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PATRIMONY OF QUEEN JELENA (ON THE BACKGROUND OF SERBIAN-HUNGARIAN CONFLICTS IN THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES)*

Abstract: *During the latter half of the thirteenth and the early half of the fourteenth centuries, a series of conflicts emerged between the Nemanjić rulers and their Hungarian neighbors. This article offers a new perspective on the origins of these conflicts, which, as recent research suggests, began in late 1265 – early 1266 when King Uroš I attacked Further Srem/Szerém (Mačva/Macsó). The article argues that the conflicts arose from a dynastic dispute over the land of Further Srem, which was the patrimony of Queen Jelena, the royal consort of Uroš I and daughter of John Angelos, the lord of Srem.*

Keywords: *Jelena Angelos, Srem/Szerém, Mačva/Macsó, Uroš I, Stefan Dragutin, Béla IV, Árpád dynasty, Nemanjić dynasty, inheritance, patrimony*

During the latter half of the thirteenth and the early half of the fourteenth centuries, a series of conflicts occurred between the Nemanjić rulers and the Hungarian kings of the Árpád and Anjou dynasties. The prize at stake was control of the Further Srem/Szerém (Syrmia Ulterior) or Mačva/Macsó region (the latter name stemming from the namesake fortress of an unknown location), an area located on the right bank of the Sava River that included modern-day Mačva and Belgrade.¹ Despite the wealth of information on the chronology and events of these conflicts derived from research in Serbian and Hungarian historiography, their underlying reasons remain unsolved. This paper aims to highlight the hitherto unnoticed causes of this conflicts and outline a fresh perspective on this chapter of Serbian-Hungarian relations during the Middle Ages.

A very brief overview of the different stages and main protagonists of the conflicts needs to be provided here. Their initial phase began with the sudden attack of King Uroš I (1243–1276) on Mačva in late 1265 – early 1266 (in older literature, it was usually dated in 1268). The attack turned into a disaster and Uroš I was defeated and captured by the army sent by Hungarian king Béla IV (1235–1270).² Soon after Uroš's defeat, his son Stefan Dragutin (1276–1282) was

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¹ On the regions of Nearer Srem (Syrmia Citerior, modern Srem/Szerém) and Further Srem (Syrmia Ulterior, modern Mačva/Macsó), their names in the sources and their territorial extent, see: Dinić 1978, 270–292; Mišić 1997, 140–141; Ćirković 2008, 3–20; Pfeiffer 2017, 125–138; Ternovác 2017, 227–240; Font 2020, 317–320.

² Dinić 1948, 30–36; Zsoldos 2007, 112–113; Gál 2013, 481–483; Bubalo 2016, 196–198. In particular, for

married to Hungarian princess Catherine, daughter of Duke Stephen (future King Stephen V) and granddaughter of Béla IV.³ Several years later, counting on Hungarian support, Dragutin rose against his father. The old Serbian king was overthrown in 1276, and a year later he died as a monk.⁴ However, in 1282, Dragutin was also forced to relinquish the throne to his younger brother Stefan Uroš II Milutin (1282–1321) and accept a territorial division of the Nemanjić lands. He kept the northern parts of the kingdom, including the areas in the valley of Western Morava with Rudnik.⁵ In the latter half of 1284, Dragutin was granted Mačva, together with Usora and Soli in northeastern Bosnia, by his brother-in-law, King Ladislaus IV (1272–1290).⁶ By merging the northern Serbian and southern Hungarian lands, a new state was created under Dragutin's rule that united two traditions and two systems of government. The situation persisted until 1316 when the conflict resurfaced upon Dragutin's death. Milutin's attempt to disinherit Dragutin's successor Stefan Vladislav II and take control of the disputed lands led to a war with the first Angevin king of Hungary, Charles Robert (1308–1342). The ambitions of Milutin were ultimately extinguished with his death in 1321.⁷ His son Stefan Dečanski (1321–1331) and grandson Stefan Dušan (1331–1355) were also engaged in a series of clashes with Charles Robert and his son Louis the Great (1342–1382), which lasted until the middle of the fourteenth century.⁸

Evidently, the so-called Serbian-Hungarian conflicts over Further Srem or Mačva were a complex and protracted struggle. It would be a misconception to view it as a simple clash over the border territory that changed hands based on situational circumstances. Quite the contrary, the underlying cause of this prolonged struggle was rooted in much deeper concerns, related to particular inheritance rights and family matters, which will be explored in greater depth in the following pages.

