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**MARIA LASKARIS AND ELISABETH THE CUMAN: TWO
EXAMPLES OF ÁRPÁDIAN QUEENSHIP**

MA Thesis in Medieval Studies

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Zuzana Orságová

(Slovakia)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU

Chair, Examination Committee

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I, the undersigned, **Zuzana Orságová**, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 25 May 2009

Signature

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INTRODUCTION

Scholarly interest in queenship in the Árpáadian period is still quite recent. Not many monographs have been published yet and they have mainly focused on the institution of queenship as such. Biographical studies of particular queens' figures are even rarer, although some of the Árpáadian queens are unknown even by the name and therefore can hardly be the subject of separate research.

Since the amount of written records increased rapidly in the thirteenth century, Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman, whom I have chosen as the protagonists of this paper, are not such extreme examples. Indeed, the source material in their cases can scarcely be placed under category "extensive" or "rich" – on the other hand, it is still sufficient to inspire discussion of their life stories, which were interesting, turbulent, and filled with tragedies and turns of fortune.

Previously I was interested in the figures of queens not only in Hungary and not only in the Árpáadian period; and although I have dealt with this topic I was not predominantly focused on it. On the other hand, this area of research has always been one of my basic fields of interest and therefore it emerged logically as the basis for this MA thesis. Examining the possibilities of writing the comparative biographies of Árpáadian queens resulted in the choice of Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman. I have chosen the Árpáadian period since in my opinion it offers broad possibilities for examining new aspects of the queenship as well as being the most compelling period for me. Not many queens of this period have been so far the focus of particular study.

I sought individuals whose biographies have not been published yet as well as figures that would be suitable for introducing the comparative approach – a requirement which Maria and Elisabeth as queens following each other conveniently fulfilled.

This paper attempts to present two basic lines: the biographies of Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman and their comparison with the established patterns of the medieval queenship. These two very figures will be compared in order to see how much their original backgrounds and individual features influenced their actions as queens of Hungary.

The thesis can be outlined as follows: first I address the general patterns of medieval queenship – what were the roles and duties of the queen in this period and how were they reflected in the Hungarian milieu? This section will set a wider framework before turning to the individual cases of Maria and Elisabeth – who they were, where they came from, why were they chosen for this role and how they acted as queens of Hungary. Using a comparative approach, questions of their common and contrasting features will be answered as well.

I consider this part of the thesis as a counterpart to the general theoretical background on queenship and also as the crucial point of the paper itself: introducing royal figures who have been more or less neglected thus far. Since Maria and Elisabeth were mother- and daughter-in-law, this kind of connection offers another perspective for further examination. Therefore I will attempt to address their mutual relationship as well – what kind of terms were two of them on and to what extent a family history can be constructed within the framework of the female line of Árpádian royalty.

Last, I will dedicate a chapter to the source representations of Maria and Elisabeth – what can be found out about their personalities and their suitability for the model of the medieval queen in the written and visual sources (particularly on seals) and how this information has been interpreted. I believe that the biographies of Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman as presented in this paper will make a contribution to this area of study as well as the novelty of a comparative approach.

CHAPTER I

Discussing sources and methodology

The primary sources

The prevailing amount of the sources used here for approaching the lives of Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman is coming from diplomatic collections. Not much is written about these two in the chronicles – there are only some (usually very brief) accounts about Maria.¹ The situation with Elisabeth is even more complicated; her name rarely appears in these kinds of accounts. Among the chronicle representations particularly the information about Maria as presented in *The History* of Thomas of Split² was useful for the purposes of this thesis, although it has to be considered that Thomas, a contemporary of Queen Maria, was in general hostile towards the royal court when he found its politics harmful to communal interests.³ Besides, Thomas also expected to become the archbishop of Split, but he was rejected for this office by the royal court. This viewpoint can be then detected in his work, which also presents the justification for his own actions and career. The most recent edition used here is however particularly well edited, containing a proper *apparatus criticus*, which prevents overlooking Thomas's own attitudes.

However, since neither Maria, nor Elisabeth are treated with much attention in other narrative sources, I do not consider it necessary to discuss the chronicles' background; Briefly, these chronicles are Hungarian, Bohemian⁴ and German⁵ and are coming from the

¹ For instance, *Chronica Picta*, http://konyv-e.hu/pdf/Chronica_Picta.pdf (accessed 14.2.2009). (hereafter: *Chronica Picta*)

² Thomae Archidiaconi Spalatensis, *Historia Salonitanorum atque Spalatinorum Pontificum*, ed. Damir Karbić (Budapest: CEU Press, 2006) (hereafter: Thomas of Split).

³ *Ibid.*, xxviii.

⁴ *Kronika Jana z Maringoly* [The Chronicle of John of Maringola], in *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum* III (Prague: Nakl. Musea Království českého, 1873-1884) (reprint: Georg Olms: Hildesheim, 2004) 485-604. (hereafter Jan Maringola)

⁵ As for instance the *Chronicon Henrici de Mügeln*, in *Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum* II, ed. I. Szentpétery (Budapest: Academia Litter. Hungarica, 1938) (hereafter: Henry of Mügeln) (*Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum* II – henceforth SRH II)

fourteenth century. They usually plainly state where Maria was from and where she was buried, but do not contain any kind of evaluation. Elisabeth only appears in the *Chronicle of John of Maringola*, which is a Bohemian chronicle – therefore for this period not much favouring Hungary anyway – and its account relevant for Elisabeth is very brief, emphasising her original background mainly.

The essential group of sources consists of diplomatic material – charters and letters. Their collections⁶ contain mainly donation and confirmation charters, but also other kinds of material such as letters and peace treaties. In the case of many charters the most relevant part of them proved to be the *arenga*, the part of the charter which explains why the specific document was issued.

The letters exchanged between the papal curia and the royal court or the Hungarian clergy, are included in Theiner's source edition, which also contributes to the source basis on the topic.⁷ Most of the source editions are older, published in the nineteenth century, but they are still very much of use, while there is also the recent edition from Attila Zsoldos⁸ – but this one usually contains only *regesta* and not the full versions of the charters. A reference is provided, however, where the particular charter can be found, which simplifies dealing with the diplomatic sources.

Of course, this material is of different periods and different provenance, though the origin is prevalingly Hungarian, sometimes Italian (in case of papal letters), Bohemian and German respectively. The period of their issuing naturally covers the lifetimes of Maria and Elisabeth, although in some cases the charters mentioning these two were issued after their

⁶ G. Fejér, ed. *Codex Diplomaticus Hungariae Ecclesiasticus ac Civilis* (Buda: Typogr. Regiae Universitatis Ungaricae, 1829) (hereafter: CDH) and G. Wenzel, ed. *Codex diplomaticus Arpadianus continuatus* (Pest: M. Akadémiai könyvtárusnál, 1870) (hereafter: CDAC)

⁷ *Monumenta Vetera Historica Hungariam Sacram*, ed. A. Theiner (Rome: Typ. Vaticanis, 1859) (hereafter: VMH)

⁸ Attila Zsoldos, ed. *Regesta ducum, ducissarum stirpis Arpadianae necnon reginarum Hungariae critico-diplomatica* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Történettudományi Intézete, 2008) (hereafter: Regesta Ducum)

death, when their privileges are later confirmed, for instance. However, these charters do not come from periods very distant from their lifetimes.

The third group of the sources consists of hagiographical material – which is again more useful for dealing with Maria and less useful in the case of Elisabeth. I use particularly the vitae of two of Maria's daughters (Margaret and Kunigunda) – she is naturally included in those.⁹ This material offers interesting pieces of information, hardly to be found in other types of sources, which is both an advantage and a disadvantage. I consider the special viewpoint of the material as advantageous, since thanks to different approaches (compared to chronicles) it offers different kinds of information. The disadvantage is that the accounts in vitae must be examined particularly attentively for their credibility. Kunigunda's vitae come from Poland: one by Jan Długosz, the fifteenth century chronicler, and another, anonymous, dated to the first half of the fourteenth century. I have also used two of Saint Margaret legends – so called Napolitan legend coming from the first half of the fourteenth century and Marcel's legend, being written shortly after Margaret's death.

My data includes the additional category of the non-written primary source – in this instance the seals of the queens. These were produced in order to assert the legal authority of queens' documents – in Maria's case during the period when she was the queen consort, in Elisabeth's case when she was queen mother. The depictions of the queens make them relevant for the purposes of my research, because the seals show how Maria and Elisabeth wished to represent themselves on the official level.

Secondary literature

⁹ *Legenda Beatae Margaritae de Hungaria*, in SRH II. (hereafter *Legenda Beatae Margaritae*); *Legenda sv. Panny Margaréty* [The Legend of the Saint Virgin Margaret], in *Legendy stredovekého Slovenska* [The Legends of Medieval Slovakia], ed. R. Marsina (Nitra: Rak, 1997) (hereafter *Legenda sv. Panny Margaréty*); *Vita sanctae Kyngae ducissae Cracoviensis*. In *Średniowieczne życiorysy Bł. Kingi i Bł. Salomei* [Medieval Lives of Blessed Kunigunda and Blessed Salome], ed. Jerzy Andrzej Wojtczak (Warsaw: Zakład Graficzny, 1999) (hereafter: *Vita Sanctae Kyngae*); *Vita Beatae Kunegundis*, in Joannis Długossii Senioris Canonici Cracoviensis Opera Omnia I., ed. Alexander Przedziecki (Cracow: Czas, 1877) (hereafter: *Vita Beatae Kunegundis*)

Some basic tendencies can be outlined in the secondary literature. First, the Árpadian queens in general are addressed mainly from the perspective of their estate holdings, their familiars and dignitaries of their court.¹⁰ Concerning Hungarian medieval queenship as such, the articles by János Bak have to be pointed out¹¹ because they discuss the most essential features of the queens' roles and refer also to the perception of theme (as well as the influences which had an impact upon this perception) in the medieval Kingdom of Hungary. This part of the literature used here also attempts to define the competencies which the queen of Hungary actually wielded.

The relevant literature not primarily focused on the queenship and its institution, nor on the figures of the queens. Therefore the information had to be collected from the variety of works, dealing with whatever aspects relevant and important for approaching the stories of Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth Cuman.¹² A separate category of this sort of literature is general histories, which provide the basic framework for the events of the period of Maria and Elisabeth – primarily, of course, histories of the Kingdom of Hungary,¹³ or the Árpadian Dynasty exclusively.¹⁴

There is no literature focusing on the representation of Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman specifically. If the roles of both women are somehow evaluated in any work, then

¹⁰ Above all, Attila Zsoldos, *Az Árpádok és asszonyaik. A királynéi intézmény az Árpádok korában* [The Árpadians and their Wives. The Reginal Institutions in the Age of Árpadians] (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Történettudományi Intézete, 2005) (hereafter *Az Árpádok és asszonyaik*)

¹¹ János M. Bak, "Roles and Functions of Queens in Árpadian and Angevin Hungary (1000 – 1386 A.D.)" in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John Carmi Parsons (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1993), 13-24 (hereafter Bak, Roles and Functions) and János M. Bak, "Queens as Scapegoats in Medieval Hungary" in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne Duggan (London: Boydell Press, 1995), 223-234 (hereafter Bak, Queens as Scapegoats)

¹² As for instance in case of Elisabeth's ancestry and its perception the most useful proved to be Nora Berend, *At the gate of Christendom: Jews, Muslims, and "pagans" in medieval Hungary, c. 1000-c. 1301* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) (hereafter: *At the Gates of Christendom*) and András Pálóczi Horváth, *Cumans, Pechenegs, Iasians: The Steppe people in Medieval Hungary* (Budapest: Corvina, 1989) (hereafter Cumans, Pechenegs, Iasians)

¹³ Pál Engel, *The Realm of Saint Stephen. A History of Medieval Hungary, 895-1526* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001) (hereafter *The Realm of Saint Stephen*)

¹⁴ Gyula Kristó, *Die Arpadien Dynastie: die Geschichte Ungarns von 895 bis 1301* (Budapest: Corvina, 1993) (hereafter *Die Arpadien Dynastie*), or Jenő Szűcs, *Az utolsó Árpádok* [The Last Árpadians] (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2002)

it is quite limited. Maria is presented as the faithful wife of King Béla,¹⁵ Elisabeth is connected with her Cuman origin and its impact upon her son, Ladislaus V.¹⁶ These views are usually very vague – when the two queens are not really the main issue of the discussion in the literature, not much can be found about the varied aspects of their queenship.

One of the few points with the argumentation about the role of one of them can be found in Nora Berend – this is a re-consideration of the image of Elisabeth as exclusively bound with her Cuman origin, then reflected negatively on her actions as queen of Hungary.¹⁷ This is also when Elisabeth's seal is also referred to – nothing else is to be found concerning this type of their representation.

To sum up, the available literature deals with Maria and Elisabeth in the context of the ruling kings of Hungary – their husbands and sons. Interpretations of their activities are rare and if any then brief indeed and not much evaluation of these figures is really provided. The problematic points of their lifetimes as viewed by different authors will be discussed below whenever they appear in the story of Maria and Elisabeth and the attitude of the secondary literature to these points (if any) will be given as well.

Methodology

For the purposes of this thesis I have used mainly textual sources; the seals represent a small category of visual material. My sources are organized according to specific subtopics. I have focused both on the theoretical concept of medieval queenship and the individual aspects of Maria's and Elisabeth's cases.

First, I dealt with the secondary literature to figure out the features which have been not addressed yet in some separate study. Subsequently, I turned to the source material to assess how sufficient this material is for my approach. Afterwards, while comparing,

¹⁵ Zoltán J. Kosztolnyik, *Hungary in thirteenth century* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1996), 248. (hereafter *Hungary in thirteenth century*)

¹⁶ Gyula Pauler, *A Magyar nemzet története az Árpád-házi királyok alatt* [The Hungarian National History under the Árpadian kings] (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1980) 333. (hereafter *Magyar Nemzet*)

¹⁷ *At the Gates of Christendom*, 262-263.

contrasting and compiling what the sources offer, I have consulted the available secondary literature to figure out and formulate the conclusions.

As I have already stated in the introduction, the thesis contains two basic features: biography and comparative study – this double orientation subsequently influenced the needs for working with the literature as well as the development of the thesis structure.

CHAPTER II

The Concept of Medieval Queenship and its Perception in the Kingdom of Hungary in the Árpáadian Period

In contrast to Western European, the research on the Árpáadian queens constantly fights a lack of the sources, which has influenced the historiographical development of this topic. Western queens were firstly approached as single figures and only later on did research start focusing on the patterns and workings concerning the institution of the queenship as such.¹⁸

On the other hand, in Hungarian milieu the situation has been quite opposite. However, it must be emphasized that the possibilities to write monographs on the majority of the eleventh- and twelfth-century Hungarian queens have been hampered by the insufficiency of the written evidence. Therefore the authors mainly focused on the roles, functions and properties of these women.¹⁹ The thirteenth-century queens' stories are, thanks to the development of a written tradition, a bit more fortunate case, although it still requires a substantial effort to put together and re-tell their lives. Monograph-types studies have rather tried to identify the queens themselves within a certain complex problem, for instance, studies of the queens of Hungary who were of Byzantine origin up to the end of the twelfth century.²⁰

Here the roles, mechanisms, competencies and other aspects of queenship as the institution shall be addressed while approaching the life stories of Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman. How were patterns from the theoretical background of queenship reflected in these examples? How well did these two meet the ideal of the queen consort, or

¹⁸ John Carmi Parsons, "Family, sex and power. Rhythms of medieval queenship" *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John Carmi Parsons (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1993), 1.

¹⁹ See **Discussing sources and methodology**, 13.

²⁰ See Ferenc Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni: political relations between Hungary and Byzantium in the 12th century* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1989) and dissertation work of Raimund Kerbl, *Byzantinische Prinzessinnen in Ungarn zwischen 1050-1200 und ihr Einfluss auf das Arpadenkönnigreich* [Byzantine Princesses in Hungary between 1050-1200 and their influence on the Árpáadian Realm](Wien: Universität Wien, 1979)

rather how was their functioning as the queen of Hungary perceived? These questions cannot be addressed without first discussing the concept of queenship and its attributes in the Kingdom of Hungary.

Becoming the Queen of Hungary

In the process of queen making there were two crucial ceremonies: the wedding and the coronation. The wedding was the result of an alliance contracted previously – subsequently the future wife moved to her new homeland.²¹ After the wedding ceremony the bride assumed a new position in the hierarchy of the kingdom – either as the queen consort already or as the wife of the heir to the throne. The wedding preceded the crucial ritual of the queen-making – the coronation. Not much is known about the queens' coronation in the Árpadian Hungary, although some basic features can be outlined.

Firstly, the Queen of Hungary was traditionally crowned by the bishop of Veszprém, while the king was crowned by the archbishop of Esztergom. According to tradition, already Saint Stephen's wife, Gisela, was associated with Veszprém Cathedral, which she founded and provided with the rich donations.²² Later, a conflict emerged within the Hungarian high clergy concerning the formal duties on the occasion of the queen's coronation and was resolved only by the pope himself.

According to his decision in 1216 the situation would have differed if the queen was crowned with the king or separately. In the first case, the archbishop of Esztergom would have crowned both king and queen, then he would have anointed the king, but bishop of Veszprém would have anointed the queen. If it were the queen's separate coronation only, it

²¹ Except of the rare cases, when she already was living in Hungary as for instance Elisabeth the Cuman.

²² Concerning the coronation ceremonies of Hungarian kings and queens see Endre Tóth and Károly Szelényi, *The Holy Crown of Hungary, Kings and Coronations* (Budapest: Kossuth Publishing, 1999) or József Deér, *Die Heilige Krone Ungarns* (Wien: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1966), which examines closely also the crown jewellery of Hungary. For the crown jewellery see also Éva Kovács and Zsuzsa Lovag, *The Hungarian Crown and Other Regalia* (Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 1980).

would have been the bishop of Veszprém, who conducted it and placed the crown upon the queen's head – then it would have been the archbishop of Esztergom who to anointed the queen.²³ In 1220 Pope Honorius III confirmed the privileges of the bishop of Veszprém to crown the queen consort of Hungary.²⁴ The coronation naturally also took a place in Veszprém – of course this was only the case when the king himself had been crowned already.²⁵

Another problem arose with the question of the queen's crown. There is the story about the diadem which belonged to Queen Gisela and which King Andrew II sold while taking part in the Crusade in 1217 when he ran out of finances.²⁶ Moreover, so-called Corona Graeca, the lower part of the later Holy Crown of Hungary is said to be intended for a queen, originally for the Byzantine second wife of Géza I.²⁷ In the times of Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman, however, the Holy Crown was already put together; therefore the idea of Corona Graeca as the queen's diadem was already out of the question in the thirteenth century.²⁸

Thence it has been assumed that the queen of Hungary was crowned with the very same crown as the king himself. Consequently, Attila Zsoldos has suggested that the Árpáadian queens probably did not wield sufficient power within their status to be crowned by their own ceremonial crown.²⁹

²³ See Endre Tóth and Károly Szelényi, *The Holy Crown of Hungary. Kings and Coronations*, 11.

²⁴ *Nos igitur, tuis iustis precibus inclinati sententiam ipsam, iustitia exigente prolatam auctoritate apostolica confirmamus, et praesentis scripti patricinio communimus.* CDH, III.1, 299. For the confirmation of the given state see MVH, 33.

²⁵ *Az Árpádok és asszonyaik*, 22.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 22.

²⁷ See Éva Kovács and Zsuzsa Lovag, *The Hungarian Crown and Other Regalia*, 18-45, or Bak, "Roles and Functions," 20-21.

²⁸ That means Corona Graeca was joined with Corona Latina, the upper part, which took place during the reign of Béla III. – actually this is the time of the constitution of the royal insignia. There is a very interesting story behind the whole set of the crown jewellery of Hungary – many theories deal particularly with the Holy crown, its parts and its making. See József Deér, *Die Heilige Krone Ungarns* or Éva Kovács and Zsuzsa Lovag, *The Hungarian Crown and Other Regalia*.

²⁹ *Az Árpádok és asszonyaik*, 23.

Concerning the problem of the queen making rituals, particularly in the case of Elisabeth the Cuman, there is another interesting issue to be addressed. As John Carmi Parsons states in his study concerning the European medieval queenship, the queen consorts in general did not swear the coronation oath, which “left their power helpfully undefined, but allowed them no effective claims to deference save as royal wives and mothers.”³⁰ In contrast, Elisabeth herself swore such an oath at the occasion of her coronation – how much this defined her competencies and increased her influence concerning the contemporary Hungarian politics, will be discussed in the following chapter but still her case is a very rare exception from the rule stated above and therefore important to note.

The queen as a representative of the foreign alliance

The queen had her title confirmed through the coronation ritual, but on the other hand, she had assumed the very primal right for this title through her wedding. The women, who married the rulers from Árpadian dynasty, were almost in all of the cases coming from some foreign distinctive lineages.³¹ This was quite practical measure in order to prevent some noble family to raise so high through the bond with the royal house to challenge the king’s power. The marriage of the king represented highly political issue, important for the foreign affairs – the choice of the future queen symbolized the momentary political orientation of the state.³² Therefore the future spouse of the king, or in many cases for the firstborn son of the ruling king, was not chosen by chance or accident. Also in the cases of Maria and Elisabeth it

³⁰ John Carmi Parsons, “Family, Sex and Power. Rhythms of Medieval Queenship,” 8.

³¹ As far as it is known, since in the cases of the few Árpadian queens, the datas are restricted to the statement that it was “an unknown woman of the probable German origin” – as in case of the first wife of King Andrew I (1046-1060) or for example the unknown first wife of Ladislaus I, (1077-1096) coming maybe from Galicia. See Vladimír Segeš, ed. *Kniha kráľov* [The Book of Kings] (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 2003), 55 and 69. (hereafter *Kniha* There were some exceptions among the daughters of the European royalty, for instance, King Samuel Aba’s wife was not a foreigner, but this is a different case, since he himself was not from the Árpadian dynasty and his wife’s kinship to Saint Stephen should have confirmed his claim to the throne.

³² For Árpadian dynastic politics see, for instance, *Die Arpadien Dynastie, Hungary in Thirteenth Century* or Ferenc Makk, *Magyar külpolitika* [Hungarian foreign policy], 819-1196 (Szeged: Szegedi Középkorász Műhely, 1993)

is crucial to perceive what kind of milieu these two were coming from and why these two particularly were chosen to be the future queens of Hungary. Was this choice accepted by the contemporaries? Was this alliance considered being a renowned one? Or was it rather rejected and disapproved of and if, then why and by whom? What was the crucial point of deciding for the Nicean princess and pagan Cuman³³ – these points will be brought back to the debate below.

The queen's origin was undeniably a strong aspect of her position. This is shown most expressively with the example of Maria's mother-in-law, Queen Gertrudis of Andechs-Meran.³⁴ Coming with the significant retinue,³⁵ whose members she did not hesitate to promote, Gertrudis became influential – but she also made many enemies.³⁶ As János Bak states, Queen Gertrudis symbolized another function, or rather the utilization, of the foreign queen – that one of the scapegoat, blamed for all wrongdoing and all mischief, which was at that time happening in the kingdom.³⁷ The original source of her power became subsequently the reason for her destruction.

One way to prevent the queen's original retinue from gaining influence was bringing the future bride to Hungary while she was still a child to weaken the links to her homeland.

³³ Since Elisabeth received her name and was baptized on the occasion of her marriage.

