

Royalty and Elites in the Countries of the Crown of Saint Stephen Medieval Solidarities and Identities in the 11th–14th Centuries

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THE HOLY CROWN OF HUNGARY
(CROWN OF SAINT STEPHEN).

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THE DEVELOPMENTS that determined the transformation of the power structure founded by the Hungarian clans settled in the Middle Danube region in the context of the second wave of the great migrations,¹ in a kingdom under the spiritual governance of the Holy See and claiming an apostolic vocation, are both a turning point in the history of Central and Eastern Europe and a demonstration of inclusivity on the part of medieval Christian civilization. The sedentarization of these clans irreversibly changed the old Slavic–German power condominium through the abolition of Great Moravia and called into question the missionary initiatives of German episcopates.² The conversion of the Hungarians to Christianity and the consecration of their kingdom through the coronation of King Saint Stephen (997–1038)

under the auspices of the conjoint forces involved in leading the Christian mission into the East and North marked, in terms of identity symbolism, the end of the moral crisis manifested in the collective mind through eschatological fear and the onset of the systematic efforts of the Christian Church to restore social order by imposing a norm in relation to arbitrariness.³ These developments highlighted by historical writings concerned with the Middle Ages and with the genesis of nations marked the evolution of the ethnic communities involved. The dynamics of the changes initially targeted the behavior of the holders of military power and subsequently the cultural background and political strategies of the old pagan elite, which, through the gradual assumption of the Western or Byzantine social-cultural paradigm, became the core component of the social scaffolding of the new states.

The case of the Kingdom of Hungary stands out among the string of accomplishments of the Christian mission due to a series of traits that the otherwise few written sources and chronicles highlight in the immediate succession of events. The conversion of the Slavs to Christianity was the result of the initiatives of contiguous Carolingian and Byzantine power structures, which ensured their partial legitimation and provided them with the opportunity to organize their own ecclesiastical institutions or to participate in disputes regarding the Empire.⁴ The relationship between the Hungarians and the two forces that competed for imperial succession consisted of conflicts generated by the Hungarians' plundering campaigns, successfully thwarted from the mid-10th century onwards. This state of affairs impacted historiographic tradition as well, in the sense that a tradition specific to Hungarian antiquity emerged, different from the paradigms of a Trojan origin developed by Western medieval chronicles.⁵ Historiography sought the origins of these choices to reach out to the Scythian and Hunnish enemies of the *orbis Romanus* in the readings embraced *expressis verbis* by the authors of the first Hungarian chronicles,⁶ who favored the incorporation of the ancient past of Pannonia into the identity heritage of the region's new inhabitants. A potential facilitating circumstance for the adoption of a past that privileged the uniqueness of the Hungarians resides, among others, in the specific singularities of their integration into *christianitas* and in the developments of the new kingdom's first century of existence. The decision to adopt the faith of their former enemies is seen as an expression of the pragmatism of Hungarian leaders, motivated by the defeat they had suffered at Lechfeld in 955,⁷ while the diplomatic proceedings to that effect involved negotiations with all the Christian centers engaged in leading the mission: the Byzantine Empire, the Holy See, and the Duchy of Poland, recently converted to Christianity in 966. The difficulty of reconciling the latter three's jurisdictional interests and the divisions among the elites of the Hungarian clans over accepting Latin Christianity

