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**Queens and Queenship in Premodern Hungary:  
Research Problems and State of the Art in 2023**

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## Special Issue

**Las mujeres de las monarquías europeas II.  
Reinas, damas y sirvientas (Siglos XI-XIX)**

**Women in European monarchies. II. The Modern Age.  
Queens, ladies and servants (11th-19th centuries)**

A cargo de / Edited by

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## Queens and Queenship in Premodern Hungary: Research Problems and State of the Art in 2023

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(Library of the Hungarian  
Academy of Sciences)

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### Abstract

The essay gives a bibliographical overview of the research made on the history of Hungarian queens in the last two decades. First, it touches upon the most important dynastic relations of the different ruling houses of the Kingdom of Hungary between 1000-1600 AD. Second, it offers a checklist of the most researched aspects of queenship, focusing on the last four queens of medieval Hungary: Beatrix of Aragon, Anne Candale-Foix, Mary of Habsburg and Isabella Jagiellon. It also calls attention to themes that would be worth examining in international co-operation, e.g. the relations between Saluzzo, Poland and the Principality of Transylvania.

### Keywords

Dynastic Marriages; Queenly Power; Image; Dowry; Coronation.

### Riassunto

Il saggio contiene un resoconto bibliografico sulla ricerca della storia delle regine ungheresi, fatta negli ultimi vent'anni. Per primo, vanno esaminate le più importanti relazioni dinastiche delle diverse casate reali d'Ungheria tra il secolo undicesimo e quello sedicesimo. Poi, va segnalato una lista dei temi più esaminati riguardanti lo stato reginale, mettendo in evidenza le ultime quattro regine dell'Ungheria medioevale: Beatrix d'Aragona, Anne Candale-Foix, Maria d'Asburgo e Isabella Jagellone. Finalmente, sono menzionati alcuni temi che secondo l'opinione di chi scrive, dovrebbero essere soggetti di cooperazione internazionale, come, ad esempio, le relazioni tra tre stati: il marchesato di Saluzzo, la Polonia, e il Principato della Transilvania.

### Parole chiave

Matrimoni dinastici; Potenza reginale; Immagine; Dote; Incoronazione.

1. *Queens and Princesses of the Árpád dynasty.* - 1.1. *Byzantium and its successor states.* - 1.2. *The First Queens from Italy and Aragon.* - 2. *The Hungarian Branch of the Anjou Dynasty, Sigismund of Luxemburg and Their Queens.* - 3. *The Ladies of King Matthias Corvinus.* - 4. *The Jagiellonian Queens and One Habsburg Royal Wife.* - 5. *Aspects of Queenship: a Checklist.* - 5.1. *The Queen's Many Faces.* - 5.2. *Reginal Income and Rights.* - 5.3. *Coronation.* - 6. *Final Remarks.* - 7. *Cited Bibliography.* - 8. *Curriculum vitae.*

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was supported by the János Bolyai Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

When I have participated as an instructor at the *VII Seminario di Studi Dottorali di storia ed economia nei paesi del Mediterraneo* in Naples in October 2021, I had a somehow bitter-sweet experience. On the one hand, most of the students presenting their projects, had arrived very prepared and showed in depth knowledge of their research materials. On the other hand, however, many of them had but a very limited comparative perspective: they did not seem to realize the necessity of apply their research questions to similar historical periods in different geographical areas. This lack of perspective was particularly visible when it came to areas and subjects comparable with the situation in the medieval Kingdom of Hungary. My experience in Naples made me realize once again that Hungarian historiography has serious debts in spreading knowledge about the countries once ruled by the Holy Crown of Saint Stephen I. Most of the recent results about female power in the Kingdom of Hungary were published in conference proceedings, more often than not, in Hungarian. In this paper, I would like to pay some of our debts by offering a bibliographical overview of such areas of Hungarian historiography, literary and/or cultural history, which could help the foreign reader orienting in subjects of female power and queenship in the time period between cc. 1000-1570 AD. In the followings, I will progress according to the ruling houses of the Kingdom of Hungary: the Árpáds, the Hungarian branch of the Anjou family, Sigismund of Luxembourg, Matthias Corvinus and the Jagiellonians. In the last subchapter, taking inspiration from Teresa Earenfight's monograph (Earenfight, 2013), I will go through a list of keywords concerning medieval queenship, in order to offer the reader comparative material from the history of Hungarian queens.

### *1. Queens and Princesses of the Árpád dynasty*

The first three centuries of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary<sup>2</sup> was characterized by the rule of the Árpád dynasty. The family, taking its name from the Grand Prince of the Hungarians, Árpád, who was the head of the Hungarian tribal federation during the conquest of the Carpathian Basin, formed extensive dynastic connections throughout Europe (Zsoldos, 2020). The twenty-four kings of the Árpáds had married at least thirty to thirty-four ladies from abroad, who became queens of Hungary for certain time periods. The first systematic examination of the royal ladies of the Árpád dynasty was ful-

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<sup>2</sup> For orientation in the political system and its actors of medieval Hungary, see the entries in the encyclopaedia: de Cevins, *et al.*, 2021.

filled by an Augustinian monk back in the eighteenth century. X. P. Schier's Latin monograph, bearing the title *Reginae Hungariae primae stripis...* is still a useful guidebook with its many family trees and entertaining choices for international historical gossip (Schier, 1776). The position and jurisdiction of the medieval queens of the House of Árpád was examined by Attila Zsoldos in 2005, who did not seem to know about Schier's monograph (Zsoldos, 2005). Zsoldos' book was recently translated into English and published by the Viella Editor House in Rome (Zsoldos, 2019).