³⁴ Queen Gertrudis of Andechs-Meran married King Andrew II around 1200. Among their children the best known are the future Béla IV, the Slavonian Duke Coloman, and Saint Elisabeth of Thuringia. Gertrudis became extremely unpopular among Hungarian nobility while promoting the members of her retinue brought from her homeland, especially the members of her own family. The nobility perceived her influence upon Andrew II as a threat to their own interests. The chronicle tradition gives the story about the wife of Bán Bank, whose wife was raped by Gertrudis' brother, which initiated a conspiracy against the queen. (See for instance *Chronica Picta*, 124). The original motif was, however, primarily bound with the rising power of the queen's relatives and familiars. For further information concerning Gertrudis see György Székely "Gertrud királyné, Szent Erzsébet anyja (egy politikai gyilkosság és elhúzódo megtorlása)" [Queen Gertrudis, the mother of Saint Elisabeth (a political murder and its lengthy retribution)] *Turul* 80 (2008):1-9.

³⁵ Another case of the queen coming to Hungary with such a retinue was Constance of Aragon, daughter of King Alfons II and future wife of Emperor Frederick II, who married King Emeric in 1196, however, only eight years later she was widowed and fled to Austria together with her infant son (being afraid of her brother-in-law, future Andrew II, who was established as regent), King Ladislaus III, who died only a year after his father. For Constance of Aragon see recently Gyögy Szabados, "Constança d'Aragó, reina d'Hongria" [Constance of Aragon, Queen of Hungary], in *Princeses de terrers llunyanes. Catalunya I Hongria a l'edat mitjana* [Princesses from the distant lands. Catalonia and Hungary in the Middle Ages], ed. Ferenc Makk, Marina Miquel, Ramon Sarobe, and Csaba Tóth 165-177. (Barcelona: Departament de Cultura I Mitjans de Comunicació, 2009)

³⁶ Such was also the case of Gisela, see below.

³⁷ Bak, "Queens as Scapegoats," 227-228.

The wife raised at the Hungarian court would not have represented such a danger for the rights of the native nobility.³⁸

Despite varying attitudes toward queens from outside the country, queens had to play their role. Queenly status, assumed through the marriage and confirmed by the coronation act, subsequently made such woman obliged to accomplish some basic duties and take the roles traditionally ascribed to the medieval queen.

The court of the queen and her political powers

At the beginning of the thirteenth century the source material attests the existence of the official queen's court with its own dignitaries as a parallel to that of the king.³⁹ Of course, the queen's court was not as structured and did not include so many officials, while at that time its development was still in its very beginnings. Later on (more precisely in only a few decades) the queen of Hungary also had, for instance, besides her own chancellor (traditionally the bishop of Veszprém⁴⁰), vice-chancellors or treasurers.⁴¹

As the king presided over his own court, the queen was the mistress of her own curia - she also possessed her own estates. These she received as her financial support and as future dower as well. Some of the estates were indeed considered for being "reginal," some were given to specific queens for specific time.⁴²

The political power of the queen was limited, however. Basically, its range depended on various aspects – if the queen was a strong personality, if she could strengthen her

³⁸ Bak, "Roles and functions," 17.

³⁹ Bak, "Roles and functions," 19. Under the queen's court should be understood her own officials who were the counterparts of those at king's court. The residences of queens' court varied.

⁴⁰ This right was attributed to him by Queen Maria Laskaris, see below. Bishops of Veszprém held this office even earlier, as can be seen from the charter of Queen Yolanda, the second wife of Andrew II. See CDH III.1, 469.

⁴¹ For queen's vice-chancellor see, for instance, CDH IV.2, 287. For the appearance of the queen's treasurer see Ibid. V.3, 210.

⁴² Attila Zsoldos has written extensively on the estate holdings of the Árpadian queens. See *Az Árpádok és asszonyaik..* For reginal estates and powers see also Gyula Kristó, *A feudális széttagolódás Magyarországon* [The feudal separation in Hungary] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1979).

influence through powerful allies and by how much her own husband allowed her to take part in the public affairs. As also János Bak stated in his article, “Roles and functions of the Queens in Árpadian and Angevin Hungary,” in this kingdom the queen was not traditionally the figure wielding the important influence and powers.⁴³ What kind of strong political player she was then able to be depended on the specific circumstances and possibilities she was offered.

It was also not very customary that the Árpadian queen acted as the regent – in fact there is only one such case in the whole three century lasting period of the rule of Árpáds, when the woman was period officially appointed with this duty – Queen Elisabeth the Cuman, after her husband died leaving the throne to his ten-year-old son. However, Elisabeth’s real influence and possibilities while acting as the regent of Hungary are quite questionable.⁴⁴

In speaking about the political powers of Hungarian queens, one must bear in mind that the queen was perceived as the possible mediator or conflict pacifier. This attitude reflected one of the aspects of the perception of the females in Middle Ages: “A wife was the fulcrum....with a twofold responsibility for peacemaking.”⁴⁵ On the other hand, it was sometimes the queen herself who did not secure the reconciliation, but the other way round – even triggered or worsened the conflict between the king and the nobles. Such was for instance the already listed case of Queen Gertrudis and her relatives.

Even respected Queen Gisela did not escape the negative reflections of her power. *The Illuminated Chronicle* – the very chronicle which shows Gisela as the co-founder of the Óbuda monastery together with Saint Stephen – accuses the queen of being involved in the blinding of Stephen’s cousin Vazul and the fact that Vazul’s sons were forced to flee to

⁴³ Bak, “Roles and functions,” 20.

⁴⁴ See below

⁴⁵ Silvana Vecchio, “The Good Wife,” in *A History of Women. Silences of the Middle Ages*, ed. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), 109.

exile.⁴⁶ This event was closely connected with the premature death of Gisela's son Emeric and her wish to prevent another branch of Árpáds to gain power. While the image of Saint King Stephen could not be spoiled by the violent acts against the members of his family, who actually were the predecessors of the next generation of Árpádian kings,⁴⁷ the influential Queen Gisela was at this point used as the scapegoat to protect the reputation of her husband.⁴⁸

This brings us back to the thesis that the queen of Hungary as the powerful woman coming from the abroad was an easy target for very harsh criticism – as John Carmi Parsons pointed out: she as a foreigner “had to work to make the unfamiliar familiar, to transform difference into identity.”⁴⁹ However, not all of the Árpádian queens faced this task successfully.

The Queenship patterns: ideal models and duties

Medieval queens assumed their position through certain rituals and maintained certain powers and competencies. Besides, they also served as the representatives of the various virtues. Such a model image of the medieval queen included some essential attributes referring to the specific aspects of her status.

The wife

The ideal king's consort was naturally expected to be submissive to her royal husband. Concerning this duty, or rather attribute, she was no different from the typical medieval wife, whose

...task was, above all, to ensure conjugal unanimity, through submission to her husband; it was almost equally important to manage and maintain good

⁴⁶ See *Chronica Picta*, 42.

⁴⁷ From Andrew I, Vazul's son, onwards (1015-1060)

⁴⁸ As János Bak states in his “Queens as Scapegoats in Medieval Hungary,” 225.

⁴⁹ John Carmi Parsons “Piety, Power and Reputations of Two Thirteenth-century English Queens,” in *Queens, Regents and Potentates*, ed. Theresa M. Vann (Cambridge: Academia Press, 1993), 122.

relations with her husband's parents and family....woman was expected to soften people's spirits, smooth over contrasts, suppress conflicts both inside and outside the marriage.⁵⁰

This statement points out towards the familial functions of the woman – which were desirable even if she was the queen. And even the queen was in return evaluated more highly the greater support and faithfulness she expressed towards her husband. She could even try to assert some impact upon his actions – as the medieval view on the role of the wife expresses: “..if your husband should try to act foolishly or does act so, you must wisely and humbly draw him away from such action.”⁵¹ Therefore the queen could affect the actions of the king – but in doing so she had to express appropriate humility.

That even queen's influences and powers could be “forgiven” to some extent is shown by the example of Queen Helena, the wife of Béla II. This daughter of Serbian Ban Uroš was a crucial support for her blind husband. Her name is connected particularly with the synod in Arad, where the sixty eight nobles somehow involved in the blinding of Béla and his father, were executed. Though such an activity is highly unusual for a Hungarian queen, Helena was not rejected by the chroniclers' traditions and was represented as a loyal wife.⁵² Loyalty was the crucial notion in regards to the image of each queen consort.

Being loyal was closely bound with being an obedient wife – another attribute which was much favoured – drawing on the Biblical tradition itself: “Wives, be subject to your husband, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of wife as Christ is the head of the Church.”⁵³ Though such a requirement was general, it implied to any woman in the medieval world, even to the queen herself.

⁵⁰ Silvana Vecchio, “The Good Wife,” 109

⁵¹ “The Householder of Paris, Manual for a Wife,” in *Women's Lives in Medieval Europe*, ed. Emilie Amt. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 319.

⁵². See Bak, “Queens as Scapegoats in Medieval Hungary,” 226; or Vladimír Segeš, 86-87

⁵³ Ephesians 5:22-33.

The mother

One of the main tasks of the royal marriage was the securing the continuity of the lineage. Although János Bak suggested that “this aspect of their functions apparently did not develop political significance until the end of the thirteenth century when the male branch of the founding dynasty became extinct,”⁵⁴ the endeavour of the Hungarian kings to prevent the succession of the other branches of the dynasty save their own direct one – even by the very radical actions – argues with this point.

For instance King Coloman (1070-1116) gave the order to blind his own brother Álmos and his infant son Béla to prevent them from threatening his power and the succession of his own son Stephen II (1101-1131). However, in the end it was Béla, who ruled the country as the second king of that name (1108/1110-1141)

The brothers of the previous king often caused their reigning nephews lot of troubles – as for example Ladislas II, (1131-1163) and Stephen IV (1133-1165), who became the anti-kings during the reign of Stephen III (1147-1172).

Male primogeniture was not accepted as a fixed norm in the House of Árpáds until the beginning of the twelfth century,⁵⁵ on the other hand judging by their actions – the Árpáadian kings indeed cared very much about the continuity of their own direct lineage. Therefore the queen’s success or failure in securing the dynasty with the heir was essential. Moreover, the daughters of the royal couple were found very suitable for the contracting of various alliances.⁵⁶

That the queen’s duty was to provide the dynasty with the children was obvious. However, when it comes to a sort of personal approach of the queen as the mother – her attitude towards the children on the private level – there is no established pattern to seek for. Moreover, usually not much is known about the relationship between royal mothers and their

⁵⁴ János Bak, “Roles and functions”, 14.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁶ See below the dynastical politics of Béla IV.

children and if some accounts even exist, rarely they do reveal the very personal levels of interfamilial interactions. These can be sometimes traced through indirect indications, but in many cases nothing can be said about the qualities of the specific queen as the mother.

The motherhood of the queen had also its political implications. She could be the important figure not only as the wife of the king, but of course also as the mother of the king. Though as it has been already stated, Árpáadian Hungary was not really the kingdom favouring the strong females within the royal dynasty – which of course does not mean that there was not the considerable number of them.

The Christian

At last, but not at least, the queen of Hungary had to behave like a true Christian. Besides showing the required piety, the queen's traditional role was to support the church through the donation policy and by founding new monasteries or churches. This traditional role was in Hungary established already with Queen Gisela, who for instance in *Chronica Picta* is depicted together with her husband Saint Stephen founding the church in Old Buda.⁵⁷ Her donation activity towards the church is also reflected by the sole piece of Hungarian regalia associated directly with the period of the first king. The coronation mantle – originally made as the liturgical vestment – was donated by the royal couple to the Székesfehérvár basilica of Our Lady in 1031.⁵⁸

Therefore, tradition established in the Kingdom of Hungary by Gisela was incorporated into the ideal image of the queen. As John Carmi Parsons states⁵⁹ queen's piety could have been as well the source of her real political power – access to which was otherwise

⁵⁷ *Chronica Picta*, 42.

⁵⁸ For further information about the coronation mantle and Gisela's connection to that see Ernő Marosi "The Székesfehérvár Chasuble of King Saint Stephen and Queen Gisela," *The Coronation Mantle of the Hungarian Kings*, ed. István Bardoly (Budapest: Hungarian National Museum, 2005), 110-139.

⁵⁹ Though working with English data, but still in the thirteenth century, this statement still can be confronted also with the Hungarian contemporary milieu.

denied her.⁶⁰ Such was for instance the case of other Hungarian Queen – though the one of the early Angevin period already – Elisabeth Piast, who is the very suitable example of this theory in practice.⁶¹

The pattern introduced by Gisela interestingly stands in the striking contrast with the representation of her mother-in-law, Sarolt, the wife of Prince Géza.⁶² She is presented by Thietmar of Merseburg as a woman exceeding the men in drinking and riding a horse like a soldier – moreover, in a great wrath she once killed a man with a spindle.⁶³ If Gisela became the model Christian queen in Hungarian milieu, Sarolt symbolized the bad (mirror) example indeed.⁶⁴

A queen's representation as a true Christian was the essential part of her whole image. She wielded the power to support the church, but being pious and generous with the ecclesiastical donations was still not enough to attain the ideal model. Medieval queen were also supposed to show the proper humility, charity and sympathy towards those, who sought support. All these attributes put together contributed to the model, which should represent the ideal medieval queenship.

To sum up, various aspects took a part in the creation of the model image of the queenship also in Árpáadian Hungary. The queen should – according to this pattern – come from the distinctive and renowned line and the alliance of this line should contribute to the greatness and the best interests of the Kingdom of Hungary. After her wedding she should

⁶⁰ John Carmi Parsons, "Piety, Power and Reputations of Two Thirteenth Century English Queens," 107.

⁶¹ Elisabeth the Piast was the daughter of Władysław the Elbow-high, one of the most powerful Piasts of his period, managed to re-unite the divided realm and was crowned king of Poland in 1320. Elisabeth was the fourth wife of King Charles Robert of Anjou (1288-1342) – though being already influential as queen consort, she became even more powerful during the reign of her son Louis I the Great (1326-1382).

⁶² János Bak, "Queens as Scapegoats," 234.

⁶³ *Uxor autem eius (Géza) Beleknegini (her Slavic name), id est pulchra domina Sclavonice dicta, supra modum bibebat et in equo more militis iter agens quendam virum iracundiae nimio fervore occidit Manus haec polluta fusum melius tangeret et mentem vesanam patientia refrenaret.* Thietmari Merseburgensis Episcopi Chronicon, Lib. VIII., in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, ed. Robert Holtzmann. (Munich: Monumenta Germaniae Historica 1980, 1980)

⁶⁴ János Bak, "Queens as Scapegoats," 234.

discreetly stand in the shade of her husband, though supporting him at any occasion. On the other hand she should get a rid of her original retinue, or at least prevent the increasing influence of her relatives and those coming with her to Hungary. That means that she should become familiar with the Hungarian milieu – as soon and as much as only possible. Ideal queen should have been also the mother of the preferably numerous family – even more preferably, the mother of the male heir of the throne.

She should also show piety and be charitable. Her connection with the church was displayed in two main ways: clerics usually obtained the highest offices at the queen's court (headed traditionally by the bishop of Veszprém and queen herself was a benefactor of the church. Besides, she presided at her own household, managed her own possessions and disposed her own network of loyal nobles, resembling the later system of *familiaritas*.⁶⁵ On the other hand, in the Árpáadian period such a system was still in an early stage of development. Of course, the queens of Hungary even in these times had their *fideles* – a group of faithful nobles whom she favoured. Although she indeed wielded power and administrated her estates, she should never become too dominant. Under any circumstances she should stay an obedient and faithful wife to her royal husband.

Such was the established model and such were generally the requirements each queen of Hungary was expected to fulfil. Sometimes the memory judged any discrepancy with this pattern too harshly. However, the fortunes of the queens in the eleventh to thirteenth century varied and not always they were able to act as was required – as the comparison of the theoretical patterns with the specific examples reveal.

⁶⁵ The institution of *familiaritas* was one of the pillars of the society of the Hungarian nobility. The most precise and tersest definition of this term is provided by Martyn Rady "...it (*familiaritas*) denotes the relationship between lord and man which was expressed in the terms of *fidelitas*, service, reward and mutual obligation. By entering a lord's service, a nobleman became part of his *familia*." Martyn Rady, *Nobility, Land and Service in Medieval Hungary* (London: Palgrave, 2000), 110.

CHAPTER III

Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman: Introducing the Historical Characters

Their origin and background

Maria and the Laskarids⁶⁶

The original milieu of these two Hungarian queens could have hardly been different. Maria was born around 1206 being the younger daughter of Nicaean Emperor⁶⁷ Theodore I Laskaris and his first wife Anna, the daughter of Alexius III Angelos. Theodore succeeded in establishing the Empire of Nicaea after the emergence of the Latin Empire of Constantinople in 1204. He settled in regions of Asia Minor outside of Constantinople and founded the realm, preserving the tradition of Byzantium and Orthodoxy.⁶⁸ Despite struggles with the Latins, Theodore strengthened his rule in Asia Minor. He himself expressed the continuity with the tradition of Byzantium by assuming the title of “Basileus and Autocrator of the Romaioi.”⁶⁹ Although his position was even subsequently challenged often by Latins, the rulers of Epirus,⁷⁰ and the Seljuks, having been crowned by the Orthodox patriarch, at that time residing in Nicaea, he was recognized as the true heir of the Byzantine emperors.⁷¹

Maria’s ancestry was therefore considered very significant. Although she is usually barely mentioned in narrative sources, when she finally appears, her origin is almost always emphasized.⁷² While the reputation of her father has been already discussed, Maria’s mother deserves some comments, too. Emperor Alexios had given his daughter in marriage just few

⁶⁶ See Appendix, Table III.

⁶⁷ For Nicaea see Michael Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile. Government and Society under the Laskarids of Nicaea (1204-1261)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

⁶⁸ George Ostrogorsky, *History of Byzantine State* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 425.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 428.

⁷⁰ Epirus was the centre of Byzantine traditions in Balkan.

⁷¹ Seljuks were ruling the Sultanate of Iconium. They made a secret alliance with Latin Empire in 1209. Their conflict with Nicaea was based on their interest in coastal areas under Nicaean control mainly.

⁷² For instance Július Sopko ed. *Kronika uhorských kráľov zvaná Dubnická* [The Chronicle of the Kings of Hungary called the Chronicle of Dubnica] (Budmerice: Rak, 2004) 92, or Henry of Mügelin, 208.

years after crusaders conquered Constantinople. Of course, he was inspired by recent political needs; therefore he chose Theodore, a man “who professed the Christian faith and whom he feared as enemy.”⁷³ Anna became his wife around the beginning of 1200. She bore him three daughters: Irene, Maria, and Eudokia (Sophia). The oldest one married Theodore’s future successor John III Vatatzes, under whom the Nicaean Empire reached its height. Maria, as a younger daughter, was not as important for internal policy as her older sister and therefore could have strengthened some foreign alliance. Her younger sister Eudokia proved to be of such use when she married Frederick II Babenberg, duke of Austria.⁷⁴ Maria also had two older brothers, but they had died at an immature age. Empress Anna herself did not enjoy the rising power of her husband for a long time – she died in 1212, approximately at the same time as her sons.

Concerning the accounts in Greek sources, not much can be found relevant for Maria herself. Her sister Irene, future empress of Nicaea, is naturally a more interesting figure from their point of view. Maria is therefore referred to exclusively in connection with her family ties: daughter of Theodore and Anna and sister of Irene.⁷⁵

Elisabeth – the daughter of a Cuman chieftain

In contrast, Elisabeth did not belong to a distinctive royal lineage – even the name of her father is not known for sure. The identity of her mother remains completely unrevealed. Usually she is considered to have been a daughter of Zeyhan, in the approximate period of

⁷³ Harry J. Magoulias, ed. *O City of Byzantium, Annals of Niketas Choniates* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), 280.

⁷⁴ Gábor Varga, *Ungarn und das Reich vom 10. bis zum 13. Jahrhundert. Das Herrscherhaus der Árpáden zwischen Anlehnung und Emanzipation* [Hungary and the Empire from the Tenth until Thirteenth Century. The Árpadian ruling house between the Dependence and Emancipation] (Munich: Verlag Ungarisches Institut, 2003), 249. This marriage was contracted partially because of the influence of duke’s mother Theodora, who herself was Byzantine and partially because of the momentary seek for the Hungarian alliance as well. Georg Juritsch, *Babenberger und Ihrer Länder* (976-1246) [The Babenbergs and their territories (976-1246)] (Innsbruck: Verlag der Wagner’schen Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1894), 496. Frederick later repudiated his wife due to her claimed infertility. František V. Sasínek, *Dejiny královstva Uhorského* [The History of Kingdom of Hungary] (Banská Bystrica: Rychlotisk vdovy F. Macholda, 1869), 155. (hereafter *Dejiny královstva Uhorského*)

⁷⁵ Georgios Akropolites, excerpted in *Fontes Byzantini Historiae Hungaricae aeo ducum et regum ex stirpe Árpád descenditum*, ed. Gyula Moravcsik (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1988) 299. Similar account can be found also in Theodoros Skutariotes. *Ibid.*, 315.

Elisabeth's marriage the main chieftain of the Cumans⁷⁶ settled in the Tisza region after the Mongol invasion in 1241-1242.

In fact, that was not the first time when Cumans were offered the residence in the Kingdom of Hungary. The first group of Cumans under chieftain Kuthen⁷⁷ arrived in 1239, after being expelled from their homelands by advancing Mongols.⁷⁸ Kuthen himself was subsequently baptized as the token for being allowed to stay in the kingdom. He was generously received by King Béla IV who granted the Cumans many privileges and benefits.⁷⁹

On the other hand, Cumans – assuming the status of a privileged group – did not gain much favour in Hungary, where the native inhabitants felt threatened by their special status.⁸⁰ Moreover, being blamed for attracting the attention of the Mongols who were at that time already approaching Hungary, Kuthen and his family were massacred in Pest by some of “armed Hungarians and Germans.”⁸¹ The Cumans fled and settled down on Lower Danube in Bulgarian plains, until 1246 when Béla, seeking military support, called for them again.

Elisabeth's family, undoubtedly belonging the Cuman elite, reappeared in the Kingdom of Hungary again at this time. Sources also do not reveal the date of Elisabeth's

⁷⁶ For the Cumans see *At the Gates of Christendom and Pechenegs, Cumans, Iasians*.

⁷⁷ Kuthen in Latin – this is also used for instance in Pál Engel, *The Realm of Saint Stephen*, 99. György Györffy used the form Kúten See György Györffy “A Kun és Komán népnév eredetének kérdéséhez” [To the question of the origin of the *Kun* and *Komán* nationality names] *A Magyarság keleti elemei* [The Eastern elements of the Hungarians], ed., György Györffy (Budapest: Néptudományi Intézet, 1948), 1-19.

⁷⁸ *Pechenegs, Cumans, Iasians*, 47.

⁷⁹ The arrival of Cumans to the Kingdom of Hungary is also described in *Carmen Miserabile*, written down by Roger, Italian canon and later bishop of Varád, shortly after Mongol invasion in 1241-1242. Concerning first arrival of Cumans and their reception in Kingdom of Hungary see *M. Rogerii Canonici Varadiensis Carmen Miserabile* (hereafter *Carmen Miserabile*), in *Tatársky vpád* (The Mongol Invasion), ed. Richard Marsina and Miloš Marek (Budmerice: Rak, 2008), 65, 67, 69, 71ff. (hereafter *Tatársky vpád*)

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 67, 69, 71.