* * *

To understand the nature of the conflicts, we need to go back to the mid-thirteenth century. Around 1250, King Uroš I of the Nemanjić dynasty married Jelena, whose origin was only circumstantially attested in narrative sources.⁹ While Serbian Archbishop Danilo II and his anonymous continuator referred vaguely to her imperial and Frankish origin,¹⁰ modern speculations attributed to her an “Anjou” connection due to the documentary evidence of her kinship

the chronology of the attack see: Komatina 2021b, 73–96.

³ The marriage is attested in numerous Serbian, Hungarian, Western and Byzantine sources. See: Danilo, 13; Pachymérès, 450–451; Anonimov opis, 125; Brocardus, 436; Chronicon Posoniense, 46. Its earliest record is in the peace agreement concluded in 1271 between Stephen V and Ottokar II of Bohemia, *Vetera monumenta*, I, 303, no. 530. See also: Gál 2013, 483–485.

⁴ Danilo, 17–21; Bubalo 2016, 210; Komatina 2021a, 269–278.

⁵ Dinić 1955, 49–56; Dinić 1978, 123–147; Đurić 1991, 169–197.

⁶ The transfer of power took place after June 11, 1284, when Elizabeth the Cuman was mentioned for the last time as the duchess of Mačva and Bosnia, *Hazai okmánytár*, VIII, no. 189. According to Archbishop Danilo II, Dragutin was already invested in the new possessions before autumn 1284, Danilo, 113. For the date see: Uzelac 2015, 205.

⁷ Ćirković 1981, 38–42; Engel 1988, 114–116, 127; Ćirković 2008, 12–13; Stanković 2012, 131–132; Krstić 2016, 47–49.

⁸ Ćirković 1981, 42–45; Ćirković, 2008, 14; Štetić 2018, 33–37.

⁹ The exact date of the marriage is not attested in the sources, but it is generally accepted to have taken place around 1250. However, some historians have proposed an earlier date of around 1248, Komatina 2021a, 133–134.

¹⁰ Danilo, 8, 58. No other contemporary narrative source deals with her origin. For sixteenth-century sources, variously describing her origin as French or Hungarian, see Uzelac 2021, 188.

with the Angevins of southern Italy. However, research by Gordon McDaniel proposed four decades ago but overlooked by Serbian historiography until recently, has convincingly solved the enigma surrounding Jelena's origin. She was the daughter of John Angelos, lord of Srem, and Mathilda de Courtenay, countess of Požega/Pozsega in Slavonia, as confirmed by information from the Papal registers related to Jelena's sister Maria and her marriage to Anselm II de Cayeux, a dignitary of the Latin Empire of Constantinople in 1253.¹¹ John Angelos, father of Jelena and Maria, was an offspring of the marriage between Byzantine emperor Isaac II Angelos (1185–1195) and Margaret of Hungary, daughter of King Béla III (1172–1195). Thus, via her father, Jelena claimed Byzantine imperial and Hungarian royal lineage. Through her mother Mathilda, she was related to the family of Courtenay, a younger branch of the Capetian dynasty, which ruled the Latin Empire of Constantinople. Her maternal grandmother Margaret of Namur was a sister of Latin Emperor Baldwin II (1227–1261). In this way, Jelena was also a distant relative of the Angevin kings in Southern Italy, who belonged to another side branch of the Capetians.

