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Personelle Bühne und internationales Zentrum

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Petr Elbel und Klara Hübner

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THE CHANCELLERY OF EMPEROR SIGISMUND OF LUXEMBOURG AND SERBIAN DESPOTS STEFAN LAZAREVIĆ AND ĐURAĐ BRANKOVIĆ

During his long reign, Sigismund of Luxembourg had intensive relations with the rulers of Serbia. These were divided into several phases. During the first period, marked by Sigismund's struggle to establish himself on the throne and his conflicts with internal opponents as well as the Ottomans, the Hungarian king was generally hostile to the Serbian Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović (1371–1389) and his heir Stefan Lazarević (1389–1427). At the beginning of the 15th century, there was a big change in Serbian-Hungarian relations after Despot Stefan Lazarević became a vassal and ally of King Sigismund. From then on, until Sigismund's death in 1437, his contacts with Despot Stefan and his successor Despot Đurađ (George) Branković (1427–1456) were firm and friendly. As Sigismund's vassals, the Serbian despots received numerous estates throughout the Kingdom of Hungary. Close political relationships between the Serbian rulers and Sigismund of Luxembourg doubtlessly resulted in significant production of documents, in both the Serbian and Sigismund's chancelleries. Unfortunately, the greatest part of these sources was destroyed. The reason undoubtedly lies in the destruction of Serbian¹, but also central Hungarian archives in Buda during the Ottoman domination² which lasted in Hungary about 150, and in Serbia almost 400 years. There are very few preserved documents which the chancery of Sigismund of Luxembourg issued directly to the Serbian rulers. Particularly rare are those which refer to the important political issues of the king's relations with the latter. However, some of the key moments of Serbian-Hungarian relations during the rule of Sigismund of Luxembourg are mentioned in several documents of his chancery issued to other persons. In this paper, we seek to point out those moments that are illuminated by the documents of Sigismund's chancery.

Upon his ascent to the Hungarian throne in 1387, Sigismund faced the hostility of Prince Lazar, who, along with Bosnian King Tvrtko I, supported the king's opponents in Hungary³.

1 From the entire period of the reign of Stefan Lazarević, Đurađ Branković and his successors, which lasted 70 years (1389–1459), only about 115 documents have been preserved, mostly in the foreign archives (Dubrovnik, Venice, Mount Athos, Hungary). This material mostly relates to inter-state relationships, business relations with the citizens of Dubrovnik, possessions of the despots in Hungary and donations to the monasteries. PORČIĆ, *Diplomatički obrasci* 385–388.

2 ENGEL, *Realm* xvii.

3 MIHALJČIĆ, *Knez Lazar* 111, 114f.; *Istorija*, ed. KALIĆ 2, 43 (MIHALJČIĆ); FINE, *Balkans* 398; ČIRKOVIĆ,

Pressed from the south by the Ottoman threat while Sigismund's campaign was advancing towards him from the north⁴, Prince Lazar was forced to make peace with the Hungarian king and accept the sovereignty of the Hungarian Crown over his lands in the early spring of 1389. Most of the information about the involvement of Prince Lazar in the Hungarian conflicts – though fragmented – was preserved in documents which King Sigismund sent to his supporters during the following years. For example, in a charter of 1406, issued to Miklós Garai the Younger, Ban of Mačva, the Hungarian king mentions the Serbian attacks on the territory of the Banate of Mačva and Srem. But he also points out the successful mediation of this baron in regulating the relations between King Sigismund and Prince Lazar⁵.

After Prince Lazar had been killed in the fateful battle against the Ottomans on the field of Kosovo on 15th June 1389, King Sigismund was determined to take advantage of the difficult position in which Lazar's heirs found themselves, by reaffirming his positions in the region south of the Sava and the Danube. Miklós Garai, son-in-law of the late Prince Lazar, again assumed a significant role in these events. This can be deduced from the letter of credentials issued by King Sigismund to Garai on 7th July 1389, at the start of his negotiations with Vuk Branković, the most powerful Serbian aristocrat who had survived the Battle of Kosovo and who was aspiring to take over the supreme reign over Serbia⁶. Faced with a military campaign by the Hungarian king, which eventually took place in the autumn of 1389, and with their authority threatened by Vuk Branković, the heirs of Prince Lazar turned to Sultan Bayezid I (1389–1402) and accepted his supreme authority⁷. In the following years, the Serbs waged a war against the Hungarians as Ottoman allies and vassals on a territory that covered the north of Serbia as well as the southern and eastern regions of Hungary. On these grounds, they provided support for the king's opponents. The importance of this struggle for Hungary is best described by the fact that Sigismund of Luxembourg led the military campaigns to the territories of Northern Serbia by himself for four years (1389–1392)⁸. The Hungarian-Serbian conflict and Sigismund's wars in Serbia in the years following the Battle of Kosovo are mostly known from the charters of

Kosovska bitka 62–64; ČIRKOVIĆ, *The Serbs* 81–84; STOJKOVSKI, *Knez Lazar i Ugarska* 228–231.

4 King Sigismund was preparing to start the campaign against Prince Lazar in February 1389: CDH X.1, 517; Sztáray család oklevéltára, ed. NAGY 1, 485; STOJKOVSKI, *Knez Lazar i Ugarska* 232.

5 CDP 7, 435f. ČIRKOVIĆ, *Kosovska bitka* 62–65; KALIĆ, *Despot Stefan i Nikola Gorjanski* 97; STOJKOVSKI, *Porodica Gorjanski* 149–151.

6 *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. THALLÓCZY, GELCHICH 113f.; STOJKOVSKI, *Porodica Gorjanski* 141.

7 *Istorija*, ed. KALIĆ 2, 47f., 50 (ČIRKOVIĆ); FINE, *Balkans* 411–414; ČIRKOVIĆ, *The Serbs* 85f.; BLAGOJEVIĆ, *O izdaji* 27–39; STOJKOVSKI, *Knez Lazar i Ugarska* 233–240; ŠUICA, *Vuk Branković* 121–129, 136; ŠUICA, *Milica* 25–26, 108–110.

