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*Moving Borders  
in Medieval Central Europe*

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## *Moving Borders in Medieval Central Europe*

András Vadas and János M. Bak  
Special Editors of the Thematic Issue

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# Colluding with the Infidel: The Alliance between Ladislaus of Naples and the Turks\*

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In October 1392, King Ladislaus of Naples (1386–1414) sent letters and an embassy to the court of the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid (1389–1402) offering to establish a pact against their common enemy, King Sigismund of Luxembourg (1387–1437). According to the “indecent proposal,” this “unholy alliance” was supposed to be sealed and strengthened by a marriage between King Ladislaus and an unnamed daughter of the sultan. Though the wedding never took place, messengers were exchanged and a tactical pact did materialize. It was manifested through military cooperation between Ladislaus’ Balkan supporters and the Ottoman marcher lords, who undertook joint attacks against the subjects of King Sigismund and their territories. Although mentioned briefly in passing, this incredible episode and the resulting alliance have never before been analyzed in depth by historians. Attempting to shed some light on the topic in general, this article proposes to examine the available narrative and diplomatic sources, assess the marriage policy of the Ottoman sultans as a diplomatic tool in the achievement of their strategic goals, and the perceived outrage that news of the potential marriage caused among the adversaries of King Ladislaus. In addition to studying the language of the letters, which extended beyond subtle courtesy, the essay will also explore the practical effects and consequences of the collusion between Ladislaus and the Turks for the overall political situation in the Balkans during the last decade of the fourteenth century and first decade of the fifteenth.

Keywords: King Ladislaus of Naples, King Sigismund of Luxembourg, Sultan Bayezid, Stephen Lackfi, John Horváti, Hrvoje Vukčić, Kingdom of Hungary, Kingdom of Naples, Ottoman Empire, Kingdom of Bosnia

## *Introduction*

The online Merriam-Webster dictionary defines *collusion* as a “secret agreement or cooperation especially for an illegal or deceitful purpose” and offers the following example of the word being used in a sentence: “acting in collusion with the enemy.” Basically, *collusion* can be interpreted as an understanding between two or more

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parties who come together secretly in order to achieve a common objective, usually to the detriment of a third side. Its synonyms include *conspiracy*, *collaboration*, and *intrigue*, while the term itself comes from the Latin *colludere* (*col-* together, *-ludere* to play), meaning to have a secret agreement. This paper will treat one such instance of blatant collusion between King Ladislaus of Naples and the Ottoman Turks, who were at the time perceived as infidels and enemies of Christendom. The “impious alliance” itself was directed against their mutual enemy, King Sigismund of Luxembourg, and it was supposed to bring long-term benefits to both sides.<sup>1</sup>

Historians have known that this “unlikely” pact existed, and they have written about it, but the whole episode has been treated almost as a curious footnote in the busy reign of the somewhat controversial and ruthless Italian king. Born in 1377, Ladislaus was only properly King of Naples, a keen candidate for the crowns of Jerusalem and Sicily, and rather more notoriously for those of Hungary, Dalmatia, and Croatia. He inherited these titles and claims from his father, Charles of Durazzo, King of Naples and Hungary, who died as a consequence of a brutal assassination in Buda in February of 1386. After his death, the nine-year old Ladislaus ruled in Italy under the regency of his mother Margaret, while the Kingdom of Hungary became embroiled in a deep and intense succession crisis that eventually polarized the whole country into two mutually conflicted camps.<sup>2</sup> Confined to his Italian possessions and unable to achieve effective control of Naples, as the city was held at the time by his opponent and distant cousin King Louis II (1389–1399), the underage Ladislaus could not play any part in the struggle for the Hungarian throne, which came to be held by King Sigismund of Luxembourg.<sup>3</sup> It was only after he was officially

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1 The expression “impious alliance” to describe Christian collaboration with the Ottomans was used first by Pope Gregory XI in 1374. Having heard that Emperor John V (1341–1391) was paying tribute to Sultan Murad (1362–1389), he interpreted this arrangement as an “impious alliance” between Greeks and Turks directed against the believers of Christ: “inter Grecos et Turcos quedam impia colligatio adversus fideles Christi.” Halecki, *Un Empereur de Byzance à Rome*, 301 n. 3; Dennis, *The Reign of Manuel II Palaeologus*, 35; Ostrogorski, “Byzance, Etat tributaire de L’empire Turc,” 49–58. The same phrase was used later to label the agreement signed between King Francis I of France (1515–1547) and Sultan Suleyman (1520–1566) in 1536. See Isom-Verhaaren, *Allies with the Infidel*, passim; Devereux, “The ruin and slaughter of ... fellow Christians,” 115.

2 A good general overview of the main events and topics concerning the Hungarian succession crisis are found in: Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 169–70, 195–202; and Süttő, “Der Dynastiewechsel Anjou-Luxemburg in Ungarn,” 79–87; cf. the older but still useful work of Huber, “Die Gefangennehmung der Königinnen Elisabeth und Maria von Ungarn,” 509–48.

3 On Sigismund’s early years as King of Hungary, see Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund in Ungarn*, 7–59; Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 64–92.

recognized as King of Naples in 1390 by Pope Boniface IX, and after the death of Bosnian King Tvrtko (1353–1391) in March of the following year, that Ladislaus was able to pursue a more aggressive stance towards the Balkans and stake a more forceful claim for the Holy Crown of St. Stephen. Therefore, in October 1392, he took concrete diplomatic steps to create an overseas network which could help him achieve his goals, and these initiatives ultimately resulted in contacts with the Ottoman court.

As Ladislaus was the last male of the senior Angevin line (which became extinct with his death in 1414) and also quite an active political figure, a lot has been written about him and the various aspects of his rule, including the projections he had for an alliance with the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid. His principal biographers, including Gyula Schönherr,<sup>4</sup> István Miskolczy,<sup>5</sup> and Alessandro Cutolo,<sup>6</sup> have always incorporated this story in their works. Also, authors who wrote about the Angevins of Naples in general, such as Bálint Hóman and Émile Léonard, have likewise not failed to indicate that Ladislaus proposed a treaty with the Ottoman Sultan.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, this fact was introduced to Croatian historiography via the early works of Franjo Rački, Vjekoslav Klaić, and Ferdo Šišić,<sup>8</sup> although apart from merely mentioning it, none of the named authors paid too much attention to this cooperation or to its deeper implications. On the other hand, the whole issue is conspicuously absent from the books and papers written by historians of the Ottoman Empire, who primarily dealt with the contemporary reign of Sultan Bayezid or the more wide-ranging topic of relations between the Ottomans and Europe, such as, for instance, Colin Imber and Rhoads Murphey, to name just two of the more prominent authors.<sup>9</sup> Apart from Halil İnalçık and Elizabeth Zachariadou, who only comment upon this incident in passing,<sup>10</sup> they all omit to mention the existence of any interactions between the courts of Ladislaus and Bayezid, probably not deeming any such

4 Schönherr, “Nápolyi László trónkövetelésének külföldi vonatkozásai,” 237–66.

5 Miskolczy, “Nápolyi László (I. közlemény),” 330–50, 499–523.

6 Cutolo, *Re Ladislao d'Angiò-Durazzo*.

7 Hóman, *Gli Angioini di Napoli in Ungheria*, 492; Léonard, *Gli Angioini di Napoli*, 626. Cf. Pór and Schönherr, *Az Anjou ház és Örökösei*, 415.

8 Rački, “Pokret na slavenskom jugu koncem XIV i početkom XV stoljeća,” vol. 3. 149, vol. 4. 16–17; Klaić, *Povjest Hrvata*, vol. 2. 281; Šišić, *Vojvoda Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić*, 83–84. Cf. Lovrenović, *Na krlježu povijesti*, 69.

9 Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 37–54; Murphey, “Bayezid I’s Foreign Policy Plans and Priorities,” 177–215.

10 İnalçık, “The Ottoman Turks and the Crusade, 1329–1451,” 248; Zachariadou, “Marginalia on the History of Epirus and Albania (1380–1418),” 205.

interactions too significant in the overall eventful reign of the dynamic Ottoman ruler.

By the last decade of the fourteenth century, the Ottomans had established relatively close relations with several Italian princes and states, most notably with Gian Galeazzo Visconti of Milan and the Republic of Genoa.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, even though it has been underrepresented in historical works, the alliance with Ladislaus of Naples still constitutes a prime example of early cooperation between the Ottomans and the Catholic rulers of the West. Therefore, this study proposes to investigate the reasons why Ladislaus colluded with the Ottomans, how his decision to do so impacted the development of political and military events in Southeast Europe at the time, whether the idea of an alliance with the Turks came from Ladislaus himself or from his Balkan allies, and, last but not least, what was the ultimate outcome of this political adventure.

