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MIXTIM HUNGARI, RASCIANI ET VALACHI HABITANT. SERBS IN SOUTHERN PARTS OF THE HUNGARIAN KINGDOM (15–16TH CENTURIES)

Abstract: The southern parts (*partes inferiores*) of the Hungarian Kingdom (nowadays called Banat) were a border territory, where in the mid-15th century the Serbian people took refuge fleeing the Ottoman advance. Noble families such as the Jakšićs or Belmuževićs were granted estates in Timiș (Temes), Torontal, Cenad (Csanád) and Arad counties. With them, other peoples of South Slavic origin came to that particular area as familiars or servants. Never-ending conflicts and insecurity provided an opportunity for many ordinary people to cross the border in the Hungarian Kingdom. The changes in the ethnical background of the territory between the Mureș/Maros and Danube rivers can be tracked from the late 15th century up to the middle of the following one. Especially in the early 16th century, the frequency of South Slavic names increased in different documents related to the southern area. Most of the Serbian people were registered in the Mureș valley and near the towns of Timișoara (Temesvár) and Lipova (Lippa). The historical data from the 15–16th centuries give us the opportunity to understand the population movement and ethnical changes in a certain area of the Hungarian Kingdom.

Keywords: Hungarian Kingdom, Serbs, Banat, refugees, 15–16th centuries, Jakšićs, Belmuževićs, Timișoara, Lipova.

The phrase in the title of my paper comes from a document issued in 1551 by Emperor Ferdinand of Habsburg and refers to a typical reality for the southern areas of the medieval Hungarian Kingdom: a mixture of ethnicities, including the Serbian population.

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In what follows, I would like to analyse a few aspects of the presence of this South Slavic population in the southern parts of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary, i.e. the south-western parts of the future autonomous principality of Transylvania. This is not a new topic, as the migration of Serbs to Hungary has been analysed in Hungarian,¹ Serbian² and even Romanian³ historiography since the 19th century. Despite the fact that the three historiographies have a point of convergence, each historical school has developed its own discourse and vision of this phenomenon. The divergences of opinion were accentuated by the course of political events, especially after the First World War. In that political context, each of the historical schools tried to find a justification for the inclusion or loss of those areas in the newly emerging state structures. The territory targeted by the South Slavic population movements was mainly the south of the Hungarian Kingdom, a region that today is part of several states. The area mentioned is too vast from a geographical point of view and covers realities that are too diverse for the process to be followed systematically in the present analysis. I will therefore limit myself to investigating the situation in the so-called lower parts (*partes inferiores*), an area known today as Banat. This is a territory of about 30,000 km², between the Mureş river to the north, the Danube to the south, the Tisa to the west and the Carpathian mountains to the east. Following decisions taken at the end of the First World War, the area was divided between Romania

¹ Samu Borovszky, "A nagylaki uradalom története", in: *Értekezések a történeti tudományok köréből*, Budapest 1900, 1–50; Lajos Thallóczy & Antal Áldásy, *A Magyarország és Szerbia közti összeköttetések oklevéltára. Magyarország melléktartományainak oklevéltára II* (Monumenta Hungariae Historica, Diplomataria XXXIII), Budapest 1907; Ferenc Szakály, "Szerbek Magyarországon – szerbek a magyar történelemben (Vázlat)", in: *A szerbek Magyarországon*, szerk. István Zombori, Szeged 1991, 11–50; Péter Rókey, "A szerbek betelepülése Magyarországra a XV. században", in: *A szerbek Magyarországon*, szerk. István Zombori, Szeged 1991, 51–63.

² Јован Радонић, *Прилози за историју Срба у Угарској у XVI, XVII и XVIII веку*, Нови Сад 1909; Алекса Ивић, *Историја Срба у Угарској од пада Смедерева до сеобе под Чарнојевићем (1459–1690)*, Загреб 1914, reproduced in *Историја Срба у Војводини: од најстаријих времена до оснивања потиско-поморишке границе (1703)*, Нови Сад 1929; Yovan Radonitch, *Histoire des Serbes de Hongrie*, Paris 1919; Ненад Лемајић, *Српска елита на прелому епоха*, Сремска Митровица – Источно Сарајево 2006; Александар Крстић, "Нови подаци о војводи Милошу Белмужевићу и његовој породици", *Иницијал. Часопис за средњовековне студије* 1 (2013) 161–185; Aleksandar Krstić & Adrian Magina, "The Belmužević family – the fate of a noble family in South East Europe during the turbulent period of the Ottoman conquest (the 15th and the first half of the 16th century)", *Revue d'Études Sud-Est Européennes* 59 (2021) 105–123.

³ Adrian Magina, "Un nobil sârb în Banatul secolului al XV-lea: Miloš Belmužević", *Analele Banatului. Serie nouă, Arheologie – Istorie* 18 (2010) 135–142; eadem, "Le long voyage vers la terre promise: les migrations serbes en Banat (XVe–XVIe siècles)", in: *Between Worlds: The Age of the Jagiellonians*, edited by Florin Nicolae Ardelean, Christopher Nicholson & Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, Peter Lang GmbH, Frankfurt am Main 2013, 129–140; Saşa Iaşin, *Familii nobiliare sârbeşti din Banat în secolele al XV-lea şi al XVI-lea*, Cluj-Napoca 2015.

(66%), Serbia (33%) and Hungary (1%). The above historiographies, as well as the German one, do not have a single view of this territory, especially as regards the ethnic situation in the Middle Ages and the early modern period. Banat, as defined today, as a model area for Central European realities, is a late creation, built after the Habsburg takeover of the province (1718). However, we should not fall into the trap of having a simplistic view of this territory in the Middle Ages, as documents from the period provide clues to a complex situation.

