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In confinibus Turcorum: The Men of Matthias Corvinus's Regime in the Late Fifteenth-Century Hungarian-Ottoman Borderlands

The paper discusses the backgrounds and careers of several lesser-known officials who occupied various positions along the Hungarian-Ottoman frontier during the reign of King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary (r. 1458-1490). By examining their biographies and their place within the ruling elite of Corvinus's Hungary, the study moreover elucidates how changes in King Matthias's authority in the borderlands were reflected in the changes in his personnel policies, showing that the king gradually gained more control over his southern lands through a growing network of loyal retainers. The latter, moreover, successfully replaced the vestiges of older regimes – whose representatives often stood in opposition to royal politics – thus allowing the introduction of greater royal control.

Keywords: Matthias Corvinus, medieval Hungary, medieval Slavonia, medieval Bosnia, medieval Croatia, Ottoman Empire, frontier, administration, Peter Szobi, Ladislaus Disznósi, John Viszlai, Ambrose Török, Ladislaus Mark Terjéni, Paul Sándor, Peter Dóci, Ladislaus Ficsor Csulai

The person of King Matthias Corvinus and his reign in Hungary and other adjacent Central and Southeast European lands (r. 1458-1490) has remained a significant historiographical topic ever since his contemporaries, such as Bonfini, Thuróczy, or Galeotto Marzio, first put to paper their impressions of the man and his politics. Numerous aspects of Matthias's rule, particularly the cornerstones of his career, have been well studied since. His ascent to the throne, the conflicts with Frederick III, with the Poles, and his involvement in the Czech lands, his

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affinity with the learned, his Italian politics, relations with the papacy, Wallachia, Bosnia, Serbia, as well as policies in his lands outside Hungary proper have received apt attention. One of these principal features is also his (anti-)Ottoman policy, the management of the Ottoman pressure against the borders of Hungary, which rarely ever abated during his long rule. Fascination with Matthias's role in the age of the Ottoman advance in the Balkans remains alive both in historiography and in the general public. With differing degrees of success, scholars continue to study his relations with the Ottoman sultans, the negotiations and treaties, his crusading discourse and policies, and the general military history of the Hungarian-Ottoman conflict.¹ It seems, however, that this area of study remains dependent on authorities to an unexpected and undeserving extent. The general image of Matthias's dealings with the Ottomans has only recently, and slowly, been moving away from the seminal studies by Gyula Rázsó.² Ferenc Szakály's views on the king's defensive structures loom large in the multilingual environment of scholarship on Matthias,³ though recently his concept of the sys-

** The following abbreviations are used in this paper: ASV: Venice, Archivio di Stato di Venezia [State Archives in Venice]; HR-AHAZU: Zagreb, Arhiv Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti [Archives of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts]; HR-DAZD: Zadar, Državni arhiv u Zadru [State Archives in Zadar]; HR-HDA: Zagreb, Hrvatski državni arhiv [Croatian State Archives]; MNL-OL-DF: Budapest, Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára –Diplomatikai Fényképgyűjtemény [Hungarian State Archives, Diploma Photo Collection]; MNL-OL-DL: Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára –Diplomatikai Levéltár [Hungarian State Archives, Diploma Collection].

¹ For recent scholarship, see: Attila Bárányi, Attila Györkös, ed., *Matthias and His Legacy: Cultural and Political Encounters between East and West* (Debrecen: University of Debrecen, 2009); Christian Gastgeber et al., ed., *Matthias Corvinus und seine Zeit: Europa am Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit zwischen Wien und Konstantinopel* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011); Iulian-Mihai Damian, “La Depositeria della Crociata (1463-1490) e i sussidi dei pontefici romani a Mattia Corvino”, *Annuario dell'Istituto Romeno di Cultura e Ricerca Umanistica di Venezia* 8 (2006): 135-152; Tamás Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács: A History of Ottoman-Hungarian Warfare, 1389-1526* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2018), 188ff; Sándor Papp, “Stefan Cel Mare, Mátyás király és az Oszmán Birodalom”, *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 121 (2008): 303-325; Alexandru Simon, “Crusading between the Adriatic and the Black Sea: Hungary, Venice, and the Ottoman Empire after the Fall of Negroponte”, *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest* 42 (2010): 195-230; Liviu Pilat, Ovidiu Cristea, *The Ottoman Threat and Crusading on the Eastern Border of Christendom during the 15th Century* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2018); Paul Srodecki, *Antemurale Christianitatis: Zur Genese der Bollwerksrhetorik im östlichen Mitteleuropa an der Schwelle vom Mittelalter zur Frühen Neuzeit* (Husum: Matthiesen, 2015), 163-216; Paul Srodecki, “Panegyrics and the Legitimation of Power: Matthias Corvinus and the Humanist Court Historiography”, in: *Hungary and Hungarians in Central and East European Narrative Sources (10th-17th Centuries)*, ed. Dániel Bagi et al. (Pécs: University of Pécs, 2019), 173-187; Benjamin Weber, “La croisade impossible. Étude sur les relations entre Sixte IV et Mathias Corvin (1471-1484)”, in: *Byzance et ses périphéries. Hommages à Alain Ducellier*, ed. Christophe Picard, Bernard Doumerc (Toulouse: CNRS, Université de Toulouse, 2004), 309-321.

² Gyula Rázsó, “Hunyadi Mátyás török politikája”, *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 22 (1975): 305-348; the German version of the paper: “Die Türkenpolitik Matthias Corvinus”, *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 32 (1986): 3-50.

³ Ferenc Szakály, “The Hungarian-Croatian Border Defense System and Its Collapse”, in: *From Hunyadi to Rákóczi: War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*, ed. János Bak,

tem of defensive *végvárak* has been criticised and refuted.⁴ Hungarian-Ottoman peace negotiations and truces have also recently been dealt with in more detail and their backgrounds and contents clarified,⁵ yet surpassed views still find their space in current research.⁶

One area of research in particular seems to have been lagging behind all others – the study of Matthias’s personnel who conducted day-to-day politics in the Hungarian-Ottoman borderlands below the levels of Matthias’s personal involvement or that of his highest-ranking captains. The seminal studies of András Kubinyi and Erik Fügedi on the Hungarian aristocracy and its role in royal politics throughout the fifteenth century established the general outlines of the monarchs’ personnel strategies, but offered very little in the way of details about the careers and impact of individual barons.⁷ We still lack detailed studies of the careers or biographies of the majority of crucial figures of Corvinus’s era in the arena of Hungarian-Ottoman relations, such as Emeric Szapolyai,⁸ Nicho-

Béla Király (Brooklyn: Brooklyn College Press, 1982), 141-158; also: Ferenc Szakály, *A mohácsi csata* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1975).

⁴ István Feld, “A déli végvárrendszer Mátyás idején”, in: *Mátyás király emlékkönyv*, ed. András Bódvai (Budapest: Bethlen Gábor, 2020), 63-81; Davor Salihović, “Definition, Extent, and Administration of the Hungarian Frontier toward the Ottoman Empire in the Reign of King Matthias Corvinus, 1458-1490” (PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2020), 82-179.

⁵ Richárd Horváth, Tibor Neumann, *Ecsedi Bátori István. Egy katonabáró életpályája 1458-1493* (Budapest: MTA, 2012), 62-64; Papp, “Stefan Cel Mare”; Sándor Papp, “Hungary and the Ottoman Empire (from the Beginnings to 1540)”, in: *Fight Against the Turk in Central-Europe in the First Half of the 16th Century*, ed. István Zombori (Budapest: METEM, 2004), 47-89; Davor Salihović, “The Process of Bordering at the Late-Fifteenth Century Hungarian-Ottoman Frontier”, *History in Flux* 1 (2019): 93-120; Salihović, “Definition, Extent, and Administration,” 5-80.

⁶ See in particular: Alexandru Simon, “The Ottoman-Hungarian Crisis of 1484: Diplomacy and Warfare in Matthias’s Corvinus’ Local and Regional Politics”, in: *Matthias and His Legacy*, 405-436; Alexandru Simon, “Truces and Negotiations between Bayezid II and Matthias Corvinus in the Context of the Hunyadi-Habsburg Conflict (1482-1484)”, *Revista Arhivelor* 86 (2009): 107-114; Alexandru Simon, Ioan-Aurel Pop, “The Venetian and Wallachian Roots of the Hungarian-Ottoman Truce of Spring 1468: Notes on Documents from the State Archives of Milan”, in: *Italy and Europe’s Eastern Border (1204-1669)*, ed. Iulian Mihai Damian et al. (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2012), 283-301.

⁷ Erik Fügedi, *A 15. századi magyar arisztokrácia mobilitása* (Budapest, 1970); András Kubinyi, “Bárók a királyi tanácsban Mátyás és II. Ulászló idején”, *Századok* 122 (1988): 147-215, cf. András Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus: Die Regierung eines Königreichs in Ostmitteleuropa* (Herne: Schäfer, 1999), 20-28; András Kubinyi, “A királyi tanács az 1490. évi interregnum idején (II. Ulászló választási feltételeinek létrejötte)”, *Levéltári Közlemények* 48-49 (1978): 60-80.

⁸ Although first names have been anglicized throughout the paper, to the extent to which that was possible, the remainder of individuals’ appellations have not been transformed via “nobiliary particles” and either anglicized or modernized *noms de terre*, which I felt would create greater confusion than the practice applied here – the use of Hungarian and/or the most frequently used equivalent of medieval “surnames” of the nobility. The names used here are those that are ordinarily used in current historiography (largely, in fact, written in the Hungarian language) as well as those which most of these individuals are regularly identified with among scholars familiar with this or similar topics.

las Újlaki, Paul Kinizsi, or Vuk Grgurević, let alone the remainder of Matthias's barons.⁹ We know even less about the lower echelons of the king's frontier administration, of men who governed the immediate situation in the field and, as we shall see, came to dominate this administration for the majority of Matthias's reign. Through ongoing research, nevertheless, some of these shortcomings have recently been addressed. Tamás Pálosfalvi has dedicated a detailed study to John Vitovec, a career warrior who entered Matthias's circles after serving the Cilli as well as Frederick III and with the king's reluctant approval maintained

This paper therefore adopts a practice that does not follow a specific language-based key, but rather a nomenclature accepted in scholarly circles.

⁹ There are, nevertheless, studies dedicated to various aspects of these individuals' backgrounds or their careers: Tamás Fedeles, "Bosniae [...] rex [...] apostolorum limina visit. Újlaki Miklós 1475-ös római zarándoklata", *Történelmi Szemle* 50 (2008): 461-478; Tamás Fedeles, "Miklós király és Lőrinc herceg. Az utolsó két Újlaki vázlatos pályaképe", in: *Személyiség és történelem. A történelmi személyiség – A történelmi életrajz módszertani kérdései*, ed. József Vonyó (Pécs; Budapest: Kronosz Kiadó, Magyar Történelmi Társulat, Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történelmi Levéltára, 2017), 135-168; Richárd Horváth, "Imre Szapolyai", in: *Matthias Corvinus, the King: Tradition and Renewal in the Hungarian Royal Court*, ed. Péter Farbaky et al. (Budapest: Budapest History Museum, 2008), 269-270; Richárd Horváth, "Pál Kinizsi", in: *Matthias Corvinus, the King: Tradition and Renewal in the Hungarian Royal Court*, ed. Péter Farbaky et al. (Budapest: Budapest History Museum, 2008), 270-271; Richárd Horváth, "A Felső Részek kapitánysága a Mátyás-korban", *Századok* 137 (2003): 929-954; András Kubinyi, "Die Frage des bosnischen Königtums von Nikolaus Újlaky", *Studia Slavica Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae* 4 (1958): 373-384; András Kubinyi, "A kaposújvári uradalom és a Somogy megyei familiárisok szerepe Újlaki Miklós birtokpolitikájában: adatok a XV. századi feudális nagybirtok hatalmi politikájához", *Somogy megye múltjából: Levéltári Évkönyv* 4 (1973): 3-44; András Kubinyi, "A megyésispánságok 1490-ben és Corvin János trónörökösödésének problémái", *A Veszprém Megyei Múzeumok Közleményei* 16 (1982): 169-180; András Kubinyi, "A Szapolyaiak és familiárisaik (szervitoraik)", in: *Tanulmányok Szapolyai Jánosról és a kora újkori Erdélyről* (Miskolc: Miskolci Egyetem, 2008), 228-233; Pál Lukcsics, "Kinizsyné Magyar Benigna örökösei", *Turul* 48 (1934), 66-75; Катарина Митровић, "Вук Гргуревић између Мехмеда II и Матије Корвина (1458-1465)", *Bраничевski glasnik* 2 (2003): 19-33; Катарина Митровић, "Пет писама деспота Вука Гргуревића", *Bраничевski glasnik* 3-4 (2004-2005): 63-83; Tibor Neumann, "Péter püspök és rokonsága (Az első Szapolyaiak)", *Acta Historica* 127 (2007): 59-70; Tibor Neumann, "A Szapolyai család legrégebbi címere", *Turul* 84 (2011), br. 4: 123-128; Tibor Neumann, ed., *A Szapolyai család oklevéltára*, vol. 1: *Levelek és oklevelek (1458-1526)* (Budapest: MTA, 2012); Tamás Pálosfalvi, "Tettes vagy áldozat? Hunyadi László halála", *Századok* 149 (2015): 383-441; Ede Reiszig, "Az Újlaki-család" (pt. 2), *Turul* 57 (1943): 56-60; Andor Puky, "Az Abaúj- és Biharmegyei Kiniszek", *Turul* 9 (1891): 88-92; Davor Salihović, "An Interesting Episode: Nicholas of Ilok's Kingship in Bosnia, 1471-1477" (MA thesis, Central European University Budapest, 2016); Davor Salihović, "Exploiting the Frontier – A Case Study: King Matthias's Corvinus and Nicholas of Ilok's Endeavour in Late Medieval Bosnia", in: *Medieval Bosnia and South-East European Relations: Political, Religious, and Cultural Life at the Adriatic Crossroads*, ed. Dženan Dautović, Emir Filipović and Neven Isailović (Amsterdam; Leeds: Amsterdam University Press and Arc Humanities Press, 2019), 97-111; Stanisław Sroka, "A Szapolyai család genealógiája", *Turul* 79 (2005): 96-103; Ferenc Szakály, Pál Fodor. "A kenyérmezei csata (1479. Október 13.)", *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 111 (1998): 309-348; Mór Wertner, "Nikolaus von Ilok (Ujlak) König von Bosnien und seine Familie", *Vjesnik Kr. hrvatsko-slavonsko-dalmatinskog zemaljskog arkiva* 8 (1906): 250-273.

his control over Slavonia and his influence over the southern frontiers.¹⁰ Richárd Horváth and Tibor Neumann have recently offered a thorough insight into the career of Stephen Bátori, Matthias's judge royal, voivode of Transylvania, and trusted soldier.¹¹ A significant contribution to the research into the structure and personnel of Matthias's (as well as Jagiellonian) frontier administration and administration in general are the recently published (and long awaited) volumes of the *Magyarország világi archontológiája* covering the period between 1458 and 1526.¹²

In this paper, we will turn to those who occupied various positions within the Hungarian frontier towards the Ottoman-held areas in the Balkans, but were of lesser status and fortune than their aristocratic colleagues. We shall focus on men whose names one often encounters in earlier scholarship, but whose careers, backgrounds, and roles in the administration of the borderlands have thus far largely evaded scholarly interest. Inspired by a recent turn towards the research of individual agency within the world of Christian-Ottoman frontiers and its role in the shaping of that world,¹³ I will attempt to shed some light on people who perhaps occupied rather inferior positions in the kingdom's administration, but had significant influence on concrete, day-to-day life in the field. Apart from their activities along the border, this paper further aims to shed light on their backgrounds and place within the larger framework of King Matthias Corvinus's domestic and personnel politics. What follows, however, is by no means exhaustive, as one needs to both limit the analysis to certain individuals for simple practical reasons, not the least of which is the lack of relevant sources, and dedicate ample space to those who had an especially lasting or important effect on the history of the Hungarian-Ottoman(-Venetian) borderlands. The latter group comprises Paul Tár and the Franciscan observant friar Alexander of Ragusa, whom I shall return to in separate studies.

