



RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The birth of *oppida*: small towns in Hungary in the Angevin period

Katalin Szende\*†

Department of Medieval Studies, Central European University, H-1051 Budapest, Nádor u. 9, Hungary

\*Corresponding author. Email: [szendek@ceu.edu](mailto:szendek@ceu.edu)

## Abstract

This article revisits the origins of small towns in medieval Hungary from the perspective of their owners and seigneurs. The fourteenth-century development of small towns on the estates of private landowners resulted from the coincidence of several factors. Among these, the article considers the intersection of royal and private interests. The aristocrats' concern to endow their estate centres with privileges or attract new settlers to their lands was dependent on royal approval; likewise, the right to hold annual fairs had to be granted by the kings, and one had to be a loyal retainer to be worthy of these grants. The royal model of supporting the mendicant orders, which were gaining ground in Hungary from the thirteenth century onwards, added a further dimension to the overlords' development strategies. This shows that royal influence, directly or indirectly, had a major impact on the development of towns on private lands in the Angevin period (1301–87).

## Small towns on the research agenda: Vera Bácskai's contribution

In order to understand Vera Bácskai's oeuvre as an urban historian, we should remember that she started out as a medievalist. She earned a degree in History at the University of Leningrad under the direction of Professor Alexandra D. Lublinskaya, with a strong orientation towards social and economic history, and with a thorough training in palaeography and the use of archival materials. She wrote her first major work, a dissertation for the so-called Candidate of Sciences degree, on the market towns of medieval Hungary, publishing it in 1965 in a deceptively modest-looking slim monograph, long before small towns attracted the serious attention of urban historians.<sup>1</sup> The medieval part of her lucid synthesis

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<sup>1</sup>V. Bácskai, *Magyar mezővárosok a XV. században* (Budapest, 1965). The 'Candidate of Sciences' title was taken over from the Soviet academic system. Its requirements were comparable or somewhat higher than those of the Ph.D. and were not connected to enrolment in a specific university programme.

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of pre-modern Hungarian urbanization published in 2002 also strongly benefits from first-hand research experience in her early career.<sup>2</sup>

The strong presence of market towns in the urban network of medieval Hungary had been noticed by historical scholarship as early as the late nineteenth century. At that time, the main distinctive criterion was to find the term *oppidum* in the sources that was used to distinguish these settlements from cities and towns (*civitas*) on the one hand, and villages (*villa, possessio*) on the other. A cadastre compiled to reconstruct the settlement network in c. 1490 identified some 850 such entities,<sup>3</sup> an alarmingly high number, making it problematic to consider them a uniform group and leaving the question of their contribution to urbanization entirely open (see Table 1). Attempts at answering this question in the inter-war period and the 1950s tended to emphasize the tenant peasant status of their inhabitants and the limited presence of craft-based production, considering them as dead-end roads diverting resources from the development of 'real' cities.<sup>4</sup> Vera Bácskai's in-depth research in the early 1960s, revealing the presence of inter-related branches of market-oriented production and commodity exchange, brought a fresh approach and an emphasis on functional criteria over the legal-constitutional aspects in the assessment of the *oppida*. Her strongest contribution was pointing out the significance of specialized agrarian production, particularly winegrowing and cattle-breeding, that tied many of the *oppida* into networks of regional and even long-distance trade. Furthermore, markets and merchants in the *oppida* efficiently channelled the surplus produced in the villages of their catchment area into broader commercial networks, thus fulfilling central functions and expanding the limits of commodity production.<sup>5</sup> These innovative conclusions are still valid and often cited in modern scholarship.

Vera Bácskai's monograph was soon followed by increased attention to social and topographical aspects by Erik Fügedi, the first scholar to point out the importance of *oppida* as estate centres, as well as their inevitable emergence as secondary or tertiary centres in the settlement hierarchy for the distribution of commercial goods. He also argued that the term *oppidum* changed its meaning around the middle of the fifteenth century, from denoting town-like although unfortified settlements to meaning privileged settlements under seigneurial jurisdiction, moving from a morphological to a constitutional sense.<sup>6</sup> The other contribution in the early 1970s was András Kubinyi's inspiring attempt at network analysis *avant la*

<sup>2</sup>V. Bácskai, *Városok Magyarországon az iparosodás előtt* (Budapest, 2002).

<sup>3</sup>D. Csánki, *Magyarország történelmi földrajza a Hunyadiak korában*, 5 vols. (Budapest, 1894–1913).

<sup>4</sup>E. Mályusz, 'Geschichte des Bürgertums in Ungarn', *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 20 (1927/28), 356–407; J. Szűcs, *Városok és kézművesség a XV. századi Magyarországon* (Budapest, 1955); Zs.P. Pach, *Das Entwicklungsniveau der feudalen Agrarverhältnisse in Ungarn in der zweiten Hälfte des XV. Jahrhunderts* (Budapest, 1960).

<sup>5</sup>V. Bácskai, 'Mezőgazdasági áruterelés és árucsera a mezővárosokban a 15. században', *Agrártörténeti Szemle*, 6 (1964), 1–35, republished in her *Városok és polgárok Magyarországon* (Budapest, 2007), available online at [https://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/BFLV\\_Vt\\_2007\\_varosok\\_01/?pg=0&layout=s](https://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/BFLV_Vt_2007_varosok_01/?pg=0&layout=s), accessed 22 Nov. 2020, vol. I, 73–104.

<sup>6</sup>E. Fügedi, 'Die Ausbreitung der städtischen Lebensform – Ungarns *oppida* im 14. Jahrhundert', in W. Rausch (ed.), *Stadt und Stadtherr im 14. Jahrhundert. Entwicklungen und Funktionen* (Linz, 1972), 165–92, reprinted in his *Kings, Bishops, Nobles and Burghers in Medieval Hungary*, ed. J.M. Bak (Variorum Collected Studies 229) (London, 1986), VIII.

*lettre* to investigate the potential of market towns to send students to universities outside Hungary. He used the number of students hailing from a settlement as a proxy for defining the level of its centrality.<sup>7</sup> Almost two decades later, Kubinyi expanded his set of criteria to nine further indicators of centrality that reflect the roles performed by these settlements as manorial, judiciary, ecclesiastic, financial, commercial or administrative centres, quantifying each on a scale of 1 to 6. Kubinyi then added up the scores and ranked the *oppida* into seven categories.<sup>8</sup> This classification enabled him to distinguish at one end the upper echelon of settlements that fulfilled central functions, and were part of the country's urban network from biggish villages at the other. Kubinyi's work, halted by his death in 2007, has recently been completed by one of his disciples, Bálint Lakatos. Many of the criteria established by Kubinyi, such as the number of craft and merchant guilds, the frequency of weekly markets and annual fairs and the position of the settlement in the road network, are closely related to the social and economic aspects Vera Bácskai analysed. Thus, it is more than a coincidence that the 150 *oppida* that according to Kubinyi fulfilled significant urban functions accurately fit the estimate that Vera Bácskai offered in her 2002 overview.<sup>9</sup>

Besides economic criteria, the urbanity of *oppida* was defined by the level of their municipal administration and civic autonomy. This research direction was also pioneered by Vera Bácskai in her 1971 study where she explicitly stated that in this respect as well *oppida* represented a transitional settlement type between villages and towns. Their bodies and methods of self-governance were modelled on those of cities, but their authority, particularly in judiciary matters, was limited by their landowners' ambitions. The limits, however, were negotiable and context-dependent, and the documents resulting from these negotiations or conflicts offer valuable insight into power-relations and the dynamics of internal mobility.<sup>10</sup> More recent studies take into consideration the administration of property transactions, the overall level of administrative literacy and the constitution of the municipal council, as well as other representatives and officials. These all build on and expand Bácskai's results.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, from the 1980s, comparative urban history also discovered small towns as a worthy research agenda. Peter Clark's estimate convincingly justifies this: 'In the high Middle Ages small towns with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants may have comprised over 90 per cent of all urban communities in Northern

<sup>7</sup>A. Kubinyi, 'A középkori magyarországi városhálózat hierarchikus térbeli rendjének kérdéséhez', *Településtudományi Közlemények*, 23 (1971), 58–78.

