

Italians at a Hungarian Archbishopric Court

Archbishop Ippolito d'Este's Retinue in Esztergom at the Turn of the Fifteenth Century based on the findings of Vestigia Research Team

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Slide 1. As first thing I would like to apologise because I realize that the title of the present paper is misleading if it is understood to be addressing the circulation of foreign clergy. Ippolito d'Este, as Ludovico Ariosto who was employed by him put it, was a "liberal, generous, sublime, great cardinal of the Catholic Church who gave material to prose, poems in all languages" a description of a cultured and worldly renaissance prince of the Church. In fact, today's paper is also focusing on the worldly, namely the young archbishop's Italian personal retinue and domestic, financial administrative personnel embedded in a completely foreign environment in Esztergom. Their complex activity unfolded due to the systematic research carried out lately by a Hungarian research project called *Vestigia* in close collaboration with the State Archives of Modena.

However, to make up for the lack of detailed analysis on the circulation of foreign prelates in Hungary I would like to propose a short overview.

Bishops and middle cluster ecclesiastic dignitaries of foreign origin were present in late medieval Hungarian kingdom at first sight Ippolito d'Este's career as first archbishop of Esztergom and later bishop of Eger does not seem to be a peculiar phenomenon. Florentines and other Italians in particular were intensively present in the kingdom during Sigismund of Luxemburg's reign, the bishopric of Oradea and the archbishopric of Kalocsa was headed by a string of Florentine prelates whose seat attracted also their fellow countrymen, like in Oradea where recent research revealed a significant Italian presence from late-fourteenth century. Concerning Esztergom, John de Surdis originally from Piacenza also held the archbishopric in 1376-78. Most of these Italian clerics were however coming from burgher families or town nobility interested in trade and/or banking and their personal success and elevation to such high ecclesiastic dignities can mostly be ascribed to personal skills and qualities, beside their close links to the ruler.

Slide 2. When talking of close relations to the ruler, one could say that Ippolito d'Este was in a special position compared to other Italian bishops and archbishops in medieval Hungary as he was kin, blood relation to Beatrice of Naples, Queen of Hungary and wife to King Matthias Corvinus. Beatrice's sister, Eleonora, duchess of Modena and Ferrara was in fact Ippolito's mother. He was not even the first from Queen Beatrice's family to hold the archbishopric of Esztergom as in 1480/1482 the queen's own brother, prince John of Aragon was invested with the dignity of administrator of the archbishopric.

This meant, that a member of a foreign royal family held the highest ecclesiastic dignity of Hungary. It is not completely unusual either as we know of a few similar cases, already from the Arpadian period when at the turn of the 12th century Berthold and John of Merania were both made archbishop of Esztergom. They were Queen Gertrude of Hungary's brothers from the German duchy of Merania their influence at the court however ended tragically for the queen who was assassinated in a backlash against her German followers. Then again during the rule of the Hungarian Angevin originally from Naples there are uncertain information about a prince Piast Boleslav archbishop of Esztergom and Mesko, bishop first of Veszprém, later of

Nyitra, both thought to be brothers to Queen Mary Piast. second wife to King Charles Robert of the Angevin.

Slide 3. In the case of Ippolito, who as third born of his parents and was destined to become a prelate, he held two important Hungarian ecclesiastic dignities by exchanging the archbishopric of Esztergom to the bishopric of Eger with Tamás Bakóc.

Slide 4. Taking a closer look on the Itinerarium of Ippolito will explain the reason of such, otherwise rare exchange. Ippolito was the circulating prelate himself, obtaining also ecclesiastic dignities in Italy (administrator of the Archbishopric of Milan in 1497) and moving back and forth between Hungary and Italy all his life. In fact, this explains also the exchange of dignities in Hungary, as the archbishop of Esztergom, the leading ecclesiastic dignity in Hungary had to sojourn in Esztergom, whereas the Pope gave permission to Ippolito to be absent from his diocese as bishop of Eger.

Slide 5. Let me say a few more words about the archbishopric of Esztergom, the oldest and the primatial archbishopric in Hungary, in order to better understand also its financial importance. You can see a map of dioceses of late medieval Hungary. As you can see Esztergom archbishopric was among those controlling settlements in a vast geographical area comprising at least 10 counties. Among the 112 settlements there are 14 market towns as well. The major yearly incomes of the archbishopric came from these villages and towns.

