

Antun Nekić

**OLIGARCHS, KING AND LOCAL SOCIETY: MEDIEVAL
SLAVONIA 1301-1343**

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1301-1343

by

Antun Nekić

(Croatia)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Master of Arts degree in Medieval Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

Chair, Examination Committee

Thesis Supervisor

Examiner

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I, the undersigned, **Antun Nekić**, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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Abstract

In 1301 the ability of the king to exert some kind of authority in medieval Slavonia reached its nadir, and the royal power was replaced by that of the oligarchs: the Babonići and the Kőszegi kindreds completely controlled medieval Slavonia. However, in the next three decades Charles Robert managed to establish effective royal control and the power of these two kindreds was crushed to a large degree. The aim of the thesis was to analyze this process from several perspectives. First of all, various strategies that the oligarchs and the king employed in the different stages of these power struggles were analyzed. Secondly, the interaction between the oligarchs and the king with the local society was investigated. Focus was especially placed on the question of loyalty. It was argued that the oligarchs managed to create closed system of service, mostly visible in the phenomenon of multi-generational service. The task to crack this system was entrusted to Nicholas Felsőlendvai and Mikac of the Ákos kindred, whom Charles Robert installed in the office of the ban after 1323, and whose power rose with that of their lord. This task was done through the various grants given by these two bans or through their patronage that lead to the royal court. Finally, the examination of the last segment, that is the possibility of local nobility to reach the royal court, revealed different mechanism of integration of medieval Slavonia (locality) and the court (center) in the fourteenth century.

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Table of contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1. OLIGARCHS AND KING, 1301-1343	9
1.1 Oligarchs and King, 1301-1309	9
1.2 Oligarchs and king, 1310-1322	22
1.3 Oligarchs and king, 1323-1343	24
Chapter 2. LOYALTY AND POWER	29
2.1 Closed system of service	29
2.2 Untying the oligarchical knot	34
2.3 The road to the royal court	46
2.3.1 Patterns of the visits to the royal court.....	47
2.3.2 Royal court and the ban's patronage	60
Conclusion	70
Bibliography	80
Appendices	86

List of Figures

Figure 1. The map of Slavonia and Croatia (from the eleventh until the fourteenth centuries)	3
Figure 2. Genealogical tree of the Kőszegis	89
Figure 3. Genealogical tree of the Babonići	89
Figure 4. Genealogical tree of Nicholas of Ludbreg of Pécs kindred and Stephen son of Apay	89

Introduction

In the period from the 1270s to the 1320s the Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia was a political stage imbued with constant struggles. Striving and fighting for the throne between number of contenders and battles of oligarchs to expand and keep their positions and power marked these turbulent years. Medieval Slavonia was not exempt from this turmoil either. From the 1270s constant struggles ensued, and from the beginning of the 1280s two oligarchical fractions emerged as the strongest: the Babonić and the Kőszegi kindreds. These two kindreds practically split medieval Slavonia into two halves, which was particularly emphasized after the death of Andrew III.¹ This point in time (1301) is also a starting point for this thesis. The year of 1301 is a point when the ability of the king to exert some kind of authority in medieval Slavonia reached its nadir. In 1343, the closing date of the temporal scope of this thesis, an entirely different situation prevails. The power of the Babonići and the Kőszegis was crushed to a large extent and the king's power in medieval Slavonia was firmly established. Although some earlier date could have been taken as the end of the period studied here, the year 1343 also possesses a symbolic value; in that year the man who was most meritorious for the restoration of the king's power in medieval Slavonia, ban of Slavonia Mikac² of the Ákos kindred, died.

This kind of political situation provides a researcher with an opportunity to question a string of interconnected issues. First of all, we can follow the strategies of the oligarchs to preserve and extend their power in various phases, from the struggles fought between each other, to the phase when their main opponent was the king. On the other hand, it is also possible to analyze the situation created by the installment of two of the king's oligarchs

¹ Nada Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata u razvijenom srednjem vijeku* [The history of Croats in the late Middle Ages] (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1976), 343-60.

² In the Hungarian historiography know as Mikcs.

(Nicholas and Mikac) as bans. Observing the situation created by the power struggle of several oligarchs of different nature also provides an insight into different strategies for extension and preservation of power at work. Besides looking at the political processes of the time from the perspective of the oligarchs, examining the restoration of royal power from the king's perspective opens up another research question. Specifically, this will entail analyses of the methods and strategies that the king used to establish his effective power, especially through the installation of his "own" oligarchs as bans in medieval Slavonia. This last point also partially explains why the king is not listed first in the title of the thesis. Putting the king in the first place not only suggests some kind of hierarchical relationship with the oligarchs, which was certainly not the case for the first half of the period studied here, but it also creates a teleological impression informed by the fact that the king did eventually manage to crush the power of the Babonići and the Kőszegis.

The other principal question of the thesis will be the interaction of the oligarchs with the local society, and one of the most important aspects of this interaction is that the oligarchs can be seen as mediators between the local society and the king (in the political sphere), and it is in this sense that they hold a central position. The position of the mediators did not necessarily mean that the channels between the king and the local society were open, sidestepping the oligarchs, but that the oligarchs actively used their position for further promotion of their interests. However, even such political behavior sheds light on one of the main strands of the present thesis, namely, the interplay between oligarchs, king and local society in its entirety.

An additional element besides the political situation in the given time period which provides a conducive research is the fact that medieval Slavonia was a distinct political entity within the Kingdom of Hungary. This does not only delineate the geographical scope of the

present thesis, but also means that there existed a political community with its own specific traits. In this regard the *regnum Sclavonie* was also a political arena with a more or less well-defined territorial framework and specific governmental and institutional characteristics, one of which was the fact that the official at the top of the political community of *regnum Sclavonie* was a ban. Combined with the previously discussed fact that the transforming power relations in the period between 1301 and 1343 enable analyses of the interaction between oligarchs, king and local community in different situations, the context of the political entity of *regnum Sclavonie* constitutes another element creating the appropriate and useful research framework for this thesis.



Figure 1. The map of Slavonia and Croatia (from the eleventh until the fourteenth centuries)³

³ The map is taken from György Györffy, „Die Nordwestgrenze des byzantinischen Reiches im XI. Jahrhundert und die Ausbildung des 'ducatus Sclavoniae',“ in *Mélanges Szabolcs de Vajay*, ed. Pierre Brière et al. (Braga: Livraria Cruz, 1971), 295-312.

Primary sources used in the thesis are legal documents issued by a few authorities: the king, the ban of *Sclavonia*, *comites* of county of Zagreb and Križevci, and places of authentication working within the territory of *regnum Sclavonie* (Zagreb and Čazma). All in all, more than 500 relevant charters issued by these institutions have survived. Due to the nature of the thesis, however, research will not be restricted to the period between 1301 and 1343, but will especially extend to the two decades prior to 1301, and in some instances it will include material from the period following the banate of Mikac. Although fairly abundant, these sources nevertheless pose certain limitations for modern historians. First of all, of all the social activities, the historical actors were almost exclusively concerned to write down those connected with the property transactions. Moreover, these charters were written in a highly formulaic fashion, and what is even more important, the relation between that what was written down and the measure in which that reflects what happened is highly problematic.⁴ It is also worth pointing out that this kind of material is especially unfriendly for research examining political institutions of the period. For instance, *comes* of the county of Zagreb can be identified only for two years within the whole period. These shortcomings and methodological problems will be addressed in the following chapters in appropriate places.

Nevertheless, with all the problems that these sources represent they have not been used and scrutinized nearly enough. Even though the trend is reversing in the recent time, Tamás Pálosfalvi's conclusion that "the structure and development of the late medieval Slavonian nobility as well as the history of late medieval Slavonia as such have hitherto remained almost completely outside the sphere of interest of historians in Croatia and

⁴ For the nature of the sources and the problem that they pose see Mladen Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo u doba anžuvinske vlasti (1301.-1387.)* [Croatian Kingdom during the Rule of the Angevin Dynasty (1301-1387)]. (forthcoming). I would like to thank the author for letting me use his manuscript before the publication, and also indicate that I will not be able to provide the relevant page numbers in the following citations.

Hungary alike” may be extended to the first half of the fourteenth century.⁵ For instance, while the attempts of kings Charles Robert and Louis the Great to establish political control on territories south of Gvozd, that is in the kingdoms of Croatia and Dalmatia, attracted much more attention, the same cannot be stated for the similar processes in medieval Slavonia during the period from 1301 to 1343.⁶ Furthermore, previous approaches to the problem have been unsatisfactory. For instance, although Hrvoje Kekez wrote valuable works on the Babonići kindred he approached the problem from the perspective of family history. In so doing he relied on the approach developed by Erik Fügedi; however, the Elefánthy had quite different social position than the Babonići and it is questionable to what measure their comparison can be useful. Furthermore, not only that his methodological approach is questionable, but there are also some other significant issues which will be approached and analyzed differently here.⁷ Another set of problems stems from the fact that most works operate inside the framework of national historiographies. In the case of Croatian historiography the authors dealing with the process of restoration and consolidation of royal power view it from the perspective of defeated oligarchs and from the perspective of nobility in general.⁸ On the other hand, some Hungarian authors view the process of restoration from the king's perspective, but focusing on the impact of the process on the courtly center rather than on the *regnum Sclavonie* itself.⁹ Besides the work of Mladen Ančić there have been no

⁵ Tamás Pálosfalvi, *The Noble Elite of the County of Körös (Križevci) 1400-1526* (Budapest: MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Történettudományi Intézet, 2014), 13.

⁶ Damir Karbić, „Defining the position of Croatia during the restoration of royal power (1345-1361). An Outline,” in ... *The Man of Many Devices, Who Wondered Many Ways ...: Festschrift in Honor of János M. Bak*, ed. Balázs Nagy and Marcell Sebők, (Budapest: CEU Press, 1999), 520-26, and the literature listed there.

⁷ Hrvoje Kekez, “Plemićki rod Babonića do kraja 14 stoljeća [The noble Babonići kindred until the end of the fourteenth century],” (Ph.D. diss., Zagreb: Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Hrvatski studiji: 2011); Ibid., “Između dva kralja: plemićki rod Babonića u vrijeme promjene na ugarsko-hrvatskom prijestolju, od 1290. do 1309. godine [Between two kings: the noble Babonići kindred in the period of change on the Hungarian-Croatian throne, from 1290 until 1309],” *Povijesni prilozi* 35 (2008): 61-89.

⁸ See for example Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, 513-30.

⁹ Mostly applicable to works of Engel and Fügedi since they occasionally use examples from medieval Kingdom of Croatia, but only to reach general conclusions rather than referring to local circumstances specifically, Pál Engel, *Realm of St. Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary, 895-1526* (London: New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 133, 135; Erik Fügedi, *Castle and Society in Medieval Hungary (1000-1437)* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1986), 69, 74, 113, 116.

attempts to combine these perspectives and focus on the interplay of oligarchs, king and the local (noble) society.¹⁰ However, he focused on the whole Kingdom of Croatia during the rule of the Angevins, and not strictly on medieval Slavonia; so the themes that he only indicated, and left unexplored will thus be taken here, along with the new problems that will be raised.

Thus, the aim of this thesis is to have a fresh look at the attempts of the oligarchs to extend and preserve their power, against the king who was trying to curb and crush their power through various strategies, and the influence of these conflicts on the local society of medieval Slavonia. The thesis will be divided into two main chapters. The first chapter will focus on the relationship of the oligarchs and the king in the given period. The chapter will be further divided into three subchapters chronologically, covering the period from 1301 to 1309, from 1310 to 1322, and from 1323 to 1343, respectively. These years mark significant changes in the (power) relationship between the king and the oligarchs. Focused on the political relations, the chapter follows a chronological line. In each phase the different strategies that the oligarchs and the king used to maintain and gain power will be examined. The themes explored in this chapter have been dealt with already before, but a fresh look is necessary, especially for the period between 1301 and 1309.

The second chapter will not be organized chronologically, and the focus will move from the sphere of the high politics to the relationship between the oligarchs and the king with the local society. Namely, the chapter will examine one of the (or even the most important) foundations of power – manpower on whom the oligarchs and the king relied on. The chapter will open with the examination of the relationship of the oligarchs with their retainers. The phenomenon of multi-generational service, which has not been recognized and stressed enough so far, will be especially emphasized in order to argue that the oligarchs

¹⁰ Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming).

created a closed system of service in which they managed to exclude any other authority (primarily the king's) and impose themselves as supreme lords in the territories under their control. The second subchapter will focus on the attempts of the king's agents (bans Nicholas and Mikac) to undermine this system and establish a chain of loyalty that would lead through them to the king. That is, the methods that they employed to win over the allegiance of local nobility will be explored. The final subchapter will focus on the interplay between the oligarchs, king and the local society from a perspective that has not been employed before. Namely, the visits of the bans to the royal court and their patronage for the nobles from Slavonia to gain various royal grants will be explored.¹¹ Through these phenomena wider question on the nature of the political system under discussion here will be addressed, especially through the comparison with the later periods. Finally, in the conclusion the matters addressed in the thesis will be approached more generally: the nature of the political system(s) will be analyzed with the help of the framework provided by the research on oligarchy by Jeffrey Winters. His typology of the oligarchies (warring, ruling, sultanistic and civil) will be used, that is, the insight provided by two types (warring and sultanistic) will serve as a framework for the consideration of socio-political system(s) in the medieval Slavonia between 1301 and 1343. Furthermore, the concept of loyalty (*fidelitas*) that stood at the center of the politics of the time will be utilized for the better understanding of the power strategies of the oligarchs and the king.

Before proceeding, some additional remarks are necessary, and they concern the terms used in the title. The oligarchs are defined here as “actors who command and control massive concentrations of material resources that can be deployed to defend or enhance their personal wealth and exclusive social position.”¹² The material resources that define the oligarchs are

¹¹ It must be stressed that Mladen Ančić opened this avenue of research, but the analyses in this thesis deal with the matter in a more systematic way and raise questions different from those that he concentrates on.

¹² Jeffrey A. Winters, *Oligarchy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 6.

always estimated in contrast to the rest of the society. No matter how hard it might be to count someone's wealth in the medieval Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia in order to distinguish his belonging to a specific group of society¹³, in order to recognize who were the oligarchs in medieval Slavonia the ownership of the castles is a definite indication.¹⁴ According to this wealth criterion only the Babonići and the Kőszegis could count as oligarchs; at the beginning of the fourteenth century both had more than ten castles in medieval Slavonia, unparalleled by anyone else. The second term in the title was used in the singular somehow teleologically, since there were more kings, at least until 1308; however, by concentrating on Charles Robert more focused analyses can be conducted. Finally, local society refers above all to the local nobility, although the Church and the free royal town will be also included in the discussion.

¹³ For this kind of problem see Pálosfalvi, *The Noble elite*,

¹⁴ That the castles were measure of wealth and oligarchical power is demonstrated in Fügedi, *Castle and Society*, 65-99.

Chapter 1. OLIGARCHS AND KING, 1301-1343

1.1 Oligarchs and King, 1301-1309

On 30 July 1303 the archbishop of Kalocsa and the bishop of Zagreb appeared before the chapter of Čazma where they had the letters of Pope Boniface VIII publicly read and declared to all the clergy and the laymen that were present there on that day.¹⁵ The papal letters were a result of the litigation process that was initiated by the papacy in 1302, and the papal verdict was promulgated in May of the following year.¹⁶ This process examined whether the throne of the Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia belonged to the Angevin contender Charles Robert or the Czech-Polish Prince Venceslas from the Přemyslid dynasty. The papal ruling left no doubt that only Charles Robert was entitled to rule as a legitimate king and that allegiance of the subjects was due only to him.¹⁷ Bearing in mind the significance of the message, the bishop and the archbishop probably tried to convoke as many people as possible.¹⁸ However, regardless of the number of people who were present and those who heard the papal decision, those who counted were certainly absent and the papal exhortations, of which they were certainly aware, had little influence upon them. They were the members of Babonić and Kőszegi family.¹⁹

¹⁵ “presentibus clero, religiosis, nobilibus, incolis, civibus, populis et ... hominibus eiusdem civitatis ... et provincie;” document no. 48, 54-55, in Tadija Smičiklas, *Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*, vol. 8 (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1910) (further CD). For the institution of chapters (*loca credibilia*) in the medieval Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia see Zsolt Hunyadi, “Administering the Law: Hungary’s Loca Credibilia,” in *Custom and Law in Central Europe*, ed. Martyn Rady (Cambridge: Centre for European Legal Studies, University of Cambridge, 2003), 25-35.

¹⁶ CD vol. 8, no. 42, 48-9. For a short review of the case see Wojciech Kozłowski, “The Thirteenth-Century ‘International’ System and the Origins of the Angevin-Piast Dynastic Alliance” (Ph.D. diss., Central European University, 2014), 266-67.

¹⁷ Kozłowski, “The Thirteenth-Century,” 267.

¹⁸ “ad hoc convocatis,” CD VIII, doc. 48, 54.

¹⁹ The term Kőszegis will be used throughout the thesis although the focus will be only on Henry the Younger and his sons who were involved in Slavonian affairs; this is done only for the sake of simplicity, and it should not be seen as a sign that the different descendants of Henry Kőszegi who died in 1274 are treated without a necessary distinction; see Attila Zsoldos, “A Henrik-fiak: A Héder nembéli Kőszegiek “családi története” [The Henrik Sons: The Family History of the Kőszegis of the Héder Kindred],” *Vasi Szemle* 64 (2010): 652.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century these two rival families controlled all of medieval Slavonia. The Babonići controlled the territory from the mountain range of Velebit to the Moslavina and regions of Križevci and Koprivnica on the northeastern part; Krapina and Varaždin in the west were out of their control. On the other hand, the Kőszegis controlled the territories outside of the domination of the Babonići, that is the eastern, northeastern and northwestern parts of medieval Slavonia.²⁰ Besides these territories in Slavonia, the Kőszegis also held huge territories in the Kingdom of Hungary under their control, including counties of Baranya, Tolna, Somogy, Zala, Bodrog, Sopron and Vas.²¹ Slavonia's division into two by these two oligarchical fractions was mainly the result of the struggles that started in the 1270s.²² Nevertheless, until the death of Andrew III in 1301, the kings, first Ladislaus IV and then Andrew III, were still able to exert some kind of power and influence in medieval Slavonia regardless of the strength of these two oligarchical fractions.²³ The two contenders for the throne during the first decade of the fourteenth century, however, had little influence on the oligarchical factions. Their power to exert some kind of influence in medieval Slavonia was nonexistent, which, in retrospect, shows that the aforementioned papal exhortations were not as effective as the pope and the Angevins hoped for at the time.

Firstly the position of the Kőszegi family will be examined. Unfortunately, there is practically no source material that could shed light on the part of medieval Slavonia that was under their influence. Nevertheless, it is possible to make some general remarks about their

²⁰ Mladen Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming).

²¹ At the height of their power the Kőszegis held around 500 villages and an impressive number of 50 castles. Marija Karbić, "Gisingovci: Hrvatsko-ugarska velikaška obitelj njemačkog podrijetla [The Kőszegi: A Croatian-Hungarian magnate family of German origin]," *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice* (1999): 21-22. For the counties which the Kőszegis held as counts see Pál Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája 1301-1457* [Hungarian Secular Archontology], vol. 1 (Budapest: História, 1996), 102, 114, 175, 178, 206, 225.

²² Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, 340-42, 346-52.; Hrvoje Kekez, "Između dva kralja," 61-81.; Ibid., "Hinc transit," 76-93; Marija Karbić, "Joakim Pektar, slavonski ban iz plemićkog roda Gut-Keled [Joakim Pektar, Slavonian ban of the noble Gut-Keled kindred]," *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice* (2000): 19-24.

²³ At least this is impression gained from the fact that for instance that the mother of Andrew III, Tomasina Morosini, who held the title of *ducissa totius Sclavonie et gubernatrix parcium citradanubialium usque maritima*, had enough military power to take the castle Vrbas from Radoslav Babonić in 1295; Kekez, "Između dva kralja," 74.

political allegiance after the death of Andrew III, enabling us to see in an indirect way the relationship between royal and oligarchical power in their part of medieval Slavonia.

Attila Zsoldos asserts that the Kőszegis were, besides Pál of the Geregye kindred and later Tamás Borsa and his sons, among the first oligarchs that emerged during the thirteenth century.²⁴ Much like his brothers, Henry the Younger was a staunch enemy of Andrew III after 1291, a situation that influenced their sympathies towards the Angevin dynasty. However, the contacts and relationship between the Kőszegis and Naples were not as strong as the ties between the latter and the Šubići, Babonići, and Frankopani kindreds.²⁵ Furthermore, John and Henry the Younger Kőszegi entered into an agreement with Andrew III in 1300, on which occasion the title of Slavonian ban was most probably granted to Henry the Younger, a title that he would keep until his death in 1310.²⁶ After the death of Andrew III in January 1301, the Kőszegis took sides with Venceslas, and during that period they had serious clashes with the supporters of Charles Robert in the counties of Vukovo (Valkó) and Požega.²⁷ After Venceslas withdrew his claim for the throne, the Kőszegis gave their support to Otto, and only in 1308 did they come to terms with Charles Robert, acknowledging him as a king.²⁸ During the time that they opposed Charles Robert, Henry the Younger and his brother John were excommunicated by the archbishop of Esztergom in 1305. Since the archbishop had greater problems with John his misdeeds are narrated in greater depth, while those of Henry the Younger are limited only to a few general remarks on his infidelity, which reveal nothing on the history of medieval Slavonia.²⁹ That leaves us only to conclude that

²⁴ Attila Zsoldos, "Kings and Oligarchs in Hungary at the Turn of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," *Hungarian Historical Review* 2, no. 2 (2013): 216-17.

