

Zgodovinski časopis

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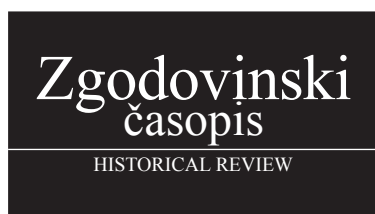
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Razprave

Ádám Novák

Seals of John and Ladislaus Hunyadi as the Counts of Bistrița (Beszterce) from the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia*

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Seals of John and Ladislaus Hunyadi as the Counts of Bistrița (Beszterce) from the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia

Zgodovinski časopis (Historical Review), Ljubljana 77/2023 (168), No. 3–4, pp. 348–358, 45 notes

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Following the return of Ladislaus the Posthumous, John Hunyadi, in recognition of his previous services, gained an extension to his coat of arms from the ruler, and, in addition, he was granted with the title Count of Bistrița (Hung. Beszterce). His eldest son Ladislaus also held the title. Pressed under texts, several copies of his red wax seal have survived; however, these are damaged, fragmented and blurred. Only a charter, dated Buda, March 31, 1456 in the charter collection of the counts of Celje (Cilli) in the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia (Arhiv Republike Slovenije) has a well preserved and intact pendant seal. It contains both seals of the counts of Bistrița, John Hunyadi and his son, Ladislaus Hunyadi. The aim of this paper is to present the brief historical background of the charter and to describe seals found on the charter.

Keywords: seal, medieval, Counts of Celje, Cilli, Hunyadi.

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Pečata Ivana in Ladislava Hunyadija, grofov Bistriških (romun. Bistrița) v Arhivu Republike Slovenije

Zgodovinski časopis, Ljubljana 77/2023 (168), št. 3–4, str. 348–358, cit. 45

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Po prevzemu oblasti je ogrski kralj Ladislav Posmrtni Ivanu Hunyadiju za njegove zasluge izboljšal grb, podelil pa mu je tudi naziv grofa Bistriškega (romun. Bistrița, madž. Beszterce). Ivanov starejši sin Ladislav je tudi prejel navedeni naziv. Kar nekaj primerkov pečata slednjega v rdečem vosku je ohranjenih na listinah, a so ti bodisi poškodovani bodisi ohranjeni fragmentarno ali zabrisani. Samo na listini, izdani v Budimu 31. marca 1456, iz zbirke listin grofov Celjskih v Arhivu Republike Slovenije, se je ohranil njegov viseči pečat v celoti, v takorekoč nedotaknjeni obliki. Na listini sta pečata obeh bistriških grofov, Ivana in Ladislava Hunyadija. Namen pričujočega prispevka je predstaviti zgodovinsko ozadje nastanka omenjene listine in opisati pečata obeh grofov na njej.

Ključne besede: pečat, srednjeveški, grofje Celjski, Celje, Hunyadi

* The research on which this study is based was funded by the Thematic Excellence Program (TKP2021-NKTA-34) announced by the Ministry for Innovation and Technology. The author is a member of the Thematic Excellence Programme of the University of Debrecen "Hungary's Place and Image in Medieval Europe" Research Group.

Short archival history and historical background

In 2005, a straightforward summary was published in the *Geschichte der Alpen* on the family history and archive of the counts of Celje (Cilli) by Johannes Grabmayer and Christian Domenig.¹ Although the medieval Hungarian diplomatic database, unique even by European standards, – which can be accessed through the Hungaricana and where the Diplomatic Photo Collection and the Diplomatic Archive of the National Archives of Hungary can be researched – lists the charters, yet names the institution in the Viennese Minoritenplatz (Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv) as the place of keeping.² Today, the original documents of the Counts of Celje archives are kept in Ljubljana, in Archives of the Republic of Slovenia (Arhiv Republike Slovenije).³ The route how they got there is explained in the above mentioned paper of Grabmayer and Domenig in full.⁴

On August 1, 1455, Ulrich, Count of Celje and John Hunyadi concluded a so-called league.⁵ Our charter is in fact the confirmation of this league on March 31, 1456 with the King's approval. According to the ratification clause, the alliance was established between John and Ladislaus Hunyadi, Counts of Bistrița, and Ulrich, Count of Celje, Ortenburg, and Zagorje, in the presence of John Vitéz, bishop of Várad, palatine Ladislaus Garai, Michael Újlaki, Voivode of Transylvania, Ladislaus Pálóci, judge royal, and Frederick Lemberger, the councilor of count Ulrich.⁶

¹ Grabmayer – Domenig, *Die Grafen von Cilli*, passim.

