



INFIMA AETAS PANNONICA

*Studies in Late Medieval
Hungarian History*

C O R V I N A

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EDITED BY

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CORVINA

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PREFACE

INFIMA AETAS PANNONICA

Studies in Late Medieval Hungarian History

The Latin title given to this volume is a reference to Hungary of the fifteenth century, during the late Middle Ages. The start of this period is marked by the long reign of King Sigismund (1387–1437) and it ends with the ascent of the house of Jagiello (1490–1516). Meanwhile, there were a succession of low points marked by civil war and strife between rival claimants to the throne (1440–1442 and 1490–1492), the successes and failures of the defensive moves against the Ottoman Turks (1443–1456), culminating in the cultural blossoming of the Renaissance under King Matthias Corvinus, all of which left posterity with the impression of some sort of Iron Age on the one hand, and a Golden Age on the other.

The phrase *‘infima aetas’* suggests some sort of completion, a final era – the original meaning of the adjective *‘infimus’* or *‘infumus’* was lowest, last, or basest, but in poetic and contemporary parlance, above all in temporal constructions, it has acquired the connotation of new, most recent. In the idiom of what was then the modern age, the phrase *‘infima aetas’* thus served to separate the times from the Middle Ages (the Roman era), and referred to the age of the Gothic, of humanism, and the Renaissance which made up the Late Medieval period. But for Hungary the fifteenth century was also *‘infimus’* in its original sense if one considers the string of failures suffered by the kingdom of Hungary; in that respect it was not far from what contemporaries saw as the *‘mundus senescens’*, the decline, the wasting away. Still, even in modern parlance the phrase has retained the sense of an age continuing the preceding and foreshadowing the subsequent eras. In effect, despite Hungary’s fifteenth-century bloodbaths, Late Medieval Hungarian history offered a synthesis of social development and marked the emergence of modern times.

It is on account of this transitional character that research into Late Medieval history has begun to attract closer attention only over the past fifty years. Previously it was looked upon as more of a “no-man’s-land”, with the possible exception of humanism and the early budding of the social and artistic offshoots of the Renaissance. As for the “Pannonica” in the title, it is intended to convey that the former province of the Roman Empire was no reborn and had forged a new identity for itself.

2008 was the “Year of the Renaissance” in Hungary, with the Hungarian academic world, in a wide range of areas and in diverse ways, rendering accounts of the

findings that explorations of the Hungarian Renaissance have yielded over the last fifty years. The editors have brought together in this volume studies that are uniform neither chronologically nor in subject matter; rather, the intention was to dismantle boundaries of discipline, approach and even age that tend to separate those working in different fields of historical research (mainline history, literary history, classical studies, art history) and to indicate ways in which we might fruitfully co-operate in the interest of gaining a better understanding of our shared past.

The authors may be divided roughly into two groups: the “STILLS” and the “ALREADYs”. Those in the first group are experienced researchers who wanted to show that they must STILL be reckoned with, while the second group is made up of young, promising researchers, who feel that they must ALREADY be reckoned with. Readers, of course, are free to make up their own minds as to how well each has succeeded in acquitting themselves.

The reason why the results of investigations into Hungarian history should be offered to readers in the English language are varied, but it is a simple fact of life that the number of readers of English in the world is substantially greater than any Hungarian readership. As there is no easy way of altering that fact (neither the editors nor the authors cherish hopes that people are likely to learn Hungarian for the sake of reading their work in the original), it seemed both realistic and expedient to look at it the other way round. Also, to be brutally frank, people outside Hungary know little about the country, let alone its history. But that is probably something which is, first and foremost, due to a collective lack of presence on our part on the stages of the wider academic world.

In addition, this volume of studies is a product of Hungary’s “Year of the Renaissance” in 2008, when Hungarian historians commemorated, among other things, the 550th anniversary of the accession to the Hungarian throne of King Matthias Corvinus (ruled 1458–1490), the king to whose personal initiatives the spread of humanism and the art of the Renaissance are closely bound. It was not our goal to produce a thematic volume – that has been done by others elsewhere. One thing that does link the studies, however, is their interest in what were either historical antecedents of, or directly linked to, the Corvinian Renaissance. Hungary’s historical community therefore felt it was right and proper to lay before a non-Hungarian public the broad areas of research whose results will be lasting and can hope to address a relatively wide audience. Whether professionals or laymen, the readers must be allowed to judge for themselves about what kind of volume this is; what it is about; what concept lay behind it; and the value of the studies within. To expound, explicate or give any further advice than this seems, therefore, unnecessary.

