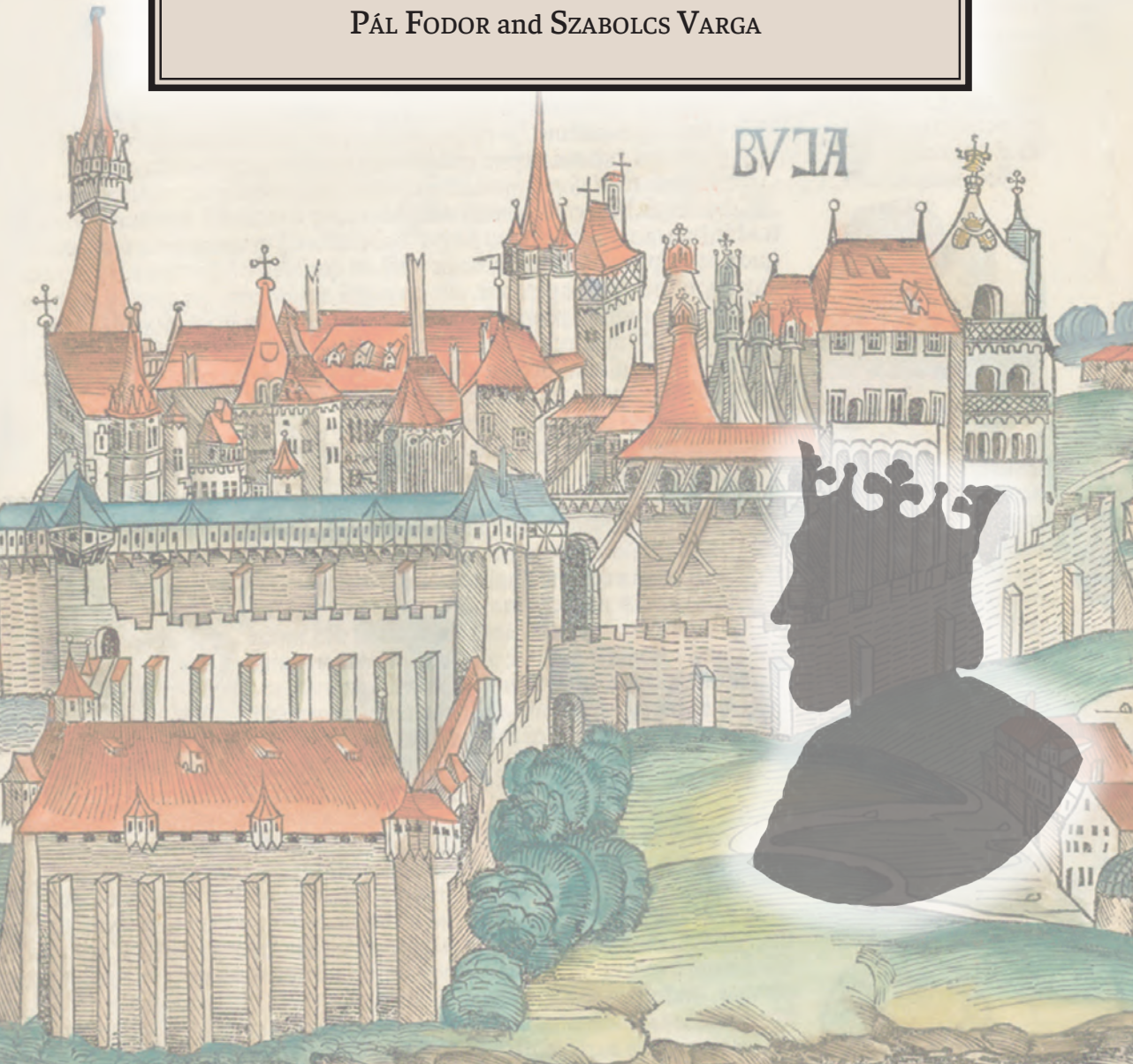


MOHÁCS 1526–2026  
RECONSTRUCTION AND REMEMBRANCE

A FORGOTTEN  
HUNGARIAN ROYAL DYNASTY:  
THE SZAPOLYAIS

Edited by  
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## THE 'LEGACY' OF THE SZAPOLYAIS

### SZAPOLYAI TREASURES IN THE SOURCES

An inventory of John Szapolyai's movable assets, compiled around 1538 and published in 1888 by Lajos Kemény, Jr., was preserved in the city archives of Kassa (Košice).<sup>1</sup> To date this list provides the most comprehensive information on the artefacts in the treasury of the Szapolyais. The exact circumstances under which the inventory was prepared are not known: it contains not only Szapolyai's treasures but also those taken to Várad (Nagyvárad/Oradea) by János Országh, bishop of Vác, who died in 1536. It is also likely that the entire treasury of the Szapolyais was not registered in the list. Apart from decorative weapons, vestments and silverware for everyday use, there is hardly any mention of 'real' treasures in it. High value items, mainly jewellery, were recorded in the first chest only. The Latin wording of the list is unfortunately rather brief: valuable rings, crosses, pendants, old coins and 'antiquities' (*diversae antiquitates*) kept in pouches are mentioned together with other 'precious items' (*diversae res preciosae*), but, essentially, no further information is given.

#### *Unicorn decorated with diamonds*

Some objects are described in more detail and could therefore be recognised at a later date, but hardly any of these are mentioned in other sources. One exception is a 'unicorn' decorated with a pointed diamond and other gemstones, recorded as being in a case among Szapolyai's movable assets (*in una scatula parva est unicornix cum lapide adamante spisso et aliis lapidibus ornatus*). Horns of

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1 Lajos Kemény Jr., 'János király kincseinek s ruháinak összeírása', *Történelmi Tár* II (1888) 566–571. The date is not featured on the first page, but on the page listing the treasures of János Országh, bishop of Vác.

unicorns were very much sought-after by the treasuries of the sovereigns and nobles of the age. Traditionally they were made of the helical tusk of narwhals. The most commonly known example of a unicorn is the famous 243cm-long ‘Ainkhürn’, kept in the treasury of the Habsburgs.<sup>2</sup> The horns were frequently crafted: they were made into chalices, crosiers, sceptres and weapon grips. Considering that the ‘unicorn’ of the treasury of Szapolyai was kept in a case, it can hardly have been a full-size horn. Indeed we can assume it was relatively small. Since it was decorated with precious stones, we can imagine it as some kind of jewellery; in this case, it may not have been called a ‘unicorn’ after the material it was made of. We might think of a pendant in the shape of a unicorn, whose horn was formed from the aforementioned pointed diamond.

According to historiographical tradition, John Szapolyai’s ‘unicorn’ was inherited by his son, John Sigismund, who gave it to his confidant, Gáspár Bekes. During the occupation of the city of Fogaras (Făgăraş), it came into the possession of Stephen Báthory, prince of Transylvania (later king of Poland), who took it to Poland, and bequeathed it in his will to the next prince of Transylvania, Sigismund Báthory.<sup>3</sup> According to the historiographer István Szamosközy (1570–1612), even though the prince had repeatedly sent for it, the Polish crown treasury refused to hand it over. Instead, they offered a price of 30,000 forints for it; it appears the amount was not paid, either.<sup>4</sup> The will of Stephen Báthory contradicts this story, however. As stated in the will, the monarch had redeemed the ‘unicorn’ from the treasury for the above price; he did not, that is, purchase it from Bekes. According to the will, Báthory bequeathed the piece of jewellery to the Ottoman sultan on behalf of the people of Transylvania. Yet he reserved the possibility for the Polish estates to redeem it, if they so wished.<sup>5</sup> Báthory thus considered it to be a worthy present for the sultan, which indicates that it was a ‘real’ alicorn, whose value was determined by the magical power attributed to it, which also made it a suitable addition to

2 Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Weltliche Schatzkammer, Inv. No. Schatzkammer WS XIV 2.

3 Sándor Szilágyi (ed.), *Szamosközy István történeti maradványai. 1542–1608. Vol. IV. Vegyes följegyzések.* (Monumenta Hungariae Historica, II; Scriptorum, 30.) Budapest, 1880, 64–65. Between 1583 and 1596 Sigismund Báthory sent for it several times.

4 On Lestár Gyulaffy’s diplomatic missions, detailing the reports from Szamosközy, see Máté János Bibor, ‘Gyulaffi Lestár lengyelországi követjárásai’, *Az Egyetemi Könyvtár Évkönyvei* 12 (2005) 121–144.

5 The relevant part of the will: *Et quoniam potentia Turcica est tanta, ut viribus sufficere nequeant, ad conciliandam imperatoris Turcarum benevolentiam unicornum illud, a Palatino Lublinensi propria mea pecunia redemptum, instituta solenni legatione in nomine Transylvanorum imperatori Turcarum protunc constituto, praesentandum committo; quod eo facilius regni Poloniae status et ordines concedent, si illis tritum illud in mentem venerit: “Tua res agitur, paries cum proxima ardet”. Verum, si tamen tanta esset aliquorum ingratitude (quod non credo), ut illud exequi nollent, at saltem pecuniam triginta millia florenorum pro unicornu erogatum reddat, unde donationem eo nomine amplum Transylvani curebunt* (Dated: Niepołomice, 12 May 1585): Endre Veress (ed.), *Báthory István erdélyi fejedelem és lengyel király levelezése. Vol. II. 1576–1586.* (Monumenta Transsilvanica) Kolozsvár, 1944, No. 805. The Polish crown treasure was kept in Lubló (Lubovňa) until 1658; this is why the castellan of Lubló is mentioned in the will. Cf. Adorján Divéky, ‘Magyar–lengyel művészettörténeti adatok’, *Művészettörténeti Értesítő* 2 (1953) 186.



the treasury of a monarch. From all this it follows that Szapolyai's jewel and Báthory's legacy were, in reality, two different objects.