### *Sigismund's Accusations*

Most of the historians who touched upon the interactions between Ladislaus and Bayezid did so on the basis of accounts given by two famous fifteenth-century historians of Hungary who described the Angevin–Ottoman conspiracy in some detail: János Thuróczy († 1489) and Antonio Bonfini († 1503). In recounting the fate of Voivode Stephen Lackfi, one of the major insurgents against King Sigismund, Thuróczy notes how, after the disaster at Nicopolis in 1396, while Sigismund was still sailing home, this Stephen committed a particularly devious crime (in addition to the other appalling villainies he had treacherously performed). Namely, according to this report, he had clandestinely dispatched messengers to Bayezid, ruler of the Turks, and had given his word to arrange a marriage between Bayezid's daughter and King Ladislaus on condition that the sultan supplied him with military assistance against King Sigismund. And so it came to pass that he introduced large hordes of Turks into the regions of Hungary between the Sava and Drava Rivers, where they pillaged and plundered. Thuróczy then writes that this occasion was the first hostile encroachment of Turks into Hungary, and he says that the Turks caused considerable destruction

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11 For Visconti's ties with the Ottomans, see Atiya, *The Crusade of Nicopolis*, 13; and for Genoa: Fleet, "The Treaty of 1387 between Murād I and the Genoese," 13–33; Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade in the Early Ottoman State*, 4–12. See also: Fleet, "Turkish–Latin Diplomatic Relations in the Fourteenth Century," 605–11; Fleet, "Turkish–Latin Relations at the End of the Fourteenth Century," 131–37.

in the towns of Syrmia, which were even in his time (almost a century later) still bereft of their buildings, testifying to the extent of the damage.<sup>12</sup>

Bonfini says almost exactly the same thing,<sup>13</sup> and the fact that these two fragments are so similar is not surprising, since Bonfini relied heavily on Thuróczy's chronicle, and comparisons between their respective works have been extensively analyzed in historiography.<sup>14</sup> Both authors were court historians who had access to the royal archives, so the information they provide seems to have been based on real events and was probably not completely invented. Fortunately, it is not too difficult to identify the source of their accounts in the contemporary diplomatic documents issued by the chancery of King Sigismund.

One such charter, dated to March 1397, confirms King Sigismund's decision to grant the Kanizsai the estates that had previously belonged to the heirs of Lack, also known as Lackfi (or Lackovići in Croatian), because certain disgraced members of this family, such as Voivode Stephen of Csáktornya and his nephews, Stephen of Simontornya and Andrew of Döbrököz, had conspired against Sigismund in the interest of Ladislaus. In the document, the king refers to them as "our notorious infidels," who plotted against him as "cunning and deceitful

12 "Hunc Stephanum wayuodam preter cetera infanda sua facinora in lesam regie dignitatis maiestatem perpetrata eadem tempestate, cum rex Sigismundus post cladem sub Nicapoli receptam maritimis demorabatur in partibus, tale scelus commisisse accusabant. Etenim illum ad cesarem Thurcorum Pasaiithem nuncios misisse filiamque illius regi Ladislao, quem inducere conabatur, ea conditione, ut illi contra regem Sigismundum adiumento fieret, iugo matrimoniali ducere spondisse et in huius documentum ingentia Thurcorum agmina Hungaricas in partes inter flumina Zawe et Drawe situatas induxisse gravesque ibidem per eosdem depopulationes edidisse dicebant. Ante hec Thurci nondum Hungaricas lustraverant terras. Iste fuit ingressus Thurcorum in Hungariam primus, eo tunc illi ingentes, quas cernimus in civitatibus Sirimiensibus, edidere vastitates, quas civitates etiam nunc loca illarum suis orbata edificiis non parvas fuisse testantur." Thuróczy, *Chronica Hungarorum*, vol. 1. 220; Thuróczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, 69. For the earliest Ottoman attacks on Hungary, see Engel, "A török–magyar háborúk első évei 1389–1392," 561–77; Engel, "Ungarn und die Türkengefahr zur Zeit Sigimunds (1387–1437)," 55–71; Rázsó, "A Zsigmond kori Magyarország és a török veszély, 1393–1437," 403–41; Szakály, "Phases of Turco–Hungarian Warfare before the Battle of Mohács (1365–1526)," 65–111.

13 "Stephanum vaivodam preter alia gravissima scelera, que patrarat, id potissimum ausum fuisse memorant. Post Nicopolitanam cladem, cum in maritimis oris Sigismundus moram traheret, hunc ad Pasaythem Turcorum regem tabellarios misisse ferunt clamque cum eo de filie nuptiis cum Ladislao rege egisse et ea quidem condicione, ut generum ad eicendum Pannonie regno Sigismundum copiis auxiliariis et opibus adiuvaret; rem per internuncios eo adduxisse, ut sub hac spe affinitatis oblate, quam tantopere profanus barbarus appetebat, nonnullas Turcorum legiones ad labefactandas Sigismundi vites inter Savum Dravumque induxerit, unde magna Ungarie appendicibus calamitas vastatioque illata; hunc igitur primum Turcorum ingressum in inferiorem Pannoniam fuisse perhibent. Quare tunc Syrmienis ager, qui tot urbibus oppidisque florebat, ita populatus et eversus est, ut vix nunc tot civitatum perpauca vestigia supersint." Bonfinis, *Rerum Ungaricarum Decades*, vol. 3. 43.

14 Juhász, *Thuróczy és Bonfini krónikájának összehasonlítása Zsigmondtól Mátyásig*, 5–6, 24–27.

serpents,” wanting to eliminate, exclude and exterminate him and his subjects from their kingdoms. Sigismund then says that both Stephens, descendants of the aforementioned Lack, obtained and procured letters from Ladislaus, the “perfidious” King of Apulia, confirming them both as his general deputies in these parts. And to please him as well as to subdue more easily Sigismund’s subjects, they had messengers sent in his name to Bayezid, Emperor of the Turks, with the aim of arranging a matrimonial bond between Ladislaus and the sultan’s daughter so that, thus joined, they could immediately be crowned with the sacred crown of the Kingdom. Furthermore, Sigismund’s charter declares that in order to achieve this, they brought cohorts of Turks who attacked the kingdom between the Drava and Sava Rivers, causing great disruption, killings, and abductions and enslaving many individuals of both sexes.<sup>15</sup>

Word by word, almost the same text is reproduced in a charter issued in Buda in December 1398, when King Sigismund confiscated the estate of Szentbertalan from Stephen called Ördög, or Vrag, meaning *Devil*, who was a well-known rebel against Sigismund’s authority and an accomplice in the treachery conducted by the Lackfi. The seized land was then given to the loyal members of the Kanizsai family.<sup>16</sup>

15 “[...] interim praetaxati viri perfidi, vterque Stephanus, vna cum Andrea, filio quondam Nicolai Vajuode, filii dicti Stephani, filii Laczk, praedicti de Debregesth fratre et fautoribus suis, ex cordiali prisco et mero doloso desiderio, cunctis nisu et nixu suis, anhelantes nos cum nostris fidelibus subditis antefatis, more et astutia subdoli serpentis, de dictis regnis nostris eliminare et excludere, obtentis a Ladislao, rege Apuliae, nato scilicet quondam Caroli Regis, huiusmodi litteris, vt iidem viri perfidi, vterque Stephanus, successores ipsius Laczk, in antefatis regnis nostris vicarii ipsius Ladislai regis essent generales et praecipue communiterque in dictis regnis et cum regnicolis nostris praefati vterque Stephanus, in persona et auctoritate ipsius Ladislai regis disponent, ordinarent et donarent, ac sponderent, cuncta illa idem Ladislaus Rex acceptaret, ratificaret et perenniter extremo roboraret. Et vt celerius ac facilius annotati Stephanus Vajuoda, et alter Stephanus de Simonytornya, vna cum dicto Andrea, filio Nicolai Vajuodae, fratre eorum, ipsos regnicolas nostros ad eiusdem Ladislai regis beneplacitum et obedientiae commoda explenda potuissent subdere, et inclinati, nunciis suis ad Payzath, Turcorum Imperatorem, super eo, vt ipsius Payzath filiam dicto Ladislao regi matrimoniali foedere molirentur copulare et copulatos similiter litteris ipsius Payzath, imperatoris Turcorum, exinde prius obtentis, sacro regio diademate ipsius regni nostri coronare, indilate destinatis, validum et saeuissimum dictorum Turcorum coetum et faleratam cohortem ad territoria regni nostri, inter fluuios Drauae et Sauae existentia, hostiliter introducere et per eosdem incendia valida et homicidia, ac spolia grandia et detentiones, abductiones Nobilium et Ignobilium vtriusque sexus immensae pluritatis hominum perpetrari facere, nequiter veriti non fuerunt.” MNL OL DL 87 647. March 4, 1397; *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae*, vol. 10/2. 416–17; *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. 1. no. 4656.