In terms of population, the province between the Mureş and the Danube seems to have had a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional component in the Middle Ages and early modern period. If we accept the data of Holy See envoys from the first half of the 14th century, the counties in the lowland area (Arad, Cenad/Csanád, Timiş/Temes and Torontal) had a population that was up to 50% Catholic, compared to the number of settlements mentioned in the documents. We cannot know for sure if where Catholic parishes are mentioned, the settlements were populated exclusively by Catholics, but in the absence of other verifiable data, we must assume that they were in the majority anyway. It is also impossible to assess whether these figures include only the ethnic Hungarian population (together with the Cumans or other populations), or whether the Romanian or Slavic population that chose Catholicism is also included. According to the same data from the envoys of the Holy See, in the mountainous area of the province, overlapped by the Banat of Severin and the Romanian districts, the number of Catholics was quite small, while the Orthodox world, the majority Romanian, represented almost 90% of the total settlements known in the documents of the period.⁴

In addition to Romanians and Hungarians, there were also Slavic communities in the lower parts of the Kingdom, some of which may have originated from the old Slavs who settled there before 1000, or who arrived in sporadic migrations during the 12–13th centuries. Documents issued by the Hungarian royal chancellery or county authorities in those areas record names such as *Sclavus* (Slav) or *Ruthenus* (Ruthenian) as early as the 14th century, but we do not always know exactly which ethnic group was behind these diplomatic formulas. There were also some settlements in the lower parts with the word *Tót*⁵ in the name, a sign of Slavic origin. The presence in medieval diplomas of the words *Rascianus* – *Rasciani*, indicates without doubt that the Serbian population lived there in the medieval period, these being the terms by which the Serbs were designated within the Hungarian Kingdom.

The steady advance of the Ottomans caused significant political unrest in the Balkan state entities as early as the second half of the 14th century. Under the military pressure of the Crescent, a part of the South Slavic population left the territory

⁴ Adrian Magina, "Parohiile catolice din Banat în epoca lui Sigismund de Luxemburg", *Analele Banatului. Serie nouă, Arheologie – Istorie* 20 (2012) 174.

⁵ For example: Tótfalu (Keve county), Tóti (Caraş/Krassó county), Tót, Tótfalu, Tótmonostor (Timiş county), Tótfalu (Torontal county) – Bódog Milleker, *Délmagyarország középkori földrajza*, Temesvár 1915.

controlled or about to be controlled by the Ottomans. I believe this explains the presence of several villages with Slavic population (*villis slavonicilibus*) mentioned in the area of Maşloc (Hung. Máslak) in the Timiș county in a document from 1438.⁶ This situation is not limited to the lowland regions of present-day Banat. In the mountainous area, the South Slavic Catholic population, the so-called Carașovans, was settled in several villages around the Caraș fortress (Carașova, Caraș-Severin county; Hung. Krassóvár). Moreover, the tradition of these Slavic speaking Catholics, recorded in the 18th century, indicates that they were refugees from south of the Danube.⁷

Until the death of despot Đurađ (George) Branković (1456), with a couple of notable exceptions associated with the communities on the Danube line, such as Keve (Kovin) or Haram, there was still no massive South Slavic immigration to Hungary but, at most, sporadic presence as family members or servants on the huge estates held by South Slavic potentates throughout the Kingdom.⁸ The massive presence of Serbs in medieval Hungary must be associated with the political situation in the Balkans in the mid-15th century. This was the beginning of the heyday of the Ottoman Empire, which was trying to advance into central Europe. The Serbian state, on the front line of attack of the Ottoman armies, succumbed to the military pressure of the High Porte. In 1459, the conquest of Smederevo, the political centre of the Despotate, led to the disappearance of the Serbian state. The fall of the fortress into Ottoman hands led to the migration of the noble elite and a part of the Serbian population in several waves to the Hungarian territories, where they could find the necessary protection. This was the era of King Matthias, when the borders were relatively stable and the Ottoman impact in the southern parts of the Kingdom was not yet so strongly felt. There was, however, attrition warfare on the southern frontier of the Hungarian Kingdom and the northern frontier of the Ottoman Empire, with constant minor battles and breaches of boundaries, which had a negative impact on the inhabitants of the Turkish-occupied area of northern Serbia.

The incursions of Hungarian troops into the Serbian territories that had become part of the Ottoman state created the opportunity for a part of the South Slavic

⁶ Frigyes Pesty, *Diplome privind istoria comitatului Timiș și a orașului Timișoara/ Oklevelek Temesvármegyé és Temesvár város történetéhez*, v. II, 1430–1470, ediție, note și comentarii /Magyarázó jegyzetekkel kiadta Livia Magina, Adrian Magina, Cluj-Napoca 2014, 82.

⁷ *Gentem hac ex Bulgaria originem trahere...circa annum Christi 1393 sub Sigismundo in Turcica potestate ac tyrannide, Bulgari neo conversi ac jugo Turcico non asoeti, potius patriam, quam fidem relinquere volentes unacum patribus ad regnum Hungariae se contulerunt* – Magyar Ferences Könyvtár és Levéltár, Budapest, Kézirattár, Blasius Kleiner, *Archivum tripartitum in clytae provinciae Bulgariae*, mss. v. I, 1761, 247–248. A research by philologists and historians has indicated that those were not Bulgarians but rather a mixture of Serbo-Croatians with added Romanian elements. For their history see Castilia Manea-Grgin, *Povijest karaševskih Hrvata u rumunjskom Banatu (16.–18. stoljeće)*, Zagreb 2012.

