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BERKASOVO (BEREKSZÓ) IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Abstract: The settlement of Berkasovo (Hungarian: Berekszó) in Srem (Syrmia) was mentioned for the first time in written sources as a small Catholic parish in the register of the papal tithe (1332–1335). Before the end of the 13th century Berkasovo became a possession of a family which took its noble appellation from it. The Berekszói family owned the Berkasovo estate until 1480/81, when the male line of the family died out. It is not known when the castle was erected on the estate, whose remains still exists in the eastern part of the Berkasovo village. King Matthias gave the Berkasovo castle and the appurtenant possessions (of which Szakadát, Hamisság, Kisberek and Varjas are known by name) to the Serbian despot Vuk Grgurević Branković before March 1482. It seems that the settlement of Berkasovo had the status of a market town (*oppidum*) during the late Middle Ages. After the death of Despot Vuk in 1485, the Berkasovo castle and its estate were given in pledge to Vuk's relatives Despot Đurađ II and Jovan Branković. During the first decades of the 16th century Berkasovo was held by Despot Jovan's widow Jelena Jakšić and her second husband Despot Ivaniš Berislavić, and then by their son Despot Stefan Berislavić. The Berkasovo castle was captured during the Ottoman incursions in Srem in 1521 and 1526, and it seems that it was definitively seized in March 1529. The castle was destroyed and did not have any military function during the Ottoman rule in Srem. In the second half of the 16th century Berkasovo (*varoş-i Berkas*) was inhabited by the mixed Muslim and Christian, predominantly Serbian population. During that period, as well as in the Middle Ages, the main occupation of its inhabitants was agriculture – primarily grain growing and viticulture.

Keywords: Berkasovo (Berekszó), Srem (Syrmia), Vukovo (Valkó) county, Berekszói family, Serbian despots in Hungary, Privina Glava monastery, Berkasovo castle.

Berkasovo (Hungarian: Berekszó) is a settlement in the municipality of Šid in Srem (Syrmia) near the Serbian-Croatian border. The settlement is located in the valley of

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the Šidina stream, under the west slopes of Fruška gora, where the Syrmian loess plateau begins. The toponym is of Hungarian origin, a compound of two words: “berek” (grove, thicket, a small wood) and “aszó” (periodic watercourse, dry streambed, valley, ravine) – meaning a place with a grove or thicket near a brook.¹ This name fully corresponds to the natural environment in which Berkasovo was founded. The first preserved news about this medieval settlement dates back to the first half of the 14th century. Berkasovo (*Perukza, Borugzo, Berukzo, Berizo*) was recorded as a parish in the registers of the papal tithe, which was extraordinarily collected in Hungary during the fourth decade of the 14th century (1332–1337). The Berkasovo parish of Saint King Stephen belonged to the Archdeaconry of Marchia of the Diocese of Pécs, which encompassed a total of 39 parishes in the eastern part of Valkó (Vukovo) county. The lists of papal tithe record the names of two parish priests in Berkasovo: the first one was Peter (1332–1333), who was replaced by Valentine (1334–1335). It can be concluded that Berkasovo was a relatively small and poor parish during the first half of the 14th century. Namely, according to the total amount of 20.5 groats of papal tithe paid in four years, Berkasovo occupied 23rd place out of 39 parishes of the Archdeaconry of Marchia.² The largest and richest parishes of the mentioned archdeaconry were those in urban centres Ilok/Újlak and Eng, which paid a total of almost 400 groats of papal tithe each during the same period. They were followed by five other larger parishes, some of which were also in towns (e.g. two more in Eng and one in Nagyolaszi/Frankavilla)³ with total tithe amounts ranging between 150 and 70 groats. The next 12 parishes paid between 69 and 30 groats of tithe for four years, and another 12 between 29 and 10 groats – this group includes Berkasovo. Parishes from which smaller amounts of papal

¹ Zoltán Gombocz & János Melich, *Magyar etymologiai szótár. Lexicon critico-etymologicum linguae hungaricae*, t. I, (A–érdem), Budapest 1914–1930, 367; Петар Скок, „Топономастика Војводине“, *Зборник Матице српске за друштвене науке* 2 (1951) 58; idem, *Etimologijski rječnik hrvatskoga ili srpskoga jezika*, knj. I, (A–J), Zagreb 1971, 138; Lajos Kiss, *Földrajzi nevek etimológiai szótára*, t. I, (A–K), Budapest 1988, 199; Леона Хајдук & Владимир Хајдук, *Беркасово: од Деспотовца до данас*, Шид 2003, 40.

² *Monumenta Vaticana historiam regni Hungariae illustrantia*, t. I/1, Budapest 1885, 243, 269, 281, 288, 301, 304, 307; Tivadar Ortway, *Magyarország egyházi földleirása a XIV. század elején a pápai tizedjegyzékek alapján feltüntetve*, t. I, Budapest 1891, 278–282; Dezső Csánki, *Magyarország történelmi földrajza a Hunyadiak korában*, t. II, Budapest 1894, 295; Georg Heller & Karl Nehring, *Comitatus Sirmiensis*, München 1973, 18–19; Pál Engel, „A török dúlások hatása a népességre: Valkó megye példája“, *Századok* 134/2 (2000) 286.

³ During the 13th and 14th centuries Eng (Nagyeng) was one of the most important towns of the Hungarian kingdom with three parishes, but the settlement later lost its importance due to Ottoman devastation and in the second half of the 16th century it was recorded as a village in the Grgurevci *nahiye* under the name Vengince. Nagyolaszi (Frankavilla), present-day Mandelos, was also an important medieval urban settlement in Srem: P. Engel, „A török dúlások hatása a népességre“, 271–272, 286, 289; Stanko Andrić, „Samostan Svetog Križa u Frankavili (Mandelosu)“, *Историјски часопис* 52 (2005) 33–77; Danijel Jelaš, *Gradovi donjeg međurječja Drave, Save i Dunava u srednjem vijeku*, Slavonski Brod 2020, 56–60, 88–90.

tithe were collected (between 9 and 5 groats for four years) were mostly without priests during that period (*vacat*).⁴

It is not known when and how Berkasovo/Berekszó became the property of a noble family that took its noble appellation from it. This, in all likelihood, happened before the end of the 13th century. Namely, in a charter of the Bač/Bács chapter from 1297, it is stated that the estate of *Zath* in Valkó county borders the possessions *comitis Stephani de Gara et Blasii filii Mauricii* on the south side. The settlement of Sot (*Zath*) is located east/northeast of Berkasovo, and the mentioned Balázs is known from later documents to have owned Berkasovo and Gibarac (Gibárt) south of Berkasovo.⁵ The sons of Balázs *de Beregsov*: Miklós (Nicholas), Péter and István (Stephen) are listed in a document of King Louis I from mid-September 1353. On that occasion, Miklós Berekszóí was the king's envoy who, together with a representative of the chapter of Kő (Banoštor), investigated a dispute between their neighbours.⁶ In the following years, the Berekszóis themselves entered into disputes with their neighbours. For example, in July 1368, the Hosszúbácsi family sued Péter of *Berekzou* and the sons of Mihály (Michael) of *Gybarth* for illegally using of the land and collecting fruits from their Hosszúbács estate (now Bačinci southeast of Šid and Gibarac).⁷

The family possessions were held by the third generation of the Berekszóis at the beginning of the 15th century,⁸ but the news about the settlement of Berkasovo from that period is rare. One such piece of news concerned a lawsuit that László (Ladislaus) Berekszóí, István's son, lost in a dispute with their neighbours, Master of the Doorkeepers János (John) Tamási and Loránd Kaplai and their wives.⁹ At the beginning

⁴ *Monumenta Vaticana*, t. I/1, 242–243, 269, 281–282, 287–288, 301–302, 304–305, 306–307; on the Archdeaconry of Marchia see also: Борис Стојковски, „Архиђаконати и жупе на тлу средњовековног Срема“, in: *Споменица академика Милоша Благојевића (1930–2012)*, ed. Синиша Мишић, Београд 2015, 204–207.

⁵ Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára, Budapest [=MNL OL], *Diplomatikai Levéltára* [=DL] 34091; *Árpádkori új okmánytár. Codex diplomaticus Arpadianus continuatus*, t. XII, ed. Gusztáv Wenzel, Pest 1874, 603–604, nr. 484; *Diplomatički zbornik Kraljevine Hrvatske, Dalmacije i Slavonije. Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*, t. VII, ed. Tadija Smičiklas, Zagreb 1909, 290, nr. 250. The mention of the possession of István (Stephen) Garai refers to Hosszúbács/Bačinci: S. Andrić, „Samostan Svetog Križa u Frankavili (Mandelosu)“, 62–63, 72–73.

⁶ MNL OL, *Diplomatikai fényképgyűjtemény* [=DF] 265552; *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, t. XXXVII (1353), ed. Éva B. Halász, Budapest–Szeged 2018, 351, 376, nr. 579, 640.

⁷ MNL OL, DF 265673; *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, t. LII (1368), ed. Ferenc Piti, Budapest–Szeged 2023, 311, nr. 598.

⁸ István of *Berekzow* had a son named László, who is mentioned as one of the possible royal envoys during an introduction to the estate in Valkó county in 1403: MNL OL, DL 33538.