as promoted by Duke Géza through means whose brutality was remarkable even to the chronicles of the time interfered with the founding of Hungary's first ecclesiastical structures, consecrated by the Holy See thanks to the missionary enterprise of Saint Adalbert of Prague, the future martyr of the Prussian Kingdom.⁸ This polycentric mission illustrates the manner in which Central-European aristocracy had undergone a certain type of deep Christianization through agents subsequently canonized, yet the records of the chronicles inspired by the Bavarian episcopates in the proximity of Hungary mainly credit the contribution of the German entourage of Duke Vajk, who, once baptized, became King Stephen I. The chronicle of Ulrich von Reichenau stresses the piety of Queen Gisela and her contribution to the support offered by the king to the first monastic foundations.⁹ The contribution of strangers to saving Hungarian Christianity during the confrontation with the rebellion of the pagan Duke Koppány of Somogy, who claimed primacy within the Hungarian dynasty based on the principle of seniority, was placed in opposition to the Christian tradition of primogeniture. The victory of the Christian forces led by Vecelin von Werzeburg, of German origin and supported by Bavarian contingents, was considered a Teutonic success against the Hungarians.¹⁰ The xenophilic choices of Hungary's first Christian sovereign are even recorded by the aulic chronicles of the 14th century, which mention the inclusion among the nobility of guests from the principalities of the Empire and from the Latin kingdoms.¹¹ Modern historiography is still debating the authenticity of such royal tolerance, which is difficult to reconcile with medieval paradigms¹²—yet it may have been the result of the kingdom's institutional vulnerabilities—and with its choices targeting an active foreign policy. Hungary's involvement in the litigations that divided neighboring Christian states required the creation of long-term or circumstantial alliances with holders of power or dissident factions, thus incorporating, among others, a certain social and demographic mobility. Furthermore, this stage is associated with a certain trajectory of internal policy, namely, that of confronting insurgent regional centers, which was done out of loyalty to the Holy See, as was the case with the duchies of Banat and Transylvania.¹³ The restoration of royal authority along Hungary's eastern borders coincided with the campaigns of Emperor Basil II (976–1025) against the Bulgarian Empire,¹⁴ as well as with the recognition by the Holy See of the spiritual authority of the Ecumenical Patriarchate within its own sphere. The convergence of the interests of the new monarchy with those of the papacy and the former's insistence on placing the Archbishopric of Esztergom (Strigonium) under the direct authority of the Pope set the stage for a decisively impactful move for the evolution of Christian Hungary, namely, the placement of the kingdom under the protection of the Supreme Pontiff.¹⁵ Such privileged relations conceal deeper significations than feudal-

vassal affiliations, volatile to the extreme within *christianitas*, emerging as a successful experiment within the Church efforts to take on the mandate of restoring legal order among the states and peoples under its spiritual governance.¹⁶ The inclusion of Hungary among the papal fiefs was spiritually justified by the missionary nature of that kingdom, located close to the Ponto-Caspian steppes inhabited by pagan populations, as well as to the borders of the two competitors for imperial succession. From a legal perspective, the Pope's position was a consequence of Pannonia being a part of the *orbis Romanus*, which was under papal authority by virtue of a maximalist interpretation of the Donation of Constantine. Such developments were difficult to anticipate in the mid-11th century, yet those prelates inspired by the agenda of the Cluniac Reforms would seek to turn this desideratum into an actual reality.

SUCH INNOVATIONS that laid the ground for a historiographic discourse partial to the *avant la lettre* tolerance postulated by Hungarian royalty were offset by the first manifestations of the aristocratic elite's distrust in the sovereign's foreign collaborators, associated with the presence of Queen Gisela and with the king's nephew and successor, Peter I Orseolo.¹⁷ Latin-Hungarian chronicles blame the latter two's influence on the final years of King Stephen's reign and hold them responsible for the mutilation of Vazul, an alleged heir to the throne, as well as for the exile of his sons.¹⁸ The rebellion against King Peter is the result of the behavior of Latin and German officials who, under the inspiration of *furor Teutonicus*, would defile the wives and daughters of Hungarian nobles.¹⁹ The abuse committed by the foreign king's entourage turned into an indirect justification for the insurgency of certain noble factions, followed by the dethronement of the legitimate sovereign and the pagan uprising of 1046. The emergence of a new Árpáadian ruler, the martyrdom of certain high prelates, and the intervention of Emperor Henry III in support of King Peter called into question the existence of the apostolic kingdom, yet the mobilization of the local elite around the new king, Andrew I the Catholic (1046–1060), who had returned from his exile in Kyiv, ensured the restauration of internal order and paved the way for a kind of power condominium between the sovereign and the Hungarian aristocracy. The new king's religious devotion ensured the survival of local ecclesiastical institutions and the support of the Holy See against the interference of the German emperor, yet the ruler was compelled to resort to the so-called *servientes regis*, whose loyalty was disputed by his brother, Duke Béla.²⁰ The preservation of internal peace required the division of the kingdom and the devolution of some authority to the younger king, yet another solution that became an instrument of maintaining internal peace, while the true restoration of royal power coincided with the rule of Holy King Ladislaus (1077–1099),