KING MATTHIAS CORVINUS'S EPISTOLARIA*

Some of King Matthias's letters have survived in their original form in archives linked to the addressee in question.¹ The ruling princes of the German nations not infrequently passed on letters that they had received from him around to each other or to the Holy Roman Emperor, and a number of the copies of such letters that were produced by the addressee are also extant.² In case Matthias wrote in Latin, translations to German were also produced.³

In some of the states that were in contact with Hungary chancery codices have survived which contain copies of a substantial fraction not only of outgoing but also

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¹Among these are, for instance, the originals of 37 letters addressed to the pope (from the years 1476–90: MKL I, no. 229 etc.) are to be found in the State Archive of Venice, see: Gyula Schönherr: 'Praefatio,' in: *Mathiae Corvini Hungariae regis epistolae ad Romanos pontifices datae et ab eis acceptae* (*Monumenta Vaticana Hungariae*, series 1, vol. 6), ed. Gyula Schönherr. Budapest: 1891, reprinted 2000 (hereafter: MV) p. xxxii. The letters are referred to wherever possible under the item numbers to be found in: *Mátyás király levelei. Külügyi osztály* [The Letters of King Matthias: Foreign Affairs], 2 vols., ed. Vilmos Fraknói. Budapest: 1893–1895 (hereafter: MKL, republished in expanded edn as *Mathiae Corvini Hungariae regis epistolae exterae*, ed. Gyula Mayer. Budapest: 2008, = MKL²); and *Epistolae Matthiae Corvini regis Hungariae*, 3 vols. Kassa 1744; vol. 4, Kassa, 1743 (hereafter: EMC).

²For example, MKL II, no. 191, addressed to the archbishop of Mainz, was sent on to the emperor, who acknowledged its receipt; the archbishop sent copies of the reply to the elector of Saxony, and this copy has survived in Weimar, see: *Regesten Kaiser Friedrichs III* (hereafter *Regg. F. III.*) H. 10 n. 553. A similar example in Italy would be the fate of MKL I, no. 4 that Matthias wrote to the emperor, with copies going to the Venetian envoy to Hungary, who sent it back home from Buda, and that in turn passed into the hands of the Milanese envoy who was posted in Venice and sent it on to Milan, where it could be found by modern scholars.

³Both the Latin and a German version of MKL I, letters 212, 261 and 289 are known (the Latin original of the latter is in the Nikolsburg codex (227v–228r); cf. Karl Nehring: 'Quellen zur ungarischen Aussenpolitik in der zweiten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts,' *Levélári Közlemények* 47 (1976) p. 101, footnote 90), furthermore of II no. 96 and of Nehring: *Quellen*, p. 106, no. 118. The original of MKL I no. 251 is in German, and the Latin version was produced from this (Adolf Bachmann: *Urkundliche Nachträge zur österreichisch-deutschen Geschichte im Zeitalter Kaiser Friedrich III.* FRA II 46. Vienna 1892, no. 416); cf. MKL², p. 978. The Latin and German texts of a document on an internal matter—a decree relating to Pozsony (Pressburg; now Bratislava, Slovakia) were published by J. Teleki: *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon* [The Hunyadi Era in Hungary], vol. 12. Pest, 1857, pp. 332–335.

incoming letters that were considered important. Thus, to the historical research on Bohemia under the name "*Cancellaria regis Georgii*" are known two manuscripts that were transferred from the Starnberg library in Prague to the National Library of the Czech Republic⁴ as these contain, along with a small number of earlier documents, the texts of writings that were produced during the reign of George Poděbrad (1458–1471). The earlier of these was written in the fifteenth century, while the second is a sixteenth-century copy.⁵ Apart from those written to or by the king, the collection of letters also contains others pertaining to him, such as correspondence between the pope, the towns of Moravia, the principality of Silesia, the bishop of Breslau (Wrocław, Poland), the papal nuncio or the margrave of Brandenburg. Many of these letters stem from Martin Maier (Mayr) and Gregor Heimburg.⁶ Matthias was the addressee of 22 letters from King George, his son and others, while he in turn was the signatory of 16 letters⁷ and six proclamations or treaties.⁸ Included in this collection of copies are writings not just in Latin but also Czech,⁹ with some documents featuring both.¹⁰

The volumes put together in the chancellery of Albrecht Achilles (1414–1486), the ruler of Brandenburg, initially as margrave but from 1470 as elector, came to be known as "*Das kaiserliche Buch*" since they consisted mainly of correspondence with the Holy Roman Emperor relating to matters of imperial concern. The volumes form two chronological sequences, with three volumes comprising the primary collection (among them the genuine originals of incoming documents), whereas the other three are copybooks made on parchment.¹¹

Contemporary narrative sources that incorporate the texts of writings judged to be important constitute a particular category of textual traditions. Thus, Peter Eschenloer, who died in 1481, compiled a history of Breslau, first in Latin¹² and later

⁴Národní knihovna České republiky (National Library of the Czech Republic), Mss. XXIII. D. 163 and XXIII. D. 172.

⁵Another copy was given a detailed description by H. Markgraf: 'Die "Kanzlei" des Königs Georg von Böhmen,' *Neues Lausitzisches Magazin* 47 (1870), pp. 214–238.

⁶Nine letters that Heimburg directed to János Vitéz were published by Konstantin Höfler: 'Böhmische Studien,' *AOG* 12 (1854), pp. 328–9 and 339–346. For Prothasius's letter (also to Vitéz), see: Teleki *op. cit.*, vol. 11, p. 224.

⁷MKL I, nos. 10–11, 109–111, 114–120, 122, 126(1), 132 and 178(3).

⁸Teleki, *op. cit.*, nos 318 and 279, as well as Markgraf, *op. cit.*, nos 276–279 and 339.

⁹Among others, a letter of 12 September 1465 from János Vitéz to Prothasius.

¹⁰Among Matthias's letters, see: MKL I, nos. 11 and 115.