⁸ For *familiares* of Serbian despots in the 15th-century Hungarian Kingdom see the excellent study of Aleksandar Krstić, “Familiares of the Serbian despots in and from the territory of Banat (1411–1458)”, in: *Politics and Society in the Central and South-Eastern Europe (13th–16th centuries)* I, ed. Zoltan Iusztin, Cluj-Napoca 2019, 93–110.

population to leave the sphere of Turkish domination. Paul Kinizsi (Kinizsi Pál), the lord of the Timiș county and captain-general of Hungarian troops in the south of the Kingdom in the second half of the 15th century, who was directly interested in populating the areas under his jurisdiction that had previously been deserted by the Turks, also contributed to this. If sources are to be believed, between 1480 and 1483, about 200,000 people were brought to the Kingdom from the Smederevo and Kruševac area between the Mureș, Danube and Tisa rivers. These massive population groups chose to settle, or were settled, mainly in the south of present-day Banat (Torontal and Timiș counties), not very far from their original territories, which, due to the geographical environment and previous incursions, were the most sparsely populated. Another group settled near Timișoara (Hung. Temesvár) or in the Mureș valley, both regions devastated by the Ottomans and therefore prone to population movements. Another massive displacement of the South Slavic population in Hungary, shortly before the Battle of Mohács in 1526, took place in 1502, when, following a Hungarian military expedition, thousands of Orthodox inhabitants of Bulgaria (*Christianam religionem graecorum ritu colebant*) were settled between Timișoara and Belgrade (*inter Temesuarum and Nandoralbam*).⁹ These large population groups were also brought to the southern part of today's Banat, in the same Torontal and Timiș counties, where, probably, the newcomers settled among those numerous inhabitants of Slavic origin who had been displaced two decades before. It is very difficult to make quantitative assessments of the medieval population in general. It is not excluded that, by the late Middle Ages, despite the devastations that this area went through, the population of the counties of present-day Banat reached the figure of about 200,000–300,000 inhabitants.¹⁰ If we consider that the figures given in the documents of the time regarding the South Slavs who moved to the Kingdom are real, there is no doubt that such a large number of people produced changes in the ethnic structure of the southern territories, especially in the case of a sparsely populated area such as the Torontal county. In the 16th century, South Slavic migrations also reached Transylvania, although to a much lesser extent than in the lower parts of the Kingdom.¹¹

The above few examples represent only one level of South Slavic population movements to Hungary. It is the official version, captured by sources of the time, chronicles or documents. In terms of their documentary and statistical value, these data provide only the quantitative framework of the problem, but with limitations. Therefore, in order to understand the phenomenon as a whole, it is necessary to raise a number of questions and thus initiate a thorough examination.

⁹ A. Magina, *Le long voyage*, 133–134.

¹⁰ András Kubinyi, "A Magyar Királyság népessége a 15. század végén", *Történelmi szemle* 38, 2–3 (1996) 157–158.

¹¹ Florin Nicolae Ardelean & Neven Isailović, "From Croatia to Transylvania: War, Migration and Adaptive Strategies in the Case of the Perušić Family (15th–17th Centuries)", *Povijesni prilozi* 60 (2021) 213–256.

What was the fate of these refugees after they arrived in Hungary? What were the exact villages or towns where they settled? The above mentioned documents give us a rather vague picture. How did the newcomers interact with the locals and, more importantly, to what extent did they change the ethnic structure of the province? This question is the second level of investigation, somewhat more difficult to observe because of the somewhat reduced number of records that have survived to the present day. However, there is enough information to show what actually happened in the territory. A piece of information from the year 1502 is relevant in this respect, as it shows us the destiny of personalities who are not out of the ordinary. At that time, two Serbian fugitives, whose origins we do not know, arrived in the lower parts of the Kingdom with all their wealth, and King Vladislav Jagello ordered the officials in the fortress of Severin (Hung. Szörény) to send them to Belgrade to strengthen the line of defence against the Turks.¹² Without the royal order we would know nothing about the consequences of the two fleeing to the Hungarian Kingdom, where they would settle and what role they would play. From the King's mandate it is easy to see that the refugees were to contribute to the defensive line against Ottomans, a common situation for many Serbs who arrived north of the Danube.

Substantial data on the interaction of the Serbs with the territory in which they settled comes from or through the Slavic elites because among the refugees who arrived in the southern part of the Kingdom there were numerous noble families, among whom the Jakšićs and Belmuževićs, mentioned in documents until the mid-16th century, stood out. The role of the Serbian nobility in the defensive structures of the Kingdom is fairly well-known, and royal decrees from the Jagiellonian period even provide us with figures on the number of soldiers with whom Serbian aristocrats settled in Hungary were obliged to participate in the defence of the country. The decree of 1498 (art. XVI) stipulated that in the eleven counties of the lower parts, 24 fiscal units (*portae*) had to contribute to the maintenance of an armed hussar. Among the aristocrats who owed military service to the Kingdom (art. XXII) was voivode Miloš Belmužević, who was to come to battle with all his hussars.¹³ Certainly, in the first years after the establishment of the Hungarian Kingdom, these light horsemen were recruited by the voivode from among the Serbs settled in his domains in the lower parts, with whom he also carried out raids in the Serbian territories occupied by the Ottomans.¹⁴ In 1504 the Jakšić family members (Stefan, Marko and Petar) had to come to battle with 600 hussars, and the total cost of their maintenance was estimated at 5550 florins. Also mentioned are the hussars from Timișoara, Lugoș (Hung. Lugas), Caransebeș (Hung. Karánsebes), Utvín (Hung. Ötvény), Mănaștíur (Hung. Bégamonostor) and Choka (a disappeared settlement), a total of 572 men under the command of

¹² L. Thallóczy & A. Áldásy, *A Magyarország és Szerbia közti összeköttetések oklevéltára*, 304.

¹³ János M. Bak, *Online Decreta Regni Mediaevalis Hungariae. The Laws of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary* 2019, 926–928.

¹⁴ A. Крстић, “Нови подаци”, 170.

several military leaders (voivodes).¹⁵ Not all of the hussars were Serbs, but the majority certainly belonged to the South Slavs in the lower parts of the Kingdom.

The relocation of the South Slavic population from south to north of the Danube can be reconstructed by looking at the Serbian noble families and their estates. The Jakšić brothers came to the Hungarian Kingdom sometime in the early 1460s, settling in the county of Cenad, where King Matthias donated them a number of possessions, the most important of which was Nădlac (Hung. Nagylak), which became the family residence. By the end of the Jagiellonian period, through donations and acquisitions, the Jakšić nobles managed to accumulate a domain comprising 88 settlements spread over various counties of the Kingdom. The core of the domain, obtained through military service to the throne, was around the main settlement of Nădlac and the Mureș valley. It seems that the family did not come alone from Serbia, but were accompanied by about 1200 soldiers, who moved with their families and settled on these estates, especially in the areas bordering the Mureș valley, administratively located in the counties of Cenad, Arad or Timiș.¹⁶ Some of these soldiers or their descendants may have been among the Slavic-named servants of Stefan and Dmítar Jakšić who in 1484 attacked the Žădăreni (Hung. Zádorlak) estate of Emeric Dóczy and killed 60 of his herd horses.¹⁷ Even today, some of the settlements in that area still retain the Serbian ethnic component, partly inherited from the Middle Ages.

