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South-Eastern Europe  
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# Familiars of the Serbian despots in and from the territory of Banat (1411–1458)\*

*Aleksandar Krstić\*\**

**Abstract:** Being vassals of the Hungarian crown, the Serbian despots Stephen Lazarević (1389–1427), George (Đurađ) Branković (1427–1456) and Lazar Branković (1456–1458) possessed large estates in the Kingdom of Hungary. They also held possessions in the territory of present-day Banat and Crişana between 1411 and 1458. As Hungarian barons and landowners, the Serbian rulers had numerous *familiars* among the local nobility. These *familiars* of the despots were usually entrusted with management of their estates in Hungary, including the territory of Banat. The Serbian rulers also appointed some of their Hungarian *familiars* on the military duties in Serbia (for example, the members of the Himfi and Pósafi families). It was not until the 1440s that Despot George started to assign positions at his Hungarian estates to some Serbian noblemen. The castellans of Vilagosvár (Şiria) and vice counts of the Torontal County should be mentioned among them. Some basic data about the *familiars* of the Serbian despots in and from Banat will be presented in this paper.

**Keywords:** Stephen Lazarević, George (Đurađ) Branković, familiars, Banat, Medieval Hungary

After the battle of Ankara in 1402, a significant change in Serbian-Hungarian relations took place. Earlier conflicts were replaced by intensive cooperation, instigated by the desire of both sides to confront the Ottoman threat. At the end of 1403, or in the beginning of 1404, the Serbian Ruler Despot Stephen Lazarević, who ruled from 1389 to 1427, became a vassal

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to the Hungarian king Sigismund of Luxembourg. In return for his service, King Sigismund gave Despot Stephen the city of Belgrade, parts of the Banate of Mačva south from the river Sava and a substantial piece of land in northwest Serbia called *terra Dettosfelde*<sup>1</sup>.

In the summer of 1411 in Buda Despot Stephen renewed his vassal relations to the Hungarian king, who in turn committed to protect the Serbian ruler and Serbia from the Ottomans<sup>2</sup>. It was at this time that Despot Stephen Lazarević received a number of estates throughout Hungary from King Sigismund, in the counties of Bihar, Szabolcs, Szatmár (Satu Mare), Bodrog<sup>3</sup>, as well as on the territory of present-day Banat. In 1411 Despot Stephen came into possession of the castle Becse (Bečej) and the towns of Besce, Becsekereke (Zrenjanin), Aracs (Arača) and Basahida (Bašaid) in the Torontal County<sup>4</sup>. Despot Stephen continued to receive donations from the Hungarian monarch after 1411. Around 1422/1423, the despot acquired

<sup>1</sup> Jovanka Kalić-Mijušković, *Beograd u srednjem veku*, (Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, 1967), pp. 83–84; Miodrag Al. Purković, *Knez i despot Stefan Lazarević*, (Beograd: Sv. arhijerejski sinod SPC, 1978), pp. 73–75; Jovanka Kalić, *Veliki preokret*, in *Istorija srpskoga naroda*, vol. II, (Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, 1982) pp. 70–71; Sima Ćirković, “Crna Gora” i problem srpsko-ugarskog graničnog područja, in *Valjevo – postanak i uspon gradskog središta*, (Valjevo: Narodni muzej u Valjevu, Filozofski fakultet u Beogradu, 1994), pp. 63–66, 74–75; Sima Ćirković, *The Serbs* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 88–89.

<sup>2</sup> *Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Kaiser Sigmund*, Bd. VII, Abt. 1 (1410–1420), ed. Dietrich Kerler (München: Oldenbourg, 1878), pp. 125–127; Jovan Radonić, *Sporazum u Tati 1426. i srpsko-ugarski odnosi od XIII do XVI veka*, in *Glas Srpske kraljevske akademije*, CLXXXVII/1941, pp. 150–151, 155–157, 161–162; Jovanka Kalić, *Nemirno doba*, in *Istorija srpskoga naroda*, vol. II, pp. 85–86; John V. A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2009), pp. 507, 509.

<sup>3</sup> Imre Nagy, *A zichi és vásonkeői gróf Zichy-család idős ágának okmánytára. Codex diplomaticus domus senioris comitum Zichy de Zich et Vasonkeo*, vol. VI, (Budapest: Magyar történelmi társulat, 1894), pp. 146–148, 451–453, 463–467; Thallóczy Lajos–Áldásy Antal, *A Magyarország és Szerbia közti összeköttetések oklevéltára 1198–1526*, Magyarország mellék-tartományainak oklevéltára 2, (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1907), pp. 52–57; Radonić, *Sporazum*, pp. 158–160; Sima Ćirković, *Kretanja prema severu*, in *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. II, pp. 322–323; Aleksandar Krstić, *Ugri i srpsko-ugarski odnosi u biografiji despota Stefana Lazarevića Konstantina Filozofa*, in *Srednji vek u srpskoj nauci, istoriji, književnosti i umetnosti*, vol. VIII, ed. Gordana Jovanović, (Despotovac: Narodna biblioteka “Resavska škola”, Institut za srpski jezik SANU, 2017), p. 78.

<sup>4</sup> Pesty Frigyes, *Oklevelek Temesmegye és Temesvárváros történetéhez*, ed. Ortvyai Tivadar, vol. I (Pozsony: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1896), pp. 478–479; Adrian Magina, *Câteva documente privind comitatul Torontal în prima jumătate a secolului al XV-lea*, in *Banatica*, 22/2012, pp. 63–65; Krstić, *Ugri i srpsko-ugarski*, p. 78.

the castle of Munkács (Mukačeve) in Bereg county with its estate<sup>5</sup>. At the same time (around 1422) Despot Stefan received from King Sigismund the castles of Boldogkő and Regéc in Abaúj County, as well as Tályá and Tokaj in Zemplén County with their appurtenances<sup>6</sup>. However, it is not clear if he was also given the Érdsomlyó castle (now Vršac) in Krassó (Caraş) County, which was in the hands of his successor George (Đurađ) Branković (1427–1456) in 1431<sup>7</sup>. In 1439, King Albert of Habsburg gave Despot George the fortress Világosvár (Şiria), along with its great estate in the Zaránd County<sup>8</sup>.

As Hungarian barons and landowners, the Serbian despots had many *familiars* and officials among the domestic nobility. They were the ones who ran the estates of the despots in Hungary in their place. The most important Hungarian *familiaris* of Despot Stephen was Stephen Himfi of Remete, son of Peter, the former ban of the Banate of Bulgaria. Stephen's activity can be tracked from 1377 until his death in 1421, as he appears in a number of documents, mostly concerning litigations which he had with his neighbors and relatives over possessions and violent acts against serfs and property in Timiș, Caraș Vas and Veszprém counties<sup>9</sup>. His noble title came from his possession Remete, which was located in the valley of the river Bârzava (Brzava), north from today's Berzovia settlement in Caraș-Severin County. During the last decade of the 14th century he began his military career as a royal knight, but soon entered the service of the counts of Timiș.

