

Spišians and Hungary. *The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota* and the Collective Identity of Spiš

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The chronicle found in Spišská Sobota (Szepesszombat, Georgenberg, Mons Sancti Georgii/Forum Sabathi) has not attracted much scholarly interest. While it regularly features in syntheses on the medieval historiography of the Spiš region in Upper Hungary, as well as whole of Hungary, the chronicle is generally regarded as a simple annalistic reproduction of other, more influential historical narratives, and therefore no individual studies devoted to the chronicle itself have appeared.¹ Written in German in the middle of the 15th century, the chronicle begins in 997 and briefly comments – with selective regards to the Spiš region – on the reign of

1) Vendelín JANKOVIČ, *Spišská historiografia*, in: *Spišské mestá v stredoveku*, ed. Richard Marsina, Košice 1974, pp. 159–172; Richard MARSINA, *Medieval Hungarian Narrative Sources and Slovak Historiography*, *Studia Historica Slovaca* 13, 1984, pp. 29–51, here p. 31, 41; Carlile Aylmer MACARTNEY, *The Medieval Hungarian Historians*, Cambridge 1953, p. 147; Ilpo Tapani PIIRAINEN, *Osem kroník neskorého stredoveku a ranného novoveku zo Spiša. Príspevok k dejepisnej nemecky písanej literatúre na Slovensku*, *Studia Historica Tyrnaviensia* 3, 2003, pp. 345–357, here pp. 348–350; I. T. PIIRAINEN – Soňa POLLÁKOVÁ, *Die Chroniken der frühen Neuzeit aus der Zips*, Levoča 2013. See also the commentaries to editions *A Szepes-szombati krónika*, ed. Kálmán DEMKÓ, Levoča 1891; *Chronicon, quod conservatur in monte s. Georgii (Szepesszombat, Georgenberg, Spišská-Sobota)*, ed. Béla PUKÁNSZKY, in: *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum tempore ducum regumque stirpis Arpadianae gestarum (further SRH) II*, ed. Emericus Szentpétery, Budapest 1938, pp. 273–287; Slovak translation: *Spiškosobotská kronika*, in: *Kroniky stredovekého Slovenska. Stredovéké Slovensko očami kráľovských a mestských kronikárov*, ed. Július SOPKO, Budmerice 1995, pp. 102–111. Here, I quote the edition of Béla Pukánszky (further “*Chronicon*”). The only exceptions are the analyses by Ryszard GRZESIK, *Spiškosobotská kronika o tatarskom vpáde v roku 1241*, in: *K stredovekým dejinám Spiša*, ed. Miroslav Števík, Stará Lubovna 2003, pp. 53–63, and recently by Adrien QUÉRET-PODESTA, *The episode of the murder of Hungarian King Ladislas IV's officer in the Chronicle of Spišska Sobota and its signification*, *Studia z dziejów średniowiecza* 22, 2018, forthcoming.

every king of Hungary until the coronation of Sigismund of Luxemburg. From there onwards, attention is paid mostly to Spišian affairs. The chronicle ends in a barely legible record of the execution of Ladislaus Hunyadi.

This paper is focused on an analysis of two sections in the chronicle where the author intentionally changed information from his sources. Afterwards, cultural, political, and social contexts are studied in order to explain the opinions presented in the chronicle. Close attention is paid to the context of the manuscript codex in which the chronicle is extant. In general terms, this study contributes to the research on the processes of the redefinition of medieval local collective identities and on the mechanisms of the instrumentalization of historiography. The society of Spiš offers the historian useful material due to the idiosyncrasy of the region; it was perceived as a social and political unit with its own distinctive municipal character and specific law.²

This study, however, is limited to the discussion of *The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota* forms. Therefore, the conclusions reached here are not valid for the entire issue of the collective identity of Spišians, but rather represent a specific discussion of the problem of Spišian self-perception. There is comparative material relevant to this discussion, but its inclusion here would require a much more extensive paper. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the communities of the Spiš region produced various memorial and historiographical texts in 14th and 15th centuries. These include minor opuscula (e. g. mural inscriptions in Levoča /Leutschau, Lőcse/) as well as continuous narratives (the chronicle by an anonymous Carthusian from Lapis Refugii), while other texts also have their own memorial functions (liturgical texts).³ The focus of this paper, however, is on the attitudes of a Spišian chronicler toward the history of the Kingdom of Hungary as expressed in *The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota*.

Foreigners and the beginning of Hungary

In the chronicler's prologue and declaration of intent, he attends to the phenomenon of *Communitas* (or *Universitas*)⁴ *Saxonum de Scepus*: "In the name of Jesus Christ. Since the Spišians are called Saxons and guests, it should be known where they came from; under the reign of which king and when they arrived in the Spiš

2) See fundamental synthesizing works: Ryszard GŁADKIEWICZ et al., *Terra Scepusiensis. Stav bádania o dejinách Spiša*, Levoča 2003 (see the history of Slovak, German and Hungarian historiography on pp. 29–73); *Historia Scepusii* I, edd. Martin HOMZA – Stanisław A. SROKA, Bratislava – Kraków 2009; Antal FEKETE NAGY, *A Szepesség területe és társadalmi kialakulása*, Budapest 1934; Henryk RUCIŃSKI, *Prowincja saska na Spiszu do 1412 roku (Na tle przemian społecznych i ustrojowych w komitacie spiskim i na obszarach przyległych)*, Białystok 1983.

3) These kinds of texts were generally published in *Analecta Scepusii sacri et profani* II, ed. Karol WAGNER, Wien 1774 (*Inscriptiones templi principis Leutschoviae*, p. 346f; *Anonymi Carthusiani Fundatio Lapidis refugii, seu Monasterii beati Joannis Baptistae*, pp. 69–79; *Memorabilia Scepusiensium parochiarum*, pp. 291–292).

