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# Subjects of the Kingdom of Hungary, Croatia, and Slavonia as Mercenaries in Fourteenth-Century Italy: Social and Cultural Dimensions

by *Katalin Prajda*

## ABSTRACT

The article aims to address the cultural and social profile of Hungarian subjects as mercenaries in Italy, focusing on the period between the late 1370s and early 1380s. The cultural and social impact of foreign mercenaries in Italy was likely the strongest in this earliest phase of their appearance when complete mercenary troops of foreign origins were hired by the corresponding polities. Soldiers' migration from the Kingdom to various Italian cities followed a migratory pattern exhibited also by other migrants belonging to a wide spectrum of occupational categories. Unlike their Western European colleagues, they also showed the same linguistic and ethnic diversity which characterized the Kingdom. Their mercenary captains kept a close relation to their king. Louis I commanded them remotely and upon their return he raised many of them to high secular offices in Hungary. They were also functioning in diplomatic capacities for the king so to shape Italian domestic politics.

Keywords: condottieri – cultural exchanges – migration – soldiers – warfare

## 1. Introduction

More than a decade ago, William Caferro, a leading scholar of Italian military history, stated in one of his significant contributions to the history of the fourteenth-century Florentine army that Italian warfare still remains an

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understudied area<sup>1</sup>. The scholarship hitherto has focused on the employment of foreign mercenary captains which marked the transition between civic armies and mercenary contingents in the service of various Italian governments. Meanwhile technical and organizational questions have elicited further scholarly attention, mainly thanks to Caferro's and Michael E. Mallet's studies examining Florentine, Sienese and Venetian warfare<sup>2</sup>. Compared to these issues, the social and cultural dimensions of foreign mercenary contingents in medieval and early Renaissance Italy seldom appear as the main focus of scholarly works<sup>3</sup>. Caferro has demonstrated, through the examples of German and English mercenaries, the various aspects of economic and cultural exchanges which took place among the soldiers and between them and the local society. Among foreign paid soldiers, these two ethnic groups were the most prominent ones and the best documented to date. However, besides them, many more ethnic and linguistic groups found their way into the service of various Italian polities.

Within a diverse set of ethnic and linguistic groups, including Englishmen, Germans, Catalans, and Burgundians, who typically formed mercenary contingents in fourteenth-century Italy, *ungheri* o *ungari* were frequently mentioned. Yet, labelling all these soldiers as «Hungarians» shall exclusively mirror their territorial affiliation or provenience. They were all subjects of the King of Hungary, Croatia, and Slavonia. Therefore, Caferro's observations regarding the «ethnic/national solidarities» among English and German could be further sophisticated, adding that in this case it means only «political solidarity»<sup>4</sup>. In this period, subjects of the Kingdom of Hungary, Croatia, and Slavonia in Italy represented a wide spectrum of occupational categories. In this sense, soldiers' migration from the Kingdom to various Italian cities followed a pattern. These migrants were primarily skilled and unskilled workers, paid soldiers, and members of religious orders. The view that these foreign mercenaries, alongside long-distance trade merchants, probably

<sup>1</sup> W. Caferro, *Continuity, Long-Term Service, and Permanent Forces: A Reassessment of the Florentine Army in the Fourteenth Century*, in «The Journal of Modern History», 80, 2008, 2, pp. 219-251, here p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> M.E. Mallet, *Mercenaries and Their Masters: Warfare in Renaissance Italy*, London, Bodley Head, 1974.

<sup>3</sup> W. Caferro, *Travel, Economy, and Identity in Fourteenth-Century Italy: An Alternate Interpretation of the «Mercenary System»*, in D.R. Curto et al. (eds.), *From Florence to the Mediterranean and Beyond*, Firenze, Olschki, 2009, pp. 363-380; M.E. Mallet, *Mercenaries and Their Masters*, pp. 207-230.

<sup>4</sup> W. Caferro, *Travel, Economy, and Identity*, pp. 373-376.

represented the most mobile groups in early Renaissance Italy might not need any further supporting evidence<sup>5</sup>. Stephan Selzer in his monograph on fourteenth-century German mercenaries in Italy recalled the fact that they too followed a broader migratory pattern<sup>6</sup>. The study, which relies on an impressive variety of source material deriving from many Italian cities, addresses a diverse set of questions connected to these soldiers' cultural and social background. In the Hungarian case, only Florence and Rome were studied in detail, reasons why also the sources on mercenaries are primarily bound to these cities. The preponderance of Florentine and Roman archival material on Hungarian subjects might be explained by the solid commercial networks between the Kingdom and the Republic of Florence, as well as by Rome's role as a major site of pilgrimage and seat of the pope which equally attracted many Hungarians<sup>7</sup>.

The cultural and social impact of foreign mercenaries in Italy was likely the strongest in the earliest phase of their appearance when entire mercenary troops of foreign origins were hired together by the corresponding polities. Michael E. Mallett described this period in European military history as a transition between medieval feudal and modern professional armies. Mallett and Caferro divided the history of mercenaries in Italy into two major periods: the first one lasted from the mid-fourteenth century until the 1380s, followed by a second phase in which many individual captains emerged<sup>8</sup>. Because of their constant movement, it is, however,

<sup>5</sup> For foreign mercenaries service in Italy, set within a framework of broader migratory tendencies see also: A. Jammé, *Mécanismes dirigés, mécanismes spontanés. Notes sur les réseaux de travail des cavaliers d'Outremer en Italie (XIIIe-XIVe siècles)*, in D. Coulon - C. Picard - D. Valérian (eds.), *Espaces et réseaux en Méditerranée (VIe-XVIIe siècle)*, I: *La configuration des réseaux*, Paris, Editions Bouchène, 2007, pp. 14-16. For framing the employment of foreign mercenaries in Renaissance Europe within the context of long-term migration see: S. Nelson - C. Fletcher, *Mercenaries, Migration and the Crew of the Mary Rose*, in «History», 107, 2022, 378, pp. 836-860.

<sup>6</sup> S. Selzer, *Deutsche Söldner im Italien des Trecento*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001, pp. 342-345.

<sup>7</sup> K. Prajda, *Reti mercantili a servizio della migrazione del primo Rinascimento. L'insediamento dei sudditi della corona ungherese nella Firenze del Quattrocento*, in A. Fara - B. Ligorio (eds.), *Penisola italiana ed Europa centro-orientale tra tardo Medioevo e prima Età moderna: Economia, Società, Cultura*, Online-Schriften des DHI Rom. Neue Reihe. Pubblicazioni online del DHI Roma. Nuova serie, Istituto Storico Germanico di Roma, 2021, pp. 55-64.

<sup>8</sup> M.E. Mallett, *Mercenaries and Their Masters*, pp. 25-50; W. Caferro, *John Hawkwood: An English Mercenary in Fourteenth Century Italy*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006, p. XII.

challenging to estimate the real dimensions of their interaction with the local population, although this interaction likely touched upon many other areas about which we have no written or visual sources. Thus, they contributed to cultural exchanges in the fields of technical skills, equipment, costumes, and linguistic practices. Many of these paid soldiers remained in Italy only for a limited time before returning to their homeland. Therefore, they may have also mediated objects and iconographic models; the most distinguished captains acquired Italian artifacts and might have commissioned Italian masters upon their return home.

