*, 2001, 280; Oborni, *Az ördögös Barát*, 63–67; Jakab and Szádeczky-Kardoss, *Udvarhely vármegye*, 247.

80 Pál Fodor, 'Ottoman Policy towards Hungary, 1520–1541', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 45:2–3 (1991) 271–345; Teréz Oborni, 'Kettős függésben: Erdély államisága a 16. században', *Korunk* 18:7 (2007) 31–40.

81 Teréz Oborni, *Erdély pénzügyei I. Ferdinánd uralma alatt, 1552–1556*. (Fons Könyvek, 1.) Budapest, 2002; Zoltán Korpás and János B. Szabó, '"If They Came as a Legation, They Are Many, If They Are Soldiers, They Are Few" – The Military Background of the 1551 Attempt to Unite Hungary', in Ágnes Máté – Teréz Oborni (eds.), *Isabella Jagiellon, Queen of Hungary (1539–1559)*. (Mohács 1526–2026: Reconstruction and Remembrance) Budapest, 2020, 158–162.

82 B. Szabó, 'A Magyar Királyság hadszervezete', 76–80.

nobles in the service of princes or magnates, nobles in Hungary with estates in Transylvania, obliged to provide a deputy for the county troops, and the ‘*predialist*’ nobles, who enjoyed noble privileges, but lived on one single plot.⁸³

Various regulations applied to how the military services should be rendered. According to a decision adopted by the diet of 1552, only one of the nobles living on such a plot was obliged to go to war, but if a *Landsturm* was called, the nobles living on the plot were obliged to take up arms depending on the size of the *Landsturm*. According to the law of 1565, five *predialist* nobles had to equip one mounted soldier, regardless of their noble plots. In 1556 this law was amended such that those too poor to comply with this regulation had to provide one baize-clad infantryman equipped with an arquebus and a sabre.⁸⁴

The laws adopted by the diets also regulated the arms of the levied nobles. According to the description given by Antal Verancsics, Transylvanian nobles stopped wearing heavy armoury in the early 16th century and switched to the lighter equipment of the hussars: “Their arms include a steel helmet, a leather breast-plate, a Turkish sword called a sabre, while in their left hand they hold a shield that covers the whole chest and the head; they wear an iron glove on their right hand and hold a spear with some kind of a small silk flag pinned to the spearhead.”⁸⁵ The rules were eased for penniless nobles possessing one plot: they were not obliged to use the more expensive defensive weaponry.

Apart from being bound personally to go to war, nobles were also obliged to equip soldiers according to the size of their domains: they had to finance most of the costs associated with the other pillar of the county army, the peasant militia. In Transylvania, from 1551, one horseman equipped with a lance and weapons similar to his master had to be provided for every sixteen tenant plots.⁸⁶ In the Hungarian counties of the Transtibiscan region, the same obligation was for every twenty tenant plots.⁸⁷ In 1575, in addition to the horsemen, one arquebusier in a “grass-green” coat also had to be sent to the camp.⁸⁸

In times of great danger, however, all male inhabitants of the country, regardless of social standing, had personally to join the army, if the monarch, in line with ancient tradition had a bloody sword or skewer taken around the country. Tenant peasants were obliged to carry arms, and the diet of 1552 required every tenant peasant with one plot and an understanding of firearms to buy an arquebus, while those without any knowledge of them had to join the army and carry a bow and at least thirty-two arrows, a sword and a shield.⁸⁹ The rapid spread of firearms among better-off tenant peasants is demonstrated by

83 1542: *EOE* I. 87. 1566: *EOE* II. 300.

84 1552: *EOE* I. 406. 1565: *EOE* II. 294. 1566: *EOE* II. 300.

85 Verancsics, ‘Két könyv Szolimán moldáviai és erdélyi hadjáratáról’, 132.

86 1551: *EOE* I. 391–392. 1557: *EOE* II. 75.

87 1545: *MOE* II. 609. 1565: *EOE* II. 287.

88 *EOE* II. 559–560; András Borosy, *A telekkatonaság és a parasztság szerepe a feudális magyar hadszervezetben*. (Értekezések a Történeti Tudományok Köréből. Új Sorozat, 60.) Budapest, 1971, 108–110.

89 *EOE* I. 405–406.

the decision taken at the partial diet of Transtibiscan counties held in Debrecen in 1545, according to which only tenant peasants living on half a tenant plot were allowed to join the army equipped with bows and arrows, swords and shield, while tenant peasants living on a whole tenant plot were required to keep their arquebuses, gunpowder and bullets at the ready. In Transylvania, the tenant peasants of half tenant plots were required to have a sword, a shield and an axe, and even the poorest tenant peasants had to have a sword and an axe to “protect their heads”.⁹⁰

The military power of tenant peasants was not only used in extraordinary cases. The prince had the right to call to arms one infantry soldier per tenant plot at any time. He could even call to arms a quarter or even half of the tenant peasantry, if needed. In such cases, the number of plots only determined the required number of soldiers; the tax-paying tenant peasants did not necessarily have to leave their village to join the military in person. Rather, the most suitable men were chosen.⁹¹ The diet of 1565 required tenant peasants living in the territories within Hungary, the so-called Partium, to be on stand-by according to the Transylvanian custom, that is on the basis of tenant plots; one in ten should carry an arquebus, another a bow, and the remaining eight should carry a spear.⁹²

The size of this plot-based military can be deduced from the number of tax-paying tenant plots. In the mid-16th century, there were 24,000 tenant plots in Transylvania, and 17,000 plots in the Partium. On the basis of this, Transylvanian nobles should have kept 1,500 mounted soldiers, while those in the Partium should have kept 850. By the 1570s the number of plots in the Partium is likely to have decreased somewhat, but it is estimated that there remained 40,000 tax-paying plots in the Principality.⁹³

The readiness of the county troops was tested every year by military inspections known as musters. The diet of 1549 assigned the task of the yearly musters in the three nations to governor Friar George, and designated the city of Torda to host these events.⁹⁴ Later it was the heads of the counties, the *ispáns* who had to ensure the necessary readiness of the troops. Because the counties were situated rather far from each other, in 1575 Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia) replaced Torda as the location for musters for the southern counties, while Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) replaced it for the northern counties. In the Partium, the nobility of Bihar county gathered in Várad, while the people of Kraszna did so in Somlyó (Şimleu).⁹⁵

At these musters, the equipment and uniforms of soldiers were inspected two to three times a year, and the surveys (*lustra*) served to check whether the

90 MOE I. 609; EOE II. 287.

91 1548: EOE I. 239. 1552: EOE I. 405, 419. 1565: EOE II. 287.

92 EOE II. 287.

93 Vencel Bíró, *Az erdélyi fejedelmi hatalom fejlődése*. Kolozsvár, 1917, 34–38.

94 EOE I. 298.

95 EOE II. 560, 570–571.

nobles had fulfilled their obligations and equipped the same number of soldiers as had been prescribed for them on the basis of their domains. Those who had not complied with their obligations were in times of peace given fines on the first two occasions, and on the third occasion their domains were seized. In times of war, however, if the number of soldiers equipped did not correspond to the numbers prescribed for a certain domain, the domain in question was seized immediately.

Banderia

In the early 16th century the backbone of the army of the Kingdom of Hungary was made up of the private armies of the *barones* who fought under the banners of their lords. (These armies were called *banderia* after the *banierum*, i.e. the banner of the lords.) This form of organization remained in use both in Hungary and in Transylvania even after the Battle of Mohács. The national assembly of Transylvania of 1558 required the lords (*domini*) to take part in the insurrection not only with their tenant peasants but also with their “troops, banners, and soldiers”.⁹⁶ According to a note written by the Italian Giovanandrea Gromo in the 1560s, those holding key government positions, and the commanders of significant forts, usually went to war with 300 mounted soldiers, except for Gábor Maylád, count of Fogaras (Făgăraș), who is said to have brought 400 cavalrymen, and György Bebek, who commanded more than 500 cavalrymen.⁹⁷ All this is not surprising, as one and a half decades earlier Friar George had commanded over more than 3,000 armed cavalry and 1,000 infantrymen.⁹⁸

Castle domains

The people of larger castle domains also provided services around the fortifications when needed. This had quite a long tradition in Fogarasföld (Țara Făgărașului). The earliest Romanian immigrants arrived here from the southern slopes of the Carpathians, and a Romanian border defence organization operated in this area, wedged between the territories of Pecheneg and Székely border defence, as early as in the 13th century. During the 14th and 15th centuries, the area became the Wallachian voivodes’ fiefdom in Hungary; it was during this time that the militant group of shepherds living in the area, called ‘*bojár*’, came to form a separate social echelon. In exchange for their military services, the *bojárs* received noble domains, but the ownership rights of these remained with the landlords, and in matters of litigation the *bojárs* were subject to the jurisdiction

⁹⁶ EOE II. 95.

⁹⁷ Giovanandrea Gromo, ‘Compendium di tutto il regno posseduto dal re Giovanni Transilvano et di tutte le cose notabili d’esso regno’, translated by Renáta Tima in Péter Takács (ed.), *Fejedelmek, forradalmak, vasutak*. (Erdélytörténeti Könyvek, 3.) Debrecen, 2000, 59–60.

⁹⁸ Teréz Oborni, ‘Fráter György szervitorainak és familiárisainak jegyzéke a Castaldo-kódexben 1552’, *Fons* 25:4 (2018) 435–451.

of their landlords. Such conditional nobility could be found in both ecclesiastical and secular landholdings in Transylvania. In the second half of the 16th century, a part of the *bojárs* amalgamated with the group of tenant peasants serving on castle domains in return for certain privileges; it later came to make up a group of liberated peasants serving as infantry and armed with small weapons (so-called '*darabonts*' and arquebusiers) and cavalry.⁹⁹ Accordingly, on 8 May 1551 the diet of Torda confirmed that the domain of Fogaras usually sent its soldiers to fight under the country's banner.¹⁰⁰

Another important royal domain alongside Fogarasföld was the Kővár District (*Districtus Kőváriensis*), which also equipped a great number of soldiers. The territory was endowed in the second half of the 14th century by King Louis I of the Anjou dynasty to Moldavian voivodes Balk and Drag who were settling there. The descendants of Balk and Drag formed the Drágffy family, and the most famous military group of the Kővár District, the so-called '*zöld puskások*' ('green-clad arquebusiers'), was formed in the 16th century from among the free Romanian and Hungarian population living on their estates.¹⁰¹

The Saxon seats

The main task of the Saxons was, first of all, to defend their own cities, but their services were also frequently used during campaigns. On such occasions, they were obliged personally to take up arms or to hire mercenaries. They equipped between 500 and 5,000 armed soldiers each time. During the second half of the century, they almost constantly sent 2,000-3,000 riflemen to join the prince's army.¹⁰²

During the 16th century, Saxon merchants and craftsmen did not necessarily join the army personally, if it was possible for them to avoid doing so. Instead they sent mercenary soldiers in the numbers required by the law. Because there were often not enough enterprising mercenaries, by offering high pay the Saxons lured infantry soldiers from the princely court. To avoid this, at the diet of 1566 it was decided that in future soldiers could only be recruited from among city burghers.¹⁰³

Apart from equipping armed infantry soldiers (*darabont*), Transylvanian Saxons had yet further obligations: they were responsible for the transport of the artillery of the Transylvanian army.¹⁰⁴ Since Saxon pastors were exempt from war tax, and were in no way burdened by any other obligations associated with the military, the Gyulafehérvár diet of 1558 required them to provide wagons

99 David Prodan, *Bojaren und „vecini” des Landes Fogarasch im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*. Bucharest, 1967; Florin Nicolae Ardelean, *Organizarea militară în Principatul Transilvaniei (1541–1691). Comitete și domenii fiscale*. Cluj-Napoca, 2019, 223.

100 EOE I. 324.

101 Mária Szentgyörgyi, *Kővár vidékének társadalma*. (Értekezések a Történeti Tudományok Köréből. Új Sorozat, 56.) Budapest, 1972, 11–102.

102 EOE II. 75, 96, 295.

103 EOE II. 301.

104 EOE I. 323–324, 525–526; EOE II. 75; 223.

for the transport of cannons and accompanying equipment. Even though this, with occasional exceptions, did not involve transport outside the borders of the principality, it still afflicted the clergy: should they neglect this obligation of theirs, priests could be removed from office.¹⁰⁵

The Székelys

Because of the perpetual war, the government intensified its military endeavours in the Székely Lands as well, which resulted in a series of violations of ancient privileges enjoyed by the Székelys. Since the government could not afford to lose their military power, nor the taxes they paid, this twofold burden became ever more pressing.¹⁰⁶ At the partial diet of Medgyes in 1554, the military obligations of the Székelys were regulated in detail.¹⁰⁷ While Székely aristocrats (*primores*) were personally obliged to take up arms, they were also allowed to leave two to three persons at home. Likewise, larger villages were allowed to leave three to four people at home and smaller ones were allowed to leave two. The decision also stressed that “Székelys may, as the situation required, leave sixteen to twenty people in castles on their own land in order to protect and guard it”.¹⁰⁸

During fighting that lasted for decades, war obligations came to afflict the *primores* and the chief horsemen (Lat. ‘*primipili*’, Hung. ‘*lófő*’) more and more; in return, the prince granted them rights similar to those of the county nobility. At the end of the 1550s, the élite of the Székely community, the *primores*, transferred the Székelys’ tax obligations entirely to the commoners. Meanwhile they sought to exempt their own tenant peasants from taxes; this led to a strong split in Székely society, hitherto united by its collective privileges.¹⁰⁹

So, despite Transylvania being returned to the jurisdiction of the Szapolyai dynasty in late 1555, in 1562 the pro-Habsburg groups, making use of the commoners’ dissatisfaction, induced some of the Székelys to revolt against John Sigismund (the elected king of Hungary in 1540–1571). The reign of the young monarch thus found itself in crisis: the Székelys had to be confronted in Transylvania; his captain general, Menyhárt Balassa, defected from him; King Ferdinand’s army attacked his territories within Hungary; in Moldavia, a pro-Habsburg voivode briefly occupied the throne.¹¹⁰ He managed to negotiate this

105 *EOE* II. 104.

106 Teréz Oborni, ‘A székelyek jogi helyzetének változásai a 16. század közepén’, in Kinga S. Tüdős (ed.), *Kastélyok, udvarházak és lakóik a régi Székelyföldön. In memoriam Demény Lajos (1926–2010)*. Sepsiszentgyörgy, 2013, 73–79.

107 *EOE* I. 465, 526–527.

108 *Ibid.*

109 Teréz Oborni, ‘Székelyföld a keleti Magyar Királyságban’, in Elek Benkő and Teréz Oborni (eds.), *Székelyföld története. Vol. I.* Budapest, Kolozsvár, Székelyudvarhely, 2016, 513–517.

110 Lajos Thallóczy, *Csömöri Zay Ferenc 1505–1570.* (Magyar Történeti Életrajzok) Budapest, 1885, 115–140; Lajos Demény, ‘Az 1562. évi székely felkelés’, in Benkő, Demény and Vekov (eds.), *Székely felkelés*, 59–70.

delicate situation, but the events demonstrated that a solution to the “flammable” circumstances in the Székely Lands could be delayed no longer.

Thus far, research has given little attention to the radical change to the geostrategic position of the Ottoman vassal state of Transylvania after 1557. From this date the Székelys, defending the outer borders of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary, actually found themselves at a sort of ‘inner border’ to other vassal states of the Ottoman Empire (Moldavia and Wallachia), from where, theoretically, no serious attacks threatened the country. In the west, meanwhile, the Szapolyai administration fought a life-and-death battle against the Kingdom of Hungary under the rule of King Ferdinand I and Maximilian II (Maximilian I in Hungary in 1564–1576).¹¹¹ As a result, the Partium, formally still belonging to the Kingdom of Hungary, saw the development of an entirely new system of border protection, one (like the royal and Ottoman border castles) based mainly on fortresses. Had the rulers in Transylvania respected the old privileges of the Székelys, they would hardly have been able to keep one or two thousand soldiers in arms. At the same time, the entire Székely population was exempt from taxes and thus not obliged to contribute to military spending. John Sigismund realised that the situation was no longer tenable, yet he was also aware that, should he violate the privileges of the Székelys, they would defect from him and become the ‘fifth column’ of the Habsburgs.

After the abolition of privileges, an overwhelming majority of the Székelys became the prince’s tenant peasants, while their military élite was still able to provide the prince with a smaller army, even on territories outside the borders of the province.¹¹² These ‘foreign territories’ included not only the theatre of war in Hungary¹¹³ but also territories of two Romanian voivodeships, where the Ottoman tributary state of Transylvania was regularly ordered by the Porte to carry out expeditions of a ‘policing’ character.¹¹⁴

The diet of Segesvár held in June 1562 therefore required the *primores* to join the army with three to five horses, depending on their economic standing. In return, they received a yearly payment called ‘*jargálás*’ (meaning ‘payment’;

111 Lajos Demény, ‘Báthori István és a székely gyalogpuskás rend felállítása’, *Történelmi Szemle* 43:3–4 (2001) 161.

112 After the implementation of the new regulation, the prince had about 2,000 tenant plots in Udvarhelyszék, which dwarfs the total of 368 tenant plots of the 81 nobles and chief horsemen families; see Lajos Demény, ‘XVI. századi kiadatlan székely összeírások’, in András Kiss, Gyöngy Kovács Kiss and Ferenc Pozsony (eds.), *Emlékkönyv Imreh István születésének nyolcvanadik évfordulójára*. Kolozsvár, 1999, 151–158.

113 Imre Lukinich, ‘Az északkeleti várháborúk történetéhez 1561–1565’, *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 14 (1913) 370–394, 584–605.

114 János B. Szabó, “Splendid isolation?” The Military Cooperation of the Principality of Transylvania with the Ottoman Empire (1571–1688) in the Mirror of the Hungarian Historiography’s Dilemmas’, in Gábor Kármán and Lovro Kunčević (eds.), *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Leiden, Boston, 2013, 301–339.

it is not to be confused with ‘nyargalás’, meaning ‘scudding’),¹¹⁵ and while serving in the military they received two florins a month from the treasury. The *primipili* (chief horsemen) were required to serve in the military for one month with one horse without any pay, after which they received one florin a month from the treasury. No special decision was issued on the obligatory military service of commoners, but their legal status was reformulated, and they came under the direct jurisdiction of the prince.¹¹⁶

This regulation suggests that the Székely primors and the chief horsemen, both treated as nobility, came to be listed into the prince’s private army.¹¹⁷ That means that the organization of the Székely Lands was transformed on the basis of the Hungarian system of castle domains, a system that was rather rare in Transylvania.¹¹⁸ The prince even had new castles built in the Székely Lands, from where the area could be controlled more easily.¹¹⁹ Following the practices on the castle domains of Hungary’s large landholders, here, in Transylvania, the wealthier and more experienced tenant peasants, former infantry soldiers, were also selected and organized around the princely castles of Udvarhely (Odorheiu Secuiesc),¹²⁰ Várhegy (Leț),¹²¹ and Görgény (Gurghiu).¹²² The tenant peasants considered the most suitable for fighting and defending the castles were placed in the unit of arquebusiers (*pixidarius*) and entrusted with the duties of gate-keeping and the defence of the fort. Because of their duties and the colour of their uniform, they came to be called ‘red guardsmen’ (Hung. *vörös darabont*). (The Hungarian word *darabont* and the variations of it that exist in other languages are likely to originate from the Persian word *derbent*, meaning ‘gate’).¹²³

115 “Of the listed payments, ‘jargalás’ was a fee regulated by a special agreement given to infantrymen and cavalrymen hired for one year. It was above their monthly pay, paid either in one sum or in two instalments. The word ‘jargalás’ and ‘jargaló’ was thus in no way related to today’s ‘nyargalás’, because the term was even applied to infantrymen hired for yearly pay who had never sat on a horse” – the word may originate from the German ‘Jahrgeld’: Sándor Takáts, ‘Jargalás és jargaló’, *Magyar Nyelv* 1 (1905) 207; Gábor Szatlóczki, *Vár a várban. A várak népe és a mezei hadak a 16. század közepén. Vol. I: A várak népe*. Szeged, 2016, 164.

116 EOE II. 202–204.

117 János J. Varga, *Szervitorok katonai szolgálata a XVI–XVII. századi dunántúli nagybirtokon* (Értekezések a Történettudományok Köréből. Új Sorozat, 94.) Budapest, 1981, 11–49; István Czigány, *Reform vagy kudarc? Kísérletek a magyarországi katonaság beillesztésére a Habsburg Birodalom haderejébe, 1600–1700*. Budapest, 2004, 85–195; Szatlóczki, *Vár a várban*, 93–98, 162–167; Ferenc Végh, ‘Zrínyi Miklós és Péter, a törökellenes határvédelem szervezői: a Muraköz védelmi rendszere a 17. század közepén’, in Györgyi Bujdosóné Pap, Ingrid Fejér and Ágota H. Szilasi (eds.), *Várostromok és Közép-Európa Zrínyi Miklós (1620–1664) korában*. (Studia Agriensia, 34.) Eger, 2017, 227–236.

118 É.g. Kővár: Szentgyörgyi, *Kővár vidékének társadalma*, 26–28, 53–77.

119 Zsigmond Jakó, ‘A székely társadalom útja a XIV–XVI. században’, in Benkő, Demény and Vekov (eds.), *Székely felkelés*, 27–29.

120 András Sófalvi, ‘A székelyudvarhelyi Csonkavár’, *Castrum Bene* 6:2 (2007) 63–80; Idem, ‘A Székelyudvarhelyi – Székelytámadt vár (Csonkavár)’, *Castrum Bene* 16:1–2 (2013) 158–163.

121 Ákos Karczag and Tibor Szabó, *Erdély, Partium és a Bánság erődtített helyei*. Budapest, 2010, 216.

122 *Ibid.*, 151–152.

123 Henri Grégoire, ‘Aux confins militaires de l’orient byzantin. Hussards, Trabans, Tasnaks’, *Byzantion* 13 (1938) 279–282.

To be clear: as for the tenant peasants of the counties, those Székely commoners who had been made tenant peasants were not entirely free of their obligation to render military service. The protracted war in Hungary forced the government to grant further concessions to the primors and chief horsemen who excelled in combat, in order to strengthen their loyalty. From 1566 onwards, John Sigismund started to give away Székely commoners, except guardsmen, to his followers,¹²⁴ but the same rules of equipping soldiers applied to the masters of the tenant peasants and the Székelys entering the social echelon of tenant peasants, as in the counties.¹²⁵

Traditionally, Székely military organization was led by the Székely *ispán* (*comes*), but as this title also came to be included in the titles of Transylvanian voivodes and princes, the military functions of the *ispán* came to be taken over by the captain general of the Székelys. Even though in the wake of the 1562 uprising, the position of the ‘captain of the six seats’ was established to administer all seats, it was abolished by Stephen Báthory in 1571, and the individual captaincies of the seats were restored.¹²⁶

The militarily active part of the village population was organized where they lived into squads and companies, according to their estates: the infantry was usually comprised of one hundred people, the cavalry of more. In places where the required numbers were not reached from one settlement, the chief horsemen and the *darabonts* from several settlements were brought together. Their immediate superiors, the captains (Hung. *hadnagy*), could give them orders in peacetime as well as in times of war, and could also hold musters at any time to check their readiness for war. Moreover, the captains even acted as judges in their litigation cases.¹²⁷

At the diet of Marosvásárhely 1549 the yearly obligatory musters of the Székely were surely enacted.¹²⁸ The armoury of Székely fighters had to be purchased by the militarily active families themselves. If earlier this had perhaps led to certain special features, in the mid-16th century Antal Veranics reported of the Székely army that its troops “have no specific war equipment, no recognizable arms and

124 Judit Balogh, ‘A székely társadalom és a várháborúk: egy katonai társadalom új szerepekben’, in Györgyi Bujdosóné Pap, Ingrid Fejér and Ágota H. Szilasi (eds.), *Mozgó frontvonalak. Háború és diplomácia a várháborúk időszakában 1552–1568.* (Studia Agriensia, 35.) Eger, 2017, 162–164.

125 EOE IV. 266, 300; Borosy, *A telekkatonaság és a parasztság szerepe*, 89–112.

126 Ildikó Horn, *Hit és hatalom. Az erdélyi unitárius nemesség 16. századi története.* Budapest, 2009, 64, 93–94.

127 Sigismund Báthory’s letter of privilege to the arquebusiers of Marosszék, confirmed by Sigismund Rákóczi: Károly Szabó, Lajos Szádeczky-Kardoss and Samu Barabás (eds.), *Székely oklevéltár. Vol. VI.* Kolozsvár, 1897, 19–24; *Székely népesség-összeírások 1635–1653.* Introduction, notes and published by Lajos Demény in *Székely oklevéltár. Új sorozat, Vol. VI.* Kolozsvár, 2000, 8–9; Lajos Demény, ‘Székely szabadság, katonáskodás és fejedelmi politika (1562–1648)’, in Ákos Egyed and András Magyar (select. and ed.), *A székelység története a 17–19. században. Tanulmányok.* Csíkszereda, 2001, 202–203.

128 EOE I. 254; XXI. 231–232.

no prominent military insignia”, i.e. their equipment at this time was identical to that of the Transylvanian and Hungarian military of the era.¹²⁹

By the 16th century, the previously homogenous Székely light cavalry archers (if there had ever been such a unit) had been replaced by the so-called *tria genera Siculorum*, a three-fold organization of primors, mounted and foot soldiers, structured according to the material wealth of the soldiers.¹³⁰ In return for their being exempt from taxes, all Székely men remained obliged to provide military services, but their equipment differed greatly. In the first half of the 16th century, the aristocracy, that is the primors, entered the army on horses, wearing armour, i.e. chain mail and helmet, and carrying a sword, a lance, and a shield. The chief horsemen's equipment included two horses, a helmet, a lance, and a pickaxe or mace, and perhaps a bow and arrows and a shield. It did not include chain mail, however. The economically more disadvantaged, the commoners, fought with a spear, a sword, and an axe.¹³¹

According to a note from the muster of 1566, this armour and equipment had by this time taken its final form and changed little until the mid-17th century: the cavalymen were registered in the survey with their “horses, flagged lances, armour, helmets and shields”, and the infantrymen with their “infantry arquebus, sabre, red dolman, pelisse and every rifle tool”¹³²

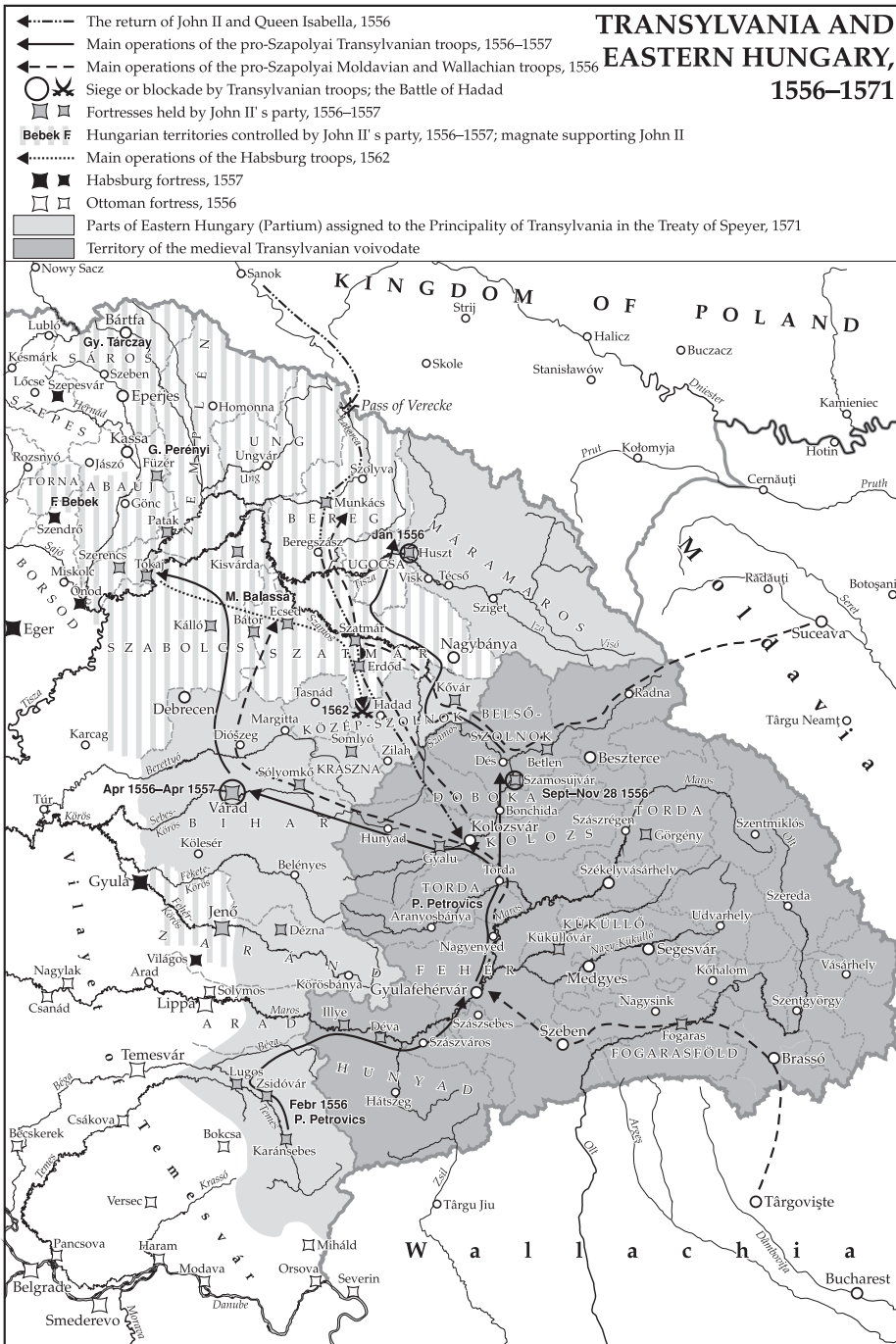
As we have already seen, from the 1560s onwards the Székely military was needed not so much for defence of the borders as to manage conflicts in neighbouring voivodeships. The reason for this was that almost every other year a letter was sent from the Porte to Transylvania, requesting the rulers to keep their troops ready for action: upheavals were to be expected, either because of a change of voivode in Moldova or Wallachia, or because of raids by the Cossacks. In 1563 Prince John Sigismund sent 1,000 cavalry and 1,000 infantry soldiers to Moldavia, under the leadership of László Radák, to support Ștefan Tomșa's rebellion against Iacob Heraclides. Hungarian narrative sources reveal that the quick end to the fighting and the fast capture of the besieged voivode Iacob were

129 Kordé, *A középkori székelység*, 145.

130 Károly Vekov, ‘*Tria genera Siculorum*’, in Tüdös (ed.), *Kastélyok, udvarházak és lakóik*, 39–63.

131 *Primipili singuli sint cum duobus equis, habentes facultatem duos equos. Si aliqui Siculi inferiores fuerint, habentes armenta, boves et bona mobilia in valore florenorum duodecim, tales habeant equum, clipeum, liastam et gladium, sintque bono apparatu instructi. Pauperiores autem Siculi singuli habeant lanceam, gladium et securim.* Marosvásárhely, 2 January 1535: MOE I. 612–614. *Coloni inter dominos Siculos hoc modo armis instructi esse deberent: primipuli res in valore quinquaginta florenorum habentes, equum, galeam, loricam et hastam habeant. Qui vero res in valore duodecim florenos habent, equum, clipeum, hastam habere teneantur.* Marosvásárhely, 2 November 1545: Károly Szabó, Lajos Szádeczky-Kardoss and Samu Barabás (eds.), *Székely oklevéltár. Vol. V. Kolozsvár, 1896*, 60. Mention of the bow and arrow, date uncertain: Ambrosii Simigiani, *Historia Rerum Ungaricarum et Transsilvanicarum ab anno 1490 usque 1606*. Cibinii, 1800, 140.

132 The report from the military muster in Székelyudvarhely: Lajos Demény (ed.), *Székely Oklevéltár. Új sorozat, Vol. VII.* Kolozsvár, 2004, 16–18. See also Benkő, *A középkori Székelyföld*, I. 191–193; András Sófalvi, *Hadakozás és önvédelem a középkori és fejdelemség kori Udvarhelyszéken*. Kolozsvár, 2017, 113.



the result of an agreement between Radák's soldiers and the distressed voivode's mercenaries (who were also Hungarian).¹³³

Armies of the court

The armies of the court were the earliest of the country's paid troops to be established. The cavalry units can be regarded as the direct continuation of the court cavalry of the Jagiellonian kings and of John Szapolyai. They were first mentioned in sources from 1557, and we know the number of people serving in this army in 1562: according to the envoy of the Hungarian king, there were 1,000 mounted soldiers serving in John Sigismund's court at that time.¹³⁴

The members of the unit were not hired directly by the monarch; apart from their salary, the various military, administrative and royal personnel received additional payments, according to their rank, in order to keep some horsemen in arms. According to later figures from 1586, a total of 99 people, including the treasurer, the master of the horses, the cup bearer, the naperers, the master of the stewards, the members of the princely council and the captains of castles, received an extra payment for maintaining 670 cavalry soldiers, of which only 250 were permanently stationed in the princely seat of Gyulafehérvár.¹³⁵

This contradiction can be interpreted with the help of the laws of 1562 on the regulation of the compulsory military service of the Székely primors and chief horsemen. The implementation of the aforementioned system of yearly payments in the Székely Lands may have been nothing but a roll-out of the court procedure to include even the group of Székely primors and chief horsemen. Dignitaries obliged to keep soldiers are likely to have received a yearly payment, similarly to the Székely primors and chief horsemen from 1562 onwards, for keeping 600–700 soldiers ready for action, a sum which was lower than the monthly pay of mercenaries. In times of peace, 200–250 of these soldiers served at the court on an alternating basis. In times of war, however, the entire contingent was mobilized, and the treasury paid a full monthly wage to each mounted soldier.

There were no antecedents of the court infantry in the Middle Ages. They were first mentioned in 1557, which means that this combat unit had already existed at the time of John Sigismund's succession to the throne.¹³⁶ Because of

133 Ferenc Forgách, *Emlékirat Magyarország állapotáról Ferdinánd, János, Miksa királysága és II. János erdélyi fejedelemsége alatt*. Translated by István Borzsák, in *Humanista történetírók*. (Magyar Remekírók) Selected, edited and with notes by Péter Kulcsár. Budapest, 1982, 804–804; Istvánffy, *Magyarok dolgaiáról*, I/2. 345–346; Farkas Bethlen, *Erdély története. Vol. II*. Budapest, Kolozsvár, 2002, 238–239.

134 EOE II. 86; Kálmán Szentmártoni, *János Zsigmond erdélyi fejedelem élet- és jellemrajza*. Székelyudvarhely, 1934, 277.

135 Attila Sunkó, 'Az erdélyi fejedelmi testőrség archontológiája a XVI. században', *Fons* 1:2 (1994) 192.

136 Attila Sunkó, 'Az Erdélyi Fejedelemség udvari hadai a XVI. században', *Levéltári Közlemények* 69:1–2 (1998) 100.

the blue colour of their uniform, in the last decades of the 16th century they were frequently referred to as ‘the blue ones’ (*kékek*).¹³⁷ It is possible that the unit was modelled on a Polish example, upon the return of the Szapolyai family: by a curious coincidence, it was around 1557 that King Sigismund II Augustus of Poland prescribed blue uniforms for his infantry soldiers.¹³⁸ The reason behind the organisation of this unit is clear: infantry soldiers equipped with and able to use suitable small arms in battles fought in regular formations were also needed in Transylvania. The organisation structure of the unit is well-known. According to the first data, from 1562 onwards the court infantry consisted of five battalions led by an infantry captain.¹³⁹

Foreign mercenaries – from Poland

Since John Sigismund’s mother, Isabella, was the daughter of the king of Poland, on their return from Poland there were numerous Polish members in the entourage of the Szapolyai family. This was because the queen consort, learning from her earlier experiences, did not wish to put herself at the mercy of the Hungarians. So, to begin with, mostly mercenaries recruited in Poland served in Transylvania. The earliest mention of Polish units serving at the court of Gyulafehérvár that can be established with certainty was made by Giovanandrea Gromo, captain of John Sigismund’s bodyguards, who wrote that in Transylvania “the fourth nation is the Polish one. It does not have its own territory, nor its own population, but it is present in the offices of the king’s house and among his bodyguards, as well as among his gentlemen-at arms and soldiers. There are never less than five hundred of them at the court, and often there are even two thousand of them in peacetime. Their clothing is of Hungarian style and so are their arms: they all fight on horseback...”¹⁴⁰ In 1574, a French traveller, Pierre Lescapier, wrote about two additional Polish lancer units that served at the court of the prince on an alternating basis.¹⁴¹

It is also clear that in many cases in which Polish soldiers and gentlemen-at-arms are known to us by name, it was their fathers who had come to Buda to master the ‘art of knighthood’, or had been familiar with the country because of being related to the Łaski family, which had sided with the Szapolyais. Moreover, there was a group whose family members had for a long time been rendering services in the Kingdom of Hungary. These include the Komorowski, the Rožen

137 *Ibid.*, 102.

138 B. Szabó and Somogyi, *Az Erdélyi Fejedelemség hadserege*, 42.

139 *Ibid.*, 101–102.

140 Giovanandrea Gromo, ‘Compendium...’, translated by Renata Tima in Takács (ed.), *Fejedelmek, forradalmak, vasutak*, 42. According to the interpretation given by Ildikó Horn, this number refers to the size of the contingent in or in the vicinity of the court, and was decreased to 500 in times of war; see Ildikó Horn, *A hatalom pillérei. A politikai elit az Erdélyi Fejedelemség megszilárdulásának korszakában (1556–1588)*. MTA Doctoral Dissertation. Budapest, 2014, 109: note 252.

141 Kálmán Benda and Lajos Tardy (ed.), *Pierre Lescapier utazása Erdélybe (1574)*. Budapest, 1982, 91.

(as early as during the reign of King Matthias) and the Gnoiński families, the last of these serving as mercenary foot soldiers as early as during the reigns of King Louis II and John Szapolyai.¹⁴²

Foreign mercenaries – from Italy

In 1564, John Sigismund recruited 100 mounted and 200 foot soldiers in Venice in order to “secure his life and reach other honourable goals of his”.¹⁴³ The troops from Ragusa (Dubrovnik) travelled via Ottoman territory and arrived in Gyulafehérvár in late April 1565. According to some contemporaries, the idea of recruiting soldiers from Italy came from John Sigismund’s influential councillor, doctor Giorgio Biandrata, born in Savoy; it is likely that the troops were meant to serve as the prince’s guards. Yet, the permanent war with the Kingdom of Hungary made it necessary to use Gromo’s soldiers even on the battlefield, so the settlement of Retteg (Reteag) in the vicinity of Dés (Dej), near the northern border, was selected as the troops’ base.¹⁴⁴ At present, we do not have any information about their later fate.

The seeds of a standing army: the country’s ‘presidiary troops’

Apart from the armies of the princely court, there were other units in Transylvania that researchers sometimes regard as permanent mercenary troops. These ‘presidiary’ (*presidiarius*) troops, i.e. garrisons, were set up in the 16th century in times of emergency or long-lasting wars in order to maintain the defence of the country while the county army, the Saxons and the Székelys were engaged in the war. The three nations (the Hungarians, the Székelys and the Saxons) were first obliged to keep 1,000 mercenary soldiers each at the side of captain general István Maylád in 1540.¹⁴⁵ In 1543, during Süleyman’s fifth campaign to Hungary, they each had to keep five hundred soldiers in readiness.¹⁴⁶ In 1548, when Friar George started to reunite the country, because “various pieces of news tend to substantiate various movements”, the governor obliged the estates to provide an army of 6,000 men in such a way that “every nation had to keep

142 Helena Kapeluś, ‘Zápolya Zsigmond udvara Gruszcziński epigrammáiban’, in *Tanulmányok a lengyel–magyar irodalmi kapcsolatok köréből*. Budapest, 1969, 154. Péter Komorowski was starost of Szepes, while Miklós was the *comes* of Liptó, Árva, and Turóc in the 15th century: Stanisław A. Sroka, *A középkori Bártfa és kapcsolatai Kis-Lengyelországgal*. Budapest, 2016, 85. The two Gnoiński brothers, Lenard and Lambert, served in Hungary from the 1520s: Lenard died at Mohács; see B. Szabó, *Mohács*, 25; Lenart Gnoiński, *Ézy smutne. Opracowała Aleksandra Oszczęda*. Warszawa, 2014, 6–7. Lambert led Szapolyai’s Polish infantry troops into the Battle of Tokaj in the autumn of 1527: Plewczyński, *Wojny i wojskowość polska*, 301.

143 Mór Kárpáthy-Kravjánszky, ‘Gromo, János Zsigmond testőrkapitánya’, in *Regnum Egyház-történeti Évkönyv*. Budapest, 1936, 97.

144 Aurel Decei, ‘Giovannandrea Gromo, Compendio della Transilvania’, *Apulum: Buletinul Muzeului Regional Alba Iulia* 2 (1943–1945) 179.

145 EOE I. 40.

146 EOE I. 177.

a garrison of two thousand men to cover all possibilities”; the national assembly would renew this obligation every year until 1552.¹⁴⁷

Since it appeared that King Ferdinand would not be able to save Transylvania from the expected Ottoman attack, the diet of Marosvásárhely decided to take Transylvania’s fate into its own hands and invite the Szapolyai family back to Transylvania. On this occasion, the three nations once again equipped an army with 1,000 men each.¹⁴⁸ The troops were kept in arms by the diet even after the armistice agreement with King Ferdinand in 1559, and the estates even ordered that, should numbers drop, it again be raised to 3,000.¹⁴⁹

In 1562 attempts were made to organize the presidary army into a standing army. That year the Transylvanian army suffered a decisive defeat at the hands of the substantially smaller army of King Ferdinand at Hadad (Hodod) in the Partium. As a result, John Sigismund definitely lost a major part of his territories in the Kingdom of Hungary.¹⁵⁰ The decisive defeat shed light on the obsolescence of the military organization, so in November 1562 the diet of Gyulafehérvár requested the Hungarians and the Székelys to keep 500 mounted soldiers each and the Saxons to keep 500 foot soldiers in arms all the time, as “the insurrection will cause many difficulties while it is of little benefit”. It was also ordered that these troops be stationed where the interests of the country required them most.¹⁵¹

According to Ferdinand’s envoy sent to Transylvania in Autumn 1564, the most valuable part of John Sigismund’s army was composed of these 2,600 hussars, the majority of which (about 600–800 cavalymen) were stationed in Várad, while the rest were lodged in other parts of the country, such as in Tokaj, Munkács (Mukachevo), or Huszt (Khust), Karánsebes (Caransebeș), in the territory of the Saxons and in Torda county, and also in Enyed (Aiud).¹⁵² Despite various attempts, these troops could not be transformed into a standing army, and later on they were equipped only in extraordinary situations, such as in 1571, during the period of the interregnum that followed after the death of John Sigismund.¹⁵³ This leads us into the era following that of the Szapolyais, however.

Overall, it would be difficult to find a common denominator for the knowledge currently available about this changing transitory period of the Hungarian army. John Szapolyai rather quickly experienced the superiority of the combined armed forces of the Habsburg military, showing Ottoman, Western and East-Central European elements, against which the traditional

147 EOE I. 239, 298, 305, 406.

148 EOE I. 305.

149 EOE II. 111–112.

150 Teréz Oborni, ‘A bécsi udvar tervei Erdély visszaszerzésére 1557–1563’, *Történelmi Szemle* 45:1–2 (2003) 115–122; Nándor Virovecz, ‘Kereszténység szolgálata vagy politikai árulás? Balassa Menyhárt 1562. évi pártváltása és az északkeleti várháborúk’, in Bujdosóné Pap, Fejér and H. Szilasi (eds.), *Mozgó frontvonalak*, 260–269.

151 EOE II. 212–213.

152 Szentmártoni, *János Zsigmond erdélyi fejedelem*, 278.

153 1571: EOE II. 384–386; Horn, *Hit és hatalom*, 85–86.

military forces of Hungary did not prove effective enough, for different reasons. Still, Szapolyai's military force, strongly supported by the Ottomans, was able to ensure Szapolyai's rule in most parts of the country, even after 1529, while after 1556 it was the increasingly modern army in the eastern part of the country, retained by the Szapolyai family, that posed an insurmountable obstacle for the Habsburg kings of Hungary.

RELIGIOUS LITERATURE AND REFORMATION IN THE TERRITORIES RULED BY THE SZAPOLYAIS (1526–1570)

The Chronicle of Lőcse (Levoča) by Caspar Hain,¹ written in the 17th century, recalls the memory of a representative figure of each of the three centres of the Reformation in Hungary as follows: “The first among the scholars who came to Hungary in Luther’s time, around the year 1540, and reformed the schools and churches, was Leonhart Stöckel of Bártfa (Bardejov), who became the rector of the school there; the second was Johannes Honterus from Brassó in Transylvania, who became the priest and superintendent of the church of his native town; the third was the Hungarian Mátyás Dévai, who became a pastor of the church of Debrecen.”²

Two of these figures were active in the eastern part of country ruled by the Szapolyais, so in the following, *inter alia*, I will focus on their work.

