

Sigismund of Luxemburg and the  
Imperial Response to the Ottoman  
Turkish Threat, c. 1410-1437

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## **Declaration of Authorship**

I, Mark Whelan, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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## Abstract

While much has been written on Sigismund of Luxemburg's response to the Ottoman threat, one aspect has almost been entirely overlooked; his use of the Reich to counter the Turkish danger after his election as King of the Romans in 1410. The central point of this thesis is to consider how Sigismund drew upon and used the newfound status and resources that came with holding the Imperial office in order to support his struggle against the Ottomans.

With the exception of the first chapter, this thesis is structured on a thematic basis. Chapter 1 provides the historical background required in order to contextualise Sigismund's response to the Ottoman Turkish threat. By drawing upon a range of unpublished archival material, it also seeks to bring new perspectives to the nature of the Turkish threat which he faced and how he conceived of his struggle against the Ottomans. Chapter 2 highlights Sigismund's use of the 'status' that came with Roman King in order to heighten awareness of the Turkish threat throughout Christendom. It does so through examining his letter writing, courtly ceremony and orations. Whereas chapter 2 underlines the more abstract ideological and cultural resources which Sigismund could draw upon as Roman King, the next three chapters explore how he attempted to draw upon concrete military resources. Chapter 3 explores how Sigismund drew upon naval and riverine expertise from his subjects as Roman King in order to support his warfare against the Ottoman Turks on the waters of the Danube. Chapter 4 focuses on the fortification of Sigismund's frontier with the Turks, and the manners in which he sourced expertise and resources from his subjects in the Reich in support of this. Lastly, chapter 5 underlines how Sigismund drew upon the logistical and fiscal knowledge present in the Reich in order to support his campaigns and diplomatic manoeuvres against the Ottomans.

In contrast to current arguments, this thesis argues throughout that Sigismund's Roman Kingship enhanced his ability to resist the Ottomans rather than hinder it, and enabled him to draw upon concrete military, political and economic in support of his struggle.

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Mark Whelan, London, September 2014

## List of Abbreviations

### Archival Materials:

ASVat	Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Vatican City
- CLP	<i>Codex Latinus Palatinus 701</i>
- RS	<i>Registra Supplicationem</i>
GstA	Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin
- OBA	<i>Ordensbriefarchiv</i>
- PU	<i>Pergament-urkunden</i>
HHSTA	Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna
- HS	<i>Handschriftensammlung</i>
- RRB	<i>Reichsregisterbücher</i>
IFS, FaM	Institut für Stadtgeschichte (Stadtarchiv Frankfurt), Frankfurt am Main
- KS	<i>Kaiserschreiben</i>
- RS	<i>Reichssachen</i>
- RS-N	<i>Reichssachen-Nachträge</i>
MOL	Magyar Országos Levéltár (Hungarian National Archives), Budapest
- DL	<i>Diplomatikai Levéltár</i>
WsuLa	Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, Vienna
- HAUrk	<i>Hauptarchiv-Urkunden (1177-1526)</i>

### Printed Materials:

ACC	<i>Acta Concilia Constanciensis</i> , ed. Heinrich Finke (Munster: Regensbergische Buchhandlung, 1896-1928), 4 vols
Altmann	<i>Regesta Imperii II. Die Urkunden Kaiser Sigmunds</i> , ed. Wilhelm Altmann (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1896-1900), 2 vols
CDDSCZ	<i>Codex Diplomaticus Domus Senioris Comitum Zichy</i> (ed. Ernest de Kammerer et al. (Budapest: A Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1871-1931), 12 vols
CDH	<i>Codex Diplomaticus Hungariae Ecclesiasticus ac Civilis</i> , ed. György Fejér (Buda, University of Hungary, 1834-43), tome 10, vols 2-8
CDP	<i>Codex Diplomaticus Patrius/Hazai Okmánytár</i> , ed. Imre Nagy (Jaurina: Victoris Sauervein, 1865-91), 8 vols



- CDPRHA* *Codex Diplomaticus Partium Regno Hungariae Adnexarum*, ed. Lajos Thallóczy and Antal Aldasy (Budapest: Tudományos Akadémia, 1907)
- CEV* *Codex Epistolaris Vitoldi Magni Ducis Lithuaniae, 1376-1430*, ed. Anton Prochaska (Krakow: Akademia Umiejetnosci, 1882)
- DMRH* *Decreta Mediaevalis Regni Hungariae/The Laws of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary* (Salt Lake City: Charles Schlacks jr., 1989-2012), 5 vols
- DRRRcRH* *Diplomatarium Relationum Reipublicae Ragusanae cum Regno Hungariae*, ed. József Gelcich and Lajos Thallóczy (Budapest: Akadémia Törtenelemi, 1887)
- FR* *Frankfurts Reichsrespondenz, nebst andern verwandten Aktenstücken von 1376-1519*, ed. Johannes Janssen (Freiburg: Herder'sche Verlagshandlung, 1863-72), 3 vols
- RhdOSMT* *Regesta historica-diplomatica Ordinis S. Mariae Theutonicorum, 11989-1525*, ed. Erich Joachim and Walther Hubatsch (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1948-1973), 2 vols
- Listine* Ljubić, Sime, 'Listine o odnošajih izmedju južnoga slavenstva I mletačke republike (1868-91)', vols. 1-10, *Monumenta Spectantia Historiam Slavorum Meridionalium*, vols. 1-5, 9, 12, 17, 21-2
- RTA* *Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Kaiser Sigmund*, ed. Dietrich Kerler, Hermann Herre, Gustav Beckmann et. al. (Munich, Rudolph Oldenbourg/ Gotha, Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1878-1906), vols 7-12
- ZKO* *Zsigmondkori Oklevéltár*, ed. Elemér Mályusz, Iván Borsa et al. (Budapest: Magyar Országos Levéltár, 1951-2013), 12 vols
- Journals:
- HK* *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*
- MIÖG* *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*
- MSHSM* *Monumenta Spectantia Historiam Slavorum Meridionalium*
- SEER* *The Slavonic and East European Review*

## Introduction

Sigismund of Luxemburg was a man of many crowns. When he died in 1437 he had been the King of Hungary for over half a century, the King of the Romans for 27 years, King of Bohemia for 18 years, King of the Lombards for 6 years and Holy Roman Emperor for 4. Sigismund's position as the secular head of Christendom, added to the responsibility of ruling vast tracts of central and eastern Europe presented him with numerous challenges throughout his reign. However, perhaps the greatest challenge with which Sigismund struggled, a challenge which first dominated his life in his late teens and which still preoccupied him on his deathbed over half a century later, was the Ottoman Turkish threat. This thesis seeks to offer a new interpretation of how Sigismund responded to the Turkish threat.

While much has been written on Sigismund's response to the Ottoman threat, one aspect has almost been entirely overlooked: his use of the Reich to counter the Turkish danger after his election as King of the Romans in 1410. The central point of this thesis is to consider how Sigismund drew upon and used the newfound status and resources that came with holding the Imperial office in order to support his struggle against the Ottomans.

Sigismund's response to the Ottoman threat has been covered in detail by scholars. Historians such as József Deér, Elemér Mályusz and Joseph Held, among others, have in a series of monographs and articles underlined how Sigismund reformed various aspects of the Hungarian kingdom in order to ensure that it could withstand attack from its powerful enemy to the south.<sup>1</sup> From efficiency drives in the salt mines to the creation of a peasant militia, Sigismund and his leading barons tried various methods to raise the resources and military forces required with varying degrees of success.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Elemér Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund in Ungarn, 1387-1437* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), esp. pp. 128-66, which draws upon József Deér, *Zsigmond király honvédelmi politikája* (Pécs: Egyetemi Könyvkiadó, 1936); Joseph Held, 'Military Reform in Early Fifteenth Century Hungary', *East European Quarterly*, 11 (1977), 129-139. See also, István Bársony, 'Sigismund in der ungarischen Geschichtsschreibung', in *Das Zeitalter König Sigmunds in Ungarn und im Deutschen Reich*, ed. Tilmann Schmidt und Péter Gunst (Debrecen: Debrecen University Press, 2000), p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> For a summary of Sigismund's defensive policies after defeat at Nicopolis, see Mark Whelan, 'Catastrophe or Consolidation? Sigismund's Response to Defeat after the Crusade of Nicopolis (1396)', in *Between Worlds: The Age of the Jagiellonians*, ed. Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, Christopher Nicholson and Florin Ardelean (Vienna: Peter Lang, 2013) pp. 215-228. See also, János M. Bak, 'Sigismund and the Ottoman Advance', in *Sigismund von Luxemburg: Ein Kaiser in Europa*, ed. Michel Pauly and Francois Reinert (Mainz am Rhein: Philip von Zabern, 2006), pp. 89-94; Pál Engel, 'Ungarn und die Türkengefahr zur Zeit Sigismunds (1387-1437)', in *Das Zeitalter König Sigmunds in Ungarn und im Deutschen Reich*, ed. Tilmann Schmidt und Péter Gunst (Debrecen: Debrecen University Press, 2000), pp. 55-72; Martyn Rady, *Nobility, Land and Service* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), pp. 149-56.

Sigismund's attempts to elicit aid from his fellow Christian rulers and princes have also received significant attention. Historians such as Aziz Atiya, Norman Housley and László Veszprémy, have underlined how Sigismund used diplomacy and the crusade to defend Hungary.<sup>3</sup> The vast majority of the literature produced in this area focuses on Sigismund's diplomatic activity during the 1390s, which ultimately culminated in the Crusade of Nicopolis and the defeat of the joint Franco-Burgundian and Hungarian force outside the Danubian citadel of the same name in September 1396.

Similarly, historians such as Gustav Beckmann, Wilhelm Baum and Martin Kintzinger have commented more broadly on the significance which the Turkish threat played within Sigismund's foreign relations throughout his reign.<sup>4</sup> They have argued that many of his great diplomatic manoeuvres, such as the healing of the Papal Schism at the Council of Constance, were driven by Sigismund's desire to unite Christendom to make a united effort against the Turks a possibility.<sup>5</sup>

However, Sigismund's use of the Reich to counter the Ottoman threat has received hardly any attention. Sigismund's election as King of the Romans in 1410 not only gave him far more prestige and esteem, but as King of the Romans he now had possible access to a whole series of financial, political and military resources, spread throughout the many principalities, duchies, counties and free imperial cities that constituted the Holy Roman Empire. This thesis will demonstrate how Sigismund put to direct use the connections, privileges and authority which he enjoyed as King of the Romans and, after 1433, as Kaiser, in order to combat the Ottomans and buttress his other kingdom, that of Hungary.

It is worth considering why Sigismund's response to the Turkish threat specifically as King of the Romans has not been previously explored in detail. In many respects, Sigismund's diplomatic manoeuvres in the west and his involvement in English, French and German affairs have been seen as detrimental to the defence of Hungary against the Turks.

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<sup>3</sup> Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades, 1274-1580: From Lyons to Alcazar* (Oxford: OUP, 1992), pp. 73-85; Aziz Atiya, *The Crusade of Nicopolis* (London: Methuen, 1934); László Veszprémy, 'Some Remarks on Recent Hungarian Historiography of the Crusade of Nicopolis (1396), in *The Crusades and the Military Orders: Expanding the Frontiers of Medieval Latin Christianity*, ed. Zsolt Hunyadi and József Laszlovszky (Budapest: CEU, 2001), pp. 223-30.

<sup>4</sup> Gustav Beckmann, *Der Kampf Kaiser Sigmunds gegen die werdende Weltmacht der Osmanen, 1392-1437* (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1902); Wilhelm Baum, *Kaiser Sigismund: Hus, Konstanz und Türkenkriege* (Graz: Styria, 1993); Martin Kintzinger, *Westbindungen im Spätmittelalterlichen Europa: Auswärtige Politik zwischen dem Reich, Frankreich, Burgund und England in der Regierungszeit Kaiser Sigmunds* (Stuttgart: Jan Thorbecke, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> F. R. H. Du Boulay, *Germany in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Athlone Press, 1983), p. 50.

His Roman Kingship, if anything, has been seen as hindering him from effectively tackling the Ottoman threat. Contemporary commentators, such as the Hungarian chronicler Johannes Thuróczy (c. 1435-1490) and Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (1405-1464 and as Pope Pius II, 1458-1464) certainly saw it that way.<sup>6</sup> This perception has found its way into modern historiography. Historians, such as Elemér Mályusz and John Jefferson, have interpreted the king's involvement in distant political affairs as detrimental to the successful defence of Hungary against the Ottomans.<sup>7</sup> Though it is accepted that Sigismund's political activities in the west were intended at least in part to generate aid for his efforts to resist the Turks, the degree to which these were successful is debatable.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, his diplomatic activities are often interpreted against a broader historiographical back drop which views Sigismund's reign as one of disappointments, if not one of failures. Jaroslaw Goll summed it up most pithily in 1895, when he stated 'das war eben seine Art, mehr zu wollen, als auszuführen, mehr zu versprechen, als zu halten'.<sup>9</sup> A century or so later not much has changed, with Engel stating that 'many of the emperor's over-ambitious plans would finally come to naught'.<sup>10</sup> In a similar vein, it has been said that Sigismund's 'west European orientation undeniably resulted in losses to Hungary'.<sup>11</sup> However, Sigismund's diplomatic involvement in the west, as this thesis will demonstrate, was of clear and direct benefit to the fight against the Turks on the Danube frontier.

Perhaps Sigismund is also a victim of his own success in securing so many crowns and in ruling so many lands. Recent historiographical works have increasingly divided Sigismund's reign and the scope of his politics into smaller, more manageable chunks. Mályusz's lengthy and detailed work, *Kaiser Sigismund in Ungarn*, as the title would suggest, focuses on Sigismund very much as the ruler of Hungary. Similarly, works by Sabine Wefers and Kintzinger focus on Sigismund as a German ruler. Wefers is primarily concerned with Sigismund's operation within the Reich and how he attempted to exercise

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<sup>6</sup> János Thuróczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, trans. Frank Mantello (Bloomington, Indiana: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1991), p. 76; Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, *Historica Bohemica*, ed. Joseph Hejnic, 3 vols (Cologne: Böhlau, 2005), ii. 440-1.

<sup>7</sup> Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 94; John Jefferson, *The Holy Wars of King Wladislas and Sultan Murad: The Ottoman-Christian Conflict from 1438-1444* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 144, 153-4.

<sup>8</sup> For this approach, see the monographs of Baum, *Sigismund* and Frank Welsh, *The Battle for Christendom: The Council of Constance, 1415, and the Struggle to unite against Islam* (London: Constable, 2008). Gerald Schwedler, *Herrscher treffen des Spätmittelalters: Formen- Rituale- Wirkungen* (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke, 2008), p. 125.

<sup>9</sup> Jaroslaw Goll, 'König Sigmund und Polen, 1419-1436', *MIÖG*, 16 (1895), 222-75 (p. 275).

<sup>10</sup> Engel, *Realm*, p. 257.

<sup>11</sup> See the introduction in *DRMH*, ii. xxxiv.

power without having any *Hausmacht* of his own.<sup>12</sup> Contrastingly, Kintzinger is interested in Sigismund as a German ruler, and his relations with the western neighbours of the Reich such as France, Burgundy and England.<sup>13</sup> These restricted perspectives are of course entirely necessary as to tackle Sigismund in one entire sweep, a figure who reigned for fifty years and who ruled lands from the Black Sea to Burgundy, would be a gargantuan task. Nevertheless, tackling different aspects of Sigismund's reign in a discrete manner does mean that the scope of Sigismund's statecraft and the broader aims and imperatives that underpinned his rule can all too frequently be obscured.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, one gets the impression from the extensive literature in German that the very idea that Sigismund could derive resources from the Reich to support his campaigns against the Turks is simply a non-starter.<sup>15</sup> Historians have generally agreed that Sigismund's position in the Reich was problematic to say the least.<sup>16</sup> Faced with numerous problems, be it the opposition of the Imperial electors, no *Hausmacht* of his own and a constant lack of funds to name but a few, Sigismund directed most of his efforts at garnering what tiny amounts of money he could raise in Reich and using his influence only where it would count.<sup>17</sup> He apparently had severe difficulty in raising money and collecting taxes from his subjects in the Reich, and mortgaged and sold significant amounts of property.<sup>18</sup> According to the contemporary *Klingenberger Chronik*, Sigismund (among many other faults, including drunkenness) was constantly short of cash, so much so that he was apparently willing to enoble anyone who would provide him with the wherewithal to settle the bill with the innkeeper in the morning.<sup>19</sup> When these comments are set against the dominant historiographical backdrop fashioned by Peter Moraw, who characterises the authority of the Roman King in the Reich as increasingly distant and ineffective in the later medieval period,

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<sup>12</sup> Sabine Wefers, *Das Politische System Kaiser Sigmunds* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1989).

<sup>13</sup> Kintzinger, *Westbindungen*.

<sup>14</sup> See also the comments in Karel Hruza's *Geleitwort* and introductory chapter, in *Kaiser Sigismund (1368-1437): Zur Herrschaftspraxis eines europäischen Monarchen*, ed. Karel Hruza and Alexandra Kaar (Vienna: Böhlau, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> See the chapter entitled 'Der überforderte König: Wahl und Krönung, Rechte und Pflichten', in Peter Moraw, *Von offener Verfassung zu gestalteter Verdichtung: Das Reich im späten Mittelalter* (Berlin: Propyläen, 1985), pp. 155-69.

<sup>16</sup> For a summary, see Hoensch, *Sigismund*, pp. 507-18.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 507-8.

<sup>18</sup> Eberhard Isenmann, 'Reichsfinanzen und Reichssteuern im 15. Jahrhundert', *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung*, 7 (1980), 1-76, 129-218. For Sigismund's income and his unsuccessful attempts to collect money, see pp. 17-25. For his mortgaging and sale of property, see p. 13. For further discussion, see Len Scales, *The Shaping of German Identity: Authority and Crisis, 1245-1414* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), p. 93.

<sup>19</sup> *Die Klingenberger Chronik*, ed. Anton Henne von Sargans (Gotha: Friedrich Perthes, 1861), pp. 208-9.

one wonders how Sigismund ever achieved anything.<sup>20</sup> As a result, when historians have studied Sigismund's relationship with the Reich they have usually done so through this prism, and focused on Sigismund's attempted reform of the Reich and his efforts to restore Imperial authority.<sup>21</sup> His plans to use his status as King of the Romans to combat the Turkish threat has never really featured in the historiography.

Recent research by Len Scales has brought a more nuanced understanding to the nature of the later medieval Reich and its monarchy. Scales does not fundamentally challenge the view that the position of the Roman King in the Reich was a weakening one, and he accepts that plummeting revenues, sluggish institutional growth and lack of dynastic continuity resulted in a weak 'state'.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, Scales takes pains to highlight how a weak central authority did not preclude a sense of 'common German belonging' or a strong attachment among the Empire's subjects to the monarchy.<sup>23</sup> This brings him to the conclusion that the German monarchy was 'materially peripheral and culturally central'.<sup>24</sup> In many respects, aspects of this thesis build upon Scales' work. Sigismund did indeed seek to use his status as Roman King and the charisma attached to the Imperial office to encourage his subjects to support him against the Turks, which suggests that the cultural pull of the Roman monarch was still a strong one. However, this thesis hopes to show that Scales' dichotomy of a monarchy with little real strength on the one hand, but with a strong cultural gravity on the other, was far more complex. Sigismund was not a distant and liminal ruler of a monarchy whose main role was to act as a cultural figurehead for his German speaking subjects.<sup>25</sup> He was a ruler who could genuinely make himself felt materially and physically in the Reich, and his ability to extract resources from his German subjects and lands in order to help withstand the Ottoman threat attests to this.

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<sup>20</sup> Moraw, *Von offener Verfassung*, pp. 155-7.

<sup>21</sup> See Moraw's treatment of Sigismund's reign, which focuses on the attempted restoration of Imperial power in the Reich, the Councils of Constance and Basle and the Hussite movement. Moraw, *Von offener Verfassung*, pp. 362-78. The Turkish threat is noted as important to Sigismund but only merits one sentence in Moraw's chapter on his reign, see p. 368.

<sup>22</sup> For the use of the word 'state', see Len Scales, 'Late Medieval Germany: an under-stated Nation?', in *Power and the Nation in European History*, ed. Len Scales and Oliver Zimmer (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), pp. 171, 181; see also idem, 'The Illuminated Reich: Memory, Crisis and the Visibility of Monarchy in late Medieval Germany', in *The Holy Roman Empire Reconsidered*, ed. Jason Philip Coy, Benjamin Marschke, David Warren Sabean (New York: Bergbahn Books, 2010), pp. 73-4.

<sup>23</sup> Scales, 'under-stated Nation?', pp. 172-3, 180-1.

<sup>24</sup> Scales, *German Identity*, p. 503.

<sup>25</sup> For comments on Sigismund's weak position as ruler of the Reich, see also, Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 148.

This thesis then, by exploring Sigismund's response to the Ottoman threat as Roman King will therefore offer new perspectives on Sigismund's relationship with the Reich and his subjects. However, it will not simply tackle issues present in the historiography of the later medieval Reich, but engage with much broader themes of interest as well.

Most importantly, it will tackle the misconceptions surrounding Christendom's response to the Ottoman threat in the later medieval period. Recent research, by historians such as Dimitris Kastritsis, Kelly DeVries and László Veszprémy, has reinforced the idea that western Europe failed to respond in any meaningful way during the first half of the fifteenth century.<sup>26</sup> Put simply, this thesis will demonstrate that there was a meaningful response from western Europe, except it was channelled in ways that historians have seldom explored. Christendom's response did not come in the form of crusades or the large military expeditions which historians have traditionally sought out, but through Sigismund, who used his connections throughout Christendom as Roman King and Kaiser in the attempt to galvanise a meaningful response to the Turkish threat.

That is not to say that the institutions, conventions and rhetoric surrounding the crusading movement did not play a role in Sigismund's response to the Ottomans for they certainly did. In this respect, Sigismund's adaptation of crusading culture and motifs form an interesting case study to compare with recent research by historians such as Housley and Benjamin Weber, who have largely focused on the second half of the fifteenth century.<sup>27</sup> The crusading attitudes and plans of figures such as Aeneas Piccolomini (1405-1464), Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy (1419-1467), and Frederick III, King of the Romans and later Holy Roman Emperor (1440/1452-1493), have been studied in far more detail than figures such as Sigismund a generation before.<sup>28</sup> An exploration of how Sigismund attempted to use his status as Roman King in order to combat the Turks reveals a distinctive attitude towards the use and adaptation of crusading culture and motifs that has so far not been recognised in the historiography. As we will see, Sigismund meshed ideals surrounding crusading and

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<sup>26</sup> Dimitris Kastritsis, 'Religious Affiliation and Political Alliances in the Ottoman Succession Wars of 1402-1413', *Medieval Encounters*, 13 (2007), 222-42 (p. 222); Kelly DeVries, 'The Lack of a Western European Military Response to the Ottoman Invasions of Eastern Europe from Nicopolis (1396) to Mohács (1526)', *Journal of Military History*, 63 (1999), 539-559. László Veszprémy, 'State and military affairs in east-central Europe', in *European Warfare, 1350-1750*, ed. Frank Tallett and D. J. B. Trim (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), pp. 108-9.

<sup>27</sup> Norman Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat, 1453-1505* (Oxford: OUP, 2012); Benjamin Weber, *Lutter contre les Turcs: Les forms nouvelles de la croisade pontificale au xv<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 2013)

<sup>28</sup> For a summary, see Housley, *Ottoman Threat*, pp. 1-6.

sanctified warfare with his own personal struggle against the Ottoman Turks, a struggle undertaken by himself as the Roman King and one which required support from the entirety of Christendom.

In the course of tracing Sigismund's response, this thesis will also bring new perspectives to the development of warfare and military technology and contribute to the debates surrounding the so called 'military revolution' of the later medieval and early modern periods. It has been argued that technological changes, bureaucratic advances and the rise of different attitudes to the art of war meant that the waging of warfare underwent fundamental changes during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>29</sup> Sigismund's attempts to tackle the Turkish threat form a case study with which many of these themes can be explored.

A significant amount of research in this field emphasises the importance of numbers and attaches special importance to the increasing size of armies which leaders in the later medieval and early modern period could field.<sup>30</sup> It has been recently stated that it was 'only a matter of time' before the more populous Ottoman Empire, which could field a much larger army than sixteenth century Hungarian kings, triumphed over the Kingdom.<sup>31</sup> This thesis demonstrates that this preoccupation regarding the amount of men which a polity could maintain under arms is in some respects more a preoccupation to modern historians than to contemporaries. Sigismund was not necessarily concerned with recruiting large numbers of soldiers or mercenaries to buttress his frontier, but was instead intensely interested in acquiring particular people with specific skills. His approach was not quantitative but qualitative.

From a more general perspective, this thesis will draw attention to the very wide geographic base upon which Sigismund drew for military expertise and demonstrate the international nature of his recruitment. This reinforces the ease with which men with particular skills could find employment across Europe, a theme drawn attention to in the research of Uwe Tresp.<sup>32</sup> The wide geographic base of Sigismund's recruitment raises the

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<sup>29</sup> For an overview, see Frank Tallett and D. J. B. Trim, "'Then was then and now is now": an overview of change and continuity in late-medieval and early-modern warfare', in *European Warfare, 1350-1750*, ed. Frank Tallett and D. J. B. Trim (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), pp. 1-26.

<sup>30</sup> Steven Gunn, 'War and the state in western Europe, 1350-1600', in *European Warfare, 1350-1750*, ed. Frank Tallett and D. J. B. Trim (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), pp. 51-9.

<sup>31</sup> Géza Pálffy, 'The Habsburg Defense System in Hungary against the Ottomans in the sixteenth century: A catalyst of military development in Central Europe', in *Warfare in Eastern Europe, 1500-1800*, ed. Brian L. Davies (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 36-7.

<sup>32</sup> Uwe Tresp, *Söldner aus Böhmen. Im Dienst deutscher Fürsten: Kriegsgeschäft und Heeresorganisation im 15. Jahrhundert* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2004).



question of the extent to which so called ‘multiple monarchs’ such as Sigismund, that is monarchs who combined in their person more than one crown, were able to unite and tap the resources of their collective kingdoms for one common purpose.<sup>33</sup> It has been argued by Kintzinger that Hungary, for the period between 1415-1419, had to fight the Turkish threat without Sigismund’s help and without support or finance from western Europe.<sup>34</sup> The research in this thesis would suggest otherwise, as Sigismund recruited numerous experts while in the Reich during this period who were dispatched eastwards precisely in order to shore up resistance to the Turks. As this thesis will show, he was able to extract resources from one kingdom for the defence of another, though this was not accomplished in the forms that historians have traditionally sought out.

As well as the development of warfare, this thesis will also form a contribution to the history of technology, notably, the transfer of technologies and military skills from Sigismund’s connections across Christendom to the Danube frontier. There exists a significant literature on technological transfers and the spread of industrial skills and expertise in later medieval and early modern central and eastern Europe.<sup>35</sup> It is frequently argued that the proliferation of industrial skills and expertise were channelled through trading links and economic connections. The research which supports this thesis offers a rather different picture. Technology transfers from one region to another and the proliferation of industrial and military expertise were not necessarily accomplished through trade or through economic forces, but by direct recruitment on the part of rulers such as Sigismund.

For the study of Sigismund there exists a significant amount of printed primary source material as well as unpublished archival material in archives across Europe. What follows is by no means an exhaustive list, but is merely meant to outline the main works and archives consulted while undertaking research for this thesis. In terms of printed material, volumes 7-12 of the *Deutsche Reichstagsakten* are invaluable for the study of Sigismund’s reign as

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<sup>33</sup> Tallett and Trim, ‘overview of change and continuity’, p. 18.

<sup>34</sup> Kintzinger, *Westbindungen*, p. 299.

<sup>35</sup> For a few examples, see Wolfgang von Stromer, ‘Die Saigerhütte: Deutsch-ungarischer Technologie-Transfer im Spätmittelalter bei der Entwicklung der Kupfer-Silber-Scheidekünste zur ‘ars conflatória separantia argenti a cupro cum plumbo vulgo saigerhütten nuncupatur’, in *Technologietransfer und Wissenschaftsaustausch zwischen Ungarn und Deutschland*, ed. Holger Fischer and Ferenc Szabadvány (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1995), pp. 27-57; Gusztáv Heckenast, ‘Zur Geschichte des Technologie-transfers von Deutschland nach Ungarn im Eisenhüttenwesen (14. bis 18. Jahrhunderts)’, in *ibid.*, pp. 59-69; Martyn Rady, ‘The Hungarian Copper Trade and Industry in the Later Middle Ages’, in *Trade and Transport in Russia and Eastern Europe*, ed. Martin McCauley and J.E.O Screen (London: UCL SSEES, 1985), pp. 18-44.

Roman King and Holy Roman Emperor.<sup>36</sup> The four volumes of the *Acta Concilia Constanciensis* compiled by Finke make available a range of materials from archives across Europe.<sup>37</sup> Two copy books dating from the fifteenth century and which contain noteworthy items of Sigismund's correspondence have been edited by Hermann Heimpel and J. Caro,<sup>38</sup> and the *Regesta* of Sigismund's correspondence compiled by Wilhelm Altmann, which contains c. 12000 entries, still remains a starting point for much of the research undertaken on Sigismund.<sup>39</sup>

The material printed by Sime Ljubić in his 10 volume *Listine o odnošajih izmedju južnoga slavenstva I mletačke republike* makes accessible a range of sources for the study of Sigismund's relationship with Venice as well as the Dalmatian coast in general.<sup>40</sup> In terms of Sigismund's relationship with Ragusa (Dubrovnik), József Gelcich and Lajos Thallóczy's collection of sources forms the starting point for any investigation.<sup>41</sup>

There are numerous sources editions which revolve around the Hussite Wars but which also contain relevant documents for this thesis. Of most importance is František Palacký's two volume *Urkundliche Beiträge*, though J. Caro's edition of a Polish copybook of the fifteenth century also provides some important material.<sup>42</sup>

For Sigismund's reign in Hungary there exist numerous printed codices which collect together diplomatic correspondence, foundation charters and other materials. György Fejér's

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<sup>36</sup> *Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Kaiser Sigmund*, ed. Dietrich Kerler, Hermann Herre, Gustav Beckmann (Munich, Rudolph Oldenbourg/ Gotha, Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1878-1906), vols. 7-12.

<sup>37</sup> *Acta Concilia Constanciensis*, ed. Heinrich Finke (Münster: Regensbergische Buchhandlung, 1896-1928), 4 vols.

<sup>38</sup> Hermann Heimpel, 'Aus der Kanzlei Kaiser Sigmunds', *Archiv für Urkundenforschung*, 12 (1932), 111-80; J. Caro, 'Aus der Kanzlei Kaiser Sigmunds: Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte des Constanzer Concils', *Archiv für österreichische Geschichte*, 59 (1880), 1-175.

<sup>39</sup> *Regesta Imperii 11. Die Urkunden Kaiser Sigmunds (1410-1437)*, ed. Wilhelm Altmann (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1896-1900) 2 vols. It is also available in an online format: <http://www.regesta-imperii.de/regesten/suche.html> (last accessed 12/01/14). A new edition of the *Regesta Imperii* which brings to light more documents from archives in Moravia has been assembled by Petr Elbel: *Regesta Imperii 11. Regesten Kaiser Sigmunds (1410-1437) nach Archiven und Bibliotheken Mährens und Tschechisch-Schlesiens*, ed. Petr Elbel (Vienna: Böhlau, 2012).

<sup>40</sup> Sime Ljubić, *Listine o odnošajih izmedju južnoga slavenstva I mletačke republike* (1868-91), vols. 1-10, in *Monumenta Spectantia Historiam Slavorum Meridionalium*, 1-5, 9, 12, 17, 21-2. Ljubić's 10 volumes are spread across 22 years of the *MSHSM*. Where Ljubić's *Listine* is referenced, references will be to the relevant volume number of *MSHSM*.

<sup>41</sup> *Diplomatarium Relationum Reipublicae Ragusanae cum Regno Hungariae*, ed. József Gelcich and Lajos Thallóczy (Budapest: Akadémia Történelmi, 1887).

<sup>42</sup> František Palacký, *Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte des Hussitenkriegs vom Jahre 1419 an* (Prague: Friedrich Tempsky, 1873), 2 vols; J. Caro, 'Liber Cancellariae Stanislai Ciołek: Ein Formelbuch der Polnischen Königskanzlei aus der Zeit der Husitischen Bewegung', *Archiv für Österreichische Geschichte*, 44 (1871), 321-545.

magisterial *Codex Diplomatic Hungariae* is rather dated but is still very useful.<sup>43</sup> Lajos Thallóczy's and Antal Aldasy's *Codex Diplomaticus Partium Regno Hungariae Adnexarum* contains useful materials for exploring the Kingdom of Hungary's relationship with its neighbours.<sup>44</sup> Three recent projects in Hungarian scholarship in particular have made undertaking research for this thesis much more straightforward. Firstly, the project to publish and translate into English the legislation of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary has produced five very helpful volumes.<sup>45</sup> Secondly, the volumes of the *Zsigmondkori Oklevéltár* (the documents of Sigismund's age) form part of an ambitious project to collate and calendar every document produced in the Kingdom of Hungary during Sigismund's age, with material from foreign archives included where they are thought to impinge directly upon Hungarian affairs.<sup>46</sup> In its current state the *Zsigmondkori Oklevéltár* comprises of 12 volumes and covers the years 1387-1425. The first 10 volumes contain c. 32000 entries alone, and they form an important reference work for all researchers working on the age of Sigismund. Thirdly, Pál Engel's impressive *Magyarország világi archontológiája* and *Közepkori magyar genealógia* must be noted, which are databases (archontologies) of the offices and office holders of medieval Hungary and lists of family trees. For each office, office holder and family tree, Engel has collated the references to the relevant published and archival materials. As a result, they make the study of Sigismund's servants and governmental administration within the Kingdom of Hungary a far easier task.

Numerous chronicles mention Sigismund but three have proven most useful. Eberhard Windecke (c. 1380-c. 1440), a banker from Mainz and a personal servant of Sigismund, preserves a wealth of material in his chronicle, even if not all of his fantastical tales are entirely reliable or believable.<sup>47</sup> The same could be said of the *Chronica Hungarorum* written

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<sup>43</sup> *Codex Diplomatic Hungariae: Ecclesiasticus ac Civilis*, ed. Georgius Fejér (Buda: Regiae Universitatis Ungaricae: 1834-43) tome 10, vols. 2-8.

<sup>44</sup> *Codex Diplomaticus Partium Regno Hungariae Adnexarum*, ed. Lajos Thallóczy and Antal Aldasy (Budapest: Tudományos Akadémia, 1907).

<sup>45</sup> *Decreta Mediaevalis Regni Hungariae/The Laws of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary* (Salt Lake City: Charles Schlacks jr., 1989-2012), 5 vols.

<sup>46</sup> *Zsigmondkori Oklevéltár*, ed. Elemér Mályusz, Iván Borsa et al. (Budapest: Magyar Országos Levéltár, 1951-2013) 12 vols. For information about the *Zsigmondkori Oklevéltár*, see Marta Kondor's short article (in German), 'Zsigmondkori Oklevéltár', pp. 1-8, available online [http://www.regesta-imperii.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/downloads/ZsO.pdf](http://www.regesta-imperii.de/fileadmin/user_upload/downloads/ZsO.pdf) (last accessed 12/01/14).

<sup>47</sup> Eberhart Windecke, *Eberhart Windeckes Denkwürdigkeiten zur Geschichte des Zeitalters Kaiser Sigmunds*, ed. Wilhelm Altmann (Berlin: R. Gaertners, 1893). For Altmann's exploration of particular events in Windecke's chronicle, see Wilhelm Altmann, *Studien zu Eberhart Windecke* (Berlin: R. Gaertners, 1891). Windecke's chronicle has been translated into modern German (from Windecke's own pfälzer dialect), though its quality is questionable in places and it was done before the appearance of Altmann's critical edition: Theodor von Hagen, *Das Leben König Sigmunds von Eberhart Windecke* (Leipzig: Franz Duncler, 1886).

by Johannes Thuróczy (c. 1435-1490).<sup>48</sup> Thuróczy provides some interesting perspectives on Sigismund's reign in Hungary, though many of his tales do come with an interesting and not wholly believable spin. Jan Długosz (1415-1480) in his gargantuan *Annales seu cronici incliti regni Poloniae* (sometimes referred to as the *Historiae Polonicae*) also provides some useful material.<sup>49</sup>

Nevertheless, it cannot be emphasised strongly enough that there exists a significant amount of unpublished archival material relevant for the study of Sigismund's quest to combat the Turkish threat. Frequently, the sheer amount of printed material has often misled historians into believing that they can study Sigismund without engaging with any archival material. Recent works by historians such as Oliver Daldrup or Franz-Reiner Erkens exhibit this trend and have relied solely upon printed material.<sup>50</sup> As a result, in producing this thesis I have undertaken stays of research in repositories and archives in Germany, Austria and Italy.

Of most importance were the rich archival resources present in the record series known as the *Ordensbriefarchiv, Pergamenturkunden und Ordensfolianten* (hereafter *Ordensbriefarchiv*), in effect the letter and manuscript collection of the Teutonic Order. Now stored in the Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Berlin, the *Ordensbriefarchiv* contains roughly 30,000 individual folders for the years c. 1200- c. 1525, which have been calendared by Erich Joachim and Walther Hubatsch.<sup>51</sup> As well as the calendar, Joachim's article on Sigismund's relationship with the Teutonic Order was of great help when conducting archival research in

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<sup>48</sup> Johannes de Thurocz, *Chronica Hungarorum*, ed. Elisabeth Galántai and Julius Kristó (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1985). An English translation is available: János Thuróczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, trans. Frank Mantello (Bloomington, Indiana: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1991). For Thuróczy's influences, see Engel, *Realm*, pp. 202, 211; Hoensch, *Sigismund*, pp. 505-6.

<sup>49</sup> Joannis Długosz, *Historiae Polonicae*, ed. Aleksander Przezdziecki, 12 books across 5 volumes, in Joannis Długosz, *Opera Omnia* (Krakow: Josepho Liskocinski, 1873-1878), vols 10-14. Długosz's *Historiae Polonicae* has been significantly abridged and translated into English (not from the original Latin, but from a modern Polish translation) by Maurice Michael, though his translation and reading of the text is questionable in numerous places. See Maurice Michael, *The Annals of Jan Długosz/ Annales seu cronicae incliti regni Poloniae: an English abridgement* (Charlton, West Sussex: IM Publications, 1997).

<sup>50</sup> Oliver Daldrup, *Zwischen König und Reich: Träger, Formen und Funktionen von Gesandtschaften zur Zeit Sigmunds von Luxemburg (1410-1437)* (Münster: Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, 2010); Franz-Reiner Erkens, "...Und wil ein grosse Reise do tun." Überlegungen zur Balkan- und Orientpolitik Sigismunds von Luxemburg', in *Studien zum 15. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Erich Meuthen*, ed. Johannes Helmraht et al. (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1994), pp. 739-62.

<sup>51</sup> For more information, see Jürgen Sarnowsky, 'Die Quellen zur Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens in Preußen', in *Edition deutschsprachiger Quellen aus dem Ostseeraum (14.-16. Jahrhundert)*, ed. Matthias Thumser et al., (Torún: Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2001), pp. 171-99. The history of the archival holdings in the twentieth century has an interesting history of its own, for which see Herbert Kraus and Erich Weise, *Two Expertises relating to the Archives of the Teutonic Order and the Ancient Prussian Duchy* (Göttingen: Academy of Sciences at Göttingen, 1949). For the calendar, see *Regesta historica-diplomatica Ordinis S. Mariae Theutonicorum, 1998-1525*, ed. Erich Joachim and Walther Hubatsch, 3 vols (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1948-1973).

the Geheimes Staatsarchiv.<sup>52</sup> In terms of documentary material these folders can vary hugely in what they contain. Some contain nothing more than a tiny strip of parchment with a few words while other folders contain dozens if not hundreds of folios of closely written paper and parchment. Furthermore, the *Ordensbriefarchiv* contains an eclectic mix of documents, including items of correspondence (sometimes only in draft forms), inventories, minutes, memoranda and financial accounts to name but a few. As a result, material from the *Ordensbriefarchiv* can be put to numerous uses.

Several archives in Vienna contain material of use for this thesis. The Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, founded by Empress Maria Theresa (1717-1780) as the central archive of the Habsburg family in 1749, contains an extensive amount of material in the so called *Reichsregisterbücher*. For Sigismund's reign as Roman King and Holy Roman Emperor there exists 8 *Reichsregisterbücher* (known now as books D- L), which record various types of imperial correspondence, accounts and paperwork of relevance to this thesis.<sup>53</sup> The majority of these documents have been calendared in Altmann's *Regesta*, but an examination of the original manuscripts not only revealed more information than Altmann had seen fit to include in his entries, but also documents which he had missed entirely. The Deutschordens Zentralarchiv, the central archive of the modern Teutonic Order, and the Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, also provided some archival material which was used in this thesis.

A spell of archival research was also undertaken at the Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt am Main, which contains the Stadtarchiv Frankfurt. Most of the relevant correspondence for this thesis in the Stadtarchiv was published in three volumes by Johannes Janssen.<sup>54</sup> However, he was particularly prone to leaving out documents which are difficult to read and he compiled his three volumes of printed correspondence before the archive was

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<sup>52</sup> Erich Joachim, 'König Sigmund und der Deutsche Ritterorden in Ungarn, 1429-1432: Mitteilung aus dem Staatsarchiv zu Königsberg', *MIÖG*, 33 (1912), 87-119.

<sup>53</sup> For background information, see Gerhard Seeliger, 'Die Registerführung am deutschen Königshof bis 1493', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung: Ergänzungsband*, 4 (1893), 223-364. For a discussion of the bands now labelled E-M, which cover the years 1411-39, see pp. 263-76. More generally, see Otto Spälter, 'Die Kanzleien des Alten Reiches im Spätmittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit', in *Kanzleisprachenforschung: Ein internationales Handbuch*, ed. Albrecht Greule, Jörg Meier et al. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), pp. 69-82.

<sup>54</sup> *Frankfurts Reichsrespondenz, nebst andern verwandten Aktenstücken von 1376-1519*, ed. Johannes Janssen, 3 vols (Freiburg: Herder'sche Verlagshandlung, 1863-1872).

reorganised in the 1880s and 1890s. This reorganisation would appear to have brought more material to light which means that Janssen's work contains some important omissions.<sup>55</sup>

Brief visits were also made to the Staatsarchiv Augsburg, Bavaria, and the Generellandesarchiv Karlsruhe, Baden-Württemberg. The *Regesta* of King Albert II's correspondence compiled by Günther Hödl was particularly useful in helping support my research in Augsburg, as was the work of von Weech for my two days spent in Karlsruhe.<sup>56</sup>

The medieval documents present in the Hungarian National Archives (Magyar Országos Levéltár) are accessible through an online database. Of particular use in accessing documents relevant to Sigismund's reign are the aforementioned volumes of the *Zsigmondkori Oklevéltár*. Where possible, under each entry in the *Zsigmondkori Oklevéltár* the reference to the original manuscript is given which allows the original document to be found in the online database.

Resources in the Archivio Segreto Vaticano and the Biblioteca Apostolica were also consulted. The *Registra Supplicationem*, much of which is unpublished and which record petitions to the Pope, were particularly useful when examining Sigismund's relationship with Pope Eugenius IV (1431-1447).

With the exception of the first chapter, this thesis is structured on a thematic basis. Chapter 1 serves to provide the historical background required in order to contextualise Sigismund's response to the Ottoman Turkish threat. Chapter 2 highlights Sigismund's use of the 'status' that came with Roman King, in order to raise awareness of the danger throughout Christendom. It does so through examining his letter writing, courtly ceremony and orations. Whereas chapter 2 underlines the more abstract ideological and cultural resources which Sigismund could draw upon as Roman King, the next three chapters explore how he attempted to draw upon concrete military resources. Chapter 3 explores how Sigismund drew upon naval and riverine expertise from his subjects as Roman King in order to support his warfare against the Ottoman Turks on the waters of the Danube. Chapter 4 focuses on the fortification of Sigismund's frontier with the Turks, and the manners in which he sourced expertise and resources from his subjects in the Reich in support of this. Lastly, chapter 5 will

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<sup>55</sup> Many of Janssen's omissions include documents of significant historical value. For one such example discovered during the course of my own archival research, see Mark Whelan, 'Walter of Schwarzenberg and the Fifth Hussite Crusade reconsidered (1431)', *MIÖG*, 122 (2014) (forthcoming).

<sup>56</sup> *Regesta Imperii 12. Albrecht II, 1438-1439*, ed. Günther Hödl (Vienna: Böhlau, 1975); Fr. von Weech, 'Die Kaiserukunden von 1379-1437 im Grossh. General-Landesarchiv in Karlsruhe', *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins*, 42 (new series, 3) (1888), 423-46.

underline how Sigismund drew upon the logistical and fiscal knowledge present in the Reich in order to support his campaigns and diplomatic manoeuvres against the Ottomans.

## **Chapter 1: Sigismund of Luxemburg and the Ottoman Turkish Threat**

This chapter will first survey Sigismund's response to the Ottoman threat between his accession as King of Hungary in 1387 and his election as King of the Romans in 1410. The second part of this chapter will then summarise his reign as Roman King and Holy Roman Emperor, his diplomatic travels and the major challenges which he confronted in order to help contextualise the thematic chapters that follow. In doing so, this chapter will provide an analysis of how Sigismund conceived of the Turkish threat and how he linked his Kingship of the Romans with his struggle against the Ottomans.

### ***1.1 Sigismund and the Ottomans, 1387-1410***

Sigismund, the second son of Charles IV (King of the Romans 1346-1355, Holy Roman Emperor 1355-1378), was born in Nuremberg in 1368 and was only 17 years of age when he was invited to become the *antecessor et capitaneus* of the Kingdom of Hungary.<sup>57</sup> Less than two years later he was crowned as King on 31 March 1387. Meanwhile, the Ottoman threat to Hungary had been growing since 1354 when the Turks had acquired a bridgehead at Gallipoli and had begun their conquest of the Balkans. After a Turkish army under the command of Murad I (1362-1389) decisively defeated a Serbian force at the Battle of Kosovo in June 1389, the Kingdom of Hungary was exposed to Turkish attacks and Sigismund was forced to respond. His first campaign against the Turks occurred at some point in the autumn of 1390, when he personally led an unsuccessful attempt to recapture the fortress of Golubac that had been seized by the Turks earlier that year.<sup>58</sup> It would be outside the same castle 38 years later when Sigismund would personally lead his last campaign against the Turks, before age and ill health ruled out further military campaigning on his part.

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<sup>57</sup> János M. Bak, *Königtum und Stände in Ungarn im 14-16. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1973), p. 28.

<sup>58</sup> Not 1392, as in Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 75. See Veszprémy, 'Sigismund at Golubac', pp. 293, 302.

Much of his life thereafter was taken up with the struggle against the Ottomans. Around 1450 Johannes de Segovia, a Spanish theologian from Castile, put his hand to writing a monumental history of the Council of Basle.<sup>59</sup> While discussing negotiations between Sigismund and a group of cardinals in the early 1430s, Segovia digresses and recounts the major events in Sigismund's life. Segovia begins by stating that Sigismund, 'had made war for the faith from the beginning of his life, [and] that he was well known in many clashes against the Turks during in the first flowering of his youth.'<sup>60</sup> Though Segovia exaggerates, this perception of Sigismund is one grounded in reality. Sigismund first campaigned against the Turks at the age of 22 and he would still be campaigning personally against the Ottomans 38 years later, at the age of 60.<sup>61</sup> In the last year of his life the desire to fight the Turks was still his overriding concern and he passed away on his deathbed lamenting that he was in too poor health to conduct a campaign to recover the Holy Land.<sup>62</sup>

Sigismund conducted campaigns with mixed success across the length of his kingdom between 1390-1395.<sup>63</sup> The scale of Sigismund's campaigning in the first few years is difficult to ascertain, but by 1395 Sigismund was able to concentrate enough resources to wrest from the Turks the critical Danubian fortress of Little Nicopolis.<sup>64</sup> His next campaign against the Turks is his most famous. In the summer of 1396 Sigismund led a crusading force composed of French, Burgundian and German contingents against the Turks. It would appear from Aşikpaşazade's account that the scale of this campaign alarmed Sultan Bayezid (1389-1402), who quickly raised his siege of Constantinople, burnt his siege machines and marched to

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<sup>59</sup> On Johannes de Segovia, see generally, Uta Fromherz, *Johannes von Segovia als Geschichtsschreiber des Konzils von Basel* (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1960). On his monumental history, see *ibid.*, pp. 72-77, 94-97.

<sup>60</sup> Joannis de Segovia, *Historia Gestorum Generalis Synodi Basiliensis*, ed. Ernest Birk, in *Monumenta Conciliorum Generalium* (Vienna: Concilium Basileense, 1857), ii. 585. 'ab inicio iuventutis sue militaverat semper pro fide, ut notum erat in multis congressibus contra Turcos factis in primo flore sue iuventutis.'

<sup>61</sup> Veszprémy, 'Sigismund at Golubac', p. 293.

<sup>62</sup> *RTA*, xii. 263 (nr 160). For further discussion, see Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 349.

<sup>63</sup> For summaries, see Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 75-6, 79-92; Housley, *Later Crusades*, pp. 73-9. Our main chronicle source is chronologically confused for these years. See, Thuróczy, *Chronicle*, pp. 29-67.

<sup>64</sup> Thuróczy, *Chronicle*, pp. 47-8. For the Ottoman raid into Hungary in 1394 which preceded Sigismund's capture of Little Nicopolis, see Halil Inalcik, 'An Ottoman Document on Bayezid I's Expedition into Hungary and Wallachia', in *Actes du X. congrès d'études byzantines* (Istanbul: Comité d'organisation du X. congrès international d'études byzantines, 1956), pp. 220-22. For background, see Halil Inalcik, 'The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades', in *A History of the Crusades*, ed. Norman Zacour and Harry Hazard, 6 vols (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), vi. 250-1.



Hungary.<sup>65</sup> After several successful sieges and skirmishes the crusading host besieged the fortress of Nicopolis, and was defeated by Bayezid's relief force on 25 September 1396.<sup>66</sup>

As regards these early clashes with the Ottomans there seems to be this notion in the historiography that Sigismund aimed to expel the Turks from Europe in their entirety in one fell blow. In the words of Ferenc Szakály, Nicopolis shattered the idea that 'the Turks could be expelled from Europe with the collaboration of the European powers in a single offensive'.<sup>67</sup> More recently, Engel has stated that Sigismund embarked on the campaign of Nicopolis 'with the ambitious aim of driving the Ottomans out of Europe'.<sup>68</sup> This hinges on a few lines of Froissart's chronicle and nothing else. A closer reading of the sources suggests that Sigismund's plan to drive the Turks out of Europe in one fell swoop did not exist. A closer reading of the sources also suggests that Sigismund's campaigning in 1396 brought genuine military successes and ones which he was able to maintain despite the defeat of the crusading force at Nicopolis in September of that year.

More convincing here is the argument of Veszprémy, who asserts that the Nicopolis 'campaign itself was the finale of a strategic plan pursued over many years', and that Sigismund was primarily concerned not with some great decisive showdown with the Turks, but with securing fortresses.<sup>69</sup> Though Veszprémy does not develop this point in any detail, the evidence available in Sigismund's donation charters to members of his nobility certainly supports this idea. Donation charters to nobles in the Kingdom of Hungary frequently contain a short biography of the noble in question in the narratio, and for many the Nicopolis campaign features highly. Sigismund's donation charter to Hermann Cilli (1365-1435) in August 1397 contains an account of the military service which the count and his followers rendered to Sigismund during the Nicopolis campaign, and the wresting of Danubian fortresses from Turkish hands lies at the centre of the narrative.<sup>70</sup> Considering Sigismund's

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<sup>65</sup> Aşıkpaşazade, *Vom Hirtenzelt zur Hohen Pforte: Frühzeit und Aufstieg des Osmanenreiches nach der Chronik 'Denkwürdigkeiten und Zeitläufte des Hauses "Osman"', von Derwisch Ahmed, genannt 'Aşık-paşa-sohn*, ed. and trans. Richard Kreutel (Graz: Verlag Styria, 1959), p. 98.

<sup>66</sup> The literature on the Crusade of Nicopolis is extensive. For a recent survey, László Veszprémy, 'Some Remarks on Recent Hungarian Historiography of the Crusade of Nicopolis (1396)', in *The Crusades and the Military Orders: Expanding the Frontiers of Medieval Latin Christianity*, ed. Zsolt Hunyadi and József Laszlovszky (Budapest: CEU, 2001), pp. 223-30.

<sup>67</sup> Szakály, 'Phases', p. 74. See also, Ferenc Szakály, 'The Hungarian-Croatian Border Defense System and its Collapse', in *From Hunyadi to Rákóczi: War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*, ed. János M. Bak and Béla K. Király (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1982), p. 141; Jefferson, *Holy Wars*, pp. 136-7.

<sup>68</sup> Engel, *Realm*, p. 203.

<sup>69</sup> Veszprémy, 'Crusade of Nicopolis', p. 225.

<sup>70</sup> *CDH*, x, ii. 418-21 (nr 247).

capture of Little Nicopolis the year before, he clearly had his mind on strengthening his hold on the Danube by capturing more fortresses in the area.<sup>71</sup> Overall, despite suffering a defeat at Nicopolis the campaign was a positive one for Sigismund. Between 1390 and 1396 he regained the fortresses which were vital for his kingdom's security and these would, with a few exceptions, remain in Hungarian hands until the sixteenth century.

Similarly, Sigismund's response to defeat at Nicopolis was a vigorous and effective one and it would be otiose to discuss it in great detail.<sup>72</sup> In brief, he attempted to reform his kingdom's finances, raise a peasant militia and oblige the Kingdom's nobility to take a more active role in the defence against the Turks.<sup>73</sup> 1401 and 1402 were particularly difficult years for Sigismund as he had to face a rebellion led by Ladislaus of Naples, a rival claimant to the Hungarian throne.<sup>74</sup> His victory, however, was a complete one and this came alongside a drive to strengthen further his own authority in the Kingdom of Hungary through marrying Barbara of Cilli, the daughter of Hermann Cilli.<sup>75</sup> In 1408 Sigismund founded the Order of the Dragon with Barbara, which initially included 21 members and which pledged all of its members to both support the king and queen and to fight the pagans.<sup>76</sup> The Order of the Dragon was critical in allowing Sigismund to stabilise his power in Hungary, but the support of its members was purchased by the ceding of numerous royal estates and by Sigismund's death the royal demesne had been significantly reduced.<sup>77</sup>

After Nicopolis Sigismund was keen to strengthen his relationships with his southern Christian neighbours, in particular the Duke of Bosnia and Despot of Serbia, in order to create what Rady has termed a *cordon sanitaire*, between him and the Turks.<sup>78</sup> Sigismund's attitude towards this *cordon sanitaire* evolved throughout his reign, but a letter to John the Fearless in 1404, Duke of Burgundy and veteran of Nicopolis, would imply that its basic components were in place by then.<sup>79</sup> In this letter, Sigismund notes that he had allied with the King of Bosnia and turned Stefan Lazarević, the Despot of Serbia, into his vassal and that he

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<sup>71</sup> A point noted in Thuróczy, *Chronicle*, p. 56.

<sup>72</sup> For a brief summary, see Whelan, 'Catastrophe or Consolidation?', pp. 215-228.

<sup>73</sup> Rady, *Land and Service*, pp. 149-56.

<sup>74</sup> Engel, *Realm*, pp. 206-8.

<sup>75</sup> For the importance of this marriage, see Thomas Krzenck, 'Barbara von Cilli – eine "Deutsche Messalina"?', *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Salzburger Landeskunde*, 131 (1991), 45-67 (pp. 47-8).

<sup>76</sup> For more information, see Jefferson, *Holy Wars*, pp. 131-4.

<sup>77</sup> Jefferson, *Holy Wars*, p. 131.

<sup>78</sup> Rady, *Land and Service*, p. 149.

<sup>79</sup> *CDH*, x, iv. 324 (nr 143). The letter is translated in Kastritsis, 'Ottoman Succession Wars', p. 228. See also, Dimitris Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid: Empire Building and Representation in the Ottoman Civil War of 1402-13* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 137-8.

was engaging the Turks with success. He had also sent forces to aid the Byzantine emperor and was simultaneously aiding the Voivode of Wallachia against the Turks.<sup>80</sup> The claims in this letter may appear bold, but they are substantiated by the continuation of the chronicle of Johann von Posilge (c. 1340-1405) which notes in 1407 how Sigismund had fought with success against the Turks, suggesting that news of his campaigning had circulated as far as Prussia.<sup>81</sup>

As Sigismund's letter to the Duke of Burgundy implies, his sphere of military activity against the Ottomans was therefore stretched across three main zones in a broad arc directly to the south of Hungary. This was a trend which would characterise his conflict with the Turks for the rest of his reign. A document outlining the defence of the Kingdom of Hungary, probably dating to 1415-1417, notes the distribution of 2200 lances *a parte partium Transalpinarum, Bulgarie [et] Rascye*.<sup>82</sup> The precise locations in which Sigismund fought the Turks of course changed throughout his reign, but it is worth briefly sketching them out. The most western zone comprised of the region around Slavonia and Bosnia. The second where the Hungarian Kingdom bordered the Despotate of Serbia, notably along the stretch of the Danube between Belgrade and Severin, roughly contiguous with the Banate of Severin.<sup>83</sup> The third zone comprised of Wallachia directly on the eastern flank of Severin, where campaigns usually revolved around supporting the Voivode against the Turks.<sup>84</sup> Taken together, the zones in which Sigismund needed to devise methods to counter the Turks stretched roughly from Wallachia, along the lower Danube to Belgrade and then along the Sava and Drava into the Banate of Slavonia and Dalmatia.<sup>85</sup>

As Rady states, the word 'frontier is... a slippery concept and can mean many things', but it seems appropriate to describe this broad zone as Sigismund's frontier with the Ottoman

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<sup>80</sup> *CDH*, x, iv. 324 (nr 143).

<sup>81</sup> Johann von Posilge, 'Chronik des Johann von Posilge nebst Fortsetzung', in *Scriptores Rerum Prussicarum*, ed. Ernst Strehlke et al. 6 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Minerva, 1965), iii. 79-388 (p. 287). Posilge is probably referring to Sigismund's campaign in Bosnia of that year. See *CDDSCZ*, v. 512 (nr 432).

<sup>82</sup> *CDPRHA*, pp. 58-9 (nr 111). For discussion, Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 145.

<sup>83</sup> For a brief introduction to the Banate of Severin/Szöreny, see Martyn Rady, *The Banate of Severin (Szöreny)* (unpublished book), pp. 3-4; Rady, *Land and Service*, pp. 90-5.

<sup>84</sup> For a summary, see Marius Diaconescu, 'The Relations of Vassalage between Sigismund of Luxemburg, King of Hungary, and Mircea the Old, Voivode of Wallachia', *Medievalia Transilvanica*, 2 (1998), 245-282 (esp. 260-70). Further to the east, the status of Moldavia was also of interest to Sigismund. See Deletant, Dennis, 'Moldavia between Hungary and Poland, 1347-1412', *SEER*, 64 (1986), 189-211 (esp. pp. 206-11).

<sup>85</sup> For more detail, see Szakály, 'border defense system', pp. 142-4 (esp. p. 143).

Turks.<sup>86</sup> It is broadly along this zone that Sigismund focussed his efforts on securing allies, building fortresses and campaigning. It has been noted that in order for the frontier ‘to remain a valid explanatory term... its singularity has to be established’.<sup>87</sup> I do not mean to imply that any aspect of this frontier, be it institutional, military, social, political, were unique to medieval Christendom at the time, only that it was here where Sigismund grappled with the Turkish threat.<sup>88</sup> This was arguably the most significant frontier on land – if not the only land frontier – between a Catholic power and the Ottoman Turks in Christendom.

Although Sigismund’s strategy against the Turks involved political and military overtures in the Adriatic, Aegean and Black Seas, it was primarily along the Danube that his involvement in the defence against the Turks was most active.<sup>89</sup> Turkish pressure was most acute on the stretch of the Danube between Belgrade and Severin, and it was this region where Sigismund arguably focussed the majority of his resources in order to counter the Ottoman threat. This thesis will therefore use the term ‘Danube frontier’, much like Rady does in a recent edition of the *DRMH*.<sup>90</sup> As chapter 3 will demonstrate, Sigismund conceptualised much of his struggle against the Turks as based directly on the Danube. In these contexts, his military planning and his rhetoric revolved around the Danube, and his campaigning was aimed at securing his hold on the river. Therefore, the term ‘Danube frontier’, which emphasises the waters of the Danube as the most critical geographical barrier between Sigismund and the Ottomans is not anachronistic as it reflects the military and political priorities which he held himself.

Overall, Sigismund was successful in securing these southern reaches of his Kingdom against Ottoman attacks throughout the first decade of the fifteenth century. Much of this can be attributed to his effective response, though it is worth emphasising that Sigismund very much had a free hand, as between 1402 and 1413 the Ottoman Empire was in a state of civil

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<sup>86</sup> For discussion, see Martyn Rady, ‘The Medieval Hungarian and Other Frontiers. Review Article: At the Gate of Christendom: Jews, Muslims and ‘Pagans’ in Medieval Hungary, c. 1000-c. 1300, by Nora Berend’, *SEER*, 81 (2003), 698-709.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 704. See also, Rady, Banate of Severin (Szöreny), pp. 84-5.

<sup>88</sup> Further helpful discussion on the nature of frontiers can be found in Paul Stephenson, *Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier: A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900-1204* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), pp. 1-7.

<sup>89</sup> See generally, Wolfgang von Stomer, ‘Die Schwarzmeer-und levante-Politik Sigismunds von Luxemburg’, *Bulletin de l’institut historique Belge de Rome*, 44 (1974), 601-11.

<sup>90</sup> Martyn Rady, ‘Jagello Hungary’, in *DRMH*, iv. xi-xlvii (for ‘Danube Frontier’, p. xxi). Zachariadou uses the same terminology in the title of an article: Elizabeth Zachariadou, ‘Ottoman Diplomacy and the Danube Frontier (1420-1424)’, in *Studies in Pre-Ottoman Turkey and the Ottomans* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), XIV.

war and their rulers were not in a position to place the Kingdom of Hungary or its neighbours under military pressure.<sup>91</sup>

## ***1.2 Election as Roman King and the Council of Constance, 1410-1419***

It was during this period of diminished threat that Sigismund acquired another crown. In May 1410 the King of the Romans, Rupert of Germany (1400-1410), died, and Sigismund was elected in his place. While he had to overcome some opposition from his cousin, Jobst of Moravia (1354-1411), Sigismund was crowned as King of the Romans in Aachen on 8 November 1414.<sup>92</sup> His election as King of the Romans marks the beginning of an intense involvement in the affairs of Christendom and Sigismund was absent from Hungary between 1412 and 1419.<sup>93</sup> Sigismund set himself the task of ending the Papal Schism and, after securing the agreement of Pope John XXIII (1410-1415) in November 1413, convened the Council of Constance which was opened in November 1414. As we will see in the next chapter, Sigismund explicitly linked his assumption of the Roman Kingship with the fight against the Ottoman Turks.