8 TRPKOVIĆ, *Tursko-ugarski sukobi* 96–112; SZAKÁLY, *Phases* 73f.; ROKAI, *Kralj Žigmund prema Srbiji* 145–150; ENGEL, *Török-magyar háborúk* 557–568; PÁLOSFALVI, *Nicopolis* 52–54.

the Hungarian king, in which he described and rewarded the merits of his barons and noblemen involved in the campaigns. Other king's charters, issued on the territory of Serbia, were also crucial for establishing the chronology of these campaigns⁹. All these documents provide important and – in some cases – the only information on several Serbian fortresses that had been fought over (Borač, Čestin, Ostrovica, Golubac, Nekudim, Nevade, Vitovnica, Ždrelo, etc)¹⁰. Although Sigismund's great defeat at Nicopolis (1396) marked the abandonment of his offensive warfare against the Ottomans, further Hungarian military actions took place in Northern Serbia – especially in the regions of Rudnik and Borač (today Gruža) – in the following years. The charter of King Sigismund from 1411, issued to the Baron Peter Perenyi, testifies to these events as well as Perenyi's military merits¹¹.

At the end of the 14th century, Stefan Lazarević tried to find a way to effect a rapprochement with the Hungarians due to the increased pressure of the Ottomans. However, the conditions for a Serbian-Hungarian collaboration and alliance improved only after the Battle of Ankara in 1402, as Ottoman influence over their vassals weakened due to the power struggle between Bayezid's sons¹². Meanwhile, the political situation took a turn for the better for Sigismund of Luxembourg too. First, he had to deal with the interests of his dynasty in Bohemia and Moravia, and then he faced two serious insurrections on the part of the nobility in the Kingdom of Hungary. By the end of 1403 he could finally devote himself to the issue of his kingdom's defence against the Ottomans¹³. Based on the letter of credentials, which King Sigismund issued on 18th December 1403 in Vác to his envoys sent to Despot Stefan and his brother Vuk with the aim of receiving a vassal oath from them (*homagium et fidelitatis juramentum*), it can be seen that the negotiations on the alliance had already been far advanced and that the Serbian deputies had previously visited the king in Buda¹⁴. By the spring of 1404, the Hungarian king had

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- 9 CDH X.1, 515f., 601, 610f., 683; X.2, 48, 418–420, 442; X.4, 295, 666; PESTY, Krassó 3, 219f.; Temesvármegye IV.1, ed. ORTVAY, PESTY 181f.; THALLÓCZY, ÁLDÁSY, Magyarország és Szerbia 26–29, 32f., 39f., 99; ZsO 1, 146f., 150f., 189, 194, 197, 245–247, 249, 262, 269, 278f., 281–283.
- 10 DINIĆ, Za istoriju rudarstva 1, 21f.; ČIRKOVIĆ, Golubac 10f.; JOVANOVIĆ, Borač i Čestin 14–18; IDEM, Ostrovica 511–531; ČIRKOVIĆ, Nevade 16–21; KRSTIĆ, Nekudim 100; MILJKOVIĆ, KRSTIĆ, Braničevo 29f., 79f., 82–85; Leksikon gradova i trgova, ed. MIŠIĆ, 53, 72, 83f., 184f., 207, 317.
- 11 ZsO 3, no. 392; TRINGLI, A Perényi család levéltára, no. 329; ČIRKOVIĆ, Nevade 15–21; KRSTIĆ, Ugri 74f.
- 12 FILIPOVIĆ, Princ Musa 48–170; IMBER, The Ottoman Empire 56–73; KASTRITSIS, The Sons of Bayezid 41–50, passim; NIKOLIĆ, Vizantijski pisci 37–75.
- 13 MÁLYUSZ, Kaiser Sigismund 60–68; HOENSCH, Sigismund 93–118; ENGEL, Realm 206–208.
- 14 King Sigismund's envoys to *magnificos et potentes dominos Stephanum despotum Servie Rascieque dominum et Wolko fratrem eius* were János of Usk, the provost of Pécs and the secret chancellor, and the castellan of Buda Zoelus de Nassis: GRZESIK, SROKA, Ismeretlen dokumentum 106f.; OBRADOVIĆ, Novi podaci 37–52.

formed a chain of vassal states along the southern borders of the Hungarian kingdom – a buffer zone against the Ottomans that stretched from the Adriatic to the Black Sea.

The great changes in the Serbian-Hungarian relations, as well as the wider politics of Sigismund of Luxembourg toward the countries and rulers of the Balkan Peninsula that were also facing the Ottoman threat, were among the subjects of a letter the king wrote on 16th April 1404 to Duke Philip of Burgundy. King Sigismund related that among his vassals who had turned against the Ottomans and were fighting them with Hungarian help were the Bosnian King Stefan Ostoja, the Serbian Despot Stefan Lazarević, the Duke of Wallachia Mircea cel Bătrân and the Bulgarian Emperor Constantine. According to Sigismund's letter, Despot Stefan had gained several victories against the Turks and other enemies of the king¹⁵. From Sigismund's charter issued to Philip Scolari (Pipo of Ozora) in 1407, we learn that Scolari – at that time in charge of defending a significant stretch of southern Hungary bordering Serbia – conducted a successful negotiation on the Hungarian-Serbian alliance with Despot Stefan¹⁶. The Serbian ruler became a vassal of his recent enemy, and in return the Hungarian king gave him Belgrade, a part of the Banate of Mačva, which was situated south of the river Sava, and a major complex of lands in Northwest Serbia, called *terra Dettosfelde*¹⁷. Further information on this estate, near the town of Valjevo, can only be found in the documents of Sigismund's chancery¹⁸.

Along with other Serbian dynasts and Ottoman vassals, Despot Stefan had been dragged into the complex dynastic conflicts of the Ottomans for another decade, until the final victory of Sultan Mehmed I in 1413. These clashes were marked by twists and changing alliances, firmly intertwined with Stefan's domestic conflicts with his nephews the Brankovići and his brother Vuk¹⁹.