¹⁰ Tamás Pálosfalvi, "Vitovec János. Egy zsoldoskarrier a 15. századi Magyarországon", *Századok* 135 (2001): 429-472.

¹¹ Horváth, Neumann, *Ecsedi Bátori István*. See also: Richárd Horváth, "Voievodul transilvănean Ștefan Bátori și frontul turcesc între 1479 și pacea din anul 1483", *Banatica* 24 (2014): 289-308; Richárd Horváth, Tibor Neumann, Norbert Tóth, ed., *Documenta ad historiam familiae Bátori de Ecsed spectantia*, vol. 1: *Diplomata 1393-1540* (Nyíregyháza: Jósza András Múzeum, 2011).

¹² Norbert Tóth et al., ed., *Magyarország világi archontológiája 1458-1526*, vol. 1: *Főpapok és bárók*; vol. 2: *Megyék* (Budapest: MTA, 2016-2017).

¹³ As promoted at a recent workshop on the "Christian-Muslim Interplay in Late Medieval and Early Modern Balkans: Power Networks and Regional Lordships during the Ottoman Conquest" held at the Institut für die Erforschung der Habsburgermonarchie und des Balkanraumes of the Austrian Academy of Sciences in May 2021.

A period of contested authority: the 1460s

Having won the Hungarian throne in 1458 and battled against Frederick III and his Hungarian supporters for the consolidation of authority in Hungary in the early years of his reign, in the mid-1460s Matthias was faced with a difficult task of reorganizing the administration of his southern territories.¹⁴ Left in a state of disorder by his predecessors and deeply affected by baronial quarrels for political influence between the Cilli, the Tallóci, Hunyadi, the Duke of Herzegovina, the Frankapans, and the kings of Bosnia (among others), Matthias's southern kingdoms, Slavonia as well as Croatia, had to be put under firmer royal control.¹⁵ The task was further complicated by the Ottoman successes in Bosnia, where the Kotromanić kingdom completely collapsed during the Ottoman invasion in the spring of 1463 and where Matthias established his own administration following a successful campaign in the winter of the same year.¹⁶

While John Vitovec and Nicholas Újlaki, both quite unreliable as far as Matthias was concerned (the latter of whom was one of the king's fiercest opponents in 1458/59),¹⁷ administered Slavonia thanks to Matthias's prudent policies, in 1464 the king managed to install in the region one of his closest associates, the well-known Emeric Szapolyai.¹⁸ Having thus succeeded Vitovec and come to partner Újlaki, Szapolyai was further awarded the governorship over the Hungarian-held Kingdom of Bosnia, the *banate* in Croatia, and rights to parts of the Hospitaller

¹⁴ On the earliest days of Matthias's reign, see: Tamás Pálosfalvi, "Szegedtől Újvárig. Az 1458-1459. esztendőkrónikájához", *Századok* 147 (2013): 347-380.

¹⁵ See Tamás Pálosfalvi, "Cilleiek és Tallóciak: küzdelem Szlavóniáért (1440-1448)", *Századok* 134 (2000): 45-94; Pálosfalvi, "Vitovec János"; Salihović, "Definition, Extent, and Administration", 117-176.

¹⁶ For recent studies on the Ottoman conquests in Bosnia in 1463, see: Ante Birin, ed., *Stjepan Tomašević (1461.-1463.) – slom srednjovjekovnoga Bosanskog Kraljevstva* (Zagreb; Sarajevo: Hrvatski institut za povijest and Katolički bogoslovni fakultet u Sarajevu, 2013); Emir Filipović, *Bosansko Kraljevstvo i Osmansko Carstvo (1386-1463)* (Sarajevo: Orijentalni institut Univerziteta u Sarajevu, 2019), 403-476; [Neven Isailović] Невен Исаиловић, ed., *Пад Босанског Краљевства 1463. године* (Belgrade; Sarajevo; Banja Luka: Institute of History in Belgrade; Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo; Faculty of Philosophy in Banja Luka, 2015); Srđan Rudić, Selim Aslantaş, ed., *State and Society in the Balkans before and after the Establishment of Ottoman Rule* (Belgrade: Institute of History, 2017).

¹⁷ In addition to the works listed in notes 14 and 15, see: Zoltán Czövek, "Három középkor végi számadás a Nádasdy-levéltárból", *Fons* 14 (2007): 119-166; Salihović, "Exploiting the Frontier"; László Veszprémy, "Reddidit amissum fugiens Germanus honorem. Az 1459-es körmendi ütközetek historiográfiájához", in: *Tanulmányok Borsa Iván tiszteletére*, ed. Enikő Csukovits (Budapest: Magyar Országos Levéltár, 1998), 319-325.

¹⁸ Tóth, et al., ed., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 93. For data on his background, see note 9.

estates in Hungary and Slavonia.¹⁹ His mandate, however, was surprisingly short-lived due to reasons that remain unclear²⁰ and he was soon, in 1466, to be substituted with Vitovec and other noblemen far more loyal to the king than any of their predecessors.²¹ By 1466, the king had managed to largely (re)gain control over the disorderly southern regions, having successfully installed loyal people in Slavonia and Croatia, acquired the contested Tallóci estates in Croatia (in jeopardy of falling into Venetian hands), and put to rest the controversy over the bishopric of Zagreb by promoting his candidate to the see.²² Through the reforms of 1466, Matthias eventually succeeded in removing Nicholas Újlaki from the *banate* of Slavonia as well as his influence from Transylvania, where Újlaki had held an almost uninterrupted voivodeship for more than two decades. These moves would have a lasting influence on the history of the Hungarian-Ottoman frontier.

Having successfully negotiated his return to Matthias's favour from Frederick III's camp in 1459, Újlaki, one of the most powerful Hungarian barons before and during Matthias's times, defended his position both in Slavonia and around his central possessions in the Hungarian "Lower Parts". He would remain the *ban* of Slavonia until 1466, and the *ban* of Macsó until his death in 1477.²³ In December 1466, King Matthias reissued a charter whereby all Újlaki's wrongdoings against the king's person and the kingdom committed before the coronation in 1464 were pardoned.²⁴ This odd deed, a reissue of the pardon granted by the king before the coronation, no doubt requested by Újlaki himself,²⁵ seems to have been a final step in the consensual transfer of Újlaki's focus from Slavonia to Bosnia. It was at that time, around May 1465, that Újlaki was granted the county of Teočak and gained control over the entire eastern section of the Hungarian-held territories in Bosnia.²⁶

¹⁹ On the place of the Hospitaller estates in Matthias's defensive arrangements, see: Davor Salihović, "Pro sustentatione castrorum: The Role of the Hospitaller Priory of Hungary in King Matthias Corvinus' Anti-Ottoman Defensive Policies, c. 1464-90", *Journal of Medieval History* 47 (2021), br. 1: 89-118.

²⁰ Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 220-222.

²¹ Tóth et al., ed., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 93ff.

²² See works in notes 14 and 15.

²³ Tóth et al., ed., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 92, 103.

²⁴ Ferdo Šišić, "Iz arkiva hercega Batthyányja u Körömendu", *Vjesnik Kr. hrvatsko-slavonsko-dalmatinskog zemaljskoga arkiva* 13 (1911): doc. 3, 225-226.

²⁵ Surely in accordance with the provisions of the royal decree of 1464 (Matthias's coronation decree), whereby all donations granted by Matthias before the coronation had to be confirmed anew. Although grants to Nicholas did not completely fall into this category, the deed of 1466 did put Nicholas's possessions under royal protection. Nicholas, furthermore, must have felt more at ease with the reissue of this privilege by a fully legitimate (and crowned) king. Ferenc Döry et al., ed., *Decreta Regni Hungariae. Gesetze und Verordnungen Ungarns 1458-1490* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1989), § XXIII, 147-148.

²⁶ He is first mentioned with the new title in May 1465: MNL-OL-DL 100746. In his will, put to paper in 1471, Nicholas calls himself the "perpetual count of Teočak, the Lord of the Land of Usora, the *ban* of Macsó, etc." MNL-OL-DL 17162; Stanko Andrić, "Oporuka Nikole Iločkog iz 1471. godine", *Godišnjak Ogranka Matice hrvatske Vinkovci* 14 (1996): 45-54.

Once Szapolyai abruptly lost his positions in Bosnia and Croatia in 1465 (as well as Stephen Frankapan, briefly Matthias's *ban* in Croatia in 1465²⁷), there seems to have been a brief period of indecision on the king's part. With Slavonia still in Újlaki's hands, the control over Bosnia and Croatia seems to have been negotiated between Matthias and Újlaki, as the king sought not only a more lasting solution for Slavonia, but also a way to integrate the Hungarian-held areas of Bosnia into his administration. By the summer of 1465, Szapolyai, the *governor* of the Kingdom of Bosnia, had been replaced by two *bans* of "Rama", Peter Szobi and Ladislaus Disznósi.²⁸ In January 1466 at the latest, both were the *bans* of the Kingdoms of Rama, Dalmatia, and Croatia,²⁹ and would remain in those offices until at least April 1466.³⁰

Peter Szobi was the son of John Szobi, a middling nobleman originating from the county of Somogy,³¹ who seems to have been close to the party of Ladislaus Jagiello during the struggles over the Hungarian throne that took place following the death of King Albert.³² During the 1440s, John was furthermore a retainer of John Hunyadi, Matthias's father. He governed the castle of Tapolcsány near Košice in Hunyadi's name around 1447, and between 1448 and 1452 the castle of Buda during Hunyadi's governorship in Hungary.³³ Around the same time, John was Hunyadi's vice-count of Temes.³⁴ John's son Peter was certainly Matthias's senior, as he appears in the primary sources as early as 1440 together with his brother Stephen.³⁵ In 1459, he was briefly Matthias's *ban* in Croatia alongside the (in)famous Paul Špirančić³⁶ and followed his king in the unsuccessful campaign against the Ottoman-held castle of Zvornik in 1464, where the king rewarded

²⁷ Tóth et al., ed., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 102.

²⁸ MNL-OL-DL 13736; DF 281275.

²⁹ MNL-OL-DL 15478; János Szendrei, *Miskolcz város története és egyetemes helyiratai*, vol. 3: *Oklevéltár Miskolcz város történetéhez 1225-1848* (Miskolc, 1890), doc. 61, 100-103.

³⁰ MNL-OL-DF 236612, 255788; cf. Iván Borsa, "A szenyéri uradalom Mohács előtti oklevelei", *Somogy megye múltjából – Levéltári évkönyv 10* (1979): doc. 206, 101; Tóth et al., ed., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 102, 139.

³¹ MNL-OL-DL 44446, 101002; DF 236652; Iván Borsa, "A szenyéri uradalom", doc. 268, 123; Dezső Csánki, *Magyarország történelmi földrajza a Hunyadiak korában*, vol. 2 (Budapest: MTA, 1894), 648, 698.

³² MNL-OL-DL 13569.

³³ MNL-OL-DL 49147, 65895, 44531, 38843; DF 292782; Pál Engel, ed., *Magyarország archontológiája 1301-1457*, vol. 1 (Budapest: História and MTA, 1996), 288.

³⁴ Engel, *Magyarország archontológiája*, vol. 1, 205; Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 26-27, n. 44. For further data on John's career, see: MNL-OL-DL 13569; 69466; 65895; István Bakács, *Hont vármegye Mohács előtt* (Budapest: MTA, 1971), 77-8, 121.

³⁵ MNL-OL-DL 13569.

³⁶ Tóth et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 102.

his loyalty.³⁷ At the time, Peter served as the castellan of the royal castle of Beszterce (presumably the Hunyadi-owned Beszterce in Transylvania).³⁸ Crucially, Matthias identified Peter in 1464 as *aulae nostrae familiaris*, thus indicating that Peter, as so many of Matthias's officials at the time, climbed the ladder from the position of *aulicus* at the king's court. Undoubtedly, John Szobi's career and connections to the Hunyadi family were his son Peter's ticket into the circle of Matthias's intimate associates. Peter Szobi was dead by 1469, leaving behind a widow and a son named Michael to settle his inheritance against what seem to have been devious plans of Ladislaus Upori, another loyal retainer of Hunyadi's and Peter's close associate from his time at the king's court.³⁹

While Peter Szobi adhered to his father's politics of supporting the Hunyadi and their cause, Disznósi, on the other hand, steered clear of Matthias's court. Disznósi was a son of Nicholas Disznósi, his family stemming from the county of Hont to which King Ladislaus V granted arms in 1456.⁴⁰ During the early 1450s, he was in the service of Catherine Treutel, widow of Peter Cseh Lévai, and her nephew Nicholas, acting as their official in the estate of Csente in the Bodrog county, the old Treutel estate that had been transferred to the Lévai with Catherine's marriage to Peter.⁴¹ However, Ladislaus had become a trusted retainer of Nicholas Újlaki by the end of the decade, at a time when service in Újlaki's circle meant open opposition to Matthias's kingship. Although evidence about Ladislaus's change of mind is lacking, it seems that his sojourn in the southern regions of the kingdom, in Catherine's service, was the catalyst that facilitated the transfer. Újlaki was the count of Bodrog at the time, when his influence over this and the surrounding area in the "Lower Parts" was unmatched.⁴² In 1459, Disznósi served Újlaki as the castellan of Kaposújvár in the county of Somogy together with Ambrose Török and John Kondé.⁴³ He governed the castle, in fact, at the time when his lord and his accomplices elected Frederick III the king of Hungary in the nearby Németújvár in February 1459.⁴⁴ Újlaki soon made peace

³⁷ MNL-OL-DL 27492.

³⁸ MNL-OL-DL 27490.

³⁹ MNL-OL-DL 16705, 16707, 16914, 67047, 45329, 17514. On Upori, see furthermore: Horváth, "A Felső Részek kapitánysága", 937-945, 953.

⁴⁰ MNL-OL-DL 69478; cf. I. Bakács, *Hont vármegye*, 277-279.