Slide 6. Here you can see the main types of revenues which rendered the archbishopric the wealthiest one in the kingdom. Revenues of Esztergom diocese were extremely complex: the ecclesiastic revenues: the tenth taxing wine, wheat and husbandry of some animals, the pisetum (that is tenth levied on minting in Kremnica and elsewhere) were the highest income sources for Esztergom. The archbishop, however, was also entitled to revenues as landlord of the estates of the archbishopric. and it was the second largest income he could rely on. Finally, incomes were expected also from tolls, wine, mills, and town houses.

Slide 7. Esztergom's geographical location was also central, close to Buda the royal seat and along a main trade route running parallel to the Danube.

Thus, the control of the Archbishopric of Esztergom was both economically and politically relevant. With the elevation first of John of Aragon to administrator of Esztergom, queen Beatrice's family gained further in influence in Hungary. Not surprisingly, however, also the significant incomes of the archbishopric were swiftly put into the cares of the Queen's trusted Neapolitan financial experts who surely had a rather effective and modern approach to the financial management of the diocese.

Slide 8. When John of Aragon suddenly died in 1485, instead of the Neapolitan royal dynasty, the ducal family of Modena and Ferrara was in line to provide the next archbishop for Esztergom. And the fact that rendered it a really unusual choice, was that the newly elected was only 6 years old, and with that he remains the youngest of the archbishops of Esztergom in the history.

That it was deemed extraordinary in fact is shown by the pope Innocent VII' reaction, who was also stupefied and branded it a foolish thing. In fact, a „princely” archbishop and cardinal with a working dynastical and political network in Italy could very well serve the ruling dynasty's interests by representing them in Rome at the Papal Curia, as was the case with John of Aragon.

A six-year-old duke of Modena and Ferrara could of course not fulfil such tasks for obvious reasons.

At this point another feature needs to be emphasized: it is quite clear from correspondence of the Este ducal family with Queen Beatrice, that although the whole stay of the young archbishop-elect was intended to be a longer one, but was clearly not planned to be a definite translocation to Hungary, at least not on the part of the ducal family. The duke and duchess of Modena clearly subsequently tried to shape Ippolito's career in Hungary in a way which would enable him to return to Italy and with all probability hoped to establish him in Rome as cardinal for the support of their dynasty. It seemed a feasible plan and the archbishopric of Esztergom was an excellent choice in these terms. All their moves and not least their arguments in their letters aimed at preparing the way for their son to return to Italy. After King Matthias death in April 6, 1490 this became imperative also in order to be able to pull him out of the conflicts and fights for the Hungarian crown. and to ultimately avoid any involvement of the House of Este into those conflicts.

Arguments of course were within reach particularly complaining about the quality of the instruction of the young archbishop-elect which his parents claimed was not sufficient. In this context they also formulated a rather negative opinion on possibilities of proper princely education in Hungary which may also be understood as hint to a kind of clash of cultures in their narrative as the surviving correspondence shows. In fact, the surviving and recently systematically explored sources are abundant on both the views of the ducal family back in Ferrara and also their close control of the financial management of the archbishopric which generated a large Italian personnel in Esztergom and around Ippolito, and they, on their turn produced a large number of economic sources on the management and in an indirect way on the everyday life and cooperation with locals at the Esztergom court in the form of account books, ledgers and reports etc. An overview of this will follow in the last part of my paper.

Slide 9. The young Ippolito's entourage, planned with care shows features reflecting its peculiar tasks, namely that of having to accommodate a small boy in a foreign environment. At the same time, even before his arrival to Hungary in 1487, the Modena ducal court took over also the management of the revenues of the archbishopric. In other words, after the numerous entourage of the newly elected archbishop arrived to Hungary it was split into two, a stable personnel in Esztergom to manage the archbishopric, and a personal court, the immediate court, or even sort of *familia* of Ippolito who were expected to cater for a child's various needs from medical assistance and supervision up to tutoring and even procuring play mates.

1. Taking into account the list of the personal court, we would mostly find trusted servants: a nanny, a cook, the doctor, and of course the tutor but all in all Ippolito's entourage reminds one to princely entourages rather than the retinue of an ecclesiastic dignity. The entourage was mainly set up from Italians following the intentions of probably both the duke's parents back in Ferrara and that of Queen Beatrice, whose own court was also mainly including Italians, most of them from Naples.