16 “[...] interim praetaxatis viris perfidis, vtrisque Stephano et Andrea, fratre ipsorum, idem Stephanus, dictus Vrdung, adherens cunctis ipsorum nisu et nixu, nos cum praefatis nostris fidelibus, nostro lateri adhaerentibus, ad instar subdoli serpentis, de dictis regnis nostris eliminare, excludere et exterminare moliebantur. Nam iidem vterque Stephanus, quibus idem Steph. Vrdung adhaeserat, nobis, vt preferunt, in naufragio procelloso laborantibus, huiusmodi litteras a Ladislao, rege Apuliae, nato scilicet quondam Caroli regis, procurantes obtinuerunt, vt iidem viri perfidi, vterque Stephanus, successores ipsius Laachk,



An identical narrative appears once again in a document issued in Trnava in January 1401, confirming that King Sigismund confiscated the castle of Rezi in the county of Zala, which had belonged to the Lackfi and had given it to Eberhard, the Bishop of Zagreb, and his kin.<sup>17</sup> And finally, the same account is also described in a charter issued in May 1408, when Sigismund gave Stephen Ördög's former assets and properties to Emeric Perényi.<sup>18</sup>

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in antefatis regnis nostris, vicarii ipsius Ladislai regis essent generales, et praecipue quicquid in dictis regnis cum regnicolis nostris ipse vterque Stephanus in persona et autoritate ipsius Ladislai regis disponerent, ordinarent et sponderent, cuncta illa idem Ladislaus rex acceptaret, ratificaret et perenniter ex nouo roboraret; et vt celerius et facilius annotati Stephanus, quondam Waywoda, et alter Stephanus de Simontornya, vna cum Andrea fratre ipsorum; nec non praefato Stephano, dicto Vrdung, ipsos regnicolas nostros ad ipsius Ladislai regis beneplacita et obedientiae commoda explenda potuissent flectere et inclinare, nunciis et syndicis suis ad Bajzath, Dominum Turcorum super eo, vt ipsius Bayzat filiam eidem Ladislao regi matrimoniali foedere copulare et post copulationem sacro regio diademate ipsius regni nostri immediate voluissent coronare, sollicite destinatis; validum et saeuissimum dictorum Turcorum coetum et falleratam cohortem ad territoria regni nostri, inter fluuios Drauae et Zauae existentia, hostiliter introducere et per eosdem incendia, valida et homicidia ac spolia grandia et detentiones, abductionesque nobilium et ignobilium vtriusque sexus immensae pluralitatis hominum fidelium nostrorum, in regno et territorio nostris antefatis; prout haec cuncta ipsorum facinora fideles nostri dolorosis eorum gemitibus, nostro in conspectu reuera reprobauerunt, nequiter perpetrari facere veriti non fuerunt." MNL OL DL 8376. December 1, 1398; *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae*, vol. 10/2. 558–59; *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. 1. no. 5603.

17 "[...] interim pretaxati viri perfidi uterque Stephanus unacum dicto Andrea, filio condam Nicolai voivode, filii dicti Stephani, filii predicti Lachk de Debregezth fratre et fautoribus suis, ex cordiali presto et mero doloroso desiderio cunctis nisu et nixu suis anhelantes, nos cum nostris fidelibus subditis antefatis more et adinstar subdoli serpentis, de dictis regnis nostris eliminare, excludere et exterminare, optentis a Ladislao rege Apulie, nato scilicet condam Karuli regis, huiusmodi literis, ut iidem viri perfidi uterque Stephanus, successores ipsius Lachk, in antefatis regnis nostris vicarii ipsius Ladislai regis essent generales et praecipue quicquid in dictis regnis nostris cum regnicolis nostris praefati uterque Stephanus in persona et auctoritate ipsius Ladislai regis disponerent, ordinarent ac donarent et sponderent, cuncta illa idem Ladislaus rex ex nouo roboraret, et ut celerius ac facilius annotati Stephanus vaivoda et alter Stephanus de Simontornya unacum dicto Andrea filio Nicolai vaivode fratre ipsorum eosdem regnicolas nostros ad eiusdem regis Ladislai beneplacita et obedientiae commoda explenda potuissent subdere, flectere et inclinare, nunciis subditis ad Bayzat dominum Turcorum super eo, ut ipsius Bayzat filiam dicto Ladislao regi matrimoniali federe molirentur copulare et copulatos sacro regio dyademate ipsius regni nostri immediate valuissent coronare, indilate destinatis, validum et seuissimum dictorum Turcorum cetum et falleratam cohortem ad territoria regni nostri inter fluuios Draue et Zawe existentia hostiliter introducere et per eosdem incendia valida et homicidia ac spolia grandia et detentiones abductionesque nobilium et ignobilium utriusque sexus immense pluralitatis hominum fidelium nostrorum in regno et territoriis nostris antefatis, prout haec cuncta facinora fideles nostri dolorosis eorum gemitibus nostre in conspectu approbauerunt maiestatis, perpetrari facere nequiter veriti non fuerunt nec expavescere maluerunt." MNL OL DL 92 259. January 6, 1401; Šišić, "Nekoliko isprava," 131; *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. 2/1. no. 802.

18 "[...] interim pretaxatis viris perfidis, vtrisque Stephano et Andrea fratribus ipsorum, idem Stephanus Vrdugh adherens nos cum praefatis nostris fidelibus, nostro lateri adherentibus, ad instar subdoli serpentis de dictis regnis nostris excludere, et exterminare machinabantur. Nam idem vterque Stephanus, quibus idem Stephanus Vrdugh toto posse, vt praefertur, nobis in naufragio periculoso laborantibus, huiusmodi

The literal expression used in the text to describe the coming together of the two potential newlyweds was *matrimoniali foedere copulare*, meaning to join in matrimonial alliance. The term bore the obvious implication that this union would ultimately lead to an unthinkable scenario whereby the grandchild of Sultan Bayezid could sometime in the future wear the Holy Crown of St. Stephen. One can only imagine the consternation that news of such a union would have caused among Sigismund's followers and god-fearing Catholics. In one document from 1404, Sigismund described Bayezid as “the abominable enemy and persecutor of the Christ's Cross and the whole Orthodox faith,” presenting the sultan as the “principal rival” of his royal majesty.<sup>19</sup> Certainly, at the time, cooperation with the Turks was equivalent to high treason, which meant that it would be punished with the harshest penalties, and it is therefore easy to consider that these one-sided charges might have constituted unjustified allegations or possibly biased claims with the intention of discrediting Sigismund's adversaries.

Nevertheless, upon closer inspection, almost all the accusations against Voivode Stephen Lackfi of Csáktornya, a.k.a. Čakovec, appear to be true. Namely, the text of the charters clearly alleges that he conspired against Sigismund in favor of Ladislaus of Naples, and Stephen was actually one of the most prominent supporters of the Angevin cause on the east coast of the Adriatic. As a member of a very powerful noble family which had estates all over the kingdom, in various periods of his political career he was ban of Croatia and

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litteras ab Ladislao rege Napulie, nato scilicet, quondam Karuli regis obtinuerant, vt ydem viri perfidi vterque Stephanus, successores ipsius Lachk, in antefatis regnis nostris vicary ipsius Ladislai regis essent generales, et precipue quidquid in dictis regnis cum regni incolis nostris ipsi vtrique Stephanus, in persona et auctoritate ipsius Ladislai regis disponerent, ordinarent, et sponderent, cuncta illa idem Ladislaus Rex acceptaret, ratificaret, et perhenniter ex nouo roboraret; et vt celerius et facilius annotati Stephanus Woyuoda et alter Stephanus de Simonytornya, vna cum Andrea fratre ipsorum, nec non prefato Stephano dicto Vrduogh ipsos regnicolas nostros ad ipsius Ladizlai regis beneplacita et obediencie commoda complenda potuissent subdere, flectere, et inclinare, nunciis — suis ad Bayzath Dominum Turcorum super eo, vt ipsius Bayzath filiam eidem Ladislao regi matrimoniali foedere copulare, et copulatam sacro diademate ipsius regni nostri immediate voluissent coronare, solícite destinatis validum et seuissimum Turcorum cetum et faleratam cohortem, ad territoria regni nostri inter fluuios Draue et Saue existens hostiliter introducere, et per eosdem valida incendia, et homicidia, ac spolia grandia et detenciones abduccionesque nobilium et ignobilium, vtriusque sexus hominum, fidelium nostrorum in regno et territorio nostris antefatis, prout hec cuncta eorum facinora fideles nostri dolorosis eorum gemitibus nostri in conspectu reuera comprobant, perpetrare facere veriti non fuerunt nequiter.” MNL OL DL 9404. May 4, 1408; *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae*, vol. 10/8. 485–86; *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. 2/2 no. 6078.