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- 1 Excerpts from: *Reformierte Bekenntnisschriften. Vols. I/1–III/1*. Neukirchen, 2002–2012 (= BSRefK); *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts. Vol. 24: Siebenbürgen*. Ed. Eike Wolgast. Tübingen, 2012 (= EKO 24); ETE; Heinz Scheible et al. (ed.), *Melanchthons Briefwechsel: Kritische und kommentierte Ausgabe*. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1977– (= MBW); EOE II; Szerémi, *Emlékirat; Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Kronstadt in Siebenbürgen. Vols. 3–4*. Brassó, 1896–1903 (= QGSK 3–4); Károly Szabó and Árpád Hellebrant, *Régi magyar könyvtár. Vol. III*. Budapest, 1898; Sándor Dörnyei and Irma Szálka (eds.), *Régi magyar könyvtár III: Pótlások, kiegészítések, javítások. Vols. 1–5*. Budapest, 1990–1996 (= RMK III); Gedeon Borsa et al. (eds.), *Régi magyarországi nyomtatványok. Vols. 1–4: 1473–1670*. Budapest, 1971–2012 (= RMNy); *Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des 16. Jahrhunderts. Vols. 1–25*. Stuttgart, 1983–2000 (= VD 16).
- 2 *De Viris Doctis, qui sub Luthero circa Annum Christi 1540 ingressi sunt Hungariam et Scholas atque Ecclesias reformatarunt, Primus fuit Leonhardus Stökelius Bartphensis factus Scholae Patriae Rector. 2. Johannes Honterus Coronensis Transylvanus factus in Patria Ecclesia Pastor et illius tractus superintendens. 3. Matthias Deway Hungarus factus Pastor Debrecinensis Ecclesiae*. Caspar Hain, *Zipserische oder Leütschaverische Chronica vndt Zeit-beschreibung*. Hain Gáspár Lőcsei krónikája. Vol. 1. Lőcse, 1910, 84–85.

CLERICAL MARRIAGES AS PROPHETIC ACTIONS

By vigorously implementing the thesis of justification by faith and the practical consequences of the principle of *sola Scriptura* in several areas of clerical and social life,³ Mátyás Dévai became the first in Hungary to represent the teachings of the Reformation in a theologically structured way and with any power.

Mátyás Dévai escaped from the captivity of King Ferdinand in the summer of 1533 and fled to the part of the country ruled by King John, namely Buda, where he enjoyed the protection of his previous patron, Imre Bebek, provost of Székesfehérvár.⁴ At Christmas the same year, Bebek, who was a member of the priesthood, led his future wife, a burgher girl from Buda, to the altar in a public ceremony.⁵ It can be assumed that this radical act, riding roughshod over canon law, was driven not so much by the unfathomable power of love but rather by Dévai, who had been preaching openly in the house of the provost. This, at least, is the suspicion raised by some unmistakably demonstrative elements whose only aim was to attract attention. The entire story appears to be the orchestrated act of a prophet-preacher. During the Reformation, Imre Bebek's planned marriage was certainly not the first to which a cleric in Hungary, prompted by a decision of principle to openly admit their relationship, had descended. Nevertheless, because of the provost's rank, recognition and loud pronouncements, his was the one that received the greatest attention. King John did not hesitate: Bebek and Dévai were soon imprisoned, and although the former was released after a couple of weeks, thanks to the efforts of his family and to having complied with various conditions, Dévai was not set free until about a year after his capture. Simon Erdődi, bishop of Zagreb, was probably right when, in his report to the pope dated 6 March 1534, he assessed the effects of the event as follows:

“That Bebek, despite coming from an ancient family of magnates and being one of the nobles of the realm holding a priestly profession, was arrested on the order of my lord and prince for his actually implemented marriage and was later released on bail, but, according to my judgement (which is the most modest in the eyes of your Holiness), supporters of such ideas should be punished not only by warnings but be discouraged from such godless crimes by the full rigour of the law. Your Holiness, my most sacred Father, should indeed be assured that had the clergy in my extended diocese not been opposed, timidly in some cases

3 Zoltán Csepregi, ‘Die Rezeption der deutschen Reformation in ungarländischen Städten und Herrschaften’, in Ulrich A. Wien and Mihai-D. Grigore (eds.), *Exportgut Reformation: Ihr Transfer in Kontaktzonen des 16. Jahrhunderts und die Gegenwart evangelischer Kirchen in Europa*. Göttingen 2017, 161–189; Pál Ács, *Reformations in Hungary in the Age of the Ottoman Conquest*. (Refo500 Academic Studies, 52.) Göttingen, 2019, 85–95.

4 ETE II. 269, 275; Jenő Zoványi, *A reformáció Magyarországon 1565-ig*. Budapest, [1922], 97–98. On the relationship between Dévai and Bebek in 1531: ETE III. 30.

5 From Augustinus Musaeus to Simon Erdődi (27 January 1534): József Bessenyei (ed.), *Litterae principum ad papam (1518–1578): Segreteria di Stato – Lettere di Principi*. (Bibliotheca Academiae Hungariae in Roma. Fontes, 3.) Rome, Budapest, 2002, 202–206: No. XXXIV/1; Verancsics Antal m. kir. helytartó, esztergomi érsek összes munkái. Vol. I. (Monumenta Hungariae Historica, II; Scriptores, 2.) Published by László Szalay. Pest, 1857 (= Verancsics), 46; ETE II. 321–323, 383–384.

and more fiercely in others, to such a temerity, the majority would have been infected by this, the most dangerous sect.”⁶

In the German Reformation, the number of secular priests and ex-friars publicly entering into matrimony considered legal by civil law increased from 1522 onwards. As early as 1523, seven married priests from Strasbourg (among them Martin Bucer, former Dominican friar, who married a former nun) used the help of the press to engage in a discourse with the archbishop and his scribblers. Parish priest and cathedral preacher Matthias Zell’s wife Katharina also played her part in the struggle as a writer of independent pamphlets.⁷

In Hungary it was not until 1531 that the first clearly documented case, namely the marriage of parson Sigmund Staudacher of Selmezbánya (Banská Štiavnica), was recorded. As a consequence of his marriage, Staudacher had to leave his office and he moved all the way to Wittenberg. In 1534 he was invited back to the parish church of Selmezbánya, but he declined on the grounds that he did not wish to cause those inviting him any inconvenience due to his marital status.⁸ He of course had good reason to do so, as Archbishop Pál Várday issued a notice to the clerics of Selmezbánya on May 1530 in which he began by calling upon them to refrain from both marital and extramarital relationships.⁹ In his letter to the pope dated 1 August 1533, lamenting the spread of Lutheranism and urging a synod be held, István Brodarics evaluated the moral state of the clergy and seemed to be inclined to tolerate clerical marriages:

“The teachings of Luther and his followers are being spread over almost all the country, and in some places – mostly in parts that are, so far, obedient to the most majestic King Ferdinand – people start doing everything, even preaching, pursuant to his teachings. Priests are openly getting married; indulgences, dispensations and other things that were once valuable are now treated with disdain. Not even we who pay proper attention to the Holy See know what to respond to such things or how to contradict their opinion. Because if we were

6 Bessenyei, *Litterae*, 176–179: No. XXX/2.

7 VD 16 Z 343–344, 349, 351, 354. These pamphlets were adapted by: Thomas Kaufmann, ‘Pfarrfrau und Publizistin: Das reformatorische Amt der Katharina Zell’, *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 23 (1996) 169–218; Stephen E. Buckwalter, *Die Priesterehe in Flugschriften der frühen Reformation*. (Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte, 68.) Gütersloh, 1998, 224–243; Elsie Anne McKee, *Katharina Schütz Zell. Vol. 1: The Life and Thought of a Sixteenth-Century Reformer. Vol. 2: The Writings: Critical Edition*. Leiden, 1999; Bernd Moeller, ‘Wenzel Lincks Hochzeit. Über Sexualität, Keuschheit und Ehe im Umbruch der Reformation’, *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 97 (2000) 293–318. For a new approach to the domestic aspect of the question: Gabriella Erdélyi, *Negotiating Violence: Papal Pardons and Everyday Life in East Central Europe (1450–1550)*. Leiden, 2018, 15–69.

8 ...gemelter Herr Magister Sigmund Staudacher und Anna, seine Hausfrau, alhie, zusammen in den Stand der heil. Ee gegeben, und mit einander nach christlicher Ordnung zu Kirchen und Gassen gangen und auch beide in iren ehestande von uns herzlich abgeschieden und an ander Ort armsantlich sich begeben. ETE II. 182; cf. Zoványi, *A reformáció*, 46, 104; ETE II. 327–328, 338–340. The case in Körmöc (Kremnica) in 1524 is different in that here it was a defrocked (!) friar who married publicly (*matrimonium publice... contraxit*): ETE I. 177–178 (3 November 1524).

9 ETE II. 37–39.

to say that priests keeping whores (which happens almost everywhere) rather than wives (not to speak of uglier things) is more sacred and pleases God more, we would not know how seriously we could make such a claim.”¹⁰

The difference between the two accounts of Imre Bebek’s betrothal is that, while Antonius Musaeus speaks of a betrothal, Antal Verancsics mentions a marriage, and that, according to Musaeus, Bebek had already applied for dispensation prior to the event, whereas, according to Verancsics, he did so only after his release. All in all, the two reports are consistent in finding it noteworthy that the provost, strongly affected by the teachings of Luther (*Lutheranis dogmatibus imbutus; imbutus peregre lutheriana persuasione*), was referring to some kind of evangelical freedom (*stulta quadam, quam ipsi perperam vocant evangelicam, et sibi ficta libertate ductus; sequutisque praeceptis evangelicis, ut ipse aiebat*) when, in front of the cleric performing the ceremony, he uttered the following words: “Do not speak to me of the Church of Rome, but speak pursuant to the Gospel, according to whose freedom I shall now take this girl to be my wedded wife.”

After being arrested, both the groom and the bride acknowledged that they were determined and that their intentions were serious. Bebek stated that “he wanted the girl to be his wife entirely, and he intended to live with her as her wife, even if this meant he would lose his head and his entire fortune.” As for the girl, she lamented over the following: “...while she was the worst person and lived in the worst possible way, she was applauded, whereas now, when she wants to improve and start a life that would please God, she is put behind bars and is detained, and the whole world turns against her.”¹¹

Ever the insider, György Szerémi comments on the events as follows: “Before the year was out, during the siege of Buda, in 1536 [!], with the mediation of Péter Petrovics, Imre Bebek married a Greek girl in Buda castle. This made the king very angry; he could not forgive his aforementioned relative Péter either. Bebek was captured and detained in the middle of Buda castle. And I quite often officiated at Masses before Imre Bebek.”¹²

THE SEGESVÁR THEOLOGICAL DEBATE

In his exciting history of the Inquisition, *Háló* (The Net; Kolozsvár, 1570), Gáspár Heltai gives us an account of the theological debate held in Segesvár (Sighişoara) in 1538,¹³ and provides a glimpse into the religious conditions of

10 ETE II. 272–274; Bessenyei, *Litterae*, 104–107: No. XIV/12.

11 Quotations used so far: Verancsics, I. 46; Bessenyei, *Litterae*, 202–206: No. XXXIV/1; ETE II. 321–323, 383–384. Dévai’s recommendation, written in Sárvár on 16 May 1535 and addressed to Imre Bebek, verifies the statements of the betrothed couple, as recorded by contemporary witnesses: *Vale in Christo, una cum Tua consorte, pro qua, Verbo Dei eruditus, omnem paternam haereditatem maluisti amittere, quam more quorundam per vagos concubitus, ut modestissime loquar, volutari*. ETE III. 31.

12 Szerémi, *Emlékirat*, 292–293.

13 Péter Kőszeghy (ed.), *Háló: válogatás Heltai Gáspár műveiből* (Magyar Tallózó). Budapest, 1979, 130–135. Cf. István Keul, *Early Modern Religious Communities in East-Central Europe: Ethnic*

early Protestantism, of which we have only very patchy information. Heltai's book is our only source of the event, which he recounts as a contemporary, albeit with hindsight of 32 years, and – when it comes to the *Háló* – in a rather tendentious context. The data in his book, to the extent that it is possible to corroborate it, is accurate, but Heltai does not even try to verify his account by naming his source. Since the description is very detailed but also rich in novelistic elements and literary tropes, it is very difficult to decide whether or not Heltai can be regarded as an eye- and earwitness to the proceedings. Heltai tells us that “the lightning of the Lord's Word struck down near and far, both in Hungary and in Transylvania” – meaning that the Reformation began to spread. At this time the prelates saw to it that King John called István Szántai, the Hungarian preacher and schoolmaster of Kassa (Košice), considered by Catholics to be their most dangerous opponent, to a debate. A great number of illustrious religious leaders stood up to Szántai in Segesvár. These Catholic priests were all well-educated intellectuals and played an important role in the literary and cultural activity of the period.

Friar George, bishop and treasurer of Várad (Nagyvárad/Oradea), was the dominant voice in the debate. The other main organizer and participant in the debate was János Statileo, bishop of Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia). Statileo, originating from Dalmatia, occupied the episcopal see between 1534 and 1542: he served under King John as the king's faithful follower and diplomat. He raised Antal Verancsics, his nephew and ward, the future archbishop of Esztergom. Ferenc Frangepán, archbishop of Kalocsa and bishop of Eger, was also present in Segesvár. Frangepán enjoyed an international network of contacts, and was a literature-loving humanist who had himself written several books. He had studied in Rome, and as part of his diplomatic missions he had visited Italy, France and Spain. He had long supported King John, but later switched to Ferdinand's side. His speeches and letters were written in the spirit of Erasmian humanism. The three bishops arriving at the theological debate in Segesvár urgently sent for Franciscan Gergely Szegedi from Várad, who had already published a printed rebuttal on the works of Mátyás Dévai. During the debate, Gergely Szegedi became the real opponent of master Szántai.

Two experts on the literature of the age were assigned from among the canons of Gyulafehérvár to act as designated judges in the matter. One of them, Adrianus Wolphardus, was an outstanding humanist in Transylvania. The other judge, Márton Kálmáncsehi Sánta, today recognized mostly for his work at the forefront of the Zwinglian Reformation and iconoclasm, was in 1539 still a canon and school master in Gyulafehérvár. These designated judges sympathized with the views of the Protestant side, and therefore, for reasons of conscience, tried to rid themselves of the responsibility to take a decision. Master Szántai was

Diversity, Denominational Plurality, and Corporative Politics in the Principality of Transylvania (1526–1691). (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, 143.) Leiden, 2009, 54–55.

also backed by King John's secretary, Ferenc Bácsi, provost of Szepes, who is likely to have freed Dévai from prison in Buda three years earlier.¹⁴

To return to the behaviour of the two designated judges: Hungarian historiographic tradition is inclined to view the actions of the chapter of Gyulafehérvár from the perspective of the later Reformation, and seeks to find the pioneers of the Reformation among the canons of Transylvania.¹⁵ Indeed, it cannot be denied that a great many members of the chapter took the side of the Reformation: Mihály Csáky, for example, became a supporter of the Unitarians in his capacity as chancellor to King John Sigismund; Sebestyén Károlyi Boldi signed several documents between 1555 and 1557 as a Lutheran superintendent, while in the 1550s the previously mentioned Márton Kálmáncsehi Sánta spread the Helvetic doctrines of the Reformation in Eastern Hungary. There is also evidence that several members of the chapter had developed friendly relations with the humanist reformer Johannes Honterus from Brassó (Braşov).¹⁶ This viewpoint with hindsight is likely to be misleading, however, and this same perspective may have influenced Heltai in his retrospective characterization of the judges.

Although the Catholic intellectual circles taking the side of King John deployed significant forces against István Szántai during the debate of Segesvár, the outcome did not bring a resounding victory for any of the parties. Still, King John finally exiled the Protestant teacher from the country and Szántai returned to his home town of Abaújszántó, where he remained active until his death in 1541. The most disturbing part of Heltai's description is the characterisation of King John: according to him, King John had, prior to the debate, already understood that the papacy was the "Devil's work"; he embarrassed the bishops with his humanist arguments regarding the Eastern Church, and in his private conversation with Szántai he let God decide the outcome of the debate; the Protestant theologian was ultimately removed from the kingdom for his own safety. The character portrayed here is in clear contrast to the one that today's research attributes to King John and his role in the spread of Reformation ideas in Hungary.

The trope of 'good ruler – bad advisors' is of course as old as literature itself, and is used in the Gospels when presenting Pontius Pilate, but in the case of Heltai it may go further than that: it appears Heltai deliberately mixed the figure of King John I, who died in 1540, with that of his son, John II, who died in 1571, and in his description the father showed certain characteristic features which, based on our current knowledge, are in fact more true of his son. The description of the Segesvár debate is thus part historical memoir, part literary fiction and part political propaganda of the age.

14 ETE III. 71.

15 See, for example, István Juhász, 'Von Luther zu Bullinger. Der theologische Weg der Reformation in den protestantischen Kirchen in Rumänien', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 81 (1970) 308–333, 310.

16 Roster edited by Mihály Balázs, *Ungarländische Antitrinitarier. Vol. IV: Ferenc Dávid*. (Bibliotheca Dissidentium, 26.) Baden-Baden, 2008, 11–12.

THE REFORMS OF BRASSÓ AND BARCASÁG (BURZENLAND)

Johannes Honterus, known for his engravings and maps, returned to his home town in 1533 from his 'exile' in Regensburg, Krakow and Basel.¹⁷ Within a couple of years he gained fame and influence as a printer, poet, city counsellor and educational and religious expert. His first publication appeared in 1539, and thereafter his career can be traced with the help of direct and reliable data.

This period brought important changes in the religious policy of both Hungary and the Holy Roman Empire. It was not until the death of his rival King John I in 1540 that King Ferdinand was able to obtain greater political room for manoeuvre and be more actively involved in religious matters. At the same time, Pope Paul III made intense diplomatic efforts to win the Lutherans back, which resulted in the dialogues of Worms and Regensburg.¹⁸ It was during these events that the inhabitants of Brassó set an eye on Wittenberg and saw him as an openly acceptable alternative to their blinkered pro-Habsburg orientation, which, in the newly arisen ideological environment, could no longer be maintained. In his most personal work, *Apologia*, Honterus recalls the process as follows: "From the accounts of reliable witnesses and various publications circulating in Transylvania, we have obtained assurances that in the presence of his majesty the emperor, the papal legate, other princes and delegates of imperial cities and the Christian world, it was unanimously decided in Regensburg, without waiting for the ecumenical council, that the Lord's Supper should from now on be freely received, under two kinds, by people of all ranks in every country, city, and municipality."¹⁹

Around the year 1543, religious life was quite eventful in Brassó and in Barcaság.²⁰ Apart from certain circumstances in foreign affairs, changes were triggered by Johannes Fuchs being elected mayor in 1541. At the end of that

17 Oskar Netoliczka (ed.), *Johannes Honterus' ausgewählte Schriften*. Wien, 1898, 209; ETE II. 257–258; cf. Keul, *Early Modern*, 57–59.

18 ETE III. 332, 364–366; Georg Pfeilschifter (ed.), *Acta reformationis catholicae ecclesiam Germaniae concernentia saeculi XVI: Die Reformverhandlungen des deutschen Episkopats von 1520 bis 1570*. Vol. 6: 1538 bis 1548. Regensburg, 1974, 21–88: No. 2; cf. Klaus Ganzer and Karl-Heinz Zur Mühlen (eds.), *Akten der deutschen Reichsreligionsgespräche der 16. Jahrhundert*. Göttingen, 2000.

19 ...compertissimum habemus ex relatione fide dignorum testium et ex quibusdam impressis libellis, qui iam per Transylvaniam circumferuntur, quod praesente Caesarea maiestate et legato summi pontificis ceterisque principibus ac imperialium civitatum legatis, omnium denique Christianorum statuum et ordinum hominibus, non expectato generali concilio Ratisbonae concorditer ab omnibus conclusum et susceptum fuerit, ut observatio cenae Domini iuxta institutionem Christi sub utraque specie omnibus provinciis, civitatibus, oppidis et cuiuslibet conditionis hominibus ab isto tempore debeat esse libera. Netoliczka, Honterus, 40. According to Juhász, we can hear an echo of the afterword of the dialogue in these sentences (*Corpus reformatorum*. Vol. 4. Braunschweig, 1837, 622–630). Juhász, 'Von Luther', 310–314; cf. Oskar Wittstock, *Johannes Honterus, der Siebenbürger Humanist und Reformator*. (Kirche im Osten. Monographienreihe, 10.) Göttingen, 1970, 219; Karl Reinherth, *Die Gründung der evangelischen Kirchen in Siebenbürgen*. (Studia Transylvanica, 5.) Köln, Wien, 1979, 90–91.

20 See the source material in the volumes of *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Kronstadt in Siebenbürgen* and *Monumenta ecclesiastica*. Cf. Keul, *Early Modern*, 63–68; Ulrich A. Wien,

year, Bartholomeus Bogner still believed that the Reformation had failed in Brassó because, in its fight against the Ottoman Turks and the Szapolyai party, the city was waiting for support from King Ferdinand: “With regards to the issue of religion, the pure teachings would have resulted in a higher yield in our city, were it not for the fear that these ideas might be resented at the very place from where we are expecting our only support against factional intrigues and the Ottoman tyranny; still, God’s word is in the meantime being spread and the pure teachings that we wish would gain ground in the entire world have now come to fruition in people’s hearts.”²¹

During Fuch’s time in office, however, the political and thus also the religious orientation underwent quick change. On 14 May 1542, the parish priest of Brassó, Jeremias Jekel, was married, and his example was soon followed by his colleague in Prázsmár (Prejmer).²² On 3 October the very same year, a new order of worship was introduced in Brassó; then, on 2 November, the issues of “preaching the pure gospel and religious reforms (*causa evangelii pure praedicandi et religionis hic reformatione*)”, i.e. the dissemination of the reforms of Brassó in the entire Barcaság region, were discussed at the assembly of the cathedral chapter.²³ In December there were canonical visitations, in which both clerical figures and lay people took part. During these visitations, priests considered unfit due to being uneducated or negligent were removed from office.²⁴ According to the summary in the chronicle written by Hieronymus Ostermayer, organ player of Brassó: “This same year, in the month of October, to honour the sacred name of God, Lutheran worship was introduced in the church of Brassó, while papist worship was banned. Amen. Furthermore, Johannes Fuchs, with the help of the wise and knowledgeable scholar Johannes Honterus, consolidated the clerical reforms in Barcaság and had his programme for the organization of the church printed”²⁵

In his work *Reformatio ecclesiae Coronensis ac totius Barcensis prouinciae*,²⁶ city counsellor Johannes Honterus, hitherto mostly known as a supporter of Erasmian

Siebenbürgen – Pionierregion der Religionsfreiheit: Luther, Honter und die Wirkungen der Reformation. Bonn, Hermannstadt, 2017.

21 Written to Leonhard Stöckel, his fellow student in Wittenberg, and later rector of Bártfa (6 November 1541): ETE III. 559–560.

22 QGSK III. 600; ETE IV. 42.

23 QGSK III. 178; ETE IV. 118.

24 QGSK III. 180; ETE IV. 131. ...et qui ad docendum non probarentur idonei, ab ecclesiasticis officiis in posterum abstinere... Netoliczka, Honterus, 13; EKO 24. 179.

25 QGSK 4. 504; ETE IV. 117: *Eodem Anno. Hat man im Monat October angefangen Ewangelische Mess zu halten in der Croner Kirch, und die Papistische weggeschafft, Gott und seinen heiligen Nahmen zu Ehren. Amen. Item hat H. Johannes Fux durch den hochehrleuchten und rechtgelehrten Mann M. Joannem Honterum die Reformation der Kirchen aufgericht in Burzenland, und in Druck lassen ausgehen.*

26 Corone, 1543; RMNy No. 52. Second edition, with a forward by Melancthon (MBW No. 3310): Wittenberg, 1543 (VD 16 H 4776). Published by: Netoliczka, Honterus, 11–28; EKO 24. 177–190; Bernhard Heigl and Thomas Sindilariu (eds.), *Reformatio Ecclesiae Coronensis ac totius Barcensis Provinciae*. Kronstadt, 2017.

humanism, tried retrospectively to certify the religious reforms of Brassó, which at the time he considered compatible with the reform efforts of Rome. It is likely that Honterus' script was published in the spring of 1543; in several places, however, it was met with revulsion. Parson Mathias Ramser of Szeben (Sibiu) even sent the booklet to the reformers of Wittenberg, who did not, however, find anything questionable or disputable in it. Moreover, they advised the Szeben contingent to use it as its guide.²⁷ On the other hand, the court of Gyulafehérvár called upon the reformers of Brassó to provide a personal report.²⁸ For fear of potential consequences, the Brassó contingent did not let Honterus leave. In the end, the delegation (consisting among others of mayor Johannes Fuchs and parish priest Jeremias Jekel) came to no harm of any kind, as all that was forthcoming was an innocent theological discourse.²⁹

What was the position of the court of Gyulafehérvár on all this? Surprisingly, of all religious matters it was on this particular one that queen consort Isabella acted independently: despite violent opposition from her clerical supporters, she approved the evangelically inclined work of the Brassóvians. Although she did not sympathize with the new teachings in any way, merely by accepting the belief of the Saxons she became the most important lay patron of the new church.³⁰ According to Katalin Péter, this position is likely to have originated – in addition to the pressure of foreign policy obligations – from the religious tolerance of Isabella's father, King Sigismund I of Poland.³¹

In 1544, amidst disturbances difficult to interpret in retrospect, three city preachers resigned. Jekel, one of the resigning priests, left for Prázsmár, and Honterus was elected to replace him as parish priest of Brassó. It was under his leadership that all but one of the altars were removed from the church.³² Although this act is frequently referred to in the literature as iconoclasm (certain authors

27 ETE IV. 296–298; cf. Martin Luther, *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Briefwechsel*. Vol. 10. Weimar, 1947, 391–393: No. 3910.

28 ETE IV. 567–568.

29 QGSK 3. 602–603; ETE IV. 324; cf. Keul, *Early Modern*, 68–69.

30 And when in 1557 Queen Isabella agreed on her own and her son's behalf that everybody could follow the faith of their choice, she also made public the underlying principle of her conduct. She declared in front of the national assembly that it was her royal duty to protect each and every church: Katalin Péter, *Studies on the History of the Reformation in Hungary and Transylvania*. (Refo500 Academic Studies, 45.) Ed. by Gabriella Erdélyi. Göttingen, 2018, 91–92. Cf. Gáspár Heltai's recommendation regarding the translations of Psalms in 1560: Edina Zvara, „Az keresztyén olvasóknak”: Magyar nyelvű bibliafordítások és kiadások előszavai és ajánlásai a 16–17. századból (Régi Magyar Könyvtár. Források, 14.) Budapest, 2003, 118–120.

31 Péter, *Studies*, 91–97; cf. Gábor Barta, 'Bedingungsfaktoren zur Entstehung religiöser Toleranz in Siebenbürgen', in Georg und Renate Weber (eds.), *Luther und Siebenbürgen: Ausstrahlungen von Reformation und Humanismus nach Südosteuropa*. (Siebenbürgisches Archiv, 19.) Köln, 1985, 229–244.

32 QGSK 4. 505; ETE IV. 351. Ostermayer's chronicle is misleading here. Cf. Erich Roth, *Die Reformation in Siebenbürgen: Ihr Verhältnis zu Wittenberg und der Schweiz*. Vol. I: *Der Durchbruch*. (Siebenbürgisches Archiv, 2.) Köln, Graz, 1962, 150–155.

even connect it with the supposed presence of Dévai),³³ the removal of the side altars was in fact a cooperation between the magistrate and Honterus, the parish priest. Thus it was an organized measure taken by competent authorities, rather than some kind of spontaneous act. In her dissertation Gudrun Litz provides a detailed description of the broad spectrum of theoretical or practical approaches to icons that existed between the extremes of iconoclasm and iconodulism in the cities of southern Germany.³⁴ Edit Szegegi notes that on the matter of the so-called *adiaphora* the positions taken prior to the Augsburg Interim of 1548 were considerably more flexible, more tolerant and also more practical than those adopted later.³⁵

In her interpretation of the events of Brassó, Edit Szegegi focuses not on what was removed from churches but rather on what remained in them: as a wise compromise, the main altar was indeed left untouched in its original place.³⁶ According to Szegegi, by taking this decision, the city authorities sought to manage the conflict that had arisen on the matter of iconodulism, trying to take the wind out of the sails of the iconoclasts while at the same time giving concessions to those who, whether out of habit or through conviction, insisted on the use of icons in churches. Szegegi also tried to break away from the historical approach that seeks to categorize the Reformation of Brassó on the basis of theological sources and foreign influences. According to Szegegi, the key to the reforms that were successfully implemented lies in the challenges the city had to face. The inhabitants of Brassó did not follow any ready-made recipes. Faced with issues that could not be resolved satisfactorily in the traditional way, they turned to foreign models and drew upon them in eclectic fashion, always adapting them to the current domestic situation and needs. As the city archives were destroyed, the exact details of these decisions are not known to us, but the crises and conflicts can be reconstructed on the basis of the responses given. According to Szegegi, the main conflict between the senate and the religious organisations concerned the question of who should

33 Karl Kurt Klein, *Der Humanist und Reformator Johannes Honter: Untersuchungen zur siebenbürgischen Geistes- und Reformationsgeschichte*. (Deutsche Akademie in München. Schriften, 22.) Hermannstadt, München, 1935, 266–268; Karl Reinert, *Die Reformation der siebenbürgisch-sächsischen Kirche*. (Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte, 173.) Gütersloh, 1956, 46–47.

34 Gudrun Litz, *Die reformatorische Bilderfrage in den schwäbischen Reichsstädten*. (Spätmittelalter und Reformation. Neue Reihe, 35.) Tübingen, 2007.

35 Edit Szegegi, 'Was bedeutet Adiaphoron – Adiaphora im siebenbürgischen Protestantismus des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts?', in Evelin Wetter (ed.), *Formierungen des konfessionellen Raumes in Ostmitteleuropa*. (Forschungen zur Geschichte und Kultur des östlichen Mitteleuropa, 33.) Stuttgart, 2008, 57–74.

36 The contradictory information found in chronicles and annals of questionable authenticity is interpreted in the light of material finds by Evelin Wetter, 'Das vorreformatorische Erbe in der Ausstattung siebenbürgisch-sächsischer Pfarrkirchen A.B.: Altarbildwerke – Vasa sacra – Abendmahlsgerät – Paramente', in Ulrich A. Wien and Krista Zach (eds.), *Humanistische Beziehungen in Ungarn und Siebenbürgen: Politik, Religion und Kunst im 16. Jahrhundert*. (Siebenbürgisches Archiv, 37.) Köln, Weimar, Wien, 2004, 19–57, esp. 22–26; Evelin Wetter, 'Staging the Eucharist, Adiaphora, and Shaping Lutheran Identities in the Transylvanian Parish Church', in Andrew Spicer (ed.), *Parish Churches in the Early Modern World*. New York, London, 2016, 119–146.

implement the reforms, and how. The dispute ended with the outright victory of the lay people, so Honterus, who had never been ordained as priest, was able to become the parson of the city parish church.³⁷

The theological and church policy reorientation in Brassó did not leave Honterus' oeuvre unaffected. The second edition of *Rudimenta cosmographica*, extended with an additional 106 lines, was published in 1542 in Brassó.³⁸ The poem praises the city as follows: of all cities that follow the teachings of Christ, this is the one upon which the rising sun sheds its light first.³⁹ This sense of self-awareness (of being the eastern vanguard of the true, i.e. the Western, church) on the part of the people of Brassó was well-established by this time, I suppose, and the poetic image of the rising sun was most likely not invented by Honterus. Still, the reformers' redefinition of the subject is apparent in another contemporary text: a couple of months later, the writer of these lines himself gave a detailed explanation of the congregational-geographical location of Brassó in his work *Reformatio ecclesiae Coronensis*. According to him, located on the boundary between East and West, this commercial centre is exposed to the critical eyes of Eastern Christianity. Therefore particular care should be taken to stop the abuses, else the burghers of Brassó would lose everyday arguments with people from the east, and the Greek, Bulgarian and Romanian visitors to the market would be shocked by external signs of idolatry and by rites introduced as human inventions, and so, by engaging in debates with the burghers, they might undermine their faith.⁴⁰ "To avoid those who believe their own rites to be truer than others' rites, and who blatantly place them above others' rites, getting the wrong image of the Christian faith because of our own habits, we were obliged, for reasons of conscience, to make some concessions on matters of minor importance."⁴¹

37 Edit Szegedi, 'Konfessionsbildung und Konfessionalisierung im städtischen Kontext: Eine Fallstudie am Beispiel von Kronstadt in Siebenbürgen (ca. 1550–1680)', in Jörg Deventer (ed.), *Konfessionelle Formierungsprozesse im frühneuzeitlichen Ostmitteleuropa: Vorträge und Studien*. (Berichte und Beiträge des Geisteswissenschaftlichen Zentrums Geschichte und Kultur Ostmitteleuropas, 2006/2.) Leipzig, 2006, 126–296, esp. 136–139.

38 RMNy No. 50. Published by Netoliczka, Honterus, 153–196; Johannes Honterus, *Rudimenta Cosmographica: Grundzüge der Weltbeschreibung (Corona/Kronstadt 1542)*. Ed. by Robert Offner et al. Hermannstadt, Bonn, 2015, 140–342.

39 Netoliczka, Honterus, 166; Honterus, *Rudimenta*, fol. c2r, 235, lines 419–421: *...praecipitque sitam sub monte Coronam / Quam primam Europae Christi documenta sequentem / Sol oriens radiis lustrat prioribus urbem*. Cf. Paul Philippi, 'Christi documenta sequi: Eine Beobachtung die siebenbürgische Reformationsgeschichte betreffend', in *Neue Beiträge zur siebenbürgischen Geschichte und Landeskunde*. (Siebenbürgisches Archiv, 1.) Köln, 1962, 104–112; Wittstock, Johannes Honterus, 223; Reinerth, *Die Gründung*, 93.

40 *Et emporium Coronense in ultimis partibus ecclesiae occidentalis constitutum assidue frequentari videamus a Graecis, Bulgaris, Moldavis et Valachis Transalpinis ac aliis orientali ecclesiae subiectis populis*. Netoliczka, Honterus, 12; EKO 24. 178. The output of the Brassó printing press reveals just how aware the city was of its special circumstances.

41 *...ne fides Christiana propter nostras consuetudines male audiat apud eos, qui suos qualescumque ritus sinceriores gloriantur ac ceteris insolenter anteponunt, in quibusdam levioribus cedere coacti sumus propter conscientiam*. Netoliczka, Honterus, 12; EKO 24. 179.

Edit Szegedi tries to interpret the Reformation movement in Brassó within the framework of the identity crisis that was caused by the presence of and continuous criticism from Eastern Christianity. There was thus yet another reason for clearing the liturgy in Brassó of idols and abuses, yet this happened for the sake of reassuring the faithful and preventing further criticism rather than to fulfil missionary purposes. The citizens of Brassó sought a new religious identity for their own self-esteem and conscience, making use not only of the full intellectual arsenal of Western Christianity but also of the legacy of Greek Church Fathers in order to respond to the challenges of Eastern Orthodoxy.⁴²

The publications of Honterus provide numerous arguments for this interpretation. Even more interesting is that Philipp Melanchthon, with only loose and indirect contact with the people of Brassó, was fully aware of the problem and tried to approach it in the foreword to the Wittenberg edition of the *Reformatio Coronensis* by using the biblical concept of the 'remainder' (Isa 37:4 par). God is not a maximalist; for him, even the remainders are enough for a fresh start: "Some churches in Pannonia that strive for the purity of teachings act piously and wisely partly in order for the people to receive convincing consolation in their current distress and partly in order not to have the name of Christ erased from their hearts. There is no doubt that in these places God retains for himself some remainders (*reliquias*), some congregations (*coetus*), certain studies (*studia*), and some schools (*scholas*), where the words of the Gospel on the removal of idols are sung, and God is called on through confidence in his Son, his agent. The righteous should therefore be careful to tend their churches with honest reckoning."⁴³

THE FIRST PROTESTANT CREED WRITTEN IN HUNGARIAN

The Helvetic movement of the Reformation appeared first in Hungary after the diet of Pozsony (Bratislava) in 1548 and became manifest partly in the introduction of the Bullingerian doctrines of the Lord's Supper and in simplified religious rituals. These doctrines were strenuously rejected and persecuted by both the royal power and the prelates. Still, the influence of Swiss theology became ever more apparent each year. Some Hungarians had given their opinion of the *Consensus Tigurinus* even before it was printed. Heinrich Bullinger⁴⁴ even had a follower at the royal chancery, namely János Fejérthóy, who in 1551

42 Cf. Paul Philippi, 'Wittenbergische Reformation und ökumenische Katholizität in Siebenbürgen', in Georg und Renate Weber (eds.), *Luther und Siebenbürgen: Ausstrahlungen von Reformation und Humanismus nach Südosteuropa*. (Siebenbürgisches Archiv, 19.) Köln, 1985, 71–76; Juhász, 'Von Luther', 322–324; Edit Szegedi, 'Die Reformation als „Krisenmanagement“: Überlegungen zur Identität einer siebenbürgischen Stadt im Zeitalter der Reformation', in Maria Craciun and Ovidiu Ghitta (eds.), *Ethnicity and Religion in Central and Eastern Europe*. Cluj, 1995, 64–70; Ludwig Binder (ed.), *Johannes Honterus: Schriften, Briefe, Zeugnisse*. Bukarest, 1996, 239.

43 MBW No. 3310.

44 Bullinger to Vadianus (8 March 1551): *Corpus reformatorum*. Vol. 42. Braunschweig, 1875, 71: No. 1461.

requested that the Swiss reformer send him his teachings on the articles of Christian faith.⁴⁵ Copies of Bullinger's reply had been circulating for years before it was finally published in 1559 in two places at the same time: in Magyaróvár, by Gál Huszár, and in Kolozsvár, by Gáspár Heltai.⁴⁶ Ludwig Lavater's work *De ritibus et institutionibus ecclesiae Tigurinae opusculum* was also published upon a request from Hungary, in 1559.⁴⁷ This work also contributed significantly to the unification of the various liturgical forms practised by different Bullingerian communities in Hungary.

These communities, which would later come to be known as Calvinist, popped up first and foremost in areas under Ottoman rule and in the buffer zone around the frontier castles. Their appearance was not directly preceded by any foreign models. Instead, they came to life as a result of changed circumstances, namely the disappearance of clerical and secular authorities, and the questioning of previous organizational and cultic norms.⁴⁸ The first major representatives of the Zurich theology in Hungary (István Szegedi Kis, Márton Kálmáncsehi Sánta and Péter Melius Juhász) all came from areas under Ottoman rule or from frontier castles.

After the death of Friar George, bishop of Várad, in 1551, the ideas of Bullinger started to spread in the Transbiscan region as well, mainly thanks to Kálmáncsehi, who became the parson of Debrecen. At the Synod of Óvári (Oar) in March 1554 the administrative division of the Transbiscan region elected a superintendent, and all but one of the decisions adopted dealt with issues regarding the liturgy and ecclesiastical regulations. The first article quite extensively expressed the opinion of the participants on the matter of the Lord's Supper. That the article used the text of the 1536 edition of the *Wittenberg Concord* is clearly recognizable. The form and the content are identical, but the text contains some modifications that seem merely stylistic, as well as some serious changes, which make the work confusing.⁴⁹ The secret of understanding the work was solved by Mihály Bucsay: the modified version of the *Wittenberg Concord* should be read side by side with the original, because each modification expresses a disagreement with the original wording. Read in itself, the sentences formulated in Óvári are unclear and confusing. They can only be interpreted

45 ETE V. 499.

46 RMNy No. 152, 157. Published in Barna Nagy (ed.), *Heinrychi Bullingeri Epistola ad ecclesias Hungaricas earumque pastores scripta MDLI = Sendschreiben an die ungarischen Kirchen und Pastoren 1551. Editio bilinguis*. Budapest, 1968; Cf. Gottfried W. Locher, 'Perseverantia in viis Domini': Bullingers Sendschreiben an die Glaubensbrüder in Ungarn unter habsburgischer und unter türkischer Herrschaft', *Zwingliana* 18 (1989) 62–68; Jan-Andrea Bernhard, *Konsolidierung des reformierten Bekenntnisses im Reich der Stephanskron: Ein Beitrag zur Kommunikationsgeschichte zwischen Ungarn und der Schweiz in der frühen Neuzeit (1500–1700)*. (Refo500 Academic Studies, 19.) Göttingen, 2015, 286–327.

47 VD 16 L 828.

48 Mihály Bucsay, 'Die Lehre vom Heiligen Abendmahl in der ungarischen Reformation helvetischer Richtung', *Deutsche Theologie* 6 (1939) 261–281, esp. 268.

49 Zoltán Csepregi, *A reformáció nyelve: Tanulmányok a magyarországi reformáció első negyedszázadának vizsgálatára alapján*. (Humanizmus és Reformáció, 34.) Budapest, 2013, 461–462.

in the light of the 1536 version. The article of 1554 thus refutes the claim that the conservative wing in Óvári tried to thwart the more radical branch of Kálmáncsehi in its attempt to gain ground. On the contrary, the majority of those convening at the synod had already dealt with the compromises contained in the concord of 1536, as well as with the mediating theology of Bucer and Melancthon, and now entered into an open debate explicitly opposed to those doctrines.⁵⁰

From 1556 onwards, the representatives of the Helvetic movement could count on the political support of Péter Petrovics, the *ispán* of Temes county (*comes Temesiensis*), who routed King Ferdinand's troops from Transylvania in 1556 and put the underage John Sigismund, previously exiled to Poland, on the throne. Right up to the end of his life (in 1557), Petrovics sought to validate the approach that later became and remained the predominant political view in Transylvania until the end of the 16th century. He accepted the fact that the new Transylvanian state had become a tax-payer to the Ottomans, and that, in return for sacrificing its independence, it had been given autonomy in its internal affairs. Representatives of this view preferred to see Transylvania as a Protestant country, and did not wish to use political considerations to limit the spread of the new religious persuasions of the Reformation.⁵¹ Research has identified two underlying factors behind this unusually tolerant and inclusive religious policy in Transylvania: on the one hand, it was the unstable balance of power that made Transylvania's autonomy possible at all, while, on the other hand, from this circumstance of foreign policy, an internal political necessity was born, namely that the prince, in order to achieve his goals, should, by way of compromise, collect as many resources and win the support of as many social ranks as possible.

Following the death of Kálmáncsehi in 1557, it was his successors, parson Gergely Szegedi of Debrecen and preacher Péter Melius Juhász, who took the lead of the Helvetic line of Protestantism in the Transtibiscan region. They were correct when they recognised that without the support of Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), the political and cultural centre of Eastern Hungary and a city that manifested rapid economic growth, they would not be able to validate their theological views in the ever-growing market of religious teachings. By mid-century, a very strong Protestant community had been formed in Kolozsvár, and from the 1550s the parson of the city, Gáspár Heltai, was able to have a great number of Lutheran works published.⁵² After a series of lengthy negotiations, Melius and Gergely Szegedi managed to win the support of Ferenc Dávid,

50 Bucsay, 'Die Lehre', 269–271; Juhász, 'Von Luther', 331.

51 Balázs, *Ungarländische*, 18.

52 Juhász, 'Von Luther', 328–329; Krista Zach, '„...Eine kleine Biblia...”: Rezeption und Resonanz des reformationszeitlichen Katechismus im historischen Ungarn (1530–1640)', in Wilhelm Kühlmann and Anton Schindling (eds.), *Deutschland und Ungarn in ihren Bildungs- und Wissenschaftsbeziehungen während der Renaissance*. (Contubernium, 62.) Stuttgart, 2004, 151–179; Pál Ács, 'Biblical Studies and Bible Translations in Hungary in the Age of the Reformation 1540–1640', in Alberto Melloni (ed.), *Martin Luther: A Christian between Reforms and Modernity (1517–2017)*. Berlin, 2017, 1219–1240.

bishop of the Hungarian diocese with its seat in Kolozsvár,⁵³ together with that of Gáspár Heltai, for the Helvetic-spirited doctrine of the Lord's Supper, which contained mainly Bullingerian elements.⁵⁴ That this was unlikely to have been an easy victory is evident from earlier events in Transylvania.

Dávid had already taken up a position against those who, once acquainted with the teachings of Zwingli and other Swiss reformers, increasingly distanced themselves from Lutheranism.⁵⁵ Moreover, in 1557, he summoned two synods where the teachings of Kálmáncsehi and his followers were declared to be false.⁵⁶ To counteract the teachings he considered subversive, Dávid did not hesitate to rely on the support of the city council in its capacity as an authority.⁵⁷

In 1557 the people of Kolozsvár, together with the Saxons, drew up and adopted a document, written in the spirit of Melanchthon, entitled *Consensus doctrinae*,⁵⁸ which was ratified at the Synod of Torda in early 1558, with the written consent of the *Praeceptor Germaniae*, and sent in a letter.⁵⁹ In Torda, Ferenc Dávid and his followers explained in a Lutheran spirit that in the dispute concerning the statues and paintings it was enough to state that these could not be worshipped. Then time should decide the rest, as in no event should unrest be caused by having these forcefully removed from churches. They also thought it ridiculous to let anyone preach freely in front of a congregation without any authorization for this. Measures were also taken so that priests would wear albs while celebrating the liturgy. Dávid was thus clearly opposed to Kálmáncsehi, who openly demanded the eradication of cult practices, yet the events of subsequent years show that other types of reform were not at all alien to him. The files of the synod tell us that, apart from priests from Lower

53 Juhász, 'Von Luther', 310–312; Balázs, *Ungarländische*, 19.

54 Juhász, 'Von Luther', 331–333; Balázs, *Ungarländische*, 16; Edit Szegedi, 'Konfessionsbildung in Klausenburg und Kronstadt', in Wien and Grigore (eds.), *Exportgut Reformation*, 191–201.