²⁵ This can be concluded from Sanja Fritz, "Taking Sides: Croatian and Slavonian Nobility in the Transition Period from the Árpád to the Anjou Dynasty," (MA Thesis, Medieval Studies, Central European University Budapest, 2000), 25-35.

²⁶ Zsoldos, "Kings and Oligarchs," 218, 232.

²⁷ Karbić, "Gisingovci," 24.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁹ No. 90 in György Fejér, *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis*, vol. 8:1 (Buda: 1832), 183-90. This was not the first time that Henry the Younger was excommunicated. In 1281, the bishop of Zagreb

Henry the Younger was the one who extended his family possessions in medieval Slavonia³⁰, and that he was the ban of Slavonia in the first decade of the fourteenth century, since there is no other evidence for the way in which his power and authority was exerted in his part of medieval Slavonia.

As for the Babonići, their strategies for increasing their power in the decades before and after the death of Andrew III differed significantly from those of the Kőszegis. In the 1290s they pursued what can be called a “double game”, in which they tried to use the rivalry between Andrew III and the Angevins in order to obtain as many royal privileges as possible.³¹ After the death of Andrew III the available source material does not reveal any contact with either of the contenders for the throne until 1309, when one of the Babonići’s representatives attended the gathering held in the Church of Our Lady at Buda in June 1309, on which occasion Charles Robert swore to respect the rights and customs of the Kingdom of Hungary.³²

On one hand, the support of Venceslas as a pretender for king was out of question since their main rivals, the Kőszegis, were his main supporters. On the other hand, their lack of contact with Charles Robert from 1301 until 1309 may seem surprising, since the Babonići were quite active in the preparations for the young king’s arrival to the Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia in 1300.³³ This has led some historians to raise the question what were the reasons for this lack of any contact between them. N. Klaić, and following her H. Kekez, reached the

excommunicated him with his brothers John and Nicholas; Nada Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba*. 1. [History of Zagreb in the Middle Ages] (Zagreb: Sveučilišna naklada Liber, 1982), 316.

³⁰ Zsoldos, “Kings and Oligarchs,” 217.

³¹ Hrvoje Kekez, “Između dva kralja: plemićki rod Babonića u vrijeme promjene na ugarsko-hrvatskom prijestolju, od 1290. do 1309. godine [Between two kings: the noble Babonići kindred in the period of change on the Hungarian-Croatian throne, from 1290 until 1309],” *Povijesni prilozi* 35 (2008):72-75, 78-80; Fritz, Sanja Fritz, “Taking sides: Croatian and Slavonian Nobility in the Transition Period from the *Árpád to the Anyóu Dynasty*,” (MA Thesis. Budapest: Central European University: 2011), 25-29.

³² Hrvoje Kekez, “Plemićki rod,” 95. For the coronations of Charles Robert see Engel, *Realm*, 128-130.

³³ Indeed, as Mladen Ančić points out the Babonići were, along with the Šubići Bribirski and the counts of Krk, the main supporters of the Angevin cause in the Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia before 1301, and in that period the whole “political infrastructure” necessary to obtain the crown for Charles Robert was provided by these noble kindreds, Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming).

conclusion that the Babonići were disappointed with the fact that Charles Robert did not grant them the title of ban of Slavonia, and because of that they turned to their western neighbors, the Habsburgs, for support.³⁴ This explanation is far from acceptable and I will propose an entirely different solution to it, focusing on three aspects: whether the Angevins granted the hereditary title of the ban to the Babonići; how did the Babonići imagine the territory under their power; and what was the political position of Charles Robert during the bigger part of his first decade in the Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia.

In the last two years of the reign of Andrew III the Babonići came to terms with the king, after they have been considered *infideles* from 1295 onwards. This rapprochement was marked with the granting of the title of ban of *totius Sclavonie* to Stephen Babonić in August 1299.³⁵ Relations among the king and the Babonići must have been good even in July 1300, which is attested by the charter issued by Alberto Morosini, the uncle of Andrew III, then *dux totius Sclavonie et comes de Posoga*. Although Alberto does not address Stephen or any of his brothers as ban but as *nobiles viros*, he still talks of them as faithful to the king and himself.³⁶ During this very same period the Babonići were also in frequent contact with the Angevin court in Naples. The sons of Baboneg, Stephen, John, Radoslav and Otto, inherited this strategy from their cousin Radoslav who was the first among the members of the kindred

³⁴ Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, 352; Kekez, "Plemićki rod Babonića," 86. Mentioning of Stephen son of Stephen as ban (*Stephanus banus*; CD vol. 8, no. 23, 26) in 1302 is rather peculiar. The explanation for this should be sought in the practice by which former bans kept the title even when they were not actively holding the office of ban. Further proof that this might be the case is a charter from 1 June 1301 in which Stephen is called *Stephanus quondam banus filius Stephani*, Ibid., no. 10, 11. It is rather strange that Hrvoje Kekez argues that Stephen was already dead in 1295. He bases his conclusion on the following; firstly he regards the charters from 1302 as wrongly dated although without any firm reason, and secondly he misreads excerpt quoted above to mean that Stephen was dead (*quondam*) instead of *quondam banus*, that is, "former ban."; Kekez, "Plemićki rod Babonića," 79. If we dismiss Kekez's claim a whole range of questions open, primarily how the sons of Baboneg managed to push Stephen aside and take over the inheritance of his late brother Radoslav. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that the charter no. 373 in CD vol. 7, 417-418 which mentions Stephan as ban of Slavonia is wrongly dated to cc. 1300, since it should be dated to 1310, for which see Šime Ljubić, *Listine o odnošajih između južnog Slavenstva i Mletačke Republike*, vol. 1, no. 394, 255-6.

³⁵ Kekez, "Između dva kralja," 78.

³⁶ No. 33 in Lajos Thallóczy and Samu Barabás. *A Blagay-család oklevéltára: Codex Diplomaticus Comitum de Blagay* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1897), 69-70.

to exploit this “double game” from 1291 until his death in 1295.³⁷ On 7 September 1299 king of Naples Charles II confirmed all of their possessions and rights connected to these possessions and above that the dignity of banship, which meant that all the brothers had the right to use the title; all of that was apparently given “in eternity”.³⁸ While the part referring to the granting of the estates and corresponding rights is unquestionable, the interpretation that all the brothers also received the hereditary title of ban on the occasion is less certain. There are a couple of reasons for suspicion. First of all, it is useful to compare this donation with the ones granted to the members of Šubić kindred, that is, to Ban Paul Šubić. It is safe to say that Ban Paul was the main supporter of the Angevin cause in Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia in the last decade of the fourteenth century, and that claim is supported by the numerous and diverse privileges that the Angevins gave to Paul and his kindred. However, no matter how indispensable Paul was for their politics, the Angevins never granted him the hereditary title of ban.³⁹ Closest to that was the donation of the title and position of ban for his lifetime.⁴⁰ In this light, the donation of hereditary title of ban to the Babonići would be highly unusual. The other thing that suggests the same is that while Paul was always mentioned as a ban in the Angevin charters from that period,⁴¹ the Babonići are not addressed as bans in charters of Angevin provenance after they had allegedly obtained the hereditary title. On 26 November 1299⁴² they appear as *comites*, on 10 February 1300⁴³ they are

³⁷ Fritz, “Taking sides” 25-28; Kekez, “Između dva kralja,” 72-75.

³⁸ Kekez, “Između dva kralja,” 79; Kekez is relying on the following charter for his conclusions: “munitiones, possessiones et bona, cum iuribus, iurisdictionibus et pertinentiis suis, que tenent et possident, sicut pretenuit et possedit; et insuper dignitates banatus eis rationabiliter competentes, de certa nostra scientia, liberalitate mera et gratia speciali, predictis Stephano, Johanni, Radislao et Och, eorumque heredibus legitimis perpetuo confirmamus”; CD vol. 7, no. 308, 355.

³⁹ On the contrary, if we are to believe otherwise spurious document, Andrew III gave Paul Šubić and his brothers the title of hereditary *banus maritimus* in 1293. Ibid., no. 144, 163-164.

⁴⁰ Damir Karbić, “The Šubići of Bribir: A Case Study of a Croatian Medieval Kindred,” (Ph.D. dissertation. Budapest: Central European University, 2000), 58-65.

⁴¹ Although under different titles, Paul is always referred to as ban without exception (*Paulus Chroviae, Dalmacieque banus*, CD vol. 7, no. 86, 104; *Paulo bano Croatorum*, Ibid., no. 126, 145; *vir nobilis Paulus banus maritimus*, Ibid., no. 184, 205; *Paulum banum Croatorum*, Ibid., no. 271, 313; *Pauli bani Croatorum*, Ibid., no. 295, 342; *Paulum banum Croatorum*, Ibid., no. 306, 353).

⁴² Ibid., no. 311, 357.

⁴³ Ibid., no. 320, 367.

addressed without any special title, and on 14 May 1300⁴⁴ they are simply referred as *nobiles viri*. Even in the charter in which the hereditary title was allegedly given to them they are called *viri nobiles* and *comites*.⁴⁵ Taking all of this into account, it is highly improbable that the dignity of hereditary bans was given to the Babonići by the Angevins, for it would be unusual to grant someone a title which was not given even to the main supporter. Likewise, it would be equally unusual to grant someone a title and afterwards not entitle him accordingly.

Furthermore, it is questionable whether the formulation *dignitates banatus eis rationabiliter competenes* meant at all that the title of ban was given to all the brothers as has been suggested, or was either something that the Babonići themselves wanted and asked for. The aforementioned charter from 14 May 1300 reveals that the Babonići perhaps started to comprehend their rule outside of the framework of what was considered to be *regnum* or *banatus Sclavonie* in which ban held the supreme authority, doing so in the name of the king of course. In this charter Charles II confirmed them “one part of the land of Slavonia (...) from German lands to Bosna and from river Sava to the mountain Gvozd.”⁴⁶ The description of the territory which they wanted to have confirmed came from the Babonići themselves (*quam dicti comites dudum tenuisse dicuntur*).⁴⁷

Two additional facts should be stressed here. First of all it is obvious that this charter was not a confirmation of possessions but a confirmation of the territory under their control. This is illustrated by the confirmation of the castle of Medvedgrad in the same charter, increasing the distinction between landed estate as a private possession and a territory of rule. The example of Medvedgrad itself suggests the obvious fact that the Babonići did not own and did not claim to have owned everything between the German lands and Bosna, and Sava

⁴⁴ Ibid., no. 342, 388.

⁴⁵ “viri nobiles Stephanus, Johannes, [Radislaus] et Och comites, filii Babonic;” Ibid., no. 308, 355.

⁴⁶ “partem unam terre Sclavonie, de iuribus et pertinentiis dicti regni Vngarie, a Theotonia videlicet usque in Bosznam, et a fluvio Zaua usque ad montem Gazd;” Ibid. no. 342, 388.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

and Gvozd, but that they only considered it to be the territory under their power. The term *terra* was used quite vividly once again to indicate the territory under the rule of the Babonići. In 1307 presiding as judges over a case between the Cistercians from Topusko and a certain *Cherne, comites* Stephen, John and Radoslav stated that they “wishing to support the justice, decided together with the nobles of our land.”⁴⁸

Secondly, the way they described a territory under their rule concurs with a manner in which Croatian Kingdom as a political entity was often described throughout the Middle Ages. In the courtly center the *regnum Sclavonie* was often referred to as *ultra Dravam*⁴⁹, or by similar phrases such as *ultradranus*,⁵⁰ *transdranus*.⁵¹ While it was usual to use the phrase *ultra Dravam* and similar derivatives in the thirteenth century, from the second decade of the fourteenth century the phrase *inter Dravam et Savam* became the most commonly used expression, but now strictly referring to medieval Slavonia.⁵² The oronym Gvozd was

⁴⁸ “volentes assistere iusticie, una cum nobilibus terre nostre decrevimus;” CD vol. 8, no. 130, 142. The case is briefly discussed in Mladen Ančić, “Cistercians in Thirteenth Century Croatia,” *Mediaevistik* 10 (1997): 216.

⁴⁹ There is a long list of examples, almost all of them issued by the kings in the thirteenth century: CD vol.2, no. 45, 47; CD vol. 3, no. 96, 120; Ibid., no. 95, 116; Ibid., no. 305, 348; Ibid. no. 315, 353; Ibid., no. 526, 608; CD vol. 4, no. 44, 49; Ibid., no. 240, 274-275; Ibid., no. 245, 280.; CD vol. 5, no. 543, 8; Ibid., no. 557, 24; Ibid., no. 566, 42; Ibid., no. 620, 104; Ibid., no. 827, 335-336; Ibid., no. 905, 436; Ibid., no. 912, 447; Ibid., no. 41, 590; Ibid., no. 45, 595; Ibid., no. 85, 641-642; Ibid., no. 85, 641; CD vol. 6, no. 129., 141; Ibid., no. 271, 325; Ibid., no. 255, 307; Ibid., no. 278, 332; Ibid., no. 255, 307; a few of them are from the 1320s (CD vol. 9, no. 31, 39, Ibid., no. 206, 253), and one from 1335 (CD vol. 10, no. 178, 243); there are more examples, but they occur rarely, from the 1350s and 1360s. The charter from 1277 issued by the king is an especially good illustration what river Drava represented: “iuxta Drawam, quia est inter Ungariam et Sclavoniam;” CD vol. 6, no. 196, 228.

⁵⁰ Ibid. no. 271, 325; Ibid., no. 519, 611; CD vol. 7, no. 30, 36; Ibid., no. 120, 141; the examples are from the thirteenth century.

⁵¹ CD vol. 6, no. 326, 386; Ibid., no. 339, 400.

⁵² There are two examples from the thirteenth century that I managed to find (CD vol. 3, no. 262, 293; CD vol. 6, no. 372, 493); the rest of them all from the fourteenth century: CD IX, doc. 183, 228; Ibid., doc. 382, 468; Ibid., doc. 412, 501; CD XI, doc. 125, 168; Ibid., doc. 396, 525; Ibid., doc. 399, 528; CD XII, doc. 42, 56; Ibid., doc. 94, 136; Ibid., doc. 120; 164. The term *Sclavonia* or *ocius Sclavonie* had different meanings in the thirteenth century, depending on who was using it. In royal circles the term was used as a synonym for the Croatian Kingdom. But, from the last quarter of the thirteenth century the title *ocius Sclavonie* started to lose its old meaning and instead of denoting the whole Croatian Kingdom it began to refer only to medieval Slavonia. This practice became predominant during the first half of the fourteenth century with the development of a distinct *regnum Sclavonie* as separat from *Croatie et Dalmatie*. Mladen Ančić, “Dva teksta iz sredine 14. Stoljeća. Prilog poznavanju ‘društvenog znanja’ u Hrvatskom Kraljevstvu” [Two works from the middle of the fourteenth century: contribution to the understanding of „social knowledge“ in the Croatian Kingdom of the fourteenth century], *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* 3, 40 (2013): 174-177; Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming). It is reasonable then to observe the change from the phrase *ultra Dravam* to *inter Drauam et Savam* in this context. *Ultra Dravam* would then refer to whole Croatian Kingdom while the term *inter Dravam et Savam*,

likewise used in the same fashion.⁵³ This practice of using certain dominant toponyms as topoi was a usual way of denoting certain political entities at the time and it seems that the Babonići used the very same logic and partly the same topoi (Sava, Gvozd) describing the territory they considered to be under their power.⁵⁴

This, of course, had considerable repercussions regarding the political entity of medieval Slavonia and the function of the ban as the political leader at the top of it. Envisioning their territory of rule outside the framework of the *banatus Sclavonie* meant that the title of ban also became obsolete for the Babonići. The *dignitates*, which can be translated not only as high offices but also as royal or seigniorial prerogatives,⁵⁵ that the Babonići had in mind when they requested them from the Angevins were probably the prerogatives that a ban would hold. However, it seems that they demanded those prerogatives only for the territory of their rule, which was only a part of what was *banatus Sclavonie*. This divergence from traditional attempts to procure the title of ban probably resulted from the pragmatic understanding that the title itself was not a guarantee for any authority. In the light of the aforementioned suggestion that the Babonići conceived their territorial rule in a new framework, the suggestion that the Babonići were disappointed with Charles Robert not granting them the title of ban is less convincing.

Finally, but certainly not less importantly, a brief look at the position of Charles Robert until 1309 will further corroborate the argument that the earlier views in

which became commonly used only after second decade of the fourteenth century, refers only to medieval Slavonia. This process reflects the shaping of a distinct *regnum*.

⁵³ It was used in the privilege for Križevci in 1252, when it was coupled with the phrase *ultra Dravam* (“ultra Gozd et ultra Drawam;” CD vol. 4, no. 426, 490); the matter touched upon the military service and it was expressed from the perspective of Križevci, which explains the usage of Drava and Gvozd as two boundaries. The other example is from 1343: “in terra Sclavonie inter fluium Drawe et Gozd;” CD vol. 11, no. 47, 62.

⁵⁴ The territory which the Babonići described using these topoi did not cover all of the territory under their rule, but that was not surprising taking into account the relationship between the use of topoi and geographical precision. For comments on the relationship see Ančić, “Dva teksta,” 168.

⁵⁵ “Dignitas” in Jan Frederik Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis lexicon minus: A Medieval Latin-French/English Dictionary* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 331-2.

historiography about the relationship of the Babonići and Charles I until 1309 are incorrect. One argument touches upon the impression that the Babonići might have had when the young contender for the throne finally arrived in the kingdom. To observe this in detail, it is necessary to turn to the events in July 1300, just before Charles Robert embarked on the journey to Dalmatia, when the preparations were reaching their peak. On 13 July 1300 Charles II mandated that his nephew, the young king, should be equipped with a proper horse and with proper silk dresses.⁵⁶ The expedition arrived in Split already during August, so the concern about appearing before his new subjects without the appropriate physical appearance as befits a royal figure even in this late phase of preparations suggests that Charles was in a sense being pushed out of Naples.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the number of 150 horses boarded for the expedition suggests that the number of men in Charles's entourage was not impressive.⁵⁸ So, when the prospective king arrived in Slavonia sometime in the (late) autumn of 1300 the Babonići were certainly not impressed with his prospects.⁵⁹

These first impressions, held until Ugrin Csák took Charles Robert under his custody in January 1301, were probably further confirmed during the subsequent period (1301-1304) when the position of Charles Robert in the struggle for the throne with Wenceslas was not promising. Once Wenceslas withdrew from the kingdom back to Bohemia the position of Charles improved, and his prospects became more promising after 1307, when his second contender for the throne, Otto, was imprisoned by Ladislaus Kán, and especially when Otto

⁵⁶ "eundem nepotem nostrum non habere destrarium, nec curserium aut robam de seta pro persona sua," Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming). The document Ančić quotes is from Gusztáv Wenzel, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek az Anjou-korból*, vol. 1 (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1874), no. 188, 151.

⁵⁷ Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming). For the rights of Charles Robert to the Kingdom of Naples and how these were taken from him see Vinni Lucherini, "The Journey of Charles I, King of Hungary, from Visegrád to Naples (1335): Its Political Implications and Artistic Consequences," *Hungarian Historical Review* 2, no. 2 (2013): 342.

⁵⁸ It should be noted that the number of horses indicate the maximum number of people in the entourage; Mladen Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming). ; Hardi, *Drugeti*, 31-33.

⁵⁹ It is most probable that Charles Robert was in Slavonia in late autumn of 1300. *Ibid.*, 81-82.; Mladen Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming).

left Hungary the following year.⁶⁰ During this period Charles Robert was well aware that the rewarding of the supporters was *conditio sine qua non*, and in that respect it would be wrong to think that the Babonići were unwelcome supporters.⁶¹ However, the main question is what profit the Babonići themselves could have expected from Charles Robert? The answer is simple; there was not much that Charles Robert was able to offer to them. For them it was best to stay out of the conflict, especially because it seems, despite the scarcity of the sources for this period, that from 1301 they had no big clashes with the Kőszegis, their main rivals in Slavonia.⁶² In this situation the title of ban, as discussed above, was probably not regarded as a serious reward to support the cause of Charles Robert.

Finally, Nada Klaić and Hrvoje Kekez argue that the disappointment of the Babonići with Charles Robert is testified by their support of the Habsburgs. Paying closer attention to the question of chronology this argument can be refuted by their own writing. The meeting that marked the beginning of the cooperation between the Babonići and Frederick I of Habsburg was held at the beginning of March 1308; likewise the marriage of John Babonić with Clara Euphemia, the sister of Henry II and Albert III, the counts of Gorizia, took place at the end of 1308.⁶³ Since the connections with the Habsburgs were established only after six

⁶⁰ Engel, *Realm*, 128-30; Stanisław A. Sroka, "Methods of Constructing Angevin Rule in Hungary in the Light of Most Recent Research," *Quaestiones Medii Aevi Novae* 1 (1996): 78-79; Kozłowski, "The Thirteenth-Century," 266-69; Tudor Salagean "Transylvania against Charles Robert: Voivode Ladislaus Kán and his Position in the Contest for the Hungarian Crown (1301-1310)," in *La Diplomatie des Etats angevins aux XIIIe et XIV siècles / Diplomacy in the Countries of the Angevin Dynasty in the Thirteenth - Fourteenth Centuries: Actes du colloque international de Szeged, Visegrád, Budapest, 13-16 septembre 2007*, ed. Zoltán Kordé, and István Petrovics (Rome: Accademia d'Ungheria in Roma, 2010), 118-121.

