

GRAFEN VON KRABATEN: THE CURIOUS DESIGNATION FOR THE FRANKAPANI IN LATE MEDIEVAL GERMAN SOURCES*

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The counts of Krk were one of the most prestigious and most powerful noble families in late medieval Croatia, with a dominant role attained under Nicholas IV who received the last name Frankapani from Pope Martin V in 1430. Soon after his death German language sources began to refer to the family as *Grafen von Krabaten* or Counts of Croatia, a somewhat peculiar designation considering that there were other prominent families such as the counts of Krbava who also maintained contacts within the Holy Roman Empire. This paper traces the development of the term *von Krabaten* from 1440 until the election of Ferdinand I Habsburg as king of Croatia, showing how it was used throughout the century and may have been an indication of the respect and status achieved by the Frankapani under Nicholas IV and his sons. The term is also explored as a helping tool for further research into the history of the family using sources that have hitherto been overlooked or neglected.

Keywords: Frankapani, *Grafen von Krabaten*, Status, Prestige

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“Count of Croatia” at the Coronation of Ladislaus the Posthumous

In the winter of 1440, something resembling a political thriller was taking place in the Kingdom of Hungary. After the death of King and Emperor Sigismund of Luxembourg on December 9, 1437, his son in law, Duke Albert V of Austria, succeeded him in Hungary, Bohemia and Germany. Before he could properly consolidate the many crowns under his rule, he died suddenly while on a campaign against the Ottomans, on October 27, 1439, leaving behind his pregnant wife, but no male heirs.¹ While multiple factions vied for influence over succession in Albert's duchy and kingdoms, his wife Elizabeth, firmly convinced she was carrying a male child and heir, conspired to acquire the Holy Crown of Hungary, kept under guard in the palace of Visegrád. She entrusted this delicate task to her chambermaid Helene Kottaner, who later committed her recollections to paper in her memoirs in German, likely composed around 1450.² On the evening of February 21, 1440, Kottaner took possession of the Crown with the help of a Hungarian accomplice, whose name she deliberately omitted from her memoirs, likely to protect him from reprisals. The following morning, the small party tirelessly covered the 77 kilometers to Komárno, but before the maid could give a full report to her mistress, the Queen felt the first contractions and gave birth to Ladislaus Posthumous later that night. Kottaner deemed the timing of the birth to be a stroke of divine favor. Had the Queen not borne the heir that night, she would have traveled to Bratislava in the following days, losing both the initiative and the magnate support necessary to have the baby crowned three months later in Székesfehérvár, where custom dictated the king of Hungary had to be crowned. Ladislaus was crowned on May 15, the day of the Pentecost. Kottaner names several powerful nobles and members of the so-called Habsburg faction, who escorted the Queen and the infant prince to Székesfehérvár or waited for them there, and who played important roles in the ceremony itself: Palatine Lawrence Héderváry, Count Ulrich II of Cilli, Nicholas Újlaki, ban

¹ For an overview of the complex political situation following Sigismund's death see Pál Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary, 895-1526* (London: I. B. Tauris. 2001), pp. 278-297.

² Her Memoirs in manuscript form are kept in the Austrian National Library in Vienna (Codex 2920), but they have been published in their original form by Karl Molay in 1971 with translation into English in 1998, Slovenian in 1999 and Croatian in 2018. See Karl Mollay, *Die Denkwürdigkeiten der Helene Kottanerin (1439-1440)* (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundersverlag für Unterricht, Wissenschaft und Kunst, 1971); Maya Bijvoet Williamson, *The Memoirs of Helene Kottanner (1439-1440)* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1998); Igor Grdina and Peter Štih, *Spomini Helene Kottanner : ženski glas iz srednjega veka* (Ljubljana: Nova Revija, 1999); Sara Katanec, “Kritičko izdanje i prijevod memoara Helene Kottanner: prilog istraživanju ženskog pisanja u srednjem vijeku,” MA thesis, (University of Zagreb, 2018).

of Mačva, Thomas Széchy, the captain of Komárno, as well as Count Bartholomew of Croatia and his unnamed brother.

The vague description of the two counts of Croatia is rather peculiar in Kottaner's text, as she seems to have been well acquainted with the relatively large cast of characters surrounding these events. The original German version allows for a relatively easy identification of the main political players, such as Count Ulrich of Cilli (*Vlrich von Zily*), count of Temes (Hungarian: *ispán*) Stephen Rozgónyi (*Rosanistván*), Palatine Lawrence Héderváry (*Larencz vom Haydenreichstüern*) or Ladislaus of Gara (*Laslawan von Gara*) but the term counts of Croatia (*grafen von Krabaten*) seems somewhat ambiguous.³ In the text, they are mentioned six times in total, always in a position of close proximity to the Queen and Count Ulrich of Cilli.⁴ Furthermore, Count Bartholomew took part in the coronation ceremony by carrying the coronation orb (*graf Bärtelme der trueg den Apphel*), a clear indication of his importance at Elizabeth's court.⁵ Who, then, were these Counts of Croatia, who, from Helene Kottaner's perspective, seem to have literally represented the entire kingdom of Croatia? There is, of course, no doubt that they were the Frankapani, the most prominent noble family of fifteenth century Croatia, related by blood to Ulrich of Cilli, whose mother was Elizabeth Frankapan. As Queen Elizabeth's mother was Ulrich's aunt Barbara of Cilli, the three families were therefore dynastically connected, which explains the support the two Frankapani brothers provided to the Queen and her son, as well as Bartholomew's distinguished role in the coronation ceremony.⁶ Granted, Bartholomew was only one of eight living sons of Nicholas IV Frankapan at the time, but he and his unnamed brother represented the rest of the family. Bartholomew's brothers, Stephen, Martin, John the Younger, and Sigismund, appear in the sources as well, in service to the Queen or her chief backer, the German king Frederick III who, as the senior member of the Habsburg dynasty, became Ladislaus' guardian and, up until 1452, served as regent of his duchy of Austria.⁷ Indeed, the description "of Croatia" (*von Krabaten*) may even have been a deliberate designation within the German speaking world of Central Europe.

Two letters by Queen Elizabeth from 1441 survive in the archives of Ulrich II of Rosenberg (Czech *z Rožmberka*), one of the most powerful Bohemian

³ Mollay, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, pp. 21, 22, 25.

⁴ Mollay, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, pp. 20, 21, 22, 25, 26.

⁵ Mollay, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 28.

⁶ Robert Kurelić, "Posljednji svjedok ubojstva: Frankopani i Celjski u petnaestome stoljeću," *Povijesni prilozi* 50 (2016): pp. 205-231.