⁹ János Tamási and Loránd Kaplai (Serkei) married two sisters, Anna and Katalin (Catharine), the daughters of György Lackfi of Némethi/Nijemci, the former ban of Mačva (1392–1393): MNL OL, DL 9023; János Karácsonyi, *A magyar nemzetségek a XIV. század közepéig*, t. II, Budapest 1901, 171, 177; Pál Engel, *Középkori magyar genealógia*, Magyar Középkori Adattár, CD-Rom, Budapest 2001, Hermán nem 2. tábla: Lackfi.

of February 1411, Tamási's wife Anna with their son Henrik as well as Kaplai and his wife Katalin acknowledged before the bans of Mačva/Macsó that László of *Berekzow* and his *familiaris* István of *Look* had paid 300 florins for wounding and beating of one of plaintiffs' officials from Srem. The same were also charged with trespassing and the acquisition of certain vineyard on the territory of the Berkasovo possession, which had previously belonged to Imre (Emeric) of Vízköz. Berekszóí and his *familiaris*, on the other hand, declared that they considered the damages and injustices committed against them to have not occurred and all their legal documents null and void.¹⁰ This case shows that some part of the Berkasovo estate was not in the possession of the Berekszóí, but belonged to other nobles. Four years later, on 16 January 1415, Pope John XXIII granted indulgence to all those who, repenting and confessing their sins, would visit the parish church of St. Stephen in *Berckzow* in the Diocese of Pécs on great feasts and on the day of the dedication of the church (August 20) and contribute to its maintenance. By all accounts, the pope granted that privilege upon the request of László Berekszóí and his wife Klára.¹¹

The next generation of the Berekszóís entered the scene in the turbulent years following the death of King Sigismund (1437).¹² It seems that Frank Berekszóí was mentioned in the available sources for the first time in 1439, when he issued a document at his domain in Berkasovo (*Berekzow*).¹³ As a noble from Valkó county, Frank Berekszóí appears in several documents regarding various legal disputes and procedures in that area. For example, he was present, as a bordering neighbour, during the legal introduction of Miklós Szentpéteri and his son János into the possession of the half of Hosszúbács/Bačinci and several other villages (Kanota, Kámánd, Peklend and Pegye) in Valkó county in the summer of 1444.¹⁴ Three years later, he was one of the noble witnesses in a lawsuit regarding the occupation of some possessions in the same county.¹⁵ However, the Berekszóí family did not own estates only in Vukovo/Valkó county, but also in some other areas in southern parts of Hungary. In 1448, Pál (Paul) Zsámboki on behalf of his daughters and Frank Berekszóí on behalf of his cousin (*fratrueilis*) László, the son of Miklós, on the one hand, and György (George) Sulyok of

¹⁰ MNL OL, DL 9747; *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, t. III, (1411–1412), ed. Elemér Mályusz, Budapest 1993, 94, nr. 107.

¹¹ On the same day, Pope John XXIII authorised the confessor of László of *Beretzow* and his wife Klára to grant them a full absolution and allowed them to use a portable altar: *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, t. V, (1415–1416), ed. Elemér Mályusz, Budapest 1997, 77–78, nr. 82, 85, 86.

¹² The family connection between Miklós and Frank and the previous generations of the Berekszóí family has not been established with certainty. According to Pál Engel, it is possible that Miklós and Frank were the sons of László and grandsons of István Berekszóí: P. Engel, *Középkori magyar genealógia*, táb. Berekszóí (Valkó m).

¹³ On 30 April 1439, Frank of Berekszó confirmed that the noble István of Gyula would take Dorottya (Dorothea), daughter of Domokos (Dominic) Matucsinaí, as his wife, or he would face a duel: MNL OL, DF 260006.

¹⁴ MNL OL, DL 265602.

¹⁵ MNL OL, DL 14050.

Lekcse on behalf of his sons and brother, on the other, concluded an agreement before the Bács/Bač chapter. They adopted each other and thus mutually transferred the property rights to their estates. They would together own and enjoy their possessions, with the provision that if one family dies, then the other inherits the estates of the extinct family. Apart from Berkasovo in Valkó/Vukovo county, the chapter document lists Bánca Szent-Lőrinc in Bács/Bačka, Munár and Gedös in Csánád/Cenad, as well as Kakat and Tótkakat in Temes/Timiş counties as possessions of the Berekszói.¹⁶

At that time Frank Berekszói was already in the service of the Serbian ruler Despot Đurađ (George) Branković, who had vast estates throughout Hungary. Namely, according to a charter of the Hungarian Estates, issued on 13 March 1450, Despot Đurađ captured János Hunyadi after the defeat of the Hungarian army in the conflict with the Ottomans on the Kosovo field in 1448, acting upon the persuasion of his wife, sons and several *familiars*, including Frank of Berekszó. The despot released Hunyadi only after he handed over the fortress of Érsomlyó (present-day Vršac) in Krassó/Caraş county with its appurtenances to the Serbian ruler, as well as several charters pertaining to other estates and rights, and having left his elder son László Hunyadi as a hostage in Smederevo in his stead.¹⁷ It is hard to say what the real role of Frank Berekszói and other accused noblemen was in those events, but it looks like the purpose of these accusations and trials was to give a legal basis for the forthcoming confiscation of the possessions of the Serbian monarch and his *familiars* in Hungary.¹⁸ We do not know what duties Frank of Berekszó performed in the despot's service. A little later, he was the vice count of Valkó county (1452–1456).¹⁹

¹⁶ MNL OL, DF 252613.

¹⁷ The charter of the Hungarian Estates resulted from a litigation instituted by Governor János Hunyadi against László Pataki, one of the officials of Despot Đurađ in Hungary: Serviciul Judeţean Cluj al Arhivelor Naţionale ale României, colecţia Kemény József, Diplomatarium autographum, now kept in Biblioteca Centrală Universitară „Lucian Blaga” Cluj-Napoca, colecţii speciale, colecţia Kemény, nr. 104; MNL OL, DF 253500; Александар Крстић, „Прилог биографији великог војводе Михаила Анђеловића”, *Зборник радова Византолошког института* 52 (2015) 361–366, 369–373.

¹⁸ As László Pataki rejected Hunyadi's accusations, the Hungarian Diet scheduled a duel of their representatives for 11 June 1450. It is not known what happened next in that case, nor how the trials against the other defendants, including Frank Berekszói, went. In 1450 and 1451 Despot Đurađ was deprived of a number of his estates in Hungary, but part of them were returned after the reconciliation between the Hunyadi and the Branković families on 7 August 1451: А. Крстић, „Прилог биографији”, 370–371; see also: Момчило Спремић, *Деспот Ђурађ Бранковић и његово доба*, Београд 1994, 344–346, 349–351, 365–366; Ђорђе Бубало, „Поседи српских деспота у одбрамбеним плановима Краљевине Угарске 1458. и 1459. године”, in: *Пад Српске деспотовине 1459. године*, ed. Момчило Спремић, Београд 2011, 232–234.

¹⁹ MNL OL, DL 14556, 14566, DF 268855; Pál Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája 1301–1457*, Budapest 1996, t. I, 222; t. II, 32; Petar Seletković, „Velikaši i županije donjeg međurječja Drave, Save i Dunava od razdoblja vladavine Žigmunda Luksemburškog prema kraju srednjeg vijeka: odnosi moći”, in: *Lokalna vlast i samouprava u povijesti Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje*, ed. Ana Rajković Pejić & Domagoj Tomas, Slavonski Brod–Osijek 2024, 79.

Frank was last mentioned in sources at the beginning of October 1458 together with his cousin László.²⁰

On 31 August 1467, King Matthias Corvinus ordered the Kő (Banoštor) chapter to introduce György Sulyok of Lekcse with his sons and brother András (Andrew) into the possession of a number of estates in the counties of Bačka/Bács, Bodrog, Baranja/Baranya, Srem/Szerém, Vukovo/Valkó, Cenad/Csánád and Timiș/Temes. The Sulyok family had claimed rights to these estates based on previous contracts with Pál Zsámboki, György Sulyok's son-in-law Jakab Morhát of Szántó,²¹ as well as with the Berekszőis. On 22 September of the same year, the chapter informed the king that they had carried out his order. Among other procedures, *ad facies possessionis Berekszo et similiter suarum pertinenciarum* they introduced the Sulyoks into the possession of the said estate of László Berekszői.²² Over the following years the Berekszői and Sulyok families continued to jointly own the Berkasovo estate. In October 1472, László Berekszői and György Sulyok of Lekcse were among the neighbours present at the introduction of Margit Szilágyi, the wife of Ban Mátyus (Matthias) Maróti, into the possession of the Atya estate (Atya/Vočin is present-day Šarengrad).²³

László Berekszői subsequently died without issue, while his uncle Frank left behind a son named György and a daughter, Katalin (Catherine), who was married to János Récsényi, a noble from Nitra/Nyitra county.²⁴ György Berekszői held the Berkasovo estate back in the early autumn of 1480. On 26 September, before the Bosnian chapter, Berekszői transferred the possessions of Szakadát (*Zakadath*), Hamisság (*Hamissagh*), Kisberek (*Kysberek*) and Varjas (*Waryas*) in Valkó county to his sister Katalin, the wife of János Récsényi, as her dowry.²⁵ In the second half of the 16th century Szakadát was an abandoned settlement (*mezra'a-i Sikadat*) which belonged to the Bapska village (medieval Babafalva). Bruce McGowan identified it with the toponym Sikoman south-east of Šarengrad, while Pál Engel believed that the settlement was located south of Bapska and north of Berkasovo. According to the Ottoman *defter* of 1568, the village of Hamışak, i. e. Hamisság, was situated in the

²⁰ On 4 October 1458, Frank and László *de Berekszo* were among the nobles who, before Miklós Újlaki, the ban of Mačva/Mácsó, supported the lawsuit of András Alifánti of Vízköz against János of Vízköz for various acts of violence and damage that the defendant, together with his serfs and *familiares*, committed on the plaintiff's estates: MNL OL, DL 34213.