² Database of Archival Documents of Medieval Hungary (hereinafter: DL/DF. <https://archives.hungaricana.hu/en/charters/>, downloaded: 31/08/2023). As a result of the activity of Iván Borsa from the Hungarian National Archives, the documents were microfilmed in the 1960s and '70s for the benefit of the Diplomatic Photo Collection. For detailed description on the microfilming activity of the Hungarian National Archives: Borsa, *A Magyar Országos Levéltár*, passim.

³ Arhiv Republike Slovenije, Arhivske zbirke, Zbirka listin, SI AS 1063/4001–4738 Listine Celjskih grofov, 1262–1456.

⁴ See also: Rill – Springer – Thomas, *Österreichisch-jugoslawische Archivverhandlungen*, passim.; Christiane Thomas published excerpts of the first 220 charters (1262–1360) in four publications: Thomas, *Cillier Urkunden (1–4. Teil)*, passim.

⁵ Haus- Hof- und Staatsarchiv Wien, Ungarische Urkundenabteilung, 1455.VIII.1. Cf. DF 287 215–216. They also strengthened the former engagement between Matthias Hunyadi and Elizabeth of Celje (daughter of Ulrich II, Count of Celje) and soon the betrothal was also carried out. Then Matthias was brought to the court of Ladislaus as a chamberlain, and Elizabeth was taken to the Hunyad/Hunedoara castle. Kubinyi, *Mátyás király*, p. 21: “Obviously, the two parties took hostages from each other through child marriage.”

⁶ ARS, SI AS 1063, Zbirka listin, št. 4567. Cf. DF 258 144. Its publication: Chmel,

Seals of the Hunyadis

The charter is unique in the sense that both Hunyadis approved it with their seals. Moreover, the seals survived in nearly intact condition, and for that reason, they deserve a brief analysis. Both seals are placed in natural colored nests and affixed by non-addressed parchment strips. The two seals are impressed into red wax, and their diameters range between 33–35mm. The quarterly shield placed in the field which is bordered by a continuous line is the same on both. In quarters 1 and 4 is a double queued lion rampant facing right, and in 2 and 3 is a raven holding a golden ring in its beak. The first seal belongs to John Hunyadi. The exact shape of the decoration above the shield is indiscernible, but it stretches into and breaks the circumscription. Its gothic minuscule circumscription reads: *S. iohannes de huniad perpetui comitis bictricie*.⁷ The second seal belongs to Ladislaus Hunyadi, on which an angel bust holds the shield. The angel breaks the gothic minuscule circumscription above: *S. lad[...] de huniad comitis de bistrice*.⁸

The colors, circumscriptions, and shield depictions are direct projections of the coat of arms extension that king Ladislaus V of Hungary granted to John Hunyadi on February 1, 1453.⁹ In the absence of the king, the governor was allowed to use red wax and positioned hierarchically above the palatine.¹⁰ Hunyadi would have lost this privilege upon resignation. To evade prestige loss, he received the very first Hungarian hereditary aristocratic title from Ladislaus V and became the count of Bistrița in Transylvania. Ladislaus expanded Hunyadi's customary raven depicting coat of arms with the lion of Bistrița and granted him the right to use red wax. At the same time, he became on par with the Count of Celje and, as imperial count, entitled to bear the same rights. Let us now take a closer look at the representational power of red wax and the count title.

Materialien zur österreichischen, I. Nr. LXXXVIII. p. 105–106. Cf. *Memoria Hungariae – Hungary in the Medieval Europe Database* (hereinafter: MH. <http://lendulet.memhung.unideb.hu>, downloaded: 31/08/2023) 22032–35. Historiographic background and the problematics of 1455–57 was recently examined by Pálosfalvi, *Tettes vagy áldozat*. Cf. Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*. For Hunyadi's biography see: Elekes, *Hunyadi*.; Teke, *Hunyadi*. For Ulrich Cillei see: Fugger Germadnik, *Zbornik*.

⁷ Cf. Zimmermann – Werner – Gündisch, *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte*, V. p. 394. See: MH 22034.

⁸ MH 22035.

⁹ The coat of arms extending charter: DL 24 762. For the differences between the grant of arms and the seal image see: Bertényi, *Címerváltozatok a középkori Magyarországon*, p. 56–57. Further literature at the same place in notes Cf. Bertényi, *I. Mátyás király*, pp. 79–80.