19 “[...] nefandissimus Crucis Christi, immo totius Orthodoxae fidei, hostis et persecutor, Bajzath, Dominus Turcorum, capitalis nostrae Maiestatis aemulus [...]” *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae*, vol. 10/4. 295–96. April 4, 1404.



Dalmatia, palatine of Hungary, voivode of Transylvania, and count of Zadar, to name just some of the most important offices he held.<sup>20</sup> Sigismund also claimed that Stephen maintained a correspondence with Ladislaus, who delegated him as one of his representatives in the Kingdom of Hungary, and in October 1392, Ladislaus really did send a series of letters to his Balkan allies, including one addressed to “Stefano de Luczlrís [!],” palatine of the Kingdom of Hungary.<sup>21</sup> So the allegation that Stephen obtained letters from Ladislaus are also true. The serious accusation of plotting to achieve a marital alliance with the sultan was likewise quite possibly genuine, since Ladislaus was eligible for marriage at the time. He had been briefly married in 1389 to the twelve-year-old Costanza, the daughter of Sicilian nobleman Manfredi Chiaramonte, Count of Modica and Malta, ruler of Palermo. But the bride’s father died in 1391, and after her brother Andrea was executed by hostile Aragonese forces in Sicily the following year, the marriage became politically inconvenient and unprofitable for Ladislaus. He managed to obtain an annulment by decree of pope Boniface IX, and in July 1392, the Bishop of Gaeta and Cardinal Acciaiuoli announced the dissolution of the marriage in church. The supposed reason for the termination was the age of the couple, who were both twelve at the time of the nuptials.<sup>22</sup>

The only problem with the sources presented here is that both Bonfini and Thuróczy, as well as Sigismund’s charters, say that the alliance and Ladislaus’ proposal to marry the sultan’s daughter occurred during Sigismund’s military campaign against the “savage and ferocious Turks and other pagans” in the Kingdom of Bulgaria, and at a time when Sigismund was suffering with his allies during a stormy voyage across the Mediterranean, dating it to the year 1396. However, other available documents shed a somewhat different light on the chronology of the whole matter and suggest that the establishment of an Angevin-Ottoman alliance was expected several years before the battle of Nicopolis.

20 Karbić, “Lacković (Lackfi) iz plemićkog roda Hermán,” 21–29. See also: Majláth, “A Laczk nemzetség,” 21–29; Lázár, “A két Laczk család eredete,” 110–12; Karácsonyi, “A kerekegyházi Laczkfyak családfája,” 166–73. Cf. Hóman, *Gli Angioini di Napoli in Ungheria*, 460–62, 480–82, 505–9.

21 Probably a misreading of “de Laczhis.” Barone, “Notizie raccolte dai registri di cancelleria del re Ladislao di Durazzo,” 728. Cf. Wenzel, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek az Anjou-korból*, vol. 3. 720. October 15, 1392.

22 Valente, “Margherita di Durazzo, vicaria di Carlo III e tutrice di re Ladislao,” vol. 43:184–85.

## *Ladislaus' Letters*

On October 18, 1392, just a few days after he dispatched the aforementioned messages to his allies across the Adriatic, three other letters were devised in Ladislaus' chancery in Gaeta, addressed to Sultan Bayezid and two of his senior officials in the Balkans. Regrettably, the original documents were part of the *Angevin registers*, which were completely destroyed by fire during World War II.<sup>23</sup> However, before they were destroyed, the letters were published and made available in 1876 by Gusztáv Wenzel in the collection *Hungarian diplomatic monuments from the Anjou age*, also known as the third volume of *Monumenta Hungariae Historica's Acta Extera*.<sup>24</sup>

The first of the three letters was addressed to the “most Serene Ruler, Lord Bayezid, Emperor of the Turks” – *maiori fratri nostro* – who was greeted with “brotherly and sincere affection.” In the message, Ladislaus regrettably conceded that the physical distance between the two of them made it impossible for them to meet personally, and he thus found it useful and necessary to write to him and to send an orator who could faithfully deliver the message and commendably complement it. He then says that he wanted to discuss some issues with the sultan which, due to the distance, he could not explain in words, so he entrusted the matter to a messenger whose name was, curiously, not stated, but Ladislaus nevertheless referred to him as a noble, a *familiaris*, and a loyal subject. Therefore, the letter continues, relying on the sincere benevolence and brotherly love of the sultan's imperial majesty, the king recommended the messenger and requested that he be trusted with confidence in all things he said about Ladislaus' agenda. And finally, the king revealed his desire to hear about Bayezid's prosperity, since he was impelled by fraternal zeal to be joined to him by bonds of consanguinity, and thus asked to be informed in writing, along with his mother Margaret and sister Johanna, about the sultan's opinion on this matter. The document itself was sealed with Ladislaus' great pendent seal.<sup>25</sup>

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23 Borghese, “Les registres de la chancellerie angevine de Naples,” 171–82; Jamison, “Documents from the Angevin Registers of Naples,” 87–173; Capasso, *Inventario cronologico-sistematico dei Registri Angioini*, 384; Filangieri, *L'Archivio di Stato di Napoli durante la seconda guerra mondiale*; Palmieri, *Degli archivi napoletani*, 249–52.

24 Wenzel, *Magyar diplomacziái emlékek az Anjou-korból*, vol. 3. 720–22. October 18, 1392.

25 “Serenissimo Principi domino Pazait Imperatori Turcorum, maiori fratri nostro Ladislaus Dei gratia Rex etc. salutem et fraterne et sincere dilectionis affectum. Quod plerumque perfici atque refferri personaliter locorum distantia prohibet, inuentus, immo utilis et necessarius scribendi modus, ac Oratorum persepe fides exequitur laudabiliter atque supplet. Habentes itaque cum Serenitate Vestra certa conferre que — — — — distantes a nobis eidem Vestre Serenitate uerbo non possumus explicare; nec minus de

On the very same day, two other letters, identical in content, were composed, one to “illustri Amortas” and the other to “illustri Aguphasa,” both of whom were referred to as “amico nostro carissimo.” Amortas was evidently Kara Timurtaş Pasha, while Agupasha was probably a Latinized corrupted version of the name Yakub Pasha.<sup>26</sup> These two high-ranking dignitaries were especially active in spreading Ottoman authority throughout southeast Europe during the last decade of the fourteenth century, and they even appeared together as Ταμονρατᾶσης and Γιαγονπασᾶς in a Byzantine *Short chronicle* for the year 1397, when they besieged and conquered Venetian held Argos in the Peloponnese.<sup>27</sup> The letters informed them that Ladislaus had sent a messenger to Bayezid in order to negotiate certain issues concerning his honor and position, and that the same messenger will be visiting them as well. Among the other diplomatic and courteous phrases, the king then stated that he was particularly grateful for their friendship, and he placed himself at their disposal.<sup>28</sup>

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viro nobili ... familiari et fideli nostro dilecto ab experto confisi, ea sibi sub credencie fide commisimus; qui de iussu et parte nostris illa Vestre Serenitati, ad eius se conferens presentiam veniet, est relaturus. Ideoque Imperialem Serenitatem Vestram sincere beniuolentie et fraterne dilectionis affectu precamur, quatenus ... predicti relatibus, quem in agendis nostris et alijs sibi expedientibus fiducialiter Vestre Serenitati reconmictimus, velit eadem Vestra Serenitas fidem tamquam nobis adhibere credentie, Nosque de statu vestro, quem impellente nos fraterno zelo et consanguinitatis nexu quo inuicem iungimur, prosperum audire et esse cupimus, vestris litteris ad nostri recreationem animi, cum habilis modusque patuerint, informare, statum nostrum, ac Serenissime Domine domine Margarite eadem gratia dictorum Regnorum Regine reuerende genitricis, et illustris Johanne sororis nostrarum fore gratie omnium Conditoris incolumem, ipsi Vestre Serenitatis serie presentium intimantes. Has autem nostras litteras exinde fieri et magni nostri pendentis sigilli iussimus appensione muniri. Data Gayete in absentia Logothete et Prothonotarj Regni nostri Sicilie eiusque Locumentenentis per virum nobilem Donatum de Aretio Legum Doctorem etc. anno Dominij MCCCLXXXII. die decimo octauo mensis Octubris prime indictionis, Regnorum nostrorum anno sexto.” Wenzel, *Magyar diplomaczejai emlékek az Anjou-korból*, vol. 3. 720–21. October 18, 1392.

26 On Timurtaş, see *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. “Timurtaş,” vol. 11. 372–74 (M.C. Şehabeddin Tekindağ). Unfortunately, there is no equivalent approach to the biography of Yakub Pasha.