⁴¹ Ernő Kammerer, *Codex diplomaticus domus senioris comitum Zichy de Zich et Vásonekeő*, vol. 9 (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1899), doc. 335, 449-458; On the Lévai: Petar Seletković, "Plemićki posjed Nevna u srednjem vijeku", *Scrinia Slavonica* 18 (2018), 29-68; Mór Wertner, "A Lévai csehek", *Századok* 35 (1901): 332-342.

⁴² Tóth et al., ed., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 2, 75.

⁴³ MNL-OL-DL 15419, 15552, 16239; István Szabó, "Középkori levéltártörténeti adatok", *Levéltári Közlemények* 10 (1932): doc. 2, 126-127.

⁴⁴ For a recent study on Frederick's election and the political circumstances of the time, see: Pálosfalvi, "Szegedtől Újvárig".

with Matthias during the summer of 1459, and would in the following years play a key role in Matthias's negotiations with Frederick III for the return of the Hungarian Holy Crown and Frederick's recognition of Matthias's rule over Hungary.⁴⁵ These changes seem to have particularly benefited Disznósi. He was present in Székesfehérvár for the occasion of Matthias's coronation, probably as part of Újlaki's retinue.⁴⁶ Just before taking the offices in Croatia and Bosnia in 1465, the king, surprisingly, made him the castellan of Zólyom together with John Daróci.⁴⁷ He thus came to govern a castle that had been contested for decades (along with the surrounding areas) between the Hungarian rulers and the "Hussite" companies of norther Hungary. In fact, the castle seems to have been one of Jan Jiskra's centres until in 1462 Matthias eventually managed to put an end to his autonomy.⁴⁸ In other words, Disznósi was put in charge of an area that had only recently returned under complete royal control and was still in the process of adjusting to the new circumstances, a process which Disznósi was no doubt meant to control and facilitate.⁴⁹ Although it may be that Matthias accepted Disznósi into the circle of his retainers soon after the coronation in 1464, the king's decision to put him in charge of an important and contested area in the north of the country seems somewhat imprudent. How and why exactly Matthias placed trust in Disznósi and whether Újlaki may have had a say in this is not completely clear at this point, but it may be indicative that Disznósi came from the Hont county, which neighboured Zólyom and whose population had substantial experience with the Czech warbands.⁵⁰ Another noteworthy fact is that in 1459, when Disznósi occupied the castellany at Újlaki's Kaposújvár, he enjoyed the support of a certain number of *homines Bohemi*, then in the service of his lord.⁵¹

One would, it seems, search in vain for concrete evidence for the reasoning behind Matthias's decision to send either Szobi or Disznósi to Croatia and Bosnia. Already Kubinyi, in his well-known study on Újlaki's Kaposújvár and personnel

⁴⁵ Salihović, "Exploiting the Frontier"; see also: Karl Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus, Kaiser Friedrich III. und das Reich: Zum hunyadisch-habsburgischen Gegensatz im Donauraum* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1975), 13-22; and works listed in n. 17.

⁴⁶ MNL-OL-DL 49435.

⁴⁷ MNL-OL-DL 65934; MNL-OL-DF 280685, 280687, 268926; Tóth et al., ed., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 2, 383.

⁴⁸ On Matthias's dealings with the "brethren" bands and Jiskra, see: Alžbeta Gácsová, "Boje Mateja I. proti Janovi Jiskrovi z Brandýsa a bratříkom v rokoch 1458-1467", *Historický časopis* 25 (1977): 187-216; Vladimír Segeš, "Husziták és bratříkok a középkori Magyarországon", in: *Hadi és más nevezetes történetek. Tanulmányok Veszprémy László tiszteletére*, ed. Katalin Mária Kincses (Budapest: Hadtörténeti Intézet és Múzeum, 2018), 458-469; Pál Tóth-Szabó, *A cseh huszita mozgalmak és uralom története Magyarországon* (Budapest: Viktor Hornyánszky, 1917), 303ff.

⁴⁹ In addition to the documents listed in n. 47, see: MNL-OL-DF 268924.

⁵⁰ See, for instance, Tóth-Szabó, *A cseh huszita mozgalmak*, doc. 28, 378-380.

⁵¹ MNL-OL-DL 15419.

politics, suggested that particularly Disznósi's offices in the south came about through Újlaki's backing.⁵² Kubinyi, however, was apparently unaware of Disznósi's role in Zólyom and did not take it into consideration when suggesting that Újlaki may have influenced the king's politics in Croatia and Bosnia. Still, his assumptions are further backed by the role taken by another retainer of Újlaki's in Slavonia in 1466 – John Viszlai of Palina. In a letter addressed to the counts, vice-counts, and judges of Slavonia in January 1466, John Viszlai signed as the “captain of the Kingdom of Slavonia installed by the king”,⁵³ thus very much claiming a position that was at the time also in the hands of John Vitovec.⁵⁴ Regardless of the true administrative background of this post, on which Pálosfalvi has offered his views,⁵⁵ Viszlai's presence in Slavonia at the time when Újlaki had not yet lost his Slavonian *banatus* is indicative of the power relations that were present in the region before Matthias's reforms in 1466. His background and career prior to this period offer further clues on the rearrangements that went with the changes in political fortunes of the main protagonists of Hungarian politics around the time of Corvinus's ascent. John Viszlai apparently came from the county of Valkó, from a family whose eponymous estate and *castellum* of Palina were located there.⁵⁶ During the 1450s, he was an associate of the Hospitaller prior Thomas Szentgyörgyi, who was possibly related to the Hunyadi family through John Szentgyörgyi, a relative of John Hunyadi as well as Thomas's predecessor in the priory, installed there by Hunyadi himself.⁵⁷ Viszlai governed the Hospitaller castle of Krassószentmiklós in Baranya in Thomas's name and would in 1457 receive the castle in exchange for the services performed for Elisabeth Szilágyi, Matthias's mother. Following the death of John Hunyadi in 1456, the execution of Ladislaus Hunyadi, Matthias's older brother, and Matthias's incarceration in March 1457,⁵⁸ Viszlai managed to gather a certain number of mercenaries and stepped in to defend the interests of the Hunyadi in the “Lower Parts.” Having failed to remunerate Viszlai for his efforts, Elisabeth asked Thomas Szentgyörgyi for help, who quickly arranged for the transfer of the castle of Krassószentmiklós and half of the estate of Nekcseszentmárton to Viszlai until his expenses were covered.⁵⁹ In 1460, King Matthias himself confirmed this pledge, perhaps be-

⁵² Kubinyi, “A kaposújvári uradalom”, 28-29.

⁵³ MNL-OL-DF 282441.

⁵⁴ On Vitovec: Pálosfalvi, “Vitovec János”; Tóth et al., ed., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 93.

⁵⁵ Pálosfalvi, “Vitovec János,” 467-468.

⁵⁶ MNL-OL-DL 93345; cf. Csánki, *Magyarország történelmi földrajza*, vol. 2, 275, 340.

⁵⁷ MNL-OL-DL 106538, 93729, 93286; Salihović, “*Pro sustentatione castrorum*,” 90-92, with further literature.

⁵⁸ On these events in detail: Pálosfalvi, “Tettes vagy áldozat?”

⁵⁹ MNL-OL-DL 93279.

cause neither had been Elisabeth's to give away.⁶⁰ Early in his career, therefore, Viszlai found himself in the Hunyadi camp, probably exclusively through his connections to Prior Thomas, which eventually dragged him into the conflicts that followed Hunyadi's death in 1456.

Viszlai centred his activities in the county of Baranya early in his career, and very little would change in later years. He married Clara Szentmártoni, daughter of a Baranya nobleman called Albert Szentmártoni,⁶¹ and would throughout the 1460s amass considerable estates in the region.⁶² As the political circumstances changed rapidly following Matthias's victory over the Habsburg party in 1459 and Újlaki preserved his status in the kingdom, Viszlai seems to have been facing better choices for his future. By the 1460s, Újlaki had long been the count of Baranya. He continued to govern the county after the instabilities of the period between 1457 and 1459,⁶³ and it seems Viszlai saw no better alternative but to approach the (re)established lord and build his career in Újlaki's rather than the Hunyadi circle. He left Prior Thomas Szentgyörgyi probably as early as 1462 and in 1463 became Újlaki's vice-count in Baranya, occupying the post, with interruptions, until at least 1471.⁶⁴ In January 1466 at the latest, as noted above, he became the captain of Slavonia alongside John Vitovec and was rewarded by the king for his services,⁶⁵ but was yet to see his finest days in Újlaki's service. By 1471, the baron had made him one of the vice-bans of Macsó⁶⁶ as he had come to trust Viszlai to such an extent that he chose him to join other loyal retainers as one of the executors of his will put to paper in 1471.⁶⁷

Both Disznósi's and especially Viszlai's cases suggest that before the abrupt changes introduced during Matthias's sojourn in Slavonia in the summer of 1466, the king had to carefully balance his domestic political goals and the power of the barons despite the victory in 1459 and the coronation in 1464. Besides Vitovec, Újlaki continued to wield significant influence over the southern borderlands, be it Slavonia, Bosnia, or Croatia, regardless of his blatant anti-Hunyadi stance of the late 1450s, and certainly with Matthias's approval. Although their personal relations, around 1459 and afterwards, have often been perceived as inimical, both seem to have resorted to pragmatism and learned to compromise in important issues. After all, following the negotiations of 1459, which ended positively for

⁶⁰ MNL-OL-DL 93304.

⁶¹ MNL-OL-DL 93286.

⁶² MNL-OL-DL 93299, 93300, 93360.

⁶³ Tóth et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 2, 42.

⁶⁴ See: HR-AHAZU-70, D-XIII-79; Tóth et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 2, 42-43.

⁶⁵ MNL-OL-DL 93360.

⁶⁶ Tóth et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 103.

⁶⁷ MNL-OL-DL 17162; Andrić, "Oporuka Nikole Iločkog", 45-54.

Újlaki, who lost nothing despite rebelling against Matthias's rule, the two worked closely and seem to have carefully negotiated many alterations in the political structure of the south of the kingdom. Újlaki, probably due to his intimacy with Frederick III, was one of the key players in the process of Frederick's yielding to Corvinus's claim to the Hungarian throne. The transfer of the baron's power from Slavonia to northeast Bosnia also seems to have been a compromise, as well as his Bosnian kingship in the 1470s.⁶⁸ So too the decisions to employ Disznósi and Viszlai in the administration of the southern frontiers seem to have come out of the respect of the young Matthias and his immediate circle for the wishes and power of Újlaki. Of course, at the time, Újlaki was still the *ban* of Slavonia and was entitled to take part in the decision process, particularly concerning Viszlai, entirely legitimately, if not thanks to his personal prestige and unofficial channels. And Disznósi and Viszlai seem to have been perfect candidates for all sides if compromise was required, as both had served the Hunyadi and the Újlaki camps at one point. Szobi, on the other hand, one of the loyal Hunyadi retainers who would eventually dominate the kingdom's administration from the early 1470s, seems to have been Corvinus's counterweight to the less trustworthy officials.

Towards royal domination: the late 1460s and the early 1470s

Having successfully implemented the administrative changes in Slavonia after 1466 and largely dispensed with the remnants of the past structures, Matthias had free hands to arrange the government of the southern borderlands to his liking. From around 1466 (with slight modifications after the rebellion of 1471), the king therefore entrusted the southern *banati* and other lower-ranking posts primarily to his trusted retainers, most of whom had served the Hunyadi family for a long time, even before Matthias's times, and were members of the intimate circle of royal *aulici*. Some, however, were more loyal than others, and the king still had to manage the tenacity and resourcefulness of individuals. One of such apparently ingenious and certainly relentless individuals was Ambrose Török.

Though far less important than one might gather from the amount of work written on his genealogy, the complexity of Ambrose Török's background warrants extensive research and offers bewildering data, one that troubled József Bessenyei, Zoltán Daróczy, or Béla Németh in their attempts to solve the Enyingi Török genealogical conundrum with varying success.⁶⁹ Zoltán Daróczy proved to be best

⁶⁸ See Salihović, "An Interesting Episode".

⁶⁹ József Bessenyei, *Enyingi Török Bálint* (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1994), V-VI; Zoltán Daróczy, "Néhány dunántúli család eredete és leszármazása", *Turul* 26 (1908): 84-86; Béla Németh, *Szigetvár története* (Pécs: Pécsi irodalmi és könyvnyomdai részvénytársaság, 1903), 49-69.

informed in his paper from 1908.⁷⁰ What follows about Ambrose's genealogy is, therefore, in agreement with Daróczy's conclusions, though more detailed.

Ambrose Török was a son of a certain George Keményfalvi and his unnamed wife, sister of Ladislaus Török Bakónaki.⁷¹ Primary sources from the earlier period show that this Ladislaus was a son of Paul Török Bakónaki,⁷² who furthermore appears in the documents as Paul *Horvát* Bakónaki, father of Ladislaus Török Bakónaki.⁷³ Moreover, in a charter from 1429, King Sigismund's letter of command for a *seisin* following the donation of an estate by John Kanizsai to Ladislaus, the recipient is named Ladislaus, son of Paul *Therek de Kemenfalva*, i.e. Török Keményfalvi.⁷⁴ In other words, this means that Paul, his son Ladislaus, his anonymous sister (Ambrose's mother), and Ambrose's father George were all Keményfalvi. Crucially, the estate granted by John Kanizsai to Ladislaus was *Nagbakonok*, i.e. Nagybakónak in the county of Zala. Just as important is the fact that the *Bakónaki* family does not appear in the sources prior to 1428/29, i.e. prior to Kanizsai's donation, suggesting that the Keményfalvi branched afterwards to produce a new, Bakónaki branch of the family.⁷⁵ Nothing is known of George Keményfalvi's background, so one cannot precisely describe his relationship with Paul and Ladislaus Török, but they were all apparently a part of one kindred or some other form of community. Closeness of the two families is further confirmed in King Matthias's grant of arms to Ambrose and his relatives from 1481, including Ambrose's sons Emeric and Benedict, Andrew, son of Peter Török, Ambrose's brother, and Ladislaus, son of Ladislaus Török Bakónaki.⁷⁶

Ambrose originated from the county of Zala, where both (Nagy)Bakónak and Keményfalva were located and where his ancestors had apparently established themselves at the turn of the fourteenth century.⁷⁷ Nothing apart from the name is known about his father, but his uncle Ladislaus played a significant role at the royal court, serving as *vicemagister ianitorum* between at least 1437 and 1438, as well as in Sigismund's campaigns against the Hussites in Bohemia.⁷⁸ During the 1420s, apparently before reaching Sigismund, Ladislaus served John Kanizsai, who in 1428 granted him the estate of Nagybakónak.⁷⁹ Ambrose initially fol-

⁷⁰ Daróczy, "Néhány dunántuli család", 84-86.

⁷¹ MNL-OL-DL 13829, 88296, 88475, 88349, 88591.

⁷² MNL-OL-DL 12030, 68986; DF 233105.

⁷³ MNL-OL-DF 233356.

⁷⁴ MNL-OL-DL 12030.

