

JOHN HUNYADI, DEFENDER OF THE SOUTHERN BORDERS OF THE MEDIEVAL KINGDOM OF HUNGARY

*István Petrovics**

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John Hunyadi (Hunyadi János), born around 1400, began his career as a simple knight. His father, Woyk (Voicu) had taken refuge from Walachia in Hungary. Here, he became a knight of the royal court. For his meritorious deeds, he was granted in 1409 by King Sigismund (Zsigmond) of Luxemburg the borough of Hunedoara (Vajdahunyad, Hunyadvár), which, together with its estates, became the cradle of the Hunyadi family.¹

As a young man John Hunyadi was in the service of several great lords. One of them was the ban of Mačva (Macsó), Stephen (István) Újlaki, the older brother of Nicholas (Miklós), John's later closest friend and political partner. After Stephen's death, Hunyadi entered King Sigismund's service and accompanied him to Italy and Bohemia where he learned the latest techniques of fifteenth-century warfare. After his return to Hungary, we find him in the southern parts of the realm, that was menaced by the Ottoman Turks. John Hunyadi, on behalf of Franko of Talovac (Tallóci Frank), ban of Severin

* University of Szeged, Faculty of Arts, department of Medieval and Early Modern History, e-mail: petrovic@febert.hu.

¹ Domokos Kosáry, *Bevezetés a magyar történelem forrásaiba és irodalmába*, I, Budapest, 1951, p. 162. See also Lajos Elekes, *Hunyadi*, Budapest 1952; Péter E. Kovács, *A Hunyadi-család*, in Gyula Rázsó, László V. Molnár, eds., *Hunyadi Mátyás. Emlékkönyv Mátyás király halálának 500. évfordulójára*, Budapest, 1990, p. 29-51. The most recent work on John Hunyadi is written by Radu Lupescu. Cf. Radu Lupescu, *Hunyadi János alakja a magyar és a román történetírásban*, in *Századok*, 139, 2005, p. 385-420. For the interpretation of the charter of donation from 1409 see Radu Lupescu, *Domeniul cetății Hunedoara în timpul Hunedorenilor*, in *MT*, 5-6, 2001-2002, p. 7-34.

(Szörény), fought here so successfully, that Sigismund's successor, King Albert of Habsburg appointed him ban of Severin.²

His career received a major impetus by the outbreak of civil war after King Albert's death in 1439. The "royal party" wanted to have Queen Elizabeth's unborn child, the future Ladislaus (László) V crowned. The "national party" offered the crown to the Polish king Wladislas (Władysław, Ulászló) III of Jagiełło who reigned over Hungary as Wladislas I (1440-1444). John Hunyadi took Wladislas's side. In early 1441, together with Nicholas Újlaki, he defeated the queen's army at Báticasék and pacified first the southern parts of the realm and the lands east of the Tisa (Tisza, Theiss), held by the adversaries of King Wladislas.

Hunyadi and Újlaki were jointly appointed voivodes of Transylvania in 1441. Timișoara (Temesvár), Beograd (Nándorfehérvár, Belgrade) as well as the entire southern defence system were entrusted by Wladislas to them. Újlaki focussed his power on the lands west of the Tisa, and he established his residence in Újlak (today Ilok in Croatia), while Hunyadi concentrated his power base on the territories east of the Tisa. The possessions obtained *pro honore* by Hunyadi served as the basis of his future power.³

In his *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, John (János) Thuróczy wrote about Hunyadi:

*In those times, John Hunyadi shined in his glory as voivode of Transylvania and as ban of Severin, he was also appointed count of Timiș and the situation made that he became captain of the fortress of Belgrade as well.*⁴

² Pál Engel, *Hunyadi János pályakezdése*, in *Nobilimea românească din Transilvania (Az erdélyi román nemesség)*, ed. Marius Diaconescu, Satu Mare, 1997, p. 91-109. See also P. Engel, *Honor vár, ispánság. Válogatott*, ed. Enikő Csukovits, Budapest, 2003. p. 512-526.

