

**Műveltség és társadalmi szerepek:
arisztokraták
Magyarországon és Európában**

**Learning, Intellect and Social Roles:
Aristocrats
in Hungary and Europe**

SZERKESZTETTE:

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TARTALOM

ELŐSZÓ (OROSZ ISTVÁN)	7
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MŰVELTSÉG ÉS TÁRSADALMI SZEREPEK A KÖZÉPKORBAN / LEARNING, INTELLECT AND SOCIAL ROLES IN THE MIDDLE AGES

JEAN-LUC FRAY: Le mécénat artistique des ducs de Bourbon (XV ^{ème} et début XVI ^{ème} siècles): entre culture du Nord, Italie et France centrale	13
KLAUS VAN EICKELS: Military Orders and their importance for the demonstration of noble status in the later Middle Ages	29
ROMAN CZAJA: Patriziat in den Hansestädten im Spätmittelalter: soziale Mobilität und Identität.....	37
LÁSZLÓ PÓSÁN: Ritterliche Kultur in spätmittelalterlichen Litauen	51
ADÁM NOVÁK: The seal usage of Hungarian aristocrats in the 15 th century	59
ATTILA BÁRÁNY: English chivalric insignia in Hungary	73
LÁSZLÓ SOLYMOSI: Conflict treatment in the estates of Bishop Albert Vetési and a lay landlord Miklós Újlaki	97
ISTVÁN DRASKÓCZY: Die Familie Szapolyai und der Handel in Oberungarn am Anfang des 16. Jahrhunderts (Krakau und Ofen)	111
ATTILA GYÖRKÖS: Aventurier sans scrupule ou héros national? La carrière de Christophe Frangepan, aristocrate de la Renaissance	121
BORBÁLA KELÉNYI: Hungarian aristocratic women's last wills from the Late Middle Ages (1440–1526). Additional data to their piety and social relationships	133
RADU LUPESCU: Social hierarchy and heraldic culture in Transylvania in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries	155
MARCELA DOMENOVÁ: Library catalogue from Sophie Berzeviczy's estate, Albert Berzeviczy's widow (a unique fragment of the family library from the second half of the 19 th century)	173
WACŁAW WIERZBIENIEC – JOANNA ELŻBIETA POTACZEK: Participation of the aristocracy in the development of material and spiritual culture, exemplified by the Dzieduszycki family of Zarzecze	187

MŰVELTSÉG ÉS TÁRSADALMI SZEREPEK A KORA ÚJKORBAN ÉS A MODERN KORBAN / LEARNING, INTELLECT AND SOCIAL ROLES IN THE EARLY MODERN AND MODERN AGES

OROSZ ISTVÁN: Szőlőbirtokos arisztokraták Tokaj-Hegyalján	215
HORN ILDIKÓ: A Báthoryak felfutása és térvészése az 1560-as évek Erdélyében.....	225

VARGA SZABOLCS: Erdődyek, Kerecsényiek, Rátkayak. A szlavóniai arisztokrácia felemelkedése és bukása a 16. században	237
MÁTYÁS RAUSCH PETRA: A Herberstein család modernizációs tevékenysége Nagybányán (1581–1597)	253
GÁLFI EMŐKE: Simai Borbély György	265
BOGDÁNDI ZSOLT: Az erdélyi ítélőmesterek társadalmi helyzetéről	281
SZABADI ISTVÁN: Adalékok Ecsedi Báthory István (1555–1605) mecenatúrájához ...	293
OBORNI TERÉZ: Adalékok Bethlen István politikai, kormányzati és udvari szerepéhez Bethlen Gábor uralkodásának idején	301
JENEY-TÓTH ANNAMÁRIA: Adalékok az udvari familiárisi karrierhez I. Rákóczy György udvarában, különös tekintettel az 1630–1638 közötti évekre	319
KÓNYA PÉTER: Királyhelvec arisztokrata birtokosai	333
KÓNYA ANNAMÁRIA: Néhány adat az arisztokrácia rekatolizációs tevékenységéhez	343
KÓNYA ANNAMÁRIA: Báthory Zsófia rekatolizációs tevékenysége	351
KÓNYA PÉTER: Arisztokrácia és a nemesség szerepe az eperjesi kollégium alapításában.....	361
OROSZ ISTVÁN: Templom és földes uraság egy hegyaljai mezővárosban.	373
BALOGH JUDIT: Apor István, a 17. század végi erdélyi arisztokrata prototípusa	383
BAGI ZOLTÁN PÉTER: Donat Johann Heißler von Heiterstein és Zrínyi Ilona cseréjének történetéhez	401
PAPP IMRE: A francia arisztokrácia a régi rend alkonyán	417
IFJ. BARTA JÁNOS: Arisztokraták Mária Terézia mezőgazdasági társaságaiban	431
KURUCZ GYÖRGY: Kényszerhelyzet és vízió: gróf Festetics György és a magyarországi agrárszakoktatás a 18–19. század fordulóján	451
SIPOS GÁBOR: A 18. századi erdélyi református arisztokrácia vallási öntudatáról	465
EGYED EMESE: Művelt nemesek és tudós pártfogoltak könyvkiadási szokásai a 18. századi Erdélyben	473
PAPP KLÁRA: Egy arisztokrata család politikájának megalapozója: Jósika Antal kolozsi főispán tervezetei	485
PÁL JUDIT: Arisztokraták a császár és király szolgálatában: Erdély két „kormányzója” a 19. század közepén	501
BÁNYAI BALÁZS: Az ipargróf másik arca. Gróf Zichy Jenő, a művészetek és a tudomány mecénása	519
SZENDREI ÁKOS: „Méltóságosok” és népképviselő. Arisztokrata politikusok országos és regionális jelenléte a dualizmus kori képviselőházban	547
ZSOLDOS ILDIKÓ: Nevelés és oktatói tevékenység a szatmári Vécseyeknél	559
EGYED ÁKOS: Gróf Mikó Imre erdélyiségéről	573
PÜSKI LEVENTE: Sporttól a politikáig: Andrássyak a 20. század első felének magyar közéletében	583
A KÖTET SZERZŐI	603