¹¹Constantin Höfler: *Das kaiserliche Buch des Markgrafen Albrecht Achilles. Vorkurfürstliche Periode 1440–1470*. Bayreuth, 1850, pp. iii–v. Julius von Minutoli: *Das kaiserliche Buch des Markgrafen Albrecht Achilles. Kurfürstliche Periode 1470–1486*. Berlin & Bayreuth, 1850. Franz Wagner: 'Das dritte kaiserliche Buch,' *Forschungen zur deutschen Geschichte* 24 (1884) pp. 475–565. A summary biography of the elector is provided by Robert Walser: *Last uns ohne nachricht nit. Botenwesen und Informationsbeschaffung unter der Regierung des Markgrafen Albrecht Achilles von Brandenburg*. Diss. Munich, 2004, pp. 41–49.

¹²From King Albert's death to 1472, see: *Historia Wratislaviensis*, ed. Hermann Markgraf. *Scriptores rerum Silesiacarum* (hereafter SSrS), vol. 7. Breslau, 1872. The bulk of the documents are to be found in SSrS, vol. 8 (1873) and vol. 9 (1874).

also in German,¹³ and naturally he did not overlook the role that the king of Hungary had played.¹⁴ Less systematic is a report produced by the Swiss Melchior Ruß in 1493, which quotes two letters sent by Matthias to the town of Lucerne.¹⁵ The speeches and letters that are quoted by Antonio Bonfini¹⁶ were considered by Vilmos Fraknói to be too fictive to include in his own edition of texts.¹⁷

The official Hungarian “royal books” (*libri regii*) were all destroyed as a result of the Ottoman Turkish advance into Hungary, but fortunately several collections that include letters related to Matthias or to his chancellery, mainly on foreign affairs have remained intact. The fifteenth- and sixteenth-century manuscript volumes that came into being this way, and managed to tide the storms of history, first came within the purview of historians in Hungary during the 1730s, when several copies were made, together with the previously cited four octavo volumes that were printed in Kassa (now Košice, Slovakia).

As the Vatican Archives were gradually opened up, for understandable reasons it was King Matthias’s correspondence with successive popes that were the first to appear in an edition that summated and significantly supplemented the results of the earlier era. A 1891 volume edited by Gyula Décsényi-Schönherr and with an introduction by Vilmos Fraknói contained, in addition to 112 of Matthias’s letters, 97 documents that were addressed to him.¹⁸ Work was still proceeding on that volume when the Historical Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences decided to commission a complete edition of Matthias’s correspondence, with Fraknói agreeing to undertake the task and reporting in a number of papers on the preparatory work

¹³ From 1440 to 1479, see: *Geschichten der Stadt Breslau*, 2 vols., ed. J. G. Kunisch. Breslau 1827–28; documents in SSrS, vol. 13 (1893). New critical edn: *Geschichte der Stadt Breslau (Quellen und Darstellungen zu schlesischen Geschichte 29.)*, 2 vols., ed. Gunhild Roth. Münster, 2003. On the author cf. Karl Nehring: *Matthias Corvinus, Kaiser Friedrich III. und das Reich*. Munich: 1975 (2nd edn. 1989), p. 4, and Roth’s detailed introduction to her edition.

¹⁴ Cf. MKL I, nos. 144, 152, 162, 166, 168, 178, 189, 251, and Nehring, *op. cit.*, p. 89, footnote 10; SSrS, vol. 13, footnote 272. For other, similar works on the subject of Silesia, see: SSrS, vol. 13, p. vi. For instance, Johannes Frobenius quotes Matthias’s nomination of an envoy to Breslau dated 22 September 1471, see SSrS, vol. 13, p. 68 (referring to SSrS, vol. 7, item 244).

¹⁵ Anton Philipp von Segesser: *Die Beziehungen der Schweizer zu Mathias Corvinus, König von Ungarn in den Jahren 1476–1490*. Lucerne: 1860, pp. 100–101 and 104–105. The letters date from 1487 and 1488.

¹⁶ *Rerum Ungaricarum decades*, eds. I. Fögel, B. Iványi, L. Juhász and P. Kulcsár. Budapest: 1936–76.

¹⁷ Cf. MKL II, p. xiii. Bonfini IV, p. 5 publishes e.g. a version of the 1477 declaration of war on Emperor Frederick III of Habsburg that differs completely from what is known to be the original (MKL I, no. 251), as well as a letter sent to Andrea Vendramin, doge of Venice, after the cessation of hostilities. Both were included in the collection made by Nicolaus Reusner: *Epistolarum Turcicarum Variorum auctorum libri quinque, Francofurti ad Moenum*, 1598 (VD16 R 1412, Régi magyar könyvtár = RMK III Pótlások [supplements] no. 7475), pp. 74–75. Bonfini claims that the declaration was made close to the Hungarian town of Győr, and in the Viennese archive can be found declarations of Matthias’s Bohemian mercenaries that were dated 21 July at Győr (Eduard Marie Lichnowsky: *Geschichte des Hauses Habsburg*, vol. 7. Vienna 1843. p. CCCCLIX, no. 2071; it is referred to by J. Teleki: *op. cit.*, vol. 5, p. 18).