⁶¹ Among the power winning strategies of Charles Robert W. Kozłowski stresses that Charles Robert was more than aware that royal grants are indispensable for successful politics; of course, the possibility of lavish grants was another matter in that period, Kozłowski, "The Thirteenth-Century," 280-281.

⁶² Although the source material is scarce, it is nevertheless a fact that the only military activities mentioned in the first decade of the fourteenth century are those mentioned in the charter from 26 January 1306, when John the son of Bank made a complaint in front of the chapter of Čazma that he lost some of his charters attesting some pledges of his land, and which were destroyed in the raid of Heyze Saracenus ...*cum provinciam Racha et Megeryuche deuastasset*...; CD vol. 8, no. 102, 113-114. This Heyza Saracenus was probably the same as Heyza who was the count of the counties of Baranya, Bodrog and Tolna in 1301 and 1302, which of course meant that he was man of Henry the Younger Kőszegi, Engel, *Magyarország* vol. 1, 102, 114, 206.

⁶³ Kekez, "Plemiński rod" 92-7; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, 352. Although it seems that the Babonići had connections with the counts of Gorica prior to 1308 there is no evidence that the Babonići politically utilized them as a replacement for lack of "royal protection" as Kekez and Klaić suggest.

or seven years after Charles Robert had allegedly refused to grant the title of ban to the Babonići it is obvious that the argument has no validity since these connections were made in an entirely different context.

Reconsidering three subjects above, namely the questions whether the Angevins granted the hereditary title of the ban to the Babonići, the way they imagined the territory under their power, and the political position of Charles Robert until 1309, entirely new conclusions can be reached concerning the strategies of the Babonići to maintain their power. Instead of viewing it as a result of disappointment, the absence of contact with any of the contenders for the throne, and especially with Charles Robert, should be viewed as a deliberate decision on their part influenced by entirely different considerations. The main cause should be sought in the position of Charles Robert in this period. Siding with him during this period obviously could not bring any serious profit to the Babonići. The title of ban, which could have been a palpable way of rewarding someone in times of strong royal power, could not be regarded as serious remuneration in those circumstances. Although a ban of Slavonia, Henry the Younger could not use any of the ban's prerogatives in the territory of the Babonići. When in 1309 Charles Robert addressed the Babonići to protect the bishop of Zagreb in the dispute which the latter had with *iobagiones castri Zagrabiensis* concerning some of the bishop's estates, it was a clear sign that he acknowledged the practical distribution of power in medieval Slavonia.⁶⁴ Instead of sending the mandate to Henry the Younger, which would have been the usual practice at the time of a functional royal government undisrupted by oligarchical power, the king sent it to the Babonići. This stemmed from the fact that Charles Robert was well aware that Henry the Younger was not in the position to carry out an order that would be definitively considered as an encroachment in

⁶⁴ ...*Karolus dei gracia rex Vngarie dilectis et fidelibus suis Stephano, Johanni et Rade comitibus ... fidelitati vestre commitimus, quatenus dictos ecclesiam et episcopum debeatis protegere ac silentium imponere iobagionibus memoratis...*; CD VIII, doc. 211, 252.

the *terra* of the Babonići by the latter. In the light of this case the practical value of the title of ban becomes clearer.

Likewise, the fact that the Babonići have not asked for any further confirmations of their possessions, a practice they had subscribed to prior to the arrival of Charles Robert in the kingdom, also indicates their self-confidence and attitude towards Charles Robert. Moreover, it seems that the Babonići started imagining their territory of rule in a new framework, pragmatically acknowledging that it did not comprise the whole of medieval Slavonia. The next step in this line of thinking was the recognition that since it could not provide them with more power and authority, acquiring the title of ban was not indispensable.

Compared with the Babonići, the Kőszegis used entirely different strategies to maintain and extend their power. They actively participated on the side of one of the contenders, were involved in serious clashes with the supporters of Charles Robert, and Henry the Younger held the title of ban of Slavonia. In this respect it seems that, as typical for the period, they followed a more traditional strategy than the Babonići. One of the reasons for this should be sought in geography. The lands of the Kőszegis were in direct touch with those of the contenders for the throne, and that did not leave them much choice. On the other hand, the lands of the Babonići were encircled by the land of the Kőszegis on the north and east, the lands of the latter creating some kind of a buffer zone around the territories held by the Babonići, practically isolating them as far as the king's physical reach is concerned. Thanks to that, the Babonići were in a position to pick an option to stay neutral in the struggle for the throne, while the Kőszegis could not afford such a strategy, and so they took an active role in the struggles for the throne.

1.2 Oligarchs and king, 1310-1322

Although the Kőszegis and the Babonići recognized Charles Robert as king in 1309 nothing changed in terms of the distribution of real power. After the death of Henry the Younger the title of ban was given to Stephen Babonić while John, one of Henry's son became count of Somogy, Tolna, Baranya and Bodrog, and from 1312 *magister agazonum regalum*; the other son Nicholas was *magister tavernicorum* from 1311.⁶⁵ In this period the king was still careful not to step on the oligarchs' toes, and the hereditary transfer of titles reflected this. But this did not last very long; 1314 signified a change in Charles Robert's attitude towards unlimited power of the oligarchs.⁶⁶ It was also a year when the first military campaign of royal forces against the Kőszegis took place. These campaigns would become almost incessant after 1315 when the king moved his seat to Timișoara, since from that moment on Charles Robert's primary focus moved away from Matthew Csák to the Kőszegis, his immediate neighbors.⁶⁷ The king's forces clashed with the Kőszegis at the end of 1315, but the summer campaign in 1316 proved decisive, when Baranya, Somogy and Tolna counties were taken from the Kőszegis, and several castles in these counties, on which the Kőszegis based their power, were taken by the royal forces.⁶⁸ The power of John Kőszegi in these three counties was crushed in the blink of an eye; nevertheless his power still remained significant, as he still had more than ten castles in Slavonia and County Varaždin.

For the Babonići, the change in power structures in the vicinity of their lands had significant consequences. The buffer zone between them and the king that was created by the Kőszegis was gone, and their strategy of neutrality was becoming untenable. For the first time since 1301 they were in the situation where they had to take sides and participate in the

⁶⁵ Engel, *Die Güssinger*, 89.

⁶⁶ Hardi, *Drugeti*, 104-5.

⁶⁷ Engel, *Die Güssinger*, 90.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 90-91.

struggles. Or to put it better, the normative expressions of loyalty to the king were no longer an option; the king's demands after 1314 were quite clear – loyalty could no longer be expressed in mere symbolic gestures (like at coronations of Charles Robert) but in the actual fighting for the crown. The question was quite simple: will they join the king or oppose him? The Babonići took the first option, and joined the king in his struggles against the Kőszegis.

The office of the ban of Slavonia changed hands in 1317. Stephen Babonić probably died during that year and his brother John became the new ban. The first information about the change in office comes from 22 May 1317, when John was mentioned as ban for the first time.⁶⁹ In December of the same year he was in the presence of the king after a successful campaign against the Kőszegis, and the king rewarded him with several estates and castles that were taken from the Kőszegis and their men.⁷⁰ It is important to emphasize that the campaign against the Kőszegis was coordinated, and the forces of Ban John and the king's men were fighting side by side.⁷¹ The struggle continued with varying success in the following years, but with the same position as established in 1317. The end of hostilities between the king and the Kőszegis came about probably in 1320, and the incessant warfare stopped. Although significantly weakened, the Kőszegis kept at least eight big estates in Slavonia and County Varaždin.⁷² On the other hand, the Babonići came out of these fights even stronger, and the active siding with the king proved to be advantageous, at least in the short run.

Finally, returning to the break in 1317, when the power of the sons of Henry was crushed to a large degree and the Babonići had to abandon the strategy of neutrality, another

⁶⁹ Engel, *Magyarország*, vol. 1, 16.

⁷⁰ CD vol. 8, no. 361, 439-442. The charter is wrongly dated; see Engel, *Magyarország*, vol. 1, 16, for the correct dating.

⁷¹ Demeter Nekcsei and Paul Gara, Count of Bodrog were leaders of king's army. Besides them, one of the important men was Stephen Bogar, who was with Ban John at the royal court in December 1317, and the charter given to the ban's man Markus reveals that the king's and the ban's forces were fighting together, DF 255656.

⁷² Engel, "Die Güssinger," 98.

important issue needs to be addressed. The new circumstances that compelled the Babonići to change their strategy to maintain power had another significant consequence besides having to engage in warfare on the king's side: for the first time after more than two decades one of the Babonići appeared before the king.⁷³ In the political culture at a time when so many things depended on physical presence and personal bonds this fact cannot be overestimated. John continued to attend the royal court after 1317 (subject of the next chapter), a stark difference to the Kőszegis. The only member of the Kőszegi family that stood in the presence of the king was Henry the Younger, who was present at the second coronation in 1308. Even then it was not a situation that signaled the subordinate position of Henry; he was mentioned as the first among the magnates of the kingdom, with power that at that moment probably exceeded that of the king, who was not even in the position yet to be crowned with the Holy Crown.⁷⁴

1.3 Oligarchs and king, 1323-1343

In 1323 a new ban, Nicholas of Felsőlendva, was sent to Kingdom of Croatia.⁷⁵ Why did Charles Robert take the title of ban from John who served him well in the last several years, and brought him the victory at Blizna in Croatia in 1322? The answers to this

⁷³ As far as the sources can tell no one from the Babonići appeared in front of Charles Robert; for the coronation ceremony they only sent an envoy. Not even the charters issued for the Babonići by King Andrew III contain the specific expression “ad nostram accedens presenciam” which would reveal that they were indeed in the king's presence when the charter was issued.

⁷⁴ CD vol. 8, no. 198, 236-40.

⁷⁵ Vjekoslav Klaić proposed that Charles Robert granted the position of ban to Nicholas already in 1322, and that the two bans, Nichola and John, shared the office for a year, Vjekoslav Klaić. “Hrvatski hercezi i bani za Karla Roberta i Ljudevita I. (1301-1382.)” [Croatian Hercegs and bans during the reign of Charles Robert and Louis I (1301-1382)],” *Rad Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 142 (1900): 167. However, a closer inspection of the two documents upon which Klaić based his argument makes it evident that Nicholas was not ban in 1322. The dignitaries in these two charters from 1322 where Nicholas was named ban *Sclavonie* are rife with errors. The first one from 5 January 1322 (Fejér, *Codex*, vol. 8: 2, no. 147, 328) mentions Dezső as *iudex curiae reginae* although at that moment Mikac was still in that office, see Engel, *Magyarország*, vol. 1, 56. Csanád as bishop of Eger despite the fact that Márton was still bishop, *ibid.*, In addition, an unusual mistake is made: County Szolnok is attributed both to palatine Dózsa and to Tamás voivode of Transylvania, who was in fact the count of Szolnok at the time (*ibid.*,). Finally, as the editors noted too, the contents of the charter itself is dubious. The second charter (Fejér, *Codex*, vol., 8: 2, no. 149, 337-8) in which name of Nicholas appears as *banus Sclavonie* is equally problematic; the editor emphasizes the mistakes in the dignity that render it highly suspicious and in this case unusable. The error that editor does not emphasize is mentioning of Philip Drugeth as palatine, while he became palatine only in 1323, see Engel, *Magyarország*, vol. 1, 2.

important question regarding the relationship between the oligarchs and the king so far have been far from satisfying.⁷⁶ In order to answer, the wider circumstances must be taken into account. Namely, until now the year 1323 was considered as a breaking point in terms of three big changes: the change of royal seat, the change of royal seal and the appointment of Philip Drugeth as the new palatine.⁷⁷ These three changes were symbolic expressions, albeit with a palpable consequence, of the rupture with the preceding period: they were clear signs that the old struggles with the oligarchs came to an end. However, another important change must be added to these three, and that is the replacement of Ban John.

Ban John was a symbol of the preceding period; an oligarch who did not owe his position to Charles Robert in any way. It was not a question whether he was loyal to Charles at a given time, or that he actively joined king's camp only from 1317. The comparison with the new Ban Nicholas will serve to illustrate this. When he was appointed as ban, and before he was sent to Slavonia, Nicholas received the confirmation of previous royal grant.⁷⁸ The royal charter specified Nicholas' undertaking for the crown in great details. However, his biography narrated in the charter starts with the fact that Nicholas had been in the service of the Kőszegis before he submitted "all of his and his men's (*servientum*) possessions and goods" for the king's cause. Namely, Nicholas was attested as the man of the Kőszegis in 1313, before he switched sides in 1316, for which he was awarded with the posts of the royal castellan of Szekcső and *comes* of Baranya and Bács.⁷⁹ Although such a service to the lords disloyal to the king was played down by emphasizing that the king's opponents used violence to coerce nobles of the kingdom into their service, Nicholas' almost impeccable biography reveals that he was not on the side of the king from the very start. In this respect Ban John

⁷⁶ Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, 355-56; Kekez, "Plemićki rod," 112-114.

⁷⁷ Summarized in Hardi, *Drugeti*, 134-35.

⁷⁸ CD vol. 9, no. 100, 117-9. For some unknown reason the whole charter was not published, but only part of it. For the whole charter see DL 1884.

⁷⁹ Engel, "Die Güssinger," 92-3.

and new Ban Nicholas were not much different. The true difference between them lies in the fact that Nicholas completely owed his position to the king, while John's power was largely inherited and had nothing to do with the largesse of Charles Robert. This is way John could not keep the position of ban after 1323: if Charles wanted to mark a clear rupture with the pre-1323 period, the last vestige of that time, an oligarch who could have been loyal at the time, but was not among the new men of the king, had to be removed. Philip Drugeth, who was with Charles Robert from the very moment when the king embarked on his journey in 1300, was promoted to the highest position in the kingdom; at the same time, the last oligarch holding one of the highest offices in the kingdom was divested of it.

Whether there were other reasons for the replacing the ban is hard to tell. Reasons of material nature loom especially large, but the sources do not reveal anything on the matter. Namely, the question is whether part of various revenues collected in Slavonia by Ban John found their way to the royal court, and if the (complete) lack of such transactions also influenced the king in his decision to depose John.

Soon after his arrival to Slavonia, the new Ban Nicholas clashed with the Babonići, but it was not a matter that had serious consequences for the position of the latter.⁸⁰ In three years in his office Ban Nicholas was building his position in Slavonia (see next chapter), but there are no indications of any further open hostilities between him and the Babonići or the Kőszegis. Things changed dramatically when Mikac became ban in 1325, after the death of Nicholas in May of the same year. Mikac was devoted follower of Charles Robert ever since Charles Robert came to the kingdom, and he successfully fought numerous battles for the king.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming).

⁸¹ On 27 May 1325 Charles Robert issued a grant for Mikac, which was obviously intended to strengthen the relationship between them prior to Mikac's departure for Slavonia; in the very beginning of the charter it was

In 1326 Mikac clashed with the Kőszegis and took their castle Koprivnica.⁸² In the next year the Babonići, sons of late ban Stephen, were the next targets of Mikac.⁸³ In the following few years quite a number of the castles that were in the hands of the Kőszegis and the Babonići were taken from them. The sources unfortunately do not reveal how Mikac got hold of them, but what is clear is that the oligarchs could no longer cope with Mikac's aggressive approach.

What led to the more aggressive approach of Mikac towards the Kőszegis and the Babonići in 1326 and 1327? The rebellion of the latter was usually given as a cause for this.⁸⁴ However, rather than interpret their rebellion as the reason for Mikac's program, it is better to look at it as a reaction to it. Mikac was sent by the king in 1325 "ad reformationem regni", that is his task was to restore all the royal rights (lands, customs etc.) that were held unlawfully.⁸⁵ One of the consequences of this "new" program was also the "new" criteria deciding what made someone *infidelis*. When in 1327 Charles Robert was speaking about the infidelity of the "son of Henry" he only mentioned that the latter was holding the castle Koprivnica against his will.⁸⁶ Likewise, a year later when Mikac took Steničnjak from the Babonići, he spoke of the castle as "the ban's former castle" (*quondam bani castrum*).⁸⁷ It can be assumed that Mikac exerted pressure on the Kőszegis and the Babonići to restore these castles (and other estates and possessions that were considered to be the king's "rights") and that they responded by forming an alliance against Mikac. Unable to recover the rights that

especially emphasized that Mikac served Charles Robert faithfully „a tempore introitus nostri in regnum nostrum Hungariam,” CD vol. 9, no. 194, 239. For short sketches of Mikac's biography see Engel, *Realm*, 144-45, for whom Mikac is one of three pillars of Charles Robert's reign; Klaić, "Hrvatski hercezi," 169-70.

⁸² See Engel, "Die Güssinger," 98.

⁸³ CD, vol. 9, no. 296, 358-60.

⁸⁴ Engel, "Die Güssinger," 98; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, 517.

⁸⁵ See Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming).

⁸⁶ Imre Nagy, *Sopron vármegye története: Oklevéltár, vol. 1: 1156-1411* (Sopron: n.p., 1889), no. 90, 112.

⁸⁷ Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming).

were considered to belong to the king (and consequently to the incumbent ban) in any other way, Mikac resorted to violence.⁸⁸

The Kőszegis and the Babonići (sons of Stephen) rose once more against the king, taking sides with the dukes of Austria in 1336, but the outcome was the same just like ten years ago, and it ended with the further loss of their wealth and power; this was also the last rebellion against the king in medieval Slavonia before the turbulent years after the death of Louis I, signaling the complete taming of the oligarchs.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming).

⁸⁹ For the rebellion see Engel, "Die Güssinger," 99-100; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, 518.

Chapter 2. LOYALTY AND POWER

2.1 Closed system of service

The power of the oligarchs depended on three mutually interconnected elements: large estates, castles, and retainers in their service.⁹⁰ The last element is the focus of the present chapter. The term retainer is used here in a wide sense: every man who was in the service of the lord (in this case the oligarchs) is regarded as a retainer.⁹¹ In order to build and control extensive lordship oligarchs had to recruit and sustain large number of nobles in their service. This was possible as they appropriated more and more resources, a part of which in case of strong central government would end up in the king's hand – the increasing number of retainers meant that more resources could be appropriated, and vice versa (these two processes were mutually underpinning each other). Recruitment had two sides: it employed the carrot and stick approach. On the one hand, the oligarchs were able to reward their men to ensure their loyalty.⁹² Besides, a special relation existed between the lord and his men. For instance, when in 1321 Ban John adopted his nephew John, he wanted to make sure that his nephew would let his retainers enjoy their *honores* even when he takes over the inheritance after the ban's death.⁹³

⁹⁰ Zsoldos, "Kings," 214. Although Attila Zsoldos and many other authors used the term *familiaris*, I decided to use the term retainer, since for the most of the period under discussion the term *familiaris* was not widely used, the term *serviens* being used more often. See Karbić, "The Šubići," 249-55; Engel, *Realm*, 126.

⁹¹ In this discussion some important features connected to the retainers of the oligarchs will emerge, which will also show that the term *familiaris* is not the most useful term to use for the period discussed here. Likewise, the focus will not be placed on the question of whether *familiaris* had any semblance to the feudal system of Western Europe, although many previous works focused on that aspect. See Engel, *Realm*, 126-8; Martyn Rady, *Nobility, Land and Service in Medieval Hungary* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 110-20; Erik Fügedi, *The Elefánthy: The Hungarian Nobleman and His Kindred* (Budapest: CEU Press, 1998), 137-40; János M. Bak, "Feudalism in Hungary?," in *Feudalism: New Landscapes of Debate*, ed. Sverre Bagge, Michael H. Gelting and Thomas Lindkvist (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 203-16.

⁹² Land donations were the clearest sign of this; for the Babonići see for instance CD vol. 8, no. 243, 291; *ibid.* vol. 8, no. 467, 572-3; *ibid.* vol. 9, no., 150, 187-9; DF 262412; for the Kőszegis see DL 86924.

⁹³ CD vol. 9, no. 10, 12-3.

On the other hand, the local nobility was not left with much choice when it came to the question which lord they will (or even should) serve. Political opposition – and neutrality was probably also regarded as such – could lead to the loss of lives and possessions; a similar consequence that awaited those convicted for *lèse-majesté*. Moving outside Slavonia, when Dezső Elefánthy abandoned Matthew Csák the latter took revenge on Dezső's wife and children, and during his exodus some of his estates were lost.⁹⁴ In 1298 Andrew III reacted to this practice of powerful men who coerced nobles into their service, emphasizing that every nobleman was free to choose whom he would serve.⁹⁵

Such exhortations as Andrew's had little practical effect. By that time the oligarchs largely managed to impose themselves as supreme lords of the men in their territories, and in the process they completely excluded royal authority. When in 1278 the Babonići and the Kőszegis concluded the peace treaty it was stipulated that the ban (Nicholas Kőszegi at the time) and his official, count of Zagreb, did not have any judicial authority over the men of the Babonići. In case someone started a dispute against them the case was to be solved in front of the bishop of Zagreb, and even that only if someone outside the rule of the Babonići sued one of their men, implying that the cases involving their men were solved internally.⁹⁶ Similar attitude can be observed in 1309, when Henry the Younger took an oath to be faithful to Charles Robert, as himself, but also in the name of his descendants and any nobles who might be under his rule.⁹⁷ But how many nobles in whose name Henry spoke were in his service voluntarily? It is impossible to speak in exact numbers, but Pál Engel concludes that many in

⁹⁴ Fügedi, *The Elefánthy*, 75-6.

