

# Political Mechanisms at the Southern Frontiers of the Hungarian Kingdom in the Fourteenth century

## The Case of a Family of Officials from Caraş County

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**T**HE HISTORY of the medieval Banat cannot eschew the identitarian reality a border land which was gradually integrated in the Hungarian royalty from the eleventh-twelfth centuries on. Hence, its permanent connection to the political and military mechanisms generated by the gearing of a state power that was itself located at the eastern frontiers of Latin Christendom, which resolutely leveled its aspirations and actions towards the Lower Danube and the Balkan space from the thirteenth century on. The Kingdom of Hungary proved to be a military instrument that was absolutely necessary for this type of territorial expansionism doubled by a spiritual one, of the Catholic proselytizing endorsed by the papacy out of the desire to restore the unity of the Christian world by converting the “schismatics” and Christianizing the peoples that were still pagan. What gained shape thus was the consciousness of Hungary as *antemurale*, an ideology that experienced its maximum affirmation in the subsequent centuries, being enhanced by the efforts to ensure its defense against the Ottoman danger.<sup>1</sup> Located henceforth, given its geographic location, at the southern border of the kingdom and at the forefront of Hungarian expansionist tendencies, the Banat necessitated a proper administrative and military organization for playing a twofold role—offensive and defensive at the same time. Its inclusion within the system of royal counties meant the entrenchment of an institutionalized and territorialized rule, which was based initially on preexisting fortresses, to which were added later the cities newly established by the royalty, even though it was not until the Mongol invasion that the documents made it clear that stone fortresses had been raised in the Banat. The intention of the present paper is to reconstruct, through published and unpublished documentary sources, the ways in which the political power mechanisms functioned during the Angevin period at the level of one of the Banatian counties, Caraş, an extremely revealing case being that of the family of *magister* Posa of Szer, a family that gave comites and castellans of the county, constituting a genuine “dynasty” that dominated the political scene of the county for almost four decades. This is an almost singular example for the Banat during the entire fourteenth century,

which is telling, in our opinion, for what the Angevin political ideology attempted and managed to implement in the sensitive areas from the frontiers of the kingdom in order to secure and co-interest them in its political-military undertakings.

## A family of dignitaries in Caraș County

FOR THE Banat, the reigns of Charles Robert and his son meant a sharp penetration in Caraș and Timiș Counties of the nobility that received many royal donations; the interest manifested by the new dynasty in the fortresses from the region was likely to moderate and limit the practice of estate donations in these areas. From this perspective, we believe that the particular case of Posa of Szer and his family is illustrative for the manner in which the political and military power coordinated by the royalty operated on the southern border, in the county of Caraș. We have no doubt that Posa's real career began and was conducted under the direct patronage of King Charles Robert, who expressed, on several occasions, his high appreciation of his faithful nobleman, whom, we have reasons to believe, he knew personally, probably during his residence in the city of Timișoara.<sup>2</sup> Over the course of four decades, Posa of Szer and his five sons (Ladislau, Ioan, Blasiu, Ștefan and Nicolae) established a true "dynasty" that held functions and *honores*, and cumulated dignities and patrimonial property in several counties, dominating the Banatian political scene as an expression of the manner in which loyalty and interest worked both ways.

According to historical data, Posa (*Pousa, Pose, Posaw, Possa, Powsa, Pouse*) son of *Iseph* allegedly descended from the old Hungarian aristocratic family of Bár-Kalán, originating in Esztergom County,<sup>3</sup> representing the noble branch Szeri and Sződi, which evolved, in time, deriving these names from two of the main family estates - *Zeer* in Csongrád County and *Zeudy* (Frumușeni) in Arad County. In absolutely all the documentary entries relating to him and his sons, his name is accompanied by the attribute *magister*, which, more than a simple courteous appellative used by the members of the attestation chapter,<sup>4</sup> was a prestige title related to a distinguished social status or scholarly knowledge; from the middle of the thirteenth until the beginning of the fifteenth century, the term was used for people with knighthood.<sup>5</sup> Although the documents preserved do not mention this, it is likely that at the beginnings of his career, Posa of Szer placed himself in the proximity of the central power, as a knight (*miles aule*), an important springboard for the rise of any nobleman who aspired to a career in the royal army or the kingdom administration.<sup>6</sup> As regards his five sons, they are all mentioned as knights (*milites aule*) in the documents, which can only mean that their father destined them, from an early age, to a career in the army or the administration. Together they constituted a very well-established family structure that worked flawlessly over the decades analyzed, interweaving political and patrimonial interests and undoubtedly dominating the political scene of Caraș County.