<sup>8</sup>A. Kubinyi, 'Városhálózat a késő középkori Kárpát-medencében', *Történelmi Szemle*, 46 (2004), 1–30. The system is explained in English in detail by E. Sárosi, *Deserting Villages – Emerging Market Towns. Settlement Dynamics and Land Management in the Great Hungarian Plain, 1300–1700* (Budapest, 2016), 137–42; and by B. Lakatos, *Mezővárosi oklevelek. Települési önkormányzat és irásbeliség a későközépkori Magyarországon, 1301–1526* (Budapest, 2019), 205–11.

<sup>9</sup>Bácskai, *Városok Magyarországon*, 39.

<sup>10</sup>V. Bácskai, 'A mezővárosi önkormányzat a 15. században és a 16. század elején', in G. Bónis and A. Degré (eds.), *Tanulmányok a helyi önkormányzat múltjából* (Budapest, 1971), 9–34, republished in her *Városok és polgárok*, vol. I, 137–55.

<sup>11</sup>Lakatos, *Mezővárosi oklevelek*; L.Sz. Gulyás, *Mezővárosi önkormányzat a középkori Hegyalján* (Budapest, 2017).

Europe, housing more than half of the urban population.<sup>12</sup> These proportions were probably even higher in East Central Europe, given the very small number of large cities. The terminology of different local vernaculars reflects the variety of functions and perceptions of these settlements, including aspects such as their small size: *mestečko*, *varošica* or *shtetl* (in diminutive); their main economic function: *Markt*, *Marktflecken*, *trgovište* or *târg*, emphasizing the marketplace; or morphological character: *palanka*, a town lacking stone walls, and *mezőváros* ('field town'), one without fortifications.<sup>13</sup> Vera Bácskai's familiarity with East Central Europe, enriched by her study on market centres and urban networks in Austria-Hungary in the early nineteenth century, made her a most appropriate contributor to Peter Clark's collected volume on *Small Towns in Early Modern Europe*. Her conclusion boldly points out the variation within the category of small towns, as well as their performance of certain roles that bigger cities played in the more urbanized parts of the continent. In her own words: 'population level and urban functions were less interrelated in an underdeveloped urban context'.<sup>14</sup>

One aspect of Hungarian *oppida* not directly reflected in the terminology is their privately owned character, i.e. that they were under the overlordship of noblemen, the church or members of the royal family as private landowners. My contribution to this collection of essays in Vera Bácskai's memory revisits certain aspects of the emergence of *oppida* from the perspective of their owners. This approach matches the current 'seigneurial turn' in urban studies, contending, as Peter Johanek states with regard to the Holy Roman Empire, that 'seigneurial power...was the driving force in the development of urban life and town foundation'.<sup>15</sup> Indirectly, this approach also pays tribute to the later decades of Vera's career when she turned from large-scale structural overviews to the impact of personal choices and the history of families and individuals.<sup>16</sup>

These seigneurial efforts were present from the beginning of the emergence of *oppida*. In my contribution, I will concentrate on three issues in particular. First, what it meant for the overlords to obtain privileges for a settlement and why this was desirable. Secondly, with reference to the 'market town' denomination of *oppida*, I will look at the market functions they performed, and trace out when, how and why the phenomenon of annual fairs first reached the market towns. Thirdly, I will briefly discuss how the overlords practised ecclesiastical patronage, particularly towards the mendicant orders. My time frame will cover the formative period of *oppida*, the Angevin period, i.e. from 1301 to 1387, which is almost identical with the take-off period of market towns defined by Vera Bácskai.

<sup>12</sup>P. Clark, 'Introduction', in P. Clark (ed.), *Small Towns in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1995), 1.

<sup>13</sup>See a similar list of terms in Lakatos, *Mezővárosi oklevelek*, 12, and the discussion in Sárosi, *Deserting Villages*, 134–8.

<sup>14</sup>V. Bácskai, 'Small towns in Eastern Central Europe', in Clark (ed.), *Small Towns*, 77–89, at 89.

<sup>15</sup>P. Johanek, 'Seigneurial power and the development of towns in the Holy Roman Empire', in A. Simms and H.B. Clarke (eds.), *Lords and Towns in Medieval Europe* (Farnham, 2015), 117–54, at 118.

<sup>16</sup>See e.g. one of her last studies, V. Bácskai, 'Család és történelem', in K.F. Toma and A.J. Horváth (eds.), *Hat (hét) nemzedék – a Manno család története* (Budapest, 2015), 9–78.

### Market towns: a new upswing from the fourteenth century

The early centuries of urbanization in Hungary – similarly to the rest of Western and Central Europe – were dominated by the church and royal power. Royal seats, bishoprics and regional administrative centres (county seats) were the typical forms of early urban centres up to the mid-thirteenth century.<sup>17</sup> In addition to these major early centres, there was a fourth type of smaller centre which also contained elements of trade, specialized craft production and lay/ecclesiastical establishments, although not in a unified structure but within a radius of a few kilometres. The lay/ecclesiastical administrative components of these smaller centres were naturally also on a smaller scale: a priory or monastery instead of a bishopric, or a private stronghold instead of a county fortress. The marketplaces serving these clusters of specialized settlements were often named after the day of the week when the market was held, or the settlements were simply called *vásárhely*, i.e. marketplace. The presence of such ‘territorially segregated centres’, as they were called by the geographer Jenő Major, the first to research them in the 1960s, can be demonstrated all over the Kingdom of Hungary. This shows that they fulfilled the general needs of spatial organization and distribution of commodities of their time.<sup>18</sup>

The thirteenth century brought about fundamental changes in the social and spatial organization of the Kingdom of Hungary, replacing the above-described groups of ‘old centres’ with an emerging network of ‘new towns’. Most of the old royal residences and several bishops’ seats lost their former importance, and so did the more numerous county seats, with the exception of a few situated by the border, along important commercial routes.<sup>19</sup> The old centres were gradually replaced by new hubs of trade and mining, populated by settlers from within and outside the country, initially also mainly on royal, and to a smaller extent, on ecclesiastical grounds. The most prominent and successful new town was Buda (part of modern-day Budapest), which later became the capital of the kingdom.<sup>20</sup>

The fourth type of proto-urban settlements, the ‘territorially segregated’ centres, experienced a similar fate as the county seats, although for different reasons. Since they consisted of several smaller units, the depopulation or devastation of one of them could easily lead to an imbalance and loss of central functions. This could happen through the dissolution of the monastic or secular centres, the disappearance of the trading or money-lending population that was partly of oriental origin (Armenians or Muslims), or the relocation of specialized craftsmen’s communities. Only those centres could survive as market towns that had a concentration of different commercial, administrative and industrial functions; alternatively, if they had just one function, it had to be strong enough to attract further development. For

<sup>17</sup>K. Szende, *Trust, Authority and the Written Word in the Royal Towns of Medieval Hungary* (Turnhout, 2018), 25–6.