⁹⁵ Rady, *Nobility*, 113.

⁹⁶ CD vol. 6, no. 224, 261-66.

⁹⁷ CD vol. 8., no. 208, 249-50.

the service of the Kőszegis were not left with much choice when it came to choosing their lord.⁹⁸

Consequences of this system, in which oligarchs imposed themselves as supreme lords of their men, excluding every kind of royal or any other authority, can be best observed in the fact that service to the lords and their descendants was multigenerational; namely there were families whose members were attached to certain oligarchical lineages for more than one generation. Three such families in the service of the Babonići will serve as example; sources for the Kőszegis are scantier but they reveal some evidence for such practice.

The three families in question are the Grebenški, Frankopani and the descendants of Orlando of Ača kindred. Grebenški are example of two generations of a family serving two generations of the Babonići. Grdun is the first one for whom we have information that he was man of the Babonići, since he appears in 1278 as such. His brother Vukoslav was likewise connected to the Babonići, just like his sons Hector and Puneč were men of the next generation of the Babonići led by Ban John. After 1327 they shared the bad fortune of their lords; Mikac took significant part of their material wealth that they had been building patiently from the second half of the thirteenth century.⁹⁹ The Frankopans and the descendants of Orlando of Ača kindred are examples of one generation of a family serving two generations of the Babonići. The Frankopans were pulled into the orbit of the Babonići from the 1280s.¹⁰⁰ In 1280 John and Dujam were by the side of the Babonići when they made

⁹⁸ Engel, "Die Güssinger," 92.

⁹⁹ Ibid.; see also Mario Kevo and Ana Novak, "Podjela kastruma i vlastelinstva Greben krajem 14. stoljeća: neki aspekti unutarnjeg razvoja svjetovnog vlastelinstva [The division of the castle and the lordship of Greben at the fourteenth century: some aspects of the internal development of the secular lordship]," in *Ascendere historiam: zbornik u čast Milana Kruheka* [Ascendere historiam: studies in the honor of Milan Kruhek], ed. Marija Karbić et al. (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2014), 42-53, albeit very poorly written.

¹⁰⁰ An extremely important observation for the understanding of the oligarchical power of the Babonići, namely that the Counts of Krk were men of the Babonići was put forward by Mladen Ančić. Until his remarks it was completely unnoticed in Croatian historiography; the discussion on the Frankopani relies on his observations. Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming).

a peace treaty with the Kőszegis.¹⁰¹ In 1308 Dujam was in the entourage of Stephen and Radoslav Babonić when they went to the meeting with Frederick, count of Gorizia-Tirol.¹⁰² Furthermore, Dujam administered some of the estates of the Babonići in the Holy Roman Empire in the same period.¹⁰³ Brothers Nicholas and John of Ača kindred served the Babonići from the 1270s, and Nicholaus and his other brother Aga were also in the service of the next generation of the Babonići in 1310s.¹⁰⁴

Retainers of the Kőszegis are almost impossible to track down, since the source material is extremely scarce about this matter. Nevertheless, there is some evidence for the long term service of their men. Namely, when in 1310 John son of Ban Henry donated some land to Nicholas he specified that Nicholas faithfully served his father and himself.¹⁰⁵ This suggests that at least one of the Kőszegis' retainers was in their service for two generations.

Besides services that were provided over couple of generations, long service in general was esteemed. In the charters of donations this was usually indicated by the statement that the service was provided from an early age. In 1316 Nicholas Kszegi rewarded his faithful man Stephen for a long service that he had performed from his youth, and similar expression was used by John Babonić for his nephew Dionysus in 1324.¹⁰⁶ However, long time service did not depend only on the youth of the retainer; such a service was promised for instance by *cantor* Nicholas to Henry Kőszegi in 1309, but the reason for the offer was

¹⁰¹ CD vol. 6, no. 306, 362.

¹⁰² Kekez, "Plemićki rod," 92-3.

¹⁰³ Janez Mlinar, "Tipologija prekograničnih odnosa u kasnom srednjem vijeku. Frimjer knezova Frankapana [The typology of the trans-border relationships in the late Middle Ages. The example of the counts of Frankapan]," *Historijski zbornik* 62 (2009): 32-3.

¹⁰⁴ CD vol. 6, no. 207, 240; *ibid.*, no. 224, 261; CD vol. 8, no. 276, 335; *ibid.*, no. 301, 359; for the Ača kindred see Klaić, *Zagreb*, 57-62. Whether the next generation also served the Babonići is impossible to tell since there is no source material for the family.

¹⁰⁵ Imre Nagy, Iván Nagy and Dezső Véghely, *A zichi és vásonkeői gróf Zichy család idősb ágának okmánytára. Codex diplomaticus domus senioris comitum Zichy de Zich et Vásonkeő*, vol. 1 (Pest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1871), no. 151, 128.

¹⁰⁶ Attila Zsoldos, "A Henrik-fiak: A Héder nembéli Kőszegielek "családi története" [The Henrik Sons: The Family History of the Kőszegis of the Héder Kindred]," *Vasi Szemle* 64, 6 (2010): 659. The charter in question is DL 65495: "Quod cum magister Stephanus filius comitis Jacobi de Venicz cum summo fidelitatis animo tenera et juvenili etate nobis existente ad nostra seruitia se applicauit". For Dionysius CD vol. 9, no. 150, 187.

probably the value of reward itself: Nicholas received a caste, and promised in return to serve his lord with thirty or forty knights as long as he lived.¹⁰⁷

Long term service was not specific only for the circumstances of oligarchical rule, since it can also be observed in later periods.¹⁰⁸ Neither can we assume that all men were connected to the Babonići and the Kőszegis in the way as that the above described nobles were. Nevertheless, the possibility to change their lord and enter into the service of another one was completely restricted; the nature of oligarchical rule excluded such a possibility which existed during the time of effective royal power. That is, the same phenomenon – long term service – in times of oligarchical rule and effective royal rule was not shaped and conditioned by the same causes.¹⁰⁹ The relationship between the king and men in oligarchical retinues deserves special merit here. The conclusion that “the *familiaris* was still bound by a superior obligation to the king” is perhaps valid for times of strong royal power, but in the first two decades of the fourteenth century nobles in Slavonia serving local oligarchs could have hardly felt such an obligation.¹¹⁰ Between 1301 and 1317 there are no instances of royal donations to the nobles from Slavonia that would reveal any kind of service to the king. Even after 1317 these contacts – at least for the men in the service of the Babonići – were controlled by the oligarchs, which is the topic of the following chapters. Only after 1323 did the king manage to impose himself as the supreme lord, and even then there were exceptions. In 1330s when they rebelled against the king, the Babonići and the Kőszegis could do such a thing only by relying on their retainers. This of course means that these men considered their duty towards their lord stronger than the one towards the king.

¹⁰⁷ Rady, *Nobility*, 118.

¹⁰⁸ See for instance Pálosfalvi, *The Noble*, 348-49.

¹⁰⁹ Reasons for a *familiaris* to change his lord were manifold; what is of essence here is that such a possibility was at their disposal. See for instance Rady, *Nobility*, 116-7; Pálosfalvi, *The Noble*, 359-60.

¹¹⁰ Quote is from Rady, *Nobility*, 120.

In 1339 when Nicholas, Peter and Henry Kőszegi were pardoned for their rebellion it was stipulated that every nobleman, unbesmirched of infidelity, could enter their service without fear for their lives and goods.¹¹¹ No longer the fear not to serve the Kőszegis, but a fear to enter their service – can there be a better sign of complete reversal of fortunes? In order to see how this happened another look at the attempts of Ban Nicholas and Mikac to crush the power of oligarchs is necessary.

2.2 Untying the oligarchical knot

Although not complete, the list of the most important men on whom Ban Nicholas and Ban Mikac relied can be obtained from the charter issued on 16 September 1327, when the Babonići, George, John, Dionysius and Paul sons of Stephen surrender Steničnjak to Mikac. Nicholas of Ludbreg, Paul and Nicholas sons of Mihalch, Stephen son of Apay, Nicholas *vicebanus*, John son of Paul castellan of Koprivnica, Thomas son of Martin, and castellans Benedict and Andrew sons of George were listed as the men who guaranteed that the deal of Mikac and the Babonići will be respected.¹¹² The importance of the occasion testifies that all of them were man of respect and more importantly they were prepared to support Mikac in his attempts to regain control over medieval Slavonia. Furthermore, it seems that the order in which they appear is not random, but it indicates their status.

Before proceeding to the analyses some methodological remarks are necessary, mainly concerning the way in which certain individual's political allegiance can be detected. In other words, the question is what can be gleaned from the confirmations of previous privileges either by the king or by the ban, since this kind of source will be used extensively in the analytical section. In essence, the problem is whether these confirmations were issued merely as part of the administrative functions on the part of the ban and the king, or meant

¹¹¹ DL 87690; the document is transcribed in Engel, "Die Güssinger," 107-12.

¹¹² CD vol. 9, no. 296, 359.

something more. On the one hand, the situation is clear if the person receiving the confirmation of donation is called *serviens*, for instance, the case with Emeric son of Farcasius, or when it can be determined that the recipient of the king's confirmation of the privilege was part of the ban's entourage, which will be discussed further in a separate chapter. The picture is less clear when these are lacking. In this regard it is instructive to take a look at the charter granted by ban Mikac to George son of Paul on 29 June 1329. George came to Mikac and presented him two charters, one by the chapter of Čazma and one by Stephen the count of Križevci, and asked for their confirmation.¹¹³ Mikac responded to George's request favorably, and his reasoning is highly informative. Mikac confirmed the charters taking those services into account, which George provided to the king and to Mikac since he had become ban, which was especially deemed meritorious.¹¹⁴ As this case illustrates, the confirmation of previous charters was not merely an administrative function of ban, but also a special sign towards his faithful men imbued with symbolical meaning, a transaction that served to confirm and strengthen the relationship between the two. However, even with this in mind, the following analyses will touch upon these situations with great caution, selecting confirmations which are likely to have been more than day to day administrative tasks.

Returning to the aforementioned list, the first name from it was that of Nicholas of Ludbreg, a member of the Pécs kindred.¹¹⁵ His uncle Dionysius was the palatine of the kingdom between 1273 and 1274.¹¹⁶ The only charter that mentions his father, Peter, still in his lifetime is one from 30 October 1280, when a peace treaty was concluded between the

¹¹³ CD vol. 9, no. 384, 470. These two charters were concerned with the donating Sveštenevac to George, by Stephen son of Peter.

¹¹⁴ "licet pro suis serviciis meritoriis, que domino nostro regi Hungarie et per eum nobis in diversis nostris expeditionibus a tempore banatus nostri exhibuit fideliter et indefesse, maiora mereretur," *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ For the genealogical table of the kindred see Pécs nem 1. tábla: Zalai ág in Pál Engel, *Magyar középkori adattár: Középkori magyar genealógia* [Hungarian medieval database. Medieval Hungarian genealogies], CD-ROM. Budapest, 2001.

¹¹⁶ Attila Zsoldos, *Magyarország világi archontológiája 1000-1300* [The secular archontology of Hungary] (Budapest: História, MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 2011), 21.

Kőszegis and the Babonići.¹¹⁷ Peter was then, together with his brother Dionysius, among the guarantors of peace on behalf of Nicholas Kőszegi.¹¹⁸ Conclusions on the question of Peter's allegiance would be hard to establish judging only by this case, but it is nevertheless indicative that Nicholas Kőszegi chose him among his guarantors. It is still more important because Peter and Dionysius owned lands and castles in medieval Slavonia and perhaps they were not altogether excluded from the fight for the dominance over medieval Slavonia. The castles in question were Ludbreg, Bistrica and Zelna, which were, according to the later testimonies, given to Dionysius and Peter by King Béla IV.¹¹⁹ Besides these castles the family had more possessions in medieval Slavonia, and all of them were in the hands of Nicholas, at least from 1324, when he inherited the possessions of his cousin Nicholas, grandson of Dionysius, who died childless.¹²⁰ Besides inheritance, Nicholas obtained more possessions with purchases. In fact, he is mentioned for the first time in the sources, on 28 September 1317, on one of these occasions.¹²¹ His political allegiance is discernible in the sources from the 1320s. On 24 April 1320 Philip de Gagnana, prior of the Hospitallers in the Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia issued a charter in which he gave Nicholas certain lands for his help in recuperation of the order's castle of Bela. As Philip narrates, the castle was taken because of the negligence of the castellan sent to guard it, and the castle ended up in the hands of *Theotonicorum*.¹²² These were obviously men of Peter and John Kőszegi, since by helping the Order to get the castle back, Nicholas "met with very heavy hostilities of noble and powerful men", sons of Henry.¹²³ These hostilities, which probably started in 1319 as

¹¹⁷ CD vol. 6, no. 306, 362.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., "Ad maiorem etiam rei certitudinem et inite pacis inter partes plenam conservationem prefatus Nicholas banus dabit et statuet pro parte sua et suorum fideiussores quatuor barones domini nostri regis, videlicet Matheum palatinum, Stephanum comitem Posoniensem filios magistri Mathei, comitem Dionysium et Petrum filios comitis Georgii."

¹¹⁹ DL 101694, DL 100339.

¹²⁰ DF 209121. . For the list of a part of the possessions that Nicholas of Ludbreg had when he died in 1350s, see DL 101694.

¹²¹ He was buying the Gostović estate from Stephen son of Ipocho, CD vol. 8, no. 377, 459.

¹²² CD vol. 8, no. 456, 556-7.

¹²³ Ibid., "incurrit gravissimas inimicicia virorum nobilium et potentum, filiorum Herici bani".

there was obviously some time between these struggles and the issuing of relevant charter in 1320, meant that Nicholas had to invest a lot of his resources to defend the castle, which was the prior's reason to repay him the debt. Further evidence for the assumption that Nicholas had serious problems with Peter and John Kőszegi appears in later news, from 1345, reporting that Peter and John at one point even captured his castle Ludbreg.¹²⁴ The time when this happened is unfortunately not indicated, but it could be that it happened precisely around 1320, when these hostilities started. The taking of Nicholas' castle of Ludbreg was not a coincidence, since it was surrounded by the territory still under the control of the Kőszegi brothers.

The reasons why Nicholas entered into the conflict with the Kőszegi brothers were similar to those why he conflicted with Hector of Greben. The conflict with Hector probably also started around the time when Nicholas had problems with the Kőszegi brothers. In the charter from 24 March 1328, issued by Charles Robert, these events are given their rationale. According to Nicholas, who corroborated his statements with the charters issued by king himself, the king gave Nicholas in mandate to protect the churches of the bishopric of Zagreb while its incumbent, Augustin was practically exiled in Avignon, as well to protect the aforementioned Castle Bela and its possessions and goods.¹²⁵ It was necessary to protect them because Hector of Greben and the Kőszegi brothers obviously wanted to lay their hands on them, which resulted in the fight with Nicholas. Nicholas obviously managed to inflict a lot of damage to his enemies who, according to the charter, included not only Hector and the Kőszegi brothers but the explicitly mentioned *hospites* of Križevci, and the nobles from

¹²⁴ CD vol. 11, no. 179, 230.

¹²⁵ "Quod nobilis vir magister Nicolaus filius Petri de Ludbreg dilectus et fidelis noster ad nostram accedens presenciam presentavit nobis plurima paria litterarum nostrarum priori et antiquo et eciam annulari sigillis consignatarum quibus mediantibus olim ecclesiam et episcopatum Zagrabiensem tempore absente venerabilis in Christo patris domini fratris Augustini quondam episcopi loci eiusdem tunc in Romana curia commorantis necnon possessiones et bona hospitalis sancti Iohannis Iherosolomitani ad castrum Bela pertinentes eidem magistro Nicolao commiseremus defendendas et auctoritate regia ab omnibus molestantibus conseruandas." DL 101669. For the exile of bishop Augustin from his diocese see Klaić, *Zagreb*, 334.

Kamarcha, who were *servientes* of Peter Kőszegi. Because of Nicholas' efficiency the king granted him the privilege that he or his men would not be prosecuted for those damages in the future.¹²⁶ It is difficult to prove that Hector and the Kőszegi brothers were acting in concert, especially taking into the account that the Grebenski were the main supporters of the Babonići. It is more the form of the charter in which all the troubles of Nicholas are narrated together, that puts Hector and the Kőszegi brothers in the same context. Another piece of evidence for the conflicts that Nicholas had with Hector apart from those with the Kőszegi brothers comes from 1323. The accusations of the destruction of possessions and desecration of churches at Nicholas' land were proven and the judge royal had all of Hector's possessions confiscated and granted Nicholas the right to execute him.¹²⁷

None of the charters that Nicholas and the king apparently exchanged during these struggles have survived, and it is difficult to say whether Nicholas actually followed the king's orders from 1319/1320. Nevertheless, it is beyond any doubt that Nicholas, by getting into conflict with both oligarchical factions was liable to connect with the king. The king obviously responded, and he was not hesitant to reward Nicholas for his efforts. As mentioned previously, in 1324 Charles Robert confirmed that all of the possessions of his cousin Nicholas son of John, grandson of Dionysius rightly belonged to Nicholas of Ludbreg.¹²⁸ More lavish reward ensued in 1326 when the king gave him "omnes castrenses et terras castrensium in Moroucha et in Glaunicha existentes."¹²⁹ In the end, Charles Robert's charter from 1328 was also a significant sign of king's largesse towards Nicholas.

To understand the role of Nicholas in the struggle for power in the 1320s in its entirety it is necessary to look further, starting with the fourth person given in the list given at

¹²⁶ Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming); DL 101669.

¹²⁷ DL 101660.

¹²⁸ DF 209121.

¹²⁹ CD vol. 9, no. 259., 316.

the beginning of the chapter. Stephen, son of Apay, was connected to Nicholas of Ludbreg by affinal ties, since Margaret, daughter of Nicholas, was married to Stephen. Like Nicholas, whose uncle was ban of Slavonia in 1274, Stephen's ancestors also held high positions in the kingdom: Apay was ban of Slavonia between 1237 and 1239.¹³⁰ Stephen also had possessions in the northern part of medieval Slavonia, in the vicinity of Nicholas's main possession Ludbreg.¹³¹ Among them was a castle whose name is known only from 1382 when it was referred to as Apikeresztur.¹³² The first surviving mention of the castle is from 1328, and the next one from 1329 when its castellan is mentioned.¹³³ Similar to Nicholas of Ludbreg Stephen obviously also enjoyed royal favor, because Charles Robert in 1323 confirmed to him, along with Nicholas son of Andrew and Stephen son of Andrew, his *fideles*, the charter issued to Stephen by Ladislaus IV in 1284.¹³⁴

Two further examples need to be examined. The first is the first surviving charter issued by Nicholas Felsőlendvai as ban of Slavonia, dated 30 May 1323, obviously very soon after his arrival in Slavonia.¹³⁵ With this charter the ban confirmed some privilege about the donation of lands to Emeric son of Farkasius of Čanovec, whom he calls "noster fidelis seruiens".¹³⁶ The other is from June of same year. It is a charter of the chapter of Čazma, whose men were obliged to introduce Geruasius son of Vrbanus to his possessions Rasinja

¹³⁰ Zsoldos, *Magyarország*, 44, 46. Dionysius was also a palatine between 1273 and 1274, between 1278 and 1279 and in 1283. Ibid., 21,22. For the genealogical table of the kindred see Gútleled nem 5. Sárvármonostori ág 1. tábla: Elágazás in Engel, *Magyar középkori*.

¹³¹ See CD vol. 8, no. 456, 558.

¹³² Ranko Pavleš, *Podravina u srednjem vijeku: povijesna topografija srednjovjekovne Gornje Komarnice (ludbreška, koprivnička i đurđevačka Podravina)* [Podravina in the Middl Ages: Historical topography of Upper Komarnica (Ludbreg's Koprivnica's and Đurđevac's Podravina)] (Koprivnica: Meridijani, 2013), 61.

¹³³ "Iohannes Magnus castellanus et officialis magistri Stephani filii Opoy," DL 2521. Ranko Pavleš correctly argues that the castle was probably built by Apay, as the name of the castle attests, but it is hard to tell which of Stephen's ancestor it is, since Stephen's father, grandfather, and great grandfather bore the name of Apay. Pavleš, *Podravina*, 61,

¹³⁴ CD vol. 9, no. 102, 121.

¹³⁵ CD vol. 9 no. 104, 122. He was still at the court of Charles Robert on 29 March when the king issued him a charter.

