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POWER-WINNING CONTEXTS AND STRATEGIES OF CHARLES I AND WENCESLAS III. A COMPARISON OF THEIR QUEST FOR THE HUNGARIAN THRONE

Introduction

In this paper I intend to investigate the methods and strategies Charles I and Wenceslas III used to win and secure the Hungarian throne for themselves through comparison. In 1301, Andrew III of the Árpád Dynasty died, leaving no immediate male heir. The Hungarian lords searched for a new king; some of them invited Wenceslas III, a son of Wenceslas II, king of Bohemia; others elected Charles I, a grandson of the Anjou Charles II, king of Naples.

The course of events in this royal competition has been well described in the scholarship. However, the prevailing approach has chiefly been to provide a chain of logically linked facts. Therefore, I will not focus on “what happened”, but rather delve into medieval political culture and the mechanisms of “international” politics by examining in what way, and by what means, both candidates to the throne worked to achieve their goal.

I begin with providing the context for this struggle for power with discussion of the gradual emergence of powerful lords in the Kingdoms of Bohemia and Hungary (with a brief look at the Polish lands). I point to the “expansion of lordship” as a driving force in the medieval “international” politics of this period in Central Europe, revealing correspondences between the “inter-state” and “intra-state” levels of conflicts. It seems the medieval “international” political system was populated with many actors possessing various degrees of power, who formed a multi-polar system, both within and outside kingdoms. This system could only function through meeting the sustained need to (re)negotiate the will to cooperate between the involved actors, and required from major players

considerable capabilities to convince. Consequently, there is an argument to be made against the traditional historiographical accounts based on the notion of a centrality-anarchy dichotomy, suggesting that multi-polarity is a concept that would more accurately describe the medieval political system in this region.

In the second part, a comparative analysis of the methods used by Charles I and Wenceslas III as they tried to promote their individual cases are introduced. Beginning with a short overview of the course of events to establish the historical background for further inquiry, I continue with reflections on the concept of multi-polarity and its applications. Comparison of the power-winning strategies employed by Charles I and Wenceslas III respectively displays striking similarities in terms of type and use. These parallels lead – in the final section of the paper – to the discussion about “moral authority” as a “power resource”, and its significance with regard to this particular struggle as well as with regard to a more general understanding of how medieval “international” politics functioned at this time and in this place.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century virtually nobody in Central Europe could foresee the abrupt and violent events coming to the regional political stage. The approaching storm represents a fairly unique period in European history when turbulent times – themselves a sign of impending changes – developed almost simultaneously in three adjacent areas: the lands of Bohemia, Hungary and Poland. The turmoil was connected to the unexpected emptying of royal thrones in the region.

On January 14, 1301, while only in his mid-thirties, Andrew III, king of Hungary died. In Hungarian scholarship his death has been traditionally considered a turning point in the history of the country. The standard understanding has been that Andrew’s III death signified a period of abrupt dynastic change, when the indigenous House of the Árpáds died out and a period of dynastic diversity followed.¹ It is generally accepted, however, that this period of transition generated a lot of distress and conclusively shattered the foundations of the Hungarian realm.

Nevertheless, such a political blow could not have happened overnight. Pál Engel observed that since 1270 political events had led to a rapid decline in central power in the Kingdom of Hungary and brought about an anarchic situation that culminated in 1301,² pushing Hungary into a “critical situation”,³ which then continued for another decade. Engel’s opinion is best summarized in two statements: “central power practically ceased to exist”, and “that the kingdom might fragment into

several independent provinces became a real possibility".⁴ Also, the idea prevailed in recent Hungarian scholarship that central power was significantly weakened at the turn of the fourteenth century⁵ and/or for a time could not be organized.⁶

The practical destruction of the political unity of the Kingdom of Hungary was not, however, solely related to the extinction of the Árpáds (or, to be more precise, to the dying out of its male branch). The fact that Andrew III was the last representative of the glorious male line of descendants of Saint King Steven was indeed noted by contemporaries. However, from the extant source material it is difficult to judge how much it really mattered. There is only a one short passage available touching upon this issue. In a charter issued by palatine Steven *de genere* Ákos, a former supporter of the deceased king, dated to February 26, 1303, the issuer speaks about Andrew III as the "last golden branch that broke off"⁷ from the paternal line of St. Steven, and about a great mourning after the king's death among all the prelates and barons. However, the desolation they felt – as the charter reads – because of the lack of their *dominus naturalis*, did not leave them without hope of finding a new monarch marked by the blood of St. Steven, that is, with a claim of belonging to Steven's kindred.⁸

In my view, it may be questioned whether there was anything special – in terms of political consequences – to Palatine Steven's contemporaries about the sudden death of Andrew III, although he was perceived as the last of the male Árpád line. Judging from what happened after the assassination of Ladislas IV in July 1290, when Andrew III took the throne and yet was immediately confronted with rebellious nobles; and judging from what followed his death in 1301, when two powerful candidates to the Hungarian throne appeared, I would hesitate to overestimate the meaning of the extinction of male line for Hungarian elites.

Thus, the argument could be made that in the late thirteenth century the Kingdom of Hungary suffered a certain level of disintegration because the powerful lords of the kingdom lost their previous interest in cooperating with the king. The political and social developments of the second half of the thirteenth century opened up new opportunities to look for their interests in showing antagonism to royal power. The circumstances and, in my view, the dominant concept of political power allowed them to pursue their goals of creating lordships and expanding their domination. What follows aims at elucidating the context and logic of practices that in my opinion helped create an environment in which the quarrel between Charles I and Wenceslas III could develop.

Establishing the contexts – Lordship-seeking practices in Central Europe in the second half of the thirteenth century

The notion of the lordship and domination applied here was recently explained by Thomas N. Bisson. Although in his study Bisson focused on the coming to maturity of the concept of the lordship,⁹ his findings offered relevant insight into attitudes that can be identified among the Central European elites in the later period.

‘Lordship’ refers diversely to personal commands over dependent people who might be peasants in quasi-servile status or knights or vassals having or seeking an elite standing; the word also denotes the value or extent of such dependencies (patrimony, *dominium*). The lordship held by nobles accounted for much of the exercise of licit power around 1100. It is tempting to include in this category the temporal dominations of prelates: bishops, abbots, priors, and the like. These were often the brothers or nephews of the old elite, nobles themselves; and even those of lesser blood, ever more numerous in time, must have been influenced by models of clerical office.¹⁰

In a longer perspective, it could be argued that problems in the Kingdom of Hungary, eventually leading to a certain paralysis of royal power,¹¹ began in the 1240s, although they could be implicitly traced to the land-giving politics of Andrew II,¹² and – since they were unsuccessfully resolved – gradually intensified over the next decades. Although my task here is not to provide an account of the Hungarian political history of the second half of the thirteenth century, it is still useful to investigate some general patterns of power-relations which over time emerged in social and political life with widespread effects over the whole region. These patterns cannot be considered exclusively Hungarian.

It can be argued that what was happening in the Kingdom of Hungary, that is, a constant and escalating struggle for lordship and domination within the Hungarian power elite, was simultaneously occurring in the Kingdom of Bohemia and in the Polish principalities. What was particular to specific realms was the scale of these phenomena, yet the general trend was universal and similar in nature to events taking place elsewhere, for instance, in the German empire.

The Mongol onslaught on Central Europe in 1240-1241 serves as a convenient point of departure for a bird’s eye view analysis of the political developments in Central Europe in the second half of the thirteenth

century. Discussion of these issues permits meaningful contextualization of the power-winning strategies that contestants for the Central European vacant thrones employed for their own success. Beginning with a brief overview of the situation in the Polish principalities, this analysis will mostly concentrate on the kingdoms of Bohemia and Hungary because they formed the background for the future competition between Charles I and Wenceslas III for the vacant Árpádian throne.

The Polish Principalities

In the thirteenth century, there were two contradictory, co-existing political trends in the Polish territories. From the first half of the twelfth century, the former Kingdom of Poland was gradually divided into smaller principalities governed by members of a single house – the Piast Dynasty. The number of divisions grew because the prevailing tradition of dynastic inheritance put a great deal of emphasis on providing each princely son with a lordship. As a result, a dominant and practically inevitable trend developed to continue such divisions well established in the so-called “ancient customs”. This trend was particularly marked in the former duchy of Silesia. This dynastic practice could not be long maintained. New duchies were smaller and smaller, and consequently, they could not sustain princely needs. Their minimal sizes were incompatible with the needs and ambitions of dukes who therefore, easily became embroiled in conflicts over pieces of land or strongholds. The growing number of political players on the simultaneously narrowing stage of what should be called the Piast legacy gave way to an escalation in predatory politics.

In fairly flexible inter-lordly constellations of short-term alliances, dukes developed their interests in expanding their lordships, usually at the expense of other players. This attitude, focused on building one’s own domination over lands, automatically generated favorable conditions for the so-called “unification process”, which was later identified and described in modern historiography. This process cannot be reduced merely to a dynastic perspective, yet it cannot be ignored that the dukes, who had entered the political arena in the second half of the thirteenth century, surely recognized that the fundamental strategy for providing a means of existence for their sons was first to inherit a lordship, and then strive for its expansion by both peaceful and violent means.

Logic of Lordship in Hungary and Bohemia after the Mongol onslaught

Undoubtedly the Mongol invasion devastated the Kingdom of Hungary. There is, however, some dispute about the degree of destruction. In the older scholarship it was claimed that almost 50% the country was depopulated by the killings and later by disease and starvation, which occurred because large parts of land was not being tilled due to the marauding Mongols. More recent studies suggest a lower proportion of 20% for the percentage of the population that was killed.¹³ To reinforce their arguments these scholars point to later events that show that after the Mongols retreated to the steppes, the Kingdom resumed its military activities fairly quickly.¹⁴ It is beyond any question, however, that the Mongolian onslaught left Hungary changed in many respects. Apparently, the fear of the soon-to-come next invasion instilled in people's hearts¹⁵ – apart from all the other damages and losses they had already suffered – significantly influenced and shaped the policies adopted by King Béla IV, who has sometimes been called the second “state-founder”.¹⁶

One of his responses to this pending Mongolian threat was to authorize nobles who could afford it to construct stone-castles. A big building campaign was primarily designed to strengthen the defense potential of the Kingdom, because – as the last example of the Mongolian attack revealed – there were significantly higher chances of survival if the invaders encountered a walled location. This construction boom was very efficient and by Béla's IV death in 1270, it produced a hundred new castles owned by the royal family, wealthy nobles, and bishops.¹⁷ The rapid rise of fortified places in the Kingdom certainly expanded its defense potential, yet – by diversification of their ownership – it deprived the king of an important advantage in times of confrontation with rebellious nobility (the number of stone-castles reached three-hundred by the end of the thirteenth century,¹⁸ and at least two-thirds of them were in private hands¹⁹). Giving away property and lands to the elite in order to financially enable them to erect their own castles reinforced the Kingdom in absolute terms but, at the same time, created a favorable foundation to reduce its political coherence as in practice, it undermined the will for cooperation on the part of the elite. A result, more powerful subjects could dictate higher ‘prices’ for their compliance.

The Kingdom of Bohemia – in contrast to Hungary – was not much affected by the Mongol invasion. Although the Mongol troops devastated

Little Poland and massacred the Christian army at Legnica, in Silesia, subsequently marched through Moravia, putting it to fire, their final destination was Hungary. Wenceslas I, King of Bohemia, gathered his army and awaited confrontation with Mongols but ultimately he did not have to engage in battle.²⁰ The Kingdom of Bohemia was spared from the external threat but was not free from internal turbulences. In 1248, King Wenceslas I faced a rebellion initiated by a group of influential barons. They wanted Přemysl Otakar, the king's son, who had recently come of age, to be their king. This struggle within the Bohemian royal family, although ultimately won by Wenceslas I, had a similar effect on the distribution of power as the aftermath of the Mongol invasion in Hungary.

In Bohemia the conflict between Wenceslas I and Přemysl Otakar was settled at the cost of strengthening the position of the local noble families, who meanwhile managed to increase their wealth (through royal grants or by illegal acquisitions of either ecclesiastical or royal properties) and, thus, gathered enough means to initiate building stone castles themselves.²¹ In its own fashion, but for other reasons, Bohemia had stepped onto the same path as Hungary.