⁷⁵ Daróczy came to the same conclusion.

⁷⁶ Áldásy Antal, "Az enyingi Török család czímeres levele 1481-ből", *Turul* 15 (1897): 33-34.

⁷⁷ MNL-OL-DL 12030; Csánki, *Magyarország történelmi földrajza*, vol. 3, 32, 69.

⁷⁸ MNL-OL-DF 233105, 241745, 228644, 270256.

⁷⁹ MNL-OL-DL 12030.

lowed the family policy and worked with the Kaniszai for the most of the 1450s,⁸⁰ but his first service of note was with none other than Nicholas Újlaki. In and around 1458, Ambrose was Újlaki's castellan of Németújvár together with Ladislaus Nádasdi,⁸¹ where Frederick III would be elected king of Hungary in 1459. At the time, however, Ambrose governed Újlaki's Kaposújvár, where he shared the castellany with his brother Peter, Ladislaus Disznósi and John Kondé.⁸² Around 1461, he left Újlaki and reapproached Nicholas and Ladislaus Kanizsai, the count of Sopron and the voivode of Transylvania, respectively, who made him the castellan of their Szentgyörgyvár in the county of Zala, which they also eventually pledged to him and his partner for 3000 florins.⁸³ Very soon, however, Ambrose was to change his lord yet again. He entered the king's service shortly afterwards and apparently followed Matthias on his campaign to Wallachia in the autumn and winter of 1462.⁸⁴ In November 1462, while the king was still in Braşov in Transylvania, he issued a charter that exempted Ambrose's estate of Enying in the county of Veszprém from taxes for the *lucrum camerae* due to Ambrose's services in the king's campaign aimed at "retaking the *partium Transalpinarum* from the abyss of the ferocious Turks".⁸⁵ The king identified Ambrose as *aule regie familiaris*, thus indicating that he had indeed entered Matthias's court.

By 1464, the king made him the captain of Sopron and the count of Sopron and Vas, areas in the Hungarian western frontier, adjacent to the Habsburg territories.⁸⁶ Particularly the town of Sopron and the surrounding region had been disputed between the Hungarians and Frederick III for decades until in 1463 Matthias managed to recover it through the Treaty of Wiener Neustadt.⁸⁷ Having apparently taken into consideration the experience Ambrose had accumulated while working in these parts of the country both with the Kanizsai and with Újlaki during the 1450s, Matthias placed his trust in Ambrose to govern the re-

⁸⁰ Engel, *Magyarország archontológiája*, vol. 1, 337, 357, 406; cf. Richárd Horváth, "Sopron megye tisztségviselői a késő középkorban (1458-1526)", *Soproni Szemle* 68 (2014): 80, n. 35; Richárd Horváth, "Vas megye tisztségviselői a késő középkorban (1458-1526)", *Vasi Szemle* 64 (2010): 729, n. 31.

⁸¹ MNL-OL-DL 15268.

⁸² MNL-OL-DL 15419, 15552, 16239.

⁸³ MNL-OL-DL 15624; Imre Nagy, Dezső Véghelyi, Gyula Nagy, ed., *Zala vármegye története. Oklevéltár*, vol. 2 (Budapest, 1890), doc. 300, 577-579. Cf. also András Kubinyi, "A budai vár udvarbírói hivatala, 1458-1541 (kísérlet az országos és a királyi magánjövedelmek szétválasztására)", *Levéltári Közlemények* 35 (1964): 93; Kubinyi, "A kaposújvári uradalom", passim and Martyn Rady, *Nobility, Land, and Service in Medieval Hungary* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 116-117.

⁸⁴ MNL-OL-DL 88382; see also: Matei Cazacu, *Dracula* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2017), 137-164; Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 203-208; Richárd Horváth, "Hunyadi Mátyás és Havasalföld", *Világtörténet* 32 (2010), br. 3-4: 3-12.

⁸⁵ MNL-OL-DL 88382.

⁸⁶ See n. 80 and Tóth et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 2, 232, 328.

⁸⁷ Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus, Kaiser Friedrich III.*, docs. 1-2; 202-209.

gion. However, Ambrose would use his position in Sopron to reengage in the long-standing local conflicts involving, among others, his old lords, the Kanizsai and Conrad Weitraher, when in the summer of 1464 he unexpectedly captured Weitraher in Sopron following an agreement between the Kanizsai and Weitraher on some old financial disputes, and requested ransom for his release.⁸⁸ Despite Weitraher's poor reputation at both Frederick's and Matthias's courts, the king did not enthuse over Ambrose's actions. Moreover, due to his misconduct towards the bishop of Győr, disobedience to royal command, and "many transgressions" committed in a sensitive frontier area, Ambrose faced a fall from grace in March 1465 and the loss of his position in the royal administration and at the court. Eventually, he and his men were forced out of Sopron by the royal officials.⁸⁹

It did not take long, however, for Ambrose as well as his brother Peter to regain Matthias's trust. As early as September 1466, Ambrose and soon Peter were pardoned for their misbehaviour.⁹⁰ In the winter of 1466/67, they accompanied the king to the north of the country in his campaign against the remnants of the Czech warbands in Kosztolány, where Matthias confirmed the pardon and granted judicial exemptions to the brothers.⁹¹ But the king forgave Ambrose much earlier than his pardons may suggest. Not long after his departure from Sopron, he was transferred to another newly acquired area and his skills were yet again employed to consolidate the recent royal acquisitions. This time, and possibly as a necessary and quickly arranged alternative to Ambrose's post in Sopron, he was sent to govern one of the royal castles in Croatia – in the southern frontier towards the Ottoman-held territories in Bosnia. In February 1466 at the latest, Ambrose was therefore put in charge of the castle of Krupa on the river Una, facing the Hungarian anti-Ottoman buffer in Bosnia,⁹² a castle which had once been a Frankapan possession. It seems that Ambrose's role in the area was primarily oriented towards facilitating the establishment and strengthening royal control during Matthias's efforts to bring the peri-Adriatic regions of his kingdom closer to the court and as far away as possible from Venetian influence.⁹³ Krupa itself was taken from Martin Frankapan in 1464 at the coronation

⁸⁸ On mid-fifteenth-century conflicts in and around Sopron and Ambrose's role in them, see: Jenő Házi, "Macskakő vára", *Soproni Szemle* 16 (1962): 332-340; Árpád Nógrády, "Csepreg ostroma és Sárvár bevétele 1454-ben", *Vasi Szemle* 64 (2010): 685-697.

⁸⁹ Jenő Házi, *Sopron szabad királyi város története*, vol. 1, pt. 5: *Oklevelek és levelek 1460-tól 1481-ig* (Sopron: Székely és Társa, 1926), docs. 197-198, 203; 163-164, 167-168.

⁹⁰ MNL-OL-DL 88434.

⁹¹ MNL-OL-DL 88438, 88439.

⁹² On the composition and extent of the Hungarian frontier in Croatia towards the Ottoman-held areas in Bosnia during Matthias's reign, see: Salihović, "Definition, Extent, and Administration," 117-179.

⁹³ Salihović, "Definition, Extent, and Administration," 117-179.

diet held in Székesfehérvár, where apparently Martin willingly surrendered the castle which he had bought from the castellan of the Cilli and Ladislaus V some six or seven years earlier.⁹⁴ Here too Ambrose soon started to annoy the locals. It was precisely Martin Frankapan who in 1466 complained before the king that Ambrose acted dishonestly towards his estates and retainers in the county of Zagreb, demanding that justice be done. The king quickly called upon the chapter in Zagreb to investigate the issue.⁹⁵

Ambrose must have possessed considerable managerial skills and showed talent in governing castles and their economies, as by 1468 Matthias had put him in charge of the royal castle in Buda as *udvarbíró* (*provisor curiae*), a post which in Matthias's times focused almost entirely on provisions for the court and the economic management of the estates attached to it.⁹⁶ This and his past experiences, both in the realm of castle management and in personal relations, led Ambrose in the early 1470s to revisit his old acquaintances and reunite with Nicholas Újlaki, who ruled the Hungarian-held parts of Bosnia from the end of 1471 as king of Bosnia.⁹⁷ Possibly with a nudge from Matthias himself, and certainly with his approval, Újlaki employed Ambrose to manage his own royal court in Jajce, where he was further put in charge of the collection of provisions – crops, wine, and money – from Újlaki's castellans in Bosnia.⁹⁸ It seems that the post of Újlaki's *provisor curiae* in Bosnia and the castellany in Krupa remained Ambrose's only significant achievements in the administration of Hungarian southern frontiers. Although it was long believed and also suggested by András Kubinyi, József Bessenyei, and Antal Áldásy that he was later, around 1479, promoted to the *banatus* of Szörényi, it is now known that the available primary sources do not indicate that.⁹⁹ In fact, Kubinyi, Áldásy, and Bessenyei all obtained this information from Frigyes Pesty's *A Szörényi bánság és Szörény vármegye története*, an overview of the history of the Szörényi region published in 1877.¹⁰⁰ Pesty's sources – gene-

⁹⁴ MNL-OL-DF 83745; Lajos Thallóczy, Samu Barabás, ed., *Codex diplomaticus Comitum de Frangepanibus*, vol. 2 (Budapest: MTA, 1913), docs. 33, 61, 62; 33-34, 64-68; see also: Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol 1, 355; Radoslav Lopašić, *Bihać i Bihaćka krajina* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1890), 205-207; Suzana Miljan, "Grofovi Celjski i Nijemci, službenici njihovih utvrda u Zagrebačkoj i Križevačkoj županiji", *Godišnjak njemačke zajednice/DG Jahrbuch* 20 (2013): 18.

⁹⁵ MNL-OL-DF 255788.

⁹⁶ Kubinyi, "A budai vár udvarbírói hivatala", 93, *passim*.

⁹⁷ On Újlaki's kingship in Bosnia, see: Kubinyi, "Die Frage des bosnischen Königtums", 373-384; Salihović, "An Interesting Episode".

⁹⁸ MNL-OL-DL 88544; Davor Salihović, "Nonnulla documenta pertinentia ad Nicolaum de Wylak, regem ultimum Regni Bosnae", *Scrinia Slavonica* 17 (2017): doc. 2, 408. Cf. András Kubinyi, "Residenz- und Herrschaftsbildung in Ungarn in der zweiten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts und am Beginn des 16. Jahrhunderts", *Vorträge und Forschungen* 36 (1991): 439-440.

⁹⁹ Bessenyei, *Enyingi Török*, V; Kubinyi, "A budai vár udvarbírói", 93; Áldásy, "Az enyingi Török", 33.

¹⁰⁰ Frigyes Pesty, *A Szörényi bánság és Szörény vármegye története* (Budapest: MTA, 1877), 285-286.

alogical notes on the Török family from János Czech's *Győr vármegye hajdani nemes familiáinak emlékezetek* – indeed contain a brief mention of Ambrose's service in Szörényi.¹⁰¹ Czech, in turn, learned about Ambrose's *banatus* from the *Collectanea genealogico-historica illustrium Hungariae familiarum quae iam intercederunt* by Karl Wagner from 1802, where the author mentions Ambrose's *banatus* in Szörényi, but provides no references to the primary sources.¹⁰² Early in the 1470s, and possibly already during the aforementioned royal campaigns in Wallachia and in the Hungarian "Upper Parts," in which he had taken part, Ambrose was designated as the "captain of the royal *militia aulica*". Matthias himself highlighted Ambrose's merit in numerous battles and the wounds he had suffered for the victory over royal enemies, for which he was suitably rewarded,¹⁰³ but he was not promoted to another post in the south. Reaching the zenith in the 1460s and the early 1470s, Ambrose's career was mostly spent in royal service at Matthias's court, where he apparently showed expertise in matters both military and administrative. Though not as consistent and loyal as some others among Matthias's *aulici*, having regularly changed lords throughout his career, Ambrose nevertheless showed to be an invaluable member of Matthias's retinue and the person the king turned to whenever necessary in specific circumstances.

Elsewhere, and usually in places of greater importance along the southern borderlands, Matthias relied on people of a somewhat different character and background, those who were by and large consistently loyal to the Hunyadi house and far less resourceful than Ambrose Török. In March 1467 at the latest, the vice-*banatus* of Croatia was given to a certain Ladislaus Mark Terjéni, who at the time worked with John Túz, the *ban* of Slavonia, Bosnia, and Croatia.¹⁰⁴ He settled in the region and administered the military and administrative matters in the field, remaining in Croatia until at least February 1470.¹⁰⁵ Ladislaus was a son of Michael Terjéni and Margaret Csúzi, members of two families that intermarried in at least two generations in the first half of the fifteenth century,¹⁰⁶ and

¹⁰¹ János Czech, *Győr vármegye hajdani nemes familiáinak emlékezetek* (Pest: Trattner J. M. & Károlyi István, 1829), 52.

¹⁰² Karl Wagner, *Collectanea genealogico-historica illustrium Hungariae familiarum quae iam intercederunt*, vol. 3 (Bratislava; Pest; Leipzig, 1802), 126.

¹⁰³ MNL-OL-DL 17443.

¹⁰⁴ MNL-OL-DL 66601; Lajos Thallócz, Samu Barabás, ed., *Codex diplomaticus comitum de Blagay* (Budapest: MTA, 1897), docs. 199-200; 374-380.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Tóth et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 102. Additional sources further below.

¹⁰⁶ MNL-OL-DL 13985, 44254, 45919, 59235. Ladislaus's mother, i.e. his father's wife, was Margaret Csúzi, a daughter of John Csúzi and a sister of Stephen and Nicholas Csúzi, who married Michael Terjéni at some point before 1439. Stephen Csúzi had a son called Anthony, Margaret's nephew, who in turn married Lucy (Lucia) Terjéni, a daughter of Mark Terjéni, Michael's father and Ladislaus's grandfather. In other words, Michael's sister was married to Margaret's nephew – Ladislaus's aunt was married to his first cousin.

stemmed from the Hungarian northwest, where the Terjéni and the Csúzi estates were located.¹⁰⁷ His background was, therefore, quite similar to that of Ladislaus Disznósi, who came from the same area. In fact, whereas Disznósi initially worked with the widow of Peter Cseh Lévai, Terjéni's father served Peter as the castellan of Léva in the 1430s.¹⁰⁸ Ladislaus first appears in the primary sources around 1446,¹⁰⁹ but nothing is known about his career prior to the 1460s. According to much later sources from the 1470s, he was a *familiaris* of Matthias's *aula* (i.e. royal *aulicus*), and he had thus possibly arrived at the royal court as early as the late 1450s.¹¹⁰

Although initially sent to Croatia as an assistant to John Túz, it seems that Ladislaus governed the region largely on his own from the outset.¹¹¹ By 1469, he no longer acted as a junior in the Kingdom's administration, but took on the *banatus* and exercised his authority both from Knin and Skradin during a particularly eventful period in the history of Croatia and Dalmatia.¹¹² Thanks to the Ottomans' success in achieving a salient penetration into the western sections of the Hungarian-controlled Bosnia at the time, the late 1460s brought incessant Ottoman incursions into (northern) Croatia, the area which stood between the Ottoman Bosnia and the Venetian possessions in Istria and Friuli, the ultimate goal of Ottoman raiders.¹¹³ The upheaval eventually resulted in a proxy war between Hungary and Venice, as the latter sought to establish a defensive belt in northern Croatia in collaboration with the Croatian aristocrats who were traditionally close to Venice and at the time (particularly the Frankapans) disgruntled with Matthias's general disinterest in investing resources in the defence of their domains against Ottoman incursions (the king was occupied with Bohemia, which the Venetians hoped he would abandon and return to the Ottoman

¹⁰⁷ MNL-OL-DL 44254, 13428, 14120.

