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Meeting of Rulers in the Scepus Region (1214)*

The personal meetings of medieval rulers were of great importance just like the political meetings of our present days. Yet, in most cases only the fact of the meeting has remained to us, without any information on the details, the persons present there, and the duration of the participants' stay etc. In this paper we intend to reconstruct the meeting and its circumstances based on the events prior to that and on its consequences.

Keywords: Scepus, Hungary, Lesser Poland, Coloman King of Galicia, Salomea



The medieval sources are laconic about the meetings even in the cases of the imperial court, where kings and princes met each other.¹ The case of the personal gathering of the Hungarian king, Andrew II (1205–1235) and the prince of Lesser Poland, Leszek the White (1202–1227) in the Scepus region (Hungarian: Szepesség, today in Slovakia: Spiš) is quite similar in that aspect.² The subject of the negotiation was the territory of Galicia, and in the end the rulers agreed upon a joint rule of the principality. Nevertheless, the content of the agreement is not known, we can solely rely on its outcome, the events of the next years.

The Background

The beginnings of the expansion of the Hungarian Kingdom and Lesser Poland towards their Eastern neighbours, the Kievan Rus' started under the reign of the forebears of the rulers, who shaped the history in the first half of the 13th

* The study is based on the paper presented at the MECERN-conference held in Zagreb on 12–14 April 2018.

¹ E. g. FONT 2017.

² ПСРП vol. II. col. 732; PAULER 1899. II. p. 54–55; WŁODARSKI 1966. p. 58; ПАШИВТО 1950. p. 200; PROCHAZKOVA 1998 p. 66; HOLLÝ 2007. p. 12, 14–15; NAGIRNYJ 2011. p. 171; DABROWSKI 2012. p. 83–84.

century. Andrew II's grandmother, Euphrosyne Mstislavna,³ came from the Rurikid dynasty, whilst his grandfather, King Géza II (1141–1162), had led several campaigns into the territory of the Kievan Rus', even if their goals diverged in several aspects from those under Béla III (1172–1196), who intended to conquer the neighbouring territories. Experiences from Géza II's time long predated Andrew II, but the memory of those campaigns probably lingered. The short reign of Béla III in Galicia (1188–1189) shows different kinds of political actions. He incarcerated Vladimir Yaroslavich, the Galician prince, and started negotiations with the Galician elite and the grand prince of Kiev, Sviatoslav Vsevolodovich. Vladimir fled from the Hungarian court, and returned to Galicia, where he stabilized his rule with the help of the duke of Cracow, Casimir II the Just (1177–1194), and the sovereign of Vladimir–Suzdal, Vsevolod Yurievich. This episode foreshadowed the later Polish–Hungarian struggles for Galicia.

Leszek's grandmother, Zbyslava Sviatopolkovna was also a descendant of the Rurikid dynasty, and two of Leszek's uncles wed princesses from the Rus' as well: Boleslaw IV the Curly married Verkhoslava, daughter of Vsevolod Mstislavich the prince of Novgorod; while Mieszko III the Old wed Eudoksiya, Daughter of Yury Dolgoruky.⁴ Leszek's own wives came from the Rus': the first one being the daughter of Ingvar Yaroslavich of Volhynia.⁵ In 1207 Leszek wed Grzymisława, the daughter of Yaroslav Vladimirovich.⁶

After the death of Béla III his sons fought each other for a long time: the conflict between King Emery (1196–1204) and Prince Andrew draw the attention from the expansion to the inner struggles, that is why the idea of a campaign to Halych remained in the background and unrealised. In Lesser Poland the sons of Casimir II the Just – Leszek and Conrad – were underage by this time. A certain part of the elite of Lesser Poland, among others Bishop Pełka of Cracow and Palatine Mikołaj served the mother of the little princes, who acted as regent, but it was not sufficient against Mieszko III the Old of Greater Poland. Leszek became the ruler of Lesser Poland only after Mieszko's death in 1202.⁷

Prince Roman Mstislavich had ruled between 1199 and 1205 not only Galicia and Volhynia, but he also controlled the river route along the Dniester down to the Black Sea, whilst his expansion towards the east had caused tension with the grand prince of Kiev, Rurik Rostislavich. Roman locked Rurik's daughter, his first wife, into a nunnery and married a new bride probably from the Byzantine Empire. Not satisfied with the struggles in the east, the Galician

³ FONT 2005. p. 138.

