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THE ORIGINS AND FATE OF THE TITLE OF *REX IUNIOR* IN SERBIA (HUNGARIAN-SERBIAN RELATIONS DURING THE REIGNS OF BÉLA IV AND UROŠ I)

Abstract: The paper examines the Hungarian-Serbian relations during the reigns of King Béla IV of Hungary (1235–1270) and King Uroš of Serbia (1243–1276) from the 1240s until the war in 1268, and one of its main consequences – the appearance of the title of *rex iunior* in Serbia. The paper highlights the evolution of relations between the two kingdoms, situating these changes within the context of international relations. Particular attention is given to the events leading to the war in 1268. The second part of the paper examines the consequences of the war, emphasising the influence of the Hungarian *rex iunior* on Serbia.

Keywords: Medieval Hungary, medieval Serbia, *rex iunior*, Béla IV, Uroš I, Dragutin.

The history of relations between Serbia and Hungary in the Middle Ages remains largely unexplored in many respects. The dynastic ties and the influence of legal institutions of one country on the other are among these understudied areas. From the 1240s, the reigns of two prominent kings – Béla IV and Uroš I, overlapped. While the King of Hungary at the beginning of this period focused on rebuilding the country after the Mongol invasion and later fought for the Babenberg inheritance and struggled with his own son over authority, the King of Serbia intended to consolidate royal power over the Serbian maritime states, which were more or less independent in many aspects, while navigating the international relations in the Balkans. This paper examines the evolving relationship between these two monarchs and their realms,

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with an emphasis on how the Hungarian institution of *rex iunior* appeared in Serbia under the influence of Béla IV and his son.

Hungary and Serbia in the 1240s and 1250s

During 1242 and 1243, great changes occurred in both Hungary and Serbia. The Mongol invasion forced Béla IV to seek refuge from his enemies as far as the Adriatic coast, while Serbia experienced a regime change, with King Uroš I ascending to the throne sometime between April 1242 and August 1243, according to the most recent research.¹ One of Uroš's greatest challenges after his accession was to unify the Serbian territories – Duklja, Zahumlje and Trebinje – which were striving for independent statehood. In the early 13th century, the temporary collapse of the Byzantine Empire created a power vacuum in the Balkans, providing Serbia with an opportunity to expand its influence in the region. During Uroš I's reign, Serbia experienced significant economic development, with mining playing an important role in supporting his efforts to strengthen royal authority. Meanwhile, following the invasion of Mongols and their retreat from Hungary, Béla IV focused on rebuilding the country. Between 1246 and 1261, the Hungarian King turned his attention to the War of the Babenberg Succession, relegating southern expansions and Balkan affairs to a secondary position in his foreign policy.² Hungary's presence in the Balkans was revitalised from the mid-1250s, when Rostislav Mikhailovich took the initiative and sought to pursue a relatively independent foreign policy, partly encompassing relations with Serbia. Rostislav was the son of Michael, the Grand Duke of Kiev, who fled from Galicia to Hungary for the last time in 1243.³ He married Princess Anna, the daughter of King Béla IV, who supported Rostislav's claims to the Galician throne in order to secure Hungarian interests in the region, which Hungarian kings had sought to assert since the early 13th century.⁴ When Rostislav lost the war for the throne in 1247, he was granted offices in Hungary. That year, he was appointed ban of all Slavonia for a brief period, becoming the first member of the royal family to hold this office since it usually belonged to barons, while the title of duke of Slavonia belonged to a member of the royal family chosen by the king, usually the heir to the throne. The pinnacle of Rostislav's career came when he was granted the title of the lord of Mačva⁵ (*dominus*

¹ Ivana Komatina, *Kralj Stefan Uroš I Veliki i njegov vek*, Beograd 2021, 89–102.

² Veronika Rudolf, "A tét a Babenberg-örökség. Cseh–magyar–osztrák kapcsolatok 1246 után", in: *Micae mediaevales IX*, ed. Enikő Kovács et al., Budapest 2020, 151–170.

³ Márta Font, "Rosztjiszlav herceg IV. Béla udvarában", in: *Hercegek és hercegségek a középkori Magyarországon*, ed. Attila Zsoldos, Székesfehérvár 2014, 67–70.

⁴ Gyula Pauler, *A magyar nemzet története az Árpád-házi királyok alatt I–II*, Budapest 1899, II, 217.

⁵ The territory was situated between the Drina, Danube and Sava rivers. The Hungarian territories south of the Sava were first given as a dynastic donation to Margaret of Byzantium, who was the widow of Byzantine Emperor Isaac II and his son Kaloyan, as *Uterior Sirmia* in 1229. Kaloyan died sometime after 1242 without an heir, and until the arrival of Rostislav we

de Machou),⁶ governing this territory together with the eastern part of Bosnia, Soli and Usora,⁷ and he was probably entrusted by King Béla IV to reorganise these territories under Hungarian influence.⁸ The first source mentions his title in 1254, but he probably received the title and the territory after leaving the office of the ban of Slavonia in 1248.⁹ Rostislav pursued a very ambitious policy in Mačva and Bosnia, which led to a renewed increased Hungarian influence in the Balkans, including Zahumlje – a territory of interest to King Uroš I – a few years after King Béla IV returned to Hungary. It should be noted that the Hungarian presence in Zahumlje was already relatively strong in the first half of the 13th century. Since the late 12th century, the kings of Hungary or the dukes of Slavonia took an active part in local power struggles. The participation varied from providing military aid – such as in 1198 when Duke Andrew led a military campaign to help Peter of Zahumlje – to offering asylum to their supported leader of Zahumlje who had to seek refuge in the neighbouring Dalmatian territories under Hungarian rule. This occurred with Peter around 1220, and later with Andrija. After Prince Andrija's death, his son Radoslav, who held only the title of župan and probably governed the western parts of Zahumlje, declared himself a vassal of the Hungarian King in 1254 while fighting for power in Zahumlje.¹⁰ It is unknown whether he actually received help from Rostislav or from Croatia-Dalmatia, where his predecessors found help and refuge in previous centuries. It cannot be excluded that Rostislav's influence also played a role in Radoslav's decision. However, it does not appear that Radoslav declaring himself a vassal of the King of Hungary, while in a conflict with the King of Serbia, led to any direct friction between the two countries. The relationship between Hungary and Serbia was relatively good or neutral in the 1240s and 1250s, not only because the main focus of the Hungarian foreign policy was to the west of the country, but also because, from the mid-1240s, Serbia was preoccupied with its increasingly strained relationship with Dubrovnik.¹¹ The conflict had both ecclesiastical and economic causes and aims. For Dubrovnik, the loss of ecclesiastical authority over Bosnia in 1247, which came under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Kalocsa, was another blow and part of the ongoing decline of ecclesiastical power in the region.¹² In the same year, Bar's ecclesiastical status brought Serbia and Dubrovnik into conflict. The