⁷ Vjekoslav Klaić, *Krčki knezovi Frankapani*. Reprint (Rijeka: Izdavački centar Rijeka, 1991), pp. 228-229.

nobles, who supported King Albert and then Ladislaus Postumus. In the first letter, in Latin, from January 22, Elizabeth announces to Ulrich the arrival of her envoy *spectabilem et magnificum Sigismundum, Wegle, Segnie et Mod-russie comitem*, whereas the second letter, from March 4, in German, thanks him (*des wir euch mit sunderen genaden danken*) for receiving *den wolgeborn unsern besunder lieben graf Siegmunden von Crabaten* (emphasis mine).⁸ These two letters, issued by the same chancery, clearly show that, when writing about the Frankapani, the convention in German was to apply the designation “of Croatia” for their title. It is impossible that Queen Elizabeth would have referred to the Frankapani as “*von Crabaten*” by mistake. Some might interpret this term as a mere descriptive tool, or a point of reference for the German speaking audience, but it still held great symbolic power. To a German reader, they were being equated with the territory of Croatia, which was, after all, a kingdom appearing in the official title of the kings of Hungary, which also included the recently departed Emperor Sigismund, who shaped imperial policy for a generation and was a veritable political giant of the age. Intentionally or not, this accorded them a preeminent status, not enjoyed by any other noble family from Croatia at the time. Basically, Croatia and the Frankapani seemed one and the same. Moreover, the two letters seem to strongly suggest that Bartholomew’s unnamed brother from Helene Kottaner’s memoirs was, in fact, Sigismund, as he was obviously in Komárno with the Queen as she penned the first letter.

The Beginnings of *von Krabaten*

The first recorded mention of *Krabaten* as a reference to the Frankapani dates to 1375, when an Augustinian monastery confirmed its obligation to hold a yearly mass for the salvation of the souls of the counts of Görz. The comprehensive list of family members includes *Frau Anna, Gräfin zu Krabathen*.⁹ This seems to have been a purely descriptive term at the time (hence the preposition *zu/in* instead of *von/of*) within a monastery, whose monks might not have been very familiar with Croatian nobility and their lineages. It did, however, foreshadow a future use of the phrase *von Krabaten* that would become much more symbolically potent in the next generation of the Frankapani. Anna was the daughter of Meinhard VII of Görz, a prince of the Holy Roman Empire, and her son Nicholas IV Frankapan (r. 1393-1432)

⁸ Blažena Rynešová, *Listář a listinář Oldřicha z Rožmberka: 1418-1462. Svazek II. 1438-1444* (Prague: Nákladem Ministerstva školství a národní osvěty, 1932), pp. 91, 93.

⁹ Karlman Tang, “Die Grafen von Pfannberg. II. Abtheilung,” *Archiv für österreichische Geschichte* 18 (1857): p. 190.

became a *de facto* hegemon in Croatia, overshadowing his Nelipčić and Kurjaković peers with his vast holdings, wealth, and prestige. Moreover, from 1426, he also held the office of ban of Croatia, which came with significant formal authority in the Kingdom. Nicholas also began to claim that his family descended from the “ancient” Roman family of Frangipani, to which, it was believed, Pope Gregory the Great also belonged. In 1430, he traveled to Rome, where Pope Martin V recognized his claim and granted him their coat of arms.¹⁰ Such claims to an illustrious ancient pedigree were commonplace among the higher nobility of the Late Middle Ages. Emperor Charles IV of Luxemburg boasted of Trojan roots,¹¹ Rudolf IV of Habsburg invented a relationship with none other than Gaius Julius Caesar,¹² and even Nicholas’ friend and ally, the aforementioned Ulrich II Rosenberg, had faked his ancestor’s heroics in the Hundred Years War.¹³ Such claims, however, are already indicative of great status, as the families tended to creatively decorate and expand their past after having achieved significant levels of power in their respective territories and domains. With that in mind, the claim to ancient lineage asserted by Nicholas IV in 1430, at great material expense – the cost of traveling to Rome alone was prohibitive, notwithstanding the political connections on the international stage required to arrange safe passage along the route – can be seen as a symbolic confirmation of a position of great power that Nicholas already enjoyed in Croatia. This is evidenced by his Croatian peers’ haste in organizing to curtail his domination.

In his paper on the role of Knin as the capital of Croatia in the High and Late Middle Ages, Mladen Ančić referred to a remarkable charter from July 26, 1430, which described the foundation of a “fraternity” of Croatian nobility (*fraternitas Croatorum*).¹⁴ This association was nominally created to protect the interests of its members from the nomadic Vlachs (*Vlachi*), in a manner

¹⁰ See Luka Špoljarić, “Illyrian Trojans in a Turkish Storm: Croatian Renaissance Lords and the Politics of Dynastic Origin Myths,” in *Portraying the Prince in the Renaissance: The Humanist Depiction of Rulers in Historiographical and Biographical Texts*, ed. Patrick Baker, Ronny Kaiser, Maike Priesterjahn, and Johannes Helmrath (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), pp. 124-131.

¹¹ Robert Antonin, *The Ideal Ruler in Medieval Bohemia* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), p. 162.

¹² Alfons Huber, *Geschichte des Herzogs Rudolf IV. von Oesterreich* (Innsbruck: Verlag der Wagnerschen Universitaets-Buchhandlung, 1865), p. 32.

¹³ Karel Maráz: “K problematice padeláni pecetí na sklonkuu stredoveku. Sfragisticky prípevek k falzum Oldricha z Rozmberku,” *Sborník archivních prací* 48 (1998): pp. 49-103.

¹⁴ Mladen Ančić, “Knin u razvijenom i kasnom srednjem vijeku,” *Radovi Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Zadru* 38 (1996): pp. 71-72. The original charter is kept in the Hungarian National Archives under MOL, DL 38517, 26. VII. 1430. A larger part is transcribed in Damir Karbić, “Hrvatski plemićki rod i običajno pravo,” *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti HAZU* 16 (1998): pp. 110-111.

Ančić referred to as a “special form of ‘medieval nationalism.’”¹⁵ Its provisions, however, extended to “any who would infringe on the liberties and customs of the Kingdom of Croatia.” The timing and the list of members would seem to suggest that said Vlachs were but an excuse for Croatian nobility to organize against a different adversary, namely Ban Nicholas IV Frankapan. Jurisdiction over the Vlachs was granted by King Sigismund to Nicholas in 1426, together with a swath of possessions in Croatia, in exchange for a loan of 28.000 florins. This, in addition to the office of ban, likely made his grip on the Kingdom of Croatia firmer than any of his predecessors for the last few generations. After his wife Dorothea died, the ban lost his marital connection to the palatine of Hungary and, by extension, to the King, who immediately arranged for the restitution of the loan and the retrieval of all the possessions pledged to him, by force if necessary.¹⁶ In 1431 the two resolved their differences, possibly because of the favor granted to Nicholas by the Pope, but, for the better part of 1430, the political situation does not seem to have favored the “hegemon” of Croatia. It is quite likely that the *fraternitas Croatorum*’s real target was Nicholas IV, with the Vlachs under his jurisdiction serving as proxy for the hostility.¹⁷ Moreover, the first Croatian noble mentioned in the charter is Ivaniš Nelipić, the count of Cetina, who continuously flaunted the fact that he had once been a ban of Croatia (*necnon regnorum Dalmatie et Croacie pridem banus*). The list exalts the counts of Cetina and Krbava (of the latter, some were mentioned in person, others in *absentia*), as well as the nobility of the twelve historical counties of Croatia but omits the Frankapani entirely. This document is a clear political manifest. It draws the line between those who belong to the Kingdom and those who do not, with all the rights and privileges this brings, especially the right to offer counsel to the king, and to interpret laws and customs of the land.¹⁸ The consensus among the representatives of Croatian noble families in 1430 was that the Frankapani were not members of the community of Croatian nobility. Ivan Majnarić has

¹⁵ Mladen Ančić, “Srednjovjekovni Vlasi kontinentalne Dalmacije,” in *Dalmatinska zagora. Nepoznata zemlja*, ed. Vesna Kusin (Zagreb: Galerija Klovićevi dvori, 2007), p. 163.