⁴ ПСРЛ vol. II. col. 313; BALZER 2005. p. 218–220, 281–285; DĄBROWSKI 2008. p. 192–207. (Verkhoslava). Balzer's statement was corrected by DĄBROWSKI 2008. p. 677–686. (Eudoksiya).

⁵ The Galician–Volhynian Chronicle reports on the marriage, see ПСРЛ vol. II. col. 720; Kronika halicko–wołyńska p. 18. Yet her name is unknown. For Ingvar Yaroslavich see ПАПОВ 1977. p. 177; For the two marriages of Leszek see DĄBROWSKI 2008. p. 334–338, 689.

⁶ Her name is known only from Polish sources, for instance, from the legend of her daughter, Blessed Salomea. See Vita et miracula sanctae Salomeae p. 776; BALZER 2005. p. 462–465.

⁷ SZCZUR 2002. p. 145–147, 259–261.

prince intervened on several occasions in the quarrels of his western neighbours, the princes of Cracow and Mazovia, which led to the local princes, Leszek the White and Conrad respectively to unite in 1205 and to turn against Roman and his expansion. The prince of Galicia lost his life on the battlefield of Zawichost as the result of this new conflict.⁸ The new situation was now ripe for the expansion by Cracow and Mazovia.

The right of Roman's children for succession was declined by the milieu after their father's death. The adult Igorevichs from Chernigov⁹ also claimed their right for Galicia based on their mother's descent, whereas Roman's distant relatives from Novgorod appeared as well, with favourable connections on the steppe: Mstislav, the Brave (Khrabry, Храбрый), and his son, Mstislav the Successful (Udaloy, Удалой).¹⁰ In this situation Roman's sons, or rather their mother chose the obvious solution and tried to make use of their Polish and Hungarian connections. The claims were all based on various titles; yet everyone was led by the goal of expansion, including the Cracowian and the Hungarian rulers.

The events suggest that the Cracowian duke and the Hungarian king were rivals after 1205 in Galicia, the "lordless" territory, even if they had to make compromises from time to time. Their shared priorities were primarily to strengthen their influence, and they supported Daniel and Vasilko while their mother acted as their regent (1205–1206). Andrew II came to an agreement with the sons of Igor (Igorevichs), who were given Galicia in return for a certain amount of taxes (1207–1210). Meanwhile, the child Daniel continued to reside in the Hungarian court. When the underage Daniel was enthroned in Galicia, the Hungarian–Polish cooperation reached a new level (1211, 1213), yet soon enough the collaboration faced hardships again. It became clear for both parties, as early as 1214, that the rule over Galicia would have been possible only as the result of a Polish–Hungarian cooperation, which needed a more solid foundation. For that purpose, the idea emerged to seal the deal with the marriage of their two children, Coloman¹¹ and Salomea, who were expected to rule in Galicia together.

The Date of the Meeting

The date of the meeting and the agreement of the Scepus region cannot be discovered in the *Galician–Volhynian Chronicle* or in any other sources, yet the

⁸ Medieval Polish texts provide a detailed narrative of this event. See: Długosz, pp. 192–197; For the relationships among the Polish princes see: CHRZANOWSKI 2013. p. 64–65.

⁹ The rivaling sides among the branches of the Rurik dynasties were the descents of Vladimir (Vsevolodovich) Monomakh and Oleg Sviatoslavich. Prince Roman and his son were offsprings of the Monomakh branch, and the princes of Chernigov derived from Oleg. One of the newest branches among Oleg's offsprings was that of the Igorevichs, and they were related to a certain part of Chernigov, Novgorod Seversky. There were several kinships among the branches at the beginning of the 13th century, still the names of the female members are mostly unknown.