In many ways, *ungari's* experience as mercenaries in Italy was no different from their Western European counterparts. Yet, the cultural features that distinguished them from the rest of the foreign mercenary population were clearly noted by contemporaries. The present article aims to address the cultural and social profile of Hungarian subjects as mercenaries in Italy, focusing in particular on the transition period between the late 1370s and early 1380s. The study is divided into three parts. The first part details the technical and organizational aspects of these mercenary contingents compared to their Western European counterparts. The second part analyzes the language and costumes of these troops. The third part focuses on the career path of the baron János Horváti, mentioned in Italian sources as Giovanni Bano, who was the most well-known mercenary captain originating from the Kingdom of Hungary, Croatia, and Slavonia.

Mercenaries, and in particular Hungarian subjects, are traceable in an ample typology of written sources. The most well-known descriptions of Hungarian troops in Italian chronicles are datable to Louis I's campaigns in the Kingdom of Naples<sup>9</sup>. Already in 1324, the Florentine Matteo Villani (1283-1363) mentioned Hungarian archers who transited in Lombardy with the duke of Austria against the lords of Padua. Later, Villani reported the presence of Hungarian soldiers among the troops of Fra Moriale, who was one of Louis I's mercenary captains in Italy. Similarly, Domenico, a notary from Gravina (ca. 1300-ca. 1355) in his *Chronicon de rebus in Apulia gestis* and Marchionne di Coppo Stefani (1336-1385) in his *Cronaca fiorentina* mention Hungarian military contingents. Besides narrative sources, archival documents are also abundant in number, coming predominantly from Tuscany and the Apostolic Chamber, but also occasionally from other

<sup>9</sup> For an analysis of the corresponding Italian chronicles see: E. Csukovits, *Hungary and the Hungarians: Western Europe's View in the Middle Ages*, Roma, Viella, 2018, Chapter 4.

parts of the peninsula where no systematic studies have been carried out regarding the issue<sup>10</sup>.

## 2. Skills, equipment and organization

In sources produced by the Florentine chancellery and the Apostolic Chamber, mercenaries typically appear as *stipendiarii*, a general term to indicate that they were receiving a stipend. Heads of mercenary units were called either *capitanei*, *commissarii*, *caporalii* or *conestabili*, depending on their role and rank within these contingents. These units were most frequently labeled *societates* and their members *sotii*, denominations that were also used for commercial firms and their partners. Contingents were typically hired together by the various Italian authorities, and their stipend and obligations were regulated by the *condotta*, a contract signed by the captain.

They were organized into companies of adventure, most typically not on ethnic grounds<sup>11</sup>. This was also true for Hungarian subjects who are frequently cited as part of ethnically mixed military contingents. For example, in the 1360s, the White Company led by the Englishman, John Hawkwood, contained not only English, but also Italian, German, and Hungarian soldiers. Similarly, the German Company had Catalan, Italian, and Hungarian members too<sup>12</sup>. Thus, despite their camaraderie with their compatriots, there was a continuous exchange between Hungarian subjects and other local and foreign soldiers. Owing to their mixed ethnicity, these mercenary troops represented an excellent opportunity to master the art of war and to exchange know-how<sup>13</sup>.

Domenico of Gravina already mentioned that at the battle of Capua (1348), Hungarian subjects, unlike other soldiers, were equipped with bows and arrows<sup>14</sup>. These particular features described by the chronicler were typical for the light cavalry, a specificity of the Hungarian army, which

<sup>10</sup> For a description of the available Florentine documentation see: W. Caferro, *Continuity*, pp. 222-223, n. 16.

<sup>11</sup> On the companies, see: W. Caferro, *John Hawkwood*, pp. 64-68.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>14</sup> On Domenico da Gravina see: F. Delle Donne, *Austerità espositiva e rielaborazione creatrice nel «Chronicon» di Domenico da Gravina*, in «Studi storici», 40, 1999, pp. 301-314.

distinguished them from their Western counterparts. Indeed, Florentine archival sources too identify Hungarian subjects by their equipment: they were predominantly horsemen, bowmen, and more rarely falconers. In addition, some heavy infantry and cavalry were also sent into battle, but they were usually hired together. Therefore, Hungarian armies were able to employ different styles, which often resulted in a mixture of western traditions and eastern, Ottoman-style battlefield techniques and equipment<sup>15</sup>. Visual testimonies also draw attention to these distinctive features in equipment and customs exhibited by Hungarian soldiers. Among them, the first folio of the Hungarian Illuminated Chronicle, commissioned around 1358 by Louis I, shows the two groups wearing distinct costumes and armor<sup>16</sup>. The Italian-style armor, which included a helmet covering the neck, was introduced into the Hungarian army only following these mercenary experiences in Italy. Besides armor, written sources also note that Hungarians, unlike their German counterparts, wore very little protection. In the 1360s, Florence specifically allowed the English and the Hungarians to have little armor, as they were accustomed to<sup>17</sup>. This, in the Hungarians' case commonly meant just hardened leather as protection.

Thus, while in Italy, Hungarian subjects needed specific leather protection, costumes, and saddles which only they used. Various scholars have already noted the positive effects of mercenaries lodging in and in the proximity of urban centers on local economies. This increase was especially palpable in the production of military equipment, in the commerce of horses and in many other related professions<sup>18</sup>. Thanks to these mercenaries, who consumed and transmitted these leather objects, Hungarian manufacturing products likely generated an interest in Italy. Leatherwork was closely related to the commerce of Hungarian livestock, horse, and leather. Various, predominantly Tuscan merchants mediated these goods from Hungary to Italy. Yet, some Hungarian immigrants settling in Florence and Rome too operated in leather- or livestock-related professions. These included horse dealers, makers of saddles, which had also different variants

<sup>15</sup> A. Bárány, *Az Anjou-kor hadtörténete*, in *Magyarország hadtörténete*, I: *A kezdetektől 1526-ig*, ed. by R. Hermann, Budapest, Zrínyi Kiadó, 2017, pp. 175-222.

<sup>16</sup> J.M. Bak - L. Veszprémy (eds.), *Studies on the Illuminated Chronicle*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> W. Caferro, '*The Fox and the Lion*': *The White Company and the Hundred Years War in Italy*, in A. Villalon - D. Kagay (eds.), *The Hundred Years War: A Wider Focus*, Leiden, Brill, 2005, pp. 187-188.

<sup>18</sup> A. Jamme, *Mécanismes dirigés*, p. 21.

in Italy and in Hungary, and other accessories for horses<sup>19</sup>. It should not be omitted that these artisans would have introduced the Hungarian-style of leather work also in Italy, making use of alum, which came from the Ottomans. During this period, this specific leather work in the Kingdom of France was labelled as «Hungarian» in the sources<sup>20</sup>.

Another significant feature distinguishing Hungarian but also English and German mercenaries from many Italian soldiers was that these former belonged to a feudally structured society back home. Thus, their social status would have deeply conditioned their interactions with the local population as well as their decision to eventually set foot in Italy. In accompanying their masters, the king and his barons, to their foreign enterprises, Hungarian soldiers acted out of a sense of feudal obligation. Some of these captains were of baronial rank; members of the royal court and men in their service were their *familiaries*. Following the mandatory service period, they remained with their masters in Italy to fight for money. Thus, thanks to the continuous contacts with Italians who considered mercenary contingents typically as economic enterprises, a similar mentality started to appear among the Hungarian barons<sup>21</sup>. This passage between feudal obligations and mercenary status contributed significantly to the regular hiring of mercenaries as part of the Hungarian royal troops<sup>22</sup>.