Szamosközy was thus mistaken regarding the objects, but this does not mean all his statements were incorrect. By way of example, he claimed that Gáspár Bekes received the object from John Sigismund, and Bekes did indeed possess such an item of jewellery. In his will he bequeathed to his son a unicorn (-shaped?) pendant, as his most precious movable asset, and entrusted his wife with keeping it: "To my elder son, László Békés, I leave the unicorn pendant. To my younger son, Gábrriel Békés, I give the old diamond ring. ... The unicorn, as well as the ring, shall be in the hands of my wife as long as she bears my name; should she marry, she is to hand them over to my brother, Gábor Békés."<sup>6</sup>

### *Gilded silver altarpiece in the castle chapel in Buda*

This inventory of movable assets is not the only source of information on artefacts owned by the Szapolyai family. We have other data, often pertaining to objects of great value. One of the earliest mentioned artefacts – and presumably one of those with the highest material and artistic value – is an enamelled, gilded silver retable, which had most likely been owned by the Szapolyai family before it was transferred to its last known location, the Chapel of John the Merciful in Buda Castle.<sup>7</sup> After the defeat of Mohács, queen consort Mary had all the treasures of the castle chapel, together with its relic, taken away. Some vestments were returned by Tamás Nádasdy the following year, while the rest found their way to Pozsony (Bratislava), and then to Nagyszombat (Trnava) or Vienna.<sup>8</sup> The chapel, deprived of its treasures, had to be restored by the new ruler for it to be worthy of a royal residence. It was presumably at this time that Szapolyai had the paraments brought here that, according to tradition, came from his mother, Hedwig of Teschen (Cieszyn).

Yet, during the siege of Buda in 1541, the chapel was once again emptied: this time, Szapolyai's man, the loyal chaplain Péter, packed up the most valuable treasures, including this altar, and fled to Eperjes (Prešov) with two chests filled with paraments. His brother-in-law, Péter Pálczán, former chief justice of Buda, who defected to Ferdinand's side in 1541, had the treasures confiscated by the mayor of Eperjes, however, treasures which were later impounded in the

6 Samu Barabás, 'Békés Gáspár végrendelete', *Történelmi Tár* 14 (1891) 146.

7 For a detailed description of the chapel, see Nándor Knauz, 'A budai királyi várpalota kápolnája', *Magyar Tudományos Értekező* 1 (1862) 41–63, 333–341; Bernát L. Kumorovitz, 'A budai várkápolna és a Szent Zsigmond-prépostság történetéhez', *Tanulmányok Budapest Múltjából* 15 (1963) 109–151.

8 On the fate that awaited them, see Sándor Takáts, 'A budai várkápolna régi kincseiről', *Archaeologiai Értesítő* N.S. 23 (1903) 173–179; Knauz, 'A budai királyi várpalota'; Zsuzsanna Boda, 'Alamizsnás Szent János kultusza és annak emlékei Magyarországon', in Árpád Mikó and Katalin Sinkó (eds.), *Történelem-kép. Szemelvények múlt és művészet kapcsolatából Magyarországon*. (A Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Kiadványai, 2000/3.) Budapest, 2000, 220–230; Zuzana Ludíková, 'A budai egyházi kincsek sorsa Pozsonyban', in Orsolya Réthelyi et al. (eds.), *Habsburg Mária, Mohács özvegye. A királyné és udvara 1521–1531*. Budapest, 2005, 115–121.

name of the king by György Werner, castellan of the castle of Sáros (Šarišský hrad).<sup>9</sup> There is no mention of the treasures during the next couple of years, but in 1544 the city council tried to purchase them. The council submitted a request to King Ferdinand in which it asked the king to let the city of Eperjes have the paraments; in return they would cancel the king's debts. Upon the request, the king sent some commissioners to estimate the value of the treasure; they compiled a detailed list of the objects, which now also serves as a source of information on the altar.<sup>10</sup>

According to the inventory, on the enamelled silver retable the scene of the *Adoration of the Magi* was visible. In the composition the Star of Bethlehem was represented by a large amethyst, while the *Massacre of the Innocents* was depicted on the predella. The silver weighed twenty-nine and a half marks and two lots (i.e. more than 8 kg).<sup>11</sup> In April 1545, Ferdinand instead ordered that the metallic treasures be melted down and their value be put towards the construction of fortifications in Vienna and Komárom (Komarno). The vestments and some chalices could be retained by Eperjes, however. But this is not what happened: almost a decade later, on 8 March 1554, Ferdinand noted that all the ecclesiastical treasures of Buda had arrived in Vienna (*totaliter et sine defectu*). It is clear that, contrary to previous assumptions, neither the silver altarpiece nor the other precious metal objects were melted down. According to the acknowledgement of receipt, the silver altarpiece of the Magi can be unambiguously recognised among the paraments listed: *...item tabulam argenteam cum imaginibus trium magorum*.<sup>12</sup> It is therefore certain that this treasure arrived in Vienna in the mid-16th century. It is also there that we lose track of it: there is no mention of it in later inventories of the imperial treasury.

9 Sándor Takács, 'A budavári királyi Szt. János kápolna kincsei', *Archaeologiai Értesítő* N.S. 21 (1901) 287–288; József Bessenyei, 'Ami a budai tanács „árulása” után következett', *Tanulmányok Budapest Múltjából* 29 (2001) 24.

10 The documents relating to this matter: ÖStA AVA HKA HFU r. No. 1. Konv. 1544. fol. 40; *Ibid.*, r. No. 4. Konv. 1553. Sept. fols. 5–16; Konv. 1554. s. d. fols. 3–14.

11 ÖStA AVA HKA HFU r. No. 4. Konv. 1553. Sept. fol. 6v: *Erstlich ist ein ganntz Silbern vergolt Tafeln, in Gestalt aines Altars. Im corpus ist ain Marien bilt silbern vergolt, unnd in geschmelztem glaßwerckh, die hailigen drey Khunig so dem kindlen Jesu das Opffer furbringen, darüber ain silbern vergolt(er) stern darinnen ain Amatistel ainer halben arbes groß: undten im fuess des Taffelins ist der unschuldigen kindlein mordt auch in geschmelztem Glaswerk. Dieses Taffeln, so des Khünig Hansen Muetter gewesen, silber sambt dem schmelzwerckh, welches die goltschmidt von kunst wegen an Silbers stat geachtet, wigt hungerisch 29 ½ Mark, 2 Loth.* Text cited (with minor alterations) by Takács, 'A budai várkápolna', 178. An important difference is that, in the source text, as opposed to the one described by Takács, it is not "carved" (*geschnitzt*), but rather "enamelled" (*geschmelzt*).

12 ÖStA AVA HKA HFU r. No. 4. Konv. 1554. s. d. fols. 3, 14. The text of the short inventory published from another source by Franz Kreytzi, 'Urkunden und Regesten aus dem K. u. K. Reichs-Finanz-Archiv', *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses in Wien* 5 (1887) Reg. 4223. LXVII.

## HOW THE SZAPOLYAI TREASURY BECAME DISPERSED

A major part of Szapolyai's treasury is very likely to have remained intact even after 1540, since, shortly before the death of King John (Fig. 1), his son and successor John Sigismund (Fig. 2) was born. Even though items in the treasury were certainly removed even after Szapolyai's death,<sup>13</sup> the large-scale dispersion of the treasury occurred, as is often the case, when the entire family died out.



FIGURE 1. ERHARD SCHÖN: PORTRAIT OF JOHN SZAPOLYAI, AROUND 1539, WOODCUT  
INSCRIPTION: "JOHANS VON GOTTES GNADEN KÖNIG ZU HUNGERN"  
PHOTO © WIKIPEDIA COMMONS



FIGURE 2. NICOLO NELLI: PORTRAIT OF JOHN SIGISMUND, PRINCE OF OPOLE, 1566  
INSCRIPTION: "IOHANNES SIGISM. HUNG. REGIS FILIUS DUX OPOLIENSIS"  
PHOTO © TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

In this case this happened in 1571, when King John II, a.k.a. John Sigismund, died. That the treasury became dispersed is confirmed by John Sigismund's will from 1567,<sup>14</sup> in which he generously divides the items of his treasury among the members of his court, his Transylvanian supporters and his mother's Polish relatives. These items even included regalia: they ended up in the royal treasury of Krakow. Allegedly, Stephen Báthory had himself crowned with a crown passed down from John Sigismund, which was lost from the treasury sometime between 1611 and 1669. Another piece of regalia, decorated with four sapphire

13 By way of example, gifts sent to Poland by Queen Isabella are known: Divéky, 'Magyar-lengyel adatok', 185.

14 The will, originally written in Hungarian, has come down to us in a Latin translation. Its text was published in Gusztáv Heckenast, 'János Zsigmond végrendelete (1567)', in Géza Galavics, János Herner and Bálint Keserü (eds.), *Collectanea Tiburtiana. Tanulmányok Klaniczay Tibor tiszteletére*. Szeged, 1990, 155–169.

stones and four rubies, coined as the ‘Hungarian crown’ (to which a sceptre and an orb also belonged), can be shown to have been in the royal treasury as late as 1794, although by 1669 it was already damaged.<sup>15</sup>

The prince did not fail to mention in his will the representatives of the two great powers of the era, the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II and Sultan Selim II, and leave them some respectful presents: the objects bequeathed to Emperor Maximilian II can be traced for quite a while in various sources, because they feature not only in the text of the will but also in the delivery notes of the executors of the will (Mihály Csáky, Kristóf Hagymássy, Stanisław Nieżowski, Gáspár Bekes, Márton Andrásy, Farkas Bornemissza, Simon Miles, Miklós Telegdi).<sup>16</sup> The most precious item was a large, wide *patera* (bowl) of pure gold, decorated with ‘pagan’ (i.e. antique) coins. The emperor was also bequeathed a sword with a beaded black velvet scabbard, and another pearl-decorated item, a sabre with purple velvet scabbard, which the sultan had sent to the prince in Torda (Turda). The empress was bequeathed various golden nuggets and minerals.

### *John Sigismund’s golden cross*

The register of John Szapolyai’s movable assets also included two (golden) crosses, which must have been considered very valuable by those compiling the lists, because both of them are featured at the top of the register. The crosses were kept in separate cases. One was described as “in nomine domini”, and the other as “Navis”, which probably indicate the inscriptions on them. We also know that the cross mentioned first was decorated with diamonds, but unfortunately no information was revealed about the other. The fact that these items occupied a prominent place in the inventory nevertheless indicates that they were of great financial value, so they were presumably of pure gold. All this is unfortunately not enough to establish a direct connection between these crosses and those that appeared in the possession of John Sigismund, son of John Szapolyai. The connection cannot entirely be excluded, however.