As a role, the kings of Hungary preferred foreign princesses as their wives instead of marrying the daughters of their feudal subjects. Thus, the queen and her court was traditionally seen as the embodiment of "otherness" in the royal court. They were subjects to hatred, and the queens themselves often endured physical injustice or less cruel forms of denigration as *damnatio memoriae* (Bak, 1997). This process of retrospective scapegoating in historiography started right with the first queen of Hungary, Gisela of Bavaria (since 1975 Blessed Gisella of Hungary), whose "sins" (mutilations of different cognate members of her husband's family) were at all probability committed by servants of King Stephen I (since 1083 King Saint Stephen I) on the king's own orders. Some years ago, Judit Csákó unravelled the systematic construction of Gisela's black legend in the different chronicles of Hungary (Csákó, 2018).

### 1.1. Byzantium and its successor states

The House of Árpád through its female offspring formed important alliances with Byzantium and the different kingdoms of the Holy Land<sup>3</sup>. First, one daughter of King Ladislaus I (since 1192 King Saint Ladislaus I) Piroska/Irene was given to matrimony to emperor Joannes II Comnenos (Bárány, 2019). In that matrimony she gave birth to Manuel I Comnenos, future emperor of Byzantium who assumed the name of Manuel I. In the next generation, the eldest daughter of Manuel I from his first marriage, Maria Comnena (1152-1182) was engaged to marry Béla/Alexios from the House of Árpád, then elected male heir to the throne of Byzantium by Manuel I himself. However, when a male heir to Manuel I was born from his second marriage to Maria of Antiochia, the engagement of the two young people got dissolved. Manuel I sent Béla back to Hungary in 1170, marrying him to Agnes/Anna of Châtillon/Antiochia, half-sister of Maria of Antiochia.

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<sup>3</sup> See the family-tree depicting the complicated relations, in the appendix of: Moravcsik, 1970. A more recent summary of the subject in English: Diószegi 2022.

After his coronation in Hungary in 1172, the young man assumed the name of King Béla III.

Yet another generation of royal offspring reinforced the dynastic relationships between Hungary and the Middle East, when the daughter of King Béla III and queen Agnes/Anna of Châtillon, Margaret/Maria (1175-after 1223) was given in her first marriage to emperor of Byzantium Isaac II Angelos. The second time Margaret/Maria married the marchese of Monferrato and king of Thessalonike, Boniface of Monferrato<sup>4</sup>, while in her third marriage she became wife to Nicolaus of Saint'Homer. She had male offspring with each of her husbands. Already in the fifth generation of dynastic marriages between the Árpáds and Byzantium, the nephew of Margaret/Maria of Hungary, King Béla IV (1235-1270) married the Byzantine princess, Maria Laskaris. Finally, their son, King Stephen V (1270-1272) married his daughter, Anna, to emperor Andronicus II Paleologos. Anna of Hungary thus became mother to the future emperor Michael IX (1277-1320). Recent research connected to the marriage of Anna of Hungary to Andronicus II Paleologos an illustrated manuscript of an epithalamium, held nowadays in the Vatican Library (ms Vat. gr. 1851) (Schreiner, 2019). There is a collected volume in preparation about this manuscript, whose editors promise to reveal a new area of Hungarian-Byzantine relationships in their papers (Német, 2022).

In attendance for the new results, I would like to call attention to one long-term reminder of the above-mentioned Hungarian-Byzantine relationships, which may be further examined in sources nowadays outside Hungary. Indeed, in a paper written about the use of female family names among the aristocracy in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Hungary, Katalin Péter called attention to a certain "Domina Theodora Komnena", who married a Hungarian aristocrat in 1527 (Péter, 2012, p. 157). She pertained to that group of aristocratic ladies, who due to their rank were mentioned even in royal patents with their native family names. The lady was probably connected to the Comnenos dynasty, once emperors of Byzantium. It would be worth examining whether her coming to be married in the Kingdom of Hungary became an exceptional case by the sixteenth century, or it was rather a natural consequence of centuries-old dynastic marriages between the families of Croatian and

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<sup>4</sup> Due to this connection, in the sixteenth century a Hungarian humanist dedicating one of his works to King Louis II Jagiellon, underlined the dynastic relations of both the Hungarian Jagiellonians and the marquesses of Saluzzo and Monferrato to the holy dynasty of the Árpáds. Máté 2017.

Serbian Syrmia, subjects to the Hungarian Crown, and the Latin emperors of Constantinople. As it is known, the first governor of Syrmia, John Angelos (in Hungarian: Kaloján), son of Margaret/Maria of Hungary and emperor Isaac II Angelos, who found refuge in Hungary, married Matilda of Vianden, granddaughter of Peter Courtenay, Latin emperor of Constantinople (McDaniel, 1982-1983). Earlier, in 1215, one daughter of Peter Courtenay, Yolanda, became second wife to John Angelos' uncle, King Andrew II of Hungary (1205-1235). In my opinion, it could bring important results both to Hungarian historiography and experts of the history of Byzantine successor states, if someone would continue examining the marriage strategies (Angold, 2011, pp. 47-68) of the once ruling families of Byzantium at least until the fall of Constantinople.

### *1.2. The First Queens from Italy and Aragon*

The dynastic relationships of the Árpáds with Byzantium and its successor states led to the first well documented scandalous marriage between a king of Hungary and a princess from Italy. Newly discovered archival documents on the marriage between King Andrew II of Hungary and his third wife, princess Beatrice D'Este, were published by Patrizia Cremonini in 2019 (Cremonini, 2019). More recently, Riccardo Pallotti, an Italian researcher cooperating with the Vestigia Research Team of the Péter Pázmány Catholic University of Budapest, shed new light on the dynastic motivations behind this marriage (Pallotti, 2022). As Pallotti describes it, it was thanks to queen Agnes/Anna of Châtillon, wife to King Béla III, and her much younger half-sister, Alisia of Châtillon, that the House of Árpád could form its first relationship with the then aspiring D'Este family. Alisia and Agnes/Anna of Châtillon were connected through their father, Rainald of Châtillon, but probably never lived in the same household. Alisia was born in the Holy Land, and by the time she was sent to be raised in the court of King Béla III, her own sister, Queen Agnes/Anna had been already dead. When Alisia came of age, her brother-in-law married her to Azzo VI D'Este and sent her in Italy. At his death in 1212, Azzo VI already had an adult son, Aldovrandino, from his first marriage. Three years later, in 1215, Aldovrandino also died, leaving behind an illegitimate daughter by the name of Beatrice. In May 1234 this Beatrice married the elderly King Andrew II of Hungary, but the ruler died in September of the following year. Queen Beatrice, who was pregnant at the time, was accused of adultery and had to escape from Hungary disguised as a man, while her alleged lover was punished with a death sentence. Her baby boy, who was born months after his father's death, became known in Hungarian history as Stephen

