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The Counts Kurjaković of Krbava in the Medieval History of Modern-day Slovakia

Kniežatá z Krbavy na území dnešného Slovenska / Krbavski knezovi na teritoriju današnje Slovačke

The Counts of Krbava (Corbaviai), a family of Croatian magnates, have been documented in the sources from the thirteenth century up to 1531. They originated from the county of Krbava, today a rather undeveloped and poorly inhabited part of the Croatian region of Lika. In contrast to this, during the Middle Ages Krbava was one of the important Croatian political and ecclesiastical centres. We do not know much about the counts due to the fact that their family archive probably perished during the Ottoman invasions at the turn of the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. However, analysis has shown that Krbavski had seven generations with three branches and altogether some 60 individuals. They mainly marked medieval Croatia, Dalmatia, Slavonia, Istria and Bosnia with their presence. Nevertheless, some of them temporarily or permanently resided in today's Hungary and Slovakia. Of all the Croatian magnates, they were the ones who were often most present in Slovakia. This was practically unknown in Croatia until the pioneering work of Pál Engel from 1998. The first among the Krbavski in Slovakia was the kindred's leading figure, Grgur (Gregory) I, in 1358. He came to Levoča? / Levice? (in castro Levia) as a prisoner of King Louis I. The counts ascended significantly on the social scale during the rule of King Sigismund (1387–1437), because they were the king's most consistent and loyal supporters in medieval Croatia. Therefore, they were rewarded with many high-ranking titles and offices, as well as with numerous landed estates. For example, Count Karlo II (Charles) of Krbava obtained from the king, in 1393, as a permanent donation the royal castle and town of Čeklís (Latin Cheklyz, Slovak Bernolákovo; Hungarian Cseklész). Čeklís or Bernolákovo remained Karlo's seat and residence right up to his death (after 1422). He was consequently even titled Duke of Čeklís. He spent his lifetime between his native region and his estates in Slovakia. He also possessed a big house in Bratislava. His direct descendents (three sons, three grandsons, and one great-grandson) remained permanently in Slovakia and with time extended their possessions even in the region of Nitra. This branch of the Krbavski kindred could be, therefore, called with full justification Slovak nobility of Croatian origin. This paper presents data about the Slovak branch of the Krbavski from the perspective of Croatian history.

Keywords: high nobility, the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, Krbava, Čeklís, Slovak branch of Croatian nobility

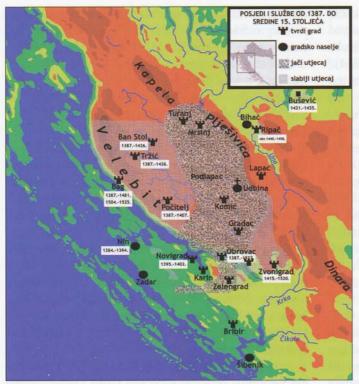
In this paper the authors will try to reconstruct the role of the Croatian counts Kurjaković of Krbava during the Late Middle Ages in today Slovakia. One has to emphasize that the Kurjakovići were not the only ones from medieval Croatia and Slavonia directly connected with the above-mentioned parts of the kingdom. However, their role was of utmost importance and they established the strongest links there. Namely, almost everybody among the

Kurjakovići, excepting the founder of the clan and a few other members over seven generations, lived temporarily or permanently in medieval Hungary. During the first decades of the fifteenth century the majority of counts were living in Slavonia, Hungary and today's Slovakia, and not in their native medieval Croatia. Suffice it to say that of some seventy clan members overall more than one third died in the north. Who and what were the Kurjakovići?

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¹ The exact figure will probably never be precisely established. Therefore, here is the list of those whose death in the north is confirmed in the sources, or there is a high degree of probability that it occurred there. Their names were as follows: Grgur I (around 1360), Budislav II (1379), the unknown Butko's daughter – married Kokoš of Kaza (after 1394), Nikola/ Nicholas II (before 1402), Grgur IV (after 1413), the unknown Butko's daughter – married Zrinski (after 1413), Ivan II Grof (1418), Karlo/Charles II (1422), Nikola/Nicholas III (after 1430), Ana/Anna – married Babonić (before 1434), Marija/Mary – married Zlatonosić (after 1434), Magdalena/Magdalen – married Kladuški (after 1434), Marija/Mary – married Kladuški (after 1434), Nikola/Nicholas Zakanjski (before 1436), Franko (around 1437), Franko's children (around 1437), Ivanka (1439), Juraj/George III (around 1440), Jelena/Helen – married Gorjanski (Garai, after 1449), Nikola/Nicholas V (1450), Ladislav/Ladislas Zakanjski (around 1458), Katarina/Catherine – married Szerdahelyi (after 1458), Grgur V (around 1460),



Map 1. Counts of Krbava, during the reign of King Sigismund of Luxembourg (1387-1437).

The counts Kurjaković of Krbava or Krbavski were among the most influential magnates in medieval Croatia. For more than two centuries they had a significant role in the Hungarian-Croatian Kingdom. They were among the first ones in medieval Croatia to establish closer ties with medieval Hungary. Already during the reign of King Charles Robert I of Anjou (1301–1342) one of their members, Count Grgur I, had the title of miles aule regie.2 During the reign of the Luxembourg, Habsburg and Jagiello kings, some of the Kurjakovići held high offices in the realm. They held the titles of ban and viceban of Croatia, magister curiae, magister daphiferorum, magister pincernarum, and curiae nostre magister officii palatini.3 Throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries they were repeatedly royal castellans in Croatia (Unac, Klis, Novigrad, Ostrovica, Počitelj, and Ripač), Slavonia (Dobra Kuća, Greben, Kozara, Mrin, and Gračenica),

Hungary (Hasznos, Visegrád, and Solymár) and modern-day Slovakia (Dobrá Niva, Slovenská Ľupča, and Brezno). The last member of the Kurjakovići of Krbava, Ivan Karlović (died in 1531), for many years held offices of Croatian viceban, ban and royal captain. The counts raised horses of high quality on their estates, they traded wheat and they had business interests in Dalmatian fairs and Venetian banks. The most distinguished among them were the guardians of St. Stephen's crown, members of the narrow circle of the Order of the Dragon and of the Santo Spirito fraternity in Rome.

