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FOOT MERCENARIES FROM HUNGARIAN TOWNS IN FOREIGN ARMIES – CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ISSUE OF MERCENARY POTENTIAL IN LATE MEDIEVAL HUNGARY

Abstract: Although interest in Central European mercenary markets has increased in recent years, the potential of mercenaries in late medieval Hungary has not yet been studied. The objectives of this study are to determine the towns or at least the regions of the Kingdom of Hungary from which a significant number of soldiers could be recruited in the late Middle Ages and to examine the role played by mercenaries of urban origin in the Hungarian royal army and in the armies of neighbouring countries. The study of this topic can contribute useful insights into the regional migration of soldiers and help to understand the spread of knowledge carried by mercenaries. Findings suggest the northern part of the Kingdom of Hungary had significant mercenary potential, which can also be seen in the armies of neighbouring countries. The analysis reveals, in the case of the infantry, the Hungarian army was heavily dependent on Czech, Polish, and German mercenaries. The answer to the question of why Hungary's mercenary potential in the Central and Eastern European region was among the least significant, ranging from possible distortions in the sources examined to constant Ottoman pressure, will require further research

Keywords: mercenary market, medieval military history, mercenaries, Hungarian history, East Central Europe

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In recent decades, there has been an increase in the number of studies and books examining the social background of the late medieval and early modern military in East Central Europe.¹ Among these works, there were writings that dealt with the mercenary potential (mercenary market) of certain areas, but the issue of foreign soldiers fighting in various armies also became an important topic.² In the case of the Kingdom of Hungary at the turn of the sixteenth century, although the problem attracted some interest among historians, it has only been researched rather marginally.³

In light of the above, this study has set itself two main goals. Based on research from various countries, urban mercenaries held important positions in the armies of various countries. Therefore, one of the goals is to identify the Hungarian towns (or at least the regions containing these towns) from which a significant number of soldiers could be

¹ R. Baumann, *Landsknechte, Ihre Geschichte und Kultur vom späten Mittelalter bis zum Dreißigjährigen Krieg*, Munich 1994; P. Burschel, *Söldner im Nordwestdeutschland des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts: Sozialgeschichtliche Studien*, Göttingen 1994; J. W. Hunterbrinker, "Fromme Knechte" und "Garteteufel". *Söldner als soziale Gruppe im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, Konstanz 2010, 55–172; T. Grabarczyk, *Piechota zaciężna Królestwa Polskiego w XV wieku*, Łódź 2000, 67–112; A. Bołdyrew, *Piechota zaciężna w Polsce w pierwszej połowie XVI wieku*, Warsaw 2011, 113–94; U. Tresp, *Söldner aus Böhmen. Im Dienst deutscher Fürsten: Kriegsgeschäft und Heeresorganisation im 15. Jahrhundert*, Paderborn – Munich – Vienna – Zürich 2004, 421–44; Gy. Rázsó, 'A zsoldosság gazdasági és társadalmi előfeltételei és típusai Magyarországon a XIV–XV. században', *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, 9 (1962), 160–217.

² R. Baumann, 'Süddeutschland als Söldnermarkt', in *Söldnerlandschaften. Frühneuzeitliche Gewaltmärkte im Vergleich*, ed. by P. Rogger, B. Hitz, Berlin 2014, 67–84; A. Bołdyrew, 'Towns as the Recruitment Base to Mercenaries During the Reign of the Last Jagiellons', in *Faces of War, VI: City and War*, ed. by T. Grabarczyk, M. Pogońska-Pol, Łódź 2022, 103–21; U. Tresp, 'Böhmen als Söldnermarkt/"Böhmen" als Söldnertypus im späten Mittelalter', in *Söldnerlandschaften. Frühneuzeitliche Gewaltmärkte im Vergleich*, ed. by P. Rogger, B. Hitz, Berlin 2014, 119–41.

³ Current research focuses on the earlier period, and within that, primarily on Hungarian soldiers fighting in Italy. L. Pósan, 'Hungarian Mercenaries in the Service of the Teutonic Order', in *Mercenaries and Crusaders*, ed. by A. Bárány, Debrecen 2024, 223–42; P. E. Kovács, 'Magyar zsoldosok Sienában', in *Arcana tabularii: Tanulmányok Solymosi László tiszteletére*, ed. by A. Bárány, G. Dreska et al., Budapest – Debrecen 2014, II, 521–42; K. Prajda, 'Subjects of the Kingdom of Hungary, Croatia, and Slavonia as Mercenaries in Fourteenth-Century Italy: Social and Cultural Dimensions', *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento*, 49 (2023), 25–48; Á. Novák, T. Ölbei et al., 'Magyar zsoldosok címerei Mantovából = Coats of Arms of Hungarian Mercenaries from Mantua', *Turul*, 96.2 (2023), 73–86.

recruited in the late Middle Ages. However, it is important to note that this research primarily examines the western, northern, and southeastern (Transylvanian) towns of the Kingdom of Hungary, and therefore does not cover the territory of present-day Croatia (medieval Croatia and Slavonia). Furthermore, regarding the time frame examined, the study focuses on the second half of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth century.