Based on a wide spectrum of Tuscan documentation, Caferro claimed that Hungarian captains were, indeed, typically noblemen with close ties to the king who often commanded them directly<sup>23</sup>. In my view, it is likely that Louis I, by commanding these troops from afar, wished to secure additional incomes for his crown. His captains either demanded bribes from the wealthy states or offered them their services to defend their territories.

<sup>19</sup> K. Prajda, *Reti mercantili*, p. 60.

<sup>20</sup> So far, there are no references to the Hungarian method in Italy. L. Righi «La manifattura del cuoio e della calzatura nell'Italia comunale: Tecniche, struttura produttiva e organizzazione del lavoro», PhD diss., Università degli Studi di Trento, 2016-2017, p. 92.

<sup>21</sup> M. Del Treppo, *Gli aspetti organizzativi economici e sociali di una compagnia di ventura italiana*, in «Rivista Storica Italiana», 85, 1973, pp. 253-275; W. Caferro, *John Hawkwood*.

<sup>22</sup> G. Rázsó, *A zsoldosintézmény kezdetei Magyarországon a XIV.században*, in «Hadtörténelmi Közlemények», 7, 1960, 2, pp. 107-143.

<sup>23</sup> W. Caferro, *The Fox and the Lion*, p. 186. For the Florentine art of the war, practiced around the time of the Black Death, see by the same author, *Petrarch's War: Florence and the Black Death in Context*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 49-83.



Alternatively, the king was likely hoping to return and conquer Naples, so he intended to shape Italian domestic politics to his advantage by moving these troops.

The employment of Hungarian subjects as mercenaries in large numbers was a by-product of Louis I's military campaigns in the Kingdom of Naples. Already before November 1347, the date of the king's departure with the royal army, a smaller contingent had set out for Italy to recruit mercenaries for the venture, including the captains Fra Moriale and Werner von Urslingen<sup>24</sup>. It was headed by the bishop of Nitra (today Slovakia) Miklós Vásári, and by both the then-count and the future count of Pressburg (today Bratislava; Slovakia), Miklós Treutel (in office until 1349) and Miklós Kont (in office between 1349-1351). When Louis I returned to Hungary during the Black Death, the Voivod of Transylvania István Lackfi became governor of Naples, and a considerable number of Hungarian soldiers remained with him. The voivod was typically one of the most influential barons of the royal court, and the leading secular dignity of Transylvania (today Western Romania). Following the second campaign in 1351, perhaps Lackfi himself, as the leading Hungarian baron of the royal army, proposed the idea of turning the contingent into a mercenary enterprise. István Lackfi was one of the most powerful barons of the royal court. He and his four brothers all participated in Louis I's campaigns in Naples<sup>25</sup>. Starting from this period, the family acquired many acquaintances in Italy. Later, his son of the same name (1343-1397) developed into one of the most significant supporters of Louis I's nephew, Charles of Durazzo. It was shortly after Lackfi's death (d. 1353), that Fra Moriale raised the first Hungarian mercenary troop. The *Magna Societas Ungarorum*, probably commanded by *comes* Miklós Kont (*Nicolaus filius Jobannis de Othim Comes et Capitanues Generalis*) as general captain, found employment in the service of Queen Joanna and her husband, Louis of Taranto, one of Louis I's former adversaries.

After a certain point, Hungarian mercenaries continued to use an older form of organization meanwhile their Western counterparts introduced considerable changes into military units. Just a couple of years following Lackfi's

<sup>24</sup> A. Bárány, *The Communion of English and Hungarian Mercenaries in Italy*, in J. Barta - K. Papp (eds.), *The First Millennium of Hungary in Europe*, Debrecen, Debrecen University Press, 2002, pp. 129-131.

<sup>25</sup> E. Csukovits, *Lackfi István Apuliában*, in V. Dáné - M. Lupescu-Makó - G. Sipos (eds.), *Testimonio litteratum. Tanulmányok Jakó Zsigmond tiszteletére*, Cluj-Napoca, Erdélyi Múzeum Egyesület, 2016, pp. 61-68; P. Engel, *Magyar Középkori Adattár*, Budapest, MTA TTI, 2001 (CD).

death, in 1359, Hungarian mercenaries appeared for the first time at the debates of the Florentine Secret Councils, a platform reserved for leading politicians to discuss primarily issues of diplomacy and taxation. Their contact, presumably Miklós Kont, was supposed to command five hundred Hungarians, specifying that they «partiti sint per bannerium» (would be divided into banners), among them several horsemen. «Banner» units included both cavalry and infantrymen. The *banderium/banerium* (banner) was a military unit of the Hungarian army. It derives from the Italian vernacular word *bandiera*, meaning a banner with coat of arms, of which use became regular starting from Charles Robert's reign (1308-1342). The term was applied both to private troops of secular barons and dignities of the Church as well as to the royal troops which served under the same banner<sup>26</sup>. Thus, it was likely rooted in Italian military traditions. Banner units had been a widespread practice also in Italy until the transition to the use of *lance* units, around the turn of the 1360s and 1370s<sup>27</sup>. The banner included twenty to twenty-five knights with a captain at its head. The lance was composed of three men: a knight, a squire, and a page and three horses. Yet, following the War of Chioggia, in July 1381, the league between Bologna, Perugia, Siena, Pisa and Lucca allowed the inclusion of Hungarian mounted cavalry archers observing banner units, into regular lance units, counting three of them as a single lance. While the Italian military system underwent these changes, Hungarian subjects continued to use banner units. Caferro has raised the question if this transition between various units represented in reality another technical innovation in the organization of mercenary troops<sup>28</sup>.

The discussions which took place among members of the Florentine political elite clearly show that in establishing contacts with these Hungarian captains the corresponding governments always considered the good relations with the Hungarian ruler. They carefully measured the diplomatic and financial impact of a possible transit or refusal of bribe money to the Hungarian contingents. In 1359, the councils intended to contact Louis I

<sup>26</sup> F. Sebök, *Banderium*, in I.C.J. Rogers (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Medieval Warfare and Military Technology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 118.

<sup>27</sup> W. Caferro, *Petrarch's War*, p. 61; *A Reassessment of the Florentine Army*, p. 233.

<sup>28</sup> W. Caferro, *Comparative Economy and Martial Corporatism: Toward an Understanding of Florentine City Leagues, 1332-92*, in «Speculum», 97, 2022, pp. 1080-1081; S. Selzer, *Deutsche Söldner*, pp. 52-58.

regarding the hiring of these Hungarians<sup>29</sup>. The Florentines wanted «good Hungarians, of sufficient number, not young boys but experienced soldiers»<sup>30</sup>. The ruler was well informed about the negotiations between the heads of the contingents and the Republic. They also intended to hire a captain to lead the Hungarian contingent. The names of several captains were mentioned during the debates who were supposed to represent Imre Szécsi (*dominus Aymerius Sciench*; 1336-1387), Miklós Szécsi's brother, Ban of Slavonia, and later count palatine, who served Louis I in Naples<sup>31</sup>. In the meantime, Miklós Kont was raised to count palatine by the king, a sign that the foreign mercenary service brought him significant recognition back home.

This attitude of the Florentine political elite is well exemplified also by the conflicts between Florence and Pisa in 1362 when both sides equally relied on Hungarian mercenaries. In January 1362, the Secret Councils discussed the matter of whether a Hungarian contingent, headed by Miklós Kont, might transit through Florentine territory, probably asking for a bribe<sup>32</sup>. One speaker was of the opinion that they should send some citizens to determine the intentions of the contingent. In this way, they could make sure that while on Florentine territory, the mercenaries obeyed the orders of the Priors. At the end of the month, members of the Councils arrived at the conclusion that they might even hire the Hungarians themselves. This decision was likely more advantageous from both diplomatic and financial points of view.