55 RMNy No. 127; RMNy App. 20; Balázs, *Ungarländische*, 149–159, 269–271; cf. Zoványi, *A reformáció*, 354, 360–362; Erich Roth, *Die Reformation in Siebenbürgen: Ihr Verhältnis zu Wittenberg und der Schweiz. Vol. II: Von Honterus zur Augustana.* (Siebenbürgisches Archiv, 4.) Köln, Graz, 1964, 29–36; Juhász, 'Von Luther', 329–330.

56 Ludwig Binder, 'Die frühesten Synoden der evangelischen Kirche in Siebenbürgen', in Franklin Clark Fry (ed.), *Geschichtswirklichkeit und Glaubensbewährung: Festschrift Friedrich Müller.* Stuttgart, 1967, 220–244, esp. 238–241; Béla Holl, 'Ein unbekannter Klausenburger Melanchthon-Druck aus dem XVI. Jahrhundert', *Magyar Könyvszemle* 82 (1966) 376–385.

57 RMNy No. 148; Balázs, *Ungarländische*, 20–21, 164–167.

58 *Consensus doctrinae de sacramentis Christi pastorum et ministrorum ecclesiarum in inferiori Pannonia et nationis utriusque in tota Transylvania.* Kolozsvár, 1557. RMNy No. 143; Balázs, *Ungarländische*, 17–18, 159–162. Published by Georg Daniel Teutsch, *Urkundenbuch der evangelischen Landeskirche A.B. in Siebenbürgen. Vol. 2: Die Synodalverhandlungen der evang. Landeskirche A.B. in Siebenbürgen im Reformationsjahrhundert.* Hermannstadt, 1883, 7–20; EKO 24. 56–66; cf. Roth, *Die Reformation*, II. 37–45; Ludwig Binder, 'Melanchthon in der siebenbürgischen evangelischen Kirche', *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 102 (1977) 2–22.

59 EOE II. 93; EKO 24. 69; MBW No. 8498. *Acta synodi pastorum ecclesiae nationis Hungaricae in Transylvania.* Kolozsvár, 1558. RMNy No. 147; Balázs, *Ungarländische*, 162–164; cf. Wilhelm H. Neuser, 'Melanchthons Abendmahlslehre und ihre Auswirkungen im unteren Donauraum', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 84 (1973) 49–59, esp. 58.

Hungary, later called the Partium, even pastors representing the two nations of Transylvania, namely the Hungarians and the Saxons, were present; looking at the list of signatories, we find the words ‘superintendent of Transylvanian Saxons, Transylvanian Hungarians and of Lower Hungary’ written alongside the names of Sebestyén Károlyi Boldi, Matthias Hebler and Franciscus Davidis.⁶⁰

Around 1557, some confusion arose in Hungary because Melanchthon had not commented on the disputed doctrine of the Lord’s Supper. In 1557 Gál Huszár requested Bullinger to encourage Melanchthon to formulate a clear position on the matter.⁶¹ Against this backdrop it came as no surprise that Melanchthon did eventually interfere in the Transylvanian dispute on the Lord’s Supper in 1558. His opinion seems not to have been firm enough, however, to retain those opting to move in the direction of the Swiss line of Protestantism, while those following the teachings of the school of Wittenberg saw Melanchthon’s letter as affirming their own conservative opinion. Disciples of Melanchthon turned out to be enthusiastic supporters not only of the Lutheran but also of the Helvetic lines of Protestantism, so the master from Wittenberg is likely to have been a recognized authority both by Lutherans and those under Swiss influence.⁶²

The negotiations between representatives of the Transtibiscan region (Melius and István Kopácsi) and those of Kolozsvár (Dávid, Heltai and Gergely Molnár) were finally concluded in August 1559 in Várad, with positive results.⁶³ It explains why Dávid, who in June 1557 played a decisive role in the publication of a Lutheran-inclined document declaring Protestant unity in Transylvania, stopped defending Lutheranism in 1559 and started preaching a doctrine of the Lord’s Supper that was very close to that preached by the Swiss.⁶⁴ The negotiating parties agreed to adopt and finalise the content of their agreement as the creed of the Lord’s Supper, at the diocesan meeting to be held in Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş) on All Saints’ Day. The identity of the person who actually undertook the task of drafting the text remains an open question for researchers. As for the genre of the *Confession of Marosvásárhely*, it is, in fact, a Lord’s Supper sermon.⁶⁵

60 Teutsch, *Urkundenbuch*, 19–20; EKO 24. 64–66; cf. Juhász, ‘Von Luther’, 332–333; Balázs, *Ungarländische*, 19.

61 *Optime faceres si et D. Philippum Melanchthonem adhortaveris, ut suam iam tandem sententiam aperte ederet et publicaret tempestive de Sacramento Eucharistiae. Dissimulatio enim ipsius non parum discriminis peperit hactenus Ecclesiae Christi.* Friedrich Adolf Lampe and Pál Debreceni Ember, *Historia Ecclesiae Reformatae in Hungaria*. Utrecht, 1728, 115; cf. Neuser, *Melanchthons Abendmahlslehre*, 53–54.

62 Zoványi, *A reformáció*, 385; Mihály Bucsay, *Der Protestantismus in Ungarn 1521–1978: Ungarns Reformationskirchen in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Vol. 1: Im Zeitalter der Reformation, Gegenreformation und katholischen Reform.* (Studien und Texte zur Kirchengeschichte und Geschichte, 1/3.) Wien, Köln, Graz, 1977, 97.

63 *Defensio orthodoxae sententiae de caena Domini ministrorum ecclesiae claudiopolitanae et reliquorum recte docentium in ecclesiis Transylvanicis.* Kolozsvár, 1559; RMNy No. 153; Balázs, *Ungarländische*, 167–169.

64 Balázs, *Ungarländische*, 21.

65 Az vrnac vaczoraiaor valo közenséges keresztyéni vallás, melyet a keresztyéni tanító mind egész Magyar Országból s mind Erdélből a vásárhelyi szent sinatba töttéc es kiattác a Christus Iesus szentegyházának építésere, MDLIX esztendőbe Mind szent napian. Kolozsvár, 1559, [8] fol. 8°.

The German translation of the *Confession* was published in 1563 in Heidelberg.⁶⁶ Compared to the original Hungarian version, it contains shorter supplements with the aim of clarifying the theological message of the work in accordance with the Calvinist view of the world. Dávid and Heltai can be considered as possible translators, mainly because of their knowledge of languages. The translation endeavours to see that the theology presented in the *Confession of Marosvásárhely* follow the path set in the *Consensus Tigurinus*. A couple of years later, this ecumenism also bore fruit in Debrecen, when the synod of February 1567 adopted the *Heidelberg Catechism* and the *Second Helvetic Confession* as the creed of the administrative division of the Transtibiscan region.⁶⁷

The Hungarian creed of the Lord's Supper seeks to strike a balance between Bullinger and Calvin in the spirit of the *Consensus Tigurinus*, but does so without adopting its characteristic formulae.⁶⁸ This concept is the same as that expressed in more pronounced fashion in later Hungarian Calvinist creeds in the period from the publication of *Confessio catholica* in 1562 to the confirmation of faith given at the synod of Csenger in 1570.⁶⁹ Yet the doctrine of the Lord's Supper of Marosvásárhely is not a mere compilation of various Calvinist and Bullingerian ideas; rather, it is the result of long years of theological work borne from religious disputes. Its authors came from the school of Melancthon, and received constructive ideas from the line of Bucer. Bullinger's Christology had a major impact on them, and, in the end,

RMNy No. 155; Balázs, *Ungarländische*, 22–23, 289–290. Edition: Csepregi, *A reformáció nyelve*, 425–430.

66 RMK III. 507; VD 16 B 2207; Balázs, *Ungarländische*, 23, 290. Edition: *BSRefK* II/1. 109–115: No. 52.

67 *Inter reliquas vero confessiones recepimus et subscripsimus Helveticae confessioni anno D. 1566 editae, cui et ecclesiae Genevensis ministri subscripserunt. Et quicumque confessionem nostram in synodis confirmatam et hanc confessionem Helveticam Tiguri editam aut articulos hos ex verbo Dei temere reiecerit, solverit et contrarium docuerit, iurisdictione ecclesiastica puniendum statuimus. Finis. 22. Augusti an. D. 1567.* (Articuli maiores, RMNy No. 226, fol. H4v, similar phrasing at the end of dedication, unnumbered pages.) Cf. Tamás Juhász, 'Mirabilis est cursus verbi Dei! Die Entwicklung des Helvetischen Bekenntnisses in Ungarn und Siebenbürgen', in Márta Fata and Anton Schindling (eds.), *Calvin und Reformiertentum in Ungarn und Siebenbürgen: Helvetisches Bekenntnis, Ethnie und Politik vom 16. Jahrhundert bis 1918.* (Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte, 155.) Münster, 2010, 63–78.

68 See, e.g., article [3] in Csepregi, *A reformáció nyelve*, 427; in German: *BSRefK* II/1. 111. In this sentence, the word "channel" is revealing, because it is a characteristic metaphor for Calvin. On the other hand, the fact that the text of Marosvásárhely interprets John chapter 6 as the verses of the Bible that were the basis of the Lord's Supper is reminiscent of the spiritualizing theology of Zurich. Article [5] of the German translation, with a precision so characteristic of Calvin, also notes that Christ communicates to us not only his assets but also himself.

69 *BSRefK* II/2. 55–62; III/1. 38–41; Peter F. Barton and László Makkai (eds.), *Ostmitteleuropas Bekenntnisschriften der evangelischen Kirchen A. und H. B. des Reformationszeitalters. Vol. III/1: 1564–1576.* Budapest, 1987, 154–158, 266–267; cf. Bucsay, 'Die Lehre', 277–281; Bernhard, *Konsolidierung*, 414–451.

by reading the works of Calvin, they arrived at the stable system that would consistently be followed by Melius.⁷⁰

Due to its ethnic character, the specialist literature of the 1930s and 1940s frequently referred to this type of theology as 'authigenic'. One can indeed recognize the continuity of this approach over several decades, together with its other particular and original features. But it is true that Hungarian reformers had read European theological texts and had intensive relations with their German and Swiss masters, so they were able openly to assess the different influences coming from various parts of the world.⁷¹ The historical significance of the *Confession of Marosvásárhely* is that it integrated various thoughts from the Helvetic movement into one comprehensive system, and that it gathered and linked the Hungarian representatives of these thoughts.

A veritable competition for international recognition and support emerged between the various Protestant confessions in Transylvania. Although, thanks to the work of Péter Petrovics, some parliamentary decisions were adopted that made room for Reformed communities,⁷² apart from Catholicism, it was only the Lutheran confession that was recognized over an extended period of time.⁷³ In their publications, Lutherans consciously propagated the fact that they enjoyed the support of the major spiritual and political centres in Germany.⁷⁴ At the same time, representatives of the Helvetic movement made similar efforts to establish their international network of contacts. The most important record of these efforts is the German translation of the Hungarian creed entitled *Az Úrnak vacsorájáról való közösleges keresztyéni vallás* (A Common Christian Confession Concerning the Lord's Supper), published in Heidelberg.

Thus both parties wished to use references to foreign authorities to decide the struggle, one in which Dávid aimed to establish a Protestant church that could unite most of the new country's population. This, however, would have meant maintaining a religious community together with those living under Habsburg rule, as similar dogmatic unrest prevailed all over Eastern Hungary,

70 Juhász, 'Von Luther', 329–331; Volker Leppin, 'Die Formierung des siebenbürgischen Lutherums zwischen Wittenberg, Zürich und Genf', in Márta Fata and Anton Schindling (eds.), *Evangelisch-Lutherischen in Ungarn und Siebenbürgen: Augsburgisches Bekenntnis, Bildung, Sprache und Nation vom 16. Jahrhundert bis 1918*. (Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte, 167). Münster, 2017, 33–56.

71 István Schlégl, 'Die Beziehungen Heinrich Bullingers zu Ungarn', *Zwingliana* 12 (1966) 330–377; Barna Nagy, 'Quellenforschung zur ungarischen Reformationsliteratur unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Beziehungen zu Bullinger', *Zwingliana* 12 (1965) 191–206; Idem, 'Bullingers Bedeutung für das östliche Europa: Ein Forschungsbericht', in Ernst Kähler (ed.), *Reformation 1517–1967: Wittenberger Vorträge*. Berlin, 1968, 84–119; Endre Zsindely, 'Bullinger und Ungarn', in *Heinrich Bullinger 1504–1575: Gesammelte Aufsätze zum 400. Todestag*. Vol. 2. (Zürcher Beiträge zur Reformationsgeschichte, 8.) Zürich, 1975, 361–382; Erich Bryner, 'Die Ausstrahlungen Bullingers auf die Reformation in Ungarn und Polen', *Zwingliana* 31 (2004) 179–197.

72 EOE II. 78; EKO 24. 52.

73 EOE II. 93, 98, 218, 223–224; EKO 24. 69, 74, 76.

74 *Approbatio refomationis ecclesiae Coronensis ac totius Barczensis prouinciae*. Coronae, 1563. RMNy No. 190; Balázs, *Ungarländische*, 23.

and Melius' bishopric in Debrecen also encompassed churches that politically belonged to Habsburg Hungary. In these renewed disputes, however, Dávid had to realize that the Helvetic doctrine of the Lord's Supper could not win over the majority of Saxon congregations, so the much-desired unity could not be achieved, not even within the territory of the Principality of Transylvania.

Helvetic theologists tried to recruit supporters to their faith through intensive missionary work. For a long time, they worked against princely power, as John Sigismund remained Catholic until 1563. In addition, of all Protestant confessions, it was only the Lutheran one that he considered acceptable. This situation changed radically around 1563, when the gradual increase in the number of followers of the Helvetic branch reached a point at which a resolution to their situation could no longer be avoided. A key role in this regard was played by Giorgio Biandrata, who arrived in Transylvania and became court doctor and councillor to the prince. During the years prior to his arrival, Biandrata also exercised a decisive influence on the development of Protestantism in Poland. It appears that Biandrata and Dávid can be regarded as the main driving force of events. It was they who persuaded the prince in early 1564 to organize a national theological debate, and who then became the main figures of the meeting in Enyed (Aiud) in April. It was again Biandrata who, prior to the synod, announced that the prince had stripped Lutheran Dionysius Alesius of his title as bishop of the Hungarian churches; subsequently Ferenc Dávid was elected, at Biandrata's proposition, to this very same position for the second time. The prince's endorsement letter, in which he recommended Dávid for the post, was read out. Dávid then read out another letter from the prince, in which the latter named Biandrata as moderator of the gathering and also formulated the main points for discussion.⁷⁵ The prince's proposition makes it clear that those who prepared the synod were aware that it would be impossible to reach an agreement. Indeed, at the synod of Enyed in 1564 and subsequently at the diet of Torda, there were officially declared to be two legally recognized confessions in Transylvania: the Lutheran, also called the church of Szeben (Sibiu), and the Calvinist, also known as the church of Kolozsvár.⁷⁶

The development of the confessions in Transylvania did not stop here, however. As the result of the religious policy of John Sigismund, the

75 *Modus concordiae* (1564), adopted at the Synod of Enyed, which contains lengthy quotations from Calvin: Balázs, *Ungarländische*, 271–273. Published by Teutsch, *Urkundenbuch*, 78–101; Barton and Makkai (eds.), *Ostmitteleuropas Bekenntnisschriften*, 25–34.

76 *EOE* II. 231–232; *EKO* 24. 78–79; cf. Juhász, 'Von Luther', 332–333; Ludwig Binder, *Grundlagen und Formen der Toleranz in Siebenbürgen bis zur Mitte des 17. Jahrhunderts*. (Siebenbürgisches Archiv, 3/11.) Köln, Wien, 1976, 57–88; Krista Zach, 'Politische Ursachen und Motive der Konfessionalisierung in Siebenbürgen', in Volker Leppin and Ulrich A. Wien (eds.), *Konfessionsbildung und Konfessionskultur in Siebenbürgen in der Frühen Neuzeit*. (Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des östlichen Europa, 66.) Stuttgart, 2005, 57–70; Balázs, *Ungarländische*, 23–24; Mihály Balázs, 'Tolerant Country – Misunderstood Laws: Interpreting Sixteenth-Century Transylvanian Legislation Concerning Religion', *The Hungarian Historical Review* 2:1 (2013) 85–108.

Antitrinitarian (Unitarian) line of Protestantism was, uniquely in Europe, also able to gain ground here. It became legally recognized in 1568, paving the way for it to become a nationwide church.

Pál Ács*

HUNGARIAN VERNACULAR LITERATURE IN THE COUNTRY OF THE SZAPOLYAIS

“The changes in political and religious conditions, as well as the settlement of the Turks in the country and the partition thereof after the disaster of Mohács were all liable to become sources of national catastrophe and of general decline. And is this what really happened? No! Instead of a decline, a major patriotic upsurge swept across our country! Hungarian national language and literature began to flourish and gain ground everywhere” – so wrote Sándor Takáts, a leading expert on Ottoman Hungary, over a hundred years ago.¹ Even 16th-century humanists – while writing solely in Latin – accused the invading Ottomans of destroying Hungarian language and culture, which means that even they felt the risk and sought somehow to avert it. In his Latin poem of 1522, Márton Nagyszombati condemns the Ottomans for eradicating both old customs and the Hungarians’ “poor mother tongue”.²

On the other hand, 16th- and 17th-century Hungarian writers (Miklós Istvánffy and Péter Pázmány, for example)³ tried to establish some kind of connection between the disaster of Mohács and the rapid spread of Reformation ideas. 16th-century Protestants believed that the Ottoman conquest was the result of an increase in sins and ‘idolatry’ (i.e. Catholicism), whereas Catholics

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1 Sándor Takáts, ‘Batthyány Ferencné Bánffy Kata’, in Idem, *Régi magyar asszonyok*. Budapest, 1914, 30.

2 *Pannonicos tandem ritus patriamque loquelam / Extinguat flammis perfidus ille vagis* (“In the end, old customs and the poor mother tongue / are eradicated – by the faithless dog – and covered with flames and ember”). Márton Nagyszombati, ‘Ad Regni Hungariae proceres’, translated by Árpád Majtényi in Pál Ács, József Jankovics and Péter Kőszeghy (eds.), *Régi magyar irodalmi szöveggyűjtemény. Vol. I: Humanizmus*. Budapest, 1998, 522–523.

3 Pál Ács, ‘Katolikus irodalom és kultúra Magyarországon a reformáció századában’, in Idem, *„Az idő ósága”. Történetiség és történetiszemlélet a régi magyar irodalomban*. Budapest, 2001, 226.

believed apostasy (i.e. Protestantism) to be the real cause.⁴ It has always been common knowledge that the Reformation urged preaching to be in the language of the people and that it deliberately fostered and nurtured national languages. It is thus no mere coincidence that studies in the field of literary history – a field newly established in the 19th century – often associated religious reforms and the disintegration of the medieval state with the spectacular development of the Hungarian language and the birth of vernacular literature.⁵ Modern cultural history does not, of course, link these political and social processes directly with each other. Yet there is no denying that the advancement of the Ottomans, the spread of Reformation ideas and the strengthening use of the mother tongue took place simultaneously. The end of the Jagiellonian period and the beginning of the Szapolyai period can thus rightly be regarded as a watershed both in political and literary history.

A question that has not yet been given due attention is how the cultural phenomenon of the “discovery of the Hungarian language”⁶ ties in with the reign of King John I (1526–1540) and that of Prince John Sigismund (1540–1571). It is hard to define a clear link between the Szapolyai court and Hungarian-language culture. It would be a mistake to believe that Reformation ideas spread more freely during the reign of King John I than during that of King Ferdinand I of Habsburg (1526–1564), or that Hungarian-language culture received stronger support in the eastern part of the country than in that ruled by the Habsburgs. It would also be a serious error to project back in time the special characteristics of later Hungarian literature, those taking shape during the 17th century, to the era of the Szapolyais. Nevertheless, in parallel with the political changes, the partition of the country brought about certain religious, literary and cultural movements that were inseparable from the Szapolyais. Thus there are phenomena in the literature of the era that are strongly and characteristically bound to the eastern part of the country, which was ruled by the Szapolyais, and which would gradually become the Principality of Transylvania. It is, of course, difficult to specify these features. We cannot speak of a specific literary language, style or genre of the Szapolyai era. It is not so much about formal characteristics, but rather ones of content and mindset. During the more than half-century of the Szapolyai era, a significant number of major literary works were written in Hungarian, so an exhaustive presentation of these would be beyond the scope of the present summary. Therefore, only works directly linked to the Szapolyais will be dealt with, grouped around specific topics, such as the Szapolyais’ ‘Hungarian character’, ‘Polish character’, ‘heresy’ or ‘Turcophilia’,

4 Pál Ács, ‘Historical Scepticism and Piety – The Revision of Protestant Ideas on History in the Sermons of the Hungarian Jesuit Péter Pázmány’, in Idem, *Reformations in Hungary in the Age of the Ottoman Conquest*. (Refo500 Academic Studies, 52.) Göttingen, 2019, 255.

5 This was in fact the fundamental idea in János Horváth’s seminal monograph on the Reformation: János Horváth, *A reformáció jegyében. A Mohács utáni félszázad irodalomtörténete*. Budapest, 1957.²

6 József Thuróczi-Trostler, ‘A magyar nyelv felfedezése’, in Idem, *Magyar irodalom – világirodalom. Tanulmányok. Vol. I.* Budapest, 1961, 19–39.

which (also) regularly crop up in the vernacular literature, whether as praise or censure.

The primary and perhaps most complex issue relates to the so-called 'Hungarian character' or 'national character' of the Szapolyais, and, in close relation to this, their 'anti-Habsburg character'. The political background to this issue dates back to the Jagiellonian period. A long-standing trope in Hungarian historiography is that at the diet of 1505, the 'party of the lesser nobility', led by István Werbőczy, came out in favour of the idea of a 'national kingdom', and nominated the 'Hungarian-born' Transylvanian voivode John Szapolyai, as opposed to foreign pretenders, for the Hungarian throne. The situation was formulated by the Hungarian historian Péter Kulcsár as follows: "the immorality of aristocratic traitors in the pay of foreigners" came up against the "nationwide bleat of the lesser nobility as fuelled by Scythian consciousness".⁷ Until his death in 1504, John Corvinus, an illegitimate son of King Matthias Corvinus, had been favoured by the gentry. Thus the Szapolyais acted as the successors and spiritual heirs of the 'national kingdom' of the Hunyadi family. The Szapolyai family's cult of the Hunyadis was reinforced by the close ties that both families had to Transylvania: King Matthias was born in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), while John Szapolyai had, prior to his coronation, been voivode of Transylvania. The Szapolyais' cult of the Hunyadi family is most clearly manifest in the funerary monument in Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia), erected by King John I in 1533 to honour the memory of John Hunyadi.⁸ This cult of the Hunyadis even withstood the malicious gossip and slander spread by historiographer Ferenc Forgách, which claimed that King Matthias had been killed by King John's father, István Szapolyai.⁹

Related to this 'patriotic' spirit is the poem written in 1567–1568 by minstrel Ambrus Görcsöni, entitled *Az felséges Mátyás királynak ... viselt dolgairól* (On the Past Deeds ... of his Majesty King Matthias).¹⁰ This rhyming chronicle relies on the chronicle written by Johannes de Thurocz, on Bonfini, and on other oral sources, and recounts the struggles between King Matthias and 'Emperor Friderik' for power and for the crown, and in such a manner that the Szapolyais could easily identify in them their own struggles with the Habsburgs.¹¹ Görcsöni's chronicle about King Matthias was subsequently adapted and finished by the outstanding Transylvanian poet Miklós Bogáti Fazakas, who also unequivocally

7 Péter Kulcsár, *A Jagelló-kor*. Budapest, 1981, 108.

8 Ágnes Ritoókné Szalay, 'Hunyadi János gyulafehérvári síremlékének domborművei', in Árpád Mikó and Katalin Sinkó (eds.), *Történelem-kép. Szemelvények múlt és művészet kapcsolatából Magyarországon*. Exhibition at the Hungarian National Gallery, 17 March – 24 September 2000. Budapest, 2000, IV-16.

9 Cf. Antal Pirnát, 'Az ars historica és Forgách Ferenc', in Idem, *Kiadatlan tanulmányok*. Ed. by Pál Ács. Budapest, 2019, 128.

10 Béla Varjas et al. (eds.), *Régi Magyar Költők Tára. XVI. századbeli magyar költők művei. Kilencedik kötet (1567–1577)*. Budapest, 1990 (hereinafter RMKT XVI/9): Ambrus Görcsöni's historical song (completed by Miklós Bogáti Fazakas), edited by Géza [Szentmártoni] Szabó, 219–359, 556–570.

11 *Ibid.*, 277–281.

interpreted it to be an appraisal of the Szapolyais: “Many words, I know, exist to describe King John, / ‘traitor’ is used by the German party, / and is surely praised by the writer of this / who to the Battle of Mohács accompanied the king).”¹² This quotation is a clear reference to István Brodarics.¹³

The greatness of the Szapolyais is also praised, albeit differently, by the exceptionally productive Protestant poet from Transylvania, András Valkai. He dedicated his work *Genealogia historica regum Hungariae ... azaz az magyar királyoknak eredetéről és nemzetségekről való szép históriája* (The Beautiful History of the Origin of the Kings of Hungary and the Kindreds), written in 1567, to the elected King John II, i.e. John Sigismund.¹⁴ Valkai belonged to the chancery of the prince’s tutor, Mihály Csáky,¹⁵ and the chancery attracted the most talented intellectuals of the age. An expert in genealogical literature, Valkai traces John Sigismund back to the House of Árpád, and outlines his lineage all the way back to Prince Taksony.¹⁶ The author recounts how Árpadian blood entered the veins of John Sigismund by way of his mother, Isabella Jagiellon, and finishes his long poem with an eloquent appraisal of the elected king. The poem cannot be evaluated as a historical work, of course: in one of his later manuscripts, simply by making minor insertions in the family tree drawn up for John Sigismund,¹⁷ Valkai linked the Báthory family to the Árpáds. Also in 1567, Valkai wrote his epic song *Az nagyságos Bánk bánnak históriája* (The History of His Lordship Bánk Bán), made relevant by the strong pro-Szapolyai and anti-German feelings prevailing in the country.¹⁸ It is no coincidence that it soon became so popular that five successive editions were published at the time. Thus, John Sigismund made many efforts – as reflected in Hungarian vernacular literature – to show, as was recently pointed out by Mihály Balázs, that “his dynasty and thus the eastern part of the country is the legal heir and successor of the Kingdom of Hungary”.¹⁹

Another historical song (*históriás ének*) recounting the life of John Sigismund (*Vita Joannis secundi, electi Hungariae regis*, 1571)²⁰ was written in a similar spirit of praise by Demeter Csanádi, secretary to the prince, and another

12 *Sok szó vagyon, tudom, János királyra, / Árulónak az német párt mondja, / Dicsíri bizonnyal az ki ezt írta, / Ki királlyal ott volt mohácsi csatába.* *Ibid.*, 356.

13 On István Brodarics, see the essay by Péter Kasza in this volume.

14 *RMKT* XVI/9. 22–116. Valkai’s poems, edited by Béla Varjas.

15 Ildikó Horn, *A hatalom pillérei. A politikai elit az Erdélyi Fejedelemség megszilárdulásának korszakában (1556–1588)*. MTA Doctoral Dissertation. Budapest, 2012, *passim*.

16 Szymon Brzeziński, ‘Az utolsó király. János Zsigmond alakja az 1570-es évek erdélyi irodalmában’, in *Idem, Tanulmányok a 16–17. századi lengyel–erdélyi–magyar kapcsolattörténetéről*. Budapest, 2014, 83–95.

17 Árpád Mikó, ‘Valkai András (1540–1586) Báthory-genealógiája. Báthory István király mint az Árpádok leszármazottja’, *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 117 (2013) 585.

18 *RMKT* XVI/9. 11–21.

19 Mihály Balázs, ‘Megjegyzések János Zsigmond valláspolitikájáról’, in *Idem, Hitújítás és egyházalapítás között. Tanulmányok az erdélyi unitarizmus 16–17. századi történetéről*. Kolozsvár, 2016, 59.

20 Lajos Dézsi (ed.), *Régi Magyar Költők tára. XVI. századbeli magyar költők művei. Hetedik kötet (1566–1577)*. Budapest, 1930 (hereinafter *RMKT* XVI/7), 213–219, 471–473.

member of the chancery led by Mihály Csáky.²¹ The biography of the ruler was written in ‘*schitico sermone*’, i.e. ‘Schythian’, that is Hungarian, which was highly characteristic of the intellectual environment of the Szapolyai party, full as it was with Schythian consciousness. The work is a description of an outstanding personality forced to endure many calamities, and revolves around the theme of the capricious nature of fate. Since the poem contains a specific reference to its being written at the time of the prince’s death, it can be surmised that it was part of the funeral ritual and representation. This assumption is also evidenced by the many formulas resembling a valediction. Csanádi paints a picture of the young Szapolyai as a man whose fate was sealed as early as in his mother’s womb, where indeed he was doomed to hardships and privations, and as a man against whom the author has nothing to say: “I am surprised by those who can speak ill of him, / and cannot see what good this could bring.”²²

Demeter Csanádi’s biography of John Sigismund is, in fact, a continuation and complementation of the historical song *Az János király fiáról szerzett szép krónika* (A Beautiful Chronicle about King John’s Son), written earlier, in the early 1550s, by the most influential writer of historical songs of the age, Sebestyén Tinódi.²³ This work follows the life of John Szapolyai’s son, John Sigismund, until his exile in Poland (1551). Even this rhyming chronicle links the fate of the Szapolyai boy to the capriciousness of fate, as Tinódi starts his song: “I call to mind the turn of the tides, / citing King John’s son’s, the prince’s life, / The thought of his fate makes my heart cry.”²⁴ The poem was never published in print; at least it is known today only from a manuscript version. According to the text itself, this short chronicle is but a summary of the great historical work *Erdéli história* (A Story of Transylvania), which is referred to as a “respectable chronicle”. Yet the *Erdéli história*²⁵ is not really about John Sigismund, nor is it written about his father, King John. The real protagonist of the work is one of the most controversial figures of the Szapolyai era, Friar George (Martinuzzi).

This fact in itself speaks volumes about Tinódi’s aim of illustrating a kind of public mood and of characterizing the period in question as an era of instability, uncertainty, and erratic changes to party loyalties. Tinódi’s *Erdéli história* presents us with a contradictory picture. On the one hand, it has a certain sympathy for the idea of the unification of the country, which was also the main aim of Friar George.²⁶ On the other hand, like many of his contemporaries, he essentially

21 Brzeziński, ‘Az utolsó király’, 95–105.

22 *Én csudálom, ki gonoszt mondhat ú felőle, / Nem látom, semmi haszna, hogy jüne belőle. RMKT XVI/7. 214.*

23 Áron Szilády (ed.), *Régi Magyar Költők Tára. XVI. századbeli magyar költők művei. Második kötet. 1540–1555. Tinódi Sebestyén összes művei.* Budapest, 1881 (hereinafter RMKT XVI/2), 365–370.

24 *Szerencsének forgásáról nektők emléközöm, / jó János király fiát herczegöt beszéllöm, / Szerencsáját ha gondolom, szivemben kesergöm. Ibid., 365.*

25 *Ibid.*, 7–60. Modern edition in Tinódi Sebestyén, *Krónika*. Edited by István Sugár, introduction by Ferenc Szakály. Budapest, 1984, 93–158.

26 Teréz Oborni, ‘„Georgius Monachus contra Reginam” – Queen Isabella and Her Reign over the Eastern Kingdom of Hungary (1541–1551)’, in Ágnes Máté and Teréz Oborni (eds.), *Isabella*

rejects the impenetrably vacillating, even Machiavellian political manoeuvres of the bishop of Várad (Nagyvárad/Oradea), acting in the service of the king:²⁷ “From a great wise man a fool was born, / to take along both princes / Believing his meanderings would not let either of them / know who was behind their horrible death.”²⁸ Yet, as we can see, Tinódi does not share the opinion of those historiographers, hostile to Friar George, who depicted him as an uneducated and impolite person with hairy ears who used bad language and may not even have known how to write. Instead, Tinódi speaks of the friar as a “man of great wit”. Tinódi even mentions that the bishop and treasurer of Várad maintained good relations with humanists of the era, and that he liked entertainment (he sometimes even joined Queen Isabella and her ladies in waiting for a dance), patronized the arts, and was widely known across the country for his construction projects: “his court was more beautiful than the king’s”,²⁹ he says, and also writes that he had the castle of Szamosújvár (Gherla) be “built by an Italian, / to later be able to oversee entire Transylvania”.³⁰ All in all, although Tinódi held a balanced political position during the period between the two kings, and seemingly came to favour King Ferdinand later in his career, deep in his heart – as pointed out by Béla Varjas in his essay on Tinódi’s political persuasion – he had always been a strongly-committed supporter of Szapolyai’s kingdom.³¹

An infamous daredevil soldier of the Szapolyai era, and an even more shining example of a ‘treacherous’ and ‘fickle’ nature than Friar George himself, was Menyhárt Balassa. The political role and importance of this magnate who skilfully beat his way windward in the times of the ever-changing wars of tripartite Hungary resulted from the geopolitical situation of his estates and social status. The areas around Szatmár (Satu Mare), where Menyhárt Balassa and his family felt most at home and where they, to use a popular expression of the time, ‘wondered freely’, that is areas they tyrannized and raided, could never be permanently annexed either by the Habsburg-ruled Kingdom of Hungary or by Transylvania as led by the Szapolyais. So when Menyhárt Balassa committed his last grand act of ‘treason’ and once again switched sides and defected from John Sigismund to the Habsburgs, he brought an area equal in size to an entire country to the Kingdom of Hungary.³² The historical situation that arose in 1562 is in fact

Jagiellon, Queen of Hungary (1539–1559). (Mohács 1526–2026: Reconstruction and Remembrance). Budapest, 2020, 209–233.

27 Tinódi, *Krónika*, see the introduction by Ferenc Szakály, 61.

28 Nagy eszes emberből mely bolond támadá, / Mindkét fejedelmet mely igen hordozá, / Véli csélsapását hogy egyik sem tudná, / Ki miatt lón néki szörnyű halála. *RMKT XVI/2*. 50.

29 királyénál szebb lón az ő udvara. This fragment exists only in the second edition of the *Erdélyi krónika*, published in 1574, in the *Cancionale* by Gáspár Heltai; see *RMKT XVI/2*. 386.

30 olással csináltatá, / hogy egész Erdélyt azután abból bírná. *Ibid*.

31 Béla Varjas, ‘A Cronica és Tinódi pártállása’, in Idem, *A magyar reneszánsz irodalom társadalmi gyökerei*. Budapest, 1982, 164–178.

32 Nándor Virovecz, ‘A kereszténység szolgálata vagy politikai árulás? Balassa Menyhárt 1562. évi pártváltása és az északkeleti várháborúk’, in Györgyi Bujdosné-Pap, Ingrid Fejér and Ágota H. Szilasi (eds.), *Mozgó frontvonalak. Háború és diplomácia a várháborúk időszakában 1552–1568*. (Studia Agriensia, 35.) Eger, 2017, 255–283.

the main subject of one of the most interesting literary works of the period, the *Balassa Comedy*,³³ written by an unknown author, in which Balassa is presented as a gallows bird. According to the *Comedy*, Balassa was a treasonous adventurer who jeopardized the fate of the entire country. Despite the statement formulated in the title (“by which [Balassa] has broken away from the second elected King John”), the piece is not about Balassa’s last great act of ‘treason’, but rather about subsequent fictitious and real events. Still, the background of the story is precisely the treason described earlier. Already in the opening scene, Balassa exclaims that “I would easily betray the king, as I have done so many times before, and as I do now for the last time, the Voivode of Transylvania”, that is, John Sigismund.³⁴ Nándor Virovecz has recently defined the circle of intellectuals of the chancery that can be linked to the court of the Habsburgs, and among which the author of this literary work was to be found.³⁵ The author was, to say the least, cunning enough to make sure the work would be published in adversarial Transylvania, and indeed this is what happened. Like some compromising documents that are in our times ‘blown’ into editorials ‘by the wind’, so this manuscript ‘came’ into the hands of the Antitrinitarian printer, Pál Karádi. The writer was right to believe that the pamphlet-like work would soon become a success in Transylvania, as publishing it would deal a severe blow to the traitor Menyhárt Balassa.³⁶

Sebestyén Tinódi – who did not of course live to witness the last great treason of Menyhárt Balassa – acknowledged Balassa as a brave soldier in several of his works. Yet let us not forget that the songwriter was first and foremost the voice and representative of soldiers fighting in border castles.³⁷ And the always truthful chronicler did indeed alter the validated facts of minor yet important details to preserve the good military reputation of a magnate who later betrayed the ‘national king’ several times, featuring him as a national hero even in situations in which he had not in fact taken part.³⁸ Tinódi’s obvious bias in favour of Menyhárt Balassa could have stemmed from the fact that Balassa remained a member of the Szapolyai party in the narrow sense even when Friar George, royal treasurer and bishop of Várad, entered into a war against Isabella Jagiellon, widow of King John and mother of John Sigismund. When Isabella and her son had to flee to Poland, it was Balassa who, as her loyal supporter, accompanied Isabella all the way to the border. Ferenc Szakály is right to conclude that Tinódi “interestingly refuses to realise that the unification

33 Critical edition: Tibor Kardos and Tekla Dömötör (eds.), *Régi magyar drámai emlékek. Vol. I.* Budapest, 1960 (hereinafter *RMDE I.*), 615–644.

34 *könnyen elárulnám az királt, mint az előbb nagy sokszor, és im utolszor az erdéli Vajdát. Ibid.*, 617.

35 Nándor Virovecz, ‘Egy hírhedt főúri imázs, és ami mögötte van. A Komédia Balassi Menyhárt árultatásáról... a történeti források fényében’, *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 120 (2016) 373–401.

36 Ágnes Ritoókné Szalay, ‘A Balassi Comoedia és Karádi Pál’, *Keresztény Magvető* 86 (1980) 39–44; Mihály Balázs, ‘Megjegyzések a Komédia Balassi Menyhárt árultatásáról értelmezéséhez’, in Idem, *Felekezeti és fikció – Tanulmányok 16–17. századi irodalmunkról*. Budapest, 2006, 159–174.

37 Tinódi, *Krónika*; see the introduction by Ferenc Szakály, *passim*.

38 Nándor Virovecz, ‘Tinódi történeti hitelességének kérdéséhez: kortárs beszámoló a „szalkai viadalról”’, *Történelmi Szemle* 62:2 (2020) 223–244.

of the country could only be achieved by the removal of queen consort Isabella, who had always been portrayed with deep sympathy, but who in reality was selfish and capricious. The fact that the friar, elevated to his position by King John, is willing to give a helping hand in ‘dispossessing’ the family of his former master, deeply hurts Tinódi’s moral senses.”³⁹

Thus, for writers committed to the idea of a ‘national kingdom’, the ‘Polish character’ of the Szapolyais did not seem foreign: they regarded the Jagiellonian dynasty, bound inextricably to the Szapolyai family,⁴⁰ as much more ‘Hungarian’ than the Habsburgs. This view is plausibly expressed in a letter written in 1605 by Stephen Bocskai, prince of Transylvania, to György Thurzó, later palatine of Hungary. In it, Bocskai complains about the atrocities of 1602 committed by the soldiers of Habsburg mercenary leader Giorgio Basta, including the case in which “the graves of honourable persons buried in the holy church of Gyulafehérvár were smashed and the body parts and bones of John Hunyadi, Ivacsó, King John’s son and mother scattered” (as mentioned earlier, John Hunyadi’s funerary monument had been erected by John Szapolyai.).⁴¹ In Bocskai’s letter (formulated by his secretary, the poet János Rimay) the Hunyadi, Szapolyai and Jagiellonian families together constitute the Transylvanian tradition of being ‘national in character’; it was in defence of that character that even Bocskai himself took up arms against the Habsburgs. An especially interesting feature of the letter is that John Sigismund is called by his Polish nickname, ‘Ivacsó’ (Ivačko). These deeply-rooted political and national attitudes and mindsets allowed many to forget the unlimited and unethical lust for power of the Jagiellons, equal to that of the Habsburgs. Even one of John Sigismund’s confidants, Demeter Csanádi, mentions in one of his poems the utmost brutality of Isabella who, upon returning from Poland, had the lords of Transylvania, namely Ferenc Bebek and his companions, killed by her Polish courtiers for being dissatisfied with her rule: [John Sigismund] “with his mother he from Poland came, / and for three more years there lived the dame / and within a year had three lords killed, / the woman I can’t hail for this deed.”⁴² What is more, the horrible murder was organized by the aforementioned Menyhárt Balassa, Isabella’s confidant and subsequent traitor to her son.⁴³

The family relations of the Szapolyais and Jagiellonians were well understood and respected by contemporaries. The marriage of King John and Isabella Jagiellon had raised great expectations, especially regarding the child and heir to be born from their wedlock. The Hungarian poetic work entitled *Historia Regis*

39 Tinódi, *Krónika*; see the introduction by Ferenc Szakály, 61.

40 Kulcsár, *A Jagelló-kor*, passim.

41 István Bocskai, *Levelek*. Ed. by Kálmán Benda. Budapest, Bukarest, 1992, 165; cf. András Kovács, ‘A gyulafehérvári székesegyház átváltozásai (1565–1715)’, in Dávid Diósi and József Marton (eds.), *Catholice reformare. A katolikus egyház a fejedelemség korában*. Budapest, Kolozsvár, 2018, 16.

42 *Lengyelországból azért anyjával békjőve, / Anyja három esztendő azután élhete / Esztendő előtt három urat megölete, / Kit én nem dicsírhetek, asszony hogy mívelé*. RMKT XVI/7. 216.

43 Endre Veress, *Izabella királyné 1519–1559*. (Magyar Történeti Életrajzok) Budapest, 1901, 458–464; see also Horn, *A hatalom pillérei*, passim.

Volter, which elaborates on the romance of *Volter and Griselda*, was written by Pál Istvánffy, father of the humanist historiographer Miklós Istvánffy (1538–1615), on the occasion of the wedding party in 1539.⁴⁴ This is the first known work in this genre written in Hungarian. *Volter and Griselda* points far beyond itself. It is an example of the process, in many ways still mysterious, which made the Hungarian language suitable for creating literary works of a European standard. It soon became very popular, and, although it was not published in print until 1574, it spread rapidly in manuscript form. The poem was thus a princely wedding gift,⁴⁵ yet it was not merely a *széphistória* (romance in verse) but also a song celebrating the marriage (*epithalamium*). It is likely that at the wedding party the author himself performed it to the accompaniment of a lute. The poem is of very high quality, even surpassing the works written by Tinódi. The humanist Pál Istvánffy had in fact spent a long time in Italy and knew Tinódi well. He also had an evident influence on Tinódi's poetry.⁴⁶ The work is based on Petrarch's prose elaboration in Latin of Boccaccio's 100th novella (*Seniles* XVII 1–4); Istvánffy strictly follows the story in his source. In the original tale Volter is testing the fidelity of his wife Griselda, who is of low social status, and he takes this so much to the extreme that it feels like torture. Petrarch makes an elevated theological allegory out of the story, in which the husband symbolizes God, while the wife symbolizes the human spirit. It is actually God who puts man's faith to the test. Istvánffy, on the other hand, returns to Boccaccio's original (fundamentally feminist) literary intentions and condemns the "evil" Volter and glorifies the virtuous Griselda, which, in the context of the *epithalamium*, meant the appraisal of the Polish princess bride, Isabella Jagiellon.⁴⁷

Out of this Hungarian–Polish marriage a son was born, who rightly aroused high expectations. As Antal Pirnát explains: "John Sigismund's father was the lawfully elected and crowned king of Hungary, while his mother was a Polish princess. Thanks to his family ties with the Polish royal house, and despite all Habsburg political manoeuvres, he had always enjoyed a certain political respect in Christian Europe. King Sigismund Augustus of Poland was childless, and no one could foresee that the Transylvanian prince would pass away before his significantly older uncle, who was also in poor health. Thus, John Sigismund had always had Polish supporters who wished to see him elected king of Poland, should the last Jagiellon die."⁴⁸

The political adversaries of John Sigismund sought to blacken his reputation in Europe by claiming that in Transylvania the prince had tolerated and even

44 RMKT XVI/1. 27–52.

45 Ágnes Máté, 'A Literary Image of Renaissance Queenship: The Marriage of Isabella Jagiellon,' in Máté and Oborni (eds.) *Isabella Jagiellon*, 44–45.