the Posthumus, later Stephen V (1270-1272). As one may recall from above, King Andrew II was the son of Agnes/Anna Châtillon and King Béla III, thus he was the nephew of Alisia of Châtillon. Therefore, in this strange marriage between the House of Árpád and the D'Este family, the daughter of Alisia's stepson became the third wife of Alisia's nephew.

King Andrew II had a quite turbulent married life, as his first wife, Gertrude von Ansbach-Meran was assassinated by aristocrat conspirators in 1213, while the King was away in the Holy Land on the fifth crusade. The exceptional case of assassinating an anointed, lawfully crowned queen had a narrative revival in Hungarian common memory in the nineteenth-century, after József Katona wrote a drama about it, bearing the title *Bánk bán*. Katona's work become symbol of national resistance against the Habsburg rulers in Hungary, thanks to the fact that parts of the drama were presented in the evening of 15 March 1848, the day the Hungarian revolution broke out. Probably due to the cognitive dissonance provoked by the shameful act of her killing, the figure of Queen Gertrude was repressed in Hungarian historiography and common memory. Therefore, even nowadays it is very rarely mentioned that she was the mother to that princess Elisabeth, who married Louis, Landgrave of Thuringia, and was canonized as Saint Elisabeth of Hungary in 1235. The re-evaluation of the figure of Queen Gertrude and her "assassination of historical importance" was the task of a conference organized for the eight-hundredth anniversary of the event in 2013 (Majorossy, 2014). Alas, its proceedings are available only in Hungarian.

It is not an exaggeration to state, that the most fortunate marriage of King Andrew II was his second one, when he married Yolanda Courteney, daughter of Peter Courteney, Latin emperor of Byzantium (Bárány, 2016). Their only offspring, also of the name of Yolanda, proved to be an asset of his father's plans for Western expansion. Yolanda of Hungary was given in marriage to King of Aragon Jacob I, their relationship becoming a very successful and almost legendary one (Ruiz-Doménec, 2009).

In 2009 Hungary and Catalonia organized together an exhibition about the relations between the two countries in the Middle Ages. The central theme of the exhibition was the "princesses who came from far away". Luckily, the exhibition catalogue was published both in Hungarian and in Catalan (Sarobe, Tóth, 2009a, 2009b). One entry of that catalogue discussed the figure of Constance of Aragon, queen consort of King Imre (1196-1204). The first queen of Hungary coming from the Aragon dynasty experienced a lot of troubles in her new country. Constance of Aragon lost her husband after a relatively short reign, and her position changed from queen consort to queen mother only for a year, when her son, Ladislaus III set on the throne of Hungary

(1204-1205). Queen Constance had to fly to Austria, taking both her little son and the coronation paraphernalia with her, when his son suddenly died. She was forced to return to Aragon, and despite many years of legal struggles that involved even the Pope, her dowry was never given back to her by the next kings of Hungary. Finally in 1209, the Pope married her to his favourite pupil, Frederick II Hohenstauf, King of Sicily, despite the man being fifteen years her junior. Her unfortunate involvement in Hungarian affairs notwithstanding, Queen Constance's mausoleum is nowadays listed among the Italian memorial places of the history of Hungary (Banfi, 2005, p. 173).

Finally, I would like to call attention to a recent exhibition, bearing the title "Kingdom of Árpáds". Its catalogue, as of May 2023, is available only in Hungarian, but its editors promise to publish it also in English in the near future (Ritoók, Simonyi, 2022). The exhibition gave an overview of the countries ruled by the House of Árpád between the end of the ninth and that of the thirteenth century, presenting, among others, such themes as the history of the Magyars before the foundation of the Kingdom of Hungary, the history of innate and immigrant minorities in the Carpathian Basin, capital cities, royal burials, codex illumination, the usage of signets, material culture (especially weapons and jewellery) etc. Due to its rich illustration, the catalogue may be of interest for the international scholarship as well.

A central theme of the cultural history of the House of Árpád, the canonization of many members of the family by the Catholic Church, is discussed rather from historical and dynastic point of views in that catalogue. For the importance of the image of the House of Árpád known as *beata strips* in Europe, and the cults of the different saints pertaining to the dynasty, one must mention Gábor Klaniczay's recent monograph, overlooked by the authors of the catalogue (Klaniczay, 2019). Klaniczay summarized there results of his research about the cult of Hungarian saints, that he executed in the last three decades. Moreover, it is also worth mentioning Dávid Falvay's exploration of the cult of Hungarian dynastic saints in Italy (Faltay, 2012), and his most recent collection of essays on the hagiography of Hungarian female saints in the royal courts of Europe (Faltay, 2022).

