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## **The Institution of *Consilium* – Obligation or Right?\***

In the following short paper, I would like to point out that the concept of *consilium* and *auxilium* proved to be a much more complex phenomenon during the centuries of the Middle Ages than many lexicons or the secondary literature presents. Contemporary sources also make it clear that armed military assistance was by no means the most typical form of assistance. We would also like to emphasize that the *consilium* was not necessarily seen as an obligation, but rather as a privilege, as it was an important political tool in the governance during the Middle Ages.

*Keywords:* *consilium et auxilium, familia*, Medieval Hungary, Medieval Bohemia, Medieval Poland, political thought



While studying medieval history, the researcher encounters the concepts of the *consilium* and *auxilium* quite often. These notions appear very frequently in various sources, therefore, modern historiography has rightly concluded that oral advice and assistance played a central role in the life of medieval men. These concepts can be found in the glossaries of both encyclopaedias and manuals and are most often considered by scholars as duties of the vassals.<sup>1</sup> This idea was obviously strengthened by Bishop Fulbert of Chartres – one of the most influential ecclesiastical figures of his time –, who, at the request of William of Aquitaine, explained and listed in a letter the obligations of vassals in general, since Duke William had become embroiled in a dispute with his vassal, Hugo of Lusignan. The bishop, going back to ancient texts, stressed the

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<sup>1</sup> For classical interpretation see: BOLCH 1965. p. 169, 222.

importance of advice and assistance.<sup>2</sup> There is no doubt that Fulbert's writing suggests that the concepts of *consilium* and *auxilium* can be used to describe a certain segment of social and feudal relations of subordination and superiority that were most prevalent in Western Europe, but, as German historiography has pointed out, we are dealing with a much more complex phenomenon.<sup>3</sup>

It is certain that in medieval political thought listening to wise counsel and seeking consensus were intertwined with the ideal of good governance. To show that this conclusion was not reached by modern historiography, but it was indeed the opinion of the intellectual elite of the eleventh century, we can refer to the historical works of Ademar of Cabanensis and Cosmas of Prague. According to Ademar, it was a fatal error not to appoint advisers, in other words, not to consult those who were worthy or entitled to do so, otherwise it was possible that the ruler's own relatives might turn against him and oust him, since this form of power was considered tyrannical rule.<sup>4</sup> Cosmas of Prague made a similar statement when he tried to portray the character of Prince Boleslaw I in a not entirely unbiased way. The chronicler compared Boleslaw I to Herod, Nero, Diocletian and Decius, and with all his many sins, he

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<sup>2</sup> "Gloriosissimo Duci Aquitanorum Willelmo, Fulbertus Episcopus orationis suffragium. De forma fidelitatis aliquid scribere monitus, haec vobis quae sequuntur breviter ex Librorum auctoritate notavi. Qui domino suo fidelitatem jurat, ista sex in memoria semper habere debet: incolume, tutum, honestum, utile, facile, possibile. Incolume, videlicet ne sit domino in damnum de corpore suo. Tutum, ne sit ei in damnum de secreto suo, vel de munitionibus per quas tutus esse potest. Honestum, ne sit ei in damnum de sua justitia, vel de aliis causis, quae ad honestatem ejus pertinere videntur. Utile, ne sit ei in damnum de suis possessionibus. Facile vel possibile, ne id bonum, quod dominus suus leviter facere poterat, faciat ei difficile; neve id quod possibile erat, reddat ei impossibile. Ut autem fidelis haec nocumenta caveat, justum est; sed non ideo casamentum meretur: non enim sufficit abstinere a malo, nisi fiat quod bonum est. Restat ergo ut in eisdem sex supradictis consilium et auxilium domino suo fideliter praestet, si beneficio dignus videri velit, et salvus esse de fidelitate, quam juravit. Dominus quoque fideli suo in his omnibus vicem reddere debet. Quo si non fecerit, merito censebitur malefidus: sicut ille, si in eorum praevaricatione vel faciendo vel consentiendo deprehensus fuerit, perfidus et perjurus. Scripsisse vobis latius, si occupatus non essem cum aliis multis, tum etiam restauratione civitatis et Ecclesiae nostrae, quae tota nuper horrendo incendio conflagravit: quo damno etsi aliquantisper non moveri non possumus, spe tamen divini atque vestri solatii respiramus." – Fulberti Episcopi Carnotensis Epistolae. p. 463.

<sup>3</sup> ALTHOFF 1997. p. 157.