¹⁰⁸ MNL-OL-DL 13428.

¹⁰⁹ MNL-OL-DL 13985.

¹¹⁰ MNL-OL-DL 45570.

¹¹¹ See note 104.

¹¹² Šime Ljubić, *Listine o odnošajih između južnoga Slavenstva i Mletačke Republike*, vol. 10 (Zagreb: JAZU, 1891), doc. 464, 440-442.

¹¹³ We lack a detailed study of Ottoman incursions into the Dalmatian hinterland and Croatia in the fifteenth century. For a general overview, see: Fabio Cusin, *Il confine orientale d'Italia nella politica Europea del XIV e XV secolo* (Trieste: Lint, 1977), 421ff; Borislav Grgin, "The Ottoman Influences on Croatia in the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century", *Povijesni prilozi* 21 (2002), br. 23: 92; Stanko Jug, "Turški napadi na Kranjsko in Primorsko do prve tretjine 16. stoletja", *Glasnik Muzejskega društva za Slovenijo* 24 (1943): 10-12; Maria Pia Pedani, "Turkish Raids in Friuli at the End of the Fifteenth Century", in: *Acta viennensia ottomanica: Akten des 13. CIEPO-Symposiums*, ed. by Markus Köbach, Gisela Procházka-Eisl and Claudia Römer (Vienna: Institut für Orientalistik, 1999), 287-291; Klement Pust, "Vpliv vojaških spopadov med Beneško republiko in Osmanskim cesarstvom na migracije na območju zgornjega Jadrana v 16. stoletju" (PhD dissertation, Koper: Univerza na Primorskem, 2009), 495ff; Salihović, "Definition, Extent, Administration", 149ff.

arena).¹¹⁴ Particularly following the campaign of royal troops in Croatia against the Frankapans and the capture of the Frankapan Senj in 1469, Ladislaus was left to deal with the local Venetian administration and address the consequences of both the recent Hungarian-Venetian disagreements and the squabbles between Hungarian and Venetian subjects that went hand-in-hand with them.

As early as May 1469, Ladislaus (as *banus* of Croatia) negotiated and eventually came to an agreement with the representatives of Venetian administration in Dalmatia on settling the differences that had recently burdened his relations with the count of Šibenik. They agreed to release the prisoners, return as much stolen or damaged goods as practically possible, grant a general amnesty and normalize trade, travel, and other matters, as well as settle boundary disputes in the hinterlands of Šibenik.¹¹⁵ While Ladislaus was absent from Croatia on a visit to Matthias in late 1469 or January 1470, his Croatian subjects, however, continued to harass the population of Šibenik's hinterlands. This initially prompted a response from Venice, as the centre demanded that Ladislaus's subjects' goods be confiscated, and all trade ceased. Having learned that trade continued nevertheless (and with goods stolen from Venetian subjects at that), Venice scolded the count of Šibenik, ordering that their wishes be respected, Ladislaus's subjects' goods confiscated, trade halted, and, if possible, stolen goods returned to Venetian people. Goods taken from Venetian subjects in the *ban's* territory and along the border in retaliation following recent clashes around Šibenik and Skradin were also to be requested from Ladislaus.¹¹⁶ The *banus* promptly responded to these events and in February 1470 agreed to recompense the damage done by royal Vlachs in Šibenik's surroundings as assessed by a shared committee put together by him and the count of Šibenik.¹¹⁷

Throughout Ladislaus's mandate in Croatia, the inhabitants of Šibenik and its hinterland relentlessly entreated the central government to help fight the "incessant plundering, destruction, and burning" brought upon them by "the Hungarians and the *ban's* men", particularly by sending troops and victuals, to which Venice

¹¹⁴ See: Salihović, "Definition, Extent, Administration," 149ff. Briefly on Matthias's campaign in Bohemia at the time in: Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 84ff. Through their envoy at the Curia in Rome, Venice tacitly accused both the pope and Matthias of imprudent waste of resources in Matthias's war in Bohemia and earnestly worked on Matthias's return to the Ottoman theatre, particularly in defence of Croatia. See, e.g.: Iván Nagy, Albert Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacizai emlékek Mátyás király korából, 1458-1490*, vol. 2 (Budapest: MTA, 1877), doc. 64, 99-100.

¹¹⁵ Ljubić, *Listine*, vol. 10, docs. 463, 464; 439-442.

¹¹⁶ MNL-OL-DF 289135; cf. HR-DAZD-388, fol. 77v; HR-DAZD-371, b. 6, fasc. 12, n. 106-107; Josip Barbarić, Josip Kolanović, eds, *Monumenta historiam Sibenici et eius districtus illustrantia*, vol. 1: *Diplomatarium Sibenicense* (Šibenik: Muzej grada Šibenika, 1986), docs. 162-163; Davor Salihović, *Monumentorum variorum pertinentium ad historiam mediaevalis Croatiae vicinarumque partium tomus primus* (Zadar: DAZD, forthcoming), doc. 24.

¹¹⁷ MNL-OL-DL 50083; cf. HR-DAZD-371, b. 6, fasc. 12, n 152.

responded by employing a *condottiere* and cavalry to face what were undoubtedly mounted raiders (largely Vlachs) commanded by the *ban* of Croatia (deployed, moreover, at the time to counter the Ottoman mounted *akinji*).¹¹⁸ Ladislaus left Croatia soon after February 1470, but was well remembered in Venetian Dalmatia for his wrongdoings against Šibenik. A couple of years later, when Venice had to deal with one far more troublesome successor of Ladislaus's in Croatia, Paul Tár, the representatives of Šibenik made sure to point out the misdeeds of "Marco Lazlaf" in Venice as well as his connections to several of Šibenik's citizens who helped Ladislaus learn about and put Šibenik in jeopardy through their relatives who had settled in Croatia following the Venetian takeover of the city.¹¹⁹

After leaving Croatia, Ladislaus apparently did not assume another role as important as the one he had been entrusted with in the late 1460s. It seems he was left without a significant office in the kingdom's administration for nearly a decade, until in 1477 he was put in charge of the castles of Esztergom and Komárom, thus returning to the area closer to his homeland.¹²⁰ In the mid-1480s, he moreover governed the county of Ung.¹²¹ The reason behind his inability to secure another post following his return from Croatia may have been his relationship with John Vitéz, whom Ladislaus apparently served immediately after returning to the north, at the time of the conspiracy of 1471, aimed at restoring the Polish Jagiellonians on the Hungarian throne. John Vitéz, at the time the archbishop of Esztergom and the royal privy chancellor, was famously involved in the conspiracy.¹²² Mere six months before his death in August 1472 – just about the time Matthias arrested him for the second time for his involvement with the Poles – in February 1472, John pledged the castle of Revište in the Bars county to Ladislaus. The archbishop particularly highlighted Ladislaus's service in recent "quarrels" (i.e. the rebellion and its consequences in the latter half of 1471), and pledged him the castle for a thousand florins and in exchange for protection and loyalty.¹²³ The archbishop furthermore highlighted that the castle had been acquired by him personally and did not belong to the archbishopric as well as hinted that he had

¹¹⁸ ASV, Senato, Deliberazioni, Mar, reg. 9, fol. 8v, 28v, 32r; Ljubić, *Listine*, vol. 10, docs. 466, 469; 443-444, 448-450; Salihović, *Monumentorum variorum tomus primus*, docs. 4, 19, 25.

¹¹⁹ Vincenzo Miagostovich, "Per una cronaca sebenicese", *Nuovo archivio veneto* 25 (1913): 466-473.

¹²⁰ MNL-OL-DF 242919, 236976; DL 25248; cf. Tóth et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 2, 99, 131.

¹²¹ Tóth et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 2, 302.

¹²² For classic studies on John Vitéz and his place in the politics (rather than art) of Matthias's period, see: Vilmos Fraknói, *Vitéz János esztergomi érsek élete* (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1879); András Kubinyi, "Vitéz János és Janus Pannonius politikája Mátyás uralkodása idején", in: *Humanista műveltség Pannóniában*, ed. István Bartók, László Jankovits, Gábor Kecskeméti (Pécs: Művészetek Háza-PTE, 2000), 7-26; for a recent view on his life and career, see: Tomislav Matić, "Ivan Vitez od Sredne – prelat i humanist 15. stoljeća" (PhD dissertation, University of Zagreb, 2017).

¹²³ MNL-OL-DL 17294.

either bought it from the late Peter Koller or acquired it in some other way after the latter's death. Revište had since the early 1440s been in the possession of Jan Jiskra and eventually by the end of the decade and throughout the 1450s in the hands of Peter Koller, Jiskra's associate.¹²⁴ In 1465, Matthias granted the castle to Koller who, according to the royal charter, acquired it with his own money from the Czech on the request of the Hungarian prelates and barons. Matthias's approval of Koller's control over Revište was a part of a deal whereby he got to keep the castle until the royal court reimbursed his expenses.¹²⁵ Koller was dead by 1472, as indicated by the archbishop's charter, but it remains a mystery just how the archbishop got his hands on the castle – probably by paying the price requested by Koller. It furthermore remains unknown whether Ladislaus ever took possession of it, as in 1479 Matthias pledged the castle to Urban Nagylucsei, royal treasurer and later bishop of Győr, without ever mentioning either Ladislaus or John Vitéz. The king merely highlighted that the castle was returned to the crown after being lost to the Czech for a long time, thanks to a combination of pledges (undoubtedly a reference to Kollar) and ancient royal rights.¹²⁶

Ladislaus's partnership with the disgraced archbishop may have cost him his place among Matthias's close associates and another position. It may even be that he joined the conspiracy against the king from the outset and thus lost or chose to abandon his position in Croatia. Whatever the case, he was surprisingly quickly welcomed back to Matthias's court (assuming he had ever lost Matthias's trust). As early as May 1474, the king rewarded Ladislaus's "constant" loyal service with several estates in the Bars county, clearly identifying him as royal *aulicus*.¹²⁷ Ladislaus had a daughter Helen (or Catherine)¹²⁸ with a certain Helen, the latter of whom later married Sigismund Matucsiani. Who precisely this Helen (Ladislaus's wife(?)) was is not clear, despite the claims that she was the daughter of Ladislaus Nagyvölgyi, the *ban* of Macsó in the late 1450s and apparently Újlaki's retainer, as evidence is lacking.¹²⁹ The daughter was eventually married

¹²⁴ MNL-OL-DF 249798; Kammerer, *Codex diplomaticus domus senioris comitum Zichy*, vol. 9, doc. 129, 169-171; František Palacký, ed., *Archiv český. Staré písemné památky české i moravské*, vol. 4 (Praze: Kronberger i Řivnác, 1846): doc. 2, 330-332; Tóth-Szabó, *A cseh huszita mozgalmak*, 238-239, and docs. 32-33, 384-388. Cf. Engel, *Magyarország archontológiája*, vol. 1, 400.

¹²⁵ MNL-OL-DL 16156.

¹²⁶ MNL-OL-DL 103835, 100922. Cf. MNL-OL-DL 102072, 25902.

¹²⁷ MNL-OL-DF 206566, DL 45570.

¹²⁸ She is identified as Catherine in MNL-OL-DL 58228, but as Helen in MNL-OL-DL 82238 and 72044.

¹²⁹ That this Helen was her mother is stated by Helen/Catherine herself in her will: MNL-OL-DL 82238. Cf. Borbála Kelényi, "Három Várdai-feleség végrendelete a késő középkorból", in: *Micae Mediaevalis*, vol. 2, ed. Bence Péterfi et al. (Budapest: ELTE, 2012), 167-168, who gathers from Engel that this was Helen Nagyvölgyi: Pál Engel, *Középkori magyar genealógia. Magyar középkori adattár* (Budapest: Arcanum, 2001), s. v. "Matucsinai (Cseményi)" and "Nagyvölgyi (Bács m.)"; see also: Kubinyi, "A kaposújvári uradalom", *passim*.

to Stephen Várdai, who was the nephew of Matthias Várdai, bishop of Bosnia in the late period of Matthias's reign.¹³⁰

Around the same time when Ladislaus arrived in Croatia, probably during the campaign led by John Rozgonyi and John Túz in the summer and autumn of 1466, a certain Paul Sándor also followed the two captains in their attempts to "recover the frontiers of Croatia and Dalmatia" for Matthias.¹³¹ Having probably first taken part in the capture of the old Tallóci domains around the Cetina, which had been contested between Hungary, Venice, and a host of local players throughout the 1450s and the early 1460s,¹³² he was put in charge of the castle of Počitelj on the Neretva.¹³³ Between the late 1460s and the end of 1471, he was moreover tasked with maintaining other royal castles in Croatia, as well as awarded the position of vice-*banus* of Croatia together with Paul Tár in September 1471 at the latest, thus either shortly after the departure of Ladislaus Terjéni or even during his tenure.¹³⁴ Paul invested significant efforts, as well as around a thousand of his own florins in maintaining and defending the castles entrusted to him between 1467 and 1471. The king therefore recompensed the costs by pledging the castle of Rmanj, once a Frankapan possession in Croatia, to Paul (and Paul Tár) for this debt in September 1471. Paul was granted the castle, all taxes and other income due from its domains, and the military command over the petty nobility attached to it in the district of Lapac.¹³⁵

The king's deed that transferred Rmanj to Paul further indicates that he was the son of Elias *Gaz de Berenzallasa* and a relative of Stephen Ficsor, son of Benedict Sándor *de eadem Berenzallasa*. Both Paul's father's (by)name (Gáz)¹³⁶ and

¹³⁰ MNL-OL-DL 82238, 58228, 72044; Bakács, *Hont vármegye Mohács előtt*, 415; Engel, *Középkori magyar genealógia*, s.v. "Gútkeled nem: Várdai".

¹³¹ A phrase used by the royal chancery in MNL-OL-DF 275108: *Iohannes... accessisset fidelem nostrum magnificum Iohannem Thwz de Lak, pro tum Regnorum nostrorum Bozne, Dalmacie, Croacie et Sclavonie Banum ac Magistrum Curie nostre, illo scilicet tempore quo idem cum exercitu nostro pro reformacione confiniorum predictorum Regnorum nostrorum Dalmacie et Croacie ac castrorum nostrorum Klyz et Zyn expugnacione per nos deputatus fuisset...*

¹³² See: [Veljan Atanasovski] Вељан Атанасовски, *Пад Херцеговине* (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga and Istorijski institut u Beogradu, 1979), 19-63; [Sima Ćirković] Сима Ћирковић, *Херцег Стефан Вукчић-Косача и његово доба* (Belgrade: Naučno delo, 1964), 245-267; Krunoslav Draganović et al., *Povijest Bosne i Hercegovine od najstarijih vremena do godine 1463*. (Sarajevo: Napredak, 1998), 534ff, passim; Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 224-228; Salihović, "Definition, Extent, and Administration", 122ff; Marko Šunjić, *Bosna i Venecija (odnosi u XIV. i XV. stoljeću)* (Sarajevo: HKD Napredak, 1996), 276ff; Lajos Thallóczy, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens und Serbiens im Mittelalter* (Munich; Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1914), 200-222.