4) On the instability of the designation, see H. RUCIŃSKI, *Prowincja saska*, pp. 275–279.

region.⁵ The chronicle uses the term Spišians (*dy Czipser*) liberally (the people of Spiš, inhabitants of the Spiš region), giving the impression that it designates a homogenous group of Saxons from Spiš; such a notion runs contrary to the actual ethnic variability of the region. While a considerable number of Slavs and Magyars enjoyed common privileges,⁶ the chronicle associates Spišians explicitly with Saxons, supposedly representing the local majority.

The reminder “it should be known („So es ist not zu wissen“, „Dorumme ist es czu wissen“), repeated twice more in the prologue, informs the reader of the authorial ambition to achieve social acceptance. To narrate the identity and the origin of the Spišians is the only intention which is explicitly stated in the chronicle, and its placement in the prologue helps shape the perceptual frame for the audience.⁷ The prologue also underlines the importance of the multinational character of the medieval kingdom of Hungary: “Numerous and diverse peoples came to Hungary in this way. I want to speak about where from and how they came.”⁸ That is the reason why, in the view of the chronicler, there is nothing extraordinary about the Spiš settlement: a German-speaking community originating from Saxony. The prologue continues: “it should be known that at the time of saint lord Stephen, numerous and diverse peoples came here from everywhere (but also in the times of other kings). They were Bohemians, Poles, Greeks, Spaniards, Jasz people, Cumans, Philistines,⁹ Saracens, Russians, Armenians, Saxons, Thuringians, Misnenses, Renenses, Walloons and Veneti. All those settled down in Hungary and have remained settled there until these days as the Hungarian chronicle relates.”¹⁰ Saxons are presented simply as one of many peoples settled in Hungary regardless of the fact that the law of guests (*ius hospitum*) did not refer merely to foreigners, but also to communities moving inside the kingdom.¹¹

5) “In den namen Jhesu xpi. Sint dem mole das dy Czipser Saxen genant seyn vnd geste, So ist es not zu wissen von wan sy bekommen seyn, vnd durch wilchen konig vnd wenne sy in den Czips komen seyn.” *Chronicon*, p. 279.

6) Henryk RUCIŃSKI, *Etnické vzťahy na Spiši v neskorom stredoveku*, in: *Historia Scepusii I*, pp. 378–380; Ondrej R. HALAGA, *Vznik miest na východnom Slovensku*, in: *Príspevky k dejinám východného Slovenska*, Bratislava 1964, pp. 70–84.

7) Miloslav ŠVÁB, *Prology a epilogy v české předhusitské literatuře*, Praha 1966, pp. 71–72; Justin LAKE, *Authorial Intention in Medieval Historiography*, *History Compass* 12, 2014, pp. 344–360, here pp. 350–351.

8) “So sein auch in Vngerlant mancherley lewte vnd mancher ley geczowgen von wan dy bekommen seyn vnd wy daz wil ich eyn teil entrichten.” *Chronicon*, p. 279.

9) For an unknown reason, Jasz people are in some Latin sources called Philistines. Pál ENGEL, *The Realm of St Stephen. A History of Medieval Hungary, 895–1526*, London – New York 2001, p. 105.

10) “Dorumb ist es czu wissen daz czu den geczeyten des heyligen hern Steffans vil vnd mancherley lewte sind anders wo hyer komen, vnd auch pey ander konigen geczeiten als Bemen, Polan, Krichen, Hyspanen, Jassen, Cumaner, Philistei, Sarraczen, Rewsen, Vrmenisen, Saxen, Duringen, Meysner, vom Reyn, vnd Walon, vnd Wynde, dy sich alle in Vngerlant habin nydergelosen, vnd sint aldo pliben wonhaftig bis off disen hewtigen tag, als das dy vngerische cronica ausweist.” *Chronicon*, p. 279.

11) Eric FÜGEDI, *Das mittelalterliche Königreich Ungarn als Gastland*, in: *Die deutsche Ostsiedlung des Mittelalters als Problem der europäischen Geschichte*, ed. Walter Schlesinger, Sigmaringen 1975, pp. 471–507; Miloš MAREK, *Postavenie hostov v stredovekom Uhorskom kráľovstve*, *Historický zborník* 12, 2002, pp. 13–23.

The note “as the Hungarian Chronicle relates” refers to the *Chronicon Pictum*,¹² but the idea dates back to the *Gesta Hungarorum* by Simon of Kéza.¹³ An influential explication of historical events and social inequality introduced by Kéza¹⁴ is reflected in the wording of the *Chronicon Pictum* as well. The most prestigious social rank within the nobility is reserved, on the one hand, for Hungarian families arisen from old Magyar clans – the first immigrants to the Carpathian Basin – and, on the other, for those noble families who helped Géza, the Grand Prince of Hungarians, and St. Stephen establish a Christian society in Hungary. In line with the model presented both in the *Gesta Hungarorum* by Anonymous Master P. and by Kéza,¹⁵ the *Chronicon Pictum* names the seven captains who brought the Magyars to the Carpathian Basin individually and relates them to later noble families. While Simon of Kéza placed the chapter *De nobilibus advenis* in the last part of his chronicle, the author of the *Chronicon Pictum* narrates the arrival of strangers right after the listing of the captains: “Since, then, strangers who were the equals of the Hungarians in nobility came into the country at that time [...]”¹⁶ The narrative is then interrupted by a detailed enumeration of the newcomers and their families. The chapter *Introitus diversarum nationum* follows, where a short list of these nations is concluded with an important statement: “After they had stayed for some time in the country, they became intermingled with the Hungarians through the contraction of marriages, and although their origin was unknown, they acquired equal rights of nobility and domicile.”¹⁷

The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota handles this tradition creatively, revisiting it not only in the prologue, but also in the following history of St. Stephen’s reign: “He was thinking how to bring the country to the faith. When he was unable to make it happen, the emperor Henry, his brother-in-law, sent him many counts, knights, and men-at-arms, as well as many people fit to fight from German countries. His counsel and help subdued disobedience to the faith. So Germans settled down in Hungary and built the cities, market towns, fortresses, and villages.”¹⁸ The chronicle emphasizes the importance of Germans and underlines their positive role in

12) *Chronici Hungarici compositio saeculi XIV.*, ed. Alexander DOMANOVSKÝ, in: SRH I, ed. Emericus Szentpétery, Budapest 1937, pp. 217–505; *The Hungarian Illuminated Chronicle*, ed. Dezső DERCSÉNYI, Budapest 1969. *Chronicon Pictum* was a primary source for the author of *The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota: Spišskosobotská kronika*, p. 102; *Chronicon*, p. 276.