¹⁰ РАПОВ 1977. p. 163, 182; ФОНТ 1993. p. 32–33; КОТЛЯР 2002. p. 118–124.

¹¹ About him see: ФОНТ – BARABÁS 2019.

year of 1214 is not disputed in the historiography.¹² A more precise dating is hardly possible and only assumptions can be made. The majority of the researchers assume the date to be the fall of 1214, solely Holovko disagrees, as he opted for a summer meeting of the rulers.¹³ The reasoning for the dating lies in the previous events and the later cooperation. Leszek was still fighting in Volhynia in the spring of 1214, whereas a united Polish–Hungarian force appeared in Galicia at the end of the year.¹⁴ The chronicles offer an intense narrative, yet it seems sure that weeks were passing by between the journey of Leszek’s envoys and the personal summit of the sovereigns. The realization of the agreement needed further time, and the joined army probably arrived weeks later in Galicia. Therefore, the meeting could have taken place in late summer or early autumn, while the campaign can be dated probably to the late fall of 1214.

The Place of the Meeting

It was convenient that the meeting of the Hungarian king and the Polish prince took place near the common border; it is similarly understandable that the sovereign of lower rank and of younger age, the prince, visited the older king. It is questionable where exactly they met in the Scepus region, or where they found an eligible venue (it might have been a royal residence) for the “summit meeting”, for the reception, and the catering of the king, the prince, and their entourages. The *Galician–Volhynian Chronicle* noted only the name of the Scepus region.

The settling of the *Scepus* region happened only in the second half of the 13th century, and it must have been mostly unpopulated in 1214. The lack of an established royal county confirms this statement, since all over the Hungarian realm royal counties represented the local inhabitants’ belonging to and dependence from the royal power.

The name of the *Scepus* derives from the Hungarian adjective *szép* (‘beautiful’), the variations in other languages were based on that: Latin: *Scepus*, German: *Zips*, and later the Slovak *Špiš*.¹⁵ The county of *Scepus* belonged to the royal counties, a kind of structure that first appeared there in the 13th century in the region. According to Gyula Kristó’s statement, in this area the counties were established only later, since records of the first ruling count, Denis (Dénes), son of Ampud, only appeared in the year of 1216; even so, the early structure of the castle is unknown. It can be assumed that the development started at the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries from the

¹² ПСРЛ vol. II. col. 732; Kronika halicko–wołyńska p. 52–53; BALZER 2005. p. 482–483; ГРУШЕВСКИЙ 1901. p. 13; ПАШУТО 1950. p. 200; КРИП’ЯКЕВИЧ 1984. p. 89; STÖKL 1981. p. 500–501; FENNEL 1981. p. 37; p. 106; АЛЕКСАНДРОВИЧ – ВОЙТОВИЧ 2013. p. 52–53.

¹³ WŁODARSKI 1966. p. 58; FONT 1991. p. 126; FONT 2005. p. 225; ХАРДИ 2002. p. 134; ВОЛОЩУК 2005. p. 98–99; HOLLY 2005. p. 7; NAGIRNYJ 2011. p. 171; DĄBROWSKI 2012. p. 83; CHRZANOWSKI 2013. p. 72; ГОЛОВКО 2006. p. 276.

¹⁴ ПСРЛ vol. II. cols. 730–731; Kronika halicko–wołyńska p. 54–55.

¹⁵ FNESZ p. 609; KRISTÓ 1994.

territories originally belonging to Borsod and Gömör (Gemer). At that time, Denis was also the count of the vicinal Újvár County, so it was reasonable to give him jurisdiction over the newly forming county as well. One reason for the separation might be the prosperity of the commercial road; as the data from 1198 shows, it led through the area called *terra Scepusiensis* (land/soil of Scepus) which the royal men took toll on.¹⁶ The next record concerning the tolls comes from the period after the attack of the Mongols (1243), and it secured the toll-free status of the noblemen of the *Scepus* region on the markets of Szepesváralja (Spišské Podhradie).