⁸¹ *...subito Hungari et Theutonici armati intrantes palacium, in quo (Kuthen) erat, uiolenter ad ipsum accedere voluerunt...populorum multitudine accedente, ceperunt eosdem (Kuthen and his retinue). Et cunctis in instanti capitibus amputatis, ea in populos per fenestras de palacio proiecerunt.* *Ibid.*, p. 270-271. Mentioned armed Germans could have been some soldiers, instigated by Frederick Babenberg, Duke of Austria. *Pechenegs, Cumans, Iasians*, 51.

birth, but possibly she was born around 1240.⁸² As a daughter of pagan, she was not baptized right after her birth – this happened only on the occasion of her marriage to future king Stephen V. At this time she was also given the name under which she was later known – Elisabeth. This name was not selected accidentally – it would have recalled Saint Elisabeth of Thuringia, the sister of King Béla IV.⁸³

Zeyhan, who could have been her father, appears in the charter of Béla IV in 1255: the basic argument for his connection to Elisabeth is that he is mentioned in the sources as *cognatus noster* and *dux Cumanorum*.⁸⁴ It has to be stressed, however, that he was not necessarily Elisabeth's father. It can be only said that her family belonged to the elite of the Cumans returning to Hungary after 1246.⁸⁵

It is interesting to observe how different two subsequent queens of Hungary were. Maria Laskaris came from a renowned line, ruling the realm, claiming the right for the Byzantine legacy itself. Of course, she was a Christian – although coming from an Orthodox milieu – one does not come across to this fact in the sources concerning Maria's actions in Hungary. Perhaps because she married at a young age, leaving the motherland quite early, there was no trace in her future actions that she was coming from an Orthodox background. Actually, as will be shown below, Elisabeth was in a way a similar case concerning the

⁸² This date is rather the general assumption. No explicit statement is offered by the sources. *Az Árpádok és asszonyaik*, 191.

⁸³ Elisabeth of Thuringia was the daughter of Andrew II of Hungary and his first wife Gertrudis of Andechs-Meran. She married Louis, landgrave of Thuringia in 1217 and bore him three children. As a widow, Elisabeth devoted her life to the caring for the sick and poor people and followed the ideals of Franciscan order. Her canonisation process was started shortly after her death in 1231, being successfully finished in 1235. Her name became subsequently popular among the families of her relatives. See Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses. Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 202–243 (hereafter: *Holy Rulers, Blessed Princesses*).

⁸⁴ *Bela....Dei gracia Hungariae.....rex....ad universorum noticiam tenore presencium volumus pervenire, quod Zeyhanus karissimus cognatus noster, dux Cumanorum, nobis instantissime supplicavit, ut terram castris nostri nomine Zeleus, vacuam et habitatoribus destitutam, cum stagno nomine Barsunus ad eandem terram pertinente, Salomoni Chere et Jacobo filiis Alberti, de nostris servientibus oriundis, qui unacum ipso nobis serviverunt fideliter et devote, conferre liberaliter dignaremur. Nos igitur petitionem dicti cognate nostri Zeyhani iustam attendentes...eis (Salomoni et Jacobo) accedente ad hoc consensus karissimi filii nostri Regis Stephani et assensu contulimus perpetuo possidendam...* I. Nagy, ed. *Codex Diplomaticus Patrius Hungaricus, VIII.* (Hazai Okmánytár) (Budapest: Societas Frankliniana, 1891), 62. (hereafter HO) For arguments for Zeyhan being Elisabeth's father see *At the Gate of Christendom*, 88, note 56.

⁸⁵ For the uppermost layers of Cuman society see Ferenc Horváth, *A csengelei kunok ura és népe*. [The Chief and the people of the Cumans at Csengele] (Archaeolingua: Budapest, 2001)

adaptation to other religion, although in her case the change was much more striking than in that of Maria.

Thus, Maria's religion, or rather that of her family, did not represent any problem for contemporaries. Elisabeth's case, naturally quite different, will be further discussed below. For now, it is sufficient to emphasize that she represented quite a different image of the future queen consort. Claiming no royal ancestry, being born a pagan, Elisabeth stands in a striking contrast to the almost ideal political and religious background of Maria.

Circumstances of marriage

The bride from the Crusade

It was rather an established custom that the Queen of Hungary came from abroad – representing the alliance between two countries firstly. The kings firstly did not intend to raise any of their subjects too high through such a union. On the other hand, they were always in a need of strong alliance to secure their own lands and protect their own interests.

Chroniclers indeed paid attention to the remarkable alliance, which King Andrew II of Hungary made while returning from the Fifth Crusade. As Thomas of Split states, Andrew contracted not only the marriage between Maria and his firstborn Béla, but also between his own daughter Maria and son of Bulgarian tsar.⁸⁶ The marriage alliance with the ruling dynasty of Armenia was, however, never completed.

According to some opinions, King Andrew II contracted all these marriage alliances on his way back from Holy Land, just to demonstrate that his participation in crusading brought some renown and benefits to his kingdom.⁸⁷ On the other hand, this event must be seen in the broader concept of his foreign policy – it was Andrew himself, who married Yolanda de Courtenay in 1215 – the niece of Latin Emperor Henry of Flanders. When Henry

⁸⁶ *...deinde transivit Gretiam, ubi affinitate contracta cum Lascaro rege Grecorum ultra progenitur. Accepit enim filliam eius suo fili primogenito Bele in uxorem. Exinde peragratis Gretie finibus, ascendit in Bulgariam, ubi ab Oxano Bulgarorum rege detentus est, nec ante abire permissus, quam plenam ei securitatem faceret, quod ei suam filiam matrimonio copularet.* Thomas of Split, 164.

⁸⁷ *Knihá král'ov*, 113-114.

died, Andrew hoped to find support for his own succession, however, Yolanda's father, Peter of Courtenay, was the one to be crowned instead in 1216.⁸⁸ The preparations for the whole enterprise were anyway already running and Andrew could not take his vows back -- therefore he naturally tried figure out how he could use his participation for dynastic purposes.

It is also said that in Nicaea Andrew had a conflict with his cousin, who was at that time living there.⁸⁹ The reason for the conflict could have been bound with some older hereditary issues.⁹⁰ The internal family struggle may have inspired Andrew to strengthen the ties with Laskaris, who was hosting Andrew's discontented cousin at his own court. Of course, the significance and prestige of such an alliance cannot be forgotten.

Maria and Béla, who were both at that time approximately the same age (probably fourteen years old), got married in 1220; in the very same year, Béla was appointed as the ruler of Slavonia. While being crowned already soon after his birth, Béla was usually referred in charters as "the king and the firstborn of the King of Hungary"⁹¹ (commonly distinguished from his father as *rex iunior*, the younger king – though this title was rather used as such only by his son Stephen). Therefore after her wedding Maria became the consort of the duke of Slavonia as well as the younger queen of Hungary.

Stephen marries Elisabeth

Few decades later, the son of Béla and Maria, Stephen, born in 1239, also received the title of the duke of Slavonia. King Béla followed the pattern established by his father and crowned his firstborn while still an infant, subsequently providing him with the very same

⁸⁸ Yolanda's mother and the wife of Peter was also Yolanda de Courtenay and she was actually the sister of two previous emperors, Henry and Baldwin.I.

⁸⁹ This one was the namesake son of Duke Géza, who was the brother of King Béla III. Géza participated in Third Crusade in 1189 and subsequently stayed in Byzantium. See, for instance, Gyula Kristó, *Die Arpadien Dynastie*, 178.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁹¹ *Bela, Dei gratia, Rex, primogenitus Regis Hungariae...* for instance CDH III.1, 196.

realm to practise exercising of royal power. As well as King Andrew II years before, some time in late 1240s Béla moreover decided to give his son in marriage.

Béla's choice was more than unusual and most probably caused in contemporary Europe rather big scandal,⁹² since Stephen's wife was neither a member of a European royal lineage nor a Christian. Béla had to justify his decision even to the pope himself: "For the purpose of the defence of Christian faith we joined out firstborn son with certain Cuman in marital union."⁹³

Dating of the marriage raises some questions. In general it is accepted that it took a place in 1246 or 1247 forasmuch as in this period rumours spread around Hungary about another planned Mongol invasion to the kingdom. King Béla found himself in urgent need of alliance, preferably very strong military one. Therefore he turned his interest to the Cumans. These, as it has been already mentioned, reappeared again in the Kingdom of Hungary, after fleeing away when their chieftain Kuthen was murdered with members of his family and his retinue. Cumans actually used the opportunity to return back to Hungary quite eagerly; settled in Bulgaria, they somehow got involved in the internal struggles after the death of Tsar Coloman I in 1246.⁹⁴

Béla's choice of a Cuman bride must be viewed in the broader context of the previous events, namely the disastrous Mongol invasion in 1241-1242. At this time, Béla was seeking for any help available – though unsuccessfully.⁹⁵ Therefore he was forced to search for any

⁹² As the Pope Alexander expressed in his letter to King Béla: such an union between the pagan and Christian was unlawful. VHM, 240, see chapter **Maria and Elisabeth: Obedient Wife and Pagan Cuman?**, 59. In addition, as it has been already pointed out above, the Cumans were not really popular in the Kingdom of Hungary.

⁹³ *Propter defensionem fidei Christiane filio nostro primogenito Cumanam quandam thoro coniunximus maritali* Fejér, CDH, IV.2, 221.

⁹⁴ The tsar – who was actually the cousin of King Béla, being the son of Maria, sister of Andrew II – was killed by a conspiracy among the nobility. During his reign he paid an annual tribute to Mongols; in the chaotic situation after his death, the Cumans could also have felt threatened by this aspect. *Pechenegs, Cumans, Iasians*, 52.

⁹⁵ For Béla's appeal to the pope see *Supplicatio ad papam*, in *Tatársky vpád*, 50-55. Neither the pope nor the emperor did more than offering the words of comfort.

possible alliance under the renewed threat. In this connotation, also the marriages of his daughters to the orthodox princes,⁹⁶ must be perceived. Also these marital unions did not later escape the criticism of Bruno, bishop of Olomouc, who pointed out also the Cuman origin of Elisabeth.⁹⁷

So when new Mongol Khan Güyük acceded to his title, he announced his plan to organize the new invasion heading westwards toward the Kingdom of Hungary. Although this enterprise never turned to become reality, the threat itself in all probability inspired king Béla to strengthen his Cuman connections. Therefore Stephen married Cuman girl, who received at her baptism name Elisabeth.⁹⁸ The Cuman representatives made an oath during the wedding “with their swords on a dog that had been sundered into two, that they would defend the lands of the Magyars as would the king’s own supporters against the Tartars and barbarian people”⁹⁹ – taking vow to the Christian king by their own pagan custom.¹⁰⁰

Another theory concerning the dating of Stephen’s and Elisabeth’s marriage shifts the date even to the year 1254, when Elisabeth’s parents were baptized in Buda.¹⁰¹ Also the above mentioned charter of King Béla, explaining the purposes of Stephen’s marriage, is coming from 1254 and the letter of pope Alexander is even from 1259, it can be concluded only that at latest in 1254 Elisabeth was married with Stephen – which could as well happened already few years earlier under the renewed Mongol threat.

⁹⁶ Rostislav of Chernigov and Leo of Galicia, see below.

⁹⁷ See chapter **Maria and Elisabeth: Obedient Wife and Pagan Cuman?**, 65-66.

⁹⁸ The sources do not contain any information about her original name.

⁹⁹ John of Plano Carpini. *Itinerarium et Historia Mongolorum*, in György Györffy, ed. *Napkelet felfedezése. Julianus, Plano Carpini és Rubruk útjelentései* [Exploring the East. The travel accounts of Julianus, Plano Carpini and Rubruk] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1965), 117.

¹⁰⁰ Such a confirmation of Cuman-Christian alliance can be found also in Joinville, who reports that the Latin Emperor (Baldwin II) entered the alliance with the Cumans. Firstly both Emperor and his nobles poured some of their blood into the goblet – subsequently Cuman representatives did the same. Then they mixed it with the wine and water and drank afterwards. Subsequently, the Cumans chopped the dog into the pieces – to emphasize what would happen to the one, who would break the oath. See *The Memoirs of the Lord of Joinville*, ed. Ethel Wedgwood (New York: E.P.Dutton and Co., 1906), online critical edition: <http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-new2?id=WedLord.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=all> (accessed May 20, 2009), 262.

¹⁰¹ *At the Gate of Christendom*, 88.

To sum up, Elisabeth became the younger queen most probably some time before 1250 in very different circumstances than her mother-in-law three decades earlier. On the contrary, her marriage was also the result of political alliance, inspired by momentary needs of kingdom and its king. Both Maria and Elisabeth came to Hungarian royal court while still very young. Subsequently both assumed the title of younger queen and the consort of appointed ruler of Slavonia.

Taking the new role – Regina iunior.¹⁰²

Interestingly both Béla and Stephan began practising their ruling duties in Slavonia. Moreover, both young kings soon opposed the policy of their fathers and created their own strong supportive factions. Their courts became the parallel centre of power to the official royal court. As far as the sources are concerned, their wives Maria and Elisabeth were supportive to their policy against their own fathers-in-law.

The younger queen Maria

Béla had various reasons for opposing his father. First, he criticized too generous donation policy of Andrew who – lacking most of the time finances, thanks to his expansive foreign policy¹⁰³ - managed to distribute significant part of traditional patrimonial domain of the Hungarian kings. Second, some personal reasons were included. Since Andrew II's position was quite weak, he was even unable to punish sufficiently the murderers of his own

¹⁰² As has already been mentioned, Béla used the title of “the king and the firstborn of the King of Hungary.” The titles “rex/ regina iunior” are explicitly used in the charters referring to Stephen and Elisabeth, but not to Béla and Maria. However for avoiding confusion concerning parallel existence of two royal couples within one kingdom, Béla and Maria during the lifetime of Andrew II. generally referred as rex/regina iunior. Another variation in titulatio is regina maior, regina minor, used in the times of Elisabeth and her daughter-in-law, queen Isabella, accidentally and confusingly called in Hungary also “Elisabeth.”

¹⁰³ For instance, this is the case in Andrew's policy towards principality of Galicia. When he was eleven, his father established him as a prince of Galicia, but Andrew was subsequently expelled by Galician nobility. Obviously, this event influenced him quite deeply – as a king, Andrew undertook fourteen (campaigns) against Galicia, which brought some military victories. In contrast, Hungarian troops and officials never managed to establish themselves in Galicia for a longer time, being always expelled by the principality.

wife (Béla's mother),¹⁰⁴ who were the members of highest nobility. Besides, Béla opposed Andrew's second and third marriage to Yolanda de Courtenay and Beatrice d'Este subsequently.¹⁰⁵

In addition, new conflict between Béla and Andrew arose in 1222, which was very much concerned with Maria herself. The events from 1222 onwards are a bit puzzled. Although they express quite well the mutual struggle between father and son, Maria's position as it is presented in diplomatic sources is not absolutely clear.

First, Béla asked Pope Honorius III to nullify his betrothal¹⁰⁶ to the daughter of Laskaris, chosen for him by his father. After seemingly obtaining the pope's permission, Béla subsequently wished to contract another union, which would better serve the needs of Hungarian kingdom.¹⁰⁷ As Slovak historian František Sasínek has argued in his *History of the Kingdom of Hungary*, Béla was probably that angry with his father that he even did not hesitate include Maria in the conflict.¹⁰⁸ The whole issue is quite complicated, since in the charter Maria is wrongly mentioned as Béla's fiancée only, which was not true in 1222. The record for the pope, composed by Hungarian clergy one year later, confirms that Béla had lived with Maria in legitimate marriage for two years already in 1222, when Maria was crowned and anointed and the marriage was consummated.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴For Queen Gertrudis of Andechs-Meran see chapter **Concept of Medieval Queenship and its perception in the Kingdom of Hungary in Árpadian period**, note 34.

¹⁰⁵ For the general overview concerning the reign of Andrew II see *The Realm of Saint Stephen*, 89-99 or *Die Arpadien Dynastie*, 174-200.

¹⁰⁶ According to Latin original of relevant charter, CDH III.1, p. 384.

¹⁰⁷ ...quod idem Rex (A.) ...dum rediret de partibus transmarinis, Lascaro, dum adhuc ipse impubes existeret, fidem dedit, quod cum illius filia infra annos nubile existente, matrimonio copularet; nunc vero dictus B. licet in aetate tenella cum puella eadem sponsalia contraxisset, cum ad pubertatem venerit, matrimonio contradicit, humiliter postulando: ut sibi tribuamus licentiam ab huiusmodi sponsalibus recedendi, et contrahendi cum alia, de qua maior possit utilitas regno Hungariae provenire. CDH III.1, 384.

¹⁰⁸ *Dejiny královstva Uhorského*, 147.

¹⁰⁹ *Episcopi Hungariae ob repudiatam a Bela, Rege iunior, coniugem ad Pontificem referunt... quod cum Dominus noster Rex Hungariae, de partibus ultramarinis rediens, per terram nobilis viri Laschari transitum faceret, filiam eiusdem filio suo primogenito Belae illustri, iam in Regem coronato, et in Regni gubernacula postmodum se, Deo propitio, successuro desponsavit uxorem; praestitio ab ipso Rege, et Nobilibus suis, qui tunc praesentes erant, publice iuramento, ut ad consummationem matrimonii inter personas memoratas fideliter laborarent, eandem eitam Nobilem, ut Nutum decet regiam, secum in suam terram adducens, recepto prius a Nobilibus regni, qui tunc in transductione puellae abesntes erant, solempniter Sacramento, filio suo memorato*

However, in 1224 the situation changed dramatically – at least from the point of view of relationship between Maria and Béla. At this time, it was King Andrew who tried to dissolve the marriage union he had once contracted. The pope's letter to King Andrew reflects the past events as well as Andrew's contradictory attitude towards Béla's marriage in 1224: "...your [Andrew's] firstborn obeyed our instructions concerning the reception of his wife against your will...."¹¹⁰ The conflicts within royal family escalated to such a point that Béla fled under protection of Frederick, Duke of Austria and Maria followed her husband. Besides, this period was in general not very fortunate for King Andrew himself – the country was in poor condition after Andrew's return from the Crusade, which caused the increasing of the taxes. The king's donations, especially to foreigners, were loathed by some members of the nobility. The revolt of 1222 caused the issuing of The Golden Bull, which established the privileges of nobility, which was moreover exempted from the taxation and was not obliged to go to the war at king's side save the case of the foreign invasion only.¹¹¹ While experiencing this political blow, Andrew still had to face the conflict within the family.

In the meanwhile, Pope Honorius tried to reconcile arguing sides, encouraging Andrew to be generous to his son. In one of his other letters to the senior king he again repeats the main reason of 1223-1224 conflict: Béla fled to Austria because Andrew opposed reception of Maria. Therefore the situation was now quite opposite to that of 1222: the younger king was no longer using his wife as a revenge tool against his father; now he even left the kingdom, where he was trying to gain the power, to protect the marriage union he had maybe wanted to dissolve two years ago only – at least in this manner the situation appears in the written evidence.

tradidit in uxorem; ipsam nihilominus omni solempnitate adhibita in Reginam Hungariae coronari faciens et inungi; cui supradictus Bela illustris cum omni dilectione et tranquillitate, in aetate legitima iam existens, cohabitavit per totum biennium et amplius, ut maritus.. CDH III. 1, 413-415.

¹¹⁰ ...primogenitus tuus circa receptionem uxoris suae mandatis nostris contra voluntatem tuam paruerit Ibid, 431.

¹¹¹ For The Golden Bull and its issuing see *The Realm of Saint Stephen*, 93-95.

Although thanks to the pope's contribution Andrew and Béla indeed were reconciled and Maria returned with her husband back to Hungary, the struggle for power lasted until the death of King Andrew in 1235. Due to mutual tensions and growing influence of younger king, Andrew decided to deprive him of government of Slavonia and appointed him as the ruler of Transylvania.¹¹² Béla's actions in Transylvania are mainly bound with Christianization of the Cumans, settled in the area of present day southern Moldavia. The conversion took place under Dominican supervision and during Béla's governance over Transylvania the separate bishopric for Cuman areas was established with the seat in Milkó.¹¹³

It is noteworthy that there was a strong Orthodox community in Transylvania in this period; in his letter from 1234 Pope Gregory IX appeals to Béla to avoid the Greek Church influence upon both Cuman and Wallachian population of Transylvania.¹¹⁴ Therefore it can be assumed that the court of Béla as the Transylvanian duke¹¹⁵ functioned as the guarantee of Latin Christianity in the region, obviously without any important sympathies towards Greek Church. As it seems, although Maria came from the land, which claimed to be the heir of Byzantine tradition and preserver of Orthodoxy, her views were either in this period already completely pro – Latin or her influence on her husband policy was still minor.

Before Béla succeeded the throne of Hungary in 1235, Maria gave birth to several daughters: Kunigunda,¹¹⁶ Margaret,¹¹⁷ Anna, Helen (Yolanda), and maybe some of the

¹¹² In this period the Order of Teutonic knights was expelled from Transylvania. Knights were called to the Kingdom of Hungary for Christianization of Cumans in the region, however they were trying to gain power and subdue the territory directly under the control of the Pope. Therefore Andrew II banished them from the kingdom in 1226. In the very same year, Béla took over government in Transylvania.

¹¹³ For further references to Béla's governance in Transylvania see Béla Kőpeczi, ed. *History of Transylvania*. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1994) 192-194. For the Cuman bishopric in Milkó during the reign of Béla IV. (however not dealing much with the period while he was still the younger king) see László Makkai. *A Milkói (Kún) püspökség és népei* [(Cuman) bishopric and its folks] Debrecen: Pannonia, 1936)

¹¹⁴ Fejér, CDH III. 2, 399-401. For further references see Gyula Moravcsik "The Role of Byzantine Church in Medieval Hungary," in *Studia Byzantina* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1967), 340.

¹¹⁵ The title has also the equivalent *voivode* (Latin variant *dux*) – its translation as "duke" is used, for instance, by Engel, *Realm of Saint Stephen*, 95.

¹¹⁶ Her name appears in various historiographical traditions under various names: this version is taken primarily from Wertner. Moritz Wertner, *Az Árpádok családi története* [The family history of the Árpadians] (Zrenjanin:

younger daughters of the couple were born while their parents were still in the position of heirs of throne.¹¹⁸

“Elisabeth, iunior Regina Hungariae”

Concerning the impact on the household and policy of her husband, Elisabeth seems to be quite a different case than her mother-in-law. The court of her husband as the younger king of Hungary was heavily under the influence of Cumans, with whom he was linked primarily through his own marriage.¹¹⁹ Therefore it is probable that younger queen herself played important role at Stephen’s side.

In contrast to Béla, Stephen’s activities as duke of Slavonia were of the quite short duration. No wonder, since in 1246-47 he was still a boy. Subsequently, Stephen was appointed as the duke of Transylvania: the younger royal couple somehow followed the career of Béla and Maria. Stephen governed Transylvania in two separated period in fact: once in 1257-1258 and then in 1260-1270, when he was originally established in Transylvania to avoid his aspirations in the west and possible alliances he could have contracted there against his father – actually the very same intention with which once Andrew II sent Béla himself to Transylvania¹²⁰. The reason for Stephen’s removal to Transylvania for the second time was the fact that in the meanwhile he assumed the title of duke of Styria, however, he was able to maintain this position for only a short while.¹²¹

Ploitz Pál könyvnyomdája, 1892 and it is very similar to the Latin version of the name as recorded for instance in her *Vita Beatae Kunegundis*, 183-336. Kunigunda can be also found as Kinga, Kynga or Cunegond.