46 Horváth, *A reformáció jegyében*, 101–102.

47 Pál Ács, 'Boccaccio Baranyában. Egy kivételes értelmiségi pálya a 16. század első felében: Istvánffy Pál,' in Pál Ács and Gergely Tóth (eds.), „A Magyar Történet folytatója”. *Tanulmányok Istvánffy Miklósról*. Budapest, 2018, 37–58.

48 Antal Pirnát, 'Báthory István valláspolitikája. Hozzászólás Ferencz József Dávid Ferenc-életrajzához,' in Idem, *Kiadatlan tanulmányok*, 181.

supported a religious confession that in other parts of Europe was regarded by both Catholics and Protestants as a dangerous heresy. From the mid-1560s John Sigismund did indeed support the free spread of the Reformation and also of radical reformed ideas.⁴⁹ This was a new development in the religious policy of the Szapolyais, however. It is clearly not the case that the Szapolyai family had already been committed to any form of Protestantism in general. In his exciting history of the Inquisition, *Háló* (The Net; Kolozsvár, 1570), dedicated to John Sigismund, Gáspár Heltai, the most influential author in Transylvania writing in Hungarian during the Szapolyai period (as well as being a translator of the Luther Bible⁵⁰ and a successful printer) gives an account of the theological debate in Segesvár (Sighişoara) in 1538, and provides a glimpse into the religious conditions of early Protestantism, of which we have only very poor information. As Heltai recounts: “and then the lightning of the Lord’s Word struck down far and near both in Hungary and in Transylvania” – i.e. Reformation ideas started to spread. So the prelates “hammered his majesty King John until he could do nothing else”⁵¹ but call István Szántai, a schoolmaster in Kassa (Košice), considered by Catholics their most dangerous opponent, to a debate. Even though, in his work, Heltai presents John Szapolyai as a secret supporter of Reformation ideas,⁵² it is revealed that King John, Friar George and Isabella all in fact rejected religious reforms.⁵³ Moreover, more recent studies have also shown that John Sigismund himself remained Catholic for a very long period of time.⁵⁴ It is well known that Mátyás Dévai, the first great disseminator of Reformation ideas who wrote his works in Hungarian, and who was often called the ‘Hungarian Luther’, was imprisoned in 1533 not only by King John, but also by Ferdinand.⁵⁵ Thus the Protestant Reformation unfolded in Transylvania rather late, in the second half of the 16th century, after Isabella and John Sigismund’s return from their exile in Poland, and did not spread at any pace before the death of Isabella in 1559, though this date does indeed mark the beginning of rapid change. There is evidence that the prince became a committed supporter of Reformation ideas in 1565. From 1566, Transylvanian religious laws condemned ‘idolatry’ and turned the country in

49 Balázs, ‘Megjegyzések János Zsigmond valláspolitikájáról’, 47.

50 One of the greatest Bible-publishing enterprises in Hungary during the Reformation era was the work published in seven volumes by the translation workshop led by Gáspár Heltai. The series of books contains almost the entire text of the Bible. The edition was supported by John Sigismund and other Transylvanian lords. Yet, the Scripture was intended to circulation not only in Transylvania, but also in Hungary – there were copies, from which the recommendation to the prince had been omitted. Ferenc Szakály, ‘A magyar nyelvű bibliafordítás terjedéséhez’, in Mihály Balázs et al. (eds.), *Művelődési törekvések a korai újkorban: Tanulmányok Késő Báltint tiszteletére*. Szeged, 1997, 545–554.

51 Gáspár Heltai, *Háló*. Ed. by Péter Kőszeghy and Zsuzsanna Tamás. Budapest, 2000, 31.

52 Balázs, ‘Megjegyzések János Zsigmond valláspolitikájáról’, 55.

53 Ács, ‘Katolikus irodalom’, 220–234.

54 An important role in this may have also been played by his tutor, Albertus Novicampianus (Wojciech Nowopolski): Horn, *A hatalom pillérei*, 44, 60.

55 Imre Révész Sr., *Dévay Bíró Mátyás első magyar reformátor életrajza és irodalmi művei*. Pest, 1863, 33–34.

a distinctly Protestant direction. The work entitled *Rövid hitvallás* (Short Creed),⁵⁶ published by Protestants in 1567, sings the praises of John Sigismund. There is no doubt that during the reign of John Sigismund, not irrespectively of the religious movements in Poland, the Antitrinitarian confession (one that rejects the doctrine of the Trinity, and which later came to be known as Unitarian) underwent unparalleled development, becoming an official church in 1568. The prince himself did not convert to Unitarianism until late in life, in 1569; it is still disputed when he accepted (and to what extent he shared) the views of his religious consultant, Italian doctor Giorgio Biandrata (1515–1588)⁵⁷, whom he had brought with him from Poland. It is certain, though, that in this period Transylvania did indeed become the last safe haven for international radical Protestants persecuted in Europe. It was also Biandrata who converted Ferenc Dávid,⁵⁸ Lutheran bishop of Kolozsvár, to the branch of Christianity that rejected the Holy Trinity. Biandrata introduced Ferenc Dávid to the writings of those Protestant heretics who doubted the traditional dogma of the Holy Trinity on a rational basis, emphasizing that there are no biblical grounds for this. In the 1560s Ferenc Dávid published numerous essays in Hungarian, of which here we only mention the works published in 1567, entitled *Rövid magyarázat* (Short Explanation)⁵⁹ and *Rövid útmutatás* (Short Guidance).⁶⁰ Theological disputes followed in rapid succession, resulting in valuable literary documents, the so-called polemic dramas. According to the Unitarian argumentative strategy employed by Ferenc Dávid from 1569, John Sigismund appeared to be committed to free religious development and tolerance. It is, to say the least, symbolic – at least from a Unitarian point of view – that at the dispute of Várad (1569), with regard to this important issue, he himself warned the Protestant preacher, shepherding God's sheep as a pope, "not to chase the ministers [i.e. pastors] for the sake of true faith, not to burn books, and not to order anyone to take his religion. This is the reason why, in our realm, as approved by a decree of the diet, we want to have peace."⁶¹ The extent to which John Sigismund's religious policy was in fact tolerant is strongly disputed among researchers today.⁶² Between 1566 and 1571 neither Catholics nor Orthodox Romanians could freely practice their religion in Transylvania. It is widely acknowledged, however, that under his reign, during which religious wars

56 Gedeon Borsa (ed.), *Régi Magyarországi Nyomtatványok. Vol. I: 1473–1600*. Budapest, 1971 (hereinafter *RMNY* I.) 228.

57 Mihály Balázs, 'Giorgio Biandrata (1516–1588) – A Physician between Politics and Theology in Early Modern East Central Europe', in Máté and Oborni (eds.), *Isabella Jagiellon*, 277–303.

58 Mihály Balázs, *Ferenc Dávid*. (Bibliotheca Dissidentium, ed. André Séguenny. Vol. 26; Ungarländische Antitrinitarier, ed. Mihály Balázs. Vol. 4.) Baden-Baden, Bouxwiller, 2008.

59 Ferenc Dávid, *Rövid magyarázat*. Gyulafehérvár, 1567. Facsimile edition, with notes, by Márton Pálfi. Kolozsvár, 1910; *RMNY* I. 232.

60 Ferenc Dávid, *Rövid útmutatás*. Gyulafehérvár, 1567; *RMNY* I. 233.

61 *RMDE* I. 686.

62 Mihály Balázs, '„A hit... hallásból leszön”'. Vallásszabadság és bevett vallások Erdélyben a 16. században', in Idem, *Felekezetiség és fikció. Tanulmányok 16–17. századi irodalmunkról*. Budapest, 2006, 11–36.

were being fought in other parts of Europe, Transylvania did to some degree become an island of religious peace.

This freedom came at a heavy price, however. The reign of King John I was secured by Ottoman weapons,⁶³ while the king's son took part in the Ottoman–Hungarian war on the sultan's side. Transylvania was thus well on track to become an Ottoman vassal state. So as to isolate him diplomatically from his potential allies, John Sigismund's pro-Habsburg Catholic adversaries sought to decry him by any means necessary, going so far as to claim that supporting Unitarianism was tantamount to converting to Islam. In this way they linked the political 'pro-Ottoman' attitude of the Szapolyais with the rejection of the Holy Trinity, which, in their interpretation, was the equal of Islam. There was much literary propaganda in which Catholics accused Protestants of their doctrines nearing those of Islam. We also know that Péter Melius and Péter Károlyi, eminent leaders of Calvinist opinion in the Szapolyai era, also criticized Ferenc Dávid for "the crime of being pro-Ottoman".⁶⁴ Farkas Pál Túri, a Calvinist writer, even wrote a satirical poem in a mixture of Hungarian and Latin about the 'Muslim faith' of Ferenc Dávid, nicknamed 'Hodja Ferenc'.⁶⁵

These accusations were of course unfounded: Unitarians were and remained Christians who believed in Jesus Christ. Moreover, the Ottomans themselves did not show any interest in establishing religious dialogues with Christians. Despite this, as a rare exception, mention can be made of an Ottoman poet, who also wrote in Hungarian, namely the dragoman Murad.⁶⁶ True, Murad was born a Hungarian in Nagybánya (Baia Mare); his original name was Balázs Somlyai. He was a page to King Louis II. In the Battle of Mohács he was captured and taken to Istanbul, where he converted to Islam. As a dragoman, i.e. an interpreter, he was also entrusted with diplomatic tasks. In 1551 he was a member of an Ottoman mission to Transylvania to convey the sultan's command in which he assured John Sigismund of his support and condemned Friar George, who had entered into an alliance with the Habsburgs. Following the murder of the friar, the Habsburg troops invading Transylvania captured Murad and sought to re-convert him to Christianity, but he refused. The theological debates between him and his interrogators resulted in an exceptional poem (or hymn), written in Latin, Hungarian and Turkish, which presents Islam as a religion that can be accepted with a clear conscience by monotheists who distance themselves from radical dogmatism, thus even by Christians. The clearly Protestant thought process of the poem is striking: "For the Scripture tells us that / without the knowledge of self, there is no knowledge of God, / If we knew our nothingness, / There is only him, there is no one else; we only have knowledge of him." Or: "Salvation is not possible through actions,

63 Gábor Barta, 'A törökös ideológia kezdetei Magyarországon', *Keletkutatás* 1987. tavasz, 8–19.

64 Pál Ács, 'Tarjumans Mahmud and Murad – Austrian and Hungarian Renegades as the Sultan's Interpreters', in Idem, *Reformations*, 157–167.

65 Mihály Balázs, *Teológia és irodalom. Az Erdélyen kívüli antitrinitarizmus kezdetei*. Budapest, 1998, 29–30.

66 Ács, 'Tarjumans Mahmud and Murad'.

/ but only through the gift of God...”, etc.⁶⁷ The message of the poem is a clear answer to Christian efforts to promote religious unification: according to Murad, there is only room for one religious universalism on Earth, and that is Islam. The poem (which, contrary to Murad’s claims, was clearly written not in the early 1550s, but decades later) aimed to make Islam more popular and acceptable among Hungarians and other Christians, and most likely received encouragement from a renegade Antitrinitarian intellectual environment in Istanbul.⁶⁸ (We cannot, of course, talk of Antitrinitarianism in Hungary in the 1550s, which adds weight to the view that the work was written later.) It is noteworthy that, in the Muslim-Catholic theological dispute that took place during Giovanni Battista Castaldo’s military campaign in Transylvania, a pivotal time in the Szapolyai era, Murad, who took the side of John Sigismund and Isabella, used (what would later be formulated as) the dogmatic language of the Hungarian Antitrinitarians to defend ‘monotheism’ (Islam) against the ‘polytheistic’ Habsburg Catholicism.

Murad engaged freely in theological disputes with Catholics. A previously unknown source has recently been discovered in which it is reported that in 1571, in Istanbul, the Ottoman interpreter of Hungarian origin entered into a theological dispute with one of the members of the embassy of the Habsburg Empire, and that the dispute turned into a sword fight.⁶⁹ Thus it seems plausible that his poem on the superiority of Islam, written in Hungarian, was also the product of religious disputes, as he himself claimed. The poem contains no explicit political references. In an indirect fashion, though (and also taking into consideration the circumstances of its creation), it still resonates with contemporary religious and political issues. It sends a message to Transylvanians: that Protestantism is a truer religion than Catholicism, and the Szapolyais are truer rulers than the Habsburgs. At the same time, it also certifies that the goal of the Szapolyais, namely to bring about a ‘national kingdom’, can only be achieved with the sultan’s support. In literary history, too, the path the Szapolyais took would – to borrow the title from the classic book by Gábor Barta – be nothing less than ‘the path to Stamboul’.⁷⁰

67 *Mert az Írás azt mondja, hogy az Istent / Meg nem ismerhetjük, míg nem magunkat [meg nem ismerjük], / Ha esmerénk ilyen semmi voltunkat, / Csak ő vagyon, nincsen más, tudjuk őtet ... Nincsen üdvösség az cselekedetben, / De az Istennek ő adományában...*” Pál Ács (ed.), *Régi Magyar Költők Tára. XVI. századbeli költők művei. Tizenegyedik kötet. Az 1580-as évek költészete*. Budapest, 1999, 139–153, 424–428; Ágnes Drosztmér, *Images of Distance and Closeness. The Ottomans in Sixteenth-Century Hungarian Vernacular Poetry*. PhD Dissertation. Budapest, 2016, 150–156.

68 Ferenc Szakály, *Mezőváros és reformáció. Tanulmányok a korai magyar polgárosodás kérdéséhez*. (Humanizmus és Reformáció, 23.) Budapest, 1995, 317–322; Martin Mulsow, ‘Antitrinitarians and Conversion to Islam. Adam Neuser Reads Murad b. Abdullah in Ottoman Istanbul’, in Claire Norton (ed.), *Conversion and Islam in the Early Modern Mediterranean: The Lure of the Other*. London, 2017, 181–193.

69 Pál Ács and Gábor Petneházi, ‘Késre menő vita 1571-ben Murád dragomán (Somlyai Balázs) és Arnoldus Manlius között’, in *MONOKgraphia. Tanulmányok Monok István 60. születésnapjára*. Budapest, 2016, 39–45.

70 Gábor Barta, *La route qui mène à Istanbul 1526–1528*. (Studia Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, 195.) Budapest, 1994.

THE LATIN-LANGUAGE LITERATURE OF THE SZAPOLYAI ERA

The Szapolyai dynasty (1526–1571) does not have a good reputation, especially when it comes to historiographical works. True, in the public mind, even the period of the Jagiellonian kings (1490–1526) is viewed as one burdened with growing chaos and decline that eventually led to the tragedy of Mohács (1526). Fortunately, historical studies have managed to provide a more nuanced picture during the last decade and a half,¹ while literary history has never viewed this period of ‘chancery humanism’ in such a negative light. There has, however, always been a consensus that after 1526, in a country exposed to the Ottoman expansion and the vicissitudes of the civil war, not much could be expected in the field of literature, as *inter arma silent Musae*. This was all the more so in the part of country ruled by the Szapolyais, which may seem, in terms of literature, a kind of cultural desert. Below, I try to add further dimensions to this overly negative picture by examining certain features of literature written in Latin during this period.

It goes without saying that the Szapolyais, especially King John I, did not have the opportunity to establish or to patronize real court culture in peacetime. The reign of King John was almost entirely defined by the civil war fought against Ferdinand: depending on the military situation, he frequently had to move the location of his court, from Buda, to Lippa (Lipova), to Várad (Nagyvárad/Oradea); he even had to flee the country on one occasion. His son did not have the pleasure of more *otium*, either: as an infant, he was rescued from Buda, captured by the Ottomans, and was just 10 years old when he was forced to leave Transylvania, as well. It was not until years later, in 1556, that he was able to return; even after his mother’s death in 1559 he had little more

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1 Tibor Neumann, Norbert C. Tóth and Tamás Pálosfalvi, ‘Két évszázad a sztereotípiák fogságában. Helyzetkép a Jagelló-kor kutatásáról’, in Pál Fodor and Szabolcs Varga (eds.), *Több mint egy csata: Mohács. Az 1526. évi ütközet a magyar tudományos és kulturális emlékezetben*. (Mohács 1526–2026: Rekonstrukció és Emlékezet) Budapest, 2019, 11–73.

than a decade to independently rule his country, a country tormented by wars and ever-growing religious unrest. Yet one cannot say that the court of the Szapolyais offered an unattractive and uninspiring environment for literature – especially not for historiography, which, during this period, consisted mostly of texts written in Latin. Before going into more detail, however, it is worth giving a brief definition of the framework within which we will undertake our analysis.

It is important to clarify which authors and which works are included by definition in the category of the Latin (humanist) literature of the Szapolyai era. Based on the time frame set by the present volume, the Szapolyai era is the period of the reign of King John and his son, John Sigismund, i.e. the period from 1526 to 1571. So only authors who lived within this length of time or works that were written in it or that can otherwise be linked to the two Szapolyais can be focused on here. Put more simply, we can only consider works that were created in their court environment, or, in a broader sense, in the part of the country that was under their rule, namely Eastern Hungary or the territory of the developing Principality of Transylvania. In accepting this definition, we must exclude humanist writers such as Miklós Oláh (Nicolaus Olahus), whose creative period does indeed fall clearly within the aforementioned time frame, but who throughout his life was a dedicated supporter of Queen Mary and the Habsburgs; in other words, he belonged to the opposing camp. Due to the period set, we must also decline to deal in detail with such outstanding authors as Ferenc Forgách. Even though he defected from the Habsburgs to side with John Sigismund, and became a pro-Szapolyai humanist, his *Commentarii*, our key sources on the age of John Sigismund, were written only in the mid-1570s, after the death of John Sigismund, during the rule of István Báthory. Yet even if we have to refrain from including such distinguished humanists in this essay, the humanism of the Szapolyai era will not be left without important figures. Of all the authors who can be linked to the Szapolyais and who worked during the half century between 1526 and 1571, mention clearly has to be made of István Brodarics, brothers Antal and Mihály Verancsics, György Szerémi, who can hardly be called humanist but who was nevertheless significant, Tranquillus Andronicus, the Dalmatian humanist with a contradictory career, and Saxon humanist Christian Schesaeus.

That the leading Latin-language genre of the age came to be the writing of history is certainly no coincidence. Rather, it is the result of the turbulent circumstances in the country.² All of the previously named writers wrote works of this kind: not even the poet Mihály Verancsics, who wrote a short chronicle of the year 1536, or Schesaeus, whose epos tells the story of Hungary between 1540–1571, are exceptions. On the other hand, if we approach the era from the perspective of historiography, we find that the contribution from the part of the country under the rule of the Szapolyais, rather than being modest,

2 Péter Kasza, 'Főpap történetírók a 16. században', in Szabolcs Varga and Lázár Vértési (eds.), *Egyházi társadalom a Magyar Királyságban a 16. században*. (Seria Historiae Dioecesis Quinqueecclesiensis, XVII.) Pécs, 2017, 393–407.

was distinctly significant: about half of 16th-century historiographers worked or began to work around the time of the Szapolyais; the impressive list of writers was topped by István Brodarics (ca. 1480–1539), the chronicler of Mohács.

Brodarics is undoubtedly one of the stars of the humanists of the Szapolyai court.³ Not only because he joined Szapolyai's court in 1527 after taking a conscious, well-considered decision, one he had, unusually, even explained in writing,⁴ and not even because he became one of the few people who, in an age characterized by constantly alternating allegiances, remained loyal to his chosen master until his death (1539), or because he became one of his most important, widely-known and broad-minded diplomats. Brodarics clearly owes his literary fame to his account of the Battle of Mohács, which had become a unique source text: this short work is the reason for his inclusion in the history of Hungarian historiography.⁵ It is worth mentioning that the use of the word 'unique' to describe the *Historia verissima* is not the usual, somewhat exaggerated epithet, because Brodarics, in his capacity as chancellor to King Louis II, did indeed take part in the tragic Battle of Mohács, fighting on the side of Louis II. He thus reported on this as an eye-witness of the ill-fated struggle, which ended with the death of the king and the fall of the Kingdom of Hungary. Since then, historical research has either criticized⁶ or glorified the credibility and reliability of his text. There is one thing, however, that it could not do: go around it, or ignore it, irrespective of the age.⁷ This was so simply because, apart from Brodarics, there is no other serious narrative source produced by the Christian side that has the credibility of an eyewitness account. On the other hand, it is almost emblematic that the most credible description of the fall of the medieval Hungarian state – and of the start of the civil war between the Habsburgs and the Szapolyais, as well as of the battle that led to the polarization of the country – was actually written by a humanist who had become the first and most important figure in this increasingly divided historiography.

3 A more recent work on his life: Péter Kasza, *Egy korszakváltás szemtanúja. Brodarics István élete és működése*. Budapest, 2015. For a detailed overview of the academic literature on Brodarics, see the following encyclopaedia entry: Péter Kasza, 'Stephanus Brodericus', in David Thomas (ed.), *Christian-Muslim Relations 1500–1900*. Consulted online on 18 October 2019 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2451-9537_cmrii_COM_26370 First published online: 2015.

4 Péter Kasza and Géza Pálffy, *Brodarics- emlékkönyv. Egy különleges pártváltás a mohácsi csata után*. Budapest, 2011.

5 Brodericus, *De conflictu Hungarorum*. For an overview of literature on the *Historia*, see Péter Kasza, 'De conflictu hungarorum cum Solymano Turcarum imperatore ad Mohach historia verissima', in Thomas (ed.), *Christian-Muslim Relations 1500–1900*. Consulted online on 18 October 2019 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2451-9537_cmrii_COM_26375 First published online: 2015.

6 Géza Perjés, *The Fall of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary: Mohacs 1526 – Buda 1541*. New Jersey, 1989.

7 The most recent approaches of military history, especially the writings of János B. Szabó, provide a much more realistic evaluation of Brodarics as source value than Perjés does. Cf. János B. Szabó, *A mohácsi csata*. Budapest, 2006; Idem, *Mohács. Régi kérdések – új válaszok. A Magyar Királyság hadserege az 1526. évi mohácsi csatában*. Budapest, 2015; in French: János B. Szabó and Ferenc Tóth, *Mohács (1526): Soliman le Magnifique prend pied en Europe centrale*. Paris, 2009.

Even though Brodarics was an eyewitness, he was far from being impartial. It is not that he gave a distorted picture, or that he wilfully described the background and the actual course of events differently. On the contrary, I am convinced that these are the most reliable parts of his work. It is rather that, although research has long believed that the text was published in April 1527, in reality it was not written until one year later, in the spring of 1528, when Szapolyai (and Brodarics with him) was in exile in Poland.⁸ The real aim of the work is thus not what (military) historians expect, namely to give exact details of the developments of the battle, but rather to explain who was responsible for the death of the young King Louis and why. Habsburg anti-Szapolyai propaganda used all available means to divulge that the Hungarians, first of all John Szapolyai, voivode of Transylvania, had abandoned their master, who thus confronted the immense military force of the Ottomans at the head of a small, poorly-equipped army, which led to the unavoidable defeat that cost him his life. The search for those responsible for this tragic outcome is clearly visible in the literature of the age: Cuspinianus, a humanist from Vienna, was the first to accuse the Hungarians of committing an act of treason and betraying their master.⁹ In his recently discovered fragment on Mohács, Caspar Ursinus Velius, King Ferdinand's court historiographer, made very clear who the person was who tried to persuade King Louis not to hurry to wage war.¹⁰ The successor to Velius, Wolfgang Lazius, went as far as to claim that King Louis II was drowned by voivode John's brother, György Szapolyai.¹¹ The circumstances of the king's death were thus a key issue. And this is the point where Brodarics's main aim, and also his partiality, can be felt. One of the leitmotifs of his work, written in 1528 and apparently kept in manuscript form until 1568, was to discharge the voivode of Transylvania, known later as King John I of Hungary, from any liability for the death of the king. Brodarics allowed himself to use only positive statements in connection with John Szapolyai. Already, when listing the officials who had held office prior to the Battle of Mohács, he states that Szapolyai

8 Péter Kasza, 'On the Track of an Edition: New Sources for the Dating of Stephanus Brodericus' *Historia verissima*, in Neven Jovanović, Branko Jozić, Francisco Javier Juez Gálvez and Bratislav Lučin (eds.), *Colloquia Maruliana XXIV: Anticka Bastina u Renesansom Tekstu (II.)*. Split, Marulianum, 2015, 193–204; Kasza, *Egy korszakváltás*, 169–200.

9 Kasza and Pálffy, *Brodarics- emlékkönyv*, 32–36; Péter Kasza, 'Cuspinians Oratio protreptica und ihr Echo in Ungarn', in Thomas Baier and Jochen Schultheiß (eds.), *Würzburger Humanismus. (NeoLatina, 23.)* Tübingen, 2015, 175–185; Gergely Tóth, 'Bűnbakképzés és propaganda. Az 1526. évi török hadjárat és a mohácsi csata a kora újkori történetírásban (I. rész: a 16. század történetírása)', in Fodor and Varga (eds.), *Több mint egy csata: Mohács*, 76–83.

10 Tóth, 'Bűnbakképzés és propaganda', 105–110; Péter Kasza, "Kézirat sosem ég el". Caspar Ursinus Velius mohácsi csatáról írott beszámolójának és egyéb töredékeinek kézirata az OSZK-ban', *Magyar Könyvszemle* 135:1 (2019) 36–49. For a recent publication of the fragment, see Péter Kasza (ed.), *Caspar Ursinus Velius: Lajos király vereségéről és haláláról. Egy elveszettnek hitt beszámoló a mohácsi csatáról / Caspar Ursinus Velius: De interitu Ludovici regis et clade Hungariae. A Long-lost Report about the Battle of Mohács. (Mohács 1526–2026. Reconstruction and Remembrance)* Budapest, 2020.

11 Gábor Farkas Farkas, Zsolt Szebelédi and Bernadett Varga, "Nekünk mégis Mohács kell..." *II. Lajos király rejtélyes halála és különböző temetési*, Budapest, 2016, 212.

later became king and that the entire country expected him to occupy the throne.¹² This is, to say the least, an exaggeration, not to mention the fact that Brodarics does not even bother to mention Ferdinand's and the Habsburgs' claim to the throne, as guaranteed by various agreements. Even more characteristic, however, is the way he is trying to clear Szapolyai, who did indeed arrive late at the scene of the battle, of charges of treason. While the opposing party obviously claimed that John Szapolyai was intentionally late for the struggle and thus abandoned his king, Brodarics, an insider of the court, claimed with the credibility of a chancellor that it was instead due to the many contradictory orders John Szapolyai had received that he was not able to leave in time for the gathering point and therefore came late to the battle. John nevertheless remained a loyal subject, as he had sent King Louis a letter telling him not to start fighting without him and his troops, and damned all those who had so prematurely led the king near to the Ottomans. There is only one more person in the *Historia* who is depicted in the same positive manner: Kristóf Frangepán, who, after the defeat of Mohács, became Szapolyai's most committed and most ardent Slavonian supporter.

In today's world it is no doubt difficult to find an explanation for why this important account that represented the interests of the Szapolyais was not published in Brodarics's or even in King John's lifetime, and why the pride and glory of its publication was credited to János Zsámboky (Johannes Sambucus), court historiographer to Maximilian II, Holy Roman Emperor of the Austrian House of Habsburg. Szapolyai could be accused of being ignorant of the possibilities hidden in the work, but one should not forget that the historical works of the age, written by two emblematic figures of the Habsburg court, have also come down to us in manuscript form,¹³ despite the fact that there were printing shops in Vienna. Manuscript form or not, it cannot be denied that the most important text about Mohács was produced by a humanist who was a dedicated follower of King John.

Another major humanist of the age, Antal Verancsics (1504–1573), was for a long time equally dedicated to the king, even though his life later took a different turn.¹⁴ To receive his education, Verancsics was sent to Italy by his uncle, who

12 On this, see Tibor Neumann's study ('Two Palatines and a Voivode, or the Szapolyai Family's Journey to the Royal Throne') in the present volume.

13 Velius's work was not published until 1762: *De Bello Pannonico Libri Decem Ex codicibus manu exaratis Caesareis nunc primum in lucem prolati... illustrati, studio et opera Adami Francisci Kollarii*, Typis Joannis Thomae Trattner, Vindobonae, 1762. Lazius's monumental history of Austria, the *Rerum Austriacarum Decades*, was only partly finished, but decas V–VI on the era of King Ferdinand has never been published. A historical-critical edition of decas V is currently being prepared by Péter Kasza within the framework of research project *Buda oppugnata – Wolfgang Lazius's Forgotten Historical Work*, ID number NKFIH K-119237.

14 A good summary of Verancsics in English, mostly on the basis of the existing Hungarian academic literature, is given by Marianna D. Birnbaum, *Humanists in a Shattered World. Croatian and Hungarian Latinity in the Sixteenth Century*. Los Angeles, 1986, 292–305. An overview of the literature regarding Verancsics is provided by Éva Gyulai, 'Antonius Verantius', in Thomas (ed.), *Christian-Muslim Relations 1500–1900*. Consulted online on 19 October 2019 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2451-9537_cmrii_COM_26230 First published online: 2015.

then called him home after 1526. Since the uncle was a committed supporter of King John, and accordingly, when he died in 1542, was bishop of Transylvania, at the time a stable hinterland of the Szapolyais, there was no question of the young nephew taking Szapolyai's side. Antal was well educated and spoke excellent Italian, so his career went from strength to strength: he became the provost of Óbuda, then of Transylvania, and later he also came to be entrusted with several diplomatic missions. With Brodarics and Ferenc Frangepán at his side, he thus started his rise to become one of the humanist prelate-diplomats of King John. The king's death halted his career, however. His correspondence during the next couple of years is fragmented, and events are hard to reconstruct, but it appears that Verancsics could not see eye to eye with Friar George (Martinuzzi), the almighty *éminence grise* of the newly-forming Transylvanian court, so in 1549 he left the court of Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia) and joined the Habsburgs. There is no doubt that it was only after his move that an illustrious career followed: he first became bishop of Pécs, then bishop of Eger; after the death of Miklós Oláh he became the archbishop of Esztergom, then governor, and finally, at the end of his life, cardinal. In the meantime, he travelled several times to Istanbul as an envoy, and played a major role in preparing the Treaty of Adrianople in 1568. His literary heritage consists of twelve printed volumes, the major part of which is correspondence.¹⁵ That he is still rightly considered one of the humanists of Szapolyai's court is due to his historical writings.

Originally, Verancsics planned to write the history of Hungary from the death of King Matthias (1490) to his own age. At least this is what can be concluded from the fragments that have come down to us, because he never accomplished his undertaking: only some parts of it, of varying consistency, are known to us. We do not know when the various sections were written, but it is obvious that the part that deals with the events in Hungary in 1551 must definitely have been written after he switched sides in 1549. The remaining parts, based on their time frame, topic and most of all their approach, are more likely to have been written prior to 1549, i.e. during Verancsics's pro-Szapolyai period. Since we are dealing with text fragments, great caution has to be applied in terms of the concept of the work, but, judging by the existing material, Verancsics, after giving an outline of the circumstances leading up to the Battle of Mohács, essentially wrote the history of the reign of John Szapolyai, focussing on the major events and turning points of the period. The focal point of these events is the fall of Buda in 1541. Related to this is the presentation of Süleyman's military campaign against Moldavia in 1538, which justified the subsequent breach of the Treaty of Várad (1538). Also related to this topic are the descriptions of the death of King John, the texts dealing with the fall of Buda, which were either written by Verancsics himself or had been sent to him and thus survived in his collection, and the detailed accounts of the struggles of 1543 that made the loss of Buda irreversible. The work also gave room to biographies of famous pro-

¹⁵ *Verancsics Antal összes munkái. Vols. I–XII.* (Monumenta Hungariae Historica, II; Scriptores) Published by László Szalay and Ágoston Wenzel. Pest, 1857–1875.

Szapolyai politicians, such as Friar George, Simon Athinai Deák and the lord and writer of songs, Orbán Batthyány.¹⁶ It also includes the long letter written by Verancsics in which he informs the most influential historiographer of the age, the Italian Paolo Giovio, of the circumstances of the loss of Buda – and he does so from the point of view of the Szapolyai court.¹⁷ Even Éva Gyulai, the most knowledgeable expert on the oeuvre of Verancsics, has already suggested that the reason the work remained unfinished is that, after his defection, it could not be continued in the same spirit; furthermore, to rewrite the text to suit the Habsburg approach would have been too time-consuming, taking into consideration all the other assignments and commitments Verancsics had. So, in the end, it was not Antal Verancsics who shaped the story of the House of Szapolyai into a coherent narrative, but instead one of the most extraordinary figures of the era: György Szerémi.

Yet, without Verancsics's contribution, this unusual text could hardly have been written. Szerémi himself added these lines to his work: "Upon his request, I have handed over this work, in writing, as a gift to Antal, provost of Transylvania."¹⁸

The work, often referred to in short as *De perditione Hungariae* (On the Decline of Hungary), is a very long letter, an *epistola flebilis*, addressed to Antal Verancsics, provost of Transylvania. The author, György Szerémi, can by no means be mentioned among the educated humanists of the period. He was a cleric who had some knowledge of Latin, and, since he had spent most of his life as a court chaplain, first to Louis II and then to Szapolyai, he was well acquainted with the functioning of courts, and was actually able to hear all the stories, gossip and even the wildest imaginable news that circulated in them.¹⁹ When he, upon encouragement from Verancsics, finally decided, sometime in the mid-1540s, to write the history of Hungary, he did not hesitate to include all existing gossip into his narrative, which thereby became a black chronicle of unlikely outrageous events, flagrant treasons and infidelities, as well as the terrible, yet fair punishment of these from God. There is hardly a character in his historical account who died of natural causes, but sooner or later all killers were doomed. According to Szerémi, Ladislaus the Posthumous (King Ladislaus V) was drowned in the river Danube, Matthias and Louis II were killed by some lords, and John Szapolyai was poisoned; this is only to mention

16 For more on Batthyány, see Gábor Nemes, 'Verancsics Antal győri irathagyatéka', in Gábor Nemes and Ádám Vajk (eds.), *In labore fructus. Jubileumi tanulmányok Győregyházmegye történetéből*. Győr, 2011, 325–333, and Borbála Sörös, 'Verancsics Antal Elogium Urbani Bathiani (1548)', in Gábor Ujváry and Réka Lengyel (eds.), *Lymbus 2012–2013. Magyarságtudományi Forrásközmények*. Budapest, 2014, 40–50.

17 Péter Kasza, 'Dialogue between Humanists. Paolo Giovio and Antun Vrančić on the Fall of Buda' (manuscript).

18 *Et ad Anthonium praepositum Transilvaniensem me rogaturum in scriptis obtuli ei in donum*. Cf. Szerémi, *Emlékirat*, 401.

19 For literature on Szerémi, see Zsolt Szebelédi, 'György Szerémi', in Thomas (ed.) *Christian-Muslim Relations 1500–1900*. Consulted online on 19 October 2019 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2451-9537_cmrii_COM_26230 First published online: 2015.

the fate of crowned kings. All in all, it is an important work from the point of view of the history of mentalities, but from a historiographical aspect it is hard to categorise it: the text is so poorly written in Latin that at certain points it is extremely hard to understand. Perhaps this is why it was never published in its own time, and remained in manuscript form until the mid-19th century. Following its publication, however, it immediately caught the attention of contemporary writers and historians, and today it still provides the basis for a great number of romantic adaptations and far-fetched theories. It is typical that while no modern translation has been made of Verancsics's fragments, nor of the work of the greatest figure of 16th-century Hungarian historiography, Miklós Istvánffy, translations have been produced of Szerémi's work.

From our point of view, although it is important that Szerémi remained loyal to the Szapolyai court throughout his life and that it was there that he wrote his special history, it is even more important that the work, even though it does not always treat King John with kid gloves, still recounts the story of the rise of the House of Szapolyai. Szerémi starts his chronicle in 1457, the year in which László Hunyadi was executed, and continues with how Matthias seized power. These events are mostly important to illustrate how the star of István Szapolyai was rising during the reign of King Matthias. The actions carried out by the Szapolyai family, more precisely by István, the father, and by his two sons, János (John) and György, are winding like a red line, sometimes perceived as tainted with blood, throughout the story, which ends shortly after the death of King John with a description of the occurrences of 1543. King John would certainly not have been pleased had he read what Szerémi wrote about him and his family, any more than Emperor Justinian would have laughed at Procopius's *Secret History*. That the Szapolyai court also produced a work of such dimensions definitively illustrates the power of its Latin-language culture.

We have so far singled out three outstanding authors, but the list could be continued. Even though Hungarian common law had already been codified before the Battle of Mohács, we should not forget that the author of *Tripartitum*, István Werbőczy, one of the most brilliant legal theorists of the age, remained a central figure at the Szapolyai court throughout his life.²⁰

Ferenc Frangepán adhered to the provisions of the Treaty of Várad, so at the end of 1540, after the death of King John, he defected to Ferdinand, who was regarded as the legal successor to the throne. In Regensburg he delivered his powerful anti-Ottoman speech, by 1541 published three times in Latin, twice in German and once in Italian, while serving the Habsburg court. His ideological background, however, was formed during the decade and a half he spent in his capacity as a top diplomat of King John, as Brodarics's permanent partner.²¹

20 For information on the years he spent at the court of Szapolyai, see Gábor Barta, 'Egy magyar politikus a középkori Magyarország széthullásának éveiben (Werbőczy István kancellár, 1526–1541)', in Lajos Ruzsás and Ferenc Szakály (eds.), *Mohács. Tanulmányok a mohácsi csata 450. évfordulója alkalmából*. Budapest, 1986, 275–322.

21 For more information on his life, see Pongrácz Sörös, 'Frangepán Ferencz, kalocsai érsek, egri püspök', *Századok* 51 (1917) 429–471, 545–576. His anti-Ottoman speech was most recently

Tranquillus Andronicus, the Venetian adventurer and secretary to Lodovico Gritti, who led a rather erratic life, belonged to the court of Szapolyai for many years.²² After the execution of Gritti, however, he also felt the urge to leave the country, but he completed his work on Gritti's years in Hungary at the end of 1534 in the Transylvanian settlement of Radnót (Irenut).²³ Even though this is an obvious apologia to Gritti, it is still a very important source for Hungarian history in the 1530s. True, Gábor Barta saw Tranquillus as an unsuccessful humanist, but it would be more correct to call him unsatisfied. One can hardly regard an author as unsuccessful if he belonged to the circles of the Polish Jan Łaski, accompanied him to Rome, and, later, after a short interval at the Szapolyai court, became King Ferdinand's diplomat²⁴ who maintained a good relationship with leading Hungarian aristocrats throughout his life. Thus in no way was he a disillusioned humanist of second rank who joined the court of Szapolyai.

Mention clearly needs to be made of the younger Verancsics brother, Mihály. His short historical work imitating Caesar commemorates one of the greatest successes achieved by Szapolyai's troops during the civil war in the 1530s, namely the devious occupation of the city of Kassa (Košice); the work thus fits well into the fragments produced by his brother on the period of King John.²⁵ While this account of a couple of pages is exciting, Mihály's poetic oeuvre is of even greater importance. We know of some poems written by his brother, but Mihály is a very unique figure, as he was almost the only representative of combative, pro-Szapolyai poetry. He made his debut quite young with his *querelas*, written in 1528; these early poems already contain some pronounced reactions to works written in an anti-Szapolyai spirit, for example by Georgius Logus and Valentin Eck.²⁶ Mihály's wedding song, written on the occasion of the marriage between

analysed by Fanni Csapó, 'Oratio Francisci Frangepani, 1541. Egy törökellenes beszéd értelmezési lehetőségei', in Hermina Gesztelyi, Dániel Görög and Szilvia Maróthy (eds.), *Szöveg, hordozó, közösség. Olvasóközönség és közösségi olvasmányok a régi magyar irodalomban. Fiatalok Konferenciája 2015*. Budapest, 2016, 199–207.

22 For information on his life as well as for a presentation of the previous academic literature, see Gábor Barta, 'Egy sikertelen humanista a 16. században [Andronicus Tranquillus]', in István Zombori (ed.), *Az értelmiség Magyarországon a 16–17. században*. Szeged, 1988, 61–77.

23 *De rebus in Hungaria gestis ab illustrissimo et magnifico Ludovico Gritti deque eius obitu epistola*. Latin edition: Henrik Kretschmayr, 'Adalékok Szapolyai János király történetéhez', *Történelmi Tár* 26 (1903) 198–231.

24 For the effects on his literature of his changing allegiances and his period of reflection, see Péter Kasza, 'The Two Lives of an Oration. Additions to the Origins of Tranquillus Andronicus' Anti-Turkish Speech from 1541', in Neven Jovanović, Branko Jozić, Francisco Javier Juez Gálvez and Bratislav Lučin (eds.), *Colloquia Maruliana XXVI: Tekstološki Izazovi Hrvatske Književne Baštine (I.)*. Split, Marulianum, 2017, 287–300.

25 For the most recent analysis of this work, see György Palotás, 'Verancsics Mihály és a Liber de Rebus Hungaricis 1536', in Tibor Bodnár-Király, Fanni Hende and Katalin Pataki (eds.), *Szóra bírni az újkor: A III. KoraujkorÁSZ doktorandusz konferencia tanulmányai*. Budapest, 2016, 116–138.

26 A great number of studies have been made of this early political elegy. For more details, see Péter Kasza, 'Lupus in Elegia: About the Literary Context of Michael Verancius' Querela', in Neven Jovanović, Branko Jozić, Francisco Javier Juez Gálvez, Bratislav Lučin (eds.), *Colloquia*

King John and Isabella,²⁷ his poem on the birth of John Sigismund,²⁸ and his elegy on the death of King John²⁹ sing the praises of the Szapolyai dynasty.

In one of his poems, Verancsics makes a heated objection to the historical works of the German Valentinus Polydamus. It is obvious that there was considerable rivalry between them for the favours of Szapolyai, so Mihály Verancsics's judgement could not of course be unbiased.³⁰ Yet even if he was right, and Polydamus was indeed a poor historiographer, we cannot ignore the fact that in 1536 he had a small work published on the early history of Hungary with the aim of winning the sympathy of King John and his court.³¹ Polydamus had never lived in the Hungarian court. It is nevertheless noteworthy that, after the 1488 edition of Thuróczy's chronicle, which was supported by King Matthias, the first historical work to be published on Hungary whose text is known to us was written by Polydamus, who, with this work, sought to win the favour of John Szapolyai. That is to say, the favour of a king who had been engaged in a correspondence with Paolo Giovio and was thus hardly insensitive to historiography.³² In times of civil war and in a country with no universities or printing houses, and where even the seat of the court was not permanent, the contribution of the Szapolyai court to Hungarian culture was thus by no means insignificant.

Although John Sigismund had even less time than his father to build up his own court around himself, his reign in itself was impact enough. As mentioned in the introduction, in the strictest sense the work of Ferenc Forgách falls outside the boundaries of the era we are dealing with, since, according to our current knowledge, the piece was written during the rule of Báthory. Still, its subject is the period of John Sigismund's reign. Forgách starts his historic account with the death of King John in 1540, and narrates the events up to 1571. Forgách was, like Brodarics and Verancsics, an educated humanist schooled in Italy. He mastered Latin, but his mindset was in a certain way akin to that of Szerémi: his work contains perhaps less in the way of absurd gossip, but the tone and the view of the world he conveys is gloomier. His account of

Maruliana XXIII: Anticka Bastina u Renesansom Tekstu. Split, Marulianum, 2014, 85–98; György Palotás, 'Politics and Literature in the Elegies of Michael Verancius in 1528', in *ibid.*, 55–83.

27 For its modern edition, see György Palotás, 'The Scythian–Sarmatian Wedding' and the Epithalamion of Michael Verancius (1539)', in Jovanović, Jozić, Juez Gálvez and Lučin (eds.), *Colloquia Maruliana XXIII*, 99–118.

28 György Palotás, 'Birth and Death in Michael Verancius' Poems Written to the Szapolyai Family in 1540', in János Nagyillés, Attila Hajdú, Gergő Gellérfi, Anne Horn Baroody and Sam Baroody (eds.), *Sapiens Ubique Civis. Vol. I. Proceedings of International Conference on Classical Studies*. Budapest, 2015, 407–424.

29 György Palotás, 'Apoteózis-motívumok Verancsics Mihály 1540-es epicediumában', *Corollarium* 2014, 18–29.

30 For more information on this, see György Palotás, 'Egy 16. századi "volusiusi Annales" ellen: hogyan ne írjunk történelmet', in Enikő Békés, Péter Kasza and Réka Lengyel (eds.), *Humanista történetírás és neolatin irodalom a 15–18. századi Magyarországon*. Budapest, 2015, 109–118.

31 Valentini Polydami, *De origine et rebus gestis Hungarorum Liber I*. Cracoviae, 1536.

32 Cf. László Szende and Róbert József Szvitek, 'Szapolyai János levele Paolo Giovióhoz a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumban', *Történeti Muzeológiai Szemle* 7 (2007) 265–270.