¹⁶ Klaić, *Krčki knezovi Frankapani*, p. 216.

¹⁷ Ivan Botica, “Krbavski knezovi u srednjem vijeku,” PhD Diss. (University of Zagreb, 2011), p. 203.

¹⁸ After King Louis the Great of Hungary took Dalmatia from Venice in 1358, he had a register made with the express purpose to have a written record of all property relations in the newly acquired territories. The register was made by consulting five Hungarian barons and twenty-four jurors from the kingdom (*vigintiquatuor iuratos ipsius regni Croacie*), and twelve jurors were employed for judicial matters (*pro iudicatu et communi iustitia obseruanda in regno Croacie*). Clearly, being a member of the kingdom meant having a seat at the table when important decisions were made. See Mirjana Matijević Sokol, “Nostrum et regni nostri registrum. Srednjovjekovni arhiv Ugarsko-hrvatskog kraljevstva,” *Arhivski vjesnik* 51 (2008): pp. 252-255.

convincingly argued that the relationships among Croatian nobility were not based on objective or independently verifiable criteria, but on a consensus of the noble community.¹⁹ The power of a community's consensus in premodern societies, to pronounce and even change earlier "truth," regardless of witnesses and material evidence, is a phenomenon that has been attested in many societies and on many levels, from small villages to globe-spanning empires.²⁰ The *Fraternitas Croatorum* was just one in a long line of such communities, that claimed for its members an exclusive right to interpret laws and customs within its imagined territory, in this case – the Kingdom of Croatia.²¹ Excluding the Frankapani from this noble Croatian identity was probably made easier by the fact they were engaged in trying to prove their Roman origin at that very moment. The subsequent reconciliation between the king and Ban Nicholas IV seems to have put a swift end to the fraternity and it is never mentioned again. Moreover, the reorganization of the Kingdom of Hungary's army, enacted in 1432, formalized the exceptional role of three families in the Kingdom of Croatia. The Frankapani of Senj, the Kurjakovići of Krbava and the Nelipčiči of Cetina were obliged to field a unit of cavalry called the *banderium* under their own standard.²² This was the royal recognition of their exceptional status, especially since all three families were listed as *comites* (*Corbavie, Cetine, Segnie*), a title that did not exist in Hungary in a hereditary

¹⁹ Ivan Majnarić, *Plemstvo zadarskog zaleđa u XIV. i XV. stoljeću* (Zadar: Sveučilište u Zadru, 2018), p. 105.

²⁰ This is especially visible in questions of frontiers and boundaries between villages and towns. When asked whether a particular plot of land falls within the community of Veprinac the župan and the judges pondered on the issue and the declared that it was in fact an inalienable part of their community which they would defend in perpetuity even though said plot of land had never been relevant or even on their minds. See Robert Kurelić, *Daily Life on the Istrian Frontier: Living on a Borderland in the Sixteenth Century* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019), p. 178. Another, even more fascinating example is a conflict between Venetian subjects from Enego and the barons of Wolkenstein over the rights of pasture on Mt. Frizzon in Vicenza. A commissioner discovered in 1589 that the inhabitants of Enego who were interrogated regarding the ownership of land on the mountain were split along generational lines. The elders claimed it had always belonged to the Wolkenstein, and the younger inhabitants were adamant that this was not the case. This illustrates how mutable the consensus can be when the majority in the community have a vested interest to change it. Walter Panciera, "Il confine tra Veneto e Tirolo nella parte orientale dell'altopiano di Asigo tra il XVIe il XVIII secolo," in: *Questioni di confine e terre di frontiera in area Veneta*, ed. Walter Panciera (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2009), pp. 171-172.

²¹ See also Ivan Majnarić, "Vazda ljublaše pravdu s našimi pr'vimi: združivanje plemstva u Kraljevini Hrvatskoj anžuvinskog doba," in: *Zadarski mir: prekretnica anžuvinskog doba*, ed. Mladen Ančić and Antun Nekić (forthcoming).

²² Botica, *Krbavski knezovi*, pp. 203-204.

capacity before the Counts of Cilli were made perpetual counts of of Zagorje.²³ Moreover, the military banner was a powerful symbol of authority in the Holy Roman Empire. Called the *Fahnlehen* (*vexillaria feuda*), it represented a fief received directly from the emperor. The Chronicle of Ulrich von Richental depicts Sigismund of Luxemburg enfeoffing Count Palatine Louis III with such a banner at the council of Constance.²⁴ In 1436, when they were elevated to the rank of princes, The Counts of Cilli also received a banner, as a symbol of their immediacy with the emperor (*reichsunmittelbar*).²⁵ It is possible that this imperial custom served as an inspiration for Sigismund when he was devising the banderial system for Hungary. Although the military reorganization suggests that the three powerful Croatian families were ultimately reconciled and placed on equal footing with respect to their status and rank, the events of the summer of 1430 suggest that, when faced with Nicholas IV's unbridled ambition, the nobility of Croatia resorted to a solution resembling that of Emperor Charles IV of Luxembourg a century earlier.

Motivated by dynastic interests and rivalries, Charles promulgated the Golden Bull of 1356, a constitution of sorts for the Empire which, among other things, regulated in perpetuity the election of the emperor by limiting the voting to the college of electors. Bavaria was excluded from the list, though a junior branch of the Wittelsbach dynasty held electoral Brandenburg for a while, as were Austria and the Habsburgs, which they perceived as a great affront to their house and prestige. Since the Habsburgs held the imperial office before the Luxembourgs and Duke Rudolf IV spared no expenses to imitate the cultural and architectural achievements of his father-in-law, the intentionality of the exclusion from the college of electors has likely not been lost on the contemporaries. The response from the Habsburg duke was swift and symbolically innovative. After the Golden Bull became public knowledge, Rudolf began calling himself archduke (German: *Erzherzog*) so he could claim a status similar to that of the electors. His death in 1365 rendered the claim to this new title dormant for a time.²⁶ Ernst the Iron (r. 1402-1424) was the

²³ Robert Kurelić, "Status Celjskih grofova kao kneževa Svetog Rimskog carstva", *Zgodovinski časopis* 60 (2006), no. 1-2: p. 57.

²⁴ Ulrich Richental, *Das Konzil zu Konstanz: Kommentar und Text*, ed. Otto Feger (Konstanz: Thorbecke, 1964), f. 76r.

²⁵ Franz von Krones, *Die Freien von Saneck und ihre Chronik als Grafen von Cilli* (Graz: Leuschner & Lubensky, 1883), pp. 163-167.