The best-documented jewel, even if its real appearance is unknown, is the golden cross with diamonds mentioned in John Sigismund’s will, which the prince left to the ‘country’. Even though the piece is mentioned in several sources, it is difficult to form an image of it because the descriptions are very brief. Moreover, as has been noted several times, it is likely that the information relating to a number of crosses have been confused in the records.<sup>17</sup> John Sigismund’s will,

15 Divéky, ‘Magyar–lengyel adatok’, 185–186.

16 ÖStA HHStA UA AA fasc. 97. Konv. A. fol. 53; Konv. B. fols. 19–21. The text was published in: *EOE* II. 480. The political background is analyzed in detail by Péter Szabó, ‘János Zsigmond végrendelete (1567) és végrehajtása (1571). A végrehajtásról szóló forráskiadás kérdése’, in Magdolna Baráth and Antal Molnár (eds.), *A történettudomány szolgálatában. Tanulmányok a 70 éves Gecsényi Lajos tiszteletére*. Budapest, 2012, 325–332.

17 After the first survey of sources on the golden cross, Sándor Szilágyi indicated that the descriptions may refer to two or even three objects: Sándor Szilágyi, ‘János Zsigmond aranykeresztje’, *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 13 (1879) 392. Tamás Kruppa studied the sources from

drawn up in 1567, contains quite accurate data, however: "His Majesty leaves the golden cross, which once belonged to Gritti, and which is decorated with nine large diamonds and four large rubies, to the people of the three nations and to his followers living in the Hungarian part of the country, in order for them to remember that His Majesty not only took care of them in his life, but also values them highly after his death. This valuable cross shall not therefore be placed in the hands of the person who shall be their lord and prince, but instead shall be kept for the needs of the country."<sup>18</sup>

Following the death of the prince in 1571, the executors acted pursuant to John Sigismund's will. The conditions of the ownership of the cross were included in the decision of the diet held on 24–31 May 1571, and these conditions were confirmed by Stephen Báthory: "...his grace, our deceased lord, ... left our country a golden cross, in which there are nine large diamonds and four rubies, which he left to our country and not to the next prince, which was placed at our disposal. ... we have given it to be bravely kept and guarded to honourable and wise individuals, namely Simon Miles, mayor of Szeben, and the sworn members of the council whom we have strongly obliged to keep it for the country in its entirety and without any alterations being made to it."<sup>19</sup> After this, the cross was deposited at the city council of Szeben (Sibiu), from where it could only be taken out with the combined authorization of the estates. A receipt for its deposit was then drawn up by Simon Miles, mayor of Szeben, judge royal Augustinus Hedwigk, judge György Csukás and the sworn burghers on 4 June 1571. While doing so, not only were the gemstones counted (consistent with the previous counts), but the weight of the object was also recorded: it weighed two marks and three ounces, i.e. approximately half a kilogram, in gold.<sup>20</sup>

We have thus learnt that the object, decorated with nine diamonds and four rubies, was especially valuable. As for its origin, it was revealed that it was not made by order of the Szapolyais: it can be assumed that John Sigismund obtained it from his father, who, according to the will, received it from governor

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the point of view of a later owner, Sigismund Báthory, distinguishing data pertaining to four different crosses that had belonged to the Báthory family: Tamás Kruppa, 'Korona és kereszt. Báthory Zsigmond és a magyar koronázási jelvények', *Művészettörténeti Értesítő* 54 (2005) 87–91. Of these, only two are in fact likely to have originated from the Szapolyai family, so I focus on these in this essay. An overview of the sources on the cross is also given in Jolán Balogh, *A művészet Mátyás király udvarában. Vol. I: Adattár*. Budapest, 1966, 383–385.

18 *Crucem auream preciosam, quae fuit Gritti, cui novem magni gemanti et quatuor magni rubini insunt, Mgtas [Maiestas] eius legat regnicolis tribus nationibus, una cum fidelibus suis in Hungaria ditioni suae subiectis, ut agnoscant Mgti [Maiestati] eius non solum viventis ipsos curae fuisse: verum post mortem quoque clementi in respectu eos habuisse. Ita tamen, ut hanc crucem preciosam in manus illius, qui dominus aut princeps futurus est, non dent, sed ad regni necessitatem conseruent.* Heckenast, 'János Zsigmond végrendelete', 159.

19 *EOE* II. 473.

20 *Ibid.*, 476–477: *Crucem illam auream novem preciosos lapillos adamantes, item quatuor rubinos continentem et totaliter una cum lapillis et auro marcas duas et piseta tria ponderantem.* Presumably measured in Szeben marks (219.45g).



Lodovico Gritti, who was killed in 1534 in Medgyes (Medias). Later records trace the precious object back even further in time.

The chronicle of István Szamosközy (*Rerum Ungaricarum Libri*), when dealing with the death of John Sigismund, also mentions the golden cross decorated with gemstones that the prince left to the country provided it might only be taken out of the treasury with the joint consent of the estates and for the benefit of the country.<sup>21</sup> The historiographer provides much complementary information on the object. On the one hand, he defines its value: to the best of his knowledge, it was worth 45,000 gold coins. On the other hand, he also provides us with more information on the origin of the treasure. As he understood it, the cross had been in the possession of the Hungarian kings, and was passed down from Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund to King Matthias, whose son, John Corvinus, presented it to Domonkos Kálmáncsehi, provost of Székesfehérvár, who performed his father's burial ceremony.<sup>22</sup> Subsequently, without providing any details as to the circumstances of the next change of ownership, it describes how the treasure came into the possession of King John, from whom it was obtained by Lodovico Gritti. After Gritti was killed, the cross was returned to Szapolyai, and was then passed down to his son. At the time the chronicle was written, Szamosközy believed it to be the property of Kristóf Báthory's son, Prince Sigismund, since, as it so happened, the council had annulled John Sigismund's will, and, at the diet of Medgyes, on the basis of his merits and services rendered, conferred the cross on the prince.<sup>23</sup>

Szamosközy's last sentence was later corrected in the manuscript. According to the correction, Báthory received the cross as compensation for his military expenses: "Prior to Várad's invasion by the Turks, in order to arrange a garrison to protect Várad, the country sold it to Sigismund Báthory for money in such a way that they did not have any money." In a note at the bottom of the page the author provides further sources in connection with the golden cross: *de aurea*

21 *Crucem auream solidam, gemmisque preciosis spectabilem, ne pluris fiscum quam rempublicam faceret, regno uniuerso legavit testamento, hac lege, ut ea nonnisi difficili ancipitque discrimine imminente, in usum publicae salutis e gazophylacio depromeretur. Quadraginta quinque millibus nummum aureum aestimata fertur. Eam ex Sigismundi Caesaris et Regis Ungariae gaza ad Mathiam Regem devolutam, Joannes Corvinus Mathiae filius, Dominico Albensis Basilicae antistiti, qui sacra expiatoria divi Regis Mathiae manibus peregerat, donaverat Bonfinio tradente. Inde in potestatem Regum, qui per seriem successerunt redacta; tandem ad Ludovicum Grittium thesaurarium, sive a Joanne Rege donata illi, sive fraude acquisita, pervenerat. Eo ad Megyes oppidum trucidato, iterum ad Regem Joannem, subinde uero ad filium heredem descendit. Nunc potitur ea Sigismundus Princeps, divi Christophori filius, abrogata ex senatus consulto testamenti cautione: in publicoque ordinum ad Megyes conventu, bene merito Principi virtutis et honoris ergo donata est. Sándor Szilágyi (ed.), Szamosközy István történeti maradványai, 1566–1603. Vol. I. 1566–1586. (Monumenta Hungariae Historica, II; Scriptores, 21.) Budapest, 1876, 113–114.*

22 This latter piece of information originated from Bonfini, who did indeed mention a cross adorned with gemstones, valued at precisely 45,000 gold coins (*crux solida gemmataque, ex obrisa affabre facta*). Quoted by Szilágyi, 'János Zsigmond', 387.

23 According to the sources, this gift was made in 1599, so Szamosközy must have written this part of the chronicle sometime after 1599.

*cruce Epsilon 12. et in testamento Joannis Regis.*<sup>24</sup> This latter source document is clearly making a reference to Prince John Sigismund's aforementioned will, whereas, as we have already seen, no data regarding the estimated value or weight of the item can have originated from it.

Sándor Szilágyi tells us that 'Epsilon', the other source mentioned in the note at the bottom of the page, indicates one of the fonds of the archives of Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia), which, based on the references, contained charters relating to affairs with the Porte.<sup>25</sup> It cannot be stated with all certainty, but the document in question may have concerned the meeting in Zimony (Zemun) in 1566, during which John Sigismund visited Süleyman I in his tent. At least, a golden cross decorated with gemstones is regularly mentioned in accounts of that event. According to the account given by Szamosközy, at the time of his visit the prince was wearing a highly valuable pectoral cross. The piece of jewellery was not described in detail, however. The historical work of Farkas Bethlen (1639–1679), a follower of Szamosközy, incorporates both the description of the object in the will of 1567 (according to which the jewel was decorated with nine diamonds and four rubies) and the theory of the provenance presented in Szamosközy's historic account (according to which the object mentioned in the will, and given first to Szeben and then to Sigismund Báthory, originated from the treasury of Sigismund, Holy Roman Emperor).<sup>26</sup>

The question is whether or not other sources can confirm that at the meeting in Zimony the prince was wearing the object mentioned in the will, and that the golden cross described in the will was indeed a pectoral cross, for neither John Sigismund's will nor later documents contain any reference to this.

The latter question might be resolved by a lost drawing by István Szamosközy: according to Sándor Szilágyi, not only did the historiographer provide a detailed description of the item, but he even reproduced it in a drawing in 1598, one year before it was handed over by the city of Szeben to Sigismund Báthory. Unfortunately, Szilágyi did not publish Szamosközy's drawing, only a written description of it, and the sheet with the graphics has since been lost. According

24 Szilágyi (ed.), *Szamosközy*, I. XXIV.

25 *Ibid.*, XXVI.