30 years is a bitter chronicle of treason, selfishness and the promotion of private interests.³³ Even if one can find some heroic moments in the text, there are no heroes in it of whom Forgách would not be able to speak badly a couple of pages later. John Sigismund is no exception. Even though Forgách, driven by personal frustrations, left his positions in Hungary in 1566 to join the elected king of the country, the Catholic prelate was deeply shocked by the king's religious tolerance. He was unable to come to terms with John Sigismund's sympathy for the Unitarians, and so, despite the anti-German and anti-Habsburg attitude of the work, John Sigismund could not be a positive character. Even prior to 1571 Forgách was striving to convince the Italian humanist, Gian Michele Bruto, to come to Transylvania and, being a trained historian, to write a continuation of Bonfini's work. It was not until the election of Báthory that Bruto let himself be persuaded; his great work shows the events through the lens of the part of the country ruled by Szapolyai.³⁴ The way for him was paved by Forgách, however, and Bruto's decision was probably also based on the decent reputation of the Transylvanian court among Italian humanists.

Even if Forgách was not a dedicated follower of John Sigismund, the Saxon Schesaeus was. Alongside Taurinus's epos on the peasant war, entitled *Stauromachia*, which the writer finished in Transylvania, the epos written by Schesaeus, *Ruinae Pannonicae*, consisting of twelve songs, is another masterpiece of Latin epic poetry written in Hungary.³⁵ It is a hexametric work that depicts the history of the age in a loosely arranged array of themes. Similarly to Forgách, Schesaeus presents the most notable events in Hungary between 1540 and 1571, and although entire songs are dedicated to events in which John Sigismund is neither a hero nor the main character, such as the siege of Temesvár (Timișoara) and Eger, or the occupation of Szigetvár and Gyula in 1566, it can be felt throughout the epos that the Saxon Schesaeus regards the elected King John II as the real, lawful sovereign of Hungary. It is only due to his premature and

33 Literary studies have not yet produced a modern biography. An important starting point is Pongrácz Sörös, *Forgách Ferencz élete*. Budapest, 1896. On his historical work, see Emma Bartoniek, *Fejezetek a XVI–XVII. századi magyarországi történetírás történetéből. Kézirat gyanánt*. Budapest, 1975, 222–250. Recently, Gábor Petneházi provides more thorough comments on Forgách: Gábor Petneházi, 'Párhuzamos történetek. Egyéniség, politika, hitelesség Istvánffy Miklós és Forgách Ferenc történeti műveiben', in Pál Ács and Gergely Tóth (eds.), *"A magyar történet folytatója." Tanulmányok Istvánffy Miklósról*. Budapest, 2018, 141–164; Idem, 'Variációk Dánielre. Az isteni bosszú és gondviselés a 16. századi humanista történetírás nyelvén (Sleidanus, Budina és Forgách)', in Enikő Békés, Péter Kasza, Farkas Gábor Kiss, István Lázár and Dávid Molnár (eds.), *A reformáció és a katolikus megújulás latin nyelvű irodalma*. Budapest, 2019, 57–72.

34 An adaptation of Bruto's historical heritage is still to be prepared. Apart from some late 19th-century essays, there is hardly any academic literature that may be of interest. See, for example, Vilmos Fraknói, 'Brutus Mihály, Báthory István udvari történetírója', *Századok* 21 (1887) 793–797; Lajos János Kovács, 'Brutus magyar történetének forrásai', *Századok* 50 (1916) 42–61, 128–159.

35 For its critical edition, see Christianus Schesaeus, *Opera quae supersunt omnia*. (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Medii Recentisque Aevorum. Series Nova, 4.) Ed. Franciscus Csonka. Budapest, 1979.

sudden death that the part published in 1571 was dedicated to Prince Stephen Báthory.

Mihály Siegler, who studied in Wittenberg together with Schesaeus, wrote two works in Latin upon returning home. One is a parenting guide, written in elegiac couplets in the mode of Melanchthon,³⁶ while the other is a historical work: *Chronologia Rerum Hungaricarum Transilvanicarum et vicinarum Regionum, Libri duo*.³⁷ This latter text is a special mixture of world chronicle and history of the age: the first volume deals with the history of the Carpathian basin from 366, but the second is a chronicle of the thirteen years from 1550 to 1563. Siegler was a schoolmaster and also a pastor of several towns. He was not directly linked to the court of John Sigismund, but his work is a testimony to his interest in the field of history.

The court of John Sigismund remains an area to be discovered. It is certain, though, that the roots of late humanism, represented by Bruto, János Baranyai Decsi, Farkas Kovácsóczy, István Szamosközy and Ambrus Somogyi, go back to his period.

In no way can it be claimed that the Szapolyai era or the Szapolyai court was an unproductive period or space for literature. On the contrary: a great number of humanists found the opportunities they were seeking in the environment of King John and later in that of his son. Historical writing, the leading genre of the 16th century in Hungary, was blooming in the period discussed, and even if Brodarics or Verancsics were no official court historians, their works protected the interests of the House of Szapolyai, so from a certain point of view they can be aligned with the works of authors on the Habsburg side such as Caspar Ursinus Velius or Wolfgang Lazius. Yet the most important work of Hungarian epic literature after Taurinus was also written in Transylvania, by Schesaeus, and the first serious representative of political poetry in Hungary, Mihály Verancsics, was also tied to the court of John Szapolyai. In the future, both the era and its authors deserve to be given more focus by the disciplines both of history and of literature.

36 Michael Siegler, *Brevia praecepta de moribus puerorum recte formandis, carmine Elegiaco conscripta*... [Coronae, 1556].

37 The work was published by Mátyás Bél in 1735: Mathias Bel, *Adparatus ad historiam Hungariae Dec. I. Posonii, 1735*, 43–88.

THE ‘LEGACY’ OF THE SZAPOLYAIS

SZAPOLYAI TREASURES IN THE SOURCES

An inventory of John Szapolyai’s movable assets, compiled around 1538 and published in 1888 by Lajos Kemény, Jr., was preserved in the city archives of Kassa (Košice).¹ To date this list provides the most comprehensive information on the artefacts in the treasury of the Szapolyais. The exact circumstances under which the inventory was prepared are not known: it contains not only Szapolyai’s treasures but also those taken to Várad (Nagyvárad/Oradea) by János Ország, bishop of Vác, who died in 1536. It is also likely that the entire treasury of the Szapolyais was not registered in the list. Apart from decorative weapons, vestments and silverware for everyday use, there is hardly any mention of ‘real’ treasures in it. High value items, mainly jewellery, were recorded in the first chest only. The Latin wording of the list is unfortunately rather brief: valuable rings, crosses, pendants, old coins and ‘antiquities’ (*diversae antiquitates*) kept in pouches are mentioned together with other ‘precious items’ (*diversae res preciosae*), but, essentially, no further information is given.

Unicorn decorated with diamonds

Some objects are described in more detail and could therefore be recognised at a later date, but hardly any of these are mentioned in other sources. One exception is a ‘unicorn’ decorated with a pointed diamond and other gemstones, recorded as being in a case among Szapolyai’s movable assets (*in una scatula parva est unicornix cum lapide adamante spisso et aliis lapidibus ornatus*). Horns of

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– The study was supported by project NKFIH K 129362; research in the Archives of Vienna was made possible by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Isabel and Alfred Bader scholarship.

1 Lajos Kemény Jr., ‘János király kincseinek s ruháinak összeírása’, *Történelmi Tár* II (1888) 566–571. The date is not featured on the first page, but on the page listing the treasures of János Ország, bishop of Vác.

unicorns were very much sought-after by the treasuries of the sovereigns and nobles of the age. Traditionally they were made of the helical tusk of narwhals. The most commonly known example of a unicorn is the famous 243cm-long ‘Ainkhürn’, kept in the treasury of the Habsburgs.² The horns were frequently crafted: they were made into chalices, crosiers, sceptres and weapon grips. Considering that the ‘unicorn’ of the treasury of Szapolyai was kept in a case, it can hardly have been a full-size horn. Indeed we can assume it was relatively small. Since it was decorated with precious stones, we can imagine it as some kind of jewellery; in this case, it may not have been called a ‘unicorn’ after the material it was made of. We might think of a pendant in the shape of a unicorn, whose horn was formed from the aforementioned pointed diamond.

According to historiographical tradition, John Szapolyai’s ‘unicorn’ was inherited by his son, John Sigismund, who gave it to his confidant, Gáspár Bekes. During the occupation of the city of Fogaras (Făgăraş), it came into the possession of Stephen Báthory, prince of Transylvania (later king of Poland), who took it to Poland, and bequeathed it in his will to the next prince of Transylvania, Sigismund Báthory.³ According to the historiographer István Szamosközy (1570–1612), even though the prince had repeatedly sent for it, the Polish crown treasury refused to hand it over. Instead, they offered a price of 30,000 forints for it; it appears the amount was not paid, either.⁴ The will of Stephen Báthory contradicts this story, however. As stated in the will, the monarch had redeemed the ‘unicorn’ from the treasury for the above price; he did not, that is, purchase it from Bekes. According to the will, Báthory bequeathed the piece of jewellery to the Ottoman sultan on behalf of the people of Transylvania. Yet he reserved the possibility for the Polish estates to redeem it, if they so wished.⁵ Báthory thus considered it to be a worthy present for the sultan, which indicates that it was a ‘real’ alicorn, whose value was determined by the magical power attributed to it, which also made it a suitable addition to

2 Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Weltliche Schatzkammer, Inv. No. Schatzkammer WS XIV 2.

3 Sándor Szilágyi (ed.), *Szamosközy István történeti maradványai. 1542–1608. Vol. IV. Végyes följegyzések.* (Monumenta Hungariae Historica, II; Scriptorum, 30.) Budapest, 1880, 64–65. Between 1583 and 1596 Sigismund Báthory sent for it several times.

4 On Lestár Gyulaffy’s diplomatic missions, detailing the reports from Szamosközy, see Máté János Bibor, ‘Gyulaffi Lestár lengyelországi követjárásai’, *Az Egyetemi Könyvtár Évkönyvei* 12 (2005) 121–144.

5 The relevant part of the will: *Et quoniam potentia Turcica est tanta, ut viribus sufficere nequeant, ad conciliandam imperatoris Turcarum benevolentiam unicornum illud, a Palatino Lublinensi propria mea pecunia redemptum, instituta solenni legatione in nomine Transylvanorum imperatori Turcarum protunc constituto, praesentandum committo; quod eo facilius regni Poloniae status et ordines concedent, si illis tritum illud in mentem venerit: “Tua res agitur, paries cum proxima ardet”. Verum, si tamen tanta esset aliquorum ingratitudo (quod non credo), ut illud exequi nollent, at saltem pecuniam triginta millia florenorum pro unicornu erogatum reddat, unde donationem eo nomine amplum Transylvani curebunt* (Dated: Niepołomice, 12 May 1585): Endre Veress (ed.), *Báthory István erdélyi fejedelem és lengyel király levelezése. Vol. II. 1576–1586.* (Monumenta Transsilvanica) Kolozsvár, 1944, No. 805. The Polish crown treasure was kept in Lubló (Lubovňa) until 1658; this is why the castellan of Lubló is mentioned in the will. Cf. Adorján Divéky, ‘Magyar–lengyel művészettörténeti adatok’, *Művészettörténeti Értesítő* 2 (1953) 186.

the treasury of a monarch. From all this it follows that Szapolyai's jewel and Báthory's legacy were, in reality, two different objects.

Szamosközy was thus mistaken regarding the objects, but this does not mean all his statements were incorrect. By way of example, he claimed that Gáspár Bekes received the object from John Sigismund, and Bekes did indeed possess such an item of jewellery. In his will he bequeathed to his son a unicorn (-shaped?) pendant, as his most precious movable asset, and entrusted his wife with keeping it: "To my elder son, László Békés, I leave the unicorn pendant. To my younger son, Gábor Békés, I give the old diamond ring. ... The unicorn, as well as the ring, shall be in the hands of my wife as long as she bears my name; should she marry, she is to hand them over to my brother, Gábor Békés."⁶

Gilded silver altarpiece in the castle chapel in Buda

This inventory of movable assets is not the only source of information on artefacts owned by the Szapolyai family. We have other data, often pertaining to objects of great value. One of the earliest mentioned artefacts – and presumably one of those with the highest material and artistic value – is an enamelled, gilded silver retable, which had most likely been owned by the Szapolyai family before it was transferred to its last known location, the Chapel of John the Merciful in Buda Castle.⁷ After the defeat of Mohács, queen consort Mary had all the treasures of the castle chapel, together with its relic, taken away. Some vestments were returned by Tamás Nádasdy the following year, while the rest found their way to Pozsony (Bratislava), and then to Nagyszombat (Trnava) or Vienna.⁸ The chapel, deprived of its treasures, had to be restored by the new ruler for it to be worthy of a royal residence. It was presumably at this time that Szapolyai had the paraments brought here that, according to tradition, came from his mother, Hedwig of Teschen (Cieszyn).

Yet, during the siege of Buda in 1541, the chapel was once again emptied: this time, Szapolyai's man, the loyal chaplain Péter, packed up the most valuable treasures, including this altar, and fled to Eperjes (Prešov) with two chests filled with paraments. His brother-in-law, Péter Pálczán, former chief justice of Buda, who defected to Ferdinand's side in 1541, had the treasures confiscated by the mayor of Eperjes, however, treasures which were later impounded in the

6 Samu Barabás, 'Békés Gáspár végrendelete', *Történelmi Tár* 14 (1891) 146.

7 For a detailed description of the chapel, see Nándor Knauz, 'A budai királyi várpalota kápolnája', *Magyar Tudományos Értekező* 1 (1862) 41–63, 333–341; Bernát L. Kumorovitz, 'A budai várkápolna és a Szent Zsigmond-prépostság történetéhez', *Tanulmányok Budapest Múltjából* 15 (1963) 109–151.

8 On the fate that awaited them, see Sándor Takáts, 'A budai várkápolna régi kincseiről', *Archaeologiai Értesítő* N.S. 23 (1903) 173–179; Knauz, 'A budai királyi várpalota'; Zsuzsanna Boda, 'Alamizsnás Szent János kultusza és annak emlékei Magyarországon', in Árpád Mikó and Katalin Sinkó (eds.), *Történelem-kép. Szemelvények múlt és művészet kapcsolatából Magyarországon*. (A Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Kiadványai, 2000/3.) Budapest, 2000, 220–230; Zuzana Ludiková, 'A budai egyházi kincsek sorsa Pozsonyban', in Orsolya Réthelyi et al. (eds.), *Habsburg Mária, Mohács özvegye. A királyné és udvara 1521–1531*. Budapest, 2005, 115–121.

name of the king by György Werner, castellan of the castle of Sáros (Šarišsky hrad).⁹ There is no mention of the treasures during the next couple of years, but in 1544 the city council tried to purchase them. The council submitted a request to King Ferdinand in which it asked the king to let the city of Eperjes have the paraments; in return they would cancel the king's debts. Upon the request, the king sent some commissioners to estimate the value of the treasure; they compiled a detailed list of the objects, which now also serves as a source of information on the altar.¹⁰

According to the inventory, on the enamelled silver retable the scene of the *Adoration of the Magi* was visible. In the composition the Star of Bethlehem was represented by a large amethyst, while the *Massacre of the Innocents* was depicted on the predella. The silver weighed twenty-nine and a half marks and two lots (i.e. more than 8 kg).¹¹ In April 1545, Ferdinand instead ordered that the metallic treasures be melted down and their value be put towards the construction of fortifications in Vienna and Komárom (Komarno). The vestments and some chalices could be retained by Eperjes, however. But this is not what happened: almost a decade later, on 8 March 1554, Ferdinand noted that all the ecclesiastical treasures of Buda had arrived in Vienna (*totaliter et sine defectu*). It is clear that, contrary to previous assumptions, neither the silver altarpiece nor the other precious metal objects were melted down. According to the acknowledgement of receipt, the silver altarpiece of the Magi can be unambiguously recognised among the paraments listed: *...item tabulam argenteam cum imaginibus trium magorum*.¹² It is therefore certain that this treasure arrived in Vienna in the mid-16th century. It is also there that we lose track of it: there is no mention of it in later inventories of the imperial treasury.

9 Sándor Takács, 'A budavári királyi Szt. János kápolna kincsei', *Archaeologiai Értesítő* N.S. 21 (1901) 287–288; József Bessenyei, 'Ami a budai tanács „árulása” után következett', *Tanulmányok Budapest Múltjából* 29 (2001) 24.

10 The documents relating to this matter: ÖStA AVA HKA HFU r. No. 1. Konv. 1544. fol. 40; *Ibid.*, r. No. 4. Konv. 1553. Sept. fols. 5–16; Konv. 1554. s. d. fols. 3–14.

11 ÖStA AVA HKA HFU r. No. 4. Konv. 1553. Sept. fol. 6v: *Erstlich ist ein ganntz Silbern vergolt Tafeln, in Gestalt aines Altars. Im corpus ist ain Marien bilt silbern vergolt, unnd in geschmelztem glaßwerckh, die hailigen drey Khunig so dem kindlen Jesu das Opffer furbringen, darüber ain silbern vergolt(er) stern darinnen ain Amatistel ainer halben arbes groß: undten im fuess des Taffelins ist der unschuldigen kindlein mordt auch in geschmelztem Glaswerk. Dieses Taffeln, so des Khünig Hansen Muetter gewesen, silber sambt dem schmeltzwerckh, welches die goltschmidt von kunst wegen an Silbers stat geachtet, wigt hungerisch 29 ½ Mark, 2 Loth.* Text cited (with minor alterations) by Takács, 'A budai várkápolna', 178. An important difference is that, in the source text, as opposed to the one described by Takács, it is not "carved" (*geschnitzt*), but rather "enamelled" (*geschmelzt*).

12 ÖStA AVA HKA HFU r. No. 4. Konv. 1554. s. d. fols. 3, 14. The text of the short inventory published from another source by Franz Kreytzi, 'Urkunden und Regesten aus dem K. u. K. Reichs-Finanz-Archiv', *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses in Wien* 5 (1887) Reg. 4223. LXVII.

HOW THE SZAPOLYAI TREASURY BECAME DISPERSED

A major part of Szapolyai's treasury is very likely to have remained intact even after 1540, since, shortly before the death of King John (Fig. 1), his son and successor John Sigismund (Fig. 2) was born. Even though items in the treasury were certainly removed even after Szapolyai's death,¹³ the large-scale dispersion of the treasury occurred, as is often the case, when the entire family died out.



FIGURE 1. ERHARD SCHÖN: PORTRAIT OF JOHN SZAPOLYAI, AROUND 1539, WOODCUT
INSCRIPTION: "JOHANS VON GOTTES GNADEN
KÖNIG ZU HUNGERN"

PHOTO © WIKIPEDIA COMMONS



FIGURE 2. NICOLO NELLI: PORTRAIT OF JOHN SIGISMUND, PRINCE OF OPOLE, 1566
INSCRIPTION: "IOHANNES SIGISM. HUNG. REGIS FILIUS
DUX OPOLIENSIS"

PHOTO © TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

In this case this happened in 1571, when King John II, a.k.a. John Sigismund, died. That the treasury became dispersed is confirmed by John Sigismund's will from 1567,¹⁴ in which he generously divides the items of his treasury among the members of his court, his Transylvanian supporters and his mother's Polish relatives. These items even included regalia: they ended up in the royal treasury of Krakow. Allegedly, Stephen Báthory had himself crowned with a crown passed down from John Sigismund, which was lost from the treasury sometime between 1611 and 1669. Another piece of regalia, decorated with four sapphire

13 By way of example, gifts sent to Poland by Queen Isabella are known: Divéky, 'Magyar-lengyel adatok', 185.

14 The will, originally written in Hungarian, has come down to us in a Latin translation. Its text was published in Gusztáv Heckenast, 'János Zsigmond végrendelete (1567)', in Géza Galavics, János Herner and Bálint Keserü (eds.), *Collectanea Tiburtiana. Tanulmányok Klaniczay Tibor tiszteletére*. Szeged, 1990, 155–169.

stones and four rubies, coined as the ‘Hungarian crown’ (to which a sceptre and an orb also belonged), can be shown to have been in the royal treasury as late as 1794, although by 1669 it was already damaged.¹⁵

The prince did not fail to mention in his will the representatives of the two great powers of the era, the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II and Sultan Selim II, and leave them some respectful presents: the objects bequeathed to Emperor Maximilian II can be traced for quite a while in various sources, because they feature not only in the text of the will but also in the delivery notes of the executors of the will (Mihály Csáky, Kristóf Hagymássy, Stanisław Nieżowski, Gáspár Bekes, Márton Andrassy, Farkas Bornemissza, Simon Miles, Miklós Telegdi).¹⁶ The most precious item was a large, wide *patera* (bowl) of pure gold, decorated with ‘pagan’ (i.e. antique) coins. The emperor was also bequeathed a sword with a beaded black velvet scabbard, and another pearl-decorated item, a sabre with purple velvet scabbard, which the sultan had sent to the prince in Torda (Turda). The empress was bequeathed various golden nuggets and minerals.

John Sigismund's golden cross

The register of John Szapolyai's movable assets also included two (golden) crosses, which must have been considered very valuable by those compiling the lists, because both of them are featured at the top of the register. The crosses were kept in separate cases. One was described as “in nomine domini”, and the other as “Navis”, which probably indicate the inscriptions on them. We also know that the cross mentioned first was decorated with diamonds, but unfortunately no information was revealed about the other. The fact that these items occupied a prominent place in the inventory nevertheless indicates that they were of great financial value, so they were presumably of pure gold. All this is unfortunately not enough to establish a direct connection between these crosses and those that appeared in the possession of John Sigismund, son of John Szapolyai. The connection cannot entirely be excluded, however.

The best-documented jewel, even if its real appearance is unknown, is the golden cross with diamonds mentioned in John Sigismund's will, which the prince left to the ‘country’. Even though the piece is mentioned in several sources, it is difficult to form an image of it because the descriptions are very brief. Moreover, as has been noted several times, it is likely that the information relating to a number of crosses have been confused in the records.¹⁷ John Sigismund's will,

¹⁵ Divéky, ‘Magyar–lengyel adatok’, 185–186.

¹⁶ ÖStA HHStA UA AA fasc. 97. Konv. A. fol. 53; Konv. B. fols. 19–21. The text was published in: EOE II. 480. The political background is analyzed in detail by Péter Szabó, ‘János Zsigmond végrendelete (1567) és végrehajtása (1571). A végrehajtásról szóló forráskiadás kérdése’, in Magdolna Baráth and Antal Molnár (eds.), *A történettudomány szolgálatában. Tanulmányok a 70 éves Gecsényi Lajos tiszteletére*. Budapest, 2012, 325–332.

¹⁷ After the first survey of sources on the golden cross, Sándor Szilágyi indicated that the descriptions may refer to two or even three objects: Sándor Szilágyi, ‘János Zsigmond aranykeresztje’, *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 13 (1879) 392. Tamás Kruppa studied the sources from

drawn up in 1567, contains quite accurate data, however: "His Majesty leaves the golden cross, which once belonged to Gritti, and which is decorated with nine large diamonds and four large rubies, to the people of the three nations and to his followers living in the Hungarian part of the country, in order for them to remember that His Majesty not only took care of them in his life, but also values them highly after his death. This valuable cross shall not therefore be placed in the hands of the person who shall be their lord and prince, but instead shall be kept for the needs of the country."¹⁸

Following the death of the prince in 1571, the executors acted pursuant to John Sigismund's will. The conditions of the ownership of the cross were included in the decision of the diet held on 24–31 May 1571, and these conditions were confirmed by Stephen Báthory: "...his grace, our deceased lord, ... left our country a golden cross, in which there are nine large diamonds and four rubies, which he left to our country and not to the next prince, which was placed at our disposal. ... we have given it to be bravely kept and guarded to honourable and wise individuals, namely Simon Miles, mayor of Szeben, and the sworn members of the council whom we have strongly obliged to keep it for the country in its entirety and without any alterations being made to it."¹⁹ After this, the cross was deposited at the city council of Szeben (Sibiu), from where it could only be taken out with the combined authorization of the estates. A receipt for its deposit was then drawn up by Simon Miles, mayor of Szeben, judge royal Augustinus Hedwigk, judge György Csukás and the sworn burghers on 4 June 1571. While doing so, not only were the gemstones counted (consistent with the previous counts), but the weight of the object was also recorded: it weighed two marks and three ounces, i.e. approximately half a kilogram, in gold.²⁰

We have thus learnt that the object, decorated with nine diamonds and four rubies, was especially valuable. As for its origin, it was revealed that it was not made by order of the Szapolyais: it can be assumed that John Sigismund obtained it from his father, who, according to the will, received it from governor

the point of view of a later owner, Sigismund Báthory, distinguishing data pertaining to four different crosses that had belonged to the Báthory family: Tamás Kruppa, 'Korona és kereszt. Báthory Zsigmond és a magyar koronázási jelvények', *Művészettörténeti Értesítő* 54 (2005) 87–91. Of these, only two are in fact likely to have originated from the Szapolyai family, so I focus on these in this essay. An overview of the sources on the cross is also given in Jolán Balogh, *A művészet Mátyás király udvarában. Vol. I: Adattár*. Budapest, 1966, 383–385.

18 *Crucem auream preciosam, quae fuit Gritti, cui novem magni gemanti et quatuor magni rubini insunt, Mgtas [Maiestas] eius legat regnicolis tribus nationibus, una cum fidelibus suis in Hungaria ditioni suae subiectis, ut agnoscant Mgti [Maiestati] eius non solum viventi ipsos curae fuisse: verum post mortem quoque clementi in respectu eos habuisse. Ita tamen, ut hanc crucem preciosam in manus illius, qui dominus aut princeps futurus est, non dent, sed ad regni necessitatem conseruent.* Heckenast, 'János Zsigmond végrendelete', 159.

19 EOE II. 473.

20 *Ibid.*, 476–477: *Crucem illam auream novem preciosos lapillos adamentes, item quatuor rubinos continentem et totaliter una cum lapillis et auro marcas duas et piseta tria ponderantem.* Presumably measured in Szeben marks (219.45g).

Lodovico Gritti, who was killed in 1534 in Medgyes (Medias). Later records trace the precious object back even further in time.

The chronicle of István Szamosközy (*Rerum Ungaricarum Libri*), when dealing with the death of John Sigismund, also mentions the golden cross decorated with gemstones that the prince left to the country provided it might only be taken out of the treasury with the joint consent of the estates and for the benefit of the country.²¹ The historiographer provides much complementary information on the object. On the one hand, he defines its value: to the best of his knowledge, it was worth 45,000 gold coins. On the other hand, he also provides us with more information on the origin of the treasure. As he understood it, the cross had been in the possession of the Hungarian kings, and was passed down from Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund to King Matthias, whose son, John Corvinus, presented it to Domonkos Kálmáncsehi, provost of Székesfehérvár, who performed his father's burial ceremony.²² Subsequently, without providing any details as to the circumstances of the next change of ownership, it describes how the treasure came into the possession of King John, from whom it was obtained by Lodovico Gritti. After Gritti was killed, the cross was returned to Szapolyai, and was then passed down to his son. At the time the chronicle was written, Szamosközy believed it to be the property of Kristóf Báthory's son, Prince Sigismund, since, as it so happened, the council had annulled John Sigismund's will, and, at the diet of Medgyes, on the basis of his merits and services rendered, conferred the cross on the prince.²³

Szamosközy's last sentence was later corrected in the manuscript. According to the correction, Báthory received the cross as compensation for his military expenses: "Prior to Várad's invasion by the Turks, in order to arrange a garrison to protect Várad, the country sold it to Sigismund Báthory for money in such a way that they did not have any money." In a note at the bottom of the page the author provides further sources in connection with the golden cross: *de aurea*

21 *Crucem auream solidam, gemmisque preciosis spectabilem, ne pluris fiscum quam rempublicam faceret, regno uniuerso legavit testamento, hac lege, ut ea nonnisi difficili ancipitque discrimine imminente, in usum publicae salutis e gazophylacio depromeretur. Quadraginta quinque millibus nummum aureum aestimata fertur. Eam ex Sigismundi Caesaris et Regis Ungariae gaza ad Mathiam Regem devolutam, Joannes Corvinus Mathiae filius, Dominico Albensis Basilicae antistiti, qui sacra expiatoria divi Regis Mathiae manibus peregerat, donaverat Bonfinio tradente. Inde in potestatem Regum, qui per seriem successerunt redacta; tandem ad Ludovicum Grittium thesaurarium, sive a Joanne Rege donata illi, sive fraude acquisita, pervenerat. Eo ad Megyes oppidum trucidato, iterum ad Regem Joannem, subinde uero ad filium heredem descendit. Nunc potitur ea Sigismundus Princeps, divi Christophori filius, abrogata ex senatus consulto testamenti cautione: in publicoque ordinum ad Megyes conventu, bene merito Principi virtutis et honoris ergo donata est. Sándor Szilágyi (ed.), Szamosközy István történeti maradványai, 1566–1603. Vol. I. 1566–1586. (Monumenta Hungariae Historica, II; Scriptores, 21.) Budapest, 1876, 113–114.*

22 This latter piece of information originated from Bonfini, who did indeed mention a cross adorned with gemstones, valued at precisely 45,000 gold coins (*crux solida gemmataque, ex obrisa affabre facta*). Quoted by Szilágyi, 'János Zsigmond', 387.

23 According to the sources, this gift was made in 1599, so Szamosközy must have written this part of the chronicle sometime after 1599.

*cruce Epsilon 12. et in testamento Joannis Regis.*²⁴ This latter source document is clearly making a reference to Prince John Sigismund's aforementioned will, whereas, as we have already seen, no data regarding the estimated value or weight of the item can have originated from it.

Sándor Szilágyi tells us that 'Epsilon', the other source mentioned in the note at the bottom of the page, indicates one of the fonds of the archives of Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia), which, based on the references, contained charters relating to affairs with the Porte.²⁵ It cannot be stated with all certainty, but the document in question may have concerned the meeting in Zimony (Zemun) in 1566, during which John Sigismund visited Süleyman I in his tent. At least, a golden cross decorated with gemstones is regularly mentioned in accounts of that event. According to the account given by Szamosközy, at the time of his visit the prince was wearing a highly valuable pectoral cross. The piece of jewellery was not described in detail, however. The historical work of Farkas Bethlen (1639–1679), a follower of Szamosközy, incorporates both the description of the object in the will of 1567 (according to which the jewel was decorated with nine diamonds and four rubies) and the theory of the provenance presented in Szamosközy's historic account (according to which the object mentioned in the will, and given first to Szeben and then to Sigismund Báthory, originated from the treasury of Sigismund, Holy Roman Emperor).²⁶

The question is whether or not other sources can confirm that at the meeting in Zimony the prince was wearing the object mentioned in the will, and that the golden cross described in the will was indeed a pectoral cross, for neither John Sigismund's will nor later documents contain any reference to this.

The latter question might be resolved by a lost drawing by István Szamosközy: according to Sándor Szilágyi, not only did the historiographer provide a detailed description of the item, but he even reproduced it in a drawing in 1598, one year before it was handed over by the city of Szeben to Sigismund Báthory. Unfortunately, Szilágyi did not publish Szamosközy's drawing, only a written description of it, and the sheet with the graphics has since been lost. According

24 Szilágyi (ed.), *Szamosközy*, I. XXIV.

25 *Ibid.*, XXVI.

26 *...de collo appendit torquem eximii operis margaritis & gemmis adornatum, de quo pendebat crux aurea novem Adamantibus & quatuor Carbunculis ad angulos dictae crucis dispositis, qui non erant quidem ex arte politi, sed rudi tantum opera insiti, pulchritudine tamen a natura data, & pretio eximio in admirationem sui omnes rapiebant, (de qua inferius fusius) quae ex gaza Sigismundi olim Romanorum Caesaris simul & Pannoniae Regis ad illum devenerat, reliqua vero ornamenta ex gazis praedecessorum suorum tam Hungariae quam Poloniae Regum habuit. Wolffgangi de Bethlen, Historia de rebus Transsylvanicis. Vol. II. Cibinii, 1782, 108. The data, complemented with a detailed provenance taken from Szamosközy, was repeated in his account from 1571: *ibid.*, II. 208. In the notes for the year 1599 he stresses that the cross given to Báthory was the same as that mentioned in John Sigismund's will: *ibid.*, 1785, IV. 205. On the basis of this work, Miklós Jankovich wrote about the cross in: 'A villogó Drága Köveknek Esmérete, és azokban lelt gyönyörködése Eleinknek', *Tudományos Gyűjtemény* 5 (1821) 45–46. However, he contests the provenance from Sigismund, claiming that John Corvinus could only have given away objects that originated from his father, not pieces of the royal treasury.*

to his description, the nine diamonds were not on the cross itself, but rather on nine removable rings attached to the cross, while the four uncut rubies were on the arms of the cross. The cross had at the time an estimated value of 80,000 thalers. On the rear side of the drawing, the following 17th-century inscription could allegedly be read: “Left by King Louis, as it is written.”²⁷ Based on the number and type of gemstones it is almost certain that the drawing was made of the cross that had been left behind by John Sigismund: the description is more likely to be of a piece of jewellery, like a pectoral cross, than of an altar cross. It is striking, though, that no mention is made of the provenance from Sigismund to Matthias to John Corvinus, etc.: the 17th-century recorder only seems to have known that the object belonged to ‘King Louis’ (II), and even this he did not state with any certainty.

The detailed description of the meeting in Zimony in 1566 is, in theory, known to us from the entries in a journal attributed to a certain György (or Gergely) Bánffi.²⁸ Allegedly, he attended the meeting of 29 June 1566, when John Sigismund visited the sultan in his tent. He provides a detailed description of the prince’s attire: “...around his neck, there was a cross, adored with a new diamond and four large marvellous garnets, as they are called, more beautiful than anything else; the goldsmiths estimated a long time ago to be worth one hundred thousand gold coins.”²⁹ The publishers, József Kemény and István Nagyajtai Kovács, reputedly came across the text in the manuscript of Dávid Rozsnyai (1641–1718), interpreter for Prince Michael Apafi (1661–1690), but the ‘original’ text, Bánffi’s manuscript from around 1566, has not been discovered, so its credibility cannot yet be confirmed.

The phrase “new diamond”, used to describe the decoration of the jewel is, however, rather strange: the value of precious stones is usually determined by their size and quantity, not by their age. As seen earlier, the descriptions in the records that can be regarded as credible (such as John Sigismund’s will, drawn up hardly a year later, the decision of the diet of 1571, or the acknowledgement

27 Szilágyi, ‘János Zsigmond’, 385–386.

28 The author of the text is still disputed. The writer was identified by György Aranka in 1796 as Gergely Bánffi, who travelled as a member of John Sigismund’s entourage: ‘1556 [sic] Bánffi Gergely, Ifjabb János Király uttya Szulimánhoz’, in György Aranka (ed.), *A’ Magyar Nyelv-Mivelő Társaság’ Munkáinak Első Darabja*. Szeben, 1796, 192. The publishers of the journal also took it from him: Gergely Bánffi, ‘Második János Magyarország’ választott királyának második Szulejman török császárhoz menetele’ rendje és módja (1566)’, in József Kemény and István Nagyajtai Kovács (eds.), *Erdélyország történetei’ tára. Vol. I. 1540–1600*, Kolozsvár, 1837, 33–49. On the basis of the historical facts, József Bessenyei reached the conclusion that it is more likely that György Bánffi was the author, because he, as opposed to Gergely, was indeed a member of the inner circle around John Sigismund, and was also present at the meeting with the sultan in his tent: József Bessenyei (ed.), *Zay Ferenc: János Király árutatása, Kis Péter: Magyarázat, [Bánffy György]: Második János ... török császárhoz menetele*. Budapest, 1993, 115–116. Most recently, Miklós Latzkovits has argued in favour of Gergely Bánffi’s being the author: Miklós Latzkovits, ‘Második Jánosnak a török császárhoz, sultán Sulimanhoz való menetelinek megírása’, *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 114 (2010) 148.

29 Bánffi, ‘Második János’, 42.

of receipt by the city of Szeben) always mention “nine” diamonds. While it is difficult to find an explanation for the difference, there is the assumption that the alleged ‘eye-witness’ was not relying on his personal experiences at the time of writing, but rather on the Latin record, as there is only a one-letter difference between the Latin words ‘*novem*’ and ‘*novum*’, whereas it is impossible to confuse the Hungarian words ‘*kilenc*’ (meaning ‘nine’) and ‘*új*’ (meaning ‘new’). This raises certain doubts, however, as to whether or not the journal writer was indeed present in the sultan’s tent and was actually able to describe the piece of jewellery on the basis of personal experience.³⁰

We know several other versions of the description of the meeting in 1566. In 1793, István Katona published a Latin version. Unfortunately, it was not the original text, but a Latin translation of a Hungarian manuscript belonging to Sámuel Thordai (1731–1801).³¹ Since Thordai usually worked from the manuscripts written by Dávid Rozsnyai, one would rightly expect the appearance of the same phrases. Yet the part describing the jewels of the prince is entirely absent from this version.³²

There is a strong indication that an original work, written in Latin, did exist: the earliest version that I know of – and one that is different from Rozsnyai’s

30 A recently recovered copy of the journal entry, made in 1715 (OSZK, Kézirattár, Oct. Lat. 459), is presented in Latzkovits, ‘Második Jánosnak’, 138–148. Apart from several Latinisms, Latzkovits also draws our attention to a mistake similar to the one above: among the names listed at the end of the entry, it is the name not of Gergely Bánffi but of György Bánffi that is featured. Hence the version published in 1837 contains yet another mistake that may be due to a misreading of a Latin word: while it is difficult to confuse the Hungarian name György with Gergely, it is easy to read Gregorius in place of Georgius (*ibid.*, 140). After comparing the different versions of the text, Latzkovits eventually reached the conclusion that an ‘ancient’ Latin text may have existed, and he definitely contested the idea that the writer of the journal had been an ‘eye-witness’ to the meeting in the sultan’s tent.

31 I have reviewed the following editions: OSZK, Kézirattár, Fol. Hung. 1130 (copy by Sámuel Thordai, made in 1704 in Fogaras, with a dedication to Francis II Rákóczi); Fol. Hung. 2214 (copy by Sámuel Thordai, made around 1763, with dedication to János Szász, the judge royal); Fol. Hung. 2684 (copy from the 19th century, with dedication to György Bánffy, governor of Transylvania, most likely on the basis of a manuscript by Thordai); Fol. Hung. 2685 (copy by Thordai, also with a dedication to János Szász, undated); Fol. Hung. 2688 (copy made to Pál Festetics in 1776 on the basis of an edition from 1701, dedicated to István Apor and attributed to Thordai, which, in turn, according to a note in it, was based on a translation prepared in 1697 by Dávid Rozsnyai and dedicated to István Apor). Thordai thus prepared several copies, but seems to have based his work on Rozsnyai’s: in all the volumes mentioned, we can find the phrases “new diamond” or “new diamonds” in the description of the piece of jewellery. The title of Rozsnyai’s original work (*Vicissitudines rerum formidabilium*) was in Latin, yet in the dedications presumably written by him he claims that he translated the texts in the volumes during his stay in Constantinople from *Turkish* (and not from Latin) into Hungarian. Another problem, whose solution cannot be given within the scope of this present essay, is that two of the manuscripts attributed to Thordai date back to the early 18th century (1701, 1704), while he was not in fact born until 1731.

32 Sámuel Thordai, ‘Profectionis serenissimi principis Joannis II. electi regis Hungariae ad Sulimanum, imperatorem Turcarum, modus et series, anno Christi 1566. factae et celebratae’, in István Katona (ed.), *Historia critica Regum Hungariae, Stirpis Austriacae*. Budae, 1793, 207–220. It should be found on page 215, but these two paragraphs are missing.

version – is the account by Zsigmond Kiss from 1666, which has come down to us in Michael Apafi's letter book (*Az Erdélyi Méltóságos Fejedelemlnek, es Magyar Ország Választott Királynának második Jánosnak a Török Császárhoz Szultán Szulimánhoz való menetelinek meg írása. Mely volt Anno 1566* [A Written Account of John II His Majesty the Prince of Transylvania and Elected King of Hungary's Visit to the Turkish Emperor Sultan Süleyman. Which Took Place in 1566]), which clearly states that the text is a translation from Latin: "Translated from Latin during the visit of Michael Apafi, his Majesty the Prince, to Érsekújvár". In this version of the description of the jewel, only one diamond and four rubies are mentioned: "Around his neck there was a cross, and in it a diamond and four large garnets – whose beauty and wonderous shine were admired by all, and that goldsmiths had valued at one hundred thousand gold coins."³³

As mentioned earlier, it is not known exactly which Latin source the 17th-century Hungarian translators (Zsigmond Kiss, Dávid Rozsnyai) used, but it is clear the texts contain no additional information compared to the description of the journey of King John in the historic epic written in Latin by a Transylvanian Saxon pastor, Christian Schesaeus (1535–1585), which was published in Wittenberg in 1571. The fragment that begins with *Regis Vngariae ad Imperatorem profectio* can be found in one of the songs (*Historia de bello Pannonico*) published after the narratives from 1540–1552 of the four songs in *Ruinae Pannonicae*, and yet, chronologically, it cannot be linked to them: *Crux Adamante rigens circumdabat aurea collum / Hanc simul ambibat quadruplex Carbunculus, olim / Iuaicio, centum reputatus millibus aureis*.³⁴ It appears, therefore, that no mention of the nine diamonds was made in the earliest sources. It is likely that this detail was included in the accounts as late as in the 17th century, following the work of Farkas Bethlen, and this was carried over through unintentional alterations (text deterioration) in translations that can be traced back to Rozsnyai, one of which was published by József Kemény and István Nagyajtai Kovács.

Szamosközy also claimed that the golden cross left by John Sigismund to the country (on the proviso that it be kept by the council of Szeben) later came into the possession of Sigismund Báthory. According to historical sources, this occurred in 1599, at the diet of Medgyes, when the estates requested the city of Szeben to return the cross, and then gave it to Sigismund Báthory as compensation for the 45,000 gold coins of his own money that he had spent on the Ottoman wars. The council of Szeben was notified on 26 March 1599 of the cross being reclaimed, and a description of it was once again provided. Yet, on this occasion, it was not described as one adorned with diamonds and

33 OSZK, Kézirattár, Quart. lat. 3987. The Hungarian originals of the texts quoted: *Méltóságos Fejedelem Apafi Mihály Ersek Ujvár alá menetelekör fordítottatott Deákból ... A Nyakáb(an) való egy Kereszt a benne való Adamás Kő, és négy nagy Carbunculusok, – Szépségekkal, és tsudálatos fenységgekkal mindeneiktől csudáltat(na)k való, ezt már az előtt az Ötvesek Száz Ezer Aranyra betsülték való.*

34 Christianus Schesaeus, *Ruinae Pannonicae Libri Quatuor*. Witebergae, 1571; Christianus Schesaeus, *Opera quae supersunt omnia*. (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Medii Recentisque Aevorum. Series Nova, 4.) Ed. Franciscus Csonka. Budapest, 1979, 284. Liber IX. lines 547–549.

rubies, but as one decorated with pearls and gems (*margaritis gemmis et lapidibus pretiosis ornatam*). Hence even in connection with this object the suspicion could arise that it is not the same as the one named in the will.

Pearls have not yet been mentioned, but one should not forget that on this occasion the recorders did not and could not see the cross, as they had just sent to Szeben for it. The jewel arrived in Medgyes four days later, and was handed over to Sigismund Báthory on 30 March 1599.³⁵ All the recorders knew was that it was extremely valuable (worth at least 45,000 gold coins), so they had every reason to believe it was adorned with pearls and other gemstones. On the other hand, the detailed description of the pre-history of the object, according to which the country once entrusted the judge royal, the mayor and the council of Szeben to keep the cross, and the fact that it was now their common wish to recover it, in my opinion leaves no doubt that the source is describing the same object that was deposited in the city of Szeben in 1571.³⁶

In his memoirs, even Tamás Borsos (1566–1634), chief justice of Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş) at the time, mentioned the event. He clearly states that this is the very same cross that was bequeathed by “young King John” to the country, and he also confirmed that it was used to repay a debt of 45,000 gold coins to Báthory. Borsos saw the cross with his own eyes, and he even claimed that he had held it in his own hands, so he can be regarded as a credible eyewitness. Nevertheless, it has to be taken into consideration that he wrote his memoirs a decade and a half after the event took place. He did not see any pearls, either, but according to him it was adorned with five diamonds and eight rubies.³⁷ Even though the proportions of the gemstones do not exactly correspond to those in previous sources (nine diamonds, four rubies), the type of stones and their total amount is the same (thirteen): this mistake is perhaps

³⁵ EOE IV. 81.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 284: *Ob hoc crucem illam auream margaritis gemmis et lapidibus pretiosis ornatam, quae alias apud manus prudentum et circumsectorum iudicis regii magistri civium caeterorumque juratorum consulum civitates Cibiniensis tuitioris conservationis gratia in eadem civitate Cibiniensi per nos regnicolas reposita habebatur ad humillimae supplicationis nostrae instantiam a sua Serenitate pro omnimoda satisfactione acceptare eidem suae Serenitati deputavimus. Qua quidem cruce per eosdem iudicem regium et magistrum civium et senatores Cibinienses ex commissione nostra, huc ad praedictam civitatem Megyes allata atque adducta, nobisque in (frequenti) regnicolari conventu nostro in ecclesia parochiali in eadem civitate fundata personaliter existentes manibus nostris assignata atque restituta. Super huiusmodi restitutione et assignatione dictae crucis aureae prefatos iudicem regium et magistrum civium caeterosque cives et senatores Cibinienses quietos expeditos et modis omnibus absolutos commisimus atque reddidimus harum nostrarum vigore et testimonio literarum mediante.*

³⁷ László Kocziány (ed.), *Vásárhelytől a Fényes Portáig. Emlékiratok, levelek*. Bukarest, 1972², 46–47. “...the cross which the young King John left in his will to the country, the country gave it in exchange for forty-five thousand gold coins to Sigismund Báthory, who messaged the country that it was not worth it, yet he would take it. This cross had stood in Szeben since the times of the young King John, from there it was taken and given to Sigismund Báthory. The cross was in my hands, too; it was not big, because it could fit into one’s fist, but there were thirteen stones in it, five diamonds and eight rubies; it was a really beautiful piece, as such a small piece was worth forty-five thousand gold coins.” Earlier publication: József Kemény and István Nagyajtai Kovács (eds.), *Erdélyország történetei’ tára*. Vol. II. 1566–1613. Kolozsvár, 1845, 22–23.

explained by him not remembering exactly after so many years. He said the cross was the size of the palm of a hand, which suggests that the object in question was indeed a pectoral cross and not a crucifix to be placed on an altar.