According to archival information, the beginnings of his career can be placed outside the Banat: a certain *magister Pous* was mentioned between 1318 and 1323 as comes of Solnoc and castellan of *Aduryan* (Adrian, Bihor County),<sup>7</sup> the first plurality

of offices, which was then multiplied repeatedly as a dignitary of Caraş County. The way in which his career started in the Banat sparks, however, some questions about the political realities of the time. We hope that a brief chronological presentation will answer at least some of these questions, in full awareness that this criterion is relative, being determined drastically by the documentary information has been preserved over time. On 21 April 1325,<sup>8</sup> a document issued by King Charles Robert to the Chapter of Arad mentioned Posa of Szer as *capitaneus partis tymisiensis*; on 5 June 1325,<sup>9</sup> in a pledge transaction, Posa was certified for the first time as castellan of Sebeş and Ilidia; finally, on 15 September 1325,<sup>10</sup> Posa appeared serving as comes of Caraş. Basically, according to documentary information, Posa of Szer may be said to have held a great deal of control over the Banat that year, dominating two important Banatian counties and their fortresses at a time when the Banat of Severin was the object of contention between the Hungarian Crown and the emerging Romanian stationality south of the Carpathians, whose organizational and military functioning was therefore deficient. We believe that we can answer more concretely a question that has been raised in recent Romanian historiography, linked to the fact that the city of Sebeş located on the Timiş-Cerna corridor might actually not have belonged to Caraş County, so its castellany was nothing but an *honor* granted to the comes of Caraş, recte Poşa de Szer,<sup>11</sup> in 1325. However, if we relate the position of castellan of Sebeş held jointly with that of comes of Timiş that year, the overall picture changes: Posa was at that time both comes of Timiş, receiving also the castellany of Sebeş fortress (which, together with Mehadia, closed the crossing corridor from the Danube into Timişoara and Transylvania), and comes of Caraş and castellan of Ilidia, a fortress located on the other lane of penetration from the Balkans to the city of Timişoara. In other words, he held, at least for a few years, a key position in the defense system of the Banat, to whose recalibration we have reason to believe that contributed out of the royal commission. The third issue is linked to the duration of holding these positions; as regards the dignity of comes of Caraş, a whole series of documents suggests an uninterrupted continuity for 21 years, between 1325 and 1346<sup>12</sup> and a return to office from 1350 until 1352.<sup>13</sup> As for the dignity of comes of Timiş, an opinion that has been advanced is that he could keep it for four years,<sup>14</sup> probably because the following comes of Timiş was documentarily attested only in 1329 in the person of Nicolae of Jank.<sup>15</sup> This is a reasonable supposition, which should be taken into account, as long as it is not amended by new documentary information.

The two and a half decades he spent at the helm of Caraş County were intertwined almost continuously with his exercising the function of castellan of several royal fortresses in the Banat, an interesting overlap of functions that draws attention, in our opinion, both to the real power he held in the area, and to the material benefits which arose by virtue of the *honor* right to which a comes or a castellan was entitled. Between the years 1325 and 1326<sup>16</sup> alone, Posa of Szer held two castellanies, of Sebeş and Ilidia, given that at that time, he jointly held as we have seen in the previous lines, the dignities of comes of Timiş and of Caraş. During the rest of the period, he was mentioned in the documents as alternating several Banatian castellanies: between 1330 and 1333,<sup>17</sup> he was castellan of Haram, perhaps at a moment when there was a vacancy of the vice-comes function, since it is known that the castellan of Haram usually also held the position

of vice-comes of Caraș; then, in 1343 and 1346,<sup>18</sup> he was mentioned as castellan of *Ersombyo* (Vârșeț). Of great responsibility was, however, the castellany of the fortress of Golubăț, which he ruled, according to the documents that have been preserved, between 1342 and 1346<sup>19</sup> and then again in 1350.<sup>20</sup> After the fortress was conquered by the Hungarian royalty in 1335, it appears that this castellany became a privilege usually granted to the comites of Caraș, representing an important offensive bridgehead south of the Danube. Finally, in 1352<sup>21</sup> he was briefly at the head of the city of Sebeș, although this time we could not say whether this castellany was related to the control exerted over Timiș County, as it appears to have been the case almost 20 years before.