who was the embodiment of the ideal Hungarian medieval sovereign. His initiatives were aligned with his image as the protector of his country and subjects against the Pecheneg raids,²¹ while the hieratic dimension of his power was strengthened by the canonization of King Saint Stephen (1080). Royal primacy in relation to its vassals materialized into foreign policy initiatives with decisive consequences for Christian Hungary, which consisted in the initiation of the incorporation of the Kingdom of Croatia, by virtue of the family alliance that united the Árpád dynasty with the last Croatian kings.²² The annexation of an old Christian kingdom with its own specific institutional profile engaged the kingdom into a constant confrontation with the local nobility seeking to secure its traditional privileges. On the other hand, Hungarian claims encroached upon the jurisdiction of the Holy See, which led the Hungarian king to cultivate a closer relationship with Emperor Henry IV (1053–1106), who was himself at odds with the papacy on the matter of ecclesiastical investiture. The reign of King Coloman the Learned (1099–1116) marked the restoration of good relations with the Holy See, as well as the institutionalization of the particular status of Croatia within the Holy Crown through the issuing of the famous *Pacta Conventa* in favor of the Croatian nobility in 1102. The reignition of disputes within the royal family led to the return of aristocratic factions in the actual race for power, facilitated, among other factors, by the emergence of new challenges threatening the stability of the kingdom, brought about by the passage of the crusaders on their way to liberate the Holy Land. The abuse committed by the latter against the locals and the king's intervention stirred hostile reactions on both sides, which continued throughout the following century.²³ In the long run, due to the migration of large groups of people, this time from the West, which was in full economic swing and experiencing demographic growth, towards the border regions of *christianitas*, inhabited by lesser-known communities enshrouded in negative prejudices by the chronicles of the time, yet rich in opportunities,²⁴ the Kingdom of Hungary was faced with the challenge of adapting to the reality of such guests, which could potentially change the kingdom's internal social hierarchy. The vulnerabilities of royal power in the first decades of the 11th century became manifest in the form of an increased importance attributed to officials of the Court, where a significant role was granted to the relatives of foreign queens. Their real or presumed influence turned them into the object of chroniclers' hostility. Queen Euphemia of Kyiv, banished by King Coloman, and her illegitimate son, Boris Árpád, in particular, are considered responsible for the confrontations which devastated Hungary during the early years of the reign of King Béla II (1131–1141),²⁵ while Queen Helena, the daughter of a Serbian dynast, was seen as the one who inspired the massacre of certain nobles suspected of having suggested the mutilation of the king. Patron-