²¹ Since Jakab (Jacob) Morhát had married Sulyok's daughter Borbála (Barbara), György, also in the name of his brother András, gave to Jakab the possessions of *Cheb*, *Kyscheb*, *Wyfalw*, *Gewd*, *Zylwas*, *Janusfalwa*, *Lwkafalwa*, *Thorsathelke*, *Thegefalwa*, *Balynthkyrthe* as well as *Erws*, *Thethes*, *Kenyeres*, *Parazthy*, *Beldzenthmiiklos*, *Medenczes* in Bács, *Jadwa*, *Indya* in Srem, *Zantho*, *Bwdy* in Bodrog and *Orew* in Baranya counties: MNL OL, DL 46110, DF 252613.

²² MNL OL, DL 46110, DF 252613.

²³ MNL OL, DL 17271; see also: Stanko Andrić, „Srednjovekovni Šarengrad i njegovi gospodari“, *Povijesni prilozi* 23 (2002) 50.

²⁴ P. Engel, *Középkori magyar genealógia*, táb. Berekszői (Valkó m). Récsényi is present-day Rišňovce northwest from Nitra in Slovakia.

²⁵ MNL OL, DL 95410.

vicinity of Dolnji Berak, which was also located next to Gornji Berak. The villages of Dolnji and Gornji Berak, identified as the medieval settlements of Berki and Kisberki (Kisberek), were situated northwest of Berkasovo, where a locality named Berak can still be found.²⁶ Reports from the very end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th centuries show that the village of Amisag was next to Berkasovo, i.e. near the locality of Despotovac, which stretches east and northeast of the present settlement.²⁷ All this points to the conclusion that Pál Engel rightly located Hamisság north of Berkasovo and east of Berak.²⁸ Perhaps Varjas can be identified with the Virjača valley north and west of Berkasovo.²⁹

In the span of next two years György Berekszói died without a male heir,³⁰ which enabled King Matthias to take over his estates and then hand them over to other nobles. The king soon gave the Berkasovo castle and its estate to the Serbian despot Vuk Grgurević Branković. We learn about that royal donation from the charter of King Matthias issued to Đurađ II Branković, Vuk's successor at the position of Serbian despot in Hungary, and his brother Jovan (John), dated 13 February 1486.³¹ Despot Vuk came over to Hungary at the invitation of King Matthias in the second half of 1464. The king officially recognised or confirmed Vuk's despot title, and he was included in the range of Hungarian barons, receiving possessions in the southern parts of the kingdom for his military merits on several occasions. Despot Vuk probably got his first possessions soon after arriving in Hungary. We know that he resided in the castle of Kupinik (Kölpény) on the Sava in Srem/Szerém county, which had been

²⁶ Bruce McGowan, *Sirem Sancađi Mufassal Tahrir Defteri*, Ankara 1983, lxxxvii–lxxxix, 38–39, 54–55, 63–65; Pál Engel, *Magyarország a középkor végén. Digitális térkép és adatbázis a középkori Magyar Királyság településeiről*. [Hungary in the Late Middle Ages. Digital vector map and attaching database about the settlements and landowners of medieval Hungary], Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Történettudományi Intézet, Budapest 2021.

²⁷ Марко Јачов, *Срем на прелому два века (XVII–XVIII)*. *Sirmio tra i secoli XVII e XVIII*, Београд 1990, 25, 27–28, 95, 98; Л. Хајдук & В. Хајдук, *Беркасово*, 39–40.

²⁸ P. Engel, *Magyarország a középkor végén*.

²⁹ *Habsburg Empire (1869–1887) – Third Military Survey (1:25000)*, <https://mapire.eu/en/map/thirdsurvey25000>; *Topografska karta 1:25000*, sekcija Bačka Palanka 4-1. Varjas, the possession of the Berekszói family, was probably not identical with the eponymous settlement in Valkó county, located in the vicinity of Nijemci/Németi. That Varjas belonged to the estate of Szentlőrinc, which was in the possession of the Garai family and then of the Gerébs: P. Engel, *Magyarország a középkor végén*.

³⁰ P. Engel, *Középkori magyar genealógia*, táb. Berekszói (Valkó m.)

³¹ *Castrum nostrum Berecző vocatum in Comitatu de Valko habitum, quod alias fidelis noster illustris quondam Wok consimiliter despotus ex nostra donatione et inscriptione tenuit et possedit*: Georgius Pray, *Annales regum Hungariae: ab anno Christi CMXCVII ad annum MDLXIV*, t. IV, Vindobonae 1767, 185–186; József Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, t. XII, Pesten 1857, 303–304; Dušanka Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, *Istraživanja* 4 (1975) 9; Александар Крстић, *Благоверна господа и славне госпође: студије о брачној политици, друштвеном положају и поседима српске елите у Угарској (XV–XVI век)*, I део: Бранковићи, Јакишићи и Белмужевићи, Београд 2025, 47–48, 79–80.

previously possessed by his grandfather Despot Đurađ.³² He also held the Irig (Ireg) castle in the same county, but it is not known exactly when he acquired it.³³ In 1470, King Matthias rewarded him with the castle of Feyérkö, i.e. Bela Stena (Bijela Stijena) in Križevci/Körös county in Slavonia. Probably at the same time, Despot Vuk acquired Töttösevína (Tituševina), a complex of possessions partly in Križevci, partly in Zagreb county. In 1482, King Matthias donated him the castles of Komogoyno (present-day Komogovina) and Gradisa (Graduša) in Zagreb county with their appurtenances, as well as the castle of Kostajnica (Kosztajnica) with its estate in the same county.³⁴ Serbian historian Aleksa Ivić, who dealt in detail with the history of Serbs in Hungary at the beginning of the 20th century, believed that Despot Vuk received Berkasovo in 1474, when King Matthias rewarded nobles who distinguished themselves in the war with the Poles. According to Antonio Bonfini, Despot Vuk and the Jakšić brothers were among those awarded at that time.³⁵ Such dating of Vuk's acquisition of Berkasovo was accepted and repeated in some other historiographical works.³⁶ However, we have seen that the previous owner, György Berekszó, still held this estate in late September 1480.³⁷ Despot Vuk certainly acquired Berkasovo before March 1482,

³² As *Wok despotus de Kewlpen* he was mentioned in a document from September 1476: MNL OL, DL 74528; A. Krstić, *Благоверна господа и славне госпође*, 41–47; of previous historiography works on Despot Vuk, see also: Алекса Ивић, *Историја Срба у Војводини од најстаријих времена до оснивања потиско-поморишке границе (1703)*, Нови Сад 1929, 16–26; Сима Ћирковић, „О деспоту Вуку Гргуревићу“, *Зборник Матице српске за ликовне уметности* 6 (1971) 285–287; idem, „Српска властела у борби за обнову Деспотовине“, in: *Историја српског народа*, књ. II, ed. Јованка Калић, Београд 1982, 376–377; D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, 6–18; Катарина Митровић, „Вук Гргуревић између Мехмеда II и Матије Корвина“, *Браничевски гласник* 2 (2004) 19–33; Момчило Спремић, „Српски деспоти у Срему“, in: *Срем кроз векове: слојеви култура Фрушке горе и Срема*, ed. Миодраг Матицки, Београд–Беоцин 2007, 47–55; Nenad Obradović, „Jedna karijera na ugarsko-osmanskoj granici pred kraj XV veka. Despot Vuk Grgurević kao jajački ban“, *Historijska misao* 9 (2023) 47–66.

³³ Despot Vuk wrote a letter to Sultan Bayezid II in Irig on 27 June 1483: Никола Радојчић, „Пет писама с краја XV века“, *Јужнословенски филолог* 20/1–4 (1953–1954) 353–354; Владимир Поломац, *Српски као дипломатски језик у XV и XVI веку. Филолошки приступ*, Крагујевац 2023, 133; Катарина Митровић, „Пет писама деспота Вука Гргуревића“, *Браничевски гласник* 3–4 (2004–2005) 78–79.

³⁴ A. Krstić, *Благоверна господа и славне госпође*, 48–50, where sources and previous historiography works are listed.