<sup>18</sup>J. Major, ‘A magyar városok és városhálózat kialakulásának kezdetei’, *Településtudományi Közlemények*, 18 (1966), 48–90; in a broader context: B.F. Romhányi, ‘Changes in the spatial organization of the Carpathian Basin (5th–14th century)’, *Zeitschrift für Archäologie des Mittelalters*, 45 (2017), 1–31.

<sup>19</sup>K. Szende, ‘Von der Gespanschaftsburg zur Stadt: Warum, wie – oder warum nicht? Ein möglicher Weg der Stadtentwicklung im mittelalterlichen Ungarn’, in F. Opll (ed.), *Stadtgründung und Stadtwerdung. Beiträge von Archäologie und Stadtgeschichtsforschung* (Linz, 2011), 375–405.

<sup>20</sup>K. Szende and A. Végh, ‘Royal power and urban space in medieval Hungary’, in Simms and Clarke (eds.), *Lords and Towns*, 255–86.

instance, in Szombathely, the successor of antique Savaria, the Saturday market indicated in its place-name (Szombathely meaning ‘Saturday Place’) exerted the dominant influence, attracting craftsmen as well as a mendicant friary, thus becoming a market town under the ownership of the bishop of Győr.<sup>21</sup> There are a few similar examples in other parts of the country: Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş, i.e. ‘marketplace by the Maros/Mureş River’), Kézdivásárhely (Târgu Secuiesc, ‘marketplace of the Kézdi administrative territory of the Széklers’) and Csíkszereda (Mercurea Ciuc, ‘the Wednesday market of the Csík administrative territory of the Széklers’) in Transylvania, Rimaszombat (Rimavská Sobota, ‘the Saturday market by the Rima/Rimava River’) and Dunaszerdahely (Dunajská Streda, ‘the Wednesday market by the Danube’) in northern Hungary (modern-day Slovakia), and Muraszombat (Murska Sobota, ‘the Saturday market by the Mura River’) in southern Hungary (modern-day Slovenia). However, most such early centres played no role in later urban development.

As Vera Bácskai demonstrated, the late thirteenth and the fourteenth century was a period of the slow take-off of *oppida*: up to 1390, there were altogether 50 localities referred to under this term as opposed to the almost 600 new references in the following century.<sup>22</sup> The numbers in Table 1 comprise settlements of very diverse levels of urbanity, and of diverse origins. Some originally belonged to the group of royal seats (such as Óbuda, another part of modern-day Budapest); some were bishops’ seats under the overlordship of the respective bishops and cathedral chapters (with further segments eventually owned by the cathedral chapters or aristocratic families); some were county seats that also ended up under the ownership of ecclesiastical bodies and noble families, and some represented the above-discussed ‘marketplace-type’ territorially segregated centres. Even many of the chartered commercial or mining centres of the thirteenth century ended up as market towns. Most of the *oppida*, however, emerged from the rank of villages, and their development was largely due to the ambitions of their lords: nobles, ecclesiastical landowners or even the king and the queen. As Erik Fügedi pointed out, the new system of estate management prevailing from the thirteenth century was intended to concentrate properties in coherent blocks and required the development of a dedicated estate centre.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the most important late medieval magnate families – the Kanizsais, Garais, Újlakis and others – excelled in promoting and embellishing, sometimes even fortifying these towns that also served as their personal residence and manorial centres.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup>E. Tóth, G. Kiss and B. Zágórhidi Czigány, *Savaria – Szombathely története a város alapításától 1526-ig* (Szombathely, 1998). By coincidence, one of the last works completed by Vera Bácskai in the 2010s was the history of Szombathely in the eighteenth century. The work is still unpublished; only three smaller case-studies were printed as articles in Festschrifts. See the bibliographic database <https://m2.mtmt.hu/gui/?type=authors&mode=browse&sel=10004510>.

<sup>22</sup>The table is also reproduced in Sárosi, *Deserting Villages*, 135, and the figures are discussed in relation to the surviving documents issued by market towns in Lakatos, *Mezővárosi oklevelek*, 26–30.

<sup>23</sup>Fügedi, ‘Die Ausbreitung’, 168–70.

<sup>24</sup>A. Kubinyi, ‘Residenz- und Herrschaftsbildung in Ungarn in der zweiten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts und am Beginn des 16. Jahrhunderts’, in H. Patze and W. Paravicini (eds.), *Fürstliche Residenzen im spätmittelalterlichen Europa* (Sigmaringen, 1991), 421–62.

**Table 1.** Number of localities referred to as *oppidum* in the Kingdom of Hungary up to 1526

Date	Number of new <i>oppida</i> references	Total number of <i>oppida</i>
Before 1390	50	50
1390–1441	249	299
1441–90	331	630
1490–1526	79	709

Source: Bácskai, *Városok Magyarországon*, 31, originally presented as a graph in Bácskai, *Magyar mezővárosok*, 16.

## Privileges concerning seigneurial towns

Awarding charters of privilege as a means of settling the status of towns and giving them prerogatives in legal, economic and ecclesiastic matters was a practice of Hungarian kings from the reign of King Emeric (1196–1204) onwards. This policy resulted in about 50 settlements receiving their charters (and some additional confirmations or extensions) by 1301, the dissolution of the Árpád dynasty.<sup>25</sup> After a protracted fight for succession, Charles I (1301–42) from the Neapolitan branch of the Angevins secured the throne for himself.<sup>26</sup> Part of his strategy in consolidating his rule was to win over towns by renewing and expanding their privileges or awarding them new ones. During his reign, private landowners gradually started to do the same.

The earliest settlement that received a charter of privilege from a private landowner in medieval Hungary was Kőszeg, a small town closely attached to the residence of the landowning family, who took their name Kőszegi from the same site (see Figure 1).<sup>27</sup> From the last decades of the thirteenth century, the family became one of the great oligarchs who took the private towns in the Austrian provinces as a model for their foundation rather than the Hungarian royal towns. Although according to the most recent reconstructions as a town Kőszeg was even smaller than previously surmised,<sup>28</sup> the fact that the Kőszegis took the liberty of issuing privileges for their eponymous seat shows their level of ambitions. They strongly opposed Charles' endeavour to unify the country, therefore it was no wonder that after he defeated them in western Hungary, Charles took over Kőszeg and reissued its privileges as a royal charter. A new measure was to order Sopron, the closest royal town whose fidelity to the king was already secured, as Kőszeg's court of appeal. This reconfiguration of relationships had a strong impact on the correspondence between Sopron and the neighbouring market towns, ensuring the spread

<sup>25</sup>K. Szende, 'Power and identity: royal privileges to the towns of medieval Hungary in the thirteenth century', in M. Pauly and A. Lee (eds.), *Urban Liberties and Citizenship from the Middle Ages up to Now* (Trier, 2015), 27–67.

<sup>26</sup>P. Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen. A History of Medieval Hungary, 895–1526* (London, 2001), 124–94; several studies in E. Csukovits (ed.), *L'Ungheria angioina* (Rome, 2013), and A. Zsoldos, 'Karol I a mesta', *Historický Časopis*, 63 (2015), 195–207.

<sup>27</sup>In Austrian historiography, the same family figures under the name 'Güssinger', based on Némétújvár (Güssing), another estate that they had near the western border of medieval Hungary. See the studies in H. Dienst and I. Lindeck-Pozza (eds.), *Die Güssinger. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Herren von Güns/Güssing und ihre Zeit 13./14. Jahrhundert* (Eisenstadt, 1989).