Following this initial phase, in the 1360s, Hungarians' visibility considerably increased as they were employed in a wide variety of places, including Naples, Siena, Pisa, Padua, Florence, and several cities within the Papal State. In 1360, the cardinal Egidio de Albornoz occupied Bologna for the

<sup>29</sup> He was mentioned as *Niccolao*, Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASFi), Consulte e pratiche (CP), 2. fols. 35r (2 February 1359); 35v-36r (10 February 1359); 38r (14 February 1359). For their number see: fols. 40r-v (16 February 1359); 84r-85r (14 May 1359); 86r-87v (15 May 1359); 88r (16 May 1359).

<sup>30</sup> «sint Hungheri boni et de numero sufficienti et non ragazzi sed in armis experti»: ASFi, CP, 2. fols. 90r-v (17 May 1359); 96r (12 June 1359); 97v (25 June 1359); 115r (2 September 1359).

<sup>31</sup> This latter was not mentioned in Hungarian sources. P. Engel, *Magyar Középkori Adattár*.

<sup>32</sup> ASFi, CP, 3. fols. 1r-2r (7 January 1362); 3r-v (13 January 1362); 5v-6r (15 January 1362); 9r-v (27 January 1362); 13r-14r (31 January 1362); 15r-16r (2 February 1362); 39r (5 April 1362).

Papal State against the Visconti and Ordelafi, with the aid of Hungarian mercenaries led by Simon Meggyesi, count of Pressburg (in office from 1351), known as Simone della Morte. Between 1361 and 1362, the Apostolic Chamber registered Hungarian mercenaries in the pope's service<sup>33</sup>. In 1363, Bernabò Visconti left Bologna to the pope in exchange for a considerable sum of money. In 1365, three other *conestabili* were cited in Bolognese sources, two of them originating from Zala County, situated in the heart of Hungary<sup>34</sup>. In 1362, Louis I ordered also the troops headed by Miklós Toldi to serve the Papal State<sup>35</sup>. Toldi's figure is one of the examples of those ordinary soldiers who succeeded in elevating their social status and rank thanks to mercenary service. Owing to his merits in Italy, Toldi was later raised by the king to the rank of nobleman of the royal court. Furthermore, he became legendary as a symbol of strength and courage. Toldi's story also strengthens the view that Louis I used these Hungarian contingents primarily for his own purposes and gave offices and titles to their captains for representing the crown's interests in the peninsula. Toldi was among those who had arrived in Italy with Louis I as *familiaries* of Miklós Vásári, already archbishop of Esztergom. Later he served Meggyesi and was fighting in Konrad von Landau's troops too<sup>36</sup>. In 1361, he passed with his soldiers to the company of John Hawkwood (ca. 1323-1394) where Toldi became a corporal. Hawkwood's White Company was composed of English, German, and Hungarian units.

John Hawkwood, mentioned by Italian sources as Giovanni Acuto, was the most well-paid mercenary captain of his time. Born in England, he started his military career in the Hundred Years' War. In 1361 he decided to descend with his troops to Italy<sup>37</sup>. Despite his recognition in Italy, he received titles from Richard II (r. 1377-1399) only after almost two decades of activity as a mercenary. Since the beginning of his reign, Hawkwood

<sup>33</sup> Archivio Apostolico Vaticano (AAV), Camera Apostolica, Collectoriae 455. See also A.C. Dincă, *Hungarian Mercenaries Serving the Pontifical State. A Vatican Source from 1362 and the Beginning of a Discussion*, in A. Fara - B. Ligorio (eds.), *Penisola italiana ed Europa centro-orientale*, pp. 43-54.

<sup>34</sup> M. Conti, *Origine, profil et solde des mercenaires à Bologne (seconde moitié XIVe s.): Réflexion à partir du Liber expensarum de 1365*, in «Antologia Militare», 9, 2022, 3, pp. 327-351, here p. 345.

<sup>35</sup> G. Rázsó, *A zsoldosintézmény*, p. 139; A. Bárány, *The Communion*, pp. 132-133.

<sup>36</sup> E. Mályusz, *A Toldi-monda történeti alapja*, in «Hadtörténelmi Közlemények», 25, 1924, pp. 3-23; W. Caferro, *John Hawkwood*, pp. 59, 63-66, 101.

<sup>37</sup> W. Caferro, *John Hawkwood*.

served as diplomatic mediator for the English crown<sup>38</sup>, like Kont and Toldi who constantly represented their sovereign in Italy even while they acted as mercenary captains.

As Caferro has pointed out, the company of John Hawkwood fought very few decisive battles. Rather they collected bribes. They lived off of frightening various Italian states with threats of sacking their cities<sup>39</sup>. Apparently, the head of the contingent, *comes Nicola*, that is, Miklós Kont adopted a similar tactic. In the end, the government did hire Hungarian mercenaries against Pisa, since between the end of 1362 and the end of 1363 numerous Hungarian captains and their commanders were registered in Florentine service<sup>40</sup>. Miklós Kont was mentioned under the Castle of San Miniato dei Tedeschi too, alongside other captains, including János (*Jobannes Domenici*) and Lancelottus Lancelottus (*Lancelotto Domenici*), sons of Domokos<sup>41</sup>. In April 1363 again, the Councils wished to hire one-hundred Hungarians with Miklós Kont at their head<sup>42</sup>.

As these mercenary captains were in continuous contact with the ruler, they can also be thought of as diplomats who mediated and negotiated in the Hungarian king's name with the local political elite. Just as Hungarians were being engaged by the Republic of Florence in summer 1363, Hawkwood and his company, including Toldi and his Hungarians, entered the service of the Commune of Pisa. Thus, Miklós Kont was employed on the Florentine side, Toldi on the Pisan side, and both were commanded by Louis I. Following these events, in 1365, Hugh de Mortimer, an English captain, made an agreement with the Hungarian company that led Miklós Toldi and ten other commanders to enter into a contract of service for Queen

<sup>38</sup> W. Caferro, *Travel, Economy, and Identity*, p. 372.

<sup>39</sup> W. Caferro, *Mercenaries and Military Expenditure: The Costs of Undeclared Warfare in Fourteenth Century Siena*, in «Journal of European Economic History», 23, 1994, 2, pp. 219-247, here p. 238.

<sup>40</sup> Miklós Kont was mentioned as *Niccola vaida ungarus conestabilis et stipendiarius Florentiae* in the Florentine sources, even though in that period, one of István Lackfi, sr.'s sons, Dénes (1359-1366), another participant of the Neapolitan campaigns, held the office of voivod of Transylvania. ASFi, Diplomatico, Monte Comune, n. 405 (16 December 1363).

<sup>41</sup> ASFi, Diplomatico, Monte Comune o delle Graticole, n. 405 (16 December 1363), n. 237 (18 October 1362), n. 252 (2 January 1363). For names of Hungarians in Florentine service see: W. Caferro, *Continuity*, pp. 229-230.

<sup>42</sup> ASFi, CP, 5. fols. 53v (14 April 1363); 131v (5 September 1364); 132v (17 September 1364).