<sup>4</sup> "Petrus abbas, singularem principatum optinens, habebat sibi fidelissimum profundissimi consilii Ainarum praepositum ex monasterio Sancti Petri Scotoriensi. Qui Ainarum habuit fratres Abbonem et Raimundum, strenuissimos duces, corpore robustos, animo bellicosos, quorum trium sororem Aldeardem accepit in matrimonium Raimundus Cabanensis, abnepos jam superscripti Turpionis episcopi, frater Adalberti decani incliti et prepositi ex monasterio sancti Marcialis, genuit que ex ea filium Ademarum Engolismensem monachum, qui haec scripsit. Vivente enim supradicto Ainaro, abbas Petrus rem publicam optime administravit, et invidos suae gloriae compressit. Nam eo Romae mortuo, et Raimundo fratre ejus Jherosolime defuncto, et Abbone infirmitate gravato, inclitus Petrus, neminem fidelem consiliarium habens, dum ad suum temere facit arbitrium omnia, et inter suos terribilis ut leo videtur, castrum proprium Mortemarensis concremat, contradicente consilio suorum, et hujus rei occasione propinquis ejus et principibus marchionibus cum Bernardo comite et Willelmo duce, quasi tirannidem praesumeret, in eum insurgentibus, paulatim ex potestate marchionum ejectus est." – Ademari Cabanensis Chronicon. p. 164–165.

also accused him of ignoring his advisers, so ruling according to his own will.<sup>5</sup> These examples are by no means exceptional or special, because many other contemporary authors have expressed that the just ruler must have had wise advisers. On the occasion of Karlmann II's coronation in 882, Hinkmar of Reims devoted an entire treatise to display the duties of a wise ruler and the desirable palace organisation. In a separate chapter Hinkmar detailed the importance of advice and the practice of choosing the right advisers. Interestingly the archbishop considered it particularly dangerous to have relatives among the advisers.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, it is also necessary to point out that the *consilium* was often intertwined with the practice of maintaining a state of peace.

The institution of *consilium* covered almost all aspects of medieval political life. It can be found in the relations between rulers and sovereigns, the most eloquent example being the imperial assemblies held in the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>7</sup> Such assemblies also show that the *consilium* was often conducted according to a set of rules and in a particular form.<sup>8</sup> This institution was also to be found within the Church and was most evident in the case of synods. It is also usual to quote St. Benedict's Rule, which contained specific provisions on deliberation.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> "Fuit enim iste dux Bolezlaus – si dicendus est dux, qui fuit inpius atque tyrannus, seuior Herode, truculentior Nerone, Decium superans scelerum inmanitate, Diocleianum crudelitate, unde sibi agnomen ascivit 'sevus Bolezlaus' ut diceretur – tante enim fuit severitatis, ut nihil consilio, nihil ratione regeret, sed omnia pro sua voluntate atque impetu animi ageret." – Cosmae Pragensis Chronica Boemorum. p. 38. Cf. ANTONIN 2017. p. 145–146.

<sup>6</sup> "Consilarii autem, quantum possibile erat, tam clerici quam laici tales eligebantur, qui primo secundum suam quisque qualitatem vel ministerium Dominum timerent, deinde talem fidem haberent, ut excepta vita aeterna nihil regi et regno praeponerent: non amicos, non inimicos, non parentes, non munera dantes, non blandientes, non exasperantes, non sophisticæ vel versute aut secundum sapientiam solummodo huius saeculi, quae inimica est Deo, sapientes, sed illam sapientiam et intelligentiam scientes, qua illos, qui in supradicta humana astutia fiduciam suam habuissent, pleniter per iustam et rectam sapientiam non solum reprimere, sed funditus opprimere potuissent. Electi autem consilarii una cum rege hoc inter se principaliter constitutum habebant, ut, quicquid inter se familiariter locuti fuissent, tam de statu regni quamque et de speciali cuiuslibet persona, nullus sine consensu ipsorum cuiuslibet domestico suo vel cuicumque alteri prodere debuisset secundum hoc, quod res eadem sive die sive duobus sive amplius seu annum vel etiam in perpetuum celari vel sub silentio manere necesse fuisset. Quia saepe in tali tractatu de qualibet persona talis interdum propter communem utilitatem agendam vel cavendam sermo procedit, qui ab eo cognitus aut valde turbat eum aut, quod magis est, in desperationem trahit vel, quod gravissimum est, in infidelitatem convertit et ab omni profectu, quem fortasse multipliciter exercere potuit, inutilem reddit, cum tamen nihil obesset, si eundem sermonem minime sciret. Quale de homine uno, tale de duobus, tale de centum, tale de maiori numero vel etiam de progenie una vel tota qualibet simul provincia, si magna cautela non fuerit, fieri poterit." – De ordine palatii. p. 86–89.