²⁶ See Eva Schlottheuber, "Das Privilegium maius – eine habsburgische Fälschung im Ringen um Rang und Einfluss," in: *Die Geburt Österreichs. 850 Jahre Privilegium minus*, ed. Peter Schmied and Heinrich Wanderwitz (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2007), pp. 157-158. A somewhat apologetic interpretation of Rudolf's intentions in Alois Niederstätter, *Österreichische Geschichte 1278-1411. Die Herrschaft Österreich. Fürst und Land im Spätmittelalter* (Vienna: Verlag Ueberreuter, 2001), p. 149.

first Habsburg after Rudolf to style himself archduke of Austria, following his investiture as duke of Carinthia in 1414.²⁷ It was not until Frederick III, following his coronation as emperor, issued a decree in 1453, recognizing Rudolf's forgery, that the matter was finally settled and the title of archduke was legalized.²⁸ If the *fraternitas Croatorum* functionally mirrors the college of electors of the Holy Roman Empire – with a purpose of excluding a powerful rival from membership in an association or club with exclusive and lucrative financial and legal privileges – then the adoption of the style *grafen von Krabaten* may have been a Frankapani response not all that dissimilar from what Rudolf attempted almost a century earlier. By claiming such a title, or even just by fostering the impression that their family was somehow inextricably connected to the Kingdom of Croatia to the point when they became almost indistinguishable from it, they could have created the perception of that very hegemony their Croatian peers were attempting to deny them. One must keep in mind that, in medieval times, the perception of status and prestige were just as important as the titles they emanated from. As Howard Kaminsky put it, status could be “maintained only by being exhibited”, in other words – claimed and defended.²⁹

***Von Krabaten* in Fifteenth Century Sources**

The phrase *von Krabaten* first appears in written record in 1439, after the death of King Albert, in Dowager Queen Elizabeth's circle, and is then used in German language sources throughout the fifteenth century when referring to the Frankapani. It is certainly possible that the power and prestige of Count Nicholas IV were, on their own merit, impressive enough among his German speaking neighbors, but the spread of this informal title coincided curiously with Habsburgs' need to marshal support for the claim of Ladislaus the Posthumous to the Hungarian throne. Perhaps *von Krabaten* was some sort of flattery which, after 1440, somehow took on a life of its own within the Empire. Official documentation and correspondence remained precise, however. In charters from 1436, dealing with Stephen III Frankapan's role as captain of Carniola in service to Frederick III, he calls himself *graf ze Veigel, ze Modrusch*

²⁷ Bruckner, “Formen der Herrschaftsrepräsentation und Selbstdarstellung habsburgischer Fürsten im Spätmittelalter,” PhD Diss. (University of Vienna, 2009), p. 183.

²⁸ Heinrich Koller, *Kaiser Friedrich III.* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005), p. 134.

²⁹ Howard Kaminsky, “Estate, Nobility, and the Exhibition of Estate in the Later Middle Ages,” *Speculum* 68 (1993), no. 3: pp. 684-709.

und Zennig,³⁰ and is referred to simply as *graf von Modrusch* by his subordinate Jörg Lamberger in 1439.³¹ The armistice agreement between Frederick III and the Cilli, from August 1440, soon after Ladislaus' coronation, also stipulated that the latter were to refrain from doing any more harm to *graf Steffanen von Modrusch vnd seinen brüdern graf Mertteen vnd graf Yban*.³² Numerous other examples throughout the fifteenth century can attest that both the Frankapani and those they corresponded with made sure to use the proper, formal title when legally binding documents were issued.³³ But, from time to time, the informal designation would appear in the sources. Frederick III was incredibly conscious of the proper forms of address and was insistent on the precise use of titles in nearly every situation. When he was feuding with the Cilli on account of their elevation to the rank of princes, an act he considered a challenge to his authority and prestige, he used a lower form of address than they were due as a weapon against them. Even after they reached an accommodation, and he elevated them again to princely status, he would still not use the princely form *hochgeboren* but kept referring to them as *wohlgeboren*, which was appropriate for counts.³⁴ Moreover, despite legalizing the invented title of archduke, he personally never used it in written form.³⁵ And yet, in a charter from January 22, 1446, summoning the estates to Vienna, it is stated that news regarding troop movements in Hungary arrived from *den von Krabaten* and other supporters of King Ladislaus.³⁶ This was a charter issued *commissio domini regis in cons(ilio)*, meaning that it was reviewed not only by the emperor but also by his council. This shows that, when the situation was dire and nerve wracking – Hunyadi was mustering an army that would invade and pillage eastern Austria six months later – the emperor's otherwise meticulous attention to detail seems to have slipped and he referred to the Frankapani as *von Krabatten*, likely because that was how they were referred to in spoken and informal conversations within the Empire, as confirmed by an example from the Auersperg archive. The text of the charter written by Dujam Franka-

³⁰ Božo Otorepec, *Centralna kartoteka srednjeveških listin* (Ljubljana: Zgodovinski inštitut Milka Kosa, Znanstvenoraziskovalni center Slovenske Akademije znanosti in umetnosti) (Henceforth: CKSL) 1436, February 12.

³¹ Matijaž Bizjak and Miha Preinfalk, *Turjaška knjiga listin II: Dokumenti 15. stoletja* (Ljubljana: Zgodovinski inštitut Milka Kosa – ZRC SAZU, 2009), pp. 292-293.

³² CKSL 1440, August 23.

³³ For example, in 1445, 1469, 1490 and so on. Also see Bizjak, *Turjaška knjiga listin*, pp. 335-336, 447-448, 552-554.

³⁴ See Kurelić, *Status Celjskih*, pp. 52-59.

³⁵ Eva Bruckner, *Formen der Herrschaftsrepräsentation*, p. 216.

³⁶ Karl Uhlirz, *Geschichte der Stadt Wien II. Regesten aus dem Archive der Stadt Wien* (Vienna: Verlag und Eigenthum des Alterthums-Vereines zu Wien, 1900), p. 281.

pan lists his official formal title as *Doym von Frangepan zu Vegel, zu Czeng und zu Modrusch etc. grave*, but on the back a clerk wrote that the charter was issued by *graf Toym von Krabaten*.³⁷ Two more examples from Frederick's chancery are relevant here: In 1453 *Graf Stephan gen. Krabath* is mentioned as a witness to a sentence in a dispute between Margrave Albert of Brandenburg and the city of Buchau,³⁸ and in 1457 a claim made by the *von Krabaten* to the patrimony of the Cilli is refused by the emperor.³⁹

Narrative sources frequently use *von Krabaten* for the Frankapani. Jakob Unrest, the renowned chronicler of the late medieval Austrian and Hungarian history, mentions a *iungen graven vom Krabaten* as a participant at the meeting of the estates in Völkermarkt in 1470. He was not referring to just any "young count of Croatia," as he proves later in the chronicle. When he describes the annihilation of an Ottoman raiding force in 1483, he includes among the leaders of the victorious Croatian army *Weredin, auff Teutsch genant graff Bernhart, der ist graff Steffans sun von Krabatten*.⁴⁰ Unrest was, therefore, quite clear about who the *von Krabatten* were. More chroniclers followed suit. Stephen III Frankapan appears in several sources, all likely composed by German clerics or monks, describing the coronation of Frederick III in Rome on March 19, 1452. He is listed in three of these as *Graf von Krabaten/Graue von Krabatten/Grauff von Krabaten* and as *Steffan von Krabatten* in the list of those the Emperor knighted after the coronation ceremony.⁴¹ The only known exception in this near exclusively German use of the title is found in the works of Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, later Pope Pius II. In his *De Europa*

³⁷ Franz Komatar, "Das Schloßarchiv in Auersperg," *Carniola* 1 (1910): p. 27.