15 Chroniques, ed. Lettenhove, 93–95; DINIĆ, Pismo 93–98.

16 WENZEL, Okmánytár 1, 22; Istorija, ed. KALIĆ 2, 70f. (KALIĆ); HAĀEGAN, Filippo Scolari 16, 20, 22; KRSTIĆ, Ugri 75f.

17 Konstantin Filosof, Život, ed. JAGIĆ 284; KRSTIĆ, Beogradsko pismo 23–25; KALIĆ-MIJUŠKOVIĆ, Beograd 83f.; PURKOVIĆ, Knez i despot 73–75; Istorija, ed. KALIĆ 2, 70f. (KALIĆ); ĆIRKOVIĆ, Crna Gora 63–66, 74f.

18 Probably *Detoševina* in Serbian, i. e. “the land of Detoš”. This estate was situated within the borders of the Serbian state, but it was probably Prince Lazar who had bestowed it on his son-in-law, the ban of Mačva Miklós Garai the Younger, from whom the Hungarian ruler took it during his wars in Serbia in March 1392. King Sigismund replaced to Garai this estate with all its castles, districts, and revenues for the castles and the towns Kőszeg in Vas and Csesznek in Veszprém county in 1392: CDP 7, 428f.; ĆIRKOVIĆ, Crna Gora 63–66, 74f. Cf. ENGEL, Török-magyar háborúk 588, who thought that Garai could occupy Dettosföld during the fighting in the fall of 1389. About Detoš, see: IVANOVIĆ, Struktura vlasteoskog sloja 85–87.

19 PURKOVIĆ, Knez i despot 69–74, 76–85, 88–106; Istorija, ed. KALIĆ 2, 64–90 (KALIĆ); SPREMIĆ, Despot Đurađ 53–62; ĆIRKOVIĆ, The Serbs 88–91, 102; FINE, Balkans 503–508.

King Sigismund had sent his military aid to Despot Stefan on several occasions. The most significant occurred during the first half of 1409, when the Count of Timiș, Pipo of Ozora, passed across the Danube with his forces and continued to Kosovo, where he fought the Ottomans in the surroundings of Priština. He was joined by King Sigismund, who came to the Danube border in June with his own troops and the detachments of the Ban of Mačva János Maróti. Information on Pipo's participation, as well as that of other Hungarian nobles in these long-winded struggles in Serbia, was also preserved in the documents produced by King Sigismund's chancery²⁰.

Despot Stefan had established firm ties with his suzerain. His importance at the Hungarian court was clear from the fact that the Serbian monarch had been mentioned in the first place among the baronial members of the Order of the Dragon in its foundation charter from 1408²¹. In the summer of 1411, Despot Stefan renewed the vassal relationship toward the Hungarian king in Buda. King Sigismund, in return, undertook to defend the Serbian ruler and Serbia itself against the Ottomans. Unfortunately, Sigismund's charter on this important step in the consolidation of Serbian-Hungarian relations has not been preserved. However, the essence of the agreement was contained in the letters of Friedrich Hohenzollern, Burgrave of Nürnberg, and in those of a knight, Johann Romlian of Cobern, who sent them from Buda to the cities of Nürnberg and Frankfurt on the 3rd and 10th of July 1411²².

At that time, the despot received a number of estates across Hungary and the Bosnian mining town of Srebrenica from King Sigismund. He was also appointed Count of Torontál County in Southern Hungary, close to the Serbian border. In this way, Despot Stefan became one of the Hungarian barons²³. There are only a few preserved documents from King Sigismund that contain information on those Hungarian estates that Despot Stefan began to receive in 1411. Although the donation charters have not been preserved, we can find data about the despot's Hungarian possessions in other acts – for the most part in the output of the chancery of Sigismund of Luxembourg. Among these are the King's

20 WENZEL, Okmánytár 226; Diplomatarium Ragusanum, ed. THALLÓCZY, GELCHICH 183f.; PESTY, Krassó 3, 264; CD Zichy 5, 604; CD Zichy 6, 245; THALLÓCZY, ÁLDÁSY, Magyarország és Szerbia 49–51; ZsO 2.2, no. 6567, 6576, 6583, 6847; Istorija, ed. KALIĆ 2, 81f. (KALIĆ); ENGEL, Ozorai Pipo 66; ENGEL, Ungarn und die Türkengefahr 64; Itineraria, ed. ENGEL, C. TÓTH 89.

21 CDH X.4, 682–694; MÁLYUSZ, Kaiser Sigismund 75f.; ANTONOVIĆ, Despot Stefan i Zmajev red; ENGEL, Realm 210, 213, 232, 234; HOENSCH, Sigismund 123–125; POPOVIĆ, The Order of the Dragon; SCHWEDLER, Rituelle Diplomatie 416f.

22 RTA 7, no. 78–80; RADONIĆ, Sporazum 150f., 155–157, 161f.; Istorija, ed. KALIĆ 2, 85f. (KALIĆ); FINE, Balkans 507.

23 RADONIĆ, Sporazum 158–160; Istorija, ed. KALIĆ 2, 74, 85–87, 322f. (KALIĆ, ČIRKOVIĆ); ENGEL, Archontológia 1, 210; 2, 230; KRSTIĆ, Despot Stefan i Batočina 108f., 111f.; KRSTIĆ, Szerb despoták 74–76; OBRADOVIĆ, Szerb despoták birtokai 61–75.

orders for the Chapter of Nagyvárad (Oradea) and the Convent of Lelesz from the 11th and 15th of July 1411 respectively for the introduction of the Serbian despot into the possession of the town of Debrecen in Bihar County and the market town Bősörmény (today Hajdúböszörmény) in Szabolcs County with their appurtenances, and one estate in Szatmár County. The latter consisted of the towns of Szatmár (Satu Mare), Németi, Nagybánya (Baia Mare) and Felsőbánya (Baia Sprie) and comprised 18 villages and *praedia*, including gold and silver mines and a mint. The King's acts are preserved in the reports from the Chapter of Nagyvárad and the Convent of Lelesz on 24th September²⁴ and 4th October 1411²⁵. Both institutions informed their sovereign about the conducted introduction of the Despot into possession of the aforementioned estates. Information on other Hungarian possessions of the Despot is contained in the acts of the royal chancery, produced for various disputes on these estates. For example, on 29th March 1414, King Sigismund wrote from Aachen to *fideli nostro illustri principi domino despoto duci Rascie*, the counts, vice counts and noble judges of the Torontál County, with regard to assaults on some local nobleman's serfs in that county²⁶. In the summer of 1417, the king intervened in favour of the widow and the children of László Töttös of Bátmonostor, because the Despot's officials in Arnat and Apáti (today Apatin) in Bodrog County had plundered their possessions. The orders to the Hungarian dignitaries and the administrative and judicial institutions responsible for these cases were issued by King Sigismund in Konstanz on 6th June 1417 and by the royal chancery in Buda in the king's name on 31st August and 1st September²⁷.