¹³⁶ CD vol. 9 no. 104, 122.

and Zablatje.¹³⁷ These were then the first moves of Ban Nicholas when he came to Slavonia. It is obvious that these occasions had deeper significance than being a simple confirmation of previous rights. These were symbolic acts, by which political allegiance was stated. Besides being among the first in Slavonia to symbolically express their connection with the new ban, Emeric and Geruasius had another thing in common. Their possessions were situated near those of Nicholas of Ludbreg and Stephen son of Apay.¹³⁸ Although there is no further evidence that Nicholas and Stephen had any connections with these two men, it is more than probable that they were all connected to the person of the new ban and his agenda in medieval Slavonia. This then leads to the conclusion that the area around Ludbreg was the place around which Ban Nicholas found his first base for establishing his effective rule. In other words, Nicholas of Ludbreg was probably the ban's main supporter in Slavonia, since he had at his disposal three castles, and a circle was created around him from which the ban could draw support. Stephen son of Apay was connected to him by marriage and proximity of estates, and these smaller nobles by the ties of vicinity.¹³⁹ When the probable support from the Hospitallers and their castle of Bela which was also near is also considered, a significant circle of resistance to the Babonići and the Kőszegi brothers can be observed in the first half of the 1320s.

Further patterns in which Ban Nicholas and Mikac recruited and rewarded their supporters can be identified. The list from 1327 can again serve as a starting point. The names include brothers Paul and Nicholas sons of Mihalch. They were members of the kindred of Svetački, which had huge land estates around the river Lonja in the south eastern

¹³⁷ DL 2173. These possessions were left to him in a will of his cousin Jacob son of Peter in December 1321. CD vol. 9, no. 31, 39-40.

¹³⁸ For the location of the Slavonian estates of Stephen son of Apay see Pavleš, *Podravina*, 18, 35, 61. For the location of the estates of Emeric son of Farkasius *de Chanou* see *ibid.*, 88-9; and for Geruasius son of Vrbanus see *ibid.*, 85-6, 102.

¹³⁹ Their network of *servientes* should be added to the list, especially for Nicholas of Ludbreg, because for the two of his *servientes*, John and Lorand, sons of Egidius, we know that they had two villages, Jalsevec and Leskovec, situated half way between the castles of Ludbreg and Bela.

parts of medieval Slavonia.¹⁴⁰ One branch of the family, descendants of Tibold, allied themselves with the Babonići kindred. This can be already said about John son of Tibold. John was involved in a prolonged dispute with his cousin Zeria son of Kozmas over certain family lands. This dispute was resolved in 1307 with an agreement between them. The charter of agreement was then confirmed by King Charles Robert in 1313. The charter was presented to the king by Peter, cantor of church of Zagreb, in the name of John.¹⁴¹ The involvement of cantor Peter indicates that John had some connections with the Babonići, since Peter was chosen, firstly by Ban Stephen Babonić in 1313 and then by John Babonić in 1314, as their representative in a family dispute.¹⁴² The political allegiance of the next generation of this branch of kindred, namely for Leukus and John sons of John is even more evident. When the king granted them some privilege in January 1322 they came to the court as part of the entourage of Ban John Babonić. However, only a year later John and Leukus were part of the entourage of Ban Nicholas, obviously switching sides.¹⁴³ Furthermore, Paul and Nicholas sons of Mihalch appear as the supporters of Ban Mikac in 1327. This may be explained by family struggles, most probably about the inheritance of the aforementioned Kosmas. The 1307 settlement of dispute stipulated that John and Zeria would inherit each other's estates in case either of them dies childless.¹⁴⁴ John wanted the settlement confirmed by the king in 1313 because Zeria died without heirs sometime between 1307 and 1313. John obviously wanted to secure his right after the death of Zeria because the dispute started with Paul, Nicholas and Peter, sons of Mihalch over Zeria's inheritance soon thereafter. In 1314 John son of Tybold, acting also in the name of his nephew John, reached an agreement with them. Taking into account that the sons of Mihalch had closer kinship ties to Zeria (*ratione*

¹⁴⁰ For the kindred of Svetački see Vjekoslav Klaić, "Plemići Svetački ili nobiles de Zempche [Nobles of Svetački]," *Rad Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 199 (1913): 1-66, and Tamás Pálosfalvi, *Noble elite*, 268-80.

¹⁴¹ Klaić, "Plemići Svetački," 13.

¹⁴² CD vol. 8, no. 276, 335; no. 301, 359.

¹⁴³ Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming).

¹⁴⁴ Klaić, "Plemići Svetački," 12-3.

parentele et proximiori generationi) John ceded them almost all of Zeria's possessions.¹⁴⁵ It was further stipulated that both parties would uphold the agreement under a threat of heavy penalties. One of the clauses also contains a condition that is not usually encountered, or at least nothing of the kind can be found in medieval Slavonia for this period, namely that the parties emphasized that “if one of the parties would proceed with his lord against the other party in some case, that party will work honestly and without fraud to the other party, and will be obliged, if possible, to reveal it to the other party”.¹⁴⁶ The highly unusual mention of someone’s lord in this context, with a stipulation that was basically cutting through the relationship of lord and his man, confirms the previous supposition that John son of Tibold and his nephew John were men of the Babonići. On the other hand, to whom the sons of Mihalch might have owed loyalty is not possible to infer. There is an indication that the different branches owed loyalty to different men also in the succeeding period. As mentioned above, the next generation of one side of the kindred (sons of John) were part of the Babonići’s entourage in 1322. What is more important, the aforementioned John son of Nicholas son of Tybold, first cousin of Leukus and John, was imprisoned by the king sometime before 1325.¹⁴⁷ This all, considered together, gives good indications that sons of Mihalch and especially John son of Nicholas son of Tybold took opposite sides, one with the Babonići and other with ban Mikac, and that these different alliances were mainly due to the property dispute fought between them.

Ban Mikac managed to secure support from a few more men who were initially men of the Babonići. Some of them are similar to the case discussed above in so far that they were also in the entourage of Ban John at the king’s court in January 1322. Paul and Dominic Pekri

¹⁴⁵ DL 100063.

¹⁴⁶ “Item si quis ex partibus cum domino suo contra partem alteram causam aliquam deueniret fideliter et sine fraude parti aduerse laborabit et si poterit eidem intimare tenebitur,” DL 100063.

¹⁴⁷ Klačić, “Plemići Svetački,” 14

obtained confirmation of their estate Pukur as part of John Babonić's entourage.¹⁴⁸ In 1329 we find Paul in front of Ban Mikac, who returned him the estate of Dimičkovina, for which Paul claimed that it had been taken from him "per infideles domini nostri Karoli".¹⁴⁹ He supported his rights to the estate with the charters of Coloman and Béla IV.¹⁵⁰ However, the charter from 1306 sheds different light on the case. According to this charter, Dimičkovina was given by the great-great grandfather of Paul, Benedict, to his sister, who was married to Demetar, and whose granddaughter sold it in 1306 to Pousa, the *infidelis* mentioned in the charter from 1329.¹⁵¹ Obviously, Paul, who had his eye on Dimičkovina as late as 1320, managed to obtain it, and what the case illustrates is a certain attitude towards king's infidels and benevolent "judicial" approach towards those who stood on the other side, among the king's and the ban's *fideles*.¹⁵²

John son of John son of Junk was also in the entourage of Ban John in 1322, and the king, taking into the account John's faithful services, confirmed him the charter of Andrew III concerning some tax exemptions.¹⁵³ Change of allegiance can be observed in 1325, when John and Paul sons of John came in front of the king, also in the name of their brother Peter, and asked the king to confirm them the charter of Ladislaus IV concerning the estates of Vrbovec and Obrež. The king of course replied favorably to his *fideles* and issued them charter confirming their previous privilege.¹⁵⁴

Another indicative case is represented by Dionysius of Kostajnica. In 1324 the former ban John Babonić, Dionysius's uncle, gave him the estate Grden for his faithful services. Dionysius served his uncle from his early youth and he was part of many of his campaigns in

¹⁴⁸ Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming).

¹⁴⁹ CD vol. 9, no. 382, 468.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ CD vol. 8, no. 106, 118.

¹⁵² Paul promised Dimičkovina to his son in law Peter called Castellan in 1322 although he obviously did not possess it at the time. CD vol. 8, no. 463, 566.

¹⁵³ Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming).

¹⁵⁴ CD vol. 9, no. 200, 245-6.

Slavonia, the German lands, the Czech lands, Serbia, Bosna, and *ultra mare*.¹⁵⁵ John also especially emphasized the services that Dionysius had done for him at the court of Charles Robert.¹⁵⁶ As can be seen, Dionysius was a loyal follower of John, serving him probably all of his life, connected to him with ties of kinship, and, what is also important to stress, he received the donation after John had been removed from the office of ban. In fact, this is the one of two extant donations of the Babonići to one of their men in new political circumstances, and the act of donation was probably made with the goal of strengthening the ties of loyalty in the period so unfavorable for the Babonići.¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless, in 1328 it was obvious that the relationship between the two was compromised. By that time Dionysius joined Mikac, just like John's other nephew, Nicholas son of Radislaus, and they were acting together against John, occupying his possessions.¹⁵⁸

Mladen Ančić also analyzed some of the men that have been examined here focusing mainly on their relationship with Ban Mikac in the first years of his banate.¹⁵⁹ In short, he emphasized that Mikac's reliance on Nicholas of Ludbreg was connected with the strategic significance of his estates on the way from Hungary to the Croatian kingdom, that is, medieval Slavonia. Furthermore, he also emphasized Mikac's reliance on Stephen son of Apay and sons of Mihalch, stressing that all of them were members of the old kindreds with high social standing.¹⁶⁰ His conclusions can be further expanded in a few more aspects. First of all, like it has been said, Nicholas of Ludbreg and the circle around him (Stephen son of Apay and members of the smaller nobility around Ludbreg) already had the power base on which Ban Nicholas could rely on since 1323. In this respect, Mikac's reliance on these men

¹⁵⁵ Marija Karbić and Damir Karbić, "Kostajnica i njezini gospodari tijekom srednjeg vijeka [Kostajnica and its lords during the Middle Ages]," in *Hrvatska Kostajnica 1240.-2000.*, ed. by Marija Krupić et al. (Hrvatska Kostajnica: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2002), 51-2.

¹⁵⁶ CD vol. 9, no. 150, 187.

¹⁵⁷ The other one is to Beloš son of Martin from 18 November 1323, DF 262412.

¹⁵⁸ Karbić and Karbić, "Kostajnica," 52.

¹⁵⁹ Ančić, *Hrvatsko Kraljevstvo* (forthcoming).

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

and the strategic importance of their estates was recognized already by his predecessor and Mikac only continued this practice. Furthermore, the links established between Nicholas of Ludbreg, the king and Ban Nicholas resulted from the fact that Nicholas opposed both oligarchical fractions from 1319 onwards. These circumstances assured that they would find a common language.

Furthermore, it has not been stressed enough that Nicholas, Stephen and the sons of Mihalch had a strong material base that could be employed against the oligarchical factions of the Babonići and the Kőszegis. What all of them had in common were castles; Nicholas had three castles and Stephen and sons of Mihalch one each. Although not as substantial as the number of castles that the Babonići held on their own and through their proxies, the number was still enough to start with, which proves that the local powers on which bans Nicholas and Mikac relied had enough resources for the costly clashes with their enemies.

The geographical aspect also warrants further discussion. As it was said, the region around Ludbreg was the first base around which the opposition to the Babonići and the Kőszegis started. After 1317 the Babonići managed to extend their influence north of the river Sava even further, and in the process their network of patronage was extended to John and Leukus Svetački, Paul and Dominic Pekri and John son of John, as far as sources can tell. However, these same men were quick to realize the change of political tide and they switched allegiance. Therefore, after establishing connections with men who opposed both oligarchical fractions the bans as the king's deputies started the decisive fight with the members of the oligarchical fractions themselves. In process they established influence and authority firstly in those lands that were not situated south of the river Sava around the territories that were under the strong control of the Babonići. Afterwards, especially after 1327 when the Babonići lost Steničnjak, their main castle, the next in line were the main supporters of the Babonići,

like Dionysus, nephew of former ban John Babonić. In the end, the process of dissolving the power of the Babonići also resulted in their intra-familial struggles, which vividly illustrates the decline of their former power.

2.3 The road to the royal court

As was demonstrated in the previous chapters one of the most important ways for remunerating faithful men were various royal grants. These could include donations of new land, confirmations of charters issued by previous kings, ennoblement of meritorious persons, exemptions from taxes, and exemption from possible judicial processes. The *conditio sine qua non* for all of these grants was some kind of service that was provided “to the king and his holy crown”, as was often stated in the royal charters. Nevertheless, faithful service was not nearly enough to enable someone to access the royal court, where these donations were issued.¹⁶¹ In order to reach the king’s court the act of patronage was indispensable, and in the case of medieval Slavonia during the period covered in this thesis the bans were the main link connecting the local nobility with the court of Charles Robert.

Before proceeding to the discussion itself, a few remarks are necessary concerning the possibility to detect when and whether certain nobles came to the royal court as part of the entourage of the ban. This is the most obvious when the charter of donation itself mentions that the bans were present during the issuing of relevant charter and that they interceded on the behalf of the recipient.¹⁶² When this was not the case, this kind of patronage can be detected when a cluster of charters was issued in a relatively short time span for the nobility

¹⁶¹ The definition of a royal court used here is a broad one; it defines the court through the presence of the king (“The court was where the ruler was”). For the main elements of the royal court (space and people around the king) and the problems in defining it see Malcom Vale, *The Princely Court: Medieval Courts and Culture in North-West Europe 1270-1380* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 15-26; Rita Costa Gomes, *The Making of a Court Society: Kings and Nobles in Late Medieval Portugal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3-16. Difference between the royal court (*curia*) and aula (*palace*) in the medieval Hungary has still not been efficiently solved. Engel, *Realm*, 145.

¹⁶² Đura Hardi managed to find only one such intervention of palatine Philip for one of his men; the examples for the nobles from medieval Slavonia are more abundant. See Hardi, *Drugeti*, 165.

from Slavonia. In such cases, even if only one of the charters mentions intervention of the ban explicitly, it is justifiable to assume that the rest of the recipients were also part of his entourage, and that they received royal donations thanks to the ban's patronage. There are other cases that are less clear, and further indirect evidence will be used to infer whether these royal donations can be attributed to the patronage of bans or not, and furthermore whether they were received when nobles came to the court as part of a ban's entourage or not.

2.3.1 Patterns of the visits to the royal court

The first¹⁶³ known example comes from the 1317, when Charles Robert ennobled Markus son of Dobre *de Lomnicha scilicet de campo Zagrabiensi* for his faithful service, namely for the participation in the military operations against the Kőszegis in the same year during which he was wounded, and considering the financial losses that he, his brothers and cousins suffered during the fighting.¹⁶⁴ The charter also specifies that his meritorious deeds were recounted to the king by Ban John Babonić and Stephen called Bugar from Tolna County.¹⁶⁵ Unfortunately, the charter in question is damaged and it is impossible to read the complete date, and only the year of issuing is still visible.¹⁶⁶ However, in December of the same year Ban John received the grant of several estates and castles from the king, and it is most likely that Markus, who was notary of Ban John, received his grant around the same time. Firstly, this is suggested by the fact that Ban John was present there to recount his

¹⁶³ The example of Reynold son of Reynold of Novigrad (Újudvar) is not completely clear. In 1315 he was castellan of Medvedgrad, which was in the hands of Ban Stephen Babonić at the time (Nada Klaić, *Medvedgrad i njegovi gospodari* [Medvedgrad and its Lords] (Zagreb: Globus, 1987), 62). However, at the end of 1317, when he was at the court of Charles Robert, he was *capitaneus castris Zagrabiensis*, which would indicate that he was not in the service of Ban Stephen any more. Further evidence that he was not in ban's service any more should be also sought in the fact that a couple of days after him, representatives of the free royal town of Zagreb and Augustin, bishop of Zagreb also received certain royal charters; their joint appearance at the court reveals them as a group that came to the court independently from ban Stephen, who came to the court a month later. CD vol. 8, no. 383, 465; no. 384, 466; no. 385, 467; no. 389, 470-1.

¹⁶⁴ DF 255656. This would be then the first time when someone defined himself as *de Campo*; for the problem see Gábor Szeberényi, „Noble Communities in Spiš and Turopolje in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries,” in *Slovakia and Croatia*, Vol. 1, ed. Martin Homza, Ján Lukačka, Neven Budak (Bratislava: Department of Slovak History at the Faculty of Philosophy of Comenius University Bratislava, 2013), 225, footnote 31.

¹⁶⁵ DF 255656.

¹⁶⁶ „anno domini millesimo trecentesimo decimo septimo tredec(imo) ...,” *ibid.*

notary's deeds. Furthermore, both of the charters describe the situation in which the ban and Markus did their faithful services in similar terms.¹⁶⁷

The next example that indicates this kind of patronage comes from January 1319, when the king ennobled *iobagiones castri* John and George, *servientes* of Ban John. That the ban was present on the occasion is again possible to infer from the similar circumstance as above, namely that the ban recounted the meritorious deeds of his *servientes*. These two also earned their grant by fighting, during which they were wounded, and also captivated (John).¹⁶⁸

The third example from the banate of John dates from January 1322. Between 22 and 28 January a whole cluster of donations was issued by the king to the men from the entourage of Ban John. These were Paul and Dominic Pekri, John son of John son of Junk, Leukus and John from Svetački kindred, and finally nephews of Ban John, Nicholas, Duimus, and John.¹⁶⁹ In the charter for Nicholas and Duimus it was explicitly stated that they received the grant for their faithful services, but above all for the services of their uncle, Ban John.¹⁷⁰

Two cases of royal donation can be also connected to Ban John, although his presence at the royal court cannot be established, and most probably he was not present there. The first one is from September 1323 when the aforementioned John and George received

¹⁶⁷ In the charter for Ban John: "quod cum nos ipsum Johannem banum pro resupmenda potentia nostra et recuperatione terrarum, castrorum et aliorum iurium regalium nostrorum ad partes ultra Drauam in servitis nostris contra filios Henrici bani," CD vol. 8, no. 361, 440. In the charter for Markus: "quod cum nos eundem magnificum virum Johannem banum ad resumpmendam potentiam nostram ad partes ultra Drauam contra filios Henrici emulos et infideles nostros transissemus," DF 255656. Furthermore, the date, which unfortunately cannot be completely read because of the damages, still provides enough clues to conclude that these charters were issued on the same day. The number which appears after the year in the charter issued for Markus (tredecimo) is probably referring to calends and the charter for Ban John was dated in the same way, using calends, and again number 13 appears: "tertio decimo kalendas ianuarii".

¹⁶⁸ CD vol. 8, no. 423, 520-1.

¹⁶⁹ Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming).

¹⁷⁰ CD vol. 9, no. 38, 48. Enikő Spekner has asserted that the visit of Philip Drugeth is the only known case of some of the barons of the court visiting the royal court at Timișoara, Enikő Spekner, "Sedi reali nell'Ungheria dell'età angioina," in *L'Ungheria angioina*, ed. Enikő Csukovits (Roma: Viella, 2013), 247. These three visits of Ban John to the royal court at Timișoara considerably change the picture.

confirmation of the previously discussed charter from 1319.¹⁷¹ The second case is from the December of 1322, when Hector of Greben received royal donations for himself and his brother and cousins.¹⁷² Hector was at that point the count of Križevci and his brother Puneč most probably the count of Zagreb; both of them obviously men of Ban John. Although not the same as the three previous examples of the ban's patronage, they still reveal that the persons in the service of the ban received royal donations of various kinds.

Ban Nicholas came to Slavonia in May of 1323, and during the summer his campaign to Croatia ended unsuccessfully. In October he was on his way back to the north, and the next piece of information on his precise location is from 17 January 1324 when he was in Križevci.¹⁷³ In the meantime, Frederick, count of Krk, and Leukus and John Svetački were at the royal court between 28 October and 7 November where they got several royal confirmations of their privileges.¹⁷⁴ Whether Ban Nicholas also went to the royal court in that period is hard to tell. One possible hint that Nicholas was at the court is the fact that Ban Nicholas summoned a *congregatio generalis* in January 1324 “ex precepto et mandato domini nostri Karoli dei gratia illustris regis Hungarie.”¹⁷⁵ Since *congregatio generalis* of the *regnum Sclavonie* was convoked regularly from this time onwards, which was one of the significant novelties after the turning point of 1323, it can be presumed that the matter was thoroughly discussed in the royal court precisely between November 1323 and January 1324. Taking this into account, it is more likely that Ban Nicholas was also present during these discussions and planning than that he just received written instructions from the king to summon general assembly.

¹⁷¹ CD vol. 9, no. 116, 134-5.

¹⁷² Ibid., no. 81, 95; no. 84, 98-99.

¹⁷³ CD vol. 8, no. 139, 171-2.

¹⁷⁴ Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming).

¹⁷⁵ CD vol. 9, no. 139, 171-2.

There are some indications that during the banate of Nicholas nobles from Slavonia went to the royal court as the ban's entourage once more. On 19 July the king confirmed a charter to the group of nobles from the county of Križevci, and on 4 August a royal charter was issued for Nicholas of Ludbreg.¹⁷⁶ Considering the role that Nicholas played in service of Ban Nicholas (which was discussed in previous chapter) and the fact that he later also came to the royal court in the entourage of Mikac, it is reasonable to conclude that Ban Nicholas was also at the court at the same time, and that these nobles from Križevci and Nicholas received royal privileges through his intervention. A further indication of this is the fact that there are no extant charters that could prove the presence of Nicholas in medieval Slavonia after June 1323.¹⁷⁷ He must have gone to the royal court in July and after that he probably did not return to Slavonia; in the first half of 1325 he stayed in Sopron (February) and Zakany (April), and in May 1325 Mikac was already ban of Slavonia.