¹³³ MNL-OL-DL 27494, issued in November 1467 for Paul, the royal castellan of Počitelj.

¹³⁴ MNL-OL-DL 68070; József Gelcich, *Raguza és Magyarország összeköttetéseinek oklevéltára* (Budapest: MTA, 1887), 800.

¹³⁵ MNL-OL-DL 68070; Gelcich, *Raguza*, 800.

¹³⁶ See: Ferenc Fodor, *A Jászság életrajza* (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1942), 112, passim.

far more strongly the toponym Berényszállás point to the fact that Paul must have been one of the As (Jász) people of Hungary, a group which figured prominently in the Hungarian kings' armies as one of several communities (such as the Cumans or the Székely) that were granted special status in return for specific military duties from at least the beginning of the fourteenth century.¹³⁷ These people of Iranian origin, who most likely entered Hungary sometime in the thirteenth century, enjoyed a high level of autonomy granted in 1323 by King Charles at the latest and confirmed by subsequent rulers, including Matthias. These rights implied self-government under captains.¹³⁸ Although the name "Sándor" appears very early in documents related to the As, in fact the very first captain known by name, mentioned in the 1330s, was identified as *Sandrinus capitaneus Jazinorum*,¹³⁹ it is not clear whether Paul might have had anything to do with the As military elite. As the family was centred in Berényszállás, which by the fifteenth century had become a sort of an administrative centre of the "Jászság", and as the royal decree addressing the kingdom's defences issued in Szeged in 1459 emphasized that the As (along with the Cumans and Tatars) "will make war in accordance with the ancient custom followed by the Saxons",¹⁴⁰ it may appear that Paul served the king due to his standing and ancient custom. There is, however, no concrete evidence to substantiate these assumptions, quite the contrary. In addition to receiving Rmanj, albeit in lieu of cash owed by the king, Paul was furthermore awarded several estates in the counties of Doboka and Torda in 1467 for services to the king, a feat not achieved by many among the As who were to exercise their obligations under the established privileges. These estates had been confiscated from two noblemen who had taken part in the Transylvanian rebellion of the same year.¹⁴¹ The king's debt, which had accumulated over the years, as apparently Paul defended and maintained the castles entrusted to him in Croatia without Matthias's subsidies, and the subsequent remuneration further suggest that Paul was at the equal standing with other knights in the king's retinue. Paul was dead by March 1472, when his recently acquired possessions in Doboka and Torda escheated to the king and were redistributed to other noblemen as Paul had no children. At least one of the recipients of these estates, Martin Ficsor of

¹³⁷ On the As in the period in general: László Szelmeci, "A jászok betelepédése, a magyarországi jászok a 13-15. században", *Jászsági évkönyv* 1 (2007): 102-116, with further bibliography; in far more detail, although long outdated, with primary sources: István Gyárfás, *A jász-kunok története*, 4 vols. (Kecskemét, Szolnok, and Budapest, 1870-1885). Also: András Pálóczi Horváth, *Pechenegs, Cumans, Iasians: Steppe Peoples in Medieval Hungary* (Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 1989), 62-67.

¹³⁸ Matthias's confirmation of rights: Gyárfás, *A jász-kunok története*, vol. 3, doc. 160, 637-638.

¹³⁹ Gyárfás, *A jász-kunok története*, vol. 3, doc. 13, 467-469.

¹⁴⁰ ... *iuxta antiquam consuetudinem exercituabunt(!), secundum quod Saxones*. Döry et al., *Decreta Regni Hungariae*, § XX, 115.

¹⁴¹ MNL-OL-DL 27494.

Berényszállás, must have been Paul's relative.¹⁴² The fact that Paul commanded the garrison at Počitelj and worked with the Ragusans on supplying the castle during the Ottoman siege in the late summer of 1471 until the very end suggests that he may have fallen defending the castle, which fell into Ottoman hands in mid-September 1471.¹⁴³

An age of uncontested royal authority: the 1470s and the 1480s

Just about the time when Počitelj was taken by the Ottoman troops and the Hungarian presence at the Neretva was eliminated, Matthias was addressing the pro-Polish conspiracy involving, as noted, Archbishop John of Esztergom. Soon the king prepared ground for another reorganization of the administration in the southern borderlands, including Bosnia and Croatia, as well as Slavonia, apparently to tackle not only the domestic political problems but particularly the improvement of anti-Ottoman defences, which seems to have been a problem the rebels were especially interested in. Although relinquishing control over Bosnia for the benefit of Nicholas Újlaki, who would rule Bosnia until his death in 1477, the king very much managed to establish firmer control over the southern regions of the country by installing people of unquestionable loyalty in key positions. Even Újlaki, although a man from another time and the last of the old veteran barons to have a say that late in Matthias's reign,¹⁴⁴ proved to be a valuable ally during the troubles of 1471. Bonfini, for instance, highlighted that when Matthias was faced with the conspiracy, he sent envoys to Nicholas to ask for advice, which the "wise" baron was more than happy to give.¹⁴⁵

A rekindled friendship and, crucially, an adoption contract between Nicholas and Matthias's mother kept the new king of Bosnia in check,¹⁴⁶ but nevertheless Matthias willingly relinquished significant authority in the Hungarian borderlands, as Újlaki ruled independently in both domestic and international arenas. In Bosnia, his rule depended on a number of usually tried-and-tested retainers,

¹⁴² MNL-OL-DL 27341. Paul's relatives were listed alongside him as the recipients of Rmanj in Matthias's charter from 1471. These included a certain Ladislaus, Stephen Ficsor, son of Benedict Sándor of Berényszállás, and his *fratres*; MNL-OL-DL 68070.

¹⁴³ Gelcich, *Raguza*, 800.

¹⁴⁴ Works of András Kubinyi such as "Bárók a királyi tanácsban" remain authoritative in questions on the composition of the baronial elite in Matthias's times.

¹⁴⁵ Antonio Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum decades*, vol. 4, pt. 1, ed. József Fögel, Béla Iványi, László Juhás (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1941), 43.

¹⁴⁶ On the adoption contract between Nicholas and Matthias's mother compiled in May 1472, through which Nicholas essentially promised his eternal loyalty to Matthias, see: MNL-OL-DL 17316; cf. Philipp Ernst Spies, *Aufklärungen in der Geschichte und Diplomatie* (Bayreuth, 1791), 274-275; József Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, vol. 11 (Pest, 1855), doc. 538, 469-471; Salihović, "Nonnulla documenta", doc. 1, 406-408.

familiar faces who had served the great baron before this last episode.¹⁴⁷ One of them was Ambrose Török and another was Nicholas Dombai, palatine of the Kingdom of Bosnia, who had throughout his career served Újlaki in Somogy, Baranya, Slavonia, Macsó, and even as the *banus* of Croatia in 1462, probably thanks to Újlaki's influence and the lack of Matthias's decisiveness in the south so early in his reign.¹⁴⁸ Dombai, at the time the castellan of Orahovica, was another retainer of Nicholas's to be chosen by the baron in 1471 to execute his last will,¹⁴⁹ and would in 1476 at the latest become the palatine of Bosnia, which undoubtedly meant the highest post at Nicholas's court.¹⁵⁰

In line with Matthias's previous designs,¹⁵¹ Újlaki was in 1471 promoted to the *banatus* in Slavonia, as well as granted the estates of the Hospitaller priory of Hungary as a source of revenue for the upkeep of his Bosnian castles.¹⁵² To keep him under control and protect the royal authority in Slavonia, Újlaki was partnered with Damian Horvat there,¹⁵³ as the latter furthermore assumed the *banatus* in Croatia in the aftermath of the bloody clashes between Hungary and Venice that had been taking place in Dalmatia and Croatia in recent years.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁷ On Nicholas's rule over Bosnia between 1471 and 1477, see works in note 97.

¹⁴⁸ MNL-OL-DL 34800, 35598, 34989; Elemér Mályusz, "A szlavóniai és horvátországi középkori pálos kolostorok oklevelei az Országos Levéltárban: harmadik közlemény", *Levéltári Közlemények* 6 (1928): doc. 130, 136; Kubinyi, "A kaposújvári uradalom", 29; Tamás Pálosfalvi, *The Noble Elite in the County of Körös (Križevci), 1400-1526* (Budapest: MTA, 2014), 102; Tóth et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 104, 144; vol. 2, 75, 222-223, 310, 421, 452.

¹⁴⁹ MNL-OL-DL 17162; Andrić, "Oporuka Nikole Iločkog", 45-54.

¹⁵⁰ MNL-OL-DL 33432.

¹⁵¹ On Matthias's combining of the offices of the *banati* of Slavonia and Bosnia with the benefices from the Hospitaller estates in Hungary, see: Salihović, "Pro sustentatione castrorum".

¹⁵² Salihović, "Pro sustentatione castrorum", 100ff. Initial news of Nicholas's assumption of kingship in Bosnia together with the *banati* and the control over the Hospitaller estates came from Ragusa, in their correspondence with the king of Naples in late 1471. Cf. Vičentije Makušev, *Monumenta historica Slavorum meridionalium vicinorumque populorum*, vol. 2 (Belgrade: Štamparija Kraljevine Srbije, 1882), 95-96.

¹⁵³ Tóth et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 94, 103.

¹⁵⁴ These include not only the conflict for influence in the Frankapan areas and for their town of Senj, but also the skirmishes and clashes that took place before and in the immediate aftermath of Matthias's assault on Senj, primarily around the status of the castle of Klis in the episode where one of Matthias's captains in Croatia, Paul Tár, was the main protagonist. I will return to this particular issue in a future study. For now, see: Vladimir Lamanski, *Secrets d'état de Venise: documents, extraits, notices, et études servant à éclaircir les rapports de la seigneurie avec les Grecs, les Slaves, et la Porte ottomane à la fin du XVe et au XVIe siècle* (Saint Petersburg, 1884), 18-23; Vladimir Lamanski, "L'Assassinat politique à Venise du XVe au XVIIIe siècle", *Revue Historique* 20 (1882): 105-120; Louis de Mas Latrie, "De l'empoisonnement politique dans la République de Venise", *Mémoires de l'Institut national de France* 34 (1895), 197-259; Salihović, *Monumentorum variorum tomus primus*, docs. 84, 85, 88, 89, 96; Marko Šunjić, "Mletačka zavjera protiv hrvatskog bana Pavla Tara", *Godišnjak Društva istoričara BiH* 16 (1965): 283-285; M. Wertner, "Magyar hadjáratok a XV-ik század második felé-

Unlike Újlaki, a seasoned and cunning baron, Damian was a staunch supporter of the whole Hunyadi family throughout his career, from the modest beginnings to the heights of the *banati*.¹⁵⁵ Matthias himself found it fitting to highlight Damian's and his brother's loyalty to the Hunyadi house in several charters, emphasizing how Damian took part "in almost all arduous things pertaining to us or our kingdom"¹⁵⁶ and how the brothers had served "lord Hunyadi, the perpetual count of Beszterce and the governor of this kingdom, our parent, and the late great Ladislaus Hunyadi, also the count of Beszterce, our dearly remembered brother, and our Majesty... in many armies and military expeditions, both mine and those of the said parent and brother, both against the Turks, the violent enemies of the Christian faith, and against the Bohemians, hostile enemies of our Kingdom of Hungary... in which they loyally served and bled."¹⁵⁷ Damian was a member of Matthias's *aula*, and probably of the courts of John and Ladislaus Hunyadi before him.¹⁵⁸ Similarly faithful to Matthias's cause was Blaise Magyar, a man of obscure origins, probably from a family originating from the county of Abaúj who had settled in the city of Kassa (Košice) before his birth.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, it seems that, in the service of John Perényi, the *magister tavernicorum*, around 1455¹⁶⁰ and before 1458, during the succession crisis following the death of king Ladislaus the Posthumous and the preparations for Matthias's ascent to the Hungarian throne, he was among the retainers of Matthias's uncle, governor Michael Szilágyi.¹⁶¹ Further sources show that he too had served John and Ladislaus Hunyadi, as well as Matthias's mother Elisabeth, especially in the defence of the kingdom's "Upper Parts" against the Bohemians, in clashes against the

ben", *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 13 (1912): 219; Paolo Preto, *I servizi segreti di Venezia: Spionaggio e controspionaggio ai tempi della Serenissima* (Milan: il Saggiatore, 2010), 330, 340. See also the works and sources listed in notes 116 to 119.

¹⁵⁵ For the only overview of Damian's life and career, see: Marija Karbić, "Od hrvatskog sitnog plemića do ugarskog velikaša i hrvatskog bana: Damjan Horvat od Litve i njegova obitelj", in: *Croato-hungarica. Uz 900 godina hrvatsko-mađarskih povijesnih veza. A horvát-magyar történelmi kapcsolatok 900 éve alkalmából*, ed. Milka Jauk-Pinhak, Csaba Kiss István Nyomárkay (Zagreb: Katedra za hungarologiju Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2002), 119-125. From recent scholarship, see also: [Neven Isailović] Невен Исаиловић "Повеља бана Дамјана Хорвата Дубровчанима о слободи трговине", *Inicijal. Časopis za srednjovekovne studije* 2 (2014): 241-253.

¹⁵⁶ MNL-OL-DL 30860.

¹⁵⁷ MNL-OL-DF 233118.

¹⁵⁸ MNL-OL-DL 98193, 46858.

¹⁵⁹ MNL-OL-DL 15543, 84974, 84975, 84976, 19105; László Fenyvesi, "Mátyás király törökverő hadvezérének származása", *Honismeret* 5-6 (1990), 38.

¹⁶⁰ MNL-OL-DL 56982; cf. Iván Borsa, *Az Abaffy család levéltára 1247-1515. A Dancs család levéltára 1232-1525. A Hanvay család levéltára 1216-1525* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1993), doc. 214, 149.

¹⁶¹ MNL-OL-DF 213696; *regesta* in: Béla Iványi, *Bártfa szabad királyi város levéltára, 1319-1526* (Budapest: MTA, 1910), doc. 997, 156.