Jelena's origin is of utmost importance in order to understand future developments related to the Further Srem or Mačva. She brought considerable family prestige, and the union was undoubtedly desirable to King Uroš I. Moreover, her father John Angelos was the lord of Srem, attested in such capacity between 1235 and 1242.¹² He inherited the land from his mother Margaret of Hungary. Both Nearer (modern Srem) and Further Srem constituted the so-called "Margaret's dowry," attested in the papal documents from the 1220s. However, there was a difference between the status of the two territories. Nearer Srem was an integral part of Hungary, while Further Srem was conquered by Béla III in the late twelfth century from Byzantium before it became part of the above-mentioned dowry and Margaret's possession.¹³ Nonetheless, Nearer and Further Srem shared the same destiny when John Angelos passed away (after 1242, and certainly before 1250, when his wife is mentioned in a document as a widow).¹⁴ In a document from 1253, a royal chancellor, archbishop Benedict (Benedek) II of Kalocsa, is attested as a governor of the "whole Srem" – Nearer and Further, in the king's name.¹⁵ It was only a temporary solution, and Béla IV had granted the southern part of the region to his son-in-law, Rostislav Mikhailovich, who is mentioned in 1254 for the first time as 'dominus de Machou'.¹⁶

John Angelos did not have sons who could be his successors. The king was therefore entitled to take back the land of Nearer Srem.¹⁷ However, the peculiar position of the Further Srem, which was part of Margaret's dowry but not the Hungarian lands in a strict sense, indicates

¹¹ McDaniel 1982, 43–50. See also: Stanković 2012, 52–54; Bácsatyai 2017, 246–249; Uzelac 2021, 187–206 (with the genealogical tree on p. 202); Komatina 2021a, 118–129. On Jelena's mother Mathilda see also: van Tricht 2020, 62–64.

¹² See the list of documents in: Hardi 2017, 125, n. 139

¹³ The difference in the legal status between Nearer and Further Srem is clearly expressed in the letter of Pope Gregory IX (1227–1241) from 1229, where it is stated that Margaret 'acquisivit quandam terram, que appellatur ulterior Sirmia ratione cuiusdam partis Ungarie, que Citerior Sirmia nuncupatur ac ad nutum et dispositionem prefato regis sororis regitur terra predicta', *Vetera monumenta*, I, 88–89, no. 159. The question of the territorial limit of Margaret's dowry was discussed in Serbian historiography on several occasions: Ferjančić 1994, 49–58; Ćirković 2008, 4–5; Hardi 2009, 67–68; Hardi 2017, 130–134; Komatina 2018, 153–157.

¹⁴ *Regesta*, I/2, 281, no. 927: 'litteras nobilis domine relicte domini Johannis, comitis de Posoga'. See also: McDaniel 1982, 44–45; Weisz 2009, 34; Hardi 2017, 129–130.

¹⁵ *Codex diplomaticus*, IV, 540, no. 469: 'per totam Sirmiam non solum honore comitatus, sed etiam vice et auctoritate nostra ex delegatione nostra fungebatur'. See also: Weisz 2009, 34; Font 2020, 320.

¹⁶ *Regesta*, I/2, 313, no. 1011; Hardi 2009, 70–72; Hardi 2019, 91–95; Font 2020, 313.

¹⁷ On inheritance laws and practices in Medieval Hungary see: Rady 2000, 22–27, 97–107.

that its acquisition by the Crown constituted an usurpation, or at least could be looked upon as such. At the time, it was not a particular problem as there was no one to dispute this course of action. John's younger half-brother William (Gyletus?), who stemmed from another Margaret's marriage, died in April 1242 in Trogir/Trau during the Mongol invasion.¹⁸ John's widow Mathilda received the town (or county) of Požega, probably as her dower and compensation,¹⁹ while their two daughters Jelena and Maria were in all likelihood still children at the time when they lost their inheritance. Their marriages, which took place in a short time span during the mid–13th century, likely served the ambitions of King Béla IV to extend Hungarian influence in Southeast Europe.²⁰ However, Jelena's marriage with Uroš I also brought unintended consequences. She entered the union without a dowry, but, as the oldest daughter of John Angelos, she still had claims to the land of Further Srem, which soon became the source of discord between the Nemanjić and Árpád dynasties