³ P. Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája. 1301-1457*, I, Budapest, 1996, p. 15, 31, 33-34, 194, 205, 374, 441-442; II, p. 103, 250; András Kubinyi, *A kaposújtvári uradalom és a Somogy megyei familiárisok szerepe Újlaki Miklós birtokpolitikájában (Adatok a XV. századi feudális nagybirtok hatalmi politikájához)*, in *Somogy Megye Múltjából*, 4, 1973, p. 5-10; P. Engel, Gyula Kristó, András Kubinyi, *Magyarország története 1301-1526*, Budapest, 1998, p. 201.

⁴ Johannes de Thurocz, *Chronica Hungarorum*, I. Textus, eds. Elisabeth Galántai, Julius Kristó, Budapest, 1985, p. 243. Thuróczy's chronicle was translated into Hungarian by

Following Thuróczy's lines, Antonio Bonfini further noted in his *Rerum Ungaricarum Decades*:

*As a reward for his loyalty and virtue, for his heroic deeds, aside from the province of Transylvania where he exercised full power, he earned the title of the captain of Severin and Timișoara. These places, however, were in the throat of the Turks and he, for halting the enemy, was appointed captain of the Lower Parts of Hungary.*⁵

As the quotations above show, Hunyadi's offices are also recorded by narrative sources, though they all fail to mention the beginnings of his activity in these offices. In this respect, most of the relevant data are provided by charters and interpreted by archontology.⁶ Our present analysis focuses on Hunyadi's administrative activity connected with the Banate of Severin and the counties located next to the southwestern parts of Transylvania.

The Banate of Severin, founded by King Béla IV in 1227, having undergone a difficult period in the late 1200s, was reorganized by Charles I (Charles Robert) of Anjou in 1335 and King Sigismund of Luxemburg in 1427. Designated originally for Oltenia (the western part of future Wallachia), the banate quickly expanded into the areas on the upper course of River Timiș and to the district of Hățeg populated by Romanians. Hățeg, however, was soon detached from the territory of the banate and under the control of a Hungarian

János Horváth. Cf. Thuróczy János, *A magyarok krónikája*, Budapest, 1978. The relevant part is on p. 382.

⁵ Antonius de Bonfinis, *Rerum Ungaricarum Decades IV et dimidia*, eds. Fögel Josephus, Iványi Béla, Juhász Ladislaus. (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Medii Recentisque Aevorum), Budapest, 1936-1941. Bonfini's work was translated into Hungarian by Péter Kulcsár. Cf. Antonio Bonfini, *A magyar történelem tizedei*, Budapest, 1995. The relevant part is on p. 592. Franz Grisellini also wrote about John Hunyadi's offices. Cf. Franz Grisellini, *Versuch einer natürlichen und politischen Geschichte des Temeswarer Banats in Briefen an Standepersonen und Gelehrte*, 2 vols., Vienna, 1780, Grisellini's work was translated into Romanian by Costin Feneșan. Cf. Costin Feneșan, *Încercare de istorie politică și naturală a Banatului Timișoarei*, Timișoara, 1982. Hunyadi's offices are mentioned on p. 45.

⁶ P. Engel, *Archontológia*, I, p. 15, 30, 33-34, 194, 205, 374, 441; II, p. 103, 250; See also P. Engel, *Mire jó az archontológia?*, in *História*, 16, 1994, no. 3, p. 8-9; Idem, *Archontológia*, in *A történelem segédtudományai*, ed. Iván Bertényi, Budapest, 1998, p. 29-36.

castellan became an independent Romanian district. The remaining territory of the banate was split into two parts after King Louis (Lajos) I of Anjou had acknowledged the voivodes of Walachia also as bans of Severin in the second half of the fourteenth century.

Henceforth, the privileged districts of the Romanians living in the upper course of River Timiș belonged to the Kingdom of Hungary and were, in fact, further divided up between two counties. The Romanian districts of Sebeș (Sebes), Lugoj (Lugos), Mehadia (Miháld), Almăj (Almás/Halmas) and Comiat (Komját/Komjáti) belonged to the county of Timiș, which had significantly increased its territory prior to the early 1500s. The Romanian districts of Bârzovia (Borzafő), Carașova (Krassófü/Kövesd) and Ilidia (Illyéd) were included in the territory of the county of Caraș (Krassó). The bans of Severin, whose office was definitely of military nature and connected with a judicial power, and the counts of Timiș were also involved, in a legal sense, in the administration of these districts.