<sup>28</sup>I. Bariska et al., *Kőszeg. Hungarian Atlas of Historic Towns*, vol. VI (Budapest, 2018), maps A.3.1 and A.3.3, designed and prepared based on K. Mentényi's and L. Benkhard's research.

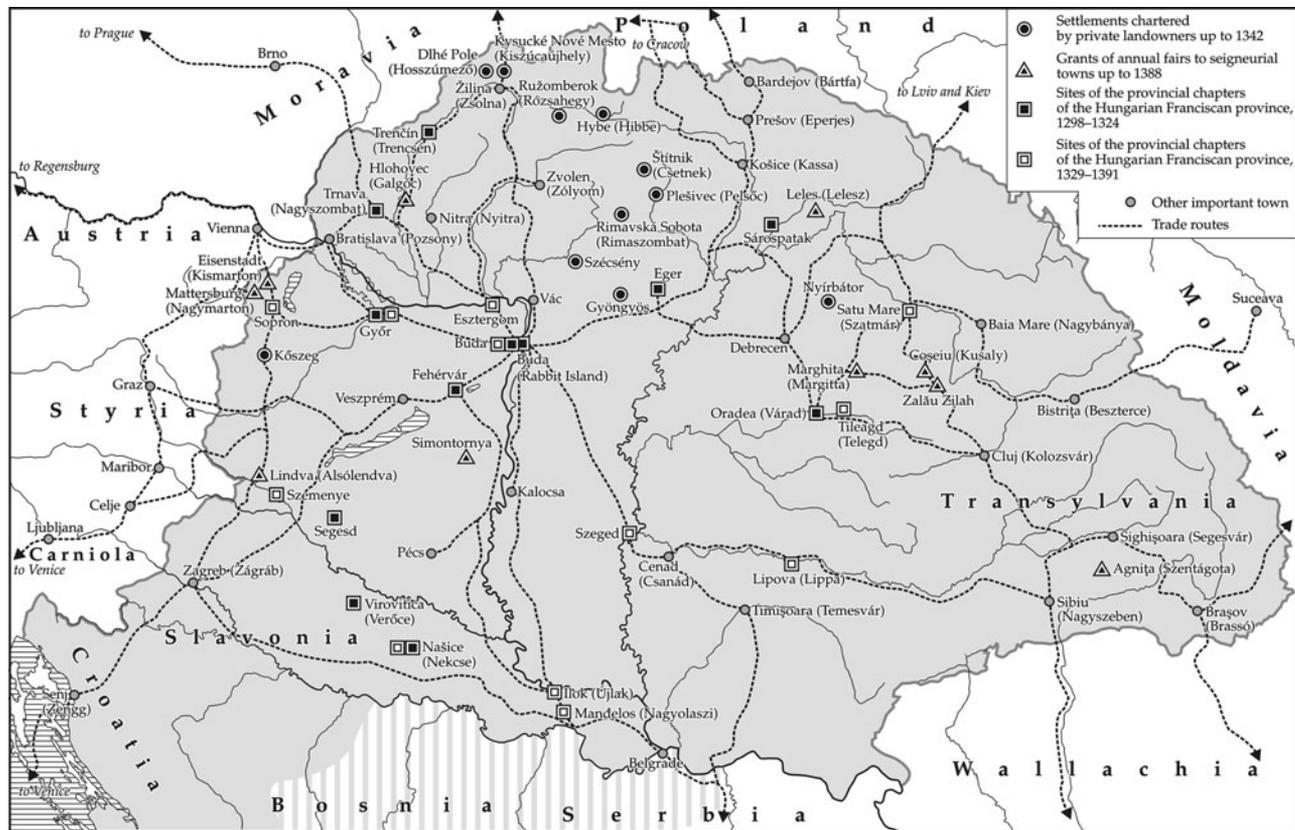


Figure 1. *Oppida* in the fourteenth-century Kingdom of Hungary discussed in the article, and their relation to the main trade routes. Designed by the author, drawn by Béla Nagy.

of urban norms and patterns in administrative literacy and self-governance.<sup>29</sup> Remarkably, and perhaps due to the royal takeover, Kőszeg was termed *civitas* and not *oppidum* in the 1328 charter.<sup>30</sup> It should also be noted in general that the terminology of settlements throughout the fourteenth century was rather inconsistent: settlements that are regularly called *oppidum* in the fifteenth century and are thus given below as examples may just as well appear as *civitas* or *possessio* in the charters.

Kőszeg, as a privately founded and chartered town in the late thirteenth century, however, was the exception rather than the rule. In other parts of the country, particularly the sparsely inhabited, mountainous northern region (modern-day Slovakia), local landowners granting privileges started a few decades later, and took the form of settlement charters, whereby the main aim was to attract settlers (*hospites*, i.e. guests) to clear the forests and colonize the land. The urban or rural character of the new settlements was not decided from the outset; how well the new sites fared rather depended on the location and on later events. These settlement charters offered the tax-free use of the land for a grace period that could last from 3 to as much as 16 years (the latter applied to really severe conditions), and the right for the new community to appoint their own priest.<sup>31</sup>

Judiciary rights were given in minor cases to the settling agent (*advocatus*, *Vogt*), who also had the privilege to operate certain services such as mills, and invite craftsmen for a few basic crafts, most frequently bakers, brewers, cobblers and smiths. An important new phenomenon during Charles' reign was the increased participation of private landlords in the conscious development of their settlements through granting privileges. Such settlement charters were issued by the dozen throughout the fourteenth century by the king, ecclesiastic landowners such as bishops, abbots, priors, chapters (for instance that of the Szepes/Spiš chapter or the chapter of Zagreb<sup>32</sup>) and also by members of aristocratic and noble families.<sup>33</sup>

Some of the early settlement charters followed the examples of previous charters of privilege granted to royal towns. For instance, charters to Pelsőc (Plešivec) and Csetnek (Štítník), owned by Dominic of the Ákos kindred, took the charter of nearby Korpona (Krupina) as their model. In these cases, the royal consent to charter the towns rewarded the loyalty of the landowner, and not the settlers. The two sites received the right to hold weekly markets, and even the right to administer justice in capital cases, a measure that was far from being justified by the level of

<sup>29</sup>Lakatos, *Mezővárosi oklevelek*, 120–2 (with map); I. Bariska, 'Sopron a kőszegi források tükrében a 14–17. században', *Soproni Szemle* 52 (1998), 4–15.

<sup>30</sup>Reference to the earlier liberties ('easdem libertates sub quibus ipsam civitatem olim Herricus banus et Iohannes palatinus filius suos construxerunt et fundaverunt sive statuerunt') can be found in Charles I's charter, in *Urkundenbuch des Burgenlandes und der angrenzenden Gebiete der Komitate Wieselburg, Ödenburg, und Eisenburg*, ed. I. Lindeck-Pozza (Vienna, Cologne and Graz, 1985), 34–7.

<sup>31</sup>A. Körmeny, *Melioratio terrae: Vergleichende Untersuchungen über die Siedlungsbewegung im östlichen Mitteleuropa im 13–14. Jahrhundert* (Poznań, 1995), 19–71.

<sup>32</sup>See e.g. the foundation of Nova Ves adjoining the Kaptol of Zagreb: M. Jerković and P. Vručina, 'Les modèles administratifs du chapitre cathédral de Zagreb et la création de la communauté sociale: le cas de l'établissement de Nova Ves', *Croatology*, 8 (2017), 229–68.