³⁸ [RI XIII] H. 19 n. 574, in *Regesta Imperii Online*, http://www.regesta-imperii.de/id/1455-12-11_1_0_13_19_0_576_574 (accessed April 19, 2021).

³⁹ Ernst Birk, "Urkunden-Auszüge zur Geschichte Kaiser Friedrich des III. in den Jahren 1452-1467 Aus bisher unbenützten Quellen," *Archiv für österreichische Geschichte* 10 (1853): p. 208.

⁴⁰ Unrest also mentions Petar Zrinski (*graf Rintschitzin*) but he is listed as "also a count *zu Krabatten*." The use of *zu* instead of *von* suggests that he was a count in Croatia, but not of Croatia. The difference is subtle, but important. See Jakob Unrest, *Österreichische Chronik*, ed. Karl Grossmann (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1957), pp. 31, 141.

⁴¹ Gustav Georg Königs von Königsthal, *Der Nachlese in den Reichs-Geschichten unter Kaiser Friederich III. Erste Sammlung von 1452. bis 1460.* (Frankfurt: Raspe, 1759), p. 17; Hieronymus Pez, "Ordinatio ingressus Friderici imp. vulgo III in urbem," *Scriptores rerum Austriacarum*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Sumptibus Joh. Frid. Gleditschi B. Filii, 1725), p. 564; Johann Gustav Büsching, *Wöchentliche Nachrichten für Freunde der Geschichte, Kunst und Gelahrtheit des Mittelalters*, vol. 1 (Wrocław: W.A. Holäufner, 1816), p. 127. Usp. Krešimir Kužić, "Carica Svetog Rimskog Carstva, Leonor Portugalska, u svetištu sv. Šimuna Bogoprimca u Zadru," *Radovi Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Zadru* 56 (2014): p. 73; Anonymus, "Hodoeponicon Friderici III. pro corona imperii," in: *Subsidia diplomatica ad selecta juris ecclesiastici Germaniae*, vol. 12 (Frankfurt – Leipzig: Apud Tobiam Goebhardt bibliopolam universitatis Bambergensis, 1778), p. 20.

from 1458 he describes how Frederick II Cilli killed his lawful wife Elizabeth *ex comitibus Croaciae natam*,⁴² and mentions *Stephanus Croatiae comes* twice in his *Commentarii* from 1462.⁴³ Piccolomini was, however, in service to Emperor Frederick III of Habsburg from 1443 to 1455 and was well acquainted with most of the prominent political players in Central and Southeastern Europe. His use of the Latin translation of *von Krabatten* is yet another confirmation that the Frankapani were regularly called the counts of Croatia at Frederick's court and in the correspondence that must have passed through Piccolomini's hands when he was the Emperor's chancellor.⁴⁴ Moreover, he maintained a vast network of contacts, and was well informed about current events in the wider region.⁴⁵

The usage of *von Krabaten* continued throughout the fifteenth and well into the first quarter of the sixteenth century. A letter, sent on January 12, 1470 to Margrave Albrecht Achilles of Brandenburg mentions how Ottoman depredations the previous year had exhausted the *graffen von Krabaten*.⁴⁶ The Chronicle of Hector Mülich from Augsburg, in the entry for the year 1469, further states that the Ottomans had overrun the *grafen von Krawaten* and then pillaged Carniola.⁴⁷ On November 5, 1493, Archduke Sigismund of Tyrol received a report from Vienna which included details about the ill-fated battle of Krbava on September 9, in the aftermath of which the Ottomans carried the head of a *grossn grafen von Krabaten* on a pike.⁴⁸ Since Ban Emeric Derencényi (Croatian Derenčin) was captured alive and taken to Istanbul, where he perished in captivity, the "great count of Croatia" could be none other than Ivan Frankapan of Cetina, who had been killed in battle while Bernardin, the victorious leader from 1483 mentioned by Unrest, managed to escape.⁴⁹

⁴² Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, *Aeneae Sylvii Historia de Europa, caput XXI, de Stiria, Opera quae extant omnia* (Basel, 1551), p. 411.

⁴³ Pius, *Commentarii*, (3.6; 3.22).

⁴⁴ Although Frederick was technically only a king until 1452 Piccolomini signed himself as *Eneas Silvius imperatorie maiestatis secretarius*. See Klaus Schreiner and Ernst Wenzel, *Hofkritik im Licht humanistischer Lebens- und Bildungsideale* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p. 112.

⁴⁵ See Robert Kurelić, *Posljednji svjedok ubojstva*, p. 208.

⁴⁶ Felix Priebatsch, *Politische Correspondenz des Kurfürsten Albrecht Achilles I.* (Leipzig: Verlag Hirzel, 1894), p. 102; Krešimir Kužić, "Političko i etničko poimanje Hrvatske kod nje-mačkih hodočasnika od XIV. do XVII. stoljeća," *KROATOLOGIJA* 1 (2010), no. 2: p. 122.

⁴⁷ Karl von Hegel, ed., *Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte* 22 (Leipzig: S. Hirzel Verlag, 1892), p. 228.

⁴⁸ The regesta of the charter is found in Eduard Marie Lichnowsky, *Geschichte des Hauses Habsburg*, vol. 8 (Vienna: Schaumburg und Compagnie, 1844), p. DCCXXIV.

⁴⁹ Hrvoje Kekez, "Bernardin Frankapan i Krbavska bitka: je li spasio sebe i malobrojne ili je pobjegao iz boja?" *Modruški zbornik* 3 (2009): pp. 65-101.

In a charter from 1494, Count Sigismund of Schaunberg issued a promissory note for his late sister *Gräfin Barbara von Krabaten*, the wife of Dujam IV Frankapan, whose dowry was apparently still owed.⁵⁰ There are numerous examples during Maximilian's reign for both Bernardin and his son Christopher (Croatian: Krsto), as well as for other family members.⁵¹ In 1511, the highest form of recognition of what had obviously become the *de facto* styling of the Frankapani came from the Emperor himself. Writing to the princes of the Empire to advertise his recent string of victories against Venetians in the War of the League of Cambrai, he highlighted the decisive role of his loyal servant *Cristoffen grafen zu Frangepan genant von krabaten* (emphasis mine).⁵² The letter explicitly states that it was composed by the chancellor at the behest of the Emperor (*As mandatum dni Imperat. pprium*). Such recognition from a ruler who also claimed the title of king of Croatia (*zu Ungern Dalmacien Croacien etc. Künig*) was no mean feat, and it certainly illustrates the established perception within the German speaking world that equated the Frankapani with Croatia, a position of unequalled preeminence as far as symbolic representation is concerned. This pinnacle of recognition also marks the beginning of the fall of the Frankapani as *grafen von Krabaten*, as Ferdinand's accession to the throne in 1526, and Christopher's support for his rival, John Zápolya, undermined the respect or flattery that Ferdinand's predecessors displayed. Ferdinand would never personally refer to them as *von Krabaten*, and the informal title went out of style soon thereafter.