¹⁸ MV, see footnote 1.

and its outcome.¹⁹ The idea that Fraknói developed was to categorise Matthias's letters under three headings: foreign affairs, letters relating to the internal affairs of Hungary, and letters regarding the internal governance of conquered Austrian and Bohemian territories. When the practicalities were taken into consideration, the upshot was that letters addressed to Matthias could qualify for publication only if they were of absolutely vital significance. Even with this restriction of the correspondence only letters of the first category made it into print.²⁰ In the end, what became a valuable source work for further scholarly studies, both historical and literary, contained 440 texts in Latin, 108 in German, and one further piece which has been transmitted only in Czech.

After producing these two volumes, Fraknói did not carry on with the planned work. It seems likely that his interest turned to other things, and he may also have been daunted by the difficulties involved in choosing the principles by which a choice could be made out of the ten thousand and more documents on Hungarian domestic affairs, which would be desirable to include in a printed collection of letters.

There are two groups that quite clearly stand out from the various manuscript collections of Matthias's letters: the first one comprising writings from the period 1462–70, the second one from 1474–82. For that earlier period three lengthy manuscripts and a small booklet are available, the earliest being the Héderváry codex from the last third of the fifteenth century,²¹ as well as the later Haager codex which is preserved in Esztergom.²²

As the Héderváry codex contains, in addition to the letters written on behalf of Matthias, writings by János Vitéz and Janus Pannonius, but there are no letters that Matthias sent during the six months that Janus Pannonius spent as an envoy in Italy (February–August 1465), Fraknói came to the conclusion that “drafts by Janus Pannonius were collected in this codex.”²³ Neither the Héderváry nor the Esztergom codex contains any reference to who formulated the letters that they contain. A single datum of this nature that Csapodi came across in the so-called second Seville codex in 1974, however, strengthened the earlier hypotheses since at the close of letter MKL I 29 addressed to the pope the following dating and subscript are to be read: *“Anno domini MCCCCLXVII mense decembri sub Alpibus Moldauiæ per*

¹⁹ Vilmos Fraknói: ‘Mátyás király leveleinek új kiadásáról [On a new edition of King Matthias's letters],’ *Magyar Könyvszemle* 15 (1890), pp. 1–10; *Akadémiai Értesítő*, 5 (1894), pp. 515–520 and 7 (1896), pp. 420–428., and finally in the introduction to the published volumes.

²⁰ MKL, see footnote 1.

²¹ Now in the safekeeping of the Hungarian National Archives under the shelf number DL 50404. Recently a facsimile-edition has been published with an accompanying text by György Rácz: *Mátyás király leveleskönyve a Héderváry család egykori könyvtárából* [King Matthias's Epistolarium from the Former Library of the Héderváry Family]. Budapest: 2008.

²² (Lajos) D(ek) Kr(escens): ‘Mátyás király leveles könyve [King Matthias's Epistolarium],’ *Századok* 29 (1895) p. 382 and V. Fraknói: ‘Igazítások [Corrections],’ in: MKL II, p. 393.

²³ MKL II, p. xxiv.

dominum Iohannem Episcopum Quinqueecclesiarum."²⁴ As there are also other pieces of evidence which confirm that Janus Pannonius was indeed in Moldavia in December 1467,²⁵ there is no good reason to question the authenticity of the "subscription." While there is no full clarity on certain details of the nature and chronology of Janus Pannonius's activities in the Hungarian chancellery, it is indisputable that he did work there.²⁶

In chancellery memoranda in diplomatic correspondence during the period following the death of Janus Pannonius²⁷ the names of two individuals crop up, one being "*P. secretarius*" and the other "*T. secretarius*." The latter was identified by Fraknói as being Tamás Bakócz.²⁸ *P. secretarius*, who functioned prior to Tamás Bakócz, his initial having survived on seven letters that were addressed to Pope Sixtus IV over the period 1480–83,²⁹ was likewise pinpointed by Fraknói as being Péter Váradi, archbishop of Kalocsa.³⁰ Váradi held posts in the Hungarian royal chancellery under King Matthias from 1474–84, until Matthias had him incarcerated in 1484,³¹ and it was only on Matthias's death in 1490 that he was released, on the orders of Matthias's son

²⁴ Csaba Csapodi: *A Janus Pannonius-szöveggyűjtemény* [The Textual Tradition of Janus Pannonius]. Budapest: 1981, p. 79, cf. also *ibid.*, 'The Janus Pannonius codices of Sevilla and the tradition of Janus texts,' *Acta Litteraria Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 23 (1981[82]), pp. 147–151 and 153.

²⁵ József Huszti: *Janus Pannonius*. Pécs: 1931, p. 267, for example, doubted this.