The sources mention some 68 members of the Kurjakovići in the period between 1298 and 1531. They all originated from the Gusići kindred, one of the oldest in Croatia. The Kurjakovići were from Krbava, once an important Croatian county and the centre of a bishopric. This is today one of the poorest and most scarcely populated areas of Croatia, in the Lika region. Krbava was an important political and ecclesiastical centre in medieval Croatia, and the neighbor-

ing counties of Lapac, Hotuča, Odorje, Podgorje, Bužane, and Lika were in its sphere of influence.4 The Kurjakovići successfully entered the narrowest circle of the social elite in Croatia at the end of the thirteenth century, via marriage between Kurjak Gusić and Jelena/Helen Šubić, the sister of Croatian ban Pavao/Paul I Šubić.5 With his brotherin-law's consent, Kurjak obtained Krbava as a hereditary estate. This estate extended well beyond the borders of Krbava county and encompassed huge parts of today's northern Dalmatia, Lika region and some border areas of present-day Bosnia. (Map 1). After Kurjak's death (around 1304), his sons Budislav I (died in 1346), Pavao/Paul I (died in 1342) and Grgur I (died around 1360) established the three branches of the Kurjakovići. The most prominent among them were: Juraj/George I (died around 1393), Butko (died in 1401), Ivan II (died in 1418), Karlo/Charles II (died in 1422), Ivanka (died

Kristof/Christopher (after 1466), Jelena/Helen - married Zrinski (after 1508), Nikola/Nicholas VI (after 1504), Juraj/George V (after 1504), Ivan Torkvat Karlović (1531).

² Engel, Pál: Krbavski knezovi u Ugarskoj. In: Povezivanje srednjoeuropskih zemalja s Jadranom (Mediteranom). Ed.: Josip Božičević. Zagreb: HAZU, 1998, pp. 73-81.

³ Вотіса, Ivan: Krbavski knezovi u srednjem vijeku. PhD. Thesis. Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2011, p. 301.

⁴ Kovačić, Slavko: Splitska metropolija u dvanaestom stoljeću. In: Krbavska biskupija u srednjem vijeku. Ed.: Mile Bogović. Rijeka – Zagreb: Visoka bogoslovska škola u Rijeci – Kršćanska sadašnjost Zagreb, 1988, pp. 28–30; Рејноvić, Dane: Geopolitički položaj Krbave u srednjovjekovnom, osmanlijskom i vojnokrajiškom razdoblju. In: Krbavska bitka i njezine posljedice. Ed.: Dragutin Pavličević. Zagreb: Hrvatska matica iseljenika, 1997, pp. 52-54.

⁵ Karbić, Damir: The Šubići of Bribir. A Case Study of a Croatian Medieval Kindred. PhD Thesis. Budapest: Central European University, Department of Medieval Studies, 2000, p. 76.

in 1439), Juraj/George III (died after 1439), Toma/ Thomas II (died after 1467), Grgur VI (died around 1458), Ivan III (died around 1483), Karlo/Charles IV (died in 1493), and Ivan IV Karlović (died in 1531).

Each and every member of the clan inherited the title of comes de Corbavia by birth. This was particularly valuable during the reign of King Sigismund (1387–1437), when the Krbavski figured as the king's closest allies in Croatia.⁷ Therefore, it is not surprising that Ivan II, Nicholas's only son, who performed the high duty of magister dapipherorum at the royal court from 1397 till 1417, had the nickname Grof ("count").8 The Krbavski were among those magnates in the Hungarian-Croatian Kingdom who had the right of possessing their own banderium of horsemen.9 Under their own banners they defended their estates and the whole of Dalmatia and Croatia together with the Frankapani and Nelipčići counts, and with Croatian ban. Their marital alliances additionally testify to their high social rank. Although the Krbavski left their marks particularly in Croatia and Dalmatia, a certain number of them temporarily or permanently acted and lived in Slavonia, Hungary and Slovakia. This last fact was relatively unknown until the publishing of Pál Engel's work The Counts of Krbava in Hungary, in 1998.10 Our colleague Damir Karbić brought to our attention all this information and we thank him for that. He also kindly provided us with additional sources and his own excerpts from the Hungarian State Archives in Budapest.

The first encounter of one of the Kurjakovići with modern-day Slovakia occurred in 1358, when Count Grgur I, the most important member of his clan during the first half of the fourteenth century, finished *in castro Levia* as a prisoner of King Louis of Anjou (1342–1382). The reason for Grgur's imprisonment was his reluctance to take Louis' side during the latter's campaign to conquer Dalmatia. This reluctance was, most probably, caused by Count Grgur's multiple business and family ties

and interests in Venice. Grgur was imprisoned propter infidelitatis notam and he spent the last years of his life there.¹¹ His letter to Venice at the end of the same year is therefore filled with frustration. He was disappointed with his family, sons and friends. He emphasized that all that was left to him was his faithful personal servant, his ring and his money deposited in Venice, because the king confiscated all his other property throughout the kingdom.¹² Count Grgur once again, at the beginning of 1360, wrote to the Venetian doge petitioning him to support his cause at the royal court, and to send him some of the count's savings via his son, Juraj/George Kurjaković. However, due to Grgur's close and sudden death, an answer never arrived. Count Grgur's sons, despite the fact that they retained their titles, were no longer closely linked to Krbava. They could therefore be considered, particularly from the beginning of the fifteenth century, as local nobility from Križevci and Somogy counties, with the surname Zakanjski.

Some twenty years after Count Grgur's death, his nephews Nikola/Nicholas I and Toma/Thomas I appeared as comites de Corbavia among the escorts of the highest state dignitaries, witnessing the premarital contract between the children of King Louis and the Austrian duke Leopold, in the Slovak town of Zvolen.¹³ It is possible that the counts then established some social links there, because later they directed their children to the north - to Slavonia, Hungary and Slovakia.14 This was particularly true in the case of Ivan II Grof, Nicholas's only son. The social ascent of the Kurjakovići gained momentum after King Louis' death, in 1382, because they firmly supported the queens Elizabeth and Mary and later King Sigismund. During that period they were among the rare opponents of the Neapolitan party in Croatia.

The leader of the clan at the end of the four-teenth century was Count Butko, son of Budislav, the royal knight and for many years the duke of the Dalmatian town of Nin (*Nona*). ¹⁵ He

⁶ Вотіса, Ivan: Krbavski knezovi и srednjem vijeku, р. 302.