have no precise information about the territory. It can be assumed that the head of the territory was called lord and not ban or any higher-ranking official known in Hungary, because it was barely organised at the time when Rostislav received it. Attila Zsoldos, *Az Árpádok és asszonyaik*, Budapest 2005, 158; M. Font, "Rosztyszlav", 71.

⁶ Đura Hardi, "Rostislav Mihailovič, Dominus de Machou", *Studia Balcanica Bohemo-Slovaca* 6 (2006) 60–72.

⁷ Konstantin Jireček, *Istorija Srba. Prva knjiga do 1527. godine. Politička istorija*, Beograd 1952, 179.

⁸ M. Font, "Rosztyszlav", 76.

⁹ *Ibidem*, 71.

¹⁰ Mladen Ančić, *Na rubu Zapada. Tri stoljeća srednjovjekovne Bosne*, Zagreb 2001, 155.

¹¹ K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, 179; Robin Harris: *Dubrovnik. A History*, London 2003, 50–53.

¹² R. Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 53.

city was located in Serbian territory, and it was in Uroš's interest that the Roman Catholic dioceses and communities of the country be under an archbishopric within Serbia.¹³ When the archbishop of Bar died in 1247, Dubrovnik tried to convince the pope to recognise Dubrovnik's authority over Bar, but the attempt was unsuccessful. In 1252, when Giovanni Carpini,¹⁴ the archbishop of Bar, died, Dubrovnik tried again to assert its claims. This time, the attempt was successful as a papal audience was secured. King Uroš did not wait for the outcome of the audience and marched against Dubrovnik with an army, while Bar refused to accept any possible strengthening of the external influence of Dubrovnik over the town. Uroš was also supported by his brother Vladislav, the former king, who held territories in the maritime region. In 1253, Dubrovnik formed an alliance with Bulgaria, which was seeking to regain its former power, and in 1254, they were joined by Radoslav of Zahumlje¹⁵ – the same Radoslav who declared himself a vassal of the Hungarian King.¹⁶ The war ended in a swift Serbian victory in 1254.¹⁷ While Radoslav claimed to be a vassal of King Béla IV, no Hungarian involvement can be found in Serbian territories – neither the King of Hungary nor Rostislav took part in any conflict involving Serbia.

The rapprochement of Hungary and Serbia in the early 1260s

After the sack of Constantinople in 1204, two successor states were formed: the Empire of Nicea and the Despotate of Epirus. King Uroš maintained a good relationship with the emperor of Nicaea until around 1256.¹⁸ After that, the Serbian ruler's foreign policy changed. In 1258, Uroš I launched a military campaign and captured Skopje, Prilep and Kičevo.¹⁹ The success was short-lived, because the new Nicaean emperor, future Michael VIII Palaiologos, retook these Serbian holdings in 1259.²⁰ Michael also captured Constantinople in 1261, and after 1204, the Byzantine Empire was reconstituted. Uroš lost his Balkan possessions of 1258, and probably to counterbalance Nicaea's power, he again forged closer ties between Serbia and

¹³ Judit Gál, "A dalmáciai egyházszerkezet jellemezői és 11–13. századi átalakulása", in: *Micae mediaevales* III, ed. Judit Gál et al., Budapest 2013, 104–108.

¹⁴ Giovanni Carpini was a papal legate to the Mongols between 1245 and 1247. Upon his return from his mission, Pope Innocent IV appointed him archbishop of Bar. Carpini's importance is evident from the fact that in *Descriptiones terrarum*, written between 1255 and 1260 by an anonymous Dominican or Franciscan friar, Carpini's former archbishopric seat of Bar is the only town mentioned. Dušan Korać i Radivoj Radić, "Iz Karakoruma u Bar. Srbija u delu anonimnog geografa XII veka", *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 37 (1998) 251.

¹⁵ Vinko Foretić, *Povijest Dubrovnika do 1808 I*, Zagreb 1980, 86–88.

¹⁶ Gy. Pauler, *A magyar nemzet*, II, 229.

¹⁷ R. Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 51.

¹⁸ K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, 183.

¹⁹ Sima Ćirković, „Srpske i pomorske zemlje kralja Uroša I“, u: *Istorija srpskog naroda* I, ur. Sima Ćirković, Beograd 1982, 350.

²⁰ K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, 183.