¹⁰ His seal as governor: Bándi, *Mátyás-kori pecsétkiállítás*, p. 76. For the hierarchy see: Lövei, „...jelen levelünket...”, p. 112. Cf. Szentpétery, *Hédervári Imre*, pp. 157–161.



Fig. 1. ARS, SI AS 1063, Zbirka listin, št. 4567: Seal of John Hunyadi (© ARS).



Fig. 2. ARS, SI AS 1063, Zbirka listin, št. 4567: Seal of Ladislaus Hunyadi (© ARS).

Address and Titulature, perpetual *ispánság* (sheriffdom), red wax – Representation of authority

Hungarian nobility was equal by law until the end of the 15th century. The 1351 decree of King Louis I stipulates that nobles bear “one and the same liberty”. Only disparities of wealth can be observed within the estate during the 14th–15th centuries.¹¹ The first law differentiating nobility was passed by the diet of king Vladislaus II of Hungary in 1498.¹² The legal shift was a more than one and a half-century-long process. This procedure is well-illustrated by the change of aristocratic appellation, the development and spreading of the perpetual *ispánság* (i.e. comes, sheriff, count, *ispánok* in the plural), and the usage of red wax, an important cornerstone of which was the seal usage of the Hunyadis as counts.

The royal council in the 14th century was composed of office-holders, namely the barons and prelates, who were referred to as “magisters”. This title, however, was not solely used regarding national office-holders, but also applied to lesser nobles, and the title itself was not heritable, nor was the honor land.¹³ The “magnificus vir” title was given to barons in the Sigismund era, and their sons were called “egregius”. Barons were addressed as “magnificus vir” until their death, but the appellation was not heritable. Thus, a process had begun that drove a wedge between the nobility.¹⁴

The leaders of the counties, namely the *ispán* received their appointment from the king until revocation or up to their death. Therefore, the first perpetual *ispánságs* were granted to institutions and not individuals. Such institution could be a bishopric or an archdiocese. The *ispán* of Esztergom county was the respective archbishop of Esztergom from 1270. From the 15th century, the *ispán* of Bihar county was the bishop of Várad, and the *ispán* of Győr county was the bishop of Győr.¹⁵ Perpetual *ispánságs* were also affiliated with secular institutions. The task of the Ban of Macsó/Mačva was to organize the southern border defense West of the Danube. For that reason, the Ban of Macsó was the *ispán* of Bács/Bačka, Baranya/Baranja, Szerém/Srem and Valkó counties from the 14th century. The costs of a given assignment were covered by this unwritten law, and the granting of perpetual *ispán* titles grown largely under the reign of Matthias Corvinus.¹⁶

Seals that were used to authorize charters were initially of natural brown color. Red wax firstly appeared in royal seal usage at the end of the 13th century.¹⁷ It was

¹¹ Engel, *Társadalom és politikai*, p. 310.

¹² Engel, *A magyar világi nagybirtok*, pp. 19–20.

¹³ Engel, *Vár és hatalom*, p. 183.

¹⁴ Engel, *Zsigmond bárói*, p. 115. For the titles, see more recently: Neumann, *Hercegek és hercegségek*, p. 99.

¹⁵ C. Tóth, *Az örökös ispánságok*, p. 468.; 473.

¹⁶ The process was studied by legal historians. Hajnik, *Az örökös főispánság.*; Schiller, *Az örökös főrendiség.* Researchers of medieval history also examined the subject: Mályusz, *A magyar társadalom*, pp. 362–364.; Kubinyi, *A megyéispánságok.* Recently: Neumann, *A gróf és a herceg.*

¹⁷ A good example of this is the royal regulatory signet seal of Andrew III impressed into his double seal: DL 50 544. Published by: Takács, Imre: *Az Árpád-házi királyok*, p. 150.

a royal monopoly, similarly to mintage, salt trade and mining. The right to use red wax was granted to prelates from the 14th century.¹⁸ The royal secret seal and signet ring, which were made after reforming the chancery, was always impressed to red wax from Charles I (1301–1342) to Louis the Great (1342–1382) and to Mary (1382–1395).¹⁹ In the period following the Angevin period, the seal of the National Council became the symbol of authority in the country without a king. The wax of that seal was always red. Historiography knows of three such periods, which occurred in 1386, following the murder of Charles III of Naples, in 1401 during the rebellion against King Sigismund, and then from 1446 to 1452 under the era of the governorate.²⁰