27 Schreiner, *Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, vol. 1. 245. On the campaign, see Loenertz, “Pour l’histoire du Péloponèse au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle (1382–1404),” 187.

28 “Ladizlaus Rex etc. illustri Amortas amico nostro carissimo salutem et sincere dilectionis affectum. Pro aliquibus agendis nostris honorem et statum nostrum concernentibus virum nobilem ... familiarem et fidelem nostrum dilectum ad presentiam Serenissimi Principis domini Pazait Imperatoris Turcorum maioris fratris nostri, ut quedam Eius Serenitatis nostri parte referat, presentialiter mictimus; cui similiter certa, fiducialiter commisimus per eum vobis eadem nostri parte verbotenus referenda. Quapropter Illustrem Vestram Amicitiam presentium tenore precamur, quatenus eiusdem ... relatibus fidem tamquam nobis adhibere credentie, et ipsum tam in agendis nostris quam in alijs sibi expedientibus recommissum suscipere nostrj amore et contemplatione velit. Vt ipsi Vestre Illustri Amicitie, ad cuius placida nos offerimus, propterea specialiter teneamur. Has autem nostras licteras exinde fieri et magni nostri pendentis sigilli iussimus appensione muniri. Data, Gaiete in absentia, Logothete et Prothonotarj Regni nostri Sicilie et

To the uninformed observer, the contents of these letters might appear quite shocking and improbable, but the conclusion of a pragmatic alliance with the Ottomans, along the lines of the maxim *the enemy of my enemy is my friend*, represented a logical step in Ladislaus' policy towards the Balkans. At that time, he had absolutely nothing to lose, and the envisaged "Gaeta–Edirne axis" was supposed to orchestrate a two-pronged attack against King Sigismund, helping both Ladislaus and Bayezid achieve their interests. But what does look strange in these letters is the proposal to seal and strengthen the alliance through a wedding, since it was highly unlikely that a sultan of the Ottoman Empire would allow his Muslim daughter to be married to a Catholic monarch, regardless of any potential strategic or diplomatic benefit he might have gained. Throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Ottoman rulers practiced royal intermarriage by marrying members of ruling dynasties from neighboring countries, even if they were Christians. An early example is Emir Orhan, who in 1346 married the daughter of Emperor John VI,<sup>29</sup> and even Bayezid himself married Olivera, the daughter of Knez Lazar.<sup>30</sup> But Muslim law is quite strict regarding these mixed marriages, and it states that a Muslim man may, under special circumstances, marry a non-Muslim woman, yet a Muslim woman was unequivocally and strictly forbidden from marrying a non-Muslim man.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, it is far more likely that the Ottomans opted to use these marriage negotiations as a simple diplomatic device intended to sustain interest in the alliance for as long as possible, without any serious consideration of actually accepting the wedding proposal.

One can also attempt to wave Ladislaus' proposition off as something that was, perhaps, planned but never realized, since we cannot know for sure whether the letters and the emissary were indeed ever sent to the sultan's court. However, less than a year after the messages were formulated, the Venetian Senate deliberated about a rather peculiar incident. On September 11, 1393, the Senators decided that they would respond to Francesco Bembo, their captain of the Adriatic Gulf, saying that they had understood the letters that he had sent

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eius Locumtenentis, per virum nobilem Donatum de Aretio etc. anno Dominj millesimo trecentesimo nonagesimo secundo die XVIII. mensis Octobris prime indictionis, Regnorum nostrorum anno sexto." Wenzel, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek az Anjou-korból*, vol. 3. 721–22. October 18, 1392.

29 Bryer, "Greek Historians on the Turks: the case of the first Byzantine–Ottoman marriage," 471–93. Cf. Zachariadou, "Notes on the Wives of the Emirs in Fourteenth-Century Anatolia," 61–68. See also: Werner, "Johannes Kantakuzenos, Umur Paşa und Orhan," 255–76; Gill, "John VI Cantacuzenus and the Turks," 55–76.

30 Purković, *Kéri kneza Lazara*, 107–12.

31 Qur'an, 2:221.

them from Split on 28 August, in which, among other things, he mentioned that a certain Nicholas from Trogir had told him that he had been ordered by his lord to transfer with his brigantine to Apulia a Turk who was an ambassador of lord *Basait*. According to the letter, the Turk was apparently heading to King Ladislaus in order to complete nuptials which were agreed upon between him and the daughter of the said *Basait*.<sup>32</sup> In the response, captain Bembo was ordered specifically to check and be sure that the Turkish envoy was not planning to work towards a certain “dishonest cause” which could damage the interests of the Venetian Republic. In that case, and if he were ever to get his hands on the ambassador, he was instructed to let him be and protect the said brigantine from injury or violence. In fact, the captain was told that the messenger should be honored with appropriate words and conduct so that he would have reason to praise their government and the captain himself.<sup>33</sup>

This letter is more or less a *corpus delicti*. It confirms that Ladislaus and the Ottomans had indeed attempted to exchange embassies and that a potential marriage alliance had been in the cards since the early 1390s.<sup>34</sup> Of course, such activities could not have gone unnoticed and would certainly have sparked revolt

32 “Anno MCCCLXXXIII. indictione II. die XI. Septembris. Capta: Quod scribatur ser Francisco Bembo Vicecapitaneo Culphi in hac forma: Intelleximus litteras vestras, quas misistis, nobis, datas supra Spalatum XXVIII. mensis Augusti, in quibus inter alia fit mentio, qualiter ille Nicolaus de Tragurio vobis dixit, quod habet in mandatis a Domino suo de faciendo poni cum uno brigentino unum Turchum in Apuleam, qui est Ambaxator domini Basaiti, et vadit ad dominum Regem Vencislaum pro complemento nuptiarum tractatarum inter ipsum dominum Regem et filiam dicti Basaiti...” ASV, *Deliberazioni Misti del Senato*, reg. 42, fol. 129r. September 11, 1393; Wenzel, *Magyar diplomacziái emlékek az Anjou-korból*, vol. 3. 742–43.

33 “[...] et quod vos estis dispositus ire ad apostandum eum in aquis Manfredonic, quia habetis, quod debeat illuc capitare; et si casus dabit, quod veniat in manus vestras, reddere sibi meritum pro suis bonis operibus. Unde consideratis omnibus, que consideranda sunt super ipsa intentione vestra, et maxime quod dictus Turchus Ambaxator non vadit in cursum, nec pro aliqua alia, quantum ad nos, causa inhonesta; fidelitati vestre cum nostris Consiliis scribimus et mandamus, quod in casu quod veniret in manus vestras eundo vel redeundo, vos non debeatis ei, nec suis in personis vel rebus, nec dicto brigentino aliquam iniuriam vel violentiam facere, sed debeatis ipsum honorare cum illis verbis et per illum modum, qui vestre sapientie videbitur, ita quod habeat causum laudandi nos, Dominium nostrum et vos; agendo vos taliter in executione istius nostri mandati, quod possitis apud nos de bona observantia commendari.” Ibid. On relations between Venice and Ladislaus of Naples, see Szalay, “Nápolyi László trónkövetelése és Velenceze,” 557–64, 643–55, 751–59, 836–44.

34 Elizabeth A. Zachariadou believed that the proposed marriage alliance was not supposed to be concluded between Ladislaus and the daughter of Sultan Bayezid but rather between Ladislaus and the daughter of the famous marcher lord of Skopje, Pasha Yiğit. Zachariadou, “Marginalia on the History of Epirus and Albania (1380–1418),” 205. This confusion apparently emanated from the similarity between their names and the way that they were transcribed into Latin. Zachariadou, “Manuel II Palaeologos on the Strife between Bāyezid I and Kāḍī Burhān al-Dīn Aḥmad,” 479–80. Regardless of this opinion, other

among the devout and pious Christians. Nevertheless, the document itself does not give us sufficient cause to conclude with certainty that Bayezid's ambassador ever reached Gaeta, since indisputable confirmation of his presence there is yet to be found. In this regard, there is one interesting though unsubstantiated claim from an important early modern historian, Scipione Ammirato († 1601), who published a biography of King Ladislaus in 1583. In this text he says that Ladislaus planned to establish relations with Bayezid, the ruler of the Turks, and to do so he traveled to Rome, where he requested papal dispensation from Pope Boniface IX while Bayezid's ambassadors remained by his side. In the end, Ammirato states that nothing came of the whole scheme, mostly because it was difficult for Ladislaus to ensure the security of the agreement more than anything else.<sup>35</sup>

The anticipated marriage clearly never materialized, and many historians thought that this implied a breakdown in the negotiations and a premature end of the Angevin-Ottoman alliance. It is true that contemporary documents do not provide any more indication of the reasons why the wedding was abandoned, but the course of events after 1393 leave little doubt that the two sides maintained further contacts and continued to undermine the reign of King Sigismund in Hungary.