There are further analogies between the situations in the kingdoms of Bohemia and Hungary. Přemysl Otakar reconciled with his father but the matter of lordship remained essential and unresolved. However, a new option emerged. The lords of Austria, the Babenbergs, died out in the male line, and the empty throne naturally drew the attention of the neighboring lords: Béla IV and Wenceslas I. Acquiring these new lands for themselves would boost their wealth, prestige and, all in all, their power. The Babenbergs' lands were attractively located on the Alpine routes between northern parts of the German Empire and Italy.²² Moreover, such acquisitions could act as a way to temporarily suspend internal tensions by finding means to satisfy ambitions nourished by royal sons. In the early 1250s, Wenceslas I attempted to make Přemysl Otakar the lord of Austria. Béla IV fought back.

In the meantime, in 1250, Emperor Frederic II died; his immediate successor, Conrad IV, followed four years later. The empty German throne was subsequently claimed by two candidates, Richard of Cornwall, a brother of King Henry III of England, and King Alfonso X of Castile. As a result, the former lands of Babenbergs, which had lain under imperial jurisdiction, were momentarily no longer backed by the authority of the German king because the German lords were preoccupied with resolving their own disputes. The absence of a third influential player in the 1250s

and 1260s left more room for arrangements made by kings of Bohemia and Hungary.

In 1253, when Wenceslas I died, the conflict over Austria entered a new phase. On the Bohemian side there was no longer a young royal son needing to be satisfied with separate lordship because Přemysl Otakar II inherited the throne after his father died. From then on his agenda changed since at the outset of his personal reign he had to secure the cooperative good will among his subjects. Béla IV, however, still had to secure Steven's needs. Again, from the perspective of Hungarian political practice, bestowing a lordship on a royal son was nothing extraordinary. Since the late twelfth century the custom prevailed that the Árpáadian princes governed Slovenia and Croatia as *duces totius Sclavonie*.²³ There are other instances of similar practices: in 1226, Béla IV, at the age of twenty, was named by his father, Andrew II, duke of Transylvania.²⁴ Four years later, after Přemysl Otakar II and Béla IV had agreed to divide the Babenbergs' lands between themselves in 1254, Steven was conferred the title of duke of Styria.²⁵ A year earlier, he received Transylvania, whereas in 1260, his younger brother Béla was authorized to oversee Slovenia.²⁶

This state of affairs did not last long. Přemysl Otakar II took advantage of the prolonged disputes in the German empire and sought to maintain good relations with both concurrent German kings. As a result, King Richard of Cornwall entrusted him with the task of defending "the property of the [imperial] Crown to the right of the Rhine" and did not interfere with Přemysl Otakar's II actions in Austria and its surroundings.²⁷ In the 1260s, the lordship of the Bohemian king extended through Austria, Styria, and Carinthia, and reached the Adriatic Sea. Meanwhile, Béla IV, had not been able to reconquer the former lands of the Babenbergs which he had lost to the King of Bohemia, came into conflict with Steven over the scope of Steven's authority in Transylvania and beyond (and, as the extant sources reveal, over the succession rights too).²⁸ This conflict subsequently transformed into a regular internal war.

Béla IV died in 1270. After domestic wars of the 1260s, the kingdom was not fully pacified. The divisions that had arisen in past years fuelled the flame of ambition and conflict in the minds of elite power brokers and at any time could trigger further conflict. In a sense, the former supporters of Béla IV found themselves in an awkward position in serving Steven V, whom they had fiercely fought while standing in the ranks of his father's army. This is presumably why a double election took place, because some of Steven's opponents invited Přemysl Otakar II to sit on the Hungarian

throne. Přemysl's claim was reinforced by the fact that from 1261 he had been married to Kunigunda, a granddaughter of Béla IV. Kunigunda was a daughter of Anna, a sister of Steven V. Přemysl Otakar II, however, was not strongly motivated to initiate a prolonged conflict with Steven V and after he had been allowed to grab Béla's IV treasury, he retreated from the competition.²⁹ Nevertheless, these events proved a precedent to the events of 1301, and the Hungarian elite must have taken note that, practically speaking, in choosing their new king they were no longer confined to the direct male descendants of St. Steven's kindred.

Towards 1301 – The decline of the Árpáds and the rise of the Přemyslids

During the 1270s, the vast lordship built-up by Přemysl Otakar II was vehemently challenged. A heretofore non-existing player, the German king, reemerged on the scene after Rudolf I Habsburg was elected to the office in 1273. Five years later, Přemysl Otakar II died on the battlefield and the Kingdom of Bohemia shrank to its former, original size, whereas the successful Habsburg Rudolf I, exercising the legal authority and prestige of the king of the Romans, could more firmly establish his family's domain in Austria.

The ultimate decline of the Kingdom of Bohemia in the late 1270s corresponded with a rising number of quarrels in the Kingdom of Hungary. Steven V ruled only two turbulent years. First, he had to struggle for the throne with the Bohemian king. Second, he grappled with the rebellion of Joachim Gutkeled, the ban of Slavonia, who captured Ladislav, an infant royal son. The king did not manage to liberate him, and Engel suspected that frustration deriving from a sense of powerlessness may have resulted in Steven's premature death.³⁰ Whatever the reasons for his death, what happened was a clear sign that in the early 1270s the effective power of the king could be successfully challenged by other lords in the kingdom.³¹

Ladislav IV was ten years-old when he inherited the Kingdom of Hungary after his father. His clear inability to efficiently assume the office encouraged the Hungarian barons to take advantage of the lack of royal authority. Apparently, there was no systemic solution available to efficiently replace the person of a monarch as the source of order and justice in the kingdom.

On the other hand, it would be legitimate to ask to what degree the royal presence was really longed for and required by other powerful lords, whose chief strategy was to establish their standing and wealth at the expense of royal resources (fighting each other was seemingly less productive although still practiced)? There is no plausible answer to this question because between 1270 and 1310, the nature of relations between the royal office and the Hungarian barons remains opaque. Namely, it seems they never imagined not having a king at all, since the barons understood clearly that all their acquisitions, both in terms of properties and jurisdiction, required – sooner or later – clear confirmation from a king. Otherwise, depending how powerful they were at any given point, their prosperity might prove, more or less, temporary and short-term. Practical usurpations would simply be short-lived because only confirmation by a higher (royal) authority diminished social and political tensions, and thus, relieved the usurper from the higher costs (of all sorts) of upholding his illegal gains.

It could be argued, however, that similar mechanisms can be also observed on the “international” stage. Before he initiated any military campaign in the lands of the Bohemian king, Rudolf I Habsburg, elected German king in 1273, refused to confirm Přemysl Otakar’s II possessions in the Empire.³² Thus, he made a public statement which declared Přemysl’s lordship in Austria illegitimate and – by exercising his royal authority – he also had means to effectively threaten Přemysl Otakar’s II domination outside Bohemia. In short, Rudolf I was in a position to claim back the lands that customarily belonged to the sphere of jurisdiction of a German king and, if he was industrious enough, he could hope to find other lords who would support any re-taking actions against the Bohemian ruler.

Přemysl Otakar II was probably well aware of how these mechanisms functioned. Precisely for this reason he previously strove to maintain favorable relations with Richard of Cornwall, who earlier – as the German king – had given him license to build up his lordship within the imperial lands, a license which was later retracted by Rudolf I, another German king. By analogy, the Hungarian lords must have been experienced enough to recognize that all they needed in the Kingdom of Hungary was either a friendly king or a king, whose will, if necessary, they had the means to resist.

Moreover, growing tensions, disputes, skirmishes and quarrels at the level of a single kingdom very much resembled conflicts in Germany during the so-called Great Interregnum, and were similar in their logic (although not in their scope) to the Béla IV-Wenceslas I conflict over the

Babenbergs' inheritance. There was no difference in quality, because in both cases the actors aimed at expanding their lordships, that is, their control over people, land and resources, and thus, improve their prestige, wealth and social standing. There was, however, a quantitative dissimilarity since the goals of the Hungarian lords, confined to the boundaries of the Kingdom of Hungary, could not be compared with the range of activities performed at the royal level.³³

In the 1270s, the Kingdom of Hungary had to grapple with an infant king directly resulting in the rise of baronial lordships. The king was expected to dominate his lords but where he was not able to fulfill this task (because of his age, absence, illness, etc.), his lords easily turned into usurpers, who recognizing opportune conditions took advantage of them.

At the end of the decade, Přemysl Otakar's II death in a battle brought the Kingdom of Bohemia into a comparable situation. Wenceslas II, an heir to the Bohemian throne, was only seven and was placed under guardianship of Otto V of Brandenburg, his maternal uncle. Wenceslas II returned to Bohemia in 1283, nevertheless only after long negotiations resulting in the payment of 20,000 silver marks to Otto V.³⁴ In the meantime, however, the Kingdom of Bohemia was virtually transformed into a "cake" which many lords would gladly take a piece of. The barons attempted to put a hold on royal or ecclesiastical properties.³⁵ Habsburg Rudolf I, as the German king and formal overseer of the Kingdom of Bohemia, successfully took control of Moravia. Otto V acquired the appointment as the guardian of Wenceslas II. Henry IV Probus of Wrocław, engaged in military action to take his chances at winning the Bohemian throne for himself or, at least, to become a regent.³⁶ Rudolf I managed to arrange a marriage contract between Wenceslas II and his daughter, Jutta of Habsburg;³⁷ an act which gave him a new argument to justify his interference in the future of Bohemian matters.

Consequently, in the 1280s, Wenceslas' II role in the domestic politics of the Kingdom of Bohemia was largely diminished by prolonged conflict between powerful lords: Zavis of Falkenstein and Tobias, Bishop of Prague. Zavis displayed a perfect lord-to-be logic: he attempted to acquire the duchy of Opava; he married Kunigunda of the Árpád dynasty, who had been left a widow after Přemysl Otakar's II death making him the stepfather of Wenceslas II; in the late 1280s, he married Elisabeth of the Árpád dynasty, a sister of Ladislas IV, King of Hungary. Thus, Zavis efficiently expanded his properties (which gave him wealth and manpower) and entered into the strata of the highest elite by marrying into the Árpád

House. Anyway, he was decapitated in 1290 with the tacit consent of Wenceslas II who was only able to fully assume his royal office afterwards.

Interestingly, Zavis – still as a minor lord compared to royal families – accomplished more than his Hungarian counterparts, who were never offered (or accepted, since I cannot exclude that they made applications for marriage) a marriage into either the House of Árpád or the Přemyslids. The Hungarian lords were, nonetheless, successful in entering into marriage contracts with other prominent ruling houses of Austria, Bavaria, or Serbia.³⁸

After assuming the throne, Wenceslas II decided not to go to war with the lords of Bohemia to recover properties which they had seized during the previous turbulent period.³⁹ According to Kateřina Charvátová,⁴⁰ who herself followed the *Chronicon Aule Regie* (which, by the way, depicted the king in very favorable terms)⁴¹, Wenceslas II did undertake diligent actions to “revoke what was split up, gather what was dispersed” and “ruled that what an unfriendly hand had taken away should be reintegrated”.⁴² However, this short and rather general account was actually followed by a more detailed description of how, in fact, Wenceslas II distributed castles, towns and offices, and that through his generosity, the kingdom was stabilized.⁴³

On the other hand, he did not give up the lordship-seeking logic and, by other means managed to gather resources to pursue his goals in his dealings with dukes of the south-eastern Polish principalities; it was a highly successful endeavour, which in 1300 eventually allowed him to become the king of Poland. It is particularly revealing that – judging from the course of events – it was easier for Wenceslas II to step outside his kingdom and seek to expand his sphere of control and domination by overpowering or, less violently, by coming to terms with the neighboring lords, than to launch a retributive campaign aimed at restoring order and justice (and thus, his authority and lordship, since a king was a legitimate source of peace and tranquility) within the borders of the Kingdom of Bohemia.