The study of Attila Zsoldos enlightens the special nature of the formation of the *Scepus* region, and he evaluates the remaining data in correlation with other counties. Zsoldos¹⁷ differentiates two types of the formation of the counties, the first group's character can be found in the close symbiosis of the county (*comitatus*, a territory enclosed by borders, in Hungarian *vármegye*) and the dispersed estate structure of the royal castle (*várispánság*), whereas the other type (the later counties) was based on the kings' personal estates. These were generally formed on the basis of the so-called forest-dominions (*erdőuraldom*), yet, the area of the *Scepus* does not fit into either group.¹⁸

Therefore, the territory's formation was still in motion in the first decades of the 13th century. It is uncertain if the royal castle's construction was already finished or even started, which could have been the location of the meeting. The first mention of the stronghold derives from a charter of Béla IV issued in 1249, so we can count with the beginning of the construction in the 1230s. The three-storey palace included an alone standing tower and a great hall at every floor. The halls (22x12m) were indeed of representative size. Slovak historiography states that these buildings were constructed by Coloman, even if certain investigations about the building-history are dating the whole castle to the second half of the 13th century. Archaeological finds suggest an earlier construction, yet, their interpretation is somewhat doubted. István Feld has summarized the history of the research in his recent study; according to him, the round building of 22 meters diameter with a middle pillar, situated on the top of the hill was originally a residential tower, and it was turned into a water tank only after the reconstruction of the building. Other scholars state that it was originally built as a water catchment construction. The latest Slovak research holds the tower as a residential building built in the late 12th century, whereas its first floor was meant to be a water tank. Martin Homza even stated that Béla III incarcerated Prince Vladimir into the tower after he fled to Hungary from Galicia, nevertheless, this theory is beyond the realm of reality.

¹⁶ WEISZ 2013. p. 370.

¹⁷ ZSOLDOS 2001.

¹⁸ For the formation of the territory of the Scepus region see KRISTÓ 1988. p. 393–395; ZSOLDOS 2001. For the first count (*comes*) see CDES I. p. 165; ZSOLDOS 2011. p. 205. Denis, son of Ampud held the titles of count of Scepus and Újvár, and he also bore the office of the master of the treasury in 1216. Later on, he had a main role in the Hungarian expansion politics towards the Balkans as the count of Bodrog (1220–1222), and subsequently palatine (1227–1228, 1231, 1234). See ZSOLDOS 2011. p. 295; RA no. 308; ZSOLDOS 2001. p. 30.

A monographic processing of the whole castle, which could clear the history of the construction, is not published yet. We can presume that the tower could have been a royal court-house, like a *curia*, as Alexander Ruttkay believes, and if not, there could have been a “court house without any fortification”, like on other administrative units on the periphery of the forest county (*comitatus, erdőispánság*),¹⁹ which was only suitable for shorter stays.²⁰

The first mention of the provost of the collegiate chapter of the Scepus region, Adolf, originates from 1209. He was given the estates along the River Poprad “to populate them with people”. The building of the provostry is younger than that; according to Ernő Marosi the construction started in the mid-13th century. Attila Zsoldos stated that the foundation of the collegiate chapter meant the occurrence of the ecclesiastical estates in the Scepus region at the beginning of the 13th century, whereas the royal donations presented the possibility for the appearance of private estates.²¹ Therefore, the beginning of the formation of Scepus (Szepes) County can be dated to the outset, whereas the construction to the mid-13th century. Therefore, the beginning of the county of Scepus (Szepes) can be dated earlier, while the construction may have started in the middle of the 13th century.²²

The Participants of the Meeting

The personal gathering of Andrew II and Leszek the White was prepared by the visit of the duke’s envoys in Hungary, namely Pakosław, *castellanus* of Cracow and Lestich.²³ From the Polish side, Pakosław must have been present during the negotiations, but concerning the Hungarian participants there is no solid record. It can be assumed, however, that several royal officials were accompanying the king in 1214. Among the royal dignitaries were Palatine Nicholas, who was also the count (*comes*) of Bodrog County, Marcel, son of Marcel from the Tétény genus, who was the judge of the royal court (*iudex curiae*) and count of Csanád, Gyula from the Kán genus, who was the voivode of Transylvania and count of Szolnok, and Atyusz, son of Atyusz from the

¹⁹ Forest regions overlapping the administrative boundaries of royal counties and administered by a forest count (*comes*). See FELD 2014.370.