In many respects, it is the Council of Constance for which Sigismund is best remembered. In a nineteenth century life size portrait of Sigismund now on display in the Kaisersaal in Frankfurt am Main, Sigismund holds in one hand a sword and in the other hand a piece of parchment on which is written *concilia constanciensis*. The so called Klingenberg Chronik notes the connection between Sigismund's arranging of the Council and his Roman kingship, stating how while at the Council he saw to the matters of the Reich and 'did other things, as a Roman King should do'.<sup>94</sup> Bringing this Council to a successful close was a major feat which required an enormous amount of diplomatic skill, tact and determination. It also required him to travel extensively throughout western Europe and these travels left a great impression on contemporaries and he received praise for his masterful handling of the negotiations at Constance.<sup>95</sup> Sigismund's time in western Europe did not just involve political negotiations and discussions, but also active recruitment of military specialists for service against the Ottoman Turks, a theme explored in chapter 4. Sigismund's activities while in western Europe also involved more humorous undertakings. His decision

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<sup>91</sup> For the civil wars generally, see Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, pp. 41-159.

<sup>92</sup> Scales, *German Identity*, pp. 152-3.

<sup>93</sup> Engel, *Realm*, pp. 229-31; Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 94. For a detailed exploration of these years, see Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 162-272.

<sup>94</sup> *Klingenberg Chronik*, p. 175.

<sup>95</sup> Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 490-2.

to dance half naked through the streets of Strasbourg in the summer of 1414 with two hundred ladies was recorded with great amusement, but his antics could frequently turn from the eccentric to the offensive. In the summer of 1416 in Paris, for example, he turned up inebriated to a ball held in his honour, where his lascivious behaviour offended the ladies and his drunken singing and dancing even distracted the diners from eating their food.<sup>96</sup>

Hungarian contemporaries or near contemporaries saw Sigismund's involvement in these matters abroad as detrimental to the effort against the Turks. Piccolomini, in his *Historica Bohemica*, notes how the Hungarian barons were reluctant to elect a foreign king in 1438, as the magnates claimed that 'Sigismund, when he adopted the Roman crown, wandered through Italy, Germany and the remaining provinces and left Hungary open to the ravages of the Turks.'<sup>97</sup> This perception has entered modern scholarship too, and to an extent they have a point.<sup>98</sup> It was during Sigismund's absence at the Council of Constance that, in the words of Engel, Sigismund's southern frontier 'began to crack'.<sup>99</sup> The kingdom's defences were certainly under pressure, in particular around Bosnia. It was here in 1415 that Duke Hrvoje of Bosnia with Ottoman support defeated a Hungarian force under the command of Pál Csutor, the Ban of Slavonia.<sup>100</sup> Thúróczy's *Chronicle* contains the amusing story of Hrvoje taking his revenge on Csutor by sewing him up into an ox's skin, as Csutor used to bellow at him 'like an ox' whenever they met in Buda, presumably as some form of joke.<sup>101</sup>

However, Hrvoje did more than simply settle old scores with former bullies. He attacked Hungarian garrisons spread across fortresses in northern Bosnia and by 1415 most had fallen, with the major exception of Srebrenik.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, while the frontier was certainly under pressure during Sigismund's absence, the severity of the situation should not be exaggerated. The basic point should be made that one of our main sources for the frontier pressure in Hungary during the Council of Constance is Sigismund himself. It was during the Council of Constance that Sigismund used every means at his disposal to spread awareness of

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<sup>96</sup> For these antics, see chapter 4.

<sup>97</sup> Piccolomini, *Historica Bohemica*, i. 440-1 (book 4.76); discussed in Jefferson, *Holy Wars*, pp. 153-4. See Thúróczy, *Chronicle*, pp. 89-90, 93.

<sup>98</sup> Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 94; Jefferson, *Holy Wars*, pp. 144, 153-4. See also the introduction in *DRMH*, ii. xxxiv.

<sup>99</sup> Engel, *Realm*, p. 235.

<sup>100</sup> Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 139-40.

<sup>101</sup> Thúróczy, *Chronicle*, pp. 76-78. The tale is repeated in Antonio Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricum Decades*, ed. Margarita Kulcsár and Petrus Kulcsár et al, 4 vols (Leipzig: Teubner/ Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1936-1976), ii. 62 (decade iii, book 3, sections 141-3).

<sup>102</sup> Engel, *Realm*, pp. 235-6.

the Turkish threat and the peril in which Hungary lay. As we will see in the next chapter, this did not just include the circulation of letters, but the display of Ottoman prisoners during civic processions and invitations to join the Order of the Dragon. It must be remembered that while in the west it was in Sigismund's vested interest to exaggerate the Turkish threat. This was not just to galvanise his fellow princes into aiding him, but also in order to hurry the negotiations taking place at the Council.

The Council of Constance was a success in that it healed the Papal schism, with the synod electing Martin V (1417-1431) as the Pope recognised throughout Christendom. However, the Council's condemnation and execution of Jan Hus gave rise to the Hussite religious wars in Bohemia.<sup>103</sup> In 1419 Sigismund claimed the Kingdom of Bohemia after the death of his brother, Wenceslaus, and civil war broke out.<sup>104</sup> While Sigismund was crowned in Prague on 27 July 1420, it would not be until 1436 that Sigismund succeeded in having his authority recognised in the Kingdom.<sup>105</sup>

### ***1.3 Sigismund's response to the Ottomans, 1419- c.1426***

Sigismund returned to Hungary in February 1419 after an absence of seven years and the next decade or so would see him organise campaigns against the Turks almost every year. There exist numerous modern summaries of Sigismund's relationship with the Ottoman Turks between his return from Constance in 1419 and his death in 1437. However, existing summaries tend to cover his campaigns in patchy chronological detail and none of these are satisfactory for the purposes of this thesis as they do not focus in enough detail on how Sigismund himself conceived of his fight against the Turks.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, much of the coverage revolves around Sigismund's campaigning against the Turks, but both literary sources and archival material underline how important Sigismund's peace treaties and negotiations were in managing his relationship with the Ottomans. Furthermore, there exists a significant amount of unpublished archival material, in particular in the *Ordensbriefarchiv*,

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<sup>103</sup> The literature on Hus, Hussitism and the Hussite wars is extensive, see František Šmahel, *Die Hussitische Revolution*, 3 vols (Hannover: Hansche Buchhandlung, 2002). For a recent survey, see Josef Válka, 'Sigismund und die Hussiten, oder: wie eine Revolution beenden?', in *Kaiser Sigismund (1368-1437): Zur Herrschaftspraxis eines europäischen Monarchen*, ed. Karel Hruza and Alexandra Kaar (Böhlau: Vienna, 2012), pp. 21-56.

<sup>104</sup> For a summary, see Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 279-310.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 446.

<sup>106</sup> For example: Engel, *Realm*, pp. 231-9; John Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1987), pp. 453-528; Szakály, 'Phases', pp. 72-85. Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 138-161. Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 283-4, 334-5, 338-9, 342-4.

the Stadtarchiv Frankfurt and the Archivio Segreto Vaticano, which can shed new perspectives on Sigismund's response to the Ottoman Turkish threat.

Sigismund's campaigns against the Turks between 1419 and 1437 can be difficult to reconstruct. Diplomatic correspondence and the reports of observers present in Hungary often only report hearsay or rumours. Furthermore, they frequently do not correlate with our major narrative sources for this period, such as the chronicles and histories authored by Thuróczy, Bonfini, Długosz, Windecke and Doukas, which themselves are chronologically confused and which frequently contradict each other.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, it is clear that Sigismund's response to the Turks during the 1420s was an effective one. If anything, his hold on the southern frontier of Hungary was strengthened throughout this period. Piccolomini's general assessment of Sigismund as one who fought unsuccessfully against the Turks (*pugnavit infeliciter contra Turcos*) is not a fair one.<sup>108</sup> Sigismund succeeded in heavily fortifying the Danube frontier between Belgrade and Severin, through acquiring existing strongholds, renovating old fortresses and building new ones. While he was unable to establish his authority in Bosnia on a permanent basis, his vigorous campaigning in support of his Wallachian and Serbian vassals ensured that his southern and south eastern flanks were kept relatively secure.

While the pressures which the Ottomans placed on his kingdom during Sigismund's absence have been exaggerated both by contemporaries and modern historians, by 1418 there was certainly some cause for alarm.<sup>109</sup> As well as setbacks in Bosnia in 1415, it would appear that the Turks took advantage of the death of Mircea the Great, Voivode of Wallachia (1386-1418) and attempted to place their own candidate, Dan II (1420-1431, though his reign was punctured with numerous interregna) on the throne.<sup>110</sup> The Ottomans subjected the critical area around the Iron Gates, the bridging point on the Danube defended by the stronghold of Severin, to the most pressure. The worsening of the situation is reflected in contemporary reports, two of which survive in the *Ordensbriefarchiv*. On 12 November 1418, a certain Hans Stadler wrote a letter from Buda to the Grandmaster of the Teutonic Order, in which he stressed both the loveliness of Sigismund's wife and, on a more serious note, the damage

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<sup>107</sup> Despite its age Iorga's work on the Ottoman Empire and its detailed footnotes remain useful when reconstructing the events of the 1420s: Nicolae Iorga, *Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches* (Gotha: Friedrich Perthes), i. 389-97.

<sup>108</sup> Piccolomini, *Historia Bohemica*, i. 214 (book 2.197)

<sup>109</sup> Długosz paints a particularly alarming picture, with Turkish attacks along the length of Bulgaria, Serbia, Siebenbürgen and Albania. See Długosz, *Historiae Polonicae*, xi. 238.

<sup>110</sup> For background, Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 141-2; Inalcik, 'The Ottoman Turks', p. 259.



which the Turks were inflicting on Hungary (*dy Turchken haben súst schaden in dem land getan*).<sup>111</sup> In the same month, Conrad, Bishop of Breslau (1417-1447) wrote to the Grandmaster expressing a similar sentiment, that *der Torken groschen schaden haben getan in dem lande*.<sup>112</sup> Conrad went on to say that the Turks had done so at the request and with the help of the Venetians and that the extent of the damage seemed so great that it was the worst seen in Hungary for many years (*mit antracht und holffe der Venediger und derselbige schaden sey so gros, das das schaden gleich nicht geschen... in dem lande vor vil jaren*).<sup>113</sup>

Though Długosz is scathing of Sigismund's attempts to fight the Turks in 1419, other sources give a more favourable impression and suggest that his response upon his return to Hungary was an effective one.<sup>114</sup> In 1419 Sigismund repossessed critical fortresses under the control of the Wallachian Voivode, such as Bran (Törzburg).<sup>115</sup> The dating clauses in the documents which he issued in October, November and December reveal that he largely based himself in the region around the Iron Gates (*Eysern tor*) and in close proximity to fortresses such as Severin and Orsova.<sup>116</sup> Sigismund recognised that this area needed strengthening and erected the fortresses of Drencova, Stanilowcz and Pojejena, around this time.<sup>117</sup> Much of this fortress building and, as we will see, the campaigning in this area, was undertaken by Filippo Scolari, a Florentine general who was given high office in the Hungarian kingdom by Sigismund.<sup>118</sup> Scolari was an active field commander and in 1419 he was campaigning in Transylvania.<sup>119</sup> As well as building new fortresses, Sigismund needed to develop and support existing ones. The fate of Severin during these years has been debated, and Szakály has suggested without any evidence that it fell to the Turks in 1420.<sup>120</sup> This assertion seems

<sup>111</sup> OBA, 2825. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 2825. Turkish pressure on Hungary is also noted in Posilge, *Chronik*, p. 378.

<sup>112</sup> OBA, 2828. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 2828.

<sup>113</sup> OBA, 2828.

<sup>114</sup> Długosz, *Historiae Polonicae*, xi. 238. Abridged in Michael, *The Annals*, p. 449. Sigismund's campaigning in 1419 is mentioned in *CDDSCZ*, vi. 559 (nr 383). *ZKO*, vii. nr 998.

<sup>115</sup> *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, ed Franz Zimmermann and Carl Werner, 4 vols, (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2007), iv. nr 1864. *ZKO*, vii. nr 618. On Törzburg generally, see Liviu Cîmpeanu, 'König Vladislav II., der Kronstädter Distrikt und die Törzburg', in *Between Worlds: The Age of the Jagiellonians*, ed. Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, Christopher Nicholson and Florin Ardelean (Vienna: Peter Lang, 2013), pp. 47-60 (Given the evidence contained in *Urkundenbuch Siebenbürgen*, iv. nr 1864, Cîmpeanu's comments on p. 58 about Törzburg remaining in the possession of the Wallachian voivode until the mid-1420s seem unfounded).

<sup>116</sup> One letter of 26 October 1419 carries the clause, 'Geben uff unserm newen haws in der Bulgarei bei dem Eysern tor'. See the letter printed in Aschbach, *Geschichte*, ii. 451-2 (nr 29).

<sup>117</sup> Ţeicu, *Banat*, pp. 72, 97, 99.

<sup>118</sup> The figure of Scolari will be explored in detail in chapter five. The literature on Scolari is extensive. For an introduction, see Mark Whelan, 'Merchant, Administrator and General: Filippo Scolari in the Service of the Hungarian King, c. 1397-1426', *Whispering Gallery*, 115 (2012), 19-24. See also the references cited in, Ioan Haţegan, *Filippo Scolari: Un condotier Italian pe meleaguri dunărene* (Timișoara: Mirton, 1997), p. 92.

<sup>119</sup> *ZKO*, ix. nr 939.

<sup>120</sup> Szakály, 'Phases', p. 80. See also, Welsh, 'The Battle for Christendom', p. 195.

unlikely, though it would appear that the Ottomans were able to cross the Danube at the Iron Gates, the bridging point which Severin was supposed to safeguard.<sup>121</sup> Severin remained under Ottoman pressure, but Sigismund ensured that it was effectively defended. Bonfini notes that Sigismund had specifically arranged for the defence against the Turks by sending a certain Stephen Losonczi to the region with full command, and this would appear to have some grounding in reality.<sup>122</sup> In a letter of 25 July 1420, Sigismund Losonczi, the castellan of Severin, Orsova, Mihald and Sebes noted the successful repulse of a Turkish attack, and other items of correspondence reveal that Scolari was also campaigning too.<sup>123</sup> Within a few years Severin had been strengthened and renovated.<sup>124</sup> Losonczi's letter also reveals that the peace treaty, which, according to Windecke, was agreed between Sigismund and Murad in 1419, was not adhered to.<sup>125</sup>

Contemporaries and modern historians present Sigismund as needing to make a choice between either fighting the Hussites or fighting the Turks. Though Windecke's chronology is sketchy, he implies that it is around 1422/23 when Sigismund refused to campaign against the Hussites on account of the threat which the Turks posed to Hungary.<sup>126</sup> Similarly, Piccolomini noted that Sigismund chose to fight the Turks rather than the Hussites, a decision which he criticised sharply. In Piccolomini's eyes, Sigismund proved unable to resist the Turks anyway, and lost the Kingdom of Bohemia and left swathes of Germany open to Hussite raiding and pillaging, a judgement repeated (almost word for word) by Długosz and Bonfini.<sup>127</sup> Their chronology is roughly correct. After all, it was in 1422 when Sigismund last took personal part in a campaign against the Hussites, but the reality was more complex.

For Sigismund it was not so much a decision whether to concentrate his forces against the Hussites or the Turks, for he clearly thought that combatting the latter took priority, but rather where precisely to fight the Turks. Sigismund knew well that he did not have the resources to support his allies and vassals against the Turks in Dalmatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Wallachia and Moldavia. He would have to prioritise, and throughout the 1420s and 1430s

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<sup>121</sup> Gustav Gündisch, 'Die Türkeneinfälle in Siebenbürgen bis zur Mitte des 15. Jahrhunderts', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 2 (1937), 393-412 (p. 397).

<sup>122</sup> Bonfini, *Decades*, ii. 62 (decade iii, book 3, section 148-150).

<sup>123</sup> Frigyes Pesty, *A Szörény vármegyei hajdani oláh kerülek* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1876), pp. 56-7. *ZKO*, vii. nr 2010. For Scolari's campaigning, see *CDDSCZ*, vi. 632-3 (nr 428); *ZKO*, vii. nr 2207.

<sup>124</sup> *CDP*, i. 317-8 (nr 205)

<sup>125</sup> Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 139.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117. Windecke states again that the Venetians were aiding the Turks.

<sup>127</sup> Piccolomini, *Historia Bohemica*, i. 272 (book 2.369). See also *ibid.*, ii. 171 (book 2.929). See also, Długosz, *Historiae Polonicae*, xi. 238; Bonfini, *Decades*, ii. 48 (decade iii, book 2, section 373-5)

Sigismund would consistently choose to concentrate what resources he had in support of his Wallachian and Serbian allies and on securing his hold on the Danube between Belgrade and Severin. Sigismund's hold on Bosnia and Dalmatia was indeed weak and historians, such as Engel and Fine, are right to point this out.<sup>128</sup> However, it was precisely these regions which slipped down in Sigismund's list of priorities during the 1420s and the 1430s. Sigismund did not support his allies in Bosnia and Dalmatia, for example, when they appealed for aid in 1422 and 1423. A letter of 25 October 1423 notes how Sigismund had recalled forces from Bosnia, precisely to support his campaigns in Transylvania.<sup>129</sup> Placing Bosnia and Dalmatia at the bottom of his list did not make Sigismund popular, but he should at least be given the credit for making a clear choice. As we will see in the last section of this chapter, this was probably the correct choice. The events of the later 1420s and, in particular, the years 1435-7, would suggest that Sigismund did not need to invest considerable resources in holding the so called *passus Bosne*. Even without these he was able to establish a defensive system which shielded Hungary from the Turks based upon just a handful of fortresses in northern Bosnia, supported by three marches dug deep into the banates of Croatia and Slavonia.<sup>130</sup>

Throughout the 1420s Sigismund threw his weight behind supporting his Wallachian and Serbian allies and in securing the critical stretch of Danube between Belgrade and Severin. Sigismund initially encountered difficulty in securing Wallachia against a resurgent Ottoman power now led by Sultan Murad II (1421-1444, 1446-1451). These difficulties resulted from Sigismund's absence from Hungary in 1420 in order to personally campaign against the Hussites. The Turks raided Transylvania in both 1420 and 1421, in the first instance apparently reaching Braşov (Kronstadt) and burning its suburbs.<sup>131</sup> Sigismund was absent once again in 1422, and though Sigismund was keen to emphasise the dangers which the Turks posed to Hungary in his correspondence, it would appear that his forces in Wallachia and Transylvania fought with some success.<sup>132</sup> Sigismund returned to Hungary in 1423 and concentrated on securing Dan II's authority in Wallachia.<sup>133</sup> Though initially

<sup>128</sup> Engel, *Realm*, p. 236. Fine, *Late Medieval Balkans*, pp. 489-90.

<sup>129</sup> *DRRRcRH*, p. 292 (nr 189). *ZKO*, x, nr 1268.

<sup>130</sup> A phrase Sigismund used in 1426, see *DRRRcRH*, p. 317 (nr 202)

<sup>131</sup> Gündisch, 'Türkeneinfälle in Siebenbürgen', p. 398.

<sup>132</sup> For Sigismund's letter in which he stresses the dangers of the Turks, see, Ottokar Israel, *Das Verhältnis des Deutschen Ordens zum Reich im 15. Jahrhundert* (Marburg: Lahn, 1952), p. 99 (nr 24). For successes against the Turks, reported in March 1423 and which presumably occurred in the campaigning season of 1422, see Andreas von Regensburg, 'Diarium sexennale', in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Georg Leidinger (Munich: M. Rieger'sche Universitäts Buchhandlung, 1903), p. 309. On Andreas' *Diarium sexennale*, see Stefan Dicker, *Landesbewusstsein und Zeitgeschehen. Studien zur bayerischen Chronistik des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Böhlau: Cologne, 2008), pp. 34-6.

<sup>133</sup> *DRRRcRH*, p. 292 (nr 189). Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 335; Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 141-2.

supported by the Ottomans, Dan II had switched sides and joined with Sigismund and by the summer of 1423 he was on the Wallachian throne.<sup>134</sup> Sigismund stressed in 1399 the danger that was posed to Hungary if the Wallachians pledged fealty to the Turks.<sup>135</sup> If the Wallachians were to submit to the power of the Turks, Sigismund asked, ‘in how great a danger and crisis would our kingdom be in afterwards?’ (*in quanto postea periculo et discrimine existeret regnum nostrum*).<sup>136</sup> The stakes were even higher in the 1420s and Sigismund did his utmost to keep his own candidate on the Wallachian throne.

It was in the early 1420s when Sigismund entered into negotiations with Władysław II of Poland (1386-1434) and Witold of Lithuania for aid, and his requests for aid *contra infaustos Turcos* were repeated throughout the decade.<sup>137</sup> It is unclear whether Sigismund wanted them to lend him soldiers to support his campaigning, or if they should attack with their own forces on a different flank to relieve pressure on his. According to Długosz, Władysław claimed in 1419 that he had already helped Sigismund against the Turks by paying for the freedom of Hungarians who had been captured by the Turks while he was absent at Constance.<sup>138</sup> This may be true, as Długosz recounts earlier in his chronicle how Władysław sent embassies to the Turks in 1415 to arrange for the ransom of Hungarian barons taken prisoner in Bosnia. Though his legates made contact with the Turks, on their way back through Hungary they were captured by Scolari and thrown into prison, robbed of their belongings and, as Długosz is particularly keen to emphasise, stripped off their clothing, including even their shoes and shoelaces.<sup>139</sup> Though Scolari’s behaviour may seem harsh, he was right to be suspicious. These Poles had letters from the Turks in their possession and no letters of safe conduct for passage through the Kingdom of Hungary, and Scolari may have feared that they were conspiring with the Ottomans.<sup>140</sup>

Whatever the case, Sigismund probably wanted more active involvement on the part of Władysław and Witold and he was eager to make them aware of the campaigning which he

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<sup>134</sup> Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 334-5. Bonfini ascribes to Losoncz a significant role in supporting Dan. See Bonfini, *Decades*, ii. 62 (decade iii, book 3, sections 145-52).

<sup>135</sup> Diaconescu, ‘Relations of Vassalage’, p. 264.

<sup>136</sup> *Documenta Romaniae Historica, D: Documenta Relații între Țările Române*, ed. Ștefan Bezdechi et al. (Bucharest: Academiei republicii socialiste România, 1977), i. 172 (nr 105). *ZKO*, i. nr 5679.

<sup>137</sup> Altmann, nr 4630. This particular phrase is used by Sigismund in a letter of July 1426. See *CEV*, p. 736 (nr 1237).

<sup>138</sup> Długosz, *Historiae Polonicae*, xi. 248-9.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, xi. 182. A similar chain of events occurred in 1439-1440. See Jefferson, *Holy Wars*, p. 156. The Hungarians in this case were also unconvinced.

<sup>140</sup> Długosz, *Historiae Polonicae*, xi. 182. Scolari eventually let the Polish legates go home and Długosz makes their anger with their treatment very clear. Długosz recalls their treatment with even more colourful language at xi.249.

was undertaking against the Ottomans. In March 1423 Sigismund met with Władysław and Witold among others at Käsmark (in modern day Slovakia).<sup>141</sup> The Voivode of Wallachia had recently inflicted a severe defeat on a Turkish army and, according to Andreas von Regensburg (c. 1380-c. 1444), had taken the Turkish captain captive and led him to Sigismund's court, presumably so that he could be displayed by Sigismund to his fellow rulers.<sup>142</sup> As we will see in the next chapter, the display of Turks captured in battle at courtly events was something which Sigismund did while travelling in the west. Regensburg also notes that Wallachian forces had found two banners of King Władysław among the piles of Turkish treasure which they had taken, banners which Sigismund presumably returned to Władysław.<sup>143</sup>

Regensburg garbles these events slightly as he identifies the voivode who vanquished the Turks as *Merczweida* (Mircea), who at the time was actually fighting for the Turks against Dan and Sigismund. Nevertheless, Regensburg's tales of success in Transylvania would appear to be essentially accurate, as they are supported by Bonfini, who notes that a member of the noble Macedóniai family, based in southern Hungary, scored numerous successes against the Turks in the *bella in Transalpinis*.<sup>144</sup> Bonfini, as usual, does not give explicit dates, but these successes appeared to have occurred in the early 1420s as they are located in the same section in which the civil war between Dan (*Daan*) and Mircea (*Merches*) is recounted.<sup>145</sup> His next section begins by reminding the reader that Sigismund, by this point in his narrative, had ruled Hungary for 34 years, which would imply that these events took place in the very late 1410s or the early 1420s.<sup>146</sup> However, it is probable that Regensburg and Bonfini are both describing the same events as similarly to Regensburg, Bonfini also notes the capture of Turkish banners and other booty which was sent to Sigismund's court.<sup>147</sup>

After securing Dan's position in 1423 Sigismund continued to campaign on his behalf. 1424 saw further campaigning with renewed attention on the Danube frontier and the region around the Iron Gates.<sup>148</sup> Scolari began renovating Severin and other nearby fortresses (*aliorum fortaliorum confiniorum*) in this year and led a campaign in support of

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., xi. 312.

<sup>142</sup> Regensburg, 'Diarium sexennale', p. 309.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p. 309.

<sup>144</sup> Bonfini, *Decades*, ii. 63 (decade iii, book 3, sections 160-63). On the Macedóniai, see Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 336.

<sup>145</sup> For the civil war, see Bonfini, *Decades*, ii. 62 (decade iii, book 3, sections 145-52)

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., ii. 64 (decade iii, book 3, section ?)

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., ii. 64 (decade iii, book 3, section ?)

<sup>148</sup> Szakály, 'Phases', p. 80.

Lazarević.<sup>149</sup> He appears to have fought with success, though some of his methods did cause consternation. In the same year, for example, the county of Krassó complained to Scolari, as his deputy had forcibly conscripted a group of peasants for service in his army.<sup>150</sup> The leaders of Krassó had a point, and Sigismund's military use of the peasantry may have been more significant than initially meets the eye.<sup>151</sup> Bonfini notes that Sigismund, rather than rely solely on knights, called upon the common people and rural peasantry to serve in his armies against the Turks (*gregarium aut e rustica plebe evocatum erat*).<sup>152</sup> According to Bonfini, Sigismund was able to collect together a significant number of peasants in this way (*agrestem congerit multitudinem*), as they were motivated by their desire to fight 'for hearths and homes' (*pro aris ac focis*).<sup>153</sup> Slightly to the east, a strong force supported with troops drawn from Scolari's *banderium* campaigned in Transylvania.<sup>154</sup> To the west, Hermann Cilli, Sigismund's father-in-law, lent military help to King Tvrtko of Bosnia (1421-1443).<sup>155</sup>

Though details are scarce, Sigismund's campaigning in 1424 would appear to have been on a scale large enough to bring Murad to the negotiating table. Murad's peace overtures may have also been influenced by the ongoing siege of Thessalonica (1422-1430), and he may have wished to free up resources on the Danube for use in northern Greece. Windecke records numerous Turkish visits to Sigismund's court and places these around the time of John VIII Palaiologus' visit to Buda which took place in 1424.<sup>156</sup> In one case he records that Sigismund agreed a two year peace, but this was not kept by the Turks (*es wart aber nit gehalten von den Dürken*).<sup>157</sup> In another tale, Windecke notes how Sigismund treated one Turkish emissary upon his arrival at his court. This emissary was, apparently, 'a most

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<sup>149</sup> CDP, i. 317-8 (nr 205)

<sup>150</sup> Frigyes Pesty, *Krassó vármegye története*, 4 vols (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1882), iii. 307 (nr 214). For further discussion, see András Borosy, 'The *Militia Portalis* in Hungary before 1526', in *From Hunyadi to Rákóczi: War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*, ed. János M. Bak and Béla K. Király (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1982), p. 72.

<sup>151</sup> On this generally, see Borosy, 'The *Militia Portalis* in Hungary', pp. 63-80.

<sup>152</sup> Both Borosy and Joseph Held seem unaware of Bonfini's account of Sigismund's use of the peasantry and the ramifications that this could have on the debates over the institution of the 'Militia Portalis'. For the 'Militia Portalis', see Borosy, 'The *Militia Portalis* in Hungary', pp. 63-80. See also Joseph Held, 'Peasants in Arms, 1437-1438 and 1456', in *From Hunyadi to Rákóczi: War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*, ed. János M. Bak and Béla K. Király (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1982), pp. 81-101. Bonfini, *Decades*, ii. 63 (decade iii, book 3, section 166).

<sup>153</sup> Bonfini, *Decades*, ii. 63 (decade iii, book 3, section 166).

<sup>154</sup> Marius Diaconescu and Géza Érszegi, 'Documenta, quibus Hungariae, Valachiae et Moldaviae relationes melius illustrantur (1417-1484)', *Mediaevalia Transilvanica*, 2 (1998), 283-88 (p. 284, nr 2).

<sup>155</sup> Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 140.

<sup>156</sup> Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, pp. 177, 182-3, 186. The Emperor was apparently treated very well in Buda. See *ibid.*, pp. 177, 198. On this visit, see Jonathan Harris, *The End of Byzantium* (London: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 110.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

lovely person to look at' and Sigismund did not insult him (*der konig geneiget ime nie*), but instead sat him down on a stool which he placed directly opposite him and began chatting.<sup>158</sup> The Turkish emissary was not so polite, 'and insulted him a little', though what form these insults take Windecke does not say.<sup>159</sup> This meeting was relatively fruitless as the peace which was eventually agreed was not kept to, though Sigismund did receive numerous gifts, including 10 pagan carpets (*10 heidesch deppich*).

Admittedly, Windecke's tales are amusing and his coverage of Sigismund's activities in the mid-1420s appears particularly fantastical. It is around 1424 when Windecke recounts in his work the bizarre tale of how Sigismund was near death after being poisoned by some black pepper.<sup>160</sup> A Viennese doctor saved his life by working 'many wonders', which included hanging the king upside down by his feet for 24 hours.<sup>161</sup> When tales of suspect batches of black pepper are left aside, however, Windecke's basic assertions as regards the Turkish emissaries can be vindicated with other sources. The correspondence of Claus Redwitz, a Teutonic Knight who was in Sigismund's service perhaps as early as 1422, survives in significant quantity in the Ordensbriefarchiv and gives invaluable glimpses into life at Sigismund's court.<sup>162</sup> Redwitz's letter to Rusdorf on 19 January 1425, for example, supports Windecke's tales of Sigismund negotiations with the Turks. As well as informing Rusdorf that the despot, presumably the Despot of Serbia, was not dead (*der dispoed nicht tot ist*), Redwitz also noted that Sigismund had an assured peace with the Turks (*eynen wolgesischerten fred mit den Torken*).<sup>163</sup> That Turkish emissaries were present in Buda in

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., p. 183. 'das was gar ein herlich persone anzusehen'. For John VIII's visit, see Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 335-6.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p. 183. 'und neiget ime do ein wenig'.

<sup>160</sup> Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, pp. 98-9.

<sup>161</sup> Windecke's tale in this case seems reliable, as Sigismund was the target of repeated attempts to poison him. For the often adventurous Venetian attempts to poison Sigismund, see Martin Štefánik, 'Die Beschlüsse des venezianischen Consiglio dei Dieci zu den Attentatsversuchen auf Sigismund aus den Jahren 1413-1420', in *Kaiser Sigismund (1368-1437): Zur Herrschaftspraxis eines europäischen Monarchen*, ed. Karel Hruza and Alexandra Kaar (Vienna: Böhlau, 2012), pp. 161-74. More generally, Franck Collard, 'D'Henri VII à Sigismund de Luxembourg: une dynastie impériale à l'épreuve du poison', in *Emperor Sigismund and the Orthodox World*, ed. Ekaterini Mitsiou et al. (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010), pp. 9-16.

<sup>162</sup> Redwitz is first mentioned as in the presence of Sigismund in a letter dated to December 26, 1422. He was clearly relatively senior as brother Ludwig von Lanzen reports that Redwitz had been entrusted with sensitive information, suitable for the Grandmaster's ears only. OBA, 4010; *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 4010. He was therefore with Sigismund much earlier than 1425, as supposed in, *Die Berichte der Generalprokuratoren des Deutschen Ordens an der Kurie*, ed. Kurt Forstreuter et al., 4 vols (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961-76), iv, part 1, p. 174 (nr 131).

<sup>163</sup> OBA, 4378.

1424 is supported by a letter of Ragusa addressed to Sigismund on 31 August, which notes a certain *orator Theucrorum* in Sigismund's company.<sup>164</sup>

The peace did not last and within a year the Ottomans had removed Dan from Wallachia and replaced him with Radul. Upon receiving news that Dan had been ousted by the Turks, Windecke records that Sigismund was 'somewhat distressed' (*etwas bekumbert*), which seems to be something of an understatement.<sup>165</sup> Another contemporary noted how the Turks had won Wallachia in 1425, leaving Transylvania open to attack.<sup>166</sup> The summer of 1425 therefore saw campaigns against the Turks in two theatres in response. Sigismund dispatched one army against the Turks in Transylvania in support of Dan, while Scolari led another force against the Turks along the Danube frontier and the vicinity of the Iron Gates.<sup>167</sup> The campaigning was extended into the next year.<sup>168</sup> Sigismund would note in a letter to Cardinal Beaufort in June 1426, how he had defeated the Turks and restored Dan to his previous position.<sup>169</sup> Once again, the importance of guarding the Iron Gates and supporting his Wallachian allies against the Ottomans emerges clearly from Sigismund's correspondence. In May 1426, Sigismund stated in a letter to Witold how he was moving to secure Severin (*Zewrino*), from where he would then head eastwards into Transylvania to support Dan.<sup>170</sup> Windecke claims that Sigismund was forced to campaign in Wallachia and Bulgaria during the summer of 1426, as had he not done so the lands would have been lost to the Turks.<sup>171</sup>

While 1426 was a successful year for Sigismund, it did come at a cost. Scolari met his death in a battle and Sigismund was deprived of one of his most talented generals. Scolari, supported by his Hungarian forces as well as several hundred Portuguese soldiers led by Dom Pedro (1392-1449), a prince of Portugal, had engaged the Turks near the fortress of Golubac and later died from wounds sustained during the battle.<sup>172</sup> Furthermore, Tvrtko, Sigismund's candidate in Bosnia, capitulated to the Turks after they campaigned with a force 4,000 strong,

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<sup>164</sup> *DRRRcRH*, p. 299 (nr 193).

<sup>165</sup> Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 197.

<sup>166</sup> Palacký, *Urkundliche Beiträge*, i. 407 (nr 349).

<sup>167</sup> *DRRRcRH*, pp. 309-10 (nr 199). Calendared in, *ZKO*, xii. nr 1144.

<sup>168</sup> In November 1425, one noble family reported buying armour in Muhi, in northern Hungary, in preparation for fighting against the Turks. See *ZKO*, xii. nr 1255. Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 135.

<sup>169</sup> *RTA*, viii. 489 (nr 405). Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 157-8.

<sup>170</sup> This document has not been published, and we are reliant on Prochaska's summary in *CEV*, pp. 724-5 (nr 1226); Altmann, nr 6674.

<sup>171</sup> Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 204

<sup>172</sup> The figure of Dom Pedro is explored in greater detail in chapter 2. For the battle, see Jacopo di Poggio Bracciolini, 'Vita di messer Filippo Scolari', *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 4 (1843), 163-84 (pp. 179, 183-4). Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 341-2.



leaving Hungarian possessions in Croatia and Dalmatia vulnerable.<sup>173</sup> With Bosnia excepted, however, Sigismund had campaigned with relative success against the Ottomans in the 6 or so years since his return from Hungary. Before exploring the next few years of his campaigning, for which we have particularly rich sources, Sigismund's conception of the Ottoman threat needs to be considered.

#### ***1.4 Between Turks and Hussites: Sigismund's broader conception of the Ottoman threat***

To modern eyes Sigismund seems surrounded by enemies. With Turks to the south, Hussites to the north west and Venetians to the west, not to mention disputes with the Polish Kingdom and Grand Duchy of Lithuania to the north and north east, Sigismund had a great deal to defend and a great many relationships to manage. It is no surprise that the idea that Sigismund was surrounded by enemies held currency with contemporaries. One gets an impression of the difficulties which Sigismund faced when reading a summary of a letter in Windecke's chronicle. Windecke notes Sigismund's rather desperate situation, noting how he could not do as he wished because he was surrounded by 'pagans and Turks' (*heiden und Durken*), who were inflicting great damage on the Christians in Hungary.<sup>174</sup> Windecke also wheeled out the stock rumour that the treacherous Venetians had played a role in supporting Turkish attacks.<sup>175</sup>

The idea that Sigismund was surrounded by enemies was one which he was keen to promote himself. In 1424, for example, Sigismund emphasised the suffering of his Kingdom of Hungary as they sought to battle simultaneously the Turks, heretical Bosnians, other unbelievers and the Hussites.<sup>176</sup> Contemporaries appear to have picked up on the fact that this image of a Hungarian Kingdom, beset on all sides, struck a chord with Sigismund. In August 1433, the city of Ragusa sent an embassy to Sigismund and included instructions on what to say so that 'our said lord would be most kind' (*detto signor nostro fosse tanto benigno*).<sup>177</sup> One of the things they were to emphasise was Hungary's position, and how it was not just envied and detested by schismatics and heretics, but was in fact surrounded by them (*molto é invidiata et odiata non solamente dali scismatici et heretici, da i quali la circumdata*).<sup>178</sup> Sigismund's own conception of his situation is best demonstrated in a report written by a

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<sup>173</sup> *DRRRcRH*, pp. 317, 319 (nr 202). Fine, *Late Medieval Balkans*, pp. 472-3.

<sup>174</sup> Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 145; Hagen, *Eberhard Windecke*, p. 117.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>176</sup> Palacký, *Urkundliche Beiträge*, i. 342 (nr 296). It is probably this letter which serves as Windecke's source for his statements on Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 145.

<sup>177</sup> *DRRRcRH*, p. 381 (nr 233).

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 381.

certain Peter Wacker, who visited his court in 1425. The detailed report of Peter is instructive and humorous in equal measure. He was sent to Sigismund with a certain Konrad of Bickenbach on behalf of the Electors of the Holy Roman Empire in order to discuss the arrangements for the upcoming Reichstag at Vienna. Konrad and Peter's instructions survive, and set out very clearly what questions they were to ask the King and what was to be discussed.<sup>179</sup> The items on the agenda very much reflect the priorities of the Imperial electors, and revolve around whether Sigismund would personally attend the Reichstag in Vienna, the actions which he intended to take against the Hussite threat and the state of his health. The fact that Sigismund placed the Turkish threat at the centre of his replies indicates the importance which Sigismund attached to combatting the Ottomans.

Sigismund has been called the *ferne König* by modern historians and Peter Wacker may have agreed, as it took him around a week to track him down in northern Hungary.<sup>180</sup> Even once they found Sigismund in the village where he was staying Peter and Konrad struggled to secure an audience as they were told the king was out hunting. A few days later they resorted to waiting patiently outside the church where they heard that Sigismund was hearing mass and sprung upon him as he made his exit. They asked for an audience and Sigismund promised to grant them one later.

Sigismund's court seems to have been quite a busy one and reflects his status as the secular head of Christendom. Peter lists the numerous German and Hungarian lords and prelates in Sigismund's chamber and notes the presence of embassies from throughout Christendom and beyond, including from the Byzantine emperor, the Despot of Serbia, the King of Poland, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, the Teutonic Order and numerous other lords.<sup>181</sup> Peter and Konrad asked Sigismund if he would personally attend the Reichstag in Vienna and if he would consider travelling further into the Reich in order to hold court at Regensburg. Sigismund's reply was very clear. He did not want to ride to Vienna, let alone Regensburg. Sigismund stated that he was in an awful position, that he thought only of the

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<sup>179</sup> *RTA*, viii. 367-8. Discussed briefly in Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 323.

<sup>180</sup> A recent project of the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften which dealt with Sigismund's rule in east and central Europe was entitled, 'Der ferne Kaiser. Herrschaftspraxis, Netzwerke und Kommunikation Sigismunds von Luxemburg (1368-1437)'. For more information, see Alexandra Kaar, 'Urkunden, Rituale und Herrschaftspraxis eines europäischen Monarchen', in *Kaiser Sigismund (1368-1437): Zur Herrschaftspraxis eines europäischen Monarchen*, ed. Karel Hruza and Alexandra Kaar (Vienna: Böhlau, 2012), pp. 467-475 (esp. p. 474). Peter's lengthy report is published in *RTA*, viii. 372-8 (nr 311). For the journey to Sigismund's court in Hungary, see pp. 372-3.

<sup>181</sup> *RTA*, viii. 373-4.

‘honour and unity of Christendom’ and that he was always stuck in the middle, in between the unbelievers.<sup>182</sup>

Sigismund explained his predicament in some detail to Peter.<sup>183</sup> He felt as if he was always sat in the middle of everything and always under the unbelievers.<sup>184</sup> Whenever he went to Vienna, his people in Hungary believed that he was abandoning them to the pagans and the Turks. Whenever he headed south to Siebenbürgen in order to fight the Turks, his son-in-law, the Duke of Austria and his Bohemian allies, felt abandoned too, as Sigismund was not helping them against the heretics and Hussites. Wacker continued, that ‘he [Sigismund] now dearly wishes to come the aid of every part of Christendom and put towards this all which God has given him, just as he has done before’.<sup>185</sup> Sigismund emphasised how he had tried to come to the aid of his subjects in the Reich before, but that it had gone horribly wrong. He recalled a time where he was travelling during the winter cold, and how he lost all of his horses and many of his men to the freezing weather. The cold made him so scared for his own life that he could apparently count the days he had left with just his feet (*das er es an sinen fußen sine leptage nummer überwüende*).<sup>186</sup> It was far better if he remained ‘in the middle in Hungary, between the Hussites and the Turks’, as he could do more good from there.<sup>187</sup>

Nevertheless, Sigismund was prepared to tell his subjects in the Reich what they did not want to hear, notably that it was more important for him to defend Hungary from the Turks than it was to defend the Reich from the Hussites.<sup>188</sup> Sigismund stated that he now needed to dedicate everything he had to Hungary (*das müße er alles mit den Ungern zubringen*), even if that meant giving others much less help.<sup>189</sup> After reminding Peter that his own son-in-law, Albert, was campaigning in person against the heretics in Moravia, Sigismund noted that both Greeks and Bosnians were being attacked by the pagans and Turks

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid., viii. 374. ‘die ere und einickeid der cristenheid’.

<sup>183</sup> Beckmann, *Kampf Kaiser Sigmunds*, pp. 91-2.

<sup>184</sup> Beckmann translates the phrase *so seße er bi als mitten umbe und umbe under den ungläubigen* as ‘ich sitze immerfort zwischen den Ungläubigen’, which is not particularly accurate. See Beckmann, *Kampf Kaiser Sigmunds*, p. 91. For the original quote, see *RTA*, viii. 374.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., viii. 374. ‘nu wolle er uf alle siten der cristenheid gern zu hulf komen und daruf legen alles das ime got verluhen hat als er ouch vor getan habe’.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., viii. 374.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., viii. 375. ‘mitten in Ungern zwuschen den Hussen und den Thurcken’.

<sup>188</sup> One gets a similar sense from a letter of Sigismund’s in June 1424. See Palacký, *Urkundliche Beiträge*, i. 342 (nr 296).

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., viii. 375.

*widder die cristenheid*.<sup>190</sup> Sigismund stated that he had promised to help the King of Bosnia against the pagans and Turks and that he had (or should have had – the German is unclear) sent a force of 1500 lances (*funfzehnhundert spieß*) to help him.<sup>191</sup> Sigismund stated that he was in a position to help the Reich against its enemies, but it would be of less use (*aber der nütze cleine*), leaving Peter with the implication that it was the Turks who needed fighting most of all.

Peter's talk with Sigismund in the summer of 1424 is illuminating in several respects. It notes the overriding significance of the Turkish threat in Sigismund's reign. The Hussite threat was of course a major consideration of Sigismund's, but, as the next chapter will underline, the role of the Hussites in Sigismund's politics has been distorted and made too significant. Our perception of the Nuremberg Reichstag, for example, as one which primarily revolved around the Hussite threat is one fashioned by the relevant edition of the *Reichstagsakten*. The editor, Dietrich Kerler, was highly selective when it came to the documents which he included in its publication. When unpublished archival material is taken into account, the Nuremberg Reichstag of 1431 was also meant to act as a springboard for a campaign against the Ottoman Turks too, though very little of this came to fruition.

Peter's talk with Sigismund also attests to the king's grasp of his competing priorities and responsibilities across Christendom. Nicholas Garai, the palatine of Hungary, said of Sigismund in 1431 that he is a 'king who has great spirit and who therefore pays attention to a great range of things, such as the Turks, matters of the Reich and indeed the entire world, so much so that he forgets about the matters of Dalmatia'.<sup>192</sup> Historians have therefore often interpreted Sigismund as being overwhelmed by his various crowns and responsibilities.<sup>193</sup> This thesis highlights how this simply is not the case. As the archival research which supports this thesis will show, Sigismund had a detailed grasp of the challenges which he faced and how he could use his status as King of the Romans to overcome many of these. Many of his

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<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, viii. 375.

<sup>191</sup> The German is unclear as to whether Sigismund is saying he has sent the men or whether he should have sent the men. The auxiliary verb in this case is 'habe', not 'hat', which would imply conditionality: 'so habe er [Sigismund] demselben konige von Bossen sines volks funfzehnhundert spieß gesant'.

<sup>192</sup> *Listine*, 21, pp. 547-8. 'rex habet animum ita varium et attendit ad tot negotia, videlicet ad Turchos ad facta imperii et ad totum mundum, quod obliviscitur istorum rerum Dalmatie'. See Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 372.

<sup>193</sup> Otto Schiff, *König Sigmunds italienische Politik bis zur Romfahrt (1410-1431)* (Frankfurt am Main: Joseph Baer & co, 1909), p. 106; David Nicholas, *The Northern Lands: Germanic Europe, c. 1270- c.1500* (Chichester: Blackwell-Wiley, 2009), pp. 88-9.

projects were, of course, not successful, but they represent how his engagement with the Ottoman threat was a vigorous one.

Peter's talk with Sigismund was, in essence, just a talk. Contemporaries accused Sigismund of talking too much and achieving too little. In the words of the near contemporary *Kleinberger* chronicle, *sine wort warent süess, milt und guot, die werk kurz, schmal und klain* ('his words were sweet, milk and honey; the work short, thin and little'), an impression which has subsequently entered modern scholarship.<sup>194</sup> As this thesis will demonstrate, Sigismund did more than just talk about fighting the Ottomans, and he was able to draw upon resources throughout the Reich when doing so.

### ***1.5 Campaigns, coronations and further warfare, c. 1426-1432.***

Though Sigismund complained at great length to Peter Wacker about his situation in 1425, the military pressures exercised on his frontier by the Ottoman Turks arguably worsened over the course of the next few years. As well as increased Ottoman pressure on Wallachia, the death of Lazarević in July 1427 and the ceding of several Serbian fortresses to Sigismund, notably Belgrade, stretched his defensive commitments along the Danube frontier.

As we have seen, the years 1425 and 1426 saw Sigismund organise campaigns in Wallachia and Transylvania in support of Dan and along the Danube frontier in defence of his fortresses and in order to support Lazarević. His campaigns were relatively successful and both succeeded in restoring Dan to the Wallachian throne and in keeping the Danube frontier secure. Sigismund's campaigning in 1427 and 1428 leave much greater marks in the source material and would suggest that these were his largest yet. His instructions to the town of Sibiu (Hermannstadt), contained in a letter of November 1426, reveal the preparations in place for the campaigns next year.<sup>195</sup> Among other issues, Sigismund reminded the council of Sibiu that he had given Dan a guard of 1000 men (100 of which were mounted soldiers) and that they were obliged to help support the voivode, as well as contribute their own troops to the fighting *in dictas partes Transilvanas*.<sup>196</sup> Sigismund also produced a military ordinance in preparation for his campaigns in Wallachia in 1427.<sup>197</sup> These ordinances suggest that Sigismund was having to supply and keep ready a significant military force all year round, as

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<sup>194</sup> *Klingenberger Chronik*, p. 208.

<sup>195</sup> *Urkundenbuch Siebenbürgen*, iv. nr 1982

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, nr 1982.

<sup>197</sup> *DRMH*, ii. 199.

allowance is made for the provisioning of food, housing and fuel for soldiers even in wintertime.<sup>198</sup> Similarly, Bonfini recalls in his work that Sigismund gathered a great array of men for the fight against the Turks around this time, including peasants, common people and knights, and goes on to say rather vaguely that he wintered them in the province (*in provincia hibernarant*).<sup>199</sup> Once again, Sigismund's campaigning was largely focussed on keeping Dan II on the Wallachian throne. Witold's description of Sigismund's campaigning in a letter to the Master of Livonia written in March 1427, accurately reflects the dynamic which existed between Sigismund, Wallachia and the Turks.<sup>200</sup> Witold records how Dan has been given an army by Sigismund and is accompanied by him (*und Dan der Grossen Walachye...ein herre gesaczt [ist] von dem Romischen konige*) and that Radul, Dan's opponent, has an army put at his disposal by the Turks (*gesaczter von den Turken*).<sup>201</sup>

As Witold's letter demonstrates, most of our reports which contain information about Sigismund's campaigns repeat details second hand. For 1427, however, we are lucky enough to have an eyewitness account of Sigismund as he travelled south towards the Danube in order to campaign against the Turks.<sup>202</sup> Claus Redwitz informed Rusdorf in a letter dated 11 April 1427 of Sigismund's plan to invite the Order to Hungary in order to serve as a bulwark against the Turks. The contents of this letter and the transfer of the Teutonic Order to the Danube will be dealt with in detail in a later chapter, but the context in which Sigismund first put serious consideration to his plan to use the Order against the Turks is evocatively depicted by Redwitz. The original letter is scruffily written, dotted with frequent mistakes, crossings out and with words entered into the margins and would appear to have been written hurriedly by Redwitz himself while accompanying Sigismund on campaign in southern Hungary.<sup>203</sup> Redwitz enjoyed close personal contact with Sigismund and the picture he offers of the middle aged king in his correspondence in general is a rather intimate one. This letter is no exception, and in this instance he notes that Sigismund appeared most troubled, with 'his hand on his head' (*sein hant auf sein heupt*).<sup>204</sup> Sigismund was worried for a reason, for while

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>199</sup> Bonfini, *Decades*, ii. 63 (decade iii, book 3, section 166).

<sup>200</sup> *CEV*, pp. 758-9 (nr 1270).

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., p. 758 (nr 1270).

<sup>202</sup> In March 1427 Sigismund was in Braşov (see Diaconescu, 'Documenta', pp. 284-6 (nr 3)), and his itinerary implies that he was moving southwards, before he was forced to head west by Lazarević's death. See Hoensch, *Itinerar*, pp. 112-3.

<sup>203</sup> Cîmpeanu, 'Dan al II-lea', pp. For the original document, see OBA, 4741; calendared in *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 4741.

<sup>204</sup> OBA, 4741.

travelling south to campaign against the Turks he received some worrying news from an envoy of Dan II,

[who] said to the king in truth that the Turkish Kaiser [*torken keiser*], who one calls the great Turk, has come over the sea, which one calls the arm of St. George, and has brought with him 11,000 [men] and that he currently lays between the same sea and the Danube and that daily more people come to him...<sup>205</sup>

Upon hearing this news Sigismund decided to move further south. It would appear that he spent the next few days deep in thought after which, ‘according to his habit’, he invited Redwitz to join him on his evening ride.<sup>206</sup> Sigismund did not invite him out to ride merely for his conversation, as Redwitz reports that ‘he [Sigismund] spoke, that “we have long thought about how we wanted to settle your order in a place in this land against the Turks”’, a theme which Sigismund then discussed in more detail.<sup>207</sup>

As we will see in chapter 3, this letter forms the first link in the chain of events which would result in Sigismund transferring the control of the Banate of Severin to the Teutonic Order. The negotiations which led to Sigismund’s ceding of his critical Danubian fortresses to the Teutonic Knights were protracted ones, and the Order would not arrive in force until 1429. Nevertheless, the glimpse offered by Redwitz in 1427 into Sigismund’s campaigning is instructive in numerous ways. It is sometimes difficult to ascertain the scale of the campaigning between Sigismund and the Turks, and for numerical estimates we are reliant on the estimates of contemporaries which often seem unbelievable.<sup>208</sup> The Wallachian envoy’s admission that the Sultan had crossed into Europe with 11,000 men and the worry it evoked in Sigismund seems believable, and accurately reflects the scale of the campaigning in this region and during this period. Furthermore, Redwitz’ letter brings the importance of the Danube frontier into sharp focus, as the best way to blunt Turkish offensives would be to not allow them across the river in the first place. The role which the Danube played in

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<sup>205</sup> OBA, 4741, ‘und sayt dem konig in der warheit bey der torken keiser den man nennet den grosen torken wider kamen uber das mer das man heist sant jorg arm und hat mit im in uberbracht wol xi<sup>m</sup> werhaftig und leit czwischen dem sleben mer und der tunow und in czeucht teglich mer folk czu’.

<sup>206</sup> OBA, 4741, ‘noch seiner gewonheit’.

<sup>207</sup> OBA, 4741, ‘sprach er wir haben laing dar uf gedacht das wir uwern ord pflanczen wold etwo an einem ort dieser land genn den torken’.

<sup>208</sup> For example, Schiltberger’s estimate of 260,000 men fighting at Nicopolis. See Hans Schiltberger, *Hans Schiltbergers Reisebuch*, ed. Valentin Langmantel (Tübingen: H. Laupp, 1885), p. 3. For further discussion, Veszprémy, ‘Crusade of Nicopolis’, pp. 226-7.

Sigismund's campaigns is a theme explored in chapter three, and will be explored in more detail then.

Sigismund's campaigning with Dan II succeeded in shoring up his position but it was cut short by the death of Lazarević in July 1427.<sup>209</sup> In return for Sigismund's recognition of his nephew, George Branković, as his rightful heir, Lazarević had offered to transfer numerous Serbian fortresses to Sigismund, notably Belgrade, upon his death.<sup>210</sup> Upon receiving news of the despot's death Sigismund hurried westwards to ensure that these treaty arrangements were put in place. The transfer of Serbian controlled fortresses was not a smooth affair, and Sigismund waited outside Belgrade for several weeks in late September and early October before finally gaining control of the fortress.<sup>211</sup> Meanwhile the Turks took advantage of the confusion left in the wake of Lazarević's death, and seized fortresses in Serbia, including the critical stronghold of Golubac, sited on the southern bank of the Danube and which commanded an important river crossing.<sup>212</sup> Bonfini decried the fall of Serbia to the Turks and noted that in his own time it was only Hungary who 'now watches the Turks', pithily remarking that Hungary was the only bulwark left against the Turks (*Ungaria unicum est propugnaculum*).<sup>213</sup>

However, Bonfini's lamentations should not be taken too seriously as Sigismund's seizure of Belgrade was a significant moment in the development of his defensive system on his southern frontier, a fact that the king was keen to emphasise to his contemporaries. In one instance he underlined the great value of Belgrade, claiming that he seized it 'so that the boundaries of the Hungarian Kingdom can be watched over uninjured' and the Kingdom of Serbia can be protected.<sup>214</sup> Doukas reinforces the importance of Belgrade when he notes how it was fear of the Turks which compelled Branković to cede Belgrade to Sigismund, as if Belgrade had fell to the Ottomans the cities of both Hungary and Serbia would have been

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<sup>209</sup> Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 342. In 1427 Sigismund campaigned in Transylvania and in support of Dan with the banderium of János Maróti, Ban of Macsó (1427-8). His campaigning is recorded in detail in *CDH*, x, vi. 872-8, 886-92 (nr 399-400, 403). See also *CDDSCZ*, viii. 327-8 (nr 213).

<sup>210</sup> For background, Jefferson, *Holy Wars*, p. 138.

<sup>211</sup> See the dating clause in Altmann, nr 6955.

<sup>212</sup> Other strongholds on the southern side of the Danube also fell into Hungarian hands, such as Ravanica. See *CDPRHA*, pp. 73-4 (nr 142). It is difficult to ascertain the other fortresses which Sigismund saved from the Turks. Writing on 25 August 1428, Witold merely notes that Sigismund had seized 'eczliche hauser' after the Despot's death. See *CEV*, p. 801 (nr 1331).

<sup>213</sup> Bonfini, *Decades*, ii. 65 (decade iii, book 3, section 193-4).

<sup>214</sup> *DRRRcRH*, p. 329 (nr 209). 'ut fines regni Hungariae illesos servet et regnum Rassic tutare possit'. Reprinted in *Documenta res Belgradi mediae aetatis illustrantia*, ed. Mihailo Dinić, 2 vols (Belgrade: 1951-1958), ii. 20-21 (nr 12). On the importance of Belgrade more generally, see Jefferson, *Holy Wars*, p. 236.



defenceless.<sup>215</sup> Archival material in the *Ordensbriefarchiv* gives deeper insights into the impact which this expansion in Sigismund's defensive commitments had on his campaigning against the Turks, and many of these issues are considered in detail in chapters three and four.

With Belgrade secure, Sigismund sought to take Golubac.<sup>216</sup> We are lucky enough to have an eyewitness account of Sigismund and his forces as he was mustering for his attack on Golubac. Walter von Schwarzenberg, a Frankfurter and a *hofdiener* of Sigismund's, wrote a letter addressed to his superiors in Frankfurt dated 18 May 1428 in Buda (*gegeyben zú Offin dinstag vorphingsten*).<sup>217</sup> The letter is damaged and some of its contents can only be guessed at, but even the legible details provide important details. Walter notes rather vaguely that he left Sigismund about 70 miles before Golubac (*dübenberg*), which would imply that Sigismund had not yet begun the siege which he began in late April.<sup>218</sup> Therefore, it would appear that Walter met with Sigismund in April, before travelling to Buda and writing his letter to Frankfurt in order to inform them about his discussions with the king. Walter notes that Sigismund is now on the border between Turkey and great Wallachia (*ist uff der grennecz czüsen thorký [und der] grüße wallacheii*) and notes the particularly strong force which he has assembled, including the great deal of artillery prepared for the siege (*und hayd dar fürre fille geschücze*).<sup>219</sup> Walter went on to say, however, that he had worries (*ich han abbir sorge*) as regards Sigismund's prospects of victory. He informed Frankfurt that the Turks had gathered together, that they have sent many men against Sigismund and that they fully intend to fight (*dý thorken hatten sich gesamet...fille fulkes gegen in geschecket und will laßen striden*). Walter's fears were to prove well founded.

Sigismund's attack on Golubac was a failure and his response to defeat will be covered in detail in chapter three. Briefly however, though Sigismund suffered a military reversal at Golubac it was by no means a disaster. Sigismund immediately began construction of the fortress of Lászlóvár, sited on the bank opposite to Golubac, to counter the new Turkish presence there.<sup>220</sup> Nor did Sigismund's defeat expose his frontier to further Turkish attacks. In a letter of August 1428 Witold reveals to the Master of Livonia how after winning

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<sup>215</sup> Doukas, *Historia Byzantina*, p. 210. Trans. in Magoulias, p. 178.

<sup>216</sup> On this campaign, see Veszprémy, 'Sigismund at Golubac', pp. 296-300.

<sup>217</sup> IFS, FaM, RS, 1, 3109. Calendared in *FR*, i. 359 (nr 661).

<sup>218</sup> Golubac roughly translates into English as Dove Stone, hence its German name Taubenstein or variants such as Taubenberg. Sigismund first notes that he is in the vicinity of Golubac (*vor Taubenburg*) on April 27. See Altmann, nr 7055.

<sup>219</sup> IFS, FaM, RS, 1, 3109.

<sup>220</sup> *RTA*, 9, p. 208.

at Golubac, the Turks continued into Wallachia and ousted Dan from his throne.<sup>221</sup> Witold makes it clear that he is reporting hearsay (his account begins with the disclaimer, *und do si sogen*) and evidence for this incursion actually occurring is scarce, though there is some evidence to suggest that Dan was briefly usurped the year before.<sup>222</sup> A letter of Sigismund's dated 31 August would imply that the Turks were in fact largely focussed on rebuilding Golubac, though they had forces ready to attack Belgrade and other Serbian fortresses.<sup>223</sup> Whatever the case, defeat at Golubac did not open up the frontier to the Turks and Dan was in fact secure on his throne until his death in 1431 or 1432.<sup>224</sup> Doukas dates a major Turkish incursion led by Murad himself into Hungary to around this time, though his account is clearly chronologically in the wrong place.<sup>225</sup> Murad campaigned in person north of the Danube only in 1432 and between 1438 and 1440, and Doukas has clearly placed one of these campaigns earlier in his narrative.<sup>226</sup> Doukas notes in his account of Murad's raid in 1427/8 that he made it to a town known as *Zipinion* (*Ἐλθόντες δὲ ἄχρι Ζιπηνίου*), which is probably Sibiu (known in German as Hermannstadt). This would seem to imply that this campaign is in fact that of 1438.<sup>227</sup> The fact that Doukas states that Murad was guided by Vlad Dracul (Voivode of Wallachia, 1436-42, 1443-7) makes it almost certain that Doukas is referring to the Sultan's campaign in 1438. George of Hungary's eyewitness account of the siege of Sebeş in 1438 records how Vlad Dracul was present with Murad, and even managed to convince some of the townsmen and women to surrender to the Turks without a fight.<sup>228</sup> The main consequence of Sigismund's defeat at Golubac was not continued conflict, but in fact a cessation of hostilities on the frontier around the Iron Gates and Wallachia. In the later months of 1428 Sigismund and Murad negotiated to extend the short term armistice which they had agreed in June.<sup>229</sup>

Before discussing Sigismund's negotiations with Murad, it is important to balance Sigismund's military campaigning and overtures for peace with his other endeavours to combat the Turks as Sigismund's focus on securing the Danube frontier was part of a much

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<sup>221</sup> *CEV*, pp. 801-2 (nr 1331).

<sup>222</sup> *CEV*, pp. 758-9 (nr 1270). Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 141.

<sup>223</sup> *CDDSCZ*, viii. 360 (nr 244).

<sup>224</sup> The date of his death is debated. See Cîmpeanu, 'Dan al II-lea', pp. 73-4.

<sup>225</sup> Doukas, *Historia Byzantina*, p. 206; Trans in Magoulias, pp. 175-6.

<sup>226</sup> The chronology of these campaigns confused both near contemporaries and later historians. For discussion, Gündisch, 'Die Türkeinfälle in Siebenbürgen', p. 403.

<sup>227</sup> Gündisch, 'Die Türkeinfälle in Siebenbürgen', p. 407.

<sup>228</sup> Georgius de Hungaria, *Tractatus de Moribus, Conditionibus et Nequicia Turcorum*, ed. and trans. Reinhard Klockow (Böhlau: Cologne, 1993), pp. 150-3.

<sup>229</sup> For the armistice, see *CDDSCZ*, viii. 354 (nr 240)

broader strategic approach. Sigismund did not just need to command the waters and fortresses of the Danube between Belgrade and the Iron Gates and support his Serbian and Wallachian allies, but also to prevent himself from being encircled to the east and north east. Much has been written on the nature of the relationship between Sigismund and Witold, but neglected archival material in the *Ordensbriefarchiv* throws new light on the pressures which the Grand Duke faced and the background to Sigismund's offer of a royal crown in 1429.<sup>230</sup> On 7 May 1427 Witold wrote a letter (in rather awkward German) to Rusdorf, in which he discussed the very real dilemma in which he found himself. Witold notes, that

an embassy from Turkey has come to us and this we are most worried about, that such a messenger would come to us from Turkey at this time when we are good friends with the lord Roman King and when he fights with the Turks and is engaged in hostilities [with them] and we worry whether he would be easy about this (literally, *umb das her leichte darum wirt*) and would assume...that we wished to be at one with the Turks against him. Regarding this we have now written to him and also to the lord King of Poland [regarding] what they want to prescribe and advise us [regarding] how and with what answer we should speak to the same Turkish messenger.<sup>231</sup>

Witold stressed at the end of this letter how he feared that the Roman King would view him with suspicion and that he would be resented by the king (*wir besorgen uns vordechnisse von dem egenanten herrn romischen konigen in der wir von im ungerne blieben wolden*).<sup>232</sup> He was right to fear the suspicion that could result from Turks visiting his court. Both Witold and his brother, Władysław II, were converts to Catholicism and the Teutonic Knights had attempted to blacken both their names at Constance by denouncing them as pagans.<sup>233</sup> Whether real or imagined, any collusion with the Turkish infidel could play directly into the hands of the Teutonic Knights and Sigismund. Nevertheless, Sigismund needed to ensure that Witold remained on his side and, thankfully, his status as Roman King gave him access to more methods aside from military force with which he could accomplish this.