Hungary. As one of the first signs of the rapprochement, Serbian auxiliary troops fought on the Hungarian side in the Battle of Kressenbrunn in 1260,²¹ which ended a phase of the War of the Babenberg Succession. Uroš's name is also found in the peace treaty.²²

At the same time, Uroš's allies lost positions in the Balkans to the emperor of Nicea, and between 1258 and 1262 Michael VIII managed to establish an alliance with Bulgaria as well.²³ In these circumstances, it was a logical step for Uroš to turn to Hungary, since Hungarian rulers had not made any moves against Serbia since the early 13th century. The closer relations established at that time did not break off after the Battle of Kressenbrunn, as evidenced by the account of the wedding of Prince Béla, the son of Béla IV, in Ottokar von Steiermark's *Steirische Reimchronik*, which mentions the Serbian King among the members of Béla IV's entourage.²⁴ There is also another factor that could have contributed to the development of the alliance between the King of Hungary and the King of Serbia. By the end of the 1250s, Bulgaria had become the focus of the southern foreign policy of Béla IV and his elder son, Prince Stephen, and Bulgaria was allied with Michael VIII. In 1261–1262, the Hungarian army, led by Prince Stephen and King Béla IV, defeated the Bulgarian army at Vidin and advanced deep into Bulgaria.²⁵

In July 1261, the Byzantine Empire was reconstituted, with Michael VIII gaining sole power after blinding his co-emperor, John Laskaris IV, who was the brother-in-law of Bulgarian ruler Constantine Asen. As a result, the peaceful relationship between the Byzantine emperor and the Bulgarian ruler, which had lasted since 1258, was broken.²⁶ In 1262, another important event for the region occurred with the death of Rostislav Mihailovich. In Bosnia and Mačva, Rostislav was succeeded by his sons. Michael governed Bosnia until 1266 and Béla became the lord of Mačva and, after Michael's death, the lord of Bosnia until 1272.²⁷ In northwestern Bulgaria, where Rostislav had territories, Jacob Sventslav took over authority.²⁸

²¹ Gy. Pauler, *A magyar nemzet*, II, 236.

²² Mór Wertner, *A középkori délszláv uralkodók genealógiai története: több genealógiai táblával*, Temesvár 1891, 51.

²³ John V. A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans. A Critical Survey from the Sixth to the Late Twelfth Century*, Ann Arbor 1994, 173.

²⁴ András Vizkelety, "Béla hercegnek, IV. Béla király fiának menyegzője", *Irodalomtörténeti közlemények* 97 (1993) 579.

²⁵ Dániel Bácsatyai, "Bolgár–magyar háborúk az 1250–1260-as években", *Századok* 155 (2021) 1037–1040.

²⁶ J. V. A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans*, 173.

²⁷ M. Font, "Rosztyiszlav", 78.

²⁸ Attila Zsoldos, *Családi ügy. IV. Béla és István ifjabb király viszálya az 1260-as években*, Budapest 2007, 134.

Changes in Hungarian-Serbian relations in 1268

To understand the circumstances of changes and the dynamics of the Hungarian-Serbian relations, it is necessary first to examine Hungary's internal crisis. In 1262, a war broke out between Béla IV and Prince Stephen, ending with the Treaty of Pozsony (modern-day Bratislava) in December of that year.²⁹ Despite the peace treaty, tensions between the two sides continued to flare up. The treaty granted Prince Stephen the title of junior king (*rex iunior*) and allowed him to govern independently a large part of the country.³⁰ It was probably after the marriage of Prince Béla in October 1264 that tensions flared up again, with the ultimatum of Béla IV in December 1264 demanding from Stephen to retain only a part of his power.³¹ The war between the two sides broke out in late 1264 and concluded with the treaty signed in March 1265. The internal struggles ended with Prince Stephen's victory, who inflicted a heavy defeat to his father's army in the decisive battle near Isaszeg.³² However, relations between father and son improved only gradually after the peace agreement of March 1265 and the treaty of 1266, signed on the Island of Rabbits (now Margaret Island, a part of Budapest). It is possible that Uroš, seeing this internal uncertainty in Hungary, felt that he could reduce his relative dependence on the Hungarian King, a situation that persisted since the beginning of the decade. Another and, in my opinion, a more realistic reason could be that the King of Serbia sought to extend his influence over Mačva. After Rostislav's death, Princess Anna governed the territory on behalf of her young son Béla, with the support of King Béla IV. However, when the King of Serbia attacked Mačva, relations between Béla IV and Stephen were tense but peaceful, and the lords of Mačva could count on the military assistance of Béla IV.

In addition to the Hungarian internal wars, there are perhaps two other reasons for the timing of Uroš's attack. In the mid-1260s, major changes occurred on the Italian Peninsula. In 1266, Charles I of Anjou defeated King Manfred in the Battle of Benevento and took the throne of the Kingdom of Sicily, becoming one of the region's most influential rulers. Charles's ambitious plans, which included the renewal of the Latin Empire, threatened to place Serbia at a territorial disadvantage.³³ By this time, Michael VIII also solidified relations with Bulgaria, whose ruler, Constantine, had married one of his nieces.³⁴ The Byzantine emperor also sought to establish a similar dynastic relationship with Serbia, but this effort was thwarted by the conditions at the Serbian court, experienced by his envoys, according to contemporary sources.³⁵ Michael VIII also established a kinship with Prince Stephen, the junior king of Hungary,

²⁹ *Ibidem*, 21.

³⁰ Gy. Pauler, *A magyar nemzet*, II, 251.

³¹ A. Zsoldos, *Családi ügy*, 40.

³² *Ibidem* 73.

³³ K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, 182–183.

³⁴ J. V. A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans*, 180.