<sup>7</sup> FONT 2017. p. 11–33.

<sup>8</sup> ALTHOFF 1990. p. 186–187.

<sup>9</sup> "Quotiens aliqua praecipua sunt in monasterio, convocet abbas omnem congregationem et dicat ipse unde agitur. Et audiens consilium fratrum tractet apud se et quod utilius iudicaverit faciat. Ideo autem omnes ad consilium vocari diximus, quia saepe iuniori Dominus revelat quod melius est. Sic autem dent fratres consilium cum omni humilitatis subiectione, et non praesumant procaciter defendere quod eis visum fuerit; et magis in abbatis pendat arbitrio, ut quod salubrius esse iudicaverit, ei cuncti oboediant. Sed sicut discipulos convenit oboedire magistro, ita et ipsum provide et iuste condecet cuncta disponere." – Regula Sancti Patris Benedicti. p. 12.

The famous German medievalist, Gerd Althoff has even stated that advice and assistance proved to be such an important factor in the exercise of power during the Carolingian age, that it was practiced along rituals and strict rules. Accordingly, Althoff distinguished confidential and public consultations.<sup>10</sup> Of course, the assertion that public ritual behaviour was inextricably intertwined with the mechanisms of the exercise of power in essentially oral societies, such as the dominions of the Árpáds, Piasts and Přemyslids of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, is so general that it does not require further justification.<sup>11</sup> The measure of rank and social standing and the degree of interpersonal relationships were not only and exclusively the subject of verbal agreement, but was reflected in formalities, traditions and customary law.<sup>12</sup>

However, I believe that it is not certain based on the sources of the region that Althoff's assessment is fully valid for East-Central Europe. The circle of advisers of the rulers and dynastic members of the region was constantly changing without any regularity. Certainly, the elements of ritual communication can be detected in the region, but it would be difficult to prove that this always followed a regular protocol in the advisory process.<sup>13</sup> In my opinion, all that can be said with certainty is that the advisers were drawn from the secular and ecclesiastical elite, and that members of the dynasty could not have been excluded, otherwise armed conflict was likely to erupt.

Before turning to a concrete analysis of the dynastic families of the Eastern-Central-European region under study, illustrated with examples, it is worth pointing out the potential pitfalls of the research. The main problem – as the sources demonstrate – lies in the fact that the *consilium* was mostly understood as a series of oral deliberations, meetings, or negotiations, which can only be examined through written sources that have remained to posterity. However, these narratives do not necessarily report the events with historical accuracy.<sup>14</sup> Based on this, it is only possible to examine the effects of the absence of *consilium* on the exercise of power, since most of the sources report on turbulent times in details.

So, we must ask whether – in contrast to the classical interpretation according to which it was an obligation to provide oral advice –, this phenomenon can be interpreted as a legal right that belonged to certain members of the royal *familia*.

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<sup>10</sup> ALTHOFF 1990. 191–192.

<sup>11</sup> For a recent summary on rituals and symbolic communication see: ZUPKA 2016. p. 15–34.

<sup>12</sup> ALTHOFF 1990. 182–186.

<sup>13</sup> A detailed order of ceremonies covering all aspects of court life was preserved only from the Byzantine Empire at this time. It is customary to credit the authorship of the writing entitled *De ceremoniis aulae Byzantinae* to Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. In addition to church ceremonies, this work contains the protocol prescribed for the ruler in the event of campaigns, triumphal entry march processions and the regulations for receiving foreign envoys. However, the source is not without problems, since the entire work cannot have been written by the emperor himself, because the manuscript remained to posterity is the product of a later compilation. ÁMTBF. 30–31.

<sup>14</sup> On the problem in details see: ALTHOFF 1997. 159. esp. footnote nr. 8.