### *The Alliance in Practice*

This is perhaps best demonstrated by the political and military developments in Bosnia, Croatia, and Dalmatia where Ladislaus had numerous supporters who could implement the Angevin-Ottoman cooperation in practice. In this respect, one letter particularly stands out among other available sources, as it unambiguously explains what went on during a dense period of defining incidents which occurred throughout 1393 and 1394, further complicating the already convoluted political landscape of the Balkans. The message was sent from Venice in July 1394 by Florentine merchant and diplomat Gherardo Davizi. It was addressed to Donato Acciaiuoli, the older brother of Neri Acciaiuoli, the Duke of Athens. In it, Davizi described how he had recently seen a letter from the

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documents leave no doubt that King Ladislaus intended to marry into the Ottoman ruling family in order to further cement his alliance with the Sultan.

35 “Ma in questo mezzo egli non perde tempo precioche volendo in ogni modo cacciar il nimico di casa, hauea tenuto pratiche d'imparentarsi con Baiazet principe de Turchi, quello che preso poi da Tamburlano, fini miseramente la vita sua in gabbia. Andò per ottener dal Pontefice dispensa di questo parentado in Roma; essendo tuttauia ambasciatori di Baiazet appo il Re. Ma come che la cosa non hauesse hauuto effetto più per la difficoltà ritrouata nella sicurtà del capitolare che per altro...” Ammirato, *Gli opuscoli*, 114–15.



Bosnian King Dabiša (1391–1395), who informed the Venetians about a recent Bosnian victory over the Turks. According to the king's report, the outcome of the battle caused a rift among his subjects, whereby his former allies, the Horváti brothers, Bishop Paul and Ban John, had abandoned him and had traveled to the court of Sultan Bayezid who, at their initiative, proclaimed a different man as the new King of Bosnia and gave them a large army in order to help them install this new king in his newly acquired royal position. As he was unable to deal with this threat alone, Dabiša came to an agreement with Sigismund in Đakovo, relinquishing his claims on Croatia and Dalmatia and declaring Sigismund his designated successor on the Bosnian throne in exchange for military assistance in defeating the insurgents.<sup>36</sup> Seeing as the Horváti brothers were the principal advocates of the Angevin cause in the Balkans (especially Ban John, who was named by Ladislaus as his general deputy in the Kingdom of Hungary),<sup>37</sup> the contents of this letter clearly imply that the supporters of King Ladislaus and his main representatives on the eastern coast of the Adriatic maintained concrete and substantial connections with the Ottoman court of Sultan Bayezid, using his military support to influence regional politics in their favor.

Although their attempts to replace the Bosnian King with a person who would be loyal to King Ladislaus initially proved unsuccessful,<sup>38</sup> as the combined

36 "Secondo posso sentire, questo jorno venonno lettere alla Signoria, dallo Re di Bossina, il quale scrive della rotta diè alli Turchi, de' quali furono morti più di Turchi V<sup>M</sup>, con alchuno preso. Apresso scrive di messer Gianbano, il quale andò allo gran Turcho a farsi suo huomo, e a fare il Turcho facesse uno altro re di Bossina; e così dice à fatto uno altro re, uno paesano. E questo re novello e messer Gianbano, e llo suo frate, con aiuto e gente ebbono dallo Turcho, sono venuti nelli paesi di Bossina per mettere in possessione questo re novello, e dice sono circha XL<sup>M</sup>, e alchuno paesano è co' loro. Scrive, secondo per l'altra v'avisai, come i' Re d'Ungheria venne nelle contrade di Bossina, e come furono a parlare insieme, e ànno fatto buono acordo e legha insieme, e come questo re, fatto per lo Turcho e messer Gianbano, con tutta loro gente, si sono rinchiusi in certi boschi in luogho forte, nello quale luogho essi gli ànno asediati e stretti assai, per modo sperano coll'aiuto di Dio avranno victoria d'essi. Anchora come questo re e messer Gianbano ànno mandato uno fratello di messer Giabano e uno suo figliuolo allo Turcho per soccorso e per aiuto. Pensasi per tutti che per certo i due re andranno adosso allo Turcho, questo è; però lo Re scrive anchora come insino a mo' ànno più di persone XL<sup>M</sup>, dove sono forestieri assai." Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, *Carteggio Acciaiuoli II*, no. 212. July 30, 1394. For more on this: Filipović, "Bosna i Turci za vrijeme kralja Stjepana Dabiše," 273–301. Cf. Ćirković, "O Đakovačkom ugovoru," 3–10.

37 "Johanni bano Machoviensi in regnis predictis nostro vicario generali [...] Rački, "Izvadci iz kralj. osrednjeg arkiva u Napulju," 36. October 8, 1391. On the Horvat brothers and their rebellion, see Wilczek, "A Horváthy család lázadásá, és a magyar tengervidek elszakadásá," 617–33, 705–15, 804–22.

38 The identity of this candidate for the royal throne of Bosnia is not directly revealed in the sources, however, it is highly likely that this was Ikach, son of Iktor de Oryaua. Filipović, "Bosna i Turci za vrijeme kralja Stjepana Dabiše," 292–94. See also: Klaić, "Tko je to 'rex Ikach'?" 12–15; Ćirković, *Istorija srednjovekovne bosanske države*, 176, 370, n. 4; Mályusz, "Ikach rex Bosnensis," 259–67.

forces of the Bosnian and Hungarian armies defeated the rebels at the castle of Dobor in northern Bosnia, members of the Angevin faction were prepared to bide their time. After Dabiša passed away in September 1395,<sup>39</sup> Sigismund could not fulfill the provisions of the Đakovo pact and crown himself with the Bosnian crown, since in the same year his pregnant wife also died as he was busy fighting the Ottomans on the Lower Danube.<sup>40</sup> Obligated by the agreement of the two monarchs, the Bosnian nobility arrived at a solution by proclaiming Dabiša's widow Helen as queen (1395–1398), which meant that she would simply extend the reign of her dead husband until Sigismund finally became free and available to crown himself King of Bosnia.<sup>41</sup> The Bosnians maintained this arrangement even after Sigismund suffered defeat at the Battle of Nicopolis in 1396, as he did not present a tangible threat for them, but as soon as he regained any semblance of control in the kingdom, they got rid of Helen and elected King Ostoja (1398–1404; 1409–1418) in her place.<sup>42</sup> This was a calculated step which was supposed to reflect the stance of the Bosnian nobility and their wish to guide the kingdom towards an openly pro-Angevin political course. On the issue of Hungarian succession, the new monarch sided with King Ladislaus of Naples, and this position also came to be reflected in his relationship with the Ottoman Turks. It is even assumed that his path to the throne could have been paved by an Ottoman military campaign carried out during the previous winter with the aim of destabilizing Bosnia.<sup>43</sup>

Numerous contemporary sources confirm this profound political change and illuminate how the Angevin–Ottoman alliance was practically implemented with the assistance of the Bosnian king and his nobles. For instance, already in March 1399, representatives of the merchant commune of Ragusa were informed that King Ostoja intended to travel to the southern parts of his realm in order to meet with a Turkish ambassador.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, in June 1399, an intriguing inscription in the minutes of the Ragusan Senate states that the

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39 Truhelka, "Kroničke bilješke u 'Liber Reformationum' dubrovačke arhive," 268.

40 Thallóczy, "Mantovai követjárás Budán 1395," 283–92; Muresan, "Avant Nicopolis: la campagne de 1395 pour le contrôle du Bas-Danube," 115–32; Salamon, "On the Credibility of an Item in Jan Długosz's Chronicle," 164–70.

41 On the reign of Queen Helen in Bosnia, see Fostikov, "Jelena Gruba, bosanska kraljica," 29–50.

42 "Prima pars est de eundo ad maius consilium pro eligendo ambassiatam nostrorum nobilium ad Regem Hostoyam nouiter creatus regem Bossine." DAD, *Reformationes*, vol. 31, fol. 116v. June 19, 1398.

43 Filipović, "The Ottoman-Serbian Attack on Bosnia in 1398," 119–25.

44 "Algune nouele de nouo non auemo de schriuer, saluo che chredemo, che miser lo Re desendera in tera de Chulmo, chome aueua spato li annbasatori de Turchi." DAD, *Diversa Cancellariae*, vol. 32, ad fol. 234. March 12, 1399.