At that particular moment, Wenceslas II was in a far more convenient position than the kings of Hungary, because he had just begun to exploit the silver mines of Kutna Hora. The mines turned out to be exceptionally rich in silver and their output soon outdistanced older sites at Jihlava among others.⁴⁴ Abundance of silver, which poured into royal coffers, provided Wenceslas II with money, a resource that made him a wealthy stand-out in the region. However, he apparently linked the satisfaction of his lords with opulent gifts and new opportunities, which would emerge from expanding his domination over new lands, and he preferred to invest his

significant incomes in projects of expansion, rather than to use his assets against his lords. It could be argued therefore for Wenceslas II, like other contemporary lords, lordship primarily had to be expanded in a mutual cooperative effort (according to an unwritten rule: 'the more powerful overlord, the more powerful his faithful lords'). Lordship, therefore, did not have to expand using an alternative model, more characteristic of modern states, which seek to disarm their citizens and monopolize access to coercive power and its resources, following the precept that 'the overlord builds up his power at the expense of his lords-subjects'.

In the 1290s, the Kingdom of Bohemia was back on an ascending track, that is, the cooperation between the king and his barons was resumed and thus, Wenceslas II could effectively engage in spreading his influence and authority in the region. In Hungary, however, this lack of will to cooperate, which had powerfully emerged ca. 1290, continued until Andrew's III death in 1301 (and beyond, up to ca. 1330).⁴⁵ His predecessor, Ladislas IV, did not come up with a solution that permanently tied the Hungarian barons to him; a failure which, in practice, left him powerless. He did not own silver mines with an output comparable to Kutna Hora, and thus, he could not cherish hope of a privileged position, which seems to have greatly contributed to Wenceslas' II success in restoring the will to cooperate among his barons.

According to Gyula Kristó, from the 1290s, the Kingdom of Hungary witnessed an explosion in lordship-building which emerged from Ladislas' IV legacy of disorder. The Hungarian lords seized royal and ecclesiastical properties and established their overlordship over considerable pieces of land. They fiercely fought each other and by both request and threat they attracted the lesser nobility to their ranks. By regionally seizing royal authority and jurisdiction they shattered the integrity of the kingdom, and actually created the "state-in-state" system.⁴⁶ Kristó calculated that by the turn of the fourteenth century there were eleven "oligarchs", who controlled the better part of the realm with the most powerful of these overlords having resources comparable to regional dukes.⁴⁷

Power-winning strategies

The course of events in the Kingdom of Hungary after Andrew's III death has been demonstrated fairly exhaustively on various occasions and in a number of publications.⁴⁸ The intention here, therefore, is not to

describe them since it would be hard to add anything in terms of new yet meaningful events. Therefore, after having set out the more general context of the throne competition, which took place in the Hungarian lands in the first decade of the fourteenth century, the focus shifts now toward the main puzzle of my article, that is, what possible strategies were employed to seize control of a throne in the region? This analysis, however, could not have been carried out adequately, without at least presenting some fundamental data to provide the immediate background for investigation of 'who did what' to accomplish his goals.

The empty throne in Hungary – an overview of events

On July 10, 1290, Ladislas IV was assassinated. However, already on July 23, 1290, Lodomer, Archbishop of Esztergom, crowned Andrew III as the successor of Ladislas IV. A year later, the Heder family, whose members were bans of Slavonia and who virtually owned Vas County in southwestern Hungary,⁴⁹ invited Charles Martel, the first-born son of Charles II, King of Naples, to seize the Hungarian crown. Charles Martel was a grandson of Steven V of Hungary and through his mother, Mary, could easily claim share in the Árpáadian House, since the deceased Ladislas IV was his uncle (a third degree of kinship). From the perspective of blood relations, the status of Andrew III was less prominent, because as an alleged descendant of King Andrew II, he was related to Steven V merely in the fourth degree and to Ladislas IV in the fifth degree.

On April 12, 1292, Charles Martel issued his first charter as King of Hungary.⁵⁰ However, he never managed to reach his new kingdom and died in 1295. His son, Charles I, was instantly named his successor and in 1298 a papal legate crowned him while he was still in the Kingdom of Naples.⁵¹ In February 1300, he left for Hungary and by October 1300 was already in Zagreb.⁵² Andrew III died on January 14, 1301.

In May 1301, Pope Boniface VIII appointed Nicholas Boccasini, Bishop of Ostia, his legate and commissioned him to make the necessary arrangements to restore order in the Kingdom of Hungary.⁵³ In the same month, Charles I was crowned King of Hungary by Gregory, Archbishop-elect of Esztergom. In the summer 1301, nevertheless, some of the Hungarian lords invited Wenceslas, a son of Wenceslas II, to be their king. Like Charles I, young Wenceslas could claim blood-membership in the Árpáadian kindred: his great-grandmother was a sister of Steven V;

thus, Wenceslas was related to Steven V in the fourth degree. On August 27, 1301, he was crowned a King of Hungary by John, Archbishop of Kalocsa, in Szekesfehervar. The double-election was now a fact.

The following year Boniface VIII called both involved parties, that is, Wenceslas II and his son, and Charles I with Mary, his mother and the Queen of Naples, to appear before him and hear his judgment about who should legitimately receive the Kingdom of Hungary.⁵⁴ In the autumn of 1302, Charles I and his followers attacked, with no effect, the town of Buda which was held by the supporters of Wenceslas III.⁵⁵ In May 1303, Boniface VIII ruled that Charles I and his mother held the legitimate rights to the Kingdom of Hungary. In June 1303, the pope sent out letters, informing Albrecht of Habsburg, the German king, about his decision regarding the Hungarian throne⁵⁶ and instructed the Hungarian prelates – under threat of excommunication – to abandon the Přemyslids.⁵⁷ Over the summer, both Hungarian archbishops, Gregory of Esztergom and Steven of Kalocsa, engaged to spread the news about the papal edict across Hungary, including Transylvania. Everybody was to obey the papal decision or suffer ecclesiastical penalties.⁵⁸ In September 1303, Albrecht of Habsburg joined the conflict on the Angevin side, and officially wrote to Wenceslas II, demanding, among other things, that he leave the Kingdom of Hungary.

Since the Přemyslids did not recognize the papal ruling concerning the Hungarian throne, Albrecht of Habsburg began preparations for a military campaign. He urged the Hungarian bishops and barons to join efforts in driving the Bohemian king away.⁵⁹ In August 1304, Charles I concluded an alliance with Rudolf Habsburg of Austria, a son of Albrecht, and gave an oath before Michael, Archbishop of Esztergom, and Steven, Archbishop of Kalocsa, promising support for Rudolf.⁶⁰ Earlier that year, however, it was Wenceslas II who marched with his troops into Hungary, hoping to secure by sheer force the throne for Wenceslas III, and devastated regions around Esztergom, and – having achieved little politically – returned with his son back to Bohemia.⁶¹ In response, Albrecht Habsburg and Rudolf and Charles I invaded Bohemia and Moravia⁶² also with limited effect.⁶³ However, Wenceslas III never returned to Hungary. In June 1305, Wenceslas II died and in August Wenceslas III, already king of Bohemia, concluded a peace treaty with Albrecht Habsburg.⁶⁴

For a time, Charles I was the only standing pretender to the throne of Hungary. Nevertheless, in October of 1305 Wenceslas III revoked all his claims to the Kingdom of Hungary and voluntarily transferred them to Otto III of Wittelsbach.⁶⁵ Otto, the duke of Bavaria, had very close

blood ties with the Árpáds because his mother, Elisabeth, was the sister of Steven V. He could, therefore, stake equally powerful dynastic claims as the Angevins since Queen Mary of Naples was the sister of Ladislas IV. Thus, both Elisabeth and Mary were royal daughters and sisters, only separated by a single generation. Starting in November 1305, Wenceslas III ceased to use the title of Hungarian king.⁶⁶ On December 6, 1305, Otto III was crowned in Szekesfehervar by Benedict, Bishop of Veszprem and Anthony, Bishop of Csanád.⁶⁷

As a result, a new candidate for the Hungarian throne beside Charles I emerged. Otto III – as indicated in the *Kronika Pulkavova* – was elected by the Hungarians to be their king⁶⁸ although he must have been most popular in Northern and Eastern Hungary, chiefly in Transylvania.⁶⁹

In the spring of 1306, Charles I organized a military expedition to the northern regions of the Hungarian kingdom and captured several strongholds there. In May 1307, Thomas, Archbishop of Esztergom, summoned a council in Udvard [Dvory nad Žitavou]. The council participants declared that – respecting fully the papal ruling – should anyone reject Charles I as the rightful king of Hungary, he would be excommunicated and his possessions placed under interdict.⁷⁰ On June 1, 1307, the town of Buda eventually fell into hands of Charles I's followers.

Since Pope Clement V still considered the Kingdom of Hungary to be in critical condition, he dispatched Cardinal Gentilis de Monteflorum as his legate to administer all necessary reforms and ensure peace and tranquility in the kingdom.⁷¹ Two days later, on August 10, 1307, the pope issued letters in which he confirmed the ruling of Boniface VIII regarding the fate of the Hungarian throne (that it should belong to Charles I of Anjou through his grandmother Mary of the House of Árpád), and urged both Hungarian archbishops, Thomas of Esztergom and Vincent of Kalocsa, to proclaim his decision across the Hungarian lands. He also demanded that Bishop Anthony of Csanád be disciplined and impelled Otto III to give up his title and royal dignity.⁷² Subsequently, Ladislas, Voivode of Transylvania, captured Otto III and took the coronation regalia from him, ultimately expelling him from the kingdom.⁷³ Charles I for the second time remained the only candidate for the royal office. It was not, however, the end of his prolonged quest for power.

On October 10, 1307, an assembly of Hungarian prelates and nobles, held on the plains of Rákos near Pest, declared Charles I king of Hungary.⁷⁴ A year later, in November 1308, another assembly in Pest, gathered to restore peace and order in the Kingdom of Hungary, once again accepted

Charles I as king,⁷⁵ and on June 15, 1309, he was crowned in the presence of the majority of the Hungarian prelates and powerful barons.⁷⁶ On April 8, 1310, Ladislas, Voivode of Transylvania, submitted to Charles I and recognized him as his *dominus naturalis*; on August 27, 1310, Charles I was again crowned,⁷⁷ yet this time according to the rules which had been put forward by Legate Gentilis and accepted by the Hungarian episcopate.⁷⁸ Apparently, from this moment onwards, Charles I became the one and only king of Hungary and finally gained widespread recognition among his subjects.⁷⁹ This statement, however, is only partially true because Charles I's quest for power lasted almost two decades. Having defeated other candidates and ceremonially received the crown – he had to confront the political reality which had prevailed in the Kingdom of Hungary since the death of Steven V in 1272. Namely, he was compelled to face the same challenges his predecessors Ladislas IV and Andrew III had had to grapple with, that is, with the extensive lordships of some Hungarian noble families. This part of the political story, although important, will not receive more attention here.

Multi-polarity instead of the anarchy-centrality dichotomy

Once the framework of facts and events has been presented, I will turn to the analysis of how – after the death of Andrew III in 1301 – two candidates, Charles I and Wenceslas III,⁸⁰ struggled to win royal recognition in the Kingdom of Hungary. Generally speaking, this competition for royal power has largely been perceived in scholarship as a conflict between Charles I and Wenceslas III. The efforts of Otto III tend to be overlooked with the statement that, apart from being crowned with the Holy Crown in the town of Szekesfehervar, he did not accomplish much else;⁸¹ consequently, scholars did not treat him as a real opponent to Charles I but rather as an adventurer,⁸² about whose political agenda there was little left to deliberate.⁸³

In the first part of this article I set out to overview some developments in social and political matters in the kingdoms of Bohemia and Hungary from the 1240s that are essential for a meaningful investigation of the power-winning strategies employed by the pretenders to the Hungarian throne in the early fourteenth century. The driving force in political life in the region⁸⁴ was the will to expand individual – and sometimes, as a consequence – also familial domination and lordship over new lands

and people. This will to expand equally characterized royal and noble attitudes with the only difference being one of scale.