## 2. *The Hungarian Branch of the Anjou Dynasty, Sigismund of Luxemburg and Their Queens*

As it is well known, the Hungarian branch of the Anjou dynasty was formed in 1270 due to the marriage between Maria of Hungary, daughter of King Stephen V (1270-1272) to



Charles II Anjou, who at the time was heir to the throne of the Kingdom of Naples. Maria of Hungary spent fifty-three years in her new country, and among other things<sup>5</sup> she passed on her right to inherit the throne of Hungary first to his son, Charles Martel, and later to his grandson, Charles Robert. It was her grandson, who became the first King of Hungary from the Anjou dynasty under the name of Charles I (1301/08-1342). His first-born son to survive infancy, Louis I (1342-1382) continued the rule of their house in Hungary, while his other son, Andrew, Duke of Calabria was assassinated in Aversa in 1343. King Louis I had only daughters, Catherine, Maria and Hedvig/Jadwiga with his wife. In order to secure the continuity of the dynasty's rule over his different countries, King Louis had to apply the process of *praefectio* to his own family, elevating his daughters to the position of male heirs. The history of *Rex Maria*<sup>6</sup> and *Rex Jadwiga* is well researched in their respective reigns of Hungary (Csukovits, 2013; Tóth, 2018, 2019) and Poland (Sroka, 2015). In this place, I would like to call attention only to the latest results of an international cooperation between researchers from Italy, Hungary and Poland, who focused on the relations between Padua and the Anjou reign (Baldissin Molli, *et al.*, 2022). Our volume contains extensive bibliography on different aspects of the reign of King Louis I, calling further attention also to the role of his daughters in reinforcing the dynasty's international relations (Lucherini, 2022, p. 349).

Despite King Louis' efforts, the idea of a female ruler did not find acceptance among the aristocracy of his countries. His daughter Maria, as heir to the throne of Hungary, was married to Sigismund of Luxemburg, son of Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV. The *rex-regina*, however, died very young and childless, thus her husband inherited her throne (1387-1437), while her kingdom was freed of the hated gynecocracy. I do not even attempt to summarize the literature about Sigismund, who became Holy Roman emperor in 1433. It is almost twenty years ago, that a great international exhibition held in Budapest and in Luxemburg presented the importance of Sigismund in European history (Takács, *et al.*, 2006). As in ten-years-time comes the six-hundredth anniversary of his coronation, it is likely that a new wave of research about his multifaceted personality will rise soon. For the time being, then, I would like to call attention to a monograph discussing the figure of Sigismund's

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<sup>5</sup> For the architectural and cultural heritage of Maria of Hungary in Italy see the monograph of Mária Prokopp with Italian summary and more than two-hundred-sixty coloured photos. Prokopp, Horváth 2014. For the reconstruction of her library see: Falvay, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> For the problem of female rule in Hungary with further literature: Máté, 2021, pp. 21-25.



second wife, Barbara of Cilli (Dvořáková, 2017). As the title of the volume itself emphasizes it, empress Barbara provoked a somewhat negative reputation in European history. In her richly illustrated monograph, Daniela Dvořáková approaches the figure of Barbara through stereotypes attributed to the female sex (e.g. the first lady of Europe, the evil queen, the emancipated queen), offering a comprehensive summary of the opinions written about the empress between 1430 and 2015. Dvořáková touches also upon the problem of Elisabeth of Luxemburg, daughter to Sigismund and Barbara, and her marriage to Albert of Habsburg, who got little attention in scholarship.

### 3. *The Ladies of King Matthias Corvinus*

King Matthias Corvinus (in Hungarian: Hunyadi Mátyás) was a real newcomer to political power when he was elected King of Hungary in 1458. Despite the everlasting legend that Matthias' father, Johann/János of Hunyad would have been the bastard son of emperor Sigismund of Luxemburg, King Matthias had to face the challenges of a *homo novus* both at home and abroad in order to reinforce his position on the throne of Hungary. His first marriage to Catherine of Poděbrady, daughter of the Bohemian king, George of Poděbrady, served to eventually secure Matthias' positions as future king of Bohemia. The young bride spent cc. three years in Hungary before she died in childbirth together with her new-born baby. After the loss, King Matthias had several attempts to forge dynastic alliances with different ruling houses of Europe (Réthelyi, 2008), but he was regularly rejected as a *parvenu*. During his unsuccessful negotiations of securing himself a royal princess as his wife, he had an extramarital relationship with an Austrian lady of burgher origins, Barbara Edelpöck. Eventually, this lady gave King Matthias the only child surviving infancy: Johannes or John Corvinus. After many years of official bachelorhood, King Matthias married the daughter of the King of Naples, Beatrix of Aragon in 1476.<sup>7</sup> The arrival of the new queen reinvigorated the efforts of King Matthias<sup>8</sup> to transform his environment in Buda and in Visegrád (Farbaky, *et al.*, 2008) into exemplary courts of humanistic culture (Farbaky, *et al.*, 2013). The role of Queen Beatrix in the transformation of the court of Buda is already examined by extensive scholarship. From the viewpoint of the different arts, the studies of art historians Péter Farbaky, Árpád

<sup>7</sup> The most comprehensive study about the Italian queen is still the monograph of Berzviczy, that he published both in Hungarian and in Italian: Berzeviczy, 1931.

<sup>8</sup> Farbaky, Waldman, 2011.