<sup>5</sup> Iványi Béla, *A római szent birodalmi széki gróf Teleki-család gyömrői levéltára* (Szeged, 1931), p. 118; Aleksandar Krstić, *Dokumenti o ugarskim posedima despota Đurđa datim u zalog Jovanu Hunjadiju 1444. godine*, in *Mešovita građa* (Miscellanea), XXXII/2011, pp. 132–154.

<sup>6</sup> Radonić, *Sporazum*, pp. 158–160; Engel Pál, *Magyarország világi archontológiája 1301–1457*, vol. I (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1996), pp. 210, 283–284, 369–370, 399, 438–439, 444–445.

<sup>7</sup> Pesty Frigyes, *Krassó vármegye története*, vol. III (Budapest: Krassó-Szörény vármegye közönség, 1882), pp. 340–342; Aleksandar Krstić, *Vršac u srednjem veku, II deo: od početka XV do sredine XVI stoleća*, in *Istorijski časopis*, LX/2011, pp. 195–196.

<sup>8</sup> Arhiv Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti (further: ASANU), *Istorijska zbirka*, nr. 13193; Georgius Fejér, *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis*, vol. XI (Budae, 1844), pp. 293–296; Radonić, *Sporazum*, p. 219; Momčilo Spremić, *Despot Đurađ Branković i njegovo doba*, (Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, 1994), p. 216.

<sup>9</sup> Pesty, *Krassó vármegye*, vol. III, p. 155, passim; Pesty, *Oklevelek Temesmegye*, p. 136, passim; Antonius Fekete Nagy–Ladislaus Makkai, *Documenta historiam Valachorum in Hungaria illustrantia, usque ad annum 1400 p. Christum*, (Budapest: Universitas Scientiarum Budapestinensis, 1941), pp. 221–223; *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. I–XII, ed. Mályusz Elemér et al., (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1951–2013), passim; Zoltán Iusztin, *Scaunele de judecată din comitatul Timiș*, in *Analele Banatului*, s. n., Arheologie – istorie, XXI/2013, pp. 253–254, 256–263.



So, at the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th century, Stephen of Remete was the *familiaris* of Nicholas Marzali and Philip Scolari (Pipo of Ozora)<sup>10</sup>. It is unknown under which exact circumstances he came into the service of Despot Stephen, but the fact that he was a nobleman from southern Hungary, from the region close to Serbia, probably played a role in it. In 1408, Stephen of Remete fought in Bosnia under Pipo's command<sup>11</sup>. He also took part in the battles against the Turks in Serbia in the following year (1409), when King Sigismund sent Pipo of Ozora and his forces to help Despot Stephen<sup>12</sup>. Perhaps during these events Despot Stephen made contact with his namesake from the Himfi family.

Stephen of Remete was the *magister tavernicorum* and *comes* of the despot – i. e., his representative in the estates the Serbian ruler had in the county of Satu Mare. Preserved archive records show that he held this position from 1417 to 1421, but it is likely he held it from a somewhat earlier time. As documents reveal, the despot's *magister tavernicorum* collected income, presided in litigations that were under the despot's jurisdiction in lieu of the despot, enforced sentences and the despot's orders, including the confiscation of property of those in debt<sup>13</sup>. Because of scarce and only

<sup>10</sup> Engel, *Archontológia*, vol. I, pp. 34–35, vol. II, p. 100; Idem, *Középkori magyar genealógia*, Magyar Középkori Adattár, CD-Rom, (Budapest: Arcanum Digitéka, 2001), Him rokonsága, 2. tábla: Himfi; Cosmin Popa-Gorjanu, *Despre familiars și familiaritas în cazul familiei Himfi*, in *Apulum*, XLIV/2007, pp. 367–370, 374; Ligia Boldea, *Situația iobăgimii de pe domeniul Gherteniş la sfârșitul secolului XIV – începutul secolului XV*, in *Banatica* 19/2009, pp. 10–11, 13, 15–27; eadem, *Un secol din evoluția unui domeniului feudal al Banatului de Câmpie: domeniul familiei nobile Danciu de Macedonia*, in *Analele Banatului*, serie nouă: Arheologie – Istorie 18/2010, pp. 124–129.

<sup>11</sup> Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (MNL-OL), *Diplomatikai fényképgyűjtemény* (DF) 285885; Ferdo Šišić, *Nekoliko isprava iz početka XV stoljeća*, *Starine JAZU*, XXXIX/1938, pp. 306–307; Dubravko Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti (sveta krana ugarska i sveta krana bosanska): 1387–1463*, (Zagreb–Sarajevo: Synopsis, 2006), p. 138.

<sup>12</sup> Wenzel Gusztáv, *Okmánytár Ozorai Pipó történetéhez*, I, *Történelmi tár* 1884, p. 226; *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. II/2, p. 203, nr. 6567; Ioan Hațegan, *Filippo Scolari. Un condottier italian pe meleaguri dunărene* (Timișoara: Editura Mirton, 1997), p. 47. About the warfare in Serbia in 1409 see also: Gelchich József–Thallóczy Lajos, *Diplomatarium relationum reipublicae Ragusanae cum regno Hungariae. Raguza és Magyarország összeköttetéseinek oklevéltára*, (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1887), pp. 183–184; Thallóczy–Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia*, pp. 49–51; Kalić, *Nemirno doba*, pp. 81–82; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans*, pp. 505–506; Ćirković, *The Serbs*, pp. 90–91.

<sup>13</sup> MNL-OL, DL 53925, 53965, 53966, 53967, 53968; Thallóczy–Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia*, pp. 59–64, 67; Aleksandar Krstić, *Despot Stefan Lazarević i Batočina*, in *Spomenica akademika Miloša Blagojevića (1930–2012)*, ed. Siniša Mišić, (Beograd: Filozofski fakultet, 2015), pp. 112–114.

partially saved source material, it cannot be said with absolute certainty if Stephen of Remete, in his role as the *magister tavernicorum*, was in charge of all the despot's estates in Hungary, which his title would indicate<sup>14</sup>, or only of those in the county of Satu Mare, as the existing documentation leads us to believe. For example, in one of his letters, King Sigismund talked about Stephen of Remete with the following words: *magistri scilicet tavernicoum in persona despoti ducis Rascie in civitate nostra Sathmariensi deputati*<sup>15</sup>.

During the second decade of the 15th century, Benedict Himfi of Döbrönte, a cousin of Stephen of Remete, served alongside him as the despot's representative in the county of Satu Mare<sup>16</sup>. Benedict was the son of Nicholas of Döbrönte and the grandson of the famous Ban Benedict Himfi the Elder. His noble title came after his castle Döbrönte in Veszprém County, but he also held family possessions in the counties of Timiș and Caraș in the Banat region. That is why Benedict the Younger, who was mentioned in the sources between 1385 and May of 1416, can also be found in the documents with the title “de Egerzegh” (Ersig settlement in Caraș-Severin county). It is unknown whether he had other public functions apart from the one he performed for the Serbian despot in the Satu Mare County<sup>17</sup>.