⁵⁰ Jodocus Stülz, "Zur Geschichte der Herren und Grafen von Schaunberg," in: *Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Classe*. Vol. 12, ed. Ferdinand Wolf, Jodocus Stülz, Johann Georg Hahn, Franz Ritter von Miklosich and Joseph Bergmann (Vienna: Aus der Kaiserlich-Königlichen Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1862), p. 351.

⁵¹ Lajos Thallóczy and Antal Hodinka, *Codex diplomaticus partium regno Hungariae adnexarum. Magyarország melléktartományainak oklevéltára. Vol. 1: A horvát véghelyek oklevéltára (1490-1527)* (Budapest: Kiadja a magyar tudományok akadémia, 1903), pp. 123, 126, 135, 287; *Neue zeyttung, wie es mit der schlacht zwischen dem Künig von Ungern und dem Türckischen Keyßer ergangen, Item, Wie der Künig von Hungern umb ist kommen ; Item, Wie der Türck die statt Ofen erobert Unnd wie Graff Christoffell Kreichisch Weyssenburg wider ingenom[m]en hat ; Item auch, Wie Ferdinandus das Küniglich schwert auß Behem entpfangen hatt ... ; Anno XVC. XXVI, [Speyer], 1526 [VD16 N 1055].*, p. 10 (<https://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/0003/bsb00039174/images/index.html?id=00039174&groesser=&fip=193.174.98.30&no=&seite=10>) (accessed April 16, 2021), Joseph Chmel, *Urkunden, Briefe und Actenstücke zur Geschichte Maximilians I. und seiner Zeit* (Stuttgart: Literarischer Verein, 1845), 197-198; Georg Kirchmair, "Georg Kirchmair's Denkwürdigkeiten seiner Zeit. 1519-1553.," *Fontes rerum Austriacarum*, vol. 1, ed. Theodor Georg v. Karajan (Vienna: Aus Der Kaisler. Königl. Hof- Und Staatsdruckerei, 1855), pp. 434-435.

⁵² Joseph Bergmann, "Kaiser Maximilian's I. gedrucktes Ausschreiben aud Toblach vom 8. Oct. 1511.," *Neue Zeitschrift des Ferdinandeum für Tirol und Vorarlberg* 7 (1841): pp. 151-156.

Self-Perception

It is one thing being referred to by others by a certain title or style, but claiming such recognition personally is a very different one. The Counts of Cilli and the Burgraves of Nuremberg did not fully grow into their role as princes of the Holy Roman Empire for many years after their official elevation.⁵³ The Frankapani did not claim the title of *von Krabaten* for themselves in official communication in German. In 1449, when Martin, Sigismund and Dujam declared a feud against the city of Nuremberg as allies of Ulrich of Cilli, they listed their official title of *von Frangiban, grave zu Seng, Vegel und zu Modrusch*, as we learn from the entry in Nuremberg's chronicle, where a detailed list of all the incoming "Absagebriefs" (formal letters announcing a feud) was noted, including the titles of the issuers.⁵⁴ This is also visible in two letters dated January 30 and June 6, 1445, sent by Bartholomew Frankopan from Győr, where he served as administrator of the bishopric, in service to Frederick III. Both are signed *Barthlme von Frangepan zu Vegel, zu Modruss ze seng etc. Graf vnd pfleger des Bisthums ze Rab*.⁵⁵ All of this correspondence was issued and signed by members of the Frankapani family, and there is no trace of *von Krabaten*, even though the letters are in German. Other examples, referred to earlier in this paper, corroborate this argument.⁵⁶ The Frankapani would have been aware of being called counts of Croatia in contemporary German sources, but it seems that they were careful not to appear to infringe on the claims of their king, nor leave written evidence that their rivals in Croatia or abroad could use against them in some way. There are, however, two examples in material sources that slightly deviate from this.

Two depictions of coats of arms bearing this *de facto* title survive, one from the armorial of Hendrik Van Heessel,⁵⁷ a renowned herald who in 1433 received the distinguished title "King of Arms" by Sigismund of Luxemburg,

⁵³ Robert Kurelić, *Status Celjskih*, pp. 54, 64-65.

⁵⁴ This full title listed above belongs to Martin Frankapan. His brothers omitted Senj from the list. See *Die Chroniken der fränkischen Städte: Nürnberg, Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte vom 14. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert*, vol. 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), pp. 146, 478, and Robert Kurelić, "Prvi markgrofov rat' i Frankapani", *Modruški zbornik* 3 (2009): pp. 53-64.

⁵⁵ Nándor Knauz, *Az országos tanács és országgyűlések története: 1445-1452* (Pest: Eggenberger Ferdinánd akadémiai, ügy Geibel, Hartleben, Kilian egyetemi, Lampel, Lauffer és Stolp, Osterlamm, Pfeifer, Ráth pesti, Haas bécsi könyvárúsnál, 1859), pp. 19, 30.

⁵⁶ For a list of examples see footnote 34.

⁵⁷ *Hendrik van Heessel's Armorial*, B89420, f. 57v-59r. Hendrik Conscience Heritage Library in Antwerp <https://dams.antwerpen.be/asset/z1eyeJtGYLG8MkZYKfBU5SiM> (accessed April 18, 2021).

the other from the armorial of Nicholas Bertschi, an illuminator active in Augsburg in the first half of the sixteenth century.⁵⁸



The coat of arms of the Grafen von Krabaten in the armorial of Hendrik Van Heessel



The coat of arms of the Grafen von Krabaten in the armorial of Nicholas Bertschi

Van Heessel is especially interesting because he was acquainted with Count Ulrich II Cilli and depicted his personal coat of arms in the pages of his armorial. This detailed and elaborate heraldic achievement also displays the shields of Ulrich's grandparents, including that of Count Stephen II Frankapan. However, instead of the traditional Frankapani shield the family had used while Stephen was alive, Van Heessel depicted the new shield granted to Nicholas IV by Pope Martin V, with two lions breaking bread, an illustration of their last name of Frangipane (Latin: *frangere panem*). Van Heessel, however, wrote down *Krabaten* under the shield, which suggests not only that this informal title was actively used at the time of their meeting in 1447/1448, but also that Ulrich II Cilli, one of the most powerful nobles in Hungary and Austria at the time, was actively promoting it.⁵⁹ Since the title emerged in

⁵⁸ Nikolaus Bertschi, *Wappenbuch besonders deutscher Geschlechter* – BSB Cod.icon. 308 (Augsburg, 1515 – 1618), f. 103v. <https://bildsuche.digitale-sammlungen.de/index.html?c=viewer&l=de&bandnummer=bsb00001364&pimage=&v=&nav=> (accessed April 18, 2021).