Red wax and the baronial title had been used in the Hungarian Kingdom preceding the Hunyadis, however, their origin was always somewhat special. Count Herman of Celje was able to use red wax for being an imperial count, and not because Hungarian law allowed him to do so.²¹ During the Council of Constance in 1417, Philip Kórógyi signed a heritage contract with his distant relative, the count of Castell. Since then, they mutually used each others' titles. Philip tended to use the title Count of Castell quite often, and he received the right to use red wax from Sigismund.²² Later, ignited by the example of the Kórógyis in 1425, Nikola IV Frankopan, Count of Krk, Senj, and Modruš referred to the customs of his ancestors when asked Sigismund and received the right from him to use red wax.²³ While Charles,²⁴ the son of Gregory, originating from the Kurjaković family (Counts of Krbava) of the Gusich/Gusić genus, used the title 'Comes de Corbavia' in 1402, his seal remained green²⁵, as we can also find it on his 1418 charter.²⁶ It means that the members of the Kurjaković family became perpetual *ispáns* prior to using red wax.²⁷ Nevertheless, the son of Charles, Ban of Croatia in 1409–1411, George of Korbávia/Krbava certainly used red wax by 1439–1440.²⁸ In 1442, Matkó Tallóci/Talovac and his family received the title Count of Cetina from Vladislaus I for their support.²⁹ It seems that he was granted the right to use red wax automatically. His seal can be identified on a charter issued on August 16, 1442.³⁰ Later, he used red wax as the Vicar of Vladislaus I, but he was only ranked after the Palatine.³¹

¹⁸ Bodor – Fügedi – Takács, *A középkori Magyarország*, p. 19.

¹⁹ Kumorovitz, *A magyar királyi*. pp. 85–88.

²⁰ Szentpétery, *Hédervári Imre*, pp. 157–161.

²¹ Neumann, *Treffén in Konstanz*, p. 135. and footnote Nr. 30.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ For the history of the family see: Varga, *Adalékok*, footnote Nr. 6–8.

²⁵ Lövei, *Az ország nagyjainak*, p. 170. Nr. 65.

²⁶ DL 43 422.

²⁷ For recent study on the coat of arms usage of the family, see: Sulejmanagić, *Grb knezova Kurjakovica*.

²⁸ 1439: DL 13 457. 1440: Novák, *Középkori magyar pecsétek*, p. 79.

²⁹ Mályusz, *A négy Tallóci*. Cf. Pálosfalvi, *Cilleiek és Tallóciak*.

³⁰ Haus- Hof- und Saatsarchiv Wien, Allgemeine Urkundenreihe 1442. VIII. 16.

³¹ DF 237 766.

The next step for the Hunyadis was to extend their title and coat of arms. They received a formerly non-existent Count of Bistrița title directly from king Ladislaus V, together with the right to use red wax. In the case of John Hunyadi the title was accompanied by an important office as Chief Captain of the country, he continued to outrank the Palatine. Prime examples being the invitations to the diet, which were sent by the court officials to the counties of Szabolcs and Szatmár, and the Transylvanian Germans on December 19, 1454.³²

Let us turn our attention to the seal of Ladislaus Hunyadi again. His seal imprints are extremely rare. Apart from the currently examined charter, and according to the Database of Archival Documents of Medieval Hungary, only 31 original charters and letters survived, either as sole or co-publications. Ladislaus became the *ispán* of Bratislava in 1452³³ and Ban of Croatia and Dalmatia in 1453.³⁴ He received the Count of Bistrița title together with his father. He arbitrarily used the Chief Captain title by 1453.³⁵ Later on he became Master of the Horse.³⁶ Only 23 of his seal imprints are known from after the period he gained the title Count of Bistrița (February 1, 1453). It seems they took their time making the new seal, at least his letter sent on March 30, was sealed with a green wax seal.³⁷ However, his letter issued on May 3, testifies of a seal pressed into red wax.³⁸ None of the seals on the surviving charters are pendant seals except the one from the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia.³⁹ All of the seals are pressed under the text or on the reverse as concluding seals are completely or partially chipped, blurred or covered with paper.⁴⁰ One cannot even find their images published. Regarding the angel with an arm embowed, this is the first such depiction from the 15th century. In the cities' coat of arms, the angel holding the shield was to replace the helmet,⁴¹ which appears in the mid-1440s in secular seal usage. Amongst the first to use an angel was Nicholas of Ilok (Újlaki, Iločki), Voivode of Transylvania,⁴² then it turned up as a

³² DF 244 802., DL 81 191. and DL 81 192.