After Stephen of Remete and Benedict Himfi of Döbrönte, another prominent nobleman from the Timiș County was the official of Despot Stephen Lazarević at his possessions in the Satu Mare County. That was Ladislaus Szilágyi of Horogszeg, the father-in-law of John Hunyadi and

<sup>14</sup> The *magister tavernicorum* of the despot had similar responsibilities at the estates of his lord as one of the highest state dignitaries in medieval Hungary with the same title, in whose domain was the care of royal goods and collection of state revenues, and who also had a significant judicial function: Martin Rady, *Medieval Buda: A Study in Municipal Government and Jurisdiction in the Kingdom of Hungary*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 127–159; András Kubinyi, *König Sigismund und das ungarische Städtewesen*, in *Das Zeitalter König Sigmunds in Ungarn und im Deutschen Reich*, ed. Tilmann Schmidt-Péter Gunst, (Debrecen: Debrecen University Press, 2000), pp. 111–113; Pál Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen. A History of Medieval Hungary 895–1526*, (London–New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001), pp. 92, 153–154, 192, 221, 252, 254. In their households, powerful Hungarian noblemen also introduced offices which imitated the royal curia, including the office of tavernicus: Martin Rady, *Nobility, Land and Service in Medieval Hungary*, (London–New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), pp. 113–114.

<sup>15</sup> MNL-OL, DF 221281; Thallóczy–Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia*, pp. 67–68.

<sup>16</sup> MNL-OL, Diplomatikai levéltár (DL) 56517; Aleksandar Krstić, *Dva neobjavljena latinska pisma despota Stefana Lazarevića*, in *Inicijal. Časopis za srednjovekovne studije / Initial. A Review of Medieval Studies*, 3/2015, pp. 197–209.

<sup>17</sup> Engel, *Archontológia*, vol. II, pp. 100; Idem, *Genealógia*, Him rokonsága, 2. tábla: Himfi; Popa-Gorjanu, *Despre familiars și familiaritas*, pp. 367–370.

the grandfather of the future Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus. In 1426 Ladislaus Szilágyi acted as the judge (*diffinitor causarum*) of Despot Stephen in the towns of Szatmár and Némethi<sup>18</sup>. Previously, as the *familiaris* of John Maróti, the Ban of Mačva, Szilágyi was the vice-count of Valkó (Vukovska) and Bács (Bač) counties (in 1404 and 1405, respectively). Szilágyi distinguished himself in the battles in Bosnia, where he, together with Nicolas Garázda of Keresztúr, held the position of the castellan of Srebrenik in Usora (1405–1408)<sup>19</sup>. King Sigismund awarded their accomplishments in Bosnia, and Nicolas Garázda and Ladislaus Szilágyi, together with their families, were given the possession of Horogszeg and seven other villages in the Timiș County at the end of 1408, partly in exchange for their estates in the counties of Heves and Nógrád<sup>20</sup>. Horogszeg was situated in the area of today's settlement Banatsko Veliko Selo, east of Kikinda and next to the present Serbian-Romanian border, and the Szilágyi family took their noble title from this possession<sup>21</sup>. Considering that John Hunyadi also spent some time in the service of Despot Stephen Lazarević, it can be assumed that the building of a close relationship and marriage connection between the families of Hunyadi and Szilágyi was facilitated by the fact that both of them belonged to the circle of Despot Stephen's *familiares*<sup>22</sup>.

In 1411, Despot Stephen was entrusted with the administration of the Torontal County, where he appointed the vice-counts from the ranks of his *familiares*<sup>23</sup>. They were Nicholas Vízközi, son of Benedict of Beletinac,

<sup>18</sup> MNL-OL, DL 11861; Engel Pál, *Hunyadi pályakezdése*, in: idem, *Honor, vár, ispánság. (Válogatott tanulmányok)*, ed. Csukovits Enikő (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2003), p. 515; Lakatos Bálint, *Mezővárosi és falusi önkormányzati testületek Magyarországon a késő középkorban*, in *Századok*, CXLVIII, 2/2014, p. 509.

<sup>19</sup> Engel, *Archontológia*, vol. I, pp. 100, 222, 435; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu*, pp. 128–129, 140–142; Jelena Mrgić, *Severna Bosna (13–16. vek)*, (Beograd: Istorijski institut, 2008), pp. 96, 98.

<sup>20</sup> MNL-OL, DL 9472; Pesty, *Oklevelek Temesmegye*, pp. 398–403; Šišić, *Nekoliko isprava*, pp. 317–320; Lendvai Miklós, *Temes vármegye nemes családjai*, vol. I, (Budapest: Budapesti hirlap nyomdája, 1896), pp. 51, 94–95; András Kubinyi, *Mathias rex*, (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2008), pp. 15–16.

<sup>21</sup> Engel Pál, *A Temesvári és Moldovai szandzsák török kori települései (1554–1579)*, *Dél-Alföldi évszázadok* 8, (Szeged: Csongrád Megyei Levéltár, 1996), p. 64.

<sup>22</sup> Laonici Chalcocondylae *Historiarum demonstrationes*, vol. II, ed. Eugenius Darkó, (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1923), pp. 33–34; Karácsonyi János, *Mátyás király ősei*, in *Mátyás király emlékkönyv kolozsvári szobrának leleplezése alkalmára*, ed. Márki Sándor, (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1902), pp. 13–14; Engel, *Hunyadi pályakezdése*, pp. 514–516, 523; see also: Camil Mureșan, *Ioan de Hunedoara și vremea sa*, (București: Editura Tineretului, 1957), p. 30.

<sup>23</sup> Pesty, *Oklevelek Temesmegye*, pp. 478–479; Engel, *Archontológia*, vol. I, p. 210.

and Gabriel Pósa, son of Nicholas of Szer. As *comites de comitatu Thorontal*, together with the noble judges, they issued documents in July of 1411, as well as during 1420 and 1421<sup>24</sup>. Nicholas Vízközi was a nobleman from Beletinac, a settlement in Valkó County, in western Srem<sup>25</sup>. In the beginning of the 15th century he and his father Benedict served Ban John Maróti, through whom Nicholas most likely came into contact with Despot Stephen<sup>26</sup>. Nicholas of Beletinac later entered the service of Despot Stephen's successor, George Branković, who took over the Hungarian estates of his late uncle in 1427. During this time, most probably between 1429 and 1431, Nicholas Vízközi shared his position of the Torontal vice-count (or, as recorded in the documents – “the count of Besce”) with a certain Michael Bany<sup>27</sup>. Over the span of more than three decades, Nicholas Vízközi of Beletinac remained in the position of vice-count of the Torontal County. The last document that records him holding this office was issued on July 1, 1444<sup>28</sup>, while on March 1, 1447 the same office was held by a Serb named Brajan<sup>29</sup>. Like his father, Nicholas' son Benedict was in the service of Despot George. In 1452, he was the despot's captain of Világosvár<sup>30</sup>.

Gabriel Pósa, Despot Stephen's second *familiaris* serving in the Torontal County, was a descendant of Pósa of Szer, another very important person in southern Hungary during the times of the Angevin dynasty. The Pósa family had possessions in the counties of Csongrád, Arad, Timiș, Kovin and Caraș, and was one of the notable noble families in the Banat region in the 15th century<sup>31</sup>. Gabriel was not the only member of the Pósa family

<sup>24</sup> MNL-OL, DF 248826, DL 54121, 54147, 54149; Magina, *Câteva documente*, pp. 63–65.