Another aim of this study is to examine the role played by these mercenaries of urban origin in the armies of the Hungarian king and the states neighbouring the Kingdom of Hungary. Regarding the latter objective, it should be stressed that, primarily due to the destruction of the Hungarian royal archives, research on this topic is quite problematic, and therefore only sporadic sources preserved in the archives of various countries can be included in the research. Given the limited availability of sources, the source base of this study cannot be considered complete. However, it is precisely the temporal and spatial fragmentation of sources, as well as the different circumstances of their creation, which allow us to consider the trends emerging from individual source groups but pointing in the same direction as generally valid. The sources are very diverse in terms of genre (narrative sources, court accounts, orders), but most of them are lists compiled for various reasons, from which we can only draw conclusions about the ethnic background and place of origin of the soldiers from their names. To examine the social and ethnic background of mercenaries, researchers have so far primarily relied on the names of soldiers, but opinions are divided on the reliability of this method. For this reason, I would like to present the problem based on data from Hungary.⁴ Since this study does not examine the role of personal names in Central European migration research, I will focus primarily on phenomena that must be taken into account regardless of language when examining the ethnicity and place of origin of mercenaries.

⁴ For more information on social history research based on family names, see L. Sz. Gulyás, 'Names and Society in Medieval Hungarian Villages and Market-towns', in *Els noms en la vida quotidiana: Actes del del XXIV Congrés Internacional d'ICOS sobre Ciències Onomàstiques = Names in Daily Life: Proceedings of the XXIV ICOS International Congress of Onomastic Sciences*, ed. by J. Tort i Donada, M. Montagut i Montagut, Barcelona 2014, 1728–37; M. Slíz, *Personal Names in Medieval Hungary*, Hamburg 2017, 131–60.

The name as a source of information on the origin and ethnicity of the individual

It is worth starting with what at first glance seems to be a less important problem: the language skills of the scribe who recorded the names. In particular, I am thinking of such cases where the scribe needed to transcribe personal names of individuals lacking basic command of the Hungarian language, which resulted in mistakes.⁵ One of the most spectacular examples of this in the case of sources related to medieval Hungary is mentioned in the literature in connection with the Records of Peter's Pence of 1332–1337. At that time, the scribes from Italy, not knowing the Hungarian language or place names, interpreted the first syllable of 'de' in the proper names of 'Debrecen' and 'Derecske' as the Latin preposition 'de', so they wrote down the mentioned municipalities as 'de Brecen' and 'de Rechke' in the list.⁶ Another problem was how the scribe could use the letters at his disposal to reproduce sounds for which they were not suitable. In other cases, the writing system used by the person writing down the text did not mark the sound as common. A good example of the latter can be seen in the names recorded in the town of Sopron in the early fifteenth century, in which the /v/ sound was written with the letter *b* in the Bavarian dialect,⁷ but besides the form of writing (I am thinking here of the letter used to represent the sound), the dialect of the area itself may have influenced the form of the name.⁸ The problem is further complicated by the fact that, in the absence of a centrally prescribed spelling system, the name of the same person could be written differently in the same source.⁹

Moving on to a further issue, there are a number of difficulties in examining ethnicity, both in terms of the form of the name recorded and the surname used to indicate ethnicity. In the former case, a person may have had parallel language names because of the different language communities that named them. In this case, however, the two names

⁵ Uwe Tresp draws attention to the same problem in the case of the German scribes who wrote down the names of Czech mercenaries: Tresp, *Söldner aus Böhmen*, 406.

⁶ M. Slíz, *Személynevek a középkori Magyarországon*, Budapest 2011, 9–10.

⁷ Slíz, *Személynévtörténeti vizsgálatok a középkori Magyarországról*, Budapest 2017, 148–50.

⁸ K. Mollay, 'Sopron a középkor végén', *Soproni Szemle*, 10 (1956), 37–39.

⁹ Slíz, *Személynevek*, 10–11.

were not necessarily loan translations of each other. It is possible that communities named the same person based on the same characteristic. It also happened that the new community was unable to remember the foreign-sounding name, so they gave the person a completely different name. Consequently, the language of the name reflected that of the community that gave it rather than that of the individual.¹⁰ In such cases, of course, the name-bearer may be more likely to use their mother tongue during registration. However, if they are multilingual, they are more likely to use the language of the current context.¹¹ The opposite could also happen, where the scribe, if he knew the language, would translate the name of the person to be registered into his mother tongue or Latin.¹² As a further case, we should not forget surnames that denote ethnicity, such as 'Bohemian' (*Bohemus*) or 'Polish' (*Polonus*). In these cases, especially when the first and surname are in the same language, it is possible that an already assimilated person appears in the source, but it is also possible that the name was given for other reasons, such as a travel or service abroad.¹³ In connection with the study of the ethnicity of a given group, we should mention the characteristic of the various registers that a significant proportion of the registered persons were given only a first name that could not be associated with an ethnicity.¹⁴ It also seems that the way names are written (in the Hungarian order of surname followed by first name, as opposed to the usual European order of first name followed by surname) does not necessarily indicate that a person is of Hungarian origin.¹⁵

¹⁰ Mollay, 'Sopron a középkor végén', 39.

¹¹ Slíz, *Személynévtörténeti*, 141–46. It is also possible that the given person will provide the name form they use themselves, which may not necessarily correspond to the name form required by their native language: R. Szentgyörgyi, 'Név, anyanyelv, identitás összefüggései a középmagyar kor boszorkánypereinek tükrében', *Helýnévtörténeti Tanulmányok*, 7 (2012), 133–42.

¹² Slíz, *Személynévtörténeti*, 124–40.

¹³ Slíz, *Személynevek*, 86; J. N. Fodor, *Személynevek rendszere a kései ómagyar korban. A Felső-Tisza-vidék személyneveinek nyelvi elemzése, 1401–1526*, Budapest 2010, 77.

¹⁴ M. Štefánik, 'Sociálny obraz stredovekého mesta. Možnosti a limity interpretácie daňových súpisov na príklade Kremnice v polovici 15. storočia', in *Stredoveké mesto a jeho obyvatelia = Medieval Town and Its Inhabitants*, ed. by M. Štefánik et al., Bratislava 2017, 232. In the case of the military: Tresp, *Söldner aus Böhmen*, 406.