³³ DF 240 184.

³⁴ DF 240 223.

³⁵ DL 44 702.

³⁶ DF 247 273.

³⁷ Archív hlavného mesta SR Bratislavy Magistrát mesta Bratislavy (hereinafter: AhMB. On monasterium.net: <https://www.monasterium.net/mom/SK-AMB/362/fond>, downloaded: 05/01/2022), zbirka listín a listov 2840. Cf. DF 240 223.

³⁸ Only fragments of the wax seal survived on the reverse of the letter. AhMB, zbirka listín a listov 2855. Cf. DF 240 234.

³⁹ According to the Database of Archival Documents of Medieval Hungary, there is a privilege letter with a pendant seal (Cf. DF 247 273) amongst the archival documents of the city of Bistrița (Nr. 40.), kept in the Arhivele Statului Cluj. However, it is not accessible online, and the charter is not (yet?) available either in the database of medieval documents kept in Romania (Arhiva medievală a României, <http://arhivamedievala.ro/>, downloaded: 05/01/2022).

⁴⁰ Examples for those that survived in a form that is relatively intact, but not suited for examination: DL 81 108., DL 44 702., AhMB, zbirka listín a listov 2916. Cf. DF 240 267., AhMB, zbirka listín a listov 3025. Cf. DF 240 328.,

⁴¹ Marosi, *Magyarországi művészet*, I. p. 630. Cf. Ibid. p. 733.

⁴² 08/02/1445. DL 50 583. Fedeles – Novák, *Újlaki Miklós*. p. 13.

shield-holder on the matrix of Ladislaus Garai, after his appointment as Palatine.⁴³ Apparently, Ladislaus Hunyadi had his seal matrix made by the most professional jewelers, following the current artistic mainstream.

We can therefore state that the seals described above are unique, as no imprint has survived that would have preserved the seal of Ladislaus Hunyadi so intact. It is also clear that the son of the former governor used the same coat of arms as the Count of Bistrița as his father. The special diploma above provides clear evidence of this as well. The example of the present charter and seals demonstrates also that a thorough study of the sources for the history of medieval Hungary promises new results, and while the material of many archives is now available online, personal archival research or contact with the institution holding the documents is often essential.⁴⁴

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⁴³ 24/06/1447. DF 236 599.

⁴⁴ The aim of the DE “Hungary in Medieval Europe” Research Group is to make the material that is catalogued, tracked and photographed throughout Europe available to all researchers. At the beginning of 2015, the research group launched an online source database, which contains a large number of seals and poly-sigillic charters, the original versions of which are kept outside of Hungary and cannot be researched online elsewhere. *Memoria Hungariae*: <http://lendulet.memhung.unideb.hu> (Downloaded: 05/01/2022).

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POVZETEK

Pečata Ivana in Ladislava Hunyadija, grofov Bistriških (romun. Bistrița) v Arhivu Republike Slovenije

Ádám Novák

Prispevek podaja zgodovino in zgodovinsko ozadje ene od listin, ki jih hrani Arhiv Republike Slovenije. Ogrski kralj Ladislav Posmrtni je 1. februarja 1453 Ivanu Hunyadiju izboljšal grb in mu podelil naziv grofa Bistriškega (romun. Bistrița, madž. Beszterce). Hunyadi se je s tem povzpел med kralja in posvetne barone kraljestva, svoj položaj je skupaj s svojim starejšim sinom Ladislavom izkazoval z uporabo rdečega voska pri pečatenju listin. Kljub temu, da je bila vloga obeh Hunyadijev, očeta Ivana in sina Ladislava, v dogodkih na Ogrskem med letoma 1452 in 1456 izjemno velika, je ohranjenih le malo njihovih dobro ohranjenih pečatov. Ravno zaradi tega je nadvse pomembno celovito raziskovanje arhivskega gradiva, hranjenega tako v domačih arhivih kot v arhivih v tujini. V tem oziru je zelo pomembna listina z dne 31. marca 1456, ki je hranjena v Arhivu Republike Slovenije (ARS, SI AS 1063, št. 4567). Na njen sta v celoti, le z neznatnimi poškodbami, ohranjena viseča pečata Ivana in Ladislava Hunyadija v rdečem vosku. V pripevku sta analizirana oba pečata, prikazan pa je tudi razvoj pečatenja v rdečem vosku na Ogrskem.

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