²⁶ Earlier research work (primarily Loránd Szilágyi: 'A magyar királyi kancellária szerepe az államkormányzatban 1458–1526' [The role of the Hungarian royal chancellery in state administration 1458–1526], *Turul* 44 (1930) and György Bónis: *A jogtudó értelmiség a Mohács előtti Magyarországon* [Intellectuals Trained in Law in Hungary before Mohács]. Budapest: 1971, have been supplemented by András Kubinyi: 'Vitéz János és Janus Pannonius politikája Mátyás uralkodása idején' [The policies of János Vitéz and Janus Pannonius during the reign of King Matthias], in: *Humanista műveltség Pannóniában* [Humanist culture in Pannonia], eds. I. Bartók, L. Jankovics L. and G. Kecskeméti. Pécs: 2000, pp. 11–18. On the likelihood that Vitus Hündler genuinely did call Janus "*reginalis maiestatis supremus cancellarius*," and this is not simply a misreading (Kubinyi, *op. cit.*, p. 12 was dubious about its authenticity, but there is no question about Vitus Hündler being well-informed) is confirmed by the Klosterneuburg manuscript (Cod. 941, f. 261r); indeed, further pieces of evidence point the same way: according to a postscript to a letter to the papal legate Rudolf by Prothasius dated 13 July 1468 (SSrS, vol. 9, note 411), "*frater noster dominus Quinqueecclesiensis... regias paternitati v(estrae) et aliis litteras mittit*," while a letter from the Breslau town council dated 22 October 1468 (SSrS, vol. 9, note 426) gives Janus the title of, among others, "*perpetuus serenissimi d. regis Hungarie cancellarius*."

²⁷ The activities of Hans Guldin, referred to in the text of MKL I, no. 294 as "*unser canczelschreiber*" and sent to the duchy of Bavaria in 1479, and of "*Lucas Snitzer secretarius*" who, according to MKL II, no. 208, was sent there in 1488, clearly related to the handling of documents in the German language; according to MKL I no. 209, King Matthias in 1473 entrusted a delicate assignment to "*Hannssenn von Hasenburg unnserrn Behemischenn cannczler*."

²⁸ Cf. Vilmos Fraknói: Erdődi Bakócz Tamás élete [The Life of Tamás Bakócz of Erdőd]. Budapest: 1889, pp. 9–13. and 17, and MKL II pp. xxxii–xxxiii. To the items that Fraknói was able to ascribe to him from 1488 (MKL II, nos. 211, 213 and 215) and from 1489 (MKL II, nos. 218, 222 and 224) can be added one more from 1487 (MKL II, no. 188 = Hungarian National Archives DF 293299).

²⁹ MKL II, nos. 51, 53, 66, 70, 77–78 and 156. Of these Fraknói considers only MKL II, no. 53 as not drawn by Matthias (MKL II p. xxxiii note 1). The documents are in Venice (see footnote 1).

³⁰ Vilmos Fraknói: Váradi Péter kalocsai érsek élete [The life of Péter Váradi, archbishop of Kalocsa], *Századok* 17 (1883), pp. 493–5 and 498.

³¹ Teleki, *op. cit.*, vol. 5, p. 300.

John Corvinus. He died in 1501. The correspondence that Váradi himself assembled contains documents dating from 1490–98.³²

In the major essay that Fraknói wrote about Matthias's letters on foreign affairs matters, he gives fairly short shrift to Váradi's role,³³ saying that, for one thing, Matthias's influence on the formulation of letters by Váradi's time had greatly increased in comparison with the period in which Vitéz and Janus left their marks, and for another, Váradi did not vindicate the "outstanding humanist erudition, to which his own letters attest, in the letters that he composed and countersigned on the king's behalf."

One of the above-mentioned volumes containing the letters from 1474–82 is the manuscript that served as the basis for the first printed collection of the royal letters. It is known from the preface to the small, octavo volume that the Jesuits published in 1743³⁴ what a deplorable state it was in when first spotted by its lucky finder, who, recognising its value, resolved to bring it out in print. Altogether 97 documents were placed in the publication, including a few letters addressed to, in addition to those by, Matthias, with the bulk of them dating to around 1478–82. What is called the old manuscript that served as the basis for the book cannot be identified with any certainty, but one of the volumes of the Kaprinai collection, now preserved in the Library of the University of Budapest (Fol. 50), or to be more specific: its opening part, bears an extraordinarily striking resemblance to it. This consists of a single quire of larger dimensions, originally consisting of 23 interleaved double sheets, which dated from the sixteenth or seventeenth century and had been provided with the old page numbering before being bound. After being bound, the first twelve pages of the manuscript were given new numbers, but from then on only the old paging is found. Before the leaves in the volume that bear the original numbering is an uncompleted title page of considerably later date, carrying a dedication to Ágost Keresztély, who was archbishop of Esztergom from 1707 to 1725.

The old page numbering of the manuscript and the contents concur in attesting to the conclusion that the second and third leaves in the original quire were lost, and it was in consequence of this that it was renumbered. On the final leaves of the quire is to be found an *Index omnium rerum quae in praesenti copia litterarum continentur*, with the references shown besides the subject headings being to pages in the old numbering. From that it follows that not only does the old page numbering date from the same time as the index and, in all probability, the main text but, far more

³² The most recent paper is János Véber: 'Váradi Péter és leveleskönyve [Péter Váradi and his epistolarium],' in: *A Magyar Irodalom Története I. A kezdetektől 1600-ig* [History of Hungarian Literature, vol 1, From the Beginnings to 1600], ed. Mihály Szegedy-Maszák, Budapest: 2007, pp. 168–179, cf. his Ph. D. thesis entitled *Két korszak határán: Váradi Péter pályaképe és írói életműve* [On the Border of Two Eras: Péter Váradi's Career and Literary Oeuvre]. The original of a letter by Váradi dated 11 December 1490 is preserved as part of the Zichy archive by the Hungarian National Archive under no. DL 82029.

³³ MKL II, p. xxxii.