⁷ Ibidem, p. 178.

⁸ In all the documents from Sigismund's period his signature had the nickname *Grof.* See – Вотіса, Ivan: *Krbavski knezovi* и srednjem vijeku, p. 170, n. 1123.

⁹ Decreta Regni mediaevalis Hungariae: 1301–1457 (deinde DRMH), vol. 2. Ed.: Franciscus Döry et al. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1976, Propositiones (1432–1433), pp. 148–149.

^{f0} Engel, Pál: Krbavski knezovi u Ugarskoj, pp. 73–81.

¹¹ Вотіса, Ivan: Krbavski knezovi и srednjem vijeku, pp. 111–112.

¹² Listine o odnošajih izmedju južnog Slavenstva i Mletačke Republike. 10 vol. Ed.: Simeon Ljubić. In: *Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum meridionalium* (deinde *MSM*), Zagreb: Fr. Župan (Albrecht et Fiedler), 1868–1891, hic vol. 3, nr. 551, p. 384.

¹³ Codex Diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis (deinde CDH). 11 vol. Ed.: Georgius Fejér. Budae: Regiae Universitatis Hungariae, 1829–1844, hic vol. 3, 9/5, p. 380.

¹⁴ Вотіса, Ivan: Krbavski knezovi и srednjem vijeku, pp. 144–145.

¹⁵ Registar Artikucija iz Rivignana. Srednjovjekovni registri Zadarskoga i Splitskoga kaptola. Ed.: Mladen Ančić: In: Fontes: Izvori za hrvatsku povijest, a. 11, 2005, nr. 36, p. 173: "Domini Budislaui comitis Corbauie nati olim domini Budislaui de genere Gussich comitis Corbauie."

participated actively, side by side with his brothers Nicholas I and Thomas II and his nephews Karlo/Charles II and Pavao/Paul II, in an action to liberate the queens from captivity (May-June 1387), in Novigrad near Zadar (Zara).16 This action definitively strengthened the political ties between the Kurjakovići and King Sigismund, and most probably influenced their rapid social ascent in the kingdom. While residing for some time on their estates near Zadar, Queen Mary showered her liberators with possessions, privileges, offices, and honors. The Kurjakovići regained the town of Obrovac and practically turned it into their main seat. They also obtained vast areas around the Velebit Mountain. From that time onwards they were titled as lords and counts of Krbava, Lika, Bužane, and Bag.¹⁷ On his behalf Count Butko became the queen's court ispán, 18 and his nephew Charles II her magister pincernarum.¹⁹ However, this was just the beginning of Charles's splendid career at the royal court. In February 1393 King Sigismund granted him for life the royal fortress and town of Čeklis (lat. Cheklyz, slov. Bernolákovo; hung. Cseklész) with the adjacent manor, northeast of Bratislava.20 Four months later the chapter of Bratislava invested Charles as the lord of Čeklis.²¹ Count Charles started to often sign himself as Count of Čeklis, or Čekliški, due to the fact that he lived there from then onwards, until his death.²² Count Charles II is particularly mentioned in the sources in relation to Čeklis and various affairs there from 1402 till 1412.23

Charles's cousin, Count Ivan II Grof, joined his relative at the royal court in the early spring of 1397. Impressively, over the following twenty

years (until 1417) he performed the duty of royal magister dapipherorum.24 He probably came to the court among Sigismund's escorts after the king's return from the battlefield at Nikopol, in the winter of 1396-1397. We know that Sigismund on his travels shortly visited Komić in Krbava, one of the main seats of the counts.²⁵ In that context one could interpret the arrival of Count Ivan II at the court as a sort of royal reward to the Kurjakovići for their previous faithful services. While negotiating with the Habsburgs in order to strengthen his shaky rule, King Sigismund summoned his faithful magnates and nobles to Bratislava, in September 1402. Among the cosigners who approved the king's action were also counts of Krbava, Charles II and Ivan II Grof.²⁶

As a reaction to Ladislas of Naples' crowning in Zadar, in summer of 1403, Sigismund from Bratislava started to regain the towns and counties throughout the kingdom, with the help of his supporters. Soon afterwards, Sigismund entered Visegrád. He immediately appointed Charles II Kurjaković of Krbava and Čeklis as a royal castellan there, and entrusted him with guarding the crown of St. Stephen.²⁷ Count Charles held that office until spring of 1409, when as a man in the king's confidence he was appointed ban of Croatia, because of Venetian territorial pretensions there.²⁸ In the meantime he also performed the duty of secular governor of the diocese of Vác, and after Sigismund's victory in Bosnia, in 1408, Charles also became a *summus thesaurarius regius*.²⁹ Charles and his relative Ivan II Grof became members of the innermost circle of the Ordo Draconis, together with the king, the queen, and 22 of the most

¹⁶ Вотіса, Ivan: Krbavski knezovi и srednjem vijeku, pp. 149–150.

¹⁷ Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae: Diplomatički zbornik Kraljevine Hrvatske, Dalmacije i Slavonije. Listine godina 1386–1394, vol. 17 (1981). Ed.: Stjepan Gunjača et al. Zagreb: JAZU, nr. 72, pp. 99–100: "Nos Nicolaus, Thomas et Vucho (!), filii olim comitis Budislaui et Paulus, filius olim comitis Caroli, et Carolus, filius olim comitis Georgii, Corbauię, Lichę, Busaneç (!), Scrissie domini et comites naturales universis et singulis (...).'

¹⁸ Вотіса, Ivan: Krbavski knezovi и srednjem vijeku, р. 151.

¹⁹ Engel, Pál: Krbavski knezovi u Ugarskoj, p. 78.

²⁰ Zsigmondkori oklevéltár: (1387–1422), 9 vol. Ed.: Elemér Mályusz – Iván Borsa. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1951. (deinde ZsŐ), hic vol. 1, nr. 2915; A Pécz nemzetség Apponyi ágának az Apponyi grófok családi levéltáraban őrizett oklevelei (1241-1526), vol. 1. Ed.: Ernő Kammerer. Budapest: Franklin-Társulat, 1906, nr. 107, pp. 235-236.

²¹ MOL DF 225517.

²² Engel, Pál: Krbavski knezovi u Ugarskoj, p. 78; Botica, Ivan: Krbavski knezovi u srednjem vijeku, p. 158.