During the first five years of his banate Mikac regularly attended the royal court, mostly during the winter season. The first case comes from January 1326 when the king confirmed some privilege to the *nobiles iobagiones* from Moravče. There is no direct evidence that Mikac was present at the court, but he was absent from Slavonia at least from 17 October 1325 when a *congregatio generalis* was held without him being present.¹⁷⁸ Moreover, there are other indications for this claim. In 1381 when Peter son of Punek of Greben received some privilege from King Luis, the circumstances of the loss of the castle Greben were also recounted. According to Peter's version of the events surrounding the loss of Greben, Mikac secured the help of a group of nobles, mainly from Moravče, by procuring for them certain donations of the king.¹⁷⁹ There are some problems with the chronological

¹⁷⁶ CD vol. 8, no. 161, 200; DF 209121.

¹⁷⁷ During June he must have been in Slavonia, since chapter of Čazma was fulfilling his mandate at the beginning of July, DF 261771.

¹⁷⁸ DL 99902.

¹⁷⁹ Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming).

details of Peter's story. Mikac most probably took Greben by force in the first half of 1328, and the confirmation of the privileges for the nobles from Moravče, which is the only extant royal charter issued for them, was issued in January 1326.¹⁸⁰ This means that Mikac probably secured the loyalty and help by interceding on behalf of the nobles he wanted to attract before he employed them for his goals. In the end, it confirms the assumption that Mikac was probably at the royal court in January 1326, and that his patronage was crucial in obtaining royal confirmation of the previous privilege for the nobles from Moravče.

Furthermore, Mikac's presence at the court can be confirmed without doubt for January 1327 when one *iobagio castri* was ennobled for the services done to Mikac upon his intervention. In February of the same year Mikac was still at the court, since he was one of the courtiers whom the king put in charge of a certain affair.¹⁸¹ The same applies for the January of 1328 when Mikac's presence at the royal court is well attested again.¹⁸² In September of the same year Mikac was again in king's presence. This time it was not in Visegrád, but "in Brugga super fluuium Leyta" (Bruck an der Leytha), on the border of the kingdom with the lands of Habsburgs, where Mikac participated in the signing of the peace treaty with the Habsburgs, which is attested not only by his mentioning in the royal charter, but also with his seal that was appended to the charter.¹⁸³

There are no indications that Mikac went to the court during 1329, but in 1330 he and his entourage left traces of their visit. In March of that year Mikac intervened for the young orphans (*parvuli orphani*) whose father died fighting for Mikac in Croatia in the previous year. Thanks to Mikac's intervention, Stephen, Martin, Guke and George got tax exemption

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming).

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Hardi, *Drugeti*, 265-6. The charter in question is DF 257972.

for their estates in Slavonia.¹⁸⁴ Two days later Mikac's sons received a land donation from the king, who sent the mandate to the chapter of Čazma to introduce them into their new possession.¹⁸⁵ Mikac was still in Visegrád in June 1330, since on 28 June the king donated him the Pölöske castle in county Zala.¹⁸⁶ Between March and June his presence in Visegrád is confirmed by the fact that he was participating in the royal council on 24 May, when it was decided that all the relatives of Felician Záh, who tried to kill the members of the royal family, including the king himself, should be severely punished.¹⁸⁷

The royal land donation to the nobles from Rakovec from April 1331 was probably given to them on the account of the death of one of the members of the family in the battle, since it was stated that they are receiving it “*ratione mortis Abre filii Ladislai*.”¹⁸⁸ In a later royal charter connected with the same estate, the donation is described in more general terms, as remuneration for loyal services, but this charter also reveals that the land in question belonged to the king.¹⁸⁹ It is hard to tell which campaign was in question. It should only be noted that the first donation happened before 1330, or to be more precise before the military campaign *in terra Transalpina*, since the aforementioned charter from 28 April makes it clear that the donation was sealed with the seal which was lost during the Wallachian campaign.¹⁹⁰ This opens the possibility that Abra's brothers, Martin, Ladislaus, Nicholas, as well as Abra's sons Nicholas, Dominick, Stephen and Jacob received the donation during the January of 1330 together with George's orphans. Finally, it needs to be stressed that all these nobles

¹⁸⁴ “*presente magnifico viro domino Mykech bano tocius Sclavonie*,” CD vol. 9, no. 412, 501-2.

¹⁸⁵ CD vol. 9, no. 413, 503.

¹⁸⁶ Imre Nagy, Dezső Véghely and Gyula Nagy, *Zala vármegye története* Oklevéltár, vol. 1 (Budapest: n.p., 1886), no. 179, 246-7.

¹⁸⁷ Fejér, *Codex*, vol. 8, 3, no. 177, 419-427. For the whole affair see Engel, *Realm*, 138-9; Hardi, *Drugeti*, 322-24.

¹⁸⁸ CD vol. 9, no. 450, 556.

¹⁸⁹ “*nostre collationi pertinentem*,” Ibid., no. 463, 571.

¹⁹⁰ For the campaign in Wallachia see Engel, *The realm*, 135-6.

were Mikac's men. In 1329 Nicholas son of Ladislaus was *homo bani*, like his brother Martin five years later.¹⁹¹

After 1331 it is hard to establish whether Mikac visited the royal court prior to 1335. In the November of that year he was present at the big congress of Visegrád.¹⁹² In the November of 1336 a verdict of judge royal has been written down concerning a certain dispute, and one of the members of the royal council who participated in adjudicating the case was Mikac.¹⁹³ Since the date of the issuing the charter is 11 November, there are reasons to suppose that the verdict was recorded after Mikac participated in the royal council, since on the same date Mikac was already in Slavonia, issuing a charter in Koprivnica.¹⁹⁴ Another clue for the date of Mikac's visit to the royal court is the royal charter from 26 October 1336 issued for Paris son of Paris, and his sons Philip and Pasa, concerning their estate Novigrad (Újudvar) in the county of Križevci.¹⁹⁵ Before proceeding to further discussion on the relationship between Mikac and Paris, it is important to look at the broader circumstances of this rather short visit, since Mikac must have been at the court sometime between 4 August and 11 November. This was the period when the relationship with the dukes of Austria was at its lowest, which led to military confrontations. The dukes of Austria provided help to the Kőszegis in their rebellion against the king in 1336, and the Babonići also entered their service against Charles Robert in the same year.¹⁹⁶ In the next year Charles responded to

¹⁹¹ For Nicholas see DL 2521; Martin was named *homo regius* in DL 99976 and CD vol. 9, no. 210, 280, but he appears as *homo bani* in *ibid.*, no. 208, 344. The distinction between *homo regius* and *homo bani* is not quite clear since Martin was designated differently in these charters dealing with the same land issue; furthermore, in the latter charter right besides Martin, *homo bani*, John son of Roh was named as *homo regius*, indicating that the difference between the two existed – but grasping the exact differences among them still await further research. Martin appears as *homo regius* again in 1344 (CD vol. 11, no. 128, 172), and the colleagues named with him, Peter son of Nezmel and George son of Thatar are the same as in the charter from 1317 (CD vol. 8, no. 383, 465), when they three also appeared in a similar royal request.

¹⁹² Hardi, *Drugeti*, 336. For the congress see György Rácz, "The Congress of Visegrád in 1335: Diplomacy and Representation," *Hungarian Historical Review* 2 (2013): 261–87.

¹⁹³ Imre Nagy, *Anjoukori okmánytár. Codex diplomaticus Hungaricus Andegavensis*, vol. 3 (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1883), no. 203, 290–298.

¹⁹⁴ CD vol. 10, no. 213, 282.

¹⁹⁵ CD vol. 10, no. 210, 280–1.

¹⁹⁶ Engel, *Realm*, 136; Kekez, *Plemički rod*, 119.

these hostilities by launching counter attacks, especially in the southern Habsburg provinces.¹⁹⁷ These were led by Mikac, and the royal donation from 1338 narrates his undertakings in great detail.¹⁹⁸ This was probably the reason why Mikac spent such a short period of time at the court; it was necessary to respond to the attack of the Habsburgs promptly, and Mikac returned to Slavonia to organize the upcoming expedition which was obviously undertaken mainly by the military forces from Slavonia.

Thanks to this charter, issued on 11 November 1338 after the successful campaign against the Kőszegis and the Babonići, we know that Mikac again came to the court, where he was rewarded for his triumph with the donation of the estate Durđevac.¹⁹⁹ Three days before, on 8 November, the aforementioned Paris son of Paris, with his sons Philip and Pasa, who had troubles with the borders of his estate, received the royal confirmation for the estate Novigrad (Újudvar) in the county of Križevci, with the new boundaries that have been established after the judicial dispute with one of his neighbors.²⁰⁰ The royal charter from November 1338 specifies one of the faithful services for the confirmation, namely the death of Nicholas son of Paris, who died fighting in the royal service under the castle of Koprivnica.²⁰¹ Although the exact date of these struggles for Koprivnica is not indicated, there are two options: either Nicholas died around 1326 when Mikac took Koprivnica from the Kőszegis, or he died during more recent struggles when the fighting could have extended as far as Koprivnica. Regardless which of these two assumptions is correct, Paris and his sons

¹⁹⁷ Engel, *Realm*, 136.

¹⁹⁸ DF 248978. The charter has been transcribed in Engel, „Die Güssinger,” 103-7.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ DL 99976, with the observation that the charter has been wrongly dated to 7 November; for the border dispute from 1337 see CD vol. 10, no. 220, 290; *ibid.*, no. 235, 308. Paris and his neighbor John of Nabrad already had a border dispute in 1332, when the issue was solved in front of Mikac, *ibid.*

²⁰¹ DL 99976.

were certainly important men for Mikac during these operations, and as such they were part of Mikac's entourage on at least two occasions, in 1336 and 1338.²⁰²

There are unfortunately no sources that reveal whether Mikac was present at the court during 1337. What is worth mentioning is that Paris received confirmation for the reambulation of his estate only in 1338, although the case was closed already in April 1337.²⁰³ This could perhaps indicate that Mikac went to the court in 1337 but Paris was not part of his entourage, or that Mikac did not visit the court that year. The latter seem more probable, because Mikac held a *congregatio* in Slavonia in January 1337, and general circumstances probably demanded his presence in Slavonia.²⁰⁴ But, moving from this uncertain ground, sources are clearer on Mikac's next visit, which happened in November 1339, when Mikac was again member of the royal council.²⁰⁵

The example from October 1342 could indicate that the presence of Mikac at the royal court was not necessary for the Slavonian nobles to gain access to the court, but that the connection with Mikac was indispensable. The nobles from Rakovec (Peter and Nicholas sons of Martin, John and Nicholas sons of Nicholas, and Nicholas and Stephen son of Abra) asked the new king to confirm them Charles Robert's above mentioned donation, which Louis did. Although Mikac was not present, these nobles appeared "cum procuratoriis litteris magnifici viri Mykch bani tocius Sclauonie," which apparently served as credentials for

²⁰² This could confirm the assumption that this Paris was indeed the castellan of Susedgrad, Engel, *Magyarország* vol. 1, 434.

²⁰³ The case was solved on 3 April in front of Mikac, and the chapter of Čazma performed the reambulation of the estate without any contradictions on 30 April. CD vol. 10, no. 235, 308, DL 99976.

²⁰⁴ "congregationem nostram in octauis epiphanie domini proxime preteritis in Zyrch cum nobilibus Sclauonie celebrassemus," CD vol. 10, no. 235, 308.

²⁰⁵ Nagy, *Anjoukori okmánytár*, no. 400, 608-9. In February 1340 Mikac's old friend, Nicholas of Ludbreg, was at the court, and the king confirmed him certain charters on the occasion; this visit should be probably connected to Mikac's patronage, DL 101669. In 1340 in the circle of Charles Robert a campaign to Dalmatia was discussed; Mikac's expertise on such a question was without a doubt extremely valuable. For the planned campaign see Ferenc Piti, "A planned Campaign of King Charles I of Hungary to Dalmatia," in *La Diplomatie des Etats angevins aux XIIIe et XIV siècles / Diplomacy in the Countries of the Angevin Dynasty in the Thirteenth - Fourteenth centuries: Actes du colloque international de Szeged, Visegrád, Budapest, 13-16 septembre 2007*, ed. Zoltán Kordé and István Petrovics (Rome and Szeged: Accademia d'Ungheria in Roma, 2010), 179-85.

them, as a sign of the ban's favor, which opened the doors of the royal court even under the new king.²⁰⁶

The last direct evidence of Mikac's presence at the royal court comes from 23 September 1342, half a month before the visit of the Rakovec nobles to the royal court. Mikac appeared before Louis I with his sons, Stephen, Akus, and Ladislaus, who were *milites aule*, and with other two sons, Lorand and Nicholas, and asked the king to grant them the right to build a castle in the county of Sáros, “in vicinitate et commetaneitate confiniorum Polonie et Ruthenie regnorum”, which the king did.²⁰⁷

Although the discussion so far has focused more on detecting cases of the ban's patronage, in a sense providing material for further analysis, one thing is certainly obvious: the ban's patronage stood behind many (it is tempting to say for all) royal charters issued for the nobles from medieval Slavonia. However, besides this, the material contains answers to other important questions: can the frequency of the ban's visits to the court be established, and are there any differences between the three bans under scrutiny here? Likewise, was the patronage of the ban indispensable for the local Slavonian nobility to reach the royal court? And finally, what can the comparison with the later periods reveal about the political system in question?

The first pattern that emerges most clearly is the connection between the military campaigns and the visits to the court. These visits could be done prior to and after the military campaigns. Visits before campaigns were obviously connected to the planning of the ensuing military operations. These pre-campaign visits were used for expressing royal generosity as a way of motivating their recipients, and the visit of Ban John and his entourage to the court in January 1322, before the campaign to Croatia, is an excellent example for this. On the other

²⁰⁶ CD vol. 11, no. 11, 16-17.

²⁰⁷ DL 3517.

hand, whether successful or unsuccessful, the visit after the campaigns most probably served to bring the news of the campaign to the king. Of course, this kind of visits was more likely to result in the issuing of various royal donations and confirmations, because the combatants brought stories of their glorious and devoted military deeds done for the king and the kingdom. But, not only new undertakings were narrated in charters of privilege; old services were equally valued and recorded in the charters. Another important thing that needs to be emphasized is that all of these campaign visits were done during the winter season. The visits of Mikac are fairly clear on this last point. Since he also waged military campaigns for several years in a row, the winter visits combined both elements: previous campaigns were analyzed and the details of the next one were planned. During his first, obviously long visit to the court as ban in the first half of 1326 (he was still in Visegrád in June of 1326), the campaign to Croatia and against the Babonići was probably planned; and after the campaign he returned to the royal court. In 1329 the campaign was directed towards Croatia. Although Mikac's itinerary does not suggest that he visited the court during the winter of 1328/1329, it is clear that he returned after the campaign.

Military affairs were not the only reason why Mikac visited the royal court. For several instances when his presence at the court or at the company of the king can be attested (treaty of 1328, Záh trial 1330, congress of 1335) this can be related to the fact that he was among the highest officials of the kingdom, and his participation at these occasions of highest importance went hand in hand with his position.²⁰⁸ The other occasions when we can

²⁰⁸ Discussing the practice from the second half of the fifteenth century András Kubinyi concluded that the king summoned all the prelates and the barons whenever there was a case that needed their common consensus, see András Kubinyi, *Bárók a királyi tanácsban Mátyás és II. Ulászló idején* [Aristocrats in the royal council under King Matthias and Wladislas II], *Századok* 122 (1988) 147-213. Mikac's example indicates that the same could be applied for the reign of Charles Robert.

establish Mikac's presence at the royal court – participation at the royal council – were also connected to his high standing.²⁰⁹

Besides these direct evidences of Mikac's visits to the court, his itinerary can offer valuable insight in the question of his visits to the royal court. Namely, it should be remarked that the most of the examples for his court visits are connected with the military affairs. Still, the campaign visits were most likely to leave some trace, since the king had good reasons to issue charters for meritorious services. On the other hand, without the military efforts the chances that the visits of Mikac and his entourage would not leave any trace in the surviving sources were greater. This is why the itinerary of Mikac may provide additional clues; for example, it shows that he issued most of the charters connected with Slavonian affairs between May and October (see appendices *Mikac's itinerary* 1 and 2).

As previously mentioned, the fact that Mikac spent the winter season at the royal court and the period from April (June) to October (November) in Slavonia was dictated by the cycle of military campaigns, but even in periods with no campaigns he mostly spent part of the year in Slavonia, with a gap in the winter months. Although not enormously high, the number of preserved charters is still representative and the pattern that emerges reveals that the gaps in issued charters during the winter months may indicate that Mikac regularly went to the court in this period. There are exceptions to this (visit in September 1328 and October 1336, winter season of 1340/1341, "coronation" visit of 1342), but they were mainly

²⁰⁹ Unfortunately there have been no detailed studies on the regularity and the rhythm of the meetings of the royal council during the reign of Charles Robert, which would allow seeing if there was further correlation between Mikac's visits and the meetings of the royal council. It was apparently only in the 1370s, during the reign of Louis I, that the work of the royal council became more regular and its authority extended, see József Gerics, "A magyar királyi kúriai bíraskodás és központi igazgatás Anjou-kori történetéhez [On the history of judiciary in the Hungarian royal curia and on the central governance in the Angevin period]," in: *Egyház, állam és gondolkodás Magyarországon a középkorban* [Church, state and intellectual life in medieval Hungary - collected studies] (Budapest: METEM, 1995), 313-14. The role of the royal council during Charles Robert's reign is summarized in Enikő Csukovits, *Az Anjouk Magyarországon I. I. Károly és uralkodása (1301-1342)* [Enikő Csukovits, The Angevins in Hungary I. Charles I and his rule (1301-1342), Budapest: MTA TTI 2012, 83-85.

connected to some pressing needs and occasions of high importance. With this in mind, and without claiming too much for the regularity of court visits (except that they happened almost every year) it is justifiable to assume that the visits to the court during the winter season were not connected only to the cycle of the military campaigns; it was apparently the customary time for these visits independently of military campaigns. This can probably be connected to the celebration of the main liturgical feasts, which were occasions when the kings usually gathered their men around them in solemn celebrations with political overtones; Christmas was especially such an occasion.²¹⁰

It is worth noting that Mikac had established infrastructure for these visits, as he owned a house in Visegrád.²¹¹ Although the first mention of his house comes from 1343, Orsolya Mészáros supposes that he must have owned it already in the 1320s.²¹² He was not the only one among the barons of Charles Robert who owned houses in Visegrád; other important barons like palatines from the Druget family, the voivode of Transylvania Thomas Szécsényi and the master of the treasury Demetrius Nekcsei also had their properties in Visegrád.²¹³ In fact, it is more than probable that all the barons and other holders of *honores* instrumental in the functioning of government had their residences in Visegrád.²¹⁴ This was not a coincidence; the choice of Visegrád as the new “capital” of the kingdom was influenced

²¹⁰ Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, Vol. 1, *The Growth of Ties of Dependence* (London: Routledge, 2004), 221; Malcom Vale, *The Princely Court: Medieval Courts and Culture in North-West Europe 1270-1380* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 28-30, 32-33. Christmas seems to be the most prominent of all the liturgical feast; the expenses of the household of Edward II and Edward III show that most of the money was spent for Christmas celebrations, *ibid.*, 308-10.