13) *Simonis de Keza Gesta Hungarorum*, ed. Alexander DOMANOVSKÝ, in: SRH I, pp. 129–194.

14) Jenő Szűcs, *Theoretical Elements in Master Simon of Kéza’s Gesta Hungarorum (1282–1285 A. D.)*, in: Simonis de Kéza *Gesta Hungarorum / Simon of Kéza: The Deeds of the Hungarians*, edd. László Veszprémy – Frank Schaer, Budapest 1999, pp. XXIX–CII.

15) *P. Magistri, qui Anonymus dicitur, Gesta Hungarorum*, edd. Aemilius JAKUBOVICH – Desiderius PAIS, in: SRH I, pp. 13–127.

16) “Cum ergo quidam sint hospites isto tempore nobilitate pares Hungaris [...]”, SRH I, p. 294. For a translation see *The Hungarian Illuminated Chronicle*, p. 101.

17) “qui diutius in regno commorando, quamvis illorum generatio nesciatur, per matrimoniorum diversorum contractus Vngaris inmixti nobilitatem partier et descensum sunt adepti.” SRH I, pp. 303–304. Translation: *The Hungarian Illuminated Chronicle*, p. 102.

18) “Also gedacht her wy her das land czu dem globen mo^ochte prengen vnd mochte das mit eygener macht nicht volprengen also gab ym sein swoger Heynrich keyser, vil grofen ritter vnd knecht vnd vil streithaftig folk aus dewtschen landen czu hu^elff, mit der rat vnd hu^elff dy vngehorsam czu dem globen

establishing religious orthodoxy, settling the land, and transforming the landscape. The newcomers are here listed in hierarchical order, from counts to ordinary people, in the same way as in the *Chronicon Pictum*. Nevertheless, emphasis on the particular noble families is absent, just as in the whole first part of the *Gesta Hungarorum*, devoted to the origin of Magyars, and their double arrival in the Carpathian Basin is omitted. In contrast, the role of “numerous and diverse peoples” (including Saxons) in the Christianisation process is highlighted, with the national or ethnic emphasis subsumed in the prologue’s concluding statement: “And the highest noblemen of this country are of German origin.”¹⁹ *The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota* is not the only historiographic text continuing this tradition: a 17th century intellectual from the town of Kežmarok (Käsmark, Késmárk), Dávid Frölich, wrote in his treatise on the origin of the Spišians that they came to Hungary upon the invitation of Grand Duke Géza.²⁰

The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota explicitly declares the people of Spiš to be of German descent. This may be understood as a contextualization and explanation of the statement from the prologue: “the Spišians are called Saxons”. The very fact that the chronicle is a local vernacular adaptation of the “Hungarian narrative” – which was, as we shall see later, combined with several important documents into a codex – indicates that their German language and origin were both important components of Spiš’s collective identity.

King’s loyals

Another crucial characteristic of a Spišian was his exemplary loyalty towards the king of Hungary. The first part of the chronicle underlines the fact that peoples and noble families came from abroad at the invitation of the first king of Hungary, a saint. Besides the prologue and the history of the beginnings of the Kingdom of

betwang vnd also haben sich dy Dewtschen czu Vngern nider gelossin, vnd haben Stete Merkte festen vnd Dorfer gepawt.” *Chronicon*, p. 279.

19) “vnd dy gro^esten hern dis lands haben iren vrsprung von den Dewtschen.” Ibidem.

20) Attila HEVESI, *The Life and Scientific Work of Dávid Frölich (1595–1648)*, Térképtudományi Tanulmányok (Studia Cartologia) 13, 2006, pp. 169–178, here p. 172. His younger contemporary Gaspar Hain, chronicler from Levoča, also examined these questions. On the one hand, he interprets the origin of the Spišians from the Biblical point of view, but on the other, although his chronicle is devoted only to the history of Levoča, he incorporates it into the general history of the Kingdom of Hungary as he begins his narration with the second arrival of old Magyars into the Carpathian basin in 744. Henrieta ALBERTOVÁ-LISKOVÁ, *Preklad kroník Leibitzerovcov a Gašpara Haina a ich význam v spišskej historiografii*, Sambucus 5, 2010, pp. 110–120, here p. 116; Jeromos BAL – Jenő FÖRSTER – Aurél KAUFFMANN, *Hain Gáspár lőcsei krónikája*, Levoča 1910, p. 9. For the opinion that Hain drew his information from *The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota*, see Stephen MOSSMAN, *Georgenberger Chronik*, in: *The Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, ed. Graeme Dunphy, Leiden – Boston 2010, p. 685. András Péter SZABÓ (*Caspar Hain Lőcsei krónikája – egy kompiláció forrásai*, in: *Clio inter arma. Tanulmányok a 16–18. századi magyarországi történetírásról*, ed. Gergely Tóth, Budapest 2014, pp. 169–202), on the other hand, argues that early-modern chronicles shared an older historiographic text with *The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota* as a common source.