In the territory of the Central-European dynasties, only in Hungary remained a certain source that belongs to the genre of contemporary political thinking. Furthermore this source shows a high degree of similarity with Hinkmar's work quoted above. The chapter 7 of *Admonitions* – which is intertwined with the name of St. Stephen –, is analogous to the contents of the *De ordine palatii* written by the Archbishop of Reims.<sup>15</sup> As early as the nineteenth century, Hungarian historiography drew attention to the fact that the *concilium* in the *Admonitions* deserved a special role, as its author stated in the prologue of the source: “the role of the royal council is second to the normative of the divine and secular laws.”<sup>16</sup> Both sources take special care when providing guidance on selecting the right consultants. In particular, the terms *clerici* and *laici* used in Hinkmar and the phrase *maioribus et melioribus* in the general sense in *Admonitions* suggest that the members of the council belonged to the wider royal *familia*. This form of deliberation is most noticeable in legislative acts, was made up of members of the secular and ecclesiastical elites, and was then heavily dependent on the royal will, as Albericus,<sup>17</sup> the author of Coloman's statute-book, suggested: “The king has gathered all the nobles of the country and after consulting with the entire senate, he reviewed the laws Saint Stephen [...]”<sup>18</sup> Based on the words of Albericus, we could therefore conclude that it was indeed an obligation.

To discuss further this phenomenon, it is worth briefly referring to the biography of St. Adalbert written by Bruno of Querfurt. According to this, Otto II relied on the “childlike advice” of his Byzantine wife Theophanu, ignoring the suggestions of the elite.<sup>19</sup> The indignation of these noblemen and clergymen is only understandable, if the institution of the *consilium* is not seen as a mere obligation, but as a right. Certain circles of society, therefore, had the right by affinity, by virtue or by their role in the government to be heard by the ruler on certain matters.

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<sup>15</sup> “In tribunalibus regum consilium sibi septimum locum vindicat. Consilio quidem constituuntur reges, determinantur regna, defenditur patria, componuntur prelia, sumitur victoria, propelluntur inimici, appellantur amici, civitates construuntur, et castra adversariorum destruuntur. Quando vero consilii inest utilitas, iam a stultis et arrogantibus ac mediocribus, ut michi videtur, non valent componi viris, sed a maioribus et melioribus, sapientioribus et honestissimis senioribus exprimi debent et poliri. Idcirco fili mi cum iuvenibus et minus sapientibus noli consiliari, aut de illis consilium querere, sed a senatoribus, quibus illud negotium propter etatem et sapientiam sit aptum. Nam consilia regum in pectoribus sapientium debent claudi, non ventositate stultorum propagari. Si enim gradieris cum sapientibus, sapiens efficeris, si versaris eum stultis, sociaberis illis fatente spiritu sancto per Salomonem: Qui cum sapientibus graditur sapientum erit amicus, nec stultorum erit similis.” – Libellus de institutione morum. p. 625.

<sup>16</sup> Szűcs 2002. 280. See: “[...] regna, consulatus, ducatus [...] ceterasque dignitates, partim divinis preceptis [...] partim civilibus ac nobiliorum etateque provectorum consilii suasionibus regi, defendi, dividi, coadunari videam [...]” – Libellus de institutione morum. p. 619.

<sup>17</sup> JÁNOSI 1994. 35.

<sup>18</sup> “[...] regni principibus congregatis, totius senatus consultuprefati regis sancte memorie Stephani legalem textum recensuit.” – ZÁVODSZKY 1904. p. 183.

<sup>19</sup> “[...] tandem pudet quia mulierem audivit, tandem sero poenitet quia infantilia consilia secutus sententias maiorum proiecit.” – Sancti Adalberti Pragensis vita altera. p. 9.

Based on the statements of the fourteenth-century Hungarian chronicle composition, the image emerges that mainly high-ranking churchmen – typically bishops – and secular dignitaries were involved in the practice of counselling. Archbishop Desiderius<sup>20</sup> advice contributed to the reconciliation of King Solomon and Prince Géza.<sup>21</sup> Bishop Frank, palatine Radvány, comes Vid from the Gutkeled genus and Ilia played a similar role, as they served their lord with good advice.<sup>22</sup> Although we do not always clearly see their exact positions, their historical existence, just as that of Archbishop Desiderius, cannot be doubted. As this short list shows, the advisers surrounding the monarch and the royal family came from the lay elite, high clergy and main officials who could not only serve but could also express their opinions and exercise influence through the *consilium*.

The same phenomenon can be observed in Poland and in Bohemia. We know from Gallus Anonymus that bishops, high ranking officials, nobles, friends, and the so-called sages, including Bishop Franco,<sup>23</sup> archbishop Martinus,<sup>24</sup> chancellor Michael<sup>25</sup> and voivode Sieciech<sup>26</sup> served the ruler as advisors. According to Cosmas' chronicle the same can be said of Bohemia. The princes' advisers consisted of friends, noblemen, and clergymen, such as King Vratislaus' brother-in-law, Comes Wiprecht<sup>27</sup> or Bishop Hermann.<sup>28</sup>

Noblemen who were able to express their views in the court of their ruler held deliberations among themselves. These deliberations were in most cases

<sup>20</sup> ZSOLDOS 2011. p. 83.