**SOCIAL HIERARCHY
AND HERALDIC CULTURE IN TRANSYLVANIA
IN THE FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURIES***

The coat of arms, as a particular symbol of a person, a family or a community was increasingly accepted even from its appearance in the Middle Ages. At that time it was used first of all on seals, but there were several other heraldic supports too. The present paper focuses on the heraldic display in architectural context, at what extent it was able to reflect social differences in medieval society.

The first spectacular user of heraldic devices in Transylvania is a family originated from abroad, but holding offices in this region: the Szécsi family. András Szécsi and his nephew, Domokos Szécsi were bishops of Transylvania with centre in Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár) for about half a century (between 1320–1368), and they played a determining role in the history of the bishopric.¹ In the second decade of the fourteenth century the Chapter was looking for an influential member of the aristocracy who was able to protect the interests of the bishopric, in a period of great disturbances in the Hungarian history. András Szécsi seemed to be the proper person, but later, after his election, he proved to be a violent man, who was much more a knight than a clerk. His nephew, Domokos has played a more constructive role in the history of the bishopric than his uncle. It is very likely that he was the person who commissioned a gisant in the memory of his uncle. Another fragment, closely related to the first one, was probably part of the funerary monument of Domokos himself.² Both of them represents the earliest examples of gisant type funerary monuments of Hungary, and clearly demonstrates the fortunate destiny of the cathedral of Alba Iulia, which, opposite to other medieval cathedrals of Hungary, was preserved. The funerary monument of András Szécsi displays the coat of arms of the family too: double headed eagle displayed, wings inverted. It was not displayed on an ostentatious manner but

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¹ Temesváry, János, *Erdély középkori püspökei*. Cluj-Kolozsvár, 1922. 141–175.

² Varga Livia – Lövei, Pál, “Funerary Art in Medieval Hungary”, = *Acta Historiae Artium* 25, 1990–1992, 3–4: 120 [hereinafter Varga – Lövei, Funerary Art]; Sarkadi, Márton, „*s folytatva magát a régi művet.*” *Tanulmányok a gyulafehérvári székesegyház és püspöki palota történetéből*. Budapest, 2010. 184–185 [hereinafter Sarkadi, Gyulafehérvár].

was placed in the lower-right corner of the tomb, forming a well-structured ensemble with the recumbent effigy of the bishop and the elegant inscription. One of the Szécsis continued the construction of the cathedral. At that time the church was already finished, only the western towers being under construction. However, the trace of their intervention can be observed not on the towers, but on the two western vaults of the central nave. The arms of the Szécsi family, placed on the key stone of the vault hints at the reconstruction of the vault in this part of the cathedral.³ Until the mid fourteen century only royal arms are known in the context of church architecture. Based on the preserved examples, the cathedral of Alba Iulia seems to be the first one where the heraldry of private persons has appeared. The arms decorating the key stone is a remarkable example how proud were the Szécsis of their achievements, considering the seat of the bishopric almost their private property, being in charge of it for several decades. Probably this was not an isolated phenomenon. Similar tendency using heraldry in the context of ecclesiastical architecture could have been identified on other cathedrals of Hungary, if they would have been preserved or not so heavily restored during the past two centuries.