<sup>25</sup> Csánki Deszö, *Magyarország történelmi földrajza a Hunyadiak korában*, vol. II, (Budapest: *Magyar Tudományos Akadémia*, 1892), pp. 268–269, 294; Engel Pál, A török dúlások hatása a népeiségre: Valkó megye példája, in *Századok*, CXXXIV, 2/2000, pp. 294.

<sup>26</sup> MNL-OL, DF 218627; Vjekoslav Klaić, *Povjest Hrvata od najstarijih vremena do svršetka XIX stoljeća*, vol. II (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske, 1985), pp. 353, 424–425. Benedict and his cousin Andrew were the castellans of Gyula in 1405: Pesty, *Oklevelek Temesmegye*, pp. 358–359; Engel, *Archontológia*, vol. I, p. 324; vol. II, p. 260.

<sup>27</sup> MNL-OL, DL 56632; Magina, *Câteva documente*, pp. 67–68; Engel, *Archontológia*, vol. I, p. 210.

<sup>28</sup> MNL-OL, DL 56546, 55247, 55273, 55277; Magina, *Câteva documente*, pp. 71–75.

<sup>29</sup> MNL-OL, DL 55345; Pesty, *Oklevelek Temesmegye*, pp. 531–532. For correct dating of the document, see: Engel, *Archontológia*, vol. I, p. 210, n.304.

<sup>30</sup> Engel, *Archontológia*, vol. I, p. 459.

<sup>31</sup> Ligia Boldea, *Political Mechanisms at the Southern Frontiers of the Hungarian Kingdom in the Fourteenth Century. The Case of a Family of Officials from Caraș County*, in *Transylvanian Review*, XXII, Supplement No. 4/2013, pp. 146–152; eadem, *O carieră politică în epoca angevină: Posa de Szer, comite de Caraș*, in *Banatica*, 24–II/2014, pp. 233–261;

to serve Despot Stephen – his paternal uncles Peter and George, the sons of Stephen Pósaſi, were also the *familiares* of the Serbian monarch. Peter had close connections with the royal court and his loyalty to King Sigismund in 1403 brought the *castellum* Hódos with its enormous possessions in Temes County to the Pósaſi family around 1405. Prior to 1406, Peter Pósaſi was the castellan of the royal fortress Œoimoſ in the Arad County<sup>32</sup>. He had family ties with Stephen Himfi of Remete – namely, Stephen’s sister was his wife. Peter and George Pósaſi entered Despot Stephen’s service most probably at the same time as their cousin Gabriel – in 1411. In June of the following year, during his stay at the royal festivities in Buda, the despot intervened at the court in favor of the *familiares* from his retinue<sup>33</sup>. In the summer of 1413, during the war between Despot Stephen and the Ottoman prince Musa, Peter and George Pósaſi were engaged in the battles in Serbia and the defense of the city of Novo Brdo<sup>34</sup>. As it is well known, in the clash with Prince Musa in 1413, Despot Stephen and his ally, Sultan Mehmed I, had the military support of King Sigismund<sup>35</sup>. In 1416, when Despot Stephen mediated in freeing four of the Hungarian barons (John Maróti, Martin Ders, John Harapki and Peter Szepesi), captured by the Turks in Bosnia in the previous year, Peter Pósaſi was one of the tax-collectors in the south-eastern counties, who collected the tax levied in order to pay the ransom for the captives<sup>36</sup>.

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Elek Szaszko, A Szeri Pósaſiak. Egy elókeló dél-alföldi család története a 14–15. században (unpublished PhD dissertation, Pázmány Péter Catholic University, 2014), pp. 21–79, available at: [www.academia.edu/7209933/A\\_Szeri\\_Posafi\\_csalad\\_PhD\\_disszertacio\\_The\\_Szeri\\_Posafi\\_family\\_PhD\\_dissertation](http://www.academia.edu/7209933/A_Szeri_Posafi_csalad_PhD_disszertacio_The_Szeri_Posafi_family_PhD_dissertation).

<sup>32</sup> Zsigmondkori oklevéltár, vol. II–1, pp. 509–510, 607, nr. 4164, 4874; Engel, *Archontológia*, vol. I, p. 413; Szaszko, A Szeri Pósaſiak, pp. 73–76.

<sup>33</sup> On June 29, 1412 in Buda, at the request of the Serbian despot, Chancellor Eberhard waived part of the fines to which Peter, George and their nephews Gabriel, George the Younger and Stephen Pósaſi had been sentenced at the court of the king’s special presence: MNL-OL, DL 92409; Zsigmondkori oklevéltár, vol. III, p. 555, nr. 2362; Szaszko, A Szeri Pósaſiak, p. 79.

<sup>34</sup> MNL-OL, DL 92426, 92427, 92428; Pál Engel, *Ungarn und die Türkengefahr zur Zeit Sigismunds (1387–1437)*, in *Das Zeitalter König Sigmunds in Ungarn und im Deutschen Reich*, pp. 64; Krstić, *Ugri i srpsko-ugarski*, pp. 84.

<sup>35</sup> To help the coalition against Musa, the Hungarian king sent them detachments led by the Ban of Mačva, John Maróti: Gelchich–Thallóczy, *Diplomatarium*, pp. 224–225; Nedim Filipović, *Princ Musa i Œejh Bedreddin* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1971), pp. 454–456, 469, 506–514; Jovanka Kalić, *Snaženje Despotovine*, in *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. II, pp. 88–90; Spremić, *Despot Đurađ*, pp. 61–62; Dimitris Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid. Empire Building and Representation in the Ottoman Civil War 1402–1413*, (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2007), pp. 159–160, 190–194.

<sup>36</sup> MNL-OL, DL 43338, 71377, 92497; Zsigmondkori oklevéltár, vol. V, pp. 599–600, 619,



George played not only an active role in the fights against the Ottomans, but also participated – together with Gabriel Pósaft – in the campaigns against the Hussites in Bohemia as well. Two documents from February 25, 1422, inform us that *Georgius filius Stephani ac Gabriel filius Nicolai Posse de dicta Zeer, familiares Despoth ducis Rascie cum aliis gentibus eiusdem Despoth in serviciis regalibus in regno Bohemie more exercituali essent constituti*<sup>37</sup>. In June of 1423, George, Peter, and their nephews Gabriel and George the Younger took part in military operations *versus partes Albanie*, most probably in Zeta, where Despot Stephen was waging a war against Venetians at the time<sup>38</sup>. While his uncles passed away shortly afterwards, Gabriel Pósaft outlived the Serbian ruler. However, it seems that he had not remained in the service of Despot Stephen's successor George Branković. Large parts of his career are still unknown. It is possible that he chose to serve the Tallóci family<sup>39</sup>. During the time spent in the service of Despot Stephen, he could have established contact with the Szilágyi family – his daughter Agatha was married to Ladislaus Szilágyi's eldest son Oswald<sup>40</sup>.