As a Hungarian baron, Despot Stefan Lazarević visited the Hungarian royal court regularly and participated in the international gatherings organised by King Sigismund. Information on the stays of the Serbian ruler at Sigismund's court is preserved in several narrative sources (e.g. in the despot's biography of Constantine the Philosopher²⁸, the chronicle of Eberhard Windecke and others)²⁹, and also in the documents arising from the activity of Sigismund's chancellery. Thus, in May 1412, Despot Stefan attended the

24 CD Zichy 6, 146–148.

25 THALLÓCZY, ÁLDÁSY, Magyarország és Szerbia 52–55. On Despot Stefan's possessions in Szatmár county, see: OBRADOVIĆ, Posedi srpskih despota 73–100.

26 Temesvármegye IV.1, ed. ORTVAY, PESTY 478f.

27 CD Zichy 6, 451–453, 463–467. King Sigismund was also in Konstanz in August and September 1417: Itinerar, hg. HOENSCH 97; Itineraria, ed. ENGEL, C. TÓTH 101.

28 Konstantin Filozof, Život, ed. JAGIĆ 311.

29 Windeckes Denkwürdigkeiten, hg. ALTMANN 177, 179f., 183, 186f. One Serbian delegation attended the Council of Constance, and according to Richental's chronicle, which some modern historians doubt, the Despot himself on one occasion visited this famous European meeting: RICHENTAL, hg. BUCK (1882) 47, 159; PURKOVIĆ, Knez i despot 143–147; Istorija, ed. KALIĆ 2, 95, n. 12 (KALIĆ).

celebration in the Hungarian capital on the occasion of the agreement between King Sigismund and the Polish King Władysław II, concluded on 15th March³⁰. During his absence from Hungary (1413–1419), Sigismund certainly maintained contacts with Despot Stefan, from whom he heard the news about the Turks and other political issues of the Balkans. Except for his correspondence with Despot Stefan, which has not survived from this period, the King received the despot's information from the Hungarian barons as well. The Archbishop of Esztergom and Royal Chancellor János Kanizsai, for example, learned the news from a conversation with the despot and therefore informed his absent King on 6th March 1418³¹. Despot Stefan could rely on the services of his Latin chancellor from Hungary, Tamás Bucsniafalvai, in whose office notaries and scribes wrote documents in accordance with Hungarian diplomatic practice. Through a letter from King Sigismund to Despot Stefan, dated by its publishers to 1422–1426, we know that this chancellor brought the Despot's gifts to the king in Germany³². According to his vassal duties, the despot sent military assistance to his suzerain against the Bohemian Hussites during late autumn and winter of 1421/22³³. In March 1423, when King Sigismund negotiated with the Polish King Władysław II and the Lithuanian Prince Witold in Kežmarok, Despot Stefan Lazarević was in the retinue of the Hungarian ruler. Therefore, Despot Stefan was listed among the King's dignitaries in the charter issued by Sigismund on 29th March, as a result of the agreement reached between the monarchs³⁴. By taking part in the broad framework of Sigismund's politics, the Serbian-Hungarian alliance could transcend the Balkans and the anti-Ottoman issues and the reason for which it was established in the first place.

After the victory of Sultan Mehmed I in 1413, Despot Stefan re-established vassal relations with the new Ottoman monarch. The ruler of Serbia was at the same time the vassal of the Sultan and the Hungarian king, which put him in an unusual and contradictory

30 CDH X.5, 246–248; ZsO 3, no. 2224; RADONIĆ, Sporazum 157; PURKOVIĆ, Knez i despot 101f.; Istorija, ed. KALIĆ 2, 87 (KALIĆ); FILIPOVIĆ, Viteške svečanosti 288–296, 306; TÓTH, Zsigmond és II. Ulászló 345; NAGY, Ceremony and Diplomacy 15; KRSTIĆ, Ugri 77; IDEM, Szerb despoták 78.

31 THALLÓCZY, ÁLDÁSY, Magyarország és Szerbia 65.

32 THALLÓCZY, ÁLDÁSY, Magyarország és Szerbia 68f.; RADONIĆ, Sporazum 161.

33 A detachment of Serbian cavalry, which seemingly was under the command of Temes Count Pipo Ozorai, fought in Bohemia in December of 1421 and January of 1422: ZsO 9, no. 201, 202; Konstantin Filozof, Život, ed. JAGIĆ 314; Windeckes Denkwürdigkeiten, hg. ALTMANN 120; Istorija, ed. KALIĆ 2, 209 (KALIĆ); KRSTIĆ, Ugri 86; IDEM, Familiars 101.