Hungary, the depiction of the Battle of Rozhanovce (Rozgony)²¹ is also related to the Spiš collective identity. Based again on the *Chronicon Pictum*, the story was rewritten to conform to the aims of *The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota*. The story, known originally from the *Chronicon Pictum* and reused by many other narratives, can be summarized thusly:

The young king Charles Robert of Anjou had few adherents in Hungary. A papal legate excommunicated the entire kingdom of Hungary with a dreadful interdict until Charles would be proclaimed king. Seeing the unburied corpses all over the kingdom, barons decided to elect Charles to the throne. Meanwhile, the pope had a treasure gathered to finance a crusade to the Holy Land. Two years later (a new chapter in a chronicle), Matthew III Csák still opposed the king and Charles set out against him. The king had to retreat before Matthew's army and was able to face him only with the support of his loyal Spišians. The king with his army confessed their sins, were given absolution, and received the sacrament from the crusaders preparing them for death. The cruelty of the Battle of Rozhanovce exceeded even that of the struggles against the Tatars. Many noble men fell in the battle (their names are enumerated).²²

The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota summarizes the story into a tighter causal narrative. See its interpretation:

The papal legate came to Hungary and imposed an interdict to make opponents of the king accept him as a legitimate ruler. Matthew III Csák still opposed Charles Robert, and so the king set out against him. As Charles had to retreat before Matthew's armed forces, he took refuge in the town of Levoča (Leutschau, Lőcse), the capital of Spiš. Spišians took up the cross and left with king Charles for the battle. Since the time of the Tatars, so much blood has never been shed as in the Battle of Rozhanovce. Despite the defeat of the king's forces, he won the battle by the will of God thanks to Spišian troops. The Spišians won recognition and were awarded privileges.²³

The emphasis on the Spišians' part in the final battle between king Charles and Matthew Csák is immediately obvious, culminating in a favourable view of the Spišians through which the story is rewritten. The memorial function of the narrative is reoriented from a list of fallen noblemen to the privileges gained by

21) Branislav VARŠIČ, *K boju medzi košickými mešťanmi a Omodejovcami (Príspevok k dejinám feudálnej anarchie v Uhorsku na zač. XIV. stor.)*, Historický sborník SAVU 10, 1952, pp. 221–255.

22) This paraphrase preserves a focalization of the *Chronicon pictum*, my notes are marked by brackets. For the original Latin text see SRH I, pp. 485–489.

23) "Anno des hern MCCCVIII quam ein legat von Rom, vnd legte in den Ban alle dy dy konig Karulum nicht wolden gehorsam thun, vnd betwang sy also. Idoch so pliben noch etzliche vngheorsam, vnd Nemlich Demetrius vnd Mathiusch von Trentschi, vnd dorume so czog Karulus vor das sloz Sarusch vnd belegte daz, do quam Mathiusch mit grossem folke vnd tryb den konig vom felde also das der konig muste weichen in dy stat Lewtscha vnd der selben weilen legten sich dy fynde vu^r Cassa. Also nemen dy Czipszer das crewcz an sich vnd czugen mit gesampt hant mit dem konig, mit irem panyr. Do daz horten dy fynde dy vor Cassa lagen, dy czogen dem konig entgegen vnd an der Tarcz bey Rozgon hilden sy den streit, also wart des koniges panyr nider geslagen, vnd vnder der Czipszer panyr gewan der konig mit Gotes hu^elfe den streit, vnd do ist gros blut vergossen daz von der Tataren czeiten ny geschen ist vnd also haben dy Czipszer gros lob vnd freitum erkriget." *Chronicon*, pp. 283–284.

Spišians. Equally of note is the new narrative logic which claims explicit causality between the Battle of Rozhanovce and the legate's interdict. Spišians here represent a narrative instrument of this logic: they set out with the king only after taking up the cross. In other versions, the king and his army are either accompanied by crusaders or receive absolution and the sacrament from them (*Chronicon Pictum*, *Chronicon Hungarorum* by Johannes Thuróczy, *Chronicon Monacense*, *Chronicon Posoniense*),²⁴ or the motif of the crusade is omitted completely (chronicle of Hungarians by Heinrich von Mügelin)²⁵. *The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota* pushes the Spišians into the foreground, not as mere allies of crusaders but crusaders themselves. All the chronicles evoke the divine provenance of the victory, *The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota*, while also claiming that the king won by the will of God, simultaneously thanks the Spišian troops. A similar account can be found in the chronicle of Joachim Leibitzer (d. 1623) from Levoča, with an essential difference – the interpretation still puts emphasis on the role of the Spišians in the battle but the motif of the cross is missing.²⁶

The privileges mentioned as a reward for their support in the battle refer to the great decree issued by the king in 1317 in which Charles Robert of Anjou, invoking the Spišians' merits in the battle, confirmed their old privileges.²⁷ In the very same year a remarkable mural painting was created in St. Martin's Church in Spišská Kapitula (Zipser Kapitel, Szepeshely), the centre of Spiš's ecclesiastic administration.²⁸ In the painting, Saint Mary with baby Jesus crown Charles Robert of Anjou the king of Hungary in the presence of the archbishop of Esztergom as well as the castle warden of Spišská Kapitula and the local provost. The image is completed with a legend: "Henricus prepositus fecit istud opus inpingi." Art history has traditionally sought to identify the artistic origin of the work and the process of its creation. The recognition of Italian painting patterns and the royal court mediation

24) Johannes de THURÓCZ, *Chronica Hungarorum. Textus*, edd. Elisabeth Galántai – Julius Kristó, Budapest 1985, p. 146; *Chronicon Posoniense*, ed. Alexander DOMANOVSKÝ, in: SRH II, pp. 7–51, here p. 49; *Chronicon Monacense*, ed. Alexander DOMANOVSKÝ, in: Ibidem, pp. 53–86, here p. 85.

25) *Chronicon Henrici de Mügelin Germanice conscriptum*, ed. Eugenius TRAVNIK, in: SRH II, pp. 87–223, here pp. 215–217.

26) In Latin translation: "Tunc Scepusienses collecta manu sub suis signis cum Rege processerunt." *Selecta ex chronicis Leibitzerianis*, in: *Analecta Scepusii sacri et profani* II, pp. 46–68, here p. 47. Joachim Leibitzer might know *The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota*, H. ALBERTOVÁ-LISKOVÁ, *Preklad kroník*, p. 112.