Mikó and Dániel Pócs shed light on the effects of Beatrix's influence on Hungary in the collective volumes and catalogues quoted in notes. The different genres of humanistic literature and the culture of symposia introduced to Hungary under the influence of Beatrix are the subject of many writings by Klára Pajorin (Pajorin, 1994, 2011). Since the early 2000s there are regular international cooperations for exploring the dimensions and importance of King Matthias' Corvina Library as well. Its latest instalment was the exhibition about the Buda workshop of scribes and illuminators, held in the National Széchényi Library during the winter of 2018-2019. Among the exhibited codices, from the viewpoint of queenship, the most important are the breviary of Queen Beatrix and the dedication copy of Antonio Bonfini's *Symposion de virginitate et pudicitia conjugali* (Zsupán, 2018, pp. 26-27, 172-173.; Bolonyai, 2020; Zsupán, 2020). The *Symposion* by Antonio Bonfini is a central point of the power struggle between King Matthias and Queen Beatrix, which formed between the partners after almost a decade of childless marriage. I have summarized the different literary representations of the attacks and counter attacks in the war for inheriting the crown of Hungary between King Matthias, his legitimated bastard son, Johannes Corvinus (Farbaky, 2013), and Queen Beatrix in my latest monograph in Italian (Máté, 2021, pp. 51-57). One of the strategic moves by Queen Beatrix in this war was her command to Jacobus Philippus Bergomensis or Jacopo Foresti to dedicate his eulogy of famous women, *De claris selectisque mulieribus* to the Queen of Hungary herself. Foresti had to include in his work the figure of Queen Gisella, wife to Saint Stephen I, and describe her in sharp contrast to the accepted patterns of her historical remembrance in the Hungarian chronicles<sup>9</sup>. Despite all her efforts, however, after the death of her husband and some years spent in Hungary struggling with helplessness in widowhood, Queen Beatrix was finally forced to leave her residence in Esztergom (Mikó, 2009) and return home to Naples. Her cultural influence and her efforts to get royal power after the death of Matthias, indeed, left bed memories of Beatrix in Hungarian chronicles, which were transferred also to future generations of queens with Italianate culture (Máté, 2020, pp. 54-58).

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<sup>9</sup> Máté, 2021, pp. 53-54. In previous scholarship, Stephen Kolsky found it „something of a surprise” that Foresti, unlike other imitators of Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus*, dedicated his work to Queen Beatrix, i.e. a female ruler living outside Italy. Kolsky, 2005, p. 117. Kolsky's surprise is yet another prove that Hungarian scholarship did not do enough to communicate its results in order to contextualize international humanistic phenomena from the viewpoint of Hungarian history.

#### 4. *The Jagiellonian Queens and One Habsburg Royal Wife*

After the death of Matthias Corvinus, the power struggle for the Crown of Saint Stephen ended with the election of Uladislav II (1490-1516), coming from the Jagiellonian family of Poland. Uladislav II already had a reputation of a marriage swindler (Wenzel, 1877), as he had consecutive engagements with different princesses and a never consummated marriage to Queen Beatrix of Aragon, when he finally chose one of two Foix-Navarre princesses offered to him for marriage, Anne. Anne Candale-Foix, cousin to the French queen, Anne of Brittany, was escorted to her new home in 1502. During their four-years-long marriage, Queen Anne gave to her husband a daughter, Anna, and a son, the future King Louis II (1508-1526), but she died soon after the second childbirth. Some aspects of Queen Anne's life were discussed in Katarzyna Kosior's monograph written on the differences of queenship between East and West (Kosior, 2019). The very few mentions of Queen Anne in that book show how under-researched her historical figure is. The latest study about her in Hungary was published two years previously to Kosior's monograph, but it did not find its way to the Polish researcher's book (Györkös, 2017). In an article written *à propos* of the legendary figure of Griseldis/Griselda of Saluzzo in the Hungarian culture, I have managed to ascertain the importance of Queen Anne's connection to Saluzzo in Hungarian cultural history. Indeed, the family relations between Queen Anne, and her aunt, the marquise of Saluzzo, Marguerite de Foix, led a Hungarian humanist to connect both the Hungarian Jagellonians and the rulers of Saluzzo to the earliest rulers of Hungary, the family of Saint Stephen (Máté, 2017). The somewhat elusive figure of Queen Anne would require further research both in Hungary and France, possibly including also sources from Saluzzo and Monferrato in Italy<sup>10</sup>.

The next Hungarian queen, daughter-in-law of Queen Anne whom she never met, came from the Habsburg family. Archduchess Mary, granddaughter of Emperor Maximilian was betrothed to Louis II in 1515, and after five years of actual marriage she got widowed, when in 1526 the young King of Hungary perished in the battle of Mohács, fighting the Ottomans. Mary, "the widow of Mohács", as Hungarian historiography

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<sup>10</sup> The politico-cultural relations between Transylvania, Poland and Saluzzo were reinforced once more in the middle of the sixteenth-century, when the Saluzzo-born Giorgio Biondrata became the doctor of Queen Bona, Queen Isabella and two Princes of Transylvania. According to historical tradition, it was due to his invention that the daughter of Prince Kristóf Báthory, Krisztina, changed her name into Griseldis when marrying the Polish chancellor, Jan Zamoyski. Máté, 2021b.

calls her (Réthelyi, *et al.*, 2005), left Hungary for ever in 1531 in order to assume the position of governor of the Habsburg Netherlands. Queen Mary of Hungary never married again, and lived in a veneration of her lost husband (Bárány, 2014). In the last two decades a research team in the Netherlands is working on the publication of the Queen's letters to Emperor Charles V (Gorter-van-Royen, *et al.*, 2009, 2018). In Hungary, Emőke Rita Szilágyi publishes the epistolary of Queen Mary's secretary, the humanist Nicolaus Olahus, who became archbishop of Esztergom (Olahus, 2018, 2022). Especially the second volume of those letters shed light on the mostly financial Hungarian affairs of Queen Mary for many years after she left the Kingdom of Hungary.

After the death of King Louis II at the battlefield of Mohács, a power struggle between Ferdinand I of Habsburg and John Zápolya/Szapolyai, voivode of Transylvania broke out. One fraction of the Hungarian magnates voted for Ferdinand I to take throne (1526-1564), while another fraction, the so-called "national party" elevated Szapolyai to the throne of the Kingdom of Hungary (1526-1540). After twelve years of intermittent war, the two Kings of Hungary signed the Treaty of Várád (Nagyvárad, today's Oradea in Romania) in 1538. According to the Treaty of Várád, the Kingdom of Hungary would remain united under this system of dual authority until King John's death (Máté, Oborni, 2020, pp. 10-11). The Treaty of Várád held out the prospect of reintegrating sovereignty over the Kingdom of Hungary, stipulating that following the death of John, his portion of the realm would come under permanent and irrevocable Habsburg rule. At the time of signing the Treaty it was unlikely, that King John, who was over fifty years of age and unmarried, would have a legitimate son to threaten the Habsburg line of inheritance.