We mentioned in the previous pages that the power and influence Posa of Szer undoubtedly had in the Banat were accompanied and supported by his five sons, all of them being direct descendants from the same marriage (as attested by the documents) and certified as *milites aule*, hence trained to engage in local politics. In 1339<sup>22</sup> they were mentioned for the first time in the documents alongside their father, without being individually nominated, however, as a community of patrimonial interests, as they were the beneficiaries of substantial royal donations whereby they recovered properties in Somogy County that had belonged to a cousin who had died without heirs. In the years that followed, they were referred to in the documentary information of the time either individually, representing family interests, or acting together, as an example of family cohesion. Their ascent at the level of effective political and military power appears to have occurred in the mid-fourteenth century. In fact, the moment and the manner in which they were involved in the administrative and political-military system of Caraș County raises some interrogations that we have tried to answer based on the information available to us. The first to have accessed the highest comital dignity was Ioan, certified as comes of Caraș and castellan of Golubăț between 1349 and 1350.<sup>23</sup> His brother Ladislau appeared in the documents as comes of Caraș between 19 May 1351 and 1 April 1353,<sup>24</sup> and as castellan of Golubăț in 1352;<sup>25</sup> he probably combined these functions according to the principle stated above, whereby the comites of Caraș were usually castellans of Golubăț, at the same time. It was also as a castellan of Golubăț that Ștefan, Posa's son, was referred to on 22 November 1353,<sup>26</sup> even though in his case we do not have any information that he was also comes of Caraș at the same time. The fourth son, Blasiu, managed to cumulate—true, only for one year, in 1351<sup>27</sup>—the dignity of comes of Arad and that of castellan of Hașeg; after that moment, for two decades, the function of comes of Arad was an attribute of the Transylvanian voivodes.

This sequence of dignities occupied by Posa of Szer's sons within only four years raised a number of questions, as we mentioned above. First, we should recall the fact reported earlier, that between 8 June 1350 and 8 November 1352 Posa of Szer himself held, for the second time, the function of comes of Caraș, combined with that of castellan of Golubăț in 1350 and that of castellan of Sebeș in 1352. How can this situation be explained, therefore? If it was an alternation of functions between Posa and his three sons, we can rightly ask why it was necessary for the office to change hands every other few months. From another perspective, however, if it was an overlap of functions, which appears in no document as a case of positional collegiality (which was much more common in the castellans' case), then we may dare to advance a hypothesis that seems

plausible enough to be envisioned. The years from the mid-fourteenth century certainly marked the end of Posa of Szer's career. Moreover, since he no longer appeared in the documents after the year 1352, we have every reason to believe that his death occurred precisely during this period. If we take into account Lendvai's statement that the oldest known information about Posa's family dates from 1290 (when even one of his sons, Ioan, was mentioned), and he obtained the first function—as comes of Solnoc and castellan of Adrian—in 1318, then we are entitled to believe that at the middle of the century of Posa of Szer was between 70 and 80 years old, a rather advanced age at which he may have kept the titlature of the function (his prestige was outstanding over the course of three decades), but may not have had the capacity to exercise it at the height of his powers. Hence, his need to maintain control over the county through his sons, whom he probably planned his launch thus onto the orbit of the kingdom's dignities. His death seems to have brought an end, at least partly, to his plans about his family, and his sons' access to the most important Banatian dignities became ever more fragile; of these, only Ladislau still appeared as comes of Caraş in 1363,<sup>28</sup> and Ştefan held the castellany of Mehadia in 1362.<sup>29</sup> Otherwise, although their presence was still indicated documentarily in the Banat, they were unable to gain any other significant function, being merely content to carry out a series of assignments they were entrusted with in their capacity as knights of the king both in their adoptive realm and in the other counties of the kingdom. It was only during the reign of Sigismund of Luxembourg that they resumed holding comital dignities, albeit outside the Banatian space: Ştefan and Nicolae, probably Posa's grandchildren (rather than his sons) were mentioned in 1384 as comites of Zolyom and Trecsén,<sup>30</sup> while in 1391 Ştefan acquired the title of comes of Csongrád.<sup>31</sup>