¹⁵ Szentgyörgyi, 'Név, anyanyelv, identitás összefüggései', 134–35. For more on this topic, see also Slíz, *Personal Names*, 35–37.

We are in a slightly better situation when the individual's surname refers to their place of origin. However, in this case, we should also take into account the possibility that the name no longer refers to the person's place of origin, but instead reflects a previously stabilized family name. In the case of non-hereditary surnames, it is also possible that a person's surname no longer refers to their exact place of origin, but to a more famous town or larger area known to communities living further away.¹⁶ For this reason, I do not intend to include the place of origin data listed below on a map in this study, as this would distort the research results in several ways. It is also worth mentioning the various forms of the designation *Hungarian* in other languages here, since these designations (e.g. 'Uher', 'Hungarus', 'Węgier') only refer to the person's country of origin and not their ethnicity.¹⁷ Therefore, they are more appropriately interpreted as a place of origin.

In conclusion, the transition from distinctive names that refer to individual characteristics to hereditary surnames makes identifying the ethnicity and place of origin of individuals uncertain. However, analyzing larger amounts of data makes it possible to determine the main characteristics of a society and the main trends of change.¹⁸ In

¹⁶ L. Sz. Gulyás, 'Újabb adatok a középkori jobbágyi-mezővárosi személynévadás kérdéséhez', *Névtani Értesítő*, 31 (2009), 58. According to Hungarian research, communities located within a radius of up to sixty kilometres, typically twenty to thirty kilometres, from the current place of residence were close enough for residents to be familiar with them. Thus, the name of the community could form the basis of the designation. However, in the case of larger towns, this could be extended, and due to their reputation, they could be used as the basis for the name even if they were located several hundred kilometres away. L. Sz. Gulyás, 'A középkori magyar városfejlődés migráció- és ipartörténeti vonatkozásai a történeti személynévtan tükrében I.: személynévadás és migráció', *Névtani Értesítő*, 36 (2014), 49, 56.

¹⁷ M. Plewczyński, *W służbie polskiego króla. Z zagadnień struktury narodowościowej Armii Koronnej w latach 1500–1574*, Oświęcim 2015, 231, footnote 20; 237, footnote 50. However, in the case of the surname 'Magyar', it was a name that did indeed refer to ethnicity.

¹⁸ For example: J. N. Fodor, 'Családnevek történeti tanulságai Partium késő középkori és újkori névanyaga alapján', in *Helynévtörténeti Tanulmányok VII*, ed. by I. Hoffmann, V. Tóth, Debrecen 2012, 156; Szentgyörgyi, 'Név, anyanyelv, identitás összefüggései', 141. Martin Štefánik criticises the use of percentages to determine the ethnic composition of a social group, but in one of his studies examining the society of Kremnica (Körmöcbánya), he emphasizes the possibility of outlining the main trends: Štefánik, 'Sociálny obraz stredovekého mesta', 233.

the next chapter, we will examine these data sets, or more precisely, the rolls listing the names of mercenaries.

Analysis of mercenary rolls

Considering the rolls, our first source cannot be considered a traditional source, such as the registers discussed below. Based on the letters sent by the mercenaries, Emmerich Zenegg-Scharffenstein compiled a list of the names of a significant number of mercenary leaders who served Frederick III, Holy Roman emperor, in 1459 and 1460.¹⁹ It turned out that the emperor came into conflict with count John II of Gorizia over the inheritance of Ulrich II, count of Celje, and he used Hungarian mercenaries in the fighting, including Jan Vitovec, who was of Czech origin but owned estates in Slavonia.²⁰ However, we are only interested in mercenary leaders whose surnames are connected to places or regions in Hungary. Accordingly, we have to mention a certain Hanss Kremnitzer, who was probably from Kremnica (Körmöcbánya). Besides him, *Stheffan von Offen* from Buda, a certain László Zalay (*Lasla Zalay*) from the county of Zala and two may have come from Sopron.

The next registers of interest to us are various rolls of Hungarian foot soldiers who served in Naples in 1481. It should be noted, however, that these mercenaries arrived in Italy before the Hungarian auxiliary troops that King Matthias had sent to recapture Otranto from the Ottomans.²¹ The first of these documents, dated 5 January, contains the names of twelve people, six of whom are connected to places in Hungary. One person is connected to Buda, one to Gyula, one to Košice (Kassa), and three to Székesfehérvár (*ferurradj*). Based on the names of the other soldiers, they appear to be from the county of Somogy, or are simply listed as Hungarians (*Ungarus*). There may also be an Austrian (Carinthian) among them, named *Griorchet de Villac*. The second document, dated 23 January, contains the names of seven soldiers. However, only

¹⁹ E. Zenegg-Scharffenstein, 'Die Söldnertruppen Kaiser Friedrichs III. in seiner Fehde mit den Grafen von Görz (1459/1460)', *Adler*, 563–64 (1927), 273–81.

²⁰ T. Pálosfalvi, 'Vitovec János: egy zsoldoskarrier a 15. századi Magyarországon', *Századok*, 135 (2001), 453.