¹¹⁷ This older Margaret must be distinguished from her younger sister, Saint Margaret, see below.

¹¹⁸ The dates of birth for Catherine, Elisabeth (the wife of Bavarian Prince Henry) and Constance (Galician princess) are unknown. See *Az Árpádok és asszonyaik*, 191. For the dates of Béla and Maria’s daughters see Moritz Wertner, *Az Árpádok családi története*, 463-493.

¹¹⁹ *Kniha kráľov*, 122.

¹²⁰ See above, 33.

¹²¹ King Béla got involved in the struggles for the Babenberg heritage in Austria. After Duke Frederick Babenberg died in 1246, leaving no male heir, his rights passed to his sister Margaret. However, Béla was supported even by the Pope Innocent IV, therefore hoping for taking over the dukedom. On the other hand Austrian and Styrian estates elected Bohemian prince, future Přemysl Otakar II, who even did not hesitate to marry three decades older Margaret Babenberg to assure the succession. However, Béla did not want to give up his claim. After first phase of war, Hungary obtained in 1254 Styria, where Stephen was entrusted with governance on 1259. Stephen tried to spread his influence even to Carinthia, however, after the battle of Kressenbrunn in 1260 he was forced to abandon these ambitions.

The development of the events after the battle of Kressenbrunn in 1260 followed the pattern which could be traced in the relationship between King Béla and his father Andrew in 1220s and 1230s. Béla renounced his claims on Styria and confirmed the peace treaty with the Bohemian King Přemysl Otakar II when marrying his granddaughter Kunigunda¹²² to the victorious Přemysl. In contrast, Stephen could never forget that his father gave up *his* Styria and opposed the policy of reconciliation with Bohemia.

Two separate power centres were formed in 1260s in Kingdom of Hungary: the one of the younger royal couple on one side and the senior royal couple on the other side, which was closely cooperating especially with their daughter Anna, the widow of Rostislav of Chernigov and the Duchess of Macsó¹²³, their son-in-law Boleslaus the Shy (husband of Kunigunda) and later on also with their younger son Béla.¹²⁴

In 1262 Stephen officially assumed the title of younger king¹²⁵ and added *dominus Cumanorum* to his intitulation.¹²⁶ An identical title style was also applied to Elisabeth, for instance, in 1264 when she confirmed the donations in the *comitatus* (county) of Borsod¹²⁷ as *Elisabeth iunior regina Hungariae, ducissa Transsilvana, Domina Cumanorum*,¹²⁸ but this was just a rare case.

When Stephen took control over the eastern part of the kingdom, he exercised the power as an independent and sole ruler. Cumans functioned as one of the pillars of his power.

Criticism of Stephen's sympathies for Cumans especially from Holy See was in vain, since

¹²² Kunigunda of Galicia was the daughter of Béla's daughter Anna and Rostislav of Chernigov from Rurik dynasty. Béla IV. married Anna to Rostislav around 1242 in order to place him as his vasal over Galicia. However, the campaigns to Galicia did not win the rulership for Béla's candidate and Rostislav had to renounce his aspiration against Daniel Romanovich of Volyn, interestingly the father of the husband of other Béla's daughter, Constance. Later on, Rostislav was established as ban of Macsó and governor of Bosnia. See Martin Dimnik, *The Dynasty of Chernigov 1146-1246* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

¹²³ Also Mačva, lat. Machva.

¹²⁴ See CDAC III, 128-131.

¹²⁵ After he concluding the treaty with Béla, which granted him own domain and in fact divided the kingdom into two more or less independent unit. In addition, although Stephen was now officially designed as the younger king, he had used the title already earlier. For example see CDH IV.3, 22.

¹²⁶ *Stephanus Dei gracia iunior Rex Hungarorum, Dux Transiluanus, Dominus Cumanorum...* See for instance CDH IV.2, 407.

¹²⁷ Present-day northeastern Hungary.

¹²⁸ HO VIII, 98.

both younger king and queen were protecting them. Thanks to younger royal couple, some of Cumans were integrated into the very elite of Hungary and the union between Elisabeth and Stephen was not the only one contracted between Cumans and members of Hungarian nobility.¹²⁹

Elisabeth's advantage in comparison to Maria consists also in the fact that she secured the continuation of the dynasty when future Ladislaus IV was born in 1262.¹³⁰ In fact all of the children of the couple had been born before Stephen succeeded to the throne in 1270. Besides Ladislaus, there was another son Andrew, named after his great grandfather. In addition, Elisabeth gave birth to at least four daughters: Maria,¹³¹ Anna,¹³² Elisabeth,¹³³ and Catherine.¹³⁴ The existence of a fifth one called Margaret is uncertain.¹³⁵

The influence and actions of Maria and Elisabeth as younger queens seems to have varied. If Maria wielded some power or influence, it was rather the hidden one. On the other hand, as it is obvious from the incident from 1223 – 1224, she undoubtedly maintained the strong position at least as the wife of Béla. In contrast, Elisabeth's influence seems to be much more obvious. However, her personal involvement has to be questioned and judged carefully. For certain, Cumans gained the significant power under the tutelage of younger king; but this fact has to be viewed also in connection of their military relevancy for Stephen's wars with his father and not just as a result of Elisabeth's favouring Cumans.

Being "regina iunior" was a preparation for taking more renown and important role of the (senior) Queen of Hungary. Already at this stage, they possessed their own estates and

¹²⁹ *At the Gate of Christendom*, 88, note 58.

¹³⁰ CDAC VII, 33-34.

¹³¹ The future wife of Charles II of Naples.

¹³² Anna married Andronikos II Palaiologos.

¹³³ Originally, she entered the Rabbit Monastery convent, but in order to be married with Záviš of Falkenštejn, her brother Ladislaus IV forced her to leave the nunnery. Later on she married Stephen Uroš II Milutin, king of Serbia.

¹³⁴ The wife of Stephen Dragutin, King of Serbia, the brother of Stephen II Milutin. For Elisabeth's daughters see Moritz Wertner, *Az Árpádok családi története*, 505-531.

¹³⁵ See Attila Zsoldos, "V službách královských dětí" [In the Service of the Royal Children] *História* 4 (2008): 7-8.

further distributed donations. They also presided at their own court and appointed own officials – for instance Elisabeth’s *magister tauernicorum* Aladar is mentioned in the charter issued by her husband Stephen in 1262.¹³⁶ Approaching this period of life in cases of both Maria and Elisabeth one has to face constant lack of the source material. On the other hand, it is obvious that both of them as younger queens got involved in the struggles between their husbands and fathers-in-law. This conception of securing the continuity of the dynasty by crowning the successor during the lifetime of the previous king and granting him the territory, where he could exercise power, turned against those, who actually designed this plan. It is paradox that while Béla revolted against Andrew, decades later he had to fight his own son – the conflict between the generations was by the very nature of the younger king inevitable.¹³⁷

During this *preparation* period therefore Maria and Elisabeth somehow followed in general the similar path. Married in a very young age, their marriage was discredited (though for various reasons). However subsequently, while growing up, they maintained the strong position at their husbands’ side, which shall be especially in Maria’s case shown below. Both strengthened this position by fulfilling one of the main tasks of Queen consort – giving birth to the children, although in that period of her life in Maria’s case still not to the male heir. On the other hand Elisabeth gave birth to the heir of throne in 1262, before she became ruling queen. Interestingly both of them had few daughters, before their sons were born after quite

¹³⁶ CDAC VII, 33. *Magister tauernicorum* was dignitary of the high rank in the Kingdom of Hungary, being in charge mainly with economical administrative of royal court as well in charge with the royal chamber.

¹³⁷ Such a development can be traced not only in Hungary. For instance in the Early Norman England from the late 1070s onwards Robert of Normandy was fighting his own father William the Conqueror, who was said to deprive him of executing the power in Normandy. Interestingly, William’s wife Mathilda of Flanders was the main mover of the reconciliation between two men. Other example is Henry II. Plantagenet (1154-1189), constantly leading wars with his sons, who were subsequently conspiring against him and against each other. For the internal struggles within the Norman and Angevin dynasty in England see Frank Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England 1042-1216* (London: Longmans, 1955) or Robert Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075-1225*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000)

long period of already being married.¹³⁸ In addition, both of them supported their husbands' cases against the senior kings.

Finally approximately in their early thirties, Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman took up the role they were intended for – Queen consort of the ruling King of Hungary. Béla IV succeeded his father in 1235 – thirty five years later, Stephen V became the King of whole Hungary.

The Queen of Hungary.

This subchapter shall refer to two different phases of the queen's status: queen consort and queen widow (queen mother respectively). The reason for such a coupling is mainly practical, since Maria died less than two months after her husband, therefore her widowhood is without any further significance. Elisabeth is an absolutely contrasting case; she was already widowed in 1272, two years after Stephen had succeeded to the throne. However, for Elisabeth the most interesting and eventful period of her life had just begun. As the only Árpáadian queen she was officially appointed as a regent for her infant son Ladislaus.¹³⁹ Therefore the unification of these two periods of exercising power seems logical for further discussion.

Maria, the queen consort of Béla IV.

The rule of King Béla began in quite a promising manner. The king aimed to strengthen the royal authority and revise of the donations of his predecessor to prevent the further division of the patrimonial domain. Béla also supported urban and economic development, rewarding towns with various scale of privileges. In addition, in 1239 when

¹³⁸ In Maria's case 19, in Elisabeth's either 8 or more probably 13-14 years (depending on the acceptance of the date of her wedding, see 36.

¹³⁹ "Bak, Roles and Functions," 20.

Queen Maria gave birth to a son – the future King Stephen V – the reign of King Béla started successfully concerning various aspects. In this period, he got interested in the search for the homeland of the Old Magyars – he supported the journey of Dominican brother Julian to the east twice.¹⁴⁰ From his first journey, Julian brought information about the planned invasion of the Mongols.¹⁴¹ Their invasion in 1241-1242 however changed the situation in the country radically.

In short, two wings of Mongol army attacked Poland and Kingdom of Hungary – in this case in spring 1241 they crossed the passes in Carpathian Mountains, guarded by easily overcome garrisons.¹⁴² In the middle of March they proceeded as far as for Vác. Béla rode to meet them and encamped himself near the Sajó River at Muhi.¹⁴³ The tactics of taking a position on the river bank, surrounded by own carts, proved to be disastrous. Mongols encircled them and won a decisive victory – the king's brother Coloman was seriously wounded¹⁴⁴ and Béla himself managed to escape only with great difficulty.

While Béla tried to escape the approaching army,¹⁴⁵ the Mongols crossed the frozen Danube, plundering wherever they advanced. They chased Béla to Trogir, but after the news of the death of their Khan reached them, they withdrew from Hungary, leaving the country in the disastrous condition.¹⁴⁶ Certainly, Maria fled too. When Mongols were drawing nearer to Székesfehérvár, Béla took the relics of Saint Stephen placed in its cathedral and entrusted them to his wife, who subsequently moved to Split. However – at least according to Thomas of Split, she did not want to linger in the town itself being persuaded by certain people who

¹⁴⁰ In 1236 and 1237-38.

¹⁴¹ See *Tatársky vpád*, 9-10.

¹⁴² *Kniha kráľov*, 118.

¹⁴³ Present day northeastern Hungary.

¹⁴⁴ Who later died as the consequence of these wounds in Zagreb.

¹⁴⁵ Béla once again looked for the shelter at the court of Austrian Duke Frederick. However, duke obviously wanted to take the benefit from Béla's difficulties and asked him for paying some old debts. After Béla ceded him three counties, he rather turned to Slavonia and later settled in Dalmatia.

¹⁴⁶ For Mongol invasion see *Tatárjárás*, ed. Balázs Nagy (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2003)

were “ill-disposed towards people of Split.”¹⁴⁷ Without any further explanation, Thomas states that she moved to the castle of Klis. Béla subsequently joined his family after lingering some time in Zagreb. However, there was some conflict between king and Spalatins, who refused to provide him with galley in case he needed to escape to some of nearby islands. Therefore the king headed with his family for Trogir. It is interesting to point out that in this acute situation, Béla bore in mind very much the safety of his own family. And afterwards, while receiving news about Mongols departure, at first he sent scouts, then moved himself and just later on while being assured of safety of such journey, Maria and children followed him.¹⁴⁸

For the queen the tragedy of the Mongol invasion brought another – personal – aspect. While dwelling in the castle of Klis, two of her daughters, Catherine and Margaret, died. However, already at that time Maria was pregnant again. This penultimate child of the couple turned out to be a girl, Margaret, later venerated as a saint and finally canonized in the twentieth century. According to the Legend of Saint Margaret:

The king...with the Queen promised to the Lord, that if Almighty God relieves his kingdom and people from the rage of Mongol tribe, and they will be blessed with the daughter, they will consecrate this daughter to God...the enemy withdrew and the Queen gave the birth to the daughter.¹⁴⁹

Actually this is what really happened afterwards and Margaret, renouncing the secular life, spent the rest of her life at first in Dominican cloister in Veszprém and subsequently on Rabbit Island¹⁵⁰ in the monastery built for her by the order of her parents.¹⁵¹

The hagiographical material on Saint Margaret allows a small glimpse into the relationship between Maria and her daughter. As it is stated there, Margaret refused to be treated as the member of royal court and therefore tried to avoid, for instance, meeting her

¹⁴⁷ Thomas of Split., 286.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 286-302.

¹⁴⁹ *Legenda Beatae Margaritae*, 685.

¹⁵⁰ Lat. *Insula Leporum*, present day Margaret Island.

¹⁵¹ See chapter **Maria and Elisabeth: The Obedient Wife and the Pagan Cuman?**, 69.

father. She rarely spoke even with her mother – and that only “when she [Maria] came to the cloister. And only with her she has spoken in a very kind manner.”¹⁵²

This is a rare account, which offers some clues concerning family life of Queen Maria. Her household must have been strongly religious, since it is no coincidence that Margaret was not the only daughter of the couple who is venerated as a saint in the Catholic Church. The same was the case of her older sister Kunigunda, the wife of Cracovian duke Boleslaus,¹⁵³ although officially canonized only in 1999, but being held in very high esteem even during her exemplary life. In addition, Margaret’s sister was also Blessed Helen (Yolanda), the wife of another Piast prince, Boleslaus the Pious, duke of Greater Poland.¹⁵⁴ These princesses of the saintly reputation belong to the wider group of renowned royal females, which emerged in the thirteenth century. Following the ideals of mendicant orders, expressing the profound religiosity and being devoted to the charity, these princesses followed the example of Saint Elisabeth, sister of Andrew II. In contrast to her, none of the daughters of Béla IV was canonised until the twentieth century, though the attempts for promoting this were made particularly in Margaret’s case soon after her death already. It can be assumed that this new cult of saintly princesses, which included quite a big number of particularly Central European ladies, influenced also the extent of the religiosity at the court of Béla IV.¹⁵⁵

Actually the married daughters of Maria, especially above mentioned Kunigunda and Helen in cooperation with Anna – who was already presented as the strong supporter of Béla’s policy - became influential figures for political development in Central European area.

¹⁵² This is taken from the so-called Napolitan legend of Saint Margaret. See *Legenda sv. Panny Margaréty*, 237.

¹⁵³ Kunigunda married Boleslaus in 1239. During her widowhood she was still the important political player in the Hungarian-Polish-Bohemian relations, on the other hand her name is bound with the profound religiosity and the foundation of the Poor Clares Convent in Stryków. For Kunigunda see Oswald Balzer, *Genalogia Piastów* (Cracow: Avalon, 2005) 491-496 and Martin Homza “Sv. Kunigunda a Spiš” *Terra Scepusiensis* (Levoča: Kláštorisko, 2003), 381-408.

¹⁵⁴ Helen married Boleslaus in 1256. After his death in 1279 she retired in the convent, which did not contradict her political activities. As a nun she lived in the Poor Clares Convent in Gniezno which she founded on her own estates. See Oswald Balzer, *Genalogia Piastów*, 406-411.

¹⁵⁵ For the cult of saintly princesses, their brief biographical entries and the use of such a cult for the dynastical purposes see *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses*, 195-279.

Later on, after the death of King Béla, they were trying to support his political legacy concerning the reconciliation with Bohemia, which was quite natural, since the daughter of Anna married the Bohemian king, Přemysl Otakar.

The relationship between Maria and Béla on one side and their firstborn, Stephen, on the other side, was tense, which was no surprise in regards to the fact that the two fighting men managed to divide the country into two parts. Maria's role in the conflict is the one of the mediator or pacifier – at least to the extent she could have the possibility to influence the ongoing events. Although she was firstly the faithful wife of the king himself, she still suffered his constant conflicts with their son, as it is for instance clear from her letter to the Dominican chapter in Buda from 1262, where Maria expresses her mourn and subsequent happiness when the men reconciled.¹⁵⁶

In contrast, Maria's youngest child, the Slavonian duke Béla, was the favourite of his parents. One finds Maria confirming his donation charters, which was quite ordinary praxis,¹⁵⁷ but besides it is Maria, who came to Split, travelling down “through Pannonia and Croatia” to receive the fealty on behalf of her son Béla, appointed duke of Slavonia.¹⁵⁸

On the other hand, Queen Maria cannot be perceived only through the actions in relevance to those of her husband or children. As queen consort of Hungary, she wielded her own possessions (lands, castles), further distributed them to her familiars, led the correspondence with the popes and performed the duties of pious Queen, protector of the Church as well.¹⁵⁹

Besides, she presided over her own court and appointed her own officials, among whom the most prominent was the chancellor. Particularly during Maria's queenship, this

¹⁵⁶ CDH, IV.3, 68-69. Interestingly, Maria is in these charter titled not only as the Queen of Hungary, but as the Duchess of Styria, although this had been the title Elisabeth held for some time. Moreover, it was precisely King Béla who renounced his claim was Styria in 1260 already.

¹⁵⁷ See chapter **Maria and Elisabeth: The Obedient Wife and the Pagan Cuman?**, 70-71.

¹⁵⁸ Thomas of Split, 368.

¹⁵⁹ For instance CDH IV.2, 122.

office was also officially entrusted to the bishop of Veszprém in 1269.¹⁶⁰ However, before Paul of Veszprém, the bishop of that city had not been necessarily chancellors of queen's curia – for instance Master Ákos, future chancellor of her son Stephen as well, is mentioned as Queen's chancellor and treasurer of Székesfehérvár church in the charter, issued by Maria in 1248.¹⁶¹ Queen Maria already had also the vice-chancellor, certain Master Stephen, mentioned in her charter from 1265.¹⁶²

The incident with the Spalatins recorded by Thomas of Split speaks most eloquently about the self-confidence which Maria assumed while exercising her royal power. When the queen came to Dalmatia as the representative of her younger son, Slavonian Duke Béla, there was a conflict between the Spalatins and the members of her military retinue, among whom some were killed. Although the Spalatins tried their best to be forgiven, the queen insisted on strict punishment and escalated the conflict. She even accused the city inhabitants of numerous things in the presence of King Béla. It is also interesting that Maria refused to return to the royal court when she was first called by her royal husband and did so only when she herself decided to travel back.

When Maria returned, Béla, according to Thomas of Split's account, believed his wife¹⁶³ – moreover, he believed the credibility of the woman, holding the title of queen. The representation of Maria in Thomas of Split's work reveals the image of strong royal personality. It is undeniable compelling to observe how this almost repudiated wife at once, gradually reached the status of renowned queen. While standing at Béla's side throughout the years, she also proved to be a faithful wife.

¹⁶⁰ Though even before the bishops of Veszprém held this office – for instance during the period of Queen Gertrudis of Andechs-Meran, or Queen Yolande. See for instance chapter **Concept of Medieval Queenship and its perception in the Kingdom of Hungary in Árpadian period**, 14, note 40 .

¹⁶¹ CDH IV.2, 35-36.

¹⁶² Ibid., IV.2, 287.

¹⁶³ *rex autem nimis credulous verbis sue uxoris respondit* Ibid., 374.

The last years of Maria's adventurous life were filled with grief above the struggle within her own family. Moreover, Maria lived to see several of her children die, among them her younger son Béla. Her husband died only year afterwards, in 1270. Maria survived the king for less than two months, dying amidst a period of uncertainty and the disruption within the royal family.¹⁶⁴

It is quite significant that Maria, Béla and Béla junior were buried at the same place in the church of Minor brothers in Esztergom, as it is also recorded by chronicler: "There he (Béla) rests peacefully, with the lady queen, his wife named Maria, the daughter of Greek Emperor and his dearest son, duke Béla."¹⁶⁵

Elisabeth – queen consort and queen mother

In contrast to Maria, Elisabeth was the wife of the ruling king of Hungary just for a brief while. Stephen acceded the throne in 1270, but died only two years later. His reign was marked by the ongoing conflicts with Bohemia, which influenced even the very relationships within Árpadian family. After King Béla died, Stephen's sister Anna left for Bohemia, ruled by her son-in-law, taking the part of Hungarian royal treasury with her.¹⁶⁶ Stephen actually made the peace with Přemysl Otakar in 1271,¹⁶⁷ but on the other hand – the inner tensions between him and the most powerful nobles of the kingdom gradually escalated. In fact, when Stephen died, his son Ladislaus was still held captive by one of them, the Slavonian Ban Joachim, which illustrates how the king's power diminished even within his own kingdom.

Concerning the length of period while Elisabeth was the queen of Hungary, or rather regina senior, there is not much of source material left. Basically, Elisabeth initiated or

¹⁶⁴ See chapter **The mutual relationship of Maria and Elisabeth**, 52.

¹⁶⁵ *Ubi cum domina regina consorte sua, Maria nomine, filia imperatoris Grecorum et duce Bela filio suo carissimo feliciter requiescit.* Chronici Hungarici Compositio Saeculi XIV., in SRH I, ed. I. Szentpétery (Budapest: Academia Litter. Hungarica, 1937), 469. (hereafter SRH I) The same account can be found also in Chronicon Posoniense, in SRH II, 43.

¹⁶⁶ CDH, V.1, 122.

¹⁶⁷ See *The Realm of Saint Stephen*, 107.

confirmed some donations, or vice versa King Stephen confirmed donations of his wife. As in Maria's case, the chancellor of the queen's court witnessed king's charters as well, particularly in this period it was Philip, bishop of Vác.¹⁶⁸

The charter issued in 1272 for Palatine Moys provides some interesting information. Elisabeth fulfils the oath she had taken at the date of her coronation (although one may ask why she is a bit late) and restores his possessions. These had been actually taken from palatine's father by Queen Maria Laskaris, which can partially contribute to the understanding of relationship between the royal couples.¹⁶⁹

After Stephen's death, Elisabeth was appointed the regent of the kingdom – actually the first (and only) Árpáadian queen appointed with such an office.¹⁷⁰ However, her status cannot be overestimated or viewed as the achievement of great political power. As Pál Engel stated – she was basically “the nominal regent” and the mighty families of Gutkeleds, Héders and Csák were ones wielding the real power.¹⁷¹

It was not Elisabeth who had the real might, but the various noble factions. Although King Ladislaus was released from his captivity, his mother could not surpass the influence of the magnates. Various conspiracies involved even the relationship between Elisabeth and her son, who from time to time found themselves belonging to rival political fractions. How these events were progressing and the situation was changing is reflected by the manner of donations: for instance, in January 1274, the king gave back his possessions in present day northwestern Slovakia to a certain *comes* Vavrinec, which he had deprived him of because Vavrinec supported queen Elisabeth at that time.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 213.