⁵⁹ For a detailed analysis of Hendrik van Heessel's depiction of Ulrich II Cilli's coats of arms see Robert Kurelić, "Grb Ulrika II. Celjskog u Grbovniku Henrika van Heessela – jedinstveni

written sources around 1440, when Ulrich II was at the center of events as one of the staunchest supporters of Dowager Queen Elizabeth and her infant son, he may have even contributed to its creation and spread at the time by promoting his Frankapani cousins, whose support he counted on for his vast ambitions in Hungary and beyond. Around that time, the Cilli also adopted the ancient coat of arms of Croatia, the three crowned golden lions on a red background, for their title of counts of Zagorje. It was attested as early as King Louis of Anjou's reign, and formed part of the coat of arms of all subsequent kings of Hungary and Croatia, although, from the sixteenth century on, it referred only to Dalmatia, being replaced by the red and white checkerboard in Croatia proper. Still, the ambitions of Ulrich II Cilli in Croatia were made manifest in 1452, after Ladislaus the Posthumous' emancipation, when his powerful cousin successfully maneuvered to acquire the office of ban of Croatia, in addition to the banate of Slavonia, which he seems to have already considered his hereditary right.⁶⁰ The usage of *Krabaten* for his Frankapani ancestry, and the appropriation of the Croatian coat of arms certainly seem to suggest that the Cilli was using symbols to further his ambitions in Croatia and lay the foundations for being recognized or perceived as a natural born lord, or as close to it as possible.

The coat of arms depicted in the armorial of Nicholas Bertschi is another curiosity. Nothing is known about the life of the illuminator apart from the fact that he was active in Augsburg at a time which could be considered the pinnacle of Frankapani fame in the German-speaking world. Christopher was a renowned military leader whose exploits were, as I mentioned earlier, celebrated by Emperor Maximilian. His father Bernardin was a well-respected retired general and diplomat with familial connections throughout the region. In 1522, the elder Frankapan held an anti-Ottoman speech before the Diet in Nuremberg, entitled *Oratio pro Croatia*, which was then printed and widely circulated.⁶¹ In 1530, His cousin Vuk I. Frankapan of Brinje held a similar speech before the diet in Augsburg.⁶² Bertschi was either already familiar with the Frankapani or made their acquaintance through their communication with the Diet. The coat of arms he depicted is the older version, with a silver star on a red and yellow shield, but the title is that of *Krabaten*.

prikaz potpunog grba u historiografiji grofova Celjskih," *Zgodovinski časopis* 72 (2018), No. 1-2: pp. 104-124.

⁶⁰ Robert Kurelić, "Simboli statusa i moći: kneževski pečati Celjskih grofova," in *Med srednjo Evropo in Sredozemljem. Vojetov zbornik*, ed. Sašo Jerše (Ljubljana: Zgodovinski inštitut Milka Kosa, 2006), pp. 61-77.

⁶¹ Ivan Jurković and Violeta Moretti, *Bernardin Frankapan Modruški, Oratio pro Croatia. Govor za Hrvatsku (1522.)* (Modruš: Katedra Čakavskog sabora Modruše, 2010).

⁶² Emil Laszowski, "Govor Vuka Frankopana g. 1530.," *Prosvjeta* 4 (1896), no. 7: pp. 222-223.

It is possible, but difficult to say for certain, that he had used an older example for his illustration but called them by the then widespread German version of the title. Unlike the example of Ulric Cilli, who had to have been personally involved in describing his coat of arms to Henrdik Van Heessel, we cannot ascertain whether a member of the Frankapani provided any input for Bertschi. If one had, this would be the only example of a conscious use of the term by a member of the family. Both heraldic examples, however, further confirm the implicit mental association of Croatia and the Frankopani in the Holy Roman Empire.

Other Croatian nobles as *Krabaten*?

A question could be posed whether all notable nobles from Croatia who interacted with the southeastern part of the Holy Roman Empire received a designation *von Krabaten*. The powerful counts of Krbava, from the Kurjakovići kindred, might serve as a prime verification example.⁶³ The list of nobles who had sworn fealty to Ladislaus the Posthumous in 1456, includes eight *grauen von Krabaten und Karbaw*, making a clear distinction between the two families.⁶⁴ Franko Kurjaković, who in 1428 accompanied Count Herman II Cilli to the Council of Konstanz, and in 1430 went on a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela with his grandson Ulrich II, is always listed as *Franz, Graf von Corbavia* or *Karbau/Karbaw*.⁶⁵ Franko was not only a *familiaris* of the Cilli

⁶³ The most recent study of the Kurjakovići is by Ivan Botica.

⁶⁴ Heinrich Ritter von Zeissberg, "Zur Geschichte der Minderjährigkeit Herzog Albrechts V. von Österreich (mit einer Beschreibung der Handschrift suppl. 3344 der K. K. Hofbibliothek in Wien)," *Archiv für österreichische Geschichte* 86 (1899): pp. 488-489.

⁶⁵ In the Chronicle of Gebhard Dacher, a prominent historian of the city of Konstanz from the second half of the fifteenth century, there is a list of all the prelates and noblemen who attended the Council in 1414 and 1415. Under the heading of *comites* he mentions *Franco aus Karbau, bey dem von Cilli*. See Gebhard Dacher, *Historia Magnatum in Constantiensi Concilio Primis Concilii Annis XIV. & XV.*, in *Sacrosancta Concilia Ad Regiam Editionem Exacta*, ed. Philippe Labbe and Gabriel Crossart (Venice: Coleti et Albrizzi, 1731), p. 1423; Also, Botica, *Krbavski knezovi*, p. 212. In the charter with which Ulrich II confirmed that he had borrowed 32.000 florins for his pilgrimage to Santiago he mentions his dear uncle, *graf Frankhen aus der Corbaw*, as one of the witnesses. CKSL, November 1, 1429. For Franko's participation in the pilgrimage see Emir O. Filipović, "O aragonskom viteškom redu Stole i vase u srednjovjekovnoj Bosni," *Radovi – Zavod za hrvatsku povijest* 52 (2020), No. 3: 76. After Franko's death his wife, Dorothea von Stubenberg is listed in a charter from August 22, 1440 as *Witwe des Grafen frannkchen aus der karbaw*. Frank's cousin is also mentioned as *Charln aus der karbaw*. Ed Pratobevera, "Urkunden und Regesten der gräflichen Familie von Stubenberg," *Archiv für österreichische Geschichte. Notizenblatt* 9 (1860): p. 352.

in Hungary, where, in 1437, he served as their captain of Čakovec,⁶⁶ but he also held fiefs from them in their Styrian lands,⁶⁷ and was married to a noblewoman from a prominent local Stubenberg family. With such deep connections to the higher nobility of the southeasternmost part of the Holy Roman Empire, there is little doubt that, if *von Krabaten* was a universal descriptor for prominent Croatian nobles, it certainly would have applied to Franko and his relatives, who were just as well known to their German speaking relatives and allies as the Frankapani. Indeed, a letter from 1527 addresses Ivan Karlović as *Graf Joachim von Korwaw aus Krabaten* at roughly the same time that Cristopher is described as *von Krabaten* in a report sent to the duke of Saxony.⁶⁸ All this clearly shows that *von Krabaten* was reserved solely for the Frankapani and no other Croatian noble families.