<sup>33</sup>Körmeny, *Melioratio terrae*, 199–233.

their social development.<sup>34</sup> A notable instance was the charter issued in 1320 by Matthew Csák, another grand oligarch who stood up against Charles I, for his new settlement called *Longus Campus* (Trencsénhosszúmező, Dlhé Pole) – a morphologically indicative name implying land clearance in a *Waldhufendorf*-style.<sup>35</sup> This document commissioned an *advocatus* called Sidelmanus (another evocative name, meaning ‘settling man or agent’) to create a settlement on Matthew’s estate modelled on the custom of nearby Zsolna (Žilina), including its exceptional right to use Zsolna’s mother-town, Teschen (Cieszyn) as its court of appeal.<sup>36</sup> After defeating Matthew, the king took over his incipient towns, just as he did with the Kőszegi family.

From the 1320s, it was not the arrogant oligarchs, but the loyal new aristocracy elevated by the king that took the opportunity to develop their estate centres into towns with the king’s consent. In 1325, Judge Royal Alexander Köcski, a loyal supporter of Charles, also decided to use the right of Zsolna to develop his estate. He named the new settlement Königsberg (*Congesberch*), in honour of the king, although it was later known as Kiszucaújhely (Kysucké Nové Mesto).<sup>37</sup> Foundations following German law were otherwise an anomaly in the Hungarian legal system; Louis I in 1369 issued a royal mandate to stop this practice and ordered the towns or their overlords to choose a mother-settlement within the boundaries of his kingdom.<sup>38</sup>

Other members of the new aristocracy that Charles I created were also among the founders of seigniorial towns. Master Doncs, *comes* of Zólyom (Zvolen), first asked for the confirmation of the old (1265) royal privileges for settlers living on his estate at Hibbe (Hybe), then issued himself a charter to his new town named Rózsahegy (Ružomberok) modelled on the liberties of the royal town of Zólyomlipcse (Slovenská Lupča) that had been chartered by the king.<sup>39</sup> Thomas Szécsényi, voivode of Transylvania, was even more ambitious in developing his properties and the large estates that he acquired from the fallen oligarch Matthew Csák in northern and north-eastern Hungary. He also exchanged some

<sup>34</sup>21 Apr. 1328, in E. Juck (ed.), *Výsady miest a mestečiek na Slovensku I (1238–1350)* (Bratislava, 1984), 112–13; see Fügedi, ‘Die Ausbreitung’, 176; and a detailed account in L.Ö. Kollmann, ‘Szempontok az észak-gömöri központi helyek középkori és kora-újkori fejlődésének vizsgálatához’, in T. Neumann (ed.), *Várak, templomok, ispotályok. Tanulmányok a magyar középkorról* (Budapest and Piliscsaba, 2004), 99–113.

<sup>35</sup>On this type of forest clearance, see W. Schenk, ‘Beiträge der Historischen Geographie zur Erforschung der gebauten und natürlichen Umwelt des mittelalterlichen Menschen’, in M. Mersch (ed.), *Mensch-Natur-Wechselwirkungen in der Vormoderne* (Göttingen, 2016), 73–94.

<sup>36</sup>1320, Hungarian National Archives, Collectio Antemohacsiana (MNL OL DL) 88 749. A peculiar detail is that ‘antedictus Sidelmanus suiue haeredes et successores ius *ehutomaniae* in sua habebunt eo iure quo locata est civitas Silinensis’, both for the spelling of the term ‘autonomy’ and its interpretation, namely as the agent’s rights over the settlement. A mother-town in this context means a town whose charter and legal system another town adopted. The mother-town often also served as court of appeal for its daughter-towns.

<sup>37</sup>1325: Juck (ed.), *Výsady miest*, 105–6.

<sup>38</sup>Szende, *Trust*, 66.

<sup>39</sup>25 Nov. 1318: *Anjou-kori oklevéltár. Documenta res Hungaricas tempore regum Andegavensium illustrantia* (50 vols., Budapest and Szeged, 1990–2020), vol. V, no. 312; 8 Nov. 1324: *Anjou-kori oklevéltár* vol. VIII, no. 497; 26 Nov. 1318: Juck (ed.), *Výsady miest*, 91–2; see F. Uličný, ‘Listina prav mesta Ružomberka z roku 1318’, *Slovenská archivistika* 19 (1984), 134–40.

lands in southern Hungary for the above-mentioned Rimaszombat (Rimavská Sobota) with the archbishop of Kalocsa to make his estate more compact. After all these transactions, in 1334 Szécsényi acquired royal privileges from Charles I for all three of his estate centres: the eponymous Szécsény plus Rimaszombat and Gyöngyös.<sup>40</sup> These charters granted the towns prerogatives similar to those of Buda, as well as the right to fortify them with stone walls. According to archaeological research, none of the towns was fortified with any walls in the fourteenth century. It is quite telling, however, that the royal charters offer a detailed account of voivode Szécsényi's merits, but do not say a single word about the self-government of these settlements' communities.<sup>41</sup> In this respect, the diplomas issued to Thomas Szécsényi closely resemble Charles' charter to Andrew Bátori, bishop of Várad (Oradea), and his three brothers, in which the king exempted the inhabitants of their eponymous estate centre Bátor (today Nyírbátor) from the jurisdiction of any dignitaries of the realm and exempted them from the payment of certain duties to the royal treasury, in return for the Bátori brothers' incessant support in Charles' fights with the oligarchs.<sup>42</sup> Although the charters issued to these towns were not sufficient in themselves to bolster urban growth, they rewarded the loyalty of Charles' most favoured retainers. And it also reveals the prevailing trend of the time that royal appreciation and the aristocrats' ambitions were aimed at developing promising sites into estate centres. We observe that the promotion of seignorial towns was even more pronounced during Louis I's reign (1342–82). The road in this direction led through the fostering of trade.

### Seignorial towns and annual fairs

Charles I, advised by one of his royal retainers from north-eastern Hungary, Kakas son of Rikalf, the forebear of the Tarkói family, fully appreciated the importance of mining precious metals for the economy of the kingdom. Granting the right of prospecting to private landowners or to towns on the estates of secular and ecclesiastical lords featured in his charters besides developing his own mining towns, first and foremost Körmöcbánya (Kremnica).<sup>43</sup> The increased output of the mines served as the basis of Charles' monetary reform and the 1325 introduction of the famous Hungarian golden florin, a favourite means of exchange for merchants in Central Europe throughout the late Middle Ages. Promoting trade, particularly long-distance commercial activities by further measures, however, was not yet

<sup>40</sup>The edition of the charters: Szécsény: 5 May 1334: I. Nagy and G. Nagy (eds.), *Anjou-kori okmánytár*, 7 vols. (Budapest, 1878–1920), vol. III, 71–2; Rimaszombat: 5 May 1334: *ibid.*, 73–4; Gyöngyös: 2 Nov. 1335 (confirmation of May 1334): *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. XIX, no. 660; G. Fejér (ed.), *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis*, 11 vols. (Buda, 1829–44), vol. X/2, 324.

<sup>41</sup>P.E. Kovács, 'Gyöngyös város privilégiumlevele', in P. Havassy and P. Kecskés (eds.), *Tanulmányok Gyöngyösről* (Gyöngyös, 1984), 11–19; I. Draskóczy, 'Gyöngyös település- és birtoklástörténete a középkorban', in *ibid.*, 91–128.