³⁵ Antonius de Bonfinis, *Rerum Ungaricarum decades*, t. IV, ed. Iosephus Fögel, Béla Iványi & Ladislaus Juhász, Budae 1941, 59; A. Ивић, *Историја Срба у Војводини*, 18; Snežana Božanić & Milica Kisić-Božić, „O prvoj generaciji Jakšića na tlu južne Ugarske – Stefanu i Dmitru u delu *Rerum ungaricarum decades*“, *Godišnjak Filozofskog fakulteta u Novom Sadu* 41/2 (2016) 123.

³⁶ Душан Поповић, „Војводина у турско доба“, in: *Војводина I, Од најстаријих времена до Велике сеобе*, Нови Сад 1939, 158, 166; Л. Хајдук & В. Хајдук, *Беркасово*, 37, 38.

³⁷ MNL OL, DL 95410. A. Ivić made another mistake when stating that King Matthias was camping by Berkasovo in August 1476, where Despot Vuk brought him 300 captured Turks after the victory over Ali Bay near the Danube: A. Ивић, *Историја Срба у Војводини*, 21. Ivić

when Stefan (or István) Vitez was mentioned as his castellan of the same castle.³⁸ It is also the earliest known information about the fortification in Berkasovo. It is not known exactly when it was erected.

The remains of the castle, known as Despotovac and Šanac,³⁹ are located on the eastern edge of the Berkasovo settlement. The fortification was built on a low, partly artificial hill that faces the valley on one side and rests on a wavy plateau on the other. Today, only two irregular, approximately semi-circular plateaus surrounded by a deep ditch and an earthen rampart can be seen. The rampart itself was protected by a ditch on the southwest side. In addition, another rampart protects the northern plateau on its eastern side.⁴⁰ The plan and description of the Berkasovo fortification left by Count Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, who saw its remains at the end of the 17th century, show that even at that time there were very few preserved parts of the fort.⁴¹ (Fig. 2) It was later

misinterpreted a note of L. Thallóczy and A. Áldásy that Judge Royal István Báthori addressed a letter to King Matthias from the camp near Berekszó on August 16, 1476: Lajos Thallóczy & Antal Áldásy, *A Magyarország és Szerbia közti összeköttetések oklevéltára 1198–1526*, Magyarország melléktartományainak oklevéltára 2, Budapest 1907, 269. However, Thallóczy and Áldásy were also wrong, because Báthori did not stay in Berekszó at that time, but in Berecki in Transylvania: Iván Nagy & Albert Nyáry, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek Mátyás király korából 1458–1490*, t. II, Budapest, 1877, 321–323; Richárd Horváth & Tibor Neumann, *Ecsedi Bátori István. Egy katonabáró életpályája (1458–1493)*, Budapest 2012, 143; the king was in Buda at that time: Richárd Horváth, *Itineraria regis Matthiae Corvini et reginae Beatricis de Aragonia (1458–[1476]–1490)*, Budapest 2011, 104; see also Tamás Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács: A History of Ottoman-Hungarian Warfare, 1389–1526*, Leiden–Boston 2018, 257–258.

³⁸ The introduction of the Geréb of Vingárt brothers into the possession of the Atya estate in March 1482 was attended by the neighbours, represented by the judge of Ilok/Újlak on behalf of Duke Lőrinc Újlaki and *egregio Stephano Wythez, castellano castri Berekzo in illustris Wok dezpoti et Stephano Porkolab de Bwky in egregii Georgii Swlyok de Lekche dominorum scilicet ipsorum personis*: MNL OL, DL 18615; Petar Rokai, *Istorija porodice Maroti* (doctoral dissertation, Филозофски факултет Београд, 1983), 419; S. Andrić, „Srednjovjekovni Šarengard i njegovi gospodari“, 51. The word “porkoláb” in Hungarian means castellan. Although the office of György Sulyok’s representative was not mentioned in the document, it is possible that he still held his part of the Berkasovo estate at that time.

³⁹ The locals also call it Turski šešir (“the Turkish hat”): Л. Хајдук & В. Хајдук, *Беркасово*, 40.

⁴⁰ Рудолф Шмит & Ђурђе Бошковић, „Средњевековни градови у Војводини“, in: *Војводина I, Од најстаријих времена до Велике сеобе*, Нови Сад 1939, 318, tab. II, fig. 3–4, 322, fig. 17; <http://spomenikikulture.mi.sanu.ac.rs/spomenik.php?id=1290> (accessed 7. April 2025).

⁴¹ “A fortress of very strong construction, situated on a high hill near the village of Amasa [i. e. Amisag/Hamisság – A. K.] in Sirmium itself. It consists of two areas, both of which are surrounded by very strong ramparts, and although they are planted on all sides with dense trees, which sufficiently prove their antiquity, they are nevertheless still very prominent, as is more clearly seen from the profile. The ruins of the walls ([marked with] *g g g* [on the plan]) which still remain in the larger area, make it possible to believe that a castle building once stood there”: Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, *Danubius Pannonico-mysicus: observationibus geographicis, astronomicis, hydrographicis, historicis, physicis, perlustratus et in sex tomos digestus*. T. 2, *Antiquitates romanae militares ad ultramque ripam Danubii*, Hagæ Comitum – Amstelodami 1726, 47, tab.

further devastated. According to some reports, during the 18th and 19th centuries bricks and stones from the Berkasovo castle were used for the construction of the Roman Catholic church in Kukujevac and the palace and other objects on the estate of the Greek Catholic bishops in Šid.⁴² Since no archaeological research has been carried out on the Berkasovo castle so far, it is difficult to say anything more specific about its appearance and construction. However, it seems that the castle had two separate parts that stood on the aforementioned plateaus and were connected to each other by a bridge. The earthen ramparts were most likely fortified with palisades.⁴³ (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4)

In 1482 Despot Vuk donated to his wife Barbara Frankapan (Frangepán) the biggest part of his estates in Križevci/Körös and Zagreb counties – the castle of Fejérkő (Bela Stena / Bijela Stijena) and the complex of possessions named Töttösevin. This donation, made to secure Barbara in case of his death, was confirmed by King Matthias in the same year, and then again, after Vuk passed away, in 1485. The despot also gave his wife some property rights to Kostajnica in Zagreb county and Berkasovo in Valkó county, and after Vuk's death Barbara handed these castles to King Matthias. In return, the king bestowed her with the castles of Komogovina and Graduša in Zagreb county and their appurtenances, which previously also belonged to Despot Vuk.⁴⁴

After the death of Despot Vuk Grgurević on 16 April 1485, King Matthias invited his relatives Đurađ and Jovan, who were in the service of Emperor Friedrich III, to come to Hungary. Đurađ was appointed despot and he was obliged to lead and equip the detachment of 1000 hussars. They arrived in Srem with their mother Angelina and the relics of their father Saint Stefan the Blind and settled in Kupinik in February

20, fig. IX. On Marsigli and his activity in the Danubian region, including Srem, see: Александар Гајић, „Луиђи Ф. Марсиљи и сремски сектор Дунава у делу *Danubius Pannonico-Mysicus*”, *Истраживања* 24 (2014) 149–159; Владимир Михајловић, *На границама Балкана. Л. Ф. Марсиљи и римска баштина (1683–1701)*, Београд 2018, 56–61, 89–121, with the previous literature.

⁴² Ilija Okruglić Srimac, „Povjestničke crtice Srima glede njegovih znamenitostih i u njemu se nahodećih starinah”, *Arkiv za povjestnicu jugoslavensku* 4 (1857) 212; Р. Шмит & Ђ. Бошковић, „Средњевековни градови у Војводини”, 306; Л. Хајдук & В. Хајдук, *Беркасово*, 39.

⁴³ Đurđe Bošković doubted that the Berkasovo castle ever had walls, suggesting the possibility that it was only an earthen palisade fortification: Р. Шмит & Ђ. Бошковић, „Средњевековни градови у Војводини”, 318, 329, n. 61. His opinion is later repeated in some other works. However, the testimonies of Marsigli and Okruglić, who also mentions piles of stones on the site of the fortification and around it, bricks that Bošković also found, as well as the term *castrum* used in medieval documents for the Berkasovo fortification, prove that the core of the castle must have been built of solid material. (Fig. 1 and Fig. 3)

⁴⁴ Hrvatski državni arhiv, Zagreb, Documenta mediaevalia varia, nr. 512, 513, 529; MNL OL, DF 218997, 218998, 219015; Marko Mesić, „Gradja mojih razprava u Radu”, *Starine JAZU* 5 (1873) 122–125; D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići”, 18; М. Спремић, „Српски деспоти у Срему”, 53–54; Marija Karbić, „Položaj pripadnika visokog plemstva u hrvatskim zemljama. Primjer Barbare Frankapan”, *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti HAZU* 30 (2012) 147–148; А. Крстић, *Благоверна господа и славне госпође*, 54–55.