Turks and other enemies.¹⁶² He was Matthias's *aulicus* who exhibited prowess in combat, which early on brought him the occasional command over John Hunyadi's troops¹⁶³ and would guide his entire career during Matthias's reign. He was the captain of the "Upper Parts" as early as 1459 and throughout the 1460s, and would famously lead the assault against Frankapan domains in 1469 as well as 1479/80, the latter of which proved to be only partially successful, as Balázs suffered defeat on the island of Krk.¹⁶⁴ He was granted the *banatus* of Croatia and Slavonia and control over Bosnia in the immediate aftermath of his conquest of Senj,¹⁶⁵ where he rather unsuccessfully negotiated the delicate relations between Venice and Hungary, the two contestants for influence in the Dalmatian hinterland.¹⁶⁶ Having in the meantime governed Transylvania,¹⁶⁷ Balázs would briefly return to the *banati* of Slavonia and Croatia in 1482, when he contributed to the refurbishment of royal castles in Slavonia.¹⁶⁸

Magyar, Horvat, and to some extent John Ernusz, ¹⁶⁹ came from a group that in the late 1470s and especially during the 1480s entirely dominated the highest ad-

¹⁶² MNL-OL-DL 15412, 15520, 15772; Ernő Kammerer, *Codex diplomaticus domus senioris comitum Zichy de Zich et Vásonkeő*, volume 10 (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1907), doc. 230, 320-326.

¹⁶³ MNL-OL-DL 15520.

¹⁶⁴ MNL-OL-DL 213767, 213772, 213778, 213779; cf. Iványi, *Bártfa*, 167-170; Horváth, "A Felső Részek kapitánysága", 953-954. For his command over the royal troops in Croatia and on Krk, see: Borislav Grgin, "Senj i Vinodol između kralja Matijaša Korvina, Frankapana i Venecije (1465-1471)", *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest* 28 (1995): 61-70; Vjekoslav Klaić, *Krčki knezovi Frankapani* (Zagreb: Matice hrvatska, 1901), 255ff; Salihović, "Definition, Extent, and Administration", 147-152; and, of course, the central source on the Venetian-Hungarian proxy conflict for the island of Krk, Vinciguerra's *Giurisdizione antica di Veglia*, published in: Šime Ljubić, *Commissiones et relationes Venetae*, vol. 1 (Zagreb: JAZU, 1876), doc. 4, 29-101.

¹⁶⁵ Tóth et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 103.

¹⁶⁶ See: ASV, Senato, Deliberazioni, Secrete, reg. 24, fol. 105v-106r, 109v, 116r-v, 117r; Deliberazioni, Mar, reg. 9, fol. 47v-48r; 90r; cf. HR-DAZD-371, b. 6, fasc. 12, nn. 124, 127, 128, 129, 131, 132-135; Salihović, *Monumentorum variorum tomus primus*, docs. 34, 36, 37, 40, 43, 60; cf. Nagy, Nyáry, *Magyar diplomaciai emlékek*, vol. 2, docs. 118, 119, 120, 121; 172-177.

¹⁶⁷ Tóth et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 86.

¹⁶⁸ Tóth et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 95. On the maintenance of the royal castles in Slavonia during the tenures of *bani* Ladislaus Egervári, Matthias Geréb, and Magyar, see: MNL-OL-DL 26235. For a brief study of this document, the inventory of the castles, and the list of refurbishments, see: Kubinyi, "Magyarország déli határvárai a középkor végén", in idem, *Nándorfehérvártól Mohácsig – A Mátyás- és a Jagelló-kor hadtörténete* (Budapest: Argumentum, 2007), 71-79; or its German version in idem, *Matthias Corvinus: Die Regierung*, 188-201.

¹⁶⁹ John Ernusz, a converted Viennese Jew who found success in trade and finances in Hungary, first came to prominence at Matthias's court during the monetary and tax reforms of the mid- and late 1460s. He worked in Matthias's treasury, was put in charge of the thirtieth tax as well as the royal mint- and mine-chamber in Körmöc (Kremnica) during the 1460s. By late 1473, he had taken over the *banatus* of Slavonia from Horvat and Újlaki, possibly due to his experience in financial management, as suggested in previous scholarship (see Kubinyi's "Die Frage des bosnischen Königums", 382, note 60; Pál Engel, Gyula Kristó, András Kubinyi, *Magyarország története 1301-1526* (Budapest: Osiris,

ministrative positions in the southern borderlands – the set of Matthias’s trust-
ed retainers who, once the king had managed to either outlive or prevail over
his political opponents, faithfully represented the king’s interests in their *banati*.
Ladislav Egervári (*banus* of Slavonia and Croatia 1476-1482 and 1489-1493)¹⁷⁰
and Matthias Geréb Vingárti (*banus* of Slavonia and Croatia 1483-1489)¹⁷¹ came
from the same group. Geréb was related to Matthias as his mother Sophia, wife
of his father John, was a sister of Matthias’s mother Elizabeth. In other words,
King Matthias and Matthias Geréb were first cousins, a connection that not only
helped the latter in his career, but his brothers Peter and Ladislav as well.¹⁷²
Just as their father before them, who had closely collaborated with both of his
brothers-in-law, Michael Szilágyi and John Hunyadi, the three brothers faithfully
served Matthias for most of their careers.¹⁷³ Egervári, on the other hand, a self-
made man from a family with the central estates in the counties of Zala and Vás,
could not enjoy the privilege of consanguinity. He nevertheless distinguished
himself at Matthias’s court as one of the *aulici*, in part probably thanks to his
military prowess,¹⁷⁴ and was in 1476 sent to govern Croatia and Slavonia, hav-
ing first in the mid-1470s administered the county of Bihar, the castle of Várad

1998), 238-239; Tamás Pálosfalvi, “Slavonski banovi u 15. stoljeću”, in: *Hrvatsko-madžarski odnosi 1102.-1918.*, ed. Milan Kruhek (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2004), 50; He was, in fact, Matthias’s fifth *banus*, after Emeric Szapolyai, John Túz, Janus Pannonius, and Damian Horvat, to have worked one way or another in the kingdom’s financial administration. Szapolyai started his career as treasurer (Tóth et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 129), Horvat took care of the finances of Queen Catherine (Kunigunda) in the early 1460s (MNL-OL-DF 237601), while Túz also served in the treasury very early in Matthias’s reign or even before his time (Tóth et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 128, see especially note 420). On Ernusz and his career, see furthermore: Márton Gyöngyössi, *Pénzgazdálkodás és monetáris politika a késő középkori Magyarországon* (Budapest: Gondolat, 2003), 46-60; András Kubinyi, “A kincstári személyzet a XV. század második felében”, *Tanulmányok Budapest múltjából* 12 (1957): 25-49; András Kubinyi, “Ernusz Zsigmond pécsi püspök rejtélyes halála és hagyatékának sorsa (A magyar igazságszolgáltatás nehézségei a középkor végén)”, *Századok* 135 (2001): 312-313; Pál Krizskó, *A körmöczi régi kamara és grófjai* (Budapest: MTA, 1880); Imre Madzsar, “Ernusz János és háza Budán”, *Századok* 52 (1918): 56-71.

¹⁷⁰ Tóth, et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 95-96.

¹⁷¹ Tóth, et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 95-96.

¹⁷² Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 18-19; Péter Kovács, “A Hunyadi-család”, in: *Hunyadi Mátyás: Emlékkönyv Mátyás király halálának 500. évfordulójára*, ed. Gyula Rázsó, László V. Molnár (Budapest: Zrínyi, 1990), 45.

¹⁷³ Vilmos Fraknoi, *Szilágyi Mihály, Mátyás király nagybátyja* (Budapest: Franklin, 1913), 102; Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex*, 18; Pálosfalvi, “Szegedtől Újvárig”, 363; Tóth, et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 38, 86, 95; cf. Norbert Tóth, *Magyarország késő középkori főpapi archontológiája. Érsekek, püspökök, illetve segédpüspökeik, vikáriusai és jövedelemkezelői az 1440-es évektől 1526-ig* (Győr: Győri Egyházmegyei Levéltár, 2017). See furthermore on the three brothers, their careers, and the benefits of their connections to the king: MNL-OL-DL 18483, 18487, 18615, also DL 285283; cf. Stanko Andrić, “Srednjovjekovni Šaregrad i njegovi gospodari”, *Povijesni prilozi* 21 (2002), br. 23: 50-52.

¹⁷⁴ MNL-OL-DL 19031.

(Oradea), and the bishopric of Várad.¹⁷⁵ It was during Ladislaus's tenure in Slavonia that the first significant measures were introduced to adapt the military structures of the kingdom to the threat of Ottoman incursions, due first and foremost to the lobbying of the local nobility before King Matthias. With the king's approval, Ladislaus summoned the diet in Slavonia in January 1478, which introduced measures in line with the concept of *militia portalis*.¹⁷⁶

From around the beginning of the 1470s and throughout the remainder of Matthias's reign, therefore, Slavonia and Croatia as well as Transylvania would be governed by relatively well-known men of the Hunyadi era, such as Geréb, Egervári, or Stephen Bátori.¹⁷⁷ From the mid-1470s, moreover, Croatia and Slavonia would be permanently put under the control of one common official, a practice which also occasionally appeared earlier in Matthias's reign. The late 1470s and the 1480s would also prove to be the time of the fewest changes in the administration of the borderlands, when unlike before, at least in Croatia, Slavonia, and Transylvania, a handful of Matthias's trusted men occupied the chief positions for longer periods. The case of Bosnia, nevertheless, was quite specific, as the kingdom was neither clearly returned under the control of the *bani* of Slavonia (as had consistently been the case before 1473), nor was its *banatus* granted to any of the king's men with experience at the highest levels of government. With the death of Nicholas Újlaki in 1477 and the inability of his son Lawrence to claim Bosnia for himself, this region would experience an administrative arrangement in stark contrast to the one before 1477. From the late 1470s onwards, the Bosnian *banatus* would be governed by the king's middling retainers and allies.

Due to the lack of explicit sources for the period between 1477 and 1480, we may only assume that the first to succeed King Nicholas in governing Bosnia was Peter Dóci, the man who would later be famously immortalized in the tradition of 'Petar Dojčin' of the Balkan epic poetry. Peter, it seems, was a soldier through and through. He came from the family of John Dóci and had at least two brothers, Ladislaus and Emeric, both of whom had a similar career. Ladislaus occupied the posts of the captain of Belgrade (together with Peter) in 1462, and intermittently the *banatus* in Szörényi in the late 1450s and the mid-1470s.¹⁷⁸ Peter became the

¹⁷⁵ MNL-OL-DL 17720, 17618, 17578. Cf. Vincze Bunyitay, *A váradai püspökség története* vol 1. *A váradai püspökök a püspökség alapításától 1566. évig* (Nagyvárad, 1883), 304.

¹⁷⁶ HR-HDA, 2-1-44, 45; MNL-OL-DF 252069, 268098; DL 17989; Emilij Laszowski, "Zaključci hrvatskog sabora u Zdencima od 20. januara 1478. pogledom na obranu Hrvatske od Turaka", *Vjesnik Kr. Hrvatsko-Slavonsko-Dalmatinskog Zemaljskog Arkiva* 18 (1916), br. 2: 81-87.

¹⁷⁷ As noted, his career has recently been dealt with in great detail in: Horváth, Neumann, *Ecsedi Bátori István*.

¹⁷⁸ MNL-OL-DL 27335, 16388; DF 260774; Zoltán Daróczy, "Dóczyak és Nagylucseyek", *Turul* 52 (1938): 82-83; Engel, *Középkori magyar genealógia*, s.v. "Dóci"; Tóth, et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 149-150. As shown by these sources and literature, he was not the son of Michael Dóci, a retainer of both John Hunyadi and Matko Tallóci during the 1440s, as suggested by Samu Borovszky, *Csanád várm-*

captain of Belgrade by 1462¹⁷⁹ and would by the end of the decade become the count of Temes (1468-1472)¹⁸⁰ and consequently one of the royal *capitanei gencium* in the southern borderlands together with, for instance, Vuk Branković and the Jakšić brothers.¹⁸¹ Both his brothers and Peter, in fact, had their own band of mounted warriors who served in the southern borderlands around Belgrade against the Ottoman frontier lords throughout the 1470s.¹⁸² According to Matthias's correspondence with Mehmed II from 1478, of which originals are yet to be found and which is only preserved in copies, in later manuscripts now kept in the Moravian Library in Brno and the Széchényi Library in Budapest, it was Peter Dóci whom Matthias chose as one of the negotiators of a peace treaty with the Ottomans at the time.¹⁸³ That this was indeed so is corroborated by the later Cyrillic correspondence between Stephen Bátori and Mihaloğlu Ali Bey, compiled in Buda probably in May 1483,¹⁸⁴ in which Bátori explicitly names Dóci as the Hungarian envoy at Mehmed's court.¹⁸⁵ Although Dóci was first mentioned as the officer in the Hungarian-controlled parts of Bosnia in 1480 (as having taken part in the Hungarian assault on Vrhbosna), it is safe to assume that he gained some administrative authority in the region soon after Újlaki's death.¹⁸⁶ He was clearly an experienced soldier in Matthias's ranks, who seems to have also joined the king's court as *aulicus*. Although we lack explicit sources, he was probably a retainer at the royal court from an earlier age, as suggested by the fact that at least one of his brothers was clearly identified by Matthias as *aule nostre familiaris* as early as 1470.¹⁸⁷

Just as experienced in military arts – as emphasized by the Venetian Senate, whose members viewed him and his riders as the only match to the Ottoman *akinji*¹⁸⁸

eyge története 1715-ig, vol. 1 (Budapest: MTA, 1896), 108-109; cf. MNL-OL-DL 55244; Gusztáv Wenzel, *Az alsómagyarországi bányavárosok küzdelmei a nagy-lucei Dóczyakkal* (Budapest: MTA, 1876), 7.

¹⁷⁹ MNL-OL-DF 260774.

¹⁸⁰ Tóth, et al., ed., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 124.

¹⁸¹ Ernő Kammerer, Ferencz Döry, *Codex diplomaticus domus senioris comitum Zichy de Zich et Vásonkeő*, vol. 11 (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1915), doc. 39, 79-80.

¹⁸² Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum decades*, vol. 4, pt. 1, 64-66.

¹⁸³ See: Czech Republic – Moravská zemská knihovna v Brně, Mk-0000.009, fol. 210r-v; cf. Vilmos Fraknói, *Mátyás király levelei. Külügyi osztály*, vol. 1 (Budapest: MTA, 1893), docs. 259, 260; 381-383; Karl Nehring, "Angaben zu einer unveröffentlichten Kopie eines Registers aus der Kanzlei von Matthias Corvinus", *Levélártári Közlemények* 43 (1972): 85-95.

¹⁸⁴ For the dating of the letter, see: Salihović, "Definition, Extent, and Administration", 35-36.

¹⁸⁵ [Nikola Radojčić] Никола Радојчић, "Пет писاما с краја XV. века", *Јужнословенски филолог* 20 (1953-1954): doc. 1, 362-363.

¹⁸⁶ [Vičentije Makušev] Вићентије Макушев, "Прилози к српској историји XIV и XV века", *Glasnik Srbskog učenog društva* 32 (1871): doc. 12, 204-208; Thallóczy, *Jajca. Oklevelek*, docs. 43, 51-53.

¹⁸⁷ MNL-OL-DL 27335.

¹⁸⁸ ASV, Senato, Deliberazioni, Segrete, reg. 28, fol. 123r; cf. HR-DAZD-371, b. 6, fasc. 1, n. 44; Salihović, *Monumentorum variorum tomus primus*, doc. 229.