What were the criteria for refugees to settle in a particular area? Data from the late 15th century and the beginning of the following one are useful. Some of the settlements donated to Serbian nobles by the kings of Hungary were deserted (*desertae*) and had no inhabitants. These nobles obtained from the Crown the right to settle them and the privilege to be exempted from taxes and financial contributions. In theory, all sorts of people could be attracted, but the preferred option was to populate the settlements with people of the same ethnicity, or speakers of a Slavic language, who were eager to start a new life relatively far from the Ottoman territories. Such was the case of Felnac (Hung. Fönlak), a settlement in the Mureș valley. A deserted place in 1478, within a few decades it acquired the status of a market town (*oppidum*), which suggests rapid population growth, which could only be achieved through immigration. In a tax register from the mid-16th century,

¹⁵ Lajos Thallóczy & Sándor Horváth, *Jajcza (bánság, vár és város) története 1450–1527*, Magyarország mellékartományainak oklevéltára IV (Monumenta Hungariae Historica, Diplomataria XL), Budapest 1915, 189–191.

¹⁶ There are many studies about the Jakšić family in the Hungarian Kingdom. Some of the authors are the following: S. Borovszky, “A nagylaki uradalom története”, 16-50 (530–564); Јован Радонић, “Прилози за историју браће Јакшића”, *Споменик Српске краљевске академије* 59 (1923) 62–75; Момчило Спремић, “Породица Јакшић у Банату”, in: *Банат кроз векове. Слојеви култура Баната. Зборник радова*, ур. Миодраг Матицки и Видојко Јовић, Београд 2010, 33–63; S. Iașin, *Familii nobiliare sârbești*, 133–167; Adrian Magina, “Acta Jakšićiana. Documents regarding the Jakšićs of Nădlac family in Romanian archives”, *Иницијал. Часопис за средњовековне студије* 4 (2018) 159–188.

¹⁷ Ј. Радонић, *Прилози за историју браће Јакшића*, 70.

the names listed are, without exception, South Slavic, probably Serbian.¹⁸ However, this model cannot be applied to all places where the Serbian population settled. The case of Felnac is revealing of how the Jakšić family, taking advantage of this royal privilege, managed to populate the town with their fellow countrymen. But they did not stop there, favouring or perhaps contributing to the building of an Orthodox monastery. Although only mentioned in the first half of the 17th century, in historiography the monastery is considered to have been most probably built with the support of the Jakšić family who owned the estate.¹⁹

The situation described so far is somewhat similar with regard to the estate of voivode Miloš Belmužević. While in the second half of the 15th century Hungarian-sounding names were recorded among the serfs in certain villages on his estates, in a document from 1523 those mentioned in roughly the same areas bear mostly South Slavic names. In this case, too, the same mechanism of establishing the Serbian population on an estate owned by a member of the elite of the same ethnic origin can be recognised.²⁰ If the great Serbian noble families were directly in the King's service, other South Slavic nobles can be found in the position of *familiares* or servants of these Serbian aristocrats. For example, voivode Belmužević left certain possessions to some of his Serbian relatives and servants from his estates in the lower parts of the country.²¹ Members of small Serbian nobles who, as *familiares*, held the position of estate officials, can also be found on the Jakšić family's estates. The names of some family serfs also indicate the same Serbian origin.²²

Serbs can be found on other noble estates, not just those of their countrymen. Numerous Serbian-sounding names can be found in the villages of the Mureş valley owned by Lawrence Ország of Guth, where these Slavs lived together with the Hungarian and Romanian population.²³ Two nobles from the same area, Francis Dóczy and Peter Ravazdi, reconciled and came to an agreement over all the wrongs done to each other, including tribute payments according to the social status of the one killed. As for the Serbs, who were probably numerous enough to be recorded separately, the agreement provided for payment according to their status (*si vero Rascianus Rasciani homagium persolvat*).²⁴ Recruited from this area were probably those who came to the aid of King John Szapolyai in 1529, when led by a certain Veszelyko they gathered in the town of Orăștie (*Veszelyko cum Rascianis veniens*).²⁵ At Periam (Hung.

¹⁸ Livia Magina, "Dreptul de târg și procesul de urbanizare. Cazul Felnac", *Analele Banatului. Serie nouă. Arheologie-Istorie* 18 (2010) 143–150.

¹⁹ Dumitru Țeicu, *Geografia ecleziastică a Banatului medieval*, Timișoara 2007, 66.

²⁰ A. Magina, "Le long voyage", 137.

²¹ A. Krstić & A. Magina, "The Belmužević family", 112.

²² *Acta et documenta partes Regni Hungarie inferiores concernentia*, collegit et edidit Hadrianus Magina, Cluj-Napoca 2020, 94–95.

²³ See the names of those involved in a conflict in around 1500 – *Acta et Documenta*, 28–29.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, 73.

²⁵ Serviciul Județean al Arhivelor Naționale (Romanian National Archive – SJAN) Sibiu (Sibiu branch), Documente medievale, U V, no. 1270.