²¹ L. Veszprémy, 'Magyar vonatkozású források Otranto ostromáról (1480–81)', *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, 103 (1990), 106–07.

one of these can be identified as being from Gorjani (Gara), in Valkó county. The names of two others probably refer to places as well, but their original forms could not be identified: *Albert de Sierbach* and *Franciscus Ungarus de Somcho*. The third list, dated 17 February, contains the names of fifteen people, all of whom are marked with the designation *Ungarus*. Two of these soldiers were given place-based names: one was from Košice, and the other was from a place that cannot be clearly identified (*de Cerdeo*). The fourth and final list, dated 3 March, contained the names of eighteen people. Six of these had names related to their place of origin: two were from Buda, one was from Pest, one was from Belgrade (Nándorfehérvár), one was a soldier from Kassa, and one was probably from Bélavár in Somogy county. However, there are also overlaps among the lists; for example, Bálint from Buda and Péter from Kassa appear on several rolls.²² Furthermore, Péter of Kassa is known to have remained in Otranto, as he is mentioned in a 1484 register. In addition to him, four soldiers from Buda, one from Pécs, one from Turňa nad Bodvou (Torna) and two Polish mercenaries are known to have served in 1484.²³

Another register includes a significant number of mercenaries of Hungarian origin and is connected to the wars fought by king Matthias of Hungary and Frederick III, Holy Roman emperor. This document, from 1482, lists the names of 282 soldiers captured by the emperor's troops from among the Hungarian king's soldiers. Today, it is kept in the Saxon State Archives in Dresden. Looking through the rolls, we find that the names are mainly German, Czech and Polish.²⁴ In many cases, only the soldiers' first names were recorded. From the point of view of the current topic, it is problematic that the majority of people from Hungary are listed in the register only under the name *Unger* (nine people). There may also have been Hungarians among the soldiers with only first names, as some of these names are of Hungarian origin (e.g. *Andrasch* = András, *Estwann* = István). However, their exact places

²² *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek Mátyás király korából*, ed. by I. Nagy, A. B. Nyáry, Budapest 1875–1878, III, 3–5.

²³ *Magyar diplomáciai*, IV, 38. The origin of the other members of the unit has not yet been clearly identified: *Martinus de Febe*, *Embric de Comar*, *Biasius de Borj*, furthermore two *de Demba*.

²⁴ Tresp, 'Böhmen als Söldnermarkt', 122.

of origin cannot be determined.²⁵ One such person is *Janusch Waswari* (= János Vasvári; Vasvár now being a Hungarian town located near the Austrian border) and it is believed that one of the soldiers came from Spiš ('Zybser', based on the German name of the area – 'Zips').²⁶

The next sources, in which we can find mentions of Hungarians, are connected to the Polish royal army and concentrate on the second half of the 1490s, but we can also find scattered references to Hungarian soldiers in the royal army from the first half of the sixteenth century that are relevant to our research. More precise names indicating their place of origin are found primarily in the case of infantrymen in the Polish royal army, among whom two captains (*rothmagister*), Jan Kałusz (as János Kallós?) and Łukasz Luboszwarski (as Lukács Lubosvári?) are generally considered to be of Hungarian origin by Polish literature,²⁷ although this is not necessarily the case.

In the case of Kałusz, the literature considers that he came from Brod in Hungary (*civitate regni Hungariae*), which probably refers to a castle located in the county of Pozsega (the area is located in southern Croatia today). However, we cannot ignore another possibility, namely that this is a misunderstanding and that the expression quoted above refers to Uherský Brod ('Hungarian ford') in Moravia, near the Hungarian border. In this case, the name 'Caluss' is more likely to refer to the Kalous family name, which still exists in the Czech Republic today, which derives from the German word 'Kohlhaas'.²⁸

²⁵ Dresden, Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, Hauptstaatsarchiv (henceforward quoted as: SStA HStAD) Dresden, 10025 Hof- und Zentralverwaltung (Wittenberger Archiv), Loc. 4377/03, fols 300–3, fol. 34^v and 35^v. In this paper, I refer to page numbers based on the new numbering shown in the document.

²⁶ SStA HStAD 10025 Hof- und Zentralverwaltung (Wittenberger Archiv), Loc. 4377/03, fols 300–03, fol. 34^r; fol. 37^r.

²⁷ Grabarczyk, *Piechota zaciężna*, 71–72, 84–87; Plewczyński, *W służbie polskiego króla*, 229–39. Aleksander Bołdyrew only mentions Jan Kałusz as Hungarian: Bołdyrew, *Piechota zaciężna*, 162. However, there are researchers who disagree, such as Vitaliy Mykhaylovskiy, who identified the latter as Czech: V. Mykhaylovskiy, 'Podolian Melting Pot. Formation of Multicultural Community of Nobles on the Eastern Border of Polish Kingdom of the Fifteenth Century Europe', *Український історичний журнал*, 94 (2020), 133.

²⁸ L. Szokola, 'Magyarországi zsoldosok a lengyel király és a litván nagyfejedelem szolgálatában a 16. század első felében', in *Micae Mediaevalis X. Fiatal történészek dolgozatai a középkori Magyarországról és Európáról*, ed. by E. Kovács, V. Rudolf et al., Budapest 2022, 124–25.

The problem with Lubosvári (Luboszwarski) is that the place Lubosvár or Libosvár did not exist within the borders of the Hungarian Kingdom. However, Libosváry did exist in Moravia. Furthermore, a *nobilis Lucas de Lebezwar alias de Staromesta* lived in this settlement at that time, who had connections in Hungary and even served Vladislaus II, but was originally a Moravian nobleman. Therefore, it is much more likely that the two captains serving in the Polish army at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries were of Moravian origin.²⁹

According to Tadeusz Grabarczyk's research, both captains' troops were mainly composed of Poles from Lesser Poland and representatives of the Czech Crown. However, in the case of Jan Kałusz, approximately twenty per cent of the troops were Hungarians in 1496, although this proportion fell to four per cent the following year. In Łukasz Luboszwarski's unit, Hungarians accounted for six per cent (six people) of the total number of soldiers in 1496.³⁰ This low proportion of Hungarians among the troops suggests that they were not originally recruited in Hungarian territory further reinforces the idea that their captains were not Hungarian.