Johanna of Naples and the Pope<sup>43</sup>. Toldi was consequently captured and then returned to Hungary, likely in 1366. On the other hand, Miklós Kont died the following year. Following Toldi's and Kont's disappearance from Italy, many Hungarians subjects remained under Hawkwood's command.

The lack of a high-rank Hungarian nobleman who would have commanded these Hungarian mercenaries and would have mediated between the ruler and the local elite is traceable in the debates of the Secret Councils. Meanwhile Hawkwood with the Hungarians under his command first served the Visconti, and then, in the early 1370s, instead, Gregory XI. In April 1370, the Florentine Secret Councils were considering assigning ambassadors to Louis I and asked for three hundred Hungarians from the royal *banderium*<sup>44</sup>. This passage clearly underlines that these Hungarian mercenaries and their contingent were originally part of the royal *banderium*, brought together by feudal ties between the ruler and the chief captains of baronial rank and between the captains and their lower rank soldiers. This period witnessed the rise of a new Hungarian mercenary commander, the Voivod István Lackfi's son of the same name. The younger István was dispatched by the king in 1372, to help his ally, Francesco da Carrara against Venice<sup>45</sup>. Lackfi was accompanied by the aforementioned Lancelottus, Domokos' son, a sign that some of Miklós Kont's soldiers did not return to Hungary but continued their mercenary activity and joined the new contingent headed by the younger István Lackfi. After the war, in 1373, the Hungarian mercenary contingent started to look for new business ventures. Lackfi's further engagement as mercenary captain in Italian military enterprises has no trace in the corresponding Italian documentation. In 1376, he departed from Hungary on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land<sup>46</sup>. Lackfi's further engagement as mercenary captain in Italian military enterprises has no trace in the corresponding Italian documentation. The growing tensions between Gregory XI and the Republic of Florence gave an excellent opportunity for the Hungarian mercenaries to seek new employment. Yet Florence regarded Louis I as its most significant diplomatic ally in the conflicts. In spring 1375, Gregory XI ended the war against Milan. The Florentine Secret Councils were filled with a preoccupation that the

<sup>43</sup> On Lackfi and Toldi see: A. Bárány, *The Communion*, pp. 128-138.

<sup>44</sup> ASFi, CP, 10. fol. 118v; CP, 11. fol. 3r (3 April 1370).

<sup>45</sup> Nicoletto d'Alessio, *La storia della guerra per i confini*, ed by R. Cessi, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1965, pp. 122, 159.

<sup>46</sup> E. Csukovits, *Középkori magyar zarándokok*, Budapest, MTA TTI, 2003, p. 103.

chief military captain of the papal troops, John Hawkwood, would turn against Florence. The Commune, therefore, decided to pay the enormous sum of 130,000 gold florins to Hawkwood as a bribe<sup>47</sup>. The government appointed the Eight of War, later nicknamed the Eight Saints, to find a way to pay Hawkwood by imposing a tax on church property; this caused a severe conflict of interests between the Republic and Gregory XI. During the War of the Eight Saints, which ended with the pope's unexpected death in March 1378, Hungarian mercenaries were again registered on both sides. Among the Hungarian mercenaries hired by the Signoria were many *conestabili*, who were likely commanders of cavalry<sup>48</sup>.

However, the larger portion of the Hungarian contingent serving as mercenaries in Italy fought on behalf of the pope. Despite of the fact that Louis I had not only refused the pope's request to expel Florentines from his kingdom; he even gave them privileges. The account books of the Apostolic Chamber listed a higher number of Hungarian captains in the papal forces, headed by a certain *comes Nicholaus*, whose identity so far remains unclear. Perhaps he was Baron Miklós Szécsi. In December 1376, the documents mentioned the payment of eighty Hungarian horsemen; however, there were several hundred archers, including those on horses, cited in these lists<sup>49</sup>. In 1377, numerous other Hungarian officers were paid by the Apostolic Chamber. Many of them had family names and therefore were likely noblemen.

Following the War of the Eight Saints, as a sign of the Hungarians' efficacy, many cities, such as Bologna, Florence, Siena, Lucca, Perugia, and Pisa, allowed the inclusion of Hungarian archers in contingents which lacked longbowmen. According to Caferro, this was an innovative solution to the structure of these companies<sup>50</sup>. Similarly, on the basis of examples coming from Mantua in the early 1360s, Stephan Selzer claimed that indeed,

<sup>47</sup> W. Caferro, *John Hawkwood*, pp. 175-176.

<sup>48</sup> ASFi, Balie 15, fols. 16r, 31r, 43r, 115r, 123v, 128v; Balie 13, fols. 118v, 127r-v (16 February 1377). Caferro has extensively researched the archival unit of the Balie. A certain «Giovanni ungero», apparently head of a troop sent a letter to the commissari of Faenza. ASF, Mediceo avanti il Principato 1, fol. 132r-v (24 September, s.a.).

<sup>49</sup> AAV, Camera Apostolica, Introitus et Exitus 345, fols. 76v (13 December 1376), 80r (17 December 1376); 88r (3 January 1377); 95v (30 January 1377); 108r (7 March 1377); 131v (28 April 1377); 132r (29 April 1377); 181r (16 August 1377); 185r (28 August 1377); 216v (20 November 1377).

<sup>50</sup> W. Caferro, *John Hawkwood*, p. 90; 'The Fox and the Lion', pp. 193, 205.

Hungarians were often hired together with German mercenaries<sup>51</sup>. Yet, in Bologna, for example, it did not become a norm and Hungarian units continued to remain by and large separate from the rest of cavalry forces. As already Villani noted, Hungarian subjects observed different regulations, a possible reason why contemporaries clearly distinguished between soldiers by their provenience: Italian, English, German, and Hungarian<sup>52</sup>.

### 3. Language and costumes

The War of the Eight Saints ended with Gregory XI's death in March 1378. This also meant that the mercenary troops hired on both sides started to look for new employment. At this point a new Hungarian military captain appeared on the scene. In September 1378, the *banus* János Horváti and five thousand Hungarian horsemen were accepted into the service of Verona against Bernabò Visconti and his commanders, Hawkwood and Landau<sup>53</sup>. At the same time, Bernabò also hired Hungarian soldiers to defend Milan<sup>54</sup>.

The Hungarian subjects serving King Louis I as mercenary captains in Italy undoubtedly possessed skills that enabled them to negotiate with local businessmen and mediate in matters of diplomacy between their sovereign and the local political elite. Among the members of the Florentine Secret Councils sat many high-profile Florentine merchant-bankers who could have engaged even in private business ventures with these mercenary captains. Therefore, the mobility of these mercenaries undoubtedly brought linguistic and cultural exchanges into movement too. Horváti's figure was a perfect example to this phenomenon, who developed fruitful connections to leading businessmen in Padua, Florence and likely in Siena, which earned him a reputation as a military captain in Italy. Given his numerous contacts in Italy, János Horváti likely knew some Italian vernacular. Since one of his brothers was a bishop, we may surmise that he knew some Latin too. In 1379, in the war against Venice, the Hungarian royal troops were headed

<sup>51</sup> S. Selzer, *Deutsche Söldner*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>52</sup> P. Lukcsics, *Magyar zsoldosok a pápaság szolgálatában a XIV században*, in «Hadtörténeti Közlemények», 33, 1932, pp. 125-157. «Cumque ipsi Ungari habeant et observent ab aliis stipendiariis novos ritus»: I. Miskolczy, *Magyar-olasz összeköttetések az Anjouk korában*, Budapest, Szent István Társulat, 1934, p. 252.