age over royal power, legitimized by ethical rationales and by a concern for the protection of the kingdom, forced royalty to return to the xenophilic measures intended to lay the foundations of the military power required by an active foreign policy. The emergence of other communities that owed their status to their relationship with the king stirred the hostility of the aristocracy that dominated the royal counties and ecclesiastical institutions. The artisan of these innovations is considered to be King Géza II (1141–1162), who was involved in diplomatic and military enterprises during the conflict that pitted the Holy See against Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa (1154–1189), and who initiated the settling of German guests in certain Hungarian border regions.²⁶ The granting of privileges to the urban settlements founded by the newcomers is a feature shared with the neighboring Slavic states, but, as far as the internal social hierarchies were concerned, it implied the broadening of the pool of inhabitants enjoying free status and paved the way for that overlap between ethnic background and privilege,²⁷ thus setting the stage for the genesis of that ethnic and religious plurality of the countries belonging to the Crown of Saint Stephen, superficially identified with tolerance. The distrust in the foreigners' influence on the Hungarian royalty acquired new dimensions once Hungary became more deeply involved in diplomatic enterprises in the region, through matrimonial alliances with the Comnenus dynasty, interested in restoring their good relations with the Holy See and in a potential religious reconciliation.²⁸ The marriage of Duke Béla to a Byzantine princess, while seeming to open the path for the assumption of imperial dignity by a representative of the Árpád dynasty, turned out to be an obstacle in the way of the latter's coronation as king of Hungary in 1172, when Archbishop Lucas of Esztergom refused to perform the ceremony, under the pretext of the potential risk that Orthodox influence might call into question the kingdom's place within *christianitas*.²⁹ The attitude of that first prelate of Hungarian origin who became the Primate of Hungary was inspired by jurisdictional arguments concerning his relationship with the Holy See and the protection of the Church's property rights. Such a precedent is relevant for the views of the aristocracy—from whose ranks the high clergy originated—regarding the right to sanction dynastic succession. In terms of the horizontal solidarity within the legal society, this moment foreshadowed, a few decades before the Fourth Crusade, the abandonment of the integration policies of the first Árpádians and the adoption of an intransigent ecclesiastical discourse as to schismatics and pagans, in pursuit of an internal policy agenda and of the redistribution of certain economic resources in the regions inhabited by non-Catholic communities.

The political stability of the kingdom took a turn during the reigns of King Béla III's (1172–1196) immediate successors, Emeric I (1196–1204) and especially Andrew II (1205–1235). Loyalty to the king proved to be providential for

the preservation of the principle of primogeniture challenged by the rebellion of the nobles in the south of the kingdom,³⁰ yet the premature disappearance of the king and of his underage son triggered a series of political and ethical crises that eventually came to nullify the innovative initiatives of King Andrew II, a worthy contemporary of Emperor Frederick II (1215–1250). His marriage to Gertrude of Merania, who belonged to a Bavarian family linked to the Hohenstauffen dynasty and involved in diplomatic actions on the confines of Slavic and German states, aroused the opposition of the aristocracy, vexed by the alienation of the Crown's possessions in favor of the queen's relatives. Disputes culminated with the queen's assassination in 1213, during the king's absence from the country.³¹ That act, which met the criteria of a *nota infidelitatis*, remained unpunished, but distrust towards the attempts of German guests to ensure their ecclesiastical autonomy by organizing their own prepositures outside the authority of Hungarian dioceses became a leitmotif of the correspondence between the said dioceses and the Holy See. The opposition of the nobles proved to be strong enough to counteract the sovereign's foreign policy initiatives, in spite of their proactivity. His attempts to incorporate the western Russian knyazates resulted in a series of campaigns that ruined royal finances, while also paving the way for the kingdom's involvement in the expansion into regions suffering from a void of political authority. The title of *Rex Galiciae et Lodomeriae* now assumed by Árpádians became the grounds for legitimizing the Habsburg Monarchy's participation in the first division of Poland.

ANOTHER AVENUE pursued by the sovereign in his quest to offset the vulnerabilities of his internal position was his active involvement in the crusading initiatives aimed to protect the Eastern Latin Empire.³² His marriage to Yolanda of Courtenay³³ created the opportunity of an imperial succession, while the daughter born of that marriage, honored by the Roman Church with the attributes of sanctity, Saint Violant of Hungary,³⁴ inaugurated the privileged relations between the Kingdom of Hungary and the states of the Iberian Peninsula under the auspices of a permanent crusade. The sovereign's ambitious foreign commitments were faced with the limitations of his institutional resources, which made him dependent on the ability to secure the loyalty of the high social classes. Hungary's participation in the Fifth Crusade (1217) dealt a decisive blow to the country's financial stability and forced it to turn to the king's Jewish and Muslim traders. The cessation of some of the Crown's properties in favor of those traders, combined with the protests of the nobility and the clergy, led to repeated interventions on the part of papal legates, culminating with the excommunication of the king. The need for a political solution imposed the adoption of the Golden Bull of 1225 in favor of the kingdom's