“Bosnians are in concordance with the Turks.”<sup>45</sup> At the very same time, King Ostoja and the other Bosnian nobles were engaged in an armed struggle against King Sigismund, and they still supported King Ladislaus in his attempts to gain the Hungarian throne, so it seems that despite all the turbulent events of the early 1390s, the Bosnians, Angevins, and Ottomans still managed to end the decade on the same political wavelength.<sup>46</sup>

There is other evidence to support this claim. For instance, in August 1399, an Ottoman embassy traveled through Ragusa in order to get to the other side of the Adriatic. Similarly, in 1400 new Ottoman envoys arrived to the market town of Drijeva, which was then a part of the Bosnian kingdom, but mostly populated by Ragusan merchants, and they wanted to resume their journey to Apulia. Unlike the delegation from the previous year, this party was obstructed by the Ragusans and prevented from going any further. This act provoked Voivode Hrvoje Vukčić, a prominent supporter of King Ladislaus, who was described by King Sigismund in June of 1398 as “a perfidious follower of treachery” and accused of joining the Turks, “the monstrous infidels of Christ’s Cross.”<sup>47</sup> Hrvoje wrote a protest note to the Ragusan government stating that “the Lord King Ostoja is complaining” since their men stopped “the Turkish envoys and prohibited them from going across the sea.” In their defense, the Ragusans devised a diplomatic response, justifying themselves by claiming that this had happened without their prior knowledge, since they do not come “between the King of Bosnia, the King of Hungary, and the Turks,” and they promised that they would find and punish the guilty individuals.<sup>48</sup> As an additional pledge of their innocence, the Ragusans reminded King Ostoja of the case from August 1399, when they had allowed the Ottoman envoys “to pass across the sea” despite the protests of Dmitar, the son of Serbian King Vukašin, who advised them not to do so.<sup>49</sup> This document proves that cordial contacts and interactions between Ladislaus

45 “Prima pars de dicendo consilio maiori quia castellanus Almixe nobis scripsit et quia Pasayt nobis misit dictum quod nos sumus una cum Bossignanis qui sunt concordati cum Turchis, essere bonum quod nostri ambaxiatori reperirent se apud nostrum dominum nostro.” DAD, *Reformationes*, vol. 31, fol. 134v. June 31, 1399.

46 Kranzieritz, “Változások a Délvidéken Nikápoly után,” 97–108.

47 “[...] quod Hervoya vayvoda, veluti perfidus alumnus proditionis, ductus malignitate, nostrorum immensorum regalium beneficiorum immemor, se ipsum in cetum infidelium crucis Christi, Turcorum videlicet, connumerare et coadunare [...]” Smičiklas, *Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*, vol. 18. 345. June 2, 1398. For the biography of Voivode Hrvoje, see Šišić, *Vojvoda Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić*.

48 DAD, *Lettere di Levante*, vol. 1, fol. 23v; Stojanović, *Stare srpske povelje i pisma*, vol. 1. 448. April 8, 1400.

49 Ibid. Cf. Ćirković, “Poklad kralja Vukašina,” 153 n. 1; Fostikov, “O Dmitru Kraljeviću,” 56–57.

and Bayezid continued well after 1393, regardless of the failed attempt to create a union through marriage, and that they were facilitated by representatives of the pro-Angevin faction within the Bosnian Kingdom. These exchanges steadily became a genuine feature of political affairs at the time, and they clearly had repercussions for the whole of the Balkans and for Bosnia in particular.

The alliance between the Angevins and Ottomans was upheld even after the calamitous collapse of Sultan Bayezid's reign at the battle of Ankara in 1402 and Ladislaus' coronation in Zadar the following year. This is confirmed in a letter sent from Rome on August 28, 1406 by Peter von Wormditt († 1419), Procurator General of the Teutonic Knights and their representative at the Holy See, to Konrad von Jungingen († 1407), Grand Master of the Order. Wormditt informed his superior about the imperial and territorial ambitions of King Ladislaus, who aimed to surround Rome both by land and by sea. He then reported how he was told by a reliable source that one of the sultan's sons; the one who escaped Tamerlane, evidently Prince Suleyman, had his messengers at the court of King Ladislaus, where they offered him an alliance and friendship. Apparently, Suleyman was ready to employ all his might in helping Ladislaus become King of Hungary. The letter continues to say that the messengers were still in Italy at the time of writing and that it was not known whether an agreement would be reached. Moreover, Wormditt ended his communication by stating that on June 24 of the same year, while King Sigismund was engaged in peace negotiations with Austrian Herzog Wilhelm of Habsburg, Prince Suleyman arrived with a great army to the land of Bosnia, "which belongs to Hungary," where he caused great damage, dislodging more than 14,000 Christians in the process, and where he still remained with a considerable force.<sup>50</sup>

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50 "Der koning von Napels steet ganz dornoch, das her keiſer moge werden, und her hup am grosten an. Her meynte, her welde Rome czum ersten haben und den bobst, so hette hers als. Nu im das nicht mochte geen, nu hat her einen frede alhie gemacht, und wirt im der kirchen sodener czu czihen. Und gewynnet her Pyse in, so steet im Lucke czu gebot itczunt mit aller herschaft. So hat her noch von der kirchen wegen ynne Campania und Maritima. So mag her denne lichte Senas und Perus gewynnen und dornoch Viterbie. So hat her Rome alumb beyde czu wasser und czu lande, das her denne also, gan ims got, des ich nicht enhoffe, synen willen an aller dank behalden mag. Mir hat gesagt ein erbar apt us dem konigrich, der nu mit den sendeboten wider kegen Rome quam, das des Turken son, der dem Czemmerlan entging, als her dem alden oberlag, syne boten habe by dem konige von Napels und hat im gelobt: welle her einen bunt und fruntschaft mit im machen, her welle im helfen [mit] all synem vermogen, das her konig czu Ungern sulle werden. Und die boten syn noch im lande. Was her mit in wirt schaffen, des weys man noch nicht. Man sagt ouch alhie vor wor, das derselbe Turke an sand Johans tage, als der konig von Ungern mit herczoge Wilhelm von Osterich, dem got gnade, vorricht wurd, mit einem grossen heere in das lant czu Bosna, das kegen Ungern gehort, were gekomen und hette aldo groſen schaden gethon und hette (von dannen) me denn 14 000 cristen von

This means that by 1406, after a relatively short period of respite from Ottoman involvement in their internal affairs, the Bosnians once again began to rely on the Turks in their conflict with Sigismund.<sup>51</sup> In that sense, the King of Hungary was faced with a double threat, and there are numerous documents which indicate this cooperation by conflating and fusing the Bosnians and the Turks as one common enemy. The broader historical context and the sheer number of such examples show that this was not merely accusatory discourse or pejorative rhetoric which dishonestly labeled Bosnians as Turks, but that the two sides actually collaborated and assisted each other in their efforts to reach a common goal.<sup>52</sup> There are numerous instances in the preserved sources that mention this cooperation. For example, the “perfidious Turks” and “schismatic Bosnians” were grouped together, along with other enemies of and rebels against Sigismund, in two charters from April and October 1406,<sup>53</sup> and then on a few occasions in 1407,<sup>54</sup> at least a couple of times in 1408,<sup>55</sup> and throughout Sigismund’s reign, for instance in 1417, 1418, 1425, and 1437.<sup>56</sup> Regardless of

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dannen lassen tryben, und lege noch aldo mit großer macht.” Koeppen, *Die Berichte der Generalprokuratoren des Deutschen Ordens an der Kurie*, vol. 2. 79–80. August 28, 1406. For the activities and reign of Prince Suleyman in the Balkans, see Dennis, “The Byzantine–Turkish Treaty of 1403,” 72–88; Zachariadou, “Süleyman çelebî in Rumili and the Ottoman chronicles,” 268–96; Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezîd*, passim.

51 The wars between Bosnia and Hungary in the first decade of the fifteenth century are described by Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 119–68.

52 See the contrasting interpretation presented in: Lovrenović, “Modelle ideologischer Ausgrenzung,” 18–55.

53 “[...] per huiusmodi nostros infideles ceterosque nonnullos rebelles et inimicos nostros videlicet Horwoyam, Wlkchith ac Bosnenses [...] adducta quasi innumerabili pluralitate perfidorum turcorum et Bosnensium scismaticorum ad dominum et possessiones ipsorum fidelium nostrorum, qui commissis ibidem predis, spoliis, rapinis, adulteriis, stupris, hominum interemptionibus, tandemque totale dominium et possessiones in favillam redactis abscesserunt [...]” Thallóczy and Barabás, *Codex diplomaticus comitum de Blagay*, 220. April 22, 1406. “Quia nonnulli Turcy, Boznenses et alii nostri emuli et rebelles coadunati regnum nostrum latesscentes et devastantes iam hostiliter subintrarunt [...]” *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. 2/1 no. 5036. October 4, 1406.