²⁰ FELD 1994; FELD 2014. p. 371, 376–379; HOMZA 2009. p. 126–150; OLEJNIK – JANOVSKÁ – STEJSKAL 2015. p. 57. The volume unfortunately gives credit to Martin Homza’s statements concerning the Scepus region without criticism and consideration of the Hungarian historiography. See HOMZA 2009. p. 55–56.

²¹ ZSOLDOS 2001. p. 29.

²² RA no. 243; MAROSI 1994.

²³ “Lestich” is not a given name, but it derives from the word Lestco (the Latin version of Leszek), it is a “paternal name”. It was not used by the Poles, still, the eastern-Slavic chronicler could use it referring to a certain relative of Leszek. It would be logical to think of his son, but Leszek married his spouse only in 1207, and he did not have a son by that time. A mystical Polish king also bore the name Lestco (See: *Magistri Vincentii Chronica*, p. 18.), therefore the passage could be also interpreted as “someone from the family of the Polish prince”. The Polish sources mention only Pakosław, and the other members of the mission are not named. The name Lestich as an independent version can be seen in the name register ПСР/І vol. II, p. xxi. For the origin of the name Leszek and its bearers see CHRZANOWSKI 2013. p. 25–26.

kindred bearing the same name, who was the ban of Slavonia. The master of the treasury was Miska, son of Solomon, from the Atyusz kindred and he was also the first master of the horses which title only appeared in 1217. If we throw a glance at the location, it can be stated that the royal structure of the area was still in motion; from 1214 only the counts of Borsod, Újvár, and Zemplén counties are known (Jacob, Alexander, son of Thomas, from the Hontpázmány genus, and Martin). The first count of the Scepus region appeared in the sources as early as 1216, the one of Gömör from the mid-13th century, while Sáros (Šariš) was merely a royal estate (*predium*) at the outset of the 14th century.²⁴

The presence of Archbishop John of Esztergom (1205–1222), the leader of the Hungarian ecclesiastical hierarchy, presumably provided an opportunity to play a role in the coronation of Coloman. Marcel, the judge of the royal court was probably there too, since his career started in 1206, right after the enthronement of Andrew II, whereas he also had an important role in the leading of the realm's military in 1211.²⁵

Denis, son of Ampud, also could have been present; his career started as master of the treasury and count of Scepus in 1216. It can be assumed that the events of 1214 promoted the formation of the royal county in the Scepus region. Furthermore, Demetrius of the Aba kindred and File (Füle, Filja), who both played later a role in Prince Coloman's rule in Galicia, were presumably present at the meeting. There are no possible participants known who also witnessed Andrew II's adventure in Galicia as a child. In the times of the campaigns under King Béla III, only Palatine Moch (Mog) held previously relevant offices; he was the judge of the royal court (*iudex curiae*) in 1185–86, and in 1188 he acted as the count of Nyitra [Nitra, SK]. At the beginning of Andrew's reign, he received the palatine's office for the third time (1206). Nevertheless, he had probably passed away before 1214.