²³ ZsO 2, nr. 1500, nr. 2102; nr. 6170; nr. 6600; ZsO 3, nr. 1744.

²⁴ Вотіса, Ivan: Krbavski knezovi и srednjem vijeku, p. 169. It seems that his stay in office was interrupted, for no obvious reasons, between 1404 and 1406.

²⁵ Šišić, Ferdo: Ljetopis Pavla Pavlovića patricija zadarskoga. In: Vjestnik kraljevskog hrvatsko-dalmatinsko-slavonskog zemaljskog arkiva, a. 6, 1904, p. 23.

²⁶ CDH 10/4, p. 47.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 299; Klaić, Vjekoslav: Capiti nostro Bavie [?]. In: Vjestnik kraljevskog hrvatsko-dalmatinsko-slavonskog zemaljskog arkiva, a. 1, 1899, p. 275; CDH 10/4, p. 104; Klaić, Vjekoslav: Capiti nostro Bavie [?], p. 206; Engel, Pál: Krbavski knezovi и Ugarskoj, p. 78; Вотіса, Ivan: Krbavski knezovi и srednjem vijeku, p. 179.

²⁸ ZsO 2, nr. 5397, nr. 6363; nr. 6589.

²⁹ Вотіса, Ivan: Krbavski knezovi и srednjem vijeku, р. 181.

distinguished men in Sigismund's kingdom.³⁰ It is indicative that they were the only Croat members of that elite order (Fig. 1).

As the Kurjakovići in general were siding with Sigismund, the counts of Krbava in Croatia felt ever more pressured from the Neapolitan party, contrary to their powerful relatives at the court. Among other reasons, it is highly probable that Charles accepted the duty of Croatian ban because the Venetian territorial expansion in the hinterland of Dalmatian towns, particularly Zadar, challenged the estates of his clan. He bore the title of ban of Dalmatia and Croatia for the first time in March 1409, in a document confirming the privileges of Bratislava.31 However, after a period of heavy fighting with the Venetians in Dalmatia, in October 1411 Charles resigned as ban and permanently left his native Croatia. The last years of his life he spent on the territory of nowadays Slovakia, especially at his Čeklis estate. He possessed a house in Bratislava as well.32 As comes Karolus de Corbauia alias de Chekles, pridem regnorum nostrorum Dalmatie et Croatie banus, Charles participated, in 1412, at the tournament in Buda organized in honor of Sigismund's peace with the Polish-Lithuanian king Wladislaus II Jagiello (1386-1434).33 The other Croatian magnates, engaged in defensive efforts against the Venetians, did not participate in that special occasion.

During King Sigismund's absence from the kingdom, between 1412 and 1418, the lord of Čeklis Charles II Krbavski and other dignitaries tried to resolve numerous disputes and conflicts about property issues, particularly throughout Slovakia.³⁴ For example, Charles was one of the jurors, in April 1413 in Bratislava, in a dispute between the citizens of Trnava and the nobleman Ulrich Wolffurt, regarding the rights of collecting grapes and the taxation of several vineyards.³⁵ This legal dispute was resolved only in July 1414, in Željezno (lat. *Kismartonium*, hung. *Kis-Marton*, ger. *Eisenstadt*) in Gradišće (ger. *Burgenland*).³⁶ In 1417



Fig. 1. The family coat-of-arms of Counts Karlo/Charles II and Ivan II Grof, as members of the Dragon Order.

the king appointed Count Charles as a permanent member of the royal supreme court.³⁷ Despite his old age, Count Charles remained rather active and engaged in public matters until his death. At the beginning of November 1418 he was regulating the agrarian relations at the estate of Čeklis,³⁸ while at the beginning of 1422 the *ispán* of Bratislava Stephen Rozgony petitioned him for clarifications regarding the borders of certain estates.³⁹ In September 1422 Charles was escorting King Sigismund who travelled to the Reichstag of the Holy Roman Empire in Nuremberg, as recorded in the *Memories of Eberhard Windecke*.⁴⁰ Count Charles II most probably died at the end of 1422, at his castle on the mount Várdomb in the town of Čeklis.

Count Charles married twice: firstly with Margaret, and after her death with Magdalena Rohonc (von Rechnitz).⁴¹ His first wife was of unknown origin. However, she was most probably

³⁰ Engel, Pál: Krbavski knezovi u Ugarskoj, p. 75.

³¹ CDH 10/4, p. 333.

³² MOL DF 239443.

³³ MOL DL 10527; Šišić, Ferdo: Vojvoda Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić i njegovo doba (1348–1416). Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1902, p. 224; Filipović, Emir: Viteške svečanosti u Budimu 1412. godine i učešće bosanskih predstavnika. In: Spomenica Marka Šunjića (1927–1998). Ed.: Dubravko Lovrenović. Sarajevo: Filozofski fakultet u Sarajevu, 2010, pp. 296–301.

³⁴ MOL DL 10527; MOL DL 10005; MOL DL 10241.

³⁵ Wenzel, Gusztáv: Stibor vajda. Életrajzi tanulmány. Budapest: Eggenberger-Féle Akad. Könyvkereskedés, 1874, nr. 115, pp. 158–159.

³⁶ MOL DL 10005; MOL DL 10241.

³⁷ DRMH, p. 401; ENGEL, Pál: Krbavski knezovi u Ugarskoj, p. 78.

³⁸ MOL DL 43422.

³⁹ MOL DF 226223.

⁴⁰ Engel, Pál: Krbavski knezovi u Ugarskoj, p. 78.

⁴¹ Botica, Ivan: Krbavski knezovi u srednjem vijeku, p. 193.

a relative of his, since Pope Innocent VII issued a special license for this marriage, in November 1404.42 Charles had three sons with Margaret: Juraj/George III, Nikola/Nicholas III, and Ivanka. Margaret probably died before Charles's return from serving as ban in Croatia. Charles later married Magdalena, the daughter of Andreas Rohonc from Burgenland.43 It is not known what happened to her after Charles's death. The year before Charles died, she and her brothers and sisters rented from the lords of Ludbreg some four possessions in Križevci, in medieval Slavonia.44 In this document Charles is explicitly mentioned as the count of Čeklis. It is possible, although far from sure, that one distinguished Hungarian and Croatian magnate in the 1430s and 1440s named Ivanka was, in fact, their son. Even if it was not the case, Ivanka was almost surely born in today's Slovakia, because his name does not have a Croatian form. It is also interesting to notice that there is a town called Ivanka near Čeklis, which was perhaps under Count Charles's rule once.