nobles. Historical writings have sought to identify similarities between this piece of legislation and the *Magna Carta Libertatum*,³⁵ given the chronological coincidence and the more volatile nature of power relations in the border regions of *christianitas*. The corroboration of its provisions with those of other similar documents issued by lay and ecclesiastical power-holders testifies to a general desire to set the relationship between power and society within a legal framework, under the auspices of a reconciliation between the attributes of the state as embodied by the authority of the sovereign, on the one hand, and the privileges of the aristocratic elite and of free citizens, on the other. The privilege granted by King Andrew II, which became the keystone of the legal identity of the medieval Hungarian nation, is distinguished by the relationship between belonging to the said nation and the properties of the Crown, which could not be ceded to foreigners.³⁶ The legal guarantee of this new relationship between the aristocracy as a founder of the motherland and the patrimony of the Holy Crown was ensured by the famous *ius resistendi*, the nobility's right to oppose those of the king's or officials' measures that they deemed abusive, as well as by the universal nature of the privilege's provisions, which concerned all of the kingdom's nobles. This legal consecration of a state of things that resulted from the evolution of territorial institutions secured the monarchy's option to collaborate with categories of people at the bottom of the Hungarian privileged society, which were experiencing a degradation of their economic and social status in the competition against the members of the aristocracy, yet were enjoying sustained numerical growth thanks to military campaigns along all the borders, which Hungary was engaged in throughout the 13th century.³⁷ The availability of these dynamic social categories animated by solidarity, among which meritocracy tended to take precedence over material status, is illustrated by the development of advisory institutions at county level and in urban centers after 1250.

The importance of these new political forces proved to be decisive during the crisis that threatened the very survival of the apostolic kingdom, occasioned by the Mongolian invasion of 1241–1242. The destruction of the royal army at Mohy and the temporary withdrawal of King Béla IV (1235–1270), the former regent agreed upon by the noble factions opposing his father, put to the test the monarchy's capacity to ensure by its own means the safety of the kingdom's inhabitants in the face of this final offensive of the world of the steppes against the sedentarized Christian world. Faced with that twofold pressure, the Hungarian royalty carried out a new attempt at legitimizing its position as the defender of the borders of Christianity. In his address to the prelates gathered at the Second Council of Lyon, King Béla referred to Hungary as *finis christianitatis*³⁸ and called for the mobilization of crusading forces in its defense. The arguments of the Hungarian diplomacy capitalized on a certain tendency within