<sup>21</sup> "Maxime autem Desiderius episcopus delinitivis ammonitionibus et dulcibus allocutionibus suis mitigavit animam Geysae ducis, ut Salomoni quamvis iuniori regnum cum pace redderet et ipse ducatum, quem pater eius prius habuerat, pacifice teneret. Cuius salubribus persuasionibus Geysa deposito rancore paruit. In festo autem Sanctorum Fabiani et Sebastiani martirum rex Salomon et Geysa dux coram Hungaria in Geur pacem iuramento firmaverunt." – Chronici Hungarici compositio. p. 362. See: Chronicle of the Deeds of the Hungarians. p. 186–189.

<sup>22</sup> "Sed cum thesaurum dividerent, rex cum consilio Vydy et Franki episcopi et Radoan filii Bugari et Ilia, generis Vydy, in quatuor partes divisit, et quartam partem duci (sic), de tribus partibus unam haberet, ut (sic!) omnibus militibus, secundam autem Vydy, tertiam autem Ilia." – Chronici Hungarici compositio p. 375. See: Chronicle of the Deeds of the Hungarians. p. 206–207.

<sup>23</sup> "Hec incessanter illis agentibus, accessit ad eos Franco Poloniensis episcopus consilium salutare donans, eis sic inquit: Si que dixero vobis devotissime compeatis, vestrum desiderium procul dubio fiet vobis." – Galli Anonymi gesta. p. 57.

<sup>24</sup> "Item alio tempore pueri principes et exercitum asciverunt et contra Plocensem urbem ex altera parte Wysle fluminis castra militie posuerunt; ubi etiam Martinus archiepiscopus, senex fidelis, magno labore magnaue cautela iram et discordiam inter patrem et filium mitigavit." – Galli Anonymi gesta. p. 83. See: BAGI 2020. p. 260.

<sup>25</sup> "Militibus itaque revocatis ac suburbio spoliato, recessit inde Boleslaus magni Michaelis consilio extra muros, omni prius edificio concremato." – Galli Anonymi gesta. p. 96.

<sup>26</sup> Gall Névтелен. p. 158. footnote nr. 256.

<sup>27</sup> "Omnia, fili, fac cum consilio, advocat Wigbertum, suum per sororem generum, virum sapientem et in talibus negociis eruditum valde et perspicacem, cui et ait: [...]" – Cosmae Pragensis Chronica Boemorum. p. 167.

<sup>28</sup> "Hos inter tantos populi motus Hermannus presul et Fabianus comes, qui habuit in urbe Wissegrad prefecturam – hii quia ceteros sicut dignitate, ita et sapientia premebant – consilio prevaluerunt et toto annis effecerunt, ut et sacramenta fierent inviolata et Wladizlaus iura principatus iure adoptata omnibus assentientibus obtineret; elevatus est autem in solium sole morante in nona parte Libere." – Cosmae Pragensis Chronica Boemorum. p. 197.

not public, hence German research classifies them among the *coniurationes*, and unlike the previous examples, refers to them as *secretum colloquium*.<sup>29</sup>

The election of the Hungarian king, Samuel Aba is worth mentioning, which, according to the Hungarian chronicle composition took place after a council of bishops (*consilium episcoporum*).<sup>30</sup> It is necessary to emphasize, therefore, that this is not only valid for the election of rulers but also in the exercise of power. For the advisors there were two possibilities for all this: the institution of the *consilium* and the role of mediator. The former is palpable in all segments of the exercise of power: the sources offer many examples of ecclesiastical and secular government, military, and legislative affairs. The lack of consensus may have even led to the retreat of the royal will, as the Hungarian chronicle reports in connection with the conflict between Prince Álmos and King Coloman. In the vicinity of the settlement of Várkony alongside the Tisza River, the nobles refused to risk their lives in the quarrels of the members of the dynasty.<sup>31</sup> The role of the aforementioned archbishop Desiderius of Kalocsa can be cited as an example of the mediating role. Of course, these cases do not count as specific Hungarian features.