³⁵ *Ibidem* 201; *Georgii Pachymeris de Michaele et Andronico Palaeologis*, libri XIII, I–II, Rec. Immanuel Bekkerus, Bonnae 1835, 350 (lib. V, 6).

as emperor's son Andronicus married Stephen's daughter Anna. On the other hand, by 1268, Serbia's war with Dubrovnik, which had begun in 1265, was drawing to a close and was no longer a constraint on Uroš's actions.³⁶

The Serbian army, led by Uroš I himself, marched against Mačva in the spring of 1268 and was defeated.³⁷ Hungarian contemporary sources testify that Prince Béla of Mačva and his mother, Princess Anna, received help from King Béla IV, but Prince Stephen took no active part in averting the threat.³⁸ Although Serbian sources do not mention the war, the details are recorded in Hungarian documents. Stephen from the kindred Csák, who was associated with Queen Mary's court, led the military forces sent by the King against the Serbian army. For this reason, one of Queen Elisabeth's charters from 1271 refers to Queen Mary as the leader of the Hungarian army.³⁹ Several members of the Hungarian army are known, such as Michael, the son of Peter from the kindred Csák and his brother Domonkos, who were wounded in the battle. The Csák brothers also captured King Uroš's son-in-law and the son of the head of his finances, along with a valuable cross. In exchange for the cross, worth around eight hundred marks, the brothers from the kindred Csák received land donations from the King of Hungary.⁴⁰ Emeric, the son of Itimér of the Nádasd kindred, also took part in the war and sustained injuries to both legs during the battle.⁴¹ The news of the victory was delivered to Béla IV by the son of Nicholas, who was the son of Mark Szepesi. He arrived at the King's court when three of King Béla's daughters, Kinga, Constance and Jolanta, were there, together with their husbands and a number of foreign envoys, who were thus able to learn of the events.⁴²

The title of *rex iunior* in Serbia

Although the junior king, Stephen did not take an active part in the war, but played an important role in the post-war settlement. Peace with the Serbian King was secured through the marriage of Uroš's eldest son Dragutin to Stephen's daughter Catherine.⁴³ It should be noted that this arrangement was also a necessity, as Béla IV did not have any daughter available for forging a dynastic marriage. It was also agreed

³⁶ R. Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 51.

³⁷ On the military campaign: Mihailo Dinić, "O ugarskom ropstvu kralja Uroša I", *Istoriski časopis* 1 (1948) 30–36. For a different dating of this conflict (1265/66) see I. Komatina, *Kralj Stefan Uroš I*, 239.

³⁸ A. Zsoldos, *Családi ügy*, 112–113.

³⁹ *Zala vármegye története. Oklevéltár*, lib. I., ed. Imre Nagy, Dezső Véghely & Gyula Nagy, Budapest 1886, 58.

⁴⁰ *Regesta regum stirpis Arpadianae critico-diplomatica* I-II, ed. Imre Szentpétery & Iván Borsa, Budapest 1923–1987, I, No. 1604, 1605.

⁴¹ *Zala vármegye története* I, 58.

⁴² *Hazai Okmánytár* VIII., ed. Imre Nagy, Budapest 1891, 96.

⁴³ A. Zsoldos, *Családi ügy*, 112.

that Dragutin should be granted sovereign rights and an independent territory in Serbia.⁴⁴ This move marked the emergence of a new royal institution, the title of *rex iunior*, which had existed in Hungary since 1262 and was established through the treaty between Stephen and King Béla IV. The first source in which Dragutin is referred to as a *rex iunior* is the Hungarian-Czech peace treaty of 1271, where Uroš I and Dragutin are mentioned as allies of Stephen V.⁴⁵ The peace and the related marriage were also reported by Serbian archbishop Danilo II in his *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*.⁴⁶ His work shows that the promise to introduce the junior royal institution and the decision to marry Catherine and Dragutin were made at the same time.

The Serbian source does not mention the war, but this may be because the biographers emphasised the glory of the monarchs' memory, thereby reinforcing the authority of the dynasty. In any case, it is significant that Uroš, according to Danilo's words, promised to divide his country. However, the Serbian ruler is known to have worked to unify the country and, contrary to earlier tradition, did not grant his sons any appanages.⁴⁷ It is difficult to imagine that he shared his power of his own free will. The Serbian archbishop's work likely reflects the peace conditions after the war.

The form of power-sharing indicated in the source was a novelty in Serbia. Although parts of the country had previously enjoyed greater or lesser autonomy due to the tradition of the appanage system, this type of dynastic power-sharing did not exist.⁴⁸ The emergence of a new institution is also indicated by the fact that, contrary to the previous custom, the King's son would not have been granted a historical territorial unit within Serbia as an appanage, but would have been, as Danilo put it, the co-ruler of the Serbian and maritime state.⁴⁹ The peace treaty was intended not only to secure the succession for Dragutin, but also to create an internal division of territory and power similar to that of Hungary, during the life of the Serbian King.⁵⁰ The biographer portrayed these events as a proposal by Uroš, describing Dragutin's accession as a wedding gift from the Serbian King.⁵¹

After the peace treaty and the wedding, Catherine and Dragutin remained at the royal court of Uroš, and the power-sharing and division of country, which had been

⁴⁴ Sima Ćirković, *The Serbs*, Oxford 2004, 49.

⁴⁵ *Magyar békeszerződések 1000–1526*, Ed. József Köblös, Szilárd Süttő & Katalin Szende, Pápa 2000, 87.

⁴⁶ *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih. Napisao arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi*, izd. Đura Daničić, Zagreb 1866, 13–19.

⁴⁷ Milka Ivković, "Ustanova 'mladog kralja' u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji", *Istorski glasnik* 10 (1957) 64.

⁴⁸ M. Ivković, "Ustanova", 60–61.

⁴⁹ *Životi kraljeva*, 14.

⁵⁰ Little is known about Dragutin before the war of 1268, but he was in all likelihood the heir to the Serbian throne. A fresco painted between 1263 and 1268 in the monastery of Sopoćani shows Dragutin and Uroš standing next to each other and wearing similar clothes and crowns. Smilja Marjanović-Dušanić, *Vladarske insignije i državna simbolika u Srbiji od XIII do XV veka*, Beograd 1994, 49.