However, the situation changed very soon, as King John I decided to propose to Princess Isabella Jagiellon, eldest daughter of Polish king Sigismund I the Old and Bona Sforza<sup>11</sup>. The nuptials of King John and Isabella were held in Székesfehérvár on March 2, 1539, and by July 1540 the young bride gave a son to her husband, John Sigismund Stephen. The long-term consequences of this Szapolyai-Jagiellon marriage by 1571 led to the formation of the Principality of Transylvania. The young Queen Isabella got widowed only two weeks after giving birth to his son, and the next twenty years of her life were full of trouble. The adversities notwithstanding, at the time of Isabella's death in 1559 her son ruled over Transylvania and the similarly prosperous eastern territories of the old Kingdom of Hungary, while her brother, Sigismund II Augustus, had ascended

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<sup>11</sup> Each of the three monographs written on Isabella emphasized different aspects of her life. Veress, 1901; Duczmal, 2000; McNary Forsey, 2009.

to the throne of Poland. Although she died unexpectedly young, the prospects of her Jagiellonian dynasty were promising.

The re-evaluation and contextualization of Isabella Jagiellon's life were the main goals of a memorial conference held in Budapest at the beginning of 2019, whose proceedings were supplemented with other studies in the publication (Máté, Oborni, 2020). As editors, Teréz Oborni and myself collaborated also with some contributors of *The Jagiellonians* ERC Grant Project, led by Natalia Nowakowska in Oxford, in order to give a supplement to the discoveries of that project from the Hungarian perspective. Altogether, one cannot state that the figure of Queen Isabella Jagiellon would be under-researched. Nevertheless, it is undeniable, that our efforts to win research grants in Hungary and in Poland for the publication of her letters resulted in failure three times between 2015-18.

### 5. Aspects of Queenship: a Checklist

According to Teresa Earenfight, a queen in medieval Europe had to fulfil a series of roles (Earenfight, 2013, p. 5), which often contradicted each other. On the spiritual level, in different situations a queen was to represent the virgin, the *virago*, the mother, or even the female saint, to mention only a few. On the level of exercising power in her day-to-day life, in turn, the position of the queen always depended on the power of her royal husband. She was a feudal lord, having jurisdiction over specific estates and people, she had her own propriety in form of the different parts of her dowry (*contrados* and *Morgengab*), she was a literate person, who as a rule spoke at least another language beside her mother-tongue. Due to her many capacities and roles, the queen was a very particular female individual.

#### 5.1. The Queen's Many Faces

In the history of Hungarian queens, the source materials for examining all the above queenly roles are uneven both in quality and in quantity. As far as the position of the queen as a feudal lord is concerned, we know quite a lot about the rights of the queen in theory, but less about the reality of exercising her power. We have, in turn, a better understanding of the "spiritual" roles of the different queens, especially from the era of Renaissance humanism. I have already mentioned the systematic building of Queen Gisella's black legend by Hungarian historiographers, which was analysed lately by Judit Csákó (Csákó, 2018).

In my Italian monograph, I went through the steps of Queen Beatrix's plan to position herself as Maria of Anjou, a female *rex*, and inherit the Kingdom of Hungary from King Matthias Corvinus, *iure coniugis* (Máté, 2021a, pp. 51-56). I have analysed there how Beatrix assumed different female roles according to the change of times and depending on the target audience, be it her brother in Naples, the Pope in Rome or the Hungarian aristocracy in Buda. In 2022, Ilona Kristóf wrote about the "maternal role" of Queen Beatrix in relation to her step-son, John Corvin, and her nephew, the young archbishop of Esztergom, Ippolito D'Este (Kristóf, 2022).

Finally, I gave an overview about how Isabella Jagiellon's Italian cultural heritage gave her heavy burdens in her new environment in Hungary, right since the beginning of her queenship (Máté, 2020). By the end of her life, Queen Isabella, like her mother, Polish Queen Bona and her distant relative, Queen Beatrix of Aragon before her, became another example of Italian i.e. immoral and power-thirsty queenship in Central Europe.

## 5.2. Reginal Income and Rights

There are no systematic examinations of each aspect of queenly power, but, for instance, we know much about the reginal income and jurisdiction. A decade ago, Attila Bárány (Bárány, 2013) summarized the state of research about this aspect of Hungarian queenship. According to the law, there were about a dozen cities in Hungary dedicated to the service of the queen. Due to their position, two of them served as administrative centres: Óbuda (today part of Budapest) and Diósgyőr (today part of Miskolc in North-Eastern Hungary). The most valuable towns from the viewpoint of income, however, were the mining cities in the Carpat mountains (today all of them are in Slovakia). There were also some cities under the queen's own jurisdiction, the so-called "crown-towns". The queen not only had her own right of tax collection in those cities, but the people living there were put under her jurisdiction from the legal point of view as well.

Some years ago, in 2019, Richárd Horváth (Horváth, 2019) presented new results about the reginal incomes of Beatrix of Aragon, who found herself in quite an exceptional situation. Indeed, she was the first Hungarian queen in cc. a hundred-years-time to have a mother-in-law living in the same country. Indeed, Queen Beatrix had to share the reginal incomes with Erzsébet Szilágyi, mother of Matthias Corvinus and with the King himself (Horváth, 2019, p. 154). This kind of secondary status of Beatrix in comparison to her mother-in-law, whom she over-ranked both by birth-right and by the law of Hungary, was a source of conflict between the partners. Until the death of "dowager queen" Erzsébet Szilágyi in 1484, Queen Beatrix was compensated by tax incomes of the

salt-mines, but that money was certainly much less than the sum she was legally entitled to receive (Horváth, 2019, p. 166).