An alternative explanation for the provenance of the cross given to Sigismund Báthory was provided by a senator of Szeben, Matthias Miles (1639–1686), born in Medgyes, who mentioned the object in his work written in 1670. According to his account, it was Sigismund Báthory who requested this treasure, described as “of no use to them”, from the city, in exchange for the costs he had sustained: the object was a two-barred cross made of pure gold and adorned with precious stones. It was valued at more than 80,000 forints, and did not come into the city’s possession by way of John Sigismund’s will, but was a votive gift from Queen Isabella and King John to the Saxons of Szeben for honouring God. After Báthory received it, it was placed on the altar of Medgyes church.³⁸ It is thus certain that Miles was referring to an altar cross. Even though the historical account given by Miles was written well after the event, his information does not necessarily lack credibility. The majority of the 16th-century information he used comes from Schesaeus, and the unpublished songs of *Ruinae Pannonicae* have come down to us in his transcripts. It cannot therefore be ruled out that another cross, one in the shape of a two-barred altar cross decorated with precious stones, also came into the possession of Sigismund Báthory; neither is it impossible that the cross had previously been owned by the Szapolyais, although, considering what has been previously stated, he probably did not obtain it at the diet of Medgyes.³⁹

Based on the aforementioned sources it follows that John Sigismund had a pectoral cross decorated with four rubies and some diamonds, which he was wearing at the meeting of 1566 and which is probably the same as the golden cross adorned with nine diamonds and four rubies that he bequeathed in his will to the country and that he can certainly have traced back through

38 Matthias Miles, *Siebenbürgischer Würg-Engel oder Chronicalischer Anhang des 16 Seculi nach Christi Geburt, aller theils in Siebenbürgen, theils Ungern ... füngelauffener Geschichten*. Hermanstadt, 1670, 124: *Es sey nehmlig bey den Möghafften H. Sachsen solche Ihnen vnnothwendige Kleynode verhanden / welcher Preiß villeicht so vill würde machen / daß er seine Schulden damit mögte entrichten. Dieselbe Kleinode aber war ein verdoppeltes Creütz / sehr köstlig von klahrem Gold / vnnd villem Edelgestein außgeziehet / so über fl. 80000 / wurde geschetzet; Vnd war von Isabella vnd Johanne II. in Hermanstadt den Sachsen dahin gegeben / vnd zu sonderligen Danckmahl zu Gott / Ihr viller Angst / vnnd außgestandenen Vnglücks in ihrem Elend vnnd Wallfahrt verehret worden: Dasselbe wurdh damahls öffentlig dar gebracht / vnnd in der Medwischer Kirchen für den Altar niedergelegt von H. Alberio Hueth (so in allen Sachen Sigismundo willfährtiger / als gnug / war) daher hats Sigismundus empfangen.*

39 One should also give due consideration to the cross weighing 6 marks and 21½ ounces, i.e. more than one and a half kilograms, ordered by voivode Alexander from the goldsmiths of Szeben, but which he never received. For this, see G[ustav] Seiverth, ‘Das goldene Kreuz Johann Sigismund Zapolya’s’, *Transsilvania. Beiblatt des Siebenbürger Boten, Wochenschrift für siebenbürgische Landeskunde, Literatur und Landeskultur* n. F. 2:4 (1862) 41–46. It is certainly not identical to the pectoral cross of John Sigismund, as was clearly stated even by Jolán Balogh in her *Művészeti*, 385. Judging by its weight, it is more likely to have been an altar cross.

his father to Lodovico Gritti. This view is supported by the fact that the same number of rubies is mentioned in the description of both objects, and that it was decorated with diamonds, even though not all the sources mention their exact number. Furthermore, there are other circumstances, for example the drawing by Szamosközy and the description by Borsos, that suggest that the cross mentioned in the will was indeed a piece of jewellery. Despite the fact that the various sources contain different estimated values for the cross, and that the document from the diet of 1599 mentions pearls instead of diamonds in the description of the treasure, given my knowledge of the pre-history of the object, I would still argue that the item handed over to Sigismund Báthory at the diet of Medgyes was identical to those described earlier. It must also be added that, once the estates requested a cross that had been left behind by John Sigismund and documented with an acknowledgement of receipt, the council of Szeben could hardly have given back *another* cross instead of the real one. It can nevertheless be considered likely that Sigismund Báthory also obtained a larger altar cross that was a two-barred cross decorated with unclarified gemstones.

One thing that remains unexplained is what source of information Szamosközy used: according to him, the golden cross had originated from the Hungarian royal treasury, more specifically from Sigismund, Holy Roman Emperor. This provenance did actually appear in other sources at around the same time Szamosközy worked on his historical account (around 1601–1603), yet this was in connection with other jewellery/crosses and not in connection with John Sigismund's pectoral cross.

In his two letters to Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II, István Hosszútóthy, a councillor to the emperor, mentioned a piece of jewellery with diamonds, which the oral tradition traced back to Sigismund, Holy Roman Emperor, and which he wished to obtain from the Csáky family.⁴⁰ According to the legend, however, this jewel did not come into the possession of John Szapolyai through the usual (yet not very well documented) path of King Matthias–John Corvinus, etc., but rather through István Szapolyai, the count of Szepes, and eventually ended up as the property of Prince John Sigismund. He in turn gave it to Gáspár Bekes and entrusted him to take it to Princess Maria Anna of Bavaria as a betrothal gift. The prince passed away before his request could be carried out, however, so the piece of jewellery remained in the possession of Bekes. Following the death of Bekes, it came to be owned by his widow, Anna Sárkány, who brought it to her new marriage with Ferenc Wesselényi; eventually it was inherited by her daughter Anna Wesselényi, wife of István Csáky. The delivery of the inheritance was, however, impeded: because of the size of the diamond, the 'antique' had become especially valuable, and at this moment in time it was not in the hands of the Csáky family, because – as we know from a letter by Hosszútóthy – it had been pawned, and only István Csáky had the right to redeem it. Nevertheless

40 ÖStA HHStA UA AA fasc. 144. Konv. C. fols. 10–102 and 112–113 (dated Dombrád, 10 November 1603, and Kassa, 9 December 1603). The second letter is published by Sándor Szilágyi, 'Egy régi ékszer történetéhez', *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 13 (1879) 191–193.

he promised that, when redeemed, he would have it transported, together with other beautiful objects in the possession of the Csáky family, to Prague without any delay.

Unfortunately, Hosszútóthy himself did not see the jewel, so he did not provide us with an exact description of it. We do not even know whether or not the piece was registered in the treasury of Emperor Rudolf II. Otherwise, the story of the piece of diamond jewellery is in several respects similar to that of the aforementioned unicorn pendant, also decorated with diamonds, possessed by King John, which, as mentioned earlier, came into the ownership of Bekes, and subsequently into that of his widow. Since Hosszútóthy mentions no unicorn in connection with the jewel he describes, however, these facts cannot as yet be applied to the piece owned by Csáky.

The prominent provenance described above did not only appear in connection with Csáky's jewel. An altar cross that appeared in 1601 was also traced back to the treasury of the Hungarian kings. Its description is very much similar to the information provided by Matthias Miles, except that this appeared not in the possession of Sigismund Báthory but in that of István Báthory, judge royal (1555–1605). Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II also took deliberate measures to obtain this piece: in his letter sent from Prague, dated 20 October 1601, he called upon Báthory to hand over the golden cross that “undoubtedly” originated from the Hungarian royal treasury, and which contained remnants of the holy cross and relics from other saints, to field paymaster Joseph Ganz.⁴¹ He also requested that any other rare and old objects worthy of kings that might be in Báthory's possession be sent to him with some of his loyal men so that he could have a look at them. He added that, should he find pleasure in an object, they would agree on a price; should he not, he would return it.

There are two sources from which we know that Báthory did indeed send the cross to Prague. It is attested to on one hand by István Hosszútóthy's letter sent from Vienna in July 1602, in which he informs the emperor, *inter alia*, that Mihály Bay, Báthory's *familiaris* (servant), had arrived in Vienna with the cross and would arrive in Prague within a couple of days.⁴² On the other hand, István Báthory's will of 1603 also reveals that the golden cross, which the emperor wished to see, was still in the hands of Mihály Bay in Dévény (Devín). So the

41 ÖStA AVA FHKA HFU r. No. 71. Konv. November 1601, fols. 107–111. The content of the letter addressed to Báthory and sent on 20 October 1601 is presented in: Sándor Takáts, 'Régi királyi kincsek Báthory István birtokában', *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 21 (1901) 445–446. The description of the cross is: ...*Crucem auream Sacro ligno, alijsq. reliquijs Sanctorum inclusis, preciosam, et proculdubio à praedecessoribus nostris, Hungariae Regibus, ex thesauro suo ad familiam tuam translata...* ÖStA AVA FHKA HFU r. No. 71. Konv. November 1601, fol. 110r. Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf was later informed by Hosszútóthy about a highly valuable chasuble adorned with beads, so on 14 November 1601 he again wrote to Báthory and informed him of the arrival of Hosszútóthy, instructing him to hand him over the chasuble without fail (*ibid.*, fols. 108r–109v).

42 The letter is published in: Kruppa, 'Korona és kereszt', 90.

emperor either did not want it, or they could not agree on a price.⁴³ In his will, Báthory also gave instructions regarding the future of the object. He wished to leave the cross (which at the time was left with András Gyulaffy's children as a guarantee) to his niece Erzsébet Báthory, wife of Ferenc Nádasdy: "... I have one golden cross, which the Emperor requested, and which now is in Dévény with Mihály Bay. The cross belongs to András Gyulaffy's children, because I owe them two and a half thousand forints. I gave it to their father as a guarantee, and this cross I leave to my niece, Mrs. Ferenc Nádasdy, Erzsébet Báthory and her children..."⁴⁴

In all probability, the cross was passed on from Erzsébet Báthory to her daughter Anna Nádasdy, wife of Miklós VI Zrínyi (d. 1625), who died childless in December 1617. Pursuant to the law, the objects that she had brought into the marriage as dowry, or had acquired by way of inheritance, were to be given back to her family. It was on these grounds that Anna's brother, Pál Nádasdy, claimed the objects on 21 December 1617.⁴⁵ Among the objects reclaimed we can find some pieces that recognizably originate from the treasury of the Báthorys: a "golden cross with stones", a "tapestry with golden pearls" and a "golden lion". It is likely that Pál Nádasdy was able to agree with Zrínyi on the treasures of the estate, and he may have become the next owner of these objects, because his son, Ferenc Nádasdy, mentioned exactly these items in his will dated 1663 when referring to them as treasures that had been passed to him by his ancestors: "Regarding the movable assets left by my ancestors..., nothing more than a cross and a rather torn beaded tapestry came in my hands."⁴⁶

43 It is revealed in the will that Báthory had already pawned the cross with András Gyulaffy, so he could only have presented it to the emperor after redeeming it from his heirs. For that, however, he would have needed several thousand forints in cash, but Rudolf II was more keen on 'paying' in the form of donations and privileges.

44 *...egi arani kereztem uagion, kit chazar fel keretett uala, Bay Mihalnal uagion most Deubenben, az kerezt az Giulaffi Andras gyermekje, mert en önekik harmadfel ezer forintall uagiok ados, atioknak uetettem uolt zalagbann, meli arani kerezet Nadasdi Ferencne hugomnak, Batori Örsebet azzonnak es gyermekinek hagiok...* Veronika Vadász, *Ecsedi Báthory István végrendelete 1603*. (Fiatl Filológusok Füzetei. Kora Újkor, 1.) Szeged, 2002, 68. The amount of the pledge is irrelevant to the value of the object, because it was common practice to pawn objects below their real value. This was a kind of guarantee that the owner intended to redeem the pawned object.

45 The inventory (*Zrini es Nadasdi Urak dolga az Marha felöl* [The agreement between Lord Zrínyi and Lord Nádasdy regarding the goods]) was published by Gabriella Reichardt, 'Nádasdy Anna csejteit tárházának jegyzéke 1617-ből', in Gábor Ujváry and Réka Lengyel (eds.), *Lymbus 2012–2013. Magyarságtudományi Forrásközlémények*. Budapest, 2014, 96–99. However, the title of her essay (Inventory of Anna Nádasdy's treasury in Csejte) is somewhat misleading: The list was not made of the precious items of the treasury of Csejte (Čachtice), but was a joint list of several other inventories of objects that Anna Nádasdy had already received from there, mainly as dowry (or objects that she took by force after the death of her mother), which objects the relatives were, at this point, claiming back.

46 *Az mi pedig az őstől maradt ingó marhát illeti..., az egy keresztnél és igen megtépett gyöngyös kárpitnál több az én kezemben nem jutott.* Gyula Schönherr, 'Nádasdy Ferencz országbíró végrendelete, 3. rész', *Történelmi Tár* 11 (1888) 582.

The beaded tapestry of King Matthias

The aforementioned beaded tapestry is also likely to have originated from a royal treasury, and even though possession of John Szapolyai cannot be ruled out, it can be assumed that it came into the ownership of the Báthory family in another way. The first person to mention the tapestry was János Drágffy, judge royal, who drew up his will a couple of days prior to the Battle of Mohács (on 27 August 1526), in which he partly confirmed the instructions of his earlier will, written in Erdőd (Ardud), but he also made a special mention of a “golden tapestry” worth 40,000 forints, which his father, Bertalan Drágffy, had received as a gift from King Matthias. Pursuant to his verbal promise made earlier in Buda, he left this tapestry to John Szapolyai, provided that, upon his death, Szapolyai would protect his family and keep his property for his children.⁴⁷

Although we have no real reason to doubt that the last wish of the judge royal was not respected and followed, it still seems that no similar tapestry appeared among the possessions of the Szapolyai family, whereas one did appear in the possession of the heirs of Gáspár Drágffy, one of Drágffy’s sons. Gáspár Drágffy passed away in 1545, and within a decade his two sons had also died, so the male line of the family died out. As a special favour from John Sigismund and Isabella, Drágffy’s widow, Anna Báthory of Somlyó, could keep the property of her late husband and could even carry it into her second marriage, with György Báthory of Ecsed. The tapestry, woven with golden threads and decorated with beads, appeared again in György Báthory’s will of 1569: “Also the beaded tapestry I leave to Erzsébet.”⁴⁸ That this item of textile was the same as that originating from the treasury of King Matthias was established by a list of items from Erzsébet Báthory’s dowry, drawn up a couple of years later: *Item aulea Mathiae regis aurata et gemmata*.⁴⁹ Its fate was identical to that of the golden cross mentioned above. According to Ferenc Nádasdy’s will, as we have seen, it was in quite bad condition as early as 1663. I know of no later mention of this object.

47 Alajos Mednyánszky, ‘Drágffy Jánosnak 1526. esztendőben Mohácsi Táborból kelt utolsó rendelése’, *Tudományos Gyűjtemény* 8 (1818) 30: Az aranyos kárpitot, melyet Ő felsége Mátyás király ada Atyámnak, Drágffy Bertalannak vére hullásáért és hűséges szolgáltyáért negyven ezer forintokban, hagyom az én Uramnak, atyámfjának Szepesi Jánosnak, erdélyi vajdának ... Budán Sz. György napján ígértem vala neki illy ok alatt: hogy ha az Isten engemet előtte ki talál e’ világból venni, Feleségemnek, gyermekeimnek, házaimnak, és minden jószágaimnak gondját viselje... (“I leave the golden tapestry, which his Majesty King Matthias gave to my Father, Bertalan Drágffy, for the blood he spilt and for his loyal services in providing forty thousand forints, to my Lord, my relative John of Szepes, voivode of Transylvania ... On the day of Saint George I made this promise to him in Buda for this reason: should God take me from this world before him, he should then take care of my wife, my children, my houses and all my property...”).

48 *Eorsetnek hagyom az gyöngyös karpitot*. MNL OL E 148, NRA, fasc. 843. No. 11. Dated: Csicsva, 3 April 1569.

49 Balogh (*Művészet*, 395) was of the opinion that the tapestry originated from the father’s side – a view supported by the fact that György Báthory gave instructions in connection with it in 1569 as if it had been his own, but no written source has been found to prove that the tapestry belonged to Báthory earlier than that date.

THE OBJECTS AND THEIR AFTERLIFE

As was also shown by the will of John Sigismund, the treasury of the Szapolyai family, in the absence of male heirs, became dispersed. The main beneficiaries of the will were the Polish relatives of the prince, but Hungarian lords also benefitted from it, and some objects did actually appear in their estates.

In the estate inventory (1603) of the immensely wealthy Ferenc Dobó, former chief of the Transylvanian salt chambers and a confidant of Lodovico Gritti as long as he lived (and, according to gossip, the man who acquired Gritti's fortune),⁵⁰ a lavabo set appeared, which, according to the description, had originated from King John: *...pelvis ingens cum amphora sive infundibulo quondam Johannis regis, ut ex insignibus apparet.*⁵¹ As mentioned by the compilers of the inventory, eight of the items left behind by Ferenc Dobó were chosen to be given to Rudolf II, Holy Roman Emperor: in all likelihood this ewer and basin set was also among them. Given what we know about the fate of the estate, however, this was only a small part of what must have entered the treasury of the emperor.⁵²

In his codicil of 16 June 1630, Kristóf Hagymássy, grandchild of John Sigismund's executor of the same name, bequeathed "King John's sabre" to his younger son, János Hagymássy, while to his older son he left another sabre he had once been given by Ferdinand.⁵³ A richly-decorated sabre, bequeathed to the elder son of Hagymássy in 1567, was indeed mentioned in John Sigismund's will. It is not impossible that the same weapon could later have appeared in the possession of his descendants.⁵⁴

Certain objects originating from the Szapolyai family were noted even in the mid-17th century. One example is Mária Abafi, Mihály Bojnicsecs Horváth's widow, who, in her will of 18 September 1645, bequeathed King John's enamelled *koncerz* (one-handed cavalry sword) to her nephew János Bekény.⁵⁵

50 Gábor Barta, 'Ludovicus Gritti kormányzósága', *Történelmi Szemle* 14 (1971) 312–313; István Draskóczy, 'Az erdélyi sókamarák ispánjai, 1529–1535: az erdélyi sóbányák sorsa a Szapolyai-korszakban', *Levéltári Közlemények* 75 (2004) 38.

51 Ferenc Dobó's estate, 29 January 1603. Extract published by Gábor Vincze, 'A Dobó-család kincsei', *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 13 (1879) 77–78. Inventories of property normally list goldsmiths' works grouped according to their value and the type of the object. Since this set is among the first on the list, preceding a jug with the coat of arms of King Matthias, we can assume it was of outstanding value.

52 Cf. Sándor Takáts, 'Dobó Ferenc generális', in Idem, *Régi magyar kapitányok és generálisok*. Budapest, 1928, 379–432.

53 Béla Radvánszky, *Magyar családélet és háztartás a XVI. és XVII. században. Vol. III*. Budapest, 1879, 258. The exact text reads as follows: *János király szabljáját, kit én csináltattam* ("King John's sword, which I had had made") – this could be interpreted as him having had the sword repaired.

54 Heckenast, 'János Zsigmond végrendelete', 159: *frameam pulchram, cuius vaginae ima pars, circui alligatorij, crux manubrij et bullae super zonam seu cingulum frameae ex auro sunt parati et colore nigro zamantz [enamel] ornati*.

55 MNL OL E 148, NRA, fasc. 782. No. 19: 10. *Marat volt ennekem Janos kiraly hegyes tore zomanczos, aztis hagyom Bekeny János Uramnak* ("10. I also possess King John's enamelled *koncerz*; I leave this to Lord János Bekény, as well").



FIGURE 3. CORAL ROSARY FROM THE ESTERHÁZY COLLECTION

PHOTO © MUSEUM OF APPLIED ARTS, BUDAPEST

Memories of the provenance of objects do not usually stretch beyond more than two or three generations, so the later an object appears in a source, the more cautious one has to be with the credibility of the data. Even 17th-century inventories of the treasures of the Esterházy family often originated objects from various monarchs, princes and prelates, and since that was the time when treasuries started to take form, we can sometimes observe items that ‘switched their provenance’: inventories compiled at different times trace these items back to different people. One such item is the coral rosary (see Fig. 3) that in 1685 Pál Esterházy traced to King John,⁵⁶ hardly a decade later, he wished to see it as a piece that had originated from King Stephen Báthory of Poland.⁵⁷ By contrast, modern research sees the object as originating from the treasury of Ferenc Nádasdy, and – depending on whether it accepts its provenance from the Báthory family – dates it to the years around either 1570 or 1640.⁵⁸

56 Imre Katona, ‘A fraknói kincstár 1685. évi leltára’, *Savaria. A Vas Megyei Múzeumok Értesítője* 17–18 (1983–1984) 470: No. 8: *Edgy eöreg h veöröss Kláris, 10 szeméü olvaso, kinek edgyik végén edgy aranyas metallium edgy eöreg h gombal edgyütt, másik végén arany teöreök forma gyeüreü vagyon, mely János királyé volt* (“One large red coral, a rosary of ten beads, with a gilded metal piece with a large button at one end, and with a golden Turkish ring, which used to belong to King John, at the other”).

57 *Inventarium Thesauri Cels. S. R. I. Princ. Pauli Esteras...*, 1696. Arm. 51–52. No. 23. MNL OL P 108, Esterházy-levéltár, Rep. 8. fasc. C. No. 38Nb: *Rosarium Decennarium ex Corallis magnis, cum argenteo deaurato Pater Noster, Numismateque simili Christi Domini, & uno Annulo dependentibus, condam Regis Poloniae Stephanj Bathory existens.*

58 Angéla Héjj-Détári, ‘A fraknói Esterházy-kincstár a történeti források tükrében’, in Géza Galavics (ed.) *Magyarországi reneszánsz és barokk. Művészettörténeti Tanulmányok*. Budapest, 1975, 490; András Szilágyi, ‘Adalék Nádasdy Ferenc (1623–1671) műkincseinek utóéletéhez’, *Ars Decorativa* 16 (1997) 58–59; Mikó and Sinkó (eds.), *Történelem-kép*, 439–440, kat. VII–13 (András Szilágyi); András Szilágyi (ed.), *Műtárgyak a fraknói Esterházy-kincstárból az Iparművészeti Múzeum gyűjteményében*. (Thesaurus Domus Esterhazyanae, I.) Budapest, 2014, 261–262, kat. V. 7 (Ildikó Pandur).

The Szapolyai cup

When an artefact is decorated with a coat of arms, the memory of the original owner may of course survive for centuries. Interestingly enough, here we see an example of just the opposite: in the history of the only object with the coat of arms of the Szapolyai family, a chrysoprase cup kept in the treasury of the Esterházy family (Fig. 4), there is no mention of King John until the end of the 19th century.

Neither can we establish for certain when the object entered the treasury of Fraknó (Forchtenstein). It has been assumed that the description in the Esterházy inventory from 1725 is of this object (*Nro 2°. Más egy kübül való Ezüstben foglalt aranyos födeles tok nélkül való Pohár* ["No. 2. A stone cup, gilded silver mounted, with lid and with no case"]).⁵⁹ Unfortunately, the cited description of the inventory does not mention the special characteristics of the cup: the stem in the shape of a winding tree trunk with figures of snails, frogs and *putti* on it; the striking green colour of the rare stone material (chrysoprase); the bubble-shaped decorations on the lid, the closing part decorated with pomegranates, and the herald holding the coat of arms of the Szapolyai family on the inside. We cannot rule out the possibility that these are descriptions of one and the same object, since the cup does indeed have a gilded silver mount, and the main part of it is indeed made of stone, and it does have a lid. Yet these features could easily apply to many other objects.

Inventories made in later years do not make the situation any better. An example is the inventory from 1858 in which the cup is described as follows: *No. 303. Eine silberne Vase mit Jaspis schalle. 12 Mark, 250 ft.*⁶⁰ One would hardly be able to establish a connection between the "silver vessel with a jasper bowl", the description of which does not even mention whether or not the object was gilded, with the object in question, had this inventory not served as the basis for the deposit agreement of 1919 with the Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest: the appendix to the agreement contains a list of objects, in which, apart from the new inventory number, the numbers used in the inventory of Fraknó are also given. In the appropriate part of the inventory, we find the following description: *No. 141–303. Fedeles serleg. Fatörzset ábrázoló szárral, teste jászpizból, fedelén gránátalma. XVI. sz. Zápolya J.-tól* ("No. 141–303. Cup with lid. Stem in the shape of a tree trunk, bowl made of jasper, pomegranate on the lid. 16th c. From J. Zápolya").⁶¹

59 Imre Katona, 'A fraknói kincstár 1725-ös leltára', *Művészettörténeti Értesítő* 29 (1980) 136.

60 *Inventarium über die zur hochfürstlich Eszterházyischen Fideicomiss herrschaft Forchtenstein gehörigen Praetiosen und anderen historisch merkwürdigen Gegenständen, welches den 26ten May d. J. und den darauf folgenden Tagen aufgenommen worden ist.* Fraknó, 1858, Kasten XLV–XLVI. No. 303; MNL OL P 112, Esterházy-levéltár, Leltárak No. 118.

61 Az Országos Magyar Iparművészeti Múzeumnak Főméltósága herceg Esterházy Miklós ur által megörzés végett 1919 szeptember hó 30-án átadott műtárgyak jegyzéke. Budapest, 1919, 40; MNL OL P 112, Esterházy-levéltár, Leltárak No. 118.



FIGURE 4. CHRYSOPRASE CUP WITH SZAPOLYAI'S COAT OF ARMS FROM THE ESTERHÁZY COLLECTION
PHOTO © MUSEUM OF APPLIED ARTS, BUDAPEST

The earliest description that in my opinion may be associated with this piece with any certainty can be found in a delivery note from 1778. The note includes items that had previously been delivered to Eszterháza but that had to be returned to Fraknó. Among the items was a large cup made of green stone, with a lid and a gilded stem, decorated with different figures and a princely coat of arms.⁶² Yet not even at this time did the thought emerge that the coat of arms might have belonged to the Szapolyai family. It was not until 1884 that the idea was mentioned in the catalogue of a goldsmiths' exhibition. The authors of the catalogue, understanding that chrysoprase was mined in Silesia, considered the object to originate from Silesia.⁶³ Where and when the object was made is still debated in the literature. Judging from its stylistic features, many argue the piece was made in Nuremberg (in the workshop of Ludwig Krug), yet very similar stylistic features were seen in Silesia in the early 16th century, under the specific influence of Krug's workshop. The maker's mark stamped on the cup has still not been identified, so this does not provide any information, either.⁶⁴

Since it is not known when the object was included in the treasury of the Esterházy family, it is also difficult to establish how it found its way to Fraknó. The assumption that John Szapolyai sent the cup as a wedding gift to Krakow on the occasion of the marriage of his niece, Polish duchess Hedwig Jagiellon to Joachim, elector of Brandenburg, and that it was subsequently kept in Berlin until 1620, then returned to Hungary in the 17th century, can only be considered as a hypothesis, as there are no written records to document its transportation in either direction.⁶⁵

Objects of dubious provenance

While in 17th-century sources objects from the treasury of the Szapolyais are mentioned in the possession of families (or their descendants) that were one way or another connected to either John Szapolyai or John Sigismund, these mentions, as we have seen, had become less frequent by the second half of this century and disappeared entirely by the next one. In the 19th century, however, as nostalgic feelings for national kings intensified (and negative opinions of

62 Anna Rákossy, 'Egy forrásértékű inventárium 1778-ból az Esterházy-kincstár „mobilis” darabjairól', in Anna Tüskés (ed.), *Ars perennis. Fiatal művészettörténészek II. konferenciája*. Budapest, 2010, 295: *Ein grosser Bocal von einem grünen Stein mit vergoldten Deckel und Fuß, verschiedenen Figuren und Fürstlichen Wappen*.

63 Jenő Radisics and Károly Pulszky (eds.), *A magyar történeti ötvösmű-kiállítás lajstroma*. Budapest, 1884, 24–25, hall 3, cabinet 2, cup 7; Jenő Radisics and Károly Pulszky, *Az ötvösség remekei a magyar történeti ötvösműkiállításon. Vol I*. Budapest, 1885, 7–8.

64 For a discussion of the problems of dating and localization, see Héjji-Détári, 'A fraknói Esterházy-kincstár', 500; Szilágyi (ed.), *Műtárgyak*, 56–62, cat. I. 3 (András Szilágyi). According to Károly Layer, the coat of arms in the foliage of the chrysoprase cup and node is a later addition: Károly Layer, *Az Országos Magyar Iparművészeti Múzeum gyűjteményeinek leíró lajstroma műtörténeti magyarázatokkal*. Budapest, 1927, 50.

65 For more details on this, see e.g. András Szilágyi (ed.), *Esterházy-kincsek. Öt évszázad műalkotásai a hercegi gyűjteményekből*. Budapest, 2006, 58–59, cat. 3 (András Szilágyi).

Szapolyai diminished),⁶⁶ artefacts believed to originate from the Szapolyai family appeared ever more frequently. King John (II)'s cloak chain, decorated with the family coat of arms and marked with the year 1561 (in other sources with 1565), appeared first in the exhibition material sent to Vienna by Hungarian 'refined ladies' in 1864 (from the property of Gábor Prónay). A couple of years later, in 1867, it was exhibited at the antique exhibition of the Society of Fine Arts, and in 1876 at the exhibit in Budapest organised to support the victims of the flood (this time from the collection of Dezső Prónay).⁶⁷

Another object, one that was first shown to the public at the antique exhibition in 1867, then at an exhibit (from the collection of Manó Andrassy) in Vienna in 1873, and in 1876 at the Károlyi palace in Budapest, is a silver cup with the initials Sz. J. and the year 1529 engraved on it. The cup allegedly originates from John Szapolyai, and, according to tradition, was found in the castle of Szepes (Spišský hrad).⁶⁸

A gilded silver cup from the Jankovich collection, sent by the Hungarian National Museum to the Paris World's Fair of 1867, was erroneously attributed by the daily paper *Fővárosi Lapok* to John Sigismund: "We are observing a gilded silver vessel alongside the welcome cups, which is decorated with reliefs. In the four segments divided by columns, the Parable of the Lost Son is depicted. The node is represented by an eagle sitting on an arm and holding a mace; the handles are formed in the shape of a woman leaning out and placing her feet on an old head. German style. Gilded silver jug with Zápolya's coat of arms and the date 1565 on the lid."⁶⁹ In reality, neither a coat of arms nor a date features on the object, and, according to a note in Jankovich's inventory, the collector purchased the piece from Anna Salbeck, niece of Károly Salbeck, bishop of Szepes.⁷⁰

There were some pieces in the Jankovich collection which even the owner linked to the Szapolyai family, however. For instance, a gilded silver cup that, according to its inscription (SRMO PPI STEFANO VRBS WARADINA VOVET 1540 VI. CYAT), was made to commemorate John Sigismund's birth,⁷¹ as well

66 Zita Horváth, 'A 19. századi történetírás Szapolyai-képe', *Publicationes Universitatis Miskolcensis. Sectio Philosophica* 13:3 (2008) 165–176.

67 'A magyar delnök bécsi tárlata', *Hölgyfutár*, 26 April 1864, 393; 'Régiségek kiállítása a Képzőművészeti Társulat termeiben', *Nefelejts*, 19 May 1867, 240; Arnold Ipolyi, 'Magyar mű- és történeti emlékek kiállítása', *Századok* 10 (1876) 502.

68 General-Direction (ed.), *Welt-Ausstellung 1873 in Wien. Officieller Kunst-Catalog*. 2. vermehrte und verb. Aufl. Wien, 1873, 50: No. 28. – here it was marked with the initials Z. J. (Zápolya János); 'Régiségek kiállítása', 240–241; Imre Henszlmann and Zsigmond Bubits (eds.), *A magyarországi árvízkarosultak javára Budapesten gf. Károlyi Alajos palotájában 1876. évi májusban rendezett Műipari és Történelmi Emlék-Kiállítás tárgyaitak lajstroma*. Budapest, 1876, 33; Ipolyi, 'Magyar mű- és történeti emlékek', 498.

69 'Magyar Régiségek (Az „1867-diki világtárlat”-ból)', *Fővárosi Lapok*, 26 January 1869, issue 20, 76.

70 Árpád Mikó (ed.), *Jankovich Miklós (1772–1846) gyűjteményei*. (A Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Kiadványai, 2002/1.) Budapest, 2002, 136–137, cat. 81 (Erika Kiss).

71 The Hungarian National Museum bought this together with the collection of Miklós Jankovich, but it was traded for other objects in 1941; from this it can be concluded that experts did not regard the object as valuable (genuine): Erika Kiss, 'Jankovich Miklós gyűjteményeinek leltárkönyvei a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumban. I. Kora újkori ezüstművek', *Folia Historica* 27 (2011) 7.

as jewels and cutlery once possessed by queen consort Isabella Jagiellon, all of disputed origin.⁷² The first object is lost, while the credibility of the others is questionable. Not because of the quality of the objects (Isabella Jagiellon's opal pendant is one of the most beautiful and most frequently published jewels in the Hungarian National Museum), but because of their date of origin: they seem to have been made only after the era of the Szapolyais.

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After the male line of the Szapolyai family died out in 1571, the treasury of John Szapolyai and his son John Sigismund became dispersed. Its pieces are only known to us from written sources: wills, protocols and inventories. Even though some of the pieces can be traced in the sources for quite a long time, none of the objects can be identified today. Since most of them were made of gold, we can assume that most were melted down over the years. After studying the sources on the treasures of the Szapolyai family, our knowledge of the objects has, paradoxically, decreased rather than increased. Where descriptions were believed credible and to have been given by eye-witnesses, it turns out their authors were in fact not present during the description of the event. In the case of accounts of the same object it was later revealed that the accounts were actually referring to different objects; in the case of documents drawn up later (which did not receive due attention for this precise reason), it turned out the information they provided was surprisingly accurate. We have also seen how 'myths' of royal origin were transferred from one object to the other. Sources also provided an easy-to-follow overview of how respect for the House of Szapolyai changed: while objects that were assumed to belong to the Szapolyais appeared regularly in written sources in the 16th century, there is no trace of them in the 17th and 18th centuries, not even in cases where the origin of an object is verified by a coat of arms. In the 19th century, however, with the shift in the public's opinion of Szapolyai, we can once again witness an increase in mentions of his treasures.

⁷² Mikó (ed.), *Jankovich*, 168–169, cat. 132 (Erika Kiss); *ibid.*, 179–180, cat. 148 (Erika Kiss); *ibid.*, 190–191, cat. 163 (Erika Kiss).

Szabolcs Varga*

HOW THE SZAPOLYAI FAMILY WAS REMEMBERED FROM THE 16TH TO THE 20TH CENTURY¹

INTRODUCTION

Hungarian historical memory has treated the Szapolyais with extreme negligence, which is all the more apparent if compared to the Hunyadi family: while ‘sites of memory’ (*loci memoriae*, *lieu de mémoire*)² related to the Hunyadi family can be found both outside the current borders of Hungary, as in Nándorfehérvár (Belgrade), Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia) and Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), and within it (Visegrád, Buda), there are no such sites at all related to the Szapolyai family.³ One could of course rightly argue that the Hunyadi family deserves to be commemorated, since John Hunyadi (1409–1456) earned his title of ‘Defeater of the Turks’ on his own merit, while his son Matthias, the greatest ruler of the Kingdom of Hungary of the late Middle Ages, was an outstanding politician, victorious military leader and a generous patron all in one. The members of the Hunyadi family were, as research reveals, far from impeccable, however.⁴ Despite this, starting from the middle third of the 16th century, the family’s cult was constantly enriched. In the light of their acknowledged political achievements, the history of the Hunyadi family has become a living historical memory, with its own rites and sites in the Carpathian basin.

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2 Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory. The Construction of the French Past*. New York, 1996–1998.

3 On the remembrance of Matthias, see Enikő Csukovits (ed.), *Mátyás és a humanizmus*. (Nemzet és Emlékezet) Budapest, 2008, 211–687, especially 343–346.

4 Pál Engel, ‘A szegedi eskü és a váradi béke. Adalék az 1444. év eseménytörténetéhez’, in Éva H. Balázs, Erik Fügedi and Ferenc Maksay (eds.), *Mályusz Elemér Emlékkönyv*. (Társadalom- és Művelődéstörténeti Tanulmányok) Budapest, 1984, 77–79; András Kubinyi, ‘Hunyadi Mátyás, a személyiség és a király’, *Aetas* 22:3 (2007) 83–100.

As regards the Szapolyai family, we are not today able to speak of a living memory, despite, by the early 16th century, its members becoming major political actors, even at an international level. The family's dynastic relationships, their estates, constructions and the humanists that so frequently appeared at their court could all have played their part in building up a cult around the family.⁵ The castles of Trencsén (Trenčín) and Szepes (Spišský hrad), together with the chapel of Szepeshely (Spišská Kapitula) located in the Szepesség (Spiš) region, which was the ancestral territory of the family, all had the potential to become the Szapolyais' representative and religious centres, yet they did not.⁶ This phenomenon is understandable, given that it took place in the early modern period, since this is when the region came under the rule of Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I, and, following the change of empire, the new regime sought to remove all traces of the Szapolyai family, as verifiably happened in Kassa (Košice):⁷ the coat of arms of the Szapolyai family was torn down and desecrated by being bound to a dog and burnt. In the 18th century, there was no living cult of the Szapolyai family, so the family entered modern historical memory, born in the 19th century, as a national royal dynasty of Hungarian origin.⁸ This is why King John's full-figure statue was included among the sculptures decorating the Hungarian parliament building in Budapest, on the side facing the river Danube.⁹ It was approximately at this time that János Fadrusz completed his monumental sculpture composition of King Matthias, which still adorns the main square of Kolozsvár. One of the secondary figures of the composition represents István Szapolyai: a figure holding the banner of his lord in his right hand, while folding down the eagle banner of the defeated Habsburgs with his left. The message of the piece is symbolic, with Szapolyai, representing the nation, depicted as the governor of Austria and Vienna.¹⁰

Under the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary, the Szapolyai family was unable to step out of the shadow of the Hunyadis. While the castle of Vajdahunyad (Hunedoara), known as the Hunyadis' family residence, had become a relic of

5 The works of Tibor Neumann, István Kenyeres, Péter Kasza and Pál Ács in this volume can be cited as good examples of this.

6 For the most recent work on the chapel of Szepeshely, see Magdaléna Janovská and Vladimír Olejník, 'A szepeshelyi (szepeskáptalani) Szent Márton-székesegyház', *Magyar Sion, Új folyam* 12/54 (2018) 77–95.

7 We know from György Szerémi's description that here the Szapolyai coat of arms was torn down and desecrated by binding to a dog and burning it. The poor animal was then chased away from the city: *Interim armam suam super parietem aplicatam luppum retraxerunt et ad unum caniculum ligaverunt cum straminibus, et insuper mingerunt cum vrinis suis et destercoraverant postea eum humana stercora. Et insuper incenderunt strameam super canem et dicebant blasfemam: "Ecce rex canis; ecce Rex canis". Szerémi, Emlékirat, 197.*

8 Zita Horváth, 'A 19. századi történetírás Szapolyai-képe', *Publicationes Universitatis Miskolciensis. Sectio Philosophica* 13:3 (2008) 165–176.

9 Kristóf Zoltán Kelecsényi, *Az Országház szobrai. (Országházi séták)* Budapest, 2017, 56–61.

10 Lajos Szádeczky, 'Mátyás király és Kolozsvár', *Erdélyi Múzeum* 19:8 (1902) 415.

Hungarian national architecture,¹¹ a copy of which was built in Budapest for the millennium celebrations in 1896, John Szapolyai, or Zápolya, as he was called in this period, was commemorated by merely having a few streets named after him. In addition to the 13th district of Budapest, Rákospalota, Dunakeszi, Kecskemét, Temesvár (Timișoara) and Kolozsvár could also boast of streets bearing the name Zápolya. This, however, lasted no longer than a couple of decades, as following the change of regime in Transylvania, street names were quickly changed, and in the 13th district of Budapest, pursuant to communist street-naming practice, in 1952 the street was officially renamed Gogol Street.

The dominant culture in connection with the Szapolyai family is that of silence, which explains why there are so few records of its members in the archives of the Carpathian basin. The figure of King John was not surrounded by any kind of cult; neither were his wife or child perceived in an especially positive way. In stories that emerged from time to time about their lives, they either featured as people who had failed in their ambitions or their example stood as a warning: John's absence from the Battle of Mohács, the humiliating way Isabella left Buda and then also Transylvania, and the meeting of John II (better known as John Sigismund) with the aged Sultan Süleyman, the embodiment of the fatal destiny of the Kingdom of Hungary, in Zimony (Zemun) in 1566. The way the family was perceived developed hand in hand with the changes in the layers of memory regarding the Battle of Mohács and was inseparably intertwined with the trauma of the country's partition into three parts.¹²

All this has since changed, and historical research has proved that John Szapolyai cannot be regarded the primary cause of the painful strokes of fate that hit Hungary in the 16th century. He can rather be seen as a scapegoat, due not least to the successful political propaganda of his enemy, King Ferdinand,¹³ which caused the public opinion of King John (and his family) to turn increasingly negative with time. The initially popular ruler gradually became a dark figure of Hungarian history. This process is presented below.

THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES

"John ... was a deeply Christian-spirited prince with great talent and unique wisdom, who also obtained outstanding experience in military matters." If only this much information had been left for prosperity about King John, the

11 Radu Lupescu, *Vajdahunyad vára a Hunyadiak korában*. PhD Dissertation, Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Humanities. Budapest, 2006, 3.

12 Pál Fodor, 'Örök Mohács. Gondolatok a mohácsi csatáról és következményeiről', *Rubicon* 30:1 (2020) 10–19; Gergely Tóth, 'Bűnbakképzés és propaganda. Az 1526. évi török hadjárat és a mohácsi csata a kora újkori történetírásban', in Pál Fodor and Szabolcs Varga (eds.), *Több mint egy csata: Mohács. Az 1526. évi ütközet a magyar tudományos és kulturális emlékezetben*. (Mohács 1526–2026: Reconstruction and Remembrance) Budapest, 2019, 75–149.

13 On Habsburg mythopoetics in connection with Johannes Cuspinianus: Tóth, 'Bűnbakképzés és propaganda', 82. On John's being a scapegoat: Szabolcs Varga, 'Katalin király és a török szultán. Mérlegen Szapolyai János árulásai', *Korunk* 25:11 (2014) 5–12.

perception of the family would certainly have been different.¹⁴ We know that this was not the case, because, almost immediately after his coronation, King John had to face allegations formulated by writers opposing him, who either concealed his existence, like Cuspinianus,¹⁵ or claimed, like Paulus Iovius (Paolo Giovio), that he was openly happy about the death of his king. The memoirs of György Szerémi contains the complete list of the sins committed by the Szapolyais:¹⁶ István Szapolyai played dirty and killed King Matthias, and received the Eucharist under false pretences; John, on the other hand, felt resentful and betrayed both his country and his king, and years before the Battle of Mohács he had made an agreement with Ibrahim Pasha, and in 1526 did everything in his power to make sure the Ottomans would win.¹⁷ He was regarded as a ‘cowardly King Cathlene’ – there could hardly be any bigger insult than this in a society built on bravery and masculine bravado.¹⁸ Szerémi’s text is nothing but the voice of the masses, and it must have been written after King John’s death. The ill-willed author did not have to hold himself back, not even for fear of punishment, but this does not mean he can be ignored. The most far-fetched stories must have been circulating in the Carpathian basin, and these intensified as King John’s power weakened. An example is his secret meeting with Ibrahim, which is also mentioned by the unknown author of the work *Memoria rerum*.¹⁹ Yet even this excessively negative text paints an ambivalent picture of King John, and the reason for the criticism may first and foremost have been his failed royal governance. At least this is what Szerémi referred to when he wrote: “As voivode he was brave and careful, and he was prudent in dealing with various matters, but as king he did not dare to do anything, and became rather fearful. We were all amazed that Almighty God had taken away his valour.”²⁰ From all this it follows that 1. the general aversion against John intensified during the civil war against Ferdinand, and writers campaigning in favour of Ferdinand are likely to have played a major role in this. 2. After beginning with great expectations, many people perceived John’s reign as a failure, and this disappointment was the reason for the increasingly, if not excessively negative opinion of him. 3. Some contemporaries had a much more positive opinion of Szapolyai, but that image has since completely faded away. How these related to each other and how they were connected in time can only be reconstructed after a more thorough investigation.