⁵¹ *Životi kraljeva*, 14.

indicated earlier, did not occur. However, the institution of *rex iunior* did not disappear without a trace in Serbia after 1268, although the circumstances and nature of its survival are disputed. To understand this institution in Serbia, it is necessary to define precisely the Hungarian *rex iunior* institution, because without understanding its uniqueness, it would be difficult to examine its appearance in Serbia. This institution, which was a recent legal innovation in 1268, appeared in the treaty signed on 5 December 1262 by Béla IV and Prince Stephen, and disappeared after Stephen's coronation in May 1270.⁵² Its creation marked a division of royal power. The junior king had his own court and barons, including a palatine (*nádor*), an office that previously belonged exclusively to the royal court. He was entitled to all the royal revenues of his territory, had the right to mint coins, maintained an independent chancellery, and exercised full royal rights with respect to grants of estates and privileges.⁵³ In addition to all this, Stephen could pursue an independent foreign policy and conclude treaties.⁵⁴

In Hungarian historiography, only a few scholars dealt with the Serbian *rex iunior* institution. Gyula Kristó believed that from the second half of the 13th century until 1371, the *rex iunior* institution existed in Serbia, but with fewer rights than in Hungary.⁵⁵ Gábor Szeberényi, however, thought that it appeared during the reign of Milutin (1282–1321), when Milutin's son Stefan Dečanski was the junior king until 1314.⁵⁶ Serbian historians who examined the subject used the title of *rex iunior* (*mladi kralj*) in Hungary as it was not the specific title held by Prince Stephen, but they generally considered it to be the title given to the heirs of the throne of Hungary. Milka Ivković regarded the title as the one all 13th-century Hungarian heirs to the throne received.⁵⁷

The sources that directly or indirectly mention the peace treaty of 1268 are quite clear that the *rex iunior* title and institution were similar to the specific Hungarian institution founded in 1262. To fully understand the possible influence of this institution in Serbia – especially since both Hungarian and Serbian historiography examined the *rex iunior* title in Serbia based on a more general institution – it is necessary to examine in detail the Serbian succession and the division of power from

⁵² Stephen was the first to use the title of *rex iunior* in Hungary. Before 1262, his title was *rex primogenitus illustris regis Hungariae* and he also held various princely titles (*dux Styriae*, *dux Transilvanus*). After the end of 1262, his full title was *iunior rex Hungariae*, *dux Transilvanus*, *dominus Cumanorum*. In 1267, the title *dominus Cumanorum* was not used, but reappeared from 1268. Imre Szentpétery, "V. István ifjabb királysága", *Századok* 55–56 (1921–1922) 77–87.

⁵³ A. Zsoldos, *Családi ügy*, 134–135; Jenő Szűcs, *Az utolsó Árpádok*, Budapest 2002, 164.

⁵⁴ Gyula Kristó, *A feudális széttagolódás Magyarországon*, Budapest 1979, 71–72.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, 18.

⁵⁶ Gábor Szeberényi, "A Balkán 800 k.–1389", in: *"Kelet-Európa" és a "Balkán" 1000–1800. Intellektuális-történeti konstrukciók vagy valós történeti régiók?*, ed. Endre Sashalmi, Pécs 2007, 316.

⁵⁷ M. Ivković, "Ustanova", 71.

the reign of Stefan Nemanja until the Battle of Maritsa in 1371, which marked the beginning of Serbia's disintegration.⁵⁸ By comparing these findings with the Hungarian *rex iunior* institution, we can gain a more accurate understanding of its presence in Serbia.

Stefan Nemanja (c. 1167–1196) was succeeded to the throne (1196–1227) not by his first-born son Vukan, but by his younger son Stefan (Prvovenčani). Before 1195, Vukan was granted the territories of Duklja, Trebinje and Hvosno, and was made king. In Milka Ivković's opinion, this title was in accordance with the earlier traditions of statehood in the territory and was not linked to the succession to the throne.⁵⁹ The donation of the territory was part of the Serbian system of appanage,⁶⁰ and for Vukan it did not imply the status of co-ruler or heir to the throne.⁶¹

Stefan Prvovenčani was succeeded to the throne by his eldest son Radoslav (1227–1233). The question of whether Radoslav was a co-ruler is disputed in Serbian historiography.⁶² There is no evidence in the sources that he was crowned during his father's lifetime, nor did he have a specific title.⁶³ What is certain, however, is that Stefan Prvovenčani intended his first-born son to succeed him to the throne.⁶⁴ After Radoslav, his brother Vladislav (1233–1243) became king of Serbia. There was no question of power-sharing between them, and the change of ruler was primarily driven by foreign policy necessities.⁶⁵

Uroš I (1243–1276), who did not have a co-ruling presence during his reign, came to the throne under similar circumstances. During his reign, Uroš also attempted to suppress the system of appanage.⁶⁶ Uroš's son Dragutin (1276–1282) did not inherit power from Uroš, but defeated his father in 1276 and seized the throne by force with the help of his brother-in-law, King Ladislas IV of Hungary.⁶⁷ In 1282, Dragutin abdicated all his sovereign rights in Deževu in favour of his younger brother Milutin (1282–1321), but it is uncertain what role he subsequently played in Serbia.⁶⁸ Dragutin continued to call himself king on his charters, seals and coins after 1282.⁶⁹ In the monastery of Arilje, founded by Dragutin himself, there is a fresco depicting Milutin,

⁵⁸ On the institution of young king in Serbia as a summary: Aleksandar Krstić, "The Rival and the Vassal of Charles Robert of Anjou: King Vladislav II Nemanjić", *Banatica* 26 (2016) 33–35.

⁵⁹ M. Ivković, "Ustanova", 62–63.

⁶⁰ Milan Šufflay, "Szláv párhuzamok a rex iunior cziméhez", *Századok* 43 (1909) 501.

⁶¹ M. Ivković, "Ustanova", 63.

⁶² Đorđe Bubalo, "Da li su kralj Stefan Prvovenčani i njegov sin kralj Radoslav bili savladari?", *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 46 (2009) 201–202.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, 205.

⁶⁴ Dušan Sindik, "O savladarstvu kralja Stefana Radoslava", *Istorijski časopis* 35 (1988) 26.

⁶⁵ J. V. A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans*, 137.

⁶⁶ M. Ivković, "Ustanova", 64.