Interestingly, the conflict of the Babenbergs inheritance between Béla IV and Wenceslas I (and its later episodes with Přemysl Otakar's II as King of Bohemia) is, for instance, regarded in the scholarship as a typical regional rivalry between states for material power and hegemony; the states therefore formed alliances and coalitions to counterbalance the superiority of their opponent and naturally sought to restore the regional balance of power by not allowing one state to significantly overpower the other or to grow too much at the other's expense.⁸⁵ Accordingly, in the 1290s, the efficient policies of Wenceslas II towards non-Bohemian lands and lords would gain him, in contemporary scholarship, a name for being a "politician of an European scale"⁸⁶; moreover, as Robert Antonin suggested in his assessment of the endeavors of Wenceslas II in the Polish principalities,

one should regard the Polish royal coronation of Wenceslas II in 1300 as a logical result of Czech diplomacy that strove to strengthen its position in southern Poland as well as in relation to other Polish regions throughout the 1290s. The acquisition of Kraków and Sandomierz duchies became one of the first and most essential steps on the way to a personal union between the Czech and Polish Kingdom, which was accomplished in 1300.⁸⁷

This way of presenting royal politics remains in striking contrast with how the analogous politics of lesser lords is traditionally depicted. For example, Pál Engel's observations, already mentioned above, clearly indicated that from 1270, the Kingdom of Hungary had increasingly fallen prey to anarchy in the absence of a firm and centralized royal power. His view is standard, not an exception.⁸⁸ Furthermore, while discussing the turbulent times in the Kingdom of Bohemia after Přemysl Otakar II fell in battle in 1278, Josef Žemlička would talk about "catastrophic consequences", when "the nobility, exploiting the king's death, began to appropriate crown properties" and "the internal integrity of the state declined".⁸⁹

In my view, the same political phenomenon, which could be called a "striving for lordship", would receive two different labels in the scholarship, depending on who was the political agent. As long as it was a legitimate incumbent on a throne, who would labor to expand his domains at the expense of external lords this action could be interpreted

in terms of valid and justified “foreign” or even “international” politics. However, if an analogous enterprise was attempted by a local nobleman, his activities would be rather viewed by scholars as egoistical actions that destabilized the state and brought disorder and anarchy, thus, demolishing the integrity and unity of the state.

These “double-standards” applied to king versus nobles seem false to me, because they reflect modern thinking about the state which was simply transferred to the medieval political reality. This approach reveals assumptions about statehood (its sovereignty, exclusive use of coercive power, centralized and bureaucratic frameworks, the existence of the reason of state, etc.) which did not necessarily belong to the political vocabulary of fourteenth century elites in Central Europe.

Thus, instead of juxtaposing centralization and anarchy it seems better to view the political stage in the medieval Kingdom of Hungary, in terms of a multi-polar environment,⁹⁰ in which power is so diffused that various actors could pursue their goals of lordship as long as they complied with specific rules derived from the dominant political culture. There was no qualitative difference between conflicts at the level of emperors, kings and dukes, and other feuds, which occurred at level of barons, bishops and noblemen. Arguably, the same principles were applied in both types of power-willing antagonisms.

Consequently, the research question presented here of ‘how to win a throne in Central Europe at the beginning of the fourteenth century?’ applies to a multi-actor milieu. This political arena demanded skills, ideas and strategies from a candidate to attract the attention of other actors, win their approval and support, and subsequently, through group effort and a cooperation move towards the ultimate goal of securing royal power.

It is worth pointing out that – judging from the course of events – the political culture, which broadly understood here to mean the essential source of principles that define politically-related interests and means to accomplish them, rested upon a deeply rooted concept of hierarchy (social, political and religious) and on tradition.⁹¹ Thus, local power bases could not operated where a ruler was missing, if previously there had been one. It was, however, an open question who should be the new ruler and what rules would apply in each particular case. Nevertheless, there was no doubt that there always had to be a king.

Identifying Political Interests – Splendor of the Kingdom of Hungary

The power and wealth of the Kingdom of Hungary was acknowledged by foreign witnesses. As noted by Pal Engel, an Angevin envoy travelling there in 1269 reported that

The king of Hungary has incredibly great power and such a military force that there is no one in the east and in the north who would dare to move if the glorious king mobilized his enormous army.⁹²

Three decades later, similar arguments were used by the Bohemian royal councilors who sought to convince Wenceslas II to enter the competition for the Hungarian throne. They spoke about how vast were the lands of this kingdom and its power hard to measure. The advisors also believed that in the past the Hungarian kings had efficiently overpowered and dominated almost all the German lands.⁹³ According to an anonymous French Dominican, who in 1308 produced a description of Eastern Europe (*Descriptio Europae Orientalis*) and whom Csukovits quoted, the Kingdom of Hungary was in size one of the largest kingdoms in the world, because it stretched for forty days of travel in longitude and latitude.⁹⁴ These accounts represent a common recognition at the turn of the fourteenth century that the Kingdom of Hungary was an attractive entity worth fighting for. It is notable that none of these reports referred to anything but 'material' power, measured in terms of the size of lands or military might.

This is, however, only part of the picture. The Bohemian royal councilors, who assisted Wenceslas II in making the best out of the proposal proffered by a number of the Hungarian lords, pointed out – in order to convince the king to accept the offer – that assuming another crown (his third, since Wenceslas II was already king of Bohemia and Poland) or even giving it to his son, Wenceslas III, would exalt and expand the royal dignity, secure better order in Bohemia, and bring about hope for peaceful tranquility. Thus accepting the offer of the throne would be worth doing for the sake of the common good.⁹⁵

This part of the argumentation focused on more abstract principles which included boosting *honor regalis*, reassuring the *dignitas inviolabilis securitatis*, and guaranteeing peace in the region. From this perspective, the Kingdom of Hungary was attractive as a special acquisition for the king of Bohemia, which would add extra splendor to his name and, since

it would be ruled either by the king himself, or by his only son and heir, there would be decreased threat of regional conflicts. Thus, the king would be equipped with additional resources to effectively control the region and spread his authority there.

In short, the Kingdom of Hungary was powerful in terms of land and military might; moreover, its royal title was prestigious, and – as a general rule – the multiplication of prominent titles had a positive effect on a king's subjects, that is, although the lesser lords always tried to strengthen themselves at the king's expense, they would be equally (or perhaps more) interested in expanding their lordships through cooperation with the ruler, who himself would then enlarge his domination and authority.

The power-winning strategies of Charles I

Charles I's quest for power is best accessible in the extant source material. There is less available data for Wenceslas III and Otto III. The primary reason is that he was the ultimate winner, and thus, there were greater chances that his charters – as generally the only valid ones and, consequently, the most precious – would survive. Moreover, his case was the most widely backed by multiple authorities (the pope, the king of the Romans, the king of Naples, the highest officials of the Hungarian Church), and so supposedly the amount of evidence produced was also exceptional. Furthermore, Charles I's quest for power lasted for a decade, Wenceslas III attempts to gain the throne lasted for four years and Otto III's only for a little more than two years. The disparity in the lengths of the main actors' respective struggles likely also resulted in disproportions in the amounts of available data.

There are three charters issued by Charles I with royal grants for his faithful followers, in which he explained in more detail the reasons why each recipient deserved his special grace. The motivations in each charter represent Charles I's self-reflection on his path to the Hungarian throne. Therefore, they will be analyzed in greater detail here.

On May 22, 1304 Charles I granted a property for services rendered to a certain Benedict. In this charter, Charles I first pointed out the serious perils and difficulties he had found himself in where Benedict had never abandoned him. Next, he explained that Benedict three times came to the Kingdom of Naples as an envoy and brought him news that as soon as possible he should travel to the Kingdom of Hungary (which was his,

due to the election of the prelates and the barons and because of his right of birth), and assisted him along the dangerous way to Hungary. Subsequently, Charles I explained that the Kingdom of Hungary was in great distress, and while attempting to administer and govern the realm, he had diligently searched for an advantageous remedy. Thus, having consulted with the prelates and the barons, he dispatched Benedict to the pope and the cardinals to ask them to help the king reform and restore the Kingdom of Hungary, then suffering from internal devastation. Benedict was successful in his mission and, with the help of God, he returned to Charles I with the papal license to rule over the Kingdom of Hungary. Next, however, some unfaithful and rebellious people attempted to disrupt the rule of Charles I and worked hard to overthrow him; therefore, he – with the consent of the prelates and the barons – turned to Albrecht of Habsburg, the king of the Romans, for support against them.⁹⁶

On March 20, 1310, Charles I rewarded Steven for his faithful services reaching back to the very beginnings of Charles I's presence in the Kingdom of Hungary. Charles I pointed out that when he had arrived in the realm, Steven acknowledged him as king and presented a royal castle to him. Later, he successfully fought battles and accompanied Charles I in his expedition against Wenceslas II. Finally, he assisted the king in establishing friendly relations with Steven Dragutin who ruled in northern Serbia.⁹⁷

On September 4, 1310, Charles I issued a grant to Alexander *de genere* Aba for his faithful services in the period from Charles I's arrival in the Kingdom of Hungary until his coronation. As the king explained, Alexander was always at his side, against all and particularly against Wenceslas III, who was crowned a king by certain Hungarian barons who had rejected Charles I's authority. Subsequently, Wenceslas II personally arrived in Pest with his powerful army – as it was widely known – and took his son back to his own domains. Next, Charles I, together with his faithful barons and noblemen, invaded the Kingdom of Bohemia, and devastated it, burning down strongholds and castles. Alexander served bravely during this expedition and also remained faithful to Charles I against Otto III Wittelsbach.⁹⁸

Apart from these three grants, there are many more which were more specific in enumerating the deeds worth rewarding. For instance, there were grants for injuries in battle,⁹⁹ for travelling overseas to persuade Queen Mary, Charles I's grandmother,¹⁰⁰ in Scepusia to abandon Wenceslas III's cause,¹⁰¹ grants for help in capturing castles in northern Hungary,¹⁰² for seizing the town of Buda,¹⁰³ for participation in the expedition against

Wenceslas II and for capturing Buda,¹⁰⁴ for recapturing Esztergom,¹⁰⁵ for assistance in achieving power, etc.¹⁰⁶ Putting all these stories together, and particularly the first three presented above, sheds light on what Charles I considered the turning point in his quest for power in the Kingdom of Hungary. I will summarize them now.

Charles I, who could claim blood ties with the House of Árpád, had been elected king by the prelates and the barons of the realm who, afterwards, repeatedly dispatched envoys to bring him to his new kingdom. It was important to have him on Hungarian soil as soon as possible, because probably his prolonged absence was detrimental to his case. He found the realm in serious distress because some of the barons had elected Wenceslas III to be their king and had had him crowned. Since Charles I's attempts to govern the kingdom seemed futile, he turned for assistance to the pope and the cardinals who ultimately ruled that he should be the one to wield power in the realm. This judgment was supposed to bring relief to the kingdom and guarantee its restoration. However, the papal decision did not prevent some barons from conspiring and plotting against Charles I. They sought to overthrow him, forcing him to apply for help from Albrecht Habsburg, the king of the Romans and his uncle. Meanwhile, Wenceslas II invaded the Kingdom of Hungary getting as far as Pest and taking his son, Wenceslas III, back to his realm. In response, Charles I organized an expedition to Bohemia and led his faithful barons and noblemen against Wenceslas II where he inflicted serious casualties. Later, he had to face Otto III of Wittelsbach. Notably, Charles I made many of his significant decisions with the counsel or assistance of the prelates and the barons.

From this perspective, the power-winning strategy which Charles I adopted was to cooperate closely with the Hungarian elite, which offered him its support, and exploit his good connections with the supreme moral and legal authority in the Christian West (the pope). He also took advantage of his affinity with the king of the Romans, who could efficiently act as a powerful ally in terms of material (military) power and who was still able to claim his royal jurisdiction over the lands of Charles I's opponent, the king of Bohemia.

The primary goal, however, for Charles I was to secure favor among the Hungarian lords who were in the convenient position of being able to choose between two candidates. It seems Charles I clearly understood his situation since I managed to identify more than twenty-five grants given for faithful service between 1302 and the end of 1310. The secondary goal (because it chiefly resulted from accomplishing the first goal) was

to defeat the enemy. The defeat, however, had to happen not solely on a military level. In fact, there was no pitched battle between the rival armies. Instead, there were some fights between the protagonists of each candidate, basically aimed at capturing strongholds, and thus, at gaining control over certain regions and people.

Charles I's power-winning strategy was multifaceted. Before he arrived in the Kingdom of Hungary, he assumed before the pope, individual religious obligations to recite daily some prayers until he was crowned. These obligations were strengthened by oaths which, after the coronation had taken place, had to be officially alleviated.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, Charles I turned to the pope for legal and moral support. He allied with Albrecht Habsburg to defeat the Přemyslids by force. He gave numerous grants to his faithful followers (the earliest of them dating back to sometime in 1302).¹⁰⁸ He intended to marry his sister Clemencia to someone in the Kingdom of Hungary to stabilize his foothold there.¹⁰⁹ He was crowned three times in the realm. He led military expeditions to the Kingdom of Bohemia and to northern Hungary; he fought back possession of towns and castles. Eventually he was victorious.