### Dignitaries in their official capacity

**W**E INTEND to present those aspects of their official activity that can be reconstructed from the information that has come down to us as documentary support for our assertions above. We are certain that the involvement of these nobles in the military campaigns conducted by the Hungarian royalty inside or outside the frontiers of the kingdom was one of the grounds on which their entire career was based. Highly suggestive are two royal donation documents whose beneficiaries were the members of Posa of Szer's family and which were motivated precisely by the devotion they had shown when the central power called them to arms. For example, on 19 May 1339,<sup>32</sup> Posa, comes of Caraş and his entire family acquired a number of estates in Somogy County, together with the right of patronage over the monastery of *Lywlaheg*, as a reward for their faithful services rendered by the southern border of the kingdom, during the conflict against the King of Serbia. A new royal donation, made on 16 October 1350,<sup>33</sup> was granted by Louis I to Ioan, son of Posa, at that time comes of Caraş and castellan of Golubăt, as well as to his brothers, on the grounds that he had participated with the king in the campaigns from the kingdoms of Hungary and Sicily in the years 1347–1349. Finally, on 14 September 1368,<sup>34</sup> the procedure of redrawing the boundaries ordered

by the palatine was postponed because of the participation of one of the parties involved, namely Ștefan, son of Posa, in the campaign against Vladislav Vlaicu, the ruler of Wallachia.

Together with the vice-comites and nobiliary judges of Caraș, the members of this family also presided over several judicial seats, which decided on common law issues, such as the inquiry into the forced displacement of one of Paul Himfi's knezes (probably a knez who had been downgraded to the level of a serf) onto the estate of another nobleman or the prohibition of the right to use the Perdwey estate which had been claimed by the same Paul Himfi in the court sessions chaired by Comes Posa of Szer on 30 May and 1 August 1342.<sup>35</sup> Two court sittings chaired by Ladislau, son of Posa, as comes of Caraș, on 19 February and 1 April 1353,<sup>36</sup> ascertained that Ioan, son of Paul Himfi, had paid a debt of 50 marks so as to redeem his estate of Remetea.

Preserving the integrity of the royal castle domains was certainly one of the responsibilities of the local officials, motivated both by the position to which they had been appointed by the king and by their personal financial interest, since the revenue of these cities was part of their right of *honor*. Thus, on 2 May 1343, Posa, as comes of Caraș and castellan of *Ersomlyo*, protested before the Chapter of Arad against the occupation by Lucaci, son of *Rayk*, of six villages on the territory of this city, which is interpreted by Maria Holban as the usurpation of a royal possession, even though the researcher does not exclude that it could also have been an attempt to expand the domain of that city to the detriment of the rightful owners of those villages.<sup>37</sup> A complex document dates back to 18 May 1363;<sup>38</sup> in it, the king demanded Ladislau, son of Posa, comes of Caraș to investigate the case brought to his attention by *Mykch*, son of Finta of *Zakalar*, whereby not only had the comes of Cuvin and the vice-castellans of Ilidia taken several serfs by force from the *Kuuesd* estate, but they had also abusively used lands and hay fields from this estate and the village of *Zakalari* (Socolari), lands that the plaintiff's family had used for many years with the consent of the other castellans of Ilidia, including Ladislau's father, Posa (castellan of Ilidia in 1325-1326). What can be inferred from here is that in time, probably due to the lack of serf labor, the castellans of the cities ceded the right of user over villages belonging to the city to families outside their authority, whose ownership they undertook to protect against acts of usurpation, which, in this case, were committed by none other than some local dignitaries. On the other hand, these plaintiffs from Socolari might have been Romanian knezes whose possessions had been included, in time, in the domain of the city of Ilidia, the royal right of ownership substituting the old knezial right, which had been downgraded to the level of a simple use of with the assent and under the protection of the castellans of this royal city.