26 *...de collo appendit torquem eximii operis margaritis & gemmis adornatum, de quo pendebat crux aurea novem Adamantibus & quatuor Carbunculis ad angulos dictae crucis dispositis, qui non erant quidem ex arte politi, sed rudi tantum opera insiti, pulchritudine tamen a natura data, & pretio eximio in admirationem sui omnes rapiebant, (de qua inferius fusius) quae ex gaza Sigismundi olim Romanorum Caesaris simul & Pannoniae Regis ad illum devenerat, reliqua vero ornamenta ex gazis praedecessorum suorum tam Hungariae quam Poloniae Regum habuit.* Wolffgangi de Bethlen, *Historia de rebus Transsylvanicis. Vol. II.* Cibinii, 1782, 108. The data, complemented with a detailed provenance taken from Szamosközy, was repeated in his account from 1571: *ibid.*, II. 208. In the notes for the year 1599 he stresses that the cross given to Báthory was the same as that mentioned in John Sigismund's will: *ibid.*, 1785, IV. 205. On the basis of this work, Miklós Jankovich wrote about the cross in: 'A villogó Drága Köveknek Esmérete, és azokban lelt gyönyörködése Eleinknek', *Tudományos Gyűjtemény* 5 (1821) 45–46. However, he contests the provenance from Sigismund, claiming that John Corvinus could only have given away objects that originated from his father, not pieces of the royal treasury.

to his description, the nine diamonds were not on the cross itself, but rather on nine removable rings attached to the cross, while the four uncut rubies were on the arms of the cross. The cross had at the time an estimated value of 80,000 thalers. On the rear side of the drawing, the following 17th-century inscription could allegedly be read: “Left by King Louis, as it is written.”<sup>27</sup> Based on the number and type of gemstones it is almost certain that the drawing was made of the cross that had been left behind by John Sigismund: the description is more likely to be of a piece of jewellery, like a pectoral cross, than of an altar cross. It is striking, though, that no mention is made of the provenance from Sigismund to Matthias to John Corvinus, etc.: the 17th-century recorder only seems to have known that the object belonged to ‘King Louis’ (II), and even this he did not state with any certainty.

The detailed description of the meeting in Zimony in 1566 is, in theory, known to us from the entries in a journal attributed to a certain György (or Gergely) Bánffi.<sup>28</sup> Allegedly, he attended the meeting of 29 June 1566, when John Sigismund visited the sultan in his tent. He provides a detailed description of the prince’s attire: “...around his neck, there was a cross, adored with a new diamond and four large marvellous garnets, as they are called, more beautiful than anything else; the goldsmiths estimated a long time ago to be worth one hundred thousand gold coins.”<sup>29</sup> The publishers, József Kemény and István Nagyajtai Kovács, reputedly came across the text in the manuscript of Dávid Rozsnyai (1641–1718), interpreter for Prince Michael Apafi (1661–1690), but the ‘original’ text, Bánffi’s manuscript from around 1566, has not been discovered, so its credibility cannot yet be confirmed.

The phrase “new diamond”, used to describe the decoration of the jewel is, however, rather strange: the value of precious stones is usually determined by their size and quantity, not by their age. As seen earlier, the descriptions in the records that can be regarded as credible (such as John Sigismund’s will, drawn up hardly a year later, the decision of the diet of 1571, or the acknowledgement

27 Szilágyi, ‘János Zsigmond’, 385–386.

28 The author of the text is still disputed. The writer was identified by György Aranka in 1796 as Gergely Bánffi, who travelled as a member of John Sigismund’s entourage: ‘1556 [sic] Bánffi Gergely, Iffjabb János Király uttya Szulimánhoz’, in György Aranka (ed.), *A’ Magyar Nyelv-Mivelő Társaság’ Munkáinak Első Darabja*. Szeben, 1796, 192. The publishers of the journal also took it from him: Gergely Bánffi, ‘Második János Magyarország’ választott királyának második Szulejman török császárhoz menetele’ rendje és módja (1566)’, in József Kemény and István Nagyajtai Kovács (eds.), *Erdélyország történetei’ tára. Vol. I. 1540–1600*, Kolozsvár, 1837, 33–49. On the basis of the historical facts, József Bessenyei reached the conclusion that it is more likely that György Bánffi was the author, because he, as opposed to Gergely, was indeed a member of the inner circle around John Sigismund, and was also present at the meeting with the sultan in his tent: József Bessenyei (ed.), *Zay Ferenc: János Király árutatása, Kis Péter: Magyarázat, [Bánffy György]: Második János ... török császárhoz menetele*. Budapest, 1993, 115–116. Most recently, Miklós Latzkovits has argued in favour of Gergely Bánffi’s being the author: Miklós Latzkovits, ‘Második Jánosnak a török császárhoz, sultán Sulimanhoz való menetelinek megírása’, *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 114 (2010) 148.

29 Bánffi, ‘Második János’, 42.

of receipt by the city of Szeben) always mention “nine” diamonds. While it is difficult to find an explanation for the difference, there is the assumption that the alleged ‘eye-witness’ was not relying on his personal experiences at the time of writing, but rather on the Latin record, as there is only a one-letter difference between the Latin words ‘*novem*’ and ‘*novum*’, whereas it is impossible to confuse the Hungarian words ‘*kilenc*’ (meaning ‘nine’) and ‘*új*’ (meaning ‘new’). This raises certain doubts, however, as to whether or not the journal writer was indeed present in the sultan’s tent and was actually able to describe the piece of jewellery on the basis of personal experience.<sup>30</sup>

We know several other versions of the description of the meeting in 1566. In 1793, István Katona published a Latin version. Unfortunately, it was not the original text, but a Latin translation of a Hungarian manuscript belonging to Sámuel Thordai (1731–1801).<sup>31</sup> Since Thordai usually worked from the manuscripts written by Dávid Rozsnyai, one would rightly expect the appearance of the same phrases. Yet the part describing the jewels of the prince is entirely absent from this version.<sup>32</sup>

There is a strong indication that an original work, written in Latin, did exist: the earliest version that I know of – and one that is different from Rozsnyai’s

30 A recently recovered copy of the journal entry, made in 1715 (OSZK, Kézirattár, Oct. Lat. 459), is presented in Latzkovits, ‘Második Jánosnak’, 138–148. Apart from several Latinisms, Latzkovits also draws our attention to a mistake similar to the one above: among the names listed at the end of the entry, it is the name not of Gergely Bánffi but of György Bánffi that is featured. Hence the version published in 1837 contains yet another mistake that may be due to a misreading of a Latin word: while it is difficult to confuse the Hungarian name György with Gergely, it is easy to read Gregorius in place of Georgius (*ibid.*, 140). After comparing the different versions of the text, Latzkovits eventually reached the conclusion that an ‘ancient’ Latin text may have existed, and he definitely contested the idea that the writer of the journal had been an ‘eye-witness’ to the meeting in the sultan’s tent.

31 I have reviewed the following editions: OSZK, Kézirattár, Fol. Hung. 1130 (copy by Sámuel Thordai, made in 1704 in Fogaras, with a dedication to Francis II Rákóczi); Fol. Hung. 2214 (copy by Sámuel Thordai, made around 1763, with dedication to János Szász, the judge royal); Fol. Hung. 2684 (copy from the 19th century, with dedication to György Bánffy, governor of Transylvania, most likely on the basis of a manuscript by Thordai); Fol. Hung. 2685 (copy by Thordai, also with a dedication to János Szász, undated); Fol. Hung. 2688 (copy made to Pál Festetics in 1776 on the basis of an edition from 1701, dedicated to István Apor and attributed to Thordai, which, in turn, according to a note in it, was based on a translation prepared in 1697 by Dávid Rozsnyai and dedicated to István Apor). Thordai thus prepared several copies, but seems to have based his work on Rozsnyai’s: in all the volumes mentioned, we can find the phrases “new diamond” or “new diamonds” in the description of the piece of jewellery. The title of Rozsnyai’s original work (*Vicissitudines rerum formidabilium*) was in Latin, yet in the dedications presumably written by him he claims that he translated the texts in the volumes during his stay in Constantinople from *Turkish* (and not from Latin) into Hungarian. Another problem, whose solution cannot be given within the scope of this present essay, is that two of the manuscripts attributed to Thordai date back to the early 18th century (1701, 1704), while he was not in fact born until 1731.

32 Sámuel Thordai, ‘Professionis serenissimi principis Joannis II. electi regis Hungariae ad Sulimanum, imperatorem Turcarum, modus et series, anno Christi 1566. factae et celebratae’, in István Katona (ed.), *Historia critica Regum Hungariae, Stirpis Austriacae*. Budaë, 1793, 207–220. It should be found on page 215, but these two paragraphs are missing.



version – is the account by Zsigmond Kiss from 1666, which has come down to us in Michael Apafi's letter book (*Az Erdélyi Méltóságos Fejedelemlnek, es Magyar Ország Választott Királynának második Jánosnak a Török Császárhoz Szultán Szulimánhoz való menetelinek meg írása. Mely volt Anno 1566* [A Written Account of John II His Majesty the Prince of Transylvania and Elected King of Hungary's Visit to the Turkish Emperor Sultan Süleyman. Which Took Place in 1566]), which clearly states that the text is a translation from Latin: "Translated from Latin during the visit of Michael Apafi, his Majesty the Prince, to Érsekújvár". In this version of the description of the jewel, only one diamond and four rubies are mentioned: "Around his neck there was a cross, and in it a diamond and four large garnets – whose beauty and wonderous shine were admired by all, and that goldsmiths had valued at one hundred thousand gold coins."<sup>33</sup>

As mentioned earlier, it is not known exactly which Latin source the 17th-century Hungarian translators (Zsigmond Kiss, Dávid Rozsnyai) used, but it is clear the texts contain no additional information compared to the description of the journey of King John in the historic epic written in Latin by a Transylvanian Saxon pastor, Christian Schesaeus (1535–1585), which was published in Wittenberg in 1571. The fragment that begins with *Regis Vngariae ad Imperatorem profectio* can be found in one of the songs (*Historia de bello Pannonico*) published after the narratives from 1540–1552 of the four songs in *Ruinae Pannonicae*, and yet, chronologically, it cannot be linked to them: *Crux Adamante rigens circumdabat aurea collum / Hanc simul ambibat quadruplex Carbunculus, olim / Iuaicio, centum reputatus millibus aureis*.<sup>34</sup> It appears, therefore, that no mention of the nine diamonds was made in the earliest sources. It is likely that this detail was included in the accounts as late as in the 17th century, following the work of Farkas Bethlen, and this was carried over through unintentional alterations (text deterioration) in translations that can be traced back to Rozsnyai, one of which was published by József Kemény and István Nagyajtai Kovács.