²¹¹ Likewise, between 1325 and 1328 he was the count of Somogy, which was the county on the way from Slavonia to Visegrád. It is worth noting that his predecessor in the office of ban, Nicholas, was also *comes* of Somogy in 1325. Engel, *Magyarország*, vol. 1, 175

²¹² Orsolya Mészáros, „Spatial Representation of the Court Nobility’s Urban Possessions in the ‘Residence-Town’ Visegrad in the Angevin Period,” in *La Diplomatie des Etats angevins aux XIIIe et XIV siècles / Diplomacy in the Countries of the Angevin Dynasty in the Thirteenth - Fourteenth centuries: Actes du colloque international de Szeged, Visegrád, Budapest, 13-16 septembre 2007*, ed. Zoltán Kordé and István Petrovics (Rome and Szeged: Accademia d’Ungheria in Roma, 2010), 202.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 202.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.* 206. The author also discussed the same problem in Orsolya Mészáros, „Topography and Urban Property Transactions,” in *The Medieval Royal Town at Visegrád: Royal Centre, Urban Settlement, Churches*, ed. Gergely Buzás, József Laszlovszky, and Orsolya Mészáros (Budapest: Archaeolingua, 2014), 177-8.

by the aspiration of Charles Robert to further strengthen his relationship with his men (one would be tempted not only to strengthen but to control), which was not possible to that extent in Buda.²¹⁵

2.3.2 Royal court and the ban's patronage

The visits of the bans to the royal court were, among other things, closely connected to the question of patronage. The discussion from the previous chapter on oligarchical factions showed the importance, and the ways in which the patronage functioned. The question is whether the patronage of the ban was indispensable for the local Slavonian nobility to reach the royal court? That is to say, the question is not only whether noblemen came to the court as part of the bans' entourage, but whether it would have been possible for the noblemen from Slavonia to reach the royal court without the ban's support? This is a delicate question because of the problems of establishing patronage networks through which an individual reached the court, and secondly, because we must rely on the charters that have survived, which can be especially tenuous. To illustrate the latter point: regarding the period of the oligarchical rule of the Babonići (for that of the Kőszegis the scarcity of sources prevents even raising such question), and having in mind the previous discussion on their rule in (part of) Slavonia, it can be concluded that they successfully controlled the communication between the Slavonian nobility and King Charles Robert. Before 1317 there is only one example when the king granted/confirmed something for any of the nobles from Slavonia, the previously discussed case of John son of Tibold, and that one was connected with the Babonići. The problem of course lays in conclusions being based on the fact that something is

²¹⁵ József Laszlovszky and Katalin Szende, "Cities and Towns as Princely Seats: Medieval Visegrád in the Context of Royal Residences and Urban Development in Europe and Hungary," in *The Medieval Royal Town at Visegrád: Royal Centre, Urban Settlement, Churches*, ed. Gergely Buzás, József Laszlovszky, and Orsolya Mészáros (Budapest: Archaeolingua, 2014), 43, Spekner, "Sedi reali," 250. The latter author nevertheless stresses more the defensive qualities of Visegrád as the main reason in the choice of new "capital", *ibid.*, 248-50.

not preserved in charters, that something is missing. Pál Engel's estimation that "the documents that have come down to us represent only one or two per cent of those that were once issued," gives a good idea how misleading such analyses can be.²¹⁶ However, even with this reservation, considering the oligarchical system which the Babonići built, and which was maximally closed for outside influences until the 1320s, allows assumptions that the Babonići, or the ban himself, fully controlled access to the royal court. Furthermore, when the number of royal privileges for Slavonian nobles increased after 1317, they all received it as a part of the entourage of the Babonići.

After 1322 some kind of dual system emerged for a short time, in which the new bans were still in a much better position to control communication with the court, but the Babonići, and especially former ban John, who was *magister tavarnicorum reginalium* between 1326 and 1333, also had access to the royal court. Thanks to this position he tried to use his closeness to the king, and the social capital that went with the office, in his dispute with Mikac.²¹⁷ However, John used his position to protect his own interests and not those of his men, a sign that the time when he was the most powerful man in Slavonia was long gone. After 1325 when Mikac became ban, and especially after 1327 when he managed to crush the power of the oligarchs to a large extent, it seems that he managed to establish complete control of the lines of communication and patronage between the court and the local nobility. Every sign of royal patronage towards the nobles from Slavonia coming to the royal court in the period between 1325 and 1343 had Mikac as a common denominator. He successfully positioned himself as the only link between the king and the local nobles, who visited the court either as part of his entourage or assisted by the fact that he was their lord. However, there were exceptions to this.

²¹⁶ Engel, *Realm*, xvii.

²¹⁷ For the case see Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming).

One option for the nobles from Slavonia was to find another influential lord who could secure them access to the court. In 1332 Ladislaus, archbishop of Kalocsa, intervened with Mikac for Stephen and Peter sons of Bodur in a question of some judicial penalty these two had to pay to the ban.²¹⁸ Theoretically, archbishop Ladislaus could have used his position and intervene for his men – and Stephen and Peter were obviously his men – at the royal court, but again, there are no such examples in the surviving sources. The number of nobles who served such great lords outside medieval Slavonia in this period is impossible to establish, but even if there were more of them, the surviving sources do not reveal signs of royal benevolence towards them.²¹⁹

Besides these exceptions, two others must be mentioned here. These include free royal town of Zagreb, the bishop of Zagreb and other religious communities from Slavonia. The community of the free royal town of Zagreb had access to the royal court independently from Mikac's patronage, and during his banate they used this possibility in a number of occasions. In some cases they even used their immediate access to the royal court in order to complain to the king about some of Mikac's misdeeds, a clear sign that Mikac could not impose himself as a mediator between the town and the king.²²⁰ The same applies to the bishop of Zagreb, for whom it might be said that he had even bigger problems with Mikac than the town of Zagreb. What is peculiar about bishop Ladislaus is that at least in one case it can be ascertained that he also brought his entourage, and obtained royal favor for them. The persons in case were Paul son of Michael and Gregory son of Sebrić, who are named "our (the king's)

²¹⁸ CD vol. 10, no. 14, 16.

²¹⁹ During Mikac's banate the only other case of royal intervention in which Mikac was apparently not actively involved was the one from 1335, when the king and queen intervened on the behalf of both parties (first for one and then for the other) involved in some dispute over *quarta puellaris*, *ibid.*, no. 156, 214. According to Tamás Pálosfalvi, in the fifteenth century there were not many Slavonian nobles who obtained land outside Slavonia on account of their service to their lords; the opposite was more usual, Pálosfalvi, *The noble elite*, 352. It seems that this also holds for the period between 1301 and 1343, but in a wider sense; they seem to have mainly served lords from Slavonia and service for those from outside Slavonia was rare.

²²⁰ For the free royal town of Zagreb in this period see Klaić, *Zagreb*, 103-114.

carpenters” (*carpentarii nostri*) in the royal charter.²²¹ However, it is questionable whether they could access the court and obtain royal favor as king’s carpenters. It is more probable that they came to this position through the bishop’s patronage. There are a couple of reasons for such a conclusion. First of all, although it is not stated explicitly, they were obviously the bishop’s *prediales*²²²; secondly, they all visited the court at the same time (the bishop’s presence can be attested on 27 October and Paul and Gregory’s on 24 and 26 October²²³); finally, Paul and Gregory named Mauricius son of Paul, who was the bishop’s *serviens*, as their legal representative in their dispute.²²⁴

No matter how telling these two exceptions might be, in order to politically control medieval Slavonia above all it was necessary to control the nobility as the most important group of society. Returning to the role of the nobility, it must be reiterated that Mikac managed to monopolize the position of mediator between royal center and local noble society. This of course raises the question whether the position of ban per se enabled such a mediating power or it was connected specifically to the banate of the Babonići and Mikac. The short banate of Nicholas was important in many ways and Mikac inherited many of the elements of his rule, but was too short to develop such a system in its entirety. In order to answer this question a comparison with previous and later political systems and the ban’s position in them would be invaluable, but unfortunately, such research still has not been conducted to date. Nevertheless, I will touch upon some elements that could indicate that the system in place during much of the first half of the fourteenth century did not exist in the same form in later times, only the period between 1445 and 1464 being comparable to some extent.

²²¹ CD vol. 10, no. 169, 236.

²²² For *prediales* see Rady, *Nobility*, 81-5.

²²³ CD vol. 10, no. 171, 237-8; *ibid.*, no. 169, 236; *ibid.*, no. 170, 237.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

First of all, the Babonići and Mikac held the titles of ban for time periods unsurpassed by later bans. With eighteen years Mikac was the longest officiating ban of Slavonia in the Middle Ages. Bans that came after Mikac in the fourteenth century generally held the office for no more than six years, and in average around three years. The mere shortness of their incumbency probably prevented them from controlling the local nobility in a way that the Babonići and Mikac did. Furthermore, in the second part of the fourteenth century, albeit only for a brief period, the position of *herceg* (*dux*) was reinstituted (basically a prince receiving an appanage). Although fairly briefly, between 1352 and 1354, *Herceg* Stephen, Louis's brother, had his court in Zagreb. His position was taken over by his widow after his death, but soon afterwards, in 1356, she remarried and left the kingdom. Their son John, although officially bearing the title of *herceg*, was too young to practice it, and also died at a young age in 1360.²²⁵ The *hercegs* who ruled over medieval Slavonia, although for a relatively short period, certainly affected the position and the power of ban, even more so since the *hercegs* resided in Slavonia (Zagreb). Since no empirical research has been conducted, it can only be speculated that the briefness of the terms the bans held their position in the second half of the fourteenth century, as well as the assumption of the title and position of *herceg* by the members of the royal family, curbed the powers of the bans to position themselves as the intermediators between the local nobility and the center in the way the Babonići and Mikac did earlier.

Another important element that undermined powers of patronage of the bans was the position in the royal household that some of the Slavonian nobles had.²²⁶ In 1345 Nicholas from the Ača kindred, thanks to the donation of Louis I, managed to return some of the

²²⁵ Klaić, "Hrvatski hercezi," 133-47; For the titles that Stephen had and his activity in general see Ladislav Dombi, "Stephen of Anjou, Lord of Spiš and Sariš, the Duke of Transylvania and Slavonia-Croatia-Dalmatia," in *Slovakia and Croatia Vol. I*, ed. Martin Homza, Ján Lukačka, Neven Budak (Bratislava: Department of Slovak History at the Faculty of Philosophy of Comenius University Bratislava, 2013), 118-127, with the remark that the author did not notice that Stephen was called *dux totius Sclavonie* already in 1339, DL 87690.

²²⁶ For the royal household see Engel, *Realm*, 145-7.

family estates; he is named as *miles dilectus* of the king in the charter. It is also of significance that the estates that were returned to him on this occasion were taken from the ban.²²⁷ Nicholas Pekri also began his court career as *nobilis iuvenis* or *familiaris* of the queen²²⁸; from this position at one point he even became master of the cupbearers of the queen and later had connections to the royal court, a position from which he obtained various privileges for himself and his brothers.²²⁹

Similar position at the court was obtained by Peter, son of Puneč whom we had encountered on a couple of occasions. In the 1360s and in the following period Peter used his position as *aule iuvenis* (afterwards he was called *miles*) to recover the family estates that have been taken by Mikac.²³⁰ Members of the family of Grđevac were knights and *aule iuvenes* in the 1340s; and Ders of Szerdahely was also knight of the queen's court at the end of the fourteenth century.²³¹ Two families from the Hrvatinići kindred that came to Slavonia also had members at the royal court. Gregory of Dobrakuća was knight of the royal court for a short period in the 1350s, like his cousin Vlatko of Brštanovac in the 1360s.²³²

Thanks to positions in the royal household these nobles managed to bypass the ban's patronage in order to gain access to the royal court and the various forms of royal patronage available there. In connection with the other two elements (short term of office and the renewed position of the herceg) it is justifiable to conclude, albeit without investigation as detailed as for the period before 1343, that the system of patronage during the banates of the Babonići and Mikac did not survive them. Similarities may perhaps be found in the period between 1445 and 1464, when Cilli and Vitovec controlled medieval Slavonia, and especially

²²⁷ Klaić, *Zagreb*, 60-1.

²²⁸ He turns up among the group of queen's *nobiles iuvenes et familiares* in 1352, see Fejér, *Codex*, vol. 9, 2, no. 83, 183-84.

²²⁹ Engel, *Magyarország*, vol. 1, 58. For privileges see for instance CD vol. 12, no. 236, 313-4; DL 100165; DL 100151; CD vol. 16, no. 242, 294.

²³⁰ Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming).

²³¹ Pálosfalvi, *The Noble elite*, 112, 95.

²³² *Ibid.*, 219, 203.

when Ulrich Cilli managed to put under his control all the acts of royal patronage.²³³ However, this was an entirely different political situation and different kind of political mechanism, since Mikac never controlled the royal court and Charles Robert was anything but a weak king after 1323. Therefore, the bans (John Babonić and Mikac) managed to position themselves as the only link that controlled communication and the acts of patronage between the court and local nobility due to the specific political circumstances and political mechanisms of rule of their time. Nevertheless, there were big differences between the Babonići and Mikac. In the case of the Babonići they managed to create a system that largely pushed out effective royal authority from medieval Slavonia, and it is due to this fact that they successfully positioned themselves as mediators between the royal court and the Slavonian nobility. After 1323 this was not possible to such a degree, and in the process of crushing the power of the Babonići – and the important aspect of the process was to divert the nobles from Slavonia from their grip – Nicholas and then Mikac relied heavily on the patronage at the royal court. That is why it was so important for the bans to create a situation in which their patronage was indispensable to obtain royal patronage. Such a system was of course untenable without the cooperation of the king, and Mikac had the absolute support from the king for his rule over Slavonia. Although perhaps a crude simplification of ideas and conclusions put forward by Mladen Ančić regarding the banate of Mikac, evidence suggests that Mikac had free rein to do in Slavonia whatever pleased him as long as enough resources from Slavonia were reaching the royal court.²³⁴ However, besides the king's support, securing local support was also necessary in order to be able to do "whatever pleased him". The mutual underpinning of the king and the ban in this respect was obvious. Royal patronage was indispensable to secure the local support, a fact perfectly clear to Mikac and Charles Robert; but in order to capitalize as much as possible on such a resource it was

²³³ Ibid., 370.

²³⁴ Ančić, *Hrvatsko kraljevstvo* (forthcoming).

necessary to use it carefully, and that meant placing it in the hands of only one person, Mikac. Being generous only to the nobles supported by Mikac was not so much a deliberate, conscious decision on the part of the king, but rather a system that went hand in hand with the kind of authority which the king gave to Mikac for his rule over Slavonia.

Finally, once demonstrated that Mikac managed to, in collaboration with the king, situate himself as the only mediator between the royal court and local society, one last issue should be discussed: most of the various royal grants/confirmations that the nobles from Slavonia received during Mikac's banate, but also during the banate of John Babonić, they received as part of the entourage of the ban, and not on the occasions when they went to the court by themselves, even if they did so as the ban's men. This indicates the significance which the bans themselves probably attached to these visits to the royal court, and the symbolic power they drew from such occasions. One example for this, essentially three sided relationship is that of Paris and his Novigrad estate, which has been discussed briefly above.

This example is especially illustrative because Paris did not receive any kind of grant (no land, tax or judicial exemption) but "only" a confirmation of the legal sentence that established the boundaries of his estate. Firstly the king, acting upon the request of Paris, gave in mandate to the chapter of Zagreb to reambulate and afterwards erect the boundary markers for Paris' estate Novigrad. At that moment Paris must have expected that the case would end up in front of his lord Mikac. Firstly, he already probably knew that his neighbor John of Nabrad would contradict the erection of boundaries, since they already had a dispute about them before. Secondly, the contradiction meant that, according to the standard procedure, the case had to be solved in front of the ban. This is exactly what happened in the end, and the case was solved in front of Mikac in favor of Paris; afterwards the procedure of reambulation and erection of boundaries was repeated, and this time no contradictors

appeared. The process which started with the king also ended with him, since he confirmed the newly erected boundaries of Paris's estate. The question is whether this whole process really needed to start and finish with the king? Was it not possible for Paris to start the litigation in front of the ban which would in the end have the same result? The king's confirmation did not have stronger legal value than the one which Paris could have obtained from the ban or even from the chapter. Later on we see that all these kinds of documents were used with the same value and strength in legal disputes. Like it was said, it must have been obvious for Paris that the dispute would be solved in front of Mikac, which also begs the question, if we approach the problem from a legal perspective, why Paris addressed the king, if he could not expect any practical benefits from it. In order to understand the case it is necessary to recognize the symbolic transactions involved and the value attached to them. To start with Paris: with no expectations of potential practical benefits, the symbolic power of the access to the royal court must have been significant. Having this mandate from the king himself he was in a situation which most of his fellow nobles at the time could not easily achieve. On the other hand, his relationship with Mikac was also strengthened, again in the symbolic way, by being part of his entourage that visited the center of the kingdom. For the king this was basically a cost-free transaction, but one from which he profited; his position as a head of the kingdom was reaffirmed in everyday transactions like these.

Finally, Mikac also profited from these transactions in more than one way. Firstly, his function as ban did not only mean that he was the head of a certain political entity in the kingdom, but also that he was among the most powerful men of the whole kingdom. In order for that to be visible, he had to be physically present at the central stage of the kingdom, the royal court. Indeed, this visibility was impossible without an entourage that manifested his

social position.²³⁵ Furthermore, his (good) relationship with king depended on these visits, which were clear signs of loyalty towards the king. His position in the kingdom and the king's grace towards him were visible to the nobles in his entourage; this also reflected upon his position in Slavonia since these nobles carried their impressions of Mikac's standing at the court back to Slavonia. Through these visits Mikac also strengthened his connection with the nobles coming with him and enjoying the (symbolic and material) fruits of his patronage. Finally, it should be stressed that the physical and visual experience for the whole transaction must have been extremely important. They lay at the core of these visits and had a strong impression on all participants, especially the nobles from Slavonia. Thus, without doubt, the primary reason behind the preference of the bans to be present at the issue of royal grants for the nobles in his entourage lays in the symbolic expression of power relations.

²³⁵ „Medieval monarchs – and great lords – automatically assumed that their power was made visible to their subjects by the number and importance of the men who surrounded them when they took central stage, whether on state occasions or on everyday travels“, Jean H. Dunbabin, „The household and entourage of Charles I of Anjou, king of the Regno, 1266-85,“ *Historical Research* 77, 197 (2004): 313.

Conclusion

This thesis has set out to explore the relationship between oligarchs, king and local society in medieval Slavonia between 1301 and 1343. Each of the chapters dealt with the specific aspects of these relations. The first chapter focused on the relationship between the oligarchs and the king, while in the second the nature of the interactions between them and the local society was analyzed. Although focused on different aspects, what both chapters showed was tremendous change in power relations. However, regardless of this change the Babonići and the Kőszegis were considered and approached as oligarchs throughout the thesis. Is it justifiable to refer to them as oligarchs throughout this period? As it was emphasized in the introduction, the definition of the oligarchs was taken from Jeffrey Winters, who defines an oligarch as someone endowed with extreme material wealth that is always estimated in contrast to the rest of the society. As it was showed in the introduction, at the beginning of the fourteenth century the Babonići and the Kőszegis had such a material power which distinguished them from the rest of the society. However, what was the situation in 1339, by the time that they suffered tremendous loss of their wealth – can they still be considered as oligarchs? Is it justifiable to call the members of the two branches of the Kőszegis that descended from Henry the Younger, and who had four castles in their hands at the moment, oligarchs?²³⁶ If the number is compared to the number of castles that the wealthiest families had in 1408 for instance, or even to the number of castle-owning families in the whole kingdom in 1355, it is clear that the descendants of Henry the Younger were still

²³⁶ For the number of castles see Engel, “Die Güssinger,” 99-100, 103.

oligarchs even in 1339.²³⁷ The same applies to the Babonići, since in 1339 they still possessed huge material wealth. However, even though they can be still considered as oligarchs, the political-economic situation in medieval Slavonia between 1300 and 1343, just like in the whole Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia, changed drastically. The insight that Jeffrey Winters provides helps in understanding this change. First of all, as Winters argues, while the nature of the oligarchs is unchangeable (extreme wealth standing as the defining characteristic of oligarchs), there are various types of oligarchies, that is, “oligarchies assume different forms” in response to the different “nature of the threats to wealth and property, and how the central problem of wealth defense is managed politically.”²³⁸ In accordance with this, Winters develops four types of oligarchies: warring, ruling, sultanistic and civil oligarchy. The first and the third type are especially important for this study. Namely, Winters defines “warring” oligarchy by the lack of superior authority, and by “a lack of cohesion and cooperation among the competing oligarchs” who “were armed actors who ruled their communities directly and faced the challenges of wealth defense personally in a context of a high fragmentation and frequent outbreaks of violence.”²³⁹ On the other hand, “sultanistic” oligarchy is characterized above all by the fact that “sultanistic rulers govern personalistically and exercise extreme discretion over all political-economic matters of significance”, and in such a system “the lead oligarch pursues strategies first to concentrate his or her power of office, and then to use access to key posts to reward supporters and subvert competitors.”²⁴⁰

²³⁷ There were only 11 families in 1408 who had more than 4 castles, see Fügedi, *Castle and Society*, 128; and for 1355 when there were 68 castle owning families see *ibid.*, “The aristocracy in medieval Hungary (theses),” in *Kings, Bishops, Nobles and Burghers in Medieval Hungary* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1986), 5.

²³⁸ Winters, *Oligarchy*, 7.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 35, 49.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 135-36. Winters puts a strong emphasis on the monopoly of the means of coercion, putting it in the forefront of the definition of sultanistic oligarchy, which was certainly not the case for the political system considered in this thesis; however, as he himself indicates, these types are ideal types not strict definitions. Furthermore, he argues that “even if a sultanistic ruler cannot fully disarm other oligarchs in the system he or she commands enough firepower to intimidate and overwhelm most of them”, which is certainly applicable for the power relations in Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia in the first half of the fourteenth century, *ibid.*, 35-36, 136.

The general characteristics of these two types of oligarchies fairly well illustrate (or to put it better, helped to understand) some of the main points discussed in the previous chapters. In the period until late the 1320s superior authority (king) was completely excluded from medieval Slavonia, and the two warring oligarchical fractions divided it into their spheres of influence. This can be seen most clearly in the relationship that the oligarchs had with their retainers. The former managed to create a system in which they, through the stick and carrot approach, imposed themselves as supreme lords in their respective territories. The oligarchs mainly used the manpower that they controlled for conflicts with each other, and also against the ruler who was in the pre-1323 period practically one of the “warring” oligarchs.