This is an important circumstance that was previously unknown in older studies and overlooked in newer ones. Namely, historians have struggled to explain why Uroš I attacked Mačva, sometimes admitting that the cause of the attack is unknown,²¹ but also interpreting it as either his desire to break away from the patronage of Béla IV,²² or as a simple conquest effort.²³ However, these interpretations are not quite consistent with the amicable relations between the Serbian king and the Hungarian court in previous years. In 1260, Serbian detachments seem to have participated on the side of the Hungarians in the battle of Kressenbrunn, fought against the Bohemian king.²⁴ Four years later, Uroš I was personally present at the wedding of King Béla's namesake youngest son in Vienna.²⁵ The additional problem is that the sources, limited to Hungarian royal charters, do not provide any concrete details about the motives of Uroš I for the attack on Mačva, except that he acted in "arrogance" (superbia) when he first "had separated himself from the king's jurisdiction" and later "devastated the kingdom's borders".²⁶ Certainly, the attack took place under relatively favorable political circumstances for such an action. Rostislav, appointed lord of Mačva by King Béla IV, had passed away (before mid–1264),²⁷ and at the time the region was being ruled by his widow Anna on behalf of their minor son Béla Rostislavich. Additionally, King Béla IV was overburdened with internal issues, and his position was weakened after a short civil war against his son Duke Stephen of Transylvania, marked by his defeat at the Battle of Isaszeg in 1265.²⁸ However, the weakness of local government in Mačva and internal dissensions within the Hungarian kingdom may only explain the aggressive

¹⁸ Lucio, 43. William is presumably the same person as 'Gyletus dux Sirmii', mentioned in a later copy of a charter from 1233, see Rokai 1983, 121–127; Hardi 2017, 123–124.

¹⁹ van Tricht 2020, 62.

²⁰ It is also proposed that the marriage of Jelena to the Serbian ruler took place under the auspices of Rostislav Mikhailovich: Bácsatyai 2007, 256.

²¹ Bubalo 2016, 196.

²² Gál 2013, 482.

²³ Ćirković 2008, 5; Kádár 2009, 420.

²⁴ Annales Otakariani, 184–185; Uzelac 2014, 12; Komatina 2021a, 216–217.

²⁵ Reimchronik, 106, vv. 8063–8067, mentions the presence of the 'kunic von Sirvie', at the wedding ceremony, undoubtedly Uroš I. See also: Gavrilović 2018, 11–12; Font 2020, 316–317; Komatina 2021a, 218–219.

²⁶ Hazai okmánytár, VIII, 96, no. 76: 'Quod cum Vros rex Servie in superbiam elevatus: se non solummodo a iurisdiccione nostra retraxisset, imo ausu ductus temerario confinia regni nostri per suas depredaciones devastasset, damna quamplurima committendo...' The attack of King Uroš I on Mačva is mentioned in four other royal charters, Dinić 1948, 31; Komatina 2021b, 79–86.

²⁷ Hardi 2019, 117–120.

²⁸ Zsoldos 2007, 136–137; Komatina 2021b, 87–88.

course of action undertaken by Uroš I, but not his primary motivation, which should be sought elsewhere.

This is a convenient place to return once again to Jelena's origin and her marriage with Uroš I. As stated before, Jelena was the granddaughter of Margaret of Hungary and daughter of John Angelos, lord of Srem, but was deprived of her patrimony by the will of Béla IV. Nevertheless, she retained her claims to Further Srem or Mačva, and these claims were inherited by her sons with Uroš I. At the time of the Serbian attack on Mačva, the oldest son of Uroš I and Jelena, Stefan Dragutin, reached the age of maturity according to medieval standards (he was approximately 14 years old).²⁹ This is another circumstance that needs to be taken into account. Therefore, it may be supposed that the death of Rostislav, the transfer of power in Mačva to his underage son Béla, and internal dissensions in the Kingdom of Hungary prompted Uroš I to undertake action, aiming to assert the rights, possibly not of Queen Jelena, but rather of their son Stefan Dragutin. Such an interpretation could not be either confirmed or rejected on the basis of the scanty documentary sources, but it can be corroborated by the later events to which we will turn our attention below.