One might conclude that Charles II Kurjaković, Count of Krbava and Lord of Čeklis, figured amongst the most prominent personalities of King Sigismund's era. Despite that, he was until now practically unknown in Slovakia's history.45 Even less is known about his cousin Ivan II Grof, who was a high court dignitary. Examples of Ivan being a royal representative testify to his high status in court circles.46 Ivan also participated in King Sigismund's imperial crowning in Aachen, together with his son George III.47

The death of Count Charles II had a strong impact on the whole Krbavski clan. Namely, Charles' sons did not return to Croatia but instead remained in Hungary. It seems that perhaps only Count Butko's son Franko, Charles' relative, constantly commuted between his native Krbava region and Hungary. Franko probably entered in Charles's service immediately upon his father's

death, in 1402. It seems that Count Charles treated Franko and his brother Petar/Peter well, probably because Butko, Charles's uncle and father of the two brothers, persuaded Count Charles earlier at the right moment to move northwards and join the king's entourage.48 It is most probable that Franko lived for some time on the Čeklis estate. It would be almost impossible that without Count Charles's blessings Franko would appear among the 25 magnates and royal nobles in King Sigismund's closest entourage, while the latter was travelling to the Council of Constance, in February 1415.49 Franko married late and had children. However, they were mentioned only as newborn babies and never again. Count Franko most probably returned to Croatia after Count Charles's death, at the end of 1422. Towards the end of his life he entered the service of the Cillei (Celjski) counts.⁵⁰ In doing that, he followed the policy of his clan formulated in Hungary by Charles's sons, George III and Ivanka.⁵¹

Counts George III and Ivanka on the other hand, together with their brother Nicholas III, left Čeklis at the end of 1422. According to the contract from 1393, the Ceklis estate was returned to the king.⁵² However, the counts did not return to Croatia. It is unknown where they lived after that. The fate of Count Charles's second wife Magdalena also remains unknown. Perhaps she continued to live in Slovakia, due to the fact that Charles possessed a house in Bratislava.⁵³ However, Charles's sons did not have to worry, at least while Sigismund was still alive. Their descent provided them enough protection.

Count Charles's death coincided with the formation of strong territorial dukedoms of the Cillei (Celjski), Frankapani, Talovci, Hunyadi, etc.⁵⁴ The Kurjakovići remained on the side of blood relatives and political allies of the court. Therefore, Count George III and his brothers Nicholas III and Ivanka, Count Franko and all the relatives in Krbava

⁴² ZsO 2, nr. 3497.

⁴³ MOL DL 43422.

⁴⁴ ZsO 8, nr 1161.

⁴⁵ Bernolákovo: História obce, http://www.bernolakovo.sk/infoobec/historia.htm, 18. 04. 2011 - On the web-page of the town of Bernolákovo (Čeklis), in the overview of the town's history, one cannot find even a single note about Charles II, who governed it between 1393 and 1422 and eventually died there.

⁴⁶ ZsO 3, nr. 1006, nr. 1422; MOL DL 86788

⁴⁷ Engel, Pál: Krbavski knezovi u Ugarskoj, p. 79.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, p. 77.

⁴⁹ CDH 10/8, p. 269; Klaić, Vjekoslav: Povijest Hrvata od najstarijih vremena do svršetka XIX stoljeća, vol. 3. Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1982, p. 95.

⁵⁰ Botica, Ivan: Krbavski knezovi u srednjem vijeku, p. 206.

⁵¹ Engel, Pál: Krbavski knezovi u Ugarskoj, p. 79.

⁵² ZsO 1, nr. 2915; A Pécz nemzetség Apponyi, nr. 107, pp. 235–236.

⁵³ MOL DF 239443.

⁵⁴ Raukar, Tomislav: *Hrvatsko srednjovjekovlje – prostor, ljudi, ideje*. Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1997, р. 221.

supported Queen Barbara, and after Sigismund's death the policy of Barbara's daughter Elizabeth, her husband Albert of Habsburg and their son Ladislas V the Posthumous. Count Charles's oldest son George III was the first one who sided with the Cillei counts. He met Herman and Frederick of Cillei at the court, while his father Charles was still alive. As George was living in Central Europe almost from his birth, his interests lied primarily there. Therefore, the Cillei were much closer to him then the Croatian leaders of the time, the Frankapani counts, with which several George's relatives in Croatia had closer connections.

In July 1426, Count George III became the queen's special envoy in solving the territorial disputes on the Zechy estate.⁵⁵ In January 1430, Queen Barbara bestowed him with the title of *comes* of Zvolen county, in today's central Slovakia.⁵⁶ From that moment until his death in 1439, Count George III lived in Zvolen Castle.⁵⁷ He was married to Agata, possibly the daughter of Pavao/Paul Zrinski, who was mentioned in 1442 as a widow. George had two sons with her – Paul III and Nicholas V. It is interesting to mention that Paul later returned to Croatia, but his grandsons came back to Slovakia at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

The arrival of Count George III in Zvolen coincided with the beginning of a dispute between Herman of Cillei and Nicholas Frankapan. It is quite possible that the Krbavski in Croatia sided with the Cillei thanks to the influence of Count George and his brothers. Namely, George's youngest brother Ivanka became the master of the queen's court (magister curiae). ⁵⁸ It is, therefore, possible that even the noble alliance Fraternitas Croatorum, concluded in 1430 under the leadership of the count of Cetina, Ivaniš Nelipčić, and of the counts of Krbava, Charles III and Thomas II, in Knin, ⁵⁹ perceived by

the Venetians as the most important city in Croatia (caput et principalis locus Croatiae), 60 had been organized with the support of Charles's powerful sons in Hungary, who were the queen's men. While enumerating the members of the above-mentioned alliance, the brothers from Krbava explicitly stated that they also represented their relatives Ivanka, George III, Nicholas III and Franko, who do not live in Croatia. 61 This noble alliance reflected the political dissatisfaction of the Croatian nobility with the oligarchic ascent of Count Nicholas Frankapan in Croatia. 62 Curbing the power of the Frankapani, the alliance was very useful for King Sigismund, and for the Cillei counts as well.