¹⁶⁹ See chapter **The mutual relationship between Maria and Elisabeth**, 53.

¹⁷⁰ In 1284, Ladislaus in one of his charters recalls the merits of his mother acting on his behalf while he was under aged. CDH V.3, 245-246.

¹⁷¹ See *The Realm of Saint Stephen*, 108.

¹⁷² Pavel Dvořák, ed. *V kráľovstve sv. Štefana. Pramene k dejinám Slovenska a Slovákov* [In the Realm of Saint Stephen. The Sources to the History of Slovakia and Slovaks] (Bratislava: Literárne Informačné centrum, 2003), 233 – 234. (hereafter *V kráľovstve sv. Štefana*)

Elisabeth's more or less formal regency ended in 1277. However, this did not mean the end of her political activities. Elisabeth was subsequently appointed to govern several territorial units within the kingdom of Hungary, therefore was approaching the roles of queen from a different perspective than in Maria's case. First, Elisabeth received Spiš¹⁷³ as her domain to strengthen king's authority in the region.¹⁷⁴ Among her important actions as *domina Scepusiensis* Elisabeth, for instance, ordered the privileged groups of Spiš (namely, Saxons and Wallachians) to pay tithes as the rest of the Spiš population did.¹⁷⁵ However, Elisabeth acted as the governor of Spiš only in 1279-1280. During this period, Ladislaus reached important international success in 1278, when he took part in the defeat of Přemysl Otakar, as an ally of German King Rudolf of Habsburg. On the other hand, the internal situation was otherwise. Besides dealing with the ambitions of powerful nobles, Ladislaus was vigorously criticized by the Hungarian clergy and the Holy See for his deep affinity for Cumans. Possibly Ladislaus preferred their company while surrounded by constantly conspiring nobles. The king's preferences for his Cuman mistresses over his true wife, Isabelle of Anjou, were also much criticized.¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, his proximity to the Cumans, preserving their own pagan customs, led to a striking contrast with the image of Christian ruler. Ladislaus IV hardly could have been proclaimed one. He usually spent his time in Cuman camps, letting the kingdom of Hungary fall into deepening anarchy. The pope sent legate Philip of Fermo to Hungary, but though an agreement was reached, the decrees of

¹⁷³ Comitatus Scepusiensis, present day north-eastern Slovakia. German version of Spiš with the numerous Saxon population was Zips.

¹⁷⁴ *quod cum Dominium terrae Scepus de beneplacito et favore Charissimi filii nostri, Regis Ladislai, et omnium Baronum Regni Hungariae, post diversas et varias destructiones et terrarum multarum alienationes per infideles regni factas, ad nos fuisset devolutum* CDH V.2, 582. For similar reasoning of Elisabeth being entrusted with the governance of Spiš See M. Schmauk, ed. *Supplementum Annalectorum Terrae Scepusiensis II* (Spišské Podhradie: Typ. Typogr. Episcopalis, 1889), 15. Further see below, chapter **Maria and Elisabeth: The Obedient Wife and the Pagan Cuman?**, 65.

¹⁷⁵ *V kráľovstve sv. Štefana*, 244 - 245

¹⁷⁶ See for instance papal letters in VMH, 358 or 359. Ladislaus way of life was inspired completely by the customs of the Cumans – during his reign even Cuman clothing became very popular. It is said that Ladislaus enjoyed also the liberal view of Cumans upon the relationship between men and women. See Gyula Pauler, *Magyar nemzet története*, 333.

the subsequent synod of Buda were absolutely ignored by Ladislaus, who had initially promised to follow them.

Concerning the relationship between Elisabeth and Ladislaus in the 1280s, there are a few issues to be addressed. First, the king used his mother according to the previous pattern applied in case of Spiš for re-establishing royal control in Slavonia and in Bosnia and territory of Macsó, which Elisabeth held in the first half of 1280s.¹⁷⁷ Interestingly, Bosna and Macsó had been once the estates of Stephen's greatest opponent among his siblings: Princess Anna. One of the most important actions of Elisabeth as the ruler of Macsó and Bosnia was her promise to fight against heretics in her territories (particularly in two of these and the county of Pozsega).¹⁷⁸ The extent of her real power was, however, hard to state due to the uncertainty of the Hungarian situation and the wars among the noble factions.

Secondly, the forms of their relationship varied – in the spreading anarchy in the second half of 1280s, contact with the whereabouts of Queen Elisabeth was weakened, though some charters are still to be found, attesting the constant fights and changing the alliances,¹⁷⁹ and even reflected on the mutual relationship of Elisabeth and Ladislaus. However, the attention is more focused on Ladislaus's wife, Isabelle of Naples, and the fact that the king did not hesitate to imprison her when he found it convenient.

At last Elisabeth appears issuing charters in 1290, which is also the very last year when she is represented in source material as still active character. Particularly the charter from 1290 deals with Elisabeth's wish that the Dominicans would pray for the salvation of her soul and those of the members of the royal family, namely king Béla, Maria, her son Ladislaus and King Stephen. This charter is also interesting from the point of view of Elisabeth's perception as the Christian Queen – or concerning the polemics how much her pagan origin influenced her actions later on, which will be discussed below.

¹⁷⁷ *Az Árpádok és asszonyaik*, 166.

¹⁷⁸ VMH, 347-348.

¹⁷⁹ *Dejiny kráľovstva uhorského*, 244.

For King Ladislaus, his Cuman kinsmen turned out to be unreliable allies, since Ladislaus was murdered in one of their camps in 1290. Amidst the widespread anarchy, the last descendant of the Árpadian dynasty appeared to be crowned as Andrew III in July, 1290.¹⁸⁰ By this year, also any other accounts, concerning Elisabeth are missing, her following destiny cannot be traced any longer. Elisabeth the Cuman disappeared due to instability of that period from the history in a same sudden, uncertain manner as she had appeared in.

¹⁸⁰ King Andrew (c.1265-1301) inherited the claim to the throne after his father, Stephen, who was the posthumous child of Andrew II by his third wife, Beatrice d'Este, whom Andrew married only one year before his death. Queen Beatrice was not much in the favour of her stepson, who became King Béla IV in 1235 and therefore rather sought shelter back in Italy. Her son, Stephen, married a member of an influential Venetian family, Tommasina Morosini, who later supported the claims of her son to the Hungarian throne. King Andrew III faced constant problems during whole his reign with the nobles and his authority was limited. Since from his two marriages to Fennena Piast and Agnes of Habsburg only one daughter survived, his death meant the extinction of the male line of Árpáds. After struggles lasting for the years the crown was finally firmly placed on the head of Charles Robert of Anjou.

CHAPTER IV

The mutual relationship between Maria and Elisabeth

Since Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman were mother- and daughter-in-law, the question that must arise in this paper is what kind of terms they were on. While trying to identify various levels of personal relationship between the figures of the thirteenth century Hungarian royalty – especially while following the female line – one always encounters the lack of the written evidence. Just a little can be explicitly found in the sources; therefore much more will be reconstructed through the whole context of the story.

There is no account that speaks openly about Maria's attitude to her daughter-in-law and their mutual relationship. As it is quite normal for the thirteenth-century Hungarian milieu nothing is known about her personal opinions concerning the alliance which her husband made with the Cumans and the marriage he contracted for their son. On the other hand, her opposition to this union is not mentioned either. Since Maria mainly presents the model faithful wife, usually in the shadow of her husband, one can presume that this time, she did not challenge his decisions as well. On the contrary, one must feel curious about how the daughter of the Laskarids, preservers of the Byzantine and Orthodox traditions, felt about her son marrying this pagan Cuman girl. While she felt comfortable in disagreeing with her husband at some points,¹⁸¹ there is no account, which would attest that she disagreed in case of this marriage.¹⁸²

When Elisabeth the Cuman married Maria's firstborn, both of them were still children. In that period there could hardly have been any personal tensions between two most prominent couples of the Hungarian royal dynasty. Stephen's struggles with his father began

¹⁸¹ As for instance during her conflict with Spalatins.

¹⁸² That Maria probably did not hesitate to express the disagreement with the unions of her children can be discussed for instance in regards to the marriage of Kunigunda with Boleslaus the Shy. See chapter **Maria and Elisabeth: The Obedient Wife and the Pagan Cuman?**, 71-72.

only in 1260 when he was deprived of Styria. Although he was appointed to govern again Transylvania¹⁸³ instead of the Austrian dukedom, Stephen was not content with such a share of power and openly revolted against Béla. In 1262 the agreement was reached and Stephen officially assumed the title which he had used in the documents issued even before – the title of the younger king, *rex iunior*.¹⁸⁴ According to this treaty, made in Bratislava, Béla ceded his son the part of the kingdom, east of the Danube river.¹⁸⁵ In this territory, Stephen basically governed as the sole king – and already here the influence of his wife's Cuman's roots was obvious and omnipresent.

One can only guess and suggest, what was going on between Maria and Elisabeth in this period, but, of course, it is natural to conclude that the internal war had to affect their relationship somehow. Though fighting her husband, Stephen was still Maria's son. She mourned the conflict within the family and as it has been already mentioned – rejoiced when she was announced about the reconciliation between father and son. In her letter to the Franciscan chapter, Maria highlighted the intervening role of their Friar John¹⁸⁶ in the conflict – as well as she expressed her position in the whole issue: "I as the mother, being distressed from the both sides and troubled by the great anxiety, have asked the mentioned Friar John for help."¹⁸⁷ Of course, the level of the formal aspect of the whole letter can be questioned, though it is clear that Maria appointed someone to act on behalf of the reconciliation – therefore it seems to have been her true concern.

Although the peace was achieved, this situation did not last long. Stephen rebelled against his father again and Béla himself managed to chase the disobedient son "as far as the

¹⁸³ Stephen had been Béla's representative in Transylvania already in 1257-1258. By moving his discontented son there, Béla probably wanted to keep him out of his Western policy. The remote territory could have been seen as a safe place for the rebellious younger king, on the other hand, Béla should have remembered better the troubles his father already had with the Teutonic order established in Transylvania, which subsequently attempted to get the territory under their jurisdiction.

¹⁸⁴ See chapter **Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman: Introducing the historical characters**, 35.

¹⁸⁵ CDH IV.3, 70.

¹⁸⁶ Bosnian bishop at that time

¹⁸⁷ *..ego, utpote mater, utrimque afflicta, et maximo metu perculsa, dicti fratris Iohannis opem imploravi* CDH, V.3, 68-69.

eastern corner of Transylvania.”¹⁸⁸ During these struggles, even younger queen Elisabeth was held captive by her father-in-law for some time.¹⁸⁹ Unfortunately for the senior king, his defeats near Braşov and at Isaszeg followed. Finally, in 1266 another treaty was concluded, which confirmed the 1262’ division.

Naturally, the relationship between the father and the son were anyway far from being warm and friendly. Although also Maria is in the sources associated prevailingly with her younger son Béla, she still was in contact with Stephen as well – she seems to have been on good terms with him (at least sometimes), which is for instance attested by Stephen’s donation charter for his “most beloved mother”¹⁹⁰ concerning the vault of Sirmium, the county of Pozsega¹⁹¹ and the Muslim village, called Rugas. The charter grants were subsequently strengthened and were to be protected by the Pope Clement IV, who confirmed them.¹⁹²

The whole decade of the struggles shall not be perceived as the period of the open hostility between father and son. That the family was sometimes reconciled indeed is affirmed, for instance, when future Ladislaus IV was born and immediately guaranteed the estates not only by his father, but also by his grandfather as a symbol of the gratitude for securing the stability through producing for the dynasty a male heir.¹⁹³ This gratitude was presumably expressed towards both royal parents – Stephen as well as Elisabeth.

¹⁸⁸ *Realm of Saint Stephen*, 106.

¹⁸⁹ *Kniha kráľov*, 122.

¹⁹⁰ Though nicely said, it was still no more than the usual part of the formal aspect of the charter.

¹⁹¹ Which as it is obvious from this charter was already given to Maria by King Béla.

¹⁹²quod mater nostra Carissima Cameram de Syrmia, que nostra fuit, habeat et possideat, liberam ordinationem disponendi et relinquendi, cuicumque liberorum suorum voluerit, habens de eadem. Iterum Villam Rugas Ismaelitarum, in tempus vite eiusdem carissime matris nostre duximus concedendam eidem cum omnibus proventibus, utilitatibus et aliis provenientibus de eadem. Ceterum terram seu predium de Posega, que vel quod cessit eidem ex parte Carissimi patris nostri B. Illustris Regis Ungarie, tam pro impensis factis in partibus maritimis, tum etiam ratione dotis seu dotaliciorum cum omnibus suis pertinentiis, appendiciis et utilitatibus, Castris scilicet, Villis, tributis omnimodis et collectis reliquimus et permisimus eidem....Item omnes possessiones.....eidem libere, pacifice et quiete concedimus, permittimus ad tempus vite sue possidenda. VMH, 283.

¹⁹³ Zsoldos, “V službách kráľovských detí,” 6.

On contrary, Stephen's relationship towards his mother got tenser at some point, as it can be detected in one of his charters issued in 1267. The younger king claims that it was not just his father but also his mother, who ordered the army to move against him.¹⁹⁴ That reveals how much the turbulent, complicated period influenced the relations even within the family. Even King Béla himself, designing his last will, asked Přemysl Otakar of Bohemia to protect his wife, his daughter Anna,¹⁹⁵ and all his faithful nobles – it is not hard to guess whom Béla meant as the threat for the above mentioned.¹⁹⁶ On the other hand, Maria herself also complained about her son shortly after the death of her husband (therefore quite soon before her own death in 1270 as well) as is reflected in her correspondence with her granddaughter, Kunigunda, queen of Bohemia.¹⁹⁷ In addition, that the conflict deeply influenced all the main protagonists (Béla and Maria on one side and Elisabeth and Stephen on the opposite side) can be demonstrated by Elisabeth's charter, issued in 1272, where the queen explicitly states: "Lord King Béla and Lady Maria, our mother-in-law of blessed memory revolted against our Lord King Stephen and against us and desired to fight with us."¹⁹⁸ Moreover, Elisabeth spoke about the last decade of Béla's reign as about the "time of our greatest pursuit,¹⁹⁹" which gives quite a certain idea about the terms which the two couples were mostly on.

Already during Maria's lifetime, both queens occurred in the same documents. On the other hand, this is not very often issue and basically these mutual references concerns Elisabeth's confirmation of older privileges, which had been given by her predecessor. Such was a common practise (though in this case we do not have many confirming charters especially while Maria was still alive) as it can be seen for instance in the charter of Queen

¹⁹⁴ *contra nos insurrexerant, mouentes exercitum...* CDH IV.2, 407-409.

¹⁹⁵ That means Přemysl's mother-in-law.

¹⁹⁶ *...nostram consortem carissimam, Reginam Ungariae, et filiam nostram dulcissimam, matrem vestram dilectissimam, ac omnes nostros Barones, qui fuerunt perseverantes in fidelitate, cum ad vos refugium habuerint...post nostrum decessum..* CDAC III, 204.

¹⁹⁷ CDAC III, 239-241.

¹⁹⁸ *Dominus Bela Rex, et Domina Maria socrus nostra bone memorie, contra dominum nostrum Stephanum Regen, et contra nos insurgere, et nos expugnare nitebantur.* CDAC III, 275.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

Isabelle of Anjou, Elisabeth's daughter-in-law, confirming the privileges in the county of "Comarum"²⁰⁰ where queens possessed some traditional estates. In this case Isabelle confirms the privileges given particularly by both Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman.²⁰¹

However, Elisabeth did not restrict herself to the plain confirmation, when it came to the policies of her mother-in-law. For instance, when Elisabeth was crowned the queen consort of Hungary, she had sworn that she would return Palatine Moys the possessions, which Maria had herself taken from his father Moys the Great, who himself also held the office of palatine.²⁰² Attila Zsoldos suggests that Elisabeth was explicitly asked to make an oath of the property restoration before being crowned: that she would not occupy or take the lands from nobles without a reason, as her predecessor had done.²⁰³ It is interesting, however, that Elisabeth issued the restoration charter only two years later after her coronation. Secondly, it is also important to emphasize that Elisabeth discredited the decision of Maria, who had occupied the lands which were said to have been taken "without any right to do so." Moreover, this is stated not just once, but at the second point Moys' estates are said to have been "taken without any right and unjustly occupied by our predecessors."²⁰⁴

Although Elisabeth openly opposed the policy of Maria at this point, though she could have been required to do so and was probably inspired by political reasons exclusively, she carried on confirming her mother-in-law's privileges even as the senior queen of Hungary.²⁰⁵ In addition the charter from 1290, where Elisabeth pleads for the redemption of her souls,

²⁰⁰ The territory of this county included areas of nowadays southwestern Slovakia and northwestern Hungary.

²⁰¹ CDH V.2, 398-400.

²⁰² *..quod Moys palatinus, comes Supruniensis et iudex Cumanorum fidelis noster a nobis cum instantia postulavit, ut villas in Tolnensi et Symigiensi comitatibus constitutas, que patris sui magni Moys quondam palatine fuerant et per dominam Mariam socrum nostrum bone memorie indebite occupate fore dicebantur, de nostra gratia sibi reddere et restituere dignaremur pleno iure....unde cum die appositionis corone capiti nostro promissimus iuramento, quod iura nobilium per antecessores nostros indebite alienata et iniuste occupata reddi faceremus et restitui... Regesta ducum, 68.*

²⁰³ *Az Árpádok és asszonyaik, 24.*

²⁰⁴ *Regesta ducum, 68.*

²⁰⁵ As the example see for instance HO VIII, 98-99, or 217. See as well *Regesta Ducum* 63,64.

among the others, she offers the alms also for the praying for the soul of the deceased Queen Maria:

for the salvation of lord King, our most beloved son and that of ours, as well as for that of King Béla, his wife Mistress Maria, our most beloved mother, their son duke Béla and of master Stephen, illustrious King and our dearest husband of blessed memory for the salvation of the souls.²⁰⁶

It is interesting to observe that although Béla is referred to “only” as the king, Maria (though being not particularly titled “the queen”) is also “the most beloved mother.” How much such a styling of the dead relatives was influenced by the memories even from Elisabeth’s childhood can be only estimated, but not stated as a fact. Still as it can be seen from Saint Margaret’s legend or the fact that Maria exercised duties on behalf of her younger son Béla – she maintained good relationship with her children. Another clue, besides Elisabeth’s charter expressing the respect for the memory of Maria, shall suggest that she also played positive role as a mother-in-law.

Since the names of the new-born princes and princesses were usually not selected accidentally or without any purpose behind them, the fact, that one of the daughters of Elisabeth was named Maria,²⁰⁷ can offer some clue to the mutual relationship of daughter and mother-in-law. On the other hand, none of Elisabeth’s and Stephen’s sons was given the name after his grandfather. The older one future king Ladislaus bore the name of the renowned saint ancestor, the younger one was, interestingly, Andrew – having the same name as his great-grandfather with whom was King Béla himself on precariously hostile terms.

To conclude the mutual relationship between Maria and Elisabeth is hard to be reconstructed due to the lack of source material. The available accounts do not attest any

²⁰⁶ *pro salute domini Regis karissimi filli nostri et nostra, quam Bele Regis, domine Marie consortis eius, matris nostre karissime, Bele ducis filii sui, et domini Stephani illustris Regis, viri nostri karissimi, felicitum recordacionum pro remedio animarum.* CDAC IX., 525.

²⁰⁷ This Maria became later on very important for Árpadian dynastical policy. In 1269 she was betrothed to the heir to the Neapolitan throne, Charles, whereas her brother was betrothed to Charles’ sister, Isabella. The weddings contracted by younger king Stephen and his Neapolitan counterpart, Charles I, took place one year later. Maria’s marriage was significant for Charles Robert of Anjou (Maria was his paternal grandmother) when he claimed the right on Hungarian throne.

tensions or conflict going between them. However, the practice of confirming the donations of her predecessor was interrupted by the promise to Palatine Moys to restore his properties taken by Queen Maria on the occasion of Elisabeth's coronation. Elisabeth carried out this pledge only two years later and hardly had been inspired more by personal antipathies than recent political needs.

Elisabeth also remembered her mother-in-law in the very last document she issued – being aware of the fragility of her earthly life probably – which may but also does not have any further significance connected the relationship between these two women. Although the aspect of formal courtesy must be remembered, the slight differences in addressing the brother and father-in-law on one side and son, husband and Queen Maria on the other side must be born in mind too, though of course not being overestimated. Therefore, the enmity between two of them cannot be accepted as a fact. The warm, friendly terms are, in contrast, very much questionable thanks to the general situation in the thirteenth century Hungary. There were things to join both women together as well as the issues, which strikingly separated them as well. Their husbands were fighting each other, but as it seems that for Maria, even as an obedient wife, this was no reason to neglect own son completely. However, her relationship towards Stephen suffered in this fight as well – which was also reflected quite openly by Elisabeth.

While two different centres of power were created in 1260s Hungary, Maria and Elisabeth spent in this period time mostly residing in different places. Sometimes their reunion happened under unfortunate circumstances – as while the fighting was seriously running on and younger Queen was captured with her children.

On the other hand, there were moments of the reconciliation of the family, as when Ladislaus was born, or when the peace treaty thanks also to the mediation of Maria herself and even more by another influential female in the family – Margaret – was concluded.

Margaret was the figure who connected senior and younger queens in some manner, since she was the favourite sister of Stephen, who also initiated her canonisation process.²⁰⁸

Margaret had also a strong relationship with her father – although her decision to reject the marriage proposal from Přemysl Otakar of Bohemia made the king angry²⁰⁹ and resulted in the banishing of the Dominicans from the royal court. Actually, the senior royal couple resided often near Margaret's monastery on Rabbit Island, established on the reginal lands of Maria Laskaris.

Moreover, Margaret was very much honoured even at the court of her nephew Ladislaus – it is reported that through her healing power young king was cured from the serious illness.²¹⁰ Afterwards, Ladislaus was much devoted to the promotion of Margaret's cult – most probably after his father's death while being still a child, this activity was promoted by his mother Elisabeth.

Therefore to sum up, there were many issues, which connected Maria and Elisabeth not only constant wars between their husbands; the two of them were contemporaries, members of the same dynasty and the subsequent holders of the very same office. Although the lack of evidence conceals more precise knowledge about the personal, unofficial level of their relationship, still there are some clues, which can reveal some of its aspects.

These clues can merely offer hints for which arguments can be suggested, but there is no sufficient material to prove with certainty anything concerning the relationship between Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman. However, while dealing with them, it is necessary at least to try to outline some basic directions in which they relationship could have been moving.

²⁰⁸ See *Holy rulers and Blessed Princesses*, 222.

²⁰⁹ *Legenda Beatae Margaritae*, 691-692.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 706.

CHAPTER V

Maria and Elisabeth: The Obedient Wife and the Pagan Cuman?

The representation of Maria and Elisabeth in the written sources

The requirements for the ideal medieval queen were discussed above and both Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman have been introduced. The question now arises, how well did they fit the ideal pattern concerning their own representation in the written sources.

Such representation of both Maria and Elisabeth can be divided into several categories, conveniently applied for structural reasons and the readability of the text. First the sources' discussion upon origin of the queens will be reviewed, then representations of Maria and Elisabeth as the queen consorts, Christian queens and mothers of the royal family. These images will be subsequently discussed and compared with the model queenship attributes of the period.