As stated earlier, despite his efforts, the campaign undertaken by Uroš I ended in failure. The army sent by King Béla IV to defend the possessions of his namesake grandson succeeded in defeating and capturing Uroš I. The capture of the unnamed son-in-law of the Serbian king, the royal banner, and a religious relic believed to be a piece of the Holy Cross that Uroš had carried with him on the campaign aggravated this defeat. Béla IV exhibited the spoils of war at his court to impress the foreign ambassadors, his daughters, and sons-in-law present on the occasion. Uroš I was soon released from captivity. A marriage was arranged between King Béla's granddaughter and Duke Stephen's daughter Catherine, and Dragutin, son of Uroš I and Jelena. Dragutin was to be instituted as the young king in Serbian lands, following the Hungarian model of the royal government and division of power. As a side note and a curiosity, Dragutin and Catherine were third cousins – Hungarian King Béla III was their great-great-grandfather (see the genealogical tree in this paper) – but it was not an obstacle to their union, neither according to Roman Catholic nor Orthodox canons. In this way, the crisis was solved by military and political means undertaken by the Hungarian crown, at least for the time being.

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Béla Rostislavich, whose possessions were successfully defended against the aggression of King Uroš I thanks to the timely intervention of the army of his grandfather, did not rule Mačva for long. In late 1272, he was brutally murdered by Henry of Kőszeg from the kindred Héder on Margitsziget (Margaret Island).³⁰ Following his demise, the land of Mačva was controlled by various royal officials (bans) who were consecutively appointed by the Hungarian government (between 1272 and 1279) and by the Queen-mother Elizabeth the Cuman (between 1280 and 1284).³¹ However, in late 1284, an unexpected turn of events took place, when King Ladislaus IV of Hungary, son of Stephen V, bestowed Mačva and Belgrade, along with the regions of Usora and Soli in northeastern Bosnia, upon Stefan Dragutin.

Undoubtedly, the investment of Dragutin into the new possessions was driven by political and strategic considerations, serving to bolster Hungary's southern border and continue

²⁹ The year of Dragutin's birth is not attested in the sources. However, it is certain that his younger brother Milutin was born in 1253 or 1254, Komatina 2021a, 135–136. Therefore, Dragutin was certainly born before 1253.

³⁰ Hermann Annales, 407; Kádár 2009, 411–429; Font 2020, 324.

³¹ Hardi 2009, 74–77; Ternovác 2017, 235–236.

Árpáadian policies in the region. Namely, Dragutin was soon engaged in the war with his eastern neighbors, the independent lords of the Braničevo region, half-brothers Dorman and Kudelin, who were of mixed Cuman and Bulgarian origin and had previously renounced Hungarian overlordship. The lords of Braničevo relied on the Tatars in Wallachian plains, ruled by Nogai, ruler of the western domains of the Golden Horde, while Dragutin counted on the support of his brother Milutin and the Hungarian crown. The war ultimately escalated, with Dragutin's lands being overrun by the Cuman and Tatar mercenaries serving the lords of Braničevo. However, in 1292, Dorman and Kudelin were defeated by joined Serbian and Hungarian forces and Dragutin added the land of Braničevo to his holdings.³²

Besides political concerns, other factors also played a considerable role in Ladislaus IV's decision to invest Dragutin in the new possessions. It needs to be borne in mind that Dragutin was not only the brother-in-law of the Hungarian king, but also an heir to Further Srem through his maternal lineage, being a grandson of John Angelos. In this way, Dragutin's state that emerged in 1284 comprised two parts with different traditions and legal foundations: the northern Nemanjić lands, which were his patrimony, and the southern Hungarian lands (Mačva and Belgrade), which he claimed through his mother and maternal grandfather.