The Agreement

The *Galician–Volhynian Chronicle* gives credit to Leszek for the idea of the dynastic marriage as the affirmation of the alliance. It is no wonder that Pakoślaw took an active part in the arrangements, given the circumstance that the agreement was favourable for him. The object of the bargaining was the Galician territory, yet Cracow had claim only for the vicinal Peremyshl and Liubachev. Those two centres geographically belonged to the watershed area of the river Vistula (the area of the rivers San and Bug), whereas all the other rivers belonged to the watershed area of Dniester. It is worth mentioning that Pakoślaw, not Leszek, got into the possession of Liubachev; this also indicates

²⁴ For the royal officials in 1214 see: ZSOLDOS 2011. p. 17, 28, 37, 43. For the master of the treasury, the master of the horse, and the master of the stewards see ZSOLDOS 2011. p. 56, 62, 71. For the counts see: ZSOLDOS 2011. p. 143. (Borsod), 205. (Gömör), 156. (Sáros), 188. (Scepus/Szepes) 217. (Újvár), 234. (Zemplén).

²⁵ ПСРЛ vol. II. col. 724; Kronika halicko-wołyńska, p. 32.

the influence of the so-called “Galician party”.²⁶ The Polish–Hungarian reign in Galicia was embodied by the children of Andrew and Leszek, the approximately six years old Coloman and the ca. three years old Salomea (she probably was born around 1211).²⁷ The agreement was theoretically perfect, but the practice showed its weakness, and several problems emerged. Mostly, they abandoned the previously used and proclaimed justification that the joined forces were only supporting the sons of Roman. This change of events was primarily dangerous for Leszek, who needed the Volhynian military force for his own purposes, yet Daniel and Vasilko supported by the local boyars could reduce the Polish influence there. The autonomy of the siblings was also damaging for Andrew II’s Galician chances, since this opened up an alternative from the Hungarian rule. The Hungarian army was significantly larger than that of Lesser Poland, therefore Leszek was almost forced to submit to Andrew II.²⁸ The prince intended to ease this pressure through the search of new allies.

The Consequences of the Agreement

Despite its pitfalls, the agreement of *Scepus* remained effective until 1221. Prince Coloman was crowned twice as king of Galicia with papal approval: first in Hungary at the end of 1214 or early 1215, and for the second time in Halych at the beginning of 1216. The latter was meant to demonstrate the Hungarian power for the local elite.²⁹ The wife of Coloman, Salomea probably arrived in Halych only in 1219, after the success of the Hungarian–Polish campaign. The young couple was imprisoned by Mstislav Mstislavich soon afterwards. Once released from their capture Coloman and Salomea did not return to Halych, they moved to Hungary, they settled first in the *Scepus* region and relocated later to Slavonia. Coloman kept his title as “*rex Galiciae*” even after his return to Hungary until his death in 1241.³⁰ Salomea was mentioned as *regina* in a papal charter.³¹ Nevertheless, this title was conferred on her as the wife of the king, regardless whether she was crowned or not.

The Slavic historiography mentions, based on Shusharin, that Andrew II’s purpose regarding Galicia was to form a personal union, as it happened in the case of Croatia from the late 11th century.³² Nevertheless, the parallel of the two cases is not only invalid, but also misleading, since Croatia began to formulate statehood already in the 10th century, and the Croatian kings received a crown from the papacy as early as the 11th century. The personal union between Hungary and Croatia was emphasized by King Coloman’s separate coronation

²⁶ ПСРЛ vol. II. col. 731; Kronika halicko–wołyńska 59–60.

²⁷ Vita et miracula sanctae Salomeae p. 776–777.

²⁸ ГОЛОВКО 2006. p. 281.

²⁹ FONT 2019.

³⁰ BARABAS 2017. p. 32–43; BARABAS 2020. 298–306.

³¹ RGIX no. 2126.

³² ШУШАРИН 1971. p. 143; DĄBROWSKI 2012. p. 84; NAGIRNYJ 2011. p. 172. (note 143) Nagirnyj has misinterpreted my statement (FONT 1993. p. 35) since the reference regarding the territory *banats* did not refer to Croatia.

in 1102.³³ The state of Croatia diverged fundamentally from that of Galicia, where the institution of the kingdom and its later tradition was established by Prince Coloman's coronation at the outset of the 13th century. The plans of Andrew II were rather similar to the Hungarian expansion and administration on the Balkans.³⁴

translated by Gábor BARABÁS

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³⁴ FONT 2005. p. 267–268.

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