

FORRÁSKÖZLEMÉNY

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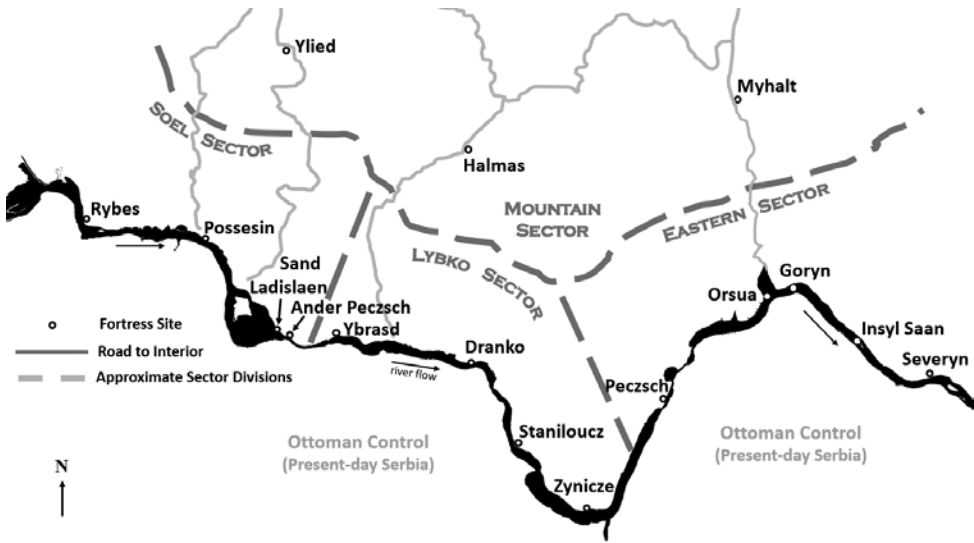
A KEY DOCUMENT OF HUNGARY'S DANUBE FRONTIER FROM 1429 REVISITED

In the first half of the fifteenth century, a set of twenty-two fortresses were organized into a defensive line on the Danube River, set to protect the southern frontier of the Kingdom of Hungary. This defense line was linked to the history of the Teutonic Order, a religious military order active in the Baltic region. In 1426, King Sigismund of Hungary (1387–1437) proposed that an expedition from the Teutonic Order take up a part of the southern defense of the Hungarian Kingdom. They would be located along the entire length of the Iron Gates Gorge system (Hungarian: *Vaskapu*, Romanian: *Porțile de Fier*, Serbian: *Ђерданска клисура / Đerdapska klisura* or *Гвоздена капија / Gvozdena kapija*, Bulgarian: *Железни врата*, and German: *Eisernes Tor*) forming a larger defensive front connecting the buffer states of the Despotate of Serbia on the Western flank, and the Voivodeship of Wallachia to the East.¹ The brothers of the Order were to set up operations in the gorge along the northern shore of the Danube River, which formed the actual frontier line, as at that time the lands on the opposite shore were under the control of the ever-active Ottoman Empire.² This particular stretch of the Danube within the Iron Gates spanned 134 km (83 miles) and included twenty-two fortresses (sixteen were manned) at the beginning of the Teutonic Order's occupation in 1429. (These fortress locations are shown in *Map 1*.) The Teutonic Order's expedition there would last only a short time, with the expedition permanently leaving the region around 1435.

The documentary examination of a relevant historical source is important in order to understand how this defensive line worked militarily – especially given its role in the on-going Ottoman Wars on the European Continent (beginning in the 14th century). This topic has been the focus of both my master thesis and my current doctoral dissertation, in which I am attempting to apply (beyond the documentation) landscape archaeology from a military perspective by using a combination of more contemporary tools. This includes satellite images and three-dimensional modelling – as well

¹ Regarding place names used in this article, I will use the Late Medieval German names for the fortresses as they are listed in the primary documents, because my argument is based on these sources, and also because many of these fortification sites no longer correspond to present-day Romanian settlements. In these cases, I suggest the reader to refer to *Map 1. Manned Castle Locations*. For all other place names, I will give their current Romanian names, followed by their Hungarian equivalents in parentheses when I am able to find them.

² *Pósán* 2021b. p. 111.



Map 1. Manned Castle Locations

as more traditional means like historical cartography and site inspection through the multiple visits that I have made to the fortress sites within the Iron Gates. The aim is to understand these fortifications as individual defensive features in their immediate geographical surroundings, as well as a strategic collective in a regional landscape.³ An effective military analysis of function can then be instructive to the evolution of defensive strategies within the history of the centuries-long Ottoman Wars, as well as can help explain how and why events occurred therein.

The Document

We know of the existence of these fortifications because they are listed in a document first transcribed from the original by archivist Erich Joachim in 1912 – at that time designated as document *StA Königsberg, OBA, Kg. VII, 21*.⁴ The archive in which Joachim found it (i.e., Staatsarchiv Königsberg, Ordensbriefarchiv) was inevitably transferred to the Secret State Archives of Prussian Cultural Heritage, in Berlin (*Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin-Dahlem, XX. Hauptabteilung, Ordensbriefarchiv*), where the collection of the Order's correspondences can be found currently.⁵

³ I currently have three works published regarding the defensive line in the Iron Gates gorge system. Snider 2020.; Snider 2021.; Snider – Laszlovszky 2019.

⁴ Joachim 1912. pp. 108–109.

⁵ This correspondence archive of the Teutonic Order has had a very complicated history in itself. With the dissolution of the Order's state in Prussia in 1525, most of these documents were transferred to Warsaw, Poland in accordance with a treaty. It was returned in 1941 to Königsberg, partially divided and distributed among a number of archives until 1944, when the remainder was

However, in terms of this individual document, I must now disclose that I am currently in contact with the Berlin archive to try and locate the original manuscript (*cota veche*) StA Königsberg, OBA, Kg. VII, 21, which appears to be missing. It is not clear if it has been misplaced, misnumbered, or completely lost since Joachim last laid eyes upon it in 1912 due to numerous archival transfers or loss caused by war. I will from this point forward refer to this original document as *Cota Veche 21*, as there does not seem to be a new designation for it in the registers of the correspondence archives in Berlin.

To be more clear, there seems to be an assumption among historians dealing with Cota Veche 21 that this manuscript is actually a part of another document sent from the same author (Nikolaus von Redwitz) and the same rough date (according to Romanian historian Feneşan, September/October 1429), listed in the Berlin archives as GStAPrKB, XX. HA, OBA, Nr. 27837. Therefore, Cota Veche 21 has been erroneously labelled in their works as OBA, Nr. 27837 as well.⁶ Nevertheless, Joachim makes it clear that these are two distinct documents in the Königsberg Archives where they both were located in 1912: StA Königsberg, OBA, Kg. VII, 21 (Cota Veche 21), and StA Königsberg, OBA, Kg. VII 25 a. Furthermore, when the present-day designation of OBA, Nr. 27837 is requested from the Berlin Archives, only StA Königsberg, OBA, Kg. VII 25 a (an expense report for eight of these fortresses) is there under that designation – Cota Veche 21 is not.⁷ Again, it is unclear what happened to Cota Veche 21, and it is also unclear how and when the incorrect designation has been attributed to it within scholarship.