What proved interesting were the relations between these potentates and the Banatian Romanian elite, whose recognition by the royalty was under way through official diplomas; this balance of power evinced marked peculiarities depending on the realities of the different regions in the Banat area. The situation in the hilly and mountain Banat, with its eight privileged districts (broadly circumscribed to the Banat of Severin), more protected from external interference, was very different from the way things stood in the lowlands of Timiș, Caraș and Cuvin Counties, which were favorable to the development of large land estates, thus appealing to the nobility of the kingdom or its officials. The documents that have been preserved - of course, insufficient - betray

nonetheless a sensible difference in the treatment of the economic problems involving the dignitaries from Posa of Szer's family and a series of Romanian knezes from the Banat. We shall address some of these documents, which are very well-known, in fact, in the Romanian historiography, but which cannot be excluded from the context of this paper.

One of those documents, which is well-known in historiography, dates back to 8 November 1352<sup>39</sup> and includes a letter patent that exceeds, to some extent, the established patterns of the period, since it was issued by Posa of Szer, comes of Caraș and castellan of Sebeș, with his sons Ladislau and Ștefan, and not by the royal authority. The donation referred to the uninhabited land of Mâtnic Valley which was assigned, for their faithful services, to Iuga and Bogdan, the sons of Ștefan of Mâtnic, so that they would master it with the same rights and freedoms with which the knezes in Sebeș District ruled their villages, including the right of trial over their men, except in cases that pertained to the major jurisdiction (theft, robbery and arson). This was the first documentary attestation of one of the most important noble Romanian families in the Banat—Mâtnic of Ohaba-Mâtnic—whose history spanned over three centuries.<sup>40</sup> From the perspective of the present material, there are some aspects that we would like to highlight because of their unique character. First, the cases in which a local dignitary donated estates were extremely rare in the medieval Banat: there were the well-known examples of Posa of Szer, comes of Caraș in 1352, of Ștefan Losonczy, ban of Severin and comes of Timiș in 1387<sup>41</sup> or Filippo Scolari, who was also comes of Timiș and ban of Severin 1413.<sup>42</sup> The latter two made donations to the family of the noble knezes Deș of Timișel. Second, the beneficiaries—members of two Romanian knezial families that were transitioning exactly during this period from the status of knezes to that of noble knezes and, then, to that of fully entitled nobles—were bestowed upon with land property for their outstanding military contributions made at tense moments for the Hungarian royalty, a further reason why the latter was particularly willing to reward their loyalty, through its representatives in the area. It should also be added that these were not spectacular donations that might have significantly altered the configuration of the patrimonial system in the area. It was rather a way of securing the loyalty of the local social elite during periods when the royalty needed the entire combat capability of its military contingents on the Danube frontier.

On the other hand, it is suggestive that Posa of Szer made this donation along with two of his sons, an aspect considered by the historian Maria Holban as “a rather strange mixture of public and private law.”<sup>43</sup> From our point of view, the situation, which was truly unique for the Banat, has another explanation. Basically, this was the last known document that can be attributed to Posa of Szer. In the period between 1349 and 1352, we have seen that both Posa of Szer and his sons Ioan, Ladislau and Ștefan appeared as comites of Caraș and castellans of Golubăț. In our opinion, this overlap of functions could be an indication that during the last part of his life, Posa kept the titulature of the county, being doubled *de facto* by his sons, whom he tried thus to integrate in the kingdom's system of dignities.

Finally, there was an altogether different kind of involvement manifested by Posa of Szer's sons in the vast trial for the estate Valea (*Vôya*) in Caraș County, which, due to its complexity, extended over a period of 17 years, between 1361 and 1378. We shall not insist