<sup>53</sup> W. Caferro, *John Hawkwood*, p. 205.

<sup>54</sup> P.E. Kovács, *Mattia Corvino e la corte di Milano*, in «Arte Lombarda», 139, 2003, 3, pp. 76-80, here p. 76.



by Charles of Durazzo, Louis I's heir to the throne. He made Horváti the general captain of the royal army, who, in this capacity, probably conducted many negotiations with various Italian politicians and businessmen. Charles gave permission to Horváti to raise money for his campaigns in Italy. In Charles's camp set up nearby Treviso, a group of exiled Florentines, enjoying the hospitality of Francesco I da Carrara in Padua, was plotting against its government<sup>55</sup>. By December 1379, news of the plot, including Charles of Durazzo's involvement, had already reached Florence. Shortly after that, presumably with Florentine and Paduan financial support, coming partly from the exiled group, Horváti recruited further mercenaries, who started in 1380 to march toward Florence. These actions had already proved Horváti's abilities as a negotiator. In October, the contingent was already at Poggibonsi, located in the Florentine countryside. Probably in return for substantial loans, the Florentine political elite avoided potential conflicts with Charles, who then moved with his troops to Arezzo<sup>56</sup>.

A document issued in Arezzo and signed between Charles of Durazzo and representatives of the Florentine political elite is the most eloquent contemporary source about the linguistic differences exhibited by these mercenaries originating from Hungary. The document lists the names of many officers, some of them well-experienced mercenaries, and Horváti at their head as general captain. His *seneschalli* were László (Ladislaus) and Lancelottus (also means László in Hungarian) Bebek, the latter likely identical with Lancelottus, son of Domokos – who had fought as a mercenary in Italy since the 1360s<sup>57</sup>. Among the captains was László Horváti,

<sup>55</sup> For the plot see: R. Fredona «Political Conspiracy in Florence, 1340-1382», PhD diss., Cornell University, 2010, pp. 165-213. For Lapo's exile see: F. Ricciardelli, *L'esclusione politica a Firenze e Lapo da Castiglionchio*, in F. Sznura (ed.), *Antica possessione con belli costumi: Due giornate di studio su Lapo da Castiglionchio il Vecchio (Firenze-Pontassieve, 3-4 Ottobre 2003)*, Firenze, ASKA, 2005, pp. 46-61; K. Prajda, *Commercio e diplomazia tra Firenze, Padova e il Regno d'Ungheria dalla conquista di Zara (1357) alla conquista di Napoli (1381)*, in F. Benucci - Á. Máté (eds.), *Luigi il Grande Rex Hungariae, Guerre, arti e mobilità tra Padova, Buda e l'Europa*, Roma, Viella, 2022, pp. 79-94.

<sup>56</sup> On 7 October 1380, Rosso de' Ricci was made head of the embassy sent to the prince when the Florentine government agreed on not aiding Johanna I and her allies by any means. In return, the document confirmed that «dominus Karolus erit, prout fuerunt eius progenitores, protector et benefactor comunis Florentiae»: ASFi, Capitoli, Registri 13, fol. 136r; ASFi, Signori, Missive, I. Cancelleria 19, fol. 45r (14 September 1380).

<sup>57</sup> Domokos was the son of Miklós Kun (Bebek) who was with Louis I in Naples. Neither Lancelottus nor Ladislaus are mentioned in Hungarian sources: P. Engel, *Magyar Középkori Adattár*.

János Horváti's other brother. Another captain was Frank Szécsi, son of the count palatine, Miklós, who became *magister tavernalis* in 1383<sup>58</sup>. Among the captains was also János Meggyesi, the son of Simon Meggyesi and of the senior István Lackfi's daughter<sup>59</sup>. Given their connections and previous experience as mercenaries in Italy, these commanders likely had some knowledge of Latin and/or vernacular. Yet the contingent also included other captains whose identity was not specified by their family names, but rather by their ethnicity. Among them was listed a certain *dominus Ladislaus valachus*, a vivid testimony to the heterogeneous ethnic composition of the Hungarian contingent, including Cuman and Vlach captains. The agreement also specified that the Hungarian contingent used «interpretes in lingua et sermonis ditorum Ungharorum» (linguistic and cultural mediators with the aforementioned Hungarians), who were the king's *familiares*. This was not the sole occasion mentioned when Hungarian subjects employed interpreters in Italy to communicate with locals. In 1352, a certain *Valentinus ungarus*, a mercenary serving the pope brought with him a certain *Nicolaus interpretes eius* to help him with the purchase of a horse<sup>60</sup>. As Selzer has noted, language was indeed an issue even for higher rank captains when they were supposed to interact with locals.

In fact, Matteo Villani's chronicle described Hungarian contingents as of mixed ethnicity<sup>61</sup>. Earlier, Ardinel C. Dincă has investigated the question by taking as an example those soldiers labelled as «Hungarians» who were cited in the records of the Apostolic Chamber in the early 1360s<sup>62</sup>. Cumans, originally a Turkish-language nomadic group, were frequently identified as a distinctive part of Hungarian contingents<sup>63</sup>. They settled in Hungary around the time of the Mongol invasion (1241-1242) and grew into a significant

<sup>58</sup> P. Engel, *Magyar Középkori Adattár*.

<sup>59</sup> K. Prajda, *Mercanti come tramite degli scambi culturali nella Firenze del primo Rinascimento, Il caso del Regno d'Ungheria*, in «I Tatti Studies», 25, 2022, 2, pp. 12-13. ASFi, Capitoli, Registri 13. s.f. (10 October 1380); published in: G. Canestrini, *Documenti per servire alla storia della milizia dal XII secolo al XVI Archivio Storico Italiano*, XV, Firenze, Gabinetto Scientifico-Letterario Viesusseux, 1851, doc. XIII; P. Engel, *Magyar Középkori Adattár*.

<sup>60</sup> S. Selzer, *Deutsche Söldner*, p. 158.

<sup>61</sup> Giovanni Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, ed. by G. Porta, Parma, Fondazione Pietro Bembo, 1991, Chapters 112, 255.

<sup>62</sup> A.C. Dincă, *Hungarian Mercenaries*.

<sup>63</sup> A. Bárány, *Az Anjou-kor hadtörténete*, pp. 205, 208-209, 222.

military power inside the Hungarian army<sup>64</sup>. They were especially known for their horsemanship and practices of light cavalry. Similarly, many Vlachs originating from Transylvania came with these troops to Italy. The Vlachs, on the other hand, were a Romance-language ethnic group. Their pastoral communities were especially dense in some areas of Transylvania and in the neighboring territories of the Balkan<sup>65</sup>. Compared to these two, the Hungarians belonged to a third distinctive language group. The Kingdom of Hungary, Croatia, and Slavonia was a melting pot of various linguistic, ethnic, and religious traditions, reasons why mercenary troops composed of Hungarian subjects were typically of mixed ethnicity. Sources attest to the presence of four different language groups among mercenaries labeled as *ungari*. Besides Hungarians (Finno-Ugric languages), Cumans (Turkish languages) and Vlachs (Romance languages), there were also Slavs of various ethnicity (Slavic languages). As in the case of other *ungari* in Italy, it remains a question if there were also Germans among them (Germanic languages).