Reviewing sources relating to the Polish infantry between 1496 and 1500 (i.e. not only those relating to the armies of the two captains mentioned above), we find the following names connected to the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary: two from Buda, two from Ploské (Lapispatak), one from Bardejov (Bártfa), one from Trnava (Nagyszombat), two from Košice, one from Túróc county, sixteen from Trenčín (Trencsén), one from Záblatie (Vágszabolcs, today part of Trenčín), one from Čachtice (Csejte), one from Perín (Perény, today part of Perín-Chym) two from Nitra (Nyitra), one from Hlohovec (Galgóc), one from Topolčany (Tapolcsány), four from Skalica (Szokolca), one from Púchov (Puhó), one from Banská Bystrica (Besztercebánya), and one from Liptovský Mikuláš (Liptószentmiklós).³¹ In summary, it can be said that the vast majority

²⁹ Szokola, 'Magyarországi zsoldosok', 125–26. However, a certain *Stephanus Hungarus* served as a captain of infantry in the Polish army in 1521. Boldyrew, *Piechota zaciężna*, 23.

³⁰ Grabarczyk, *Piechota zaciężna*, 70–72.

³¹ Warsaw, Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych w Warszawie, 85, Rejestry Popisowe Wojska Koronnego, 1474–1758 (henceforward quoted as: AGAD ASK 85), vol. 1–4. See also V. Chaloupecký, *Středověké listy ze Slovenska. Sbirka listů a listin, psaných jazykem národním*, Bratislava 1937, XXVIII.

of soldiers came from the north-western border region, but there were also many from other areas and from major towns.

Aleksander Bołdyrew in a study on the Polish infantry in the first half of the sixteenth century, drew attention to the social and personal composition of soldiers, in the same way as Tadeusz Grabarczyk did. In the case of common soldiers, he examined 12,000 soldiers from between 1522 and 1547. According to his findings, forty-five of the soldiers examined were of Hungarian origin, representing zero point three eight percent of the total.³² However, only a fraction of these people can be linked to a place of origin in Hungary. Fortunately, the military records from 1531 have been published in printed form, unlike records from earlier periods. Among the soldiers appearing in these publications, we find two individuals from Kassa³³ and one from Levoča (Lőcse).³⁴ Furthermore, other military-related Polish royal accounts from this period mention eleven people from Košice, one from Pest, one from Bardejov, and one from Levoča.³⁵

The next record related to the Czechs/Bohemians, in which we find mention of foot soldiers arriving from the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary, is a list of prisoners taken in the battle of Wenzelbach (Germany) on 12 September 1504. The battle was connected to the struggle for the Duchy of Landshut, in which Ruprecht of the Palatinate (son of Philip, Elector Palatine of the Rhine) and his troops faced off against the forces of Albert IV, duke of Bavaria, and his ally Maximilian I, king of the Romans. Around 3,000 Czech infantrymen served in the Palatinate army. Most of them were killed in battle, and a significant number were captured. Although sources provide different numbers of Czech prisoners of war, based on the names listed below, the number of prisoners known by name can be assessed at 630. Among them 563 foot soldiers and sixty-seven 'young men' ('syn' probably armed servants) were taken prisoner.³⁶ The list itself was written in Czech and was most likely compiled by one of the literate soldiers who had

³² Bołdyrew, *Piechota zaciężna*, 137–39.

³³ *Rejestry popisowe wojska koronnego 1531*, ed. by A. Bołdyrew, Warsaw 2023, 247, 268.

³⁴ Z. Spieralski, *Kampania obertyńska 1531 roku*, Warsaw 1962, 263.

³⁵ Archival material related to the persons listed: AGAD ASK 85, vol. 12–42. I would like to thank Aleksander Bołdyrew for providing me with the relevant data.

³⁶ K. Sladkovská, 'Česká účast ve válce o dědictví landshutské roku 1504', *Husitský Tábor: Sborník Husitského Muzea*, 16 (2009), 190–92.

been captured.³⁷ At least ten of the people recorded can be identified as originating from Northern Hungary. One of them may have come from Trnava and served in Jindřich z Gutštejn's³⁸ unit.³⁹ Nine other people identified on the same document fought in the same unit, six of whom were from Trenčín (*z Trenczina*) and the surrounding area, two from the village of Bánovce nad Bebravou (*z Banowiz, Bán*), and one from Banská Štiavnica (Selmechánya). Furthermore, in addition to Kamilla Sladkovská's identifications, it may be possible that Martin Kassparuow came from Banská Bystrica (*z Bystrzize*) and Blaziek Slovak from Košice (*z Kossatize*). Regardless of the place of origin of the last two soldiers, those serving in the army who were presumably connected to the Kingdom of Hungary came primarily from the north-western region of the kingdom, as Polish sources also indicate.

Information obtained from other kind of sources

Data from the various registers can be supplemented with data from other sources. For example, charters refer to royal captains whose surnames indicate their place of origin: Bálint Nagy of Pest,⁴⁰ Bálint Huszti (of Khust, today Ukraine),⁴¹ Kálmán Óbudai (of Old Buda),⁴² István Kovács of Miskolc,⁴³ Péter Szakolócki of Nagyszombat (Trnava).⁴⁴

Further information is provided by the so-called account book of Zsigmond Ernuszt, which contains the royal court's expenditures and

³⁷ Sladkovská, 'Česká účast', 192.

³⁸ Sladkovská, 'Česká účast', 182–84.

³⁹ Sladkovská, 'Česká účast', 215.