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nr. 2255, 2319; Sima Ćirković, *O jednom posredovanju despota Stefana između Ugarske i Turske*, in *Istraživanja*, 16/2005, pp. 230–231, 235, 239; Szaszko, *A Szeri Pósaftiak*, pp. 80–81.

<sup>37</sup> MNL-OL, DL 79721, 79722; *Codex Zichy*, vol. VIII, pp. 274; *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. IX, pp. 83–84, nr. 201, 202. Despot Stephen sent military assistance (a detachment of Serbian cavalry) to his suzerain against Hussites in Bohemia in the late fall of 1421: Konstantin Filosof, *Život Stefana Lazarevića despota srpskoga*, ed. Vatroslav Jagić, in *Glasnik Srpskog učenog društva*, XLII/1875, pp. 313–314; Kuyo Kuev–Georgi Petkov, *Sàbrani sàchineniya na Konstantin Kostenechki. Izsledvane i tekst*, (Sofia: BAN, 1986), pp. 414–415; Eberhard Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten zur Geschichte des Zeitalters Kaiser Sigmunds*, ed. Wilhelm Altmann (Berlin: R. Gaertners Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1893), pp. 120; Jovanka Kalić, *Doba prividnog mira*, in *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. II, pp. 209. George Pósaft also personally served on Zsigmond's side during his first campaign in Bohemia (1420–1421): MNL-OL, DL 79659, 79663, 79671; *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. VIII, pp. 85, 88, 184, nr. 203, 219, 621; Szaszko, *A Szeri Pósaftiak*, pp. 84.

<sup>38</sup> MNL-OL, DL 79783, 79813; *Codex Zichy*, vol. VIII, pp. 274; *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. X, pp. 319–320, nr. 767, 768; Szaszko, *A Szeri Pósaftiak*, pp. 81. At the beginning of the summer of 1423, Serbian forces of 8000 horsemen under the command of George Branković started a new campaign in Zeta and blocked Scutari. Peace was accomplished on August 12 of the same year: Momčilo Spremić, *Pripajanje Zete Despotovini i širenje mletačke vlasti u Primorju*, in *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. II, pp. 195–201; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans*, pp. 518–520.

<sup>39</sup> Peter died in 1423, and George in 1423/1424. Gabriel Pósaft participated at the diets in 1439 and 1440. He supported the election of King Wladilaus I, but was killed in the conflict soon after the coronation of the new monarch: Szaszko, *A Szeri Pósaftiak*, pp. 81, 84–91.

<sup>40</sup> Engel, *Genealógia*, Bár-Kalán nem 1. Szeri ág 2. tábla: Pósaft (szeri, sződi), and Szilágyi (horogszegi); Szaszko, *A Szeri Pósaftiak*, pp. 86.

Peter and George Pósaft certainly were not the only Hungarian *familiars* of Despot Stephen who were engaged in the clashes with the Ottomans, or entrusted with certain duties in Serbia. For example, at some moment between 1413 and 1420, Despot Stephen ordered the aforementioned Stephen and Benedict Himfi to be prepared to come to him as soon he called on them<sup>41</sup>. It is quite possible that this letter referred to the same Serbian-Ottoman battles of 1413. Constantine the Philosopher, the biographer of Despot Stephen Lazarević, also mentions the Hungarian noblemen in the service of the Serbian monarch. He asserts that the despot had the right to grant the knighthood to Hungarian noblemen and that many knights were proud of the fact that it was the despot who knighted them. When he speaks of the sorrow that followed the despot's passing in 1427, Constantine talks about Hungarian knights who served the despot in Serbia and of their mourning of the death of their lord<sup>42</sup>.

There are more preserved documents regarding the Hungarian estates of Despot George, his *familiars*, castellans and officials than it is the case with Despot Stephen. The bulk of those sources refer to litigations between the despot's castellans and neighboring landowners regarding mutual ownership disputes, robberies and lootings, attacks on serfs, unlawful charging of fees, etc.

Ladislaus of Geszt, the son of Michael of Gyula, a nobleman from the county of Bodrog, who was recorded in archive documents between 1413 and 1444<sup>43</sup>, was one of the most significant and trustworthy *familiaris* of Despot George in Hungary. It is very likely that he entered the despot's service through the Pósafts, because in 1430 he was already married to the daughter of George Pósaft the Elder<sup>44</sup>. In 1431, he held the office of the despot's castellan in Érdsomlyó (Vršac), in the county of Caraş<sup>45</sup>. Two

<sup>41</sup> MNL-OL, DL 56517; Krstić, *Dva neobjavljena*, pp. 203, 208.

<sup>42</sup> Konstantin Filozof, *Život*, pp. 312, 319–320; Kuev–Petkov, *Sâbrani sâchinieniya*, pp. 413, 419; Krstić, *Ugri i srpsko-ugarski*, pp. 84.

<sup>43</sup> Ladislaus Geszti and his stepfather Nicolas of Szana were in conflict with the Tötös brothers over possessions in the Bodrog County and their boundaries for years (1419–1431). That conflict, marked with attacks on the property and serfs, caused long-lasting trials. Geszti also participated in some other disputes: *Codex Zichy*, vol. VI, pp. 567–569; vol. VIII, pp. 68, 124–125, 175–176, 193–194, 242–243, 257–258, 356–360, 470–473, 490–494, 524–526, 643–644, 649–650; Đorđe Bubalo, *Ladislav Gesti*, in *Srpski biografski rečnik*, vol. V, ed. Čedomir Popov (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 2011), p. 468.

<sup>44</sup> MNL-OL, DL 80264; Szaszko, *A Szeri Pósaftiak*, p. 87.

<sup>45</sup> MNL-OL, DL 54747, 54764; Pesty, *Krassó vármegyje*, vol. III, pp. 340–342; Krstić, *Vršac*, pp. 195–196.

years later, in 1433, Ladislaus Geszti simultaneously performed the duties of the castellan in as many as five of the despot's castles in Hungary (Tálya and Tokaj in Zemplén County, Boldogkő and Regéc in Abaúj County, as well as Munkács/Mukačeve in Bereg County). Geszti and other castellans and officials of the despot in Hungary violated the privileges of the free royal city of Bártfa (Bardejov in today's Slovakia). The city authorities therefore appealed to Emperor Sigismund, who intervened in favor of the citizens of Bártfa, ordering Despot George and Ladislaus Geszti to respect their rights and property<sup>46</sup>. At the same time, Ladislaus of Geszt was also mentioned as the despot's representative – *comes* at his estates in the kingdom. As his uncle Despot Stephen, Despot George also had his *magister tavernicorum* in Hungary. It seems that Ladislaus of Geszt was the person who held this office during the first period of the rule of Despot George. Namely, on July 19, 1433, Despot George gave permission to the citizens of his town Debrecen to collect the annual tribute by themselves and ordered them to deliver it to his castellan of Tálya and their *comes* Ladislaus Geszti. The Serbian monarch also ordered the city authorities of Debrecen not to appeal to the judge and the council of Buda, but instead to his *magister tavernicorum*, and then to bring all his judgments to the despot himself<sup>47</sup>. In any case, the facts that the Serbian despot moved this official from one castle to another across Hungary, and that he, at one point, entrusted Ladislaus with five castles, show a significant degree of confidence that George had in him. As a high-ranking official of Despot George, Ladislaus Geszti was involved in various disputes between the despot and his *familiars* on the one side, and the masters of neighboring estates on the other, mainly due to the possession borders, serfs, robbery and damaging of property. In some cases he figured as a plaintiff and in other as a defendant<sup>48</sup>. In 1439, he was still the castellan of Tokaj, and