As I mentioned it before, in her Hungarian environment the foreign queen was the embodiment of “national” and gender stereotypes (Bak, 1997). Moreover, due to specific historical circumstances from the middle of the fifteenth century until the partition of Hungary in 1541, the queen’s presence in the court of Buda itself became an anomaly. The position of the dowager queen was also regularly vacant, as the mothers of the different kings lived abroad or died before their sons got crowned. King Matthias Corvinus married Beatrix of Aragon in 1476 after a thirteen-year-long widowhood. Anna Candale-Foix, wife to King Uladislav II Jagiellon, arrived to Hungary in 1502, when there had not been a queen in Buda for a decade. Mary of Habsburg, wife of King Louis II started to reside in Buda in 1521, thirteen years after the previous queen, her mother-in-law, died. Finally, Isabella Jagiellon married King John I Szapolyai in 1539, thirteen years after the previous queen, Mary of Habsburg, left the kingdom’s capital. King John I Szapolyai’s mother, Hedvig of Teschen, died already in 1521, two years after the birth of her future daughter-in-law, Isabella Jagiellon.

Due to these special circumstances, the newly arrived queens had to find a place for their own female courts inside the royal court, both metaphorically and physically speaking. It was Beatrix of Aragon, who received a book of instructions for her wedding from one of her father’s court humanist, Diomedes Carafa. In order to help Beatrix’s transition from Naples to Buda, in his *De institutione vivendi* (Carafa, 2006) Carafa gave advice to the new queen about decent behaviour in her new environment. He explained to Beatrix, for instance, how to organize the trip of her entourage to Hungary, how to behave with her subjects, her royal husband and, especially, how to honour her Hungarian mother-in-law<sup>12</sup>.

Returning to the financial questions and maintenance of the queen’s court, I have to mention the critical point of the negotiations of each dynastic marriage: the dowry. As in other parts of medieval Europe, in Hungary the dowry consisted of three main components: the sum that the bride’s father paid to the future husband (*dos*), a similar or equal quantity of money given by the future husband to the bride to secure her maintenance.

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<sup>12</sup> A recent discovery of a marriage oration dedicated to Matthias Corvinus by a Venetian humanist, and the king’s dressing in the garment sent by his future wife as an act of transition to married life during the proxy marriage see: Pastrnak, 2022.



nance (*contrados*), and the price of the bride's virginity to be handled to her after the consummation of the marriage (*donatio propter nuptias* or *Morgengab*), which also became the wife's property. Beside the data provided by Attila Bárány in his paper quoted in notes, I would like to mention some known cases for the sake of comparison.

Some years ago, Patrizia Cremonini called attention to an interesting comparative data for the value of a *donatio propter nuptias* from the Árpád era. According to Cremonini, when marrying his third wife, Beatrix D'Este in 1234, King Andrew II gave five-thousand silver marcs to the bride. It was almost ten times the sum that he paid to Venice for transporting his army to the Holy Land for the crusade (Cremonini, 2019, p. 188, n. 4).

There are more systematic data about the bride-price from the end of the fifteenth-century onwards. During the marriage negotiations of Beatrix of Aragon with Matthias Corvinus, the King of Naples and the King of Hungary established the bride's dowry in the sum of 200,000 golds, out of which 30,000 was the net worth of the bride's jewellery (Berzeviczy, 1931, pp. 58-60). The latter sum of 30,000 was Beatrix's own property, that could have been inherited by her children, or in case of a childless marriage, it was to be paid back to her if leaving the country as a widowed queen. According to the contract, King Matthias Corvinus was supposed to make a *donatio propter nuptias* worth one-third of the dowry, that is cc. 65,000 golds<sup>13</sup>. However, such a donation did not happen, or no trace of its testifying document survived. At any rate, it is certain, that Beatrice did not ever get back her money, and after her questionable marriage to King Uladislav II, she was sent home to Naples impoverished.

The dowry of Anne Candale-Foix was established in forty-thousand French francs, to be paid to the husband after the celebration of their marriage (Györkö, 2016, pp. 50-51).

Three decades later, when King John I Szapolyai asked for the hand of Princess Isabella Jagiellon, the marriage contract established that Isabella was to have 70,000 golden florins as her dowry, out of which she would take paraphernalia ie. jewellery, clothes, other objects worth 26005 florins when leaving Poland. In turn, King John was supposed to give the rights to Isabella over the incomes of certain cities, villages, mines etc. worth another 70,000 Hungarian golden florins, in order to secure the financial needs of his future wife (Veress, 1901, p. 32). Moreover, as *donatio propter nuptias*, an annual income was granted to Isabella taken from the Saint Martin's day tax collection of the Saxones of Transylvania, 2000 florins every year. The latter sum was at Isabella's own disposal

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<sup>13</sup> New discoveries about the negotiations are presented in Marti, 2022.



to spend or invest, while the income based on the rights over certain cities was traditionally assigned to the status of the queen of Hungary. In theory, Isabella had incomes granted to her both by the marriage contract and by the Hungarian law. However, already in King John's lifetime the Hungarian queen had to face financial problems, and her father, King Sigismund regularly wrote to King John in order to remind him about his debts to Isabella and to the Polish king himself.

### 5.3. Coronation

As it is well-known, in the Kingdom of Hungary the Holy Crown of Saint Stephen had a specific status, in brief, it was considered almost a separate legal entity. Thus, the question emerges, whether the Holy Crown played any role in the investiture of the royal wives. In 2020 János M. Bak and Géza Pálffy published a comprehensive volume in English about the importance of the Crown and the symbology of the coronation in Hungarian history (Bak, Pálffy, 2020). They discussed the investiture of the queens as a secondary problem in their monograph, while Péter Molnár dedicated a separate paper to the question in our collective volume about Isabella Jagiellon (Molnár, 2020). As Molnár demonstrated, during the medieval times, in most of the documented cases the queens of Hungary were crowned with a separate female crown (forged to the occasion itself or inherited from previous queens), not with the Holy Crown of the Kingdom. The investiture of the queen underwent a change after the partition of the Kingdom, during the reign of the House of Habsburg in Hungary.