The next stop of our survey is the parish church Reghin (Szászrégen). In the fourteenth century this important settlement was the centre of an estate made up of twenty-four villages, being in the property of the Losonci family. There is no evidence how the family entered in the property of it, but it was in the possession of all of the three branches of the family. Although on the territory of the estate they built two castles (Mentővár and Idecs), Reghin has remained the centre of it, where the family had its own manor house. According to an early inscription that has survived, the parish church was finished around 1330.⁴ The commissioner of this church was Tamás Losonci, who between 1315–1320 was the Count of the Székely. An interesting moment in the history of the church has occurred half a century later, during the 1380s, when the then lord of the property, László Losonci tried to obtain the consent of the pope to transform the parish church into an Augustinian monastery. This was probably related to a residential plan for the family, close to the church. The plan was to raise the nearby Saint George chapel to the status of the parish church. According to the later sources everything remained unchanged, but several architectural features clearly demonstrate that some construction activity was carried out on it in the 1380s. First of all I would like to call the attention to a coat of arms placed on the key stone from the south nave of the church, and related to this construction period. The triangular shield is facing sinister and it is charged with a griffin sergeant. Above the shield a pot helmet was placed and some traces of the crest and the mantling are preserved.

³ Sarkadi, Gyulafehérvár, 106–107.

⁴ Entz, Géza, *Erdély építészete a 14–16. században*. Kolozsvár, 1996. 55, 454.

Considering its shape and style it obviously follows the heraldic tradition of the Anjou period, and together with the rest of architectural carvings demonstrates the existence of a separate construction phase at the end of the fourteenth century. Concerning the person of László Losonci who is mentioned in the written records there are two possibilities. He could be the one who started his career as castellan of Bistrița (Beszterce) and was Ban of Slavonia between 1387–1389. But it is very likely that he is László from the Dezsőfi branch of the family who was Voivode of Transylvania for about two decades, between 1376–1389.⁵ Thus it is not surprising that for the first time in Transylvania private heraldry involved in ecclesiastical architecture has appeared in a church under the patronage of the Losonci family. This was the most important family from this region, who can be unequivocally considered member of the Hungarian aristocracy. They were holding several times high offices in the kingdom, and was the first family in Transylvania having in their property tree castles at the same time.

Thus, the beginning of private heraldry used in ecclesiastical architecture is related to two families, both members of the aristocracy. However, this situation was about to change soon. An early and beautiful example for this is the church of Mălâncrav (Almakerék) under the patronage of Apafi family.⁶ In the fourteenth century the family was in the property of about 10–15 villages. Their members were in charge of some minor offices at the level of the county or judges of the nobles (*iudex nobilium*). Following the visit of Transylvania by King Louis I in 1366, they appeared among the courtly knights of the king, but no higher offices they were holding. Greater ambitions seem to had Miklós Apafi who between 1414–1418 was appointed by King Sigismund castellan of castles from south Hungary: Srebrenik (Szrebernik), Vranduk és Dubovac (Dobóc).⁷ For a while he was Count of Biertan (Berethalom). It seems that the career of Miklós Apafi was the highlight of the family history, because in the next century they were missing even from among the courtly knights. Nevertheless, they built a highly demanding church, which almost rivalled the Losoncis' church in Reghin. There is no doubt that Mălâncrav played an important role among the family estates, where they set up a manor house, and the church also served as burial place for the family. The church was built at the beginning of the fourteenth century, and shortly after it was decorated with mural paintings of great quality. It was transformed around 1400, when a new choir was built, being also decorated with

⁵ Engel, Pál, *Magyarország világi archontológiája 1301–1457*. II. Budapest, 1996. 148–149 [hereinafter Engel, Archontológia].

⁶ Gogâltan, Anca – Dóra, Sallay, "The Church of Mălâncrav and the Holy Blood Chapel of Nicholas Apa", In. *Középkori egyházi építészet Erdélyben*. Satu Mare, 2002, 181–202; Gogâltan, Anca, "The Self: Religious and Noble Identity in Late Medieval Transylvania", = *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai. Historia*, 58, 2013, 49–77.

⁷ Engel, Archontológia. I. 306, 435, 463.

high quality frescoes. Thanks to its well preserved murals, it counts among those churches, which still retain a particular medieval atmosphere. The eastern bay of the choir vault, right above the main altar holds a key stone decorated with the arms of the Apafi family. Actually it displays only the bucket helmet, the mantling and the crest. A writing around the arms mentions a person called Apa, the rest of the words could not be interpreted. The whole achievement is quite archaic. This is demonstrated by the majuscule writing, the type of the helmet, and the design of the achievement, which follows the design of the fourteenth century so called helmet-seals. Based on a coloured arms of the Apafis, displayed on the predella of the winged altar of the church, one can reconstruct the tinctures of the key stone arms: the mantling was probably gules, the crest vert.⁸ The commissioner of the new choir was probably Apa III, mentioned by the inscription, and his son, Miklós Apafi, who was a prominent member of the family. To the age of the latter can be dated the new mural paintings in the choir. We know about him that in 1424 he founded a chapel in honour of the Holy Blood. Thus, the church of Mălâncrav represents the taste and the possibilities of a middle-class noble family, who were not able to reach the high demand of the Losoncis, but definitely represented above the average the patronage activity of the middle-class nobility.