The Banate of Severin, particularly exposed to Ottoman attacks, and whose borders were rather indefinite, had a very special position. From the period between 1335 and 1435 we know of only 34 years when a ban headed Severin. In times when the seat of the ban was vacant (see above and from the later period e.g. 1446, 1456, 1464, 1465, 1468, 1471) the estates of the banate were managed from the fortress of Timișoara, and, interestingly enough, the dignity of the ban was usually indicated on the lists of the office-holders of the realm.⁷

For John Hunyadi, too, the Banate of Severin was of great importance. He held the office of the ban of Severin from 1439 to 1446, but, in fact, he headed the banate even in the period between 1446 and 1456, when the seat of the ban was practically vacant. In the latter period Hunyadi governed the Banate of Severin through his own men: Mihály and Balázs Csornai (Michael et Blasius de Chorna), and Péter Dancs Sebesi (Petrus Dancz de Sebes), who were, as a matter of fact, deputy bans of Severin. Concerning the significance of the bans of Severin, two additional facts deserve special attention. Firstly,

⁷ P. Engel, *Archontológia*, I, p. 32-34; László Makkai, *Szörényi bánság*, in *Korai magyar történeti lexikon (9-14. század)*, eds. Gyula Kristó, Pál Engel and Ferenc Makk, Budapest, 1994, p. 657; István Petrovics, *Módszertani problémák a középkori Temesvár történetének kutatása kapcsán*, in *Várostörténet, helytörténet. Elmélet és módszertan*, in *Tanulmányok Pécs történetéből*, XIV, ed. József Vonyó, Pécs, 2003, p. 143-145.

between 1446 and 1456 the dignity of the ban of Severin is missing from the lists of Hungarian office-holders, and secondly that in 1439 John Hunyadi's brother, John the Younger also appeared in the sources as ban of Severin.⁸

Between the 1030s and the mid-sixteenth century the area bordered by the south-eastern part of the Great Hungarian Plain (Nagy Alföld), the rivers Mureş (Maros), Tisa (Tisza) and the Lower-Danube (Al-Duna) and the Poiana Rusca Mountains (Munții Poiana Ruscăi), constituted an organic part of the Kingdom of Hungary. This area, i.e. the Danube-Tisa-Mureş region, in all probability, came under the rule of the first Hungarian king, Saint Stephen, in 1028, when the king's military leader, Csanád subdued Ajtony, then lord of this region. This change of rule allowed the spread of Latin Christianity in the region that had previously belonged to Ajtony and which, through his person, had had contacts with the Greek Orthodox Church. It also permitted the introduction of the county system here, which had a past of several decades in the western part of the Danube-Basin. Around Marosvár (or Csanádvár, as it was named from this time on), a bishopric (*diocesis*) was organized, whose borders coincided with those of the Danube-Tisa-Mureş region. Certain territories to the north of the River Mureş also belonged to the bishopric of Csanád/Cenad (*diocesis Chanadiensis*) since the *archidiaconatus Ultramorisensis* and a part of the *archidiaconatus Orodienensis* were also included in the bishopric of Csanád. Saint Gerard (Gellért), an Italian murdered by the mob during the pagan uprising in 1046, had become the first bishop of Csanád in 1030. Concerning the secular administration, it seems very probable that originally one huge county, the county of Csanád/Cenad, was organized on the former territory of Ajtony, and this coincided in size with the bishopric of Csanád/Cenad. However, this immense county eventually broke up into several smaller counties, in all probability in the twelfth century. The county of Kovin (Keve) became independent first, followed (in parallel with the expansion of the state system towards the south and the east) by the counties of Arad, Timiş (Temes), Caraş (Krassó) and finally Torontál. The last phase, i.e. the formation of the county of Torontál took place relatively late: the earliest surviving document mentioning the existence of this county dates from 1326. Roughly between the mid-fourteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries, therefore, the following counties existed in the Danube-Tisa-Mureş region: Kovin, Caraş, Timiş, Torontál, and