<sup>46</sup> MNL-OL, DF 212938, 212941, 212945, 212949; Iványi Béla, *Bártfa szabad királyi város levéltára (1319–1526)*, vol. I, (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1910), pp. 46–48, nr. 251, 254, 259, 262; Fejér, *Codex diplomaticus*, vol. X/7, pp. 450–451, 457–460; Engel Pál, *Királyi hatalom és arisztokrácia viszonya a Zsigmond-korban (1387–1437)*, (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1977), pp. 99, 110, 144, 160, 162; idem, *Archontológia*, vol. I, pp. 284, 309, 370, 399, 439, 444, 517; vol. II, p. 85.

<sup>47</sup> Admittedly, it was not explicitly stated in the document who was the despot's *magister tavernicorum*: MNL-OL, DF 278797; Thallóczy–Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia*, pp. 95–96.

<sup>48</sup> MNL-OL, DF 221939, DL 57649, DL 12955; Herpay Gábor, *Debrecen szabad királyi város levéltára diplomagyűjteményének regesztái*, (Debrecen: Városi tanács, 1916), pp. 44, nr. 99; Thallóczy–Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia*, pp. 101–102, 106–110.



probably of Tályá as well<sup>49</sup>. In order to reward his service, the despot gave Ladislaus Geszti and his sons John, Ladislaus and Michael the Bečej castle and its estate in pledge at the end of 1439 or in the first days of 1440<sup>50</sup>. As the vice castellan of Tokaj, Ladislaus' brother John was also in Despot George's service (1434)<sup>51</sup>.

Sandrín, the son of Thomas of Helemba (Halimba), a nobleman from Caraş County<sup>52</sup>, was noted to have been in the despot's service as of June of 1439. It was then that he received the amount of 2500 golden Florins on behalf of the despot from King Albert. It was half the amount that Count Stephen Rozgonyi owed the despot as payment for the pledged possessions of Tura, *Hévíz-völgy and others* in Pest and Heves counties<sup>53</sup>. This task shows that Despot George already had significant trust in Sandrin at the time. Sandrin of Helemba was the castellan in the despot's castles Boldogkő and Regéc in Abaúj County in the beginning of 1443, most likely even earlier than that. This official of the despot was to be found in the same position, but with the title of captain, in the following year as well<sup>54</sup>. It would appear that he was at the same time the castellan of Tályá,

<sup>49</sup> In March 1439, the vice-castellans of *egregii Ladislai filii Michaelis de Gezth, familiaris illustris Georgii despoti Rasscie, per eum in castello Thokay vocato constitutis* were accused of forcibly charging illegal fees for crossing over the river Tisza, which they allegedly did at Geszti's "request and with his approval": MNL-OL, DF 222167.

<sup>50</sup> Frigyes Pesty, *Diplome privind istoria comitatului Timiș și a orașului Timișoara. Oklevelek Temesvármegye és Temesvár város történetéhez*, ed. Livia Magina, Adrian Magina, vol. II (1430–1470), (Cluj–Napoca: Editura Mega, 2014), pp. 104–106, nr. 78, 79. In the summer of 1440 King Wladislaus I took away the Bečej castle and estate from Despot George due to his support to the party of Ladislaus V, but gave them back to the despot after their reconciliation in 1441: MNL-OL, DL 55215; Magina, *Câteva documente*, pp. 71–72; Aleksandar Krstić–Neven Isailović, *Donacija despota Đurđa Vukovića (Brankovića) Pavlu Biriniju iz Verone: problem autentičnosti*, in *Inicijal. Časopis za srednjovekovne studije*, 4/2016, pp. 213–215, 223–225.

<sup>51</sup> Géresi Kálmán, *A nagy-károlyi gróf Károlyi-család oklevéltára*, vol. II, (Budapest: Károlyi Tibor, 1883), pp. 149–150; Engel, *Archontológia*, vol. I, p. 444.

<sup>52</sup> His family possession Helemba (Halimba) was located along the river Bârzava, in the neighborhood of Șoșdea and Gherteniș, northwest of Reșița. The Helembai were the neighbors of the Remetei and the Csép of Gherteniș families, with whom they occasionally had disputes over property (mills) and serfs. In 1449 Sandrin took the estate Șoșdea in pledge from the Tornallyai brothers: Pesty, *Krassó vármegye*, vol. III, pp. 260–261, 301–305; Pesty, *Diplome*, pp. 207–208, nr. 175.

<sup>53</sup> MNL-OL, DL 13404; Pesty, *Krassó vármegye*, vol. III, pp. 369–370; see also: Thallóczy–Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia*, pp. 127, 129–131; Sima Ćirković, *Kretanja prema severu*, p. 326.

<sup>54</sup> MNL-OL, DL 13704, 88187.

together with Ladislaus Pataki. That can be reliably claimed for the spring of 1448, when both of them were named as the castellans of Tályá in a lawsuit<sup>55</sup>. In March of 1450, at the time when John Hunyadi was preparing for confrontation with the Serbian ruler and his men in Hungary, he considered Sandrin of Helemba one of the most important *familiaris* of Despot George. Namely, Hunyadi blamed not only the despot for arresting him after the defeat at Kosovo field in 1448, but also accused George's wife, sons, Michael "vayvode Chelnek dicti de Uhad", and four of the despot's Hungarian *familiars* – Ladislaus Pataki, Sandrin Helembai, Philip Kátai and Frank Berekszóí – who, allegedly, persuaded their master to imprison him in Smederevo. The despot released Hunyadi only after he handed over the fortress Érksomlyó (Vršac) in Banat with its appurtenances and having left his elder son Ladislaus as a hostage in Smederevo in his stead<sup>56</sup>. It is hard to say what was the real role of Sandrin of Helemba and other accused noblemen 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<sup>57</sup>. In any case, in April of 1453, Sandrin was still the castellan of

<sup>55</sup> They were accused of occupying arable land, vineyards, forests and fishponds belonging to the possession Liszka of the Szepes Chapter – MNL-OL, DF 222349; Thallóczy–Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia*, pp. 147–149, 154–155.