Perception of origin

As it has been already stated, distinctive origin has been acknowledged as one of the requirements of the medieval queen.²¹¹ Indeed, the Byzantine tradition behind Maria's ancestry was much emphasized and commented on by chroniclers, who did not focus on this queen much otherwise. For instance, *The Illuminated Chronicle* pays some attention to Maria only at the moment of her death, when the source reports that the queen was buried in Esztergom together with her husband and younger son, Béla. But when is she finally mentioned, her origin is not left behind; Maria is styled *filia imperatoris Graecorum*.²¹² A similar entry can be found in the *Chronicle of Bratislava* or in that of Henry of Mügelin.²¹³

²¹¹ See chapter **Conception of medieval queenship**..., 12-14.

²¹² See *Chronica Picta*, 127.

²¹³ *Chronicon Posoniense*, 43. Henry of Mügelin, 208.

Only Thomas of Split in his *History* dedicates more attention to Queen Maria than any other chronicler. His evaluation of her actions will be discussed below – at this point it shall be only noted that he also did not omit a comment upon Maria's ancestry, calling her the one, "born from the dynasty of the Emperors of the Greeks."²¹⁴

Although only a short time after her wedding, the advantage of such an union for the Kingdom of Hungary was questioned,²¹⁵ later her origin was found worthy of mention and emphasis by chroniclers. The prestigious match that Andrew II made for his firstborn on his way back from the Crusade was later also glorified in the *Vita* of one of Maria's saintly daughters – Kunigunda, wife of Boleslaus the Shy, prince of Cracow and Sandomierz. In his *Vita Beatae Kunegundis*, the Cracowian canon John Longinus pays attention to the origin of Princess Kunigunda. Of course, there is much more written concerning her paternal ancestry, but Maria's background is not left out – though with many inaccuracies, since she is mentioned as "the daughter of Greek Emperor Alexius, who ruled at Constantinople many years."²¹⁶

Another version of Kunigunda's *vita*²¹⁷ even attributes a connection to the Roman Emperors to Maria's lineage: "Béla...whose wife was named Maria, she was the daughter of the Greek Emperor, who derived his origin from the Emperor Nero. On the other hand, the Empress (!) was also related by blood to Saint Catherine...the famous martyr."²¹⁸

Elisabeth's case is different, but one thing connects her with Maria at this point – her origin was also an important issue in the sources, although any positive evaluation of a Cuman girl becoming the queen of Hungary cannot be found. King of Hungary himself had to

²¹⁴ *Grecorum inperatorum stripe progenita*. Thomas of Split, 366.

²¹⁵ See chapter **Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman: Introducing the historical characters**, 31.

²¹⁶ (M.), *filliam Alexii Graecorum Caesaris, qui apud Constantinopolim annis pluribus imperavit. Vita Beatae Kunegundis*. 191.

²¹⁷ *Vita sanctae Kyngae ducissae Cracoviensis*.

²¹⁸ *Bela, którego małżonka miała na imię Maria, była zaś córką cesarza greckiego, sam zaś cesarz ród swój wywodził od cesarza Nerona. Cesarzowa natmoiast była spokrewniona ze Świętą Katarzyna...sławną męczenniczką*. Ibid., 126.

apologize for such a choice in a letter to the pope, claiming that he sought such an alliance only for the purposes of kingdom's defence. Pope Alexander IV emphasized that the truly Christian king would never use such means for the preservation of his country as the marriage between Elisabeth and Stephen was – indeed such a union was even against the law.²¹⁹

Queen Elisabeth rarely styled herself by her origin. Her *intitulatio* usually included only *regina Hungariae*, respectively *iunior regina Hungariae*,²²⁰ before she was appointed to govern the territories of Spiš, Macsó, and Bosnia.²²¹ While King Stephen – especially when he was still the younger king of Hungary only – usually also included the title *Dominus Cumanorum*,²²² in the case of his wife it is more complicated to detect this feature, since she did not issue many charters before 1270. However, at least one of these few preserved charters represents Elisabeth not only as the younger queen, but also as *Domina Cumanorum*.²²³

Even later, Elisabeth's origin was a convenient weapon for her opponents, for instance, Bruno, the bishop of Olomouc, who agitated against the “Cuman queen of Hungary.”²²⁴ The queen's Cuman background became an issue even more during the reign of her son, who was very devoted to this background of his ancestry. It seems, however, that it was never such a great issue for Elisabeth herself.

While the chronicle tradition reflects the renown of Maria Laskaris' origin, the case of her daughter-in-law is quite different. If Maria scarcely appears in the chronicles, the accounts concerning Queen Elisabeth are missing almost completely. If her origin is then mentioned in

²¹⁹ VMH, 240 – at this point pope also concludes that the marriage between Christian and infidel is not a proper, binding marriage.: *Matrimonii quoque nexus nec christiano paganum, nec christianum pagano coniungit..Si ergo...filium vel filiam tuam contingat gentilis conubii contagio maculari...(this deed) non iuri effectum, sed solam creatoris tuam contumeliam continebit.*

²²⁰ Fejér, CDH IV.2, 391.

²²¹ Since these titles were subsequently also included in *intitulatio*.

²²² See for instance CDAC VII, 33-34.

²²³ HO VIII, 98.

²²⁴ VMH, 308. See below.

the written sources, it is mainly used as an argument – as for instance in Bruno’s case – by her political opponents as something which did not really harmonize with her royal status.

Maria and Elisabeth – ideal queens?

The second important category of the written source representations of Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman includes the presentation of these figures as queen consorts. As has been already stated, an ideal king’s wife should support her husband on any possible occasion, protect and benefit the church, preside over her curia – be a charitable, humble counterpart for the king – though supporting him, standing also in his shadow.

At the first glance, Maria Laskaris particularly seems to be that noble, faithful and obedient wife – an ideal queen consort indeed. However unfortunately her marriage began, Maria later on remained at her husband’s side during the uneasy years of his reign – while he was fleeing, when the Mongols devastated the country or during the decade when he was fighting their own son. Maria’s actions may be perceived as that of the devoted wife depending on her husband’s deeds, also because she died only weeks after King Béla and therefore never acted as the queen mother or queen regent as her daughter-in-law did.

However, when the queen wanted something, she acted quite independently and self-confidently. Her incident with the Spalatins noted above can be examined again here. The queen went down to Dalmatia to receive the fealty on behalf of her son Béla, appointed as a duke of these territories, since they belonged to him according to the natural law of the second-born son.²²⁵

While Maria was staying in Split, two Hungarian soldiers were accidentally killed by some young Spalatins in an incident provoked by the queen’s retinue, which unjustly took some of the harvest from the citizens. Although the Spalatins argued that the crime happened

²²⁵ Thomas of Split, 366.

by chance, not by the decision of community, the queen's heart was set and nothing could soften her.²²⁶

The queen refused the excuse of town citizens, moved to the castle of Klis and was so angry that she even commanded her soldiers to go down to the city and carry off livestock, burn houses, invade vineyards and fields.²²⁷ Archbishop Robert did his best to obtain peace, but Maria got more angry and even suspected that he was behind the wrongdoing.

At this point Maria's image becomes most interesting. King Béla, grieving upon the news, sent two religious men from the order of Friars Minor to calm the queen down and call her back to Hungary. Surprisingly, the faithful wife persisted in her harshness.²²⁸

The queen's men even managed to capture some citizens of Split. While they kept them in custody, Maria finally returned north – but it must be stressed that this time she acted on her own initiative – she travelled only when she decided to do so, not when her husband asked her to. The Spalatins afterwards sent Archdeacon Thomas (the author of the account himself) and Marinus, Procurator of Split, to the royal court to present their cause and explain the whole incident, but the queen accused Spalatins of numerous things and Béla believed her words.²²⁹ Thomas asked subsequently for the hostages held by the best men of the city to be released, but he was refused.

The conflict with the Spalatins was resolved only during the next journey of the royal couple to Dalmatia. At that time Maria and Béla received the hostages they had asked for. These were the children of disguised Spalatins; the queen and king received them kindly and promised to treat them well and not keep them too long.²³⁰

²²⁶ *Sed ipsa nihil ad rationabilem nostrorum excusationem flectens sui animi rigorem venit.* Ibid, 368.

²²⁷ *Erat autem cum ipsa exercitus magnus Hungarorum, Sclavorum, Cumanorum, quibus percepir arma capere, ad civitatem descendere, predas animalium facere, domos incidere, vineas et agros invadere et cuncta, que possent, absque remedio devasarent.* Thomas of Split., 370.

²²⁸ *Sed ipsa in suo rigore perdurans* Ibid., 372.

²²⁹ Ibid., 374.

²³⁰ Ibid., 376.

This incident indeed shows that if Maria made a decision she acted quite independently and applied even more radical measures when she found them necessary. Thomas of Split's account, however, presents Maria in quite an unflattering manner – as an unjust, cruel person. On the other hand, author's personal involvement in the whole case must be borne in mind. Besides, the Spalatines' memory of the royal couple was in the 1260s not very positive because during the flight from Mongols, King Béla had already had one conflict with the citizens, also recorded by Thomas of Split – and queen herself had also refused to reside in the city while her family was in flight before the advancing Mongols.²³¹

Maria as she is represented in the work of Thomas of Split is much closer to the woman, who, for instance, took the lands of Moys the Great, only later restored to his son by Queen Elisabeth. Maybe this is closer to the image of the woman whom the chronicle tradition perceived only as limited to her renowned Nicean ancestry and as the faithful wife, resting by the side of her husband and second-born son. On the other hand, Maria's traditional role as the faithful queen consort was neither discarded.

The strong bond between the royal couple may be attested by a few examples: for instance, a conflict in 1224 Béla chose to flee to the court of Leopold, duke of Austria,²³² rather than dissolve his marriage – which King Andrew desired.²³³ When country was devastated by the Mongols, Maria was even entrusted by her husband with the relics of Saint Stephen when she fled southwards. Canon Roger in his *Carmen Miserabile* also states that after the battle of Muhi, Béla hurried to the Austrian border, because the queen was lingering there.²³⁴ The king did not manage to meet the queen at that time,²³⁵ but the point is that when

²³¹ See chapter **Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman: introducing the historical characters**, 39-40.

²³² Interestingly, Leopold's own wife Theodora was coming from Byzantium. And Leopold's future successor, his son Frederick later married Maria's own younger sister, Eudokia (Sophia).

²³³ See chapter **Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman: introducing the historical characters**, 32 and also papal letters in CDH III.1, 430-439.

²³⁴ ...inde directo tramite, ut reginam posset attingere, que in confinio Austrie morabatur, quantum poterat, properabat. *Carmen Miserabile*, 101.

he suffered the disastrous defeat his wife was the first person he desired to meet. Maria was also the woman who stood at his side during the war with Stephen – she was in the end a woman whom Béla naturally trusted, even when she raised accusations which Thomas of Split found to be completely fictional.

Maria's image as the royal consort therefore has to be perceived primarily through her strong relationship with her husband and their mutual support during almost all of the five decades of their marriage. Although at the first glance she may seem a bit boring, other layers of her story reveal quite a powerful woman, able to conduct her own policies as queen and wield her own influence. As stated above, though – save the incident with the Spalatins – these actions were scarcely not bound with the politics of King Béla himself.

Elisabeth the Cuman is an even more specific case – she was the queen consort for only two years. Afterwards, however, she assumed as the only Árpáadian queen officially the title of the regent. Firstly, it asserts that the woman, who was entrusted with such a function, had to possess the significant influence and means how to secure her power. Unfortunately for Elisabeth, the reality was quite opposite.

Even during the reign of her husband, King Stephen V, the royal power was challenged by the magnates, who were getting increasingly powerful. No wonder that the king himself sought for some support among the Cuman kin of his wife – this attitude was later adopted by his son, Ladislaus, with disastrous results.²³⁵ However, even with the Cumans as allies (and as Ladislaus himself later experienced – not very trustworthy ones), the power of the royal family was diminishing.

Elisabeth was indeed the regent of the kingdom, but her opportunities were quite limited. She even had to negotiate to have her son – the rightful king – released from captivity

²³⁵ Instead of her, he encountered his ex-brother-in-law, duke Frederick of Austria, who offered him the shelter on the Austrian side of the border. However, Béla instead of receiving hospitality, fell into captivity and could leave only when he paid himself off by the significant ransom.

²³⁶ See chapter **Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman: introducing the historical characters**, 46, 48.

and could do as much as the nobility allowed her to. On the other hand, she also tried to be influential herself – Jenő Szűcs even presents Elisabeth as the very ambitious woman, who did not hesitate to join her forces with Joachim Gutkeled – the very man, who held new king Ladislaus captive.²³⁷ And at this point again – while evaluating Elisabeth, her Cuman origin is not left out.²³⁸

That she cannot be perceived only as a puppet in the hands of the magnates is also attested by the fact that she was appointed as the governor of Spiš, and although she did not hold this office long, she later became duchess of Bosnia, Macsó, and Slavonia. Why did King Ladislaus appoint his mother to all these offices? The clue can be found in one of the charters, where Elisabeth speaks about receiving the government of Spiš:

...since the domain of the province of Spiš was delivered to our hands by the God's grace, favour of the Lord King, our most beloved son and the agreement of the Lords, his barons and at the request of this king we try to examine carefully the rights of those, who possess the lands in the province of Spiš itself, as we have the power to restore and bring back...in the same manner the alienated lands with the full right.²³⁹

It seems that Elisabeth was entrusted with her special offices to secure the royal power in the specific region, to act there as the official deputy of her son. She was the only Árpadian queen appointed to be regent or a provincial governor, which is a strong political attribute of queenly representation. Elisabeth's case is much more complicated, since her role as queen consort was of short duration, she found herself as a widow in the non-traditional role of regent and later as the administrator of significant estates.

Her activities as a woman in power are at this point only dimly reflected in the written sources, any evaluation is almost completely left out from the chronicle tradition. In contrast,

²³⁷ Same incident is commented also by Kozstolnyik, in a similar manner – that the queen was strongly criticized for meeting Gutkeled, which was perceived as her approval for Ladislaus's captivity. *Hungary in thirteenth century*, 255.

²³⁸ See Jenő Szűcs, *Az utolsó Árpádok*, 390-392.

²³⁹ ...cum dominium provincie Scypus de gratia et favore domini regis Ladyslai filii nostri karissimi et omnium baronum suorum consensus ad nos fuisset devolutum et ad petitionem eiusdem domni regis iura uniuscuiusque, quibus terras in ipsa provincial Scypus possident, experiremur investigatione diligenti, ut perinde terras indebite alienatas restaurare etreducere possemus pleno iure. *Regesta ducum*, 81.

the historiography attempted to evaluate her activities as the regent of Hungary – she is even labelled as an incapable regent,²⁴⁰ although how much she could have asserted her own influence is questionable. In 1270s the queen's situation was quite poor; first she had to negotiate for Ladislaus to be released from captivity and later the same situation occurred when her younger son, Andrew, was captured by one of the magnates, Henry Héder of Kőszeg in 1274.²⁴¹

As the sources reveal, Elisabeth was a faithful spouse of Stephen, their actions agreed at any point. After Stephen's death, Elisabeth's role became more political, but prevalingly, the evaluation of her role got lost in the framework of the unpopular rule of Ladislaus. Her impact is hardly to be judged according the queenship pattern requirements, since her situation was quite unique. However, her attempts to be an influential regent, creating own political faction did not really meet the approval.

The pious queen

Elisabeth's religiosity was also a topic discussed in contemporary sources. As it has been already mentioned, her opponents did not miss the opportunity to raise the unusual background of this Hungarian queen. Particularly Bruno, bishop of Olomouc, used this issue as the part of his pro-Bohemian political propaganda. In 1272 he pointed out in his report to Pope Gregory X that the "...Queen of Hungary is a Cuman...her closest relatives are and were pagans."²⁴² However, Bruno failed to mention that the very closest relatives of the queen – her parents – had already been baptized in 1254.²⁴³ While Bruno recalled the scandalous aspect of Stephen's marriage, it is also important to offer some reasoning, which stood behind his

²⁴⁰ *Hungary in the thirteenth century*, 255.

²⁴¹ *The Realm of Saint Stephen*, 108.

²⁴² *Ipsa Regina Ungarie est Cumana, proximi parentes eius gentiles sunt et fuerunt*. VMH, 308. Besides, Bishop Bruno demonstrated the decline of the true Christianity in the Kingdom of Hungary by his statement that the two daughters of the King Béla "married the Russians, who are schismatics." (*Due filie Regis Ungarie Ruthenis, qui sunt Scismatici, desponsate fuerunt*) Ibid.

²⁴³ See *At the Gates of Christendom*, 261.

account. Bruno himself was closely linked to Přemysl Otakar II of Bohemia and therefore may have held a hostile position towards the Hungarian royal court. Although Otakar and Stephen contracted a peace treaty in 1272, the relations between the countries were still complicated and the policy of Stephen's administrative can hardly be labelled as Bohemian-friendly.²⁴⁴

Bohemian sources treated Elisabeth's origin with the suspicion – it was convenient material for their propaganda. When the chronicler John of Maringola wrote his chronicle in the fourteenth century, relying on older Bohemian sources, he also stated that although the wife of King Stephen was baptized she was *still* of Cuman origin.²⁴⁵

As Nora Berend states in *At the Gates of Christendom*, modern scholars' views on Elisabeth were often influenced by evidence that she took ecclesiastical properties as well as her Cuman origin.²⁴⁶ One such piece of evidence can be found in the charter of King Ladislaus issued in 1284, where he urges his mother to return the lands of the Zagreb bishop which she had occupied illegally.²⁴⁷

Berend's point is that this charter also must be perceived in the context of the contemporary situation in Hungary, when the fighting factions often changed and even the queen mother sometimes found herself on the opposite side from her son, with whom she had been cooperating only months before.²⁴⁸ Besides, it has to be stressed that Ladislaus issued this charter in 1284 – in the period when his relations with the Church were far from good – and he still insisted upon the return of the clergyman's properties. As well as this is no evidence about his affection towards church, it can be only a weak evidence for Elisabeth's anti-ecclesiastical attitude

²⁴⁴ *Realm of Saint Stephen*, 107.

²⁴⁵ *...uxor Regis Stephani Cumana nacione, licet baptizata...* Kronika Jana z Maringoly [The Chronicle of John of Maringola], in *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum*, ed. Josef Emler. (Prague: Nakl. Musea Království českého, 1873-1884) (reprint: Georg Olms: Hildesheim, 2004), 568.

²⁴⁶ *At the Gates of Christendom*, 262.

²⁴⁷ *...ac occupation indebita, contra Deum et iustitiam attentata.* CDH V.3, 245-246.

²⁴⁸ See chapter **Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman: Introducing the historical characters**, 45.

While the queen's hostility towards the church basically included only this main argument – the taking of the ecclesiastical land – which can be easily discredited in regard to the momentary political situation, her other actions completely followed the pattern of the ideal Christian queen. Elisabeth is indeed no exception among the Hungarian queens; she showed piety, made donations to monasteries and churches, and the offices at her court were held by the high ecclesiastical dignitaries, as was traditional, among her chancellors were, for instance, the provost of Esztergom Luke,²⁴⁹ and, in the late 1270s, Philip, bishop of Vác.²⁵⁰ It also cannot be forgotten that Elisabeth as the governor of Macsó and Bosnia promised to deal with the heretic movements in the area of her competencies.

One of Elisabeth's daughter, also Elisabeth,²⁵¹ was, for instance, sent to the convent on Rabbit Island following the example of Saint Margaret. Subsequently Elisabeth donated properties to the convent, for instance in 1272, when Elisabeth gave to the monastery possession one of her properties, a certain land, called "Drug...which is connected to the land of the Esztergom Chapter, called similarly Drug (as well)."²⁵² King Stephen was devoted to his saintly sister Margaret – he even chose her monastery as his burial place. After Stephen's death, the cult of Margaret was still held in the high esteem at the royal court as the story, as the miraculous healing of Ladislaus attests.²⁵³

Simply, there is more evidence which confirms that the religious views of Elisabeth the Cuman did not vary much from those of her predecessors. Truly, she was born pagan, but baptised as an infant when she married Stephen. She herself noted that early stage of her life only in the charter from May 1290 where in the beginning she thanks to God for saving her

²⁴⁹ He is mentioned as the one, who produced Elisabeth's chapters in 1280. *Regesta ducum*, 85-91.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 78.

²⁵¹ And therefore another Árpadian bearing the name of Saint Elisabeth of Thuringia.

²⁵² *quondam terram Drug vocata, que terre Capituli Strigoniensis similiter Drug vocata est annexa*. CDAC VIII, 395-396.

²⁵³ See chapter **The mutual relationship between Maria and Elisabeth**, 56.

from her “pagan error.”²⁵⁴ This is also the same charter where Elisabeth pleads for the salvation of her soul and for that of her closest relatives, among whom she names particularly her husband, son, and parents-in-law. This does not mean that Queen Elisabeth completely cut the bonds with her Cuman background. There is, however, only very subtle and questionable evidence which could challenge her representation as a traditional Christian queen. On the contrary, the arguments confirming the opposite are much more numerous.

In the case of Queen Maria, her piety or true Christianity was never doubted nor questioned. The same attributes which have already been named for Elisabeth were met by Maria Laskaris, donor to the Church, undeniably a pious woman and the supporter of the mendicant orders. These close connections are displayed, for instance, in her association with the Dominican Order, where Princess Margaret was placed – the convent was constructed on land belonging to the queen’s properties.²⁵⁵ According to Thomas of Split, there were two Friars Minor appointed with the delicate mission to bring the angry queen back to the royal court.²⁵⁶ In addition, Maria gratefully thanked the Franciscan, Friar John when he helped to achieve an agreement between Béla and Stephen.²⁵⁷

Maria’s husband himself is known to have been on very good terms with the mendicants, although he later favoured the Franciscans much more than the Dominicans. Béla believed that the Dominican influence crossed his dynastic plans and therefore banned the order from the royal court.²⁵⁸ This was probably reflected in the *Vita* of his daughter Kunigunda, the duchess of Cracow, where it is explicitly stated that Maria herself first favoured Dominicans – only later (though here she was inspired by the preferences of her saintly daughter) did she turn to the Friars Minor.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁴ ... *nostri creatoris, quibus nos a gentilitates errore revocatam*. HO VIII 279-280.

²⁵⁵ For the foundation of the Rabbit Island monastery see *Legenda Beatae Margarita*, 686.

²⁵⁶ Thomas of Split, 372.

²⁵⁷ See CDH, IV.3, 68-69 and the chapter **The mutual relationship between Maria and Elisabeth**, 50.

²⁵⁸ See chapter **The mutual relationship between Maria and Elisabeth**, 56.

²⁵⁹ *Vita Sanctae Kunegundis*, 142.

Moreover, Maria was also the mother of at least three saintly princesses.²⁶⁰ That Maria's court was very religious is beyond question, although, which is interesting, her Orthodox background never became an issue. If someone did not know about the Orthodoxy of the Laskarids, he would never guess that Maria's original beliefs were not those of Western Christianity. No increased support for the Greek monastery or the Orthodox communities is recorded during Béla's times – Maria clearly adopted the religious norms of the Latin Christianity.

The queen and the mother

The last category which this chapter addresses concerning the queens' representations in the written sources is that of the queen as a mother. Both Maria and Elisabeth became the mothers of large families, both secured the dynasty with an heir, and both had at least complicated relationships with their firstborn sons for various reasons. Both were the mothers of princesses who entered the convent as well as those who became crucial in the Árpád dynastic politics. How much sources reveal about their relationship with their children and how do they evaluate their maternal roles?