Despite this, Cota Veche 21 is a very important document, as a rereading of it provides indications that the defensive line on the Danube was more complex and organized than has been previously understood. Methodologically speaking, a rereading of the original manuscript would be ideal to particularly analyze two structural elements found within it that indicate this complexity. However, given the manuscript's lack of availability to me at this time, I must instead demonstrate in this article that its transcription by Joachim is a faithful representation of the information contained within it – and by that laying the foundation for making any arguments in regard to its data structure. This shall be done in the chapter labelled “Cota Veche 21”.

transferred to the shelter of the Grasleben salt mine near Helmstedt in Lower Saxony due to the war. Despite this, only approximately one third of the total archive survived this period of conflict, which was then sent to Goslar in 1945, then to Göttingen in 1953, and finally to the Private State Archives of Prussian Cultural Heritage in Berlin in 1978/79. *Sarnowsk*, 2014. pp. 95–96.

⁶ This seems to be a minor error, which most likely comes from a single source that all of these scholars seem to have used in good faith. The two most recent works that use this incorrect designation includes *Feneşan*, 2015. p. 187 (the work where I had first obtained the incorrect designation to search within the Secret State Archives in Berlin), and *Pósán*, 2021a. p. 264, fn. 544.

⁷ In fact, when one goes to the online databank register of the Order's correspondence archive (*Virtuelles Preußisches Urkundenbuch*), the entry describing manuscript 27837 clearly states that this document is VII 25a. See: <https://www.spaetmittelalter.uni-hamburg.de/Urkundenbuch/pub/Undatiert.html> (Last access 16 January 2022.)

The Greater Historical Context of the Expedition

Disaster and setbacks marked the decades surrounding the turn of the fifteenth century for both the Hungarian King and the Teutonic Order and shaped the military policies for both in the following few decades. King Sigismund already had a history of struggle against the Ottomans long before his proposal to the Teutonic Order to enter the Iron Gates. For him, the troubles began in 1396 with his sound defeat and narrow escape from Ottoman forces on the battlefield of Nicopolis.⁸ Leading a pan-European crusade to counter recent rapid advances by the Ottomans into the southern Balkans, Sigismund ventured out from the Kingdom of Hungary through the Iron Gates with a force of about 15,000 men.⁹ They set a two week-long siege of the city of Nicopolis that contained a slightly smaller enemy force within. The result was a route of Sigismund's Christian forces, with their full retreat to the river Danube. Panic set in once they realized that not enough ships were available to rescue all of the battle's survivors. The result of this loss was that there was almost no remaining crusading fervor on a large scale left in Europe.¹⁰ This forced Sigismund to try a number of other solutions to slow or halt the steady northern movement of Ottoman armies. It began with an attempt to overhaul his military forces – requiring local nobles to arm one out of twenty peasants under them –, and it eventually led to his request to the Teutonic Order for help.¹¹

The Order, for its part, had fallen suddenly and sharply from its greatest extent in influence, territory, and martial power with its defeat at the Battle of Tannenberg in 1410.¹² Estimates of troop strengths vary wildly (anywhere between 25,000 to 60,000 total combatants), but it appears to be the largest medieval battle in terms of troop sizes for both the Teutonic Order and the combined Polish and Lithuanian force.¹³ The Order lost three-fourths of its total amount of serving brothers (those who had taken the Oath to become full members of the Order).¹⁴ Furthermore, it was almost entirely decapitated of its leadership including its Grandmaster, Grand Marshal, Grand Commander, Supply Marshal, one of its two Grand Treasurers, and ten Commanders of the local commanderies.¹⁵

⁸ *Whelan* 2013. pp. 215–216.

⁹ *Nicolle*, 1999. p. 37.

¹⁰ *Tuchman* 1978. p. 560.

¹¹ *Whelan* 2013. p. 216.

¹² *Urban* 2003. pp. 30–32.

¹³ *Urban* 1999. pp. 138–139.

¹⁴ *Frost* 2015. pp. 106–107.

¹⁵ Within the Teutonic Order, a commandery (*Komturei* or *Kommende*) was the basic military and economic organizational unit made up of estates tied to a fortress under the administration of a House Commander (*Komtur* or *Hauskomtur*). Several commanderies make up a Bailliwick (*Ballei*). *Jučas* 2009. pp. 85–86.

The Order also had to pay an indemnity to the victors in an amount that would bankrupt most kingdoms of the time: equaling ten times the annual income of the King of England.¹⁶ Furthermore, the Order would go back to war with the Kingdom of Poland three more times within the next three decades: 1414, 1422, and 1431–1433. The last war would help to ensure that the success of the expedition into the Iron Gates took a low priority for the Order as a whole. These wars were marked by invasions into the territory of the Order, causing problems with the peasantry and nobles alike as they resulted in famine, loss of property, and a disaffection of the privileges for townspeople. These problems were exacerbated by the conservative policies under Grandmaster Rußdorf, who was trying to restore the political, social, and economic control of the Order over the state (*Ordensstaat*) to pre-Tannenberg levels. This disaffection of the local populace would come to a head several times for the remainder of the century.¹⁷

In fact, these difficulties also colored the budding relationship between the Teutonic Order and Sigismund – one in which the Order increasingly relied on the King's support in its struggles with the papacy, the Kingdom of Poland, and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania – as the king began courting the military support of the Teutonic Knights against the advancing Ottoman forces as early as 1412.¹⁸ Sigismund also played an important role in the Order's purchase of the territory of the Neumark from the Margravate of Brandenburg in 1402, although it did not obtain its full control until 1429 – the same year that the expedition set out, also becoming yet another matter with a higher priority than the Iron Gates expedition for the Order.¹⁹

Moreover, Sigismund also had a negative effect on the Order's war with Poland in 1422 (the Gollub War), though indirectly. His war against the Hussites in Bohemia made it very difficult for the Teutonic Order to raise the vital mercenaries from that land. It could typically rely on this resource to help boost its fighting numbers during times of conflict, and Władisław II of Poland and Duke Witold of Lithuania counted on this disruption to launch their invasion of 1422.²⁰ Incidentally, the Hussite War would, many times, take a higher priority for Sigismund over the expedition that he had proposed.

Sigismund also had an influence in the conclusion of the 1422 Gollub War. The Treaty of Mełno signed the following year stipulated that Sigismund would no longer continue his support for the Teutonic Order, in exchange for Poland and Lithuania agreeing to cease their support for the Hussites in Bohemia.²¹ The dire situation in the *Ordensstaat* had forced Grandmaster Rußdorf to agree to very unfavorable terms

¹⁶ Christiansen 1997. p. 228.

¹⁷ Burleigh 1984. p. 8.

¹⁸ Following the defeat at Tannenberg (1410), the Order relied on Sigismund as a third-party broker for a more acceptable peace deal with victors (Poland and Lithuania). Whelan 2014. pp. 68–69.

¹⁹ Burleigh 1984. pp. 70–71.

²⁰ Krollmann 1932. p. 127. Cited in Burleigh 1984. p. 84.

²¹ Urban 1999. pp. 281–283.

in order to stop the conflict, and furthermore, the angry nobles of the Ordensstaat forced a concession from the Order stipulating that if it were ever to engage in a war of aggression, the Estates would be freed from their oaths to it.²² The historical context of crisis and decline for the Order, the shifting of official alignments, and serious division in military priorities of the Hungarian King becomes very important in explaining why the expedition to the Iron Gates would number a mere eight brother-knights from the Order. This circumstance also underlines that military strategy and organization were crucial for Redwitz to defend the lynchpin of Hungary's southern defensive line of twenty-two fortresses in the Iron Gates.²³

The Strategy in Geography and Terrain

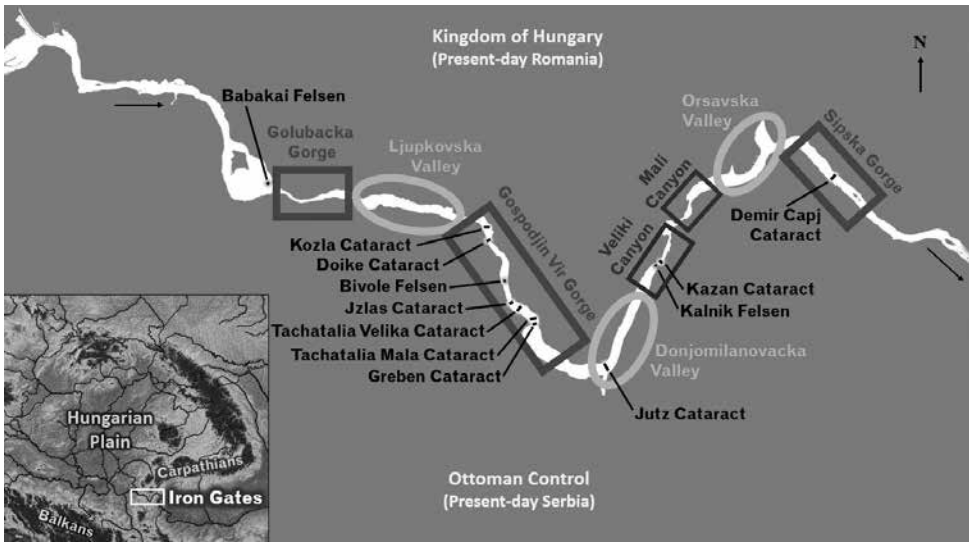
The location of the Iron Gates on the threshold of Central Europe has made it strategically important for millennia. The chain of the Carpathian Mountains separates the Hungarian Plain from the rest of the Great Eurasian Steppe, making this plain the valuable defensible endpoint to hold against all nomadic horse cultures who had travelled along the Great Steppe from the East.²⁴ The Iron Gates system of gorges and canyons marks the southern entrance into the Kingdom of Hungary via the Danube River (see *Map 2*). It is formed structurally by the Southern Carpathians (in nowadays' Romania) and Serbian Carpathians meeting on opposite sides of the river and then falling down into it. The Iron Gates is actually comprised of three gorges (Golubacka, Gospodjin Vir, and Sipska) with steep walls towering over the river. These are separated by two canyons (Mali Kazan and Veliki Kazan) with straight vertical walls, and three valleys (Orsavska, Donjomilanovacka, and Ljupkovska) with more gently sloping gradients.

Put together, the entire gorge system forms a bottleneck between the two mountain ranges for all river traffic, as the Danube is a major river capable of transporting large flotillas along its length – except here. In the Iron Gates itself, the river forms ninety degree turns in general flow at five major places, and one of sixty degrees. Furthermore, prior to the twentieth century, it had nine cataracts (extremely fast-moving courses of the river studded by large rocks and boulders) spread along its length, and three giant rock formations (*Felsen*) jutting out of the water at separate narrow points in the river (see *Map 2*).

²² *Burleigh* 1984, p. 143.

²³ These eight brothers were to act as a command structure for the garrisons of mercenaries enumerated in the Cota Veche 21 manuscript. Cf. GStAPrKB, XX. HA, OBA, Nr. 5096, in *Feneşan* 2015, p. 168.

²⁴ These groups began their westward migrations on the Eurasian Steppe along varying points, ending their long migration at the doorstep of the Pannonian (Hungarian) Plain. The long list includes the Scythians, Sarmatians, Alans, Goths, Huns, Avars, Bulgars, Magyars, Khazars, Pechenegs, Cumans, and Mongols.



Map 2. The Gorge System. Insertion: The Iron Gates and the Hungarian Plain

All of these obstacles meant careful navigation was necessary, and so control of passage through and around them would aid in the defense of the gorge system as a whole. By extension, control of the Iron Gates was strategically important in defending the wide, flat interior of Hungary from an invasion coming from the Wallachian Plain to its east and south (once again, separated by the Carpathian Mountains). This need to control the Iron Gates theater of operations was answered by a complex system of fortifications that stretched the entire length of the gorge and needed to be adequately garrisoned.

Cota Veche 21

Cota Veche 21 is in fact a troop strength report of the castle system in the Iron Gates composed by the expedition's overall commander, lay brother Nikolaus von Redwitz (fl. 1423–c. 1435). It was prepared for his superior, Grandmaster Paul von Rußdorf (c. 1385–1441) along with two other documents, which deal with the costs of maintaining the defensive line. Strictly speaking, there are twenty-four placenames listed in Cota Veche 21, but I will argue that only twenty-two are fortresses whose entries relate the size and composition of their garrisons. The remaining two names are displayed in a very different manner from the rest, and without any of the accompanying information found in the remainder of the entries – see the faithfully rendered transcription below. These anomalous two are key to the focus of this article.

To begin with, in historiographical terms, all twenty-four names have been interpreted as fortifications since Joachim published his study on the history of the

expedition in 1912. He included in his notations conjectures as to the possible locations for what he interpreted to be twenty-four fortresses – which had by his time not only fallen into disuse but were also forgotten and lost to the long march of time.²⁵ The latest study centered specifically on the documents of the expedition themselves was created by Romanian historian Costin Feneşan in 2015. In it, Feneşan carries on the assertion that all twenty-four names are fortresses but offers alternate possibilities for some of the twenty-four locations.²⁶ Since they specifically discuss interpretations of the names from the list in Cota Veche 21, I will use these two works (Joachim’s article and Feneşan’s book) to determine whether all twenty-four entries do, indeed, designate fortifications.

In fact, the argument of this article is that the two inconsistent entries (“Lybko” and “Soel”) are not fortresses at all; rather they are section headings in the formatting of the list representing sector divisions within the defensive line created by the leaders of the expedition to better conduct defensive operations within the Iron Gates. This possibility indicates a more complex defensive plan than has previously been credited to the expedition, one that reorganizes the castle chain into more manageable zones of operation that are placed under a central command. This would come in the person of Procurator Nikolaus von Redwitz.²⁷ Thus, a more comprehensive strategic plan seems to emerge on the southern frontier of the Kingdom of Hungary in the third decade of the fifteenth century.

As a matter of fact, Hungarian historian László Pószán also suggests that the defensive line was complex and multilayered, as it has been presented in his authoritative monograph on the extensive relationship of the Teutonic Order and the Kingdom of Hungary from the thirteenth through the sixteenth centuries. It is the most recent and comprehensive work on the association between these two entities.

Regarding the section of his book that deals with the Iron Gates defense line from 1429 through c. 1435, I agree with Pószán in his analysis that there were multiple lines of defense set up by the Teutonic Order on the frontier. The documents make this clear. However, I diverge from him slightly, as I am not convinced that the three castles of his proposed third line – Sebes (today Sebeş), Krassóvár (Caraşova), and Borzafő (next to Reşiţa) – were viewed by the Teutonic Order as specifically a defensive line,²⁸ since these places are only listed in another document (GStAPrKB, XX. HA, OBA, Nr. 27838) that deals exclusively with the production of revenues for the maintenance of the entire expedition.²⁹ In comparison, the twenty-two fortifications listed in Cota Veche 21 and the aforementioned OBA, Nr. 27837 have

²⁵ Joachim 1912. pp. 108–109.

²⁶ Feneşan 2015. p. 187.

²⁷ Pószán 2021b. p. 123.

²⁸ Pószán 2021a. p. 266.

²⁹ For a transcription of GStAPrKB, XX. HA, OBA, Nr. 27838, see Feneşan 2015. pp. 200–204.

a clear military purpose spelled out in manned garrisons and military equipment. Sebes, Krassóvár and Borzafő do not in any way, as they are presented only in OBA, Nr. 27838, and are not even mentioned in Cota Veche 21, nor in OBA, Nr. 27837. This indicates (I believe) that the same author of all three documents (Procurator Redwitz) viewed these three places as different in nature from the other twenty-two fortifications.³⁰

However, I do not believe that Sebes, Krassóvár, and Borzafő have no military aspect to them at all – it would be ridiculous to claim that a functioning fortress serves no military purpose – but given the nature of the relevant documents I am not persuaded that the Teutonic Order's expeditionary force viewed them specifically as a defensive line. Also, Pószán does not include Lybko nor Soel at all in his treatment of the fortresses listed in Cota Veche 21. I do not know if he assumes, as I do, that they were not names of castles at all, or if there is some other reason why they are missing from this portion of his work.³¹

Cota Veche 21 is written in the typical Late Medieval Middle German dialect that is found in the majority of correspondences and documents of the Prussian branch of the Teutonic Order at that time.³² Despite being undated, the most recent scholarship conducted on it by Costin Feneşan dates this manuscript's composition to October or November 1429.³³ To understand its place in the expedition's timeline, this comes only a month or two after their arrival to the Iron Gates, as an earlier letter dated to 9 September 1429 sent from King Sigismund to Grandmaster Rußdorf states that Redwitz and his men had only recently left Pressburg (present-day Bratislava/Pozsony) to take possession of the castles on the border. This makes Cota Veche 21 an initial strength report from Redwitz to his direct superior, Rußdorf.³⁴

In order to determine the nature of the placenames found within (particularly Lybko and Soel), it becomes necessary to examine the contents of this report. First, an impediment must be overcome. As the original manuscript is currently missing, an analysis can only be accomplished once it has been established that Joachim's published transcription is accurate in its representation of the original.

³⁰ Feneşan 2015. pp. 190–204.

³¹ Pószán 2021a. p. 267.

³² While the brotherhood of the Livonian branch largely tended to come from the Hanseatic cities and territories of what is the northern parts of Germany and the Netherlands today, speaking and writing in a version of the Low German or Saxon dialect, those members of the Prussian Ordensstaat were most inclined to come from the more central regions of Franconia, Thuringia, Swabia, and Hesse, and speak a form of the Middle dialect. *Burleigh* 1984. p. 37.

³³ Feneşan 2015. p. 187.

³⁴ GStAPrKB, XX. HA, OBA, Nr. 5171, in Feneşan 2015. pp. 184–186.

JOACHIM'S TRANSCRIPTION OF COTA VECHÉ 21

Das huws Severyn hat 200 person und 40 schutzen.

Die insyl Saan hat 216 person.

Vaskapu, das huws ist wuste.

Sente Peters huws ist wuste.

Ken Severin obir ist eyn huws und ist wuste.

Czu Goryn sien 60 person.

Czu Orsua 60 person, 30 schutzen, 260 sulcher knechte, di do thun
mussen alles das man sie heisset, und sien ouch weerhaftig.

Kegen dem huwsze Orsua obir ist eyn huws und ist wuste.

Czu Peczsch sien 32 personen und 20 schutzen.

Ober dem Peczsch ist aber eyn huws und ist wuste.

L y b k o

Czu Zynicze sien 40 person und 6 schutzen.

Czu Staniloucz 32 person und 4 schutzen.

Dranko 24 person und 4 schutzen.

Ybrasd 24 person und 4 schutzen.

S o e l

Do ist eyn ander Peczsch und do sien 20 person und 4 schutzen.

In Sand Ladislaen huwsze sien 400 person und 56 schutzen.

Czu Possesin 200 Person und 30 schutzen, und czwuschen den beiden
hewsern, als Sand Ladislaen und Possesin, ist eyn gute feere.

Kegen Possesin obir ist eyn wuste huws.

Czu Rybes 40 person.

Das huws Myhalt mit sienen czuhorungen und jegenoth hat 294 knesien,
das sien gute freyen etc., 1112 puwer, 30 die die wege bewaren
und 20 brieffwurer.

Halmas das huws mit siener jegenoth hat 223 knesien, 504 puwern, 32 die
der wege huwten und 26 brieffwurer.

Das huws Ylied mit siener czuhorunge hat 126 knesien, 450 puwern etc.

The scheme above is a faithful reproduction to the transcription published in the appendix of Joachim's article, excluding his footnote markers.³⁵ The second line hanging indentations for longer entries that extend beyond the first line are broken at the exact words as are done by Joachim. Both lines containing "Lybko" and "Soel" are indented

³⁵ It should be noted that the line: "*mussen alles das man sie heisset, und sien ouch weerhaftig*", that the word "*alles*" contains an extra letter "L" as is reflected in Joachim. As Cota Veche 21 is currently missing, it is impossible to know for sure if the fault lies with the original scribe putting in too many strokes. *Joachim* 1912. pp. 108–109.

to the exact alignment with the word directly below them in his transcription.³⁶ I have been as accurate as possible to best illustrate for the reader how significantly different the line for Lybko and the line for Soel are from the rest of the entries in the list. Let me recall once again, that these two names have historiographically been assumed to be castle names, the same as all other entries in the list. I will now begin to argue differently.

Analyzing Joachim's Transcription

To begin with, Erich Joachim already had experience in the transcription of fifteenth century documents from the Teutonic Order by the time of his 1912 article. He published *Das Marienburger Tresslerbuch der Jahre 1399–1409* sixteen years earlier, in 1896.³⁷ Though it only covered a period of ten years, it contains six hundred pages of transcription. I believe this in part establishes his “*bona fides*” as a transcriber of documents.

In addition to this, although the original for Cota Veche 21 is currently missing, it is still possible to assess the quality of Joachim's transcription of it by examining the very next document which he transcribes within the same work – a manuscript that does happen to exist in the present-day correspondence archive in Berlin. In Joachim's time, this second document was known as *StA Königsberg, OBA, Kg. VII, 25 a*. Nevertheless, to avoid confusion, from now on I shall refer to it by its current designation in the Berlin archive: *OBA 27837*. This is an accounting report set in the form of an itemized list for eight of the fortifications previously named in Cota Veche 21. Moreover, current scholarship places the composition dates of both documents to about the same period in the expedition (October–November 1429), which is another similarity between the two.³⁸ As *OBA 27837* is also a list, its structure lends itself to direct comparison with the list in Cota Veche 21, and their similarities are helpful in determining what Lybko and Soel could be, if they are not fortifications.

Examining a digital copy of the original document *OBA 27837* – published by Feneşan –, it becomes clear that Joachim is indeed faithful to the manuscript text with his transcription.³⁹ He reproduces the format of the data in the same manner as it appears in the digital copy. He also organizes all of the individual entries in the same hanging indentations, the sums and totals set to the same margin, and the headings for each fortress horizontally centered above the section to which they correspond – just

³⁶ The start of the name “Lybko” is aligned above the space following the word “und” in the line below it, and the beginning of “Soel” is aligned with the “o” in the word “do” in the line directly below it.

³⁷ This was the ledger book for one of the two financial officers of the Teutonic Order who was located in the main headquarters of Marienburg (now Malbork, Poland). *Joachim* 1896. pp. 1–600.

³⁸ *Feneşan* 2015. pp. 187., 190.

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 90.

as they were recorded in the original ledger. All of this suggests that he employed a careful transcription technique in his article that contains both OBA 27837, and Cota Veche 21, and therefore, faith in the accuracy in the former may be projected on the latter. Bottom line: the Order's manuscripts use centered headings, and Joachim preserved them in transcription.

Now, turning to a comparison between the two transcriptions themselves, similarities appear. Individual entries in OBA 27837 that extend longer than the first line are shown in the same hanging indentation format as they appear in Cota Veche 21. What is most significant is that the single placenames in OBA 27837 that are centered alone on their own lines of text are unquestionably title-headings that organize the entries below them into sections, and these are in the same format as Lybko and Soel in Cota Veche 21.⁴⁰ Therefore, I suggest that they are also section headings. But headings for what?

Unlike every other entry in the list, Lybko and Soel appear as single words with no other information tied to them. The rest of the entries either state that there are fighters and bowmen/gunners located there, or that they are abandoned for the time being. Lybko and Soel cannot be interpreted as unmanned fortresses because it is clearly stated six other times in the list when a fortress is "abandoned" (*wuste*). Also, all of the other entries give language signifiers indicating that they are definite geographical places. For example, there is a commandery (*huws*) located there, or it is on an island (*Insyl*), or it is upriver (*kegen/ken, obir/ober*) from another place. The lack of signifiers suggests that Lybko and Soel are general locations, and combined with the observation that they appear as section headings, makes me believe that they describe a division of the entire defensive chain of fortresses into military sectors containing the places named beneath them.

Dispelling Counterarguments

Joachim posited that Lybko could be the fortress of *Lugoj* (Lugos) in present-day Timiș County, Romania, however this is highly unlikely, as this castle was under the control of the Counts of Logoj at the time of the expedition between 1429 and 1435, and it is also located about 180 km north of the Iron Gates. This second fact means that it would make no sense militarily as the location of Lybko, because it would be an outlier – far away from the defensive line on the Danube. Nor would it make sense geographically, as Cota Veche 21 lists locations as if one were moving westward upriver from the easternmost location at Severyn (Szörényvár, present-day Drobeta-Turnu Severin), ending

⁴⁰ *Joachim* 1912. pp. 109–113.

with the three nearby fortresses on the mountain interior – again in a westward order.⁴¹ If Lybko were Lugo castle, it would in fact be listed at the very end of the list.

Feneşan, on the other hand, stated in his 2015 work that he believes it to be most likely a fortress located in present-day *Liubcova*. This is far more reasonable, as it would fall into place in the westward order of the list, however there were two locations that have been historically known as *Liubcova* (alternative spelling *Lupkova*). Today's settlement of Gornea was once known as Upper *Liubcova* (*Felsőlupkó*, *Gorna-Lupkova*), but according to Pál Engel's work on the Ottoman tax registers for this region after the Turks took control in the beginning of the sixteenth century, the name of *Lupkova* is not attached to this settlement before 1554.⁴² This means that no fortress named *Lybko* (i.e., *Lupkova*) was in existence between 1429 and 1435.

The settlement that is known today as *Liubcova*, used to be called Lower *Liubcova* (*Alsólupkó*). However, Klára Hegyi's 2007 study of fortifications in the period of the Turkish occupation states that the settlement of *Ljupkovadolnja* or *Liubcova de Jos* (both mean Lower *Liubcova*) did not have a palisade until around 1600, built by the Ottomans.⁴³ This means that there was no fortification at this site in the time of the expedition.

There is, however, a general geographical location named the *Liubcova Depression*. This is an eighteen-kilometer stretch along the river, where the more gently sloping valley supports agriculture, ranging from *Liborajdea* (*Liborásdia*) to *Drecova* (*Berszászka*).⁴⁴ Dumitru Ţeicu states that a District of *Liubcova* had developed within the *Liubcova Depression*, documentarily confirmed by the 15th century.⁴⁵ This would seem to bolster the idea that *Lybko* refers to a larger area that contains a portion of the fortresses recorded within *Cota Veche 21*: *Zynicze*, *Staniloucz*, *Dranko*, and *Ybrasd*.

As for *Soel*, Joachim has no idea where it could be, and simply states in his footnotes that it is, "*Nicht festzustellen*" (undetermined).⁴⁶ Feneşan appears to use the principle of the westward order of progression in the list of *Cota Veche 21* at this point. He suggests that it may be located between *Ybrasd* and the second fortress referred to as *Peczsch* (*Ander Peczsch*), seemingly because that is where it falls in the list.⁴⁷ However, given the argument established above that *Lybko* and *Soel* are organizational

⁴¹ It has also been believed by Joachim and, once again, others after him (like Feneşan) that *Insyl Saan* is the now completely submerged island of *Ade Kaleh* (near present-day *Orsova/Orşova*), going against the idea that the fortresses are listed in an order like traveling upriver. However, I plan to produce an article in the near future arguing that *Insyl Saan* is a misreading of the manuscript for *Insyl Baan* (*Insula Banului*), an old name for present-day *Insula Golul* near *Gura Văii* – thus putting the list back into a westward order.

⁴² Engel 1996. p. 86.

⁴³ Hegyi 2007. pp. 1423–1424.

⁴⁴ Patroescu – Vintila 1997. p. 36.

⁴⁵ Ţeicu 2002. pp. 207–208.

⁴⁶ Joachim 1912. pp. 108–109.

⁴⁷ Feneşan 2015. p. 187.

headings in the structure of the list, I would like to put forth that the name Soel, like Lybko, reflects a description of the geographical area that contains its contingent of fortresses (Ander Peczsch, Sand Ladislaen, Possesin, an unnamed fortification “up-river of Possesin”, and Rybes). This particular section lies just outside the actual gorge system at its western entrance. It is marked by gentle slopes along the riverside before becoming the slopes of the Locva Mountains (Munții Locvei). To this day, multiple vineyards line this stretch of the Danube on the northern bank, creating a very different landscape from the other sectors within the gorge system.⁴⁸ One possibility may be that the word Soel is connected to the viticulture of this area.

The Hungarian word *szőlő* means grape, and this had been the southern frontier for the Kingdom of Hungary since the thirteenth century.⁴⁹ In addition, there is a pattern within that kingdom during the High Middle Ages for using toponyms containing *szőlő*,⁵⁰ For example, there is documentary attestation in 1423 of a settlement named Szőlősardó in today’s Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County of northeastern Hungary.⁵¹ Closer to the Iron Gates, there is a meadow along the Danube in the vicinity of the Serbian city of Futog with the name of Szőlősjakabfölde. This in fact has been attested in documents dating to 1320/1322.⁵² Within the area controlled by the expedition, more closely within the Soel defensive sector, there exists on the road between the fortresses of Possesin and Ylied the town of Kaluđerovo (appr. 15 km due north of Fortress Possesin, in present-day Serbia) that has been and is still known as Szőlőshegy. However, it cannot be substantiated for the time being that this name was used in the medieval period.⁵³ Regardless of whether Soel is a toponym connected to viticulture, it is still a heading separating the list of fortresses into smaller sections in Cota Veche 21. The true meaning of the name Soel bears no real obstacle to the theory on establishment of defensive sectors within the castle chain in the Iron Gates.

The Implications of Defensive Sectors

It is hard not to succumb to the false dichotomy that if the military technology found in conflicts of the distant past was comparatively less sophisticated than the technology used in current warfare, then the tactical and strategic organization used to properly deploy these technologies was necessarily more primitive as well. Narrowing this postulate’s focus to defensive combat, it would be equally fallacious to assume that a fifteenth century collection of castles – positioned along a well delineated frontier –

⁴⁸ Though anecdotal, my most recent trip to the Iron Gates in August of 2021 has yielded photographs of vineyards all along the river in this section of the Danube.

⁴⁹ *Teicu* 2002. p. 208.

⁵⁰ *Reszegi* 2016. p. 246.

⁵¹ *Tóth – Rácz – Hoffmann* 2017. p. 190.

⁵² *Ibid.* 2017. p. 140.

⁵³ *Lelkes* 1992. p. 377.

would only reflect a simple line drawn on a map, and by extension it was not likely to have been a well-organized structure divided into smaller defensive sectors for more intensive command and control of individual access points and unique local objectives because of our prejudices of military theory within the medieval period.

In general terms, there has always been a complexity of threats posed by an enemy in the field (infiltration, espionage, sabotage, etc.) – there are endless ancient and classical examples that would illustrate this point. It would follow that defenders, therefore, would need to face the nebulousness of these dangers in an equally complex set of strategies in order to be successful.⁵⁴ A 134 km defensive line formed by a river and shared with an enemy where both sides control opposing riverbanks would unavoidably contain multiple points of infiltration (to include the river itself, located up- or downriver), as well as strategic objectives that might provide opportunities for the adversary to gain an upper hand. It would be logical that a partition of that defensive line into, let us say, four smaller zones or sectors could have a positive effect upon the management of these problems by breaking them up and focusing individual garrisons along the line to face a fewer number of objectives within a manageable distance.⁵⁵ Yet, when combined, these sectors would cover the length of the entire frontline under the overall control of a hierarchical chain of command.⁵⁶

Just looking at Cota Veche 21, if you take out the six fortresses recorded as being abandoned, the remaining occupied fortifications fall very evenly into the proposed sector system. Five comprise the first sector on the list guarding the eastern door to the Iron Gates (Severyn, Insyl Saan, Goryn, Orsua, and Peczsich), four belong to the Lybko sector (Zynicze, Staniloucz, Dranko, and Ybrasd), four fall within the Soel sector (Ander Peczsich, Sand Ladislaen, Possesin, and Rybes), and three are guarding the three interior valleys of the Mountain sector (Myhalt, Halmas, and Ylied). This balanced distribution pattern would point to a planned organizational structure designed to control the multiple objectives contained along the broad 134 km frontline, in order to provide a proper military defense of the Iron Gates.

The Mountain Fortresses

The last three fortresses of Myhalt, Halmas, and Ylied in Cota Veche 21 can be positively located in present-day Romania's Mehadia (Mehádia), Almaj (Dalbosec) and Illidia (Illyéd) respectively. They are not set on the Danube like the others, but in three

⁵⁴ *Kramer* 2007. p. 10.

⁵⁵ *Tactical Principles and Decisions* 3, pp. 24–25.

⁵⁶ Within the terms of modern management science, the typical organizational structure found in various armies is labeled as “Scalar” or “Line” organization. It is a top-down structure that is designed to provide a unified chain of command that branches down to control an increasing number of subordinates at each succeeding level like the roots of a tree radiating out from one trunk. *McCullum: Military Review*. LVI. Nr. 3. (1976), 69. Also *Chand* 2006. p. 200.

different mountain valleys at an average distance of about 33 km from the river to the North. Each guard the objective of a major road (defined as being capable of allowing a large enemy force passage to the Transylvanian interior). (See *Map 1* for the relationship of these fortresses to the interior roads.) They also serve as communication nodes that connect the fortresses along the defensive line on the river with places further to the interior – including the court of the Hungarian king as well as with the headquarters of the Grandmaster in Prussia. In fact, Cota Veche 21 mentions twenty message couriers (*brieffuwrer*) stationed at Myhalt, and twenty-six at Halmas.⁵⁷

Besides monitoring the major valley roads, these three fortresses also serve as income generators to help finance the perpetual costs of maintaining the expedition. This is proved by the types of people tied to them in the list. Instead of soldiers and bowmen/gunners (*person* and *schutczen*) found in the river fortresses, village officials and peasants (*knesien* and *puwern*) are recorded in their entries. Also, a third document transcribed by Joachim in the same 1912 article further illustrates this by specifically itemizing the produce and animals (wheat, oats, honey, cows, sheep, pigs, etc.) owed to each of the three fortresses in the mountain sector on the Feast of St. George (April 23) and Michaelmas (September 29).⁵⁸

The River Fortifications

The defensive objectives of a sector located on the river differs from those of the mountain interior. Although the heads of major roads that start at the riverbank should also be controlled and patrolled, it is the river serving as a highway in itself that an enemy may want to take advantage of for intelligence gathering, sabotage, or invasion. Control of the river involves the mastery of the physical features scattered along it that hinders or slows the enemy's river traffic. In the Iron Gates, this includes three narrows/gorges (Golubacka, Gospodjin Vir, and Sipska), along with the aforementioned nine cataracts (namely, Demir Capj, Kazan, Jutz, Greben, Tachatalia Mala, Tachatalia Velika, Jzlas, Doike, and Kozla), and three giant rock formations (Babakai, Bivole, and Kalnik) towering out of the water surface (see *Map 2*).

The easternmost defensive zone from the fortresses of Severyn to Pezcsch stretches approximately 60 km in length (see *Map 1*). It controls the eastern entrance to the gorge system from an approach off the vast Wallachian Plain. It also controls the one major road that starts at the fortification of Orsua on the Danube and winds along the Cerna (Cserna) River to pass the fortress of Myhalt in the mountain region. In terms of river traffic, this sector would also be responsible for control of the Vărciorova–Gura Văii Narrows with the Demir Capj cataract in its eastern entry point, the Kazan Cataract and

⁵⁷ Joachim 1912. pp. 109–113.

⁵⁸ GStAPrKB, XX. HA, OBA, Nr. 27838. In Joachim 1912. pp. 113–115.

nearby Kalnik giant rock that both impede travel through the Veliki Canyon, and the Jutz Cataract that separates this sector from the Lybko sector.

The Lybko sector from Zynicze to Ybrasd (approximately 45 km long) would handle the control of one large rock formation (Bivole) and the remaining six cataracts (Greben, Tachatalia Mala, Tachatalia Velika, Jzlas, Doike, and Kozla) in the Danube. All of which are contained within the Berzasca–Greben Narrows, greatly hampering a hostile force's travel along the river in this part. It would also be responsible for the protection of one major road that starts at the river between the fortifications of Dranko and Ybrasd and passes the fortress of Halmas in the interior.

The final sector of Soel spans 30 km from the fortresses of Ander Peczsch (the other Peczsch) to Rybes. As discussed above, the immediate terrain along the river edge within this section is gentler than the geography found within the gorge system. However, it is tightly flanked all along by the Locva Mountains. This ordains that there are only two major roads for it to dominate. Both provide direct access to the Hungarian Plain – as opposed to the other two roads leading into the internal mountainous areas of Transylvania. Near the entrance to the gorge between Sand Ladislaen (Szentlászlóvár, today Lászlóvára) and Ander Peczsch lies the last rock formation (Babakai) that used to set within a tiny narrow formed by the shore of Ostrov Island and the northern bank.

Therefore, if the defensive line is broken into smaller segments in this manner, it becomes far easier for a limited force to protect this frontier when coordinated, because it provides a structure for fortifications within these groups to cooperate and focus on the immediate tactical and strategic objectives nearby. I have argued that there is documentary evidence for the possibility of this division and have discussed how this integrated system may have been applied to the realities of the Iron Gates defensive line. I plan to continue to work on this issue as it relates to my dissertation applying a military analysis to the entire Iron Gates castle system between 1429 and 1437.

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Jason Snider

A DUNAI MAGYAR HATÁRVÉDELEM EGY KULCSDOKUMENTUMÁNAK
(1429) ÚJ ÉRTELMEZÉSE

(*Rezümé*)

1429-ben a Német Lovagrend nyolc lovagját küldték a Poroszországtól ezer kilométerre fekvő Magyar Királyságba, hogy átvegyék a déli határt védelmező várrendszer irányítását. Ezek az erősségek a magyar védelmi rendszer központjában feküdtek, stratégiaileg kapcsolták össze az ütközőállamokat, a szerb és havasalföldi fejedelemséget a II. Murád szultán (1421–1451) idején indított oszmán előrenyomulással szemben. Zsigmond magyar király (1387–1437) bizakodóan úgy gondolta, hogy ezt a várrendszert a nagy tapasztalattal rendelkező Német Lovagrendre bízhatja, amivel helyére teheti a hiányzó láncszemet a déli határszakasz szerb és havasalföldi szárnya között.

A lovagrend levéltára megőrzött egy nem könnyen értelmezhető beszámolót ezeknek az erősségeknek az aktuális létszámáról, amelyet 1429-ben továbbítottak Paul von Rußdorffhoz, a rend nagymesteréhez (1422–1441) Poroszországba. A jelentést arról a várrendszerről küldték, amely a Dunának egy 134 kilométeres kanyargó szorosát, a Vaskaput (német: *Eiserne Tor*; román: *Porțile de Fier*; szerb: *Ђердап, Đerdap*) biztosította. Ez az a terület, ahol a Déli-Kárpátok déli nyúlványa találkozik a Szerb-érchegység északi vonulatával, és a hegyoldalak szinte függőlegesen szakadnak a Dunába, amely ma határfolyó Románia és Szerbia között.

Jelen tanulmány az előzetes felmérést (*StA Königsberg, OBA, Kg. VII, 21*) újraolvasva nyújtja a Német Lovagrendre bízott várrendszer hadszervezetének új értelmezését. Megcáfolja azt az évszázados véleményt, miszerint a listán szereplő összes földrajzi név mögött egy-egy erősséget kellene keresni. A szerző felfogása szerint ezek közül kettő nem vár volt, hanem a védelmi rendszeren belüli frontszakasz megnevezésére szolgált. A tanulmány arra tesz kísérletet, hogy ezt bizonyítsa a források szöveg szerkezetének vizsgálatával, a szektorfelbontás mögötti katonai észszerűség felvázolásával. Ezek alapján igazolja azt is, hogy a Vaskapu várrendszere sokkal ambiciózusabb volt a korábbi kutatásokban feltételezetténél, és felveti, hogy a lovagrend expedíciós műveleteinek vezetési és irányítási rendszere is jóval összetettebb lehetett.

Jason Snider

A KEY DOCUMENT OF HUNGARY'S DANUBE FRONTIER FROM 1429 REVISITED

(Summary)

In 1429, eight knights of the Teutonic Knights were sent to the Kingdom of Hungary, a thousand kilometres from Prussia, to take control of the fortifications defending the southern border. These fortifications lay in a strategic position between the buffer states of the Despotate of Serbia and the Voivodeship of Wallachia defending Hungary against the advances of the Ottoman Empire launched by Sultan Murad II (1421–1451). Sigismund of Luxembourg, king of Hungary (1387–1437) was confident that he could entrust this fortress system to the experienced Teutonic Knights, thus putting in place the missing link between the Serbian and the Wallachian wings of the southern border.

The archives of the Order of Teutonic Knights have preserved a not easily interpretable account of the actual strength of these fortresses (*Sta Königsberg, OBA, Kg. VII, 21*). The report – forwarded to Paul von Rußdorf, Grand Master of the Order (1422–1441) in Prussia in 1429 – described the fortification system that secured the Iron Gate (German: *Eiserne Tor*; Romanian: *Porțile de Fier*; Serbian: Ђердап, Đerdap), a 134-kilometre-long winding gorge system on the River Danube. This is the place where the Southern Carpathians and the Serbian Carpathians meet with almost vertical slopes on both sides of the river that is the present-day border between Romania and Serbia.

The present research article, revisiting the preliminary survey, provides a new interpretation to the military organisation of the fortress system entrusted to the Order of Teutonic Knights. It refutes the centuries-old view that each geographical name in the list stands for a fortress. In the author's opinion, two of these names designate sectors within the defensive system instead. The research paper attempts to prove this by examining the structure of the source text and outlining the military rationale behind the sectoral division. On this basis, it also demonstrates that the Iron Gate fortress system was much more ambitious than assumed in previous research, and suggests that the command and control system of the expeditionary operations of the Order of the Teutonic Knights may have also been more complex.

Jason Snider

NEUINTERPRETATION EINES SCHLÜSSELDOKUMENTS DES UNGARISCHEN
GRENZSCHUTZES AN DER DONAU (1429)

(Resümee)

Im Jahr 1429 wurden acht Ritter des Deutschen Ordens in das tausend Kilometer von Preußen entfernte Königreich Ungarn entsandt, um die Kontrolle über das Festungssystem, das die Südgrenze schützte, zu übernehmen. Diese Festungen bildeten das Zentrum des ungarischen Verteidigungssystems, das die beiden Pufferstaaten, das Fürstentum Serbien und Walachei, strategisch gegen den osmanischen Vormarsch unter Sultan Murad II. (1421–1451) miteinander verband. Sigismund von Luxemburg, König von Ungarn (1387–1437), war zuversichtlich, dass er dieses Festungssystem dem erfahrenen Deutschen Orden anvertrauen und damit das fehlende Bindeglied zwischen dem serbischen und walachischen Flügel der Südgrenze schaffen konnte.

In den Archiven des Ritterordens ist eine nicht leicht zu interpretierende Aufstellung über die tatsächliche Anzahl dieser Festungen erhalten geblieben, die im Jahr 1429 an Paul von Rußdorf, Hochmeister des Ordens (1422–1441) in Preußen, übermittelt wurde. Der Bericht bezog sich auf das Befestigungssystem zur Sicherung des Eisernen Tores (ungarisch: Vaskapu, rumänisch: Porțile de Fier, serbisch: Ђердап, Đerdap), einer 134 Kilometer langen, gewundenen Donauenge. In diesem Gebiet trifft der südliche Ausläufer der Südkarpaten auf den nördlichen Ausläufer des serbischen Erzgebirges, und die Hänge brechen fast senkrecht in die Donau ab, die heute die Grenze zwischen Rumänien und Serbien bildet.

Die vorliegende Studie, die die vorläufige Analyse (StA Königsberg, OBA, Kg. VII, 21) wieder aufgreift, liefert eine Neuinterpretation der militärischen Organisation des dem Deutschen Ritterorden anvertrauten Festungssystems. Sie widerlegt die jahrhundertealte Ansicht, dass sich hinter jedem geografischen Namen in der Liste eine Festung verbirgt. Nach Ansicht des Verfassers waren zwei davon keine Festungen, sondern dienten dazu, eine Frontlinie innerhalb des Verteidigungssystems zu kennzeichnen. Der Beitrag versucht dies zu beweisen, indem er die Struktur des Quelltextes untersucht und die militärischen Gründe für die sektorale Aufteilung darlegt. Auf dieser Grundlage beweist er auch, dass das Festungssystem des Eisernen Tores weitaus ehrgeiziger war, als in den bisherigen Forschungen angenommen, und lässt vermuten, dass das Kommando- und Kontrollsystem der Expeditionsoperationen des Ritterordens ebenfalls weitaus komplexer gewesen sein könnte.

Jason Snider

NOUVELLE INTERPRÉTATION D'UN DOCUMENT CLÉ DE 1429 SUR LE DISPOSITIF
DE DÉFENSE DES FRONTIÈRES HONGROISES DANUBIENNES

(Résumé)

En 1429, huit chevaliers de l'ordre des chevaliers teutoniques furent envoyés dans le royaume de Hongrie, à mille kilomètres de la Prusse, pour prendre le contrôle du réseau de fortifications qui défendait la frontière sud. Ces forteresses se trouvaient au cœur du dispositif de défense hongrois reliant stratégiquement les États tampons, la Serbie et la Principauté de Valachie en première ligne contre l'avancée ottomane sous le sultan Mourad II (1421–1451). Le roi Sigismond de Hongrie (1387–1437) pensait pouvoir confier ce réseau de fortifications aux chevaliers teutoniques chevronnés en vue d'assurer la jonction entre les ailes serbe et valaque de la frontière sud.

Les archives de l'ordre des chevaliers ont conservé un rapport difficile à interpréter quant au nombre réel de ces forteresses. En 1429, ce rapport fut transmis à Paul von Rußdorf, grand maître de l'ordre (1422–1441) en Prusse. Il parlait du réseau de fortifications qui sécurisait les Portes de Fer (en allemand : *Eiserne Tor*, en roumain : *Porțile de Fier*, en serbe: Ђердап, Đerdap), une gorge sinueuse de 134 kilomètres du Danube. C'est la région où les prolongements des Carpates méridionales rencontrent la ligne nord des monts métallifères serbes et où les versants tombent presque verticalement dans le Danube, frontière actuelle entre la Roumanie et la Serbie.

Après relecture de l'étude préliminaire (*StA Königsberg, OBA, Kg. VII, 21*), l'auteur de la présente étude fournit une nouvelle interprétation de l'organisation militaire du réseau de forteresses confié à l'ordre des chevaliers teutoniques. Il réfute l'opinion séculaire selon laquelle chaque nom géographique de la liste désigne une forteresse. L'auteur estime que deux d'entre eux ne désignaient pas des forteresses, mais des secteurs du front situés au sein du dispositif de défense. L'étude cherche à le prouver en examinant la structure du texte source et en présentant

la logique militaire qui sous-tend la répartition des secteurs. Sur cette base, il démontre également que le réseau de forteresses des Portes de Fer était beaucoup plus ambitieux que ce que supposaient les recherches précédentes et suggère que le système de commandement et de contrôle des opérations expéditionnaires de l'ordre des chevaliers devait être beaucoup plus complexe.

Джасон Снайдер

НОВЫЙ ВЗГЛЯД К РАЗЪЯСНЕНИЮ КЛЮЧЕВОГО ДОКУМЕНТА
О ДУНАЙСКОЙ ГРАНИЦЕ ВЕНГРИИ ОТ 1429 Г.

(Резюме)

В 1429-ом году восемь рыцарей Тевтонского ордена были отправлены в Венгерское Королевство, расположенное в тысячу километров от Пруссии, для того чтобы взять под контроль управление системы замков, защищающих южную границу. Эти силы крепости находились в центре венгерской системы обороны, они стратегически связывали конфликтующие государства, сербское и валашское княжества во время Второй мировой войны против османского продвигающегося вперед наступления, начатого во время правления султана Мурада II. (1421–1451). Король Венгрии Сигизмунд (1387–1437) надеясь полагал и думал что он может доверить эту систему замков имеющим большой опыт немецким рыцарям, тем самым может поставить на место недостающее звено между сербским и валашским крыльями на южном пограничном участке.

В письменном архиве рыцарского ордена сохранился один нелегко интерпретируемый отчет об актуальном численном составе этих крепостей, который был отправлен в 1429-ом году Паулю фон Рюдорфу, великому магистру ордена (1422–1441) в Пруссию. Отчет был отправлен о той системе крепостей, которая обеспечивала охрану одной 134-километровой извилистой теснины Дуная, Железные ворота (нем. *Eiserne Tor*, румынский: *Porțile de Fier*, сербский: Дердап, Đerdap). Это территория, где южный отрос Южных Карпат встречается с северной грядой Сербских Рудных гор, а склоны гор почти вертикально обрываются в Дунай, который сейчас сегодня является пограничной рекой между Румынией и Сербией.

Перечитывая заново предварительный обзор (*StA Königsberg, OBA, Kg. VII, 21*), настоящее исследование предлагает новую интерпретацию военной организации замковой системы, доверенной рыцарям Тевтонского ордена. Он опровергает многовековое мнение о том, что во всех географических названиях в списке нужно искать крепость. По мнению автора, два из них не были крепостями, а служили для обозначения названия участка фронта внутри системы обороны. В исследовании делается попытка доказать это, изучая структуру источника текста и обрисовывая в общих чертах военную рациональность, стоящую за разбивкой сектора. На основе этих он также доказывает и то, что система крепости Железных ворот была гораздо более амбициозной, чем предполагалось в предыдущих исследованиях, и выдвигает, что система управления и контроля экспедиционными операциями рыцарского ордена могла быть гораздо более сложной.

A HADTÖRTÉNETI INTÉZET ÉS MÚZEUM KÖNYVTÁRA

KEMÉNY KRISZTIÁN

A SZOLNOKI ÜTKÖZET

1849. MÁRCIUS 5.