⁸ P. Engel, *Archontológia*, I, p. 32-34; P. Engel, *Archontológia*, II, p. 54-55.

the southern parts of the counties of Arad and Cenad which lay on the left bank of the River Mureş. By the mid-sixteenth century, however, all these counties had ceased to function in consequence of the victorious advance of the Ottoman Turks, who destroyed the mediaeval Kingdom of Hungary.⁹

The royal county, founded in the twelfth century and named Temes/Timiş, had become by the early 1300s a noble county, which was the self-governing corporation of the local nobility. Timiș is mentioned for the first time as a noble county in 1321. Unfortunately, no details of this transformation are known. Only one thing can be stated for sure: the fortress of Timișoara functioned as the centre of both the royal and noble county, and the castellan of the royal fortress of Timișoara was usually the deputy of the count (*vicecomes*) of the noble county of Timiș.¹⁰ The original borders of the county of Timiș can be reconstructed with the help of the papal tithe-lists from the years 1332-1337. This important document demonstrates that the archdeacon of Timiș (*archidiaconus Themesiensis*) had the same territorial authority as the count of Timiș (*comes Themesiensis*). Concerning the administration of the *archidiaconatus Themesiensis*, its territory was subdivided into three districts bordered by the Rivers Timiș and Bîrzava.¹¹

A major change took place in the history of the county of Timiș and Timișoara in the early 1300s, when the hostile attitude of the citizenry of Buda and the fact that virtually the entire realm was controlled by the “little kings” (oligarchs) led Charles I to seek a temporary residence at Timișoara. The monarch paid his first visit to the town in 1315, and had his royal residence there until 1323. It is not widely known that an attempt was made on the king’s life in the royal palace at Timișoara, perhaps in 1317. Since Timișoara did not have the advantage of a central geographical location, the royal court

⁹ See I. Petrovics, *Urban development in the Danube-Tisa-Mureş region in the Middle Ages*, in *AnB* (SN), IX, 2001, Timișoara, 2002, p. 389-390 (With further bibliographical items). Also cf. I. Petrovics, *A Duna-Tisza-Maros köz és Temesvár egyházi viszonyai a középkorban. Történelmi vázlat tényekkel és kérdőjelekkel*, in *Erdélyi várostörténeti tanulmányok*, ed. Nándor Bárdi, János Fleisz, Judit Pál, Csíkszereda [Miercurea Ciuc], 2001, p. 46-51; for the bishopric of Csanád/Cenad see Kálmán Juhász, *A csanádi püspökség története*, 8 vols., Makó, 1930-1947.

¹⁰ P. Engel, *Archontológia*, I, p. 202-205, p. 441-442; I. Petrovics, *A Temes megyei tisztikar legkorábbi kiadványai*, in *AUSz. Historica*, 96, 2003, p. 21-29.

¹¹ I. Petrovics, *A Duna-Tisza-Maros köz egyházi viszonyai*, p. 47-51.

moved to Visegrád, in the middle of the realm, soon after the death of the most powerful oligarch, Máté Csák, in 1321. This move, in fact, took place in 1323, when the last of the “little kings”, John (János) Babonić, was subdued by Charles I. The departure of the royal court evidently did not favour the further development of Timișoara.

A new situation emerged in the 1360s, when Louis I (or the Great) launched a very active Balkans policy. This clearly increased the role of the *comes Temesiensis* and the importance of Timișoara, the favourable geographical location of which led to its serving as the “gateway” to the Balkans. Louis I occupied Vidin in Bulgaria in 1365 and appointed a ban there to administer the affairs of the newly created *Bulgarian banate of Vidin*. It is important to stress that the jurisdiction of the *ban of Vidin* extended not only to Vidin, but also to those Hungarian castles which were located next to the banate of Vidin. These castles, among which Timișoara was perhaps the most significant, provided military protection for the banate of Vidin. This political arrangement proved to be merely temporary since the *banate of Vidin* ceased to exist in 1369. After 1369, the king transferred the authority of the former *ban of Vidin* to the *comes Temesiensis*, who thereby became one of the most powerful dignitaries of the realm.

