

Gábor BARABÁS: Charles I of Hungary and the Popes (Ágnes Maléth: The Kingdom of Hungary and the Holy See Relations in the time of Charles I (1301–1342). Budapest. HUN-REN Research Centre for the Humanities, 2025. (Arpadiana XIX.) 389 p.) DOI: 10.15170/SPMNNV.2025.14.14

Ágnes Maléth, currently assistant professor at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Szeged and formerly a research fellow at the Department of Medieval and Early Modern History at the University of Pécs, published her first monograph, written in Hungarian based on her PhD dissertation in 2020.¹ Her work, which can confidently be described as filling a gap in the historiography, is now also available in English, as a revised version was published in 2025 in the renowned *Arpadiana* series of the Institute of History in Budapest.

I published a review of the Hungarian volume five years ago, so the question may rightly arise: what else can be added to what was written then? I believe that the purpose of book reviews is not solely scientific criticism, even if that is indeed an important aim of those. At the same time, we must not forget the informative role of reviews, especially when an excellent historical work has finally become available to a wider international readership.

The *Arpadiana* series was launched in 2020, edited by Pál Fodor and Attila Zsoldos of the Institute of History in Budapest, with the undisguised aim of promoting the international dissemination of the results of Hungarian medieval studies. The first six volumes of the series were published in English, but later volumes included a number of new works written in Hungarian. There is no doubt that this is a project of outstanding importance for Hungarian medieval studies, especially for the study of the Árpád-era, including several works by researchers connected to the University of Pécs appearing in the series.²

However, before we turn our attention to the monograph in question, we must address an issue connected to the current state of the historical sciences and broader the humanities in Hungary. At the time of the first volume of *Arpadiana*, the publisher, formerly part of the Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Research Centre for Humanities, was operating as part of the Eötvös Loránd Research Network (ELKH), and soon afterwards, the network was rebranded and became

¹ Maléth, Ágnes: *A Magyar Királyság és a Szentsek kapcsolata I. Károly korában (1301–1342)*. Pécs, 2020. (DeLegatOnline Könyvek 2.)

² Volumes by authors connected to the Department of Medieval and Early Modern History in Pécs are Bagi, Dániel: *Divisio Regni. The territorial divisions, power struggles, and dynastic historiography of the Árpáds of 11th- and early 12th-century Hungary, with comparative studies of the Piasts of Poland and the Přemyslids of Bohemia*. Budapest. 2020 (Arpadiana II); Báling, Péter: *Az Árpád-ház hatalmi kapcsolatrendszeréi. Rokonok, barátok és dinasztikus konfliktus Kelet-Közép-Európában a 11. században és a 12. század elején* [The Power Networks of the Árpadian Dynasty. Relatives, Friends, and Dynastic Conflicts in East-Central Europe in the Eleventh and Early Twelfth Century]. Budapest. 2021 (Arpadiana VII); Font, Márta: *The Kings of the House of Árpád and the Rurikid Princes. Cooperation and conflict in medieval Hungary and Kievan Rus*. Budapest. 2021 (Arpadiana VIII); *Ottokar aus der Gaal: Stájer rimes krónika* [Ottokar aus der Gaal: Styrian rhyming chronicle]. Translated, annotated with an introduction by Bagi, Dániel. Budapest. 2023 (Arpadiana XI); Barabás, Gábor: *Delegated Papal Jurisdiction in Arpadian Hungary – Bishops, provosts, papal chaplains*. Budapest. 2023 (Arpadiana XVI). For the full series see: <https://ti.abtk.hu/kiadvanyok/konyvsorozatok/arpadiana> (downloaded: 11. 10. 2025.) The latest volume of the series has been recently published: Kiss, Gergely: *Magyarországi Klemencia. Egy elfeledett királyné a dinasztiai szolgálatában* [Clemence of Hungary. A forgotten queen in the service of the dynasties]. Budapest. 2025 (Arpadiana XX).

Hungarian Research Network, HUN-REN, up until 2025, when the Research Centre for Humanities no longer exists and the Institute of History now operates as part of the Humanities Research Centre of the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. Without delving further into the intricacies of science policy, it should be noted that Ágnes Maléth's book is one of the last that has been published in the *Arpadiana* series under HUN-REN. We can only hope that the editors will be able to continue their important work in the future.