14 Antal Verancsics, ‘Péter moldvai vajda elűzése (1538)’, translation and notes by Éva Gyulai in *Gesta* 7:1 (2007) 52.

15 Tóth, ‘Bűnbakkepzés és propaganda’, 78.

16 *Ibid.*, 95, 111, 113, 114–117.

17 Szerémi, *Emlékirat*, 25–26, 29, 82, 120.

18 *Ibid.*, 142: *Vere bene nominaverat eum Georgius Siculus Cathalin vaida sub Sarno, quando, cum suo fratre sagardabat versus Nandor-Albam. Nunc est katalin kiral. Nos existimabamus, quod esset bonus pastor campi, ut defenderet agnelos a lupibus. Sub molli pastore lupus lanam cacat.*

19 *Memoria rerum*, 25.

20 *Tempore vaivodatu suo erat strenuus et curans, et velox in causis pergebat; haud in Regietate sua nil ausus erat, sed tremulus erat. Nos admirabamur, quod Deus omnipotens acceperat ab hoc strenuitatem suam.* Szerémi, *Emlékirat*, 144.

On the basis of contemporary memories and historiographical texts regarding John, even an image of a good king could be presented. His time as voivode of Transylvania is a clear success story,²¹ one that has visibly been commemorated on a beautifully adorned door-frame in a house in Kolozsvár, built according to tradition by the city as a sign of its gratitude. The inscription read as follows: “To his lordship voivode John Zápolya, in times of crusades, the lucky winner, Bernárd the painter. 1514.”²² He was the most successful Hungarian military leader, one who victoriously defended the province entrusted to him and lead campaigns south of the Carpathians several times. His contemporaries could thus hardly have been shocked when János Statileo erected, on his orders, John Hunyadi’s tomb stone in Gyulafehérvár in 1533.²³ By this, Szapolyai wished openly to demonstrate to the public the continuation of the politics of the Hunyadis, and to exploit the growing popularity of the cult of Matthias. In a better age John could even have become a new Matthias.

The source that best describes John’s personality is a memoir written posthumously in Hungarian. The identity of the author remains uncertain,²⁴ but most likely he was Catholic. Throughout the work the figure of the “god-fearing and humble King John”, who enjoyed great popularity among his people, is treated with deep respect. According to his description, when the people of Buda caught sight of the pregnant Isabella, many of them exclaimed: “May God give our Hungarian homeland a Hungarian prince, so we will not be dependent on another nation and Hungarian blood will not die out.”²⁵ This overt expression of emotion cannot have been a fantasy or some hollow phrase; John’s court was indeed filled with some kind of Scythian consciousness, which fitted well with classical Latin erudition. This is proved by the numerous charters of ennoblement which contain some concrete references to this, and which were issued by King John’s chancery.²⁶ The highly literate King John, who could recite Virgil from memory, had a court that was in many aspects a continuation of Matthias’s, and as such it was, in all likelihood, a conscious opposition to the ‘foreign’ royal household of the Jagiellonian courts, where German and Bohemian features dominated. Many who had previously suffered real or perceived injustice must have contemplated

21 See Norbert C. Tóth’s essay in the present volume.

22 Albert Zsolt Jakab, *Emlékköltés és emlékezési gyakorlat. A kulturális emlékezet reprezentációi Kolozsváron*. PhD Dissertation, Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Humanities. Budapest, 2011, 92.

23 Ágnes Ritoókné Szalay, ‘Üzenet a kövön. A gyulafehérvári Hunyadi János-síremlék mint politikai manifesztum’, in Eadem, *Kutak. Tanulmányok a XV–XVI. századi magyarországi művelődés köréből*. (Humanizmus és Reformáció, 33.) Budapest, 2012, 166–174.

24 László Makkai, ‘Utószó’, in Mindszenti Gábor diáriuma öreg János király haláláról. Budapest, 1977, 26. There were some rumours in later times that the text might be a forgery, but more recent research contradicts this, and therefore it is considered genuine. On this, see Sándor Fazekas, ‘Ez szomorú gyászír megvitelére’. Mindszenti Gábor emlékiratáról, *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 107:2–3 (2003) 243–260.

25 *Mindszenti Gábor diáriuma*, 6.

26 Gábor Barta, ‘Humanisták I. János király udvarában’, in Ágnes R. Várkonyi (ed.), *Magyar reneszánsz udvari kultúra*. Budapest, 1987, 200–201.

this with great satisfaction. It is no coincidence that the author of the diary wrote that “the king, his majesty, is loved by young and old, who feel sorry for his ill health”.²⁷ Before he left for Buda, he “spoke in a friendly way to the masses who had gathered around him to see him off on his journey”.²⁸ A similar sentiment was expressed when the news of the birth of the heir apparent spread in Szászsebes (Sebeş): “That day there was great joy in the city and in the camp, because the people loved the humble king, our majesty.”²⁹ At the same time King John showed a great deal of mercy when he pardoned the rebellious Saxons, saying that “we cannot repudiate them, let them have mercy”.³⁰ Like Matthias, John knew his people very well: “These masses were the same before; they bend with whatever wind blows; the Turks come one today, they kiss their caftans, the Hungarians come the next day, they fawn over them; and they bless the Germans, should they come the day after next; they only seek their own good, and they would even deny their own homeland, if it proved necessary.”³¹ Had any work containing the king’s words of wisdom been compiled, this quote would certainly have been included in it.

We can rightly consider the diary of scribe Gábor as merely the expression of a biased intellectual’s thoughts, yet he was not alone in his opinion of King John. Another chronicler of the age, János Zermegh, also accepted King John unconditionally, respected his person and used the following adjectives to describe him: *mitis, christianus, bonus princeps*.³² András Farkas also wrote positively about King John in his poem from 1538, entitled *A zsidó és a magyar nemzetről* (On the Jewish and the Hungarian Nations): according to his prophecies, the divine retribution that had fallen on Hungary would only be lifted if the lords sided with the “humble king”.³³

It is very interesting that the monarch, who remained Catholic throughout his life, was characterized by the Protestant Gáspár Heltai in his novel entitled *A Háló* (The Net), written in connection with the religious debate of 1538, as the “great King John ... of blessed memory”, who was “humble and witty”.³⁴ According to the story, the king even encouraged the preachers as follows: “Have no fear! I have also got into my mind that the science of master Stephen is true and that the papacy is nothing! But there is nothing I can do against the lords. Yet I will find a way.”³⁵ In light of the above, the adjectives ‘humble’ and ‘god-fearing’ used to characterize the king cannot be regarded as examples of *epitheton ornans*; we have to accept that this really was how these authors saw the king.

27 *Mindszenti Gábor diáriuma*, 7.

28 *Ibid.*, 12.

29 *Ibid.*, 20.

30 *Ibid.*, 17.

31 *Ibid.*, 15–16.

32 Makkai, ‘Utószó’, 35.

33 *Ibid.*, 37.

34 Gáspár Heltai, *Háló*. (Millenniumi Könyvtár) Budapest, 2000, 34.

35 *Ibid.*, 32.

We know that at the respective courts of Transylvanian prince Stephen Báthory (1571–1586) and the king of Poland (1576–1586) there was a certain nostalgia for the Szapolyais. According to the Jesuit István Szántó (Arator), supported by the Catholic prince, King John was the only legitimate king of Hungary after the Battle of Mohács.³⁶ This thought was then taken up by the Saxon Christian Schesaeus, who, alongside Miklós Zrínyi, praised King John II the most, in his poem entitled *Ruinae Pannonicae*.³⁷ This trend was then further reinforced by Gian Michele Brutus, whose aim was to prove the pro-Ottoman character of the politics of the Szapolyais,³⁸ and by his followers, namely Johannes Bocatius, who also accepted the alliance with the Ottomans,³⁹ and István Szamosközy, who believed that it was pro-Habsburg János Zsámboky who “although King John did not deserve it, marked his name with the stigma of evil sin”.⁴⁰ The long list of 16th-century works praising John could be continued, and research must find ways to do exactly this in the next couple of years.⁴¹ Yet the data mentioned so far will perhaps suffice to demonstrate that a positive experience did exist in connection with King John. It has just not become part of Hungarian historical memory. We can accept the word of László Makkai, who believed that “there can hardly be any doubt that it was not so much Szapolyai’s deeds during his life (e.g. defeating the Székelys and the peasants, his alliance with the Ottomans, the Gritti affair, etc.) that cast a dark shadow on his memory in the public mind, but rather the occupation of Buda by the Ottomans in 1541, in which he did not actually play a direct role, but, many people believed he had paved the way for it to happen.”⁴² Of his varied career path, posterity used what it pleased. This is why outstanding historian Emma Bartoniek used the following fragments of the very same texts to describe him: “a coward and weak, but ruthless and bloody man, who was only afraid of hurting powerful lords.”⁴³ There are three reasons for this distortion. First, the country of the Szapolyais, and thus the family’s space of memory gradually narrowed to the territory of the Principality of Transylvania. Second, by the end of the 16th century at the latest, the dangers of the Szapolyais’ pro-Ottoman

36 Tamás Kruppa, *Tradíció és propaganda keresztútján. Fejezetek Báthory Zsigmond udvarának kultúrájából*. Budapest, 2015, 32.

37 Christianus Schesaeus, *Opera quae supersunt omnia*. (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Medii Recentisque Aevorum. Series Nova, 4.) Ed. Franciscus Csonka. Budapest, 1979.

38 Ferenc Toldy (ed.), *Brutus János Mihály m. kir. történetíró magyar históriája, 1490–1552. Vols. I–III*. (Monumenta Hungariae Historica, II; Scriptores, 12–14.) Pest, 1863–1876.

39 Johannes Bocatius, *Hungaroteutomachia – Magyaránémetharc*. Published by Kees Teszelszky and Gergely Tóth. Budapest, 2014, 193–195.

40 *Nec audiendus est in hic Sambucus quoque ille semiteuto, patriarum historiarum teredo, qui innocentis regis Joannis nomini nefarii sceleris notam, nullo eius merito impingit*. Quoted in Mihály Balázs and István Monok, “Történetírók Báthory Zsigmond udvarában”, in R. Várkonyi (ed.), *Magyar reneszánsz udvari kultúra*, 254.

41 An example of this is the poetry of Mihály Verancsics and Sebestyén Tinódi.

42 Makkai, ‘Utószó’, 41.

43 Emma Bartoniek, *Fejezetek a XVI–XVII. századi magyarországi történetírás történetéből*. Budapest, 1975, 90.

politics had become clear to everybody, so recalling the circumstances of the establishment of the principality seemed inappropriate, even within its borders. An alliance with the Ottoman Empire was not consistent with any of the new political-theological slogans of the turn of the century (Protestant concordance and Christian Union).⁴⁴ Third, the Hungarian historiography of the 17th century was predominantly Catholic and Habsburg in spirit, with no room for rhetoric glorifying the Szapolyais.

The most important historiographical work written in the Carpathian basin in the early modern period is undoubtedly Miklós Istvánffy's work on the history of the Hungarians, which had a fundamental impact on the view of history in Hungary.⁴⁵ The stories found in the work have almost come to form part of Hungarian folklore, and it is thanks to Istvánffy that the period of the 16th-century siege wars has become a period of utmost importance in Hungarian national memory.

Being a clever humanist thinker, Istvánffy systematically collected various sources and complemented them with data and stories he knew from hearsay. Yet the characterization he provided in connection with the Szapolyais was not *sine ira et studio*. In the absence of a critical publication, a comprehensive analysis is still awaited. Nevertheless, a short summary can be provided. When writing about the family's rise, Istvánffy relied first and foremost on Antonio Bonfini, and initially expressed negative views of palatine István because of his relationship with queen consort Beatrice. Later on in his work he gave an account of the palatine's last years but without any particular assessment of the period. Concerning John, he stressed from the very beginning his desire to obtain the throne (*dominandi libido*), and his wish to conceal this desire. According to him, John lived under the spell of power, and his sinful plans would eventually lead to the destruction of the country.⁴⁶ Yet, in connection with the occurrences of 1514, we are presented with the picture of a careful voivode: John acts in the interest of his homeland; he is recruiting an army and provides timely support to István Báthori, the *ispán* of Temes (*comes Temesiensis*). Even when describing the period of retaliations, it is his honesty rather than his cruelty that is mentioned. All this remained without any consequences, however, because success only made John's personality even worse. Taking the extreme glorification he received from the masses at face value, he planned a plot against his king; in his pursuit of glory he attacked the castle of Zsarnó (*Žarnov/Havale*) in 1515, but suffered a miserable defeat at the hands of the Ottoman army.⁴⁷ The secret quest for power is a thread that runs through his entire life and defines

44 On this, see among others the works of Pál Thúri and Albert Szenci Molnár: Imre Mihály, 'Szenci Molnár Albert „Idea Christianorum”-a', in Béla Varjas (ed.), *Irodalom és ideológia a 16–17. században*. (Memoria Saeculorum Hungariae, 5.) Budapest, 1987, 235.

45 Istvánffy, *Historiarum de rebus*; Gábor Nagy, 'Szapolyai István és János alakja Istvánffy *Historiae*jában', in József Bessenyei, Zita Horváth and Péter Tóth (eds.), *Tanulmányok Szapolyai Jánosról és a kora újkori Erdélyről*. (Studia Miskolcinsensia, 5.) Miskolc, 2004, 195.

46 Nagy, 'Szapolyai István és János alakja', 198.

47 *Ibid.*, 201; see Norbert C. Tóth's essay in the present volume.

all his actions. Interestingly, in connection with the military preparations in 1526, Szapolyai is once again depicted in a favourable light: he is described as a man who does everything in his power to defend the province. It appears that at this point Istvánffy takes Brodarics's side in recounting events: he does not even mention the usual allegations regarding John's betrayal and his intentionally being late for the battle. Yet the defeat changed everything, as immediately upon the death of King Louis he set out to obtain the throne. The portrayal of characters in Istvánffy's work is rather interesting. It is not Ferdinand who is lifted to counterbalance the figure of John. Instead, John's supporters Kristóf Frangepán and Ferenc Bodó are praised, and it is their loyalty and valour that is put as an example to follow. Regarding the alliance with the Ottoman sultan, the writer mentions that this was a beneficial step for John, but a tragic one for Christianity. From this point onwards, events are related from a distance. An extremely negative assessment of the family is given in connection with the death of John II in 1571, as, according to the author, the reason John II was unable to rule and was unworthy of the throne was queen consort Isabella's inappropriate way of educating her child.⁴⁸ These adjectives and phrases will, as we shall see later, reappear in characterisations from subsequent periods.

Before moving on to the next century, a mention has to be made of another piece written in the 17th century, but which did not have a major impact on the image of the Szapolyais until its publication in 1782: in the 1670s Farkas Bethlen wrote a history of Transylvania from 1526 to 1609. Bethlen drew upon a massive source base, presenting the events from the point of view of the Szapolyais and attributing many statements to John.⁴⁹ According to him, John Szapolyai never wanted to obtain royal power, and, since he abhorred marriage and only married in 1539 at the instigation of his councillors, he cannot be accused of breaching the Treaty of Várad.⁵⁰ In the part that describes the king's death, he portrays the king in an especially beautiful way. By quoting Brutus, he mentions that, although the king's ancestors were all high-born, the king shone with his virtue and character. From a young age he was prudent, and displayed the spiritual grandeur necessary to help him live through weal and woe.⁵¹ Then, following Ambrus Somogyi, who worked in the early 17th century, he continued: John was calm, gentile and fair, and lacked the vehemence so characteristic of the Hungarians. He was characterized by a desire for knowledge and sound prudence; he was careful and vigilant, and in private he was learned and humane.

48 *Ibid.*, 212.

49 Wolffgangi de Bethlen, *Historia de rebus Transylvanicis. Vols. I–II. Cibinii, 1782.*

50 *Regnum, quod sibi deferrent, se quidem nunquam concupivisse.* Bethlen, *Historia*, I. 44. *Abhorreret a nuptiis, precibus tamen Procerum Pannoniae coelibatum abruptere suadentium ad ineundum conjugium urgebatur...* *Ibid.*, 274.

51 *Ibid.*, 324: *Joannes Rex illustri per omnes Majores prosapia oriundus, fed virtutis et ingenii laudibus omni nobilitate clarior; enim in illo Joannis a primis adolescentiae annis indoles enituit, ut et Regis. in recte sentiendo prudentia, et in faciendo animi celsitudo semper perluxerit, adeo ut tam in secundis quam in adversis rebus semper praesenti fortuna major fuerit habitus, semperque paratus, tam adverse fortunae grassantis in secufus excipere, quam secundæ fallacia gaudia contemnere.*

He kept saying that friends obtained through good deeds were his most precious treasure. This description reveals the image of a peaceful, well-educated and good-willed monarch. That Bethlen briefly quotes Istvánffy, according to whom John was a gentle, generous man who demonstrated a high level of integrity throughout his life and whose biggest sin was that he wished to reach his goals with Ottoman support, does little to damage this image.⁵² In Bethlen's work, John appears as a tragic hero who, because he was born under an unlucky star, was not able to show his real skills. According to Bethlen, the person was not evil, only the age in which he lived. He expressed this by putting these words in King John's mouth: "Not a single day was certain in my life; the end of one misfortune was only the beginning of the other."⁵³ Giving it more thought, this is likely to have been the real motto of the Szapolyais' rule. Yet Bethlen's work is a testimony to the fact that the cult of the Szapolyai dynasty still existed in Transylvania in the 17th century.

THE 18TH CENTURY

If the so-called 'Szapolyai tradition' ever existed in Hungarian historiography, only some sporadic data on it has come down to us from the 18th century.⁵⁴ The independence of the Principality of Transylvania, handed down by the Szapolyai family, ended in 1690, and the territory came under Habsburg rule. Well-educated Catholic historiographers usually avoided the prehistory of the territory, especially the ecclesiastical circumstances there.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, it is perhaps not hopeless to try to draw some cautious conclusions.

I have chosen, somewhat arbitrarily, to deal with the works of three writers in greater detail. The first, in a chronological order, is Sámuel Timon, who, as a Jesuit monk, conducted serious scholarship in the early decades of the 18th century, and consciously strove to create a new historical synthesis. His work *Epitome chronologica rerum Hungaricarum*, which appeared in 1736 and dealt with the events of the Kingdom of Hungary until 1576, can be regarded

52 *Ibid.*, 324: Somogyi: *Fuit Joannes Rex miti clementique ingenio, et ad beneficentiam aequitatemque maxime propenso; aberat enim ab illo innata illa Hungaris ferocia militaris, cum litterarum studio, et multis utriusque fortunae casibus, nunquam virium impetu, sed accurata consilii ratione regeretur. Ibid.*, 325: Istvánffy: *Joannem Regem fuisse in omni vita placido liberalique ingenio, ad ambitionem tamen prono, moribus autem inculpatis, praeterquam quod patrocínio Turcarum res suas promotum iverit.*

53 *Ibid.*, 271: *Nulla mihi dies secunda affulsit, unius mali finis prodromus erat futuri.*

54 For more recent coverage of the century's historiography in the scholarly literature, see István Soós, 'Felzárkózás vagy lemaradás? Történetírás a 18. századi Magyarországon', in Gergely Tóth (ed.), *Clio inter arma. Tanulmányok a 16–18. századi magyarországi történetírásról.* (Magyar Történelmi Emlékek, Értekezések) Budapest, 2014, 227–251. I hereby thank Zoltán Gőzsy and Gergely Tóth for their advice on the writing of this chapter.

55 On the self-censorship of Jesuits and after 1773, former Jesuits, see Gergely Tóth, 'Ex-jesuiták. Önkép, önreprezentáció és a rend 1773. évi megszüntetésének emléke Palma Károly Ferenc, Pray György és Katona István történeti munkáiban', in András Forgó and Zoltán Gőzsy (eds.), *Katolikus egyházi társadalom Magyarországon a 18. században.* (Pécsi Egyháztörténeti Műhely, 11.) Pécs, 2019, 411–427.

as the culmination of his oeuvre.⁵⁶ His family originated from Moravia, but he was born in Tornýos (Trenčianská Turná), near Trenčsén, so he saw the light of the day on a territory that had once belonged to the Szapolyai family. Despite this, he does not dwell upon the family's origin. Imre is first mentioned *in medias res*, in connection with the events in Bosnia in 1464, while István is introduced, following Bonfini, in relation to the military events of 1474. When recording the events of 1487, he wrote about Imre Szapolyai's death, the place of his burial and also the inscription on his tomb; the last of these he had seen with his own eyes.⁵⁷ The Jesuit scientist was interested in epigraphy, which may be the reason why, after praising the deceased István Szapolyai, he also recorded the epitaph on his tomb when he wrote the entry for the year 1499.⁵⁸ He mentions John in 1526 as a wealthy and influential noble (*vir opibus ac clientilis potens*), and explains the events of the royal election on the basis of Péter Révay's book *De Monarchia*, published in 1659.⁵⁹ Apart from this he also quotes from works by Miklós Istvánffy, Miklós Oláh, János Zsámboky and Gergely Petthő. According to him, the reason for Szapolyai's alliance with the sultan was simply that John was, during his exile in Poland, unable to give up his desire to become king,⁶⁰ and had found a suitable person, Hieronym Łaski, to represent his interests at the Porte. He recounts the events of the next couple of years without any accusations, in a well-balanced manner, and, as for the year 1539, he speaks of John as a real peacemaker, since he concluded a peace with both great powers, had the walls of Buda built, walls that continued to preserve his memory even in the 18th century.⁶¹ This is the point where John's portrayal reaches its culmination, yet the climax comes when John II's death in 1571 is mentioned, because with this the family, known since the times of King Sigismund and favoured by the Hunyadis, died out. Some regarded John as diligent, while others said he was lazy. Yet, everybody agreed that no one is able to act according to their knowledge if surrounded by filth and dirt.⁶² With this assessment Timon exonerated the Szapolyais, instead blaming the epoch for all the misery that occurred during their reign.

The most influential Hungarian historian of the 18th century was undoubtedly Matthias Bél, who in many aspects set the standard for upcoming generations. Bél wished to create a geographical and historical description of the country on

56 Samuel Timon, *Epitome chronologica rerum Hungaricarum et Transilvanicarum a nativitate divi Stephani primi regis apostolici, producta ad Annum MDCCXXXVI*. Claudiopoli, 1764².

57 *Ibid.*, 77–78, 85, 95.

58 *Ibid.*, 105; Árpád Mikó, 'Jagelló-kori reneszánsz sírkövekről', *Ars Hungarica* 14:1–2 (1986) 102.

59 Timon, *Epitome chronologica*, 119–120; Gergely Tóth, 'Lutheránus országtörténet újszoikus keretben. Révay Péter Monarchiája', in *Idem* (ed.), *Clio inter arma*, 128–129.

60 *Non potuit tamen Joannes cupiditati suas imperare, quin magis magisque ad regnum aspiraret*. Timon, *Epitome chronologica*, 123.

61 *Joannes Rex reconciliato sibi Solymano, et pace aliqua cum Domo Auftriaca facta, Budense castrum muniebat. Reliquitque memoriam sui in muris, quorum aliqui hodie supersunt.* *Ibid.*, 145.

62 *Alii Joannem hebetis ingenii, alii acris fuisse ajunt; sed in ganeis et sordibus, educatum, nihil suo gradu dignum egisse, consentiunt.* *Ibid.*, 233.

the basis of the methods of German theories of the state.⁶³ He had a primary interest in geography, but, as an outstanding scholar, he was in fact interested in everything. The story he told of how Szapolyai received the castle of Trencsén for his bravery demonstrated in the Bohemian war was essentially based on Bonfini's account.⁶⁴ When describing the events after the Battle of Mohács, he chose not to enter into a deep analysis of John's kingship, yet, on the basis of the work of Istvánffy, he gave a detailed account of the siege and occupation of Trencsén by Ferdinand's troops.⁶⁵

Similar data can be found also in Matthias Bél's manuscript written about the county of Sáros and published first a couple of years earlier.⁶⁶ He noted that since Sáros was Péter Perényi's estate, after he switched sides it came under John Szapolyai's jurisdiction, and it was only after a long siege that Leonhard von Vels was able to retake it for King Ferdinand.⁶⁷ The entry on the castle of Munkács (Mukachevo) reveals that in one part of the upper castle, where the apartments of the garrison officers and priests were located, the rooms were decorated with paintings of the Rákóczi, Szapolyai and Zrínyi families, which may be somewhat surprising.⁶⁸ Knowing the history of the castle, it is not so striking that the Zrínyi and Rákóczi families are mentioned. It is however less known that the castle was occupied by King John for a brief period in 1528. After a series of changes in ownership, it came into the possession of Péter Petrovics in 1551, and was then inherited from him by John II.⁶⁹ Looking at it from the perspective of the remembrance of the Szapolyais, that visitors were able to see a composition of the Zrínyi, Rákóczi and Szapolyai families at the same time and at the same place must have been interesting. All this means that some form of regional cult of the Szapolyai family did exist at the end of the 18th century.

In the late 18th century, it was mostly Károly Wagner who conducted research into the Szapolyai family. Wagner was very much influenced by Matthias Bél's collection on Szepes county, *Historia comitatus Scepusiensis*, which provided a

63 Gergely Tóth, 'Vestigia barbarae gentis: Mátyás Bél on Ottoman and Post-Ottoman Hungary', in Pál Fodor and Pál Ács (eds.), *Identity and Culture in Ottoman Hungary*. (Studien zur Sprache, Geschichte und Kultur der Türkvölker, 24.) Berlin, 2017, 367–369.

64 Matthias Bel, *Notitia Hungariae novae historico geographica... Comitatum ineditorum tomus primus, in quo continentur... Comitatus Arvensis et Trentsiniensis*. Ed. by Gergely Tóth in collaboration with László Glück and Zoltán Gőzsy. Budapest, 2011, 271–277.

65 *Ibid.*, 277.

66 Matthias Bel, *Notitia Hungariae novae historico geographica... Comitatum ineditorum tomus quintus, in quo continentur... Comitatus Sarosiensis, Zempliniensis, Ungváriensis et Bereghiensis*. Ed. by Gergely Tóth in collaboration with Bernadett Benei, Zoltán Gőzsy and Rezső Jarmalov. Budapest, 2018.

67 *Ibid.*, 69.

68 *Partem superiorem commendans arcis, cuius conclave iconibus familiae Rákoczy, Zapolyai, Zrínyi, affabre pictis superbit*. *Ibid.*, 329. The text dates back only to the early 19th century at the earliest, so must be a later insertion.

69 *Ibid.*, 331; also see XVI. századi uradalmi utasítások. *Utasítások a kamarai uradalmak prefektusai, udvarbírái és ellenőrei részére*. Vol. II. (Fons Könyvek, 2.) Edited and introductory essay by István Kenyeres. Budapest, 2002, 451–452.

very detailed description of the area,⁷⁰ but while Bél's interest in geography defined his view of history, Wagner was interested in history only. In archival sources, Wagner was looking for past events, and placed the individual at the centre in his work on the Szepesség region, as well.⁷¹ In his writings he placed special emphasis on the genealogy of certain families; for this reason, his work was very popular in the upcoming decades. Iván Nagy methodically used his findings in his work on family history;⁷² Jeromos Bal also referred to him in his writings on the history of Szepes county.⁷³ Alongside the history of the Thurzó, Thököly and Varkocs families, the fourth volume of Wagner's work also contains the history of the Szapolyai family, which has become the most famous collection of information on the family.⁷⁴

Wagner mentioned the family's origin in Pozsega county on the basis of charters and of notes from Hans Dernschwam.⁷⁵ The latter wrote about the Szapolyais in a rather hostile manner, and this hostility also found its way into Wagner's work. Like him, Wagner also made repeated mention of the pro-Ottoman attitude of the family.⁷⁶ When presenting Imre Szapolyai, he mentioned that he founded a Pauline monastery in the city of Tokaj in 1476.⁷⁷ When giving an account of his death, he published the entire letter written by the family's servitor Pál Isép to the city of Bátfá.⁷⁸ As regards István, he emphasized his generosity and his military experience,⁷⁹ only a few lines later to accuse him of poisoning Matthias when he was captain of Vienna.⁸⁰ He then continued the list of István's sins: he stole a large part of Matthias's treasury, and some of the dishes with the raven insignia could be found in King John's possession as much as four decades later. To this he added that as all accusations came from Hans Dernschwam, who in several instances wrote negatively about the Szapolyai family, he could not imagine that palatine István would treat his royal benefactor in such a way. It was more likely, wrote the historian, that these objects, marked with the coat of arms of the royal family, came into the

70 Matthias Bel, 'Historia comitatus Scepusiensis', in Idem, *Hungariae antiquae et novae prodromus cum specimen*. Norimbergae, 1723, 69–124.

71 Carolus Wagner, *Analecta Scepusii sacri et profane. Vols. I–IV*. Viennae, 1774–1778. On Wagner's works most recently: Kornélia Szőke, *Genealogia variabilis. Tanulmány a genealógia műfajairól a Thurzó-család példáján*. PhD Dissertation, Miskolc University, Faculty of Humanities. Miskolc, 2017.

72 Szőke, *Genealogia*, 105.

73 Jeromos Bal, *Szepesvára története*. (A Szepesmegyei Történelmi Társulat Évkönyve, 13.) Lőcse, 1914.

74 Wagner, *Analecta*, IV. 1–46.

75 Hans Dernschwam, *Erdély, Besztercebánya, Törökországi útinapló*. (Bibliotheca Historica) Translated and published by Lajos Tardy. Budapest, 1984, 112.

76 On this, see Tibor Neumann's essay on the rise of the family in the present volume.

77 The building of the monastery was found in the 1960s: Zoltán Ribáry and Tibor Joó, 'A tokaji páloskolostor nyomában', *A Miskolci Herman Ottó Múzeum Közleményei* 6 (1964) 49–53.

78 Wagner, *Analecta*, IV. 16–17.

79 *Ibid.*, 19.

80 *Matthiam fuisse Viennae ab ipso Stephano veneno sublatum. Ibid.*, 20. True, he noted in the footnotes that according to other historians the murder was carried out by István Báthori.

possession of the Szapolyai family as a result of John Corvinus's benevolence. Wagner also cleared Szapolyai of the accusations concerning his surrender of Vienna, reasoning that he had done so for the good of the country,⁸¹ and it was for the same reason that he had actively supported the election of Vladislaus as king.

Having presented István, he turned to some of the female members of the family and then to John's life. At the very outset he remarked that there was uncertainty concerning his date of birth: according to Paul Eber he was born on 29 March 1490, whereas Farkas Bethlen stated that he died in 1540 at the age of 53.⁸² On the basis of the works of Istvánffy and Péter Révay, it was this latter view that gained ground in scholarly literature, despite Eber's opinion being the more probable. Regarding the place of John's birth, Wagner corrected Bél, who believed John was born in Trencsén,⁸³ and published the anecdote according to which István told his son: "if only you were older, I would make you king!"⁸⁴ The story is attributed to the Polish humanist Jan Łaski and is meant to demonstrate the family's ambitions. For the later years of John's life, once again, Wagner's main source was Dernschwam, and the main concern is the process by which the royal throne was obtained. Since the German humanist and trader clearly had a hostile attitude towards the Szapolyais, there is no question that Wagner's choice of source had a great impact on his assessment of the family. His wording on the period after the Battle of Mohács is surprisingly brief. By relying on archival sources, he proved that John was not crowned by Pál Várday, archbishop of Esztergom, but rather by István Podmaniczky, bishop of Nyitra (Nitra). He avoided any reference to John's alliance with the Ottomans and instead briefly mentioned the Treaty of Várad and subsequently John's death and reburial in 1543. As for Isabella, he stated that the characterizations that can be read of her in various works differ greatly. Then, finally, on the basis of the works of Istvánffy and Forgách, he gave a short summary on John Sigismund, but distorted his physical appearance, describing him as a person with thin calves, a thin, reddish beard, and a sad face. True, on the last page of the family history, the eulogy written of John II by Gian Michele Brutus eases the tone, so the reader can in fact also find something positive about the last Szapolyai.⁸⁵

This short overview does not cover all aspects of the subject; many other writers and works could be included in more comprehensive research. The aim of this study has only been to present the way the Szapolyai family was remembered during the birth of Hungarian academic historiography. As we have seen, of all the existing historical texts, those written by pro-Habsburg writers, especially by Istvánffy, were more commonly used. Despite this, a broad palette of voices had been passed down to the next generation of writers.

81 *non tam periculi impendentis metu, quam patrie, cui se servare voluit, studio, Vienna descensit. Ibid., 22.*

82 *Ibid., 33; Paulus Eber, Calendarium historicum. Vittebergae, 1573. 123, quoted in Tibor Neumann's essay in the present volume.*

83 Bél, *Historia comitatus Scepusiensis*, 100.

84 *de creando novo Rege ageretur, filium suum Joannem "adhuc infautem complexum dixisse: Si tantulus esses Fili (modo corporis paulo majore ostenso) nunc Rex Hungaria esses". Wagner, Analecta, IV. 34.*

85 *Ibid., 43, 45.*

THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

The 19th-century practitioners of the new professional Hungarian historiography – whose thinking was no longer dependent on any particular religious denomination – set themselves the primary goal of actively participating in building a nation. The language of the texts also changed, with these new works mostly published in Hungarian. Historians and literary authors were more and more intensely attracted to the subject of the Battle of Mohács, with the opinion strengthening that it was the fatal turning point for the powerful Kingdom of Hungary, derailed after King Matthias's death in 1490, to head into decline and disintegration.⁸⁶ Inevitably, the tone of scholarly and literary works written about the Szapolyai family members, first of all King John, as protagonists of this age, likewise grew more and more sombre.

The change in outlook is well illustrated by *A Magyarokhoz* (To the Hungarians), an ode by Dániel Berzsenyi, in which Szapolyai was already linked to the bloody storm clouds of war of the 16th and 17th centuries. The poet praises his nation: "You did survive the murderous century of Zápolya / the secret assassins' hands / while you stood firm / amidst the flames of family blood-feuds in retribution."⁸⁷ More straightforward is the opinion of the age in a poem by another early 19th-century poet, Sándor Kisfaludy, entitled *Somló*, in which John Szapolyai already appears in contrast to John Hunyadi: "The fateful hour arrives / amidst roars and screams / And the fine land of Hungarians is uprooted! / For Louis gets killed at Mohács / like Vladislaus at Varna; / and Zápolya – not Hunyadi – / has his eye on the throne – from behind."⁸⁸

Károly Kisfaludy's poem *Mohács* is a milestone in this process, even though contemporaries were unaware of it.⁸⁹ Its motifs were not brand new, since domestic strife had already been blamed for the defeat at Mohács in earlier works, for example in the epic poem *Magyar gyász* (Hungarian Grief) by Márton

86 Pál S. Varga, '...keresettek alkalmat a hajdanra visszatekinteni...' Mohács emlékezetihelyé válása a 19. század elejének magyar irodalmában', in Pál S. Varga, Orsolya Száraz and Miklós Takács (eds.), *A magyar emlékezetihelyek kutatásának elméleti és módszertani alapjai*. (Locī Memoriae Hungaricae, 2.) Debrecen, 2013, 244–249. On all this, most recently, see Tibor Neumann, Norbert C. Tóth and Tamás Pálosfalvi, 'Két évszázad a sztereotípiák fogságában. Helyzetkép a Jagelló-kor kutatásáról', in Fodor and Varga (eds.), *Több mint egy csata*, 11–73; János B. Szabó, 'A mohácsi csata a modern kori történetírásban', in *ibid.*, 339–340.

87 *Nem fojthatott meg Zápolya öldöklő / Százdja, 's titkos gyilkosaid keze / A' szent rokon vérbe ferösztő / Visszavonás tüze közt megálltál*, English translation: Ádám Makkai, https://www.babelmatrix.org/works/hu/Berzsenyi_D%C3%A1niel-1776/A_magyarokhoz_%28I%29. Gábor Vaderna, *A költészet születése. A magyarországi költészet társadalomtörténete a 19. század első évtizedeiben*. Budapest, 2017, 411, 425.

88 *Eljött zúgva és ordítva / A sors vészes órája, / S kihányatik sarkaiból / A magyar szép hazája! / Mert Mohácsnál elvész Lajos, / Mint Ulászló Várnánál; / És Zápolya – nem Hunyadi – / Trónust les és – hátul áll*. Sándor Kisfaludy, *Somló*, stanza 41.

89 András S. Laczkó, 'Új nap, régi fény. Kisfaludy Károly Mohácsáról', in Ágnes Hansági and Zoltán Hermann (eds.), *A két Kisfaludy. Tanulmányok*. (Tempevölgy Könyvek, 21.) Balatonfüred, 2016, 147–149; Idem, *Új nap, régi fény. Mohács a reformkori magyar lírában*. Pécs, 2019.

Etédi Sós,⁹⁰ but Kisfaludy's line "No! Not the enemy, her own son inflicted her wound (*Nem! Nem az ellenség, önfia vágta sebé!*)!" epitomized general opinion and determined the evaluation of the Szapolyais. King John and his family could not emerge well from the perspective of "Discordia", that is of feud and dissent, since it was during their reign that Buda got lost and the Hungarian Kingdom fell into pieces. What is more, the liberal 19th-century Hungarian nobility championing the cause of the liberation of serfs created a positive memory of the peasant rising of 1514, while John Szapolyai, who had the leader György Dózsa brutally executed, was mentioned with contempt as one who had put individual interest ahead of the interest of the nation and depraved his homeland with his megalomania.⁹¹

Neither did it contribute to a more favourable image of the Szapolyais that, alongside the Hungarian élite advocating national independence, those who were appreciative of the rule of the Habsburgs in Hungary also had an equally negative opinion of the family. After all, if the golden age was brought to the country by the Habsburgs, then King John crowned in opposition to them hindered the rise of the country. This idea was reinforced by György Szerémi's *Epistola de perditio regni Hungarorum*, published in 1840,⁹² replete with slanderous remarks about King John.

Following the defeat of the war of liberation in 1849, the image of the Habsburgs changed drastically in Hungary, and this had some influence on the evaluation of the Szapolyais. The Hungarian intellectuals in exile thought that, rather than bringing tranquillity, the Austrian dynasty further deepened the crisis brought by Matthias's death.⁹³ The authors of major syntheses along this line of thought, László Szalay⁹⁴ and Mihály Horváth, opined that it was not the domestic strife that caused the fall of the country, but conversely historical necessity that brought about the crowning of two kings. In their judgment, both the Ottomans and the Habsburgs were enemies, so they did not condemn the Szapolyais for trying to seek a solution out of this unfortunate situation with the sultan.⁹⁵ Of course, the historians were aware that in the given period, King John could not feature as a positive figure opposed to Ferdinand of Habsburg. This made them place

90 Márton Etédi Sós, *Magyar gyász; vagy-is Második Lajos Magyar Királynak a Mohácsi mezőn történt veszedelme*. Pest, 1792. More recently: Árpád Csonki, 'Etédi Sós Márton műve Mohácsról (1792)', in Fodor and Varga (eds.), *Több mint egy csata*, 259–279.

91 Orsolya Völgyesi, 'Erdély kérdése és a hazai nyilvánosság az 1830-as években', in Ferenc Hörcher, Mátyás Lajtai and Béla Mester (eds.), *Nemzet, faj, kultúra a hosszú 19. században Magyarországon és Európában*. (Magyar Történelmi Emlékek, Értekezések. Tanulmányok a Nacionalizmus Kultúrtörténetéből, 2.) Budapest, 2016, 187.

92 It was known that the work existed but its contents were not known. Jászay used it, which may have contributed to John's negative characterization: Zsolt Szebelédi, *Szerémi György Epistolájának nyelvi elemzése*. PhD Dissertation, Pázmány Péter Catholic University. Piliscsaba, 2017, 5.

93 In general, see Horváth, 'A 19. századi történetírás', 167–171.

94 László Szalay, *Magyarország története. Vol. IV. A mohácsi vésztől a linczi békekötésig 1526–1654*. Lipcse, 1854.

95 *Ibid.*, 77.

the emphasis on the wife and mother with a tragic fate, Isabella Jagiellon,⁹⁶ and discover new national heroes, Friar George (Martinuzzi) and the erudite humanist aristocrat Tamás Nádasdy.⁹⁷ Thus keeping a distance from King John remained unchanged during the dualist Monarchy, which also explains why his biography was written not by a scholarly historian but by a lawyer from Kolozsvár, Mihály Kőváry, in *Vasárnapi Újság* in 1861;⁹⁸ this is his only biography to this day.

Despite the enormous cultural transformation in Hungary over the 19th century, the assessment of the Szapolyais changed little. In vain did the intellectuals of the Reform Era turn with interest to Transylvania, the family who founded the independent principality did not receive a more positive evaluation in historiography or literature. The burgeoning cult of the defeat at Mohács and the increasingly ambivalent memory of the Habsburgs prevented John, Isabella or John II from coming closer to the Hungarian hall of fame. Of the three of them, perhaps Isabella fared best: in her, the society of reviled and widowed Hungarian noblewomen found its archetype. It is no accident that thanks to Endre Veress her biography was completed at the turn of the century.⁹⁹ John received a statue on the wall of the parliament, and in the plans of 1897 he was considered for inclusion in the sculpture gallery of the kings in Heroes' Square in Budapest, but eventually he was not found worthy and was replaced by the full-length statue of John Hunyadi.¹⁰⁰

After the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, the politics of memory painted an even darker picture of Hungarian history in the Ottoman era and the 16th century. It was self-evident to compare Mohács to Trianon, and all historical syntheses and political analyses pinpointed the primary source of the recent catastrophe in the age of the Jagiellons and Szapolyais.¹⁰¹ They held that it was factionalism, selfishness and discord that led both to the weakening of the sovereign's power in 1526 and to the disintegration of historical Hungary in 1920. At the same time, a nostalgia for Transylvania emerged, closely connected to the cult of Matthias Corvinus in Kolozsvár and to the romanticization of the period of the Hunyadis.¹⁰² However, the Szapolyais were again the losers in the reinterpretation of the tropes of the Hungarian national character.

There is no room to list all the literature on this theme, but whether we take the celebrated female author Irén Gulácsy's novel *Fekete vőlegények* (Black

96 Szabolcs Varga, 'A Szapolyaiak emlékezete', in Pál Fodor and Szabolcs Varga (eds.), *Egy elfeledett magyar királyi dinasztia: A Szapolyaiak*. Budapest, 2020, 358–359.

97 Mihály Horváth, *Gróf Nádasdy Tamás élete, némi tekintettel korára*. Buda, 1836; Idem, *Fráter György*. Pest, 1871.

98 Mihály Kőváry, 'Zápolya János király', *Vasárnapi Újság* 8 (1861) 313–315, 327–328, 338–340, 350–352, 363–365.

99 Endre Veress, *Izabella királyné (1519–1559)*. (Magyar Történeti Életrajzok) Budapest, 1901.

100 <https://intezet.nori.gov.hu/nemzeti-emlekhelyek/Budapest/hosok-tere/> (access date: 15.08.2020).

101 Gábor Kovács and Béla Mester, 'Mohács szerepe a modern magyar politikai eszmetörténetben', in Fodor and Varga (eds.), *Több mint egy csata*, 320–321.

102 See the chapter on a comparison with the Hunyadis.

Bridegrooms)¹⁰³ or Gyula Krúdy's trilogy of novels about 1526, we find a corrupt, lonely King John ill-suited to rule a country.¹⁰⁴

Gyula Szekfű wrote in a similar vein about the Szapolyais in the major historical synthesis of the age. The historian, who sympathized with the Habsburgs, claimed that "János Zápolya was the hero of illusions, tossed about by surges of moods. He was not responsible for the disaster of Mohács; his rival Ferdinand of Austria brought that charge against him without justification before his contemporaries and for centuries of history to come. Remorse did not weigh on his mind, King Louis's death was not his fault, and his own brother György Zápolya was also killed at Mohács, for whom he dressed in mourning."¹⁰⁵ Szekfű also attributed the reign of the Szapolyais to the decay that had set in during the Jagiellonian period: "That's how John's rule relapsed into the Middle Ages, when for lack of a strong central power the country disintegrated into parts, each only defending and caring for itself, and the central power became incapable of performing comprehensive tasks."¹⁰⁶

The evaluation of the Szapolyais did not change with the fall of the Horthy regime and the post-1945 emergence of the communist system. All that happened was to complement the decline from Matthias's death onwards with the ideology of the class struggle and the centuries-old myth of anti-Habsburg fighting for national independence. The indictment of two long centuries was drafted by István Nemeskürthy in the 1970s – the polemic it triggered is remembered as the Mohács debate in Hungarian historical studies.¹⁰⁷ The moot question was whether Hungary could have avoided the defeat at Mohács and the fall of the late medieval Hungarian state relying on herself alone, or whether the fate of the country already depended on the great powers. Although the dispute has not been ended with a convincing conclusion as yet, it now seems the Hungarian élite of this era, including the Szapolyais, did not bear full responsibility, for the intentions of the great powers of the time were decisive for the issue. This – not quite new – conclusion made a more balanced assessment of the age possible: András Kubinyi and his disciples have modified the historical evaluation of the Jagiellonian age in several regards,¹⁰⁸ and Gábor Barta has written fundamental works on the Szapolyais.¹⁰⁹ He was the first to stress the need to reinterpret the movement of 1514, he has explored the first months of King John's reign, and he has described the initial phases of the birth of the Transylvanian principality.