1486.⁴⁵ At the same time, on 13 February 1486, King Matthias gave them, among other donations and rewards, the castle of Berekszó in Valkó county in pledge for 12,000 gold forints, hoping that the brothers would faithfully serve him, the kingdom and all of Christendom. The royal charter emphasises that the Berkasovo castle was reverted to the crown after Despot Vuk had died without offspring (*per mortem et defectum seminis*). The castle was transferred to Despot Đurađ and Jovan Branković together with all appurtenant possessions and rights (*cum omnibus districtibus, oppidis, villis, possessionibus, prediis, portionibusque, ac iuribus possessionariis*), but the donation charter does not list them by name and in detail. So, it is not known whether any other possessions belonged to the Berkasovo castle, apart from the settlement of the same name and the villages of Kisberek, Szakadát, Hamisság and Varjas in the vicinity of Berkasovo, parts of which György Berekszó handed over to his sister Katalin as a dowry in September 1480. Instead, the royal charter contains standard phrases enumerating all the types of immovable property that make up a single estate (that is, arable land, cultivated and uncultivated, fields, meadows, pastures, woods, forests, mountains, valleys, vineyards and vineyard ridges, rivers, ponds, fisheries, watercourses, mills and their places, etc).⁴⁶

It is believed that the settlement of Berkasovo had the status of a market town (*oppidum*, Hungarian: *mezőváros*) in the late Middle Ages, but there is no direct information about this in preserved medieval sources.⁴⁷ This conclusion is most likely correct, not only because the royal charter from 1486 mentions some *oppida* in general as part of the Berkasovo estate (which may just be a common legal phrase). After the Ottoman conquest of Srem, during the second half of the 16th century, Berkasovo indeed had the status of a *varoş* (a semi-urban settlement inhabited predominantly by a Christian population that largely lived off agriculture).⁴⁸ Using and partially modifying the methodology for assessing the degree of urbanisation of medieval settlements in Hungary established by András Kubinyi,⁴⁹ Danijel Jelaš concluded that Berkasovo did not have the role of a central place. Of the ten criteria

⁴⁵ Љубомир Стојановић, *Стари српски родослови и летописи*, Сремски Карловци 1927, 254–255, 297; А. Ивић, *Историја Срба у Војводини*, 32; D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovićí“, 28–29; Сима Ћирковић, „Последњи Бранковићи“, in: *Историја српског народа*, II, ed. Јованка Калић, Београд 1982, 445–446; М. Спремић, „Српски деспоти у Срему“, 55–56; Snežana Božanić, „The Political and Cultural Life of Despot Đorđe Branković in Syrmia“, in: *The cultural and historical heritage of Vojvodina in the context of classical and medieval studies*, ed. Đura Hardi, Novi Sad 2015, 192–196; Светлана Томин, *Владика Максим Бранковић*, Нови Сад 2007, 13; А. Крстић, *Благоверна господа и славне госпође*, 79–80.

⁴⁶ G. Pray, *Annales regum Hungariae*, t. IV, 185–186; J. Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, t. XII, 303–304.

⁴⁷ P. Engel, *Magyarország a középkor végén*; D. Jelaš, *Gradovi donjeg međurječja*, 40–41.

⁴⁸ B. McGowan, *Sirem Sancağı Mufasssal Tahrir Defteri*, 26–28; On that type of settlements see: Nenad Moačanin, *Slavonija i Srijem u razdoblju osmanske vladavine*, Slavonski Brod 2001, 59–62, 65–70.

⁴⁹ András Kubinyi, *Városfejlődés és vásárhálózat a középkori Alföldön és az Alföld szélén*, Szeged 2000.

for determining the function of a central place in a particular settlement, which Kubinyi quantified, Jelaš found only four (fortress and lordly residence, parish, good location of the settlement as a traffic junction⁵⁰ and legal status of a market town after 1490). Therefore, he placed Berkasovo in the penultimate, 6th category: average market towns and villages with market characteristics.⁵¹ Although the history of Berkasovo under the Ottoman rule is beyond the scope of our topic, in the absence of medieval sources regarding economic activity and incomes on this estate, it is useful to refer to the data provided by the Ottoman tax registers (*defters*) of the Srem sanjak from the second half of the 16th century. During that period the largest part of income from the *varoş-i Berkas* came from agricultural production – primarily grain growing and viticulture. The situation was certainly the same during the late Middle Ages. In 1568, the Muslims of Berkasovo (14 families) held 39,5 *dönüm* or around 3.63 hectares of vineyards in total in its area. At the same time, the wine tithe of the vineyards held by 21 Christian (mostly Serbian) families that lived in Berkasovo was 152 *pinte*.⁵² Most wheat, then mixed grain (barley and rye) were grown, and to a much lesser degree oats and millet. Of other crops, flax and hemp, vegetables (lentils, peas, cabbage and onions – just to mention the Old-World species) and some fruits were cultivated in Berkasovo during the second half of the 16th century. Taxes on hay and gardens and firewood were also paid, as well as on sheep, pigs and beehives. There were also several watermills in the territory of Berkasovo during the same period.⁵³

⁵⁰ In a document from 1377 on the demarcation of the Hosszúbács/Bačinci and Gibarac estates, two public roads are mentioned – one between Bačinci and Berkasovo and the other connecting Gibarac and Ilok, the latter most likely also via Berkasovo and Sot: MNL OL, DF, 265580; Danijel Jelaš, *Rekonstrukcija srednjovjekovne urbane mreže Vukovske županije na temelju analize centralnih funkcija* (doctoral dissertation, Filozofski fakultet Zagreb, 2018, 83), 137, 190; on that document see: S. Andrić, „Samostan Svetog Križa u Frankavili (Mandelosu)“, 70–74. Via Gibarac, Berkasovo was connected to the main road that went from Sremska Mitrovica to Vukovar. The road connecting Voćin/Atya (Šarengard) and Morović/Marót also passed through Berkasovo. One road led from Berkasovo to Opatovac/Ápáti in the northwest and another to Ilinci/Szentillye in the southwest: D. Jelaš, *ibidem*, 85–86, 98, 127–128, 156–157, 171–172, 193, 209.

⁵¹ D. Jelaš, *Rekonstrukcija srednjovjekovne urbane mreže Vukovske županije*, 85–86.

⁵² The exact surface area of their vineyards is not known. There are different opinions among the scholars about the size of the *pinte* used in the sanjak of Srem at that time. According to Bruce McGowan, it equals 5,6 l, while Nenad Moaćanin believes that its volume is around 10 litres: Bruce McGowan, „Food Supply and Taxation on the Middle Danube (1568–1579)“, *Archivum Ottomanicum* 1 (1969) 173, n. 54; N. Moaćanin, *Slavonija i Srijem*, 160–161.

⁵³ B. McGowan, *Sirem Sancağı Mufassal Tahrir Defteri*, 26–28; Небојша Шулетић, *Сремски санџак у XVI веку* (doctoral dissertation, Филозофски факултет Београд, 2013), 163, 165, 256; Ненад Лемајић, „Аграрни односи и развој пољопривреде у Срему половином XVI века“, *Истраживања* 15 (2004) 88. Cf. also the registers of Berkasovo from 1698 and 1702 and the then structure of arable land, vineyards, meadows and forests, cultivated cereals and domestic animals (including horses and cattle, which were not taxed nor registered during the Ottoman period): М. Јачов, *Срем на прелому два века*, 9, 15.

Despite the royal donation to the Branković brothers, the heirs of the Berekszói family did not renounce claims to their former estates. In the lawsuit brought before the royal court in Buda on 19 December 1492, János Récsényi appeared as the plaintiff on his own behalf and on behalf of his wife Katalin, daughter of Frank Berekszói, while István Hermán of *Pethresfalwa* appeared as the defendant *pro illustribus Georgio et Johanne Rascie despotis*.⁵⁴ The Serbian despots were accused of occupying parts of the possessions of *Zakad*, *Hanussag*, *Berk* and *Waryas* in Valkó county, which consisted the dowry and the “maiden quarters” of the aforementioned lady Katalin. The parties agreed to continue the litigation before István Hásságyi, the prothonotary of the royal court, on 13 May 1493. Judge Royal István Báthori issued a document on this, also ordering Despots Đurađ and Jovan to pay a fine of 200 gold forints if they would not appear at the hearing.⁵⁵ However, as Hásságyi had been killed in the meantime, the Serbian despots did not want to continue the lawsuit before another judge or protonotary, which is why the plaintiff Récsényi protested before the Buda chapter on 14 May 1493.⁵⁶

Although the royal charter from 1486 stipulated that the king or his heirs could take back the castle if they paid the Branković brothers the sum of 12,000 gold forints, the Berkasovo estate remained in the possession of the despots over the following decades. After the death of Despot Jovan in December 1502, it passed into the hands of his widow, Despotissa Jelena (Helena, Hung. Ilona) Jakšić. In September and October 1503 one of her officials, *provisor Stephanus*, was present as a witness during the introduction of Treasurer Zsigmond (Sigismund) Ernuszt, the bishop of Pécs, and his brother János of Čakovec/Csáktornya into the possession of the estates in Valkó county which previously belonged to the late Palatine Péter Geréb. The village of Sot/Szat was among the possessions that Bishop Zsigmond and his brother gained, and that settlement is neighbouring to Berkasovo. So, it is an indirect evidence of Despotissa Jelena’s ownership of Berkasovo at that time.⁵⁷ The mentioned official was the *provisor curiae*, which means that he administered the estate and collected its revenues.⁵⁸ However, in the autumn of 1503 King Wladislaus II appointed the Croatian nobleman Ivaniš Berislavić (János Beriszló) of Grabarje as the new Serbian

⁵⁴ Jovan acquired the title of despot in 1491, most likely as a result of the reconciliation of the Branković brothers with the new Hungarian king Wladislaus II: A. Крстић, *Благоверна господа и славне госпође*, 86–89.