⁴⁰ Budapest, Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára, Budapest. Mohács előtti gyűjtemény. Diplomatikai Levéltár (henceforward quoted as: MNL OL DL) 75398.

⁴¹ D. Csánki, 'Oklevelek a Hunyadiak korából. (Kassa város levéltárából.) Első közlemény', *Történelmi Tár* 2, 3.3 (1902), 350.

⁴² MNL OL DL 46068. Óbuda is nowadays part of Budapest.

⁴³ For his biography see I. Draskóczy, 'Egy katonatiszt Hunyadi Mátyás korában. Miskolci Kovács István', in *Rex invictissimus. Hadsereg és hadszervezet a Mátyás kori Magyarországon*, ed. by L. Veszprémy, Budapest 2008, 185–93.

⁴⁴ L. Thallóczy, *Jajcza (bánság, vár és város) története 1450–1527*, Budapest 1915, 250–51; Burgher of Trnava, *A Szapolyai család oklevéltára I. Levelek és oklevelek (1458–1526)*, ed. by T. Neumann, Budapest 2012, No. 429.

revenues from the years 1494–1495.⁴⁵ From our point of view, this book of accounts is interesting because it also contains details of royal expenditure on an internal war in Hungary, known as the war against Lőrinc Újlaki.⁴⁶ I would like to highlight that, in addition to entries relating to the payment of captains serving the king, this source also contains information about measures restricting the recruitment of soldiers.

Vladislaus II sent his man Kristóf to Graz (Austria) in Styria to recruit infantrymen.⁴⁷ Vladislaus II had twelve Czech infantry captains in his service.⁴⁸ On another occasion, seven or possibly eight, presumably Czech captains were given forty florins.⁴⁹ On one occasion, Vladislaus II sent a letter to the captain-general of Reinprecht von Reichenburg in Styria, as well as to the captains of Graz and Celje (today Slovenia) in Styria and Laibach (Ljubljana) in Carniola, to prevent Újlaki from recruiting soldiers. In the same way, Vladislaus II tried to hire the dismissed soldiers of the king of the Romans, Maximilian I into his own mercenary service, and to prevent Újlaki from doing so.⁵⁰ Riflemen from Pest and Buda were probably recruited into the army of Vladislaus II.⁵¹ Two of his men were sent by the Hungarian king to recruit mercenaries from Moravia.⁵² Another man was sent to Vienna (Austria) to collect two hundred infantrymen.⁵³

The next data set, which I have mentioned before, comprises a series of regulations that restrict mercenary recruitment. To the best of my knowledge, no such restriction has been imposed on the Kingdom of Hungary as a whole or on any of its towns.⁵⁴ However, in 1458, the city

⁴⁵ *Registrum proventuum regni Hungariae. A Magyar Királyság kincstartójának számadáskönyve (1494–1495)*, ed. by T. Neumann, Budapest 2019.

⁴⁶ Lőrinc Újlaki was the last male heir of one of the largest noble families in Hungary. He became an enemy of the Hungarian king, Vladislaus II. In 1494, the king finally launched a campaign against him. For the campaign, see T. Fedeles, *A király és a lázadó herceg. Az Újlaki Lőrinc és szövetségesei elleni királyi hadjárat (1494–1495)*, Szeged 2012.

⁴⁷ *Registrum proventuum regni Hungariae*, No. 1036.

⁴⁸ *Registrum proventuum regni Hungariae*, No. 878.

⁴⁹ *Registrum proventuum regni Hungariae*, No. 974.

⁵⁰ *Registrum proventuum regni Hungariae*, No. 732–737, 980.

⁵¹ *Registrum proventuum regni Hungariae*, No. 1667.

⁵² *Registrum proventuum regni Hungariae*, No. 1680–1682.

⁵³ *Registrum proventuum regni Hungariae*, No. 1100.

⁵⁴ In the Holy Roman Empire (based on examples from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), towns restricted the entry of the local, especially poorer population into military service: Burschel, *Söldner im Nordwestdeutschland*, 64.

of Split in Dalmatia (today Croatia) limited the number of mercenaries it could accept by banning the recruitment of Croatian, German and Hungarian soldiers.⁵⁵ We must also include the efforts of Vladislaus II, mentioned in the previous paragraph, to prevent the recruitment of soldiers in various areas of Styria and Carniola in connection with the clash against Lőrinc Újlaki. Furthermore, in a letter sent to České Budějovice (Czech Republic) in 1506, Vladislaus II forbade the city from allowing Maximilian I or anyone other than the Hungarian-Czech ruler to recruit soldiers.⁵⁶ And in 1527, King Sigismund of Poland restricted the contracting of soldiers from his own country to foreign countries, due to the Tatar threat.⁵⁷ I should of course stress that the considerable military potential of the three regions involved (the Austrian territories, the German territories in a broader sense; the lands of the Czech Crown; the lands of the Polish Crown) has already been noted in the literature. Although the lands of the Czech Crown were in decline, they still had significant mercenary potential, especially compared to other countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, the military potential of the German territories was increasing during the period under discussion.⁵⁸ Moreover, Poland's mercenary potential was at its peak at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries. In this respect, the territories of Lesser Poland bordering the Kingdom of Hungary were of outstanding importance within the provinces of the Polish Crown.⁵⁹ The latter is exemplified by the case of Mikołaj Storcz (Szorc) z Rudnik (Rudnicy), who, in 1522, wrote to the city of Gdańsk (Poland) from his position as captain of Petrovaradin (Pétervárad), informing them of his intention to travel to Cracow to recruit more mercenaries.⁶⁰ Mikołaj is known to have taken part in the war between

⁵⁵ L. Sadovski, 'Protecting a Dalmatian Town: Security Measures in Venetian Split (1480–1550)', *Reti Medievali Rivista*, 24 (2023), 7.