Perjámos), not far from the Mureş valley, in 1547, Serb Pethko and his relatives were negotiating a settlement with nobles Thelegdy and Weseny in regard to a series of stolen goods, with nobles Nicholas Crepović (Cherepowyth) and George Klinčić (Klynchyth) being among the arbitrators who favoured the agreement.²⁶ Crepović was one of the most important Serbian nobles in the lower parts and was one of those appointed to present to Emperor Ferdinand I the demands of the Serbian nobility in the Hungarian Kingdom. Through the marriage of his daughters, he became related to the great Hungarian nobility and Wallachian rulers, and was buried in a church in the area of Haţeg (Hung. Hátszeg), the Hunedoara county.²⁷ Such marriage alliances between Serbian and Hungarian or Romanian nobles in the Kingdom were not at all uncommon. They were customary in the case of ladies of the Jakšić and Belmužević families, who were integrated among the nobles of the Kingdom, later the Principality of Transylvania.²⁸

Attractive to Serbian refugees were not only noble estates, but urban areas as well. In Timișoara, it seems that the inhabitants of Slavic origin settled most often in the peripheral districts formed around the city and in the surrounding villages. In 1539, at the perambulation of the border of Timișoara with the extinct village of Nemethi, of the seven witnesses who came from Timișoara and three surrounding villages, six bear typical South Slavic names.²⁹ Two years later, in 1541, two nobles were paid 100 florins for their journey to Timișoara, to the Serbian lord of the Timiș county (*ad Petrum Petrowyth comitem Themesiensem et Rascianos*),³⁰ which indicates that the Serbs were numerous and represented a force to be reckoned with.

In Lipova (Hung. Lippa), a town situated in the Mureş valley, very close to the Jakšić family estate, the charters of the time recorded an increasing number of Serbian names. We cannot even guess the percentage share of Serbian refugees in the town's population, but documents from the first half of the 16th century record Slavic names among the inhabitants.³¹ Their number must have been significant since only Serbian boatmen (*nazadistae*) in the town were paid 200 florins at one time.³² Moreover, in August 1540, friar George Martinuzzi, the treasurer of Transylvania, celebrated in Lipova the assembly of the Serbs (*dieta Rascianis*), during which they

²⁶ SJAN Cluj, fond Vécsey, Documente fasciculate, no. 5, f. 18.

²⁷ S. Iașin, *Familii nobiliare sârbești*, 192–195; Ileana Burnichioiu, "Revenirea la un subiect fără surse: biserica din Bârsău în secolele XV–XVI", *Medievalia Transilvanica* V–VI/1–2 (2001–2002) 102–111. Adrian Magina, "Nikola Crepović. A Serbian nobleman and his family in 16th-century Transylvania", *Исторички Часопис*, књ. LXVIII (2023) 311–341.

²⁸ Livia Magina, "Ana Jakšić: A woman of her time", *Иницијал. Часопис за средњовековне студије* 8 (2020) 101–115; A. Krstić & A. Magina, "The Belmužević family" 114–116.

²⁹ Adrian Magina, "Hotarele și domeniul orașului Timișoara în anul 1539", *Banatica* 19 (2009) 73; Costin Feneșan, "Hotărnicia domeniului cetății Timișoara de la începutul secolului al XVI-lea", *Banatica* 24/2 (2014) 65–72.

³⁰ *Acta et Documenta*, 180.

³¹ Adrian Magina, "Documentele autorităților urbane din Lipova (1455–1548)", *Banatica* 23 (2013) 613–614.

³² *Acta et Documenta*, 134.

swore an oath to Queen Isabella and her son.³³ The place was not chosen by chance – it was precisely an area where the Serbian population must have lived in significant numbers. As can be seen, in the towns of Timișoara and Lipova, as well as in the places bordering these urban centres, the Serbs formed representative communities, mixing with the Hungarian and Romanian populations. Their numbers and military importance attracted the attention of the royal authority, which used the newcomers to strengthen the defensive structures threatened by the Ottomans. In return, the Hungarian Crown rewarded them with privileges and tax exemptions. In 1551, Ferdinand I of Habsburg, the King of the Romans and of Hungary, guaranteed on two occasions (July and August) to the Serbian nobility and population around Timișoara the old rights, freedoms, privileges and exemptions obtained from the former Hungarian kings in exchange for keeping faith with the sovereign.³⁴

The document quoted at the beginning of this study contains further clues to the territories in the Kingdom where Serbian refugees settled. On that occasion, King Ferdinand I of Habsburg mentioned the areas under the authority of the lord of the Timiș county, whose power extended to Lugoj, Caransebeș, Recaș (Hung. Rékás) and Zahla (a disappeared settlement), where the Serbs lived mixed with Hungarians and Romanians. The sovereign was also interested in the services, privileges and freedoms of the Serbian population of Lipova, Șoimoș (Hung. Solymos), Bečej (Hung. Becse) and Becskerek (today Zrenjanin; Hung. Nagy Becskerek).³⁵ It is clear from this testimony that the phenomenon of South Slavic migrations covered almost the entire region between the Mureș, Danube and Tisa. The town of Recaș was not mentioned by chance either, as there seems to have lived a small Serbian community about which we have little information. From a complaint addressed to Spanish military commander Bernardo de Aldana by several Serbian nobles in 1552, we are informed that nobleman Benedict Kosar occupied by force the properties in Recaș owned by Serbian inhabitants.³⁶

The expansion of Serbian refugees is visible even in the highlands of the region, but not to the extent recorded in the lowlands. The ethnic framework there was

³³ *Thezaurarius est Lippe, celebravit dieta Rascianis, concludarunt cum Rascianis, ut reginam et filium ad Lipa et Solymos ducant et habeant intelligentiam cum Turcis, et prompti erunt usque ad unum mori pro filio regis et pro regina* – Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (HHStA), Allgemeine Akten. Hungarica, fasz. 43, Konv. A, f. 50.

³⁴ Costin Feneșan, *Diplomatarium Banaticum*, v. I, Cluj-Napoca 2016, 339–343.

³⁵ Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára, E 142 Acta Publica, fasc. 41, no. 9, f. 8: *tam circa dictum castrum, quoque circa alia loca vicina videlicet Lugas, Karansebes, Rekas, Zahla in quibus mixtim Hungari, Rasciani et Valachi habitant. Non dissimilia inquirant de arcibus nostris Lyppa, Solmos, Bechye et Bechkerew, pro cuiusque arcis statu et conditione, ac singulariter de Rascianorum libertatibus, servitiis, censibus et hoc genus aliis, quae maiestatis nostri debentur*. The document was partially published by A. Ивић, *Историја Срба у Угарској*, 155.

