

Dalmatia and the Exercise of Royal Authority in the Árpád-Era Kingdom of Hungary. By Judit Gál. Budapest: Research Centre for the Humanities, 2020. 228 pp.

Coloman the Learned, king of Hungary (1095–1116), was crowned king of Croatia and Dalmatia in 1102. Within three years, he occupied the most important cities of northern and central Dalmatia, thus unifying Hungary and Croatia into a union that lasted till 1918. The monograph under review, this valuable contribution to common Hungarian-Croatian history, analyses the southernmost part of the Kingdom of Hungary, or more precisely, Dalmatian cities and their place within the kingdom in the first two hundred years through the lens of the exercise of royal authority. Although several aspects of this relationship have been dealt with by Hungarian and Croatian historians, Judit Gál's monograph has two major strengths. First, it is a modern original work based on hundreds and hundreds of hours of diligent archival work accompanied with intelligent comparative analyses of both national historiographies. Second and no less important, it is a highly analytical, yet comprehensible piece of scholarly work written in English, or in other words, it is accessible to a comparatively wide audience.

The book begins with a concise but very useful discussion of the socio-historical and geopolitical background. On the one hand, there was a relatively young and quite active Kingdom of Hungary which managed to extend its influence on the Adriatic although, on the other side, the doge of Venice had adopted the title duke of Croatia and Dalmatia in the late eleventh century, at the time when the Byzantine Empire was occupied with other affairs in the east. Dalmatian cities, those precious ancient (apart from Šibenik) urban shells in that frustratingly narrow coastal strip beneath the mountainous region in the north, have always had special status and a degree of autonomy which they mostly maintained within the Kingdom of Hungary.

The study is pursued here in two major chapters, constructed and intertwined around the role of royal authority. The first one is dedicated to the church, which played an essential role even in the secular life of Dalmatian cities. When addressing ecclesiastic affairs, Gál focuses on the three most important aspects: the changes in the structure of the Dalmatian church and the role played by Hungarian rulers in its modification; the personalities of the prelates of Dalmatia and changes in their roles; and the role played by royal and ducal donations to the church in the exercise of royal authority. The kings of Hungary did not

have permanent local representatives in Dalmatian cities, so the archbishops of Split were Hungarian kings' right hands, administrators with an extended reach. Dalmatian bishops and archbishops served as symbolic representatives of royal authority who promoted royal policies in their cities. Split archbishops, who inherited the metropolitan status of ancient Salona and were primases of Dalmatia, connected their city with the royal court and helped manage local affairs and promote the kings' foreign-policy interests.

In the second chapter, Gál examines aspects concerning the exercise of Hungarian royal authority related to secular administration and urban communities. First, she analyses the privileges granted by the kings of Hungary to the cities of Dalmatia. She then examines the roles of the representatives of Hungarian royal authority: the dukes of Slavonia and the bans of Slavonia. She concludes with a discussion of shows of royal power and authority, mostly displayed through royal and ducal visits to Dalmatia. Her analyses of rulers' show of power reveal that these visits were in fact complex performances with practical and symbolic functions. King Coloman made his visits to Dalmatia, during which he was accompanied by his splendid retinue consisting of Hungary's highest-ranking secular and ecclesiastic dignitaries (as well as their Dalmatian counterparts), according to a regular schedule: every three years. Other kings traveled less frequently, never managing to follow this pattern, while the dukes of Slavonia mostly travelled to Dalmatia shortly after acquiring their titles. The bans became increasingly powerful after the Mongol invasion of 1241–42, but the overall Hungarian royal authority deteriorated after King Bela IV died (1270), and the local oligarchy, especially the Šubić clan, gained more influence in Dalmatia.

There are four very useful appendices at the end of the book. The first is on "Iohannes Lucius' Collection of Historical Manuscripts," which Judit Gál probably knows better than anyone else at this point, at least among the younger generation of historians from both sides of the Pannonian border. The second is the list of "Dalmatian Toponyms in Various Languages." The third is the list of "Hungarian Kings' and Dukes' Donations to Dalmatian Churches" (1102–1285). The fourth and final appendix is a list of "Hungarian Kings' and Dukes' Grants of Privileges to the Cities of Dalmatia." The book ends with four other additions: two indices (of personal and geographical names) and two sets of historical maps. The first set presents the city maps of Zadar, Biograd na Moru, Šibenik, Nin, Split, and Trogir in the period of Árpád kings. The second

shows Dalmatia in 1105, 1180, 1205, and 1298, and it also includes a map of the Catholic Church in Croatia (as of 1298).

Gál spent a substantial amount of time in the Archive of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb and the Archbishopric Archive in Split, and she has made admirable use of the sources she found in both. She came to Zagreb as a MA student, and she brought with her an infectious enthusiasm, good knowledge of Latin, and an ever-improving ability to use Croatian scholarly literature. Dr. Damir Karbić, the director of the Historical Department of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, quickly realized what a promising scholar she was, and showing his usual hospitality, he made sure that she had the proper guidance through Croatian institutions. But all other credit goes to her for her dedicated, disciplined, old-fashioned hard work in the archives. This book is not the only fruit of the many years she spent pursuing research. She has also written numerous scholarly papers, digitized material, and made fresh discoveries in the undeservedly forgotten yet very valuable collection of sources. Historians of Central Europe in the Middle Ages cannot help but be impressed by her achievements, and it is worth noting that Gál, who only completed her PhD in 2019, is still at the beginning of her academic career.

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