– Vuk Grgurević Branković was another soldier to take over Bosnia during the 1480s.¹⁸⁹ A well-known figure of a relatively obscure background, he joined Matthias's cause in the mid-1460s, having in his youth served among the Ottoman frontier lords.¹⁹⁰ Probably a son of the blind Grgur (Gregory) Branković, and a grandson of Despot George of Serbia, he was welcomed in the Hungarian ranks as King Matthias granted him some of the old Branković domains in Hungary, the same which the Hunyadi and the Serbian ruling dynasty had quarrelled over in the preceding decades.¹⁹¹ As a soldier, Vuk would take part in incursions into Ottoman Bosnia, the siege of Šabac, the Battle of Kenyérmező in 1479, the Hungarian assault on Vrhbosna and the Sanjak of Bosnia of 1480, and the subsequent incursions into Serbia led by Paul Kinizsi. He moreover served the king in his wars in the north, in Moravia, against Frederick III, and against the Poles.¹⁹² He would amass further estates in the southern regions of the kingdom, but would die childless in 1485, leaving his wife Barbara Frankapan to see to his inheritance.¹⁹³ Matthias probably immediately sent another trusted man to take over Vuk's position in Bosnia, the last of the middling royal retainers to govern this Hungarian frontier zone before Matthias's death in April 1490.

Ladislaus Ficsor Csulai came from a numerous family of Ladislaus Csulai (he had at least eight brothers and sisters) from the Hunyad county, whose members

¹⁸⁹ He styled himself “captain of Bosnian castles” – [Radojčić] Радојчић, “Пет писама”, doc. 3, 355.

¹⁹⁰ On Vuk's background, life and career, though still under-researched, see: Dušanka Dinić-Knežević, “Sremski Brankovići”, *Istraživanja* 4 (1975): 5-47; Vladimir Džamić, “The Syrmium Branković Dynasty and the Founding of the Holy Mount of Fruška Gora”, in: *Byzantine Heritage and Serbian Art*, vol. 2: *Sacral Art of the Serbian Lands in the Middle Ages*, ed. Danica Popović, Dragan Vojvodić (Belgrade: SANU, 2016), 473-483; [Jovanka Kalić] Јованка Калић, ed., *Историја српског народа* [History of the Serbs], vol. 2 (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1982), 373-464; [Mitrović] Митровић, “Пет писама”; [Mitrović] Митровић, “Вук Гргуревић између Мехмеда II и Матије Корвина”; [Ljubomir Stojanović] Љубомир Стојановић, *Стари српски родослови и летописи* (Sremski Karlovci: Srpska kraljevska akademija, 1927), 55, 119, 243, 250, 253-254, 296, 298.

¹⁹¹ See: MNL-OL-DL 15411, 55788; DF 274885; Pál Engel, “János Hunyadi: The Decisive Years of his Career”, in: *From Hunyadi to Rákóczi: War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*, ed. János M. Bak, Béla K. Király (Brooklyn: Brooklyn College Press, 1982), 103-21; Pál Engel, “A szegedi eskü és a váradi béke: Adalék az 1444. év eseménytörténetéhez”, in: *Mályusz Elemér emlékkönyv*, ed. Éva Balázs, Erik Fügedi, Ferenc Maksay (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1984), 77-96; Pál Engel, “János Hunyadi and the Peace ‘of Szeged’”, *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 47 (1994): 241-257; Sándor Papp, “II. Murád szultán és I. Ulászló lengyel és magyar király 1444. évi békekötése”, *Acta Historica* 109 (1999): 47-62; also: Frigyes Pesty, *Brankovics György rácz despota birtokviszonyai Magyarországon és a rácz despota cím* (Budapest: MTA, 1877).

¹⁹² See: Aleksandar Krstić, “Which realm will you opt for? The Serbian Nobility between the Ottomans and the Hungarians in the 15th Century”, in: *State and Society in the Balkans*, 129-163.

¹⁹³ MNL-OL-DL 34320, 37757, 34317, 34319, 74528, 33628; DF 218997; Matija Mesić, “Građa mojih rasprava u Radu”, *Starine JAZU* 5 (1873): docs. 15, 17, 22; 120-125; Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, vol. 12, doc. 730, 303-304; Thallóczy, Barabás, *Codex diplomaticus comitum de Blagay*, doc. 218, 428-430.

had already served the Hunyadi during the times of Matthias's father John.¹⁹⁴ Ladislaus (the Younger) entered Matthias's circle of retainers in 1475 at the latest, when the king awarded him for his loyal service to the crown.¹⁹⁵ Nothing is known about Ladislaus's career prior to 1475, but he would quickly acquire positions both at the royal court and in the southern borderlands. By 1479, he had become the king's *magister agasonum* and entered Matthias's immediate circle,¹⁹⁶ and between 1486 and 1491 he was the captain of Jajce and the *banus* of Bosnia, the position he would eventually share with the better-known Emeric Derencsényi.¹⁹⁷ Following his relatively long command over royal castles in Bosnia, Ladislaus would moreover serve a short stint as the *banus* of Szörényi between 1491 and 1492.¹⁹⁸

That his position in the kingdom's administration during his *banatus* in Bosnia did not entirely correspond to his status at Matthias's court is suggested by the sources related to the dispute over the inheritance of Ladislaus Töttös Bátmonostori from 1489. Although the Bosnian *banatus* was not counted among the baronial offices in Matthias's era, Ficsor Csulai was nevertheless summoned to take part in the arbitration over the Töttös lands, in a panel composed of him and other "barons and prelates" of the kingdom, such as Oswald, bishop of Zagreb, John, bishop of Csánad, provosts of Dömös, George Turóci, the royal *magister pincernarum*, the prothonotaries of the palatine and the high judge, etc.¹⁹⁹ His achievements in other arenas, however, may have been overstated. In both older and recent literature,²⁰⁰ Ladislaus features among the Hungarian captains who in late 1483 met in battle and defeated Ottoman raiders near the river Una. None of the sources depicting the battle, King Matthias's letter to Pope Sixtus IV,²⁰¹

¹⁹⁴ On the family, see: Ioan Drăgan, "Un căpitan Român pe frontul antiotoman: Ladislau Ficior de Ciula (?-1492)", *Acta Musei Napocensis* 22-23 (1985-1986): 261-266 (with significant errors, especially in the overview of Ladislaus's career, which the paper is focused on); Ioan Drăgan, "Les nobles surnommés More au service de la famille Hunyadi", in: *Matthias Rex. Hungary at the Dawn of Renaissance*, accessed on 13 July 2020, <http://renaissance.elte.hu/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Ioan-Dragan-Les-nobles-surnommes-More-au-service-de-la-famille-Hunyadi.pdf>; T. Fedeles, "Egy Jagelló-kori humanista pályaképe. Csulai Móré Fülöp (1476/1477-1526)", in: idem, *Püspökök, prépostok, kanonokok. Fejezetek Pécs középkori egyháztörténetéből* (Szeged: Szegedi Tudományegyetem Történeti Intézet, 2010), 55-66, originally published in *Levéltári Közlemények* 78 (2007): 25-84.

¹⁹⁵ MNL-OL-DL 29533, 29844; cf. Fedeles, "Egy Jagelló-kori humanista", 59; Pál Török, "Középkori magyar nemes családok Erdélyben", *Magyar Családtörténeti Szemle* 9 (1943): 106.

¹⁹⁶ MNL-OL-DL 29844, DF 266137.

¹⁹⁷ MNL-OL-DL 86002, 19242; 27553; Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, vol. 12, doc. 737, 313-317; cf. Tóth, et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 140.

¹⁹⁸ Tóth, et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 151.

¹⁹⁹ MNL-OL-DL 86002.

²⁰⁰ Lajos Thallóczy, Sándor Horváth, *Jajcza (Bánság, vár és város) története* (Budapest: MTA, 1915) CXLVII; Drăgan, "Un căpitan Român", 263; Fedeles, "Egy Jagelló-kori humanista", 59.

²⁰¹ Fraknói, *Mátyás király levelei*, vol. 2, doc. 156, 267-270.

Bonfini's, Unrest's, and Tomašić's accounts,²⁰² or the correspondence published by Iorga,²⁰³ make any mention of Ladislaus. It was Thallóczy who initially noted Ladislaus's participation in the battle, even though the sources he consulted lack any data on the man.²⁰⁴ Thallóczy was, furthermore, the first to note that Ladislaus captained the garrison in Belgrade at the time of the battle, another misinformation still present in recent scholarship.²⁰⁵ There is no evidence that Ladislaus ever acquired such post.²⁰⁶

Conclusions

The review of the backgrounds and careers of King Matthias Corvinus's lesser-known men who occupied positions along the Hungarian-Ottoman borderlands between the mid-1460s and 1490 offers several clues about the royal administrative policies and the underlying structures that informed them. What immediately captures one's attention are the distinct chronological outlines of Matthias's steadily increasing ability to manage the personnel of the borderlands to his own liking. While he still had to come to grips and put up with the remnants of the old regimes, particularly in Slavonia, for nearly a decade after his election, around the mid-1460s he gained the upper hand in the southern regions by addressing the situation quite aggressively. This not only meant the anti-Ottoman campaigns in Bosnia, but also the establishment of royal presence in Croatia and on the Neretva, as well as the renegotiation of power relations in Slavonia and the southern Hungarian regions. Once the primarily Cilli, as well as the Újlaki power or its vestiges had been successfully removed, the administration of the southern regions became increasingly royal in outlook, with no apparent influence of the private interests of the barons. The only exemption in this case is Újlaki's kingship in Bosnia, the direct result of the troubles of 1471. Nevertheless, despite the obvious waning of royal control over Bosnia due to unexpected causes and sudden disturbances, this too was consensually arranged between the king and his enemy-turned-ally (in fact, even adopted brother). For the remainder of his reign, Matthias proved to be more than capable in retaining firm control over the frontiers and frontier regions,

²⁰² Bonfini, *Rerum Hungaricarum decades*, 123; Ivan Kukuljević-Sakcinski, ed., "Chronicon breve Regni Croatiae Ioannis Tomasich minoritae", *Arhiv za povjestnicu jugoslavensku* 9 (1868): 22; Jakob Unrest, *Österreichische Chronik*, ed. Karl Grossmann (Weimar: Böhlau, 1957), 141-142.

²⁰³ Nicolae Iorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XVe siècle*, vol. 5 (Bucharest: Academia Română, 1915), docs. 134, 135, 136; 135-142. Although there are a fair number of mistakes in Iorga's transcriptions of the original documents, they make no mention of Ladislaus. Cf. Germany – Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich – MS Clm 14668, fol. 79r ff.

²⁰⁴ Thallóczy, Horváth, *Jajcza (Bánság, vár és város) története*, CXLVII.

²⁰⁵ Thallóczy, Horváth, *Jajcza (Bánság, vár és város) története*, CXLVII. Cf. Fedeles, "Egy Jagelló-kori humanista", 59.

²⁰⁶ Tóth et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 144-145.

as both for the remainder of the 1470s and in the 1480s, only his closest and most trusted associates acquired leading positions in these areas.

These, apart from a few ambitious or capable individuals, were regularly recruited from the king's *aulici* and were either long-standing allies and retainers of the Hunyadi family or men who had arrived at Matthias's court at an early age to serve the king in his immediate retinue. All were men of modest background, usually without a baronial pedigree, who served their king in various positions, in castle garrisons, as head of counties, and usually as soldiers, and sought promotion and rise in status in the king's circle. Most, moreover, were exceptionally loyal to their lord, and certainly belonged to a closely-knit group, both on a "corporative" and personal level, as already noted by András Kubinyi.²⁰⁷ They not only enjoyed certain financial and legal privileges, or the king's favour, but also seem to have regularly developed personal ties and shared agendas, particularly in matters of marriage and property policies. One of the better-known alliances of such sort is the one between Paul Kinizsi and Blaise Magyar. As the former married Blaise's daughter Benigna, the latter in turn married Paul's mother following the death of Paul's father Anthony.²⁰⁸ The Dóci brothers, furthermore, married off their daughters to George Csulai, Nicholas Csulai, and Francis Haraszti, captains in Belgrade and *bani* in Szörényi, men of similar standing and careers.²⁰⁹

Following the successful campaigns and reforms of the 1460s, Matthias, largely solely and with significant authority, managed the borderlands in matters both military and administrative through the network of loyal and dependent retainers. This at least officially gave the king enormous power in negotiating the Ottoman affairs as well as the kingdom's relations with Venice and other surrounding powers, but it nevertheless remains a matter of debate to what extent he managed to curtail the power and autonomy of certain individuals, especially powerful barons (such as, for instance, the Frankapans or Újlaki) and their abilities to maintain private initiative along the frontiers of the kingdom. While previous research suggests that through this network the king violently imposed his will in the borderlands, particularly in Croatia, in a manner indistinctly private or public (as befits the period),²¹⁰ thus retaining control over official legal and administrative structures of the Realm as well as overall international politics, it is yet to be seen how, in fact, this affected the power relations beyond the obvious domestic arena – in the field of private relations between individuals and their counterparts across the frontier.

²⁰⁷ Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus: Die Regierung*, 12-19.

²⁰⁸ Horváth, "Pál Kinizsi", 270-271; cf. Engel, *Középkori magyar genealógia*, s.v. "Magyar"; Pál Lukcsics, "Kinizsyné Magyar Benigna örökösei", 66-75.

²⁰⁹ Engel, *Középkori magyar genealógia*, s.v. "Dóci"; Tóth et al *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, vol. 1, 145, 150-151.

²¹⁰ Cf. Salihović, "Definition, Extent, and Administration", 82ff.

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Davor Salihović*

In confinibus Turcorum: Ljudi režima Matije Korvina u ugarsko-osmanskom pograničju kasnog petnaestog stoljeća

Sažetak

Rad raspravlja pozadine i karijere nekoliko manje poznatih službenika koji su zauzimali različite službe u ugarsko-osmanskom pograničju tijekom vladavine ugarskoga kralja Matije Korvina (1458-1490). Analizirajući njihove biografije i mjesta u vladajućoj eliti Korvinove Ugarske, ova studija nadalje ilustrira kako su se promjene u kraljevom autoritetu u pograničju reflektirale u promjenama u kadroviranju na tom prostoru, pokazujući da je kralj postepeno stjecao kontrolu nad svojim južnim zemljama uz pomoć rastuće mreže odanih familijara. Ovi su, konačno, uspješno zamijenili ostatke starijih režima, čiji su predstavnici redovito ustajali protiv kraljevske politike, i tako dozvolili uspostavu čvršće kraljeve kontrole.

Ključne riječi: Matija Korvin, srednjovjekovna Ugarska, srednjovjekovna Slavonija, srednjovjekovna Bosna, srednjovjekovna Hrvatska, Osmansko Carstvo, granica, administracija, Péter Szobi, László Disznósi, János Vízslai, Ambrus Török, László Márk Terjéni, Pál Sándor, Péter Dóci, László Ficsor Csulai

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