Serbian Archbishop Danilo II provides two pieces of information that can corroborate the interpretation that Dragutin's investment in the possession of Further Srem was related to his maternal origin and can also illustrate that King Uroš I's motive for attacking Mačva was to pursue Dragutin's claims. Firstly, referring to the events of 1284, Danilo II states that Dragutin received "the rule of the Srem land anew,"³³ which implies that he was earlier invested in the power of this region. The only plausible explanation is that Danilo II here refers to the unsuccessful actions of Uroš I in acquiring the territory on behalf of his oldest son in late 1265–early 1266 when Mačva came under Serbian control for a short time.³⁴ Equally important is that the archbishop bestowed on Dragutin the informal title "King of Srem".³⁵ The title was evidently inherited from his grandfather, John Angelos, the lord of Srem, as McDaniel rightfully noted.³⁶

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In addition to strengthening the southern border, the administrative reforms of Ladislaus IV were evidently aimed to settle the dispute over the Further Srem in a way acceptable to all interested parties. The land remained under the Árpáadian crown's formal authority but was granted as a fief to its legal heir, Dragutin. This solution remained in effect until Dragutin's death in 1316, when a new era of conflicts over Mačva and Belgrade began. Milutin used the death of Dragutin to disinherit and treacherously imprison Dragutin's eldest and only remaining son, Vladislav II. This probably happened during the transfer of Dragutin's remains to his foundation, Đurđevi Stupovi, in the south, or even during the funeral ceremony.³⁷ From a legal point of view,

³² The main source for these events is the Vita of King Milutin, by archbishop Danilo II: Danilo, 114–116. Hungarian participation in the demise of the lords of Braničevo is attested in two royal charters of King Andrew III (1290–1301), Hazai okmánytár, VII, 309–310, no. 268 and Regesta, II/4, 125, no. 3951. See also: Vásáry 2005, 102–107; Uzelac 2015, 204–210.

³³ Danilo, 114.

³⁴ According to Sima Ćirković, who took note of this statement by Danilo II, Dragutin's first investment into the Srem land probably took place during the reign of his father-in-law Stephen V, between 1270 and 1272, Ćirković 2008, 10–11. However, this interpretation must be rejected as at that time the region was still under the control of Béla Rostislavich.

³⁵ Danilo, 18, 22, 94. See also Komatina 2018, 157, n. 89.

³⁶ McDaniel 1982, 50.

³⁷ Brocardus, 437; Madius, 643; Dinić 2005, 74–75; Engel 1988, 114; Krstić 2016, 47.