Roman Church ecclesiology, which had started in the second half of the 12th century, to prioritize the so-called Cismarine Crusade over fighting for the defense of Jerusalem, as a premise for preserving the purity of the doctrine of the Christian Church. The privileged position claimed by Hungary as the border of *christianitas* justified a certain amount of tolerance as to the king's relations to pagan or schismatic communities, such as his patronage of the Cumans and his dynastic alliances with the western Russian knyazes or the Lascaris dynasty. His recourse to the military resources of such allies aroused the mistrust of the Holy See, which found in the local noblemen an interlocutor more willing to embrace its choices in ecclesiastical policy, according to which the properties of non-Catholics became a potential target for the expansion of the nobility's possessions.³⁹ The resumption of an active foreign policy aimed at acquiring land along the western border of the Lands of the Crown in the context of the escheat of the Babenberg dynasty⁴⁰ and the opportunities brought about by the disintegration of the Vlach-Bulgarian Empire of the Asenids in the Balkans⁴¹ generated further suspicion among the papal legates, who were concerned by the employment of contingents of Cumans, who were the former adversaries of the Latin crusaders in the Balkans and whose conversion was deemed uncertain, while the experienced failures triggered a new crisis among the Hungarian elite, this time in the form of an intergenerational conflict. The attempts at dividing power between the king and Crown Prince Stephen, the future Stephen V (1270–1272), by resorting to the old way of dividing the kingdom, set the stage for a series of civil wars⁴² brought to an end through the mediation of the kingdom's high prelates, while the ascent of the young king hastened an open confrontation between the magnates who owned land in the northern and western parts of the kingdom, who requested support from Bohemia and the nobles of Styria, on the one hand, and the young magnates involved in the campaigns of former Duke Stefan of Bulgaria, who held fiefs along the northern and eastern borders of the Crown. The achievements of that short rule led to the realignment of the monarchy with the agenda of the Holy See through a dynastic alliance with the Angevin sovereigns of Naples, the papacy's lay partners in Italy, who were seeking to restore the Eastern Latin Empire.⁴³ The disappearance of the king under circumstances that were never fully clarified and the rule of his underage son, Ladislas IV the Cuman, delayed the restoration of royal power until the assumption of the crown by his Neapolitan relatives. The members of the nobility who had become the *de facto* deciders of kingdom policy proved to be efficient enough to preserve its unity and to successfully oppose a Mongolian invasion, as well as internal insurgencies stimulated by the vulnerability of the royal power.

The historiographic manifestation of such innovative dispositions consists of the significations incorporated in the Latin-Hungarian chronicles written dur-

ing this period, where the protagonists of the history narrated by the authors are mainly members of aristocratic clans, invested *expressis verbis* by Simon of Kéza with the right to manage the public affairs of the Holy Crown.⁴⁴

The political experiment embodied by the founding dynasty of the Kingdom of Hungary marked the completion of the integration of the Hungarian clans that settled in Pannonia in the late 9th century into the development frameworks of medieval civilization, while the choice to preserve the type of state typical for the preclassic Middle Ages entailed the sharing of power with certain categories of the privileged elite. This diarchy did not interfere with the functioning of the state thanks to a division of competences between the royal power and the *natio nobilium*, which, during this process, acquired a legal identity and outlined its own identity-related views in relation to the past and present, thus influencing the long-term development of the modern Hungarian nation.



Notes

1. For an overview of the events and their impact on the post-Carolingian Christian world, see Lucien Musset, *Les invasions: le second assaut contre l'Europe chrétienne (VIIe–XIe siècles)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969), passim.
2. Jenő Szűcs, “Questions of ‘Origins’ and National Consciousness,” in *The Historical Construction of National Consciousness: Selected Writings*, ed. Gábor Klaniczay, Balázs Trencsényi, and Gábor Gyáni (Budapest: Central-European University Press, 2022), 296–332.
3. Nora Berend, “Introduction,” in *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus’, c. 900–1200*, ed. Nora Berend (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 6–10.
4. Mirela Ivanova, “Inventing and Ethnicising Slavonic in the Long Ninth Century,” *Journal of Medieval History* 47, 4–5 (2021): 576–587.
5. Merovingian chronicles operated a spectacular innovation in comparison to their sources of inspiration. While Gregory of Tours referred to the founder of the Frankish dynasty as *quidam Francus*, Fredegarius Scolasticus associated the Frankish tribes with the Trojan refugees led by *Francio*. See Stelian Brezeanu, *Identități și solidarități medievale: Controverse istorice* (Bucharest: Corint, 2002), 23–36.
6. For more on the genres cultivated by medieval historical writing, see Bernard Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris: Aubier–Montaigne, 1980), passim.
7. György Györffy, *King Saint Stephen of Hungary*, trans. Peter Doherty (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 27–30.
8. For details, see Cosmas Pragensis, *Chronica Boemorum*, ed. Bertold Bretholz and Wilhelm Weinberger (Berlin: Weidmann, 1955), 39–47.