27) "Nos igitur, qui ex officio suscepti regiminis unumquemque et specialiter dictos hospites nostros de Scepes fideles in suis iuribus conservare debemus, considerantes nichilominus fidelitates et servitiorum merita eorumdem, que nobis in nostris negociis, expeditionibus et agendis a primevis adolescencie nostre temporibus cum omni reverencia et sollicitudine impenderunt tam humiliter, quam devote et specialiter in conflictu nostro, quem contra potenciam Mathei de Trenchen, Demetrium, filium Nicolai et filios Omodei, quondam palatini, in Ruzgon habuimus, iidem hospites nostri viriliter dimicantes, non parentes rebus et personis, se fortune casibus pro nobis submittere non formidantes, cum mortibus fratrum, proximorum et sociorum suorum in conspectu nostre regie maiestatis et effusione sanguinum ipsorum, nobis fideles exhibuerunt famulatus." *Výsady miest a mestečiek na Slovensku (1238–1350)*, ed. Lubomír JUCK, Bratislava 1984, p. 90.

28) See the latest synthesis referring to previous titles: Milan TOGNER – Vladimír PLERANEC, *Stredoveká nástenná malba na Spiši*, Dolany 2012, pp. 20–39.

have gained acceptance.²⁹ Nevertheless, for our purposes, the social meaning and representative function of the painting is of principal relevance.³⁰ Even though the royal court probably encouraged the creation of the painting and provided the artists, I have to emphasize the public declaration of the provost that “he made the opus”. In the composition, the coronation of Charles Robert (taking place repeatedly in 1301, 1309, and 1310) is directly connected with the elites of Spiš, as the Spišians appear as a decisive factor in Charles’ royal ascendancy in the kingdom. That is precisely the manner in which Charles’ steps to gain the crown of Hungary are interpreted by *The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota* in its account of the Battle of Rozhanovce. The painting can thus be appreciated not just as a visualisation of royal power (an aspect accentuated by art history), but also as an instrument of Spišian self-identification, declaring loyalty to the king.

Local traditions

In a minor but important study, Ryszard Grzesik analysed *The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota* with regards to the author’s interpretation.³¹ Grzesik’s analysis of the way in which the author handles the 1241 Tatar raid may serve to demonstrate in greater depth the strategies used in the chronicle. *The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota* derived its information from the chronicle by Martin of Poland (“als dy cronica sagit Martiniana”³²). The latter adopted the story of a famine following the Tatar raid, when mothers ate their children and instead of flour people had to use soil from a hill. The Spišian author here provides his own interpretation: “It is thought that it happened on that hill where the cloister of Carthusians stands, for the Spišians surrounded the hill with a wall, which is still visible, and therefore women and children were saved from the cruelty of the Tatars.”³³ As Grzesik observed, a local tradition about the Carthusian cloister called *Lapis refugii* found its way into the narrative.³⁴ Although large regions of Hungary and Poland were hit by Tatar raids, from the perspective of *The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota*, the Spiš region was the epicentre of the conflict. This is followed by an account of the founding of the town of Levoča which the Spišians allegedly built to protect themselves from raids in the future. We shall see that Levoča was long considered the capital of Spiš and the seat of the Count of Spiš.

29) Ibidem, p. 23.

30) Generally on the communicative and representative functions of the medieval *imago*, see Milena BARTLOVÁ, *The Utraquist Church and the Visual Arts Before Luther*, in: *The Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice 4*, edd. Zdeněk V. David – David R. HOLETON, Praha 2002, pp. 215–224. Recently EADEM, *Pravda zvítězila. Výtvarné umění a husitství 1380–1490*, Praha 2015.

31) R. GRZESIK, *Spiškosobotská kronika*.

32) *Chronicon*, p. 282.

33) “Es ist czu glewben das das ist geschen, off dem berge do der Kartuser closter leynt, went dy Czipser haben czu derselben czeit denselben den pergk mit einer mawer omczogen alz man daz noch syd, vnd aldo haben sy sich mit kynd vnd weib behaldyn vu^{er} der Tataru grawsamkeit.“ Ibidem.

34) For general literature see Ivan CHALUPECKÝ – Michal SLIVKA, *Kláštorská: Skala útočišta – Letanovce, Spišská Nová Ves* 1995.

I do not intend to underline the focus on local affairs, but rather the solid interconnection between Spiš history and that of the entire Kingdom of Hungary, as the history of the region is told through the history of the whole country. The sense of belonging to Hungary was part of the collective identity of Spišians, which may be due to the specific relationship between kings of Hungary and the community of Spiš (Saxons). The last section of the chronicle (from the account of the coronation of king Sigismund) is thereafter devoted mostly to events occurring in the Spiš region, but attention is still paid to links between Spišians and the kings of Hungary. In other words, the Hungarian narrative is not a point of departure from the Spišian one, but rather constitutes a permanent framework in which the Spišian narrative transpires and which make its existence possible. If the framework of the Hungarian narrative had disappeared, the Spišians would have had to search for a new mode of writing their own history.

The legal basis of Spišian collective identity³⁵

The views on Spišian collective identity presented in *The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota* are closely related to the complex royal privileges held by the community of Spišian Saxons (*Communitas* or *Universitas Saxonum de Scepus*) and by the Province of 24 Spišian Towns (*Provincia XXIV oppidorum terrae Scepusiensis*). Solid underpinnings of Spišian collective identity were established as early as in the middle of the 13th century, when individual municipal communities gained privileges based on *ius hospitum*³⁶ issued by Béla IV as part of a renovation of the region after Tatar raids. These privileges were then confirmed in 1271 by Stephen V whose decree, the first valid for the whole community of Spišian Saxons,³⁷ was in turn confirmed by Charles Robert of Anjou in 1317. In those days, the towns of Levoča and Kežmarok were part of the Spišian community, with Levoča as its capital. After some time, both Levoča and Kežmarok left the informal commonwealth of Spišian towns and became independent powers (and later royal towns), and as such began to rival each other.³⁸ The rest of the Spišian towns reassembled in 1344 into the Province of 24 Spišian Towns, and since 1370 their legal status was based on *Zipser Willkür*, a law book probably reproducing older customary law. This Province of 24 Spišian Towns produced also the Unity of 24 Parish Priests (*Universi plebani XXIV civitatum*), known alternatively as *Fraternitas XXIV plebanorum civitatum*

35) Generally on this topic, see especially Ilpo Tapani PIIRAINEN – Mária PAPSONOVÁ, *Das Recht der Spiš/Zips. Texte und Untersuchungen zum Frühneuhochdeutschen in der Slowakei* I–II, Oulu 1992.