During the fifteenth century the heraldic display was embraced by the lower nobility too. A good example in Transylvania is the case of Kakas family who had only a one village property in Kolozs County, Boteni (Botháza).⁹ Only two generations of the family are known from the mid fifteenth century. In 1458 the male line of the family has already died out. The church of Boteni was built at the end of the thirteenth century. An armorial tablet placed above the main entrance to the church mentions about a building activity around 1450. The tablet displays the arms of the Kakas family: a sword palewise and two cocks respectant. The shield is placed in the same barbed quatrefoil frame and to sinister the letter “i” or “l” can be deciphered. Since the letters do not refer to the owner of the coats of arms they probably have another meaning or message. The patron of this small church was Imre Kakas a noble from Transylvania, one of the János Hunyadi`s supporters. He has probably rebuilt the church at some extent, and placed this memorial plaque on that occasion. The career of Imre Kakas and the quality of the relief clearly reflects the social statues of the patron family who

⁸ Sarkadi Nagy, Emese, *Local Workshops – Foreign Connections. Late Medieval Altarpieces from Transylvania*. Thorbecke, 2012. 173–175.

⁹ Benkő, Elek, “A botházai református templom építési feliratai”, = *Erdélyi Múzeum* 56, 1994, 3–4: 56–61; Lupescu, Radu. “A kolozsvári Szent Mihály-templom nyugati kapuja”, In. *Arhitectura religioasă medievală din Transilvania – Középkori egyházi építészet Erdélyben*. V. Satu Mare, 2012. 185.

commissioned the reconstruction and demonstrates the strong influence of the patronage activity of the aristocracy.

The case of the four families presented above illustrates the process, as in addition to the usage of heraldry in administration, the heraldic culture has become more diverse and penetrated into the lower strata of the noble society. While this process culminated in the fifteenth century there were always new tools to increase the range of the heraldic display. In this sense come to the fore beside the single coat of arms the so called series of arms, which for the first time appeared in the context of the royal court architecture on the territory of Hungary. We know from descriptions about the existence of a so called Heraldic Tower set up near the Sigismund palace in Buda Castle, displaying probably a complex heraldic program.¹⁰ An early example of heraldic series in Transylvania can be found in the church of Vingard (Vingárd) placed under the patronage of the Vingárti Geréb family.¹¹ They started to acquire landed properties in Transylvania from the beginning of the fourteenth century, and in the next century they became one of the wealthiest families in this region. The marriage of János Geréb with Zsófia, the sister-in-law of Governor János Hunyadi, strongly influenced the career of him, being the Castellan of Gurghiu (Görgény) from 1448, later Voivode of Transylvania and finally vice governor. At Vingard was the most important residence of the family, where they built an imposing church. According to an inscription placed on the western façade of the church János Geréb was the patron who finished the construction of it. The church was lavishly decorated with heraldic arms. Especially the choir of the church calls our attention, where the arms of the Geréb, Szilágyi and Hunyadi family was displayed on the key stones, alluding to their relationship. The first arms is quarterly: 1st quarter barry of eight (for Hungary); 2nd quarter double-cross (for Hungary); 3rd quarter three leopards' faces, tongued and crowned (for Dalmatia); 4th quarter a lion rampant, crowned, holding a crown (for the County of Bistrița). The second shield is charged with a lion, crowned, tongued, naissant from a crown. The base is barry of four (for the Geréb family). The third shield is charged with a goat horned and unguled, naissant from fire, touching a twig (for the Szilágyi family). The fourth arms displays a raven (corbie) with a ring in his beak, holding a twig. To sinister chief a crescent reversed moon and a five pointed estoil. The order of the arms has a particular meaning and follows a social hierarchy. Thus the series starts right above the main altar, which was the most significant place in the altar with the arms of King Matthias, and continues with the rest of the arms. On the second place is the heraldic symbol of the patron János Geréb, on the third the arms of his wife

¹⁰ Balogh, Jolán, *A művészet Mátyás király udvarában*. I. Budapest, 1966. 47.

¹¹ Gündisch, Gustav – Harald Krasser – Theobald Streitfeld, "Dominium, Kirche und Burg von Weingartskirchen", In: Gustav Gündisch – Albert Klein – Harald Krasser – Theobald Streitfeld (eds.): *Studien zur siebenbürgischen Kunstgeschichte*. Köln – Wien: Böhlau, 1976. 134–192.

Zsófia Szilágyi, and finally on the fourth place the arms of the Hunyadis. The relationship between the Gerébs and Szilágyis is reflected by the vault of the sacristy too, where on one of the key stones was placed the arms of the Geréb family, on the other one the arms of the Szilágyi family. The rich heraldic program of the church of Vingard was not a unique case in Transylvania, but followed a tendency established by the patronage activity of János Hunyadi.