It remains an open question, however, how much of this success was the result of Charles I's outstanding ability to convince the Hungarian lords to accept him as a king. He was, more likely, an able player in a game of cooperation. Only the joint effort by various powerful lords favoring Charles I resulted in him being successfully crowned king of Hungary. The course of events showed that inasmuch as the problem was that there were other candidates for the throne, their final disappearance from the political scene by the end of 1307 did not automatically mean the common reception of Charles I. It was the Hungarian lords that needed to be ultimately convinced or compelled to submission. However, with disappearance of rival candidates to the throne, the Hungarian lords lost a good excuse to work against the Angevin candidate.

The nature of the multi-polar system in Hungary

The multi-polar inter-lordly system of the Kingdom of Hungary was extremely flexible and adaptable. The logic of this system could not accept neutrality, that is, once the candidates emerged on the scene – invited to the throne by separate groups of lords (both secular and ecclesiastical) – they superimposed another level of interaction by creating a bipolar

situation that itself demanded from the lords that they orient themselves towards one of the existing poles. As noted before, the logic of the system did not recognize an empty throne as an acceptable state of affairs, and thus, actors were either able to come up with their own candidate or they had to accept the one put forward by others. Multipolarity was not, therefore, the desired final stage of political organization of the Kingdom of Hungary, because it was unstable, contrary to the old customs and traditions, and would in fact deprive the actors of their learnt and customary ways of expanding their lordships. For instance, since the 1270s the Hungarian lords had gained their lordships by supporting or resisting the royal office; they never acted in a power vacuum but rather claimed, received or usurped resources controlled by the king; there was no other way for them to do it.

Thus, a meta-unit, a king, was required, although in this hierarchical system he did not act as a hegemon (a uni-polarity), who controlled and clearly dominated the remainder of the hierarchy, but rather – with the *auxilium et consilium* of the lords – was viewed as a distributor of legitimate lordship. The idea was, therefore, not to abolish the practical multipolarity and install a royal monopoly of lordship, but to establish – by general consensus – a hierarchically superior power that would be empowered (by material and spiritual means) to organize and supervise the social and political life of the lords, that is, to dominate over lesser lords but chiefly in order to coordinate their own quests for domination. ‘Dominate and let others dominate too’ – this would be the maxim of this multi-polar system.

This is why defeating the opponent militarily, although required, was not sufficient. On the meta-level, bipolarity was only a temporary solution because the system, in order to function naturally needed a single distributor of legitimate lordship. Otherwise, no one could claim sufficient authority to provide a sense of security to lesser lords who strove to secure their status through official recognition and confirmation by a legitimate ruler. Consequently, defeating the opponent by force had to be followed by further victories in other fields, particularly legal and moral. In short, the Hungarian lords, the people who could finally decide whether to submit or not to submit to a given candidate, could be convinced to give their support in various ways: by sheer force, by generosity, by legal reasoning, and/or by moral and religious argumentation.

In the multi-polar system, by definition, there is no one power capable of sustaining stability and peace with his own resources alone. Sustaining

the power status quo could be only achieved through various kinds of negotiation which ideally lead to cooperation. Any changes in the political order required the consent of a group which would be powerful (influential) enough to perform its actions even if other actors resisted.

By analogy, in 1301, the pending change in Central European politics, the introduction of a new king to the Kingdom of Hungary, began a dispute between two groups of lords. Each corporate group hoped to overwhelm the resistance of the other. Ptolemy of Lucca, a contemporary chronicler at the papal court explained in an account that in 1301 a conflict flared up over the Hungarian throne. He identified these competing groups with two competing monarchs, Wenceslas II of Bohemia and Charles II of Naples.¹¹⁰ To Giovanni Villani, a contemporary Florentine chronicler, the pope was the creator of Charles I's kingship, because he sent his legate Cardinal Gentilis to the Kingdom of Hungary, tasking him to make sure that Charles I conquered the entire realm and ruled in peace.¹¹¹

At the beginning of this competition, however, the favors of Pope Boniface VIII and Charles II did not necessarily assure bright prospects for Charles I's future. On September 13, 1301, Mario Mariglon wrote to James II of Aragon about the situation in the Kingdom of Hungary, saying that Wenceslas III had better chances than Charles I.¹¹² Three months later, on December 9, 1301, a certain Abbot Ganfridus informed James II that Wenceslas III controlled most of Hungary and that Charles I could only rely on the Cumans, that is, the recently baptized 'pastoralist' people, who in the previous decades had been allowed to settle in the Kingdom of Hungary.¹¹³

According to *Chronici Hungarici Compositio*, Wenceslas III and Charles I became kings in very similar circumstances. They were both elected by the powerful Hungarian lords¹¹⁴ and yet they were not given any real authority, that is, no control over castles and no power.¹¹⁵ This course of events reinforces my argument that, although the multi-polar system required a meta-unit (a distributor and a coordinator of power in the kingdom), this unit was not meant nor designed to control or supervise the lords (and, thus, establish a uni-polar system) but chiefly to coordinate and encourage cooperation by "injecting" into the system royal legitimacy and authority, factors that validated the system *per se*.

The power-winning strategies of Wenceslas III

To gain the upper hand in the dispute, Wenceslas III applied similar power-winning strategies to defeat his opponent. The number of instruments each could command was limited but they were at least accessible to both candidates. He therefore, like Charles I, awarded grants to his supporters. Moreover, he had already initiated this practice in 1301, within a month after his coronation and earlier than his rival.¹¹⁶

Although he left no charters containing elaborate interpretations of his quest for power, as in the case of Charles I, perhaps because his battle for the Hungarian throne did not last long, he still managed to reward some Hungarian lords for their help in defending the town of Buda¹¹⁷ or for assistance in getting him crowned.¹¹⁸ He also made large concessions to one of the most powerful Hungarian lords, Máté Csák, lavishing him with authority over the whole of counties Nitra¹¹⁹ and Trencsén¹²⁰ (thus, much more than control over a group of villages or a castle which would have been a more customary way of rewarding faithful lords) for supporting his bid to become king of Hungary. There was a grant for a Saxon leader in Scepusia for Saxon support¹²¹. Wenceslas III continued to distribute wealth and properties from 1303¹²² until July 1304,¹²³ when he most probably joined his father, Wenceslas II, on his way back to the Kingdom of Bohemia.

As mentioned earlier, in the period between 1302 and 1310, comparatively speaking, Charles I awarded not many more than twenty-five grants for faithful service, whereas Wenceslas awarded approximately ten grants between 1301 and 1304. By the summer of 1304, however, Charles I had issued only seven such charters in comparison to ten grants presented by Wenceslas III. This would suggest, according to the extant source material, that both candidates were more-or-less equally busy rewarding their followers and that both clearly understood the effectiveness of and need for such practices.

Charles I, as he himself emphasized, sought external help from the pope and the German king. The former provided him with the legal and moral justification of his claims and the latter mainly with military support. Wenceslas III relied chiefly on his father's assistance, which would have been considerable since Wenceslas II was – as king of Bohemia and Poland – the closest and most powerful neighbor to the north of the Hungarian Kingdom. Judging from the military expeditions of Charles I, generally directed to the northern regions, the lords of these lands were particularly interested in benefiting from Přemyslids' domination in Central Europe.

In spring of 1304, Wenceslas II was capable of bringing a considerable army up to the town of Buda and, meanwhile, reinforce his son's followers in their hold of strategic castles in the north, which fell to Charles I only two years later.

Like Charles I, Wenceslas III followed the logic of a multi-polar system which required his enterprise to mobilize widespread support from many lords, since only an extensive network of allies could secure political change favorable to his cause. Therefore, in 1303, both Přemyslids concluded an alliance with Philip IV of France which was supposed to outweigh Albrecht Habsburg's and Boniface VIII's commitment to Charles' case. Both parties agreed that in the case of war, each of the allies would rise a mercenary army for 100,000 silver marks and provide help.¹²⁴ It was a formidable promise which was never realized.

In *Regesta Slovaciae* there is a summary of the letter which in July 1304 Wenceslas III apparently sent to his father discussing the state of affairs in the Kingdom of Hungary.¹²⁵ It is an interesting piece of critical self-reflection and self-evaluation. Wenceslas III explained there that his protagonists had become dull and idle; that prominent barons were leaving his side because Charles I was closer to the inheritance following Andrew III (closer either in terms of the family relationship, which is doubtful, or in time, which would fit to what is otherwise known from the sources); that, in particular, Charles I's innate talents and charm attracted the Hungarians to him, whereas Wenceslas' idleness, pride and other manifestations of bad manners had caused people to hate him and thus, provoked his alienation from key players. For this reason, he argued, the lords of towns and castles were gradually abandoning him and submitting to Charles I by making secret agreements. In his opinion, this might cut the domestic fights short and interrupt the internal dispute. The Hungarian barons, however – Wenceslas III continued – who were not faithful to either side, seemed more interested in nourishing these divisions than willing to extinguish them in order to get hold of royal castles and incomes and escape punishment.¹²⁶

I will not concentrate on the accuracy of Wenceslas' ruling capabilities in comparison to Charles'. In 1304, Charles I was sixteen and Wenceslas III was fifteen. They were both young and comparably inexperienced, although they had already spent a couple of years in the Kingdom of Hungary and must have learnt a great deal about political mechanisms at work there. Moreover, the *Chronicon Aulae Regie* has left us with quite the opposite description of Wenceslas III's skills and abilities, depicting

him as an agile, attractive and talented ruler,¹²⁷ although with inclinations to promiscuous behavior because of his age.¹²⁸

Leaving this issue aside, it is worth observing two things here. First, Wenceslas III noted how much the personal features of a candidate could enhance his chances for success. Inborn talents combined with outer attractiveness and exemplary manners did matter, since skills in 'making friends' were particularly desirable in enterprises which depended upon smooth cooperation from the lords that was built chiefly on loyalty and reciprocity.

Second, that in the multi-polar system, the weakest lords (individual noblemen, towns or particular castles) sought to side with the most plausibly victorious candidate, hoping to benefit from so-called band-wagoning (they could either submit to a more powerful lord and seek his protection or side with the king whose protection did not have to be immediate but, on the other hand, represented greater authority in legal and moral terms, and eventually could be more profitable).

More powerful players tended to take advantage of the candidates' rivalry to boost their lordships. The multi-polar system did not possess a hegemonic power to curtail their activities; on the contrary, since political change required that groups of lords engage in cooperative efforts, their status guaranteed them profitable participation in the rivalry. On the other hand, the rivalry itself was necessary and on the basis of Wenceslas III's observations, I would again argue that sustaining the royal office was indispensable for the internal logic of the political system. This was because for the lords, only appropriating royal properties or privileges and subsequently, acquiring legal and moral confirmation for these acquisitions (from a legitimate ruler) was the ultimate (that is, there was no alternative) way of establishing and enlarging their lordships.

Money Matters

Another essential element in the quest for power was money. As pointed out earlier, Charles I and Wenceslas III resorted extensively to their royal right to reward actors deemed loyal to them. In a sense, it was the most customary way of showing magnanimity and assure a profit for the supporters who in majority of cases had to first invest their own wealth in the service of their lord, hoping subsequently for remuneration which

would exceed their expenses. Apart from grants, both rivals could rely on external financial support.