³⁴ See footnote 1.

important, that the quire was prepared from the very outset for copying in such a way that the main text and index should fit exactly. The index in its current state is truncated, in agreement with the fact that there are 21 leaves to be found before the middle of the quire (to which must be added the two that came adrift), whereas after the middle there are just 17, suggesting that six leaves were lost from the end. In the first part of the quire even more than this, eight leaves are loose.

The contents of the above manuscript correspond to headings 5–95 of the 97 headings in the Kassa edition. The first four headings of the printed volume comprise two exchanges of letters with the Ottoman sultan for which Fraknói was unable to locate a manuscript source (MKL II, nos. 169 and 174). In 1974, Sándor V. Kovács described an eighteenth-century codex of miscellaneous contents in the library of the archbishop of Eger that contains 11 items from the correspondence of King Matthias.³⁵ Among these, but divorced from the other ones (pp. 121–123), he discovered the first four of the Kassa letters, complete with linking texts, from which it is learnt that in drawing up the text of a cease-fire with the Turks chancellor Péter committed a mistake for which Matthias castigated him with his own hand and he had Péter locked up in prison.³⁶ Based on the available sources, this event can be placed in 1484.³⁷ Sándor V. Kovács supposed that the assembly of the collection of letters might be linked to Váradi himself, and he went on to draw quite far-reaching inferences: “The Eger fragment displays the outlines of an epistolarium, accompanied by a highly—hitherto unexampled—narrative linking text, which breaks off after the first four letters.” A few years ago, Kornél Szovák recounted details of a manuscript of that text that could be dated to around 1520 and concluded that, for one thing, the historical frame for the letters was consistent with other sources, but also that “The contents of the letter are more than a little bit naïve, and it is far from sure that we are dealing here with genuine diplomatic correspondence.”³⁸ Among other manuscripts that have come to light is a Viennese manuscript containing these same

³⁵ Sándor V. Kovács: ‘Mátyás király leveleskönyvének egeri töredéke [A fragment in Eger of the epistolarium of King Matthias],’ *Magyar Könyvszemle* 90 (1974), pp. 115–8.

³⁶ *Matthias rex ultra verbera, quae illi manu sua inflixerat, carceri illum perpetuo inclusit* (see V. Kovács, *op. cit.*, p. 118).

³⁷ Fraknói: Váradi, *op. cit.*, p. 503, cf. footnote 31.

³⁸ Kornél Szovák: ‘Egy kódex két tanulsága [Two lessons from one codex].’ in: ΤΕΝΕΣΙΑ. *Tanulmányok Bol-lók János emlékére* [Genesia: Studies in Commemoration of János Bollók], ed. László Horváth, Krisztina Laczkó, Gyula Mayer and László Takács. Budapest: 2004, p. 160. (There is incidentally another letter linked to Matthias that researchers believed to be a humanist forgery, and thus Fraknói refused to include it in his edition. The addressee of the letter is Cardinal Marco Barbo and its text is known from a manuscript that is preserved in Leipzig (Leipzig, UB Ms. Civ. 377 (II fol. 10a) f. 283r; cf. J. V. Šimák: *Bohemica v Lipsku*, Prague: 1907 = *Historický Archiv* 29 (1907), p. 72.). Kronthal and Wendt (SSrS XIII p. 91) suspect that this was produced as piece of stylistic practice (cf. SSrS, vol. 13, pp. 125–126 and 137). Another item in the same series is also considered to be a forgery by the editors of Regg. F. III. 4. 21 n. 115, who show no awareness of the Leipzig MS or of SSrS.

four letters along with the linking texts, in a similar manner to that described by Szóvák.³⁹ That exchange of letters with the sultan also found its way into the later title page of the Kaprinai MS, hastily written and truncated, but based on what is said this text has nothing to do with the original MS.

The situation is again different in the case of the late sixteenth-century Nikolsburg codex that is currently held in Brünn (Brno).⁴⁰ In this, wedged in between what are undoubtedly authentic letters from 1478-82, there is a letter in what, chronologically speaking is more or less in the right place, coming after a letter to Gábor Ranconi (MKL II, no. 61) and dated 10 March 1481, there is a letter in which Matthias reports that having been left entirely to his own devices by the great European powers, has no choice but to conclude a peace with the Turks, the first hand of the MS copied the four above-mentioned letters, along with the linking texts.⁴¹ The coupling of these letters to the larger collections had already started to happen in the sixteenth century, and it is the knock-on effects of this that are encountered on the eighteenth-century title page of the Kaprinai MS and in the volume printed in Kassa. The native tongue of the copyist responsible for the Nikolsburg codex was most probably Italian, which "shows through" particularly when it is a matter of writing down numerals: in the list of Hungarian counties, the first of the Székely "seats" in Transylvania is still referred to as "*prima*", but the second as "*seconda*", the third "*terza*" (223v), and one of Matthias's letters is given as "*Ex Buda ventesimo die octobris*" (215r). To put it another way, the epistolarium clearly aroused the interest of foreigners but, sadly, hitherto no Italian codex has come to notice.