After outlining the essential institutional background, let us turn to the subject of this review, the opus of our former colleague from Pécs. As the title suggests, Maléth's work analyses the relationship between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Apostolic See during the reign of King Charles I of Hungary (1301–1342). The author could have considered including the entire pontificate of Pope Boniface VIII (1294–1303) in her work, however, as Maléth herself points out, her research is based on the perspective of the Kingdom of Hungary, so 1301, the extinction of the Árpád-dynasty and the beginning of the struggle for the throne in the Realm, and the first coronation of Charles I, a member of the Angevin-dynasty of Naples, is a natural starting point. No similar question arose regarding the end of the analysed era, which is 1342, the year of the deaths of Charles I and Pope Benedict XII (1334–1342).

The volume begins with a thorough historiographical overview, dividing the works on the topic into Hungarian and foreign-language parts, as it has been done in the Hungarian version. Maléth then outlines the source condition, in relation to which it cannot be emphasized enough that few people know more than Ágnes Maléth about the fourteenth-century Hungary-related sources of the *Archivio Apostolico Vaticano* (formerly known as the *Archivio Segreto Vaticano*). For this reason alone, the volume is indispensable for any researcher dealing with papal-Hungarian relations or the history of the Holy See in general.

In the third chapter, the author presents the used research methodology, then in the fourth part of the book the system of representation of the Hungarian king at the papal court and its practice is presented, analysing the ecclesiastical and secular royal envoys separately. After the royal representation, Maléth focuses on the other side, the delegates of the Apostolic See. One of the main virtues of the chapter is the thorough typological analysis. In the case of legates of the Apostolic See, Hungarian medieval studies have tended to concentrate solely on political activities of papal delegates, yet in the last years—in connection with international research—other aspects of the activities of papal envoys received attention, partially thanks to the efforts of the DeLegatOnline research group led by Gergely Kiss,³ such as the judicial activities of the envoys. With regard to diplomatic tasks and other activities of legates, a thorough analysis of the so-called *facultates*, special powers granted to papal envoys, is of paramount importance. Maléth examines this aspect in detail in the case of Cardinals Boccassini and Gentilis de Monteflorum, who as papal envoys acted with the full office of legation in the Kingdom of Hungary.

Similarly noteworthy is the analysis of the legates' entourages and their internal functioning. In connection with this topic, Maléth emphasizes that not only clerics but also lay people were to be found alongside the papal legates, such as merchants. It is also important to note that local clergymen and local merchants also appeared in the service of the legates.

In addition to the highest level of papal representation, the volume also presents the topic of the so-called nuncios and *collectores*, i.e., tax collectors, with similar

³ <https://delegatonline.pte.hu/>.

thoroughness. It is worth noting that during the period under review, the two types were linked, as nuncios always arrived in the Kingdom of Hungary with tax collection duties. This latter task of papal delegates, compared to other areas of relations, was a particular source of conflict in the relationship between the pontiffs and King Charles I. Furthermore, we also gain insight into the functioning of the operation of delegated papal jurisdiction, the activity of the so-called *conservatores* (legal guardians), administrators (governors, acting officials), and executors in Hungary at the beginning of the fourteenth century. This is followed by an analysis of a group of clerics that has received little attention in research to date. This includes clerics of the Holy See who received benefices in Hungary, and those Hungarian clergymen who appeared in papal service in several cases.

In the fifth chapter of the book, Maléth analyses the system of relations between Hungary and the papacy. She begins by focusing on dynastic conflicts. After discussing the question of succession to the Hungarian throne, the author turns to the Holy See's involvement in the dynastic politics of Charles I, followed by a perhaps lesser-known issue, the role of the Hungarian king in the case of the German succession struggles, and its impact on the relationship between Charles I and Pope John XXII (1316–1334).

Among other aspects of Hungarian-Papal relations, Maléth analyses the beneficial policy of the pontiffs and, to some extent, that of the Hungarian king, focusing on the issue of papal reservations. The author also discusses so-called matters of faith in a separate subchapter, then turns to the Hungarian Kingdom's involvement in the planned crusades. At the end of the volume, following the summary, there is a repository containing the most important participants in papal–Hungarian relations, followed by an appendix with tables supplementing the analysis.

All in all, Agnes Maléth's book is one of the outstanding achievements of Hungarian medieval studies, and it is now finally available in English. This is important for works related to the history of the Kingdom of Hungary, because the past of the Realm of Saint Stephen is also part of the history of neighbouring peoples of present-day Hungary. Therefore, thanks to works published in World-languages, among others, Croatian, Slovak, Ukrainian, Romanian, Serbian, or Bosnian researchers can more easily access the new results of Hungarian medieval studies. Furthermore, the wider international scientific community could also be interested in the history of territories on the periphery of Latin Christianity, just as the history of the papacy cannot be fully reconstructed without exploring all elements of its network of relationships. I warmly recommend this impressive book to anyone interested in the subject.