Both Maria and Elisabeth were mothers of large families: Maria bore Béla eight daughters and two sons; Elisabeth was the mother of at least four daughters and also of two sons. Maria's relationship with her older son was quite complicated, heavily influenced by family struggles. In contrast, she was close to her younger son, Slavonian Duke Béla. This proximity is reflected first in the diplomatic sources, where Maria's donation policy coincided with that of Duke Béla. Second, Maria is often represented as acting on behalf of or in the cooperation with her son – as, for instance, in her journey to Dalmatia recorded by Thomas of

²⁶⁰ Margaret, Kunigunda and Yolanda, former two are canonised, latter beatified. The fourth sister can be added as well to this threesome: Constance, the wife of Leo of Galicia. See *Holy Rulers, Blessed Princesses*, 208, 231.

Split²⁶¹ - and this is confirmed in various charters.²⁶² Third, the closeness of the royal couple and their younger son can be seen in their burial place, since they were all buried in Esztergom.²⁶³

The relationship between Maria and her daughters also offers interesting stories. As queen mother she is first mentioned in the biography of her saintly daughter, Margaret, as the one with whom the nun had the most cordial relationship. Longer passages concerning Maria Laskaris are also included in the vita of another of her daughters who was later canonised – Saint Kunigunda. First, the dream of Queen Maria before the birth of her oldest daughter is told; later, the source reveals Maria's disapproval of Kunigunda's marriage to Boleslaus the Shy and her hostility towards Boleslaus' sister, the Blessed Salome, who became a kind of spiritual tutor to young Princess Kunigunda after her arrival in Cracow.

First, Maria is represented as a worried young woman awaiting the birth of her first child who became calm when she heard a voice from heavens comforting her and announcing the birth of a girl, who would give her great pleasure.²⁶⁴ This scene prevailingly suited the purposes of the hagiographical genre, but this is not the sole account of Maria in Kunigunda's vita. The queen is mentioned on the occasion of her change in sympathies towards the Franciscans and later on in even more interesting context when she got into conflict again.²⁶⁵

At this time the author of vita records Maria's hostility towards Princess Salome, the sister of Kunigunda's future husband – but also the sister-in-law of Maria herself.²⁶⁶ As far as the story in the vita is concerned,²⁶⁷ the conflict between the two of them was triggered when

²⁶¹ Thomas of Split, 366.

²⁶² For instance CDH IV.2, 236-237 or Ibid., 399-401.

²⁶³ Henry of Mügel, 208 or Chronicon Knauzianum, SRH II, 339.

²⁶⁴ The story about the anxious queen is included in the both versions of Kunigunda's hagiographical sources

²⁶⁵ This "again" refers to the account of Thomas of Split.

²⁶⁶ Salome was married to Béla's brother, Slavonian Duke Coloman. Her marriage to Coloman was contracted in 1214 by her father Prince Lešek the White and Andrew II, in order to connect the Lesser Polish and Hungarian claims on Galicia, though Coloman never succeeded to be established in Galicia. Then he was made the Duke of Slavonia later on. After his death, following the battle at Mohi in 1241, Salome moved back to Poland.

²⁶⁷ Because if there were some tensions between Maria and Salome, these are impossible to be revealed in regards to the period while both women were living at the same royal court, being married with two brothers.

Salome (according to the *vita*) literally abducted young Kunigunda in order to marry the girl to Boleslaus and sent her secretly to Cracow. The legend's author sees this deed within the frame of the positive, pious activities of Blessed Salome, who had found in Kunigunda a successor of her own works and policies.²⁶⁸

After such an incident, the wedding followed, unattended by the royal parents of Princess Kunigunda. Later, unsurprisingly, when Salome came to Hungary again to meet the royal court at Esztergom, Maria forbade any signs of honouring Salome's status to be shown. Miraculously indeed (which is the point of Kunigunda's biographer) the two women were reconciled and Maria Laskaris was eager to put aside her "old anger."²⁶⁹ This should have been the reminiscence of the story bound with Kunigunda's marriage – regardless the reliability of the secretly taking the princess to Hungary – it is obvious that Maria was not really reconciled with the idea of the marriage between her firstborn daughter and the Cracowian duke – maybe the match she had found unsuitable for the descendant of her renowned line, joined together with that of Árpáds. On the other hand, her hostility could have simply reflected the previous possible animosities between King Béla and his brother (Salome's husband). No other accounts can tell much about the relationship between two royal ladies – the *vita* of Salome herself says nothing at all about her sister-in-law.²⁷⁰

Judging from the written source evidence, Maria was probably indeed a loving mother, but her relationships with her numerous children varied and were naturally complicated. As it seems, she, like Béla, was closer to their younger son than the firstborn, Stephen, towards whom she indeed had ambiguous attitude, already discussed above. Her interactions with her

²⁶⁸ *Vita Sanctae Kyngae*, 128.

²⁶⁹ ...*Maria pohamowała swój dawny gniew i poprosiła, by przyprowadzić do niej jej córkę, to jest Kingę*. Ibid., 155-156.

²⁷⁰ Interestingly though it says something about the relationship between Salome and the second wife of King Andrew II, Yolanda de Courtenay – it is said that this Queen was fond of tournaments, which Salome as the woman rejecting earthly vanities, did not approve. Anyway this short account offers a brief glimpse into the courtly life during the reign of last Árpádians. See *Vitae sanctae Salomeae Reginae Haliciensis*, in *Średniowieczne życiorysy Bł. Kingi i Bł. Salomei* [Medieval Lives of Blessed Kunigunda and Blessed Salome] ed. Jerzy Andrzej Wojtczak (Warsaw: Zakład Graficzny., 1999), 208.

children, however, help to add some further characteristic features to the image of Maria's personality.

Concerning the medieval requirements for the queen as a mother, Maria with her ten children, who were seemingly raised in a very pious environment, managed to meet the expectations which her role demanded of her. Elisabeth the Cuman also filled the traditional role of the royal female very well. Among her children, more is known about the relationship between her and her oldest son, Ladislaus, than the others.

The daughters of Queen Elisabeth married while still young and moved to their new homelands: Naples, Serbia, and Byzantium.²⁷¹ Not much can be concluded about the relationship of Elisabeth and her younger son, Andrew, the duke of Slavonia, though his story is quite interesting and puzzling. The life story of the younger prince disappears in the shadows – although traditionally it has been assumed that he died sometime around 1278. In the vita of Saint Kunigunda he is reported to have fled to Poland at some point to seek shelter against his own brother, Ladislaus.²⁷² Whether this man was indeed the son of Elisabeth is unclear, but Kunigunda and her Piast allies intended to use him as a candidate for the Hungarian throne. However, this “Andrew” was murdered in 1290, therefore did not manage to fulfil the hopes of his supporters.²⁷³ Elisabeth's connections to this person and her attitude towards the whole event are unknown. If it was really Andrew who appeared in Poland, his presence there was the result of a momentary political situation, which was the factor that also influenced Elisabeth's attitude towards her older son.

The sources speak eloquently about the alliance changing during Elisabeth's regency and the rule of Ladislaus IV. Once mother and son stood together – a short while afterwards they were rivals – owing to the momentary development and will of the most prominent nobles. Her position as a regent was especially complicated from the aspect of her

²⁷¹ See the chapter **Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman: introducing the historical characters**, 36.

²⁷² *Vita Sanctae Kyngae*, 274-275.

²⁷³ Martin Homza, “Sv. Kunigunda a Spiš”, 402.

motherhood – as, for instance, when she pleaded for the freedom of Ladislaus only a short time after he became the king of Hungary following the death of Stephen V. It is said that she visited Joachim Gutkeled, who held the boy captive – according to Kosztolnyik, this visit was misinterpreted, however, and considered her subjection to Gutkeled – which did not win her much favour.²⁷⁴ Elisabeth perhaps acted as any mother would – putting aside politics – she only wanted to set her son free. That her actions were also influenced by the wish to gain the power, however, cannot be also rejected completely.

Despite the changes in the relationship between Elisabeth and Ladislaus during the following turbulent years, Ladislaus and the people around him found Elisabeth reliable and suitable to secure the royal authority in specific territories. That would imply that his mother was one of his closest allies. What can be argued is that Ladislaus was much influenced by the Cuman origin of Queen Elisabeth.

It may be a bit puzzling, but when looks over the actions and representations of Ladislaus and those of Elisabeth, he seems to have been far more influenced by Cumans than his mother. Presumably, he had come into the contact with their customs and way of life at the court of his father – his mother was also known for supporting her Cuman relatives, and naturally she was the first link between Ladislaus himself and the Cumans. However, as can be concluded from the sources, it was only queen's *origin*, not that much her *actions*, which is emphasized in connection to the Cumans.²⁷⁵

While Ladislaus' problems with the clergy were gradually growing, Elisabeth, for instance in 1280 promised as the Duchess of Macsó and Bosna to follow the instructions of the Papal Legate Philip of Fermo to fight the heretics in the territory which falls under her

²⁷⁴ See *Hungary in Thirteenth Century*, 254-255.

²⁷⁵ As it has been seen above, although for instance bishop Bruno of Olomouc who fails to give specific example of Elisabeth's improper behaviour. See VMH, 308.

competence.²⁷⁶ The problem for a further definition of Elisabeth's position in Hungary, especially in later 1280s, rests on the lack of source material which would specify her contemporary whereabouts, actions, and attitudes. Therefore the possibilities of defining her influence upon her son's government (or rather his reluctance to govern the kingdom) and their mutual relationship are subtle indeed. Ladislaus is still listed among those for whom Elisabeth pleads in her charter for the Dominican convent. This document from 1290 is one of the very few sources which can throw some light on Elisabeth the Cuman as the queen mother – though it still does not reveal much.

Visual representations of Maria and Elisabeth on seals

While the written evidence concerning both women is not very large, the visual material is even scarcer. One of the rare occasions of Maria's depiction is the image in the *Illuminated Chronicle*, where she is presented as witnessing the coronation of Stephen – she is standing behind Béla, who is placing the crown on Stephen's head.²⁷⁷ However, this depiction cannot be compared with a similar representation for Elisabeth. This image is still interesting, however, and leaves an impression, supporting Maria's representation as the faithful, supportive queen consort – standing at her husband's side, but still a bit in behind – which can be also perceived in connection with her image prevailing in the written sources. On the other hand, both queens disposed with their own seals.²⁷⁸ The queens' seal held similar importance

²⁷⁶ ...ad requisicionem et commonicionem Reverendi patris nostri Philippi dei gracia Firmani episcopo, apostolice sedis legati, promictimus et assumimus per presentes, quod omnia statute, iura atque decreta contra hereticos et hereticam pravitatem, quibuscumque nominibus censeantur, per sanctam sedem apostolicam edita aut approbata, seu etiam acceptata, observabimus et ad mandatum sancte ecclesie Romane, et per nos etiam ea efficaciter faciemus a nostris subditis in ducatus ceterisque comitatibus nostre Reginali potestati subiectis inviolabiliter observari... VMH, 348.

²⁷⁷ *Chronica Picta*, 127. See TABLE V.

²⁷⁸ Seal (lat. sigillum) served as the main device of proving the credibility of the document to which the seal itself was attached. The most important among the seals was of course in the Kingdom of Hungary that one of the king himself, from the point of view of hierarchy, the seal of the queen, palatine, members of the royal council and the highest clergymen followed. Among the Árpadian queens (except of these two) Yolanda of Courtenay, Isabella of Naples, Fennena Piast and Agnes Habsburg used their own seals (all of them thirteenth

to that of the king – they were also called “authentic,” which meant that they had full legal authority. Their design also followed the formal style of king’s seal.²⁷⁹ The queens sometimes used different seals during their lifetimes – two available seals of Maria and Elisabeth are depicted below. All accessible relevant data concerning any other seals of these two are given below.

The Seal of Maria Laskaris



The seal measures approximately eighty mm in diameter. It depicts Maria sitting on the throne, holding the sceptre in her right hand and probably holding the orb in her left hand.

century queens, beginning with Yolanda, who married Andrew II in 1215) See Bernát L. Kumorovit, *A magyar pecséthasználat története a középkorban* [History of using seals in medieval Hungary] (reprint Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum, 1993) 55-56.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

The queen is wearing a crown. The seal is encircled most probably with the following inscription: “MARIA DEI GRACIA REGINA HVNGARIE.”²⁸⁰ The inscription, however, is not very well preserved.



The reverse part of the seal shows the double cross as the symbol of the Kingdom of Hungary, encircled again with the inscription – preserved even worse than on the obverse. Judging by the other preserved thirteenth-century queens’ seals,²⁸¹ the writing may refer to the origin of Maria Laskaris – which would agree with the number of letters and with the placing

²⁸⁰ *Maria, by the God’s grace, the Queen of Hungary*

²⁸¹ See below. The similar is the case for example of the seal of Fennena Piast, the first wife of last Árpáadian king, Andrew III. Her seal inscription also refer to her father. For her seal see Ladislav Vrtel, *Osem storočí slovenskej heraldiky* [Eight centuries of Slovak Heraldry] (Martin: Matica Slovenská, 1999) 52.

of those of letters, which can be recognized. Therefore the inscription itself may have said:
“MARIA FILIA IMPERATORIS GRAECORVM.”²⁸²

This particular seal was attached to Maria’s charter issued in 1267 that confirm the privileges given by her son, the Slavonian Duke Béla, to *comes* Nicolas, son of Julius of Siklós.²⁸³

The seal of Elisabeth the Cuman



This seal measures approximately eighty-five mm in diameter. The front part of the seal shows Queen Elisabeth with the crown above her head. Her hands are crossed on her breast and she sits on a throne decorated with wolves’ heads at sides. The inscription states:
“ELISABET DEI GRATIA REGINA VNGARIE ET FILIA IMPERATORIS

²⁸² “Maria, the daughter of the Greek Emperor”

²⁸³ *Nicolaus comes filius Iule de Suclous* This Suclous stands for Siklós, which is in former county of Baranya. Magyar Országos Levéltár (Hungarian National Archive). The charter of Maria Laskaris with attached double-sided seal, 1267, DL 686.

CVMANORVM”²⁸⁴ In this case, the letters are a bit better preserved than in Maria’s case and the seal itself was re-drawn, which may help the identification of the inscription.



The reverse also bears the depiction of the double cross as in Maria’s case. The inscription, encircling this part of the seal says: “S (sigillum).VXORIS STEFANI REGIS QVINTI QVARTI BELE ILLVSSTRIS REGIS FILII.”²⁸⁵ This seal was attached to Elisabeth’s donation charter to *comes* Dominic, son of Peter of the Csák family,²⁸⁶ issued in 1273 at the beginning of her regency for Ladislas IV.²⁸⁷

Comparison of Maria’s and Elisabeth’s seal representations

²⁸⁴ *Elisabeth, by the God’s grace the Queen of Hungary, the daughter of the Emperor of the Cumans* Elisabeth’s charter was re-drawn by András Palóczy Horváth in *Cumans, Iasians, Pechenegs*, 78. TABLE V.

²⁸⁵ *Seal of the wife of the King Stephen V., the son of illustrious King Béla IV.*

²⁸⁶ Peter was the judge of Elisabeth’s curia ...*fili petri...judicis curiae nostrae* See DL 844.

²⁸⁷ Magyar Országos Levéltár (Hungarian National Archive). The charter of Elisabeth the Cuman with attached double-sided seal, 1273, DL 844.

The seal of Queen Elisabeth more complicated, or rather, more detailed in the amount of written text. On the other hand, the model is basically the same: on the obverse side the queen herself is depicted, identified in both cases with the traditional *intitulatio*: “X, by the God’s grace the Queen of Hungary.” Both are also depicted sitting on the throne, having the royal authority strengthened by wearing a crown. Besides, in Maria’s case, she is obviously wielding the sceptre as well, but Elisabeth is lacking this attribute. Both Maria and Elisabeth are distinguished by their origins, although the location of this statement differs: in former’s case it is on the obverse, in the latter case on the reverse.

Elisabeth’s seal inscription carries the information that she is the wife of King Stephen, who is “the son of King Béla.” It is also interesting to note that both charters are connected with the role of queen mother – Maria issues a confirmation of privileges awarded by her younger son Béla; Elisabeth is acting as the regent of her older son, Ladislaus, at the time of issuing of the seal – this fact only confirms that the figure of the royal mother had its significance.

Both women are also represented through their origins. There is nothing extraordinary about Maria’s “Greek” ancestry, but the “daughter of the Cuman emperor” in Elisabeth’s case triggered interest and served as an argument about her unsuitability for the model medieval queen.²⁸⁸

However, Nora Berend argues against this attitude, stating that “the idea of descent from an ‘emperor’ did not originate in Cuman pride...rather it indicated Christian references and an attempt to assert authority.”²⁸⁹ This statement indeed harmonizes with Elisabeth’s actions. Berend’s thesis that this part of the inscription represents “Elisabeth’s claim to

²⁸⁸ *At the Gates of Christendom*, 263. Ladislaus’s deep affection with the Cumans and living according to their customs was of course presented as the result of his mother’s origin. Gyula Pauler, *Magyar Nemzet Története*, 333.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

rulership simultaneously as conferred on her by her birth (descent from an emperor)²⁹⁰ seems questionable. Elisabeth was not made regent because of her origin, but because of her motherhood – and, of course, because she was queen – the widow of Stephen V. The use of the term “emperor of the Cumans” may have been an attempt to make the parallel in the Christian hierarchy of rulership explicit as a device to support Elisabeth’s authority in a turbulent time. As András Pálóczi Horváth has commented in his work on the Cumans as such as well as the Cumans in Hungary: in their perception the title “emperor” was the equivalent of “khan.”²⁹¹

In 1280 the information on Elisabeth’s ancestry was missing from her seal – she may not have needed to strengthen her authority by glorifying her origin as she had done in 1273.²⁹² However, while the queen mother’s situation was maybe less threatened than in 1273, in 1280 Elisabeth was still very active politically – this was the period when she held first Spiš as her domain and then Bosnia and Macsó as well. Therefore she still needed to assert the authority.

Leaving off the “daughter of the Cuman emperor” formula may offer a clue to another aspect of Elisabeth’s self representation – with the emphasis on may. After the synod of Buda and first major conflicts between the clergy and Ladislaus,²⁹³ is there a possibility that his mother just did not find it proper to present herself as kin to the Cumans? This must remain only on the level of the hypothesis for now.

Among the data available directly or indirectly on this topic,²⁹⁴ there is another seal depiction of Maria. In this case, she is depicted at her husband’s side as the co-founder of the Rabbit Island Monastery on the seal of the convent from 1280s which represents the

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ *Cumans, Pechenegs, Iasians*, 78.

²⁹² *At the Gates of Christendom*, 263.

²⁹³ See chapter **Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman: Introducing the historical characters**, 46.

²⁹⁴ Which simply means either the seals I was able to find and see myself or those about which I have only the transmitted knowledge

foundation of the monastery. The royal couple can be seen kneeling, raising the new-born child to the Virgin Mary.²⁹⁵ This is undoubtedly a reference to the story in the legend of Saint Margaret that her royal parents promised their youngest daughter to the Virgin at birth.

Maria's piety²⁹⁶ as displayed on this seal should be stressed, but one must bear in mind that this is just an additional example of her representation, not really falling into the previously discussed category, of the queen's *own* seal.

To sum up, Maria's visual representation does not contradict at any point the patterns of Hungarian medieval queenship. Elisabeth's case is a bit more complicated; in the written sources and definitely in the seal representations, too. Her origin was an issue here – and that is also closely connected with her religiosity. However, the information available suggests that it Elisabeth's idea was not to oppose the established patterns of a queen's behaviour – or rather to emphasize her unusual background.

It seems that, although coming from such a different background and experiencing different circumstances, the visual representations of Maria and Elisabeth mostly harmonized and followed similar patterns. The differences are the result of the fact that each case includes its individual features and was influenced by varying circumstances.

²⁹⁵ *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses*, 261. For the image of the seal see Appendix, TABLE V.

²⁹⁶ As well as the fact that she was very much connected with the monastery, founded on her own estate.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this paper was to present the life stories of the two not-well-known Árpadian queens – Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman – and seek answers to the research questions – who they were, how they were represented and how much they suited into the established queenship patterns – primarily by introducing the comparative approach, juxtaposing both characters together and also comparing their source representations with established patterns of the medieval queenship.

First I have outlined the main features of queens' roles and duties – some crucial points which defined the status of a medieval queen – therefore also the status of the queen of Hungary. She was firstly the symbol of an achieved political alliance – “almost by definition.”²⁹⁷ As it turned out, the queen being a foreigner may have meant difficulties for her in regards to the native nobility. The case was not only that she was not Hungarian, of course; her influence could also trigger disagreement – even to the very ultimate extent – the assassination of the queen.

On the other hand, it was natural in the medieval understanding of the world that the queen was supposed to have some influence. The acceptance of its extent was however questionable and being a powerful political player was not really desirable. However, she obtained reginal estates and conducted her own policies – gave donations, confirmed privileges, and corresponded with the papal curia, for instance. Her duty was also to secure the continuation of the dynasty. Besides, charity and piety were required as basic features of the medieval queen. In her status of the king's wife – she was not expected to differ from any common woman – being an obedient, loyal, and supportive spouse.

²⁹⁷ János Bak, “Queens as scapegoats,” 228.

As has been already stated, these patterns were introduced in the thesis in order to create a general background for presenting Maria and Elisabeth and setting their own agency into a broader conceptualization of the Árpadian (and generally medieval) queenship.

Subsequently I have presented both queens as individuals, provided their accessible biographical data, figured out who they were and to what extent were they influential as queens of Hungary. If these data appeared to be controversial, I have attempted to offer possible alternative interpretations within the academic discourse, also providing their pros and cons. When juxtaposing these two characters, interesting observations emerged. While they came from very different milieus and their lives were influenced many times by various kinds of circumstances, their careers followed a similar path to some extent. Though, for instance, their religious background before marriage differed a great deal and was Latin Christian in neither case, both queens seem to have acted like Latin Christian queens – although this was debated and objected to in the case of Elisabeth. However, there are strong arguments to reject this view and support her representation as a Christian queen.²⁹⁸

To sum up the common issues, both Elisabeth and Maria became the members of the Árpadian dynasty at a young age. Marrying the heirs to the throne, they both became the consorts of the appointed ruler of Slavonia and young queens of Hungary – both of them were later made to move from Slavonia to Transylvania. As far as the sources are concerned, Maria as well as Elisabeth supported their husbands,²⁹⁹ which inevitably meant being involved in the conflict between the ruling king and his successor.

However, their careers after their husbands became the (senior) kings of Hungary differed – Maria held this title for thirty-five years, Elisabeth only for two. On the contrary, after her husband died, she became the regent for her son Ladislaus. That would suggest that Elisabeth actually had the opportunity to execute power more strongly and openly than Maria.

²⁹⁸ See below.

²⁹⁹ Though in Maria's case the incident with her possible repudiation from the early stage of her marriage should be remembered as well.

However, Maria turned to be not only a supportive faithful wife (though maybe perceived as standing in the shadow of her husband), but also a woman who indeed conducted her own policy.

On the other hand, Elisabeth's position as regent was complicated thanks to the contemporary situation, when the most powerful magnates took control, fighting the king and each other alternately. Despite this, Elisabeth cannot be perceived as an insignificant figure, later being appointed also with offices which no queen had held before – the governance of Bosnia, Macsó, and Spiš.