9. János M. Bak, "Roles and Functions of Queens in Árpadian and Angevin Hungary (1000–1386 A.D.)," in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John Carmi Parsons (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 13–24.
10. Pál Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary, 895–1526* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 26.
11. The same sources attribute to the king the remark that the rule of a single language (in the ethnical sense of the word) is weak. See *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum*, ed. Emericus Szentpétery (Budapest, 1932), 1:137.
12. Nora Berend, *Stephen I, the First Christian King of Hungary: From Medieval Myth to Modern Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), passim.
13. See Alexandru Madgearu, *Expansiunea maghiară în Transilvania* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2019), passim.
14. For details, see Paul Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier: A Political Study of the Northern Balkans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 38–44.
15. Șerban Turcuș, *Sinodul general de la Buda (1279)* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2001), 101–104.
16. For information on the dynamics of this process, see Georges Duby, *Arta și societatea: 980–1420*, trans. Marina Rădulescu, with a preface by Răzvan Theodorescu (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1987), passim.
17. Györffy, *King Saint Stephen of Hungary*.
18. Simon of Kéza, *Gesta Hunorum et Hungarorum*, in *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum*, ed. Emericus Szentpétery (Budapest, 1932), 1:68.
19. Simon of Kéza, *Gesta Hunorum et Hungarorum*, 1:71. The topic of assaults against women of noble status is a leitmotif of the chronicles of the time, even noted in the records of the Chronicle of Novgorod in relation to the Varangian allies of Knyaz Yaroslav the Wise. See *The Chronicle of Novgorod, 1016–1471*, trans. Robert Michell and Nevill Forbes (London: Royal Historical Society, 1914), 76.
20. For details, see *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum*, 1:128–120.
21. The king's defeat of the Pechenegs at Kerlés and the legend of the rescuing of the bishop's daughter, whom they had kidnapped, became sources of Hungarian state propaganda in the mid-15th century, in the context of Emperor Frederick III's (1446–1493) claim to Saint Stephen's Crown, on the basis of family succession. See Johannes de Thurocz, *Chronica Hungarorum*, ed. Erzsébet Galántai and Gyula Kristó (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1985; repr., 1994), 47–49.
22. Danijel Džino, *Becoming Slav, Becoming Croat: Identity Transformations in Post-Roman and Early Medieval Dalmatia*, East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450, vol. 12 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 179–192.
23. The chronicle of Otto of Freising regretfully noted that Hungary was inhabited by monsters in human guise. See Ioan-Aurel Pop, *Geneza medievală a națiunilor moderne (secolele XIII–XVI)* (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1998), 71–73.
24. For the significations of medieval colonization, see Jacques Le Goff, *Civilizația Occidentului medieval*, trans. Maria Holban (Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1970), 23–37.