⁵⁶ F. Palacký, *Archiv český, čili, Staré písemné památky české i moravské, z archivův domácích i cizích*, Prague 1872, VI, 338–39.

⁵⁷ *Acta Tomicianae: Epistole, legationes, responsa, actiones, res geste serenissimi principis Sigismundi, eius nominis primi, regis Polonie, magni ducis Lithvanie, Russie, Prussie, Masovie domini [...]*, ed. by S. Górski, Z. Celichowski, Poznań 1852–1999, IX, 229.

⁵⁸ Tresp, 'Böhmen als Söldnermarkt'; Baumann, 'Süddeutschland als Söldnermarkt'.

⁵⁹ Grabarczyk, *Piechota zaciężna*, 68–91; Böldyrew, *Piechota zaciężna*, 113–36; Böldyrew, 'Towns as the Recruitment Base', 111–13.

⁶⁰ Gdańsk, Archiwum Państwowe w Gdańsku, Akta miasta Gdańska – Dokumenty, 17/E, 22. This source has been found and analyzed by Benjámín Borbás. I am grateful to him for sharing it with me.

Poland and the Teutonic Order between 1519 and 1521, and was one of the officers of the Polish auxiliary detachment sent to Hungary against the Ottoman army in 1521.⁶¹

Regarding the narrative sources, we should mention the ‘war plan’ by an anonymous author for Ferdinand I, archduke of Austria and king of Hungary and Bohemia. In this plan, the author praises the excellent infantrymen recruited near the Váh river,⁶² probably due to its proximity to Moravia.⁶³ It was not in vain, that one of his men recruited infantrymen for the Hungarian king in the counties of Trencsén and Nyitra in 1522.⁶⁴ The anonymous author’s information is also confirmed by a source preserved in the archives of Banská Bystrica. According to this, one of king Ferdinand’s captains intended to recruit soldiers in the region surrounding the town, as well as in Moravia and other places in 1535.⁶⁵ Furthermore, earlier sources suggest that the northwestern part of the Kingdom of Hungary was not the only area suitable for recruiting large numbers of mercenaries. During Matthias Corvinus’s reign (1458–1490), the ruler recruited mercenaries from the north-eastern region of the Kingdom of Hungary on several occasions. In a letter dated 18 May 1464, for example, the ruler waived Bardejov tax arrears of four hundred florins in exchange for mercenaries hired for him.⁶⁶

⁶¹ M. Biskup, “Wojna Pruska”, czyli wojna Polski z Zakonem Krzyżackim z lat 1519–1521, Oświęcim 2014, 72, 74, 293, 324, 330, 332, 339, 358, 442, 445, 494–95; *Matricularum Regni Poloniae summaria, excussis codicibus, qui in Chartophylacio Maximo Varsoviensi asservantur*, ed. by T. Wierzbowski, Warsaw 1905–1961, IV.2, No. 12927.

⁶² F. Csapó, P. Kasza, M. Majoros, “Álomszerű” haditerv Szapolyai János ellen, in *Lymbus – Magyarságtudományi forrásközlemények*, ed. by A. P. Szabó, Budapest 2020, 62.

⁶³ Based on contemporary sources, there was another region suitable for recruiting foot soldiers in the early sixteenth century. István Brodarics, who participated in the battle of Mohács in 1526 and recorded its history, noted that the people living along the Drava River were considered excellent foot archers: Stephanus Brodericus, *De conflictu Hungarorum cum Solymano Turcarum imperatore ad Mohach historia verissima*, ed. by P. Kulcsár, Budapest 1985, 47. However, due to space limitations, I am unable to address the military potential of this area within the scope of this study.

⁶⁴ A. Kubinyi, ‘A Szávaszentdemeter–Nagyolaszi győzelem 1523-ban. Adatok Mohács előzményéhez’, in *Nándorfehérvártól Mohácsig. A Mátyás- és a Jagelló-kor hadtörténete*, ed. by A. Kubinyi, Budapest 2007, 130.

⁶⁵ *Mesto Banská Bystrica. Katalóg administratívnych a súdnych písomností (1020) 1255–1536*, ed. by C. Matulay, Bratislava 1980, I–II, No. 1361.

⁶⁶ Budapest, Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára, Budapest. Mohács előtti gyűjtemény. Diplomatikai Fényképgyűjtemény (henceforward quoted as: MNL

In August 1467, he asked the towns of Bardejov, Prešov (Eperjes), and Levoča to allow his man, Mátyás Szántói, to enter their walls in order to recruit soldiers.⁶⁷ In 1481, Bálint Huszti recruited soldiers for the royal army in Košice, which was also announced in the surrounding settlements.⁶⁸ This was a unique move by King Matthias, as there are no records of the Jagiellonian kings (1490–1526) recruiting soldiers in this region during their reign.

A somewhat different picture emerges in the eastern part of the Kingdom of Hungary, more particularly in Transylvania. Here, in certain instances (i.e., not continuously), we have information about the hiring of troops from Wallachia. The presence of these soldiers is mentioned in a letter dated 22 December 1480, from István Bátori, voivode of Transylvania, in which he instructed Braşov (Brassó) to take in 110 horsemen from among the men of the late voivode of Wallachia, paying two florins for each soldier.⁶⁹ However, in a letter dated 9 March 1481, he only mentions the recruitment of Vlachs and does not specifically name the Wallachians,⁷⁰ but it is likely that they are also referred to here, as on 31 March he again ordered the recruitment of three hundred horsemen from among the Wallachians for the town.⁷¹ The mercenary conditions in Transylvania are well illustrated by a letter dated November or December 1476 from Vlad Țepeş, voivode of Wallachia, addressed to Braşov, in which he asks the town to send him Hungarian, Szekler, or Wallachian soldiers despite being unable to pay them, offering only food in return. The letter clearly shows that these ethnic groups were the main source of mercenaries in Transylvania.⁷²

In medieval Western Hungary, our sources regarding the mercenary market in the region are primarily from Bratislava (Pozsony).