While from ethnic and linguistic point of view the *ungari* were different from their Western counterparts, their ordinary life in Italy should have been similar. The transition and lodging of these mercenary troops, most typically amounting to a couple of thousand soldiers, required certain logistics and organization. Ordinary soldiers camped outside city walls. Mallett has pointed out that besides soldiers, a substantial group of camp followers accompanied them, many of whom were women<sup>66</sup>. Fra Moriale's company, for example, was followed by about 20,000 people, double as many as the soldiers themselves. Mercenary companies were not allowed to enter in cities, as the corresponding governments feared that they would sack them. In 1327, for example, Pisa took measures in preventing foreign mercenaries from merging with the local population by prohibiting their lodging in private homes<sup>67</sup>. They generated fear as they needed food and supply for their horses whether they were hired by the corresponding cities or they were just transiting there. Besides, they were not free from troubles,

<sup>64</sup> A. Pálóczi-Horváth, *Pechenegs, Cumans, Iasians, Steppe Peoples in Medieval Hungary*, Budapest, Corvina, 1989; K. Lyublyanovic, *New Home, New Herds: Cuman Integration and Animal Husbandry in Medieval Hungary from an Archaeozoological Perspective*, Budapest, Archaeopress-Archaeolingua, 2017.

<sup>65</sup> I. Czamańska, *Vlachs and Slavs in the Middle Ages and Modern Era*, in «Res Historica», 41, 2016, pp. 11-24.

<sup>66</sup> M.E. Mallett, *Mercenaries and Their Masters*, p. 34.

<sup>67</sup> A. Jamme, *Mécanismes dirigés*, pp. 17-18.

caused by these cultural and linguistic differences. Caferro mentioned that in 1364 Hawkwood camped outside Florence where a violent brawl broke out between English and German soldiers<sup>68</sup>. This might have been one of the many examples of the ways the transition of these mercenary troops shaped local landscapes and soundscapes. At the same time, it remains an open question if captains on occasion were allowed to lodge in lodging houses in the city<sup>69</sup>. Armand Jamme claims that in 1361, in Bologna various captains installed themselves in the city center. According to him, there was a clear difference from this point of view between commanders and lower rank soldiers<sup>70</sup>. Yet, it would be reasonable to think that the commanders on many occasions camped with their company, otherwise keeping order would have represented a serious challenge. At least this was likely the case when the weather was favorable for camp life.

Mallett has also emphasized the seasonal nature of Italian warfare, though there is very little information on the ways these troops spent winters. He suspected that at the end of the season, soldiers returned home to their families<sup>71</sup>. Examples from Bologna and Pisa underline that foreign mercenaries not seldom arrived in Italy with their families<sup>72</sup>. Equally, they could have married by choosing a local wife. Mallett's hypothesis would provide us with an explanation also for Hungarian soldiers' presence as residents in Italian cities like Florence, Pisa, and Siena, in the early fifteenth-century<sup>73</sup>.

#### 4. Giovanni Bano: the mercenary captain

Foreign military service provided mercenary captains from Hungary with an excellent occasion to distinguish themselves. Upon their return they

<sup>68</sup> W. Caferro, *John Hawkwood*, pp. 118-119.

<sup>69</sup> R. Salzberg, *Mobility, Cohabitation, and Cultural Exchange in the Lodging Houses of Early Modern Venice*, in «Urban History», 46, 2019, 3, pp. 398-418.

<sup>70</sup> A. Jamme, *Mécanismes dirigés*, p. 19.

<sup>71</sup> M.E. Mallett, *Mercenaries and Their Masters*, p. 190. On the seasonal nature of Italian warfare see also: A.A. Settia, *Tecniche e spazi della guerra medievale*, Roma, Viella, pp. 189-200.

<sup>72</sup> A. Jamme, *Mécanismes dirigés*, p. 20.

<sup>73</sup> P.E. Kovács, *Magyar zsoldosok Sienában*, in A. Bárány - G. Dreska - K. Szovák, (eds.), *Arcana tabularii, Tanulmányok Solymosi László tiszteletére*, Debrecen - Budapest, ELTE BTK, 2014, pp. 521-542. ASFi, Mercanzia, 11779., fol. 67r (8 March 1421); K. Prajda, *Reti mercantili*, pp. 58-59.

received donations, titles, offices, and feudal lands directly from the king in a way different from Englishmen and Germans who acquired lands at their places of origins by investing their incomes deriving from mercenary service<sup>74</sup>. Among the mercenary captains originating from Hungary, János Horváti was probably the most well-known among his Italian contemporaries. Members of the Florentine Secret Councils frequently emphasized his name in their discourses dealing with the Hungarian contingents: «Et honoratur dominus Johannes banus» (show respect for Giovanni Bano)<sup>75</sup>. Florentines also gave him a vernacular name, *Giovanni Bano*, just as in the case of John Hawkwood who was simply called *Giovanni Acuto*, an indicator of close ties to the Florentine political elite. The name *Bano* refers to his title as banus (ban), that is governor of Macho (today Mačva, Serbia), a territory located westwards from Belgrade. Horváti was a well-networked person in Italy who had vast diplomatic contacts and emerged as an able businessman and mercenary captain<sup>76</sup>. William Caferro has already detailed the cooperation between the two mercenary captains whose careers undoubtedly show many similarities, with one significant distinction. Hawkwood, despite his original intentions, never returned permanently to the Kingdom of England, and his career encompassed a very long period. Who was Giovanni Bano and how did he emerge as the most well-known mercenary captain from Hungary?

The Horváti family was elevated to baronial rank by Louis I. The first important office obtained by János came through his nomination to the banus of Macho, which he held between 1376 and 1381. The banate of Macho was a vast territory which later turned into an energetic contact zone between Hungary and the Ottomans. In 1379, just at the beginnings of the Venetian-Hungarian Wars (1378-1381), one of his brothers, Pál was nominated to the bishopric of Zagreb, the most significant town of Slavonia. The Horváti's territories were located in Slavonia, and Croatia, where, until 1381, Charles governed as the royal prince. During his siege of Naples in July 1381, Charles headed the military contingent comprising the Hungarian royal army and local mercenaries led by Horváti. On 30 October, Horváti

<sup>74</sup> W. Caferro, *Travel, Economy, and Identity in Fourteenth-Century Italy: An Alternate Interpretation of the «Mercenary System»*, in D.R. Curto et al. (eds.), *From Florence to the Mediterranean*, pp. 363-380; M.E. Mallett, *Mercenaries and Their Masters*, pp. 207-230.

<sup>75</sup> ASFi, CP, 19. fols. 84r (2 November 1380); 90r, 166v (12 November 1380).

<sup>76</sup> For Horváti as mercenary captain in Italy and his cooperation with Hawkwood see: W. Caferro, *Mercenary Companies and the Decline of Siena*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998, pp. 14, 224-225; W. Caferro, *John Hawkwood*, pp. 235-237.

signed a contract with Siena as co-commander, alongside Hawkwood, Eberhard, and Conrad Landau<sup>77</sup>. In 1383, Hawkwood, operating then as a mercenary of Pope Urban, was fighting south of Rome together with the troops of Horváti, who himself had a separate contingent of two thousand Hungarian horsemen under his command<sup>78</sup>. He continued to serve as mercenary captain in Italy even following Charles' elevation to the throne of Naples and Louis I's death, in 1382.