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<sup>230</sup> On Sigismund's relationship with Witold, see Zachariadou, 'Ottoman Diplomacy and the Danube Frontier', pp. 683-9; Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 347-50.

<sup>231</sup> OBA, 4764. 'wi daz czu uns us der Turcký botschafft komet mit dem wir hoch bekúmert syn das ein sulcher bote us der Turckýe off die czeit czu uns komet wert wir mit dem herrn romische konige in guter fruntschafft synt und her mit den Turcken kriget und in findtschafft ist und darum wir besorgen umb das her leichte darum wirt und umb vordenken... das wir das uns mit den Turken wedir in eýnen welden und nw wir dorum in und ouch dem herrn konige czu Polan etc geschreiben haben, das sie uns vorschreiben und roten welden, wie und mit was entwurt wir dem selben Turkischen bote sprichten sulden'. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 4764. This document has been published, though with mistakes, in *CEV*, pp. 770-1 (nr 1286).

<sup>232</sup> OBA, 4764.

<sup>233</sup> Eric Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades* (London: Penguin, 1980), pp. 165, 231-2.

Historians, such as Jörg Hoensch and Julia Dücker, interpret Sigismund's offer of a royal crown to Witold from the standpoint of his Hussite politics and as an attempt to weaken Władysław II's hold on Witold.<sup>234</sup> These were certainly pertinent issues for Sigismund and even more so for Pope Martin V (1417-31), who stressed to Witold how once he was king he would need to assist Sigismund *contra Bohemos haereticos*.<sup>235</sup> In a similar vein, Długosz claims that Sigismund offered Witold a crown and membership of the Order of the Dragon simply so that he would be a friend and ally of the Empire (*ut Withawdus ipse amicus fieret Imperii et socius*).<sup>236</sup> However, the spectre of the Turkish threat barely features at all in the analysis of Hoensch and Dücker, and they underplay its role in the entire affair. Długosz reports an apparent exchange of letters between Władysław and Sigismund in 1428, in which Sigismund vigorously complained to King Władysław that he had not received the aid against the Turks which he had promised him (*in quibus queri de Wladislao Rege graviter visus est, quod sibi in expeditione contra Turcos constituto promissum subsidium non tulerit*).<sup>237</sup> Władysław, Witold and Sigismund met at Lutsk in early 1429, principally to discuss Sigismund's offer of a royal crown to Witold. Długosz's covers the debates which this offer sparked in excruciating detail, but the question of the Turkish threat does appear briefly at the beginning of his narrative.<sup>238</sup> It is clear that Sigismund was negotiating with Władysław and Witold for Polish and Lithuanian aid against the Turks, as Długosz records the Polish king's exasperation at being repeatedly accused by Sigismund of not coming to fight the Turks. Apparently, Władysław claimed (though rather vaguely) that he had dispatched an army in support of Sigismund a previous summer. Though it remained stationed on the Danube for two months (*usque ad Danubium...et prope duobus mensibus immorati*), Sigismund never arrived to lead it and it eventually went home.<sup>239</sup> Władysław was adamant that it was Sigismund who was to blame, and that there was no point organising a campaign against the Turks if Sigismund could not even bother to turn up when he said he would!<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Hoensch, 'König/Kaiser Sigismund', pp. 33-4; idem, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 348-9. Julia Dücker, 'Sigismund und der Konflikt um die Königskrönung Witolds von Litauen (1329/30)', in *Emperor Sigismund and the Orthodox World*, ed. Ekaterini Mitsiou et al. (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010), pp. 18-19.

<sup>235</sup> Długosz, *Historiae Polonicae*, xi. 431.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., xi. 387.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., xi. 360.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., xi. 366-86.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., xi. 368. This episode features in Maurice Michael's abridgement of Długosz's work. See idem, *The Annals*, p. 449.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., xi. 368.

The cautious tone of Witold's letter therefore reflects Sigismund's fear of being surrounded by neighbours allied with the Turks and points to his sincere desire for Polish and Lithuanian aid. Sigismund constantly sought to ensure that Bosnian, Serbian and Wallachian leaders fought with him against the Turks rather than vice versa, and Witold's coronation needs to be seen in the same light. By crowning Witold, Sigismund could establish a closer relationship with the Grand Duke and further incentivise Lithuanian resistance to the Turks. Far from being an unsuccessful move in the power play between Sigismund and Władysław, the coronation of the Grand Duke was in fact an innovative way of widening the so called *cordon sanitaire* beyond the states on his southern frontier.

Sigismund's offer of a royal crown to Witold in 1428 was only made possible by the power which he drew from his status and authority as Roman King.<sup>241</sup> Sigismund said so himself. According to Długosz, while at Lutsk Sigismund and his wife entered uninvited into Władysław's chamber so early in the morning that he was still in bed, and tried to convince him that raising the Grand Duke to the rank of king was a good idea.<sup>242</sup> Sigismund apparently announced, that 'I have this power as the King of the Romans'.<sup>243</sup> A rather mysterious list of the barons, prelates and other notables in Sigismund's court, produced c. 1429, underlines further how Sigismund's offer of a royal crown to Witold was an imperial affair.<sup>244</sup> The list is divided into three sections and the third records those whom Sigismund intended to send to Witold to perform the coronation.<sup>245</sup> Sigismund planned to send the archbishops of Cologne and Magdeburg, a Bavarian duke, as well as two Hungarian barons, a Hungarian bishop and a Bosnian lord.<sup>246</sup> Furthermore, the fact that Witold was inducted into the Order of the Dragon, which obliged him to aid Sigismund in the fight against the infidels, further supports the idea that Sigismund sought aid against the Turks from the prospective King of Lithuania.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Hoensch, 'König/Kaiser Sigismund', p. 34. Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 348-9.

<sup>242</sup> Długosz, *Historiae Polonicae*, xi. 369-70.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, xi. 370. 'qui nunc hanc potestatem velut Romanorum Rex habeo...'

<sup>244</sup> OBA 5545. This list carries no dating clause and no indications as to its author and is discussed in more detail in chapter five. My sincere thanks to Suzana Miljan for her help in transcribing a few difficult words.

<sup>245</sup> OBA 5545. 'Item scribuntur nominam eorum quos serenitatum domunis rex in sancto coronatos ad illustrissimum principem et dominum Wytoud magnum ducem simil cum corona excogitavit transmittendos'. The first person on the list, Hermann Cilli, is described as the Palatine of the Kingdom of Hungary, which is clearly a mistake. Thankfully, the rest of the list appears far more accurate.

<sup>246</sup> OBA, 5545. In the end, the coronation was eventually performed without the German archbishops. See *Berichte der Generalprokuratoren*, 4, part 1, p. 174 (nr 131). For the logistical difficulties with the coronation, Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 107.

<sup>247</sup> For the ceremony, see Długosz, *Historiae Polonicae*, xi. 386-7.

While the arrival of Turkish embassies at his court worried Witold in May 1427, by September 1429 he had no such qualms and was openly accepting them.<sup>248</sup> Witold felt confident enough to do this as Sigismund himself began negotiations with Murad for peace after suffering defeat at Golubac in June 1428. The initial truce agreed between himself and the Turks in June 1428 was soon extended.<sup>249</sup> In February 1429 Sigismund noted in a letter to Rusdorf that he had concluded a three year peace with the Turks, which would ensure that Wallachia, Serbia and Russia (*Walachye, Syrsey und Ruwszen*) would remain free.<sup>250</sup> The term *Ruwszen* here is unclear, but it perhaps refers to Red Ruthenia, a region between the Kingdom of Poland, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Hungary, or the entire region beyond Hungary in general.<sup>251</sup> Doukas notes in a different context how Murad II wished to have a guide that could lead his armies to *Ἀλαμανίας τε καὶ Ῥωσίας* (Germany and Russia), which implies that *Ruwszen* was broadly the region beyond Hungary and was a possible target of Murad's.<sup>252</sup> Sigismund goes on to say that a certain *Saybeg*, the *Torken hoffmeister*, had arrived to strengthen the peace (*sulchen fride mit uns czu befestigen*) and to negotiate with Venice for peace too.<sup>253</sup> *Saybeg*'s visit to Sigismund was clearly a precursor to something much bigger, as in a letter of 7 April, Sigismund reported that a Turkish delegation, numbering 90 horses and bringing numerous gifts, had arrived in Buda.<sup>254</sup> In August of the same year Rusdorf noted in a letter to the procurator in Rome how Sigismund had secured a three year peace with the Turks.<sup>255</sup> Sigismund strongly desired peace so that he could head to Rome in order to be crowned as Holy Roman Emperor, and after overseeing the unsuccessful Fifth Hussite Crusade in the summer of 1431 from Nuremberg, he began his journey to Rome.<sup>256</sup>

This peace brought a respite to the Iron Gates, Transylvania and Wallachia until the Turks launched a major offensive in the summer of 1432. Between 1429 and 1431 Murad

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<sup>248</sup> *CEV*, pp. 865-6 (nr 1880)

<sup>249</sup> OBA, 4954. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 4954.

<sup>250</sup> OBA 5050. Printed in *CEV*, pp. 818-9 (nr 1346); *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 5050; Altmann, nr 7171.

<sup>251</sup> Writing in October 1430, Wladislas notes in a letter to Witold that Sigismund has confirmed the land of Russia ('lant czu Rewssen') as being a possession of the Kingdom of Poland.

<sup>252</sup> Doukas, *Historia Byzantina*, p. 204. Trans in Magoulias, p. 174.

<sup>253</sup> Two years later Sigismund expected Ottoman courtiers to visit Bratislava, and the evidence for the preparations which he undertook survive. See *CDH*, x, viii. 630-2 (nrs 298-299)

<sup>254</sup> OBA, 5071. Published in *CEV*, p. 823 (nr 1348). *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 5071. Altmann, nr 7215.

<sup>255</sup> OBA, 5156. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 5156.

<sup>256</sup> He was reported as saying so by a Florentine diplomat in 1427. See Clemente Lupi, 'Delle Relazioni fra la Repubblica di Firenze e i conti e duchi di Savoia memoria compilata sui documenti dell'archivio Fiorentino', *Giornale Storico Degli Archivi Toscani*, 7 (1863), 257-322 (p. 266). Walter von Schwarzenberg recorded similar sentiments from Sigismund in May 1428, stating 'daz unßer herre hayd willen geen Rome, alz syne wortte wirdent met ganczem ernst'. See IFS, FaM, RS, 1, 3109.

appears to have kept to the terms of his agreement with Sigismund, largely leaving *Walachye, Syrsey und Ruwszen* alone and campaigning elsewhere.<sup>257</sup> A letter of the Teutonic Order's procurator in Rome to Rusdorf in May 1430 makes this point clear. In this letter the procurator reports that the Turks have refrained from attacking Hungary, and have instead attacked Venetian territory with a great force of 180,000 men (*dy turken gewest sein in der fenidier lande mit groser macht, als mit hundert tuss und achczig tuss man*).<sup>258</sup> He goes on to say that they have seized two Venetian towns in Slavonia (*zww stete in Sclavonie*). Hungarian controlled territory around Belgrade was not attacked and relations with the Ottomans seem to have remained cordial. In August of the same year the presence of Ottoman emissaries is recorded in Belgrade, with the Ragusans present in the city greeting the *ambassador del Turcho* with a guard of fifty horses.<sup>259</sup> The next year Ragusan accounts emphasise the pressure placed on Tvrtko by the Turks, though he was able to maintain his position.<sup>260</sup> Sigismund's forces along the Danube were still on guard during this time. In January 1431, for example, Franko Tallóci, the Captain of Belgrade, readied his forces in the County of Keve and stationed them on the ports and harbours of the Danube.<sup>261</sup> He did so for the Danube had frozen over and he feared that the Turks would use the opportunity to raid into Hungary.<sup>262</sup>

### ***1.6 Rome, Basle and continued fighting with the Ottoman Turks, 1432-1437.***

The conditions on Sigismund's southern frontier after 1429 gave him the opportunity to journey abroad in order to be crowned as Holy Roman Emperor. Sigismund began his passage to Rome in the summer of 1431 from Nuremberg and his journey to Rome was marked by protracted political negotiations with the Papacy and other north Italian states.<sup>263</sup> It was also marked by a whole range of civic processions, ceremonies and entries, and his penchant for dancing with any lady he could annoy one particular husband in Lucca.<sup>264</sup> He

<sup>257</sup> *CEV*, pp. 818-9 (nr 1346).

<sup>258</sup> OBA, 5367. The reliability of this figure is questionable as this figure appears again in the same letter. The procurator notes that a group of cardinals are discussing giving the Teutonic Order 180,000 gulden in order to support the effort against the Hussites.

<sup>259</sup> *Documenta res Belgradi*, ii. 23 (nr 16).

<sup>260</sup> *DRRRcRH*, pp. 354-62 (nrs 221-3).

<sup>261</sup> *CDPRHA*, p. 88 (nr 160). For background, Elemér Mályusz, 'Die vier Gebrüder Tallóci', *Studia Slavica Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae*, 28 (1982), 1-66 (p. 19).

<sup>262</sup> *CDPRHA*, p. 88.

<sup>263</sup> Sigismund was absent from Hungary between June 1430 and October 1434. See Hoensch, *Itinerar*, pp. 115-120.

<sup>264</sup> Marie-Luise Favreau-Lilie, 'Vom Kriegsgeschrei zur Tanzmusik. Anmerkungen zu den Italienzügen des späteren Mittelalters', in *Montjoie: Studies in Crusade History in Honour of Hans Eberhard Mayer*, ed.

received the Iron Crown of the Lombards in Milan in November 1431, after which he apparently wintered at Piacenza in great poverty.<sup>265</sup> Sigismund was crowned as Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Eugenius IV on 31 May 1433, and departed from Rome on 14 August.<sup>266</sup> As the next chapter will show, his supplications to the Pope survive and they allow historians an insight into how he conceived of his struggle against the Turks.

Meanwhile, Sigismund's frontier was under severe pressure. In 1432 Murad shifted his focus from Bosnia and committed substantial forces to campaigning along the Danube frontier. It would appear that Ottoman commanders began campaigning in January 1432 and they initially massed their forces opposite the Danubian fortress of Keve.<sup>267</sup> This was perhaps a diversionary tactic to throw the defenders off guard, as they then swiftly manoeuvred westwards and placed pressure on Belgrade.<sup>268</sup> Belgrade's captain was up to the task and concentrated his forces in Belgrade, which seems to have caused the Turkish Begs to refrain from launching any attacks.<sup>269</sup> The Turks were right to be cautious as Belgrade was well defended. Bertrandon de la Broquière (c. 1400-1459), who was present in Belgrade in 1433, noted the city's extensive fortifications, the impressive artillery, the fleet of ships and the German mercenaries stationed there.<sup>270</sup>

A far more concerted effort on the part of the Turks came later in May and June, but perhaps on account of Belgrade's strength, Murad committed his forces to campaigning in Wallachia and the area around the Iron Gates. This change in focus may have also been stimulated by a change in leadership in Wallachia. According to Doukas, it was around this time that Dan II was killed by Vlad II, though whether this took place in 1431 or 1432 is difficult to ascertain.<sup>271</sup> Whatever the case, by the summer of 1432 Alexandra Aldea was clearly in place as Voivode of Wallachia (1431-1436) as he was in charge of organising the

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Benjamin Z. Kedar, Jonathan Riley-Smith and Rudolf Hiestand (Ashgate: Variorum, 1997), pp. 213-4. For general background, see Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 375-99.

<sup>265</sup> Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 329. For Sigismund in Piacenza, *ibid.*, p. 326.

<sup>266</sup> For Sigismund's coronation, see Péter E. Kovács, 'Emperor Sigismund's Coronation in Rome', in *Infima Aetas Pannonica: Studies in Late Medieval Hungarian History*, ed. Péter E. Kovács and Kamél Szovák (Budapest: Corvina, 2009), pp. 97-162. Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 400-7.

<sup>267</sup> *CDPRHA*, p. 91 (nr 164)

<sup>268</sup> See the documents in *CDPRHA*, pp. 90-3 (nrs 163-66). For discussion, Mályusz, 'Die vier Gebrüder Tallóci', p. 19.

<sup>269</sup> *CDPRHA*, pp. 91-2 (nr 165).

<sup>270</sup> Bertrandon de la Broquière, *Le Voyage d'Outremer de Bertrandon de la Broquière premier écuyer trenchant et conseiller de Philippe le Bon, duc de Bourgogne (1432-1433)*, ed. Charles Schefer (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1842), pp. 212-6.

<sup>271</sup> Doukas, *Historia Byzantina*, p. 202. Trans. in Magoulias, p. 173. For discussion of when Dan may have died, see Cîmpeanu, 'Dan al II-lea', pp. 73-4.



defence against the Turks.<sup>272</sup> In June 1432 Ottoman forces crossed the Danube where they divided into separate forces, each led by a beg, and penetrated deep into Wallachia and Transylvania.<sup>273</sup> According to one report, Ottoman forces almost reached Târgoviște.<sup>274</sup> The Ottomans were able to penetrate so far because the defences around the Iron Gates, under the control of the Teutonic Knights since 1429, had collapsed. A letter to Rusdorf, penned by Švitrigaila, Grand Duke of Lithuania (1430-1432) on 22 June, reports the Ottomans as entering Hungary around the Iron Gates (*in das lanth ken ungeru umbe eyseryn Thor*).<sup>275</sup> There the Turks killed numerous Hungarian lords and a later report, written in December of the same year, recounts how the Teutonic Knights had lost three fortresses.<sup>276</sup> Fighting was not just fierce for the Teutonic Knights and the Hungarians, as Aldea's own forces needed to resist pro-Turkish Wallachian forces. In one case, Aldea had to rally his forces to meet a 66 strong fleet of ships raised by a brother of his to conduct raids *in des wayewode land*, which he in the end defeated successfully.<sup>277</sup> This may have been to no avail, as a Ragusan letter dated 31 July 1432 notes that the *Dominus Vlachorum*, perhaps Aldea, had submitted to Murad.<sup>278</sup>

The events of 1432 were certainly destructive, and they leave a significant footprint in the sources. The supplications to the Papacy made by Transylvanian clerics in the 1430s, for example, paint a picture of widespread destruction and fear. In a supplication dated 13 July 1433, a certain John, son of Balthasar de Enned, asked for permission to raise money in order to rebuild properties throughout the diocese.<sup>279</sup> This was because numerous buildings and houses, including almshouses and hospitals, had been destroyed by Turkish invasions and raiding.<sup>280</sup> Later, in a supplication of 20 December 1436, a certain *decanus districti Cybensis*, stressed how his diocese existed in an area on the bounds and limits of the pagans, schismatics and Turks (*quod in districtu qui in finibus et limitibus paganorum scismaticorum*

<sup>272</sup> *Urkundenbuch Siebenbürgen*, iv. nr 2150.

<sup>273</sup> See Aldea's account of June 1432, in *Urkundenbuch Siebenbürgen*, iv. nr 2150. See also, *DRRRcRH*, p. 374 (nr 228).

<sup>274</sup> *Urkundenbuch Siebenbürgen*, iv. nr 2156. Gündisch, 'Türkeneinfälle in Siebenbürgen', p. 403.

<sup>275</sup> OBA, 6138. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 6138. Mentioned in Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden', p. 103.

<sup>276</sup> OBA, 6276. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 6276. Discussed briefly in Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden', p. 104.

<sup>277</sup> OBA, 6138.

<sup>278</sup> *DRRRcRH*, p. 374 (nr 228)

<sup>279</sup> ASVat, RS, 287, 39v. Partially transcribed in *Acta Eugenii Papae IV (1431-1447)*, ed. Georgio Fedalto (Rome: Pontificia Commissio Codici Iuris Canonici Orientalis Recognoscendo, 1990), p. 127 (nr 206).

<sup>280</sup> ASVat, RS, 287, 39v.

*Torcorum*).<sup>281</sup> The supplication goes on to say that they were being invaded by infidels in all parts (*partes alle ab infidelibus invaduntur*), and gives descriptions of how the local dwellers were forced to haul themselves into local towers and ramparts with their wives and daughters (*in turribus deffensiones et propugnacula... cum uxuibus (sic) suis et mulieribus*) whenever the Turks attacked, as that was the only secure place to be.<sup>282</sup>

However, it is important not to take sources such as these at face value and not to exaggerate the scale of the damage or the ineffectiveness of the defence. It would appear that the Turks, for example, were unable to take well defended sites such as Braşov, and instead raided easier targets such as the nearby villages and hamlets in the forests.<sup>283</sup> Fundamentally, the Turks were primarily interested in raiding and any fortresses which they were able to seize swiftly fell back into Hungarian hands. Though the damage wrought to the local infrastructure is difficult to assess, it would appear to have been repaired rather quickly. The roads around Braşov were clearly in good repair after the invasions of 1432, as in 1438 they were ordered to be made impassable in order to slow the approach of Turkish forces.<sup>284</sup> In most cases, the defences would not collapse in the face of Turkish attack until after Sigismund's death.<sup>285</sup> In fact, it is all too easy to take the tales of continual crisis and disaster present in the source material at face value, and infer that Sigismund's attempts to defend against the Turks were unsuccessful and that his military policies were simply not fit for purpose.

It is precisely this gloominess and sense of alarm in the sources which has unfairly coloured the modern literature. Rokai Petar has argued that Sigismund's campaigns in the later 1430s did not meet the expectations of contemporaries and that his entire 'Balkanpolitik' in this period should be characterised as fruitless and as a failure.<sup>286</sup> Similarly, Szakály has commented on Sigismund's inability to shift the balance of power in Hungary's 'foregrounds' and characterises the period of 1427-1437 as one in which Sigismund lost ground in the Balkans.<sup>287</sup> Nevertheless, Sigismund's response in the last five

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<sup>281</sup> ASVat, RS, 332, 24v-r. Partially printed in *Acta Eugenii*, pp. 254-5 (nr 479). Retreating to towers in the face of Turkish raids features in other accounts. See *Urkundenbuch Siebenbürgen*, iv. nr 2206; Georgius de Hungaria, *Tractatus de Moribus*, pp. 152-3.

<sup>282</sup> ASVat, RS, 332, 24v-r.

<sup>283</sup> *Urkundenbuch Siebenbürgen*, iv. nr 2221.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, iv. nr 2317.

<sup>285</sup> For the campaigns after Sigismund's death, see Jefferson, *Holy Wars*, pp. 157-75.

<sup>286</sup> Rokai Petar, 'Poslednje godine balkanske politike kralja Žigmunda (1435-1437)', *Godišnjak Filozofskog Fakulteta u Novom Sadu*, 12 (1969), 89-109 (German summary on pp. 108-9). For the comments, see p. 109.

<sup>287</sup> Szakály, 'Phases', p. 82-5.

or so years of his reign was not one marked by stagnation and should not be characterised as simply him doing his best to defend what little he could. If anything, in the last four years Sigismund actively took the fight to the Turks beyond the Danube. This did not just involve attempts to outflank the Ottomans by paying renewed attention to Bosnia, but also the launching of attacks across the Danube into Serbia and Bulgaria in order to destroy Ottoman fleets and regain the initiative after the events of 1432.

After Sigismund relieved the Teutonic Knights of their command in 1432, the task of defending the southern frontier eventually fell to a family of Ragusan origin known as the Tallóci, principally comprised of four brothers. By the later 1430s they dominated the management and the defence of the frontier. Upon Sigismund's death in 1437, Matko Tallóci was the Count of Kevi, Ban of Slovenia, Dalmatia and Croatia and Franko Tallóci was the Captain of Belgrade and Ban of Severin. Jovan Tallóci was Prior of the Hospitallers in Hungary and Perko Tallóci later held major office under Sigismund's successors.<sup>288</sup> They proved to be highly effective administrators and military commanders, and were able to draw upon specialised expertise from their native city of Ragusa in order to support their campaigns against the Turks. Matko, for example, used Ragusan architects to improve the fortifications in Belgrade.<sup>289</sup> In some cases, they tried to draw directly upon Ragusan military resources in their campaigns against the Turks. In 1436, for example, Matko requested two pieces of artillery with suitable equipment and arms for an expedition against a lord who had allied himself with a certain lord *Zelapie Teucro*.<sup>290</sup> The Ragusans never did send the cannon, though they had a rather good excuse. Their armoury had exploded the year before, causing a great deal of damage and they simply had no cannon to give.<sup>291</sup>

The Turkish attacks of 1432 and the Hussite attacks in northern Hungary in the same year left an impression on Sigismund, and he submitted proposals outlining the military resources of the Kingdom of Hungary and how they were to be deployed.<sup>292</sup> Though the defences around the Iron Gates and in Transylvania had given way in the summer of 1432,

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<sup>288</sup> On the Tallóci family, see generally Mályusz, 'Die vier Gebrüder Tallóci', 1-66. See also Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 161-66.

<sup>289</sup> *Documenti res Belgradi*, ii. 41-3 (nrs 43-5). For further discussion, Mályusz, 'Die vier Gebrüder Tallóci', pp. 36-7.

<sup>290</sup> *DRRRcRH*, p. 400 (nr 245). On Matko's sourcing of artillery more generally, see Jefferson, *Holy Wars*, p. 227-30.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 400. The explosion is covered in more detail by a contemporary Ragusan chronicler. See Philippus de Diversis, *Situs Aedificarum, Politiae et laudabilium Consuetudinum inclytiae Civitatis Ragusij*, ed. Vitaliano Brunelli (Zara: G. Woditzka, 1882), pp. 41-3.

<sup>292</sup> *DRMH*, ii. 141-53, 245-8. For background, Bak, 'Sigismund and the Ottoman Advance', p. 92.

they were soon restored, though fear of attack lingered. In May 1433, for example, Michael Jackch, Count of the Szeklers (1427-38), promised to help Braşov (Kronstadt) should the Turks attack.<sup>293</sup> It would appear, however, that Turkish pressure in 1433 and 1434 turned out to be significantly less than in 1432. Perhaps because of this, Sigismund in 1434 felt confident enough to pursue a more proactive policy in Bosnia, perhaps in an effort to broaden the front on which he engaged the Turks. This allowed Sigismund to invest considerable resources in supporting Tvrtko in Bosnia and in securing the Kingdom of Hungary's south western flank. A document dated 27 June 1435 recounts the campaigning which Matko Tallóci undertook there *contra sevissimos Turcos* the previous summer with a force of 1117 lances (*mille centum ac decem et septem lancearum*).<sup>294</sup> The military effectiveness of Sigismund's banderial system is clear, as in one season Matko and his banderium were able to reconquer the critical fortresses of Jajce and Bihác as well as many other fortresses (*Jayischa... et Bochach... et alia multa castra*), and leave them provisioned with supplies and munitions (*fortalicia et municionis in eodem regno... apparavit*).<sup>295</sup> Though these gains were impressive Sigismund simply could not afford to station Matko and over a thousand lances in Bosnia on a permanent basis, as by 1435 they were needed elsewhere, notably along the Danube near Belgrade and in Transylvania.

Pressing his aims in Bosnia thus slipped down his list once again, and in 1435 a Turkish force of 1500 men would roll back many of the gains made by Matko the year before.<sup>296</sup> However, the subsequent years would prove that Sigismund's decision to downgrade the defence of Bosnia in favour of supporting the Danube frontier and his Wallachian allies was the correct choice. Even without the control of the so called *passus Bosne*, Sigismund was able to establish an effective defensive system on the Kingdom of Hungary's south western frontier with only a handful of fortresses and a reform of military organisation in the area.<sup>297</sup> A contemporary list of castles and towns drawn up in 1437 notes the three fortresses along the Bosnian frontier which were still in Hungarian hands as Jajce, Komothyn and Bihác, meaning that at least two of Matko's conquests in 1434 had been

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<sup>293</sup> *Urkundenbuch Siebenbürgen*, iv. nr 2174.

<sup>294</sup> DL 34067. Partially printed in Petar, 'Poslednje godine balkanske', p. 101. For another account of this campaign, see *CDPRHA*, pp. 115-6 (nr 184). Matko had accrued numerous benefits and incomes from Sigismund in 1433 and 1434, perhaps in preparation for this campaign. See Mályusz, 'Die vier Gebrüder Tallóci', pp. 30-2.

<sup>295</sup> DL 34067.

<sup>296</sup> *DRRRcRH*, p. 393 (nr 241).

<sup>297</sup> For 'passus Bosne', a phrase Sigismund used in 1426, see *DRRRcRH*, p. 317 (nr 202)

held.<sup>298</sup> Sigismund, by arranging three marches dug deep into the banates of Slavonia and Croatia and centred behind notable fortresses, was able to provide for his kingdom's security in that area.<sup>299</sup>

Throughout 1435 and 1436 the Ottomans continued to put pressure on Sigismund's southern frontier, though the impact which their incursions had, if any, is difficult to ascertain. John of Ragusa (c. 1380- c. 1440), a legate of the Council of Basle present in Constantinople, wrote two letters in February 1436, one to the synod and the other to Cardinal Julian Cesarini (1398-1444).<sup>300</sup> In both these letters and in colourful language, he emphasised how the Turks were laying waste to Hungary and enslaving Christians by the tens of thousands and deporting them to Asia.<sup>301</sup> It is difficult to find sources that can support these disaster stories, and the reality of the situation on the frontier seems to have been much more stable. 1435 and 1436 saw Sigismund shift his attention away from Bosnia once again, in favour of the Danube frontier and Wallachia. Rumours circulating in Nuremberg in April 1436 suggested that Sigismund had based himself in Szeged in order to see to affairs regarding the Turks.<sup>302</sup> Although Szeged is noted as being on the border between Hungary and Serbia, which is clearly inaccurate, Sigismund was indeed in Szeged at that time and his correspondence in April shows that he was attending to the defence of his border.<sup>303</sup> In a letter of 22 April 1436, for example, Sigismund dealt with issues regarding the taxation of ecclesiastical property, as the money was needed to support forces that were to fight the Turks.<sup>304</sup> Though the chronology is unclear, it would appear that it was in 1436 that Alexander Aldea, the Voivode of Wallachia, died. His successor was Vlad II Dracul, and Sigismund worked to ensure that he remained on the throne in the face of Turkish pressure. Details of campaigning are scarce, but evidence from after Sigismund's reign would suggest that Sigismund had endowed Vlad with property and strongholds in Hungary, both to support his campaigning against the Turks and to provide a place of refuge should he have to flee

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<sup>298</sup> DL 13137. Printed in, Lajos Thallóczy, 'Magyar várak 1437 körül', *Archaeologiai Közlemények*, 12 (1878), 112-5 (p. 115).

<sup>299</sup> For Sigismund's military reforms, see Petar, 'Poslednje godine balkanske', pp. 89-90. German summary on pp. 108-9; For more information, see Fine, *Late Medieval Balkans*, pp. 497-8. Though at some point Jajce must have been lost again, as Matthias Corvinus reconquered it in 1463. See Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Skanderbeg: Der neue Alexander auf dem Balkan* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 2009), p. 259.

<sup>300</sup> Eugenio Cecconi, *Studi storici sul concilio di Firenze* (Florence: S. Antonino, 1869), pp. 198-211 (nrs 77-8).

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 204, 207.

<sup>302</sup> *FR*, i. 409 (nr 754).

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 409. The city lies around 200 km to the north of Belgrade, so it is hardly on the border of Serbia. For Sigismund's itinerary, see Hoensch, *Itinerar*, p. 121.

<sup>304</sup> *Urkundenbuch Siebenbürgen*, iv. nr 2257.

Wallachia.<sup>305</sup> Meanwhile, Matko Tallóci campaigned against Turkish allies towards Dalmatia.<sup>306</sup>

The Turkish threat was clearly on Sigismund's mind throughout this period, and it is unfair to suggest, as Szakály does, that Sigismund 'focussed his attention on west European policy' to the detriment of the fight against the Turks.<sup>307</sup> It was towards the end of 1436 that Sigismund embarked upon one of his more bizarre ideas to buttress his efforts against the Ottomans, and began lobbying for the ecclesiastical council at Basle to be moved to Buda, an idea which will be explored in more detail in the next chapter. Though the reasons and justifications Sigismund gave for such a move can appear quite humorous, Sigismund emphasised above all how it would help him fight the Turks, as he argued that by placing the council closer to the power of the Turks, he would have a better chance of organising a great campaign against them.

The last year of Sigismund's reign saw Sigismund draw upon Bohemian expertise in his fight against the Turks. The Battle of Lipany on 30 May 1434 significantly reduced the strength of the Taborite and Orphan factions in Bohemia and paved the way for the signing of the Compactata in 1436, which allowed Sigismund to secure his position as King of Bohemia. The point has been made that his power was never secure in Bohemia and that his authority was merely nominal. A gang known only by the amusing title of the 'Young Ladies of Bohemia' brazenly kidnapped and ransomed his loyal servant, Walter von Schwarzenberg, while he was in Bohemia in November 1436.<sup>308</sup> Similarly, if Thuróczy is to be believed, Sigismund felt that he needed to leave Bohemia before he died, as he feared that his Hungarian nobles would be attacked and robbed if they were to be found in Bohemia after his death.<sup>309</sup>

Nevertheless, Sigismund's position was not so weak that he was unable to draw upon Bohemian military expertise against the Turks. Writing from Prague in February 1437, Sigismund commanded Peter Cseh, the Voivode of Siebenbürgen (1436-1437), to be ready to

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<sup>305</sup> *RTA*, xii, part 2, pp. 524-5 (nr 283).

<sup>306</sup> *DRRRcRH*, p. 400 (nr 245).

<sup>307</sup> Szakály, 'Phases', p. 83.

<sup>308</sup> Franz Kirchgässner, *Walter von Schwarzenberg, ein Frankfurter Gesandter des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Marburg, 1910), p. 59.

<sup>309</sup> Thuróczy, *Chronicle*, p. 94-5. For further discussion, Katalin Szende, 'Between Hatred and Affection: Towns and Sigismund in Hungary and the Empire', in *Segregation – Integration – Assimilation: Religious and Ethnic Groups in the Medieval Towns of Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Derek Keene, Balasz Nagy and Katalin Szende (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 235.

resist the Turks.<sup>310</sup> He went on to say that he was planning a great expedition of his own, which would involve a great army of Bohemians (*ingenti Bohemorum exercitu*).<sup>311</sup> This expedition will be explored in detail in chapter three, but, in brief, it involved a joint Bohemian, Hungarian and Austrian force striking deep into Ottoman territory that same summer. There they burnt numerous Turkish ships and, during their return, defeated the Beg of Vidin in battle.<sup>312</sup> Jefferson has speculated, that if Sigismund's plan was 'to bring the forces of his various realms to bear against the Turks, it was a policy the elder monarch would never realise'.<sup>313</sup> The campaign of 1437 shows precisely that he was able to bring the forces of his various realms together to bear against the Turks, uniting Taborites from Bohemia, naval resources from his subjects in the Reich and Hungarian troops into one force for a campaign against the Ottomans. Admittedly, he was only able to draw upon the resources of Bohemia for a very short period of time. Sigismund's ability to draw upon the resources of the Reich, however, was far longer lasting, and it is to this theme that this thesis will now turn.

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<sup>310</sup> *Urkundenbuch Siebenbürgen*, iv. nr 2278.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, nr 2278. Sigismund notes his plans to fight the Turks in another letter of February 1437. See *CDDSCZ*, viii. 595-6 (nr 411).

<sup>312</sup> For a summary, Jefferson, *Holy Wars*, pp. 144-6.

<sup>313</sup> Jefferson, *Holy Wars*, p. 145.

## Chapter 2. Courtly Ceremony, Councils and Chivalric Orders: Sigismund and the Publicising of the Turkish Threat

This chapter will explore Sigismund's use of spectacle and propaganda to raise awareness of the Turkish threat as the Roman King and Holy Roman Emperor. It will demonstrate the skill and finesse with which Sigismund approached his task of raising awareness of the Turkish threat, both in his German lands and throughout Christendom. It will do so through underlining the more nuanced and less apparent ways in which Sigismund exercised and displayed his authority as Roman King in order to raise the profile of the Turkish threat. After an introduction, several relevant case studies of Sigismund's ceremony will be explored before focussing on Sigismund's use of his chivalric order, the Order of the Dragon. Afterwards the chapter will turn to the figure of Mossen Borra and then to Sigismund's attitude towards the Council of Basle before concluding.

There has been a significant amount of literature on the impact that the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (1451-1481) in 1453 had on the perception of the Turks among contemporary European rulers. Historians, such as Karoline Döring, Matthias Thumser and Dieter Mertens, have argued that the fall of the city to the Turks marked the beginning of an intense reaction on the part of Christian rulers in the west to the Turkish threat.<sup>314</sup> This manifested itself in courtly contexts, notably Philip's feast of the Pheasant, but also in learned texts, orations and humanist discourse.<sup>315</sup> Historians, such as Jonathan Harris and Anthony Bryer, have underlined other strategies pursued by crusade propagandists to heighten the awareness of the Turkish threat after the fall of

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<sup>314</sup> Karoline Döring, 'Rhetorik und Politik im 15. Jahrhundert. Die "Türkenreden" und Ihre Verbreitung im Druck', in *Rhetorik im Mittelalter und Renaissance: Konzepte – Praxis – Diversität*, ed. George Strack and Julia Knödler (Munich: Herbert Utz, 2011), pp. 429-454 (pp. 429-430). Matthias Thumser, 'Türkenfrage und öffentliche Meinung. Zeitgenössische Zeugnisse nach dem Fall von Konstantinopel (1453)', in *Europa und die Osmanische Expansion im ausgehenden Mittelalter*, ed. Franz-Reiner Erkens (Berlin: Dunker und Humblot, 1997), pp. 59-78. Dieter Mertens, 'Europäischer Friede und Türkenkrieg im Spätmittelalter', in *Zwischenstaatliche Friedenswahrung in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. Heinz Duchhardt (Cologne: Böhlau, 1991), pp. 45-90 (esp. pp. 73-4).

<sup>315</sup> Döring, 'Rhetorik und Politik', pp. 429-430. See also Kühnel, 'Spätmittelalterliche Festkultur', pp 77-80.



Constantinople.<sup>316</sup> These included the use of Greek refugees to help sell crusade indulgences in England, as well as the display of exotic easterners by Franciscans in order to generate interest in launching campaigns against the Ottoman Turks.<sup>317</sup> This focus on the period after 1453 has obscured Sigismund's own efforts in raising awareness of the Turkish threat. Moreover, Sigismund sought to spread awareness of the Turkish threat not through the medium of Latin but through the German vernacular. As the vast majority of research in this field has usually focused on humanist discourse, most often conducted in Latin, Sigismund's attempts to advertise the Turkish threat in his German vernacular have gone relatively unnoticed.<sup>318</sup> As the chapter will demonstrate, Sigismund, a generation before the fall of Constantinople and the birth of 'Turcica' as a literary form, was attempting to spread awareness of the Turkish threat and the peril in which Christendom lay through various means.<sup>319</sup>

A few points should be made before discussing Sigismund's courtly behaviour and ceremony and its links with the advertisement of the Turkish threat. Numerous works of literature on Sigismund's diplomatic activity in the west have mentioned how one of Sigismund's key aims was to generate aid for his campaigns against the Turks, but then ignore totally his use of ceremony in aid of this.<sup>320</sup> It would seem that historians have not connected Sigismund's use of ceremony as Roman King and Kaiser with the advertisement of the Turkish threat at all. Gustav Beckmann's short but brilliant exploration of Sigismund's plan to move Christendom into making a combined effort against the Turks, largely focused upon the years 1410-1415, features little or no mention of ceremony.<sup>321</sup> Anna Maria Drabek in her study on imperial ceremony in the later middle ages includes dances and jousts and

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<sup>316</sup> Jonathan Harris, 'Publicising the Crusade: English Bishops and the Jubilee Indulgence of 1455', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 50 (1999), 23-37; Anthony Bryer, 'Ludovico da Bologna and the Georgian and Anatolian Embassy of 1460-1', in idem., *The Empire of Trebizond and the Pontos* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1980), X.

<sup>317</sup> Harris, 'Publicising the Crusade', p. 36-7; Bryer, 'Ludovico da Bologna', pp. 181-2.

<sup>318</sup> See, for example, Dieter Mertens, "'Europa, id est patria, domus propria, sedes nostra...". Zu Funktionen und Überlieferung lateinischer Türkenreden im 15. Jahrhundert', in *Europa und die Osmanische Expansion im ausgehenden Mittelalter*, ed. Franz-Reiner Erkens (Berlin: Ducker und Humblot, 1997), pp. 39-57.

<sup>319</sup> For 'Turcica', see Klára Pajorin, 'The Crusades and Early Humanism in Hungary', *Infima Aetas Pannonica: Studies in Late Medieval Hungarian History* (Budapest: Corvina, 2009), pp. 237-49 (p. 244); Housley, *Ottoman Threat*, pp. 170-1. Johannes Helmrath, 'Pius II. und die Türken', in *Europa und die Türken in der Renaissance*, ed. Bodo Guthmüller et al. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2000), pp. 79-138 (p. 84).

<sup>320</sup> Schwedler, *Herrschartreffen*, p. 124. Kintzinger, *Westbindungen*, p. 301.

<sup>321</sup> Beckmann, *Kampf Kaiser Sigmunds*, passim.

other similar activities during diplomatic congresses or meetings under the sub-heading of ‘festivities and distractions’.<sup>322</sup> For Sigismund they were certainly not distractions.

This all seems strange, for historians have had no problem in linking the courtly events and ceremony of, for example, Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy (1419-1467) or Frederick III, King of the Romans and Kaiser (1440/1452-1493), with the advertisement of Turkish threat.<sup>323</sup> It has been recently pointed out by Housley that in the second half of the fifteenth century ‘Hungary does not appear to have had an equivalent to Philip the Good’s Feast of the Pheasant or Maximilian’s Society of St George’.<sup>324</sup> This was certainly so, but the same cannot be said for the first half of the fifteenth century. As we will see, the diplomatic correspondence and chronicle accounts generated in the wake of Sigismund’s courtly events, diplomatic congresses and other such spectacles give the impression that the ceremony surrounding Sigismund as Roman King and the advertisement of the Turkish threat went hand in hand. Sigismund, much like the Duke of Burgundy at the famous Feast of the Pheasant of 1454, used courtly ceremony as an effective means to make Christendom aware of the Turkish threat. The difference here, however, is that Sigismund made good on his promise to fight the Turks and encouraged members of his audience to do the same.

It has also been argued that Sigismund was not influenced that greatly by contemporary crusading ideals.<sup>325</sup> This seems odd as Sigismund, even on his death bed, was said to be in despair for he was about to die having never made good on his vow to visit the Holy Land.<sup>326</sup> Though the longing to visit the Holy Land upon one’s death bed is rather clichéd, this chapter will show how the ideals surrounding sanctified warfare and crusading were critical in Sigismund’s presentation of the Turkish threat, a fact which his contemporaries picked up on also.<sup>327</sup> Sigismund’s crusade posturing, far from being unsuited

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<sup>322</sup> Anna Maria Drabek, *Reisen und Reisezeremoniell der römisch-deutschen Herrscher im Spätmittelalter* (Vienna: H. Geyer, 1964), pp. 69-71.

<sup>323</sup> Harry Kühnel, ‘Spätmittelalterliche Festkultur im Dienste religiöser, politischer und sozialer Ziele’, in *Feste und Feiern im Mittelalter: Paderborner Symposium des Mediävistenverbandes*, ed. Detlef Altenberg et. al. (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1991), pp. 71-87 (esp.77-80).

<sup>324</sup> Housley, *Ottoman Threat*, p. 119.

<sup>325</sup> Kintzinger, *Westbindungen*. 299. Kintzinger believes that Sigismund’s willingness to make peace with the Turks demonstrates ‘dass er nicht wirklich von Kreuzzugsideen beeindruckt ließ’, which seems far too simplistic. More recently, however, Sigismund’s fondness for crusading ideals within the context of humanist thought have been emphasised more strongly. See Pajorin, ‘Crusades and Early Humanism’, p. 241.

<sup>326</sup> *RTA*, xii. 263.

<sup>327</sup> Henry V of England said much the same thing. See Christopher Tyerman, *England and the Crusades, 1095-1588* (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1988), p. 303.

to the political and ideological environment of the early fifteenth century as a recent historian has argued, was actually of direct benefit to his wars against the Turks.<sup>328</sup>

## 2.1 Sigismund, the Roman Kingship, and the fight against the Turks

At the outset, it is worth tackling the point of whether Sigismund purposefully sought to use the status that came with his Roman Kingship to bolster his efforts against the Turks. One could of course argue that Sigismund did not purposely seek to use his power as Roman King to raise awareness of the Turkish threat and the plight of Hungary; that to suggest that Sigismund deliberately sought to use the Roman crown to garner more power to fight the Turks is to be far too generous. In fact, one could easily argue that he secured the Roman crown merely to increase his prestige and that his attempt, if one ever existed, to utilise his status as the King of the Romans to fight the Turks was one of mere opportunism. A letter of Sigismund, written at the beginning of his reign as King of the Romans, indicates that the fight against the Turks and the Roman crown, in Sigismund's mind at least, were inextricably linked. This letter carries no date for the original does not survive, and we are reliant on the copy which survives in a codex now in the Vatican Library.<sup>329</sup> It is highly likely that it comes from the time of the Council of Constance and it is addressed to an unknown figure in Constantinople.<sup>330</sup> In this letter, after emphasising how the blasphemers have overrun the entirety of Asia and the east (*totum asye ac orientis*), Sigismund moves on to discuss his plans to aid the 'city of Constantinople against the Turks'.<sup>331</sup> Here, Sigismund explicitly links his Roman crown with the fight against the infidels, when he notes that

truly to this end we have taken up the summit of the Kingdom of the Romans, so that we should therefore be able to bring about... a *passagium generale* against the infidels more easily and harmoniously.<sup>332</sup>

In Sigismund's mind at least, a combined effort against the Turks was made *habilius et convenientius* when the Roman crown was on his head. It is easy to see why Sigismund believed his Roman Kingship could make the organisation of a united effort against the Turks

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<sup>328</sup> Erkens, 'Überlegungen', pp. 759-62.

<sup>329</sup> Heimpel, 'Kanzlei Kaiser Sigismunds', p. 180. For discussion of the codex in general, see *ibid.*, pp. 115-31.

<sup>330</sup> For dating and discussion of the letter, see Márta Kondor, 'Latin West and Byzantine East at the Dawn of the Renaissance: Emperor Sigismund and the Union with the Greeks', in *Infima Aetas Pannonica: Studies in Late Medieval Hungarian History*, ed. Péter E. Kovács (Budapest: Corvina, 2009), 79-96 (p. 90).

<sup>331</sup> CLP, 701, f. 317. 'urbi constantinopoli a teucris'. The letter is partially printed in ACC. i. 236 (footnote 1), and calendared in ZKO, iv. nr 2824.

<sup>332</sup> CLP, 701, f. 317. 'maxime Romani regni fastigium ad hunc finem revera assumpsimus, ut eo habilius et convenientius passagium generale contra infideles...facere valeamus'.

easier to achieve. His status as Roman King and later, as Holy Roman Emperor, made him the secular head of Christendom and imbued him with a prestige and status far greater than he had simply as the King of Hungary. His coronation as King of the Romans also imbued him with a duty to combat the infidels in defence of Christendom, a duty he sought to fulfil in 1412 when he convened his first diplomatic congress as Roman King.<sup>333</sup>

## 2.2 Diplomatic events, crusading and marriages

The first great diplomatic event which Sigismund held as Roman King was the so called Congress of Buda in April and May 1412.<sup>334</sup> Sigismund had of course gathered kings and princes and other notables in Hungary before, precisely to negotiate for help in his fights against the Turks. However this council was different. The Congress of Buda, organised as it was by the now Roman King elect, the secular head of Christendom, was a truly international event.<sup>335</sup> A contemporary description of the various rulers and emissaries present demonstrates this.<sup>336</sup> This report, compiled for the benefit of the city council of Frankfurt, notes the presence of three kings, three captains of three lands, a despot, 13 dukes, 21 counts, 26 lords and 1500 knights, 4000 servants, a cardinal, a legate, three archbishops and 11 other bishops.<sup>337</sup> There were over 17 tongues present in the camp and representatives from over 19 lands. These included, among others, Englishmen, Turks, Jews from the 'Holy Sepulchre and even many ghastly pagans with long beards, great bellies and high hats', whoever they may have been.<sup>338</sup> Windecke's account of the congress gives similar numbers of attendees and implies that the event was suitably catered for, with one hunt alone resulting in the slaughter and cooking of 612 animals.<sup>339</sup>

The main issue on Sigismund's agenda at the Congress of Buda was to broker a lasting peace between the Teutonic Order and the Kingdom of Poland in the aftermath of the

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<sup>333</sup> Mertens, 'Europäischer Friede und Türkenkrieg', p. 66.

<sup>334</sup> For background, see Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 162-4; Wefers, *Das Politische System*, pp. 28-9..

<sup>335</sup> See Schwedler, *Herrschertrreffen*, for a brief précis of the congress and a bibliographic summary in his useful 'Repertorium' of *Herrschertrreffen* in the later Middle Ages.

<sup>336</sup> The account, which no longer survives in the original as a result of bomb damage to the Stadtarchiv Frankfurt in World War II, can be found in, Aschbach, *Kaiser Sigismund's*, pp. 441-2. Calendared in, *ZKO*, iii. nr 2175.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 442.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 442. 'Abrahamsche lüte vom heiligen grabe und sust vil heßlicher heiden mit langen berten, großen Brüchen, hohen hüten'.

<sup>339</sup> Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 10, and for the feasting, pp. 90-1

Battle of Tannenberg (sometimes referred to as Grunwald) which had taken place in July 1410.<sup>340</sup> However, Sigismund made clear that he had a broader motivation behind securing this peace in a letter of April 1412 which he addressed to various towns throughout the Reich. He states in the letter how he considers the Teutonic Order to be the ‘strong shield of Christendom’, and how damaging warfare between the Order and the King of Poland truly was.<sup>341</sup> Sigismund’s ultimate goal behind these peace negotiations was, as he continues, ‘so that we, the aforesaid king together with the [Teutonic] Order faithfully [can] help against the unbelievers, from which much good will come for Christendom’.<sup>342</sup> That by unbelievers Sigismund means the Turks is clear from a statement made later in the letter, where he claims that he had spoken to King of Poland about this ‘and that he shall and indeed wants to help us against the Turks and other unbelievers with his entire force’.<sup>343</sup> Beckmann is certainly correct when he underlines how it was Sigismund’s so-called ‘Orientpolitik’, his attempts to combat the Turks in the east, that was the main influence on his convening of the Congress of Buda. A Venetian report of March reflects the Turkish focus of the negotiations, and relays how the Polish King apparently told Sigismund of ‘his intention to fight against the Infidels’.<sup>344</sup> It is clear then, that being the Roman King and organising the resistance to the Turkish threat went hand in hand from the very beginning of his kingship.

Another letter, written around seven years after the Congress of Buda, is worth mentioning in this context too, if only for the bizarre spin it places on the Roman King’s crusading plans. In the *Ordensbriefarchiv* there survives a peculiar letter sent by the Komtur of Koblenz to the Grandmaster, Michael Kuchenmeister, dated to April 8 1419.<sup>345</sup> This letter served to inform the Grandmaster of the various goings on in the region and what follows is rather mundane stuff. So mundane, in fact, that at first sight it would appear to bear no relevance to this chapter (or this thesis) at all. The Komtur reports how, among other things, that there seems to be a lack of ships in the area and that this may cause him difficulty in the near future when transporting shipments of wine. He goes on to reveal that feuding between some minor nobility in the local area has resulted in some violence. This has, among other

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<sup>340</sup> Beckmann, *Kampf Kaiser Sigmunds*, pp. 65-6. For background to the battle, Sven Ekdahl, ‘Die Flucht der Litauer in der Schlacht bei Tannenburg’, *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung*, 12 (1963), 11-19.

<sup>341</sup> *RTA*, vii. 186 (nr 126). ‘vester schilt der cristenheite’.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186 (nr 126). ‘daz wir der vorgenanten kunig und der orden einander wider die ungleubigen furbasmere getrülich helfen und daz der cristenheite vil gutes doruß kommen werde’.

<sup>343</sup> *RTA*, vii. 187 (nr 126). ‘und daz er uns wider die Turken und andere ungleubig mit siner ganczen mahte helfen sol und wil’.

<sup>344</sup> *Listine*, 9, p. 261. ‘eius intentio guerizzare contra infideles’. Beckmann, *Kampf Kaiser Sigmunds*, p. 66.

<sup>345</sup> OBA, 2944. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr. 2944. This letter has been published, though with errors, in Israel, *Verhältnis*, p. 96 (nr 18).

things, had the unfortunate effect of damaging some of the Order's possessions. Eventually the Komtur turns to more distant matters and reports on the activities of Sigismund, *der roemsche conyng*. At this point the Komtur's prose thankfully begins to liven up, as he then moves on to spinning out a garbled and fantastical account of the goings on in Sigismund's court. He first reports that one has heard

in the king's court that the Roman King has deprived the Duke of Austria of his daughter and has given [him instead] a pagan queen sat in Hungary, which he had commanded from his land in his absence while he was in Germany.<sup>346</sup>

This mysterious *heydennische conyng*, the Komtur continues, is then revealed to be someone

with whom the Roman King himself has allied, to gather their power this summer and so to attempt, whether they may gain the Holy Sepulchre.<sup>347</sup>

The Komtur would appear to be suggesting that the Roman King has allied with a non-Christian princess with the intention of going on some form of crusade expedition, for their aim, as he clearly states, was *das heilige graff*, the Holy Sepulchre. The Komtur then reports that this is, however, a ruse, for

with real concern it is feared, that their plan is perhaps not to gain the Holy Sepulchre but to lay waste to our order and its land, oh God forbid.<sup>348</sup>

This short account raises many questions. Such an event or even rumours of such an event do not feature, as far as one can tell, in other items of contemporary correspondence or chronicles.<sup>349</sup> Where on earth did the Komtur get such a rumour from and why did he see such a negative ulterior motive behind Sigismund's plan to retake the Holy Sepulchre? Sigismund's attitude toward the Order was often erratic, but would Sigismund really consider attacking Order territory, especially with the support of a pagan princess?

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<sup>346</sup> OBA, 2944. 'in des conynges hove das der selbe roemsche conyng syne doechter dem herzougen von osterryche untzoegeu und eyne heydennische conyng gegeben hait by ungaren gesessen, deme her syn landt in symen apwesen as her in duydzchenland was bevoelen hatte'.

<sup>347</sup> OBA, 2944. 'mit deme sich der roemsche conyng ouch verbunden hait uff desen somer yre maicht zo versamelen und zo versuechen ap sy das heilige graff moegen gewynnen'.

<sup>348</sup> OBA, 2944. 'sunder mit mirklichen vermessen ist zo vesorgen das ir uffsacz sy nyt das heilige graff zo gewynnen sunder unsern ord und syn lant zo verderben das doch got verbiede'.

<sup>349</sup> Though according to Wolfgang Stromeer, rumours were circulating in Nuremberg in October 1419 that Sigismund was planning a 'Tartar campaign'. See Wolfgang von Stromeer, 'Eine Botschaft des Turkmenenfürsten Eine Botschaft des Turkmenenfürsten Qara auf dem Nürnberger Reichstag im März 1431', *Jahrbuch für fränkische Landesforschung*, 22 (1962), 433-41 (p. 438)

Whatever the case, in two respects this report would appear to be reading Sigismund's intentions relatively correctly. Firstly, Sigismund, as this chapter will demonstrate, made no secret of his desire to fight the enemies of Christendom. Winning back the Holy Land, *das heilige graff*, was shorthand for fighting the Turks and it formed a consistent part of Sigismund's rhetoric that presented itself in numerous guises.<sup>350</sup> The extent to which we can discern a comprehensive and well-thought out plan on the part of Sigismund to be the leader of a united Christendom against the Turks is debatable, but the ideal remained a critical part of his rhetoric and appears in bursts in his correspondence throughout his reign as Roman King and Holy Roman Emperor.<sup>351</sup> That the Komtur heard and chose to report this particular tale is significant, for it demonstrates that Sigismund's zeal to retake the Holy Land was known outside the limited audience of his letters and orations.

Secondly, in terms of Sigismund's marriage politics, the Komtur's rendering of the king as a ruler willing to use his daughter as a diplomatic pawn within the context of crusade planning is not too far off the truth. At first sight the idea that Sigismund would wish to cancel the planned marriage between his daughter, Elizabeth, and the Duke of Austria, seems rather outlandish. Why would Sigismund deprive Albert, the Duke of Austria, of his 10 year old daughter? Albert had been promised Elizabeth eight years previously, an honour which Sigismund was charging the duke a considerable sum of money for.<sup>352</sup> However, Sigismund did approach Elizabeth's marriage with some flexibility. While narrating events of 1421/1422 Windecke notes how a part of Sigismund's council advised Sigismund that he should give his daughter not to Duke Albert, but to the 'son of the Turkish Emperor' instead (*des Durken keisers sone*)<sup>353</sup>. Failing that, as Windecke continues, the suggestion that Sigismund should give his daughter to Duke Sigismund, the Grand Duke of Lithuania's son in law, perhaps in the attempt to stop him supporting the Hussites, was also present in Sigismund's court.<sup>354</sup>

Assessing how reliable the content of Windecke's chronicle is can be highly problematic, but he enjoyed personal contact with Sigismund and he may have been present

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<sup>350</sup> Erkens, 'Überlegungen', pp. 758-60. Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 221.

<sup>351</sup> In this respect, see the important contribution of Kondor, 'Sigismund and the Union', pp. 89-95. For correspondence between Sigismund and Emperor Manuel Paleologus which stresses the king's desire to fight the Turks, see ACC, i. 391-401 (nrs 111-2). These letters have been translated into German, Wilhelm Baum (ed.), *Kaiser Manuel II. Palaiologos: Dialog über den Islam und Erziehungsratschläge. Mit drei Briefen König Sigismunds von Luxemburg an Manuel II.*, trans. Raimund Senoner (Klagenfurt: Kitab, 2003), pp. 157-166.

<sup>352</sup> For the financial arrangements of this marriage deal, see Sigismund's letter to Krems an der Donau, dated to 1411, available in CDH, x, v. 171-7 (nr 75). Windecke records the arranging of the marriage and dates it to 1411. See Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 23.

<sup>353</sup> Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 117.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

or at least have known people who were present at the sort of meetings where these issues were discussed. However, there is evidence from Sigismund himself which reinforces the idea that he was willing to use his daughter as a pawn in his drive to secure aid against the Turks. In a letter of 1416, for example, Sigismund himself stated that he was willing to marry his daughter to one of the French King's sons if this would provide peace between France and England.<sup>355</sup> Sigismund was willing to use his daughter in such a way as securing peace was a vital prerequisite for a crusade and, as Sigismund stated himself in the same letter, he needed peace in Christendom so that

we may make a *passagium generale* against the barbarian nations and the blasphemers and enemies of the name of Christ and so we may set in order our attempted exercise and arms in the name of the lord.<sup>356</sup>

In the same year Sigismund also said that he wanted the King of Poland to marry his daughter to the son of the Turkish Sultan, although what the King of Poland (or the Turkish Sultan for that matter) thought of this is unknown.<sup>357</sup> As an aside, Sigismund may actually have had a Turkish princess at his disposal in Buda. Much like other western powers, Sigismund took advantage of Ottoman dynastic struggles and gave asylum to renegade Ottoman royalty.<sup>358</sup> Around 1400 he gave shelter to a branch of the Ottoman dynasty and the presence of a certain 'illustrious lady Katherine, daughter of Morath Beg, Emperor of the Turks of the Ottoman house' in Hungary during Sigismund's time is well attested.<sup>359</sup> She even had her own stone house in Buda, although in 1419 she would have been very young or even not yet born at all. The Komtur's tale then, may in fact be true.<sup>360</sup> In short and despite a bizarre spin, the Komtur of Koblenz's report reveals Sigismund's underlying intention; to combat the infidel threat using whatever means possible.

Leaving the Komtur's bizarre twist aside, one can see that Sigismund used a whole range of measures, techniques and guises as the Roman King to spread awareness of the

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<sup>355</sup> Caro, 'Kanzlei', p. 120.

<sup>356</sup> Caro, 'Kanzlei', pp. 120-1. 'contra barbaricas naciones et blasphemos nomini Christi et inimicos passagium generale faceremus conatusque nostros in nomine domini exercitium brachiaque dirigemus'.

<sup>357</sup> Heimpel, 'Kanzlei Kaiser Sigismunds', p. 177.

<sup>358</sup> Jonathan Harris, *Greek Émigrés in the West, 1400-1520* (Camberley: Porphyrogenitus, 1995), pp. 101-2.

<sup>359</sup> CDP, i. 375 (nr 244). 'domina katherine illustris...morath beg imperatoris thurcorum de domo Othmanorum...filia'. For the Ottoman family under Sigismund's protection, see Franz Babinger, 'Dâwûd-Čelebi, ein osmanischer Thronwerber des 15. Jahrhunderts', *Südost-Forschungen*, 16 (1957), 297-311 (for Katherine, p. 304).

<sup>360</sup> Similar rumours, that Sigismund was planning a campaign to seize the Holy Land, but in this case with Tartar aid, were afoot in Nuremberg. See Stromer, 'Qara Yuluq an König', p. 438.



Turkish threat and to generate the aid he required in order to withstand it. This did not just involve letter writing or marriage politics, for Sigismund's favourite combination of dance, drink and ladies were also weapons in the fight against the Ottomans.

### **2.3 Paris, Rome, Perpignan and Nuremberg: Raising awareness of the Turkish threat throughout Christendom**

Sigismund's behaviour at courtly events could be highly erratic and unpredictable, especially when dancing, ladies and alcohol were involved. Nevertheless, the advertisement of the Turkish threat was a common element after 1410. One example is particularly instructive. In February of 1416 a certain Ulrich Meiger, a notary of Strasbourg, was dispatched to Sigismund in order to discuss the confirmation of various town privileges which only the Roman King could confirm.<sup>361</sup> Ulrich was received by Sigismund in Paris one evening, but the King of the Romans was in no mood to talk business and wanted to only talk about ladies. This should come as no surprise, for ladies, while travelling in the west, in places as far apart as Avignon, Strasbourg and London, seemed to be the main object of his attention. The observation of the courtly poet and servant of Sigismund, Oswald von Wolkenstein (c. 1377-1445), that *wer zwaiung an den frauen gelaint, wir hetten uns leicht ee veraint* ('if the Schism had involved ladies, we would have achieved unity sooner') may be a little tongue-in-cheek, but does nevertheless point to Sigismund's eye for the ladies.<sup>362</sup> Sigismund's behaviour in Paris involved a heady mix of drunken balls, shocking audiences with his impromptu singing and dancing and generally dazzling onlookers with his gregarious and lascivious behaviour. So when Sigismund received Ulrich in his chamber he continued in a similar fashion, and for the benefit of Ulrich and his assembled audience he began speaking at length about the ladies in Strasbourg and how he had never been made so happy by such a group of lovely ladies during his last visit to the city.

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<sup>361</sup> This particular letter of Ulrich's is available in, ACC, iv. 455-8 (nr 464). This same letter with other letters of Ulrich's, though transcribed differently, can be found in, Jacob Wencker, *Collecta archive et cancellariae jura* (Strasbourg: Johannes Reinholdi Dulsseckeri, 1715), pp. 158-61. The tale of Ulrich's visit to Sigismund features in the chronicle of Jacob von Königshoven. See Jacob von Königshoven, *Elsassische und Straßburgische Chronicke* (Strasbourg: Josias Städel, 1648), pp. 145-6.