Starting with the humble village church of Boteni and continuing with the prestigious church of Vingard our attention is drawn now by the personality of János Hunyadi, his patronage and heraldic display. He was an exceptional character, in many ways a pioneer in the History of Hungary, and played an important role in spreading the heraldic culture and establishing new standards. Its source was first of all the refined courtly culture of King Sigismund where he spent several years, and the court of the Visconti in Milan, where he stayed for almost two years. All this experience gained from abroad was implemented at Hunedoara (Vajdahunyad) where in the 1440s he started to build a magnificent residence.¹² Among its particular features is a mural painting depicting fourteen coats of arms covering the wall of the so-called Matthias Loggia. It is a remarkable testimony of Hunyadi's aristocratic display, and gives an insight into the political life of the social elite of the Hungarian Kingdom.¹³

The Heraldic Wall consisted of two registers. The upper part was a row of fourteen armorial bearings, the lower was made up of a bushy vegetal ornamentation. Starting from left to right the following blazons were depicted:

1. King Wladislaw I Jagiello (1440–1444). Quarterly. 1st field gules, eagle displayed Argent, armed, beaked and crowned or (for Poland); 2nd field barry of eight, Argent and gules (for Hungary); 3rd field gules, double cross Argent on three hills vert (for Hungary); 4th field gules, an armoured knight armed, mounted on a horse salient, holding in his dexter hand a sword above his head Argent. A shield Azure hangs on the sinister shoulder of the knight, charged with a double cross or. The horse saddles, straps, and belts Azure (for Lithuania).

2. The second coat of arms refers to the Hédervári family (paly of six, gules and Argent). In the mid-fifteenth century this family provided some very influential and important officeholders, such as Imre Hédervári, Ban of Macsó (Mačva), László Hédervári Bishop of Eger, but first and foremost Lőrinc Hédervári

¹² Lupescu, Radu, "Vajdahunyad Castle", In. Péter Farbaky et al (eds), *Matthias Corvinus, the King. Tradition and Renewal in the Hungarian Royal Court 1458–1490*. Exhibition catalogue. Budapest, 2008. 186–187.

¹³ Lupescu, Radu, "Lay and Ecclesiastic in the Heraldic Representation on the Matthias Loggia in Hunedoara Castle", = *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolya. Historia* 58, 2013. 31–48.

(†1447) Palatine of Hungary (1437–1447).¹⁴ Being placed right next to the coat of arms of the king, it is very likely that it refers to the palatine of Hungary.

3. The owner of the third coat of arms was the Garai family (azure, a serpent glissant, crowned or, who appears to have an orb with cross in his mouth or). At that time the head of the family was László Garai (†1459), who held some very important positions, but beyond these offices he represented one of the most influential families of Hungary, his ancestors being Palatines of Hungary for a long period. He was Ban of Macsó (1431–1441, 1445–1447), and Palatine of Hungary (1447–1458). László was one of the leading figures of the party opposing János Hunyadi.

4. The fourth blazon belongs to the Újlaki family (Party per fess. Chief azure, a fess gules. Base gules. Overall an Angel azure, naissant from a crown or, winged, crowned or). It was represented by Miklós Újlaki († 1477) who had a career strongly connected with that of János Hunyadi. They were appointed together Ban of Szörény (Severin), chief captain of Nándorfehérvár (Belgrade), Voivode of Transylvania and Count of the Székely. Beside these offices, he was Ban of Macsó for a long period (1438–1458) and count of several counties of Hungary.

5. The next blazon places the Csáki family in the fifth position (azure, a man's half-length-portrait, haired and bearded or, calpac and overcoat azure). Its members held some important offices during the reign of King Sigismund. In the next period only Ferenc Csáki († cc. 1470) managed to be appointed Count of the Székely (1439–1440, 1446–1448) and count of some other counties. Ferenc was a trusted man of János Hunyadi, who joined the governor in his campaign to Kosovo in 1448.

6. The sixth coat of arms belongs to the Losoncis (gules, a griffin sergent sable, winged or), the wealthiest family in Transylvania. During the civil war in 1440–1441 they sided with the Habsburgs, and after their defeat the Losoncis were neglected by the Jagiellonian royal court. Until 1441 Dezső Losonci was the Voivode of Transylvania, an office granted in the same year by Wladislaw I to János Hunyadi and Miklós Újlaki. In the mid-1440s the conflict between János Hunyadi and the Losoncis appears to have been settled. The nephew of Dezső Losonci, Benedek, joined the army of János Hunyadi in 1448, and died at the Battle of Kosovo.

7. The owner of the seventh coat of arms was the Rozgonyi family (azure, a cygnet displayed or, naissant from a crown or). Many of its members held important offices. Among them Simon Rozgonyi was Bishop of Eger (1440–1444) and his

¹⁴ Offices are specified based on the archaeontology made by Pál Engel, *Archontológia, passim*.

brother, György († cc. 1457) Judge royal (1441–1446). Because on this side of the Heraldic Wall are placed the coats of arms of the lay main office holders, it is very likely that this blazon refers to György Rozgonyi, the Judge Royal of Hungary.