Horváti remained as mercenary captain in Italy until December 1385. His mercenary career was considerably shorter than Hawkwood's, extending as it did approximately seven years between 1378 and 1385. It is likely that following Queen Mary's accession to the Hungarian throne in 1382, Charles wished to keep his trusted captain in Italy. In August 1385, Giovanni Bano's brother Pál visited Charles's court in Naples to summon the king to Hungary to secure the Kingdom against Queen Mary. As Charles's most significant supporter, Horváti then returned to Hungary. Charles was crowned king on 31 December 1385, only to be assassinated on the orders of the Queen Mother in February 1386. Following Charles's death, as part of the *vendetta* against the opposition, Pál Horváti brought the heads of the three decapitated barons – among them the count palatine – first to Florence, the late king's most significant diplomatic ally, and then to Charles's widow in Naples<sup>79</sup>. In the meantime, the queens were captured by the Horváti. The Queen Mother was assassinated in Cittanova (today Novigrad, Croatia), while Mary was liberated through Venetian aid<sup>80</sup>. After 1387, the Horváti brothers lost a part of their territories and died in 1394 as they were captured by King Sigismund's party<sup>81</sup>.

It remains an open question why after Charles's death Horváti and his brother did not remain in Italy, for example in the court of Naples. One explanation might be that the younger István Lackfi had also aligned himself with the Durazzi, which might have lent them comfort and further support.

<sup>77</sup> G. Canestrini, *Documenti*, doc. XIV.

<sup>78</sup> W. Caferro, *John Hawkwood*, p. 237.

<sup>79</sup> A. Molho - F. Sznura (eds.), *Alle bocche della piazza: Diario di anonimo fiorentino (1382-1401)*, Firenze, Olschki, 1986, p. 61.

<sup>80</sup> P.E. Kovács, *Mária királyné kiszabadítása: Magyar-velencei szövetség 1387-ben*, in «Századok», 140, 2006, pp. 925-938.

<sup>81</sup> I. Petrovics, *A Horváti-lázadás és Pécs*, in T. Fedeles - I. Horváth - G. Kiss (eds.), *A pécsi egyházmegye vonzásában: Ünnepi tanulmányok Timár György tiszteletére*, Budapest, METEM, 2007, pp. 285-293.

After the Horváti's deaths, the former mercenary captain Lackfi became the most significant supporter of Charles's son, Ladislaus of Durazzo (r. 1386-1414), in obtaining the Hungarian crown. He was killed on Sigismund's order in 1397 following an unsuccessful plot.

The cultural and social impact of these barons' mobility as mercenary captains in Italy was extensive. Both Caferro and Selzer recalled several examples of artistic commissions connected to mercenary captains and their purchases of luxury objects, such as goldsmiths' articles in Italy<sup>82</sup>. Giovanni Bano's contacts in Italy resulted in the influx of a number of Italian businessmen, mostly Florentines, in the economy of Slavonia, and Croatia where the Horváti possessed extensive feudal lands. Between 1379 and 1386, in the years crucial for the settlement of Italians in Hungary, Pál Horváti, as local bishop, led the town of Zagreb. In those years, Zagreb and its twin city, the free royal town of Gradec (today both Zagreb) became home to an extended Italian mercantile community which was closely related to the Horváti. Lackfi too developed into promoter of Italian business interests in the Kingdom. He reportedly kept business contacts with leading Florentine firms operating in Buda. Back in Hungary, Lackfi became their customer as he purchased silk, among others from them<sup>83</sup>. These businessmen and their firms likely provided Charles of Durazzo with substantial loans in the years between 1378 and 1386. Lackfi also commissioned artifacts which bore evident signs of cultural exchanges between Italy and Hungary. The frescoes of the Franciscan Friary of Keszthely, patronized likely by both Louis I and Lackfi are one of the surviving examples of this phenomenon<sup>84</sup>. The Pauline Monastery of Csáktornya (Šenkovec, today in Slovakia), founded and decorated also by Lackfi, provides us with another

<sup>82</sup> W. Caferro, *Travel, Economy, and Identity*, pp. 369-270; S. Selzer, *Deutsche Söldner*, pp. 328-329.

<sup>83</sup> K. Prajda, *Florentines' Trade in the Kingdom of Hungary in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries: Trade Routes, Networks, and Commodities*, in «Hungarian Historical Review», 6, 2017, p. 43.

<sup>84</sup> Z. Jékely, *Die Rolle der Kunst in der Repräsentation der ungarischen Aristokratie unter Sigismund von Luxemburg*, in *Sigismundus Rex et Imperator. Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg, 1387-1437*, ed. by I. Takács, with the assistance of Z. Jékely, S. Papp, G. Poszler, Mainz a.R., Philipp von Zabern, 2006, pp. 298-310. B.Z. Szakács, *Three Patrons for a Single Church: The Franciscan Friary at Keszthely*, in R. Alcoy Pedrós - D. Allios (eds.), *Le plaisir de l'art du Moyen Âge: commande, production et réception de l'oeuvre d'art: Mélanges en hommage à Xavier Barral I Altet*, Paris, Picard, 2012, pp. 184-191.

testimony to his role as cultural mediator<sup>85</sup>. While in Italy, these noblemen likely visited shrines and other places of devotions, as did Louis I himself with his entourage on the occasion of the jubilee year in 1350<sup>86</sup>. To my best knowledge no pilgrim badges of Italian shrines related to Hungarian mercenaries have survived. Yet, we could expect that these Italian shrines played a role of cultural transfer in the Hungarian mercenaries' case similar to that they normally did in case of other pilgrims.

## 5. Conclusions

The limits of this publication have not allowed me to elaborate on many issues which would require further attention. Hungarian subjects serving as mercenaries in Italy represented in many ways an exception within the broader society of foreign mercenaries. Their equipment, organization, and customs differed from their English or German counterparts. They also showed the same linguistic and ethnic diversity which characterized the Kingdom of Hungary, Croatia, and Slavonia. Unlike their Western European colleagues, Hungarian mercenary captains kept a close relation to their king, Louis I. He commanded them remotely and used them likely with the intention to shape Italian domestic politics. Furthermore, it cannot be excluded that part of the compensation they earned, either through service or bribe, directly enriched the crown. Captains also succeeded in elevating their social status by their foreign service and the ruler raised many of them to high secular offices in Hungary.

The mobility of Hungarian subjects as mercenaries had a visible cultural impact on both sides. Especially mercenary captains' interactions with the local population in Italy were diverse and of far-reaching importance. They were also functioning in diplomatic capacities for the Hungarian king. They developed into well-traveled Hungarian subjects who ventured to numerous places within the peninsula, consuming and transmitting cultural objects along the way.

They diversified technical skills, equipment, and organizational systems thus turning camps and even battlefields into places of intense cultural exchange. This is testified by the spread of the Western type of heavy

<sup>85</sup> Z. Jékely, *A Laczkfi-család pálos temploma Csáktornya mellett*, in T. Kollár (ed.), *Építészet a középkori Dél-Magyarországon: Tanulmányok*, Budapest, Teleki László Alapítvány, 2010, pp. 165-211.

<sup>86</sup> E. Csukovits, *Középkori magyar zarándokok*, pp. 69, 328.



armor in Hungary which scholars tend to trace back to the activity of these mercenaries. Similarly, the development of mercenary system in Hungary, following the Italian model, was related to this phenomenon. The Italian art of leather too likely received an impulse by the Hungarian-style of leather work used for these mercenaries' protections, costumes and for the equipment of their horses.

As these Hungarian subjects represented a great variety of ethnic groups, their story may well exemplify the ways in which the mobility of a hitherto understudied social group contributed to cultural exchanges, ultimately bringing together eastern and western traditions in the early Renaissance period.

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