The greatest obstacle to the development of the town of Timișoara was that the overwhelming Turkish victory at Nicopolis in 1396 resulted in Timișoara and the region around it becoming the permanent target of Ottoman onslaughts. Consequently, by the early fifteenth century, Timișoara assumed the role of a *border castle*. This evidently hindered its urban development, despite the fact that Pipo Ozorai (Filippo Scolari) and John Hunyadi as *comites Temesiensis* initiated significant building operations here. Since these building operations primarily focussed on fortifying the castle and the town, they did not essentially promote urban development. At the same time, the administrative functions of Timișoara were broadened, since the exploitation of the salt deposit at Keve (today Kovin in Serbia) was controlled by Pipo Ozorai in Timișoara. The change in the status of Timișoara was made in order to make the southern defence system more effective, since Ozorai, for a while, simultaneously held the offices of *comes Temesiensis* and *comes camerarum salium regalium*.

Timișoara is referred to in mediaeval charters as *villa*, *oppidum* and *civitas*. According to our present knowledge documents that contain franchises of the *hospites/cives* of Timișoara do not appear to have survived from the mediaeval period. However, indirect evidence clearly reveals that the town enjoyed the right to hold weekly fairs, and daily life in Timișoara was directed by the town council, consisting of a *judge (iudex)* and the *aldermen (iurati cives)*. Despite its privileges, Timișoara cannot be regarded as a royal free town since its autonomy was seriously restricted by the *comes* and *vicemomes Temesiensis* who had their seats in the town. From the point of view of urban autonomy, the most disadvantageous features were that in 1369 the authority of the ban of Vidin was transferred to the *comes Temesiensis*, and that from the late fourteenth century the Ottoman advance led to the authority of the *comes Temesiensis* being significantly strengthened. In the early fifteenth century, for instance, Pipo Ozorai as *comes Temesiensis* also exercised jurisdiction over the counties of Cenad, Arad, Kovin (Keve), Caraș, Zarand (Zaránd) and Csongrád, and 15 to 20 royal castles were also under his control.¹²

After Ozorai's death in 1426 King Sigismund drastically reduced the power of the count of Timiș, because he had found it far too dangerous for royal authority. However, the Ottoman menace called once more for a local concentration of power. By the appointment of Hunyadi and Újlaki as voivodes of Transylvania in 1441 the southeastern parts of the realm stood once more under a unified joint command. Hunyadi and Újlaki were appointed jointly and had equal authority as voivodes of Transylvania, counts of the Szeklers (*comites Siculorum*) and counts of the counties of Timiș, Cenad, Arad, Kovin/Keve and Caraș.¹³ It is very strange that Nicholas Újlaki appears in charters as count of Timiș, Cenad, Arad, Kovin/Keve and Caraș only between 1441 and 1446, while - in contrast to him - John Hunyadi is referred to as the *comes* of the above mentioned counties - with the exception of Timiș - until his death in

¹² I. Petrovics, *The fading glory of a former royal seat: the case of medieval Temesvár*, in *The Man of Many Devices Who Wandered Full Many Ways. Festschrift in Honor of János M. Bak*, ed. Balázs Nagy, Marcell Sebök, Budapest, 1999, p. 529-534; Idem, *Urban Development*, p. 390-394; I. Petrovics, *A középkori Temesvár. Fejezetek a Bega-parti város 1552 előtti történetéből*, Szeged, 2008.

¹³ P. Engel, *Archontológia*, I, p. 15, 194; I. Petrovics, *A Délvidék és a török veszély: a nándorfehérvári diadal és előzményei*, in *Bácsország*, 10, 2006, no. 2, p. 11-15.

1456. On the other hand, contrary to Hunyadi who had large estates in Zarand (e.g. Világosvár/Şiria), only Újlaki is mentioned as count of Zarand (1445).¹⁴