<sup>362</sup> Karl Kurt Klein (ed.), *Die Lieder Oswalds von Wolkenstein* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1987), KL 19, VI, 5-6. I am most grateful to Sieglinde Hartmann for this reference and her kindness in allowing me to read an unpublished article of hers regarding Wolkenstein's poem, 'Es ist ein altgesprochener rat (KL 19)', from which the quoted reference is drawn.

Ulrich had clearly come prepared. He softened Sigismund up by joining him in his discussion about the ladies, an action which made Sigismund ‘especially friendly’.<sup>363</sup> He then revealed that he had brought with him a letter for Sigismund, a *frowen brief* as he called it, from the very ladies of Strasbourg who had so impressed the king in the summer of 1414. Sigismund asked Ulrich to read the letter out immediately and he took great pleasure in hearing its contents. Upon learning that Ulrich bore a special piece of jewellery, a piece of *frowen cleinat* as he called it, from the ladies of his town as a gift for their king, Sigismund went into overdrive. He commanded his servants and attendants to join him in his chamber, where he then proudly declared that he would make the ladies of London, whom he was about to go and visit, send numerous gifts to the ladies of Strasbourg.<sup>364</sup> After this Sigismund commanded everyone to start dancing, placed the *frowen cleinat* on his neck and, as Ulrich records, launched into speech:

now, God willing, with this jewellery I will from today for a year move against the Turks and whoever wishes to fight with the Turks, be it through God, through honour or on account of a lady, should remain for this time with me...<sup>365</sup>

As Meiger reports, this was one of many speeches which Sigismund made that day (*beschach vil rede da*) yet it was the only one which he thought fit to record in his letter. This short speech is important in the context of this chapter for several reasons. It is curious that Meiger has been the subject of one specific study by Hans Kaiser and a significant element in the work of Oliver Daldrup and that his account of Sigismund’s speech about fighting the Turks is not mentioned in either.<sup>366</sup> Daldrup has used the letters of Meiger to come to some interesting conclusions in a recent monograph on diplomacy and diplomatic practice in the Reich during Sigismund’s time. Daldrup argues that the content of Meiger’s letters reinforce how the political issues of the Reich never left Sigismund’s eyes.<sup>367</sup> This conclusion is unconvincing. Meiger’s letters show how Sigismund’s obsession with ladies and desire to

<sup>363</sup> ACC, iv. 456. ‘zumal froelich’.

<sup>364</sup> Sigismund’s impression of London when he visited in the summer of 1416 is recorded by Windecke. Apparently, Sigismund was enamoured with London, and special reference is made to the beautiful ladies and girls of London who wore their best dresses when escorting the king into the city. See Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 66.

<sup>365</sup> Wencker, *Collecta archive*, p. 159. ‘nun wil ich mit disem Cleinot ob Gott wil, von hut uber ein Jar uf den Turken ligen, Darumb wer durch Gott und durch Ere oder umb Frawen willen mit den Türcken vechten welle, der sol uff die zit bi mir syn’.

<sup>366</sup> Hans Kaiser, ‘Ulrich Meiger von Waseneck’, *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins*, 55 (1901), 161-203. Daldrup, *Zwischen König und Reich*, pp. 80-5, 137, 173. See also Meiger’s entry in Daldrup’s table of embassies sent to Sigismund (‘Tabelle der untersuchten Gesandtschaften’), which begins on p. 435 (the subsequent pages are not paginated).

<sup>367</sup> Daldrup, *Zwischen König und Reich*, p. 173.

advertise the Turkish threat came to the fore precisely when he should have been considering matters of the Reich, in this case the privileges of Strasbourg. When Meiger's report of his time at Sigismund's court in Paris is considered as a whole, a very different impression is gained from the one forwarded by Hans Kaiser and Daldrup.<sup>368</sup> Sigismund appears less concerned with the Reich and more with ladies and the Turkish threat. This historiographic emphasis, which tends to obscure Sigismund's focus on the Turkish threat in favour of his focus on political issues in the Reich is one that surfaces frequently. With Meiger's speech and further examples, it is hoped that this chapter can redress this balance and restore the Turkish threat to the fore of Sigismund's thinking and diplomatic activity, particularly while travelling in the west.

Sigismund's speech, as reported by Meiger, helps to underline how he was actively seeking to spread awareness of the Turkish through a means which historians have traditionally not focused upon. Sigismund was in wide correspondence between 1410 and 1415, with everyone from kings such as Henry IV of England and Charles VI of France all the way down to rather junior members of the clergy in Hungary. These letters do indeed make a point of stressing the threat of the Turks.<sup>369</sup> As well as individual letters targeting particular princes or prelates, Sigismund also sent a circular letter in August 1415 to, among others, the Kings of England, Aragon, France, Duke Ernest of Austria and the Counts of Savoy.<sup>370</sup> Its circulation was clearly greater than its stated address list, for a copy ended up in Venice too. During the Council of Constance the synod itself sent letters to the various princes and rulers in Christendom, reminding their readers of the monstrosities which the Turks were daily subjecting Christians to in Hungary.<sup>371</sup> Sigismund would, in fact, write similar letters throughout the rest of his reign. These efforts certainly did raise awareness of the Turkish threat and Hungary's dire position, but they only did so among the ruling classes of Christendom.<sup>372</sup> Sigismund's speech in Paris as recorded by Meiger, made in the German vernacular, demonstrates a commitment to raise awareness of the Turkish threat beyond the limited circle of people that received his letters. The speech was made in late February 1416 and it was by no means the only courtly event during which Sigismund deliberately sought to advertise the Turkish threat.

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<sup>368</sup> Hans Kaiser, 'Ulrich Meiger', pp. 176-8. Daldrup, *Zwischen König und Reich*, p. 173.

<sup>369</sup> For Henry IV, *ACC*, i. 88-92, esp. p. 91 (nr 21); *ZKO*, iii. nr 1849; Altmann, nr 12225. For Charles VI, *ZKO*, iv. nr 1347. For the clergyman in Hungary, *CDP*, ii. 201-5, esp. pp. 201-2 (nr 137); *ZKO*, v. nr 167. For background see, Beckmann, *Kampf Kaiser Sigmunds*, pp. 60-62.

<sup>370</sup> *Listine*, 12, pp. 209-11; *ACC*, iii. 284 (nr 129, footnote 2).

<sup>371</sup> *ACC*, iv. 659-62 (nr 511).

<sup>372</sup> See for example the response of Venice, *ACC*, iv. 283 (nr 129).

If we skip ahead twenty or so years, Sigismund was doing precisely the same thing but in a very different context; notably during the festivities surrounding his coronation as emperor in Rome in the summer of 1433. Sigismund's sojourn in Italy culminated in his imperial coronation in Rome in May 1433 and its splendour and spectacle attracted numerous comments from contemporary observers. Of particular interest to contemporary chroniclers and letter writers was Sigismund's extensive retinue of lords, prelates, knights, servants and hangers on, drawn from throughout his kingdoms and lands of Hungary, Bohemia, Italy and Germany. Some chroniclers noted with interest the Turkish representatives in his retinue and others, such as the mysterious Ertogod, excited some interesting comments.<sup>373</sup> The town chronicler of Viterbo notes the presence in Sigismund's company of 'the Englishman Ertogod, who was 120 years old and who knew more about arms than a young man and who had never committed a carnal sin. He was a virgin and a great lord of England and was one of the nine leading lords of the world'.<sup>374</sup>

Whoever this aged and virginal expert fighter of an Englishman may have been, while an interesting avenue of enquiry, is not important in this context. Having these interesting people in your retinue got people talking and interested in what was going on. To take later examples, Greek refugees accompanied the Archbishop of Ravenna when he visited England in 1455.<sup>375</sup> In another case, Ludovico da Bologna's travels around Europe between 1460-1, aimed at engineering a crusade against the Turks, attracted a great deal of attention from contemporaries.<sup>376</sup> This was mostly because his embassies were replete with some rather bizarre Georgian and Anatolian representatives. One group of them drew attention from one chronicler because together they managed to eat 20lbs of meat a day, and other representatives, such as the flute playing envoy of lesser Cilicia or the astrological expert who claimed to be an envoy of Prester John, drew equal amounts of attention.<sup>377</sup> In Sigismund's case, the journey of a Roman King to Rome to receive the Imperial crown was an event that had not been repeated since 1368 and the Holy Roman Emperor elect was

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<sup>373</sup> *Cronache e statute della città di Viterbo*, ed. Ignazio Ciampi (Florence: Tipi di M. Cellini E. C., 1872), p. 124.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124. 'L'altro fu Ertogod inglese, che era d'eta di anni 120 e portava meglio tutt'arme che un giovane: e mai non commise peccato carnale. Era vergine e grandissimo signore in Inghilterra, ed era uno delli nove principali signori del mondo'. See also, Kovács, 'Sigismund's Coronation in Rome', pp. 97-162 (p. 137).

<sup>375</sup> Harris, 'Publicising the Crusade', p. 32-4.

<sup>376</sup> Bryer, 'Ludovico da Bologna', pp. 180-91.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 184,190.

taking full advantage of the crowds and the spectacle.<sup>378</sup> One act of ceremony, notably his personal baptism of Petro de Orasteia, helps demonstrate this.

For information on Petro de Orasteia's baptism we are reliant on one source, Petro's own supplication to Pope Eugenius IV which survives in the *Registra Supplicationum* and dated to July 13, 1433.<sup>379</sup> Petro records how he had previously been of the Greek rite but on June 7 he had been baptised into the Catholic faith by the Holy Roman Emperor himself (*per eundem dominum imperatorem fuit baptizatus*) in a ceremony conducted in St Peter's Basilica in Rome.<sup>380</sup> Sigismund had been crowned as Holy Roman Emperor the week before on May 31, 1433, and this public baptism may have been seen as a continuation of the festivities and celebrations of the past few weeks.<sup>381</sup> Petro's supplication reveals that he had enjoyed a particularly interesting career in Sigismund's service and a career that the Holy Roman Emperor would have liked to publicise for others to emulate and follow. Petro was a knight of Sigismund who had fought 'for the defence of the catholic and faith and the defence of Christians against the most perfidious and infidel Turks and the heretical Hussites'.<sup>382</sup> Petro had an interesting background for a knight of Sigismund. He had clearly first entered Sigismund's service some time before and while still an adherent of the Greek rite. After serving against Sigismund's Turkish and Hussite enemies for several years he had accompanied Sigismund to Rome where he was baptised into the Latin rite. His supplication asked for him to be cleansed of all sin on account of his services to Christendom, a request that was granted by the Papacy.

Where Petro had originally come from is hard to tell. The supplication does not explicitly identify Petro's native diocese and his father's name, *Blasii de Orastiia*, does not provide any geographical hint as to where he may have hailed from. A further supplication of his, however, which asks for the grant of indulgences to support the rebuilding of a church, dedicated to Saint Demetrius the Martyr of Thessalonica, perhaps reveals a Greek influence. This church, however, is stated to be in the diocese *Chanadiensis*, centred upon Csanád (modern day Cenad, in Romania) in the southern parts of the Hungarian Kingdom and is not likely to have been his birth place. Where Petro came from, therefore, is not possible to

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<sup>378</sup> Favreau-Lilie, 'Vom Kriegsgeschrei zur Tanzmusik', pp. 213-4

<sup>379</sup> ASVat, RS, 287, 132v-133. It has been published, though with some mistakes, in *Acta Eugenii*, pp. 127-8 (nr 207). The ceremony is mentioned in Kondor, 'Sigismund and the Union', p. 81.

<sup>380</sup> ASVat, RS, 287, 132v.

<sup>381</sup> Kondor, 'Sigismund and the Union', p. 81.

<sup>382</sup> ASVat, RS, 287, 132v. 'qui pro fidei catholice et christianorum defensione contra perfidissimos et infideles turcos et hussitas hereticos'.

ascertain. He could have been from the Byzantine Empire or from much closer, perhaps from the Orthodox populations of Serbia or Transylvania.

As Kondor as argued, there could also be a broader significance behind this baptism, especially when Sigismund's personal interest in union between the Catholic and Orthodox faith is considered.<sup>383</sup> Sigismund interest in the Church union was well known and, contrary to Kondor's view, did not necessarily present itself in fits and bursts.<sup>384</sup> It would appear that Sigismund remained a strong proponent for Church union through his entire reign, even if his desire for union did not regularly present itself in his own correspondence. Długosz records the highly amusing tale of Sigismund debating the merits of the Orthodox rite while at Lutsk in 1429. Sigismund proclaimed that the only things separating the Greeks from the Latins were beards and wives (*barbis duntaxat et uxoribus a nobis secreti sunt*).<sup>385</sup> He then went on to joke that the issues surrounding the clerical taking of wives was more a problem for the Latins, as the Greeks were content to take just one wife each, while Latin clerics usually took ten or more! What his fellow Latins made of this joke is anyone's guess, but Sigismund's audience, in this case a group of Ruthenian nobles, enjoyed it immensely.<sup>386</sup> Sigismund's firm belief in union surfaced in other situations, as is implied by a letter of Johann Karschau, a cleric of the Teutonic Order present at the Council of Basle. In September 1437 he notes to his Grandmaster how it was the 'Kaiser's opinion, that the Greeks be one with us Latins'.<sup>387</sup> Karschau reports in the same letter that Sigismund also wanted to unite the Order of St. John with the Teutonic Order and to place them in Hungary 'against the Turks' (*widdir die Torken*). Clearly then, unions were close to Sigismund's heart. Perhaps Sigismund's public baptism of Petro was to show his explicit support for Church union. Church union would, after all, make the organisation of a joint crusade and military effort against the Turks even easier. Sigismund's successor as King of Hungary and Roman King, Albrecht II, was supposedly overjoyed when he heard that union negotiations were almost at an end. In a letter dated to September 3, 1439, and written while on campaign against the Turks, Albert notes how these successful negotiations are most useful for Christendom and will spur him on to even greater efforts against the barbarians who he was currently engaging.<sup>388</sup> Sigismund's

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<sup>383</sup> Kondor, 'Sigismund and the Union', p. 81.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>385</sup> Długosz, *Historiae Polonicae*, xi. 368.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid., xi. 368.

<sup>387</sup> OBA, 7363. *RhdOSMT*, i. i. nr 7363. The letter has been partially printed in Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden', p. 119.

<sup>388</sup> Theodor Lindner, 'Zur deutschen Geschichte im fünfzehnten Jahrhundert', *MIÖG*, 13 (1892), 377-434 (for the letter in question, see pp. 430-1). See also, *Regesta Imperii 12*, ed. Hödl, nr 1143.

display and baptism of Petro could be said to be a rather positive symbolic action. By showing off a successful and triumphant knight, Sigismund was underlining the rewards and spiritual prizes which one could receive if they were to fight in his service against his infidel enemies.

Our next case study comes, so to speak, from the other side of the struggle, and involves Sigismund's display of a captured Turkish king to Iberian royalty and nobility. Speeches and public baptisms were not the only methods which Sigismund drew upon to raise awareness of the Turkish threat. In some cases Sigismund used slightly more niche means to underline how he struggled on behalf of Christendom against the Turks. Sigismund's entrance into Perpignan in September 1415, which then was technically within the Kingdom of Aragon, was an ostentatious event and attended by dignitaries and emissaries from across Christendom.<sup>389</sup> It is noteworthy that the set piece event of Sigismund's entry into Perpignan involved the Roman King showing off a supposedly Turkish prisoner to the assembled crowd.<sup>390</sup> A chronicle of John II's reign, King of Castile and Leon (1406-1454), composed by Álvaro Garcíá de Santa María (1370-1460), reports on Sigismund's entry in the most detail.<sup>391</sup>

The reason for Sigismund's visit to Perpignan, as Garcíá's chronicle makes clear in numerous repetitions in the preceding chapters, was to negotiate with the King of Aragon for the successful 'union of the Church, which has been in schism for 36 years..., and so to bring order and peace to all of Christendom'.<sup>392</sup> As we have seen, the healing of the Papal schism and the fight against the Turks were, in Sigismund's mind at least, inextricably entwined. At Perpignan it was clear that the *Emperador de los Romanos*, as Garcíá calls Sigismund,

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<sup>389</sup> Sieglinde Hartmann, 'Sigismunds Ankunft in Perpignan und Oswalds Rolle als *Wisskunte von Türkei*', in *Durch Abenteuer muess man wagen vil: Festschrift für Anton Schwob zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Wernfried Hofmeister and Bernd Steinbauer (Innsbruck: Innsbrücker Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft, 1997), pp. 133-9 (p. 137). For background to Sigismund's diplomatic journey through France and Iberia, see Drabek, *Reisezeremoniell*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>390</sup> Hartmann makes the argument that Sigismund's Turkish prisoner was in fact played by Oswald von Wolkenstein. See Hartmann, 'Ankunft in Perpignan', pp. 133-9.

<sup>391</sup> Álvaro Garcíá de Santa María, 'Crónica del Rey don Juan, segundo Rey deste nombre en Castilla y en Leon', in *Crónicas de los Reyes de Castilla*, ed. Cayetano Rosell (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1877), ii, 277-696 (p. 365). The relevant passage has been translated into German and is available here: Hartmann, 'Ankunft in Perpignan', pp. 137-8. I am most grateful to Sieglinde Hartmann for information regarding Sigismund's entry into Perpignan. For dating of the chronicle and further discussion, see, Hartmann, 'Ankunft in Perpignan', pp. 133-4. Esteban Sarasa Sánchez, *Aragón en el reinado de Fernando I, 1412-1416: gobierno y administración, constitución política, hacienda real* (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 1986), pp. 33-47.

<sup>392</sup> Álvaro Garcíá, 'Crónica del Rey don Juan', p. 364.

intended not only to lay the groundwork for the abdication of Pedro de Luna, the renegade Antipope Benedict XII resident in Iberia, but also to raise awareness of the Turkish threat.<sup>393</sup>

Sigismund was grandly received in Perpignan by Alfonso, the crown prince of Aragon, and was accompanied down the streets, specially carpeted for the occasion, with numerous nobles and prelates of the Iberian kingdoms.<sup>394</sup> With Sigismund was a large retinue of 300 knights, fully armed and displaying ‘the arms of the Empire’, who entered the town to find the celebrations in full swing, with dances and other celebrations lining the streets.<sup>395</sup> Upon arriving at his prepared lodgings Sigismund was received at the entrance by a servant of his. This servant was, as the chronicler reports, none other than a ‘king of Turkey, who the emperor had captured in battle’.<sup>396</sup> This so called *Rey de Turquía* was Sigismund’s sword bearer, who, after drawing and presenting his sword in front of the King, escorted him into his lodgings amid his escort of four crossbowmen, twenty five litter bearers and the accompanying music of three young musicians.<sup>397</sup> Sigismund was careful not to appear too decadent, however, as the chronicler goes on to relate how Sigismund restricted himself to eating off plain tableware rather than his usual silver set, on account of the ‘schism in which the Church was’.<sup>398</sup>

This ceremony was performed in front of a crowd which included, among others, Prince Alfonso, the future Alfonso V of Aragon (1416-1458) and nobles from across Iberia and southern France.<sup>399</sup> It is not unreasonable to suggest that in this audience Sigismund saw potential crusaders whom he could rally to his cause in his fight against the Turks. The display of a Turkish prisoner whom he had captured in battle was certainly an overt symbol of the struggle which he had been waging on the Danube. That the chronicler explicitly says that Sigismund’s Turk was captured in battle is noteworthy.<sup>400</sup> It implies that when

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<sup>393</sup> Ibid., p. 364. ‘la union de la Iglesia, que treinta y seis años habia que estaba en cisma..., é asi daria orden á la pacificacion de toda la Christiandad’.

<sup>394</sup> Alvar Garcíá, ‘Crónica del Rey don Juan’, p. 365. See also Windecke’s somewhat fantastical account of Sigismund at Perpignan, Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 63.

<sup>395</sup> Alvar Garcíá, ‘Crónica del Rey don Juan’, p. 365; ‘las armas del Imperio’. For the dances, see Luis Vela Gormedino (ed.), *Crónica incompleta del reinado de Fernando I de Aragón* (Zaragoza: Anubar, 1985), p. 62; Hartmann, ‘Ankunft in Perpignan’, p. 137.

<sup>396</sup> Alvar Garcíá, ‘Crónica del Rey don Juan’, p. 365. ‘que habia seydo Rey de Turquía, é que el Emperador lo habia prendido en batalla’.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid., p. 365; Hartmann, ‘Ankunft in Perpignan’, p. 137.

<sup>398</sup> Alvar Garcíá, ‘Crónica del Rey don Juan’, p. 365. ‘la cisma en que la Iglesia estaba’.

<sup>399</sup> In regards to diplomatic guests, Sigismund notes the arrival of princes and legates from Aragon, Castile and Navarre while in Narbonne in December 1415. See, IFS, FaM, KS, 2, 362. Published, though with errors, in *FR*, ii. 295 (nr 509).

<sup>400</sup> Alvar Garcíá, ‘Crónica del Rey don Juan’, p. 364.



contemporaries viewed Sigismund's courtly events they were reminded of Sigismund's fighting of the Turks and the military efforts in which he was engaged.

This was not the only instance, however, of Sigismund bringing Turks to his courtly events held outside of Hungary order to spread awareness of the Ottoman threat for he did a similar thing 15 years later in Nuremberg. There is an extensive literature on Sigismund's holding of a Reichstag in Nuremberg in the spring of 1431. It was probably the best attended of all Reichstags in Sigismund's reign, with envoys and diplomats from across Christendom and, as we shall see, from even further afield in attendance.<sup>401</sup> The vast majority of studies on this Reichstag rely upon the documents edited by Dietrich Kerler in the ninth volume of the *Deutsche Reichstagsakten*.<sup>402</sup> He was highly selective in the documents which he included in this edition, and saw fit only to include documents of direct relevance to the Reich and Sigismund's attempt to combat the Hussites. This intense focus on the Reich has obscured the international scope of the Reichstag. When a broader base of sources is drawn upon, it is clear that Sigismund's deliberately sought to use this event to not only to raise the profile of the Turkish threat but as a platform from which to launch an ambitious plan to deal decisively with the Ottomans. Only one document included by Kerler, a list of expenses incurred by the city of Nuremberg, references the Turks. It records the rather generous gift of 16 quarts of wine to *etlichen herren auß der Dürkgey*.<sup>403</sup> An exploration of who these lords of Turkey were yields interesting results.

It has been argued that these lords of Turkey were not Turks at all, but instead were Wallachians in Sigismund's retinue.<sup>404</sup> However, a rather mysterious letter, preserved in a codex of diplomatic correspondence compiled c. 1450 by Albrecht Achilles, Margrave of Brandenburg (1440-1486), suggests otherwise.<sup>405</sup> In between two entries regarding Hussite matters, dated March 1 and 18 1431 respectively, lies a letter from a certain *Korolock der Tartar*. This letter, translated into German from the Turkish, was from a certain Qara Yuluq who had appointed two of his subjects, both apparently called *Niclas Turcken*, to deliver it to

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<sup>401</sup> Daldrup, *Zwischen König und Reich*, pp. 308-12.

<sup>402</sup> *RTA*, ix. 493-613.

<sup>403</sup> *RTA*, ix. 607 (nr 447).

<sup>404</sup> Stromer, 'Eine Botschaft des Turkmenenfürsten Qara', p. 433.

<sup>405</sup> Wolfgang von Stromer, 'Diplomatische Kontakte des Herrschers vom Weißen Hammel, Uthmann genannt Qara Yuluq, mit dem Deutschen König Sigismund', *Südost-Forschungen*, 20 (1961), 267-72 (p. 269). For the codex, see Constantin Höfler, *Das kaiserliche Buch des Markgrafen Albrecht Achilles* (Bayreuth: R. Buchnersche, 1850).

Sigismund in Nuremberg.<sup>406</sup> Qara Yuluq was none other than the leader of the Turkish tribal confederation of the White Sheep, who ruled extensive lands to the east of the Ottoman Empire, largely centred on the northern areas of Mesopotamia. This letter was probably a result of negotiations between Sigismund and the Turkish prince.<sup>407</sup> In this letter Qara Yuluq reveals that he plans to go on the offensive against the Ottoman Turks with his allies in Asia Minor, Egypt and Arabia, with the implication that Sigismund should do the same in the west in order to deliver the fatal blow to the Turks. Seen within the context of the Reichstag at Nuremberg in Spring 1431, this letter reveals that Sigismund was using this meeting to not just organise a combined effort against the Hussites but also to plan a campaign against the Turks. Archival research undertaken in Berlin has revealed that the Turkish element of the Nuremberg Reichstag was probably far stronger than it would appear from the published sources. For example Claus Redwitz, in a report to the Grandmaster dated to 27 April 1431 and sent from Nuremberg, notes the coming and going of Turkish embassies, though it would appear these were from *Amerat* (Murad II), the Ottoman Sultan himself.<sup>408</sup>

Seen alongside Sigismund's other activities in 1430 and 1431, his invitation of two Turkish legates to Nuremberg in spring 1431 would appear to be part of a broader effort to raise the profile of the Turkish threat throughout Christendom. Beckmann's research in the Bayerisches Staatsbibliothek has revealed two pieces of evidence important in this respect, though any comments on these must be brief as he cites archival evidence which has not since been published.<sup>409</sup> In the winter of 1430 Sigismund dispatched an embassy to the Pope to ask for the Papal Tenth, marked down to be used against the Hussites, to also be put to use in helping the fight against the Turks. In August 1431 Sigismund dispatched the Bishop of Augsburg to the court of the French King, Charles VII, to deliver a speech imploring the king to support Sigismund against the Turks and other infidels.<sup>410</sup> A month later another embassy of Sigismund's, sent directly from Nuremberg, was present in Venice. This embassy similarly implored the Venetians to join with the King of the Romans in the attempt to combat the

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<sup>406</sup> Stromer, 'Eine Botschaft des Turkmenenfürsten Qara', p. 441. A certain 'Josa Turcasis de Cristaloucz', possibly one of Qara Yuluq's legates, was given a coat of arms in a charter drawn up by Sigismund while in Nuremberg. See DL 50522. Wolfgang von Stromer, 'König Sigmunds Gesandte in den Orient', in *Festschrift für Hermann Heimpel zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Mitarbeiter des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1972), 2, pp. 597, 600. More generally, see Mályusz, *Sigismund*, pp. 103-4.

<sup>407</sup> Stromer, 'König Sigmunds Gesandte in den Orient', p. 594

<sup>408</sup> OBA, 5630. For a contemporary Ragusan report, see Nicolae Iorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir a l'histoire des Croisades au Xve siècle*, 6 vols (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1899-1916), ii. 273.

<sup>409</sup> Beckmann, *Kampf Kaiser Sigmunds*, pp. 95-6. Beckmann draws the evidence from the codex *BSB Clm* 22372, now in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

Turks.<sup>411</sup> Overall, it would appear that Sigismund's decision to travel into his German lands and to base himself in Nuremberg between 1430 and 1431 was not simply about combating the Hussite threat or to deal with German matters.<sup>412</sup> It offered him further opportunities to raise the profile of the Turkish threat both in his German lands and throughout Christendom.

## **2.4 The Order of the Dragon, its crusading indulgence and foreign membership**

It is worth comparing Sigismund's courtly ceremony with that of other fifteenth century rulers. Much has been written on Philip the Good's Feast of the Pheasant, his Order of the Golden Fleece and his programme, which ultimately never materialised, to combat the Turks. Historians, such as Adalbert Roth, have credited Philip the Good with devising innovative techniques to encourage his subjects to protect Christendom against infidel threats.<sup>413</sup> Leaving aside the giant singing pies and the fire breathing dragon displayed during the Feast of the Pheasant, vividly described by Olivier de la Marche (1425-1502), Roth, for example, underlines how Philip utilised a range of court musicians and poets to produce and circulate songs and ballads to make his advertisement of the Turkish threat more potent.<sup>414</sup> This was done in connection with his Order of the Golden Fleece, itself with a clear crusading ethos.<sup>415</sup> The above case studies of Sigismund's courtly ceremony demonstrate that Sigismund, while in the West, was also at pains to advertise the Turkish in various languages and through various means. Much like Philip and as we will explore now, Sigismund also used his own chivalric order, the Order of the Dragon, in the attempt to organise an offensive against the Turks.

In the case of chivalric orders Sigismund went a step further than Philip the Good. Before discussing this aspect of Sigismund's courtly culture, a few points must be made about the Order of the Dragon. While there is a growing body of literature on the Order of the Dragon numerous issues remain barely touched upon. The Order of the Dragon was founded

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<sup>411</sup> *Listine*, 21, pp. 47-9; Iorga, *Geschichte*, i. 412.

<sup>412</sup> Sabine Wefers, *Das Politische System*, pp. 174-83.

<sup>413</sup> Adalbert Roth, "L'homme armé, le doute turc, l'ordre de la toison d'or": Zur "Begleitmusik" der letzten großen Kreuzzugsbewegung nach dem Fall von Konstantinopel, in *Feste und Feiern im Mittelalter: Paderborner Symposium des Mediävistenverbandes*, ed. Detlef Altenberg et. al. (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1991), pp. 469-79 (pp. 478-9).

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 478-9. For de la Marche's account of the Feast of the Pheasant, see Oliver de la Marche, *Les Mémoires*, in *Collection universelle des mémoires particuliers relatifs à l'histoire de France*, 8-9, 2 vols (London and Paris, 1785), ii. 1-31. For the pie which could hold 28 singers, see *ibid.*, pp. 11-12, and for the dragon, *ibid.*, p. 16. For an English translation of de la Marche's account, see Andrew Brown and Graeme Small, *Court and Civic Society in the Burgundian Low Countries, c. 1420-1530* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 36-53. For the pie, *ibid.*, p. 43, and for the dragon, *ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>415</sup> For the statutes of the order, see Brown, *Court and Civic Society*, pp. 137-45.

by Sigismund in 1408 and all members were obliged, among other things, to support its founder in the fight *contra paganos*.<sup>416</sup> The Order's general history has been well researched. While there is an entry for the Order in Kruse's and Kamenz's *Verzeichnis* of later medieval knightly and chivalric orders which takes the form of a 52 point list, it does not analyse Sigismund's use of the Order with any real complexity.<sup>417</sup> In recent years numerous historians have analysed Sigismund's use of the Order both inside and outside of Hungary as a political instrument during his reign and they all largely say the same thing. Boulton, Kintzinger, Erkens, Hoensch, among others, have all explored how Sigismund used the Order as a political tool with which he could consolidate his power base in Hungary.<sup>418</sup> More specialist studies, by historians such as Popović and Schwedler, have explored how Sigismund used the Order to solidify his political and military relations with neighbouring rulers in Serbia, Bosnia and Wallachia.<sup>419</sup>

They are all certainly correct. The Order of the Dragon was indeed critical in consolidating Sigismund's power base in Hungary and in the Balkans. However, the Order's impact on the international stage has been covered in far less detail. The next section of this chapter will explore how Sigismund used the Order within his diplomatic manoeuvres throughout Christendom and demonstrate that the Order's significance was not merely restricted to Hungary and the Balkans. The Order of the Dragon was a vital means with which Sigismund spread the ideals of crusading and sanctified warfare in the name of Hungary. The Order served as another vehicle to advertise the Turkish threat, as well as a means with which Sigismund could subtly refashion and repackage warfare in the name of Christ against the Turks.

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<sup>416</sup> *CDH*, x, iv. 690 (nr 317). For background, see D'Arcy Jonathan Boulton, *The Knights of the Crown: The Monarchical Orders of Knighthood in Later Medieval Europe* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1987), pp. 350-352.

<sup>417</sup> Holger Kruse and Kirstin Kamenz, '52. Drache (1408)', in *Ritterorden und Adelsgesellschaften im spätmittelalterlichen Deutschland: Ein systematisches Verzeichnis*, ed. Holger Kruse, Werner Paravicini et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991), pp. 230-247.

<sup>418</sup> Boulton, *Monarchical Orders*, pp. 350-352; Erkens, 'Überlegungen', pp. 744-5; Kintzinger, *Westbindungen*, pp. 262-6, 272-3, 299. Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 123-5; Pál Lövei, 'Hoforden im Mittelalter, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Drachenordens', in *Sigismundus Rex et Imperator: Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg, 1387-1437*, ed. Imre Takács (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2006), pp. 235-63.

<sup>419</sup> Mihailo Popović, 'Der Drachenorden Sigismunds von Luxemburg und der serbische Despot Stefan Lazarević', in *Church Union and Crusading in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. Christian Gastgeber et al. (Cluj-Napoca: IDC Press, 2009), 71-8; Gerald Schwedler, 'Rituelle Diplomatie: Die persönlichen Beziehungen Sigismunds von Luxemburg zu benachbarten Königen und den Herrschern des Balkans', in *Kaiser Sigismund (1368-1437). Zur Herrschaftspraxis eines europäischen Monarchen*, ed. Karel Hruza and Alexandra Kaar (Vienna: Böhlau, 2012), pp. 411-27 (esp. pp. 421-6).

This can be most clearly seen in 1433, when Sigismund used the opportunity of his Imperial coronation to request numerous privileges from the Holy See.<sup>420</sup> One particular supplication, entered twice into separate books now known as part of *Registra Supplicationum*, is perhaps of unique significance for the history of chivalric and military orders.<sup>421</sup> Sigismund was able to convince Pope Eugenius IV to endow the Order of the Dragon with a crusading indulgence. Anyone who fought personally ‘against the Turks, schismatics, heretics and infidels’ under the aegis of the Order of the Dragon, ‘for the defence of the kingdom of Hungary in support of the lord Emperor’, would gain full remission of sins.

While the basic premise of the indulgence is clear - that those who fight for the Emperor and his successors with the Order of the Dragon will gain the same spiritual rewards as ‘those signed with the cross in the journey to acquire (*passagio adquisicionis*) the Holy Land’ - there are problems with the source material.<sup>422</sup> There are two versions of the grant, both carrying different dates (both are dated in Rome, but one is dated to July 21, 1433 and the other to January 21, 1433) and both with different wordings and emphasis.<sup>423</sup> Why this is so is somewhat puzzling, although the presence of two copies does help explain why the printed transcriptions of the confirmation published by Fraknói in 1893 and Fedalto in 1990 differ slightly.<sup>424</sup>

The transcription of Fedalto is fraught with problems. It is only a partial transcription yet even his partial transcription seems to have included words or phrases (such as *plenam remissionem*) and conjunctions and adverbs which are not actually on either of the registers. Fraknói’s transcription seems also to be only a partial one and differs slightly to that of Fedalto. After an inspection of the original archival material this is not unsurprising. While Fedalto references both copies of the supplication, his own partial transcription, which is highly dubious anyway, is only drawn from one copy.<sup>425</sup> Fraknói seems to use the other version as his base, which, given the slight differences between the two and the distortions added by Fedalto in his own transcription, have resulted in the two different transcriptions of the same document. These problems aside, both supplications were recorded by the notaries in the Papal Chancery and both were confirmed by the Pope. As such, they both give an

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<sup>420</sup> For background, see Kovács, ‘Sigismund’s Coronation in Rome’, pp. 97-162.

<sup>421</sup> ASVat, RS, 287, f. 195v; 292, f. 202r-203.

<sup>422</sup> ASVat, RS, 292, f. 202r. ‘cruce signati in passagio adquisicionis terre sancte’.

<sup>423</sup> ASVat, RS, 287, f. 195. ‘datum Rome apud Sanctum Petrum duodecimo calendis Augusti Anno Tertio’; RS, 292, f. 203. ‘Datum Rome apud Sanctum Petrum duodecimo kalendos februarii anno tertio’.

<sup>424</sup> Wilhelm Fraknói, ‘Genealogiai és Heraldikai Közlemények a Vatikani Levéltarbol’, *Turul*, 11 (1893), 1-8; *Acta Eugenii*, p. 129 (nr 209).

<sup>425</sup> *Acta Eugenii*, p. 129. It would appear that Fedalto is using the copy in RS, 287 as his base.

insight into how Sigismund, present as he was in Rome for his Imperial coronation, sought to supplicate the Pope in order support his campaigns against Turks and his other enemies.

As a result of its significance for the chapter's arguments, the supplication which carries the later date of July 21, 1433 is given and translated in full below:

Item, because, by the power of its statutes and fulfilment of its oath, whoever is touched by the device or the society of the Dragon is obliged personally to set forth against the Turks, schismatics and heretics and also infidels and to expose his own person and to attend to the extermination and confusion of the same [groups of people], the lord emperor himself therefore supplicates, that our lord should mercifully consider conceding in perpetuity, that the aforementioned lord emperor and his successors, the kings of Hungary and those of the aforesaid society and also all and everyone of the kingdom of Hungary and those of other foreign nations, who personally set out for the defence of the Kingdom of Hungary and in support of the lord emperor and the successors of the kings and of the aforesaid society against those labelled infidels, schismatics and heretics, should have full remission of sins and penalties, in the same way that crusaders (*crucesignati*), confessed and penitent, in the passage for the acquisition of the Holy Land, [have]. Permitted for all in the most blessed form.<sup>426</sup>

However, the other version of the supplication is subtly different. At first sight this earlier version, dated to January, would appear to be a shorter and less polished version of the supplication dated to July. For example, the opening clause lacks any reference to the symbol of the Order of the Dragon (*divisa seu societate draconica*) present in the July version, and merely references the 'aforesaid society' (*societate predicta*).<sup>427</sup> In fact, there is no explicit reference to the Order of the Dragon at all in the January version; merely the 'aforesaid society' is used twice. The decision to strengthen the connection between the crusading

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<sup>426</sup> ASVat, RS, 287, f. 202r. 'Item quia quilibet de praetacta divisa seu societate draconica ex vi statutorum et prestiti iuramenti obligatur contra Turcos scismaticos et hereticos ac infideles quoscumque personam suam exponere et eorundem exterminum et confusionem pro posse suo procurare. Supplicat ipse dominus Imperator ut dominus noster dignetur misericorditer concedere imperpetuum ut praefatus dominus Imperator et eius successores Reges hungariae ac illi de societate predicta necnon omnes et singuli tam de Regno hungaris quam aliarum quarumcumque exterarum nacionum qui pro defensione Regni hungaris in subsidium domini Imperatoris et suorum successorum Regum ac societatis praetacte contra iamfatos infideles Scismaticos et hereticos personaliter profiscuntur perinde sicut Crucesignati in passagio acquisitionis terresancte plenam contriti et confessi habeant remissionem culparum et penarum. Concessus pro omnibus in forma Beatissime gradensis.'

<sup>427</sup> ASVat, RS, 292. f. 202r.

indulgence and Sigismund's Order of the Dragon may have been made in the time between the recordings of the two versions. Sigismund did not arrive in the vicinity of Rome until March 1433, so perhaps the slight alteration to his second supplication was touched upon during his last minute negotiations with the Pope in the spring and early summer of that year.

On the other hand, the January version seems to contain more detail than the later, more polished version. Not included in Fraknói's transcription of the January version and nowhere to be found in the manuscript of the July version, is the following:

Concessum quando contra infideles dirigere hereticos contemplacis cesaree magistraris [majestatis?] maxime cum privilegium istud sit terre sancte que meretur et debet singulari privilegio ultra ceteras decorari Beatissime gradensis.<sup>428</sup>

The Latin presents problems, hence why it is given here in the original without a direct translation. Nevertheless, it would appear that Sigismund's petition was 'conceded...most greatly with such a privilege which should be for the Holy Land which merits and ought to be honoured with a single privilege above others'.

While there are complexities involved in analysing the two versions of the crusading indulgence the basic point remains clear: Those who fought against the Turks under the aegis of the Order of the Dragon, in support of the Holy Roman Emperor and of the Kingdom of Hungary, merited a crusading indulgence. Of course, a ruler augmenting his own wars with sacral elements is nothing special, and Sigismund was just one of many who sought to do so in the Middle Ages.<sup>429</sup> Moreover, anecdotal evidence would suggest that Sigismund's commanders and soldiers in Hungary believed they were engaging in warfare which carried spiritual benefits anyway, which means that Papal recognition would not necessarily have helped further encourage his garrison troops and levies to fight the Turks.<sup>430</sup> Bonfini may have stated that the peasants and common people in Sigismund's armies fought merely 'for hearths and homes' (*pro aris ac focis*), but other sources give more complex and spiritual impressions behind the desire to fight the Turks.<sup>431</sup> In 1400, for example, a Hungarian noble went to fight the Turks 'to protect the country and Christian faith' and the next year, he was

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<sup>428</sup> ASVat, RS, 292, f. 202r.

<sup>429</sup> Norman Housley, 'Pro deo et pro patria mori: Sanctified Patriotism in Europe, 1400-1600', in *War and Competition between States*, ed. Philippe Contamine (Oxford: OUP, 2000), pp. 221-48 (esp. pp. 222-5, 47-8).

<sup>430</sup> It has been rightly noted that the views which the garrison troops and levies held of their role in fighting the Turks require further investigation. See Norman Housley, 'Frontier Societies and Crusading in the late Middle Ages', *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 10 (1995), 104-19 (pp. 109-110). On this point, see Jefferson, *Holy Wars*, p. 145.

<sup>431</sup> Bonfini, *Decades*, ii. 63 (decade iii, book 3, section 166).

joined by another who wished ‘to fight for the country’s liberty and the salvation of his relatives’.<sup>432</sup> They were clearly joined by other nobles too and in 1416 when one noble was reported missing on the southern frontier, he was recorded as fighting the impious Turks in Bosnia for the faith of the Christian people and to defend the kingdom of Hungary (*pro christiane plebis fide et eiusdem regni nostri Hungarie*).<sup>433</sup> One baron who had spent four years in Turkish captivity during the 1420s, noted that he had not only been battling them for the glory of his king, but had willingly fought them for the defence of the entire faith.<sup>434</sup>

However, Sigismund’s supplications to the Papacy demonstrate in a very direct way how the Holy Roman Emperor used his status to secure benefits for his wars against the Turks in Hungary. The supplications make it explicitly clear that the ‘defence of the Kingdom of Hungary’ was worthy of spiritual reward. Sigismund naturally believed that the defence of Hungary was vitally important to Christendom, labelling in one instance the defence of Hungary against the Turks as ‘matters of Christianity’ (*sachen der kristenheit*) when writing to the Grandmaster in 1427.<sup>435</sup> Gaining Papal recognition of Hungary’s worth as a bastion against the Turks is significant in this context. It reveals that the conscious development of the idea that Hungary formed the so called *antemurale et clipeus* of Christendom, which becomes prevalent during the reign of King Matthias Corvinus and which, in effect, meant that anyone who fought for the defence of Hungary was in fact fighting for Christendom, was first encouraged by Sigismund.<sup>436</sup> Kintzinger has argued that Sigismund used the Order of the Dragon ‘in the interests of Hungarian defence and not as an expression of crusading ideals’.<sup>437</sup> This is a false dichotomy and surely misses the point. Sigismund’s success in securing a crusade indulgence for those who fought the Turks under the aegis of his Order meant that the defence of Hungary and ideals surrounding crusading were combined.

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<sup>432</sup> Erik Fügedi, ‘Two Kinds of Enemies- Two Kinds of Ideology: The Hungarian-Turkish Wars in the Fifteenth Century’, in *War and Peace in the Middle Ages*, ed. Brian Patrick McGuire (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels, 1987), pp. 146-60 (esp. pp. 146-7); *ZKO*, ii. nr 523, 817.

<sup>433</sup> *CDDSCZ*, vi. 392-3 (nr 261). The same person is reported as missing in a later letter, though without any rhetoric, and was still in Turkish captivity in 1418. See *ibid.*, vi. 413 (nr 282); xii. 111-2 (nr 89).

<sup>434</sup> *CDH*, x, vi. 888 (nr 403). For a discussion of Hungarian motivations after 1453, see Housley, *Ottoman Threat*, p. 118.

<sup>435</sup> OBA, 4759. This unpublished letter will be explored in detail in the next chapter.

<sup>436</sup> For an introduction to this idea, see János Varga, ‘Europa und “Die Vormauer des Christentums”’: Die Entwicklungsgeschichte eines geflügelten Wortes’, in *Europa und die Türken in der Renaissance*, ed. Bodo Gothmüller and Wilhelm Kuhlmann (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2000), pp. 55-64.

<sup>437</sup> Kintzinger, *Westbindungen*, p. 271. ‘im Interesse der ungarischen Landesverteidigung, nicht als Ausdruck einer Kreuzzugssee’.



Sigismund's Order of the Dragon is noteworthy in other respects. In a recent and comprehensive monograph on the Papacy and crusading in the fifteenth century, Benjamin Weber has commented on what was, in effect, the Papacy's promotion of crusading, an eleventh century form of combat, in the fifteenth century.<sup>438</sup> He concludes that the Papacy continually drew upon past precedents, such as using established phrases, literary topoi and the mechanism of indulgences, in order to publicise and support crusading efforts. Their crusade rhetoric and planning was primarily conservative and drew heavily upon past precedents in order to legitimate itself and innovation and novelty were kept to a minimum. Sigismund's entries in the *Registra Supplicationum*, an archival deposit which Weber does not pay much attention to, demonstrates that the Papacy and secular princes of the fifteenth century approached crusading and indulgences with far more innovation than he allows. Attaching an indulgence to a chivalric order was another innovative method of Sigismund's, who sought to use his status as Holy Roman Emperor to bring the benefits that came with waging sanctified warfare in the name of Christ to his struggle against the Turks on a permanent basis. That the primary focus of the supplication is not on the liberation of Holy Land also demonstrates that not all papal rhetoric was so obsessed with using past precedents within which to frame its crusading endeavours.<sup>439</sup>

The attachment of a crusading indulgence to a chivalric order was a logical one but Sigismund seems to be the first one to have undertaken it. Other rulers, such as Philip the Good with his foundation of the Order of the Golden Fleece (1431) and Peter I of Cyprus (1358-1369) with his Order of the Sword, had sought to use chivalric orders as a means to raise awareness of the Turkish threat.<sup>440</sup> The Order of the Sword contained similar oaths to the Order of the Dragon, if the account of Felix Fabri, a pilgrim visiting Cyprus in 1480 is to be believed. Fabri reports that he met Queen Catherine Cornaro (1474-1489), who inducted him and his party into the order, 'so that one should come to defend the Kingdom of Cyprus when needed', against the 'Saracens, Turks and Tartars'.<sup>441</sup> Yet for all of their rhetoric, no one until Sigismund had ever had the idea of attaching a crusading indulgence to their order,

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<sup>438</sup> For what follows, *ibid.*, pp. 498-500.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 529.

<sup>440</sup> Boulton, *The Knights of the Crown*, pp. 241-8, esp. pp. 245-6. Although no connection is made between King Peter's travels in the west and his use of Order of the Sword as a crusade tool in Peter Edbury, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191-1374* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), p. 165.

<sup>441</sup> Felix Fabri, 'Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae, Arabiae et Egypti Peregrinationem', in *Bibliothek des literarischen Vereins in Stuttgart* (Stuttgart: societatis litterariae stuttgardiensis, 1843), ii. 42. 'ut regnum Cypri in ejus necessitate defensare conentur...Sarracenos, Turcos et Tartaros'.

incentivising both its existing members and prospective ones to uphold their oaths and fight the Turks.

Over fifty years later Maximilian followed a similar policy of Sigismund, when he succeeded in securing privileges from Pope Alexander VI for all those who served against the Turks in his Fraternity of St George.<sup>442</sup> Whereas Maximilian's use of the Fraternity of St George impacted little upon the fight against the Turks, Sigismund's Order of the Dragon was far more successful in galvanising support. It is important to emphasise, however, that Sigismund had used the Order of the Dragon to advertise the Ottoman Turkish threat in Christendom right from his election as Roman King in 1410. Kintzinger is certainly correct when he notes the Order of the Dragon's role in securing Sigismund's rule in the Kingdom of Hungary, but it was meant as far more than a mere facilitator of diplomatic contact, as a so called 'Instrument des diplomatischen Verkehrs'.<sup>443</sup> It was meant to gain Sigismund allies in the fight against the Turks, and to spread awareness of the threat which they posed to Hungary and Christendom.

There is not enough space to cover the foreign membership of the Order of the Dragon in detail, but Sigismund's attitude towards the nobles of Iberia forms an illuminating case study. As we have seen, Sigismund met numerous Iberian nobles and royalty when he displayed a Turkish prisoner to them during his sojourn in Perpignan in September 1415. A few months later Sigismund sought to strengthen his connections with the nobility of Iberia. On 16 February 1416 Sigismund empowered two men, the Hungarian noble and later Count of the Szeklers (1427-38) Michael Jakcs, and a certain *Ottobonus de Bellonis*, a doctor of law from Valence who had been in Sigismund's service since May 1412, to tour numerous kingdoms and principalities in Iberia on his behalf.<sup>444</sup> They were ordered to visit the 'serene princes and kings of Aragon, Castile, Leon and Navarre, and indeed the illustrious firstborn son and other children of our aforesaid most beloved brother the King of Aragon', in order to induct them into the Order of the Dragon. Though the Latin is unclear, it would suggest that

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<sup>442</sup> Housley, *Ottoman Threat*, pp. 59-61.

<sup>443</sup> Kintzinger, *Westbindungen*, pp. 262-3, 66.

<sup>444</sup> For the original letter, see HHSTA, RRB, E, 201r. Calendared in, Altmann, nr 1930; *ZKO*, v. nr 1547. For Ottobonus's first mission undertaken on Sigismund's behalf, see Altmann, nr 258. Sigismund would send Jakcs to Aragon, Castile, Leon and Navarre and Portugal again in August 1426. See Altmann, nr 6716-6719.

the King of Aragon was granted the right to confer the insignia of the Order (the dragon badge) to 30 other nobles of his choice.<sup>445</sup>

It is clear that several members of Aragonese and Portuguese royalty joined the Order. In a letter of 30 March King Ferdinand of Aragon told Sigismund how he had received 50 dragon badges and that he himself, his wife, his son, Alfonso, and Alfonso's son Pedro, have been inducted into the Order.<sup>446</sup> Sigismund was clearly pleased and arranged in January 1418 for a copy of the statutes of the Order to be delivered to Ferdinand's third son, Henry of Aragon.<sup>447</sup> The letter which arranges for the delivery of the statutes notes how they are destined for the 'illustrious prince Henry, prince of Aragon and Sicily and master of [the Order of] St James'. The reference to the Order of St James, also known as the Order of Santiago, is illuminating. Despite his youth Henry was already the grandmaster of the Order of Santiago which commanded significant military resources. One gets the impression that Sigismund was targeting him at a young age in the hope that he would grow up to support him once he had matured. Sigismund states that he has invited Henry into the Order and that once he has taken the customary oath (*solitum iuramentum*) he should not only seek to fulfil the responsibilities which the Order of the Dragon requires, but aim to surpass them: *statutis et moribus, que dicta nostra requirit societas [sic], praestare debeas*.<sup>448</sup>

It would seem that Sigismund's efforts to cultivate connections with Iberian nobility paid off. The infante Peter, the future Duke of Coimbra and regent of Portugal, eventually took an army to Hungary and campaigned with Sigismund against the Turks.<sup>449</sup> There is no evidence to suggest that Peter ever joined the Order of the Dragon, but the sources give the impression that Sigismund met him during his diplomatic travels in Iberia as they enjoyed

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<sup>445</sup> HHSTA, RRB, E, fol 201r. 'serenissimes principes Aragonem, Castelle et Legionis ac Navarre reges... necnon illustres primogenitum et alios inclitos natos praefati carissimi fratris nostri Aragonum regis'.

<sup>446</sup> ACC, iii. 390-1. ZKO, v. nr 1710.

<sup>447</sup> HHSTA, RRB, G, 83v. Calendared in Altmann, nr 2836; ZKO, vi. nr 1402.

<sup>448</sup> HHSTA, RRB, G, 83v. The middle clause, in order to make more grammatical sense, should run *que dicta nostra societas requirit*. Details regarding the oath are scarce. For the issues surrounding Witold's taking of the oath in 1429, see Jefferson, *Holy Wars*, p. 132.

<sup>449</sup> Recent research by Pavel Soukup has shed light on Peter's varied activities while in the west, including his interest in fighting the Hussites and in crusading liturgy. See Pavel Soukup, 'Augustinian Prior Oswald Reinlein: A Biography of an Anti-Hussite Preacher', in *The Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice*, ed. Zdeněk V. David and David R. Holeton (Prague: Filosofia, forthcoming), p. 9; idem, 'Portugalský král a husité. Příspěvek k dějinám křižácké liturgie', *O felix Bohemia: Studie k dějinám české reformace*, ed. Petr Hlaváček (Prague: Europeana Pragensia 5, 2013), pp. 90-104. For an interesting take on Peter's travels, with the argument that he toured Europe on the hunt for maps for his brother, see Miroslav Svoboda, 'Proč byl v roce 1426 u Břeclavi portugalský princ?', *Jižní Morava*, 50 (2011), pp. 41-50. (English summary on p. 41, German summary on p.50). My sincere thanks to Pavel Soukup for these references and his help with the Czech.

close links from 1416 onwards.<sup>450</sup> A document regarding Peter's marriage arrangements dated 8 January 1417 was copied into a codex produced by Sigismund's scribes, which implies some form of contact between the two.<sup>451</sup> On 22 January 1418 Sigismund wrote to the *illustri infanti Petro* to offer him the March of Treviso, an imperial fiefdom near Lake Garda in northern Italy.<sup>452</sup> The next month Sigismund addressed another letter to the *illustris princeps Petrus infans*.<sup>453</sup> This time he stated that if Peter was to make the journey to his court (*versus curiam nostram regalem iter*) then he would receive 'the sum of twenty thousand ducats or florins'.<sup>454</sup>

Peter never did take Sigismund up on his offer of the March of Treviso but he did join Sigismund to fight the Turks in Hungary. Our most detailed account of his campaigning against the Turks comes from a biography of Filippo Scolari, a Florentine general in the service of Sigismund whose life will be explored in a later chapter.<sup>455</sup> The biography, written by Poggio Bracciolini, a nephew of the more famous Jacopo di Poggio Bracciolini (d. 1478), notes that Peter fought the Turks in the same battle where Scolari was mortally wounded. Bracciolini notes that Peter travelled to Hungary *per sodisfare a una vota* ('to satisfy a vow'), though what sort of vow this was is unclear.<sup>456</sup> The idea that Sigismund may have asked this of him is certainly not out of the question, as in other cases he had targeted nobles precisely in the attempt to lure them to Hungary in order to fight the Turks. Albert of Bavaria's letter to his father, Duke Ernst of Bayern, for example, records one such offer. In the letter Albert reveals to his father that Sigismund, appealing to Albert as 'our noble lord the Kaiser', had offered him land and title if he was to serve as his 'captain against the Turks'.<sup>457</sup>

Whatever the case, Bracciolini states that Peter had in his retinue 'eight hundred men at arms', who were dressed in crusading garb ('all dressed with white cloth, everyone having

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<sup>450</sup> It has been argued that it was Sigismund who encouraged Peter to embark on his travels across Christendom. See *The Travels of the Infante Dom Pedro*, trans. Francis M. Rogers (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1961), p. 14.

<sup>451</sup> Caro, 'Kanzlei', pp. 173-5. For speculation on how it got copied by Sigismund's notaries, see *ibid.*, pp. 167-8.

<sup>452</sup> HHSTA, RRB, F, 89r. Altmann, nr 2838. For background, *Dom Pedro*, p. 16.

<sup>453</sup> HHSTA, RRB, F, 98r-98v. Altmann, nr 3017; ZKO, vi. nr 1568.

<sup>454</sup> HHSTA, RRB, F, 98v. 'summam viginti miliam ducatorum seu florenorum'.

<sup>455</sup> Bracciolini, 'Vita di messer Filippo Scolari', pp. 183-4. For discussion of the source's provenance, see F. Polidori, 'Due Vite di Filippo Scolari', *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 4 (1843), 119-27 (119-20). Bonfini also treats Peter's campaigning in some detail. See Bonfini, *Decades*, ii. 65 (decade III, book 3, sections 189-92).

<sup>456</sup> Bracciolini, 'Vita di messer Filippo Scolari', p. 183.

<sup>457</sup> Palacký, *Urkundliche Beiträge*, ii. 406-7 (nr). 'wie er uns zu einem hawbtman auf die Turgken machen wollt'.

a red cross on their arm’).<sup>458</sup> The size of Peter’s force given here is probably exaggerated. The contemporary chronicler who compiled the so called *kleine Klosterneuburger Chronik* notes that Peter had ‘300 good men’ (*300 guets volckh*) and this estimate seems reliable.<sup>459</sup> Peter sheltered near the monastery with his force so we can assume that the compiler witnessed the size of his force first hand.<sup>460</sup>

Sigismund’s use of the Order of the Dragon and his distribution of dragon badges to princes and kings across Christendom was not mere tokenism as foreign members of the Order did make good on their vows and fight the Turks.<sup>461</sup> Two foreign members of the order, Duke Ernest ‘the Iron’ (*der Eiserne*) (r. 1406-1424) of Austria and Sigismund’s son in law, Duke Albert V of Austria (r. 1404-1439), made good on their vows and fought the Turks, even if Albert did pawn his dragon badge in 1432.<sup>462</sup> From a cynical standpoint, one could say that they needed to fight the Turks anyway. After all, their lands centred on modern day Slovenia were periodically exposed to Turkish raids and it was from Carniola (modern day Kranj) where Ernest and Albert would assemble their forces before battling the Turks.<sup>463</sup> The same cannot be said of others. The King of Poland, Władysław II was inducted into the Order, perhaps in 1412, and despite Sigismund’s complaints he never did participate in the fight against the Turks.<sup>464</sup> That is not to say, however, that Władysław II never aided Sigismund in his fight against the Turks. Soon after his entry into the Order, a Polish knight known as Zawisza the Black appears in Sigismund’s service, who, as we will see in the next

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<sup>458</sup> P. 183. ‘con ottocento uomini d’arme, vestiti tutti drappo bianco, avendo ognuno la croce rossa sopra l’arme’.

<sup>459</sup> *Die kleine Klosterneuburger Chronik (1322 bis 1428)*, ed. H. J. Zeibig (offprint from *Archiv für Kunde Österreichischer Geschichtsquellen*, 7, 1851), p. 24.

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24. The chronicle’s reliability is increased as it contains information about Peter that does not feature in other sources, notably that Peter could speak Latin well but had no German. The figure of 400 knights in Andrei Pippidi, *Visions of the Ottoman World in Renaissance Europe* (London: Hurst & Co., 2012), p. 14, would appear to have no basis in the primary sources.

<sup>461</sup> Recent research has continued to reveal more inductees of Sigismund into the Order of the Dragon. See Kintzinger, *Westbindungen*, p. 264; Elbel, *Regesta*, pp. 192-3. Much of the scholarship surrounding the international membership of the Order is of poor quality. There exists, for example, no primary source to suggest that King Henry V of England was a member, yet the assertion that he was a member frequently appears. For one example, see Pál Lővei, ‘Hoforden im Mittelalter, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Drachenordens’, in *Sigismundus Rex et Imperator: Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg, 1387-1437*, ed. Imre Takács (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2006), pp. 261.

<sup>462</sup> *Die ältesten steirischen Landtagsakten, 1396-1519*, ed. Burkhard Seuffert and Gottfriede Kogler (Vienna: Stiasny, 1953), 1, pp. 58-9. My thanks to Benjamin Muesegades for providing me with a copy of this publication. For the induction of Ernest and Albert into the membership of the Order, see *CDH*, x, iv. 764-5 (nr 315). For Albert’s badge, see K. von Sava, ‘Ueber Ordens-Insignien auf deutschen Siegeln vor Kaiser Maximilian I’, *Anzeiger für Kunde der deutschen Vorzeit*, 4 (1857), 331-2.

<sup>463</sup> For background, see Peter Štih, *The Middle Ages between the Eastern Alps and the Northern Adriatic: Select Papers on Slovene Historiography and Medieval History* (Brill: Leiden, 2010), pp. 355-6.

<sup>464</sup> The date is contested. The relevant letter survives in a copy in CLP, 701, f. 230v. Partially printed in Heimpel, ‘Kanzlei Kaiser Sigismunds’, pp. 142-3. The same codex also preserves a letter in which Sigismund asks for Władysław’s aid in fighting the Turks. See *ibid.*, pp. 165-6.

chapter, was captured and executed by Turks while fighting on the Danube frontier in June 1428. He was clearly not alone, as Długosz records that other Polish knights were captured with him during the fighting, while many other Polish knights cowardly fled.<sup>465</sup> Jefferson has stated that Zawisza was himself a member of the Order of the Dragon, though there is no basis in the primary sources for this.<sup>466</sup> Nevertheless, it would appear that the Order of the Dragon played an important role in channelling support from throughout Christendom towards Sigismund's campaigns against the Turks.

The use of the Order of the Dragon in this manner would not have been possible had he not been Roman King as for Sigismund, the Order of the Dragon was intimately connected to his status as King of the Romans. When accepting Berthold Orsini into the Order of the Dragon in 1412, Sigismund explicitly linked the society with his Roman Kingship, stating that the throne of the Roman King, the *Romani regie maistatis [sic] solium*, would be embellished by the participation and adherence of great people in his society: *magnificarum personarum participia et coherencia exornant*.<sup>467</sup> The point of the Order, as far as Sigismund was concerned, was that the glory of being Roman King would be made greater: *regnantis gloriam propagator*.<sup>468</sup> Sigismund consciously linked his attempt to spread awareness of the Turkish threat through the Order of the Dragon with his Roman Kingship.

## 2.5 Mossen Borra at Sigismund's court

It would of course be very easy to dismiss the courtly events and ceremonies covered in this chapter as insignificant. Drabek in her study in imperial ceremony implies as much, when she includes dances and jousts and other similar activities under the sub-heading of 'festivities and distractions'.<sup>469</sup> Perhaps Sigismund's antics while enjoying himself in France, Iberia and Italy were simply that: the antics of a middle aged king enjoying himself perhaps too much. However, courtly ceremony and festivities did matter. The glimpses offered by the letters of Antonio Tallander, also known as Mossen Borra, an Aragonese knight and court jester who accompanied Sigismund between c.1415 and c. 1423, allow us to delve slightly deeper into the workings of Sigismund's court and the importance of his courtly events such as dances and jousts. The alcohol and dance fuelled courtly culture of the *empereur*, as Borra

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<sup>465</sup> Długosz, *Historiae Polonicae*, xi. 356.

<sup>466</sup> Jefferson, *Holy Wars*, p. 133. Personal correspondence between John Jefferson and I has confirmed that he based this on secondary sources and that it is probably a mistake.

<sup>467</sup> HHSTA, HS, Böhm 22, Blau 8, fol 45b. Calendared in Altmann, nr 359. For similar statements, see *CDH*, x, v. 406 (nr 182).

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, fol 45b.

<sup>469</sup> Drabek, *Reisezeremoniell*, pp. 69-71.

calls Sigismund, was indeed effective in generating the sort of aid which the Roman King desired against his infidel enemies.

Borra arrived at Sigismund's court as a legate of the King of Aragon at some point in 1415, possibly while Sigismund was holding court in southern France, and they seem to have become especially good friends. Borra enjoyed close personal contact with Sigismund, occasionally even sleeping in the same bed as him after their heavy drinking sessions.<sup>470</sup> His three letters to Alfonso V of Aragon, striking in their humorous and down to earth style, tend to give the impression of Sigismund's itinerant court as a drunken fiasco. Be it a Bavarian duke reduced to giggles by Sigismund's French, his attempts (and success) at making small talk in Latin or his involvement in week long drinking binges, particularly in imperial free cities where someone else was footing the bill, the anecdotes in Borra's letters offer an almost unique view of the Sigismund.<sup>471</sup> Their only rival is perhaps the correspondence of Claus Redwitz, a Teutonic Knight in Sigismund's service, whose letter collection and intense interest in Sigismund's behaviour and mood swings will be explored in other chapters. On an aside, the theoretical approaches and tendencies to qualify and reduce to theoretical bite-sized chunks the various aspects of imperial ceremony in German historiography would do well to draw upon evidence such as Borra's or Redwitz's letters. There may have been deeper intentions or grander motives behind much of Sigismund's courtly display and ceremony, but, to put it bluntly, much of it appears to be him getting rather drunk and going from there.