³⁶ HHStA, Allgemeine Akten. Hungarica, fasz. 63, Konv. B, f. 107, partially published by A. Ивић, *Историја Срба у Угарској*, 164–165.

predominantly Romanian. Apart from confessional affinities, nothing attracted immigrants to these places. The terrain is mountainous, with sparse fertile land and was already populated by Romanian communities. In the mountain areas, the Romanian nobility played the anti-Ottoman role assumed by the Serbian nobility around Timișoara. In the 15th century, Romanian noblemen were granted important privileges, obtained through military service to the Crown and periodically renewed by Hungarian kings.³⁷ These places ensured neither a setting nor were a site for social advancement or the development of extensive estates. There were a few exceptions mentioned in the 1551 document: the towns of Caransebeș and Lugoj, including several villages in the Danube valley and some villages on the hilly side which bordered the plain and were relatively close to the newcomers' place of origin.³⁸ We have no data on when the Serbs arrived or how many of them settled in Caransebeș, but in the second half of the 16th century a Serbian Orthodox church functioned in Srem Street (Zerem utca) in the town,³⁹ most likely hierarchically subordinated to one of the Serbian dioceses in the vicinity. The name of the street undoubtedly indicates the origin of the newcomers and the fact that they formed a close-knit community around the church. One of the Serbs from Srem Street, *Stefan Orbonacz alias Ztoice Lezkozith*, was ennobled by Prince Sigismund Báthori of Transylvania in 1590, for his loyal services to Prince's brother Balthasar Báthori, not only in Transylvania but *in exteris etiam regionibus*,⁴⁰ probably as a spy in Ottoman territories.

The privileges offered by Hungarian sovereigns also contributed to the ecclesiastical organisation of the Serbs, probably as a consequence of the large number of Slavic-speaking people settling in the lower parts of the Kingdom. The

³⁷ Adrian Magina, "Universitas Valachorum. Privilege and Community in the medieval Banat", in: *Reform and Renewal in Medieval East and Central Europe: Politics, Law and Society*, Minerva III. Acta Europaea, v. 15, Studies in Russia and Eastern Europe, v. 14, edited by Suzana Miljan, Éva B. Halász & Alexandru Simon, Cluj-Napoca – Zagreb – London 2019, 493–502.

³⁸ For example, the number of names recorded in 1597 in villages on today's Serbian-Romanian border indicate, without doubt, their Serbian origin – Frigyes Pesty, *Krassó vármegye története*, v. IV, Oklevéltár, Budapest 1883, 210.

³⁹ A document from 1579 indirectly mentions this church, describing its cemetery (*ciimitherium templi Razianorum*) – Adrian Magina, "In Karansebes patres Societatis Iesu evangelizant. Misionarii", in: *Studii Bănățene*, ed. Valeriu Leu, Dumitru Țeicu & Carmen Albert, Timișoara-Reșița 2007, 154.

⁴⁰ SJAN CJ, colecția Documente cu peceți atârinate (in custody at "Lucian Blaga" Central University Library Cluj – Documente cu blazon), no. 23: His coat-of-arms: *scutum videlicet triangulare coelestini coloris in cuius campo leo integer est depictus, quo hominem humi prostratum ore hianti per medium correptum, ita detinet, ut delaniaturus esse videatur, supra scutum galea militaris clausa est possita, ex cuius cono teniae, seu lemnisci, variorum colorum hinc inde defluentes, utramque scuti partem pulcherime ambiunt et exornat*. The Prince also exempted his house from all taxes and contributions: *domum eiusdem in civitate nostra Caransebes in platea Zerem ucza vocata...ab omni census, taxarum et contributionum nostrarum [tam ordinarium] quam extra ordinarium subsidiique et lucri Camerae nostrae solutione...in perpetuum eximendo et supportando duximus*.

Serbian church in Timișoara is mentioned quite late – in the second half of the 16th century, while the Serbian community in Lipova benefited from well-established ecclesiastical institutions. In 1529 a metropolitan is mentioned there and a certain amount of money was paid for his sustenance. The same senior member of the church was also given a cup valued at 25 florins.⁴¹ Although the information is interesting, the document refers to the metropolitan of Moldova being in Lipova to conclude a treaty with King John Szapolyai, and not to an Orthodox ecclesiastical organisation based in the town.⁴² The first reliable record of an Orthodox bishop is from 1542, when a document mentions the Serbian bishop's house in Lipova (*domus episcopii Rascianorum*),⁴³ In addition to the bishopric, there was probably also an Orthodox parish in the town, and Serbian priest Paul (Pavle?) is mentioned as being involved in a property transaction.⁴⁴ After Ottoman rule was imposed, the Orthodox diocese continued its work and was one of the most important Eastern dioceses in the former Ottoman-occupied Hungarian territories. Moreover, in the Ottoman tax registers (*defters*) compiled after the conquest of the town in 1552, a metropolitan was mentioned again – he was certainly only the bishop of the place, but the name that conferred prestige persisted.⁴⁵ It was probably also in the first half of the 16th century that the Serbian church in the town was built, although records of its existence date from the beginning of the following century.⁴⁶

According to 16th-century documents, the Serbian population lived mainly around Timișoara, on the Mureș valley, near Lipova and in the area bordering the Danube. On Wolfgang Lazius's map, drawn up in the middle of that century, between the Danube to the south, the forests bordering Caransebeș and the Bârzava river to the north, the Maxons plain and the wastelands to the west, the Austrian humanist marked the land of the Serbs (*Ratzenland, Rasciani*).⁴⁷

⁴¹ *Acta et documenta*, 134.