In the late 1920s, Pál Lukcsics spent three summers at the Zichy family archive in Zsély (now Želovce in Slovakia) in order to prepare a supplementary volume to the publication of the extremely valuable family charters. Among the documents, he also came across several manuscripts,⁴² one of which was a remnant of what he hoped were "unknown political letters by King Matthias." Recognizing the potential significance of the find, he prepared to publish them, and to that end copied the fragmentary manuscript. On returning home and checking the literature, he was obliged to conclude that not one of the letters was, in fact, unknown, but fortunately he kept the copy he had made, and this passed into the Department of Manuscripts of the

³⁹ ÖNB Cod. S. n. 1912, ff. 42r-45r = Hungarian National Archives DF 292984. Cf. O. Mazal and F. Unterkircher: *Katalog der abendländischen Handschriften der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek. Series nova*, 2/1, 1963, p. 130.

⁴⁰ Moravská zemská knihovna v Brně, Mk 9. Karl Nehring: 'Angaben zu einer unveröffentlichten Kopie eines Registers aus der Kanzlei von Matthias Corvinus.' *Levéltári Közlemények* 43 (1972), pp. 85-96.

⁴¹ Ff. 221r-223r. The passage cited in footnote 36 contains here the location of the prison, "*carceri in arce Arua*". MKL II, no. 61 is the last among the letters in the Kaprinai MS; the text is also preserved by Hung. Nat. Arch. DL 24341.

⁴² Pál Lukcsics: 'A gróf Zichy-család zselői nemzeti levéltára [The family archive of the Counts Zichy at Zsély];' *Levéltári Közlemények* 7 (1929), p. 227; *A gróf Zichy család okmánytára* [Records of the Counts Zichy], vol. 12, ed. Pál Lukcsics. Budapest: 1931, p. v.

Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.⁴³ The material from the Zsély archive is now in the hands of the Hungarian National Archive, but as yet no sign has been found of the original MS, so that the text is only known from the copy that Lukcsics made. Nevertheless, it can be established that it, too, contained letters from 1478–82 in similar order to the early sixteenth-century codex shelfmarked Fol. Lat. 1656 in the National Széchenyi Library, Budapest, a preeminent source of the edition by Fraknói. In a few cases the text of the Zsély MS gives a more detailed time-point (Fol. Lat. 1656 generally omits it), so that the twentieth-century copy helps establish the text and determine the dating of the letters more precisely.

The final two items in the Kassa edition are letters written to Rome on the matter of the canonisation of King Béla IV's daughter, Princess Margaret (1241–1271). Their texts are already known from codices that can be tied to Vitéz and Janus Panonius, and so Fraknói rightly placed their date at 1462–64.⁴⁴ Irrespective of the collection, these letters, given their special subject, have their own, independent textual tradition, with one of them having already appeared in print as early as 1637.⁴⁵

The Kassa edition also contains, albeit in smaller numbers, certain letters that are not related to foreign affairs. E.g. there is one such with the title "*Mathias rex ad Jobde*" (EMC IV no. 14) about the castle of "Szulmos," which the eighteenth-century publisher has tried to identify with Sulau in Silesia. It is a letter that, apart from the Kaprinai MS can also be read in the Kassa formulary,⁴⁶ and those bear out a suspicion that "Jobde" is actually a misprinting of the name Job de Gara. At the passage in the Kassa codex where the fortress in question appears all that stands there is ".t." as an abbreviation for "*talis*" ("such as, as follows"), as to be expected in a formulary, but in the Kaprinai MS the form "Solmos" can be read, making it more than likely that it concerns a fort with the name "Solymos", obviously that in Transylvania (county Arad). In the letter king Matthias entrusts responsibility for attending to administrative matters connected with the transfer of the fort to the king to a certain lawyer referred to as the "egregius Georgius Szulok." That name is given not just by the Kaprinai MS but by the Kassa MS, too, albeit with a slightly different spelling (Kassa: "Swlijok", Kaprinai: "Sulyok"). Of the numerous "Sulyoks" in Hungary, the most

⁴³ Library of the Hung. Academy of Sciences, Budapest, Ms. 4930.

⁴⁴ MKL I, nos. 43 and 44.

⁴⁵ Schönherr, *op. cit.*, p. lxxv.

⁴⁶ On the details of the history of the Kassa MS (Schönherr MV, p. xxxiv) see the literature listed by Csapodi: *Bibliotheca Hungarica. II.* Budapest 1993. no. 1,819). The MS passed from a member of the monastery of the Premonstratensian order in Kassa to the library of the monastery at Jászóvár (later its manuscripts have been transferred to the Miestne Pracovisko Matice Slovenskej Jasov), where it was shelfmarked as item number 78, often being referred to in the literature as "Miklós Oláh's formulary." A copy is available for study in the Hungarian National Archive as DF 282621. It contains not only letters from the years 1480–84, as stated by Fraknói, but also two letters from 1466 (MKL I nos 109 and 110). Fraknói relies on it only in the case of letters not known from other sources, although Schönherr has prepared a detailed description (Budapest, Libr. of the Hung. Acad. of Sc., Dept. of Mss. Tört. 2 281/III).