As far as the line of inheritance is concerned, first born and/or only royal daughters got not crowned, the politico-cultural environment preferring their younger brothers or well-chosen husbands to the female offspring of kings. Both Mary of Anjou and Elisabeth of Luxemburg were forced to pass actual power to their husbands. Females, like under-age or baby male heirs to the throne were considered bodily inapt to rule, thus child-coronation was also very rare in Hungary (Mroziejewicz, 2017). Princess Anna of Jagiellon, first born daughter to King Uladislaus II and Anne Candale-Foix was a little girl when her brother got crowned. However, according to contemporary chronicles, the little girl was convinced that by her birth-right the whole ceremony was organized in her honour (Mroziejewicz, 2017, p. 163).

The regular investiture of a Hungarian queen emerged with utmost importance in the case of Queen Isabella Jagiellon, who was given the *epitheton ornans* "last national queen of Hungary" by nineteenth-century Hungarian historiography. This expression referred to the fact, that Isabella was *the wife* to the last such king of Hungary, who himself was member of the *natio Hungarica*, and subject to the Hungarian Crown since his

birth. This somewhat anachronistic expression summarizes well the meaning of her coronation: by the unction and the coronation oath Isabella herself became a subject to the Hungarian Crown, and one with the *natio Hungarica*. Therefore, despite losing her husband in 1541, and soon after being forced to give up the capital city of the Kingdom to the Ottomans, Isabella could claim (at least parts of) her late husband's territories due to the rights her coronation granted her and her son. Isabella clearly understood that the eventual coronation of her infant son would make John Sigismund Stephen open enemy both to the Habsburgs and the Ottomans, therefore she did not let him crowned, when the Hungarian aristocracy elected the boy to be the next King of Hungary. Instead, during the many years of power struggle, which eventually led to the formation of the Principality of Transylvania, she assumed the role of the queen regent as the elected king's mother and represented her son's interests. She regularly referred to herself as *regina legitime coronata* of Hungary. It was from 1556 until her untimely death in 1559, when Isabella finally had both the power and the money to enjoy her position as *regina Hungariae*. One of the emblematic moments of her reign was the coinage of her own golden florin, which is the central element of our book-cover published in 2020 (Máté, Oborni, 2020). This golden florin is the only example from the medieval history of Hungary, which bears the name of a female sovereign, who was a queen regent governing in the name of her son. There was only another female ruler, Maria of Anjou back in the fourteenth century, who could coinage her own money. Like I have mentioned before, according to the law of *praeffectio*, applied to his own family in times of need by Maria's grandfather, King Loius I Anjou, Maria's title was not queen but king, *rex Hungariae*. As a king and sovereign, she had the right of coinage, although on the coin she is described as *Maria dei gratia regina Hungariae*, not as a king. Hence, it was a queen regent and the only female ruler in Hungarian history, Isabella Jagiellon, who "got paid" with her own money for the services to the Kingdom of Hungary.

## 6. Final Remarks

As I hope to have presented above, the actual state of scholarship on medieval queenship in Hungary is somewhat sporadic and promising at the same time. There are but a few systematic analyses of certain aspects of queenship, for instance, the coronation and the denigration of the foreign queen in historical memory are two such examples. There are certain eras of medieval Hungary, like the reign of the Árpád dynasty, which already got their monographic exploration, thus, the ques-

tions of queenship are also discussed in those volumes. One or two queens, as Beatrix of Aragon and Isabella Jagiellon were also the subjects of monographs, although cc. a century ago, while further exploration of archival materials on their reigns did not get financial help from Hungarian research agencies in recent years. It seems, altogether, that nothing but anniversaries of certain kings, queens and political events are important enough to encourage new research and to get financial help for making those results both visible to the general public and acceptable for specialists.

As I have stated it in the introduction of this paper, the biggest problem of spreading results of Hungarian scholarship is the language of the publications themselves. Therefore, in these concluding remarks, I would like to give a short guide how to find publications by Hungarian scholars on-line. In harmony with the European initiative for open access publication, every scholar, who wishes to apply for positions and grants in Hungary, is obliged to register their writings in the Hungarian Science Bibliography on-line (MTMT), provided by Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (<https://www.mtmt.hu/>). Through its search engine, available also in English, everyone can search for names, authors, keywords and institutions in the MTMT. The bibliography is connected to a digital library as well, where scholars are obliged to upload their publications (REAL, REAL-D, REAL-J). Since 2018, if a publication is financed from Hungarian tax-payers' money, it will be available as green or gold open access, for free. Papers published abroad also got registered in MTMT and uploaded to the REAL system, generally with an embargo of two years. Thus, in theory, every publication by Hungarian scholars is possible to find and often read directly through the systems of MTMT and REAL.

I encourage every scholar interested in the Middle Ages and the early modern era, to use the possibilities offered by the open access publications coming from Hungary, and look for comparative materials in order to answer their own research questions. The methodology of a paper that uncovers connections and finds explanations on materials that one is not expert of, can lead to a broader perspective of one's own approach and to a deeper understanding of the universality of research problems.

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*8. Curriculum vitae*

Ágnes Máté, PhD is a literary historian who works as a librarian specialized in old prints at the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and as a second-time awardee of the Bolyai János Postdoctoral Research Scholarship. She is interested in the broadly understood Italo-Hungarian-Polish relations in the premodern era, from textual transmission of *novelle* to cultural transfer inspired by foreign queens. Her contributions and books were printed by Amsterdam University Press, Routledge, Viella and L'Harmattan.



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