To date the beginning of Hunyadi's career as count of Timiş is rather difficult. According to Pál Engel John Hunyadi became count of Timiş on 8 May 1441.¹⁵ However, on the basis of a charter issued by Vlad II Dracul, voivode of Wallachia probably after 7 March, it can be assumed that Hunyadi's appointment happened a little bit earlier than 8 May.¹⁶ Hunyadi's political ally, Nicholas Újlaki was mentioned as count of Timiş for the first time on 17 April 1441.¹⁷ The matter is further complicated by the fact that George (György) Orbonász, descendant of a Serbian family from Albania, also appears as count of Timiş: first on 22 March 1441, and later on 7 March 1442.¹⁸ Moreover, Vukasin, George's brother acted, according to the charters issued on 17 February and 7 March 1442, as quasi count of Timiş.¹⁹ These documents, however, do not call Vukasin *comes Temesiensis*, but only reveal that Vukasin was *frater et germanus magnifici comitis Temesiensis*. The most surprising piece of information is provided by a charter issued by John Hunyadi on 1 November 1441, in which Hunyadi notified the magistrates of the county of Timiş that he had donated his part of the county to Michael Dóci, and ordered them to obey Dóci. Unfortunately, the charter does not tell us anything about the reason why Hunyadi made this decision.²⁰

Although after Hunyadi's election as governor of the realm in 1446 there is no mention of him as the count of Timiş, it is beyond doubt that he had, in fact, control over this important county. There seems to have been a vacancy in the county of Timiş between 1453 and 1455, but in 1455 and

¹⁴ P. Engel, *Archontológia*, I, p. 97, 123, 140, 145, 205, 240; Dezső Csánki, *Magyarország történelmi földrajza a Hunyadiak korában*, I, Budapest, 1890, p. 751 (John Hunyadi's estates in Zarand county).

¹⁵ P. Engel, *Archontológia*, I, p. 205.

¹⁶ Franz Zimmermann, Carl Werner, Georg Müller, Gustav Gündisch, Herta Gündisch, Konrad Gustav Gündisch, Gernot Nussbächer, *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen* (henceforth UGDS), V, Hermannstadt-Köln-Wien-Bukarest, 1892-1991, p. 74.

¹⁷ P. Engel, *Archontológia*, I, p. 205.

¹⁸ Magyar Országos Levéltár. Mohács előtti gyűjtemény (henceforth: MOL, DL) 55238, 55248; P. Engel, *Archontológia*, I, p. 205; II, p. 178.

¹⁹ MOL, DL 74494 (17/02/1442); MOL, DL 55248 (07/03/1442).

²⁰ MOL, DL 55240.

1456 John Hunyadi appears again in the documents as count there.²¹ After Hunyadi's death on 11 August 1456, it was his son, Ladislaus (László) who obtained the dignity of the count of Timiș. This is confirmed by the list of the office-holders of the realm that can be found in the charter issued by King Ladislaus V on 19 January 1457.²²

Altogether there are 577 charters in the collections of the Hungarian National Archives that were issued by the counts of Timiș before the battle of Mohács, and 102 charters that were issued by the deputy counts and the magistrates, the elected judges of the county of Timiș. In the first group nearly 30 charters refer to Hunyadi – besides other offices – as the count of Timiș.²³ Nevertheless, it seems very probable that these documents do not inform us about any matters of great significance which were settled by Hunyadi exclusively as *comes Temesiensis*. This is quite surprising since Hunyadi, undoubtedly, recognized pretty soon the strategic importance of the county of Timiș and the town of Timișoara. Earlier research has established that after 1443 John Hunyadi rebuilt and fortified the castle of Timișoara, and brought his family here from Cluj (Koložsvár/Klausenburg) in 1447.²⁴ Hunyadi preferred to stay in the castle of Timișoara, whence he launched several campaigns in different directions. On 22 June 1456 he issued his last charter in Timișoara, in which – for the second time – he called the Transylvanian Saxons to arms against the Ottomans.²⁵ Soon afterwards he left with his troops for Belgrade.

²¹ P. Engel, *Archontológia*, I, p.205.

²² MOL, DL 13425.