However, the sons and particularly grandsons of the lord of Čeklis, Charles II Krbavski, loosened with time their ties with Krbava. In the meantime, Count Nicholas III died. The youngest Ivanka, in February 1434, acted as the queen's prosecutor at the court in Buda against the county of Sopron, which did not send the queen's tricesima regularly.63 A year later, in June 1435, Ivanka and his brother George III obtained from the king, for 2000 guldens, the castle of Tátika near Keszthely, on Lake Balaton.64 Due to the fact that the castle was located in Zala county, where the Cillei had significant influence, it is highly probable that Charles's sons obtained it in pledge with the former's recommendation and blessing. In 1437, Count Franko was mentioned as castellan of the Cillei counts in Cakovec (today in Croatia), also in Zala county.65 However, the unity between Count Charles's sons, George III and Ivanka, was shortly interrupted due to the chain of events caused by King Sigismund's death.

In the struggle for the throne between Barbara of Cillei and Elizabeth of Habsburg, after the death of King Sigismund in 1437,666 the

⁵⁵ Codex diplomaticus dominus senioris comitum Zichy de Zich et Vásonkeő. A zichi és vásonkeői gróf Zichy-család idósb ág anak okmánytára (deinde CD Zichy), vol. 8. Ed.: Iván Nagy – Ernő Kammerer, – Pál Lukacsics. Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1895, nr. 189, pp. 296–302.

⁵⁶ ENGEL, Pál: Krbavski knezovi u Ugarskoj, p. 79.

⁵⁷ See http://eng.zvolen.eu/history.phtml?id3=5227, 01. 04. 2010 –The castle was later labeled as "deserted", because the Hunyadi party warriors desolated it during the dynastic clashes.

⁵⁸ Engel, Pál: Krbavski knezovi u Ugarskoj, p. 79.

⁵⁹ Karbić, Damir: The Šubići of Bribir. A Case Study of a Croatian Medieval Kindred, pp. 110–111.

⁶⁰ Klaić, Vjekoslav: Povijest Hrvata od najstarijih vremena do svršetka XIX stoljeća, vol. 3, p. 324.

⁶¹ MOL DL 38517: "(...) item domini Karulus et Thomas comites Corbauie in suis et aliorum fratrum suorum comitum Corbauie personis videlizet comițis Iwankonis, comitis Georgii, comitis Nicolai et comitis Frankonis necnon ceteri singuli et uniuersi nobiles."

⁶² Karbić, Damir: The Šubići of Bribir. A Case Study of a Croatian Medieval Kindred, pp. 110–111; Вотіса, Ivan: Krbavski knezovi и srednjem vijeku, pp. 201–203.

⁶³ MOL DL 15681.

⁶⁴ MOL DF 200436.

⁶⁵ BIZJAK, Matjaž – Preinfalk, Miha: *Turjaška knjiga listin. Dokumenti 15. stoletja*, vol. 2. Ljubljana: Zgodovinski inštitut Milka Kosa – ZRC SAZU, 2009, nr. 188, nr. 278, nr. 189, pp. 279–280.

⁶⁶ ENGEL, Pál: Magyarország a középkor végén. Digitális térkép és adatbázis a középkori Magyar Királyság településeiről. PC CD-ROM. Budapest: Arcanum Adátbázis, 2001, , pp. 280–281; Klaić, Vjekoslav: Povijest Hrvata od najstarijih vremena do svršetka XIX stoljeća, vol. 3, pp. 177–178.

Kurjakovići split in two. The older son of Count Charles, George III, sided with Barbara, while younger Ivanka supported Elizabeth. Ivanka already from the summer of 1436 did not hold the office of the queen's magister curiae.⁶⁷ After Sigismund's death he immediately sided with Elizabeth, who returned to him his former status.68 His influence at Elizabeth's court was significant, and he appeared repeatedly as relator in her autographs.⁶⁹ Queen Elizabeth also rewarded him with the castle of Solymár, in the Pilis county near Pest.70 George was mentioned for the last time in March 1439.71 With his unknown wife he had a son who was a minor, Grgur V. The latter kept his father's allegiances, siding with Elizabeth and her son Ladislas V the Posthumous.

On the other side, Ivanka's older brother and the comes of Zvolen, George III Krbavski, sided with Queen Barbara, becoming her magister curiae immediately after the queen's split with Elizabeth,



Fig. 2. The seal of the lords of Mrsinje, counts Petar/Peter II and George V of Krbava.

inheriting his brother's former status.72 At the beginning of November 1439 he was a member of her narrowest entourage in Visegrád, when she made peace with her daughter and delivered her the crown of St. Stephen.73 Soon afterwards Count George died.74 His sons, counts Nicholas V and Paul III, followed the political path of the new queen and her successor, Ladislas V. In fact, all the Krbavski in Hungary sided from the 1440s onwards with Queen Elizabeth.75 Therefore, during the civil war from 1440 till 1442 between the supporters of Elizabeth and of the newly crowned king, Wladislaus I Jagiello (1440-1444),76 the Krbavski were the queen's soldiers in Zvolen county.77 Count George's sons lived with their mother Agatha, probably in the vicinity of Zvolen, helping the troops of Jan Jiskra (Ivan Jiškra) who were defending the counties of Spiš and Zvolen.78 One source mentions that Agatha and her sons held Dobrá Niva, in the vicinity of Zvolen.⁷⁹ This castle belonged to the queen, and Elizabeth later consigned it to Agatha and her sons. Its captain in September 1441 was Jakov Horvat, perhaps originating from the county of Krbava, who was probably Count George's servant even from before.80 The above-mentioned castle remained in the hands of Nicholas V until 1447, when Jan Jiskra took it over.81 Count Nicholas V was mentioned as a Hungarian landowner for the last time in 1450.82

After the loss of Dobrá Niva, it seems that Paul III went back to Croatia. From that time onwards he was living in the Krbava county, in Mrsinj, and died there before 1468.83 He left for Croatia with his son, Count Grgur VII, who was already married by then. In later charters written in Croatian, in Glagolitic script, Paul's grandson Nicholas VI's name was repeatedly mentioned in its northern language form, as Miklavuš. At the beginning of March 1489, Nicholas VI and his

⁶⁷ CDH 10/7, p. 364.