<sup>42</sup>Fejér (ed.), *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae*, vol. VIII/3, 404–11; Fügedi, 'Die Ausbreitung', 182–3; and a forthcoming volume on Nyírbátor in the Hungarian Atlas of Historic Towns series.

<sup>43</sup>B. Weisz, 'Mining town privileges in Angevin Hungary', *Hungarian Historical Review*, 2 (2013), 288–312; M. Štefánik, 'Die Privilegierung der Kremnitzer Bevölkerung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Münzer-Privilegien und ihre sozioökonomischen Zusammenhänge', in A. Westermann (ed.), *Montanregion als Sozialregion* (Husum, 2012), 437–56.

high on his agenda. The reign of his son, Louis I, who used the instrument of granting annual fairs to boost commerce, differed significantly from that of his father. Up to the early fourteenth century, the exchange of commodities was chiefly served by weekly markets, complemented by a few noted sites of daily commerce plus three annual fairs that emerged at Székesfehérvár by customary right, and were granted to Zagreb and Buda by royal charters.<sup>44</sup>

Granting fairs was a royal prerogative in Hungary throughout the Middle Ages. The monarch thus ensured the most important precondition of safe trade: royal protection, including the ban on *arrestatio* (the custom of arresting for a business partner's debts one of his compatriots from the same community). He gave the right of market jurisdiction to the judge of the place where the fair was held. Traders were also free from paying tolls on their way to the market for the period proclaimed in the charter. All these were elements of the market privileges of Buda, which almost all the charters explicitly named as a model.<sup>45</sup>

Charles I does not seem to have issued any new grants of this type. From the reign of Louis I, his mother Elisabeth Piast, his widow Elisabeth Kotromanić and their daughter Mary, however, i.e. from 1342 to 1387, altogether 23 grants of annual fairs have come down to us. Of these grants, 12 were issued to royal towns, and 11 to towns owned by private landowners.<sup>46</sup> It is the latter group that is of interest to us here (see Figure 1). These grants show a different way in which private landowners contributed to developing their estate centres. At the outset, the sites of these fairs hardly exceeded the level of villages and were most often termed *villa* or *possessio* at the time of the grant. It was their owner that made these places worthy of the royal favour. Exceptionally, the grant could be obtained by ecclesiastical overlords, such as the Premonstratensian priory of Lelesz (Leles) in north-eastern Hungary in 1350, modelled on a similar grant to the nearby royal town of Kassa (Košice) three years earlier. However, even there the pivotal point was that Peter, the provost of Lelesz, also served as royal chaplain.<sup>47</sup>

Further grants for holding annual fairs were given to Nagymarton (Mattersburg) owned by Niklinus, nephew of former judge royal Paul of Nagymarton, in 1354. The date of the fair on St James' Day (25 July) allowed for moving conveniently between the fairs of Sopron (13 July) and Wiener Neustadt (15 August), just as Nagymarton itself is situated between those two towns. The grantee enjoyed the benefits of the grant for decades; he appears as a member of the royal aula as late as 1380.<sup>48</sup> In 1362, an even more important aristocrat, Palatine Nicholas Kont, was allowed to hold annual fairs at Galgóc (Hlohovec), the principal seat of his estate.<sup>49</sup> In fact, Galgóc, donated to Palatine Kont as part of a large property, consisted of two main parts. The first was *Antiqua Galgoc*, the site of a county castle

<sup>44</sup>K. Szende, 'Nundinae seu forum annuale: Sokadalomtartási engedélyek Nagy Lajos várospolitikájában', in B. Weisz and I. Kádás (eds.), *Hatalom, adó, jog: Gazdaságtörténeti tanulmányok a magyar középkorról* (Budapest, 2017), 231–62, at 235–7.

<sup>45</sup>B. Weisz, *Markets and Staples in the Medieval Hungarian Kingdom* (Budapest, 2020), 14–43.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, Gazetteer. A further 12 fairs are mentioned in various sources in the period, but for those the grants have not been preserved.

<sup>47</sup>MNL OL DF 233 669.

<sup>48</sup>Fejér (ed.), *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae*, vol. IX/2, 311–13.

<sup>49</sup>MNL OL DL 5133.

from the early twelfth century, later resettled, for which Kont issued detailed regulations in 1365. The second was a new settlement named Freistadt with reference to its German-speaking settlers and newly awarded liberties, that the palatine promoted by all possible means, including the foundation of a hospital and the acquisition of the grant of a fair.<sup>50</sup>

In parallel to Galgóc, in the eastern part of the country, Debrecen rose to prominence as an estate centre and received privileges in 1361. The town developed as an agglomeration of three villages on a site that provided a dry passage across the swampy flatland of the Hungarian Plain. All three villages were owned by branches of the Debreceni family that took sides with Charles I early on. The royal charter acquired from Louis by the grandson of Dózsa Debreceni, Charles' legendary warlord, granted immunity to Debrecen from the above-described custom of *arrestatio*. Even if grants to hold annual fairs were only given to Debrecen after 1405, this privilege clearly shows the inhabitants' engagement in trade and the landowning family's interest in its undisturbed flow.<sup>51</sup>

In 1366, two members of the aristocratic family Bánfi of Alsólendva (Lindva), later *bans* (governors) of Slavonia, received a grant to hold fairs on their eponymous estate by an important crossroads en route to Zagreb.<sup>52</sup> The fairs of Simontornya, the other venue in southern Transdanubia, benefited the Lackfis, another most trusted aristocratic family in Louis' court: the two petitioners named in the charter were voivode of Transylvania and master of the horse, respectively.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, four annual fairs of private landowners were connected to Transylvania and its northern border area: one at Szentágota (Agnita) granted in 1376 to a royal judge of the Saxon area,<sup>54</sup> one in 1384 at Kusaly (Coșeiu) to the Jakcs family whose most prominent member was royal *thesaurarius* (treasurer) at that time.<sup>55</sup> Two places in the northern border area of Transylvania are only known indirectly from a court case arbitrated in 1370: the fair at Margitta (Marghita) was owned by another branch of the Lackfi family, and the one at Zilah (Zalău) lay on the property of the bishop of Transylvania, also a frequent visitor to the royal court. The issue evolved around the competition between these

<sup>50</sup>The 1365 regulation: MNL OL DL 5389; promoting Freistadt by the palatine: MNL OL DL 5020, 5021; Fügedi, 'Die Ausbreitung', 183–4 (with the sketch of a ground plan); T. Fedeles, 'Galgóc az Újlaki éraban (1349–1524)', in A. Bárány, K. Papp and T. Szálkai (eds.), *Debrecen város 650 éves. Várostörténeti tanulmányok* (Debrecen, 2011), 195–222.

<sup>51</sup>L. Solymosi, 'Debrecen 1361. évi kiváltságlevelé', in Bárány, Papp and Szálkai (eds.), *Debrecen város*, 9–21 (with the edition of the charter); B. Weisz, 'Debrecen kereskedelmi életének jogi háttere a középkorban', in *ibid.*, 131–48 (with the edition of the fifteenth-century fair grants); Fügedi, 'Die Ausbreitung', 179–82.

<sup>52</sup>I. Nagy, G. Nagy and D. Véghely (eds.), *Zala vármegye története. Oklevéltár*, vol. II: 1364–1498 (Budapest, 1890), 9.

<sup>53</sup>N.C. Tóth, 'Oklevelek Simontornya középkori történetéhez (1264–1543)', *Levéltári Közlemények*, 71 (2000), 93–127, at 98–9.