²³ MOL, Diplomatikai fényképgyűjtemény (henceforth: MOL, DF) 275268 (13/04/1441), 283083 (02/05/1441), 246669 (05/05/1441), DL 37600 (05/14/1441), 55244 (18/01/1443), 30817 (22/05/1443), DF 245083 (22/05/1443), 245096 (22/05/1443), 245 097 (22/05/1443), 244749 (23/05/1443), 246908 (25/05/1443), 246910 (25/05/1444), 277501 (26/05/1444), 244 911(03/07/1444), 244 912 (13/07/1444), 286775 (11/08/1444), 246909 (28/08/1444), 246 862 (25/11/1444), DL 27025 (09/12/1444), 38605 (04/04/1445), DF 274904 (14/04/1445), DF 274908 (14/04/1445), 213116 (11/05/1445), 213128 (11/05/1445), 236594 (15/05/1445), 244753 (29/07/1445), 286063 (15/09/1445), DL 13901 (03/01/1446), DF 274904 (09/02/1446), 274908 (09/02/1446), 246913 (15/03/1446).

²⁴ Jenő Szentkláray, *Temesvár város története [a kezdetektől 1850-ig]*, in *Temes vármegye és Temesvár [város története]*, Magyarország vármegyéi és városai, ed. Samu Borovszky, Budapest, s.a. p. 20, 26; Adrian Andrei Rusu, *Arad és Temes megye középkori erődtítményei*, in *A középkori Dél-Alföld és Szer*, ed. Tibor Kollár, Szeged, 2000, p. 579-581.

²⁵ UGDS, V, p. 535.

John Hunyadi administered the county of Timiș and the castle of Timișoara with the help of his long proven adherents. Among these the following should be mentioned: Nicholas Vajdafi (Vajdafi Miklós), Nicholas of Bizere (Bizerei Miklós), Peter of Hangony (Hangonyi Péter), John of Szob (Szobi János), Valentin of Fehéregyház (Fehéregyházi Bálint), Nicholas of Hațeg (Hátszegi Miklós), and Ladislaus of Pocsaj (Pocsaji László).²⁶

Since John Hunyadi was a very ambitious man who would do anything in order to increase his wealth, we have good reason to believe that he wanted to take possession of the town of Timișoara, too. The opportunity to realize his plans came in 1455 and 1456. A charter issued by the chapter of Cenad on 3 September 1455 relates that the aforesaid chapter – following the order of King Ladislaus – introduced Hunyadi on 20 August 1455 into the possession of the castle of Timișoara and its appurtenances, proving that the king had mortgaged these crownlands to Hunyadi.²⁷ From another charter issued by King Ladislaus on 7 April 1456 we learn that Hunyadi had previously loaned the monarch 12 000 golden florins, and that this sum together with the newly given 8 000 golden florins amounted to 20 000 florins. King Ladislaus, in return, put the castle of Timișoara together with the countship of Timiș and all the fortresses, towns, market-towns, villages, and revenues that belonged to the castle of Timișoara, at the disposition of Hunyadi.²⁸ Although the charter mentioned above, as a matter of fact, does not refer – *expressis verbis* – to the town of Timișoara, scholars analyzing the text of this important document (... *castrum nostrum Themeswar vocatum simul cum honore Comitatus Themesiensis ad idem castrum nostrum spectare solito, nec non universis castellis, civitatibus oppidis, villis, pertinentiis, et proventibus ad idem castrum nostrum spectantibus*...) state that not only the castle but also the town of Timișoara was obtained by Hunyadi in 1456.²⁹ We tend to agree with this opinion, yet the case of nearby Szeged cautions us against this assumption. When King Albert donated Szeged to his wife, Elizabeth in 1439, the charter made a clear distinction between the town and the castle: ... *castrum nostrum*

²⁶ P. Engel, *Archontológia*, I, p. 205.

²⁷ MOL, DL. 14981 (The charter is published in József Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, X-XII, Okmánytár, Pest, 1853-1857, X, p. 479-481.

²⁸ MOL, DL 24764 (The charter is published in J. Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora*, X, p. 497-498.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 497-498; J. Szentkláray, *Temesvár város története*, p. 26-27.