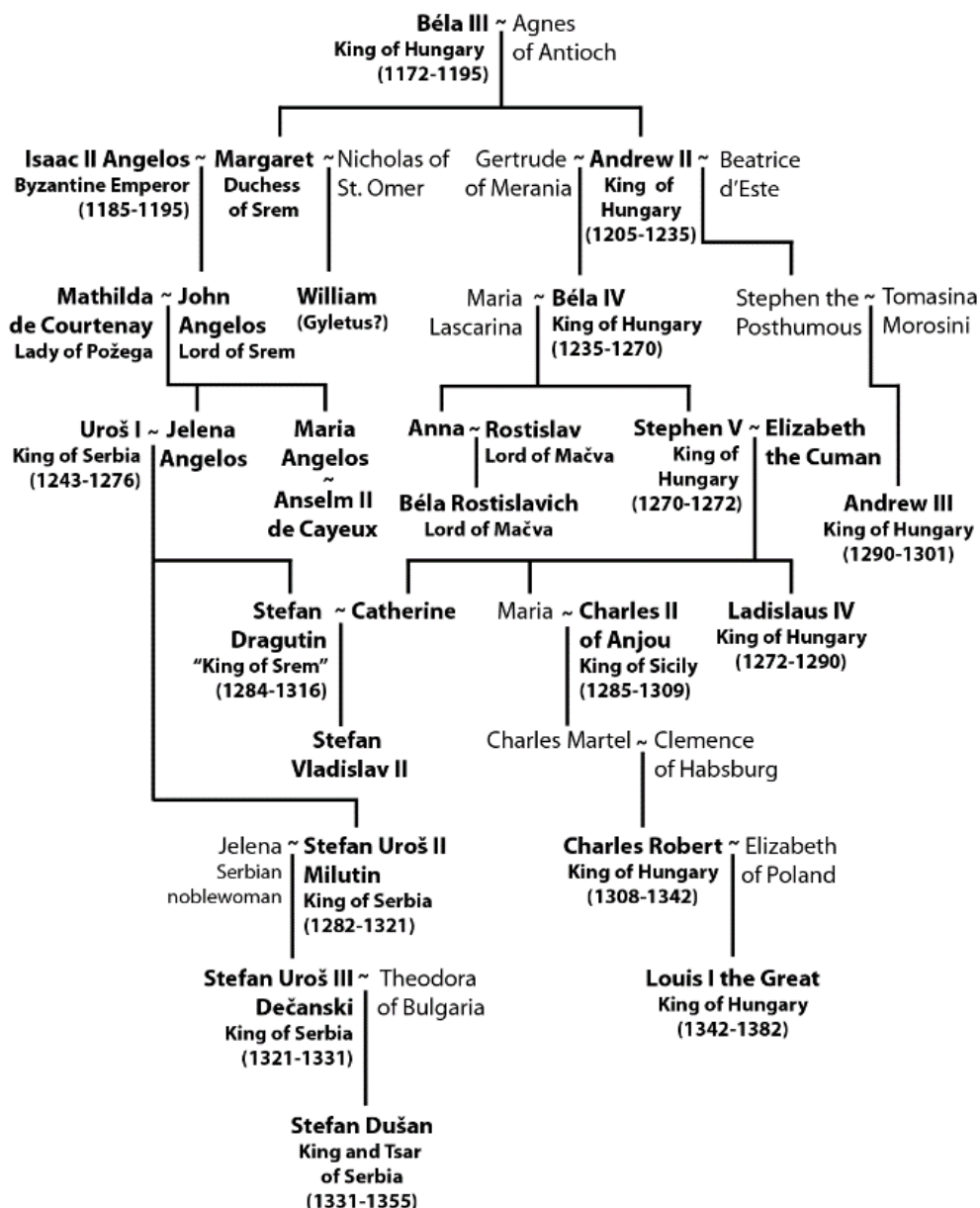
Vladislav II, as Dragutin's son, had stronger claims on Mačva than Milutin, but it did not deter the ambitions of the younger son of Uroš I and Jelena to acquire the disputed land for himself. Milutin's moves prompted a reaction in the North; a bloody conflict between Milutin and Charles Robert, the first Hungarian king of the Angevin dynasty, followed, which again ended in failure for the Serbian side. After Milutin's death, Vladislav II managed to escape from prison and establish himself as his father's successor, probably with the acknowledgment of Charles Robert. However, it was only for a short time before he was forced to escape to Hungary under the pressure of Stefan Dečanski, and the land of Mačva yet again became a battleground between the Nemanjić kings and Hungarian rulers.³⁸

There is no need to explore the later phases of the struggle waged between Milutin's son and grandson and the Hungarian kings of the Anjou dynasty, as they do not provide additional details that could illuminate the causes and background of the long-term quarrel over Mačva. Nonetheless, based on previous analysis of the circumstances which preceded and followed the unsuccessful attack of Uroš I in late 1265 – early 1266, and Dragutin's investment into his possessions in 1284, it may be concluded that the relationship between the Nemanjić and Árpád rulers was shaped by a dispute centred around inheritance claims over the Further Srem, held by Queen Jelena, daughter of John Angelos and royal consort of Uroš I, and her descendants. Therefore, the conflict was primarily a consequence of unresolved family matters within the two ruling dynasties, which were mutually related by multiple marital ties.

³⁸ Madius, 646; Marjanović Dušanić 2007, 258–260. On the destiny of Dragutin's son Vladislav: Krstić 2016, 49–51.