⁶⁷ K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, 188.

⁶⁸ Mihailo Dinić, "Odnos između kralja Milutina i Dragutina", *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 3 (1955) 51.

⁶⁹ S. Marjanović-Dušanić, *Vladarske insignije*, 50.

Dragutin and his wife Queen Catherine, painted during Milutin's reign. In this fresco, the two brothers are both depicted as kings, but they are clearly distinguishable, as Dragutin wore fewer royal insignia.⁷⁰ In Serbia, royal power was in the hands of Milutin. Dragutin was subordinate to his brother, but he held significant power over his own territories.⁷¹ It is assumed that Milutin was given the throne only for his lifetime, and that it would revert to Dragutin's children after his death, but, in fact, Milutin was succeeded by his son Stefan Dečanski (1321–1331).⁷² From 1308 onwards, Stefan held the appanage of Duklja, but none of his father's charters referred to him as heir to the throne or *rex iunior*.⁷³

In 1322, Stefan Dečanski was crowned king, and his son Dušan was crowned junior king, marking a major change from the previous forms of succession and power-sharing.⁷⁴ Dušan had more extensive rights and a broader and more powerful court, and received Duklja as his territory from his father. The main purpose of Stefan Dečanski's coronation was to secure the throne for his son.⁷⁵ As King, Dušan (1331–1355) continued this approach and crowned his son, future Uroš V (1355–1371), as the young king, a title by which he appeared in the sources for the first time in 1345.⁷⁶ Dušan assumed the title of Tsar in 1346, and Uroš was crowned King.

Having examined the system of power-sharing and succession in Serbia, we now turn to the question of whether the Hungarian *rex iunior* actually appeared in Serbia. Since the Hungarian institution was not established until late 1262, it is not necessary to examine the rights of the heirs who came before that date. The other date that can be taken as the cut-off point is 1346 – and not 1371, as Gyula Kristó believed⁷⁷ – since in 1346 Dušan was crowned Tsar and subsequently transformed the Serbian state on a more Byzantine model. While the title of young king appeared later under the rule of Emperor Uroš in Serbia for a short time, this study focuses only on the young kings before 1346, since a discussion of the differences in Serbia's state structures would go beyond the scope of this work.⁷⁸

After the Hungarian-Serbian war of 1268, as we have seen, one of the conditions for peace was that the newly established Hungarian institution should be applied in Serbia, with a junior king equal in rank to the actual king. Dragutin was already mentioned as a junior king of Serbia among the allies of Stephen V in the 1271

⁷⁰ M. Dinić, "Odnos", 54, S. Marjanović-Dušanić, *Vladarske insignije*, 50.

⁷¹ M. Dinić, "Odnos", 55.

⁷² M. Ivković, "Ustanova", 65–66.

⁷³ M. Dinić, "Odnos", 76.

⁷⁴ J. V. A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans*, 263.

⁷⁵ M. Ivković, "Ustanova", 76.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, 77.

⁷⁷ Gy. Kristó, *Feudális széttagolódás*, 18.

⁷⁸ For a short time in 1371, when Emperor Uroš reigned, there was a three-tier structure in the governance of Serbia with the emperor at the head of the state, King Vukašin as the co-ruler of the emperor, and Vukašin's son, Marko mentioned as young king in the sources. See Rade Mihaljičić, *Kraj srpskog carstva*, Beograd 1989, 196–201.

Hungarian-Czech peace treaty. However, the Hungarian institution was not adopted into Serbian practice.⁷⁹ Archbishop Danilo, in his biography of Dragutin, states that the conflict between Dragutin and his father broke out because of the failure to keep the promises of power-sharing.⁸⁰ Since the beginning of King Uroš I's reign, he had sought to unify Serbia, and without external pressure, Dragutin could not have obtained the territory and power that had been promised to him. This external pressure arrived in 1276 in the form of Cuman auxiliary troops sent by King Ladislas IV of Hungary.⁸¹

There is no evidence that this institution appeared in any form after the peace in 1268, and it could not have been present in Serbia until the mid-14th century, as some scholars previously believed. While the *rex iunior* institution did not appear in its pure form, its influence can still be traced back in the following decades. The first possible junior king after Dragutin would have been Stefan Dečanski. Stefan received Duklja as an appanage from his father, which he held from 1308 to 1314, until his rebellion against his father.⁸² Archbishop Danilo's collection of biographies also mentions Stefan Dečanski's Duklja appanage and power.

According to this, King Milutin granted Duklja to Stefan after he married the daughter of Bulgarian ruler Smilets. In this area, Stefan lived with the dignity of a monarch and had his own men.⁸³ This part of Stefan Dečanski's biography can be compared with the part of Dragutin's biography regarding theoretical, but never established *rex iunior* institution in Serbia.⁸⁴ In Dragutin's case, it was a matter of a complete division of power, the result of which would have been the equal rights of Uroš and his son. In contrast, in Stefan Dečanski's biography, Danilo describes a situation in which Stefan was a subordinate to his father, with no such autonomy.⁸⁵ While he appeared in Venetian sources as king⁸⁶ and signed himself as king in his charter to the Vranjina monastery,⁸⁷ Stefan was not crowned during his father's lifetime, and no Serbian source has ever referred to him as either Milutin's heir or junior king (*rex iunior*) Stefan.⁸⁸ Danilo's work also shows that Stefan Dečanski was heavily dependent on his father.⁸⁹ In light of this, the views that consider Stefan Dečanski as a *rex iunior* cannot be supported.

⁷⁹ M. Ivković, "Ustanova", 71.

⁸⁰ *Životi kraljeva*, 17.

⁸¹ J. V. A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans*, 208.

⁸² *Ibidem*, 259.

⁸³ *Životi kraljeva*, 124.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, 13–14.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, 124–125.