One particular anecdote, recorded in Borra's last letter, sent from Ulm in September 1418, is particularly noteworthy within the context of this chapter.<sup>472</sup> In this letter Borra records his experiences in Strasbourg, where he sojourned with Sigismund for around one month between July and August 1418.<sup>473</sup> As Borra reports, 'we remained in this city for about a month and we danced and jousted every day and I have never seen so many pretty ladies and so well dressed'.<sup>474</sup> The last dance put on by the city was particularly arduous, beginning at about 5 pm after dinner and lasting, in Borra's words, *tota la nit fins lendema*

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<sup>470</sup> Borra's letters have been printed with a Castilian translation in, Fernando de Antequerra (ed.), *Tres cartas autógrafas é inéditas de Antonio Tallander (Mossén Borra)* (Barcelona: Jaime Jepús, 1895). For the tale of Borra sharing Sigismund's bed, see p. 13 (and in Castilian translation, p. 17).

<sup>471</sup> For introductions to Borra and the content of his letters, see Heinrich Finke, 'Bilder vom Konstanzer Konzil', *Neujahrsblätter der Badischen Historischen Kommission*, 6 (1903), 3-98 (pp. 93-8); idem, 'Des aragonischen Hofnarren Mossén Borra Berichte aus Deutschland (1417, 1418)', *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 56 (1936), 161-73.

<sup>472</sup> For discussion of this particular letter, see Finke, 'Mossén Borra', pp. 169-72.

<sup>473</sup> For dating of Sigismund's stay, see Hoensch, *Itinerar*, p. 98.

<sup>474</sup> Antequerra, *Antonio Tallander*, p. 13. 'En aquella cite avem demore bien I moys tots jorns danser juster james vi tanta bela dama ni tant bien areada'. For further discussion and partial translations into German, see Finke, 'Bilder', p. 96; idem, 'Mossén Borra', p. 170.

*que le Sol era per tot lo monde* (the entire night and until the next day and the sun was [shining] throughout all the earth).<sup>475</sup> Borra had drunk no less than two entire casks of wine (*II botas vi*) during the evening's festivities and his next statement, 'I pretended I was ill' (*jo me fey malalt*), may be wishful thinking on his part as his hangover was severe enough to attract the attention of Sigismund.<sup>476</sup>

Sigismund clearly cared for his loyal Aragonese companion and servant of the past three or so years. He allowed him to recover in his own chamber and even gave him a litter and a team of servants, so that the poorly knight could accompany the king about his travels. Borra then states that Sigismund made him an offer which, it turns out, he could not refuse. While Borra was in his weakened state, Sigismund asked him to remain in his entourage for the indefinite future so that he could see first-hand his kingdoms of Hungary and Bohemia, 'his power and his daughter, in order to tell and preach through the whole world about his deeds and lands' (*e sa poyssansa e sa filia per so que pus ca dire e predicar per tot lo mont son fet e son estat*).<sup>477</sup>

Finke has stated that it is not known whether Borra travelled to the east with Sigismund.<sup>478</sup> A perusal of Windecke's chronicle would suggest that Borra did take Sigismund up on his offer to visit Bohemia and Hungary.<sup>479</sup> In fact, while it would appear that Borra never fought the Turks, he was at least actively involved in fighting the Hussites in 1422. He was captured during one of Sigismund's Hussite campaigns, held prisoner for a year and then made his escape to the nearby town of Brno. While in prison he had heard the rumour that the captain of the city guards of Brno intended to turn the town over to the Hussites. Upon his arrival he successfully cooperated with the town council to uncover this conspiracy, after which he was sent back to Sigismund in Buda, weighed down with numerous gifts from grateful city elders. If Borra did compose literary works about Sigismund's kingdoms and power while under his patronage then none have survived. Nevertheless, the fascinating glimpse into court life which Borra's letters offer, reveal that the link between Sigismund's drunken antics in the west and his combating of the infidel threat in the east were not so far removed as one may think.

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<sup>475</sup> Antequerra, *Antonio Tallander*, p. 13.

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13. Finke, 'Bilder', p. 97.

<sup>477</sup> Antequerra, *Antonio Tallander*, p. 14.

<sup>478</sup> Finke, 'Mossén Borra', p. 172.

<sup>479</sup> Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 115.



## 2.6 The Council of Basel and the spectre of the Ottoman threat

Before concluding, Sigismund's attitude to the Council of Basle and his plan to host a great event in Buda, which unfortunately only ever existed on paper, will be explored. Before doing so, however, it is worth making the point that for many clerics at the Council Sigismund's acts of public ceremony were interpreted as being detrimental to Christendom's efforts against its enemies, in this case the Hussites. Sigismund, contrary to the opinions of Erik Fügedi, was an avid jouster, and this fondness even earned him a reprimand from a group of clerics at the Council of Basle, who believed his time and effort would be better spent on tackling the infidel threat.

In January 1434, according to Johannes de Segovia, a group of clerics discovered that Sigismund was planning on participating in a special tournament to be held at Constance in honour of his Imperial coronation. They advised him, that

things of this kind should rightfully be condemned, since they exist solely for people to show off, and since at that time the faithful of Pilzen were besieged by the infidels, and suffering such great oppression, it was not right for the faithful to go around playing with spears [*hastis ludere*], but would instead be better if the great cost of these events, which were dedicated to men showing off, were instead dedicated to fighting the infidels.<sup>480</sup>

The clerics continued to emphasise the importance of their request, stating that it would be far better if Sigismund thought about 'the shunning of tournaments for the reward of converting the infidel', and instead spent the money on raising 400 soldiers to help relieve Pilzen.<sup>481</sup> Sigismund was not convinced, and after stressing that great tradition of these tournaments, he commented that 'he himself would not participate with them in the tournament, but, if it was possible, he wanted to go to watch, because he had never seen one, and for that reason it should not be stopped.'<sup>482</sup> If Sigismund was somewhat blasé about fighting the Hussites during the Council of Basle, then the same cannot be said of his attitude to the fight against the Turks.

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<sup>480</sup> Segovia, *Synodi Basiliensis*, ii. 586. 'hujusmodi autem essent a jure reprobata fierentque solum ad ostentacionem, et quia tunc fideles Pilznenses obsessi ab infidelibus tantam paciebantur oppressionem, non decebat fideles hastis ludere, sed potius illas magnas expensas, que fiebant ad ostentacionem virium, convertere contra infideles'.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid., pp. 584, 88. 'torneamentis evitandis aut in fructum fidei convertendis'.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid., p. 587. 'ipseque non debebat interesse cum eis ad torneandum, sed, si posset, ad aspiciendum, quia nunquam vidisset, volebat accedere, ideoque non desisteretur'.

Between December 1436 and July 1437 Sigismund was seemingly obsessed with transferring the Council of Basle to Buda.<sup>483</sup> Sigismund, first as Roman King and then Holy Roman Emperor, had been highly influential in convening the Council of Basle and he was now attempting to use his influence to move it to Hungary. To move the entire Council to Buda was a rather big ask and Sigismund knew it, so he came up with numerous arguments, some convincing and some not so, in order to support his request. One such argument, notably that John VIII Palaiologus (1416-1448, as co-emperor with Manuel II Paleologus, 1416-1425) had visited Buda previously in 1424 so he already knew the way, was a good start.<sup>484</sup> Sigismund maintained that the Greeks wanted to come to Buda and perhaps this was the case.<sup>485</sup> The sea route to Italy and then northwards to Basle was long and dangerous, and a Byzantine ambassador had perished on his way to Venice when his ship sunk in the Adriatic in 1397.<sup>486</sup> The route through Hungary, however, could be just as hazardous. After all, a Byzantine delegation were robbed while taking the land route through Hungary to Basle in 1434.<sup>487</sup> They were deprived of all of their possessions, Turkish rapiers included, and had to borrow money once they reached Buda in order to reach their destination.<sup>488</sup> Perhaps the least convincing reason Sigismund could come up with was the idea that the delegations from the Spanish, French and English nations would find it much easier to get to Buda than they would Basle.<sup>489</sup> It was easy, so Sigismund maintained, for they could arrange to meet their colleagues currently at Basel in nearby Ulm, and then it was just a quick (actually, a 500 mile), inexpensive ship ride down the Danube.<sup>490</sup>

However, before any of the reasons given above, Sigismund stressed that holding the Council in Buda would be of the greatest help in fighting the Turks. Sigismund stated that there were many ‘peoples of the Greek faith’ (*gentes de fide Grecorum*) within the confines of the Hungarian Kingdom who would happily gather in Buda for the celebration of an ecumenical council, which itself would help increase the chances of union.<sup>491</sup> Furthermore, many of these had themselves experienced Turkish rule and, were they to see the council moved to Buda, would be inspired ‘to rise up against the tyranny of the domination of the

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<sup>483</sup> Beckmann, *Kampf Kaiser Sigmunds*, p. 104; Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 153-4.

<sup>484</sup> *RTA*, xii. 35 (nr 21). See also, Harris, *The End of Byzantium*, p. 110.

<sup>485</sup> *RTA*, xii. 56 (nr 32),

<sup>486</sup> Harris, *End of Byzantium*, p. 133.

<sup>487</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>488</sup> Kondor, ‘Sigismund and the Union’, p. 80; Harris, *End of Byzantium*, p. 133.

<sup>489</sup> *RTA*, xii. 36 (nr 21).

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>491</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33 (nr 20).

Turks'.<sup>492</sup> The council would simply not have the same inspirational pull on those of the Greek faith, Sigismund maintained, if it was not held near the areas of Turkish rule.<sup>493</sup> Sigismund was also planning a major campaign against the Turks, a *passagium ad sepulcrum dominicum*, and it would be of great organisational help if the council was convened in Buda.<sup>494</sup> Then his campaign could be more effectively organised as it could be done in tandem with the legates of the Byzantine Emperor.

It is clear that this idea was close to Sigismund's heart as he would repeatedly mention it until a few months before his death. He even took the trouble to have his ideas read out to the Council of Basel and sent letters supporting the above arguments to his fellow German princes.<sup>495</sup> Sigismund even went to trouble of getting someone to count every dwelling in the four districts of Buda (967 of them, it turned out) in order to prove that he had enough lodgings to house the delegates.<sup>496</sup> He even claimed to be stockpiling grain, wine and other foodstuffs in and around Buda to provide for the delegates once they arrived.<sup>497</sup> As we will consider in other chapters, Sigismund's intention to fight the Turks during the last year of his reign was not just mere rhetoric. A joint Hungarian, German and Czech force, in effect a military force drawing upon three of Sigismund's four kingdoms, launched a stunning incursion into Ottoman territory in the summer of 1437 and inflicted considerable damage on the Turkish fleet based on the Danube and Morava.<sup>498</sup> Sigismund's rather eccentric plan to use his status to move the council to Buda in support of his Turkish campaigns was one of his last acts. His plan, of course, never came to fruition and on his death bed a few months later he lamented that he was about to die, having never made good on his vow to visit the Holy Land.<sup>499</sup>

In conclusion, it is clear that Sigismund's courtly ceremony and events were designed with the advertisement of the Turkish threat in mind. Be it speeches in Paris, baptisms in Rome or the display of Turkish prisoners in Perpignan, Sigismund, one of the first major European rulers forced to deal with the Ottoman threat, sought to raise awareness of his kingdom's plight throughout Christendom. He sought to bring the issue of the Turkish threat to the fore of European politics, attempting to turn political assemblies which he was wholly

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<sup>492</sup> Ibid., p. 35 (nr 21). 'insurgare contra tyrannicam dominacionem Turcorum'.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid., p. 33, 50 (nr 30), 57 (nr 32), 234 (nr 146).

<sup>496</sup> Palacký, *Urkundliche Beiträge*, ii. 473-5 (nr 984); Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 213.

<sup>497</sup> *RTA*, xii. 40 (nr 26).

<sup>498</sup> Jefferson, *Holy Wars*, pp. 144-6.

<sup>499</sup> *RTA*, xii. 263 (nr 160).

or partly responsible for convening, such as the Nuremberg Reichstag of 1431 and the Council of Basle, into platforms where the struggle against the Turks could be discussed. His advertisement of the Turkish threat foreshadowed the activities of later rulers such as Philip the Good of Burgundy and Maximilian.<sup>500</sup> More importantly, he bequeathed to his successors a legacy of appropriating crusade ideas and language which became directly linked to the defence of Hungary and their struggle against the Turks. This was a legacy upon which his successor Matthias Corvinus (1458-90) built upon, and something which Corvinus would arguably exploit more successfully than Sigismund.<sup>501</sup> Sigismund's courtly ceremony and rhetoric was only one facet of his response to the Turkish threat as Roman King. Importantly, he not only made good on his promise made in Paris in 1415 to fight the Turks, but, as we will see in the next three chapters, was able to convince many other of his subjects as Roman King to join him.

### **Chapter 3. Sigismund and the Danube: Naval and Riverine Warfare and the Ottoman Turks**

This chapter will explore Sigismund's drive to secure naval and riverine expertise in order to combat the Ottoman Turkish threat. While the Kingdom of Hungary's coastline was minimal, the southern frontier which Sigismund shared with the Ottomans was almost entirely composed of rivers and waterways, notably the river Danube. The Danube, which runs for around 1800 miles from its source in the Black Forest to the Black Sea, was and remains a vital artery for trade, transport and communication in Europe.<sup>502</sup> The Danube also acts as the parent river for numerous other river systems, notably the Drava, Sava and Great Morava. It was vital to control the Danube and its tributaries if the Kingdom's security was to be ensured. As this chapter will demonstrate, Sigismund systematically used his status as King of the Romans and then as Holy Roman Emperor in order to secure naval and shipbuilding expertise to strengthen his hold on the Danube. In doing so, this chapter will also show that the historiographic focus on Sigismund's fortress building and land campaigns has obscured

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<sup>500</sup> See Housley, *Ottoman Threat*, pp. 104-6

<sup>501</sup> For Corvinus' attitudes towards crusading, see Norman Housley, 'Matthias Corvinus and Crusading', *Transylvanian Review*, 28, supplement 2 (2009), pp. 239-50 (esp. 240-5).

<sup>502</sup> The Danube is still of vital importance today as an artery for commerce and communication, and will see significant investment over the next couple of decades as 'Corridor VII' of the Pan-European Transport Project. See <http://www.corridor7.org/about-corridor-vii/> (accessed 16/06/14).

the overriding importance and significance which Sigismund attached to the naval aspect of his efforts against the Ottomans.

Despite naval power playing an important role in the wars against the Ottoman Turks in the Danube region, being vital in breaking the Ottoman siege of Belgrade in 1456 for example, little research has been undertaken on how Sigismund sought to counter the Ottoman Turkish threat on the water.<sup>503</sup> Elemér Mályusz only discusses Sigismund's conduct of naval warfare once in his otherwise very detailed monograph,<sup>504</sup> while Gustav Beckmann largely concerns himself with Sigismund's desire for naval aid from Venice in the context of crusade negotiations.<sup>505</sup> From a general perspective, the historiography of medieval naval warfare has been dominated by studies of Mediterranean galley warfare and the development of naval warfare in the North Sea in the later Medieval period.<sup>506</sup> Thus a study into how Sigismund sought to use naval power to defend his southern frontier does not just offer new perspectives on how he sought to combat the Turkish threat, but also on the development of naval warfare in general.

### 3.1. Sigismund and the importance of the Danube

Sigismund's interest in securing the Danube is a theme which receives little mention in current historical scholarship, with the focus generally upon Sigismund's land campaigns and fortress building programmes. His interest in naval warfare receives only cursory mentions in the work of Veszprémy and Mályusz, and it is rarely considered alongside Sigismund's programme of fortress building.<sup>507</sup> Mályusz notes, for example, that Sigismund's defence against the Ottoman Turks was based upon fortresses, and concentrates exclusively on the development of his 'Festungssystem'.<sup>508</sup> This defensive system was based upon the Danube and contemporary sources make the connection explicit. A document of 1437 which lists the *castra* of the Hungarian realm collates Sigismund's Danubian fortresses not by banate or by owner, but under the heading of *castra inferiora cis Danubialia*.<sup>509</sup>

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<sup>503</sup> *CDPRHA*, pp. 383-4 (nr 518).

<sup>504</sup> Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*. See p. 147, for the only reference to ships and naval power on the Danube in his 39 page chapter on Sigismund's defensive policies.

<sup>505</sup> Beckmann, *Kampf Kaiser Sigmunds*, pp. 5-8.

<sup>506</sup> Recent works continue to exhibit this emphasis. See, for example, Susan Rose, *Medieval Naval Warfare, 1000-1500* (London: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>507</sup> Veszprémy, 'Militärtechnische', pp. 290-91; Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 147; Szakály 'Border Defense System', pp. 141-58.

<sup>508</sup> Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 145-6.

<sup>509</sup> DL 13137. See Țeicu, *Banat*, p. 92. Not 'castra inferiora cisdanubiana', as in Csánki, *Magyarország történelmi*, ii. 96.

However, these fortresses formed only one aspect of the effort against the Turks, as Sigismund conceived of the defence as also involving naval warfare. This was implied in 1427 when Sigismund requested military experts from the Teutonic Order in order to advise him on his Turkish campaigns. The fact that they needed to be knowledgeable in matters of *krieg zuwasser und zuland* highlights how Sigismund's attempt to secure the Danube involved a dual effort of land and naval campaigning.<sup>510</sup> Sigismund's interest in naval warfare and expertise surfaces in numerous sources, such as diplomatic correspondence, chronicles and middle English poetry to name but a few. Overall, the impression is that the securing of the Danube waters was just as important to Sigismund as securing the river banks with his fortresses and castles.

This chapter will therefore demonstrate the importance which Sigismund attributed to securing naval expertise by first exploring Sigismund's attitude towards naval warfare on the Danube, before underlining how he used his status as Roman King in order to secure naval and riverine expertise from the Teutonic Order for service against the Ottoman Turks. It will then underline how he was able to use his connections as Roman King and, after 1433, as Kaiser, in order to draw upon naval expertise from throughout Christendom, be it through the personal recruitment of experts while travelling in the Reich or by encouraging his subjects as Kaiser, such as the Duke of Austria, to contribute ships to his Turkish campaigns.

In order to fully understand the reasons behind Sigismund's intense interest in acquiring naval aid and expertise we need to understand the importance of the Danube in military terms. While Hungarian kings had certainly launched campaigns along the Danube and fought enemies in the river basin before, it is during Sigismund's reign and the growth of Ottoman power that this frontier becomes a heavily fortified zone which saw regular campaigning.<sup>511</sup> The intensification of warfare in this area, particularly in the hundred or so kilometres between the fortresses of Belgrade and Turnu Severin where the Ottoman pressure was most acute, heightened the strategic and tactical importance of controlling the river Danube and its limited crossing points. Fundamentally, it was around the Danube that Sigismund's defensive policies revolved. In April 1427 Sigismund sent a letter to Henry, duke of Bavaria-Landshut, where he spoke about his plan to campaign against the Turks. His aim was, in his own words, *mit der hilfe gotes die Tunaw wider einzunemen* ('with the help

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<sup>510</sup> OBA, 4759.

<sup>511</sup> For Louis the Great's campaigns against the Turks which took place in Wallachia, see Bernát L. Kumorovitz, 'Lajos Királyunk 1375 evi havasalföldi Hadjárata (és 'Török') Háborúja', *Századok*, 117 (1983), 919-82.

of God, to recapture the Danube’).<sup>512</sup> The importance of the naval aspect of Sigismund’s warfare against the Turks was not lost on his fellow princes. In August 1427, for example, the Duke of Milan noted with sorrow the news that Sigismund had suffered a defeat against the Turks on the Danube, noting in particular how the loss of ships (*arreptione naveam et galearum*) distressed him.<sup>513</sup> When discussing the placement of the Teutonic Order in Hungary in February 1429, Sigismund explicitly stated that he wanted to place them *bi der Tunaw*.<sup>514</sup> On some occasions Sigismund expressed a more ambitious interest in blocking the straits of Gallipoli, which would have impeded the Ottoman Sultan’s ability to reinforce their military efforts on the Danube frontier with resources drawn from their Anatolian domains.<sup>515</sup>

### 3.2 Sigismund, Venice, and the waging of naval warfare against the Ottoman Turks

Some of our most detailed insights into Sigismund’s attitudes towards defending the waterways on his southern frontier come from a particularly detailed letter written by the Senate of Venice and sent to the king in August 1427.<sup>516</sup> The letter was delivered by Marco Dandolo (1362-1444), who was given the difficult task of visiting Sigismund in Hungary and convincing him to make peace with Venice. The terms under which the Venetians would be willing to make peace with Sigismund were included in Dandolo’s letter and are highly relevant to this chapter. Their terms for peace include detailed offers of naval aid and this allows us to grasp Sigismund’s military priorities from a Venetian perspective.<sup>517</sup>

Dandolo arrived in Hungary in October 1427, accompanied by his motley crew of one notary and his assistant, a bursar, a cook, an interpreter, four armed escorts and four valets and with the rather precise budget of seven ducats for each day to cover all of their

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<sup>512</sup> *RTA*, ix. 30-1 (nr 29). A year later Sigismund’s secretary, Caspar Schlick, would note that the Turks lie along the Danube with strength (‘so ligen di Turken enhalb der Tunaw mit maht’). See *FR*, i. 365 (nr 671).

<sup>513</sup> *Documenti Diplomatici tratti dagli archivi milanesi*, ed. Luigi Osio (Milan: La Goliardica, 1971), ii. 329 (nr 212).

<sup>514</sup> OBA, 5050.

<sup>515</sup> Schiff, *Sigmunds italienische Politik*, p. 106.

<sup>516</sup> For the letter itself, see *Listine*, 21, pp. 21-5. See also the Venetian decisions made in response to Sigismund’s proposals in October 1425, which stress the same themes in the letter delivered by Dandolo, in Freddy Thiriet, *Régestes des délibérations du sénat de Venise concernant la Roumanie* (Paris: Mouton & co, 1959), ii. 232 (nr 2006).

<sup>517</sup> Schiff, *Sigmunds italienische Politik*, pp. 105-6.

expenses.<sup>518</sup> His offer of peace began with the usual Venetian request and the usual stumbling block in the negotiations between Venice and Sigismund. The Venetians were willing to conclude a peace of either 5 or 10 years with Sigismund, but they would require him to recognise Venetian possessions on the Dalmatian coast.<sup>519</sup> This was something that Sigismund could not even think about considering.<sup>520</sup> Nevertheless, the Venetians attempted to sweeten the deal by offering him an unprecedented range of military kit, technical expertise, logistical support and money - even a free passage to Italy should he want to come and claim his imperial crown in Rome - to aid in his campaigns against the Turks.

Of the most relevance for this chapter is the Venetian offer of naval support as it allows us to grasp how Sigismund conceived of his naval effort against the Ottoman Turks. The Venetians clearly knew that Sigismund wanted shipbuilders and were willing to give them to him. If Sigismund were only to ask, the letter states that he would be sent ‘masters capable of making *galeas*, *cochas* and *naves*’.<sup>521</sup> In fact, ‘whenever he would wish for masters suitable for these things, [namely] the construction of *cochas*, *naves* and *galeas* to go against the Turks, he could have them for his service, placed under him.’<sup>522</sup> *Naves*, meaning ships, and *galeas*, galleys, usually propelled by sails and oars, are relatively clear terms. It is difficult to ascertain precisely what is meant by *cochas*. It could possibly be a form of ship influenced by the northern European cog, and more adapted to the rougher waters of the Atlantic.<sup>523</sup> Clearly then, Sigismund wanted sufficient expertise in order to be able to construct a variety of vessels which would be able to operate in a variety of different waters.

But what did Sigismund want these ships for? Here again, the letter is useful. It contains discussions of what the Venetians would be willing to do with their fleet on behalf of Sigismund and what they would not be willing to consider. As has already been stated, the letter and its proposals appear to be well thought out and geared towards pre-empting

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<sup>518</sup> *Listine*, 21, p. 21.

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22-3. Veszprémy, ‘Sigismund at Golubac’, p. 299. Venetian influence along the Dalmatian coast was a long running problem for Sigismund and his predecessors. See Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 14-5, 112-22 and for Sigismund’s attitude in the later 1420s, pp. 117-8. For Sigismund’s wars with Venice, see Maria Wakounig, *Dalmatien und Friaul: Die Auseinandersetzungen zwischen Sigismund von Luxemburg und der Republik Venedig um die Vorherrschaft im adriatischen Raum* (Vienna: Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaften Österreichs, 1990), pp. 47-80.

<sup>520</sup> Though further military developments forced Sigismund to reconsider his attitude in 1433. See Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 118-9. His decision to give up much of Dalmatia in the mid-1430s caused resentment among his subjects. Engel, *Realm*, p. 240.

<sup>521</sup> *Listine*, 21, p. 24. ‘magistris nostris aptis ad faciendum galeas, cochas et naves’.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24. ‘quotienscumque voluerit pro faciendo cochas, naves et galeas ituras contra Turchos, magistris ad hoc aptos de subditis nostris, possit illos habere pro suis pecuniis.’

<sup>523</sup> Furio Ciciliot, ‘The Genoese Cocha’, *Archaeonautica*, 14 (1998), 191-194.



Sigismund's possible requests. As a result, they offer a reliable insight into Sigismund's naval thinking, or at least into what the Venetians perceived as Sigismund's aims.

Of most importance, at least to the Venetians, was the crossing across the Dardanelles.<sup>524</sup> The Venetians offered to hold the critical stretch of sea around Gallipoli at their own expense, whenever Sigismund campaigned against the Turks in the regions of Romania, the so called *partibus Romanie*.<sup>525</sup> While left unstated, the aim behind this was presumably to keep any Ottoman forces in Asia Minor trapped there. The Venetians were careful not to guarantee that they could hold the sea passage near Gallipoli. In order to set the difficulty of defending the crossing at Gallipoli in a context which Sigismund could easily understand, the letter advises Dandolo, that

if the said lord king should ask about the blocking of the passage of Gallipoli, we say the same as we would say of the passage of the Danube, so you should respond, that considering the short distance of Gallipoli as far as the Danube, it may be impossible to prohibit the said passage.<sup>526</sup>

As a result, the Venetians were willing, with reservations, to guard the straits near Gallipoli. The Danube, perhaps being further away and more difficult for the Venetian fleet to get to, could not be defended by them in any circumstances. Nevertheless, the prospect of Sigismund asking for Venetian aid in manning the Danube had been raised by him before and the authors of the letter were clearly of the opinion that Sigismund might ask for this again.<sup>527</sup> As a result, if Sigismund raised the issue of manning the Danube, Dandolo was curtly advised that 'the Danube is not to be mentioned'.<sup>528</sup>

If we were to summarise Sigismund's naval priorities then they would be roughly as follows: Sigismund wanted the ability to be able to build his own vessels and the capability of controlling the Danube and Gallipoli crossings. Nothing ever came of these negotiations and it is tempting to argue that Sigismund's quest for naval aid and expertise to buttress his efforts against the Turks ended in failure. One gets this impression from Gustav Beckmann's work on Sigismund's plan to lead Christendom on a great campaign against the Turks.

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<sup>524</sup> A common theme. See Beckmann, *Kampf Kaiser Sigmunds*, p. 10.

<sup>525</sup> *Listine*, 21, p. 23.

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23. 'et si dictus dominus rex requireret, quod sicut dicimus, de obviando transitum Galipolis, ita diceremus transitum Danubii, respondere debeas, quod considerata distantia strictus Galipolis usque Danubium, impossibile foret dictos passus prohibere'.

<sup>527</sup> For a later item of correspondence, which stresses the Venetian refusal to place ships on the Danube, see Thiriet, *Régestes*, ii. 262 (nr 2146).

<sup>528</sup> *Listine*, 21, p. 23. 'Et propterea de Danubio non est fienda mentio'.

Beckmann notes how Sigismund's efforts to secure naval support in his plans to combat the Ottoman threat in the 1400s and 1410 were fruitless.<sup>529</sup> In a similar vein, Otto Schiff expresses exasperation at Sigismund's inability to reconcile with Venice. After all, so Schiff argues, if Sigismund truly wished to combat the Ottoman threat, then he would have done anything to win the support of Venice in order to gain access to their fleet, even if that meant giving up Hungarian Dalmatia.<sup>530</sup> Kintzinger has highlighted how Sigismund so dearly desired naval support from Venice and the Order of St John, support which he never received.<sup>531</sup>

### 3.3 Sigismund and his appeal to the Teutonic Knights to defend the Danube frontier

This is far too simplistic a conclusion. Historians have so far neglected to recognise that there was another source of naval aid and expertise upon which Sigismund could draw upon; notably his subjects who owed allegiance to him as Roman King. As this chapter will now demonstrate, Sigismund was indeed successful in marshalling naval resources from his subjects in the Reich for service on the Danube frontier against the Turks. There are two reasons why this source of naval aid has not been explored by historians before. Firstly, historians of naval warfare usually focus on the navies of Italian states so it has seemed natural and logical to explore Sigismund's quest for naval aid by focussing upon his relationship with polities such as Venice and Genoa. Nevertheless, western kingdoms and states were able to contribute ships and naval expertise to the fight against the Ottoman Turks later in the fifteenth century. Take, for example, the exploits of the Burgundian fleet during the Crusade of Varna, as described by Jehan de Wavrin in his *chroniques*.<sup>532</sup> This chapter will demonstrate that western and northern kingdoms and states were aiding Sigismund in the naval effort against the Turks, except that this aid was being filtered through different channels than in the 1440s. Secondly and perhaps more importantly, the majority of the relevant archival material has not been published.

Our best insight into Sigismund's attitudes towards defending the waterways on his southern frontier comes from a particularly detailed series of diplomatic correspondence and

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<sup>529</sup> Beckmann, *Kampf Kaiser Sigmunds*, pp. 10-12.

<sup>530</sup> Schiff, *Sigmunds italienische Politik*, pp. 105-6.

<sup>531</sup> Kintzinger, *Westbindungen*, p. 247.

<sup>532</sup> Jehan de Wavrin, *Recueil des chroniques et anciennes istories de la Grant Bretagne, a present nomme Engleterre*, ed. William Hardy, 5 vols (London: 1864-91), v. 19-23, 30-41, 44-119. For a translation of sections of Wavrin's account, see Colin Imber, *The Crusade of Varna* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 107-66. See also, Vladimir Agrigoroaei, 'Literary Leakings into Wavrin's Danube: Three Strongholds and a Broken Bombard', in *Extincta est Lucerna Orbis: John Hunyadi and his Time*, ed. Ana Dumitran, Loránd Mádly and Alexandru Simon (Cluj-Napoca: Romanian Academy, Center for Transylvanian Studies, 2009), pp. 51-66.

memoranda produced in the later 1420s and which survive today in the Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Berlin. The most striking document and the one which must form the starting point for the discussion in this chapter is a letter, not yet published, sent by Sigismund to the Grandmaster Paul von Rusdorf in September 1427. Now available under the archival signature of *Ordensbriefarchiv 4759*, this letter is vitally important for two reasons.<sup>533</sup> Firstly, it gives us an unparalleled insight into Sigismund's own military priorities and the resources which he felt he needed in order to defend his frontier. Secondly, it shows most clearly how Sigismund successfully used his status as Roman King to encourage one of his subjects, in this case the Grandmaster of the Teutonic Order, to support him militarily against the Turks. Throughout his letter Sigismund continually emphasises themes of vital importance which run throughout this thesis. He takes pains to stress how he and his people are struggling against the Turks and how the Turkish threat is a concern for all of Christendom. Moreover, he emphasises his kingship of the Romans and how his subjects are under obligation to help him defend Christendom against the pagans and heretics.

Written in the German vernacular, the letter begins with a report on Sigismund's efforts against the Turks. Sigismund stresses that both he and 'his people' (*sein volk*) struggle daily against the Turks and intend never to cease fighting. With considerable exaggeration and imprecision, Sigismund claims that he has overwhelmed the entire length of the Danube until it reaches the sea, presumably the Black Sea (*sin gnad hab dann die tunaw biß in das mer gancz geweltigt*), and that he foresees more fighting in the area next summer.

This is then followed by a call for aid, where Sigismund stresses how the Turks are a matter which concerns the entirety of Christendom and how the Grandmaster is obligated to help his Roman King in the effort to combat the pagans:

Therefore his royal grace requests of you and the entire Order, that you come to help and support him in these matters of Christendom..., and that you will in this case not leave him in his business, for his grace trusts that you are obligated to him as Roman King, and to help him equitably against the pagans.<sup>534</sup>

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<sup>533</sup> This letter has not been published and it has attracted little attention from historians because it was not included in Altmann's *Regesta*. For its calendar entry, see *RhdOSMT*, i. i. nr 4759. For a narrow discussion of the military requests contained in the letter, see Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden', pp. 93-4, and Israel, *Das Verhältnis*, p. 33.

<sup>534</sup> OBA, 4759. 'Also bitt sein kuniglich gnad, euch und den ganczen Orden, das ir im in disen sachen der kristenheit, ouch zuhulf und zustewre komet... und werdet in zu disem mal, in sinen geschefften nicht lassen, als sin gnad getrawet daz ir im des ouch als einem Romischen kunig wol pflichtig seyt, und wider die heiden billich

One gets the impression that Sigismund is deliberately emphasising his status as Roman King as he mentions it so frequently throughout the letter. Furthermore, in a letter covering three sides of parchment (roughly 1600 words once transcribed) his status as King of Hungary is not mentioned once. The only reference to Hungary comes when Sigismund notes how he wishes to spread the Order's influence both in the New Mark in Eastern Brandenburg and 'in his lands of Hungary' (*in sinen landen zu ungeren*).<sup>535</sup> Aside from that Hungary is not mentioned once, not even in the dating clause. In this respect the letter's heading is highly instructive: *unsers herren des romischen kunigs begerung von unserm herrn dem hoemeister und dem orden* ('our lord the Roman King's desire regarding our lord the Grandmaster and the Order').<sup>536</sup> Israel is right to note that Sigismund's plan to use the Teutonic Order represented the coming together of crusading ideals and imperial thoughts, but it was much more than this.<sup>537</sup> This was also a letter from the Roman King to his subject, with a request for help that the subject is obligated to fulfil. We have seen in the previous chapter how in 1412 Sigismund wanted the Order to help him against the 'unbelievers' (*ungleubigen*), 'out of which much good will come for Christendom'.<sup>538</sup> Sigismund had then underlined how the Order was not just 'a strong shield of Christendom in Prussia, but also for us, the Reich, to which the same order belongs'.<sup>539</sup> Sigismund's opinions had changed since 1419, when he was recorded as saying that he was unsure whether the Order stood under the authority of the Reich or the Church.<sup>540</sup> By 1421 he was in no such doubt about the Order's relationship with the Reich.<sup>541</sup> Sarnowsky notes that the Teutonic Order and Sigismund were 'allies', a word which does not do justice to their relationship.<sup>542</sup> Sigismund was in fact the leader of the Reich, and, as this letter shows, he believed that bringing the Order to his lands to defend against the Turks was his right as leader of the Reich.<sup>543</sup> Sigismund had finally

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helfen.' Similar phrasing, though this time regarding the Hussite threat, can be found in Palacký, *Urkundliche Beiträge*, i. 343 (nr 296).

<sup>535</sup> OBA, 4759.

<sup>536</sup> Compare with other headings used by Sigismund's chancery at the same time: e.g. 'Sigmund von gotes gnaden romischer kunig zu allen tzeiten merer des reichs und zu hungern zu beheime etc kunig', in RTA, ix. 346 (nr 274).

<sup>537</sup> Israel, *Das Verhältnis*, p. 34.

<sup>538</sup> RTA, vii. 186 (nr 126). 'cristenheite vil gutes doruß kommen werde'.

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>540</sup> Israel, *Das Verhältnis*, p. 91 (nr 14).

<sup>541</sup> Israel, *Das Verhältnis*, p. 98 (nr 23).

<sup>542</sup> Sarnowsky, 'Teutonic Order', p. 260.

<sup>543</sup> For other plans regarding possible transfers of the Teutonic Order during the first quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, see Kurt Forstreuter, *Der Deutsche Orden am Mittelmeer* (Bonn: Wissenschaftliches Archiv Bad Godesburg, 1967), pp. 221-2. More generally, see Malgorzata Dąbrowska, 'From Poland to Tenedos: The Project of Using the Teutonic Order in the Fight against the Turks after the Fall of Constantinople', in *Byzanz und Ostmitteleuropa, 950-1453: Beiträge zu einer table-ronde des XIX International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Copenhagen, 1996*, ed. Günter Prinzing and Maciej Soloman (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), pp. 165-176.

come round to translating his words into action fifteen years after he had first seriously fleshed out his idea of using the Order against the Turks.

What follows these rhetorical flourishes is a detailed exposition of the various military resources and fields of expertise, from military advisers to fishermen, which Sigismund needed in order to defend his frontier against the Turks. Sometimes these requests for particular resources are integrated into paragraphs where their intended use is explained but in other cases they are merely written down in the form of a list. As a result the letter both reads rather bizarrely and looks rather bizarre, with the lists of military posts and kit required set alongside extended paragraphs of rhetoric. Sigismund's most distinct priorities are clear. While he is particularly concerned with securing managerial and administrative expertise to manage his frontier, a theme we will explore in a later chapter, his overriding concern is for naval expertise and resources.<sup>544</sup> Sigismund wanted twenty shipbuilders (*czweinczig schiffmacher*), who were to come to the Danube with their own equipment.<sup>545</sup> Importantly, Sigismund stipulated that they should be able to build ships that could operate both on inland waters and also on the sea. Sigismund wanted captains (*schifhouptleute*) to operate them as well as sufficient men to operate them. Sigismund wanted '1000 or 800... sailors (*schifkinder*) or as many that your grace [the Grandmaster] allows.'<sup>546</sup>

That Sigismund intended to use these people to support his fight against the Turks is clear, though it is unclear whether Sigismund intended the shipbuilders to build ships for him or to maintain ones that Sigismund already had or which he intended to source himself. When taken in its context, one suspects that it is the latter, as this paragraph situated below the request would suggest:

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<sup>544</sup> Mályusz is reliant on Joachim and his interpretation of the specific forms of expertise which Sigismund wanted seems muddled. See Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 147.

<sup>545</sup> OBA, 4759.

<sup>546</sup> OBA, 4759. 'tausent oder viii<sup>c</sup>...schifkinder oder das meyst und ewer gnad vermag'. *Schifkinder* are not actual children, but is a term used to indicate the crew required to man the vessel, in opposition to the *Schiffvater*, the captain of the ship. For more information about the sailors or 'ship children', see Sven Ekdahl, "'Schiffskinder" im Kriegsdienst des Deutschen Ordens. Ein Überblick über die Werbungen von Seeleuten durch den Deutschen Orden von der Schlacht bei Tannenberg bis zum Brester Frieden (1410-1435)', in *Kultur und Politik im Ostseeraum und im Norden, 1350-1450*, ed. Sven Ekdahl (Visby: Kungsböcker, 1973), pp. 239-274.

and that they [the shipbuilders, captains and sailors] should be by his grace [Sigismund] in the month of August, when our lord has a few finished and strengthened galleys and intends to purchase [*zukoufen meynt*] a seaworthy ship.<sup>547</sup>

Sigismund clearly foresees here that the naval experts of the Teutonic Order will arrive when (*wann*) he has access to ships, which implies that they were to help him maintain and man them, and not necessarily build them. Sigismund then continues that the shipbuilders and sailors will be used against the Turks (*gen den Turcken*) and that he wishes specifically ‘to use [them] on the Danube and on the sea’.<sup>548</sup> In the case that the sailors were to take any booty or captives while fighting the Turks, the profits would belong to Sigismund. Overall, one gets the impression that Sigismund already has some sort of fleet or intends to source ships using his own channels. He does not require the Order’s physical resources and materials but their expertise in maintaining and outfitting ships.

It is worth mentioning that this letter, dated to September 1427, was not the first which Sigismund sent to the Grandmaster regarding naval aid.<sup>549</sup> The letter which seemed to have formally indicated Sigismund’s desire to settle the Order in Hungary is OBA 4738, dated to 9 April 1427.<sup>550</sup> In this letter, Sigismund makes Rusdorf aware of his desire to bring the Order to Hungary including *schiffmacher* and *schiffkinder* though he does not explain why. It would appear that OBA 4759 was produced after Sigismund wrote his letter of 9 April 1427 as it contains explanations of why Sigismund wanted aid from the Order and how he intended to use it. It would appear that OBA 4759 was delivered to Rusdorf by Caspar Schlick, Sigismund’s chancellor, who was dispatched to Marienburg after Sigismund sent OBA 4738 in order to arrange the transfer of the Order to Hungary. Zimmermann and Israel are right to highlight OBA 4738 as Sigismund’s letter of invitation, but they seem unaware of OBA 4759, the document which reveals how Sigismund conceived of the transfer.<sup>551</sup>

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<sup>547</sup> OBA, 4759. ‘und das die in dem monat Augusti bey sinen gnaden, gesein mogen, wann unser herre, nu ettliche fertige, und gereyte galein hat, und ouch der schiff uff das mere gehorund zukoufen meynt’.

<sup>548</sup> OBA, 4759. ‘uff der Tunaw und uff dem mere zunüzen’.

<sup>549</sup> Joachim, ‘Deutsche Ritterorden’, p. 93.

<sup>550</sup> OBA, 4738. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 4738. Altmann, nr. 6887. The letter is printed though with some minor errors in Harald Zimmermann, *Der Deutsche Orden in Siebenbürgen: Eine diplomatische Untersuchung* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2011), pp. 215-6.

<sup>551</sup> Zimmermann, *Deutsche Orden*, p. 35; Israel, *Das Verhältnis*, p. 33. A document dated to 2 July 1426, which purports to be a command of Sigismund to the vice-voivode of Transylvania to reintroduce the Order to the region surrounding the Iron gates around Severin, is reproduced by Zimmermann, *ibid.*, pp. 214-5. This document is a nineteenth century forgery. See Martyn Rady, ‘The Forgeries of Baron József Kemény’, *SEER*, 71 (1993), 102-25 (pp. 119-20).

We can delve even deeper into Sigismund's military thinking as we are fortunate to have an eyewitness account of Sigismund as he first decided to make the requests contained in OBA 4759, a letter which was previously discussed in the first chapter. Claus Redwitz, a Teutonic Knight present in Sigismund's court perhaps as early as 1421, informed Rusdorf in a letter dated April 11 1427 of Sigismund's plan to invite the Order to Hungary in order to serve as a bulwark against the Turks. Redwitz stresses the worry which Sigismund felt upon hearing that the Ottomans had moved 11,000 men from Asia into Europe across the Dardanelles, and the Sultan and his forces were said now to be between the Sea of Marmara and the Danube (*zwischen dem sleben mer und der tunow*).<sup>552</sup>

When seen in this context, Sigismund's desire for naval expertise appears understandable. He was clearly worried by the build-up of Turkish forces beyond the Danube and the solution was simple: stop them from crossing. Sigismund alludes to this in his aforementioned letter to Henry, Duke of Bavaria-Landshut, in which he stated that his planned campaign against the Turks specifically involved holding the Danube.<sup>553</sup> After all, holding the Danube would provide numerous benefits to Sigismund. If the Turks could be stopped from crossing the Danube then his subjects would be safe from Ottoman raiding and aggression. There would be no need to devise measures to counter Ottoman numerical superiority, as they would not need to engage significant Turkish land forces north of the Danube because they would not be able to cross in the first place.<sup>554</sup> A strong naval force could also prevent the Turks from transporting the men and materials which they needed over the Danube in order to conquer or subdue any of Sigismund's fortresses between Belgrade and Turnu Severin. Ottoman armies had, for example, crossed the Danube in force before and inflicted substantial damage to settlements as far north as Temesvár in the 1390s, and they would do so again in Transylvania in 1438 when they forced a crossing at the Iron Gates near Turnu Severin.<sup>555</sup>

Strengthening his fleet would also allow Sigismund to offer more support to his Wallachian allies. Very few sources mention the naval conflicts which the Wallachian Voivodes engaged in towards the mouth of the Danube but chance glimpses occasionally

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<sup>552</sup> OBA, 4741, 'und sayt dem konig in der warheit bey der torcken keiser den man nennet den grosen torcken wider kamen uber das mer das man heist sant jorg arm und hat mit im in uberbracht wol xi<sup>m</sup> werhaftig und leit zwischen dem sleben mer und der tunow und in czeucht teglich mer folk czu'.

<sup>553</sup> RTA, ix. 30-1 (nr 29).

<sup>554</sup> On Ottoman numerical superiority, see Rady, *Land and Service*, pp. 149-50.

<sup>555</sup> Inalcik, 'An Ottoman Document on Bayezid I's expedition into Hungary and Wallachia', pp. 220-222. For Murad's campaign in 1438, see Jefferson, *Holy Wars*, pp. 158-61.

survive in the mix of correspondence present in the *Ordensbriefarchiv*. In June 1432 Švitrigaila, the Grand Duke of Lithuania (1430-32), penned a letter to Rusdorf, to which was attached a report upon the conflict between the Voivode of Wallachia and a marauding force identified as *der bessern herrn*, probably from Moldova.<sup>556</sup> The marauding force was laying waste to the Voivode's territory with a fleet of 66 ships (*sechs und sechczik schiffe zu wassir*) and in response the Voivode mobilised his own. The decisive battle was most likely a naval one as it took place 'on the water' (*off dem wassir*) and the Wallachian Voivode defeated the marauding fleet so well 'that not one of them survived' (*das nyrkeyner von en entkamen*).

Sigismund wanted vessels capable of not just patrolling the Danube but also the sea (*das mere*) and it is worth considering his motives.<sup>557</sup> He had toyed with the idea of installing Teutonic garrisons in the cities of Caffa on the Crimean and Akkerman in Moldova before and perhaps now, with the help of Teutonic naval expertise and sea going vessels, he could achieve this.<sup>558</sup> An undated manuscript which concerns Sigismund's negotiations with the Teutonic Order in the later 1420s and which will be explored in more detail later, reports how Sigismund wished to 'to speak about Caffa' with the Order.<sup>559</sup> The status of the Black Sea was clearly on Sigismund's agenda during the late 1420s.<sup>560</sup> If Ghillebert de Lannoy's account can be trusted, then the status of Caffa was also a priority of the Ottoman sultan during the 1420s.<sup>561</sup> Therefore, Sigismund may have wanted to increase his naval strength in the effort to resist Turkish advances in the Black Sea. Furthermore, the desire to project naval power beyond the mouth of the Danube basin and into the Black Sea may seem an outlandish plan on Sigismund's part but it certainly was not when seen within the context of the time. Other Christian states had holdings in the Black Sea and it was an active campaigning theatre for the Genoese, as demonstrated by Carlo Lomellino's attempt to strengthen Genoese lordship in the Crimea with a force of 5,000 men at arms and 3,000 auxiliaries in 1433.<sup>562</sup>

### **3.4 Hansen von Ratibor, the Grandmaster's *Bleidenmeister***

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<sup>556</sup> OBA, 6138. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 6138.

<sup>557</sup> OBA, 4759.

<sup>558</sup> Altmann, nr 2847, 4241. For an analysis of Sigismund's possible motives, see Wolfgang von Stromer, 'Die Schwarzmeer- und Levante-Politik Sigismund von Luxemburg', *Bulletin de L'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, 44 (1974), 601-11 (p. 603).

<sup>559</sup> OBA, 5215. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 5215. A portion of this document has been published and is available in *CEV*, pp. 809-10 (nr 1340).

<sup>560</sup> See also, *CEV*, p. 823 (nr 1348).

<sup>561</sup> Ghillebert de Lannoy, *Oeuvres de Ghillebert de Lannoy*, ed. Ch. Potvin (Louvain: J. Lefever, 1878), p. 59.

<sup>562</sup> Iulian Mihai Damian, 'La disfatta di Solgat (Crimea) e I suoi echi nei trattati d'arte militare rinascimentale', *Ephemeris Dacoromana*, 13 (2011), 129-144 (pp. 131-3).



Sigismund's desire for naval and riverine aid has left a significant paper trail in the *Ordensbriefarchiv*, but one particular figure, a certain Hansen von Ratibor, stands out in particular. Hansen was a career engineer in the Teutonic Order and a specialist in building bridges. Sigismund claimed to require his unique services on his frontier for service in his military campaigns. Hansen's career is easy to follow as he is referred to in the manuscripts by his name and not some generic plural military term.<sup>563</sup> His brief spell in Sigismund's service serves as a good example of how Sigismund used his status as Roman King to draw upon expertise and aid to support his Turkish campaigns to which he would not otherwise have had access.

Sigismund first mentions Hansen in a letter to Rusdorf dated 9 October 1428.<sup>564</sup> In this letter Sigismund again requests a range of Teutonic military specialists for service on the Danube frontier, with the stated reason of helping him to secure and fortify several castles, such as Belgrade, which had recently come into his possession. Sigismund expands upon his predicament and continues that 'we have so many great buildings and works before our hands on the Danube and for these we dearly require skilled people [*künstrichter lute*]',<sup>565</sup> Sigismund then goes into specifics, and states that he particularly desires those who 'are able to make bridges over great waters'. It would appear that Sigismund knew that the Grandmaster had just the person for the job, as he then states in the same letter:

'We have now understood that you have master Hansen of Ratibor,<sup>566</sup> your *bleidenmeister*..., who we have wanted for a time [to serve] us on this our frontier [*unser grenicz*], to advise and help us in our matters and such things. Therefore we desire from your grace and request with diligence, that, when you send the aforesaid

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<sup>563</sup> Though he has received very little attention from historians. He is mentioned in footnotes by Joachim and Veszprémy. See Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden', pp. 94-5; László Veszprémy, 'King Sigismund of Luxemburg at Golubac (Galamboc) 1428', in *Worlds in Change: Church Union and Crusading in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. Christian Gastgeber, Ioan-Aurel Pop et. al., (Cluj-Napoca: Romanian Academy, Transylvanian Review, xviii, supplement 2, 2009), pp. 303-4.

<sup>564</sup> OBA, 4989. Altmann, nr 7132; *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 4989.

<sup>565</sup> OBA, 4989. 'haben wir alhie an der Tunaw groß gepäwe und arbeyt vor handen dorczu wir künstrichter lute wol bedorffen'.

<sup>566</sup> If Hansen is using his place of origin as his surname, then three possibilities for his native home can be suggested. Rattenberg in modern day Austria, or the two towns of Ratibor, one in modern day Poland and the other in the Czech Republic. See, Karl Heinrich Schäfer, *Deutsche Ritter und Edelknechte in Italien während des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1911), ii. 98.

brothers of your order, you make agreement with the same master Hansen, so that he then comes with them to us.<sup>567</sup>

Once he arrived Hansen was to remain in Sigismund's service for half a year, a length of time that Sigismund presumably thought was long enough for the specialist to 'help and advise in these things' to the king's satisfaction.<sup>568</sup>

Hansen is described as a *bleidenmeister* (sometimes with variable spellings such as *blyden/bliden*), a term which describes an expert in matters relating to military engineering and technology. Strictly speaking, its literal meaning (an amalgamation of the words *blide* and *meister*, literally 'master of trebuchets') implies a person with expertise in siege machinery, but it is clear that in this case and in others which will be explored later, that *bleidenmeister* can be used to denote range of military abilities.<sup>569</sup> That being said, it is clear that Hansen's particular specialism was in bridging stretches of water for men and material to cross and his status and the value of his services are clear as he is the only Teutonic military specialist to be requested by name by Sigismund. Sigismund's correspondence with the Teutonic Knights often contains a range of requests for different types of specialists. These include demands for workmen (*werkluten*), whose precise roles are hard to ascertain, to very specific ones, such as for brick makers (*zigelstreicher*), both of which will be explored in subsequent chapters. However, Hansen and his skills are requested specifically and by name by Sigismund, a request which Sigismund had to make again several times in 1429 as the bridge builder's arrival at his court in Bratislava was delayed.

The next mention of Hansen by Sigismund comes in a letter of 3 February 1429, where his skills and intended application on the Danube frontier is spelt out in more detail.<sup>570</sup> In this letter Sigismund reminds Rusdorf, that 'we have previously written to your grace on account of master Hansen *blidenmeister*', and requests that he sends him to him as soon as

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<sup>567</sup> OBA, 4989. 'nu haben wir verstanden daz du meister hansen von ratibor deynen bleidenmeister..., bey dir habest, den wir eyn czeit gern bey uns und an diser unser grenicz haben wolden, uns, und den unseren in solichen sachen zuhelfen und zuraten. Dorumb begern wir aber von deyner andacht, und bitten die mit flisse, daz du denselben meister hansen ouch vertag machest, wenn du uns die egenanten dyns ordens brudere also senden wurdest, daz er dann mit in zu uns kome'.

<sup>568</sup> OBA, 4989. 'und in disen sachen helff und rate'.

<sup>569</sup> In 1417 a certain *Hansen blidenmeister* briefly served the Marshal of Livonia, and it is probable that this is the same Hansen who was to serve in Sigismund's court. See *Liv-, Est- und Kurländisches Urkundenbuch: Nebst Regesten*, ed. Friedrich Georg von Bunge et. al., 17 vols (Gotha: Scientia Verlag Allen, 1967-1981), v. 289, 312-314. For his various activities while in the service of the Order Marshal, see p. 290. See also, *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 2630, 2665.

<sup>570</sup> OBA, 5042. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 5042; Altmann, nr 7161.

possible.<sup>571</sup> Sigismund states that he requires Hansen's presence because 'we should have a bridge, and we must [have him] now to raise this'. It is clear that Hansen had a particular skill which was instrumental to Sigismund's plans. A couple of months later Hansen was in direct contact with Sigismund and clearly on his way to Bratislava, where Sigismund was based. A letter sent by Sigismund to Rusdorf in April 1429 records that, 'yesterday the master *bleidenmeister* answered us in his letter', after which Sigismund thanks the Grandmaster for 'having sent Hansen to us' and promises to keep him safe.<sup>572</sup>

Just why Sigismund wanted Hansen so much is clear from another manuscript preserved in the *Ordensbriefarchiv*.<sup>573</sup> This curious document, which lists a whole manner of things relating both to the Teutonic management of the Danube frontier and contemporary political matters, begins with the heading, 'So is our lord Roman King's opinion regarding the gift of the castle district', presumably to the Teutonic Order. It is not an item of correspondence and it bears no seal or dating clause. It would appear to be some form of memorandum, perhaps produced by a Teutonic Knight or a scribe of Sigismund's during the negotiations for the transfer of the Order to the Danube. The document can be dated to 1428 or very early 1429, as it notes the coronation of the Lithuanian Grand Duke Witold and the ceding of the New Mark as topics of discussion, both of which occurred in early 1429.<sup>574</sup>

Included in this document is a detailed description of the various personnel and materials that Sigismund wished the Teutonic order to send to the castles now under their own control, which can only mean the dozen or so fortresses which the knights were given between Belgrade and Turnu Severin.<sup>575</sup> Hansen is included in this list too, with the document implying that he was to act as some sort of advisor in the construction of bridges made out of boats on the Danube: 'The lord Roman king desires master Hansen the *bleidenmeister*, to instruct here how one makes bridges over the Danube on ships'.<sup>576</sup> It is clear then that Hansen was destined for the region of the Danube between Belgrade and

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<sup>571</sup> OBA, 5042. 'ouch als wir deyner andacht vormals geschriben haben, von meister hansen blidenmeisters wegen, also bitten wir dich noch mit ganzem flisse, das du uns denselben meister ye ee ye besser sendest, wann es nü an der czeit ist, und soll wir eyn bruk haben so müssen wir yczund dorczu anheben

<sup>572</sup> OBA, 5042. 'so hat uns meister bleidenmeister gestern auch deine briff geantwort', 'du uns meister Hansen...gesandt'. This letter has been printed in *CEV*, pp. 821-2 (nr 1348).

<sup>573</sup> OBA, 5215.

<sup>574</sup> For Sigismund's donation of the Neumark, see *CDH*, x, vii. 100-7 (nr 11). For Witold's coronation, see *ibid.*, pp. 115-6 (nr 16) and also *ibid.*, x, viii. 616-21 (nr 291).

<sup>575</sup> These fortresses are recorded in the financial accounts of the Teutonic Knights from 1429 or 1430, published in Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden', pp. 108-13.

<sup>576</sup> OBA, 5215. 'Ouch begeret der here romische konig serr meister hansen des bleidenmeisters, das her en underweise wie man brucken mache ober die Thune uff schiffen.'

Turnu Severin which Sigismund was so concerned with defending and, once there, he was to undertake a very specific task.

### **3.5 Hansen von Ratibor, Golubac, and the military challenges of the later 1420s**

While Hansen's skills as a bridge builder would have made him a useful asset to any medieval king, Sigismund's request for the engineer has to be seen in the context of the changing military requirements that he was experiencing in his campaigns against the Ottomans in the later 1420s. As we have seen, Hansen is first mentioned in an item of correspondence in October 1428, a document which also discusses Sigismund's military commitments on the Danube frontier. In this letter Sigismund reveals to Rusdorf, that 'your grace knows well, that since the death of the Despot [of Serbia] we have accepted Belgrade and also from the Danube to Turnu Severin we have many good castles by the grace of God on both sides of the Danube.'<sup>577</sup> This transfer of Serbian fortresses to Hungarian control was agreed in the Treaty of Tata in 1426, where, upon Lazarević's death and in return for recognising Lazarević's nephew, George Branković, as the successor to the Serbian Despotate, Sigismund would receive a string of fortresses along the Danube, including Belgrade and Golubac among others.<sup>578</sup> Hitherto, Sigismund's defensive line of castles had been on the northern, Hungarian side of the river, but with the extension of his line into Serbia and across the river Danube, the importance of being able to bridge the river assumes a new importance. It was now vital to be able to bridge the river easily so as to ensure that the fortresses of Belgrade, Golubac and others on the southern side of the river, could be supported and supplied in peace time and during times of conflict.<sup>579</sup>

Sigismund would pay a dear price for learning the importance of being able to transport his forces across the Danube. In June 1428 Sigismund was attempting to seize the critical fortress of Golubac with a Hungarian force supported by Polish, Lithuanian and Wallachian contingents. After a short and unsuccessful siege Sigismund was forced to retreat to the northern side of the Danube but many of his men were left stranded on the southern side and slaughtered by the Turks. It was probably this experience, and his plan to retake

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<sup>577</sup> OBA, 4989. 'nu weiss deyn andacht wol, daz wir nach tode des despotes vert [?] greichischweissenburg yngenommen, und ouch die Tunaw ab bis gen Severin uf beydenseiten von den gnaden gotes vil guter sloss haben.'

<sup>578</sup> Engel, *Realm*, p. 237.

<sup>579</sup> Other fortresses on the southern side of the Danube also fell into Hungarian hands. The successful capture of Ravanica by a force led by the Hungarian knight Nicolaus Bochka is reported in a letter dated to November 1427. See *CDPRHA*, pp. 73-4 (nr 142).

Golubac, which prompted his request for Hansen.<sup>580</sup> Golubac, despite the terms of the Treaty of Tata, was not transferred to Hungarian control and was instead sold by the Serbian commander to the Ottomans in the summer or autumn of 1427, who then promptly installed a garrison.<sup>581</sup> Golubac, whose loss according to Bertrandon de la Broquière ‘was a great damage for the Christians’, was a strategically vital fortress that was essential for Sigismund to control.<sup>582</sup> As a result, Sigismund committed to this siege one of the largest and most well equipped armies in his reign, including Genoese crossbowmen, galleys armed with cannon and other types of artillery and a force of Polish and Lithuanian knights.<sup>583</sup> Sigismund had crossed the river with his army, presumably in the same galleys that would later bombard the fortress by the 27 April and soon encircled the fortress.<sup>584</sup> A large Ottoman force arrived to lift the siege but around 3 June,<sup>585</sup> and in a decision that would draw both criticism from contemporaries and modern historians, Sigismund decided not to risk a battle and instead to make a truce with the Turks and withdraw to the northern side of the river.<sup>586</sup>

Despite assurances that his army would be allowed to make the time-consuming crossing back to the northern side unmolested, Sigismund’s forces were treacherously attacked and their orderly withdrawal turned into anarchy.<sup>587</sup> A significant force of soldiers, including Sigismund himself, was left stranded on the southern side and in grave danger, with only a few boats able to ferry soldiers across at a time.<sup>588</sup> Luckily, at least for Sigismund, and after apparently two days of fighting,<sup>589</sup> Zawissus the Black, the leader of the Polish knights, fought a rear guard action which allowed him to cross the river and escape unharmed.<sup>590</sup> Nevertheless, this act of heroism resulted in the Pole’s death and the deaths of a significant

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<sup>580</sup> For a summary of this campaign, see Veszprémy, ‘Sigismund at Golubac’, pp. 303-4. For Sigismund’s plan to attack Golubac again, See *RTA*, ix. 208 (173).

<sup>581</sup> Veszprémy, ‘Sigismund at Golubac’, pp. 292-3. According to one source, the Serbian commander was called Jeremiah and despite taking oaths to the contrary, he treacherously sold the castle to the Turks. See Palacký, *Urkundliche Beiträge*, i. 649 (nr 548).

<sup>582</sup> Broquière, *Le Voyage d’Outremer*, p. 213. ‘fu grant dommaige pour les Crestiens’.

<sup>583</sup> For the bowmen see, Broquière, *Le Voyage d’Outremer*, p. 225. For the galleys, see *CDH*, x, vii. 628-9 (nr 295), and for the Polish knights, Długosz, *Historiae Polonicae*, xi. 354-8. For a discussion of the possible size of Sigismund’s force in 1428, see Veszprémy, ‘Sigismund at Golubac’, pp. 294-5, 303.

<sup>584</sup> *CDDSCZ*, viii. 353-4 (nr 239).

<sup>585</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 354.

<sup>586</sup> Broquière, *Le Voyage d’Outremer*, p. 225.

<sup>587</sup> Sigismund’s withdrawal can be pieced together using several sources. For the best summary, see Veszprémy, ‘Sigismund at Golubac’, pp. 297-8, 305. See also Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 343-4.

<sup>588</sup> *CDPRHA*, p. 113 (nr 184).

<sup>589</sup> *CEV*, pp. 800-1 (nr 1330).

<sup>590</sup> Długosz, *Historiae Polonicae*, xi. 355-6.

number of soldiers, although Broquierè's estimate of 6000 Wallachian casualties dying in the rearguard action is probably exaggerated.<sup>591</sup>

The above account is reliant on printed material but it must be said that the two most informative accounts of the Siege of Golubac and Sigismund's retreat have not yet been published. Aside from the two accounts of the siege sent by Witold to Rusdorf and the Master of Livonia respectively in August 1428, the other sources for the brief campaign were written much later and the details of the battle have been distorted.<sup>592</sup> Under the signature *Ordensbriefarchiv 4954* there are two illuminating accounts of Sigismund's Golubac campaign, though only one carries details which are most relevant for this chapter. This particular letter was dated in Buda on the vigil of the feast of Peter and Paul (28 June) (*datum Bude in vigilia beatorum apostolorum petri et pauli anno etc xxviii<sup>o</sup>*), by someone who would appear to be a diocesan official in Wrocław (Breslau) (*magister Sefridus Degenberg cancellarius Wratislavensis*).<sup>593</sup> Sefridus' account largely agrees with the other accounts of the battle but it gives us precious more detail regarding Sigismund's retreat. Sefridus notes Sigismund agreement of a peace with the Turkish sultan and how 'he withdrew from the siege of the castle of Golubac [*castrum tarobenburg*] with his people [*gente bellica*] and crossed over the river Danube'.<sup>594</sup> However, he was forced to abandon some of his soldiers on the shoreline surrounding the castle *propter navium carentiam et destinam* ('on account of lack of ships and support').<sup>595</sup> Before long the Turks attacked the remainder of the army, killing many and capturing others, including Zawissus whom they later executed. Sefridus' mention of Sigismund's lack of ships and naval transport is significant here. With additional naval support from the Teutonic Order and the services of a bridge builder such as Hansen, Sigismund would have been able to invest Golubac far more easily. It has been argued that the defeat at Golubac scarred Sigismund and that afterwards he took little personal interest in the defence of the Danube.<sup>596</sup> Sigismund's efforts to secure the services of Hansen would suggest otherwise.