34 CDH X.6, 533–536; ZsO 10, no. 329. On that occasion Ragusans tried to influence the despot through their "natural lord", the Hungarian king, and thereby to obtain a favourable position for their traders in Serbia: Diplomatarium Ragusanum, ed. THALLÓCZY, GELCHICH 290f.; RADONIĆ, Sporazum 167f.; Istorija, ed. KALIĆ 2, 209 (KALIĆ); SCHWEDLER, Rituelle Diplomatie 418; TÓTH, Zsigmond és II. Ulászló 351f.

position, especially after Murad II came to power in 1421³⁵. This development forced the Despot in the last years of his reign to once again seek support from his suzerain in the west. Despot Stefan Lazarević was in Buda in June 1424, while King Sigismund negotiated with the Byzantine Emperor John VIII Palaeologus about the creation of a broader anti-Ottoman coalition. The meetings of the monarchs in the Hungarian capital were accompanied by ceremonies and exchanges of precious gifts, including those between King Sigismund and Despot Stefan. However, their discussions on the subject of an anti-Ottoman alliance had no outcome³⁶. The participation of the Serbian ruler in King Sigismund's anti-Ottoman plans soon resulted in the attack of Murad II on Serbia. In autumn 1425 the Ottoman army penetrated into Serbia and reached Kruševac. The Hungarian king once again sent his military aid, led by Pipo of Ozora, to the despot³⁷. The despot temporarily managed to make agreements with the Sultan, and the Ottomans withdrew from Serbia³⁸.

The deterioration of relations with the Ottomans, added to his own health problems, led Despot Stefan to finally name a successor, who became his nephew Đurađ Branković. His Hungarian suzerain gave his consent to the despot's decision. In an agreement reached in Tata, Komárom County, in May 1426, King Sigismund recognised Đurađ as Stefan's heir and made him a Hungarian baron – as such, he could inherit the despot's possessions in Hungary. In return the King asked for Mačva, Belgrade, Golubac, *Detosfelde* as well as the despot's possessions to the west of the river Drina to be returned to the Hungarian Crown³⁹. Obviously fearing possible changes in Serbian politics after Stefan's death, the Hungarian king wished to secure the defence of the southern parts of his realm by controlling the strategic fortresses in the regions to the south of the Sava and the Danube. Despite attempts in earlier Serbian historiography to question the credibility of the existing version of the agreement, which was documented only by

35 Istorija, ed. KALIĆ 2, 206, 208 (KALIĆ); KALIĆ, Despot Stefan i Turci 8–12.

36 Windeckes Denkwürdigkeiten, hg. ALTMANN 177, 179f., 183, 186f.; RADONIĆ, Sporazum, 165f.; PURKOVIĆ, Knez i despot 127–129; ĐURIĆ, Sumrak Vizantije 259–261; KALIĆ, Despot Stefan i Turci 12–14; EADEM, Despot Stefan i Vizantija 35f.; HOENSCH, Sigismund 334–336; SCHWEDLER, Rituelle Diplomatie 423, 425f.; NAGY, Royal Summits 361f.; KRSTIĆ, Ugri 80f.

37 THALLÓCZY, ÁLDÁSY, Magyarország és Szerbia 71.

38 Konstantin Filosofov, Život, ed. JAGIĆ 316f.; Istorija, ed. KALIĆ 2, 209–212, 216 (KALIĆ); SPREMIĆ, Despot Đurađ 90.

39 ENGEL, Geschichte von Serbien und Bosnien 370–372; CDH X.6, 809–813; MIJATOVIĆ, Despot Đurađ 1, 42–46, 391–395; KALIĆ-MIJUŠKOVIĆ, Beograd 101; Istorija, ed. KALIĆ 2, 215 (KALIĆ); PRLENDER, Sporazum u Tati 33–39; MÁLYUSZ, Kaiser Sigismund 146; SPREMIĆ, Despot Đurađ 70f.; ĆIRKOVIĆ, Crna Gora 64–66.

two transcripts of Sigismund's charter made in the second half of the 16th century⁴⁰, the events to come confirmed its content⁴¹.

Attacking the largest city and the most important mining centre of Novo Brdo at the beginning of 1427, the Ottomans started a major campaign against Serbia which lasted for months⁴². In these difficult times Stefan Lazarević suddenly passed away on 19th July. As soon as Sigismund heard of the Despot's death, he escorted his troops personally to the gates of Belgrade in order to secure the takeover of the city. Faced with the Ottoman offensive, Đurađ Branković (1427–1456) could not ignore the commitments made in the previous year in Tata. He recognised the sovereign authority of King Sigismund and turned Belgrade over to him at the end of September 1427⁴³. For Sigismund, Belgrade was “the footing and the key to the Kingdom of Hungary”, as he put it in a letter to the papal legation⁴⁴. Throughout this critical period, the Hungarian king provided his new vassal with military assistance against the Ottomans. A few charters of Sigismund of Luxembourg, issued to some Hungarian noblemen, contain information on their struggles with the Turks in Serbia during the autumn of 1427⁴⁵. The King's charters – besides other sources⁴⁶ – contain valuable notes on the surrendering of the Golubac fortress to the Ottomans and on the unsuccessful attempt of Sigismund to occupy this stronghold on the Danube in the following spring (1428)⁴⁷.

40 One transcript of this document can be found in the formulary of Sebastian Lisztius from 1553, and it was used in the edition of J. C. Engel. Faust Vrančić made the second copy, which was published by G. Fejér. Jovan Radonić considered that the charter was modified with a strong political tendency to emphasize that Serbia was “pars anexa” of Hungary: RADONIĆ, *Sporazum* 117–126, 178, 184f., 191f. FINE, *Balkans* 523f., based on Radonić, wrongly considered that the diet, at which Đurađ was confirmed as the despot's successor, took place in Srebrenica in Eastern Bosnia. This Srebrenica was a mine town near Stagari, in the area of Rudnik in central Serbia. SCHWEDLER, *Rituelle Diplomatie*, 417, is also wrong when he states that the contract between the Hungarian king and the Serbian despot was made in 1424. On Sigismund's and Stefan's stay in Tata in May 1426 cf. RADONIĆ, *Sporazum* 176.

41 KRSTIĆ, *Kralj Žigmund u Borči* 115–127.

42 BOŽIĆ, *Dubrovnik i Turska* 33f., no. 62; *Istorija*, ed. KALIĆ 2, 215 (KALIĆ); KALIĆ, *Despot Stefan i Turci* 16f.; SPREMIĆ, *Despot Đurađ*, 90.