Szamosközy also claimed that the golden cross left by John Sigismund to the country (on the proviso that it be kept by the council of Szeben) later came into the possession of Sigismund Báthory. According to historical sources, this occurred in 1599, at the diet of Medgyes, when the estates requested the city of Szeben to return the cross, and then gave it to Sigismund Báthory as compensation for the 45,000 gold coins of his own money that he had spent on the Ottoman wars. The council of Szeben was notified on 26 March 1599 of the cross being reclaimed, and a description of it was once again provided. Yet, on this occasion, it was not described as one adorned with diamonds and

33 OSZK, Kézirattár, Quart. lat. 3987. The Hungarian originals of the texts quoted: *Méltóságos Fejedelem Apafi Mihály Ersek Ujvár alá menetelekor fordítottatott Deákból ... A Nyakáb (an) vala egy Kereszt a benne valo Adamás Kő, és négy nagy Carbunculusok, – Szépségekkkel, és tsudálatos fenyességekkkel mindenetől csudáltat (na)k vala, ezt már az előtt az Ötvesek Száz Ezer Aranyra betsülték vala.*

34 Christianus Schesaeus, *Ruinae Pannonicae Libri Quatuor*. Witebergae, 1571; Christianus Schesaeus, *Opera quae supersunt omnia*. (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Medii Recentisque Aevorum. Series Nova, 4.) Ed. Franciscus Csonka. Budapest, 1979, 284. Liber IX. lines 547–549.

rubies, but as one decorated with pearls and gems (*margaritis gemmis et lapidibus pretiosis ornatam*). Hence even in connection with this object the suspicion could arise that it is not the same as the one named in the will.

Pearls have not yet been mentioned, but one should not forget that on this occasion the recorders did not and could not see the cross, as they had just sent to Szeben for it. The jewel arrived in Medgyes four days later, and was handed over to Sigismund Báthory on 30 March 1599.<sup>35</sup> All the recorders knew was that it was extremely valuable (worth at least 45,000 gold coins), so they had every reason to believe it was adorned with pearls and other gemstones. On the other hand, the detailed description of the pre-history of the object, according to which the country once entrusted the judge royal, the mayor and the council of Szeben to keep the cross, and the fact that it was now their common wish to recover it, in my opinion leaves no doubt that the source is describing the same object that was deposited in the city of Szeben in 1571.<sup>36</sup>

In his memoirs, even Tamás Borsos (1566–1634), chief justice of Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş) at the time, mentioned the event. He clearly states that this is the very same cross that was bequeathed by “young King John” to the country, and he also confirmed that it was used to repay a debt of 45,000 gold coins to Báthory. Borsos saw the cross with his own eyes, and he even claimed that he had held it in his own hands, so he can be regarded as a credible eyewitness. Nevertheless, it has to be taken into consideration that he wrote his memoirs a decade and a half after the event took place. He did not see any pearls, either, but according to him it was adorned with five diamonds and eight rubies.<sup>37</sup> Even though the proportions of the gemstones do not exactly correspond to those in previous sources (nine diamonds, four rubies), the type of stones and their total amount is the same (thirteen): this mistake is perhaps

35 *EOE* IV. 81.

36 *Ibid.*, 284: *Ob hoc crucem illam auream margaritis gemmis et lapidibus pretiosis ornatam, quae alias apud manus prudentum et circumsectorum iudicis regii magistri civium caeterorumque juratorum consulum civitates Cibiniensis tuitioris conservationis gratia in eadem civitate Cibiniensi per nos regnicolas reposita habebatur ad humillimae supplicationis nostrae instantiam a sua Serenitate pro omnimoda satisfactione acceptare eidem suae Serenitati deputavimus. Qua quidem cruce per eosdem iudicem regium et magistrum civium et senatores Cibinienses ex commissione nostra, huc ad praedictam civitatem Megyes allata atque adducta, nobisque in (frequenti) regnicolari conventu nostro in ecclesia parochiali in eadem civitate fundata personaliter existentes manibus nostris assignata atque restituta. Super huiusmodi restitutione et assignatione dictae crucis aureae prefatos iudicem regium et magistrum civium caeterosque cives et senatores Cibinienses quietos expeditos et modis omnibus absolutos commisimus atque reddidimus harum nostrarum vigore et testimonio literarum mediante.*

37 László Kocziány (ed.), *Vásárhelytől a Fényes Portáig. Emlékiratok, levelek*. Bukarest, 1972<sup>2</sup>, 46–47. “...the cross which the young King John left in his will to the country, the country gave it in exchange for forty-five thousand gold coins to Sigismund Báthory, who messaged the country that it was not worth it, yet he would take it. This cross had stood in Szeben since the times of the young King John, from there it was taken and given to Sigismund Báthory. The cross was in my hands, too; it was not big, because it could fit into one’s fist, but there were thirteen stones in it, five diamonds and eight rubies; it was a really beautiful piece, as such a small piece was worth forty-five thousand gold coins.” Earlier publication: József Kemény and István Nagyajtai Kovács (eds.), *Erdélyország történetei’ tára*. Vol. II. 1566–1613. Kolozsvár, 1845, 22–23.

explained by him not remembering exactly after so many years. He said the cross was the size of the palm of a hand, which suggests that the object in question was indeed a pectoral cross and not a crucifix to be placed on an altar.

An alternative explanation for the provenance of the cross given to Sigismund Báthory was provided by a senator of Szeben, Matthias Miles (1639–1686), born in Medgyes, who mentioned the object in his work written in 1670. According to his account, it was Sigismund Báthory who requested this treasure, described as “of no use to them”, from the city, in exchange for the costs he had sustained: the object was a two-barred cross made of pure gold and adorned with precious stones. It was valued at more than 80,000 forints, and did not come into the city’s possession by way of John Sigismund’s will, but was a votive gift from Queen Isabella and King John to the Saxons of Szeben for honouring God. After Báthory received it, it was placed on the altar of Medgyes church.<sup>38</sup> It is thus certain that Miles was referring to an altar cross. Even though the historical account given by Miles was written well after the event, his information does not necessarily lack credibility. The majority of the 16th-century information he used comes from Schesaeus, and the unpublished songs of *Ruinae Pannonicae* have come down to us in his transcripts. It cannot therefore be ruled out that another cross, one in the shape of a two-barred altar cross decorated with precious stones, also came into the possession of Sigismund Báthory; neither is it impossible that the cross had previously been owned by the Szapolyais, although, considering what has been previously stated, he probably did not obtain it at the diet of Medgyes.<sup>39</sup>

Based on the aforementioned sources it follows that John Sigismund had a pectoral cross decorated with four rubies and some diamonds, which he was wearing at the meeting of 1566 and which is probably the same as the golden cross adorned with nine diamonds and four rubies that he bequeathed in his will to the country and that he can certainly have traced back through

38 Matthias Miles, *Siebenbürgischer Würg-Engel oder Chronicalischer Anhang des 16 Seculi nach Christi Geburt, aller theils in Siebenbürgen, theils Ungern ... fürgelauffener Geschichten*. Hermanstadt, 1670, 124: *Es sey nehmlig bey den Möghafften H. Sachsen solche Ihnen vnnothwendige Kleynode verhanden / welcher Preiß villeicht so vill würde machen / daß er seine Schulden damit mögte entrichten. Dieselbe Kleinode aber war ein verdoppeltes Creütz / sehr köstlig von klahrem Gold / vnnd villem Edelgestein außgeziehet / so über fl. 80000 / wurde geschetzet; Vnd war von Isabella vnd Johanne II. in Hermanstadt den Sachsen dahin gegeben / vnd zu sonderligen Danckmahl zu Gott / Ihr viller Angst / vnnd außgestandenen Vnglücks in ihrem Elend vnnd Wallfahrt verehret worden: Dasselbe wurd damahls öffentlig dar gebracht / vnnd in der Medwischer Kirchen für den Altar niedergelegt von H. Alberio Hueth (so in allen Sachen Sigismundo willfährtiger / als gnug / war) daher hats Sigismundus empfangen.*

39 One should also give due consideration to the cross weighing 6 marks and 21½ ounces, i.e. more than one and a half kilograms, ordered by voivode Alexander from the goldsmiths of Szeben, but which he never received. For this, see G[ustav] Seiverth, ‘Das goldene Kreuz Johann Sigismund Zapolya’s’, *Transsilvania. Beiblatt des Siebenbürger Boten, Wochenschrift für siebenbürgische Landeskunde, Literatur und Landeskultur* n. F. 2:4 (1862) 41–46. It is certainly not identical to the pectoral cross of John Sigismund, as was clearly stated even by Jolán Balogh in her *Művészeti*, 385. Judging by its weight, it is more likely to have been an altar cross.

his father to Lodovico Gritti. This view is supported by the fact that the same number of rubies is mentioned in the description of both objects, and that it was decorated with diamonds, even though not all the sources mention their exact number. Furthermore, there are other circumstances, for example the drawing by Szamosközy and the description by Borsos, that suggest that the cross mentioned in the will was indeed a piece of jewellery. Despite the fact that the various sources contain different estimated values for the cross, and that the document from the diet of 1599 mentions pearls instead of diamonds in the description of the treasure, given my knowledge of the pre-history of the object, I would still argue that the item handed over to Sigismund Báthory at the diet of Medgyes was identical to those described earlier. It must also be added that, once the estates requested a cross that had been left behind by John Sigismund and documented with an acknowledgement of receipt, the council of Szeben could hardly have given back *another* cross instead of the real one. It can nevertheless be considered likely that Sigismund Báthory also obtained a larger altar cross that was a two-barred cross decorated with unclarified gemstones.

One thing that remains unexplained is what source of information Szamosközy used: according to him, the golden cross had originated from the Hungarian royal treasury, more specifically from Sigismund, Holy Roman Emperor. This provenance did actually appear in other sources at around the same time Szamosközy worked on his historical account (around 1601–1603), yet this was in connection with other jewellery/crosses and not in connection with John Sigismund's pectoral cross.