<sup>54</sup>The Saxons were German-speaking settlers who founded villages and towns in Transylvania from the mid-twelfth century onwards. Their privileges were put into writing by King Andrew II's charter, the *Andreanum*, in 1224. On the case of Agnita, see F. Zimmermann and C. Werner (eds.), *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, vol. II (Cologne, 1897), 452–3.

<sup>55</sup>MNL OL DL 105 457.

fairs, both of which fell on St Margaret's Day (13 July), and were only two or three days' walk apart.<sup>56</sup>

The last example presented here, that of Kismarton (Eisenstadt), sums up what clever and industrious owners of market towns could achieve in a couple of decades. Kismarton was also an old centre and, as its German name ('iron-place') implies, an early hub of iron production and distribution. The Kanizsai family, shortly after receiving the estate of Szarvkő (Hornstein) as a royal donation in 1364, acquired a murage permission for *villa seu oppidum Zabamortun* and made it into their new estate centre in 1371. This time, they were indeed able to have the walls built together with a residential urban castle. In 1373, the Kanizsai issued a seigneurial charter to Kismarton's inhabitants, and finally in 1388 John Kanizsai, royal chancellor and archbishop of Esztergom, successfully appealed to the king, at that time already Sigismund (1387–1437), for two annual fairs. In this document, Kismarton appears as *libera sua civitas*, emphasizing both its seigneurial and fortified character. The foundation of a Franciscan friary in 1386 fits well into the measures for development.<sup>57</sup>

The fair grants covered a period of two to four weeks in royal towns, while in seigneurial towns this period was usually shorter, which points to their relatively more limited scope. The timing of the fairs followed two possible patterns: it was either adjusted to the dates of other fairs arranged on the same route, so that merchants could move from one to the other, or they were held to coincide with the feast of the local parish church's patron saint. In the case of fairs in free royal towns, the former timing was dominant, while in private towns, the two patterns were equally prevalent, which may mean that private towns relied relatively more on the attraction of church feasts.

The choice of which of their villages or incipient towns they proposed to the ruler depended entirely on the grantees. In most cases, the site they chose was the eponymous estate centre of the family, or a branch of it. Furthermore, the sites were situated by major trade routes, road or river crossings (bridges, ferries or fords). To generalize, the combination of family prestige embodied in the name of the given settlement and their favourable location offered the landowning family an added advantage. The centres of landed estates had a better chance of starting on a path leading to urban development, and annual fairs offered a further pillar in consolidating this process.

An important difference between the annual fairs granted to free royal towns and seigneurial towns is in the justification of the royal favour, directly connected to the fact that in case of the former, the right belonged to the community of burghers, whereas in the latter group it was the landowner's personal property. Consequently, in grants to royal towns the most frequently given reason was strengthening their economic capacity, including their ability to construct and

<sup>56</sup>Fejér (ed.), *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae*, vol. IX/4, 222–3. On the office-holding of George and Andres Kusalyi Jakcs as thesaurarius between 1383 and 1389/91, see P. Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája* (Budapest, 1996), 52.

<sup>57</sup>H. Prickler, Kommentar in *Eisenstadt. Österreichischer Städteatlas* (Vienna 1988), online at [www.arcanum.hu/hu/online-kiadvanyok/OsterreichischerStädteatlas-osterreichischer-stadteatlas-1/eisenstadt-9A2/kommentar-9BF/](http://www.arcanum.hu/hu/online-kiadvanyok/OsterreichischerStädteatlas-osterreichischer-stadteatlas-1/eisenstadt-9A2/kommentar-9BF/), accessed 17 Mar. 2020; the fair grant: I. Nagy, *Sopron vármegye története. Oklevéltár első kötet 1156–1411* (Sopron, 1889), 493.

maintain their defensive walls. In the case of the privately owned sites of annual fairs, the owner as a person comes to the fore. The rhetoric of these charters corresponds to title deeds granting properties, and especially to the grants of arms, a genre that gained increasing popularity from the early fifteenth century onwards. We find the same 'catalogues of virtues' praising the grantee in both cases: unconditional loyalty to the ruler, services rendered to him in times of war and peace, diligence and self-sacrifice. A further common element in the two types of grants to noblemen is that royal grace could be manifest without the need to offer real estate or any direct revenues. Later on, it depended on the economic potential of the site and the agility of its owner how well they joined the developing trade networks, and how much profit the grant yielded.<sup>58</sup>

### Seigneurial towns and the patronage of mendicant orders

The third aspect that may add a new facet to the relationship of noble landowners and their towns is ecclesiastical patronage. Besides being the chief patrons of all parish churches on their properties and sponsoring the upkeep and enlargement of their buildings,<sup>59</sup> the wealthiest landowners also founded other church institutions, particularly hospitals and monastic houses. Among the latter, the fourteenth century started a new trend with the private patronage of the mendicants, whereas during their first century in Hungary, mendicants were mainly settled by royal and, to a smaller extent, by episcopal foundations.<sup>60</sup>

In the absence of foundation charters, it is often difficult to determine the foundation date and the actual founder of monasteries, but it is notable that Franciscan friaries increasingly appeared in private landowners' estate centres, in the fourteenth century particularly in those of the aristocracy. From the fifteenth century onwards, the middling nobility also made an effort to settle Franciscans on their estates, a trend that favourably coincided with the friars' willingness to settle in small towns or even villages. The location of the friaries within the settlement, especially its closeness to the lord's residence, was a clear indicator of the tight contact between the friars and their patron. Some of the examples of the patronage of the persons or families discussed in other contexts above are the Franciscan friaries at Szécsény and Gyöngyös founded by Thomas Szécsényi in 1332, the friars of the same order the Lackfis settled at Keszthely in 1368, and at Csáktornya (Čakovec) in 1376, and the Pauline monastery at Csatka founded by Nicholas Kont in the 1350s.<sup>61</sup>

A special aspect of patronage that reached beyond the level of individual friaries was to offer one's seigneurial town as a venue for the provincial chapters of the Hungarian Franciscan province. These meetings were one-off events that did not require a continuous commitment, but through the presence of guests from all

<sup>58</sup>Fügedi, 'Die Ausbreitung', 174–9; Szende, 'Nundinae', 246–8.

<sup>59</sup>K. Éder, 'Centrality and parish churches in the Middle Ages in regions without towns of Hungary', *Prace historyczne*, 143 (2016), 13–36, [www.ejournals.eu/pliki/art/7095/](http://www.ejournals.eu/pliki/art/7095/), accessed 17 Mar. 2020.

<sup>60</sup>E. Fügedi, 'Les formations des villes et les ordres mendiants en Hongrie', *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 25 (1970), 966–87, reprinted in his *Kings, Bishops, Nobles*, XIII.

<sup>61</sup>See the data in B.F. Romhányi, *Kolostorok és társaskáptalanok a középkori Magyarországon* (Budapest, 2008).

over the country they offered excellent publicity opportunities both for the host friary and its patron. Art historians take good advantage of these events and tie the date of rebuilding or redecorating the friaries (especially their chapter halls) to such gatherings. The logistics of the meetings also presupposed a well-developed infrastructure on the host settlement. A survey of these sites – the last example in my overview – highlights how the aristocracy cooperated with the Franciscan Order in bringing these assemblies home.