⁸⁶ Šime Ljubić, *Listine o odnošajih između Južnoga slavenstva i Mletačke Republike*, knj. I, *od godine 960 do 1335*, Zagreb 1868, 192.

⁸⁷ On the charters see: Žarko Vujošević, „Povelja prestolonaslednika Stefana Uroša (Dečanskog) manastiru Vranjini“, *Inicijal* 11 (2023) 191–213.

⁸⁸ J. V. A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans*, 259.

⁸⁹ M. Ivković, "Ustanova", 74.

Stefan Dečanski was crowned king on 6 January 1322, and his son Dušan was crowned junior king at the same time. While the lack of contemporary sources should be considered, this was the first time that such title appeared in Serbian sources, as Dragutin was only mentioned with this title in foreign documents.⁹⁰ In light of the above, we can narrow our examination of whether the Hungarian junior kingship was established in Serbia to the period from 1322 to 1346. During these 24 years, two heirs to the throne held this title: Dušan until his accession to the throne in 1331, and his son Uroš. Both of them received Duklja from their fathers as their own territory. The possession of Duklja as an appanage, as shown above, was a Serbian tradition established long before the emergence of the *rex iunior* title. Both rulers were known to have had their own courts and officials. They were less active militarily, although Dušan twice assisted his father.⁹¹

From the analysis, it can be seen that Dušan and his son Uroš can be considered the only junior kings of the examined period. How did their authority and institution compare to the Hungarian institution in question? The *rex iunior* in Hungary, namely Stephen, had his own court, structured in the same way as the royal court, and he had his own barons.⁹² The same is more or less true for both Dušan and Uroš. The only uncertainty is that we do not know much about the organisation of their court, due to the lack of sources.⁹³ Both Stephen and the two Serbian heirs were crowned during their fathers' lifetimes.⁹⁴ In Stephen's case, however, this did not occur between 1262 and 1270, when the *rex iunior* institution existed, but already in 1246 when he also became the duke of Slavonia.⁹⁵ It should be noted that the coronation of heirs to the Kingdom of Hungary was a distinctive feature of the inheritance system in Hungary, especially in the 13th century, and was not a specific characteristic of the institution established in 1262. Prince Stephen's territorial power and its nature surpassed that of the Serbian junior kings. While the Serbian crown princes governed a specific territorial unit, Duklja, Stephen not only had authority over a duchy, but also ruled over a large part of the country that was divided between him and his father, the King.⁹⁶

One important feature of the Hungarian *rex iunior* was the right to mint coins.⁹⁷ In the case of Dušan and Uroš, however, there is no evidence that they minted coins as young kings.⁹⁸ No coins have survived bearing the inscription *mladi kralj*, which

⁹⁰ Ibidem, 77.

⁹¹ Ibidem, 76–77.

⁹² J. Szűcs, *Az utolsó Árpádok*, 164.

⁹³ M. Ivković, "Ustanova", 77.

⁹⁴ Gy. Kristó, *Feudális széttagolódás*, 35.

⁹⁵ It should be noted that traditionally the heirs to the throne in Hungary held the title of Duke of Slavonia from the late 12th century, but this tradition did not become an automatic right and being granted the title depended on a royal decision. A. Zsoldos, *Családi ügy*, 15; Judit Gál, *Dalmatia and the Exercise of Royal Authority in the Árpád-Era Kingdom of Hungary*, Budapest 2020, 128–129.

⁹⁶ A. Zsoldos, *Családi ügy*, 28–29, J. Szűcs, *Az utolsó Árpádok*, 163.

⁹⁷ J. Szűcs, *Az utolsó Árpádok*, 164.

⁹⁸ Vujadin Ivanišević, *Novčarstvo srednjovekovne Srbije*, Beograd 2001, 158.

may indicate that the Serbian junior kings did not have the right to mint coins in general.⁹⁹ Prince Stephen, as junior king, was able to pursue an independent foreign policy and conclude treaties.¹⁰⁰ The Serbian heirs to the throne, however, lacked such rights, and their room for manoeuvre in foreign policy was very limited. As already noted, while Dušan, as junior king, provided military assistance to his father on at least two occasions, he did not engage in any independent foreign policy action.¹⁰¹ There is no evidence of any independent foreign policy activity. In terms of political rights, the institution of the junior kingship in Hungary implied the equality between Stephen and Béla IV and a practical division of power between the end of 1262 and May 1270.¹⁰² This marked a significant departure from the earlier forms of dynastic division of the kingdom and is why the *rex iunior* institution can be considered a legal innovation. No such division of power existed in Serbia between 1322 and 1346, or before.

The characteristics of the junior kingdoms of Dušan and Uroš can be summarised as follows: they were crowned during their fathers' lifetimes and were granted Duklja as their own territory. They had their own court and officials, and their titles designated them as official heirs to the Serbian throne. But while Stephen had similar rights to the King in Hungary, there was no political equality in Serbia. Archbishop Danilo's collection of biographies also provides information about Dušan's title. According to the archbishop, Dušan was granted Duklja by his father and obeyed him.¹⁰³ The Serbian junior kings were therefore subordinate to their fathers, had no independent foreign policy and no right to mint coins. The primary function of the Serbian institution, which existed between 1322 and 1346, was to ensure succession to the throne.¹⁰⁴ When Stefan Dečanski had his son crowned in 1322, Dragutin's son Vladislav and Stefan Dečanski's brother Konstantin also claimed the throne, which is why he had to secure it for his son.¹⁰⁵

The above suggests that the Hungarian junior kingship and the inheritance system of Hungary in general influenced the transformation of the Serbian system of succession to the throne. The very name certainly suggests that the Hungarian institution, which existed between 1262 and 1270, and the attempt to introduce it in Serbia after 1268, left a lasting impact. Serbian junior kings were crowned during their fathers' lifetimes and had their own territories and courts. The Serbian junior kingship developed not only under the influence of the Hungarian *rex iunior* institution but also as an extension of the appanage system. It is important to note that the title of *rex iunior* in Hungary developed under duress. In Serbia, however, between 1322 and 1346, we cannot speak of such circumstances. The two younger kings received the

⁹⁹ S. Marjanović-Dušanić, *Vladarske insignije*, 89.