⁶⁸ ENGEL, Pál: Krbavski knezovi u Ugarskoj, p. 79.

⁶⁹ MOL DL 15681; Codex diplomaticus patrius (deinde CDP), 8 vol. Ed.: Imre Nagy et al. Budapestini: Typis Alexsandri Kocsi, 1865-1891, hic vol. 8, nr. 180; MOL DL 13317; MOL DL 13301.

⁷⁰ Engel, Pál: Krbavski knezovi u Ugarskoj, p. 79.

⁷¹ MOL DL 13301.

⁷² CDH 11, p. 147; MOL DL 13457.

⁷³ MOL DL 13457.

⁷⁴ Engel, Pál: Korbáviai grófok, György (1414–1439).

⁷⁵ IDEM: Krbavski knezovi и Ugarskoj, p. 79.

⁷⁶ KLAIĆ, Vjekoslav: Povijest Hrvata od najstarijih vremena do svršetka XIX stoljeća, vol. 3, pp. 198–202; Engel, Pál: Magyarország a középkor végén, pp. 280-281.

⁷⁷ ENGEL, Pál: Krbavski knezovi u Ugarskoj, p. 79.

⁷⁸ IDEM: Magyarország a középkor végén, p. 282.

⁷⁹ MOL DL 254187.

⁸⁰ MOL DL 249795.

⁸¹ CD Zichy 9, p. 169.

⁸² MOL DL 252476.

⁸³ MOL DL 33310.

sons Petar/Peter II and George V donated their watermill near Rog, on the river Krka, and adjacent peasant plots to Franjo Utišenić.84 This charter is sealed with an impressive family seal, with the engraved inscription in Croatian Glagolitic PETR I JURI KNZI KRBAVSKI (Fig. 2 – see the previous page).85 It is possible that this marked the beginning of the selling and donating of their lands in the old country, due to the overall insecurity in Croatia, Ottoman raids and King Matthias's negative attitude towards their clan. It seems that they have already then started to think about going back to Slovakia.86 Namely, in July 1504 this whole branch of the clan was testified in Slovakia, in Slovenská Ľupča and Brezno where George V was allegedly a local lord.87 It is still not known whether Count George left any descendants in today's Slovakia. The same George soon afterwards, as a Croatian magnate, participated in the Hungarian Diet which decided that only a Hungarian born king could ascend to the throne.88 George was also a royal ambassador on various occasions, for example in 1504 to the Ottomans,89 or in 1507 to Venice.90 Therefore, it is highly probable that he did not remain for long on his estate in Slovakia.

Count Ivanka's son, Grgur V, was also important for Slovak history. During the civil war, between 1440 and 1442, he moved from today's western Hungary to today's Slovakia. He was a firm supporter of Queen Elizabeth and Ladislas V during the war, which was particularly intense around Bratislava. Some fifteen years after the war, King Ladislas once mentioned that Grgur V participated in his and his mother's liberation from captivity. Therefore, the queen rewarded Grgur, at the end of 1441 he became captain of the town of Slovenská Ľupča, on the Hron river, east of Banská Bystrica. Count Grgur received in mortgage, for 10 000 golden florins, all the possessions belonging to Ľupča, including the villages of:

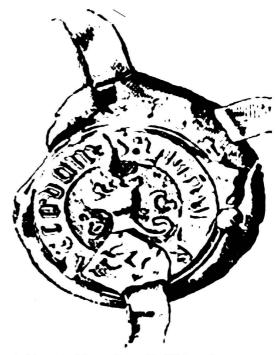


Fig. 3. The seal of Count Grgur V of Krbava, from the Hungarian Diet in 1447.

Ponykowa, Tergorch, Molcze, Dubrawitz, Salkowawaz, Solcza, Podkonycze, Luchetyn, Pryhod, Meybradye, Brusno, Villa S. Andree, Rastoka, Nymska Wag, Sagronye, Dubrowa, Gesen, Prodayna, Lamastye, Lyhota regis, Lyhota Petri, Lopye, Sthawnicze, Hrwnecz, and Hedel. Four years later, in September 1445, Count Grgur gave to his faithful castellan George Hototin a possession called Dubravice. George's second name Hototin might indicate his descent from the region of Hotuča, in Krbava county. Count Grgur confirmed the said donation with his seal, carrying the inscription S. GREGORII CO. CORBAV. on it. The seal, among other elements, contained a figure of a goose, symbol of the Kurjakovići Krbavski.

Grgur V Krbavski has been married to Sofia Neczpály, a noble woman from Turiec county,

⁸⁴ Hrvatski spomenici, vol. 1 (od godine 1100-1499). Ed.: Đuro Šurmin. Zagreb: JAZU, 1898, nr. 226, pp. 337–338: "Mi knez Miklovuš i knez Petar i knez Juraj i knez Mikula, knezi krbavski i veće (...)".

⁸⁵ Pantelić, Marija: Glagoljski kodeksi Bartola Krbavca. In: Radovi Staroslavenskog instituta, a. 5, 1964, p. 11.

⁸⁶ GRGIN, Borislav: Počeci rasapa. Kralj Matijaš Korvin i srednjovjekovna Hrvatska. Zagreb: Ibis grafika, 2002, pp. 94–97, 123–125; JURKOVIĆ, Ivan: Turska opasnost i hrvatski velikaši: knez Bernardin Frankapan i njegovo doba. In: Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti, a. 17, 2000, p. 72.

⁸⁷ MOL DL 30864.

⁸⁸ Klaić, Vjekoslav: Povijest Hrvata od najstarijih vremena do svršetka XIX stoljeća, vol. 4, p. 270.

⁸⁹ I diari di Marino Sanuto, vol. 5. Ed.: Rinaldo Fulin – Federico Stefani – Niccolo Barozzi – Guglielmo Berchet – Marco Allegri. Venezia: La R. deputazione veneta di storia patria, 1881, pp. 587, 602, 740–741.

⁹⁰ Ibidem, vol. 6, pp. 542, 545; vol. 10, p. 268.

⁹¹ Klaić, Vjekoslav: Povijest Hrvata od najstarijih vremena do svršetka XIX stoljeća, vol. 3, p. 218.

⁹² MOL DL 30859.

⁹³ MOL DL 30857.