25. According to the aulic chronicles, King Béla summoned a meeting of the kingdom's nobles that reconfirmed his legitimacy, rejecting the arguments of the supporters of the Ukrainian claimant. See *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum*, 1:184.
26. According to Hungarian chronistic tradition, King Géza had in his service significant contingents of Muslim archers from Khorezm. See Thomas Nágler, *Așezarea sașilor în Transilvania*, 2nd edition, trans. Anamaria Haldner (Bucharest: Kriterion, 1992), 32–47.
27. Nora Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom: Jews, Muslims and “Pagans” in Medieval Hungary, c.1000–c.1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 193–207.
28. Emperor Manuel Comnenus (1143–1180) had initiated a reconciliation with the Supreme Pontiff as a premise for the reestablishment of Byzantine positions in southern Italy, while the marriage of his daughter to Hungarian Duke Béla was going to ensure the stability of the empire's Balkan borders. See Warren T. Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 137–148.
29. László Kontler, *A History of Hungary: Millennium in Central Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 59–63.
30. According to chronistic tradition, King Emeric came unarmed and wearing his royal crown in the midst of the rebels led by his brother Andrew, which caused them to capitulate. See Archdeacon Thomas of Split, *History of the Bishops of Salona and Zadar*, Latin text by Olga Perić, ed. and trans. Damir Karbić, Mirjana Matijević Sokol, and James Ross Sweeney (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 141–143.
31. Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 123–126.
32. For details on the evolution of the Latin states in the Balkans after 1204, see Filip Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium: The Empire of Constantinople (1204–1228)* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), *passim*.
33. Florian Dumitru Soporan, “Mission and Identity: Foreign Queens, Founding Dynasties and their Subjects in Central and Eastern Europe,” *Transylvanian Review* 23, 3 (2014): 108–119.
34. For the significance of this prestigious Hungarian princess, who became Queen of Aragon through her marriage to King James I, see Therese Martin, ed., *Reassessing the Roles of Women as “Makers” of Medieval Art and Architecture* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1087–1089;
35. Alice Taylor, “Homage, Overlordship and the Consequences of Peace: The Treaties of Norham (1209, 1212), Anglo-Scottish Relations and the ‘Scottish Clause’ in Magna Carta Revisited,” *Journal of Medieval History* 51, 1 (2025): 25–54.
36. For details, see Attila Zsoldos, *The Golden Bull of Hungary*, Arpadiana 9 (Budapest: Research Centre for the Humanities, 2022), *passim*.
37. Martyn Rady, *Nobility, Land and Service in Medieval Hungary* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 125–139.
38. For an analysis of Hungarian medieval political discourse, see Nora Berend, “Défense de la Chrétienté et naissance d’une identité: Hongrie, Pologne et la péninsule

- Ibérique au Moyen Âge,” *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 58, 5 (2003): 1009–1027.
39. For details regarding the realities in Transylvania, see Ioan-Aurel Pop, “*Din mâinile valabilor schismatici...: Românii și puterea în Regatul Ungariei medievale (secolele XIII–XIV)*” (Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană, 2018), *passim*.
 40. For details as to the conflicts generated by the inheritance of the possessions of the empire’s former Eastern Mark, see Jean Bérenger, *Istoria Imperiului Habsburgilor, 1273–1918*, trans. Nicolae Baltă (Bucharest: Teora, 2000), 12–19.
 41. See Alexandru Madgearu, *The Asanids: The Political and Military History of the Second Bulgarian Empire (1185–1280)* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 183–189.
 42. For the dynamics of the disputes of 1260–1266, see Tudor Sălăgean, *Transilvania în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIII-lea: Afirmarea regimului congregațional* (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2003), 24–47.
 43. Florian Dumitru Soporan, “Sfânta Coroană și *natio nobilium*: realitatea competiției și simbolistica puterii în Ungaria medievală,” in *Națiuni, naționalism și perspective interetnice în Transilvania: In honorem Sorin Mitu la 60 de ani*, ed. Constantin Bărbulescu, Ion Cârja, Marius Eppel, Andrea Fehér, Vlad Popovici, Ana Victoria Sima, and Lucian Turcu (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2025), 93–103.
 44. Brezeanu, *Identități și solidarități medievale*, 153–168.

Abstract

Royalty and Elites in the Countries of the Crown of Saint Stephen:
Medieval Solidarities and Identities in the 11th–14th Centuries

Political stabilization, along with the onset of the economic revival of the late first millennium AD, entailed a double genesis, of both ethnic and institutional nature, characterized, in the case of Central-Eastern European states, by their integration into the Christian world. While the choices of the ruling elite of the Hungarian clans settled in Pannonia in the late 9th century ensured the survival of the nation in the long run, even through crises that challenged its institutional autonomy, the changes they brought about triggered an active dialogue between power and society, which led to the outlining of two parallel views among the actors competing for political power and for the discourse that legitimized it.

Keywords

kingdom, nobility, nation, Christendom, liberty