<sup>56</sup> The case was known from the charter of the Hungarian estates, issued on March 13, 1450, which resulted from a litigation instituted by Governor John Hunyadi against Ladislaus Pataki: Serviciul Județean Cluj al Arhivelor Naționale ale României, colecția Kemény József, *Diplomatarium autographum*, now kept in Biblioteca Centrală Universitară "Lucian Blaga" Cluj-Napoca, colecții speciale, colecția Kemény, nr. 104; MNL-OL, DF 253500. Based on this document and other known data on Great voivode Michael Angelović, who was previously the great čelnik, I concluded that the aforementioned voivode Michael is no other than this Serbian lord of Byzantine origin. A noble title "de Uhad" shows that he had possessions in Hungary in 1450. This possession is most likely identical with the settlement Ohád (Ohát) near Ghilad in the Romanian Banat: Aleksandar Krstić, *Prilog biografiji velikog vojvode Mihaila Anđelovića*, in *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta*, LII/2015, pp. 361–366, 369–373. On the other hand, in the 14th and the first half of the 15th century there was also the noble family Csölnök of Gaj and Omor in Caraș County: Engel, *Archontológia*, vol. I, pp. 136, 144, 215, 314, 325, 500, 501, 506; vol. II, pp. 54, 80; idem, *Genealógia*, tábla: Csölnök (gáji, omori). However, of the eight known members of the four generations of this family, mentioned in the sources between 1325 and 1437, none of them were called Michael, nor did they have the title of voivode, and it is not known that anyone from that family was in the service of the Serbian despots.

<sup>57</sup> As Ladislaus Pataki rejected Hunyadi's accusations, the Hungarian Diet scheduled a duel of their representatives for June 11, 1450. It is not known what happened next in that case, nor how the trials against the other defendants, including Sandrin of Helemba, went. In

the fortress Boldogkő<sup>58</sup>, as well as at the end of 1456, when he fell very ill and made his last will<sup>59</sup>.

One partially damaged document of the Torontal County authorities was wrongly dated by Pesty Frigyes and Ortvy Tivadar in 1417, which is way it was believed for a long time that during the rule of Despot Stephen, the vice-count of Torontal was a certain Serb named Brajan<sup>60</sup>. However, the document issued in Arača by *Brayan [despoti] Rascie vicecomes et iudices nobilium comitatus de Thurontal* had actually been created on March 1, 1447, which would mean that Brajan was the vice-count under Despot George<sup>61</sup>. The data concerning the officials of the despots on their Hungarian estates shows that Serbs among them only start to appear from the second half of Despot George's rule, i. e. from the 1440s. In fact, the only official of Despot Stephen in Hungary for whom we may assume that he was of Serbian origin was Nicholas *Raacz (Raach)*, the castellan of Munkács. He was mentioned in that position in 1424, and he also had the same duty during the first years of Despot George's rule (around 1430)<sup>62</sup>.

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1450 and 1451 Despot George was deprived of a number of his estates in Hungary, but part of them have been returned after the reconciliation between the Hunyadi and the Branković family on August 7, 1451: Krstić, *Prilog biografiji*, pp. 370–371; see also: Spremić, *Despot Đurađ*, pp. 344–346, 349–351, 365–366; Đorđe Bubalo, *Posedi srpskih despota u odbrambenim planovima Kraljevine Ugarske 1458. i 1459. godine*, in *Pad Srpske despotovine 1459. godine*, Zbornik radova SANU, ed. M. Spremić (Beograd: SANU, 2011), pp. 232–234.

<sup>58</sup> At that time, Despot George, Sandrin of Helemba, the castellan of Boldogkő, his son Ladislaus and his vice-castellans and *familiars* were accused of attacking serfs of Silvester of Torna in Abaúj County: DF 222523; Thallóczy–Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia*, pp. 168–170.

<sup>59</sup> He left a hundred florins and a half of his inherited possessions, as well as a quarter of the purchased properties, to his daughter-in-law Catharine, the widow of his son Ladislaus, who was in childbirth at that moment – MNL-OL, DF 284169. It seems that there is no data about her and Ladislaus' offspring. Cf. Engel, *Genealógia*, tábla: Helembai (Krassó m.).

<sup>60</sup> Pesty, *Oklevelek Temesmegye*, pp. 531–532; Aleksa Ivić, *Istorija Srba u Vojvodini od najstarijih vremena do osnivanja potisko-pomoriške granice (1703)*, (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1929), p. 10; Dušan Popović, *Vojvodina u tursko doba*, in *Vojvodina I. Od najstarijih vremena do Velike seobe*, (Novi Sad: Istorijско društvo u Novom Sadu, 1939), p. 155; Konstantin Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, vol. II, prevod i dopune Jovan Radonić, (Beograd: Prosveta, 1952), p. 357; Sima Ćirković, *Kretanja prema severu*, p. 324.

<sup>61</sup> MNL-OL, DL 55345; Engel, *Archontológia*, vol. I, pp. 210, n. 304; Aleksandar. Krstić, "Which Realm Will You Opt for?" – *the Serbian Nobility between the Ottomans and the Hungarians in the 15th Century*, in *State and Society in the Balkans before and after Establishment of Ottoman Rule*, ed. Srđan Rudić and Selim Aslantaş, (Belgrade: The Institute of History, Yunus Emre Enstitüsü Turkish Cultural Centre Belgrade, 2017), pp. 133–134.

<sup>62</sup> MNL-OL, DF 221558; DL 12252; Iványi Béla, *A római szent birodalmi széki gróf*

Serbian officials appeared at the despot George's estates in Hungary precisely at a time when the Hungarian kings, pressured by the domestic nobility, issued decrees that prohibited the Serbian despot and other magnates to give the official positions in Hungary to foreigners<sup>63</sup>. Thus in 1440, the castellan of Vilagosvár was a certain voivode Stepan, who, at the time of his lord's conflict with the new king of Hungary Wladislaus I, acted together with other opponents of the king, like the count of Timiș, Andrew Botos Harapki. However, Ladislaus Maróti, a supporter of the Jagiellonian king, managed to take over the despot's fortress of Vilagosvár at the end of 1440, or early 1441<sup>64</sup>. It is not known what happened to voivode Stepan afterwards.

Following the reconciliation with the Serbian ruler in the middle of 1441, King Wladislaus returned to him the estates he had previously taken, including Világosvár. The castle with the appurtenant estate Despot George then gave to John Hunyadi in 1444<sup>65</sup>, but managed to take it back in 1448. In the years that followed, Világosvár was one of the points of conflict between the Serbian despot and Hunyadi. It was during this time that despot George appointed Serbs to positions at Világosvár – between 1450 and 1453 a certain Vlatko was castellan of Vilagosvár, while his deputy was Brajislav. Groups of Serbs settled at the Vilagosvár estate at the same time<sup>66</sup>.

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*Teleki-család gyömrői levéltára*, (Szeged: Kiadja a gr. Teleki család Gyömrői ága, 1931), p. 118; Engel, *Archontológia*, vol. I, pp. 369–370; Krstić, *Serbian Nobility*, p. 134.

<sup>63</sup> Franciscus Dóry, Georgius Bonis, Vera Bácskai, *Decreta Regni Hungariae. Gesetze und Verordnungen Ungarns 1301–1457*, (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1976), p. 293; Ćirković, *Kretanja prema severu*, pp. 324–325; Spremić, *Despot Đurađ*, pp. 216–217; Krstić, *Serbian Nobility*, p. 324.