⁹⁴ CDP 8, nr. 348.

⁹⁵ Ibidem: "Hártyán, hártyaszalagon függő ép pecséttel, mely sárga viasz fészekben vörös viaszba van nyomva. Körirata: S. GREGORII CO. CORBAV. A pecséten jobbra dûlt paizs, alsó felében három csík, ezek tetején álló hattyú; a paizs felett csőrsisak, a sisakdísz ismét hattyú."

whose grandfather George and father Ladislas fought against the Hussites in King Sigismund's army. She and Count Grgur had a son named Kristof/Christopher. In summer of 1445, Grgur was one of the envoys who petitioned the duke of Austria and German king Frederick to let young Ladislas V return to the Hungarian-Croatian Kingdom.⁹⁷ Being one of the most distinguished magnates, Grgur probably participated in all Hungarian diets of that period. For example, together with his father-in-law he participated in the diet of September 1447, during which Ladislas Garai (Gorjanski), Ban of Machva (Mačva), was elected count palatine.98 On that occasion, Grgur and Ladislas sealed a charter through which John Hunyadi took over the command of Buda Castle (Fig. 3).99 It is interesting to note that on that occasion Count Grgur, besides his fellow Croatian magnate Sigismund Frankapan, was listed as a deputy from Slavonia. 100

According to extant sources, Count Grgur was living in Slovenská Ľupča until approximately 1460.101 It is not known whether he stayed on the side of Jan Jiskra even after 1447, when the latter went on a collision course with John Hunyadi. 102 However, contrary to Jiskra, Grgur later sided with

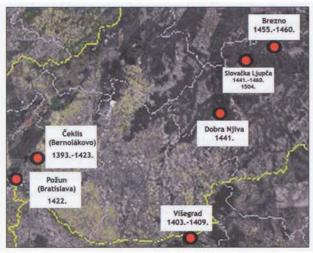


Fig. 4. The estates and offices of the Kurjakovići Krbavski counts in the present-day Slovakia and northern Hungary.

King Ladislas V.103 Consequently, the young king rewarded Grgur, due to his former merits, at the beginning of 1455, with the lifelong possession of Slovenská Ľupča and Brezno, comprising 22 villages and customs rights on the borders of those towns and villages, in Zvolen county. 104 The overall value of Count Grgur's estates east of Banská Bystrica, around the Hron river, was estimated at 10000 golden florins, which was still pledged. On this occasion, the king emphasized that Count Grgur rebuilt and repaired at his own expenses the walls of Slovenská Ľupča and numerous buildings there that were almost completely desolated after the strong earthquake that struck the region. The king further announced that he would in due time, after Count Grgur's death, claim all those possessions for himself. However, Grgur's successors would have the right to be compensated for it, in the amount of the aforementioned 10 000 golden florins.

After Count Grgur's death, around 1460, King Matthias Corvinus (1458-1490) ordered that Slovenská Ľupča be returned to him. However, there was some resistance, because Grgur's widow Sofia and her minor son Christopher did not obtain guarantees for the above-mentioned sum of monev. The indirect confirmation for that is a king's donation for Ladislas from Dolná Mičiná, near Banská Bystrica. King Matthias donated to him one half of the neighboring possession Môlča, because of his participation in capturing Slovenská Ľupča.¹⁰⁵ Count Grgur's son Christopher, as recorded in May 1461, was then still a boy. 106

Count Christopher seemed to be still alive at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Perhaps during that period he recommended to his relatives from Krbava to buy his former estate in Slovakia. Namely, Nicholas VI and his son George V became, in July 1504, the owners of Slovenská Ľupča and Brezno with the adjacent villages, in Zvolen county. 107 In such a way the descendants of the once mighty Charles II returned to Slovakia. Their lives there and the life of Christopher cannot be reconstructed, for the time being. If

⁹⁶ ENGEL, Pál: Neczpály de Neczpál and Bethlen de Iktár families, http://genealogy.euweb.cz/hung/neczpaly.html, 19. 11. 2010.

⁹⁷ Klaić, Vjekoslav: Povijest Hrvata od najstarijih vremena do svršetka XIX stoljeća, vol. 3, pp. 245–246.

⁹⁸ Ibidem, p. 261.

⁹⁹ RADVÁNSZKY, Bela – ZÁVODSZKY, Lajos: A Héderváry-család oklevéltára, vol. 1. Budapest: Kiada a Magyar tudományos academia, 1909, nr. 189, pp. 251-255.

¹⁰⁰ Klaić, Vjekoslav: Povijest Hrvata od najstarijih vremena do svršetka XIX stoljeća, vol. 3, p. 261.

¹⁰¹ Engel, Pál: Magyaroszág világi arhontológiája, p. 361.

¹⁰² Klaić, Vjekoslav: Povijest Hrvata od najstarijih vremena do svršetka XIX stoljeća, vol. 3, pp. 278–281; Engel, Pál: Magyarország a középkor végén, pp. 290-291.

¹⁰³ ENGEL, Pál: Magyarország a középkor végén, pp. 288–295.

¹⁰⁴ MOL DL 30859.

¹⁰⁵ MOL DL 63963.

¹⁰⁶ MOL DL 63200.

¹⁰⁷ MOL DL 30864.

there were to appear any hint that any of them left male heirs behind, then Ivan IV Karlović could no longer be considered the last member of the Kurjakovići clan. For the time being, everything we know points to the fact that with Karlović's death, in 1531, the Kurjakovići Krbavski became extinct in the male line. In the end, one might conclude that the counts of Krbava, among all the Croatian magnates, had the strongest impact on today's Slovakia and its history (Fig. 4 – see the previous page). Through their clan, the two countries and histories were connected for at least one century and a half.

¹⁰⁸ Мігнік, Ivan: Zmajski Red u Hrvatskoj i Ugarskoj Heraldici. In: *Grb i Zastava*, a. 3, 2009, nr. 5, p. 6.

¹⁰⁹ MOL DL 82044; According to mould done by B. Fučić.

¹¹⁰ RADVÁNSZKY, Bela – ZÁVODSZKY, Lajos: A Héderváry-család oklevéltára, nr. 189, p. 255.

¹¹¹ We thank to our colleague Hrvoje Kekez for helping us to draw the maps. We used Google Maps as a basis for this particular map.

Slovakia and Croatia Vol. I



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