GENEALOGICAL TREE

(NAMES OF THE PERSONS MENTIONED IN THE ARTICLE ARE GIVEN IN BOLD)



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БАШТИНА КРАЉИЦЕ ЈЕЛЕНЕ (О ПОЗАДИНИ СРПСКО-УГАРСКИХ СУКОБА У XIII И XIV ВЕКУ)

Односе између Немањинских владара и угарских монарха током друге половине XIII и прве половине XIV века обележио је низ сукоба вођених око територије Оностраног Срема (*Syrmia Ulterior*), односно данашње Мачве и Београда. Сукоби су отпочели нападом краља Уроша I на Мачву, који се одиграо крајем 1265. или почетком 1266. године, како показују новија истраживања. Њихова следећа фаза било је додељивање ових области краљу Стефану Драгутину у другој половини 1284. године. Оружани сукоби су обновљени после Драгутинове смрти 1316. године и вођени су у више наврата између краља Стефана Уроша II Милутина, његовог сина Стефана Дечанског и унука Стефана Душана и угарских владара из Анжујске династије. Упркос обиљу података о хронологији и догађајима везаним за ове сукобе, чини се да су њихов узрок и позадина остали недовољно разјашњени. Стога је у овом тексту начињен покушај да се они осветле и пружи нови поглед на ово поглавље српско-угарских односа у средњем веку.

Закључак изнесен у тексту почива на новијим истраживањима везаним за порекло Урошеве супруге краљице Јелене, у српској историографији још увек често и погрешно зване „Анжујска“. Јелена је била ћерка Јована Анђела, господара Срема и Матилде де Куртене, господарице Пожеге, баштинећи са очеве стране порекло од византијске царске лозе Анђела и угарске краљевске породице Арпада, а са мајчине, посредне везе са породицом Куртене, млађом граном француске породице Капета. Ово је, уједно, разлог зашто су анжујски владари из јужне Италије, који су припадали другом споредном огранку француске краљевске породице, Јелену и њену сестру Марију звали својим рођакама. После смрти Јована Анђела (након 1242. године) Јелена и Марија, у том тренутку по свој прилици још увек малолетне, остале су без породичне баштине која је, одлуком краља Беле IV (1235–1270) припала угарској круни. Међутим, Јелена је као најстарије дете Јована Анђела и даље гajила права и претензије на Онострици Срем, тј. Мачву које су се пренеле на њеног најстаријег сина из брака са Урошем I, Стефана Драгутина. Имајући ове породичне околности у виду, може се претпоставити да је Урошев напад на Мачву крајем 1265. или почетком 1266. године имао за циљ да оствари ове претензије у корист Драгутина који је отприлике у том тренутку стасао до пунолетства (према средњовековним стандардима). Међутим, напад је био завршен Урошевим поразом и заробљавањем, а Драгутин потом везан за угарски двор женидбом са принцем Каталином, унуком Беле IV и ћерком Стефана V. Двоје супружника су били у четвртој степену сродства (њихов заједнички чукундеда био је угарски краљ Бела III), што ни по римокатоличким, ни по православним канонима, није представљало препреку за овај брак.

Нешто мање од две деценије касније, током друге половине 1284. године, постојећи спор је био решен тако што је Драгутин од свог шурака, угарског краља Ладислава IV, добио у посед Мачву са Београдом. Додељивање ових области Драгутину уобичајено се у српској историографији посматрало као догађај који је означио њихов улазак у састав српских земаља. И даље формално део угарске круне, оне су постале Драгутинов посед, захваљујући томе што су представљале његову дедовину. Такође, по свој прилици од свог деде Јована Анђела, Драгутин је наследио и титулу господара Срема, односно „Сремског краља“, како га назива архиепископ Данило II у више наврата. Овакво решење спора, које је задовољило све заинтересоване стране, остало је на снази све до Драгутинове смрти када се сукоб поново распламсао. Драгутинов млађи брат Стефан Урош II Милутин тада је заточио свог синовца Стефана Владислава и безуспешно покушао да загосподари просто-

ром Мачве и Београда, очигледно се позивајући на иста наследна права која је уживео и његов старији брат.

Сагласно интерпретацији догађаја изнетој у тексту, низ сукоба око Оностраног Срема, односно Мачве није био етничког крактера, нити га треба сводити на просту борбу око контроле над пограничном облашћу између две суседне државе. Сукоби су проистекли из нерешеног питања „баштине“ краљице Јелене које је, почевши од средине XIII века, оптерећивало односе две владарске династије – Арпада и Немањића, повезане више-струким брачним везама.