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<sup>591</sup> Broquierè, *Le Voyage d'Outremer*, p. 225.

<sup>592</sup> For Witold's letter, *CEV*, pp. 800-2 (nrs 1330-1). The account of the battle in the donation charter to Matko Tallóci issued by Sigismund, dated to 1437, understandably inflates the role of Matko: *CDPRHA*, pp. 112-113 (nr 184). Similarly, the Polish chronicler Długosz is keen to glorify the death of Zawissus: Długossi, *Historiae Poloniae*, xi. 355-6. See Veszprémy, 'Sigismund at Golubac', p. 300. A donation charter to Stephen Rozgonyi of 1436 notes how Stephen personally held off the Turks while Sigismund entered his ship, *Diplome privind*, ii. 50-2 (nr 41).

<sup>593</sup> OBA, 4954. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 4954.

<sup>594</sup> OBA, 4954. 'de obsidione castrum tarobenburg cum gente sua bellica se amovit'.

<sup>595</sup> OBA, 4954.

<sup>596</sup> Engel, 'Türkengefahr', p. 70.

It would genuinely appear that campaigning across the Danube posed logistical problems and that the ability to erect temporary bridges, whether with pontoons or, in Hansen's case, by using a chain of ships, would have been a vital strategic and tactical asset to Sigismund. The remark of Stephen Rozgonyi, the count of Temesvár (1427-1438), to László Töttös, the captain of Belgrade, in a letter of 1427 reinforces just what an asset this could be. Rozgonyi could only imagine prolonging the campaign against the Turks 'if the water of the Danube was to freeze over', presumably because he could think of no other viable means to cross the stretch of water.<sup>597</sup> That the act of bridging the Danube was an important consideration for Sigismund and the Teutonic knights during their settlement of frontier is clear as it appears in other documents. For example, an undated list of forts with their Teutonic garrisons on the Danube, probably compiled between 1428-9, records good points to cross the river, stating at one point that, 'between both [fortresses] known as Saint Ladislaus and Požeženo is a good crossing (*gute feere*)'.<sup>598</sup>

That Sigismund planned to use Hansen in an attempt to conquer Golubac is supported by a letter which the Roman King sent to Frederick, the Margrave of Brandenburg, in November 1428. In this letter Sigismund makes it very clear to the Margrave that his kingdom is struggling with the Turks and the pagans and requires his aid in order to wrest Golubac from Turkish hands.<sup>599</sup> In aid of this Sigismund asks for 'a few *Bleydenmeister*, one or more', and in particular people with the ability to make bridges and ladders (*'prechen und... steygen'*).<sup>600</sup> Hansen was just one part of a much broader plan of Sigismund, where he sought to use his connections as Roman King in order to mobilise the resources he needed to successfully prosecute his campaigns against the Turks.

It has been suggested by Katalin Szende that Sigismund could not have used Hansen's skills on the Danube in the region between Belgrade and Turnu Severin as the river there was too wide.<sup>601</sup> Szende's research has underlined how Sigismund attempted to bridge the Danube around Bratislava in the 1430s, a feat which was only accomplished in 1439 by Sigismund's successor, Albert.<sup>602</sup> Albert constructed his bridge using a chain of ships, which,

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<sup>597</sup> *CDDSCZ*, viii. 310 (nr 197). 'et si aqua Danubii congelata fuerit'.

<sup>598</sup> Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden in Ungarn', p. 109. 'czwuschen den beiden hewsern als Sand Ladislaen huwse und Possesin ist eyn gute feere'. See also, Veszprémy, 'Sigismund at Golubac', p. 295.

<sup>599</sup> Palacký, *Urkundliche Beiträge*, i. 649 (nr 548).

<sup>600</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 649. 'ettlich bleydenmeister einen oder mer'.

<sup>601</sup> This issue was raised by Katalin Szende (CEU, Budapest) in a discussion after a paper I gave in Heidelberg, October 2013.

<sup>602</sup> Katalin Szende, 'Stadt und Naturlandschaft im ungarischen Donaauraum des Mittelalters', *Europäische Städte im Mittelalter*, ed. Ferdinand Opll and Christoph Sonnlechner (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2010), pp. 390-1.

as we have seen, was precisely Hansen's area of expertise.<sup>603</sup> Therefore, it is not out of the question that Sigismund intended to use Hansen's skills around Bratislava and not against the Turks. In my opinion, however, it is highly likely that Sigismund intended to use Hansen's skills on the Danube around Belgrade. The report of a certain Paschale de Sorgo on the state of John Hunyadi's army on the eve of the Battle of Kosovo provides supporting evidence. De Sorgo was a Ragusan in the service of the Serbian Despot, George Branković (ruled 1427-1456), and he wrote a detailed report on almost all aspects of Hunyadi's army while present in the Serbian war camp in September 1448. His letter was copied by the humanist Cyriac of Ancona and now survives in a single copy in the Biblioteca Universitaria Allessandrina.<sup>604</sup> It has been published with numerous errors and omissions by M. Kostić,<sup>605</sup> but historians who have covered the 1448 campaign, including Halil Inalcik, Kenneth Setton and Oliver Jens Schmitt just to name a few, seem unaware of it.<sup>606</sup>

De Sorgo describes Hunyadi's siege train and equipment in detail, and notes his 'immense number of disconnected ladders and bridges and many other wonderful and clever instruments of war'.<sup>607</sup> These ladders and bridges were a critical part of Hunyadi's army and allowed de Sorgo to credit Hunyadi's army as one of the best resourced which he had ever seen. A campaigning army which needed to cross the Danube or other waterways in the area needed to have various options. Seen in this light, Hansen would have been useful to Sigismund on the Danube in the later 1420s and early 1430s.

### **3.6 Hansen von Ratibor and his spell at Sigismund's court**

The extent to which Sigismund realised his ambitious plans to install the Teutonic Order in Hungary has been debated by historians. János Bak, for example, has stated that little or no evidence exists to suggest that Sigismund's plans to use the Teutonic Order were converted into reality.<sup>608</sup> This issue will be dealt with more broadly at a later point, but there

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<sup>603</sup> OBA, 5215.

<sup>604</sup> Rome, Biblioteca Universitaria Allessandrina, MS 253, fols. 13v-16r. Mentioned in Cyriac of Ancona, *Later Travels*, ed. and trans. Edward W. Bodnor and Clive Foss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 349 (letter 47).

<sup>605</sup> M. Kostić, 'Opis Vojske Jovana Hunjadija pri Polasku u boj na Kosovo', *Glasnik Skopskog, Naučnog Društva*, 1 (1925), 79-91.

<sup>606</sup> Inalcik, 'The Ottoman Turks', vi. 222-75; Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant, 1204-1571* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1978), ii. 99-100; Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Skanderbeg: Der neue Alexander auf dem Balkan* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 2009).

<sup>607</sup> Allessandrina, MS 253, fol 14v. 'innumerae sunt disiunctae scalae pontesque et alia pleraque mirifica ingeniosaque bellorum instrumenta'

<sup>608</sup> János M. Bak, 'The Price of War and Peace in Late Medieval Hungary', in *War and Peace in the Middle Ages*, ed. Brian Patrick McGuire (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels, 1987), p. 166.



exists concrete evidence that Hansen did spend time at Sigismund's court and serve him militarily. Firstly, a scrap of parchment which survives in the Hungarian National Archives demonstrates that Hansen did visit Sigismund and even drew a stipend.<sup>609</sup> Fortunately for the year 1429 a list survives, which details the arrivals and departures of Sigismund's servants in 'the tent of the lord King...in the castle of Bratislava'.<sup>610</sup> One of the entries runs *Item magistro Johanni pontiparo*, who is probably Hansen but with his name and profession spelt in Latin. Hansen is the diminutive German form of Johannes and *pontiparo* (a combination of the noun *pons* and verb *paro*) certainly means bridge builder or bridge preparer.

Whatever the case, alongside this footprint left in Sigismund's administration lie two letters which attest to Hansen's brief spell in Sigismund's service. While serving Sigismund Hansen himself wrote two letters to Rusdorf. The letters, dated to 6 November 1429 and 9 February 1430 and both sent from Bratislava, imply that he was in the kingdom for at least half a year.<sup>611</sup> Both letters are rather uninformative in the respect that they shed little light on what he actually did for Sigismund, though they do give an interesting view of the king. The first letter is difficult to interpret as it is defaced by a large hole through its centre, but it largely revolves around the worries which Hansen had for his adoptive son, who appears to be a schoolmaster.<sup>612</sup> In the second letter Hansen expresses his desire to return home, but it would appear that Sigismund was rather pleased with Hansen's services over the winter and was encouraging him to remain in his court. Hansen reports that Sigismund had spoken to him several times and had even asked him to send for his wife, presumably so that he could make his home in Hungary.<sup>613</sup> Perhaps Sigismund asked him to do this when he was drunk. Hansen goes on to report that the Grandmaster should be aware that many of his servants, in particular a certain *martinus*, were erring as they were appearing in Sigismund's court and delivering letters to him *wen her eyn loter ist und eyn trunkenbolt* ('when he is loose and a drunkard'). Sigismund had been seriously ill over the winter of 1429/1430 but clearly he was feeling better.<sup>614</sup> Regarding all other matters Hansen states that he will wait and inform Rusdorf by mouth (*euwern gnaden wol muntlich sagen und vorezden*).<sup>615</sup>

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<sup>609</sup> DL, 25933. For a transcription of this document, see János Szendrei, 'Zsigmond kiraly pozsonyi várban lévő hodi sátrának jegyzéke, 1429 és 1430-ban', *HK*, 3 (1890), 728-31.

<sup>610</sup> DL 25933. 'Tentoria domini regis...in castro posoniensi'.

<sup>611</sup> OBA, 5211, 5289. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 5211, 5289.

<sup>612</sup> OBA, 5211.

<sup>613</sup> OBA, 5289.

<sup>614</sup> For a report on Sigismund's illness, see *RTA*, ix. 354 (nr 282).

<sup>615</sup> OBA, 5289.

It is highly unlikely, however, that Hansen's spell in Sigismund's service involved campaigning against the Turks. This is because Sigismund's truce agreed with the Turks at Golubac eventually evolved into a three year peace with the Sultan.<sup>616</sup> Peace on the Danube frontier would have been beneficial for both rulers, considering that Murad had considerable resources already invested in the siege of Thessalonica and Sigismund a great desire for a peaceful southern frontier given his wish to travel to Rome to be crowned Holy Roman Emperor.<sup>617</sup> However, attached to Hansen's first letter is tiny scrap of paper, a so called zettel, which reveals that Hansen was probably used by Sigismund not in any campaign against the Turks, but in actions against the Hussites. Hansen notes in the zettel that he was on his way to *wngerissche brode*, modern day Uherský Brod in Moravia, a town which had been seized by the Hussites the year before.<sup>618</sup> Hansen notes that after conquering the town his plan was to head deeper into Moravia, before moving north to Breslau in Silesia (Wrocław, in modern Poland). There exists a draft copy of a letter from Rusdorf to Hansen which was drafted on 21 December 1429, in which Rusdorf notes how Hansen was moving against the heretics (*die ketzzer*).<sup>619</sup> Perhaps, in the case of Hansen, Sigismund was deliberately using the spectre of the Turkish threat to gain resources from the Teutonic Order and then putting them to other uses. However, this was not the case for other resources which Sigismund garnered from the order, as these were clearly put to use on the Danube frontier against the Turks.

A broader analysis of the Teutonic Order's activities on the Danube frontier will follow in the next chapter, but it is clear that at least some portions of Sigismund's plans to use the Order's naval expertise were converted into reality. Sigismund implied in his letter to Rusdorf in September 1427 (OBA 4759) that he did not necessarily intend to build his ships, but that he already had galleys though he did intend a sailing vessel capable of operating on the sea. Whether he himself purchased them or not, by 1431 Redwitz had an 80 strong fleet stationed on the Danube between Regensburg and Buda. In a letter of August 1431, Redwitz notes that he has a fleet of ships, 80 strong (*attzig houptschiff*), on the Danube and that he has

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<sup>616</sup> Details about the peace negotiations, led by a certain Benedictum Fulchi, can be found in *CEV*, pp. 818-9, 820-3 (nrs 1346, 1348) and *CDH*, x, viii. 630-1 (nr 298).

<sup>617</sup> For a contemporary account of Sigismund's motives by a Florentine diplomat, see Lupi, 'Delle Relazioni', p. 266.

<sup>618</sup> OBA, 5211. For Hussite activity, see Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 124.

<sup>619</sup> OBA, 5236. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 5236.

been able to ‘send people and all necessities to the houses [in Hungary]’, meaning the fortresses now under Order control.<sup>620</sup>

Whether these ships were ever deployed to the area of the Danube between Belgrade and Turnu Severin is hard to tell. In this respect the Teutonic Order’s accounts, drawn up to record the expenditure which they were incurring in their Hungarian fortresses, provide some importance evidence.<sup>621</sup> The accounts suggest that they only operated a fleet of smaller, oar powered ships and never the larger sea going fleet that the king had also desired. Overall, the accounts reveal that the Teutonic knights deployed 44 *nazaden* and employed 480 men dedicated to serving in them. These boats would appear to be some form of rowed vessel as they were allocated 10 rowers each, although the accounts also contain an entry for the payment of these boatmen which records not 480, but 1100 in Teutonic service, so the real number of men to each boat could likely be higher.<sup>622</sup> This roughly tallies with the manpower which Sigismund desired to man his ships in previous correspondence with the Order.<sup>623</sup> The reliability of the Teutonic Order’s accounts has been questioned, but seen in this light some of the figures contained within can partly be relied upon.<sup>624</sup> The longer term impact which the Teutonic Knights had on the development of Sigismund’s navy is debatable, as, after suffering a defeat in 1432, they were relieved of their command. Little is known about this campaign in 1432 but a few lines in an aforementioned letter, sent by Švitrigaila to Rusdorf in June 1432, are instructive.<sup>625</sup> The letter describes how the Turks were laying waste to Hungary and killing many Hungarian lords *umb eyseryn Thor* (‘around the Iron Gate’).<sup>626</sup> The fact that the Teutonic Knights were unable to defend the crossing at the Iron Gates would imply that the naval force which they had at their disposal was either not that significant or ineffective in repulsing Turkish attacks.

### 3.7 Sigismund’s broader efforts to source naval resources from the Reich

However, the Teutonic Order was not the only source of naval expertise which Sigismund could draw upon as Roman King. From a broader perspective the Teutonic Knights were simply one source of many upon which Sigismund could draw upon after his

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<sup>620</sup> OBA, 5705. Partially printed in Joachim, ‘Deutsche Ritterorden’, pp. 115-6 and calendared in *RhdOSMT*, i, i, nr. 5705.

<sup>621</sup> OBA, 27837. Calendared in *RhdOSMT*, iii, nr 27837. This document has been published although with some minor errors in Joachim, ‘Deutsche Ritterorden’, pp. 109-113.

<sup>622</sup> Joachim, ‘Deutsche Ritterorden’, p. 110.

<sup>623</sup> OBA, 4759.

<sup>624</sup> Martyn Rady, *The Banate of Severin (Szöreny)* (unpublished book), p. 60.

<sup>625</sup> Joachim, ‘Deutsche Ritterorden’, p. 103.

<sup>626</sup> OBA, 6138.

election as Roman King in 1410. As the remainder of this chapter will now demonstrate, the opportunities which Sigismund had to recruit naval and riverine expertise to support his efforts against the Ottoman Turks radically increased after 1410. His diplomatic travels throughout Austria, Germany, France, England and Aragon between 1414 and 1419 gave him the chance to recruit the very best naval expertise which western Christendom could offer.

Before exploring Sigismund's recruitment while engaged on his foreign travels, a few brief comments on Sigismund's efforts to combat the Ottoman threat on the Danube as King of Hungary before 1410 are required. While Sigismund's predecessors, such as King Louis (1342-82), had certainly used ships in their military campaigns in the Adriatic Sea, it would appear that it was only in the 1390s that the use of ships on the Danube river started to warrant serious consideration.<sup>627</sup> The presence of 'captains of the galleys' in Sigismund's retinue in 1389,<sup>628</sup> implies that Sigismund had the use of some ships from the start of the reign and his correspondence with the Venetians during the preparations for the Nicopolis campaign demonstrates that he envisaged the use of Venetian naval expertise in his crusade against the Turks.<sup>629</sup> Venetian aid was not forthcoming but Sigismund's method of escape from the battlefield of Nicopolis proves that he had sea-worthy vessels on the Danube. One source reveals that the defeated king sailed from the battlefield to Constantinople with his barons in galleys across the Danube, the sea and numerous rivers,<sup>630</sup> where at one point, according to Schiltberger, Sigismund was taunted while sailing past the Turkish garrison at Gallipoli.<sup>631</sup>

The beginnings of the development of naval organisation in Hungary is revealed by a command of Sigismund, dated to 11 June 1396 and perhaps stimulated by the transportation needs of the crusader army crossing through northern Hungary around that time.<sup>632</sup> In this request, the town of Bratislava is asked somehow to source or build 'six great ships'.<sup>633</sup> These vessels appear not to be the galleys or ships needed to ensure that Sigismund could dominate the river Danube but horse transports, as the letter states that the ships 'should be able to

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<sup>627</sup> See, for example, *DRRRcRH*, p. 5 (nr 1). Sigismund did indeed raise a fleet on the Adriatic during his war with Venice in 1412, for which we have an anachronistic illustration from a chronicle of 1484. See, Walter Muschg and Eduard Achilles Gessler, *Die Schweizer Bilderchroniken des 15./16. Jahrhunderts* (Zürich: Atlantis, 1941), picture 87.

<sup>628</sup> *DRRRcRH*, p. 112. (nr 86). 'capitaneis galearum'.

<sup>629</sup> Beckmann, *Kampf Kaiser Sigmunds*, pp. 5-8.

<sup>630</sup> *CDH*, x, ii. 421 (nr 247).

<sup>631</sup> Schiltberger, *Hans Schiltebergers Reisebuch*, p. 7. See also John Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus, 1391-1425: A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1969), pp. 482-5.

<sup>632</sup> For further discussion, see Szende, 'Donauraum', pp. 390-1.

<sup>633</sup> *CDH*, x, viii. 408-10 (nr 146). 'Sex magnas Naves'.

bring across to the other side of the river Danube forty horses and riders at any time'.<sup>634</sup> Where these ships were to come from is unclear, with the letter simply stating that 'without delay, three should be established from that part and the remaining three from the other part of the Danube'.<sup>635</sup> Their sourcing or construction was to be overseen by so called *homines navigatores* and contractors (*conductores*), although the letter gives no indication as to from where they were to be drawn from. The letter also foresees the creation of some sort of colony of seamen in the city, as the councillors and clergymen of the cathedral were to cooperate in bringing together sailors, although from where precisely is unclear, and then entering them into a census.<sup>636</sup> Whether Bratislava did succeed in fulfilling Sigismund's wishes is unclear. While this command does demonstrate that Sigismund was not content with depending on the mercantile trading community for his naval needs but was attempting to develop his own institutions and networks, there is little evidence to suggest that his orders were ever put into action.<sup>637</sup>

In fact, it was only after Sigismund's election as Roman King that we see plans such as those above translated into practice. Election as Roman King made Sigismund the secular head of western Christendom and with this authority Sigismund summoned a great council of ecclesiastical and secular leaders to Constance, in order to resolve the schism of the Church. This political act, which Sigismund was able to initiate by virtue of being King of the Romans, required him to travel extensively throughout Europe. While conducting diplomacy across western Europe Sigismund came into contact and used sailing vessels to a much greater extent than before and it was precisely this experience that helped him to develop a Danube fleet during the latter half of his reign.

For example, Sigismund is reported as arriving at Constance by ship and he clearly planned on conducting many of his other future travels by ship too.<sup>638</sup> On 19 October Sigismund sent Heinz Wyn, a citizen of Frankfurt, to his home town on the Main with the materials to build more sailing vessels to facilitate further travel. Wyn was to raise the required amount of 'carpenters and other necessities' and to ensure that the 'ships were made

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<sup>634</sup> Ibid., p. 409, 'in quorum qualibet quadraginta equi, et equites simul et semel ultra ipsum Fluvium transduci possent'.

<sup>635</sup> Ibid., p. 409. 'quorum tres ex ista parte, et reliquae tres et alia parte Danubii continuo constituentur'.

<sup>636</sup> Ibid., pp. 409-10.

<sup>637</sup> Rose, *Naval Warfare*, p. 6.

<sup>638</sup> For the original document: IFS, FaM, KS, 2, 358. This document has been calendared in *FR*, i. 266 (nr 477); Altmann, nr 1265.

and prepared without delay'.<sup>639</sup> Frankfurt was not the only source of naval expertise which Sigismund drew upon while travelling. It would appear that Sigismund took advantage of his geographical position in the west of the Reich and recruited rather widely. Windecke notes in his chronicle, how

Here [in Constance] the King had ships, which he had built in Constance with Zealanders which he had brought from Zealand. Therefore he had brought some [shipbuilders] from a number of lands, from Catalonia, from Provence, from France, from England, from Flanders, from Brabant and from other lands and with these the king had built ships.<sup>640</sup>

A letter of Sigismund's preserved in a fifteenth century copy book now in Vienna supports Windecke, a chronicler whose reliability is often questioned. In a letter dated 13 April 1417, Sigismund thanks an unknown prince (*illustris princeps*) for allowing him the use of some of his *magistros et opifices galliatarum*<sup>641</sup> As the document is written in Latin it is highly likely that the recipient was not of a German speaking land. In this case then, Sigismund was recruiting outside of his base of subjects as Roman King. Nevertheless, it was precisely Sigismund's election as Roman King which enabled him to convene the Council of Constance and which offered him opportunities to recruit shipbuilders such as these.

It would appear that Sigismund had a genuine interest in naval matters and warfare while travelling abroad.<sup>642</sup> A Middle English poem written in the 1430s, *The libelle of Englyshe polycye*, purports to record a conversation between Sigismund and Henry V, King of England (1413-1422), while they were together during the summer of 1416. Of all the things which the anonymous author could have made Sigismund and Henry talk about, they talk about the security of the waters around Calais and Dover.<sup>643</sup> In the poem, Sigismund advises Henry to safeguard Calais and Dover just as he would safeguard his own two eyes,

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<sup>639</sup> IFS, FaM, KS, 2, 358. 'mit cymmerlütten und andere notdurfft, daz dieselben schiffung unverczogenlich gemacht und bereitet werden.' Altmann, nr 1265.

<sup>640</sup> Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 77. 'Do hette der konig Sigemont schiff, die er hette gelon machen zu Costenz von Selanden und die er ouch von Selant braht, also er etwas von vil landen uß Cathelonien uß Provinzien uß Frankriche us Engelant uß Flandern uß Probant und uß allen landen brocht hette; also hette sin gnode schiff gelon machen'.

<sup>641</sup> HHSTA, HS, Böhm 22, Blau 8, fol 25b. Printed, though with some mistakes, in Caro, 'Kanzlei', pp. 127-8.

<sup>642</sup> On Sigismund's views on Henry V's fleet, see Veszprémy, 'Militärtechnische', p. 288.

<sup>643</sup> Anonymous, *The libelle of Englyshe polycye : a poem on the use of sea-power, 1436*, ed. George Warner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), p. 2.

for as long as he held the two towns the sea crossing would be secure and Henry would be able to make war abroad and safeguard his reign in France.<sup>644</sup>

The end result of Sigismund's recruitment is recorded in the account of his arrival at Constance in 1417, written by the Teutonic Knight Heinrich Streler and sent to Frankfurt's council. Streler was struck by Sigismund's method of arrival and the seafaring qualities of his vessels, stating 'that our gracious lord the King has arrived at Constance, made in eight such ships, the same as ships in the sea, which are called galliots'.<sup>645</sup> While Sigismund's recruitment of shipbuilders was designed not to support his fight against the Turks but to make his diplomatic travels along the Rhine easier, they still represent how Sigismund put his connections in the Reich to use in order to provide him with a fleet. The ships mentioned by Streler were clearly not taken with Sigismund back to Hungary as several years later Sigismund notes in a letter his intention to sell five of them in Cologne for 180 Rhenish Gulden, though this sum is rather small and amounts roughly to £24 sterling.<sup>646</sup> Moreover, there is concrete evidence to show that Sigismund brought many of his recruits back with him to Hungary to build a fleet on the Danube.

### **3.8 Sigismund and his recruitment of Flemish shipbuilders while at Constance**

That Sigismund took a team of Flemish shipbuilders back with him to Hungary is clear from a letter of safe passage, dated to 23 November 1418 in Passau. This letter ensures their safe passage to Bratislava and then to Buda. This letter, sent by Sigismund from Passau to the count of Bratislava on 23 November 1418, implies that these shipbuilders (*navifactores*) had been in Sigismund's presence since their recruitment in Flanders and were now being sent ahead from the Passau to Buda.<sup>647</sup> These shipbuilders could be the same *magistros et opifices galliatarum* mentioned in Sigismund's employ in his letter to a certain *illustris princeps*, though it cannot be known for certain.

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<sup>644</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>645</sup> FR, i. 304 (nr 525). 'daz unser gnediger here der koning zo Costancz hayt gemachet ind doyt degeliche machen acht Schiff, gelich den schiffen in dem mer, de da heyseent galiotten.'

<sup>646</sup> HHSTA, RRB, G, fol. 156v. The phrase referring to ships runs: 'das wir unser funf schiffe, die wir zu Costencz als das Concilium daselbs gehalden wart, liessen machen'. Therefore, they are clearly the ships built by Sigismund at Constance during the council. Altmann, nr. 5175. The exchange rate is based upon the account ledgers of the Borromeo bankers in Bruges. In 1438 the exchange rate of one Rhenish Gulden varied from 37.5-39.5 groot (pence), which expressed in sterling, means that one Rhenish Gulden was worth 33.25d. Archivio Borromeo dell'Isola Bella, libro macro no. 8, Filippo Borromei e compagni in Brugia, 1438. My sincere thanks to Jim Bolton for this reference and his help in contextualising these sums of money.

<sup>647</sup> DF, 239399. Calendared in ZKO, vi. nr 2565.

Sigismund had clearly given some thought to how these shipbuilders were to be employed as the document details how they should be treated, where they should be stationed and who should be responsible for them. These ‘shipbuilders of Flanders’ were, ‘as soon as possible to arrange and build our ships to the number of twenty two’, and were first destined for Bratislava.<sup>648</sup> Upon arrival they were to report to Peter Kapleno, the count of Bratislava. Sigismund’s order, notably that Kapleno should equip the shipbuilders with ‘suitable sailors and experts’ in Bratislava, implies that king’s aforementioned requests to the city in 1396 had been followed to some extent.<sup>649</sup> Once ready, the letter states that these shipbuilders ‘should be safely led to [build] the same ships in Buda and assigned to Noffry, our chamberlain of Buda’.<sup>650</sup> Once in Buda, Noffry would then provide or purchase the relevant materials for the shipbuilders and they could finally get to work.<sup>651</sup>

The number of 22 is worthy of comment. In the spring of 1395 Sigismund had desired 25 galleys from Venice in order to pursue war against the Turks on the water, though whether he wanted to use them in the Aegean or on the Danube is unclear.<sup>652</sup> Sigismund never did get the ships he wanted from Venice, but the opportunities that he enjoyed as Roman King allowed him to recruit his own shipbuilders and use them to build the fleet which he desired. Moreover, Bertrandon de la Broquière’s account of his visit to Hungary in 1433 would also imply that Sigismund recruited other experts to conduct work on the Danube in Buda while in France between 1415 and 1417. Broquière records that Sigismund had hired six or eight families from France with the express purpose of building a tower capable of extending a chain across the river to the south of his palace.<sup>653</sup> It is clear then, that Sigismund’s recruitment of shipbuilders was part of a broader platform of seeking foreign experts who could help secure his hold on the Danube waters.

Sigismund’s recruitment of these Flemish shipbuilders perhaps explains the wording of Sigismund’s requests to the Grandmaster roughly a decade later where he implies that he had ships, but he needed help in maintaining them. While there is no conclusive evidence, it

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<sup>648</sup> DF 239399. ‘navifactores de flandria’. ‘quamprimum naves nostre numero vigintidue’.

<sup>649</sup> DF 239399. ‘nautas udoneos et expertos’.

<sup>650</sup> DF 239399. ‘qui easdem naves usque in Budam salve conducant et manibus Noffry nostri Camerariij Bude assignent’.

<sup>651</sup> On Noffry, see Andrea Faro, ‘Italian Merchants in the Kingdom of Hungary in the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period (xiii<sup>th</sup>-xvi<sup>th</sup> Centuries)’, in *Italy and Europe’s Eastern Border (1204-1669)*, ed. Iulian Mihai Damian, Mihailo St. Popović et. al. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012), p. 126.

<sup>652</sup> ZKO, i. nr 3873; printed in full, *Magyar Diplomacziái Emlékek az Anjou-korból*, ed. Gusztáv Wenzel, 3 vols (Budapest: Akademia könyvkiadó hivatalában, 1874-1876), iii. 761-3 (nr 478).

<sup>653</sup> Broquière, *Le Voyage d’Outremer*, p. 235.



is highly probable that these Flemish shipbuilders did build Sigismund a fleet of ships which saw service against the Ottoman Turks.<sup>654</sup> Perhaps after the fleet had been built his band of Flemish shipbuilders had disbanded, hence his request for shipbuilders from the Order who could help him maintain the fleet which they had left. Whatever the case, after Sigismund's recruitment of Flemish shipbuilders in 1419 we encounter mentions of naval combat and the use of vessels in operations against the Turks with increasing frequency. That is partly because our source material is richer for the 1420s and 1430s, but, nevertheless, it would appear that after the early 1420s Sigismund and his barons had access to a class of naval vessel which they did not have access to before.

It is clear that Sigismund's attempt to seize Golubac in 1428 involved a heavily armed fleet of ships as the sources for this battle are particularly rich, largely because one of the ship captains excited a fair amount of attention. Remarkably, one ship was commanded by Countess Cecilia Rozgonyi, husband of Stephen Rozgonyi, the count of Temes (1427-1438). Her audacity and fearlessness in fighting the Turks must have left a deep impression on Sigismund, as he commemorates her actions in a charter dated to 1435.<sup>655</sup>

In this charter, Sigismund notes how the fleet transported his forces across the Danube in order to allow them to besiege Golubac. That Cecilia was in command of *unam galeam...inter caeteras* ('one galley among others') implies that Sigismund had the capability to mobilise at least several ships to support his siege.<sup>656</sup> These must have been sizable ships too, as they were complete with cannon, ballistae and other siege engines (*pixidibus, seu bombardis, balistisque et aliis ad id conquisitis ingeniis*).<sup>657</sup> The ships in question had clearly been adapted to suit the required conditions, as the artillery in question was not for transport and deployment on the other side of the river, but had been mounted onto the vessel for firing. They were able to inflict considerable damage, breaking the walls and smashing some of the towers of Golubac castle.<sup>658</sup> The damage which the cannon on Sigismund's ships inflicted on the fortress may have been worsened by firing at close range. One charter notes how Cecilia's ship fired her cannon from within arrow shot of the castle, though even this did not scare her in the slightest.<sup>659</sup> Nevertheless, these were clearly naval vessels with strong

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<sup>654</sup> Veszprémy states that Sigismund's Flemish custom built 22-ship fleet was mobilised against the Turks, though does not produce any primary evidence to support this. See Veszprémy, 'Sigismund at Golubac', p. 294.

<sup>655</sup> DL 59120. *CDH*, x, vii. 628-30 (nr 295).

<sup>656</sup> *CDH*, x, vii. 629.

<sup>657</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 629.

<sup>658</sup> Veszprémy, 'Sigismund at Golubac', p. 296. *CDH*, x, vii. 629 (nr 295).

<sup>659</sup> *CDH*, x, vii. 629.

enough cannon to damage stone masonry and on a par with the vessels outfitted by Sigismund's contemporaries in England and France.<sup>660</sup>

It would appear that these ships were constantly mobilised as well, with Broquière noting how Sigismund permanently maintained 6 galleys and five galliots outside Belgrade for the defence of the fortress.<sup>661</sup> A document from 1434 notes how Sigismund employed a certain Jacob in Bratislava, *qui custodit naves domini Imperatoris*, who may be the same Jacob as Sigismund's master carpenter, a figure briefly explored in the next chapter.<sup>662</sup> Other references to ships on the Danube, such as in 1435, when 'the ships of the same royal majesty towards Belgrade' are mentioned in a letter between two barons, reinforce both how the Turkish threat necessitated the maintenance of a permanent naval force and how Sigismund now had the capability to do so.<sup>663</sup>

### 3.9 The naval expedition of 1437

A campaign waged against the Turks by a group of Hungarian barons in the summer of 1437 reinforces how Sigismund could use his status as Roman King to support his naval efforts against the Turks. This expedition led by Frank Tallóci, the captain of Belgrade and Ban of Severin, was a campaign aimed at burning the Ottoman fleet on the Great Morava (Velika Morava) in modern day Serbia.<sup>664</sup> The expedition comprised a fleet of ships, heavily armed with cannon, siege weaponry and with a force of infantry and cavalry.<sup>665</sup> The fleet set sail from Požeženo, on the river bank opposite Golubac, whence it sailed up the Great Morava. Here they burnt a fleet of Turkish ships (*naves et galee*), before continuing to sail upstream where they laid waste to Turkish possessions in Kruševač and burnt more Turkish vessels.<sup>666</sup> On the way back the force landed and risked battle with the Beg of Vidin, whom they defeated.<sup>667</sup> This campaign reinforces the importance of naval warfare on the Danube

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<sup>660</sup> Norris, *Early Gunpowder Artillery*, p. 65.

<sup>661</sup> Broquière, *Le Voyage d'Outremer*, p. 214.

<sup>662</sup> Jenő Szűcs, 'A középkori építészet munkaszervezetének kérdéséhez', *Budapest Régiségei*, 18 (1958), 313-363 (pp. 340, 2).

<sup>663</sup> *CDDSCZ*, viii. 563 (nr 388). 'navibus eiusdem regie maeistatis versus Albamnandor'.

<sup>664</sup> Our main source for this expedition is printed in Eusebius Fermendžin, 'Acta Bosnae potissimum ecclesiastica cum insertis editorum documentorum registis ab anno 925 usque ad annum 1752', *MSHSM*, 23, pp. 142-4. It was dated by the editor to 1434, but recent scholarship has revised its date to 1437. See Veszprémy, 'Sigismund at Golubac', p. 292. Important information is also contained in Matko Tallóci's donation charter of 1437, *CDPHRA*, pp. 118-121 (nr 184).

<sup>665</sup> For a summary of the expedition's course, see Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 127; Jefferson, *Holy Wars*, pp. 144-6.

<sup>666</sup> Fermendžin, 'Acta Bosnae', p 143.

<sup>667</sup> News of this battle reached Constantinople: *Concilium Basiliense*, ed. Johannes Haller (Basel: R. Reich, 1896), i. 383 (nr 46).

frontier. After all, their central aim was to burn Turkish ships and thus neutralise their presence on the Danube waters. One can perhaps emphasise the success of this campaign too much. After all, the taller, heavier European vessels generally triumphed against the Ottoman Turkish craft in naval battles throughout the later medieval period so the achievements of 1437 can be overplayed. Broquière notes in his report, for example, that the Hungarians operate galleys and galiots on the Danube while the Turks the smaller and lighter fusta.<sup>668</sup> Nevertheless, the campaign garnered mentions in a range of sources and news of the success was enthusiastically received in Constantinople and Basle.<sup>669</sup>

These significant successes were only made possible because of Sigismund's status as Roman King, as much of the naval support was drawn from Vienna. Sigismund therefore had taken advantage of his connections with Albrecht II of Austria, his subject as Roman King as well as his son-in-law, in order to source the ships he required for this ambitious expedition.

Our source for this is a letter of Sigismund to the town council of Sopron (Ödenburg), sent 29 March 1437.<sup>670</sup> In this letter Sigismund notes how he intends to source twelve ships from Vienna, *vulgo hochnawer dictas* ('called high ships in the vulgar tongue'), and that he requires money from Sopron in order to outfit them.<sup>671</sup> Sigismund continues that the ships will have arrived in Bratislava by 19 May, where George Rozgony, the Count of Bratislava, will supply three men to each ship to act as captains and navigators before they sail to Belgrade. Before departing, however, the ships were to take on board some important passengers. Sigismund notes that the ships will be transporting a *capitaneus Taboritarum cum suis Taboritis*.<sup>672</sup> Sigismund foresaw then the deployment of a company of Hussite Taborites against the Turks on the Danube frontier.<sup>673</sup> Sigismund was therefore drawing upon another of his kingdoms, the Kingdom of Bohemia, in order to support this campaign against the Turks. To be fair, Sigismund's letter to Sopron indicates only his intentions, but further evidence suggests that Sigismund converted these ambitious plans into reality. The chronicle of Bartošek z Drahonice (died. c. 1443) notes how the force assembled for the campaign in 1437 was composed of Hungarians, Czechs, Moravians and Poles, who together overcame

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<sup>668</sup> Broquière, *Le Voyage d'Outremer*, p. 214-5.

<sup>669</sup> Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 440.

<sup>670</sup> Palacký, *Urkundliche Beiträge*, ii. 475-6 (nr 985).

<sup>671</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 476.

<sup>672</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 476. Tresp, *Söldner aus Böhmen*, pp. 44-5.

<sup>673</sup> It has been speculated that the commander of the expedition was Jan Jiskra. See, Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 339-40; Martyn Rady, 'Jiskra, Hussitism and Slovakia', in *Confession and Nation in the Era of Reformation: Central Europe in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Eva Doležalova and Jaroslav Pánek (Prague: Institute of History, 2011), p. 60. Tresp thinks it unlikely, *Söldner aus Böhmen*, p. 45.

many Turks in battle. (*Uhrů, Čechů, Moravanů a Poláků... přemohla v bitvě mnoho Turků*).<sup>674</sup> News of this campaign spread to Constantinople, where a certain John of Ragusa noted in a letter of August 1437 how an army of Hungarians and Bohemians had triumphed against the Turks.<sup>675</sup>

Sigismund ruled numerous kingdoms and Jefferson has speculated, that if Sigismund's plan was 'to bring the forces of his various realms to bear against the Turks, it was a policy the elder monarch would never realise'.<sup>676</sup> Frank Tallóci's raid demonstrates that Sigismund did realise this plan, drawing together naval expertise from the Reich and men from Hungary and Bohemia together for a joint campaign against the Turks.<sup>677</sup> One could make the argument that it would have been quite easy for Hungarian lords to use ships from Vienna in their military campaigns against the Turks and that Sigismund's status as Roman King was not important. After all, Vienna enjoyed trading links with Hungarian towns such as Bratislava and Budapest and Viennese councillors did occasionally sell ships in Bratislava. In the summer of 1456, for example, a citizen of Bratislava wrote a rather amusing letter to the Burgermeister of Vienna. In this letter he stated that he had not sold the Burgermeister's ship as he had been asked to do, but that he had in fact lent it to a group of crusaders who were heading south to fight the Turks.<sup>678</sup> However, Sigismund's status as Roman King was important in making the expedition of 1437 possible. Ships were mobilised in the Duchy of Austria in 1440 for defence against the Turks, for example, but they did not cooperate with Hungarian forces further down the Danube. The raid on Kruševác and the wide geographical base of expertise upon which it drew was made possible only because of Sigismund, who united several kingdoms in his one person.

Before concluding, it is worth stressing that Sigismund, as the King of Hungary, was by no means unique in having to recruit outside of his subjects in order to gain access to specialised naval and riverine expertise. Contemporary to Sigismund Venetians employed Greek shipbuilders in their arsenal, who were able to build ships with different characteristics than which Venetian shipbuilders could offer.<sup>679</sup> Similarly, Philip the Good used a Portuguese

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<sup>674</sup> Bartošek z Drahonice, 'Kronika', in *Ze zpráv a kronik doby husitské* (Prague: Členská Knížnice, 1981), pp. 231-290 (pp. 278-9).

<sup>675</sup> *Concilium Basiliense*, i. 382-3 (nr 46).

<sup>676</sup> Jefferson, *Holy Wars*, p. 145.

<sup>677</sup> Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 439-40.

<sup>678</sup> WsuLa, HAUrk, nr 3674.

<sup>679</sup> Jonathan Harris, 'Bessarion on Shipbuilding: A Re-interpretation', *Byzantinoslavica*, 55 (1994), 292-303, esp. pp. 297-8.

shipbuilder, João Alfonso and his four servants, to help build his caravels.<sup>680</sup> It is not the fact that Sigismund is recruiting from outside of his Hungarian subjects that is important, but how he is recruiting. The examples in this chapter show very clearly how Sigismund was using the channels available to him as King of the Romans in order to gain access to naval and riverine expertise. As an added bonus, by using his status as their nominal overlord Sigismund was also able to gain access to much of this expertise for free.

Sigismund was able use his status as Roman King to draw upon naval and riverine expertise in various ways. Sigismund could demand from his subjects as Roman King that aid be sent to him, such as in the case of his relationship with Rusdorf and the Teutonic Order. In other cases, he personally recruited the experts which he needed. His diplomatic travels in the Reich and throughout western Christendom, themselves necessitated by his election as Roman King, allowed Sigismund to directly recruit the experts he needed in order to support his naval efforts against the Ottomans.

Sigismund's recruitment of naval expertise and conduct of warfare on the Danube has deeper implications. When seen in the context of this chapter, Sigismund's failure to secure naval aid from Venice seems far less significant than before, though it is true that in the past people had turned to Venice for ships.<sup>681</sup> His securing of the Roman Crown in 1410 gave him other means with which he could gain support in order to tighten his hold on the Danube and fight the Ottoman threat on the water. Sigismund's interest in securing naval expertise reinforces the importance which he attached to the naval aspect of his efforts against the Turks. Much has been written on Sigismund's development of a chain of fortresses which lined in some parts the very banks of the Danube and which buffered his southern frontier against Turkish attacks. However, the fact that this was accompanied by a systematic drive to defend the waters of the Danube has received little recognition from historians. In order to defend against the Ottoman threat Sigismund needed to combat the Turks on both water and land. This he implies himself when requesting military advisors from the Teutonic Order in 1427, as Sigismund stipulated that they should be knowledgeable in *krieg zuwasser und zulang*.<sup>682</sup> Of course, that is not to say that he did not value the building and maintenance of the chain of fortresses which guarded his southern frontier. As we will see in the next chapter,

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<sup>680</sup> Werner Schulz, *Andreaskreuz und Christusorden: Isabella von Portugal und der Burgundische Kreuzzug* (Freiburg: Historische Schriften der Universität Freiburg, 1976), pp. 134-42.

<sup>681</sup> Such as the leaders of the Fourth Crusade; see, Geoffrey of Villehardouin, *The Conquest of Constantinople*, trans Caroline Smith (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 8.

<sup>682</sup> OBA, 4759.

his construction and maintenance of his chain of fortresses was helped significantly by his status as Roman King.

#### **Chapter 4. Defending the Frontier: Stonemasons, Cannon Masters and Workmen**

This chapter will explore how Sigismund used his status as King of the Romans and, after 1433, Holy Roman Emperor, to secure the expertise he required in order to fortify and defend his Danube frontier against the Turks. It will draw attention to how the status and opportunities afforded to him after his election as Roman King in September 1410 were put to direct use in securing construction and gunpowder expertise in order to support his efforts against the Turks. In doing so, this chapter seeks to shed light on one of Sigismund's supposed 'failures', notably his inability to organise another crusade against the Turks after the debacle at Nicopolis in 1396.<sup>683</sup> Historians such as Veszprémy, DeVries and Kastritsis have automatically assumed that Sigismund wanted another crusade after 1396. This view is perhaps understandable, especially when seen alongside the orations which Sigismund made

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<sup>683</sup>For background, Veszprémy, 'Crusade of Nicopolis' pp. 223-30; Kelly DeVries, 'European Military Response', pp. 539-559.

at the Council of Constance for a *passagium generale*.<sup>684</sup> The impression that one gets from the archival material, however, is very different indeed. When Sigismund's reign as Roman King is viewed in its entirety, it can be seen that it was not a large crusading army which he prized most, but specialist help in areas where his kingdom of Hungary was lacking militarily.

Of course, that is not to say that Sigismund did not value the advantages of being able to field large forces and contemporary sources do emphasise how important the size of the force which Hungarian rulers could muster was. Even though it is probably fictional, Długosz's tale of Władysław I of Hungary's (1440-1444) meeting with Vlad Dracul in 1444 is amusing and instructive in equal measure.<sup>685</sup> Shortly before losing his head at the battle of Varna Władysław boasts about the great size of his army. Vlad retorts that the Ottoman Sultan, even when he is just going hunting, does so with more men than Władysław has currently raised (*qui cum maioribus potentiis venationes ferarum exercere consuevit*), and begs him not to attack the Turks.<sup>686</sup> While raising force on a significant scale was important for Sigismund, by the 1420s his banderial system was able to provide a sufficient number of men to satisfy basic requirements.<sup>687</sup> His most acute military needs, therefore, were felt not in the realm of numbers but in the realm of skills and it is here where he used his Roman Kingship to great effect. In the broader context, this chapter hopes to contribute to historiographical debates surrounding military development in later medieval and early modern Europe. Generally, when historians have studied military organisation in these contexts, they have focused on the scale with which rulers could extract resources from their subjects and on the size of the military force which they could maintain, an approach which has its problems, as Gunn admits.<sup>688</sup> This chapter will demonstrate how Sigismund was not so concerned with the scale of the resources which he could draw upon from his subjects in the Reich, but their type. It was specific experts he was interested in raising from his subjects in the Reich, not great numbers of men.

By far the best evidence for Sigismund's application of construction expertise from the Reich on the Danube frontier comes from the later 1420s and early 1430s during his dealings with the Teutonic Knights. The letter collection of the Order, the *Ordensbriefarchiv*,

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<sup>684</sup> See, for example, Caro, 'Aus der Kanzlei', p. 121.

<sup>685</sup> Długosz, *Historica Polonicae*, xii. 716.

<sup>686</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 716.

<sup>687</sup> For the banderial system, see Rady, *Land and Service*, pp. 144-57; Mályusz, p. 145.

<sup>688</sup> Tallet and Trim, 'Late-medieval and early-modern warfare', pp. 17-18; Gunn, 'War and the State', p. 53

is a particularly rich resource and it preserves letters in which Sigismund explicitly links his requests for building expertise from the Order with the struggle against the Ottomans on the Danube. However, this chapter, by drawing upon unpublished material from a range of archives throughout Austria and Germany, will attempt to offer a more complete picture of how Sigismund secured construction expertise throughout his reign. Historians, such as Ernő Marosi and Volker Liedke, have written on Sigismund's use of German and French construction expertise in Hungary.<sup>689</sup> Their contributions have only been of article length and have restricted themselves to only a few examples and they do not interpret these within the broader context of Sigismund's use of his status as Roman King to secure the aid he required in order to combat the Turkish threat. Moreover, they have not made use of the rich archival resources available in Vienna, Frankfurt am Main and Berlin for the study of this theme. As a result this chapter will survey Sigismund's recruitment and use of construction and building expertise and underline how his status as Roman King was a vital pre-requisite in gaining access to much of this expertise.

After setting the context, this chapter will begin with looking at Sigismund's recruitment activities while travelling through France and Germany in the 1410s. After a brief discussion of some pertinent issues related to the archival material and the terms used in the documents, Sigismund's relationship with the Teutonic Order will be explored. The scope will then be expanded by briefly examining queen Barbara's desire for construction expertise.<sup>690</sup> This will require an examination of her relationship with the Teutonic Knights and the Burgermeister of Vienna during the 1420s. After some historiographic discussion archival finds in the Archivio Segreto Vaticano will then be used to offer some brief comments on Sigismund's use of Bohemian construction experts before concluding.

#### **4.1 Sigismund's recruitment in the France and Germany during the 1410s**

While Sigismund was officially crowned as King of the Romans in Aachen in November 1414, he had in fact been the Roman King elect since September 1410. Sigismund wasted little time in putting his newfound status to use for his personal advantage and was

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<sup>689</sup> Ernő Marosi, 'König Sigismund von Ungarn und Avignon', in *Orient und Okzident im Spiegel der Kunst. Festschrift Heinrich Gerhard Franz zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Günter Brucher et al. (Graz: Akademische Druck, 1986), pp. 229-49; Volker Liedke, 'Meister Dietrich, König Sigismunds Baumeister und Meister Rapolt von Köln', *Ars Bavarica*, 3 (1975), 18-20.

<sup>690</sup> For introductions to the figure of Barbara Cilli, see Amalie Föbel, 'Die Korrespondenz der Königin Barbara im Ungarischen Staatsarchiv zu Budapest', in *Kaiser Sigismund (1368-1437): Zur Herrschaftspraxis eines europäischen Monarchen*, ed. Karel Hruza and Alexandra Kaar (Vienna: Böhlau, 2012), pp. 245-54; idem, 'Barbara von Cilli: ihre frühen jahre als Gemahlin Sigismunds und ungarische Königin', in *Sigismund von Luxemburg: Ein Kaiser in Europa*, ed. Michel Pauly et al. (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2006), pp. 95-112.



enjoying many of the privileges which came with being Roman King even before his coronation. In July 1414, for example, and while on the way to Aachen, Sigismund enjoyed the hospitality of Strasbourg, an imperial free city that held their privileges directly from their Roman King. His entry certainly caused quite a stir. The town chronicle notes how Sigismund danced through the streets half-naked, with over 100 young ladies in tow, who, upon arriving at the Rathaus sat the 49 year old king down and provided him with a pair of shoes, jewellery and beer all at the city's expense.<sup>691</sup> Judging from these sort of events it would appear that the soon to be Roman King did not have his mind on securing aid for the fight against the Turks at all. Nevertheless, Sigismund did in fact make good use of his foreign travels between 1412 and 1419 and his status as Roman King in order to secure building expertise for Hungary.

At first sight Sigismund's activities in Paris in the summer of 1416 would not support the impression of him as a king, hungry for knowledge and expertise. Sigismund behaved appallingly in Paris and his antics, usually focused around dancing, ladies and alcohol, have amused many modern commentators.<sup>692</sup> Many of his antics, one of which involved him sitting in the King's seat at the Parisian Parlement and disrupting the proceedings with various spoken interjections made in Latin met with controversy. Jean de Montreuil, a confidante of the French king, notes in a letter to Charles VI (1380-1422) how Sigismund behaved 'as if he had been born with horns' and the general 'amazement with his folly' that was present in Parisian circles.<sup>693</sup> Perhaps worse was his behaviour at a special ball held in his honour, to which 120 of the most noble ladies in Paris had been invited.<sup>694</sup> There the king managed to offend more people, where 'well fed and drunk, he walked before the tables in the manner of an actor', dancing and singing along to the songs which he recognised.<sup>695</sup> It was a quite a spectacle and Montreuil concludes that 'he supposedly delayed the guests from eating or at least forced them to divert their eyes because of the shame.'<sup>696</sup>

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<sup>691</sup> Königshoven, *Chronicke*, p. 145.

<sup>692</sup> James Wylie and William Waugh, *The Reign of Henry V*, 3 vols (Cambridge: CUP, 1914-1929), ii. 4-6.

<sup>693</sup> This letter was not printed in the most recent edition of de Montreuil's work, Johannes de Monsterolio, *Epistolario*, ed. Ezio Ornatò (Turin: Giappichelli, 1963), p. 282. The full text of the letter is available in Johannes de Monsterolio, 'Epistolae selectae Johannes de Monsterolio, Praepositi insulensis', pp. 1443-1452, in Edmond Martene, *Veterum Scriptorum et Monumentorum Historicorum, Dogmaticorum, Moraliū, Amplissima Collectio* (Paris: Montalant, 1724), ii. For the quoted references see, p. 1448.

<sup>694</sup> Martene, *Collectio*, p. 1448.

<sup>695</sup> Ibid, p. 1448. 'ipse satur, et jam potus, ante mensas incedebat, histrionis more'.

<sup>696</sup> Ibid., p. 1448. 'ut convivas remoratetur ab esu: immo divertere oculos cogebat prae pudore'.

The Monk of Saint-Denis notes Sigismund's poor behaviour at the Parlement and the Ball, but then reveals a very different area of activity which Sigismund engaged himself in. The chronicle reveals that Sigismund did not just spend his time singing, drinking and dancing because while in Paris 'he often seriously spoke about the notable things which he saw in the kingdom'.<sup>697</sup> The chronicle states that Sigismund, 'supposedly judging and preferring the masters of mechanical works (*artifices mechanicorum operum*) over all others.., thought to assemble from Paris and elsewhere 300 of the more skilled, [which] he sent to Hungary, so that they could instruct his compatriots in the aforesaid works.'<sup>698</sup>

A letter authored by Stephen Rozgonyi, a Hungarian baron following Sigismund in his retinue, expands upon Sigismund's recruitment activities while in Paris.<sup>699</sup> This letter, dated to 14 March 1416, notes the baron's own experiences in the city, stating at one point that so 'much beautiful merchandise and work is being discovered in this city'.<sup>700</sup> Sigismund was struck by what he saw too and Rozgonyi, mirroring the account in the Chronicle, records 'that our lord king is sending across several masters to Buda, goldsmiths and other masters', as well as a number of 'large dogs'.<sup>701</sup> It would appear that once in Hungary this mixed band of specialists and large dogs would liaise with Noffry (*Onofrium*), the chamberlain of Buda, who as we have seen in previous chapters was responsible for equipping other specialists which Sigismund had recruited in the west.<sup>702</sup>

Sigismund's intentions, so clearly expressed by the Monk of Saint-Denis and in the letter of Rozgonyi, were at least partly converted into reality. Sigismund presumably wanted the dogs for hunting but whether they made it to Hungary can only be guessed at, but it is clear that many of the French specialists did get there.<sup>703</sup> The account of Bertrandon de la

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<sup>697</sup> Monk of Saint-Denis, *Chronique du religieux de Saint-Denys contenant le règne de Charles VI., de 1380 à 1422*, ed. Louis Bellaguet, 6 vols (Paris: De l'imprimerie de crapelet, 1839-52), v. 746. 'Sepius eciam seriose recitans que in regno commendabiliora viderat'.

<sup>698</sup> Ibid., p. 746. 'artifices mechanicorum operum iudicaret cunctis aliis preferendos..., Parisius et alibi trecentos ex pericioribus congregari statuit, et in hungariam misit, ut in predictis operibus compatriotas suos redderent doctiores'

<sup>699</sup> Antal Áldássy, 'Rozgonyi István levele Párisból 1416 Márczius 14-Ről', *Történelmi Tár*, 25 (1901), 575-7. For another letter authored by Rozgonyi and dated to 21 October, 1415, see Idem, 'Rozgonyi István levele Zsigmond király Perpignoni tartozkodásáról', *Történelmi Tár*, 23 (1900), 449-52.

<sup>700</sup> Áldássy, 'levele Párisból 1416', p 576. 'multa pulcra negocia mercimonia reperiuntur in civitate ista'.

<sup>701</sup> Ibid., p. 576. 'quod plures magistros transmittit dominus noster rex ad Budam aurifabros et ceteros magistros'.

<sup>702</sup> Ibid., p. 576. On dogs and their uses in late medieval courts in general, see Simon Teuscher, 'Hunde am Fürstenhof: Köter und "edle wind" als Medien sozialer Beziehungen vom 14. bis 16. Jahrhundert', *Historische Anthropologie*, 6 (1998), 347-69.

<sup>703</sup> Sigismund had received dogs from Witold in 1412, as well as team of falcons to assist them. Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 15

Broquière reveals that many of these specialists were recruited precisely to build a fortress.<sup>704</sup> While passing through Buda in 1433, Broquière records that Sigismund had hired six or eight families from France with the express purpose of building a tower capable of extending a chain across the river to the south of his palace.<sup>705</sup> That these French masons had specific skills which Sigismund did not have access to in Hungary is implied by Broquière's admission that the tower remained incomplete because the masons had died and that there was no one else capable of finishing their specialised work.<sup>706</sup>

Paris was not the only place in which Sigismund was on the lookout for skills to send back to Hungary and the familiar themes of dancing, fraternising with ladies and securing building expertise is visible during Sigismund's sojourn in Avignon. Sigismund stayed in Avignon between 22 December 1415 and 13 January 1416 and was fascinated by what he saw there.<sup>707</sup> As well as being very taken with the ladies of Avignon, whom he collectively gave a diamond ring at a dance on 9 January, Sigismund was most struck by the Papal palace.<sup>708</sup> This should come as no surprise as John XXIII had invested a considerable amount of money into the repair of the palace.<sup>709</sup> It had sustained heavy damage from Catalan attacks and the payments for repairs, which survive in the *Registra Avenionensa*, reveal that John XXIII had teams of men working on the palace's walls, galleries, towers, chambers and arches.<sup>710</sup> The palace was clearly striking and this helps explain the 'request of the lord king of the Romans', entered into the *Registra Avenionensa*, for one painter and a stonemason to take detailed drawings of the palace, including its 'towers and walls and ceilings and the height, thickness and extent of other buildings'.<sup>711</sup> That this information was to be recorded and a copy (*exemplar*) dispatched to Sigismund would suggest that Sigismund wanted to replicate what he saw in Avignon in his own palaces in Hungary or elsewhere.<sup>712</sup>

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<sup>704</sup> Veszprémy, 'Military Science', pp. 37-8.

<sup>705</sup> Broquière, *Le Voyage d'Outremer*, p. 235.

<sup>706</sup> For further discussion, see Marosi, 'Sigismund von Ungarn und Avignon', p. 238.

<sup>707</sup> Marosi, 'Sigismund von Ungarn und Avignon', pp. 229-31. Exploring Avignon was made even more comfortable for Sigismund as the townsmen supposedly carpeted the streets for his comfort. See Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 64.

<sup>708</sup> Marosi, 'Sigismund von Ungarn und Avignon', p. 230.

<sup>709</sup> Claude Faure, 'Les réparations du palais pontifical d'Avignon au temps de Jean XXIII (1413-1415)', *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire*, 28 (1908), 185-206.

<sup>710</sup> Faure, 'Les réparations', pp. 191-4.

<sup>711</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 197-8. 'peiticionem domini regis Romanorum'. 'turriumque et murorum ac tectorum et aliorum edificiorum ipsius altitudinem, grossitudinem et latitudinem'.

<sup>712</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 197-8. See Marosi, 'Sigismund von Ungarn und Avignon', pp. 233-41

A similar request from Sigismund exists for Siena.<sup>713</sup> In May 1414 the city councillors received a letter from the King of the Romans, who had clearly been impressed by the Ospedale Santa Maria della Scala during his sojourn in the city a few months earlier. Citing its beauty and its utility for the poor and pilgrims, Sigismund requested its dormitories, monasteries and chambers be depicted by painters and for their drawings to be sent to him.<sup>714</sup> Sigismund's recruiting activities and desire for technical information indicate that there was another aspect to his travels in the west aside from his diplomatic negotiations and manoeuvres. While in the west Sigismund demonstrated an intense interest in technology and in the buildings and structures which he encountered and a desire to secure the means with which he could reproduce these in Hungary.

Sigismund was given the opportunity to recruit the French specialists in Paris and to collect drawings of notable structures because he was travelling through the kingdom in the attempt to solve political disputes that could hinder the success of the Council of Constance, which he had convened as King of the Romans. It was his new status as the secular head of Christendom and the resultant expansion of his political horizons which brought him into contact with the new technologies and skills which he was so struck by in Avignon and Paris. Málýusz, when assessing Sigismund's political manoeuvres in the west, has labelled them as without any relevance to Hungary. Leaving the question of how relevant his political activities were to Hungary aside, Sigismund's actual diplomatic travels were directly relevant to Hungary for he used them as opportunities to recruit expertise which could be used to strengthen Hungary. This theme will now be expanded upon in greater detail with the aid of the rich archival resources which survive in the Haus, Hof und Staatsarchiv, Vienna.

#### **4.2 Sigismund and his recruitment of building specialists at Augsburg in October 1418**

Alongside Sigismund's rather opportunistic and spontaneous acts of recruitment in Paris and requests for technical information in Avignon and Siena lies a far more concerted effort to recruit building and construction expertise. The best case study for this is undoubtedly Sigismund's holding of court in Augsburg in October 1418. This case study demonstrates how Sigismund was drawing upon his status as the wearer of the Roman Crown precisely to raise resources in his German lands for use in Hungary. Sigismund's 14 days

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<sup>713</sup> Marosi, 'Sigismund von Ungarn und Avignon', pp. 238-9.

<sup>714</sup> Giovanni Gaye, *Carteggio inedito d'artisti dei secoli XIV. XV. XVI.* (Florence: Giuseppe Molini, 1839), 1, p. 92. For Sigismund's itinerary, see Hoensch, *Itinerar*, p. 93.

spent in Augsburg was a most German affair. Holding court as the King of the Romans in an imperial free city, Sigismund was joyously received by the people of Augsburg. As the town chronicle makes clear, the civic authorities held parties and dances in honour of their king, placed the Rindermarkt and the Mayor's house at his disposal and gave him numerous gifts.<sup>715</sup> Dancing and fraternising with the city's ladies were, as usual, a major factor in Sigismund's itinerary and the town chronicler records at least one dance, during which the king in his customary style gave a ring to the city's maidens.<sup>716</sup> A perusal of the *Reichsregisterbücher*, however, reveals that there was another important element to Sigismund's time in Augsburg as during his stay the Roman King embarked on a conspicuous recruitment drive.

The indentures and agreements produced during this recruitment spree survive only because they were copied by scribes in his imperial chancery and composed into large registers in book form. These large registers, now known as the *Reichsregisterbücher* and held in the Haus, Hof, und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, record the correspondence, debts and transactions of the King of the Romans or the Holy Roman Emperor. The first substantial fragment to survive comes from 1348, during the reign of Sigismund's father, Charles IV, but by Sigismund's time much more survives and the *Reichsregisterbücher*, from E to L, appear to offer full coverage for the years 1411-1437.<sup>717</sup> As Gerhard Seeliger notes in his study, however, the *Reichsregisterbücher* formed only a small part of the total administrative output of Sigismund's chancery and the surviving material should not be regarded as comprehensively covering the king's administrative activity.<sup>718</sup> Furthermore, many aspects of their composition, such as the manner in which the documents were registered, the dates of the entries and the ways in which they were used and organised by contemporaries remain unclear. It would be otiose to discuss these problems in great detail, for Seeliger in his 141 page article discusses many of these at length. Whatever the case, *Reichsregisterbuch G* has preserved a range of material which enables a glimpse into Sigismund's recruitment in October 1418. In terms of sheer quantity, Sigismund's recruitment of stonemasons and carpenters easily outnumber his other cases of recruitment and it would appear that he was most concerned with gaining building and construction expertise while in Augsburg.

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<sup>715</sup> *Die Chroniken der Deutschen Städte von 14. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1892), 22, p. 63.

<sup>716</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>717</sup> Gerhard Seeliger, 'Die Registerführung am deutschen Königshof bis 1493', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung: Ergänzungsband*, 4 (1893), 223-364. For a discussion of the bands now labelled E-M, which cover the years 1411-39, see pp. 263-76.