In his two letters to Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II, István Hosszútóthy, a councillor to the emperor, mentioned a piece of jewellery with diamonds, which the oral tradition traced back to Sigismund, Holy Roman Emperor, and which he wished to obtain from the Csáky family.<sup>40</sup> According to the legend, however, this jewel did not come into the possession of John Szapolyai through the usual (yet not very well documented) path of King Matthias–John Corvinus, etc., but rather through István Szapolyai, the count of Szepes, and eventually ended up as the property of Prince John Sigismund. He in turn gave it to Gáspár Bekes and entrusted him to take it to Princess Maria Anna of Bavaria as a betrothal gift. The prince passed away before his request could be carried out, however, so the piece of jewellery remained in the possession of Bekes. Following the death of Bekes, it came to be owned by his widow, Anna Sárkányi, who brought it to her new marriage with Ferenc Wesselényi; eventually it was inherited by her daughter Anna Wesselényi, wife of István Csáky. The delivery of the inheritance was, however, impeded: because of the size of the diamond, the 'antique' had become especially valuable, and at this moment in time it was not in the hands of the Csáky family, because – as we know from a letter by Hosszútóthy – it had been pawned, and only István Csáky had the right to redeem it. Nevertheless

40 ÖStA HHStA UA AA fasc. 144. Konv. C. fols. 10–102 and 112–113 (dated Dombrád, 10 November 1603, and Kassa, 9 December 1603). The second letter is published by Sándor Szilágyi, 'Egy régi ékszer történetéhez', *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 13 (1879) 191–193.



he promised that, when redeemed, he would have it transported, together with other beautiful objects in the possession of the Csáky family, to Prague without any delay.

Unfortunately, Hosszútóthy himself did not see the jewel, so he did not provide us with an exact description of it. We do not even know whether or not the piece was registered in the treasury of Emperor Rudolf II. Otherwise, the story of the piece of diamond jewellery is in several respects similar to that of the aforementioned unicorn pendant, also decorated with diamonds, possessed by King John, which, as mentioned earlier, came into the ownership of Bekes, and subsequently into that of his widow. Since Hosszútóthy mentions no unicorn in connection with the jewel he describes, however, these facts cannot as yet be applied to the piece owned by Csáky.

The prominent provenance described above did not only appear in connection with Csáky's jewel. An altar cross that appeared in 1601 was also traced back to the treasury of the Hungarian kings. Its description is very much similar to the information provided by Matthias Miles, except that this appeared not in the possession of Sigismund Báthory but in that of István Báthory, judge royal (1555–1605). Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II also took deliberate measures to obtain this piece: in his letter sent from Prague, dated 20 October 1601, he called upon Báthory to hand over the golden cross that “undoubtedly” originated from the Hungarian royal treasury, and which contained remnants of the holy cross and relics from other saints, to field paymaster Joseph Ganz.<sup>41</sup> He also requested that any other rare and old objects worthy of kings that might be in Báthory's possession be sent to him with some of his loyal men so that he could have a look at them. He added that, should he find pleasure in an object, they would agree on a price; should he not, he would return it.

There are two sources from which we know that Báthory did indeed send the cross to Prague. It is attested to on one hand by István Hosszútóthy's letter sent from Vienna in July 1602, in which he informs the emperor, *inter alia*, that Mihály Bay, Báthory's *familiaris* (servant), had arrived in Vienna with the cross and would arrive in Prague within a couple of days.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, István Báthory's will of 1603 also reveals that the golden cross, which the emperor wished to see, was still in the hands of Mihály Bay in Dévény (Devín). So the

41 ÖStA AVA FHKA HFU r. No. 71. Konv. November 1601, fols. 107–111. The content of the letter addressed to Báthory and sent on 20 October 1601 is presented in: Sándor Takáts, 'Régi királyi kincsek Báthory István birtokában', *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 21 (1901) 445–446. The description of the cross is: ...*Crucem auream Sacro ligno, alijsq. reliquijs Sanctorum inclusis, preciosam, et proculdubio à praedecessoribus nostris, Hungariae Regibus, ex thesauro suo ad familiam tuam translata...* ÖStA AVA FHKA HFU r. No. 71. Konv. November 1601, fol. 110r. Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf was later informed by Hosszútóthy about a highly valuable chasuble adorned with beads, so on 14 November 1601 he again wrote to Báthory and informed him of the arrival of Hosszútóthy, instructing him to hand him over the chasuble without fail (*ibid.*, fols. 108r–109v).

42 The letter is published in: Kruppa, 'Korona és kereszt', 90.

emperor either did not want it, or they could not agree on a price.<sup>43</sup> In his will, Báthory also gave instructions regarding the future of the object. He wished to leave the cross (which at the time was left with András Gyulaffy's children as a guarantee) to his niece Erzsébet Báthory, wife of Ferenc Nádasdy: "... I have one golden cross, which the Emperor requested, and which now is in Dévény with Mihály Bay. The cross belongs to András Gyulaffy's children, because I owe them two and a half thousand forints. I gave it to their father as a guarantee, and this cross I leave to my niece, Mrs. Ferenc Nádasdy, Erzsébet Báthory and her children..."<sup>44</sup>

In all probability, the cross was passed on from Erzsébet Báthory to her daughter Anna Nádasdy, wife of Miklós VI Zrínyi (d. 1625), who died childless in December 1617. Pursuant to the law, the objects that she had brought into the marriage as dowry, or had acquired by way of inheritance, were to be given back to her family. It was on these grounds that Anna's brother, Pál Nádasdy, claimed the objects on 21 December 1617.<sup>45</sup> Among the objects reclaimed we can find some pieces that recognizably originate from the treasury of the Báthorys: a "golden cross with stones", a "tapestry with golden pearls" and a "golden lion". It is likely that Pál Nádasdy was able to agree with Zrínyi on the treasures of the estate, and he may have become the next owner of these objects, because his son, Ferenc Nádasdy, mentioned exactly these items in his will dated 1663 when referring to them as treasures that had been passed to him by his ancestors: "Regarding the movable assets left by my ancestors..., nothing more than a cross and a rather torn beaded tapestry came in my hands."<sup>46</sup>

43 It is revealed in the will that Báthory had already pawned the cross with András Gyulaffy, so he could only have presented it to the emperor after redeeming it from his heirs. For that, however, he would have needed several thousand forints in cash, but Rudolf II was more keen on 'paying' in the form of donations and privileges.

44 *...egi arani kereztem uagion, kit chazar fel kerett uala, Bay Mihalnal uagion most Deubenben, az kerez az Giulaffi Andras gyermekje, mert en önekik harmadfel ezer forintall uagiok ados, atioknak uetettem uolt zalagbann, meli arani kerezet Nadasdi Ferencne hugomnak, Batori Örsbet azonnak es gyermekinek hagiok... Veronika Vadász, Ecsedi Báthory István végrendelete 1603. (Fiatl Filológusok Füzetei. Kora Újkor, 1.) Szeged, 2002, 68. The amount of the pledge is irrelevant to the value of the object, because it was common practice to pawn objects below their real value. This was a kind of guarantee that the owner intended to redeem the pawned object.*

45 The inventory (*Zrini es Nadasdi Urak dolga az Marha felöl* [The agreement between Lord Zrínyi and Lord Nádasdy regarding the goods]) was published by Gabriella Reichardt, 'Nádasdy Anna csejtei tárházának jegyzéke 1617-ből', in Gábor Ujváry and Réka Lengyel (eds.), *Lymbus 2012–2013. Magyarságtudományi Forrásközlemények*. Budapest, 2014, 96–99. However, the title of her essay (Inventory of Anna Nádasdy's treasury in Csejte) is somewhat misleading: The list was not made of the precious items of the treasury of Csejte (Čachtice), but was a joint list of several other inventories of objects that Anna Nádasdy had already received from there, mainly as dowry (or objects that she took by force after the death of her mother), which objects the relatives were, at this point, claiming back.

46 *Az mi pedig az őstől maradt ingó marhát illeti..., az egy keresztnél és igen megtépett gyöngyös kárpitnál több az én kezemben nem jutott.* Gyula Schönherr, 'Nádasdy Ferencz országbíró végrendelete, 3. rész', *Történelmi Tár* 11 (1888) 582.

*The beaded tapestry of King Matthias*

The aforementioned beaded tapestry is also likely to have originated from a royal treasury, and even though possession of John Szapolyai cannot be ruled out, it can be assumed that it came into the ownership of the Báthory family in another way. The first person to mention the tapestry was János Drágffy, judge royal, who drew up his will a couple of days prior to the Battle of Mohács (on 27 August 1526), in which he partly confirmed the instructions of his earlier will, written in Erdőd (Ardud), but he also made a special mention of a “golden tapestry” worth 40,000 forints, which his father, Bertalan Drágffy, had received as a gift from King Matthias. Pursuant to his verbal promise made earlier in Buda, he left this tapestry to John Szapolyai, provided that, upon his death, Szapolyai would protect his family and keep his property for his children.<sup>47</sup>

Although we have no real reason to doubt that the last wish of the judge royal was not respected and followed, it still seems that no similar tapestry appeared among the possessions of the Szapolyai family, whereas one did appear in the possession of the heirs of Gáspár Drágffy, one of Drágffy’s sons. Gáspár Drágffy passed away in 1545, and within a decade his two sons had also died, so the male line of the family died out. As a special favour from John Sigismund and Isabella, Drágffy’s widow, Anna Báthory of Somlyó, could keep the property of her late husband and could even carry it into her second marriage, with György Báthory of Ecsed. The tapestry, woven with golden threads and decorated with beads, appeared again in György Báthory’s will of 1569: “Also the beaded tapestry I leave to Erzsébet.”<sup>48</sup> That this item of textile was the same as that originating from the treasury of King Matthias was established by a list of items from Erzsébet Báthory’s dowry, drawn up a couple of years later: *Item aulea Mathiae regis aurata et gemmata*.<sup>49</sup> Its fate was identical to that of the golden cross mentioned above. According to Ferenc Nádasdy’s will, as we have seen, it was in quite bad condition as early as 1663. I know of no later mention of this object.

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47 Alajos Mednyánszky, ‘Drágffy Jánosnak 1526. esztendőben Mohácsi Táborból kelt utolsó rendelése’, *Tudományos Gyűjtemény* 8 (1818) 30: *Az aranyos kárpitot, melyet Ő felsége Mátyás király ada Atyámnak, Drágffy Bertalannak vére hullásásért és hűséges szolgálattyaért negyven ezer forintokban, hagyom az én Uramnak, atyámfiának Szepesi Jánosnak, erdélyi vajdának ... Budán Sz. György napján ígértem vala neki illy ok alatt: hogy ha az Isten engemet előtte ki talál e’ világból venni, Feleségemnek, gyermekeimnek, házaimnak, és minden jószágaimnak gondját viselje...* (“I leave the golden tapestry, which his Majesty King Matthias gave to my Father, Bertalan Drágffy, for the blood he spilt and for his loyal services in providing forty thousand forints, to my Lord, my relative John of Szepes, voivode of Transylvania ... On the day of Saint George I made this promise to him in Buda for this reason: should God take me from this world before him, he should then take care of my wife, my children, my houses and all my property...”).

