

A Hunyadiak címereslevelei 1447–1489 [The Hunyadi family grants of arms, 1447–1489]. Edited by Anton Avar. Budapest: National Archives of Hungary, 2018. 320 pp.

A Hunyadiak címereslevelei 1447–1489 [The Hunyadi family grants of arms, 1447–1489] is one of the most ambitious books of recent times in the auxiliary sciences. The purpose of the book is stated clearly by the editor in the introduction. The aim of the volume is to “present the entire corpus of the grants of arms of János and Mátyás Hunyadi in a scholarly manner, in full, with the publication of the complete texts, accompanied by reproductions.” The authors of this volume have fully achieved their aim, and they have produced a work of great importance in the fields of history and art history. Few people could have been better qualified than Anton Avar to produce this work. As a member of the staff of the Hungarian National Archives, he is responsible for the maintenance of the grants of arms database, so neither the period nor the type of source was new to him. As a result, he was able to approach the sources with confidence and to put them in order. He has also managed to bring together the works of various authors to form a single work of scholarship the language of which is consistent and precise. Anton Avar himself has transcribed a considerable number of grants of arms and had written short studies on them, the following collaborators also contributed to the production of the volume: Dávid Faragó, Csaba Farkas, Judit Gál, Éva Gyulai, István Kádas, Dániel Kálmán, Tamás Körmendi, Mihály Kurecskó, Julianna Orsós, György Rácz, Miklós Sölch, and Attila Tuhári.

The book was published in a hardcover edition with a color illustration on the cover capturing the subject, Ambrus Török’s 1481 grant of arms. The table of contents is followed by a short foreword which provides information concerning the various administrative details which were essential to the creation of the book. This is followed by an introductory essay and a study by Árpád Mikó entitled “The Place of Mátyás-period Grants of Arms in the History of Miniature painting.” The introduction provides a more in-depth look at the history of research on the subject since the nineteenth century as well as some discussion of the textual aspects of the present edition. As an example, all seven German-language and 39 Latin-language charters have been printed in letter-for-letter fidelity to the originals, adhering to the distinctive spelling conventions of the period. The reader then comes to the source edition itself, the grants of arms. The structure of the work is as follows for each item: the donor and the

donated party are given as titles. Below this, the place and date of issue and other charter details (original or forged, place of custody, description of status) follow, together with additional informative notes. If the document has already been published, the bibliographical details are also given here. Before the source text, the authors list the most important works in the secondary literature. The authors have published the grants of arms in full, in Latin, in complete transcriptions. In each case, the source is followed by a short essay on the background and content of the issue of the grant of arms. This offers the necessary historical background knowledge and puts the source and the image of the grant of arms in context. Both the studies and the accompanying annotated appendices are valuable resources for scholars of the period and of the subject. The images also add considerably to the value of the work. The transcription in Latin is accompanied by the painted coat-of-arms, and the studies accompanying the source texts are often followed by a high-quality photograph of the grant of arms and/or the seal on it. Below the heraldic images, there is precise documentation which adheres to and makes consistent use of the methodology of the heraldic inscriptions and heraldic terminology.

The publication of the grants of arms for the entire Hunyadi period is a valuable and ambitious undertaking in and of itself, but the pictures add significantly to its merits of this book. After the transcriptions of the texts, there is a brief summary in English of the grants of arms published in the volume as well, followed by the last part of the work, the bibliography, which is divided into a list of the national fonds and holdings to which references are made and the secondary literature which was used. In total, 47 grants of arms have been published, of which 32 were originals and 15 were forgeries. Four of them were from János Hunyadi, one was for János Hunyadi, and 42 were from Mátyás Hunyadi. The volume is an ambitious and major work which constitutes a significant contribution to the field from several perspectives. The inaccuracies in the earlier lists of coats of arms and grants of arms have been corrected, thus providing the reader with a reliable reference work. Furthermore, the authors have made every effort to ensure completeness and have researched all the relevant data. Thus, the book is the product and embodiment of thorough knowledge of the whole corpus of the Hunyadi era, including findings which will be interesting and essential to further research both within Hungary and among the international community of historians. Indeed, it will reveal previously unrecognized connections. A few of the grants of arms worth mention in this context are the 1453 grant of arms to János Hunyadi, the 1459 grant of arms to

Bálint Bakóc, the grant of arms to the town of Késmárk in 1463, and the grant of arms to the town of Sankt Pölten in 1486. In addition to the textual sources, the publication of the pictorial material contributes to the secondary literature on grants of arms as part of the field of art history and philology.

The book will be of use not only to the narrow community of Hungarian scholars of medieval history. It meets the highest international standards of source publications, and thus will certainly win recognition both in Hungary and abroad. The inclusion of explanatory texts in English makes it significantly more accessible to the non-Hungarian readership, and the Latin transcriptions will be of considerable use to members of the international professional community. One might pause to note that it might have added to the value of the book had the authors included at least a short version of the preface in English translation, as this would have made it more easily accessible to the international readership. However, it is unquestionably a major contribution to the Hungarian scholarship on the Middle Ages. One could even hope that it will prompt the creation of a new series on grants of arms.

Eszter Tarján
eesther6@gmail.com