<sup>718</sup> Gerhard Seeliger, 'Die Registerführung', pp. 275-6.

The entry in the register for Master George of Tübingen (*Görgen von Tubin*), dated to 6 October, reveals without a doubt that he was destined to serve in Hungary and draws attention to the numbers of builders which Sigismund desired.<sup>719</sup> The entry states that George ‘shall bring twenty appropriate servants to Hungary, also stonemasons, who should work there all year’.<sup>720</sup> This entry is repeated on the next folio for a certain Stefan Holl of Stuttgart (*Steffano Holl de Stuckgarten*), also a stonemason, who was to serve Sigismund with twenty servants in the same capacity as George of Tübingen.<sup>721</sup> Sigismund did not just stop at recruiting 42 stonemasons as there is a particularly long entry for the recruitment of a group of carpenters. The brothers Erharten und Lienharten, identifying themselves as carpenters (*czymmerluten*), were to work for Sigismund for one year.<sup>722</sup> For their year of service they were also to employ six servants (*sechste redlicher zymer gesellen*) who were also to work and to carpenter (*arbeyten und czymmern*) alongside them.

In the case of Erhart and Lienharten von Vyngerlin there is no explicit mention to indicate that they were to serve in Hungary. However, an entry in the previous register noting a payment to *her Ljjenhart von Jungingen* would imply that at least one of the brothers had been in the service of Sigismund previously.<sup>723</sup> There exists no entry of an indenture for Lienharten until 1418 even though he was clearly drawing money from the ‘yearly pay of the King’s chamber’ as early as 1414.<sup>724</sup> This would support Seeliger’s assertion that the *Reichsregisterbücher* only represent a small amount of the paperwork produced by Sigismund’s imperial chancery for Lienhart’s earlier contracts were never copied. This entry would also imply that Lienharten had been in Sigismund’s service for some time and that he was one of the many who made up Sigismund’s travelling retinue of servants.

Sigismund also recruited cannon masters during his stay in Augsburg for service in Hungary.<sup>725</sup> *Meister Adam den Buchsenmeister* was recruited on 6 October, and Sigismund stipulated that he was to serve him for an entire year with two servants. During his period of service he was to receive 200 Hungarian gulden and 100 in Rhenish, and was to both work on

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<sup>719</sup> HHSTA, RRB, G, 23. Altmann, nr 3623.

<sup>720</sup> HHSTA, RRB, G, 23. ‘zweintzig redlicher gesellen ouch steinmetzen in ungerm bringen sol und da arbeiten sollen alle jar’.

<sup>721</sup> HHSTA, RRB, G 24. Altmann, nr 3624.

<sup>722</sup> HHSTA, RRB, G, 24. Altmann, nr 3635

<sup>723</sup> HHSTA, RRB, E, 161. This supports the speculation of Seeliger, who maintains that the *Reichsregisterbücher* only preserve a fraction of the material which actually passed through the Imperial chancery on a day to day basis. See, Seeliger, ‘Die Registerführung’, pp. 274-5

<sup>724</sup> HHSTA, RRB, E, 162. ‘jarsold uß des kunigs camer’.

<sup>725</sup> For more detail, see Whelan, ‘Catastrophe or Consolidation’, pp. 221-2.

founding pieces of artillery and on building dwellings (*uf unser czug und behusunge gyessen und arbeyten*).<sup>726</sup> On the same day Martin, a cannon master from Stuttgart (*Martino buchsenmeister de Stúkgarten*) was recruited under the same terms.<sup>727</sup> On 25 October Sigismund recruited *Otto buchsenmeister von Munchen* with his two journeymen for a year, though this contract is more vague than the others, and comments only that he was to produce and work upon *hantwerkes*. For his labour he was to receive 300 Hungarian gulden, the first half of which he would receive upon his arrival in Hungary (*wann er in Ungern komet*).<sup>728</sup>

One gets the impression that there were many more *Buchsenmeisters* of German origin in Sigismund's service for whom no recruitment document survives in the *Reichsregisterbücher*. Master Werner, a cannon master of Strasbourg is recorded as being in Sigismund's service in July 1418 only because the king sent Strasbourg a letter informing them of this.<sup>729</sup> Johannes Gansar de Argentina from Strasbourg, for whom no recruitment document survives, seems to have enjoyed a particularly long, successful career as a gunner in Sigismund's service. He is first mentioned in a royal charter of 1421, where he receives certain lands in a place called Cothze.<sup>730</sup> More detail can be gleaned from the original document and it would appear that this land grant was particularly generous, as he was also given the 'rights to the wool from Cothze', 'cultivated fields' and all of the rights that had belonged to the previous owner, a certain John Reno.<sup>731</sup> These rights were also to go 'to his heirs and successors', permanently establishing him and his family in Hungary and allowing them to continue as royal servants.<sup>732</sup> The reason for this generosity is clear, as Johannes is yet another German skilled in gunpowder weaponry, with Sigismund describing him as a 'distinguished...cannon master of our majesty'.<sup>733</sup> Sigismund's land grant succeeded in keeping Johannes and his prized skills as a gunner in his service, as he appears nine years later in another document, only this time he is recorded as the 'master of royal guns'.<sup>734</sup>

With the exception of Johannes Gansar, these cases of recruitment have been known since the 1890s when they were first calendared in Altmann's *Regesta Imperii*. As we have

<sup>726</sup> HHSTA, RRB, G, 23. Altmann, nr 3621; *ZKO*, vi. nr 2396.

<sup>727</sup> HHSTA, RRB, G, 23. Altmann, nr 3622; *ZKO*, vi. nr 2397.

<sup>728</sup> HHSTA, RRB, g, 27. Altmann, nr 3671; *ZKO*, vi. nr 2452.

<sup>729</sup> Altmann, nr 3322.

<sup>730</sup> DL 11089. *ZKO*, viii. nr 552. '...quendam fundum curie in opido nostro Cothze'.

<sup>731</sup> DL 11089. '...alias medio laneum extra ipsius Opidum..cum omnibus fuit dedicatibus...et lignam et arabilibus cultis'.

<sup>732</sup> *Ibid.*, '...et suos heredes ac successores possidens tenes...et habere salvo iure alieno'.

<sup>733</sup> *Ibid.*, '...magister Pixidum nostrae maiestatis'.

<sup>734</sup> Quoted in Veszprémy, 'A Katonai Reformer?', p. 663. 'Királyi ágyúk mesteréről'. See also, Veszprémy, 'Military Science', p. 41.

seen, an examination of the original *Reichsregisterbücher* has revealed more important details regarding Sigismund's recruitment and his intention to bring them to Hungary. However, it is worth reflecting on the nature of the source material in question here, as these instances of recruitment have been mentioned by historians before but with little or no analysis of the source material.<sup>735</sup> As has already been stated, these indentures and cases of recruitment survive only because they were copied by scribes in the Imperial chancery. In other words, Sigismund recruited these men into his service in his capacity as the King of the Romans. Yet many of these instances of recruitment were meant to serve in Sigismund's other kingdom, his kingdom of Hungary. That these cases of recruitment for service in Hungary were recorded as official imperial business demonstrates without a doubt how Sigismund was using his second kingdom and the privileges and institutions that came with it in order to support his first kingdom.

There is some evidence to suggest that Sigismund utilised not just the crown of the Romans but his status as King of Bohemia, as the holder of the Crown of St Wenceslaus, in order to secure building and construction expertise for his Hungarian realm. A charter issued by Sigismund in 1430 to 'our distinguished Jacob of Bohemia, master of our carpenters', helps demonstrate this.<sup>736</sup> The charter makes it clear that Jacob was being rewarded with a house and an income for his specific skills, which the document details as, 'the arrangement of the work of our court and of our mechanical art..., [namely] the fastening of wood, composed in an amazing manner, in several of our forts and machines, from many heaps of wood and also for the conclusion of the erection of clear and pleasing works in the same place'.<sup>737</sup> Jacob's place of residence was Bratislava but his supplication to the Pope, which will be discussed below, would suggest that he most likely travelled with Sigismund as one of the many servants that followed him. More biographical information about Jacob can be gleaned from documents in the Vatican archive. Jacob was clearly an important member of Sigismund's retinue for he accompanied the king on his journey to Rome in 1433 and while there he petitioned the Pope for spiritual privileges.<sup>738</sup> In his supplication, Jacob identifies himself as 'Jacob of Brno of the diocese of Olomouc, the master of carpenters of the lord

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<sup>735</sup> See, for example, Veszprémy, 'Military Science', pp. 41-2.

<sup>736</sup> *CDH*, x, viii. 623 (nr 313). 'nostri circumspecti Jacobi Bohemi Magistri Carpentariorum nostrorum...'

<sup>737</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 623. 'in directione laborum aularum nostrarum mechanicae artis ... ex diversis lignaminum compaginibus mire compositorum, verum etiam in nonnullorum fortalitorum nostrorum et Machinarum e multis lignorum congeriebus artificiosa erectione et sudorosorum eorundem operum placibili consumatione'.

<sup>738</sup> *ASVat*, RS, 287, f. 21r-v. See also, Kovács, 'Sigismund's Coronation in Rome', pp. 143, 157.



emperor'.<sup>739</sup> His appellation, 'of Brno', identifies him as coming from Moravia, a constituent part of the Bohemian crown lands which remained largely loyal to Sigismund and his son in law, Albert of Austria, during the Hussite religious wars.

### 4.3 Sigismund's use of expertise sourced from his lands in the Reich in context

The argument could be made that the recruitment of German builders and workmen for service in other kingdoms is nothing new and that Sigismund is merely yet another example of a ruler putting expertise of German origin to use in his lands. Archival research in The National Archives, London, for example, has revealed that King Henry VI of England (1422-1461, 1470-1471), a contemporary of Sigismund, used German builders on his estates.<sup>740</sup> Henry VI's use of German building expertise was mirrored by his subjects too, with German builders and architects at work in Norwich and East Anglia.<sup>741</sup> As research by Jens Röhrkasten has showed, Germans specialists can be found in many walks of English commerce and trade where a specialised skill was required.<sup>742</sup>

The same could be said for Sigismund's recruitment of cannon masters. Sigismund was by no means unique in recruiting cannon masters of German origin, even within the Kingdom of Hungary. The account book of Bratislava, which begins in 1414 and records the city's armaments and acquisitions, is particularly illuminating. Bratislava's first artillery sergeant appears in 1414,<sup>743</sup> and was known as 'Henry the cannon master', but his entry into the manuscript as *Heinrich der Puchsenmayster*, which, in German and using German technical vocabulary, implies a significant German influence.<sup>744</sup> In fact, the German influence on the production of gunpowder weaponry in general cannon was dominated by Germans. The Byzantine historian Kritovoulos (c. 1410-1470) specifically notes in his work how

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<sup>739</sup> ASVat, RS, f. 21r-v. 'Jacobus de Brunna Oloniensis diocesis magister carpentariorum domini Imperatoris'.

<sup>740</sup> For a payment to a group of 'artifices de partibus alimanus' in 1438/9, see The National Archives, E 101/622/26

<sup>741</sup> H. D. Barnes et al., 'Building Accounts of Caister Castle A.D. 1432-35', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 30 (1952), 178-88 (p. 180).

<sup>742</sup> Jens Röhrkasten, 'Handwerker aus Zentraleuropa im spätmittelalterlichen England', in *Handwerk in Europa: Vom Spätmittelalter bis zur frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Knut Schulz (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1999), pp. 81-107 (esp. pp. 90-95).

<sup>743</sup> Veszprémy, 'Military Science', p. 42.

<sup>744</sup> Zuzana Nemcová, 'Počiatky Puškárskeho Remesla v Bratislave', *Vojenská História*, 2 (1998), 87-92 (p. 87). '...120 kusov palných zbraní'. My thanks to Martin Fotta for his help with reading the Slovak.

cannon were believed to be an invention of the Germans.<sup>745</sup> Whether *Heinrich der Puchsenmayster* came from Germany or not is debatable, but his appearance in court because of issues surrounding a loan that he sent back to his home implies that his place of origin was not Bratislava.<sup>746</sup> Holl has stated that the cannon masters in Hungarian towns, such as Bratislava and Sopron, were usually recruited from nearby towns or were drawn from local smiths or craftsmen.<sup>747</sup> This is unlikely for Bratislava at least, as Henry was clearly not a local and the surnames of his successors indicate that they were foreigners also. His immediate successor was, with a name like *Hanns von Brünn* (Brünn being the German for Brno), probably from Moravia and the next master with a geographical place as a surname, *Hanns von den Krems*, master between 1440-1444 was likely from Austria (from modern day Krems an der Donau).<sup>748</sup> Most of the masters with only forenames or with non-geographical surnames before 1440 would seem to be German as well, with names such as *Hanns Schedrich*, *Albrecht Geltler*, *Frantz* and yet another *Hanns*, all sounding distinctly Germanic.<sup>749</sup> *Wenzla*, active in the city as a cannon master between 1439-1442, is likely a Czech.

Nevertheless, it is the manner in which Sigismund got the specialists mentioned above which is important. German specialists can be found in any corner of Europe during the fifteenth century but Sigismund had secured many of his recruits by using his status as Roman King. This theme can be strengthened further when we examine Sigismund's relationship with the Teutonic Knights, an aspect of his reign which we will examine later in this chapter.

It is worth noting that Sigismund's recruitment of gunpowder specialists while in the Reich appears to be one of great success. There is no concrete evidence that the artillerymen which Sigismund recruited at Augsburg were used against the Turks, but the king's deployment of cannon against the Turks on his southern frontier during the 1420s certainly leaves a great impression on his contemporaries.<sup>750</sup> It would be reasonable to assume that his recruitment in the Reich played a role in this. Sigismund's wish to attack the Turks with

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<sup>745</sup> Michael Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, trans. Charles Riggs (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), pp. 45-6.

<sup>746</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>747</sup> I. Holl, 'Feuerwaffen und Stadtmauern: Angaben zur Entwicklung der Wehrarchitektur des 15. Jahrhunderts', *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungarica*, 33 (1981), 201-43 (p. 203).

<sup>748</sup> Nemcová, 'Puškárského', p. 92.

<sup>749</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>750</sup> For Sigismund's use of gunpowder weaponry between 1410 and 1413, see Veszprémy, 'Military Science', pp. 40-5.

80,000 horse and many cannon (*achtzigtuseht pfert und vil búhssen*), recorded by an inhabitant of Strasbourg in January 1420, may have been wishful thinking as for the large army of horsemen, but he certainly had access to cannon.<sup>751</sup> The account of Sigismund's military preparations in 1428 by Walter von Schwarzenberg, noted in particular the numerous cannon (*filie geschücze*) which the king had at his disposal.<sup>752</sup> Sigismund's use of artillery clearly had an impact on their intended targets. Aşıkpaşazade records the Sinan of Vidin complaining in the 1420s that he had had enough of hearing the guns of his enemy.<sup>753</sup> Their horrible noise had, apparently, not only petrified his horses but had also turned his ears most deaf.<sup>754</sup>

Other sources would suggest that the entries contained in the *Reichsregisterbücher* were only a small part of a much larger recruitment drive and a recruitment drive which Sigismund had begun from the very beginning of his travels in the west. The case in 1414 of Dietrich, a stonemason in Sigismund's service, would support the idea that Sigismund's *Reichsregisterbücher* do not comprehensively record Sigismund's recruitment and that they should be regarded as more selective records of his recruiting activities.<sup>755</sup> In December 1414 a certain Dietrich was staying in the town of Regensburg and, for some unknown reason, was arrested and placed in prison for a period of time.<sup>756</sup> Upon his release Dietrich witnessed and sealed a document which confirmed that he felt no ill will towards the town council. In this document Dietrich identifies himself as 'master Dietrich, stonemason of my noble lord the Roman King and King of Hungary, most serene prince'. Dietrich was not travelling alone and, judging from the list of his 'dear friends and servants' contained in the document, was actually in charge of an entire construction team.<sup>757</sup> Aside from the stonemasons Heinreichen Pair von Swann and Hannsen Vogler von Leibczk, whose surnames make identifying their place of origin difficult, the rest of his party were drawn entirely from Cologne, Herrenberg (in Swabia) and Geisenham (in Hessen). Overall and including himself, Dietrich's party consisted of six stonemasons, two carpenters and one leadworker (*pleidekcher*).<sup>758</sup>

Their locations of origin would suggest that Sigismund recruited them while he travelled through Swabia and Hessen and then along the Rhine in the summer and autumn of

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<sup>751</sup> *RTA*, vii. 408 (nr 280); *ZKO*, vii. nr 1286.

<sup>752</sup> *IFS*, FaM, RS, 1, 3109.

<sup>753</sup> Aşıkpaşazade, *Vom Hirtenzelt zur Hohen Pforte*, pp. 166-7.

<sup>754</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

<sup>755</sup> Seeliger, 'Die Registerführung', pp. 274-5.

<sup>756</sup> Liedke, 'Meister Dietrich', p. 19.

<sup>757</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20. 'Ich maister Dietrich dez aller durchluchtigsten fursten meins genedigen herren dez romischen künig und kunig czu Ungarn ec. Staynmetcz'.

<sup>758</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

1414 as he was heading to Aachen.<sup>759</sup> Whatever the case, Dietrich's letter makes it clear that they were in Sigismund's service and while not explicitly stated, they were most probably journeying to Hungary. This is implied by their area of origin, the Rhineland, and Dietrich's site of arrest, Regensburg. A common route to Hungary through Germany was to travel up the Rhine and then to head overland in an eastward direction until reaching Bavaria, where Dietrich was actually imprisoned. Then one could travel south until they reached the Danube, at which point they could board a ship that could take them directly to cities such as Bratislava, Buda and Belgrade.<sup>760</sup>

Sigismund's recruitment drive while travelling through the Reich and France has certainly left its mark in a variety of sources. However the context in which many of these building specialists were recruited would suggest that they were not necessarily to be put to military uses. As the entries in the *Reichsregisterbücher* make clear, Sigismund recruited stone masons and carpenters at the same time as fountain makers and other specialists and it is likely that many would have been put to work to improving and renovating his palaces, though it is not until the later 1420s that Sigismund's palace building, particularly in Bratislava, began in earnest.<sup>761</sup> However, it must be emphasized that Sigismund's southern frontier had been under pressure since the beginning of his reign and became particularly acute after 1415, when after roughly a decade of civil war, a resurgent Ottoman power in the Balkans began to go on the offensive once again.<sup>762</sup> While at the Council of Constance Sigismund had been receiving bad news from his barons in Hungary throughout 1414 and early 1415 and there were even rumours that Sigismund was considering abandoning the council and heading home to support his beleaguered kingdom.<sup>763</sup> Sigismund clearly had the defence of his lands in the east on his mind throughout his western travels. In fact, Sigismund began building new fortresses on the Danube the very year he returned to Hungary, The fortresses of Drencova, Stanilowcz and Pojejena, for example, were erected in 1419, and it

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<sup>759</sup> For Sigismund's visit to Cologne in December 1414 see Liedke, 'Meister Dietrich', p. 19.

<sup>760</sup> Walter atte Moore, a diplomat in the service of King Edward III of England, took a similar route to Hungary in 1346 and boarded a ship en route to Buda at Mauthausen, in Austria, a few days after passing Regensburg. For his account, see London, The National Archives, E 101/312/22. His account has been published albeit with some minor errors, see Fritz Trautz, 'Die Reise eines englischen Gesandten nach Ungarn im Jahre 1346', *MIÖG*, 60 (1952), 359-68.

<sup>761</sup> This trend can be observed in the recruitment activities of Filippo Scolari, whose Florentine recruits frequently worked on his palaces. See Prajda, 'Scolari Family', pp. 525-6. For Sigismund's building activities in Bratislava, see Szűcs, 'A középkori', p. 358, though Windecke would imply that Sigismund began renovating his palace in Buda c. 1420. See Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 109.

<sup>762</sup> For the civil wars generally, see Kastritsis, *Sons of Bayezid*, pp. 41-159. See also, Elizabeth Zachariadou, 'Ottoman Diplomacy', XIV.

<sup>763</sup> ACC, iv. 436, 443 (nr 455).

would not be unreasonable to suppose that many of his acts of recruitment had defensive motives in mind.<sup>764</sup>

It must be emphasised that many of Sigismund's recruits, who would appear at first sight to have few or no skills applicable to military activities can be found performing military tasks. Put more simply, the division between a civil skill and a military skill was not one that existed in the fifteenth century. Many of his recruits during his western travels could have easily been put to military uses as well as to palace building and decoration. In fact there is clear evidence that they did do both and two examples will suffice.

The literary work, *Novella del grasso legnaiuolo*, by Antonio Manetti discusses the tale of a hard-up Florentine who sought his fortune in Hungary.<sup>765</sup> The tale revolves around Grasso, a wood carver, who ends up achieving fame and renown in the service of Filippo Scolari, a baron of Sigismund who has been discussed in a previous chapter. Though the novella is fiction, it does point to the varied roles which experts could be put to performing. Despite being a woodworker, the novel explains how Scolari employed Grasso as his 'master engineer' (*maestro ingegneri*) and 'led him into the field when he went on campaign' (*menavaselo seco in campo, quando egli andava negli esserciti*).<sup>766</sup> When not on campaign Grasso was employed as a woodcarver and his skills were put to use in building Scolari's palace at Ozora.

One of Sigismund's own military specialists, a certain Hans Felber von Ulm, helps reinforce this theme. Hans Felber, hailing from the free city of Ulm in modern day Baden-Württemberg, was a jack of all trades and documents produced during his life time describe him variably as a fountain maker, a master of works, a cannon master and building master.<sup>767</sup> His life was so varied that Diakonus Klemm has posited that he may in fact be two different people.<sup>768</sup> The figure of Felber, though he is identified in the sources as a cannon master (*buchsenmeister*), underlines the varied roles which those with skills such as him could undertake. Felber's career demonstrates that there was little or no division between civil and

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<sup>764</sup> Teicu, *Banat*, pp. 72, 97, 99.

<sup>765</sup> Antonio Manetti, *Vita di Filippo Brunelleschi: preceduta da la novella del Grasso*, ed. Domenico de Robertis (Milan: Il Polifilo, 1976). For a German translation of the story, see Antonio Manetti, *Novella del grasso legnaiuolo. Die Novelle vom dicken Holzschnitter*, trans. Marianne Schneider (Berlin: Wagenbach, 2012).

<sup>766</sup> Manetti, *del Grasso*, p. 42.

<sup>767</sup> Albert Gumpel, 'Der Baumeister und Stückgießer Hans Felber von Ulm, dessen Beziehungen zu Nürnberg und Todesjahr. Nachträgliches zur Biographie Konrad Heinzelmanns', *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, 34 (1911), 232-245.

<sup>768</sup> Diakonus Klemm, 'Württembergische Baumeister und Bildhauer bis ums Jahr 1750', *Württembergische Vierteljahrshefte für Landesgeschichte*, 5 (1882), 1-217 (pp. 75-6).

military skill. He built churches and installed fountains in cities, improved town walls and fortifications and took part in military campaigns against the Hussites. First as a cannon master on campaign in 1427 and secondly as a master of works in 1430 and 1431, where he worked in Nuremberg in order to supply their contingent of soldiers with wagons and cannon.<sup>769</sup> It is reasonable to assume then, that Sigismund's recruits in the west could have easily been put to military uses and have contributed to the fight against the Turks. Just because many of Sigismund's experts were put to use in Bratislava, does not mean that they were not used against the Turks, as some of Sigismund's officers who were ostensibly based there were put to use against the Turks. Sigismund's castellan of Bratislava, Sigismund Lapispatak, had fought in diverse and numerous campaigns, both against the Turks and the Hussites.<sup>770</sup>

Sigismund, as well as his leading barons such as Scolari, maintained often extensive retinues which would have included builders and craftsmen such as Hans Felber. Sigismund clearly had figures such as Hans Felber in his employ for contemporary accounts make it clear that the king could erect and improve fortresses while on the move. In 1422, for example, Sigismund was able to erect his own fortification (*eyn gar grose basteye*) in front of Ostrava in Moravia while campaigning against the Hussites in the region.<sup>771</sup> In a similar case, Sigismund built a fortification (*buwet dovor ein pasti*) before a certain place called Steinitz.<sup>772</sup> Examples can be found for the Danube frontier. In 1427, for example, Redwitz authored a report for the benefit of his Grandmaster about Sigismund and his campaign against the Turks in Wallachia.<sup>773</sup> Among other things, Redwitz notes Sigismund's strengthening of a Wallachian fortification with moats and wooden walls to help resist the Turks (*mit graben und planck durch enthaldung der Torken*) while he held court in a nearby town while heading to the Danube.<sup>774</sup>

#### 4.4 Sigismund and the use of the Teutonic Order's construction expertise

Nevertheless, the purposes behind Sigismund's recruitment of building and construction expertise can frequently be unclear. Throughout his reign Sigismund commissioned large scale building projects in Hungary, not all of which were specifically for

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<sup>769</sup> For a detailed overview of Felber's service in the Hussite campaigns and as a founder of cannon in Nuremberg, in preparation for the Fifth Hussite Crusade of 1431, see Gumpel, 'Hans Felber', pp. 239-42.

<sup>770</sup> CDH, x, vii. 642-645 (nr 301). See Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, pp. 423, 1056.

<sup>771</sup> OBA, 3711. Printed in Palacký, *Urkundliche Beiträge*, i. 190-2 (nr 177).

<sup>772</sup> Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 112

<sup>773</sup> OBA, 4741. Cîmpeanu, 'Dan al II-lea', p. 74.

<sup>774</sup> OBA, 4741. Cîmpeanu, 'Dan al II-lea', p. 74.

defensive purposes. Many of the instances of recruitment mentioned so far could have been put to any use. In the case of Sigismund's relationship with the Teutonic Knights, however, Sigismund's recruitment was clearly for defensive purposes and specifically to strengthen his fortresses on his southern frontier against the Turks. Sigismund's relationship with the Teutonic Knights will now be explored and placed in the context of his military commitments in the latter years of his reign.

As Sigismund makes clear in several letters, the summer of 1427 marked the beginning a particularly important point in his effort to secure his frontier against the Turkish threat. In a letter dated to 27 September 1427, Sigismund informs Cardinal Beaufort of the Serbian Despot's death and of his consequent success in securing several castles in Serbia.<sup>775</sup> By far the most important of these was the former Serbian capital, Belgrade, labelled 'the pass and key to the kingdom of Hungary' by Sigismund, although the king also drew attention to his garrisoning of several other castles in Serbia.<sup>776</sup>

It was at this precise time that Sigismund entered into negotiations with the Grandmaster of the Teutonic Order, Paul Rusdorf, and it would appear that the king intended to use Teutonic building expertise on his frontier.<sup>777</sup> Sigismund's detailed request for Teutonic aid in his campaigns against the Turks, discussed at length in the previous chapter, was produced by his chancery in 1427 and was delivered to Rusdorf by Caspar Slick, his secretary, in September of the same year.<sup>778</sup> The document contains, among others, a request for 'two good *Bolwerkmeister*'.<sup>779</sup> What precisely a *Bolwerkmeister* is or does is difficult to ascertain but it is probable that their area of expertise lay in fortress building and construction.

Contemporary correspondence from the *Ordensbriefarchiv* which makes reference to a *Bolwerk* identifies it either as the wall of a fortress or an aspect of the fortification itself.<sup>780</sup> Martin Ehrenberg's report to Rusdorf in 16 April 1428 on Hussite incursions in Silesia would support this.<sup>781</sup> In fact Ehrenberg's comment, that after seizing a stronghold the Hussites 'occupied and strengthened [it] with *Bolwergkin* and other fortifications' as best they could,

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<sup>775</sup> RTA, ix. 72-4 (nr 61). For an English translation see, Norman Housley, *Documents on the Later Crusades, 1274-1580* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), pp. 120-3 (nr 40).

<sup>776</sup> RTA, ix. 73, 'passu et clave regni Ungarie'.

<sup>777</sup> For background see the previous chapter.

<sup>778</sup> OBA, 4759. See folio 2v for the dating clause. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 4789.

<sup>779</sup> OBA, 4759. 'Item czwene gute Bolwerkmeister'.

<sup>780</sup> Or variations, such as *bolwerg*, *bolwergkin* etc.

<sup>781</sup> Palacký, *Urkundliche Beiträge*, i. 611-3 (nr 515).

would seem to imply that the addition or strengthening of a *bolwerk* was an important step in making a site defensible.<sup>782</sup> Other references make it clear that the *bolwerk* was part of the fortress or stronghold in question, as Johannes Frauenberg demonstrates in his account of the siege of Hoyerswerda in Saxony, dated to 7 July 1468.<sup>783</sup> The *bolwerk* was clearly one of the more important parts of the fortification as it was precisely his blowing of a great hole (*eyn grosz loch*) in it that encouraged a local priest to sneak out secretly from the fortress the next day to inform the besiegers of the despair within the besieged settlement.<sup>784</sup>

Whether Sigismund ever received these two *Bolwerkmeister* to aid in repairing his existing fortresses in Hungary or his recent acquisitions in Serbia is not clear. The negotiations for the transfer of the Teutonic Knights between September 1427 and October 1428 have left only a slight paper trail. The lack of correspondence is probably on account of Sigismund conducting the negotiations not through correspondence but through diplomats. For example, in his letter dated to 9 April and which marks the beginning of the negotiations, the king informs Rusdorf that he has empowered his secretary, Caspar Slick, to arrange for the transfer of Teutonic expertise to Hungary.<sup>785</sup> This pattern continued and in July Sigismund informed Rusdorf that he has dispatched Nicholas Stocks, ‘to tell you our opinion’, and to discuss with the Grandmaster what he needed in order to begin sending aid to Hungary.<sup>786</sup>

The dispatch of diplomats was not just one way, and by the end of 1427 a certain *pflieger von Ortelsburg* had been dispatched by Rusdorf to the Roman King’s court. Ortelsburg’s agenda for his negotiations with Sigismund survives in the form of a rather battered piece of parchment, folded four times in order to make a small booklet and covered with handwriting that has frequently been crossed out and corrected.<sup>787</sup> It reveals that he was to discuss, in particular, ‘the answer to the lord Roman King’s embassy’ and ‘to answer the articles advertised by Caspar Slick’, as well as other pressing matters, such as the mysterious Herr Nimpsch whose penchant for openly criticising the Teutonic Order and imprisoning

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<sup>782</sup> Ibid., p. 611. ‘die ketzzer haben das haws Czothinberg gewonnen, das haldin sy ynne, besetzen und vestin mit Bolwergkin und andir vestenunge’

<sup>783</sup> Frantisek Palacký, *Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte Böhmens und seiner Nachbarländer im Zeitalter Georg's von Podiebrad (1450 - 1471)* (Vienna: Kaiserliche-Königliche Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1860), p. 551 (nr 463).

<sup>784</sup> Ibid., p. 551.

<sup>785</sup> OBA, 4738. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 4787. Altmann, nr 6887

<sup>786</sup> OBA, 4787. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 4787.

<sup>787</sup> OBA, 4772. This item is dated to between May and September 1427 in *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 4772. The item carries no dating clause and internal evidence would suggest that it could be dated to after September, especially if the articles submitted by Caspar Slick which are referred to are contained in OBA, 4789.



various burgers from the Ordenstaat as they visited Hungary was clearly beginning to annoy.<sup>788</sup>

If the limited amount of correspondence and Ortensburg's memorandum can be taken to be representative of the negotiations during 1427 then it would appear that Sigismund's desire for *Bolwerkmeister* rather slipped in priority for they are only mentioned once.<sup>789</sup> The requests which Sigismund make in his correspondence of 1427, which are only brief and usually preface the introduction of a diplomat empowered to discuss the issue further, usually revolve around naval and mercantile expertise.<sup>790</sup> In this respect, Ortelsburg's memorandum to discuss only the 'order brothers, merchants [and] sailors' would imply that the transfer of construction expertise to the Danube frontier had been displaced by the more urgent need of Sigismund to secure naval aid.<sup>791</sup> Sigismund's great need for assistance in securing the Danube waters has been explored in previous chapters and it is no surprise that he prioritised securing assistance in this matter during the summer of 1427. That naval aid was his priority at this time is supported in his letter in April 1427 to Henry, Duke of Bavaria-Landshut, in which he revealed that his plan to take the fight to the Turks sought in particular, 'with the help of God, to recapture the Danube'.<sup>792</sup>

However, Sigismund's desire for construction and fortification experts from the Teutonic Order resurfaces in October 1428 and remains an issue until the summer of 1430. This change in heart is understandable when Sigismund's campaigning in the summer of 1428 is considered. It is important to emphasise that Sigismund was not only gaining control of new, existing fortresses but also building new ones. After his failure to seize the Ottoman held fortress of Golubac in June 1428, a strategically key fortress which lay on the southern side of the Danube, Sigismund decided to erect a new one nearby.<sup>793</sup> This fortress, named Lászlóvár and apparently sited and built with 'the advice of his Hungarian lords', was placed on the northern bank of the river directly opposite Golubac.<sup>794</sup>

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<sup>788</sup> OBA, 4772. 'Item dey entwot uffs des herren romischen konigs botschofft' and 'Item tzuentwerten uff die artikel dy Caspar Slik erworben hat'. For Nimpsch's criticisms of the Teutonic Order, which of course were far too savage to repeat in contemporary correspondence so can only be guessed at, see OBA, 4397, and for his capture of *Tylman Watzelrade*, OBA, 4782.

<sup>789</sup> In OBA, 4789.

<sup>790</sup> See OBA, 4738, 4787.

<sup>791</sup> OBA, 4772. The passage which references what is to be discussed regarding the transfer of Teutonic expertise runs, 'Alzo von ~~den~~ der bruder wegen/kouflete/schiffkinder'.

<sup>792</sup> RTA, ix. 30-1 (nr 29). 'und hoffen mit der hilfe gotes die Tunaw wider einzunemen'.

<sup>793</sup> RTA, ix. 207-8 (nr 173).

<sup>794</sup> RTA, ix. 208 (nr 173). 'mit raute siner Ungrischen herren'. For more information, Ţeicu, *Banat*, pp. 104-5.

By 1428 it was clear to Sigismund that his military commitments on his southern frontier had increased even further and his letter, dated to 11 October 1428 and sent to Rusdorf, draws attention to his predicament. In this letter Sigismund claimed that he had taken ‘by God’s grace on both sides [of the Danube] many good castles’, situated between Belgrade and Turnu Severin and that he was daily having to struggle with the Turks.<sup>795</sup> ‘For this’, he continued, ‘we have dearly wanted to deploy such order, organisational activity (*ampter wirtschaftt*) and handling, as is practiced in your order in the houses, castles and courts and other places’.<sup>796</sup> This clause likely refers to the Teutonic Order’s skill in running and operating a military frontier but Sigismund’s later admission, that ‘we have so many great buildings and works before our hands on the Danube and for these we dearly require skilled people’, suggests that he needed them for their building skills too.<sup>797</sup>

It is clear that Sigismund felt that he needed the Teutonic Order’s aid in helping consolidate his chain of fortresses on the Danube as from this point on and for several years he would repeatedly request the dispatch of teams of builders. For whatever reason the term *bolwerkmeister* never appears in the correspondence again. Instead, it is replaced by demands for *werkleute*. Two items of correspondence between Rusdorf and the Master of Livonia support the idea that Sigismund needed the Order’s building expertise within the context of his recent gains in Serbia. The original letters do not survive but the rough copies produced by the Order’s chancery, both scruffily written and heavily damaged, do allow us to partly reconstruct how the Grandmaster conceived of his Order’s mission in Hungary and of what it involved at the time of their composition in late spring 1429.

The first letter sent by Rusdorf, dated to 23 April 1428, was clearly meant to inform the Master of Livonia of contemporary events throughout central Europe and contains a wealth of detail.<sup>798</sup> Of relevance for this chapter is Rusdorf’s admission to the Master that Sigismund intends to deploy ‘our order in Serbia in one castle and the deserted land’, for which he reports that he will soon dispatch Claus Redwitz, so that he can ‘accept

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<sup>795</sup> OBA, 4989. ‘uf beydenseiten von den gnaden gotes vil guter sloß haben’. See also *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 4989. Altmann, nr 7132.

<sup>796</sup> OBA, 4989. ‘dorynn wir solich ordnung, ampter wirtschaftt und handlung gern anrichten wollten, als dann die in demselben deynem Orden uff heussern slossern, hofen, und anderswo gehalden werden’. Similarly, in July 1429 Sigismund would state how he desired ‘in Hungern eynen meister und ander Amptluwte’. See OBA, 5050.

<sup>797</sup> OBA, 4989. ‘haben wir alhie an der Tunaw groß gepäwe und arbeýt vor handen dorczu wir künstrichter lute wol bedorffen’. Sigismund did not just have land based building projects in mind, but the bridging of the Danube which required the Grandmaster’s personal servant, Hansen the Bleydenmeister. His dispatch to Sigismund’s court has been covered in detail in a previous chapter.

<sup>798</sup> OBA, 5074. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 5074

(*ufftzunemen*) the aforementioned castle and land'.<sup>799</sup> In the second letter, datable to early May, Rusdorf admits that such a task, 'namely to accept castles and estates situated on the Danube between Hungary, Serbia and Wallachia with their responsibilities [is a] very hard and great exhortation (*irmanunge*)' to pursue.<sup>800</sup> As a result, Rusdorf orders the Master and his officials to collect a sum of money, in Hungarian Gulder, to be given to the Treasurer at the Order's headquarters in Marienburg.<sup>801</sup> This money was to be used precisely to support the dispatch of 'our brothers of the Order and several *werglute*' to serve Sigismund.<sup>802</sup>

What *werkleute* did precisely is difficult to ascertain as they can be found in a variety of different roles. Numerous items of correspondence would imply that the term *werkleute* was in fact a general term for a class of servants with various skills and not just those with expertise restricted to building. In the context of Sigismund's service, for example, they can be found aiding cannon masters and shipbuilders but these instances have been explored in previous chapters. In the context of Sigismund's relationship with the Teutonic Order they were most likely meant to aid in the construction and fortification of sites. The figure of Hansen Bleidenmeister, who was explored in a previous chapter, once used a team of *wokluthen* to build a series of ditches and canals in March 1426.<sup>803</sup> Their acquisition was clearly high on Sigismund's list of priorities and it would appear from other contemporary sources that *werkleute* were particularly valuable. In a letter of 1386 to the Grandmaster for example, the dukes of Stettin, particularly concerned with the Polish kingdom aiding the Lithuanians, decide to highlight in particular the *werg und werglute* which the king is supplying.<sup>804</sup> The dukes argued that the Lithuanians would be able to strengthen themselves considerably with this aid, especially as the likes of these specialists, apparently, 'had never been in the land [of Lithuania] before'.<sup>805</sup> This aid clearly worried the Teutonic Knights as

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<sup>799</sup> OBA, 5074. 'unserm ordn in syrve an der evnen slos und wuste lant'. 'wrgdachten slos un lant, ufftzunemem'

<sup>800</sup> OBA, 5084. 'nemliche Slossere und guter mit iren czubehorunge in gelegen bey der Tunen czwussen Hungern Seryen und Walachien gelegen uffczunehmen... swer harter und groser irmanungen'.

<sup>801</sup> OBA, 5084. The sum of money is not known as the draft copy was not in an advanced enough stage, and instead a scribe has entered 'A. B. C.' as the amount.

<sup>802</sup> OBA, 5084. 'unser ordens Bruders und etliche werglute'.

<sup>803</sup> OBA, 4561. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 4561. The letter reports that one ditch was over half a mile long.

<sup>804</sup> *Codex Diplomaticus Prussicus: Urkunden Sammlung zur älteren Geschichte Preussens aus dem königlichen geheimen Archiv zu Königsberg* ed. Johannes Voigt, 6 vols (Königsberg: Willhelm Roch, 1836-61), iv. 45 (nr 38).

<sup>805</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45. 'die vor in den landen ny sint gewest'.

they report on the Polish dispatch of *werkmeister* to Lithuania in similar tones in 1397 and 1398.<sup>806</sup>

A rather peculiar document, probably drafted by a Teutonic knight as an aid for negotiation or as a memorandum in 1429, reveals the very specific areas of expertise that Sigismund desired for his frontier.<sup>807</sup> Several of the examples contained within have been discussed in detail in previous chapters, but one section for the document states, ‘also one [should] send such *werkleute*’, and lists afterwards ‘ship builders, foresters (*walthouwer*), *holczfliesser*, fishermen and brickmakers’.<sup>808</sup> If this document can be taken to be representative of what the term *werkleute* meant during the negotiations, then Sigismund’s demands for *werkleute* were in fact demands for a whole range of expertise and not exclusive to those skilled in building and fortification. Whatever the case, other items of Sigismund’s correspondence demonstrate how Sigismund intended to deploy Teutonic *werkleute* in a construction context.

A letter of 17 April 1429, for example, reveals very clearly Sigismund’s intention to use Teutonic building expertise. The letter itself, addressed to Rusdorf, only mentions the Order’s planned activities in Hungary very briefly in the middle, when Sigismund states, ‘that your grace should send us your order brothers and *werklute*, who we have wanted to deploy’.<sup>809</sup> The letter was sent, however, with a Zettel, an additional item of correspondence produced by Sigismund’s chancery which contains further encouragement for Rusdorf to dispatch the aid which the king desired.<sup>810</sup> In this Zettel Sigismund informs Rusdorf that he has been made aware that the Order are about to send to him a number of brothers accompanied with *wergluten*, and ‘that it would be most helpful and good’ if he was to send them soon.<sup>811</sup> In particular, Sigismund desired that they come with *speis holcz gepewe und ander werk* (‘supplies, wood, buildings and other works’), so that the Order would be able support their new fortresses with ‘such supplies, fish, wood and all such necessary things for the castles as per the custom and order [of the] Order’.<sup>812</sup> Sigismund went on the say that he

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<sup>806</sup> *Codex Diplomaticus Prussicus*, v. 126 (nr 109), and *ibid*, vi. 65 (nr 61)

<sup>807</sup> OBA, 5215. A portion of this document has been published and is available in, *CEV*, pp. 809-10 (nr 1340).

<sup>808</sup> OBA, 5215. ‘

<sup>809</sup> OBA, 5071. ‘daz dein andacht uns deines Ordens Brudere und werklute ye ee ye besser sendte, daz wir die ausgerichten mochten’. The letter itself has been published in *CEV*, pp. 821-3 (nr 1348). *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 5071. Altmann, nr. 7215.

<sup>810</sup> The second, less interesting half of the zettel has been published in *CEV*, p. 823 (nr 1348).

<sup>811</sup> OBA, 5071. ‘daz gar nüzlich und gut were’.

<sup>812</sup> OBA, 5071. ‘solch speis visch holcz, und all solch notdurfftig sach zu slössern nach... Ordens gewonheit und ordnung zurichten’.

wanted the experts to serve him for an entire year and warned the Grandmaster that he would not be able to begin his defensive works until they arrived. His statement, that ‘we reckon in particular, not to begin with building until the *Berglute* come’, could be exaggeration on the part of Sigismund, in order to speed the dispatch of the Teutonic experts.<sup>813</sup> When assessed within the context of other contemporary correspondence, such as the letter of Sigismund’s queen to Vienna in 1426 which will be discussed later, there is little reason to doubt that Sigismund’s statement accurately reflects the predicament which he faced on his frontier.

Sigismund lacked the adequate expertise and skilled manpower which he required in order to adequately defend his frontier which in this case meant the construction of fortifications. The King in this instance was using his status as the wearer of the Roman crown to encourage one his German subjects to give him a particular type of expertise which was not as easily available to him in Hungary. Sigismund would repeat his request once more in July 1429. In this letter he writes to Rusdorf enquiring as to the location of the ‘brothers of the Order, with more brothers, *werkluten* and other necessary persons’ whom he states the Grandmaster has promised to send.<sup>814</sup> In this letter Sigismund refers not just to how he is patiently waiting for the Teutonic Knights and their *werkleute* but also to his wife, who is expecting them too.<sup>815</sup>

#### **4.5 Barbara and the use of her influence as Queen of the Romans**

Barbara’s desire for Teutonic expertise can in fact be expanded upon. Other items of correspondence held in the *Ordensbriefarchiv* reveal that she, as the Roman Queen, was also keen to secure Teutonic building expertise to support her fortresses. The admission in the aforementioned memorandum, that ‘our lady the queen is so greatly desirous of a brickmaker, that [one could] not well refuse her’, is not the only instance in which Barbara was using her status as the wearer of the Roman crown in order to secure specialised expertise.<sup>816</sup> That Barbara was an important figure in her own right is without doubt. Writing in 1418, a certain

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<sup>813</sup> OBA, 5071. ‘sunderlich so meinen wir, mit gepew nichts anczufahen, bis dem Berglute komen’.

<sup>814</sup> OBA, 5148. ‘ordens brudern mit mer brudern werkluten und andern notdurfftigen person’. This letter has been printed in *CEV*, p. 853 (nr 1367), and calendared in *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 5148, Altmann, nr 7349.

<sup>815</sup> OBA, 5148.

<sup>816</sup> OBA, 5215. ‘Sunderlichin ist unser frauwe konigynne eynes czigelstreichers so groslich begerende, das her ir nicht wol stedt czuversagen’.

Hans Stadler even took the time to describe Barbara's disposition to the Grandmaster, presumably because her opinions were important.<sup>817</sup> As a result, it is unsurprising that that Barbara was negotiating directly for Teutonic aid with the Grandmaster directly, as the Grand Duke of Lithuania states in a letter to Rusdorf in January 1429 that he has enclosed two letters, one from Sigismund and one from the Queen.<sup>818</sup> This chain of correspondence did not just go in one direction. A peculiar manuscript of several folios survives from May 1429 and it records the fellow knights who accompanied Redwitz to Hungary and the various possessions and items in their inventory.<sup>819</sup> Included in Redwitz's collection of letters and correspondence were 'two letters to the queen'.<sup>820</sup> It is clear that Barbara and Rusdorf were in direct communication, even if no text of the correspondence between them has survived.

That the letter mentioned by the Grand Duke contained requests for specialised expertise is highly probable for this was not the first time that Barbara had tried to use her status as queen of the Romans in order to secure building expertise from her subjects in the Reich. Another example survives in the form of a letter dated to 13 March 1425 and which survives in the Stadt und Landesarchiv, Vienna. In this letter Barbara, 'by God's grace Roman Queen and of Hungary', requests the dispatch of workmen from Hans Holczler, the Burgermeister of Vienna.<sup>821</sup> In a strikingly straightforward letter Barbara informs the Burgermeister 'that we have taken hold of and have quickly begun to build up (*zepawen*) our castles in Hungary, and particularly our seat at Etzelburg'.<sup>822</sup> To help with this Barbara needed something very specific, identified in the letter as *Czigelprenner* (Brickbakers). This request mirrors very closely her aforementioned demand for *czigelstreicher*, but this case contains more details as to their intended use. She desired two '*maister der Czigelprenner*', who should be able to bake bricks just 'as they bake them in Vienna' and who should not

<sup>817</sup> OBA, 2825. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 2825. Hans Stadler gave Barbara nothing less than a glowing review, stating that she was most favourably disposed to the Grandmaster, and that whatever she did for the Grandmaster she did at all times with great pleasure and great speed ('auch wist fur war daz meiner fraun genad euhren genaden gar gunstig ist und waz sy euch chund zü lieb tun daz tat sy alzeit gern mit ganzem fleyß')

<sup>818</sup> CEV, pp. 808-9 (nr 1338).

<sup>819</sup> OBA, 5096. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 5096.

<sup>820</sup> OBA, 5096. 'item czwene briffe an die konygynne'.

<sup>821</sup> WSuLA, HAUrk, nr 2244. 'von gots genad Romissche und ze Ungern kuniginn'. Calendared in Anton Mayer, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Wien*, 10 vols (Vienna: Altherthums-Vereines zu Wien, 1895-1927), ii. nr 2244, and Altmann, nr 6187a. For a brief analysis of Barbara's use of her Hungarian and Roman titles in her correspondence, see Föbel, 'Korrespondenz der Königin', pp. 249-50.

<sup>822</sup> HAUrk, nr 2244. 'das wir zugriffen und angefangen haben unser geslosser alhie ze Ungern und nemlich unsern Sitz ze Eczelburg fursich zepawen'.

only be capable of producing several thousand bricks (*von den Tausent geben sollen*), but roof tiles and other bricks also (*dach Czigel und auch ander Czigel*).<sup>823</sup>

A close analysis of the original document reveals an interesting clause. Barbara, when justifying why she needs these two *czigelbrenner*, states *darzu wir Czigelprenner, alhie ze lande nicht mügen gehabt* ('for this we need brickbakers, for [one] may not have [them] in this land [Hungary]).<sup>824</sup> Barbara assured the burgermeister that she would provide for the workmen what they needed ('Huts and wood', among other things) and that their service would greatly please her.<sup>825</sup> Barbara thus had the adequate material resources at hand to fortify her castles, but not the adequate expertise. As the Roman Queen, however, she could draw upon the far richer base of skills available in her pool of German subjects. The point, that the Hungarian kingdom lacked native officials competent enough to run their mines and mints has been made before, and Barbara's letter suggests that this lack of expertise spread to the realm of fortress building in particular contexts.<sup>826</sup>

It is worth reflecting on the date of the request too. Barbara's request is a specific one. She asks for two specific masters of a certain skill who, as the letter specifies, need to be able to produce particular bricks 'according to the custom' of Vienna.<sup>827</sup> The letter was dated and sealed in *Tothans*, modern day Tata in north-western Hungary, but it is highly likely that Barbara had been in Vienna that winter, accompanying Sigismund who had convened a Reichstag there.<sup>828</sup> The argument has been made that Sigismund's travels in the west, his stays in Paris and Avignon, introduced him to new technologies and opened his mind to new things.<sup>829</sup> Perhaps Barbara's letter to Hans Holczler reveals that her travels in Vienna had a similar impact, and demonstrates an intention to bring the very best of what she saw in the west back to Hungary, to help defend her estates against the Hussites and the Turks.

It is clear then, that both Sigismund and Barbara sought to use their links with the Teutonic Knights to secure construction and building expertise. It is worth making the point that an inspection and close reading of the original documents has revealed how specific and detailed their requests are. Recent research on the Teutonic Knights and their activities in

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<sup>823</sup> HAUrk, nr 2244. 'als sie die ze wienn prennen'.

<sup>824</sup> Ibid., nr 2244.

<sup>825</sup> Ibid., nr 2244. 'Hüetten und holcz'.

<sup>826</sup> For a brief discussion, see Prajda, 'Scolari Family', pp. 514-5.

<sup>827</sup> HAUrk, nr 2244. 'noch der gewarnheit'.

<sup>828</sup> For background, *RTA*, viii. 336-9. That Sigismund and Barbara travelled together is supported by the fact that both were together in Totis in the March and April of 1425. See Hoensch, *Itinerar*, p. 109.

<sup>829</sup> Veszprémy, 'Military Science', pp. 39-40.

Hungary has not considered the ramifications of this point. Both Jurgen Sarnowsky and Matthias Thumser have surveyed how the Teutonic Knights contributed to the fight against the Turks during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and their articles draw attention to how Sigismund needed the Order and its knights in order to defend the most vulnerable section of the Danube.<sup>830</sup> However, in the context of Sigismund's defensive plans (as well as other contemporary plans which involved the Teutonic Knights) they both interpret what the Order could contribute in terms of the amount of men that they could bring to the fight. A close study of the original correspondence would suggest that this was not the attitude that Sigismund held. Sigismund did not want battalions of fighting men but particular people for specific reasons. In other words, he did not want men with strong sword arms but men with special skills.

#### **4.6 The Teutonic Knights and the fortresses on the Danube frontier**

The extent to which Sigismund received what he wanted from the Teutonic Order in the later 1420s and early 1430s is, however, debatable. While aspects of the transfer of the Teutonic Knights to the Danube frontier were dealt with in the previous chapter, there still remains something to be said for the transfer of building and construction expertise. In this respect the Teutonic Order's accounts, drawn up to record the expenditure which they were incurring in their Hungarian fortresses, provide some important evidence. However, these accounts are difficult to interpret for various reasons.<sup>831</sup> While they take the form of accounts, with lists of men, equipment and strongholds and the expenditure required to support them, much of the number work appears speculative. The accounts probably date from start of their period of tenure in the Banate of Severin, and perhaps reflect an assessment of their holdings when they first arrived in 1429. Upon their arrival in Bratislava in July 1429, Sigismund noted in a letter to Rusdorf that he was sending Redwitz in the name of God to take the castles under his control (*nu senden wir sie itczunt in dem namen gotis sich der slosser czu underwinden*).<sup>832</sup> The most probable date for the creation of these accounts is the second half of 1429. That is perhaps why they appear incomplete in some areas, and do not record castles

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<sup>830</sup> Jurgen Sarnowsky, 'The Teutonic Order confronts Mongols and the Turks', in *The Military Orders: Fighting for the Faith and Caring for the Sick*, ed. Malcolm Barber (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), pp. 252-62 (pp. 259-61); Matthias Thumser, 'Eine neue Aufgabe im Heidenkampf? Pläne mit dem Deutschen Orden als Vorposten gegen die Türken', in *Europa und die Türken in der Renaissance*, ed. Bodo Guthmüller and Wilhelm Kühlmann (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2000), pp. 139-176 (pp. 142-3).

<sup>831</sup> OBA, 27837. Calendared in *RhdOSMT*, iii. nr. 27837. This document has been published although with some very minor errors in Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden', pp. 109-113.

<sup>832</sup> OBA, 5148.



which came into their possession later.<sup>833</sup> The castle at Borzafő, for example, was held by the Teutonic Knights but it is not recorded in any of the lists contained in the documents.<sup>834</sup>

Four *czimmerleuten* and two smiths are recorded in the garrison of Severin, for example, and the accounts would suggest that the Order were building and improving fortresses in the region.<sup>835</sup> In some cases the accounts reveal only the intention of the Order to install new fortresses. For the section regarding the fortress of Sinicza, the accounts record that ‘between Sinicza and Pecz one should look for where one may build a fort (*veste*) and one may also build a *meierhof*’.<sup>836</sup>

The Order did not just wish to install a new fortress and a *meierhof*, a large building usually used as a centre of administration, but to improve existing fortresses. These improvements, unlike the intention to install a new fortress near Sinicza, come with financial entries for their cost. The phrasing of the accounts often makes it unclear whether these financial entries record expenditure already made or estimated expenditure for improvements which were to be made in the future. Whatever the case, these entries reveal that the Teutonic commanders responsible for drafting these accounts had put a great deal of thought into the fortification of their new territories. For the fortress of Orsova, for example, a fortress on the Danube near Severin, there exists an entry for 20,000 florins for its repair.<sup>837</sup> The exact wording, that ‘one has estimated [this amount] this year to build the castle’, would imply that this entry was an assessment for expenditure to be incurred in the future. A further 4,400 florins had been set aside for the ‘building up of the house’ around Mihald, a fortress a few dozen miles north of Orsova.<sup>838</sup> Other comments, such as that Sinicze is a castle and ‘one must improve it’, would imply that the Order were acutely aware of the state of their fortresses and intended to improve them where necessary.<sup>839</sup>

Perhaps the fact that Sigismund’s requests for workman from the Order cease after 1430 imply that the appropriate expertise had arrived in Hungary. Sarnowsky, drawing upon the material published by Joachim, has argued that the Teutonic Knight’s position in Hungary

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<sup>833</sup> Rady, *Banate of Severin (Szöreny)* (unpublished book), p. 59. The identification of certain sites mentioned in the accounts has proved difficult. See Țeicu, *Banat*, pp. 95-6.

<sup>834</sup> Rady, *Banate of Severin (Szöreny)* (unpublished book), p. 59. Also, Țeicu, *Banat*, p. 65.

<sup>835</sup> Joachim, ‘Deutsche Ritterorden’, p. 111.

<sup>836</sup> OBA, 27837, fol. 1. ‘zwischen Sinicza und pecz sol man besehen wo man ein veste gemachen moge, und do mag man ouch wol ein meierhof machen’. Joachim, ‘Deutsche Ritterorden’, p. 110.

<sup>837</sup> OBA, 27837, fol. 1a. ‘Item zu bawe der Slosser hat man des jares überslagen’. Joachim, ‘Deutsche Ritterorden’, p. 111.

<sup>838</sup> OBA, 27837, fol. 2a. ‘Item zugebewe der hewser’. Joachim, ‘Deutsche Ritterorden’, p. 112.

<sup>839</sup> OBA, 27837, fol. 1. ‘man muß das bessern’. Joachim, ‘Deutsche Ritterorden’, p. 110.

was a weak one and that the Order had difficulty in supplying their distant contingents on the Danube.<sup>840</sup> Sarnowsky's main source for this conclusion are the numerous complaints and issues raised by Redwitz, the Teutonic commander in Hungary, in his letters to the Grandmaster. Even a perusal of the printed material would not justify this conclusion. One letter authored by Redwitz and printed by Joachim would imply that the Order was able to marshal the resources they needed for their possessions on the Danube. In August 1431, for example, Redwitz writes from Nuremberg that he has a fleet of ships, 80 strong, on the Danube between Regensburg and Buda.<sup>841</sup> He had been able to 'send people and all necessities to the houses [on the Danube]', though he admits that he is having trouble in paying the men, presumably the men in the houses in Hungary.<sup>842</sup>

Redwitz's letter of 7 March 1432 does indeed stress the difficulties which he was experiencing in fighting the Turks, but this should not be taken as representative of the Order's entire experience on the Danube.<sup>843</sup> As we will discover in the next chapter, even if the incomes promised to the Order were not forthcoming, Redwitz was able to raise sums of money from his own contacts in Hungary. However, in the context of this chapter, a closer exploration of the correspondence between Redwitz and the Grandmaster is warranted.

Other items of correspondence, penned by Redwitz but not printed or mentioned in Joachim's article, give a different if an occasionally bizarre impression of life on the Danube frontier in the service of Sigismund. A long and detailed letter penned by Redwitz, undated but probably written in the later months of 1430, comes from the initial period of the Order's tenure in Hungary.<sup>844</sup> This letter discusses a whole range of issues, including English defeats in France, the fight against the Hussites and the case of a rather unfortunate notary of the Polish king who had been locked out of the chancery in Buda. Regarding the situation in Hungary, Redwitz makes no explicit complaints about the Order's position, implying that the workman and fellow knights with whom he had travelled to Hungary with were sufficient to defend the Order's new possessions. He is far more concerned to underline Sigismund's

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<sup>840</sup> Sarnowsky, 'Teutonic Order', pp. 260-1.

<sup>841</sup> OBA, 5705. Partially printed in Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden', pp. 115-6 and calendared in *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 5705.

<sup>842</sup> OBA, 5705. 'leuten unde aller notdurfft zu den hewsern gesandt'.

<sup>843</sup> OBA, 5999. Printed in Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden', pp. 116-8. Calendared in *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 5999.

<sup>844</sup> OBA, 5245. Calendared in *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 5245. With no dating clause Joachim guesses that this letter was written in 1429. Internal evidence would suggest a date of at least after 14 May 1430. Redwitz's letter of May 1430 (OBA, 5365) notes how he wants a dog and two falcons dispatched from the Grandmaster. As a dog and two falcons are either noted as lost or dead in OBA, 5245, we can assume that OBA, 5245 must post date OBA, 5365. Therefore this letter can be dated to 1430, and probably the second half of the year.

anger at some of the Grandmaster's subjects in Livonia and the king's reluctance to confirm the Order in their possession of the New Mark.<sup>845</sup>

In terms of supplies and men, the only things that Redwitz required from the Grandmaster were various items of clothing, which apparently needed to 'be good and well coloured'.<sup>846</sup> Redwitz's only complaints were of a pestilence in Hungary, which was killing many and 'which no one in Hungary had not heard of' and the botched delivery of a special dog.<sup>847</sup> This special dog was meant as a gift for the Ottoman sultan but somehow 'the dog was lost on the way' (one wonders how) and two birds, also meant as gifts, were 'both dead' (*beyde dot*).<sup>848</sup> In other correspondence where Redwitz does make requests of the Grandmaster they are usually for money or for advice, and as he does not request *werkleute* it would be reasonable to assume that he had a sufficient amount in his service in Hungary.<sup>849</sup> Taken together, the building activity noted in the Teutonic accounts, Sigismund's cessation of appeals for Teutonic workmen and Redwitz's correspondence would imply that the building expertise which Sigismund desired from the Order did eventually arrive in Hungary.

This chapter has demonstrated how Sigismund used the opportunities that came with being the Roman King in order to secure building and construction expertise. Much of this expertise, especially in the early stages of his Roman kingship, was recruited on an opportunistic basis as he was travelling through the west. Whether his recruits here were expressly meant to help him combat the Turks remains unclear. Nevertheless, his correspondence with the Grandmaster brings into sharp relief the military requirements which Sigismund faced on the Danube frontier and the effective measures which both he and his wife could take, as wearers of the Roman crown, in order to bring balance to his frontier. It also reinforces how Sigismund was searching for very specific sources of expertise. It was not men or groups of soldiers that he was so interested in recruiting, but specialists who could fulfil particular roles in supporting his campaigns. As we will see in the next chapter, this trend of using specialised forms of expertise was present in Sigismund's attempts to manage his military campaigns and support them economically.

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<sup>845</sup> OBA, 5245.

<sup>846</sup> Ibid.

<sup>847</sup> Ibid., 'das in ungerlant kein man desgeleichen nicht gehort hat'.

<sup>848</sup> Ibid., 'der hunt verloren ist uff den weg'. For the request for the dog, see OBA, 5365, calendared in *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 5365, published in *CEV*, pp. 901-3 (nr 1412). OBA, 5245 also reveals that the falconer responsible for these mishaps had made it to Hungary, and Redwitz informs the Grandmaster that he had sent him to Buda and to the Bishop of Agram, the de facto ruler of Hungary given Sigismund's absence, in order to explain what had happened to these animals.

<sup>849</sup> For example, OBA, 5630 (dated in Nuremberg, 27 April 1431); *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 5630.

## **Chapter 5. Mines, Merchants and Dogs: Military organisation, Economics and Diplomacy**

Sigismund's defensive commitments on his southern frontier required a thorough reform of the Kingdom of Hungary's military organisation, but ensuring that he had the adequate manpower and skills at hand to defend against the Turks was only one part of the solution. The financial and economic structures which underpinned his fortress building programmes and which ensured that his forces were paid and supplied, from the guards and *banderia* of his bans to the rowers in his galley crews, also needed to be addressed. This chapter will demonstrate how Sigismund drew upon financial, logistical and administrative expertise from

his subjects in the Reich, in order to support his efforts against the Ottoman Turks. In doing so, it will demonstrate how Sigismund explicitly linked economic development with the defence of his frontier.

Many of Sigismund's reforms aimed at improving the ability of the kingdom of Hungary to resist the Turks were largely restricted to the Kingdom itself and have little to do with his Roman Kingship. However, even though they are not strictly within the scope of this thesis, it is worth highlighting Sigismund's attitude to administration and the centralisation of economic and military resources in the face of the Turkish threat. Two trends are worth highlighting, as they directly foreshadow Sigismund's attempt to apply Teutonic administrative and economic expertise to the management of the Danube frontier in the later 1420s. These two trends are the revenue drives in the royal mines and the desire to concentrate the responsibilities for the defence against the Turks in particular men, notably the Florentine condottieri Filippo Scolari.