Where Winters’ insights are least helpful is in the explanation of changes between various types of oligarchy. However, this was also one of the main goals of this thesis: to see how the king managed to elevate himself from one of the “warring” oligarchs to the leading one, and to show it on the example of one particular territory. Before all, it needs to be stressed that Charles Robert had power resource that the other oligarchs lacked: power stemming from the ideology of kingship. However, as Michael Mann stresses, “single power source (...) is rarely capable of determining the overall structures of the societies.”²⁴¹ Relying only on this power source, the level of authority that Charles Robert could have exerted in medieval Slavonia in 1310 was low, and the loyalty of the local oligarchs only “passive” (see further). Ideological power, therefore, had to be combined with other power sources, and as these were increasing with every victory, the king’s power of command grew stronger.

One of the key elements in this process was loyalty, since exercising of power depended on loyal men. The multi-generational service that can be observed for the Babonići and the Kőszegis reveals the significance of loyal men on whom one could rely, putting the

²⁴¹ Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 2, The Rise of Classes and Nation-States, 1760-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 7.

personal bonds between the lords and their men at the forefront of the politics of a time. Therefore, in order to crush the power of the oligarchs it was necessary for the king to undermine one of the three pillars of oligarchical power: their retainers.²⁴² This was done through the various grants either by the men whom Charles Robert installed at the position of bans after 1323, or through their patronage that led to the royal court. Ban Nicholas looked for support to establish effective authority in medieval Slavonia firstly among the local nobles that were caught in the middle between the two oligarchical factions. The most important among them was Nicholas of Ludbreg, around whom those unsatisfied with the rule of the oligarchs gathered. This circle was slowly widened, and started to include those nobles who were serving the “warring” oligarchs, and then switched their allegiance to the king. This can be observed firstly for the retainers of the Kőszegis, already after 1315, and in the 1320s for the Babonići.

However, loyalty was not a statically defined phenomenon. The discussion of the matter by Attila Zsoldos can serve as a starting point. In his differentiation between the oligarchs and provincial lords he emphasizes “the arbitrary exercise of royal authority” as the main characteristic of the former.²⁴³ That is, it was not the question of loyalty that differentiated between these two: someone could be a loyal oligarch, but still behave in a way that curbed royal prerogatives in the territories they controlled.²⁴⁴ However, loyalty should be approached as a changing phenomenon, that depended on the different power relations or the willingness (primarily of Charles Robert) to change the distribution of power.²⁴⁵ When

²⁴² In this respect Charles Robert differed from his predecessors who fought against the oligarchs; instead of securing the loyalty of the oligarchs he focused on their retainers, which proved to be successful tactic, see Zsoldos, “Kings and Oligarchs,” 236.

²⁴³ Ibid., 221-22.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 222-24.

²⁴⁵ As Hans Jacob Orning argues for the Norwegian case „loyalty was not so much a permanently defined norm, but something that had to be activated from one situation to another“; his approach is focused on the difference between the absolute and contextual loyalty, where the king tried to enforce the absolute loyalty and opposite tendencies prevailed among those over whom the king wanted to rule. Hans Jacob Orning, *Unpredictability and Presence: Norwegian Kingship in the High Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 315, 5-10; however, in the following discussion the argument is that the king also used contextual loyalty as a power strategy.

Andrew III made an agreement with the oligarchs in 1300 his main concern was to prevent a possible coalition between them and Charles Robert. In such a situation he struck a deal with the oligarchs that gave them wide power over their respective territories.²⁴⁶ This signified a shift in the understanding of loyalty – the wider power given to the oligarchs meant that certain sort of behavior was not considered any more as disloyalty. While he was struggling with the rivals for the throne, Charles Robert had similar concerns, and in that phase he was also focused to gain what can be called a “passive” loyalty. That is, it was important to gain at least the nominal allegiance of the oligarchs and in such a way eliminate rival contenders for the throne. That is why “the arbitrary exercise of royal authority” at that time was not regarded as disloyalty.

On the other hand, the demands that were presented to the widow and the sons of Amadé Aba in 1311 can be considered as new criteria for establishing someone’s loyalty. This was not only a “passive” or nominal loyalty any longer, which indeed meant “arbitrary exercise of royal authority”, but a loyalty that was aimed at establishing unquestioned royal authority (transition from the “warring” to the “sultanistic” oligarchy). Namely, Amadé Aba’s widow and sons had to return to the king certain counties and permit the royal men to exercise royal authority in them; stop encroaching on royal rights, namely levying customs or building castles without royal permission. Instead, the oligarchs were expected to return the royal lands that were occupied by them; let the nobles freely serve the king or any other lord, and not to force these nobles to be subject of their tribunals.²⁴⁷ Therefore, although Attila Zsoldos claims that the question of loyalty is only a minor issue in the Treaty of Kassa, in my view entirely the opposite can be argued: it signaled the establishment of the new criteria of

²⁴⁶ Zsoldos, “Kings and Oligarchs,” 232-33.

²⁴⁷ Fejér, *Codex Diplomaticus*, vol. 8, 1, no. 192, 408-9. These clauses of Treaty of Kassa are discussed in Zsoldos, “Kings and Oligarchs,” 221-22.

loyalty.²⁴⁸ It signaled the attempt of Charles Robert to “concentrate his power of office, and then to use access to key posts to reward supporters and subvert competitors” – every county and castle that was taken meant that new men could be rewarded (or even given back to the previous holder) and their allegiance tied to the king in such a way. Thus, when Charles Robert started the struggles to establish the full royal power in the territories of the oligarchs, this also signified the change in the understanding of the nature of loyalty. That is why the requests that were presented to the widow and the sons of Amadé Aba in 1311 should not be considered as the elements that differentiated between (loyal) oligarch and provincial lord, as Atilla Zsoldos does, but as a change in the notion of loyalty.²⁴⁹

Differentiation between the static and changing understanding of loyalty enables one to approach loyalty as strategy.²⁵⁰ As mentioned above, the political behavior that was considered loyal depended on the sort and scope of requests that the actors demanded from each other (“passive” loyalty versus “effective” loyalty). Besides this, temporal dimension is also an important matter. Rather than fixing a certain moment when the “new” criteria for loyalty were established for everyone (1311 or 1314 for instance), this kind of request was raised for different warring oligarchs at different moments. When such an approach is applied to the warring oligarchs from medieval Slavonia, the strategies of the oligarchs and the king become much clearer.

The sons of Henry Kőszegi the Younger were faced with such demands before the Babonići, especially when Charles Robert moved his seat to Timișoara after 1314, since they had possessions outside Slavonia that were neighboring to the king’s new base (which points

²⁴⁸ Even from the treaty itself it can be seen that the question of loyalty was not only one of the clauses (the way that Atilla Zsoldos treats it), but that the acceptance and respect of the clauses that were enumerated was inextricably connected to loyalty: “Assumsissent etiam et se obligassent, fidelitatem perpetuam D. Karolo, Regi Hungariae, domino ipsorum naturali, perpetuo seruatueros, et servitia per praedictum D. Regem eis imposita, pro posse eorum contra quoslibet efficaciter exercere.”. Fejér, *Codex Diplomaticus*, vol. 8, 1, no. 192, 409.

²⁴⁹ Likewise, the distinction between the ruling and sultanistic oligarchy is also providing a better framework for understanding the phenomenon in question than the distinction between oligarchs and provincial lords.

²⁵⁰ For the excellent overview of legal anthropological approach that puts the diverse strategies of the actors, and not the subjection to the static norms, in the forefront of the analyses see Orning, *Unpredictability and Presence*, 10-22.

to the influence which geography had on the course of these power struggles). On the other hand, in the period between 1301 and 1317 the Babonići enjoyed the neutrality mainly thanks to the Kőszegis, who created a sort of a buffer zone between the Babonići and the king. For this period there are no sources that could reveal any active involvement of the Babonići in the struggles of Charles Robert either to secure the throne or to overpower the other oligarchs. In this period the king was aware that raising demands for “effective” loyalty would be futile since he was not in the position to enforce them, and the Babonići from their side obviously did not see any gains that such an involvement could bring. It was not that the Babonići evaded armed conflict; in the period between 1309 and 1316 they fought in the service of the Habsburgs.²⁵¹ However, joining the king’s cause in this period would have meant conflict with the Kőszegis, and in this case the war would be waged in their own backyard, and not (mostly) in the more distant (and richer) Friuli. The logic of wealth protection in this case is more than evident. The situation changed when John Babonić took over the office of ban in 1317 after his brother’s death. It is important to notice that this was a situation which gave the king the opportunity to install a man of his own choice, especially since Charles Robert was previously quick to use the deaths of the oligarchs to prevent their family members to inherit their power.²⁵² However, such a decision was not made regarding John Babonić, probably since the king thought that he was not strong enough in Slavonia to wage the war against both the Kőszegis and the Babonići. On the other hand, John as new ban was quick to grasp the change of circumstances and involved himself in the king’s struggles against the Kőszegis more actively.

If 1317, from Charles Robert’s viewpoint, was not a moment for a new man on the banal seat, 1323 was. However, it seems that it was still not a time to raise the demands for

²⁵¹ For their service to the Habsburgs see Kekez, “Plemiński rod,” 92-100, 111-12.

²⁵² Charles Robert responded in such a way after the death of Ugrin Csák and Amadé Aba, see Zsoldos, “Kings and Oligarchs,” 221, 223; however the author looks at the problem from the oligarchs’ point of view, who considered their power as hereditary.

returning the king's lands and rights, since there are no indications that Ban Nicholas tried to recover these from the Babonići. This changed when Mikac became the ban. It was only in the moment that such claims for restoration of the royal rights were raised that the Babonići became *infideles*, since they (or at least sons of the late Ban Stephen) refused to turn these over to Mikac. On the other hand, former Ban John tried to use his position at the court to counteract these pressures from Mikac.²⁵³ Thus, different demands were raised at different moments, ultimately revealing that shifting notion of loyalty was employed as a power strategy. The actors (king and oligarch) adapted their strategies to the perceived power relations, and this was expressed through the shifting notion of loyalty

Unlike his relationship with the Babonići that was characterized by the shifting notion of loyalty, the relationship of Charles Robert with Nicholas Felsőlendva and Mikac was of quite different nature. While the Babonići were not empowered by Charles Robert, Nicholas and Mikac were “new” men, whose power rose with that of their lord, and from them Charles Robert could have expected unquestionable loyalty.²⁵⁴ Focusing now on Mikac exclusively, yes, he was an oligarch, but he could have risen to such a position only with the rise of “sultanistic” oligarchy, unlike the Babonići and the Kőszegis for whom the change of the political system in the long run only meant weakening of their power.

These differences can be also viewed from the perspective of the relationship between the center and locality. Mechanisms of integration can be observed through the possibility of the local nobility to reach the royal court and gain various royal privileges there. In this respect, it did not make much difference whether John Babonić or Mikac was ban, since the local nobility did not have any other choice but to rely on their patronage to reach the royal court. However, in later periods there were other means to attain the same goal, and among

²⁵³ The wealth protection by appealing to the ruler is one of the defining elements of “sultanistic” oligarchy, since “Property threats laterally from other oligarchs are managed strategically by the sultanistic ruler at the top.” Winters, *Oligarchy*, 36.

²⁵⁴ For “new” men see Engel, *Realm*, 143-145.

them the possibility to reach royal favor thanks to the position in the royal household is especially indicative. It reveals other mechanisms of integration of center and locality at work: members of local elite were given a position at the royal household, supplementing the integration provided by the ban.²⁵⁵ Furthermore, if the system at work during the reign of Charles Robert is considered, there is a difference between the bans who were intermediators between the center and locality. While Nicholas and Mikac were in essence “agents of the central authority serving in the localities”, the Babonići were par excellence local elite; the different nature of the intermediators between the center and locality in this case reveals shifting power relationships.²⁵⁶

However, no matter what approach is used, loyalty reappears as decisive element of power struggles. In this respect one last element of loyalty needs to be stressed: presence. This was analyzed through the visits of the bans to the royal court. No one from the Babonići ever appeared in front of Charles Robert until 1317, and the fact that Ban John started attending the court from that year on reveals the process of the transformation of the “warring” oligarchy. HenryKöszegi the Younger and his sons were even worse in this respect: only Henry the Younger appeared in front of the king, but only to express his “passive” loyalty. This is in stark difference to that of Nicholas and Mikac, especially to the latter for whom there is more information. As Mikac’s itinerary shows he was present at the court almost every year of his banate; these were situations when his loyalty to the king was undoubtedly confirmed and strengthened repeatedly. Likewise, the longevity of Mikac in the office of ban also stands out as a special mark of this period. These traits can be best explained when connected to the change from the “warring” to the “sultanistic” oligarchy. However, it was

255 For the distinction between the integration at central and regional level see Mario Damen, “The Nerve Centre of Political Networks? The Burgundian Court and the Integration of Holland and Zeeland into the Burgundian State, 1425–1477,” in *The Court as a Stage: England and the Low Countries in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Steven Gunn and Antheun Janse (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), 7.

256 For the different modes of relationship between center and locality see Gerald E. Aylmer, “Centre and Locality: The nature of Power Elites,” in *Power Elites and State Building*, ed. Wolfgang Reinhard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 59-77 (the quote is from page 60).

not only the change from one type of oligarchy to another that shaped the political culture of a time; the political system that was created in the process, just like the one which preceded him, was grounded on the personal relationships revolving around the notion of loyalty, which was a key for maintaining and gaining power.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Mikac's itinerary ¹²⁵⁷

1 August 1325 Zagreb
4 July 1326 Topusko
8 September 1326 Križevci
24 June 1327 Visegrád
16 September 1327 Steničnjak
8 October 1327 Zagreb
12 October 1327 Zagreb
17 July 1328 Zagreb
16 October 1328 Križevci
25 October 1328 Zagreb
28 October 1328 Zagreb
23 January 1329 Zagreb
1 February 1329 Križevci
22 June 1329 Križevci
29 June 1329 Kalnik
17 July 1329 by river Sava near Zagreb
26 April 1332 Medvedgrad
20 March 1333 Zagreb
29 April 1333 Koprivnica
7 August 1333 Medvedgrad
20 August 1333 Zagreb
14 September 1333 Zagreb
28 June 1334 Garić
21 August 1334 Zagreb
9 May 1335 Koprivnica
29 May 1335 Koprivnica
27 August 1335 Zagreb
4 August 1336 Koprivnica
11 November 1336 Koprivnica
10 December 1336 Zagreb
14 December 1336 Zagreb
20 December 1336 Zagreb
1 March 1337 Koprivnica
3 April 1337 Zagreb

²⁵⁷ Only the references, that is the place of issuing, from the charters that have been issued by Mikac have been included in this itinerary. I relied on the list of charters issued by the bans of Slavonia which forms an appendix for the article of Éva B. Halász, „Diplomatička analiza isprava slavonskih banova u razdoblju od 1323. do 1381. godine“ [A diplomatic analysis of the charters of the bans of Slavonia from the period 1323-1381], *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* Vol. 27 (2009): 62-97.

5 April 1337 Zagreb
12 April 1337 Zagreb
29 August 1337 Zagreb
3 May 1338 Koprivnica
31 October 1339 Zagreb
24 April 1340 Zagreb
7 July 1340 Koprivnica
9 October 1340 Koprivnica
15 October 1340 Koprivnica
21 October 1340 Koprivnica
15 November 1340 Velika Lokva
4 February 1341 Virje (Prodavić)
9 February 1341 Križevci
11 February 1341 Garić
12 April 1341 Zagreb
19 April 1341 Zagreb
12 March 1342 Zagreb
13 April 1342 Zagreb
27 April 1342 Zagreb
9 August 1342 Križevci
11 November 1342 Virje (Prodavić)

Appendix 2. Mikac's itinerary 2²⁵⁸

1 August 1325 Zagreb
January 1326 Visegrád
4 July 1326 Topusko
8 September 1326 Križevci
January-February 1327 Visegrád
24 June 1327 Visegrád
16 September 1327 Steničnjak
8 October 1327 Zagreb
12 October 1327 Zagreb
January 1328 Visegrád
17 July 1328 Zagreb
16 October 1328 Križevci
25 October 1328 Zagreb
28 October 1328 Zagreb
23 January 1329 Zagreb
1 February 1329 Križevci
22 June 1329 Križevci
29 June 1329 Kalnik
17 July 1329 by river Sava near

²⁵⁸ In this itinerary the places where Mikac's presence can be fairly well established are included (they are all discussed in the main text, which is the reason there are no further references in the footnote).

Zagreb
March 1330 Visegrád
June 1330 Visegrád
26 April 1332 Medvedgrad
20 March 1333 Zagreb
29 April 1333 Koprivnica
7 August 1333 Medvedgrad
20 August 1333 Zagreb
14 September 1333 Zagreb
28 June 1334 Garić
21 August 1334 Zagreb
9 May 1335 Koprivnica
29 May 1335 Koprivnica
27 August 1335 Zagreb
4 August 1336 Koprivnica
October 1336 Visegrád
11 November 1336 Koprivnica
10 December 1336 Zagreb
14 December 1336 Zagreb
20 December 1336 Zagreb
1 March 1337 Koprivnica
3 April 1337 Zagreb
5 April 1337 Zagreb
12 April 1337 Zagreb
29 August 1337 Zagreb
3 May 1338 Koprivnica
November 1338 Visegrád
31 October 1339 Zagreb
November 1339 Visegrád
24 April 1340 Zagreb
7 July 1340 Koprivnica
9 October 1340 Koprivnica
15 October 1340 Koprivnica
21 October 1340 Koprivnica
15 November 1340 Velika Lokva
4 February 1341 Virje (Prodavić)
9 February 1341 Križevci
11 February 1341 Garić
12 April 1341 Zagreb
19 April 1341 Zagreb
12 March 1342 Zagreb
13 April 1342 Zagreb
27 April 1342 Zagreb
9 August 1342 Križevci
September 1342 Visegrád
11 November 1342 Virje (Prodavić)

Figure 2. Genealogical tree of the Kőszegis²⁵⁹

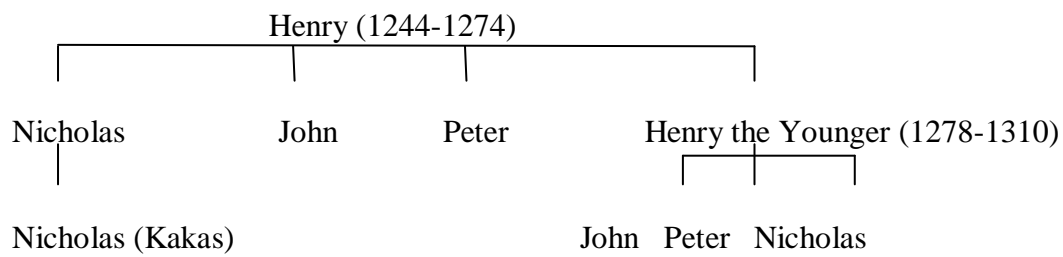


Figure 3. Genealogical tree of the Babonići

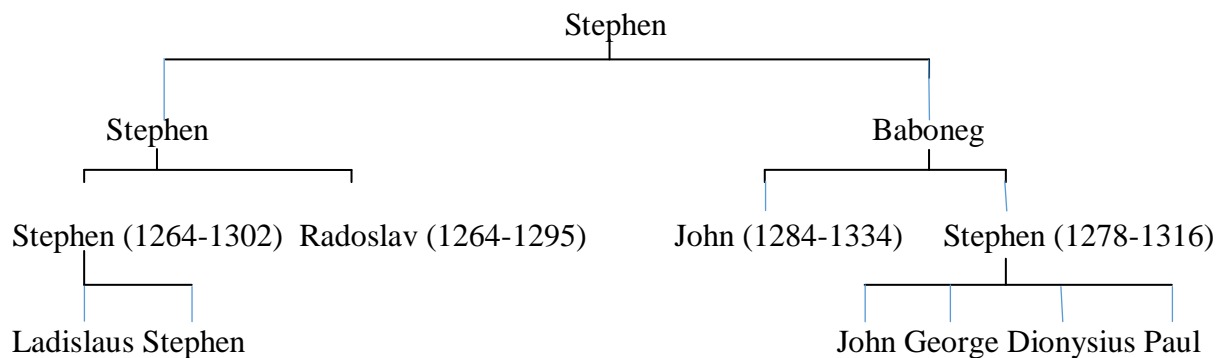
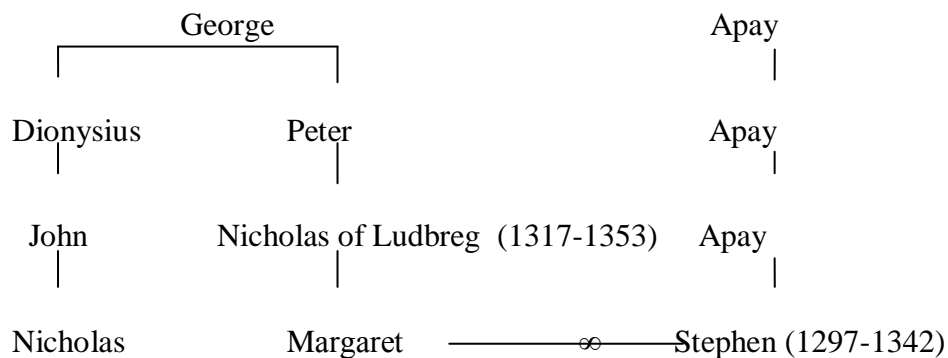


Figure 4. Genealogical tree of Nicholas of Ludbreg of Péc kindred and Stephen son of Apay



²⁵⁹ All of the genealogical trees are simplified, and with primary intention to make the text easier to read.