on the details of this trial, which has repeatedly been the subject of in-depth studies on the relationship between the Romanian knezes from the Banat and the royal officials who acquired not only an important power in the region, but also important estates, by usurping the Romanian knezial possessions.<sup>44</sup> The role played by Posa of Szer's sons, especially Ștefan, was both official and private, for the two documents dated between the years 1361 and 1373<sup>45</sup> and on 3 July 1372<sup>46</sup> reveal that as the king's knight, Ștefan was designated, together with the bishop of Cenad, the provost of the chapter of Buda and the archdeacon of Timiș to participate in all the recoveries of royal estates, as well as in the redrawing or erection of new boundaries between the royal and the noble domains in the counties of Timiș, Caraș and Cuvin. On the other hand, Posa's family also owned estates in the county of Caraș, either *pro honore* (as comites and castellans) or obtained through royal donations. The fact that Posa's sons testified at two key moments in the trial—on 22 March 1363 and 29 March 1378<sup>47</sup>—suggests the existence of a conflict of interest, rather: they appear to have been situated at the limit of the law, given the mix-up between their official capacity, assigned by royal decree, and the family's personal interests. Thus, while in 1363 Posa's sons testified as *comitaneci* when the knezes of Ilidia city and *magister* Petru Himfi did not reach an agreement on the placement of the border signs in the forest known as *Fortalan*, located on the border between the Valea estate and the domain of Ilidia city (whose castellan their father had been in the past, so it was assumed that they were somewhat familiar with the situation), in 1378 Ștefan, son of Posa, was both the king's official attorney in the investigation of the case which led to the final verdict, and part of the problem, because he was mentioned as holding, within the Valea estate, the *Foktalan* possessions with 9 families of serfs and *Perlyzke* with 8 serfish households. The testimony Ștefan personally submitted refers to the period following the replacement of his father, Posa of Szer, as comes of Caraș with Toma Szécsényi. While recognizing that Ioan of Valea had owned that possession recognized by Charles Robert through a written instrument, and that he had collected income and benefices from it, giving part of them to the city of Ilidia, after the replacement of his father from office, he could no longer say how many land plots Ioan had "attached" to his estate, how many villages he had founded, how many people he had settled here or how he raised the boundaries of the above-mentioned Valea estate. Perhaps combined with the entire mechanism of the legislation that favored, in all cases, royal ownership or that of the noble donees, Posa's testimony led to the final verdict whereby it was decided that the family of the knezes from Valea should lose all possession of Valea estate after the "abuse" they had allegedly committed by extending their dominion at the expense of the royal or noble ownership.

### Final considerations

**T**HE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL foray we proposed intended to focus on the well-defined prototype of an official (comes and castellan) of the Angevin period, an agent of the royal policy implemented in one of the counties from the southern border of the Hungarian kingdom. We consider that the political-administrative and military career of *magister* Posa of Szer, as well as of his family, provides a highly sugges-



tive model of the mechanism of power that functioned in the medieval Banat during the fourteenth century.

Posa of Szer's rise was due entirely to the appreciation he enjoyed before the first Angevin monarch, whom we have reason to believe that he met personally during his stay in the city of Timișoara. He must have been among those elements loyal to the new dynasty, implanted at the head of the counties and especially of the royal cities, the centers supporting both royal authority and its foreign policy. He was entrusted with the administration of Caraș County and its cities in a period when this administrative unit played a significant role in the military actions undertaken south of the Danube or the Carpathians. Together with his sons, he represented a genuine political "dynasty" which accumulated dignities and properties both in the Banatian counties and beyond. The documents betray a strong cohesion of interests and personal bonds between father and sons, which went so far as to render, in mid-century, the alternation of Posa and his sons at the helm of the county as a natural passing of the torch from one generation to another insofar as the responsibilities entailed by the comital administration were concerned. The documentary information that has been preserved has allowed us to reconstruct, in broad outlines, the main responsibilities of a comes or castellan during that period.