36) M. MAREK, *Postavenie host'ov*; E. FÜGEDI, *Das mittelalterliche Königreich Ungarn*.

37) „Proinde ad universorum noticiam harum serie volumus pervenire, quod cum per transitum domini Bele, illustris regis Hungarie, patris nostri karissimi felicis recordacionis, ad nos regni gubernaculum devenisset iure successorio seu ordine geniture, placuit nobis inter cetera libertatem fidelium nostrorum hospitum Saxonum de Scepus graciosius reformare.“ *Výsady miest a mestečiek*, p. 55.

38) Nora BARÁTHOVÁ, *Spory Kežmarku s Levočou*, in: Pohľady do minulosti. Zborník prednášok z histórie, ed. Mária Novotná, Levoča 2001, pp. 41–57; EADEM, *Boj Kežmarku o práva slobodného kráľovského mesta*, *Z minulosti Spiša* 2, 1994, pp. 26–33; Michal SUCHÝ, *Dejiny Levoče* I, Levoča 1974, p. 68f.

regalium. They were not only an ecclesiastical, but also an intellectual structure which, for instance, established a common library.³⁹

A single codex of the *Chronicle* is known, which makes the manuscript's context all the more important.⁴⁰ The *Chronicle* is followed by the oldest known copy of the *Zipser Willkür*, which offers a substantial interpretative clue for understanding its contemporary social function.⁴¹ In spite of the fact that the *Zipser Willkür* was written down on another quire of paper and bound together with the quire containing the *Chronicle* only later, we have to approach the relationship between these two texts as a confirmation of the chronicler's original intentions. Accentuating the royal origin of Spišian law,⁴² the *Zipser Willkür* chiefly classifies hereditary law and family arrangements, but it also discusses the relationship between the Count of Spiš and the judges (*iudices, richter*) of the 24 towns.⁴³ The collective substance of the *Zipser Willkür* is frequently expressed in the phrase "wir haben auch czu einem recht",⁴⁴ the wording of which serves as evidence of the conception of the chronicle as a legitimizing instrument whose author associated historical argumentation with the legal rights of Spišians, and combined the two into a manuscript codex. One more point of context validating a close connection between the *Chronicle* and the Spišian law: the first five sheets of the codex contain another important legal document in which Emperor Sigismund confirms the aforementioned decree of Stephen V, Charles Robert of Anjou, and Louis the Great for the community of Spišian Saxons. A direct connection between this document and the *Chronicle* is indicated by one scribal hand identifiable in the two texts. After the *Codex from Spišská Sobota*, the charter was issued in Basel in 1433.⁴⁵ Although the original charter is not known today, the adaptation in the *Codex from Spišská Sobota* is supposed to be a German translation of the Latin original.⁴⁶

39) József HRADSZKY, *A XXIV királyi plébános testvérülete és a reformáció a Szepességben*, Miskolcz 1895; András VIZKELETY, *Die „Fraternitas XXIV plebanorum civitatum regalium“ in Oberungarn und der Handschriftenbestand Zipser Pfarreibibliotheken*, in: *Pfarreien im Mittelalter. Deutschland, Polen, Tschechien und Ungarn im Vergleich*, ed. Nathalie Kruppa, Göttingen 2008, pp. 327–338; Eva SELECKÁ, *Stredoveká levočská knižnica*, Martin 1974.

40) State Archives in Prešov, workplace Archive Poprad (Štátny archív v Prešove, pracovisko Archív Poprad), 10034-MSPS, XV. storočie; cf. Július SOPKO, *Kódexy a neúplne zachované rukopisy v slovenských knižniciach*, Martin 1986, p. 170; Ulrich-Dieter OPPITZ, *Deutsche Rechtsbücher des Mittelalters II. Beschreibung der Handschriften*, Köln – Wien 1990, p. 465. There is incorrect information in both handbooks about the presence of a particular section of the codex.

41) For an edition of the manuscript see I. T. PIIRAINEN – M. PAPONOVÁ, *Das Recht der Spiš/Zips I*, pp. 39–71.

42) "Saxen ken hofe nymant mag. Von ersten an habin wir dy alten konigen von wngern." Ibidem, p. 39.

43) Subsections 51§ and 52§, ibidem, pp. 59–60.

44) Regularly from 48§ on, ibidem, p. 58.

45) "datur zu Basel im sand Katherine tag der heiligen junckfrawen Anno des hern m cccc° xxx iii, vnsers reiches czu wngern Im xlvii Jar, des Romischen reiches ym xxiii Jar, des bemischen ym xiiii Jar vnd des keyseris ym ersten Jar ist." Poprad, 10034-MSPS, pag. 9. Some studies date the confirmation to 1434, see Štefánia MERTANOVÁ, *Vznik a vývoj spišského práva*, in: *Spišské mestá v stredoveku*, pp. 91–99, here p. 93.

46) This opinion was held already by Kálmán DEMKÓ, *A szepesi jog (Zipser Willkühr). Keletkezése, viszonya országos jogunkhoz és a németországai anyajogokhoz*, Budapest 1891, p. 12. Sigismund was issuing

The political and social context of the origin of the chronicle

Two fundamental issues influenced the situation in Spiš around the middle of the 15th century, which might have provoked the reaction expressed in the *Codex from Spišská Sobota*. First, in 1412 king Sigismund pawned 13 Spišian Towns to Władysław II Jagiełło, the king of Poland.⁴⁷ Those towns had up to this point been united into the so-called Province of 24 Spišian Towns but now became, together with another 3 small Spišian towns, subjects of the Polish king. Although from then on they were known as the Starostwo of Spiš⁴⁸, their ties with the other 11 Spišian towns were not completely dissolved.⁴⁹ Neither king Sigismund nor his successors abandoned the efforts to re-establish the Province of 24 Towns. Sigismund confirmed older privileges to several towns, entitled others to new ones, and also negotiated appointments of his courtiers to the position of starosta of the pawned towns (*capitaneus Lubowliensis*).⁵⁰ Sigismund also confirmed the decrees of Stephen V, Charles Robert of Anjou, and Louis the Great, as mentioned above: in the charter translated into German and inserted into the *Codex of Spišská Sobota*, the privileges were confirmed not only to the 11 Spišian towns but also to the towns under Polish rule. Sigismund addresses Stephen Rokolfinger, the Count of the 11 towns, Johannes Folkysch, the Count of the 13 towns under Polish rule, and the judges of all 24 towns.⁵¹

charters in Latin for Hungarian recipients, as well as for those in regions with German settlement, such as Spiš or Transylvania. I thank Anna Jagošová for her consultation.