103 Irén Gulácsy, *Fekete völgyek*. Budapest, 1927.

104 Gyula Krúdy, *Mohács*. Budapest, 1926; Idem, *Festett király*. Budapest, 1929; Idem, *Az első Habsburg*. Budapest, 1930; Anna Horváth, *Krúdy Gyula Mohács-trilógiája (Egy történelmi tényregény születése)*. PhD Dissertation, Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Humanities. Budapest, 2010, 109–111.

105 Bálint Hóman and Gyula Szekfű, *Magyar történet. Vol. III*. Budapest, 1935, 13 (the chapter was written by Gyula Szekfű).

106 Hóman and Szekfű, *Magyar történet*, III. 29.

107 B. Szabó, 'A mohácsi csata a modern kori történetírásban', 351–354. On the debate with further literature, see Vilmos Erős, 'Mohács-vita', *Magyar Szemle. Új Folyam* 23:5–6 (2014) 55–76.

108 Neumann, C. Tóth and Pálosfalvi, 'Két évszázad a sztereotípiák fogságában', 70–72.

109 'Barta Gábor publikációi', *Történelmi Szemle* 37:1 (1995) 123–128.

It is to him that we owe an adequate methodology for the pursuit of further research.

For the time being, the evaluation of the Szapolyais is somewhere between the stereotypes of the past and the new assessments of the present. In Transylvania, there was a real stir after 1990, and local Hungarian communities have been making efforts to cherish the memory of the Szapolyais and their age. This is a clearly positive development, and the historical investigations still going on may facilitate this process. It is still early to draw far-reaching conclusions from these signs, but now we have a chance to experience the return of the Szapolyais' cult to the point where it started in the 16th century.

THE PILLARS OF ROYAL POWER: THE MAIN SUPPORTERS OF KING JOHN I SZAPOLYAI

“The fourth ornament of the reign consists of the loyalty, strength, obligation and trust of the dignitaries, counts and soldiers. This is because they form the protecting walls of your realm, they protect the weak, destroy the enemy and increase the borders. Let them, my son, be your fathers and brothers, never force them into servitude, and never call them servants!”¹ This is a fragment from the work entitled *Admonitions*, written by King (Saint) Stephen I of the House of Árpád (1000–1038) to his son, which sheds clear light on the nature of medieval royal power: rulers exercised their will through their loyal grandees. Therefore, when examining royal power, due attention should be given to the royal council, which consisted of a narrow circle of the king’s most influential supporters. Usually, the council was comprised of high office holders, but from the late Middle Ages, members of the most influential baronial families could also become members of the council and thus participate in governmental work. They became the ‘*éminences grises*’ who were able to exert greater informal influence on the monarch. Through them, we can learn more about internal decision-making mechanisms.

King John I Szapolyai is often referred to, even in Hungarian scholarly literature, as an anti-king. It is therefore important to emphasize that he was, in fact, legally crowned as king of Hungary on 11 November 1526, after which date he vigorously embarked on a path to consolidate his reign. During the political

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1 *Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum tempore ducum regumque stirpis Arpadianae gestarum. Vol. II. Edendo operi praefuit Emericus Szentpétery. Budapest, 1938, 623: Quartus decor regiminis est fidelitas, fortitudo, agilitas, comitas, confidentia principum, comitum, militum. Illi enim sunt regni propugnaculum, defensores inbellicium, expugnatores adversariorum augmentatores marciarum. Illi enim sint fili mi tibi, patres et fratres, ex his vero neminem in servitutem redigas vel servum nomines.*

chaos that characterized the country after the Battle of Mohács, he faced a great amount of serious difficulty. On 29 August, the Hungarian army suffered a serious loss and many dignitaries lost their lives on the battlefield, leaving their posts vacant. The capital city of Buda was plundered by Ottoman troops, and the destruction in the central part of the realm reached unprecedented levels. On top of all this, many of those with influence did not recognize John as their legitimate ruler. Most importantly, the dowager Queen Mary of Austria, who, after the death of her husband, put her family first and supported her brother Ferdinand's claim to the throne whatever the cost. The country's second-highest dignitary, palatine István Báthori, lined up behind her, also wishing to see the Habsburg archduke occupy the throne of Hungary. King John thus did not have the possibility to enjoy the conditions of peaceful governance, which left him substantially reliant on the support of his followers.²

During his reign, many people entered the closest circles around him, yet, from time to time several of them switched over to King Ferdinand's side, among them Péter Perényi, Bálint Török, Tamás Nádasdy, and Pál Várday, bishop of Esztergom. Others passed away relatively early, or disappeared from the political arena. By way of example, the Croatian count Kristóf Frangepán can be mentioned, who was killed in 1527,³ and Ferenc Bodó, who died in captivity.⁴ Others, however, remained committed to King John. Below, we will present some of the most important members of the court who remained in the Szapolyai family's service for a long time, until their death. This group included Péter Petrovics, a member of the family, István Werbőczy, a nobleman, and Friar George and István Brodarics (Stephanus Brodericus), members of the clergy. Even though they had different family backgrounds, characters and skills, their loyalty to the Szapolyais kept them united.

ISTVÁN WERBŐCZY

"Justice gives everyone his due (*Item iustitia tribuit unicuique, quod suum est*)" – these were the words of wisdom István Werbőczy may have given King John to encourage him during his period of exile, defeat and humiliation.⁵ For a very long time, the Hungarian historical public mind has considered Werbőczy as an iconic figure of the nobility of the late Middle Ages, and through him John

² On this, see the essay by Szabolcs Varga in this volume.

³ Matije Mesić, 'Krstó Frankapan u tudini', *Rad JAZU* 13 (1870) 17–79.

⁴ Bodó fought against the Ottomans sometimes as a soldier at frontier fortresses in voivode Szapolyai's service, and at other times as royal castellan of a frontier fortress. His political importance is demonstrated by the fact that at the diet of Hatvan in 1525, the Croatian nobility wanted to elect him *ban* of Croatia. In late 1527 he was captured and was held captive in Wiener Neustadt prison until his death in 1531: András Kubinyi, 'A középbirtokos nemesség Mohács előestéjén', in Ferenc Szvircsek (ed.), *Magyarország társadalma a török kiűzésének idején*. (Discussiones Neogradienses, I.) Salgótarján, 1984, 5–24.

⁵ Sándor Kolosvári and Kelemen Óvári (eds.), *Werbőczy István Hármaskönyve*. (Corpus Juris Hungarici) Budapest, 1897, 28. (*Tripartitum, Prologus*, Tit. 5. §. 3.)

Szapolyai was considered to be the candidate of the Hungarian ‘national party’ for the royal throne.⁶ Although more recent research into Werbőczy’s life has broken away from this opinion, it cannot be denied that the lesser noble from Ugocsa county wholeheartedly supported John’s election, and remained a committed supporter of the family until his death.⁷

István Werbőczy was born in the 1450s, and thanks to his relatives who were experts in the field of law, in the 1480s he found employment in the royal chancery where he worked as keeper of the seal (*conservator sigilli*) in 1483–1484. During these years, he was supported by István Báthori of Ecsed, voivode of Transylvania and judge royal. In 1492 he travelled to Krakow for six months to study at the university there, but he never got a degree: after a couple of months he interrupted his studies and returned to Hungary. He then worked in the office of the judge royal as a notary, and worked as a solicitor in Transylvania.⁸ The latter equipped him with a breadth of contacts from whom he benefitted when, some decades later, he managed the reign of King John.

Werbőczy’s political career advanced rapidly in the early 16th century, a process in which István Szobi, a very active and influential member of the lesser nobility, who treated Werbőczy as if he was his own son, played an important role.⁹ It was thanks to his support that Werbőczy entered into the service of Péter Szentgyörgyi, and from 1502 onwards he held the office of protonotary (*protonotarius*) to the Transylvanian voivode and to the judge royal. In connection with his position he was constantly travelling, and his skills and expertise in the field of law became widely recongized. As a result, he came to draft a compilation of Hungarian customary law, the so called *Tripartitum*; in 1515 he was appointed the ‘personal’ (Lat. *personalis presentia regia*¹⁰ or short *personalis*, Hung. *személynök*) of Hungary and was elevated to the rank of baron.¹¹

During the reign of King Louis II (1516–1526), Werbőczy’s political role became increasingly controversial. Back in 1515, he was removed from his office as protonotary of the voivode and of the judge royal, but remained one of the highest-ranking judges of Hungary in his capacity as personal. Meanwhile, he was assigned an increasing number of diplomatic missions. In 1519, for example, he tried to gain support from Venice and Rome for the country’s anti-Ottoman

6 Especially: Vilmos Fraknói, *Werbőczy István életrajza*. (Magyar Történeti Életrajzok) Budapest, 1899.

7 András Kubinyi, ‘Werbőczy Mohács (1526) előtti pályafutása’, in Gábor Hamza (ed.), *Tanulmányok Werbőczy Istvánról / Studien über István Werbőczy*. (MF Könyvek, 21.) Budapest, 2001, 65–94.

8 Tibor Neumann, ‘Werbőczy István származása és pályakezdése’, in Gábor Máthé (ed.), *A magyar jog fejlődésének fél évezrede. Werbőczy és a Hármaskönyv 500 esztendő múltán*. Budapest, 2014, 45–46.

9 Kubinyi, ‘Werbőczy Mohács (1526) előtti pályafutása’, 72, 88.

10 Court of royal personal presence which emerged as early as the thirteenth century. In the late Middle Ages it became the main royal court of justice, issuing sentences under the king’s judicial seal.

11 István Gazda, ‘A Tripartitum-kiadások könyvésze. Werbőczy életrajzzal’, in István Werbőczy, *Tripartitum: A dicsőséges Magyar Királyság szokásjogának hármaskönyve*. Budapest, 1990, 26–32; *Arch.* I. 76.

struggles. His efforts brought little success, however. True, he made friends with cardinal Giulio de' Medici, known later as Pope Clement VII, and, even if papacy was no longer able to provide any major support, it did remain one of his most reliable supporters in the 1520s.¹² Werbőczy's mission in Worms in 1521, when he should have convinced the German estates at the imperial diet of the importance of the anti-Ottoman struggles, also proved unsuccessful.¹³ The only positive outcome of his visit was that he met Martin Luther, whom he tried to persuade, somewhat naively, of the truths of Catholic teachings.¹⁴ The results of these diplomatic missions reveal that Werbőczy's legal skills were not matched by any special political talent, as clearly demonstrated by his public role in the 1520s.

In the increasingly volatile political situation in Hungary, Werbőczy rose to the position of palatine (Hung. *nádor*) in 1525, which then seemed to mark the peak of his exceptional career. In reality, however, this statement is true only as regards the increase in Werbőczy's private fortune, as he shamelessly laid his hands on every property that was within his reach: by 1526, he had come into the possession of 360 tax-paying tenant plots.¹⁵ As palatine, on the other hand, he failed completely.¹⁶ Despite the tacit support of Pope Clement VII, Werbőczy's room for manoeuvre was radically reduced, his supporters left him, and even the royal couple lost their trust in him. In this situation the previous palatine, István Báthori, had no difficulty in overthrowing him, and at the national assembly all those who had been so keen on him a year before now condemned him to death and ordered his property be confiscated.¹⁷ The fact that John Szapolyai, voivode of Transylvania, who had previously wholeheartedly supported Werbőczy, also turned against him, contributed to these events. The reason Szapolyai turned away from Werbőczy was that the new palatine had offended him when he awarded the immense landed estates of Lőrinc Újlaki, who died heirless, to the crown rather than to him. During the Battle of Mohács, Werbőczy locked himself up in one of his castles in Upper Hungary, thinking his path would never again cross that of his former patron. Life, however, proved him wrong, and the failed palatine became one of King John's most important supporters.

Shortly after his coronation, King John began to organise the country's administration, and appointed Werbőczy to the post of chancellor of the realm, granting him landed estates of considerable size. The new chancellor's main tasks included convoking diets and compiling documents of national importance, but the king relied on Werbőczy's knowledge even in diplomatic matters. The edition of the articles passed at the first major diet convoked

12 Gábor Nemes, 'Elszalasztott lehetőségek. VII. Kelemen pápa és II. Lajos országainak belpolitikája (1523–1526)', *Egyháztörténeti Szemle* 15:4 (2014) 3–4.

13 Kubinyi, 'Werbőczy Mohács (1526) előtti pályafutása', 79.

14 Fraknói, *Werbőczy*, 167–173.

15 Neumann, 'Werbőczy István származása és pályakezdése', 49–50.

16 András Kubinyi, 'A magyar állam belpolitikai helyzete Mohács előtt', in Lajos Ruzsás and Ferenc Szakály (eds.), *Mohács. Tanulmányok a mohácsi csata 450. évfordulója alkalmából*. Budapest, 1986, 92.

17 Fraknói, *Werbőczy*, 226–235.

by John bears Werbőczy's imprint. At the diet of Buda, convoked in March 1527, the participating clerical and secular estates confirmed the content of the decision passed at Rákos, admonished some members of the diet for being disloyal and voting for King Ferdinand, and declared them enemies of the Holy Crown.¹⁸ Ferdinand was requested not to use the title 'King of Hungary' and not to consider the Hungarians as his subjects or to interfere with the country's administration. He was also made aware that "Hungary was not to be given away either as a betrothal present or as a fief; instead it is a sovereign country independent from any foreign monarch, and neither our former kings nor our ancestors had the right to bequeath it to anybody."¹⁹

In 1527 King John surrendered Buda and the western territories to Ferdinand's invading troops and retreated to Várad (Nagyvárad/Oradea), where he was accompanied by Werbőczy. Thus it was Werbőczy who, in his capacity as chancellor, drafted the letters sent out throughout the country, in which King John tried to encourage his followers to remain loyal to him and remember the decision of Rákos. King John also assured them that at the head of his army he would soon come to defend them, and that as long as he lived he would see to it that "Germans would not rule over Hungarians or deprive them of their freedom."²⁰ When the Habsburg army successfully invaded Hungary and King John had to flee to the castle of Tarnów in Poland, Werbőczy once again joined his master.

That Werbőczy was a key figure is clearly shown by Ferdinand's intention to bring him over to his side: he dispatched several envoys and wrote him several letters, in which he emphasized that John's coronation was invalid and insisted on his own claim to the throne. He also promised that were he to be accepted as king of Hungary he would spare no effort to defend Hungary.²¹ In his reply, Werbőczy informed Ferdinand of his firm loyalty to King John and the Holy Crown of Hungary with which John had been crowned.

Werbőczy was also a member of the delegations that in the 1530s conducted negotiations in Poznań, Megyer and Pozsony (Bratislava) on behalf of the king on the agreement between the two monarchs. In 1534 he travelled to the Porte to represent the interests of his king there. His journey proved successful, as the sultan nominally returned the Hungarian territories, previously taken from Louis II, to King John's possession. In 1535 he once again became a member, together with István Brodarics and Franciscan friar Ferenc Frangepán, of the delegation sent to Vienna to conduct negotiations with Ferdinand on the partition of the country. Their mission failed, however, and the war between the two monarchs continued.

18 MOE I. 116–125.

19 *sciat Majestas Vestra, Regnum hoc Hungarie vel dotalitium, vel tributarium, venaleque nunquam fuisse, sed liberum, et a cujuslibet externi Principis jurisdictione exemptum semper extitisse, et modo quoque esse, et illud neminem Regum, ac Principum nostrorum, etiam legitime coronatorum, neminem etiam Progenitorum. ac Predecessorum nostrorum contra publicam libertatem nostram cuiquam ad successinem obligari potuisse...* MOE I. 127.

20 MOE I. 154.

21 Fraknói, Werbőczy, 257.

Another detail that shows how important a figure Werbőczy was at this time is that he was a member of the Hungarian delegation sent to Krakow to bring Princess Isabella Jagiellon to Hungary. Other members of the delegation were King John's main supporters: István Brodarics and Péter Perényi. Despite the marriage, Werbőczy argued in favour of the implementation of the Treaty of Várad (1538), but he turned out to be alone in his opinion, as the majority of the king's councillors hoped that the young queen would bear her husband a son and that the part of the country ruled by Szapolyai would thus not be transferred to Ferdinand.²²

Before King John travelled to Transylvania to suppress the rebellion of voivodes István Maylád and Imre Balassa in the spring of 1540, he left István Werbőczy in Buda, entrusting him with the post of governor; in fact, by May, Werbőczy was already in Transylvania and participated at the diet of Torda, which had been convoked to settle the situation. The eighty-year-old chancellor was also present by King John's deathbed in the military camp in Szászsebes (Sebes). After the king's death he took a great burden upon himself and once again travelled to Constantinople with János Eszéki, bishop of Pécs. The aim of their mission was to obtain the sultan's permission to crown the deceased king's son as king of Hungary. Their undertaking was successful, and they returned to Hungary in January 1541. By this time, Friar George and King John's supporters had already taken control of the castle of Buda, which was under siege by the Habsburg army, as Ferdinand, referring to the Treaty of Várad, wished to occupy the capital city. The supporters of the Szapolyais, however, pursuant to their oath to the king, were not willing to surrender the city.

The Hungarian lords supporting the Szapolyais viewed with fear and mistrust the sultan and his army arriving in Buda on 26 August 1541. Their fear only grew when the padishah requested their and the two-months old John Sigismund's presence. Werbőczy, on the other hand, was comforting the dismayed Isabella and the councillors by emphasizing that the sultan's words should be trusted, as on many occasions he had already demonstrated his good will towards the Hungarians.²³ The old chancellor had not, however, become any wiser in the field of politics, and he could not have been more wrong as regards the Ottomans' plans.

Süleyman, on the other hand, was well aware of Werbőczy's skills, so following the occupation of Buda, he appointed him judge general of the Christian population remaining in Buda. He was competent in the fields of law and jurisdiction, so in these last days of his life he returned to the work he really loved. He did not have much time to spend on this, however, as in October 1541, the Ottoman commander of Buda, Süleyman Pasha, allegedly had him poisoned, though we do not have any credible evidence for this. It is also possible that he died of a disease that was spreading within the walls of the castle.

22 Rorario's report is quoted by Fraknói, *Werbőczy*, 316–317.

23 *Verancsics Antal m. kir. helytartó, esztergomi érsek összes munkái. Vol. I.* (Monumenta Hungariae Historica, II; Scriptores, 2.). Published by László Szalay. Pest, 1857, 186.

Throughout his life, István Werbőczy had propagated the idea of a national kingdom and national political forces in Hungary. As early as prior to the Battle of Mohács he strove to establish Christian cooperation in Europe against the Ottoman Turks menacing Hungary. In the political turmoil following the battle, he immediately took King John's side and this is where he remained, but he had less and less say in political events. The peak of his career is marked by his great work, the *Tripartitum*, which remained the foundation for Hungarian and Transylvanian jurisdiction until 1848.²⁴

PÉTER PETROVICS

Every monarch strove to have his country governed by his closest supporters, and King John was no exception. The most important element of trust was family relations, so it is no surprise that even he tried to recruit his relatives to key governmental positions. This was, however, hardly visible at a first glance, since the Szapolyais did not belong to the most populous families of the country.²⁵ As we know, John had three siblings: his younger brother György died in the Battle of Mohács, without leaving an heir; his younger sister Borbála had two daughters, who were not able to take part in their uncle's politics due to their age. Hedvig, born in 1513, grew up in Poland, and was always kept away from political events in Hungary, while Anna died at the age of five in 1520. There was thus no one in John's immediate family whom he could have picked to be at his side.

There were, however, numerous family members among the collateral relatives, who, for a longer or shorter period of time, were given important offices in the Szapolyai government. These included several members of the Drugeth family of Homonna, who, being second cousins of Szapolyai, held several positions. Ferenc, István and Antal were *ispáns* of Ung and Zemplén counties, whereas Gábor served as bishop of Győr for many years. Another important dynasty was the Petrovics family of Szuraklin (Zaraklyn); through them, the Lévai, Patócsi and Kendi families also became members of the network of Szapolyai relatives, gaining major roles after King John's death in 1540.²⁶ Of all the close relatives, it was Péter Petrovics, born into the marriage of John Szapolyai's unknown aunt and Mihály Petrovics, who rose to the highest rank, and who was a lifelong committed supporter of King John and of his son and heir John II.

Péter Petrovics was born into a lesser noble family in Orbász county around 1487; as early as 1514, the relative from the Bosnian border was employed in the service of Szapolyai. He actively participated in the suppression of the Dózsa

24 Pál Fodor, 'Werbőczy, az államépítő és a politikus', in Máthé (ed.), *A magyar jog fejlődésének fél évezrede*, 187–199.

25 See the family tree on the front flyleaf of this volume, and the essay by Tibor Neumann, also in this volume.

26 On this in more detail, see Szabolcs Varga, 'A hűséges rokon: Petrovics Péter a Szapolyaiak szolgálatában', in Pál Fodor and Szabolcs Varga (eds.), *Egy elfeledett magyar királyi dinasztia: a Szapolyaiak*. (Mohács 1526–2026: Rekonstrukció és Emlékezet) Budapest, 2020, 147–148.

revolt: he captured the enemy leader, thus deciding the outcome of the Battle of Temesvár (Timișoara). In the 1520s he served as castellan of Szklabinya (Sklabiňa) in Turóc county, but there are no references from this time suggesting that Szapolyai relied on him in any substantial way.

Péter Petrovics is likely to have entered John Szapolyai's inner circle after the Battle of Mohács. He was with him in Esztergom in late 1526, and is likely to have accompanied his master into his exile in Poland in 1528.²⁷ At King John's side he viewed Sultan Süleyman's campaign to Vienna in 1529, and later witnessed the king's second coronation.²⁸ We have no information of him ever disapproving of John's pro-Ottoman political actions. He even appears to firmly have adhered to the political principle that the sultan was able to ensure the Szapolyai family's rule in Hungary. This may even have been the reason behind his rising career.

In the 1530s Péter Petrovics held more senior offices and was granted ever larger landed estates. In 1531 he owned the castles of Lippa (Lipova), Solymos (Șoimoș) and Becse (Bečej) in the Temesköz region, and in 1533 at the latest he was appointed the *ispán* of Temes (*comes Temesiensis*) and captain general of the Lower Parts (*supremus capitaneus partium regni Hungariae inferiorum*), and thus was elevated to the rank of baron.²⁹ The fact that Petrovics thus came to lead the region around Temesvár, a strategically important part of the country, demonstrates the king's faith in him, because, as the campaign of 1551 showed, the eastern parts of the Kingdom of Hungary, which served as a base for the Szapolyai family's power, could only be attacked after the Temesköz region had been conquered.³⁰

In 1538 Petrovics had the task of organizing the defence against the Ottoman retaliatory campaign, as King John feared that the Treaty of Várad, signed by him and Ferdinand on 24 February 1538, would result in a severe Ottoman counter attack. He therefore entrusted the *ispán* of Temes county to make the necessary preparations. To the country's benefit, the campaign did not take place, but in 1539 John had to face an internal riot. Petrovics was sent to crush the rebellion led by the Transylvanian voivode István Maylád; these operations continued well into the following year and into the last weeks of John's life.

Péter Petrovics was standing by King John's deathbed in Szászsebes when the king named him as one of his son's guardians. According to contemporary reports, the key argument in his favour was that he was related to and loyal to the king and that he did not have any children of his own, so no one had to fear

27 Szerémi, *Emlékirat*, 231.

28 *Ibid.*, 267.

29 Géza Pálffy, 'Kerületi és végvidéki főkapitányok és főkapitány-helyettesek Magyarországon a 16–17. században (Minta egy készülő főkapitányi archontológiai és "életrajzi lexikonból")', *Történelmi Szemle* 39:2 (1997) 275.

30 Imre Szántó, 'A török 1551. évi őszi hadjárata a Temes-vidék és a Maros-völgy meghódítására', *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 19:1 (1972) 73–98.

he would prioritize the interests of his own heirs.³¹ John should be credited for his choice. During the months that followed, Petrovics was considered Queen Isabella's most intimate confidant, and he remained a faithful supporter of the Szapolyai family until the end of his life. In the interest of the elected king of Hungary, John II Szapolyai (John Sigismund, 1540–1571), he even turned against Friar George, who gained ever more power in Transylvania. In 1549 he took it upon himself to organize a group of nobles in support of the queen,³² and then, in 1551, as a sign of loyalty towards the family, he even undertook to go to exile. It was he who arranged for Queen Isabella and John II's return in 1556 from their exile in Poland, and who then left all his fortune to his queen.³³

Petrovics and John's relationship was clearly determined by their being related and by their military service. The old bachelor had remained loyal to the family throughout his life, and he did not strive to obtain major landed estates, either. Because of his South Slavic origin, he enjoyed the support of the Serb population living in the Temesköz region and was used to a military lifestyle, which made him more valuable in the eyes of the king. He fully identified himself with King John's pro-Ottoman policy, so from 1541 he was, in his capacity as *ispán* of the Temesköz region, one of the highest-ranking lords in the Kingdom of Hungary, and at the same time he was also, by the grace of the sultan, the *sanjakbeyi* of Temes.³⁴ During his long life, he did many things for the dynasty. All his life, he supported King John, and it was thanks to him that Queen Isabella and John II were able to return to rule Transylvania in 1556. It was not his fault that the Szapolyai family eventually disappeared from the theatre of Hungarian history.

FRIAR GEORGE

The Pauline monk, who appeared in the political arena around King John under the name of Friar George, came from a Croatian family of the lesser nobility. He was born as Juraj Utiešenić/Utiešenović on 18 June 1482 in a castle called Kamičac near today's Croatian town of Skradin. George's mother, Anna Martinušević, came from a higher-ranking noble family. George Utiešenić came to be known as Martinuzzi, which is the Italianised version of his mother's last name.³⁵

31 Szabolcs Varga, 'Péter Petrovics (1487–1557) in the Service of Queen Isabella', in Ágnes Máté and Teréz Oborni (eds.), *Isabella Jagellion, Queen of Hungary (1519–1559)*. (Mohács 1526–2026: Reconstruction and Remembrance) Budapest, 2020, 327–347.

32 Adrian Magina (ed.), *Acta et Documenta partes Regni Hungariae inferiores concernentia 1500–1552*. Cluj-Napoca, 2020, No. 130.

33 Wolffgangi de Bethlen, *Historia de rebus Transsylvanicis*. Vol. I. Cibinii, 1782, 610.

34 Varga, 'Péter Petrovics (1487–1557)', 332–336.

35 For more on the life of Friar George, see Antoine Béchet, *Histoire du ministère du Cardinal Martinusius*. Paris, 1715; Mihály Horváth, 'Útyseszenich Fráter György (Martinuzzi bíbornok) élete', in Horváth Mihály *kisebb történelmi munkái*. Pest, 1868, 1–427; Ognjeslav Utiešenović, *Lebensgeschichte des Cardinals Georg Utiešenović genannt Martinusius*. Wien, 1881; Gábor Barta, *Vajon kié az ország?* Budapest, 1988; Ante Sekulić, *Naš velikan graditelj povijesti Juraj Utišinović Martinušević: 1482.–1551*. (Knjižnica hrvatske povijesti i kulture, 2.) Jastrebarsko, 1996; Adriano Papo and Gizella Nemeth Papo, *Frate Giorgio Martinuzzi. Cardinale, soldato e statista dalmata agli*

As a child, he served Prince John Corvinus, King Matthias I Corvinus's son, as a page in the castle of Hunyad (Hunedoara) in Transylvania. Later, he worked as a mercenary until the age of 20, and in the early 1500s he served at the court of King John's mother, Hedwig of Teschen (Cieszyn), in Szepesvár (Spišský hrad).

After a couple of years, he entered a monastery named after Hermit St. Paul in Buda. He started his life as a monk at the Pauline monastery of St. Lawrence in Buda, from where he was soon transferred to the centre of the Pauline order, the monastery of Częstochowa. In 1527 George was stationed in the small friary in Sajólad and was appointed prior there. It was there he met King John, fleeing to Poland, in 1528, and entered into a life-long alliance with him. While at King John's side, Friar George's career rose steadily, and he obtained the highest-ranking offices. From 1532 he became the court judge (*provisor*) of Buda Castle, and later on he became the country's treasurer (1534), bishop of Várad and perpetual *supremus comes* of Bihar county (1534). In 1540 he held the following positions: elected bishop of Várad, treasurer, royal councillor, castellan and provisor of Buda Castle (*electus Varadiensis, thesaurarius et consiliarius regiae maiestatis, castellanusque et provisor castri Budensis*).³⁶ Following the death of King John, he retained his earlier offices, and also became King Ferdinand's and later Queen Isabella's lord-lieutenant (*locumtenens*; 1541–1542) and judge general (*judex generalis*; 1544) in the eastern part of the country. In 1551 Ferdinand appointed him to the post of voivode of Transylvania; later he became archbishop of Esztergom (1551), while two months before his death he was named a cardinal by Pope Julius III.

Antonio Mazza of Venice, who worked as an embassy secretary in Vienna, noted that Friar George was exceptionally respected among the people around King John, mainly because he was able to raise funds, which made him very influential. Mazza also added that King John elevated him from his low status to a level much higher than would have been in line with his merits, and that, eventually, the whole country had come mainly to be governed in accordance with his ideas and advice. According to Mazza's account, George was a cunning and ambitious man who took particular care of everything (especially finances), and was not ashamed of his greediness. He was also generous, but at the same time vain and arrogant, and wished for change and for new things. Those who knew him, but not on his wavelength, were never able to grow to like him.³⁷

arbori del Principato di Transilvania. Canterano, 2017; Teréz Oborni, *Az ördögös Barát. Fráter György (1482–1551)*. Pécs, Budapest, 2017; Eadem, 'A "Devilish Monk" in the Kingdom of Hungary: The Lieutenant Governorship of Friar George (1541–1551)', in Philippe Chareyre, Álvaro Adot Lerga and Dénes Harai (eds.), *Les alter ego des souverains. Vice-rois et lieutenants généraux en Europe et dans les Amériques (XIV^e-XVII^e siècle)*. Pau, 2020 (forthcoming).

36 Georgius Pray, *Epistolae Procerum Regni Hungariae. Pars II. Posonii*, 1806, 389; András Kubinyi, 'A budai vár udvarbírói hivatala (1458–1541) (Kísérlet az országos és a királyi magánjövodelemek szétválasztására)', *Levélári Közlemények* 35:1 (1964) 67–98.

37 *...huomo callido, astuto, sollecito et vigilante a tutte le cose, ma molto piu al denaro del quale era et non si vergognava dimostrarsi avidissimo, l'animo suo grande, vano, et desideroso di mutationi et cose nove, ambizioso, superbo, et brevemente tale che da niuno che lo havesse conosciuto, et che non fusse stato simil suo, non potea esser amato. Ma il Re Gioanne ne faceva grandissimo conto come di huomo*

One of Friar George's major achievements is the Treaty of Várad, signed in 1538 by King John I and King Ferdinand I, two monarchs who had been rivals since 1526. In the initial phase of the negotiations, Friar George remained in the background. From 1536, however, he gradually took the lead. In his letter written in Várad, archbishop Wese wrote the following to his master, Ferdinand, about the current situation: the White Friar (*monachus albus*) administers everything in John's country, deliberately levies taxes, excoriates those he wants to, all the while accumulating wealth for himself and his master.³⁸

The agreement was finally signed on 24 February 1538; in it, King John made peace not only with Ferdinand but also with Emperor Charles V. According to the main points of the treaty, the Kingdom of Hungary was divided between the two monarchs, while the basic principles of dual rule, originally meant to be temporary, were also established. It was also stipulated that, in the event of King John's death, his part of the country would be put under the rule of Ferdinand even if a son was born to him in the meantime.³⁹

At the time of the birth of his son, King John was in Transylvania trying to curb the rebellion of István Maylád and Imre Balassa, Transylvanian voivodes previously appointed by him.⁴⁰ When he received the news, he was already in very bad health. On his deathbed, he left his will in spoken form to his councillors standing beside his bed. He requested his main confidants, Péter Petrovics and Friar George, to be his son's guardians, and, together with the other Szapolyai supporters, to preserve the country for his son.⁴¹ He lifted Friar George above his other supporters, however, by requesting him to govern the part of the country remaining under Szapolyai rule. By this act, the king laid the grounds for Friar George's outstanding position of power in later times.

King John died on 22 July. During 1541–1551 Friar George built an autocracy first in Queen Isabella's part of the country, then in that of her son. His main ambition was to unite the two parts of the country under Ferdinand's rule so as to rout the Ottomans from Hungary. He achieved his goal in 1549, when

che sapea trovar denari, et per tal causa facea molto a proposito suo, et lo havea di basso luoco elevato a grado molto piu alto delli suoi meriti, donatoli il vescovato di Varadino che rende grandissima entrata, fattolo suo thesoriero, et finalmente tale che per opinione di ognuno il stato in buon parte si governava per il consiglio et parer suo. Linz, 1 September 1541, published in György Domokos and Norbert Mátyus, 'Antonio Mazza és Buda ostromáról írt jelentése', in Gábor Ujváry and Réka Lengyel (eds.), *Lymbus 2016. Magyarságtudományi Forrásközlemények*. Budapest, 2016, 47.

38 Mihály Hatvani (ed.), *Magyar történelmi okmánytár a brüsseli országos levéltárból és a burgundi könyvtárból. Vol. I: 1441–1538.* (Monumenta Hungariae Historica, I; Diplomataria, 2.) Pest, 1857, 354.

39 Documents relating to the peace agreement: Roderich Gooss, *Österreichische Staatsverträge. Fürstentum Siebenbürgen*. Wien, 1911, 49–113; see also Pál Fodor and Teréz Oborni's essay in this volume.

40 The rebels' letter of alliance: László Fehérpataky, 'Mayláth István és társai frigylevele', *Történelmi Tár* 1878/I, 183–184; Szabolcs Varga, 'A Maylád-féle lázadás történetének kritikai vizsgálata', in Balázs Mátyás (ed.), *Grastyán Endre Szakkollégium. Tanulmánykötet 2.* Pécs, 2001, 277–293.

41 King John's will: *Verancsics Antal összes munkái. Vol. VI: Vegyes levelek 1538–1549.* (Monumenta Hungariae Historica, II; Scriptores, 9.) Published by László Szalay. Pest, 1860, 111–130.

the Treaty of Nyírbátor was signed, in which he made Isabella renounce the throne to Ferdinand. The Habsburg king, however, had lost his faith in George, who enjoyed a suspiciously good relationship with Ottoman leaders, so on 17 December 1551 he had him killed by his mercenaries who were in control of Transylvania.

ISTVÁN BRODARICS (STEPHANUS BRODERICUS)

John Szapolyai assumed power in the country in autumn 1526, in an extremely difficult and precarious situation. The government was completely destroyed, the clerical and secular élite suffered immense losses in the battlefield at Mohács, and the newly crowned king had to face the imminent challenge posed by the Habsburgs. The king's main task after his election was to have his reign recognized by major Christian courts. For this he needed experienced diplomats who could speak several languages and who knew their way in the field of diplomacy. So the decision in late March 1527 of István Brodarics, bishop of Szerém and chancellor, to leave the Habsburg side and switch to King John, must surely have played into the king's hands. Although the years that followed the Battle of Mohács were characterized by fading loyalty and the constant changing of sides, Brodarics's case is special in several aspects.

Even though Miklós Oláh (Nicolaus Olahus), Brodarics's former friend who had for a time been living abroad and working as the widow Queen Mary's secretary, believed Brodarics may have had economic reasons for switching sides,⁴² Brodarics's motives were more complex. In his long letter written to Ferdinand dated 18 March 1527 (which we have only known in its entirety for a couple of years), he explained in detail the circumstances behind his decision. The fact that in this era a person of high rank feels it necessary to explain his decision is extraordinary in itself. Moreover, Brodarics displayed great moral merit when he decided to end his service to Ferdinand who was ready to take up arms against Brodarics's country and at whose court he held a secure position, and instead take John Szapolyai's side, despite having no special personal contact with him earlier.⁴³ Yet, whatever their personal relationship might have been, one thing is certain: King John stood greatly to gain from Brodarics's decision.

At the time he switched sides, Brodarics was regarded as a skilled and recognised diplomat. He was born into a family of the lesser nobility around 1480, somewhere in Körös county. The family possessed only a few tenant plots, and in the past its members were conditional nobles of the bishop of Zagreb. Brodarics, on the other hand, obtained a position as canon in Zagreb, presumably with the help of his uncle on his mother's side, János Jalsity, and the income he received made it possible for him to spend several years studying in Italy, in

42 Brodericus, *Epistulae*, 261.

43 For the text of the letter and for more details on the circumstances of the side-switching, see Péter Kasza and Géza Pálffy, *Brodarics- emlékkönyv. Egy különleges pártváltás a mohácsi csata után*. Budapest, 2011.

Padua and Bologna.⁴⁴ That his personal skills and his broad education played a major role in his rise is testified by a charter issued in 1517, which states that the previous coat of arms granted to the family in recognition for its military achievements, was, in recognition of his merits achieved through knowledge, embellished with Apollo's raven.

Upon returning home, Brodarics became personal secretary to György Szatmári, chancellor and bishop of Pécs; he thereby soon acquired a taste of courtly life. That he had gained the monarch's trust is shown by his being sent in 1522 as an envoy to Rome, where he represented Hungarian affairs for several years, until autumn 1525. During his years in Rome, he established excellent personal relationships with several cardinals, and maintained good relations with leading Polish statesmen and also with the king of Poland.⁴⁵ Enjoying the support of the papal and Polish courts, he became chancellor of Hungary in 1526, but in the shadow of the Ottoman threat the office was more of a curse than a blessing. Still, the appointment had an advantage, namely that, because of his new office, Brodarics participated in the campaign of Mohács, and thus became an eyewitness to and one of the most authentic chroniclers of these events.⁴⁶

Brodarics was exactly the kind of person King John needed: that the king trusted him is shown by the fact that as early as 1527 he intended to grant him the important title of bishop of Zagreb,⁴⁷ and that in 1527 he was sent, together with Ferenc Frangepán, on a diplomatic mission to Poland to obtain support for their campaign against Ferdinand's army.⁴⁸ From this time on, Brodarics was and remained King John's most dedicated supporter and leading diplomat, which he remained as long as he lived. Even though the country's political stance was mostly determined by Lodovico Gritti in the first half of the 1530s and by Friar George in the second half of the decade, in an age in which news travelled no faster than at the speed of a courier a great deal depended on the skills and decisions of the envoys who conducted negotiations. Brodarics had a leading role in almost all domestic and foreign policy negotiations from 1527 onwards: in autumn 1529 he was sent to France, but King John, upon being informed that

44 For more information on Brodarics's learning, see Péter Kasza, 'Egy karrier hajnala. Adalékok Brodarics István tanulmányainak és családi viszonyainak kérdéséhez', *Századok* 142:5 (2008) 1187–1209.

45 On Brodarics's Polish connections, see Péter Kasza, 'Hungarian Diplomat in Polish Service (New Sources for the Functioning of István Brodarics as Ambassador in Rome)', *Camoenae Hungaricae* 7 (2010) 61–73.

46 On the origins of *Historia*, see Péter Kasza, 'Because I Can See that Some [...] Tell the Events Differently to How They Happened...' Comments to the Story of the Formation of István Brodarics's *Historia verissima*, *Camoenae Hungaricae* 5 (2007–2008) 47–63; Idem, 'On the Track of an Edition: New Sources for the Dating of Stephanus Brodericus' *Historia verissima*, in Neven Jovanović, Branko Jozić, Francisco Javier Juez Gálvez and Bratislav Lučin (eds.), *Colloquia Maruliana XXIV: Anticka Bastina u Renesansom Tekstu (II.)*. Split, Marulianum, 2015, 193–204.

47 Péter Kasza, *Egy korszakváltás szemtanúja. Brodarics István élete és működése*, Budapest, 2015, 210–214.

48 *Ibid.*, 82–90.

he had been excommunicated by the pope, requested Brodarics, who was just arriving in Venice, to arrange to visit the pope and take the necessary steps to rescind his excommunication. In 1533 Brodarics was a member of the delegation sent to the negotiations in Óvár and Pozsony, and in 1536 he was sent to Naples to try to negotiate directly, over Ferdinand's head, with Charles V. In 1537 he was in constant negotiations with archbishop Wese: there were rounds of talks that did not start until he arrived, even though Szapolyai's interests were represented by other dignitaries as well.⁴⁹ He had played a lion's share in having the Treaty of Várad signed. Later he was a member of the delegation that travelled to Krakow in 1539 to ask Isabella to marry King John.

Although Brodarics was Szapolyai's loyal and trustworthy follower, he also appeared to be a man of principle, whose decisions were often influenced by moral considerations. This was also the case when he switched sides in 1527; even after this, he put the interests of the country ahead of his own. It is rather telling that, however loyal he was to his master, he was not afraid to allow a spat to arise between them if and when he believed Szapolyai's policy did not serve the interests of the country. A document written by Brodarics and Frangepán in autumn 1537 has come down to us, and which states that if King John is not willing to make peace on fair terms with Ferdinand, they will leave him and join the Habsburg monarch.⁵⁰ In short, Brodarics did not have any problem with an Ottoman protectorate: he was a realist, and he was aware that if the Ottomans attacked John's part of the country only sporadically, the king's pro-Ottoman policy was to the benefit of the country.

Yet when after many long years of diplomatic struggle there appeared to be the possibility of an agreement between the two Christian monarchs, and thus the possibility that the unity of the country be restored, Brodarics was ready to threaten treason should John not accept realistic conditions for peace. It is, on the other hand, rather peculiar that Brodarics undertook to participate in a delegation that set out to propose Isabella for Szapolyai, because he must have known that a potential male heir would most likely be the source of serious trouble. Yet, apart from being loyal, he was also realistic. In the summer of 1538, he must have seen that, despite the Treaty of Várad, in the event of an Ottoman attack Ferdinand was unable to provide substantial support to Hungary, and that, should Szapolyai die without a successor, he would not be able to defend his own part of the country. And vassalage was still better than direct Ottoman rule. At the end of his life, he might therefore have agreed to his last mission to offer a marriage proposal to Isabella.

As stated in his epitaph written by Miklós Oláh,⁵¹ fate treated Brodarics kindly: he died in November 1539, so he did not have to decide whether he

49 *Ibid.*, 129.

50 Brodericus, *Epistulae*, 515–516.

51 For the text of the epitaph, see Emőke Rita Szilágyi, 'Oláh Miklós epitaphiuma Brodarics István halálára', Gábor Ujváry and Réka Lengyel (eds.), *Lymbus 2014. Magyarságtudományi Forrásközlemények*. Budapest, 2015, 7–16.

wanted to adhere to the Treaty of Várad or to his loyalty to the Szapolyai family after the king's death. One thing is certain: during the last decade and a half of his life, he was one of Szapolyai's most dedicated followers.

As we have seen, King John was surrounded by excellent soldiers, diplomats with a humanist education, royal secretaries, legal experts, as well as staff that could well be used in high-level administration. Many of these office holders had previously served at the court of Louis II, although not in the highest-ranking positions. Working for King John, however, offered career advancement opportunities and possibilities to use their talents. Apart from secular dignitaries, clerical staff with an outstanding education, such as János Statileo, bishop of Transylvania, Ferenc Frangepán, archbishop of Kalocsa, and the aforementioned Brodarics entered his service, so the king's court in Buda and in Várad satisfied all the requirements of royal courts of the age. It was not for any lack in the personal skills of his confidants that King John was unable to consolidate his power. Nevertheless, of the entire political élite of the Kingdom of Hungary, King John was unable to retain the wealthiest lords on his side. Petrovics, Brodarics and Werbőczy would most likely have played second fiddle at Ferdinand's court; perhaps only Friar George would have had a similar career in the service of the Habsburgs. We do not know how far these people were responsible for John's failures. We do, however, see that none of them understood the real threat the Ottoman Empire posed, and through their loyalty and service they only encouraged John's pro-Ottoman political actions. For this alone they share a very considerable part of the blame.

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(Abbreviations: A: Austria; BH: Bosnia-Herzegovina; Cr: Croatia; Po: Poland; S: Serbia; Sl: Slovakia; Slo: Slovenia; R: Romania; U: Ukraine)

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MOHÁCS 1526–2026
RECONSTRUCTION AND REMEMBRANCE

From the 1460s onwards, the Szapolyai family played a decisive role in the history of Hungary for more than a hundred years. The studies in this volume highlight the extraordinary careers of members of the family's first generation, which made them the greatest landowning magnates of the country. Relying on the wealth, prestige and military force of the dynasty, John, a member of the second generation, successfully governed Transylvania for a decade and a half; it was partly due to this achievement that in 1526 the majority of Hungarian noblemen found him worthy of the orphaned throne of Louis II. The writings in this volume explore King John's foreign, urban and church politics, the cultural trends at his court, as well as his relations with the Ottoman Empire, and those of his successors (Queen Isabella and her son John II, elected king of Hungary). What we learn from these texts is that the history of the Szapolyais can be divided into two parts: after their successful rise as kings of Hungary, their family background was no longer sufficient for effective governance. The country became a battleground for global empires, and the Szapolyais, similarly to the Jagiellonians, were unable to overcome their vulnerable circumstances. After centuries of the subject being neglected, this volume undertakes to give the last Hungarian royal dynasty the evaluation it deserves.



The Szapolyai Family Tree