8. It is interesting to observe the presence of the armoury of the Bánfi of Alsólendva family in the eighth position (azure, an ox's head caboshed or). They held no important offices in the first half of the fifteenth century. In the middle of that century the family was represented by two brothers, István and Pál. Both of them were regarded as members of the social elite of Hungary, although they were not officeholders at that time. István Bánfi of Alsólendva died at the Battle of Kosovo in 1448.

9. Unknown

10. The tenth coat of arms refers to the owner of the castle, namely the Hunyadi family, more precisely to János Hunyadi (azure, a raven (corbie) displayed proper (sable) naissant from a crown or, a ring in his beak or). He, besides some other important offices, was Voivode of Transylvania (1440–1446) and after that Governor of Hungary (1446–1453).

11. Regarding the eleventh coat of arms there was no doubt even from the nineteenth century that it belonged to the Szécsi family (gules, two-headed eagle, crowned or. Above the arms a scarlet cardinal's hat having cords and tassels pendent on either side gules). However, only recent research has discovered the cardinal's hat above the heraldic shield, which offers a distinct clue to the person the blazon refers to. It is the blazon of Cardinal Dénes Szécsi (†1465) Archbishop of Esztergom (1440–1465).

12. Unknown

13. The thirteenth blazon can be attributed to András Kálnói, bishop of Pécs (1445–1455): azure, latin cross or, three fleur-de-lis or, two mullets of six points or.

14. The last one refers to Mátyás Gatalóci, Bishop of Veszprém (1440–1457): gules, three horseshoes Argent.

Considering the time interval specified for these officeholders the Heraldic Wall was painted very likely in 1445, or in 1446 at the latest. In this context especially the career of András Kálnói is a determining factor, being appointed bishop of Pécs in 1445. It was the year when the return of King Wladislaw I was still awaited after the severe defeat of the Christian army at the Battle of Varna. The deadline for return was set by the Hungarian Diet for the end of May 1445.

However, there are some clues for a slightly later dating, too. The presence of the armouries of the Hungarian barons in the castle of a noble family seems to be very strange in the context of the aristocratic display of that time. There is no other evidence in this respect among the Hungarian nobility. János Hunyadi was Voivode of Transylvania, in charge only of a region of the kingdom. He had no authority over the whole of Hungary. This armorial program fits better the next stage of his career, when he was elected Governor of Hungary in 1446. As governor, Hunyadi took over some elements of the royal display, and the heraldic presence of the barons in his castle is much more acceptable. This is the period when the position of the raven in his arms was slightly changed. Previously it was displayed mainly from profile, but now appeared frontally resembling much more an eagle. In this case the presence of the Jagiellonian coat of arms on the Heraldic Wall can be regarded as a retrospective insertion in this heraldic program, but even in this case the murals were painted not later than the mid-1440s.

Up to this time the Heraldic Wall has been dated to the period 1460–1480s, namely during the reign of King Matthias. This is the reason why, based on the arms, the whole construction that housed these paintings, that is the loggia, was called the Matthias Loggia. Considering the new dating of the arms, it seems that this loggia-like architecture now has to be dated a little bit earlier, and is related to the king's father, János Hunyadi.

The relatively accurate identification of the armorial bearings allows us not only to date the fresco, but some important conclusions can be reached concerning the meaning and the logic of this heraldic composition.

In the context of the interpretation of the Heraldic Wall it is very important to establish whether the whole row of the blazons was preserved, or it has some missing parts. Since the row starts with the royal coat of arms the beginning of it has no missing parts. The end of the row seems to be complete as well, because the frame of the last blazon is not adjoining a new one, but stops. Thus the fourteen coats of arms form a complete series, which is a rare record of medieval Hungarian heraldry.

The coats of arms were not placed randomly in the row of the Heraldic Wall but the position of them was carefully weighted. First of all, our attention is called to the blazon of János Hunyadi. It is larger than the rest of the arms and it has a more elaborate frame and ribbons with texts. It is noteworthy that the blazon was not placed either at the beginning of the row or in the middle of it. It was placed slightly to the right of the centre, probably just above the entrance to the main chamber of the first floor. Apart from this blazon, the row of the coats of arms has to be read from left to right. It starts with the arms of the king and continues with eight further arms until that of the Hunyadis. The common feature of these arms is that their owners are laymen, mostly principal officeholders, called barons in Hungary. The row continues on the right of the Hunyadi arms

with the coats of arms of the prelates. It means that this heraldic program is articulated by two main arms, that is the blazon of the king and of János Hunyadi. The rest of the arms make up two groups: the armouries of the barons and of the prelates. Not all the families present in this program were involved in the governance of the kingdom. The members of the Losonci and Bánfi of Alsólendva families held no offices at that time. But without doubt they were very influential. It is remarkable to note the presence of some of the most important political enemies of János Hunyadi, especially László Garai. This demonstrates clearly that the heraldic program was not based on the sympathies of János Hunyadi, but more likely on the political reality. Probably all of them were members of the Royal Council, although the council was made up of many more members.