47) Recounting this event, the chronicle enters into details, but surprisingly without expressing partiality: "Anno dni MCCCCX gewan konig Wladislaus von polan den streit ken den prewssin vnd wart gros folk do dirslagen. Dornoch Anno dni MCCCCXII, hot der konig Sigmund dy dreyczenstete versaczt dem polnischen konig vmb XXXVII^m schok groschen, das macht gulden LXXXVIII^m vnd acht hundert gulden, als XXV groschen vor 1 gulden zu rechnen." *Chronicon*, p. 285. As a result of the Treaty of Lubowla, the relations between Poland, the Teutonic Order, and Hungary were rearranged. The charter is deposited in the Czartoryski Library in Cracow (Biblioteka Czartoryskich w Krakowie, BCzK), original parchment no. 294. Władysław SEMKOWICZ, *Akt zastawu XVI miast spiskich Polsce w roku 1412*, Kraków 1930; František HRUŠOVSKÝ, *Záložná listina 16 spišských miest Polsku v r. 1412*, Turčianský Svätý Martin 1930; Michal SUCHÝ, *Spišské mestá v polskom zálohu*, in: *Spišské mestá v stredoveku*, pp. 55–87.

48) Janusz KURTYKA, *Starostwo spiskie (1412–1769/70)*, in: *Terra Scepusiensis*, pp. 487–533.

49) E. g. the aforementioned Unity of parish priests, as well as the whole network of ecclesiastical administration, were not affected by this situation. Henryk RUCIŃSKI, *Cirkevné štruktúry na Spiši v neskorom stredoveku*, in: *Historia Scepusii I*, pp. 400–429, here p. 408, 412.

50) František ZIFČÁK, *Provincia XI spišských miest a ich pečat*, in: *Pocata Ivanovi Chaluppeckému. Zborník príspevkov k slovenským dejinám* vydaný pri príležitosti osemdesiatin doc. PhDr. Ivana Chaluppeckého, edd. Filip Fetko – Miroslav Števík, Levoča 2012, pp. 73–88, here p. 77; M. SUCHÝ, *Spišská mestá v polskom zálohu*; Ivan CHALUPECKÝ, *Snahy Uhorska o vykúpenie spišských miest z polského zálohu v 15.–17. storočí*, *Historické štúdie* 41, 2000, pp. 115–120; J. KURTYKA, *Starostwo spiskie*, p. 509. For courtiers of Sigismund see Stanisław A. SROKA, *Záviš Čierny z Garbowa*, in: *Historia Scepusii I*, p. 539–540.

51) „daz vnser liben getrewen dy erben vnd fürsichtigen Stephanus rokolfinger purger vnser stat lewtscha der eylff stete lantgroff, vnd Johannes folkesch purger vnd Inwoner czu kirchdorff, der dreyczenstete dy wir czu den henden des allerdurchlewchsten fursten hern wladislai konigis czu polan vorsaczit habin, auch lantgroff vnd sy haben in irem vnd der andern menig gesworen Richter, der eldistin, der geste vnd des folkes vnser fyr vnd czwenczig stete obgenant namen“, *Poprad, 10034-MSPS*, pag. 1. For Folkysch as count see F. ZIFČÁK, *Provincia XI spišských miest*, p. 81–83.

The charter formed part of the permanent politics of Sigismund toward the Spišian towns, with the pawn perceived from the outset as an interim situation and, according to Polish historian Henryk Ruciński, the division of Spišian towns itself blurred until 1437.⁵² In *The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota*, the treaty between Sigismund and Władysław is only mentioned briefly without any evaluating commentary – it seems the author did not want to conceal it, but aimed to present it as a marginal and normal event.⁵³ This attitude of the chronicle presents a continuous and uninterrupted story of the Spišians. We shall see below that the author ignored internal conflicts and hostile struggles within the Spiš region.

While the towns under Polish rule preserved their municipal status and commercial position, the members of the Province of 11 Spišian Towns gradually lost their privileges and, despite efforts from the kings of Hungary, were eventually incorporated into the dominion of Emeric Zápolya⁵⁴ and eclipsed by Kežmarok, Levoča, and local mining towns.

Second, the Spiš region was among the hardest hit by the Hussite raids into northern Hungary.⁵⁵ *The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota* relates: “Anno Domini 1433 on the feast of St. Mark the Hussites with their captain Jan Pardus came to Spiš through Poland with their wagon-forts and with many people, and they seized Kežmarok. They plundered, burned the land, killed and captured people. They held Spiš for fourteen days and then went back home through Liptov.”⁵⁶ The Hussite raids served as an argument for Kežmarok and Levoča to gain privileges, with Kežmarok even claiming that the raiders had destroyed its old privilege charter, and in following years, Sigismund did indeed issue a higher number of confirmations and privileges.⁵⁷ The calamitous period following the death of Albert II (d. 1439) are also depicted as one of harmful struggles among various factions, including the troops under the command of Jan Jiskra of Brandýs, in which the individual Spišian towns competed amongst each other for privileges and commercial hegemony. The dominant towns of Kežmarok and Levoča wrestled not only for commercial privileges, but also competed on the political level – Kežmarok supported the faction of Władysław III, while Levoča upheld queen Elisabeth and Ladislaus the Posthumous. Even later, during the conflict between Ferdinand I and John Zápolya, the Spišian towns stood on opposite sides. This conflict is called the Hundred Years’ War:

52) The details of the division were not stated and it did not affect many spheres of everyday reality. Henryk RUCIŃSKI, *Politické dejiny Spiša v neskorom stredoveku*, in: *Historia Scepusii I*, pp. 330–449, hier p. 343.