⁵⁵ MNL OL, DL 75694. In fact, the document was issued by the prothonotary himself, cf. the next note.

⁵⁶ MNL OL, DL 95426. On István Hásságyi and his death see: György Bónis, *A jogtudó értelmiség a Mohács előtti Magyarországon*, Budapest 1971, 275–276, passim; R. Horváth & T. Neumann, *Ecsedi Bátori István*, 45, 47, 113, 130, 138; Norbert C. Tóth, Richárd Horváth, Tibor Neumann & Tamás Pálosfalvi, *Magyarország világi archontológiája 1458–1526*, I, *Főpapok és bárók*, Budapest 2017, 89.

⁵⁷ *Stephanus, provisor illustras domini relicte condam Johannis Rascie despothy*: MNL OL, DF 276738, 276739.

⁵⁸ Pál Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen. A History of Medieval Hungary 895–1526*, London–New York 2001, 344; A. Крстић, *Благоверна господа и славне госпође*, 92–93.

despot, who next year married the widow of his predecessor. Still not accepting the loss of her paternal inheritance, Katalin Berekszői, then Récsényi's widow,⁵⁹ protested before the chapter in Nitra on 9 September 1506, forbidding the king to donate her inheritance and Despot Ivaniš and his wife *Elizabeth* (!) to claim, take possession of, and use the Berkasovo castle with its belongings.⁶⁰

Having become a widow for the second time in 1514, Despotissa Jelena took over the care of the family estates on behalf of her son Stefan Berislavić (István Beriszló) and unmarried daughters. There is not much information about their possessions during those years. In April 1515, during one introduction into the possession in Valkó county, András Porkoláb was mentioned as a present neighbour. He was the castellan *castris Berekzo illustris et magnifice domine Elene, relicte condami Johannis Beryslo Rascie despoti et Stephani filii*.⁶¹ Berkasovo certainly remained in their possession during the following years. However, the peace did not last long. In the summer of 1521, when Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent seized Šabac and besieged Belgrade, the Berislavić family also faced great danger. In order to gain time to escape, Despotissa Jelena had offered to submit to the sultan, but then she fled from Kupinik with her family and movable property. The sultan therefore ordered a hunt for Jelena, but they failed to catch her. The Ottomans heavily ravaged Srem, captured a lot of people and seized and demolished many castles and towns. Apart from Berkasovo, all other were located in Srem county, mainly along the banks of the Sava and Danube (Sremska Mitrovica/ Szávaszentdemeter, Kupinik/ Kölpény, Barič/ Barics, Zemun/ Zimony, Slankamen/ Szalánkemén, Sremski Karlovci/ Karom, Kamenica/ Kamanc, Petrovaradin/ Pétervárad, Vrdnik/ Rednek, Čerević/ Cserög).⁶² Perhaps the capture

⁵⁹ János Récsényi died some time before 27 November 1499, when András, his son from the previous marriage, reconciled before the chapter of Nitra with his widow Katalin, the daughter of Frank of *Berekzo*, according to the verdict that judges reached in their lawsuit: MNL OL, DL 46509.

⁶⁰ MNL OL, DL 95457. The name of Despot Ivaniš' wife is apparently incorrectly recorded in the document. Based on this document, some scholars believed that Elisabeth was the first spouse of Ivaniš Berislavić: P. Engel, *Középkori magyar genealógia*, tábl. Borics nem 2. Grabarjai (Beriszló); M. Karbić, *Plemički rod Borića bana*, 76, 105.

⁶¹ MNL OL, DF 265636.

⁶² Marino Sanuto, „Világkrónikájának Magyarországot illető tudósításai”, III, ed. Gusztáv Wenzel, *Magyar Történelmi tár* 25 (1878) 248–252; Antal Verancsics, *Összes munkái* II, Monumenta Hungariae Historica, Scriptores 3, ed. László Szalay, Pest 1857, 16–18; Ludovici Tuberonis Dalmatae abbas, *Commentarii de temporibus suis*, ed. Vlado Rezar, Zagreb 2001, 273, 278–279 (Croatian translation: Ludovik Crijević Tuberon, *Komentari o mojem vremenu*, uvodna studija i prijevod Vlado Rezar, Zagreb 2001, 267–268, 273–274); József Thúry, *Török történetírók*, t. I, Budapest 1893, 214, 287–292; II, 1896, 54, 142–143; Félix Tauer, *Histoire de la campagne du sultan Suleyman Ier contre Belgrade en 1521: Texte persan publié d'après deux manuscrits de Constantinople avec une traduction abrégée*, Prague 1924, 41–49; Глиша Елезовић & Гавро Шкриванић, *Како су Турци после више опсада заузеле Београд*, Београд 1956, 44–55; Д. Поповић, „Војводина у турско доба”, 176; Олга Зиројевић,

and destruction of Berkasovo, mentioned in the Ottoman as well as in the Christian sources (*Prochaz, Berkas, Perquasium*),⁶³ was the result of an unsuccessful pursuit of Despotissa Jelena through her possessions. After the conquest of Belgrade and withdrawal of the Ottomans from Srem, Despot Stefan Berislavić and his mother returned to their devastated estates in that area.⁶⁴

Five years later, during the campaign against Hungary that resulted in the fateful Battle of Mohács on 29 August 1526, the Ottomans occupied Srem once again. Listing the fortresses “on the Srem island” that fell to their hands in 1526, György Szerémi also mentions Berkasovo (*Bercazzo*).⁶⁵ That occupation of Berkasovo was also temporarily, but it seems that the Ottoman capture of the castle on 28 March 1529 was the definitive one.⁶⁶ Or not? Namely, Despot Stefan and his mother were arrested by the order of King Ferdinand I at about the same time, but Berislavić managed to free himself a few months later, during Sultan Süleyman’s campaign on Vienna. The despot then recognised the authority of the sultan, so his former possessions in Slavonia were returned to him. For now, there is no information whether Berkasovo was among them. In any case, Despot Stefan Berislavić died in a conflict with the

„Један век турске владавине у Сланкамену“, *Историјски часопис* 14–15 (1963–1965) 30–32; Ferenc Szakály, „Nándorfehérvár, 1521: The Beginning of the End of the Medieval Hungarian Kingdom“, in: *Hungarian-Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Relations in the Age of Süleyman the Magnificent*, eds. Géza Dávid & Pál Fodor, Budapest 1994, 61–62; Feridun Emecen, „The History of an Early Sixteenth Century Migration – Sirem Exiles in Gallipoli“, *ibidem*, 82–85; András Kubinyi, „The Battle of Szávaszentdemeter–Nagyolaszi (1523): Ottoman Advance and Hungarian Defence on the Eve of Mohács“, in: *Ottomans, Hungarians and Habsburgs in Central Europe: the Military Confines in the Era of Ottoman Conquest*, eds. Pál Fodor & Geza Dávid, Leiden 2000, 80–81.

⁶³ M. Sanuto, „Világkrónikája“, III, 248; L. Tubero, *Commentarii*, 279; Nicolaus Isthuanffy, *Regni Hungarici historia post obitum gloriosissimi Mathiae Corvini regis*, Coloniae Agrippinae 1724, 59–60; J. Thúry, *Török történetírók*, t. II, 142–143; cf. Valentin Cseh, „The Collapse of the Border Fortress System against the Ottoman Empire between 1521 and 1527“, in: *Central and Southeastern Europe between the Christian and Ottoman Worlds: Conflicts, Encounters and Compromises (XVI – XVIII Centuries)*, eds. Canan Parmaksızoğlu Aksoy & Katalin Nagy, *Eastern European History Review* 5 (2022), Special issue, 122, where Berkasovo is mixed with Beregsău Mare, the settlement of the same Hungarian name situated in Temes/Timiş county.

⁶⁴ L. Thallóczy & A. Áldásy, *A Magyarország és Szerbia*, 357; A. Kubinyi, „The Battle of Szávaszentdemeter–Nagyolaszi“, 81; M. Спремић, „Српски деспоти у Срему“, 68; A. Крстић, *Благоверна господа и славне госпође*, 126.

⁶⁵ Szerémi György, *Emlékirata Magyarország romlásáról 1484–1543*, ed. Gusztáv Wenczel, Pest 1857, 115; Ђурађ Сремац, *Посланица о пропасти Угарског краљевства*, превод Мирко Полгар, Београд 1987, 69.

⁶⁶ According to a document from the Kriegsarchiv in Vienna, which is partly summarised (regarding the capture of Berkasovo) and partly cited by A. Ивић, *Историја Срба у Војводини*, 370, note 4.