43 KRSTIĆ, *Kralj Žigmund u Borči* 122–125.

44 RTA 9, no. 61.

45 THALLÓCZY, ÁLDÁSY, *Magyarország és Szerbia* 73f., 78, 85; CD Zichy 2, 464.

46 Konstantin Filosoof, *Život*, ed. JAGIĆ 322f.; STOJANOVIĆ, *Zapisi i natpisi* 1, 81f.; IDEM, *Rodoslovi i letopisi* 228f.; *Dlugosz*, ed. MECHERZYŃSKI 4, ks. 11–12, 327–329.

47 CDH X.7, 628–630, 773–776; THALLÓCZY, ÁLDÁSY, *Magyarország és Szerbia* 78–81, 85f., 97, 111–113; ĆIRKOVIĆ, *Golubac* 13–17; SPREMIĆ, *Despot Đurađ* 101, 103f.; ENGEL, *Ungarn und die Türkengefahr* 67f.; HOENSCH, *Sigismund* 342–344; MILJKOVIĆ, KRSTIĆ, *Braničevo* 33f.; VESZPRÉMY, *King Sigismund at Golubac*; PÁLOSALVI, *Nicopolis* 70–76.

The charter of King Sigismund, preserved in *Reichsregisterbücher* at the State Archives in Vienna, describes that he solemnly inaugurated Đurađ *principem, ducem et despotum totius regni Rascie et Albanie* by taking the vassal's oath of loyalty and obedience⁴⁸. The authenticity of this document was questioned by the Serbian historian Jovan Radonić. He noticed a few formal elements that diverged from the practice of the Hungarian royal chancery in Sigismund's times. Instead, they resemble the German forms and customs⁴⁹. Radonić points out that the main problem of the document is shown by the fact that Đurađ Branković received the title of Despot from the Byzantine Emperor only in the spring of 1429⁵⁰. A few documents from 1428 and 1429 indeed confirm that Sigismund's chancellery and other Hungarian institutions were very well informed about the titles of the Serbian monarch. In these documents Đurađ had been referred to as Despot only from June 1429⁵¹. Hence, Radonić believed that the document was created by Kaspar Schlick, who intended to raise Sigismund's reputation before the Pope and the German Electors in anticipation of the Emperor's visit to Italy and his coronation⁵². Whether the aforementioned enthronement document was false or not, in every medieval society "the concluding of a contract had to be completed with a certain kind of ceremony", as Momčilo Spremić noted⁵³.

48 THALLÓCZY, ÁLDÁSY, Magyarország és Szerbia 74–76.

49 Radonić indicated that there was a verbal *invocatio* and a very long *arenga*, that *principes ecclesiastici et seculares, comites et barones* were mentioned instead of *prelati, barones* and *proceres*. The *sanctio* was different from those in other Hungarian charters of that period; the list of dignitaries, which consisted only of prelates, was placed before the *datatio* (which was not preserved), and those dignitaries were denoted as witnesses (*testes*): RADONIĆ, Sporazum 206–212.

50 See also: FERJANČIĆ, Despoti 187–189; SPREMIĆ, Despot Đurađ 137, and VESELINOVIĆ, Država 63–65, thought that the envoy of Emperor John VIII crowned Đurađ at the end of June or in July of 1429.

51 On 24th July 1428, the Chapter of Arad denoted Đurađ as *Georgius Wlk dux regionis Rascie*: THALLÓCZY, ÁLDÁSY, Magyarország és Szerbia 77. On 22th March 1429, King Sigismund mentioned Đurađ only as *fidelis noster illustris Georgius*: MNL OL DL 12057. On 5th May 1429, Đurađ called himself *Georgius Wlk Rascie Albanieque dominus*. However, from 16th and 24th June 1429 onwards, King Sigismund referred to Đurađ as *fidelis noster illustris Georgius despotus seu dux Rascie*: THALLÓCZY, ÁLDÁSY, Magyarország és Szerbia 82–85; IVÁNYI, Bártfa 36f., no. 207. At the same time (1427–1429), in his Serbian, Cyrillic documents, Đurađ used the title: *Gospodin Srbijem Gjurg*. The earliest preserved Cyrillic charter of Đurađ with his despot title was issued on the 11th September 1429: VESELINOVIĆ, Država 64, 71.

52 RADONIĆ, Sporazum 205, 213–219. On Kaspar Schlick, his career and the forging of the documents see: ELBEL, ZAJIC, Die zwei Körper I–III.

53 This author considers that the ceremony was performed in Belgrade during the handover of the city in the fall of 1427: SPREMIĆ, Despot Đurađ 96. VESELINOVIĆ, Država 62, also believes that Sigismund appointed and confirmed Đurađ as the ruler of Serbia by some act of investiture, but the king did not crown him as the despot. According to SCHWEDLER, Rituelle Diplomatie 418, King Sigismund did not really attend the enthronement ceremony with a mitre and a sword, which was described in the aforementioned charter.

Most of Sigismund's documents which were sent to Despot Đurađ or to his Hungarian familiars, castellans or officials, were related to disputes over the possessions of the Serbian monarch in Hungary. Among them were numerous documents in which László Geszti, the Despot's castellan of Tállya, Tokaj, Regéc, Boldogkő and Munkács (Mukačevo), appears as plaintiff or defendant⁵⁴. Geszti and other castellans and officials of the Despot often did not respect the privileges of the free royal cities. They therefore appealed to Emperor and King Sigismund, who wrote to Despot Đurađ and his familiars in favour of these cities. In the period between 1429 and the end of 1433, for example, Sigismund's chancery issued several documents regarding the violation of the rights of the citizens of Bártfa (Bardejov in today's Slovakia) at the Hungarian estates of Despot Đurađ⁵⁵. The latter also repeatedly appealed to the Emperor and King Sigismund when his property and possession rights in Hungary were endangered. In 1429 Despot Đurađ confirmed the privileges that Sigismund of Luxembourg and Stefan Lazarević had given to the citizens of Debrecen. In return, Despot Đurađ asked the Hungarian monarch for some *praedia*, which belonged to Debrecen and had been usurped by a local nobleman after the death of Despot Stefan⁵⁶. At the same time, accepting a petition of Despot Đurađ, King Sigismund relieved the residents of Torbágy – one of the despot's possessions in Pilis County – from the payment of royal taxes⁵⁷. During Sigismund's absence from Hungary, Despot Đurađ addressed a letter on 20th August 1432 to Queen Barbara, the Hungarian prelates and other barons and nobles concerning a dispute over some debts with the leaseholder of the monetary chamber in Nagybánya (Baia Mare).⁵⁸ The following year, the Despot appealed to the Hungarian monarch because some noblemen from Bereg County had usurped lands that belonged to Đurađ's town of Bereg. For that reason, on 16th July 1433 Emperor Sigismund ordered the Convent of Lelesz to investigate the case and to call the accused noblemen to the royal court⁵⁹. On 28th December 1435 the Emperor ordered an investigation into the assaults and robberies on the