The Count of Croatia “hidden” at a royal wedding

With the connection between *von Krabaten* and the Frankapani in German sources clearly established, we can look at our sources with a fresh pair of eyes to uncover hitherto unknown facts about the family. The identification of the Frakapani as key supporters and active participants at the coronation of Ladislaus Posthumous is an important contribution to the historiography of the family, but another prestigious event allows us to discern the shrewdness of Stephen III in international politics, the wedding of Matthias Corvinus to Beatrice of Aragon in December of 1476. Most historians tended to agree that Stephen’s son Bernardin was in Naples as part of the Hungarian delegation, to marry King Ferrante’s daughter to Matthias by proxy and escort her to Hungary.⁶⁹ Luka Špoljarić has recently argued, however, that he was there as a result of independent connections with the Neapolitan court, and not in any official capacity as a representative of Corvinus. Moreover, he suggests that the

⁶⁶ In two charters issued in Čakovec on April 21, 1437 Franko entrusts all his possessions in “Krbava and the German lands” to the Cilli for safekeeping until his heirs come of age. Bizjak, *Turjaška knjiga listin*, p. 278-280.

⁶⁷ He sold with permission from Herman II Cilli a fief (German: *Lehen*) near the town of Radeče in 1429, just as he was getting ready for the pilgrimage. See Albrecht von Muchar, *Geschichte des Herzogthums Steiermark*, vol. 7 (Graz: Leuschner & Lubensch k. k. Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1864), p. 207.

⁶⁸ Thallóczy, *Codex diplomaticus partium*, 58; Anonymous, *Böhmischen Landtagsverhandlungen und Landtagsbeschlüsse vom Jahre 1526 an bis auf die Neuzeit* (Prag, Verlag des Kön. Böhm. Landesausschusses, 1877), pp. 169-171.

⁶⁹ Vjekoslav Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata IV* (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske 1975), p. 124; Albert Berzeviczy, *Beatrix Királyné (1457-1508)* (Budapest: A. Magyar történelmi társulat kiadása, 1908), p. 131.

Frankapani of Modruš seem to have been quite out of Matthias' favor at the time, as he suspected them of engaging in suspicious, borderline treasonous negotiations with various neighboring powers in Italy and the Empire.⁷⁰ With that in mind, it is interesting to note that a *von Krabaten* was subsequently present at the coronation ceremony in Székesfehérvár and the wedding in Buda in December. This was certainly none other than Bernardin. He had just married Luisa Marzano, a cousin to Beatrice, on September 15, which made him a relative to the royal dynasty of Naples. Peter Eschenloer, the Wrocław city chronicler, provided a detailed description of the coronation ceremony on December 12. He mentions *ein Großer aus Crabaten*, who carried a candle before the royal couple, together with one of the most prominent guests, Duke Frederick I of Liegnitz.⁷¹ While the wording allows that this could have been any prominent nobleman from Croatia, two additional sources narrow it down for us. One is an anonymous report in the archives of Saxony that names four dukes, including the Queen's brother, the *Graue von Krabat*, and a Hungarian lord as torchbearers who went ahead of the royal couple.⁷² The other is Hans Seybod, a Bavarian noble and chronicler who was personally present at these events. He wrote that, at the great wedding ceremony on December 22 in Buda *der Graff von krabatten*, dressed in a golden robe, carried the queen's crown to the doors of the church, and later took part in the ritual gift giving at the banquet.⁷³ The use of the definite article clearly points to a Frankapan, and not just any Croatian lord. Moreover, since the count carried the queen's crown, he had to have been someone of great importance to her side of the family. Again, Bernardin, with a newly forged direct relationship to Ferrante and Beatrice, was the only great lord from Croatia who could have fit that description. Since Seybold provides a list of important people at the wedding, the omission of the *Graf vom Krabatten* from the lists suggests the following: Bernardin probably had to keep a generally low profile during the ceremonies in Hungary on account of the king's disfavor, and it was likely the personal intercession of the new queen that placed him in an obvious place of importance during the high point of both the coronation and the wedding. He did not sit at the royal table, as that was reserved for the visiting princes and

⁷⁰ Luka Špoljarić, "Zov partenopejskih princeza: Kosače i Frankapani u bračnim pregovorima s napuljskim kraljem Ferranteom," *Radovi – Zavod za hrvatsku povijest* 52/3 (2020): pp. 146-151.

⁷¹ Johann G. Kunisch, ed., *Peter Eschenloer's, Stadtschreibers zu Breslau, Geschichten der Stadt Breslau, oder Denkwürdigkeiten seiner Zeit: vom Jahre 1440 bis 1479* (Breslau [Wrocław]: Max, 1828), p. 344.

⁷² Freidrich Albert von Langenn, *Herzog Albrecht Der Beherzte: Stammvater Des Koniglichen Hauses Sachsen...* (Leipzig: Verlag der J. C. Heinrich'schen Buchhandlung, 1838), p. 521.

⁷³ Béla Borsa, "Reneszánszkori ünnepségek Budán," *Tanulmányok Budapest múltjából* 10 (1943): p. 48, 51.

their representatives, and his gift was presented after those of Transylvanian towns, which is another indication that he does not seem to have been highly regarded by the court and the protocol. Still, the queen's influence was likely crucial for the mending of the rift between the Frankapani of Modruš and Matthias Corvinus, and it shows how astute Stephen's choice of bride for his son truly was. As Peter Wilson stated in his book on the Holy Roman Empire "Symbols and rituals were as much a part of politics as formal institutions."⁷⁴ Early medieval rulers were expected, practically obliged, to forgive those who prostrated themselves in the ritual known as *deditio*.⁷⁵ In 1159, Henry II of England attempted to conquer Toulouse, but had to withdraw because his liege, the king of France made an impromptu visit to the city and he did not dare raise arms against him. Burgundian dukes in the fifteenth century even abandoned sieges in progress when news of the king's visit reached them, as they would rather have delayed their strategic goals than lost honor and reputation.⁷⁶ Maintaining decorum and observing the formalities in ceremonies was much more important than personal feelings, for kings especially, as it was a vital component of their legitimacy. Matthias expended considerable resources to recover the Holy Crown from Frederick III, to fulfill all the necessary customary prerequisites for a proper and legitimate Hungarian coronation.⁷⁷ With that in mind, Matthias probably could not hold a grudge against the Frankapani for long if his new queen were adamant in restoring her "cousins" to courtly favor. A settlement was soon reached between Stephen III and the King which resolved their differences. It should come as no surprise that two of the children from Bernardin's and Luisa's marriage were named Matthias and Beatrice, after the royal couple. Beatrice Frankapan would later marry Matthias Corvinus' bastard son, John Corvinus, cementing the relationship. Although the *von Krabaten* began to disappear after Bernardin's and Christopher's death, their curious and flattering *de facto* title accentuated their immense prestige in the fifteenth and the first decades of the sixteenth century, even if their actual power diminished after the divisions into separate branches in 1449. Moreover, this peculiar designation also allows today's historiography to uncover many more details regarding their fascinating history.

⁷⁴ Peter Wilson, *Heart of Europe: A History of the Holy Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), p. 9.

⁷⁵ Robert Kurelić, "Deditio, ritual mirenja u društveno-političkom kontekstu ranog i razvijenog srednjeg vijeka," in: *Ceremonije i ceremonijalna komunikacija*, ed. Robert Kurelić, Kosana Jovanović, Goran Bilogrivić and Barbara Španjol-Pandelo (Rijeka: Filozofski fakultet u Rijeci, 2019), pp. 75-94.

⁷⁶ Johan Huizinga, *Waning of the Middle Ages* (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 42-43.

⁷⁷ He paid 80.000 florins and made numerous important concessions regarding succession in Hungary. See Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, pp. 299-300.

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