<sup>64</sup> MNL-OL, DL 71964; Pesty, *Diplome*, pp. 112–117.

<sup>65</sup> ASANU, Istorijaska zbirka, nr. 13197; Georgius Fejér, *Genus, incunabula et virtus Joannis Corvini de Hunyad, regni Hungariae gubernatoris*, (Budae: Typogr. regiae vniuersitatis vngaricae, 1844), pp. 71–75; Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la istoria Românilor*, vol. I/2, (București: Academia Română, 1890), pp. 696–698; Teleki József, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, vol. X, (Pest: Emich Gusztáv könyvnyomdája, 1853), pp. 159–164; Pál Engel, *János Hunyadi and the Peace "of Szeged"*, in *Acta Orientalia Academiae scientiarum Hungaricae*, XLVII–3/1994, pp. 246–247; Krstić–Isailović, *Donacija*, pp. 209–212.

<sup>66</sup> Vice-castellan Brajislav and the Serbs who settled at the Vilagosvár estate were accused of violence against the possessions and serfs of the Arad Chapter – MNL-OL, DL 29809; Thallóczy–Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia*, pp. 172–174; Ćirković, *Kretanja prema severu*, pp. 324, 328; Dušana Dinić-Knežević, *Slovenski živalj u urbanim naseljima srednjovekovne južne Ugarske*, in *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju*, 37/1988, p. 11; Engel, *Archontológia I*, pp. 458–459; Bubalo, *Posedi*, p. 233.

Beside the aforementioned Brajan, in the middle of the 15th century the duties of Torontal vice-counts were also performed by the Serbian *familiares* of the despot: Desimir and Juga (in 1448)<sup>67</sup> and Novak (in 1450)<sup>68</sup>. No other information remained about any of the despot George's Serbian *familiares* from the Banat region. The increased presence of Serbian noblemen at the despot's possessions in Hungary from the 1440s may have been caused, on the one hand, by the growing Ottoman pressure and the reduction of the despot's territory (which led to the reduction in the number of available possessions in Serbia). On the other hand, at the time of internal turmoil in Hungary and his conflicts with the Hunyadi family, Despot George needed to have reliable men at his Hungarian estates<sup>69</sup>.

However, domestic noblemen on the estates of Despot George in Hungary still greatly outnumbered the Serbian ones. From a letter of Despot George sent on May 31, 1454, to the palatine Ladislaus Garai concerning the truce negotiations with the Turks, we learn that the despot's vice-count in Torontal County, or rather, in Bečej, was a certain Sulyok<sup>70</sup>.

After the death of Despot George at the end of 1456, his successor Despot Lazar (1456–1458) became actively involved in the internal conflicts in Hungary between the supporters of King Ladislaus V and the party of Hunyadi<sup>71</sup>. In April of 1457, Michael Szilágyi captured the Bečej castle and executed its Hungarian castellan with his family<sup>72</sup>. In return, Despot Lazar seized Keve (Kovin), Szentlászlóvár (Pescari) and some other castles on the Danube, relying on the king's supporters in the southern Banat. The ones who surrendered Kovin to the Serbian ruler were the commanders of this fortress, brothers John and Anthony, the sons of Peter of Zsidó. They were local noblemen with possessions in the Kovin County. The despot's army managed to penetrate deeper into the interior of Banat, but Szilágyi defeated them in the battle by the Tamiš (Timiș) river on May

<sup>67</sup> MNL-OL, DL 44588, 55368; Magina, *Câteva documente*, pp. 75–76; Engel, *Archontológia*, vol. I, p. 210; Krstić, *Serbian Nobility*, p. 135.

<sup>68</sup> MNL-OL, DL 44588; Pesty, Magina, *Diplome*, pp. 222–223.

<sup>69</sup> Krstić, *Serbian Nobility*, p. 135.

<sup>70</sup> *Codex Zichy*, vol. XII, p. 237.

<sup>71</sup> Peter Rokai, *Prilog biografiji despota Lazara Brankovića*, in *Istorijski časopis*, LVI/2008, pp. 186–190; Momčilo Spremić, *Despot Lazar Branković*, in *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta*, L/2013, pp. 904–905.

<sup>72</sup> The name of the unfortunate castellan was not stated in the report, so it is not certain if it was the aforementioned Sulyok: The *Archivo di Stato di Milano (ASMi)*, Sforzesco 650/1, 13, 1; Fraknoi Vilmos, *Hunyadi Mátyás király, 1440–1490*, (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1890), p. 45; Rokai, *Prilog biografiji*, p. 189.

25. Castles on the Danube remained in the hands of Serbs for about a year, most likely until the March of 1458, when they were taken by Michael Szilágyi<sup>73</sup>. At that time the aforementioned brothers John and Anthony of Zsidó lost their possessions in the Kovin County due to “infidelity”. King Matthias turned the confiscated possessions of the Zsidó brothers over to his uncle Szilágyi<sup>74</sup>. Due to the conflict with the Hunyadis, the despot’s family lost all their estates on Hungarian territory on the eve of the fall of the Serbian state in 1459<sup>75</sup>.

To conclude, the Serbian despots, as Hungarian barons and landowners, had numerous *familiars* among the domestic nobility to whom they entrusted the running of their vast estates. Many of the *familiars* of the despots came from the southern parts of Hungary, which were situated in the vicinity of Serbia. Some of them were previously in the service of Hungarian barons tasked with the protection of the southern parts of the kingdom, like Pipo of Ozora and John Maróti, who worked closely together with Despot Stephen. This all facilitated establishing of contacts between the Serbian monarch and the Hungarian nobility, leading to their employment by the despot. The *familiars* of the Serbian despots often established strong family and social relationships among themselves. Regarding the territories of today’s Banat and Crişana, the Serbian despots entrusted their estates there to either domestic noblemen or to noblemen from other parts of the kingdom, mainly from the southern Hungary. The Serbian despots gave responsible offices to some of their *familiars* from the Banat region, like Stephen and Benedict Himfi or Sandrin of Helemba, on their estates in other parts of the Hungarian kingdom as well. Since the 1440s, Despot George started appointing officials from Serbia on his estates in Banat and Crişana. The Serbian despots were also entrusted their Hungarian *familiars* with military and various other duties on the territory of Serbia.

<sup>73</sup> ASMi, Sforzesco 650/1, 7, 9, a; Nagy Iván – Nyáry Albert, *Magyar diplomaciai emlékek Mátyás király korából 1458–1490*, vol. I, (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1875), p. 19; Ljubomir Stojanović, *Stari srpski rodoslovi i letopisi*, (Sremski Karlovci: Srpska kraljevska akademija, 1927), p. 241; Sima Ćirković, *Prilošci za istoriju Kovina*, in Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju, 1/1970, pp. 85–86.

<sup>74</sup> MNL-OL, DL 15239; Ćirković, *Prilošci*, pp. 85–86; Aleksandar Krstić, *Iz istorije srednjovekovnih naselja jugozapadnog Banata (XV vek – prva polovina XVI veka)*, in Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju, 73/2006, pp. 37–38.

<sup>75</sup> Bubalo, *Posedi*, pp. 235–241.