Charles I's sponsors, known from the source material, were his grandparents Charles II of Naples and his wife, Queen Mary. In 1301, Charles II agreed to transport thirty-three horses (including three war-horses) to Dalmatia (a region tied to the Kingdom of Hungary);¹²⁹ in 1301 and 1302, he assigned altogether 200 ounces of gold to Paul Subic, Ban of Slavonia and a powerful supporter of Charles I.¹³⁰ In 1303, he agreed that instead of 100 ounces of gold, Paul Subic would receive 1000 packloads (*salme*)¹³¹ of wheat.¹³² In December 1301, Charles II ordered his seneschals in two districts to collect taxes to build up an army for Charles I.¹³³ In 1305, Queen Mary pledged her jewelry and crown to the Florentine merchants in exchange for 300 ounces of gold.¹³⁴ Two years later, Charles II agreed that Mary could pledge her incomes from 1307 for the sake of Hungarian affairs.¹³⁵ Ultimately, in his last will dated March 1308, Charles II donated 2000 ounces of gold to Charles I.¹³⁶

Although it is difficult to estimate the overall of financial aid provided to Charles I by his grandparents to achieve victory, it seems quite clear that almost every year money poured to his pocket constantly. Moreover, the extant source material indicates that until 1303 Charles II extensively supported his grandson. Nevertheless, from 1305, when the Přemyslids eventually left the Kingdom of Hungary and ceased to threaten Charles I, Queen Mary contributed to further efforts, whereas Charles II limited himself to approving his wife's actions. His final donation on his deathbed was only partially connected to Charles I's enterprise in Hungary, and was primarily related to sorting out the question of succession in the Kingdom of Naples.

Wenceslas III was sponsored by his father. There is, however, less data available about direct financial support. One hint may be the formidable sum of 100,000 marks of silver that the Přemyslids agreed to spend to recruit an army against Albrecht Habsburg, a promise which was a part of an alliance with Philip IV of France. There is no evidence that this huge amount of money was ever used although it reveals the degree of contribution approved at least officially by the Přemyslids. Another, and far more modest, indication would be a charter issued on May 31, 1305 by Wenceslas II in which he promised to a canon of Aquileia that Wenceslas III would return by December 25, the tithes of 580 marks of silver which had been collected for the sake of the Holy Land in the Olomouc region but requisitioned by Wenceslas III for "times of need".¹³⁷

Non-material Dimensions of Power

So far, the comparative analysis of the power-winning strategies employed by Charles I and Wenceslas III revealed that they generally match each other. They started their quest for the Hungarian throne under almost identical conditions, having been elected by different groups of the Hungarian lords and were nearly the same age. They employed similar methods to gain the hearts and minds of their prospective subjects, sought widespread support from external powers and relied on generous sponsors who could provide considerable financial aid. Both were in the fourth degree of affinity with the deceased Andrew III, with a slight advantage towards Wenceslas, who in the late 1290s, was formally engaged to Andrew III's daughter and might have become his son-in-law. Therefore, if the legal terminology used in 1304 by Wenceslas II in his dispute with Albrecht Habsburg is followed, it appears each party could equally claim rights to the Hungarian throne *iure legitime successionis* (by the legitimate law of succession) and *vocationis titulo* (by election).¹³⁸

However, despite all these similarities, only Charles I was eventually successful. It is worth asking what made the difference? Was it sheer disparity in material power or Wenceslas III's questionable charm that caused the same power-winning strategies to work better for Charles I? The extant source material suggests that between 1301 and 1306 there was a gradual shift in the ranks of the Hungarian lords who shifted from the Bohemian prince's side to that of Charles I changing an anticipated triumph into a defeat. What did Wenceslas III lack that mattered so much in the quest for power in the early fourteenth century?

The answer to this question lies in the non-material dimensions of power, and to moral authority in particular. It can be argued that what made a considerable difference between the positions of Charles I and Wenceslas III was precisely the support of the pope and the German king.¹³⁹ Yet, this assistance was not important in its material aspects but rather in its persuasive, soft-power type of capabilities. The firm moral and legal protection from the pope, when effectively used, triggered the Hungarian Church to place its moral and religious authority on Charles I's side.

In 1301, after the death of Andrew III, the prelates were not unanimous in their decision who should replace him. They split into two groups. According to the papal legate's report, most of them adhered to John, Archbishop of Kalocsa, and refused to acknowledge the authority of Gregory, a new Archbishop of Esztergom (and the formal head of the

Church in the Kingdom of Hungary).¹⁴⁰ John crowned Wenceslas III, whereas Gregory crowned Charles I.

Boniface VIII followed the politics of his predecessors and favored the Angevin claims. A few months after Andrew III's death, he appointed his legate, Nicholas, Bishop of Ostia.¹⁴¹ Already in October 1301, the legate summoned the Hungarian prelates in search of a way to settle the conflict between Wenceslas III and Charles I, and – as I presume – to end the divisions in the Hungarian Church.¹⁴² On November 6, 1301, Boniface VIII issued a number of letters which requested Wenceslas II to cooperate with the legate,¹⁴³ urged the bishops of Hungary, Dalmatia, Slavonia and Poland to assist the legate in restoring peace in the Kingdom of Hungary,¹⁴⁴ and empowered the legate to punish these prelates who obstructed his efforts to reform the realm.¹⁴⁵ On November 17, 1301, Boniface VIII sent out further letters. The first was addressed to Archbishop of Kalocsa and reprimanded him for siding with Wenceslas III, declaring that the coronation of Wenceslas III was illegitimate, reminding him that ultimately St. Steven himself had received the royal crown from the pope (hence, the pope's will should be obeyed), and demanding that the archbishop correct his behavior and show loyalty to the pope in the spirit of obedience.¹⁴⁶ The second letter was for the legate mandating him to discipline the archbishop of Kalocsa and informing him that only the archbishop of Esztergom could legitimately crown a king of Hungary.¹⁴⁷

In May 1302, the papal legate levied an interdict on the town of Buda which had sided with Wenceslas III and whose clergy had refused to submit to the papal decrees.¹⁴⁸ Meanwhile, Boniface VIII continued his policy to act as the ultimate overseer of Central European "international" relations. On June 10, 1302, he deprived Wenceslas II of his self-appointed title of the king of Poland¹⁴⁹ and summoned the Přemyslids and the Angevins before himself to adjudicate their dispute for the Hungarian throne.¹⁵⁰ The pope made his ruling in favor of the Angevins on May 31, 1303. He recognized Charles I's hereditary rights deriving from his grandmother, Queen Mary, and granted validity to his election. Furthermore, the pope stated that Wenceslas II did not send well-prepared advocates to represent the Přemyslids at his court (he rather expected them to come personally). Moreover, Boniface VIII demanded that everyone – under threat of excommunication – support Mary and Charles in their efforts to repossess the Hungarian realm. All laity and clergymen were absolved from allegiance to the Přemyslids, and the latter were to provide within four months evidence for their rights to Hungary; otherwise, the pope

decided to introduce the rule of *perpetuum silentium*, that is, to impose on the Přemyslids “eternal silence”, meaning they did not have the right to resume the trial in the future.¹⁵¹ In addition, the pope informed Albrecht Habsburg the German king, his son Rudolf, Duke of Austria, and all *praelatis, principibus et nobilibus* in Hungary and beyond, about his ruling, and urged them to support Charles I with *consilium et auxilium et favor*.¹⁵² Subsequently, the prelates of the Hungarian Church received a clear command to abandon the Přemyslids and side with the Angevins.¹⁵³

In the following months, the Hungarian bishops engaged in spreading the news about the papal decision across the whole kingdom.¹⁵⁴ They were fairly determined to uphold it. For instance, on July 31, 1305 a certain John and Henry were excommunicated and their lands put under an interdict as punishment for their support of Wenceslas III (*consilium et auxilium*), for ignoring the papal orders, for helping the Přemyslids to carry away the Hungarian Holy Crown, and for inflicting damage on the town and castle of Esztergom.¹⁵⁵ However, complete unity within the Hungarian Church had still not been attained. On December 6, 1305, Otto III of Wittelsbach was crowned by Benedict, Bishop of Veszprem, and Antonius, Bishop of Csanád.¹⁵⁶ A half a year later, the former was rewarded for this act by Otto.¹⁵⁷

The emergence of Otto III of Wittelsbach as a new candidate for the Hungarian throne mobilized the Church anew. In May 1307, Thomas, Archbishop of Esztergom presided over a local council, which reiterated that anyone opposing Charles I would be excommunicated based on a papal ruling.¹⁵⁸ In August 1307, Clement V dispatched Gentilis de Monteflorum OFM as a legate to a “distressed” Hungary,¹⁵⁹ reconfirmed Boniface VIII’s ruling concerning Angevin rights to the Árpáadian legacy,¹⁶⁰ and required Thomas, Archbishop of Esztergom and Vincent, Archbishop of Kalocsa, to promulgate his decision in the Hungarian realm and to discipline Bishop Antonius for his support of Otto.¹⁶¹

When, at the end of 1307, Charles I was the last standing candidate for the Hungarian throne, the legate and the archbishops continued in their efforts to facilitate his final recognition in the kingdom.¹⁶² Their contribution was, first and foremost, non-material and rooted in the moral authority they wielded that equipped them with “pacifying powers”. Although their success was not complete (since Charles I needed another two decades to eliminate lordships that contested his authority), they managed to generate conditions favorable for the new king. He was widely recognized across the kingdom and the will to cooperate with him among the lords was restored

to a level that allowed them to think positively about returning the realm to peace, order, and tranquility. Therefore, the papal judgment in favor of Charles I did not fully settle the dispute over the empty throne in Hungary but it definitely created a new context for its continuation. The Hungarian Church, which in the last decades had been active in restoring peace and tranquility in the kingdom, gained additional validation and justification for her efforts. However, it was not merely papal moral authority that made the difference, for at nearly the same time Boniface VIII was losing his conflict with Philip IV of France, precisely because his stance did not resonate with the majority of the French bishops. Joseph Canning has mentioned an eloquent anecdote which neatly expressed the fragility of papal moral power. According to this anecdote, current in England at the time of the quarrel between the pope and the king of France, Philip's chancellor and ambassador to the pope, Pierre Flotte, said to Boniface: "Your power is verbal, ours however, is real."¹⁶³

While comparing the power-winning strategies that drove Charles I and Wenceslas III in their quest to win the Árpáadian legacy, it appears evident that the Angevins were able to exploit an additional power resource (to wit, moral authority), which was – at least from August 1303 – significantly less available to the Přemyslids. Making this claim does not mean that Wenceslas III was defeated solely because of a 'shortage' of this type of power resource. The Angevin-Přemyslid struggle was waged on many fronts, using military, financial, and even hereditary assets. The very fact that in late 1305 Otto III Wittelsbach replaced Wenceslas III in this succession conflict reveals that, despite the papal ruling and the sustained offensive of the Hungarian Church, options were still open and things could go in a variety of directions.

My point is, therefore, to show that this more detailed analysis of the way Charles I and Wenceslas III acted in order to gain control of the Hungarian throne, permits a firmer grip on the non-material aspects, which played important roles in medieval "international" politics. The Přemyslids did not lose Hungary in a battle and their protagonists survived in northern Hungary for next two years. Rather, the Přemyslids withdrew from the dispute, as previously Přemysl Otakar II had done in 1271, concentrating on reaffirming their hold of the kingdoms of Bohemia and Poland. One could therefore argue that the military campaigns of late 1304, and Władysław Łokietek's emergence in Little Poland, forced the Přemyslids to give up their ambitions in Hungary and to shift their attention to domains they already possessed.

However, it could be argued that it was very telling that in the summer of 1304, Wenceslas II led a strong military force to the Kingdom of Hungary although the final outcome of this enterprise was to extricate his son from Buda back to Bohemia since Wenceslas III was no longer a welcome candidate for the throne there either. This circumstance had much to do, it seems, with the efficiency of papal moral authority, which clearly took the side of Charles I. Moreover, there is always the question of how much the emergence of the anti-Přemyslid coalition was prompted by admonitions coming from the pope, and to what extent his attitude promoted cooperation between members of this alliance (it included Rudolf of Habsburg, Charles I, both Hungarian archbishops, four other Hungarian bishops, a number of powerful Hungarian lords,¹⁶⁴ and – presumably – Władysław Łokietek¹⁶⁵).