¹⁰⁰ J. Szűcs, *Az utolsó Árpádok*, 164.

¹⁰¹ M. Ivković, "Ustanova", 76.

¹⁰² Attila Zsoldos, "Két hamis oklevélről", *Történelmi szemle* 41 (1999) 203.

¹⁰³ *Životi kraljeva*, 207.

¹⁰⁴ M. Ivković, "Ustanova", 79–80.

¹⁰⁵ J. V. A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans*, 264.

THE ORIGINS AND FATE OF THE TITLE OF REX IUNIOR IN SERBIA
(HUNGARIAN-SERBIAN RELATIONS DURING THE REIGNS OF BÉLA IV AND UROŠ I)

title when they were still young. Since in Serbia the kings themselves decided on the coronation of younger kings, and the heirs did not impose them in any way, it is logical that while the Serbian institution was not a direct adaptation of the Hungarian *rex iunior*, it was influenced by it in certain ways – particularly in the practice of coronating heirs during their fathers' lifetimes.

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Gál Judit

**A REX JUNIOR CÍM EREDETE ÉS SORSA SZERBIÁBAN
(MAGYAR-SZERB VISZONYOK IV. BÉLA ÉS I. UROŠ URALKODÁSA IDEJÉN)**

Rezümé

A tanulmány a IV. Béla magyar király (1235-1270) és I. Uroš (1243-1276) szerb király uralma alatti magyar-szerb kapcsolatokat vizsgálja az 1240-es évektől az 1268-as háborúig, elemezve annak következményeit, illetve a *rex junior* cím megjelenésének körülményeit Szerbiában. A korszak elején, az 1240-es években a két ország kapcsolata a békés együttélés és alapvető semlegesség jegyében alakult. Ez az állapot az 1250-es évek közepére megváltozott, amikor Rosztyiszlav Mihajloviics lett Macsó ura, és aktív külpolitikát folytatott a Magyarországtól délre eső vidékeken. Balkáni tevékenysége, halomföldi szerepvállalása azonban nem IV. Béla kezdeményezésére történt, tehát nem volt közvetlen magyar beavatkozás Szerbia bel- és külügyeibe. Az 1250-es évek végén a két uralkodó kapcsolata szorosabbá vált, leginkább azért, mert a szerb királyt minden oldalról ellenség vagy annak szövetségesei vették körül, és különösen Nikaia terjeszkedése veszélyeztette. IV. Béla királyt a kressenbrunni csatában szerb segédcapatok segítették, és Béla fiának esküvőjén a szerb király is jelen volt. Az 1260-as évek végére Magyarország és Szerbia viszonya megromlott, és Uroš valószínűleg ki akarta terjeszteni befolyását Mačva területére. Miután a szerb hadsereg vereséget szenvedett, a magyar király befolyása megnőtt a szerb területeken. A békeszerződés előírta Katalin hercegnő, István (IV. Béla társuralkodója – ifjabb király) lánya és Dragutin herceg, a szerbiai trónörökös házasságkötését, valamint a szerbiai hatalommegosztást azzal, hogy megpróbált Dragutinnak hasonló jogokat adni, mint István hercegnek Magyarországon. A *rex junior* (ifjabb király) intézménye elméletben Szerbiában is megjelent, de a valóságban az 1262 és 1270 között létező sajátos magyar intézményt 1268 után többet nem alkalmazták a szerb uralkodók. Hatása ugyanakkor továbbra is érezhető volt, és befolyásolta a szerb trónöröklési rendszert a 14. század első felében.

Јудит Гал

**ПОРЕКЛО И СУДБИНА ТИТУЛЕ *REX IUNIOR* У СРБИЈИ
(МАЂАРСКО-СРПСКИ ОДНОСИ ТОКОМ ВЛАДАВИНА БЕЛЕ IV И УРОША I)**

Резиме

Рад се бави угарско-српским односима током владавине угарског краља Беле IV (1235–1270) и српског краља Уроша (1243–1276), од 1240-их до рата 1268. године и његових последица, са посебним освртом на појаву титуле *rex iunior* у Србији. На почетку овог периода, током 1240-их, односе су карактерисали мирни суживот и основна неутралност. То стање променило се средином 1250-их, када је Ростислав Михаилович, који је постао господар Мачве, водио активну спољну политику јужно од Угарске. Међутим, његове активности на Балкану и благо уплитање у Захумљу нису били иницирани од стране Беле IV нити су представљали директну угарску интервенцију у унутрашње или спољне послове Србије. Крајем 1250-их година, однос између двојице владара постао је ближи, углавном зато што је српски краљ био окружен непријатељима или њиховим савезницима са свих страна, при чему је посебну претњу представљала Никеја. Српске помоћне трупе помогле су краљу Бели у бици код Кресенбруна, а краљ Србије био је присутан и на венчању Белиног сина. До касних 1260-их година, односи између Угарске и Србије су се погоршали, при чему је Урош вероватно настојао да прошири свој утицај на територију Мачве. Након војног пораза Србије, угарски краљ појачао је свој утицај на српске територије. Мировни споразум предвиђао је брак између принцезе Каталине, ћерке Стефана, млађег краља Угарске, и принца Драгутина, наследника српског престола. Такође је подразумевао и поделу власти у Србији, додељивањем Драгутину права сличних онима која је као млади краљ у Угарској имао принц Стефан. Иако се институција *rex iunior* теоријски појавила у Србији, конкретна угарска институција, која је постојала између 1262. и 1270. године, никада није у потпуности прихваћена од стране српских владара након 1268. године. Међутим, утицај те институције није нестао, тј. она се одразила на процес и систем наслеђивања престола у Србији током прве половине 14. века.