54 MNL OL DL 57649, 12955, DF 222167; HERPAY, Debrecen regesztái 44; THALLÓCZY, ÁLDÁSY, Magyarország és Szerbia 95f., 101f., 106–110. László Geszti was one of the most prominent officials of Despot Đurađ in Hungary: ENGEL, Archontológia 1, 284, 309, 370, 399, 439, 444, 517; 2, 85; KRSTIĆ, Familiares 102–104; IDEM, Szerb despoták 77.

55 CDH X.7, 450f.; IVÁNYI, Bártfa 36f., 46, no. 207, 251, 254; KRSTIĆ, Familiares 103.

56 THALLÓCZY, ÁLDÁSY, Magyarország és Szerbia 82f.; ISAILOVIĆ, FOSTIKOV, Povelja 62–64; HERPAY, Debrecen regesztái 43.

57 THALLÓCZY, ÁLDÁSY, Magyarország és Szerbia 83–85.

58 KUMOROVITZ, Budapest Emlékei III.2, 184–188, no. 1035, 1037; KRSTIĆ, Pismo 172–178; KRSTIĆ, Despot Đurađ i zakup komore 243–251.

59 THALLÓCZY, ÁLDÁSY, Magyarország és Szerbia 93–95.

Despot's possessions in Tetétlen, Szentpéterszeg and Keresztúr in the surroundings of the city of Debrecen (Bihar County)⁶⁰.

Although Sigismund of Luxembourg tried to reorganise and strengthen the defence of the southern borders of Hungary⁶¹, it turned out that his state could not counteract the Ottomans or provide more effective protection of Serbia. Furthermore, the position of the Serbian rulers and their state – wedged between the rivals, Hungary and the Ottoman Empire – was not sustainable in the long term. This also resulted from the last Hungarian-Ottoman encounter on Serbian soil, which took place in Sigismund's lifetime – in the summer of 1437. The Hungarian army, led by János Marcali, János Ország and Franko Talovac (Tallóci), crossed the Danube, ravaged the surroundings of Golubac, and reached the Ottoman Kruševac through the Morava valley. The city was taken and burnt, and the army returned to the Danube over the despot's territory. Before they crossed the Danube, the Hungarians had defeated the *sancakbey* of Vidin near Smederevo. Nevertheless, the Hungarian intention to prevent Ottoman incursions across the Sava and the Danube could not be realised by this attack. It was actually a prelude to the first Ottoman occupation of the Serbian state (1439–1444). Among the sources that document this campaign is the charter of Emperor Sigismund, issued to the Talovac brothers on 27th September 1437, two months before Sigismund's death⁶².

Finally, this article looks at the ideological aspects of Sigismund's documents regarding his relationship with the Serbian rulers, and the aspirations and “rights” of the Roman Emperor and Hungarian King towards the Serbian state.

It can be said that Sigismund maintained a constant political attitude throughout his long reign – irrespective of the changes in his relations with the Serbian monarchs and the position of the Serbian state in the face of Hungary or the Ottoman Empire. The Emperor remained consistent in emphasising his sovereign rights over Serbia (*regnum nostrum Rasciae*). This approach did not diverge much from the way in which he manifested his pretensions to sovereign authority over other countries in South Eastern Europe, in-

60 THALLÓCZY, ÁLDÁSY, Magyarország és Szerbia 101f.

61 MÁLYUSZ, Kaiser Sigismund 147f., 150, 153, 160–166; HOENSCH, Sigismund 344f., 435f.; ENGEL, Ungarn und die Türkengefahr 68f.; ENGEL, Realm 219f., 237f.; PÓSÁN, Sigismund 80–82; KALIC-MIJUŠKOVIĆ, Beograd 102, 106–108; ROKAI, Poslednje godine 89–93; Istorija, ed. KALIC 2, 220f., 243 (SPREMIĆ).

62 THALLÓCZY, ÁLDÁSY, Magyarország és Szerbia 119f. See also: FERMENDŽIN, Acta Bosnae 142–144; STOJANOVIĆ, Rodoslovi i letopisi 130; ROKAI, Poslednje godine 107f.; SPREMIĆ, Despot Đurađ 206–208; SZAKÁLY, Phases 84f.; PÁLOSFALVI, Nicopolis 80–82. In the older historiography, as well as in some recent works, it is erroneously considered that the Hungarian army in 1437 liberated Smederevo from the siege of the Turks and then penetrated the Ottoman territory. Cf. ENGEL, Ungarn und die Türkengefahr 70.

herited together with the Hungarian Crown from his Árpád and Anjou predecessors. The idea that Serbia had been subject to Hungary since early times was best shown in the aforementioned charter from Tata, which contained Sigismund's recognition of Đurađ's rights to the Serbian throne (1426)⁶³. This idea had influenced Sigismund's policies and actions towards Serbia and its rulers since his campaign against Prince Lazar in 1388–1389. From that time, it appears in his charters⁶⁴.