48 *Eorsebetnek hagyom az gyöngyös karpitot*. MNL OL E 148, NRA, fasc. 843. No. 11. Dated: Csicsva, 3 April 1569.

49 Balogh (*Művészet*, 395) was of the opinion that the tapestry originated from the father’s side – a view supported by the fact that György Báthory gave instructions in connection with it in 1569 as if it had been his own, but no written source has been found to prove that the tapestry belonged to Báthory earlier than that date.

## THE OBJECTS AND THEIR AFTERLIFE

As was also shown by the will of John Sigismund, the treasury of the Szapolyai family, in the absence of male heirs, became dispersed. The main beneficiaries of the will were the Polish relatives of the prince, but Hungarian lords also benefitted from it, and some objects did actually appear in their estates.

In the estate inventory (1603) of the immensely wealthy Ferenc Dobó, former chief of the Transylvanian salt chambers and a confidant of Lodovico Gritti as long as he lived (and, according to gossip, the man who acquired Gritti's fortune),<sup>50</sup> a lavabo set appeared, which, according to the description, had originated from King John: *...pelvis ingens cum amphora sive infundibulo quondam Johannis regis, ut ex insignibus apparet.*<sup>51</sup> As mentioned by the compilers of the inventory, eight of the items left behind by Ferenc Dobó were chosen to be given to Rudolf II, Holy Roman Emperor: in all likelihood this ewer and basin set was also among them. Given what we know about the fate of the estate, however, this was only a small part of what must have entered the treasury of the emperor.<sup>52</sup>

In his codicil of 16 June 1630, Kristóf Hagymássy, grandchild of John Sigismund's executor of the same name, bequeathed "King John's sabre" to his younger son, János Hagymássy, while to his older son he left another sabre he had once been given by Ferdinand.<sup>53</sup> A richly-decorated sabre, bequeathed to the elder son of Hagymássy in 1567, was indeed mentioned in John Sigismund's will. It is not impossible that the same weapon could later have appeared in the possession of his descendants.<sup>54</sup>

Certain objects originating from the Szapolyai family were noted even in the mid-17th century. One example is Mária Abafi, Mihály Bojnicics Horváth's widow, who, in her will of 18 September 1645, bequeathed King John's enamelled *koncerz* (one-handed cavalry sword) to her nephew János Bekény.<sup>55</sup>

50 Gábor Barta, 'Ludovicus Gritti kormányzósága', *Történelmi Szemle* 14 (1971) 312–313; István Draskóczy, 'Az erdélyi sókamarák ispánjai, 1529–1535: az erdélyi sóbányák sorsa a Szapolyai-korszakban', *Levéltári Közlemények* 75 (2004) 38.

51 Ferenc Dobó's estate, 29 January 1603. Extract published by Gábor Vincze, 'A Dobó-család kincsei', *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 13 (1879) 77–78. Inventories of property normally list goldsmiths' works grouped according to their value and the type of the object. Since this set is among the first on the list, preceding a jug with the coat of arms of King Matthias, we can assume it was of outstanding value.

52 Cf. Sándor Takáts, 'Dobó Ferenc generális', in Idem, *Régi magyar kapitányok és generálisok*. Budapest, 1928, 379–432.

53 Béla Radvánszky, *Magyar családélet és háztartás a XVI. és XVII. században. Vol. III*. Budapest, 1879, 258. The exact text reads as follows: *János király szabljáját, kit én csináltattam* ("King John's sword, which I had had made") – this could be interpreted as him having had the sword repaired.

54 Heckenast, 'János Zsigmond végrendelete', 159: *frameam pulchram, cuius vaginae ima pars, circui alligatorij, crux manubrij et bullae super zonam seu cingulum frameae ex auro sunt parati et colore nigro zamantz [enamel] ornati*.

55 MNL OL E 148, NRA, fasc. 782. No. 19: 10. *Marat volt ennekem Janos kiraly hegyes tore zomanczos, aztis hagyom Bekeny János Uramnak* ("10. I also possess King John's enamelled *koncerz*; I leave this to Lord János Bekény, as well").





FIGURE 3. CORAL ROSARY FROM THE ESTERHÁZY COLLECTION

PHOTO © MUSEUM OF APPLIED ARTS, BUDAPEST

Memories of the provenance of objects do not usually stretch beyond more than two or three generations, so the later an object appears in a source, the more cautious one has to be with the credibility of the data. Even 17th-century inventories of the treasures of the Esterházy family often originated objects from various monarchs, princes and prelates, and since that was the time when treasuries started to take form, we can sometimes observe items that ‘switched their provenance’: inventories compiled at different times trace these items back to different people. One such item is the coral rosary (see Fig. 3) that in 1685 Pál Esterházy traced to King John,<sup>56</sup> hardly a decade later, he wished to see it as a piece that had originated from King Stephen Báthory of Poland.<sup>57</sup> By contrast, modern research sees the object as originating from the treasury of Ferenc Nádasdy, and – depending on whether it accepts its provenance from the Báthory family – dates it to the years around either 1570 or 1640.<sup>58</sup>

56 Imre Katona, ‘A fraknói kincstár 1685. évi leltára’, *Savaria. A Vas Megyei Múzeumok Értesítője* 17–18 (1983–1984) 470: No. 8: *Edgy eöreggh veöröss Kláris, 10 szeméü olvaso, kinek edgyik végén edgy aranyas metallium edgy eöreggh gombal edgyütt, másik végén arany teöreök forma gyeüreü vagyon, mely János királyé volt* (“One large red coral, a rosary of ten beads, with a gilded metal piece with a large button at one end, and with a golden Turkish ring, which used to belong to King John, at the other”).

57 *Inventarium Thesauri Cels. S. R. I. Princ. Pauli Esteras...*, 1696. Arm. 51–52. No. 23. MNL OL P 108, Esterházy-levéltár, Rep. 8. fasc. C. No. 38Nb: *Rosarium Decennarium ex Corallis magnis, cum argenteo deaurato Pater Noster, Numismateque simili Christi Domini, & uno Annulo dependentibus, condam Regis Poloniae Stephanj Bathory existens.*

58 Angéla Héjj-Détári, ‘A fraknói Esterházy-kincstár a történeti források tükrében’, in Géza Galavics (ed.) *Magyarországi reneszánsz és barokk. Művészettörténeti Tanulmányok*. Budapest, 1975, 490; András Szilágyi, ‘Adalék Nádasdy Ferenc (1623–1671) műkincseinek utóéletéhez’, *Ars Decorativa* 16 (1997) 58–59; Mikó and Sinkó (eds.), *Történelem-kép*, 439–440, kat. VII–13 (András Szilágyi); András Szilágyi (ed.), *Műtárgyak a fraknói Esterházy-kincstárból az Iparművészeti Múzeum gyűjteményében*. (Thesaurus Domus Esterhazyanae, I.) Budapest, 2014, 261–262, kat. V. 7 (Ildikó Pandur).

*The Szapolyai cup*

When an artefact is decorated with a coat of arms, the memory of the original owner may of course survive for centuries. Interestingly enough, here we see an example of just the opposite: in the history of the only object with the coat of arms of the Szapolyai family, a chrysoprase cup kept in the treasury of the Esterházy family (Fig. 4), there is no mention of King John until the end of the 19th century.

Neither can we establish for certain when the object entered the treasury of Fraknó (Forchtenstein). It has been assumed that the description in the Esterházy inventory from 1725 is of this object (*Nro 2°. Más egy kübül való Ezüstben foglalt aranyos födeles tok nélkül való Pohár* ["No. 2. A stone cup, gilded silver mounted, with lid and with no case"]).<sup>59</sup> Unfortunately, the cited description of the inventory does not mention the special characteristics of the cup: the stem in the shape of a winding tree trunk with figures of snails, frogs and *putti* on it; the striking green colour of the rare stone material (chrysoprase); the bubble-shaped decorations on the lid, the closing part decorated with pomegranates, and the herald holding the coat of arms of the Szapolyai family on the inside. We cannot rule out the possibility that these are descriptions of one and the same object, since the cup does indeed have a gilded silver mount, and the main part of it is indeed made of stone, and it does have a lid. Yet these features could easily apply to many other objects.

Inventories made in later years do not make the situation any better. An example is the inventory from 1858 in which the cup is described as follows: *No. 303. Eine silberne Vase mit Jaspis schalle. 12 Mark, 250 ft.*<sup>60</sup> One would hardly be able to establish a connection between the "silver vessel with a jasper bowl", the description of which does not even mention whether or not the object was gilded, with the object in question, had this inventory not served as the basis for the deposit agreement of 1919 with the Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest: the appendix to the agreement contains a list of objects, in which, apart from the new inventory number, the numbers used in the inventory of Fraknó are also given. In the appropriate part of the inventory, we find the following description: *No. 141–303. Fedeles serleg. Fatörzset ábrázoló szárral, teste jászpizból, fedelén gránátalma. XVI. sz. Zápolya J.-tól* ("No. 141–303. Cup with lid. Stem in the shape of a tree trunk, bowl made of jasper, pomegranate on the lid. 16th c. From J. Zápolya").<sup>61</sup>

59 Imre Katona, 'A fraknói kincstár 1725-ös leltára', *Művészettörténeti Értesítő* 29 (1980) 136.

60 *Inventarium über die zur hochfürstlich Eszterházyischen Fideicommiss herrschaft Forchtenstein gehörigen Praetiosen und anderen historisch merkwürdigen Gegenständen, welches den 26ten May d. J. und den darauf folgenden Tagen aufgenommen worden ist.* Fraknó, 1858, Kasten XLV–XLVI. No. 303; MNL OL P 112, Esterházy-levéltár, Leltárak No. 118.

61 *Az Országos Magyar Iparművészeti Múzeumnak Főméltóságu herceg Esterházy Miklós ur által megörzész végett 1919 szeptember hó 30-án átadott műtárgyak jegyzéke.* Budapest, 1919, 40; MNL OL P 112, Esterházy-levéltár, Leltárak No. 118.