In 1997, Rodney Bruce Hall developed the concept of moral authority as a power resource. Since his approach was constructivist, he assumed a methodological suggestion that in order to identify what, in any given context, the power resource actually is, one first needs to understand “a situationally specific or historically contingent structure of co-constituted identities and interests”.¹⁶⁶ In short, his idea was that moral authority could function as a power resource if, in a given context, the political actors were impelled by their socially constructed identities and political interests to recognize it as a power resource, i.e. as a resource that has utility and value.¹⁶⁷ He believed that “institutionalizing social practices into conventions lends utility to the subject of the convention as a power resource”.¹⁶⁸ Hall argued that such a convention regarding moral authority existed in the Middle Ages, and hence, he claimed that “feudal ecclesial and politico-military actors competed for the moral authority”.¹⁶⁹

The quarrel between Charles I and Wenceslas III over the empty throne in the Kingdom of Hungary reflects Hall’s intuitions about special “conventions” which governed medieval “international” politics by influencing the concepts of kingship and crafting particular types of political interests. This analysis showed that in the multi-polar political environment, which had emerged in Central Europe since the 1240s, and in which efficient rulership could only be attained by promoting the will to cooperate between the lords (because there was no hegemonic actor towering over the remainder), the lord’s ability to attract, persuade and convince both other lords and his dependants appeared as an important factor in successful politics in the “international” realm. In a political system comprised of comparably powerful units (be it on the level

of dukes, kings, emperors or on the more modest level of counts and individual lords), the prevailing multi-polarity combined with the limited effectiveness of military force together with the fragility of the financial system and its confined assets (as in the Middle Ages) lead to an increase in the prominence of non-material power resources, themselves deeply imbedded in the traditional political culture of the time.

One can think of many reasons why Charles I was successful in his quest for power in the Kingdom of Hungary. In terms of strategies, he did not come up with ideas that were qualitatively different than his most serious opponent, Wenceslas III. Their points of departure were rather similar and at the outset of the competition their chances of success were fairly even. Over time, however, it turned out that Charles I managed to nearly monopolize access to a single power resource of moral authority, which consequently, projected him in a favorable light and boosted his abilities to convince and manipulate. This striking disparity, which arose after Boniface VIII's ruling concerning Angevin succession rights and continued until Charles I's third coronation in 1310, presumably knocked his rivals (Wenceslas III, Otto III and the rebellious Hungarian lords) off balance and deprived them of the power of arguments they could use to draw the others' will to cooperate to their side.

The course of events between 1307 and 1310 revealed how consistently the pope, the legate and the Hungarian Church worked on advancing their power of argument within the "convention" (as Hall called it) of their moral authority on behalf of Charles I. The repeated general assemblies which officially acknowledged Charles I's authority, agreements with the powerful lords, and the elaboration of the coronation rite under the legate's *aegis* were all reflections of the same procedure, namely, to monopolize the discourse of legitimacy and authority in favor of one candidate. Wenceslas III, himself well equipped with strong legal and dynastic arguments, still could not manage to balance this pressure, which willy-nilly made him lose the battle on the moral discourse front.

I argue that it was an influential power-winning strategy in the society which was fundamentally organized according to the concepts of rank and order, and which was susceptible to moral argumentation (based on the Christian doctrine) in the political realm.

NOTES

- ¹ Pál Engel, Gyula Kristó, and András Kubinyi, *Magyarország története, 1301-1526* [History of Hungary, 1301-1526] (Budapest: Osiris, 2002), 11. Pál Engel, *Realm of St Stephen: a History of Medieval Hungary, 895-1526* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 124. Iván Bertényi and László Szende, *Anjou-királyaink és Zsigmond kora* [The Period of Angevin kings and of Sigismund] (Budapest: Officina, 2011), 51.
- ² Engel, *Realm of St Stephen*, 101.
- ³ *Ibid.*, 111.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.
- ⁵ Enikő Csukovits, *Az Anjouk Magyarországon I.: I. Károly és uralkodása* [The Angevins in Hungary. Charles I and His Rule] (Budapest: MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Történettudományi Intézet, 2012), 41.
- ⁶ Iván Bertényi and László Szende, *Anjou-királyaink és Zsigmond kora*, 51.
- ⁷ Translation after: Engel, *Realm of St Stephen*, 124.
- ⁸ Imre Nagy and Gyula Nagy, *Codex Diplomaticus Hungaricus Andegavensis. Anjoukori Okmánytár*, vol. 1 (Budapest: A Magyar tudományos akadémia, 1878), 51–53: *Demum eciam domino Andree Illustri Regi Hungarie diuina vocante clemencia rebus humanis exempto vltimo aureo ramusculo a progenie stirpe ac sanguine sancti Regis Stephani primi Regis Hungarorum per paternam lineam descendenti extinco, cum vniuersi ecclesiarum prelati administrationem habentes et Barones proceres ac vniuersi nobiles et cuiusuis status homines Regni Hungarie cum se vero ac naturali domino desolato sentirent scirent et intelligerent de morte eiusdem more Rachelis deplorantes et immensum conturbati et admodum solliciti qualiter et quemadmodum sibi diuina desuper disponente clemencia futurum dominum de sanguine sancti Regis polulatum possent et valerent inuenire.*
- ⁹ Thomas N. Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009), IX.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3–4.
- ¹¹ I intentionally avoid the term “central power”, because to some degree using it automatically invokes anachronistic thoughts about medieval political entities in terms of modern states, which I consider misleading, impoverishing the “otherness” of medieval power relations.
- ¹² Gyula Kristó, “Die Macht der Territorialherren in Ungarn am Anfang des 14. Jahrhunderts,” in *Etudes Historiques Hongroises 1985*, vol. 1 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1985), 598.
- ¹³ Recently about the supposed decimation of the population cf. Attila Zsoldos, *Nagy uralkodók és kiskirályok a 13. században* [Great Rulers and Small Kings in the Thirteenth Century] (Budapest: Kossuth/Metropol, 2009), 54.

- 14 László Szende, "Magyarország külpolitikája 1242-1246 között," [The Foreign
Politics of Hungary between 1242 and 1246] *Első Század* 2 (2000): 307–311;
Engel, *Realm of St Stephen*, 101–102.
- 15 Zsoldos, *Nagy Uralkodók*, 54.
- 16 Cf. Iván Bertényi and Gábor Gyapay, *Magyarország rövid története* [Short
History of Hungary] (Budapest: Maecenas, 1992), 90–91.
- 17 Engel, *Realm of St Stephen*, 104.
- 18 Zsoldos, *Nagy uralkodók*, 55.
- 19 Kristó, "Die Macht," 605.
- 20 Jaroslav Pánek and Oldřich Tůma, *A History of the Czech Lands* (Prague:
Karolinum Press, 2009), 107.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 107–108.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 107.
- 23 Attila Zsoldos, "Az ifjabb király országa," [The Realm of the 'Junior' King]
Századok 139 (2005): 235.
- 24 Engel, *Realm of St Stephen*, 95.
- 25 Zsoldos, "Az ifjabb király országa," 235.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 260.
- 27 Pánek and Tůma, *A History of the Czech Lands*, 110.
- 28 Zsoldos, "Az ifjabb király országa," 233–234.
- 29 Engel, *Realm of St Stephen*, 107.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 János M. Bak, *Königtum und Stände in Ungarn im 14.-16. Jahrhundert*
(Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1973), 12.
- 32 Pánek and Tůma, *A History of the Czech Lands*, 110.
- 33 Cf. the description of political activities carried out by the Hungarian lords:
Kristó, "Die Macht," 603–604.
- 34 Jörg K. Hoensch, *Geschichte Böhmens: Von der slavischen Landnahme bis
ins 20. Jahrhundert*, 2., aktualisierte u. ergänzte Auflage (München: C.H.
Beck, 1992), 279.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 280.
- 36 Tomasz Jurek, Stanisław Szczur, and Krzysztof Ożóg, *Piastowie: Leksykon
Biograficzny* [The Piasts: Biographical Lexicon] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo
Literackie, 1999), 428.
- 37 Kateřina Charvátová, *Václav II: Král Český a Polský* [Wenceslas II: the Czech
and Polish King] (Praha: Vyšehrad, 2007), 48–51.
- 38 Kristó, "Die Macht," 604.
- 39 Hoensch, *Geschichte Böhmens*, 280.
- 40 Charvátová, *Václav II*, 116.
- 41 Cf. Robert Antonín, *Zahraniční Politika Krále Václava II. v Letech 1283-1300*
[King Wenceslas' II Foreign Policy between 1283 and 1300] (Brno: Matic
moravská, 2009), 20–63.

- 42 Chronicon Aulae Regie, 38: *Wenceslaus rex [...] sicque dispersa revocat, dissipata congregat, ea quoque, que aliena manus distraxerat, cum summa diligencia reintegrando gubernat.*
- 43 *Ibid.*, 38.
- 44 Charvátová, *Václav II*, 180–181.
- 45 Kristó, “Die Macht,” 598.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 600.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 601–602.
- 48 Gyula Kristó and Ferenc Makk, *Károly Róbert emlékezete* [The Legacy of Charles Robert] (Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó, 1988), 7–21. Blanka Brezovakova, “Politický Zapas Anjouovcov o Uhorsku Korunu,” [The Angevin Struggle for the Hungarian Crown] *Historicky Casopis* 39, no. 6 (1991): 569–587. Stanisław A. Sroka, “Methods of Constructing Angevin Rule in Hungary in the Light of Most Recent Research,” *Quaestiones Mediaevi Novae* 1 (1996): 77–90. Csukovits, *Az Anjouk Magyarországon I.*, 41–69. Iván Bertényi, *Magyarország az Anjouk korában* [Hungary in the Angevin Period] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1987), 27–47.
- 49 Engel, *Realm of St Stephen*, 125.
- 50 Brezovakova, “Politický Zapas,” 572.
- 51 Bak, *Königtum*, 13.
- 52 Brezovakova, “Politický Zapas,” 575.
- 53 Irena Sułkowska-Kurasiowa and Stanisław Kuraś, *Bullarium Poloniae*, vol. 1 (Romae: Ecole française de Rome, 1982), n. 951.
- 54 Josef Emler, ed., *Regesta Diplomatica Nec Non Epistolaria Bohemiae et Moraviae*, vol. 2 (Prague: Haase, 1855) [hereafter: RDEBM], 827–829.
- 55 Brezovakova, “Politický Zapas,” 580.
- 56 Emler, *RDEBM*, 2:843–846.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 2:847–849.
- 58 *Anjou-kori Oklevéltár: Documenta Res Hungaricas Tempore Regum Andegavensium Illustrantia*, vol. 1 (Szeged: Szegedi Középkorász Műhely, 1990), n. 417.
- 59 Emler, *RDEBM*, 2:870.
- 60 *AOKl.*, 1990, vol. 1, n. 643.
- 61 Csukovits, *Az Anjouk Magyarországon I.*, 65.
- 62 Emler, *RDEBM*, 2:871.
- 63 As the comment favorable to Wenceslas II goes in the *Chronica Oliviensis: Item istius regis nobilis tempore* [Wenceslas II] *Albertus monoculus rex Romanorum cum valido exercitu Bohemiam intravit et ad tempus in ea stetit, sed nichil proficiens, protegente Deo pium regem, confusus recessit non sine multo exercitus sui detrimento. Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, vol. 6 (Kraków: Akademia Umiejętności, 1893), 317.
- 64 Emler, *RDEBM*, 2:886–887.