Leonardo Bruni, in his *Historiae Florentinae* published in 1442, noted that Sigismund was rather bad with money and that he gave so much away that he hindered both his administration and his waging of wars.<sup>850</sup> This is unfair, and throughout his reign Sigismund was well aware of the need to raise as much income as possible in order to support his wars against the Ottoman Turks. It is in the Hungarian salt trade, which the Hungarian crown held as a monopoly, where the drive to secure a greater income can be most clearly seen. It is worth making the point that the incomes associated with the mines during Sigismund's reign could be immense and attracted the attention of foreign visitors. Walter von Schwarzenberg, while visiting Sigismund near Buda in August 1426, notes in a letter to Frankfurt the significant sums involved in one of Sigismund's recent financial dealings.<sup>851</sup> Schwarzenberg's remark, that *der konig hayd syn bergweg vorsast vor seßwer hundit tuisend gulden*, would seem to imply that Sigismund had mortgaged (*vorsast*) the ownership or the income of his mines (*bergweg*) for the rather large sum of 600,000 gulden.<sup>852</sup> Walter adds that Sigismund had so far only received one third of this sum (*y me werdint eczünd czwerrzud hündirt tüßend gulden*), though even this amount, if it is accurate, remains a princely sum

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<sup>850</sup> Leonardo Bruni, *History of the Florentine People*, ed. and trans. James Hankins, 3 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001-7), iii. 376.

<sup>851</sup> IFS, FaM, RS-N, 2534, nr 49. Calendared in *FR*, i. 353 (nr 636).

<sup>852</sup> IFS, FaM, RS-N, 2534, nr 49. Schwarzenberg does not state whether the 'bergweg' in question are salt, gold or silver mines (or all three).

within the context of Hungarian royal finances.<sup>853</sup> Sigismund was able to procure such a princely sum from his mines on account of almost twenty years of reform and reorganisations, which will be discussed now.

There exists a significant amount of research on the Hungarian salt mines and on the royal management of the salt trade in Hungary. Kubinyi has linked attempts to raise the income from the Hungarian salt chambers in 1513 with the Turkish threat and Sigismund's reforms to the salt chambers in 1397 should be seen in the same light.<sup>854</sup> Sigismund enacted important reforms to the salt mines in October and November, precisely the same time as the diet of Temesvár, which contained important provisions for the kingdom's defence. In 1397 Sigismund appointed Peter Veréb, the vice voivode of Transylvania, as count of all of the salt chambers in Transylvania. Sigismund empowered Verebi to found more salt chambers and to spend the sum of 6,000 florins in building or improving lodgings for the labourers, carters and sailors involved in the process of mining and moving the valuable commodity.<sup>855</sup> Salt was a vital resource and source of income for the Hungarian kingdom and could be sold, either within the kingdom or to foreign traders for export, given to royal creditors in return for acquittal of crown debt or given to soldiers as a form of pay, the so called *sale exercitantuum* or *sale exercituantibus*.<sup>856</sup> By the 1430s the rights to the salt mines were being explicitly given to border lords precisely to help them support armies which could support fortresses such as Belgrade against the Turks.<sup>857</sup> As a result, the reform of the salt mines could and did feasibly help Sigismund in his fight against the Turks.

As István Draskóczy argues, however, the management of a project as big as the Hungarian salt chambers required specialised knowledge and it would appear that Sigismund could only find this specialised knowledge from recruiting outside of his subjects as King of

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<sup>853</sup> Perhaps the equivalent of 2/3 of Sigismund's income in Hungary. See Engel, *Realm*, p. 226. For discussion of the kingdom's royal finances during the later fifteenth century, for which we have more evidence, see Martyn Rady, 'Rethinking Jagiełło Hungary (1490-1526)', *Central Europe*, 3 (2005), 3-18 (pp. 6-7). On an aside, if Schwarzenberg's figures are even roughly correct, then this would support the modern estimates of royal income from mining present in the historiography.

<sup>854</sup> Andras Kubinyi, 'Königliches Salzmonopol und die Städte des Königreichs Ungarn im Mittelalter', in *Stadt und Salz*, ed. Wilhelm Rausch (Linz: Österreichischer Arbeitskreis für Stadtgeschichtsforschung, 1988), p. 231.

<sup>855</sup> For the full letter to Peter Verebi, see Gusztav Wenzel, *Magyarország Bányászatának Kritikai Története* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1880), pp. 436-39. For the 6,000 florins of construction work, see pp. 437-8.

<sup>856</sup> For discussion of the possible incomes drawn from the salt mines, see János M. Bak, 'Monarchie im Wellental: Materielle Grundlagen des ungarischen Königtums im funfzehnten Jahrhundert', in idem, *Studying Medieval Rulers and their Subjects: Central Europe and Beyond*, ed. Balázs Nagy and Gábor Kaniczay (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 359-60, 80-3. For the references to salt of the soldiers, see *DRMH*, ii. 58-9, 193, 200.

<sup>857</sup> See, for example, *CDPRHA*, pp. 86-7 (nr 158), and *Diplome privind*, ii. 21 (nr 8).

Hungary.<sup>858</sup> As a result, the man who would eventually hold responsibility for the operation of every salt chamber in Hungary was not a native Hungarian, but Filippo Stefano Scolari, a native of Florence. As early as 1397 Sigismund had taken Scolari, a Florentine trader resident in Buda, into his service. His entry into Sigismund's service would mark the beginning of a career which lasted until his death in 1426, and the varied activities which Scolari undertook during his career demonstrate how his skills and expertise as a merchant were vital in allowing Sigismund to tackle the Ottoman threat.

### 5.1 Filippo Scolari and the defence against the Turks, c. 1400-1426

There exists a significant amount of historical writing on Scolari and on his career in Hungarian royal service.<sup>859</sup> Sigismund's recruitment of foreign servants, including Scolari, has been seen by some historians, such as Mályusz, as an attempt to counter the power of Hungarian barons and to aid in his consolidation of power.<sup>860</sup> Mályusz, and other historians such as János Bak and Jörg Hoensch, have recently come to more positive conclusions regarding Scolari's recruitment, stressing, for example, how his skills were invaluable to Sigismund and his political activities.<sup>861</sup> Nevertheless, recent work, such as that by Katalin Prajda, has continued to underline how Sigismund's recruitment of foreigners, such as Scolari, was 'part of Sigismund's greater strategy of building a new loyal elite at the royal court'.<sup>862</sup> The argument that Sigismund could not fully trust his Hungarian barons, many of whom had proved rebellious in the past, and that he therefore recruited foreigners in order to administer and run his kingdom certainly has some merit. As Faro has underlined, however, Sigismund's recruitment and use of Scolari must be seen within the broader context of the king's desire for skills and expertise.<sup>863</sup> Scolari's true utility becomes clearer when seen within the context of the Turkish threat and the increasing demands on governance that it entailed.

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<sup>858</sup> István Draskóczy, 'Zur Frage des ungarischen Salswesens unter König Sigismund', in *Sigismund von Luxemburg: Kaiser und König in Mitteleuropa, 1387-1437*, ed. Josef Macek, Ernő Marosi, Ferdinand Seibt (Warendorf: Fahlbusch Verlag, 1994), pp. 184-91.

<sup>859</sup> For a brief introduction to the figure of Scolari, see Mark Whelan, 'Merchant, Administrator and General: Filippo Scolari in the Service of the Hungarian King, c. 1397-1426', *Whispering Gallery*, 115 (2012), 19-24. See also the references cited in, Ioan Hațegan, *Filippo Scolari: Un condotier Italian pe meleaguri dunărene* (Timișoara: Mirton, 1997), p. 92.

<sup>860</sup> Elemér Mályusz, 'Die Zentralisationbestrebungen König Sigismunds in Ungarn', *Studia Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 50 (1960), 1-42 (p. 11).

<sup>861</sup> See Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 121-2.

<sup>862</sup> Katalin Prajda, 'The Florentine Scolari Family at the Court of Sigismund of Luxemburg in Buda', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 14 (2010), 513-33 (p. 519).

<sup>863</sup> See the comments in Faro, 'Italian Merchants', pp. 125, 133.

There exist a range of sources available for the study of Scolari. Scolari's remarkable career in Hungarian royal service, first as an administrator and later as a military commander, has left a great paper trail. Moreover, his diplomatic activities in the run up to the Council of Constance as well as the brutal tactics which he used during his invasion of Venetian territory in 1412 provoked discussion among contemporaries and made him a well-known figure in cultural and literary circles. The contemporary Italian proverb, *ha più fede in lui che gli ungheri nello Spano* ('to have more faith in him than the Hungarians do in Spano [Scolari's nickname]'), was well known enough for Niccolò Machiavelli to deliberately misquote it for comedic purposes in *Mandragola*, his play of 1518.<sup>864</sup> His character of Nicia demonstrates his stupidity by stating instead, 'Come, se mi pare? Io tornerò qui in uno stante, ché ho più fede in voi che gli ungheri nelle spade' ('How do I appear to you? I will return because I have more faith in you than the Hungarians do in their swords'). Scolari proved a popular figure in Florentine literary circles and there exist several biographies, penned by Florentines such as Jacopo Poggio di Bracciolini (d. 1478), the nephew of the famous humanist Poggio, and Domenico Mellini (d. 1620), which document his life in Hungarian service.<sup>865</sup> By the 1450s his reputation had sufficient fame and renown for numerous Florentines to feature Scolari in their works. The Florentine painter, Andrea del Castagno (d. 1457), included Scolari in his *uomini famosi*, a series of panel paintings commemorating great figures from Florence's recent past and Leonardo Bruni, in his *Historiae Florentinae*, ranked Scolari second only to Julius Caesar in military genius.<sup>866</sup>

Sigismund took Scolari into his service around 1397 and Bracciolini, Mellini and the anonymously authored 'La Vita di Meser Filippo Scolari', probably written before 1442, offer different versions of how Scolari and Sigismund met.<sup>867</sup> While their versions may differ and be overly dramatised, they all give the impression that Sigismund was genuinely impressed by Scolari's financial and accounting skills. Bracciolini reports that Scolari, as a young man, worked with his master, a certain Luca Pecchia, in Buda during the 1390s. One day Scolari's mercantile activities brought him to 'the treasury of king Sigismund' to discuss

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<sup>864</sup> Gyorgy Szabo, 'Riferimenti all'Ungheria in un detto popolare de la mandragola Machiavelliana', *Annales Universitatis Scientiarum Budapestinensis de Rolando Eotvos nominatae. Sectio Linguistica*, 1 (1970), 65-8.

<sup>865</sup> Shayne Mary Mitchell, 'The Image of Hungary and of Hungarians in Italy, 1437-1526' (Unpublished PhD thesis, Warburg Institute, 1994), p. 29.

<sup>866</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26-7. Gizella Nemeth Popo and Adria Popo, *Pippo Spano: un eroe antiturco antesignano del rinascimento* (Florence: Edizioni della Laguna, 2006), p. 95.

<sup>867</sup> Anonymous, 'La Vita di Meser Filippo Scolari', trans. Bastiano Fortini, *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 4 (1843), 152-62. For discussion of the source's provenance, see F. Polidori, 'Due Vite di Filippo Scolari', *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 4 (1843), 119-27 (119-20)



business and where Sigismund, who happened to be present, after ‘seeing the young man in the arranging of the objects, and in the holding, accounting and the discussion, prestigiously doing everything with a dexterity and genius given by nature; demanded with many prayers to the merchant, that if he would yield [to his service], he would have and hold him like his son.’<sup>868</sup>

The reason why Sigismund was so keen to have a man such as Scolari in his service is reinforced by another anecdote from Bracciolini’s biography, which demonstrates how the Florentine’s skills were of direct use when dealing with the Ottoman threat. One day, when Sigismund and his barons were discussing the ‘custody and guard of the Danube, for the defence of that land from the assaults of the Turks’, they were struggling to work out the pay and materials necessary to supply 12,000 horsemen.<sup>869</sup> For an Italian with a mercantile background it was easy, and ‘Filippo, taking his pen, by that fact itself, did the counting with such a swiftness that all those surrounding were amazed by it, and they greatly praised [him]’.<sup>870</sup>

A similar tale comes from the anonymously authored biography, which records Scolari coming to the aid of the Archbishop of Esztergom. The archbishop was unable to keep coherent accounts but Scolari, apparently with some form of double entry book keeping, ‘drew the sums with little confusion and difficulty between one part and the other’.<sup>871</sup> This was a skill which apparently ‘stupified the Archbishop to amazement’ and, after discovering that his servants could not copy Scolari’s accounting procedures, the prelate promised to put Scolari in charge and place him above all his other servants and friends.<sup>872</sup>

While the stories surrounding Scolari are certainly embellished, these stories reflect the milieu of Italian traders in Buda.<sup>873</sup> They reflect how the sophisticated financial and accounting skills that Scolari and other members of the European mercantile classes had were not present in the Hungarian court. In the context of fourteenth and fifteenth century Europe

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<sup>868</sup> Jacopo di Poggio Bracciolini, ‘Vita di Messer Filippo Scolari’, *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 4 (1843), 163-84 (p. 164). ‘e veggendo il giovanetto nello assettare le cose, e nel tenere i conti e le ragioni, prestissimamente ogni cosa fare, con una destrezza d’ingegno da natura data; con molti prieghi lo chiese al mercatante, promettendoli, se gliene dava, d’averlo e tenerlo sempre per suo figliulo.’

<sup>869</sup> Ibid., p. 165. ‘custodia e guardia del Danubio, per difendere quell paese dall’assaulto de’Turchi’.

<sup>870</sup> Ibid., p. 165. ‘Filippo, e preso lui la penna, ipso facto con tale celerità ebbe il conto fatto, che tutti i circostanti si maravigliavona, grandissimamente lodandolo’.

<sup>871</sup> Anonymous, ‘La Vita di Meser Philipppo Scolari’, p. 153. ‘et non pichola confusione et difficoltà tra l’una parte et l’altra d’esso calculo nasceva’.

<sup>872</sup> Ibid., p. 153. ‘che stupefacto l’Arcivescovo si maravigliò.’

<sup>873</sup> Mitchell, ‘Image of Hungary’, p. 30.

however, Sigismund was by no means unique in using Italian mercantile expertise within his administration. Italian merchants frequently dominated the conduct of trade and commerce throughout Europe and the case was no different in Hungary.<sup>874</sup> Many Italian traders settled in their countries of business for extended periods of time and became involved in the administration of state finances and it would appear that the Kingdom of Hungary, and the states of eastern Christendom in general, do not form exceptions to this trend during the fifteenth century.<sup>875</sup>

However, a study of Scolari and his direct successors, the Tallóci, a group of four brothers from a Ragusan merchant family, complicate this trend. Scolari and the Ragusan Tallóci brothers went far beyond the standard merchant in royal service, eventually becoming barons and bearing responsibility for the raising and victualing of armies and their command in battle. Scolari and Matcó Tallóci became great barons in Hungary and Matcó, with his brothers Petro, Franko and Jovan also coming to hold significant lands and commanding their own *Banderia* in battle against the Ottoman Turks.<sup>876</sup> Scolari and Franko Tallóci would both die in battle, the first outside Golubac commanding a joint Hungaro-Serbian and Portuguese force in 1426 and the second at the head of his *banderium* at the Second Battle of Kosovo in 1448. Matko Tallóci campaigned extensively in Hungary against the Turks and their Bosnian allies towards the west of Hungary until his death in 1445 and Jovan Tallóci, as the Prior of the Knights Hospitaller in Hungary, had significant military responsibilities. In fact, it was Jovan who successfully defended Belgrade against the attack of Murad II in 1440 and, if the account of Jan Długosz is to be believed, the Hungarians owed their victory almost exclusively to his tactics and leadership.<sup>877</sup> Sigismund and Scolari appeared to have been good friends too and as a sign of his affection, Sigismund buried Scolari in the cathedral of Székesfehérvár, alongside the traditional resting place of Hungarian kings.<sup>878</sup>

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<sup>874</sup> See the survey work, Gyorgy Szekely, 'Wallons et Italiens en europe centrale aux 11-16e siecles', *Annales Universitatis Scientiarum Budapestinensis de Rolando Eötvös Nominatae, Sectio Historica*, 6 (1964), 3-71. For coverage of Hungary, see pp. 46-51. Foreign merchants and moneylenders played vital roles in managing crown finances in England. See Martin Allen, *Mints and Money in Medieval England* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), pp. 73-102 (for specific examples, pp. 85-7).

<sup>875</sup> See, for example, Giovannia Ptasnik, 'Gl'Italiani in Polonia nel Medioevo', *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Italian summary by Armando Saporì, 83 (1925), 125-55. On Hungary, see Draskóczy, 'ungarische Salzwesens', p. 191.

<sup>876</sup> For a discussion of the names of the four Tallóci brothers and their appearance in the sources, see Mályusz, 'Die vier Gebrüder Tallóci', p. 9. István 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 and Marcell Sebök (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999), p. 533.

<sup>877</sup> Długosz, *Historiae Polonicae*, xii. 651-3; See also the comments in Speratus Nadilo, 'Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii (ab origine urbis usque ad annum 1451)', *MSHSM*, 26 (1893), (p. 282).

<sup>878</sup> Bracciolini, 'Scolari', p. 184.

Scolari and the Tallóci brothers served Sigismund in various capacities and roles, as merchants and traders, diplomats, administrators and military commanders and as such, they do not fit the stereotypical pattern of merchants in royal service. Nor, with their careers in trade and finance, do they fit the pattern of condottieri, a term with which Scolari is frequently labelled and one which some scholars, such as Ioan Hațegan, are aware does not adequately describe Scolari, when he states that ‘compared with many other contemporaries who specialised in the art of war, Scolari was detached from mere condottiere’.<sup>879</sup> Scolari and the Tallóci brothers form an administrative and governmental condottieri, or, to borrow a term coined by Rady, military enterprisers.<sup>880</sup> Their mercantile expertise and skill at fighting made them the ideal people to both administer and defend the southern frontier of Hungary, processes which were becoming increasingly complex as more resources were being committed to the frontier in order to defend it against the Ottomans.

The accolades which Scolari receives for his financial expertise in his biographies clearly had grounding in reality, as the Florentine quickly rose to prominence in the Hungarian royal administration. None of his biographies provide a precise date detailing his entry into Sigismund’s service, but the first grants of land made to Scolari and his brother, Matteo, to survive, are dated to 1398.<sup>881</sup> It would not be unreasonable to suggest that Sigismund recruited Scolari, a skilled Florentine financier, to aid him in his drive to reform his kingdom’s finances which he embarked upon at the Diet of Temesvár in 1397.<sup>882</sup> In 1397 Sigismund rewarded Scolari with the wardenship of Simontornya, a town roughly 100 miles to the south of Buda, where Scolari presumably met and married his wife, the Hungarian noblewoman Barbara of Ozora.<sup>883</sup> Scolari’s recruitment needs to be seen in the context of Sigismund’s attempts at garnering more economic resources, because as early as 1399 Sigismund had appointed Scolari as ‘the count of our city of Kremnica’,<sup>884</sup> where a royal mint was based, and by 1401 he was in charge of the salt chambers, a major source of royal income, as a document refers to him as ‘the count of the royal salt chambers’.<sup>885</sup>

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<sup>879</sup> Hațegan, *Scolari*, p. 92. ‘Comparativ cu alți mulți contemporani, specializați în arta războiului, Scolari s-a detașat de simplul condotier’.

<sup>880</sup> Rady, *Banate of Severin (Szöreny)*, p. 55.

<sup>881</sup> Gusztáv Wenzel, ‘Okmánytar Ozorai Pipó Történetéhez’, *Történelmi Társulat Társulata*, 27 (1884), 1-31, 220-47, 412-37, 613-27 (pp. 5-6).

<sup>882</sup> *DRMH*, ii. 21-28.

<sup>883</sup> Prajda, ‘Scolari Family’, p. 518.

<sup>884</sup> Wenzel, ‘Ozorai Pipó’, p. 7. ‘Comitis urburam nostrarum de Crempnica’.

<sup>885</sup> *ZKO*, ii. nr. 831. ‘comitis camararum salium regalium’.

In 1403 however, Scolari proved to Sigismund that he was not just an able administrator but a competent military commander too. Ladislaus of Naples (d. 1414), a claimant to the Hungarian throne, attempted to usurp Sigismund in 1403 and his invasion received the support of several Hungarian barons. However, Scolari remained loyal, raised an army and helped to drive Ladislaus and his supporters out of Hungary.<sup>886</sup> Upon the stabilisation of his rule in 1404, Sigismund made Scolari a baron of the Hungarian realm and appointed him to rule the strategically important County of Temesvár, which, lying around 100km the north of the Danube, could oversee the critical stretch of the Ottoman frontier between Belgrade and Turnu Severin.<sup>887</sup>

At this point Scolari's career in Hungarian royal service assumes a clear military dimension and within a few years his military responsibilities had grown to become quite significant.<sup>888</sup> In 1407, for example, he commanded a Hungarian army tasked with conquering and subduing rebellious Bosnian lords and their Turkish allies on Hungary's south-western flank. The land grants and praise which Scolari received would imply that this campaign was one of military success.<sup>889</sup> Scolari's achievements in this campaign resulted in more rewards from the Hungarian king.<sup>890</sup> In 1407 Sigismund refers to Scolari as the 'excellent Pipo of Ozora, charged with the treasury and also count of Temesvár and of our salt chambers' and the next year Scolari is listed as one of the founding members of the Order of the Dragon, a chivalric order founded by Sigismund and his wife in 1408.<sup>891</sup> The addition of *Zewreniensis* (modern day Turnu Severin) to Scolari's name in the statutes of the Order would also imply that Scolari was in charge of the strategically key Danubian fortress of the same name and held the title of Ban of Severin by 1408.<sup>892</sup>

Scolari's responsibilities continued to increase. By the 1420s his posts and responsibilities had developed in such a way that most of the Hungarian defensive system on

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<sup>886</sup> Bracciolini, 'Scolari', pp. 168-70. It is also at this point, according to Bracciolini, Scolari took the nickname Spano, with Spano being a form of the Hungarian word *ispán*, meaning governor.

<sup>887</sup> Ibid., p. 169-70.

<sup>888</sup> What follows is only a summary of Scolari's career. For a clear and concise summary, see Joseph Aschbach's summary of Scolari's military activities in his *Geschichte Kaiser Sigmund's*, iv. 412-19. For a study of monograph length, see Popo and Popo, *Pippo Spano*.

<sup>889</sup> Wenzel, 'Ozorai Pipó', pp. 21-27.

<sup>890</sup> Bracciolini, 'Scolari', p. 173.

<sup>891</sup> Wenzel, 'Ozorai Pipó', p. 20. 'Magnifici Piponis de Ozora sumpni nostril Thesaurij nec non Themensiensis et camerarum salium nostrarum comitis'. For his position in the order, *CDH*, x, iv. 687 (nr 317). For more information, see Engel, *Realm*, p. 212.

<sup>892</sup> *CDH*, x, iv. 689 (nr 317). Severin was perhaps the most important fortress on the frontier. The Teutonic accounts, compiled around 1430, record Severin's garrison and military resources, including 300 men, 60 archers and eight gunpowder experts. See Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden', p. 111.

the southern frontier was centralised around him. Scolari ruled all of the seven counties which comprised the Hungaro-Turkish frontier, held posts which meant that he was the dominant figure in Hungarian financial administration and held the lands and titles which made him directly responsible for the defence of the southern frontier. Thus, he was in charge of, or at least had the responsibility for, managing the Hungarian war machine at all levels.

Scolari's posts in the mints, salt chambers and treasury meant that he oversaw the levying of the majority of crown finance. His role in the treasury meant that he was then responsible for allocating the funds and resources in line with the kingdom's various military commitments. It is hard to ascertain what Scolari's precise administrative responsibilities were, but the glimpses offered by the sources reveal that his mercantile background and linguistic skills would have certainly been in demand. Sigismund was grieved enough at Scolari's death to write to his widow in 1428. In the letter, Scolari's skills and importance to the financial administration is made evident as Sigismund describes his day to day activities in great detail. He reveals how Scolari was responsible for most of the treasury's operation, stating that 'count Pipo...for many past years held from us the duty of all of our royal salt chambers...and furthermore, he bore and secured yearly many of our royal issues and rents by our command in each of the aforesaid years'.<sup>893</sup> The income from these various streams would then be allotted to 'our various royal campaigns and arrangements' by Scolari as well, a process that would have taken much financial skill.<sup>894</sup> It would appear that Scolari's means of accounting and of providing for military campaigns was a successful one, and that Jörg Hoensch's rather pessimistic assessment of Scolari's abilities to keep Sigismund's coffers full is unwarranted.<sup>895</sup> That Scolari's methods of accounting were successful is implied by a clause in Sigismund's military ordinance of 1432/3. In the ordinance Sigismund issued a series of military regulations and special attention is drawn to how the kingdom's finances should continue to be administered 'just as was done at one time by count Pipo and the Despot [of Serbia]'.<sup>896</sup>

Scolari did not just count the money in and then count it out. It is clear that he had other administrative responsibilities to oversee. These included not just allocating expenses

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<sup>893</sup> Wenzel, 'Ozorai Pipó', p. 622. 'Pipo...comes...pluribus retroactis annis officium omnium camerarum salium nostrarum Regalium a nobis tenedo... et eciam multos alios nostros regales proventus et redditus de nostro mandato in singulis predictorum annorum tulerit et perceperit annis.' Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 135-6.

<sup>894</sup> Wenzel, 'Ozorai Pipó', p. 622. 'ad nostras regias varios expediciones disposicionem'.

<sup>895</sup> Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 67.

<sup>896</sup> DRMH, ii. 144. 'sicut etiam fuit factum per quondam comites Piponem et Despoto'. The laws of medieval Hungary have been translated into English. The English translation is not my own and the translation from the above work is quoted here. The same case applies for any further references from the DRMH.

for campaigns, but also victualling and supplying armies, transporting vital royal supplies and stocks, such as salt, grain and timber, around the kingdom by river and by land.<sup>897</sup> He also worked closely with figures such as Mark of Nuremberg, a German financier employed by Sigismund, to mint new currency and manage the kingdom's coinage.<sup>898</sup> Financial responsibilities aside, his status as the Count of Temesvár and as ruler of the other six counties which formed the Hungaro-Turkish border meant that he was responsible for maintaining and extending the system of Hungarian fortresses, a process which he actively took part in, personally appointing castle builders and raising new fortresses as early as 1405.<sup>899</sup> This commitment to reinforcing the system of Hungarian fortresses along the Danube never ceased, and he continued to renovate castles and build new ones throughout the 1420s.<sup>900</sup> Furthermore, Scolari led the majority of the campaigns on the southern frontier for roughly the decade between after his return from Constance in 1415 until his death in 1426.

## **5.2 Sigismund, his need for administrative and fiscal expertise, and the Teutonic Knights**

Scolari's death in 1426 left a great gap both in his administration and in the defence of the Danube frontier. Sigismund's solution was to call upon the Teutonic Knights for their aid. As we have seen in previous chapters, this call for aid, contained in OBA 4759, encompassed a range of military specialists. Requests for those with administrative and economic expertise feature highly. In this letter Sigismund expressed his desire for Rusdorf to dispatch two Teutonic Knights to him. The figure of two was the minimum which Sigismund wanted (*czwen deutsche herren oder mer*), noting that if they could send more then they should.<sup>901</sup> Furthermore, they should have a knowledge of Polish or Russian (*ettliche polonish oder reüsisch künden*), presumably so that they could be used in diplomatic missions. Sigismund was also very specific about the burghers which he required from the Order:

Item, two appropriate burghers from Danzig and two from Thorn, who are wise and capable of such war on water and on land, and who are able to advise our lord with

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<sup>897</sup> For such a case in 1419, see *ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>898</sup> Such as in 1415, when the current coins were said to be in a state of 'total ruin and destruction'. See, Wenzel, 'Ozorai Pipó', p. 246. 'in toalem...ruinam et destruccionem'.

<sup>899</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>900</sup> Ioan Hategan, 'Das mittelalterliche Schloss von Temesvár die von Filippo Scolari im Banat gebauten oder renovierten Schlösser', *Castrum Bene*, 2 (1992), 268-75. For a charter detailing Scolari's reconstruction of Severin and its surrounding fortresses, see *CDP*, i. 317-8 (nr 205).

<sup>901</sup> OBA, 4759.

the wisdom of the Order and also in trade, fishing and other acts, as one practices in Prussia, and to remain with his grace until he is satisfied.<sup>902</sup>

The fact that these requests come before any mention of military kit or skills attest to the high priority which Sigismund attached to securing Teutonic administrative expertise. Sigismund also requested that the Teutonic Knights send two fishermen, with their own nets and equipment (*mit iren netzen und geczeug*), and who were capable of fishing in both inland waters and in the sea (*die uff seen und uff sussen wassern, do die in das mere fallen fischen können*).<sup>903</sup> The desire for fishermen can be seen in other items of correspondence and in a document that, although undated, was probably produced in either 1429 or 1430.<sup>904</sup> This document, which requests the sending of several Teutonic Knights and a variety of people with skills relating to woodcutting and shipbuilding, asks for fishermen too.

The desire for fishermen is understandable. The Teutonic Knights were given the right to the fisheries of the Danube river, all ‘the fishing...and all other fish of Severin as far up as Rybess’ to be precise.<sup>905</sup> It is clear that they took advantage of this right as in 1432, Claus Redwitz, the leader of the Teutonic Knights in Hungary, reports to Rusdorf from Severin that ‘the fisheries of the *hawsenfanghes* for the castles on the Danube’ were a part of their income.<sup>906</sup> This would have both formed an important part of their income which supported the maintenance of their defences and garrisons in the region, but also as a possible source of food for their soldiers and retainers. One of the seven brothers who accompanied Redwitz is identified as the *vischmeister tzu Morteck*, so the Teutonic Knights took the appropriate expertise to Hungary.<sup>907</sup>

Sigismund expanded upon his desire for Teutonic expertise in a letter of October 1428. When noting the numerous fortresses which he needed to defend against the Turks, he stated that ‘we have dearly wanted to deploy such order, organisational activity (*ampter wirtschafft*) and handling, as is practiced in your order in the houses, castles and courts and

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<sup>902</sup> OBA, 4759. ‘Item zwei redliche bürger von danzk und zwei von Thorun, die verstendig und solicher krieg zuwasser und zulang leuffig sein und unserem herren, nach des ordens wyse dorynne raten können und auch in kaufmanschaft, fischerey und anderen hantirungen, als man die zu preussen treibt kuntschaft haben, und bei sinen gnaden beliben biß uff im wolgefallen’.

<sup>903</sup> OBA, 4759.

<sup>904</sup> OBA, 5215. See chapter 3 for discussion of dating.

<sup>905</sup> Joachim, ‘Deutsche Ritterorden’, p. 112. ‘alle fischerey... und aller anderer fische von Severin bisz herauf gen Rybess.’

<sup>906</sup> Ibid., p. 117. ‘mit der fischerey des hawsenfanghes by den slossen uf der Thunaw,’

<sup>907</sup> OBA, 5096.

other places'.<sup>908</sup> In this letter Sigismund also revised his demands for Teutonic Knights upwards from two, and instead asked for five, six or more (*fünff, sechs oder mere*), who were experienced in seeing to the Order's administration and offices on a daily basis (*die zu solichen sachen täglich und alle ampter, der mann dann uff des Ordens heusern gebruchet wissentlich und leuffig seyn*).<sup>909</sup> Sigismund emphasised to Rusdorf how his brothers were *wol versucht und geubet* in these matters, and hoped that they would soon arrive to serve him.<sup>910</sup>

It is worth emphasising here that this was not the first time Sigismund had drawn upon Teutonic expertise in order to carry out his economic and military plans. This point is made particularly clear in a letter of Sigismund in the *Ordensbriefarchiv*. The scale of Sigismund's politics was ambitious and many of his policies were broad in their scope. Sigismund's attempted economic blockade of Venice was no exception. In the later 1410s Sigismund experimented with an ambitious plan to cripple Venice by opening up a new trade route to the east, bypassing their trade routes through Constantinople and the Levant and depriving them of income. This trade route was to be routed through the Danube and through the Genoese colonies of Kyla and Caffa (modern day Kiliya and Feodosiya in modern day Ukraine and the Crimea respectively) in the Black Sea.<sup>911</sup> This plan had a military facet too, and if successful it would have strengthened Sigismund's hold on the Danube frontier and increased Genoese influence in the Black Sea region which could have helped counter Ottoman naval power. When it came to the specifics, however, Sigismund needed help from the Teutonic Order and specifically their building expertise.

On 25 August 1420 Sigismund sent a letter to the Grandmaster confirming that a brother of the Teutonic Order, a certain *Wytichen von Phorten* had arrived at his court.<sup>912</sup> The document reveals the interesting detail that Sigismund had requested Wytichen in order to help build the roads which would support these new trade routes. The document states that Wytichen was requested precisely 'on account of the road towards Kyla, which we had hoped to build and to open for the common merchant'.<sup>913</sup> While not explicitly stated in the letter,

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<sup>908</sup> OBA, 4989. 'dorynn wir solich ordnung, ampter wirtschafft und handlung gern anrichten wollten, als dann die in demselben deynem Orden uff heussern slossern, hofen, und anderswo gehalten werden'. Similarly, in July 1429 Sigismund would state how he desired 'in Hungern eynen meister und ander Amptluwte'. See OBA, 5050.

<sup>909</sup> OBA, 4989.

<sup>910</sup> Ibid.

<sup>911</sup> For a discussion of the sources and some speculation regarding the feasibility of this plan, see Hermann Heimpel, 'Zur Handelspolitik Kaiser Sigismunds', *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 23 (1930), 145-156. See also, Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden', pp. 90-1.

<sup>912</sup> OBA, 3239. This letter has been calendared in Altmann, nr 4241 (and for the initial plan, nr 2857) and *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 3239. For further discussion, Israel, *Das Verhältnis*, p. 32.

<sup>913</sup> OBA, 3239. 'der straße gen kyla wegen dir wir hoffeten zubuen und dem gemeynen koufman zu offenen'



this planned road would have had military uses too as Sigismund had been considering attempting to install garrisons in key cities in Moldova, including the city of Kyla in the later 1410s in order to strengthen his hold across the entirety of the Danube frontier.<sup>914</sup> Sigismund had needed to improve the roads in western Hungary, for example, specifically to facilitate the transport of artillery for his Venetian campaigns in the early 1410s.<sup>915</sup> The case of Wytichen von Phorten demonstrates once again how Sigismund was able to draw on expertise from the Teutonic Order in order to accomplish tasks that required specialised skills. That Wytichen was present at Sigismund's court demonstrates also that his request to the Grandmaster was heeded. Unfortunately Wytichen's skills were never put to use for Sigismund notes in the same letter that Kyla had been taken by the Turks. This fact provides the reason for the letter, as the letter acts as a letter of safe conduct for Wytichen to return to the Grandmaster for he was no longer required by Sigismund.

The Teutonic Knights which Sigismund first requested in 1427, however, enjoyed a longer career in his service than Wytichen's. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the most important figure in the party of the Teutonic Knights who served Sigismund on the Danube frontier was Claus Redwitz. It is certain that Sigismund received the two or more Teutonic Knights and the burghers from Danzig and Thorn. In fact, Redwitz was accompanied by seven brothers, making 8 brothers overall.<sup>916</sup> There may have been more brothers in Hungary than were listed in the inventory of Redwitz.<sup>917</sup> For example, a brother of the order, *Andras Schonald*, travelled from Rome to Trnava in Slovakia within sixteen days in May 1430 (*der zcog vor mir von rome xvi tags denselben habe ich gefunden czu Tirnow in Ungarn*), where he bumped into a fellow brother, *Baltazar*.<sup>918</sup>

It would appear that Sigismund received the burghers from Danzig and Thorn sooner than he did the group of Teutonic Knights. The memorandum of the Pflieger von Ortelsberg, mentioned in the previous chapter, was drawn up in preparation for his visit to Sigismund's court in 1427/1428. The fact that Ortelsburg notes that he has been sent *mit dessen kauffman* to answer the questions asked of the Grandmaster would imply that Sigismund received the burghers which he desired rather quickly.<sup>919</sup> There were other burghers from Thorn and

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<sup>914</sup> For a brief narrative of these years, see Zachariadou, 'Danube Frontier (1420-1424)', pp. 682-6.

<sup>915</sup> *Listine*, 9, p. 229. Calendared in, *ZKO*, iii. nr 1728

<sup>916</sup> OBA, 5096. Not six brothers, as in Sarnowsky, 'Teutonic Order', p. 260.

<sup>917</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>918</sup> OBA, 5269. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 5269. It is no wonder then, that Schonald goes on to say that his horses were 'sicher gar mude'

<sup>919</sup> OBA, 4772.

Danzig present in the Kingdom of Hungary too, though whether they were there specifically to advise Sigismund is unclear. While in Trnava the aforementioned *Schonald* also met a burgher from Thorn known as *Niclos Richenberg*.<sup>920</sup> That there were burghers from Thorn in Bratislava during these years is without doubt. Redwitz was in contact with *Tilman Rewss Burger zü Thoren* as he borrowed money of him while in Bratislava in October 1429.<sup>921</sup> Other burghers from the Ordenstaat, such as the Thorner *Tylman Watczelrade*, were not so fortunate. *Tylman* was in Hungary in 1427 though he was languishing in the captivity of a certain Herr Nimpsch.<sup>922</sup> Nevertheless, there is ample evidence to suggest that Sigismund received the burghers whom he desired.

Redwitz was ultimately responsible for the defence against the Turks and for managing the seven brothers who accompanied him to Hungary. He was given numerous lands and titles to help facilitate the upkeep and maintenance of the Danube frontier. His titles are noted in a letter of his dated to 27 April 1431, where he signs as *Cloß von Redewicz, bruder deutsches ordens, baenn zu severin, obrister graff der moncz und salz camern in Sybenburgen*.<sup>923</sup> A list of the major figures in the company of Sigismund, undated but probably produced in the early 1430s, provides clues as to his status in Sigismund's court.<sup>924</sup> The list is rather mysterious as it is undated and its author and recipient are both unknown, but one gets the impression that it was written for either the Grandmaster or the King of Poland. As Redwitz is listed in the section which records the prelates and barons of Sigismund, it can be assumed that Redwitz enjoyed quite a high status in Sigismund's court.<sup>925</sup>

The paper trail which Redwitz has left in the *Ordensbriefarchiv* is an eclectic one, and attests to the variety of roles which he performed while in Sigismund's service. This did not just include commanding and managing the Danube frontier and its military resources, but sourcing hunting dogs for Sigismund, arranging loans and looking for stolen sheep.<sup>926</sup> As we have seen in a previous chapter, his attempt to procure a hunting dog upon Sigismund's

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<sup>920</sup> OBA, 5269.

<sup>921</sup> OBA, 5197. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 5197.

<sup>922</sup> OBA, 4782.

<sup>923</sup> OBA, 5630.

<sup>924</sup> OBA, 5545. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 5545.

<sup>925</sup> OBA, 5545. The line which mentions Redwitz runs, 'Radwicz Crucifer de prussia qui praesens erat apud vestram excellenciam'.

<sup>926</sup> For Redwitz's involvement in the altercation over the stolen sheep, see *Urkundenbuch Siebenbürgen*, iv. nr 2083.

request, which could be given as a gift to the Ottoman Sultan, failed miserably.<sup>927</sup> Other items of evidence shed a more favourable light on his activity, such as a chance archaeological find in 1981. This takes the form of a ceramic pot unearthed in modern day Slovakia and which contained 122 coins bearing the mark of Claus Redwitz.<sup>928</sup> The activities of his fellow knights while in Hungary are more difficult to ascertain, but it would appear that they were spread across the various fortresses of the Danube frontier with various military and bureaucratic roles. Alongside the named captains and lieutenants of the fortresses are the names of those with administrative responsibilities, such as Conrad Kaffensteyner, the *kochenmeister* of Severin, Mathes Kyczka, the *kelnermeister* of Severin, and Albrecht von Ulmen, the *fyschmeister*, based in the fortress of Pecs near Orsova.<sup>929</sup>

### 5.3 The failure of Sigismund's experiment with the Teutonic Order

The reasons given by historians as to why the Teutonic Knights failed to hold the Danube frontier against the Turks generally revolve around two factors. The first is that the Teutonic Knights were too weak to maintain such a distant post anyway.<sup>930</sup> This is unconvincing. As we have seen in previous chapters, the Teutonic Knights were able to marshal the necessary resources in 1430 and 1431 from their lands and bring them to the Danube frontier, as suggested by Redwitz in his letter of August 1431.<sup>931</sup> The second factor is that they simply did not receive the money which they were promised to defend the lands and castles given to them.<sup>932</sup> This explanation is not entirely satisfactory either. After all, Redwitz had access to other sources of income. He was able to raise 870 gulden in October 1429 while in Bratislava by borrowing money from two men, one a burgher from Thorn.<sup>933</sup> These men would be paid back from the treasury at Marienburg.<sup>934</sup> He also had supplies of money from his superiors in Prussia and Marienburg.<sup>935</sup> Nevertheless, in a letter of 7 March 1432, Redwitz emphasises lack of money and lack of support from both Sigismund and various Hungarian nobles.

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<sup>927</sup> OBA, 5245.

<sup>928</sup> Ján Hunka and Marián Soják, 'Interesting Motives on the Redwitz-type Coins in the Context of New Discoveries', in *Iconography of Money in Central and East Europe*, Slovak Numismatic Society, 2007, p. 16: [http://www.muenzgeschichte.ch/downloads/symposium\\_hummene.pdf](http://www.muenzgeschichte.ch/downloads/symposium_hummene.pdf) (accessed online, 08/04/14)

<sup>929</sup> Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden', p. 118.

<sup>930</sup> Fostreuter, *Deutsche Orden*, p. 222; Thumser, 'neue Aufgabe', p. 142. Some historians, such as Joachim and Israel, do not come to any firm conclusions as to why the enterprise ultimately failed. See Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden', pp. 102-5; Israel, *Das Verhältnis*, pp. 32-4.

<sup>931</sup> OBA, 5705.

<sup>932</sup> Sarnowsky, 'Teutonic Order', p. 261.

<sup>933</sup> OBA, 5197.

<sup>934</sup> See the zettel attached to OBA, 5192.

<sup>935</sup> Sarnowsky, 'Teutonic Order', p. 260. See also OBA, 5084 and the discussion in the previous chapter.

Whatever the case, if we take Redwitz' letters at face value as historians such as Hoensch have done, then money would appear to have been a problem.<sup>936</sup> Sigismund, much like in the case of Scolari, concentrated a whole series of incomes and resources into the hands of the Teutonic Knights in order to enable them to defend the frontier against the Ottomans. Their accounts list in detail the sources which made up their 314,000 florin income. These included the rights to the mints of Hermannstadt and Kronstadt; the rights to the silver mines and to the tax on cattle in Siebenbürgen; a hundred tons of salt from each mine of Szeged, Lippa, Temesvár and Keve; the tax on the Cumans and Jasz; access to all of the millet around Szeged and Szolnok; the Archbishop of Kalocza's wine tithe and the aforementioned fishing rights.<sup>937</sup> However, it is clear from Redwitz's letter that the status of these incomes could be arbitrarily changed by Sigismund. Redwitz lists a series of incomes and privileges, which 'the most serene prince and lord Sigismund, Roman and Hungarian king... gives us...to hold the castles and land' against the Turks or other enemies.<sup>938</sup> Many of the above incomes and privileges are mentioned and Redwitz also refers to gold mints under his control. After listing the Order's extensive privileges Redwitz offers his opinion to Rusdorf, stating that he should have enough (*genwg haben*) support, income and means in order to accomplish the task at hand (*wir sulden von den bygelegten landen czu Hunghern und hirren hulfe stewher und rettunge genwg haben*).<sup>939</sup>

However, Redwitz went on to say that all was not as well as it seemed.<sup>940</sup> Sigismund had withdrawn the income from the tax on the Cumans and Jasz from Redwitz. Bertrandon de la Broquière's comment in 1433, that Sigismund had given the gold mines to both the Teutonic Knights and Matco Tallóci, implies that Redwitz may have been sharing some of his incomes with others.<sup>941</sup> Furthermore, Redwitz alleged that the Hungarian lords had proved most unhelpful and were not supporting the Teutonic Knights against the Turks. How reliable this statement is remains unclear. In June 1432 Švitrigaila noted in a letter to Rusdorf that when the Turks attacked the area around Severin that summer that it was Hungarian lords

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<sup>936</sup> Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 345.

<sup>937</sup> Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden', pp. 112-3.

<sup>938</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117. 'der allerdurchlauchtigste furste und hirre Sigmund Romischer hungarischer kunig... dy sloß und land domethe czuenthalten... dy uns seyne genad hat lassen folgen'.

<sup>939</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>940</sup> For further discussion, see Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden', p. 102.

<sup>941</sup> Broquière, *Le Voyage d'Outremer*, p. 236. The Teutonic accounts also reveal that the Order was to help feed 400 of Matco's cavalry. See Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden', p. 111.

who bore the brunt of the casualties, very few of whom escaped with their life (*die ungerischen hern tot slugen, das ir mit leben wenik entgangen sein*).<sup>942</sup>

Ascertaining precisely what happened in 1432 and what made Sigismund relieve Redwitz of his command the following year is a difficult task, and a discussion of what occurred this year is included in chapter one. Nevertheless, it would appear that the pressure which the Ottomans placed on the Danube frontier in 1432 was particularly intense. In the previous three campaigning seasons the Ottomans had campaigned elsewhere in the Balkans and had respected the peace treaty which they had agreed with Sigismund after Golubac in 1428. A letter of the Teutonic Order's procurator in Rome to the Grandmaster in May 1430 makes this point clear. In this letter the procurator reports that the Turks have refrained from attacking Hungary, and have instead attacked Venetian territory with a great force of 180,000 men (*dy turken gewest sein in der fenidier lande mit groser macht, als mit hundert tuss und achczig tuss man*).<sup>943</sup> He goes on to say that they have seized two Venetian towns in Slavonia (*zwo stete in Sclavonie*). In the summer of 1432 it would appear that the bulk of Ottoman campaigning was centred around the Iron Gates and Severin.<sup>944</sup>

The chronicle of Windecke is also difficult to use in this instance as he initially records that the Teutonic Knights fought with great success in 1432.<sup>945</sup> According to Windecke, it was a joint force of Teutonic Knights (*prüsseschen herrn*), Hungarian lords and the Lithuanian Grand Duke Švitrigaila who defeated the Turks in 1432, with Ottoman casualties numbering sixty thousand.<sup>946</sup> Though where this battle took place Windecke does not say. Later in his work and using as his chronological marker the vague term of *uf die zit* ('at this time'), he notes how a Turkish defeat of the Teutonic Knights made Sigismund *sere trurig* ('most sad') and forced him to send an embassy to the *prüssen herrn*, which presumably relieved them off their command.<sup>947</sup>

Whatever the case, by December the Komptur von Osterode reported in a letter to Rusdorf that the Turks had entered Wallachia in a civil war between two rival voivodes.<sup>948</sup>

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<sup>942</sup> Joachim states without justification that these Hungarian lords were the Teutonic Knights. Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden', p. 103.

<sup>943</sup> OBA, 5367. The reliability of this figure is questionable as this figure appears again in the same letter. The procurator notes that a group of cardinals are discussing giving the Order 180,000 gulden in order to support the effort against the Hussites.

<sup>944</sup> OBA, 6138. See also Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden', p. 103.

<sup>945</sup> Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, pp. 332-3

<sup>946</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 332-3.

<sup>947</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 349.

<sup>948</sup> OBA, 6276. Discussed briefly in Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden', pp. 103-4.

During the summer of 1432 the Turks invaded the territory which Sigismund had given the Order (*die torcken in de lande, das euwir gnode Orden ist gegeben*) and had seized three fortresses from them (*drey slosser haben vorbert*).<sup>949</sup> News of this deterioration on the frontier may have reached Sigismund, but it does not appear to feature in any of his correspondence. On 21 February Sigismund sent a letter to Rusdorf from Siena, and the only reference to the Order's activities in Hungary comes in a zettel and little is revealed in the way of detail: *sunderlich ouch so haben wir de procuratori befolhen ettlich sach als von des ordens sache wegen in hungern*.<sup>950</sup>

Joachim notes that the fate of the Teutonic Knights in Hungary after 1434 is very difficult to ascertain on account of the scarce evidence.<sup>951</sup> What little evidence there is would suggest that Sigismund owed the Teutonic Order money and that Redwitz's complaints in his letter of March 1432 had some grounding in reality. A letter of 6 November 1435 would not only support this, but also suggest that Redwitz and some of his order brothers were still in Sigismund's service and travelling in his retinue, though no longer in command of the fortresses on the Danube frontier. In this letter Sigismund reports on the various events occurring in Basel and Prague to Rusdorf.<sup>952</sup> Attached to this letter is a zettel, in which Sigismund asks for Rusdorf to send a representative to Bratislava to discuss the account (*der rechenung*), which he needed to attend to with Redwitz and the brothers (*die wir mit dem ersamen Clausen Redwicz und den Brudern zu tun haben*).<sup>953</sup>

Redwitz had been in Sigismund's service since the early 1420s and this is the last reference to Redwitz being in Sigismund's company. His correspondence throughout his career would suggest that Sigismund was difficult to work with. In the spring of 1425, for example, Redwitz penned a detailed report of the negotiations which were taking place before the Reichstag in Vienna which Sigismund had called.<sup>954</sup> This *werbung* was meant to keep Rusdorf informed of the major events, but mainly serves to highlight the hectic nature of Sigismund's court. Redwitz notes that he has met and spoken with Sigismund five times regarding the status of the Newmark but still cannot write anything for sure (*ich wol funff mol mit dem konige gereth, ich kann nict von im dirfaren, das ich mochte vor worheit schreiben*). Even if Redwitz did have concrete information he would not have been able to pass it on to

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<sup>949</sup> OBA, 6276

<sup>950</sup> OBA, 6366. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 6366. Altmann, nr 9368. See Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden', p. 104.

<sup>951</sup> Joachim, 'Deutsche Ritterorden', p. 105.

<sup>952</sup> OBA, 7083. *RhdOSMT* i, i. nr 7083.

<sup>953</sup> OBA, 7083.

<sup>954</sup> OBA, 4397. *RhdOSMT*, i, i. nr 4397.

Rusdorf, as he reports that Duke Ludwig of Bavaria was vetting his letters and forbidding him to write anything which he had learnt from the king (*ouch hat mir herczog lodwig verboten czu schreiben, was ich noch von dem konige vorneme*).<sup>955</sup> All that Redwitz could say for sure was that ‘the king has said to me that I am in his hands and that I am not going back’.<sup>956</sup> In effect, Sigismund strung Redwitz along for the better part of a decade before confirming the Teutonic Order’s possession of the New Mark, and he continued to string him along while he was Ban of Severin.<sup>957</sup> Perhaps much of the blame for Redwitz’s failure to hold the Danube frontier should be laid at Sigismund’s door.

Sigismund did not just string Redwitz along, but Rusdorf also. It would appear that Sigismund led Rusdorf into believing that the Teutonic Order was assuming control of the castles and lands in Hungary for a strictly limited period of time. A close examination of the source material in the *Ordensbriefarchiv*, and in particular the so called ‘Entwürfe’ which survive there, supports the idea that Sigismund took advantage of the Order and misled Rusdorf as to his real intentions. These ‘Entwürfe’, or draft copies of letters, give us an insight into the thinking of Grandmaster and his advisors as his correspondence was being drawn up. That being said though, there exist two issues which need to be taken into account when using them as sources. Firstly, they are scruffily written and often heavily damaged, which can make reconstructing their contents and their meaning difficult. Furthermore, in many cases where we have the draft copies of letters we do not have the final product which was eventually sent, which means we have no guarantee that the sentiments expressed in the draft made it into the final product. Nevertheless, one of Rusdorf’s rough letters composed in the spring of 1429 clearly demonstrate that the Teutonic Order’s transfer to the Danube frontier was seen as only temporary, at least by the Grandmaster. A time limit on the Teutonic Order’s tenure in Hungary is made explicit in April 1429, in a draft letter of Rusdorf’s to the Master of Livonia.<sup>958</sup> Originally the scribe wrote that Rusdorf was recalling some men (*etliche gebiethen*) from Memel, a commandery of the Order, and sending them to Hungary to remain with the Roman King *ein etwas jare*. Admittedly, the phrase *ein etwas jare* does not make perfect sense, as *etwas* in this sort of instance is predominantly used as an adverb meaning somewhat or partly. The *etwas* was then crossed out and replaced with

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<sup>955</sup> OBA, 4397. Duke Ludwig was not a popular man, and Windecke records one court hearing where Sigismund heard no less than 83 complaints about him. See Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 125.

<sup>956</sup> OBA, 4397. ‘der konig hat mir gesagt ich byn eyns in iren henden gewest ich kome nicht also wedir do hyn.’

<sup>957</sup> *CDH*, x, vii. 100-7 (nr 11).

<sup>958</sup> OBA, 5074.

*obiche*, so that the phrase now ran *ein obiche jare*, which could roughly be taken to mean ‘an entire year’.<sup>959</sup>

Sigismund also implied that he only desired the services of the Teutonic Order for a certain period of time. In September 1427 the brothers of the Order and the burgers from Danzig and Thorn were to remain with him until he was satisfied (*bey sinen gnaden beliben biß uff sin wolgefallen*).<sup>960</sup> In October 1429 he stated how he wanted the brothers of the Order, including Claus Redwitz, to remain with him ‘for a time’ and to prepare all matters according to their manner of rule (*eyn czeit bey uns bliben und alle sache nach irer ordnung anrichten*).<sup>961</sup> Perhaps Sigismund was telling Rusdorf what he wanted to hear, and only prolonged the Teutonic Order’s tenure in Hungary indefinitely once they had arrived. It was, after all, a difficult task to undertake, and one which was Rusdorf received some criticism for accepting. In February 1430 the procurator noted to Rusdorf the rumours which were circulating regarding Sigismund’s plan to send the Order to Hungary. He did so in rather disparaging terms, saying how he had heard that the Roman King was giving the Order waste land (*wuste landt*) in Hungary, of which the Order already had more than enough in Prussia (*der her doch scwer gnuk hat in Prüßen*).<sup>962</sup> Rusdorf went on to say how difficult a decision it was to accept Sigismund’s offer, and ‘how sweet or how bitter’ the consequences could be.<sup>963</sup> In a rough letter to the Master of Livonia, produced in early May 1429, Rusdorf noted how difficult a task it was (*so swer harter und groser irmanungen*), to accept the castles and lands on the Danube between Hungary, Serbia and Wallachia and defend them against them the Turks.<sup>964</sup> It was not that Rusdorf never gave the project any chance, as runs the argument of Hoensch, but that Rusdorf probably thought that the project was something much more short term than the one which Sigismund had in mind.<sup>965</sup> If Sigismund was not forthcoming with the resources which the Teutonic Order needed to maintain their presence in Hungary, then Rusdorf, given the Order’s military commitments in Silesia, Poland and Samogitia, would not have had the ability to support Redwitz and his fellow brothers against the Turks on a long term basis from his own pocket.

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<sup>959</sup> Ibid.

<sup>960</sup> OBA, 4759.

<sup>961</sup> OBA, 4989.

<sup>962</sup> OBA, 5293. Partially printed in Joachim, ‘Deutsche Ritterorden’, pp. 107-8. The term ‘wuste landt’ itself is not pejorative, and is used in other items of correspondence by Rusdorf (e.g. OBA, 5074).

<sup>963</sup> OBA, 5293.

<sup>964</sup> OBA, 5084.

<sup>965</sup> Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 345.



The vacuum left by the withdrawal of the Teutonic Knights was filled by the Tallóci brothers, and, upon Sigismund's death in 1437 and with Matco as the Count of Kevi, Ban of Slovenia, Dalmatia and Croatia, Frank, as the Captain of Belgrade and Ban of Severin and John, as the Prior of the Hospitallers, the Tallóci family dominated the frontier.<sup>966</sup> The ultimate successor to Sigismund's defensive system were not the Tallóci brothers, but John Hunyadi, whose military skills and battles against the Turks were later to win him great renown.

#### 5.4 John Hunyadi and his military education

It is worth noting that Hunyadi had Sigismund to thank for much of his military skill. The military and economic advisors which Sigismund requested from the Order in 1427 was merely one way in which he could gain access to military expertise outside the immediate base of his Hungarian subjects. Sigismund's diplomatic travels as Roman King allowed many members of his Hungarian nobility to travel across Christendom too, an opportunity which Hunyadi took advantage of when Sigismund travelled to Italy to be crowned in Rome.<sup>967</sup> According to Antonio Bonfini (1434-1502), an Italian court historian and author of *Rerum Hungaricum Decades*, produced during Matthias Corvinus' reign, 'Hunyadi earned rewards in Italy for two years under Duke Philip of Milan (Filippo Visconti), for he stayed behind in Italy after following Sigismund.'<sup>968</sup> Bonfini goes into even more detail later, stating that, Hunyadi travelled to Italy 'in order to see the Roman ancestors and also the masters of [military] affairs. He learnt of military education first under Duke Phillip of Milan.'<sup>969</sup> The reliability of Bonfini in this case has been questioned, but other sources would suggest that Hunyadi's stay at the Duke of Milan's court is not out of the question. While at Constance, for example, Sigismund addressed a letter to an unknown prince asking them if they could accept a certain Polish knight into his service. Sigismund noted that the knight had an interest in military matters and wished to serve him *pro actuum militarium exercicio*.<sup>970</sup> Clearly then, the idea that members of Sigismund's retinue would take advantage of their master's travels to learn about military matters is a realistic prospect.

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<sup>966</sup> Mályusz, 'Gebrüder Tallóci', pp. 31-48. See also Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 161-66. The only major office along the 400 mile stretch of frontier which had not been granted to one of the Tallócis was the Banate of Macsó.

<sup>967</sup> For a summary, see Whelan, 'Catastrophe or Consolidation', pp. 223-4.

<sup>968</sup> Bonfini, *Decades*, ii. 218 (decade iii, book 9, section 197). 'in Italia duos annos sub duce Phillippo Mediolanensi prima stipendia meruit, nam Sigismundum in Italiam secutus remansit'.

<sup>969</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 219. (decade iii, book 9, sections 196-8). 'ut Romanos progenitores ac rerum dominos inviseret. Militaris discipline gratia prima sub Phillippo Mediolanensium duce stipendia fecit'.

<sup>970</sup> HHSTA, HS, Böhm 22, Blau 8, fol 24a. Printed in Caro, 'Kanzlei', p. 10.

In conclusion, this chapter has shown how Sigismund's attitude to the defence of his southern frontier involved a conscious focus on economic development and the restructuring of his kingdom's finances. The development of a fortified frontier, the need to maintain a permanent standing force and the commitment to regular (if not yearly) campaigns on the frontier was a tremendous task for a medieval state such as Hungary, and required logistical and financial expertise that was not present in the Hungarian court. While Sigismund's solution to these challenges came first in the form of Scolari, and later in the form of the Tallóci brothers, his Roman Kingship did allow him to draw upon the expertise of the Teutonic Knights.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis has explored the response of Sigismund von Luxemburg to the Ottoman Turkish threat as Roman King and Holy Roman Emperor. It has hopefully shown how Sigismund consciously attempted to use the new found status and prestige that came with holding imperial office in order to counter the power of the Turks in south-eastern Europe. More importantly, it has hopefully shown that Sigismund's response to the Ottomans as Roman King was not merely limited to speeches, letters and the airing of his good intentions, but that he was able to use his status as the holder of the imperial office to bring concrete military, political and economic support to his struggle. In doing so, it has demonstrated how

Sigismund's accession as Roman King imbued him with additional options with which to combat the Ottoman Turkish threat. The historiographical focus on Sigismund's relationship with Venice for naval aid or on his attempts to galvanise assistance from his fellow Christians through the institutions and ideology of crusading are perfectly valid, but, as this thesis has shown, his connections as the leader of the Reich cannot be discounted. His status as Roman King, and later as Holy Roman Emperor, should be seen as a factor which enhanced Sigismund's ability to tackle the Turkish threat, not one which retarded it.

Sigismund made the fullest use possible of the ideological resources which came with the Imperial office, emphasising how his struggle against the Turks was a matter of importance for all of Christendom. He did not succeed in galvanising Christendom into a great crusading expedition aimed at the Turks during his reign as Roman King and Holy Roman Emperor, but he was still able to effect some response from his fellow princes. It was through Sigismund himself that Christendom's response to the Turkish threat was actuated, and not necessarily through the crusading movement. The concrete military and political help which Sigismund could draw upon as Roman King came in many forms. Much of this aid Sigismund recruited himself during his often extensive travels abroad, necessitated as they were by his status as Roman King which made him the secular head of western Christendom. In other cases, Sigismund was able to convince his subjects in the Reich, notably the Teutonic Knights, to come and serve him against the Turks on his southern frontier. The fact that he was able to convince some of his subjects to aid him in the struggle against the Turks would suggest that the figure of Roman King was not so liminal and distant as historians, notably Moraw, have suggested.

As we have seen, Sigismund's contemporaries and near contemporaries, such as Piccolomini and Thuróczy, did not always view Sigismund's efforts against the Turks in the most sympathetic light. It has been alleged that the imperial office distracted him from battling the Turks effectively, and that he spent years wandering around all corners of Christendom while his kingdom dearly needed him. A far more flattering view of Sigismund emerges from the works of Vespasiano da Bisticci (1421-1498), who notes that during Cosimo de' Medici's period of influence in Florence 'reigned the Emperor Sigismund, who held, besides the imperial dominion, the kingdom of Hungary, a valiant foe of the impious Turks, as is plainly manifest, because in his reign they were kept within their own limits and

not suffered to express Christian people as in former days'.<sup>971</sup> One of the factors behind Sigismund's success in holding back the Turks was undoubtedly his ability to tap both the ideological and military resources which he could access as Roman King and then as Holy Roman Emperor.

Sigismund's attempt to bring the resources of his various lands to bear against the Turks was arguably a policy which Albert II, Sigismund's short-lived successor as King of Hungary and Roman King, attempted to continue. When requesting a contingent of soldiers from Augsburg on 20 April 1439, Albert stated simply that he required them for the *krieg gegen die Böhmen, und Pohlen, nicht weniger gen Türken*.<sup>972</sup> These forces from a Bavarian imperial free city, had they been raised, could therefore have been sent to fight in defence of Albert's Kingdom of Hungary, against the Turks. Unfortunately, Albert's premature death in October 1439 meant that the crown of the Romans and the crown of St Stephen were no longer united in one person, and the ability of the Hungarian King to draw upon the resources present in the Reich came to an end.

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### Abbreviations:

Journal titles:

<i>HK</i>	<i>Hadtörténelmi Közlemények</i>
<i>MIÖG</i>	<i>Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung</i>
<i>MSHSM</i>	<i>Monumenta Spectantia Historiam Slavorum Meridionalium</i>
<i>SEER</i>	<i>The Slavonic and East European Review</i>

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<sup>971</sup> Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Vite di uomini illustri del secolo xv* (Florence: Rinascimento del Libro, 1938), p. 289. Translated in Vespasiano da Bisticci, *The Vespasian Memoirs: Lives of Illustrious Men of the XVth Century*, trans. William George and Emily Waters (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 231.

<sup>972</sup> Augsburg, Staatsarchiv Augsburg, Reichstadt Augsburg Urkunden, IV 20 (393). Calendared in *Regesta Imperii* 12, ed. Hödl, nr

Publishers:

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OUP Oxford University Press

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*Diplomatikai Levéltár*

Frankfurt am Main, Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Stadtarchiv Frankfurt

*Reichssachen*

*Reichssachen-Nachträge*

*Kaiserschreiben*

*Recheneiamt*

*Reichstagsakten*

Karlsruhe, Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe, Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg

*Kaiser und Königsurkunden*

London, The National Archives

*King's Remembrancer (E101)*

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*Manoscritti*

Vatican City, Archivio segreto Vaticano

*Registra Supplicationem*

Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

*Codex Latinus Palatinus, 701*

Vienna, Deutschordens Zentralarchiv

*Karton 166*

Vienna, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Österreichische Staatsarchiv

*Reichsregisterbücher*  
*Handschriftensammlung*

Vienna, Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv

*Hauptarchiv-urkunden*

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