The castle of Hunedoara was not the only construction commissioned by János Hunyadi where royal and noble heraldry was combined. In the cathedral of Alba Iulia there is a collection of three tombstones placed there in the memory of the members of the Hunyadi family. Two of them, as it looks now, are made up of different carvings and there is a huge debate concerning their actual appearance. The third one seems to be a homogeneous work made of reddish limestone. According to the inscription running on the margin of the sarcophagus this monument was commissioned by János Hunyadi, the Governor of Hungary, in the memory of his younger brother, called also János (*Iohannes Miles*), who died in 1440. Considering that the senior János was elected governor in 1446, it is evident that the monument was not commissioned right after the death of his brother, but about a decade later.¹⁵

It is a so called false sarcophagus because the interior of it did not was shaped out to accommodate the body of the deceased. The body of *Iohannes Miles* is represented on the lid of the tomb in high relief. Under his head, instead of a pillow, there is a beaked helmet with large, fringed cover. He wears a richly decorated mail. His waist is corded by a baldric with buckle on which hangs a sword (on the left side) and a dagger (on the right side). In the right hand holds a flag and tramples on a lion with the feet. The legs and the arms are missing and the face is destroyed. Three sides of the sarcophagus are carved on each of them being displayed a coat of arms. The first shield is charged with an eagle displayed. Although the last King of Hungary at that time was a Jagiellonian ruler (Wladislaw I), this is not the Jagiellonian eagle because it is not crowned but probably the royal eagle of King Sigismund of Luxemburg. The next shield displays the arms of the Hunyadi family: a raven (*corbie*) with a ring in his beak, holding a twig. The third shield is barry of eight for Hungary. All of the shields are placed in a barbed quatrefoil frame.

¹⁵ Varga – Lövei, *Funerary Art*, 136, 151–152.

The selection of the burial place for the members of the Hunyadi family, and the type of the funerary monument commissioned was carefully weighted. Although not exclusively, in Hungary the sarcophagus fitted first of all the tradition of the royal burials. János Hunyadi, as the governor of the kingdom, selected a type of funerary monument that fitted his new status, and it was not placed between the walls of a familial monastery, but in a cathedral, where he planned to set up a burial place for his family.

But heraldic innovations associated with János Hunyadi did not stop here. It is well known that the return of King Ladislaus V to Hungary was preceded by serious debates concerning the political power of János Hunyadi in the new context. As part of the compromise the king raised the district of Bistrița to the rank of a county, and bestowed it on János Hunyadi together with the title of perpetual count of Bistrița. Among the high nobility of Hungary Hunyadi was the first who held this title and put the basis of a new tradition ended up with the creation of a new title that is the count. On that occasion the king extended the traditional blazon of the Hunyadis, and divided it per cross: in the first and the fourth quarter was placed the former charge of the family arms, the second and third quarter was charged by a lion passant crowned, and holding a coronet.¹⁶ This was a novelty in the Hungarian heraldic usage since quartered shield were used by then only by the kings and some members of the Zilli/Cillei and Stiboricz/Stiborici family, but they brought their arms from abroad. The armorial letter described the symbolic meaning of the new charge, which was also something new in the tradition of these types of letters. The azure (white) field refers to the righteous soul of János Hunyadi, the red lion represented the hero himself who defended the crown and offered it up to the king. A beautiful phrasing of an extremely difficult political reorganization between the parties of the king and János Hunyadi taken place in 1452–1453. From that moment János Hunyadi was using this new arms, and a remarkable example of it was preserved in the castle of Hunedoara. In the mid 1450s was built a magnificent staircase, which connected the courtyard with the upper great hall. The new blazon was placed above the entrance to the staircase. It is an outstanding piece of work of our heraldic sculpture, and its quality is even increased by the presence of two tenant angels.

János Hunyadi, typically to a *homo novus*, got hold of every opportunity to strengthen his political influence, and to increase his landed properties. At the same time he used the whole set of royal and noble display to make clear his social status. The difficult political situation of the Hungarian Kingdom offered a great opportunity for him to succeed, and the coincidence of all these factors made it possible to be initiator of several new tendencies. He was not only very skilled in the art of war, but he was the first person elected governor of Hungary,

¹⁶ Farbaky, *Matthias Corvinus*, 180.

he built a unique residence for his family, and as the above presented examples demonstrate, he used heraldry as means of expression of his social status. The influence of his patronage spread soon among the rest of the Transylvanian nobility, and it is not accidental that half a century later in this region was built the chapel which retained the most complex heraldic display. It is the so called Lázói Chapel, built on the northern side of the cathedral of Alba Iulia, decorated with no less than 25 coats of arms. Thus the heraldic representation in architectural environment reached its apogee, which following the gothic period started to become much more moderate.