In the fourteenth century, the provincial chapters had no fixed venues, but the location had to be negotiated from one chapter to another, which left ample room for adjusting to political considerations.<sup>62</sup> The list of the provincial chapters in Hungary has been preserved in a unique source, the *Speculum vitae beati Francisci et sociorum eius*, printed in Venice in 1504. The very last pages of this voluminous compilation include *Capitula fratrum in Hungaria ab initio universis temporibus facta*.<sup>63</sup> The list goes in the order of places and adding the year to them, but patterns are better revealed when we reorder the venues in a chronological sequence. Even if it were reassuring to ascertain the details by further research, the list shows a conscious selection of sites where each year the provincial chapter was held, as well as a clear pattern over time (see [Tables 2a](#) and [2b](#)).

In the years of contested dynastic succession after the dissolution of the Árpád dynasty, chapters were held mainly at bishops' seats or in towns that received royal charters early on. Várad, Eger and Győr represent the former group, while Nagyszombat (Trnava), Segesd, Verőce (Virovitica), Sárospatak and others the latter, which were all in royal ownership, with the single exception of Trencsén (Trenčín).<sup>64</sup> The spatial distribution of these sites, mainly in the central part of the kingdom, accurately reflects the regions where steady support for Charles could be expected.

The pattern changed considerably from the 1320s onwards, when Charles' reign was stabilized. The favoured members of the new aristocracy came to the fore, partly as sponsors of chapters held in royal towns and archiepiscopal seats (Sopron, Esztergom), partly as hosts on their own estates and in their market towns. Not surprisingly, many of the names or sites coincide with the ones discussed previously, with the addition of *magister tavernicorum* Demeter Néksei and treasurer Paul Magyar, palatine Nicholas Zsámboki and *comes* Benedict Himfi. The distribution of the venues also shows a new pattern, with stronger reliance on southern and south-eastern territories, suggesting that the kingdom's unity and stability had been restored (see [Figure 1](#)). This reunited kingdom also provided a strong background for the development of seignorial towns.

<sup>62</sup>J. Röhrkasten, 'On the problem of communication within the Franciscan Order', in M. Robson and J. Röhrkasten (eds.), *Franciscan Organisation in the Mendicant Context: Formal and Informal Structures of the Friars' Lives and Ministry* (Münster, 2010), 307–30.

<sup>63</sup>Bayersische Staatsbibliothek, München, V.ss.c. 232, online at [https://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/fs1/object/display/bsb10208986\\_00001.html](https://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/fs1/object/display/bsb10208986_00001.html), accessed 22 Nov. 2020, 236–7. See also E. Konrád, 'The representation of the saints of the mendicant orders in late medieval Hungary', Central European University, Budapest, Ph.D. dissertation, 2017, 223–7.

<sup>64</sup>See the Appendix in Szende, 'Power and identity', 63–6.

**Table 2a.** Sites of the provincial chapters of the Hungarian Franciscan province, 1298–1324

Year	Place	Owner	Charter	Friary
1298	Várad / Oradea	bishop	—	1298
1301	Nagyszombat / Trnava	king	1238	c. 1230
1302	Segesd	[queen]	(1248)	1290–95
1304	Eger	bishop	—	13th c. (1231?)
1305	Győr	bishop, king	— /1271	before 1288
1306	Segesd	queen	(1248)	1290–95
1307	Sárospatak	king	1261	before 1261
1308	Rabbit Island (Buda)	king	—	1270
1309	Trencsén / Trenčín	Matthew Csák	[1342]	1301
1311	Győr	bishop, king	—/1271	before 1288
1312	Verőce / Virovitica	king	1234/48	before 1250
1313	Buda	king	1246–49	before 1270
1315	Sárospatak	king	1261	before 1261
1319, 1320	Segesd	queen	(1248)	1290–95
1321, 1323	Nekcse / Našice	Demeter Nekcsei	—	early 16th c.
1324	Buda, Székesfehérvár	king	1246–49	early 14th c.

**Table 2b.** Sponsors of provincial chapters of the Hungarian Franciscan province, 1329–91

Year	Place	Sponsor	Dignity	Friary
1329	Szeged	master Doncs	<i>comes</i> of Zólyom	b. 1332
1331	Nekcse / Našice	Demeter Nekcsei	<i>magister tavernicorum</i>	early 14th c.
1340	Sopron	Paul Magyar	treasurer	c. 1250
1349	Szatmár / Satu Mare	Maurice Meggyesi	nobleman	b. 1285
1351	Szemenye	Nicholas Lendvai	<i>ban</i> of Szörény	1248
1352	Lippa / Lipova	Queen Elisabeth	dowager queen	1325
1353	Újlak / Ilok	<i>magister Nicolaus</i> Nicholas Kont (?)	nobleman, <i>ban</i> ?	late 13th c.
1354	Esztergom	Nicholas Zsámboki	palatine	1235
1356	Esztergom	Nicholas Kont	palatine	1235
1357	Esztergom	Queen Elisabeth	dowager queen	1235
1359	Lippa / Lipova	Lack of Kerekegyháza	<i>comes Siculorum</i>	1325
1359 and 1367	Telegd / Tileagd	Thomas Telegdi	archbishop of Esztergom	1329
1369	Nagyolaszi / Francavilla	Louis the Great	king	1229 / 1246
1380	Győr	Benedict Himfi	<i>comes</i> of several counties	b. 1270
1391	Buda	John Kanizsai	archbishop of Esztergom	1270

## Conclusions

This study pays tribute to Vera Bácskai's work by highlighting the personal incentives of the landowning aristocracy in the emergence of small towns in the Kingdom of Hungary from the 1300s onwards, particularly during the reigns of Charles I and Louis I. The fourteenth-century emergence and steady development of small towns on the estates of private landowners resulted from the coincidence of several factors: the increasing importance of market-oriented commodity production and the needs for its efficient redistribution; the growing number and concentration of the population including a continuous influx of settlers; new patterns of estate management creating more coherent conglomerates of properties; and a stronger integration of the Carpathian Basin in the trading networks of Central

Europe. These factors have been highlighted in studies by Vera Bácskai and her colleagues and disciples.

The present article adds a personal angle to this research, namely the intersection of royal and private interests. The aristocrats' concern to endow their estate centres with privileges or attract new settlers to their lands was dependent on royal approval; likewise, the right to hold annual fairs were granted exclusively by the kings, and one had to be a loyal retainer to be worthy of these grants. Thus, when landowners intended to develop towns on their own estates, it was not enough to support the promising sites directly, within their own means. The good relations of the owners to the newly established Angevin rule played an equally important role, just as did the monarchs' recognition that their grants to secure their retainers' loyalty and foster urbanization could kill more birds with one stone. Following the royal model of supporting the upcoming mendicant orders added a further dimension to the overlords' activity in their incipient urban settlements. All this shows that royal influence, directly or indirectly, had a major impact even on the development of towns on private lands in the Angevin period.

This strong interdependence of central power and the emergence of seigneurial towns may add a new facet to the specificities of regional development in East Central Europe, its *Sonderwege* or interconnectedness with the rest of Europe. Vera Bácskai closes her 1995 study with an intriguing sentence: 'Despite several similarities, the small towns of the European periphery belonged to a rather different world than the small towns of the European centre.'<sup>65</sup> Integrating the conclusions of this research with comparative studies on a regional level, posing similar questions on the emergence of seigneurial towns in Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Poland and Austria – or indeed, in other polities on the fringes of Europe – will open new chapters towards a more informed understanding of this intricate issue of regional specificities.

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<sup>65</sup>Bácskai, 'Small towns', 89.