Bosnian sanjak bey at the beginning of 1535,⁶⁷ and two years later the Ottomans definitively consolidated their rule in the area of Srem and eastern Slavonia.⁶⁸

The castle of Berkasovo was destroyed and did not have any military function during the Ottoman rule in Srem. However, at the time when the Hungarian kingdom was losing its southern territories, the *Bereczlo* castle, together with other fortifications in the area of Srem, was depicted on the famous Lazarus' Map of Hungary (1528).⁶⁹ Later, throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, data from that map were taken over in numerous cartographic publications, so the Berkasovo fortification continued to exist in Western European cartography long after it was ruined.⁷⁰

Unfortunately, there is no information about the population of Berkasovo during the late Middle Ages. The first data we have comes only from the tax register of the Srem sanjak from around 1568. Apart from 14 Muslim households, 21 Christian

⁶⁷ А. Ивић, *Историја Срба у Војводини*, 95–98, 105–106, 110, 118, 128; Д. Поповић, „Војводина у турско доба“, 175–180; Марија Карбић, *Plemićki rod Borića bana*, Slavonski Brod 2013, 64–66; А. Крстић, *Благоверна господа и славне госпође*, 130–131. The Serbian Orthodox Church, which created the cults of Saint Brankovićs of Srem, has never accepted Ivaniš and Stefan Berislavić as the legitimate Serbian despots due to their Catholic fate. It is therefore interesting that Despot Stefan Berislavić was painted on the wall of the church in Lačarak, near Sremska Mitrovica, with a depiction of Berkasovo in 1786: Лепосава Шелмић, *Српско зидно сликарство у XVIII веку*, Нови Сад 1987, 42; Л. Хајдук & В. Хајдук, *Беркасово*, 44–45.

⁶⁸ Nenad Močanić, „Ratovanje i osnivanje upravnih jedinica u srednjoj Slavoniji 1536–1541“, in: *Zbornik radova simpozija o vojnim krajinama do 1699*, Beograd 1987, 115–124; Н. Шулетић, *Сремски санџак у XVI веку*, 22.

⁶⁹ Lazarus Secretarius, *Tabula Hungarie*, Ingolstadt 1528. Cartographic material for this map was collected during the second decade of the 16th century, see: *Lazarus Secretarius: The First Hungarian Mapmaker and His Work*, ed. Lajos Stegena, Budapest 1982; Јованка Калић, „Најстарија карта Угарске *Tabula Hungariae*“, *Зборник радова Византолошког института* 24–25 (1986) 423–436; Zsolt Török, „Renaissance Cartography in East-Central Europe, ca. 1450–1650“, in: *History of Cartography III, Cartography in the European Renaissance*, ed. David Woodward, Chicago–London 2007, 1820–1828; Katalin Plihal, *The Tabula Hungariae..., Ingolstadt, 1528, Map and its Afterlife in the Light of Previous and Current Research*, Budapest 2013.

⁷⁰ For example, it is depicted in: Wolfgang Lazius, *Karte des Königreichs Ungarn 1556. Regni Hungariae Descriptio Vera*, Vienne 1556; Matthias Zündt, *Nova totius Ungariae descriptio accurata diligens desumpta ex pluribus aliorum editis cosmographicis chartis et typis aereis incisaa Matthia Cynthio Norimbergensi Anno a Christo nato MDLXVII*; Abraham Ortelius, *Hungariae descriptio, Wolfgango Lazio Auct[ore]*, Antwerp 1572, 1579, 1580, 1584, 1612; Claes Janszoon Visscher, *Nova et recens emendata totius Regni Ungariae una cum adiacentibus et finitimis regionibus delineatio*, Amsterdam 1624, 1634; Nicolas Berrey, *Carte de Haute et Basse Hongrie Transilvanie Slavonie, Croatie, et Dalmatie Dessignée sur les lieux par un Gentilhomme Hongrois*, Paris 1663; Jacob von Sandrart, *Neue Land-Tafel von Ungarn und dessen incorporirten Königreichen und Provinzen: auß den besten Mappen verfertigt und gebessert*, Nuremberg 1664.

families were recorded in the *varoš*. Judging by the anthroponymy, in which both Christian and vernacular Slavic names were present, the Christian community of Berkasovo was predominantly Serbian (only two residents had Hungarian names).⁷¹ At that time, the entire eastern part of the sanjak, the former Srem/Szerém and the westernmost parts of Vukovo/Valkó counties, were inhabited by a compact Serbian population. Berkasovo was located on the very border between territories inhabited by majority Serbs and those dominated by Hungarian and Slavonian populations.⁷² Srem was largely populated by Serbs even during the first half of the 15th century,⁷³ but the migrations from the territories south of the Sava river continued over the next decades. The turbulent events that accompanied the Ottoman conquest of Srem also influenced migrations and demographic changes in that area. Therefore, it is not possible to assess whether and to what extent the ethnic structure that existed in Berkasovo in the second half of the 16th century was the result of the activities of the Serbian despots, who owned that estate for 45 years, or it came from the wider migratory processes in the area. The Orthodox monastery of Pribina (Privina) Glava already existed on the territory of Berkasovo in the 1560s, but there is no reliable information about the time and circumstances of its establishment and founder.⁷⁴ One can therefore only speculate whether this monastic community was created by the activities of one of the Serbian despots or their officials, as tradition claims,⁷⁵ or it was founded in some other circumstances.

⁷¹ Todor Nikola, Petar Radosav, Raya Bojit', Vučurina Yovan, Antol Lukač, Mihal Dimitre, Miklos Radiman, Deyan D'ura, Điragit' Vukašin, Radonya Vukač, Istepan Radonya, Radosav Radohna, Radonya doselač (newcomer), Vukdirag Yovan, Petar Radiča, Todor kojar (tanner), Vuletin Vučit', Milin Bosna, D'ura Yovan, Rayko Vuyin, bive (widow) Mariča: B. McGowan, *Sirem Sancaği Mufassal Tahrir Defteri*, 26.

⁷² Н. Шулетић, *Сремски санџак у XVI веку*, 183–213.

⁷³ According to the testimonies of the bishop of Srem, the count of Požega and the nobleman László Maróti from 1437, *maiores partem dictarum parcium Syrmie Rascianos inhabitare, licet autem quedam civitates et ville christiano nomine fungantur, tamen in compluribus Rasciani cum christianis mixtim commorantur*: Euzebijer Fermendžin, *Acta Bosnae potissimum ecclesiastica cum insertis editorum documentorum regestris ab anno 925 usque ad annum 1752*, Zagreb 1892, 159, 162–164; Сима Ђирковић, „Кретања према северу“, in: *Историја српског народа*, II, 319; Борис Стојковски, „Православље у Срему у позном средњем веку“, in: *Три века Карловачке митрополије 1713–2013*, ed. Дејан Микавица & Драго Његован, Сремски Карловци–Нови Сад 2014, 44.

⁷⁴ B. McGowan, *Sirem Sancaği Mufassal Tahrir Defteri*, 28; Olga Zirojević, „Posedi fruškogorskih manastira“, in: eadem, *Turci u Podunavlju*, knj. II, Pančevo 2010, 147–148.

⁷⁵ According to one version, which was recorded as early as 1702, the founder of Pribina Glava was Despot Vuk: Марко Јачов, *Срем на прелому два века*, 80–81, 151. Another version, written down four decades later, says that the monastery was established by Saint Jovan and Maxim (Ђurađ) Branković. The third one, most likely created among the monks themselves in order to explain the name of the monastery and move its origin further into the past, claims that it was erected by a certain nobleman named Priba, allegedly in the 12th century. According to same tradition, Saint Jovan and Maxim Branković renewed the

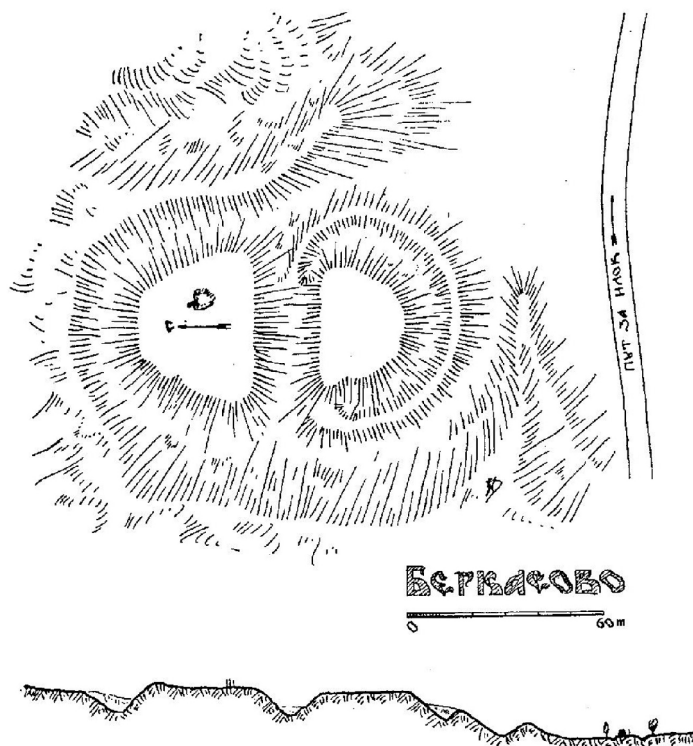


Fig. 1. The ground-plan of the remains of the Berkasovo castle made by Đurđe Bošković before The Second World War.

monastery at the end of the 15th century: Радослав Грујић, „Духовни живот“, in: *Војводина I. Од најстаријих времена до Велике сеобе*, Нови Сад 1939, 364; С. Томин, *Владика Максим Бранковић*, 85. On the other hand, it should be noted that in the mid-18th century, the Church authorities of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci did not know for sure who was the founder of the monastery and when it was erected: Димитрије Руварац, *Опис српских фрушкогорских манастира 1753. године*, Сремски Карловци 1903, 202. Berkasovo is remembered as the residence of Saint Despotissa Angelina Branković in some Serbian epic poems: Mirjana Detelić, *Epski gradovi. Leksikon*, Beograd 2007, 47. Another example of a later tradition that remembered Berkasovo as the possession of Serbian despots is the forged charter of Despot Jovan to the Krušedol monastery, which he allegedly issued in Berkasovo on 4 May 1496: Franc Miklosich, *Monumenta Serbica spectantia historiam Serbiae, Bosnae, Ragusii*, Viennae 1858, 541–542.