54 “[...] vtputa Turcorum et aliarum perfidarum nacionum, nec non Paterinorum Boznensium a parte Regni Bozne [...]” Wenzel, “Okmánytár Ozorai Pipo történetéhez,” 25. December 7, 1407. “[...] nonnullorum Infidelium Crucis Christi nostrorum, vt puta et regni nostri aemulorum, signanterque Turcorum, et Boznensium [...]” *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae*, vol. 10/4. 609. December 9, 1407.

55 “[...] contra nonnullos nostros et regni nostri emulos, videlicet Boznenses et turcos [...]” Barabás, *Codex diplomaticus Teleki de Szék*, vol. 1. 339–40. May 26, 1408. “[...] dictorum nostrorum emulorum Turcorum videlicet et Boznensium tirannicam rebellionem [...]” Šišić, “Nekoliko isprava,” 319. December 29, 1408.

56 “[...] demum vero pridem in exercitu nostro regali contra nonnullos nostros et ipsius regni aemulos, vtputa Turcas Bosnenses et alias nationes barbaricas pro tunc instaurato [...]” *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae*, vol. 10/5. 810. September 29, 1417. “[...] primum contra et adversus perfidissimos Turcom, crucis Christi inimicos, et alias nationes barbaricas et scismaticas, versus partes inferiores Themesienses, demum vero

whether Sigismund was referring to battles from the first decade of the fifteenth century or speaking in general, the idea that Bosnians and Turks worked together stuck in his mind long after these conflicts had passed.

The implications of King Ladislaus' collusion with the Turks left an indelible mark on Bosnia, extending even beyond his own interest in the region. After Sigismund's decisive victory over his enemies in 1408, which forced Hrvoje Vukčić to switch sides and submit himself to his authority, Ladislaus sold his possessions and royal rights over Dalmatia to Venice for 100,000 ducats, basically abandoning his trans-Adriatic ambitions.<sup>57</sup> However, irrespective of this inglorious outcome of the decades-long struggle to support Angevin aspirations for the throne of the Hungarian Kingdom, some Bosnians refused to come to terms with the political reality of the time. They continued to maintain close connections to Ladislaus, and through him with the Ottomans. A case in point is Bosnian Voivode Sandalj Hranić. In 1409, he sent a messenger to Ragusa to explain that King Ladislaus was still his "friend" and that he would be willing to perform any honorable service for him, stating that he could rely on military aid both from Apulians and from the Turks.<sup>58</sup> And his Ottoman ties did not end there. On one occasion in 1411 when Sigismund complained to the Pope against the Venetians who had purchased the Dalmatian fortress of Ostrovica from Voivode Sandalj, the Venetians defended their position by declaring that they had bought the castle in the interest of the whole of Christendom, because Sandalj had many Turks and could have just as well have given Ostrovica to them.<sup>59</sup> In the same year, the Venetians sent a letter to the commune of Kotor

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contra Boznenses, puta tunc nostros infideles et rebelles [...]” Fejérpataky, *Magyar czimeres emlékek*, vol. 1. 49. March 29, 1418. “[...] contra sevissimos Turcos, crucis christiani persecutores, presertim vero adversus Bosnenses, nostros eotunc et regni nostri notorios emulos et rebelles [...]” Thallóczy, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens und Serbiens im Mittelalter*, 354. September 5, 1425. “[...] quod dum alias quondam Zandal wayuoda de Bozna paterinae iniquitatis alumpnus, non paucis Boznensibus necnon Turcis, crucis Christi et totius orthodoxae fidei persecutoribus, nostris videlicet et regnorum nostrorum aemulis caterva falerata congregatis [...]” Thallóczy and Áldásy, *A Magyarország és Szerbia közti összeköttetések oklevéltára*, 112. September 27, 1437. Cf. Lovrenović, “Modelle ideologischer Ausgrenzung,” 18–55.

57 Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant, 1204–1571*, vol. 1. 403.

58 Stojanović, *Stare srpske povelje i pisma*, vol. 1. 276–77. August 5, 1409. Cf. Kurtović, *Veliki vojvoda bosanski Sandalj Hranić Kosača*, 195.

59 “[...] quod dictum castrum Ostroviz non accepimus in displicentiam dicti domini regis, sed habentes et cognoscentes, illud esse in manibus cuiusdam domini Sandalis capitanei Bosinensis, qui habet multos Turcos secum, et cuius Sandalis dictum castrum ex patrimonio erat, ne capitaret ad manus aliorum et potissime Teucrorum, pro bono universe christianitatis et pro bono nostri domini illud emimus [...]” Ljubić, *Listine*, vol. 6. 139–40. February 10, 1411. Cf. Šunjić, *Bosna i Venecija*, 131; Kurtović, *Veliki vojvoda bosanski Sandalj Hranić Kosača*, 195.

telling them that Sandalj had with him, “as it is said,” 7,000 Turks.<sup>60</sup> By that time, however, the situation for Sandalj became untenable, and he soon joined the camp of King Sigismund.

### *Concluding Remarks*

Although the envisaged wedding never took place, there is no question that messengers were exchanged between the courts of Gaeta and Edirne, resulting in a real and tangible Angevin-Ottoman alliance that was executed through concrete military cooperation between Ladislaus’ representatives in the Balkans and their Ottoman counterparts in the form of combined attacks against King Sigismund and his subjects. Viewed in the appropriate historical context, the accusations that King Sigismund directed against Ladislaus and his Balkan allies blaming them for cooperating with the Turks, which were previously waved off as possibly biased or unfounded allegations, turn out to have been grounded in reality and based on actual events.

Possibly the key problem in the whole issue is whether the idea of an alliance with the Turks came from Ladislaus himself or from his followers in Dalmatia, Croatia, and Bosnia. More research will have to be done in order to answer this question properly, but in the geopolitical context of the time, an alliance with the Turks was a natural and rational step for both Ladislaus and his Balkan supporters. This was, in fact, a classic case of political opportunism, in which Ladislaus expected that the sultan’s military help would be a useful tool in achieving full control of what he believed rightfully belonged to him. The language of his letters to the sultan extended beyond mere diplomatic courtesy and showed his readiness to achieve an alliance at almost any cost. It was an unscrupulous Machiavellian move, a century before Machiavelli, in which the end justified the means. In that sense, the Holy Crown of St. Stephen was deemed a prize worthy enough to vindicate even “collusion with infidels.”

The local nobility in the Balkans was aware that the sultan disposed of seemingly endless resources and had already by that time began directing his armies north across the Danube, through Bulgaria and Serbia. If they could not beat the Ottomans, they could join them and try to achieve their own goals by launching joint attacks against Hungary from Bosnia and Croatia. On the other

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60 “[...] et precipue nunc, quum Sandali habet secum, ut dicitur, VII mille Turchorum [...]” Ljubić, *Listine*, vol. 6. 139–40. May 25, 1411. Cf. Kurtović, *Veliki vojvoda bosanski Sandalj Hranić Kosača*, 196.

hand, the Ottoman Turks sought to impose themselves on the Christian lords by pursuing a policy of *divide et impera*, supporting conflicts among them and not leaving them much choice other than to call upon Ottoman assistance in their internecine struggles. As Ladislaus and his court in Italy were almost completely reliant on local political factors in the Balkans, it seems far more likely that plans for this military and diplomatic collaboration with the Turks were devised among Ladislaus' overseas advisors. If it can indeed be proved that the idea originated from Croat or Bosnian nobles, particularly from the Horváti or Hrvatinić brothers, who might have initially suggested it to Ladislaus, then this would just highlight the depth of the chasm between Sigismund and his rebels, who evidently preferred working with the aggressive Sultan Bayezid over being ruled by the “Czech swine,” as they affectionately referred to the King of Hungary.

Regardless of whether the idea came from his Balkan or Italian counsellors, Ladislaus' decision to reach out to Sultan Bayezid had practical effects and far reaching consequences, and it greatly impacted overall political events in Southeast Europe at the end of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth. This was especially the case in Bosnia, where supporting Ladislaus eventually came to mean sustaining an open and public alliance with the Turks, as well as potentially forever being tainted with the stain of collaboration and ultimately alienating those from whom help was needed most when Bosnia struggled against the very same Turks at a later stage. It proved to be a naive, narrow-minded policy which involved the sacrifice of long-term goals for short-term benefit, as this outlandish political adventure ended in 1408 in spectacular failure for Ladislaus, when he was forced to retreat definitively from his ambitions of ruling over Hungary. By doing so, he had abandoned his Bosnian supporters, whose land had already become a base for advanced Ottoman conquests towards the west and north. Irrespective of its failed final outcome, this strategic three-way alliance left a profound impression on the history of the region. Further exposing the mechanisms by which it functioned would help us understand the actions and conduct of all those who were involved in the struggle for political supremacy at the time and would hopefully allow us to arrive at a clearer image of the events which decisively shaped the political landscape of the Balkans for decades and even centuries to come

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