53) See note 50.

54) F. ZIFČÁK, *Provincia XI spišských miest*, p. 84.

55) Recently Miroslav Lysý, *Husitská revolúcia a Uhorsko*, Bratislava 2016.

56) “Anno des hern MCCCCXXXIII an Sand Marci tag komen dy Hussin mit irem hewptman Johane Pardus durch Polan in den Czips mit der wagenpurk vnd mit grossem folke vnd gewonnen den Kesmargt vnd rawpten, prenten morten, vnd fingen dy lewte, vnd behatten vnd dem Czips pey XIII tagen vnd czogen durch dy Lipta wider hyn hemem.” *Chronicon*, p. 285.

57) Karin FÁBROVÁ, *Žigmund Luxemburský a spišské mestá*, in: *Stredoveké mesto ako miesto stretnutí a komunikácie*, edd. Ján Lukačka – Martin Štefánik et al., Bratislava 2010, pp. 217–223; N. BARÁTHOVÁ, *Spory Kežmarku s Levočou*. See also the annals from Kežmarok: *Urbis Kesmarkiensis ab Anno MCDXXXIII. ad MDXLVII. memorabilia*, in: *Analecta Scepusii sacri et profani II*, pp. 104–113.

It is worth noting that there was no conflict within the Spišian community according to the *Chronicle*. While the campaigns of Jan Pardus and of Jiskra of Brandýs are considered key destructive events, the struggle between Levoča and Kežmarok is not mentioned at all. Each disruption to peace in the Spiš region is purportedly caused by an external factor, just as in the case of 1401: “At that time, a great war arose in the country. The Czechs seized Levoča under their control and Hungarians held Kežmarok and the country suffered from both sides. The war lasted one year before the king came back to the country.”⁵⁸ Once again, the king became the guarantor of peace.

Conclusions

The Chronicle from Spišská Sobota is not a mere brief reproduction of a broadly shared narrative of Hungarian history. In analysing the chronicle, previous research recognized textual sources and remarked on its local focus, but did not proceed further to explain the nuances of rewriting and of authorial motivation. *The Chronicle of Spišská Sobota* is remarkable as a product of a local community, the comparatively well-mapped society of Spiš. Together with the whole *Codex from Spišská Sobota*, it serves as a carrier of opinion on the collective identity of the Spišians. We are, nonetheless, talking only of a single particular opinion – one which envisions an ideal Spišian community – whose precise local or personal provenance is impossible to identify. We do not know if the attitude advocated in the chronicle is a result of individual endeavour or of a commonly-shared social and political persuasion, and the chronicle itself received its name only at the end of the 18th century, based on the place of its discovery.⁵⁹ The *Codex from Spišská Sobota*, however, was not ignored by local discourse, as supplements written by a 17th-century hand are inserted. The chronicle thus might even have been known to the later chroniclers Gáspár Hain, Dávid Frölich, or Joachim Leibitzer, who represent certain historical events in a similar fashion.⁶⁰

The chronicle was written into the codex from Spišská Sobota at a time when the Spišian towns oscillated between Hungary and Poland, struggled as political and economic rivals, and held the Hussite raids in recent memory. Wherever the codex was written – in the pawned Spišian towns, in the Province of 11 Spišian Towns, or even in Kežmarok or Levoča – its contents serve both to recall the previous unity of 24 Spišian towns and to present the legal claim to this status, invoking in both cases the authority of the kings of Hungary. It coincides not only with the composition of the historical narrative and legal documents in one cohesive

58) “In der selbin czeit hot sich gros crig gemacht ym lande. Dy Bemen hatten dy Lewtscha ingehalden, vnd dy Vnger den Kesmargt vnd von peyden seyten ist daz land beswerit wurden vnd hot der crig ein Jor gewert, bis der konig wider czu lande quam.” *Chronicon*, pp. 284–285.

59) For some scholars it was seductive to contemplate the possibility that the chronicle originated from Spišská Sobota (i. e. the town under Polish rule). A. QUÉRET-PODESTA (*The episode of the murder*) argues that the perspective of the chronicler is close to the milieu of Levoča and of Spišský Štvrtok (Csütörtökhely, Donnersmarkt).

60) See notes 22 and 28.

codex, but also with the vague image of a Spišian, and this conception is taken up by a German inhabitant and neglects the multiethnicity of the region. The German element is underlined by the language of the codex – not only of the chronicle, but also of the vernacular adaptation of the privileges issued by Sigismund and of the *Zipser Willkür* record. At the same time, the chronicle conceals conflicts within the Spišian community: individual towns are only forced into competition by external pressures.

To conclude, a final remark on the construction of collective identity in the chronicle: it is not based primarily on an opposition between “us” and “the other” – probably the most common means of self-identification⁶¹ – but rather heads in the other, integrative, direction. The history of the Spišians is narrated through the history of Hungary, and the local elements of Spišian collective identity are integrally connected with the countrywide issues of the kingdom of Hungary. This Spišian identity could not be functional without the identity and history of Hungary. “The other” is not absent, even in such a positively-defined relationship, but apart from Hussite pillagers, these “others” – the rebellious and excommunicated Matthew Csák, the pagan Magyars from the time of St. Stephen, the Tatars – are mediated as “the other” through the adoption of the countrywide Hungarian narrative.⁶²

61) Ortfried SCHÄFFTER, *Modi des Fremderlebens. Deutungsmuster im Umgang mit Fremdheit*, in: *Das Fremde. Erfahrungsmöglichkeiten zwischen Faszination und Bedrohung*, ed. Idem, Opladen 1991, pp. 11–43.

62) This study is part of the project “Cultural Codes and Their Transformations in the Hussite Period” (P405/12/G148) funded by the Czech Science Foundation (GA ČR) and resolved at the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences.