

**BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY**  
**FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY**  
**CLUJ-NAPOCA**

**DOCTORAL DISSERTATION**

*The Pontifical Legations to Transylvania in the 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> Centuries*

**- SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION –**

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## **Keywords:**

Hierocracy, the Holy See, the Kingdom of Hungary, Transylvania, the 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries, legates *de latere*, legates *nati*, excommunication, *plenitudo potestatis*.

## **Abstract:**

The theme under consideration here, which has given the title of our thesis (*The Pontifical Legations to Transylvania in the 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> Centuries*), represents the outcome of our continuous efforts in the field of historical research, as well as an in-depth exploration of the topic that we also approached in our BA thesis.

According to Walter Ullmann, the European Christian world formed an *ecclesia* or a *corpus Christi*, a political body that encompassed all the European kingdoms, including the Western Empire. The spiritual and political leader of that *corpus* was the vicar of St. Peter, the Pope. The kings and the Western (Roman-German) emperor had merely the auxiliary role of defending the Church by the force of their swords. This entire political system “took on” a monarchical garment in the form of *societas christiana* or *Christianitas*, in which most of the rulers of the European kingdoms and the Roman-German emperor recognised the papal supremacy and came under the comprehensive patronage of St. Peter (*patrocinium Beati Petri*).

It was to this system of alliances that the Hungarian Kingdom adhered in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century, when the first Hungarian King, Stephen I, received the royal insignia from Pope Sylvester II. From a geographical and religious perspective, the Kingdom of Hungary stood at the juncture between the two Empires (Roman-German and Constantinopolitan) and between the two Churches (Roman and Constantinopolitan). All these features made the Arpadian Kingdom differ from most of the western kingdoms, and this situation demanded greater vigilance from the Roman Curia.

Hierocracy was like a “pontifical monarchy” in which most of the European kingdoms had recognised the papal suzerainty and royal dignities fell into the category of the so-called “royal ministries.” The kings had to obey the Roman Curia and enforce any directive coming therefrom. Any disobedience to or deviation from these rules was punishable by excommunication and by placing that kingdom under interdict.

Pontifical universalism was prominently materialised during the pontificate of Innocent III, who controlled the Christian society through the legatine institution. Legates were used as an instrument of papal control in areas as diverse as Spain, England and Scandinavia, but also in Hungary and even in Constantinople. Legates were present in all the European kingdoms, either as *legatus natus*, in other words, the primate archbishops from most of the kingdoms, who became papal “dignitaries,” or as legates *de latere*, who were the most important of the three categories (*de latere, nati, and missi*).

As the time devoted to this study has been limited, it has prevented us from accomplishing a work that might have approached all the European legations; therefore, we have focused only on the specific case of the Hungarian Kingdom, with particular emphasis on the Transylvanian region. The historical period under study comprises the years 1191-1310, i.e. the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century up until the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the pontifical legates were most active.

All the legates *de latere* had pontifical powers, which meant that they could bind or absolve everything and everyone. This was also the position adopted by Gregory of Santa Maria in Portico, who activated in Hungary in 1191-1196. His role was to break the ancient ties of this kingdom with the Empire of Constantinople and to channel the general “attention” exclusively to Rome. The legate had to consolidate the influence exerted by the Roman Curia in this area of Christianity. Specifically, the papal influence was achieved by “tying” certain newly established ecclesiastical institutions directly to Rome (e.g. the Provostship of Sibiu). The Hungarian Primate Archbishop of Esztergom became now a Roman “official” representing the pontifical interests (*legatus natus*) in the Hungarian Kingdom. Besides the primate archbishop, the king also began to be an official, in light of the fact that his coronation was carried out by the Hungarian primate and the *status quo* had to receive Rome’s assent.

King Andrew II (1205-1235) was a king who did not comply with all the directives from Rome, and even acted against the papal Curia when the local interests demanded it. The hierocratic current operated in the Hungarian Kingdom most clearly during the reign of the aforementioned king. After fourteen years of “royal tolerance,” Andrew II expelled the Teutonic knights from the kingdom, a gesture which brought about pontifical dissatisfaction. Most of these conflicts were resolved by activating the legatine institution. During the reign of Andrew II, there were three legations *de latere* (the legation of Bishop Conrad of Urach in 1225; the legation of Archbishop Robert of Esztergom in “Cumania” in 1227; and the legation of Cardinal Jacob of Preneste between 1232-1234).

The son of Andrew II, Béla IV (1235-1270), did not perpetuate his father's "rebellious" attitude to Rome; on the contrary, he had a positive contribution in the fight waged by the Holy See against the "schismatic" populations, whether we refer here to the Romanians, the Bulgarians, or the Serbs, etc. In 1238, urged by Rome, Bela IV attempted to attack the Bulgarian Tsarate lying south of the Danube. The royal and pontifical plan was thwarted by the Tatar-Mongolian invasion of 1241, a moment that radically changed the royal Hungarian attitude towards Rome.

The grandson of Bela IV, Ladislaus IV (1272-1290), took this royal "frustration" to extremes by adopting a deviant behaviour towards the Holy See. The papal Curia sent Philip of Fermo as a legate, who was entrusted with bringing the King back onto the path of normality. The Bishop of Fermo attempted in vain, through various means, to determine Ladislaus IV to abjure his pagan customs.

Up until the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, there were three other legates appointed to the Kingdom of Hungary (the legatine mission led by Bishop Benvenuto of Gubbio in 1290; the legation of Bishop John of Jesi in 1291; and the legation of Cardinal Nicholas Boccassini in 1301). None of them distinguished themselves through great accomplishments in their activity. Only Cardinal Gentile Montefiore, sent by the papal Curia, normalised the situation in the Arpadian Kingdom (1307-1311). He was also the one who had a beneficial impact upon dynastic change in Hungary, as the Arpadian dynasty died out at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, making room for the first foreign dynasty in the history of Hungarian royalty - the Angevin dynasty.

In these approximately one hundred and twenty years (1191-1311), there were ten legatine missions to the Hungarian Kingdom, most of them led by legates *de latere*. Not all the legations were "truly successful," nor could they all satisfy Rome's hierocratic claims. The control the Rome exercised over the European kingdoms, in our case, the Hungarian Kingdom, under the aegis of the medieval hierocratic current was not an easy task even with the assistance of the legates. This is also what we have attempted and, hopefully, managed to prove throughout this PhD thesis.

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From a methodological point of view, we move within the frameworks of reconstituting history and, then, interpreting history.

The references used comprise three sectors: sources, general bibliography and specialised bibliography. The sources - albeit of high quality, many of them published and

translated at times - have not yet been sufficiently explored in the Romanian historical literature. The general bibliography includes authoritative works on the history of the Church. Besides these, there are included general works on the history of Romania, the history of Hungary and the history of Transylvania. The category of special works features thematic approaches to political history, institutional history and canon law.