2. Ippolito was mostly under the close supervision of the Queen who seemed to adore him as the son she could not born. Thus, Ippolito was rarely present at his own seat in Esztergom in the first years. He was rather living with his personal court or entourage at the Hungarian royal court with the Queen wherever it may have sojourned. This was mostly Pressburg, Buda and particularly Vienna for a year.

King Matthias's death in 1490 caused a turning point regarding his movements, not only the young archbishop-elect, but also the widowed queen had to take shelter at Esztergom on a permanent basis. The three-year cohabitation proved to be turbulent and also expensive. Then Ippolito left the country whereas Beatrice stayed on in Esztergom.

Slide 10. The personnel trusted with the care of the archbishopric's revenues, shows a different picture. Its Italian members arrived directly to Esztergom to take over the management from the Neapolitan predecessors.

To manage this rather complex economy, stable personnel was established in the town of Esztergom. The personnel working in the administration of the diocese, source of substantial incomes but also possible source of staggering financial losses was however made up by more local/Hungarian officials than Italians. In fact, as Cesare Valentini, the legate of the duke of Ferrara and Modena emphasized in one of his early reports to his lord, the goal of a strict control of the management was to monitor the expenses and incomes of the archbishopric and possibly improve its margin. The queen also kept an eye on the incomes of the diocese by appointing the provisors who were in charge of the supply and maintenance of the castle of Esztergom and the collection of certain incomes of the archbishopric.

Thus altogether some rather international personnel had to cooperate: Learned and mostly Ferrarese salaried officials and a few Neapolitans had to get along with István Battyányi, the provisor of Esztergom and those local officials who managed the single properties or revenues of the diocese directly. Also, lower and local offices were understandably held by local officials, mostly Hungarians.

Also the booking system mirrors the complex structure of the management of the revenues resulted from the overlapping differing Hungarian and Italian financial traditions and usage. Thus the altogether 33 preserved ledgers have been identified by Hajnalka Kuffart, member of the Vestigia team. Apparently the whole accounting system is based on the local ledgers of single revenues or of local estates (so called *partialis registrum*) made by the Hungarian officials. The cumulative or summarizing books of accounts at the same time reflect the much more modern Italian use. The managers in Ferrara were in charge of control by checking the ledgers of every and each revenue type sent to them, entering and summarising the expenses and incomes generated from it in these accumulative ledgers.

The ledgers and personal letters of the queen with her sister and brother-in-law and the envoys' and the governor's regular reports to the duke of Ferrara and Modena preserved the names of both personnel and occasionally also preserved memory on their personal experiences and opinion. Such is the notary, Piero Pincaro's positive remark on the deceased vice-castellan of Esztergom, Kozári János. In fact, he stated that Kozári was a valuable servant of the Archbishopric of Esztergom.

From 1493 however in absence of Ippolito only his officials managing the archbishopric remained in place. Particularly in this period complaints were rather often on the agenda. It seems that also the Hungarian officials turned occasionally directly to the Ferrara court with their problems. Just to mention a case a Hungarian staffer of Esztergom, Gregorio di Pannonia wrote a letter to Ferrara bemoaning the quality of the bread because as he claimed even the dogs at the court get better food than them. At the same time Pincaro and the provisor Battyányi's cooperation was rather turbulent. In general, also the subsequent provisors, actually mostly

Italians, appointed by the queen were negatively viewed by other officials, as again Gregorio di Pannonia put it, they would have stolen even the clothes of the patron saint of the archbishopric. The provisor (Donato Aretino) on the other side complained that he diminished the expenses as much as possible, but he felt that he was sent among lions and wolves, who were continuously demanding food and drink.

Among the Italian officials the complaint about their circumstances in Hungary, the differing usage and custom in the kingdom remained a recurrent topic. The doctor for example wanted to return to Ferrara because he had only Hungarian patients and they would cure themselves in weird ways and in general, he claimed the place was not apt to learn science so his mind would get dull if he stayed longer. The archbishop finally managed to exchange the archbishopric of Esztergom to the bishopric of Eger and that allowed also him and his personal court to leave the kingdom and to return only on a few occasions. His staff at Eger stayed on until 1520 and managed the bishopric's revenues on his behalf.

Slide 11. Thank You for your Kind Attention!