- 65 *Chronicon Aulae Regie* explained that Wenceslas III “voluntarie resignabat” his royal rights: František Palacký, *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum*, vol. 4 (Prague: Nákl. N. F. Palackého, 1884), 107. See also: Kristó and Makk, *Károly Róbert emlékezete*, 16.
- 66 He still used it in a charter of October 10, 1305 although the title had vanished from charters starting from November 3, 1305: cf. Ignacy Zakrzewski, ed., *Kodeks Dyplomatyczny Wielkopolski*, vol. 2 (Poznań: Nakł. Bibl. Kórnickiej, 1878), n. 894., and Emler, *RDEBM*, 2:888.
- 67 Brezovakova, “Politický Zapas,” 585.
- 68 Kronika Pulkavova: *Sed et Otto, Bavarie dux*, [tamquam heres vicinior - version B] *in regem Ungarie per Ungaros est electus*: František Palacký, *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum*, vol. 5 (Prague: Nákl. N. F. Palackého, 1884), 187.
- 69 Cf. *Anjou-kori Oklevéltár: Documenta Res Hungaricas Tempore Regum Andegavensium Illustrantia*, vol. 2 (Szeged: Szegedi Középkorász Műhely, 1992), n. 656 and 683. Cf. Kristó and Makk, *Károly Róbert emlékezete*, 17.
- 70 Brezovakova, “Politický Zapas,” 585. Cf. *AOkI.*, 1992, vol. 2, n. 172.
- 71 *AOkI.*, 1992, vol. 2, n. 201.
- 72 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, n. 221–222.
- 73 Csukovits, *Az Anjouk Magyarországon I.*, 65–66.
- 74 *AOkI.*, 1992, vol. 2, n. 243.
- 75 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, n. 494.
- 76 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, n. 668.
- 77 *Chronici Hungarici*, Imre Szentpétery, ed., *Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum Tempore Ducum Regumque Stirpis Arpadinae Gestarum*, vol. 1 (Budapest, 1937), 486.
- 78 *AOkI.*, 1992, vol. 2, n. 674. Cf. Csukovits, *Az Anjouk Magyarországon I.*, 68.
- 79 As Kristó asserted, by 1310, the Church, the lesser nobility, towns, merchants, and peasants realized that “for their own interest” they had to staunchly support the new king in order to overpower the “oligarchs”, cf. Kristó, “Die Macht,” 609.
- 80 I omit the case of Otto III principally due to space limitations. Moreover, the competition between Charles I and Wenceslas III is better documented (than in the case of Otto III), permitting a more profound analysis.
- 81 Csukovits, *Az Anjouk Magyarországon I.*, 65.
- 82 *Ibid.* She referred there to a study by Ludwig Holzfurtner that shortly reported on the “adventures” of Otto III.
- 83 Kristó in his account of the action of Otto III in the kingdom of Hungary focused mainly on reporting about the content of the source material. However, he did not attempt to provide a coherent picture of Otto’s expedition to Hungary, cf. Kristó and Makk, *Károly Róbert emlékezete*, 16–17.

- 84 For the sake of brevity I had to omit the Polish principalities. Without going into detail, I would argue that such analogical tendencies, mechanisms and attitudes worked there too. They certainly reflected some local peculiarities which were partially connected to the non-royal status of power in the Polish lands but, nevertheless, the similarities are remarkable.
- 85 One recent example would be Josef Žemlička who explained: *The Hungarian king, Béla IV, was unhappy with these disturbances in the balance of power in Central Europe* [which derived from Wenceslas' I successes in Austria – wk]. *War came: Pánek and Tůma, A History of the Czech Lands*, 108.
- 86 Charvátová, *Václav II*, 114.
- 87 Antonín, *Zahraniční*, 278.
- 88 Cf. Csukovits, *Az Anjouk Magyarországon I.*, 39.; Kristó and Makk, *Károly Róbert emlékezete*, 8–9.; Engel, Kristó, and Kubinyi, *Magyarország története*, 27–29; Kristó, “Die Macht,” 606–609.
- 89 Pánek and Tůma, *A History of the Czech Lands*, 111.
- 90 I follow here concepts that already exist in the IR scholarship. Andrew Heywood recently explained the concept of “multipolarity”: *Multipolarity refers to an international system in which there are three or more power centres. However, this may encompass arrangements ranging from tripolar systems [...] to effectively nonpolar systems [...], in which power is so diffuse that no actor can any longer be portrayed as a ‘pole’.* Neorealists argue that multipolarity creates a bias in favour of fluidity and uncertainty, which can lead only to instability and an increased likelihood of war (‘anarchical’ multipolarity). Liberals nevertheless argue that multipolar systems are characterized by a tendency towards multilateralism, as a more even division of global power promotes peace, cooperation and integration (‘interdependent’ multipolarity); Andrew Heywood, *Global Politics* (Houndmills, Basingstoke Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 230.
- 91 Andrzej Feliks Grabski, *Dzieje historiografii* [History of Historiography] (Poznań: Wydaw. Poznanskie, 2003). Krzysztof Pomian, *Przeszłość Jako Przedmiot Wiary; Historia i Filozofia w Myśli Średniowiecza*. [Past as the Subject of Faith. History and Philosophy in the Medieval Thought] (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawn. Naukowe, 1968).
- 92 Engel, *Realm of St Stephen*, 108.
- 93 *Chronicon Aulae Regie: Non te latet domine rex, iniquiunt, et nos ipsi cognoverunt et patres nostri narraverunt nobis, quia lata est Ungarie terra ac ipsius potencia minime mensurata. Reges enim Ungarie, qui ante nos fuerunt, per totam fere Germaniam tyrannidem exercentes longe dominati sunt;* Palacký, *FRB*, 1884, 4:83.
- 94 Csukovits, *Az Anjouk Magyarországon I.*, 11. *Regnum vngarie est de maioribus regnis mundi, quantum ad terre spacium; dicitur enim comuniter, quod in longitudine habebat XL diebus et totidem in latitudine:*

- Olgierd Górka, ed., *Anonymi Descriptio Europae Orientalis "Imperium Constantinopolitanum, Albania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Ruthenia, Ungaria, Polonia, Bohemia" Anno MCCCVIII Exarata* (Cracow: Gebethner: sumptibus Academiae Litterarum, 1916), 46.
- 95 *Chronicon Aulae Regie*, Palacký, *FRB*, 1884, 4:83–84.
- 96 Nagy and Nagy, *AO*, 1:80–81.
- 97 *AOkl.*, 1992, vol. 2, n. 855.
- 98 Nagy and Nagy, *AO*, 1:210.
- 99 *AOkl.*, 1990, vol. 1, n. 451.
- 100 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, n. 675.
- 101 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, n. 668.
- 102 *AOkl.*, 1992, vol. 2, n. 44.
- 103 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, n. 173.
- 104 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, n. 232.
- 105 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, n. 436.
- 106 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, n. 684.
- 107 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, n. 825–826.
- 108 *AOkl.*, 1990, vol. 1, n. 278, 316–317.
- 109 *AOkl.*, 1992, vol. 2, n. 821–823.
- 110 *Eodem anno [1301] controversia exorta est in Ungaria de regno inter regem Boemie, qui filium suum cum favore aliquorum principum coronari ordinavit in Buda, et inter regem Karolum, qui filium Karoli martelli nati de Ungaria in Ungariam miserat pro corona habens similiter in suum auxilium et favorem aliquos principes regionis et Cumanos ac multitudinem Tartarorum*: Ottavio Clavuot, ed., *Tholomaeus von Lucca, Historia Ecclesiastica Nova*, vol. 39, Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptorum, 2009, 647. Almost identical account Ptolemy inserted into his *Annales*: Bernhard Schmeidler, ed., *Tholomei Lucensis Annales*, vol. 8, Scriptorum Rerum Germanicarum, Nova Series, 1930, 238.
- 111 *Ugyane pápa Gentile de Montefiore biboros urat küldte követül Magyarországba. Károly Róbertnek, Martell Károly fiának, Róbert király unokaöccsének Magyarország királyává való koronázására s hogy az egyház segélyében s támogatásában részesítset. S úgy is történt s a nevezett biboros huzamosabb időt töltött Magyarországbán, a míg az említett Károly király szinte az egész országot meg nem hódította s őt békességben meg nem koronázta*: Giovanni Villani, *A Három Villani Krónikája [The Chronicle of Three Villanis]* (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1909), 113.
- 112 *AOkl.*, 1990, vol. 1, n. 69.
- 113 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, n. 130.
- 114 *Chronici Hungarici*, *SRH*, 1:479–480.
- 115 *Chronici Hungarici*, *ibid.*, 1:481.
- 116 *AOkl.*, 1990, vol. 1, n. 76.

- 117 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, n. 315.
- 118 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, n. 212, 315.
- 119 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, n. 184.
- 120 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, n. 186.
- 121 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, n. 268.
- 122 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, n. 505, 507, 508.
- 123 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, n. 634.
- 124 Emler, *RDEBM*, 2:856–857.
- 125 Brezovakova, “Politický Zapas,” 583.
- 126 *Ladislau, rex Hungariae, Wenceslao, regi Bohemiae et Poloniae, patri suo, litteras de statu regni mittit, in quibus continebatur, quod pars sua sensim languidior hebetiorque esse coepit. Desciscentibus praecipuis baronibus ab eo et in partem Caroli regis facientibus secessionem, quod et Carolus ad succedendum regi Andreae erat propinquior, singularique ingenio et indole atque venustate morum praeclarus Hungarorum mentes in sui venerationem et culturam instexerat, et Wenceslaus desidia et superbia ceterisque corruptis moribus et flagitiis odium in se et alienationem animorum provocabat. Quo effectum est, ut castra municipiaque, obedientiam Wenceslai regis professam, regi Carolo dederentur et in personae suae clamdestini celebrarentur tractatus, quo facilius civile bellum intercipi posset, expulsionem vel discrimen. Barones insuper Hungariae, nulli partium fidi, nutrire magis divisionem, quam extinguere visi sunt, ut castrorum et introituum regalium impunis illis esset detentio:* Vincent Sedlák, *Regesta Diplomatica Nec Non Epistolaria Slovaciae*, vol. 1 (Bratislavae: Sumptibus Academiae Scientiarum Slovacae, 1980), 156.
- 127 *Chronicon Aulae Regie*, *FRB*, 1884, 4:106.
- 128 *Chronicon Aulae Regie*, *ibid.*, 4:107.
- 129 *AOKl.*, 1990, vol. 1, n. 46.
- 130 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, n. 55, 249.
- 131 Philip B. Baldwin recently explained: “A *salma*, derived from *sagma*, a pack-saddle, is the load that can be carried on the back of pack-horse or other beast of burden. ... One hundred pack-loads of wheat on the English example might therefore be equated, in general terms, with the bread provision for 55 people for one year; but there are many variables.”: cf. Philip B. Baldwin, “Charles of Anjou, Pope Gregory X and the Crown of Jerusalem,” *Journal of Medieval History* 38, no. 4 (2012): 428. Following his calculations, Paul Subic was granted the annual bread provision for approx. 550 people.
- 132 *AOKl.*, 1990, vol. 1, n. 429.
- 133 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, n. 128.
- 134 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, n. 744.
- 135 *AOKl.*, 1992, vol. 2, n. 262.
- 136 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, n. 323.

- 137 Emler, *RDEBM*, 2:880–881.
- 138 Chronicon Aulae Regie, *FRB*, 1884, 4:88.
- 139 For this analysis it is less important to elucidate the reasons which made the pope and the German king work against the Přemyslids.
- 140 Emler, *RDEBM*, 2:188.
- 141 Sułkowska-Kurasiowa and Kuraś, *Bullarium Poloniae*, vol. 1, n. 951.
- 142 *AOkł.*, 1990, vol. 1, n. 96.
- 143 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, n. 107.
- 144 Emler, *RDEBM*, 2:820.
- 145 *Ibid.*, 2:819–820.
- 146 *AOkł.*, 1990, vol. 1, n. 88.
- 147 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, n. 89.
- 148 Brezovakova, “Politicky Zapas,” 579.
- 149 Zakrzewski, *KDW*, vol. 2, n. 853.
- 150 Sedlák, *Regesta Slovaciae*, 1:827–829.
- 151 *Ibid.*, 1:843–846.
- 152 *Ibid.*, 1:846.
- 153 *Ibid.*, 1:848–849.
- 154 *AOkł.*, 1990, vol. 1, n. 417, 426, 432–434.
- 155 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, n. 756.
- 156 Brezovakova, “Politicky Zapas,” 585.
- 157 *AOkł.*, 1992, vol. 2, n. 55.
- 158 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, n. 172; cf. Brezovakova, “Politicky Zapas,” 585.
- 159 *AOkł.*, 1992, vol. 2, n. 201.
- 160 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, n. 221.
- 161 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, n. 222.
- 162 Csukovits, *Az Anjouk Magyarországon I.*, 66–69.
- 163 Joseph Canning, *Ideas of Power in the Late Middle Ages, 1296-1417* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 12.
- 164 *AOkł.*, 1990, vol. 1, n. 643–644.
- 165 Edmund Długopolski, *Władysław Łokietek Na Tle Swoich Czasów* [Władysław Łokietek and His Times] (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich, 1951), 55; cf. Adam Kłodziński, “Łokietek a Habsburgowie (1300-1332),” [Łokietek and the Habsburgs (1300-1332)] *RAU. Wydział Hist.-filoz.* 59 (1916): 259.
- 166 Rodney Bruce Hall, “Moral Authority as a Power Resource,” *International Organization* 51, no. 4 (1997): 594.
- 167 *Ibid.*
- 168 *Ibid.*, 596.
- 169 *Ibid.*, 591.