⁴² *Sabbato post Ascensionis Domini Walacho mitropol dati sunt fl. XXV; cuidam interpreti cum eodem eunti fl. XX* – Slovenský národný archív, Bratislava, Rodu Révay, škat. 90, Diversae familiae, fasc. V, no. 5. These lines have not been published in the edited excerpt from *Acta et Documenta*. For the Orthodox diocese of Lipova see: Adrian Magina, "Episcopia ortodoxă a Lipovei în secolul al XVI-lea", in: *Istorie, cultură și spiritualitate în Banat*, v. II, ed. D. Alic, Timișoara 2023, 310-320.

⁴³ Marius Diaconescu, "Un episcop sârb la Lipova în 1542", *Arhiva Istorică a României*, serie nouă I/2 (2004), 30.

⁴⁴ *...discreto Paulo presbitero Rascianorum* – Ibidem. The document was also published in A. Magina, "Documentele autorităților urbane din Lipova", 614.

⁴⁵ Adrian Magina, "The city and the church. Religious life in Lipova, the 14th–16th centuries", in: *Common Man, Society and Religion in the 16th Century/Gemeiner Mann, Gesellschaft und Religion Im 16. Jahrhundert: Piety, Morality and Discipline in the Carpathian Basin/ Frömmigkeit, Moral und Sozialdisziplinierung Im Karpatenbogen*, ed. Ulrich A. Wien et al., Göttingen 2021, 256–260.

⁴⁶ In 1607 Transylvanian Prince Sigismund Rákóczy exempted from all taxes the house of Serbian nobleman Živko Rac located in *plateea Nemeth ucza vulgo nominata, vicinitatibus templi Rascianorum* – Costin Feneșan, *Diplome de înnobilitare și blazon din Banat*, Timișoara 2007, 242.

⁴⁷ Wolfgang Lazius, *Regni Hungariae descriptio vera 1556*, available online at: https://www.e-rara.ch/bau_1/content/zoom/3946330.

What was the proportion of the Serbian population? According to Paul Bank, the castellan of Deva, the number of refugees fleeing from the Turks in Transylvania alone reached one hundred thousand people in 1552, including women and children, who arrived there with thirteen thousand wagons.⁴⁸ Ottoman tax records provide valuable details about the settlements and inhabitants between the Danube-Mureş and the Tisa in the first decades after they took the territory from the Christians. The Ottoman authorities carried out the first population census immediately after the conquest in 1552,⁴⁹ but the first preserved census is from 1554, followed by two others from 1567 and 1579. South Slavic names predominate in these registers, most likely Serbian. It is difficult to know whether the scribe recorded all those names because they were really Slavic, or perhaps because he was of Slavic origin and filtered everything through his own cultural background. No matter how we look at these definitions, it is certain that in the decades after the Ottoman conquest a large part of the population of present-day Banat was Serbian, especially in the southern part of the province. In the mid-16th century, in the sançak of Cenad, in an area of the former Torontal county (Becserek nahiye), South Slavic names were registered for the majority of the inhabitants,⁵⁰ a situation whose roots are to be seen in the population transfer of the second half of the previous century and are not of recent date, after the integration into the Crescent territories. These data can be supplemented with the tithe register of 1560, which includes 66 settlements in the county of Cenad, outside the Ottoman rule. The Serbs can be easily recognised because they are Orthodox and do not pay Catholic ecclesiastical taxes: *Rasciani sunt, decimis non tenentur*, or simply *non dant decimas* – applied to 16 villages, i.e. 25% of the total.⁵¹ Does this percentage reflect the total Serbian population? It is risky, if not impossible to assess this, as the data in question refer to only one county, and even that one is not fully recorded, while at the same time those who do not pay tithe may be Orthodox in general.

The situation described by various documents in the mid-16th century remained somewhat constant throughout the Ottoman rule, but the examination of that period goes beyond what I have set out here. It would be too much to talk about certain adaptive strategies of the Serbian population who took refuge in the Hungarian Kingdom, but a few aspects are revealing. First is the fact that the Serbs who massively

⁴⁸ *Centum millia Rascianorum, computatis parvulis et mulieribus, sciat que habebant tredecim millia currum propriorum* – HHStA, Allgemeine Akten. Hungarica, fasz. 66, Konv. B, f. 23, partially edited by A. Ивић, *Истопуја Срба у Узарској*, 168.

⁴⁹ *Cazzun bassa totam Rascianitatem, Valachos citra vltraque partes Marossy pertinentia Temesuar et populos desertorum atque totam suam ditionem connumeravit* – HHStA, Allgemeine Akten. Hungarica, fasz. 68, Konv. B, f. 12, excerpt published by A. Ивић, *Истопуја Срба у Узарској*, 169.

⁵⁰ Gyula Káldy-Nagy, *A csanádi szandzsák 1567. és 1579. évi összeírása* (Dél-Alföldi évszázadok 15.), Szeged 2000; Zoltán Iusztin, “Testimonies about Mobility in the Becserek Nahije in the 16th Century”, in: *Politics and Society in the Central and South-Eastern Europe (13th-16th centuries)* II, ed. Zsuzsanna Kopeczny, Cluj-Napoca 2021, 37–57.

⁵¹ A. Magina, “Le long voyage”, 139.

fled in the second half of the 15th century were accepted and even encouraged by the royalty and Hungarian aristocrats of the time to come to Hungary, where they gained an important role in the anti-Ottoman struggle. The high number of refugees produced changes at the ethnic level, which can be seen in documents from the first half of the 16th century, and especially in the Ottoman tax records after 1552. Moreover, famous Serbian noble families were almost without exception fully integrated into the nobility of the Kingdom. Over time, they established matrimonial or political alliances that allowed them to move up the social and administrative ladder, but the consequence was the loss of ethnic and religious specificity. If the first generations of families such as the Jakšićs or Belmuževićs can be assumed to remain attached to Serbian linguistic, cultural and religious values, the later generations can be regarded rather as part of the Hungarian nobility of Serbian origin, no longer resonating with the South Slavic past. The situation in compact communities was different. In the Mureş valley or the former areas of the Torontal county, the Serbian population preserved their language and Orthodox religion. The Ottoman conquest in the mid-16th century superimposed a world which, from an ethnic and confessional point of view, was entirely different than in the middle of the previous century. Where the Serbs were a numerical minority, in the areas where they lived alongside the Romanians and Hungarians, they became integrated into the majority communities in the early modern period. Only sporadic names or references to Serbian origin are still found in the names of people or places once inhabited by Serbs. Although the topic has been investigated in three historiographies, it still offers new avenues of research, while at the same time enabling the understanding of the history shared by the Serbs, Hungarians and Romanians.