Anyway, the nobles taking part in the oral consultations were interested in gaining some benefits for themselves during the discord between the members of the dynasty, which had obviously financial and political reasons. Therefore, the members of the dynasty had to reckon with the nobles interested in particularism.<sup>32</sup> At this point, I would like to refer to the statement that a ruler risked a great deal, if he did not take into account the views of his family members, as the aggrieved party could easily find patrons among the nobility who could have threatened the ruler. The institution of the *consilium* was therefore also suitable for gaining the influence of the elite who accompanied the members of the dynasty. The best example is the case of Comes Vid, who was already mentioned above. The chronicle depicted him almost every time as a wicked counsellor, whose “poisonous words filled the king with hate and rancor.”<sup>33</sup>

One more factor should be emphasized here: the concept of *imitatio imperii*. This imitation of princely and royal functions appeared since the eleventh

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<sup>29</sup> ALTHOFF 1997. p. 175.

<sup>30</sup> "Anno igitur regni Petri tertio principes Hungarorum et milites consilio episcoporum convenerunt adversus Petrum regem et sollicitè querebant, si aliquem de regali progenie in regno tunc invenire possent, qui ad gubernandum regnum esset idoneus et eos a tyrannide Petri liberaret." – Chronici Hungarici compositio p. 324–325. See: Chronicle of the Deeds of the Hungarians. p. 134–135.

<sup>31</sup> "Fideles autem Hungari treugas ab ipsis petierunt, et ut colloquium haberent, dixerunt: »Quid est, quod nos pugnamus? Isti nos obpugnant, moriemur; et cum ipsi evaserint, fugient: sicut nudi tertius patres nostri vel fratres cum patribus eorum vel fratribus pugnaverunt, et ipsi mortui sunt. Nec nos, videmus causam pugne. Sed eis si pugna placet, ipsi duo pugnent, et quis eorum prevaluerit, ipsum pro domino habeamus.« Quo statuto consilio principes reversi sunt." – Chronici Hungarici compositio. p. 423. See: Chronicle of the Deeds of the Hungarians. p. 268–269.

<sup>32</sup> KRISTÓ 1974. p. 47.

<sup>33</sup> "Rex ergo venenosis verbis comitis Vyð tragefactus odium et rancorem concepit." – Chronici Hungarici compositio. p. 376. See: Chronicle of the Deeds of the Hungarians. p. 208–209.

century among the nobles who were donated land, high offices and who stood close to the members of the ruling dynasty and often served as counsellors.

More interesting for us, however, is the practice of oral advice between members of the ruling dynasties. Obviously, if the secular and ecclesiastical elite regarded the institution of the *consilium* as a right, this was even more true for the members of the dynasty. Even more so, as the family members could reach concord through the institution of the *consilium*, therefore it was essential for the peaceful exercise of power. A good example is provided by Chapter 88 of the Hungarian chronicle, which in fact describes the circumstances of the establishment of the Hungarian *ducatus*. According to the source, King Andrew and his younger brother, Prince Béla held a council and agreed to divide the country into three parts, of which the king would give the prince one. The chronicler used the term *habito consilio* when he was recording the events.<sup>34</sup> The narrative in chapter 88 also tells us that during the council, which was clearly initiated by King Andrew I, the brothers agreed upon not only how to divide the exercise of power between them, but also the question of the succession to the throne emerged. This agreement, the consensual exercise of power among the Árpáds, can be traced in later times as well, since the members of the dynasty's following generations regularly concluded similar agreements. The consensual exercise of power based on *consilium*, taking into account each other's interests therefore played a central role in the medieval history of the Kingdom of Hungary.

It is not always clear how the Latin word *consilium* can be translated. In my view, based on the examples above, the *consilium* can mean decision-making, consultation, outlining plans and strategies, and expressing opinions. The phenomenon thus goes far beyond the simplified lexicon-like master-vassal relationship, but rather served as a relationship-building "tool" in which both material benefits and social esteem could be gained. In the case of conflict situations – as it can also be observed in the sources, – the counsellors came from a much wider circle of relatives than during the more peaceful periods, as the latter is mostly characterized by agreements between the nearest kin. In the wider circle of relatives we can find brothers-in-law, fathers-in-law and sons-in-law, thus relatives by marriage. To conclude this short paper, we might say that the *consilium* was a much more complex phenomenon than the definitions offered by the manuals.

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<sup>34</sup> "Post hec autem rex et frater eius Bela habito consilio dividerunt regnum in tres partes, quarum due in proprietatem (sic!) regie maiestatis seu potestatis manserunt, tertia vero pars in proprietatem ducis est collata." – Chronici Hungarici compositio. p. 345. For the interpretation of the narrative see: BAGI 2020. p. 48–76.



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