likely candidates are the “Lekcsei” (i.e. “de Lekcse”) family. There is a known reference in 1453 to the lawyer Pál Lekcsei Sulyok, and in 1461 a György Sulyok is to be found acting as the lawyer just for Jób Garai (i.e. Job de Gara).⁴⁷ The first printed edition designates Buda as the place where the letter was given, but it bears no date and “Buda” leaves too many possibilities open. On the other hand, the place Olmütz (Olomouc, Czech Republic) appears in both of the manuscripts in question (Kassa: “ex Olomwcz”), and that in itself considerably narrows down the options. From an itinerary of Matthias’s travels that has been assembled by Richárd Horváth,⁴⁸ one readily discovers that the king went to the town of Olmütz just four times: in 1468 (e.g. MKL I, nos. 164–170), 1469, 1474 and 1479. The first three visits are too early for any letters that may have been produced to be included in these codices leaving just 1479 as a possibility. There are documents to indicate that Jób Garai dies in 1481,⁴⁹ which ties in with the presumed date of the letter. From a report made by the Saxon negotiator, it is precisely known that Matthias arrived at the town, the site of the Congress of Olmütz, on 2 July 1479,⁵⁰ with his departure taking place somewhere between 14 and 17 August.

Olmütz also figures as the place of origin for three letters in the Nikolsburg codex (MKL I 314–316). These were published by Fraknói based on Fol. Lat. 1656 of the Széchenyi Library, in which ms. there is no place or date of origin. Matthias aims in these writings that to the recently appointed archbishop of Kalocsa, György Handó should be granted the confirmatory papal bulls without having to pay the usual levies. It is known from the Vatican’s records⁵¹ that the decision on filling the vacant seat of archbishop of Kalocsa was proposed by Cardinal Domenico della Rovere (a cousin of Pope Sixtus IV) on 1 February 1479, with George being given a five-month respite to pay the levy. Fraknói correctly places the three letters in question to that year, whilst in the Nikolsburg codex the precise dates are given: the second letter is dated 4 July and the third 10 July. As Matthias probably felt rather tired on his arrival in Olmütz on 2 July, it seems fairly certain that Matthias also had the first letter, to Sixtus IV himself, written on 4 July; with the five months’ grace period for payment having run out, urgent action was required.

From the other letters in the Nikolsburg codex that were dated from elsewhere than Buda, one further one is worth picking out. The 114th letter there (MKL II, no. 129), also undated in the Budapest codex that Fraknói consulted, as are three others that all describe the siege by Frederick’s forces of Marchstein, one of Matthias’s

⁴⁷ Kubinyi, *op. cit.*, p. 16 relays information concerning a György Sulyok, the undersheriff of County Bács, from 1468 to 1470.

⁴⁸ Richárd Horváth: *Mátyás király itineráriuma 1458–1490* [King Matthias’s Itinerary 1458–1490], MS. Budapest, 2008.

⁴⁹ DL 24850; cf. e.g. Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora, op. cit.*, vol. 12, p. 217.

⁵⁰ Henrik Marczali: ‘Regesták a külföldi levéltárakból. I [Records from foreign libraries. 1],’ *Történelmi Tár* 1 (1878), p. 438.

⁵¹ *Camera apostolica*, vol. 1 (*Monumenta Vaticana Croatica I*). Eds. Josip Barbarić et al. Zagreb: 1996, no. 964.

fortresses, and how the besiegers had cravenly taken to their heels on the approach of Matthias's men.⁵² According to extant reports in Dresden that were sent by the Saxon troops involved, that flight took place around 11–23 May 1482;⁵³ the Nikolsburg codex, on the other hand, dates them to Pozsony (Preßburg, in the Latin text: "*Datum Posonij etc.*"), which is precisely where Matthias is known to have been staying that year between 7 May and 5 August.⁵⁴ The codex, therefore, is reliable in this case as well.

It seems that the above-described books of copies of Matthias's letters indisputably derived from genuine sources, with the core of the letters stemming from the period 1478–82, and it is known for certain of the original documents surviving in Venice that two of the letters are the work of Secretary Peter.⁵⁵ It is quite possible that Sándor V. Kovács was wrong in supposing that the exchange of correspondence with the Turkish sultan was redacted by Péter Váradi, but, paradoxically, he may still be right in stating that the collection of authentic letters does contain drafts by Váradi. A model will almost certainly have been ready to hand as the earliest identifiable owner of the Hédervári codex, which contains letters by János Vitéz and Janus Pannonius, was Váradi's protégé, Fülöp Móre de Csula,⁵⁶ who became also royal secretary between 1502–1517 and died during the battle of Mohács as bishop of Pécs (1524–26).

⁵² "*Gentes imperiales et famosa illa sacri Romani imperii presidia adventum meorum persentientes, percussi terrore, obsidione confestim soluta, confuso agmine, celerius quam accesserant, Wiennam sunt regressi, ubi in presentiarum de reportato a me triumpho gloriantur*" (MKL II no. 127) Cf. MKL II, p. liv.

⁵³ Fraknói: MKL II, p. 229

⁵⁴ A charter dated 19 August can obviously be disregarded here.

⁵⁵ Copies of MKL II no. 51 (National Széchényi Library, Budapest, Fol. Lat. 1656 no. 41) and of MKL II, no. 70 (EMC, vol. 4, no. 63, Nikolsburg codex no. 53) have passed into various manuscript collections.

⁵⁶ Gyula Décsényi-Schönherr: 'Mátyás király leveleskönyve a gróf Khuen-Héderváry család könyvtárában [A collection of King Matthias's letters in the library of the Counts Khuen-Héderváry]', *Magyar Könyvszemle* 16 (1891), p. 172.