Fig. 1. The tombstone of bishop András Szécsi in the Cathedral of Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár)

Fig. 2. The coat of arms of András Szécsi from its tombstone





Fig. 3. Key stone from the central nave of the Cathedral of Alba Iulia displaying the arms of the Szécsi family

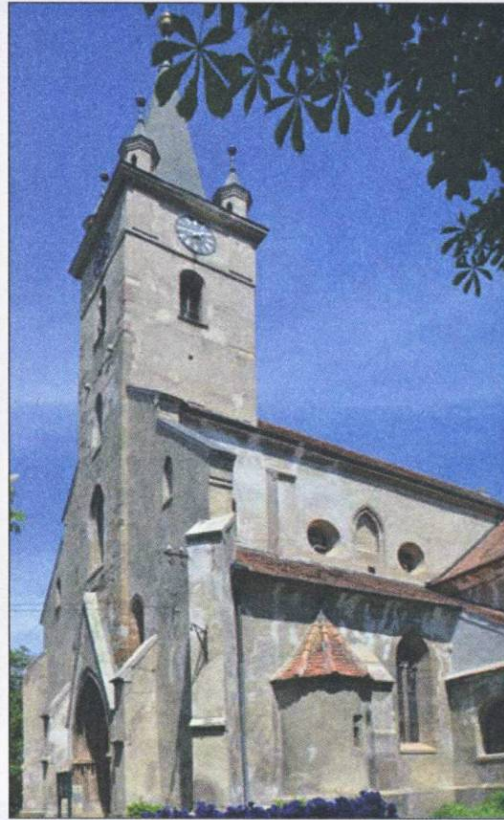


Fig. 4. The Lutheran church from Reghin (Szászrégen)



Fig. 5. Key stone from the south nave of the church of Reghin displaying the arms of the Losonci family



Fig. 6. The Lutheran church from Mălâncrav (Almakerék)



Fig. 7. Key stone from the choir of the church of Mălâncrav (Almakerék) displaying the arms of the Apafi family



Fig. 8. The coat of arms of the Apafi family



Fig. 9.
The Calvinist church from Boteni
(Botháza)



Fig. 10. Heraldic plaque placed above
the entrance to the church of Boteni (Botháza)
displaying the arms of the Kakas family



*Fig. 11.
The Lutheran church from Vingard (Vingárd)*



*Fig. 12.
The vaulting of the choir in the Vingard (Vingárd) church*



Fig. 13.
The arms displayed on the key stones from the vaulting
(King Matthias, Vingárti Geréb, Szilágyi, Hunyadi)



Fig. 14.
The castle of Hunedoara
(Vajdahunyad)



Fig. 15. The Heraldic Wall in the castle (reconstruction)



Fig. 16. The coat of arms of the Heraldic Wall

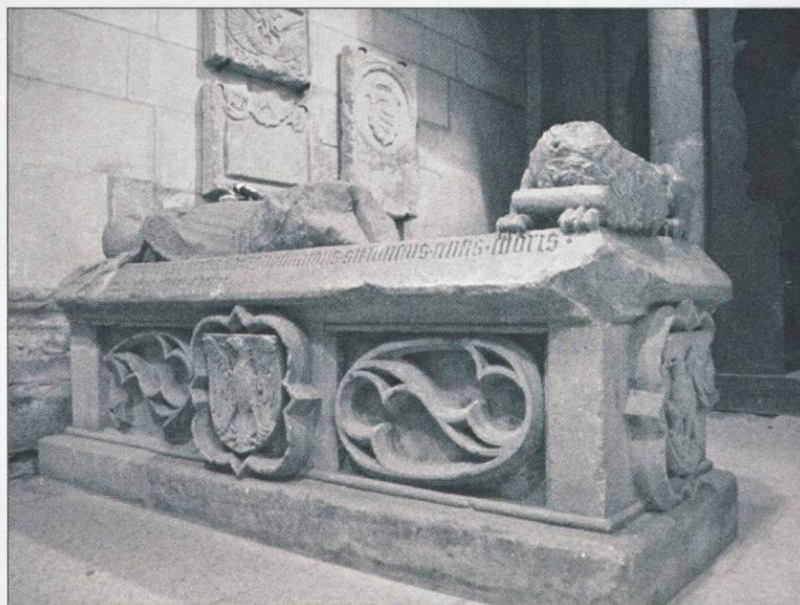


Fig. 17. The sarcophagus of János Hunyadi junior



Fig. 18. The blazon granted by King Ladislaus V to János Hunyadi in 1453



Fig. 19. The quarterly blazon of the Hunyadis in the castle of Hunedoara