Nevertheless, the reality was different from the image created by Emperor Sigismund and his chancellery. Because of the constant pressure applied by the Ottomans, the rulers of Serbia had no alternative but to accept vassal obligations to the Hungarian king. On the one hand, their mutual relations were marked by this hierarchical situation. On a ceremonial and symbolic level, Despots Stefan and Đurađ carried out their duties of *auxilium et consilium*. They travelled to Sigismund's court and participated in the court rituals and celebrations. Sometimes they offered military aid to their suzerain. The Serbian despots consistently portrayed themselves as loyal vassals of King Sigismund, even as genuine Hungarian barons in Latin acts addressed to him and other Hungarian dignitaries, institutions or structures – including their own *familiares*⁶⁵. On the other hand, the Serbian despots were also vassals of the sultans. Their real obligations to the Ottoman rulers were far greater than to the Hungarian Crown. Namely, they had to pay a high annual tribute (*haraç*) and were obliged to send auxiliary troops to the sultans on a regular basis. Their contemporaries and foreign observers (like Bertrandon de la Broquière) were fully aware of this fact, especially when the Ottoman pressure on Serbia increased in the first period of Despot Đurađ's reign, i.e. during the last decade of Sigismund's life⁶⁶. However, the Serbian despots sought to present themselves to their subjects as independent rulers in their country. The same representation was used in their communication with their weaker neighbours such as Dubrovnik (Ragusa). Although they no longer used the epithet *samodržac* ("autocrat") in the *intitulatio* and *subscriptio* formulae of their Cyrillic charters – as their predecessors from the Nemanjić dynasty or Prince Lazar did – they followed the previous practice of the Serbian royal chancery in all other aspects. Moreover, the title *samodržac* can be found in unofficial texts, inscriptions and

63 ... *ipsum regnum Rasciae cum omnibus iuribus et pertinentiis suis nobis et sacro nostro diademati, ac dicto regno nostro Hungariae, semper et ab antiquo subiectum fuisse et esse, ac ad ius et proprietatem nostrae Maiestatis, sacraeque coronae ac dicti regni nostri Hungariae semper et ab antiquo et regno nostrorum praecestorum nullo medio spectasse et pertinuisse, ac spectare et pertinere etiam de praesenti ...*

ENGEL, Geschichte von Serwien und Bosnien 370–372, somewhat different version: CDH X.6, 809–813.

64 For instance, see: CDP 7, 435f.; WENZEL, Okmánytár 1, 22.

65 THALLÓCZY, ÁLDÁSY, Magyarország és Szerbia 59–64, 71, 82f., 95–98; KUMOROVITZ, Budapest Em-lékei III.2, no. 1037; KRSTIĆ, Pismo 173f., 185f.

66 Broquière, Voyage, ed. SCHEFER, CORDIER 206–215.

other sources which emerged in Serbia during the rule of the despots. This fact, among others, shows how the subjects perceived their monarchs⁶⁷. The narrative sources, such as the biography of Despot Stefan Lazarević, written by Konstantin Kostenečki (the Philosopher), also demonstrate the ideological image created in Serbia concerning the despots and their rule. Constantine the Philosopher wrote about Despot Stefan's relations with the Hungarians and King Sigismund. His work belongs, therefore, among the most important domestic sources for the topic. For Konstantin, Despot Stefan was not a vassal, but a "friend" and the ally of the Hungarians or the "Westerners" and their king, who lavished honours and gifts on the Serbian monarch⁶⁸.

The difference between the relations which the Serbian rulers maintained with Sigismund and the Ottoman sultans is illustrated by the documents issued in the Cyrillic chancellery of the despots. They make references to subjugation under Turkish dominion and the obligations that were associated with it, but there is no reference to their relations with Hungary or to the dependence of Serbia on Sigismund of Luxembourg⁶⁹.

We can conclude that the preserved documents issued by the chancery of King and Emperor Sigismund of Luxembourg provide significant information on his relations with the Serbian monarchs and his policy towards Serbia during the five decades of his reign. As such, they represent one of the most important sources for researching these questions. In some cases, Sigismund's acts are the only sources that document Hungarian military campaigns in the territory of Serbia against the Ottomans and the Serbs during the last decades of the 14th century. The documents also shed light on the military aid which King and Emperor Sigismund sent to the Serbian despots against the Ottomans in the first half of the 15th century. Thanks to the documents issued by Sigismund's chancery, it is possible to reconstruct the estates of Despots Stefan and Đurađ in the Kingdom of Hungary. Finally, charters, letters and other acts published by the chancery of Sigismund of Luxembourg allow us to perceive the ideological image created by the Hungarian King and Roman Emperor regarding his sovereign authority over the Serbian state.

67 VESELINOVIĆ, *Država* 52–57, 71–73.

68 Konstantin Filosof, *Život*, ed. JAGIĆ 311f.; KRSTIĆ, *Ugri* 71–89. King Sigismund mentioned Despot Stefan and his brother as *amicos et fideles nostros dilectos* during their negotiations at the end of 1403: GRZESIK, *SROKA*, *Ismeretlen dokumentum* 106.

69 KRSTIĆ, *Szerb despoták* 79f. Only in the charter of Đurađ Branković issued for Great čelnik Radič in 1429 is there a brief mention of the possessions in Srem, which were given to this Serbian aristocrat by King Sigismund: STOJANOVIĆ, *Stari srpski hrisovulji* 3f.; PAVLIKIANOV, *Medieval Slavic Acts*, 83f., 89f., 99; TOŠIĆ, *Veliki čelnik Radič* 16; ŽIVOJINOVIĆ, *Le grand čelnik* 394.

ABKÜRZUNGEN

AOASH	Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae
GSANU	Glas Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti, Odeljenje istorijskih nauka
GSKA	Glas Srpske kraljevske akademije
IČ	Istorijski časopis (The Historical Review)
IG	Istorijski glasnik
MG	Mešovita građa (Miscellanea)
MHB	Mediaevalia historica Bohemica
MHH	Monumenta Hungariae Historica
MNL	Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár [Ungarisches Nationalarchiv]
OL	Országos Levéltár [Staatsarchiv]
DL	Diplomatikai Levéltár [Diplomatische Sammlung]
DF	Diplomatikai Fényképgyűjtemény [Photographische Sammlung]
ND	Neudruck
UB	Urkundenbuch
ZMSI	Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju
ZRVI	Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta (Recueil des travaux de l'Institut d'Études Byzantines)

QUELLEN- UND LITERATURVERZEICHNIS

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