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**MIXTIM HUNGARI, RASCIANI ET VALACHI HABITANT.
SZERBEK A MAGYAR KIRÁLYSÁG DÉLI TERÜLETEIN (15–16. SZÁZAD)**

Rezümé

A tanulmány a középkori Magyar Királyság déli területein és a jövőbeli autonóm Erdélyi Fejedelemség délnyugati részein élő délszláv (szerb) lakosságot vizsgálja több szempontból. A szerbek magyarországi vándorlása mind a magyar, mind a szerb és román történetírásban megjelent a 19. századtól. A Magyar Királyság déli részei (partes inferiores), a mai Bánát, határvidék volt, ahová a szerbek a törökök elől menekülve érkeztek a 15. században. Az olyan nemesi családok, mint a Jakšić vagy a Belmužević család, birtokokat kaptak Temes, Torontál, Csanád és Arad vármegyékben. Velük együtt más délszláv eredetű népek is érkeztek a térségbe mint szolgák avagy familiárisok (familiares). Az állandó jellegű összetűzések és a bizonytalanság számos egyszerű ember számára lehetővé tette, hogy átkeljenek a határon, és a Magyar Királyságban telepedjenek le. A Maros és a Duna közötti terület lakosságának etnikai összetételében nyomon követhetők a változások a kései 15. századtól egészen a következő század közepéig. A legszámottevőbb szerb lakosság a Maros völgyében, illetve Temesvár és Lippa városok közelében volt. A 15. század második felében tömegesen menekülő szerbeket elfogadta, sőt támogatta is a magyar királyi udvar és a nemesség, hogy jöjjenek az országba, ahol fontos szerepük volt a törökök elleni harcokban. A nagyszámú menekült megváltoztatta a térség lakosságának etnikai összetételét, ami jól nyomon követhető a 16. század első feléből származó dokumentumokban, különösen az 1552 utáni oszmán kataszteri nyilvántartásokban. További szempontot képviselnek a kutatásban az ismert szerb nemesi családok, amelyek szinte kivétel nélkül teljesen integrálódtak a Magyar Királyság nemességébe. Idővel ezek a családok házasságkötés útján vagy politikai megfontolásból szövetségeket kötöttek, amelyek által feljebb juthattak a társadalmi és adminisztratív ranglétrán, de ennek következményeként feladták etnikai és vallási hovatartozásukat. A tömbben élő közösségek esetében más volt a helyzet. A Maros-völgyben vagy az egykori Torontál vármegye területén élő szerbség megőrizte nyelvét és pravoszláv vallását. Ahol a szerbek kisebbségben voltak, ahol a magyarokkal és románokkal együtt éltek, integrálódtak a többségi közösségekbe az új évszázad küszöbén. A török hódítások nyomán a 16. század közepén etnikai és vallási szempontból egy teljesen új világ volt kialakulóban, amely jelentős mértékben eltért attól a társadalomtól, amely az előző évszázad derekát jellemezte. A 15-16. századból származó történelmi források lehetővé teszik számunkra, hogy megértsük a népességmozgásokat és az etnikai összetételben történt változásokat a Magyar Királyságnak e meghatározott térségében.

Адријан Мађина

**MIXTIM HUNGARI, RASCIANI ET VALACHI HABITANT.
СРБИ У ЈУЖНИМ ДЕЛОВИМА КРАЉЕВИНЕ УГАРСКЕ (15–16. ВЕК)**

Резиме

Рад се бави појединим аспектима присуства јужнословенског (српског) становништва у јужним деловима средњовековне Краљевине Угарске, односно југозападним деловима будуће аутономне кнежевине Трансилваније. Миграције Срба у Угарску предмет су проучавања мађарске, српске и румунске историографије од 19. века. Јужни делови (*partes inferiores*) Краљевине Угарске (данашњи Банат) били су погранична територија, где су се средином 15. века Срби склањали пред турском најездом. Племићке породице попут Јакшића или Белмужевића добиле су поседе у жупанијама Тамиш, Торонтал, Чанад и Арад. С њима су у ту област дошли и други народи јужнословенског порекла као *familiares* или слуге. Стални сукоби и несигурност пружили су прилику многим обичним људима да пређу границу и дођу у Краљевину Угарску. Промене у етничком саставу територије између Мориша и Дунава могу се пратити од касног 15. века до средине наредног. Већина Срба била је забележена у долини Мориша и близу градова Темишвара и Липове. Срби, који су масовно избегли у другој половини 15. века, били су прихваћени, па чак и подстицани од стране краљевске власти и угарске аристократије тог доба да дођу у Угарску, где су имали важну улогу у борби против Османлија. Велики број избеглица довео је до промена на етничком плану, што се види у документима из прве половине 16. века, посебно у османским дефтерима након 1552. године. Још један аспект представљају познате српске племићке породице, које су готово без изузетка биле потпуно интегрисане у племство Краљевине. Временом су те породице склапале брачне или политичке савезе који су им омогућили напредак на друштвеној и административној лествици, али је последица тога био губитак етничке и верске специфичности. Ситуација у компактним заједницама била је другачија. У долини Мориша или у некадашњим областима Торонталске жупаније, српско становништво сачувало је свој језик и православну веру. Тамо где су Срби били у мањини, у областима где су живели заједно са Румунима и Мађарима, интегрисали су се у већинске заједнице у раном новом веку. Османско освајање средином 16. века наметнуло је свет који је, са етничког и конфесионалног становишта, имао потпуно другачије карактеристике него средином претходног века. Историјски подаци из 15–16. века омогућавају нам да разумемо кретање становништва и етничке промене у одређеном делу Краљевине Угарске.