FIGURE 4. CHRYSOPRASE CUP WITH SZAPOLYAI'S COAT OF ARMS FROM THE ÉSTERHÁZY COLLECTION  
PHOTO © MUSEUM OF APPLIED ARTS, BUDAPEST

The earliest description that in my opinion may be associated with this piece with any certainty can be found in a delivery note from 1778. The note includes items that had previously been delivered to Eszterháza but that had to be returned to Fraknó. Among the items was a large cup made of green stone, with a lid and a gilded stem, decorated with different figures and a princely coat of arms.<sup>62</sup> Yet not even at this time did the thought emerge that the coat of arms might have belonged to the Szapolyai family. It was not until 1884 that the idea was mentioned in the catalogue of a goldsmiths' exhibition. The authors of the catalogue, understanding that chrysoptase was mined in Silesia, considered the object to originate from Silesia.<sup>63</sup> Where and when the object was made is still debated in the literature. Judging from its stylistic features, many argue the piece was made in Nuremberg (in the workshop of Ludwig Krug), yet very similar stylistic features were seen in Silesia in the early 16th century, under the specific influence of Krug's workshop. The maker's mark stamped on the cup has still not been identified, so this does not provide any information, either.<sup>64</sup>

Since it is not known when the object was included in the treasury of the Esterházy family, it is also difficult to establish how it found its way to Fraknó. The assumption that John Szapolyai sent the cup as a wedding gift to Krakow on the occasion of the marriage of his niece, Polish duchess Hedwig Jagiellon to Joachim, elector of Brandenburg, and that it was subsequently kept in Berlin until 1620, then returned to Hungary in the 17th century, can only be considered as a hypothesis, as there are no written records to document its transportation in either direction.<sup>65</sup>

### *Objects of dubious provenance*

While in 17th-century sources objects from the treasury of the Szapolyais are mentioned in the possession of families (or their descendants) that were one way or another connected to either John Szapolyai or John Sigismund, these mentions, as we have seen, had become less frequent by the second half of this century and disappeared entirely by the next one. In the 19th century, however, as nostalgic feelings for national kings intensified (and negative opinions of

62 Anna Rákossy, 'Egy forrásértékű inventárium 1778-ból az Esterházy-kincstár „mobilis” darabjairól', in Anna Tüskés (ed.), *Ars perennis. Fiatal művészettörténészek II. konferenciája*. Budapest, 2010, 295: *Ein grosser Bocal von einem grünen Stein mit vergoldten Deckel und Fuß, verschiedenen Figuren und Fürstlichen Wappen*.

63 Jenő Radisics and Károly Pulszky (eds.), *A magyar történelmi ötvösmű-kiállítás lajstroma*. Budapest, 1884, 24–25, hall 3, cabinet 2, cup 7; Jenő Radisics and Károly Pulszky, *Az ötvösség remekei a magyar történelmi ötvösműkiállításon. Vol I*. Budapest, 1885, 7–8.

64 For a discussion of the problems of dating and localization, see Héjj-Détári, 'A fraknói Esterházy-kincstár', 500; Szilágyi (ed.), *Műtárgyak*, 56–62, cat. I. 3 (András Szilágyi). According to Károly Layer, the coat of arms in the foliage of the chrysoptase cup and node is a later addition: Károly Layer, *Az Országos Magyar Iparművészeti Múzeum gyűjteményeinek leíró lajstroma műtörténelmi magyarázatokkal*. Budapest, 1927, 50.

65 For more details on this, see e.g. András Szilágyi (ed.), *Esterházy-kincsek. Öt évszázad műalkotásai a hercegi gyűjteményekből*. Budapest, 2006, 58–59, cat. 3 (András Szilágyi).

Szapolyai diminished),<sup>66</sup> artefacts believed to originate from the Szapolyai family appeared ever more frequently. King John (II)'s cloak chain, decorated with the family coat of arms and marked with the year 1561 (in other sources with 1565), appeared first in the exhibition material sent to Vienna by Hungarian 'refined ladies' in 1864 (from the property of Gábor Prónay). A couple of years later, in 1867, it was exhibited at the antique exhibition of the Society of Fine Arts, and in 1876 at the exhibit in Budapest organised to support the victims of the flood (this time from the collection of Dezső Prónay).<sup>67</sup>

Another object, one that was first shown to the public at the antique exhibition in 1867, then at an exhibit (from the collection of Manó Andrassy) in Vienna in 1873, and in 1876 at the Károlyi palace in Budapest, is a silver cup with the initials Sz. J. and the year 1529 engraved on it. The cup allegedly originates from John Szapolyai, and, according to tradition, was found in the castle of Szepes (Spišský hrad).<sup>68</sup>

A gilded silver cup from the Jankovich collection, sent by the Hungarian National Museum to the Paris World's Fair of 1867, was erroneously attributed by the daily paper *Fővárosi Lapok* to John Sigismund: "We are observing a gilded silver vessel alongside the welcome cups, which is decorated with reliefs. In the four segments divided by columns, the Parable of the Lost Son is depicted. The node is represented by an eagle sitting on an arm and holding a mace; the handles are formed in the shape of a woman leaning out and placing her feet on an old head. German style. Gilded silver jug with Zápolya's coat of arms and the date 1565 on the lid."<sup>69</sup> In reality, neither a coat of arms nor a date features on the object, and, according to a note in Jankovich's inventory, the collector purchased the piece from Anna Salbeck, niece of Károly Salbeck, bishop of Szepes.<sup>70</sup>

There were some pieces in the Jankovich collection which even the owner linked to the Szapolyai family, however. For instance, a gilded silver cup that, according to its inscription (SRMO PPI STEFANO VRBS WARADINA VOVET 1540 VI. CYAT), was made to commemorate John Sigismund's birth,<sup>71</sup> as well

66 Zita Horváth, 'A 19. századi történetírás Szapolyai-képe', *Publicationes Universitatis Miskolcensis. Sectio Philosophica* 13:3 (2008) 165–176.

67 'A magyar delnők bécsi tárlata', *Hölgyfutár*, 26 April 1864, 393; 'Régiségek kiállítása a Képzőművészeti Társulat termeiben', *Nefejejs*, 19 May 1867, 240; Arnold Ipolyi, 'Magyar mű- és történeti emlékek kiállítása', *Századok* 10 (1876) 502.

68 General-Direction (ed.), *Welt-Ausstellung 1873 in Wien. Officieller Kunst-Catalog*. 2. vermehrte und verb. Aufl. Wien, 1873, 50: No. 28. – here it was marked with the initials Z. J. (Zápolya János); 'Régiségek kiállítása', 240–241; Imre Henszlmann and Zsigmond Bubits (eds.), *A magyarországi árvízkarosultak javára Budapesten gf. Károlyi Alajos palotájában 1876. évi májusban rendezett Műipari és Történelmi Emlék-Kiállítás tárgyainak lajstroma*. Budapest, 1876, 33; Ipolyi, 'Magyar mű- és történeti emlékek', 498.

69 'Magyar Régiségek (Az „1867-diki világtárlat”-ból)', *Fővárosi Lapok*, 26 January 1869, issue 20, 76.

70 Árpád Mikó (ed.), *Jankovich Miklós (1772–1846) gyűjteményei*. (A Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Kiadványai, 2002/1.) Budapest, 2002, 136–137, cat. 81 (Erika Kiss).

71 The Hungarian National Museum bought this together with the collection of Miklós Jankovich, but it was traded for other objects in 1941; from this it can be concluded that experts did not regard the object as valuable (genuine): Erika Kiss, 'Jankovich Miklós gyűjteményeinek leltárkönyvei a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumban. I. Kora újkori ezüstművek', *Folia Historica* 27 (2011) 7.



as jewels and cutlery once possessed by queen consort Isabella Jagiellon, all of disputed origin.<sup>72</sup> The first object is lost, while the credibility of the others is questionable. Not because of the quality of the objects (Isabella Jagiellon's opal pendant is one of the most beautiful and most frequently published jewels in the Hungarian National Museum), but because of their date of origin: they seem to have been made only after the era of the Szapolyais.

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After the male line of the Szapolyai family died out in 1571, the treasury of John Szapolyai and his son John Sigismund became dispersed. Its pieces are only known to us from written sources: wills, protocols and inventories. Even though some of the pieces can be traced in the sources for quite a long time, none of the objects can be identified today. Since most of them were made of gold, we can assume that most were melted down over the years. After studying the sources on the treasures of the Szapolyai family, our knowledge of the objects has, paradoxically, decreased rather than increased. Where descriptions were believed credible and to have been given by eye-witnesses, it turns out their authors were in fact not present during the description of the event. In the case of accounts of the same object it was later revealed that the accounts were actually referring to different objects; in the case of documents drawn up later (which did not receive due attention for this precise reason), it turned out the information they provided was surprisingly accurate. We have also seen how 'myths' of royal origin were transferred from one object to the other. Sources also provided an easy-to-follow overview of how respect for the House of Szapolyai changed: while objects that were assumed to belong to the Szapolyais appeared regularly in written sources in the 16th century, there is no trace of them in the 17th and 18th centuries, not even in cases where the origin of an object is verified by a coat of arms. In the 19th century, however, with the shift in the public's opinion of Szapolyai, we can once again witness an increase in mentions of his treasures.

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<sup>72</sup> Mikó (ed.), *Jankovich*, 168–169, cat. 132 (Erika Kiss); *ibid.*, 179–180, cat. 148 (Erika Kiss); *ibid.*, 190–191, cat. 163 (Erika Kiss).

MOHÁCS 1526–2026  
RECONSTRUCTION AND REMEMBRANCE

From the 1460s onwards, the Szapolyai family played a decisive role in the history of Hungary for more than a hundred years. The studies in this volume highlight the extraordinary careers of members of the family's first generation, which made them the greatest landowning magnates of the country. Relying on the wealth, prestige and military force of the dynasty, John, a member of the second generation, successfully governed Transylvania for a decade and a half; it was partly due to this achievement that in 1526 the majority of Hungarian noblemen found him worthy of the orphaned throne of Louis II. The writings in this volume explore King John's foreign, urban and church politics, the cultural trends at his court, as well as his relations with the Ottoman Empire, and those of his successors (Queen Isabella and her son John II, elected king of Hungary). What we learn from these texts is that the history of the Szapolyais can be divided into two parts: after their successful rise as kings of Hungary, their family background was no longer sufficient for effective governance. The country became a battleground for global empires, and the Szapolyais, similarly to the Jagiellonians, were unable to overcome their vulnerable circumstances. After centuries of the subject being neglected, this volume undertakes to give the last Hungarian royal dynasty the evaluation it deserves.