OL DF) 214221.

⁶⁷ MNL OL DF 214397.

⁶⁸ MNL OL DF 214956.

⁶⁹ *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, ed. by F. Zimmermann, Hermannstadt – Bucharest 1892–1991, VII, No. 4378.

⁷⁰ *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen*, VII, No. 4392.

⁷¹ *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen*, VII, No. 4405.

⁷² *Documente privitoare la relațiile Țării Românești cu Braşovul şi cu Țara Ungurească în sec. XV şi XVI*, I: 1413–1508, ed. by I. Bogdan, Bucharest 1905, 99, No. 77. On the military organization in Wallachia during this period, see A. Gheorghe, 'Understanding the Ottoman Campaign in Wallachia in the Summer of 1462. Numbers, Limits, Manoeuvres and Meanings', in *Vlad der Pfähler – Dracula Tyrann oder Volkstribun?*, ed. by T. Bohn, R. Einax et al., Wiesbaden 2017, 159–88.

Based on the town's detailed and numerous extant account books, in 1443,⁷³ 1448,⁷⁴ and 1457,⁷⁵ the council of Bratislava sent people to Vienna to recruit soldiers. Furthermore, we know of four letters written in Czech, all but one of which are undated, in which various individuals offered their services to the inhabitants of Bratislava. The only dated letter was written on 4 March 1458, in Smolenice (Szomolány). The leader of the group was a certain 'Medved', who came from Slavičín (Czech Republic) in Moravia, and without specifying his troops more precisely, he inquired whether the town needed soldiers.⁷⁶ One of the undated letters was written on behalf of a nobleman named Ján Žampach z Žamberka, presumably from Moravia,⁷⁷ who offered to hire an unknown number of horsemen and foot soldiers to serve the town.⁷⁸ The second undated letter was sent by a certain 'Lorek', who offered his services along with thirty-two companions.⁷⁹ The leader of the last group was a certain 'Janek', who commanded sixteen foot soldiers. In the end, they were probably not employed, or at least we find no mention of this in the town accounts. Yet, based on the same accounts, we learn of a messenger from an unknown mercenary troop in 1439. The town refused to hire these soldiers, but the messenger was rewarded for his efforts.⁸⁰

Conclusions

While this study is incomplete due to the temporal and spatial dispersion of the sources and a detailed overview of the soldiers hired by medieval Hungarian towns has not been provided due to space limitations, the information provided in the above sources are nevertheless suitable for drawing cautious, general conclusions.

⁷³ Bratislava, Archív mesta Bratislavy, Magistrát mesta Bratislavy (henceforward quoted as: AMB, MMB), vol. 5 (1442–1443), 170.

⁷⁴ AMB, MMB, vol. 14 (1448–1449), 285.

⁷⁵ AMB, MMB, vol. 25 (1457), 274.

⁷⁶ Chaloupecký, *Středověké listy ze Slovenska*, 92–93.

⁷⁷ Chaloupecký, *Středověké listy ze Slovenska*, 41.

⁷⁸ For identification of the family, see P. Sedláček, 'Žoldnieri v Bratislave v polovici 15. storočia', *Vojenská História*, 17 (2013), 8, footnote 13.

⁷⁹ Chaloupecký, *Středověké listy ze Slovenska*, 42.

⁸⁰ Sedláček, 'Žoldnieri v Bratislave', 8–9.

One of the most important conclusions drawn from these sources is that Northern Hungary had the greatest potential for mercenary recruitment of the three regions examined. The western territories in general, as well as the two most important towns in the region, Košice and possibly Levoča, had outstanding military potential. Additionally, the central part of the country, comprising Buda and Pest, is noteworthy in terms of the number of mercenaries that can be hired. These areas were frequently used by kings and military commanders to increase the size of their armies. Furthermore, significant but not decisive numbers of soldiers from these areas also appeared in foreign armies. By contrast, mercenaries from Western Hungarian and Transylvanian Saxon towns rarely appeared in armies outside their own towns.

Another important observation is that in the second half of the fifteenth century and at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the army of the Kingdom of Hungary relied heavily on the military potential of the surrounding areas (in the following order): the countries of the Czech Crown, the Austrian and German territories, and the territories of the Polish Crown. This can be true not only of King Matthias's 'black army', but also of the army of the Jagiellonian rulers.⁸¹ It is therefore no surprise that even in the case of an internal conflict, the ruler primarily seeks to cut off his opponent from foreign mercenary markets. Furthermore, in some cases, we are also aware of instructions whereby the rulers of these areas wished to protect their own mercenary potential in connection with certain conflicts. From the Hungarian point of view, no similar explicit prohibition is known from the Kingdom of Hungary during the period I have examined. Furthermore, it seems that foot mercenaries from the Hungarian Kingdom did not appear in decisive numbers in foreign armies. The answer to the question of why Hungary's infantry potential in the Central and Eastern European region was among the least significant, ranging from possible distortions in the sources examined so far to constant Ottoman pressure, may vary. The decision on this issue must therefore be left to further research and consideration.

⁸¹ T. Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács. A History of Ottoman-Hungarian Warfare, 1389–1526*, Boston 2018, 28–39.

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