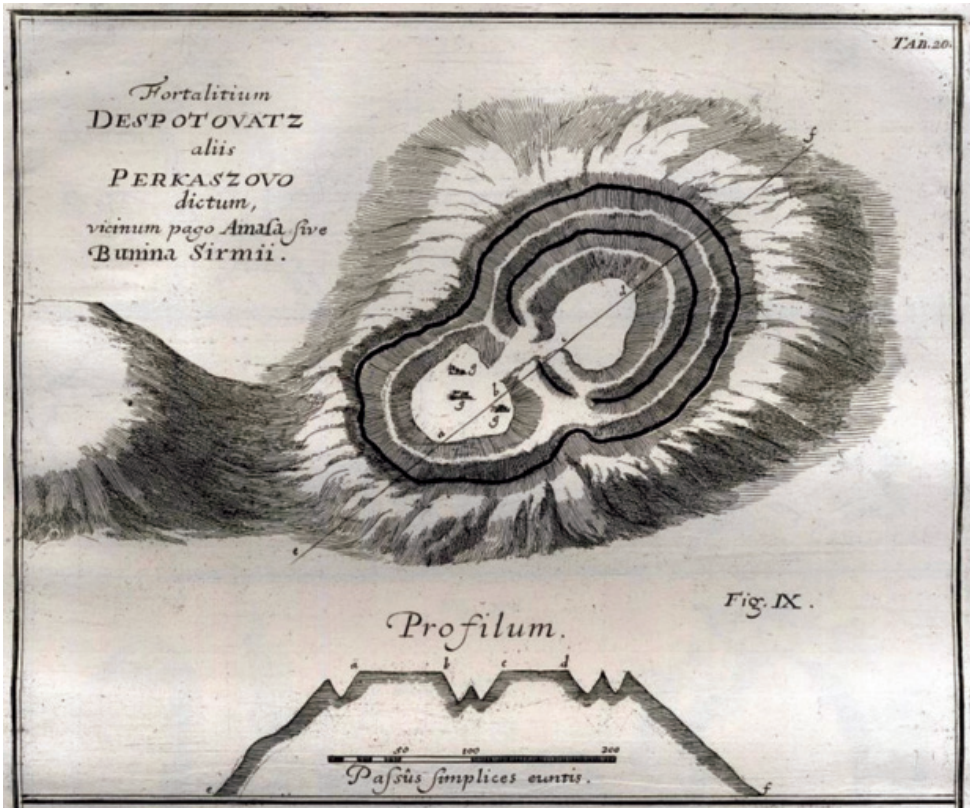


Fig 2. The ground-plan of the remains of the Berkasovo castle made by Count L. F. Marsigli at the end of the 17th century (published in 1726).



Fig. 3. The remains of the Berkasovo castle in the 1930s,
photo by Đurđe Bošković.



Fig. 4. The remains of the Berkasovo castle in 2018, view from the south side,
photo by Rade Vesović.

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Александар Крстић

БЕРКАСОВО У СРЕДЊЕМ ВЕКУ

Резиме

Насеље Беркасово (мађарски: Berekszó) у Срему, на западним падинама Фрушке горе, помиње се први пут у писаним историјским изворима у пописима папске десетине (1332–1335) као мала парохија на подручју Маркијског архиђаконата Печујске бискупије. Топоним је мађарског порекла, сложеница у значењу „шумовито место поред потока“. Током средњег века Беркасово је припадало Вуковској жупанији. Парохијска црква била је посвећена првом угарском краљу Светом Стефану. Пре краја 13. столећа Беркасово је постало посед породице која је по њему понела свој племићки придевак. Синови Блажа од Беркасова, првог познатог члана ове племићке породице, јављају се у документима средином и током друге половине 14. столећа. Представник треће генерације био је Ладислав од Беркасова, који је био активан током првих деценија 15. века. Беркасовачки се у дипломатичким изворима појављују углавном у вези с правним споровима које су имали са суседима, или као сведоци у другим парницама. О самом Беркасову има мало података из тог периода. Знамо да су део земљопоседа држали и други племићи, који су на територији Беркасова имали своје винограде. Папа Јован XXIII дао је 1415. године опроштајнице свима који посете парохијску цркву Светог краља Стефана на дан црквене славе и који је буду помагали својим прилозима.

Крајем четврте деценије 15. столећа Беркасово су држали чланови наредних генерација породице Беркасовачких – Франк и његов синовац Ладислав. Франк је половином столећа био један од угарских фамилијара српског деспота Ђурђа Вуковића (Бранковића), али није познато које је службе тачно обављао. Неколико година касније био је поджупан Вуковске жупаније (1452–1456). Уговором склопљеним с Павлом Жамбокијем и Ђурђем Шуљоком од Лекче Франк и Ладислав Беркасовачки су им признали сувласничка права на својим властелинствима, истовремено стичући таква права на њиховим земљопоседима (1448). По том основу је Ђурађ Шуљок од Лекче стекао сувласничка права и над Беркасовом, у чији посед је уведен 1467. године. Последњи мушки представник породице Беркасовачких био је Франков син Ђурађ, који је крајем септембра 1480. године својој сестри Катарини, супрузи Јована Речењија, племића из Њитранске жупаније, на име мираза пренео власничка права над делом Беркасовачког властелинства. Њега су чинила насеља Сикадат, Хамишаг, Киш (Мали) Берак и Варјаш у близини Беркасова. Сматра се да је насеље Беркасово током позног средњег века имало статус трговишта (*oppidum*). Није познато када је на Беркасовачком властелинству подигнут замак (*castrum*). Остаци тог утврђења и данас постоје на источном крају

села Беркасова. Како темељна археолошка истраживања још увек нису спроведена, општи закључци о изгледу замка могу се извучити на основу описа и скице које је крајем 17. века начинио гроф Л. Ф. Марсиљи, као и на основу каснијих описа локалитета. Чини се да се замак, изграђен од камена и опеке, састојао од две међусобно одвојене целине, око којих је био ископан ров. Ова два дела замка била су највероватније повезана мостом. Око рова се налазио земљани насип, највероватније утврђен палисадом, који је с југозападне стране био заштићен још једним ровом.

После смрти Ђурђа Беркасовачког, који није имао потомства, краљ Матија Корвин је замак Беркасово с истоименим насељем и читавим властелинством предао деспоту Вуку Гргуревићу. То се догодило између септембра 1480. и марта 1482, када се помиње Стефан Витез као деспотов кастелан у Беркасову. Деспот Вук је део својих поседа у Угарској поклатио супрузи Барбари Франкапан, међу којима је било и Беркасовачко властелинство. После деспотове смрти 16. априла 1485. године Барбара је краљу Матији предала Костајницу и Беркасово, а угарски владар јој је заузврат признао власништво над Белом Стеном, Титушевином, Комоговином и Градушом у Крижевачкој и Загребачкој жупанији. Краљ је затим, 13. фебруара 1486. године, замак Беркасово и припадајуће властелинство дао у залог за 12.000 форинти Ђурђу II Бранковићу, новом српском деспоту у Угарској, и његовом брату Јовану. Беркасовачко властелинство остало је у поседу српских деспота и током наредних 45 година, иако су Катарина Беркасовачка и њен муж Јован Речењи у више наврата покушавали да судским путем остваре њена права на део земљопоседа који је добила у мираз. После смрти деспота Јована Бранковића крајем 1502. године Беркасово је држала његова удовица Јелена Јакшић заједно са својим другим супругом деспотом Иванишем Бериславићем, а затим с њиховим сином деспотом Стефаном Бериславићем. Османлије су током упада у Срем 1521. и 1526. године освајале и пустошиле Беркасово, а заузеле су га, чини се коначно, у марту 1529. године. Замак је после тога напуштен и разорен, док је насеље у другој половини 16. века имало статус вароши и било је насељено муслиманским и хришћанским, великом већином српским становништвом. Како показују дефтери Сремског санџака из друге половине 16. века, становници *varoş-i Berkas* су тада, као и током средњег века, живели углавном од пољопривреде – првенствено од узгоја житарица и од виноградарства. Османски дефтери на територији Беркасова бележе и манастир Прибину (Привину) Главу, чије оснивање или обнову предање приписује деспотима Вуку, односно Ђурђу (владики Максиму) и Јовану Бранковићу.