*Translated into English by CARMEN-VERONICA BORBELY*

## Notes:

1. Viorel Achim, *Politica sud-estică a regatului ungar sub ultimii Arpadieni* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2008), 37.
2. Fügedi Erik, *Ispánok, bárók, kiskirályok. A középkori magyar arisztokrácia fejlődése* (Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1986), 184; Petrovics István, "Városi elit a középkori dél-magyarországon. Pécs, Szeged és Temesvár," *Urbs. Magyar várostörténeté évkönyv*, III (Budapest, 2008): 6.
3. Karácsonyi János, *A magyar nemzetiség a XIV. század közepéig*, vol. I (Budapest, 1900), 140; Lukinich Emericus et al., eds., *Documentam historiam Valachorum in Hungaria illustrantia usque ad annum 1400 p. Christum* (Budapest, 1941), 97, note 2; Adrian Andrei Rusu, *Castelarea carpatică. Fortificații și cetăți din Transilvania și teritoriile învecinate (sec. XIII-XIV)* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2005), 242; Cosmin Popa-Gorjanu, "Despre familiares și familiaritas in cazul familiei Himfi," *Apulum* XLIV (2007): 368. See also the genealogy of the family in Engel Pál, *Középkori magyar genealógia*, Pósaft entry (szeri, szódi) (variant CD).
4. Maria Holban, *Din cronica relațiilor româno-ungare în secolele XIII-XIV* (București, 1981), 266.
5. Kristó Gy., Engel P., Makkai F. eds., *Korai magyar történeti lexicon (9-14 sz.)* (Budapest, 1994), 422; Rusu, *Castelarea carpatică.*, 242.
6. Fügedi, *Ispánok*, 191-192; Martyn Rady, *Nobility, Land and Service in Medieval Hungary* (London, 2000), 128; Engel P., *Regatul Sf. Ștefan. Istoria Ungariei medievale 895-1526*, eds. A.A. Rusu, I. Drăgan (Cluj-Napoca, 2006), 173-714.
7. Magyar Országos Lévéltár, Diplomatikai levéltár, 56559, 76307; A.A. Rusu, "Castelania din Transilvania în secolele XIII-XIV," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie Cluj-Napoca* XXII (1979): 83 and 96.
8. DI 91204; Fenyvesi László, "A temesközi-szörényeségi végvárvidék funkcióváltozásai (1365-1718)," *Studia Agriensia. Végvárak és régiók a XVI-XVII. Században* 14 (1993): 240; Rusu,

- Castelarea carpatică*, 310; Zoltan Iusztin, "Comitele de Timiș. Un baron al regatului medieval maghiar," *Analele Banatului* Serie Nouă, Arheologic-Istorie XIX (2011): 258.
9. MOL, P 1732, the copy is found in the manuscript of Fekete Nagy Antal, *Temesi bánság oklevéltára 1307-1340*, 152/a; Pesty Frigyes, *A szörény vármegyei hajdani oláh kerületek* (Budapest, 1876), 10; Fügedi Erik, *Vár és társadalom a 13-14. századi Magyarországon* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1977), 145.
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  30. Fejér, *Codex diplomaticus*, X/1, 153.
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  32. *Nos itaque consideratis et partier circumspicis fidelitatibus et fidelium obsequiorum meritis preclaris multa laude dignis ipsius magistri Posa et filiorum suorum quibus nobis continue in confinibus Regni nostri contra Regem Rascie non parcendo rebus nec persone fortune casibus se opposcentes studerunt complacere...* Pesty, *Krassó* IV, 380.
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### Abstract

Political mechanisms at the southern frontiers of the Hungarian kingdom  
in the fourteenth century: The case of a family of officials from Caraș County

The historiographic foray we propose intends to focus on the well-defined prototype of an official (comes and castellan) of the Angevin period, an agent of the royal policy implemented in one of the counties from the southern border of the Hungarian kingdom. We consider that the political-administrative and military career of Master Posa of Szer, as well as of his family, provides a highly suggestive model of the mechanism of power that functioned in the medieval Banat during the fourteenth century. Established in the north of the realm, in Arad County, most likely on the cusp between the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries, the family rapidly expanded its possessions and influence into the other Banatian counties during the Angevin era. We believe that the basis for this rapid and spectacular rise was the extremely strong personality of Master Posa, son of *Iseph*, who accumulated, over the course of three decades, a series of dignities that propelled him among the most influential representatives of the royal policies at the southern frontiers of the kingdom. Together with his sons, he represented a genuine political "dynasty" which accumulated dignities and properties both in the Banatian counties and beyond. The documentary information that has been preserved allows us to reconstruct, in broad outlines, the elements that composed the main responsibilities of a comes or castellan during that period.

### Keywords

the Angevin period, Caraș County, comes, castellan, knight, Posa of Szer