I have attempted to address also the mutual relationship of Maria and Elisabeth and answer the question of how their relationship was influenced by the events; they were both involved in a task, which could be accomplished only to the limited extent due to the lack of source material concerning this particular issue. Therefore I have offered more clues than certain statements. Definitely, the two of them knew each other well and were in close contact as mother- and daughter-in-law. The main obstacle in their relationship was the war between their husbands, of course, but some sources leave the impression that their relationship was not that hostile.³⁰⁰ Besides, Elisabeth's husband was still Maria's son and both royal couples seem to have been connected with the figure of Princess Margaret, who used her influence and renown to reconcile her father with her brother. On the contrary, even these attempts usually failed. However, as has been already stated, these are clues which can outline the main features of Maria's attitude towards Elisabeth and vice versa – the amount of source material at this stage does not allow examination of this topic more precisely.

Last, I have focused on the sources representation of Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman in order to answer my last research question: How were the general patterns of medieval queenship reflected in these two particular examples of Árpadian queenship?

³⁰⁰ As, for instance, one of Elisabeth's daughters was named Maria, while none of their sons bore the name of their grandfather or the style of addressing Maria in Elisabeth's charter pleading for prayers for the salvation of her soul.

Subsequently a few categories of the representation were discussed. First, the original background of both queens – at this point there was nothing to object to Maria's ancestry, which was renowned and noteworthy. Indeed, Elisabeth was not favoured by the chroniclers – I have found the relevant accounts on the perception of her origin in one chronicle only and then in some diplomatic sources and these did not much appreciate that the queen of Hungary was Cuman. Therefore, in this case Maria proved to be more suitable for the role she played than Elisabeth, though through the prism of the momentary needs of Hungarian politics she actually fulfilled the requirements, since the union with Cumans was sought by King Béla in order to protect his country against another possible Mongol invasion by any possible means.

Queen Maria especially, is presented as a faithful wife; when one views her life story she is usually somewhere around her husband, following him and supporting him. But the story of Thomas of Split or the *Legend of Blessed Salome* actually reveal that Maria was not just an undistinguished housewife, but a self-sufficient woman who could get angry and act harshly even without a righteous reason. The bias of Thomas of Split must not be overlooked in this case as well as the possibility of some earlier hostilities between Maria and Salome. These sources offer a different presentation of the woman standing aside – Maria obviously could show her powers – but maybe as in the parallel with Queen Helen,³⁰¹ since her actions were on the behalf of her husband she was not evaluated negatively save in these two cases.

Elisabeth the Cuman did not perform any worse on this point, however, as the source material reveals she indeed supported her husband in his wars against his father. As she stated in one of her charters, already mentioned, Maria and Béla “revolted against us and desired to fight with us,”³⁰² which clearly defines her position in the whole conflict. Elisabeth did not show gratitude to the man who had once made her the potential queen – which on the other hand made her harmonize completely with the model wife.

³⁰¹ The wife of Béla II.

³⁰² CDAC III, 275.

As both Maria and Elisabeth had strong relationships with their husbands, the relationships with their older sons especially were far more complicated. Maria favoured the younger son Béla; Elisabeth's attitude to her other son Andrew is unclear, as is his whole fate. The relationship with the numerous daughters is concealed especially in Elisabeth's case, though both of them placed one of their daughters in the Rabbit Island nunnery. It seems, however, that Maria was particularly close to her youngest daughter, Margaret.

The situation was much different with Stephen – as can be detected in the sources, Maria was comforted when Stephen and Béla reconciled. Despite this, when King Béla died, she led the correspondence with her granddaughter in Bohemia, which showed that she did not have a positive attitude towards her son's rule. Also, the relationship between Elisabeth and Ladislaus was ambiguous; on the one hand Elisabeth was entrusted with high offices during his reign, on the other hand Ladislaus openly opposed her actions at some points. It seems only logical to conclude that the personal level of communication was influenced by the momentary development of events as well.

Both Maria and Elisabeth succeeded in securing the continuity of the dynasty as such – although especially in regard to their firstborn sons they had a complicated relationship. The interesting common issue is that they both exercised (though to a questionable extent) power in the stead of one of their sons. János Bak states that the mother of last Árpáadian king, Andrew III, Thomassina Morosini “was influential in the first years of her son's reign, but probably because of her Venetian background and forceful personality, not through any specific tradition.”³⁰³ However, it seems that there was some basis upon which the authority of the royal mother could have stood. Elisabeth was more a nominal than a real regent – still, she was found suitable to be appointed as the governor of other territories – and so was Maria

³⁰³ Bak, “Roles and functions”, 20.

found suitable for accepting fealty on behalf of her son Béla, instead of whom she travelled to Dalmatia. This again raises the issue of both queens as the women-in-power.

To assert their legal authority, both Maria and Elisabeth wielded their seals, where they are represented particularly in regards to their origin, emphasising the importance of the background the queen of Hungary came from. Besides, Elisabeth was also distinguished by her marriage and the paternal ancestry of her husband. Though the reminiscences on her origin were considered to prove that she was deeply bound with her Cuman roots, the way she was represented on her seal simply follows the same pattern as that of Maria Laskaris. Therefore it is also my conclusion that Elisabeth's actions as preserved in the sources do not oppose the tradition of pious queen consort, loyal first of all to her husband. This is exactly the impression of Maria Laskaris' representation, too, though she also proved to be a much more colourful character than the traditional interpretation of her role assumed. To sum up, both women, coming from different milieus, adapted themselves to their roles seemingly well. Of course, each of them had a different life story due to various circumstances, but after discussing the background of their negative representation in the sources, I would argue that both Elisabeth the Cuman and Maria Laskaris appear to have fulfilled the requirements of the ideal queen consort within the limits of the human possibilities of fitting into established patterns despite various circumstances.

I see my contribution to the academic discourse in this field as offering brief biographies of both Maria Laskaris and Elisabeth the Cuman, who have not been treated as separate subjects before, nor examined comparatively. While the Árpáadian queenship as such is still not an extensively researched topic, with many interesting aspects to address I think that this kind of approach (connecting the biographical account with a comparison within the broader patterns of medieval queenship) can contribute to perspectives of the further research

– not only in the cases of Elisabeth the Cuman and Maria Laskaris as queens, but also within the wider framework of the Árpadian period.

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³⁰⁴ For further references see *Képes Krónika*, ed. János Bollók. Budapest: Osiris, 2004

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APPENDIX

TABLE I. Genealogical table of the Árpáds from Béla III to Andrew III (first part)

TABLE II. Genealogical table of the Árpáds from Béla III to Andrew III (second part)

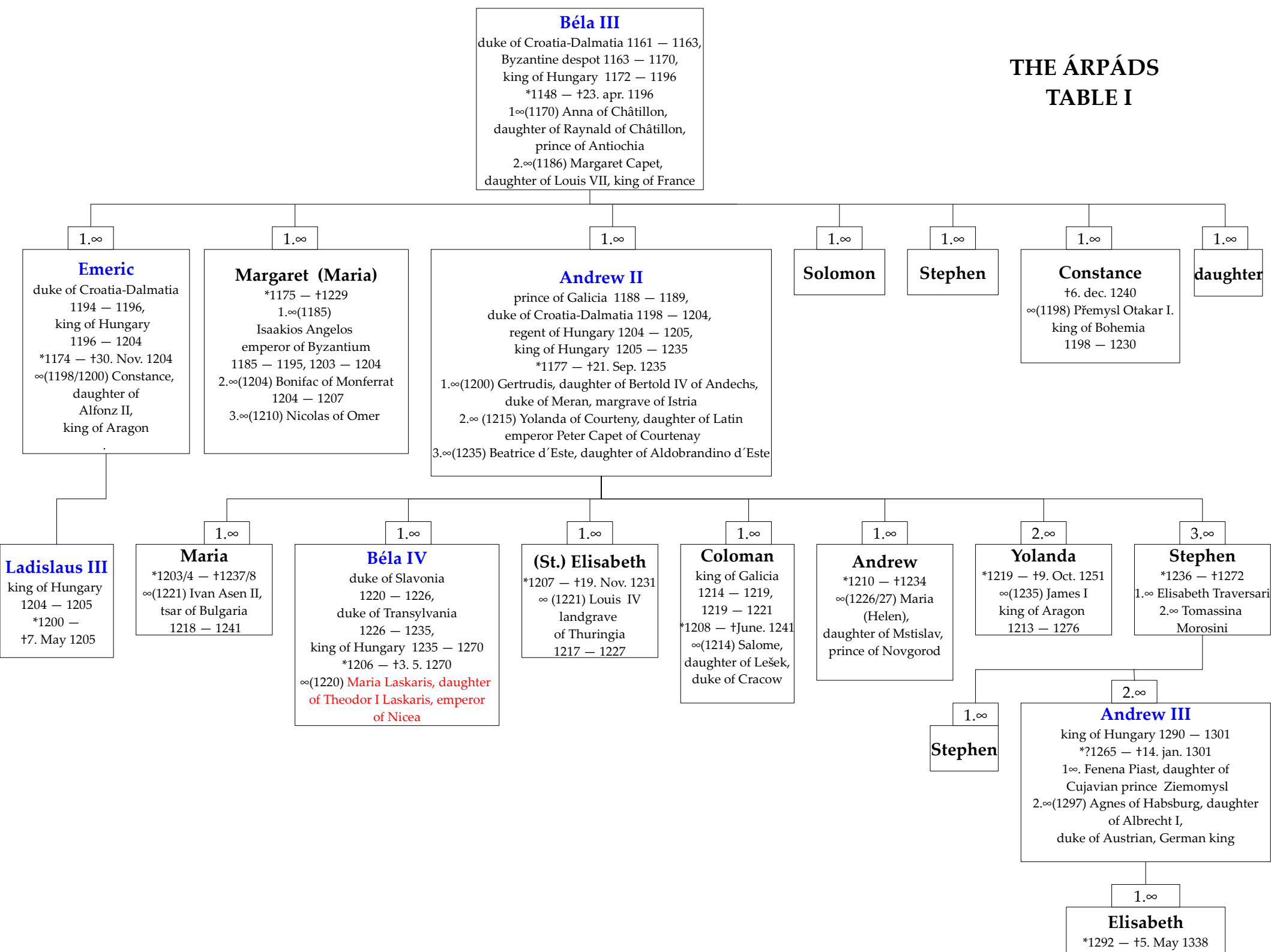
TABLE III. Laskarids – Maria’s family

TABLE IV. Maps: 1. Árpáadian Hungary and the direction of Mongol Invasion; 2. Non- christian population in Hungary

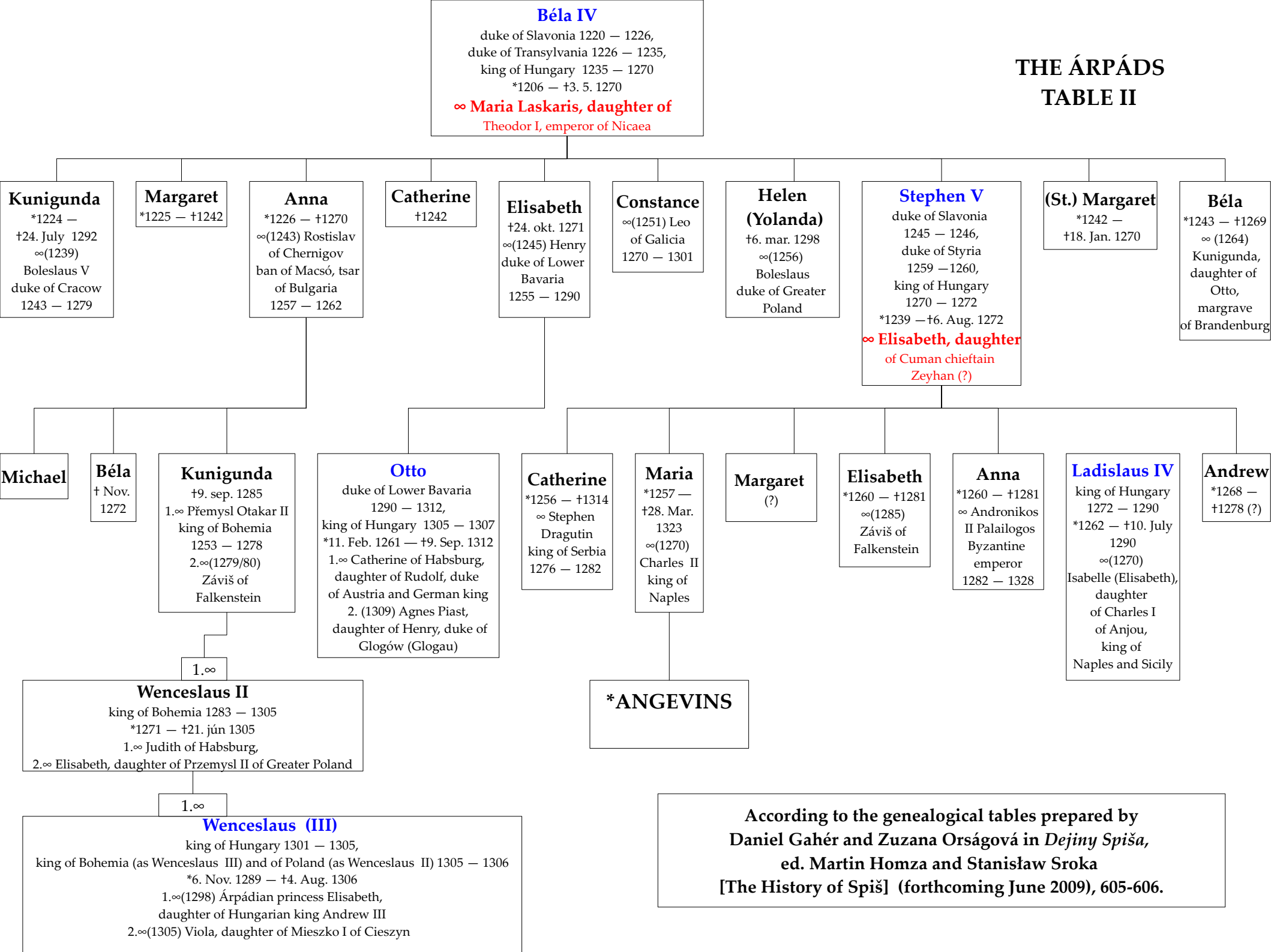
TABLE V. 1. Queen Maria, witnessing the coronation of her son Stephen; 2. Rabbit Island Monastery Seal (1280s), representing the foundation of the convent – royal couple kneeling, offering the baby to Virgin Mary; 3.–4. re-drawing of the seal of Elisabeth the Cuman

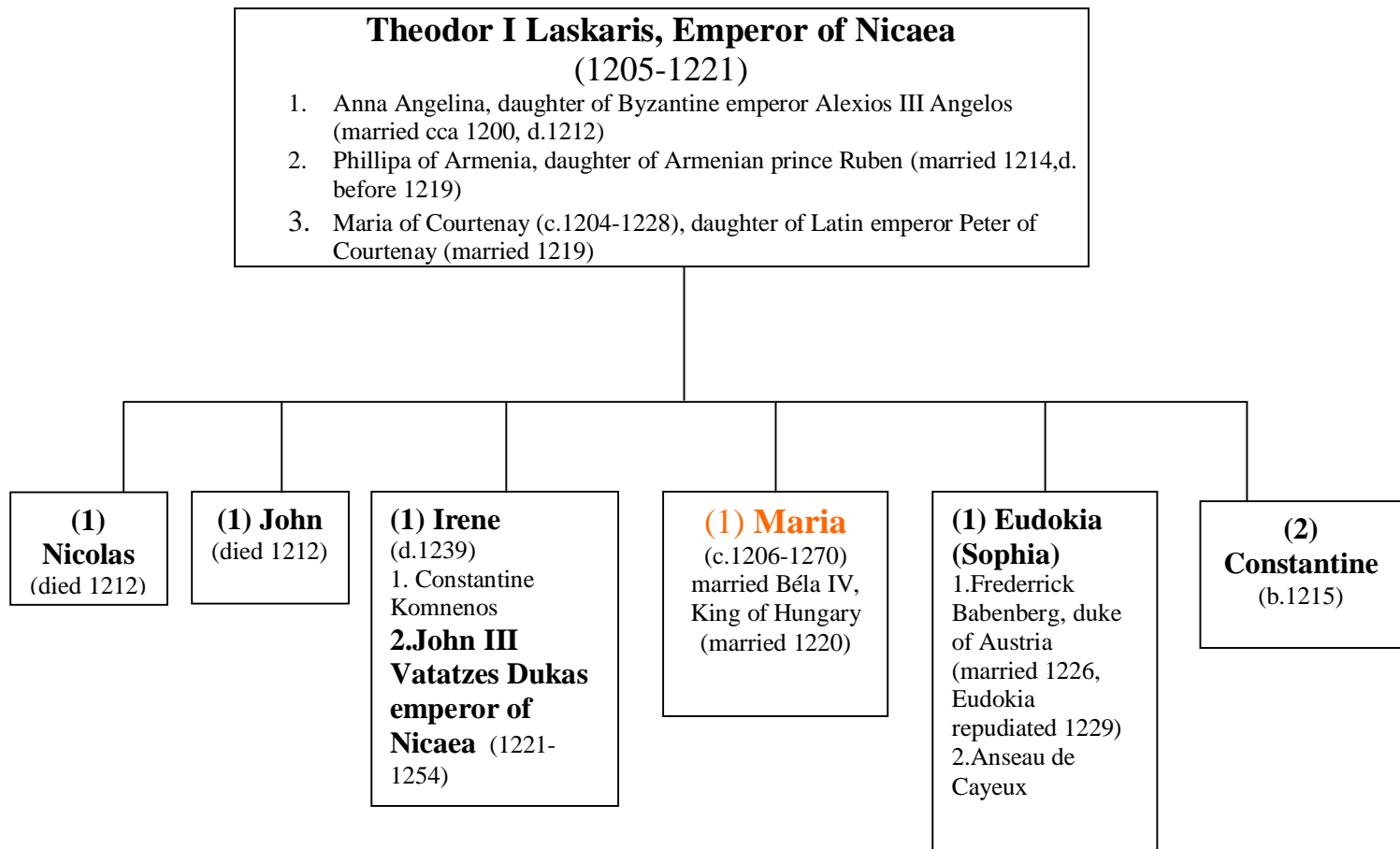
TABLE VI. 1. The charter of Maria Laskaris with the attached seal; 2. The charter of Elisabeth the Cuman with the attached seal

THE ÁRPÁDS
TABLE I



THE ÁRPÁDS TABLE II





MARIA'S FAMILY
(TABLE III)

Prepared according to Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) Table 16 and Gábor Varga, *Ungarn und das Reich vom 10. bis zum 13. Jahrhundert. Das Herrscherhaus der Árpáden zwischen Anlehnung und Emanzipation* [Hungary and the Empire from the Tenth until Thirteenth Century. The Árpadian ruling house between the Dependence and Emancipation] (Münich: Verlag Ungarisches Institut, 2003), 249, 252.

TABLE IV



1. ÁRPÁDIAN HUNGARY AND THE DIRECTION OF MONGOL INVASION¹



2. NON-CHRISTIAN POPULATION IN HUNGARY²

¹ *At the Gate of Christendom*, 18.

² *Ibid.*, 58.

TABLE V



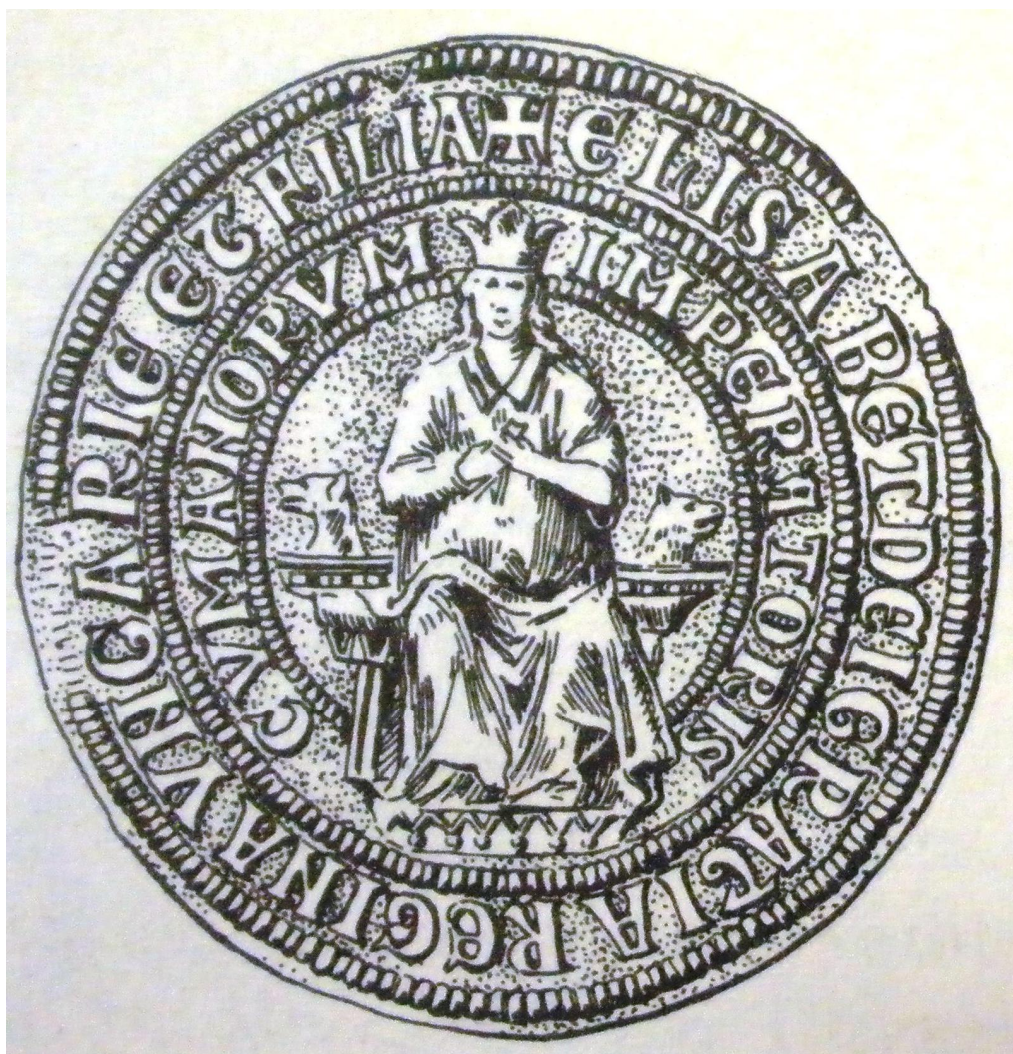
1. Queen Maria, witnessing the coronation of her son Stephen, The Illuminated Chronicle³



2. Rabbit Island Monastery Seal (1280s), representing the foundation of the convent – royal couple kneeling, offering the baby to Virgin Mary⁴

³ *Chronica Picta*, 127. http://konyv-e.hu/pdf/Chronica_Picta.pdf (accessed 14.2.2009)

⁴ Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses. Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 206.



3.-4. re-drawing of the seal of Elisabeth the Cuman, taken from András Pálóczi Horváth, *Cumans, Pechenegs, Iasians: The Steppe people in Medieval Hungary* (Budapest: Corvina, 1989), 78.

TABLE VI



1. The charter of Maria Laskaris with the attached seal, 1267⁵



2. The charter of Elisabeth the Cuman with the attached seal, 1273⁶

⁵ DL 686

⁶ DL 844.