*Zege diense ac opidum similiter Zege diense, necnon ossessions seu villas Recke Bec...h et Chongrad vocatas ad idem castrum spectantes...*³⁰

Since King Ladislaus failed to return the 20 000 golden florins to John Hunyadi, the castle, and most probably the town of Timișoara remained in the possession of the Hunyadi family. After John Hunyadi's death all the goods that had been put in pawn to him, went first to his wife, Elizabeth (Erzsébet) Szilágyi, and then to his son Matthias (Mátyás), later king of Hungary. There is not a shred of evidence however that after the death of King Matthias Timișoara and its appurtenances were inherited by the monarch's natural son John Corvin. The expression *castrum regium* that appears in the charters issued after 1490 unanimously refer to the fact that the castle of Timișoara belonged to the crown, i.e. to the king himself.³¹

Finally, we would like to call attention to a particular phenomenon. We do not know of any charters issued by John Hunyadi that contain privileges for the town of Timișoara. This is quite surprising since the perpetual count of Bistrița (*comes perpetuus Bistricensis*), especially when he held the office of governor between 1446-1453, pursued a policy that was very favourable to the towns of the realm.³² The case of one town may suffice here as an example: in 1450 John Hunyadi confirmed the old privileges of the burghers of Szeged which stated that they were not required to pay tolls for their empty barrels at the ferry of Titel.³³ Soon after, in 1456 Hunyadi forbade the castellan of Szeged to collect tolls at the fairs held in the *suburbium* of the town, named Palánk in Hungarian.³⁴ We have good reason to suppose that Hunyadi also tried to promote the development of the town of Timișoara, but in the shadow of the Ottoman menace, his activities were restricted to shoring up the fortifications of the castle and the town. On the other hand, the lack of documentary evidence concerning John Hunyadi's urban policy in connection with Timișoara, could

³⁰ János Reizner, *Szeged története*, IV, *Oklevéltár, név- és tárgymutató*, p. 45.

³¹ J. Szentkláray, *Temesvár város története*, p. 27.

³² For the urban policy of John Hunyadi see Lajos Elekes, *Hunyadi*, Budapest, 1952. pp. 335-341. See also I. Petrovics, *Romanians and Hungarians in the Danube-Tisa-Mureș Area*, in *Stephen the Great and Matthias Corvinus and their Time*, ed. László Koszta, Ovidiu Mureșan, Alexandru Simon, *Mélanges d'Histoire Générale. Nouvelle Série*, I, Cluj-Napoca, 2007, p. 202-206.

³³ J. Reizner, *Szeged története*, p. 46-49.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 50-51.

also be explained by the vast destruction of charters and other written sources during the Ottoman conquest in the sixteenth century.

To sum up: indirect evidence indicates that the county of Timiș as well as the castle and the town of Timișoara were of great importance for John Hunyadi. This fact becomes obvious when we consider the size of the county of Timiș, the territory of which had grown remarkably by the fifteenth century, and the strategic location of the town of Timișoara, which offered a favourable starting point for anti-Ottoman campaigns. However, more important for Hunyadi was the fact, that as a result of the public authority which he exercised over the county of Timiș, a link was created between his Transylvanian offices (voivode of Transylvania, count of the Szeklers) and estates, and the ones he had in southern Hungary east of the River Tisza, including the estates of the Szilágyi family.

IOAN DE HUNEDOARA, APĂRĂTORUL GRANIȚELOR SUDICE ALE REGATULUI MEDIEVAL MAGHIAR

Rezumat

Născut în jurul lui 1400, în rândul micii nobilimi de origine românească, Ioan de Hunedoara s-a afirmat ca unul dintre cei mai importanți magnați ai epocii sale. A avut un rol esențial în menținerea graniței sudice a regatului Ungar constituită pe Dunăre și a teritoriilor adiacente cum ar fi comitatul Timiș, Banatul de Severin sau districtele românești. Anumite dovezi indică faptul că orașul Timișoara și castelul său, precum și comitatul Timiș, au fost de mare importanță pentru Ioan de Hunedoara. Acest fapt devine evident atunci când luăm în considerare mărimea acestui comitat, al cărui teritoriu a crescut remarcabil în secolul al XV-lea, precum și amplasarea strategică a orașului Timișoara, care a oferit un punct de plecare favorabil pentru campaniile antiotomane. Cu toate acestea, mai important pentru Ioan de Hunedoara a fost faptul că, urmare a autorității publice care a exercitat-o asupra comitatului Timiș, a fost creată o punte de legătură între funcțiile (voievod, comite al secuilor) și moșiile sale din Transilvania cu cele avute în sudul Ungariei de la est de râul Tisa.